

Date – July 2025

Applicant – Holy Law Congregation

Applicant Address – C/O Agent – Gold Sketch Studios Ltd

Proposal – Planning for Perimeter Security Fencing

Site Address – Holy Law Congregation, Bury Old Road, Prestwich, M25 0EX

Introduction

This statement is to be read in conjunction with the planning application and plans for the erection of security fencing at the noted site (Holy Law Congregation, Bury Old Road).

Background

Over the years there has been a significant rise in the security risk faced by public religious institutions. As a result of this high risk, appropriate building security is necessary. More information about the current risk level can be found here - <https://cst.org.uk/research/cst-publications>. The security of the building on this site is of particular importance due to the synagogue catering to a soup kitchen, daily prayer and prior to the pandemic, a community centre for all ages specifically the young and the elderly.

Planning History

Application Reference 67082 – Permission was granted in October 2021 for the erection of security fencing at the front and left boundary of the site.

Proposal

The proposal includes plans to erect fencing to the rear and right-hand boundary of the site. The fencing will match with, and will continue seamlessly from, the existing fencing found at the front and left side boundary of the site.

Security

In recent years many synagogues, schools and other religious buildings have installed security measures such as perimeter fencing. This fencing is now ever-present in the Prestwich area of Bury. The fence style is uniform across all sites in the area including this one and the routes of egress and ingress are commonly understood by all users.

Timing

Due to the recent heightened security risk faced by the Jewish Community, there has been an increase in funds available for community security. This means that there is a financial opportunity with available funds to be spent specifically on building security. The funds have to be spent within

the financial year in order to keep the money from being redistributed. There was therefore a one-off opportunity to increase the security of the site and minimise the risks laid out on the CST's website.

HERITAGE ELEMENT

Site: The property, despite not being a statutorily listed building or located within a Conservation Area, is nevertheless acknowledged for its special architectural or historic interest on the Council's Draft Local List. It has been formally designated as a non-designated heritage asset, a classification based on its age, rarity, historical importance, and community value.

In line with paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local planning authorities must consider the impact of any proposed development on the significance of such non-designated heritage assets. This necessitates a balanced judgment, weighing the extent of any harm or loss against the asset's inherent significance.

Dating back to 1933, the Holy Law Synagogue on Bury Old Road was the first synagogue in Prestwich designed specifically for its purpose. Its congregation initially met in a converted church at Bank View, Red Bank, from 1901. In 1978, a merger with South Broughton Synagogue established the current Holy Law South Broughton Congregation. Built around 1933 on the former site of Howcaster Cottage, the building was Prestwich's premier and largest purpose-built synagogue. Chief Rabbi Dr. J. H. Hertz formally opened and consecrated it on September 15, 1935. The congregation is now recognized as part of the "North Manchester" Jewish community.

Currently, the site comprises a large prominent main synagogue building, an ancillary hall and Beis Medrash building with separate access and a two storey building, known as Howcaster Cottage, occupied as offices and a care takers **dwelling fronting directly on to Bury Old Road**.

Proposal: The project focuses solely on installing new security fencing around half of the site's perimeter. This scheme makes no alterations to the main building. Furthermore, the installation of the fencing requires no changes to the existing landscaped areas or trees. The new fencing is strategically positioned to be nearly imperceptible from the street. It sits behind the current boundary fencing, purposefully avoiding all existing landscaped areas and trees. The proposal, therefore, is limited to the placement of new boundary security fencing at key points around the site.

Planning Consideration: The application site is not situated within a Conservation Area, nor does it contain any listed buildings. Bury Council recognizes the importance of local heritage, acknowledging that many buildings from the 16th to 20th centuries contribute significantly to the borough's unique character and should be recorded and protected even if they are not of national interest.

The main Synagogue building holds architectural and historical value for the local area. While it lacks national protection, it is included in Bury's Draft Local List as a building of special architectural or historic interest, categorized as a "Non-designated heritage asset". Buildings within the borough are assessed against criteria adapted from Historic England Advice Note 7, Local Heritage Listing.

For the Holy Law Synagogue, the relevant criteria for local listing include:

- **Age and Rarity:** Buildings constructed between 1919 and 1939 that exemplify the style or a popular building type of that period may be considered.
- **Historic Interest:** The building may be included if it is a fine or rare example illustrating social, economic, or industrial history, or an important aspect of Bury's cultural history, or a good example of town planning.

- **Architectural Interest:** Buildings that showcase a style unique to the local area can also be included.

The site occupies a prominent position on Bury Old Road, a significant arterial route connecting Bury Town to Manchester City Centre. The development of the site, on land previously associated with Howcaster Cottage and Singleton Lodge, symbolizes the growth of suburban residential areas and their supporting infrastructure along primary routes leading into Manchester City Centre.

Character Impact Assessment: The proposed perimeter fencing, located at the rear and right-hand side of the site, does not alter the appearance of the existing properties. The proposal does not involve any changes to the existing structure, fabric, or architectural features of the buildings. Consequently, the architectural merit and heritage value of the existing properties are entirely preserved.

The new security fencing in these areas has a limited impact on the overall appearance of the site. These sections of perimeter fencing, particularly along Ravens Place private access road at the rear, are further removed from public view. Therefore, they are considered to have a less significant visual impact on the non-designated heritage asset buildings and the surrounding street scene. The fencing in these areas is largely concealed by existing trees and foliage.

Summary

This statement supports a planning application for the installation of new security fencing at Holy Law Congregation on Bury Old Road, Prestwich. The proposal specifically addresses the rear and right-hand boundaries of the site, seamlessly extending the existing security fencing already present at the front and left sides. This initiative is a direct response to the heightened security risks currently faced by public religious institutions, particularly given the synagogue's role as a community hub providing services such as a soup kitchen, daily prayer, and prior to the pandemic, a community centre for all ages.

The Holy Law Synagogue, a significant local landmark, holds recognition as a non-designated heritage asset on Bury Council's Draft Local List due to its age, rarity, historic interest, and community value. While not statutorily listed or within a Conservation Area, its heritage significance requires careful consideration under paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which mandates a balanced judgment regarding any potential harm or loss against the asset's inherent significance.

The proposed fencing is designed to have a minimal visual impact. It avoids alterations to the main building, existing landscaped areas, foliage, or trees. Crucially, the sections of fencing along the rear and right-hand boundaries are positioned to be largely out of public view and are further screened by existing trees and foliage, ensuring the architectural merit and heritage value of the site are preserved.

Given the critical need to enhance security for the congregation and the wider community, and the limited visual impact of the proposal on this non-designated heritage asset, it is concluded that the scheme effectively balances necessary security improvements with the preservation of the site's special architectural and historic interest. The availability of specific funding for this security upgrade also presents a timely opportunity to mitigate identified risks.