

PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed Rear Single-Storey Extension and Increase in Congregation Size (From 50 to 100 Attendees)

Zainabiya Welfare Foundation, 4–6 School Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 5AL

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a planning application by the Zainabiya Welfare Foundation for the construction of a rear single-storey extension to the existing community facility (used as a Mosque), and for the increase in maximum attendee numbers from 50 to 100 during peak prayer times and events.

The site is located at 4–6 School Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 5AL, and has long been established as a place of worship and community gathering for the local Shia Muslim community.

This statement outlines the proposed development, assesses it against relevant national and local planning policies, and demonstrates that the proposals are appropriate in land use, design, and impact terms.

2. Site and Surrounding Context

The application site comprises two adjoining terraced commercial units which have been adapted for use as a Mosque and community centre by the Zainabiya Welfare Foundation following planning permission 180094. The site is situated on School Road, a mixed-use area within Tilehurst, west of Reading town centre, characterised by a mix of residential, retail, and community uses.

The existing building has been in lawful use as a place of worship for a number of years, with regular congregations of up to 50 people. The site benefits from a modest rear yard and backs onto a service lane, which provides limited off-street access. The area is well served by public transport, with regular bus services and Tilehurst Station located nearby.

3. Planning History

The property has been used continuously by the Zainabiya Welfare Foundation for religious and cultural gatherings following the planning permission granted in 2018 under reference 180094 for **Change of use from B1 (offices) to D1 (non-residential institution) for use as a community facility offering space for worship, training, education and meetings with**

associated works which include an extension to the front and a low boundary fence to demark the site area at the front.

4. Proposed Development

The proposed development involves:

- A single-storey rear extension of approximately , to provide:
 - Additional prayer space to accommodate growing demand.
 - Ancillary facilities such as a small wudhu (ablution) area.
 - Improved internal circulation and fire safety.
 - Demolition of existing wooden shed, replacing with a smaller shed down the side of proposed extension.
 - An increase in the maximum number of attendees from 50 to 100, particularly during peak times such as Friday Jummah prayers, religious festivals, and Muharram gatherings.
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5. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023)

- **Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities:**
The NPPF supports the creation of social, recreational and cultural facilities which serve local needs. The proposal contributes positively by enhancing an inclusive and valued community facility.
- **Section 11 – Making effective use of land:**
The modest extension ensures that the site can continue to meet local needs without the requirement for relocation, intensifying use within an existing developed footprint.

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Key relevant policies:

- **Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm:**
The proposed extension has been designed to be sympathetic to the existing building and surrounding context, maintaining visual amenity and character.
 - **Policy EN11 – Waterspaces and Watercourses:**
While not directly applicable, the site is not in or near any flood zone or protected watercourse.
 - **Policy OU5 – Community Facilities:**
Proposals for new or expanded community facilities will be supported where they are accessible by sustainable modes of transport and do not have unacceptable impacts on local amenity. This proposal meets both criteria.
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6. Justification for Development

6.1 Need and Community Benefit

The current capacity of the building no longer meets the needs of the growing local community. The proposal allows the Mosque to accommodate worshippers more comfortably and safely, especially during peak periods. The Foundation plays an important cultural, religious, and educational role, offering classes, support services, and community events. This proposal will safeguard and enhance those offerings.

6.2 Design and Scale

The proposed rear extension will be modest in scale and constructed with materials sympathetic to the existing building. It will not be visible from the public highway and will have negligible impact on local character or amenity.

6.3 Transport and Parking

The increase in capacity has been assessed in terms of its transport and parking implications:

- The majority of attendees arrive by foot, bicycle, or public transport.
- Friday prayers and key events are carefully managed by volunteer stewards to avoid congestion.
- There is no history of complaints or enforcement linked to transport or parking.
- The increase in numbers will be gradual and managed responsibly.

A Transport assessment undertaken by Motion has been included within this submission.

6.4 Amenity Impact

- The building operates during typical daytime and early evening hours. No overnight activities take place.
- Noise levels are well controlled and have not historically generated complaints.
- Waste is collected regularly and managed appropriately.
- The extension will not overlook or overshadow neighbouring properties.

7. Summary and Conclusion

The proposed single-storey rear extension and increase in capacity from 50 to 100 attendees at Zainabiya Welfare Foundation is a proportionate, sustainable, and well-justified enhancement to an established place of worship. It is consistent with national and local planning policy and will secure the long-term viability of an important community asset.

The proposals are modest in scale, respect local amenity and character, and will be managed responsibly. The applicant welcomes ongoing engagement with Reading Borough Council and local residents to ensure the successful delivery of the scheme.

We respectfully request that planning permission be granted.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'C. Keen', is centered within a light blue rectangular box.

Chris Keen MRICS MCABE