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Multi-ethnic London: an architectural study of religious buildings in a globalized urban culture

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**Multi-Ethnic London:
An Architectural Study of Religious Buildings in a
Globalized Urban Culture**

ABEER AL-SAUD

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Westminster for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

From the first primitive huts through to modern buildings, humans have created architecture for shelter. Different cultures began to develop architectural forms to suit many kinds of social functions; then, as time passed, and civilizations grew and developed even further, more complex forms materialized to suit even more complex functions. Architecture today offers a rich form of symbolism for a specific culture in a variety of ways. Hence the key aim behind this PhD thesis is to explore how cultural identity is expressed through architecture, specifically through the presence of religious buildings within cities in our current globalized world. As a site for investigation, London is a city where many ethnicities live side-by-side and, moreover, have built their own cultural buildings. Therefore, this thesis focuses on religious buildings for immigrant communities in London so as to examine key issues of architecture and culture, while taking into account a theoretical framework that embraces concepts of multiculturalism, cultural identity and religious belief. The hypothesis behind the study is that it is the challenge to express people's own ethnic and religious identity which prompts the erection of such vital pieces of architecture.

The analysis and structure for the thesis is divided into four parts. The first part discusses in general the meanings and concepts that will be explored, beginning with a review of the crucial concept of cultural identity. The second part explores a selection of buildings within a number of multi-ethnic communities in and around London to develop the methodology for subsequent analysis. The third part of the thesis consists of a couple of related chapters. The first explores the history of the Southall area in west London, along with the composition of its current ethnic communities and their patterns of religious beliefs and ritual. The following chapter examines the architecture of a number of case studies of religious building for the different immigrant communities in Southall, so as to understand the way in which these buildings serve the local community. There is also an attempt to review their specific planning history within the local council's regulatory policies over the last few decades.

This PhD thesis demonstrates not only the implications of culturally expressive architecture within immigrant communities in global cities, but also the ways in which

these communities are able to use these religious buildings to demonstrate ideas of identity, assimilation and architectural symbolism. The research methodology is based squarely on using qualitative techniques to collect data from a wide range of sources which relate to the selected case studies. The overall aim is to examine the various case studies, and especially the religious buildings of Southall, to reveal the wider cultural and architectural meanings of the extremely broad variety of multi-ethnic buildings that we know are increasingly found in globalized cities like London.

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Author's declaration:

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.



Introduction



In the contemporary era, with the widespread merging together of different civilizations as a legacy of 19th-century and 20th-century imperialism and colonization – and more recently via the phenomenon known as globalization, through its impacts on social and economic factors at the city scale – a variety of new and often problematic issues of religion, identity and culture have arisen. Until the 1950s the study of religious architecture within the urban environment in western countries can be said to have tended to focus more on sociology rather than on anthropology as a discipline within

urban studies, certainly within the British and American academic worlds; hence issues of dislocation, economic unrest, unemployment, and social welfare dominated the discussion, as opposed to specific cultural interpretations about religious and other kinds of beliefs. However, in the late-1950s an important translation of the highly influential book – *Die Stadt* (1921), now called *The City* (1958) – by the German sociologist, Max Weber, helped to ensure that the contemporary city came to be understood more in cultural or symbolic terms. Thus the important space that anthropology allots for religion as a belief system had largely been missing from academic research until the translation of Weber's book, which instead urged that theorists should deal with the city as a 'living thing'.¹

It is at this important intersection of urbanization and religion, along with his analysis of the rise of the urban middle classes, which has seen the continued value of the texts of Max Weber over the last half century. Consciously comparative, Weber wrote of the city in terms of the 'occident' and the 'orient', and he also noted the relative effects of many of the world's major religions on the differential process of modernization. It is still impossible today to ignore his influence on our collective perceptions of the rise of capitalism, which he portrayed essentially as a Protestant phenomenon based on a particular work-ethic. And this connection between contemporary culture and theories of religion, especially in its relation to wider capitalist processes, is what remains relevant to today's global cities, and consequently is a feature of this PhD study.

Certainly, in terms of our understanding of what cities will be like in the future, or indeed of what are already known as the new 'global cities', the arguments developed in Weber's book remain relevant. Now with the phenomenon of globalization, more recent academic studies – such as *The Global City: New York, London and Tokyo* (2001) by Saskia Sassen – tend to analyse globalisation and its consequences for urban communities and organisational structures in relation particularly to the economic dimension.² Sassen's main contribution to the wider study of globalisation is her linking of economic growth to social structures, and ultimately their effects on certain areas of cities – a phenomenon which she calls 'social geographies'. As she notes, when referring to London, that the city has changed enormously from becoming increasingly based on financial services, rather than its previous trade-oriented status. Another fascinating study, this time written by Anthony King, is entitled *Representing the City: Ethnicity, Capital, and Culture in the 21st-Century Metropolis* (1996). His book moves between describing representations of emerging global cities and more theoretical and

methodological questions raised by the task of interpreting these representations. King discusses recent visual, architectural and spatial transformations in New York and other major world cities in relation to the themes of ethnicity, capital and culture.³ King's book deals also with economic globalization and its specific recent history in London. On a similar theme, another of his important texts is *Global Cities: Post-Imperialism and the Internationalization of London* (1990).⁴

Yet within the reality of these so-called 'world cities' (contained and shaped as they are now by the concept of globalization), the idea of relying on certain fixed understandings is constantly being tested – especially in those urban areas where multicultural communities happen to be living together. This is certainly the case today in the city of London, where numerous immigrant groups now reside and work, and many issues of integration and segregation between communities are increasingly surfacing, especially due to the large number of diverse cultures surrounding any new ethnic group that arrives. The communities that are formed within newly arrived immigrant groups are different from the ones that would be known at home. New affinities are formed and new divisions occur because what forms a particular community is constantly changing and shifting with the arrival of new immigrants. This diversity of culture is today reflected in equally diverse architecture found within the city itself, yet still this altered urban reality does not figure enough in writings by scholars like Sassen or King. My interest in this PhD thesis therefore lies in studying the complex links between architecture, culture, religion, everyday life and monumental expression within the contemporary urban continuum of London.

1. Cultural implications

This study will hence attempt to shed light on the implications that culture has for our understanding of architecture and, above all, architectural form. The findings of my research will be used to clarify some common misconceptions about culture, identity and architecture in general. Furthermore, my aim is to show how architecture as a discipline can explain certain cultural and religious phenomena that are related to immigrant communities, and in doing so this perhaps might even assist in bridging the gaps between people so they can live together in greater harmony within current globalized conditions. Citizens in a major global city like London have no choice but to learn to deal with the varied cultures of people from many diverse immigrant

communities by developing a sense of indifference – i.e. by disregarding issues such as dress code or how people look. This necessary psychology of indifference (as first pointed out by George Simmel) arises from the sheer size of population in global cities, which means that people who might otherwise view a man with a turban, or else a strange and unfamiliar building, as being odd, need instead to treat it with detachment and acceptance. Even if they happen to approve (or disapprove) of what they see, this doesn't necessarily mean that they actually know or understand the cultural background that lies behind, say, the wearing of a turban. Similarly, they will often not know much if anything about the cultural background behind the architecture of a certain building. This sense of indifference usually only turns into a desire to find out more about a particular ethnic or religious culture whenever certain events – such as an act of violence like the London underground bombings on 7th July 2005 – which may be associated with a specific immigrant community. Only then do most people earnestly start to ask questions and demand explanations about the state of inter-cultural relationships.

Historical and sociological studies have revealed many different types and patterns and reasons for immigration throughout the centuries, as well as showing how these immigrant communities have then merged – or not – with their new environments. From such analysis, there appear to be certain elements that clearly influence architectural form within this complex process of cultural negotiation. In looking at the relationship between culture and architecture, what becomes clear from this thesis is that an expanded and more complex reading of culture by definition sheds new light on many aspects of the buildings we use. Cultural factors affect the function, aesthetic and patterns of usage of all buildings, and in the case of this doctoral thesis, the close study of cultural influences shows that we cannot possibly treat the architecture used by immigrant communities in London in a neutral or normative manner. It is beholden on the visitor to be aware of, and acknowledge, the many cultural values that form part of these buildings. It is for this reason that in this study like this it is so important to differentiate between those aspects of the buildings that are specifically the result of religious factors, and those which can be interpreted as broader cultural elements. The implications of this distinction will therefore be studied in some detail when looking at the various empirical case studies. Hence this doctoral research also attempts to focus on particular buildings amongst several of the different ethnic communities in London in order to analyze their cultural implications. Out of this research arise a number of aspects that are relevant to the topic in general. Above all, the study will focus on the cultural requirements and complex functions of our built environment.

Every member of a given society has certain needs and uses which they expect from architecture; sometimes these needs can only be satisfied by creating a specific form of newly built architecture, yet at other times an existing building form can be altered to satisfy these needs, depending on circumstances. However, even when the needs are satisfied within a new architectural form, we can still observe the ways in which these forms themselves are continually changing, as is so clearly the case with religious buildings. It is also for this reason that this thesis will focus on religious architecture. Over time, as communities grow in size and become more confident, they begin to affirm their territory, displaying more outward signs of their identities. The extent and manner to which the various ethnic groups in this study have expressed themselves through the establishment of religious buildings differs due to their community size, cohesion, prosperity, and has fluctuated over time. Some communities have adapted existing buildings, thereby giving new meaning to British architecture, whereas others have started from scratch with purpose-built religious buildings. These new religious buildings have had a profound effect on the British streetscape, adding new typologies, and exotic shapes, such as domes, *chhatris*, *sikharas* and *minarets* to the standard rectilinear skyline of Britain.⁵ By studying these emerging architectural forms, the differences between groups, beliefs, history, levels of prosperity and politics can be revealed. As has been noted, ‘architectural decisions are material expressions that reveal the range of our differences.’⁶

No architectural approach or style is ever constant or unchanging, whatever professional rhetoric might say to the contrary. Therefore there have to be other factors that contribute to the creation of any architectural form. The argument presented here is that the ongoing challenge to prove or restate one’s own fluctuating cultural identity is what shapes architectural form, and consequently creates our cityscapes. Another aspect to focus on is the study of globalization and its specific effects on a city like London, especially in terms of the composition of immigrant communities and the extent to which these communities are themselves affected by the concept and reality of globalization. The theoretical angle which my thesis covers has to be understood as a cultural context with a strong reference to past history, and yet it cannot be simply seen as a piece of historical discourse; instead, the aim is to take – almost as a single photograph or snapshot – a frozen moment in time in London, in an attempt to be as accurate as possible about the current conditions of urban experience there. Once this snapshot has been taken, the city will of course continue to change and as such it will never ever be the same again, but nonetheless the method used in this thesis offers us a

critical tool of analysis. Cultural fluidity presents a difficult field to read, but this cannot stop us analyzing what is happening in London. Noha Nasser expands on this issue when stating that ‘globalization and postcolonialization have created new geographies of cultural ‘displacement’ in global cities’.⁷ According to her: ‘The question of displacement opens up a discourse on local global issues of identity and place-making. By examining the effect of transnational imaginings on everyday practices and social processes constructed within regimes of multiculturalism’.⁸

In carrying out the research for this doctoral thesis, therefore, a number of important questions by necessity will be raised and addressed. These issues, as mentioned previously, have already been discussed by a number of scholars, but it is worth highlighting them here and expanding upon their analysis. Taken together, these questions can be divided on the three levels that this thesis has chosen to focus on – i.e. religious, socio-cultural and architectural.

Looking at the first category, the religious level, the key issues are as follows:

- 1- How do religious beliefs influence the architectural form of houses of worship?
- 2- How are religious practices being conducted in London today within immigrant communities?
- 3- How are these religious rituals affected in turn by the dominant ‘host’ community in London?
- 4- What are the specific elements that are most affected, in terms of religious rituals and practices, after the process of immigration and the subsequent integration of ethnic groups within the dominant culture?

5- Do religious buildings carry a special meaning in the creation of cultural identity, or not? Here there is a common misconception that the building of religious houses is meant somehow to act as the ultimate visual expression of a given cultural group, despite the fact that religion and culture are clearly not one and the same thing. For example, there is a big difference between the general everyday values of Christianity and the typical Gothic cathedral, or equally between the Hindu temple and Indian culture. In the first instance, obviously not all Gothic architecture consists of churches and not every church is Gothic in style – so therefore the act of associating the Gothic cathedral directly with a certain cultural identity is misguided. This is also the case with the Hindu temple, which is almost always associated with Indian culture, whereas clearly by no means do all Indians belong to the Hindu religion. Based on such circumstances, the research here needs to

investigate more carefully the relationship between culture and religion as expressed in architectural terms.

Taking now the second category, that of the socio-cultural level, some other questions to ask are:

- 1- How do the communities of different cultures interact with each other in London, and also with the dominant 'host' culture?
- 2- How do ethnic communities change in terms of mixing with the prevailing culture, and how does this change come to affect later generations from these ethnic groups?
- 3- How do ethnic communities develop a new hybrid culture, and how in turn does this hybrid culture affect future generations?
- 4- Why does the problem or issue of community cohesion/integration seem to affect certain communities more than others?
- 5- How are ideas of cultural identity projected amongst immigrant groups, and through what means?
- 6- Why are certain terms always cast and practiced upon certain social groups, and not others, such as questions of race, ethnicity, multiculturalism, mono-culturalism, diversity, community cohesion, etc.?
- 7- What do we actually mean when we use the term 'cultural identity', and how has its meaning varied over time?
- 8- To what extent can cultural identity be seen as a fluid or a fixed phenomenon within a complete urban society such as London?

And then, thirdly, on the architectural level:

- 1- What kinds of architectural form do these groups of new immigrants create when building their houses of worship?
- 2- Is there really any substantive connection in built form between theology and religious practices?
- 3- What elements are essential to the form and design of a house of worship of worship in a given community, and why do these vary between groups and over time?
- 4- Does the specific location of a house of worship decide its location and architectural form, and if so, how?
- 5- Are there any elements that are borrowed from the prevailing architecture of

the ‘host’ community that are introduced to the design of houses of worship within immigrant communities?

6- How close can the relationship ever really be between architectural forms and our ideas of cultural identity, or will there always be an essential dislocation because they operate in different spheres?

7- How can architecture contribute towards, or perhaps militate against, the development of a sense of cultural identity amongst an immigrant group?

8- Is, indeed, architecture actually a useful medium at all for the expression or pursuit of cultural identity?

This thesis will thus also need to take into account the fact that architecture is not always that directly connected to the people who inhabit it. Therefore it is vital that my study distinguishes between what could be defined as a conscious cultural building, such as a house of religious worship, and a secular building that perhaps only incidentally or subconsciously reflects a given culture. But what, then, can we say about the links and oppositions between religious and secular buildings within a particular community? Here it is worth opening up the scope of analysis.

2. Scope of investigation

As well as addressing the important questions outlined previously, the crucial terms (and academic disciplines) that this doctoral thesis will investigate are those related to culture, identity, architecture, form, politics, history, religion, immigration, suburbs and community formation/cohesion.

To date, a variety of studies have been carried out into various aspects of colonial and post-colonial architecture, as well as of globalisation and architecture, and about immigration and its causes; indeed, there is an extremely broad bibliography if one looks at such issues within the wider area of cultural studies. But almost nothing has been written so far on the specific topic which this thesis focuses on, namely the reasons why certain buildings are seen as reflecting particular cultural backgrounds, especially within immigrant communities, while others are not. More specifically this thesis will look at those buildings which are contained within a global city like London, especially in terms of the multicultural communities that live in its urban areas, asking whether these buildings are perceived as such by their local communities – and what might be

the future of this type of architecture given that the processes of globalisation seem so colossal in force.

Arjun Appadurai argues that the new wave of debates about multiculturalism which has spread through Europe and the United States is ‘surely testimony to the incapacity of states to prevent their minority populations from linking themselves to wider constituencies of religious or ethnic affiliation’⁹. He suggests the end of national states, or indeed homogeneous units within societies, by stating that ‘viable public spheres were typically, exclusively, or necessarily national could be at an end’.¹⁰ To him the possibility of the freedom of the nation form could lead to a new wave of modernity, with all that entails in terms of inconsistencies and disturbances. He writes:

‘In the short run, as we can see already, it is likely to be a world of increased incivility and violence. In the long run, free of constraints of the nation form, we may find that cultural freedom and sustainable justice in the world do not presuppose the uniform and general existence of the nation-state. The unsettling possibility could be the most exciting dividend of living in modernity at large’.¹¹

Appadurai draws attention to the nature of localities as well as the possibility of divergent interpretations of what ‘locality’ implies, particularly in the context of wider transnational social relations. Nasser on the other hand disagrees with his use of the term ‘ethno’; she sees it as problematic because it “serves to compound notions of ‘otherness’ as understood in Western discourse”.¹² Nonetheless, the opening up of this research topic has to be an essential part of the thesis.

Therefore to investigate the latest phenomenon of religious architecture amongst ethnic groups in London, I undertook a series of research exercises by looking at several areas of London that were mainly inhabited by large immigrant populations which formed communities in these areas, and which ultimately built their own religious buildings or reused other buildings for religious purposes. This covered a good many areas in London and Greater London. I found many interesting buildings being used by different ethnic immigrant communities, and these were analysed based on many criteria and factors discussed in depth in the next chapter. However, for the purpose of this study, it was then decided to limit the scope of study in a way that could enhance understanding of the proposed hypothesis. Thus the main investigation for this thesis is centred on the area of Southall in west London, where a large number of immigrant communities have

settled and built their own houses of worship or reused existing buildings.

By choosing to focus on Southall as the location for this thesis, many of the study criteria were able to be analysed due to:

- 1- The presence of many immigrant communities in the area who practice their different religions.
- 2- The proximity of each of the houses of worship to each other as well as their proximity to the residential areas where the immigrant communities live.
- 3- The variety of architecture of the houses of worship, in Southall ranging from the simple house to grand and monumental scaled buildings.
- 4- The ability to look at how the Southall local council had dealt with the issue of religious buildings in its planning regulations.

But there is also of course an inherent limitation in studying Southall alone. Therefore the decision was made to include also a brief study of some other key buildings in different areas around London that belong to a multitude of immigrant communities and religions so as to enhance the scope of the research – even though these other buildings if taken by themselves would be considered as an incomplete evidence. But when compared with the Southall area, enables the study to go wider in regards to the key issues, especially in light of this approach, recent political debates about multiculturalism, ethnic integration and the future of immigration to the UK. This is why a separate chapter has been dedicated to looking at some sample buildings and the local councils and communities of these other areas. Each example will highlight a certain issue to be compared with the architecture of similar building in the Southall area.

Consequently, the gap in knowledge that this thesis addresses has two strands:

- 1- A key aim is to reveal the reasons behind the construction of cultural buildings, and in this specific instance the religious houses used by multicultural immigrant communities, as this is something which has not been analysed before architecturally in any great detail.
- 2- The other aspect is also to analyse for the first time, in detail, the precise distinction between those architecture elements of religious houses that are essential for religious rituals and those other elements which are more symbolic, and thus express cultural manifestations.

3. Thesis hypothesis

As noted, my concern in this thesis is to study how the merging of global cultures in London affects architecture in general, and architectural form in particular. The intention will be to argue that the challenge to provide an identity for an individual or a specific community constitutes the factor that determines the cultural need to erect identifiable cultural building types – rather than their specific use or function of that building. In other words, form follows culture, and not function. Consequently, this observation has a clear impact on our understanding of architectural form, and thus, of course, on the cityscape which surrounds us. Above all, the hypothesis is that these subtle readings of multicultural buildings in London can only be achieved by looking at each case on an empirical basis. There is no simple cover-all theory that can cover all of the complexities involved, and indeed the essence of cultural hybridity means that every instance will represent its own version of the process. As such, any theoretical questions can only be answered by the study of actual examples. As mentioned previously, cultural identity can therefore be explored in terms of religious architecture as it can reveal understandings that it is not possible to reveal by looking at other artefacts, and it is for this reasons also that it is essential to identify what elements of the religious houses used by immigrant communities are religious, in that they are essential to rituals, and what elements refer to wider cultural practices which express the identity of the particular community.

4. Theoretical review

This PhD thesis aims to cover many issues and topics in a general manner. Yet because this research focusses on the architecture of religious buildings amongst immigrant communities, these broad issues form the supporting information to understand the particulars of this study. The general issues to be kept in mind are architecture, religion and culture; and the subcategories that relate to our topic exist at the architectural level (local architecture, religious/cultural architecture and hybrid architecture), the religious level (theology, rituals and systems of beliefs), and on the cultural level (the meaning of culture, multiculturalism, ethnicity, integration and cultural identity).

In the next chapter, this thesis will look more closely at terms such as multiculturalism and community cohesion, asking what these concepts entail, especially given they have now been established at governmental level to regulate and form policies for communities

in general and immigrant communities in particular. While of course acknowledging this wider dimension, this thesis however will concentrate on architectural factors, and as such will try to analyse a range of buildings used by immigrant communities on an explicitly empirical and case-by-case basis. This will be a major contribution of the thesis to ideas about multiculturalism and community cohesion, in that the presence and role of buildings, and the spaces they form within multicultural cities, touch upon a broad range of ideals and aspirations felt by many immigrant communities. This is experienced not least in response to their feelings about the traditional aspects of their original culture, such as the typical religious houses where they worshipped. On this subject, Homi Bhaba has pointed out the complexities surrounding issues of tradition and identity:

‘The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification. In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This process estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a ‘received’ tradition. The borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual; they may confound our definitions of tradition and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low; and challenge normative expectations of development and progress’.¹³

As a consequence, this thesis addresses other works by scholars from many disciplines. This includes texts by architectural writers who have studied religious buildings such as Martin Frishman,¹⁴ who analyses the form of the mosque in relation to Islamic beliefs and rituals. In addition, other scholars have written about Islamic art and its symbols, such as Oleg Grabar.¹⁵ He stresses an important issue regarding religious art and architecture, in that the term ‘Islamic’ is not comparable to ‘Christian’, ‘Hindu’ or ‘Sikh’ architecture because it refers to so many different cultures in which the majority of the population, or at least the ruling element, profess the faith of Islam. Garber goes on to say: ‘in this fashion Islamic art is different in kind from Chinese art, Spanish art, for there is no Islamic land or Islamic people.’¹⁶ This particular idea is also echoed by this study in that many misinterpretations about the word ‘Islamic’ paint an incomplete or even an incorrect picture when discussing the architecture of mosques.

Other fascinating books on other kinds of religious buildings include the work of Adam Hardy,¹⁷ who has written extensively on Hindu temples in such texts as *The Temple Architecture of India*, and George Michell¹⁸, who also wrote about this subject in

his book, *The Hindu Temple*, which emphasizes the role of geography in the form of the building. Scholars who also focus on the subject of temples include G. S. Sidhu,¹⁹ in his book, *The Sikh Temple*, and also Gurharpal Singh²⁰ in his essay about *gurdwaras* and community-building among British Sikhs. Although this PhD thesis deals with areas inhabited by immigrant communities and religious architecture that tends to be mosques, Hindu temples (*mandir*) and Sikh temples (*gurdwara*), nonetheless it will also include Christian churches, especially in Southall. In this way, the writings of Gerd Bauman,²¹ who produced an extensive study about the area of Southall will be much referenced in this study. His work is not architectural analysis *per se*; it is rather an ethnographic account of British life as reflected in a multi-ethnic London suburb. Bauman looks at Southall thoroughly by analysing all of the communities that inhabit the area – indeed, as well as looking at their cultural/ ethnic background, he also attempts to engage the communities in rethinking their identities and debating the meaning of their cultural heritage. His key contribution to this thesis lies in his categorisation of these ethnic communities based on what he describes as two discourses: the ‘dominant discourse’ and the ‘demotic discourse’. These categories will be analysed closely in Chapter Three of this thesis. Also in relation to studies that deal with Southall, the analysis here will rely on significant work specifically on the religious buildings of that area. This includes Noha Nasser,²² who has studied the religious buildings of immigrant communities in general through texts such as ‘South Asian Ethnoscapes: The Changing Landscapes of British Cities’, or in relation to Southall in essays such as ‘Southall’s Kaleido-scape: A study in the changing morphology of a west London suburb’. Her research focuses on London as a global city with such issues as migration patterns and what is entailed in the mixing of cultures, as well as notions of territorial heritage in concepts like ‘community’, ‘culture’ and ‘group identity’.²³ Hence on top of issues relating to the built environment, Nasser signals her wider interest by stating that:

‘Although there is an extensive literature on the globalization of culture focusing on the ethnographic and sociological aspects of migration and settlement in Britain ... [there is] little record of the physical changes these new societies have created in the built environment’.²⁴

Nasser’s work is thus crucial to my thesis in the way it suggests that there are many other angles to be investigated in the relationship between architecture, culture and religion – especially within global cities which are ultimately governed by rules and regulations that control strictly the construction of new buildings and the conversion of older buildings. This particular point brings us to the vital work carried

out by Richard Gale and Simon Naylor,²⁵ and titled ‘Religion, planning and the city: The spatial politics of ethnic minority expression in British cities and towns’. That text deals with the new patterns of interaction between the state and minority religious groups especially when the latter are wanting to build houses of worship. Another text by Richard Gale and Ceri Peach,²⁶ this time on ‘Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in the New Religious Landscape of England’, offers a basis for the analysis of religious buildings in Southall because they describe the relationship between minority ethnic faith groups and the British planning process as a four-stage cycle. This proposition will be used in this thesis as a critical tool for analysis of the case studies. Other scholars that will be discussed have explored specific issues relating to one type of religious buildings; these include Sean Mcloughlin²⁷ in his writings on mosques and public space, and Sam Bresnahan²⁸ in *The Hindu Temple: A Cosmic Intersection*, which explores the relationship between symbolism and faith.

Furthermore, other scholars have written about the subject of architecture and its association with culture, such as Clare Melhuish,²⁹ whose work on architecture and its relation to anthropology has to be considered essential. Melhuish points out that historically the interest of scholars who began to include the dimension of culture in their writings about architecture started in the 1960s, but these earlier texts only included the cultural dimension in connection with modernist theories until the publication by Edward T Hall,³⁰ an anthropologist, of *The Hidden Dimension* in 1966. This book included a chapter about cities and culture which applied the principles of anthropological research to the relationships between space and behaviour patterns in urban form. Another relevant publication edited by Jan Pieper³¹ was *Ritual space in India: Studies in architectural anthropology*, a collection of essays in Bombay in 1979 that dealt closely with the issues of culture and anthropology.

This thesis will also refer to certain thematic debates such as that on ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘community integration’, especially because these issues are so closely related to immigrant communities in London. Furthermore, there are several important recent political events which have helped to push this debate to the foreground. As mentioned previously, the use of current debate will be undertaken to reveal the ideas of many scholars who have written about the subject of multiculturalism, whether in terms of its origin, development, or progression to the level of governmental legislation. I will also take into account other scholars who seek to question or even oppose these theories – for instance, the celebrated book by Bhikhu Parekh on *Rethinking Multiculturalism*:

Cultural diversity and political theory (2006). He is also widely considered to be the ‘father’ of this concept in the UK since he was asked to lead a Labour government research project on the subject of multiculturalism. He states that: ‘Multiculturalism ... is best seen neither as a political doctrine with a programmatic content nor as a philosophical theory of man and the world but as a perspective on human life’.³² Tariq Modood is another analyst of the concept of multiculturalism, and has written many books about the subject, as well as relating it to the subject of integration. Modood writes:

‘So integration – like the multiculturalism as a whole – is not simply or even primarily a minority problem. If too many white people do not feel the power of Britishness, it will only be a legal concept and other identities will prevail, including ones that will be damaging to multicultural citizenship’.³³

Some have offered very different opinions. They include Derek McGhee, who wrote a book called *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights*. McGhee’s book agrees with the political position as expressed by the current Prime Minister, David Cameron, about the ‘failure’ of state multiculturalism. All of these issues will be discussed here in association with immigrant communities and their religious architecture, taking note of legislation and official investigations into questions of immigrant communities, such as the Cantle Report³⁴. Since the study needs to take into account a number of seemingly competing issues (religious groups, building types, local histories, socio-cultural formations), this might potentially seem to be problematic or insurmountable – especially since there are obviously an extremely wide range of religious buildings and cultural communities that could be studied. Yet by adopting a specific conceptual framework and especially by the use where necessary of discourse analysis, the complexity of the subject can be handled in a sufficiently structured manner.

The theoretical framework for my thesis will therefore develop gradually through the chapters because of the need to highlight the many disciplines that it is tackling, as well as the nature of concepts which range between the religious, the cultural and the architectural. In terms of methodology, there are hence different approaches for each part of this doctoral study. In Chapter 1, the aim will be to provide a theoretical review of each of the main terms and concepts that will be studied – including culture, multiculturalism, ethnicity, community cohesion and religion – so that this process can

help to determine the selection of buildings and urban areas for analysis. This section will thus be primarily theoretical and will deal with questions in a more abstract manner. In Chapter 2, in contrast, the aim is to study several immigrant communities dispersed around London in different geographical locations, to see how this might or might not affect multicultural architecture. Hence the methods to be used specifically for this chapter will consist of building visits, data gathering from council records/newspaper articles/reports/etc, and face-to-face interviews with users as well as architects, clerics, and such like. This will lead on to a more detailed area of study of Southall in Chapter 3, in order to discuss the complex composition of immigrant communities in that area along with the causes and patterns of migration. It will involve a detailed study of the history of the area, over a fairly long timeline, as well as studying geographical maps and other sources to detect the distribution of communities within the area. Then in Chapter 4, the aim is to focus on specific communities and their religious houses in Southall, again using largely empirical analysis of the buildings themselves as well as looking at archival records and also carrying out more face-to-face interviews. The methods used for exploration in this chapter will also include census records as well as insights collected from ‘*The London Profiler*’ website.³⁵

5. Thesis structure

This doctoral study is thus shaped into four distinct chapters in order to investigate the issues, and these chapters are as follows:

Chapter 1: The concept of culture within immigrant communities of London

This initial chapter will introduce the concepts that have influenced the theoretical review so as to focus and outline the main purpose of the study, as well as exploring the terms that affect this thesis on the three levels mentioned previously: religious, socio-cultural and architectural. These terms will be introduced using the views of scholars who oppose or support these issues. There will follow an explanation about how the scope of the building case studies has been established. The chapter will also articulate the methods for studying these buildings and urban areas, as well as setting out the key objectives of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Case studies of religious buildings around London

Background information will then be given about the selected case studies and the local ethnic communities in the areas concerned in terms of urban geography and relevant buildings. This section will also go into more detail about the reasons for choosing these specific detailed studies. This chapter will hence address in general the different types of religious cultural architecture in London – for instance, by highlighting four fascinating and diverse examples of how such buildings have been dispersed across London, thereby shedding a light on how their architecture reflects upon the wider cityscape. To give an overview, these are the wider case-study buildings that will be looked at in this general chapter:

- Case Study 1: Krishna Avanti Primary School in Harrow. This school is located within an inner suburb, and was chosen to highlight the fact that while it is not a religious building *per se*, it is however a school based explicitly on faith principles in an area highly populated by immigrant communities. The school sits within an existing residential area which makes the choice of placing a faith school there a controversial issue, as will be noted.
- Case Study 2: The Neasden Temple in north-west London, just off the North Circular Road. This building is based in another suburb of London, and was chosen for its geographical location because it is in a semi-public area which has many public and commercial buildings around it – as well of course as for the fact that is such an elaborate and famous Hindu complex, comprising a massive temple, cultural centre and adjoining school.
- Case Study 3: The eighteenth-century Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking was the first mosque ever to be built in Europe. Thus the reason for choosing this building to study is due to its interesting history and because it is located in an extreme outer suburb of London, unlike the other case studies, which means also therefore that there is only a small immigrant population in the local area.
- Case Study 4: Finsbury Park Mosque in London. This particular building is situated in an inner urban area of London which has a high population of immigrants from a multitude of ethnicities. The choice of this building, however, was mainly based on its highly politicized nature. After becoming the subject of a great deal of adverse publicity in wake of the London tube bombings, leading to its temporary closure, the building is currently trying to ‘improve’ its image by changing its religious approach and congregation.

Chapter 3: Southall – the suburb and the sacred

Southall is an area situated in west London that is inhabited by an incredibly diverse and multi-ethnic society. Southall can therefore be seen as being highly differentiated to other parts of London in the scope of ethnicity, culture, religion, language – indeed in terms of almost all kinds of diversities. The largest communities in the locality come originally from South Asia, with Sikhs from India being the single largest percentage. Therefore the discussion in this chapter will largely be concentrated on issues such as religion, cultural identity, and the general role of architectural form in their relationship. This chapter will focus on the concepts and categorizations of communities and religions, albeit highlighting only the religions that are practiced by immigrant communities in Southall. Discussion will also be provided about cultural and social theories relating to the ethnic and religious communities of Southall, and how government legislation is now affecting these communities. This chapter follows the historical and geographical growth of Southall's religious architecture, noting how immigrant communities have changed the urban landscape of the whole area. To do so I will use specific architectural examples to analyse in relation to concepts such as multiculturalism, diversity and community cohesion that will then be analysed architecturally in the following Chapter.

Chapter 4: Southall – an exploration of its religious buildings

Southall, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is a particularly fascinating example of multicultural society, as well as of the realities of a newly globalised society. This can be seen in terms of the architectural diversity of both its religious and civil structures. But for the purpose of this study, the emphasis hence will be on Southall's religious architecture, mainly focusing on significant houses of worship of various religions and denominations in an attempt to explore the central hypothesis of the thesis. The analysis will thus also take into consideration concepts that are introduced by scholars like Richard Gale, Ceri Peach, Simon Naylor and Noha Nasser, and will use some of their concepts – such as Peach and Gale's four-stage cycle – to follow the history of how local planning authorities regard the phenomenon of religious buildings for immigrant communities.

6. Research methodology

In terms of methodology, the research for this doctoral thesis is based on a close analysis of case-study examples that in different ways reflect the relationship between cultural buildings and the communities who build and use them – tracing also their wider effect on London's cityscape as a result. In this regard, three methodological concepts have been particularly useful:

1- On one side, the attempt is to compare and contrast the way in which identity is expressed within culture, and between ethnic and religious communities, within a city like London. As such the study will be focused primarily on formal architectural interpretation of buildings and will also touch on themes of translation, transliteration, appropriation, desire, hybridity, authorship, conflict, freedom, language, misrepresentation, tradition, history, displacement, mobility, ethics, belonging, etc.

2- There will be a parallel attempt to explore and comprehend the new social formations being brought about by the sheer density and diversity of ethnic communities within certain areas of London. As such, the key buildings in these communities are analysed as incidents within the wider cultural, political and economic landscape of this 'global city'. This aspect will involve investigating in greater depth terms such as multicultural, cosmopolitan, territory, identity, difference, local, inclusion, exclusion, and plurality.

3- The focus on religious buildings will, as noted, make the majority of the case studies that are analysed in this thesis. Yet some buildings are included that are not totally religious, such as the faith school in Harrow.

In terms of the more detailed aspects of methodology in this thesis, each of the selected case studies will be analysed using what are essentially qualitative methods. In terms of collecting the actual research data, several sources have been used:

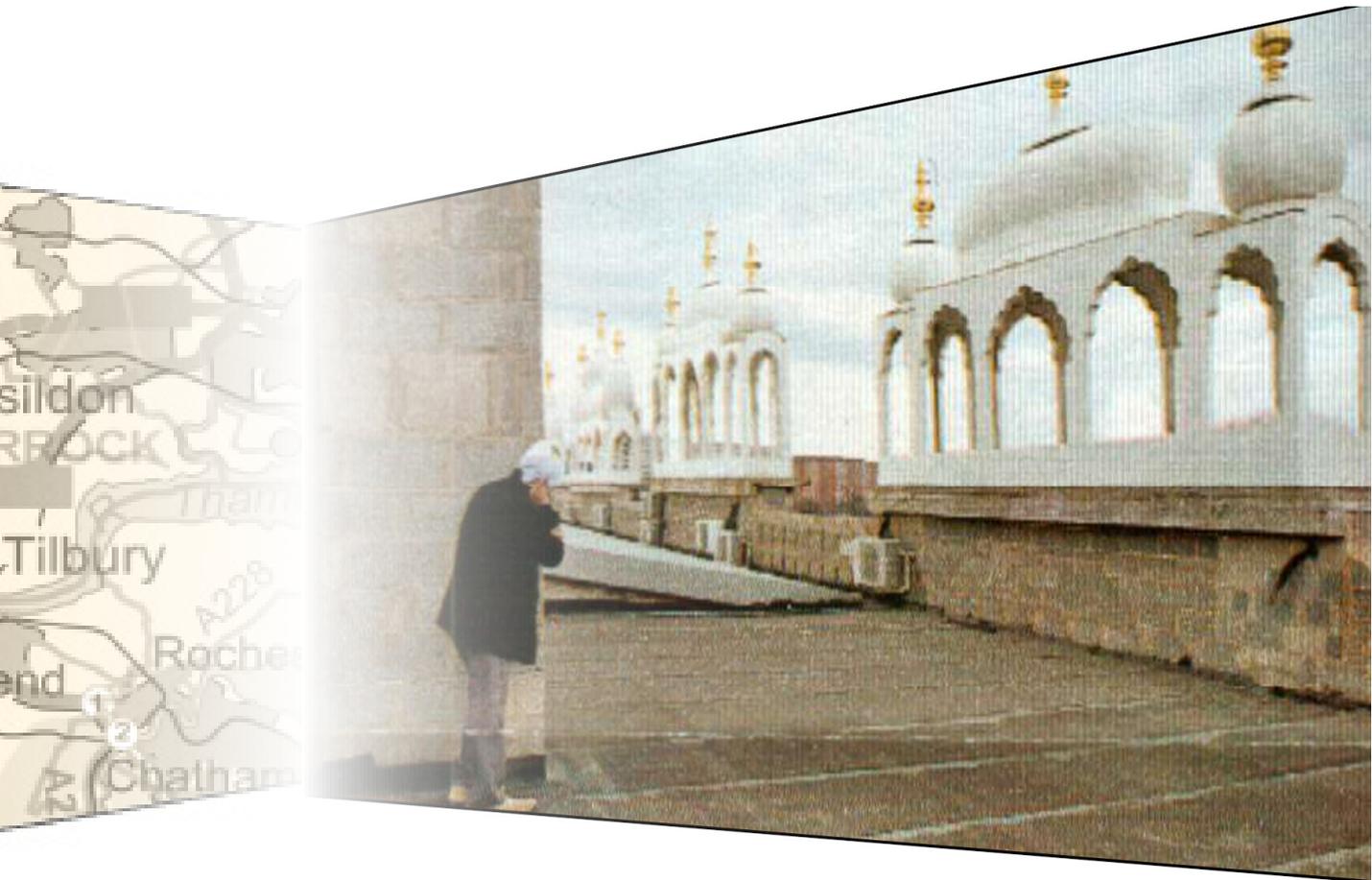
- Field visits to the key buildings identified as the case studies.
- Photographic analysis of the whole urban area surrounding each of the case studies.
- Local council records, such as planning applications, especially in the case of Southall.

- Census records for all of the case studies and especially in the case of Southall.
- Architectural drawings for key identified buildings, again especially in more detail for Southall.
- A series of interviews with the architects, clients, owners, users, etc. of the buildings, with the aim however of producing qualitative rather than quantitative data from these interviews.
- Historical background research for all of the case studies, particularly in terms of the buildings themselves and the reasons behind their construction.
- Information found in academic websites that usefully classify urban data through categories based on factors such as ethnicities and culture, of which the key example is a website created by academics at University College London, called *The London Profiler*.

Each of these different kinds of research material has been analysed on the basis of architectural and cultural elements of the various building exteriors and their internal planning – as well of course by trying to understand how such buildings are culturally representational, and how they have been constructed, adapted or transformed by different communities over time. Therefore the study reflects upon the wider architectural forms found within that community in particular, and on the cityscape of London in general. The purpose of this analysis is hence to establish a link between these different buildings for the different local communities for which they try to represent – or not – cultural identities. Specific features will be identified in each of the buildings in question; the aim is then to look at the significance of such elements to the actual uses of the buildings, as well as to ask whether there might in fact be other cultural reasons for the presence of such elements. The data gathered for the various case studies will then be compared with the actual use of the building and how well it satisfies its intended purpose, or not. It is essential to ask if the house of worship acts as a successful representation of cultural identity or religious belief, as well as looking at the view of users in relation to architectural limitations imposed on the site, economic factors surrounding the brief, or other issues that might have contributed to the perceived success or failure of the building in the eyes of those who inhabit it.



Chapter 1: The concept of culture within immigrant communities of London



London, like any other global city, incorporates many types and styles of architecture that reflect its different cultures. London also – as with any other city – contains many kinds, causes and levels of immigration. Yet its microcosm of culture and architecture gets entangled with so many different social issues and misconceptions that they become extremely complicated to understand, especially in light of issues such as globalisation, cultural identity, multiculturalism, politics and global terrorism. Such issues certainly are connected and even reflected in architecture, with a clear example being the difficulty of building a new mosque in most areas of London. Such a topic would previously have only been dealt with within local councils and local news, yet we can see now how such an event is well documented by news and media publicity – as well as through police

intervention in some cases, especially where there are many demonstrations against the granting of building permission as in the recent case of the proposed East London Mosque in 2010.¹ And these troubled circumstances would not have happened without such global events and catastrophes such as the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11th September 2001. Such events almost always result in ripples that trigger many new issues. Certain issues such as multiculturalism and community cohesion are now right at the heart of such political debates. The previous Labour government and the current Tory-led Coalition government in 2010, tend to push these issues to the foreground due to their role in immigration matters, which is ultimately a door to open a large political debate between consecutive governments in the UK due to the association of migration to issues of such a sensitive nature as terrorism and crime.

Hence the main issues to be explored in this chapter include the following: multiculturalism, culture, identity, ethnicity and community cohesion. Yet by exploring these issues – especially in how they affect immigrant communities who are the core of this research – this will also entail an exploration into many other sub-issues related to our main topic. To ensure the continuity of the theme, and to develop the argument further, we will study these issues through a theoretical review of certain scholars who are considered as pioneers in a debate that is often then reproduced by government officials in order to ‘prove’ certain political views and policies. Particularly important is the idea of multiculturalism, contrasted with the idea of the current government that national identity is a substitute for multiculturalism to solve the problem of community cohesion and eradicate terrorism and crime. Certainly these ideas generate supporters as well as opponents. These policies can also govern religious communities and associations between communities as well as architectural and planning policies. All this is relevant since this study relies on the hypothesis that identity expression is what prompts religious buildings to take on certain architectural forms and certain cultural and religious symbolism. In order to explore the themes for this chapter we need first to define each issue. The scope of our investigation will mostly focus on current debates and the work of scholars over the last fifteen years, as well of course as tracing some of these issues historically for the purpose of clarifying certain trends within the field of social theory.

Furthermore, for the purpose of this investigation an emphasis is placed on a

methodological approach that seeks to highlight certain categories of the social strata within communities, especially to privilege unacknowledged voices in terms of class, culture, religion, as well as age, because many issues that are age-related also tend to hinder community cohesion. Therefore, this chapter will start by concentrating on the policies that govern these issues, and then will look at how such issues came to be integrated into London's society – as well of course as looking at lines of criticism within these debates.

1. Immigrant communities and the concept of culture

Migrants are people who for one reason or another have moved from a settled environment somewhere else to another they believe to be preferable and more beneficial. The movement can be voluntary or involuntary, the decision made at leisure or under duress, and it is in most cases influenced by one of a number of factors, the most common being economic enhancement. Those who choose to migrate encompass a spectrum of abilities, from the scientist attracted by the most up-to-date research facilities and funding, or the labourer seeking work on building sites in cities, through to the desperate person who is prepared to do almost anything.² The flow of migrants, however, may be part of a regular pattern, or else it might represent a one-off event. It might involve players in a long-running chain of migration or pioneers who may, or may not, initiate a social network which will start yet another chain. Historically, immigration is usually associated with labour migration, yet migration is not always labour-related. Other factors can include problems resulting from religion, climate, politics and most importantly colonialism. The migration of any one person or group has to be analysed within a broad framework which takes account of historical and contemporary conditions in both 'sending' and 'receiving' societies. In many instances, this will reveal links or causes which explain the choice of destination. Such connections may form diasporic networks, or they might be the direct outcome of colonization which, as in the case of Britain, led to the arrival of labour recruited in the 1950s and 60s to work on the buses, trains, hospitals or in the construction business. Across history, mass migration has formed communities within many London areas; these migrants eventually became British citizens, as in the case of earlier migrations of the Jews or later people from the West Indies.

However, forming their displaced communities also put their own experiences and cultural backgrounds into view. John White writes: 'Culture is a concept clearly

understood and impossible to define. It is a chameleon word that has multiple meanings. It is a word, like imagination, that philosophers enjoy defining out of existence.³ When defining the term 'culture', Gerd Baumann's important study of Southall identified the dominant discourses of the terms 'culture' and 'community'. He explains that culture is not a real thing, but an analytical notion that summarizes an abstraction from social behaviour.⁴ Culture only exists insofar as it is performed: 'Culture making is not an *ex tempore* improvisation, but a project of social continuity placed within, and contending with, moments of social change.'⁵ The term 'community' is even more problematic to define, and is used with caution by social scientists as it is thought to be a complex, if not dishonest, word. It is often used as a polite term for ethnic minorities, always with positive connotations as it appears to 'value people as members of a special collective.'⁶ However, it is often lazily assumed that the ethnic bond of a community must mean they share the same culture: 'for many... the term (culture) seems to donate a certain coherence, uniformity and timelessness in the meaning systems of certain groups.'⁷ This similarity between culture and community is very rarely the case – indeed, communities often have varying cultures within them, and the case of Southall will demonstrate this fact clearly. Bhikuh Parekh adds to the definition by stating that 'a body of people united in terms of a shared culture constitutes a cultural community'. According to him, cultural communities can thus be of several kinds; some who otherwise share nothing in common nonetheless preserve their original culture; some also share a religion, especially when their own 'home' culture is religiously derived; some might share common ethnicity. Indeed, since every culture is the culture of a particular group of people, its creators and historical bearers, this means that all cultures tend to have an ethnic basis. Parekh expands upon this point by stating: 'However, the two can part company. An ethnic community might lose its traditional culture, as when it immigrates or abandons that culture in favour of another'.⁸ Parekh also explains therefore that any cultural community has two dimensions: cultural and communal. In other words, there is content in the form of a particular culture, and a communal basis in the form of a group of men and women who share that culture. He states that 'to be born and raised into a cultural community is to be deeply influenced by both its cultural content and communal basis'.⁹

Yet the concept of culture in itself proposes other dimensions and interpretations as well as open skepticism, especially within the field of sociology and anthropology. Edward Tylor's definition is frequently served up as the best example of the classical conception:

“Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits required by man as a member of society”.¹⁰

In the kind of evolutionary framework typical of the late-nineteenth century, Tylor regarded cultures as stages along a common developmental path, with primitive cultures showing the advanced ones their own pre-history, and advanced cultures showing the primitive ones where they might eventually hope to get to. Later anthropologists rejected this implied hierarchy. They came to regard all cultures as expressing an internally coherent and legitimate way of life, and thus all as being equally worthy of respect.¹¹ Anthropological culturalism became one of the main counters to what was portrayed as biological racism, providing, as Etienne Balibar puts it, ‘the humanist and cosmopolitan anti-racism of the post-war period with most of its arguments.’¹² Yet even in challenging the characterisation of the primitive culture, or the notion that some cultures were more advanced complex, developed, or refined than others, it has been noted that the post-war structuralism of figures like Claude Levi-Strauss still retained many of the features of the classical conception.¹³ It was assumed, moreover, that the values of a given culture were somehow broadly shared, and that these values somehow explained why members of the cultural group behaved the way they do. Understanding why someone acted or thought in a particular way then became a matter of understanding the underlying principles of whatever culture was being structured. It became the classic pattern of structuralist thought. Although these notions originated with anthropology, it has also been anthropologists who have been criticizing them for many years. A number have commented on the role their discipline has played in constructing and even inventing some cultures. Also, according to Ann Phillips, some problems with the earlier notions of culture is that they exaggerate lines of demarcation between different cultural groups. This has combined with an almost opposite problem – more common in popular thought than anthropological usage – which is the tendency to treat cultures as the same as countries.¹⁴ For instance, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson observe that “‘society’ and ‘culture’ are routinely simply appended to the names of nation-states, as when a tourist visits India to understand ‘Indian culture’ and ‘Indian society.’”¹⁵ Other scholars have elaborated on this point. Cedric Cullingford and Ikhlāq Din write:

‘Culture is an attempt to invoke a collective identity, of taste or class, of family and tribe. A

shared culture is one that both creates itself through a sense exclusivity, keeping others out, or is an inclusive control, defining what is common as an identity'.¹⁶

They also point out that people often define themselves against others as belonging to a series of bonds and mutual interests, usually with others in their own country. The small family, or caste or tribe, are all communities of shared implicit understandings as well as conscious interests. Each of these can be rejected as well as inhabited, and their influence is often at a subconscious or unstated level. Culture, therefore, as an environmental inheritance, is as much part of human personality as genetics, giving us our language and social attitudes.¹⁷ According to recent theorists, whatever is understood about the equality or diversity of genetics, human history is often the story of prejudice or definitions of exclusivity and authority. Such factors define exclusivity in terms of religion or sect, nation or region, education or taste, class or loyalty, dialect or caste. It has also been pointed out that many of these exclusivities are overlapping and often contradictory. Cullingford and Din give an example regarding this point, in that an adherent to a particular religion will frequently tend to be defensive of his sect in one circumstance and yet overly sensitive about his religion in others, and thus sometimes will wonder which of these belief systems arouses his fiercest of passions. They sum it up by stating: 'People will always care about their collective identity'.¹⁸ As a deliberate abstraction, the notion of culture is used to help anthropologists conceptualize that ever-changing 'complex whole' which makes up human societies.¹⁹

Outside the field of anthropology, however, the word 'culture' has been borrowed and assigned a new and somewhat different meaning. The term is hence commonly used to describe the process of 'mobilizing ethnicity from a psychological or cultural or social datum into political leverage for the purpose of altering or reinforcing systems of structured inequality between and among ethnic categories'.²⁰ Furthermore, an additional understanding of culture is given in the studies by Jonathan Friedman, who speaks of culture as a historical process which is emerging on different levels in the new globalised world.²¹ Culture can thus have several and different meanings depending on the context in which it is used: as one example, 'culture' within political rhetoric can mean something very different than if used in anthropological analysis, or if used in architectural discourse. Although many kinds of academics (and other writers) have contributed to the general debates over culture, multiculturalism and human rights, anthropologists still tend to feel that they speak with a special authority. They have,

after all, been trained to study and make sense of cultural variations. They are also, perhaps more than any group of academics, caught between promoting a sense of liberal individualism and their ‘love of culture’.

To trace back some of the convergences between culture and multiculturalism, the famous German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche,²² wrote more than a hundred years ago about the likely effects of multiculturalism in his book *Human, All Too Human*. Conceived even before the word ‘multiculturalism’ had even been thought of, Nietzsche envisioned people as being the active negotiators of culture and cultural difference. Such a view was unheard of at a time when other prominent social thinkers were still working out the ‘scientific’ doctrines of colonial domination and underpinning them with equally racist theories of ‘high cultures’ and ‘low cultures’. What Nietzsche was reacting to, most probably, was the ongoing process of mass urbanization in Western capitalist countries, by which the growing cities were attracting scores of new social groups, each with their own ‘folk cultures’. Far from entertaining some naïve vision of the city as a cultural melting-pot, Nietzsche predicted a period of cross-cultural comparison between these urban groups that – if only all went well – would give way to a newer and better understanding of culture. But as we know only too well, this process of urban mixing did not go that well within western history in the twentieth century, and even a lot of present-day multicultural thinking doesn’t seem to have progressed much beyond Nietzsche’s notion of a necessary phase of cultural comparison.

Therefore the concept of culture throughout this doctoral thesis is based on how it is viewed and indeed used locally within the areas under study, whether this is by new immigrant communities or more indigenous locals. The concept of culture depends upon many aspects that range across ethnicity, historical background, regional heritage, religious views, economic position, and social status or caste. It is by necessity highly differentiated even within the same locality. As one example of this fact, as can be seen so clearly in Southall, when trying to define ‘Indian’ culture one can look at religious distinctions between Hindus and Sikhs, and yet other understandings also exist especially when studying the Indian Orthodox Christian community, and of course the many Muslim groups who come from that country as well.

2. Multiculturalism

As mentioned previously, it is very difficult to study immigrant communities and their cultural beliefs without mentioning the term multiculturalism – a term that entails a multitude of descriptions as well as elaborate criticisms. Yet it also came to define an era of trying to define migrants and their cultures, especially in that this term is very much associated with the city of London. Therefore, it is an intrinsic issue to this thesis, and needs some discussion. However, unlike the concept of culture, the term multiculturalism always seems to become a highly politicized term, especially given that it is applied at the governmental/legislative level to create policies for immigrant communities without seeming to discriminate against or antagonize these communities when dealing with issues such as religious expression and community cohesion.

