

ADDITIONAL OBJECTIONS/COMMENTS ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS PL/2022/00677 AND PL/2022/00609 OF THE SALISBURY CATHEDRAL CLOSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY (“THE SOCIETY”)

These comments are made by the Society Trustees of registered charity 1015692. Its charitable aims include the preservation, protection and improvement of the area around Salisbury Cathedral, particularly Salisbury Cathedral Close (“The Close”).

These comments are ADDITIONAL to those of 16th February 2022 - prompted by the comments of Historic England, the revised plans which appeared on the Wiltshire Planning website on 23rd February and the slightly revised Design & Access Statement (“the Revised Statement”) which appeared on the same website today. Our previous objections and comments remain valid.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

We would like the applications withdrawn and re-submitted with substantially more detail on preservation of historic fabric & details of the materials to be used. If not, the applications lack detail. If the LPA is minded to consent to this application, they should impose planning conditions mentioned in our previous comments and below. There should also be a more extensive Heritage Statement.

Historic England Comments

Historic England note the stables at Bishop Wordsworth’s School (“The Stables”) retain several original features and considerable historic fabric. They flag their guidance on the adaptation of traditional farm buildings (“the Guidance”).

The Society’s response - The Society feels much of the Guidance addresses farm buildings in a farm/rural setting. Here are stables in the context of The Close. To put The Close in context, one could look no further than the Historic England Listing for the Cathedral which says

“Historic England Listing (NGR: SU1430229533)

The setting of the Cathedral is probably the finest in England. The grouping and splendid character of the houses of the Close, all in sites laid down at the time of the Foundation of the Cathedral, MAKE ALL THE BUILDINGS INSIDE THE CLOSE WALL, including the Close Wall itself A GROUP OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE.

All the listed buildings in the Close form outstanding group.”

The Stables - in addition to being listed Grade 2* - is one of the buildings inside the Close wall in a group of the first importance. It is also in the setting of many listed buildings around it in The Close. Many stables in The Close were turned into residential units, well before the arrival of the current planning framework or, it was in its infancy, so this is probably the only unchanged Georgian stable in The Close. Relevant extracts below from the Guidance (headed in green) are worthy of mention and endorsement.

1 “Minimise alterations and loss to significant historic fabric

Retention of as much significant historic fabric as possible is a fundamental part of any good adaptation, together with the use of compatible materials and methods of repair.”

The Society’s comment -The Revised Statement repeats - encouragingly, “The hidden timber frame that forms the roof structure is in very good condition for its age. It is evident that this structure has not been altered/updated for a considerable amount of time.”

The works mustn’t compromise the roof structure to insert conservation rooflights. There is no photo montage of how the rooflights might look. Details of the rooflight type haven’t been provided. There should be conditions as to rooflight type being pre-approved before use and, perhaps, a physical inspection of the roof area for the proposed rooflights to ensure minimal damage to the roof wooden structure Are the rooflights in the Revised Statement still the same size as in the original plans?

The Revised Statement is otherwise largely silent on the sensitive re-use of important historic fabric.

2 “Retain distinctive features

Historic farm buildings invariably retain features that provide evidence of their former use and contribute to their significance. They may range from a simple series of ventilation slits formed in the masonry structure to vertically boarded doors to a cart entrance. Retaining such features contributes to a successful adaptation. “

The Society’s comment - We endorse this. The new plans show part of the original stable stall structure being used as a divider between the kitchen and living area, a suggestion we advanced in our earlier comments.

The Revised Statement mentions the wooden panelling on the Stables ground floor. “The external walls are currently lined with timber panelling, however this is in very poor condition, it may be possible to salvage this or replicate it”. We assume this should be reference to the ground floor “internal” walls. There should be a proper inspection of the panelling by a wood conservation specialist; if it can be salvaged, it should be used, to provide evidence of “their former use” – See above. If any is to be replicated, this should only be done if beyond repair. Any planning consents for the Stables should have conditions attached that the wooden panelling should be so inspected and, if any is capable of re-use, a revised drawing should be submitted to the LPA for approval showing how it might be re-used; and that proper records would be made before any fabric is removed, so it could be accurately re-instated. Potentially parts or the whole of the Stables should be subject to a condition that the original fabric should be recorded and the understanding of the Stables’ significance recorded before any of it is lost, in accordance with a written scheme of investigation. There is already a proposal to remove half of the ground floor ceiling – presumably to provide light to the ground floor.

