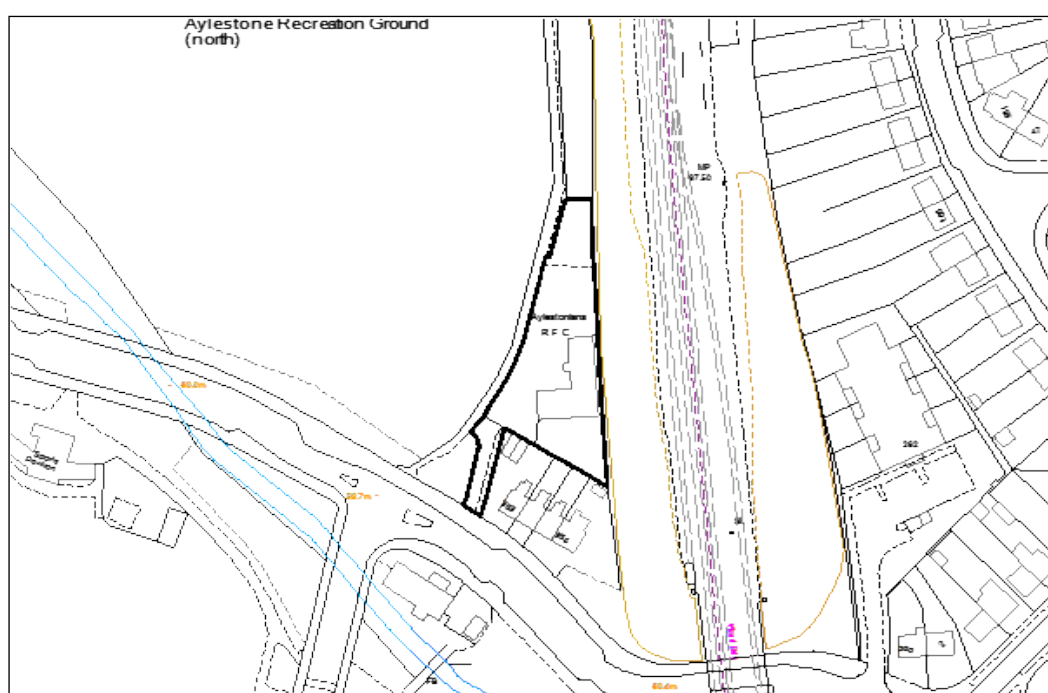


COMMITTEE REPORT

20250285	252-258 Knighton Lane East, Rugby Football Club Building at rear	
Proposal:	Change of use of sports club premises (Class F2) to a place of worship with ancillary education (Class F1) (amended 15.10.25)	
Applicant:	Dr Louay Al-Alousi (Abu Salam)	
App type:	Operational development - full application	
Status:	Change of use	
Expiry Date:	3 October 2025	
TEI	TEAM: PD	WARD: Saffron



Summary

- This application has been brought to committee as there are 38 objections and 163 supporting comments
- The main issues are the principle of the change of use, impacts in relation to noise and general disturbance, highways and parking impacts, flooding and biodiversity
- The 38 objections were on the grounds of the issues above and also antisocial behaviour and climate change
- The application is recommended for approval subject to conditions

The Site

The application relates to an unused club house formerly used by the Aylestonians Rugby Football Club. The site is reported in a number of the representations received to be used periodically for events. In the Development Plan the site is

allocated as Open Space. To the south of the site at between 19 and 30 metres from the south of the building are four residential properties. To the immediate east is the main railway line and to the north and west the northern part of Aylestone recreation Ground. There is a vehicular access to the west of the building down to Knighton Lane East. On the other side of the road is the southern part of Aylestone Recreation Ground and the Friar Lane Football Club. Residential properties along Whittier Road are 135 metres to the south of the building along the eastern side of the Recreation Ground with Aylestone Leisure Centre 280 metres to the west of the site.

The site is in a Critical Drainage Area, Flood Zone 2 and a Biodiversity Enhancement Site.

Background

Planning permission for the demolition of the old clubhouse and the erection of a new clubhouse was granted on 02.06.87 under application 19870482.

An application for a certificate of lawful proposed development (20240564) for a material change of use from local community use (Class F2) to a place of worship (Class F1) was refused on 13.05.24. The reason for refusal was that there is no provision within the General Permitted Development Order (2015) as amended for a permitted change from Class F2 to Class F1.

Though now unused, the lawful planning use of the premises remains as a sports club premises (Class F2).

The Proposal

The proposal is to change the use of the sports club premises (Class F2) to a place of worship with ancillary education (Class F1).

There are no material alterations to any of the elevations, albeit the Noise Assessment notes replacement windows of a higher acoustic performance than the existing (x 3 windows at the northern part of the west elevation). However, these will be within the same openings and of the same dimensions as existing and will not have a material difference on the appearance of the building.

