

The road through 'The Backs'.

Originally providing a route from the city centre to the village of Newnham, the northern extension of the road during the C17 helped to create a route around the north and west side of the city avoiding the crowded city streets. Queens' College was the first college to access the west bank by erecting a bridge in 1749 and the road may either be named after the college or in commemoration of visits by Queen Victoria in 1842 and 1847. Until 1724, when the Gibbs Building was built at King's College, the colleges had turned their backs on the river. The improvement of the colleges'

grounds either side of the river during the C17 transformed The Backs into a series of pleasure grounds that are an icon of Cambridge. Queen's Road however lies outside these grounds, beyond high railings and running through a series of unenclosed 'pieces' of woodland and grassland that provide part of the ring of open spaces that separate the city centre from the wider setting. Views across the backs to the college buildings are, again, some of the most iconic and frequently reproduced images of Cambridge.

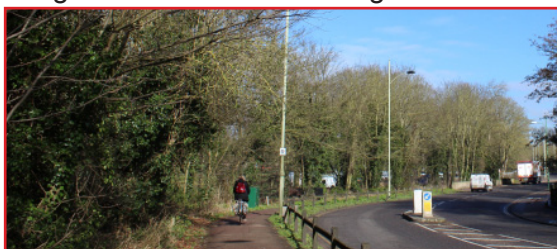


Street view

SIGNIFICANCE - VERY HIGH

General Overview

Buildings only address the road at its northern end, forming a small southerly continuation of the development of Northampton Street. The defining character of Queen's Road otherwise, is its green surroundings and route through the chain of unenclosed open spaces or 'pieces' with a mixture of wooded parkland or grassland. The eastern sides of the spaces are punctuated by routes into college properties via distinguished wrought iron gateways leading to causeways and paths across the formal college parklands of the backs, to bridges and hence into college courts.



Substantial tree line

The improvement of The Backs during the C17 reflects the growing wealth and importance of the colleges. It also reflects their need to cater for secular scholars as the university grew to serve as a centre of learning for emerging middle class professions, beyond its more religious focus during the Middle Ages. Moreover the landscapes created reflect emerging trends in garden design seen both in Britain and Europe in the C17, with formal parklands crossed by tree-lined walks and providing vistas to the architectural spectacle of each of the colleges.



Buildings at northern end

The west side of the road is marked by a substantial tree line that maintains the undeveloped character of the road, as well as providing some enclosure, with occasional glimpsed views through to more recently developed college and university campuses. These include formal vistas to buildings of architectural interest, including the tower of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's University Library and Clare College's Memorial Court to the west.



The backs

The views across The Backs are the most frequently reproduced images of Cambridge, with the view of Clare College and King's College Chapel being the iconic image used to represent the university and city around the world. The quality of these views is a combination of the green setting of manicured lawns with wilder paddocks, the river with its traditional activity of punting and architecturally elaborate bridges, the spectacular architecture of the historic college buildings as the focus of the view (without interruption of discordant structures), and the clear space behind, again without interference of structures that might draw attention away from historic college buildings.



View of Kings College Chapel



Mounting stone

Queen's Road forms part of the inner ring road and contains a number of car and bus parking spaces, and is therefore, a very busy vehicular route. It is also frequently busy with pedestrians and cyclists crossing to college or university buildings, or (particularly in summer) enjoying The Backs. The road and the open spaces beside it are divided only by low timber rails on timber posts with regular footpaths leading off the road from crossing points and helping to incorporate it with the wider space of wooded parkland. On the west side of the road, a paved footpath is divided from the road by similar wooden rails and a grass verge, reflecting the green and open character of the land to the east. An unusual feature of the parkland is a large, stepped mounting stone that lies at the junction of Queen's Road and the gates to Clare College's grounds. This provides a reminder of the days when horses and carriages were the normal form of transport for travellers.

At the southern end of the road, a series of large C19 villas are set back from the west side of the road in extensive grounds and represent an early element of the extensive picturesque West Cambridge suburb.



