

## New Sunderland mosque sparks widespread complaints



Former councillor Paul Dixon and Patricia Thomas with some of the protesters at Sunderland Civic Centre about plans to sell the old Council depot for use as a mosque.

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COMPLAINTS from across Sunderland have now been registered on the city council's website against a proposed mosque.

The controversial proposal to convert an old transport depot on St Mark's Road, Millfield, into an Islamic place of worship has sparked a heated debate in the community as to whether it should go ahead.

If the plans get the green light, they will involve the demolition of single-storey offices, the erection of parapet walls and two brick-faced columns.

But many of the neighbours have objected because they believe it will result in an increase in noise and traffic.

The application, which was submitted by the Pakistan Islamic Centre, has now drawn more than 1,000 comments on the council's website.

But while many are from people who live in Millfield, there are also objections from people in Seaburn, Southwick and Hylton.

After initially submitting their plan, it is believed the application was revised to allow more room for parking.

The campaign against the mosque has also seen local politicians getting involved with ex-Lib Dem councillor Paul Dixon attending a protest in January.

At the time he said: "All credit has to go to the residents on this and it's been a difficult time for them to get all the objections in."

"People are concerned about noise, traffic and parking. There's also the impact on the character of the area."

A Sunderland City Council spokesman said: "A planning application for change of use of a vehicle storage depot at St Mark's Road to provide a place of worship, community and education centre has been received by the city council's Development Management Section.

"This application will be considered on its merits having regard to national and local planning policies and other material considerations.

"It is anticipated that the application will be considered at a meeting of the Development Control (South Sunderland) Sub-Committee on Tuesday, July 31, in the civic centre.

"Public consultation has been undertaken and interested parties have the opportunity to make representations through the planning process."

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