



Ripon Spa Partnership

Please reply to:
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14 November 2008

To: HBC Planning Committee Members

Dear

Ripon Spa Baths Agenda Item 6 - Planning Committee Meeting 18 November 2008

This is a last minute plea for your support in rejecting the application before the planning meeting next Tuesday for the demolition and conversion of the Ripon Spa Baths for housing and the complementary application to build a new swimming pool on the playing fields at Camp Close.

It is our firm view that this application is being pushed through without proper regard for the government guidelines for planning and historic buildings – PPG15.

Until the extraordinary meeting of the Council in July of this year HBC had refused to enter into any kind of dialogue with our Partnership (which represents the Ripon Civic Society, the Ripon Area Business Association and other community groups) to discuss an alternative future for the Spa Baths. This was on the grounds that we disagreed with Council policy! It was only the resolution – almost unanimous – of this special meeting that has opened the door to the discussions that started in October.

We are quite clear that the PPG15 guidelines, supposedly part of HBC policy, require the authority to use all reasonable efforts to sustain the existing use of the building or to find viable new uses and not to grant consent for demolition (or substantial alteration) unless there is clear and convincing evidence that alternative possibilities for new ownership and new uses have been thoroughly explored and proved to have failed. The present consultations are a vital part of that process and the Secretaries of State would not expect consent to be granted until they are finished (March 2009) and clear, convincing and documented evidence provided.

From the documentation supporting this application it is clear that the timetable has been driven by considerations that are financial, not planning. It is the financial timetable that is preventing compliance with planning policy and a thorough exploration of alternatives. The fact that the applicant believes that redevelopment for housing is the most economically attractive route for him is as irrelevant to an application from the authority as it would be from a private developer.

We have recently lodged detailed objections to this application citing material breach of the guidelines in PPG15 and we trust that these will be available to you in the meeting papers.

We have also raised concern that this application runs contrary to one of the most important strategic objectives of the Council which is to enhance the District as a visitor destination. The Ripon Spa Baths is part of an ensemble of amenities including the Spa Gardens, the monuments, the Spa Hotel and the recreational facilities on Park Street. As English Heritage observe; *“this is an important public facility of considerable communal, social and historical significance for Ripon”*. The proposal before the Committee will remove public access to the Spa Baths (except for the occasional heritage day) and any role for the building as a visitor attraction. The character of the Park Street facilities will be irretrievably damaged.

The Partnership is working very hard to develop a scheme that will attract funding not available to HBC on its own and that will make a significant contribution to the future of Ripon as a visitor destination. Please give us the time we need to make these efforts.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Grandison
Ripon Spa Partnership

Ripon Spa Partnership est. 2008 by: Ripon Civic Society, Ripon Area Business Association and local Aquatic sports providers to establish new swimming facilities in Ripon and to seek regeneration of the Ripon Spa Baths.