RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

In 2019, Ripon City Council published the Ripon Neighbourhood Plan which set out planning policies for the city that would guide development until 2030. Ripon Civic Society was a key contributor in the development of this document. Whilst this plan period is beginning to draw to a close and the new Local Plan for the combined North Yorkshire authority begins to take shape, it should be recognised that the Neighbourhood Plan contains projects that the City saw as important for the future prosperity of Ripon, many of which remain important and unfulfilled. This document is intended to set out how Ripon Civic Society would like to see the city develop and grow stronger, and how key projects could help in achieving this.

Since the publication of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Society continued to engage with the former Harrogate Borough Council and now the North Yorkshire Council to ensure that the best interests of the City are acknowledged. To this end, we have provided comprehensive and considered responses to the consultation on the new Local Plan and have put forward sites as part of the Call for Sites process that seek to protect the open and green spaces within the city that frame and enhance its unique built heritage. Ripon is one of the most significant historic settlements in the County and in addition to its built and military heritage, it has a fine setting on the edge of the Vale of York between the Nidderdale National Landscape and Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey World Heritage Site to the west and the river Ure and Special Landscape Area to the north and east.

The vision for the City should therefore reflect the priority for Ripon to achieve sustainable development that conserves and enhances its special historic and landscape character. However, as in any desirable place to live and work, there is development pressure that, if unchecked, could erode the special character of the City and erode its significance. Construction is underway on the West Lane development within the Buffer Zone of the World Heritage Site that will provide approximately 350 new homes, and the military estate at Clotherholme has outline planning for up to 1,300 new homes with building projected to continue until 2040. Both of these developments represent a very significant expansion to the city which will require a consequential significant improvement in infrastructure which the Town Investment Plan could help facilitate.

It is too early to know how many additional homes will be allocated in Ripon in the emerging North Yorkshire Plan but the countywide numbers are large, and the North Yorkshire Council are under pressure to deliver these numbers. The Society is of the view that the locations noted above along with some small-scale brownfield development will be sufficient to meet the bulk of the City's needs over the plan period. In addition to significant new housing development, there are also severe constraints to further urban extension of the City, including land within an area of high flood risk, ground stability issues due to gypsum dissolution, the designated Nidderdale National Landscape, inadequate historic road systems and poor public transport options.

From its inception Ripon Civic Society has been a supporter and advocate for better museum coverage in the City. Since the Ripon Neighbourhood Plan was published, Ripon Museum Trust with its three museums and in its role as a National Portfolio Organisation, has become an increasingly important focus for heritage and cultural investment in the city and the wider region. It has received regular strategic investment from Arts Council England as well as investment from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and others which has allowed the Trust to embark on an ambitious redevelopment initiative which will breathe new life into the Workhouse Museum and Garden. All three museums – Workhouse Museum, Prison and Police Museum and Georgian Courthouse – are listed buildings and important heritage assets in the city. It is the opinion of the Society that they will need further capital investment in the future if the museums are to continue to thrive. There has also been a lack of a museum telling the story of the history of the City since the closure of the Wakeman's House Museum in 1987 when the assets and artifacts were transferred into the care of Harrogate Borough Council's museum service (now North Yorkshire Council). The Society is aware of community interest in creating a Ripon local history museum which is an ambition we very much support.

The Cathedral, a grade 1 listed building, is the most significant heritage asset in the City. The Society has always supported the need for the Cathedral to provide better facilities for its worshippers, choristers and visitors. We believe that the withdrawal of the planning application for an Annex on Kirkgate Park provides an opportunity to make a fresh start in creating a development, as envisioned in the neighbourhood plan, of which everyone can be proud.

It is the opinion of the Society that the Market Square will largely look after itself in terms of investment, opportunity and growth but that the areas linked to, but behind, the Market Square frontages are an undervalued and underused resource. Often these are linked to the square and to other parts of the city with historic ginnels and these are largely uninviting or have been blocked off as routes. The creation of a Heritage Action Zone to incorporate areas such as the historic Kirkgate Yards, Allhallowgate Yards, and former yards to the north of Westgate could significantly aid investment and help restore and link underused areas of the city back to its heart, whether through capital projects or through coordinated and targeted small works. The work of Ripon Business Improvement District (BID) has been crucial in supporting businesses within the City and the Society views the continuation of the BID beyond its first term as vitally important.

Ripon is an important settlement within North Yorkshire and occupies a unique position in the cultural and historical landscape of the County. The Civic Society believe that investment in heritage, and heritage related projects, can bring significant benefits in their own right, as well as acting as a catalyst for further investment, regeneration and growth. As well as investment in conservation for its own sake, this will also help reinforce the City's sense of place and avoid further homogenisation of North Yorkshire's diverse and special character.

