

**The Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society**  
**53A The Close, Salisbury**  
**Wiltshire SP1 2EL**

Mr Simon Hickman,  
Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas  
Historic England, South West Office,  
29 Queen Square,  
BRISTOL  
BS1 4ND

4<sup>th</sup> June 2018

**PLANNING APPLICATION 18/03096/FUL – TEMPORARY CHANGE OF USE TO  
HOLD A CHRISTMAS MARKET OVER SPECIFIED DATES IN 2018 ONLY**

Dear Mr Hickman

The Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society, a charity the objects of which include the preservation, protection and improvement of Salisbury Cathedral Close, has seen the letter which you wrote to Mrs Jones at Wiltshire Council, Development Services on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018 and the response to Historic England from Mr Speer dated 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018 on behalf of the applicant. The Society would wish to comment as follows:

**1 Impact of the proposal**

**a) the Cathedral setting**

The Conservation Officer states that the siting of the chalets astride the principal route from the High street Gate to the Cathedral has a significant visual impact on the setting of the Cathedral. It will impinge on key views. This is in addition to the higher footfall and noise he feels it will cause. Mr Speer's response that the western façade of the Cathedral will be unaffected is not relevant given that the application concerns the view from North Walk. The view of the proposed market is the first view of the Cathedral which most visitors will see.

The heritage asset that is the Close reflects a designed landscape envisaged by Wyatt in the late 18th century when he created the open setting for the Cathedral by demolishing the Bell Tower and creating the lawned area over what remains a consecrated graveyard (see letter of objection on the planning

website from Miss Suzanne Eward, the former Cathedral archivist). The very open nature of the landscape inevitably means that noise carries, thus affecting the setting. This is an argument that the Cathedral itself used in 2015 to object to an application to allow use of the garden of Arundells, the former home of the late Sir Edward Heath, for a limited number of dedicated events and activities (Application 15/02009/VAR).

## **b) public benefit**

The recent revelation, not mentioned in the original planning application or a subsequent supporting statement, that the current size of the Christmas market in the City centre is to be reduced by more than two thirds/approaching three quarters (from around 70 to 20 chalets) means that the 50 chalets in the Close will largely represent a relocation rather than an expansion of the existing market. What will be left, perhaps, in the original location will be stalls selling food and drink since the Cathedral has, in discussions with the Society at the end of 2017 and early 2018, (way before the problems that have affected Salisbury in recent months), indicated that catering on site would only be by the Cathedral's caterers. A statement filed in support of the application said that "There is no plan for food or drink sales at the Christmas Market for immediate consumption in the Cathedral Close". Also, the Cathedral itself proscribes the drinking of alcohol in the Close.

Last year there were 27 stalls selling food to go, hampers, other foodstuffs or alcohol, so the implication from that must be that the entire general merchandising side of the Christmas Market, is being moved to the Cathedral Close. The relocation to the Close is unnecessary and there is likely to be a negative public benefit given that all the local businesses which are supposed to benefit from additional footfall are in the area where only the rump of the market will be based.

## **2 Archaeology**

There is no information as to how the foundations of the former Bell Tower are to be satisfactorily protected. As the Conservation Officer has indicated, he would wish to see protective measures carried out.

## **3 Financial justification**

The scant information provided by Mr Speer does not in our view reflect a realistic financial planning approach. It does not represent a proper and

considered financial assessment and lacks any evidence base. It is based on phrases such as “it is hoped that .....by siting the market in the Cathedral Close.....visitors would visit the Cathedral”. Also, there is a suggestion that (again, expressed as a hope), the Christmas Market might bolster visitor numbers at a quieter time. That is not a reasoned and structured financial justification for allowing such a market in the Salisbury Cathedral Close.

The expressed reason for the planning application was to help local businesses recover from the recent nerve agent attack. The proposed new location is however not helpful to the city’s businesses being some distance from shops, bars and restaurants. The Society has seen no analysis that the proposal will have the hoped-for effects.

We understand that it was not the primary intention to site the market in the Close to benefit the Cathedral financially. On 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018, the Executive Director & Chapter Clerk of the Cathedral wrote in support of the application stating that the primary reason was “to develop the relationships the Cathedral has within the public, business and voluntary sectors”. In fact, no income is to be received by the Cathedral for hire of the chalets. Your paper on temporary structures requires evidence of income and how it will be utilised to preserve and protect the historic asset. There might be some income from the Cathedral’s catering facilities but that is not the primary purpose of the Cathedral participating in the proposal. Indeed, the letter from the Cathedral referred to above says that only if the application is successful will “we explore ways to encourage more visitors into the Cathedral itself”.

There is no estimate of projected visitor numbers to the market and/or of the proportion of these likely to visit the Cathedral following a visit to the Christmas market. It could be questioned whether shoppers carrying their shopping are likely to then visit the Cathedral.

## **Conclusions**

The proposed market will have an adverse impact on the visual appearance and tranquillity of the Cathedral Close for a prolonged period. It will damage the appearance of the grass for many months (with the need for the area to be fenced off in the meantime) as well as compounding problems of security, noise, light pollution and traffic congestion. The Christmas market in a large part or its entirety has no need to move to the Close and can be

accommodated in its present position in the central Guildhall Square or expanded into the High Street or other central commercial areas of the city.

Mr Speer's assertion that the new revised plan (which differs markedly from the plan submitted with the application) will mean pedestrians will not walk on the grass lacks credibility.

The period of operation of the market is stated by Mr Speer to be four weeks (actually 31 days) but he omits to mention that up to two weeks will be needed for setting up and dismantling. In fact, the dismantling period may well extend well beyond the Christmas period as the market will finish very close to Christmas Day.

Mr Speer refers Historic England to the original statement filed in support of the application as explaining how they propose to deal with protecting trees, statuary, paths and surfaces. All the statement says is that there will be various programmes and method statements produced at some unspecified future time.

In an email dated 2 May to the senior planning officer, Becky Jones, Mr Speer expressly acknowledges that not all the details of the proposal have been submitted and that some planning conditions on matters such as "noise, generators, Music, etc" might be acceptable. This is insufficient to protect the unique heritage asset that is the Cathedral Close. The sort of information that should be provided is as set out in Historic England's guidance "Temporary structures in Historic Places". And the level of detail should, as that guidance states, be "proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and the impact of the proposal". This open and tranquil space is unique and is a world class heritage asset which should be protected.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Olsen, Chairman

The Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society