



1 October 2026

The Council lost once. Now it is rushing to approve the same building before the Court can rule on what it did wrong.

Last year Cambridge City Council approved a new library for Christ's College. We took it to the High Court, and the Council gave in on all four grounds. Two of them say its own councillors were "materially misled".

Now the College has sent in the same building again, which the Council itself calls "identical", and the Council wants it approved before a judge can say what went wrong.

Council vote	Wednesday 7 October, 10 am, Guildhall
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High Court hearing	Tuesday 20 October
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The vote is on Wednesday 7 October. The High Court sits on Tuesday 20 October, thirteen days later, and the Council will not wait.

THE COUNCIL'S SLEIGHT OF HAND

It tried to stop the hearing. On 22 September the College asked for the hearing to be cancelled, without copying us in. Within hours it vanished from the court's list. We got it back the next morning. A week later the Council wrote to the court backing the College, and did not copy us either, though the court's rules require it. The same day a judge ruled against them, ordering that the hearing "shall remain listed".

It told the judge one thing and councillors another. On 29 September it told the High Court that last year's permission had been quashed. The next day its report told councillors that the permission "still stands".

This is how it treats the residents who caught it out.

It shut us behind an anonymous mailbox. We are told to send everything to a mailbox that answers "once a week" and takes no telephone calls. No one else is treated this way.

It sat on our evidence until its report was out. We sent seventeen documents on 25 September with detailed assessments of policy violations, requesting the Council to fix the errors. For five days not a single document appeared on the public file, until after the officer's report was published. Then four appeared, on 30 September. Thirteen were still missing that evening. The Council told us they are "not able to be incorporated into the report". The College's letters go up within a day.

It let the College decide what you may see. It kept our record of the College's own public meeting off the public file, and gave as its reason that "the college objects to its inclusion".

It puts earlier dates on our papers. The report tells councillors that representations "are uploaded against dates that reflect when they were uploaded". Of our four documents that went up on 30 September, three are dated 25 September. In July the Council asked for our papers to be "dated the 14th July", and they went up on the 17th and the 20th.

It will not answer. We have put 92 points to it on the law and its own policies, and almost none has had an answer on the substance. On 2 July it wrote that "the Council is not obliged to respond".

THE REPORT: THE RIGHT WORDS, AND NOTHING UNDER THEM

It was written to get past the court. The College told the Council's public forum in July that the second application was made so that "the Council could be confident that it met the standards of the JR". The report duly announces that "All four grounds of judicial challenge have been directly addressed".

It quotes the rule and never applies it. National policy says harm to a Grade I listed building must be avoided or, "if that is not possible", minimised. The report never finds that the harm could not be avoided.

It tells councillors what no document says. It says the stair tower beside the Grade I Bodley Library "has a minimum height requirement" as a fire escape. There is no fire strategy on the public file.

It takes the College's word. It sets aside the lower library the Council approved in 2016, which the Council said at the time "would meet the needs of Christ's College", because the College "has made the case that this previous scheme is no longer viable". No document on the file makes that case.

It skips the Council's own sustainability test. It calls the building "highly sustainable". The Council's own rules require a BREEAM assessment by an accredited assessor, and none is on the file.

It brushes aside the harm to the shopping lane. The Council's own policy says development should "add to the vitality and viability of the city centre". The report says that test does not directly apply here. It calls Christ's Lane "a heavily used thoroughfare

for pedestrians ... linking the shopping area of the City Centre including the Grand Arcade with Christ's Pieces". Yet it ignores the effect of an oversized building that will enclose the lane and darken its shops.

It leaves the shops out of the daylight test. It tells councillors that one window fails. The shops across the lane are left out because their users "are likely to only visit for a short period of time before leaving", yet on the College's own figures 37 of the 61 windows on the two lower floors opposite fail. People work behind them all day.

It conceded an error in court, then brought it back in its report. The error was counting the "optimum viable use" of the College's buildings as a benefit. Paragraph 1.12 says the report no longer relies on that. Yet paragraph 26.25 counts the library's help to "support and sustain the ongoing use of the Grade I listed College buildings" as a benefit with "significant weight", the same thing in other words.

*We say this report was written backwards:
the answer first, then the words to fit it.*

We ask two things of the Council: wait for the High Court, and answer the questions. We do not oppose a new library. Otherwise it is walking into another High Court case with taxpayers' money. It has had our notice of the grounds for a second judicial review since 29 September.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Write to the Council at PlanningComments@greatercambridgeplanning.org, quoting 26/02109/FUL. Ask for the decision to be deferred until after the High Court's reasoned judgment, and for the scheme to be rejected if the Council rushes ahead. Forward this to everyone you know.

Come to the Guildhall at 10 am on Wednesday 7 October.

In March a High Court judge told the College that it "has been educating students since 1505" and could manage some additional time. The Council will not wait thirteen days.

CHRIST'S LANE ACTION GROUP
www.christslaneactiongroup.org