

Comments for Planning Application 143445/FO/2025

Application Summary

Application Number: 143445/FO/2025

Address: British Muslim Heritage Centre College Road Manchester M16 8BP

Proposal: Extension of time for further three years for a temporary marquee

Case Officer: Sue Wills

Customer Details

Name: Not Available

Address: Not Available

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Member of the Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:APPLICATION REFERENCE: 143445/FO/2025 and 143446/LO/2025

ADDRESS OF DEVELOPMENT: British Muslim Heritage Centre, College Road, Manchester, M16 8BQ

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT: Extension of time for further three years for a temporary marquee & Listed building consent for an extension of time for further three years of temporary marquee

Whalley range is a quiet, residential neighbourhood with few businesses and mostly compromised of residential dwellings. It is a diverse and welcoming neighbourhood housing many families, three primary schools and a small high street. The BMHC is the most recent custodian of the Grade II* listed building and site that this application refers to - it is a very large site in Whalley Range and surrounded by residential streets.

Since the BMHC's purchase of the site, through the erection of the marquee it has transformed the historical college site to incorporate an events venue. The marquee that this application refers to is now an integral part of the BMHC's operating system despite only being assessed on the grounds of it being a temporary structure since its erection over 10 years ago. The extension approval that this application refers to should be subject to the scrutiny of a permanent structure given the number of years it has been in place. The BMHC have had over 10 years to arrive at a "suitable, sustainable, alternative solution" (Management Strategy Document, 2025) but nothing has been presented so far, so we are now at yet another lease extension request.

I object to the planning application request on the following grounds:

1. Ecological impact & biodiversity:

The documents uploaded to this planning application state:

1. Are there trees or hedges on land adjacent to the proposed development site that could influence the development or might be important as part of the local landscape character? No
2. Protected and priority species? No
3. Designated sites, important habitats or other biodiversity features? No
4. Features of geological conservation importance? No

There is no ecological survey in the uploaded documents as proof for these statements hence it is actually unknown whether they are factual. As is already known to your planning department and local residents, over the 12 years that the marquee has been in place there has been a significant decline in the number of trees and hedges around the marquee. This will, in turn, already have had a significant impact on the wildlife and biodiversity of the site. Hence the marquee and the events that it hosts have already had a significant impact on the local landscape character. Ticking no to all these questions is disingenuous without an independent ecological survey to establish there are no protected or priority species, important habitats, or biodiversity features.

2. Noise pollution:

As is known to the planning department and the BMHC, there have been complaints from residents for many years about excessive noise during events at the marquee, often late into the night. It is therefore astonishing that 10 years later the marquee still has inappropriate sound management (as stated in the sound proofing document uploaded to the planning portal): "Audio levels were considerably high whenever the announcements were made. After the arrival and entrance of the couple to the Marquee, the audio level was high, one could hear the Mic, announcement, and accompanying music tracks on Clarendon Road".

It is also residents experience that during events there are often cars revving on the street and fireworks late into the night demonstrating that the security teams meant to mitigate these incidents are not effective.

10 years is a suitable time frame for the marquee to have installed effective sound mitigating measures. Any proposed future measures feel tokenistic - how are residents expected to believe these will be implemented given they are not in place 10 years later?

3. Impact on traffic, congestion, and road safety:

The transport plan uploaded to the planning portal is flawed for the following reasons:

- The premise of the transport plan uploaded to the planning portal is that "it is assumed that the BMHC primarily serves the local population". This is incorrect for many of the events held in the marquee. Whilst it is known that many visitors during Friday prayers may be local, large events like weddings, Ramadan, Eid, and other smaller events attract people from much further afield in Greater Manchester.
- This transport plan uses the 2011 census data to calculate modal split of transport methods. Why was the 2021 data not used? This would provide much more up to date data and makes the

proposed plan redundant.

- This transport plan includes data from one day during Friday prayers and one day of Ramadan (albeit with significantly lower responses). To provide more representative data of people's transport choices it would be necessary to have data for other events such as weddings, funerals and larger samples during Ramadan. The current data misrepresents the actual impact of marquee events on traffic, congestion and air pollution on the local area.

