RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2023

PLANS FOR RIPON CATHEDRAL



Minster Gardens and the north side of Ripon Cathedral (above). Many of the trees seen here would be felled under the cathedral's plans. Below is the same view from the Cathedral's planning application, showing the proposed new structure.

THE PLANNING APPLICATION for a new building opposite the north side of Ripon Cathedral is one of the highest profile and most contentious matters with which the Society has been involved for some years. It is an emotive issue, and one that, in its many aspects, gives rise to passionate views both for and against, not just in the Society but in the wider community. *(continued on page 2)*



Walbran's Rifle



We often get requests to help with family history, but an email from David Shelton asked about his antique rifle, engraved with 'Walbran' and 'Ripon' in block letters. Intrigued, we asked for the help of Guy Wilson, former head of the Royal Armouries in Leeds. He told us - and Mr Shelton - that the gun is a percussion breechloader with a side lever operating a vertically revolving loading chamber on the top of the breech. It's likely that it was sold by Walbran (father of Ripon's 19th-century historian) from his ironmonger's shop in Blossomgate, Ripon.

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The Society's Executive Committee has spent many hours considering all aspects of the proposals set out in the planning application - including reading all the multifarious (and, it transpires, sometimes incomplete or contradictory) documents - which is available online at https://uniformonline.harrogate.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=RMZUMLHYIYB00&activeTab=summary

The Committee fully acknowledges, and agrees, that the Cathedral sorely needs extra space - not just toilets (though they appear to be the paramount desideratum of a significant number of the supporters of the plans) but also space to receive visitors, for rehearsals of the choir and storage for chairs and equipment. The Committee has concluded, however, that the current proposal is not the way to provide this extra accommodation. Our objections have already been put forward, not just in this newsletter last July, but also in discussions with Cathedral staff and advisors, since the planning application went public in mid-January.

We are disappointed that the amount of public consultation, as outlined in one of the documents submitted with the application, has been particularly inadequate.

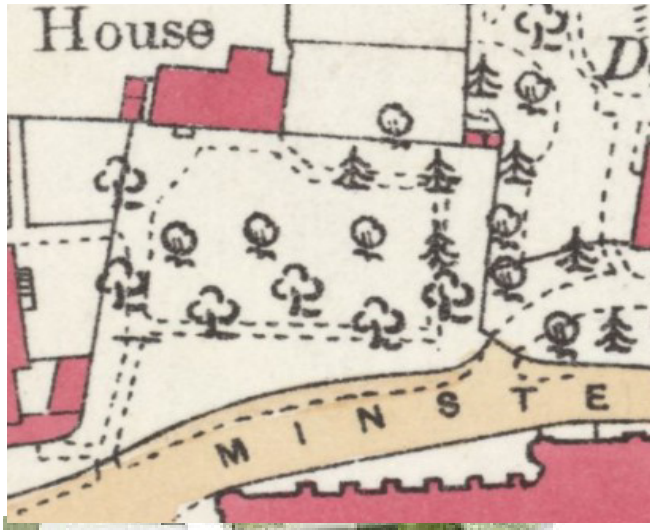
To reiterate, our objections are based on the unacceptability of constructing a large building on Minster Gardens, a space that has long been open and available for public use and which is protected in both the Harrogate Local Plan and the Ripon Neighbourhood Plan. It is in the ownership of Harrogate Borough Council, which has a duty to protect it. A new structure here would compromise the setting of the important listed buildings surrounding the gardens.

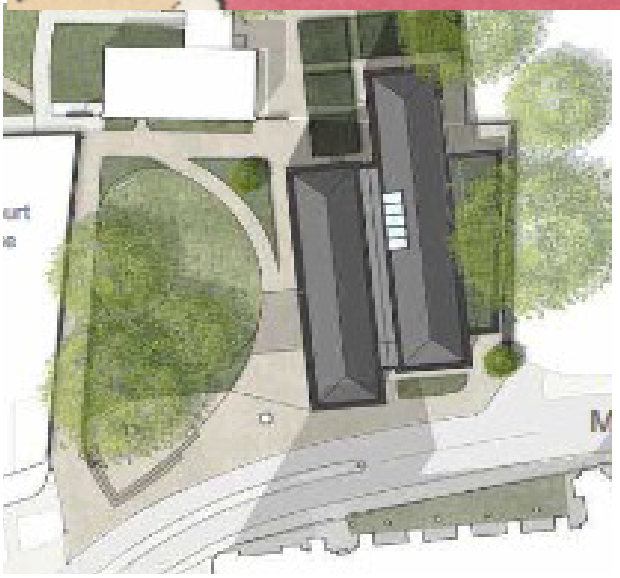
It would also result in the felling of at least ten trees - eight of them graded A1, with the central beech also a 'veteran'. Veteran trees are described in the National Planning Policy Framework as 'irreplaceable habitat'. Reports from four of Harrogate Borough Council's officers have outlined objections to the works to trees and loss of open space on the site.

