

Hughes Hall



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## Response to second consultation on Hughes Hall Regeneration Project

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

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Cambridge Past, Present and Future (CPPF) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the further detailed plans presented at the March 2026 consultation event. While we appreciate the additional technical information provided, we are disappointed to note that the fundamental aspects of the masterplan remain unchanged, leaving our previous concerns largely unaddressed.

Our primary objections continue to focus on Site 3 (Wileman Court) and Site 4 (Covent Garden Hall), specifically regarding the incremental erosion of land designated as Protected Open Space (POS) under Policy 67 of the Cambridge City Local Plan 2018.

**1. Impact on Protected Open Space and Mitigation** The updated plans clarify that the proposals involve 587 sqm of new built form within the POS. While we note the College's argument that this represents a small percentage of the total area, CPPF maintains that even minor incursions into protected land set a dangerous precedent.

The current proposals rely heavily on enhancing the quality of existing landscaping—such as the removal of the boundary wall in front of the Margaret Wileman Building to create a new courtyard, and enhancements to land between sites 3 and 4—to justify this development. However, these enhancements will go towards satisfying statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) obligations and do not constitute the creation of *new* replacement open space.

To overcome these concerns, the final plans should:

- Retract building footprints: The massing of Site 3 and Site 4 should be reconfigured to stay strictly within previously developed brownfield areas, thereby preserving the physical integrity of the POS.

- Provide genuine compensatory space: If any encroachment remains, the College must demonstrate a mitigation strategy that provides a "net gain" in accessible green space for the local community that is *additional* to the landscape improvements already proposed.

**2. Visual Impact and Heritage Character** The scale of Wileman Court (Site 3), especially, remains a concern regarding its impact on the "ambience" and heritage character of the historic Fenner's cricket ground. The proximity of this new building risks dominating the central greensward.

To overcome these concerns, the final plans should:

- Adjust height and massing: Further consideration should be given to reducing the bulk of Wileman Court to ensure it remains subservient to the open character of the cricket ground.
- Refine the interface with Covent Garden Hall: As Site 4 is being taken forward as a separate application, it is vital that its design is fully integrated with the sensitive heritage context of Covent Garden to avoid a disjointed visual impact on the conservation area.

**3. Conclusion** We acknowledge the positive development of Sites 1 and 2 on brownfield land, which will help improve the Mortimer Road gateway. However, these improvements do not offset the loss of protected space elsewhere. We urge the College to prioritise the protection of the greensward in its final designs to ensure compliance with Local Plan policies and to respect the long-term integrity of Cambridge's green infrastructure.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

*Sarah Nicholas*

Principal Planning Officer