

17 The Close, Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury, Wiltshire

National Grid Reference (NGR) SU 14488 29675

Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief

Wiltshire Council planning reference PL/2024/07610

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Wiltshire Council has granted planning permission (ref PL/2024/07610) and listed building consent (PL/2024/08311) to the Chapter of Salisbury Cathedral for work at the Grade II* listed 17 The Close, Salisbury Cathedral.¹ The work under the planning permission is described as “minor alterations, refurbishment works, including creation of family room and minor localised re-landscaping”. No 17 lies in the north-east part of The Close on the north side of North Walk, between Sarum College to the west and St Anne’s Gate to the east.

Condition 3 of the planning permission states that

“No development shall commence on site until:

a) A written programme of archaeological investigation, which should include on-site work and off-site work such as the analysis, publishing and archiving of the results, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and

b) The approved programme of archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost in a manner proportionate to their importance and to make this evidence and any archive generated publicly accessible.

The programme of archaeological work should involve the monitoring of any ground works that have the potential to impact on buried archaeological remains, followed by the preparation of a report commensurate with the significance of the results.”

This WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation) provides the required methodology for the watching brief, recording, analysis and reporting of results during the project. The WSI has been prepared by Graham Keevill, who will also implement the WSI personally. GK is the Cathedral Archaeologist for Salisbury, on behalf of the Dean and Chapter.

1.2 17 The Close

No 17 The Close is a Grade II* listed building (National Heritage List number 1252153), designated on 28 February 1952. The full list description reads: “Documentary reference of 1442-43 but virtually rebuilt C16/17. Jacobean. 3 storeys red brick with stone bands between storeys, projecting flanking piers, one stuccoed, with ashlar quoins and cornice broken forward over. Deep moulded and coved eaves cornice. Hipped old tile roof. 2 4-light stone mullioned windows to second floor, 2 4-light stone mullioned and transomed windows on first floor and ground floor. Central Victorian neo-Jacobean doorway with stone pilasters, block impost and keystone to arch, panelled stone frieze and cornice. The door is round headed and panelled. The rear north elevation has paired gables, mullioned and transomed windows and rectangular bays largely renewed. The floor levels to right hand are slightly higher than those on left. Interior: 2 turning and arched staircases in both halves of

¹ [17, THE CLOSE, Salisbury - 1252153 | Historic England](#)

building to rear, serving different levels. Curious mezzanine zoom or cupboard with window over garden entrance. To the front the whole of the first floor is one room with panelling, pilasters and frieze with geometrical arabesque and strapwork decoration. Plaster frieze with strapwork, figures and floral decoration. Thin ribbed ceiling with pendants. 4 centred arched fireplace flanked by carved wood pilasters and fluted tapering pilasters flanking panelled overmantel. The panelling does not always accord with plaster frieze and may have been reset. Panelled second floor room to rear. All the listed buildings in the Close form an outstanding group". The list description locates the house at NGR SU 14488 29675.

