



CAMBRIDGE CENTRAL MOSQUE





FIRST FRIDAY PRAYER 2019



# CAMBRIDGE CENTRAL MOSQUE

## Executive Summary

SINCE OPENING ITS doors in December 2019, the Cambridge Central Mosque has sought to transform Muslim and other communities by presenting an ideal image of Islamic culture in the heart of one of the world's great university cities.

Muslims are frequently misunderstood and misrepresented. By building a mosque according to the highest global architectural standards, and welcoming a diverse spectrum of male and female worshippers from every ethnic group and Islamic point of view, the Cambridge Central Mosque provides a symbol to the media and the world of the religion's breadth, tolerance, and capacity to contribute to modern culture and society.

The mosque's unique design, incorporating a harmonious fusion of Islamic and English architectural themes, was chosen in consultation with representatives of the local residents' organization and the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Architecture.

Maintaining the structure, paying staff, and operating a wide range of cultural programmes, requires an annual budget of approximately nine hundred thousand pounds. It is proposed that a permanent endowment be established to generate an income to support the mosque for its long-term future viability.

﴿وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا﴾

*The mosques are for God; so don't call upon anyone other than God.*

QUR'AN 72:18



## Who are the Muslims of Cambridge?

THE HISTORIC UNIVERSITY city of Cambridge is known to everyone. This celebrated urban area, with its eight-hundred year old tradition of learning, is home to an increasing number of people of Muslim background. The 2011 census identified 6,361 Muslim usual residents, with many students and visitors needing to be added to this number.

### MUSLIM ETHNICITIES IN CAMBRIDGE (2011 CENSUS) PERCENTAGES

White 10.84	Arab 15.7
South Asian 59.1	Mixed 5.19
Black 3.8	Other 5.37

This number is growing in line with the approximately 40% increase in British Muslim numbers reported every ten years.

In the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University, located in the same city, there are approximately two thousand Muslim students and faculty members. To this number one must add the students at the private English language schools, together with employees in research, IT development, the restaurant sector, Addenbrookes Biomedical Campus, and a range of other career pathways.

The first Friday prayers were held in Cambridge's Pembroke College in the early 1960s. From the 1970s the community purchased a range of houses and other structures for use as mosques. These quickly became inadequate, obliging worshippers in all seasons to pray in corridors and on the street. This scenario did no favours to Islam in the eyes of neighbours, the City Council and the University.



# The Cambridge Mosque: A Short History

IN CONSULTATION WITH local communities, the City Planners, and University stakeholders, a site for a new purpose-built mosque was bought in April 2008 at 309-313 Mill Road. This was located in an accessible city district with a significant Muslim population. The sum paid for the land was four million pounds, which was secured with an Islamic loan, which was paid in full within three years.

In 2009 a global design competition was held. The jury, which included University representation, unanimously selected the design bid by **Marks Barfield**, the London-based designers of world-famous landmarks including the London Eye and the Kew Walkway.

On May 1 2013 the Cambridge City Council granted formal planning permission for the construction of the facility. The official decision was agreed unanimously by the City councillors and the Mayor, with not one councillor registering an objection.

One councillor, **John Hipkin**, remarked that the new building 'will be a major addition to the treasure house of architecture that is Cambridge'.

A range of donors stepped forward to cover the build cost of approximately 27 million pounds. The largest donors were from the Republic of Türkiye, including engineering firm **Yapi Merkezi**, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and other agencies.

Following the selection of the main contractors, Belfast-based **Gilbert Ash** (builders of the new British Embassy in Paris), construction began, and was completed within budget and on schedule, enabling an opening ceremony to take place on 5 December 2019. Attendees included Turkish president **HE Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**, Trust president **Yusuf Islam**, ministerial representatives from the British government, local bishops and senior clergy, Jewish representatives, and significant donors and community stakeholders. The opening ceremony attracted much attention from national and international media and the coverage was overwhelmingly favourable.

﴿ إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى  
الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴾

*The only ones to frequent and maintain the mosques of God are those who believe in God and the last day, and who practice prayer and give alms for the poor and fear none but God: then they may be among the guided.*

QUR'AN 90:18





## The Cambridge Mosque Trust

THE MOSQUE IS owned and operated by the Cambridge Mosque Trust, a registered UK Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered 1164931. The charity's independently audited accounts are available for download at the website of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales.

