**NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL PLAN FIRST CONVERSATION 2025**
**COMMENTS BY RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY**

**What is Important about Ripon (p17)**

Ripon has claim to be one of the most significant historic settlements in North Yorkshire. The consultation document acknowledges three of its attributes which are unique in the county. It is:

- The only city
- The only settlement with a Cathedral – hence the 'Cathedral City of the Dales' attribution
- The only one with a World Heritage Site close by at Studley Royal/Fountains Abbey

To these can be added

- A marketplace designed as a Roman forum with the first free-standing obelisk in the country
- The intangible asset of the Horn blowing tradition, thought to be unbroken since medieval times
- The only settlement in the UK with a trio of historic law and order sites open to the public – a former Workhouse (the most complete in England), Courthouse and Prison/Police Station
- Surviving structures and features marking the city's important place in 20th century military history

Taken together these attributes give Ripon its most important USP which is its historic environment.

In addition to its built environment Ripon has a fine setting on the edge of the Vale of York with the Nidderdale National Landscape to the west and Special Landscape Areas in and around the city. Ripon boasts three rivers and a canal.

The Ripon Neighbourhood Plan has more detail on the character of the city.

All of the above contribute to Ripon's character and appearance and is intrinsic in the built fabric and the spaces between. It provides tangible significance and a sense of identity for the city and intangible significance to the people that live here. This local distinctiveness is particular to Ripon, but each part of the county will be distinctive in its own right. This should be protected and celebrated.

The vision should therefore reflect the priority for Ripon of achieving sustainable development that conserves and enhances its special historic and landscape character.

**Sustainable Development (p20)**

The purpose of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to contribute towards sustainable development, and it uses the definition of sustainable development contained in UN Resolution 42/187 as *"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".* Planning for sustainable development should therefore allow the county to meet its present needs but not to the detriment future needs. Recent changing patterns of living and working caused by the Covid pandemic, and changes to patterns of retail and leisure due to online shopping for example would seem to make it difficult to predict what these future needs might be at the present time.

If the county is to meet its annual housing targets, then additional employment will be necessary along with services, schools etc. and this may not sit well in the many areas of the county that have

protected landscapes. In this respect, the county is unique in containing a relatively low population in a very large area constrained by some of the most important protected, and visited, landscapes in the country. This would seem to suggest growth is targeted around those areas like the Vale of York, which lie between the protected landscapes, but which are well served by road and rail links. What this approach fails to recognise is the already sustainable nature of our rural landscapes where young children from several villages travel to schools by bus or live at some distance from service centres and therefore rely on local shops. Planned development needs to recognise the well-established patterns of development and character of the county that already exist, and which is proportionate to the various areas. The National Parks for example, are working landscapes where people live and work. They are not untouched wildernesses as in some other countries and can cope with some development. Clearly large distribution centres wouldn't be appropriate in the middle of the Dales, but small-scale employment use and small housing development could help retain young people and families in the area which in turn would prevent local schools, shops and pubs from closing. In the same way, constructing a small residential development of a few houses next to the A1 would not be appropriate where a distribution centre could more easily work.

To answer the question posed by the consultation document, the HEDNA would seem to have identified potential need over the plan period, and this should be planned for but not necessarily implemented if the actual need is not there. There is no point building a housing estate if there are no jobs for people to do, or no point building an office park if there is no one to work there. Growth should be planned to be adaptable as needs continue to evolve.

**New settlements and/or significant extensions (p22)**

1. Ripon Civic Society does not support the exploration in the North Yorkshire Local Plan of further significant extensions to Ripon within the life of this plan. There is already a significant, not yet started, urban extension for 1300 homes planned for Ripon, with building projected to continue until 2040. The Clotherholme development was allocated in the Harrogate Local Plan and has only recently received outline planning permission. Identification of additional large sites in Ripon is also severely limited by the designated National Landscape immediately to the west, the extensive flood land to the east and north, the inadequate historic road system and the deficient public transport options.

We do, however, support new settlements and significant urban extensions in sustainable locations in North Yorkshire. These would help deliver the significantly higher housing figure for the authority in an acceptable way without compromising the character of existing settlements such as Ripon.

