



Planning Committee Date	Wednesday 5 th July 2023
Report to	Cambridge City Council Planning Committee
Lead Officer	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
Reference	23/01137/FUL
Site	The Varsity Hotel and Spa, 24 Thompsons Lane, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire.
Ward / Parish	Market
Proposal	Installation of a new all weather lightweight retractable roof canopy and associated works
Applicant	Mr Will Davies
Presenting Officer	Charlotte Peet
Reason Reported to Committee	Public Interest
Member Site Visit Date	Site Visit Recommended
Key Issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Design, Scale, Layout and Landscaping2. Heritage Assets3. Amenity4. Highway Safety and Traffic5. Third Party Representations
Recommendation	Approve

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The application seeks permission for the installation of a new all weather lightweight retractable roof canopy and associated works.
- 1.2 The proposal would introduce a new structure to the rooftop of the building, comprising a steel frame and glazed roof and sides. The retractable elements comprise a retractable awning system within the roof area and guillotine/ telescopic windows that open in the sides. The rest of the structure would remain as a permanent structure above the roof of the existing building.
- 1.3 This application follows a previous application which was refused at Planning Committee 2nd November 2022 following Officer recommendation. It was refused for two reasons based on the scale, bulk and design of the structure and the impact to the Cambridge skyline and harm to both designated and non-designated heritage impacts of the proposal. At this time, it was not considered that the harm to heritage assets would be outweighed by public benefits.
- 1.4 The report details that the proposal has been improved following the previous application. Whilst it would continue to result in a prominent addition to the Cambridge skyline, that would result in harm to surrounding heritage assets, it is considered that on balance the public benefits resulting from the proposal would outweigh the harm and therefore be considered acceptable.
- 1.5 Officers recommend that the Planning Committee APPROVE the application.

2.0 Site Description and Context

None-relevant		Tree Preservation Order	
Conservation Area	X	Local Nature Reserve	
Listed Building	X	Flood Zone	
Building of Local Interest	X	Green Belt	
Historic Park and Garden		Protected Open Space	
Scheduled Ancient Monument		Controlled Parking Zone	
Local Neighbourhood and District Centre		Article 4 Direction	

- 2.1 The Varsity Hotel is a seven-storey building, approximately 21m tall, used as a hotel and restaurant within the centre of the city adjacent to the quayside area. The Glassworks gym occupy the converted warehouse

which adjoins the application site to the north. To the northeast of the site, the character is predominantly residential and defined by consistent rows of two-storey terraced properties which are designated buildings of local interest. To the southwest, the character shifts, and is defined by taller, commercial use buildings which form part of the quayside area. Beyond this, is the River Cam.

2.2 The proposal is located within the Central Conservation Area, within the setting of a number of listed buildings and buildings of local interest which are summarised in the heritage section of this report.

3.0 The Proposal

3.1 The application seeks permission for installation of a new all weather lightweight retractable roof canopy and associated works.

3.2 The proposed development comprises a structure made with a steel frame and glass which would sit across the entire rooftop area to provide year-round use of the rooftop. It would involve the removal of the existing balustrade and become a permanent structure on the rooftop. The windows to the side of the structure would be openable through a mechanised guillotine/ telescopic system and the roof would contain an awning system that would retract into the pelmet at the top of the structure when weather allows.

3.3 Throughout the consideration period of the application, the applicant submitted further information including a heritage statement and additional verified views to show the impact of the proposal from Magdalene Bridge and Jesus Green and scaled elevations.

4.0 Relevant Site History

Reference	Description	Outcome
22/00778/FUL	Installation of a new all weather lightweight retractable roof canopy and associated works.	Refused (Appeal Lodged)
21/05201/NMA1	Non-material amendment of planning permission 21/05201/FUL (Creation of new basement/s for Hotel and Spa) Amendment of basement level, increasing depth by approx 2m	Withdrawn
21/05201/FUL	Creation of new basement/s for Hotel and Spa	Permitted
21/03682/FUL	Creation of new basement/s for Hotel and Spa	Permitted
20/02622/S73	S73 to remove condition 4 (car parking layout) of ref: 09/0447/FUL (Change of use from two residential apartments on 6th floor to six hotel rooms).	Disposed

20/02504/S73	Removal of condition 2 (vehicle parking) of planning permission 08/1610/FUL	Permitted
18/1933/FUL	Erection of a lightweight retractable fabric awning system, together with minimalist sliding glass curtains above the existing glass balustrade on the 6th Floor.	Permitted
15/0396/S73	S73 application to remove the prohibition of restaurant, cafe, bar use on the sixth floor - removal of condition 3 of planning permission 09/0447/FUL.	Permitted
14/0499/S73	S73 application to vary condition 2 of planning permission 08/1610/FUL to remove the part relating to the provision of a disabled parking space to amend to 'provision would be made offering valet parking free of charge for disabled guests'.	Refused
09/0775/S73	Variation of Condition 3 of planning permission 08/1610/FUL to allow the possibility of a restaurant	Permitted
09/0498/S73	Variation of Condition 3 of planning permission 08/1610/FUL to allow the possibility of a restaurant.	Refused
09/0447/FUL	Change of use from two residential apartments on 6th floor to six hotel rooms.	Permitted
09/0344/S73	Variation of condition 3 of planning permission 08/1610/FUL to allow the possibility of a restaurant.	Allowed on appeal
08/1610/FUL	Change of use which involves conversion of an existing apartment block in the centre of Cambridge into a Hotel, with no change to the top floor which will remain residential.	Permitted
04/1270/FUL	Amendments to approved planning permission C/03/0808/FP to achieve acoustic improvements and minor internal changes and increase size of Flat 19, to accommodate these changes by varying Northern, Eastern and Western elevations.	Permitted

- 4.1 The building was originally built as a residential building, however was later converted to a hotel through subsequent applications which first converted the lower floors to hotel use and then the top floor and then added the restaurant. The most recent alterations to the building have been in the form of the creation of a basement for the hotel/spa.
- 4.2 This application follows an application which was previously refused at Planning Committee of 2nd November 2022. The reasons for refusal were based on the adverse impact to the Cambridge skyline and the impact to designated and non-designated heritage assets. It was not considered that the public benefits would not have outweighed the harm to designated

heritage assets and that harm would result to non-designated heritage assets to the detriment of the character of the area. The proposal has since been amended following advice from Officers prior to the submission of the current application.

5.0 Policy

5.1 National

National Planning Policy Framework 2021
National Planning Practice Guidance
National Design Guide 2021
Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) Cycle Infrastructure Design
Circular 11/95 (Conditions, Annex A)
Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
Environment Act 2021
ODPM Circular 06/2005 – Protected Species
Equalities Act 2010

5.2 Cambridge Local Plan 2018

Policy 1: The presumption in favour of sustainable development
Policy 2: Spatial strategy for the location of employment development
Policy 10: The City Centre
Policy 11: Development in the City Centre Primary Shopping Area
Policy 28: Sustainable design and construction, and water use
Policy 31: Integrated water management and the water cycle
Policy 32: Flood risk
Policy 34: Light pollution control
Policy 41: Protection of business space
Policy 55: Responding to context
Policy 56: Creating successful places
Policy 58: Altering and extending existing buildings
Policy 59: Designing landscape and the public realm
Policy 60: Tall buildings and the skyline in Cambridge
Policy 61: Conservation and enhancement of historic environment
Policy 62: Local heritage assets
Policy 80: Supporting sustainable access to development
Policy 82: Parking management

5.3 Neighbourhood Plan

N/A

5.4 Supplementary Planning Documents

Biodiversity SPD – Adopted February 2022
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD – Adopted January 2020
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD – Adopted November 2016
Health Impact Assessment SPD – Adopted March 2011

Landscape in New Developments SPD – Adopted March 2010
Open Space SPD – Adopted January 2009
Public Art SPD – Adopted January 2009
Trees and Development Sites SPD – Adopted January 2009
Grafton Area Masterplan and Guidance SPD (2018)
Mitcham’s Corner Development Framework SPD (2018)

5.5 **Other Guidance**

Central Conservation Area Appraisal (2017)

6.0 **Consultations**

6.1 **Conservation Officer – Objection (Further Information Required)**

6.2 A roof extension in this historic context will be readily apparent to residents, workers, and visitors to Cambridge and would be a long-term feature that ought to be of generally acknowledged high quality if it is to be permitted. I do not believe this has been demonstrated nor that there is sufficient material (e.g. detailed drawings and a detailed model), or a convincingly justified case for such an intrusion into the roofscape / skyline.