The internal layout will be altered so that the female prayer area will be within the northern wing of the building (with associated toiletry and ablution facilities) and the male prayer area will be within the southern wing of the building (again with associated toiletry and ablution facilities). There will be a storage area, office and disabled toilet in each wing. Each wing will be accessed separately. The educational uses will be carried out in the same space. The site plan shows space for 25 parking spaces, a bin store and a cycle store.

The application was originally accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment and Noise Assessment. However, both of these have been revisited with revised assessments submitted following advice from with the local planning authority. The revised assessments were also supplemented by a Transport Statement, Travel Plan, Flood Warning Evacuation Pack and Surface Water Drainage Strategy.

A statement from the applicant was also submitted on 12.05.25 in response to the objections received at the time. The majority of representations had been received by this point with 8 objections and 34 representations in support received after that date.

The main points raised in this statement were that:

- The existing lawful Class F2 use potentially results in a greater loss of privacy and of amenity, greater noise pollution, traffic congestion, road safety impacts and anti-social behaviour than a mosque.
- The proposal mosque will enhance local amenity having a positive impact on local trade and services
- The proposal will not result in a loss of green space or trees or a harmful impact on protected species
- The three other mosques in the area have limited worship facilities insufficient to the increasing demand of local residents and with no dedicated facilities for female worshippers
- Images in the objections received at that time of cars blocking the road or machinery making structural alterations and removing trees are not associated with the use of the building as a mosque as any use has not yet commenced.

Policy Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024

Paragraph 2 (Primacy of development plan)

Paragraph 11 (Sustainable development)

Paragraph 39 (Early engagement)

Paragraph 44 (Right information crucial)

Paragraph 57 (Six tests for planning conditions)

Paragraph 85 (Economic growth)

Paragraph 88 (retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities)

Paragraph 96 (Social, accessible and healthy places)

Paragraph 98 (Social, recreational & cultural services/facilities)

Paragraph 109 (Transport impacts and patterns)

Paragraph 115 (Assessing transport issues)

Paragraph 116 (Unacceptable highways impact)

Paragraph 117 (Highways requirements for development)

Paragraph 118 (Travel Plan)

Paragraph 187 (Natural environment considerations)

Paragraph 193 (Biodiversity in planning decisions)

Paragraph 195 (Effects on a habitats site)

Paragraph 198 (Noise and light pollution)

Paragraph 200 (Agent of change)

Paragraph 201 (Planning decisions separate from other regimes)

Core Strategy 2014 and Local Plan 2006

Development plan policies relevant to this application are listed at the end of this report.

Further Relevant Documents

City of Leicester Local Plan (2006). Saved policies. Appendix 1: Parking Standards

Consultations

Local Highway Authority (LCC): - comments received following receipt of Transport Statement and Travel Information Pack.

The Transport Statement contains limited information in its comparison of the existing and proposed uses, but demonstrates access is suitable with visibility splays commensurate with actual vehicle speeds and satisfactory two-way movement available. Sufficient capacity is available on the highway network to accommodate a place of worship, including at its peak time when prayers take place between 1pm – 2pm each Friday.

The site is in a sustainable location with opportunities for worshippers to walk, cycle or use public transport rather than rely on the private car.

The Statement discusses the 25 car parking spaces which are to be retained within the site curtilage but acknowledges that parking demand may exceed this number during peak periods. The proposal complies with the Appendix 1 of City of Leicester Local Plan and it would be difficult to demonstrate that the situation would alter significantly from busy events which could take place at the rugby club.

Double yellow lines are in place along Knighton Lane East with parking bays on each side of the road. On-street parking is also available on Whittier Road. The use of a Travel Plan should help to reduce the reliance on the private car to access the site and consequently the need for on-street parking.

The Travel Information Pack is not the Travel Plan requested by the Local Highway Authority. However, the need for a Travel Plan can be controlled by condition.

No objections subject to conditions requiring cycle parking, no gates to be installed closer than 5m to the highway, parking spaces to be marked out and retained and requiring the Travel Plan mentioned above.

Environmental Health (pollution) (LCC): - comments received on updated noise assessment by Druk Ltd (31.07.25). The noise assessment has used different noise level data for the educational functions and worship functions of the proposal. It has also considered all other applicable noise sources such as noise from persons outside and vehicle movement and modelled noise levels accordingly to predict the levels at the noise sensitive receptors (the residential properties to the south).

The assessment identifies that during the daytime background noise levels were higher at 'measured position 2' (closer to the residential properties) than at 'measured position 1' (closer to the application building). However, it also identifies that background noise levels are lower during the proposed period of dawn prayer than during the rest of the day.

Overall, the updated noise assessment satisfies initial concerns. However, it is more likely that at unsociable hours visitors to the premises are likely to drive to premises rather than walk or use public transport and as such recommended that hours of use are between 07:30-23:00 (00:30 during Ramadan).

The windows will be replaced resulting in better sound reduction than the current windows. Other conditions recommended that external doors and windows are kept

closed if there are events involving the use of musical instruments or amplified music or voice and ensuring there is no amplified call to prayer.

