The Kendrew Quadrangle
St. John's College, Oxford
Kendrew Quadrangle for St John’s College, Oxford includes student accommodation and related facilities designed by MJP Architects.

St. John’s College has a reputation for commissioning fine modern buildings, and has won several prizes for the two projects previously completed by MJP Architects, the Garden Quadrangle and the Senior Common Room. The new scheme is a prestigious new element within the College’s historic grounds and an important addition to the cityscape.

The building surrounds a beech tree of historic significance and is adjacent to listed buildings and listed walls in a conservation area. These elements have informed the design and construction significantly.

The building is approximately 6,000sqm in area over four floors plus a large basement. It is arranged in a quadrangle open to the South. In addition to the main quadrangle there are a number of gardens and small courtyards formed in the spaces between the new building and its surroundings.

The accommodation falls into three categories. There are approximately 80 student rooms with en-suite shower pods and 6 small flats for college fellows. Academic facilities consist of a law library, an archive and a number of teaching rooms. Communal facilities include a café, an events room and a gym, as well as an arts area. Generally, residential parts are on the upper floors, and communal and teaching spaces on the ground floor.

In the scheme there is a strong sustainability strategy. This includes several active measures such as a biomass boiler, ground source heat pumps, PV cells and solar panels, as well as passive measures such as air-tightness and insulation exceeding the latest part L regulations.

The building envelope is complicated and airtight, so pre-fabrication was considered for most parts of the elevations and the en-suite shower pods.

The design can be summarised as a series of parallel concrete fin walls which divide the student rooms, which in turn are expressed by wooden boxes arranged around a central courtyard. The café is at the heart of the scheme with a double height glass box. MJP collaborated with four artists who produced artworks for different areas of the scheme. Alex Beleschenko produced the café and Blackhall Road glass artworks. His previous collaborations with MJP include Southwark Station, Phoenix Initiative and the Garden Quadrangle also for St John’s College. Other artists include Wendy Ramshaw (gates), Ian Monroe (cafe screen) and Langlands and Bell (myoglobin sculpture).
The Tree and the Main Courtyard

“Designed and detailed to a very high standard by MJP Architects, and beautifully built to a very generous budget, it is also a very green building with a near zero-carbon rating.”
The Student Room

01. The student room's facade module includes a desk, window seat and shelving.
02. Section through student bedrooms and teaching room.
03. Axonometric of the facade module externally.
04. Axonometric of a typical student bedroom.
05. The facade module.
The Porters’ Lodge

01. The building seen from St. Giles is framed by listed buildings. The tree is visible through a glazed gap.

02. The Porter’s desk

03. The main entrance
01. The South East stair tower and fellows’ flats
02. The South East stair tower lies between the main courtyard and the west courtyard
03. The side of the porters’ lodge with the link building in the background
External elevations

“MJP Architects’ Kendrew Quadrangle is a thoughtful response to both the certainties of tradition and an uncertain future.”
“The drama of the two precast staircases is the way they float above the ground... creating a physical separation between the accommodation spaces above and the communal use of the ground floor.”
The interiors

“...The individual study bedrooms are of a very high standard... The kitchens have splendid glass to glass corners”
Art and Architecture

01. Detail of artwork by Ian Monroe
02. The artwork screens the sensory from the cafe
03. The fritted pattern is an abstraction of the tree outside
04. Detail of Alex Bekischenko’s artwork
Art and Architecture

01. Wendy Ramsawak gate
02. Wendy Ramsawak gate
03. Detail of Fritted glass
04. Alex Beleschenko's artwork on the Blackhall Road elevation relates to the masonry of surrounding buildings