3 “Consider how services and insulation will be incorporated

Most new uses have some service requirement and will need to comply with Building Regulations (Part L) for adequate levels of energy efficiency. These need to

be incorporated so as not to damage historic fabric or features of interest. Exemptions and 'special considerations' apply for historic and buildings of traditional construction. "

The Society's comment – We endorse this.

The Revised Statement gives no assurance that the original timber frame IS going to be made a feature and to be preserved. All it says is "Consideration would be given to exposing as much of the existing timber frame as possible within the roof and emphasise the historic fabric as a feature within the space."

It is possible that simply cutting the insulation required by the Building Regulations to fit between the beams on the ceiling to reveal them as a feature might not satisfy the requirements of those Regulations. The applicant must ensure it takes advantage of any "exemptions and "special considerations" mentioned by Historic England to avoid any necessity of covering such features. This should also apply to the preservation/ retention of the sight of the rafters, wind braces, purlins and the timber framing to the West gable end and the substantial central post on the photograph in the Revised Statement.

4 "3.3 Walls

The main external walls of farm buildings were generally constructed of locally available materials. All materials require their own appropriate repair techniques, and compatible materials should be used when these are needed for repair. "

The Society's comment – we were encouraged to see that the Applications contemplate some of the recent – and inappropriate - repairs to the exterior on the west and south elevations would be re-done. We re-iterate that there should be a condition that all bricks and mortar and external materials should be pre- approved by the planning authority.

5 "Openings

Because ventilation was a more important consideration than light, farm buildings often have few external openings. The historic pattern of openings is related to the function of the building over time, and often makes a fundamental contribution to its mass and character.

Maximising the use of these existing openings by planning internal spaces around them and limiting the formation of new ones will help retain character. Where new openings are added or new windows inserted within existing door openings, great care needs to be given to their placing and design."

The Society's comment – The hayloft window proposed could be recessed somewhat, looking at drawings, as advocated in the Guidance. The Guidance says. "The glazing of openings is a particularly subtle aspect of design in farm building adaptation work." In one case they advocated setting the glass back from the window opening which would make it less intrusive in an opening that would traditionally never have been glazed.

6 "3.4 Floors

Floor finishes in many traditional farm buildings, particularly barns, are rudimentary. Many are simply well-compacted earth or clay, which may have built up over many years. Barns had threshing floors of beaten earth, bricks, stone flags or raised wooden platforms. Other kinds of buildings, such as stables, were often cobbled or laid with setts or bricks.

Most farm buildings have had new floors added during their lifespan. Concrete was frequently used as a cheap and easily maintained finish but is rarely suitable to be retained in an adaptation. If an earlier floor finish, such as stable bricks, stone setts or brickwork, survives beneath the concrete it can be salvaged and re-laid on the new floor structure. Alternatively, it may be possible to lay a new finish over an older surface, using a layer of sand blinding to protect the historic floor from damage”

The Society’s comment – The applications, revised plans and Revised Statement do not say anything about the floor of the Stables. This is a major omission. There is an opportunity, here, to preserve that floor.

AIR BNB

We welcome that reference to this in the Revised Statement has been deleted. Since there is much objection to commercialisation of the Stables as any form of holiday let, a condition that only allows a term time use for School staff or a residential long let should be imposed, caveated that this should expressly exclude any sort of holiday use/Air BnB and should only be for residential use.

CONCLUSION

The revised plans and Revised Statement still do not address the concerns we expressed in our earlier submission as to why the original LBC application was inadequate. This application should be revised and re-submitted. If this application were to be approved, it is thin on detail and a considerable number of conditions should be attached. The better approach must be to withdraw the application and re-present it in a much more detailed way.