

Salisbury Central Area Framework (“CAF”) Consultation – September 2019

I am writing on behalf of the Trustees of The Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society. The Society is a registered charity whose aims are to promote knowledge of the area of Salisbury near the Cathedral, in particular the Cathedral Close (The Close), its history and architecture and to secure the preservation, protection and improvement of its features of historic and public interest.

Preserving the unique features of The Close

In this context, we responded to the original consultation on the CAF. We were very pleased to note the features that you originally cited as key characteristics of The Close – notably *Contemplation* and *Quiet* – are retained in this iteration and we trust this will not change in the final CAF. Whilst it did not appear in the recent consultation slide presentation, we note that the speaker’s notes include one other point he made, his own comment, that it would be important to “ensure protection of cathedral views from the meadows”. The Society supports this concept and its inclusion in the CAF.

Pedestrianisation

Reducing city centre traffic and creating pedestrianised/enhanced streets as you propose is to be commended. The Society stresses that the North (High St) Gate provides the only vehicular entrance to The Close, which is of course a residential area with several hundred inhabitants as well as a major ecclesiastical, educational and visitor attraction. This is the **only** access to The Close of a sufficient size for access by the emergency services. Therefore, that section of the High Street between its intersection with Crane Street and New Street and the North Gate is not feasible for pedestrianisation.

Coach parking in St. John’s Street

Many visitors on foot, especially those visiting Salisbury on coach tours, enter The Close via the St Ann’s Gate. The coaches park on the west side of St John’s St. This is unsatisfactory and the coaches – many of which come from continental Europe and discharge their passengers on the right-hand side into busy traffic – create a traffic blockage, a hazard to coach visitors and air pollution. The first consultation on the CAF referred to the need for **additional parking** with no proposals on location. There is now no mention of additional parking in the CAF, referring instead to “consolidating car parking” with emphasis on better use of Culver Street and the Park and Rides and a potential for, in the future, Salt Lane and Brown Street car parks being put to different uses. This change in emphasis does nothing to solve the problem with the Cathedral visitors’ coaches. Given the Maltings Masterplan includes improvements to the Coach Park and a new “Salisbury Welcome Experience” we urge you to address in the CAF the possibility of all Cathedral coach parking/ dropping off going elsewhere such as the Maltings. This would substantially improve the quality/safety of the St John’s St. environment.

Churchfields

At the recent consultation The Society asked why earlier potential zoning of Churchfields to become residential in other existing plans had been dropped in the CAF in favour of continuing as industrial. There is no explanation of this in the CAF. The answer received was that there

was a viability gap – residential v. employment – so moving to residential was not viable now or probably forever.

Churchfields continues to be characterised by trading, industry and working in the CAF. The first consultation mentioned a wish to ‘**increase intensity of land use**’ there. The revised CAF is silent on that. Please could it state that there will be no further intensification of usage, with no knock-on increase in heavy traffic along, amongst others, Mill Road, Crane Street and New Street? If Churchfields is to remain wholly industrial/commercial, there has to be an end to the current volume of traffic moving to and from there through the city centre. This heavily polluting traffic (noise and vibration as well as vehicular emissions) creates an unsafe environment and impinges heavily on the pedestrian environment, notably but not only at the New St/High St crossroads. While that continues, everything else you propose for the city centre is put at risk: if Churchfields is to be retained in its current form and use, an alternative route serving it – presumably from Netherhampton Road – must be considered as part of the CAF. The Society is concerned that the CAF says nothing at all about Churchfields, other than that it is one of the “Priority Intervention Areas.” There must be, at the very least, some form of Traffic Management Plan reducing Churchfields traffic through the city centre[, and also using the station approach (because they can get under the railway bridge, there). This causes real congestion and hazards there at peak times, as large lorries turning left into Fisherton Street block the opposite carriageway to make the turn.]Please address this in the CAF.

Repurposing heritage buildings

The CAF now states that it would “Support the repurposing of heritage buildings, under-utilised rear courtyards and upper floors”. The Society queried this at the presentation. The answer was that it was more about better use of underutilised areas such as yards and upper floors, rather than changes of use from residential to other uses. In various parts of the town centre, the Society would be in favour of this. There are many properties in areas such as Crane Street or Fisherton Street where, when one looks up, some upper floors look unkempt, compared to the shops/offices at street level. This repurposing could result in improvements to heritage buildings. It might also lead to more availability of residential flats in upper floors at more modest cost, consistent with the CAF’s desire to increase affordable homes in the city.

As regards The Close, which has the greatest density of listed buildings in Salisbury, (including more than 20 which are Grade 1 listed) and of which it is stated

“All the listed buildings in the Close form an outstanding group”, repurposing would be frequently inappropriate. This would be particularly so if that repurposing could include change of use from residential to other uses – particularly commercial. Curbs on repurposing in The Close is also consistent with the Salisbury Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan which identifies, as core features of The Close, its ‘quiet formality’, its ‘tranquil character’ and ‘the absence of **commercial** enterprises within the walls’. This is particularly important as more intensity of development could damage the settings of the many listed buildings in The Close. The Close, as you note, is Salisbury’s major tourist attraction whose unique features should be protected from commercial intrusions, other than those low-key activities which are provided by some of the attractions open to the public. Such activities must continue to be controlled by planning conditions.

Heather Olsen – Chairman
Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society