



Invited Competition

ST CATHARINE'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Malcolm Reading Consultants (MRC) specialises in achieving outstanding design for clients with capital projects. Expert in all methods of selecting and appointing architects, we believe in the power of design to act as an inspiration.

Whatever the commission – cultural or commercial, high-profile or discreet – MRC creates a unique search strategy around it. We devise original intellectual and visual content for our project briefs in order to engage designers and attract the best minds.

We are the leading independent organiser of design competitions based in the UK, with a dedicated global following and an unrivalled reputation for finding new talent.

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St Catharine's College is one of the most popular in Cambridge; in 2017, the College received the highest number of applications relative to student places of all the University colleges.

Architecturally notable for its unique three-sided open court, designed by an associate of Sir Christopher Wren, St Catharine's has grown significantly over time and now suffers from a tightly constrained site.

MRC was commissioned to run a fast-track invited design competition seeking an outstanding team to remodel the College's showpiece, social, and functional spaces. This initiative aims to re-connect and integrate key elements like the Hall and the 18th-century Sherlock Library, as well as improve staff welfare by modernising the kitchens and support spaces.

The competition's first stage launched just two weeks after our appointment, with a longlist of thirty practices approached with an invitation to participate. Competitors were asked to prepare submissions outlining their practice, proposed team, relevant experience and initial response to the project.

Advised by MRC, the College selected six teams for the shortlist; they attended a site visit and prepared concept designs in response to the brief.

Mid-way through the second stage, the College held individual meetings with each shortlisted team to address any queries and discuss their emerging response to the project.

Following final concept design submissions in May 2019, a selection committee interviewed the teams and chose Gort Scott Architects as the winner — citing their 'inspiring and timeless proposal'.

The Shortlist

BGS Architects
Gort Scott Architects
MICA Architects
RH Partnership Architects
Sergison Bates architects
Wright & Wright Architects

Won by

Gort Scott Architects