It is noted that several sites submitted through the 'call for sites' exercise are to be investigated and that these range in size from several hundred to several thousand homes. We believe that new settlements should be large enough to provide a wide range of supporting infrastructure and services and should include employment sites in addition to new housing. We understand that 2,000 homes is the minimum to support a primary school and a small range of services and that a new town with a secondary school and a full range of services needs to be more than 10,000 homes. We therefore suggest that the investigation should focus on sites above 2,000 homes and should also investigate potential sites beyond those submitted through the 'call for sites.'

2. Ripon Civic Society does not consider that it is appropriate to rank these priorities since they are all essential requirements for a sustainable new settlement and any new settlement must be large enough to deliver these i.e. at least 2,000 homes and preferably over 10,000 homes. The new

settlements and significant urban extensions need to be locally distinctive in terms of design and should provide an opportunity for imaginative long-term master planning.

**Settlement hierarchy (p 23)**

**1.** Ripon Civic Society agrees with Ripon's status in the settlement hierarchy as a tier 2 Key Service Centre. However, we note that a number of settlements elsewhere have been linked together because of their proximity and the shared use of services. The villages of Sharow and Littlethorpe relate similarly to Ripon and we consider that they should be linked in the plan hierarchy and in the search for sites.

We do, however, consider that the methodology behind the settlement hierarchy is flawed, particularly in relation to the lower tier settlements. Ranking the settlements primarily on the population of the built-up areas does not give sufficient weight to the wide catchment areas and good range of services of the small towns and villages in the more rural parts of North Yorkshire. The populations of many of the settlements, particularly the villages, are also not functionally limited to the identified built-up cores and many have been under-estimated. It is accepted that the role of this exercise is at this stage to consider the ability of settlements to accommodate development. However, we are concerned that the hierarchy once agreed will set the scene for other decision-making which could threaten the future of these rural areas.

Looking at the wider area around Ripon, we consider that the proposed hierarchy underestimates the significance of the larger villages/small towns of Pateley Bridge and Masham by placing them in tier 4 Neighbourhood Service Centres. They have good rather than basic ranges of services because they serve much wider catchment areas than their local populations and have a significant tourism function. We therefore consider that they should be moved to tier 3.

We are confused by the methodology that has led to a large number of villages around Ripon being assigned to tier 6 Countryside. The calculated populations do not include the scattered groups of houses in these settlements that extend beyond a central core but are functional parts of the villages. As a result, many of the settlements around Ripon are in lower tiers than their status would suggest, which could lead to a slow decline and school closures without some new development. We consider that more weight should be given to the importance of villages with primary schools which often serve several settlements and would be sustained by a proportionate level of housing development. We suggest that clusters of physically separate villages with a primary school in one of the villages served by school buses could be jointly placed in a higher tier with limited development supported in any of the villages.

2. Consideration should be given to the wider catchment areas and populations of the small towns/larger villages in the more rural areas rather than ranking them according to the populations within the settlement boundaries. The importance of tourism should also be a factor.

**Development Limits (p24)**

Development limits have, in the past, been drawn tightly around the built footprint of settlements, therefore restricting development to existing built up areas. This effectively makes it very difficult to gain approval for many buildings, particularly dwellings, that may be just outside or adjacent to existing developments. In some cases, this makes it almost impossible for settlements to expand whether due to natural or planned increases in population.

In reality, the edges of settlements are less rigid than a line on a map would suggest, and in many cases, settlements have expanded outwards over time. Whilst the notion of 'open countryside' is well established in planning policy, it would seem sensible to recognise that there is, in effect, a gradual shift from urban to rural in many settlements. In a city such as Ripon for example, there exists, in simple terms, the town centre around the market square, historic development focussed around this core, usually with older buildings closer to the centre, and more modern housing, retail or light industry beyond this. At the periphery, lie the more modern housing developments of the last thirty or forty years which lie further from the centre than those of the 1960s or 1970s.
Again, taking Ripon as an example, this gradual change is already recognised in the designation of the World Heritage Site around Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal where a buffer zone is designated around the actual World Heritage Site. Similar buffer zones are also designated around Special Protection Areas (SPA's).

It could be that the fringes of settlements have similar buffer zones where countryside policies are gradually given more weight. In its crudest sense, this could be based on distance from the centre, although there could be a much more imaginative and progressive approach to this based on existing planning policy. In Ripon, this would take account of zones of land instability, areas of high landscape quality, ecological features or the World Heritage Site buffer zone to name but a few. Removing development limits could result in sprawl and perhaps policy could be linked to historic development limits rather than purely built-up area which would increase over time.
In practice, this approach would require robust criteria-based policies that are enforceable. Existing policies for Rural Exception Sites provide an indication of how this approach could work and land values become critical as they are generally depressed for Rural Exception Sites which are primarily aimed at affordable housing. For high quality, locally distinctive development to occur, cost modelling and established profit margins for developers could be explored.