- When open, the structure would appear as an incongruous skeletal frame further detracting from the surroundings.
- Other than having a “bulky pelmet”, there are no detailed drawings of what the frame/canopy would look like.
- When closed, the structure equates to an extra storey on an already prominent building.
- The applicant’s claim of only “minor level harm” is based on incomplete information and questionable assumptions. There would be significant harm to heritage assets.
- Given 2 & 4, a Planning Balance exercise ought to acknowledge greater than minor level harm – especially given the importance of the heritage assets affected.
- There would be difficulty in granting a planning permission that relies on a planning condition to mitigate/establish design information – as it has not been demonstrated that development accords with policy in principle.

6.3 These are expanded below.

Commentary

6.4 The proposal is for the construction of a structural frame built off the edges of the 6th floor, with a secondary structure (including a “bulkier pelmet” – ref: Design & Access Statement para 1.6) which will allow the retractable roof - its moving parts folding and gathering behind the roof members - and associated motors to be “disguised by the roof members”. ii Cladding to solid sections, would match the existing on the Hotel ie. is to be in “zinc”

grey as the existing upper storeys are (HIA 7.1.5). The perimeter glazing would be telescopic/guillotine in configuration which when open, would have 1100mm high balustrading like the existing glass screen. It is proposed to install low-level infra-red heater units on the “inboard retractable roofing columns.” The existing two smaller 6th floor canopies would be replaced.

- 6.5 Notwithstanding this general description, there is a lack of detailed information on its actual appearance – what would get built if permission was granted. The design is only indicated on the elevation drawings (TVH-AMA-XX-SK-A-10-01 etc) which are entitled “Retractable Roof Visualization” and the roof plan diagrams (whereas for instance, Policy 60 requires “scaled drawings, sections, accurate visual representations and models”). So despite this being described as a lightweight retractable roof canopy, there is no drawn or other information on the dimensions of the “bulkier Pelmet” or the frame that is thick enough to disguise the moving, folding parts and associated motors behind them. It is not just the pelmet we lack dimensions for but for the frame members generally. Nor are there drawings of how the sliding panels would look. There is nothing for the “inboard retractable roofing columns”. In short, there are no lower scaled drawings. The drawings sent latterly with a scale bar are not a substitution for this information. Neither are the proposed materials or finishes of the roof frame structure stated on the application form. We also don't know how noisy and distracting its operation would be and have not seen such a roof in action. If a permission was granted on the current information, little of the resultant appearance apart from the roof frame's layout would be known ahead. Surely, the importance of this city centre area warrants a model, sections, full drawings and decision makers consideration of the working operation of an automated roof (perhaps from an example elsewhere but considered in the Cambridge context).
- 6.6 The building form would be extended upwards by some three metres taken from the existing top floor. For a comparison, this equates to an additional (domestic scale) floor on a building. The frame would in the applicants terms, be “extruded” from the outer edges of the existing building (ie go straight up from the outer walls).The result is to introduce greater presence for a building with upper floors that lack coherent form – to introduce this into a roof/streetscape where in contrast, roof forms are clear and where those taller buildings that do feature are of quality and significance. It is notable that in spite of the importance of the location, the quality of the proposed design has not been tested by the Council's Design Review Panel to independently comment on the design (and on any claim that it successfully contrasts with existing established building forms).
- 6.7 That there would be harm to the conservation area and settings of heritage assets is acknowledged by the applicants submitted Historic Impact Assessment (HIA). However, I do not agree the claimed level of harm. The HIA appears also to be based on the same limited drawings/information available with the application and therefore the

assessment of harm was without full knowledge of the appearance of the structure/roof. It also lacks assessment of setting. Also, it considers that the materials (steel and glass) reflect the roofs of the neighbouring Quayside development but these are predominantly tile and slate viewed from the ground. Further, as guidance tells us, how we experience a conservation area is not restricted to selected set views alone and includes other ways the area is experienced (Historic England guidance GPA3 – The Setting of Heritage Assets). The HIA does not fully take account of the physical or visual disturbance of the moving structure opening and closing. For lighting - during twilight and darkness, the additional storey would be lighted within (by we are told, strip lighting). It would continue to appear as a very prominent illuminated volume against the darkening sky and given it is intended as an all-weather canopy, this is likely to be the case for additional time.

- 6.8 Thus, the factors above mean the applicant's assessment of harm to heritage assets is too low and harm would actually be at a more significant level of the NPPF's "less than substantial".
- 6.9 The NPPF "planning balance" exercise: Lack of a detailed design also means it's contribution to potential harm cannot be fully assessed. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance (NPPF para 199). The weight given to the heritage assets affected in the planning balance needs to be particularly great ("the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be") as they include highly graded Listed buildings and the historic core of Cambridge.
- 6.10 The extension is not demonstrated to be in accord with Local Plan policies (see below) and this would not be mitigated by simply relying on a condition requiring design information.
- A taller building of this nature and also having an automated roof would be out of character here.
 - In decision making, special attention must be paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the character of the conservation area as per section 72 of the Planning (Listed buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Heritage Assets:

- 6.11 The application site is within the Central conservation area, and forms part of the setting of a number of statutorily and locally listed buildings, including the Grade I Pepys and First Court buildings at Magdalene College, the Chapel at St John's College, also Grade I, the Bright's building at Magdalene College, and Magdalene Bridge, which are both

listed Grade II, and the Buildings of Local Interest on the east side of the north section of Thompson's Lane, both sides of St John's Street, and the west side of Park Parade.

- 6.12 The applicant's submitted HIA (by LanPro) concludes: "that the proposed development will result in less than substantial harm (minor level) on the significance and character of the river Cam corridor of the Central Conservation Area. The design and shape of the proposed canopy will give better continuity with the established upper floors of the Hotel and will also reflect the existing steel and glass rooftops of the neighbouring Quayside development, making it a more cohesive addition to the buildings along the eastern bank of the river Cam."
- 6.13 However, the existing Quayside development roofs present not as "steel and glass" as the applicants suggest, but as pitched tile and slate roofs. To claim to be reflecting the Quayside roofs is false and suggests the level of harm has been underestimated.
- 6.14 The applicants also claim the level of harm is only minor as "the design and shape of the proposed canopy will give better continuity with the established upper floors of the Hotel". This continuity with the upper floors equates to extending the envelope of these floors up another level along with additional skeleton structure. Again, in terms of the additional height, and prominence, this is hardly a sound basis for claiming just minor level harm.
- 6.15 Dealing with views from Jesus Green etc, the HIA conclusions are mixed with skyline assessment. However, a Jesus Green assessment is more to do with impact on the character of the conservation area.

Policy and Guidance Appraisal regarding Historic Environment:

- 6.16 Policy 58: Altering and extending existing buildings. Alterations and extensions to existing buildings will be permitted where they:
- a. do not adversely impact on the setting, character or appearance of listed buildings or the appearance of conservation areas, local heritage assets, open spaces, trees or important wildlife features;
 - b. reflect, or successfully contrast with, the existing building form, use of materials and architectural detailing while ensuring that proposals are sympathetic to the existing building and surrounding area;
- 6.17 The proposal would adversely impact assets in (a) above. There is no evidence it would successfully achieve (b) above.
- 6.18 Policy 60. Views analysis for Policy 60 "Tall Buildings", shows for instance, the proposal does not comply with 60(c): scale, massing and architectural quality – applicants should demonstrate through the use of scaled

drawings, sections, accurate visual representations and models how the proposals will deliver a high quality addition to the Cambridge skyline and clearly demonstrate that there is no adverse impact.

- 6.19 Policy 61 Historic Environment, proposals should:
- a. preserve or enhance the significance of the heritage assets of the city, their setting and the wider townscape, including views into, within and out of conservation areas.
- 6.20 The proposal would fail to do so.
- 6.21 NPPF 199. “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”
- 6.22 The assets concerned are within the settings of Listed buildings of the highest significance and within the historic core of Cambridge and should be given great weight in the decision on this application.
- 6.23 Section 66 of the Planning (LB & CAs) Act 1990 states that, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting.....
- 6.24 The proposal does not demonstrate that it successfully resolves the impact of the existing top floor use impact, it simply emphasises the clutter with an open frame or when closed creates a full additional floor that is not sympathetic to the surrounding area
- 6.25 **Urban Design Officer – No Objection**

Background information /additional comments:

- 6.26 A previous application (reference: 22/00778/FUL) for a lightweight all-weather canopy was refused because the proposals failed to create a high-quality addition to the Cambridge Skyline due to the excessive scale, bulk and poor detailing of the proposals.
- 6.27 The applicant has since engaged in a series of constructive pre-application discussions to support the revised proposals for the all-weather canopy which form the basis of the submitted scheme. A series of verified views have been prepared and submitted to help with the assessment of

the scheme from surrounding streets and open space as well as from other vantagepoints.

