RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER - MAY 2021

Alliteration continues. Another use for RR: not our Ripon Reviewed historic photo project, nor Ripon *Cathedral* Renewed. Now it's the ***Ripon Renewal*** Project.

Harrogate Borough Council has appointed Bauman Lyons, architects and urbanists, to prepare a masterplan for Ripon centre. This at last should take forward the ideas in our Ripon Neighbourhood Plan.

Funds are coming from the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, North Yorkshire County Council and HBC itself. It appears that the consultants will be taking a look at the impacts of the Clotherholme development including the road junctions. It will link also with a Ripon walking and cycling strategy.

The consultants have started work and we've been able to explain the issues and opportunities to them. In this newsletter we'll explain what these are.

One current topic is the proposed sale of the Spa Baths. More needs to be known about what the health service needs in Ripon. Our stance is that sale is premature. The Baths are well located with the hospital and two GP practices and being in the city centre are accessible for the whole city. Back to the consultants.

Christopher Hughes
Chairman

Ripon Spa Baths

As the Spa Baths is the topic of the moment, Jane Furse has started delving into the history and significance of this special building as and when we may need to promote or defend it.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires that "...In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting...". Significance is a guiding principle running through the historic built environment, and understanding the form, materials and history of any affected heritage asset is a key first stage in the process.

To that end the Civic Society have been constructively using 'Lockdown' to carry out research into the Spa Baths and their setting, Spa Gardens. While there is still much to do some interesting details are emerging.

The history of the commissioning and construction of the baths is a complex and lengthy one, stretching from the 1880s through to the royal opening in October 1905. Lord Ripon is an important figure in the scheme as the spa water rises on his land in Spa Ghyll woods at Aldfield and had to be piped the 4.5 miles to Park Street, an engineering feat which took several attempts and a considerable amount of investment.

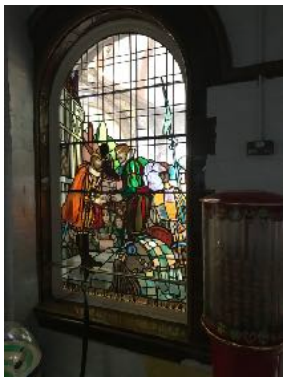




It is well known that the Pump Room and baths were designed by the architect Samuel Stead, but evidence is emerging of the contractors and craftsmen who worked on the project – many from Ripon - as the Council made a concerted effort to employ local firms. In the Pump Room, Messrs Abbot and Co. supplied the *"handsome mahogany counter with marble top"*, which had, *"...been much admired during the last few days in Mr Abbott's window North Street..."*.

Additional tenders were accepted from, *"...Mrs Hardisty...for eight couches at £4.15s each; Mr John Lowley for eight mirrors at £2.15s each....and Messrs Croft and Blackburn tender for [an] invalid chair at £4.8s.6d."*. 250 towels and 50 sheets were provided by Mr Gowland providing he, *"...gave a guarantee that the size and quality of the sheets and towels offered by him were equal to the sample deposited at the Town Hall..."*. Larger contracts for the main building work were assigned to Barker Brothers, builders, J.H. Coldbeck, joiner and J.S. Lowley, painter.

