CHRIST'S LANE ACTION GROUP · PETITIONERS FOR THE PUBLIC

We support 'libraries' & opportunities & buildings the city can cherish

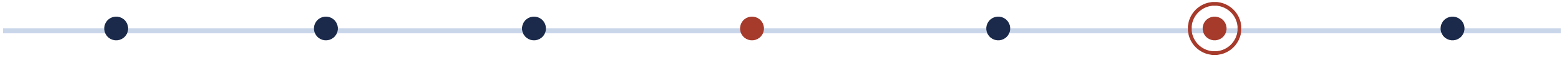
Not this design, which harms the city and gives nothing back to the public realm.

Development Control Forum · 29 July 2026

Application 26/02109/FUL — Christ's College library, Christ's Lane

WHY ARE WE HERE?

- A Judicial Review brought to the High Court
- The College and Council Concede to Quashing on All Four Grounds
- Reasoned Judgment By The High Court on 20 October 2026
- Rather than wait, the College re-submits the same application



7 Nov 2025	Dec 2025	9 Mar 2026	28 Apr 2026	10 Jun 2026	29 Jul 2026	20 Oct 2026
First permission granted	CLAG: judicial review, four grounds	Permission to proceed on ALL four	College & Council consent to quash: ALL four grounds	The same scheme resubmitted	Development Control Forum · TODAY	**High Court hearing, Royal Courts of Justice**

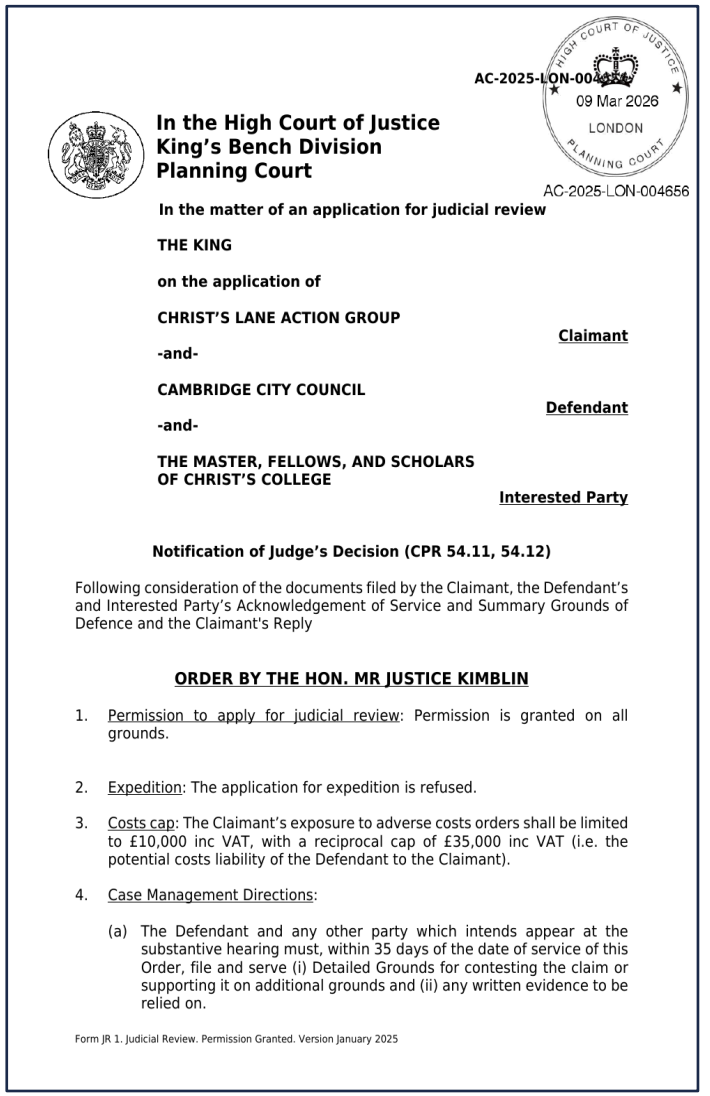
The High Court gives judgment on 20 October 2026, twelve weeks from today's Forum.

WHAT THE JUDGE SAID

"[The claim] raises important issues about the decision making in this case which had a **bearing on key planning considerations which informed the grant of consent.**

I consider that they are strongly arguable and merit consideration at a full hearing."

The Honourable Mr Justice Kimblin, Judge of the High Court, granting permission on all four grounds, March 2026



AC-2025-LON-004656

HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
09 Mar 2026
LONDON
PLANNING COURT

In the High Court of Justice
King's Bench Division
Planning Court

AC-2025-LON-004656

In the matter of an application for judicial review

THE KING

on the application of

CHRIST'S LANE ACTION GROUP

Claimant

-and-

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Defendant

-and-

THE MASTER, FELLOWS, AND SCHOLARS OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE

Interested Party

Notification of Judge's Decision (CPR 54.11, 54.12)

Following consideration of the documents filed by the Claimant, the Defendant's and Interested Party's Acknowledgement of Service and Summary Grounds of Defence and the Claimant's Reply

ORDER BY THE HON. MR JUSTICE KIMBLIN

1. Permission to apply for judicial review: Permission is granted on all grounds.

2. Expedition: The application for expedition is refused.

3. Costs cap: The Claimant's exposure to adverse costs orders shall be limited to £10,000 inc VAT, with a reciprocal cap of £35,000 inc VAT (i.e. the potential costs liability of the Defendant to the Claimant).

