

Queens' Lane and King's Lane

A narrow lane serving three of the city's historic colleges.

This is now a quiet, narrow access lane running north from Silver Street and dominated by the frontages of historic college buildings of Queens' College on the west side, St Catharine's College on the east side and the gate of Webb's Court where King's College terminates the lane to the north. Greenery from St Catharine's College gardens spills over into the street providing an attractive feature, whilst the collected buildings of the three colleges provides exceptional architectural interest

documenting their development from the C15 to the C20. The lane also has interesting historic street surfaces and lighting contributing further to the historic collegiate character. The general low level of motor traffic also contributes to an air of tranquillity in an area near the heart of the city, although access via Kings Parade to Trumpington Street to the east provides a level of pedestrian and cycle traffic that prevent the lane from having a lonely feel.



Street view

SIGNIFICANCE - HIGH

General Overview

Queens' Lane was originally part of Cambridge's early medieval street pattern, providing a back lane that served the rear of long plots with frontages to the 'Highe Street' (the route from Trinity Lane to Trumpington Street), as well as providing access to riverside wharves. The foundation of King's College by Henry VI, cut across the line of the lane with the length in the south becoming a service lane. The foundation of Queens' College by Margaret of Anjou (Henry VI's Queen) in 1448, provided the lane with its name and its oldest buildings.

The Old Court of Queens' College stands at the entrance to the lane from Silver Street with imposing brick frontages to both streets. The Old Court is archetypal of the arrangement of the medieval colleges of Cambridge, with access via a gate-tower in a frontage flanked by accommodation ranges. This leads to a court with a hall (including the refectory connected by a screen passage to a buttery, pantry and kitchens at one end and combination room at the other) facing the entrance and with further accommodation ranges based on pairs of rooms set either side of staircases accessed off the court to one side, and a library and chapel to the other. The use of red brick reflects its use as prestigious building material at this date, though with stone still used for more ornate detailing such as the Gothic arched windows and tracery. The corner turret between the front and south ranges rises at the entrance to the street, and makes a dramatic statement which signals the presence of the college and narrow lane from Silver Street.



Old Court, Queens' College

Opposite Old Court, the brick walls and wrought iron screen enclosing the garden of St Catharine's College Master's Lodge allow the greenery of the gardens to spill over into the streetscene, whilst also maintaining a strong sense of enclosure to the street and a high level of ornate detailing that maintains an interesting frontage.

Development of Queens' College progressed in phases northwards along the lane, with the frontage of Walnut Tree Court built in the early C17 and heightened in the late C18, the chapel to Walnut Tree Court added in the 1890s and Friars' Court Dockett Building added in 1912. The northward expansion of the college illustrates the acquisition of the land of the Carmelite Friary that stood here until the dissolution of the monasteries. The buildings maintain a strong sense of unity through the use of red brick with stone dressing throughout (except for the slightly incongruous stone apron of the New Chapel), with the frontage range and New Chapel of Walnut Tree Court maintaining the Gothic detailing of the Old Court frontage, although in a simpler form. The later Friars Court Range adopted a later Jacobean Revival style, but nonetheless has a similarly high level of architectural detailing, highlighting the rhythm of window openings and providing an interesting frontage. The corner turrets and gate-tower of Old Court establish a rhythm that is continued northwards by the substantial chimney stacks of Walnut Tree Court, and at Friars Court further to the north, through forward projecting bays with gabled returns to the roof and oriel windows.



Walnut Tree Court



West Range, St Catharine's College

St Catharine's College was also founded in the mid C15 on a plot on Milne Street (now Queens' Lane). The land of the present Master's Lodge and garden to the south was leased from Queens' College and prevented expansion of the college southward due to uncertainty over the security of the lease, resulting in the green character of the southern end of the lane and views to the south range of the court. The West Range of the court, which addresses Queens' Lane, was completed between 1679 and 1687. It is of similar date to Walnut Tree Court and shares the same palette of materials as Queens' College. The classical architectural style used is in contrast to the buildings of Queens' College but the use of stone dressings and level of detailing, including stone quoins, plat band, modillion cornice, rusticated case to the gateway and stone frontispiece above, provide a level of architectural detailing that is complementary to the buildings they face. The range effectively screens views into the court beyond, which is, however, experienced from Trumpington Street. The later C20 range to the north replaced the early C17 Walnut Tree Court of St Catharine's College and is not considered to be of architectural interest. It was designed to reflect the detailing of the range to the south, albeit with simple modernist detailing including a large bay window at the centre of the frontage providing some engagement with the street.