The intended effect of such a policy would make it relatively straightforward to gain approval for new development on previously developed land, slightly less so for land adjacent to this, and harder still for land further away. Writing prescriptive, black and white policies precludes the expansion and development of our towns and villages and stifles an imaginative approach to planning by both designers and decision makers.

We would question why the council has suggested the possibility of removing development limits from settlements? Is this a serious consideration and is there evidence that it could share to allow further exploration? It represents an opportunity for a radical new approach to planning that could offer a new approach to development but of course the devil will be in the detail. It is encouraging that the Council is considering all options, and it should not waste this generational chance for radical change.

**Growth Options (p28)**

Growth is desirable on many levels to maintain and improve the vitality of our settlements and to allow for the provision of additional services however, many settlements would say that they have had more than their fair share of new development – Killinghall, Green Hammerton and Ripon being three local examples amongst many. In many cases, this would seem to be driven by developers and housebuilders focussing development where profits are highest rather than necessarily where housing is needed, and the planning system responding in a reactive manner, rather than through proactive policy. Given the required housing numbers in North Yorkshire, the ability of the authority to maintain a 5-year housing supply is crucial in managing housing provision where it is needed.

Focussing growth- and housing in particular – in the larger settlements fails to recognise the range and diversity of settlements and their needs across the county. In contrast, and with specific reference to housing, it would seem sensible (and desirable) to spread new development equally across all settlements including the very small villages and hamlets. It may be that there is a weighting system that allows a focus on the major towns and key service centres but there is a need to allow even small settlements of a few houses to expand even if only by one or two houses over the plan period, to maintain vitality and encourage younger people and families to remain. In many cases and recognising the rural nature of much of the county, rural settlements are already well provisioned with services such as bus services, broadband and rural schools that require pupils to avoid closure.

In considering housing growth options, it is also crucial to consider the type and tenure of new housing. Many new volume housebuilder developments prioritise the large executive homes that represent the largest profit margin. In many cases and in particular in smaller communities, this does not cater for the demand for smaller first-time homes for couples or affordable homes for young families. The Council should ensure the needs of people are put front and centre in any growth policy that should be evidence-led by need and by developers. The fact that volume housing developments sell is not necessarily evidence that that is what people want – it is just evidence that those are the most widely available housing to buy and that high quality alternatives are not there or are not affordable. The council should consider using local occupancy restrictions on some new houses to ensure the needs of locals are met. This already occurs in many National Parks. It could also consider how to restrict housing in some locations being utilised as holiday lets or Airbnb which limits supply by looking at how other counties such as Cornwall have responded to the issue.

Spreading growth across all settlements may still not allow the authority to meet housing targets over the plan period and it would seem sensible to plan for an entirely new town which would in any event, take many years to come to fruition. This could be in one of the identified growth corridors and given the existing larger settlements in the south of the county, a sensible location would seem to be along the A1 north of Ripon or the A64 west of York. This could be based on a new 'market town' ideal with its own centre, services and housing and would demonstrate a progressive and proactive approach to housing demand in rural districts, in conjunction with small scale, easier to cope with development in all settlements. Not only would this combined approach provide the necessary long term housing numbers, but proportionate, small-scale development would also encourage smaller, local developers and housebuilders to construct good quality, locally distinctive homes.

**Green Spaces (p37)**

Open space and green space are important in any area. The Ripon Neighbourhood Plan recognised this in 2012 with seven Local Green Spaces designated across the parish which are all well used and important open spaces in the city. As part of the current Call for Sites process, Ripon Civic Society has proposed further additions to these, suggesting that several areas are designated as Local Green Spaces including playing fields, allotments and nature reserves as well as other open spaces that provide a much needed visual, social and psychological break. In many cases, these open spaces already exist and are recognised and well-used by the local community around them – they just need maintaining as open spaces to resist the pressure to construct new development within settlement boundaries (see response to Development Limits). In the case of new development, planning for and maintaining open space is crucial for creating safe and healthy communities. In the case of Ripon, the development of the former college site in the early 2000's included provision for play parks, areas of

woodland, and a playing field. All of these spaces are valued locally on the development and city wide, with many people making use of the green lungs within the city. The recent withdrawal of the proposal to build a cathedral annexe on Kirkgate Park has also demonstrated the importance that the local community places on these spaces.