Bhikuh Parekh is a scholar often associated with the term multiculturalism because of his extensive studies on the topic. He was asked by the Labour government in 2000 to chair the Runnymede Commission on *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, whose report is considered to be the start of this debate. He relates the origin of the term with the many countries that have declared themselves as multicultural states, such as Australia, which declared itself multicultural and committed itself to the policy of multiculturalism in the early-1970s because of its increasing ‘Asianization’ and the presence of so-called ‘non-assimilable types’. This was also broadly the case in Canada. In Germany, however, multiculturalism only really appeared on the national agenda and in people’s consciousness with the arrival of large bodies of immigrants from Turkey and elsewhere. And, according to Parekh: ‘In all these societies multiculturalism became a politically and ideologically significant movement because of its rejection of the assimilationist demand of the wider society’.²³ Parekh’s definition of the term ‘multiculturalism’ is based on his previous statement to the effect that: ‘a multicultural society is one that includes two or more cultural communities. It might respond to its cultural diversity in one of two ways, each capable of taking several forms.’²⁴ To him a multicultural society might welcome and cherish diversity, make it central to its self-understanding, and respect the cultural demands of its constituent communities; or else it might seek to assimilate these communities into its mainstream culture, either wholly or substantially. He explains: ‘in the first case, it can be seen as multiculturalist, and in the second monoculturalist in terms of its orientation and ethos. Both alike are multicultural societies, but only one of them is multiculturalist.’²⁵ Thus according to him the term ‘multicultural’ refers to the social fact of cultural diversity, while the term

‘multiculturalism’ refers to a normative response to the fact.²⁶ Parekh adds that ‘the failure to distinguish between a multicultural and multiculturalist society has often led to an agonized but largely unnecessary debate about how to describe a society’.²⁷

At the time of Parekh’s key text in 2002, Britain’s ethnic minorities, made up of several distinct cultural communities, comprised just over 6% of the population. Although the country is clearly multicultural, ‘the conservative opinion has systematically resisted the description’.²⁸ He notes that Britain has over the centuries evolved a distinct culture which is integrally tied up with its national identity and which it thinks should continue to enjoy a privileged status. For him to call British multicultural is however to imply that its traditional culture should not be given priority: i.e. that the minority cultures are equally central to its identity, that they should be respected and even cherished and not encouraged to disappear over time, and that ethnic minorities consist not of individuals but of organized communities who are fully entitled to make collective claims. Parekh criticizes conservative thinkers since they reject all his opinions, and above all they refuse to call Britain multicultural; by contrast he says that ‘many British liberals, who endorse most of these implications, have no hesitation in accepting that description’.²⁹ Tariq Modood, another supporter of multiculturalism who has written many books about the subject, defines multiculturalism as being ‘the recognition of group differences within the public sphere of laws, politics, democratic discourses and the terms of citizenship and national identity’.³⁰ Parekh responds to Modood’s definition by saying that ‘it is not about differences *per se*, but refers specifically to culturally derived, or culturally embedded, differences’ – although of course such differences are not necessarily ethnic or ‘racial’ in character.³¹ One of the clearest statements on multiculturalism came arguably in an article by the anthropologist Terence Turner,³² in which he distinguished between two kinds of multiculturalism: *critical* and *difference* multiculturalism. The latter represents, to Turner, a relativist position which celebrates difference, tends to essentialise culture, and renders difficult any dialogue, compromise or even translation between groups. According to Turner the former kind, which he prefers, ‘is an idea of multiculturalism aimed at extending democratic rights by engaging in critical dialogue across social boundaries and within social groups.’³³

Multiculturalism in Britain, however, has become associated above all with the issue of racial equality.³⁴ Indeed, as Modood puts it, multiculturalism has come to represent ‘the political accommodation of minorities formed by immigration’.³⁵ Moreover, the

majority of scholars agree that Britain is undoubtedly a multicultural society, but in a situation where the role of multiculturalism in the public life is still deeply contested. One element of these social contestations is the rise of faith identities in both political and social life. To him there are ‘top-down’ pressures on the multiculturalist view given that British governments seek to engage with ‘faith communities’ instead of – or at least in addition to – the ethnically based interests and pressures arising from the growing critique of public and social policies (such as in housing, education, social care and community development). Thus in acknowledging and celebrating diversity, governments have been seen instead to have reinforced cultural difference and separation.³⁶ Modood argues that the term multiculturalism refers not to a fully developed political philosophy, much less one that is in simple opposition to liberalism³⁷. Rather, for him:

‘Multiculturalism could not get off the ground if one totally repudiated liberalism; but neither could it do so if liberalism marked the limits of one’s politics. Multiculturalism is a child of liberal egalitarianism but, like any child, it is not a faithful reproduction of its parents’.³⁸

Modood also seeks to develop the notion of multiculturalism in his writings, not in relation to a general theory, but as a more empirical way of applying these terms on actual societies and examining these results. He does so by taking “a more intellectually modest and non-totalistic political perspective’ which contains a slice of pragmatism in pursuing ‘moderate secularism’ rather than ‘ideological secularism’”.³⁹ Modood thus foresees the view that the equality of individuals should be linked directly to recognition of group difference and identity.⁴⁰ Bhikhu Parekh has also argued that the term multiculturalism contains other implications as well, especially in terms of applying the principle of equality within a multicultural society:

‘Although society has a duty to treat all its citizens equally, its ability to do so is necessarily limited. It has a dominant language, and no language is culturally neutral. While it should cherish its minority languages and help their speakers acquire competence in the dominant language, it cannot always give these an equal public status. Every society also has a historically inherited cultural structure which informs its conduct of public life. While it has a duty to modify it to accommodate the legitimate demands of its minorities, it cannot do so beyond a certain point without losing its coherence and causing widespread disorientation’.⁴¹

On the other hand, Parekh stresses that culture matters deeply to people and that, as a result, their self-esteem depends on other’s recognition and respect: ‘People have cultural rights and should not be subject to mockery’. The universalising tendencies of

the nation state and the defenders of what is seen as a 'narrow' liberal political realm, therefore, are sources of harm, injustice and oppression. This applies particularly in a religious context where the 'sacred' is of explicit significance, and thus a source of deep feelings.⁴² As one analyst of Parekh's writings has pointed out, 'religion shapes a culture's system of beliefs and practices, which is why according to him, when individuals or communities convert to another religion, their ways of thought and life undergo important changes'. Thus in this manner, culture influences how a religion is interpreted, how its rituals are conducted, and how it takes the place assigned to it in the life of society. Parekh also adds that 'although no culture can be exclusively based on religion, it can be shaped by it in different ways and degrees.'⁴³ He divides cultures based on their dependency on religion: some are heavily dependent on religion, in others religion is only one source of influence and is constantly challenged by other influences, such as science, secular morality and critical reason, for example. Parekh hence offers variations on the debate about religion and culture by stating that 'even when culture and religion are closely connected, they are separable in thought and practice. Just as we can abstract away the cultural basis of a practice and follow it for purely social reasons'.⁴⁴ In our research we will therefore focus on finding out what makes religion and culture separable in thought and practice.

As mentioned previously, the term multiculturalism has many critics. Some opponents have even criticized Bhikhu Parekh to the point that he included a whole chapter in one of his books to address and answer his critics. One in particular is Brian Barry through his polemical book, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*. Barry argues that multiculturalism rejects the great intellectual and moral heritage of the Enlightenment and as such it represents a new form of 'barbarism'.⁴⁵ A response from Parekh on many points regarding Barry's book concludes with the damning lines:

'Like all such sweeping attacks, Barry's dismissal of multiculturalism is uneven, at places muddled, and ultimately unconvincing. Multiculturalism is not a homogeneous body of thought. As a political movement it is just over thirty years old, and as a theoretical exploration of it only half as old. Unlike liberalism, it has neither founders nor canonical texts. It is also not so much a substantive political doctrine laying down political goals and institutional structures as a philosophical perspective drawing its inspiration from a variety of sources.'⁴⁶

Some scholars have even tried to draw a line for the end of multiculturalism; even before the current government stated its view regarding this subject, Derek McGhee

did so in his book on *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights*. In it, he observed that the hostility towards multiculturalism has increased especially in contemporary British society of recent years after the events of 11th September 2001 in New York. The attack on multiculturalism, according to McGhee, is now being led by opinion makers on both the left and the right of the political spectrum. This concerted hostility is however being directed at what is a highly contested and multi-faceted concept. Also there are many kinds of multiculturalism: it can be conservative, liberal, critical, reflexive, and many more things.⁴⁷ At the same time, both McGhee and Parekh note the distinctive versions of multiculturalism that have emerged in different places, in that European multiculturalism is quite different from the American version, and both again from the Indian version.⁴⁸ According to Andrew Mason,⁴⁹ whatever else it might be at heart, multiculturalism is above all an approach to cultural diversity. For David Goldberg, multiculturalism ‘is critical of and resistant to the necessarily reductive imperatives of monocultural assimilation’.⁵⁰ Some scholars agree with this statement while others of course do not. As McGhee describes it, ‘some multiculturalists advocate pluralism, some are closer in orientation to assimilation and some advocate a doctrine of cultural separation’.⁵¹ And right at this point is the relation to the architectural exploration of how these views affect the design of religious houses within immigrant communities. Indeed, how can multiculturalism promote community cohesion? Peter Kivisto suggests that multiculturalism as a social policy ought to be viewed as a mechanism of assimilation or incorporation that both valorizes ethnic diversity but also requires that newcomers embrace the values of their new ‘host’ country.⁵² However, there are also others – for example Brian Barry – who see multiculturalism as being socially divisive and based on the over-valorization of the distinctive cultural attributes of groups.⁵³ According to Barry, ‘viewing a single set of rules applying to all its members is bound to be oppressive to cultural minorities, because the rules will simply reflect the culture of the majority’.⁵⁴

From all this, it becomes clear that multiculturalism means different things to different people even in the same country. As an example we can compare some leading British academics who are all broadly on the centre left of the political spectrum, yet have varied opinions on the term ‘multiculturalism’ than the aforementioned. For example, Paul Gilroy refuses to use the term ‘multiculturalism’ in relation to diversity and race relations in contemporary Britain. Gilroy prefers the term ‘conviviality’ rather than multiculturalism, ‘for, in Britain at least, there has been no such ideology for at

least two decades'.⁵⁵ According to Gilroy, 'convivial culture spouted spontaneously and unappreciated from the detritus of the failed social experiment of the mid-60's'.⁵⁶ Therefore, according to Gilroy, multiculturalism was a failed 1960s experiment that has not really influenced British policy-making for a number of decades. However, Anthony Giddens has voiced some concern about what he saw as the suddenness of the backlash against multiculturalism when he declared: 'everyone seemed suddenly to be dismissive of the notion – not only the traditional critics on the far right but nowadays most of the liberal left too'.⁵⁷ Therefore, Giddens seems to be pro-multiculturalism, suggesting that it has been a successful policy for managing diversity. Moreover, as we have mentioned previously that Modood is also pro-multiculturalism but wants multiculturalism to complement the new integration strategies in order to avoid falling back into mere cultural assimilation.⁵⁸ McGhee raises an important question regarding multiculturalism that it is often presented rather benignly by academics such as Gilroy, Giddens and Modood, when he asks:

'This begs the question, why is this concept consistently presented as such a threat to British values by media and political commentators of the right and the left in contemporary Britain? Is multiculturalism really the problem? Moreover, will its 'replacement', for example, Modood's multiculturalist integration or David Blunkett's civic assimilation or Gordon Brown's civic nationalism be more successful in promoting unity in diversity in twenty-first century Britain?'.⁵⁹

McGhee also points out that the extent of the influence of multiculturalism in British policy-making is disputed. He notes that both 'integration' and the new terrorism threat are extremely important 'governing issues' that have been critically examined by scholars such as Jan Kooiman, who suggest that the level of governance relies upon the 'convincing and socially penetrating images and sufficient social-political will or support enlisted through agenda-setting work of formal and informal instrumentation'.⁶⁰ Kooiman also suggests "that governing 'action' usually takes the form of governing 'reaction'. Governing is often reflexive in that it takes the form of reacting to the actions and policies introduced by previous administrations".⁶¹ McGhee has also examined the retreat from multiculturalism in British government policy ever since the disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in 2001, and since the July 2005 bombings in London this retreat from multiculturalism has if anything accelerated.⁶² According to McGhee, it is in this context that a balance is being sought between encouraging loyalty and commitment to particular cultures, traditions and identities but with one overriding

requirement – that is, these loyalties and commitments must be seen as conducive to the fostering of broader civic and political allegiances.⁶³

Will Kymlicka also studied the issue of governmental policy-making and its association with multiculturalism in his book, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*. He argues that the battle to establish the justice of minority rights is over – and that multiculturalism, by implication, is now in the ascendant⁶⁴. According to Kymlicka, those concerned with the rights of ethno-cultural minorities had successfully redefined the terms of public debate. It is now widely recognized that states can harm their citizens by trivializing or ignoring their cultural identities, and that this harm can be just as damaging to people as denying them their civil or political rights. It has also become more widely accepted that laws, rules and institutions are likely to be biased towards the identities and interests of majority cultural groups in a country like Britain, even when they have been crafted in ways that are supposed to make them neutral: ‘If we accept either or both of these points, then we can see minority rights not as unfair privileges or invidious forms of discrimination, but as compensation for unfair disadvantages and so as consistent with, and even required by justice.’⁶⁵ Furthermore, Ann Phillips comments on Kymlicka’s book by pointing out that ‘Kymlicka was not suggesting that the cultural wars were over’. He has predicted, however, that future critics of multiculturalism ought to ‘spend less time challenging the intrinsic minority rights and more querying the perverse effects of particular multicultural policies. If so, there would be fewer arguments about whether it was possible to be liberal and yet support something that smacked of group rights – or to be an egalitarian and still condone differential treatment’⁶⁶. Phillips further adds that critics of multiculturalism should dwell on the way policies defended in the name of all members of a disadvantaged cultural group end up favouring some over others, creating a new kind of injustice in the course of redressing an old injustice. Similarly, they should worry about multicultural policies corroding the common core of citizenship, undermining the bases of social unity, and making it impossible for citizens to sustain a strong sense of their national identity.⁶⁷

Phillips also examines some concepts that in her view most critics of multiculturalism agree upon. She concurs with Kymlicka in his concern regarding the fact that multicultural policies could end up favouring some members of minority groups over others – and more specifically, end up disadvantaging women. This critique was inspired, in other

words, by feminist literature that examined the impact of multiculturalism on the rights of women, and the very real danger that women's freedom of choice or equality with men could be sacrificed in the name of what were deemed to be more important cultural traditions.⁶⁸ Another line of criticism portrays multiculturalism as undermining social cohesion, dissipating national identity, and emptying citizenship of much of its content. David Miller, for example, argues that radical multiculturalism emphasizes group difference at the expense of what people have in common – and in doing so, weakens the bonds of solidarity that tends to lead citizens to support the redistributive policies of the welfare state, in an era when welfare spending is being scaled down under the combined pressures of global markets and voters who want lower taxes.⁶⁹ Another concern is based on the fears about social unity that were heightened by the spread of terrorist activities into the West. In Europe, worries about what are now described as 'homegrown terrorists' have caused a major review of the aims of multiculturalism, with mainly conservative commentators asserting that too much cultural toleration is preventing minority groups from integrating with the white majority, and thus creating Islamic militants.⁷⁰ Another objection to multiculturalism is offered by Phillips when she takes issue with the notion of culture itself, representing it as a falsely homogenizing reification – meaning that multiculturalism considers itself the route to a more tolerant and inclusive society because it recognizes that there is a diversity of cultures, and rejects the assimilation of these into the cultural traditions of the dominant group. Much recent literature claims that this exaggerates the internal unity of cultures, solidifies differences that are currently more fluid, and makes people from other cultures seem more exotic and distinct than they really are. 'Multiculturalism in this light appears not as a cultural liberator but as a cultural constraint, forcing those described as members of a minority cultural group into a regime of authenticity, and denying them the chance to cross cultural borders, borrow cultural differences define, or generally redefine themselves'.⁷¹ Derek McGhee offers a typically downbeat conclusion to this debate about multiculturalism by stating:

"Britain has entered an authoritarian 'anti-multiculturalism' period in which multiple identities, loyalties and allegiances are both being problematized and deployed in order to facilitate 'our' primary identification as British citizens who must accept British values above all else'. At the level of these national debates we will see attempts to 'soften' these strategies through employing terms such as 'shared futures'. However, 'we' should be under no illusion that the 'shared values' that allegedly provide the foundation for 'our shared futures' will be dictated by political exigencies in which ensuring public safety will be dictated by political exigencies in which ensuring public safety will be the first and foremost priority."⁷²

3. Ethnicity, cultural diversity and cultural identity within the community

Ethnicity, as a concept, might seem to be just as vague as the previously discussed concept of culture. ‘Ethnicity’ as a distinct term was first introduced into the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1972, according to Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan.⁷³ Its first actual usage is often attributed to the American sociologist David Riesman in 1953. The word ‘ethnic’, however, is of course much, much older. It is derived from the Greek word ‘ethnos’ (which in turn is derived from the word ‘ethnikos’), and in its original sense it meant heathen or pagan.⁷⁴ Indeed the term was used in this sense in English from the mid-fourteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century, after which time it gradually began to be used to refer to attributed ‘racial’ characteristics. One of the figures who granted ethnicity such predominant attention was Max Weber⁷⁵, who as a leading social theorist, decided to discard the term ‘ethnic community action’ as an analytical concept, since he felt it referred to too wide a variety of different kinds of phenomenon. Weber also held that ‘primordial phenomenon’ such as ethnicity and nationalism would decrease in importance and eventually vanish as a result of western modernisation, industrialisation and individualism. This situation has not yet come about. On the contrary, ethnicity, nationalism and similar forms of identity politics grew – if anything – in political importance in the world throughout the twentieth century, particularly since the Second World War.⁷⁶ Ethnicity, however, is a term that is generally found by scholars to be more sensitive than the term ‘race’. Ann Phillips refers to the term as a ‘politer hybrid – or race – that combines the notion of blood connection with a more historically mutable culture’.⁷⁷ She also agrees that the term has become the preferred term in recent years but she also acknowledges that it is widely attacked. It was even criticised by Max Weber for its lack of conceptual rigour as far back as 1912.⁷⁸ Ever since then, it has been described as ‘an ambiguous concept referring to an identity that is sometimes national and sometimes religious or class-linked’, or indeed as being ‘analytically impotent.’⁷⁹ And when coupled with the term ‘community’ (as in ethnic community), it is regarded as positively misleading and even dishonest. In Michael Ignatieff’s view, for example, “ethnic minorities are called ‘communities’ either because it makes them feel better, or because it makes the white majority feel more secure”.⁸⁰ According to Phillips, even those who see ethnicity as a useful category of social analysis complain that it gets misread as if it actually described a real entity, thereby conjuring into existence something to which ethnicity is supposed to correspond.⁸¹ All approaches of anthropology nevertheless agree that

ethnicity has at root something to do with the classification of people and their group relations within societies. In everyday language the word ethnicity still carries a ring of ‘minority issues’ and ‘race relations’, but in social anthropology it refers to all aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves – and are regarded by others – as being culturally distinctive. In this sense, social majorities and dominant groups of peoples are no less ‘ethnic’ than minorities. This duality has been pointed out by Malcolm Chapman, who writes that ‘the discourse concerning ethnicity tends to concern itself with substantial units or minorities of some kind or another’.⁸² Certainly the term ethnicity will be a major factor in this thesis, particularly due to the reason that many immigrant communities are almost exclusively defined by ethnicity (as opposed to religious beliefs, etc), as can be seen readily in the catch-all term for ‘West Indians’.

The study of ethnicity almost always involves the term ‘race’, which can sometimes be used to describe the meaning of ethnicity. This aspect has been explored by Richard Jenkins⁸³, who explains that concepts of race can still be relevant to the extent that they inform people’s actions; at this level, race exists as a meaningful cultural construct, even if has no ‘biological’ reality at all. Some scholars have questioned the study of ‘race relations’, arguing that it needs to be distinguished from the real study of ethnicity. In Michael Banton’s⁸⁴ opinion, race refers to the (negative) categorisation of people, while ethnicity has instead to do with (positive) group identification. He argues that ethnicity is generally more concerned with the identification of ‘us’, while racial analysis is more oriented to the categorisation and stigmatisation of ‘them’. This implies that race is a negative term of social exclusion, whereas ethnic identity becomes a positive term of social inclusion. Others such as Pierre van den Berghe, however, do not think that ethnicity and race are in fact two separate concepts, and prefer to regard ‘race relations’ as merely a special case of ethnicity. Obviously ethnicity can assume many different forms, and since ethnic ideologies tend to stress a common descent of their members, the distinction between race and ethnicity is therefore a problematic one – even if Banton’s distinction between groups and categories is useful⁸⁵, as will later be explored when discussing Southall’s different communities.

One of the deepest controversies in studies of ethnicity concerns the role of culture. This topic has created a real debate between scholars, first started in a 1970s book called *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*⁸⁶, which has shown that the extremes within this debate are defined by, on one hand, a position which holds that ethnic groups are also

culturally defined and culturally determined groups, and on the other hand, by a position which pours cold water on such ideas, and instead argues that culture only enters the subject of ethnicity in so far as it can be exploited politically.⁸⁷ According to Thomas Hylland Eriksen, who carried out extensive studies into ethnicity, the specific role of cultural differences in ethnic relations hasn't yet been sufficiently studied – certainly when compared to the mass of studies which deal with issues of power inequality, social reproduction of group boundaries, group competition, and the formation of political identity. Eriksen also states that anthropological and sociological ethnicity studies have dealt primarily with political processes and identity processes, and not nearly enough with cultural processes. In part this is because cultural differences are analytically elusive – i.e. they cannot be measured. Another important point for anthropologists writing on ethnicity has been precisely that there is no easy one-to-one relationship between cultural variations and ethnicity. Erikson even suggests that efforts at ethnic differentiation may partly be a reaction to the perception of cultural homogenisation, and so need to be treated with caution. Besides, there are certain political and moral dangers associated with any analytical emphasis on the cultural differences between groups. Such an emphasis may both contribute to an untenable reification of culture and contribute to a reproduction of the dominant indigenous ideology, which in turn only reinforces stereotypes. Partly for these reasons, anthropologists writing on ethnic relations have tended not to stress cultural differences between social groups, focusing instead on the description of general social processes.⁸⁸

Another term that is closely related to culture and ethnicity is that of cultural diversity. Bhikhu Parekh explains that cultural diversity in modern society takes many forms but that three types are most common. This first category is subcultural diversity, in which members share a broadly common culture, and some of them either entertain different beliefs and practices concerning particular areas of life or evolve relatively distinct ways of life of their own. According to Parekh, this refers to people who have unconventional lifestyles or family structures, such as artists, jet-set transnational executives, fishermen and miners, and so on. They all broadly share their society's dominant system of meaning and values but seek to carve out within it unique spaces for their divergent lifestyles. Parekh's second category is perspectival diversity, in which some members of society are highly critical of some of the central principles or values of the prevailing culture, and so seek to reconstitute it along what they feel are more appropriate lines. Here, as an example, are deeply religious people who are against

secular orientation, feminists who attack patriarchal bias, or environmentalists who are against anthropocentric and technocratic bias. These and other groups, according to Parekh, represent neither subculture, for they often challenge the very basis of the existing culture, nor distinct cultural communities living by their values and views of the world, but intellectual perspectives on how dominant culture needs to be reconstituted. His third category is communal diversity, which in most modern societies includes several self-conscious and more or less well-organized communities living by their own different systems of beliefs and practices. They include newly arrived immigrants, long-established communities such as Jews or the Amish, various religious communities, and territorially concentrated cultural groups of indigenous peoples like the Basques, Catalans, Scots, Welsh and Quebecois.⁸⁹ Parekh also explains that although these three kinds of diversity share several common features, and sometimes overlap in practice, they differ in important respects. Subcultural diversity is embedded in a shared culture which it wishes to open up and diversify and not replace with another. This does not mean that it is in any sense shallower or more easy to accommodate than other types of diversity. Perspectival diversity represents a vision of life that the dominant culture either rejects all together, or else accepts in theory but ignores in practice. It is a more radical and comprehensive than subcultural diversity and as such cannot be so easily accommodated. Communal diversity, according to Parekh, is something quite different. It springs from and is sustained by a plurality of long-established communities, each with its own long history and way of life, which it wishes to preserve and transmit to future generations.⁹⁰

When the term identity is used, especially in its anthropological, sociological or architectural senses, it is almost always nowadays in conjunction with culture. As such, cultural identity can be explained by two models of thought and action.⁹¹ The first is rooted in the traditional view that identity is something which is distributed amongst the larger social network, meaning that it is not actually based on ethnic affiliation, and thus can be easily changed or complemented by geographic mobility. Whenever a member of a given social group changes their place of residence, most often they are then adopted by or else adopt themselves the new local traditions of gods and ancestors and social norms, and thereby become a practising member of this new community. In the second and more modern model, in which social groups are becoming ever more fragmented, the notion of cultural identity is based and concentrated much more in the individual human body, meaning that it tends to be based on personal biological

descent.⁹² There is, of course, a degree of overlap between these two readings. If ‘cultural identity’ is by nature a genetic concept, referring to the attribution of a set of qualities to a given population, then we can say that the kind of cultural identity which is experienced and carried by the individual person – in their blood, so to speak – is what is commonly known as ethnicity. This is not something which is practised socially, but is inherent and inherited; it is hence not achieved, but ascribed. This is also expressed in the concept of race or biological descent. In a weaker sense it can be expressed as cultural heritage, or cultural descent, as is learned by each individual within a given social group, and thereafter becomes distinctive precisely at the level of their individual behaviour.⁹³ In Homi Bhabha’s celebrated book, *The Location of Culture*, he talks about our understanding of belonging and identity:

‘The vernacular cosmopolitan takes the view that the commitment to a right to difference in equality as a process of constituting emergent groups and affiliations has less to do with the affirmation or authentication of origins and ‘identities,’ and more to do with political practices and ethical choices. Minoritarian affiliations or solidarities arise in response to the failures and limits of democratic representation, creating new modes of agency, new strategies of recognition, new forms of political and symbolic representation.’⁹⁴

Bhabha’s notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism thus takes the discussion beyond political definitions of terms to define difference. According to him, it ‘represents a political process that works towards the shared goals of democratic rule, rather than simply acknowledging already constituted ‘marginal’ political entities or identities’.

Hence, cultural identity is indeed a problematic term when applied to architectural analysis, which is why this issue was outlined in the thesis hypothesis as the core aim of this study. The previous explorations of cultural identity have in this sense helped to explain two key points:

a- That the term can be interpreted from many factors such as geography, ethnicity, collective history and even economic status. Therefore when analyzing the religious buildings for immigrant communities, many of these interpretations tend to converge.

b- How important it is to register that the term is viewed very differently within

immigrant communities, and the results of this have different affects on local clusters of immigrant and indigenous communities as part of a larger global view.

4. Social integration, community cohesion and assimilation within immigrant communities

No understanding of concepts such as culture, multiculturalism, ethnicity and cultural diversity can be complete without looking at the issues of integration and assimilation. Tariq Modood tries to expand upon the understanding of the term integration by comparing it to multiculturalism in the way that it's similar in being widely understood by critics as a vague, confused concept whose different meanings to different people seem to make sensible debate and policy orientation difficult. He thinks that there is the same problem with ideas of integration and assimilation. However, Modood defines assimilation thus: 'this is where the process affecting the relationship between newly settled social groups are seen as one-way, and where the desired outcome for society as a whole is seen as involving least change in the ways of doing things for the majority of the country and its institutional policies'.⁹⁵ Integration, on the other hand, is defined by Modood as 'where processes of social interaction are seen as two-way, and where members of the majority community as well as immigrants and ethnic minorities are required to do something; so the latter cannot alone be blamed for failing or not trying to integrate. The established society is the site of institutions – including employers, civil society and the government – in which integration has to take place, and they accordingly must take the lead'.⁹⁶ According to Malcolm Harrison, the whole concept of integration is now certainly back in vogue. In fact, through the publication of the Community Cohesion Review in 2001 and various documents that have followed it since, the terms 'integration' and 'community relations' in his view 'have been given something of a makeover'.⁹⁷ Parekh relates the concept of integration to his ideas about multiculturalism:

'... since no multiculturalist society can or should ignore the demands of diversity, the assimilation mode of political integration advocated by Conservatives, nationalists, some communitarians and proponents of comprehensive liberalism is inherently unsuited to it. The assimilationist takes the nation state as his ideal and believes that no polity can be stable and cohesive unless its members share a common national culture, including common values, ideals of excellence, moral beliefs and social practices'.⁹⁸

What Parekh is pointing out is that the nation state, in arguing that as a custodian of society's way of life, is assuming to have the right and the duty to ensure that its cultural minorities assimilate into the prevailing national culture and shed all vestiges of their previous cultures. He also adds that in the assimilationist view the choice placed before minorities is simple. If they wish to become part of society and be treated like the rest of their fellow-citizens, they have to assimilate. However, he adds that if they choose to insist on retaining their separate cultures, they should not then complain if they are viewed as outsiders and subjected to discriminatory treatment.⁹⁹ Parekh also argues that there is nothing wrong with assimilation if minorities freely decide to assimilate into the dominant culture. He adds that their decisions either way should be respected and they should be given every opportunity and help to do so. The question, however, is whether this degree of assimilation is necessary to ensure political unity and should be made a precondition of equal citizenship. Parekh also offers an answer that it is in the negative, because to him minorities have the right to maintain and transmit their separate ways of life, and denying this right to them is both indefensible and likely to provoke resistance. Furthermore, he points out that it is not really clear what they are to be assimilated into.¹⁰⁰ He further clarifies this by saying:

‘The assimilationist assumes that society has a coherent and unified cultural and moral structure, and that is rarely the case. Although the moral and cultural structure of a society has some internal coherence, it is not a homogenous and unified whole. It varies with class, religion and region, is made up of diverse and even conflicting strands, and consists of values and practices that can be interpreted and related in several ways. The assimilationist ignores all this, and either offers a highly abridged and distorted view of national culture or equates it with that of the dominant group.’¹⁰¹

Nick Johnson has written about the integration issue, especially in terms of ‘race relations’, saying that Britain is unique in the sheer diversity of racial backgrounds of those who live here and the presence of legislation that is in place to protect equality. However, according to Johnson, Britain – like so many other countries - struggles to meet the demands of ensuring equality within diversity, and at the same time tackle the challenges posed by the threat of international terrorism, increased immigration, the rise of extremist groups and the changed dynamics of ethnicity and culture.¹⁰² The Commission of Racial Equality (CRE)¹⁰³ has long been at the forefront of a debate about diversity and identity in Britain. They believe that in debating and discussing ideas around multiculturalism, integration and cohesion, they also have explored the

ways in which these terms have had theories and policies attached to them. In many respects, the plethora of terminology is used to describe similar desires in terms of public policy. According to the CRE, their wish is to create and sustain a Britain where one can celebrate diversity, but where difference does not have to mean division, and where everyone has the chance to participate in making the decisions that count. They declare:

‘We believe that the best and most inclusive term for this agenda is ‘integration’, which we have now made the centerpiece of our work. This is not assimilation, but rather an interdependent combination of factors’.¹⁰⁴

The CRE believes that an integrated society is one where everyone signs up to a single core set of values held in common and defined legally: democracy, equality between men and women, the integrity of the person and freedom of expression. Whenever and wherever these core values conflict with the ancestral cultural values of ethnic groups, the core values must always win.¹⁰⁵

Community cohesion, on the other hand, has also been defined in a range of different ways under British government policy, and especially since the publication of the Cante Report in 2001.¹⁰⁶ Recent reports have settled upon the definition devised by the Local Government Association in their *Guidance on Community Cohesion* that was first published in 2002.¹⁰⁷ This aims not to be a definition of community definition *per se*, but rather a definition of what makes a cohesive community. In this definition, a cohesive community is a community where:

- There is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities.
- The diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued.
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities.
- Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.¹⁰⁸

Derek McGhee comments on these points that ‘despite the range of issues included in this definition, the Cante report and Local Government Association focus almost exclusively on increasing contact and opening up the channels of communications between community groups and in local areas in order to overcome segregation. Thus,

poor integration, ineffective communication and lack of contact between community groups was deemed to be the overwhelming problem behind segregation of these communities in these areas above all other related problems such as segregation, targeted far right activists and alleged institutional racism and Islamophobia in the police'.¹⁰⁹ As a result, the Cantle Report and related documents have attracted a great deal of criticism especially in regard to the analysis of social segregation and their main recommendations for overcoming segregation – i.e. increasing contact between culturally different yet spatially proximate communities. According to Kalra, the 'segregation' discourse in the Cantle Report is tantamount to a drastic simplification of the problems being experienced today in towns like Oldham and Burnley and Bedford. Kalra suggests that the 'comically simple' thesis proffered by Cantle and others amounts to something of the order of 'these people do not live together and therefore this is the reason they do not get on and therefore riot'.¹¹⁰ McGhee also points out that it is not only social scientists that have criticised the official discourse on community cohesion. Organizations representing ethnic and religious minority groups have also been outspoken. For example, the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (CBMI) was critical of the over-emphasis of 'the contact hypothesis' in the Cantle Report. According to the CBMI, this 'contact hypothesis' is grounded in the:

'... naïve faith that if only there were more contact between different communities all would be well'.¹¹¹

The CBMI instead suggest that the community cohesion agenda has got off to a poor start, since it appears to be based on negative views and stereotypes of British Muslim communities, and to be proposing something more like assimilation rather than genuine inclusion.¹¹² Despite these criticisms, directed at the Cantle Report recommendations, the Home Affairs Committee viewed the Cantle recommendations for community cohesion as entirely valid, and hence decided that these recommendations should become a major component of their proposals for the development of a broader counter-terrorism strategy in Britain.

Thus the challenge facing Britain now, according to the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, is that it needs to act effectively against terror suspects within particular communities without being seen as targeting or stigmatizing the community.¹¹³ As noted above, the Committee has also suggested that the Home Office 'does not yet appreciate that the implementation of its community cohesion strategy is central to

its ability to deal with the community impact of international terrorism'.¹¹⁴ In other words, the Committee considered the Cantle Report to be a blueprint for improving community relations, especially between Muslim communities and the rest of Britain in the context of the so-called 'war on terror'. The Committee hence made specific statements regarding the focus of their inquiry, in that their concern was to attempt to reduce the negative impact of counter-terrorism provisions on the members of Muslim communities in Britain. According to McGhee, the Committee was not alone in their concern about the negative impact of 9/11 (including the introduction of counter-terrorism legislation) on British Muslims communities. The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, suggested that although strong measures may prove necessary to deal with serious terrorist threats, their impact on certain communities should also be considered.¹¹⁵ The Home Affairs Committee in 2004, was well aware of this problem and was at pains to include a consideration of 'community relations' alongside the Blair government's primary emphasis on national security. McGhee thinks that in many ways the Committee had the best of intentions; however, according to him their over-reliance on the Cantle Report resulted in the development of a rather limited set of recommendations. In particular, the Committee seemed to be fixated (following Cantle) about the role that community leaders ought to be playing in building and maintaining community cohesion. Faith leaders, according to the Committee's vision for a 'broader' counter-terrorism strategy, had a crucial role to play:

'... faith leaders, can make an important contribution: we call them to build bridges to other communities, including by dropping defensive and reactive stances to create a climate of tolerance and mutual respect'.¹¹⁶

This statement, according to McGhee, has many of the hallmarks of the Cantle approach to community cohesion – for example, increasing contact, opening up channels of communication, and encouraging effective dialogue in local areas between 'community leaders'. This approach has since attracted significant criticism¹¹⁷ in relation to both Cantle's diagnosis of the problem – that is, 'Muslims have not integrated with their white neighbours' – and also Cantle's solution to this problem: by increasing contact between Muslim and white groups. The former is associated with the 'parallel lives' theory and the latter is associated with the much derided 'contact hypothesis'.¹¹⁸ The contact hypothesis, however, is as noted a highly disputed, theoretical paradigm for understanding ethnic conflict without acknowledging that groups already had

considerable contact, especially when attributing the inter-communal disturbances to a lack of contact between the different residents of the towns in which they occurred. The issue of integration was first named by George Allport in his classic text from 1945, *The Nature of Prejudice*. David Conway questions the validity of the contact hypothesis and wonders why it has been taken for granted in all subsequent official government literature on community cohesion, becoming the cornerstone of their entire community cohesion agenda.¹¹⁹ Conway adds:

‘... there is considerable reason to doubt the validity of the contact hypothesis. The doubts rest on the following two considerations. First, lack of close contact between different groups does not necessarily give rise to poor mutual relations between them, albeit, without their enjoying close contact, the relations between groups can never be anything other than somewhat distant. Second, artificially engineered contact between different groups does not necessarily improve their mutual relations. Consequently, relative social ‘distance’ between groups is not necessarily a cause for any public concern or a social ‘problem’ that needs correcting by social engineering’.¹²⁰

This brings us to a term that is essential in the discussion of these different communities, and that is faith – specifically, how faith is used and interpreted within the immigrant communities. Cedric Cullingford and Ikhlāq Din have investigated the term religious identity by relating it to cultural identity. The latter is inevitable, and can be good as well as bad. Religious identity is particularly important in understanding the cultural and tribal loyalties of many groups of people, marked not just by language and ethnicity, because it bestows the idea of a ‘chosen’ people – a group that is especially blessed. According to Cullingford and Din, this sense of personal loyalties and connections which underlay nationalistic movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has much older roots in religious exclusiveness.¹²¹ Kedourie adds that ‘it is only just beneath the surface of fascist nationalism, which explains how little opposition was mounted by the churches against Hitler’.¹²² Faith is also now being grappled with by academics, policy makers and practitioners in terms of its emphatic return to the public table, and they are seeking to make sense of its contemporary implications. Adam Dinham and Vivien Lowndes observed that recent government policies begin to understand the role of faith and faith-based groups in ensuring people have access to welfare services, and that these faith-based groups offer an invaluable link into communities.¹²³ Dinham and Lowndes therefore observe that faiths are being welcomed back to the public debate in three ways:

- Religious faiths are increasingly seen as repositories of resources – buildings, staff and networks – in a mixed economy of welfare provision. Indeed, from 1997 governments have identified the potential for building on the traditional service role of faith bodies and extending this into new areas.
- Faiths are recognised by the British government as having a potentially important role to play in ‘community cohesion’. Faith bodies, and particularly inter-faith networks, are hence identified as important brokers in building better relationships between different communities and social groups, whether on the basis of ethnicity, generation or social class.
- Government policy is interested in the engagement of faiths in extended forms of participative governance. Faith involvement is seen as helping to diversify community representation, particularly in localities where there are high concentrations of minority faiths.¹²⁴

5. Religion:

Consequently, this brings us to the term ‘religion’ which according to some interpretations: ‘immediately brings to mind countless ideas and images, ranging from acts of saintliness to cruelty, from reverential art to madness’. Victor Turner has written that ‘the wealth of religious behaviours and experiences seems to cover most areas of human culture and society, from great art to bloody conflict. Complexity and multivocality characterize religion at every level’.¹²⁵ At the social and communal level, a key interpretation of Benjamin Beit-Hallami is one that examines religion in terms of its social attributions:

‘Religion has served as the inspiration to the heights of altruism and devotion, while being also the declared source of cruelty and moral depravity. For society there are schisms and conflicts, as well as unity and brotherhood, and actions that range from the sublime to the horrifying, from the absolute reverence for life of the Jains, to fanatic massacres committed by groups of believers in all societies and in all times’.¹²⁶

It is also important to analyse how religion is interpreted on many different levels. Believers usually claim that religion, as an essential human activity, is a natural response to the reality of the supernatural world and to the possibility – indeed inevitability – of divine revelation. Academic researchers who approach religion from a more academic vantage point tend to describe it as a crucial element in human cultural evolution, not

Origin hypothesis	Maintenance hypothesis	Consequence hypothesis
Neural Factors	Social learning	Personal integration
Cognitive need	Identity and self-esteem	Social integration
Cognitive styles: evolutionary optimism	Deprivation explanations	
Cognitive styles: religion as art	Personality factors	
Adjustment to anxiety Fear of death		
The effects of early childhood		
Projection and religious beliefs		
Super-ego projection and Guilt		
Sexual motivation		

Table 1: Proposed theoretical explanation by Beit-Hallami

necessarily true in itself, but important in terms of social formations. And psychologists tend to view religion as an individual mental response to our existence in the world, with the stimuli they consider being found as equally in the natural and the social world, and in this sense they are both external and internal to our minds.¹²⁷

A very important method to understand religious behaviour has been proposed by Beit-Hallami and Argyle, and is based on three categories: the hypothesis of origin, which attempts to explain the psychological sources of religion; the hypothesis of maintenance, which tries to explain why certain individuals, and certain societies, continue to hold certain belief systems across time; and the hypothesis of consequence, which deals with the effects of religious behaviour for either individuals or social groups. The hypothesis of consequence, which talks about the results of religious belief, clearly overlaps with the hypothesis of maintenance to explain the continuity and survival of belief systems.¹²⁸ It is claimed that all these categories cover all individuals and human cultures. They are explained in the table shown opposite.

The idea of the ‘origin of religion’ is clearly a crucial aspect in understanding the psychology of religion, and is almost always linked to the concept of ‘deprivation’. Psychoanalysis, in many of its notions about religion, has stressed the concepts of deprivation and compensation. Sigmund Freud developed a view of religious beliefs as being the reaction to both individual and collective deprivations.¹²⁹ All psychoanalytic theorists duly take a tragic view of life and agree that there is a continuing repressed frustration of both our individual instincts and humanity’s general dream of immortality. Social isolation and loneliness are powerful forms of psychological deprivation, which would lead to feelings of religiosity, amongst other possibilities. Erich Fromm described the general tendency within human nature to follow powerful entities outside oneself (individuals, groups or institutions) in order to enhance one’s own sense of power.¹³⁰ Religious believers are expected to obey cosmic forces and as a result be rewarded by feelings of vicarious participation in the power and wisdom of these forces. The sociological deprivation-compensation theory of religious involvement was most clearly expressed by Kingsley Davis as follows:

‘The greater his [man’s] disappointment in this life, the greater his faith in the next. Thus the existence of goals beyond this world serves to compensate people for frustrations they inevitably experience in striving to reach socially acquired and socially valuable ends’.¹³¹

This echoes, of course, Karl Marx's famous view of religion as being an 'opiate to the masses'. This view leads to several predictions, as derived from Marxian ideas, covering both social and personal behaviour. The basic prediction is that people who experience actual deprivations in their lives are more likely to be religious.¹³² Therefore, it should also be recalled that the social scientific explanations for most human behaviours – whether individual and social, and including also secular ideologies and movements, political activity and private behaviour – are based on the concept of deprivation or deficiency.¹³³ Self-actualization theorists on the other hand declare that humans are motivated by growth and actualisation, i.e. positive urges, as opposed to deficiency needs. While these ideas have had some impact, they are hard if not impossible to measure and test, and so deprivation explanations remain dominant in the social sciences. As for every kind of theory, there are criticisms of deprivation theories in that they are circular and too generalised, which in turn adds to their apparent attraction for scholars in many disciplines.¹³⁴

Then there are the constructivist theories of religious behaviour. Many sociologists of religion, ever since Emile Durkheim – who suggested that the origin of religion lay in 'collective effervescence' in groups, that is, intense emotional arousal which strengthened social bonds and beliefs and also produced new ideas¹³⁵ – have explained the function of religion in terms of its ability to provide legitimation for social arrangements and thus the 'social construction of reality'.¹³⁶ Religious beliefs are thus maintained as a kind of 'social reality', based on the collective beliefs shared in the group, and religious experiences have as one of their contents a feeling of unity with others and a desire for harmony with them. On this subject of religious identity and how it is acquired, Beit-Hallami states:

'In many cultures today, religious identity is still determined by kinship, and considered immutable, like 'race'. It is a matter of birth within a certain family. Consequently, in traditional cultures, it is the parents' duty, and in modern cultures their right, to socialize their children into religious faith, as a part of the parental role. Children then become a captive audience, whose religion and religiosity is a matter of destiny, not decision'.¹³⁷

Out of this conclusion about the acquisition of religious identity, another subject automatically arises: the conversation or relationship between different religions. A.M Fisk has explored this subject and concludes that under particular circumstances, the changing of one's religious affiliation may be an attempt to cope with or overcome a deprivation whose source stems from religious identity. Thus, whole groups of

‘untouchables’ and other low-status groups in India have converted to Islam, Christianity or Buddhism to try to shake off the stigma created by the Hindu caste system.¹³⁸ Another interpretation of this subject comes from Robert Wuthnow, who says that at both the individual and collective levels the act of religious awakening (or conversion), as well as the appearance of new religious ideas, are tied to crises and anxieties.¹³⁹ Therefore, we can conclude that the idea of individual choice and voluntary change in religious identity is in itself a novel idea, often being tied to secularization and feelings of individualism. And as we have seen even in modern culture, converts stand out in being more socially vulnerable and less stable.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, one essential feature of a living religion is its sense of community: in other words, the feeling of partnership and belonging which brings about real and often tangible gratification for its members. This collective aspect is often felt as the most powerful. Religion creates a real community, not just an imagined one, through its emphasis on ritual, identity definition, living together, and placing of limitations on interaction with other religious groups. Much effort is put into religious behaviour which marks identity boundaries, such as through clothing or having different weekly calendars of observance. These acts of exclusion determine the identity of larger and smaller groups, and this social categorization is highly effective in creating barriers and low evaluations of other social groups.¹⁴¹ An important phenomenon concerning religion in modern societies, especially in Western Europe, is the decreasing role it now plays. The conclusion of many social scientists, historians and church leaders in the western world is that it’s no accident most modern societies are largely secular. Industrialization brought with it a series of social changes – the fragmentation of daily life, the decline of feelings of community, the rise of bureaucracy, increased technological consciousness – that together have made religion less appealing and less plausible than in pre-modern societies. An extensive study about secularization by Steve Bruce¹⁴² presses further by stressing the impact of even greater social diversity, unlike other scholars who draw their explanation for the decline of religion from the increasingly neutral and powerful political state in western nations. Bruce’s work draws the attention to the very causes of this neutrality:

‘Although the idea that citizens should not have their rights constrained by religious affiliation had become sufficiently well established as part of liberal and democratic discourse by the middle of the nineteenth century that it became part of democratic reform, it was born out of necessity. The cultural diversity created by the interaction of the fragmenting religious culture and structural and social differentiation pushed religious identity (and with it all but the blandest religious ideas) out of the public arena and into the private sphere’.¹⁴³

Bruce however also stresses the impact of social diversity on the way in which people in western countries who wish to remain religious continue to hold their religious beliefs. The removal of group support at the level of social structure has a corresponding effect on the social psychology of belief. Consequently, he argues that there are counter-trends that can retard or prevent the process of secularization. The impact of diversity on secularization therefore depends to a great extent on having an egalitarian culture and a democratic political realm. In their absence, diversity may simply heighten racial and ethnic conflict and deepen the commitment to communal religious identity. Bruce also notes that the decline in Christianity as a dominant religion in western countries has not really impacted upon other Eastern religions or other monotheistic belief systems to replace it, and instead it is clear that the growth of Islam and Judaism in the west has been due almost entirely to migration patterns. He states that rates of conversion to other religions such as Islam, Judaism or Hinduism is so rare that he doesn't see any need to mention or study it further.¹⁴⁴

A rather different view of the process of secularization is given by Benjamin Beit-Hallami, who interprets the idea by stating that:

‘... despite widespread secularization, especially in the developed world, religion is not just history. A global view reminds us that most humans regard themselves as followers of a religious tradition, even if their commitment to specific commandments may be partial only. They make up a clear majority of humanity, and two main traditions claim about a billion followers each (Islam and Hinduism), while Christianity in several varieties can claim even more, including almost one billion Roman Catholics’.¹⁴⁵

Beit-Hallami then expands upon this observation:

‘... we are struck by the prevalence of similar customs, ideas, myths and rituals. Syncretism seems to be the rule, rather than the exception, in all traditions. An ancient Judaic taboo about mixing of milk and meat is found in East Africa, and stories told in India about Krishna are being told in Europe about Jesus’.

Paul Weller notes that we now live in a landscape of ‘religious plurality’ – one in which race and ethnicity has been joined by a new focus on faith. He is concerned that the British government is seeking to ‘incorporate’ and ‘neutralise’ faith identities, particularly in the context of anxieties about religious extremism.¹⁴⁶ Parekh debates the relationship between religion, science and reason by asking questions such as: Are we really required to choose between scientific rationality and religious irrationality? Or

can the encounter between science and religion contribute to an enriching and more plural ‘civilized dialogue’?¹⁴⁷ Certainly there has been intense discussion regarding these issues in recent years. Central to this argument is the common view that religion is irrational and a matter of ‘blind faith’. Dinham cites some issues regarding this argument by noting that this argument has been pressed by particular scientists, philosophers and cultural commentators in widely read books such as Sam Harris in *The End of Faith: Religion, terror and the future of reason*, Richard Dawkins in *The God Delusion*, and A.C. Grayling in *What is God? The search for the best way to live*.¹⁴⁸ Harris argues that religions involve such a misuse of our minds that it continues ‘a vanishing point beyond which rational discourse proves impossible’.¹⁴⁹ He argues that this ‘singularity’ of religion, with which we have grown up and been asked to respect, should be challenged in the light of ‘hammer blows of modernity’. Exploring the nature of ‘belief’, Harris says that there is not a single meaning for our lives, and that religious beliefs exert overwhelming power in our lives. He continues:

‘Certain beliefs place their adherents beyond the reach of every peaceful means of persuasion ... there is, in fact, no talking to some people’.¹⁵⁰

According to Harris, religions may console us personally, but they fail the tests of truth and demand an unwarranted leap of faith. He also accepts that not all religious believers are fully locked into this conservative, self-conforming world. What is however played down or ignored in such accounts is the extent that religious liberals are becoming ever more questioning, their moderation and tolerance reflecting the development of secular knowledge and a modern awareness of human rights and the value of democracy, not just defending some static religious ‘knowledge’. Moreover, moderate religion has long been a fragile bulwark against extremism. The fundamentalists know their scriptures better than the moderates; liberals, as liberals, have to respect the conservatives’ freedom of belief, steadily giving ground to increasingly powerful religious obscurantism.¹⁵¹ From varying perspectives, these writers who attack faith reject the view that the relationship between religion, rationality and science amounts to a ‘clash of civilizations’.¹⁵² Karen Armstrong notes there is a perennial difficulty in defining ‘religion’ and hence there are as many different religions as there are human cultures.¹⁵³ Religion also changes and develops over time through both experience and the impact of scientific discovery on human understanding.¹⁵⁴ Thus, Keith Ward and John Polkinghorne celebrate the practice and discoveries of science in transforming the image of God and yielding evidence regarding the beginnings of the universe.¹⁵⁵ Dinham argues also that religion becomes

particularly dangerous when, at any spatial scale, it achieves ‘uninterrogated’ political privilege and power, the extreme case being the absolutist religious state. Christopher Hitchens also contributes to this argument, by asking whether it is legitimate to assert that “‘religion’ poisons everything”¹⁵⁶ Moreover, according to Dinham, to what extent does secularist criticism itself really display a circularity of argument and a resistance to falsification? He adds it can be argued that such a stance fails to capture the empirically observable diversity, complexity and mutability of the religious landscape.¹⁵⁷

In an empirically grounded exploration of Christianity and its various major conflicts, David Martin has identified religion, ethnicity and language as forming crucial ‘markers of identity’. He concludes, however, that the most powerful cause of war is a confused blurring of nationalistic principles, with religion often pressed into service by nationalist leaders who are seeking to justify violent atrocity.¹⁵⁸ Each conflict is subtly different and history does not support the attribution of a generalized and primary role for religion, much less the presence of a ‘virus’ of religious certainty. The diminution or absence of religious belief, as in the ex-USSR, is not associated with decreased enmity.¹⁵⁹ Martin’s data, therefore, questions the identification of religion as a universal poison.¹⁶⁰ The secularist thesis in its strongest form (as summarized by Bhikhu Parekh) argues that religion and politics must be seen as separate activities, the former being other-worldly and personal and the latter this-worldly, communal and public. Religion in this view is a matter of faith and deals in unbending absolutes, while politics requires rational deliberation and debate. Religion has little to contribute to public life; rather, it threatens mayhem. Public politics should thus be secular, omitting religion.¹⁶¹ In this sense, John Rawls crystallises such liberal secularist concerns in the following question:

‘How is it possible for those affirming a religious doctrine that is based on religious authority, for example the Church or the Bible, also to hold a reasonable political conception that supports a just democratic regime? ... How is it possible for citizens of faith to be wholehearted members of a democratic society?’¹⁶²

Given such a definition, Timothy Shah concludes that ‘it is not surprising that he considers the containment of presumptively unreasonable and illiberal religion – Christianity always being his paradigm case – an essential component of liberalism’.¹⁶³ Shah also identifies in both the foundational writings of Hugo Grotius in the early seventeenth century and the modern liberal contribution of John Rawls a similar resolution of the tension between liberalism and religious pluralism. Both he argues, ‘seek to make the world safe for liberalism by making it unsafe for religious pluralism’.¹⁶⁴ To summarize

the previous arguments and issues, Adam Dinham suggests that: “secular liberalism has also been equally challenged, during the twentieth century particularly when allied to reductive materialism and to narrow understanding of ‘rationality’”. Scientists, theologians and ordinary human beings throughout history have all utilised myth and metaphor to make (often enriching) sense of the world. The history of science and religion, according to Dinham, has involved a strong intertwining of religion and philosophy, with religion being a source of secularism and a secular public realm, not simply an antagonistic force. In these various ways, therefore, the religious and the secular can be seen as less ‘other to each other’ than is commonly supposed.¹⁶⁵

Parekh’s description of the relationship between religion and culture, certainly relates to issues that are discussed further in the next chapters due to our focus on religious buildings, as well as the inclusion of such theories can enhance certain views that are related to such concepts of ‘Islamophobia’ and terrorism due to their highly debated status in world events in general and within London’s immigrant communities in particular. Furthermore, Parekh’s previously mentioned secularist theory has a weaker version which separates state and religion and maintains that the state should not enforce, institutionalize or formally endorse a religion, nor be guided by religious considerations in its policies and treatment of citizens – indeed it should in general retain an attitude of strict indifference to religion.¹⁶⁶ Parekh adds that although the two levels of state secularism share several common assumptions, they are distinct, which is why many earlier writers such as Montesquieu, Lord Acton, and even de Tocqueville advocated its weaker and rejected its stronger version.¹⁶⁷ Parekh also suggests some recommendations in light of previous points about the secularist thesis. He suggests that we need to appreciate that religion matters deeply to many people, and that certainly many people feel alienated from and even despised by a political system that does not allow them to speak in their native idioms. Hence religion can contribute much to political life, and should find ways of respecting and welcoming it.¹⁶⁸ This brings us back to the Runnymede Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (CMEB)¹⁶⁹ which was chaired by Bhikhu Parekh in 2000. A summary of the Commission’s vision can be given thus:

‘The fundamental need, both practical and theoretical, is to treat people both equally and with due respect for difference; to treasure the rights and freedoms of individuals; and to cherish belonging, cohesion and solidarity. Neither equality nor respect for difference is a sufficient value in itself. The two must be held together, mutually challenging and supportive. Similarly, neither personal liberty nor social cohesion is sufficient on its own. They too must be held together, qualifying and challenging each other, yet also mutually informing and enriching’.¹⁷⁰

However things did not go as the Runnymede Commission predicted or even envisioned, due to political events such as the 9/11 attack and its aftermath. According to Claire Alexander, the Runnymede Commission published ‘a vision for Britain’ as a ‘community of communities’ – i.e. a place ‘in which all citizens are treated with rigorous and uncompromising equality and social justice, but in which cultural diversity is cherished and celebrated’.¹⁷¹ She adds however that as the years have passed since then, the ground has shifted subtly, but decidedly, in political and policy terms away from this pluralist vision of Britain as a multicultural mosaic, and in favour of a reinvigorated and assimilative national project captured in the notion of ‘community cohesion’.¹⁷² Tariq Modood on the other hand comments: ‘it is clear that the concepts of recognition and belonging are about much more than ethnic culture and cultural rights’. He adds that the realization of multicultural equality is not possible in a society in which the distribution of opportunities is so restricted by ‘difference’, but also that it cannot be confined to socio-economic opportunities. According to Modood, central to citizenship is the right to make claim for a sense of national identity in which the idea of negative difference is challenged and supplanted by positive difference.¹⁷³

6. Conclusion:

From such complex discussions, which architectural analysis cannot possibly try to unravel in itself, it nonetheless becomes ever clearer that religious buildings belong to a multitude of cultures as well as belonging to several communities and areas within London. However there are other issues such as racism and the focus from the media on the political angles to faith that relate mostly to the Muslim community. In the next chapter these issues will be discussed based on specific communities around many areas of London. To study the above theories and issues in relation to actual buildings is also to see how these issues affect the architecture of these buildings of faith, and why we are concerned with them. The analysis will also draw on Parekh’s categorization of diversity to help understand the effects of culture on these buildings and their communities. The focus, therefore, will be on certain buildings that are dispersed within the city itself. A few case studies will be taken from within immigrant communities, such as the Finsbury Park Mosque. Others are not situated within immigrant communities, yet are primarily used by immigrant communities, and these include the Neasden Temple and the Shah Jahan Mosque. Others are studied because of their association to other aspects of our study such as the Krishna Avanti School in Harrow. Each of these case studies

was chosen to satisfy certain criteria within the main topic of research, to attempt to explore a broad scope of case studies to understand the terms explored in this chapter.

