

Senate House Passage

A highly atmospheric passage leading from Senate House Hill into a network of narrow lanes that provide access to several of the city's most historic colleges, and onwards to The Backs and West Cambridge beyond.

This narrow lane boasts buildings that include examples by some of the most celebrated academic architects of the C18 and C19, including Gibbs, Cockcroft and Alfred Waterhouse, built for both college and university institutions, and dating from the C16 through to the later C19. Indeed, only one of the buildings with a frontage to this lane is not Listed with a grade of less than I or II*, making this one of the most exceptional areas of architectural quality in the

country. These buildings are set along the narrow, intimate route of the lane leading into the network of back lanes that provide access to further historic colleges as well as The Backs and includes both historic paving and street furniture, such as cast iron gas lamps and the listed iron railings to Senate House lawn. The combination of buildings, space and furniture make this one of the most distinctive spaces in the city centre.



Street view

SIGNIFICANCE - VERY HIGH

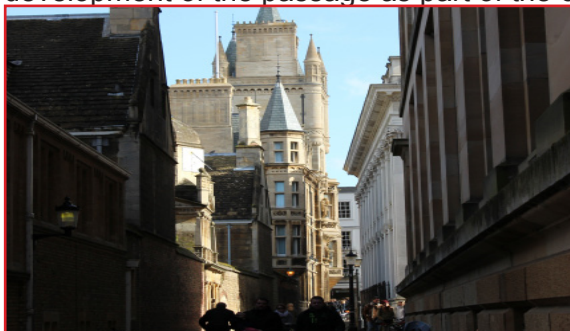
General Overview

Part of the medieval street plan, Senate House Passage is recorded on Braun's map of Cambridge, produced in 1572, running between Caius College and the University Schools, which were already set around two courts at that date. Later alteration at the eastern end of the passage opened the route through to Trinity Street and Senate House Square by the late C17.

Caius Court and the gateways of the college (named Humility, Virtue and Honour) are the most visible legacies of its founder (at its second founding in 1557), the Elizabethan doctor John Keys (who also spelt his name Caius). The 'Honour' gate is a spectacular monument of Elizabethan design, formed as a triumphal arch in mixed classical order and topped with a low hexagonal tower with a cupola and sporting sundials on each of its faces. The large 'rosette' motif used profusely on the gateway is reminiscent of similar details used on other college gates at Magdalene and St John's Colleges. Given the grandeur of the surrounding buildings, the college boundary wall is surprisingly 'scruffy', with patches of different materials and in-filled niches or arches that provide texture and a sense of the age and organic development of the passage as part of the city.



The Honour gate



Gonville and Caius College Tree Court

The larger buildings are generally clad in ashlar and richly ornamented with classical (on the south side) or Gothic (on the north side) architectural detail, favourably reflecting the materials and rich detailing of Keys' gateway. The former Law Library and Old School buildings tower over the south side of the lane, casting much of it into shadow, but allowing light through gaps which illuminates the college and the tall tower of Gonville and Caius College Tree Court. The latter rises as a landmark at the east end of the lane and forms the focus of the channelled view along the

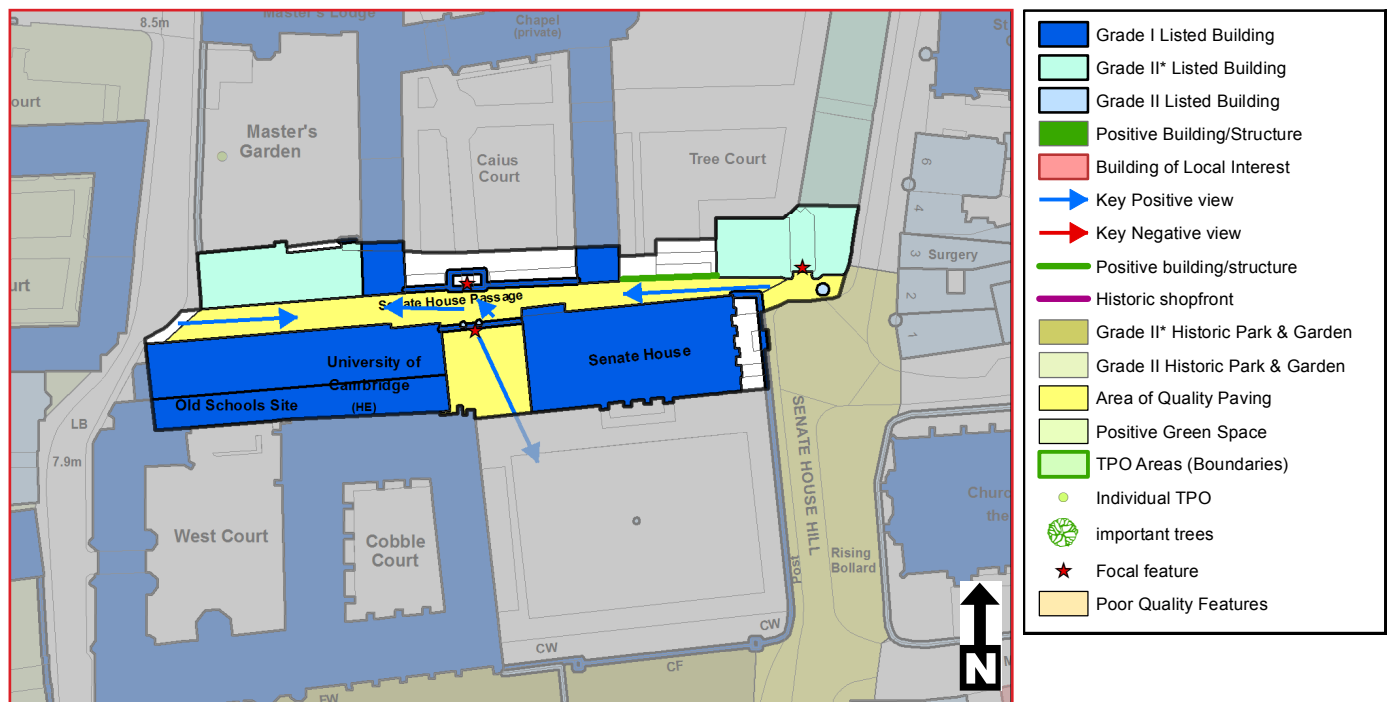
lane from the west. The earlier Old Schools construction can be glimpsed behind the later refronting in places.



