RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY NEWS

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RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY RECEIVES AWARD FROM REGIONAL ORGANISATION

Ripon Civic Society has been recognised with a prestigious award from the Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies (YHACS) for its campaigning work on the proposed Ripon Cathedral annexe.

The Prize, which sees the Society receiving the Peter Spawforth trophy and a cheque for £200 from YHACS, is awarded annually to the local Civic Society that has undertaken outstanding work in the region; it is judged by members of the committee representing the 41 groups that are part of YHACS.

This is the second time Ripon has won the award; we were previously winners, in 2019, for the Ripon ReViewed photographic project, and runners up before that for activities around the Olympic Torch run and Civic Day in 2012.

The Society's approach was to the Cathedral's proposal was to agree that it needs additional space but that the proposed building was not right for its location in Kirkgate Park, an important public space in the city. Ripon Civic spent two years campaigning, and the Cathedral withdrew its planning application in January 2024.

Margaret Hicks-Clarke, Chair of YHACS, said, 'Ripon Civic Society's entry for the Peter Spawforth Award was an excellent example of a Society tackling an important local issue in a measured and professional way. They used the expertise within their own ranks, as well as collaboration with outside bodies, to campaign for a better outcome for the city of Ripon. We felt that the Society was a worthy winner!'

Welcoming the Award, Rachel Wigginton, Planning Lead for Ripon Civic Society, said 'This was one of the largest and most sustained campaigns the Society has conducted for several decades and it occupied the attention of our entirely voluntary committee for almost two years. At no time was the Society against the Cathedral's principal aim, but we believe that the withdrawal of the proposal was the right outcome for the city of Ripon. We look forward to supporting them in the search for a solution that will be right for the Cathedral and for Ripon. We are very grateful to our fellow Civic Societies in the region for recognising and endorsing our achievements by awarding us the Spawforth Prize.'

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The YHACS award noted that the Society was instrumental in alerting local people to the plans, and helping create a groundswell of opinion in Ripon and beyond that began a critical examination of the Cathedral's proposals. The Society particularly drew attention to detrimental effect the proposed

new structure would have the listed buildings around the park – the Grade II* Old Deanery and the Grade II Old Courthouse and Liberty Courthouse, as well as the Grade I Cathedral itself. The also pointed out that no full archaeological survey had been undertaken.

The Society submitted an initial objection to the plans, and over the course of a two-year campaign wrote 20 additional letters on aspects of the scheme. It also produced a number of documents;

- Kirkgate Park – An appreciation (a history of the park's usage over the centuries)
- A Critique on the Design of the proposed Annexe
- Ripon Cathedral Proposed Annex – Heritage Impact Assessment
- The Ownership of Kirkgate Park – map and Q&A

The Critique and the Heritage Impact Assessment were revised in December 2024 after the Cathedral put forward a slightly revised, but still unacceptable, plan for the site. At that point the Society also produced three reports on aspects of the damage the construction and new building would do to the existing trees. We also had local, regional and national publicity.

The Society met with the Dean, the cathedral's architect, planners and advisory committee, and visited Regional Director of Historic England, which had agreed to the plans. It also consulted with a number of local and national organisations, including Yorkshire Gardens Trust, The Woodland Trust and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.