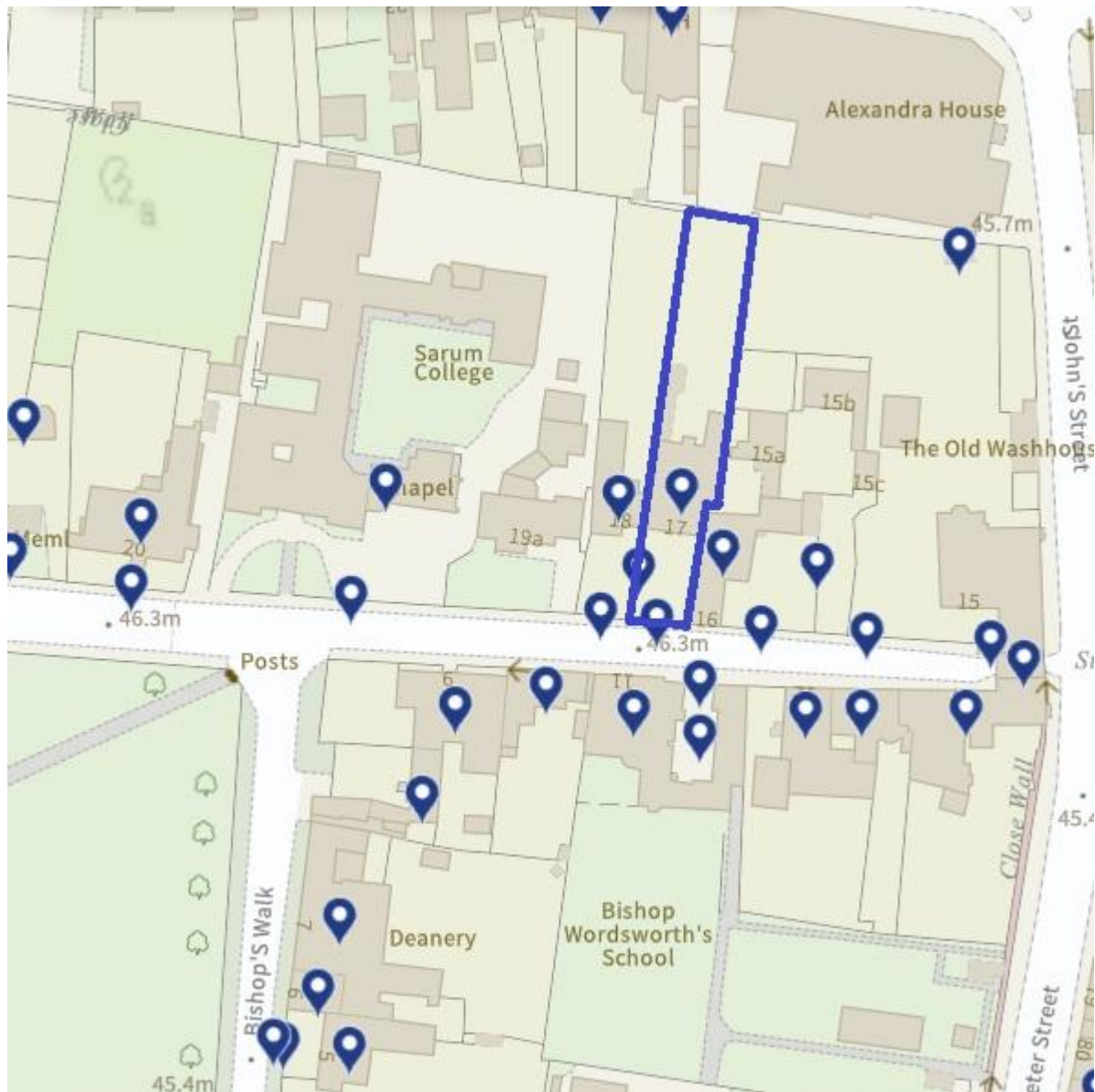


Figure 2: Listed buildings (blue pins) on North Walk, with No 17 identified in blue. Note that the boundary wall between No 17 and No 18 is listed separately, at Grade II (NHL number 1023593). Ordnance Survey data Crown Copyright 2026. All rights reserved. Licence number AC0000848318.

This section of North Walk housed the Vicars Choral in the late medieval period and after. They had an important role in the daily life of the Cathedral and its community, in effect taking the place of the Canons whose large residences are such a huge (literally) feature on West Walk and Chorister's Green at its north end. Salisbury's Vicars Choral did not exist as a formal group until c 1409 when

they received a charter acknowledging their existence,² but the vicars had been present individually before that. Houses of the Close suggests that the present No 17 stands “on the site of an earlier house which belonged from the later Middle Ages to the vicars; this was occupied (perhaps mainly) by their members, such as John Wallopp (vicar) in 1442/3, Patrick Ford in 1559 and Richard Ganyett (lay vicar) in 1583”.³ Nothing is known about any earlier buildings.

The Newhaven Chalk Formation (Chalk) forms the bedrock geology at 17 The Close. This sedimentary material formed between 86.3 and 72.1 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. Superficial (drift) River Terrace Deposits (4 - sand and gravel) overlie this, having formed between 2.5 million years ago and the present during the Quaternary period.⁴

