

Myths and misconceptions surrounding baths proposal

From: Mark DeOwenley, Ash Bank Road, Ripon.

WHILE I wholeheartedly welcome the publication of the proposed redevelopment of the Spa Baths site and the new swimming facilities, I have become somewhat concerned by the misinformation and general lack of clarity of thought among those who claim to show an interest in the Spa redevelopment. Like Coun Powell I am not sure if the people who signed the recently publicised petition actually knew what their signature was representing.

The Harrogate Borough Council proposals are now back on display in the foyer of the swimming baths and I would recommend that everyone who lives in Ripon and has expressed an interest goes to look at them.

The main myth surrounding the redevelopment is that the whole site will be demolished and that the current views from Park Street and the Spa Gardens will be destroyed. Not so. The redevelopment will not only retain the existing frontage but will result in its repair restoration and preservation, improving not destroying the current pleasing aspect from Park Street. Similarly, the building that will replace the existing functional pool house complex will, in my opinion, improved the aspect from the Spa Gardens side of the building.

Remember that less than five per cent of the whole site is of architectural or historical importance and all the relevant elements are being retained within the new development. The remaining contentious

issue is that of continued public access to the listed sections.

I would propose that part of the planning application would allow for supervised access to the public on, for example, four occasions each year, these days being Easter Weekend, Spring Bank Holiday, St Wilfrid's Day and August Bank Holiday Weekend, these visits to be promoted and hosted by Ripon Civic Society members who could provide the necessary literature and historical background to the building which they claim it deserves. Numbers of visitors could be monitored and reviewed after three years to establish whether there is actually any continuing demand.

Again, I would please ask everyone to go to the baths, look at the plans for themselves, take in all the relevant facts and make up your own minds.