Lead Local Flooding Authority (LCC):- broadly satisfied with content of revised Flood Risk Assessment, Flood Warning Evacuation Pack and Surface Water Drainage Strategy. However, additional details required clarifying how the risk of blockage from the small-diameter orifice plate will be managed and product specification or design drawing for permeable areas also required. Conditions recommended that a SuDS and Drainage Scheme be submitted incorporating these details and that the flood resilience measures in Flood Risk Assessment be incorporated into the scheme.

Sports England:- the proposal would result in the loss of an ancillary facility at the site. Sport England has sought the views of the following National Governing Bodies for Sport (NGBs): the Rugby Football Union (RFU) and the Football Foundation (FF). The RFU has confirmed that the ancillary building is no longer used for rugby and there is no strategic need for a pavilion to be used for rugby in this location. The FF and Leicestershire & Rutland FA do not believe that this building has a direct impact on the use of these playing pitches as the recreation ground has its own sports facility. The FF notes that the proposal includes retained WC facilities that are accessible through external entrances and recommends that the WCs are made available for community use for spectators/coaches/players to use on matchdays. Sport England does not wish to raise an objection.

Network Rail:- no observations

Representations

Objections:

38 objections were received. The objections raised the following concerns:

Principle of the use:

- That as the building has stood idle for several years the assessment of the application should be on the basis of the site being a vacant site
- That there is no community need for the use with similar premises providing the same use at the Midland Hotel on Saffron Lane, the Knighton Community and Education Centre on Keble Road, the mosque on Avenue Road Extension and the mosque opposite the New Road Inn and that there are a large number of mosques in Leicester relative to the Muslim population
- That there are a limited number of sports facilities in the area with direct access to green space
- That the proposed change of use would mean less diversity in people visiting the premises
- That there are no other buildings in the local area that could serve as a community centre with the building ideal for those on a limited income wanting a celebration on a budget or for offering sports activities to the local community
- That places of worship result in segregation whilst sports facilities result in integration

Highways and parking:

- That the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on parking in the area, particularly on Fridays with reference to illegal parking near other mosques

- That the unacceptable impact on parking in the area would be heightened when taking into consideration neighbouring uses including Leicester City and Leicester Tigers traffic during matchdays, the nearby leisure centre and other sports teams and the two neighbouring secondary schools of Sir Jonathan North and the Lancaster School
- That the proposal will lead to highways congestion with the junction, mini roundabout and connecting roads unable to handle the influx of cars and people when the site is in use
- That the access from Knighton Lane East (at 3.8 metres wide) is too narrow, falling short of highway design guidance and insufficient to accommodate two-way vehicular movements
- That the access is shared with maintenance vehicles accessing the park grounds and is routinely used by pedestrians as an alternative to the gated footpath
- That the proposal would result in accident risk particularly in relation to children passing the site

Noise, disturbance and antisocial behaviour:

- That the proposal will result in disturbance to the neighbouring properties particularly during early morning or late-night prayers including vehicles and foot traffic and due to possible additional security lighting
- That there is concern that no hours of operation have been stated, and that the acoustic assessment is unlikely to cover the actual hours of use
- That the acoustic assessment uses Al-Ma'rifah as a comparable study but that the assessment hours of 17:25-19:15 do not match the actual prayers of 16:39-19:40 and that Al-Ma'rifah is purpose built of different materials and as such is a poor comparison.
- That the area is already under strain in relation to waste creation
- That the proposal would result in a loss of privacy and possible impact on security with a fixed bike store offering a structure for potential criminals to trespass or break in
- That an increase in footfall and the potential creation of unmonitored alleyways or secluded spaces, could create an environment conducive to anti-social behaviour, loitering, and even criminal activity, particularly so given past incidents of vandalism and trespassing in the area.

Biodiversity, endangered species and climate:

- That the application did not include an Environmental Impact Assessment
- That the proposal does not seek to minimise pollution to air, water and land or ensure that air quality meets legal limits
- That the proposal does not improve and maintain green infrastructure or seek sustainable procurement practices promoting a circular economy
- That none of the above were taken into account when the current owner cut down several trees used for nesting on land that was adjacent to the property and belongs to Network Rail
- That the proposed development would result in the loss of and disturbance to green space and potential mature vegetation that provides a habitat for local wildlife including birds, insects, foxes and protected species
- That no bat surveys have been submitted with the application

Other:

- That the proposal will have a negative impact on property values

- That the proposal may conflict with existing covenants on the land that it be used for sport and social uses only
- That there was little transparency in relation to the sale of the building
- That there were no site notices in Knighton Lane East itself but only along the footpath that runs adjacent to the site (itself removed)
- One objection refers to 2021 Census data stating that in Leicester there are 35 mosques for over 50,000 Muslims, 22 temples for over 87,000 Hindus and 10 gurudwaras for over 16500 Sikhs and other places of worship without planning permission.