There is also a question mark over the land to the north of the Courthouse building, including the Stone Yard. This, the planning application states, will provide compensatory green space for that lost in the construction of the proposed new building. We believe that not only is this an inadequate substitute but also that the space is acknowledged to be under threat from the Cathedral's masterplan for the area, which shows an hotel on part of the site. Despite being referenced in several of the planning documents the masterplan was not submitted as part of the application.

The Executive Committee is aware that members of the Society will have other opinions. But the Committee's position is, we believe, in the best interest of the long-term future of the city, which is the Society's remit and raison d'être. We hope that the Cathedral authorities will take our views not as awkward opposition but as constructive criticism that will lead to a better way forward both for the Cathedral and the City.

Maps showing Minster Gardens in 1892 contrasted with the proposal - the new building is shown in dark grey.





OTHER PLANNING MATTERS

CLOTHERHOLME and RIPON'S MILITARY HERITAGE



The Heavy Girder Bridge over the River Ure

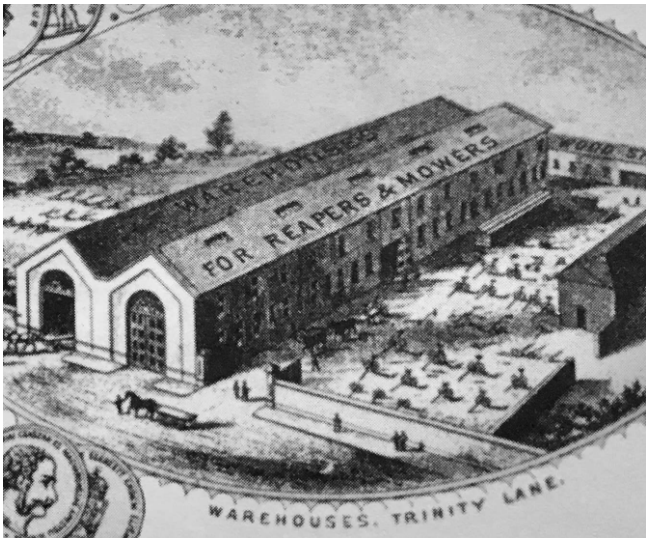
The saga of the Barracks and the redevelopment of the site continues to rumble on, with the dates of closure still unclear. Harrogate Borough Council has convened a special Planning Committee to determine the outline planning permission. We shall report further in the next newsletter.
The Ripon Military Heritage Trust (RMHT), formed under the wing of the Civic Society, says that it is disappointing that after so much collaboration the applicant, Homes England, has decided only to commit to 'carry on talks' with the Trust about preserving and protecting the military heritage assets at the site.

When the proposals were being developed there was no clear understanding of the significance and importance of the military heritage at the site. Work carried out by RMHT has shown, without question, that the site is one of very considerable national and international importance. The evacuation of the Royal School of Military Engineering to Ripon in 1940 meant that Ripon played a huge part in training soldiers for most of the major battles and operations during WW2.

- Jane's talk 'From Bailey Bridges to Bombs: Ripon's secret role in WW2' will tell us more about the site's history - see TALKS AND OTHER EVENTS below.

FORMER NORTH YORKSHIRE TIMBER BUILDING

The building in Trinity Lane was once the warehouse for Kearsley's Ironworks (later 'The British Iron and Implement Factory'). It housed the company's products - particularly mowing and reaping machines - and here they were finished before sale.



Kearsley's warehouse from a 19th-century letterhead.

Two former planning applications for total demolition and the building of houses on the site have been refused by the planning authority because it is 'a non-designated heritage asset which makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of Ripon Conservation Area, and the construction of the proposed dwellings, would cause unacceptable harm to designated and undesignated heritage assets which would not be out-weighed by the benefits of the proposal'.

The latest proposal would retain the southern part of the double-gabled building and convert it for a terrace of houses. This would use the existing windows (currently blocked) and in general retain the look of the most public-facing aspect the structure. Although we regret the loss of part of the building, we can accept the compromise. We should be pleased to see the existing semi-circular window, relic of a former archway, moved for incorporation into the corresponding position on the surviving gable.

OLD MALTINGS BUILDING, UNICORN YARD

A planning application for the developing the long-derelict former malthouse at the rear of the Unicorn hotel - and adjacent to Sainsbury's store - with two detached dwellings. We have supported the application in principle, acknowledging that planning permission has already been granted for housing on the adjoining garage site north of Court Terrace, and in light of the poor condition of the malthouse building. We believe that a proposal such as this could help as catalyst to encourage the development of other sites in the Kirkgate Yards Area.