The Chair of the Trust is currently **Dr Tim Winter (Abdal Hakim Murad)**, lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge. The Patron-President is **Yusuf Islam**.



## Community Spaces

IN ADDITION TO a prayer hall holding a thousand men and women, the Cambridge Central Mosque offers the following features:

- Fully-equipped mortuary
- Car park for 76 vehicles, including charge points for electric vehicles
- Teaching Room for meetings of up to 120 seated people. This versatile space is used for exhibitions, weddings, conferences, prayer overflow, and many other functions.
- Cafeteria and fully-equipped kitchen. This popular social space is an informal hub for meetings, and can be used for weddings, banquets, and other more formal occasions. The space extends into an outdoor area during summer months.
- The complex includes two four-bedroom houses for imams.
- The women's area includes a soundproof mother and child room to encourage young mothers to attend the mosque.
- A dedicated mezzanine with a fine view of the mosque interior is also included in the women's area.
- A large multi-purpose Atrium in which chairs can be arranged to provide a lecture space for up to 220 people.

Events held in the mosque include academic conferences co-hosted with universities. The mosque is especially active in promoting and hosting academic work on green theology and on interreligious dialogue.









## An Architectural Vision

THE COMPLEX'S UNIQUE DESIGN showcases Islam's belief in the sanctity of the natural world and the underlying geometrical and symmetrical order which bespeaks the purposes of the Creator.

The building's most distinctive feature is the 'trees' which support the roof of the atrium and prayer hall. These are fabricated from glue-laminated timber by the specialist Swiss timber engineers **Blumer-Lehmann** of Gossau. The shapes recall the sheltering life granted by trees, which are also a symbol of paradise. As the trees rise the branches interlock to form geometrical shapes inspired by Islamic patterns.

The walls are fabricated from timber which is then faced in brick slips. The brickwork traces Islamic patterns and also a quotation in brick from Sura 112 of the Holy Qur'an.

The marble floor of the atrium, the marquetry doors, and the ventilation grills and other features were designed by **Professor Keith Critchlow** of the Prince's Institute of Traditional Arts in London. Critchlow was a world-leading author on Islamic patterns and geometrical design.

The layout of the mosque invites visitors to leave the busy street and progress through a series of spaces. Firstly, there is a public garden open twenty-four hours a day. This leads on to the Islamic 'paradise' garden, which is followed by a large portico supported by glue-laminated timber trees, to give a sense of expansive welcome. This in turn leads to the interior spaces: firstly the large atrium, together with the Teaching Room and the cafeteria. Beyond this are the men's and women's ablution spaces, and the main prayer hall.





## An English Mosque

DESIGNING A MOSQUE which fits into the distinctive architectural landscape of Cambridge has presented a particular challenge. The architect has delivered a recognizably British mosque. This has been achieved not by slavishly reproducing an existing building or idiom, but by referencing some of the keynote features of the city's built heritage.

One aspect of this has been the incorporation in the 'tree' structures of themes which recall the Gothic fan-vaulting for which several of Cambridge's older buildings, notably King's College Chapel, are world-famous. The Gothic architectural style is derived in many respects from Middle-Eastern architectural idioms and construction techniques.

The brick cladding references Islamic but also Victorian British diamond patterning widespread in the gault brick construction of the terraced domestic architecture which surrounds the Mill Road site.











## The Garden

THE PROJECT CONCEPT incorporates significant garden areas, which were designed by **Professor Emma Clark** of the Prince's School of Traditional Arts. Among the distinctive features of these gardens is that they bring out the substantial historical connections which link Islamic and British culture. The design team recalled that several noted features of traditional English gardens were learned from Middle Eastern culture during the period of the Crusades.

The Islamic garden at the front of the building follows the classical fourfold pattern converging on a fountain designed by **Keith Critchlow**, and includes eight flowering crab-apple trees. At the side and rear of the building are further gardens which showcase a range of flowers, climbers and shrubs.

Since opening, the garden has been featured in major gardening magazines and BBC TV programmes.