The Council must ensure that the Local Green Spaces already designated in Ripon's adopted Neighbourhood Plan are carried through to the new Local Plan. This should be a formality and not require further consideration.

**Biodiversity (p39)**

Biodiversity has become increasingly important in the planning system in recent years with the introduction of the nationwide Biodiversity Net Gain regulations which provide, with some exceptions, for a 10% improvement in the biodiversity of a particular site that is then maintained legally for a period of thirty years. Whilst this is a commendable and valuable Regulation, as with much new legislation, it is proving unwieldly, ill-considered in execution and causing significant delays in many small-scale developments – in some cases the legal agreements costing more and taking more time to draft than the planning process itself. Whilst there are exemptions to these regulations, a simplified approach, targeted at those sites where it makes a greater difference would be welcomed. Currently the BNG agreement requires legal agreements with developers or homeowners – surely this can be simplified through the well-established use of planning conditions, rather than causing further delay and expense in a planning system already at breaking point. Notwithstanding the above, we recognise the importance of biodiversity and the opportunities this creates. As was highlighted in Ripon by the Cathedral annexe application, the applicant proposed to plant replacement trees 'offsite' in an undisclosed location as mitigation for onsite losses. This non-local offsetting of biodiversity makes no sense and does not benefit the local community. If targets cannot be met on-site, then local areas should be identified where this could occur. There are many green spaces in Ripon that could benefit from this approach to enhance existing or provide new green infrastructure. It could involve replanting trees to line roads, to setting targets for improving the biodiversity of urban areas, to allowing developer investment in existing enterprises such as Ripon Wetlands.

Urban trees should be genuinely protected in a similar way to those in conservation areas and the council should encourage additional urban tree planting.

All urban areas should have green infrastructure identified, allocated and designated to allow this to happen and Ripon Civic Society have used the Call for Sites to propose additional Local Green Spaces that go some way towards this. As well as communal spaces, private gardens are also important to biodiversity and help provide green corridors through the built environment. The Council should consider whether a 'minimum garden size' policy could be implemented to work hand in hand with nationally designated space standards for dwellings. This could work alongside providing more smaller, affordable homes that would maintain housing densities.

**Special Landscape Areas (p 40)**

Ripon Civic Society welcomes the acknowledgement by North Yorkshire Council of its 'legal duty to seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes', but finds the proposals set out in paragraph 7.15 insufficiently rigorous to meet the challenge of special landscapes in the county.

The Society notes that, unlike most sections of the document, the 'High Quality Landscapes' section (7.8 to 7.15) does not pose a series of questions to prompt answers from consultees.

The proposed preparation of a landscape character assessment is welcomed, but the Society believes that this must go much deeper than a box-ticking exercise. The criteria for assessment must be updated so that they include a wider range of landscape types and consider how best to enhance the currently protected areas.

The Nidderdale National Landscape Area is of particular significance to Ripon. The Society would like to see consideration being given to extending its area. In addition, Special Landscape Areas should be expanded to take into account the particular strengths of the landscapes, especially where the adjoin other designated areas. As part of the current Call for Sites process, the Society will be proposing extensions to the two Special Landscape Areas that lie adjacent to the city to recognise the importance of the riparian landscape alongside the rivers Ure, Skell and Laver.

North Yorkshire is especially rich in historic landscapes, which form an important part of the county's heritage. Near to Ripon there are important designed landscapes, particularly Studley Royal, cited in paragraph 7.8. Studley Royal with Fountains Abbey is North Yorkshire's only World Heritage Site; the Society finds little in the document except generalisations to recognise the global importance of the site and would wish to see policies that would ensure its continued protection and enhancement – including strengthening the buffer site that protects views across the city of Ripon.

Other historic landscapes include those of Newby Hall, Norton Conyers, Hackfall, Clifton Castle and Swinton Castle, to name a few examples. Work should be done to identify such landscapes, and policies introduced to ensure their survival as important indications of the county's past and as possible exemplars of future land use.

