



## PLANNING STATEMENT

**Site:** 45 Bury Mead Road  
Hitchin  
SG5 1RX

**For:** Hitchin Mosque

**Project Ref:** 25025

**Date:** August 2025

**Prepared by:**

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**RTPI**

Chartered Town Planners

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## **Appendices**

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## **Plans and Documents Accompanying the Application**

|                                                             |
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| PL-499 Revision A Existing and Proposed Location Site Plans |
| PL-500 Revision A Existing Ground Floor Plan Sheet 1 of 2   |
| PL-501 Revision A Existing Ground Floor Plan Sheet 2 of 2   |
| PL-502 Revision A Existing First Floor Plan                 |
| PL-503 Revision A Existing Roof Plan                        |
| PL-504 Revision A Existing Front and Side Elevations        |
| PL-505 Revision A Existing Rear and Side Elevations         |
| PL-600 Revision A Proposed Ground Floor Plan                |

|                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------|
| PL-601 Revision A Proposed First Floor Plan          |
| PL-602 Revision A Proposed Roof Plan                 |
| PL-603 Revision A Proposed Front and Side Elevations |
| PL-604 Revision A Proposed Rear and Side Elevations  |

1.0 **Introduction**

1.1 This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of our clients, the Hitchin Mosque, ("the applicants") in relation to a scheme to change the use of No 45 Bury Mead Road, Hitchin ("the site").

1.2 The description of development is as proposed:

*Change of use from Class E (g)(office and light industrial) to Class F.1(Mosque).*

1.3 Section 2.0 of this Statement provides a description of the site and its surroundings including any relevant planning history. Section 3.0 outlines the development proposals and Section 4.0 summarises the relevant policy considerations. Section 5.0 provides a review and analysis of the proposals against the relevant planning policy and Section 6.0 provides a conclusion.

## 2.0 **Site Context**

### **Site and Surroundings**

- 2.1 The application site is located on the northern side of Hitchin, a main settlement within North Hertfordshire, and extends to 0.11ha. The immediate surroundings are comprised of a mix of employment uses, reflective of this being a designated employment area. To the southwest of the site is a landscape buffer and residential development beyond.
- 2.2 The site itself is located on the southwestern side of Bury Mead Road and is comprised of a series of buildings serving as offices, light industrial workshop spaces and storage areas. The buildings are surrounded by hard surfacing.
- 2.3 The site benefits from two access points onto Bury Mead Road.
- 2.4 The 2025 Google Earth image below (Figure 1) shows the location of the site marked by a red dot, in relation to its wider context, and Figure 2 shows an enlarged view of the site outlined in red.



*Figure 1 Wider context of the site*



Figure 2 Enlarged view of the site

## Planning Designations

- 2.5 The site is located in a designated employment area.

