

29 October 2025 Planning Speaker Statements

#6 - 25/02161/FUL – Local resident

My opposition to the proposals by Christ's College to re-build a Library in the position currently under review goes back to the early 2010s when a scheme by Rick Mather was tabled and eventually received consent (later renewed). I was greatly concerned at the time about the possible environmental effects on the adjacent buildings inside the college and it was a relief that the scheme was dropped eventually.

After a lapse of several years (during the "Covid" period etc.) the current proposals have now been drawn up and they demonstrate the continued willingness of the college to over-fill this confined space with new structures. These new plans include extensive alterations to embrace the Old Library (a.k.a. "Bodley Library") and the nearby kitchen and dining areas as located on upper floors. The buildings would be taller, more massive and would reach up into high chimneys. All of this has drawn justified objection from neighbours in Christ's Lane and other users of this important pedestrian thoroughfare and thus a wider community now points-out that the college, due to its unique and focal position in the busy city centre, would cause serious and permanent detriment in realising the project. The scheme as shown would thus affect adversely both the ancient surviving structures of "God's House" (as seen on this side of First Court) and the nearby public areas, shops and buildings beyond the perimeter walls.

My objections go beyond attending to the details of the current scheme. I have suggested in every contribution made to the on-going debate that a new structure in this position is unsustainable, is detrimental to the environment and is unlikely in the medium term to be the anticipated asset that Christ's College is looking for.

Historical evidence abundantly points out that for the first centuries of its existence (approximately 1500 to 1800) the area of "Bath Court" was a garden which was carefully laid out and maintained to provide open

space and to give the college a beautiful area that was also useful for culinary herbs and the medicinal plants which were still then essential.

Such a garden would be possible to re-instate again. The working library for students has already been transferred to Third Court (in anticipation of the demolition of the existing 1970s structure) and “Bath Court” cries out to be turned back into an open space. Such a positive destiny will be made possible only by the refusal of the Planning Applications and by Christ’s College looking elsewhere among the many available sites on its extensive estate to create a more sustainable long-term working library, study centre, archive etc.

I join with others in registering strong objection these Planning Applications.

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#6 - 25/02161/FUL – Golding Road resident

I am John Preston, Cambridge resident, Historic Environment Consultant, former Jesus College student, former conservation officer then Historic Environment Manager for the City Council, former Heritage Chair of the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance, and currently a consultant to the Christ’s Lane Action Group. I attended both the pre-application presentation and the DCF. The following is a personal response drawing together my multiple involvements, knowledge and professional experience. Due to circumstances beyond my control I was unable to submit the full response I had planned before going on holiday.

Here, with apologies for lateness, are comments on key issues raised by the application and the officer report.

1. The balance between private and public benefits is heavily weighted towards the College and its students; benefits to the public realm are marginal at best.

2. What improvements have been achieved in the public interest during negotiations have benefitted the listed building, but not the conservation area and the public realm. The primary, public, impacts of the proposed height and bulk have not been resolved.

3. The report's assessments of Policy implications are highly questionable. Why are Criteria a) and b) of Policy 10 considered "not applicable" when this proposal has major impacts on the pedestrian route between the city centre and Grafton, prioritised under this Policy? The access implications for users of this route displaced by construction works are not considered. A detailed transport plan is essential, as Cllr Bick said during the DCF, to resolve these key issues now.

4. I strongly disagree with the way officers have followed the applicant's interpretation of Policy 60 (Tall Buildings). The Historic Core Street Analysis for Drummer St and Christ's Lane (not mentioned in either the application or the officer report) identifies key views in both directions along the Lane which would be severely impacted by the proposal.

5. It is beyond belief to describe the heritage impacts of the bulk and height of the building, coupled with the loss of sky component, as "neutral". Contrary to the applicant's claims, the additional height along part of the Lane would dominate the whole Lane and views into and from St Andrew's St.

6. The key issues of height and bulk arise from the applicant's choice to omit the previously approved basement. What consideration has been given to meeting the College's revised needs within the height and bulk of the approved scheme with basement?

7. The claimed archaeological benefits of omitting a basement are highly questionable. The likelihood is very low of there being any remains of decisive significance requiring preservation in situ rather than by record. The site (as evidenced in Willis and Clark vol 4) was a tenement and garden in medieval times, and Bath Court appears to have been a garden for much of its history.

