

THE FORMER ASSIZE COURT

NORTHGATE STREET DEVIZES



SCHEDULE 2 THE BRIEF

Devizes Assize Court Trust

May 2019

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1 Introduction

This Brief has been prepared to accompany an invitation to tender for architectural design and related services for the challenge of restoring, remodelling and extending the former Assize Court building in Devizes, Wiltshire to become the new home for the Wiltshire Museum and to form an integral part of a major regeneration scheme.

The newly created Devizes Assize Court Trust (the Trust) aims to rescue and restore this fine building to an exemplary standard so that it will once again become an important part of the cultural and economic life of Devizes.

For the Wiltshire Museum, this will be a transformational project, matching the importance of its internationally significant Designated collections with a world-class building to create a whole new visitor experience to engage and inspire a wider audience and to enhance enjoyment, education and learning. More details on the current Wiltshire Museum can be found in Appendix 2 - Introduction to the Wiltshire Museum.

The Assize Court site adjoins the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Wharf area for which Wiltshire Council has announced extensive regeneration plans. The site is also adjacent to Wadworth Brewery which brings in a large number of visitors. Accordingly, this is a significant project for the town of Devizes, the county of Wiltshire and the wider area. The likely costs of the building work have been estimated at £6million plus fees and VAT but excluding the cost of fitting out the Museum. The scheme needs to be sufficiently high-profile and high quality that it will attract funding from a range of national and local public and private sources.

2 Background

The Assize Court is listed grade II* and is included in the current Historic England, Buildings at Risk, list, priority A. It has not been occupied for over 30 years and is in poor condition. It was purchased by the Trust in November 2018 and prior to that was in private ownership. For more than 10 years the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust with the local community has been looking for ways to intervene to save the building and more recently has been working with Wiltshire Council and the Wiltshire Museum.

The current Wiltshire Museum is located in Long Street Devizes and is run by the Wiltshire Archaeological History Society. The premises consist of five separate buildings linked together and with 25 different floor levels making access difficult. It has also outgrown its storage capacity.

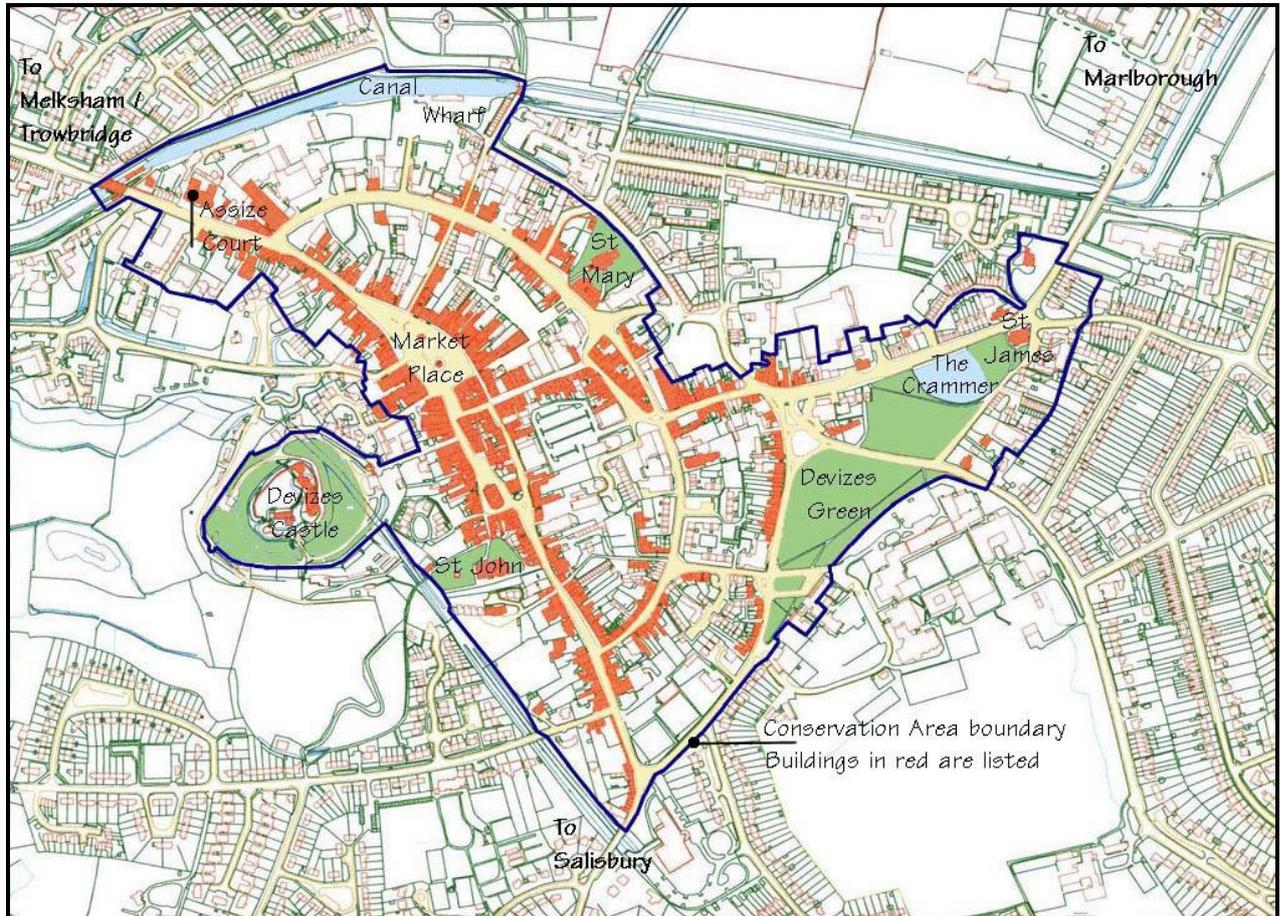
The Museum is Designated by the Government as being of National significance and features the best Bronze Age archaeology collection in Britain, including objects from the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site. The Museum, established in 1853, received an HLF grant in 2010 to develop new Prehistory galleries, working in partnership with the new Stonehenge Visitor Centre that was opened by English Heritage in 2014.