Therefore, based on the analysis in this chapter, we are now able to derive a series of questions to be applied to all the case studies in the next chapter so as to provide a similar methodology and a systematic pattern of analysis. This will then allow for comparison in terms of these aspects:

- 1– How does the geographical location within London influence the choice of this particular case study?
- 2– What is the size of the religious population which prompted a certain community to erect such a building?
- 3– What is the history of this building, and how well does it satisfy its users and the wider local community in terms of its religious/ritualistic elements?
- 4– How does the building operate in terms of function and purpose?
- 5– What are the architectural elements that promote cultural identity in the building?
- 6– What was the role and attitude of the local council in relation to initial planning permissions or subsequent architectural additions?
- 7– How well does the building work for its immigrant community in terms of expressing cultural identity role and promoting community cohesion?

It is now time to look at these issues in terms of a selection of case studies taken from the rich variety to be found in multicultural London.



Chapter 2:

Case studies of religious building around London



Having looked in the last chapter at general theories of religious belief and practices within the urban realm, the purpose of this chapter is to look at how such forces impact on the houses of worship built by ethnic communities in London. As such it takes a case-study approach, and in doing so also builds up a critique of this traditional way of looking at architecture. If the format and content of the chapter seem fragmented, then that seems to be an inherent consequence also of the case-study approach. Therefore the last part of this chapter attempts a different format, that of examining a specific area of

London to look at that, but not in this instance at the religious buildings of ethnic groups, since clearly there are no ‘religious’ quarters as such. From these initial studies, a broader methodology will be used in the following two chapters in terms of a more in-depth study of religious buildings in Southall. Having made these introductory points, it is now time to look at the findings arising from the case studies in this chapter.

Every city has its own tale of how it began and how its future is going to be. In this chapter we are concerned with the story of London, and more specifically about its immigrant communities and their religious buildings. Immigration has changed in many respects over the past twenty years. International mobility has increased generally and so too has immigration to the UK. Categories are always difficult to define precisely, but it is generally accepted that one in every three people now living in London was born abroad. According to Home Office reports, more people are still arriving to work here, more people are seeking protection from persecution, and increasing numbers are continuing to arrive for family reasons. Moreover, there is the growing realisation that this pattern of immigration is set to continue because the UK continues to require the skills that immigration brings in order to remain competitive within a globalised economy. This realisation is what has led policy-makers to try to conceive and manage a better migration policy.¹ According to Sarah Kyambi in her book about immigration in Britain:

‘Policymakers need to ensure that the UK makes the most of the benefits immigration brings, and tackles the related challenges efficiently and effectively. However, these tasks are made more difficult by the paucity of comprehensive information available for policymakers. While we frequently know a lot about certain communities or certain locations, there is little information that allows for direct comparison between different immigrant groups or locations’.²

Moreover, as Kyambi points out, immigration trends have changed in significant ways, with an increasing number and greater diversity of immigrants coming to live and work in Britain. New immigrants have gone from being a third of the total immigrant population to making up half of it. Integration policy is complex and must consider the position of all social groups, whether immigrant and non-immigrant. Nevertheless, according to Kyambi the increased prevalence of new migrants in the overall immigrant population suggests that they now require increased consideration from policy-makers.³ She also offers some specific recommendations which include:

- Policy-makers should monitor how changes in economics and politics affect the socio-economic outcomes of new immigrants.

- The provision and quality of English-language teaching courses needs to cater for the growth in immigration from even more non-English-speaking countries.
- Further research and policy work needs to be done to investigate the ways in which the proliferation of immigrant diversity is affecting service delivery, ethnic relations and community cohesion.⁴

Based on such accounts – and on the data of the Office of National Statistics (ONS) – this chapter touches on the ways in which immigrant communities develop and how this is reflected across London. To do so it will concentrate on themes of community cohesion, ethnic diversity and faith within immigrant communities. This investigation will focus primarily on certain buildings of faith among the many different areas of London, since religious belief is clearly so important to community values. These areas were chosen carefully from the plethora of other cultural possibilities in London for the following reasons:

- 1- The essential aim was to look for non-Christian communities which might have – in certain cases at least – taken the opportunity to build distinctive religious buildings for themselves which clearly lie outside the normal (and predominantly Christian) architectural tradition of London.
- 2- The search was also to find non-traditional communities whose everyday rituals and patterns of family life are notably different from those of the majority of London's (and Britain's) traditional population – and who have as a result tended to construct different types of community buildings which can be analysed for this study.
- 3- The idea was, furthermore, to identify communities which have established themselves and evolved in London since the Second World War, and as such have created distinctive cultural areas within the capital over the last 50 years. This is in distinction to other well-known cultural groups, such as Irish or Jewish immigrants, who moved to the city earlier in history, and who hence have over a longer timescale become spread more diffusely across London.

And since we are exploring mainly religious buildings, this chapter will look at only those communities with a strong religious/cultural background such as Hindus in north

	London			
	2001		2004	
	Thousands	Percentage	Thousands	Percentage
All people	7,322.4	100.0	7,428.6	100.0
White	5,205.1	71.1	5,182.2	69.8
White British	4,363.9	59.6	4,336.5	58.4
White Irish	223.7	3.1	200.6	2.7
Other White	617.5	8.4	645.1	8.7
Non-White	2,117.3	28.9	2,246.4	30.2
Mixed				
White and Black Caribbean	72.0	1.0	73.6	1.0
White and Black African	35.1	0.5	38.4	0.5
White and Asian	61.5	0.8	68.0	0.9
Other Mixed	62.5	0.9	67.7	0.9
Asian or Asian British				
Indian	445.8	6.1	473.8	6.4
Pakistani	146.8	2.0	161.8	2.2
Bangladeshi	157.7	2.2	165.9	2.2
Other Asian	136.6	1.9	147.6	2.0
Black or Black British				
Black Caribbean	348.7	4.8	334.4	4.5
Black African	388.6	5.3	412.5	5.6
Other Black	61.4	0.8	62.1	0.8
Chinese	83.3	1.1	103.0	1.4
Other	117.3	1.6	137.5	1.9

Table 2: Estimated resident population of London by ethnic group in mid-2001 and mid-2004
(UK National Statistics archives)

London or Muslims (with their multitude of ethnicities) in north-west London. It cannot of course cover all other ethnic communities such as Somalis in Wembley or Italians in Kensington and Chelsea, Jews in Golders Green or West Africans in Southwark. This focus on religious buildings is precisely to try to establish the links between religious rituals, cultural elements, and social norms within the immigrant community. With this in mind, the terms ‘religious building’ of ‘house of worship’ will be used for any building that is purposely designed for the practice of religious rituals, whether this is in the form of a newly built structure or a converted building. In many cases, these religious buildings are shared by a number of sub-communities who share the same ethnic composition, or sometimes it is the religious belief that unites a number of communities, such as mosques, where all one needs to be is a Muslim from any country. All these different categories will be explored in this chapter, as well as the following two chapters on Southall, by looking at the definitions in relation to specific case studies from different religious groups.

Looking now at the social composition of London, a few general points need to be pointed out. According to the Office of National Statistics, the city is home to over 7.5 million residents and is very densely populated, with nearly 4,800 people per square kilometre. The ONS figures also show that London’s population has experienced significant growth in recent years, both because of births exceeding deaths and as a result of net international migration exceeding net migration out to other UK regions. The estimated net increase from international migration in 2004 was 126,000 people, although for some migrants London may be only a short-term destination. London today has an extremely ethnically diverse population. Around 30% of Londoners are from non-white groups and while London makes up just 15% of the total population of England, it contains some 43% of the nation’s non-white population.⁵

As mentioned previously, increased immigration to the United Kingdom over the past fifteen years has consisted of the arrival of asylum seekers, work permit holders, other work/ student visa holders, as well as large-scale migration from new European Union member states since 2004. At the same time, emigration of British and non-British nationals from the UK has also increased, although since 1995 there has been a gain with immigration easily exceeding emigration. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the impact of net immigration has been to increase the proportion of the population who were born overseas. Census data show that the foreign-born population rose from 2.1 million (4.2% of Britain’s population) in 1951 to 4.9 million

(8.3%) in 2001. Labour Force Survey data from 2007 likewise suggests that 10.7% of the total UK population was born abroad, indicating that the trend is continuing.⁶ And as noted before, the concentration of foreign-born population is particularly strong in London, where today approaching 35% of the city is foreign-born. The 2001 Census surveyed only 16 key ethnic categories. According to the Equality and Human Rights commission, 40% of Londoners come from an ethnic minority background and ‘half of them are outside those core groups’ that the 2001 Census identified. For this reason the more recent 2011 Census includes many more ethnic categories. Sarah Kyambi also mentions in her key text – *Beyond Black and White: Mapping new immigrant communities* – the urban and social consequences of these forces:

‘New immigrants tend to settle in areas with settled immigrant communities from the same country. Some groups cluster in London while others settle more widely across the UK. New immigrants with the lowest levels of employment originate from Somalia, Angola, Iran and Ethiopia. This may be because these groups contain asylum seekers who are not allowed to work and may be experiencing problems achieving socio-economic integration even after they obtain refugee status. As a result, refugee populations may register high unemployment and low earnings. New immigrants from Iran, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka were some of the settled new immigrants groups that were educated to a higher level.’⁷

Leo Benedictus has written several articles based on his extensive research within many immigrant communities in and around London. He describes that the degree of hostility to new migrants has a root cause – i.e. low levels of social interaction with the existing communities that are receiving these migrants. While much public policy discussion on social cohesion and inter-ethnic relations has stressed ‘mixing’ and bemoaned ‘segregation’, according to Benedictus much of this debate has been overly abstract. Very little consideration has been given to how and why and where different groups can meet and mix in a particular area.⁸ He also suggests that language is a major reason that many immigrant communities choose to settle in Britain as a whole, and in London in particular:

‘Fluency in English is a great gift for one’s children. Then there are the many refugees who arrive expecting to return home, but find, over time, that home has come with them. “People don’t treat you as a foreigner, but you feel it yourself,” said one Somali man of his first trip back after 15 years in London. “You see things like spiders and snakes that used to be normal, but when you go back you are scared. You become westernised, although you don’t realise it.”’⁹

The research by Benedictus contains many levels of meaning that relate to what will be studied in this chapter. For instance, an issue he refers to in terms of integration with the

existing society is whether the core values of immigrant groups fully adopt the social customs of the new environment or not. He quotes one person that he spoke to:

‘“People here don’t know their own neighbours, and they’re like that their whole life. When I meet English people, which is not very often round here, my experience is that they are lost, really miserable people, sometimes with emotional problems. They don’t know how to speak to you. They are surprised you are open and nice to them.” – Gosia, 25, from Poland’.¹⁰

Benedictus asked everyone he met during the course of his investigation about how they got along with their ‘English’ neighbours in London, and he found quite a few problems to report. The picture that emerges is of a broadly tolerant city – ‘but toleration is about as far as it goes’, he writes. ‘Indifference might be a better description’.¹¹ Benedictus points out that the real lesson to be learnt from his investigation ‘is that you cannot erase a person’s attachment to their country of birth, but nor should you try’. This, combined with the relative availability of work, is the source of London’s great appeal to many immigrants. ‘People do not come here to become English, in the way that they go to New York to become Americans. People come to London to be themselves – their children and grandchildren can be English if they want’.¹² Benedictus adds also: ‘Londoners don’t tolerate our city’s diversity as much as ignore it. And where there is ignorance, intolerance can quickly be fomented’. In fact, according to Benedictus, this happens all the time. One of the most unpleasant facts that arose from his study was that every community had at least one story of media misrepresentation to tell. Lurid falsehoods, it seems, are still the best way of getting Londoners to take any interest in the qat-chewing, dog-eating, drug-running family of terrorists next door. Somehow, ‘it is only when foreigners are problematic that we want to read about them’.¹³ He concludes, after studying many communities, that there are common truths:

‘Turks and Poles are really just the same as everybody else – they work hard, love their kids and move to the suburbs when they can afford it.’¹⁴

Based on the ONS figures, as noted before, nearly half of Britain’s ethnic minorities live in the Greater London area. According to one estimate, there are 1.8 million residents of ethnic minority origin in London and they own 62,000 businesses, which represents 19% of all businesses in London.¹⁵ Ethnic entrepreneurs are estimated to own over 50% of new business start-ups and 7% of small businesses in London. It is argued that immigrants opt for self-employment in order to avoid racial discrimination in the host country’s labour market, which otherwise forces them to accept low-

paid jobs and thus blocks upward mobility.¹⁶ This approach however ignores the fact that some ethnic groups may also bring with them a cultural tendency towards entrepreneurship. The ONS produces a self-identification measure of ethnic groups and religion through censuses and other surveys, reflecting the subjective nature of religious identity. According to their findings:

‘This measurement of religion is complicated by the distinction between religious background, belief and practice. The way that people answer questions on religion is sensitive to the wording of the question, particularly for people who have a loose religious affiliation. Religious practice is particularly difficult to measure, as what constitutes ‘practicing’ a religion may vary from one religion to another and from one person to another. The approach adopted for the 2001 Census was a deliberate decision to use a measure based on identity rather than practice’.¹⁷

Also of vital importance are the spatial impacts of immigration into British cities. In a study by Simon Naylor and John Ryan,¹⁸ which focuses on mosques in the suburbs of Glasgow to explore the dispersal of Scottish-Pakistanis to more prosperous areas on the periphery of the city, it highlights in particular how such movements are often accompanied by the adoption of middle-class professional identities. Despite the fact that such movements are relatively recent, Naylor and Ryan state that ‘for a variety of historical, social and economic reasons, a large number of South Asian religious groups in the UK have sought to locate their sites of worship in residential, suburban locations’¹⁹. The movement of ethnic minority and religious groups to the suburbs often leads for further requests for places of worship to be constructed in such locations. Naylor and Ryan’s recent research into ‘the mosque in the suburbs’ examines how conflicts over the sites of religious buildings are negotiated. One of the problems that such (re)locations often create is the assumption that non-Christian sites of worship may impact negatively upon the value of residential property. These tensions have increased in recent years with the demand among various Muslim groups in Britain for the establishment of their own places of worship. Naylor and Ryan’s study points towards the way that places of ‘minority worship are marked out – for good or ill – as exotic sites amidst the “normality” of the city’²⁰. Furthermore, their research project also found that decisions are frequently ‘politicized’ when it comes to planning permission being granted for the development of religious buildings for religious minority groups. They summarise their study by stating:

‘Overall then, the changing geographies of black and minority ethnic residential settlement are being accompanied by the claiming of space, the (re)making of identities and new forms of racism, in/exclusion and marginalization’.²¹

Against this complex background, this chapter will build upon the available information about immigrants, their ethnic backgrounds, their concentration within London and its suburbs, helping to explain the reasons behind choosing certain buildings to study. These case studies will ultimately fill some of the gaps essential to understanding some aspects regarding the relationship between religious buildings and their relation with geographical location, and local council regulations.

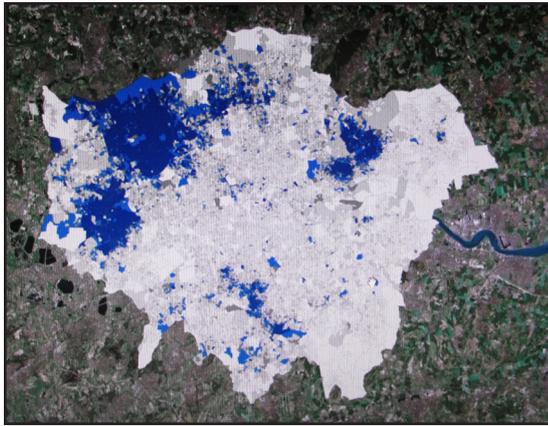
All the case studies in this chapter consist of religious houses or a school that is built around the Hindu faith principles. Each of the other case-study examples is related to faith. The emphasis in this chapter will be on the urban location, area profile, ethnicities of the users of the buildings, architectural form and the relationship between the building and its local community. Moreover, for this chapter less attention will be placed on the actual religious purpose of these case studies due to the scope and purpose of this chapter, which aims to focus instead on the key terms identified in the previous chapter such as integration, culture, community cohesion and identity.

1. Notes on methodology

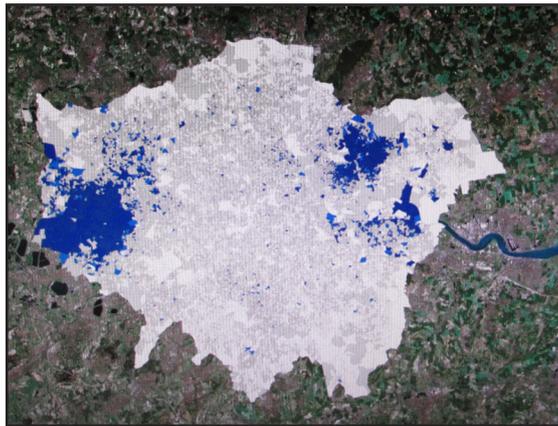
To start the process of analysing the selected case studies, the information for this chapter came mainly from three sources:

- The 2001 Census as carried out by the Office of National Statistics, which provides basic population information about new sub-categories of distinction according to ethnicity and religion.
- Data supplied by an extensive study by Sarah Kyambi in mapping the UK's immigrant communities, which in itself was based on data from the Labour Force Survey.
- The London Profiler website, which uses an innovative approach to determine ethnicity through the use of people's surnames.

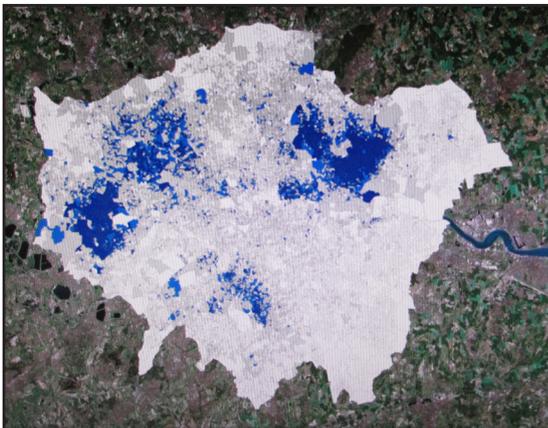
In terms of the latter source, the London Profiler website consists of an ongoing study at University College London – led by Paul Longely – which has been able to determine the probability of a particular surname being tied to an ethnic group. That system then uses the names listed on the electoral register to determine the ethnic make-up of London in much greater detail than the official census figures can. The new maps included in the latest version of the London Profiler provide some interesting results.



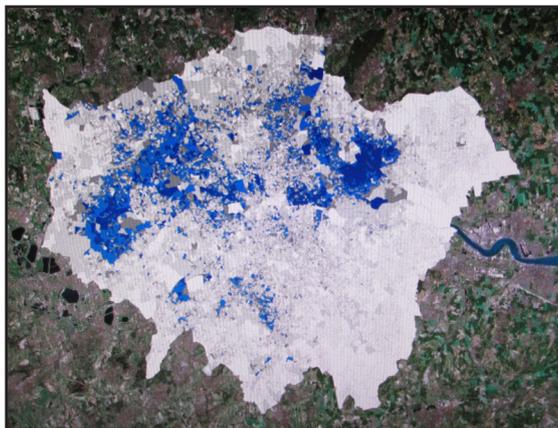
Hindi



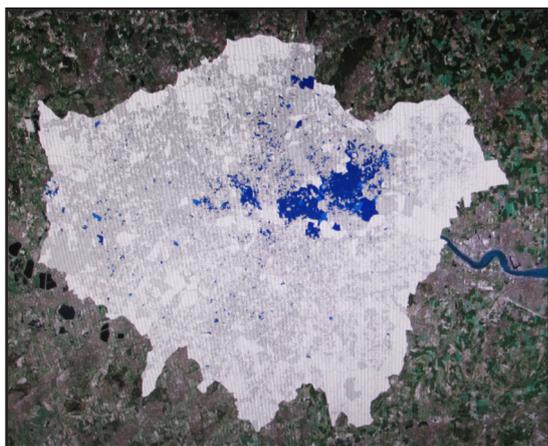
Sikh



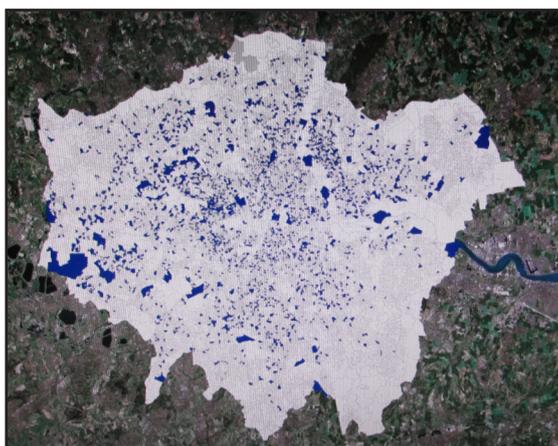
Pakistani



Other Muslims



Bangladeshi



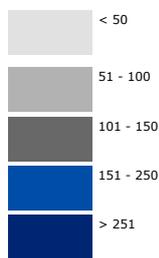
Muslim North Africa

Figure 1: General maps of London and its general ethnic concentrations based on the London Profiler (Source: The London Profiler website).

An example, according to their website, is as follows:

‘While the Greek and Turkish nations have often had an antagonistic relationship, the map shows that in London, Greeks and Turks seem to prefer the same areas north of the capital. The use of names [however] has its limits too. Some groups, such as Jewish or black-Caribbean communities, have names that are very similar to names associated with the wider English population. But it’s still an improvement on the raw information provided by the census’.²²

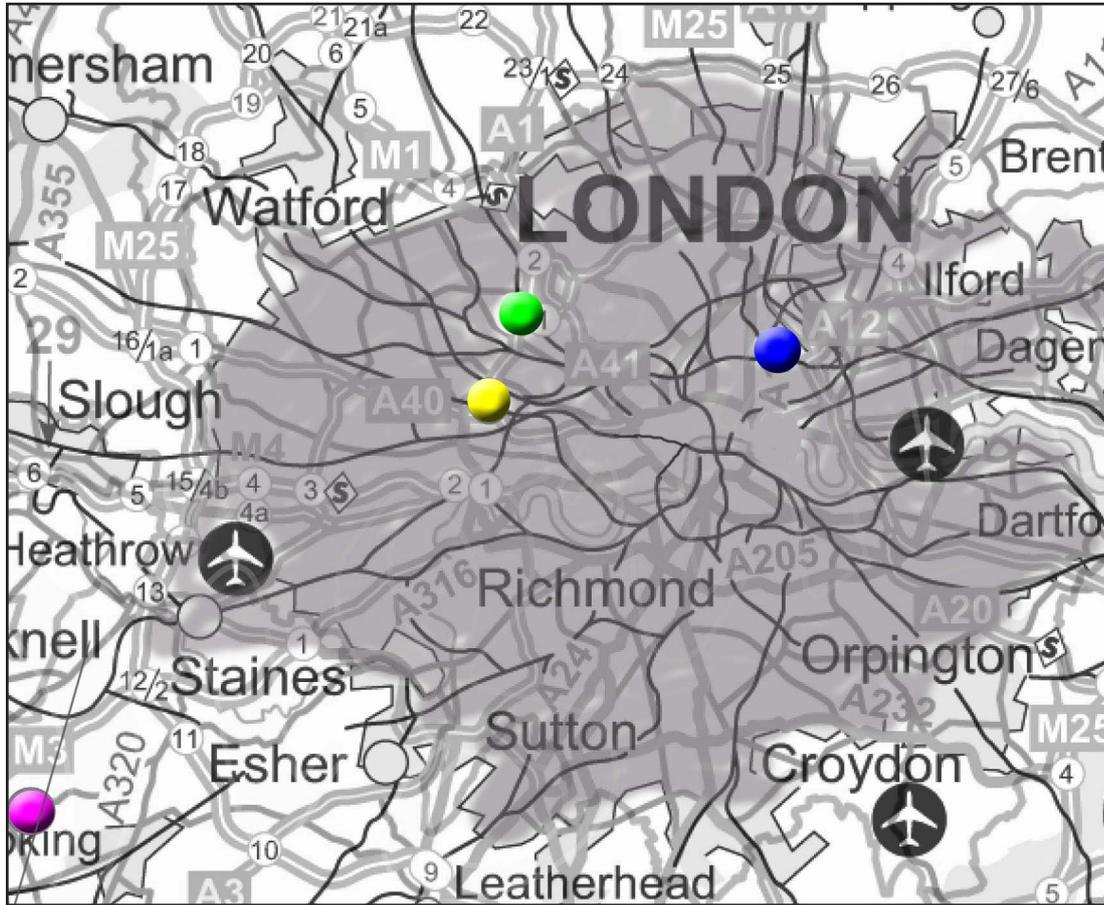
The website uses the following key to give an indication of the concentration of ethnicities in every area of London.²³



Then, as their website declares:

‘Both forenames and surnames are currently classified into 185 independently assigned *Onomap* categories that can be then grouped in different ways. The Multicultural Atlas of London shows the geographical distribution of 42 of the most symbolic cultural-ethnic-linguistic groups in London. The maps show the index values of the peoples’ names associated to the specified Onomap Group, to a fine geographical resolution at Output Area level. These index values indicate the proportion of people in each output area associated with the specified Onomap Group, divided by the overall proportion of the same Onomap Group for the whole of London, and multiplied by 100. As a result, in this index scale a value of 100 means that the Output Area has the same proportion of people from the specified Onomap group as the overall London average, while 200 means double the London average, and 50 half of the London average’.

As such, the maps in the London Profiler show bands of concentration consisting of the colours above. If the colour shown is dark blue, it means that more than 251 people from a certain ethnic group are to be found in that area. However if the dominant colour happens to be light grey, then that indicates that a certain ethnic group is low in numbers. Even though the London Profiler does not claim to produce exact data, however for the particular investigation in this chapter, which attempts to study buildings and their users, such information is very useful. Also this kind of statistics acts as a buffer between the statistics provided by the ONS because the London Profiler provides two types of data that we need here: i.e. statistics based on ethnicity and those based on religion. As we are studying specific buildings within a particular borough, the London Profiler can also improve upon the available data by offering more ethnic/religious categories than the 2001 Census data. Therefore, prior to each case study, an



- Krishna Avanti Primary School in Harrow
- The Neasden Temple in north-west London
- The Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking, on the southern outskirts of London
- Finsbury Park Mosque in north London

examination of the 2001 Census in terms of different ethnic group that seem to be the majority in that specific area, and who are protected users or visitors to our investigated building, will be compared to the more detailed information as, provided by the London Profiler method. None of these sources is of course perfect, but if they are used to cross-check each other than sufficiently accurate data can be obtained for the purpose of this chapter.

2. Case studies

Four case study buildings/areas have thus been selected for the purpose of this chapter, as shown on the map to the left. The reasons for selecting each one will be explained in each the sections that follow. Overall, however, the aim of these studies is to show the diversity and complexity of ethnic houses of worship, and how these cannot ever be stereotyped.

2.1. Krishna Avanti Primary School in Harrow

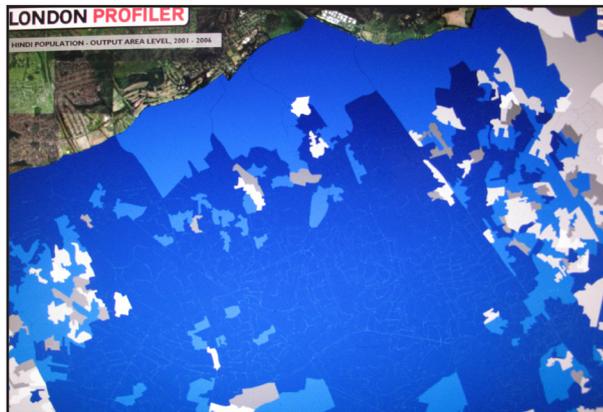


Figure 2: Hindu population in the Harrow area (Source: London profiler)

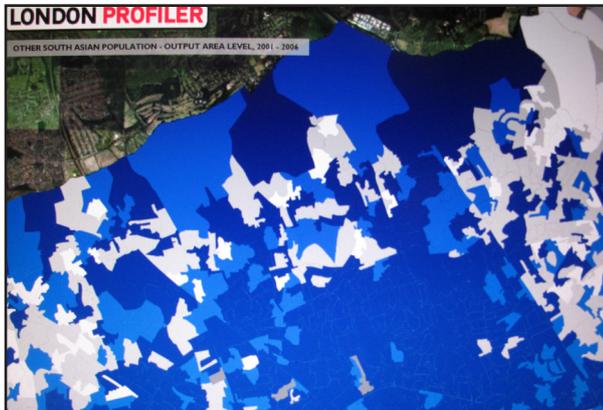


Figure 3: Other South-Asian population in the Harrow area (Source: London profiler)

		Harrow	London
All People	Count	206,814	7,172,091
White: British	Count	103,207	4,287,861
White: British	%	49.90	59.79
White: Irish	Count	9,057	220,488
White: Irish	%	4.38	3.07
White: Other White	Count	9,279	594,854
White: Other White	%	4.49	8.29
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	Count	1,371	70,928
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	%	0.66	0.99
Mixed: White and Black African	Count	633	34,182
Mixed: White and Black African	%	0.31	0.48
Mixed: White and Asian	Count	2,018	59,944
Mixed: White and Asian	%	0.98	0.84
Mixed: Other Mixed	Count	1,818	61,057
Mixed: Other Mixed	%	0.88	0.85
Asian or Asian British: Indian	Count	45,310	436,993
Asian or Asian British: Indian	%	21.91	6.09
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	Count	4,317	142,749
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	%	2.09	1.99
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	Count	953	153,893
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	%	0.46	2.15
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	Count	10,734	133,058
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	%	5.19	1.86
Black or Black British: Caribbean	Count	6,116	343,567
Black or Black British: Caribbean	%	2.96	4.79
Black or Black British: African	Count	5,656	378,933
Black or Black British: African	%	2.73	5.28
Black or Black British: Other Black	Count	931	60,349
Black or Black British: Other Black	%	0.45	0.84
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese	Count	2,567	80,201
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese	%	1.24	1.12
Chinese or other ethnic group: Other ethnic group	Count	2,847	113,034
Chinese or other ethnic group: Other ethnic group	%	1.38	1.58

Table 3: Population statistics based on ethnicity in the Harrow area (Office of National Statistics)

		Harrow	London	England
All People (Persons)	Count	206,814	7,172,091	49,138,831
People stating religion as: Christian (Persons)	Count	97,799	4,176,175	35,251,244
People stating religion as: Christian (Persons)	%	47.29	58.23	71.74
People stating religion as: Buddhist (Persons)	Count	1,390	54,297	139,046
People stating religion as: Buddhist (Persons)	%	0.67	0.76	0.28
People stating religion as: Hindu (Persons)	Count	40,548	291,977	546,982
People stating religion as: Hindu (Persons)	%	19.61	4.07	1.11
People stating religion as: Jewish (Persons)	Count	13,112	149,789	257,671
People stating religion as: Jewish (Persons)	%	6.34	2.09	0.52
People stating religion as: Muslim (Persons)	Count	14,915	607,083	1,524,887
People stating religion as: Muslim (Persons)	%	7.21	8.46	3.10
People stating religion as: Sikh (Persons)	Count	2,073	104,230	327,343
People stating religion as: Sikh (Persons)	%	1.00	1.45	0.67
People stating religion as: Other religions (Persons)	Count	4,208	36,558	143,811
People stating religion as: Other religions (Persons)	%	2.03	0.51	0.29
People stating religion as: No religion (Persons)	Count	18,674	1,130,616	7,171,332
People stating religion as: No religion (Persons)	%	9.03	15.76	14.59
People stating religion as: Religion not stated (Persons)	Count	14,095	621,366	3,776,515
People stating religion as: Religion not stated (Persons)	%	6.82	8.66	7.69

Table 4: Population statistics based on religion in the Harrow area (Office of National Statistics)

We can see from the tables and maps that the overwhelming number of immigrant people in the Harrow area comes from the Asian or British-Asian Indian community, which makes up 21% of the local population. Likewise, followers of the Hindu religion make up 19% of local people, and so that is the largest religion after Christianity in the Harrow area. However, the choice to study a school in this area might not at first seem to coincide with the rest of the focus on religious buildings in this study, but yet this example is a purpose-built school with faith principles guiding its architectural design. Making the choice to study this school is thus due to its location in an area of London which has such a strong ethnic/religious concentration. This makes the need for such a school significant, as well as leading to an architectural style that is based partly on Hindu principles and methods of construction.

History of the school

Krishna Avanti was the first voluntary-aided Hindu faith school anywhere in Britain. Funding for the school was led by a local businessman, Nitesh Gor, who successfully raised money from local companies, and then lobbied the local council to support his bid for £11 million from public money to help set up the school. The vision for the school was as follows:

1. Academic achievement: enabling students to become confident, articulate and motivated learners laying solid foundations for their future vocation, economic well-being and self-fulfilment.
2. Character formation: nurturing character and conduct consistent with Hindu virtues of respect, empathy, honesty, self-esteem, self-discipline, thoughtfulness and appreciation of the divine.
3. Health, mind and body: promoting pupils' holistic health through the provision of a safe, caring environment, a balanced vegetarian diet and opportunities to practice yoga, meditation and the arts.
4. Wholesome sense of identity: acknowledging the key roles of free choice, exemplary role-models, loyalty to tradition and spiritual identity.
5. Social and community cohesion: inviting all members of the school and broader community to share in its aims, and preparing students of all backgrounds to contribute to society as responsible citizens.

6. Environmental responsibility: helping students adopt conscientious lifestyles that help sustain our planet, particularly by setting a practical example, nurturing respect for all life, and maintaining a simple, clean and ecologically-friendly environment.²⁴

The Krishna Avanti School today offers places for 210 primary school pupils. It is located on a residential street and the school occupies some of the fields that previously belonged to Belmont Football Club, which still occupies its own site behind the school. The school also features a temple, shrine and meditation garden. The Hindu faith is at the heart of the school's design and management and most pupils come from local Hindu families. However, as the head teacher, Naina Parma, states: 'we're not an exclusivist ghetto [but] an inclusive faith school [with] strong links to other schools and the community'.²⁵

According to the *Harrow Times*, a row broke out after this pioneering state-funded Hindu school revealed that its admissions policy would give preferential treatment to certain pupils based on the strength of their Hindu beliefs. Jay Lakhani, the Hindu Council UK's director for education, expressed his opinions to the policy:

"The Krishna Avanti School was offered state-funding and is being allowed to open as a 'Hindu' rather than an 'ISKCON' school. That is what it should be, a truly Hindu school that serves and reflects the wider Harrow Hindu community with its kaleidoscopic Hindu diversity."²⁶

But the I-Foundation, which is the charity behind the school, has dismissed such criticisms and put together a list of signatures from religious leaders defending the school's policy. Nitesh Gor, director of the I-Foundation, has declared:

"In common with other faith schools, which may require letters from priests or proof of church or synagogue attendance, we want to give priority to those that are most active in their faith."²⁷

Such debates aside, the architectural form of the Krishna Avanti School is of much interest. Initially the local council agreed to the plans supplied by the architects and the scheme had many supporters from the surrounding community, yet there were also many objections that were recorded in the Harrow Council's records²⁸. According to an article in the *Harrow Times*:

"Councillors decided to grant planning permission for the Krishna-Avanti school, which will be built on the William Ellis Playing Fields, in Camrose Avenue, at a meeting on Monday, September 10. Nitesh Gor, director of the I-Foundation, which submitted the application, said:

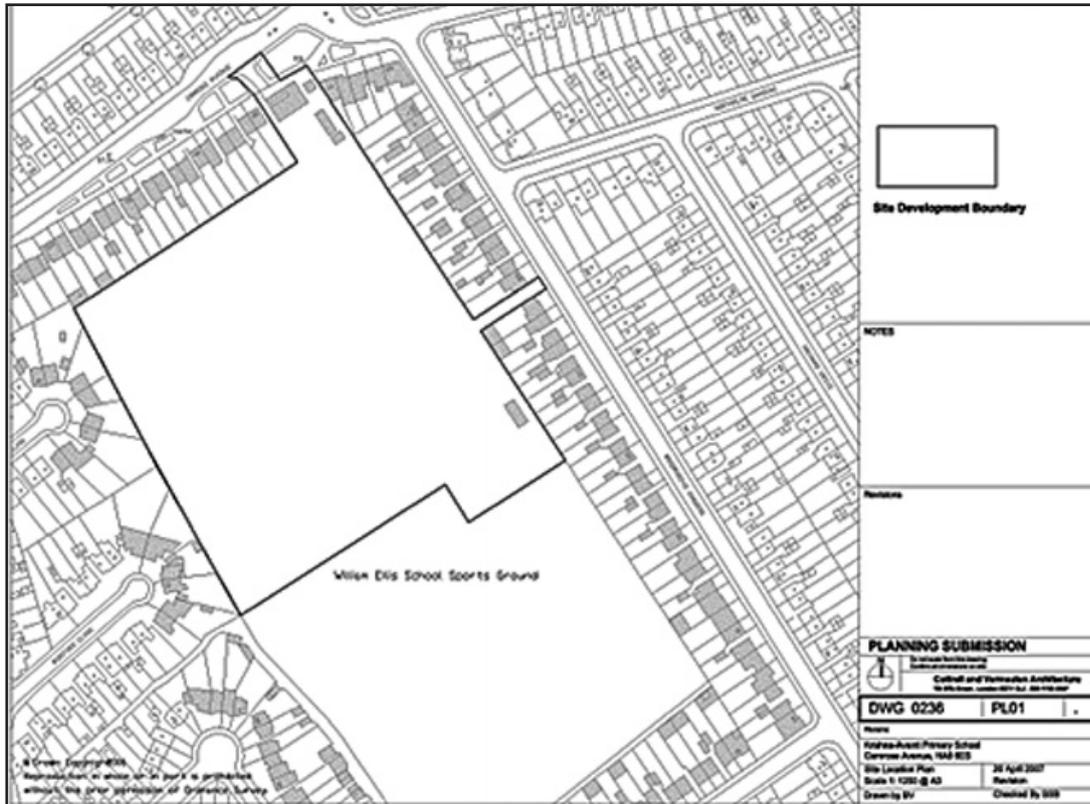


Figure 4: Site plan of the Krishna Avanti School (images: Cottrell and Vermeulen Architects)

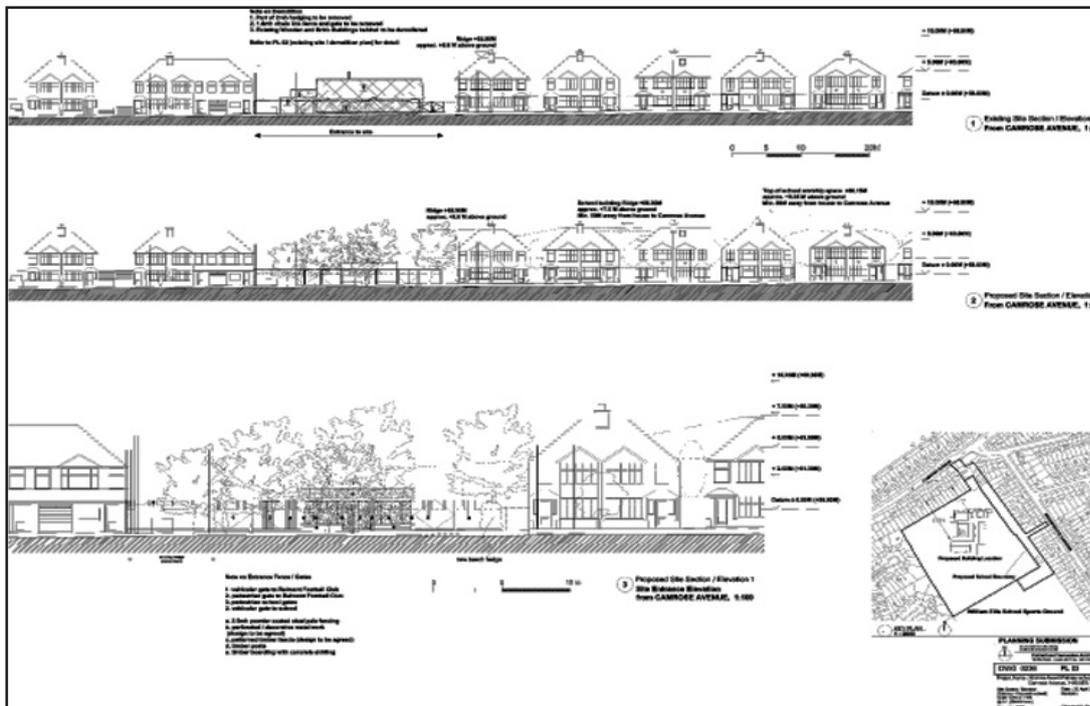


Figure 5: Elevations of the houses taken from the school (images: Cottrell and Vermeulen Architects)

“We are absolutely ecstatic. This is the first time the Hindu community has had the option to send its children to a faith school. “There are 40,000 Hindus in this borough, who have been waiting for this decision for many years, and we feel this is the right decision for the community.””²⁹

The *Harrow Times* also observed that the plans drew strong criticism from some residents who said they were keen to protect the playing fields. Len Halsey, chairman of the William Ellis Residents’ Association, said:

‘We are disappointed with the decision, but it was predictable. If this is the only site for the Hindu school then it is not the right one.’³⁰

Thus the school was built on a greenfield site which had been used by many sports clubs; those who opposed the scheme argued that a brownfield site should be used instead. Mr Halsey stated: ‘We have serious concerns that some green space won’t be replaced. And putting the school here gives it no option to expand, and very few options for the future.’ According to the *Harrow Times*, the decision was originally due in July 2009, but was delayed after Sport England objected to the plans. The latter agency was concerned that construction on the playing fields might result in a loss of green space if they were not replaced. But Harrow Council agreed to allow locals to have access to the school’s playing fields, and so signed a 25-year lease with Belmont FC so that the club can continue to play on the land. The I-Foundation has also pledged to spend £500,000 upgrading the football facilities and £70,000 on traffic and parking measures, in a bid to allay fears that the area would be seriously affected by construction of the new school. Sport England subsequently withdrew its objection.³¹ Some of these objections are very interesting because many came not only from people of different faiths, but also from people belonging to the Hindu faith. The key points for objection were:

- The permanent loss of green open space.
- The increase of traffic due to the school and the impact of these cars on the environment.
- Environmental damage as a result of this development, with a reduction in local people’s quality of life.
- Congestion, noise, litter and pollution.
- The school wasn’t actually needed for educational purposes because existing schools were undersubscribed.
- More minor issues such as the increased risk of flooding due to loss of drainage because of the school’s construction, or its direct effect in blocking resident’s views.

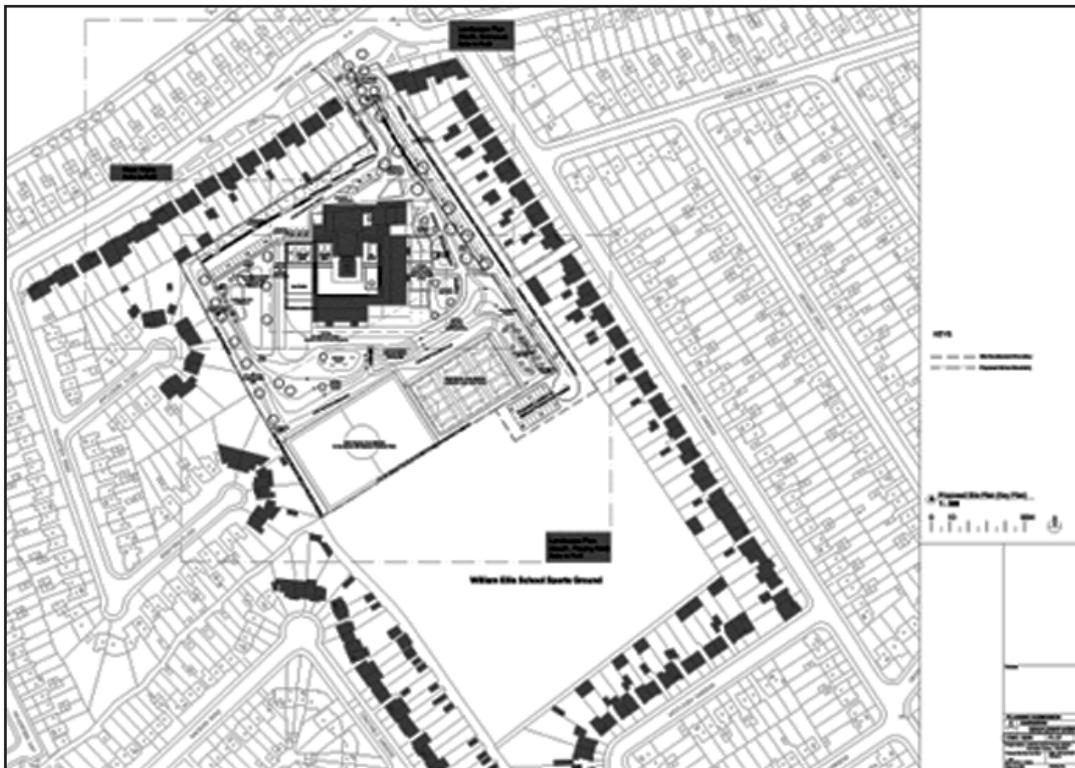
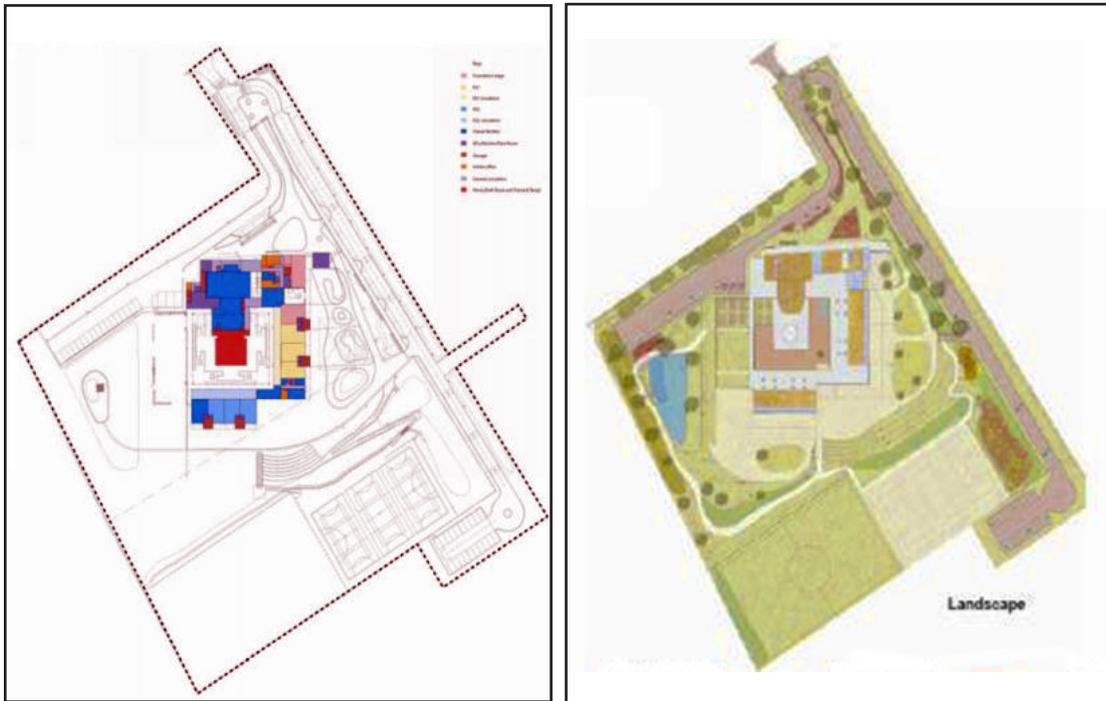


Figure 6: Selected views showing the site plan of the school

All plans and section on the next page are from Cottrell and Vermeulen Architects

These points help us understand some of the story behind the construction of the school, given that it is located within a residential area, and also show the largely middle-class background of the people who reside in the area. As mentioned previously, most of these objections came from those (based on the names on the letters in the council's records) who have non-Indian names, and therefore we can conclude that opposition to the building of the school was faith-related; yet there are some letters which distinctly mention that the individual behind the letters of rejection were practicing Hindus. Furthermore, council documents show that there were far more letters of support than there were objection letters. Ultimately it is no surprise that the Krishna Avanti School came to be built in the course of 2009. Furthermore, according to school records, the school is now four times over-subscribed, showing how popular it has become; much of this is due undoubtedly to the high quality of its design.

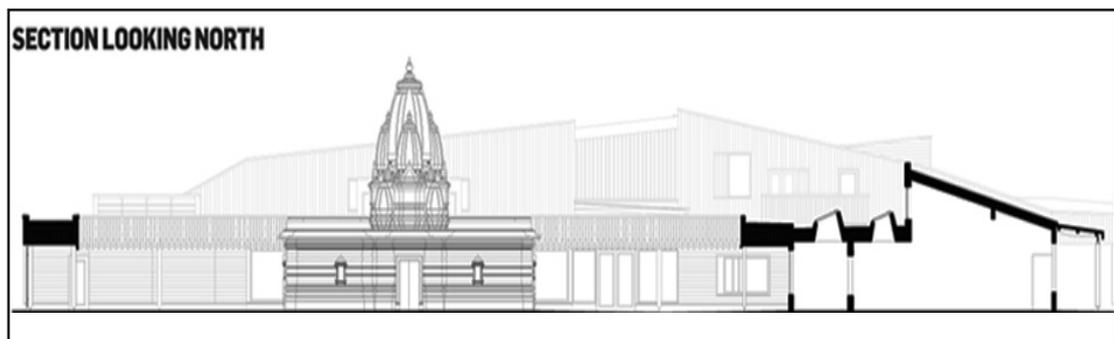


Figure 7: Section showing the temple in relation to the classrooms

Architecture of the school

The Krishna Avanti School invited a number of architects to enter a design competition that would reflect their core aims and vision. From this process, Cottrell and Vermeulen were appointed as the architects. They began work on the project by holding five community workshops involving discussions and drawing sessions in a local Hindu temple. A range of local people were involved including teachers, priests, parents and local children. From these workshops it was clear that local people wanted a number of things to be included:

- A school layout which had a Hindu temple at its heart
- A sustainable school building that was in sympathy with the natural environment
- A school with various different types of outdoor space around it.
- A modern and contemporary design that also respected the ancient Hindu principles of Vastu Shastra architecture.



Figure 8: Photograph showing the temple within the courtyard of the school.

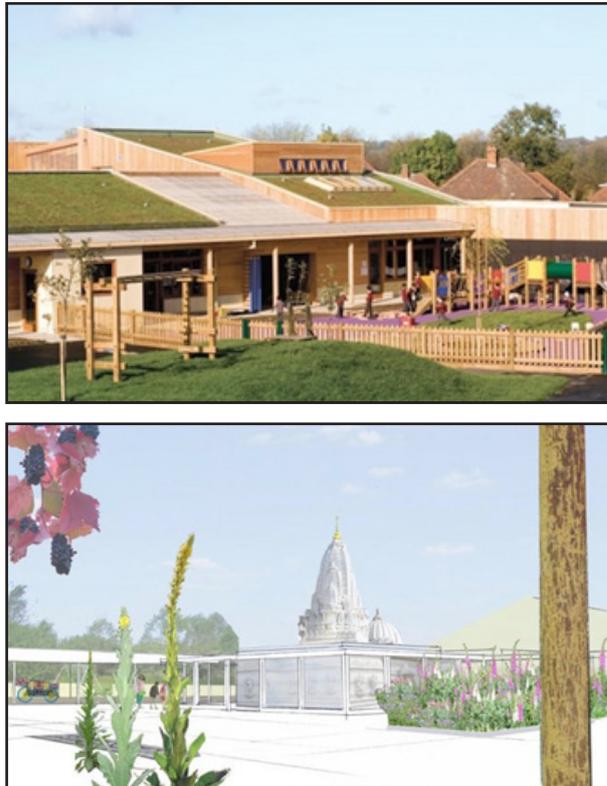


Figure 9: Different views of the courtyard of the school

All images of the school are from: (Anthony Coleman Photography)

As noted, the Krishna Avanti School is located within a residential area and accessed only by a wide avenue that runs through a row of semi-detached houses to the north of the site. The school gate is decorated with peacock feathers and lotus flower designs; a gentle slope leads up to the visitor's entrance through a front garden.

The architecture consists of single-level buildings with double-height ceilings to access light from windows located within non-uniform voids in the ceiling, in order to create an interesting glow throughout the school. However, staff facilities are located above the reception area at the east of the building and can be accessed by stairs and a lift – the rest of the school is all at ground-floor level. The entrance interior consists of a reception area that is accessed through automatic glass doors. The reception desk has been dropped down so that it is at a suitable height for children and wheelchairs users. There is a small seating area, and a place for visitors to take off their shoes before they enter the main part of the school. At the heart of the scheme is a striking Hindu temple sitting in the middle of an internal courtyard. This temple is visible from every public space in the school, which means that all activities can be conducted within the deities' line of vision. The front façade of the temple is connected to the school's main hall; the other three temple sides are closed off but overlook the classrooms around the interior courtyard. It is also notable that the temple is the only structure in the school that is not constructed in timber. Instead it is carved from off-white marble that came from Rajasthan in India, carried out by 30 skilled craftsmen and led by Indian stone specialist, Prakash Patel. The carved pieces were then shipped over to the UK and assembled on site. This marble is the same marble that was used to build the Taj Mahal. The temple, however, is constructed in a way that was not meant to be intimidating because it was meant to be designed at the scale for the children who pray, learn and play there. Linked to the temple by two retractable glass doors are a dining room and gym where children can eat, dance, practice yoga, sports and music and where various community and religious festivals take place. The school has been designed as a space using the principles of Vastu Shastra as its cultural foundation. Some of these principles were defined by the local community prior to construction, and included:

- The fact that the deities should be placed right at the centre of the school, watching over children during lessons and when they eat, because in Hinduism all of these activities are seen as acts of worship.
- The building should be orientated in a north-south direction and should be built on flat ground.