4. Case Management Directions:

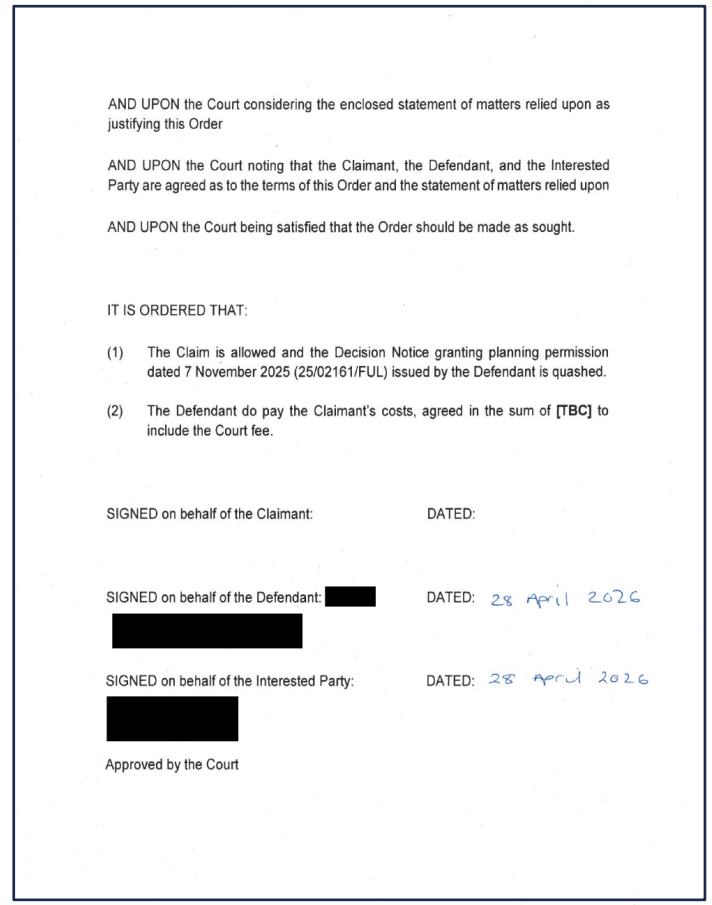
   (a) The Defendant and any other party which intends appear at the substantive hearing must, within 35 days of the date of service of this Order, file and serve (i) Detailed Grounds for contesting the claim or supporting it on additional grounds and (ii) any written evidence to be relied on.

Form JR 1. Judicial Review. Permission Granted. Version January 2025

THE COLLEGE AND THE COUNCIL CONSENTED TO QUASH

"The Defendant and Interested Party have agreed to a Consent Order quashing the Council's decision on all four grounds relied upon by the Claimant."

Cambridge City Council to the Administrative Court, 28 April 2026



AND UPON the Court considering the enclosed statement of matters relied upon as justifying this Order

AND UPON the Court noting that the Claimant, the Defendant, and the Interested Party are agreed as to the terms of this Order and the statement of matters relied upon

AND UPON the Court being satisfied that the Order should be made as sought.

IT IS ORDERED THAT:

(1) The Claim is allowed and the Decision Notice granting planning permission dated 7 November 2025 (25/02161/FUL) issued by the Defendant is quashed.

(2) The Defendant do pay the Claimant's costs, agreed in the sum of **[TBC]** to include the Court fee.

SIGNED on behalf of the Claimant: DATED:

SIGNED on behalf of the Defendant: [redacted] DATED: 28 April 2026

[redacted]

SIGNED on behalf of the Interested Party: DATED: 28 April 2026

[redacted]

Approved by the Court

The Permission No-one Defended

CLAG asked the High Court to retain the hearing, so the errors are ruled on and do not recur. Listed for 20 October 2026, Royal Courts of Justice.

THE COLLEGE'S CLAIM:"PROCESS, NOT THE DESIGN"

The application is unchanged as the Judicial Review relates to the Council's decision-making process, not to the design by award-winning Grafton Architects.

"THE COLLEGE'S APPLICATION IS PART OF THE PROBLEM"

THE FOUR CONCEDED GROUNDS

FIRST APPLICATION: How the Planning Committee was misled

1 **Historic England found harm**: "excessive bulk", "too big for its location".
Members were told the opposite.

2 The report found harm, then called it "neutral". Both cannot be true.
The balancing never happened.

3 The library was counted as its own benefit, securing "optimum viable use" erroneously.
A phantom public benefit. It is already a library.

4 When heritage harm is found, **less harmful alternatives must be considered**.
Members were actively dissuaded from considering alternatives on the table.

Four Heritage Grounds.

All conceded by the College and the Council. None defended.

Every Heritage Expert finds Harm

The College calls it "a Benefit"

THE VERDICT OF EVERY EXPERT

Every heritage expert that assessed this scheme finds HARM

HISTORIC ENGLAND

"...certain levels of harm to the significance of the listed building, primarily as a result of the excessive bulk of the new building."

Advice letter, 29 Jul 2025 — position unchanged 8 Jul 2026

VICTORIAN SOCIETY

"Our principal point still stands. Harm is attributed to this scheme, and this has not been mitigated in the resubmitted design."

Reply to the applicant's agent, 24 Jul 2026

CAMBRIDGE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

"...multi-layered harm to highly sensitive designated heritage assets."

New Objection, 9 Jul 2026

COUNCIL'S CONSERVATION OFFICER

"...the heritage benefits are not considered to fully outweigh the heritage harm."

New Harm Finding, 13 Jul 2026

ALEC FORSHAW IHBC MRTPI

"The proposals unquestionably cause harm to designated heritage assets of very high significance."

Heritage appraisal & 2026 addendum

Five independent assessments. One conclusion.

JULY 2026

CAMBRIDGE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

'OBJECTS'

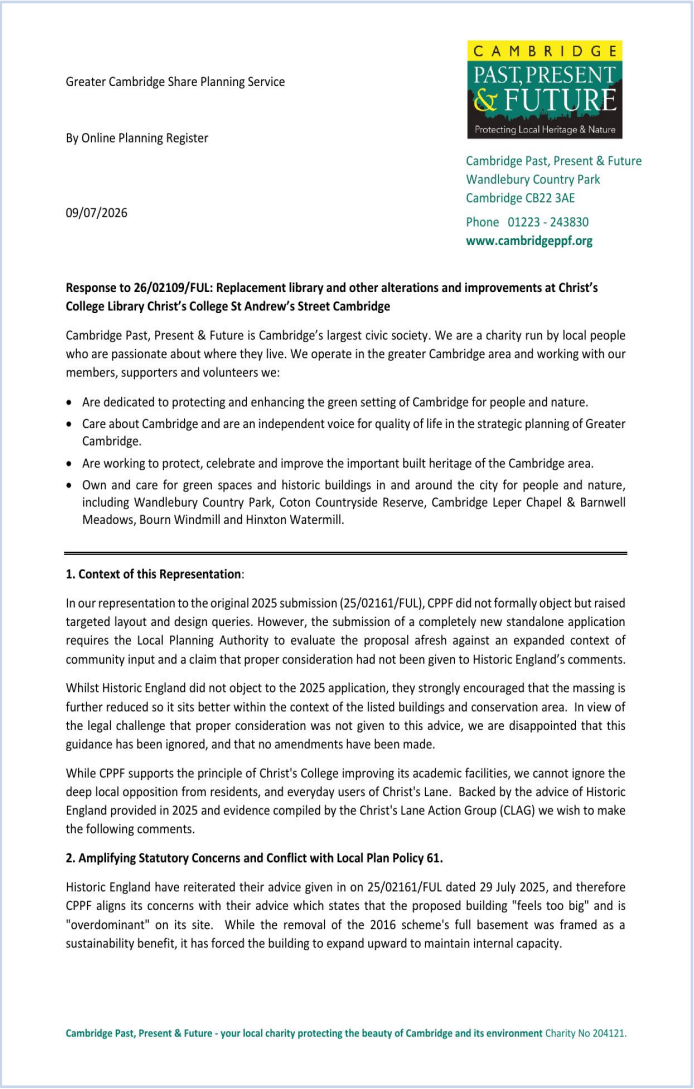
"...we cannot ignore the deep local opposition from residents, and everyday users of Christ's Lane."

