

Salisbury Cathedral Close

Preservation Society



Supporting Excellence in Heritage Estate Management

OBJECTION TO: PL/2024/00373 and PL/2024/00720 (LBC): Change of use of Leadenhall from education to offices and meeting rooms, facilities for events etc

Introduction

The Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society welcomes the plan to carry out long-overdue repair works at Leadenhall. It is one of the most important canons' houses in the Close and among a group of houses listed Grades I and II* in the stewardship of the Chapter (17 and 20 the Close, Hemyngsby) which have been empty for some time. They are clearly in need of day-to-day maintenance as well as thorough repair.

The Society regards Grade I listed Leadenhall and its setting as being of national significance. In consequence, any decisions taken in response to the planning application are crucial, not just to Leadenhall and its setting, but also to the Cathedral and its uniquely large Close. That is why the Society's Trustees committed funds to obtain the professional advice of Alan Baxter Associates (ABA). Their report in response to the planning application will be submitted separately. The Trustees entirely support the comments and recommendations made in that report.

The comments below amplify and complement the ABA report. In developing our response, we and ABA's Richard Pollard have liaised with officials at Historic England and caseworkers at the Georgian Group and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, as well as the former Cathedral Consultant Archaeologist, Tim Tatton-Brown, who was involved in all the previous works done for Leadenhall School between 1990 and 2011.

If, despite the evidence provided, planning and conservation officers were minded to approve the application, Cllr Sven Hocking has agreed, in response to the Society's request, to call in the application.

Despite assertions in the planning application, near neighbours at West Walk House, the Walton Canonry and Myles Place categorically deny having been consulted.

Summary

The Society urges the planning authorities to reject the planning application in its current form.

The repair and development of Leadenhall offers a long-awaited opportunity to restore a valuable heritage asset. The outcome would be more environmentally and financially sustainable if the plans were developed as part of an over-arching strategy for the development and use of all the Chapter's assets in the Close.

Ideally, the Society's Trustees would like to see Leadenhall returned to residential use, which would safeguard its future. (The Society is not clear whether alternative options for Leadenhall have been given full consideration.) However, given the poor condition of the house and gardens, the priority is to ensure it – and its grounds – are the subject of sensitive repair and restoration as soon as possible.

The key changes to the application sought by the Society are:

- The removal of Stephenson Hall, which was only granted planning consent because of the educational requirements of the school which occupied the site. The then architect was quoted as saying: "The architect points out that the ... new buildings are not designed to express permanence and could easily be removed (because of the method of construction) if the school ceased to occupy the site." (This was also said to Tim Tatton-Brown, in his role as Consultant Archaeologist, and the original siting of the swimming pool was changed because it was too close to the South-East Wing of the house.)
- Restoration of the grounds to the historic layout recorded in the numerous Constable paintings and the detailed 1:500 1880 Ordnance Survey maps of Salisbury.
- Elimination of the plans for solar panels in the grounds – particularly since the area demonstrably floods (cf. the photographs taken in January 2024) and they will mar a well-documented historic landscape.
- Elimination of the plans for the archive building on this site and a return to the previous plan to locate it south of the Cathedral (Masterplan signed off by Wiltshire Council 2017.)
- Plans for immediate remedial maintenance to prevent further deterioration of the house and garden.
- That any consent includes conditions requiring the Chapter:
 - To carry out immediate repairs and maintenance to the house and gardens and to continue to maintain them pending full implementation of the consent.
 - To produce a costed, 10-year plan for the maintenance of the house and grounds.

Reasons for the Society's objections to the application in its current form

- The application does not give sufficient consideration to the setting of Leadenhall, either in terms of its grounds, or within the Close. The house is Grade I listed. It lies within the Close, which sits within a Conservation Area. The Constable paintings, which are predominantly focussed on views of and from Leadenhall, have considerable bearing on the treatment of the Close. They make the Grade I designation of national importance.
- In the case of heritage assets, the new Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 requires that:
*(1) In considering whether to grant planning permission or permission in principle for the development of land in England which affects a relevant asset or its setting, **the local planning authority or (as the case may be) the Secretary of State must have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the asset or its setting.***
- Similarly, while there is mention of the Historic England Advice Note 12 2019 i.e.

