

Planning statement in respect of the proposed change of use of, and first floor extension to, 59 Leigh Road, Eastleigh, SO50 9DF from a Class E office use to that of a Community Centre and a one-bedroom first floor flat.

The following statement seek to set out the aspirations of the Eastleigh Masjid and Islamic Centre in support of a planning application in respect of the proposed change of use of 59 Leigh Road, Eastleigh from offices to that of community centre.



The proposed building will be used to meet the needs of the local community to include the following:

- Education services
- Community support sessions
- Book clubs
- Health activities
- Counselling sessions
- Meetings
- Hall hire.
- Children's play
- Place of worship

It is anticipated that peak usage will be on Friday afternoons when up to 40 attendees will be on-site.

At present the applicants use a local community centre, The Cranbury Centre, for meetings and prayer. This building is located some 450m to the south-east of the site at the junction of Cranbury Road and Grantham Road.

The authorised use of the site is a Class E commercial use whereas the proposals comprise a Class F use.

The application includes plans for a first floor one-bedroom flat that it will sit side by side with the proposed community centre. The application is supported by a noise impact assessment which acknowledges the presence of the apartment. The NIA makes recommendations in respect of upgrading the fabric of the building so as to minimise impact.

The plans include a first floor extension – of 3.8m in depth.

Previous applications have included residential accommodation on-site, and the provision of a first-floor extension. The current application seeks to build on well-established principles with respect to the site.

The site is located in close proximity to Eastleigh town centre and therefore in close walking distance to a number of public car parks.

The proposals represent an efficient use of land in a central location. It is an appropriate use of the site and should be supported.

The application was preceded by a pre-application submission that sought the views of the LPA in respect of the proposed use. The LPA response was supportive. Additional information has been requested in respect the proposed use and highway implications.

Site and surrounding area

The existing premises comprises a two-storey semi-detached building located to the south of Leigh Road, Eastleigh. Part of the ground floor has previously been used for retail purposes (most recently a hairdressers) whilst the remainder of the ground floor and the whole of the first floor has been most recently used as offices. The authorised use of the whole of the premises is therefore a Class E use.



The development site is centrally located, within 500m of Eastleigh Town Centre, which amongst numerous facilities has a number of car parks and also Eastleigh Bus Station, which has numerous bus routes during the day to a wide range of locations. The site is also in close proximity to Eastleigh Railway Station, which is located in the main Southampton-London railway line.

The site therefore located in a highly sustainable location.

Immediate neighbours are non-residential – no 57 Leigh Road is a dental surgery and occupies both floors whilst no 61 is a children's nursery. Other uses on Leigh Road typically include retail units, a children's day nursery and a church.

To the to the south of Leigh Road are the residential dwellings of Desborough Road.

The site is located within a permit-controlled parking area. It appears to be applicable 6 days a week, except Sundays and allows for non-permit holders to park for two hours parking requiring vehicles not to return for at least 2 hours.



The development site has car parking areas to both the front and rear of the site.

There are three car parking spaces to the front of the site requiring cars to reverse either on or off Leigh Road. To the rear of the site a service road provides an access to a rear car park as per the following photograph;



Policy advice

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchases Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework was published in December 2023.

Paragraph 47 reinforces the presumption in favour of the development plan.

47. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.

Paras 7 and 8 refer to the principles of sustainable development, as follows:

7. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs 4 . At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection

8. *Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 3 overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*

- *an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure*
- *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- *an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*

Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development

11. *Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.*

For decision-taking this means:

(c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

Paragraph 38 seeks to encourage LPA's to take a positive approach to decision making;

38. *Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way.*

Paragraph 97 requires LPAs to take a positive approach to the provision of community facilities to include meeting places and places of worship;

