NEWS FROM RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

31 January 2023

SOCIETY CRITICISES CATHEDRAL'S PLANS TO BUILD ON GREEN SPACE

NOTE: A PHOTOGRAPH OF MINSTER GARDENS IS ATTACHED. The proposed building would occupy the area to the right of the image.

The proposed location of a new structure to the north of Ripon Cathedral to serve as much-needed extra accommodation for the Cathedral's mission is strongly criticised by Ripon Civic Society.

The Society has long supported the Cathedral's aim to provide space for a Song School, Refectory, shop, toilets and storage space. The Society also agrees that any new building should be to the north of the Cathedral rather than the south. It cannot, however, support the intended position of the proposed new building, as set out in the latest planning application.

The Cathedral's intention is to build a two-storey structure on part of the public open space known as Minster Gardens. This is an area of grass and mature trees that has been a green space to the north of the cathedral for more than two centuries – and that in the Middle Ages was the site of the Archbishop of York's Ripon palace. It is surrounded by important Ripon listed buildings – the Old Court House, the Old Deanery and the Courthouse Museum.

The proposal will take up approximately half the open space and will involve the felling of at least 10 trees which currently contribute to the green nature of the site. One of the trees proposed for removal is a large beech tree in the centre of Minster Gardens, recognised as 'entering Veteran status' and graded A1. Proposals to plant new trees elsewhere – many of them outside the city – are intended as an attempt to offset the loss of these trees.

The site of the proposed structure, which will abut Minster Road, is currently owned by Harrogate Borough Council and will pass to North Yorkshire Council in April. It is protected as open space by policies in the Harrogate District Local Plan and in the Ripon Neighbourhood Plan.

David Winpenny, Co-Chairman of Ripon Civic Society, says, 'The Civic Society was set up more than 50 years ago to safeguard the city and to encourage good, long-term development. We are, therefore, very disappointed that Ripon Cathedral has decided that it needs to take away an important open space in the city and to propose a building that will dominate the Cathedral's north side and detract from its setting, as well as affecting the setting of the nearby listed buildings and resulting in a significant loss of trees.

'This will be one of the most important interventions in the city for many years, and construction on this historically open site cannot be accepted without a fuller consultation of all interested parties in the city, and beyond, than appears to have been carried out until now.

'We have already urged the Cathedral authorities, which has environmental as well as spiritual responsibilities, to build a new structure on the former Stoneyard, next to Minster Gardens. This is already in the Cathedral's ownership, and a new building sited there would be both less dominating and more able to act as a welcome entrance to the Cathedral estate from Ripon's main car park.'

Ripon Civic Society will welcome further discussion of the plans with both the Cathedral and with other interested parties, to help achieve a solution that is acceptable to the city of Ripon.

ENDS

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