Representations in support:

163 representations were received in support of the application. The representations express the following:

Local need for facility:

- That there is a lack of adequate facilities in the local area where there is a growing Muslim community who need a Mosque and Islamic education centre
- That the facility will serve a local demographic who will benefit from the convenience of a place of worship close to home that they can walk to
- That the proposal will support the human right to freedom of religion and belief for local residents providing an appropriate place of worship nearby
- That the facility will provide needed spaces dedicated to women

Community cohesion:

- That the proposal will promote inclusion and tolerance amongst people from different races, ethnicities and social backgrounds
- That the facility is operated by a charitable trust focused on the prevention and relief of poverty
- That the facility will also offer services including programs in ethics, character development and language skills and provide mental health support and community initiatives including food distribution, fundraising for local causes, and volunteer work
- That such activities would be open to the public serving the wider local population
- That the facility will provide a safe and positive location for children to learn and activities for youth reducing anti-social behaviour
- That the facility will revive the area and bring economic benefit to local businesses
- That the facility will increase local footfall and support a sense of care and stewardship in the community
- That the facility will provide a space for interfaith dialogue and shared understand and for Muslims to demonstrate what Islam is as a counter to Islamophobia.

Parking and highways:

- That it is encouraging to know that highways and parking impacts are being discussed with the local authority

- That the organisers of the trust are working on traffic management solutions such as staggered timings, carpool initiatives and clear messaging to attendees
- That many of the worshippers are local and likely to travel on foot
- That the use of the facility will be spread throughout the week rather than concentrated at peak times
- That there are sufficient parking spaces for the use

Noise and disturbance:

- That Mosques and educational establishments are generally low-noise environments
- That the nature of the proposed use will likely generate less noise than the previous use as a rugby club, which often hosted events and gatherings associated with louder activity

Other:

- That the proposal will utilise an underused building revitalising the site
- That the proposal is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework

Consideration

Principle of the development:

1) Release of the clubhouse:

Core Strategy Policy CS13 'Green Network' states that the Council will "seek to maintain and enhance the quality of the green network so that residents and visitors have easy access to good quality green space, sport and recreation provision that meets the needs of local people". It adds that the Council will "safeguard and improve green space, sport and recreation facilities that are of value to the green network and that where there are proposals that affect green space, outdoor sport or recreation facilities, land should not be released, either in total or in part, for development unless it is... surplus to requirements for its current green space function; and... not needed for another type of green space use; or... equivalent or better replacement green space would be provided in the local area".

The Green Space SPD describes "Informal Green Space" and the northern part of Aylestone Recreation Ground shares these characteristics. It notes that Saffron Ward (formerly Freeman Ward) has a "Sufficient Supply" of Informal Green Space.

The modified version of Emerging Local Plan Policy OSSR02. 'Development of Open Spaces' states that "development of open space... such as privately-owned sports pitches and sites below 0.5ha... will not be permitted unless... the open space is surplus to requirements in relation to its current open space typology, taking into consideration the quantity, quality, and accessibility of existing open spaces by reference to the Council's Open Space, Sport, and Recreation Study and... the open space is not needed for another type of open space; or ... the development enhances and/or retains public access to and within the open space".

In the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study 2017 (p42) the site sits immediately outside and to the south-east of the Aylestone Recreation Ground (north) informal space. In relation to the Old Aylestonians the study describes how the club has

experienced decline, primarily attributed to the lack of facilities that the club provides in comparison to others, identifying at this point a need for the renovation of the clubhouse (p245). The Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan 2017 states that “all rugby sites should be protected and enhanced to increase capacity” (p14) and notes that there is a need to “improve access to training facilities (for the club) through either the provision of floodlighting or alternative venues” (p14). However, the 2022 Position Statement notes that as of 2022 the Old Aylestonians Rugby Football Club have folded.

I consider the folding of the club to demonstrate that the clubhouse is surplus to requirements. The Informal Green Space itself will not be lost as part of the proposal, and there is in any case a “sufficient supply” of Informal Green Space in the Saffron Ward. Furthermore, the Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report 2017 notes that of the 13 Rugby Clubs in the city 6 are in the south (5 with the folding of Old Aylestonians), 5 are in the east and 2 are in the west, with the south remaining well-provisioned for Rugby Clubs.

As such, I do not consider the material change of use of the clubhouse to unduly conflict with the objectives of Core Strategy Policy CS13 or of emerging Local Plan policy OSSR02. The lack of objection from Sport England, and from the RFU, FF and Leicestershire and Rutland FA gives further weight to this position.

I note too that in terms of sports facilities in general the immediate area is well provisioned with both parts of Aylestone Recreation Ground, The Aylestone Leisure Centre and Friar Lane Football Club.

2) Suitability of place of worship with ancillary education use:
Core Strategy Policy CS08 ‘Existing Neighbourhoods’ is supportive of new community facilities where they meet the identified needs of local communities and have a viable long-term management and funding proposal. It states that in “considering proposals for new places of worship the Council will take account of the demand for it within the local neighbourhood, the scale of activities for which it is likely to be used and the nature of the area around it.”