The plan to relocate the Wiltshire Museum to the Assize Court will transform the Museum, restore this important building to its former glory and create a visitor destination at the heart of the County. The aim is that the visitor experience will engage and inspire a broader range of audiences.

Devizes, with a population of over 32,000, is a medieval market town in the centre of Wiltshire just north of Salisbury Plain. The building of a castle in Norman times dictated the layout of streets and spaces with the Market Place now the heart of the town. The quality of life for residents and businesses owes much to the town's history and architectural heritage, its surrounding landscape and strong sense of community, and these are also the main attractions for its many visitors.

3 The Location

The building is located in Northgate Street in a prominent position at the entrance to the historic core of the town from the west and within the Devizes Conservation Area. The main road past the building is the east / west route through Wiltshire, the A361. Devizes is 16 miles north from Stonehenge and 8 miles west from Avebury.



Location Plan – not to scale

The Kennet and Avon Canal, which pre-dates the construction of the Assize Court, lies just to the north. Now fully restored as a cruising waterway the canal also provides a long distance walking and cycling route.

Along Northgate Street and to the west of the Assize Court is a small terrace of late 19th century houses. To the south east are the grade II listed Wadworth buildings including the 19th century former White Lion Pub and the imposing 1885 6 storey red brick brewery on the corner with New Park Street.

