

**REPORT TITLE: Jesus Green Wall repairs**

To: Council 1st October

Report by:

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Wards affected:

Market and West Chesterton

Director Approval: Director James Elms confirms that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to Council for decision.

1.	Recommendations
1.1	It is recommended that Council: a) approves an increase in the capital budget for the Jesus Green River wall project from £850,000 to a maximum of £2.441 million, an increase of £1.591 million, to enable the stabilisation and replacement works to proceed; b) approves the additional capital provision being funded from reserves, with financing implications incorporated into the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy; and c) notes that Cabinet, on 23 September 2026, supported an open, two-stage procurement process, with appointment of a preferred contractor under a Pre-Construction Services Agreement followed by entry into the main construction contract only if the final design, construction methodology, cost plan and contract sum are acceptable and remain within the approved budget.
2.	Purpose and reason for the report
2.1	This report seeks Council approval for the additional capital budget required to stabilise and replace the Council-owned river wall at Jesus Green, between Jesus Green Lido and Jesus Green Lock.

2.2 2.3	Cabinet considered the River Cam, Chalk Streams and Tributaries report on 23 September 2026 and agreed to recommend that Council increase the approved project budget. Council approval is required because the revised capital requirement exceeds the £850,000 provision approved in October 2024. The recommendation allows the project to move into competitive two-stage procurement while retaining a clear control point before the Council enters the main construction contract. The Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 21st September 2026 considered the proposals and endorsed the recommendations following debate. Members sought assurance on the revised project cost and controls on expenditure, the likely timescales, and the work already undertaken to establish the condition of the wall and develop the proposed solution. Cabinet on the 23rd of September, subsequently approved the recommendations. Its discussion included questions about the project timetable and assurance that cost and construction risks would be managed within the proposed budget. The two-stage procurement approach provides a further control point before the Council enters the main construction contract.
3.	Background and Key Issues
3.1	The City Council is the riparian owner of the affected river wall. Inspections and investigations have confirmed active movement and rotation of the structure. A gap of up to two feet has developed between the concrete capping beam and the soil embankment, indicating continuing structural failure. In October 2024, Council approved a capital budget of £850,000. This early estimate was based on a high-level assessment of the wall length and assumed that conventional construction plant could work from the bankside. Subsequent arboricultural, engineering and geotechnical investigations have shown that this assumption is not deliverable. The river wall adjoins an avenue of mature trees, and the scale of land-based piling plant would have unacceptable effects on root-protection areas and tree canopies. The works must instead be undertaken from the river using floating plant and pontoons. Low bridge clearances also restrict the equipment that can reach the site, requiring specialist river access, plant and construction methods. Since the original budget was approved, the Council has undertaken inspections and arboricultural, engineering and geotechnical investigations. These established the

	extent of the wall's movement, tested the original assumption that construction could take place from the bank, and informed the assessment of repair options. The investigations found that the heavy plant needed for bankside piling would cause unacceptable damage to the mature tree avenue. No viable land-based method was identified that would both protect the trees and deliver the required works. The investigations and design work explain why the proposed method and budget differ from the high-level estimate made in 2024. The permanent wall repair has yet to be undertaken.
4.	Preferred engineering solution and revised budget
4.1	The technical assessment identifies steel sheet piling as the most viable solution capable of meeting the site's geotechnical and load-bearing requirements while maintaining the required river frontage alignment. The proposed steel sheet piles would be installed in front of the existing concrete retaining wall, with the ground behind reinstated. This would retain the river frontage alignment and avoid extensive excavation beside the mature trees. Alternative hard-engineering solutions would cost more, take longer to install and have greater embodied carbon. Softer revetment approaches would not provide the necessary structural performance or retain the required alignment because of the adjacent infrastructure and lock. The revised maximum project budget is £2.441 million, including the £850,000 already approved. Council is therefore asked to approve an additional £1.591 million. The revised estimate reflects construction from the river, specialist plant and access arrangements, design and project costs, and risk allowances identified as the investigations progressed. The final construction methodology, programme, risk allocation, and contract sum will be developed and evaluated with the preferred contractor during the pre-construction stage.

5.	Procurement and project control
	Cabinet has approved an open, two-stage procurement approach: • Stage 1 - appoint a preferred contractor under a Pre-Construction Services Agreement to work with the Council and design team on the detailed design, temporary works, river logistics, construction methodology, programme and final cost plan. • Stage 2 - subject to an acceptable final design, risk allocation and contract sum, enter the main construction contract. This approach brings specialist contractor knowledge into the design before the Council commits to the principal works. It is intended to improve buildability and cost certainty, allocate risk appropriately and reduce exposure to inflated tender prices or later variations. If an acceptable contract sum cannot be achieved, the Council will retain the ability to re-tender the developed scheme. Approval of the maximum budget does not itself authorise expenditure beyond the pre-construction stage unless the final contract remains affordable and the required technical, legal, procurement and financial assurances have been completed. The detailed construction programme cannot be confirmed until the preferred contractor has tested river access, temporary works and the construction sequence during the Pre-Construction Services Agreement. Officers will monitor progress against the programme developed at that stage and assess the effect of any delay on the condition of the wall and the need for interim measures. Before entering the main construction contract, officers will review the developed design, programme, risk allocation and contract sum, with appropriate technical, legal, procurement and financial advice. The main contract will proceed only if those matters are acceptable and the project remains within the budget approved by Council. If they are not, the Council can reconsider or re-tender the developed scheme. Any proposal requiring a higher budget will need further approval.
6.	Case for investment
	The wall is actively moving and continued reactive maintenance does not address the underlying structural failure. Delaying intervention would increase the risk of localised collapse, emergency works, service disruption and higher costs. Failure could affect: • Jesus Green Lido and the adjoining public open space; • Jesus Green Lock and river navigation; • Foul water pump-out facility for river vessels and residential boats; • Adjoining footpaths and strategic cycle routes; • Granta Backbone Network and drainage infrastructure;

