

Planning Committee Report	
Planning Ref:	FUL/2022/0613
Site:	60 Somerset Road
Ward:	Radford
Proposal:	Application for change of use of No.60 from single dwelling to religious education centre (Use Class F1) in connection with use of No.62 Somerset Road
Case Officer:	Andrew Tew

SUMMARY

The proposal is for the change of use of No.60 Somerset Road in conjunction with the established and approved use of No.62 as a religious education centre. This results in a prayer room and study room over the ground and first floor in place of a lounge, dining room and two bedrooms. The application states that this results in an increase in the number of users from 25 individuals per session (as controlled by the previous permission at No.62) to 50 individuals per session.

BACKGROUND

62 Somerset Road was granted permission in 2011 for a change of use from retail (Use Class A1) to religious education centre (Use Class D1). This was granted with conditions to limit the numbers using the centre to no more than 25 at any one time between the hours of 09:00-22:00.

Application reference FUL/2021/2293 to change of use of no 60 from single dwelling to religious education centre (Use Class D1) in connection with no. 62 would have increased the numbers using the centre to 60 at any one time. This was refused due to the potential for increased noise and disturbance.

This application seeks to change the use of no. 60, but with the number of users reduced to 50 and internal noise abatement measures.

KEY FACTS

Reason for report to committee:	Five or more letters of support
Current use of site:	Residential dwelling
Proposed use of site:	Religious education centre

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Committee are recommended to refuse planning permission for the reasons set out within this report.

REASON FOR DECISION

The extension of the religious education centre is contrary to Policy CO1 of the Coventry Local Plan 2016 and guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework in that the site is situated in close proximity to residential properties and it is considered that the disturbance arising from comings and goings associated with the education centre and the

intensification of the use would result in significant harm to the amenities enjoyed by nearby residential occupiers.

APPLICATION PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the change of use of No.60 Somerset Road in conjunction with the established and approved use of No.62 as a religious education centre. This results in a prayer room and study room over the ground and first floor in place of a lounge, dining room and two bedrooms. The application states that this results in an increase in the number of users from 25 individuals per session (as controlled by the previous permission at No.62) to 50 individuals per session. The application also identifies that the peak use would be in the evening with sessions running at 4.30, 5.40 and 6.50 for children. This introduces a 10-minute gap between classes compared to application FUL/2021/2293. A submitted statement also explains that the premises would continue to be used for prayers between 9am and 10pm.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application relates to a mid-terraced property located on the north-west side of Somerset Road near to the junction with Dorset Road. The property has a small front garden accessed by a gate with no off-road car parking available. The surrounding area is predominantly residential in nature.

PLANNING HISTORY

There have been a number of historic planning applications on this site; the following are the most recent/relevant:

Application Number	Description of Development	Decision and Date
FUL/2021/2293	Change of use of no 60 from single dwelling to religious education centre (Use Class D1) in connection with no. 62 (retrospective application)	Refused 05/10/2021
FUL/2020/1591	Change of use of no 60 from single dwelling to religious education centre (Use Class D1) in connection with no. 62 (retrospective application)	Withdrawn 21/4/2021
FUL/2011/1842	Change of use from retail (Use Class A1) to religious education centre (Use Class D1)(No.62) (retrospective)	Approved 6/12/2011
R/2008/0718	Change of Use from Retail (Use Class A1) to Religious Education Centre (Use Class D1)(no.62), retention of external alterations to building and retention of single storey extension to rear	Approved 11/9/2008

POLICY

National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that is relevant, proportionate and

necessary to do so. The NPPF increases the focus on achieving high quality design and states that it is “fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve”.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) adds further context to the NPPF and it is intended that the two documents are read together.

Local Policy Guidance

The current local policy is provided within the Coventry Local Plan 2016, which was adopted by Coventry City Council on 6th December 2017. Relevant policy relating to this application is:

- CO1 – New or improved social community or leisure premises
- DS3 – Sustainable development policy
- AC2 – Road network
- AC3 – Demand management

CONSULTATION

Statutory

No Objections received from:

- Highways

Objections have been received from:

- Environmental Protection – Object on grounds of increased noise and disturbance

Neighbour consultation

Immediate neighbours and local councillors have been notified; a site notice was posted on 14/04/2022.