We did, however, flag up some concerns. The application omits crucial detail, both for the proposed conversion and the new build; the latter should reflect the materials and proportions of the Grade II Listed Court Terrace, albeit in a contemporary form. More detail is needed of the materials. We commented on proposed building materials and on window proportions and glazing bars.

We were also concerned about the future protection and maintenance of the mature trees on the northern boundary - concerns that have since been amplified by Harrogate Borough Council's Arboricultural Officer. The Society also urged clarification on the retention of public access to the area, and the sensitive treatment of boundaries. We expect that sustainability actions will include energy-saving measures, including electric vehicle charging points, as well as sustainable heating and photovoltaics as e.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Members will know that Ripon Civic Society is a member of both **Civic Voice** and the **Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies (YHACS)**.

Civic Voice is the national umbrella organisation for civic societies, and undertakes much of the high-level information gathering and lobbying, especially in Westminster and Whitehall, which is impossible for individual societies. The information that Civic Voice disseminates on policy, both set and developing, can be of great value locally.

Unfortunately Civic Voice lost a considerable sum of money because of fraudulent action, and came near to closing; most of its small staff had to be laid off. The Trustees of Civic Voice have revised their financial procedures, and have appealed to civic societies to help in this difficult situation. Ripon Civic Society has, as agreed by its Executive Committee, donated £300 towards the work of encouraging future growth of Civic Voice. We believe that its work is vital, and that it is important for Ripon to show its support.

The AGM of YHACS, which was attended by our Co-Chairmen, was held in Harrogate in January and included a talk on the work of Civic Voice from its chairman. We also used the opportunity to alert other local societies of our stance on the plan for Ripon Cathedral.

We have received an invitation to join **Yorkshire Heritage Guardians**, an informal network of volunteer heritage and environment groups brought together to share information and ideas. There is no fee, and no obligation for us to do anything except share, so we have decided to take up the invitation.

TALKS AND OTHER EVENTS

2 March 2023 - **FROM BAILEY BRIDGES TO BOMBS: RIPON'S SECRET ROLE IN WW2** - Jane Furse will speak about the latest findings and the plans for the future.

6 April 2023 - **WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT STAINED GLASS?** - Tim Ayres. Tim is a



Professor in the History of Art, and a member of the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York and an expert of medieval glass.

4 May 2023: **SEEN TO BE BELIEVED**, a film compiled for the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrating the reign of Queen Elizabeth from the Yorkshire Film Archive, using amateur film footage in its collection: good preparation for the King's coronation two days later.

We break for the summer, so there are no talks in June, July or August. We have talks and speakers already lined up - on the first Thursday of each month - from September onwards. We are waiting to agree which date each can do. They include:

- HUTTON CONYERS MANOR HOUSE DISCOVERY - Tony Hunt from Yorkshire Archaeological Aerial Mapping Surveys on the discovery of a lost medieval moated manor as well as other aerial surveys and footage.

- THE RIPON HARROGATE RAILWAY LINE - Terry Williams will discuss the line and the likelihood of its revival.



- HIGH BATTS NATURE RESERVE - Colin Slator from High Batts will speak about its history and ongoing work.

- RIPON IN STONE - Mick Stanley will focus on the city's geology.

Our next newsletter will confirm dates, and members will also be notified in advance of each talk.

All our talks take place at the Workhouse Museum, Allhallowgate, Ripon HG4 1LE, starting at 7.30pm; tea, coffee and biscuits from 7.00pm. Everyone is welcome; non-members pay £3.00.

And don't forget **HERITAGE OPEN DAYS**, from 8 to 17 September 2023 - look out for the programme of events.

RIPON RENEWED

At our AGM in November questions were asked about 'Ripon Renewed', a masterplan for the city. North Yorkshire County Council and the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership joined Harrogate Borough Council in commissioning a report on how best to create a vision for the future of Ripon that would help the city to win funding for infrastructure, planning and community projects. An £85,000 contract was let by Harrogate Borough Council.

The Report has not yet been seen, and, although promised for publication before North Yorkshire County Council gives way to the new North Yorkshire Council on 1 April, there is no sign of it, nor any indication of when it may arrive. We are pleased that Ripon City Council is pursuing this matter, and we shall watch any progress.

THIS YEAR'S COMMITTEE

President - Nigel Rawlinson
Co-Chairmen - Richard Taylor and David Winpenny
Treasurer - Paul Jackson
Membership - Alison Brayshaw (co-opted)
Planning Lead - Rachel Wigginton
Website, Talks & Visits, Design Awards - David Hall
Military Heritage - Jane Furse
Heritage Open Days - Andrew Curtis
Skell Valley Project, Ripon ReViewed - Mandy Whitehead
Communications - David Winpenny
Newsletters and External Relations - Richard Taylor and David Winpenny