Newnham Cottage

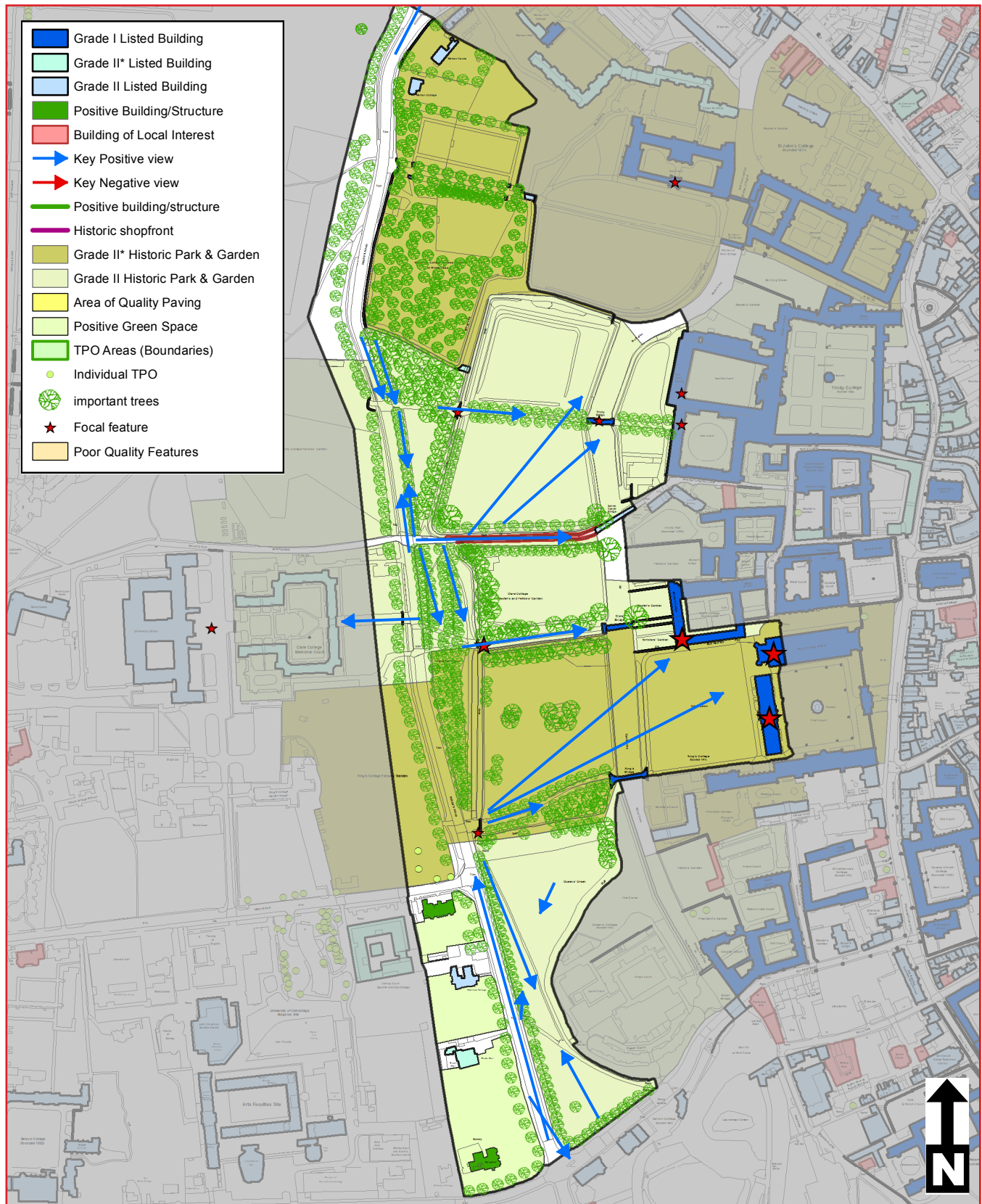


Finella



Springfield

All buildings along Queen's Road are in college use. The area is busy often with students moving from one campus to another and with parties of tourists, as well as local people, using The Backs and the various 'greens' and 'pieces' as an area for walking and picnicking.