Cambridge Past, Present & Future, objection to 26/02109/FUL, 9 July 2026

Cambridge's largest civic society.

"The design results in certain levels of harm across multiple assets, including the setting of the Grade I listed Bodley Library, Bath Court, and the Central Conservation Area."

"...the minimal public benefits identified here fail to outweigh these costs."



Greater Cambridge Share Planning Service

By Online Planning Register

09/07/2026

CAMBRIDGE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE
Protecting Local Heritage & Nature

Cambridge Past, Present & Future
Wandlebury Country Park
Cambridge CB22 3AE
Phone 01223 - 243830
www.cambridgeppf.org

Response to 26/02109/FUL: Replacement library and other alterations and improvements at Christ's College Library Christ's College St Andrew's Street Cambridge

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

1. Context of this Representation:

In our representation to the original 2025 submission (25/02161/FUL), CPPF did not formally object but raised targeted layout and design queries. However, the submission of a completely new standalone application requires the Local Planning Authority to evaluate the proposal afresh against an expanded context of community input and a claim that proper consideration had not been given to Historic England's comments.

Whilst Historic England did not object to the 2025 application, they strongly encouraged that the massing is further reduced so it sits better within the context of the listed buildings and conservation area. In view of the legal challenge that proper consideration was not given to this advice, we are disappointed that this guidance has been ignored, and that no amendments have been made.

While CPPF supports the principle of Christ's College improving its academic facilities, we cannot ignore the deep local opposition from residents, and everyday users of Christ's Lane. Backed by the advice of Historic England provided in 2025 and evidence compiled by the Christ's Lane Action Group (CLAG) we wish to make the following comments.

2. Amplifying Statutory Concerns and Conflict with Local Plan Policy 61.

Historic England have reiterated their advice given in on 25/02161/FUL dated 29 July 2025, and therefore CPPF aligns its concerns with their advice which states that the proposed building "feels too big" and is "overdominant" on its site. While the removal of the 2016 scheme's full basement was framed as a sustainability benefit, it has forced the building to expand upward to maintain internal capacity.

THE COLLEGE SUBMITS THE SAME SCHEME; ERRORS INTACT

The College: Heritage Harm (re)framed as 'Benefit':

"The need to apply public benefits to outweigh heritage harms does not therefore, in our view, apply here."

Christ's College Covering Statement, June 2026 — claiming a "minor beneficial impact" on the Grade I listed buildings

The Experts: Disagree

"It goes without saying that the same submitted scheme cannot improve its level of harm."

The Victorian Society, 10 July 2026

THE COLLEGE SIGNED CONCEDING THE ERRORS YET, THEY RETURNED AN UNCHANGED SCHEME

WHERE THE FOUR GROUNDS STAND

Grounds 1 & 2 — repeated

Heritage harm denied outright: no harm, so, College Claims that no balance is needed.

Ground 3 — repeated

The “optimum viable use” benefit reappears, but the library already in use, so should not be applied.

Ground 4 — repeated

Still, no assessment of any less harmful alternative.

The College could have adjusted the scheme, taken expert advice, waited for the High Court's Reasoned Judgment. Yet it rushed to resubmit the scheme unchanged.

WHAT IS THE RUSH?

"…so that the Council can re-consider the application more quickly."

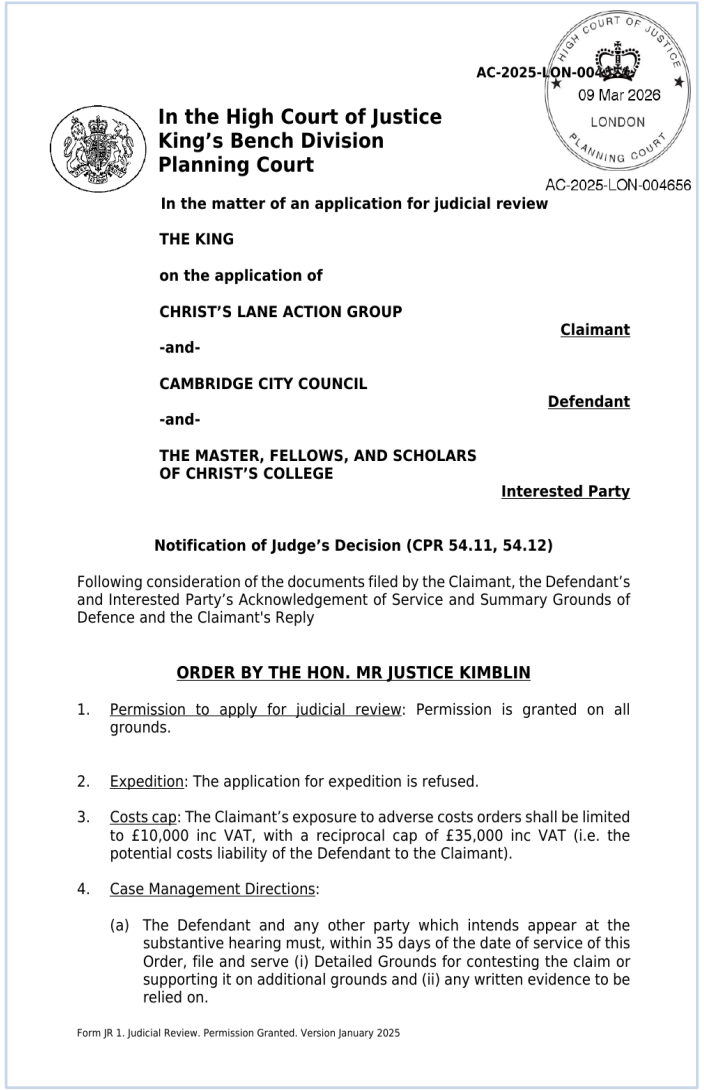
Christ's College Covering Statement, para 2.2, June 2026

"…the College chose to enter contracts before the permission was legally secure. That was a risk which it chose to take. The College has been educating students since 1505. If it takes some additional time to review the legality of the consent, that is something which the College will manage."

Mr Justice Kimblin, March 2026, refusing the College's request for special expedition

The Court refused expedition.

Why is Cambridge Council being rushed?