Ripon Civic Society believe that the forthcoming Local Plan offers the opportunity for the County Council to set a blueprint for others in the care and protection of a diverse and historically important range of landscapes.

**Green and Blue Infrastructure (p41)**

The former Harrogate Borough Council produced a Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) over ten years ago. This document won an award from the Landscape Institute and the work contained in it should be built upon. With specific reference to Ripon, both Green and Blue infrastructure are important in the development and legibility of the city and offer significant opportunities to improve the interconnectivity of different areas. With three rivers, a canal and a disused railway line, along with a network of existing and proposed local green spaces, the opportunity exists to create networks of publicly accessible green and blue infrastructure that could also provide pedestrian and cycle routes to help reduce the reliance on cars. Considering where existing development is located (or where new development might be located), can help develop and enhance these networks in a phased approach.

The award-winning collaborative work that the Skell Valley Project has completed over the last five years along with the legacy work that will continue, showed how it was possible to enhance green and blue infrastructure, improve biodiversity and build resilient landscapes at High Cleugh in Ripon and other locations along the river. This work could be built upon to include work on former quarries as they evolve beyond mineral extraction into green and blue infrastructure assets such as at High Batts Nature Reserve near Ripon.

Footpaths and routes already exist along many of the rivers and enhancing these with appropriate lighting and surface materials would make them even more accessible and well-used. They already connect many parts of the city, and the small scale of Ripon means it is an ideal location for this to be undertaken.

The Council should produce a green and blue infrastructure plan for each urban area and require this for large new developments.

**Pollution and Ground Conditions (p42)**

We would suggest that pollution and ground conditions are not considered together under one heading but dealt with separately on their own. Ground instability in the Ripon area is not pollution and does not have the same cause or effect. Unlike pollution in general, it is not caused by human action and cannot be treated through remediation. Whilst gypsum dissolution in Ripon is recognised as a significant issue in new development, the current requirement for intrusive ground investigation, often involving the injection of water into boreholes – thus exacerbating the reason why the gypsum is dissolving in the first place – is expensive and not the only solution. Many new technologies that do not rely on intrusive investigation exist and should be encouraged to both speed up and reduce the cost of development which can both prove prohibitive. In some cases, the resultant foundation design is identical to that suggested by non-intrusive measures which are currently not accepted by the council. There are far too few engineers locally on the Register of Ground Engineering Professionals (RoGEP) – a requirement of the Harrogate Local Plan - to allow the sensible investigation of sites and the substructure design.

The Council should bring the Minerals Plan back into the new Local Plan to ensure a joined-up approach to planning.

**Second homes and holiday homes (p 48)**

*1,* Ripon Civic Society supports the exploration and development of policies to control the use of existing and new dwellings as holiday lets or second homes as so as to balance meeting the needs of local people.

*2.* Consideration should be given to introducing measures in Ripon, which is an established tourist destination due to its historic centre, buildings and museums and to its location close to the Nidderdale National Landscape, the Studley Royal World Heritage Site and other attractions. There is increasing evidence of holiday lets in the city, particularly the more affordable smaller properties to the detriment of local people. It is also an issue in the surrounding villages, particularly those to the west within the Nidderdale National Landscape.

We consider, however, that the issue should be dealt with strategically across the authority rather than just identifying specific locations. For example, Cornwall Council has policies for the whole authority.

**Changing role of Ripon city centre (p 58)**

The 2019 Ripon Neighbourhood Plan identified the city centre as Ripon's hub and 'meeting place of choice' serving a wide area. This remains true today but the components of the hub are continually changing to meet changing needs.

Four quarters were identified each with its own character and function:

- Market Place Quarter – principal arrival point, retail, food/drink, business services, twice-weekly market and main civic focus for events
- Spa Quarter – recreation and health facilities, much green space
- Northern Quarter – retail, community and cultural facilities
- Cathedral Precinct – cathedral dominates with significant green areas around it.