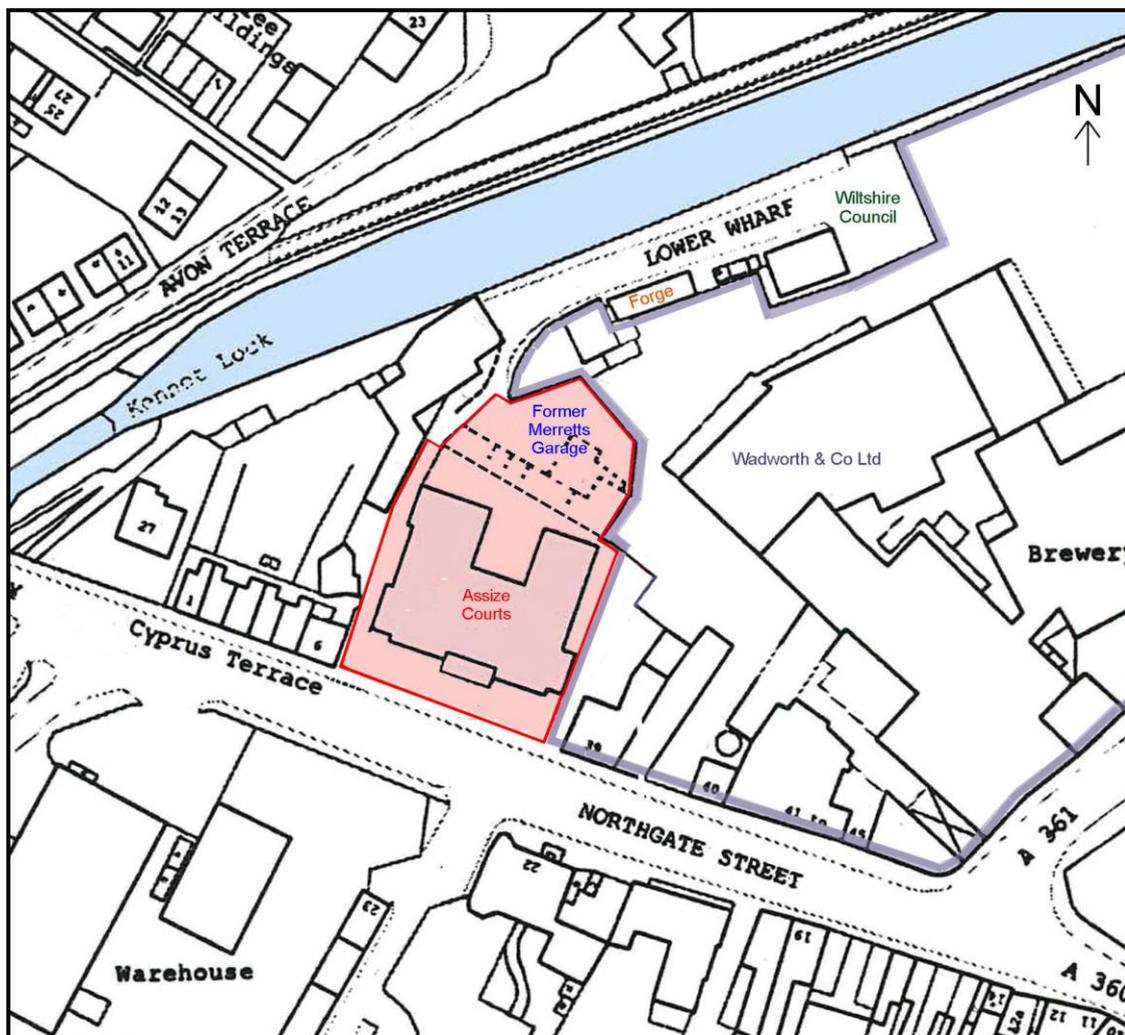
4 The building and its site

The former Assize Court is a nationally important grade II* listed building. Following several decades of neglect it is in very poor condition. Internally almost all the interior features and finishes have been destroyed or severely damaged and the building is seriously at risk.

A full assessment of the significance of the building is required as the starting point for the evaluation of how the historic aspect of the project should evolve. See Appendix 1 – Historical Context – Statement of Significance for more details.

To the rear of the building is an open area of land previously in use as Merretts Garage. The garage property was made up of a complex of small two-storey brick buildings, all of which have been demolished. Work undertaken at the garage was vehicle repair and maintenance and did not include fuel sales. No information on ground conditions is available but site contamination is a possibility.

The site for the project includes the Assize Court and Merretts Garage and together provide the opportunity for extension and enhancement. Vehicular access is on the north-west side between the Assize Court and Dundas Court, which is a residential conversion of a former small 20th century industrial building.



Site Plan scale 1:1250 @ A4

Information from the Land Registry will be made available. Where necessary exact property boundaries, access and easements will need to be agreed, in particular with the adjoining owner, Wadworth Brewery. The freehold of the Assize Court building and the former Merretts site have been combined and the whole site is owned by the Trust. No accurate information is available at this stage concerning the location or suitability of services. All services to the building have been cut off.



View from Northgate Street looking east



From the north-west looking across the Merretts site



Across the Canal to the rear of the building



The east elevation



The entrance hall

5 The Historical Background

Devizes has a remarkable historic and architectural legacy. The pattern of streets and spaces still reflects the organisation of the Norman castle and this, together with the 500 or so listed buildings, provides a town centre of individuality and distinction that is much appreciated by its residents, businesses and visitors.

The 19th century was a time of economic prosperity and the population grew from 3,460 in 1801 to 6,840 in 1871. The location of Devizes led naturally to its establishment as an important administrative centre with new buildings constructed specifically to serve this role.

One of the most significant of the buildings is the former Assize Court which is located to the west side of Devizes in Northgate Street, the main route from Melksham and Trowbridge, the A361. It is set back from the general street line and is distinguished by its imposing scale and symmetrical form.

Designed by the Architect T H Wyatt in 1835 in the Grecian Style, and funded by public subscription, it represents the high aspirations of nineteenth century Devizes.

The dominant feature of the building is a four-column portico of unfluted ionic columns with pediment. The floor plan is symmetrical with two courtrooms linked by a grand central entrance hall behind the portico. The courts and the grand hall are built to the same eight metre internal height. Symmetrical lower wings to the front and side contain the secondary rooms.

The west courtroom was the original Crown Court. The bench was at the northern end and alongside and recessed in the west wall the grand jury gallery. The dock was centrally placed within the courtroom and had originally had direct access to the basement cells. There were two levels of public seating to the south end of the courtroom. The upper gallery was accessed from the central hall via a corridor and staircase. The east courthouse was the original Nisi Prius courtroom. Its layout was similar to the west courtroom. Both courtrooms were double-height and lit by windows in the upper parts of the north, east and west walls.

Since the building was last used in the 1980's there has been a succession of owners with their ambitious but unachievable plans for its future. Various planning and listed building consents have been granted and there is a current permission for conversion to 18 apartments. It is a scheme that divides the interior into small units and would have destroyed the former grand spaces. No work has been done to implement the consents.

Following three decades of neglect the Assize Court building is seriously at risk. The interior has been completely stripped or damaged beyond repair by the elements.

The Kennet and Avon canal came to Devizes in 1810 and gradually declined thereafter. Towards the end of the 20th century the canal was revived, largely with lottery funding, and at Devizes Wharf became once more part of the town. Wiltshire Council plans for the regeneration of the Wharf area include the rescue of the Assize Court which is identified in the current study as a key building in the project and one where action is urgently required.

The Wiltshire Museum was established in a group of converted houses in Long Street in 1872. These have been adapted over the years to accommodate the changing needs of the museum and to encourage active participation by those interested in history and archaeology but the premises are less than ideal. Room sizes are generally small and there are too many stairs. The displays are of considerable significance and interest but are constrained by the layout of the buildings.

The pace of new discoveries and new research means that it is possible to display only a tiny fraction of the nationally important collections. The current buildings feature largely domestic frontages and are located on a residential street which means that the building does not do justice to the importance of the collections.

Notwithstanding the less than ideal situation some 7,000 visitors a year enjoy the Museum plus around 9,000 children from local schools who take part in workshops and taught sessions. This is part of a busy engagement programme that includes outreach, lectures and similar activities. The Museum is currently working with the British Museum and international partners on plans for major touring exhibitions in Europe (2019), UK (2021) and the US/Canada (2020 – 2023).

