



St Chad's College
Durham University

Estates Strategy

2024 - 2027



Background

St Chad’s College occupies a number of historic buildings within Durham City Centre, with the majority being situated on the world-famous peninsula. The site occupied by these College buildings is adjacent to the World Heritage Site which encompasses Durham Cathedral and Castle. The majority of the College’s properties are used as student residences.

Our estate has evolved gradually over the last 120 years through a combination of acquisition, gifts and development. The historic nature of our buildings plays an important part in defining the character of the College, yet also presents us with significant challenges.

Our estate can be summarised as follows:

Student Accommodation	Value (as at 30/9/23)
1 & 2 North Bailey – Queen’s Court	£1,450,000
5 North Bailey – Epiphany	£460,000
15-18 North Bailey – Main College (inc. College Chapel)	£3,775,000
19-20 North Bailey – Lightfoot	£1,105,000
21 North Bailey – Langford	£600,000
22 North Bailey – Grads	£1,280,000
25 North Bailey – Ramsey	£830,000
Trinity Hall	(£600,500)
30 Hallgarth Street	£375,000
Ancillary properties	
7 Pimlico – Principal’s residence	£800,000
Boathouse	£50,000

Eight of the College's eleven properties are Grade II listed as defined by Historic England. As well as student accommodation, some teaching, administration, catering and conference facilities are located within 15-18 North Bailey, (known as Main College). This building also houses common rooms and a College bar.

The College owns all but two of its properties outright, with Queen's Court and Trinity Hall being leasehold, with Durham University and Durham Cathedral respectively as landlords.

In Autumn 2023 the College commissioned a full valuation of our estate, based on RICS Red Book standards as part of the process to produce annual financial statements. This resulted in a valuation of just over £10m (see table on page 2). The College undertakes a formal, external valuation in this way every five years.

As the College looks to build on its strategic aims, a full survey of the condition of our estate was undertaken in late 2018. This formed the basis of an initial plan to refurbish the buildings. The surveys identified a significant amount of work which was required to bring our buildings up to a standard which will continue to attract both students and commercial guests, while acknowledging the historic and valuable assets that we are custodians of.

Strategic Framework 2017-2027

Our estates strategy builds on the College's ten year strategic framework which was developed in 2017. This was subject a minor revision in 2023 and can be summarised in the following section:

Our Vision

To be a hospitable, supportive, challenging community of learning which inspires and educates our members to contribute with imagination towards a sustainable and just present and future for our world.

Our Mission

Working together as a warm, reflective community which sustains an outstanding collegiate experience, we promote academic excellence and whole person development. In a context of unprecedented global challenges, we aim to encourage intellectual curiosity and thoughtful hope as we explore how to live more sustainably and equip our members to make a positive social impact.

Our Values

As an independent college within Durham University, we are defined by our founding commitment to justice, inclusion and service, shaped and inspired by our Anglican roots and our home in the North East region. We seek to live with

integrity as a community which includes people of all faiths, beliefs, and backgrounds.

St Chad's is:

- **Communal and Curious**
We welcome and value people from all backgrounds, beliefs and gender and sexual identities and promote a culture of respect, friendship, and inclusion. Our ethos supports the pursuit of academic excellence, the passion for ideas, the quest for truth, and a lifelong commitment to learning.
- **Sustainable and Just**
We reach out to under-represented people within local, national, and global communities, and work towards a fairer, more ethical and sustainable world. We respect our planet, aim to minimise the harm we do to it by adopting environmentally sustainable practices, and facilitate our students' engagement with ideas and practices that contribute to the sustainability of our planet.
- **Holistic and Beautiful**
We live as a community which nurtures spiritual as well as intellectual growth, and we facilitate an appreciation of the personal and political significance of faith in our world today. We value the aesthetic quality of our community environment, recognise the creativity involved in all intellectual endeavour, and integrate sport, music, art, drama and literature into our life together.
- **Professional and Adaptable**
We live in a competitive, fast-changing world. We are committed to maintaining all that is good in our College whilst ensuring that we develop and continue to flourish in the future.

