

Chandos House, Bridgwater



ambition of this development begun by the Duke of Chandos in 1723 to provide high status houses for Bridgwater's merchants (in every respect the equal of the buildings being constructed for London's merchant class at this date).

In terms of the impact of both schemes the information provided was insufficient. We had particular concerns about the apartment scheme: this would have entailed new openings between the principal rooms on the ground floor with loss of both original walling and timber panelling. Overall, the scheme represented an unacceptable intensification of use. At a site meeting the applicant agreed to withdraw this scheme and to pursue the HMO option which requires fewer new openings. Discussion on site centred on how to minimise impact on historic planform and the least harmful method of introducing ensuite bathrooms. Following the site meeting we had the opportunity to view Legion House further up Castle Street (grade II*). This fine building is vacant and has been very severely vandalised but retains many original features. The plight of Legion House again emphasises the need for a strategic approach to the future of this remarkable street.

WILTSHIRE

Leaden Hall

The Close, Salisbury (grade I, conservation area)

The original canonical house on this site was built by Elias de Dereham, designer of Salisbury Cathedral. The present house was built to the north of its predecessor in 1717 making use of some medieval stonework but rebuilt c.1800 when the Chancellor of the Diocese, William Douglas, paid for extensive embellishments – including Regency Gothic buttresses and porch to the principal eastern elevation. On several occasions in the early nineteenth century John Constable was a guest of the then occupant, Archdeacon John Fisher. It was from here that the artist produced sketches for his celebrated views of the Cathedral, one of which, 'Salisbury Cathedral and Leadenhall from the River', shows part of the western elevation of the house glimpsed from the water meadows. The verdant tranquil setting of Leaden Hall, contained in a series of screen walls, largely survives today – albeit compromised by Stephenson Hall, a timber and glass structure added in the garden west of the house in 2004 to facilitate use of the site as a school. Regrettably this severed the picturesque view of the Cathedral from the river recorded by Constable. Internally, use as a school for much of the twentieth century resulted in the loss of some of

Leaden Hall's historic features. However, the planform remains legible, and some fine Neo-Classical interiors survive.

Earlier this year the Group was consulted on proposals by the Dean & Chapter for the conversion of Leaden Hall to offices and the construction in its immediate setting of a new building to house the Cathedral archives. The scheme also entailed the retention of Stephenson Hall for educational use.

We were therefore extremely concerned to see on our site visit the deteriorated condition of the building caused by the failure over several years to address water ingress. We noted widespread rot of timbers, damage to historic features and fittings, growth of vegetation, and damaged plasterwork. A large section of the drawing room ceiling – close to a particularly fine cornice – had collapsed entirely.

The Group submitted a robust objection to the proposals which would have caused unacceptable loss of fabric to the listed building itself and compromised its setting. We pointed to the existence of a Masterplan for the Cathedral which identifies an alternative and more suitable site for the archive building. We highlighted the severe damage to the listed building and urged Wiltshire to use its statutory powers, if necessary, to ensure urgent works of repair and protection are carried out pending determination of the application.



Leaden Hall, Salisbury