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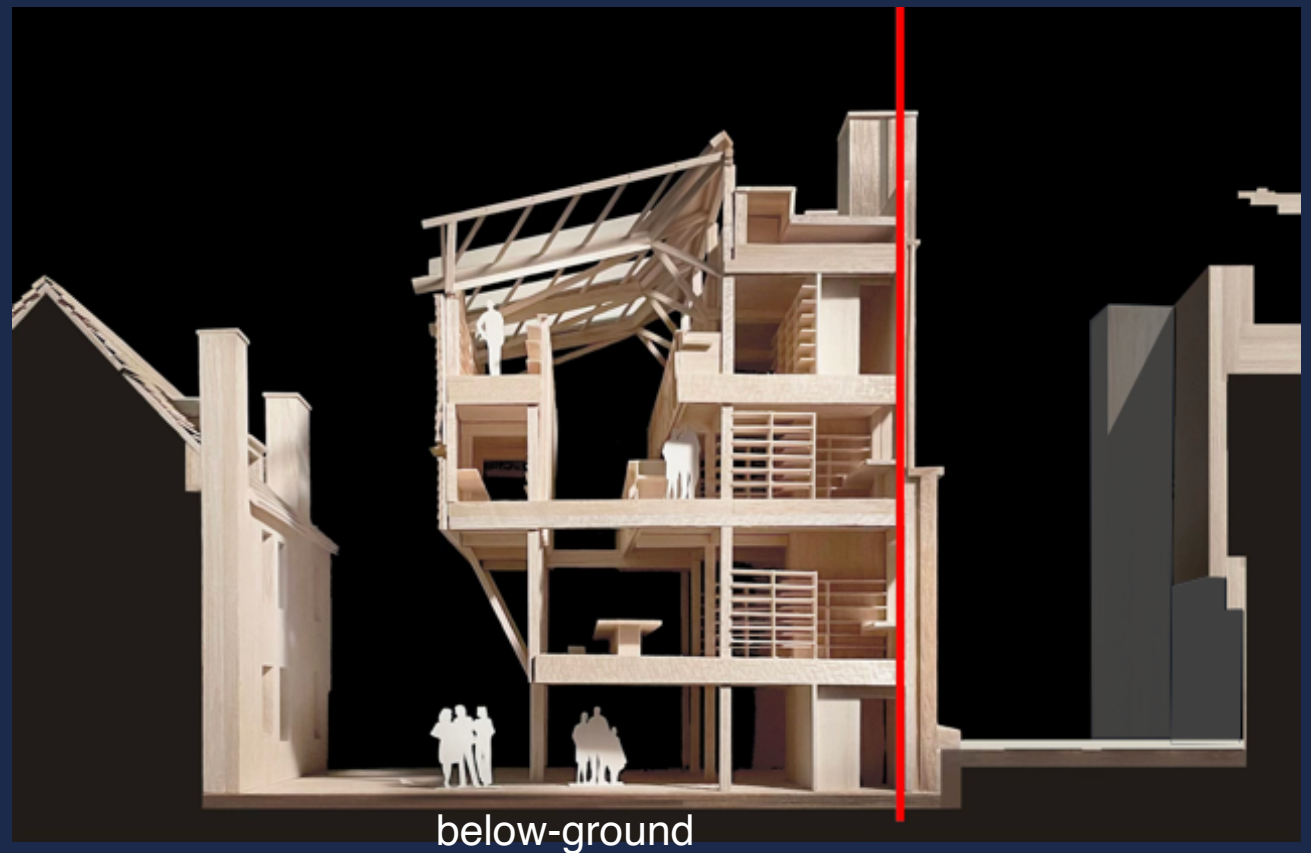
Form JR 1. Judicial Review. Permission Granted. Version January 2025

VERDICT OF HERITAGE HARM

A 4-storey+ building over a 2-storey Grade I Masterpiece



Grafton section: the proposed wall over Christ's Lane

"The building feels too big, over-dominant on this space, particularly in its relationship with the south range of First Court and the Bodley Library."

Historic England, 29 July 2025

"…we are of the view that the building is too big for its location."