97. *To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:*

(a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments

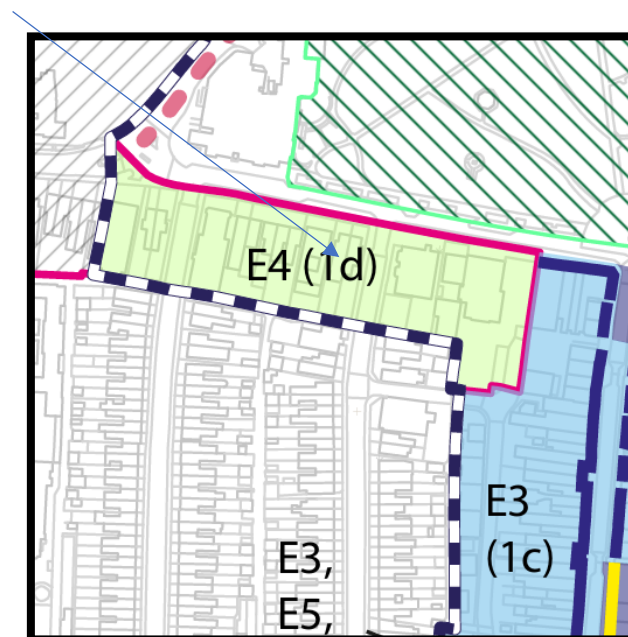
The National Minimum Space Standards set out minimum floor areas for new dwellings to include the following:

Number of bedrooms (b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
1b	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
2b	4p	70	79		2.0
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
3b	5p	86	93	99	2.5

The standards also include minimum room sizes.

The relevant Local Plan is the Adopted Local Plan 2016-2036.

The site is located within the settlement boundary, as defined in the Local Plan Review, as per the following extract:



The site is identified as being subject to policy E4(1d), which states the following:

d. Leisure and cultural zone, Leigh Road

The Borough Council will seek to strengthen the relationship between the Recreation Ground, The Point and the southern side of Leigh Road as defined on the policies map, by permitting the redevelopment and change of use of premises in this area for restaurants, cafes, community uses, cultural uses and retailing, provided that:

- i. the design of any new buildings or external alterations is of high quality; and*
- ii. the new use is complementary to the cultural or recreational activities that are established at The Point or Recreation Ground.*

Policy S10 seeks to encourage the provision of community facilities in order to meet the needs of the community as follows:

Strategic policy S10, Community facilities

- 1. The Borough Council will work with Hampshire County Council, the health authorities, emergency services, town and parish Councils, faith groups and voluntary groups to ensure the adequate provision of facilities to serve the Borough's communities.*

Planning history

A pre-application submission was made on the 22nd May 2024 and the formal response received from the LPA on the 25th June.

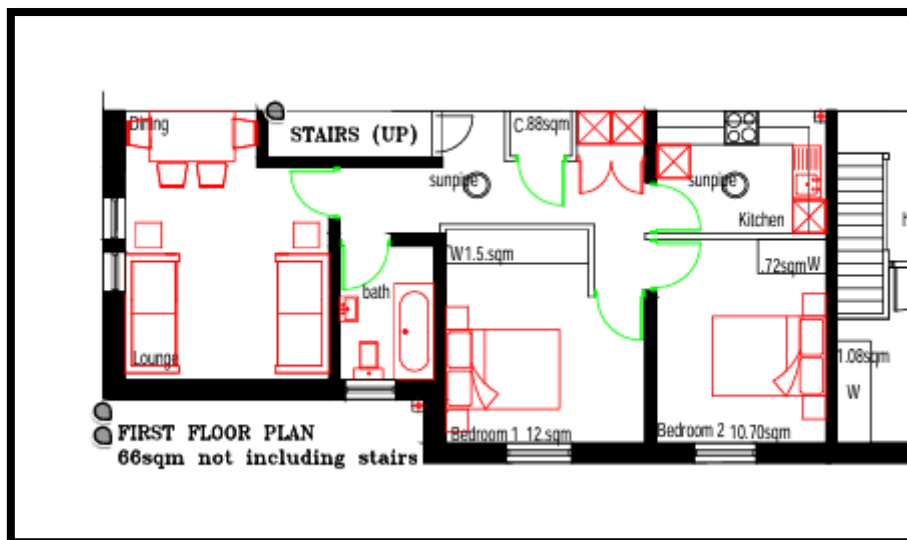
The submission sought the LPA advice in respect of the anticipated change of use of the existing building to provide a community centre. LPA comments on the proposals were as follows:

- the response notes that the proposed use comprises a place of worship; drop in centre with kitchen; educational, community support and counselling services; book clubs; health and fitness classes, hire of hall and meeting rooms; and indoor play area;
- the principle of development is acceptable subject to relevant policies. In addition, the site is identified as being located in the urban renaissance quarter where community uses are encouraged;
- clarification is required with respect to the potential to generate noise and noise impact assessment is requested. Additional information is requested in respect of likely noisy meetings are to take place and whether amplified music is to be used.