The main changes affecting the four quarters are:

- Market Place – change to fewer banks and building societies, more restaurants and coffee shops, more living over the shop apartments and holiday accommodation. Greater use of outdoor spaces for eating and drinking is welcome (subject to safeguards for residents and pavement users)
- Spa Quarter – redevelopment of the Spa Baths underway to provide a converted complex centred on the listed pump room frontage building. Ripon Inn has emerged from the former Spa Hotel – a welcome improvement in visitor accommodation but loss of large function room has been detrimental to community vitality.
- Northern Quarter – future of the former Curzon Cinema unclear, growth in the use of the Arts Hub (Operatic Hall), regeneration of the Workhouse Museum with significant Heritage Fund investment, completion of Allhallowgate Flats scheme with potential for public use of green space thereby created, opportunity for redevelopment of the Telephone Exchange after likely closure within life of the Local Plan. Could this be the site for a new 200-seat performance space?
- Cathedral Precinct – expectation that the Cathedral would develop a masterplan for its estate in consultation with the community has not been realised. Consequently, no viable scheme for new toilets and other facilities has emerged. A priority if the Cathedral and associated buildings are to be used to their full potential.

**Retaining Local Retail (p59)**

Local retail is crucial for all sizes of settlement but for it to be viable, it needs a critical mass of population tied in with 'Growth Options'. This critical mass might be relatively few people for a shop in a small village, or it might be many more for a larger chain store in one of the local service centres.

What makes many North Yorkshire towns distinctive and attractive is the unique retail offer of small independent businesses which often fits well with the size and pattern of the often-historic retail units in settlements. Whilst the local service centres can cope with larger chain stores – usually outside of the historic centres such as at Ripon or Northallerton due to space and parking requirements, the homogenisation of our settlements should be avoided. Allowing historic centres to thrive with a diverse and independent retail offer that attracts locals and tourists alike should be encouraged alongside complementary uses such as cafes etc. Whether local businesses can be encouraged with a lower level of business rates should be explored. Allowing empty units to be occupied with charity shops that do not pay business rates does not seem a sensible long-term strategy. The work carried out by the various Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) across the county is valuable in this area, including Ripon BID.

**High Quality Design (p 69**)

There is an abundance of very talented and creative businesses within North Yorkshire such as architects, landscape designers and interior designers yet much of the new development that gets constructed is of remarkably poor quality that pays no heed to local distinctiveness, form or style. In the same way that councils require ecological surveys to be carried out by suitably qualified ecologists, or ground investigations in Ripon to be carried out by RoGEP registered engineers, surely it is time to require new development to be designed by suitably qualified architects and designers. These people and businesses are already in our towns and cities and are more than capable of designing fantastic buildings and places yet planning applications can be designed and submitted by anyone, with no training or qualifications. Likewise, works to our important listed buildings can be carried out by anyone with little or no training yet there exists conservation accreditation for architects, engineers etc who specialise in this type of work. Rather than re-writing policies which talk about design quality, surely it is time to ensure that the people and businesses qualified to carry out this work are valued which will in turn help foster and improve our already talented creative industries in the county.

High quality design can also be aided by writing sensible and progressive design codes for specific areas that allow for a range of design styles if they respond to context and are locally distinctive. Many of our settlements are attractive because of the range of architectural styles – a stone cottage adjacent to a Victorian villa for example. Slavish copying of the past and pastiche should not always be encouraged. There exists in Yorkshire (and elsewhere), nationally recognised Design Review providers that are more than capable of assessing and commenting on proposed developments and designs. Whilst this may only be viable on certain projects, the use of these services should be encouraged to objectively assess design quality.

The use of locally distinctive, and where possible, locally produced materials should be encouraged which will improve the distinctiveness of our urban and rural landscapes. In the 2000's, Bradford tried to ensure materials and labour on new developments was sourced locally using postcode areas and something along these lines could be explored. Many skilled producers of materials, craftspeople and tradespeople already live locally, and their expertise should be encouraged.

All of the above would go a long way toward avoiding the homogenisation of our towns and villages and help ensure that many of the unremarkable at best, and downright ugly at worst, volume housing developments can be avoided. It is recognised that housing is needed, but this does not have to be, and should not be, poor quality. People and skills exist and are more than capable of designing and building high quality buildings and places.

**Safeguarding the Historic Environment (p72)**

The key themes identified are the right ones. The level of statutory heritage protection is about right and the Ripon economy is sufficiently buoyant to maintain the stock of historic buildings in the most part in active use and good repair. There are currently no high-grade listed buildings in Ripon on the HE Buildings at Risk Register but some long-term dilapidated sites persist. A stick-and-carrot approach is needed to combine helpful advice with enforcement action where needed.

