



# YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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[www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.yorkshiregardenstrust.org.uk)

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2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023

Dear Mr Kenyon

**23/00507/LBC Internal and external alterations including erection of new student centre building with associated landscaping enabling works, including works to the library footbridge, following demolition of 3no. buildings and partial demolition of footbridge. University Central Hall, University Road To Central Hall, York YO10 5DD**

This planning application has been sent to The Gardens Trust by the staff and volunteers who maintain the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies (JCNAS) casework log <https://casework.jcnas.org.uk/>. The Gardens Trust's (GT) role is as Statutory Consultee with regard to any proposed development affecting a site listed by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks and Gardens. In this case University of York Campus West 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 planning application site comprises 2.26 hectares on land at the centre of the University of York's Campus West. The site is broadly rectangular and runs from the front elevation of the JB Morrel Library, which is the University Library, (north) to the entrance to Vanbrugh College (south), taking in that part of University Road, and spanning between Harewood Way to the east and Vanbrugh Way to the west. The Enrolment Building, Security Centre, IT Services and Student Administration Building are proposed to be demolished, and a number of trees felled to enable the new works to be implemented.

Designed by Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners (RMJM), Campus West was registered due to its historic and design interest, landscaping, designers, degree of survival and group value of the University buildings. We note the report from Edward Freedman, your Authority's Conservation Officer, who details the Heritage Significance and significance of the Landscaping in the designation of the University Campus West by Historic England, with which we agree, and we won't repeat that here.

The need for a student centre is undisputed and welcomed. We also welcome the demolition of the buildings on the site of the proposed building, and the remodelling of Market Square. The latter has

always been inappropriate and incoherent. The new, open layout suits the original landscaping of the campus well.

The character of the registered campus landscape is distinctive, with buildings placed in it with reference to each other and to the landscape. The lake is a key feature that invites views into and beyond the Registered Park and Garden (RPG). Buildings are mostly low rise, determinedly rectilinear, and modest in scale. Buildings and landscape features are connected by paths and covered ways, emphasising the ideal of the University founders of connectivity and complementarity. The University Library, beyond the RPG, has always acted as an eyecatcher (like an 18th century folly), and its landscape function as such has been mostly preserved in the later interventions in the campus landscape. Notably, the Berrick Saul Building carefully acknowledges the major view of the Library from Physics across the Lake, and that from Central Hall; and, too, the reciprocal views from the upper floors of the Library (much valued by generations of students). Contrary to the claim at page 55 of the Design and Access statement, the height, massing and placing of the proposed building destroys this key vista. Page 71 of the Design and Access statement itself shows how the view of the Library from Physics/Central Hall is lost by the intrusion of the proposed building. Moreover, its design, completely at odds with the other buildings on campus, draws attention to itself in a way that no other building in or close to the RPG does. This intended function of the proposed building asserts itself from other locations in and close to the RPG. It's worth noting that many of the design drawings illustrate the campus in summer, when the deciduous trees are in full leaf - the intrusion will be greater in winter. There is already an eyecatcher - placing another, competing, eyecatcher next to it is bound to interfere with the role of the former.

We are concerned at the proposal to remove the canopies to the Library Bridge and towards Vanburgh College. This is part of the overall system of covered walkways through the designed landscape – a visual and practical thread in the design. The listed (Grade II) concrete ramp is itself a covered walkway and the canopies on the Library Bridge and to Vanburgh College are part of a continuous pedestrian route. It is important that they are retained and if necessary, they could be reconfigured to accommodate the ground works and landscaping schemes. Although having planting on aerial structures is from many aspects commendable, we are of the opinion that the proposed seats and herbaceous planting on the 'Living Bridge' will be difficult to maintain and the plants would suffer drought if the canopy is retained as we request.

We also query that within the Tree Removal and Retention Plan it appears to propose the removal of a fine *Paulownia tomentosa* (Foxglove Tree, T48) which was magnificent in flower this spring. It is sited in a raised brick area next to the concrete ramp up to the bridge and it should be possible to protect and work round it.

We acknowledge the importance of new Student Centre building to the future health of the University. However, as it stands this proposal will destroy some of the features that are important to the listed status of the campus landscape.

Yours sincerely,

Val Hepworth  
Trustee Conservation and Planning

cc. Yorkshire and the North East, Historic England; Conservation at the Gardens Trust