The supporting text for the modified version of emerging Local Plan Policy CT05 ‘Places of Worship and Community’ recognises the “important role” that places of worship can play “in spiritual and mental wellbeing” and the “long tradition (of the council) of seeking to accommodate places of worship to cater for the various religions in the city”. It adds that many communities need small premises for religious use while some require large buildings, and that they “generally need to be located conveniently to their congregations”. It cautions that places of worship “may bring increased noise, disturbance and parking problems to an area and can have an adverse effect on the amenities of neighbouring residents and occupiers”.

The policy itself states that permission will be granted subject to the appropriateness of the location, the impact on residential amenity and the impact on highway safety and function (encouraging walking and cycling as sustainable modes of transport). The latter two are considered in separate sections below.

A number of objectors question the need for the proposal raising concerns in relation to existing Mosques in the area and perceptions of the demographic within the area.

Chapter 5 of the Transport Statement assesses anticipated local patronage of the site by looking at 2021 census data for Lower Super Output Areas within a 500 metre and 1 km radius of the site. Within the 500 metre radius it notes 812 Muslims

(13.1% of the population) and within the 1 km radius it notes 2,038 Muslims (11.3% of the population). By comparison with the 2011 census data the Transport Statement also notes that this is a fast growing population (748 to 2,038 in that period, from 4.8% of the local population to 11.3% of the local population).

The need for the facility has also been expressed in the statement submitted in response to the objections. The statement points out the smaller size of other neighbouring mosques, and in particular, the need for dedicated female spaces. I also note that separate Islamic communities or denominations may have separate needs for their individual spaces. The need for the facility is also supported by a large number of supporting comments, many of which express a need for a place of worship in walking distance. A large amount of these representations are from addresses within walking distance.

I consider that the need for the facility has been adequately demonstrated through census data and adequately expressed in other submissions to a degree that I give these expressions of need suitable weight in consideration of the application.

As such, I consider the location to be appropriate to the use, consistent with the objectives of Core Strategy Policy CS08 and of emerging Local Plan policy CT05.

Concern has been raised by some objectors to the scheme that the proposal will only meet the needs of some people in the community, specifically the Muslim community. However, this is true of many uses for example, sports club houses, public houses that only meet the needs of those who want to use them and many shops that cater for those who want specific products.

Character & appearance:

Other than replacement windows the scheme does not involve any material changes to the property. A viable use of the building will help to support the maintenance of the building. It is a building that is in any case well concealed from the public realm due to its position. The proposal will not have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area.

Highways and parking:

A substantial number of concerns have been raised regarding the impact of the development on parking and highway safety. The National Planning Policy Framework states “development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios”.

1) Highway safety:

As mentioned above, access is suitable with visibility splays commensurate with actual vehicle speeds and satisfactory two-way movement is available. I do not consider that the proposal will result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety. However, in order to ensure that visibility splays are retained and that the use of any gate will not result in any potential compromise to the highway safety of the site I consider it necessary to attach the condition recommended by Highways Officers that no gate shall be installed closer than 5 metres to the highway.

I note the observation that pedestrians use the access as a route to access the northern part of Aylestone Recreation Ground. However, I do not consider that such use of the access in this way will result in a risk to highway safety. Users of the site

arriving by foot are likely to access the site in the same way, with users of the former club house arriving by foot presumably previously having accessed the site using this route. Similarly, access for maintenance vehicles, likely to be periodic, is unlikely to result in a risk to highway safety and will likely follow previous patterns.

2) Parking and congestion:

There are 25 car parking spaces available on the site, in excess of the standards recommended in Appendix 1 of the City of Leicester Local Plan (11 spaces for a building of this size). However, the Statement submitted with the application acknowledges that parking demand may exceed this number during peak periods. Nevertheless, I concur with the views of Highway Officers that, the parking spaces on site, together with the available parking bays on each side of Knighton Park Road and the on-street parking available on Whittier Road that sufficient capacity is available on the highway network to accommodate a place of worship, including at its peak time when prayers take place between 1pm – 2pm each Friday.

The use of a Travel Plan should help to reduce the reliance on private cars further as will the sustainable location of the site with opportunities for worshippers to walk, cycle or use public transport.

Though use of the building as a place of worship with ancillary education will likely mean it is used more frequently than a sports clubhouse I do not consider that any impact on congestion or the operation of the highway to be significantly different from busy events which could have taken place at the club house. Nor when considering the neighbouring uses mentioned in the objections do I consider that the proposed mosque use will contribute significantly to any congestion that may occur.

In order to reserve the parking on site, I consider it appropriate to attach a condition ensuring that the planned parking spaces on site are marked out and retained for parking use only.

3) Promoting sustainable transport

Though the Travel Information Pack is not the Travel Plan requested by the Local Highway Authority it provides a good basis for such a Travel Plan. Further information on the contents of and expectations for such a Travel Plan have been sent to the applicant and there is a commitment to one being produced with evidence of one being commissioned having been provided. I consider such a plan necessary in the interests of sustainable transport. It will help to encourage a shift away from single occupancy car use towards alternative forms of travel such as walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing. Such a plan can be secured by condition. Space for cycle parking has been indicated on the plans and in the interests of sustainable transport a condition can be attached to any consent ensuring that storage is provided for 12 cycles.

