RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2021







The evenings have drawn in so November's newsletter should try and cheer us up.

Is there good news, or at least matters of interest?

Three topics: a decision at last refusing planning permission to redevelop the Tower Road Field; new green space emerging on Allhallowgate (will this be Finkle Park?); and tidying up is underway at the former Girls' High School on College Road.

Then there's investment completed with the opening of Claro Lounge on Market Place.

In the background is work in the Ripon Renewal masterplan. There's a piece about what this means for the Society. Ripon Renewal has also provided an insight into what young people think is important.

And there's a full stop. In addition to Ripon matters I'm sure you'll like to hear about other topics of interest. So, to start off what I hope will be a regular feature (250 words and a couple of photos, please), here is a piece about 'trulli'.

Enjoy reading. ***Christopher Hughes***

Thoughts so far on Ripon Renewal





Some of you may have Zoomed-in to our meeting on 7th October to hear about *Our Meeting Place of Choice - Thoughts on Ripon Centre*. This presentation was based on the made Ripon Neighbourhood Plan and what can be learned so far from the Ripon Renewal project, which has reached the half way point. (If you want to view the presentation to understand more of the project it will be available shortly.)

Stage 1 has focused on consultation but it's obvious that the themes and range of projects have been formed. Stage 2 will put more detail in place and set out how each project would be delivered and is to be completed by February 2022.

Those projects which are of greatest apparent interest to the Society flow from all themes. Whether we are invited to help work up the projects is not in our gift but it's worth recording here why we are confident that the Society has something to offer. We'll be pressing this with the consultant team over coming weeks.

Theme 1 is *Physical and Digital Connectivity.*
We want to be involved in forming the *Transport Management Strategy* project because traffic affects all of the public realm eg Minster Road, the 36, Firby Lane and the Market Place.
(Perhaps it's worth recording that we believe the time is right to press ahead with creating new comprehensive public realm to the west and north of the Cathedral.)

Theme 2 is about providing *Enterprise Infrastruture*. Stage 1 lists five projects and because they are all about buildings and places we think we can assist. The projects identified are:
Enterprise Hub
Innovative Housing for Young People
Expand Evolve College
Town Hall
YMCA Expanded premises

Health and Wellbeing is Theme 3.
The *Wellbeing Hub* would be a significant and wide ranging investment in Ripon's health services and picks up from the Ripon Neighbourhood Plan and the intended disposal of the Spa Baths. We want to be involved because the Spa Quarter is too important to be dealt with incrementally and the Spa Baths needs us. We support the *New Green Spaces* project, because we advocate greening the city.

Stage 1 acknowledges the ambition of Ripon Museum's 'big project' and Ripon Cathedral Renewed as anchors for Theme 4 *Welcome Infrastructure*. Perhaps harking back to the Society's 1995 proposal for the Market Place but clearly picking up on the Ripon Neighbourhood Plan vision of 'the meeting place of choice' and consultation with young people, there is a further project in this theme - *Market Place Re-imagined*. As you might expect, we will welcome involvement in this as unfinished business.

Finally, Ripon Connected picks up on the Ripon Neighbourhood Plan's 'East of Market Place' proposal to provide a continuous and legible pedestrian link between the Cathedral, Court House, car parks, bus station and Workhouse. It's good to see this as we believe that this is eminently deliverable.

We'll see how this goes.

Values underpinning the masterplan include being 'inclusive, collaborative, and attentive to the *voice of young people'*. A *Youth Manifesto* has been produced from the *Speak Up, Speak Out* consultation. This reveals several requests seen from young people's perspective which are interesting to learn in relation to the themes above:

- Electric Vehicle access for the city's youth workers
- Focus on Outer Town and Village Connectivity
- Equitable access is kept as ambition for new services
- Youth locations and routes are prioritised

- A Kickstart housing project for young people
- Economic opportunities are widened as well as multiplied
- Youth employment and enterprise starts now, not later

- Ambition for free facility use is retained
- Youth locations and routes are prioritised
- Welcome signs (inc. for youth and families) are prioritised in mixed community spaces

- Food and entertainment hub is included in Market Place reimagining
- New community infrastructure is created to support greater youth welcome

Claro Lounge





The latest addition to hospitality on the Market Place is the Claro Lounge.