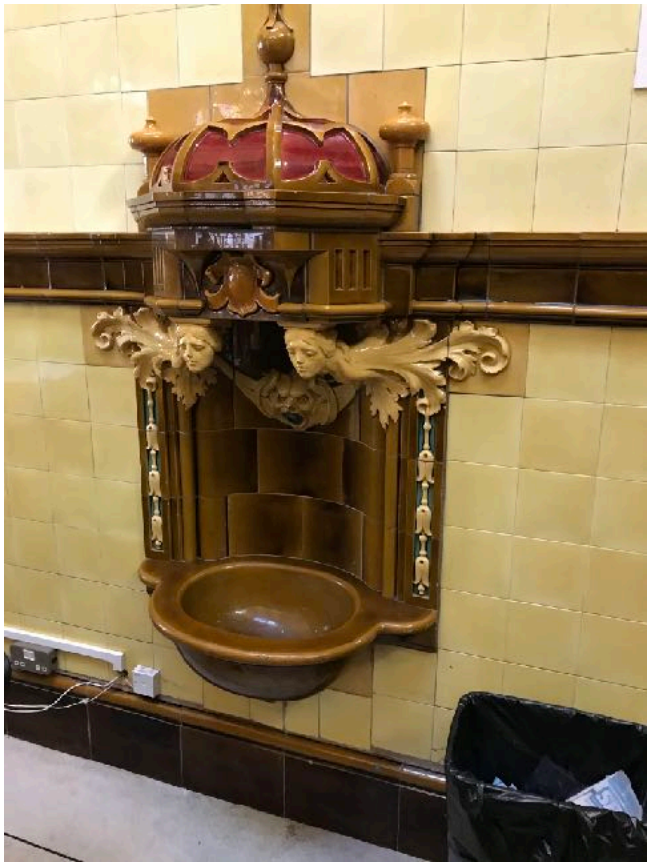
The terracotta and faience work was provided by the Burmantofts works of the Leeds Fireclay Company, specialists in architectural decoration who not only supplied the materials but also fitted the glazed tiled interiors. The porcelain baths were supplied by Messrs Twyford of Handley, their tender was not the lowest but nearly so, however the Council felt, *"...knowing the well-known character of the firm they were perfectly justified in going to the extra expense of having their baths..."*.















The water for the baths was stored in two wooden tanks lined with lead, each containing 1,000 gallons housed in the tower to the side of the baths. The lower parts of this structure contained the boiler house and a workshop. All the pipes used for hot sulphur water were made from copper whilst cold water ran through lead ones. The building was lit by gas but "...*wires have been provided so that electric light may be used when available…*".

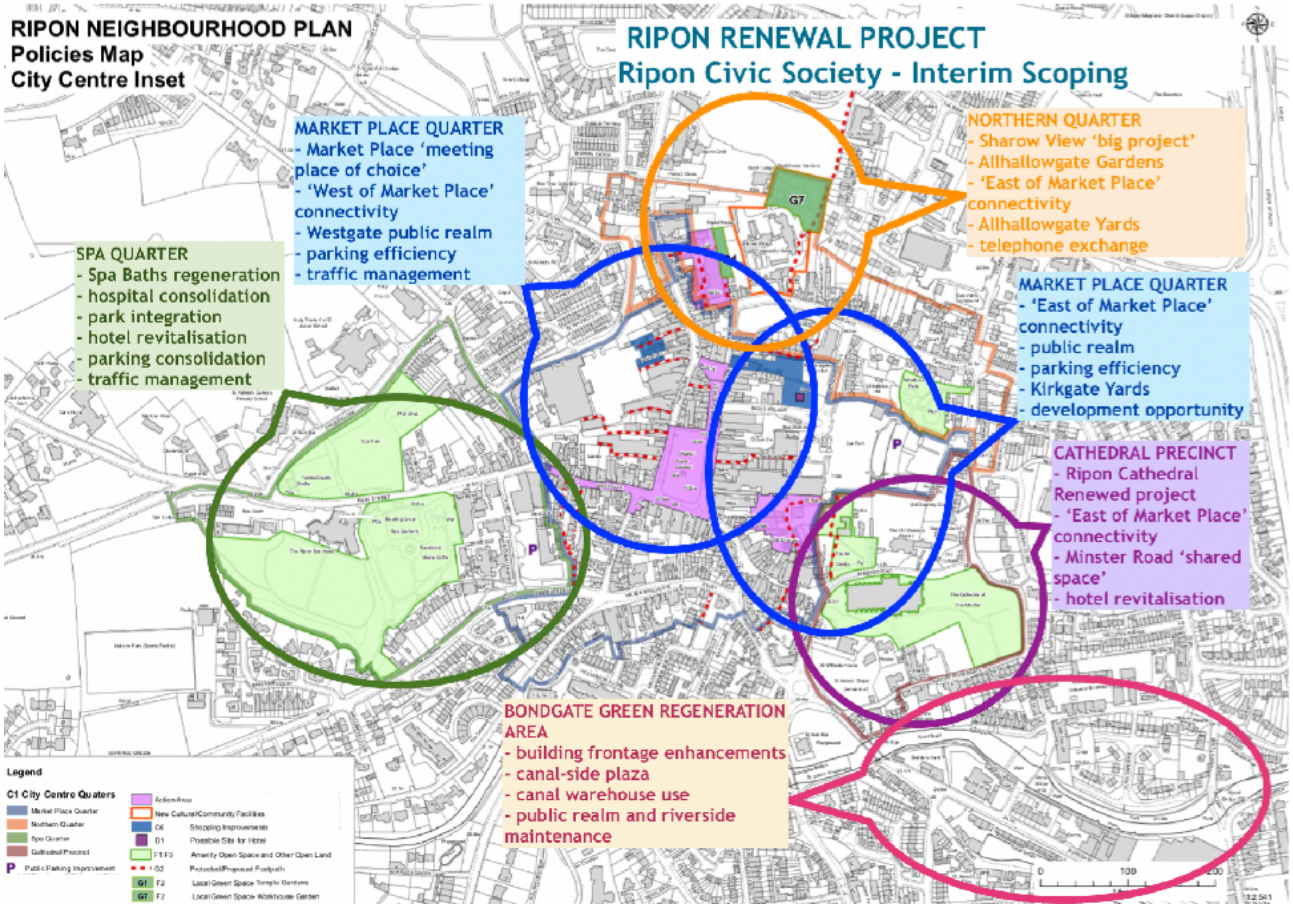
The total cost of the baths was around £6,000 and when the acquisition of land, the laying out of Spa Park and the bandstand were added the figure was nearer to £16,000. Further alterations were made to baths when 'electrical treatments' were installed and eventually in April 1936 the present swimming pool was opened.