1.3 Archaeology

The Wiltshire Historic Environment Record does not appear to contain any references to previous archaeological work at 17 The Close. *Houses of the Close* nor *Vicars' Close* refer to any work here either, excepting that RCHME visited the property and recorded various details as part of their work for *Houses*. A few records are noted near to No 17. Two trial trenches dug at Sarum College in 1997, for example (EWI3955), revealed considerable depths of garden soil and recent made ground along with probable medieval layers and features/walls.⁵ More recently, in 2023 Wessex Archaeology excavated two trial trenches in advance of a substantial extension being added to 12 The Close (on North Walk to the south-east of No 17), and subsequently maintained a detailed watching brief during groundworks for the building. They recorded substantial, well-preserved remains of the Hall of the Vicars Choral – in effect their headquarters building in the late medieval period. Substantial masonry walls forming the north and south sides of the Hall were revealed. Other remains suggested that the late medieval Hall had been maintained and perhaps repaired in the post-medieval period: it was not demolished until 1814.⁶ The medieval walls were close to the modern ground level near the existing house, but further away from it to the west they were buried by around 0.8m-1m of garden soil and other layers. The author's watching brief at No 10 The Close in 2024-5 did not record any significant archaeological remains, although most of the work monitored was very superficial.⁷

2 Project aims

The general aim of archaeological intervention on a proposed development site is

- To ensure that as much as possible of the archaeological resource affected by Scheme proposals is preserved *in situ*.
- To mitigate a Scheme's impact on archaeology (including buildings) through fieldwork methods designed to preserve by record any remains which cannot be retained *in situ*.

² Tatton-Brown T 2005, Where was the Vicars' Close at Salisbury?, in R Hall and D Stocker (eds), *Vicars Choral at English Cathedrals*, Oxbow Books, 106-11. Hereafter simply referred to as *Vicars' Close*.

³ *Houses of the Close*, 105. Wallopp's occupation of the site is probably the documentary reference mentioned at the start of the list description.

⁴ [BGS Geology Viewer \(BETA\)](#)

⁵ Wessex Archaeology and Keevill G 2015, *Salisbury Cathedral Close – Precinct Archaeological Assessment*.

⁶ Wessex Archaeology 2023a, *12 The Close, Salisbury: Archaeological evaluation*; Wessex Archaeology 2023b, *12 The Close, Salisbury: Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*; on the demolition of the Hall, see *Vicars' Close*, 106.

⁷ Keevill G D 2025, *10 The Close, Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury - report on an archaeological watching brief on a new extension to the rear of the property*

The specific aims of this archaeological watching brief are

- to maintain full supervision of any operations on site that may disturb or destroy significant archaeological deposits;
- to determine whether archaeological structures, features or layers exist within the proposal site – in particular, remnant structures or features associated with the medieval house of a Vicar Choral (ie a predecessor of 17 The Close);
- to collect artefacts (where present and of archaeological significance) from the excavations, and soil samples if there is apparent potential for environmental studies;
- to assess the significance of any archaeological deposits, structures and features that may be encountered, and to define any further research priorities that may be relevant;
- to make a full graphic, photographic and written record of the work, related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid and Ordnance Datum, whether or not archaeological remains are encountered;
- to communicate the results of the project to the Cathedral Chapter in the form of a detailed, illustrated report, and to provide digital copies to Wiltshire Council's Planning Archaeologist (with digital and, if required, printed copies for the County Historic Environment Record), and Historic England
- to create an OaSIS record for the project (a copy to be appended to the report); and
- to prepare an archive of the project, which will be maintained in the Chapter Archive at Salisbury Cathedral.

3 Project methods

Proposed alterations are small in scale, and will have a limited impact in the ground. Three areas of excavation are needed, all quite minor. They comprise some work to improve drainage to the rear of No 17; a foundation to a steel column for a bi-fold door opening in the family room (G11-13) in the small wing to the north-east of the main house; and partial renewal of the water main from North Walk to the house.

3.1 Archaeological methods

All excavations which might impact on significant archaeological remains as defined in this WSI will be monitored in detail. If only garden soils and made ground are exposed, these will be recorded summarily – primarily through photography, with written context notes and section drawings as appropriate. The locations of all monitored excavations will be recorded on the existing site plans as supplied in the planning/listed building consent applications.

If revealed, pits, postholes and other discrete features will usually be subject to a 50% sample by volume. Linear features such as ditches will usually be sectioned to an equivalent 10-20% sample or as appropriate. It may not always be possible to determine the nature/character of an individual feature within the constraints of a watching brief (especially in narrow service trenches): a pragmatic approach will therefore be taken to the excavation sampling strategy, based on the best assessment possible of what any given feature might represent. Graves/skeletons, if found during a watching brief, may need to be removed under archaeological control if they cannot be left in situ without risk of damage (none are expected on this site). Structures, if found, will be fully recorded and samples of building materials will be kept if appropriate.