This gives confidence that we are right to promote and enjoy the heart of the city as 'the meeting place of choice'.

Society members will know that loss of the original property was one of the causes that led to setting up the Society over fifty years ago and the designation of the Conservation Area.

Decades have passed since 'S. Wilfrid in his Bath' has looked out upon the Market Place during which time the replacement Sixties' bank in some people's minds poured scorn upon its neighbours. The ground floor frontage was refreshed at some point but the new building never seemed to win any affection.

The developer's decision to put the upper floors into residential use gave an impetus to adapt the elevation to reflect a more domestic architecture sympathetic to the Market Place.

The 'lounge' adds vitality to the Market Place in functional terms. The elevational change takes the story of this site further forward.







Tower Road Field





Planning permission was refused for development of Tower Road Field at the end of September. The application was submitted originally in June 2018 for nine dwellings, both houses and bungalows. During negotiation this was reduced to seven and then to five.

Significant objections were made against the application including from the Yorkshire Gardens Trust and Historic England. Several were received from supporters of the Workhouse museum. The grounds for objection ranged from impact on the Workhouse, neighbouring historic buildings and the Conservation Area, archaeological interest, bio-diversity and ground stability.

Tower Road Field is strongly protected by Ripon Neighbourhood Plan as Local Green Space (along with national and local planning policy). It borders the Workhouse garden to the south, also designated as local green space.

The reasons for refusal of planning permission cover both the policy context and the material circumstances of the site.

Is this the end of the matter? There remains the right for the applicant to appeal against the decision. Given the extensive reasons for refusal and the exhaustive manner in which Harrogate Borough Council has considered the application since it was submitted, we should watch the forthcoming period with interest.

The Ripon Renewal project has shown interest in Tower Road Field as new green space.

Updates



At last the hoardings have gone and the prospective Finkle Park has been revealed. Let's trust that this is the first step to a permanent new park for the Northern Quarter. Nice to be able to stand back and view the Workhouse.

And tidying up is at last taking place at the former Girls' High School.

Readers will be aware that the Society has been protesting against the deterioration of this building for more years than we care to remember, such has been the frustration created by neglect.

We objected successfully to the planning application to demolish and redevelop the site. In 2019 it looked possible that the building might have a more promising future when planning permission was granted to convert the building into eight dwellings, although that was accompanied by a further five dwellings in the grounds.

Contact has opened up with the owners in recent months and the current attention to the building and site is hoped to pave the way for a new owner to take the building forward in the new year. We'll keep on watching.

Full Stop





It's said that travel broadens the mind, and it certainly provides an opportunity to absorb new cultures and experiences. This includes the particular pleasure of discovering alternative styles of architecture, vernacular as well as grand, which help to determine the character of a region.

Recently my wife and I were fortunate to enjoy a holiday near Alberobello in Apulia, located on the "heel" of southern Italy. Since medieval times the local farming community has developed a distinctive style of dwelling-cum-farm-building known as a trullo (plural, trulli): these are, basically, drystone, limestone huts with quirky conical roofs.

Their origins are somewhat unclear. The "popular" version suggests that landowners conceived these as temporary structures which could be speedily demolished when tax inspectors visited, and later rebuilt. More credible is the theory that, due to the lack of wood for construction purposes, the wide availability of limestone made for an obvious alternative choice. Whichever is true their metre-thick walls and corbelled or keystone vaults provide a safe haven as well as cool respite from the summer heat.

In 1996 their uniqueness was recognised with a UNESCO listing and they are now protected. As inevitably happens, many have now been purchased as second homes, extended (within strictly-controlled limits) and converted into holiday homes or lets.

Professionally restored we can testify that they make for very comfortable accommodation, though the bill to achieve this can be significant. A dilapidated roof repair alone (see illustration) costs £15/20,000 to effect, and such decay often conceals a further multitude of sins! Caveat emptor.

David Hall