The Devizes Assize Court offers the potential to transform the Museum by relocating to an iconic building at the heart of an urban regeneration project located alongside the Kennet and Avon Canal, used by thousands of people each year.

6 The User Requirements

The opportunity for a new museum in Devizes has the attraction in that it could offer much improved display and meeting facilities and attract many more visitors. It would also allow the links between Devizes, Avebury and Stonehenge to be improved. Initial studies show that the former Assize Court building offers additional space and facilities.

An initial assessment of requirements is included below:

Space in current building (Long Street)

Category	Area (m ²)
Museum Display	468
Office	74
Other	198
Museum Storage	245
Library	171
TOTAL	1155

Minimum additional space required

Function	Area (m2)	Category
Additional office space	15	Office
Meeting room	20	Office
Staff room	20	Office
Education space	50	Other
Café	75	Other
Workshop (exhibition prep / store)	20	Other
Shop storage	10	Other
Library research space	30	Library
TOTAL	240	

Minimum space required at Assize Court

Category	Area (m2)
Museum Display	468
Office	129
Other	452
Museum Storage	136
Library	162
TOTAL	1346

(Some collections storage currently provided at the Museum on Long Street can more effectively be located in an off-site store).

Key requirements:-

- event space that can function outside 'standard' office hours when the remainder of the building is closed
 - lecture room for at least 100 (ideally 150) people with projection facilities
 - toilet capacity to match
 - catering – kitchen and seating space – this needs to be capable of being open when the rest of the building is closed
 - storage for tables, chairs etc
- space that meets Government Indemnity security standards for permanent and temporary exhibitions / displays and storage
 - secure vehicle access for delivering exhibitions / object loans
 - goods lift
 - intruder alarms / CCTV
 - controlled environment (relative humidity and light levels)
 - temporary exhibition gallery of at least 100 m²
- dedicated education space with associated storage and services to seat 35
- fully accessible building and services – including minimal floor level changes, lift, ramps, accessible toilets etc
- retail / reception area – including ticket purchasing, shop stock storage, secure area for cash handling and cloakroom facilities (coats and left luggage)
- workshop / exhibition preparation / crate storage space
- range of formal and informal meeting spaces
- coach drop-off / lay-by

The building should have a positive identity in Devizes and the Assize Court provides the opportunity to achieve this.

Front elevation: The front elevation should establish the building as a visitor destination and landmark building visible from the Market Place. Elements may include pedestrian crossing, coach drop-off bay, external banners and appropriate paving.

Rear elevation: To the rear of the building is a part open aspect to the Kennet and Avon Canal, with significant potential for enhancement. To integrate with the Wharf development, a new path will be provided alongside the canal to provide the main pedestrian route along the canal, linking Caen Hill Locks to the Wharf and used by up to 100,000 people a year on foot, cycle and boat. Subject to agreement, it may be possible to run canal boat trips from the rear of the building. To the side is a residential block of flats (Dundas Court) and to the rear a building owned by Wadworth Brewery.

The new extension to the rear of the Assize Court should therefore establish the identity of the museum as a visitor destination and public building. There should also be an open space with seating, ideally used as additional space for the café. An issue to be managed is maintaining and monitoring two entrances to the building.

External spaces: Integral to the project is the need to improve the whole setting of the Assize Court and especially the forecourt area facing Northgate Street. High quality hard landscape materials in keeping with the character of the building and the locality will be required.

7 Conservation Philosophy

The project must respect the architectural and historic quality of the building with repair work undertaken to a high standard. Particular reference should be made to current Historic England guidance and the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Wiltshire Core Strategy. The aim of conserving the building is to leave for the future an integral part of the history of Devizes with the architectural importance of the former Court clearly evident.

In this context the project should:

Conserve	Retain and preserve what is there
Repair	using correct materials and techniques
Maintain	ensure no further decay
Restore	where integral to the architecture but avoid conjecture.

Where alterations and extensions are required these are to be designed relative to the significance of the building. New work should not detract from the architectural and historic interest and where such work is proposed there should be clear reasoned justification to support the applications for consent that will be needed. There is no intention to dictate an architectural style for the new work, which is expected to reflect the needs and opportunities of today.

8 Design Options

There are four key aspects to this project:

- 1 The careful conservation of the historic building to a standard commensurate to its grade II* listing
- 2 The creating of spaces to accommodate the museum requirements
- 3 A rear and possibly side extension (east) to provide the additional spaces needed
- 4 Fitting out of the museum displays

Initial studies have shown that the adaptation of the Assize Court as a museum has significant potential. Detailed design studies are required to allow consideration of options and for a preferred option to emerge.

It is essential that the project design complies with all the Museum requirements and provision must be made for this to be achieved. The building is to be made fully accessible for the disabled. This will require the installation of a lift and level access across all floors together with provision for the whole range of recognised disabilities.

The acoustics of all spaces should relate to their function and enhance the comfort for users. The lecture / conference room should promote the ability to hear speech, eliminate the potential for disturbances from outside noise, and should allow audiences to interact with speakers.

9 The Environment, Energy and Sustainability

All matters related to the environment, energy and sustainability are to be assessed in the design and planning of the new Museum using state-of-the-art energy and environmental technology to keep maintenance and running costs to a minimum. All project requirements should be assessed in light of their totality and evaluated from ecological, financial and socially sustainable perspectives. Full use is to be made of tried and tested methods of ensuring that energy demands are kept low and that the "green credentials" of the project are high. Possible approaches including ground source heat pumps and solar panels etc. need to be explored. Special requirements regarding internal climatic conditions will be provided later by the museum.