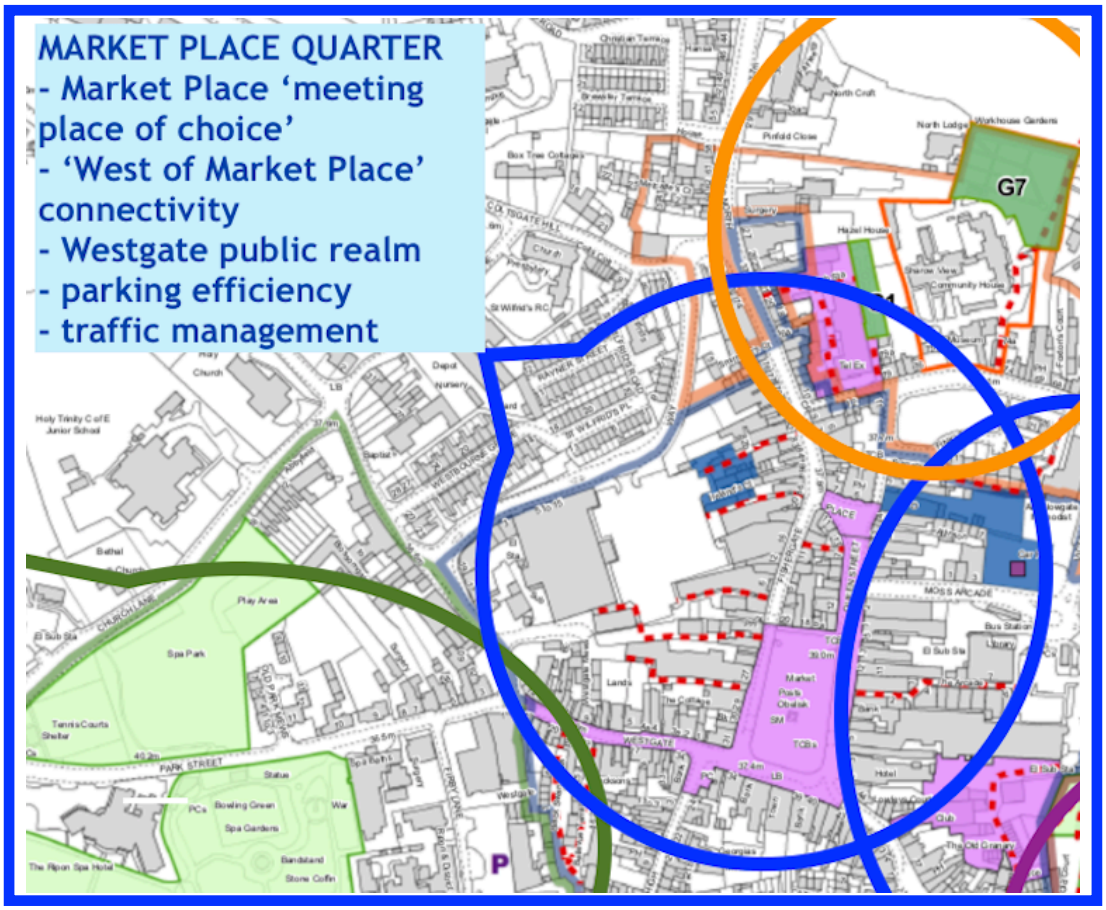
Ripon Renewal Project

The Ripon Renewal Project is the opportunity for Ripon Civic Society to explain and influence the directions for our city to be recommended by consultants, Bauman Lyons.

We quickly prepared a diagram of our ideas to invite discussion. This is shown below and we've seen it used already by the consultants and others. It's based on the Ripon Neighbourhood Plan policies map for the city centre and summarises proposals in each of the four quarters, the 'East of Market Place' integrated project and the nearby Bondgate Green Regeneration Area.

