

PLANNING REF : 250543
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 79 Spencer Road
: Reading, Berkshire
: RG2 8TP
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Afshan Imran
DATE SUBMITTED : 28/03/2025

COMMENTS:

1. Adherence to Regulatory Standards

This proposed development has been evaluated fully and adheres to all relevant planning policies, including those related to traffic, noise, and architectural design. Both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Equality Act 2010 safeguard the right to establish places of worship, provided that all technical planning criteria are met which is demonstrably the case here. Consequently, there are no lawful or policy-based grounds to reject this application.

2. Clarification of Misconceptions

Several objections misrepresent the nature and scale of the proposed mosque. Contrary to claims, this is not a large-scale development but a modest facility designed to cater to the local Muslim community. Comprehensive impact assessments confirm that parking and traffic concerns have been effectively addressed. Allegations of overdevelopment lack merit, as the design is in harmony with the surrounding area and complements the borough's existing diversity. Moreover, establishing a communal space for local Muslims will enhance social integration and counter divisive narratives, reinforcing the need for such a facility.

3. Enhanced Community Integration

The mosque will function as a multi-purpose hub, providing a space for worship, educational initiatives, charitable activities, and interfaith dialogue contributing positively to Wokingham's social cohesion. At present, many local Muslim residents must travel outside the borough to access a place of worship, which increases congestion and travel-related emissions. The provision of a local facility will alleviate these challenges while fostering a more inclusive and equitable community. Rejecting this proposal would be inconsistent with the council's commitment to social cohesion and equal access to community spaces.

4. Effective Traffic and Noise Mitigation

Independent assessments confirm that peak usage times such as midday prayers fall outside of rush-hour periods, ensuring minimal disruption to traffic flow. The proposed on-site parking facilities are sufficient to accommodate visitor numbers, and the design actively promotes sustainable travel methods, such as walking and car-sharing, thereby reducing the borough's overall carbon footprint. Comparisons to larger mosques elsewhere are misleading, as this proposal is proportionate to the needs of the local community and has been carefully planned to integrate seamlessly into its surroundings.

5. Commitment to Equity and Inclusivity

Planning decisions should be based solely on objective, material considerations rather than subjective opinions or misconceptions.

Wokingham has a strong reputation for being a diverse and welcoming community, and approving this application would uphold those values. The proposed mosque will provide significant social, spiritual, and practical benefits that far outweigh any speculative or unsubstantiated objections.

Furthermore, just as other faith and ethnic communities have been granted spaces for communal and religious gatherings, it is both reasonable and equitable for the Muslim community to have access to a similar facility one that fosters unity, mutual understanding, and collective well-being.