The frontage of Webb's Court of King's College was designed to reflect the college's medieval grandeur. The use of rock-faced stone for the elevation provides a contrast with the other buildings on the lane but helps to indicate a different ownership and unites the building with other structures of King's College to the north. The gate-tower, however, provides a third significant gateway within the street which contributes to the overall theme, emphasising the enclosure of the college spaces beyond the main frontages and the control of access to these exclusive institutions which is the primary purpose of the lane. Again, the frontage is heavily detailed,



Webb's Court, King's College

although the lack of contrast between red brick and stone detailing makes this less evident.

Views along King's Parade to the east are relatively inauspicious, taking in the rear of the McGrath Centre and the side elevations of the 1960s accommodation ranges of St Catharine's College.

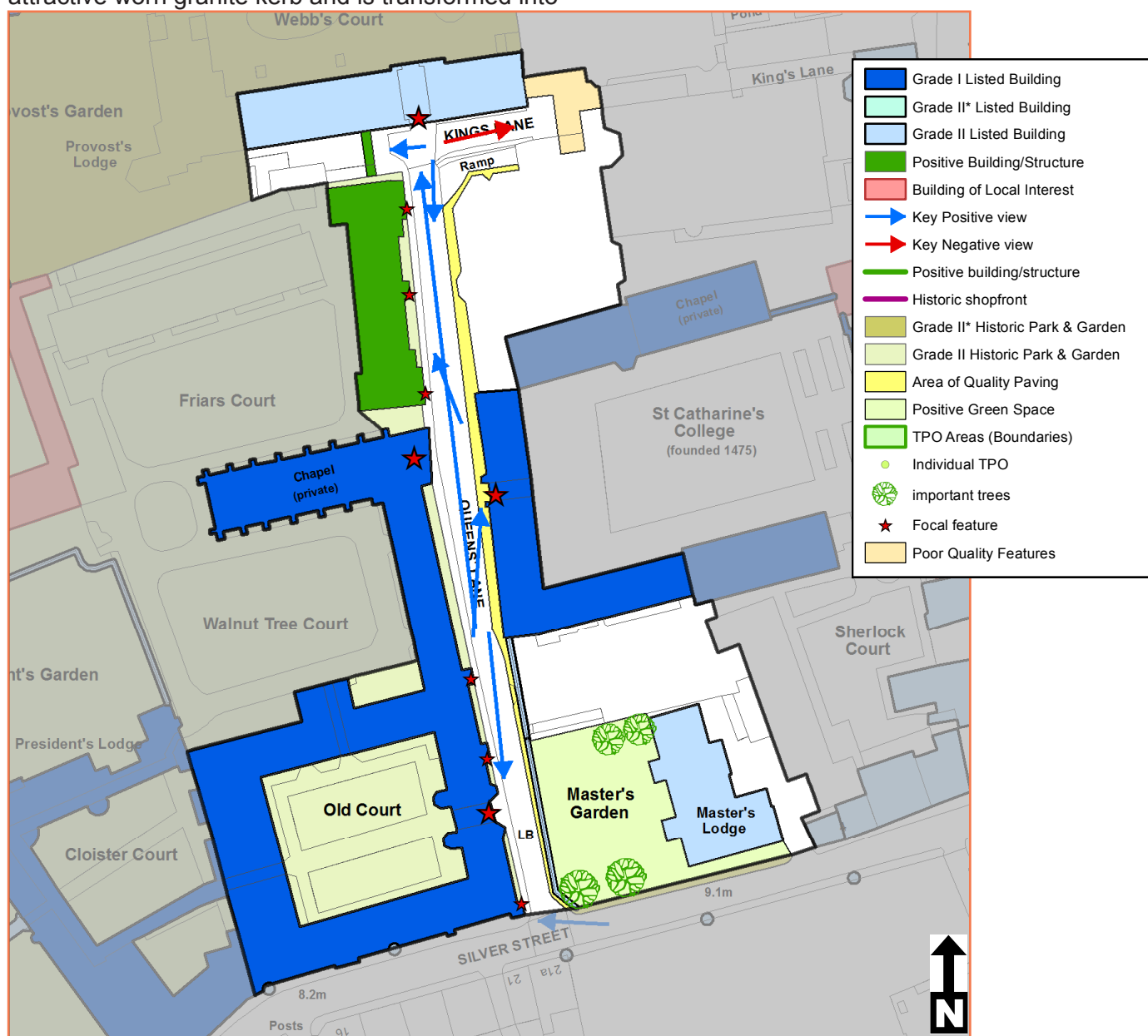
The scale of development rises from two storeys with attics in the south to four storeys (including a mansard storey) in the north with considerable variation and interest at the roofline, including dormers, turrets, chimney stacks and gable ends of chapels. The rising scale emphasises the strong sense of enclosure in views from the north end of the lane, with a more open feel to the south.

