RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

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Dear Ms Rann

APPLICATION NOS: 6ZC23/03403/FUL and 31.733.L.LB ZC23/03404/LB
Proposed conversion of Ripon Spa Baths and Boiler Tower to form two commercial units and offices, including demolition of Swimming Pool Building and replacement with single storey extension to Spa Building, and internal and external alterations to existing buildings. Erection of new building to accommodate four residential apartments. Alterations to landscaping to link new courtyard to Spa Gardens.

Thank you for consulting Ripon Civic Society on the above applications.

The Society very much welcomes this scheme which proposes to conserve and provide new uses for an important historic building in the city. Overall, it is a sensitive approach with historic structures cleansed of later inferior additions (including the 1936 pool) and with new-build done in an unashamedly modern but complementary style and materials. We accept the need for the residential development as enabling development to make the scheme viable.

Whilst supporting the applications in principle, we have the following comments:

Main building

- We note that it is proposed to remove the front internal lobby in the pump room. Although altered and fitting a little uncomfortably against the external wall, it is shown in the heritage statement as essentially original fabric from 1905 and should stay. It is good for containing heat loss, too (see attached photo).
- We are sure the tiled pump fountain (see photo) and wall tiling are to remain, but these are not shown. A note to this effect should be added for the avoidance of doubt.
- The existing tiling in the east wing does not appear to be shown as being retained and we ask for reassurance that as much as possible is conserved.
- On the frontage we welcome the use of planters to remove most parking and to define a public footway but the planters need careful positioning so as to align with the symmetrical frontage especially with the porte-cochere. They must also be in keeping with the façade, not just functional.
- The name Spa Baths is formed in relief lettering at the top and this clearly will stay. The remains of painted lettering can be seen around the top of the porte-cochere - the original version is shown on the old photo in the heritage statement. This should either be reproduced in the original wording and font or the opportunity could be taken to rebrand the building with new wording, again in the same font.
- The new extension is acceptable – we note and agree with the sedum roof.

- The retention and preservation of the stained-glass panels within the foyer is of particular importance. One shows the presentation of a pair of Ripon's silver spurs to James 1st in the 1600s; a notable event as he also gave Ripon Cathedral its first Charter and also Ripon's spurs, or more notably their rowels (nothing as sharp as a Ripon rowel, as the saying records it !), which were the 'stars' on Sir William de Washington's ancestral coat of arms, together with its red and white stripes. He was an ancestor of George Washington, the 1st President of the United States, hence the origins of the Stars and Stripes flag of the USA, which is recorded in the Grantley Window in Ripon Cathedral

Tower/boiler room

The changes make good use of the structure and are all welcome.

New-build

This fits in well and does not dominate the baths buildings. We suggest that some lighter brick banding be included to pick up the detailing on the existing buildings; this would pull the overall scheme together better.

Landscaping

The tree works are generally acceptable in the context of the proposals but some additional planting would help screen the new-build. The layout of paths and planters is rather complicated, but this may have something to do with the need to keep the best of the trees. Some of the joins between paving and tarmac are a little uncomfortable and it is not clear if the tarmac paths follow desire lines – which is to be preferred. We ask that the landscaping work be remodelled to provide a fitting setting for the listed war memorial and the needs of those attending ceremonies there.

In conclusion, we give this scheme our strong support as being the best chance of allowing the site to survive. We would urge a speedy grant of Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent to allow work to begin as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Wigginton

Planning Lead
Ripon Civic Society