Scale, massing and appearance

- 6.28 The upper floors of the existing Varsity Hotel appear somewhat unresolved with the existing roof terrace balustrade forming a poor termination to the building. The canopies to the floors below, serving the restaurant space, contribute to this piecemeal appearance.
- 6.29 Key challenges set down as part of the pre-application discussions for a revised approach to the canopy were how to achieve a better resolution to the upper floors of the building and in so doing create a more elegant and refined structure to accommodate the canopies.
- 6.30 Working with the existing constraints of the roof structure have posed a significant challenge to creating the framework required to hold the canopies and associated mechanisms which require any structure to be supported off the existing ring-beam at the 6th floor.
- 6.31 Our advice at pre-application discussions was to explore how a more cohesive approach could be achieved that would remove the piecemeal approach of the different canopy design at 6th floor and work with the structure required to support the new canopies on the roof terrace. Modelling the overall form and setting back the deeper pelmet were crucial parts of the required approach.
- 6.32 The proposals create an 'exoskeleton' approach that extend columns up from the 6th floor and over the roof terrace. The top of these columns transition into the supporting beams but are chamfered to drop the horizontal line down at the top of the building and push the deeper pelmet profile back from the edge of the building.
- 6.33 Although the proposed roof terrace structure is visually more apparent than the existing roof terrace details, our view is that the overall approach now results in a much more resolved and refined approach which crucially removes the various and conflicting design approaches of the previous canopy designs. The expression of the columns and their profile is an important part of the design and the elevations show how they sit in front of the pelmet and other cladding to provide articulation and rhythm to the upper floors of the hotel.
- 6.34 The proposed structure is identified in the submitted Design & Access Statement as having the 'tonal qualities of the frame being muted and glazing specifically being non-reflective'. These are important qualities to get right in order that it doesn't appear obtrusive in key views and creates a calm addition to the skyline. Although the planning elevations show the

exoskeleton to be the same colour as the cladding behind, there may be a need to create a subtle contrast between the frame and cladding using a bronze or similar colour. These details can be covered by condition should the application be approved and suggested wording is including in these comments.

Visual appraisal

- 6.35 A series of five verified views have been prepared by Foundation CGI Limited and submitted to show the proposed canopy addition to the hotel in the context of surrounding streets and buildings, from key public spaces and other local vantagepoints. The methodology followed to produce each view has been provided and is consistent with industry standards and show the existing situation and then the proposals with the canopy open and canopy closed. The approach is consistent with the requirements identified in the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 Policy 60 and supporting Appendix F.

View 1: Great St Mary's Tower

- 6.36 The view shows how the current height of the Varsity sits below or level with the ridge of St John's College. The proposed canopy increases the overall height of the building and results in it being visible above the ridge. This view demonstrates the importance of appropriate colour palettes and finishes to the proposed structure. With muted tones it is unlikely to compete with the foreground buildings.

View 2: Castle Mound

- 6.37 The current terrace is visible from this location and read against a foreground and background of trees. The canopy structure does increase the overall height but is still read in the same way as before. The view shows that the proposed canopy will therefore have a limited impact on this view.

View 3: Central Jesus Green

- 6.38 The view provided shows The Varsity Hotel in the context of foreground vegetation and how the increased height created by the canopy makes the building more prominent. It emphasises why there was a need to try and create a more resolved and coherent upper floor to the hotel which the new structure manages to go some way to achieving. The importance of colour palette and tonal qualities will be crucial to achieving a good 'fit' with the surroundings.

View 4: Jesus Green Café

- 6.39 The view from the Jesus Green Café reveals the importance of the foreground mature trees in managing the views towards The Varsity. The

current roof terrace and upper floors of the hotel are already visible in this view, and the additional canopy structure does result in the increased visual prominence of the building on the local skyline. However, the extent of change is not excessive when compared to the against what can already be seen of The Varsity from this location.

View 5: Scholar's Garden

- 6.40 This view shows how the existing Varsity roof terrace is visible but forms a minor component of local skyline. With the proposed canopy there is a limited change to the local skyline from this location.

Additional Views (Foundation CGI Limited document dated 23rd May 2023)

- 6.41 Two further views have been produced to allow the assessment of the proposed canopy from Jesus Green (centre) and Magdalene Bridge.

Additional View: Jesus Green (centre)

- 6.42 This view was requested because when standing further north on Jesus Green the hotel and additional structure will form a more obvious change to the skyline. The images show the existing massing of The Varsity and associated roof terrace. The existing building forms a horizontal and bulky component of the local skyline.

- 6.43 The additional canopy structures result in an overall increase in the height of the building and so increases the prominence of the building in this view. However, it can also be seen how the proposed canopy structure better resolves the upper floors of the building to create a more coherent design. The chamfered sections to the left of the upper floor create a degree of articulation and modelling in a way that the current open roof terrace does not.

- 6.44 An on-balance judgement is needed to compare the extent of change to an already visually prominent component on the skyline. In our view, the additional height created by the canopy structure is not significant when compared to the already prominent massing of The Varsity and results in the better resolution of the top floors and overall articulation of the roofscape.

Additional View: Magdalene Bridge

- 6.45 The view looking north-east from Magdalene Bridge is important in terms of assessing the impact of the proposals from a well-used street where the upper floors of The Varsity can be seen rising above buildings to the south.

- 6.46 The view demonstrates how the existing roof terrace and upper floors create a strong horizontal form that contrasts with the more varied roofscape created by the buildings that surround it. The views that show the proposed canopy reveal that the additional massing will increase the upper floor prominence from Magdalene Bridge.
- 6.47 In terms of the design approach, the canopy supports are intended to read as an 'extrusion' with the support structures breaking the horizontal emphasis of the cladding below. This is shown on the other views so it may be an issue with the supplied image. On the assumption that it will be detailed as per the other elevations, there will be a less horizontal emphasis to the cladded sections and consequently a more vertical and articulated form which would be considered acceptable in design terms and impact on this localised view.

Conclusion

- 6.48 The addition of the canopy and associated supporting structure does undoubtedly change the profile of the building and increases its visual prominence from some local views. However, this change needs to be balanced against the benefit of creating a more visually coherent design which removes the very horizontal emphasis of the existing upper floors.
- 6.49 In our view, the proposals manage to achieve a more elegant and modelled solution through the exoskeleton design and the removal of the existing canopies at the 6th floor level and their replacement with the same system as proposed for the roof terrace forms a key part of this more comprehensive approach. The submitted CGIs reveal that the impact of the additional structure is limited given the existing visual prominence of the hotel on the local skyline from the submitted views.

7.0 Third Party Representations

7.1 Representations were received in supporting of the application from the following addresses:

- 9 Icen Way, Cambridge
- 3 Bath Close, Wyton on the Hill
- 138 Coleridge Road, Cambridge
- 7 North Steet, Huntingdon
- 118 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge
- 11 Apple Close, Brandon
- 27 Mowbray Road, Cambridge
- 56 Manor Place, King Street, Cambridge
- 726 Newmarket Road, Cambridge
- 50 Belvoir Road, Cambridge
- 18 Maddingly Road, Cambridge
- 6 Blackhall Road, Cambridge

- 88 Histon Road, Cambridge
- 25 George Street Cambridge
- 15 The Crescent, Cambridge
- 1A Moyne Close, Cambridge
- 51A Ermine Street North, Papworth Everard
- 17 Lovell Road, Cambridge
- 42 Harvey Goodwin Gardens, Harvey Goodwin Avenue, Cambridge
- 64 Cam Causeway, Cambridge
- 6 Blackhall Road Cambridge

7.2 The following matters were highlighted within these comments:

Benefits

- All year round use in all weather
- Employment benefits
- Supporting business in Cambridge
- Tourism opportunities
- Variety of users would benefit from covering and protection from weather including old, young people and professionals
- Enhancement of guest experience
- Building offers good views of Cambridge