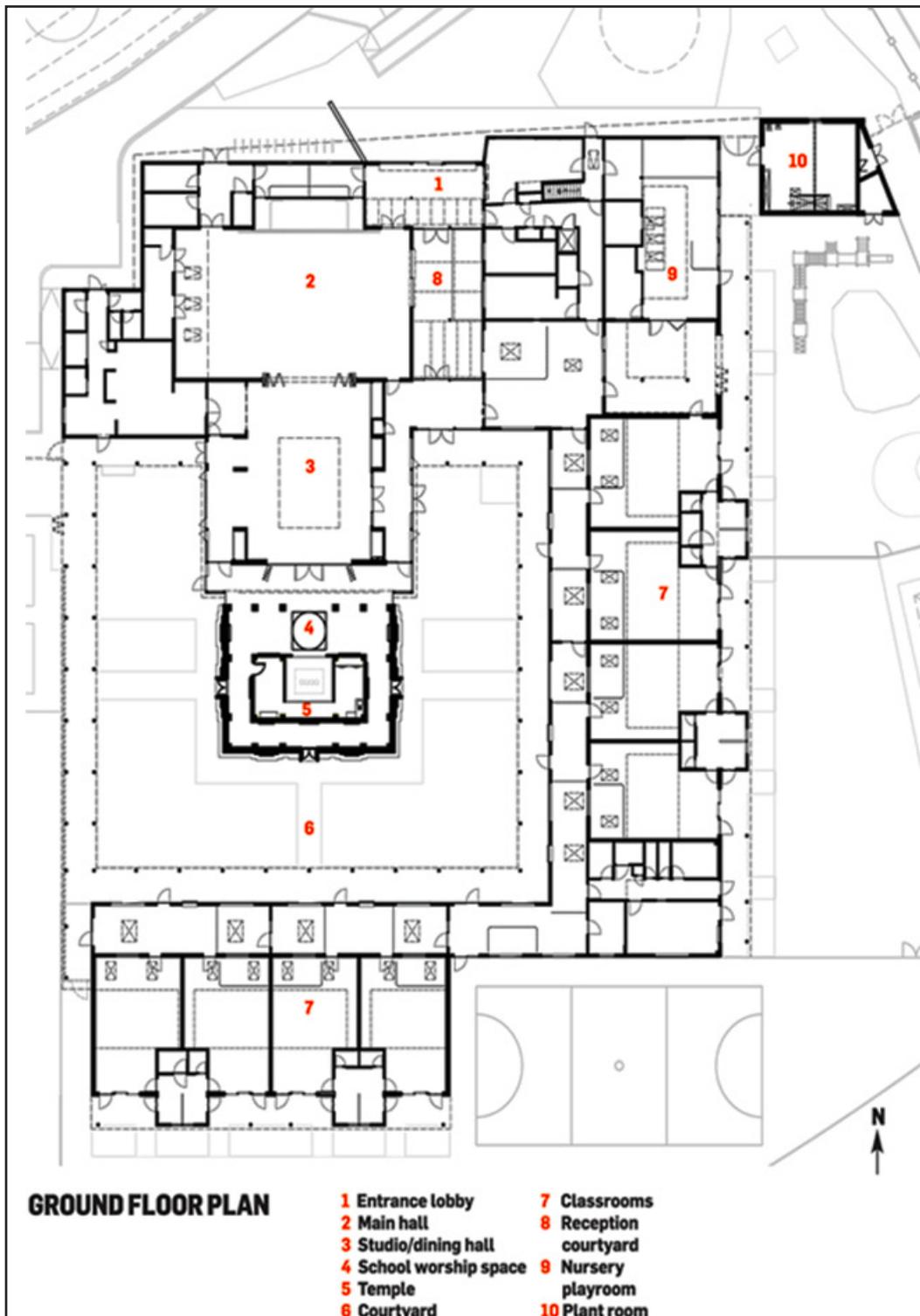


Figure 10: Plan showing the different spaces of the school

- No metals which could be seen as detrimental to meditation should be used in the construction, for example steel.
- There should be no toilets placed between the entrance area and the central temple.

As mentioned previously, all of the classrooms are located around the central courtyard and look out onto their own outdoor play areas. Classrooms are full of natural light and fresh air, with high ceilings and large louvred dormer windows. Sliding wooden doors open from the classrooms onto the external play areas. Children enter their classrooms through an entrance where they have a cloakroom and a space to store their shoes. Each classroom has its own shrine where pupils can leave offerings, such as fruit or pens and notebooks, and there are multi-hued wall displays bearing Sanskrit words and images of deities and farm animals. A poster for Diwali has diva lamps fashioned out of DVDs and tea lights. Miss Allen, one of three teachers at the school and a Hare Krishna follower, says that the school ethos is conducive to a calm atmosphere:

‘The children enjoy coming to school and that’s nice for us because we enjoy coming to school. They race into morning prayers. The faith aspect is really important.’³²

The Krishna Avanti School also contains a library, which has empty spaces so that children can sit on the floor and read, as well as a small hall for such activities as yoga and a food hall with no furniture because again the Hindu faith promotes the idea of eating while sitting on the floor; this practice also kind of encourage young pupils to feel free and comfortable while eating. At the back of the classrooms, steps and a ramp lead up to an amphitheatre, playing fields and an adventure playground. There is also a quiet outdoor space known as the Japa³³ garden that includes 108 stepping stones reflecting Hindu prayer beads. To the west of the site are a number of raised beds for growing fruit and vegetables which are then cooked in the school’s vegetarian kitchen. Each classroom also has its own individual vegetable patch that the children look after. There is also a wildlife garden and pond. As the chair of the governors, Nitesh Gor, declares: ‘environmental responsibility is one of the key aspects of the school. The whole process of growing food and cooking is important. The children are responsible for patches outside their own classrooms. Our school cook is also the school priest’³⁴ Vidur Dindayal, who is a member of the architectural practice that built the school, writes:

‘The Krishna Avanti School scores highly on sustainability and inclusive design. Its ethos is



Figure 11: Photographs of the pupils facing the temple from the school's interior courtyard



Figure 12: photographs showing the interior and exterior corridors of the school

perhaps unique: to nurture good human values; respect for all life; growing and preparing food; and a lifestyle of caring for the environment, and the community.’³⁵

The school’s exterior slanted roofs are covered with grass to complete the picture of an eco-oriented school in every way possible as well as making the school blend into the environment given that it occupies a green sports field. The wooden structure of the school helps with this vision too. The only feature that stands out from the idea of a soft, natural ethos is the marble temple. Making it the focal point of the school’s interior appearance enhances the exterior since only the dome is visible from the outside, creating a powerful effect. In this sense, the use of a prestigious and expensive material like marble, and the intricacy of the temple design, is intended to emphasize religious belief. It represents an interesting approach to design, in which the more ‘secular’ form of the school – modern, organic, informal timber – is deliberately contrasted with the central temple – traditional, organic, formal, stone – to accentuate the latter as the most significant element. Ultimately, however, this binary approach only serves to divorce the religious element from the secular in an uneasy manner. Hence a few key points can be made about the Krishna Avanti School:

- 1- The design of the school is intended to combine the traditional elements of Hindu beliefs by focusing the school around a small Hindu *mandir*; in terms of the final design this has been very well executed.
- 2- Traditionally Hindu *mandirs* are oriented towards the north or the east and in this case, site regulations could not accommodate such a feature; therefore the entrance to the school is very awkwardly positioned between the rows of houses that surround it.
- 3- Although the school’s use of building materials, as well as plan, is considered a successful hybrid architectural form especially by its developers, these are not quite as successful in terms of its practicality as a school; this is according to some of the parents of the children at the school as well as some inside sources who asked not to be named.
- 4- The major complaint of the parents are the impracticality of the position of the *mandir* within the school’s courtyard, which means that the location of the school’s classrooms are very awkward for small children, and the same issue was highlighted by several members of staff.

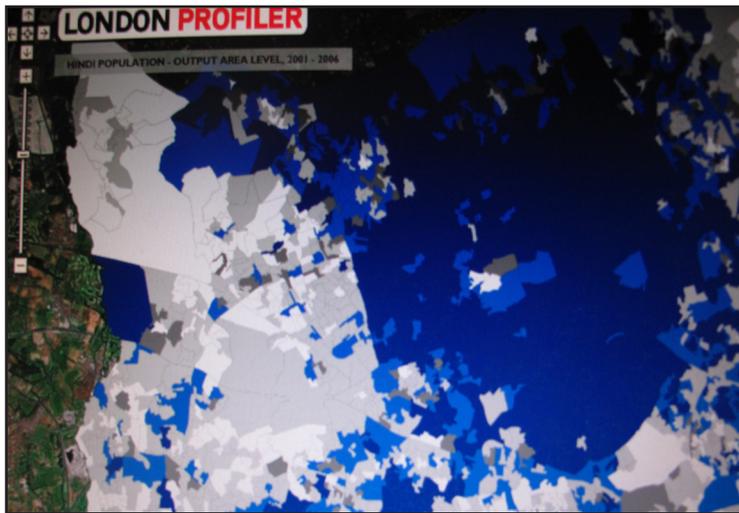


Figure 13: Hindu population in the Brent area

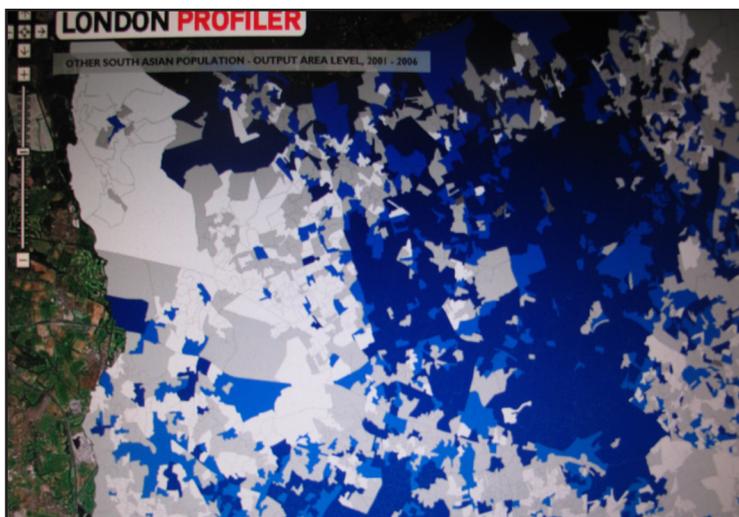


Figure 14: Other South Asian groups in the Brent area

All images are from: the London Profiler website)

2.2: Neasden Temple in north-west London

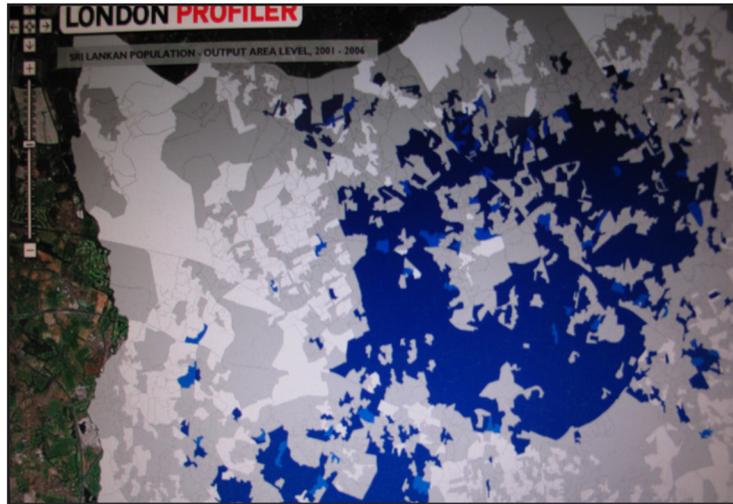


Figure 15: Sri Lankan population in the Brent area



Figure 16: Hindu population in the Brent area

		Brent	London	England
All People (Persons)	Count	263,464	7,172,091	49,138,831
White: British (Persons)	Count	76,893	4,287,861	42,747,136
White: British (Persons)	%	29.19	59.79	86.99
White: Irish (Persons)	Count	18,313	220,488	624,115
White: Irish (Persons)	%	6.95	3.07	1.27
White: Other White (Persons)	Count	24,072	594,854	1,308,110
White: Other White (Persons)	%	9.14	8.29	2.66
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean (Persons)	Count	2,739	70,928	231,424
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean (Persons)	%	1.04	0.99	0.47
Mixed: White and Black African (Persons)	Count	1,739	34,182	76,498
Mixed: White and Black African (Persons)	%	0.66	0.48	0.16
Mixed: White and Asian (Persons)	Count	2,529	59,944	184,014
Mixed: White and Asian (Persons)	%	0.96	0.84	0.37
Mixed: Other Mixed (Persons)	Count	2,795	61,057	151,437
Mixed: Other Mixed (Persons)	%	1.06	0.85	0.31
Asian or Asian British: Indian (Persons)	Count	48,624	436,993	1,028,546
Asian or Asian British: Indian (Persons)	%	18.46	6.09	2.09
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani (Persons)	Count	10,626	142,749	706,539
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani (Persons)	%	4.03	1.99	1.44
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi (Persons)	Count	1,184	153,893	275,394
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi (Persons)	%	0.45	2.15	0.56
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian (Persons)	Count	12,628	133,058	237,810
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian (Persons)	%	4.79	1.86	0.48
Black or Black British: Caribbean (Persons)	Count	27,574	343,567	561,246
Black or Black British: Caribbean (Persons)	%	10.47	4.79	1.14
Black or Black British: African (Persons)	Count	20,640	378,933	475,938
Black or Black British: African (Persons)	%	7.83	5.28	0.97
Black or Black British: Other Black (Persons)	Count	4,123	60,349	95,324
Black or Black British: Other Black (Persons)	%	1.56	0.84	0.19
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese (Persons)	Count	2,812	80,201	220,681
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese (Persons)	%	1.07	1.12	0.45
Chinese or other ethnic group: Other ethnic group (Persons)	Count	6,173	113,034	214,619
Chinese or other ethnic group: Other ethnic group (Persons)	%	2.34	1.58	0.44

Table 5: Population statistics based on ethnicity in the Brent area (Office of National Statistics)

		Brent	London	England
All People (Persons)	Count	263,464	7,172,091	49,138,831
People stating religion as: Christian (Persons)	Count	125,702	4,176,175	35,251,244
People stating religion as: Christian (Persons)	%	47.71	58.23	71.74
People stating religion as: Buddhist (Persons)	Count	2,497	54,297	139,046
People stating religion as: Buddhist (Persons)	%	0.95	0.76	0.28
People stating religion as: Hindu (Persons)	Count	45,228	291,977	546,982
People stating religion as: Hindu (Persons)	%	17.17	4.07	1.11
People stating religion as: Jewish (Persons)	Count	6,464	149,789	257,671
People stating religion as: Jewish (Persons)	%	2.45	2.09	0.52
People stating religion as: Muslim (Persons)	Count	32,290	607,083	1,524,887
People stating religion as: Muslim (Persons)	%	12.26	8.46	3.10
People stating religion as: Sikh (Persons)	Count	1,738	104,230	327,343
People stating religion as: Sikh (Persons)	%	0.66	1.45	0.67
People stating religion as: Other religions (Persons)	Count	2,977	36,558	143,811
People stating religion as: Other religions (Persons)	%	1.13	0.51	0.29
People stating religion as: No religion (Persons)	Count	26,252	1,130,616	7,171,332
People stating religion as: No religion (Persons)	%	9.96	15.76	14.59
People stating religion as: Religion not stated (Persons)	Count	20,316	621,366	3,776,515
People stating religion as: Religion not stated (Persons)	%	7.71	8.66	7.6

Table 6: Population statistics based on religion in the Brent area (Office of National Statistics)

We can see from Tables 5 and 6, along with the London Profiler maps (Figures 13-16), that in Brent the main ethnicity (other than white British) are the Asian Indian residents which constitute 18.46% of the population, followed by Black or Black British Caribbean, which make up 10.47% of residents in the area. Also according to Brent Council's records, more than 130 languages are spoken in addition to English – with Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Somali and Urdu being the most widespread. The majority religion after Christianity is Hinduism, as seen also in our previous example in Harrow. Furthermore, along with the need to construct



Figure 17: Photographs of the temple building



Figure 18: The *haveli* building

a Hindu temple to serve local residents, the purpose of such a large and imposing monumental building clearly has other reasons for its significance, as will be seen later.

History of the temple:

Constructed by the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) organisation, Shri Swaminarayan Mandir London – also commonly known as the Neasden Temple – is the main Hindu religious building in the London Borough of Brent in North-West London, whose major area is Wembley. It borders Harrow in north-west London. In 1982 the congregation moved from its previous Islington temple to a small ex-warehouse in Neasden. By 1990, BAPS was again in search of a building that could cope with its growing congregation, and so the plans for the present temple were drawn up. The temple was inaugurated on 20th August 1995 by Pramukh Swami Maharaj on the site of a disused truck warehouse opposite the interim temple. The temple's location itself is fascinating, because the main street, which is the North Circular Road, contains plenty of large shopping stores such as Ikea. The area where the temple is located just sits behind the main road in a semi-residential area, and as such it is barely visible from the main road. There is a faith school that sits opposite the temple itself. Thus the main reason for building the temple in this particular plot would have to be the ready availability of a large plot of land and the ease of car access for visiting worshippers.

The temple, however, was then built entirely using traditional methods and materials, and as such was considered to be Britain's first authentic Hindu temple. Indeed it was also Europe's first traditional Hindu stone temple or *mandir*. The building was cited in the *Guinness World Records 2000* as follows:

'The Shri Swaminarayan Temple in Neasden, London, UK, is the largest Hindu temple outside India. It was built by His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, a 79-year-old Indian sadhu (holy man), and is made of 2,828 tonnes of Bulgarian limestone and 2,000 tonnes of Italian marble, which was first shipped to India to be carved by a team of 1,526 sculptors. The temple cost £12 million to build.'³⁶

The *mandir* was built and funded entirely by the Hindu community and the life of the entire project spanned five years, although the construction itself was completed in two-and-a-half years. Building work began in August 1992. On 24th November of that same year, the temple recorded the biggest-ever concrete pour in the UK, when 4,500 tons was put down in 24 hours to create a foundation mat that was 1.8m thick. The first

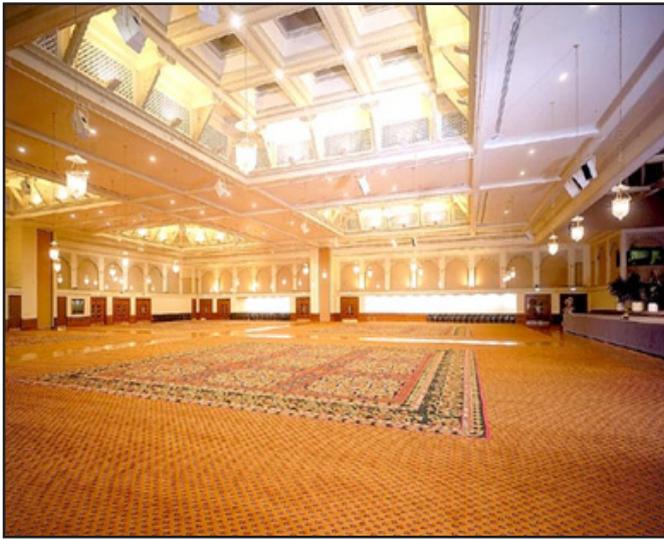


Figure 19: Photographs of the interior of the *haveli*.
Images: (from the temple's website)

Figure 20: Photographs showing religious ceremony
Images: (from the temple's website)



Figure 21: VIP entrance gate that leads to the *mandir*

stone block was laid in June 1993; two years later, the whole building was complete. Compositionally, the Neasden Temple complex consists of:

- A large and somewhat traditional Hindu temple.
- A permanent exhibition display entitled ‘Understanding Hinduism’
- A cultural centre, known as the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Haveli, which is designed using traditional Gujarati *haveli* architecture, and which contains an assembly hall, gymnasium, bookshop and offices.

Architecture of the temple:

As noted, *mandir* is the Hindu name for a place of worship or prayer. *Mandir* is a Sanskrit word for where the mind becomes still and the soul floats freely to seek the source of life, peace, joy and comfort. For centuries the *mandir* was the focal point of any Hindu religious complex and was designed according to the Shilpa-Shastras, a Vedic text that develops Hindu architecture to metaphorically represent the different attributes of God. Traditionally, however, *mandirs* in India were built using red sandstone, marble, timber, or a combination of timber and stone (the choice is based on many reasons ranging from class, caste and gender). In addition, *mandir* construction, according to Vedic tradition, requires the ban on the use of ferrous materials for the exterior. Therefore, the need for suitable stone and marble for the building envelope became intrinsic. Indeed, it was the first time the Hindu community would have to conform their building techniques (based on religious beliefs) to the UK’s building regulations, as well as those of the planning department in the local council.³⁷ Hence it was decided by the temple’s committee and the architects (the principal architect was CB Sompura, who is based in Ahmedabad), that materials like Indian marble, Italian marble, Sardinian granite and Bulgarian limestone were the suitable choices under the circumstances. This temple is considered a *shikharbaddha* (or pinnacled) *mandir*, and involves the use of seven tiered pinnacles topped by golden spires which make the roofline; these are also complemented by five ribbed domes. The temple has an intricately carved cantilevered central dome, claimed to be the only modern example in Britain that does not use steel. The interior of the dome consists of serpentine ribbons of stone that link the columns to the arches. Also, according to the construction records, the carving of the interior and exterior work needed more than 1500 craftsmen volunteers in a workshop especially set up for the project.



Figure 22: Entrance door of the *haveli*

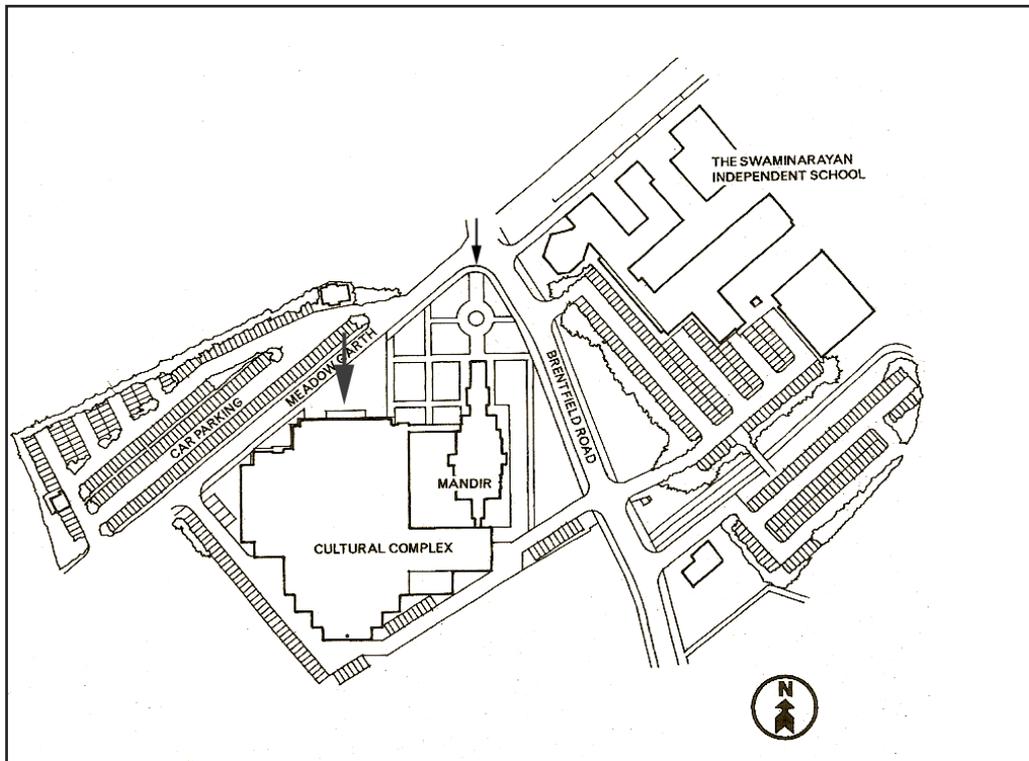


Figure 23: Site plan showing the visitor's entrance highlighted by the darker arrow and the other VIP entrance highlighted by the smaller arrow. (Source: Ealing Council records)

The entrance to the temple is through a gated fence with a security room that checks out people as they enter. After the entrance gate a tiled courtyard with the *haveli* to the right and the temple's dominating staircase becomes visible, as well as the side of the temple, forming a U-shaped courtyard. The main entrance of the temple is through another gate but that is mostly used for important visitors and special occasions. The public enters the building from the *haveli's* entrance to a central hall that acts as the access point to all the activities of the building; the *haveli* hall is to the right of the entrance, while the temple is accessed through a staircase to the left of the entrance.

Naturally, the Neasden Temple serves essentially as a major centre of worship. Directly beneath each of the seven pinnacles seen from the outside is a shrine. Each of these seven shrines contains *murtis* (sacred images of the deities) within altars. Each *murti* is revered like God in person and devoutly attended to each day by the *sadhus* (monks) who live in the temple *ashram*. Beneath the *mandir* is the permanent exhibition on 'Understanding Hinduism' which uses 3D images, paintings, sculptures and traditional craftwork to ensure that visitors can learn about the origin and beliefs of the Hindu faith, and how this ancient religion is being practiced today. Daily rituals begin before sunrise. The *murtis*, which are adorned in their night attire are woken by the *sadhus* and the shrine doors are opened for the *Mangala Aarti*, which is the first of five *aarti* rituals offered during the day. *Aarti* is a ritual wherein a specific prayer is recited in a poetic format with music while the *sadhus* wave a lighted lamp in front of the *murtis*. The *sadhus* then recite some *shlokas* (prayers), serve the deities, offer them food and bathe them, and close the shrine doors. The shrines are opened again for the second *aarti* (*Shangar Aarti*). The shrines remain open from 9:00am to approximately 11:00am, when the shrines are closed and offered *thal* (food for lunch). At 11.45am, the shrines are re-opened for the midday *aarti* (*Rajbhog Aarti*), and the *thal* (offering hymn) is recited before the deities. The shrines are closed after this to allow the deities to rest during the afternoon. And the ritual carries on until the deities are then prepared for the night and adorned in their evening attire by the *sadhus*. The shrines are opened a final time for the night time *Shayan Aarti* with the lights dimmed and music lowered. The devotees then recite a few hymns, gently sending the deities to sleep, before the shrines are finally closed up for the night.

The architecture of the *mandir*, as noted, consists of light marble that is intricately carved and gives a dominant message of excellent craftsmanship. The entrance staircase floor does not have such excellent workmanship as the temple itself; in fact it is poorly

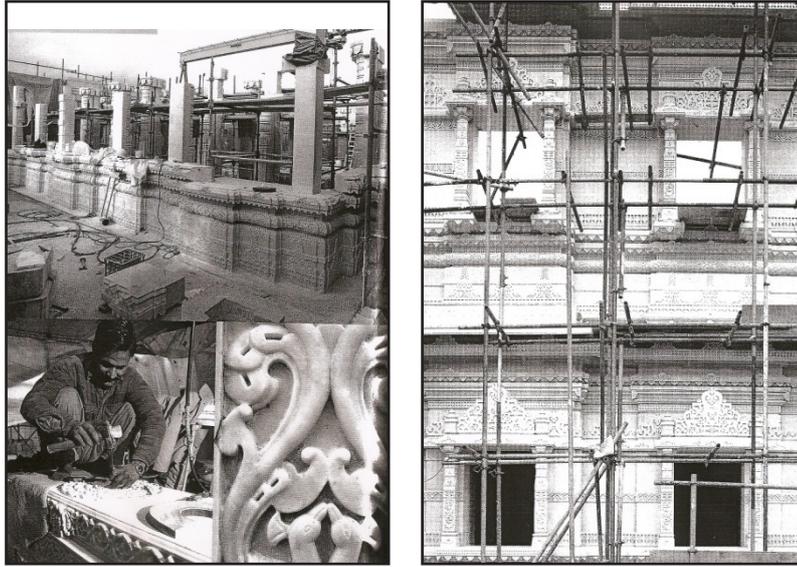


Figure 24: Photographs of the plaster work during construction of the *mandir*

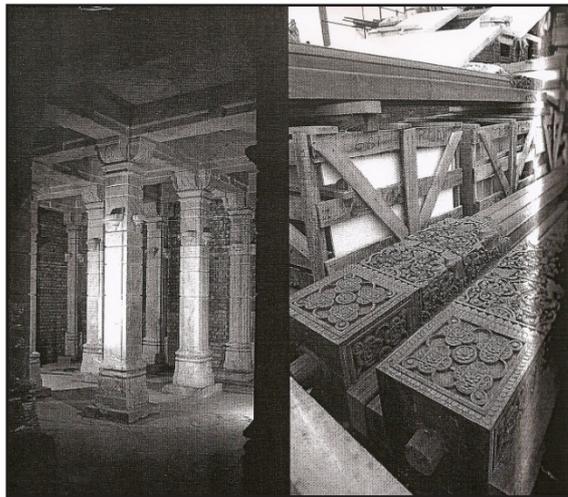


Figure 25: photographs of the wooden columns of the *haveli*



Figure 26: model of the *mandir*

All images from: Photographer David Churchil/Arcade. Published in the Architectural Journal

executed, probably due to the fact that it was done on the premises by volunteers (not the skilled workmen who carved the temple in India) and in a limited time in order to complete the work quickly. The interior of the *mandir* itself is also crafted very delicately, giving a notable feeling of serenity as intended.

The Haveli

Adjoining the Neasden temple is the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Haveli, a courtyard house built in wood as a multi-function cultural centre. Whereas the *mandir* is carved from stone, the *haveli* uses wood (particularly English Oak and Burmese Teak) carved into panels, arches and screens. These were all carved by craftsmen in India based on geometric patterns, stylised animal heads and flower garlands. It required over 150 craftsmen from all over India a period of three years to create 1,600 m² of wood carvings of the highest quality. The interior of the *haveli* is a two-storey open space that is used for large functions and occasion. The second tier is surrounded by a number of arches that are covered by curtains. There are also two entrances that lead to the kitchens that supply food every day to the people praying, as well of course as catering for large occasions.

Behind the deeply traditional timber façade, this cultural centre houses a vast pillar-less prayer hall with space for 3,000 people, along with a gymnasium, medical centre, dining facilities, bookstall, conference facilities, and offices. In 2010 the management committee added a new lift to the south of the *haveli* in order to give mothers better access to the crèche on the first floor, and this addition certainly enhances the building's key purpose as a community centre.

Neasden Temple in itself is now considered to be significant part of British history according to the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. They state that it is a: 'modern building of major importance in our multicultural society'. It is also listed among the 10 most interesting attractive sites that are recommended for tourists to visit in London if they want to see more than the usual icons of the city. This places its significance on a larger scale – not just as a local community centre or a religious building for the local community only. This role for the temple is certainly facilitated by its location in a semi-public area just off the North Circular Road, not in a residential area as in the previous case study, making its proximity to public transport more accessible to overseas tourists as well as visitors of Hindu background from all over the UK. While the building thus fulfils an iconic role as a tourist destination and landmark, its entirely traditional design makes no concession to London conditions,

and it is only its roadside location that innovates.

A number of points can thus be made about the Neasden Temple:

- 1- Since it is a general rule that *mandirs* must face to the north or east, and the existing site happens to be north-west orientated, the building has been built at an angle to suit its site. This particular aspect is always a major concern for the architects of Hindu *mandirs* because of the conflict it creates between planning regulations and religious traditions.
- 2- Between the temple and the *haveli* is a corrugated fence built to protect the temple itself, and which acts as a wall separating the two buildings.
- 3- In Hindu tradition of temple construction, the *sikhara* is positioned directly above the *garbhagrha* (the pinnacled dome on top of the main core of the building). This element was implemented successfully and as we will see later in Southall's Hindu temples, this particular element could not be achieved. As in Vishwa Hindu Mandir.
- 4- There are certain architectural elements that had to be adjusted to meet planning regulations, such as the filling of window spaces within the *mandir* (these windows are usually left open in India to allow for air circulation) with double-glazed windows that are camouflaged by carved wood grilles.
- 5- While the temple design is very traditional the adjoining *haveli* complex openly uses a modern steel structure. The *haveli* was clad in limestone that features a richly decorated wooden carved portico in an attempt to reduce the contrast between the ancient and modern, yet the use of different building materials and the different coloured exteriors work against that aim.

		Woking	South East	England
All People (Persons)	Count	89,840	8,000,645	49,138,831
White: British (Persons)	Count	75,599	7,304,678	42,747,136
White: British (Persons)	%	84.15	91.30	86.99
White: Irish (Persons)	Count	1,228	82,405	624,115
White: Irish (Persons)	%	1.37	1.03	1.27
White: Other White (Persons)	Count	5,174	221,906	1,308,110
White: Other White (Persons)	%	5.76	2.77	2.66
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean (Persons)	Count	222	23,742	231,424
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean (Persons)	%	0.25	0.30	0.47
Mixed: White and Black African (Persons)	Count	116	9,493	76,498
Mixed: White and Black African (Persons)	%	0.13	0.12	0.16
Mixed: White and Asian (Persons)	Count	503	29,977	184,014
Mixed: White and Asian (Persons)	%	0.56	0.37	0.37
Mixed: Other Mixed (Persons)	Count	387	22,567	151,437
Mixed: Other Mixed (Persons)	%	0.43	0.28	0.31
Asian or Asian British: Indian (Persons)	Count	961	89,219	1,028,546
Asian or Asian British: Indian (Persons)	%	1.07	1.12	2.09
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani (Persons)	Count	3,517	58,520	706,539
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani (Persons)	%	3.91	0.73	1.44
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi (Persons)	Count	288	15,358	275,394
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi (Persons)	%	0.32	0.19	0.56
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian (Persons)	Count	453	23,518	237,810
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian (Persons)	%	0.50	0.29	0.48
Black or Black British: Caribbean (Persons)	Count	170	27,452	561,246
Black or Black British: Caribbean (Persons)	%	0.19	0.34	1.14
Black or Black British: African (Persons)	Count	222	24,582	475,938
Black or Black British: African (Persons)	%	0.25	0.31	0.97
Black or Black British: Other Black (Persons)	Count	55	4,880	95,324
Black or Black British: Other Black (Persons)	%	0.06	0.06	0.19
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese (Persons)	Count	424	33,089	220,681
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese (Persons)	%	0.47	0.41	0.45
Chinese or other ethnic group: Other ethnic group (Persons)	Count	521	29,259	214,619
Chinese or other ethnic group: Other ethnic group (Persons)	%	0.58	0.37	0.44

Table 7: Population statistics based on ethnicity in the Woking area. (The Office of National Statistics)

2.3. The Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking:

Turning now to a very different case study, the Shah Jahan Mosque is situated on Oriental Road in Woking and is one of the most significant mosques in the whole of Britain. This mosque was built in 1889 and as such was the second thing that put the current Woking on the map; the first being the railway line which came in 1838. The mosque played a vital role in the establishment of Islam in Britain and became known throughout the world due to its publications and missionary work in the early part of the twentieth century.

		Woking	South East	England
All People (Persons)	Count	89,840	8,000,645	49,138,831
People stating religion as: Christian (Persons)	Count	64,096	5,823,025	35,251,244
People stating religion as: Christian (Persons)	%	71.34	72.78	71.74
People stating religion as: Buddhist (Persons)	Count	257	22,005	139,046
People stating religion as: Buddhist (Persons)	%	0.29	0.28	0.28
People stating religion as: Hindu (Persons)	Count	611	44,575	546,982
People stating religion as: Hindu (Persons)	%	0.68	0.56	1.11
People stating religion as: Jewish (Persons)	Count	232	19,037	257,671
People stating religion as: Jewish (Persons)	%	0.26	0.24	0.52
People stating religion as: Muslim (Persons)	Count	4,550	108,725	1,524,887
People stating religion as: Muslim (Persons)	%	5.06	1.36	3.10
People stating religion as: Sikh (Persons)	Count	98	37,735	327,343
People stating religion as: Sikh (Persons) ¹	%	0.11	0.47	0.67
People stating religion as: Other religions (Persons)	Count	262	28,668	143,811
People stating religion as: Other religions (Persons)	%	0.29	0.36	0.29
People stating religion as: No religion (Persons)	Count	13,587	1,319,979	7,171,332
People stating religion as: No religion (Persons)	%	15.12	16.50	14.59
People stating religion as: Religion not stated (Persons)	Count	6,147	596,896	3,776,515
People stating religion as: Religion not stated (Persons)	%	6.84	7.46	7.69

Table 8: Population statistics based on religion in the Woking area. (The Office of National Statistics)

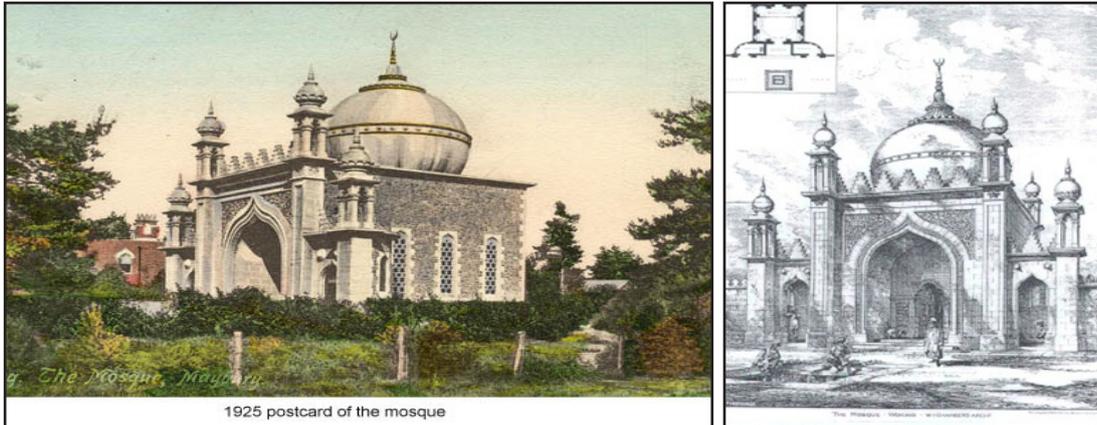


Figure 27: Old postcards of the Shah Jahan Mosque from the book *A Miracle at Woking*

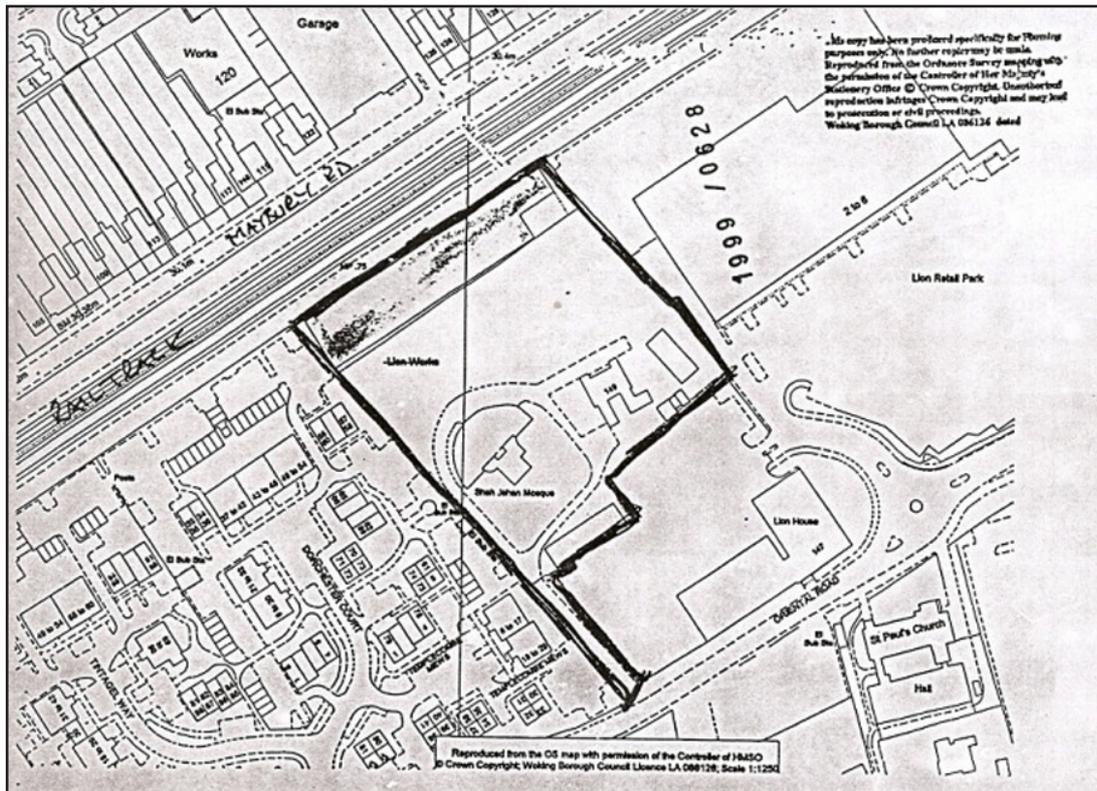


Figure 28: Location plan of the Shah Jahan mosque

All plans are from the Woking Council records

For this particular example we need to rely solely on the data provided by the Office of National Statistics because the London Profiler's scope of investigation concentrates only on inner London, and so doesn't cover Woking. What can be seen is that there are only a few residents of Pakistani ethnicity, which constitute just 3.09% of the local population; likewise Muslims are just 5% of the population. Instead, this example was chosen because it has such an interesting history compared with the previous case studies.

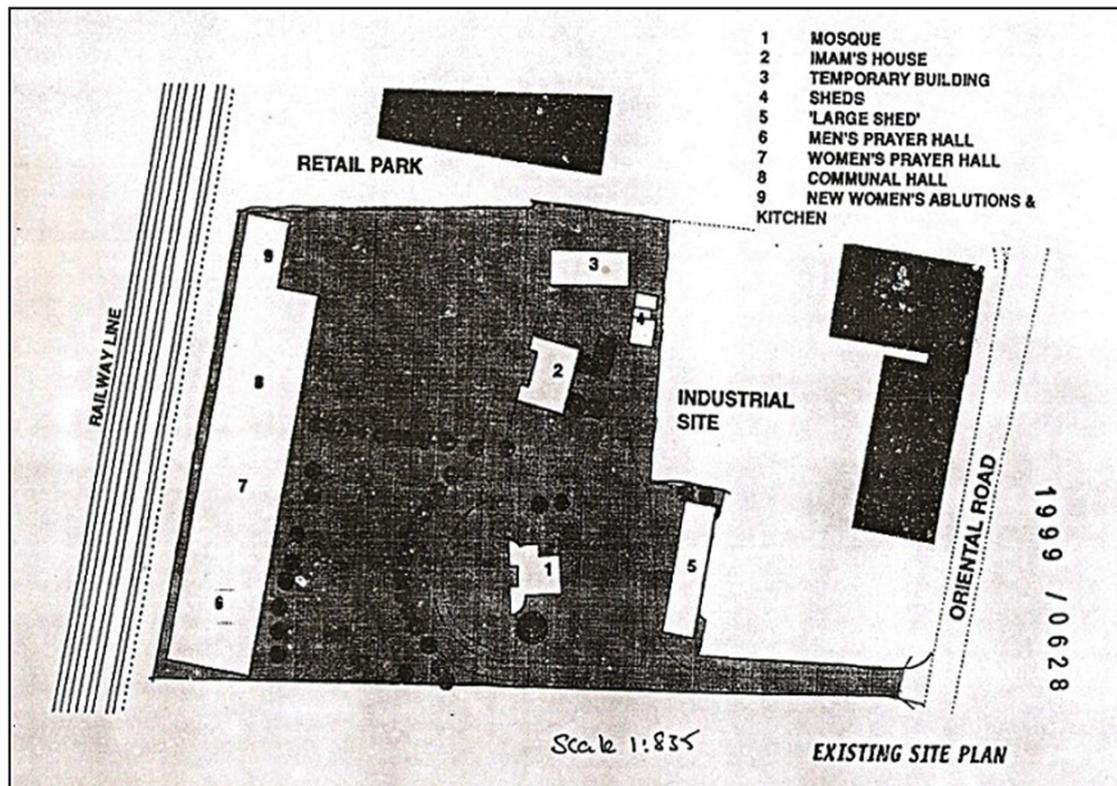


Figure 29: Existing site plan showing the various components of the mosque.

History of the mosque

The Shah Jahan Mosque has a unique background because it is the first mosque to be built in the UK and the fact that it was actually built by an orientalist named Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner. He was born of Jewish parents in Pest, Hungary. He had an interesting life which led to the building of this mosque. For reasons that are not totally clear, Leitner studied at *madrassah* schools attached to the mosques in Istanbul, and by his own account memorised large portions of the Quran. Leitner later came to England aged just 17 years and took a degree at Kings College London. After his degree he was appointed

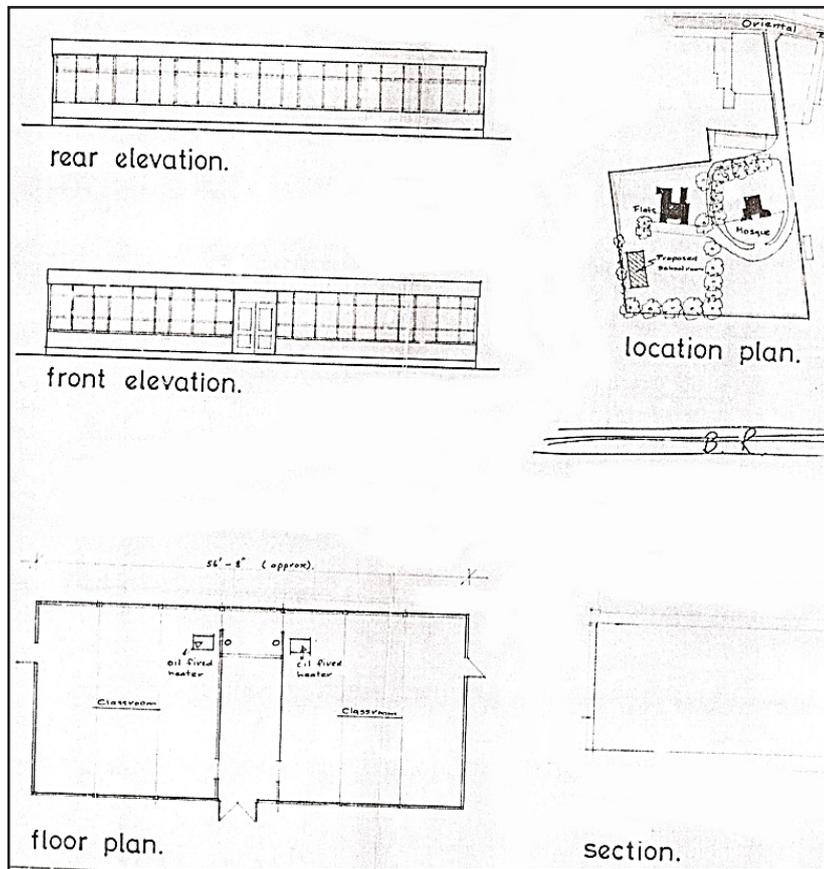


Figure 30: Plan and elevation of the prayer hall.

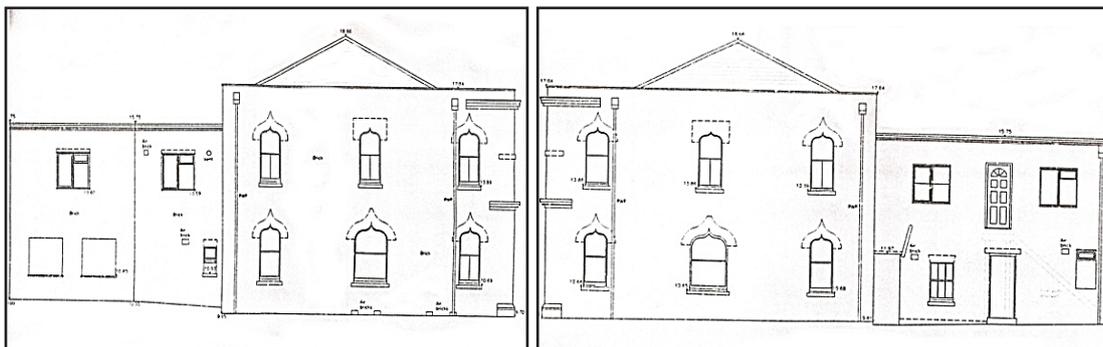


Figure 31: Elevations of the *imam* building (All plans are from the Woking Council)

as a lecturer aged just 19 years old and by the age of 21 was professor, at the same college, in Arabic and Muhammadan Law. Then, at the age of 24, he took up the post of Principal of the Government College in Lahore, later the University of the Punjab. He also befriended many notable figures there, who also shaped the vision behind building the mosque. When Leitner returned to England he decided that he would like to start an educational institution of his own. His search for suitable premises brought him to Woking, at that time an underdeveloped commuter town some 30 miles from London.³⁸ He purchased what had been the Royal Dramatic College, a large Victorian building in extensive grounds that had served as a retirement home for actors. That project had not been successful but the building was ideal for Leitner's purposes. Here in 1883 Leitner established his Oriental Institute and with a donation from Begum Shah Jahan, later was added England's first mosque in 1889.³⁹ The purpose of the Oriental Institute was to enable visiting dignitaries from India to stay and study in culturally sympathetic surroundings. It also enabled Europeans who were being posted to India to learn about the language and culture in advance.

By the time of Leitner's death in 1899, the Oriental Institute was awarding degrees through its affiliation to the University of the Punjab. After his death the institute closed down and was sold and the mosque fell into disuse. Although there is no clearly documented evidence that Leitner himself followed Islam, he was none the less an active sympathiser and supporter of that religion. In the beginning the mosque was mainly used by visiting dignitaries and notables from Muslim nations. It lay neglected until 1912, when a visiting Indian lawyer, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, was so moved by the plight of this beautiful mosque that he was inspired to establish an Islamic mission here. By the time that Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din arrived on the scene, Leitner's son was just on the point of selling the mosque and its land to a housing developer. But Khwaja took him to court arguing that the mosque was consecrated ground and thus enjoyed the same rights and status as a Christian church. He won the case and as a result was able to purchase the mosque and its grounds for a nominal sum from the inheritor.

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din duly set up residence in the *imam's* house, established daily prayers in the mosque and – with helpers brought over from India – he also founded the Muslim Mission Woking to spread the message of Islam to the people of Britain. Amongst one of the early converts was Lord Headley, who became a lifelong friend of Khwaja, and together they worked tirelessly for the cause and spreading the word of Islam. Later on, Lord Headley campaigned avidly for the establishment of a mosque and Islamic centre in central London, arguing that the British Government should



Figure 32: Photographs of the mosque

assist in making this happen. In a speech that he made to this effect in the House of Lords he pointed out that under the British Empire there were more Muslim subjects than Christians, and hence the government had a duty to ensure that the faith of its subjects was properly represented in the imperial capital city. He compared the British Government's attitude unfavourably with that of France, where there had been a central mosque built in Paris in 1926.

Within a few years, through the work of Kamal-ud-Din and his Muslim Mission, Islam had established a definite foothold within Britain and from this point onwards it grew steadily in significance. The Woking Mission was a focal point for meetings of influential Muslims across the UK, and was where they discussed and planned the future growth and development of Islam, including the establishment of a central mosque in London. In 1924 it was estimated that there was a total Muslim population in England of 10,000 believers, of which 1,000 were converts. Obviously in later years many other factors came to play a role in the growth of Islam in Britain, such as mass immigration after the Second World War, but until the 1950s, Woking remained the pre-eminent centre for the Islamic religion in the UK.⁴⁰ Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din died in 1936, and although the Mission continued after his death the loss of his inspiration and leadership was significant. In fact, within a space of three years the movement lost not only Khwaja but also Lord Headley.⁴¹

In the 1920s and 1930s, it is estimated that over 2,000 conversions to Islam took place. Many of the original Mosque Trustees were no longer alive, and so it was considered advisable to disband the old trust, particularly as it had now been registered at Lahore in India. But with the creation of the separate state of Pakistan between 1947 and 1956 it was decided that a new Woking Trust should be created and should conform to the legal requirements in Britain. The new trust was headed by the High Commissioner of Pakistan, and several officials from the High Commission were also members. Since no well-known resident Muslims from Woking seemed suitable for appointment there was no local representation on this Board – although two Muslims from Woking were subsequently invited to become Trustees some years later. In 1956 it was found that the mosque was in need of urgent repairs and surveyors were brought in. It was found that the damage to the mosque was quite extensive and would need a large amount of money which the Mosque Trust did not have, and so donations were sought. However, only minor repairs could be carried out.⁴²

After the Second World War there was – as noted – a tremendous influx of Muslim



Figure 33: Photographs of the interior of the Woking Mosque



Figure 34: Exterior photographs of the prayer



Figure 35: Interior photograph of the prayer hall

immigrants from the British colonies and they established their own communities throughout the country. Gradually the influence of the Woking Mosque declined as a national centre and from the 1960s onward it has served mainly as a small local mosque for the neighbouring Muslim immigrant population. In 1994 the Trust made efforts to extend the mosque because more prayer space was needed, yet the necessary sum was not available. The Embassy of the United Arab Emirates agreed to help based on the plans of an architect, but the High Commissioner of Pakistan did not agree with the proposal, and therefore the plans were dismissed. Later that year the Woking Borough Council awarded a grant of £28,000 and four new exterior prayer halls were built to increase the accommodation, especially for the two Islamic holy days known as ‘the Eid’. However, these new halls still were not enough to hold the Eid congregation, and so ever since 2004 it has been found necessary to organise two separate prayer sessions to meet the demand during this festival.⁴³

Architecture of the mosque:

The Shah Jahan Mosque was primarily built to cater to the spiritual needs of Muslim students at the Oriental Institute, as well as any other believers who were within reach. The original mosque held up to 60 worshippers and is still used for most of the five daily prayers. The mosque was designed and supervised by the architect, W.I. Chambers. The loan of drawings of a design titled ‘Art Arab’ by the India Office in London assisted Chambers in formulating his design for the mosque, as did other details copied from other oriental mosques; all this meant the mosque has Indian rather than Arab design features.⁴⁴ Noha Nasser has written about this particular mosque thus: ‘Its simple geometric form is styled in Indo-Saracenic fashion’.⁴⁵ The building does not include a *minaret*, perhaps because there was no need for it due to the fact that the *minaret*’s purpose is the call for prayers and this feature has been prohibited in Europe. Or perhaps the reason for not having a *minaret* is that at the time when the mosque was built there was no need for such a symbolic or religious reference. As one enters the grounds the rear side of the mosque becomes visible. Pressing on further, a semi-circular garden is bisected by a narrow path which runs around a small fountain and leads into the mosque. The current building consists of the mosque itself, the Sir Salar Jang Memorial Hall (the *imam*’s accommodation and a meeting place for the Trustee Committee) and the so-called Warehouse (four new prayer halls). The mosque building is clad in brick, except for its front façade, which is of stone. The mosque has also a



Figure 36: Photographs of the *imam's* building

lovely copper dome. This spherical dome has a band of stars around its perimeter and a petal decoration at the top which forms the base of a filial holding a golden crescent. The front of the mosque is divided into three bays contained by four-panelled piers with open turrets above, these being linked by a battlement-type decoration. The turrets themselves are crowned with floral sockets. The central bay rises to a full height of about 8 metres and has decorative bands of arabesque work in gold on a green inlay in the arch spandrels; these were originally blue in colour but now they are painted green.⁴⁶ The entrance includes the ablution space before the mosque itself is entered through a four-panelled door with a trefoil top which is single-leafed. On the opposite side of the entrance is a small niche (*mihrab*) where the *imam* stands while leading the prayers. The right hand of the *mihrab* is a small stand known as the *minbar* (pulpit) from where the *imam* stands. The direction of the mosque is of course aligned towards Mecca because that is of course the direction that all Muslims face when praying.