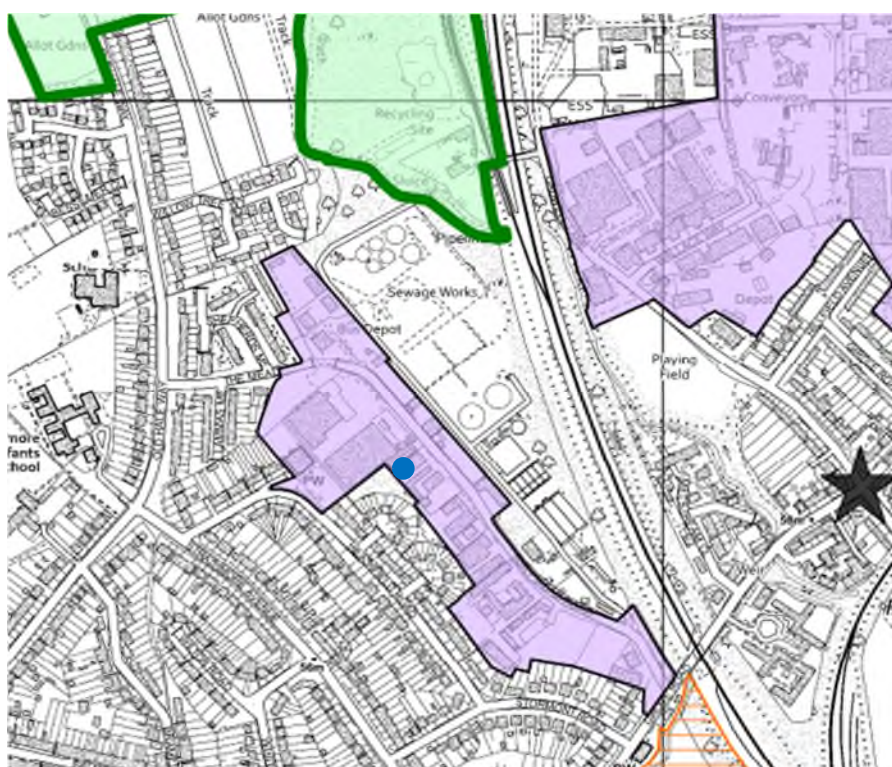


Figure 3 - Position of the site, marked in blue in relation to the employment area

- 2.6 The site is in Flood Zone 1 and has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea.
- 2.7 There is no relevant planning history associated with the site.



3.0 **Proposed Development**

3.1 Full planning permission for the following works:

*Change of use from Class E (g)(office and light industrial) to Class F.1(Mosque).*

3.2 The submission is supported by a series of existing and proposed plans, demonstrating how the mosque is proposed to be laid out, along with a Transport Statement demonstrating that there is no detrimental impact on highway safety.

3.3 The scheme involves the demolition of two disused storage buildings at the rear of the site.

3.4 The remaining buildings will be improved aesthetically with cladding, an increase in eaves height of the rear buildings and addition of flat roofs and domes. The flat roofs will incorporate green roofs and/or solar panels. The introduction of a landscaped garden in lieu of the removed buildings will connect the remaining buildings and create a shared space for use by the community.

3.5 The remaining hard surfaced area will provide 16no car parking spaces, cycle parking and refuse storage area.

3.6 The existing mosque timetable is attached at Appendix 1, and it is intended for this to remain the same at the new location.



*Figure 4 – Aerial image of the site*

#### 4.0 **Planning Policy**

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for development must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. At present the adopted Development Plan for the District comprises of:

- North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 8 November 2022)

4.2 Relevant policies from the North Hertfordshire Local Plan include:

- Policy SP1 (Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire)
- Policy SP2 (Settlement hierarchy and spatial distribution)
- Policy SP3 (Employment)
- Policy SP6 (Sustainable transport)
- Policy ETC1 (Appropriate Uses in Employment Areas)
- Policy T1 (Assessment of Transport Matters)
- Policy T2 (Parking)
- Policy D1 (Sustainable design)
- Policy D3 (Protecting living conditions)
- Policy HC1 (Community facilities)
- Policy NE4 (Biodiversity and geological sites)

#### **Supplementary Planning Documents**

4.3 The Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD 2011 is relevant to this proposal.

## National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024)

4.4 The National Planning Policy Framework was first published in 2012 and last updated in December 2024. It is an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications. In approaching decision-taking, the NPPF is clear that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should take a positive approach.

4.5 The following chapter is of particular relevance to this proposal.

### Chapter 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities

4.6 Paragraph 98 – *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;*
- (b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;*
- (c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;*
- (d) ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and*
- (e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.*

## 5.0 **Planning Assessment**

### **Principle of Development**

- 5.1 The mosque is currently located on Florence Street, Hitchin, which is a predominately residential area save for the mosque and the adjacent accident repair centre. That site has no on plot parking and has created some conflict over the years given the close proximity to existing dwellings in respect of parking constraints.
- 5.2 The community have therefore been actively looking for many years to re-locate to a location that is less sensitive to the nature of the use and the hours of operation.
- 5.3 Wishing to remain in Hitchin, close to their existing congregation, other residential locations are not considered to be appropriate. The nature of the town centre and the smaller historic buildings have not provided any suitable opportunities, also still being located in close proximity to residential properties contained in the upper floors and to the rear of the primary frontage.
- 5.4 This has therefore led to the consideration of sites located in employment areas, which also have the benefit of a more flexible internal arrangement to allow the building to be fit for the intended purpose, as opposed to constrained by the existing built form.
- 5.5 The site has been owned and occupied by Wilmond Engineering for many years and whilst still listed as their main address, the company is no longer trading and has had a reduced presence on the site for many years, dating back to circa 2016. Pre-pandemic it appears that site was only open for 2 days per week, following the pandemic the site has been largely disused and has remained closed.

