

PLANNING REF : 250543
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Seven oaks R Wokingham
: Reading, £40,001 - £60,000
: RG6 7NT
SUBMITTED BY : Dr Mehnaz Qureshi
DATE SUBMITTED : 24/03/2025

COMMENTS:

I would really like to support the initiative for the construction of a masjid in Wokingham, with the firm belief that this project will greatly enrich the local community in multiple ways. We recognise the concerns raised around congestion, proximity to other places of worship, noise, and environmental impact, and we address these with practical, proactive solutions while highlighting the broader benefits to the community.

1. Reflecting Wokingham's Diversity and Commitment to Equality:

Wokingham is a town that embraces diversity, inclusivity, and fairness. The construction of a masjid acknowledges and supports the religious and cultural needs of a growing Muslim population, ensuring equal access to spaces of worship, as afforded to other faith groups. Denying such provision could inadvertently marginalise a significant segment of the population. Furthermore, positioning different places of worship close to one another sends a powerful message of interfaith harmony, acceptance, and shared values. It demonstrates Wokingham's leadership in fostering community cohesion, where diversity is celebrated, and differences are bridged, not divided.

2. Alleviating Congestion & Parking:

Practical Solutions We have carefully considered the concerns around congestion and parking:

A) Shared Parking Schemes: We propose formal agreements with neighbouring places of worship and community centres to pool car park facilities, especially since peak usage times may differ across communities, ensuring optimal use of space without additional strain.

B) Carpooling & Sustainable Transport Initiatives: The masjid will implement structured carpooling systems, promote walking groups, and encourage cycling. We are also prepared to engage with local transport services to explore options to improve public transport access.

C) Staggered Timings: Prayer services and community events will be scheduled mindfully to avoid overlap with nearby venues' peak times, easing any potential traffic congestion.

D) Exploring walking routes which we will be sign posting.

3. Noise & Environmental Management:

The masjid will comply fully with all local regulations concerning noise and environmental standards:

Unlike in some countries, there is no intention to broadcast the call to prayer audibly, ensuring no disruption to neighbours. We are committed to incorporating sustainable, eco-friendly design principles, such as solar panels, green spaces, and energy-efficient lighting ensuring minimal environmental footprint and contributing positively to the borough's environmental goals.

4. A Community Asset for All: Beyond Worship The masjid will serve

not just as a religious space but as a multi-functional hub for all residents, offering

A) Charity Fundraisers & Public Events: Open to people of all faiths and backgrounds, promoting social responsibility, and supporting local causes.

B) Educational Workshops & Youth Programmes: From language classes to career guidance, mental health awareness, and interfaith dialogue sessions, benefiting Wokingham's younger population and wider society.

C) Emergency Support & Welfare Services: Providing a resource for the local authority during times of need such as food bank drives, crisis relief efforts, or as an emergency venue during adverse weather or public health situations such as COVID-19 has taught us.

5. Demonstrating Social Integration & Civic Contribution Members of the Muslim community in Wokingham contribute actively to civic life, working in healthcare, education, business, and public services. Having a dedicated space of worship allows them not only to practise their faith but to further contribute positively to society, embedding social responsibility and local engagement as key aspects of their identity.

6. Addressing Concerns About Existing Masjids in Reading

While it is acknowledged that there are several masjids located in Reading, it is important to recognise that Wokingham is a distinct and growing borough with its own unique community needs. Many Wokingham residents, including families, elderly individuals, and those without access to private transport, face significant barriers in travelling to Reading for regular worship, community activities, and support services.

Building a masjid within Wokingham ensures

Local Accessibility: It reduces the need for unnecessary travel, helping ease pressure on roads, lowering carbon emissions, and allowing worshippers to practise their faith closer to home, especially those without cars it also relieves overcrowding in existing Masjids which are not very close proximity Existing masjids in Reading are already operating at or near full capacity, particularly during key events such as Friday prayers, Ramadan, and Eid. Providing facilities in Wokingham alleviates this strain and ensures the safety, comfort, and wellbeing of worshippers in both towns.

These places are very important for individuals with mobility challenges and other health conditions who cannot travel but wish to connect spiritually. This includes those living with cancer/muscle-skeletal/age issues related mobility issues, which can also strain local councils that must provide transportation and mental health support. Such spaces foster healing and community support not only for Muslims, but for everyone. Additionally, they offer free access for educational and charitable purposes.

Serving Wokingham's Growing Population: The Muslim population in Wokingham has grown considerably in recent years, and it is both reasonable and fair that local infrastructure reflects this demographic shift. The provision of a masjid directly in Wokingham demonstrates an investment in the wellbeing and inclusion of all its residents, rather than expecting them to rely solely on facilities

outside the borough.

Thank you for taking time to read my comments.

Best Regards,

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