An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

the plans do not give any weight to community access to heritage assets of considerable cultural significance:

- There is no appreciation, nor assessment of the impact of the works on a building and a landscape strongly associated with John Constable (e.g. the numerous paintings by Constable of Leadenhall, its grounds and views towards the Cathedral).
- There is no attempt to recognise that Elias de Dereham not only designed the Cathedral, but Leadenhall as a model canon's house. The now largely demolished south cross-wing of Leadenhall still has half-cellars below ground and fragments of the c.1230 chamber block of the Canon's house still survive, including important reset 13th Century windows in the south garden wall. Tim Tatton-Brown is of the opinion that this area should be designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- The application diverges from the revised Masterplan of 2016 (*Salisbury Cathedral "An Exceptional Place"*), which was endorsed by Wiltshire County Council in 2017, in several important respects:
 - the Masterplan proposed that education facilities should be accommodated on the south side of the Cathedral alongside a smaller Works Department offering potential "synergy" between the two, a song school and possibly provision for the archive and display of the Magna Carta;

- the Masterplan acknowledged that Wiltshire Council had advised it would not support an auditorium, not least because of the impact on other listed buildings and the Close overall. Feedback on the consultations indicated support for a larger auditorium than envisaged located in the city.
- The Society is keen to be a critical friend to the Chapter and to encourage a holistic approach to the planning, as urged by the Cathedrals Fabric Commission (in its letter of February 2022 to the Chapter Clerk Jackie Molnar) and exemplified by York Minster. This would facilitate a more coherent and strategic approach to issues such as sustainable energy, parking and the use of buildings. The current piecemeal approach means the application would cause **needless harm because it largely fails to evaluate other options that may be available or the wider impact of the proposals:**
 - Use of Leadenhall as an office will leave a purpose-built office building (Wyndham House) empty. (The freehold is owned by the Chapter.) It would also leave a Grade II* building empty (6 The Close).
 - Creation of another auditorium will compete with other nearby venues, including the Medieval Hall, Sarum College and venues in the city.
 - Parking plans which do not take account of the current planning application to make the car park in the South of the Close permanent.
- There is a lack of evidence and/or material to support assertions (such as the scale of administrative staff accommodation required) or decisions that diverge from the 2016 Masterplan (such as the proposed location of education and the Archive Building at Leadenhall rather than on the south side of the Cathedral).
- There is no:
 - Evaluation of the harm caused to the views painted by Constable. E.g. the Archive Building would block the view captured by Constable in “A View at Salisbury from Archdeacon Fisher’s House”. (Conversely, there has been no attempt to restore views that have been harmed by previous development, such as by removing Stephenson Hall.)
 - Traffic plan in respect of the proposed uses of the Stephenson Hall for education or events.
 - Evaluation of the impact of loss of amenity, for instance, in relation to the impact of the Archive Building on the public appreciation of the landscape, views across the Harnham Water Meadows, from the much-used Town Path or the views of immediate neighbours.
 - Travel plan setting out how children using the proposed facilities in the Stephenson Hall will move safely from there to the Cathedral.
- It is not clear whether the Chapter has submitted a valid application: has the Chapter met the requirements of S29 of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011?
- The Fabric Committee appears not to have been consulted.

Some Specific Comments

Leadenhall

As stated earlier, the Society's preference would be for Leadenhall to be returned to residential use. However, given its very poor condition, the priority is to ensure the house and its grounds are the subject of sensitive repair and restoration as soon as possible.

There is a considerable section in the Design and Access Statement setting out the very poor condition of Leadenhall, partly as a result of "solely reactive maintenance" during the tenure of the School. (However, there appears to have been little maintenance and no heating since the school vacated the site, handing it back to the Chapter. In consequence, there has been marked and avoidable damage to the fabric under the Chapter's stewardship.) The grounds, too, have suffered from lack of maintenance. **It is not clear why basic repairs and maintenance have not been carried out and cannot be carried out prior to consent to any planning application, in order to avoid any further deterioration of the fabric and the grounds.**

Archaeological evaluation of Leadenhall does not appear to reflect the possibility¹ that there may still be medieval cellar walls particularly within the southern crosswing (as shown in Naish's 1716 map of Salisbury) of Elias de Dereham's house, demolished in 1915 to the South and East of the current building.

Tim Tatton-Brown has advised that a full archaeological/architectural survey of the whole house should be undertaken, based on the brief, but useful survey published in the Royal Commission of Historic Monuments' *Houses of the Close*.

The Design and Access Statement (Cathedral Office Need 3.7) fails to demonstrate the calculations carried out to ensure that Leadenhall will deliver sufficient accommodation for staff. Nor does it show how it has factored in the impact of home-working and/or hot-desking.

There is very limited evidence of examination of historic paint finishes or wallcoverings and no coverage of plans for their conservation. The same is true of fixtures and fittings, such as fireplaces, woodwork, panelling, rainwater goods etc.

The grounds

The Landscape Masterplan and Proposed Site Plan demonstrate an inadequate understanding of the historic layout of the grounds. There are substantial and detailed records available, including the National Library of Scotland on-line Ordnance Survey maps (<https://maps.nls.uk/os/townplans-england/salisbury.html>), useful files and photographs now kept in Historic England's Historic Monuments Archives in Swindon and the extensive series of paintings by John Constable. (See the article by Tim Tatton-Brown in the Sarum Chronicle Issue 15 *The Gardens of the Leadenhall*.)