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Townscape Elements

- A long, gently sinuous road running around the fringe of the city through a chain of unenclosed green woodland and parkland spaces, which mark the boundaries of the historic city core. These spaces help to provide a strong definition between the medieval core of the city to the east and the more recent C19 and C20 suburb to the west.
- Views and access to The Backs; a series of formal parklands and gardens, originated as a part of the improvement of the riverside area during the C17.
- Buildings are set back behind extensive landscaped gardens.
- The enduring impression is of greenery - expanses of grass / mature trees / shrubs with buildings framed by verdant settings. Westminster College provides a striking focal point at north end.
- St John's College is an important focal point from the east side through a tree-lined gateway.
- The south end has an abrupt change to a more urban feel where the terraced buildings of Silver Street overlook Queens' College Green and buildings form a narrow entrance to the built up Newnham Road, which continues the line of Queen's Road to the south.

Traffic Management

The key challenge is to maintain the ring road whilst reducing the impact of vehicles and associated signage on the character of The Backs. Particular care should be taken in the location and design of signs and other paraphernalia.

East side

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
Merton House	Listed Grade II	early C19	2	gault brick			
garden wall	Listed Grade II	early C19	N/A	grey gault brick			
Merton Cottage	Listed Grade II	c1820	2	grey gault brick			
St John's Scholars' Garden	Registered Grade II	C20	N/A	divided into 2 east: open lawn west: specimen trees & shrubs			
St John's College Fellows' Garden or 'Wilderness'		by late C18	N/A	informal, landscaped design with grove of trees			
field gate	Listed Grade II	1822 to C17 design	N/A	stone piers & wrought iron gates			
boundary wall between Field Gate & Bin Brook	Listed Grade II	early C19 (probably contemporary with Field Gate, 1822)	N/A	red stone, brick-capped			
'Wilderness' Fence	Listed Grade II	C19	N/A	cast-iron			
Trinity Pieces	Registered Grade II		N/A	informal lawn with specimen trees			
field gates to Trinity College	Listed Grade I	erected 1733, but of earlier date	N/A	wrought iron		from Horseheath Hall	

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
Clare Hall Piece	Registered Grade II	mid-late C20	N/A	laid to lawn with lines of alders & beeches			
gateway to Clare Hall Piece	Listed Grade II*	1691	N/A	ashlar piers			
		early C18 (probably 1714)		wrought iron gate with overthrow			
gateway to King's College	Listed Grade II*	1818	N/A	rusticated stone & wrought-iron gates		William Wilkins	
Queens' Green	Registered Grade II	C16 / C17	open area of grass - registered common land, public open space				

West side

Building No./ Name	Status	Age	Height (Storeys)	Wall Materials	Roof Form / Materials	Architect	Notes
St John's College playing fields	none	C20	open expanse of grass laid to rugby / football, etc. pitches and bounded by trees and hedges				
gate of Trinity College Fellows' Garden	Listed Grade II	mid C18	N/A	wrought iron gates between modern stone piers		from Rectory Manorhouse, Enfield, Middlesex	
Trinity College Fellows' Garden	Registered Grade II	1873	bounded by an informal belt of trees & shrubs through which winds a perimeter path encircling a lawn containing several island beds			W Broderick Thomas	
Clare College Memorial Court	Listed Grade II	1922-33	3	grey brick	pantile	Sir Giles Gilbert Scott	built as Memorial of 1914-18 War
screen & gates	Listed Grade II	c1930	N/A	buff brick piers with stone caps & wrought iron screen & gates		probably Sir G. G. Scott	
grounds	Registered Grade II	c1930	lawns with mature shrubberies flanking gravel drive, steps to central archway & gates				
King's College Fellows' Garden	Registered Grade II*	c1850 or earlier	N/A	rectangular garden, perimeter belts of shrubs & trees, several large specimen trees, informal lawn & informal shrub beds			
1 West Road	Positive building	C19	2	gault brick	hipped / slate		
Newnham Cottage	Listed Grade II	c1805	2	grey gault brick	slate	William Wilkins, Senior	
Finella	Listed Grade II*	c1840	2	colour-washed brick	hipped / slate	decorated internally by Raymond McGrath 1927-9. Significant 'modern movement' interior	
Springfield	Positive building	C19	2	gault brick	hipped / slate		