- Confirmation is also required as to whether there will be residential accommodation on site due to concerns with regard to potential issues with regard to noise.
- Car parking – the proposal requires 14 car parking spaces. While three spaces can be provided to the front of the site and there is relatively large hardsurfaced area to the rear it will not be able to accommodate a significant number of car parking spaces. However, due to the central location of the site in a sustainable area an argument can be put forward for reduced parking on the basis that a number of attendees will walk to the site. This should be set out in a short highway statement, which could be supported by a travel survey.
- No information has been provided in respect of external alterations and internal floor plans.
- Swift boxes and bat boxes should be provided on-site.

In addition, there have been a number of recent planning applications on site, comprising the following:

1. Prior notification application under Class MA for the change of use of the first-floor office to 1no. two bed flat (Application no. - PN/24/97060). Prior approval granted 1st May 2024.



The consent was subject to the following condition and restriction;

The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until a mechanical ventilation system (type 4 with heat recovery) has been installed in accordance with the approved Environmental Noise Impact Assessment by Impact Acoustics (referenced IMP7275-1). Reason: To protect the future residents of the property from external noise sources.

Note to Applicant: A separate regulation 77 application must be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for this development. Under Regulation 77 of the Habitat

Regulations, development which would be permitted by a Development Order, and which would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European off-shore marine site, (in this case, through additional nitrates loading on the waste water system and recreational disturbance to the New Forest) must not commence until the Local Planning Authority has given its written approval for the development and appropriate mitigation has been secured against the developments harmful impacts on the European Protected Site. Further information on Eastleigh Borough Council nitrate mitigation scheme is available Nutrient Neutrality (eastleigh.gov.uk) and Recreational disturbance (eastleigh.gov.uk)

2. Two storey rear extension and part conversion of building to create 1no. one bed and 2no. two bed flats with associated cycle parking and landscaping. The first-floor office at the front of the building is to be retained within this application (F/23/96368), Conditionally approved, 6th November 2023

The approved two-storey rear extension extends some 8m beyond the existing first-floor rear building line.

3. Section 77 Application: to approve the nutrients contribution for the approved prior notification application PN/22/93831 for the change of use of the ground floor and the rear of the first floor of the building into 2no. one bed dwellings (internal alterations only). The first -floor office unit at the front of the building is not affected by this application. (V/23/94837), Withdrawn.
4. Replace the existing shopfront with 1no. bay window on North East Elevation (in connection with the conversion of the building to residential use approved under PN/22/93831). F/22/94362, Conditionally approved, 12th January 2023
5. Prior Notification Application for the change of use of the ground floor and the rear of the first floor of the building into 2no. one bed dwellings (internal alterations only). The first -floor office unit at the front of the building is not affected by this application. (PN/22/93831). Conditionally approved, 24th November 2022

Development proposals

The application seek to change the use of the existing building to that of a F use – for use as a community centre and to provide a first floor flat. A 3.8m deep first floor extension is to be provided – which will be built over an existing rear outshot.

With respect to these two elements:

Community Centre

The applicant is the Eastleigh Masjid and Islamic Centre, which has been operative in the locality since 2013 and seeks to serve the needs of the local Islamic community. At present the applicants do not have a permanent base and the development site provides the opportunity to secure one. In doing so the applicants will be able to provide a significantly increased facilities for the local community to include the following:

- Place of worship
- Drop in centre during the day for local residents to include access to kitchen facilities
- Education services
- Community support services
- Book Clubs
- Counselling services
- Meeting rooms
- Health and fitness classes
- Training/education facilities
- Hall hire
- Children's play areas

These facilities either simply do not exist for members of the community or there is very limited access. The development site provides the opportunity of providing education and a support network for local residents some of whom have limited English language skills.

There will typically be one member of staff on-site at any one time. Staff car parking will be provided at the front of the site, within the car parking area.

It is anticipated that the peak attendance on site will be on Friday afternoons when the premises will be used as a place of worship. From experience it is likely that the peak attendance will be up to 40 attendees.

