**Ibn Abbas Islamic Centre**

**Rationale and some important information for the planning application**

As far as amenity in the area is concerned, the proposed extension of use will not cause any loss of amenity to the adjoining occupiers or the area generally.

The prayers operate from varying times between 4am and 11pm during the course of the year. In the summer months, the first prayers will be at the earliest 4am time. During the winter months, first prayers normally begin around 7am.

Currently the centre is offering only three prayers when it supposed to be offering all five daily prayers to the local Muslim community. Worse in the weekends we may only manage just two of them whereas we have to close the centre altogether on Bank holidays. All these restrictions frustrated our local centre users who kept asking us why they are not allowed to pray it all five prayers like other Muslims in Camden and beyond. To answer their need for a complete and full worship service to them, the trustee decided to apply an extension to the use of the centre between 4am and 11pm.

For the extended times, the prayer hall will be used at daily prayer times only, each prayer normally takes between twenty to thirty minutes. The number those attending to early morning prayer is between 10 and 15 people whereas the late evening prayer, the number of worshipers is limited to 20 to 25 people. Our extension to the use of the centre proposal will not overlook, disturb or cause any harm to any of our neighbours.

The extension of the existing hours of use for the mosque has been the subject of discussion for several years. As recently as 4th November 2021 we carried out a public consultation seeking the views of users and local community. During the consultation meeting, a detailed extension of the centre use was provided. All the participants overwhelmingly supported the extension proposal and also encouraged the trustee to seek a full planning permission from Camden council.

Most of the Muslim worship places in Camden are situated in residential area similar to our centre however, in unison, all have no restrictions to their operating hours or have a very generous one unlike to our centre. Below are examples of three mosques in Camden which are situated within very close proximity to residential flats.

Somers Town Islamic Cultural and Education Centre

68 Churchway London NW1 1LT

Kentish Town Baitul Aman Masjid

156-158 Weedington Road London NW5 4NU

Shahjalal Jame Masjid

204A N Gower St London NW1 2LY

Existing Uses and activities

Ibn Abbas Islamic Centre currently provides activities, prayers and other events which take place at the Mosque. Please see attached tables for more information about prayer times and centre activities

When viewing tables, the prayer times are approximate and dependent on the movement of the sun. It is also important to note that the Muslim calendar follows the progress of the moon exactly. This means that the dates of Muslim festivals may vary continually from year to year.

CONCLUSIONS

The reasons for applying centre usage time extension are: 1. Our users have demanded that we run full prayer service including early morning prayer (Fajr) and late evening prayer (Isha). 2. As policies noted above, the Muslim community which is using the centre have right to fulfil their religious obligations without any prejudice. 3. Allowing users to feel home and enjoy their faith nurture community cohesion. 4. Allowing the centre for late evening prayer will put a bar with other Islamic centres in Camden and beyond.

On the other hand, the proposed extension of use would not harm the character, function, vitality and viability of the area and is considered to be a positive contribution to the local community.

The proposal is also deliveries sufficient community and cultural facilities to meet the local needs. The proposal would not give rise to any harmful impact on residential amenity.

**PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

**The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The NPPF lays down a series of core planning principles which should

underpin the planning system. One of the principles is that planning

“should deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services

to meet local needs.” The central theme to the NPPF is to achieve

sustainable development. The Government states that there are three

dimensions to sustainable development: an economic role, a social

role and an environmental role.

The NPPF requires planning decisions for social and cultural facilities to

take account of an integrated approach & to consider the location of

housing, economic uses, and community facilities and services. It also

mentions that planning policies and decisions should plan positively for

the provision and use of community facilities (such as meeting places,

cultural buildings and places of worship) and other local services to

enhance the sustainability of communities and residential

environments and guard against the unnecessary loss of valued

facilities and services.

According to the NPPF, planning policies should aim for a balance of

land uses within

their area so that people can be encouraged to

minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure,

education and other activities.