One of the main reasons why the historic environment of Ripon is in largely good shape has been the active involvement of local authority conservation and planning staff working with community

organisations such as Ripon Civic Society, the Ripon Business Improvement District (BID) and Ripon City Council. Locally based staff have built up a good understanding of the city but there is now concern for the future with the loss of local authority conservation staff to administer the systems of protection including the thoughtful and timely operation of the planning and listed building control systems. Skilled staff are needed both to limit unauthorised works to protected assets, to advise on the reuse of historic buildings and to identify as yet unrecognised heritage assets. These skills include the ability to align planning decisions with economic realities so that conservation is seen as a force for positive action and not a drag on Ripon's vitality.

As local authority resources have been squeezed, the voluntary sector has a growing role in heritage protection. Ripon Civic Society will continue to do what it can to offer advice and support to owners and to NYC to help ensure that heritage assets in Ripon have a sustainable future. The Society expects to continue to be consulted by NYC and that its reasoned advice is taken into consideration in the planning system. An annual meeting with NYC staff would be welcomed to develop this working relationship.

The NYC commitment to strengthening the Historic Environment Record is very welcome. The pressing need is to improve online access to the information. Too little information about specific sites is readily available to site owners and users. Well-informed owners are more likely to make the right decisions about heritage buildings and structures in their care. Investment now in upgrading the HER will reduce the burden on NYC in the longer term. An example of a well-presented and use-friendly site is the 'Know Your Place' project in Bristol - see https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-regulations/conservation-listed-buildings-and-the-historic-environment/historic-bristol/know-your-place

RCS would welcome an approach to contribute to a survey of non-registered heritage assets to assess which could be included in a register to assist in planning decision-making. The public could be invited to contribute too in the way that Historic England has done through its crowdsourcing 'Enrich the List' scheme.

**Delivering the Local Plan (p 74)**

Ripon Civic Society does not consider that it is appropriate to rank these priorities since they are all essential requirements of a comprehensive local plan. Government planning guidance encourages the adoption of design codes and masterplans to set specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area so as to deliver these priorities. Policies for these should be part of the Local Plan.

**Your City (p 78)**

*1. Specific issues for Ripon*

*Local traffic issues*

Due to the narrow streets in its historic city centre and the absence of a western by-pass, Ripon experiences serious traffic problems, particularly in the centre, which cannot be remediated. This is a constraint on further significant housing development as well as impacting on the historic environment.

*2. Other issues for the Local Plan*

*Community Infrastructure Levy*

Ripon Civic Society is concerned that the current CIL policies adopted by the former Harrogate Borough Council are not delivering funding for community infrastructure in Ripon. This is to a large extent because the impact of gypsum deposits on house prices has been over-estimated. We conder that policies are needed in the Local Plan to establish a new, authority-wide approach to CIL.

*The scope of the Local Plan*

The Civic Society recognises that a Local Plan covering the whole of England's largest local authority is likely to contain policies that are more strategic in nature than those in the seven existing local plans and it will not be possible to plan in more detail for every settlement. We are concerned that there is a large gap between North Yorkshire and the lower tier authorities i.e. the town and parish councils. Whilst some of these have prepared or are in the process of preparing neighbourhood plans, many will not or cannot and we consider that the local plan should address the need for effective planning for more local areas. We suggest that the town plans being prepared by the York and North Yorkshire Mayor's office and the pilot Uredale Community Partnership may provide a way forward.

*Climate Change*

- Climate change is well and truly with us, only today Yorkshire Water declared a hosepipe ban from 11/07/25 as the region has experienced its driest and warmest spring on record.
- North Yorkshire in July 2022 announced a climate emergency and this ought to give us the imperative to place climate action at the heart of every aspect of our new plan. It is therefore disappointing that in our judgement the plan as outlined for the initial conversation is weak on the specifics of climate action. Opportunities have been lost to weave this mission critical issue throughout all the chapters of the document.
- Our worry is that the new plan will be quick fix and short term. The length of the new plan is 20 years a considerable period of time and the plan needs to have depth and breadth around the raft of climate action considerations that desperately need to be taken if we are to slow down climate change over the two decades.
- In summary we would wish to see the climate agenda have a much higher profile in the conversation perhaps the whole document needs revisiting through a climate action lens with appropriate input from scientists and specialists in their field?
- We believe it is so important that the next iteration of the plan and the next big conversation ought to have a special focus around climate change and the climate actions needed in all sections of the plan.

Ripon Civic Society
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