
**Letter to the Planners from the Leadership of Tyndale House
in support of their planning application**

What is Tyndale House?

Tyndale House is a charity which has operated as an international research institute from our property in Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge, for the past seventy-eight years. It serves those working in biblical scholarship or related disciplines at a postgraduate or higher level from around the world, as well as engaging with the public to help them understand the Bible.

We seek to bring together academic rigour with a deep spiritual commitment to live out our lives together as a Christian community, which serves the Church and the wider world. Since our foundation in 1944, several hundred scholars have completed PhDs on our site using our facilities to support their studies.

Tyndale House has a global reputation for research excellence and houses one of the most significant library collections for biblical studies in the world, staffed by highly trained professional librarians. It contains around 47,000 volumes covering all subjects associated with the language, culture and manuscripts of the Bible.

Our site is ideally located five minutes' walk from Cambridge University Divinity Faculty and eight minutes' walk from Cambridge University Library. This proximity brings a synergy for scholars who can benefit from both our facilities and those of the University, and are able to contribute to the research activities of both institutions. There is also a vibrant Christian faith community within Cambridge and members of our community value this highly and seek to contribute to it.

We are intentional about creating a social environment that fosters lasting relationships between academics from across the globe and facilitate this by providing temporary accommodation for single scholars in twelve ensuite bedrooms above the existing library. We are also determined that lack of money should never prevent the best researchers from the Majority World accessing excellent materials. Our International Scholars Programme enables us to nurture academics who could not otherwise afford to study in the West. We subsidise all academic visitors who use our resources but we particularly target grants to support non-Western scholars. We are committed to religious freedom and particularly welcome scholars from parts of the world where they face marginalisation and persecution for their beliefs.

Tyndale House delivers in-house academic programmes through which we research the history, language and context of the Bible. We also publish a specialist academic journal with an international readership, technical books for academics and run conferences, colloquia and other events. Our most notable recent publication has been the Tyndale House Greek New Testament which has been published in the UK by Cambridge University Press and by Crossway in the United States. Our publications have contributed to the intellectual life of the Church for over seventy-five years and we have produced many notable biblical scholars and church leaders.

We want to enable all those who read the Bible to understand and appreciate it more. To this end we produce a magazine, podcasts and video clips aimed at the general public and also offer public lectures and similar events.

Issues with our Current Residential and Library Building

Our existing library building was built in 1956, sixty-six years ago, and is inadequate for our current needs in many respects.

The library is cramped with not enough space for shelves and study carrels (desks). The study carrels with windows have light, but the rest of the library is dark. It is draughty and cold in the winter and stuffy and hot in the summer. Put simply, it is not conducive to work.

Research, both by those in the library and of course those away from the library, increasingly relies upon digital resources. The existing building does not have the digital infrastructure to allow this either in terms of cabling or storage. Those working in biblical scholarship are increasingly wishing to access collections of biblical manuscripts electronically and require large monitors in order to scrutinise the minute details of digital images. The study carrels within our libraries do not provide sufficient space and the infrastructure within the library does not exist for the necessary IT equipment required to allow them to carry out their work in an efficient way.

The library was designed to meet the needs of scholars who worked in a very different way from that which is currently required. In the past scholars worked largely in isolation. Scholars now wish to work collaboratively and increasingly work internationally. This collaborative working, with the ability to share knowledge and build relationships, is of fundamental importance. Our current building is not configured to support this type of work as there are no spaces where scholars can meet together in the building and no space nor infrastructure to allow meetings to take place online (which would minimise the need for travel and reduce the environmental impact of our research).

Our predecessors left us an outstanding collection of books on biblical scholarship which has an international reputation. We are committed to preserving, maintaining and growing our collection of hard copy resources for future generations. However, we ran out of space a number of years ago and we can only add a limited number of titles per year. We have missed out on a number of opportunities to receive donations of collections of books from the estates of notable scholars due to a lack of shelf space. If we are to offer a legacy to future generations we will need additional space for book storage.

We also require specialist storage space with a temperature and humidity-controlled environment to preserve our unique collection of rare manuscripts, books and other biblical artefacts to further our research. We currently do not have such a facility. We also need to improve fire protection in case a disaster should strike. Whilst we want to improve the quality of the library, we are not proposing to increase the quantity of scholars using it.

In addition to the changing needs of our scholars, we have become an independent charity in 2015. One of our aims as a charity is to communicate our research to benefit the general public. We currently host colloquia and conferences for academics and the general public. However, our current meeting spaces are unwelcoming in many respects. Our primary concern is that we are not able to host disabled visitors. Our current meeting room is poorly ventilated and insulated which makes it unpleasantly hot in the summer months and cold in the winter months. Because of the window arrangements we are not able to use the room for multi-media presentations. Moreover, as the meeting space is on the first floor and we have no lifts or ramps to enable wheel chair users to access this room. We would like a facility which has more capacity for the general public and which can receive disabled visitors. We would also like to easily live stream presentations and to offer interactive events for scholars dialling in remotely from across the world.

We welcome scholars from across the world, with a particular focus on scholars from the poorest parts of the world and those where religious persecution prevents biblical study. To enable this we provide single occupancy residential accommodation. However, it is only suitable for short-term visits as they are very cramped and provide little shared cooking or social space. We would like a purpose-built facility which would enable scholars to stay on site for several months at a time, sharing in community life with adequate space to cook and socialise together. Again, whilst we want to improve the quality of the accommodation, we are not proposing to increase the quantity of accommodation (there are 12 existing rooms and 10 proposed rooms).

Aspirations for our New Building

Our ambition is to create a beautiful building which will serve the needs of our charity for at least another 75 years. We are aware of our environmental responsibilities and wish to have a building which is constructed to save energy and reduce our carbon footprint. We would want to enhance the street scene and build something which complements our 1908 building. The building will be designed to tell some of the story of our endeavours. We want to make a statement that although biblical study is rooted in the past we are aware of our place in the current culture and employ cutting edge technology and research, bringing together traditional materials with current architectural priorities.

We aspire to have a library which is both functional and aesthetically pleasing, creating a suitable setting for our unique collection, whilst providing quiet and productive workspaces for readers and allowing them to benefit from technological resources to support their research. To the rear of the building, we want it to engage with our gardens and to create a sense of light and space.

Because collaborative work is at the heart of all that we do, community life is important to us and as Christians, prayer and worship infuses all our endeavours. We wish to create an internal environment where there is space for a shared community life, for those working here regularly and for the visiting public, but also space for individual reflection and prayer. Beauty is important to us as we believe that this glorifies God and we would want to pay careful attention to creating rooms furnished with high quality materials which will stand the test of time.

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