

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

COUNCIL MEETING – 15 JULY 2015

Question by: Anna Richmond-Dodd

To: The Deputy Leader

QUESTION

“The residents of Parsons Green Lane, Harbledown Road area, Purser’s Cross and Epple Road have lived alongside the Al Muntada centre for many years. Over that time, the centre’s use has grown significantly. However this has now resulted in residents experiencing extremely serious noise disturbance close to 24 hours a day, as well as other problems relating to parking and other matters.

These issues are affecting residents’ health, forcing others to move home and generally causing significant stress in an otherwise peaceful residential area. What is the council doing to address these environmental health and planning enforcement issues?”

ANSWER

Planning permission was granted for a change of use from a factory to an educational establishment in 1966. No conditions were applied to control the operation or hours of use. The change from an educational establishment to a Mosque fell within the D1 use class and did not require planning permission and therefore the Mosque operates without any conditions controlling either the hours or noise levels. It has been operating legally for nearly 50 years.

Planning permission was granted in 1990 (ref: 1990/01515/FUL) for the use of the second floor of the educational centre for short stay residential accommodation for up to a maximum of 15 people in connection with the operation of the centre as an educational establishment. I was Chair of the Planning Applications Committee at that time and I made a private visit with Councillor Gerald Wombwell then Leader of the Conservative Group to see how the mosque was operating. We recommended that the committee consider a section 106 agreement which they approved.

Appendix 1

A further application for a link corridor at second floor level was approved in May 2015 (ref: 2015/01150/FUL). This restricted the use of the adjacent flat roof as a terrace to prevent a loss of amenity to neighbours.

Unfortunately, as the building was granted change of use without a restriction on operating times nearly 50 years ago, there is nothing that can be done from a planning perspective to control the hours the premises operates.

The Council have previously received similar complaints which increase during Ramadan (this year 18th June till 17th July) when prayers continue late into the evening. The Council's Noise and Nuisance service carried out pro-active monitoring at the end of June 2015 but were unable to hear any noise or disturbance arising from activities from within the centre. A programmed visit to Ms Richmond-Dodds (Parsons Green Lane) was undertaken at midnight on 10 July where any noise from the Centre was likely to be more audible. No statutory noise nuisance was observed and officers found the pedestrian dispersal to be well organised. The majority of people appeared to be on foot and they left quickly and quietly with no loitering. The mosque wardens were evident and would have moved on any groups that loitered.

Officers observed a large number of cars parked on the single yellow lines along Parsons Green Lane, which is permitted at that time of day. The mosque wardens were patrolling and speaking to motorists to ensure engines and vehicle lights were turned off promptly.

Officers revisited the area at 2am and 3.30am but did not observe any activity to be causing disturbance. The top floor windows facing Epple Road were found to be open during amplified prayer/service. Officers brought this to the attention of the mosque and the windows were closed. A further complaint was received that the windows were opened again but this was not witnessed by officers.

Noise and Nuisance powers relate to noise arising from premises and not activities in the street. From the monitoring carried out to date, no activities have been witnessed which would cause a statutory nuisance. Should officers witness a statutory nuisance from the noise and light at the centre, we shall work with the responsible parties to carry out necessary works.

We are conscious that this issue arises on an annual basis and in response the Noise & Nuisance team proactively work with the Mosque to ensure that appropriate control measures are put in place in advance.