

Petition launched against proposed Hughes Hall development

Campaigners fear that the development on Fenner's cricket ground will disrupt both sport and the environment



Fenner's has been the home ground of Cambridge University Cricket Club for 175 years
Louis Ashworth with permission for Varsity

by [Hannah Burfield](#)

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A petition has been [mounted](#) against proposed plans from Hughes Hall to build facilities on Fenner's cricket ground.

Since its launch on 14 August, the petition has amassed over 2,200 signatures.

Hughes Hall bought the piece of land from the Cambridge University Cricket and Tennis Ground for development.

They intend to [build](#) a three-storey block which will provide "much-needed student accommodation, teaching and communal spaces," although no formal planning application has yet been submitted.

However, campaigners [fear](#) that if these plans go ahead, the remaining green spaces in the city could be put at risk.

The Protect Fenner's Action Group was responsible for setting up the petition, stating that "if planning approval for a large development on Fenner's is given, no Protected Open Space in Cambridge is safe."

To avoid this, they suggest that Hughes Hall looks to expand by "using University land in West Cambridge or a brownfield site."

Fenner's cricket ground was previously labelled a Protected Open Space in the Cambridge Local Plan in 2018. This status means that building on these areas is restricted, unless exceptions such as "educational need" apply.

Steve Platt, a member of the development advisory group, Cambridgeshire Quality Panel, has expressed concern over the announcement. He worries that if the plans progress, it will open a way for further campus expansion.

He explained: "The key issue for me is the precedent this sets for Fenner's and the city."

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Last month, Sir Laurie Bristow, President of Hughes Hall College, wrote to residents living near the grounds informing them that the College was finalising the purchase of the plot of land.

Despite the letter stating that cricket would continue, residents expressed their concerns about the risk these plans pose to the sport.

Lionel Sheffield, a local resident and chair of the Protect Fenner's Action Group, finds the plans "deeply unsettling". He believes that "given the environmental values the College says it wants to uphold [...] Hughes Hall must be prohibited from building on it."

Hughes Hall alumnus and former England Test cricketer Steve James also spoke on the issue, describing it as "a great shame".

Currently, the site is used by the community for charity events, and residents frequently gather to have picnics and watch the cricket during summer.

In response to fears, Hughes Hall has assured residents that "there will be absolutely no impact on the playing of sport at Fenner's, which will remain the home of university cricket and tennis."

They also addressed environmental concerns, stating that development would align with local and national planning policy and "will be environmentally-friendly".

Nick Brooking, Director of Sport at the University of Cambridge, revealed that Fenner's "is an increasingly expensive ground to run," and that the plans are "mutually beneficial" for both the Club and the College.