¹ Tim Tatton-Brown, Sarum Chronicle Issue 15.

As a result, the plans promote needless harm while failing to take advantage of opportunities for restoration. Specifically:

- Proposals for the reconfiguration of the forecourt of Leadenhall would gratuitously destroy the historic layout. There is space to create parking for people with disabilities through the Gothic arch to the North, with a substantial car park less than five minutes' walk away. The archaeological remains of the medieval gatehouse will lie under the east side of the forecourt.
- The retention of Stephenson Hall and proposals for a new garden layout around it cut across the landscape recorded in Constable's paintings causing further needless harm.
- The proposed orchard and array of solar panels (of which more below) are at odds with the documented historic layout of the fruit and vegetable garden. The "growing spaces" identified in the Proposed Site Plan are inappropriately located and would be more suitably located in the fruit and vegetable garden. (There is still an original door to the West Walk, now covered in ivy.)
- In view of the cultural significance of the site, it would be an act of public benefit to open the grounds (and possibly some of the historic interiors of Leadenhall) to the public periodically with the proceeds being donated to charity.
- The Heritage Statement includes the specific Historic England listing for the front wall and gates. The latter are in an advanced state of decay with missing ironwork.
- There is no examination of the impact of the proposals on the historic Constable views. (E.g. the Archive Building, in the light of "A View of Salisbury from Archdeacon Fisher's house", or the retention of Stephenson Hall, in the light of "Salisbury Cathedral and Leadenhall from the River Avon")



John Constable: Salisbury Cathedral and Leadenhall from the River Avon



View from across the River Avon: February 2024: The view of Leadenhall is obscured and the view of the Cathedral is dominated by Stephenson Hall.

The only restoration which appears to draw on historic evidence is of the parterre to the south of the Leadenhall, which the Society applauds.

Stephenson Hall

- The planning history in the Design and Access Statement fails to mention some key points:
 - Stephenson Hall and the associated timber classrooms were agreed as the culmination of a series of failed planning applications around the Millennium. Previous applications had been opposed by English Heritage, the Royal Fine Arts Commission and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission because of the sensitivity of the site.
 - Planners appeared to acquiesce to the final set of plans only because of the pressing educational need: the application noted the need “to ensure that the highest standards of education are maintained” after the Department for Education and Employment and the Independent Schools Joint Council had pointed out the need for specialist teaching accommodation.

The Stephenson Hall development was explicitly linked to the existence of the school. One of the architect’s key arguments in support of the successful application made clear the rationale for the development rested on the school’s needs on educational grounds: “The architect points out that the ... new buildings are not designed to express permanence and could easily be removed (because of the method of construction) if the school ceased to occupy the site”.

The then Cathedral Archaeologist has advised that these temporary buildings were meant to cause minimal damage to the below-ground archaeology and to the garden landscape so that the garden could be restored when the school had no further need for them.

- **Stephenson Hall had been built as a gym etc for Leadenhall School. Its use has now ended and its existence is detrimental to the setting documented in Constable’s paintings – particularly the view from across the River Avon. It dwarfs Leadenhall itself. It is harmful to the view from the Longbridge, immortalised in Constable’s painting “Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows”. It is also detrimental to the Close overall, which is the setting for the Cathedral. The proposed change of use should be turned down and Stephenson Hall should be removed.**



Part of the extensive flooding in the grounds of Leadenhall January 2024

The Archive

- **The Society recognises the need to re-house the archive, but believes a building forming part of the south side redevelopment would be more appropriate and consistent with the Cathedral’s masterplan.** This option would cause less harm.
- In view of the significance of the setting of Leadenhall, both to Leadenhall itself and the wider setting of the Close, there should be a presumption against further building on the historic gardens.
- Despite the assertions in the Heritage Statement and Design and Access Statement, the size, scale and massing and consequent impact on views of the proposed Archive Building are significant. This is evident from the mock-up of the aerial view and the elevations.

- Not only will it affect views of Leadenhall from Marsh Close, the churchyard, the West Walk and Broad Walk, it will also have a detrimental impact on views from the Town Path across the Harnham Wate Meadows, and on views from West Walk House (particularly of the sight lines to the Cathedral). (The evaluation of the sight lines from West Walk House in the Design and Access Statement are inaccurate.) It is not “modest” in scale. Nor is it, as asserted, “subservient” to Leadenhall.
- Proposals for the excavation of the site are not based on an adequate archaeological survey.

Solar panels

The construction of the tennis and netball courts was originally refused consent in 1991 as being “inimical to a historic garden setting”. As with the Stephenson Hall (and the swimming pool), their purpose no longer exists and the grounds should be restored to their previous condition as a kitchen garden.

Notwithstanding the plans to raise the solar panel array above ground level, this area was subject to serious flooding in January 2024. This is likely to recur as the impact of climate change becomes more marked.



Terry Byrne

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