There is no mention in this transport assessment of the impact of the car use on congestions, road safety, and street parking of surrounding roads. All these are important to assess the impact of the marquee on the neighbourhood. College road (where the BMHC is placed) is already a through-road in Whalley Range, absorbing a lot of the traffic crossing our neighbourhood.

Events at the BMHC cause significant traffic congestion in College road even during events at low traffic hours (I recently got stuck in traffic at 10am on a Tuesday during school summer holidays during an event at the BMHC for example). The transport plan states that the percentage of car drivers does not increase during Ramadan, which is completely at odds with the lived experience of residents of College and Clarendon Roads who often find gridlocked streets full of idling engines and constant beeping horns during large events.

As well as heavy traffic congestion there are also repeated incidents of antisocial and dangerous driving and street parking during day and night time events at the marquee. It is important to remember that there are two primary schools in College road, making this a road safety issue for school children.

4. Air pollution

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committed to increasing sustainable and zero emission travel modes

(<https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/combined-authority-declares-climate-emergency/>). In Whalley range there are currently incredible efforts from local residents and organisations to promote active travel and reduce air pollution (including Manley Park School Street and Bike Train, St Margaret's School Bike and Walking Trains, Let's Talk Clean Air Whalley Range, Whalley Range Climate Action Group, WR for Wildlife etc.). The car use this site attracts is disproportionate to the existing road infrastructure and makes the streets unacceptably congested, polluted and dangerous to local residents and children.

5. Unsuitability of the site to host large events

As stated in the proposals the marquee accommodates 600 people, with Friday prayers attracting over 800 people overall. The existing transport plan states approximately 57% of visitors drive (although, as above, this is probably an underestimate). Nonetheless, this means that the site needs to absorb at least over 450 cars for visitors during large events, plus more for staff who may also drive. The site has 130 existing car parking spaces plus 60 overspill car parks with only 20 free cycle standing plans. Hence, the number of people driving for large events completely exceeds the infrastructure of the site to absorb the number of cars that drive there. This is the experience of local residents who experience unacceptable traffic and street parking during these

large events.

This grade II* listed site is already being used in contravention to the proposed parking plans given it cannot absorb the number of cars that attend for events. The front of the building is frequently completely covered in cars during both day and night time events [photographic evidence can be provided if required].

Large events significantly exceed the current infrastructure requirements to absorb the number of people attending and future plans to increase the number of visitors to the site will only exacerbate this.

6. Impact of the events venue on a Grade II* listed building and site

The Design Access and Heritage Statement states the "level of harm [to the site] is less than substantial and justified by community benefits" but does not detail exactly what harms it causes and how the level of harm is calculated? I feel that the events hosted in the marquee itself and their impact on how the remaining of this listed site is used (culling of trees and hedges, use of the front as a large car park for example) threatens the heritage value of the area. To date there have been no published documents from Historic England about this site. Furthermore, the larger events hosted at the marquee such as weddings and large religious events do not have the same level of beneficial impact on the local community which is the premise of this calculation.

7. Lack of community engagement from BMHC

Whilst the Management Strategy provides a welcome plan of future action, residents recall there were a long list of planned mitigation measures in the previous application for an extension in 2022 (video available on the council recordings) which have still not been put in place three years on. The uploaded document (Progress Note on Redevelopment Proposals) from 2022 states that feedback from local residents found concerns on "trees, ecology, landscaping, transport and air quality"; none are mentioned in the 2025 document which instead focuses on petty complaints from a small number of residents. Concerns regarding the ecological, air quality and transport impact of the marquee have been known for many years and not had an impact on the current running of the site. This makes it difficult for local residents to trust the BMHC's claims of future mitigation measures.

Overall the local community has been accepting and accommodating of the events at the marquee for many years now. Genuine concerns around air and noise pollution, road safety and traffic congestion have not been meaningfully addressed to date and are not mentioned in this proposal. It is my feeling that the BMHC should have engaged much more meaningfully with the local community if it their intention to run such large events in a residential neighbourhood with no precedent of anything similar.