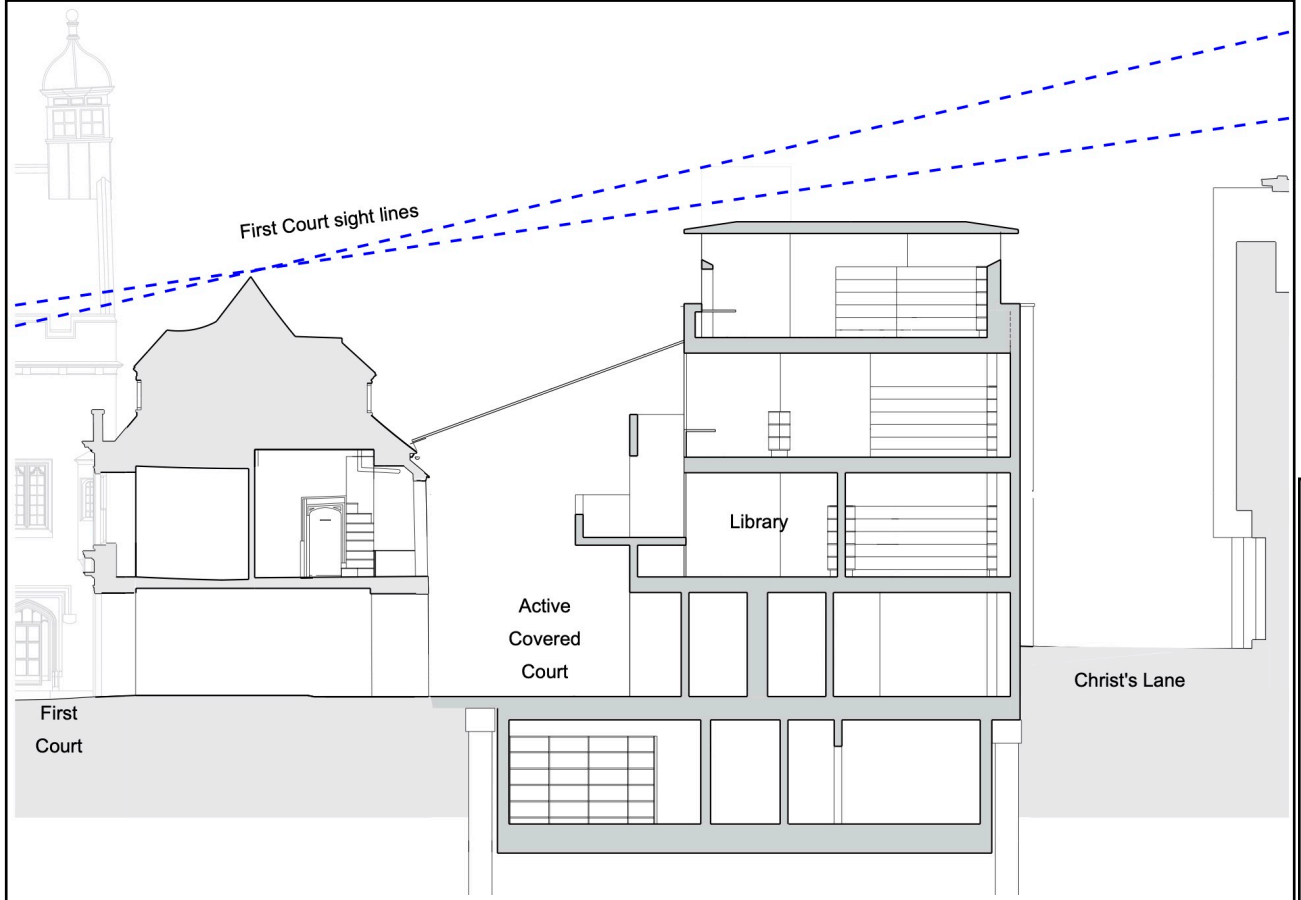
Historic England, 29 July 2025

1,050 m^2 replacing 680 m^2

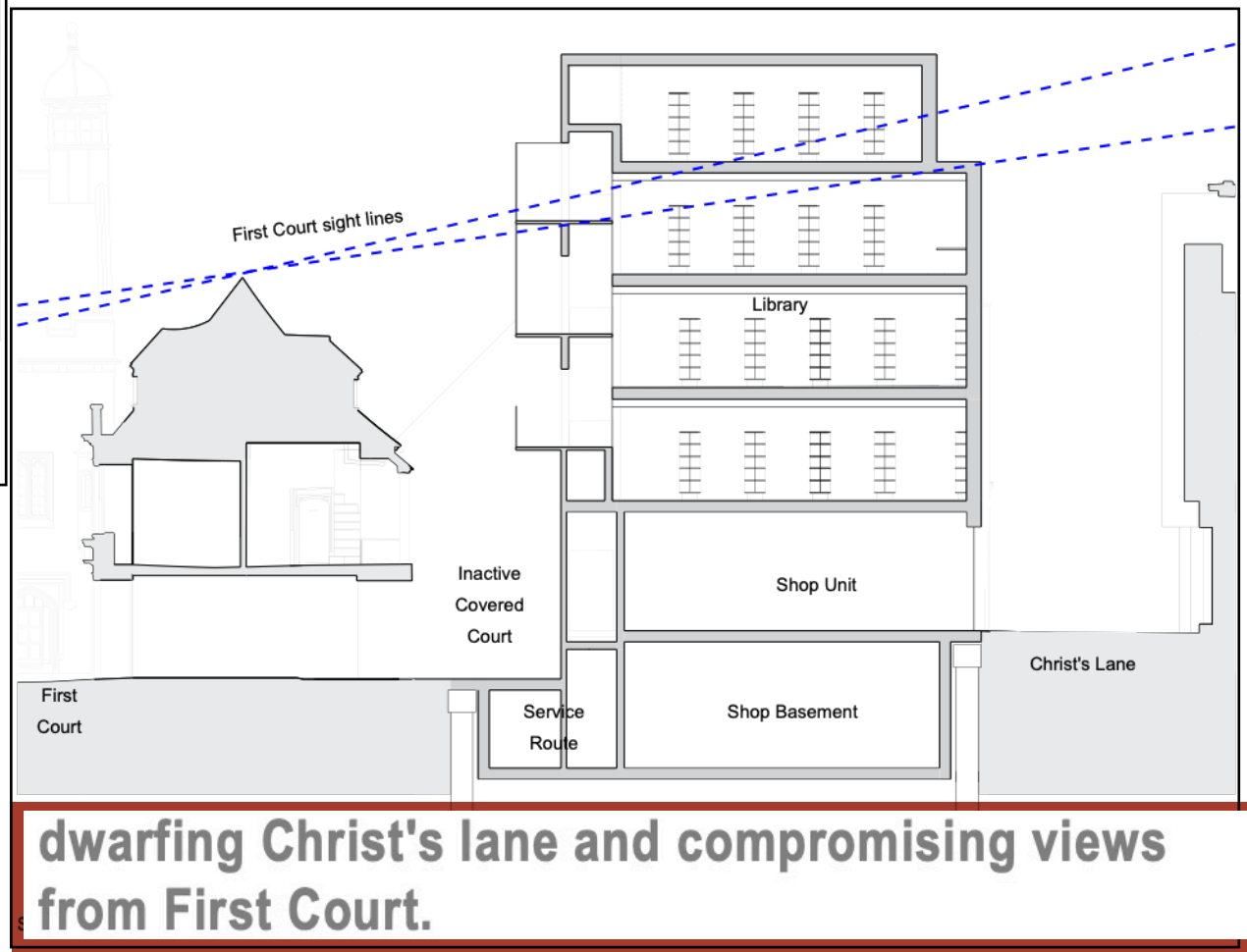
4+ storeys beside the 2 storey Grade I listed building

Every building here has deferred to the Bodley. This one would not.

Why a taller building was REJECTED in the Rick Mather Feasibility Study



Consented building causing no heritage harm



dwarfing Christ's lane and compromising views from First Court.

Christ's College New Library Feasibility Study by Rick Mather Architects 02.03.2010

FIRST APPLICATION ERROR: NO PLANNING BALANCE

Members were mislead that the harm was Neutral, NO PUBLIC BENEFIT BALANCING

"...there is harm identified to an aspect of the overall Grade I site, that being said the overall harm is considered to be neutral" - Case Officer Presentation 2025

APPROVAL (First APPLICATION)
Key material considerations

- Provision of **library facilities** to meet the **needs of the current student body**.
- Significantly **improved accessibility** of the library and wider College
- Improved **sustainability** performance of the site.
- Works help to secure the **optimum viable use** of the site and its listed buildings
- **Public benefits** through the enhancement of the public realm along Christ's Lane.

Officer Recommendation: Approve

2026: A FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT QUESTION FOR MEMBERS: THE PLANNING BALANCE

"…the heritage benefits are not considered to fully outweigh the heritage harm." - Conservation Officer, 2026

EVERY heritage expert finds heritage harm to Grade I listed setting: HARM GIVEN GREAT WEIGHT

THE QUESTION MEMBERS SHOULD HAVE FACED THE FIRST TIME:

DO PUBLIC BENEFITS OUTWEIGH THE HARM?

