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 Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
 North Western Europe Diocese
 London- Great Britain

EOTC /Ref. No. 0776/0/0/05/072/09

ቀን 21/07/2007 ዓ.ም

Date 30/03/2017

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 የሙሉው አውሮፓ ለቶ ላላባ
 Abba Musie
 Arch Bishop for the whole Europe

Dear David,

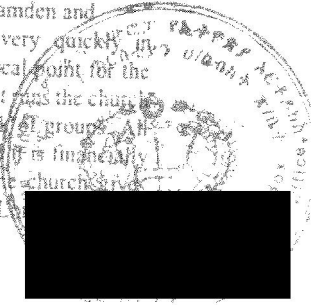
Greetings in the name of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Re: Re: Planning Application [2016/6069/P]-Debre Genet Holy Trinity Church,
 Longford St, NW1 3PT

I am Abune Muse, the Archbishop of North West Europe Diocese of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church (EOTC).

The Diocese of North Western Europe EOTC represents the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Churches in the UK and has its headquarter in London with its office based at D/G Holy Trinity EOTC. The dwelling house of the church is where I am staying when I am at the United Kingdom and it is also a resting place for any visiting archbishops. London Debre Genet Holy Trinity Church was established in 2006 and it has been providing spiritual and other important services to the community. It is a focal place where children and young adults are shaped to become better citizens, a place where those that face difficulties in life turn for help through the pastoral care provided by the clergies and fellow members. It also provides services such as visiting the sick, the elderly and vulnerable people in the community.

I consecrated the church over ten years ago. In the beginning, it was opened mainly to serve the Orthodox Christian community in North London, i.e. mainly from Camden and Islington and surrounding boroughs. However, since then it has grown very quickly in attendance as well as in the provision of its services. It has now become a focal point for the community and the diocese itself. The church has a dedicated parish council that supports the congregation and the community at large through a network of groups and parish administration council members and sub-committees are volunteers and supported completely by the church members and individual donations. The church is supported by tens of thousands of people, the majority of whom reside in North London. There are more than 500 registered contributing members that are increasing by the day.



About 70% of its members are young people of whom about 80% are British citizens. In line with the demographic constitution of its members, the church focuses on teaching and supporting the youth in addition to the normal service it provides to the community. In the last 10 years it has helped young people grow into being responsible and dependable citizens. It has mentored and protected them from substance abuse, antisocial behaviour and other distractions through Christian moral teachings and engagement in various religious and social activities. We are proud to see those young children today graduate from universities with the same strong moral integrity that is shared by the church community and the wider society.

Debre Genet Holy Trinity is the only Ethiopian Orthodox Church that can provide a full service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year in the United Kingdom with no time restriction using the church building. It is the centre for unique and vital services such as teaching ancient languages, such as Geez and Hebrew. The church is a hub and anchor for EOTCs in London and other parts of the UK. The church is a pillar of support for the elderly and other vulnerable people in the neighbourhood. EOTC is an ecumenical church and thus people of all races and status are welcome to receive both religious and non-religious support and services, from Debre Genet Holy Trinity church.

Thus, the church has grown to be part and parcel of the neighbourhood. It has strong support from the Regent Street neighbourhood. Leaving this neighbourhood is devastating to our community as well as to the neighbourhood. Since many of our congregation members live in Camden and as we have been working hand in hand with our neighbours to maintain peace and harmony in the neighbourhood, this devastating uprooting of the church has been felt deeply by all.

We are well aware that British Land has submitted to the council an application for planning permission that entails the removal of the church. We understand that British Land needs the land to build residential buildings to discharge its obligation to the Council. However, if the council decides to allow the application, it will destabilize the service and support structure of the church leading to the possible collapse of the church community and the wider services it provides to the neighbourhood. The church will face an uncertain and complicated future.

Whereas, British Land can build residential houses almost anywhere provided there is space available, a church such as ours rooted in the local community and centrally placed to worshippers from all directions finds it extremely difficult to move without suffering grave consequences.

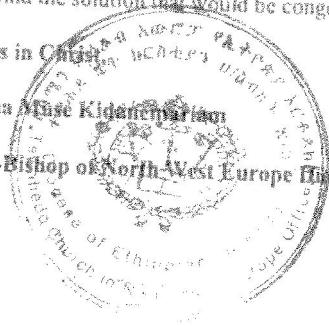
Thus, I sincerely plead with the Council in mind of its obligation to its residents and people of worship, and not to allow this local community facility to be demolished as it is being used actively by the local communities, London residents and people all around the UK.

We pray for the congregation of the church and the neighbourhood and also for you so that you may find the solution that would be congenial to all involved.

Yours in Christ,

Abuna Mese Kidanemariam

Arch-Bishop of North West Europe Diocese of EOTC



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