Internal air quality and thermal and acoustic comfort are important considerations. This must be achieved throughout with the overall building design based on a philosophy that creates a good indoor environment.

10 Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent

The local Planning Authority is Wiltshire Council County Hall Trowbridge BA14 8JD. Initial discussions have been held with the Conservation Officer and Planning Officer at Wiltshire Council and separately with representatives from Historic England. Both organisations have expressed support in principle subject to detail.

Early consultation with Wiltshire Council and Historic England will be required at the concept design stage, RIBA Stage 2, with formal planning and listed building consent applications and all necessary additional information submitted and approved before a substantial start is made on Stage 3.

More details on Planning Considerations can be found in Appendix 3 – The Planning Context.

11 The Budget and Funding

The overall cost of the project has been assessed on the information currently available as in the region of £8 million and is to include:

- full repair of the building including restoration of damaged architectural elements
- conversion works
- extensions (including café, kitchen and the main toilet facilities for the museum)
- all services, including specialist lighting
- external spaces
- museum displays
- all fees (where applicable)
- but excluding VAT

A fundraising Strategy has been prepared and applications for grant will need to be made to a range of funding bodies including the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The project will be funded from grants and donations and the requirements of funders will need to be taken into account in the development of the project.

12 The Devizes Wharf Project

In 2017 Wiltshire Council commissioned Consultants to undertake a study of Devizes Wharf and surrounding area and this work is progressing. The starting point was the Wiltshire Core Strategy recognition that the cultural heritage of Devizes is an important issue. The Assize Court is within the study area.

The Strategy identifies two potential regeneration sites, the Wharf and Assize Court as presenting an opportunity to enhance and develop this historic heritage through development which encourages tourism, recreation and community uses whilst retaining the historic integrity of each site. Development at the Wharf could have a dramatic impact and therefore improvements to the public realm at the Wharf and guidance on appropriate development should be secured through the preparation of a supplementary planning document.

It also identifies the Kennet and Avon Canal as a vital social, environmental and economic asset to the area which forms part of a wider green infrastructure network linking Devizes, Trowbridge, Bradford on Avon, Bath and the wider countryside.

Planning Policy states that development in the area around Assize Court should:

- a. build upon the scale and pattern of existing development and provide for the retention and refurbishment of existing listed buildings and other good quality buildings in the area and
- b. improve access to the canal and provide canal based employment opportunities.

The policy identifies the former Assizes Court as having "potential for tourism and leisure uses given its location by the canal. The development should provide a direct pedestrian link from this canal-side location to the redevelopment area at the Wharf as the uses proposed for each site will be complementary. Proposed development should accommodate the needs of existing businesses and protect the amenity of local residents".

Additional information about the wider context for the Devizes Wharf Project can be found in Appendix 4.

13 Community and stakeholder consultation requirements

It will be important to ensure that there is significant public support for the project. As a grade II* building in a Conservation Area there will be a need for formal consultation.

The Client body will develop and undertake the desired consultation with the public but assistance from the Design Team will be required to show and explain how the design is emerging and why the final design has been selected.

A detailed consultation strategy will be developed in consultation with the Design Team.

14 Communications Strategy

All communications on the project will be undertaken by THE TRUST and consultants are not to engage in publicity or other external communication on the project without obtaining express written consent.

15 Monitoring and evaluation requirements

It is expected these will emerge from HLF and other funding requirements. A risk assessment will follow.

Appendix 1: Historical Importance – Statement of Significance

The former Assize Court in Northgate Street, designed by the architect T.H. Wyatt in 1835, was one of a number of prestigious public buildings which were part of the development of Devizes as an administrative centre in the 19th century. The building stands on the north side of the road in a prominent position at the approach to the Market Place and alongside the imposing Wadworth Brewery of 1885.

The building is listed grade II* and described as:

Symmetrical group of Bath stone buildings in Grecian style. One storey. High central portico of four Ionic columns on stone base approached by five stone steps between rectangular stone bastions. The columns carry a complete entablature and pediment with carved Coat of Arms in tympanum.

The entablature is returned each side over side walls, terminating in projecting pier formation behind outer columns and enclosing lobby with three entrance doors, the outer ones now blocked with windows set in upper part.

Very tall central six panel double door framed with pilasters and entablature carried round lobby as string course. The blocked flanking doors have similar surrounds. The outer wall entablature has stele cresting over cornice. The entablature carried round walls of court rooms to rear, all of same height as portico. Flanking portico and in front of courts are lower wings, each with chamfered quoins, cornice and parapet with moulded coping.

Three windows each in architrave surrounds with frieze and cornice over. Extensions of similar design and height, slightly recessed, each with arched niche. These wings have a double plinth with moulded sill course.

The interior has a square hall with coffered ceiling, partly glazed. The stairs rise to left and right between solid walls.

Assize and Quarter Sessions Courts 1700-1835

Shire and Town Halls were the main venues for courts during the Middle Ages and they continued to be the principal location for the Assizes and Quarter Sessions in the 18th and 19th centuries. The government of counties and towns shared the same officials, the same buildings and some procedures with the Quarter Sessions courts. Justices of the Peace, who dealt with the administration of the county on one day, served on the bench of county Quarter Sessions on the next.