- 5.6 The site has therefore been vacant for some time and there has been no interest in anyone taking on the building for alternative employment uses. This is likely to be due to the need for extensive refurbishment or re-development when compared to other comparable buildings that are available in Hitchin and/or other towns in North Hertfordshire.
- 5.7 The purchase of the site by the mosque brings with it an opportunity to bring the site back into meaningful use rather than it being left vacant for a further period of time, as required by ETC1(iv). Further it will bring with it employment, education and community facilities.
- 5.8 Policy HC1 supports new community facilities where they are of an appropriate scale to the local context, accessible by alternative modes of transport and meet an identified need.
- 5.9 Given the nature of the site, and the intended use of the existing buildings, it is considered that the use of the site as a mosque is of a scale that is appropriate to this context.
- 5.10 The need to relocate the existing mosque is a paramount consideration, as it will ensure that the community has the space it needs and will mitigate against the conflict of uses in its existing location, accordingly there is an identified need.
- 5.11 Subject to the consideration of transport implications below, it is considered that the proposal complies with HC1.
- 5.12 It is acknowledged that the site falls within an employment area whereby Policy ETC1 seeks to prevent the loss of employment uses, but it does provide for some exceptional circumstances, one of which is the vacancy of the unit and the ability to bring the property back into meaningful use.

- 5.13 The use of the site as a mosque is not an employment generating use, however, the site has been vacant for some time and this does provide an opportunity to bring this vacant site back into meaningful use and officers have acknowledged that employment areas are generally better suited to the associated impacts of places of worship, such as comings and goings of users, parking, noise etc compared to residential areas. It is also acknowledged that there are other places of worship in employment areas across the district, including Letchworth and Hitchin.
- 5.14 We welcome the Council's support for the re-location of the mosque and trust that they will agree that the principle of development in this location can be supported.

### **Character and Appearance**

- 5.15 Local Plan Policy D1 (Sustainable design) requires development proposals to respond positively to the site's local context.
- 5.16 As an employment area, there are a mix of styles and sizes of buildings, most are typical of an industrial type use and are in varying states of repair, including this site.
- 5.17 There is therefore no prevailing character, other than being large buildings invariably with frontage parking.
- 5.18 As set out above, it is intended to re-use most of the existing buildings on site. To the rear, the retained buildings will have their dated and tired roofs and associated steel frames removed, the brick walls will then be increased in height to meet the height of the front two storey building and finished with matching flat roofs. The addition of domes is symbolic to the Islamic faith as a symbol of the vault of heaven.

- 5.19 The completed structures will then be clad, to bring a uniformity to the overall building.
- 5.20 The creation of the flat roofs enables the addition of solar panels and/or green roofs adding a sustainability element to the overall scheme.
- 5.21 It is also proposed to incorporate new planting and a new communal garden within the core of the site. Whilst the garden will not be visible from the wider area, landscaping to the front parking area will soften the appearance of the site and create a more aesthetically pleasing finish than it is at present.
- 5.22 It is considered that the proposal offers the opportunity to enhance the public realm, reduce energy consumption through new insulation, promote sustainable technologies and incorporate new planting, as required by Policy D1.

### **Transport and Parking**

- 5.23 In respect of parking, the Council's SPD on Vehicle Parking at New Development states that under the 'Places of Worship' category the standard required is 1 car parking space per 10sqm of floor area. The floorspace proposed is approximately 1,817sqm therefore 181 spaces would be required. Using the Non-residential accessibility zones in the SPD the site falls within Zone 2 where the car parking provision allowed could be between 25 - 50% of unfettered demand. This means that between 45 and 90 spaces would be an appropriate range to accommodate the use. These are, however, maximum parking standards not minimum standards, regard therefore must be given to the nature of the use proposed and the location. 16no parking spaces can be accommodated on the site and it is likely that there will be some on-street parking available in the early mornings, evenings

and weekends outside of normal working hours which, if required, would supplement the on-site provision.

