



EDUCATION | SCHOOL OF PYTHAGORAS

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Heritage and planning advice for conversion of Grade I listed building to new archives centre for St John's College.

DESCRIPTION

As part of Beacon's role providing heritage and planning advice to St John's College, Cambridge, we worked with Caroe Architecture on the conversion of this grade I listed building to an archive.

The School of Pythagoras is thought to be the oldest secular building in Cambridgeshire; dating from c.1200, it is important as one of the very few domestic buildings of this date surviving in the country. It was built to house the first known mayor of Cambridge, Hervey Dunning, whose family owned the prestigious stone-built house until c.1270 when it was bought by Walter de Merton, founder of Merton College in Oxford.

St John's College acquired the building in 1959 as a lecture theatre space. However, disabled access requirements and other issues meant that the building was under-utilised, and a new use needed to be found.

Access to and storage of the College's archives had long been an issue, and the ancient building seemed appropriate for this purpose. It also provided the opportunity to make the School of Pythagoras more publicly accessible - a recognisable benefit for both the building and the College.

In addition to being grade I listed, the building lies within the College's grade II* registered park and garden, the Cambridge

Client	St John's College, University of Cambridge
Location	Cambridge
Appointed	2010
Services	Advice

BP team	Jon Burgess Jenni Mason
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Architect	Caroe Architecture
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Historic Core Conservation Area, and is adjacent to the grade II* listed Cripps Building. The potential impact of any proposals on these other important heritage assets therefore had to be considered alongside the impact on the School of Pythagoras itself. Planning and listed building consent was gained in November 2011 following discussions and negotiations with English Heritage, the City Council's Historic Environment Team, and various amenity societies (including the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Ancient Monuments Group and the Twentieth Century Society). Construction concluded in March 2014 and, after a six month period of testing and acclimatization, the archive was gradually moved into its new home

OUTCOME

The scheme was granted planning and listed building consent in November 2011. The building work was completed in 2014 and went on to win the award for Best Conservation of a Building in the Cambridge Design and Construction Awards 2015 and commended in the RTPI Region Planning Achievement Award 2015.

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