The ideas for each area are explained in the following pages. Hopefully you'll find them interesting.





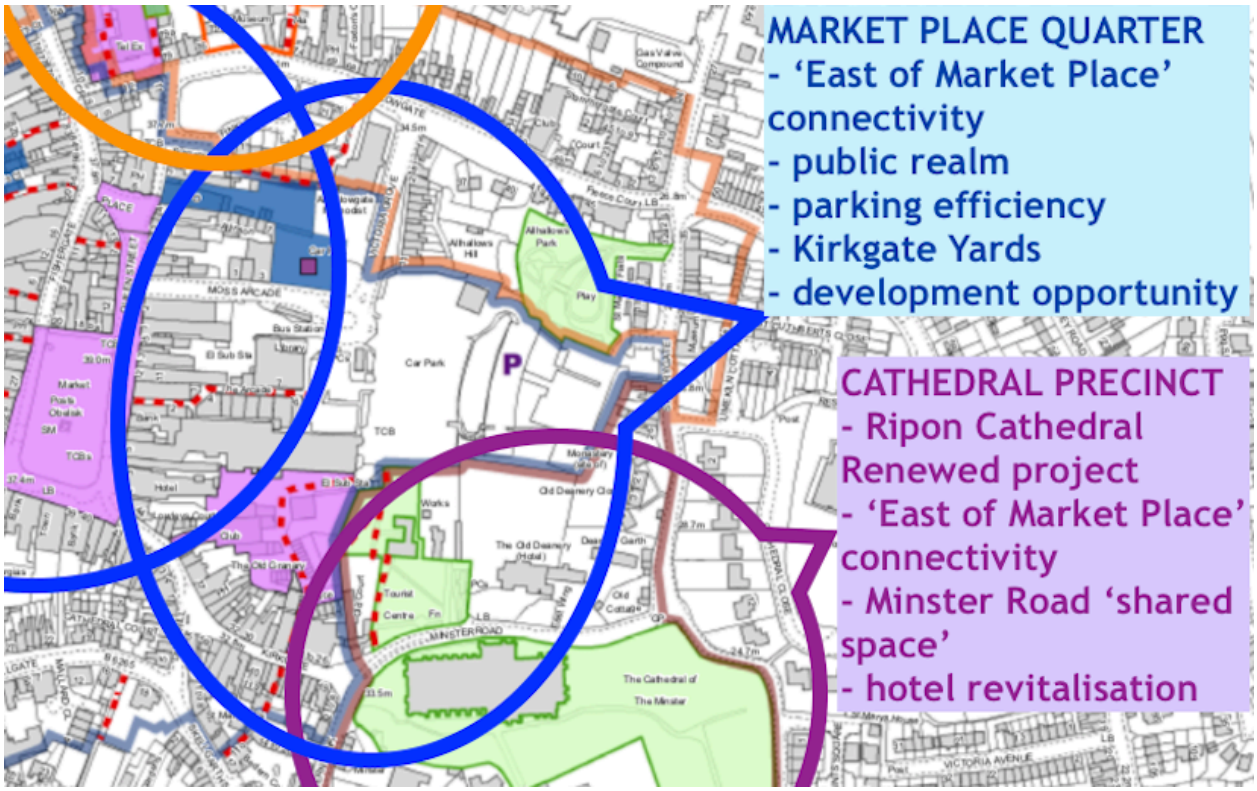
The Market Place is the hub of the city centre - our 'meeting place of choice'. Can it be a place for more activity? What would help it be so? Ripon City Council is keen to provide more events in the Market Place and again the local press is reporting that Ripon and Knaresborough want to run their markets.