8. The sustainability argument for omitting the basement advances only one part, saving carbon, of the environmental pillar of sustainability, rather than taking a holistic approach in keeping with current policy and best practice. Considering the social pillar, the application demonstrably fails in its lack of consideration for the public, particularly in relation to access needs along Christ's Lane. Adverse economic impacts on the public realm are already happening, with the impending closure of Starbucks. The application is also inadequate in its failure to consider heritage as an integral element of social and environmental sustainability, particularly so given UNESCO's 2010 recognition of Culture as the 4th pillar of sustainability, and the best practice requirements in BS EN 16883:2017 ("Guidelines for improving the energy performance of historic buildings) for all 4 pillars of sustainability to be considered together.

9. There seems to have been a collective loss of corporate memory in relation to this proposal. Both the application and the report fail to note the priority given by the Council in 2004 to avoiding canyonisation of the reopened Christ's Lane, and the College's subsequent failure to deliver the landscape / public art improvements to its Christ's Lane frontage which were promised at that time

10. The architects have treated the Christ's Lane frontage as an edge to the College, comparable to other College frontages facing car, cycle and pedestrian routes. But Christ's Lane is different. It is a wholly pedestrian public route, experienced over a longer time (it takes me 1 minute 20 sec to walk), which needs to be considered as far more than an edge.

11. From long involvement as a council officer with the development of proposals, and with facilitating panel discussions, I am very well aware that sometimes proposals develop momentum within which key issues can become overlooked. It is my impression that this has happened here, in relation to the lack of consideration given to impacts on the public.

Conclusion

Both the application and the officer report have very significant failings. The submitted justification does not address significant policy requirements. The officer's identified balance between the applicant and the public is seriously flawed in favour of the application. I urge the Committee to refuse the applications.

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#6 - 25/02161/FUL – Cllr Jean Glasberg (Ward Councillor)

On behalf of residents and regular users of Christ's Lane, I object to this application on policy, evidential, and procedural grounds. The proposal would cause material harm to the character, amenity, and heritage of a core conservation area, contrary to both national and local planning policy.

1. Character and Role of Christ's Lane

Christ's Lane, a 13th-century route reopened in 2008 through the Bradwell's Court redevelopment, was described by English Heritage as "an inspirational example" of new design within the medieval grain. Its hallmark permeability, light, and human scale are directly undermined by this scheme.

2. Height, Design, and Scale

The proposed 14 m elevation across a 6 m lane (2.3:1 enclosure ratio) exceeds the 1:1.5 limit set in the Bradwell's Court Brief, producing the canyon-like form earlier planners rejected. The continuous, fortress-like façade removes articulation and human scale, breaching Policies 56, 60 and 65.

3. Departure from the 2016 Scheme

The approved 2016 design achieved balance through a stepped composition. This proposal replaces it with a monolithic wall and oversized chimneys, increasing bulk and reducing transparency—an evident policy regression.

4. Daylight and Overshadowing

No BRE-compliant daylight or sunlight assessment was submitted, despite the 2022 Validation Checklist requiring one. Even the late-stage material is incomplete, but already shows Christ's Lane receiving additional shadow from the new building. This breaches Policies 56(f), 58(c), and 60(i) and NPPF § 130(c).

5. Heritage Impact

Historic England (29 July and 1 Sept 2025) found the building “too big ... over-dominant on Bath Court ... height towards Christ's Lane feels quite large.” The Victorian Society called it “excessive in scale” and suggested halving the height. Independent analysis by Alec Forshaw confirmed cumulative harm to the Conservation Area. These identify “less-than-substantial” harm at the upper end of the NPPF § 215 scale. Such harm carries very great weight under §§ 202 and 212 and cannot be offset by peripheral “enhancements.” The officer's “neutral” conclusion misapplies Sections 66 and 72 of the 1990 Act.

6. Public Benefits

Purported benefits—access, landscaping, and fixtures—are pre-existing or trivial. Under NPPF § 202 they cannot outweigh harm of national significance.

7. Sustainability

Claims of environmental gain are unsupported. The higher mass increases embodied carbon, just transferring it from the basement to above-ground, and fails to meet NPPF § 8's test of environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

8. Procedural Context

The PPA process lacked transparency, contrary to NPPF § 39 and the Council's SCI (2022). Daylight, shading, and core conservation assessments were withheld pre-application, preventing proper scrutiny. Information requested by residents was refused despite the Lane's designation as a key pedestrian corridor.