As mentioned previously, given the small size of the original mosque, four large halls were built in the grounds to use when there is need for more space. These are made up of three sections: a men's section, which can hold up to 1000 worshippers; a ladies' section, which can hold up to 600 worshippers; and a general community hall. The latter is a large space with an attached kitchen and additional washroom facilities used for weddings and gatherings. It is also used as a sports hall on a few days during the week. The mosque also provides a (*ghusal*) facility for receiving and washing the dead. The Shah Jahan Mosque received a donation from the BBC Southern Counties Radio which supported a special project in 2001 to create a garden built on an Islamic theme on the south side of the building – this is what greets visitors as they enter the grounds. This example differs significantly from the previous example of the Neasden Temple. The latter was a large monumental building belonging to the Hindu faith followed by residents in the area. In the case of the Shah Jahan Mosque, the building's location bears no relation to the residents of the area; the mosque was not even specifically built to serve the local community, even if in later years more and more Muslims lived in the area. Also the mosque's architectural form does not necessarily reflect any deeper religious significance. The building's purpose was more of an advertising function, perhaps to invite more people to join an 'exotic' religion that was then fairly new in the UK, and the Woking location was thus nothing more a convenient site to build on. Thus as an example of an 'orientalist' design from another age, the building has historical resonance, but its dislocation from modern-day ethnic living patterns in the end reduces its value to that of a curiosity.

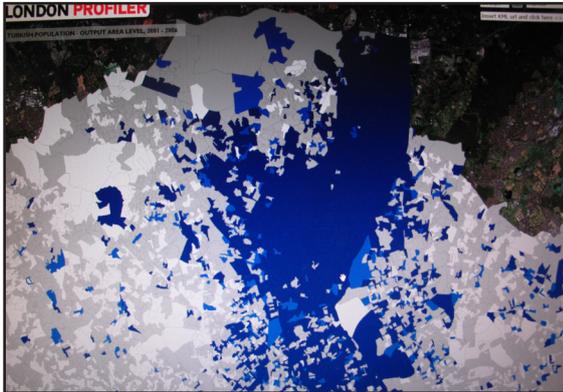


Figure 37: Turkish population in the Islington area

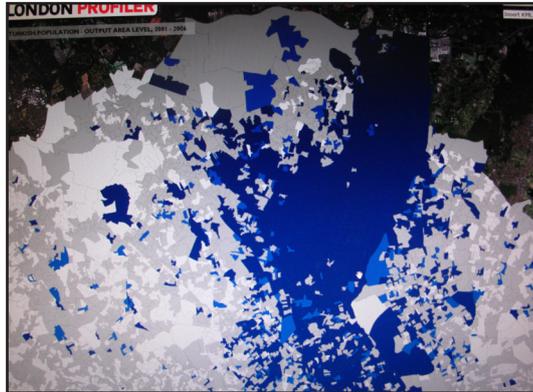


Figure 38: Other Muslim residents



Figure 39: Muslim North African population

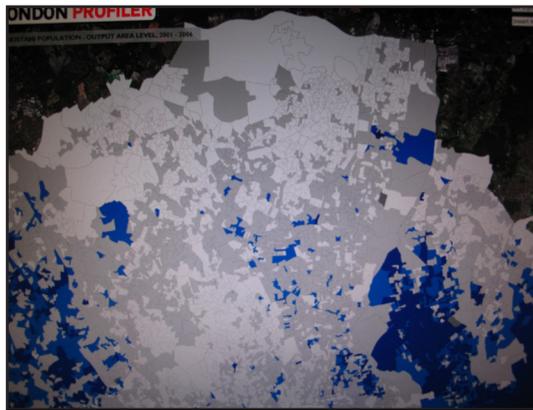


Figure 40: Pakistani population



Figure 41: Middle Eastern population



Figure 42: White British population

All image from:(the London Profiler website)

2.4: Finsbury Park Mosque (previously North London Central Mosque):

Finsbury Park Mosque was opened to the public in 1994 at a ceremony that was attended by HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales. It is located two minutes' walk from Finsbury Park underground station, close to the old Arsenal football stadium. Until 2005 it was known as Finsbury Park Mosque, later it was changed to North London Central Mosque, but more recently in 2010 it has reverted back to Finsbury Park Mosque. According to the mosque's website:

‘Please be advised that our mosque name had legally changed from North London Central Mosque to Finsbury Park Mosque. Despite the change, there is no change in management.’⁷⁴⁷

The mosque today serves a diverse community of Pakistanis, Bengalis, Turkish, Algerians and Egyptians. However the choice to study this mosque in particular is because of the controversial history and political implications that surrounds it, especially in terms of the role of changing Muslim communities in the Finsbury Park area.

Based on the figures from the ONS data, there is no majority population in Islington based on ethnicity. The numbers based on religion show that Muslims constitute 8.11% of the population, the largest religion after Christianity. Yet from the London Profiler data we can to a large extent determine the ethnicity of the different Muslim residents of the area, which shows that Turkish and North African immigrants are the main local ethnic groups which follow the Islamic faith.

		Islington	London	England
All People (Persons)	Count	175,797	7,172,091	49,138,831
White: British (Persons)	Count	99,784	4,287,861	42,747,136
White: British (Persons)	%	56.76	59.79	86.99
White: Irish (Persons)	Count	10,057	220,488	624,115
White: Irish (Persons)	%	5.72	3.07	1.27
White: Other White (Persons)	Count	22,623	594,854	1,308,110
White: Other White (Persons)	%	12.87	8.29	2.66
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean (Persons)	Count	2,329	70,928	231,424
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean (Persons)	%	1.32	0.99	0.47
Mixed: White and Black African (Persons)	Count	1,241	34,182	76,498
Mixed: White and Black African (Persons)	%	0.71	0.48	0.16
Mixed: White and Asian (Persons)	Count	1,543	59,944	184,014
Mixed: White and Asian (Persons)	%	0.88	0.84	0.37
Mixed: Other Mixed (Persons)	Count	2,121	61,057	151,437
Mixed: Other Mixed (Persons)	%	1.21	0.85	0.31
Asian or Asian British: Indian (Persons)	Count	2,851	436,993	1,028,546
Asian or Asian British: Indian (Persons)	%	1.62	6.09	2.09
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani (Persons)	Count	912	142,749	706,539
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani (Persons)	%	0.52	1.99	1.44
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi (Persons)	Count	4,229	153,893	275,394
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi (Persons)	%	2.41	2.15	0.56
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian (Persons)	Count	1,492	133,058	237,810
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian (Persons)	%	0.85	1.86	0.48
Black or Black British: Caribbean (Persons)	Count	8,550	343,567	561,246
Black or Black British: Caribbean (Persons)	%	4.86	4.79	1.14
Black or Black British: African (Persons)	Count	10,500	378,933	475,938
Black or Black British: African (Persons)	%	5.97	5.28	0.97
Black or Black British: Other Black (Persons)	Count	1,806	60,349	95,324
Black or Black British: Other Black (Persons)	%	1.03	0.84	0.19
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese (Persons)	Count	3,074	80,201	220,681
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese (Persons)	%	1.75	1.12	0.45
Chinese or other ethnic group: Other ethnic group (Persons)	Count	2,685	113,034	214,619
Chinese or other ethnic group: Other ethnic group (Persons)	%	1.53	1.58	0.44

Table 9: Population statistics based on ethnicity in the Islington area. (Office of National Statistics)

		Islington	London	England
All People (Persons)	Count	175,797	7,172,091	49,138,831
People stating religion as: Christian (Persons)	Count	95,305	4,176,175	35,251,244
People stating religion as: Christian (Persons)	%	54.21	58.23	71.74
People stating religion as: Buddhist (Persons)	Count	1,840	54,297	139,046
People stating religion as: Buddhist (Persons)	%	1.05	0.76	0.28
People stating religion as: Hindu (Persons)	Count	1,751	291,977	546,982
People stating religion as: Hindu (Persons)	%	1.00	4.07	1.11
People stating religion as: Jewish (Persons)	Count	1,846	149,789	257,671
People stating religion as: Jewish (Persons)	%	1.05	2.09	0.52
People stating religion as: Muslim (Persons)	Count	14,259	607,083	1,524,887
People stating religion as: Muslim (Persons)	%	8.11	8.46	3.10
People stating religion as: Sikh (Persons)	Count	590	104,230	327,343
People stating religion as: Sikh (Persons)	%	0.34	1.45	0.67
People stating religion as: Other religions (Persons)	Count	719	36,558	143,811
People stating religion as: Other religions (Persons)	%	0.41	0.51	0.29
People stating religion as: No religion (Persons)	Count	41,691	1,130,616	7,171,332
People stating religion as: No religion (Persons)	%	23.72	15.76	14.59
People stating religion as: Religion not stated (Persons)	Count	17,796	621,366	3,776,515
People stating religion as: Religion not stated (Persons)	%	10.12	8.66	7.69

Table 10: Population statistics based on religion in the Islington area (Office of National Statistics)



Figure 43: Photographs showing Abu Hamza Al-Masri praying on the street opposite the mosque.
 (Source: *The Dailytimes* website)



Figure 44: Finsbury Park Mosque



Figure 45: A view from Finsbury Park Tube Station showing the back of the mosque.

(Source: The mosque's website)

History of the mosque:

Back in the mid-1950s, a devout Muslim donated a room in his guest-house at Woodfall Road in Finsbury Park to be used as a prayer room. As the immigrant population rose steadily in the late-1960s and early-70s with newcomers from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Middle East and Mauritius, there wasn't enough room in the guest house for Friday prayers; and nobody had even begun to think about educating the children of these arrivals. The guest-house was acquired under compulsory purchase scheme by the local authority as it tried to improve this rundown quarter of London, blighted by unemployment, wretched housing and crime. Muslim community leaders duly set up the Muslim Welfare Centre (MWC), a registered charity, to find new premises, and so began to plan for a new mosque building which – or so they dreamed – would rival anything in Europe. In the mid-1970s the MWC bought up five terraced houses on the corner of St Thomas's Road which they planned to demolish and use as the site

to accommodate their vision. However, they did not choose the quietest of locations. The site sits just south of the busy Seven Sisters Road, wedged between a railway line and a permanently congested traffic intersection. Diplomats and dignitaries from various faiths lent their weight to the project, and in March 1978 the MWC found a new champion when the Prince of Wales visited the area and cast an appreciative eye over the architectural plans. Prince Charles was impressed by the designer's idea of getting around height restrictions by having a five-storey building look like four storeys on its façade, thus blending them in with the rest of the local council's regeneration scheme. With £12 million donated from Saudi Arabia, this money allowed the mosque to be built; the Saudi Ambassador to Britain and Bangladesh's High Commissioner both served as trustees of the mosque for several years.⁴⁸ Yet for all the civic goodwill and local enthusiasm, the project was soon mired by delays and disputes. The project was hopelessly behind schedule and the contractors claimed they were not paid, surveyors were criticised for not keeping control of the project, and allegations were made that some of the management were being too lavish in their demands for luxuries like a terrazzo floor in the lobbies, or in spending £90,000 on carpets. Despite these controversies, the building eventually opened its doors in March 1994.

Finsbury Park Mosque was however almost immediately plagued by leadership disputes which allowed extremist Islamists preachers to take over. By 1997 the management committee had been riven for months with petty disputes over who should hold the



Figure 46: Interior Photographs of the mosque (Source: The mosque's website)

prestigious post of *khatteb* (speaker *imam*), the person whose job is to deliver the main Friday sermon. These arguments and disputes were taken to extremes. The Bangladeshi members, who regarded themselves as the majority voice, wanted one of their own, and pointed out that Urdu was the dominant tongue in the mosque. But this offended the Arabic-speakers who also wanted an *imam* who spoke Arabic. There were also other racial tensions among the worshippers, and so later on they turned to Abu Hamza Al-Masri as a peacemaker.⁴⁹ These circumstances also happened within a climate of instability, since the whole character of Finsbury Park was changing due to gentrification and immigration. The Bengali and Pakistani communities which had dominated the congregation in its infancy were now moving out of the area, to be replaced by an influx of asylum seekers and refugees from North Africa and the Arab world, who agitated for a preacher who spoke Arabic, not Urdu.⁵⁰ Furthermore, younger worshippers, born and bred in north London, wanted someone who could explain their faith to them in English. Hence they installed Abu Hamza as the new *imam* of the mosque. He initially won the mosque committee over by talking calmly and charmingly to them. Sean O'Neill and Daniel McGrory however observe in their book about the Finsbury Park Mosque that Abu Hamza proved to be a capricious character:

‘In his first weeks as imam he proved an admirable choice; he was by turns passionate and reasonable, calm and engaging. He preached about the plight of Muslims around the world and the need of unity among people of faith. He also suggested that as Britain was the adopted home for Muslims of all the persuasions in north London, they should make the effort to speak English as often as they could’.⁵¹

However, by 1998 the committee had already decided to get rid of him. Abdul Kadir Barkatullah,⁵² who was on the original selection committee, cannot believe now that he and his friends were so readily taken in: ‘We were fooled by him’.⁵³ O'Neill and McGrory also write about some events that occurred between Abu Hamza's appointment as *imam* and other events in 1998:

‘... but for his own band of followers, who had followed him to north London, he had another message. He told them stories of how much money had gone missing, and pointed the finger of blame at senior figures among the trustees. They had been given permission to convert a row of houses into flats with the intention of raising income for the mosque; but in his attempts to smear, Abu Hamza claimed that either rents had not been paid, or the cash had disappeared’.⁵⁴

When the mosque committee sought help from the police to get rid of Abu Hamza they learnt that other mosques – including one in Luton and the prestigious Central London Mosque in Regents Park – had already taken legal steps to thwart his attempts to take



Figure 47: Perspectives showing the original design concept of the mosque.
(Source: Islington Council Records)

over their premises. Largely because of the Abu Hamza experience, leading Muslim organisations in the UK have now begun to argue for the establishment of a body that would vet *imams* and assess their fitness to preach at mosques in Britain. The Finsbury Park Trustees however had no idea what was happening to any of the income from collections. Abu Hamza made it clear that it was none of their business; he was to be the only one that deals with all financial matters. There were also certain circumstances that assisted Abu Hamza to spread his power over the mosque, namely the large number of refugees from Algeria who had been veterans of the conflict in that country. According to O'Neill and McGrory, 'they had already infiltrated the mosque' and therefore they supported and facilitated his arrival. In the years that followed there were many controversial events ranging from the association of Abu Hamza with al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups, links to terrorist training camps, sending donations to shady organisations. Even his Friday sermons were controversial due to his increasing support for the ideas of *jihad*. The police often investigated such events but always Abu Hamza would try to turn the situation to his benefit; even when he was taken away by the police he would swear that he was not the one to blame, and would point to others. That was until the decisive events in 2003, when armed police raided the building as part of the investigation into the alleged Wood Green ricin plot⁵⁵. The *Islington Now* newspaper reported:

'In the early hours of a Monday morning in January 2003, 150 police officers clad in body armour and slip-on overshoes forced their way into Finsbury Park Mosque with a battering ram. Inside they found scores of terrorist paraphernalia, including chemical warfare suits, false passports, a stun gun, gas masks, handcuffs and hunting knives. The raid, codenamed operation Mermat, was the first of its kind in a British mosque, and caused shockwaves throughout the community. At the time the mosque was led by Abu Hamza, the one-eyed, hook-handed, extremist imam. Although Hamza was not charged in connection with the raid, which centred on an alleged plot to produce ricin poison, Operation Mermat marked the beginning of his downfall. He was dismissed from the mosque 14 days later by the Charity Commission and was later imprisoned for intent to incite racial hatred'.⁵⁶

Officers risked offending delicate religious sensitivities by raiding the Finsbury Park Mosque. The cache of equipment discovered included chemical warfare protection suits, or NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) suits, as they are technically known. They were found together with three blank-firing pistols, a stun gun and CS spray. Officers also found a gas mask, handcuffs, hunting knives and a walkie-talkie. Detectives believe the equipment was being used in terrorist training camps located somewhere around Britain. It is not clear where these camps were:

'Our assessment was that this was material that had been used in training camps, probably here

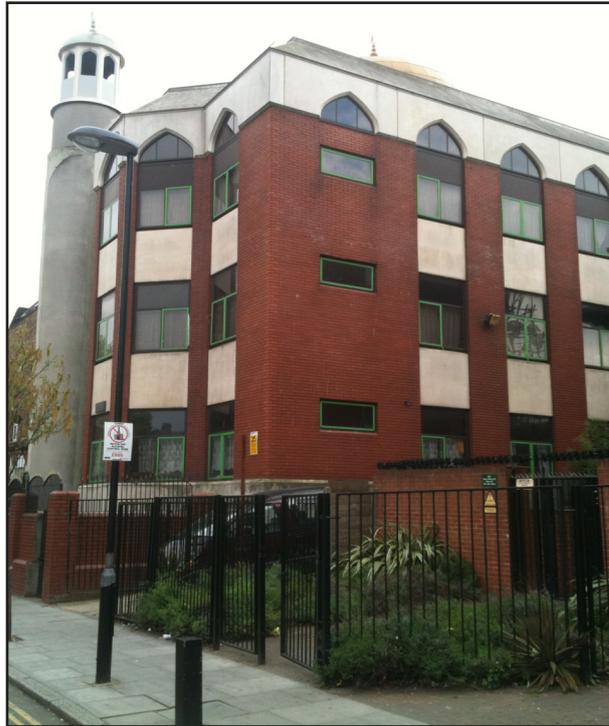


Figure 48: Existing photographs of the mosque showing the entrance door, the *minaret* and part of the dome

in the UK,” a senior police source said.⁵⁷ Muslim officers also accompanied police on the raid to advise on appropriate behaviour. They were appalled at the state of the mosque. “They were shocked at the condition of the mosque, the lack of cleanliness and care,” the police source said.⁵⁸

Abu Hamza of course condemned this raid, accusing the police and the Blair Government of adopting ‘Rambo-style’ tactics, describing it as ‘provocative’, ‘silly’ and ‘illogical’. Other Muslim leaders also criticised the manner of the operation. The mosque was closed due to the appallingly filthy condition it was in, and Abu Hamza was banned from entering it. This led Abu Hamza’s supporters to take to the streets as he was determined to continue his preaching. His supporters spilled out onto St Thomas’s Road to hear him dismiss the Charity Commissioners as ‘nagging bodies’; he dared the Commission’s director of operations to be ‘man enough’ to come to north London to enforce the ban. Police closely watched the street as more and more supporters and spectators of all faiths came to observe this spectacle. There were many complaints from residents in the neighbourhood and surrounding areas, but the police said they were handling it. Eventually the police, who had taped all the sermons, submitted this evidence to court and this led to the eventual conviction of Abu Hamza in 2006 for seven years on the charge of inciting murder and racial hatred.

After the events of 11th September 2001, Johann Hari of *The Independent* had been sent by the editor to insinuate herself into the Finsbury Park Mosque and – if possible – to talk to Abu Hamza. She quotes the following encounters:

‘I ended up hanging around for nearly a week. There are always a few tough-looking lads on the door of the mosque who act as unofficial bouncers, and anybody new who approaches immediately receives very aggressive questioning. They see the mosque as a safe haven from a hostile society – and although undoubtedly some of these lads are confronting real problems with racism, their paranoia is extreme and vicious.

... Although there are a fair few non-Arab Muslims who hang around, it took a while to convince the regulars that I was one of Them ... So why, then, did I also feel a slight tinge of sadness when the mosque was busted? Partly because I knew that some people would see this as yet another excuse to bash British Muslims *en masse*, the vast majority of whom are decent and moderate and not, as a *Daily Mail* journalist has claimed, a “fifth column” in our midst. But mostly because Finsbury Park mosque provided one of the few non-commercial spaces in that patch of North London (where I used to live) in which the most dispossessed lads could hang out.’⁵⁹

She also offered an insightful summary about her experience and the potential future of the mosque:

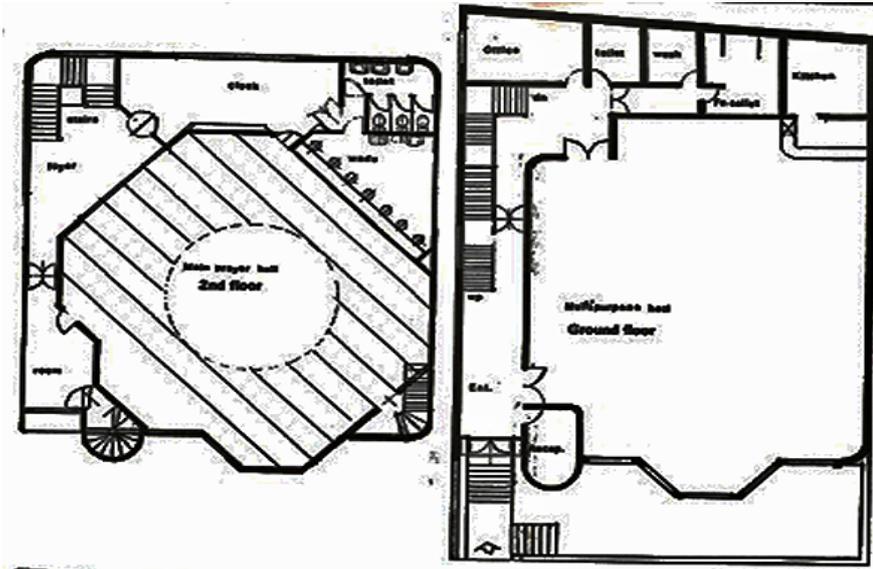


Figure 49: Plans of the lower ground and ground floor of the mosque

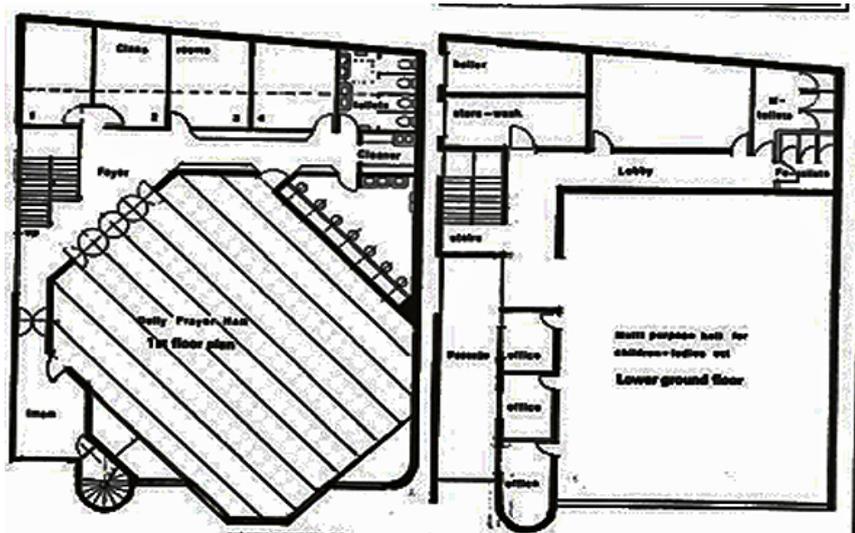


Figure 50: Plans of the first and second floors of the mosque

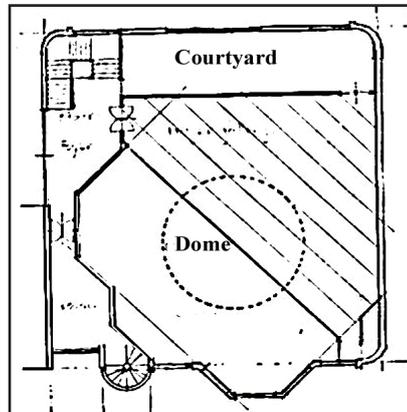


Figure 51: Plan of the third floor of the mosque.

‘Shorn of Hamza, shorn of the handful of other lunatic preachers who gravitate towards it, the mosque has the potential to be a terrific community centre for local Muslims, as mosques across the Arab world are. Hamza offers a siren call for confused boys; they would respond equally well to sane voices who actually bothered to show an interest in them’.

Following the 2003 police raid, Finsbury Park Mosque was reclaimed by mainstream Muslims, including representatives from the Muslim Association of Britain, who installed a new board of trustees and *imam*. The mosque now offers courses that are open to the general public, and its weekly attendance has tripled. It is open for public visits, awareness weeks, community open days, and seeks to promote Islam as a religion of tolerance and cooperation.

Architecture of the mosque:

The mosque is a large red-brick building with a tall *minaret* and golden coloured domes that are visible from all angles. It shares the skyline in this corner of north London with Arsenal Football Club’s old Highbury stadium. The mosque’s façade consists of large horizontal bands that alternate between windows in strange shades of bright green, and as noted it has four-and-a-half floors. There are three floors of prayer rooms which serve more than a thousand worshippers. The building also has a space that is dedicated for ladies to pray in, which can hold up to 100 women. However two floors can be utilised for different activities and as such is designed as a multi-purpose hall over two floors; that have an octagonal plan with a central dome that has blind arched niches that resembles windows. The interior of the hall is adorned with wooden columns that carry the dome and the floor has a striped carpet, as do all the other prayer spaces. The prayer halls have partitions that can be closed off to make even smaller segregated areas such as female prayer areas or for classrooms (previously in the time of Abu Hamza these areas were sealed off for secret meetings or even residential purposes). There are also other functions such as funeral washing facilities. Beside the five daily congregational prayers, the Friday service, regular Islamic lectures and discussion circles for men, ladies and children, and family events on special occasions, there are many other services offered to the community. The mosque provides help and advice in all matters of day-to-day life, especially since many of the community members came from immigrant backgrounds but find themselves in a strange new environment, and so need all the help they can possibly get. Hence the community hall is currently used for a number of activities including:

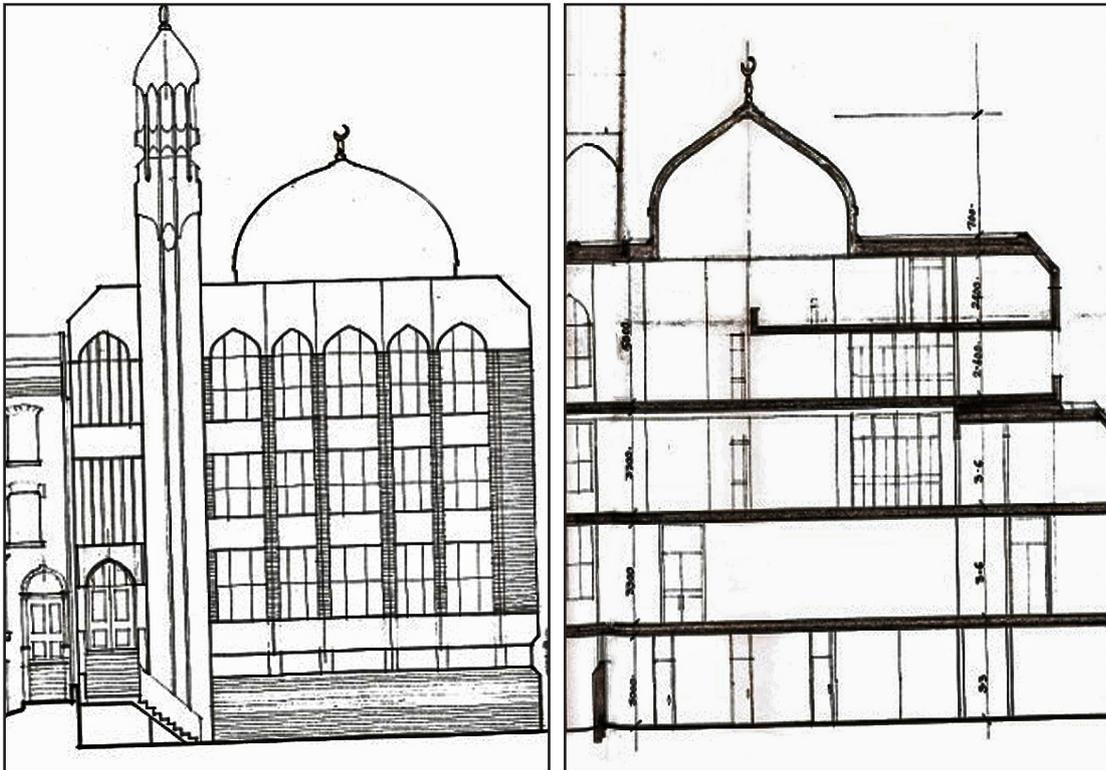


Figure 52: Elevation and section plans of the mosque

- Educational projects for children and adults
- Exhibition centre
- Provision and services for female worshippers
- A dedicated youth centre
- An advice centre for the community
- Large classroom for training
- Community centre available for hire for special events

According to the *Islington Now*, which ran an interview with the new *Imam* regarding the image that the mosque now wants to promote:

‘Imam Saad, who came to the mosque in January 2007, says at first it was hard to engage with the community. “When I came here, we did not have a permanent Imam who could speak for the community and who spoke English.” So Saad created activities, such as its award-winning youth club, aimed at attracting the community back to the mosque by word of mouth. “A change is never easy. First of all for creating a change you need to get the trust of people. Once they trust you then they will feel there is a change happening. To get the trust of people you need time to spread your name in the community and let them know what you’re doing. You need to know them and you need them to know you. This has taken quite a long time, about a year and a half’.⁶⁰

He says the biggest challenge when he arrived was the low turnout on Fridays, the main prayer day.

‘People would listen to the sermons I gave and give feedback. People said I had touched on problems in their lives. They realised the Friday sermon was talking to them; it’s more mainstream than extreme. Then they realised it was safe and they came with their problems.’⁶¹

But it hasn’t always been plain sailing. Imam Saad also says that some individuals in the community have been unhappy about his moderate approach:

‘In every community one or two people will be off track ... but people started to defend me and stand up and tell people off. We were empowering the community to stand up against extremism and say this is not welcome in our mosque’.⁶²

Today, the doors of Finsbury Park Mosque are wide open. Whenever someone walks in, they are faced by a notice in English and Arabic asking visitors to take off their shoes as a sign of respect. Next to this sit rows of colourful toys ready for the children of the community to play with. An electronic board fixed to the wall announces the

prayer times for the day, and there's a stack of notices on a shelf announcing the opening times of its in-house gym, youth clubs and martial arts lessons. Upstairs, in a conference hall, a group of women can almost always be seen sitting waiting for their children or preparing for prayer, all of which certainly enhances the image that the new management wants to project as the mosque's new identity. It clearly wants to be seen as a vibrant community centre and a peaceful place for prayer - not a space for extremist preaching.

What the building offers, therefore, is a super-charged intensity of space in terms of its community function – out of its urban location in a densely multi-ethnic area, and its bitter political history – but in terms of design as a structure it offers little of interest or insight into how religious buildings might fit into London. Also, in spite of the existence of Islamic mosque architecture signifiers such as the minaret and the dome, the local community do not relate with the identity of the mosque due to the mosque's notorious history. This suggests that as the ethnicities changed within the local Muslim communities in the area, they brought new kinds of meaning and uses to the mosque. Therefore we can assume that the building's identity can change to reflect its worshipper's views of religious belief.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to draw out a whole variety of issues relating to architecture, cultural identity and religion. Another intention is to begin to understand the urban and social implications of immigration and migrant communities in order to detect and conceptualise issues that relate back to the introduction of this thesis, and thereby to set the scene for the more detailed analysis in the next two chapters about Southall.

Thus linking the four selected case studies in this chapter is an emphasis on the many aspects that surround such religious buildings especially that they belong to immigrant communities and they contain many cultural/religious significance to our investigation. All of the cases discussed in this chapter tended to be religious buildings apart of course from the case of Krishna Avanti School. As such, they help to highlight the role of religion and culture in many ways:

- 1- As a method of construction in the example of the Krishna Avanti School.
- 2- As a tool for expressing cultural identity in the example of Neasden Temple, and of religious identity in the case of Shah Jahan Mosque.
- 3- As a political statement in the case of Finsbury Park Mosque, even if at times this is a case of extremism.

A fascinating article in *The Independent* discussed Krishna Avanti School because its opening coincided with unprecedented levels of government funding for faith-based education. The article stated:

“Despite polls suggesting that public support for state-funded faith education is declining. A YouGov poll this month found that more than half of Britons think faith schools damage community cohesion, and 72% want state schools to be forbidden from discriminating on religious grounds ... Until 1959, the state paid for only half the capital costs of religious schools, but over the past half-century the cost borne by the Government has soared, finally rising from 85 to 90% under Tony Blair in 2001. Since Labour came to power, faith schools have broadened from being almost exclusively Christian to include Muslim, Sikh and now Hindu institutions. Increasingly, the 10% of capital costs that religious foundations are supposed to pay is slipping. Schools are claiming ‘exceptional circumstances’ so often that the average contribution made by the foundations behind faith schools is just 7.5%, resulting in additional costs to the taxpayer of more than £18m this year”.⁶³

The same article however went on to describe that critics say the bill to the taxpayer is all the more exasperating because faith schools are likely to be dominated by privileged and able children. One of those critics is Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, who is the chair of the Accord Coalition, a body opposed to faith schools: ‘The number of young people from low-income families attending both primary and secondary faith schools is lower than the number attending non-faith schools. As someone who values faith enormously, I find it immoral that they’re using taxpayers’ money to act in this way. If faith schools have any *raison d’être* it should be to support those others ignore, but it seems the opposite happens.’ Another critic is Keith Porteous Wood, who is the executive director of the National Secular Society. He says that the decision is one of principle: ‘Most church schools proselytise. It is wrong in principle for the state to fund proselytization – whatever state or religion.’⁶⁴ The article also goes on further to explore these claims in terms of Krishna Avanti’s doctrine:

‘Staff at the Krishna-Avanti stressed that indoctrination is not the school’s aim. Naina Parmar, the headmistress, said: “We’re certainly not here to proselytise the Hindu faith” – despite

morning prayers and yoga being followed by a reading of the Bhagavad Gita'.⁶⁵

Another case study discussed in this chapter was the Neasden Temple, which shares some of the circumstances with the aforementioned school, at least in terms of its highly unsuitable location and its successful implementation of Hindu faith principles with the construction of this temple. It also shares its successful execution with the school in terms of its adaptation to British planning constraints. Regarding this matter, Noha Nasser notes: 'Observed within the urban landscape, the idiosyncratic treatment and usage of architectural features, forms, materials and ornamentation in the Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden bears no relationship to neither time nor context, but evokes a strong visual image to the users and to non-Hindus alike'.⁶⁶ Hence the image reflected is a successful representation of the required effect in this giving a clear example of identity representation, in that the execution of the Neasden Temple promotes Hindu identity on a grand scale in Britain, having an impact on the global city of London.

Nasser also describes some of the elements that successfully combine local forms with elements from Hindu temple architecture as a 'self-conscious gesture of reconciliation'. In the process, a stylistic hybridity between the two traditions has created an innovative fusion of brickwork and slate roofing with a *shikhara* and marble entrance supported on four ornately decorated pillars. Examples of this kind of architectural hybridity in new cultural forms can be found across many British cities – 'the result of negotiations between locality and identity that have been part of the struggle of South Asian communities in expressing their sense of belonging in an urban context'.⁶⁷

This brings us back to the two case studies of mosques in this chapter. One was in a suburb with no real immigrant communities in the area; and where the Muslim community in the area consists of a single ethnicity, Pakistani. The other mosque is located within a highly populated area with a multi-ethnic Muslim community. The absence of the *minaret* in the Shah Jahan Mosque and its existence in the case of Finsbury Park Mosque certainly correlates with what Vincent Biondo discovered in his study on mosques in Britain and America. He wrote:

'Individual elements can prove highly contentious since domes and minarets are the two most powerful symbols of mosque architecture but are non-essential products of imperial patronage and statements of political power. The issue is magnified in diaspora where domes and minarets become more important as outward symbols to non-Muslims, yet interpretations of their

importance can vary widely. For Muslims in New York and California, for example, the dome is the most important element, ... Choosing between artisan-crafted decorative mosaics and school textbooks or food for the poor are also major decisions with direct consequences on the ethnic, political, and social identity of the community. Minarets are also important symbols of Muslim identity to Muslims and non-Muslims, but they are more controversial than domes.⁷⁶⁸

Another key question has been to establish the reasons for building religious houses within specific urban areas, so as to find out whether there is a pattern by immigrant communities to establish their identity either by building large monumental buildings for symbolic reasons in the public sphere, or choosing to worship in smaller buildings primarily organized around ritualistic religious practices which are generally seen only by members of that community. The key points which can be drawn from each of the case study buildings in this chapter are as follows:

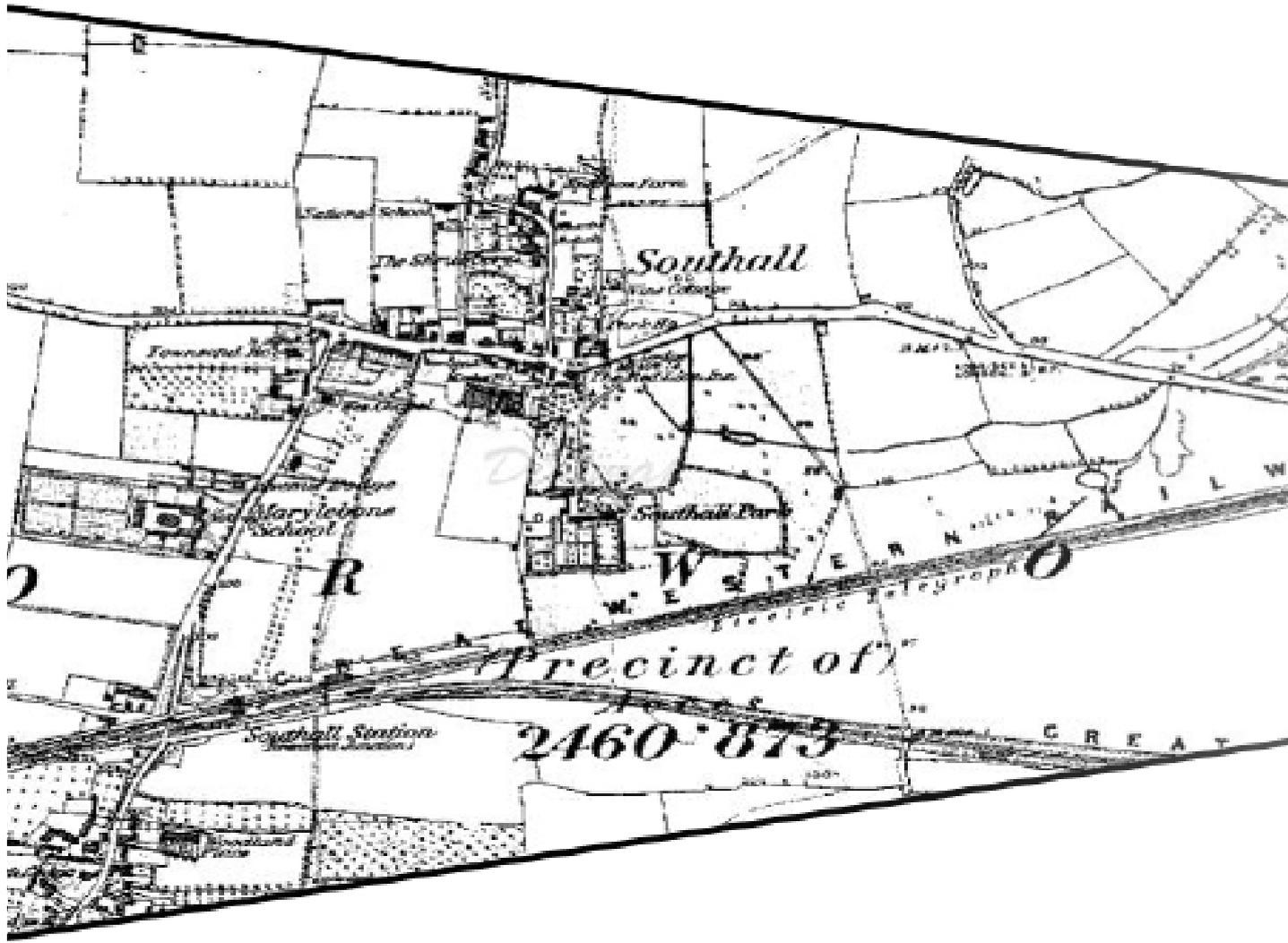
1. The Krishna Avanti School represents the very real difficulties of the co-presence of sacred and secular in architectural form. Moreover, this example shows that despite the immigrant community's acceptance of the need for a faith-based school, and the way it impacted on traffic patterns and the local indigenous population, in the end this hybrid of a religious/secular building has not greatly affected or enhanced the immigrant community, nor increased their cultural integration. On the contrary it seems more to have created friction with the neighbouring population due to its prime location and use of powerful religious elements within the structure of what is after all just a school.
2. The Neasden Temple touches upon questions of authenticity and origin in terms of the negotiation between sacred formulas and legal building codes. This example also exemplifies the principle of openly promoting cultural identity by building large monumental buildings. However its location, being just outside of the visibility cone of the busy North Circular Road, then somewhat undermines its role as an iconic building among London's major cultural attractions. Furthermore, the use of hybrid architectural elements such as the timber-structured hall and the marble temple also works against the idea of creating a uniform, powerful urban image.
3. The Shah Jahan Mosque offers the image of an exotic object that seems, ultimately, to be far too cut off from patterns of everyday life to carry any real meaning. This building also shows just how much the geographical location and fluctuations in immigration patterns ultimately define the perceived success of failure of a religious

building. However, interestingly, this example also revealed that the lack of strong religious elements such as a minaret did not in any way diminish the architectural impact or ritualistic role of this structure as a mosque; indeed its smallness and exquisite detailing made it more effective than any grand gesture might have done.

4. The Finsbury Park Mosque represents the dynamic politicisation of a religious building and the way in which this image is mediated through various media. Also due to political factors this mosque took on notoriety as a religious building, to the extent that many of the established Muslim communities in the locality wanted to disassociate themselves from the mosque completely. This trend has now been reversed and so the same piece of architecture can now be represented as a successful model of multicultural integration. Therefore the purpose of this example was to reveal how the complex history of a building plays such an important role opposite both in promoting cultural identity and also ensuring social integration.

As well as studying the various religious buildings which belong to multi-ethnic communities, and their architectural elements, this chapter highlights for the next chapters the crucial issue of identity and how it is expressed. Reuse of the existing urban building stock is an important factor. Nasser has highlighted issues within converted religious buildings and how they relate to the issue of identity by stating: “Of all these trends, the conversion of listed industrial buildings has created the greatest contention. Indeed, the adaptation of historical buildings has given rise to the politicization of heritage as a means of constructing and redefining ‘Britishness’ and national identity.”⁶⁹

Therefore this chapter has enabled us to look at how different geographical locations within London play such a key role in defining religious buildings for immigrant communities. Site limitations have a crucial role in how the purpose of the building can be achieved successfully or not. The history of the building’s use can also shed light on how suited it is for its task. The provision, or indeed omission, of architectural elements associated with religious beliefs such as domes, minarets, sikharas, etc. – or even hybridised versions of these elements – will be seen in the following chapters on Southall as being vital evidence sources from which one can draw broader conclusions about the relationship between architecture and culture for London’s immigrant groups.



Chapter 3: Southall – the suburb and the sacred



A great many academic studies have dealt with important concepts such as culture, religion, ethnicity, architecture, and globalization. Yet it is rarely the case that any scholar has explored all of these concepts within one research umbrella, due to a variety of reasons, such as the broad theoretical meaning inherent in such terms and the complex interpretations of their use within different disciplines. Yet in some specific cases, such as when one is looking at the phenomenon of culturally meaningful architecture, there is clearly a need to explore all of these concepts to achieve a proper understanding of

the phenomenon. These concepts – especially their effect on immigration – have been discussed on the social and economic levels primarily through their architecture and on the effects of this hybrid architecture on the cityscape itself. And these specific circumstances, which lead to the creation of a wide array of cultural buildings, can be readily found in Southall, a fascinating suburb in west London. Indeed, that area has been chosen for this study largely because of the importance of its cultural heritage and its truly multi-cultural population, as well as for the multitude of cultural buildings – both secular and religious – which can be found in the area. By looking at the case of Southall we can therefore evaluate the meanings of the above-mentioned terms through specific geographical and cultural examples.

In order to research Southall as a model of cultural profusion, we first need to mention its importance as a suburb that many scholars have chosen to study. Cohan describes Southall by stating: ‘From English farming village, feudal manor, hamlet, market town, industrial conurbation, to a British-Asian metropolis, Southall demonstrates quite poignantly Britain’s postcolonial ascent to a globalized modernity’.¹ Noha Nasser has also explored the subject area of Southall, where she has carried out extensive studies on the immigrant communities and their religious architecture. Nasser states regarding her interest in the subject that she ‘aims to explore the impact of the cultural displacement of migrant groups on the changing morphology of Britain’s towns and cities, using Southall as a case study.’² Ceri Peach and Richard Gale³ have also examined the area and the religious buildings of its immigrant communities. However, this study will push the exploration even further by focusing only on the religious buildings in Southall to investigate the changes that have taken place within in terms of theology and rituals and the architecture of the different houses of worship, as to study these in a more integrated and systematic manner.

Therefore, the focus in this chapter will be on Southall’s religious buildings from the point of view of their architecture. Given that these religious buildings are visited by communities that originate from different ethnicities, background, history, etc, therefore in order to study the architecture an exploration of all these issues is imperative. This chapter will investigate several factors such as the diversity of culture, religion, and architecture, as well as general ideas about religious practice from academic disciplines that are closely related to culture and religion. And the next chapter will then go into more detailed case studies to focus architecturally on the thesis hypothesis. Above all, in order to study Southall’s cultural diversity, what is required is a flexible approach to key

terms such as those described by Gerd Baumann in his use of the term ‘communities’:

The putative basis of culture may be sought in language, so that there are transnational ‘communities’ such as the Arab, the Armenian or the Punjabi. Cutting across ethnic, national, and linguistic criteria alike, communities with reified cultures are postulated on the basis of some religions. Thus ‘Muslim’ culture is thought to establish a community despite the greatest ethnic, national, and linguistic diversity. In yet other contexts, followers of different faiths may be stylized into communities based on regional origin or migratory history. In this way, the discourse can recognize a Gujarati community tying together Hindus and Muslims, or an East African Asian one that unites Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.⁴

To explore these terms further especially in light of our previous discussion, this chapter is organised around three sections: the first will look at notions that have not previously been discussed such as religious belief as a complex social practice, and as such will also deal more specifically with notions of ethnicity, culture and identity especially on how they are interpreted in Southall; the second section will deal with Southall’s history and its immigrant communities; while the third section will focus on a comprehensive listing of the houses of worship in Southall in terms of their history, architecture, doctrines and rituals.

1. Ethnicity, culture and identity in Southall:

Previously we have discussed some of these key terms in a generalised sense; here these terms will be discussed by how they are represented in Southall. The term ‘ethnicity’, for instance, is also one that has been examined recently by Bauman:

The word ‘ethnic’ is inescapably a relational term in at least two respects. The first concerns the criteria of distinction that are used to tell one ethnic category from another. On the face of it, ethnic criteria appear grounded in the biological criteria sometimes called ‘descent’ or ‘race’. But this biological basis disappears as soon as it is scrutinized: anthropologists have known that descent is a social construction, not a biological fact. All serious social scientist agree that differences of ‘race’ are biologicistic reductions of differences which mask a plethora of non-biological criteria and would readily endorse Gilroy’s⁵ reminder that “race” is a relational concept which does not have fixed referents.⁶

Ethnic divisions are thus an entirely social construct which are based upon a propagation of distinctions, all of them mutually independent. Social scientists as well as ordinary people in the street both speak equally of ethnic groups on the basis of assumed common referents: a shared language or homeland; a shared nationality; an often trans-national

religion; a specific social caste; etc.⁷ The topic becomes duly complicated. Another view is given by A. P. Cohen in his book on the symbolic construction of community,⁸ in which it becomes apparent that the production and maintenance of social boundaries, and the production of ‘cultural stuff’, merge together through the creation of symbols. The relationship between ethnicity and culture is as a result often discussed within the context of an overarching theory that is termed as social constructivism. In an extensive critique of Gerd Baumann’s study of multi-ethnic Southall, for example, Viet Bader argues that Baumann’s essentially constructivist view of culture reduces the topic to a discourse and a series of self-identifications – thereby discarding the more objective, often unacknowledged and implicit, aspects of culture. The anthropology of ethnicity runs the danger, therefore, of becoming restricted to studying only people’s perceptions about their own culture, and their consequent actions, instead of studying their culture as it actually exists within broader society. Baumann responded to this critique by distancing himself from ideas of determinism and essentialism, emphasising above all the influence of agency and flexibility within strategies of self-identification. This debate nonetheless reveals important differences, in that the orthodox positions on issues of ethnicity and nationalism are deeply informed by empiricist, analytical philosophy, whereas the alternative approach (as represented here by Bader) instead takes its cue from rational, critical philosophy in Continental Europe, with a resulting difference in emphasis.⁹

All of these different aspects and meanings of culture are epitomized in Southall. In fact, Southall can be seen as one of the best urban areas in Britain in which one can contemplate nearly all of the cultures of the world. Southall is yet at the same time a dependent suburb that sits clearly within the globalised city of London. And in this global framework, Southall’s culture can be seen to correspond to Saskia Sassen’s definition as given in her interpretation of the global city.¹⁰ Sassen openly uses the term ‘immigrant cities’ as a part of the conceptual structure of the global city. And since the concept of culture – especially that contained within a global milieu – lies at the core of this doctoral study, Southall offers an ideal case to explore. While it might be argued that Southall doesn’t ever try to represent itself as an ‘immigrant city’ as such, it displays many other complex issues related to globalisation, cultural diversity and the history of British immigration.

In attempting to explore some of the key aspects of the globalization process, particularly as they relate to issues of culture, Paul De Gay has described the situation thus:

‘Globalization is about the dissolution of the old structures and boundaries of national states and communities. It is about the increasing transnationalization of economic and cultural life, frequently imagined in terms of the creation of a global citizens and neighbours.’¹¹

Yet when trying to apply such an analysis to the case of Southall, many conflicting circumstances present themselves at once, and of course to investigate these problematic relationships between culture and globalization is the main purpose of this study. Furthermore, other arguments dealing with culture and globalization often compare ethnic and cultural fragmentation with earlier modernist ideals of social homogenization. These issues are in fact not two separate arguments, nor are they two opposing views of what is happening in the world today; instead they form two concurrent trends of global reality as can be seen openly in the case of Southall. So far in this study, the focus has not been so much on the anthropologic, ethnographic or psychological meanings of the word ‘culture’, but rather on its expression or reflection within the realm of architecture. However, by exploring the architectural meaning of the word culture, other intrinsic notions are brought more naturally into this exploration of ethnicity and identity.

As noted above, one of the most widely discussed studies of multi-ethnic society is Baumann’s monograph on Southall. Although he focused on studying culture from an anthropologist’s view, and this present chapter is more interested in cultural identity and religious architecture in Southall, an interpretation of his text is essential for the research here. In Baumann’s work, which dates back to 1996, the main categories that he says makes up Southall’s population of 60,000 inhabitants¹² are ‘English’, ‘Irish’, ‘Indian/Pakistani’ and ‘West Indian’. However, within these categories there are multiple sub-allegiances, and loyalties are frequently divided – based as these are on place of origin, religion (the main local religions are Church of England, Roman Catholicism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam), as well as other criteria such as age, gender, profession and place of residence. Instead of concentrating on any single ethnic group, Baumann prefers to study Southall as a single social field. He analyses the complex, situational self-ascriptions and kinds of community integration arising from participation by local residents through a variety of events and local contexts. Unlike many other studies of ethnicity, Baumann’s book can be read as a running dialogue between the anthropologist’s abstract conceptualisations of culture, community and ethnicity, on the one hand, and those of the opinions of the real ethnographic subjects on the other. For example, the book begins with an extensive discussion of the local inhabitants’

understandings of the word ‘community’, and its relationship to ‘culture’, which reveals both a close kinship to standard anthropological conceptualisations and to major social variations within Southall. Notwithstanding the fascinating local ethnographic details provided on everything from drinking habits to marriage practices, the main theoretical contribution of Baumann’s book is his identification of two kinds of discourses about ethnicity: as noted, what he terms the *dominant* (imposed) discourse and the *demotic* (popular) discourse. The dominant discourse, which is reproduced chiefly through the mass media and by agencies within the public sector, tends to equate ethnicity with community and culture; in this worldview, one ethnic group constitutes a community with a notionally shared culture. Since these dominant readings of ‘communities’ can be based on language, religion or place of origin, it is not surprising that in practice many individuals find that they ‘belong’ to several different communities. For example, it could be described as a Gujarati identity that somehow unites Hindus and Muslims originating from that part of India, or it could be a Muslim identity which unites people of many linguistic or regional origins if they happen to derive from the so-called ‘Arab world’, or indeed it could be a broader Asian sub-continental identity that tries to unite Indians and Pakistanis. Be this as it may, Baumann’s ethnography shows that the demotic discourse, the one which is practiced on the actual streets of Southall, is far more flexible, negotiated and complex. Only it can recognise the situational and multi-faceted character of individual people’s often contradictory self-identifications, and by doing so it contests the terms by which the dominant discourse is framed. Out of this dialectic comes alternative identifications such as blackness (which may or may not include Asian people), feminism, socialism, inter-faith networks and multicultural ideologies of tolerance. All of these of course contribute to softening ethnic boundaries, and create a myriad of complex ‘frontier zones’ instead.