The Society first promoted making more of the Market Place in 1995. It took over a decade to arrive at the current half-way house. How can footways be widened to allow more outside seating for cafés. How should the cabmen's shelter and the telephone kiosks be used? Can short stay parking be relocated? Does traffic need to go in front of the Town Hall? Is it a practical location for trees?

The footpaths to the 'West of Market Place' development are poor and retailers could make more attempt to front onto this 'second market place'.

Westgate succeeds as a destination with many long-established businesses but it is most unsuccessful as public realm. This is largely down to the failure to complete effective traffic circulation in the city centre.

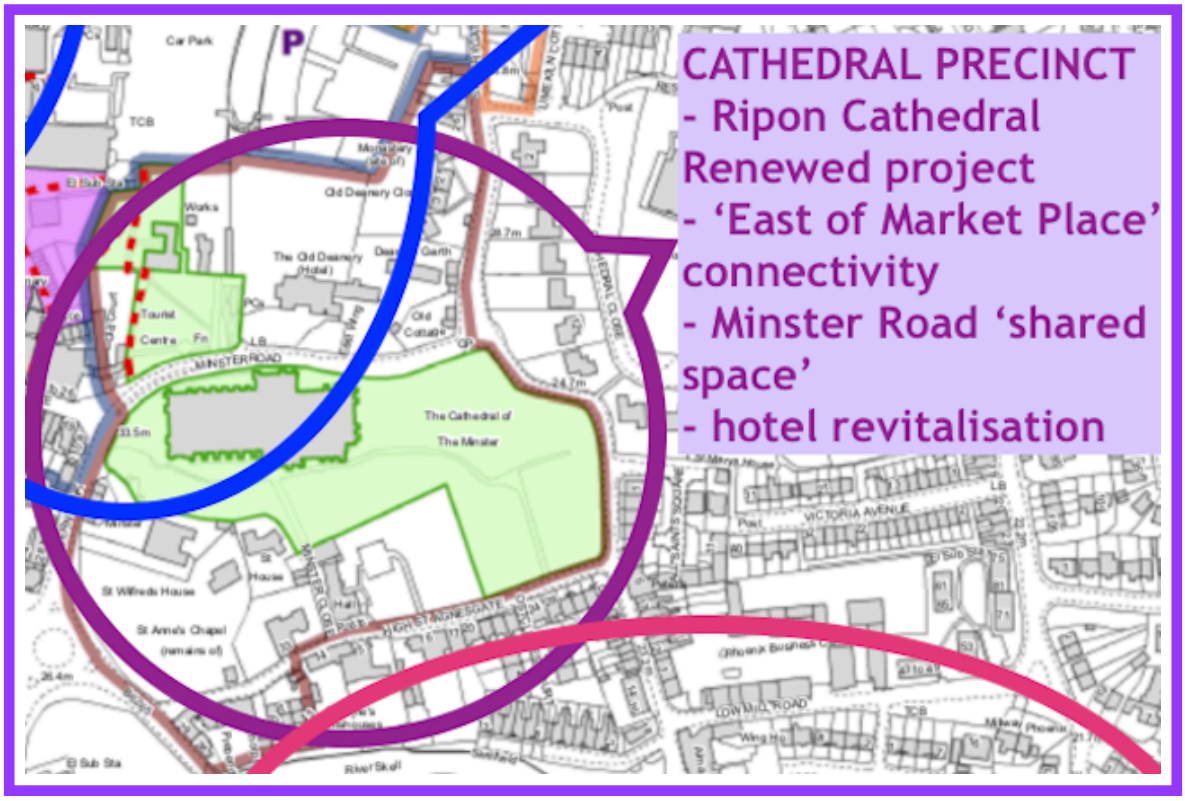
Parking and traffic are the challenge. Less of both, please.