In relation to highway safety, parking and congestion it would be difficult to demonstrate that approval of the proposal would compromise highway conditions to such an extent as can be considered unacceptable, in relation to National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 116 and the use of a Travel Plan will help to secure sustainable travel objectives.

Residential amenity

The nearest residential dwellings are the four properties 252, 254, 256 and 258 Knighton Lane East between 19 and 30 metres away from the building. The Whittier Road dwellings are approximately 130 metres away. At this distance the proposed

use does not have potential to have a detrimental impact on the residential amenity of the latter.

An updated Noise Assessment by Druk Ltd has been submitted using differing noise level data for the worship and educational functions of the proposal. It considers potential noise from the building and from potential noise from persons and vehicle movement outside to predict the levels at the four properties to the south.

The windows will be replaced resulting in better sound reduction than the current windows. This satisfies concerns and I consider that a condition ensuring that the new windows are installed to the acoustic performance detailed at page 14 of the noise assessment would mean that sound emanating from the building would not result in an unacceptable level of harm to neighbouring residential properties. The condition would also need to ensure that ventilation is provided that allows for 4 air changes per hour. A condition ensuring that windows are kept closed when there is any amplified music or voice would provide further assurance in this respect. However, none of the doors open directly on to the two main spaces for prayer, worship or education, with the nearest to this arrangement opening into a lobby with double doors. I do not consider it necessary to extend this condition to ensuring that doors remain closed.

I note there are no existing hours of use associated with the clubhouse. However, I also note that the assessment does identify that background noise levels are lower during the proposed period of dawn prayer than during the rest of the day. Though it concludes that noise generated by the use at this time would remain acceptable I consider it more likely that at unsociable hours visitors to the premises are likely to drive than walk or use public transport. As such I consider it appropriate to attach a condition restricting hours of use to between 07:30-23:00 (00:30 during Ramadan). The applicant's intention was to be open for dawn prayers and so these shorter hours of use were discussed. Though noting disappointment there was an acceptance to operate within these hours as part of the planning consent. There is no intention for externally amplified call to prayer.

In addition, I am concerned that events using the curtilage of the site could occur and that these could cause disturbance to the residential properties to the south. I therefore recommend a condition ensuring that the area outside of but around the building shall not be used for any formal scheduled activities for example outside worship, religious events, weddings, classes or community events.

I note the objection in relation to the Al-Ma'rifah site. However, the updated noise assessment no longer uses this site as a comparable study.

I do not consider that the use as a place of worship with ancillary education will be a significant waste generating use and do not have concerns in that respect.

I do not consider that an increase in footfall is likely to create an environment conducive to anti-social behaviour but rather create more active surveillance. The bike store could be fixed away from the fence so as to ensure that the structure does not provide an opportunity for break in. As mentioned above, a condition is recommended to secure cycle storage. There is now provided at the north of the site.

There is no intention to install additional security lighting that would have any significant impact beyond what may be existing.

Biodiversity Net Gain, Ecology and Protected Species:

The proposal is solely for a change of use with the only other development being replacement windows. As such the development is exempt from the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain provision (as per the 'de minimis' exemption).

The proposed change of use is unlikely to impact any habitat or areas of the existing building that have potential to support protected species. However, as a precautionary measure, I recommend that the applicant be advised of the law regarding protected species by attaching a note to applicant to any consent.

In relation to other concerns raised by the objections the application does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment, nor do I consider that it is a use of a type or scale that will have a polluting impact on air, water or land. The site is not in an air quality management area.

Though adjacent to the informal green space at the Aylestone recreation Ground (north) this green space is retained. Any removal of trees that may have occurred is not part of the consideration of the application. The trees themselves were not protected by Tree Protection Order.

Flooding and drainage:

The site is in a Critical Drainage Area and Flood Zone 2. The documents submitted with the application demonstrate that the impacts of this can be successfully managed though some additional details are required as mentioned above. With these details and the implementation of the flood resilience measures in the Flood Risk Assessment secured by condition, I consider that the proposal will be acceptable in this respect. I do not consider that the submission of a new SuDS and Drainage Scheme is required and that a separate condition requiring only the missing details to be sufficient.

Other considerations:

Details on the sale of the land, any existing covenants on the land and the impact the proposal may have on property values are not material planning considerations.

The Development Management Procedure Order (DMPO) states that applications of this type must be publicised by site display in at least one place on or near the land to which the application relates or by serving the notice on any adjoining owner or occupier. The application was publicised by letters to the four properties to the south and by site notice along the footpath (a second site notice was put up in place of a site notice reported to the Council as having been removed). Network Rail were also notified. Publicity was carried out in accordance with the DMPO and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). As mentioned above, given the distance of the building from the Whittier Road properties I do not consider that the proposal has the potential to have a detrimental impact on the amenity of these properties.