In spite of the lack of any easy fit between the dominant discourse and its popular representations, something which is also confirmed by the lack of any simple link between class and ethnicity, most Southallians nonetheless still continue to reproduce the dominant discourse in certain situations. This could be seen as a simple effect of dominating influence from those in the British social elite, but it is probably more accurate to say that since resources flow through ethnic or religious channels as are defined by the authorities who hold power, then the reality is that most people have little choice but to present their claims in ethnic or religious terms: ‘The dominant discourse represent the hegemonic language within which Southallians must explain themselves and legitimate their claims’. This is not to say that Southallians are not systematically

different because of their differing migration histories, linguistic backgrounds, social customs, and so on, but what Baumann shows is the classificatory system characteristic of the modern, liberal state encourages the social construction of apparently stable, reified, ethnic or religious *communities*.¹³ So if it indeed is by virtue of their ethnic identity that social minorities are discriminated against, then it is also chiefly through that same identity that they are able to claim rights in recompense.¹⁴

Another important interpretation of multiculturalism comes in Gerd Baumann's book, *The Multicultural Riddle*. In this he states that today's form of multiculturalism is no longer concerned with preserving the 'folk cultures' of white peasants flocking to cities that are run by white urban people who generally despise them and usually want them to leave again. The present-day challenge, both political and theoretical, is attributed by Baumann to three other concerns. These three points of the new multicultural triangle are about nationality as culture, ethnicity as culture, and religion as culture. All of these, according to Baumann, begin to crumble as soon as one scratches their surface: nationality as culture is neither post-ethnic nor post-religious, but a ragged mixture at best; ethnicity as culture is based on culturally derived social commitments, not on people's raw genes; and religion as culture is not a matter of following the dictates of sacred books of rules of worship, but rather a process of contextual bearings. Yet all these three versions of culture come down to the same essential choice, which is whether cultural identity should be comprehended as a thing one holds inside oneself, or as a shared external process that one can help to shape. Furthermore, Baumann suggests that, until now, the more influential of these two rival theories is the essentialist one which regards national cultures, ethnic cultures, and religious cultures as somehow being fixed and finished objects that people can then ascribe to or be ascribed to. In this view, culture – whether it is national, ethnic, or religious – is something one possesses and can be said already to be a member of, rather than something that one needs to create and reshape constantly through renewing activities.¹⁵ Baumann faults this essentialist view because it disregards the fact that we all in fact practise more than one culture, and take on myriad cultural identities as a result: 'In the urbanized societies of the West, and in fact everywhere else in our urbanized world, different cultural cleavages do not run parallel to each other. Rather, they cut across one another to form an ever-changing pattern of what may be called "cross cutting cleavages".'

Yet when speaking about secular societies and the impact of globalisation, the phenomenon of the growth of the mega-religious buildings is clearly vital. Therefore in the exploration of Southall in this chapter the attempt will be to study the religious phenomenon against notions of secularization and globalization, aiming to locate these terms in their most common meaning as used by the ordinary people of Southall to describe their different cultures and communities. For this purpose, this chapter will adopt the terminology of Gerd Baumann in his aforementioned study of Southall and its residents. As stated by Baumann:

‘... The words *culture* and *community* were thus used in two systematically different ways among Southallians themselves. One range of usages reflected the dominant discourse as emphasized by many experts in ‘community relations’, many community studies and also, remarkably, by their political opponents who blamed ‘ethnic minorities’ and their reified ‘cultures’ for the ‘social problems’ facing the ‘nation’. Besides engaging this dominant discourse, however, local usages established an alternative discourse which I have called demotic (lit. ‘by the people’), and which denied the congruence between *culture* and *community* that was the hallmark of the dominant discourse’.¹⁶

As noted, Baumann divided the communities in Southall into five main categories: three were based on religion (the dominant discourse), in terms of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims; and the other two categories were based on race and origin (the demotic discourse), as in the West Indian and White communities. Census statistics indeed reveal that over half of the population in Southall come from different ‘ethnic minority’ backgrounds, mostly from south-east Asia, and particularly from the Punjab area. The largest group of residents follow the Sikh religion, although the Hindu and Muslim religions have a significant number of followers amongst the rest of the British Asian community within the locality. And several other ethnic minorities such as people from a Caribbean or Chinese background also reside in Southall.

But most of all, Southall is widely known as ‘Little India’, and this is mainly due to its street culture which certainly bears the strong imprint of its South Asian majority population. Their conventions on the use of urban space are widely shared: embellished street facades made up of canopied shops sell everything from coloured textiles to Asian-styled jewellery, from the devotional through to the chic, and to ostentatious saris and other forms of Indian and Pakistani apparel. The pavements of the main shopping street in the heart of Southall, The Broadway, are not actually walkways, but instead



Figure 53: Scenes from the streets of Southall in 2008.

elongated plazas: shopkeepers and freelancers open wild-cat stalls that contain toys, fruits, vegetables, Bollywood DVDs, Indian music, etc. Indian and Pakistani spice shops occupy a large number of stores on The Broadway, with some of them almost the size of supermarkets, and these attract people from all over London and not only from the Asian community. Southall is also famous for its Asian restaurants which also help to attract outsiders, due to their cheaper prices and better quality when compared with other London restaurants. Altogether it makes for an astonishing urban diversity.

To try to limit the extent of diversity a little, for this study the focus will be on the area of Southall between Norwood Green to the south, Greenford to the north, Hanwell to the east, and Yeading to the west – an area of 2 miles in radius. The heart of Southall is centred around the intersection of Uxbridge Road, usually known as The Broadway, and South Road. This area consists almost entirely of shops, restaurants or different types of houses of worship, and as such is the main focus for the research in this chapter.

The more detailed reasons for choosing the area of Southall as a case study are as follows:

- 1- The area has an extremely diverse multicultural mix of communities from different cultural backgrounds which all live in close proximity to each other.
- 2- Southall as a suburb with a strong multi-ethnic population has been held up in recent history as a model of a successful multicultural society – although previously, and especially in the 1970s and 1980s¹⁷, it had its fair share of political problems such as racial tension, discrimination and economic decline.
- 3- Political factors, which are so intrinsic to the overall study, are particularly visible amongst Southall's ethnic communities. These include workplace and neighbourhood organisation, trade unionism, political activism, socialist and communist party affiliation, street rallies and such like. All of these factors play a role in the formation, location and consecration of houses of worship in the area.
- 4- Southall as a suburb has the proximity and closeness of an 'urban village', and yet in other aspects, such as in terms of its closeness to London and to Heathrow Airport, it allows for the analysis of this area to be carried out at the same scale as any major town or urban centre.

As mentioned previously, the suburb of Southall is especially rich in many types of multicultural architecture, including its plentiful shop facades, cinemas, theatres, etc.

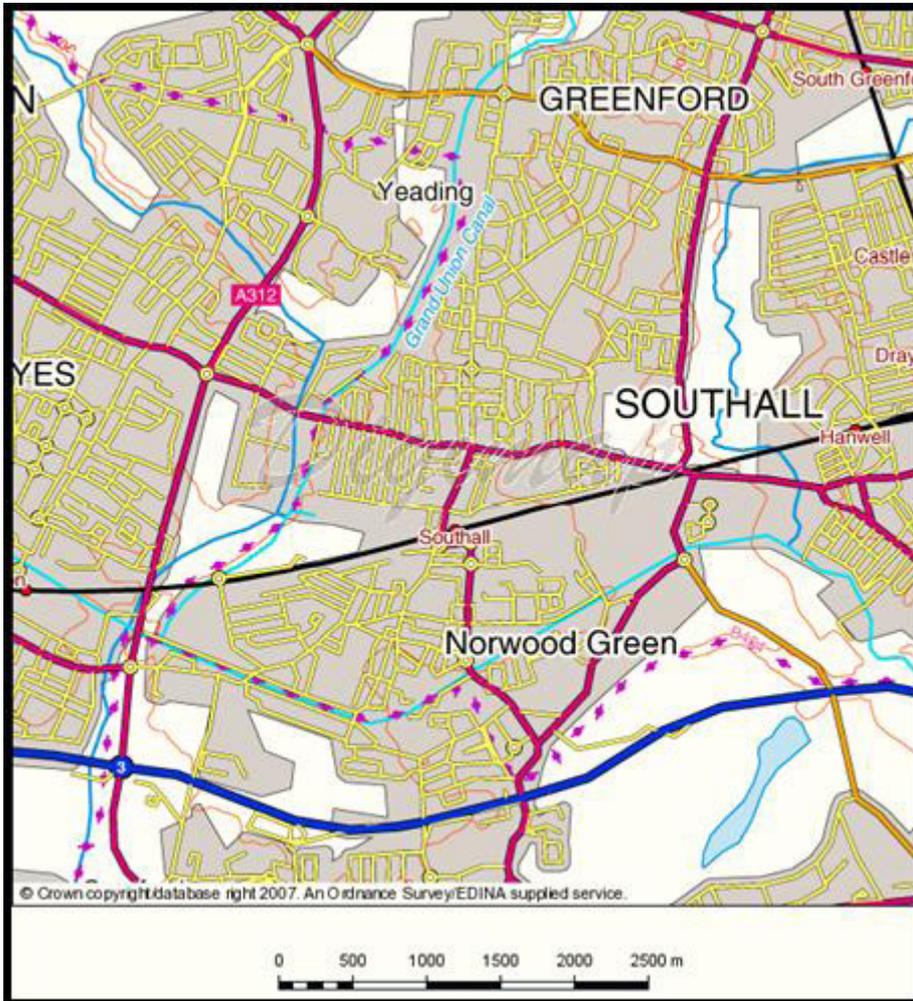


Figure 54: Map of Southall (Source: Edina Digimaps)

Yet for the purposes of this research, the concentration will be on religious architecture due to the following reasons:

- 1- The sheer proximity of different types of religious worship and different types of houses of worship to each other is quite remarkable in Southall, especially in terms of the types of users and their occupation of the places of worship as community centres or for other functions than worship.
- 2- The many different kinds of architecture for houses of worship even within the same religion, and hence the issue becomes even more complicated as to what this tells us about the relationships between architectural form and religious belief.
- 3- The phenomenon of employing often monumental religious architecture within an urban area like Southall is useful in asking what this implies for this study in general, particularly in the links between cultural identity and social rituals.
- 4- There is a clear aim to reveal the kinds of debates and issues faced by any ethnic minority when seeking planning permission for constructing new houses of worship, or for converting existing dwellings for the practice of religious worship, and thereby to ask what this implies for architectural form in terms of its reflection of the ongoing 'multiculturising' of British suburbs.

A framework for comparative study of Southall's houses of worship:

Although this doctoral thesis tends to be rooted in thematic rather than comparative study, for this chapter and the next, the methodology will adopt a framework of direct comparison partly because the focus is on the architectural analysis of the houses of worship in Southall, and also to account for meanings, social interaction and contextual parameters amongst Southall's multi-cultural communities in a variety of architectural and historical circumstances. Thus a broad range of factors must be accounted for in a systematic way, in a similar way to the similar comparative approach devised by Clark, Peach and Vertovec¹⁸ for studying the South Asian diaspora in the area.

To structure the research here, a number of factors will be grouped under four general rubrics appropriate for the analysis of houses of worship for Southall's cultural communities. It is imperative to note that the evidence sources are patchy, and there

is hence a need to piece together a lot of disparate information in order to focus and arrange the evidence. The four key categories are as follows:

1- Historical process and settlement formation in Southall

- a. Historical data about the formation of houses of worship in Southall.
- b. Geographical features of local settlements (e.g. nature and extent of settlement; proximity to other ethnic groups; location of religious buildings).
- c. Types and reasons for migration to Southall.
- d. Infrastructure and make-up of communities (e.g. nature of governmental policies towards multi-cultural/ethnic groups, degree of economic specialisation, interaction between community organizations and government).

2- Cultural composition

- a. History of Southall's ethnic communities
- b. Language (e.g. diversity of the languages within Southall's multi-cultural communities; extent of their use between the communities themselves and above all in places of worship).
- c. Region of origin, and the effects and relationship between region of origin and current area of residence.
- d. Caste or class composition of Southall's various communities.
- e. Degree of cultural homogenisation.

3- Social structure and community development

- a. Religion and its social divisions within Southall's communities (e.g. proportion of Southall's population comprised of the main faiths, such as Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Christian; presence of sub-sects or movements within each of these religions; extent of institutionalization, including formal organizations, places of worship, and the faiths and beliefs of each religion).
- b. Extent and nature of homogenisation between houses of worship.
- c. Politics behind houses of worship and community integration
- d. Ethnic convergence or conflict (e.g. trends towards intra-communal fragmentation; signs of inter-ethnic/inter-religious cooperation).

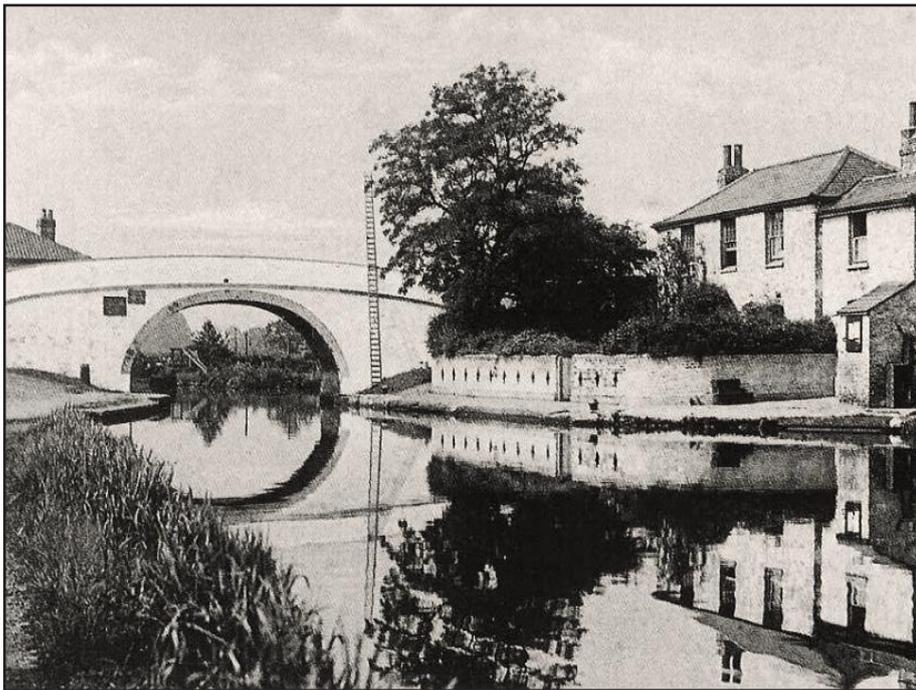


Figure 55: Southall in 1860, showing the Grand Union Canal
(Source: Ealing Council record)

- 4- Architectural exploration of Southall's houses of worship
 - a. Culturally based influences on the architecture of houses of worship.
 - b. Specific architectural features of Southall's houses of worship.
 - c. Architectural and cultural aspects within Southall's houses of worship relating to issues of hybridity, misrepresentation, tradition, mobility, and use.

Hence this chapter will start with a brief historical analysis of the Southall area, after which there will be an architectural investigation of its historical buildings and a discussion of themes relating to architectural form and function. Following that, the chapter will look at the history of immigration into the area, as well as the current social status and economic conditions of Southall's immigrant communities. There will also be an examination of different religious building forms based on their theology and rituals, and a listing of each and every house of worship in Southall. All of this will result in a further architectural exploration of specific case studies which have been chosen to focus on in the next chapter.

2. History of the area of Southall

What is now the London Borough of Ealing was once of course just forest and countryside. There was no evidence of fixed settlements until the Saxons arrived around the sixth and seventh centuries AD. More sizeable settlements were formed in the medieval period and by then the county of Middlesex had been formed. Southall, Acton and Ealing themselves were parts of large manors and so were not recorded individually until 14th century. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the basic unit of local government in this and other areas of Britain was the religious parish. Ealing, Hanwell, Acton and Southall all lay on the main road from London to Oxford, and thus travellers passed through these villages frequently. Greenford, Perivale and Northolt, in contrast, lay rather off the beaten track and so remained as small 'untouched' villages until after the First World War. Around the mid-seventeenth century Southall consisted of 19 houses, none of which is described other than as a cottage, and the village was surrounded by 35 acres of enclosed farm land.¹⁹ Even by 1801 Southall still had a very small population. Only 697 people lived there and most of these inhabitants worked on local farms. Wheat and barley was grown and sheep and cows grazed in the fields. There

CLASSIFICATION	PERCENTAGE
Male:	49.7%
Female:	50.3%
Under 18	24.8%
Over 60	14%
Total White	11.90%
Total Mixed	2.04%
Total Asians	75.49%
Total Black	7.46%
Total Other	3.12%

Table 11: 2001 Census demographics

RELIGION	PERCENTAGE
Christian	15.9%
Buddhist	20.35%
Hindu	20.35%
Jewish	0.05%
Muslim	18.86%
Sikh	36.58%
Other/None	7.69%

Table 12: Religious classification

were almost no industries, but, during the course of the nineteenth century there were to be major changes, mainly brought about by developments in transport. Commerce had first been stimulated by the Grand Union Canal, which cut through Southall, Greenford and Perivale at the end of the eighteenth century.

The coming of the railways in 1838 had little initial impact, but slowly the small villages in the area grew into small towns as the population rose. By the end of the nineteenth century, improved communications - in the form of trams, buses and trains - made access to and from London so much easier. Many residents now worked in London, travelling there and back each day. Ealing became rather a desirable residential centre, whilst Acton and Southall became seen as places for large-scale industry.²⁰ The expansion of industry in Greenford and Perivale became truly spectacular in the 1920s and 1930s, helped by the building of the Western Avenue in the 1930s, as a result of which even more industries came to Acton and Southall.

Southall had become a self-governing town in 1859, and then in 1936, when it now had nearly 50,000 residents, Southall became a municipal borough with its own mayor and charter. Fortunately for Southall, the bombing raids of the Second World War were less severe than elsewhere in London. After the war, the remaining rural portion of Ealing and Northolt was built upon with council housing estates in order to accommodate new people. Another key feature of the post-war period was the large-scale immigration of people from India, Pakistan, Poland, the Caribbean, and many other countries. In 1965, the old boroughs of Ealing, Acton and Southall were abolished and they were merged into one new local authority called the London Borough of Ealing. The next section will analyse these histories and circumstances in social terms before connecting them to their religious and architectural consequences.

2.1. The demographics of Southall

The 2001 Census gave the following demographic for the Southall Broadway area, and since it is the last published census, is the one being used for this chapter. Total population of Southall: 89, 275 people. The census also provided this classification based on religious profile:

From these figures, we can easily see the extremely large non-white population – almost 90% – and the fact that the largest majority of ethnicity in Southall comes from the



Figure 56: An old map of Southall in the 1880s (Source: Ealing Council records)

Asian Indian community. Sikhs are easily the largest religious faith, followed by almost equal number of Hindus and Muslims. Christians came just behind, being mostly a mixture of those of Anglo-Caribbean extraction and White British residents.

2.2. History of immigration in Southall

The earliest systematic approaches to the study of population migration derive from the nineteenth-century geographer, Ernest George Ravenstein, who suggested that migration could be attributed to socio-economic imbalances between regions. Certain factors ‘push’ people away from their area of origin while others ‘pull’ them to their area of destination. ‘Push factors’ include rapid demographic growth, low living standards, lack of economic opportunities and political repression, whereas ‘pull factors’ include demand for labour, availability of land and good economic opportunities.²¹

The post-war migration of South Asian people to Britain, looked at specifically, is often explained in terms of structural factors in which the interplay between ‘push’ and ‘pull’ created a movement of large groups of relatively low-paid and disadvantaged workers. Accordingly, the major reconstruction project in Britain after the Second World War produced a demand for workers that ‘pulled’ people to Britain, and at the same time conditions in the various successor states to the British Raj in India and Pakistan after independence and partition was what ‘pushed’ many south Asians to leave their country. This is certainly relevant for immigrants in the suburb of Southall. This migratory movement was mainly due to the influx of workers needed to work in the various factories that were newly opened in Southall after the war.²² However this demand for overseas labour at a period of post-war labour shortage was due according to many scholars, to demographic reasons such as war deaths, birth and death rates, etc. Clive Harris states that it was also caused by ‘an over-accumulation of capital in Britain fostered by imperial protection [as well as] a product of the specific forms of capital accumulation in the colonies’.²³

There was in fact a surplus working population amongst the indigenous British population, and so the government’s first tactics to overcome this labour shortage aimed to mobilise those in Britain to start working again. Such tactics to get the ‘missing millions’ within the labour force into essential and undermanned industries included the nationalization of unprofitable sectors of the economy, the creation of ‘Development

Areas', increasing the amount of people that came under the definition of 'worker', such as women and disabled people, and the 1948 Registration of Employment Order, which aimed to move people from the less productive sectors of employment to more beneficial jobs.²⁴ However, by 1946 it became apparent that despite the implementation of these tactics, the government would have to look abroad to fill the labour shortage in Britain. Politicians at that time thus looked to the vast amount of workers available in its colonies to fill the labour shortage. However, despite the Nationality Act of 1948, which gave colonial subjects the right to live and work in Britain, this was not explicitly encouraged. It was assumed that the main aim of the Act was a symbolic reaffirmation of the old imperial system, to diffuse the anti-colonial nationalist movements that were occurring at the time.²⁵ The 1948 Act was passed because no one believed that subjects in these colonies would ever want to live in Britain: 'this measure conformed to the system of global apartheid that had characterized British imperialism: imperial subjects were to be formally equal but geographically separate.'²⁶

Instead, the European Volunteer Worker (EVW) scheme was launched, recruiting workers from war-torn Europe.²⁷ These workers were assigned to low-skilled, industrial jobs that nobody else would fill. Workers had little free will as to what jobs they could take, as the government ensured they stayed in the 'essential industries', with the threat of deportation if their work was not up to standard. As Harris summarises the situation:

'... the formalised employment contract for EVWs was significant for its undermining of the sporadic nature of the transaction between labour and capital, which is essential to the preservation of the illusion that workers remain in ultimate possession of themselves and are therefore in a position to alienate their labour-power.'²⁸

However, by the late-1950s British politicians embarked upon a public debate about immigration and settlement policies. The Commonwealth Immigrant Act (1962) established a system of entry vouchers, and a 1965 government White Paper effectively ended the granting of such visas to unskilled applicants. From the mid-1960s onwards, the reduced influx favoured a higher proportion of skilled people coming into Britain from South Asia. Their number, however, were exceeded tenfold by the vigorous movement of dependents who wished to join relatives who had previously moved to Britain. This influx of dependents created even more larger numbers of South-Asian immigrants and led in turn to the eventual reverse of this policy as well.

Throughout the 1970s, as immigrants continued to arrive in places like Southall, an increase of racial contestation in Britain led to the threat of further controls. As more legislation was introduced, unpleasant justifications for it had to be made, as Frank Reeves points out:

‘The justification for such measures could only lie in massive evidence of discrimination practiced by the white population and fear of the likely consequences of this behaviour should it be allowed to continue unabated.’²⁹

The following decade, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher introduced the even tougher Nationality Act of 1981 to slow down immigration. These new immigration restrictions were so successful that by the mid-1980s net immigration only accounted for a third of the growth of the ethnic minority population. The largest increase now being caused by natural population growth.³⁰ Although Southall experienced some problems with providing housing and employment for these settlers, by the end of the 1990s a strong model of a prosperous multicultural, and multi-religious, community had emerged in the area.

2.3. Socio-economic status and employment within immigrant communities

As the duration of British Asian settlement has increased, and as these communities have grown and matured, so too the numbers of Asian businesses have likewise expanded; in the last twenty years, they have grown very rapidly³¹. Despite the fact that ethnic minorities are only 6.4% of the overall British population, ethnic minority businesses now comprise about 10% of total business start-ups. Given that nearly half of the ethnic minority population in Britain is concentrated in the Greater London area, it is not surprising that ethnic minority businesses should be concentrated there. According to one estimate,³² there are 62,000 ethnic minority businesses in London, representing 19% of all companies in the city. The same source estimates that ethnic minority entrepreneurs now own over 50% of new start-ups and 7% of all small businesses nationally.³³

The current social status of many of these ethnic communities in Southall are thus now of a solid, hard-working people from the middle class or lower-middle class. Yet previously, and especially at the time of early Sikh migration, many of those coming in to the area had come from poor working classes in the villages of Punjab. At the same

time, West-African Sikhs tended to be more from the educated middle class. Both had obviously migrated to Southall for very different political reasons. Today, the British Asians in Southall possess the highest level of home ownership in the entire borough of Ealing.³⁴ A dramatic and solid social and economic transformation has clearly happened.

In the common everyday language of the people of Southall the aspiration to ‘move up’ in the world requires ‘moving out’³⁵ - implying that to join a higher class financially, this requires getting out of Southall – and this indeed is widely apparent among the people of Southall. Yet, in studying the houses of worship in the area, such assertions seem to be of little concern among worshippers. Even if residents do get richer and move to other areas, they still want to come back to Southall to practice their religion.

2.4. Planning policies and the development of places of worship:

In England, especially at the time of the large influx of South Asian immigrants to Southall in the 1960, an exodus of white middle-class families and suburbs had already begun, and so many structures were left abandoned.³⁶ These structures that were redundant were mostly industrial buildings, or houses that had been built for the workers who moved away, as well as a large number of churches were also left empty due to the increasing secularisation of British society. It was these types of buildings that were adapted for places of worship by the new communities, as a gradual process. First, the specific religious community had to establish itself in the new location, money had to be raised to purchase a site, and it took time for the communities to develop the confidence to express themselves through their buildings. These new additions and adaptations to the townscape created new, often unprecedented cases for local authority planning departments to deal with.³⁷ British planning and zoning laws differ greatly from those on the Indian subcontinent, so often the new communities were unaware of the legal applications that had to be made or the cases where permission had to be sought. Planning laws generally perform a conservative function; changes in building use require permission, and applications for new developments are generally judged on how they will fit in or affect the surrounding area, plus the effect on neighbouring landowners’ amenities. As one study notes: ‘Crucially, planning aims to ensure the harmonization of new development with its existing surroundings.’³⁸

Certainly, this process can prove problematic when trying to establish a new *mandir*, mosque or *gurdwara*, particularly in the early stages of settlement in an area. According

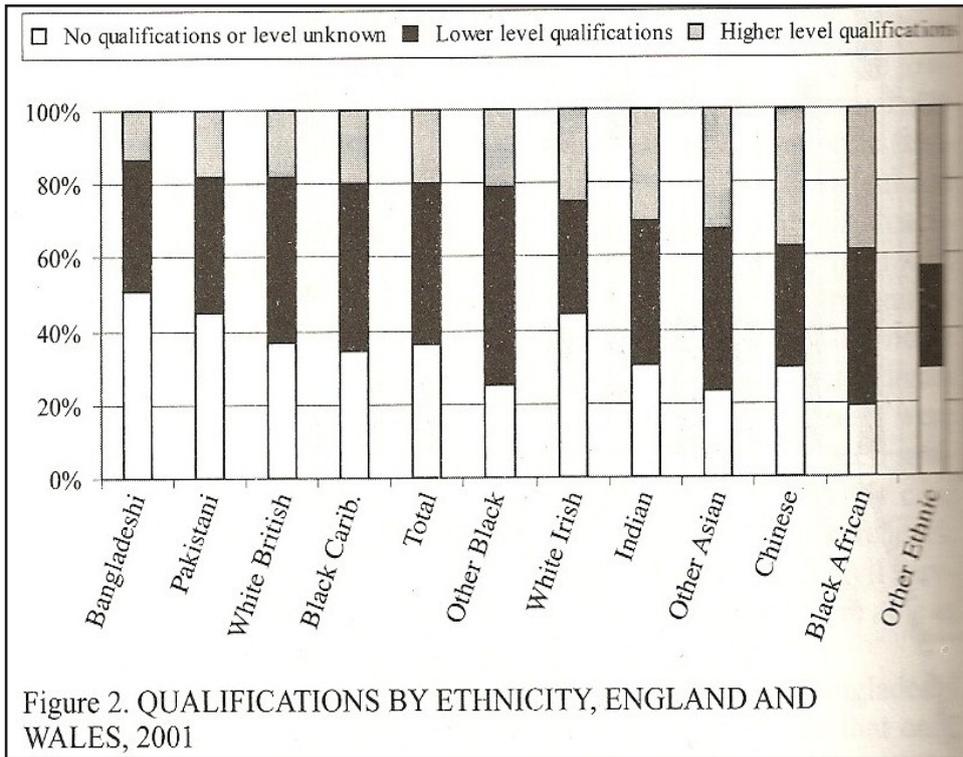


Figure 57: Qualifications by ethnicity, England and Wales, 2001³⁹

to Peach and Gale, the history of negotiations of planning permissions of Muslims, Sikh and Hindu houses of worship differs from city to city and area to area in Britain. Three points are crucial: the relative size and composition of the local faith communities; their length of residence in the area; and the types of proposals they advanced. Peach and Gale acknowledge that generalization could be problematic, yet they have devised a four-stage cycle of the interaction between minority faith groups and the British planning process. They declare: ‘Although we present the scenario as sequential, the different stages can exist simultaneously in different cities or even within the same city, according to the type of development proposed.’⁴⁰ The four stage cycle devised by Peach and Gale is as follows:

1- First stage: ‘tacit change and planning denial’. Initially, newly arrived immigrants are unaware of the requirement of obtaining permission to change the use of premises. The change of use from domestic to non-domestic is often strongly resisted by planners and indigenous neighbours, due to noise disturbance, shortage of car parking and the need for affordable housing. While this stage may still occur today, it was even more pronounced during the 1960s during the large post-war influx of South Asians in Britain. By the 1970s, many councils changed their policies to permit house-temple conversions.⁴¹ In their survey of places of worship listed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) between 1999 and 2001, Peach and Gale found that 40% of mosques, compared to just 14% of *mandirs* and *gurdwaras*, consisted of converted houses. The much higher number of house-mosques could be due to the greater need for prayer halls situated throughout towns and cities for the five daily prayer-times (whereas Friday worship may be carried out at a larger mosque), or it could be that Muslim groups had less money to buy bigger premises.

2- Second stage: ‘larger scale conversion with minimalist change’. This involves the conversion of larger scale buildings required as the communities expand and outgrow the house-temples. Redundant warehouses, schools, community halls, cinemas and churches are often bought and adapted. Adapting a religious building is the most convenient option as permission for change of use does not have to be sought. As the communities become more settled and more assertive of their identity, external signs start to appear to express the religious use. However, as these are additions to a building that was designed for a different purpose, these add-on signs are solely signifiers, rather than holding the wider meaning attributed to them in traditional religious architecture. With the extra space now available, the community aspect of these religious buildings becomes more pronounced; as well as a place for worship, the buildings also provide

educational and social functions.

Modifications made often tend to be visually aesthetic rather than architectural, and such conversions are met with greater approval from planners, generally as they are situated further from residential areas. However, this also means that these premises are harder for the congregation to access. In their survey, Peach and Gale found that 62% of *mandirs*, 52% of *gurdwaras* and 41% of mosques were in such conversions.⁴²

3- Third stage: ‘accept the development of purpose-built premises’. The presence today in Britain of minarets, domes, and Hindu conical towers represents the true challenge to the cultural landscape of British cities. These stages resolve into two opposing planning strategies. One of them, the third stage, involves ‘hiding and displacement’ and later ‘embracing and celebration’. The third stage deals with the concerns of planning authorities about changing certain features of houses of worship to keep in character with the surroundings. Peach and Gale state that often the ‘acceptance of exotic architectural styles is accompanied by either hiding the buildings from public view or truncating their iconic features’.⁴³ They add that:

‘Such styles contest the images of English heritage conjured up by politicians and maintained by the town and country planning system. The amount of purpose building to date is relatively small and comparatively recent. Of the buildings in our survey, only 16 % were purpose built: 13 % of the mosques, 7 % of the *gurdwaras*, but 24 % of the *mandirs*.’⁴⁴

4- Fourth stage ‘embracing and celebrating’. This refers to planners and politicians who have grasped the advantage of spectacle in reviving the image of a city to advertise its multiculturalism.⁴⁵ Although this attitude of planners is more accepting to the development of religious buildings, there are still certain elements in these buildings that have had to be modified, such as minarets which are technically used to call for prayer, but now have no purpose other than to give the image of a mosque. Other changes that deal with planning regulations include the frequent placement of religious buildings in industrialised or commercial areas – this point would ease the concern of inhabitants of the area not to have ethnic religious buildings close by a residential area.

As demonstrated by Peach and Gale’s four-stage cycle of interaction between planners and religious communities, the formation and expression of these religious buildings are never immediately accepted, and in some cases are still not. Religious buildings have often been the point of cultural contestation precisely because ‘they have been

constructed as visible symbols of ethnic and religious difference.⁴⁶ However in Southall there are other challenges that result from the planning regulations that we will discuss when analysing certain religious buildings, while also referring to this four-stage cycle to understand the development of expressing the identity of a community through its religious buildings.

2.5. General characteristics of the houses of worship in Southall

The dominant use of the word ‘culture’ among the local people of Southall in everyday discourse equates the term to five distinct communities. Two are defined on ‘racial’ lines as West Indians and White, while three are distinguished on religious criteria for those from South Asia: Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. Yet most people in Southall are also fully aware that there are Muslims who are ‘Black’ and Christians who are ‘Asians’; yet these are treated as classificatory anomalies, and most people are – in most contexts – happy with a division into those five categories⁴⁷. Accordingly, this study will be based on these everyday categories.

The houses of worship in Southall thus can all be said to have their own distinctive qualities for these cultural groups. Not all can be investigated, and so the choice of studying some of these houses in greater depth was not done randomly, but was based on several key factors:

- 1- Certain houses of worship have much clearer multi-ethnic congregations, and therefore they practice their prayer services in several languages, which makes them more relevant here.
- 2- The architectural form of the building, and its history, can also be seen as offering important evidence of the processes being investigated.
- 3- The location and proximity of a particular religious building from other houses of worship, or its proximity to the main residential areas, or to a certain community, or being set away from the main streets, also made it more important.
- 4- The availability of data to be able to carry out in-depth analysis, or the ability to visit and interview the priests or clerks of these houses of worship, made them useful examples.

Year	Estimated number of people of each religion in England and Wales	Number of places of worship in England and Wales	Estimated number of worshippers per place of worship
Muslims			
1961	50,000	7	7,143
1971	226,000	30	7,533
1981	553,000	149	3,711
1991	950,000	443	2,144
2001	1,600,000	614	2,606
Sikh			
1961	16,000	3	5,333
1971	72,000	33	2,182
1981	144,000	69	2,087
1991	206,000	138	1,493
2001	340,000	193	1,762
Hindu			
1961	30,000	1	30,000
1971	138,000	2	69,000
1981	278,000	25	11,120
1991	397,000	78	5,090
2001	560,000	109	5,138

Table 13: Estimated number of Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus and their distribution per place of worship in England and Wales, 1961-2001.⁴⁸

3. Religious belief in Southall:

As mentioned previously, religions are very important in Southall for its immigrant communities. In the study by Richard Gale and Ceri Peach regarding immigrant houses of worship in England and Wales, Southall forms a key part of the increasing number of religious buildings that have been registered with the Office of National Statistics on the table shown opposite. It shows that in England and Wales up to 1961 there were very few religious establishments for the ethnic religions being studied: just 7 mosques, 3 *gurdwaras* and 1 *mandir*,⁴⁹ across the whole of the country. The large increases in religious buildings generally occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, which is a decade after the large influx of South Asian immigration to Britain. This illustrates that the communities were only able to establish new places of worship once they had established themselves in their new surroundings, and raised enough money. It also indicates the arrival and settlement of the families of immigrants in England, as the myth of return was fading. The realisation that their children would be raised in a secularising British society, and would need to experience a British education, meant that the establishment of religious buildings was vital for the institutionalization of their religious culture.⁵⁰ Generally the number of people per place of worship has decreased over time, as new venues are established – although this varies greatly between the different religions – Gale and Peach also found out that ‘significant differences are still evident in the number of places of worship relative to the estimated size of the religious groups. In 2001 there were three times as many Hindus per *mandir* as there were Sikhs per *gurdwara* and half as many more Muslims per mosque than Sikhs per *gurdwara*’.⁵¹

3.1 Christian churches

Having made these general points about the development of ethnic religious buildings, it is now time to look in more detail at the different religious practices and forms. Historically, the choice of building form for the Christian house of worship, because it had its first beginnings in Ancient Rome, came out of an existing type of Roman culture the basilica. In other words, if the Christian house of worship had seen its origins arising further to the east, it most likely would have been the typology of eastern buildings that would have served the purpose of worship.⁵² Therefore, we can assume that culture and history reflects the architecture of religious buildings, more so than religious theology and doctrines, because it is a striking fact that the texts of all major religions very rarely emphasize the type or shape of a building. The important idea in all religions is simply

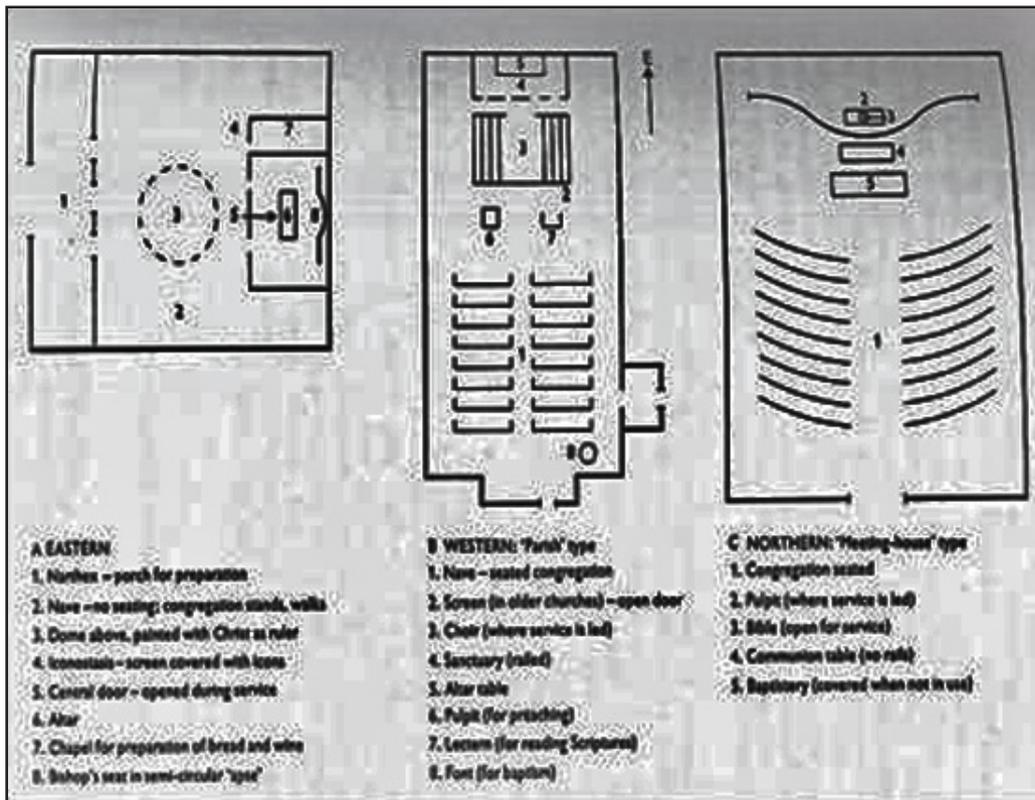


Figure 58: Types of Christian church plans.
 (Source: *Living Religions*)

to have a place to accommodate the act of worship. And later on when the Christian faith spread in Europe and then globally, its churches therefore evolved into many different types, borrowing from the culture and history of different regions.

Among the many types of Christian religions, the act of communal prayer is the deepest way in which these religious communities define themselves. Christians pray communally most often on Sunday morning. In all the Christian prayer services, men and women pray openly together. In Christianity, the different sects have slight differences between their ideologies and practices, and this involves different furniture and layouts for each sect. For the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, we find a crucifix, a symbolic cross with the figure of Jesus on it, and a cloth-covered altar – called the altar of sacrifice – where the priest prepares the Eucharist. The altar is always placed at the far end of the church and often has a niche with a relic in it. This relic is commonly meant to be from the saint which the church is named after. Other items on the altar include: two candles, always burning; a cup (chalice) to hold the wine; a dish (paten) to hold the Eucharist wafers; decanters (cruets) of water and wine to be mixed together; a dish of water for the priest to wash his hands; and a missal, the Catholic prayer book for priests. Another vital element is the pulpit: it is located in the sanctuary of the church, and this is where the priest stands when he reads from the Bible; then there is the tabernacle; the place where the consecrated Eucharist is kept before it makes its grand appearance on the altar. Elsewhere in the church is a baptismal font, a feature always found in the Catholic Church. It is often placed either to the side of the altar, or at the back of the church, and is where babies are christened. Frequently there are scenes depicting the 14 Stations of the Cross: these images, which depict the story of Jesus' death, appear on the inside walls of the church. Another feature is the basin of holy water, placed at each entrance to the church, for use by church members as they enter the church.

Confessional booths are where practicing Roman Catholics go for confession. The person confessing (called a penitent) has a choice of confessing to the priest face-to-face or confessing through a screen.⁵³ Catholics celebrate communal worship as a so-called mass, which is the symbolic re-enactment of the Last Supper. Catholic churches celebrate mass every day and at several times during the day on Sunday. The mass involves eating bread that has been changed (transubstantiated) into the body of Christ and drinking wine that has been changed into the blood of Christ. Worshippers sing hymns, listen to readings from the Bible, and participate in a penitential rite in which

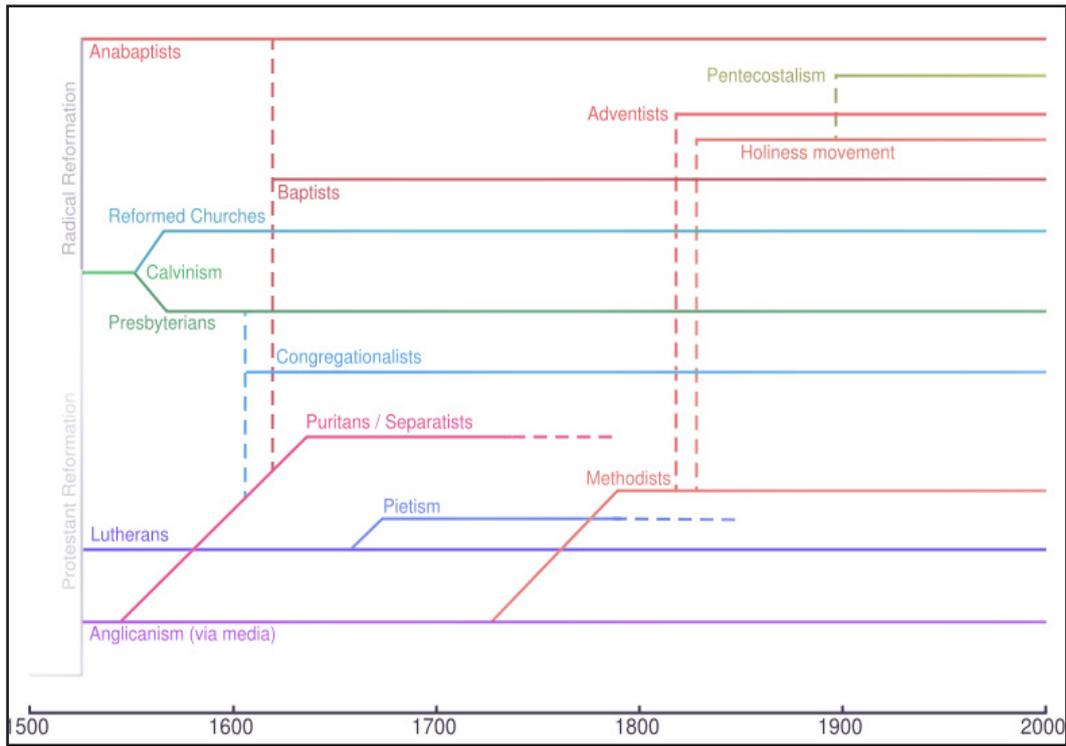


Figure 59: Diagram of Protestant denominations
 (Source: *Living Religions*)

they repent for their sins. The priest gives a sermon, which is called a homily.⁵⁴ The Catholic Church is the world's oldest and largest formal religious institution. From at least the 4th century AD it has played a prominent role in the history of western civilization. In the 11th century, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the western Catholic Church split, largely over disagreements regarding papal primacy. Eastern churches, which maintained or later re-established communion with Rome, now form the Eastern Catholic Churches. In the 16th century, partly in response to the threat from the Protestant Reformation, the western Catholic Church engaged in a substantial process of reform and renewal, which was known popularly as the Counter-Reformation.

As a Trinitarian⁵⁵ form of worship, Roman Catholicism holds that there is one eternal God who exists as a mutual combination of three persons: the Father, God; the Son, Jesus; and the Holy Spirit. Catholic beliefs are summarized in the Nicene Creed and detailed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

In early Protestant churches after the Reformation, as a breaking away from Roman Catholicism, there was a reaction against what the reformers considered to be Catholic excess. Their church design and ornamentation (or lack of it) reflected Protestant ideas of the relationship between God and humankind. This relation is seen as direct, and does not need interceders. It also does not need icons only faith. Luther and other Protestant reformers emphasized the acts of singing, reading the word of God, and preaching. Hence they also tended to emphasize architectural simplicity. Because the Protestant churches focus on the sermon, their architectural emphasis is mainly on the pulpit, where the minister preaches; it is not on the altar, like in Catholic churches. Because the early Protestants rejected the symbols of wealth, many of their churches were sparsely decorated. Protestants generally believe in something called the "priesthood of believers," a concept in which participants speak directly to God; they do not actually need someone, like a priest, to act on their behalf. For that reason, Protestant churches do not have confessionals.

Most Protestant churches prefer the plain expression of symbol of the cross, as representative of the risen Christ, rather than the crucifix, with its image of a crucified Christ⁵⁶. Protestant services feature aspects such as: hymn singing, communal prayers, reading from the Bible, and, occasionally, the celebration of the Eucharist, through which Protestants take communion.⁵⁷ Hymn singing is hence a major feature of

Protestant services, and the hymns for the service are usually posted on the wall of the church. In many of the African or American Protestant churches, a large amount of avid and inspiring gospel singing adds an ecstatic and joyful energy to the prayer service. Another major denomination within Protestant Christianity is the Church of England, which acts as the ‘Mother Church’ for the worldwide Anglican Communion and is the oldest among the communion’s thirty-eight independent national churches. The Church of England considers itself to be both ‘Catholic’ and ‘Reformed’ – i.e. ‘Catholic’ in that it views itself as being an unbroken continuation of both the early Apostolic and the later medieval universal church, rather than as a new formation, and in that it holds and teaches the historic Catholic faith; and ‘Reformed’ insofar as many of the principles of the early Protestant reformers as well as the subsequent Protestant Reformation have influenced it via the English Reformation, and also because it clearly does not accept papal supremacy.⁵⁸ The religious landscape of the Church of England thus took on its present form. As such, the Church of England has a clear structure which governs the hierarchy of the church. First comes the Primacy, which is the area under the jurisdiction of a primate, e.g. the Archbishop of Canterbury. A Primacy may consist of one or several Provinces, and after this comes the Diocese, Archdeaconry, Deanery and then Parish. The parish is run by the vicar, rector and various other officials.

In both its beliefs and practices, or forms of churchmanship, the Church of England is decidedly mixed: in some of its congregations, the patterns of worship remain closer to Roman Catholicism than most Protestant churches, while in others it is difficult to distinguish between Anglican forms and other Evangelical bodies. Its constitution affirms relatively conservative theological beliefs, its liturgical form of worship is traditional, and its organization embodies a belief in the appropriateness of the historical hierarchy of archbishops, bishops and dioceses. The Anglican liturgy is based largely on the *Book of Common Prayer* and now the *Book of Common Worship*, dating from 2000.

The third Christian denomination that will be focused on for this study is Baptist. The act of Baptism, commonly referred to as “believer’s baptism” among Baptists and some other groups, is administered by full immersion in water after a person professes Jesus Christ to be the Saviour⁵⁹. This is seen as an act of obedience to the example and command of Jesus. It is an outward expression which is symbolic of the inward cleansing or remission of their sins that has already taken place. It is also a public identification of that person with Christianity and with that particular local church.

An important feature of Baptists is that they do not practice infant baptism, because they believe parents cannot make a decision of salvation for an infant. Related to this doctrine is the disputed concept of an “age of accountability” when God determines that a mentally capable person is accountable for their sins and eligible for baptism. This is not set as a specific age, but is based on whether or not the person is mentally capable of knowing right from wrong. “Believers’ baptism” probably considered as the primary distinctive characteristic, yet Baptists are not the only Christians to practise “believers’ baptism”. Nor are they the only Christians to believe in congregational church government, the priesthood of all believers, or the separation of church and state. It is in fact the unique combination of these various beliefs which make Baptists distinctive.

There are of course many other sects in Christianity. But basically the common act of prayer involves the same participation between the worshipper and the church and its furniture in all different types of Christianity. For clarity, the focus of this study will be on these three main denominations – Roman Catholicism, Church of England and Baptist – which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter in terms of their buildings in Southall.

3.1.1 Christianity in Southall:

To speak of Christianity in Southall also requires a mention of the term ‘White’, borrowing this category from Baumann’s demotic discourse. It is clear that white English and Irish people are the most common Christian groups amongst Southallians, other than the South Asian and West Indian Christians. Baumann observes that ‘to speak of a white community is commonplace among South Asian and Afro-Caribbean Southallians; yet it is rare among their white neighbours themselves. Their self-classification acknowledges only one internal distinction as clearly as this: that between Irish and English Southallians.⁶⁰ Yet while Irish culture is openly recognized as a heritage, no local Irish community can be said to exist in the area. Therefore the only recognizable feeling or existence of the presence of white people in Southall can be seen in the local Christian churches or in a few Irish-owned pubs.

3.1.2 West Indian Christians:

West Indian migration to the UK began in the early-1950s due to the need for workers

to help to rebuild Britain after the war, in particular to work on transport networks or in factories. But although the West Indian communities were the first overseas settlers in Southall, their number today is only around 10% of the local population, as based on the 2001 Census records. West Indian numbers are considerably lower than South Asians in Southall due to many factors. For one thing, their migratory history is different from South Asians because it spanned little more than a decade in Southall, given that the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 severely restricted further labour migration, and because Caribbeans tended not to send back for their dependent relatives to the same extent that South Asians did. Further, while many West Indians arrived as early as did the Sikh pioneers, they did not, by preference, choose to settle in Southall. For the Sikh pioneers, it was the privately owned factories that promised jobs in Southall; for many West Indians it was to work for, and sometimes as the result of organized recruitment drives by, organizations like the National Health Service and London Transport that attracted them to London,⁶¹ rather than gravitating to suburbs like Southall.⁶²

That the West Indians of Southall should form and be considered as, one community is in itself remarkable. Most Caribbean islands had developed a heritage not out of unity or even proximity, but of mutual estrangement and rivalry both as British Dominions and as independent states. Yet this national differentiation of West Indian heritages came too late to influence most of the would-be migrants. Their journey, again unlike that of most South Asians, became ‘a journey to the mother country’ as many migrants still recall. ‘The educational, religious and cultural centre of West Indian society lay not within itself, geographically or otherwise, but outside – in England. For the individual West Indian, coming to England was thus an inward movement, a journey into his cultural womb’ comments Dilip Hiro.⁶³ Ever since then West Indians have mostly been born in Britain, and such differences from Caribbean history never really affected them. Thus, in general, West Indians because of their colonial history tend to be mostly Christians, at first mainly Evangelical, and later on largely Pentecostal.

3.1.3 Indian Christians

Christianity came to India in two main periods: initially the first-century AD missionary activity of Thomas, a disciple of Jesus, and later on the widespread western missionary activities from 1500 to 1975. Most of the early missionaries in India – i.e. the Baptists, Anglicans, Scottish Presbyterians, Lutherans, American Presbyterians and American Methodists – failed to identify themselves with the local people and their culture. Many of them were individualists, and thought of Christianity largely in terms of their own

personal experience of Christ. For some others, the Christian faith primarily was a set of beliefs that need to be shown to be superior to the beliefs of other religions in India. Many missionaries in the beginning were not at all interested in the poor or lower castes. The majority of Protestant Christians in India today are still the product of these Christian mass movements, especially in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and parts of West Bengal. In the 19th century, more and more kinds of Protestant denominations – from Europe and then also from America – began to arrive in India. The denominational differences posed great problems in a missionary situation. By sheer force of necessity the various denominations formed the habit of consulting together on common problems. The result is that Christians including Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, now form the third largest religious group in India. It is also estimated that about 73% of the present-day Christians in India are Roman Catholics (around 18 million people). The Catholic Church in India is composed of three individual churches: Latin, Malabar and Malankara-with their own independent hierarchies. However, a great diversity of Christians is noticeable in India: they include Syrian Christians, Knanaya Christians, Goan Christians, Tamil Christians, Anglo-Indians, Naga Christians, etc. They all differ in their language, social customs and economic prosperity. Christians often occupy high positions: cabinet ministers, governors of states, high court judges, university vice-chancellors, top-ranking officers, etc. The Non-Catholic Thomas Christians are mainly composed of the Jacobites or the Syrian Orthodox Christians, divided at present into two rival groups (Bava Kakshi and Metran Kakshi), the Anjoorians, the Anglicans (CMS), the Marthomites, the Mellusians or Nestorians, and the St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India. There are also around 6 million non-Catholics in India, including Orthodox Christians and Protestants.⁶⁴

So in general, the background of Indian Christians is highly complex. There is also no available data that can give an accurate indication of the total number of Indian Christians among the other Christian practitioners in Southall. Yet according to the number of attendance in churches, approximately half the worshippers in Southall's Catholic, Church of England, and Spiritualist churches are South Indians. In the other churches of Southall, especially the Pentecostal churches, the West Indian community forms the majority of worshippers. As for the Baptist church, a combination of all the ethnicities found in Southall makes up the worshippers of that church.