- Provision of **library facilities** to meet the **needs of the current student body**.
- Significantly **improved accessibility** of the library and wider College
- Improved **sustainability** performance of the site.
- Works help to secure the **optimum viable use** of the site and its listed buildings
- **Public benefits** through the enhancement of the public realm along Christ's Lane. [ACCORDING TO WHOM?]

OPTIONS and CHOICES

College's own Alternatives: Disregarded

The College changed its mind.

The City should not pay.

ALTERNATIVES — 1: ALREADY CONSENTED

"We considered dusting off the initial design by Rick Mather… but rejected it."

The Master of Christ's College, Planning Committee, 29 October 2025

Rejecting its own consented design is the College's prerogative.

Paying for that in Heritage Harm is not the City's role.

ALTERNATIVES — 2: ENGAGED FACADES

When Cambridge was shown two alternatives, it chose

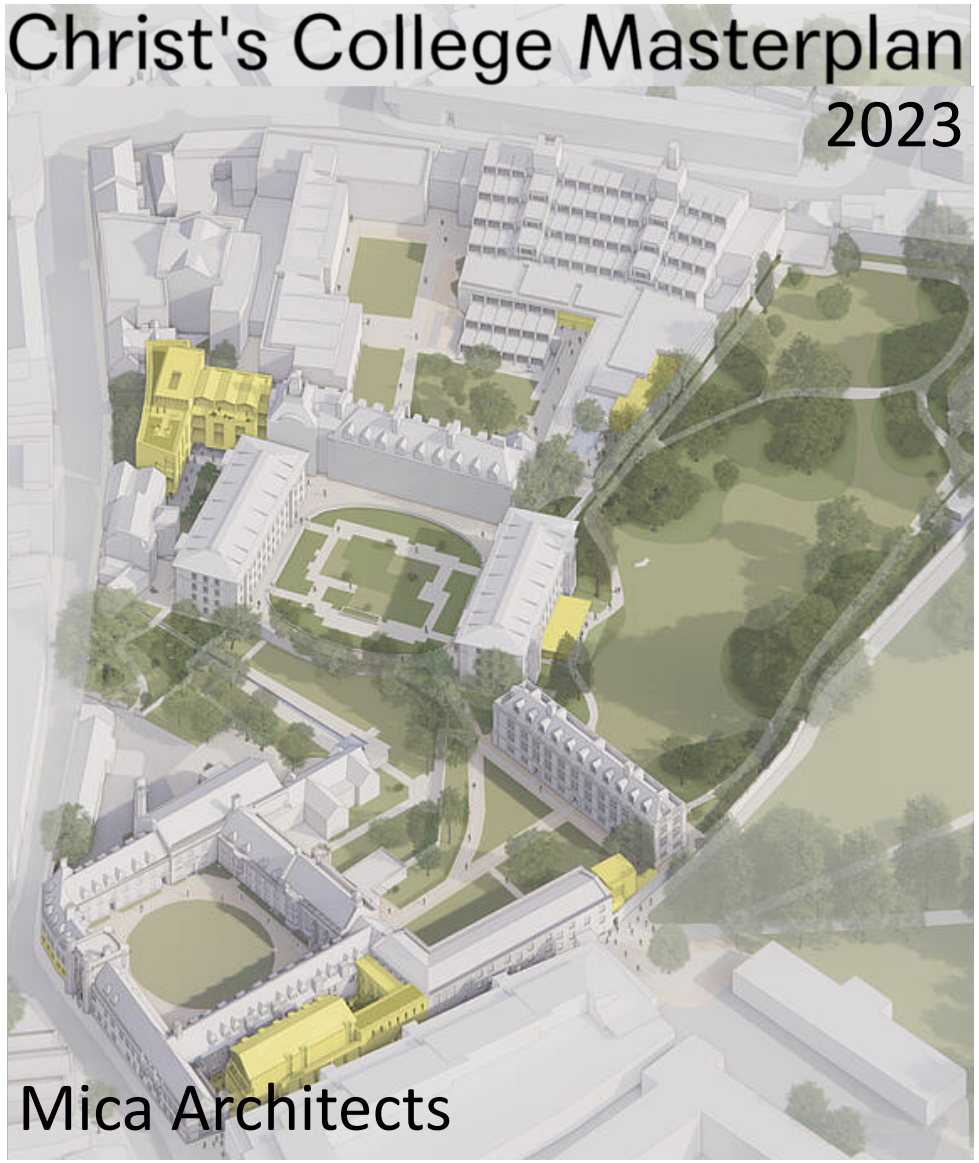
71%

public support — Create Streets' contextual alternative

21%

public support — the College scheme

ALTERNATIVES — 3: Not *just* a ‘LIBRARY'
A ‘STUDY CONSTELLATION'



The College’s Masterplan to achieve its objectives

“Until the new library is built, temporary study space is available in the Y Building, Lloyd Room and Plumb Auditorium;
to that we now add… the existing library… The structure is safe, clean, and vacant; we might as well use it.”

The Master of Christ’s College, Pieces issue 49, Spring 2026 — distributed study space, in the College’s own words

Better for Student Welfare

A **diversity of study settings** is the College’s own case for neurodivergent students

A **constellation** delivers more of it than one big room.