If the Market Place is the destination, it's not where people arrive. East of Market Place' is the term coined to draw attention (particularly Harrogate Borough Council's attention) to the problems of the point of arrival, whether by car, bus or coach. Legibility is the key word, visitors have genuine difficulty in knowing where to go. The idea is to make clear visual and physical links between the Market Place, Cathedral and museums with the St Marygate and Cathedral car parks and the bus station. This is more than just sign-posting, it could mean new public realm, improved, safe and more direct footpaths and memorable public art.

Does Ripon city centre need a new shopping centre? The neighbourhood plan suggests that this might be a better use for the coach park and postal sorting office. How far does online shopping growth call this into question?

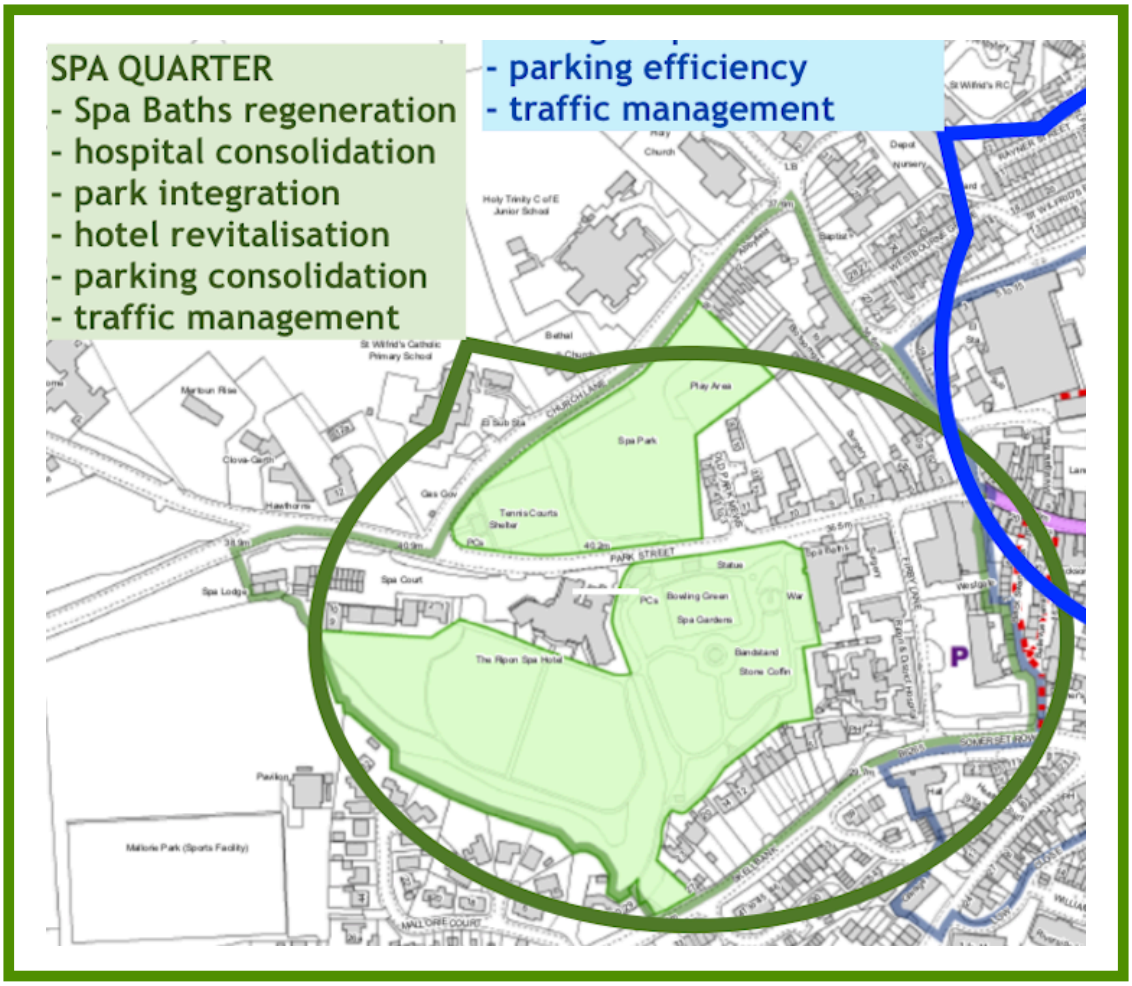
New development could make better use of the various small sites and buildings between Sainsbury's and Kirkgate. This needs a comprehensive design to make the Kirkgate Yards an attractive area, especially for new homes, not just wasted land and empty buildings. 'East of Market Place' is also about using existing parking efficiently, not just trying to build more.



