

UK rejects new 'mega mosque' plans in London

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London: The UK government has rejected plans by an Islamic group to build a new 290,000-square-foot "mega mosque" in east London, citing a "conflict" with authorities' local plans for the brought.

Tablighi Jamaat's mosque with 190-foot minarets near the Olympic Park would have accommodated up to 9,300 worshippers in two main gender-segregated prayer halls and a further 2,000 in a separate hall.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has dismissed appeals against the refusal of planning permission for the mosque in Newham area of the city.

A DCLG spokesperson said: "The decision was based on concerns that include local housing provision and conflict with the council's local plan for the borough.â€•

"It also took account of the evidence from all parties and is in line with the council's original determination and advice from the independent planning inspector on the main appeal."

The project proposed by Tablighi Jamaat - referred to by a number of names such as Abbey Mills Markaz, London Markaz, Masjid-e-Ilyas or the Riverine Centre - was rejected by the local Newham Council back in December, 2012, with councillors saying the building was too large and would harm their plans for a mixed-use neighbourhood.

Tablighi Jamaat had appealed, taking the application to a three-week public inquiry last year.

The inquiry inspector's report was submitted to the DCLG in January this year and the decision this week concludes a long-drawn battle over the project.

The group had bought the site in 1996, which was a chemical works until it was decommissioned in the late 1980s.

A temporary mosque known as the Riverine Centre, with a capacity of 2,500 people, was built on the site soon after.

The new mosque was to have been its new headquarters with residential facilities, a library, visitor centre and sports centre, besides the mosque.

The conservative Tablighi Jamaat has been accused of links with Islamic radicalism, which is hotly disputed, with many experts saying it is peaceful and non-political.

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