9. Planning Balance and Conclusion

When accurately weighted, the verified heritage harm, amenity loss, and policy conflicts decisively outweigh the scheme's minor benefits. The application conflicts with Policies 10, 56, 58, 60, 61, and 65 and fails the duties of Sections 66 and 72 of the 1990 Act.

I urge Members to refuse planning permission and require a transparent, policy-compliant redesign preserving the light, scale, and heritage of Cambridge's core conservation area.

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#9 - 25/02147/FUL Cambridge Rugby Union Club – Local Resident

My main reason for objecting is the amount of noise the open air padel courts will generate. I have been to the padel courts in west Cambridge and tried to stand at a similar distance to that between my house and the proposed padel courts. I found the noise to be considerable. I gather from the application that the opening times will be 7 am till 10 pm every day of the week. This will be of huge nuisance to me and my family, especially for my two teenage children whose bedrooms (where they study and do homework) are on the same side of the house as the rugby club. Our house is very small and there is nowhere else for them to study. In the spring/summer/autumn time they keep their windows open.

We have lived here for 15 years and none of the rugby events have ever impacted us as they are mostly in the winter time when we have our windows closed. The odd summer rugby are kind of nice to hear as it's nice hearing people enjoying themselves.

The rugby club has already been granted a license this year for 17 outdoor music events which are already having a huge impact on us. Please could the Councillors consider the cumulative effect of all this extra noise pollution that the rugby club is creating. Although the padel courts would benefit some people in terms of extra entertainment/exercise amenity, they would lead to severe degradation in quality of residential amenity on Selwyn Rd, Fulbrooke Rd, end of Kings Rd and Millington Rd. This is where we live, this is our living amenity. We can't go anywhere else.

It has taken me a great deal of time that I couldn't really spare to process a small portion of the information regarding this application, although the council has done a good job of supplying information, and to write this statement. Many neighbours can't do this due to family duties, being new to the area, about to leave the area, work and illnesses. They feel powerless due to the fact that the very unreasonable outdoor event license was granted. The odds are stacked against us as the rugby club have access to legal professionals to present their side.

Therefore, we can only rely on the Councillors to try and be in our shoes a little and imagine what it would be like having all these applications in your neighbourhood.

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#9 - 25/02147/FUL – Cllr Jean Glasberg (Ward Councillor)

I had asked for this application to be called in for determination by members of the Planning Committee if the officer was minded to approve it for the following reasons:

It is not compliant with policies in the Cambridge Local Plan and the South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan on Green Belt, Biodiversity, Flood Risk and Light pollution. It fails to make a positive contribution to the setting and landscape character of this Green Belt area and has a negative impact on residential amenity.

The application comes before you now with a recommendation for refusal and details of the key grounds, which are set out most clearly in the Consultation response from the Landscape officer. This is not neutral, as stated in the planning officer's report, but asks for further information and sets out concerns about the principle of development on this site.

The site is not grey belt, as claimed by the applicant, but designated both Green Belt and a Protected Open Space in the Cambridge Policies Map 2018.

Protected Open Space should preclude the development of structures on the site while Local Plan Policy 4 on the Cambridge Green Belt requires proposals for new developments in the Green Belt to justify Very Special Circumstances, which can only be approved in line with Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. While there is a recognised demand for more Padel Courts, and recreational use can be permitted, there are other places which can provide these, and indeed are already doing so. The construction of 5 padel courts, 3 of which are under all-weather canopies, does not meet the Very Special Circumstances which are required.

As the Landscape officer says in her report, any development in the Green belt has to consider the impact on openness, and "there are concerns over the impact of the height and scale of the canopies on the visual envelope and the presence of other structures which may impact". She expresses concerns that the submission does not show all the site information, which would "have relevance on the cumulative impacts of the various intrusions into the greenbelt and protected open space".

This concern is well-founded, as although this is a recreation ground there is a history of incremental encroachment and increase in structures which have been placed on the site without planning permission. These are currently under investigation by Planning Enforcement.

She is also concerned that the canopies are very tall, the sections, elevations and plans lack dimensions, and there is no Landscape and Visual Assessment to determine the level of harm that could be caused, including to protected views included in the South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan, .

