MJP have over 30 years experience working with Universities to plan their estates. As Development Plan Architects, our long-term relationships with universities have given us a comprehensive understanding of the constraints and opportunities that affect their estates. We work closely with Estates Departments to deliver their Estate Strategy.

We have produced masterplans for city centre campuses and for self-contained campuses. Our masterplans provide a framework for coherent, long-term development and promote a vision for the campus with a strong sense of place. They are robust but flexible so that they can be adapted to changing needs and opportunities.

Our intelligent approach to design and our negotiation skills help us to achieve complex planning consents, which streamline the development process and allow our clients to plan with certainty, responding to new opportunities as they arise. At the University of Birmingham, MJP’s masterplan encompassed 21 separate projects, with 55,000m² of new development and over 5 hectares of new squares and landscape, to achieve a successful Hybrid Planning Approval.
“Large, research-intensive universities are complicated organisations; ‘master-planning’ their facilities requires a very thoughtful, sophisticated and creative approach — which is exactly what Liz Pride and the team at MJP have delivered.”

IAN BARKER
DIRECTOR OF ESTATES,
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
ENHANCING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

“A concise demonstration of how the architects’ special skills at ordering buildings and their internal volumes to achieve social ends can be successfully applied to external spaces, turning them into true civic areas.”

MARTIN SPRING, BUILDING MAGAZINE

“... the masterplan facilitates the social and academic interaction which is a key part of the student experience and university life.

Public spaces and facilities such as cafes provide places for students to socialise and work informally. At UCL a new café in a Grade 1 Listed building transformed a service yard into a pleasant square, creating a new focus for the campus.”

The Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey shows that environmental and social factors influence students when choosing a university or college. An attractive, well-designed campus helps to establish an identity for a university and attract new students and staff. LSE research also shows that a poor quality campus deters potential students.

MJP’s masterplans promote a lively campus with a strong a sense of place which helps to build a university community. Buildings, squares and routes are arranged to focus activity, providing convivial places for people to meet: the masterplan facilitates the social and academic interaction which is a key part of the student experience and university life.
MJP’s masterplans make best use of all the campus assets. We optimise use of land and buildings, and less tangible assets such as views and connections to the adjoining city or countryside. The design of our masterplans celebrate key buildings and utilise the existing campus structure. We identify development sites and ensure that the design of each new project contributes to the wider campus.

At the University of Warwick MJP won Planning Approval for 171,000m² of development, with half in the green belt, securing the University’s right to long-term expansion. New development builds on the University’s original masterplan, exploiting the site’s topography, views and landscape character.

Inevitably university requirements change, so our masterplans are robust but flexible and include strategies for phasing. At the University of Bristol we extended a row of villas to form a series of linked courtyard buildings, providing flexible shared space for 12 Departments in the Faculty of Arts.
The public realm — the areas between the buildings — is the ‘glue’ which makes a campus out of a diverse group of buildings. It is the public face of the university and establishes its identity. It is the place where students and staff come together and provides the first impression for visitors. Many campuses have developed in a piecemeal way and their external spaces are dominated by parking and patches of planting. In our masterplans, a framework of squares, linked by well-landscaped routes, provides a focus for each area of the campus. Our public spaces accommodate a wide range of activities: relaxation, informal study, performances, film shows, art, market stalls, student elections and degree photographs. Screens and banners are used to promote university activities.

A good-quality palette of landscape materials, street furniture and planting creates a consistent appearance across the campus and raises the university’s public presence. At LSE in London our landscape design defined the extent of the campus, providing a common setting for the diverse university buildings.
“The practice has a real empathy for the University and helped us achieve a valuable Planning Approval for the long term development of the campus. MJP provide consistent, intelligent advice and support to the Estates Department as we continue to work together to enhance the campus and deliver the University’s vision for the future.”

BOB WILSON, DIRECTOR OF ESTATES
Transportation is key to sustainable masterplanning and MJP work closely with transport consultants on strategies for vehicle, cycle and pedestrian movement. Our masterplans promote a pedestrian and cycle-friendly environment, with safe and attractive routes and good access to public transport. Traffic and parking are often contentious issues for members of the university and the local community. We aim to reduce the impact of car parking on the environment, with traffic calming on routes which are heavily used by pedestrians.

Pedestrian and cycle movement were key drivers of MJP’s masterplan for the University of Cambridge at West Cambridge. A 7m wide pedestrian and cycle path runs the length of the site, linking two new squares and defining the main area for University development. Car parks are located outside this core area, and are sunk below pavement level and screened.

Opposite: Strategies for pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movement provide a structure for the masterplan. Car parks are sunken and screened by walls and hedges to reduce their impact on the public realm.

Below: A new lake provides sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) and enhances the main public square.
University masterplanning is about planning for the long-term, so sustainability is a fundamental issue. Planning development across a large mixed-use campus provides the opportunity to develop site-wide strategies — plans for energy and CHP, SUDs, transportation and ecology can have a greater impact. In our West Cambridge masterplan a new lake provides site-wide sustainable drainage and enhances landscape and ecology.

MJP designed a 55m long bridge to carry the University of Birmingham’s CHP network across a canal and railway. The bridge is at the main campus entrance, so it had to be attractive as well as meet demanding technical requirements. The bridge won a Civic Trust Award Commendation and its elegant, sinuous stainless steel cladding promotes the University’s energy strategy.

Social sustainability and flexibility are built into our masterplans. The form of development is arranged to create a good microclimate, with planting and canopies to provide shelter in external areas, extending their use throughout the year. We plan places that can be managed and maintained efficiently.

“The success of the bridge is that it reduces our carbon footprint by in excess of 1,500 tonnes of carbon per year and gives us a vastly improved security of supply.”

DAVID DREW, M&E MANAGER, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
Communicating the vision for the campus is an essential part of the masterplanning process. Winning long-term support from stakeholders is crucial, particularly if a masterplan is implemented over a number of years. Effective communication helps to secure funding for public realm projects. It can be difficult to explain a masterplan - presenting the benefits of public realm, way-finding or public presence, or explaining what is fixed or may change.

We aim to inform and inspire, and explain proposals through a range of media: diagrams, plans, computer and free-hand drawings, visualisations, photographs and models. Our computer model and film for the University of Warwick helps to bring the masterplan proposals to life.

We support Estates Departments through the implementation of their masterplan and refresh plans as requirements change. We prepare detailed design guidelines and liaise with project teams to assimilate their designs into the masterplan, ensuring the overall coherence and quality of the campus.

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Opposite: A major new landscape project creates a focus for the campus and reinstates views of the Listed Chamberlain Clock Tower

Below: The model is used to test new projects and for fundraising. An extract from the film can be seen by following this link: https://vimeo.com/6271184

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“MJP were vital in helping us to reconcile our brief for a quality, flexible environment with the constraints of the University’s Capital Programme.”

DARREN WALTER
COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
“The project was designed and developed in a very open and positive working atmosphere, perhaps the best I have experienced in my 30 plus years as a Chartered Surveyor. I have no hesitation in recommending MJP for an educational project.”

MATTHEW WESTMORE FRICS, DIRECTOR OF ESTATES & FACILITIES, HARROW FE COLLEGE

MJP Architects are also working in these other sectors.