Better for Carbon, Sustainability & the Environment

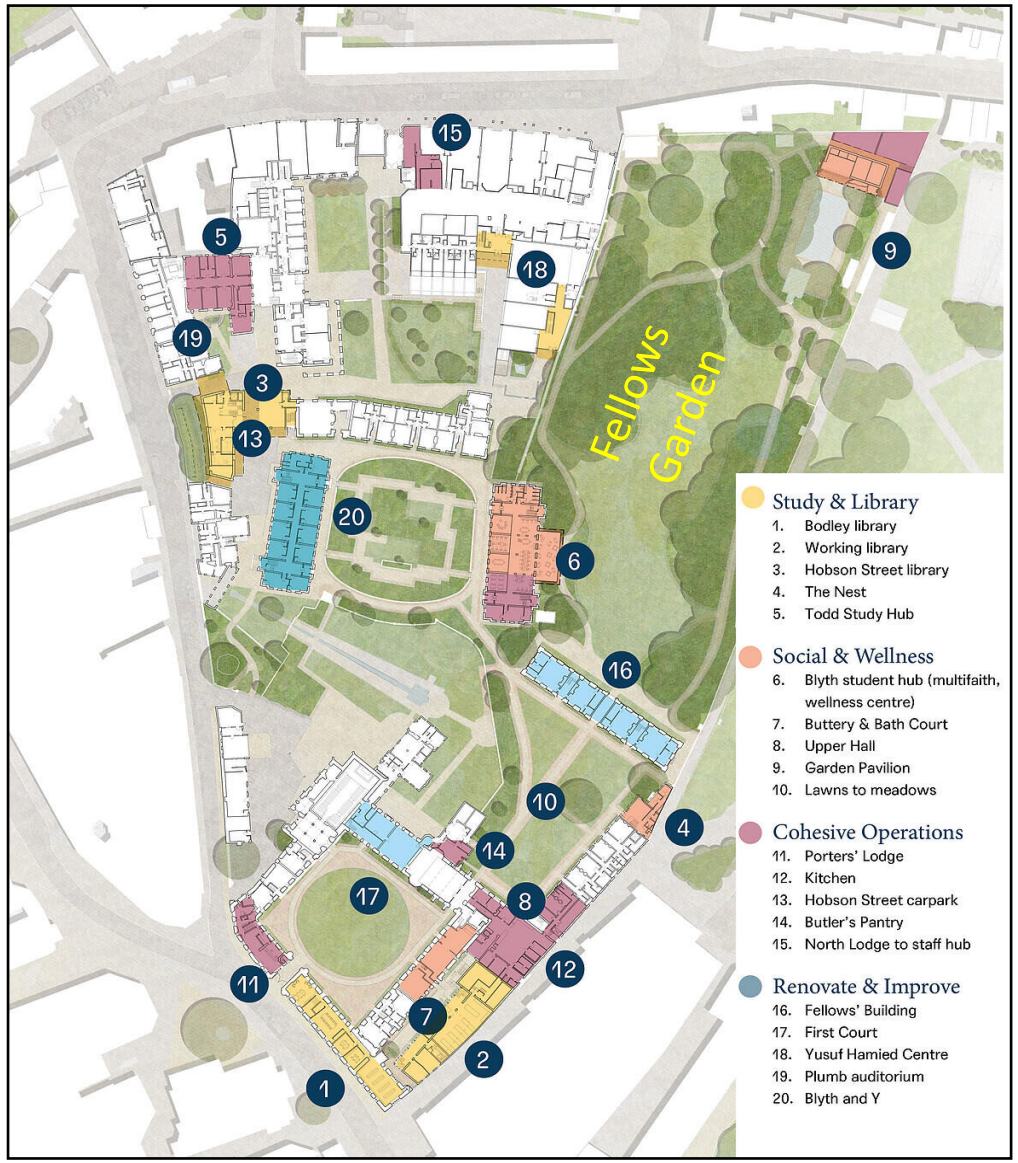
Repurposing existing rooms beats any new-build

Better for Accessibility

(New) Hamied Court has added ground-floor seminar rooms — and a lift now makes the Plumb Auditorium and Sosnow Room step-free.

ALTERNATIVES — 3: Not *just* a ‘LIBRARY'

A ‘STUDY CONSTELLATION'



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PHANTOM BENEFITS. REAL LOSSES.

"The public pays the price."

"canyon-like and oppressive."

What building heights on Christ's Lane must never make it — the City's own brief, 2002.

“A BEAUTIFUL WALL”

“…it’s very important to make a beautiful wall which will be enjoyed by passers-by.”

The applicant’s architect, Grafton Architects · Development Control Forum, 11 September 2025

A 14-metre wall beside a 6-metre lane: enclosure 2.3 : 1.

The Lane today 1.3 : 1 ·

Silver Street 1.6 : 1 · Trinity Street 1.6 : 1

Rose Crescent 1.5 : 1 · Pembroke Street 1 : 1 to 1.3 : 1

Over 40 per cent more enclosed than the tightest of central Cambridge streets. THE CANYON EFFECT.

A FRAGILE ECO-SYSTEM

Ten years to become a successful civic space.

Why destroy it?

THE CITY DESIGNED A CIVIC SPACE HERE

Redevelopment of Bradwells court (2007)

“a distinctive mixed-use development”

“active frontages… vitality.”

“a new public square… a first point of arrival.”

A Historic England national exemplar.

A street you go ***to***, not just go through

Historic England, Valuing Places — one of 18 National Case Studies

BRADWELL'S COURT - PLANNING AND DESIGN BRIEF

Vision for the Site

To transform an important but under utilised site in the historic city centre by:

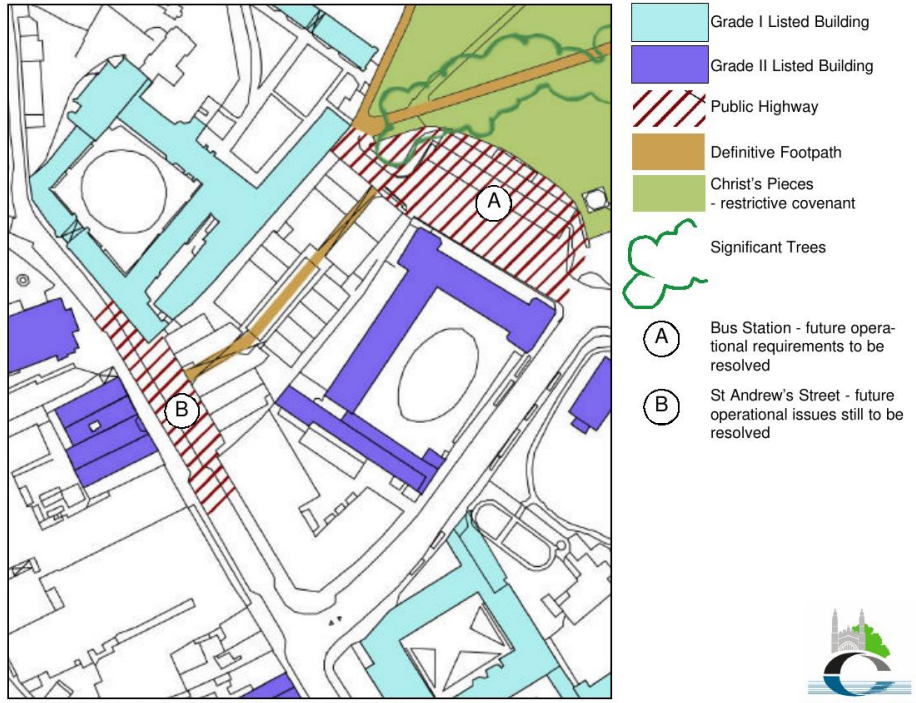
- creating a distinctive mixed use development that responds to its setting in a Conservation Area and adjacent to listed buildings
- reopening the historic Christ's Lane as an attractive pedestrian link between St Andrew's Street and Christ's Pieces
- creating townscape and architecture of the highest quality
- exploiting the excellent public transport links to the area and securing car free development
- improving servicing arrangements

Planning Policy Guidelines

Bradwell's Court is designated as a site for redevelopment (site 11.3), within the Cambridge Local Plan (adopted 1996). The proposed uses within the plan are shopping, arts/entertainment space with private or student residential accommodation above. Café/restaurant use may also be acceptable.