Design and Visual Amenity

- Improved scale and bulk from previous application
- Fit in with existing mixture of modern and old buildings in skyline
- Existing building goes unnoticed
- The roof proposal is sympathetic and does not look out of place
- Design is interesting and detailed

Other Matters

- Park Street hotel supported
- Environmentally friendly

7.3 Representations were received in objection to the application from the following addresses:

- 3 Beaufort Place, Thompson Lane, Cambridge
- Unit 2, The Campkins Station Road, Melbourne
- 8 Lansdowne Road, Cambridge
- Cheffins, Clifton House, 1 - 2 Clifton Road Cambridge (on behalf of Magdalene College)
- 29 Beaufort Place, Thompson's Lane
- 22 Beaufort Place, Thompson Lane, Cambridge

7.4 The following matters were raised as concerns:

Design and Visual Amenity

- Adverse impacts to Cambridge skyline and surrounding environment
- Detrimental impact of increased height of proposal

- Structure at odds with surrounding residential buildings
- Addition of enclosed eighth storey to building
- Prominence due to internal illumination
- Prominence of building in surrounding townscape
- Lack of benefit from soft landscaping from street level

Heritage Impacts

- Disruption of views to St Johns College and historic features in skyline
- Negative contrast with historic buildings and Central Conservation Area
- Adverse impacts to buildings of local interest
- Impact to Conservation Area and listed buildings due to scale, bulk and night time lighting
- Jarring profile with Pepys and Bright building

Residential Amenity

- Increased noise and disturbance
- Night-time use of the rooftop

Traffic and Highway Safety

- Additional traffic movements and congestions

8.0 Member Representations

None.

9.0 Local Groups / Petition

- 9.1 The applicant has produced a petition in support of the application, including the approx. 140 signatures.
- 9.2 The above representations are a summary of the comments that have been received. Full details of the representations are available on the Council's website.

10.0 Assessment

10.1 Principle of Development

- 10.2 Cambridge Local Plan (2018) policy 10 seeks to ensure Cambridge expands its role as a multi-functional centre through supporting a mix of retail, leisure and cultural development in order to add to the viability and vitality of the city centre. The "Cambridge Hotel Futures Study" (2012) identifies the importance of achieving a high quality and distinctive hotel offer in Cambridge City Centre and that around 1,500 new hotel rooms may be required up to 2031. High quality visitor accommodation is therefore important to the Cambridge economy if it is to remain competitive as a visitor destination.

- 10.3 The NPPF (2021) paragraph 86 states that planning policies should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.
- 10.4 The proposal would seek to create a new structure to cover the existing rooftop level, which is currently used as a rooftop terrace as part of the restaurant on the floor below. The applicants explain in the information submitted with the application that the lack of cover on the existing rooftop means that the rooftop use is uncertain and limited due to weather variation, which limits both patron usage and employment certainty for staff. The proposal seeks to cover the entire roof to allow resilience to weather conditions (both rainfall and heat). The information submitted with the application explains that this would enhance the operational capacity of the rooftop and allow increased numbers of and more consistent staffing opportunities.
- 10.5 In principle, the expansion of the rooftop facility through the addition of the proposed structure is considered to be a logical response to the existing seasonal restrictions that currently limit its year-round use and as such the proposal is considered to comply with Policy 10.
- 10.6 **Design, Layout, Scale and Landscaping**
- 10.7 Cambridge Local Plan (2018) policies 55, 56, 57, 58 and 59 seek to ensure that development responds appropriately to its context, is of a high quality, reflects or successfully contrasts with existing building forms and materials and includes appropriate landscaping and boundary treatment.
- 10.8 Cambridge Local Plan (2018) Policy 60 seeks to ensure that the overall character and qualities of its skyline is maintained and, where appropriate, enhanced as the city continues to grow and develop. The proposal states that any proposal for a structure to break the existing skyline and/or is significantly taller than the surrounding built form should be assessed against the criteria listed in parts (a) – (e) of the policy.
- 10.9 The NPPF (2021) paragraph 126 seeks to support the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.
- 10.10 Appendix F (Tall Buildings and the Skyline) of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018, states that Cambridge has a distinctive skyline that combines towers, turrets, chimneys and spires with large trees with notable buildings including St John's College Chapel and others forming some of the important view to Cambridge.
- 10.11 It defines a tall building as any structure that breaks the existing skyline and/or is significantly taller than the surrounding built form, and states that

within the historic core any proposal with six storeys or more and a height above 19 metres would need to address the criteria set out the guidance.

- 10.12 In this case, the existing building forms seven storeys and the proposal would result in an enclosed structure above the existing rooftop. The existing building has a height of 21 metres with the balustrade projecting 1 metre above this height (total height 22 metres). The proposed structure would have a height of 3 metres, extending the overall height of the building to 24 metres. Given the matters above, and taking into account that the existing building would break the existing skyline and sit higher than the surrounding building, it is considered that the proposal would need to address the criteria within the guidance.
- 10.13 In regard to part (a), the applicant is required to demonstrate through a visual assessment or appraisal with supporting accurate visual representations, how the proposals fit within the existing landscape and townscape. Appendix F (paragraph F.29) expands on this criteria to suggest that the relationship of the proposed building, or buildings, to the surrounding context needs to be carefully examined through a townscape, landscape and urban design appraisal.
- 10.14 The application has been submitted with visualisations from various viewpoints around the city. The visualisations are presented in a lower quality format as part of the visualisations Method Statement by Foundation and as higher quality individual images. The visualisations were uploaded in two parts as Officers requested additional views following a visit to the site and surrounding areas. The initial views were taken from the following locations: Great St Mary's Tower; Castle Mound; Central Jesus Green; Jesus Green Café; Scholars Garden. Officers requested that two additional visualisations were generated from Magdalene Bridge and an additional view on Jesus Green.
- 10.15 The additional view points were requested as the initial image from Jesus Green was from a location where the building would be offered screening by the mature trees; it was considered that a less screened image should be presented to give a fuller understanding of the impact of the proposal. The image from Magdalene Bridge is considered to be a vital viewpoint to be considered as part of the proposal given that it forms a key route into the city centre and is of heritage importance and taking into account that the proposal would be prominent from this view.
- 10.16 The application has been submitted with a Design and Access Statement which explains the design approach to the proposal and the views are helpful for Officers to understand the impact of the proposal.
- 10.17 The view from Great St Mary's Tower shows an important view of the Cambridge skyline, which is noted in Appendix F of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) as a viewpoint to consider. The views highlight the existing well detailed, delicate historic features which characterize the existing

skyline of Cambridge including various steeples and spires. Importantly, this view includes the roofscape of the St John's College courts and St John's College Chapel, the latter is considered to be an important landmark feature of the skyline in the Local Plan (2018). The proposal is visible beyond this feature, just above the ridge of the body of the chapel. It clearly differs from the historic features of the skyline from this view due to its modern, exoskeleton form and materiality. The Urban Design Officer has been consulted on the application and suggests that this view highlights the importance of an appropriate colour palette and suggests that the building would not compete with the foreground buildings.

- 10.18 Officers have regard to the view of the Urban Design Officer and agree that maintaining a tonal difference from the bricks and stonework in the skyline will aid the proposal in not attempting to compete with historic features available within this view. The proposed structure would clearly differ from the existing features in form and appearance, however the chamfered approach to the termination of the structure limits the mass and bulk of the built form above the existing historic features which helps to maintain the chapel as the primary skyline feature from this viewpoint.
- 10.19 The second view is from Castle Mound, which forms an elevated and strategic viewpoint into the city. It is noted in the Local Plan (2018) that views from Castle Mound reveal a city of spires and towers emerging above an established tree line as to create a number of 'incidents', where important buildings rise above those of a prevailing lower scale. As existing, the building is visible from this viewpoint, however it is noted that the proposal would increase the height of the building as to raise its prominence from this location. It would sit taller than some of the surrounding buildings, although the proposal would continue to be viewed within the backdrop of trees especially given its glazed nature which allows some views to remain.
- 10.20 It is noted that from this view the chamfered elements are not visible and instead the proposal appears flatter due to the rectangular form of the proposal from the north west elevation, however Officers do acknowledge that this is partially broken up by the trees present across this area of the city which reduces public viewers ability to fully appreciate the full bulk from this view.
- 10.21 The third and fourth views are from central Jesus Green and Jesus Green café. Jesus Green is considered to be an important green space which contributes to the setting of the city. For clarity these views were part of the original views submitted, their location is detailed withing Foundation Method statement, PDF pg. 11-18).
- 10.22 Despite the screening offered, it is clear from the central view that the existing building offers a bulky imposition into the skyline that due to its form, scale and height appears entirely different in character from the

surrounding two-storey residential buildings. The Urban Design Officer has acknowledged that this view highlights the need to try to create a more resolved and coherent upper floor, and Officers agree that improvement should be considered due to the existing poor termination. In regard to the proposed development, this view holds the proposal in an advantage above some of the others provided, as not only does it benefit from a high level of screening but also the chamfered approach can be fully appreciated. Officers acknowledge that the proposal would add height and prominence to the building and as such raise its profile in the skyline from local views, however the reduction in mass and bulk is appreciated from the previous application.

