



LEISURE | COLLEGE BOATHOUSE

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New state-of-the-art boathouse reinterpreting the original form.

DESCRIPTION

Beacon Planning were approached by Gonville and Caius College and architects Bland Brown and Cole to assist with proposals for a new boathouse following refusal of a previous application.

Although an attractive structure dating from 1879 and designed by Cambridge architect William Fawcett, the original boathouse had structural and other issues and could not be adapted to meet the needs of the successful College Boat Club. It was not listed, nationally or locally, but was a popular and much loved building cherished by current rowers and the many alumni who had rowed for the College.

Cambridge City Council officers needed to be convinced that the existing building could not be altered and that there was a wider public benefit outweighing the loss of the original structure.

We wrote a very detailed Design and Access and Heritage Statement to justify the proposals. This explained why the existing boathouse could not be made fit for purpose, supported by an architect's drawing showing how little fabric would be left if necessary structural works were carried out and increased boat storage space provided. We also explained how the heritage significance of the existing building related to its value as one of the group of traditional boathouses and the contribution its architectural features and materials made to the riverscape. This contribution could be maintained by the well-designed new building. Finally, we

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Location Cambridge

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explained how the works would improve the facilities for all rowers - particularly female and disabled users - and how this would benefit the town and school crews who use the building.

We felt it was important to gauge the views of residents so we organised a consultation session and kept them apprised of progress. They felt strongly that the building should have a similar appearance to the original building – a view not shared by the Council's Design and Conservation Panel. Whilst it was clear that we could not accommodate the latter's views and please local residents, we took several of the Panel's detailed comments on board and made modifications to the designs.

This scheme highlighted how public benefits can outweigh heritage significance. It also demonstrated the importance of consultation and of being able to clearly show the source of the design inspiration of a building - particularly where, as in this case, there were conflicting opinions amongst consultees.

OUTCOME

Planning permission and conservation area consent were granted in November 2012. The foundation stone was unveiled in November 2015 and the building completed the following year. In 2017 the building was shortlisted in the best New Building small category of the Cambridge Design Construction Awards.

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