3.2 Temples

In Southall the local temples belong to the two existing Indian religions, Hindu and Sikh. Hinduism and Sikhism can in fact both be practised in temple-style buildings or any normal consecrated buildings, or even in ordinary houses, depending on the particular situation. It is worth discussing both of these major religions in turn,

3.2.1 Hindu temples

A Hindu temple, or *mandir*, is a specific house of worship for followers of Hinduism. They are usually specifically reserved for religious and spiritual activities, though not always. A Hindu temple can be designed as a separate structure or a part of another building. A feature of most temples is the presence of *murtis* or statues of the Hindu deity to whom the temple is dedicated. They are usually dedicated to one primary deity, called the presiding deity, and to the other subordinate deities who are associated with the main deity. However, some temples are dedicated to several deities, and some have symbols instead of a *murti*.⁶⁵ Therefore, the *mandir* began as a place to provide shelter for an image in the sanctum, and a place for individual worship. As religious requirements developed, the notion of worshipping a number of deities representing the single central divinity became important. Over time features such as ambulatory paths, enclosed halls, expanded open front halls, spaces for dance and music, and space for the preparation of food were added.⁶⁶

Temple construction in India started nearly 2,000 years ago. The oldest temples were built of brick and wood but they no longer exist. Stone later became the preferred material. Temples marked the transition of Hinduism from the Vedic religion of ritual sacrifices to a religion of Bhakti, or love and devotion to a personal deity. Temple construction and the mode of worship is governed by ancient Sanskrit scriptures called *agamas*, of which there are several, which each deal with individual deities. There are substantial differences in architecture, customs, rituals and traditions in the temples in different parts of India. South India is for instance very different from the north. Hundreds, if not thousands, of ancient temples were destroyed during Islamic rule in India (especially in North India) between 1200AD and 1700AD.

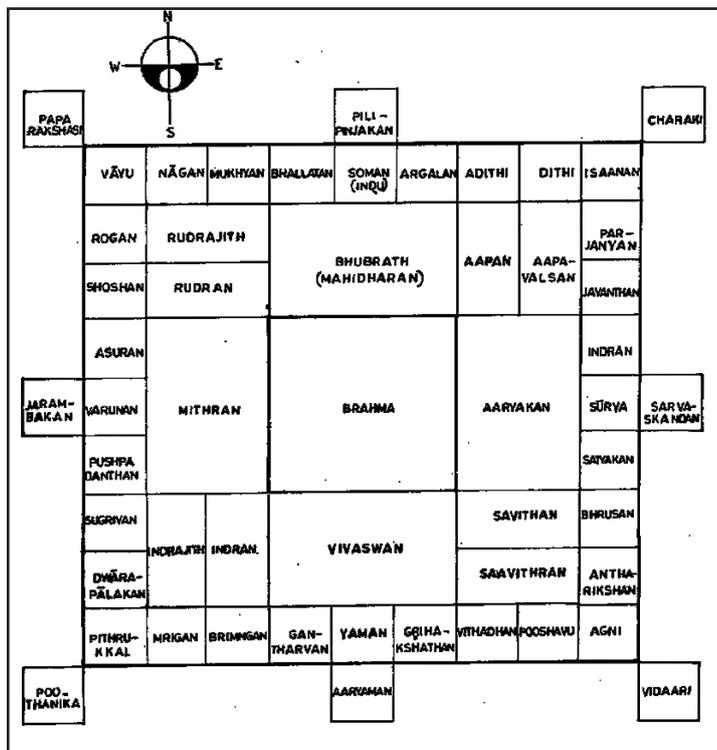
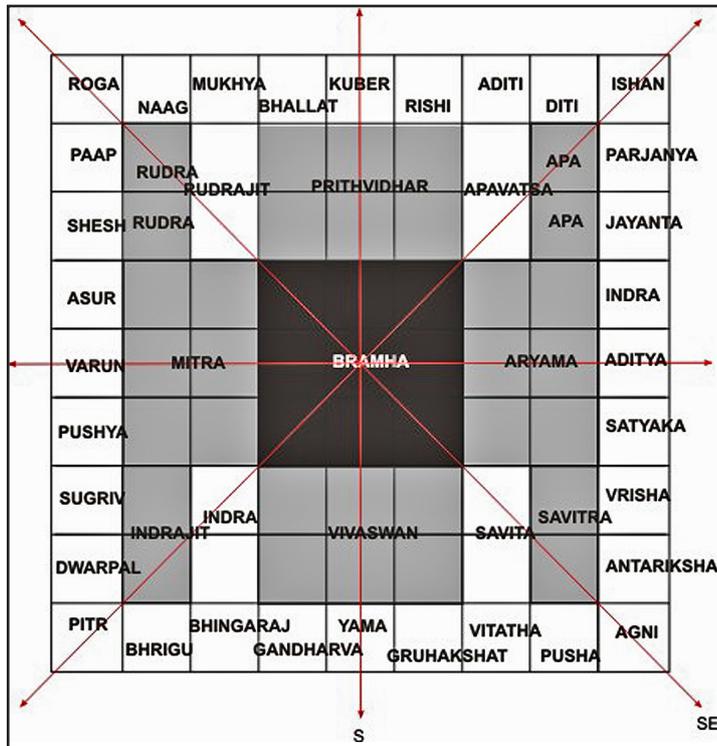


Figure 60: Diagrams of the typical *mandalas*
 (Source: Internet- Intenal Kerala website)

The basic Hindu temple consists of :

- 1- *Vastu Purusha Mandala*. The *mandala* offers the basis of the layout of the temple. This square grid is assumed to give a number of ideas: perfection and order, cosmic man, a microscopic image of the universe, and a symbolic pantheon of the gods. The centre square however, represent the mythical mountain of Meru, the geographical centre of the cosmos.⁶⁷ The *mandala* also provides the design for the formal arrangement of the temple, and consequently performs as an architectural and ritualistic process.
- 2- The *garbhagrha* is the core of the temple where the consecrated *murti* is housed. This core is located in the central square of the *mandala*, symbolically residing at the exact centre of the universe. In the ritual *garbha-dana*, a pot with precious stones is buried below the *garbhagrha*. This seed symbolically grows upwards towards the heavens, through the *sikhara* (the spire above the sanctum), and produces the *kalasa* (the flower bud at the top of the spire).⁶⁸
- 3- The *sikhara* is the tower which sits directly above the *garbhagrha*. An invisible pillar extending from the top of the *sikhara* through the sacred ground (*brahmasthana*) represents the cosmic axis – a term used to describe a Hindu person's progression towards enlightenment, and also marks the sanctum as the point of cosmic orientation.⁶⁹ The tower symbolically connects the realms of the cosmos, and facilitates the meeting of the deity and the worshipper. The *kalasa*, a flower-bud shaped carving, is located at the top of the *sikhara*, representing new life and growth.

At the turn of the first millennium AD, two major types of temples existed: the northern or *Nagara* style, and the southern or *Dravida* type. They are mainly distinguishable by the shape and decoration of their respective *sikharas*.

- *Nagara* style: here the tower is beehive-shaped.
- *Dravida*: the tower consists of progressively smaller storeys or pavilions stacked on each other, reaching up to the sky.

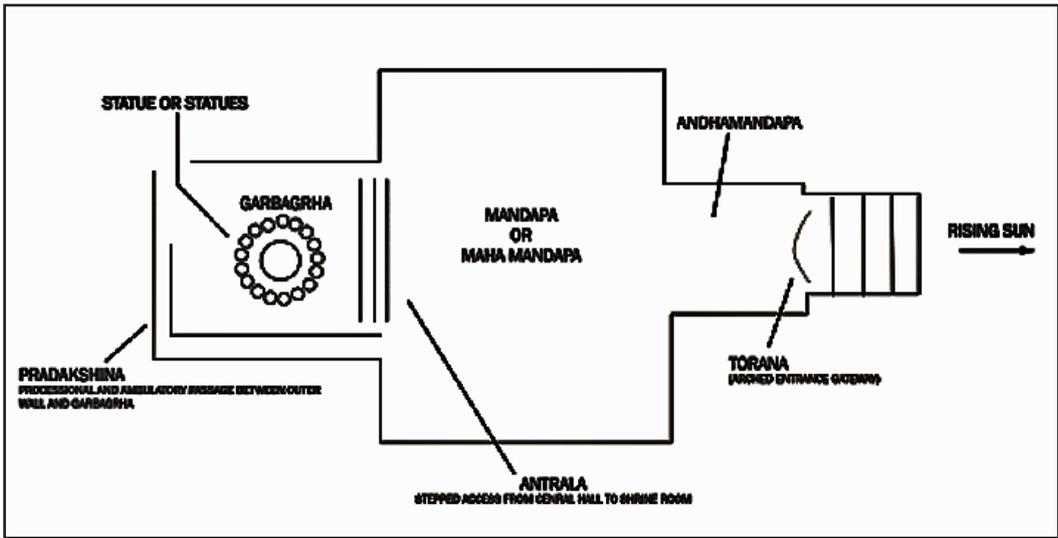


Figure 61: Typical plan of a developed Hindu temple
 (Source: *The Hindu Temple*)

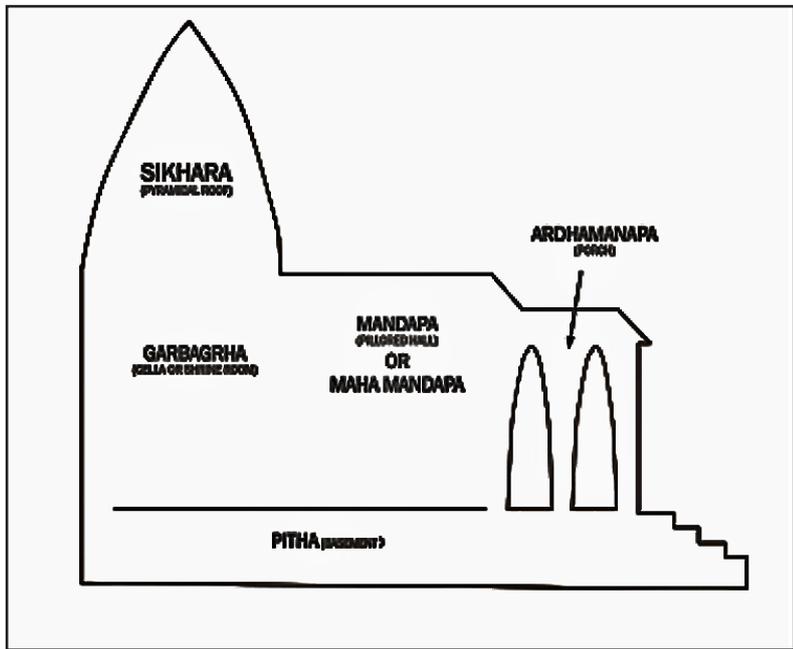


Figure 62: Typical section of a developed Hindu temple form.
 (Source: *The Hindu Temple*)



Figure 63: Examples of *Nagara*-style temples.
(Source: Internet- India net zone)

The earliest *Nagara* temples are found in Karnataka (e.g. Galaganath at Pattadakal), and some of the very early *Dravida*-style temples (e.g. Teli-ka-Mandir at Gwalior) are actually located in North India. A complex hybrid style termed *Vesara* was once common in Karnataka, which combined the two main styles in dramatic fashion.⁷⁰ This may be seen in the classic Hindu temples of India and South-East Asia, such as Angkor Wat, Brihadisvara Temple, Khajuraho, Mukteshvara, and Prambanan.

As the form of the Hindu temple has evolved over time, its key components – the *garbhagrha* and *sikhara* remain, which other structures have been added. Where devotees used to stand in front of the shrine, a platform was built, and so a *mandapa* (pillared hall) has been developed. In front of the *mandapa*, a covered porch (*ardhamanapa*) with steps leading down from the temple has been added.⁷¹ There are also rites that must be performed during the various stages of construction of the *mandir*, such as *garbha-dana* (ceremoniously placing the pot of sacraments below the *garbhagrha*), and *khatmuhurt*. This ritual involves paying homage to the land and performing prayers to seek permission of earth to disturb its natural state for construction.⁷² Also, mandirs try not to use ferrous metals in their construction as they believe they concentrate the earth's magnetic field, which impedes meditation.⁷³



Figure 64: Examples of *Darvida*-style temples
(top image by: Deepak Gopaldas. Bottom image by: Deepak Amembal)

3.2.1.1 Beliefs and Faith

Hinduism is one of the oldest living religious traditions in the world, and has been practiced for millennia. The term 'Hindu' is related to the word Sindhu, which is a pronunciation of the name of the River Indus. However, because of the difficulty in pronunciation by the Persians who conquered the country, the River Sindhu became known as the River Hindu. And the inhabitants living across the 'River Hindu' were called Hindus and the land became known as Hindustan. Hence, the major religion of India (this name in turn coming from the Latin word for Hindu) was called Hinduism. Hinduism has no single founder or scripture; rather, throughout its history there have been many key teaching figures and a number of key scripts encompassing varying aspects of the religion. These scripts allow room for individual and sectarian interpretations that have resulted in a number of devotions, and recognition of the Godhead in the forms of Vishnu, Shiva or Shakti.⁷⁴ Hinduism actually became an umbrella description for the multitude of religious ideas in the Indian sub-continent. Some of these ideas adhere closely to the original Vedic tradition, while over the years many others have incorporated local influences with regional, linguistic and doctrinal variations. The proliferation of Hindu denominations largely fall within three main groups: Vaishnavism, this being worship of Krishna and His incarnations; Shaivism, the worship of Shiva; and the Shaktas who worship Kali. The Hindu religion also teaches that all life-forms are created by God and that humankind needs to share the world with the animal kingdom.⁷⁵ During the ritual consecration of a temple, the presence of the universal all-powerful spirit of God, or Brahman, is invoked into the main stone deity of the temple, through ritual - thereby making the deity and the temple sacred and divine. The customs and etiquette when visiting Hindu temples have a long history and are filled with symbolism, solemn respect and veneration of God's creations. Visitors and worshippers to Hindu temples are required to remove their shoes and any other footwear before entering them. Most temples have an area designated to store this footwear.⁷⁶

Different types of Hindu worship can be described as devotional or ritualistic. An example of a devotional service is *aarti*, where those present hope to receive *darshan* (receiving grace through sight of the deity) and *mukti* (liberation). This service involves verse-prayers and hymns. Rituals are performed at a number of occasions, both daily and for special occasions in a person's life, or at religious festivals. One example is the weekly fire ritual known as *havan*, performed to sustain and regulate the cosmos.⁷⁷

Yet the chanting of mantras is the most popular form of worship in Hinduism. Yoga and meditation are also considered as a form of devotional service towards the Lord. Worshippers in the major temples typically bring in symbolic offerings for the prayer or *puja*. This includes fruits, flowers, sweets and other symbols of the bounty of God's natural world.⁷⁸ Once inside the temple, it is typical to keep both ones' hands folded together as a sign of respect. The worshippers approach the inner sanctum, recite sacred Sanskrit verses called mantras, follow the instructions of the priest called the '*pujari*', and then present offerings to the feet of the God-form, the *murti*, symbolising total submission and immersion into the All-Loving Being. The *murti* is typically placed on a *mandap* or pedestal surrounded by beautiful offerings such as colourful cloths, flowers, incense sticks or *agarbati*, and sounds such as those coming from a conch shell or large bells. Upon the conclusion of their prayer, devotees get down on their knees or even fall flat on their stomach and bow before the symbol of the All-Loving Being and mentally declare whatever is felt in their hearts. If a priest or *pujari* is present, then he is likely to provide sacred symbolically-blessed food called *prasad* to the devotee. He may also apply a holy red mark to the forehead of the devotee symbolising his blessings. Visitors to famous temples often feel intense inner joy, harmony and peace at this point. Finally the worshipper or visitor will walk clockwise around the sanctum sanctorum, stop once on each side, and close their eyes and pray to the All-Loving Being.⁷⁹ Yet a Hindu may not perform an elaborate *puja* at the home, so they experience the full ritual, performed by a priest, at the temple.

A Hindu person will generally worship one deity, and this can be carried out at home or in the temple, as Hindu worship is essentially individual rather than communal. Therefore temple attendance is not a requirement, so Hindus attend the temple at varying intervals and occasions throughout the year. However when worshipping at home, Hindus worship or perform rituals by their home shrine that can vary from a room, a small cupboard or a picture. The *mandir* is the home of the consecrated *murtis* of deities. They are cared for by priests as if they are human – they are awakened, bathed, dressed, offered *puja* and food; after the midday *puja* they are allowed to rest as the inner shine is closed off; at night they are placed in a bed chamber to rest.⁸⁰ A Hindu may not perform an elaborate *puja* at the home, so they experience the full ritual, performed by a priest, at the temple. Temple attendance is not a requirement, so Hindus attend the temple at varying regularities throughout the year. Hinduism therefore 'in this dominant discourse is closely associated with non-violence and religious toleration and with the dignity of an ancient civilization'.⁸¹

3.2.1.2 Hindu society in Southall

As mentioned, the development of Hinduism in Britain took place largely in the 1960s and 1970s when a large number of Hindu immigrants arrived, mostly from Africa and India. Of the Hindu population in Britain today, up to 70% are Gujarati, some 15% are Punjabi, and the rest come from other parts of India, Sri Lanka and other countries.⁸² The dominant discourse about Hinduism in Britain can thus maintain two positions at once: on the one hand, Hinduism is seen as the cultural property of an ethnic group defined as ‘Hindus’; on the other hand, this ‘ethnic’ religion can assume the status of a meta-religion of such sublimity that it is able to integrate what would otherwise contend or even conflict. In the specific circumstances of Southall, these considerations throw light on two mutually independent sets of observations: the remarkable absence of internal divisions within the Hindu community itself, and the cachet which Hindu culture enjoys in the area.⁸³

The majority of Hindus in Britain speak one or more languages apart from English⁸⁴. These include Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali and Tamil. Sanskrit is greatly used in the ancient religious texts. Yet in Southall, the majority of Hindus are, like their Sikh neighbours, Punjabi by language and regional origin, which makes the lack of internal divisions so remarkable in light of their subsequent migratory history. There are, however, far greater numbers of urban Punjabis among them; plus there are others who, also Punjabi by family history, have grown up in other cities of India and thus may speak Hindi rather than Punjabi. The influx of East African Asians brought further Punjabi-speaking Hindus, as well as a sizeable proportion of Gujaratis who may also speak Hindi, but not Punjabi. Finally, the Sri Lankan civil war brought into Southall a growing number of Tamil refugees who, although distinct by their language and nationality, their calendar, and some of their religious festivals, join in the worshipping in the Hindu *mandirs*.⁸⁵ Baumann also found out that the lack of divisions amongst the Hindu community in Southall was due to the fact that the Hindu community was largely outnumbered by the Sikh community, so stuck together due to the threat of “Sikh hegemony”.⁸⁶ Other points on what makes the Hindu community in Southall different from other Hindu communities elsewhere, and ultimately would point out that the Southall Hindu community is divided, are the facts related to the Hindu faith in general such as the caste differentiation which is a key part of the Hindu religion. Also, as mentioned previously, because local Hindus originate from different parts of India, Sri Lanka and East Africa; therefore they speak different languages and follow different

religious calendars. The last point is that Hindus generally worship domestically, temple worship is not compulsory, therefore may experience lack of contact with other Hindus. Richard Gale states that: 'But Hinduism is also much more a domestic religion than is Islam or Sikhism. Hindus tend to go to their mandirs less frequently and to travel farther to them'.⁸⁷ All these points could highlight internal divisions in the community, yet these divisions are not visible in Southall, as Baumann noted. He also states that: 'by their very readiness toward encompassing others and by their universalist claims, they have removed themselves all the further from boundedness as a community in the image of the dominant discourse.'⁸⁸

3.2.1.3 Caste divisions among British Hindus:

The caste system is the term used to describe the rigid social stratification and social restrictions that are practised in the Indian sub-continent, as well as by diasporic Indians. It is generally associated with Hinduism, although it is also practised amongst Sikhs, as well as by some Muslims and Christians in India.⁸⁹

Gujarat is a region that is well known in the Indian subcontinent for the number, complexity and distinctiveness of its caste and sub-caste groups, and the same can also be said for the Gujarati caste phenomenon in Britain. Maureen Michaelson⁹⁰ notes the presence of at least thirty distinct Gujarati castes in Britain, each with a provenance in India. Prominent groups include Patidars from Surat and Charottar, Lohanas and Visa Halari Oshwals from Kathiaward, and Bhattias and Leva Kanbi Patels from Kutch. In the aforementioned study by Vertovec of the Hindu diaspora in Britain, he observes that while the caste system could no longer govern the dominant social, economic, ritualistic, or other relationships that British Indians have to negotiate, nonetheless caste identities among Gujaratis still continue to be of considerable importance in regard to status, marriage, social networks and certain formal institutions. Caste has also undoubtedly played a major role in differentially reproducing and transforming socio-religious phenomena in Britain.⁹¹

Different religious traditions among British Hindus thus derive from their diverse regional and caste origins. Variations of religious heritage between Indian regions reflect very different histories involving the presence of certain sects, or revivalist or reformist movements, or the degree of contact – or not – with other major religions

in India. Within a given region, sacred geographies and pilgrimage sites devoted to specific, sometimes parochial, deities make for further variance in popular religious orientations and traditions. This is compounded, in addition, by the local or provincial prevalence of certain kinds of castes and sub-castes, sometimes holding their own unique religious beliefs, practises, or sectarian attachments.

Although most persons in Britain who regard themselves as Hindu recognize many of the same special days of the 'All- Hindu calendar', several specialised festivals, or periods of fasting, or other types of religious signification are additionally prescribed according to one's place of origin.⁹² Furthermore, these regional and caste-based differences exist not only with regard to annual religious observances (particularly celebrated by caste associations) but also to the number, form, and importance of certain rites of passage and other more everyday domestic religious practices.

In a study of Hinduism in England carried out by David Bowen,⁹³ he outlines three phases of institutional development among British Hindus which, although initially intended to describe the evolution of the Gujarati population in Bradford, can also be used to characterize processes at the national scale. The first phase pertains especially to the period in which the British Asian population was comprised predominantly of young male immigrants, roughly from 1950-60. Since the number of migrants was relatively few, their living and working conditions were usually dire, and racism and discrimination continued unabated; most immigrants therefore desired a routinization of mutual networks for moral support and social processes along collective 'cultural' activity. Therefore, some loosely-knit associations or committees of Indian migrants were formed locally in various cities around Britain, particularly functioning to organize for all – regardless of area, sect or social group or caste of origin.

The second phase noted by Bowen witnessed the growth of more diverse linguistic, sectarian, and caste associations. Towards the end of the 1960s, coinciding with the reunion of husbands with their wives and children, who by now had also come over to Britain, there was a marked growth in the number of persons arriving from distinct and specific regions, sects and castes in each locale around Britain. This growth of regional, sectarian and caste communities in given areas combined importantly with the individuals' concerns about appropriate social, cultural, and religious provision. These factors led directly to the establishment of numerous group-specific associations and institutions.⁹⁴ A great many of these associations were set up with a view to

providing or coordinating religious activity, ultimately dedicated to raising funds for the establishment and management of purpose-built temples or social centres that also functioned as a place of worship. The third and more recent phase has been characterized by strong institutional development is that typified by the formation of wider ‘umbrella’ organizations for British Indians, whereas before that very few actually existed at either local or national levels. These now operate very effectively to undertake or coordinate Hindu activities, or to express and to safeguard common interests across a spectrum of regional, sectarian and caste groups. The National Council of Hindu Temples (UK) is just one body created in an attempt to providing religious services. Some ninety temples and local societies are directly affiliated to the council. However, some Punjabis for example complain that the National Council appears to be too Gujarati-dominated, and seems to favour Gujarati temples and organizations, and that therefore its name really should be changed to reflect its regional Indian bias.

Such examples reflect the complexity and diversity of the formation of the Hindu community in Britain. As mentioned by Baumann when talking about the representation of British Hindus, they are often portrayed, and are increasingly representing themselves, as if there are indeed part of a single unified ‘faith’, which is far from true in India: at the same time they are moving (albeit at a deferential pace) towards reproducing themselves as a cohesive ‘community’.⁹⁵ Another interpretation regarding this matter is provided by Richard Burghart, who concludes:

The cultural awareness of Hindus has been sharpened in an alien cultural milieu, and they are ready to believe – as many non-Hindus do – that Hinduism is an ethnic religion. Still, however, its regional, sectarian and caste-specific traditions that are continuing to be reproduced in domestic and local community spheres: therefore, conflict and confusion persist. This will likely give way as new generations are inculcated with the generalized representations of ‘Hinduism’ promulgated by broad-based associations and state schools.⁹⁶

These differences of origin and language among people of the same religion from other areas of the Indian subcontinent, or with people from the same religion but who speak a different variant of language, plays a major role in the current politics of worship in Hindu temples today, as will be discussed again later.

3.2.2 Sikh temples

During the times of the early gurus, Sikh places of worship were referred to as *dharamsalas*. These were a place where Sikhs could gather to hear the guru speak or sing hymns. As the Sikh population continued to grow, Guru Hargobind introduced the word '*gurdwara*', meaning the gateway through which the guru could be reached. Thereafter, all Sikh places of worship came to be known as *gurdwaras*. Three main functions are carried out in all public *gurdwaras*. One is *Kirtan*, which is the singing of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib, and another is *Katha*, which is reading of the Guru Granth Sahib and its explanations. The third main function, which is carried out at every *gurdwara*, is the *langar*, or free community kitchen for the visitors of all religions. *Gurdwaras* form the principle religious institutions and they do not represent only the Sikh's places of worship; they are also the foundations of community building, and act as guardians of its core values, and provide a forum for collective worship by the *sangat* (congregation).⁹⁷

The emergence from the nineteenth century onwards of a modern Sikh identity was also accompanied by the demarcation of a distinctive sacred space as symbolized by the Akali movement⁹⁸, which brought the main *gurdwaras* under the community's control in Punjab and gave birth to a committee for managing *gurdwaras*, the SGPC, and its political wing, the SAD. These two bodies are sometimes referred to as the Sikh 'political system'.⁹⁹ Community leadership, in short, can emerge only from within *gurdwaras*, and as the popular axiom goes, 'those who control the *gurdwaras* control the Sikh community'.

When entering the *gurdwara*, one is expected to remove one's shoes and cover one's bare head as signs of respect towards the sovereignty of the Guru Granth Sahib. Hands are washed, and in some *gurdwaras* there are also facilities to wash feet. Approaching the figure of Guru Granth Sahib, one is expected to bow down and touch the floor as a sign of further respect towards the "Eternal Sikh Guru". Offerings of cash are usually made at this time to help carry the expenses of running the *gurdwara* and the community work carried out by it. These offerings are voluntary and not compulsory. All people irrespective of their status sit on the floor as a sign of equality, as opposed to chairs, and the statue of Guru Granth Sahib is always installed on a higher level. Anyone may enter or leave the congregation at any time. Men and women do not generally sit together but on separate sides of the room, both at an equal distance from

the Guru Granth Sahib. All people are expected to stand facing the Guru Granth Sahib statue when the *Ardas* (common prayer) is read out. However, the *diwan hall* will never have images or statues of god, as Sikhs believe that god has no shape or form. They also do not have any incense, candles or bells, as the focus is concentrated on the *darbar* where the Guru Granth Sahib sits.

Gurdwaras are open to all people of all religions and are generally open for 24 hours a day. Some *gurdwaras* also provide temporary accommodations for visitors or pilgrims. In the food hall, or *langar*, all people sit on the floor,¹⁰⁰ and food is cooked and served by volunteers; this food is available at all times. A *gurdwara* can be identified from a distance by observing the Nishan Sahib, the Sikh flag. The four doors of a Sikh temple represent the Door of Peace, the Door of Livelihood, the Door of Learning and the Door of Grace. These doors must always remain open to all. And they symbolise that it was open to everyone, regardless of caste or creed. Furthermore representing Sikh humility, whilst also making it accessible to all. They also represent the omnipresence of God, and draw attention to the centre of the room where the holy book sat. Circumambulation of the temple was important to acknowledge the Guru Granth Sahib, and therefore God, at the centre of the worshipper's life.¹⁰¹ Therefore there was often a path surrounding the building. The Sikh temple is therefore intended as a place for training the devotees in the company of pious people.¹⁰²

Architecturally, the *gurdwara* does not follow strict set of rules as does Hindu temple architecture. The origin of *gurdwara* architecture can be attributed to some principles that are borrowed from Mughal architecture. As well as some Rajput palaces and forts which were prominent in the Punjab during the early years of Sikhism, however, over time original concepts have been added conforming to principles of the Sikh religion. Henry J. Walker records the gradual development of the *gurdwara* form, from its humble beginnings as essentially a small room which indicated the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib.¹⁰³ These structures were nearly always based around a square or octagonal plan, and set at ground level, reversing the tradition of placing religious buildings on high plinths. This aimed to emphasize the 'inner strength that was provided by the faith, rather than draw attention to its external manifestations,'¹⁰⁴ When *gurdwara* buildings became more elaborate in the 1700s, these principles stayed, but four new key features emerged, becoming 'the fundamentals of Sikh sacred architecture.'¹⁰⁵ These elements are: the pool, the temple, the gateway and the enclosure.



Figure 65: Examples of traditional gurdwaras
(Source: top by Margaret Deetholts. Bottom Internet: Shunya.net)



Originally the pool was situated outside the enclosure walls, which made it cut off from the complex. But later it has become a more integrated element, as demonstrated in the Golden Temple in Amritsar, which is considered to be the most holy shrine in Sikhism. Here the pool is situated at the centre of the complex, with the temple appearing to float upon it. This marks where the Guru Granth Sahib sits, as the most sacred part of the complex. The floating structure is meant to represent how Sikhs should live their lives: ‘rooted in the earthly world but with an eye towards the divine.’ The pool, which is meant to have healing powers, also represents the ‘spiritual and temporal realms of human existence,’¹⁰⁶ as well as openness and infinity.¹⁰⁷

Walls of the Gurdwaras are often covered in marble slabs with light relief patterns, which projects this weightless appearance. Gateways have become through time, increasingly elaborate, and the dome has developed into a key feature, often indicating the position of the holy book from the exterior. Walker on the other hand considers the colonnade, pool and pathway to be revolving around the temple in honour.¹⁰⁸ A gallery that is located on the upper floor of the temple often features elaborate decorations which aims to overwhelm the senses, so that the attention of the worshipper is focused on the calm in the centre of the hall, where the holy book sits as mentioned previously.¹⁰⁹

3.2.2.1 Sikh Faith and Beliefs

Sikhism was founded in 1469, and is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The spirit of Guru Nanak was passed on through the ten living gurus that succeeded him. The spirit was then passed on to the Sikh’s holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, which as well as containing scriptures, also symbolises god’s presence. Sikhism was created in the Punjab region of India, where society was fragmented by the rivalry of Hinduism

and Islam brought about by the Muslim conquest of India, which began in the twelfth century and continued for a number of centuries. Hinduism was also creating further segregation through the caste system.¹¹⁰ As a response to this, the key belief of Sikhism is the fair and equal treatment of everybody, regardless of background. Their conception of God is highly personal. The believer is in constant communion with Him through prayer. Therefore, prayer is much used in Sikhism, and the sacred scripture consists primarily of prayers. No ceremony whether religious or secular, is complete without prayer; most of the ceremonies and rituals contain nothing else. The custom of offering prayers must have begun with the rise of Sikhism, but by the time of Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth successor of Guru Nanak Dev, when places of worship had been organized and a definite book of faith had been installed in them, it became an established rule together for the purpose of praying in congregations. Familiar expressions of prayer began to accumulate until by the time of Guru Gobind Singh a definite form was given to it.

There are five sacred Sikh symbols as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, and they are commonly known as *Panj Kakkar*, or the 'Five Ks', because they start with letter 'K' representing *Kakkar* in the Punjabi language. They are:

1. *Kes*, or unshorn hair, regarded as a symbol of saintliness. The keeping of hair in its natural state is regarded as living in harmony with the will of God, and is a symbol of the Khalsa brotherhood and the Sikh faith. Hair is an integral part of the human body created by God and Sikhism calls for its preservation. The shaving or cutting of hair is one of the four taboos or *Kurehats*.¹¹¹
2. *Kangha*, or the comb, is necessary to keep the hair clean and tidy. A Sikh must comb his hair twice a day and tie his turban neatly. The Gurus wore turbans and commanded the Sikhs to wear turbans for the protection of their hair, and for the promotion of social identity and cohesion. It has thus become an essential part of Sikh dress.¹¹²
3. *Kara*, or the steel bracelet, symbolises restraint from evil deeds. It is worn on the right wrist and reminds the Sikh of the vows taken that is, he is a servant of the Guru and should not do anything which may bring shame or disgrace. When he looks at the *Kara*, he is made to think twice before doing anything evil with his hands.
4. *Kachh*, or the soldier's shorts, must be worn at all times. It reminds the Sikh of the need for self-restraint, over passions and desires. Apart from its moral significance, it is intended to ensure briskness during action and freedom of movement at all times.
5. *Kirpan*, or the sword, is the emblem of courage and self-defence. It symbolises

dignity and self-reliance, and the capacity and readiness to always defend the weak and the oppressed. It helps to sustain one's martial spirit and the determination to sacrifice oneself in order to defend truth, oppression and Sikh moral values.¹¹³

The Five K's, along with the turban, constitute the *Khalsa* uniform which distinguishes a Sikh from any other person in the world, and is essential for preserving the life of the community and fostering the sense of *Khalsa* brotherhood. The Five K's are not however supposed to foster exclusiveness or superiority. They are instead meant to keep the Sikhs united in the pursuit of the aims and ideals of the gurus.¹¹⁴ The pattern of congregational worship can be divided into two categories: *Katha*, the reading of the holy hymns followed by their explanation, and *Kirtan*, the singing of the hymns.

3.2.2.2 History of Sikh migration to Southall

Historically, immigration to Britain has tended to be strictly controlled, with racial distinction deeply seared into British immigration policy. As mentioned before, initially Britain's post-war labour needs were met by European migrants, many of whom were recruited as European Volunteer Workers to meet specific shortages.¹¹⁵ But as the post-war reconstruction boom took off, and simultaneously the Iron Curtain came down across Eastern Europe, the newly arrived Commonwealth migrants readily filled the gap. It is most likely that after the war, Sikh residents in Britain began communicating knowledge of opportunities for work back to their relatives in Punjab. These links were instrumental in inspiring many Sikhs to leave Punjab, which at the time suffered serious disruption following partition. But the British Nationality Act of 1948, passed in response to India's independence, gave the citizens of the Commonwealth the right to settle and work in Britain and provided the impetus for more regular migration. Unofficial controls, however, such as the pressure on governments from South Asia not to issue passports, or the requirement of an endorsement to travel to the UK, created many practical difficulties.¹¹⁶ Between 1947 and 1950 very few passports were issued in Punjab, as the main passport office was moved to Delhi. Nevertheless, many Sikhs avoided these regulations by travelling to Ceylon, Pakistan or the Far East, changing their names and assuming their new nationality. Some estimates suggest that as many as 5,000-10,000 arrived in Britain through these other countries.¹¹⁷

It was however in the early-1950s that the demand for labour increased dramatically in Britain, and labour migrants met the need rapidly, especially Indian Sikhs. Until 1962

most of this immigration consisted of single, young men seeking employment to make their fortunes abroad with the intention of then returning to their 'homeland'. Few if any thought of permanently settling in Britain. Where new migrants chose to settle upon arrival was determined by two considerations: the location of relatives and the availability of work. Most opted to live in areas such as the West Midlands and West London, such as Southall, plus other areas. There was also migration amongst other Sikhs, not only of the Punjab Sikhs. Sikhs from cities as Jalandhar, Ludhiana, and Delhi also came over, along with East African Sikhs who began to arrive in Britain in large numbers from the mid-1960s; they were in effect 'twice migrants', having previously emigrated to East Africa. Generally, the Sikhs from East Africa were more educated than the Sikhs of Punjab, and also more urbanised, because mostly the Punjab Sikhs came from agricultural villages. Many were attracted to areas as Southall because of the presence of previous family members who had settled there.

During the 1960s and 1970s, these Punjabi and East African Sikhs were joined by further settlers from other places in the Sikh Diaspora such as Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Fiji, the West Indies and parts of Africa, including Nigeria, South Africa, and Zambia.¹¹⁸ Then in the late-1970s and 1980s the rise of the 'New Right' in British politics was accompanied by further restriction on the ability of migrants to settle in Britain. A new British Nationality Act (1981) created three categories of citizen - British, dependent territories, and overseas - and effectively excluded the latter, most of whom were South Asians, from the right to abode in Britain. Ever since these years, the Sikh migration to Britain has consisted of family reunions, asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. Although family reunions involving immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s were by and large completed in the early-1970s, an ongoing tradition of marrying brides and bridegrooms in Punjab has continued to create new avenues for migration. But as immigration controls have become more strict, Sikhs have just found more ingenious ways to circumvent them.¹¹⁹

Today, about 56.1% of British Sikhs are in fact British-born. To some extent this was inevitable given the age profile of the early immigrants, but they still remain a significant representation, at 43.8% - though the proportion of those who came from India is now only about a third.¹²⁰ Many of those original Sikhs settled in areas as Southall opening their first *gurdwara* in 1950s called the Singh Sabha. Today the Sikh are the largest religious group living in Southall, forming 60% of the population.¹²¹ They are also the most prominent and influential group within Southall, leading community organizations

and entering into local politics.

3.2.2.3 Caste divisions among British Sikhs:

Despite the consensus that Hindus are categorised as classifying their people into castes, the Sikh religion traditionally does not use such classification. The case of Southall is completely the opposite. The exploration by Gerd Baumann sheds a light on this issue, since he observes:

Process of cultural and class differentiation have led to the formation of several Sikh communities based upon congregational criteria subtly articulated with the idiom of caste. Among Hindu Southallians, remarkably undivided by caste norms, it is the discourse of Hindu universalism and of encompassing other faiths that now serves to disengage the equation between Hindu culture and Hindu community.¹²²

Thus this would lead to the assumption that the Sikh community is cohesive and unified. Baumann discovered also that the Sikh community stuck together when required, especially during the early years of migration when there were so few of them.

The understanding of these issues requires historical analysis that goes back almost to the beginnings of the Sikh religion. At the time of the Tenth Guru (1666-1708), which initiated the first Sikhs into the ranks of the *Khalsa*, literally meaning ‘The Pure’, sworn to defend the integrity of their now autonomous faith through the sword. This turn from pacifism to self-defence, however, also reaffirmed the original indifference of Sikh teachings to distinctions of caste. *Khalsa* initiates continued, like most other Sikhs, to adopt the caste-neutral names of *Singh* (Lion) and *Kaur* (Princess). Yet the integrity and completeness of Sikhism as a religion was sealed when the Tenth Guru ceded his authority (*Guru Gadi*) to the completed Holy Book, rather than to a further dynastic follower.¹²³ Given the economic circumstances of the Punjab at the time, Sikh practice was largely shaped by the caste of land-owning ‘tillers’ (*Jat*); and it was this caste, too, to which the vast majority of Southall’s Sikh pioneers belonged. However, *Jats*, traditionally a low-caste group in terms of the other caste groups of India, had by then over successive centuries had risen to power, most notably during the period of Sikh rule in the Punjab, by capturing the agrarian economy of the province.¹²⁴

The local Sikh community in Southall remained predominantly *Jat* until the arrival of the East African refugees. Since then, however, the thorny issue of caste has returned to Southall Sikh culture. Hence, the arrival of the East African Asians in the 1960s

instigated the first split. Their experience as ‘twice migrants’ meant that they had more experience in settling into a new country than the existing Sikhs in Southall.¹²⁵ These Asians were generally from the Ramgarhia caste, as opposed to the existing Sikhs who were mainly from the higher *Jat* caste. Bhachu notes the transfer of the *Ramgarhia* caste from Africa to Southall: ‘A consequence of their minority position within this larger South Asian population in Britain has led to a greater consciousness of their ‘Ramgarhianess’ and ‘East Africanness.’¹²⁶ An observer from the East African Sikhs in Southall explains the situation cleverly: ‘Caste doesn’t matter in Sikhism – so long as you’re a *Jat*’,¹²⁷ like one of the 90% of East African Sikhs who belong to the *Ramgarhia* castes, in the main the *Tharkan* or (carpenters), *Lohar* or (blacksmiths), and *Raj* or (bricklayers). In the Punjab, these castes had not normally owned land, and the colonial literature indeed describes them as ‘village serfs’.¹²⁸ Needless to say, most of the *Jat* Sikhs of Southall tended to regard them as socially inferior. Nor do they look kindly upon the rapid economic progress and the superior aspirations shown by those whom they consider to be inferior by caste. The East African Sikhs were, after all, the latest arrivals in Southall. Many Sikhs of the craft castes, on the other hand, regard the *Jat* farmers as little more than landless labourers, and as uneducated, crude, and rude. This antagonism has a direct relevance to this study because these caste differentiations have also led to the differentiation in types of worship, as well as in the architecture of the houses of worship. The other issue concerning the boundaries that determine who is Sikh and who is not is certainly apparent with regards to the followers of the Guru Ravidas, whom most Sikhs do not recognize as fellow Sikhs, and this issue clearly articulates both the salience of caste and the ambiguity of who is, and who is not, regarded as Sikh¹²⁹. Moreover, both of these castes practise their worship in their own temple in Southall, the Ramgharia Sabha and the Shri Guru Ravidas Sabha.

There is also a very important new role for *gurdwaras* in general in Britain and that is highlighted by the role of the management committee which involves the running of all aspects of the temple; paying bills, helping to organise the worship programme, running children’s classes, devising future projects for the community and acting as a point of contact with local authorities. The importance of a unified management committee has increased since the early years of settlement, not only because of the increasing size of the community, but also as the *biradari* connections and the extended family are in decline. *Gurdwaras* have come to replace this gap, serving as a place where the community can socialise and support each other.¹³⁰ As well as the growing role of a community centre which is not a main focus in *gurdwaras* in India.



Figure 66: Kaaba Mosque in Mecca (Internet image, Mecca Mosque wallpaper)

3.3 Mosques

3.3.1 Mosque architecture

The word ‘mosque’ comes from the Arabic word *masjid*, which means a place of ritual prostration. A mosque is hence any place devoted to prayer. It could be a house, a community building, or an open area of ground that is marked off as being sacred. The early mosques were based on the place where Mohammed worshipped: i.e. the courtyard of his house. Later builders kept the basic design – a single open space – and added on a roof, thus creating the first mosque in Islam, which was later demolished and several times rebuilt, and subsequently renovated. Spatial elements in mosques have certain architectural aspects that are different from those of synagogues and churches. There is the *minaret*, which is a tower in which the crier or *muezzin* calls people to prayer, and a *mihrab*, which is a niche or an alcove set on the *qibla* wall (the wall that faces Mecca, to which Muslims face when they pray). The *mihrab* is not an altar (although it might look like it); instead, the *mihrab*'s function is to direct Muslims' minds and thoughts towards Mecca. Another element is the *minbar*, which is a raised platform to the right of the arch or alcove. It is similar to the Christian pulpit, and this is where the imam reads the prayers, and gives sermons. Most older mosques have an ablutions fountain, a place where the faithful can perform the ritual of washing before prayer. In modern mosques, an ablution room is usually provided. Yet there are some other features in mosque interiors worthy of note, such as the fact they do not have any furniture. Everyone sits on the floor, not in pews or chairs. And in larger mosques, the carpeting often has a design that is characterised by the prayer niche, or *mihrab*, an arch-shaped design at the end of the carpet; this shows the direction towards the *qibla*, as well as marks out the prayer lines and boundaries, so that the people know where to sit so as to leave enough room for someone else. Mosques also do not have any statues or pictures in them.

Prayer in mosques is established on four levels: the individual, the congregational, the total population of a town, and the entire Muslim world. For three of these levels, there are distinct liturgical structures. The first is the *masjid*, which is a mosque that is used for daily prayer by individuals or small groups, but not for the main Friday worship. The second is the *Jami*, which is the congregational or Friday mosque, and is used for the main weekly service. Consequently, it is normally much larger than a *masjid*. The third is the *mussala*, which is a place of open community prayer. This is a

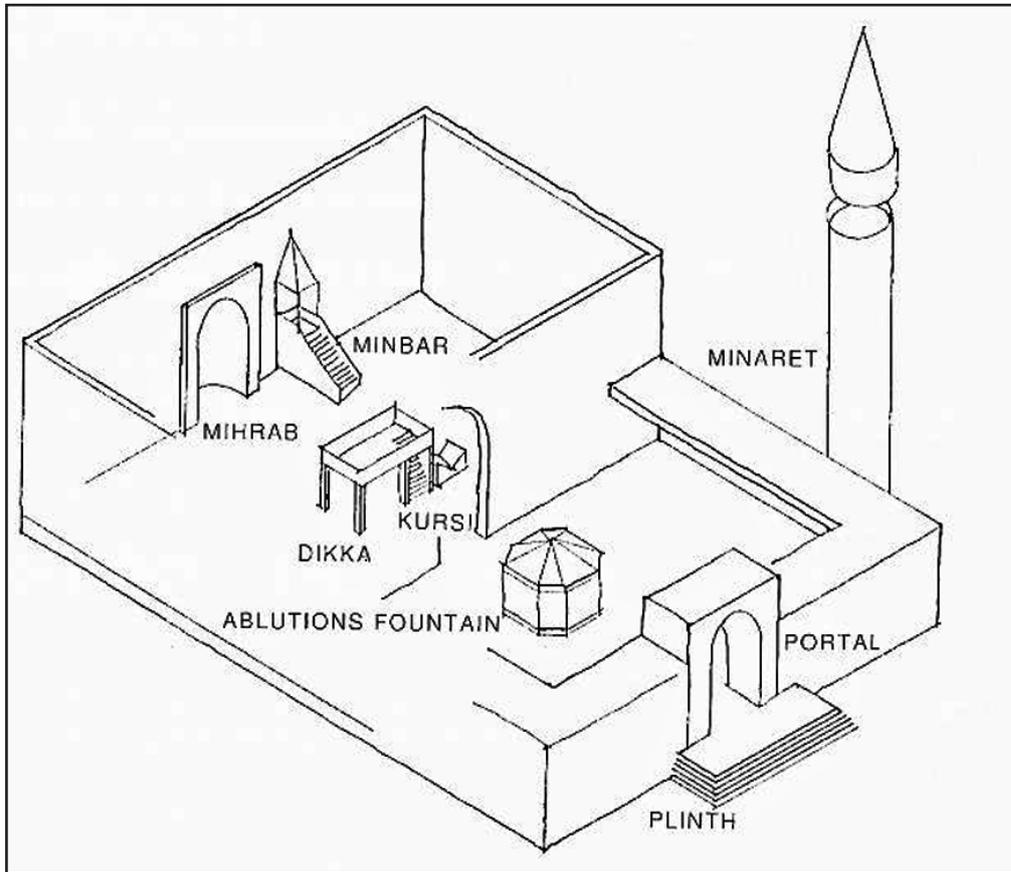


Figure 67: Spatial elements of a mosque.
(From the book *Architecture of the Islamic World*)

mosque reduced to its bare essentials, a great open area with nothing but a *qibla* wall and a *mihrab*. Here, the whole population of a city is able to assemble for the two major annual festivals, the breaking of the fast and the sacrifice of Abraham. The fourth level is then the holy *qibla* mosque of Mecca, which is the mosque were all Muslims turn to, or try to get to, for the annual ritual of the pilgrimage.

3.3.2 Faith and Beliefs

The Arabic word ‘Islam’ means ‘entering into the peace’ or ‘submission’. Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last in a line of prophets that includes Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. The essentials of Muslim practice are five-fold the so-called ‘Five Pillars of Islam’. These are *shahadah* (the declaration of faith that states that there is none worthy of worship except God, and that Muhammad is his messenger); *salah* (the five daily obligatory prayers); *zakat* (a welfare payment due that consists of 2.5% of a Muslim’s wealth, totalled at the end of a lunar Year); *Ramadan* (a month of fasting from dawn to sunset); and *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca to be undertaken at least once in a lifetime, circumstances permitting).

Islamic law does not distinguish between ‘matters of church’ and ‘matters of state’; the *ulema* function as both jurists and theologians. Nor is Islam homogeneous. Instead, it consists of a number of religious denominations that are essentially similar in belief but which have significant theological and legal differences. The primary division is between the Sunni and the Shi’ite with Sufism generally considered to be a mystical inflection of Islam rather than a distinct school. According to most sources, approximately 85% of the world’s Muslims are Sunni and approximately 15% are Shiite, with a small minority being members of other Islamic sects.¹³¹ Although basic denominations in Islam differ considerably in term of doctrines, rituals, and even their religious calendar is different, yet their basic acts of worship and prayer rituals are basically very similar. Mosques are unlike Christian churches in that sense; basic prayer is performed on four levels as mentioned previously for all Islamic denominations.

3.3.3 Prayer and worship

Muslims reinforce the passion of their commitment to Allah during the course of their daily prayer schedule. According to the Koran, a practising Muslim must offer prayer to God five times a day – at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and then in the evening. In Muslim countries, the faithful are called to prayer by the *muezzin*, or crier, who calls

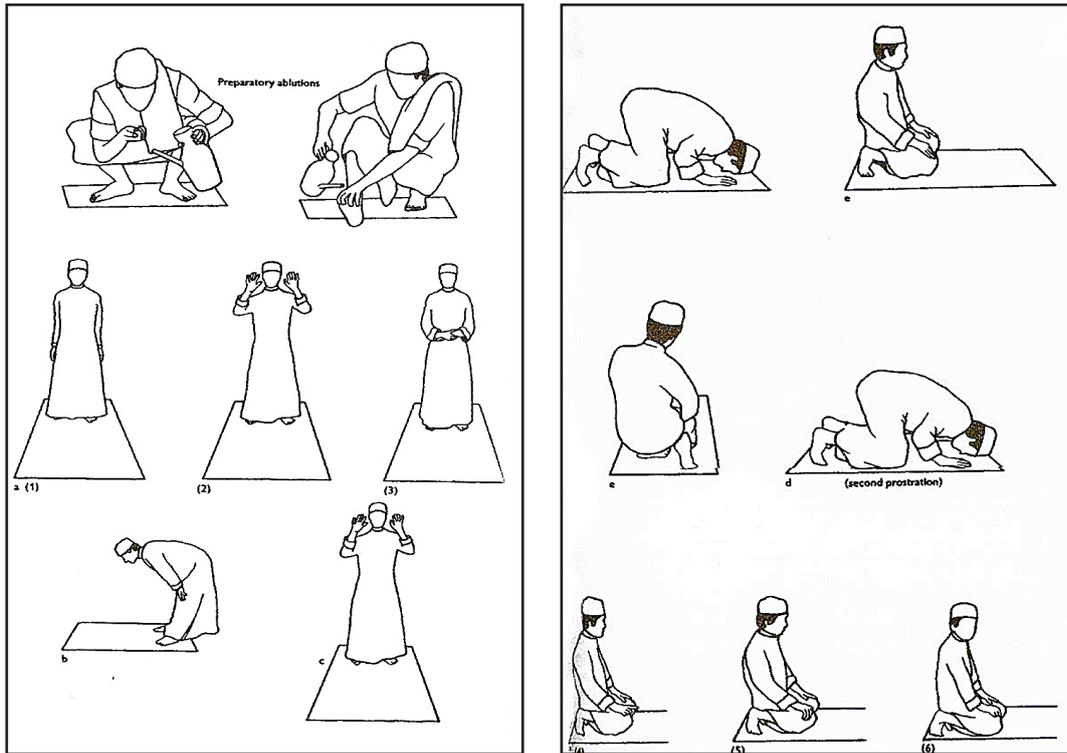


Figure 68: Muslim prayer positions
 (From the book *Architecture of the Islamic World*)

from a *minaret*, the high tower of the mosque. The prayer ritual is highly formalised. At the appointed time, Muslims prepare themselves for prayer by closing their minds to worldly concerns. They do this by purifying themselves with water (which is performed before every prayer), and finding a suitable place to pray. They also remove their shoes. The prayer consists of cycles involving recitation of parts of the Koran (which are memorized), and bodily movement to show respect and supplication before God. The prayer begins with Muslims standing with their hands raised to their ears while proclaiming God's greatness. They then stand up while reciting the opening chapter of the Koran. As worshippers recite certain other verses from the Koran – some prescribed by tradition, and some selected on their own – they change their position from standing (to show alertness), to bowing (to show respect, as well as love, for God), to prostrating themselves (to show surrender), to sitting (to show tranquillity and acceptance), and finally, a second prostration. Although Muslims can pray in a mosque, they do not actually have to. Nor do they need a certain number of people together before they can pray. However, the community usually gathers together for Friday prayers at noon. These prayers are offered in the mosque and last for about an hour. They may include a sermon by the *imam* (the leader of the mosque). Men and women usually pray in separate areas. Unlike Christianity in this sense, Islam does not generally have full-time clergy. If Muslims are not praying in a mosque, then the most learned man or oldest man in the group leads the prayer. Women can lead the prayer only when no men are present, and even then only for other women and for children.

3.3.4 The Muslim community in Southall

About 40% of London's Muslims were born in Britain, with significant other numbers being born in South Asia, Africa and Europe. Almost two-thirds of Muslims in London are of South Asian origin (24 % Bangladeshi, 22 % Pakistani, 7% Indian and 7% 'other' Asian). Nearly 20 % of London's Muslims are white, 13 % are black (12 % Black African) and almost 5% come from mixed groups and from other ethnic groups. London's Muslim communities are thus highly diverse in terms of their nationality, ethnicity and language.