- 1 no. public objection:
 - Noise generated from 4.40am – 11.30pm already
 - Lack of parking
- 9 no. public letters of support:
 - Integral part of local community
 - Provides homeless support
 - Provides support to young and old
 - Runs food bank and clothes bank
 - School classes for children
 - Provides place of worship
 - More space for community functions
- 11 no. public notes of “support” but no planning reason provided

Any further comments received will be reported within late representations.

APPRAISAL

The main issues in determining this application are the impact upon neighbouring amenity, noise and highway considerations.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

Policy CO1: New or improved social community and leisure premises states a sequential approach will be applied to applications and that sites adjacent to associated facilities will be considered where no designated centre or edge of centre sites are available. However, if no suitable site can be identified within this hierarchy, the proposed site must i) meet an unmet community need ii) be no adverse impact on the defined centre and iii) have no impact on neighbouring amenity.

Whilst supporting information suggests that there is a community need for expansion to the facility, concerns remain with the impact on neighbourhood amenity. It suggests the reduction in attendees from 60 to 50 individuals per session and introduction of 10-minute gap between classes to stagger arrivals and departures, would alleviate this, however this would be extremely difficult to enforce. Previously refused application FUL/2021/2293 states *“Ultimately, it is considered that the principle of expanding the centre in this tight knit Victorian era terraced street is not acceptable. The existing centre has a restriction limiting users to 25 at once, which is reasonable considering the previous use as a retail unit.”*

The supporting planning statement says the *“premises would continue to be open for prayers between 9am and 10pm on any day”* for which *“there would never be more than 50 attendees for prayer, even at peak times”*. There will potentially be up to 100 people each hour during the evening with 36 children leaving classes and 36 arriving plus 14 attendees for prayers. The activities associated with this change of use such as people’s arrival and departure, car doors slamming and people talking as they arrive and leave are short-lived events that aren’t easy to measure or control. Whilst the planning statement suggests use of rear gate for second exit point, this does not address the potential noise and disturbance caused by such events on the street.

Environmental Health have been consulted and object on the grounds of noise and disturbance cause by the intensification of use.

The letters of support for the application are noted, with the good work the centre undertakes as part of local community; providing homeless support, providing support to young and old; running food and clothes banks and providing a place of worship. The reasoning the application, if approved, would offer more space for community functions reinforces the potential for increased noise and disturbance.

The existing centre has a restriction limiting users to 25 at once, which is reasonable considering the previous use as a retail unit. However, any increase on that is likely to lead to more pronounced amenity issues, contrary to Policy CO1.

Highways

The proposed use generates more car and pedestrian trips than the existing use, however the proposed number of attendees is reduced from the previous application, to which the Highway Authority had no objections.

The parking statement notes the application would provide 27 sq.m additional gross internal floorspace, with the closest standards in the City Council’s Local Plan having a maximum requirement of 1 space per 10 sq.m for a place of worship (i.e 3 no. additional car parking spaces for the additional floorspace). However, the proposed plans and elevations show a “new prayer room” at ground floor and “new study room 3” at first floor, both of which measure 27sq. m. On this basis, the parking requirement would be 6 no. additional spaces.

The planning statement notes that the increased trip generation is negligible as the majority of users live in the local area and walk to the centre.

Neither 60 or 62 Somerset Road has any parking provision and rely on on-street parking. A parking beat survey, completed in line with the Council's standards, has been submitted to demonstrate that there are enough spaces within a reasonable distance (<200m) of the site to cope with the increase in parked cars. This has been assessed by Highways, who raise no objection to the application. As such, the application is deemed to accord with Policies AC2 and AC3.

Equality Implications

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:-

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Officers have taken this into account and given due regard to this statutory duty, and the matters specified in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 in the determination of this application.

There are no known equality implications arising directly from this development.

Conclusion

The application is deemed contrary to Policy CO1 of the Local Plan and relevant guidance within the NPPF. The extended use of the centre would result in noise and disturbance due to the increased comings and goings which would be detrimental to neighbourhood amenity. On this basis the application is recommended for refusal.

REASON FOR REFUSAL

The extension of the religious education centre is contrary to Policies CO1 of the Coventry Local Plan 2016 and guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework in that the site is situated in close proximity to residential properties and it is considered that the disturbance arising from comings and goings associated with the education centre and the intensity of the use would result in significant harm to the amenities enjoyed by nearby residential occupiers

