

DC/09/73066/X: 35 Sunderland Road, London, SE23 2PS

I am writing on behalf of the Forest Hill Society. We wish to object to the above application. Although we welcome a vacant building being brought back into use, we are concerned about this building's suitability as a place of worship.

(1) The building is situated on the South Circular and no on-street parking is permitted along the road outside the venue. Parking would need to be found in nearby residential roads. In light of the proposed operational times, we have the following comments on parking:

(i) Wednesday and Fridays 7-9pm: it is likely that many local residents will be at home at this time of night and therefore most parking spaces will already be taken.

(ii) Sundays 10am-2pm: there are two other places of worship nearby (Balm of Gilead Healing Centre at 123-125 Stanstead Road and the Quaker's Meeting House at 34 Sunderland Road) which also have services on Sundays. Will an additional place of worship put even more pressure on the need for car parking in nearby roads on Sundays?

(iii) First Friday of the month 10pm-2am: the applicant's travel plan acknowledges that there will be no public transport at 2.00am and we think it unlikely that many of the congregation will walk or cycle home in the early hours of the morning, despite the applicant's intention to encourage the use of such modes of transport. The applicant also intends to use space at the rear of the building as parking for 4 vehicles, which is accessed via a private lane running along the backs of several residential properties. Will vehicles driving along this lane in the early hours of the morning disturb residents of those properties?

(2) Does the application contain a true representation of the activities planned? The applicant's travel plan has focused on their 'normal' weekly activities but does not mention other types of events, such as weddings or conferences (the applicant's website states they are hosting a Church Convention from 26-28 October). When the applicant previously claimed to be operating as a community centre they said they intended to run a number of activities, which are not mentioned in this application. How many additional visitors might be expected at such events and what modes of transport will they use?

(4) Does the applicant intend to increase the size of its congregation? What are the limits to the number of people who can be safely accommodated within the building?

(5) Air conditioning units: 8 are to be installed at the rear of the building. How noisy are they and do they disturb neighbouring residents? The Design, Access and Planning Statement says many of the windows will be fixed shut to cut down on noise. If windows can't be opened for ventilation then the building will be reliant on the air conditioning units for air handling all year round and not just in hot weather. The units will therefore be in operation throughout the year and this will increase any disturbance to neighbours.

(6) If permission were to be granted, we would strongly argue that conditions should be imposed on the times of operation. People leaving a service ending at 2am may disturb local residents. While an occasional service ending after midnight is understandable (eg Christmas Eve), having a monthly service finishing at 2am may well be a nuisance. However, given the applicant's history of trying to avoid compliance with planning rules, we are doubtful of the likelihood of the applicant observing any undertakings or conditions placed upon them.