- 5.24 The general usage of the mosque, as can be seen in the supporting timetable, while frequent, is relatively low at most times, the exception is the main prayer period on a Friday lunch time where up to 210 people can attend across two separate prayer sessions. The existing mosque similarly has a high attendance on a Friday lunchtime and whilst it relies on on-street parking, it does not create a highway safety issue. It is for a short time period (typically less than 2hrs) throughout the week and as general rule members of the congregation travel together or walk to the mosque thus reducing the reliance on the car and parking spaces.
- 5.25 Where on street parking does already occur, it is unlikely that the congregation will displace this parking, as it will likely have been present from earlier in the day, such that the inability to park near to the mosque readily will dissuade people from driving and encourage the use of other non-car modes of transport.
- 5.26 The application is supported by a Transport Statement which includes a parking stress survey. The survey demonstrates that there is sufficient on street parking provision during the key Friday periods where there is the most pressure on on-street parking.
- 5.27 This is also a marked improvement on the existing site. Parking is only available on Florence Street and conflicts with the residential uses of the area that similarly relies on the on-street parking provision. Moving the mosque away from this area will be a marked improvement for local residents.
- 5.28 The proposal seeks to provide cycle parking provision within the rear car park. The site also has good access to bus stops, with provision on Old Hale Way

and Stormont Road, both of which are within easy walking distance of the site and provide connections into other parts of Hitchin and wider villages.

5.29 It is therefore considered that this is a sustainable location whereby non-car modes of transport can be accessed readily. The congregation is also largely from the Hitchin area rather than from further afield, such that the need to rely on the private car is reduced. The supporting Transport Statement shows that the existing congregation largely walk to the Mosque rather than relying on alternative modes of transport.

5.30 It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with policies T1 and T2.

### **Other Material Considerations**

#### Neighbour Amenity

5.31 To the rear of the site are residential dwellings, as such regard must be given to the impact on their amenity that would potentially arise as a result of this proposal, in accordance with Policy D3.

5.32 It is considered that the separation distance and natural vegetation between the site and those properties assists in reducing any impact that may arise, whilst regard must also be given to the nature of the employment area generally. The mosque is a quiet more friendly neighbour than industrial uses, such that it is considered there will be a reduced impact on those properties as a result of the proposed scheme.

5.33 As can be seen from the attached timetable, there are no anticipated noisy events proposed. The space is not designed for parties or events that require amplified noise, it is a place of quiet reflection and prayer, with an element of education for children.

- 5.34 It is not therefore considered that there will be any detrimental impact arising from the proposal and that it would accord with Policy D3.

#### Ecology and BNG

- 5.35 The scheme does not result in the loss of any habitats or landscaped areas, such that there will be no ecological impact, or loss of any habitat units.
- 5.36 As a result, the proposal would be exempt from BNG requirements, however, the introduction of green roofs and landscaping will result in biodiversity net gain overall.

#### **Climate Change and Sustainability**

- 5.37 The Local Authority published their sustainability SPD in September 2024; it seeks to promote the three pillars of sustainable development set out in the NPPF and respond to the declared climate emergency.
- 5.38 In the strictest sense, the SPD does not apply to this proposed development, whilst it is a change of use, the proposal does not incorporate more than 250sqm of new non-residential floor space.
- 5.39 That said, this proposal does seek to re-use the existing building which reduces the proposals carbon footprint. The cladding of the exterior of the building will improve the energy efficiency of the building itself, whilst it is also proposed to include a green roof and solar panels to further enhance the green credentials of the proposal.

6.0 **Conclusion**

- 6.1 This planning statement demonstrates that the proposed change of use of the site to a mosque complies with Local Plan policy and will bring this vacant site back into use.
- 6.2 As set out, the mosque have struggled in their existing location on Florence Street and have been searching for new premises for some 20 years, both to enable their offering to the community to grow and to remove the conflict of being located in a primarily residential location.
- 6.3 Having explored numerous areas within Hitchin, the most preferable in terms of property scope and impact are the employment areas. This site has been vacant for some time and given the extent of refurbishment required, is less appealing to the market than other sites that are currently on the market. It is therefore likely that the property will remain vacant and continue to fall into further decline.
- 6.4 The site presents an opportunity for this new community facility to be provided and to support the mosque's community within Hitchin.
- 6.5 The character of the area is varied in its form, such that the proposed alterations to the buildings are not considered to be out of keeping, but characteristic of the proposed use. The scheme also seeks to optimise the sustainability credentials and improve the aesthetic appearance of the street scene.
- 6.6 Parking is considered to be appropriate given the nature of the proposed use and the accessibility of the site by non-car modes of transport. Where on street parking is already present, this will naturally be self-policing and encourage the use of alternative modes of transport to the site. It is not

therefore considered that there is a highway safety issue arising and that the parking proposed is adequate.

