

Cambridge City Council Development Control Forum

Date: Wednesday, 29 July 2026

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Small Hall - The Guildhall, Market Square, Cambridge, CB2 3QJ
[access the building via Peashill entrance]

Contact: democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk, tel:01223 457000

Agenda

1 Introduction by Chair to the Forum

2 Apologies

3 Declarations of Interest

4 Application and Petition Details

Application No: 26/02109/FUL

Site Address: Christs College Library Christs College St
Andrews Street Cambridge

Description: Demolition of 1970s library and replacement with new library, social and study spaces 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 south east 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.

Applicant: Lord Simon McDonald

Agent: Ms Ellie Drozdowska

Address: Turley, 8 Quay Court Colliers Lane Cambridge CB23 9DH

Case Officer: Dominic Bush

Lead Petitioner: Christ's Lane Action Group

The grounds for asking for a Forum on this application are as follows:

The Christ's Lane Action Group supports the provision of a new library

for Christ's College. We do not object in principle to a new library. We object to this particular scheme. Application 26/02109/FUL is the same physical building as the previous application (25/02161/FUL). Rather than defend the judicial review of that permission, the Council and the College signed a Consent Order on 28 April 2026 agreeing that it should be quashed on all four grounds and that the Action Group's costs should be paid; the Court has not yet made a final quashing order, and the substantive hearing remains listed for 20 October 2026. The resubmission reproduces the same reasoning, and now goes further, recharacterising as a "minor beneficial impact" the very bulk and massing that the heritage consultees had identified as harmful. A Development Control Forum is needed so that residents, retailers, the College and the Council can discuss how a new library can be delivered without that harm.

1) Historic England, the Victorian Society and the independent heritage consultant Alec Forshaw each assessed this scheme and found harm, and none of them has withdrawn that advice. Historic England (29 July 2025) found the building "too big, overdominant" and confirmed on 1 September 2025 that "the overall massing of the building remains unchanged"; the Victorian Society (August 2025) suggested reducing the height by approximately half at each floor to improve the overall scale of the current proposals; and Alec Forshaw (October 2025) found less-than-substantial harm "at the upper end of the scale" to the setting of the Grade I listed Bodley Library. These and other heritage consultees, including the statutory consultee, the Gardens Trust, have not had the opportunity to respond to the resubmission's new claim of a "minor beneficial impact".

2) The scheme creates a canyon effect on Christ's Lane. It places a sheer wall of approximately 14 metres on the north side of a lane only approximately 6 metres wide, an enclosure ratio of roughly 2.3:1, far exceeding historic streets such as Trinity Street and Rose Crescent (approximately 1.5:1). The height further exceeds the 11.4-metre height limit set for this lane in the 2002 Joint Planning Brief by around 3 metres. Christ's Lane is a designated principal pedestrian route (Local Plan Policy 10) carrying over 10,000 people a day, and the scheme would turn it into a dark, oppressive corridor.

3) The loss of daylight is severe and has not been properly assessed. The applicant's own evidence shows Vertical Sky Component losses exceeding 50% at 25 windows along Christ's Lane and over 90% at four, with the café windows directly opposite reduced by between 55% and 96%. No BRE 209 (2022)-compliant daylight, sunlight and shadow-plotting assessment has been provided for the lane as a public space, and no Construction Management Plan has

been submitted for a route with this footfall.

4) The scheme offers minimal genuine public benefit or active frontage. Against the harm identified by the heritage consultees, it offers only a single bench and a “book-stop”. Benefits offered by previous Christ’s College library schemes never materialised, including the previously promised green wall. The building presents a blank, inactive wall to Christ’s Lane where the lane requires active frontage.

5) The building qualifies as a Tall Building: it breaks the existing skyline and is significantly taller than the Bodley Library and First Court, yet no Townscape and Visual Impact Appraisal has been provided against the specific criteria of Policy 60 of the Cambridge Local Plan. The scheme also conflicts with Local Plan Policies 10, 56, 58 and 61 and with NPPF paragraphs 212–215, none of which can be satisfied while the harm found by the heritage consultees is simply denied.

