



York Civic Trust

Promoting Heritage - Shaping Tomorrow

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12th February 2016

BOOTHAM PARK HOSPITAL GRADE I (LISTED BUILDING) DESIGNED 1777 BY JOHN CARR OF YORK: ALSO ASSOCIATED GROUNDS AND GRADE II LISTED 19thC STRUCTURES

1. The York Civic Trust wishes to comment with regard to the recent closure of the Mental Health Services at Bootham Park Hospital bringing to a closure 232 years of continuous provision of care. It is not our role to comment on specific medical issues other than to note the value placed by the citizens of the City of York on having facilities at the heart of the City. Bootham Park (York Asylum) was one of the first four purpose-built mental institutions to be opened and when it closed it was the last of this type to remain in its original use.
2. The Grade I listed status recognises the importance of the whole complex of 18th and 19th-century date 'to the nation' both for its architectural merit and also for its historical interest. It is of exceptional interest and lies within the York Central Historic Core Conservation Area and its site is recognised for providing an important setting to the building and for its amenity as noted in Policy C5 of the Draft City of York Local Plan (2005). Historic England highlights Bootham Park (the former York Asylum) as a particularly fine example of the striking local tradition of philanthropy which is also shown at the 'Retreat' hospital in York. The leading 18th -century architect John Carr, who lived and worked within the city centre of York took a personal interest in the construction of Bootham Park as well as being the architect.

3. It has long been acknowledged that one of the best ways of ensuring the survival of historic buildings is to keep them wherever possible in their original use. In this context and for this reason we hope that moves being made to reinstate mental health services at Bootham Park by patients and medical staff will be successful. If that however does not come about then a new use will need to be found that would be compatible with the architectural structure and sensitive to the historic nature of the building and the site.
4. The York Civic Trust is pleased to note that *NHS Property Services Limited* during 2015 commissioned a Heritage Statement (Issue 4 June 2015) with regard to specific Wards of the hospital building. This was prepared by *Purcell* an international consultancy with an office based in York near to Bootham Park; this is in the public domain since it supported the recent planning application. This Heritage Statement sets out the history of the site with a description of the various phases of buildings including the subsidiary buildings within the grounds and is well illustrated with photographs and plans. It also puts forward an assessment of some of the interiors and categorises these in terms of their historic importance. The Heritage Statement sets out a three-stage approach of '*Understanding*' the buildings and site; assessing the '*Significance*' of various elements and thirdly considering the '*Capacity*' for change in the future. This document would be invaluable in any future debate about which new uses might be considered acceptable. The York Civic Trust understands that the Council sought further work to be undertaken to cover the whole complex but this has yet to be published.
5. No assessment of the landscape setting of the Grade I complex was undertaken in this Statement as this was not included within the brief. Neither were on-site views or sight lines considered that may be valued of local importance. These would be important issues to be addressed if development proposals come forward. It is noteworthy that the area where former 1960s nurses housing has been demolished within the historic walled site and which has now been landscaped, has been excluded from the study. This area is historically associated

with the running of the hospital from its inception and forms an important part of the 'close setting' of the Grade I building.

6. With regard to the interiors there has been significant alteration in many parts with some areas such as the 1777 building and the *Recreational Hall* of the 1870s built in a baronial style in timber, remaining surprisingly impressive. The tiled entrance floor with Minton tiles of the 1850s, some with nine clays and restored in the 1980s is of national interest. A full Conservation Statement would assess each internal area for its significance.
7. In the meantime, The York Civic Trust understand that the building is partly closed and this gives grounds for concern as the building fabric may deteriorate. Risk may arise from a possible lack of heating and ventilation coupled with risks from vandalism and fire. The historic furniture and fittings such as the Benefactions Boards and the only portrait of Jeffrey Dunstan are of historic importance and may be vulnerable. We sincerely hope that the good stewardship of the interiors that has been undertaken up to the closure date is continuing.
8. The external open space between the main 1777 building and Bootham (A19) forms the prime statutory *setting* to the 18th - century building, is currently used for local sports and provides locally valued historic views from Bootham of the main façade.
9. Other important aspects include the Grade II Lodge and the Grade II railings and piers to Bootham now in disrepair and designed by the local architect Fowler Jones in the 1860s.
10. Following the Quality Care Commission report that found aspects of the building to give cause for concern, permission was sought from the City of York Council to adapt the building to overcome these issues. We understand that negotiations were progressing to the satisfaction of the City Council but the new NHS trust

taking over the provision for mental health care in York, the *Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust* closed the hospital before undertaking the works.

11. The York Civic Trust concludes that the continuation of health facilities at Bootham Park albeit with the agreed building works of adaptation, would be likely to cause less harm to the architectural and historic interest of buildings and grounds than a sale of the site for a new use. If this is found not to be acceptable to the *NHS Property Services Limited* and the site is offered for sale we urge that the Conservation Statement is released to prospective purchasers and that a development brief is agreed with the City of York Council. It would be highly desirable for this brief to be subject to public consultation.

 12. In summary, the York Civic Trust believes Bootham Park Hospital and its extensive open grounds to be of the greatest importance within the environment of the City of York. The buildings and their setting have been assessed as of exceptional architectural and historic interest in the national context and have high significance within the local realm. Their future deserves the highest level of consideration from both the *Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust* and the body *NHS Property Services Limited*.
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