10.23 As above, the additional initial view submitted from Jesus Green from the café on the northern side of the open space, close to the River Cam. The proposal benefits from a level of screening from this view, although it is clear the proposal would increase the prominence of the building. Given the constraints of the building, the form of the structure returns on the north west elevation to a rectangular shape which would offer some additional bulk and scale. This is owing to the building terminating with the steel pelmet rather than the tapered steel framing. It is considered that the material finishes would be crucial from this view point to ensure the proposal would be cohesive with the existing building and not stand out to a significant degree.

10.24 One view has been provided from the Scholar's Garden at Magdalene College to the north of the site. As above, it is unfortunate that the constraints of the site do not allow for the termination to be tapered and reduce the bulk of the framing from this view. The proposal would clearly appear different in terms of form and character from the existing roof structures from this view point, and contrary to the Urban Design Officers comments, the proposal would introduce a reasonably sizeable structure to this viewpoint. The linear nature of the existing built form in the foreground of this visualisations does allow for the linear nature of the building from this view to be less prominent, however it is clearly visible above the existing roofscape.

10.25 The first additional view that was created was from Jesus Green. This view was requested because when standing further to the north east on Jesus Green the building is offered much less screening and therefore becomes more visually prominent from local views. It is also important when considered the impact to the skyline and heritage assets because St John's Chapel and the spire of St John's New Court are visible. This view demonstrates that the proposal will increase the height and scale of the building as well as its dominance in the skyline. Officers suggest that this needs to be balanced against the impact of the existing building, as well as the attempt to better terminate the building through the proposal. As discussed already in this section the chamfered element offers better integration into the building that the previous scheme that was heard at Planning Committee last year. This is acknowledged, however due to the

constraints of the site, this was not possible all the way around the building and so the proposal would continue to result in some additional bulk and height, resulting in increased prominence from this viewpoint.

- 10.26 The final view is from Magdalene Bridge, as above this was requested by Officers given the importance of this view into the city. As existing the building rises above the roofscape so that the top of the cladding and the roof terrace balustrade is visible, however the proposal will increase the height so that the entire structure would be visible above the surrounding roof line. As existing the building is viewed as exceptionally linear, given this and the modern cladding it is clearly in contrast with the varied roofscape on the surrounding buildings at the quayside. The proposal would sit above the existing roof top, and would offer some differentiation in the termination of the building as to reduce the overly linear emphasis to the benefit of the roofscape in this area.
- 10.27 Criteria (b) aims to preserve and enhance heritage assets and requires the applicant to demonstrate and quantify the potential harm of proposals to the significance of heritage assets or other sensitive receptors. The applicant has submitted a Heritage Impact Assessment, which describes the significance of relevant heritage assets and the potential impact that the proposal may have on these features. The information submitted provides an assessment of surrounding heritage assets and the views detailed within this section. The impact will be fully assessed in the following section of the report.
- 10.28 Criteria (c) requires that the applicant to demonstrate through the use of scaled drawings, sections, accurate visual representations and models how the proposals will deliver a high quality addition to the Cambridge skyline and clearly demonstrate that there is no adverse impact.
- 10.29 Appendix F (paragraph F.36) states that the appropriate scale and massing of buildings is an important consideration in achieving the good integration of new buildings within established urban areas and the wider landscape. An understanding of the surrounding context, as required in Policy 55 of the Cambridge Local Plan, is an important step in achieving appropriately scaled buildings.
- 10.30 The applicant described in the Design and Access Statement that the proposal has been amended following the previous application which was refused at Planning Committee (2nd November 2022). They suggest that the design has been established through giving consideration to the structural limitations of the building, and informal advice from the Urban Design Officer who invited a scheme that would provide an improved termination to the building and be better integrated into the building.
- 10.31 Following the previous application, Officers advised the applicant that reducing the overall scale of the built form would help to reduce its impact. It was considered that this could have been achieved in a number of manners, including reducing the overall size, height, mass and bulk of the

building. In terms of overall size, it was suggested that the proposal could be brought back from the edge of the roof top and reduced so that the canopy would not extend across the entire space. The applicant gave consideration to this suggestion, however due to the structural limitations of the roof top this was not possible. The rooftop is supported by a ring beam which extends around the edge of the building, and therefore any structure would need to extend from this point across the rooftop. As such, any structure covering part of the roof or extending from a central point on the roof could not be supported.

- 10.32 Given this limitation, the applicant sought to re-consider aspects of the proposal that could be altered. The applicant sought to establish a new approach where the proposal would extend up in an exoskeleton form from the floors below. As existing, the hotel building features balconies which serve the restaurant on the floor below on the eastern side of the building and part of the southern side of the building. As such, the structure was able to begin at the level below where these balconies were established and extend upwards to create the structure of the rooftop. This improved the overall scale and articulation of the structure from the previous scheme because it was able to reduce the bulk and height of the built form.
- 10.33 In regard to bulk, whilst there is no doubt that from the visualisations that the proposal would continue to be a prominent and tall addition within the skyline from a number of views, it is recognized that the chamfered elements reduce its previously blocky appearance and therefore reduce its dominance and overall bulk within the skyline. In regard to height, the previous element has an overall height of approximately 4 metres, this proposal has been reduced so that the height above the existing rooftop level is approximately 3 metres. The reduction in upwards projection would support the reduction in overall scale of the proposal.
- 10.34 In addition, this approach provides a better articulation to the proposed built form that is better integrated into the building rather than appearing as an ill-considered add-on. It also offers a termination to the building due to the tapered appearance that would complete the appearance of the building. To ensure that this approach is successful, Officers would condition the materials so that they would closely align with the appearance of the existing cladding.
- 10.35 In regard to part (d), the applicant has not submitted information regarding any consideration of the amenity and microclimate of neighbouring buildings and open spaces. The amenity impacts of the proposal will be considered more fully in the amenity section of this proposal to understand if any further information would be required.
- 10.36 Finally, in reference to criteria (e), the higher quality visualisations provide an indication of how the building would be viewed from various local viewpoints around the city and would inform the public realm. As

discussed, the building would be a visual feature from a number of viewpoints around the city, with both activity and lighting drawing the eye of any public viewers. With this application, the applicant has proposed that the existing bollard type lighting system would be replaced with low-level LED strip lighting within the perimeter of the roof structure. Infra-red heater units would also be added at this level. Officers appreciate consideration to this aspect, in this case the detail of this lighting and heating has not been submitted in full with the application and as such this will be conditioned. In addition, the applicant has aimed to improved public views through incorporating some landscaping in the form of planters across the rooftop. The planters are unlikely to provide a significant softening of the built form given the limited greenery they would provide, however from longer views they may provide some greenery that would be appreciated as part of the proposal.

- 10.37 Policy 55 states that development will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context and has drawn inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings to help create distinctive and high quality places.
- 10.38 Policy 58 supports alteration or extension to existing buildings where the addition is carefully designed as to preserve the character and appearance of the area and not adversely impact the character of the area. The policy text states that any proposals should reflect or successfully contrast with existing built form, use of materials and architectural detailing whilst ensuring that the proposals are sympathetic to the existing building and surrounding area.
- 10.39 As existing, the building contains a brick facade with openings to serve the hotel from ground floor to the fourth, above this the building finish is a more contemporary grey zinc. The fifth floor contains balconies to serve the hotel rooms, the sixth comprises the restaurant with a covered balcony. Above this, is the roof top level which comprises a glass balustrade which wraps around the edge of the building. The existing glass balustrade projects 1 metre above the existing roof top with metal railings surrounding the glazing.
- 10.40 As existing, the hotel projects above the roofscape of the surrounding quayside buildings and clearly reads as a modern imposition which would differ from the differentiated roofscape visible from the southwest of the site, close to Magdalene Bridge. Its appearance would be characterised by a linear form and modern, discernible materials rather than a more subtle, undulating form which may be more common in some of the surrounding traditional roofscapes at this height.
- 10.41 The proposal seeks to install a new all weather lightweight retractable roof canopy so that the rooftop can be used year round rather than limited seasonably as if the existing situation. As has been described in this report, it would extend across the entire roof top from the balconies on the floor below to create an exoskeleton form. The building has been designed so that the glazing on the side of the building would be openable through a

guillotine/ telescopic system where the upper portion of the glazing would be lowered down to sit with the lower portion of glazing. The applicant has not provided full details of this system and as such this will be requested through condition to ensure it would sit appropriately on the rooftop. The roof of the structure would contain retractable canopy elements that would be retracted into the pelmet at the top of the structure, details of pelmet system would also need to be captured through condition to ensure that it would be suitable and not create a level of activity that would detract from its surroundings.