The narrowness of the lane permits a pavement on only the west side for much of its length. However, the short stretch of pavement near the southern end of the road is of high quality riven slabs with an attractive worn granite kerb and is transformed into

a plinth with a steep cobbled 'batter' rising from the road's edge that helps to separate the road from the buildings in the north. A similar raised plinth or apron separates the Queens' College buildings from the pavement and helps to create some sense of separation between the buildings and the public realm. The public realm also includes a number of historic street lamps, possibly originally gas lamps converted to electric power, whilst other street lighting is provided by historic lanterns on wrought iron brackets attached to the college buildings.

The lane has a very gentle curve, echoing the alignment of Trumpington Street, which means that although the whole lane is generally visible within a single view, different buildings attain a greater degree of prominence in the streetscape from different points within the street.

The principal use of the lane as access to the colleges has remained unchanged and, indeed



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has been reinforced, ensuring that it has a quiet character with little vehicle traffic.

Townscape Elements

- The road feels very enclosed as the buildings are taller than the width of the street and there are few breaks in the building line.
- The building frontages are generally of great historical and architectural interest, spanning the construction of collegiate buildings from the mid C15 through to the later C20 and, as such, these form the focus of the space.
- The buildings are constructed from a limited palette of materials but with a high degree of ornamental detail, creating a sense of unity.
- The strong rhythms of architectural features either projecting forwards or upwards from the buildings, creates a detailed and interesting streetscape and roofline.
- Buildings are located at the back of footway or set back on top of a raised footway or apron that provides a small amount of division from the public realm.
- King's College Webb's Court gate-tower provides an end-stop to the view north. The gate-tower helps to highlight the point where the road originally continued northwards as Milne Street.



Views south terminated by Silver Street buildings

- Buildings on Silver Street terminate the views to the south.
- The greenery of St Catharine's College, seen beyond the college wall and screen, adds a softer texture, as well as greenery, to the street, whilst the absence of a built frontage at this point creates a more open feeling area and allows views to the southern range of St Catharine's College.

Streetscape Enhancements

The lighting along the lane is interesting with three free-standing lamps with black iron shafts and a decorative lantern. There are also two large lanterns attached to Queens' College Old Court



Free standing lamps

above the main entrance. To complement this, a lighting scheme could be developed to enhance the attractive gate into King's College Webb's Court and the gate to St Catharine's College Principal Court.

Signage is generally discreet, but seems unnecessarily duplicated with two identical parking signs placed only a few metres apart. One of these could perhaps be removed.

Complete removal of cars, except for access could give the opportunity for carriageway and pavement resurfacing and enhancement of both this lane and King's Lane as an alternative route between Trumpington Road and the bridge over the River Cam at Silver Street.

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
Queens' College: Old Court: East Range with Gatehouse	Listed Grade I	1448	2 Gatehouse: 3	red brick, stone dressings	tiled	Mason, Reginald Ely	
Queens' College: Walnut Tree Court: East Range	Listed Grade I	1617-19 heightened c1780	3	brick, stone dressings	parapet		reroofed & embattled 1823
Queens' College: Walnut Tree Court: Chapel	Listed Grade I	1890	N/A	red brick, stone dressings	tiled	Bodley & Garner	
Queens' College: Friars Court: Dockett Building	Positive building	1912	3 + attic + basement	red brick, stone dressings	clay tiled	E.T. Hare	
King's College: Webb's Court	Listed Grade II	1908-9	3 + attic	ashlar-faced	mansard / slate	Sir Aston Webb	
St Catharine's College: part of King's Lane Courts	none	1965-68	3 + attic storey	red brick, stone detailing	mansard / lead		
St Catharine's College: Principal Court: West Range	Listed Grade I	1687	3 + attic	red brick, stone dressings	tiled	Builder: Robert Grumbold	
St Catharine's College: boundary wall	Listed Grade II	late C17 / early C18	N/A	red brick			
St Catharine's College: Screen & gates of Master's Lodge	Listed Grade II	late C19	N/A	wrought iron fence & gates, red brick stone capped piers	W. Fawcett		