The census data numbers and of reported numbers of places of worship submitted by one objection are noted.

Conclusion

The folding of the Old Aylestonians club demonstrates that the clubhouse is surplus to requirements with the Informal Green Space itself not lost as part of the proposal. There is a sufficient supply of Informal green Space in the Saffron Ward with the south remaining well-provisioned for Rugby Clubs. I do not consider the material change of use of the clubhouse to unduly conflict with the objectives of Core Strategy Policy CS13 or of emerging Local Plan policy OSSR02. The lack of objection from Sport England, and from the RFU, FF and Leicestershire and Rutland FA gives further weight to this view.

The need for the facility has been demonstrated in the data used in the Transport Statement and expressed in the statement submitted in response to the objections pointing out the smaller size of other neighbouring mosques, and in particular, the need for dedicated female spaces. This need is also supported by a large number of supporting comments, many of which express a need for a place of worship in walking distance. I consider the location to be appropriate to the use, consistent with the objectives of Core Strategy Policy CS08 and of emerging Local Plan policy CT05.

In relation to highway safety, parking and congestion it would be difficult to demonstrate that approval of the proposal would compromise highway conditions to such an extent as can be considered unacceptable, in relation to National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 116 and the use of a Travel Plan will help to secure sustainable travel objectives.

I consider that conditions ensuring that the new windows are installed to the acoustic performance detailed at page 14 of the noise assessment, restricting the hours of use to those specified above and ensuring that no scheduled formal activities take place externally would mean that the proposal will have an acceptable impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties.

The proposal will not have a harmful impact on protected species or biodiversity and, with the condition referred to above attached, will have an acceptable impact in terms of flooding, drainage and water run-off.

I therefore recommend APPROVAL subject to the following conditions:

CONDITIONS

1. START WITHIN THREE YEARS
2. Any gates installed along the access route from Knighton Lane East shall be set back at least 5 metres into the site from the highway boundary and shall be fixed so that they open inwards only (in the interests of highways safety and in accordance with saved City of Leicester Local Plan policy AM01, Core Strategy policy CS14 and paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework).
3. Before the occupation of any part of the development, all parking areas shall be surfaced and marked out in accordance with the 'Existing/Proposed Site Plans' ref. VD25776, received 15.10.25. and shall be retained for parking and not used for any other purpose. (To ensure that parking can take place in a satisfactory manner, and in accordance with saved City of Leicester Local Plan policies AM01 and AM11,

Core Strategy policy CS03 and paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

4. No part of the development shall be occupied until a Travel Plan for the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as local planning authority and shall be carried out in accordance with a timetable to be contained within the Travel Plan, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Council. The plan shall (a) assess the site in terms of transport choice for staff, users of services, visitors and deliveries; (b) consider pre-trip mode choice, measures to promote more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling, car share and public transport (including providing a personal journey planner, information for bus routes, bus discounts available, cycling routes, cycle discounts available and retailers, health benefits of walking, car sharing information, information on sustainable journey plans, notice boards) over choosing to drive to and from the site as a single occupancy vehicle users, so that all users have awareness of sustainable travel options; (c) identify marketing, promotion and reward schemes to promote sustainable travel and look at a parking management scheme to discourage off-site parking; (d) include provision for monitoring travel modes (including travel surveys) of all users and patterns at regular intervals, for a minimum of 5 years from the first occupation of the development brought into use. The plan shall be maintained and operated thereafter. (To promote sustainable transport and in accordance with saved City of Leicester Local Plan policies AM01, AM02 and AM11, Core Strategy policies CS14 and CS15 and paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

5. No part of the development shall be occupied until secure cycle parking for 12 cycles has been provided in the position shown on 'Existing/Proposed Site Plans' ref. VD25776, received 15.10.25. The secure cycle parking shall be retained thereafter. (In the interests of the satisfactory development of the site and in accordance with saved City of Leicester Local Plan policy H07, Core Strategy Policy CS14 and paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

6. No part of the development shall be occupied until new glazing has been installed to all external windows to the minimum sound insulation values demonstrated in Table 6 of the "Assessment of the Existing Noise Climate" by Druk Ltd (ref. DRUK/ACC/RS/KLEPM/3323, dated 31.07.25). The glazing shall be retained thereafter at the same minimum acoustic performance and shall also include mechanical ventilation allowing for air changes per hour. (In the interests of the amenity of neighbouring residential properties and in accordance with saved City of Leicester Local Plan policies PS10 and PS11 and paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

7. The use shall not be carried on outside the hours of 07:30 and 23:00 daily except during the Holy Month of Ramadan when the use shall not be carried on outside the hours of 07:30 and 00:30. (In the interests of the amenity of neighbouring residential properties and in accordance with saved City of Leicester Local Plan policies PS10 and PS11 and paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

8. The hardstanding around the site and the grassed area to the south of the building shall not be used for any formal scheduled activities (for example worship,

religious events, weddings, classes or community events) at any time during the lifetime of the use. (In the interests of the amenity of neighbouring residential properties and in accordance with saved City of Leicester Local Plan policies PS10 and PS11 and paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

9. No part of the development shall be occupied until details regarding a) how the risk of blockage from the small-diameter orifice plate will be managed (ref. section 4.8 of the Surface Water Drainage Strategy) and b) product specifications or design drawings of the raingarden and cellular storage crates have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with these details. (To reduce surface water runoff and to secure other related benefits in accordance with Core Strategy policy CS02).