10.42 As has been described, the proposal has attempted to provide a more considered approach which due to the chamfered framing would better incorporate the structure into the existing building and provide termination the building that would appear less linear where this approach is offered on the built form. Officers note that the proposal would continue to constitute a reasonably significantly structure that would extend higher above the existing roofscape and therefore be visually prominent from a number of views around the city, however this should be balanced against the attempt to reduce the scale and massing of the building. It is noted that the steelwork is still reasonably significant in terms of its bulk, especially where the pelmet is required at the top of the structure, however this is given visual relief by the exoskeleton approach to the east and south of the building. Whilst, the height and prominence of the building is recognized by Officers, the chamfered approach aids the relationship with surrounding views from parts of Jesus Green and Magdalene Bridge. To ensure that the framework and pelmet would not be overly dominating, the final detail of this will be conditioned to ensure it would not be overly bulky.

10.43 Overall, the proposed development would preserve its surroundings. The proposal is compliant with Cambridge Local Plan (2018) policies 55, 56, 58, 60 and the NPPF (2021).

10.44 **Heritage Assets**

10.45 The application falls with the Central Conservation Area (Historic Core). The application is within the setting of a number of listed buildings and other heritage assets both within the surrounding area and within the skyline which are summarised within the table below.

Address	Historic Listing
29 Thompsons Lane	Grade II
30 Thompsons Lane	Grade II
Brights Building, Magdalene College	Grade II
Pepys Building, Magdalene College	Grade I
First Court, Magdalene College	Grade I
Second Court Magdalene College	Grade II

Magdalene Bridge	Grade II
No. 1-3 St Johns Road	Building of Local Interest
5-12 St Johns Road	Building of Local Interest
No 16-22 St Johns Road	Building of Local Interest
No 1-14 Thompson's Lane	Building of Local Interest
Park Parade	Building of Local Interest
St John's College Chapel	Grade I
New Court, St Johns College	Grade I
Central Conservation Area	Conservation Area
Castel Mound	Scheduled Ancient Monument

- 10.46 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that a local authority shall have regard to the desirability of preserving features of special architectural or historic interest, and in particular, Listed Buildings. Section 72 provides that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.
- 10.47 Para. 199 of the NPPF set out that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Any harm to, or loss of, the significant of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.
- 10.48 Para. 202 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 10.49 Para. 203 of the NPPF states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 10.50 Policy 61 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) requires development to preserve or enhance the significance of heritage assets, their setting and the wider townscape, including views into, within and out of the conservation area. Policy 62 seeks the retention of local heritage assets and where permission is required, proposals will be permitted where they retain the significance, appearance, character or setting of a local heritage asset.
- 10.51 The Conservation Officer has been formally consulted on the application on the application and has provided concerns about the application which can be seen in full in the comments uploaded to the application file. The

comments conclude that overall the application has not demonstrated that the proposal would successfully resolve the rooftop of the building.

- 10.52 The concerns raised focus on the lack of detail to demonstrate the appearance of the proposal, especially in regard to the pelmet, framework, moving parts and lighting. In addition, the Officer raises concerns regarding extending the building upwards and adding to its prominence. The Officer comments that whilst it is difficult to consider harm without fuller detail, the proposal would result in additional harm to the heritage assets than is outlined by the applicant, equating to a more significant level of less-than-substantial harm.
- 10.53 In addition to this, representations have been received which also raise that the proposal would become more prominent, higher and out of keeping with the historic centre due to the negative contrast between the proposed buildings and the historic buildings. It is suggested that the proposal would adversely impact setting of buildings of local interest, the Central Conservation Area and Grade I and Grade II listed buildings. The comment are concerns that the proposal would produce an eight storey to the building and exacerbate the impact of the building of the skyline and raise its scale above surrounding buildings.
- 10.54 Officers have regard for the comments and concerns raised by the Conservation Officer and within the representations received by members of the public and the Heritage Impact Assessment submitted by the applicant, and are guided by the policy above in the consideration of the impact to heritage assets. Officers will assess the impact to relevant heritage assets and then following the tests within paragraphs 202 and 203 of the NPPF to make a judgment on the impact.
- 10.55 Officers would like Committee Members to note that a judgment as to the level of harm, and the judgment in relation to the tests in the NPPF describes above is a judgment for the decision maker and therefore this should be carefully considered as part of the decision making process.
- 10.56 It should be noted that a number of the matters raised by the Conservation Officer have been suggested by Officers to be considered through condition. Whilst the Conservation Officer suggests this is insufficient, it is Officers view that the submitted visualisations and elevations give enough information to determine the application at this stage. As the Conservation Officer considers the information to be insufficient, they have not made a complete judgment on harm to each heritage asset as was conducted in the previous application. Officers have reviewed the table which was produced by the Conservation Officer previously summarising harm as part of the consideration of this application and have made a judgment on harm following this.

- 10.57 To the east of the proposal site are the Thompson Lane, St John's Street and Park Parade buildings of local interest, which are considered to positively contribute to the Conservation Area due to their consistent two storey scale and uniform appearance. As existing these buildings sit within the setting of the taller and more varied buildings at the former brewery. Beyond these buildings is Jesus Green from which there are important views of the Cambridge skyline above the existing tree line. From this point the chapel of St Johns College and the spire of All Saint's Church can be seen, and positively inform the skyline. The rooftop of the Varsity hotel is also visible, but this is noted in the Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal (2017) as a negative feature which detracts from the skyline and character of the area.
- 10.58 It is highlighted within the Conservation Appraisal that there are important positive views from Jesus Green beyond the frontage of the Park Parade properties and down along both Thompsons Lane and St John's Road. The applicants Heritage Impact Assessment states that these views are not important to the overall significance of these buildings, however Officers disagree and suggest that these views do inform the setting of the buildings and contribute to their character. It is recognized that the immediate views to the terrace properties are of the most important, however given the prominence of the hotel from these views, development here would impact the setting of these buildings.
- 10.59 As is shown in Officers site photos, the Varsity Hotel already forms a prominent feature from these key viewing points due to its height and the contrasting materials palette on the upper floor. The proposal would further increase the prominence and height of the building from these views and from the setting of these buildings. Whilst, the improvements to the design of the proposal are appreciated, it is considered that due to the height, scale and appearance of the proposal in relationship to the traditional two storey properties, it is considered that the proposal would result in a low level of less-than-substantial harm to the setting of these heritage assets.
- 10.60 To the east of the site is Magdalene College as the associated listed buildings (First Court, Pepys Building) and Magdalene Bridge, from which the proposal would also be visible as shown in the verified views. As existing the rooftop area sits above the quayside buildings' rooftops and is considered to be detrimental to key views from Magdalene Bridge. The submitted visualisations show that the structure would further extend the building above the roofscape, adding both prominence and height from Magdalene Bridge and the First Court due to the more modern structure introduced. It is acknowledged that the scheme is improved from the previous application, and that the chamfered edges do reduce some of the bulk from this view, however it is considered that from this view the proposal would result in a moderate level of less than-substantial harm to the setting of the heritage assets due to its modern character.

