Barking and Dagenham Council
Development Control Board

Date: 4 September 2017

Application Number: 17/00480/FUL
Ward: Eastbrook

Reason for Referral to DCB as set out in Part 2, Chapter 9 of the Council Constitution:
The application is recommended for approval and is contrary to policy in that it would involve the loss of an employment use in a Locally Significant Industrial Site.

Address: Part of Becon House, Rainham Road South, Dagenham

Development: Change of use of part of warehouse to place of worship (D1).

Applicant: Mr M M Ali

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Title: Development Management Officer
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Summary:
The application site is located on Rainham Road South, Dagenham within the Sterling Industrial Estate/Wantz Road Locally Significant Industrial Site. This application seeks permission for the change of use of part of a warehouse in Becon House to a place of worship (Use Class D1).

The space is owned by Blutex and forms a small part of a larger warehouse that is used for archive storage. A site visit confirmed that there is space in the main warehouse to store these files and the proposal would involve no loss of employment.

The owner of Blutex has confirmed that worshippers would be able to use their 42 parking spaces with the exception of five parking spaces which will be required by Blutex employees between 9am-5pm Monday to Saturday.

The proposed hours of use are 6:30am to 11:00pm. The estimated number of visitors would range between 20-80 during a standard week and up to 150 for the Eid morning prayer twice a year. It is not anticipated that the use would have an adverse affect on nearby businesses due to the associated car parking facilities, the lack of openings in the external façade which should retain sound and the location of the premises at the edge of the industrial area. The site is separated from the nearest residential properties on the opposite side of Rainham Road South by the busy carriageway and is situated in a mixed commercial/residential area where noise levels are generally higher than in a purely residential street.

Four objections were received relating to the need for the facility, the loss of employment land and noise and car parking concerns. The responses came from a local businessman and one nearby resident plus two residents who lived some distance from the site. At that time the applicant had not clarified the extent of the car parking provision for the premises.

The proposal is contrary to the Local Plan due to it involving the loss of an employment
use in a Locally Significant Industrial Site. However, the proposal would only involve the
loss of a small area of the existing warehouse which is currently used for archive storage
and this could be accommodated elsewhere in the warehouse. There would be no loss of
employment to the existing operator. It is therefore considered that the proposal would not
be materially harmful to the employment function of the estate and would not be harmful to
amenity or result in highway safety concerns.

**Recommendation:**

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The development permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from
   the date of this permission.
   
   **Reason:** To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as
   amended by S.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The use hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following
   approved plans: 17110_099A, 17110_099B and 17110_099D.

   **Reason:** For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. No external amplification or loud speaker system shall be placed on or used beyond
   any walls, roof or roof structures of the building.

   **Reason:** To safeguard the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and to comply
   with policies BP8 and BP11 of the Borough Wide Development Policies DPD 2011.

4. The car parking areas indicated on drawing No. 17110_099D shall be marked out
   prior to the commencement of the use hereby approved and thereafter retained
   permanently for the accommodation of vehicles of users of the premises with the
   exception of 5 spaces which may be used by employees of the adjacent BLUTEX
   warehouse, as indicated in blue on the location plan submitted with the application,
   between the hours of 9am and 5pm Monday to Saturday.

   **Reason:** To ensure that sufficient off-street parking areas are provided and not to
   prejudice the free flow of traffic or conditions of general safety along the adjoining
   highway in accordance with policy BR9 of the Borough Wide Development Policies
   Development Plan Document.

5. The use hereby permitted shall not take place other than between the hours of
   6:30am and 11:00pm.

   **Reason:** To prevent the use causing any undue disturbance to occupants of
   neighbouring properties at unreasonable hours and in accordance with policy BP8

6. Prior to the use commencing a secondary emergency exit shall be provided
   connecting the proposed place of worship and the existing warehouse.

   **Reason:** To ensure there are sufficient exit routes out of the space in case of
   emergency.
1. **Introduction and Description of Development**

1.1 The application site (102m²), which is currently used for the storage of archive files, forms part of a warehouse owned by Blutex located on the western side of Rainham Road South. The building includes Gold’s Gym and is part of the Sterling Industrial Estate. This side of Rainham Road South is mainly industrial in nature although on the opposite side of the road there are residential properties and a petrol filling station and hand car wash and valeting centre.

1.2 The application seeks planning permission to change the use of this storage space to a place of worship (Use Class D1).