Leading on from 'East of Market Place', creating the Cathedral Precinct will be an important intervention in the city helping to consolidate identity, permeability and legibility. All jargon terms perhaps, but with one key message, the Cathedral is not just a destination but a signpost for moving around. Surprisingly, and similar to the Market Place, many visitors are unable to find it.

The Cathedral's proposal for a new building on the south side to provide sufficient storage, a refectory and meeting space, restrooms, song school and shopping would enable the cathedral to be better interpreted and its interior fully revealed.
The stoneyard, gardens and Minster Road could then be remodelled and developed as a cathedral close creating an inviting arrival experience, incorporating the Courthouse museum, enhancing the Conservation Area and displaying the emblematic West Front as a principal meeting place for the city.

The Old Deanery Hotel is an important asset in the precinct and the opportunity for its expansion would contribute to Ripon's lack of hotel accommodation and hospitality.

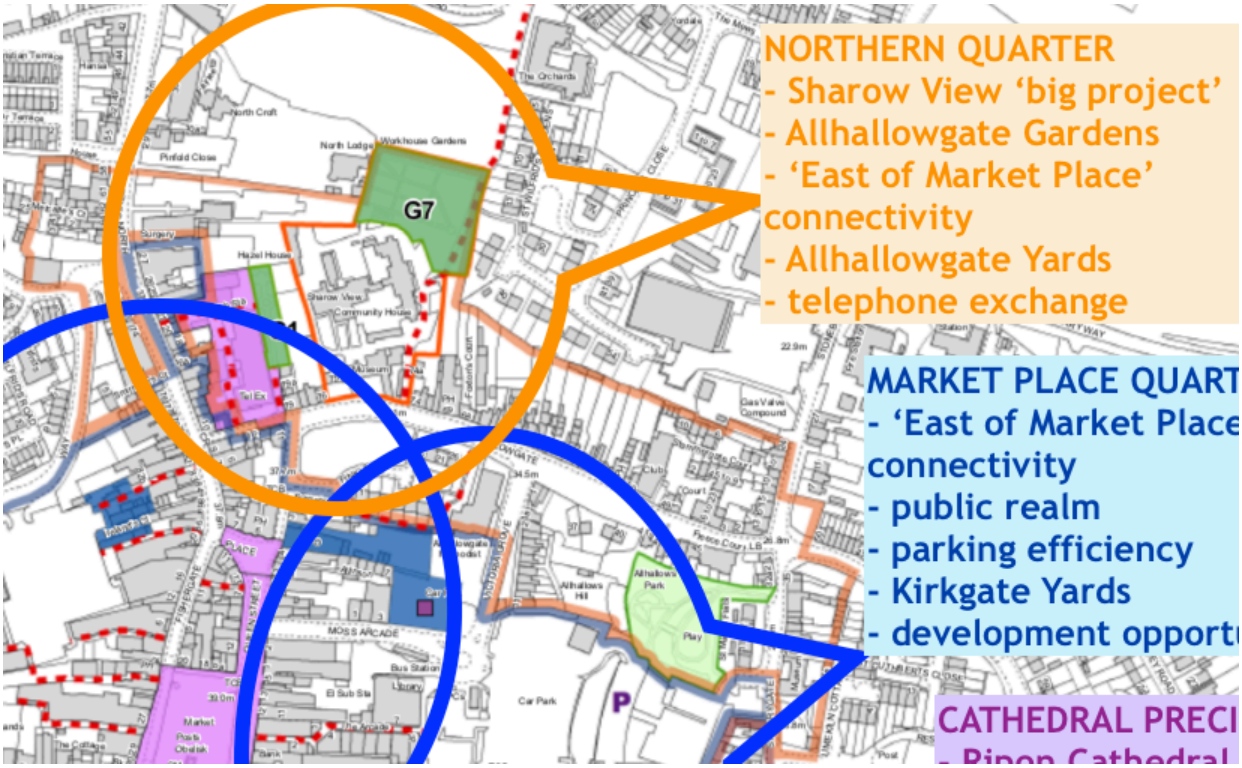


The Spa Quarter is certainly not an ugly duckling, but it took the neighbourhood plan to identify it as part of the city centre.

Primarily it is the location for the majority of Ripon's health services. The neighbourhood plan sets out the preferred approach to how these can be consolidated and expanded. In practice this is challenging requiring as it does commitment and coordination from a range of public sector agencies. This is being put to the test with the current proposed sale of the Spa Baths.

The quarter is challenged as well by the currently vacant Spa Hotel. Securing regeneration of what was Ripon's largest city centre hotel needs commercial and civic leadership.

As if this isn't enough, the quarter invites attention to opportunities to improve city centre traffic circulation and parking.



The Northern Quarter is already a cultural quarter and has potential to go further. New operators are needed for the currently closed cinema. Ripon Amateur Operatic Society is making valuable investment youth theatre and community arts at its Allhallowgate premises purchased in 2014.

Ripon Museum Trust, having acquired the Workhouse in 2017 is now working on its next project *Ripon Museums: Inspiration for a Fairer Society*. This has the aim of fully using its three sites to engage visitors not only with law, order and workhouse history but also contemporary social issues.