- 10.61 The proposal is shown to be less visible from the Scholars Garden, however this quite a way east from the immediate setting of the Pepys Building where the proposal is likely to appear more prominent. This view of the proposal is somewhat unfortunate because it highlights the more rectangular form of the building on this side which is clearly less well articulated than the chamfered section. Due to the views that would be available from the setting of this building and taking into account the modern form and appearance of the structure, it is considered that the proposal would result in a moderate level of less than substantial harm to the setting of the heritage assets.
- 10.62 The significance of the Central Conservation Area comes from its special architectural and historic interest. As has been described, the proposal would adversely impact the significance of a number of key historic views and buildings located within the area and as such is considered to result in harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area overall to a moderate level of less than substantial harm.
- 10.63 Notwithstanding the additional information provided by the applicant, officers consider this to have reinforced the assessment of less than substantial harm to a number of heritage assets, of a low to moderate level. It should be noted that the Local Authority has a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area and a listed building or its setting. In this case, the Historic Core Conservation Area is considered to be a significant asset within the setting, as are the nationally and locally listed buildings.
- 10.64 In the case that a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, paragraph 202 of the NPPF (2021) states that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In relation to non designated heritage assets which are indirectly affected by a proposal, paragraph 203 states a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 10.65 In regard to the potential public benefits of the proposal, the applicant has provided information regarding the increase in employment opportunities that would result from the proposal. This details that the existing rooftop terrace supports 8 part time staff and 8 full time staff in April and October and 10 part time staff and 10 full time staff between May and August. The information submitted explains that in April and October, where the weather is unpredictable, it can be difficult to keep the part time staff, although full time staff are paid regardless of weather conditions. It adds that currently due to the weather restrictions no staff are employed from November to March.
- 10.66 The proposal would improve stability and provide additional roles during the winter months. The information submitted explains that the proposal would offer a 33% increase in staff through the rooftop being open in

winter months and an increase of 25% during existing opening months due to being able to mitigate against the weather changes. This would equate to an additional 12 part time staff and 12 full time staff members per year above the existing levels. It is highlighted that these staff members would also benefit from increased stability. The information submitted highlights that this would also have indirect employment benefits from the local companies that the Varsity use as part of the service and within the hotel itself if occupancy were to increase as part of the proposal. This matter has also been highlighted within the representations received from local people, many of those in support of the proposal raised that local employment opportunities should be supported.

- 10.67 In addition to the employment opportunities, the applicant has suggested that the proposal may enhance the ability of the hotel to attract visitors to the city centre. Increased occupancy at the hotel cannot be considered a public benefit, however it is noted that the Varsity Hotel does form a tourist attraction in Cambridge, and a number of the supporting representations did raise that the proposal would enhance the guest experience should they choose to visit the hotel. Officers have researched the tourism potential of the site and have noted that the rooftop bar does appear to represent an attraction that is likely to be visited by those coming to the city and residents having guests within the city, it is referenced in a number of online articles as a location to visit and is recognised as a unique opportunity to see Cambridge from a high level location. As such, Officers do recognize that the proposal would increase the rooftop to a year round attraction, enhancing the experience and opportunity for tourism across the city.
- 10.68 The applicant has presented additional social benefits of the proposal including providing a high quality environment that could aid social and mental well-being and the potential for additional events on the rooftop. Officers recognize the important of mental health and well-being, and spaces for events to be held, however as the public use of the roof top is not secured it is difficult for Officers to find these as advantages of the scheme.
- 10.69 It is recognised that the proposal would result in a low to moderate level of less-than-substantial harm to both designated and non-designated heritage assets. In regard to the designated assets, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal by the decision maker which in this case are mainly increased employment opportunities and tourism to the city. The employment numbers would be modest overall, however would make a significant difference to the level of employment at the Varsity Hotel. In addition, the tourism benefits should not be underappreciated, given that the proposal would increase the Varsity Hotel's opportunity to function as attraction in the city. In this case, noting the harm would be at a lower level than previously given, it is considered that on balance that the benefits would outweigh the harm.

- 10.70 In regard to non-designated assets, a balanced judgement should be made. In this case, the main importance of the BLI's comes from their immediate setting including the rows of terrace housing. The Varsity Hotel already forms a prominent addition, and whilst harm is acknowledged it is not considered that the additional height would be result in a significant impact to the BLI's and therefore Officers judgement is that the proposal should be considered acceptable.
- 10.71 The proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area and to the setting of listed buildings and the buildings of local interest. It is therefore not compliant with the provisions of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, the NPPF and Local Plan policies 61 and 62 and special consideration should be given to this harm in the planning balance as weighed against the public benefits of the scheme. This is a finely balanced matter for members to consider given the significance of the heritage assets affected and the harm that has been identified by officers.
- 10.72 **Amenity**
- 10.73 Policy 35, 50, 52, 53 and 58 seek to preserve the amenity of neighbouring and / or future occupiers in terms of noise and disturbance, overshadowing, overlooking or overbearing and through providing high quality internal and external spaces.
- 10.74 Policy 60 requires the applicant to demonstrate that there is no adverse impact on neighbouring buildings and open spaces in terms of the diversion of wind, overlooking or overshadowing, and that there is adequate sunlight and daylight within and around the proposals.
- 10.75 The applicant has not made an assessment regarding the impact of neighbouring buildings in terms of the surrounding urban microclimate and impacts in regard to wind, overlooking, overshadowing and sunlight and daylight as is required by Policy 60. However, in this case, given that the proposal would be sited on the roof of an existing building it is unlikely to result in significant adverse impacts in terms of microclimate and amenity.
- 10.76 The application has received representations which raise concerns about noise outbreak from increased activity on the roof terrace. The representations raise that there are residential occupiers in close proximity to the site at Beaufort Place and Richmond Terrace. In terms of noise outbreak the roof top terrace and restaurant balconies are already accessed and used by patrons of the hotel and restaurant regularly, albeit the rooftop is only used on a seasonable basis. As such, noise is already dispersed from the terrace and balconies at a raised level above the surrounding buildings. Whilst enclosing spaces can often create noise reverberation, given the nature of the existing use it is not considered that this would contribute to a significant increase in terms of noise and activity that would be detrimental to the surrounding occupiers.

10.77 As well as this, Officers note that the proposal site is situated adjacent to the quayside area, with the closest buildings comprising office and retail uses and therefore these are not considered to be significantly sensitive to an increase in noise and activity.

10.78 It is recognized that the proposal site would front onto Thompsons Lane which does contain residential properties, closest to the site are No. 28 and No. 29 Thompsons Lane. As these buildings have a height of only two and two and half storeys, and taking into account that the proposal which sits at roof top level the proposed structure is not considered to result in adverse impacts in terms of loss of light or cause an overbearing relationship to these properties. In addition, it is recognized, as raised by the representation received that there are residential properties to the north of the site, however given the existing level of activity, it is not considered that the proposal would adversely impact amenity to these residents.

10.79 The proposal would adequately respect the residential amenity of its neighbours and the constraints of the site and therefore would not be compliant with Cambridge Local Plan (2018) policies 35, 58 and 60.

10.80 Highway Safety and Traffic

10.81 The proposal would seek to create a glazed canopy structure over the existing roof-top bar area to allow for the roof-top to be used year-round. It is recognised that the representations received have raised concerns that the increased use of the roof top would contribute to increased traffic movements along Thompsons Lane due to potential additional users.

10.82 Officers have had regard for the proposal and the increased use from seasonal to potential year-round use, and acknowledge that the proposal may lead to an increase in users and therefore to and from the site. However, noting that the hotel and restaurant is already used year-round and taking into account that the building is sited in the centre of the city where sustainable transport methods are highly available and likely to be used, it is not considered that the proposal would be likely to lead to a significant increase in traffic as to adversely impact highway safety or the surrounding highway users.

10.83 The proposal is considered to be acceptable in highway safety terms in compliance with Cambridge Local Plan (2018) policy 80.

10.84 Third Party Representations

Address	Summary of Matters Raised	Summary of Response in Report
Comments in Support		
15 The Crescent, Cambridge	Noise disturbance is not a problem here.	It is agreed that significant noise impacts are unlikely.