Estates Vision

St Chad's College seeks to develop its estate in a way that provides a functional, well-equipped and safe infrastructure appropriate to the needs of students and commercial guests and which will:

- Support academic activity
- Provide a stimulating working, learning and living environment
- Be developed and operated to meet national and international environmental sustainability and responsibility objectives
- Make optimal use of space

Recent History

Prior to 2018, many of the College's buildings had been refurbished with an eye to keeping costs to a minimum. Little thought had been given to aesthetic appeal or consistency, and as a result, the College's accommodation offer varied considerably. Much of this is evidenced in the output from the building condition surveys. Attempts have been made to increase the provision of en-suite accommodation, though further development of this is something which requires careful consideration, along with the provision of single vs. twin room accommodation. At present, 68% of bedrooms are en-suite, while 22% of rooms are shared. Analysis of income from accommodation indicates that to un-twin all of the shared rooms would reduce income by more than £400k per annum.

Some key issues to consider:

Disability access

Ensuring (where possible) that access is available to all areas of College and that staff, students and guests with particular needs have access to appropriate facilities.

Enhancing the student experience

Providing good quality, well-located living, learning and social spaces that support group and individual settings.

Engaging with our wider community

Providing public access to concerts, functions and events, as well as interaction with key local authority partners over issues such as planning, transport and relations between students and local residents.

Current staffing

The Estates team is headed up by the Finance & Operations Director, with the Facilities & Housekeeping Manager taking responsibility for day-to-day maintenance of minor items. The College employs three part-time (2 FTE) Maintenance Assistants to carry out the majority of this work.

Until 2017, much of the refurbishment in College was carried out by this team (or its predecessors), with appropriate support from qualified tradesmen. Going forward there is less likelihood of the team being involved in major capital projects with external contractors taking the lead. Experience has shown that working with a Main Contractor has been an efficient, safe, and compliant way of ensuring projects are completed on time and on budget.

It must be acknowledged that our buildings are far from perfect, and to seek a counsel of perfection in terms of refurbishment would be prohibitively expensive. If properties were graded A-D in terms of condition and appeal, then I would expect our properties to fall within Grade B once refurbished.

Progress to date

Having digested the content of the condition surveys, a clear plan of action was developed which took into account the condition of each building, our operational priorities and our financial capacity.

Work began on developing an Estates Strategy in 2019, but was then impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020/21. However, it was possible to make some significant progress both before, during and after the pandemic, with full-scale refurbishment taking place at Grads (22 North Bailey), while infrastructure improvements were made at Trinity Hall and to fire safety across all buildings.

In 2022, boilers were replaced in three of the College's buildings (Main College, Lightfoot and Langford), adding resilience to the infrastructure of those buildings. In 2023, a full-scale refurbishment of Langford (21 North Bailey) was carried out, along similar lines to the Grads refurbishment.

The table below summarises the capital expenditure relating to projects completed since 2017:

Financial Year	Project	Cost
2018/19	Boiler replacement (Grads)	£169,181
2019/20	Boiler replacement (Trinity)	£178,068
	Fire stopping work (all buildings)	£100,440
	Grads refurbishment (Q4)	£103,699
2020/21	Grads refurbishment (Q1/Q2/Q3)	£1,249,882
2021/22	Boiler replacement (Langford/Lightfoot/Main College)	£508,013
2022/23	Boiler replacement	£111,829
	Chapel refurbishment	£223,108 *
	Langford refurbishment	£758,470
	Hallgarth St refurbishment	£44,121
2023/24	Langford refurbishment	£132,705
	Total capital expenditure post-condition survey	£3,579,516

n.b. the project to refurbish the Chapel during 2023 was fully funded by donations from individuals, trusts and foundations.

Environmental and Estate Sustainability

Preparing the built environment to address the environmental agenda and challenge is a major undertaking. We are committed to being proactive in seeking the highest environmental credentials we can reasonably achieve and given the constraints of our heritage estate. We are committed to maximising the opportunities for sustainable environmental improvement through a carefully planned programme of works. Particular focus will be on energy use, energy efficiency and the generation of energy whilst retaining the character and appearance of a listed / heritage estate.

The techniques for measuring the energy performance and the environmental performance of buildings are fast changing along with the regulatory environment. The current recognised measurement methods are EPC (Energy Performance Certificates), BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) and NABERS (National Australian Built Environment Rating System). Heritage estates lend themselves better to measurement techniques such as NABERS because they retain high levels of embodied carbon as opposed to EPCs which measure operational carbon. Given the fast pace of change in this area, our strategy will need to be kept under constant review.

