

Salisbury Cathedral Close

Preservation Society



Dear Friends of The Close,

LEADEN HALL PLANNING APPLICATION PL/2024/00373

We are writing to let you know that Chapter have recently submitted a planning application for the conversion of Leaden Hall to provide office accommodation for their staff.

Your Trustees are busily engaged in reviewing the considerable quantity of documentation and have retained a number of professional advisors including Alan Baxter Associates to support their response to the application.

We consider this to be the most important planning application to arise in The Close over the last ten years.

The purpose of this letter is to keep you informed of this important development and to ask for your support as we prepare a collective response before the current deadline of the 29th February. We are planning to circulate a response with a covering letter well before the deadline so that you will have an opportunity to consider it and deciding on your individual responses to Wiltshire Planning Portal.

You can access the application by clicking this link

<https://development.wiltshire.gov.uk/pr/s/planning-application/a0i3z00001CGQvHAAX/pl202400373>

Whilst we are delighted to see that work is being proposed to protect and restore this most significant Grade 1 listed building we believe that a considerable number of elements of the current planning application need to be challenged.

In fulfilling our aim to be supporters and critical best friends of the Chapter, your Trustees are committed to encouraging Chapter towards the highest standards of heritage estate management and conservation.

First thoughts and areas of concern

We have undertaken a first read of the documents submitted with the planning application and would draw your attention to the following documents.

1. Flood Risk Assessment.

The Planning application includes a comprehensive theoretical flood risk assessment, but this desk-based analysis seems to ignore the observed reality that the proposed site of the new archive and the solar panels lie within an area with a current history of very high flood risk as the photographs taken this January illustrate.

Climate change will only exacerbate this trend.

We contend that there must be an alternative site for the precious archives of the Cathedral. It cannot be wise to locate these heritage assets in an area so obviously at risk.





2. Proposed Archive building Scale and Impact.



This drawing shows the South and East elevations of the proposed Archive building. We believe that the building is too large for the site and will seriously impair the streetscape as seen looking west from Marsh Close.

We especially note the very considerable impact on views from the South in particular those of residents living at and alongside the South Canony.

3. Heritage Assessment.

There are many pages of the application referring to dendrology and the general history of the building but there is relatively little written about the landscape history and the general curtilage of this building and vista which is classified Grade 1 as well as being in a conservation area. It is a site of national and international significance not least because of its connection with John Constable's paintings.

Indeed in section 7.1 of the document the writer notes his opinion that ***“The building lacks the architectural quality to merit a Grade 1 listed status”***. A comment that we most robustly challenge.

Fortunately Section 4 of the document from Forum Heritage Services notes that ***“The setting of Leaden Hall in the conservation area represents one of the finest collections of buildings in the country”***.

The SCCPS believes that special weight and attention must be given to the entirety of the landscape and gardens and the setting including the frontage and especially the historic interest and significance of the Constable Views.

The plans submitted include proposals to use the courtyard at the front of Leaden Hall for car parking and to create a new opening through the south wall of the garden to the new archive building for vehicle traffic and access.

We believe that this development will significantly impair the views, character and visual appreciation of the east elevation of Leaden Hall.

4. Assessment of Significance Section 5

Planning Act 1990 Section 72 Conservation Areas.

“Special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that conservation area”.

The Society is concerned that the application is not being considered in the overall context of the whole of The Close and most importantly Marsh Close.

We believe that the proposed development, in particular the location of the Archive Building will see increased traffic along West Walk and regular high volume pedestrian traffic between Leaden Hall and the Cathedral.

Recent developments have seen Marsh Close being used as a location for car parking for the Cathedral and for the erection of marquees for both charitable and commercial fundraising events.

The construction of a large and unsightly electricity connection box could be seen as being indicative of an intention to increase the number and frequency of events on Marsh Close.

This application includes proposals to use Stephenson Hall as an auditorium for events and capable of holding an audience of two hundred people.

Historic England classify the entire conservation area as Grade 1 and Marsh Close as a unique area of semi-rural peace and tranquility.

“The setting of Leaden Hall in the Salisbury Cathedral Close is of particularly high value in terms of the way the building is experienced and appreciated”.



5. Need for a comprehensive Master Plan to avoid piecemeal development within the Conservation Area.

The SCCPS understand that Chapter are already working on a new Master Plan for the South Side Development. We are keen to be fully involved in this development.

We anticipate that this will include a new Works Department, Song School, Education and Visitor Facilities, perhaps including a new home for Magna Carta.

In this context it is our fervent view that plans for Leaden Hall should be considered in the wider context of the anticipated South Side Development to ensure that efforts are not duplicated, or funds wasted.

We are encouraged that the Cathedral Fabric Commission would appear to support this approach:

“It is important that the development of the Cathedral Close is considered as a whole rather than considering each building individually.

A Master Plan for the precinct could help to maximise the Cathedral’s income. The Commission suggested that you could seek other institutions whose activities complement those of the Cathedral to use the precinct buildings.

The Cathedral could be well served by speaking to York Minster about how they lead on the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for their Close. The Close in Salisbury is well used and highly regarded but would nevertheless benefit from having a specific plan, which the Cathedral could lead on with the Local Authority ahead of the proposed new draft of the local plan due in early 2023”.

Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England. Letter to Chapter dated 17th February 2022.

Yours sincerely,



Terry Byrne, Chairman