	The design is in accordance with the locality and would provide protection from the weather.	The design is improved from the previous scheme and would provide protection from the weather.
9 Icen Way, Cambridge	Support protection against weather and employment benefits.	It is recognized that the proposal would offer localised employment benefits and protection from weather.
3 Bath Close	Proposal is complimentary to skyline, support reduced bulk and altered appearance.	The proposal has been amended from the previous scheme, and it is acknowledged that the bulk and appearance are improved. The proposal would result in a taller, and more visually prominent structure in the skyline.
138 Coleridge Road, Cambridge	Sympathetic to skyline	The proposal would be visible as part of the skyline from a number of local views, it is clearly a prominent structure however the appearance is improved from the previous scheme.
7 North Street, Huntingdon	The venue offers a lot to local community and economy. Support employment and tourism opportunities.	The benefits of the scheme are recognised and have been summarised within the body of the report, and where appropriate balanced with the resulting harm to heritage assets.
118 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge	Support enhanced usability of rooftop area.	It is recognised that the proposal would offer year round use of roof terrace.
11 Apple Close, Brandon	The Cambridge skyline is a mixture of modern and historic buildings, from Jesus Green views are generally across rather than up towards the site. Support jobs for young people.	The views from Jesus Green are important as they inform the experience of the open space. The employment benefits are recognised.
27 Mowbray Road, Cambridge	Support local business and continued use of roof	The benefits of the proposal are recognised, the design is improved

	top. The design is suitable.	from the previous scheme and the impact to the skyline and historic assets are balanced with this.
56 Manor Place, King Street, Cambridge	Proposal is welcome addition and would improve user experience.	The proposal would ensure the rooftop can be used year round.
726 Newmarket Road, Cambridge	Enjoy rooftop and support covering.	It is acknowledged that the proposal would ensure the rooftop can be used year round.
50 Belvoir Road, Cambridge	Support protection from weather due to personal enjoyment and from business perspective	The proposal would ensure the rooftop can be used year round and would support business.
18 Madingley Road, Cambridge	Recognise benefits of the scheme including increased tourism and enjoyment of views. Aligns with sustainable and environmentally friendly initiatives.	The tourism benefits of the scheme are recognised. The comments surrounding sustainability and environmental considerations is noted, the proposal would extend an existing building and as such is not required to address sustainability aims.
1A Moyne Close, Cambridge	The site is already lit and therefore lighting won't impact the site. This application will tidy up the building. This would enhance the skyline.	The application proposes a new low level lighting scheme, which will be reviewed in full through condition. The proposal would allow an opportunity to improve the termination of the building.
51A Ermine Street North, Papworth Everard	Will add to Conservation Area due to design and sitting next to flats. Practical solution to weather and will benefit residents.	It is acknowledged that there is harm to the Conservation Area, however this should be considered with the benefits of the scheme.
25 George Street Cambridge	Support stylish and sensible solution for hotel.	Comments are noted.
17 Lovell Road, Cambridge	Support enhancement for tourism and employment.	The benefits of employment and tourism have been taken into account and weighed

	Wouldn't impact on views or noise.	against the harm. The proposal would impact views around the city, however the noise levels would not be significant.
42 Harvey Goodwin Gardens, Harvey Goodwin Avenue, Cambridge	Support proposal to have all weather use of rooftop.	It is acknowledged that the proposal would ensure the rooftop can be used year round.
64 Cam Causeway, Cambridge	Support proposal for employment growth and increased tourism. Will enhance city character which combines modern and historic structures.	The proposal would impact the skyline of the city, however the benefits are recognised.
6 Blackhall Road Cambridge	Design and detail make a positive addition to skyline. Most people do not look up at the sky.	The proposal would result in a prominent addition to the skyline, however the design has been improved following the previous refusal.
88 Histon Road, Cambridge	Support employment opportunities and enhancement of guest experience.	The employment benefits are recognised.
Comments in Objection		
3 Beaufort Place, Thompsons Lane, Cambridge	Increased activity will lead to noise disturbance for residents within Beaufort Place and Richmond Terrace. The quayside area is already noise for residents.	The proposal has the potential increase activity, however given the existing use and the noise levels in the surroundings, this is unlikely to have a significant impact to amenity.
Unit 2, The Campkins Station Road, Melbourn Royston	Out of keeping with historic skyline and city centre due to height and modern character. Disruption to residential occupiers at Beaufort Place.	It is acknowledged that the proposal would result in a modern imposition into the skyline, the harm to heritage assets is balanced with the benefits of the proposal. The proposal is unlikely to

		result in significant noise increase.
8 Lansdowne Road	The proposal would harm the historic environment and result in economic harm. The proposal has a rectangular silhouette from Jesus Green which is at odds with low level residential buildings.	Harm to the historic environment is recognised and has been weighed against the benefits of the proposal. It is recognised that the proposal would take on a rectangular silhouette where the chamfered structure is not offered which differs from the surrounding roofscape.
Cheffins, Clifton House, 1 - 2 Clifton Road Cambridge (on behalf of Magdalene College)	The proposal will create a enclosed eight storey, raising height and exacerbating the impact of the building on the skyline. Insensitive addition, negative contrast to surrounding buildings. The scale, bulk and night time lighting would harm heritage assets.	The harm to heritage assets is recognised with the report, as is the prominence within the skyline. The impact is balanced with the benefits of the proposal.
29 Beaufort Place, Thompson Lane, Cambridge	Appreciate efforts to integrate into building, however existing building is already too tall for townscape. The proposal will not enhance this setting. Landscaping will not be visible at street level. Increase to traffic.	It is acknowledged that the existing building detracts from surroundings (Conservation Area Appraisal) and that the proposal would add height to the building. The landscaping would not be visible from close street levels views but may be from longer views. The proposal is unlikely to increase traffic generation to a significant level.
22 Beaufort Place, Thompsons Lane, Cambridge	Height and bulk of proposal would be detrimental to historic central and surrounding views.	It is recognised that the proposal would add height and bulk to the existing building and result in harm to local heritage assets, this is weighed against the potential benefits of the scheme.

2 The Campkins, Station Road, Melbourn	The height of the building has already been increased and is contrary to policy.	The proposal would increase the height of the hotel, however would offer a termination to the building.
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10.85 Planning Balance

10.86 Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise (section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38[6] of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

10.87 It is considered that due to the improved design, scale and bulk, the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the area and not result in significant adverse impacts to the Cambridge skyline, as to comply with Cambridge Local Plan (2018) policies 55, 56, 58, 60.

10.88 It is recognised that the proposal would result in a low to moderate level of less than substantial harm to the setting of a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets. These assets range in significance and vary from locally listed buildings of local interest to grade I listed buildings and the Central Conservation Area (see report paragraph 10.45), as such special regard is to be given to the desirability of preserving these assets. As guided by the NPPF, consideration was given in the report to the public benefits of the proposal when considering designated assets, and a balanced judgment was made for the non-designated assets. It was concluded that due to the employment and tourism benefits of the scheme, the harm would be outweighed, and therefore the proposal would comply with Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and the NPPF (2021) as a whole.

10.89 The Committee Members are reminded of the level of heritage harm resulting from the proposal and the special consideration that must be given to this. The weight to be given to the harm against the public benefits is for the decision maker. This is a finely balanced case. The Officer recommendation, having taken into account the provisions of the development plan, NPPF and NPPG guidance, the statutory requirements of section 66(1) and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the views of statutory consultees and wider stakeholders, as well as all other material planning considerations, is that the scheme is acceptable. The proposed development is therefore recommended for approval.

10.90 Recommendation

10.91 **APPROVE**, subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans as listed on this decision notice.

Reason: In the interests of good planning, for the avoidance of doubt and to facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 3 Prior to the commencement of development, details of the external materials to be used in the construction of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The materials shall be displayed as samples on site for the Local Planning Authority to review. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the area and the Cambridge Skyline and would not adversely impact the setting of surrounding heritage assets. (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 55, 58, 60, 61 and 62.

- 4 Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the appearance and operation of the steel framework and pelmet feature shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

This shall include:

- (a) Drawings at a minimum scale of 1:20 (including plans, elevations and sections) of the framework and pelmet feature.
- (b) Details of the operation of the retractable pelmet features including the canopies.
- (c) Details of how any lighting and heating systems would be installed within the framework.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the area and the Cambridge Skyline and would not adversely impact the setting of surrounding heritage assets. (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 55, 58, 60, 61 and 62.

- 5 Prior to the commencement of development full details of the glazing to be used in the construction of the development, hereby permitted, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

This shall include:

- (a) Details of the appearance of the glazing.
- (b) Details of the operation of the guillotine/ telescopic function.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the area and the Cambridge Skyline and would not adversely impact the setting of surrounding heritage assets. (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 55, 58, 60, 61 and 62.

- 6 Prior to the commencement of development, details of any new lighting to be installed, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This should include details of the appearance, position and lux levels of the lighting to be installed.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the area and the Cambridge Skyline and would not adversely impact the setting of surrounding heritage assets. (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 55, 58, 60, 61 and 62.

- 7 Prior to the commencement of development, details of any new heating system to be installed, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This should include the details of how and where the heating would be installed and its appearance.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the area and the Cambridge Skyline and would not adversely impact the setting of surrounding heritage assets. (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 55, 58, 60, 61 and 62.