6) Credible less harmful alternatives were before the Council and remain unaddressed. The 2016 basemented Rick Mather scheme was not found harmful by Historic England, and the Victorian Society expressly contrasted it with the current scheme; the 2016 design would not be harmful, whereas the current one has the potential to be. The Victorian Society also recommended aligning floor heights with the Bodley Library’s oriel window, roughly halving each floor height. Create Streets further illustrated a basemented lower-impact route (October 2025). The failure to engage with these options, one of the grounds conceded in the judicial review, returns unchanged.

Do you think there are changes that could be made to overcome your concerns?

Yes. The Christ’s Lane Action Group is not objecting in principle to a new library. The following changes would overcome our concerns:

1) Reduce the height, mass and scale of the building so that it no longer harms the setting of the Grade I listed buildings or the character of Christ’s Lane, for example by aligning floor heights with the Bodley Library’s oriel window as the Victorian Society recommended, and by revisiting a basemented, lower-rise approach along the lines of the 2016 scheme.

2) Introduce genuine active frontage and public benefit onto Christ’s Lane, satisfying Local Plan policy on this principal pedestrian route, rather than presenting a blank wall.

3) Provide the missing evidence and consult on it properly: a BRE 209 (2022)-compliant daylight, sunlight and shadow-plotting

assessment for Christ's Lane as a public space, and a Construction Management Plan for the construction period.

4) Bring the ventilation stacks down to a height subservient to the college's historic buildings, and demonstrate a comparison between alternative ways of realising passive ventilation.

5) Undertake and publish a genuine assessment of less harmful alternatives, including the 2016 Rick Mather scheme, together with a proper Townscape and Visual Impact Appraisal against Policy 60.

Development Control Forum Members: Baigent, Clough, Dryden, Fisher, Griffin, Illingworth, Porrer, Smart and Todd-Jones

Alternates: Bennett, Blackburn-Horgan, Flaubert, Nestor and Young

Information for Petitioners' and Applicants' Representative

The aims of the Forum are to allow early discussion of the planning issues and to explore the scope for agreement and compromise between all sides.

Up to three representatives of the petitioners and up to three representatives of the applicants may attend and speak for a total period not exceeding 20 minutes.

The applicants' presentation is heard first and applicants are asked to start their presentation with a brief description of the application proposals.

For further information on the conduct of the Forum or the petition process, please see the Development Control Guidelines, a copy of this is available on the Council's website at <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/petitions-and-development-control-forum> or contact the Council's Committee Section (01223) 457000.

Please let the Committee Manager know if you have any queries about the Forum.

Format of the Forum

The format of the Forum will be as follows for each application:

- Introduction by Chair and declaration of Councillor interests – **up to 5 minutes**
- Presentation of the application by the applicant/agent (up to 3 representatives) principally to address the issues raised by petitioners – **up to 20 minutes**
- Presentation of the views of the petitioners against the application (up to 3 representatives) – **up to 20 minutes**
- Presentation of the views of the petitioners in support of the application (where applicable) (up to 3 representatives) – **up to 20 minutes**
- Presentation by the planning officer – **up to 10 minutes**
- Member questions and issues arising – **up to 30 minutes**

- Summing up by the applicant/agent – up to 5 minutes
- Summing up by the petitioners against the application – **up to 5 minutes**
- Summing up by the petitioners in support of the application – **up to 5 minutes**
- Final comments of the Chair

Emergency Evacuation Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm sounding all persons should vacate the building by way of the nearest escape route and proceed directly to the assembly point in front St Mary's Church. The duty Officer will assume overall control during any evacuation, however in the unlikely event the duty Officer is unavailable, this responsibility will be assumed by the Committee Chair.

Information for the public

The public may record (e.g. film, audio, tweet, blog) meetings which are open to the public.

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- Website: <http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk>
- Email: democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk
- Phone: 01223 457000

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On some occasions livestreaming may not be possible. Whilst this is frustrating it is important to note that there is no legal requirement to record or livestream meetings. The meeting may proceed in person only should there be an ICT failure on the day. Democratic Services aim to live stream this meeting on the Council's YouTube channel. If the service cannot be provided, this will be clearly stated on the agenda page of the City Council's website. Regardless of whether the meeting is streamed, members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting in person.

Those wishing to address the meeting as invited Supporters/Objectors (there is no general public speaking item) will be able to do so virtually via Microsoft Teams, or by attending to speak in person. You must contact Democratic Services democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk by 12 noon two working days before the meeting.