RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

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Gerard Walsh
Development Management
North Yorkshire Council

Copy to: ICOMOS

31st May 2024

Dear Mr Walsh

Application No. 22/04808/FULMAJ Construction of annex to provide support facilities for Ripon Cathedral, including a refectory, a song school and toilets, Ripon Cathedral Minster Road Ripon North Yorkshire HG4 1QT

Ripon Civic Society has submitted several representations on the above planning application which has not yet been determined. The Society has previously focussed its comments on the inappropriate siting and design of the building, and its impact on Minster Gardens (also known as Kirkgate Park) and on the settings of the adjacent Listed Buildings.

In our document titled Statement of Significance which we submitted on 15th April 2024 we gave a value of high significance to Minster Gardens because of the impact on the World Heritage Site but we did not explore this aspect further.

Recently, a representation in the form of a technical review from ICOMOS to the current applications by the National Trust for development at Canal Gates, Studley Park has drawn our attention to the important connection between the Grade I Ripon Cathedral and the World Heritage Site of Studley Royal Park including the ruins of Fountains Abbey. ICOMOS explain in their representation that a formal buffer zone was added to the designation '*to protect against … inappropriately sited buildings which could harm … key views into and out of the inscribed property*" and they give a high level of importance to the role of the buffer zone. Ripon Cathedral is the focal point of this part of the buffer zone in designed views from the World Heritage Site. We have therefore now looked in more detail at the impact of the proposed annex on the key views from Studley Royal Park to the Cathedral and consider it appropriate to comment on these.

The recently approved Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal World Heritage Site Management Plan 2023-2029 aims "to protect the views and vistas which were key to the Aislabies' design". The relevant Action is E2 *Raise awareness of the OUV* (Outstanding Universal Value) *and managing change in the WHS, buffer zone and setting for planners and other decision-makers.*

We would also draw your attention to the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 which became law in October 2023. This creates a new Section 58(B) in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Its heritage-related provisions now require a local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing assets, including world

heritage sites. It introduced a statutory duty to preserve and enhance these assets, whereas previously this statutory duty only related to listed buildings and conservation areas.

The Heritage Impact Assessment of the Cathedral application concludes that "*the proposed development site … will not impede or appear in views from the World Heritage Site*". We disagree with this. The Civic Society has visited the significant viewpoints within the World Heritage Site where the Cathedral can be seen, and we attach photographs taken from these. These photographs were taken in early summer and we believe that the impact of the proposed annex would be even greater in winter when there were no leaves on the trees. Of particular importance is the view along the Oak Line, which was planted as a designed view from the Grade II* Listed stables to the Cathedral. As our photograph demonstrates, the proposed annex would be clearly seen in this view. We also believe that the building would be visible from the wider deer park as shown in our photograph from above the Dell. Not only would it seriously detract from key views of the Cathedral as a landmark building but also the removal of mature trees in Minster Gardens would adversely affect the setting of the Cathedral in all these views.

We also note that the National Trust made a representation dated 19th February 2023 in which they emphasise the important connection between the World Heritage Site and the Cathedral that is the reason for the inclusion of the latter in the buffer zone. They expressed serious concern that there has been insufficient assessment in the Heritage Impact Assessment against the attributes of OUV of whether impacts are likely to arise, contrary to guidance in NPPF Para. 197 and to Harrogate Local Plan Policy HP2 b). The National Trust requested assessment from other viewpoints than the principal designed view, including the Oak Line, and also called for assessment of the views to be made in winter before they can come to a view on the application. As far as the Civic Society is aware the applicant has not addressed this important aspect of the heritage impact of the development.

We understand that the applicant is discussing with you the submission of revised plans; however, the concerns expressed above will be pertinent to any building, particularly two-storey, in Minster Gardens. Relocation of the annex into the stone yard as we and others have previously suggested would avoid these impacts.

To conclude, the Civic Society considers that the proposed two-storey annexe sited in Minster Gardens would detract from key views of the Cathedral which is a focal point in the World Heritage Site buffer zone, both because of the visibility of the building and also the removal of trees which form an integral part of the setting of the Cathedral in these views.

Please would you consider the issues raised this letter which supplements our previous objections when considering the application. Ripon Civic Society still cannot support this application, which is not a sustainable development, contrary to national, local and neighbourhood policy.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Wigginton
Planning Lead
Ripon Civic Society



View down the Oak Line



View from above the Dell in the Deer Park