Until 1835 in major towns and cities the Mayor was also the judge of the borough Quarter Sessions. This close association between the law and the government of counties led to multi-purpose civic buildings with a variety of names.

Mark Girouard summarised this phenomenon as follows:

Before the creation of County Councils in 1888, buildings which today shelter somewhat confusingly under the different titles of castle, county hall, shire hall, assize courts and sessions house all had one and the same function. They were the seats both of county justice and county government.

Until the 18th century the courts were normally housed in the main hall, with temporary furnishings, but in the 18th century some civic buildings began to provide separate courtrooms attached to the hall. This allowed courts to sit with less interruption from the public and they could be provided with more permanent furnishings. Rooms were also created for the judges and the jury beside the courtrooms.

The earliest example of this new building type was the Guildhall in Worcester (1721-7), the venue for the Assize and the Quarter Sessions of Worcestershire as well as civic and social functions. The ground floor contained two courtrooms behind the hall, while on the first floor there is a large assembly room, reached by the grand stair between the courts. Similar arrangements were adopted for the Shire Halls at Warwick (1754-8) and Stafford (1795-8).

This plan type was still employed as late as the 1830s when the Shire Hall in Worcester was built (1834-8). Compared to a century earlier the most fundamental change was the degree of separation between the courts and the hall. In the Guildhall at Worcester there were no substantial walls between the courts and the hall, but by the same time the Shire Hall was erected the courtrooms were wholly separate.

By the early 19th century purpose-built law courts were also employing this type of plan. The Assize Court in Devizes (1835) has a small central hall with the Grand Jury room and a room for counsel flanking it. Behind these were the two courts with rooms for the jury and the judges between them. The courthouse did not require a large hall as local government functions were undertaken at the Town Hall of 1808. A similar plan was also employed in the Shire Hall in Bodmin (1837-8).

An alternative to placing the courts behind the hall was to place them at either end. This created a less compact design but potentially increased the grandeur of the external massing. At Nottingham (1769-72) both types of plan were considered, the linear layout being preferred in this instance because it was cheaper. Frugality was not a consideration when the Assize Courts were built in York (1773-7).

Two elaborate courtrooms flank a small central entrance hall. Like Nottingham, the courts were originally open to the hall. The location and therefore the form of the courthouse within a town were partly determined by its association with other governmental functions.

Where new Assizes and Quarter Sessions were combined with a large hall for civic functions, the buildings were invariably located in the centre of towns. However, a number of new courts were built along with a prison, either on an existing castle site or on a new site near the edge of the town. This had obvious advantages in terms of security and was a continuation of an ancient tradition.

It was common in the Middle Ages for castles to house the court and provide a place of imprisonment, while a small prison was often included in a town hall. In York, the castle, on the fringe of the city, was sufficiently large to contain the new prison (1701-5).

The Shire Hall at Lincoln (1824-8) is also located within the walls of the medieval castle, a short distance from the county gaol, while the County Hall at Oxford (1839-41) was built immediately outside the walls of the prison, which was on the side of the Norman Castle.

When most prisons were built or rebuilt in the late 18th or 19th centuries, the castle or other town centre site was not large enough and extensive, empty sites, outside the town or city centre, were sought. However, such sites were unsuitable for local government or civic functions and therefore when new court buildings were erected along with prisons the large public hall was omitted.

If these new courthouses were to hold the Assizes as well as the Quarter Sessions, there would only be one courtroom. With the creation of the Model Prison at Pentonville in London, which opened in 1842, the link between courthouses and prisons was broken. No new courthouse was built along with a prison until HMP Belmarsh and Woolwich Crown Courts opened in the 1990s.

The Devizes Court in detail

The main entrance to the building is under the projecting Ionic portico, which leads to the central entrance hall, originally via three doorways. Also accessible from the entrance portico, through side doors, are two large rooms to the east and west front of the building.

The west room was the Grand Jury room and the east room a records room, prior to its later subdivision into four separate spaces. Beyond the main entrance hall was a series of four ancillary rooms that were situated between the two courtrooms.

These ancillary rooms have since been demolished. The southernmost of these rooms had direct access to both courtrooms and appears to have been used by advocates as the doorways into the courtrooms were about halfway along the side walls. The central, easternmost ancillary room also had access to the side of the east courtroom. This may have been the jury retiring room.

The central, western ancillary room did not have similar access to the western courtroom. The northernmost of these ancillary rooms had access to both judicial benches and may have been a shared judges' retiring room.

The west courtroom was the original Crown Court. The bench was at the northern end and alongside and recessed in the west wall was a small grand jury gallery. This was accessible from the grand jury room via a corridor running along the western side of the building. The dock was centrally placed within the courtroom and had originally had direct access to the basement cells. There were two levels of public seating to the south end of the courtroom.

The upper gallery was accessed from the central hall via a corridor and staircase. The rear of the lower gallery could also be reached from this corridor. It is unlikely if members of the general public would initially have been allowed to enter the central hall and so the upper gallery would probably have been reserved for those spectators of a higher social standing. If this was the case, the general public would probably have entered the building through a door in the west elevation that also provided access into the grand jury corridor and from there into the courtroom via another side door.