Conflict between pedestrians and cyclists

Despite their great quality, the elevations of several of these buildings seen from the passage is unmistakably their rear side, confirming that this is a back or side lane running between properties, rather than a principle route within the city's street plan.

Senate House Passage is heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists as a route out of the city towards West Cambridge, the river and other colleges. It is the main route for visitors to access King's College chapel, which is now a major attraction for tourists in the city and forms part of an attractive network of lanes that tourists can explore as part of their visit to the city. It is also part of



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the route to Clare College, Trinity Hall and parts of Trinity College. As such it is often busy and there is some conflict between the needs of cyclists trying to pass through the space rapidly and pedestrians who may want to linger in the space for longer.

Townscape Elements

- The lane provides an experience of a range of academic buildings of exceptional architectural interest and quality with a strong sense of cohesion, through the use of a similar palette of materials and richness of ornamental detail in spite of widely different architectural styles.
- The passage is narrow and well enclosed by long building frontages and high college boundary walls with buildings generally rising from the edge of the pavement.



Framed views to Trinity Street

- The tight enclosure by the surrounding buildings focuses views up and down the passage, drawing the eye to the surrounding buildings, items of historic street furniture and framing

buildings on Trinity Street and Trinity Lane.

- The tower of Gonville & Caius College Tree Court is an important focal feature in views along the passage, as well as in views along both Trinity Street and King's Parade/Senate House Hill.
- The varied roofscape on the north side of the passage provides evidence of the incremental development of the college but is also an element of the aesthetic designed into the buildings designed by Waterhouse, expressing the functions of internal spaces and adding interest and variety.
- This is a hard-surfaced urban lane with virtually no greenery other than glimpses through to the grass of Senate House Lawn and the venerable horse chestnut on King's Parade beyond.
- The passage has a mixture of paving with cobbled edges and a central path of stone flags that provides areas that are more or less suited to cyclists and creating safer zones for pedestrians. These materials reflect the historic character of the passage.

Streetscape Enhancements

It is important that the historic floorscape is maintained and repaired and that the historic streetlights are not replaced by more modern fittings. Any additional fittings should follow the traditional style of these lanterns. Poor quality footway repairs should be redone to a better standard.

Whilst the sight of students cycling through the city streets is a part of Cambridge's traditional image, this narrow lane is dominated by cyclists to the detriment of its use by pedestrians and their ability to appreciate the high quality of the buildings that surround it.

North side (from junction with Senate House Hill)

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
Gonville & Caius: Tree Court: East Range	Listed Grade II*	1870	3 + attic 5 storey tower	ashlar faced	flat-pitched / westmorland slate lead & copper	Alfred Waterhouse	
south side wall			N/A	red brick & stone with stone copings			
Caius Court: East Range	Listed Grade I	C16	2 + attics	ashlar / some red bricks	collyweston stone slate	built to design of Dr Caius	
The Gate of Honour & flanking walls	Listed Grade I	1575	N/A	gate: ashlar; walls: stone & red brick		designed by Dr Caius	
Caius Court: West Range	Listed Grade I	1565	2 + attic	reused ashlar	collyweston stone slate		
Lecture Rooms	Listed Grade II*	1883	2	red brick	hipped / slate	Alfred Waterhouse	

South and east side (from junction with Senate House Hill)

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
The Old Schools: The Senate House	Listed Grade I	1722-30	appearance of 2	portland stone ashlar	lead	James Gibbs	west end completed in stone 1767-8 James Essex
2 Lampposts at entrance to The Old Schools	Listed Grade II	mid C19	N/A	cast-iron			
Squire Law Library	Listed Grade I	1837-40	3	Portland & Whitby ashlar faced	slate	C R Cockerell	built on site of Old Hall of King's College