2. **Background**

2.1 None relevant.

3. **Consultations**

3.1 a) Neighbours/Publicity

31 letters were sent to the surrounding neighbouring premises and 4 site notices were posted along Rainham Road South on 27 March 2017. 4 responses were received objecting to the proposal and a petition was received from the applicant in support of the proposal with 380 signatures. The people who have signed the petition included their addresses and it shows that there are a mix of both local residents and those who live slightly further afield. It is not clear, however, if they work locally.

Objections were received from the owner of Units 16/17 Sterling Industrial Estate and the occupier of 392 Rainham Road South both within close proximity to the application site. Two further objections were received from the occupiers of 184 Ilchester Road and 19 Central Park Avenue which are a significant distance from the application site.

The objections received were based on the following issues:

- The site is located in a Locally Significant Industrial Estate, protected for commercial and employment and should remain that way;
- Proposal is not just for staff employed within the estate;
- Proposal offers no on-site parking and there is already considerable parking pressure on the entrance roads adjacent Gold’s Gym;
  - Following these comments the applicant has confirmed the availability of on-site parking as discussed later in the report
- No opening times, estimated number of users or catchment areas submitted;
  - The applicant has provided these details as discussed later in the report and opening times have been discussed with the applicant and included as a condition
- The need for this use is not proven due to another facility 0.4 miles away;
  - This refers to the place of worship at 539 Rainham Road South which is located 0.3 miles from the application site. This, similarly, is a small
property and would not be capable of hosting a significant number of worshippers.

- Applicant has operated illegal facility for number of years in nearby Sterling Works and would be unlikely to comply with conditions if approved;
- Concerns regarding increase of noise in the area

Following clarification regarding the proposed car parking, 14 further letters were sent on 4 July 2017 to commercial premises adjoining the car parking area. No responses were received.

b) Transport Development Management Team

The Transport Officer is satisfied with the level of parking provided and raises no objections.

d) Environmental Health Team

No objections subject to conditions restricting the hours of operation to between 7:00 and 23:00 on any day and to prohibit the external amplification or use of a loud speaker system which would be placed on or used beyond any walls, roof or roof structures of the building.

4. Local Finance Considerations

4.1 The application is not subject to the Mayor of London or Council’s Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

5. Equalities Considerations

5.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it in the exercise of its functions. The proposed change of use would provide a useful space for local residents and workers to pray which would advance equality of opportunity in respect of the protected characteristics of race and religion as there is a lack of such facilities in the eastern part of the Borough. It is considered that there are no specific negative impacts of the change of use on the groups identified in Section 149(7) of the Equality Act 2010.

6. Analysis

6.1 Principle of Use

6.1.1 This application seeks permission for the change of use of part of Becon House to a place of worship.

6.1.2 The site is located within the Sterling Industrial Estate/Wantz Road Locally Significant Industrial Site. Core Strategy Policy CE3 states that the first objective is to safeguard employment areas to retain and encourage employment opportunities in the borough. Policy CE4 of the Core Strategy aims to ensure that designated employment areas comprise an appropriate mix of employment uses including B1 (Light Industry), B2 (General Industry) and in certain locations B8 (Storage and Distribution).
6.1.3 Core Strategy Policy CC2 states that support will be given to proposals which lead to the provision of additional community facilities which should be sustainable and accessible by way of:

- Being located where they can be accessed on foot, bicycle or public transport, rather than only by car;
- Where possible, being developed as part of mixed-use developments so their facilities are better linked to housing, jobs, shopping, leisure and other local services, in order to minimise travel distances;
- Where possible, being located in close proximity to the community that the facility will serve.

6.1.4 The Council’s Planning Advice Note (PAN) 4 (Religious Meeting Places) states that the preferred location for places of worship should be in locations which are easily accessible by walking and cycling and which benefit from good transport links. The site has a PTAL rating of 3 which is moderate; however it is located only 0.4 miles from Dagenham East Station and is in close proximity to bus routes along Rainham Road South while also providing a substantial number of off-street parking spaces.

6.1.5 The guidance within PAN4 also states that proposals for places of worship within the Borough’s designated employment areas will not be permitted except in exceptional circumstances. Exceptions may be made subject to consideration being given to:

- The extent of the amount of vacant employment floorspace falling below 8% of the total existing employment space in the area;
- Car parking demands can be met within the curtilage of the development;
- And there would be no conflicts between the proposed use and the day to day operation of existing businesses in the area.

