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 made comments in support of the Planning Application
Comment Reasons:
Comment:I am writing to express my strong support for the planning application for the marquee at the British Muslim Heritage Centre.

The marquee is not simply an events tent. It is now a vital extension of a busy place of worship and a community hub that serves a very large and diverse local population. Without this space the centre cannot safely accommodate the numbers who attend for key religious duties and essential community activities.

In support of the application I would like to set out the following points.

1. Essential place of worship and community facility
The marquee allows the centre to host large congregational prayers such as Friday prayers, Taraweeh and Eid, as well as funeral prayers. These are not optional social functions. They are core acts of worship that Muslims are required to perform in congregation where possible. National and local planning policy both stress the importance of protecting and supporting places of worship and community facilities. Removing the marquee would directly undermine the ability of a significant faith community to practise its religion in an organised and safe way.

2. Protection of a heritage asset
Income generated through carefully managed events in the marquee helps to sustain the British Muslim Heritage Centre, which is an important landmark and heritage building in the city. The marquee is a lightweight, fully reversible structure that does not damage the original building fabric. In practice it supports the long term maintenance and positive use of the heritage asset, which is clearly in line with planning objectives.

3. Social cohesion and inclusion
The centre delivers a wide range of activities that benefit the whole community, not only Muslims. These include youth projects, education programmes, charity events, open days and interfaith work. The marquee creates flexible space where people of different backgrounds can come together in a safe, supervised environment. In an area with a large Muslim population, enabling a respected institution like this to function well has clear benefits for social cohesion, public safety and overall community well being.

4. Reduced overspill and better management of crowds
At peak times, if the marquee is removed, worshippers will simply be displaced into neighbouring streets and smaller venues, which will worsen congestion and disturbance. By contrast, the marquee allows people to be accommodated within a managed site, with stewards, clear entry and exit routes, and the ability to control parking and dispersal. Keeping people inside the site is better for neighbours than having them gather on pavements and roads.

5. Limited and controllable impact on residential amenity
I understand that some objections relate to weddings and noise. These concerns are understandable, but they can be addressed by reasonable and enforceable conditions. For example, the Council could require:

- Strict finishing times in the evening
- A limit on the number of large wedding functions per month
- Use of internal sound systems set to agreed limits
- Doors and sides closed during evening events to contain noise
- A clear dispersal plan that encourages guests to leave quietly and swiftly

The centre already has a culture of volunteer stewards and is used to managing large gatherings. With suitable conditions the impact on neighbours can remain at an acceptable level. It is also worth stressing that the great majority of use of the marquee is for religious and educational purposes which finish early and generate minimal noise.

6. Equality and fair treatment of a faith community
Manchester is rightly proud of being a diverse city. The Equality Act places a duty on public bodies to have due regard to the needs of people with protected characteristics, including religion. In practice this means giving proper weight to the genuine needs of a large faith community for appropriate worship and community space, so long as impacts can be managed. Allowing this

marquee, with suitable conditions, would show fair and proportionate support rather than special treatment.

7. Lack of realistic alternatives
There are very few alternative venues in the area that can safely host large religious gatherings, funerals and festivals at the scale needed, particularly ones that are culturally appropriate and within walking distance for many worshippers. Expecting people to travel far outside the neighbourhood would increase traffic, cost and inconvenience and would in fact create more environmental impact than retaining a temporary structure on an existing community site.

In summary, the marquee at the British Muslim Heritage Centre is a critical part of local community and faith infrastructure. Its benefits are significant and ongoing. Any negative impacts are specific, limited in time and can be managed through appropriate planning conditions rather than refusal.

For these reasons I respectfully ask the Council to approve the planning application and to work with the centre on any conditions needed, so that this valued facility can continue to serve both worshippers and the wider community.