

CHRIST'S COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE
LIBRARY + PROJECT

Second Planning Application Covering Statement

June 2026

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Client
Christ's College

Our reference
01097 PLESE

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 7 November 2025, the Planning Committee of Cambridge City Council granted planning permission (C/25/02161/FUL) and Listed Building Consent (C/25/02162/LBC) for:

Demolition of 1970s library and replacement with new library and social and study spaces and 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 SE 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.

- 1.2 Despite the decisions made at Planning Committee, in which they played a full part in the proceedings, the Christ's Lane Action Group (CLAG) sought Judicial Review of the decision relating to the planning permission on four grounds. On 6 March 2026, a Judge agreed that the Judicial Review could proceed.
- 1.3 A potential date for this to be heard has been set for 20 October 2026. Due to the significant time implications and the impact this is having on the College's students (see paras 2.3 to 2.5 below), Christ's College have taken the unusual step of submitting a second planning application so that this can be reconsidered by Planning Committee more quickly.
- 1.4 It should be noted that the Listed Building Consent (LBC) remains approved and has not been challenged by CLAG. This is not therefore resubmitted.
- 1.5 As the Judicial Review relates to the process involved in determining the original application, not the planning merits, the material submitted is almost entirely the same as for 25/02161/FUL. All the original plans and supporting reports (e.g. the Design and Access Statement, Planning and Heritage Statements, Daylight / Sunlight Report etc.) remain the same.
- 1.6 The only differences are:-
- The inclusion of this statement to 1) explain the background to Third Parties; 2) ensure all understand the need for this facility and the impact of delay on the College's students; and 3) to restate our opinion on the balance of heritage impacts and planning benefits.
 - Annotations to the drawings to explain that the Listed Building Consent (LBC) application is not challenged and remains approved.
 - The omission of drawings which were approved as part of the LBC application but are not included on the list of approved plans for the original planning permission.
 - The originally submitted 'Logistics Summary Document' by SDC Contractors, draft Construction Management Plan and related drawings have not been resubmitted as

that information is now provided and updated in the material used to discharge Condition 3.

- 1.7 It should be noted that no changes have been made to the detail of the drawings nor consequently to the reports submitted in support of that application.

2. The Reason for this Second Application

- 2.1 The College respects the Judicial Review process as an important safeguard to the Council's decision-making powers.
- 2.2 The points raised in the Judicial Review in this case are capable of being addressed in the Planning Officer's report when the Planning Committee re-considers the application. With the Judicial Review hearing date not until 20 October 2026, it could be into 2027 before the first application returns to the Planning Committee for re-determination – as seems likely. Rather than wait for the application to be referred back to the Council by the High Court, this second application allows the Council to re-consider the application more quickly.
- 2.3 Timescales are important for the College. Christ's has one of the lowest numbers of study spaces per student of any Oxbridge college. The range of different types of study spaces is very limited and disadvantages neurodivergent students. For students with mobility challenges the current library is only accessible via a staff-operated book lift and the cafeteria is only accessible by a service lift in the kitchens.
- 2.4 Put simply, the longer the delay, the greater the impact on our current students who are here for just a few years - and the harder it is for the College to attract applications from school pupils who are neurodiverse or disadvantaged.
- 2.5 The Library+ project is hugely important for the learning experience and inclusivity and accessibility of the facilities the College can offer to the 700 students during their three years living and studying in the College.

3. Heritage Impact and Public Benefits

- 3.1 The Heritage Statement which we produced to accompany the application very clearly set out the impact of the works on the various heritage assets potentially affected. For ease, these are also summarised in paragraph 8.17 of the Planning Statement.
- 3.2 Three of these 'harmful' aspects relate to minor loss of historic fabric / loss of fabric of low significance arising from some of the internal configurations of the First Court Buildings. These works are covered by the Listed Building Consent application which has not been challenged and therefore are approved already.
- 3.3 The other works result in a very low impact on the setting of Second Court through the provision of an essential access ramp and the temporary impact on the setting of Second Court through the location of the temporary kitchen / dining hall. In the latter case, any impact would only last for the duration of the building contract after which the existing condition would be reinstated. Both of these works are minor and neither aspect has been identified as unacceptable by anyone commenting on the proposals.
- 3.4 Whilst we do not recognise any harm in relation to the juxtaposition of the new library and the C19 Bodley library, it is clear that others do. We therefore take this opportunity to explain our position. Photographs of many of the situations described below are included within Appendix 1.
- 3.5 The current library does not relate well to the Bodley Library. It is closer than the proposed library and of a very utilitarian design – including a large flue – dating from the era when Christ's Lane was an enclosed service access. The College gate is solid and offers no view into the court and the first floor linking bridge is not particularly elegant.
- 3.6 On the College (Bath Court) side, the library sits very close to the bay window of the Bodley and leaves a narrow access to the Christ's Lane gate, over which the bridge spans.
- 3.7 The new library pulls further away from the Bodley giving it greater breathing space. The bridge is of much lighter construction and the gate to Christ's Lane will allow views through making the lane less foreboding and making the passageway brighter and wider. All will help reduce the feeling of a building 'cramping' the space around the Bodley.
- 3.8 The focus by objectors has been on the impact from Christ's Lane. When the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) was put together (in draft form first to aid pre-application discussions) the College took the decision to use the view down Christ's Lane from the end of St Andrew's Street as the 'worst case' scenario so we could not be accused of just trying to show the new building in its best light. The problem with doing so is that people then focus on this view only as being indicative of the impact of the new structure on the setting of the Bodley, disregarding all the other views which would have shown the relationship more favourably. That said, the College considers that even from this viewpoint, the new library will be a clear improvement on the existing.