All recording of archaeological deposits will be according to standard practice using pro-forma sheets and the single-context system of numbering. Detailed drawings in elevation, plan and section

will be at a scale of 1:20, although other scales (eg 1:100) can be useful for location, key and summary coverage. The site in general will be located on an Ordnance Survey map at a suitable scale (eg 1:1250 available from client/architect). Photographs will primarily be taken digitally using a Canon EOS 600D, EOS 700D, EOS M100 or Sony a6000 DSLR saving images in jpeg and uncompressed RAW formats. Colour (slide) and black-and-white (negative) photographs may also be taken if required, but are increasingly found to be redundant and inferior to our digital results. Photographs will include general working shots as well as context-specific ones. Full index lists will be maintained for the context, drawn, and photographic records.

Finds will be assessed by context on site. The following collection policy will apply to this project, in line with the relevant Standard and Guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.⁸

- All finds will be collected initially. An initial sift will be made on site, or at our office if this is not feasible due to weather or other site conditions.
- Prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon material is unlikely to be present but will certainly be retained in full if found.
- All medieval finds will be retained. Early post-medieval (16th/17th-century) finds will normally be retained in full as well.
- Later post-medieval (18th/early 19th century) material will be noted by count but only retained if significant within the research aims or because of features/structures found during the excavations. Otherwise they will be discarded.
- Modern material (later 19th/20th-century) will only be retained if it is of exceptional interest in its own right.

All retained finds will be collected and recorded by context.

Human skeletal remains are not expected at this site, which is well away from the burial ground in the Green around the Cathedral. As far as we are aware no burials have been found previously along North Walk. Should any human bone be found it will be treated appropriately and with proper respect under a burial licence from the Ministry of Justice (Wiltshire Council's Planning Archaeologist will also be informed immediately of any discovery of human skeletal remains). Finds of "treasure" will be reported to the county Coroner's Office in accordance with the Treasure Act 1996, and also to Wiltshire Council's Planning Archaeologist.⁹ The potential for preservation of organic remains and environmental archaeological material is unclear but appears to be low given that all excavations will be relatively shallow, but soil samples will be taken as necessary and appropriate. If any artefact conservation is needed, it would be undertaken at recognised laboratories by experienced and qualified personnel. On and off-site finds processing will conform to all UKIC guidelines. All recording materials will conform to UKIC guidelines (Walker 1990).

The Data Management Plan for this project will involve

- Retention within the project archive of relevant preliminary/planning information (eg this WSI and the project brief if provided, drawings by the architect and others, site and/or topographical surveys where available)
- Retention within the project archive of all primary project physical records (site surveys, drawings such as plans and sections, context records, site notes, index lists etc);
- Digital copying of primary project physical records where appropriate (eg drawings);

⁸ ClfA, *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief; Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*; both originally published December 2014, updated June 2020. See also their *Universal Guidance for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* (2023).

⁹ [Treasure Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/32)

- Retention within the project archive of all primary project digital records (survey data, photographs, scans/3D models where relevant) along with printed copies of selected material (eg digital photographs) as appropriate;
- Secondary information such as research papers, published work on the site and its surrounding, data on designated heritage assets/the Historic England Archive/Historic Environment Record will be noted and recorded within the archive but will not usually be retained as part of it.
- The project report(s) will always form part of the project archive in digital format (usually a PDF file) and in hard copy where appropriate. Publications, if relevant, will also form part of project archive in digital format (PDF) and in hard copy where appropriate.

3.3 Post-excavation work and watching brief report

Any archaeological features, structures and deposits encountered will be fully described and interpreted. This will include all appropriate specialist consideration of the finds etc. The results of the work will be illustrated as necessary. This work will form the basis for the reporting of the results.

A report detailing the results of the watching brief will be written and deposited with the Planning Archaeologist and the county Historic Environment Record within three to four months of the end of fieldwork (or such other timescale as may be agreed with Wiltshire Council). The report will be illustrated with a site location plan at a scale of 1:1250 or 1:2500 using relevant OS coverage, and plans and sections of the excavations as relevant at appropriate scales. Photographs (digital and/or scanned conventional media) will be included. The report will include a full description of the excavated evidence, even if this is negative (ie no archaeological remains are found). A summary context/finds table or tables, all relevant specialist reports, and consideration of the wider significance of the results will also be included.

