

Development Control Forum	DCF/1	Thursday, 11 September 2025
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DEVELOPMENT CONTROL FORUM

11 September 2025
11.00 am - 1.05 pm

Present:

Planning Committee Members: Councillors Flaubert, Illingworth, Porrer, Smart and Thornburrow

Also present Councillor: Bick

Officers:

Delivery Manager: Toby Williams

Senior Planner: Dominic Bush

Committee Manager: James Goddard

Meeting Producer: Claire Tunnicliffe

For Applicant:

Applicant: Lord Simon McDonald, Master of Christ's College

Applicant's Agent: Doctor Jon Burgess, Director Turley Planning Consultants

Applicant's Architect: Shelley McNamara, Director Grafton Architects

Petitioners in Support:

Professor Tom Monie

Professor Chris Pickard

Doctor Irit Katz

Petitioners in Objection from Christ's Lane Action Group (CLAG):

Lead Petitioner: Professor Suchitra Sebastian

CLAG Heritage Consultant: Doctor Alec Foreshaw

CLAG Planning Consultant: Roger Hephher

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/1/DCF Opening Remarks by Chair

The Chair outlined the role and purpose of the Development Control Forum. They stated no decisions would be taken at the meeting.

25/2/DCF Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Dryden and Todd-Jones.

25/3/DCF Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Declaration
Councillor Porrer		Personal: Was a Reserve on Planning Committee. Ward Councillor issues were dealt with by Councillors Bick and Martinelli so her discretion was unfettered.

25/4/DCF Application and Petition Details

Case by Applicant

- 1) Set out the proposed design in their presentation.
- 2) Architect Rick Mather produced a design that was submitted and given planning approval in 2011. This planning approval was extended in 2016 but lapsed in 2021. The College undertook no building work in 2016 due to lack of funds but the urgency of replacing the library had grown.
- 3) The Master commissioned a space survey of the whole of the 9-acre Christ's College site to make the best use of space and how to improve on sustainability.
- 4) The new library should be a beautiful building and the wall onto Christ's Lane plus concrete bench an attractive interface between the college and the city. The building should last many years to be sustainable.
- 5) This was not a scheme that had been rushed to submission but one which followed 12 months of careful discussion and was supported by all the necessary technical reports.
- 6) No statutory consultees objected. The Applicant's Representatives accepted that everyone had a right to their concerns about design matters. None of the professional consultees objected to the scheme. Many of them considered this to be an extremely high quality proposal and one which would be a fitting addition to the townscape.

Case by Petitioners in Objection

Made the following points:

- 7) Supported an appropriate form of development on site. The current design was better suited to college needs than the public's as it was inward facing and created a canyon effect in Christ's Lane which was a busy thoroughfare for pedestrians to get across the city.
- 8) Christ's Lane needed to be improved but the current design did not do this.
- 9) Produced an alternative vision on behalf of CLAG for how a new library could be inserted onto the site.

Expressed the following concerns:

- 10) There was less than substantial harm to a heritage asset (library).
- 11) Massing and impact on surrounding buildings and the public realm such as overbearing and overshadowing. Suggested the daylight/sunlight study was submitted late and did not conform to BRE standards.
- 12) The current proposal undid the previous work to sympathetically develop Bath Court.
- 13) The building was too high for its setting.
- 14) Harm to heritage assets outweighed any public benefit.
- 15) The new building broke the existing skyline and would go against Local Plan policy about tall buildings.
- 16) There needed to be more 'porosity' between the college and the public realm, not a wall that blocked the two. The tall blank wall had no windows or active (attractive) frontage at 'the human scale' (where people could see).
- 17) Verified views were missing from the current iteration but were included in the 2016 submission.
- 18) Discussion about the design happened behind closed doors and the public were not consulted except for a small subset of Bradwell's Court residents. This was in contrast to Bradwell's Court where consultation was undertaken.
- 19) Christ College was now parking on Christ's Lane.

Case by Petitioners in Support

Made the following points:

- 20) The development was of interest to students who were local residents.
- 21) The design would improve:
 - a. Study/work space.
 - b. Student health and wellbeing.
 - c. Building accessibility.
 - d. Facilities in the building.

- 22) The proposal had changed how the College looked at the site to design and put in a modern building that met modern sustainability and environmental standards. The design responded to challenges, was appropriate for the site (e.g. size) and would bring public benefits.
- 23) Public consultation had been undertaken.