Ripon Civic Society, 2026

Project requiring investment	Why this project is needed
Clotherholme Military Estate	
Outline planning permission has been secured by Homes England for the military estate at Clotherholme. The retention and conservation of surviving military structures importance should be ensured to secure Ripon's military heritage.	Ripon Military Heritage Trust is in conversation with Homes England to further its aim to preserve the surviving huts, bridges and other items of military heritage currently located at Clotherholme. These structures, along with the more intangible significance via association with the thousands of military personnel who have been based at, or passed through the city's military estate, is of vital importance for the City. The Society fully supports the aims of the Trust.
Heritage Action Zones	
Westgate and west of the Market Place - The historic ginnels that link the Market Place to this area should be improved and these important links would benefit circulation, particularly towards the new Tesco store and underused sites in this area. The widening of Westgate's pavements would also significantly enhance the pedestrian experience where high vehicle usage and narrow footpaths present a barrier to investment. **Kirkgate Yards - A**n historic but run down area of the city centre. Characterised by fragmented ownership and empty or underused buildings, this area is in need of investment and could act as an important pedestrian link between the Market Place, Court House museum and the Cathedral. Allowing public access to some of the private, closed-up ginnels would provide a porous street frontage that could allow greater connectivity within and through this area. **Allhallowgate Yards -** Like those on Kirkgate, Allhallowgate Yards are an under-developed area of the city centre occupying the site of the former British Iron & Implement Works and adjacent courts lost in the slum	As evidenced in Skipton, the Society considers that the Market Place, as the commercial centre of the city, will largely look after itself with regard to investment. This is not necessarily the case for the areas connected to or behind it. A Heritage Action Zone is needed that will help realise the public value potential, prevent further fragmentation and shape schemes that conserve and enhance the character of the physical environment. Investment in improvements to ginnels, pedestrian links including widening pavements will improve connectivity within the city whilst securing the development of currently empty or underused sites. This will have a positive impact on footfall and dwell-time and will help strengthen the prosperity of the City as a whole.

clearances of the mid-twentieth century. This area could act as an important pedestrian route from North Street to the Temple Gardens and Workhouse museum again utilising historic ginnels and courts. **Water Skellgate** - There is a group of historic buildings on the south side of Water Skellgate that form an important gateway into the city, but which are poorly maintained and in dire need of investment. Extending west from the former Ripon Club to the former Turks Head Inn, this group of five buildings - possibly with a change of use - could offer a much improved and visually attractive entrance to the city from the south.	
Pathways and Routes	
There is need for a self-contained and commissioned piece of work that considers how best to improve connectivity, access and waymarking within the city.	There is no one organisation with strategic oversight of this area within the city and whilst there has been - and continues to be - valued initiatives by organisations such as the BID and the Disability Forum, it would make a material difference to consider the subject holistically. Many footpaths along historic streets in the city centre are narrow along roads where vehicles are clearly a priority. Prioritising pedestrians above vehicles, whether with lower speed limits, widened footpaths or traffic calming could significantly improve the pedestrian experience. For example, the refurbishment of the Ripon Spa Hotel and the redevelopment of the former Ripon Baths represent a much-needed boost to the Park Street. However, access is problematic due to there being a footpath on only one side of the road. A pedestrian crossing from the north side of Park Street to the Spa Gardens would greatly improve access to this important green space as well as providing better links to the Spa hotel. Ripon's waterways also present significant barriers to pedestrian routes through the city and there may be innovative or imaginative ways in which these could be overcome or celebrated. Whilst development of the Canal

	Basin is welcomed, pedestrian links to the city centre need improving to cross the busy Water Skellgate and the River Skell.
Protecting and conserving heritage	
The Society offers to work with the North Yorkshire Council to pilot a process to identify, create and maintain a local list of heritage assets in the city and explore how this could be utilised in the planning process to help ensure the conservation and protection of assets of heritage value.	Creating a local list of heritage assets will help ensure their protection in the planning system where they are at risk of being overlooked by virtue of not being statutorily Listed. The Society considers that this is an important area of work and one which the Society is well-placed to undertake. A collaborative approach with the planning department is needed to ensure meaningful outputs that, if successful, could be rolled out to other areas of the County.
Community Facilities	
Investment in one or more feasibility studies to look at options, opportunities and funding to secure facilities for the people of Ripon and the surrounding area to enjoy. Facilities could include the following services currently lacking in the city: • Cinema • Youth hub • Arts Centre • Community learning • Studio/gallery space for artists	There is a great need and desire within the city for improved and additional arts, cultural and community facilities. The closure of the Curzon cinema some years ago has left a gap in the cultural offer of the city whilst the successful Ripon Theatre Festival lacks a venue – whether purpose designed or multi-use – that can accommodate a medium to large audience as at Skipton's Town Hall. Centres for youth and community learning closed twenty years ago leaving a gap which is very present. There may be opportunities to repurpose one of the City's underused historic buildings such as, the recently closed Trinity Infants School or the Hugh Ripley Hall; or there may be other privately owned buildings which could help fulfil this need.
Landscape & Green Spaces	
The management, maintenance and extension of Special Landscape Areas in the wider landscape and the creation of new parks within the city including the protection of green spaces for the enjoyment of all.	Riverbank Habitat Improvement. The Skell Valley Project carried out important work on the River Skell to the west of the city, but the scope of this project stopped short of the city itself. Ripon has three rivers and one canal,

	and rivers represent important routes (and barriers to routes) through the city often with footpaths running alongside. The city's riverbanks and riverine footpaths would greatly benefit from a Skell Valley Project phase II that could apply lessons learned in a lasting legacy for the city. The Society has proposed new Green Spaces within the city as part of the Call for Sites consultation by The North Yorkshire Council. Finkle Park and Tower Road Gardens are important green spaces that should be protected to prevent inappropriate development and the erosion of much needed green lungs in the city centre.
Car parking capacity study	
An objective car park capacity study to assess current and projected future need and evaluate whether additional parking is required.	Car parking is an important but contentious subject in the city with some claiming that sufficient spaces exist and others that capacity is regularly exceeded. An objective up to date study is required which takes into account the significant new housing developments at Clotherholme and West Lane.
Hotel development	
The need for additional hotel accommodation identified in the 2019 Neighbourhood Plan is still extant.	Voices in the City such as the BID and Visit Ripon suggest there is still a need for additional hotel accommodation. The Society is open about the best location that will allow flexibility for a hotel operator to implement brand standards and meet parking requirements. This could be a budget hotel operator in an edge of town location as with Premier Inn in Pickering.