10. No part of the development shall be occupied until the Surface Water Drainage Strategy has been fully implemented in accordance with the details submitted in the "Surface Water Drainage Strategy" by Unda (ref. 95330-AIAlousi-KnightonLaneEast_SWDS, dated 01.10.25) together with the details secured under Condition 9 above It shall thereafter be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details. (To reduce surface water runoff and to secure other related benefits in accordance with policy CS02 of the Core Strategy).

11. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the Flood Resistance Design Measures detailed at paragraph of the "Flood Risk Assessment for Planning" by Unda (ref. 95330-AIAlousi-KnightonLaneEast issue: v2.0, dated 12.09.25) and the measures with the "Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan" by Unda (ref. 95330-AIAlousi-KnightonLaneEast-FWEP-v1.0, dated 12.09.25). The Floor Resistance Measures be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing/phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority.

12. Development shall be carried out in full accordance with the following approved plans:
'Existing/Proposed Site Plans' ref. VD25776, received 15.10.25.
'Existing/Proposed Floor Plans/Elevations' ref. VD25776, received 18.02.25.
(For the avoidance of doubt).

NOTES FOR APPLICANT

1. The building may be suitable for roosting bats, which are protected by law from harm. The applicant should ensure that all contractors and individuals working on the property are aware of this possibility, as works must cease if bats are found during the course of the works, whilst expert advice from a bat ecologist is obtained. Bats are particularly associated with the roof structure of buildings, including lofts, rafters, beams, gables, eaves, soffits, flashing, ridge-tile, chimneys, the under-tile area, etc. but may also be present in crevices in stone or brickwork and in cavity walls.

Further information on bats and the law can be found here [Bats: protection and licences - GOV.UK](#)

2. If any nests or birds in the process of building a nest are found, these areas will be retained (left undisturbed) until the nest is no longer in use and all the young have fledged. An appropriate standoff zone will also be marked out to avoid disturbance to the nest whilst it is in use.

All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended making it an offence to kill, injure or disturb a wild bird and during the nesting season to damage or destroy an active nest or eggs during that time. Further information on birds and the law can be found here - Wild birds: protection and licences - GOV.UK

3. There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply.

Based on the information available, this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because the following statutory exemption/transitional arrangement is considered to apply:

Development below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:

i) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and

ii) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

4. The City Council, as local planning authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant during the process (and or pre-application).

The decision to grant planning permission with appropriate conditions taking account of those material considerations in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF 2025 is considered to be a positive outcome of these discussions.

Policies relating to this recommendation

2006_AM01	Planning permission will only be granted where the needs of pedestrians and people with disabilities are incorporated into the design and routes are as direct as possible to key destinations.
2006_AM02	Planning permission will only be granted where the needs of cyclists have been incorporated into the design and new or improved cycling routes should link directly and safely to key destinations.
2006_AM11	Proposals for parking provision for non-residential development should not exceed the maximum standards specified in Appendix 01.
2006_PS10	Criteria will be used to assess planning applications which concern the amenity of existing or proposed residents.
2006_PS11	Control over proposals which have the potential to pollute, and over proposals which are sensitive to pollution near existing polluting uses; support for alternative fuels etc.

2014_CS01	The overall objective of the Core Strategy is to ensure that Leicester develops as a sustainable city, with an improved quality of life for all its citizens. The policy includes guidelines for the location of housing and other development.
2014_CS02	Development must mitigate and adapt to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The policy sets out principles which provide the climate change policy context for the City.
2014_CS03	The Council will require high quality, well designed developments that contribute positively to the character and appearance of the local natural and built environment. The policy sets out design objectives for urban form, connections and access, public spaces, the historic environment, and 'Building for Life'.
2014_CS08	Neighbourhoods should be sustainable places that people choose to live and work in and where everyday facilities are available to local people. The policy sets out requirements for various neighbourhood areas in the City.
2014_CS14	The Council will seek to ensure that new development is easily accessible to all future users including by alternative means of travel to the car; and will aim to develop and maintain a Transport Network that will maximise accessibility, manage congestion and air quality, and accommodate the impacts of new development.
2014_CS15	To meet the key aim of reducing Leicester's contribution to climate change, the policy sets out measures to help manage congestion on the City roads.
2014_CS17	The policy sets out measures to require new development to maintain, enhance and strengthen connections for wildlife, both within and beyond the identified biodiversity network.