The un-developable site of former flats, could be seen as a community 'green space' at the north end of 'East of Market Place'.

To the rear of North Street is a collection of untidy and un-coordinated small sites and the Temple Garden proposed in the neighbourhood plan as the Allhallowgate Yards. An environmental improvement scheme could uplift the public realm.

The visually dominating, some would say ugly, telephone exchange is something to be tacked as a contribution to the quarter.



Strictly, Bondgate Green Regeneration Area is not part of the city centre but it is strongly linked with the Cathedral Precinct. It is also one of the principal entrances to the city.

It has seen key regeneration projects including restoration of the Ripon Canal and riverside environmental improvements. Recently two new housing projects have been completed, a replacement restaurant created at the *Water Rat* and former warehousing converted for the Farmison & Co meat production company and Ripon Interiors.

There are still opportunities for improvement. The canal basin feels incomplete where a more active use for the canal warehouse would be welcome. The canalised moorings are used but the towpath is now narrow and tired and there is opportunity for a longer canalside plaza to be laid out opposite the prominent businesses.

In spite of the recent property investments there are still some premises where building elevations could be renovated on both road and riverside. Improvement to the Bondgate Green Lane junction could improve the public realm.

The riverside footpaths could be widened in places and there is opportunity for further landscaping and tree planting.

Tail ends



Farmison & Co have flown the Society's flag alongside their own since they took up occupation of their Boroughbridge Road premises. When the time came to replace the flags they asked if we would like to be included once again.

The photo shows Richard Taylor, our Vice-Chairman, with John Pallagi of Farmison and the new flag.
We have been given the old flag; now to find the Society's flagpole.

Our programme

Thursday 6 May 7.30 (online)
"Addingham Civic Society: keeping up with the times?"

Thursday 15 July (afternoon)
Visit to Allerton Castle with tea (by cars)

Thursday 1 September
"The River Skell project" Speakers from the National Trust.
Provisionally to be beheld at the Workhouse.

Thursday 7 October
"Design Awards 2021"
Venue to be announced