6.1.6 This application involves the change of use of 102m\(^2\) of a building with a total area of approximately 2,415m\(^2\). This is just 4% of the total floorspace. The storage space is currently owned by Blutex as part of the larger warehouse, but stores files rarely in use. A site visit confirmed that there is space in the main warehouse to store these files and there would be no loss of employment due to it being currently unused. This proposal involves the loss of employment space in a Locally Significant Industrial Site contrary to the Local Plan, however with regards to the proposed size and existing use of the storage space, there will be no reduction in employment numbers and it is considered that the proposal will not cause a loss of employment space which would adversely impact upon the functioning of the Sterling Industrial Estate.

6.1.7 The owner of Blutex has confirmed that there are 42 parking spaces within the curtilage of the application site which can be used by visitors to the proposed place of worship, including during times when the Blutex warehouse is in use and employees require parking spaces. The owner has stated that 5 parking spaces will be required between 9am-5pm Monday to Saturday for employees of Blutex and the Transport Officer was satisfied with this provision. 38 of the parking spaces are located to the south of the application site and four are towards the north, both accessed from Rainham Road South.
6.1.8 The application site is located at the edge of an industrial estate, which includes the large Golds Gym premises, which is likely to have activity from early morning to later at night due to the existing uses and businesses. The nature of the adjoining uses would also therefore be less sensitive to any comings and goings. The premises would be accessed by one door facing away from Rainham Road South and the external walls would contain no windows and hence noise should be relatively self-contained. It is not therefore considered that the use would be likely to result in any appreciable harm to neighbouring amenity.

6.2 Transport and Parking

6.2.1 The site has a moderate PTAL rating of 3 on a scale of 1 to 6 where 1 is very poor and 6 is excellent. The opening times and expected number of visitors submitted by the applicant advises that, at the maximum, the place of worship would hold up to 60-80 people for evening (Magrib) prayers, up to 50-60 for noon prayers (with the exception of Friday noon prayers which expects to hold up to 80), and up to 150 for twice annual Eid Morning Prayers (7-8am). It is also expected that the number of visitors will increase during Ramadan prayers (especially Friday midday prayers), however the applicant states this would not exceed the expected maximum visitors of 80.

6.2.2 The Planning Statement submitted with the application states that the place of worship would be used by the people who work within the area and adjoining Industrial Estates for praying purposes and so would not result in the generation of significant additional traffic to the area.

6.2.3 It is considered, however, that it is likely that there will be visitors to the proposed place of worship from further afield than stated in the Planning Statement. However the provision of 42 car parking spaces would provide sufficient off-street parking to cater for the needs of people visiting the premises and would not therefore result in highway congestion.

6.3 Visitor Numbers and Opening Hours

6.3.1 The applicant has provided estimated numbers of visitors ranging from 20-80 during a standard week and up to 150 for the Eid morning prayer twice a year (7-8am). Opening times have also been discussed with the applicant in relation to the Environmental Health Officer's (EHO) comments. As the gym opens at 6.30 it is considered appropriate to allow opening from this time rather than 7:00 as specified by the EHO. Officers agree with the EHO that 11:00pm would be an appropriate closing time.

6.3.2 Weekday prayers (7:30-8pm) during the summer, weekday prayers (8-9pm) during the winter, and Friday afternoon prayers (12:30-1:45pm) throughout the year are expected to be the busiest with 60-80 users. As stated above in paragraphs 6.1.8 and 6.2.3 it is not anticipated that the use would result in any material harm to amenity or interfere with business activity.

6.4 Conclusion

6.4.1 The proposed change of use would provide a useful place of worship for local residents and workers offering an accessible space for prayers throughout the week
in accordance with policy CC2. The place of worship would not impact upon local businesses due to its location at the edge of the industrial estate, the expected number of visitors and the provision of car parking to the north and south of the application site. It is not considered that the use would adversely affect residential amenity. The small loss of employment space would not impact on existing businesses and would not be harmful to the functioning of the estate.

Background Papers

- Planning Application File: [http://paplan.lbbd.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=ON4FXGBLM8M00](http://paplan.lbbd.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=ON4FXGBLM8M00)

- Local Plan Policy

Core Strategy

Policy CC2 – Social Infrastructure to Meet Community Needs
Policy CE3 – Safeguarding and Release of Employment Land
Policy CE4 – Mix and Balance of Uses within Designated Employment Areas

Borough Wide Development Policies DPD

Policy BR9 – Parking
Policy BR10 – Sustainable Transport
Policy BR13 – Noise Mitigation
Policy BP8 – Protecting Residential Amenity
Policy BP11 – Urban Design

Site Specific Allocations DPD (December 2010)

Planning Advice Note (PAN4) – Religious Meeting Places

London Plan – Policy 3.16: Protection and enhancement of social infrastructure

- National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance