

THE STRAND QUADRANGLE
King's College London Architectural Competition
Preliminary briefing paper

Expressions of interest are invited from architects for the redevelopment of the Strand Campus Quadrangle Building and associated areas for King's College London.

This is a £20 million project at the College's historic Strand Campus in London WC2. The Quad project will provide an additional 3,700 square metres of teaching space and student facilities.



View of Somerset House and King's Strand Campus from the south bank of the River Thames.

King's is one of England's oldest and most prestigious universities, with four main Thames-side campuses in the centre of London. It has nine Schools of study, covering arts and humanities, law, medicine, dentistry, biomedical, natural and social sciences, nursing and psychiatry, with more than 24,000 students.



Students on the River Terrace, Strand Campus.

The Strand is the College's founding campus, dating from the early 19th century, and is a Grade 1 listed site. It is at the heart of the King's estate, with a prime location overlooking the Thames, mid-way between the Houses of Parliament and St Paul's Cathedral.

It has a particular focus on arts and sciences, and is home to the College's Schools of Arts & Humanities, Social Science & Public Policy, and Natural & Mathematical Sciences, and to the Dickson Poon School of Law. Because of the distinction of King's research and teaching and this campus' key location close to Westminster, the City, the West End, the South Bank and the Law Courts, the College has important links with the worlds of policy, the law, culture and the arts, which it wishes to develop still further.

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The Quad viewed from the north, showing the King's Building.

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Students in the Strand Reception area.

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Students in a seminar.

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Entrance to the Strand Campus from the Strand, showing the front of the Strand Building.

The Strand Campus accommodates some 9,200 students and more than 1,500 staff. Over the next five years the College plans to add a further 2,600 students at this campus, and the redevelopment of the Quad site will therefore form a crucial part of King's plans to provide high-quality facilities and infrastructure for teaching and research at this campus, and to nurture its connections with the surrounding area.

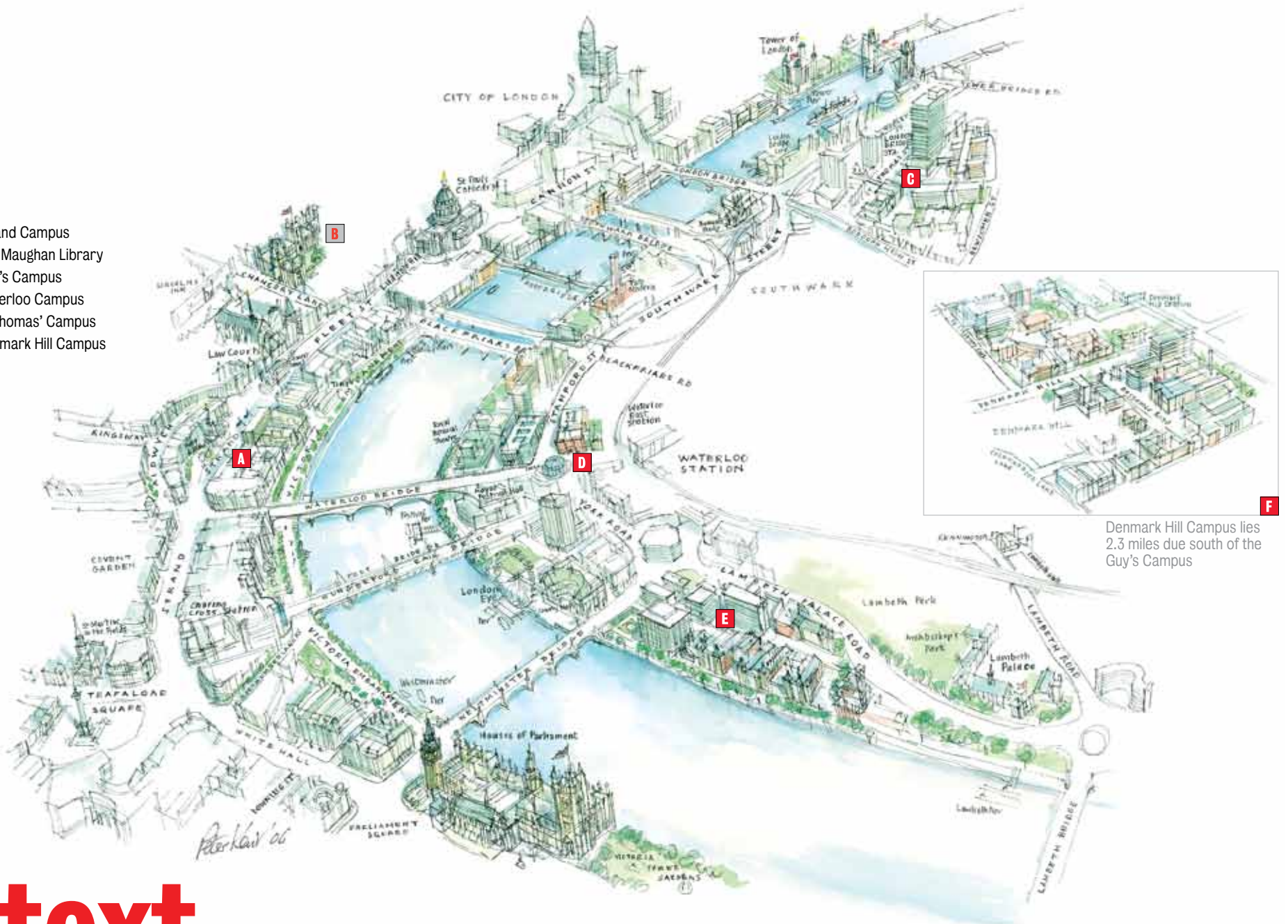
King's College London is committed to appointing an architect based on their ability to bring innovative thinking to a significant historical site in order to revitalise a learning community. The qualification criteria for the submission are designed to allow all architects to respond inventively.



King's students in the Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court, Somerset House. King's Somerset House East Wing is shown in the background.



- A** Strand Campus
- B** The Maughan Library
- C** Guy's Campus
- D** Waterloo Campus
- E** St Thomas' Campus
- F** Denmark Hill Campus



Context

King's College London was established by King George IV in 1829. Its founding campus opened in 1831 at the Strand, adjoining Somerset House, with which King's shares a neo-classical Thames-side frontage. The College has recently been extended into the East Wing of Somerset House, adjacent to the Strand Campus.

This area of London is rich in history, and has seen successively a Saxon settlement, medieval bishops' residences, and a royal palace (Old Somerset House). The Strand Campus now comprises a diverse mix of celebrated historic buildings, state-of-the-art modern architecture and functional post-war architecture.

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Somerset House and King's College London before the Embankment was constructed.

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Historic image of the Quad showing light well structures.
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World War II bomb damage in the Quad.

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A memorial plaque in the Quad was unveiled in 1993 by Professor Maurice Wilkins (second right) and some members of the team who carried out the x-ray diffraction studies which led to the discovery of the double-helix structure of DNA.

Before the College and the Embankment were built, the Quad area formed the East Street of Somerset House, sloping steeply down to the Thames and providing a slipway for boats.

Although in its present state and condition it is far removed from the traditional image of a university quadrangle, it was part of the original plan for the College and has played an important part in the history of King's. In particular, laboratories here were the site for the key experiments carried out by Maurice Wilkins, Rosalind Franklin and others that led to the discovery of the double-helix structure of the DNA molecule in 1953 and the award of the Nobel Prize to Professor Wilkins in 1962.



The Quad today viewed from the north, showing the King's Building to the left and Somerset House East Wing to the right.

The Quad today is a long and narrow site lying between the main (King's) building at the Strand (designed by Sir Robert Smirke, also architect of the British Museum) and the Somerset House East Wing (designed by Sir William Chambers). The College's recent extension into Somerset House East Wing means that this campus is more than ever focused on the Quad.

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Entrance to the Quad from the River Terrace.

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Light-well between the Quad and Somerset House East Wing. View from the south towards the Strand.

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View of the south side of the Quad, showing the river and south bank beyond.

At the deck or surface level there is currently access for vehicles and pedestrians and car-parking space which extends from the Strand to the River Terrace. Beneath this lie two levels of substantial basements, accommodating laboratories, offices and teaching space, with light-wells along the sides. This current building is poorly configured for modern use and its roof is a surface that is in need of landscaping. We wish to retain the steel-frame outer structure which may require structural repairs.

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The Quad viewed from the north.

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River Terrace entrance to the Quad.



The vision

Somerset House East Wing viewed from the Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court of Somerset House.

This key space is now ready for renovation and redevelopment by 2014 as part of King's commitments to enhancing the student experience through the provision of flexible, technology-rich learning, teaching and social spaces, and providing a high-quality, outward-facing estate environment, with buildings that contribute to the regeneration and distinction of London.



King's is a leader in environmental sustainability and in 2011 it became the first university to achieve Energy Management Standard BS EN 16001. The College wishes to take the opportunity of all new renovation, refurbishment and development of its estate to reinforce the King's brand and to enhance its interface with its external surroundings.

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Social space in the refurbished south range of the King's Building.

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King's Maughan Library, Chancery Lane, opened in 2002.



The project

Entrance to the Quad from the Strand.

Outline project brief

The proposed plan includes:

- renovation of the two floors of the underground Quad building in a light, flexible contemporary style as a 'Learning Commons', providing 600-900 square metres of space. This area will connect into King's Building on the east, to the East Wing of Somerset House on the west, to the Strand Building on the north, and it will also provide for future connectivity south to the Embankment and north into the former Laws Building on the Strand, when these are redeveloped;



Current basement buildings below the Quad.

- relandscaping the current car park into a learning area, including break out areas to allow light (and access) down into the floors below. This area provides the College with its probably only realistic opportunity to develop a campus open space of quality and significant size at the Strand;
- creating a new entrance and reception area from the Strand;



The Quad viewed from the south, showing Somerset House East Wing to the left and the King's Building to the right.

- refurbishment of the 320 seat Arthur & Paula Lucas Lecture Theatre, and suggestions of how to improve access to this area from the Quadrangle;



The Arthur & Paula Lucas Lecture Theatre.

- enhancing access and the entrance from the Embankment;
- providing a coffee-shop open to both the Strand (and the public) and the Quad deck.

The architectural design will need to take into consideration the findings of a six month consultation led by Nomad RDC to ascertain student and staff perceptions of how the Quad space could be used.



View of the entrance from the Victoria Embankment.