



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

President: The Countess of Harewood

Vice-presidents: Lady Legard, Peter Goodchild, Nick Lane Fox

www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

Ms Sophie Prendergast

Planning Team

York City Council

Mrs Val Hepworth

Trustee

Conservation & Planning

planning.teamenquiries@york.gov.uk

conservation@yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk

11th April 2022

Dear Ms Prendergast

21/02758/FUL Change of use of land to form a 12 -hole mini golf course for a period of 7 years Central Library Gardens Museum Street York

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to the proposed development affecting Museum Gardens, a site included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks & Gardens at grade II. The Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites, and is authorised by the GT to respond on GT's behalf in respect of such consultations.

The Museum Gardens were laid out by Sir John Murray Naesmyth for the Yorkshire Philosophical Society in 1844. They were designed as pleasure grounds to provide a setting for the Yorkshire Museum (listed grade I) and the many ancient monuments in its vicinity and to incorporate botanical gardens. The Central Library Gardens or Library Lawn is an area between the grade II listed Central Library building and a section of the north-eastern boundary of Museum Gardens. It is therefore within the setting of Museum Gardens but also within the setting of several other designated heritage assets including the City Walls Scheduled Monument, the grade I listed Multangular Tower and remains of St Leonard's Hospital.

The 12- hole mini golf course to a heritage themed design based on York's history is proposed for the Library Lawn. The layout would include kerbed paths of concrete with imprinted shapes and surfaces, rubber mulch and resin flexipave to represent differing styles of paving for the respective periods of the holes and a permeable grass-coloured 'carpet' putting surface. The various historic periods would have appropriate models of buildings and other features, made from 'art concrete' modelled and coloured to resemble natural materials, up to c.900mm in height. Information plinths containing brief historical facts relevant to the respective periods are also proposed with some low- level planting and an accessible path of in-situ cast concrete slabs. The application proposes a seven- year period (six years of use and additional time for construction and removal), then a return to the present state but with the concrete path retained.

We understand from the City Archaeologist and Historic England that the construction of the mini golf course will not affect any archaeology due to previous excavations and by the creation of an air raid shelter in this location.

As a family activity for visitors and residents we can appreciate that a history of York in a mini golf course could be a good deal of fun, however, we feel that the proposed location is far too sensitive for such a proposal; totally the wrong place.

The Central Library Lawn is a secluded green space adjacent to the much more-busy Museum Gardens. It is a valued space from which to view and appreciate the Roman Walls and their full evolutionary history as the city walls from Roman to Medieval, the interior of the Multangular Tower and the remains of St Leonard's Hospital, and therefore it also contributes positively to the setting of these buildings and structures. The introduction of a mini golf course will detract from the heritage assets and their setting and introduce a visually and audially distracting environment.

The proposed development would affect the aesthetic and communal heritage values of the site. It would not affect evidential or historical heritage values. We are concerned that the application is proposed to be temporary, but the timescale is for seven years, and such commercial development may continue for longer once established. This could lead to a change in the aesthetic and communal characters of the site so that future decisions would be based on the character of the site as it then was, not on its current character. We think that the use of part of St Leonard's Hospital as a ticket office/equipment storage demotes the heritage and adds to our concerns over the appropriateness of this location for a mini-golf course. We have not seen any information about the signage for this attraction which because of the location and the heritage assets would need careful consideration.

We agree with your Authority's Landscape Architect that the 'seclusion provides a tranquil lawn, hidden from Museum Street and Museum Gardens; somewhere to rest, meet, take in the sounds of nature. The library garden is a simple open space from which views of the surrounding buildings and structures can be appreciated, in relative stillness, from any location of choice within the garden.' As she writes 'there is scope to enhance the amenity and quality of the garden experience with simple measures such as mixed border planting and seating in front of the library...'

The Gardens Trust and Yorkshire Gardens Trust is not convinced that the proposed change of use of the Central Library Lawn complies with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021 paragraphs 199 and 200, and also paragraph 202, where the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset(s) is outweighed, in our opinion, by any public benefits of the proposal. We suggest that other locations are explored in less historically sensitive areas.

For the reasons explained above the Gardens Trust and Yorkshire Gardens Trust objects to this change of use proposal.

Yours sincerely

Val Hepworth
Trustee Conservation and Planning

cc. Chris Mayes, Landscape Architect North of England, Historic England
e-yorks@historicengland.org.uk; Conservation@ the Gardens Trust