**The London Plan**

POLICY 3.1

ENSURING EQUAL LIFE CHANCES FOR ALL

Strategic

The Mayor is committed to ensuring equal life chances for all Londoners.

Meeting the needs and expanding opportunities for all Londoners – and where

appropriate, addressing the barriers to meeting the needs of particular

groups and communities – is key to tackling the huge issue of inequality

across London.

**Planning decisions**

Development proposals should protect and enhance facilities and services

that meet the needs of particular groups and communities. Proposals

involving loss of these facilities without adequate justification or provision for

replacement should be resisted.

**Camden Local Plan**

Community health and welfare

Faith facilities

Camden has many meeting places, Churches, Synagogues,

Community facilities and Islamic prayer centres that cater for a range

of faiths and beliefs. It is expected that further provision will be

required to meet the needs of faith communities during the Plan

period. The main sources of demand arise from the inadequate size of

Islamic prayer spaces in the borough and the growth in forms of

evangelical Christianity.

The Council welcomes investment by faith communities to develop

new space to meet or worship, subject to other policies in the Local

Plan. The Council will also encourage faith communities to consider

sharing facilities where one community has spare capacity and

another has a need for space. Where new spaces are provided, the

Council will expect applicants to submit an Equality Impact

Assessment examining the balance between maintaining Camden’s

unique diversity and community cohesion.

CAMDEN PLANNING GUIDANCE

Community uses, Leisure facilities and pubs

Provision of faith facilities

It is evident from the Council’s Infrastructure Study (updated in 2015

as part of the Camden Local Plan Evidence Base) that there is an

unmet need for faith facilities in the Borough and the condition of

some existing buildings is poor while congregations continue to grow.

For people of faith or belief, good quality and flexible facilities can

confer a sense of belonging and wellbeing and may provide a range of

services, Camden Planning Guidance: Community uses, leisure

facilities and pubs 9 advocacy and support for their users. The Council

welcomes investment by faith communities to develop new space to

meet or worship, subject to compliance with relevant planning

policies. From a planning perspective, it is important to ensure that

where new provision is proposed, the scale and impact of the scheme

is appropriate in the context of the surrounding area. A particularly

important consideration for the Council will be to assess the likely

intensity of use, how far people need to travel to access the facility

and its hours of operation. The Council will expect applicants to submit

information setting out the frequency of key activities and likely levels

of attendance.

The Council has developed in conjunction with Camden’s citizens,

partners, businesses and staff “Our Camden Plan (2018-2022)”. This

states the importance of Camden being a cohesive and integrated

borough “where different communities have opportunities to come

together and celebrate diversity and shared values”. The Council will

therefore seek proposals which provide shared facilities for people of

different faiths and beliefs and which provide opportunities for day-today

users of the faith facility to come together with the wider

community, acknowledging their common values. The Camden 2025

Vision identifies the importance of buildings and development in the

Borough being open and accessible for everyone. Policy C2 of the

adopted Camden Local Plan similarly stresses the need to achieve the

efficient use of community facilities and multi-functional community

facilities capable of providing a range of services to the community

from a single location. To ensure that the transport and amenity

impacts of new floor space is minimised, the Council would normally

expect such provision to be close or accessible to the community it is

intended to serve. The Council will expect developments likely to

attract large numbers of people to be located on sites in town centres.

Respondent’s comments on this topic were often expressed briefly

but, following a meeting during the consultation period, a detailed response was

provided by the Baitul Aman Mosque committee, which outlined their reasons for

seeking larger premises.

In summary:

The current worship space has room for around 200 people, which is not large

enough to accommodate everyone who wishes to pray in congregation. The current

worship centre only provides space for men to pray. The Mosque also runs a school

at weekends that has a waiting list. The committee would like to clear the waiting

list and extend the reach of the school. There is openness to the idea of a shared

multi-faith premises, with certain provisos”