



Inside and out

Rowan Moore is right (“[In Cambridge, it’s town v gown over rival plans for a college library](#)”) that architectural judgment requires more than counting votes. A library must work as a library. Serious questions of structure and cost cannot be settled by an opinion poll. But nor should public opinion about the outward face of a public-facing building be treated as irrelevant. More people will walk past the outside of the new library than will ever use the inside. Architecture is a public art, shaping our common home. What people feel about it matters.

Unless we build in existing towns and cities in forms people are willing to welcome, younger generations will struggle to afford homes, while growth is pushed into less sustainable sprawl. Good design should welcome scrutiny, including from non-specialists. Cambridge deserves buildings that meet their brief and enrich the city. These should not be opposing aims. The present design has not achieved either.

Nicholas Boys Smith, chairman, Create Streets; **David Milner** managing director, Create Streets

Rowan Moore reviewed the architecture and buried the law. He tells readers our group, the Christ’s Lane Action Group, “has won the first round” of a judicial review: the College’s own account of a case it has in fact agreed should be quashed. On 28 April 2026 Cambridge City Council and Christ’s College signed a consent order agreeing the planning permission be quashed on all four grounds we argued, with residents’ costs paid.

The College has not acknowledged that consent in its public statements about the application. Writing to all 42 city councillors, and in its resubmission statement, it calls the judicial review merely pending. Its stated aim: get the same building, with the same massing, re-approved “more quickly,” rather than “wait for the application to be referred back to the Council by the High Court”.

Christ’s Lane Action Group *Cambridge*