The proposed layout of both the ground and first floors is as follows:



First-floor flat

The proposals include the provision of a first-floor one-bedroom one-person flat. The internal dimensions of the flat meet the requirements of the National Minimum Space Standards both in terms of overall size and bedroom size. The internal floor area of the flat is 42.8sq-m whereas 39sq-m is required.

The proposals also include a first-floor extension in part to accommodate the proposed flat. This is to be provided over an existing single storey rear outshot. The proposed extension will not create any nuisance or overshadowing to neighbouring properties.

The plans also include details of refuse and cycle storage and amenity space for the proposed flat.

One car parking space is to be provided for the flat to front of the building

Noise assessment

The application is supported by a noise assessment which confirms that a noise survey was carried out at the Cranbury Centre on the 16th August. The survey confirmed that

the meeting lasted 1 hour and during the meeting that there was no amplification of speech.

The NIA notes the intention of the application to include a flat within the scheme. In order to accommodate the relationship of the proposed community centre and flat it is suggested that sound insulation measures are incorporated into the fabric of the building and that prayer meetings and children playing should be provided at ground floor at the front of the building.

Highways

The proposal provides the opportunity of some 6 car parking spaces, three at the back and three at the front. The proposed development will serve an established community facility that serves local residents. In addition, it is noted that the site is located in high-sustainable location in close proximity to an extensive local bus network and Eastleigh Railway Station. This again will reduce demand for on-site car parking spaces.

It is noted that there are local on-street parking spaces. The site is located in a residents car parking zone which restricts car parking to non-permit holders to up to 2 hours (between the hours of 8.00am-8.00pm Monday to Saturday). Given that peak attendance at the community centre is anticipated to be on Friday afternoons it is clear that attendees at that time will be subject to these restrictions.

The proposals seek to use the whole of the site as a community centre and there is no intention to provide separate living accommodation. As noted in the LPA response there are no immediate residential neighbours to the application site and therefore there will be little or no harm to local residential amenities.

In response to potential concerns with regard to car parking issues it should be noted that the vast majority of attendees live in the immediate vicinity of the site and will be able to walk to the site. In addition, attendees will be encouraged to access the site using the local bus and rail network.

For those that are reliant on a car there will be some on-site parking whilst other users will be encouraged to use the local car parking areas in Eastleigh Town Centre that are only a few minutes walk away from the development site.

It is therefore argued that the proposed development will have limited impact on the local area in terms of pressure on local car parking facilities.

Elevational alterations

The proposed development includes a first-floor rear extension and new ground floor windows on the side elevation and alterations to the ground floor window on the front elevation – these windows are to be provided as high level windows;



Planning balance

The application has been preceded by a pre-application submission that was supportive in principle with regard to the proposed use. The proposals seek to provide a permanent facility for a well-established community group that has been operational within Eastleigh for a number of years. There is clearly an opportunity here to provide a permanent, and much needed, base for the applicants that will enable them to provide bespoke and enhanced facilities for the local community. This will provide a clear benefit to the local area and community.

Given that the applicants have been using the Cranbury Centre on a regular basis, without any known issues, it is clear that the applicants will not create any problems in terms of car parking and loss of amenity in the immediate area.

As such the proposed development is policy compliant. The site is located close to the town centre and within the settlement boundary and the principle of development is therefore accepted. In addition, both paragraphs 97 of the NPPF and policy S10 of the adopted local plan seek to encourage community uses. This should be the starting point for the assessment of the development proposals and the LPA should actively encourage such uses in appropriate locations.

The proposals comprise a sustainable form of development and meet the overarching objectives of the NPPF. They meet the social aims by providing accessible services that contribute to the current and future needs to the community supporting its social and cultural well-being. They also meet the environmental aims by making the effective use of land.

The principle of residential accommodation on site has been established in previous consents and it is argued that the proposed use is compatible with that of residential. The application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment which confirms that potential nuisance in this regard can be successfully mitigated.

Previous applications have sought to establish a residential use on site and this has been supported. These works have included a much larger rear outshot than currently proposed.

It is therefore argued that the location of the proposed community centre is appropriately located in order to meet the needs of the local community and should be supported.