

Henry Pankhurst,
Harrogate Civic Society,
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Harrogate,
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3rd March 2018

The Editor,
Harrogate Advertiser,
Cardale Park,
Harrogate.

Dear Madam,

This newspaper reported last week of an imminent planning application for the old Borough Council Offices building at Crescent Gardens. When we were first aware of Mr. Adam Thorpe's plans for re-use of the building, the Civic Society felt optimistic that the best scheme that we dared hope for had been secured. This confidence has been dealt serious blows as we gleaned that the road in front could be sold off to the developer. If Crescent Gardens (the road) is to be taken out of public use, a stopping up order will be necessary because the road is a right of way. It must have been in public use since at least 1871 when the New Victoria Baths was built on the site. It was then divulged that the flats would be at prices only affordable by the super- rich. We also saw sketches of the gardens in front that gave the impression that they would be commandeered for the benefit of the private flat owners, but we are told in the article last week that they would at least remain available to the public.

However, another completely unexpected blow has been dealt, because we now learn that not even the complete shell of the building will remain, according to your report of the planning application to come. Though the building is not listed, it is noted in the Council's own Conservation Area Character Appraisal as a 'landmark building of interest'. Considering its architecture and history, the building would be classed as an undesignated heritage asset which is within a designated heritage asset – the conservation area. The proposed treatment of the building must have found favour with some members of the Council/Executive but this has not been tested by a planning application. Certainly the Council Leader, if quoted correctly, wants to ensure that Mr. Thorpe sticks to his ambitious timetable. Can he really be sure that the public are principally interested in a timetable, rather than treatment of the building, the road in front, and the gardens?

For the Civic Society, decisions about the treatment of our Old Town Hall and its surroundings are far more important than sticking to a timetable.

Yours faithfully,

Henry Pankhurst,
Chairman
Harrogate Civic Society