It is the intention for this brief to be adopted by the City Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Context



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CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

The LANE

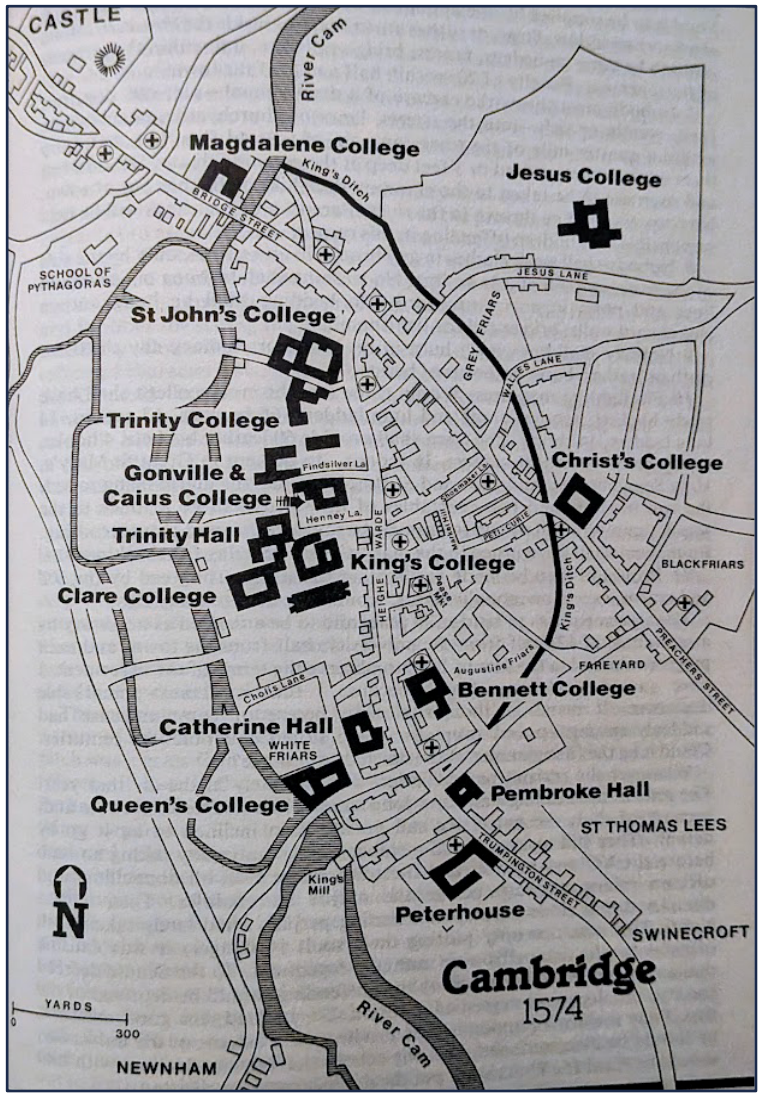
OLDER THAN THE COLLEGE

‘The lane predates the College. It is the town’s door into academic Cambridge — from the bus station into the historic core.'

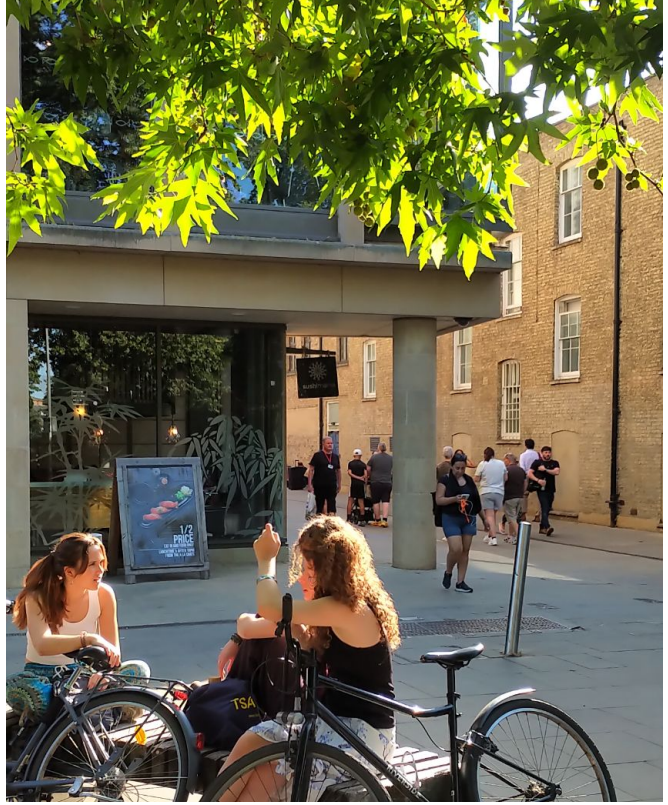
Cambridge, 1574 — Museum of Cambridge

Christ's Lane: a central pedestrian route

- linking the East and West of the city.
- connecting the main Bus Station, the Commercial centre, and Academic core.
- **10,000 people a day**



Museum of Cambridge, “Revisiting the Story of Cambridge” (2026) · Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal: Drummer St & Christ’s Lane



TOWN & GOWN

A CIVIC SPACE FOR THE CITY

THE QUESTION FOR TODAY

Why outrun the Court?

"…the College chose to enter contracts before the permission was legally secure. That was a risk which it chose to take. The College has been educating students since 1505. If it takes some additional time to review the legality of the consent, that is something which the College will manage."

Hon. Mr Justice Kimblin — refusing the College's request for special expedition, March 2026

The judgment lands on 20 October - Only 12 WEEKS AWAY

A decision for generations, for tens of thousands of people.
Isn't it worth getting right?

The first unlawful decision ended with the Council agreeing to pay the Claimant's costs. We do not wish a repeat.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY

for the Council, the College and the Public

1. **Defer** — No determination until the High Court has ruled on 20 October. A lawful decision needs the judgment.

2. **Use the twelve weeks** — A genuine look at the consented design, the constellation, a **appropriate**-sized scheme. Consideration of alternatives.

3. **Bring us together** — College, Council and Community at one table, in an **engaged, respectful, transparent, collaborative process.**

"... resilience, flexibility, and imagination.
In the library saga, we are drawing on all our virtues!"
- Christ's College Master, Lent 2026