Welcome

The University Centre is in need of vital upgrades to ensure safety, security, accessibility, and sustainability. Parts of the building are currently underutilised. Given the prime city centre location, there is a great opportunity to re-imagine the use of the building and create an asset in the heart of the city which all members of the University community can enjoy.

Feasibility study
The University of Cambridge has commissioned a feasibility study to assess how best to upgrade the University Centre and guarantee its future.

Our study will align with the principles of Reshaping our Estate
• Create high quality spaces that support staff and students to carry out their best work.
• Develop a smaller estate with more shared spaces.
• Consider how to make the most of existing spaces before building new ones.
• Support teams across the University to adopt new ways of working.
• Develop a financially and environmentally sustainable estate.
• Protect and promote our built and cultural heritage.

At this exhibition
You can learn more about the building, the vital upgrades it needs, and the future uses that are being explored.

We will be hosting two drop-in events and a webinar. This information can also be found online:
https://www.em.admin.cam.ac.uk/university-centre-consultation

Consultation
We are engaging with the statutory members of the University Centre alongside key stakeholders and current building occupants to collect views on the future of the University Centre at this early stage.

Please share your thoughts on our survey.

Results of the survey will be fed into our future design work and captured in a report with recommendations to the University Council. As the proposal progresses there will be further opportunities for you to engage.
The University Centre, fondly known as the ‘Grad Pad’, was built in 1967 to provide recreational, social, and dining facilities for people in the University community who did not have access to College amenities.

**Founding principles**

The University Centre was funded by the Wolfson Foundation board and served members of the Regent House, University officers, Fellows of Colleges, and postgraduate registered students. Membership is still protected by the Ordinance for the University Centre.

**What did it provide?**

When it opened in 1967, it housed a large central dining hall, small formal dining rooms, several common rooms, a roof terrace and a ground floor bar. A large central kitchen and servery supported on-site catering. Recreational facilities included billiards and table tennis.

**How was it used?**

Over the next decades it served as a focus for the social life of the University as distinct from its Colleges. Beyond the daily functions of dining, meeting and socialising, it hosted a broad range of events from boxing matches to breastfeeding groups, discotheques to exams and everything in between.

**Recent changes**

When the West Hub was opened, the central catering kitchen was relocated there and the University Centre restaurant, servery and cafe were closed. A medium term strategy was endorsed for internal refurbishments to provide more teaching space and accommodate the Students’ Union and the University Messenger Service. The closure for this refurbishment coincided with closures during the pandemic, but the building has since re-opened.

**And now…**

The University Centre continues to serve many different users. It provides overflow teaching and exam spaces, a home for the Students’ Union, clubs and societies, the University Messenger Service, and the organisation Newcomers and Visiting Scholars, who host frequent social and learning events throughout the year. However, the principal use of the building as a social and dining hub has been discontinued and some of these spaces are now vacant or underutilised.
Where is it?
The University Centre at Granta Place is centrally located on the Cambridge riverfront. The area is a much visited tourist destination, situated at one end of the river route, next door to the popular pub, The Mill, overlooking Laundress Green. The upper floors and roof enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding city, countryside and river.

It is surrounded by colleges and centrally located between New Museums, Downing and Sidgwick sites. However, it is not within a 5-minute walking distance to these, which impacts its potential for teaching use.

Just east of the site, Pembroke College is redeveloping the former site of Miller’s Yard and the Mill Lane Lecture Block to provide new student residences. The loss of the Mill Lane Lecture Block has resulted in more dispersed teaching space.

Although The Mill sits within the boundary of the site, no changes have been proposed for the pub as it provides active public food and leisure on the riverfront and it is operated under a long-term lease.
Vital Upgrades

Since its completion almost 60 years ago there has been no significant refurbishment of the University Centre. Extensive refurbishment and upgrades are needed to give the building another 60 years of life. Upgrades will also help us meet our decarbonisation commitments.

Conserve

In 2013, the building was listed as Grade II by Historic England, which means that it is “of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve it”. All upgrades will work to preserve the aesthetics and key features of the architectural heritage.

Re-Imagine

Given the prime city centre location and the underutilised spaces, now is the time to re-imagine how this building can best serve the needs of the University community. All upgrades will maintain the flexibility of future use.

Decarbonise

The University has committed to targeting Zero Carbon by 2048 with aspirations to achieve this by 2038 if possible.

Fully occupied, the University Centre is estimated to generate approximately 320 tonnes of CO₂ per year using current carbon factors. It is one of our more carbon intensive buildings.

Full refurbishment with both energy efficient measures and low carbon technologies could reduce the building’s whole life carbon emissions by 80% over the next 60 years.

Refurbishing the building instead of building a new one could save 50-60% of whole life carbon emissions during the same period.

Improve

Safety

New evacuation lifts and fire safety systems are needed to ensure safe operation in the long term.

Accessibility

Circulation, toilets and other provisions must be re-evaluated to provide access for people of all abilities.

Health and wellbeing

Upgrades will provide fresh air, thermal comfort, and better lighting for occupants.

Adaptability

All upgrades will support flexible use so the building can adapt to the changing needs of the University in the long term.

Potential upgrades include:

- Roof mounted PV panels to maximise on-site electricity generation.
- Low carbon technologies such as heat pumps for heating and cooling.
- Energy efficient lighting with smart controls to bolster well-being.
- Façade improvements to reduce heat loss and draughts.
- New ventilation for increased occupant load and well-being.
- New low voltage distribution system to promote safety, flexibility, and future proofing.
- Robust metering strategy for future adaptability and monitoring of operational energy.
- All gas connections removed and replaced with electric.
- Energy efficient evacuation lifts for fire safety and accessibility.
- Robust control strategy for thermal comfort and well-being.
- Window replacement with high performance windows for energy efficiency, acoustics and comfort.
- Exposed precast concrete frame to be preserved. Initial structural review suggests that the building can be repurposed with minimal structural intervention.

Following the Coronavirus pandemic the University Centre has no longer been used as a social and dining hub, with the central kitchen moving to the West Hub. The building is under-used and our aim is to establish how best to guarantee its long-term future.

University Centre Future Uses Consultation
It is too early in the process to be prescriptive about the future use of the building. To stimulate discussion, we offer four options for future use, which are summarised below and on the following boards.

Each option can accommodate elements from the others, and all options will prioritise long term adaptability to meet the University’s changing needs.

### Option A
**Multi-Purpose Hub**
A dynamic communal place for working, learning, dining, and connecting with friends, colleagues and industry partners.

**Potential Users:**
- Students and alumni
- Academic and university staff
- Newcomers and Visiting Scholars
- Students’ Union and societies
- General public

**Operated by:**
University of Cambridge

**Space for:**
- Bookable rooms for teaching, exams or events
- Social study space for groups and individuals
- Café/bar
- Convenience store

### Option B
**Teaching Hub**
A dedicated centre for teaching, seminars, lectures, exams and study that addresses the shortfall of centrally located high quality teaching spaces.

**Potential Users:**
- Students
- Teaching staff
- Students’ Union and societies
- Newcomers and Visiting Scholars

**Operated by:**
University of Cambridge

**Space for:**
- Seminars
- Lectures
- Exams
- Study
- Touch-down
- Café

### Option C
**Mixed Workplace**
A workplace shared between the University staff and entrepreneurs to promote local innovation and generate income for the University.

**Potential Users:**
- University administration
- Academic and commercial entrepreneurs
- Commercial clients
- Students’ Union and societies
- Newcomers and Visiting Scholars

**Operated by:**
University of Cambridge

**Space for:**
- University workplace
- Research/business incubator
- Commercial restaurant/bar
- ideaSpace

### Option D
**Commercial Use**
A facility for one or more commercial tenants which would generate income for the University, with reduced capital outlay and maintenance.

**Potential Users:**
- Tenant staff
- Clients/customers and visitors

**Developed and operated by:**
Either the University of Cambridge or a third party could develop the building to be let out to one or more commercial tenants.

**Space for:**
- Workplace
- Educational institution
- Gallery/arts centre
- Hotel or student residence
- Laboratories
- ideaSpace
A dynamic communal place for working, learning, dining, and connecting with friends and colleagues.

- Would bring new life to the original purpose of the building.
- Serve all members of the University community.
- Building on the success of the West Hub, this would provide space for interdisciplinary connections and collaborations.
- Flexible spaces could be open year round.
- Provision of event spaces would relieve the pressures on purpose built teaching and exam rooms.
- Would continue to provide a suitable location for the Students’ Union and Newcomers and Visiting Scholars, as well as meeting space for other clubs and societies.

Speculative vision of Multi-Purpose Hub in use

Learn + Connect = Hub

15% Meetings / Seminars
15% Open study
10% Cafe + bar
40% Entrance foyer
20% Multi-purpose hall for events
10% Touch down space
40% Students’ Union
20% Cycle parking
15% Roof terrace

University Centre Future Uses Consultation
Option B

Teaching Hub

A dedicated centre for teaching, seminars, lectures, exams and study that addresses the shortfall of centrally located high quality teaching spaces.

- As it is more than a 5 minute walk from other teaching sites it would need to provide enough teaching spaces that a cohort could spend most of the day there, where timetabling allows.
- Could provide up to twelve small to medium teaching spaces and one lecture hall. (Sidgwick Site has six small, seven large, and one lecture hall.)
- Requires subdivision of some communal spaces and full acoustic separation, as well as substantial service upgrades for a higher occupancy.
- May be able to accommodate the Students’ Union, clubs, societies and Newcomers and Visiting Scholars.

Learn + Connect = Teaching Hub

20% 25% 25% 10% 20%

Classrooms Lecture theatre Quiet study Seminar rooms Cafe Grab + Go Entrance foyer Students’ Union Touch down space

Dedicated Lecture Theatre (with writing benches)

Speculative vision of Teaching Hub in use
Option C

Mixed Workplace

A workplace shared between university administration and entrepreneurs to promote local innovation and generate income for the University.

- Would provide a mix of cellular and open plan offices and meeting spaces for university staff.
- Would support collaborative partnerships between the University and industry.
- Would provide flexible shared spaces for the use of the University and commercial tenants.
- Could provide an income stream for the University through letting of parts of the building.
- May be able to continue to accommodate the Students’ Union, clubs and societies, University Messenger Service and Newcomers and Visiting Scholars.
- Commercial feasibility would need to be evaluated.

Work + Connect = Workplace

Speculative vision of Mixed Workplace in use
A facility for a range of commercial tenants which would generate income for the University, with reduced capital outlay and maintenance.

- Could be developed either by the University or by the future tenant.
- Would provide an income stream for the University by letting out the building in its entirety.
- Would require relocating the Students’ Union, clubs and societies, University Messenger Service and Newcomers and Visiting Scholars to a more compatible site.
- There is a broad range of commercial uses that could be viable, and commercial feasibility would need to be evaluated further, as well as planning permission for change of use.
- Elements from the previous options can equally be considered within this commercial context.
Thank you for taking the time to engage with us on the future of the University Centre. If you have thoughts on what you’ve seen please share them.

Have your say!