- 6.7 There is not considered to be any impact on residential amenity, and the proposal seeks to deliver a biodiversity net gain.
- 6.8 The mosque would welcome the support of the Local Planning Authority in bringing this site forward, as an essential step in their longevity.



**APPENDIX 1**  
**Mosque Timetable**

# Hitchin Mosque Timetable

| Time  | Monday                                           |                                                   | Tuesday                                          |                                                   | Wednesday                                         | Thursday                                          | Friday                                               | Saturday                                          |                                                   | Sunday                                             |                                                         |  |                                                   |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------------------|
| 00:00 | Mosque Closed                                    |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                    |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                     | Mosque Closed                                     | Mosque Closed                                        | Mosque Closed                                     |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                      |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 01:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 02:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 03:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 04:00 | Morning Prayer 20 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 7  |                                                   | Morning Prayer 20 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 7  |                                                   | Morning Prayer 20 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 7   | Morning Prayer 20 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 7   | Morning Prayer 20 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 7      | Morning Prayer 20 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 9   |                                                   | Morning Prayer 20 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 9    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 05:00 | Mosque Closed                                    |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                    |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                     | Mosque Closed                                     | Mosque Closed                                        | Mosque Closed                                     |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                      |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 06:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 07:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 08:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 09:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 10:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      | Kids Arabic classes<br>20 students                |                                                   | Kids Arabic classes<br>20 students                 | Once a month<br>Sisters Circle<br>Mosque<br>Attendee 20 |  |                                                   |
| 11:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 12:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
|       |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 13:00 | Noon-Prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 12    |                                                   | Noon-Prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 12    |                                                   | Noon-Prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 12     | Noon-Prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque attendees 12     | Friday prayer (1) 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 120 | Noon-Prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 20     | Monthly talks<br>Mosque attendees 25              | Noon-Prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 20      |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 14:00 | Empty - Open                                     |                                                   | Empty - Open                                     |                                                   | Empty - Open                                      | Empty - Open                                      | Friday prayer (2) 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 90  | Empty - Open                                      |                                                   | By monthly Board meetings<br>attendees 18          |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 15:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   | Empty - Open                                         |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 16:00 |                                                  |                                                   |                                                  |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                    |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 17:00 | Kids Arabic classes<br>20 students               |                                                   | Kids Arabic classes<br>20 students               |                                                   | Afternoon Prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 8 | Afternoon Prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 8 | Afternoon Prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 8    | Afternoon Prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 8 |                                                   | Afternoon Prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 10 | Afternoon Prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 10      |  |                                                   |
| 18:00 |                                                  | Afternoon Prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 8 |                                                  | Afternoon Prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 8 |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   | Afternoon Prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 8 |                                                    |                                                         |  | Afternoon Prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 8 |
| 19:00 |                                                  | Empty - Open                                      |                                                  | Empty - Open                                      |                                                   |                                                   |                                                      |                                                   | Empty - Open                                      |                                                    |                                                         |  | Empty - Open                                      |
| 20:00 | Sun set prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 12 |                                                   | Sun set prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 12 |                                                   | Sun set prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 12  | Sun set prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 12  | Sun set prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 12     | Sun set prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 15  |                                                   | Sun set prayer 20 Minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 15   |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 21:00 | Empty - Open                                     |                                                   | Empty - Open                                     |                                                   | Empty - Open                                      | Empty - Open                                      | Empty - Open                                         | Empty - Open                                      |                                                   | Empty - Open                                       |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 22:00 | Night prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 13   |                                                   | Night prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 13   |                                                   | Night prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 13    | Night prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 13    | Night prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 13       | Night prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 15    |                                                   | Night prayer 30 minutes<br>Mosque Attendees 15     |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 23:00 | Mosque Closed                                    |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                    |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                     | Mosque Closed                                     | Mosque Closed                                        | Mosque Closed                                     |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                      |                                                         |  |                                                   |
| 00:00 | Mosque Closed                                    |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                    |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                     | Mosque Closed                                     | Mosque Closed                                        | Mosque Closed                                     |                                                   | Mosque Closed                                      |                                                         |  |                                                   |