

APPLICATION - CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Consultee:	BNE - Conservation
Reference Number:	26/02109/FUL
Proposal:	Demolition of 1970s library and replacement with new library, social and study spaces including re-provision of bridge to the Bodley Library. Alterations to kitchen, Upper Hall and adjacent areas including new plant, access improvements and alterations to wc, provision in the south east range of Second Court. Re-landscaping of Bath Court and ancillary works, installation of temporary kitchen and dining facility in Second Court for the duration of the works.
Site Address:	Christs College Library Christs College St Andrews Street Cambridge Cambridgeshire
Case Officer:	Dominic Bush
Responding Officer:	Paul Robertshaw
Date:	26.08.26



No objection



Amendments are / Further information is required



Object for the following reasons:



Outside remit of this consultee's specialism

Documents Reviewed

- Plans
- Heritage Statement – Turley, May 2025
- Design and Access Statement – Grafton Architects, May 2025
- Townscape and Visual Appraisal – Caroe Architects, May 2025

Suggested Conditions	Code
See comments dated 13.07.26 for recommended conditions.	

Background information /additional comments:

Revised comments to reflect updated NPPF, August 2026:

Heritage assets

The application concerns the replacement of the 1974 college library, with associated connections and alterations to the 1896 Bodley Library and the 16th century (and later) buildings of First Court and Second Court.

The buildings surrounding Entrance (First) Court with the south-east range of Second Court are grade I listed. The 1974 library and adjoining Edwardian section are part of the listed building but of minimal significance. The site is within the grade II Christ's College Historic Park and Garden and the historic core of the Central Cambridge Conservation Area.

Further details of the site's development and significance are included in the heritage statement. The statement also refers to listed building works outside the scope of this application, and does not include subsequent revisions made to the chimney height and internal layout (consented under 25/02162/LBC).

Proposals

The replacement of the 1974 library has previously been approved and continues to be supported in principle. The building makes a generally negative contribution to the significance of the above heritage assets. The current proposal is smaller overall than the earlier approved scheme (refs: 11/0495/FUL and 11/0516/LBC, renewed under refs: 16/0405/FUL and 16/0406/LBC), omitting the basement and Bath Court roof and thereby avoiding these harmful impacts.

The proposed library is overall considered a high-quality building that would improve the current arrangement and provide numerous advantages in terms of landscaping, accessibility and sustainability. The new building would be substantial in relation to the size of the plot, with a greater presence than the existing library both within and outside the college. The design has skilfully responded to the constrained context and has minimised adverse impacts through articulation of the facades and setbacks at the upper levels between the chimneys. The reduction in the height and refinement of the chimneys following the original submission (which supersedes the heritage and design and access statements) has avoided additional harm to the setting of First Court.

The four-storey stair tower is however large in relation to the adjacent Bodley Library which is of two storeys with a domestic scale. The stair's impact has been partly mitigated by a setback from Christ's Lane and through the lightness of its design and materiality. There would be an enhanced relationship between the new library and Bodley Library through the increase in space and an improved link between the buildings. However, on balance it is considered the mitigations have not fully overcome the impact of the relative scale and proximity of the stair tower, and this part of the scheme remains harmful to the listed building's setting.

When considered in relation to the existing poor-quality building, the proposed library would be an enhancement to the conservation area when experienced from within or outside the college. Its overall scale, including the taller elements, is considered appropriate to the historic and dense urban context which includes nearby buildings of comparable or greater height.

Changes to the levels and landscaping in Bath Court, which would largely affect modern features and fabric, and would provide enhancements to the space are not of concern subject to any archaeological considerations. The ramp to second court would cause minimal harm and is supported subject to further details.

Bath Court and the library are within the grade II registered park and garden but are not considered to contribute to its significance. The proposed building would have a

minimal visual presence from Second Court, within the RPG, but is considered to have no effect on its significance.

Heritage balance

The harm to heritage assets is considered to primarily relate to the setting of the Bodley Library, which forms part of the grade I listed asset 'buildings surrounding Entrance (First) Court with the south-east range of Second Court'. The harm arises from the relative scale and proximity of the stair tower.

The proposal includes positive heritage effects, namely:

- An enhancement to the setting of the grade I listed building when experienced from Bath Court or Christ's Lane due to the increased space between the Bodley Library and proposed library at the lower levels;
- Wider enhancements to the appearance of Bath Court through the removal of redundant plant and fire escape, improved landscaping and the reopening of a blocked historic doorway to First Court;
- An enhancement to the Central Conservation Area through the introduction of an architecturally superior building;
- Sustaining the ongoing use and conservation of the grade I listed building by providing improved, accessible library facilities.

Conclusion

When considering the above heritage effects with reference to NPPF policies HE4 (1, 2), HE5 (1-4), HE6 (1-3) and HE9, the positive effects are not considered to fully outweigh the harm. On balance, the harm is considered to be at the lower end of the scale, and therefore NPPF policy HE6 (4) is engaged.