



Mr Dominic Bush
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Our ref: L01594085

29 July 2025

Dear Mr Bush

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021 & T&CP
(Development Management Procedure)(England) Order 2015 & Planning (Listed
Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**CHRIST'S COLLEGE LIBRARY, CHRIST'S COLLEGE, ST ANDREW'S STREET,
CAMBRIDGE, CB2 3BU
Application Nos. 25/02162/LBC & 25/02161/FUL**

Thank you for your letter of 19 June 2025 regarding the above application for listed building consent. We note there is a parallel planning application (25/02161/FUL) for this scheme. Please treat this letter as our advice on both applications. On the basis of this information, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

Christ's College was founded by Lady Margaret Beaufort in 1505 on the site of God's House, a Grammar College established in 1448, having been moved from its original site near Clare Hall to allow the construction of King's College.

The proposals involve the demolition of the 1970s library in Bath Court and its replacement with a new library building including social and study spaces. They also include internal alterations to kitchen, Upper Hall and adjacent areas as well as alterations to WC provision in the SE range of Second Court.

The buildings surrounding the Entrance (First) Court, with the south-east range of Second Court comprise the oldest parts of the college and are listed at grade I. The college grounds are also a grade II registered park and garden and fall within the historic core of Central Conservation Area, Cambridge.

The current proposals represent a re-examination of the scheme consented in 2011 and renewed in 2016. They have been informed by a Strategic Masterplanning exercise



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commissioned by the College in 2023 and follow an architectural competition for a new library within the site.

The strong emphasis on sustainability of the new proposals results on a scheme that threads more lightly on the site; the basement extension is no longer considered, neither is the glazing of Bath Court.

In order to meet the requirements of the brief and compensate for the loss of the basement, the building needs to extend further above ground. Heights and relationship with surrounding buildings (Darwin's rooms in the south wing of First Court, the Bodley Library to the west, kitchen to the east) therefore require careful consideration. Given its position fronting what is now a public lane, the building's contribution to the streetscape, in addition to its relationship with the college as a whole and the building's own proportions need also to be considered.

New building

The architectural expression of the new building seeks inspiration from ancillary garden buildings, a library in a walled garden, however quite large in its relationship to the garden space. A wall towards Christ's Lane accommodates services and vertical communication; the building then lightens and opens up towards the shaded gardens proposed in Bath Court; the upper levels adopt a more 'silent' expression trying to avoid overdominance and visual intrusion. Ventilation stacks serve to articulate the rhythm of the street elevation and are reminiscent of some of the college's powerful chimney stacks that can be found around the historic town.

The removal of the basement and glazed enclosure have removed instances of harm to the significance of the listed college. However, the resulting increased massing brings other instances of harm, as it puts considerable pressure on the surrounding buildings forming Bath Court. The building feels too big, overdominant on this space, particularly in its relationship with the south range of first court and the Bodley Library.

Similarly, the increased height towards Christ's Lane feels quite large when seen alongside the relatively modest elevations of the college. This impact is evidenced in the visualisations presented, particularly those looking towards St Andrew's Street.

Internal Works

The changes to the kitchen area, Upper Hall and adjacent areas would considerably improve the accessibility and functionality of these spaces. They involve (but are not limited to) the introduction of a new lift to serve the kitchen and upper hall, the provision of level access to the Old Combination Room alongside a new doorway, and the reopening of windows and removal of false ceiling in the Upper Hall.



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This aspect of the proposals involves interventions within some of the oldest parts of the College. We are largely comfortable that the majority of the works proposed would largely affect fabric that has already been subject of previous alterations and therefore of less significance.

The most contentious aspect here would be the introduction of a large wash-up pod in the historic buttery, a highly significant space within the 16th century building. It would require enclosing and lining a large section of the room, alongside the introduction of ductwork and pipework. Albeit this room has been already modified to adapt it to its current use as offices, its conversion into a wash up area would strongly affect the character of this space and ability to understand its historic plan form.

Planning Policy Considerations

Paragraph 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. Relatedly, paragraph 212 asks local authorities to look for opportunities to enhance and better reveal their significance.

When considering potential impacts on the significance of designated heritage assets, paragraph 204 requires great weight is given to their conservation, the more important the asset, the greater the weight, and irrespective of the level of harm. Paragraph 206 goes on to ask clear and convincing justification for any harm.

Historic England Position

The introduction of a new primary building of the massing proposed within what historically was a domestic kitchen garden is challenging. Whilst we acknowledge the proposals represent a more contextual approach and the architectural quality of the scheme, we are of the view that the building is too big for its location.

Historic England engaged on pre-application discussions with the College alongside Council officers, where we welcomed the approach taken to revising the granted scheme and its ambitions. We highlighted the architectural quality of the project and its potential for enhancing the character of the conservation area and for delivering greater benefit to the college. We expressed our concerns however about its massing, its relationship with the Bodley library, and made some recommendations in relation to the Christ Lane elevation, which we consider would benefit from simplification.

Changes introduced to the western end of the building (staircase, prayer room and landscaping) have improved the relationship of the building with the Bodley.

The treatment to Christ's Lane has also been refined and simplified from the competition and subsequent designs discussed at pre-application stage. The wall level which initially



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aligned with the Bodley's stringcourse has been now lifted up to turret level. Whilst this simplifies the design and improves the building's own proportions, it feels more overbearing in its relationship with the Bodley and evidences the difficulties to accommodate a building which is too large for what is a very domestic setting.

In relation to the ventilation stacks/new chimneys proposed, we agree that the proportions and relationship of these elements in the historic streetscape are an important consideration and note the comparative analysis included in the Design and Access Statement. However, the role of these new elements within the college needs also to be factored in.

In that regard, it is worth noting that the chimneys at Queens College despite their massing, are proportionate to the college itself, and still remain subservient to the imposing corner and gatehouse turrets; a similar relationship exists in St John's College.

Christ's College's proportions are more modest than these latter colleges; the prominence of the gatehouse also appears to have diminished through time. Hyde's painting from 1856 shows the rear turrets being lowered; 19th century illustrations show chimney stacks being common features alongside the gatehouse front turrets.

To summarise and conclude, in their present form, the proposals would result in certain levels of harm to the significance of the listed building, primarily as a result of the excessive bulk of the new building, which we consider would detract from the setting of the surrounding buildings.

The proposals would be bulkier than those that were previously granted consent. We also acknowledge the benefits of removing the basement and glazing from the court and the architectural merits of the current scheme. With this in mind, we do not wish to object to the application but would strongly encourage that massing is further reduced so it sits better within this context.

Should the Council be minded to grant permission for the proposals in their current form, we would ask that refinements are introduced to the chimney/ventilation stacks so that their bulk is reduced as far as practicable. Clarity should also be given in relation to how their height would sit alongside the chapel turret, as we consider the prominence of the latter should remain unchallenged - and bearing in mind that the massing of these elements would be larger than traditional chimney stacks. Ideally, the combined lift and ventilation shaft would be reduced to match the adjacent shafts, if possible.

In relation to the wash-up pod. The Council should be satisfied that the proposed solution represents the least harmful option, and that other more sympathetic solutions are not possible. You should also be satisfied that the adaptation of the space for the proposed use would not have any adverse impacts on sensitive early historic fabric.



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Historic England

Recommendation

We urge you to address the above issues and recommend that this application be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of your expert conservation advice. It is not necessary for us to be consulted again.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

In addition, section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 asks you to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Your authority should take these representations into account in determining the application. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us. Please advise us of the decision in due course.

Yours sincerely

Rosa Teira Paz

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