

9 July 2026

Morgan Ellis Leah
Southern Conservation Adviser
The Victorian Society

By email – copied to Dominic Bush, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Services

Dear Morgan Ellis Leah

CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE: APPLICATION NO. 26/02109

I am writing on behalf of Christ's College in response to your email of 6 July 2026 to Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Services regarding the College's application for planning permission for a replacement library. You are clearly aware that this application is a resubmission of planning application 25/02161/FUL

In your email you suggest that we have 'blatantly changed the level of harm attributed to this design'. This is despite the fact that we have submitted precisely the same material, including the same Heritage Statement and Planning statement as we submitted last year.

I would draw your attention to Section 6 of the Heritage Statement. You might, for example, look at paragraph 6.6 which comments:-

Taking all of the above into account, on balance, it is considered that the small or low level of heritage 'harm' identified to the Grade I listed building (and within its setting) would be outweighed by the above identified heritage benefits and enhancements. This is notwithstanding the overall public benefits resulting from the proposed development, which are weighed as part of the overall planning balance within the supporting Planning Statement.

Similarly, paragraph 6.9, with regard to the conservation area comments:-

The proposed replacement library building is considered to be of a higher design quality and arrangement, over both the existing situation and the earlier approved proposal (in 2011 and 2016). This is such that, subject to final materials details and execution, it provides the opportunity to enhance this part of the Conservation Area, by replacing an existing poor quality and disappointing range along Christ's Lane. Whilst the proposed library will be of a greater scale than the existing and previously approved scheme, the proposed scale (and arrangement) would be contextually appropriate within this part of the Conservation Area, transitioning between the scale of Bodley Library and surrounding buildings. The proposal provides for a high-quality detailed design, which is well-considered and

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results in a more active and welcoming frontage to Christ's Lane, whilst introducing a visually interesting new building within this identified key view towards Christ's Pieces.

Turning to the Planning Statement, detailed consideration, based on the Heritage Statement is provided in paragraphs 7.9 *et seq* and a clear summary provided in paragraphs 8.17 (where we identify elements causing heritage harm) and 8.18 where we identify those of heritage benefit. You will note that in the paragraph 'Balance to be brought forward' we say '*it is considered that on balance there would be a minor beneficial impact on the listed College buildings and their settings. Although minor, this attracts 'great weight' in the planning balance*'.

In paragraph 8.20 we comment that 'there will be no harm to the character and a minor benefit to the appearance' of the Conservation Area.

In the light of these documents, we wonder how you can possibly suggest that we have changed the level of heritage harm we attribute to the proposals.

We fully accept that others may draw different conclusions on heritage harm to us. However, that does not alter our assessment which remains entirely the same as in our previous submission.

We also fully recognise your Society's role in advocating for the protection of Victorian and Edwardian architecture and that therefore you have a particular interest in the C19 works by Bodley and Garner which extended the College Library. You clearly have concerns about the setting of the library which appear to be largely based on the changed view along Christ's Lane. I have not seen anything to suggest in your responses that you have even considered the beneficial impacts of the enhanced setting from the works in Bath Court itself.

As you can see from the comments which Historic England provided and the way the Conservation Officer approached this scheme, they recognised that there may be some aspects considered to cause heritage harm, but there were also others which are heritage benefits. You must assess, as we have done in the Heritage Statement, all the works physically affecting any of the listed buildings, any works affecting the setting of listed buildings (and whether that affects their significance) any works preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area and the impact of works on the significance of the Registered Park and Garden. Our view remains, that when these respective harms and benefits are weighed, the works have a beneficial impact on the listed buildings and their settings and the conservation area.

We confess to being a little surprised by your implied advocacy for the scheme granted consent in 2011 and 2016. I was involved in both of these applications and cannot recall comments from the Victorian Society. I therefore wonder if you are aware that this earlier scheme, in addition to the basement, included physically attaching a glazed roof to the exterior of the Bodley Library?

We recognise that you made various suggestions regarding the detailing of the Christ's Lane elevation and a suggestion of reducing the building by half a storey (whilst suggesting that you would prefer the taller chimneys previously proposed). I therefore attach a separate note from Grafton Architects which explains their design rationale and how they have responded to the 'human scale' of the Bodley Library.

I hope these comments are helpful and thank you for your interest in this scheme.

Yours sincerely

Dr J Burgess
Planning and Heritage Director

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