Over the last 18 months the College has sought to move this area forward at pace. Whilst some progress has been made, we now need to accelerate this with additional skill sets in addition to the College's usual advisors.

Internal Aesthetics

In recent years there have been ongoing discussions regarding the best approach for achieving refurbished buildings which achieve modern specifications, safety standards and environmental standards whilst at the same time retaining the character of a historic estate. This all needs to be achieved in the context of sensible cost control. Whilst recent refurbishment experience with Grads and Langford have generally been considered very successful, some discussion remains about the detail of the internal finishes in terms of sympathetic detailing within a historic estate.

It is the detailed matters that make a difference. The key details such as skirting boards, architraves, picture rails, cornices, doors (notwithstanding technical requirements that go with fire doors), the positioning of fire doors in corridors, radiators, sash windows and their surrounds, paint colours and the extent to which historic features are covered up or exposed. The treatment of the external walls will also become increasingly important given the competing priorities with the Environmental agenda (above).

We currently procure building refurbishment through design and build contracts which means that only basic details are provided in the specifications and the contractor has discretion to source materials in a cost effective way. If we are to deliver more sympathetic internal finishes then we will need to be much more precise as to what we want to achieve in the specifications going as far as insisting

on particular products. This will take slightly more time and we may need short term additional external advice.

In order to implement this approach, we will need a small working group, perhaps with some external input initially, to agree a standard pallet of internal finishes including all of the above details and any others considered appropriate. Once agreed, this will become our standard approach for the Estate going forward and will be included in detail in all specifications.

Proposed next steps

In late 2023, the College was visited by the Fire Safety Officer from County Durham Fire and Rescue Service. While large improvements have been made to fire safety across the College estate, this visit showed up a number of non-compliance areas in relation to Fire Doors.

On the Fire Safety Officer's recommendation, a fire door survey was commissioned and this identified a significant number of doors which required either replacement or repair.

This resulted in a change in plan from an estate perspective, with the proposed project to refurbish Epiphany being put on hold while effort and expenditure were channelled in the direction of fire doors.

As such, a revised proposal for capital expenditure over the next three years has been created.

2023/24

Fire Doors	All buildings	£650,000
Redecoration	Queens Court (inc. new carpets)	£100,000

2024/25

Accessibility project	Main College	£250,000 *
Refurbishment	Epiphany	£1,000,000

2025/26

Refurbishment	Lightfoot	£ ??
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*The project to improve accessibility in the Main College building will form part of an appeal to donors. While it is expected that a significant proportion of the cost will be met by donations, I feel that it is prudent to include the expected capital cost of the project within this plan. Should this not be required (i.e. should this amount be raised from donations, then this can be backed out and included in future year projections).

Lightfoot presents the most significant challenge across our buildings. It is actually three separate houses which have been joined together to form one building, housing 46 students in 34 rooms. This is the largest single block of accommodation, and a full-scale refurbishment would not be possible in the normal summer vacation shutdown period. I plan to take soundings from an architect and building surveyor in the next two months about the most suitable way to approach this refurbishment, planned for the summer of 2026. This will require clear and careful planning to ensure continued operational efficiency. It is likely that some form of decant of students will be required at some stage of this project.

Summary

Significant progress has been made over the last five years, using the 2018 Building Condition Surveys as a starting point. By the end of summer 2025, it is hoped that Grads, Langford and Epiphany will have all had a substantial refurbishment carried out, while Queens Court will have benefited from a smaller-scale, though impactful refurbishment.

This will leave Lightfoot (mentioned above) and Ramsey as the two buildings which will not have been refurbished. Once a fully worked up plan for Lightfoot is drawn up then it will be possible to understand how and when Ramsey will fit into the longer term plan.

Thought will also need to be given to the long-term future of Trinity Hall, held on a lease from Durham Cathedral which is due to expire in 2036. It is clear that the terms of the current lease will unlikely be repeated in any renewal, and full consideration will need to be given as to whether future occupation of the building is in the best interests of the College.

Alistair Jenkins; Finance & Operations Director
Adam Key; Lead Governor – Estates

March 2024