	• Mature trees and the riverbank environment; and • Public safety and access along a heavily used riverside route. • High-speed fibre-optic cables, foul and surface water sewers, and other buried utilities. The preferred option is therefore planned replacement through a controlled procurement process. This provides a more proportionate and financially responsible response than continued temporary repairs or waiting for structural failure.
7	Relationship with Jesus Green Lock
	The proposed maximum capital budget is £2.441 million, comprising the existing £850,000 provision and an additional £1.591 million sought from Council. The recommendation is that the additional provision be funded from reserves, with the financing implications reflected in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The estimate includes an allowance for identified project risks, but specialist river construction, access constraints, ground conditions and temporary works remain sources of cost uncertainty. The two-stage procurement process will provide a more developed cost plan before commitment to the main construction contract. The projects should continue to be coordinated where practical, but the river wall project should not be delayed if this would increase structural or financial risk. Any shared access or delivery arrangement must clearly allocate costs, liabilities and future maintenance responsibilities. The budget request in this report relates only to the Council-owned river wall and does not transfer responsibility for the lock or the Conservators' statutory navigation functions to the Council.
8.	Implications
8.1	Financial Risk
	A total of £850,000 is already allocated and approved within the Council's current Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The remaining balance of £1,591,000 will be funded from the Council's unallocated capital reserves. • Financing Costs: Because the project is entirely funded by cash from the MTFS and existing reserves, the Council will not take on any debt or pay any interest costs for this work. • Impact on Council Plans: Using these reserves means those funds will not be available for other future projects. However, drawing from reserves ensures this urgent safety work can move forward without disrupting the existing MTFS budget plans.

	Future Maintenance Costs (Revenue Budget) Once the new river wall is built, it will require routine safety checks and visual inspections annually to check for defects relating to the moorings and path. The main structural component of the steel piles will have a design life of at least 60 years. We estimate these ongoing costs of minor repairs to surfacing or mooring points will be in the region of £500-1000 annually as an average over the next 12 years. This can be absorbed within the existing annual revenue budget as an existing asset. Before the report is finalised, we need to confirm the funding source, financing costs if any, cash-flow profile, treatment of inflation and risk allowance, and any effect on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Any ongoing inspection or maintenance costs arising from the completed asset should be incorporated into future revenue budgets. The two-stage procurement provides a further financial control. Entry into the main construction contract will take place only when the developed design and contract sum are acceptable and within the maximum approved budget. Any proposal exceeding that limit, or creating material unfunded liabilities, will require further approval under the Council's financial governance arrangements. Financial and Governance Controls The two-stage procurement process ensures that the Council retains full control over project expenditure. Progression from the pre-construction phase to the construction contract will only occur where the final design and tendered construction cost remain within the approved budget of £2,441,000. Any cost exceeding the approved budget, or any material increase in future financial liabilities, would require further approval through the Council's formal decision-making and financial governance processes before a contract could be awarded at the second stage.
8.2	Risk Management
	The principal risks and controls are: Structural deterioration: The active movement may worsen before construction. Monitoring, interim safety measures and timely procurement will continue. Cost uncertainty: Specialist River working, restricted access, ground conditions and temporary works may affect price. Early contractor involvement, an explicit risk allowance and a maximum budget provide control.

	Failure to secure an acceptable tender: The Council will retain the ability to revise the design or re-tender the developed scheme rather than enter an unaffordable main contract. Environmental and tree impacts: Detailed design, construction methodology, arboricultural controls and relevant consents will minimise effects on mature trees, habitats and the river. Interface with the Conservators: The wall and lock projects will be coordinated, but responsibilities, costs and liabilities will remain clearly separated. Programme delay: Delay increases the likelihood of emergency intervention and disruption. The two-stage route is intended to resolve buildability and logistics early.
8.3	Legal Implications
	The Council owns the affected river wall and may undertake works to protect and maintain its asset. The project will require appropriate land, navigation, environmental, flood-risk and construction consents. Contract documents must clearly allocate design, construction, river access, third-party and future maintenance liabilities. Partnership and funding arrangements will need to clearly identify responsibilities, liabilities, ownership of works and future maintenance obligations.
8.4	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
	The completed works will protect continued public access to an important riverside open space and route. Temporary construction arrangements will need to consider accessibility, alternative routes, and clear public information.
8.5	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
	Construction will have temporary environmental and carbon impacts. The developed design and procurement should minimise embodied carbon, protect trees and habitats, control pollution and disturbance, and consider material reuse where feasible. The preferred steel sheet-pile solution has lower embodied carbon than the other viable hard-engineering options assessed.
8.6	Procurement Implications

	Cabinet has approved an open, two-stage procurement process. The procurement will comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and applicable procurement legislation.
8.7	Community Safety Implications
	Planned intervention reduces the risk associated with continuing structural movement. Construction will require site controls, safe diversions and coordination with river and open-space users. In the longer term, investment in riverbank infrastructure, appropriate management of riverside land and improved environmental condition should contribute positively to the safety, resilience and quality of the river environment.
9	Background documents Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
	River Cam, Chalk Streams and Tributaries - Strategic Review and Environmental Projects, Cabinet, 23 September 2026.
10	Appendices
10.1	None
	To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Alistair Wilson, City Services, alistair.wilson@cambridge.gov.uk