The east courthouse was the original Nisi Prius courtroom. Its layout was similar to the west courtroom in that the bench was at the north end, the upper and lower public galleries at the south end and the dock in the centre. The upper gallery was accessed via a similar corridor and staircase to the rear of the courtroom and the lower gallery was entered via an external door in the east elevation. Both courtrooms were double-height and lit by windows in the upper parts of the north, east and west walls



The view from the top of Wadworth Brewery several years ago and before the Merretts Garage buildings were demolished

The original access to the basements cell was via an outside rear staircase, which also served the boiler room. From the cells was a narrow brick tunnel that provided direct access to each dock. It appears that this basement access was extended when the cells were moved into the former ground floor record store sometime before 1934 and it may be assumed that at this stage the basement cells were abandoned. A small single storey detached female cell building is shown on the 1934 plan

The glass rooflights over the entrance hall appear to be a later addition as there is evidence of alteration to the roof structure to accommodate them. The installation of the rooflights caused deformation of the roof structure which survives in part under later accretions, but its condition is now perilous.

Additional work was undertaken in the 1960s to modernise and improve the accommodation including the cells and at the time the Victorian panelling in the courtrooms was concealed with plywood. The most recent work then reported (1980s) was related to maintenance of the fabric with various attempts made to eradicate repeated attacks of dry rot.

At that time the high roofs of the court and of the wings were reslated in a mixture of asbestos and second-hand Welsh slates and the lower flat roofs covered with mineral felt and spar chippings. Parapet and back gutters to the higher roofs were felted and turnerised. Minor repairs to the stonework, including repairs to the portico, were undertaken in 1980.

The Court and the Town

The town of Devizes had held Quarter sessions from 1383 until 1872 and Assizes were held at odd times during the 17th and 18th centuries. The Assize Act of 1833 enabled the Crown to appoint new Assize Towns and this provoked a petition to the Privy Council.

In 1834 a subscription was held by townsmen and local gentry for the building of a new law court. Whilst Salisbury remained the principal Assize town in the county, Devizes was granted the Summer Assizes upon completion of the new Assize Court. By 1852 the Assize Court in Devizes was also hosting County Quarter Sessions. In 1857 the Summer Assize returned to Salisbury and Devizes was granted the Spring session.

By 1899 the County Court had moved from Devizes Town Hall to the Assize Court building, where it was held on a monthly basis. By 1923 the Assize Courts were holding the Autumn and Winter Assizes every alternate year and the Epiphany Quarter Sessions. By 1939 both the Borough and County magistrates held their Petty sessions at the Assize Courts.

The building also continued to hold the County Court on a bi-monthly basis and the Police Station had also moved into the premises. Following the Courts Act 1971 Devizes became a third-tier Crown Court.

Summary

The information given above provides the starting point for an in depth analysis. At this stage it has not been possible to examine the fabric of the building in detail and existing survey information is limited. A more formal statement will need to be prepared and used to inform the scheme as it develops. Work should follow the approach set out in the Historic England Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance (English Heritage 2008), with reference to the values:

- Exceptional: considered to be of international importance or value.
- High: of national importance or value.
- Some: of local importance or value, or potentially of national importance.
- Neutral: of neutral importance or value.
- Detracting: of negative value or detrimental to the significance as a whole.

Appendix 2: Introduction to the Wiltshire Museum

Our Mission is to inspire people to explore the archaeology, history and environment of Wiltshire.

Background

The Wiltshire Museum has been located in the historic market town of Devizes since 1874 and contains the largest collection of Early Bronze Age gold ever put on public display in England. Award-winning displays transform public understanding of the era and feature 500 Stonehenge period objects, including 30 pieces of gold treasure, together with archaeology, art, natural history, local history, and an Archive and Library which is open to the public.

The Museum is housed in Georgian and Victorian buildings – all Grade II listed - in a residential area of similar building. The Museum is open throughout the year for visitors and researchers and in addition to the permanent galleries offers a variety of events, lectures and special exhibitions for all ages.

Awards and Quality Marks

The Museum collections have been Designated by the Government - an accolade, celebrating unique collections of national and international importance. Organisations holding Designated collections are expected to work towards the provision of high-quality services which deliver the fullest possible access to those collections and to take a leadership role by sharing expertise, offering advice and lending objects or materials.

We are a fully Accredited Museum – which means we meet nationally agreed standards on collections care, museum management and the provision of information and services to visitors. The status is reviewed very few years and ours was successfully renewed in 2015.

Our Exhibition Galleries meet the requirements of the Government Indemnity Scheme, meaning that we are able to borrow objects from national museums, such as the British Museum

Customer Charter

To ensure that visitors are at the heart of what we do at Wiltshire Museum, we have developed a nine-point Customer Charter that aims to deliver excellent customer service and an enjoyable experience for all our visitors and members. We recognise that they have choices about where they go and how they spend their time. We will actively seek to understand and address their needs so we may successfully engage large and diverse audiences.

The Charter applies to all our visitors – including customers, volunteers, WANHS members, Trustees, enquirers, researchers, guest exhibitors, visiting artists, speakers, students, school groups and corporate hire. It aims to inform the behaviour and conduct of all our trustees, staff and volunteers. Everyone has a role to play in putting our audiences at the heart of what we do.

Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society

The Wiltshire Museum is owned and run by the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, a Registered Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee. The Society was formed in 1853 to establish a Museum and Library and for the promotion and study of objects connected with Wiltshire.

Today the Objects of the Society are “to educate the public by promoting, fostering interest in, exploration, research and publication on the archaeology, art, history and natural history of Wiltshire for the public benefit”.

These aims are achieved through the Wiltshire Museum, a programme of conferences, lectures and events, a learning and outreach programme for children and schools, enabling access to our object, library and archive collections for academic and general researchers, supporting the Wiltshire Archaeology Field Group, promoting industrial archaeology, monitoring listed building planning applications and publishing the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine (WANHM).

The Society is governed by Articles of Association and has a Board of Trustees. Members of the Society can attend the Annual General Meeting and all receive the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine.

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The original TH Wyatt drawing from the Museum collection

Appendix 3: The Planning Context

The Wiltshire Core Strategy adopted January 2015 includes a Devizes Area Strategy of which the following is an abbreviated extract:

5.61 The Devizes Community Area is predominantly rural in character, containing a number of small villages and featuring a high quality landscape, lying partly within the North Wessex Downs AONB.

5.62 The main settlement within the Community Area is Devizes, which is one of the largest market towns in Wiltshire. The urban area of Devizes includes the administrative area of Devizes Town Council and parts of Bishops Cannings and Roundway parishes. Devizes has a well regarded town centre and has a good range of shopping and recreational facilities. Although not within a strategic transport corridor, Devizes is located on the crossroads of the A361 and A342, which serve as important links to Chippenham, Swindon and the M4. The town has historically been the focus for development within east Wiltshire and has a large and varied employment base with a relatively high level of residents living and working in the town.

5.63 Devizes is identified as a location for strategic employment growth. The town retains a large and varied employment base and should be resistant to job losses from single business closures. Devizes has a good record of attracting employers, although given its location and transport access, these have tended to be small to medium businesses catering for local networks. The success of Devizes as an employment location and the status of the town should enable it to continue to be a strategic location for new employment outside the principle employment growth areas of Wiltshire.

The strategy for the Devizes Area

5.64 The development strategy for the Devizes Community Area supports Devizes' role as a significant service centre providing jobs, homes and attractive retail opportunities within east Wiltshire whilst recognising existing constraints within the highway network and the town's rich built and natural environment.

5.65 Specific issues to be addressed in planning for the Devizes Community Area include:

- The cultural heritage of Devizes is very important. Two potential regeneration sites, the Wharf and Assize Courts, present an opportunity to enhance and develop this historic heritage through development that encourages tourism, recreation and community uses whilst retaining the historic integrity of each site.
- Development could have a dramatic impact on Devizes Wharf. Therefore improvements to the public realm at the Wharf and guidance on appropriate development should be secured through the preparation of a supplementary planning document.
- Development associated with the Kennet and Avon canal will need to protect and enhance its wildlife value, landscape setting and recreational use.
- The north eastern section of the Devizes Community Area borders the Avebury section of the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site and contains a number of its attributes of outstanding universal value.

How will the Devizes Community Area change by 2026?

5.66 Devizes will have a strengthened service centre role for employment, retail and community services within the Community Area and east Wiltshire. New residential, employment and retail development will have been delivered to support the town's high level of self-containment.

The Kennet and Avon canal will continue to act as a vital social, environmental and economic asset to the area as part of a wider green infrastructure network linking Devizes, Trowbridge, Bradford on Avon, Bath and the wider countryside.

The Core Strategy is available at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshirecorestrategy.htm

Appendix 4: The Devizes Wharf Project – Additional information

The future use and purpose of Devizes Wharf has been under discussion for several years but, as yet, few proposals have been implemented. The possible realignment of key sites in the area provides an opportunity to re-invigorate the project through partnership working with the NHS and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

A significant amount of planning and consultation work was undertaken by Wiltshire Council in 2011 mainly focused around the Theatre and Museum.

Building on the earlier work, a brief was prepared to provide a framework for the wider Devizes Wharf area, taking into account emerging development opportunities and the potential role it can play in the context of Devizes



The Wharf study area

The objective of the study is to build on the work undertaken to date and to:

- create a high-quality design framework which enhances the considerable cultural and historic value of the wharf area,
- create vibrant, connected mixed-use areas with a strong local identity,
- provide a clear framework to support policy making and public sector investment decisions,
- provide a robust strategy for delivering this framework
- create a destination which functions as an integrated extension of the town centre and
- support the long-term economic future of important historic buildings and the town centre as a whole.

A key objective for Devizes must be not just to enhance the Wharf Area as a leisure and cultural destination but to integrate the canal and the associated buildings more effectively with the town centre. Together these areas can provide a varied, interesting and locally distinctive retail, leisure and cultural offer.

The study will define complementary roles for the key areas along the Canal in order to create a balanced and integrated town centre 'offer'. These roles will include creating cultural and recreational destinations, providing supporting retail and leisure uses, creating attractive public spaces and importantly creating the critical mass of population and the capital value necessary to create and support these high-quality facilities.

NEW masterplanning and PER Consulting were appointed on 16th March 2017 by Wiltshire Council to undertake a 'redevelopment and feasibility study' of the Wharf area in Devizes. The consultant's report was submitted to the Council in September 2017 and is being evaluated. Further information will be provided in due course.