

Weston Town Council address the NSC Planning Committee
considering the mosque application on 18 February 2026

- * 00:00:00 – The first slot is for the town council, Western Town Council.
- * 00:00:15 – And we have with us the chair of the Town Council's planning committee, Councillor Caroline Reynolds.
- * 00:00:23 – So, Caroline, you've got four minutes and I'll let you know when there's 30 seconds remaining so you can start to wind up.
- * 00:00:31 – And then at four minutes that'll be it.
- * 00:00:33 – Okay?
- * 00:00:34 – Yes, thank you, Chair.
- * 00:00:36 – We should stick to time.
- * 00:00:38 – Off you go.
- * 00:00:39 – Firstly, I'd like to remind us that the mosque and Islamic education centre have been at 16 Waterloo St. For more than 20 years and the property next door was acquired more than five years ago.
- * 00:00:53 – Both units have been used for worship.
- * 00:00:56 – This is not new at present.
- * 00:00:59 – Particularly on Fridays, prayers are relayed into several separate rooms as there is no single room large enough to accommodate all of the worshippers.
- * 00:01:10 – The words of the Imam are heard over speakers throughout the buildings.
- * 00:01:16 – They are not heard outside nor is the call to prayer.
- * 00:01:22 – Whilst we wish to encourage retailers to the centre of Western Super Mare, at my last count there were eight empty units in Martineau street and around the corner in the high street, all owned by the same landlord.
- * 00:01:37 – So changing the use of these two is not a significant loss.
- * 00:01:43 – One of the objections raised has been to parking in the locality.
- * 00:01:48 – This is often an issue around places of worship and schools, especially in town centres.
- * 00:01:57 – Here, volunteers from the mosque don high vis jackets at busy times and supervise parking within sight of the rear entrance in Palmer Street.
- * 00:02:09 – They have also been known to call someone out and pray to move a car.
- * 00:02:14 – An embarrassment to all.
- * 00:02:18 – Mention has been made of the segregation of women and men.
- * 00:02:22 – Men and women both enter the mosque through the rear entrance in Palm street, bringing in prams and push chairs.
- * 00:02:31 – But for the women's modesty, there is a women only entrance in Waterloo street so the women may feel more comfortable when going in and when washing in preparation for prayer.
- * 00:02:45 – During prayer, Muslims stand shoulder to shoulder and also they prostrate themselves before Allah.
- * 00:02:55 – It is considered very uncomfortable and distracting to do this in mixed sex company.
- * 00:03:03 – Another concern raised over the planning application has been the inclusion of a laundry room.
- * 00:03:10 – It is a custom of Islam to burn bodies quickly.
- * 00:03:14 – The room would receive the dead.
- * 00:03:16 – Then trained members of the mosque would wash and gown the body which would then be held in a freezer until the burial can take place.
- * 00:03:25 – This procedure usually takes less than 24 hours and is free to all Muslims.
- * 00:03:32 – Other burying expenses are covered by the community if anyone is unable to pay.
- * 00:03:40 – Members of the mosque stressed to me that this is a community centre open to all.
- * 00:03:47 – They have a good relationship with the Christian church.

* 00:03:49 – Opposite, there is a library for non Muslims and the building is open to all their neighbours.

* 00:03:57 – They also highlighted the economic value to our town of welcoming Muslims from around the area and attracting them to return and use our facilities.

* 00:04:09 – Finally, whilst I personally considered plans demonstrate a vast improvement to the external appearance of the buildings, members told me that it is the internal alterations that are most necessary and they are open to suggestions on the external design.

* 00:04:27 – I hope that this application needs your approval.

* 00:04:34 – Thank you very much.

* 00:04:35 – Thank you for sticking to time.