

Re: Castle Car Park, Castlegate, York [22/00209/FULM]

Wednesday 25th February 2025

Dear Members of City of York Council,

We write to you as Co-Leads of The Movement for Progressive Judaism, the unified national body representing Progressive Jewish communities across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Formed through the unification of Reform and Liberal Judaism, the Movement supports and sustains Jewish life across the country, ensuring Jewish communities, history, and presence continue to contribute to the civic life of British society.

We are writing to express our strong support for the proposed revisions concerning how the events of 1190 at Clifford's Tower are remembered and interpreted, and to thank the Council for its willingness to revisit and strengthen its approach to tell and respect the history of the site following ongoing consultation and the concerns expressed.

Your leadership in this area, including through the annual Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration, demonstrates York's commitment to remembrance as a civic responsibility, not only a historical exercise. This is especially welcomed in these difficult times.

Clifford's Tower marks the site of one of the most devastating acts of anti-Jewish violence in medieval England. The Jewish community of York, who had lived, worked, and contributed to the economic and civic life of the city, were driven to seek refuge and lost their lives when the perpetrators sought to wipe out York's Jewish community. This atrocity was not only a tragedy for the Jewish people, but a loss for York itself. The responsibility to now openly remember it with honesty and dignity belongs to the whole city and speaks directly to the values York upholds today.

We welcome the reinstated intention to create a separate and distinct 1190 Memorial / Peace Garden close to the foot of Clifford's Tower, with sufficient space and clarity of purpose to allow for meaningful reflection, gathering, and education. It is essential that this space is recognisably and unapologetically rooted in its Jewish significance, including enabling Jewish acts of remembrance and prayer.

At the same time, its presence within the civic landscape allows it to serve as a place where people of all backgrounds can engage with York's history and reflect on the importance of mutual respect and shared belonging.

Jewish life in York did not end in 1190. Despite expulsion, absence, and then return and integration across many centuries, Jewish presence has endured and renewed itself. Today, York Liberal Jewish Community represents a vibrant and growing part of the city's life, contributing to its civic, cultural, and interfaith fabric. Their presence affirms both continuity and confidence in York as a place where Jewish life belongs.

Memorialisation, when done with integrity, strengthens social cohesion. It affirms that difficult histories are neither forgotten nor marginalised, and that minority communities are recognised as part of the shared civic story.

These proposals to reinstate and include a properly recognisable 1190 Memorial Garden as a peaceful contemplative multifunctional welcoming space represent an important and positive step. They honour the victims with dignity, affirm the distinct Jewish meaning of the site and demonstrate York's commitment to being a city that remembers its past while strengthening its shared future.

It is essential that the Jewish significance of the site is properly marked and that the redevelopment includes the long promised 1190 Memorial Garden. We look forward to seeing further refined proposals of this space in due course.

Yours faithfully,



Rabbi Charley Baginsky and Rabbi Josh Levy
Co-Leads, The Movement for Progressive Judaism