3.4 Publication

A brief summary report will be submitted for inclusion in the annual round-up of projects in the Council for British Archaeology Wessex Regional Group's biannual newsletter, *Wessex News*, and in relevant national journals (eg *Medieval Archaeology*, *Post-Medieval Archaeology*) if significant archaeology is found. The reports will include details of the client, planning reference, OS grid reference, personnel involved in the fieldwork and other such technical data as may be relevant. The curatorial role of the Wiltshire Council (Archaeological Services) will be duly acknowledged. Should the results prove to be of sufficient significance, a more extensive publication will be considered, eg in *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* or the *Sarum Chronicle*. An OaSIS entry for the project will also be prepared; the summary will be appended to the project report.

3.5 Archive

The project archive will be fully ordered and indexed as part of the post-excavation process. The archive and finds (if relevant) from the project will be curated at the Cathedral's own Archive. Digital archiving, if needed, will be arranged with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

4 RESOURCES

4.1 Personnel

The archaeological project will be carried out personally by Salisbury's Cathedral Archaeologist (since 2011), Graham Keevill (BA MCIFA FSA). He retires from post on 31 March 2026, but will complete this project as part of his responsibilities even if report work needs to continue after that date. He graduated in archaeology from the University of Leicester in 1980 and has been in professional practice ever since. He has directed archaeological programmes throughout England, and has been extensively involved in major strategic studies, management plans and environmental assessments, eg on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and at the Tower of London. He is the Cathedral Archaeologist to the Deans and Chapters of Christ Church Oxford, Rochester, Blackburn and Salisbury, and fulfils an equivalent role at Tewkesbury Abbey. He has directed evaluations, excavations, surveys and post-excavation work at numerous sites throughout England, including locally at Eynsham Abbey, Dorchester Abbey, Nuneham Courtenay (Lower Farm kiln site), Abingdon, Wallingford and elsewhere. He has extensive knowledge of archaeological and other heritage legislation and planning policy, and has widely acknowledged experience and skill in project management, interdisciplinary teamwork, report writing and editing to top professional standards, and working with all heritage bodies. He works regularly with Historic England officers and local authority archaeologists.

Graham has researched all periods of human endeavour from early prehistory to the industrial age, and is an acknowledged expert in medieval and post-medieval archaeology. From 1993 onwards he has been in charge of archaeological projects at the Historic Royal Palaces in London, especially at the Tower of London. He has particular experience in church and monastic archaeology, having been in charge of complex projects in Carlisle, Eynsham, Rievaulx, Dorchester, Lanercost, Abbotsbury and elsewhere. His publications include eight monographs, detailed and summary excavation reports in numerous local and regional journals, and contributions to several published conference proceedings.

Further professional archaeologists with suitable training, qualifications and experience may assist during fieldwork if needed. Cathy Keevill (see below) will lead in providing such assistance on site.

Ceramic/finds analysis would be dealt with by Cathy Keevill (see section 4.1.2), who would also assess building materials and other finds in conjunction with Graham Keevill. Archiving and finds management will be also carried out by Cathy. Report illustrations will be handled by internal staff.

4.2 Attendances, fencing, security and plant hire

All attendances will be provided by the building contractor, who is already on site for other work.

4.3 Health and safety; Insurance

It is not expected that deep excavations will be required. No contamination issues are anticipated. All work will be carried out to the requirements of *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974*, the Keevill Heritage Ltd Health and Safety Policy, *The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992*, the SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers) manual *Health and Safety in Field Archaeology 1991*, and the client/contractor. All necessary personal protective equipment will be provided. Under no circumstances would the archaeological team be expected or allowed to knowingly place themselves in unsafe situations.

Keevill Heritage Ltd retains full professional indemnity insurance, employers' liability insurance and public liability insurance.

4.4 Timing

It is expected that this project will commencement at the end of February/start of March 2026. The work requiring a watching brief has been timetabled to take place on 4-5 March 2026, and Graham Keevill will be on site during this period accordingly. If timings need to change at all, this will be confirmed as soon as possible so that a site visit by the County's Planning Archaeologist can be arranged if needed. Report timings are dealt with in section 3.3 above.

Graham D Keevill
Keevill Heritage Ltd
19 February 2026