Case Officer's Comments:

- 24) Both of the full and the listed building consent planning applications being discussed today were received on the 2nd of June 2025 and validated on the 17th of June 2025.
- 25) Neighbours and statutory consultees were notified and consulted on the 19th of June 2025.
- 26) Site notices were displayed by the application site on either end of Christ's Lane on the 26th of June and the applications were advertised by the press on the 25th of June.
- 27) The original consultation period expired on the 17th of July 2025. A total of 123 third party representations had been received up until 11th September 2025. 57 in support, 65 in objection, and a single neutral comment. Some technical objections had been received during the process of the application and the applicants had provided a package of amendments in attempt to address these issues. A re-consultation had commenced and would expire on the 25th of September 2025. An extension of time had been requested for both applications to allow for the expiry of this consultation period.
- 28) An objection had been received from Anglian Water due to lack of capacity at the Cambridge Wastewater Recycling Centre.
- 29) The Council's Conservation Officer had requested additional information and updated comments had not been received.
- 30) As heard from both the applicants, objectors and petitioners in support today; there were a number of points for discussion as part of this forum:
 - i. The scale of design and the proposed replacement library building.
 - ii. The impact on relevant heritage assets.
 - iii. Potential improvements to the frontage with Christ's Lane in the public realm.
 - iv. The impact on the residential amenity of nearby properties, plus resident and retail units along Christ's Lane and Bradwell's Court.

Case by Ward Councillors

Councillor Bick spoke as a Ward Councillor to make the following points:

- 31) Agreed with the College's wish to replace its library. There were constraints on how to do this.

- 32) There were two things to be addressed by the development.
- Replacing the college library.
 - Unfinished business in Christ's Lane which was created as a result of the redevelopment of Bradwell's Court i.e. the poor boundary on one side. Christ's Lane was a busy thoroughfare and needed to be made more attractive on the College side.
- 33) Shared people's concern about the canyon effect in Christ's Lane and asked how this could be mitigated?
- 34) Requested more than a public bench as a public benefit.
- 35) It would be helpful if a construction plan were considered at the same time as the planning application due to the impact of the development on Christ's Lane as a public thoroughfare.
- 36) Encouraged the College to engage with Objectors to overcome concerns.

Members' Questions and Comments:

Councillor Porrer left the meeting before this item started and did not return.

- 37) Sought clarification about the proposed basement/height/massing/construction.

Applicant:

- i. The basement was integral to the design in 2011 then ruled out due to sustainability concerns. The new design had sustainability at its heart.

Applicant's Architect:

- ii. Bradwell's Court would overshadow Christ's Lane not Christ's College library.
- iii. The library would be the same height as Bradwell's Court. It would not overshadow or block light into Christ's Lane.
- iv. The design would make a beautiful wall which suited the character of the city. The city had lots of walls so the design was in-keeping with other areas.

Applicant's Agent:

- v. Digging a basement could have an impact on archaeology and surrounding buildings.
- vi. A draft construction management plan was request by Planners at the pre-application stage. A final plan would be submitted when requested through planning conditions.

CLAG Planning Consultant:

- vii. The basement was ruled out due to sustainability concerns, but sustainability was more than avoiding digging holes and pouring concrete. It also covered the built and historic environment which the College had ignored.

38) Made the following observations:

- i. The Objector's petition seemed to focus on:
 - a. The balance between heritage harm versus public benefit.
 - b. Active use of Christ's Lane.
- ii. Narrow lanes could produce a cool place in hot summers.
- iii. There was a lot of interest in how open the College was to the public, so how could the public learn about the library?
- iv. Lessons would be learnt from how the design tried to reduce the environmental impact of the building e.g. degassing.
- v. The application only affected half to one third of Christ's Lane so would wait to see how the design affected the whole lane including shops opposite the college as Councillors needed to consider the impact of the design on the city.

39) Queried public access arrangements to the college now and in future?

Applicant's Architect:

- i. The college was open every day except Christmas and exam days.
- ii. Part of the scheme was to open up a bricked-up door in the wall to give access to the 'Buttery' as a café.

40) Made the following observations:

- i. Who had free/lease hold of Christ's Lane? Would this impact the library development?
- ii. Would the development produce funding to improve Christ's Lane?
- iii. Was Christ's Lane well lit?
- iv. Was the library deficient of BRE standards as mentioned earlier?
- v. How would the wall be built on Christ's Lane to mitigate a bulky design?
- vi. What happened to students/library users whilst the new building went up as they could not access the old facility?