It is clear that not only is this application against the principles of development in this location, and key policies in the NPPF, Local and Neighbourhood Plans, but there is inadequate information to judge the harm that could be caused by the proposals.

I hope that you will uphold the recommendation of the Planning Officer and refuse it

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#9 - 25/02147/FUL – David Levien

I make this submission as a resident of Cambridge City rather than as a County Councillor.

I wish to support the application.

What's in it for the Rugby club?

The club has risen faster through the rugby leagues than any other club on record and is now in the second tier nationally. Cambridge should be very proud of this achievement.

However, the club is now suffering growing pains after such a rapid rise and needs better facilities and methods for income generation – these Padel courts would provide that.

The site is already completely orientated towards sport, and these courts are a natural fit with the existing facilities which include parking plus areas for social interaction.

What's in it for Cambridge city?

The city is a rapidly expanding centre employing ever increasing numbers of people from all walks of life many of whom are keen on sporting activities. Padel is known to be highly suitable for young busy people and will be a valuable addition to the city's facilities.

Currently there are very few Padel court available for the general public. The city needs an asset like this and should seize this opportunity.

In addition:

Most objections to the application appear to come from houses on a nearby road. These are set back from the rugby club grounds with

lengthy gardens and with a substantial hedge and trees at the bottom providing a good level of isolation from the club.

Some objections are related to the area concerned being within the Green Belt but these may be outweighed by the potential benefits of the application. There appears to be some leeway for the area being defined as Grey Belt.

The recently promised £400m investment in Cambridge by the government will bring to the city and area large numbers of sports-minded people. These padel courts will be ideal for them.

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#10 - 25/03078/FUL Land Adjacent to 49 New Square - Kite Resident

Since submitting my comments in support of the above application, there has been a statement from the BNE - Conservation team objecting to the above application. It is to this I wish to respond.

1. *"The proposal will harm the setting of No 49 New Square and fails to preserve or enhance the character of the conservation department"*
(REF - BNE-Consultation Comments).

I find the interpretation of 'preserve and enhance' stated in the BNE Consultation Comments, to be narrow and restrictive. It is clear from looking at any historic map of Cambridge that over the centuries the Kite area has seen significant changes - See for example "*An Historical Map of Cambridge - Town and City Historical Maps no 16.*" Whilst these changes have not always enhanced the area, it is clear that in order to survive as a living, vibrant city with thriving and varied communities, that the historic centre has to accommodate change. The above proposal is for a high quality build and can only enhance the character of the area.

It is a subjective view that the above proposal will harm the setting of no 49 New Square. A modern addition to the Square, particularly the one proposed, which is of such a high specification in terms of environmental impact and sustainability, will add to the interest, character and

sustainability of New Square. There are many examples across the country where new buildings have been added to historic squares, terraces etc, resulting in enhancement, eco living styles and community cohesion which adding to the character of the area. See for example - *The Magazine of the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland Autumn 2022, No 50 pp.* which discusses a new four storey modern tenement in Bath Street Portobello, which sits within an early Victorian terrace. I suggest the addition of a new, high quality, low level building such as that given in the proposal can similarly only enhance the appearance of New Sq.

2. *“The garden forms an essential and unique part of the setting and makes a significant positive contribution to the listed building and surrounding Conservation area.” (ibid) and ‘The continuation of a built form would remove the open aspect of the garden which is currently an attractive part of the conservation character, the setting of No 49 and the listed buildings on Willow Walk,” (ibid).* This statement defends the status quo for those privileged enough to live in No 49 New Square or Willow Walk. It is not a statement about a garden which is accessible to the local community or people passing through the area. As such it is a biased and subjective view of what constitutes protection of the area for the wider community. The interests of the wider Kite community should be taken into account when considering this proposal. The open aspect of a garden is not a wider community concern, but an individual one and the interests of the wider area should be considered rather than individual interest. The garden is hidden from New Square by a huge fence. The proposed new build is strongly supported across the wider community and as such, this consideration, together with the enhancement of heritage offered by it, are clear reasons for approving and supporting this proposal.

3. Finally, I object to the Council’s narrow, conservative, class- ridden interpretation of heritage as expressed in the BNE-Conservation Comments. If it is committed to supporting local communities and avoiding the ossification of the city centre with it becoming a museum for day visitors, it would look to the interests of the people who live here and support this proposal.