## A Green Mosque

CLIMATE BREAKDOWN HAS become the most significant challenge confronting humanity in the modern age. Sacred traditions of the past offer solutions of modest living and respect for the sanctity of the living world. The Cambridge Mosque showcases Islam's respect for the ecosystems which support human and animal life, by incorporating a range of recycling techniques and new green technologies. These include:

- Air-source heat pumps to reduce electricity costs.
- The site is zero-carbon and makes no use of hydrocarbon fuels.
- Rainwater is harvested and stored for summer irrigation of the garden.
- Water from ablutions is stored and re-used to flush lavatories.
- Photovoltaic arrays on the roof generate electricity.
- Sedum roofs on some areas increase biomass and biodiversity.
- Passive ventilation makes air conditioning unnecessary even on hot days.
- There is thermal gain from the portico windows in winter months.
- Construction materials were from natural sources wherever possible, including the use of timber from sustainably-managed forests.



## What They Say...

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“Both the University and the city of Cambridge need such a centre for Muslim worship and other activities. So this initiative has my wholehearted support.”

– DAVID FORD, EMERITUS REGIUS PROFESSOR OF  
DIVINITY, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

“I’m delighted to welcome this project for a mosque here in Cambridge. Cambridge is a very international city, with students from all over the world, and it has, of course, a growing Muslim population. It is a great thing for Cambridge as a town, as a University, to affirm this project.”

– ROWAN WILLIAMS, FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY



“A fantastic showcase for Islamic culture in the city which will, I am sure, enjoy close and beneficial links with all of us in the University who are actively engaged in the teaching and study of Islam.”

– JAMES MONTGOMERY, PROFESSOR OF CLASSICAL ARABIC,  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

“As an elected representative and a local resident, I am proud to be backing the work”

– RICHARD HOWITT, EX-MEP FOR EAST OF ENGLAND



“I hope that this vital project will become a symbol of the love of God and of reconciliation and better understanding between communities, not only in Cambridge but around the world. Ours is a troubled time, and human beings of all persuasions should work together for peace, respect and harmony.”

– YUSUF ISLAM (CAT STEVENS)

“The Mill Road Mosque is a powerful symbol for our city... I welcome the project”

– DANIEL ZEICHNER, MP FOR CAMBRIDGE







## Endowment Requirement

THE MOSQUE REQUIRES a minimum annual budget of £900,000, which covers technical maintenance, electricity, water, and staff costs (three imams, three administrators, security, cleaning). Additional programmes and activities can be provided in the complex with a larger budget, and the Trustees are targeting an annual income of £1 million.

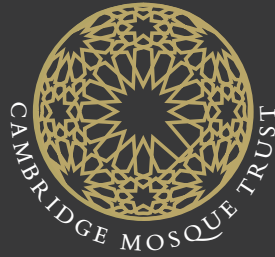
To generate this income an endowment of approximately £20 million would be required. This would be invested primarily in rental property and blue-chip shares.

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REGISTERED CHARITY 1164931





## Cambridge Central Mosque has been the recipient of the following awards:

### ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS AWARDS

RIBA Stirling Prize Shortlist 2021  
RIBA Client of the Year 2021  
RIBA People's Vote 2021  
RIBA National Award 2021  
RIBA East Award 2021  
RIBA East Building of the Year  
RIBA East Client of the Year  
RIBA East Project Architect of the Year 2021

### OTHER AWARDS

Best public building of 2019: Brick Awards Brick Development Association  
Best community and faith project: AJ Architecture Awards 2019  
Structural award: Wood Awards 2019  
Best education and public sector category: Wood awards 2019  
Engineer of the year: Blumer Lehmann Structural Timber Awards 2019  
Installer of the Year: Blumer Lehmann Structural Timber Awards 2019  
Winner of winners: Structural Timber Awards 2019  
Project of the year: 2019 Structural Timber Awards  
Best Culture and Leisure project of 2019: BCIA (British Construction Industry Awards)  
Regional Award of the Royal Town Planning Institute 2019  
Planning Excellence RTPI Award 2019  
Contractor of the Year: Gilbert Ash Offsite Awards 2019  
Installer of the year: Blumer Lehmann Offsite Awards 2019  
Best use of timber technology: Blumer Lehmann Offsite Awards 2019  
National Award Civic Trust 2020  
Sustainability Award Civic Trust 2020