Applicant:

- vii. The library was already being decanted into a temporary space in the third court.

- viii. People's study habits had changed since lockdown. The new design would have three times as much study space as the current library.

Applicant's Architect:

- ix. The proposed boundary wall would be traditional in style, with headers and stretchers, high lime content in the mortar, recycled bricks if possible integrated into a collage of new and old.
- x. Sunlight was adequate in Christ's Lane. Overshadowing came from Bradwell's Court. The new library would reflect light into Christ's Lane so it would not cause a dark canyon effect.
- xi. The design of the wall would create a high quality public realm.

Applicant's Agent:

- xii. Christ's College and Jesus College were the freeholders of the whole development including Bradwell's Court and Christ's Lane. Bradwell's Court was under a long lease to a lead lease holder who was responsible for lettings of the commercial units. Half of the lane was public highway even though the freeholders were the colleges.
 - xiii. A sunlight daylight assessment had been undertaken. There was no detrimental impact on residential units. BRE standards don't generally apply to commercial units, highways, streets or public spaces. So there were no material planning issues.
- 41) The sunlight assessment of shadow effect in Christ's Lane covered the summer solstice; would it cover the whole year, or was further information available?

Applicant's Agent:

- i. Would check as believed the assessment covered the whole year.
- ii. Bradwell's Court was the building on the south. So the building that existed already was the building that cast the shadow over Christ's Lane. The new building would not change the light materially.

Lead Objector:

- iii. Took issue with the Applicant's description of the height of the application. Suggested it was 15m not 11.4m. This would create a building that was taller than Bradwell's Court and bulkier.
- iv. Did not accept the chimneys had to be so high above ground for 'sustainability' reasons.
- v. A café and shops would be overshadowed by the proposed development which would affect their livelihoods.

- vi. Suggested details were missing from the sunlight study.
- vii. The boundary wall design looked pretty but did not reflect active frontage at human scale i.e. interesting to look at from eye level.

Objector's Planning Consultant:

- viii. The college got benefits from the design. Queried what were the public benefits? Private benefits outweighed public benefits of the scheme.
- 42) Queried if planting, canopies or pop-up markets could be introduced in Christ's Lane to make it more attractive and mitigate the tall building?
- 43) The chimneys appeared quite bulky. Queried if the design could be reviewed?

Applicant's Architect:

- i. The chimney design could be reviewed in future; the application was not at a detailed design stage yet. The chimneys were functional (not decorative) and 14m in height.
- ii. The new library was lower than Christ's Lane at parapet height so was not as tall as suggested by Objectors' concerns.
- iii. Was conscious of human scale. The design started with human scale, but there was also a case to be made for grandeur and presence in building design as it was a civic asset.

Summing up by the Applicant

- 44) The canyon effect in Christ's Lane was only mentioned by Objectors. The College took issue with this description.
- 45) The height of the new proposal was lower than Bradwell's Court. There was no canyon effect or negative impact on light.
- 46) Technical advice cautioned against including a basement in the design so a higher building was proposed instead. This was similar in height to adjacent buildings.
- 47) The new library would improve heritage not harm it.

Summing up by the Petitioners in Objection

- 48) The scheme benefitted the College but not the city/public realm.
- 49) The building was too tall and massive. Tall buildings policy (60) had not been applied, despite the proposed building triggering it, since the building broke a key skyline view from St Andrew's Street.

- 50) The College decided not to include a basement which led to negative comments about the design as discussed today.

Summing up by the Petitioners in Support

- 51) Asked for discussion points from today's forum to be taken into consideration when the planning application was considered by Planning Committee.
- 52) The proposal improved Christ's Lane and the design of the library.

Final Comments of the Chair

- 53) The Chair observed the following:
- i. Notes of the Development Control Forum would be made available to relevant parties, published on the council's website and appended to the Planning Officer's report.
 - ii. The Planning Case Officer should contact the Applicant/Agent after the meeting to discuss the outcome of the meeting and to follow up any further action that was necessary. The Applicant would be encouraged to keep in direct contact with the Petitioners and to seek their views on any proposed amendment/s.
 - iii. The Council would follow its normal neighbour notification procedures on any amendments to the application.
 - iv. Application to be considered at a future Planning Committee.
 - v. Along with other individuals who may have made representations on the application, the Petitioners' Representatives would be informed of the date of the meeting at which the application is to be considered by Committee and of their public speaking rights. The Committee report would be publicly available five clear days before the Committee meeting.

The meeting ended at 1.05 pm

CHAIR