- 3.9 As noted earlier, the proposed works will not harm the historic fabric of the C19 Bodley library (by contrast, the 2016 scheme would have caused some harm to it). What is at issue is therefore the impact of works on the ‘setting’ of this building (which is of course just one part of the listed College buildings).
- 3.10 Historic England has produced guidance on assessing the impact of works on the setting of Listed Buildings¹. Paragraph 9 of this guidance states that the importance of setting ‘*lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance*’.
- 3.11 The work by Bodley and Garner carried out from 1895-7 involved modernising the original Library and extending it to the south to turn the corner into Christ’s Lane. Its significance is therefore as a piece of high quality late-Victorian remodelling work by a well-regarded architectural practice. The new library will not affect this at all, nor will it harm anyone’s ability to appreciate it. No views of Bodley and Garner’s work will be impeded and there will be no doubt where the C19 work ends and the modern library starts. Indeed, by pulling the new building further away from the Bodley Library, we are helping people’s ability to appreciate the significance of this part of the building, and that is why we find no harm – in line with Historic England’s definition.
- 3.12 In similar vein, we recognise that the Conservation Officer also finds a low level of harm in the way the very tops of the chimneys can be seen from the very furthest corner of First Court. We explain in our Heritage Statement why we disagree that this is harmful. It is perhaps ironic, given the objections from CLAG, that the building on the south side of Christ’s Lane can itself be seen from some of the student rooms in First Court (see the final photo in the Appendix), The new library would help reduce the impact of the Christ’s Lane building’s unbroken ridgeline.
- 3.13 Returning to the summary of heritage impacts in our Planning Statement, these are set out in 8.18. Even discounting those wholly covered by the approved Listed Building Consent, there is still a minor beneficial impact in terms of works to the listed buildings and their settings.
- 3.14 In 8.20 we conclude a similar minor benefit to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 3.15 The consequence of this is that the ‘great weight’ to be given to the preservation and enhancement of Listed Buildings (by virtue of S66 of the Planning [Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas] Act 1990) and to conservation areas by S72 of the same Act is applied positively.
- 3.16 The need to apply public benefits to outweigh heritage harms does not therefore, in our view, apply here. Nevertheless, we set these public benefits out in 8.21 of the Planning Statement. It should be noted that these are not things which will benefit only College students, but the community as a whole.

¹ Historic England: ‘The Setting of Heritage Assets; Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (second edition) (2017)

- 3.17 In conclusion, it is extremely disappointing that a high-quality scheme, which evolved through a year of pre-application discussions with the Council and Historic England, was supported by all professional consultees, and ultimately approved by Planning Committee has been significantly slowed down.
- 3.18 Nevertheless, the College remain wholly committed to delivering this scheme and look forward to a positive resolution of this resubmitted planning application to accompany the already approved and unchallenged Listed Building Consent.

4. Approved Conditions

4.1 Once planning permission was granted in November 2025, the College began submitting additional detail as required by various conditions attached to the approved planning application (ref 25/02161). The main reason for this being to deal with any 'pre-commencement' conditions so that work could commence as quickly as possible.

4.2 The following conditions have therefore all been submitted and approved by Cambridge City Council:-

Condition 3 (Demolition and Construction Environmental Management Plan)

Condition 5 (Listed Building protection)

Condition 6 (Airborne Dust)

Condition 7 (Demolition and construction noise and vibration)

Condition 8 (Surface Water run off)

Condition 9 (Tree Protection methodology)

Condition 10 (Salvage and reuse of materials)

Condition 11 (Temporary kitchen and dining facility).

4.3 By submitting these to support this second application, it is envisaged that, should the application be approved, it will not be necessary to re-impose these conditions.

Appendix 1: Site Photographs



The corner of the Bodley Library, gate and the existing library viewed from Christ's Lane showing the present degree of separation.



The view of the Bodley bay and proximity of present library when entering through the Christ's Lane gate.



The reverse view, looking south back towards Christ's Lane



From left to right, the present library, the Bodley Library and First Court (south elevation) showing the proximities and poor quality of space.



Looking south from first floor rooms in Entrance Court – the College's Grade I Listed Buildings with the apartments in the development on the south side of Christ's Lane seen behind.