The 2001 Census indicated that Muslims have the lowest rates of employment and economic activity, and the highest unemployment rate of all the faith groups. Economically active people are generally defined as being in employment or unemployed and looking for work; economically inactive people include students, retired people and people who are permanently sick. Just 42 % of Muslims aged 16-24

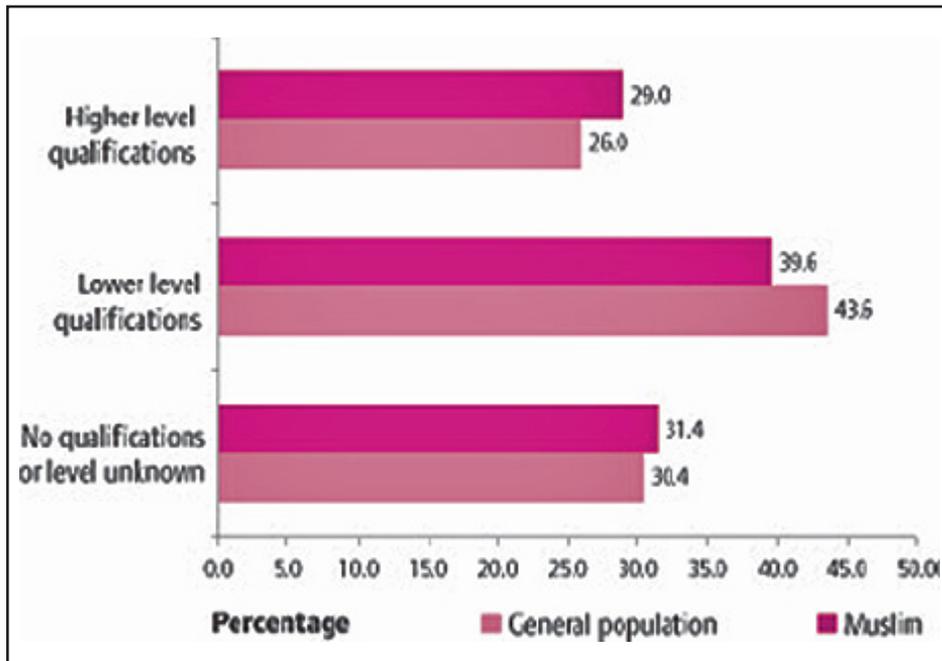


Figure 69: Diagram of working qualifications
 (Source: *Muslims in the UK: Policies for Engaged Citizens*)

are economically active, compared with 60 % of the general population.¹³² The 2001 Census also showed that Muslims are more likely to be economically inactive than Christians, Hindus, Jews and Sikhs. Muslim women have higher levels of economic inactivity than women from other faith groups, and as a whole they are more likely than the general population to be students or looking after home or family. The table opposite demonstrates the qualifications of working age people among the Muslims in the outer suburbs of London in 2001.¹³³

Factors that can contribute to lower levels of attainment in education are complex, and may be social, economic or related to faith. These factors include discrimination, low expectations by teachers of Muslim students, lower social class, a lack of fluency of English, the employment status of parents, general poverty and deprivation.¹³⁴

The need for Muslims to find better ways to form a community is in itself a cause for a debate that this study cannot address. ‘All Muslims’, Halliday finds, ‘do share certain tenets in common, and in this minimal sense there can be said to be a “Muslim community” in Britain. But as with Christians, the unity ends there’.¹³⁵ None the less, Muslims face much greater discursive difficulties in negating or escaping the imposition of a reifying dominant discourse. It might be one thing for a Muslim to repudiate outsiders’ views that all Muslims are the same; it is another to disown the doctrinal commitment to a unified *umma* – which translates as one Islamic nation – before fellow believers. The dominant discourse,¹³⁶ which turns all Muslims into one community defined by culture, is thus much harder to oppose or relativize. Correspondingly, locals find themselves readily objectified as ‘Muslims in Southall’, with all the marginalizing effects that such thinking entails. These effects are exacerbated by a number of other factors, such as the consequences of the recent history of the Indian subcontinent. The resentment of Indian-born Sikhs and Hindus against Pakistanis is as intense in Southall as it is back in India. Since the Pakistanis form the majority of Muslims in Southall, they are blamed for causing the partition of India, as well as the continuing territorial dispute over Kashmir, and various other political tensions have kept alive this heritage of distrust. As a result of this, the Pakistanis in Southall are only entitled to associate membership in the powerful Indian Worker’s Association. Instead, local Muslims have set up their own separate community organizations and social or welfare associations, be they inclusively Muslim, or else specifically Pakistani or Bangladeshi. A second reason for the marginalization of the Muslims in Southall may be seen in their different

migratory history. It is a fact that most Muslims in Southall arrived considerably later than their Sikh and Hindu neighbours. Many indeed arrived only after the post-war decade of labour shortages was over and hence found it difficult to establish themselves as firmly as their new Indian neighbours had done.¹³⁷ These tensions also play an important role behind the politics behind the planning and designing of houses of worship, and the obtaining of the necessary construction permissions. This will be seen in the next chapter.

Therefore, this chapter attempted to highlight the key social and belief systems related to religious worship in Southall. It is now time to look at the architectural consequences of immigration and ethnic change in Southall. In the next chapter we will therefore discuss this evidence based on key examples that have been chosen to highlight certain social and religious notions within the actual architecture of various houses of worship.

Chapter 4: Southall – an exploration into its religious buildings



A variety of scholars have studied the architecture of religious buildings within the context of immigrant communities and of the effects of these buildings on the indigenous architecture. Noha Nasser, for example, has stressed the way in which new communities either take over existing buildings, or create new additions to the streetscape as a prime example of their resistance to assimilation into mainstream British culture. This

expression through built forms not only articulates distinctions from the rest of British culture, but also ‘amongst competing intra – and inter-faith communities’.¹ She also examines the way in which communities create religiously expressive buildings by trying to recreate traditional forms of architecture as opposed to adopting modern or western styles. However, reinterpreting ways of expressing religious values through form and architecture can also lead to a new style of architecture, ‘through exploration based on the setting, form, function, and use of technology, to create a new semblance of architectural identity that does not violate cultural principles’.² This kind of hybrid building is more likely to blend in with the surrounding environment; therefore immigrant communities nearly always prefer to use a more traditional form of cultural identity, for a number of reasons:³

- to represent a particular memory or tie with their the home country and their ancestral past.
- to represent the importance of certain religious features and what they symbolise
- to demonstrate their in relation to the surrounding white British community
- to demonstrate the struggle that is experienced by the communities to establish such buildings, such as difficulties with the planning process and also raising funds for themselves.⁴ Religious buildings of this type are described by Ceri Peach and Richard Gale as phenomena that “express these communities’ confident assertion of their negotiated terms of belonging within British society.”⁵

Therefore this chapter will start with a brief overview of the history of houses of worship in Southall, along with some maps to show the location of these buildings in the locality. Then the chapter will focus on a closer examination of some of the key buildings from the major faiths – Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam – to provide a more precise and thoroughgoing study. Accordingly, this chapter will draw heavily on a conscious mixture of socio-cultural, theological, urban and architectural analysis. In terms of collecting evidence for this chapter, the research methods included:

- 1- Field trips and photographs of every house of worship in Southall, noting their proximity either to certain main streets or to each other.
- 2- Research into the architecture of specific selected houses of worship, especially of plans and sections if these are available, and of local archival records.
- 3- Analysis of the actual users and their relationship to that sacred space, as well as their fundamental choice or reason for attending the particular place of worship. This

research task involved widespread attendance on my part at prayers and services, and interviews with the respective priest, *imam*, chairman, clerk, etc.

- 4- Studying the wider functions of the selected places of worship in terms of usage patterns and of their links to the rituals performed. Here the aim was to ask if they differed in any way from similar types of sacred building elsewhere, and if so, what the reasons were. Southall contains many houses of worship which enclose spaces used for different types of religion, and often the users of these houses of worship come from all kinds of ethnicities. For example, the local Catholic Church is attended by people of many diverse ethnic groups who just happen to practise the same religion.

To refine further the level of architectural analysis in this chapter, a standard method was devised for the analysis of each of the houses of worship in Southall. This method is based on similar critical studies carried out by architects who have recently studied the housing needs of the cultural, religious and ethnic minorities of London.⁶ Hence the building analysis consists of eight key elements:

- 1- Physical location of the house of worship.
- 2- History and patterns of use of the house of worship.
- 3- The type and number of users of the building.
- 4- The religion involved and its ritual practices.
- 5- Features and cultural elements displayed in the external architectural form
- 6- Interior atmospheres and characteristics.
- 7- Specific elements or features within the interiors that are related to cultural/ethnic considerations.
- 8- General observations about the form of the buildings.

However, it is worth stressing again the particular approach that this chapter intends to take. The key of study here is not so much the individual religious buildings concerned, but rather the spatial urban relationship to each other and the implications for how their ethnic community uses them. What the chapter ultimately intends to show is that the use and purpose of all of these religious buildings is continually in a state of flux within a major multicultural and global city like London.



Figure 70: McDonalds with the 'Halal' sign



Figure 71: Southall's old cinema

1. Architectural history of houses of worship in Southall

When a visitor first arrives in Southall today the first thing that will attract their eye are the colourful embellished facades of the main shopping streets which represent vividly the South Asian influence on the area. Even the common sites of British high streets are here accentuated with an Asian flavour, such as the McDonalds with its 'Halal meat' sign, which in this case caters mostly to the Muslim Asian community in the area. As well there are many other restaurants and markets in Southall with their colourful multicultural varieties of merchandise, food, textiles, etc. This also adds the sense of a very lively street culture. Southall is for instance also home to an old Chinese-style movie theatre, as well as a famous pub which was the first in Britain to accept payment in rupees. The most noticeable urban feature of the area, however, is the microcosm it presents of different religious places of worship. These range from the boldly monumental to the less ornate, even down to some ordinary residential dwellings that perform as a worship centre.

As noted, the focal point or the centre of Southall was previously near to the Grand Union Canal, especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries. But over time the heart of Southall has shifted somewhat, and The Broadway shopping street now acts as its main focus. Residential housing off this main drag is largely made up of typical Edwardian terraced houses. To the south of Uxbridge Road, beyond the railway station, lies the original nucleus of the area. Here is what is known as 'Old Southall' and the housing is predominantly of Victorian accumulation. There are also a few concentrations of social housing including the extensive concrete jungle of the Golf Links Estate and the Havelock Estate.

Of more relevance here is the architecture of houses of worship. The aim will be specifically to look at their history of construction, because this determines not only the style of the architecture but also shows how this style has been altered or modified later on to accommodate certain demands from the religious functions that take place in that building. The first recorded mention of a priest living in the precinct of Norwood is of Simon, the then chaplain of Southall, way back in 1394. In 1489 the parish of the church of Hayes and the chapel of Norwood were vested in the farmer who tended the Archbishop of Canterbury's manor at Hayes. In 1520 the position of the Norwood chaplain was clarified further in the ordination of the Hayes vicarage by Archbishop Warham.⁷

The church of St. Mary the Virgin is said to have been the first Christian church to exist in Southall, and it was constructed in 1439. This medieval church was then heavily restored in 1824 and it has undergone several other restorations up until the present day.



Figure 72: The church of St Mary the Virgin

The second Christian church to be built in Southall was the chapel of St John in 1838, as designed by Henry Dobbs, a little known local architect. It served the first new parish – of course, Church of England – to be created in the precinct of Norwood, in the area known as Southall Green, in 1850.



Figure 73: St John's Church

Holy Trinity Church in Uxbridge Road, which in 1881 was erected on a site leased from the Earl of Jersey, was the third church to be founded in the area, the present incarnation of that Christian Protestant church was designed by John Lee in 1890.



Figure 74: Holy Trinity Church

Despite the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act⁸ in 1829, permitting Catholics to worship freely in Britain, there is no record of Roman Catholicism existing in Norwood until the parish of St. Anselm, in Southall Green, was founded in 1906. This Catholic church was later rebuilt in its present location nearby, also on Southall Green, in 1967.⁹

In terms of non-conformist Christianity, the King's Hall formed the headquarters of Wesleyan Methodism in the local area and provided a place for their social and religious meetings. The first mention of a Methodist church in Southall was in 1887, on the same site which was later demolished and replaced by the current version of King's Hall in 1916.



Figure 75: Kings Hall Methodist Chapel



Figure 76: Examples of several types of smaller Christian churches in Southall

The Baptists founded a church in Western Road in 1889. A further piece of land, lying on the corner of Western Road and St. John's Road, was then added in 1898. Their chapel was then totally rebuilt in 1901. Other types of alternative Christian churches were also constructed in the twentieth century, such as the church of St George. Likewise, churches that represent the new immigrant Pentecostal community were erected also in the period from the 1960s onwards, by which time Southall had already become well known for its multicultural population.

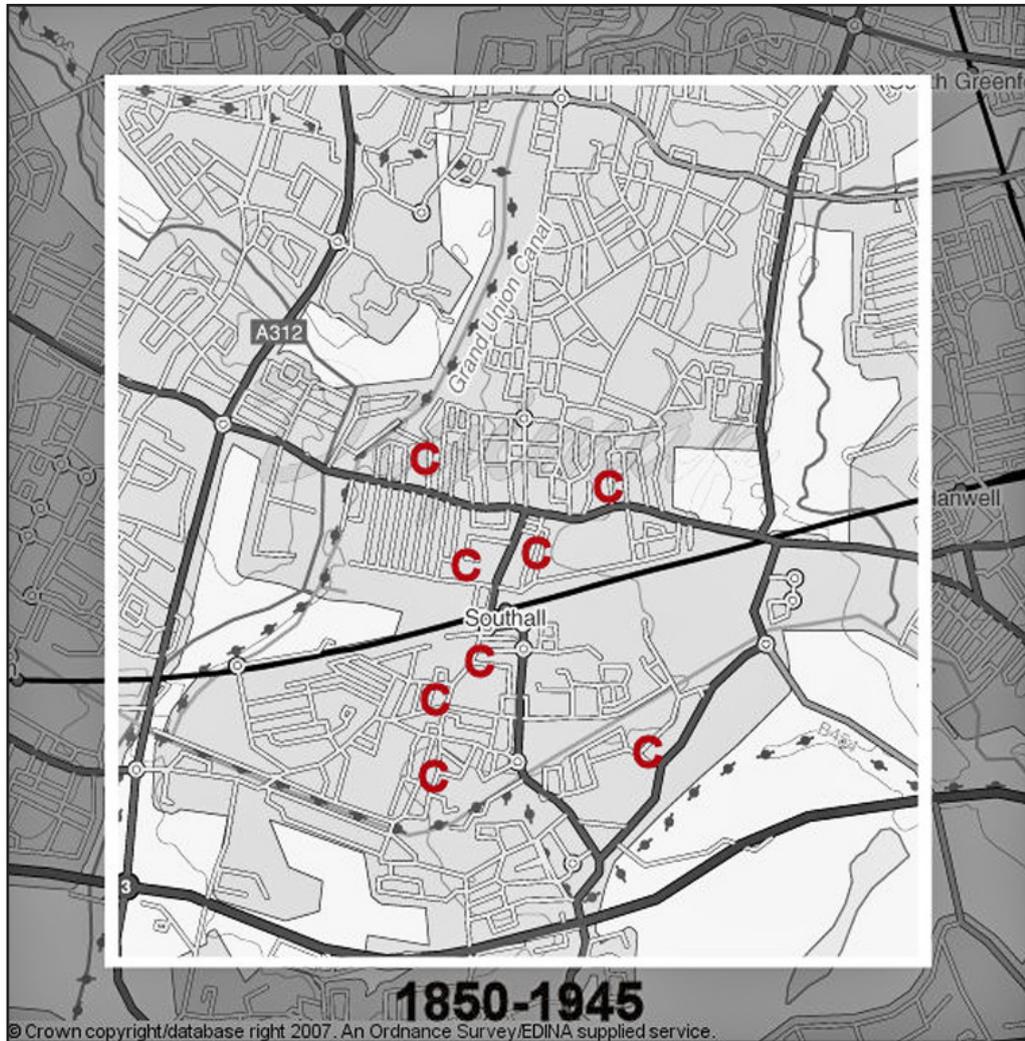


Figure 77: Examples of two local Pentecostal Churches in Southall

Southall is also today a home for a number of other denominations of Christian churches built in the same period onwards and which represent Congregationalists, Evangelicals, Spiritualists, Seventh Day Adventists, etc. however, these tend to be very small cults which have not impacted much on the area.

Far more importantly, the first emergence of pockets of South Asian immigrants in Southall during the 1950s also saw the first consecration of Sikh temples in the area. Sikhs, who previously had hired halls for their monthly meetings, then acquired a major temple on Southall Green in 1963. This building was demolished in 1967 to make way for a new Roman Catholic Church. So a much larger Sikh temple was then opened on the site of a converted dairy in Havelock Road.¹⁰ The emergence of Hindu temples and Islamic mosques began after the 1960s once Southall really started to accommodate large numbers of different ethnic communities, other than merely Asian Sikhs. The path was thus now open for the profusion of multi-ethnic places of worship that exist today. But before looking at specific examples of different types of religious houses in Southall, it is worth tracking the history of the social changes in terms of immigration into the local area.

2. Historical stages of Southall's houses of worship



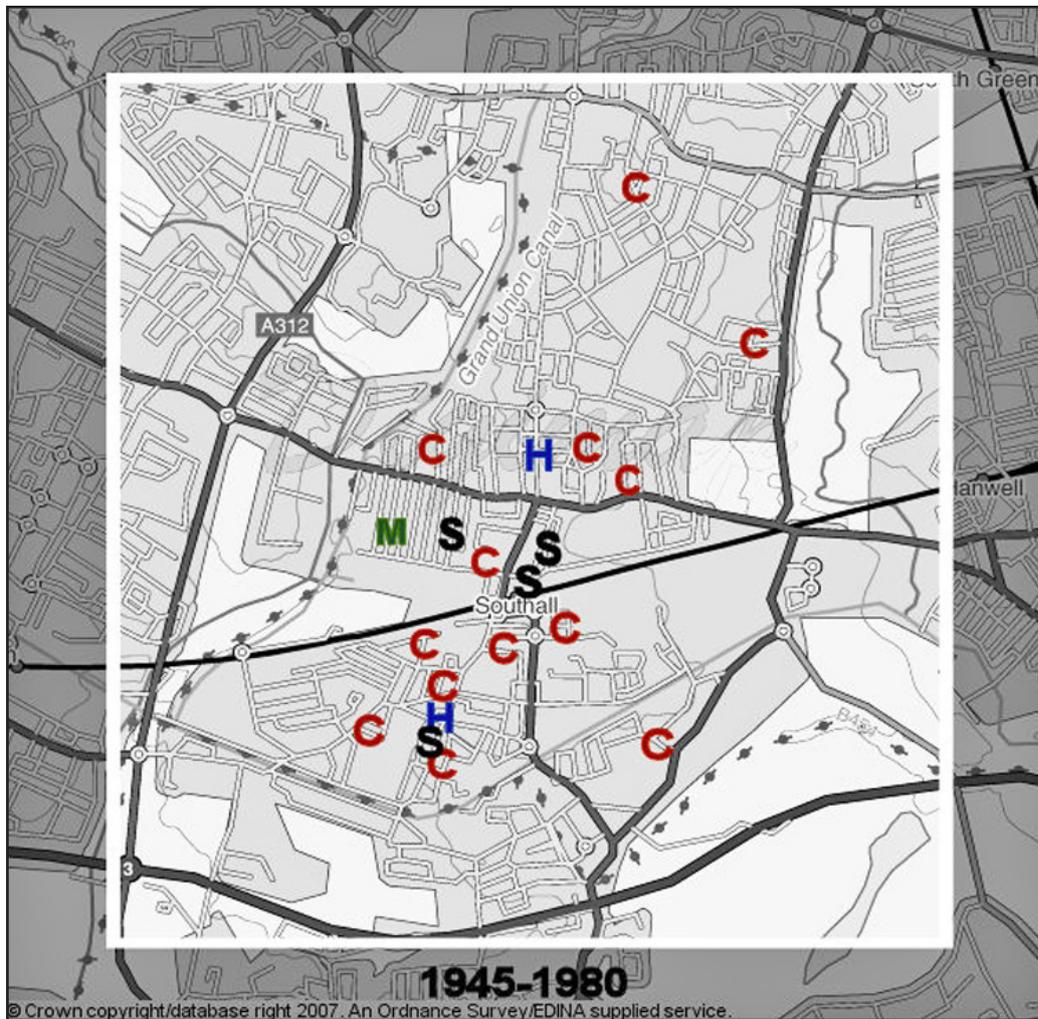
1850- 1945

C: Christian Churches

S: Sikh temples

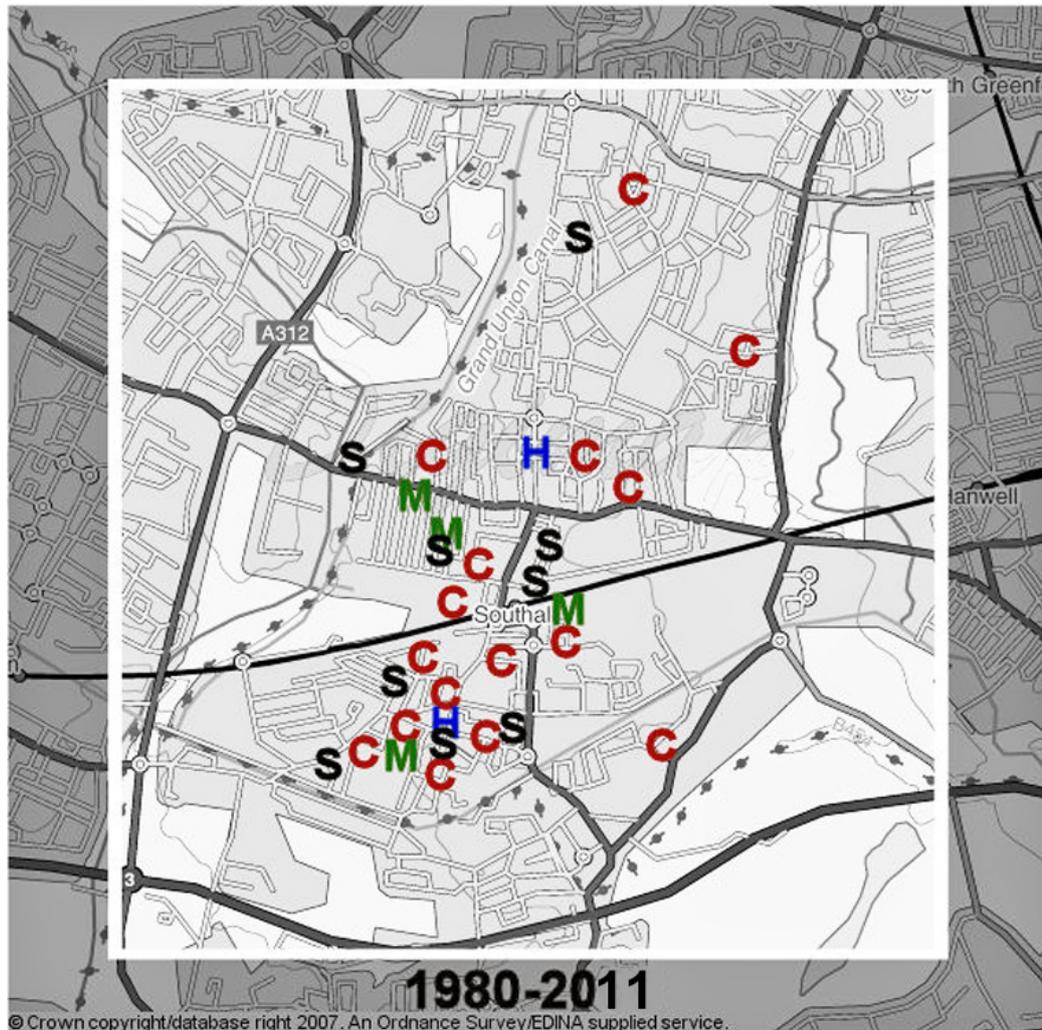
H: Hindu temples

M: Mosques



1945- 1980

- C:** Christian Churches
- S:** Sikh temples
- H:** Hindu temples
- M:** Mosques



1980- 2011

C: Christian Churches

S: Sikh temples

H: Hindu temples

M: Mosques

HOUSE	NAME	TYPE	YEAR	SIZE
Churches	Emmanuel Church	Church of England	1974	Seats 100
1-				
2-	Christ The Redeemer Church	Church of England	1964	Seats 200
3-	Holy Trinity Church	Church of England	1890	Seats 300
4-	St George's Church	Church of England	1908	Seats 300
5-	St Mary The Virgin Church	Church of England	1859	Seats 300
6-	Bethany Church of God	Pentecostal	1916	Seats 400
7-	Southall Christian Fellowship	Pentecostal	1926	Seats 50
8-	St John's Church	Pentecostal	1910	Seats 250
9-	Southall Church of God	Pentecostal	2002	Seats 100
10-	The Church of God Pentecostal	Pentecostal	1970s	Seats 150
11-	St Anselm's Church	Catholic	1967	Seats 200
12-	Southall Spiritualist Church	Spiritualist	1970s	Seats 50
13-	Kings Hall Methodist Church	Methodist	1916	Seats 400
14-	Southall Baptist Church	Baptist	1901	Seats 200
15-	Southall Seventh Day Adventist Church	Seventh Day Adventist	1970s	Seats 50
16-	Every Nation Gospel Fellowship	Evangelical	1970s	Seats 70
Hindu				
1-	Vishwa Hindu Mandir	Hindu	1972	400 people
2-	Shree Ram Mandir	Hindu	1971	200-300 people
Sikh				
1-	Guardwara Nankar	Sikh	2002	400 people
2-	Shri Guru Ravidas Sabha	Sikh	1980	500 people
3-	Ramgarhia Sabha	Sikh	1971	400 people
4-	Sri Guru Singh Sabha	Sikh	1960	400 people
5-	Guardwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha	Sikh	2003	10,000-15000 people
6-	Guru Granth Guardwara	Sikh	1969	Seats 350
7-	Gurdwara Miri Piri Sahib	Sikh	1980	100 people
8-	Shromani Akali Dal	Sikh	1960	100 people
9-	Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar	Sikh- Afghan	1970	400 people
Mosques				
1-	Central Jamia Masjid Mosque	Sunni	1990	300 people
2-	Jamia Masjid Islamic Centre	Sunni	1967	200 people
3-	Abubakr Mosque	Sunni	1999	200-300 people
4-	Ahmadiyya Muslim Association	Ahmadiyya	1990	70- 100 people

Table 14: List of the houses of worship in Southall

ARCHITECTURE	INFORMATION	SERVICE
Modern Church		
Modern Church		
Gothic		
Neo Gothic Church		
Neo Gothic Church	First Church in Southall	
Edwardian-Baroque		
Old workshop		English, Tamil
Neo Gothic Church		
Edwardian-Baroque		
Neo Georgian Hall		English, Punjabi
Modern Church	Rebuilt after 3 previous churches	
Vernacular Hall		Tamil, Malayalam and Urdu
Edwardian-Baroque		
Neo Gothic Church		English, Urdu
Neo Georgian Hall		
Neo Georgian Hall		
Modern Indian	Biggest Hindu temple in Southall	
Converted old warehouse	Britain's oldest Hindu temple	Hindu
Pseudo- Indian	Practices a more pure religion than other temples	
Pseudo- Indian	A gurdwara for the Ravidas caste	
Converted 1970s shop	A gurdwara for the Ramgarhia caste	
Converted 1960s shop	A gurdwara for the Jat caste	
Monumental Temple	Biggest Sikh temple in Europe	
Converted Church	Used to be a Congregational Church	
Small prefab building		
Converted house		
Converted 1960s factory	Gurdwara for the Afghan population	
Pseudo-Islamic		
Converted terraced houses		
Converted 1950s office		
Converted house		

3. The Christian Churches of Southall

Today, Southall has sixteen registered Christian churches in total, these being drawn from all kinds of denominations.¹¹ As noted, church-building in Southall began in the 14th century, when the first church of St Mary The Virgin was constructed. Later on a number of Catholic, Baptist, and Methodist churches opened in the area, respectively. For this part of the analysis, the primary focus here will be on three particular Christian churches in Southall:

- St Anselm's Catholic Church.
- Christ the Redeemer Church. (Church of England).
- Southall Baptist Church.

These three churches have been chosen because:

- 1- The Catholic church and the Baptist church represent two separate and distinctive types of churches belonging to two different denominations, so they make a good comparison to the main Anglican Church.
- 2- The location of these two churches is also in the densest area of Southall in terms of population, number of houses of worship, and activity along the commercial streets.
- 3- The large majority of the congregation in all three churches are drawn from different local ethnicities.
- 4- The location of the third church, Christ the Redeemer, is not nearly as central as the two other churches and indeed sits in a more residential area.
- 5- These churches offer extremely diverse architectural styles and have very diverse histories.

3.1 St Anselm's Catholic Church

The church of St Anselm's is located on South Road, meaning that it sits right in the middle of the commercial heart of Southall. There have in fact been four churches named St Anselm's in Southall. The first one was an old tithe barn belonging to a Tudor manor house that reopened after being converted into a Catholic Church in 1906 on Southall Green.



The second church with the name of St Anselm, unusually, was a building designed in two halves, the other half of which was St Anselm's School.



The third version of the church was later built beside the school. This had become necessary as the number of children studying in the school had increased substantially, and indeed that previous church building now serves as the school hall.



The present Catholic Church was begun on site in 1968 and was built on a different location from the first three churches, although as noted before, it is still faces onto the main Southall Green. The times of the mass services in this church are as follows:¹²

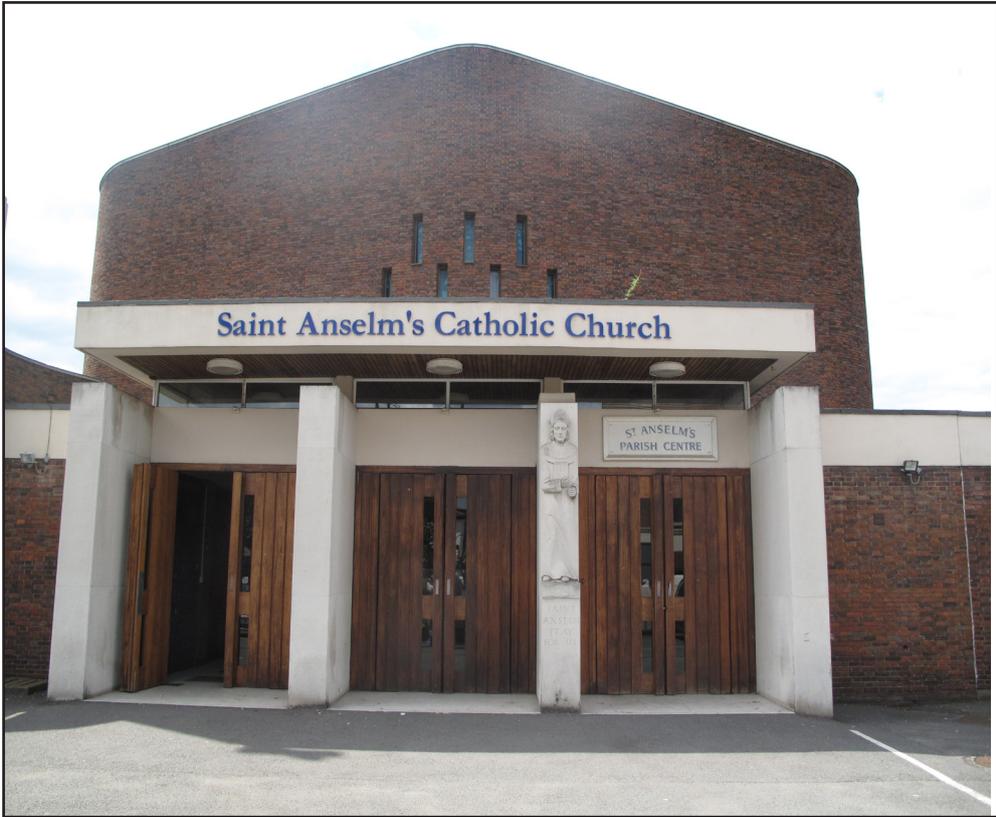


Figure 78: St Anselm's Catholic Church

Sunday Mass: 9 am, 11 am, 6.30pm. (Saturday 6.30pm)
Holidays Mass: 9.15 am, 12.15pm, 7.30pm.
Weekday Mass: Monday-Friday 9.15 am, Saturday 12 noon
Confessions: Saturday 11 am-12 noon.
Holy Hour: Sunday 4.30pm, Novena 5.30pm
Tamil Mass: Usually the first Sunday of the month, 1.30 pm
Malayalam Mass: Usually the third Sunday of the month, 3.00 pm
Urdu Mass: Usually the last Sunday of the month, 3.00 pm

As can be seen from the church's announcements, the mass service is performed in several languages due to the multi-ethnic congregation who attend. These special services are performed by chaplains who come from other churches in order to perform the mass in different languages. The current congregation is mostly drawn from the local area, and consists of several ethnicities. Mostly they are South Asians, but historically after the Second World War it was a mostly a 'White' church with an English and Irish congregation. Later on, West Indians from the islands of Grenada and Dominica started moving to the area and attending the church, and from the late-1970's, South Asian immigrants became the majority of the congregation. Mostly the South Asians attending St Anselm's today originally came from Kerla via Singapore, and more lately there are Sri Lankan Tamils and people from Goa, as well as some Catholics from Pakistan. There are also a few people from sub-Saharan Africa as well as a few Catholic families from Latin America.

The total number of the congregation on a normal Sunday main service would be around 350 people.¹³ On special occasions such as Christmas, the balcony is also be used and this seats around 500 people altogether. On a normal day, the likely number attending would however be around 40-80 people. And on Sundays, where the mass is performed in other languages, around 100 people would attend, including many Tamils. For the weekday mass, attendance would also be drawn from a multitude of ethnicities and some people would even attend both mass services on the same day.

In terms of interpretation of the general level of Catholic Church attendance in Southall and elsewhere, Father James Crampsey, the present priest at St Anselm's, states:

'It is the case that churches within immigrant communities receive higher rates of attendance than other areas in London'.¹⁴



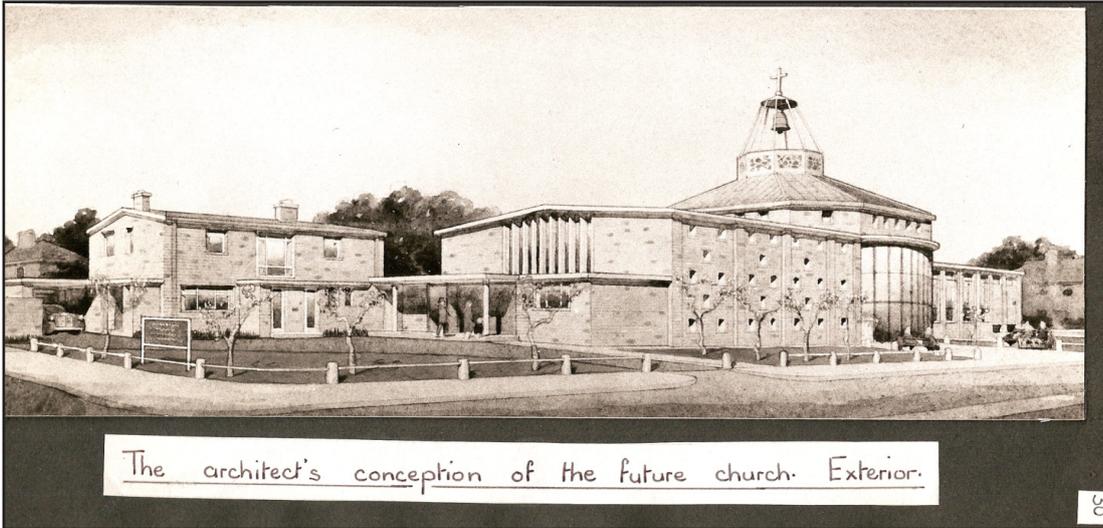
Figure 79: Interior of St Anselm's Church

Architecture:

In terms of its actual architecture, the current version of St Anselm's is a modernist modest building finished in 1967 by the architect John Newton of Burles, Newton & Partners.¹⁵ It has a red-brick façade with a large oval-shaped dome, along with two projecting chapels and a small baptistery which has concave walls divided by stained glass (this being added by Patrick Reyntiens in 1971). The interior of the church consists of a large open space with a twin altar on the sides and a large apse in the centre, which opens up to the congregation and embraces them, rather than funnel them as happens in many conventional Neo-Gothic churches. This change of the position of the priest to face the people, rather than show his back to them, came about due to the architectural changes introduced by the Second Vatican Council in 1965, which made the seismic decision that the priest actually needed to look at his congregation. This church was built immediately after this decision, reflecting the fact that new Catholicism wanted to emphasise the 'table' aspect of the altar (representing the Last Supper) rather than the previous emphasis on the sacrificial aspect. This shift in the meaning of Catholic churches was reflected in the architectural form of churches, as can certainly be seen in the church of St Anselm's. Another notable feature in this church is the large pipes of the organ on the right-hand wall; music is very important in Catholic worship. The confession booths are located to the left. Also on the back wall facing the altar is the aforementioned balcony which is only opened to the congregation on special occasions when there is a need to house a much larger attendance.

There are hence certain aspects to be found in St Anselm's Church and which are essential to this study's core ideas, due to the multicultural congregation that attend the church. These characteristics can be seen by an exploration of current interactions as well as of the worshippers themselves.

1. South Asians who attend the church come not only originally from India, but there are also people from Pakistan and some Malabar Catholics (a unique eastern type of Catholicism),¹⁶ giving a very diverse mix.
2. Although the type of Catholic prayer that is celebrated is the same, and all the ethnicities read from the same scriptures, some groups of people – especially South Asians and West Indians – have a more enthusiastic style of prayer which is due to the scriptures that they are used to in their original country.
3. Another difference in the practice of rituals between the multicultural



30



Figure 80: Phases for the construction of Christ the Redeemer Church (Images from the church's archives)

congregations is that some of the British Indians would put garlands on statues (as is done in temples), and they would often put veils particularly on the statue of Mary, mother of Jesus, and later on someone else might take it off!

4. Another difference among the different ethnic congregations is personal prayers, which differ quite a lot from the typical British individual prayer in the way they are performed and the words that are used. Some South Asians will walk up from the back of the church to the altar at the front, on their knees¹⁷, or will take off their shoes, or will not turn their back to the altar when leaving the church (again as is done in temples). Other people will pick up candles in their hands and walk around the various statues; this act is now being copied by White British families, as well as people from other cultures who attend the same church.
5. Although worshippers come from different cultural backgrounds, in the case of houses of worship in Southall such as St Anselm's they seem to have learnt to live with mutual co-existence, certainly while in church.
6. A lot of people in the congregation, especially the very latest immigrants, home in to the church because it's the one thing that they know about and are familiar with, and as such they visit the church regularly both for prayer and comfort.
7. Another feature influenced by culture is that St Anselm's Church makes its parish party into a form of gathering by inviting people to bring food that they have cooked, in an attempt to bring people from different backgrounds together. This feature of sacred hospitality again seems to be strongly eastern-influenced, being particularly influenced from community practices in countries like India.

3.2 Christ The Redeemer Church

This Protestant church belongs to the Church of England, and is located at the end of Allenby Road, meaning that it is definitely not in the current centre of Southall. The church was completed in 1964 by the architect Michael Farey, and the parish in which this church now serves was originally created by replacing temporary mission huts in the area. These huts were disposed of by the church authorities for £70,000, but this was still not enough money for all the buildings to be constructed, and so the members

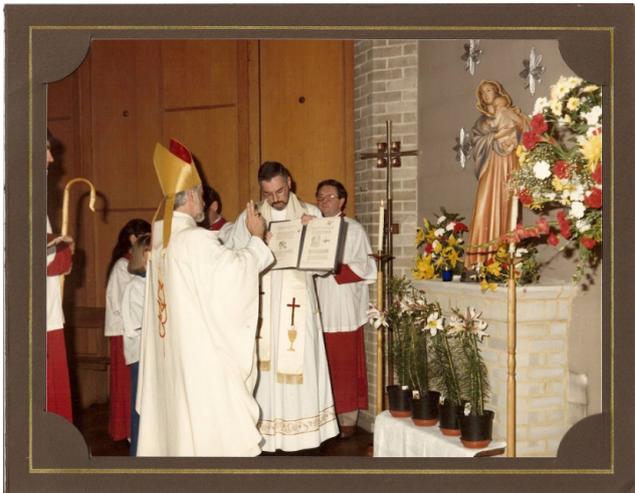


Figure 81: Images of a sermon within the church
(Images from the church's archives)

of the parish were called upon to donate the rest of the costs. The church at the time was run by Reverend G.T. Grainger, who was very keen on the new liturgical thought. Thus he stated to his parish council:

‘... the task of modern architecture is not to design a building that looks like a church, it is to create a building that works as a place for the performance of the liturgy.’¹⁸

Hence a clear commission was given to the architect to create a modern architectural expression for the centralities of protestant Christian faith.

The main service in Christ the Redeemer is held every Sunday morning, and a sheet is also given out to announce the other times during the week that the church is going to be open for prayer. The majority of the congregation when the church was built were predominantly White British, but now the majority are people who come from Western India¹⁹, with some families from South India, as well as some Africans and Sri Lankans. The indigenous White people who previously lived in the area are now mostly old people and a lot of them are dying off. The majority of new White people who move to this area are predominantly from Eastern Europe, such as from Poland, and hence they are mostly Roman Catholics.²⁰ The average congregation on a Sunday in Christ the Redeemer church is only about 150 people, and the service is performed solely in English.

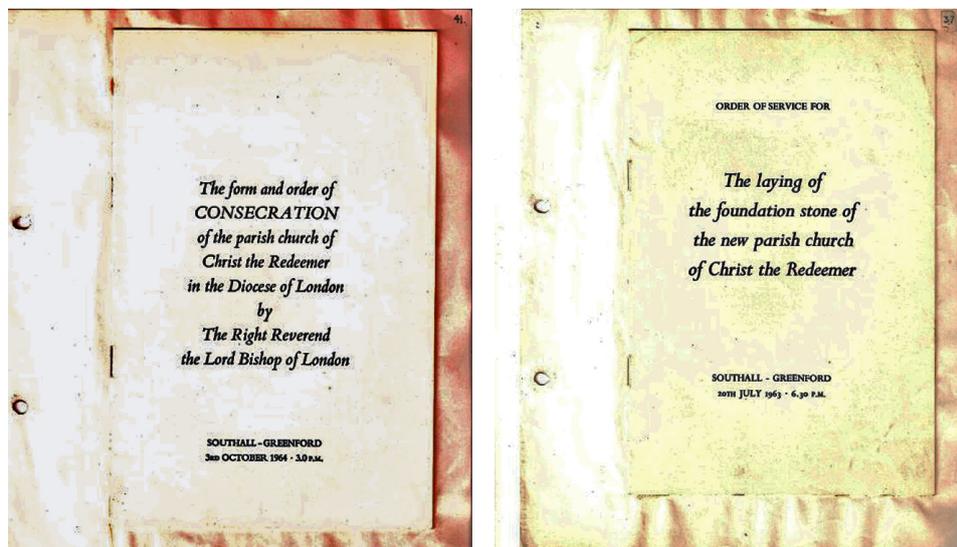


Figure 82: Images of ‘order of service for Christ the Redeemer Church’



Figure 83: Photographs of the existing Church

Architecture:

Christ the Redeemer is made up of two adjoining buildings: the church itself, and a community hall which is used by the community centre for all sorts of functions. The church itself runs parallel to the street with a facade made out of stone and a striking fibreglass cupola, in which sits the bell tower on top of the church. Stained glass windows surround the aisles, and there is a large curved bay window that overlooks the altar. Large glass doors in the west porch create the main entrance to the church. The inside west wall which faces the altar is also made of glass, and a continuous band of small multi-coloured windows runs along the side of the west porch. From the entrance, the nave slopes gently down to a large circular sanctuary area, which occupies half the church. The nave is narrower than the sanctuary and this creates a strong visual illusion, making the circular area appear to be even larger than it is.

Inside, the church has simple wooden bench seating that can seat up to 250 people, even if it never sees this number. Around the perimeter of the sanctuary, which is raised one step above the nave, is a communion rail at which 60 people are able to kneel at the same time. This rail is broken at four points to give access to the altar, which is raised up on a further step in the centre. To the front of the west window there is a large candlestick made of hammered steel and copper containing the Pascal candle, which is lit only during baptismal services. In the North Bay opposite the large south window are placed the organ and choir, with the choir facing inwards to the altar. In this bay there is also a door that leads to the church hall and ancillary rooms.

Christ the Redeemer church was certainly built in an extremely modern style for the time by its architect, and can be seen to possess key characteristics:

1. The church is located away from the centre of Southall, and was originally built as a small church serving the immediate local community. It was not designed to attract other people from surrounding areas, and this is palpable from the community hall adjoining the church which acts as a multi-purpose community centre for local residents only.
2. The boldly modern architecture of the church at the time it was built was intended primarily to reflect the new liturgical thought of that era. Yet the style of furniture for the purpose of worship, and how this furniture is located within the church, continues in the same modern style, and is

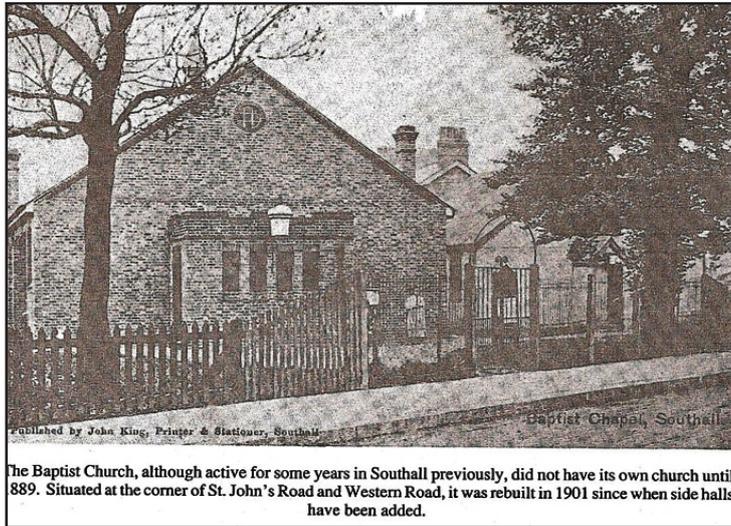


Figure 84: An old photograph of the Baptist Church of Southall



Figure 85: The existing Baptist Church

not the same as is found in other traditional Church of England churches in Southall.

3. Here the South Asian influence is not nearly as dominant as other parts of Southall, neither within the church nor outside it.
4. The style of prayer in Christ the Redeemer is not culturally influenced in the same way as other churches in Southall, and this is due to the limited ethnic groups who attend the church. This particular point will be discussed again in later parts of this chapter.

3.3 Southall Baptist Church

This Baptist church is located on Western Road, right in the centre of Southall, and the current version was opened back in 1901. The church, as noted, was originally founded in 1889 and registered in 1890. Six years later the site and the chapel, a temporary one, were vested in the trustees. A further piece of land, on the corner of Western Road and St. John's Road was added in 1898, and hence the chapel came to be rebuilt in 1901. The previous corrugated iron chapel was subsequently used as a Sunday school. This building, functioning as an annexe to the church, was later rebuilt in 1912-13.²¹ The surviving trustees then vested the old building in the London Baptist Property Board in 1930. Branch Sunday schools were also held at the schools in Lady Margaret Road and Carlyle Avenue, and at the Norwood Green School. In 1961 the church consisted of a plain, yellow-brick building, with red-brick arches over the doors and windows, and a small wooden central cupola. The annexe consisted of a fairly large hall with various offices attached. A Baptist mission station at the junction of Thorncliffe Road and Norwood Road in Norwood Green was registered in 1946, but this registration was soon cancelled in 1954.

The worshippers in Southall Baptist Church derive from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, being drawn from English Pakistanis, Indians, Brazilians, Columbians, Myanmaris, and Africans. In the morning service on Sundays there are usually about 100-150 people, and in the afternoon the service is performed in English, Tamil and Singalise because much of the congregation come from Sri Lanka. The service on Sunday evenings is mostly a service for Indian Baptists. The service starts by worship and singing, and then the sermon continues with readings from the Bible. There is also a data projector to project the words of songs so that people can read from the verses of the Bible.



Figure 86: The interior of the existing church and the recreational hall

Mostly the worshippers are from local communities who live in Southall. The nature of their ethnic backgrounds varies from time to time according to new people who come to the area, such as students, visiting scholars, etc. The school hall which is the building adjacent to the church hosts many different activities: it is part of the church ministry. It contains an English language school, leadership classes and computer classes. etc.

Architecture:

The Southall Baptist Church is designed in a weak neo-Gothic style. It is made up of two buildings connected to each other by an entrance area that was added on later to the church. Traditionally, Baptists tended to look for great simplicity in their buildings, and so an absence of images or statues is immediately apparent. Baptists believe in the fact that preaching from the Bible is central to their worship, and so the architecture also revolves around that aspect. The existing interior is hence very plain and severe. Traditionally, the church had pews facing the length of the building facing a pulpit, but now the pews have changed into semi-circular chairs so that people can see each other, as well as the screen and the priest who is reading the sermon. The Baptist faith believes in Baptism of people to be immersed in a pool of water before entering the faith. Hence the ground of the church opens up and a large pool for baptism is located there; otherwise normally it is covered by wooden panels. The people who attend the church do not necessarily believe that this is actually a holy place, because the building is used for a variety of functions; however neither does this make it unholy. This particular version of the building was built as a Sunday school, and so it was never meant to be permanent. There is a plan in the future to expand the church, especially the school hall area, if funds can be found.

Next to the pulpit there are many musical instruments, since the new Baptist churches believe in modernising all aspects of the church in order to attract the younger generation, The organ used in other Christian churches has become the least popular of instruments, so here the ethos of music has to follow the ethos of a modern generation. Hence there are drums, guitars, etc.²² There is a tremendous shortage of church space in Southall especially after the decision to take down the Kings Hall in the near future, which is a big hall that was a Methodist church as well as hosting a Pentecostal ethnic group from the Church of God denomination. Given the latter group's faith is almost identical to the Baptist church, the decision has been agreed for this other religious group to later join the Baptist church after the removal of their church building.

There is also a plan to add a place for preparing food. A food hall is greatly needed, because after prayer in the Baptist Church a large number of the worshippers are used to having areas where they can sit and socialise, especially for those people who come from cultures such as East Indians, where this is common practise in their churches back home. As the current priest for this church, Pastor Boyd Williams told me:

‘You cannot have a static building when the world around us is changing’.²³

3.4. Key aspects of Southall’s Christian churches

1. The location of the Christian churches in Southall tends to determine their relative size, type and the ethnic background of their congregation. Churches located within denser populated areas are mostly larger than other churches that are located within less populated areas, such as the case of Christ the Redeemer Church.
2. The churches of Southall in general appear to enjoy greater prominence for the congregations that visit them, compared to other churches in London, due largely to the social role that these churches play in the lives of the multi-ethnic communities of Southall, whether it is for the Indian Orthodox communities or Eastern European groups or the West Indian population.
3. Internal elements within these churches adopt many of the ritual practices from the cultural heritage of the multi-ethnic congregations in their ‘home’ countries. Yet in terms of the overall architecture, there is really no obvious association with the ethnicity or the cultural background of the congregation given the disassociation of Christianity from the cultural heritage of these multi-ethnic congregations. Therefore there appears to be no need to prove the identity of the users through the architecture of Southall’s churches, again in contrast (as we will see later) with the houses of worship belonging to the Hindu, Sikh and Islamic faiths.

4. Hindu temples in Southall

In 1965, over a decade after the Punjabi immigration to Southall first commenced, a Hindu Cultural Society was formed – ultimately due to a large financial contribution by East African Indians from the Arya Samajis caste, who had a great deal of prior organizational experience in coordinating various Hindu religious functions. The group originally met in private houses in Southall, but eventually it rented public places as its membership and popularity grew. By 1972 the Hindu Cultural Society had split, largely over conflicts about personality and political control, into two organizations which became the Hindu Temple Trust and the Vishwa Hindu Kendra. Within a few years, each body eventually purchased its own dedicated building premises in Southall and converted them into temples. Finance came mostly by way of donations.²⁴ The two organizations have different constitutions and organizational structures: one holding frequent elections with separate functions for its Management Board and Board of Trustees, the other by a core set of Trustees who look after most of the functions and managerial tasks.

In a study by Steven Vertovec²⁵ about the combined patterns of congregational and individual use of the temples of both the Hindu Temple Trust and Vishwa Hindu Kendra, he noted a number of factors. First, both organizations and their activities have developed through many years of complex committee negotiations; hence the attitudes of a large number of people can be seen to have been expressed, and in this way a generalized Punjabi corpus of beliefs and activities has come into prominence. Second, compared to Gujaratis in places like Wandsworth, the Punjabi Hindus in Southall possess a greater social and cultural homogeneity by the virtue of deriving largely from a more localized area (mainly from Jullundar and Hoshiarpur, with others coming from Ludhiana and Amritsar), such that common communal practices are easier to sustain.

Also, caste differentiation doesn't play such a role in terms of religious organization among the Punjabis in Britain compared to Gujaratis (with the exception of low-caste Punjabi Churhas and Chamras, who have their own temples in Southall devoted to the Valmiki and Ravidasi religious traditions, respectively). Why this should be so is debated, but it certainly has been suggested that in the northern Punjab/Himachal Pradesh region, the social and ritualistic distance between castes is historically far less rigid and pronounced than in other parts of India.²⁶

Although individual worship is emphasized in Hinduism, in Britain the role of religion is changing. It is becoming more congregational, and the function of the *mandir* as a community centre has increased. These are also not the solitary changes that have occurred to *mandirs* in Britain; certain practices of Hinduism have been adapted slightly. For example, a small Hindu community may be made up of Hindus from different parts of India, who worship different deities and favour different types of worship and rituals. Both of the *mandirs* in Southall house the *murtis* of a number of deities to cater for the varied community. Kim Knott notes that there is often an element of standardization, whereby certain religious beliefs are stressed more than others. Services and festivals are carried out at different times of the day or year to suit the British working week and calendar, and the unorthodox surroundings result in rituals being performed differently to how they would be traditionally.²⁷ However, through this process of standardization, the preferred rituals of the various ethnic groups are able to be expressed. This adaptation, or ‘retraditionalization ... rejuvenating ... giving new meaning to traditional beliefs and practices’ can be seen as the ‘price of its survival as a socially meaningful tradition in a new location’.²⁸ This observation has clear consequences for the lives of British Indians in districts such as Southall. Among the Punjabis in Britain, although caste sentiments continue to determine many marriages, and higher castes seem always to maintain sway in the management of temple affairs, the issue of caste has not been seen to militate against congregational forms of worship, which is made most evident in the prevalence of communal meals.²⁹

There are two Hindu temples in Southall: one is a converted church building, the Vishwa Hindu Mandir, while the other is a purpose-built building: the Shree Ram Mandir. It is worth looking at both temples in turn.

4. 1. Vishwa Hindu Mandir

Vishwa Hindu Mandir in Southall has the advantage over the other local *mandir* in that it is located on the highly popular intersection of the two major streets The Broadway and South Street. It is also located just behind the former town hall. The building was changed in purpose from the church hall of Holy Trinity Church to a Hindu *mandir* in 1976. The first alterations to the building were small, such as the erection of a boundary wall and gates in 1979; also the erection of an external staircase in 1980. Then in 1982, the temple committee was granted permission to build a first-floor extension for



Figure 87: Lady Margaret Road, view from the High Street showing Holy Trinity Church Hall on the right, 1979. (Images on the left from the local council's archives)



Figure 88: Photographs of the current mandir showing it from Lady Margaret Road.

adding a library and reading room. Later the following year the *mandir* received a grant from the Greater London Council (GLC) for the provision of community facilities in the building, including the new library, and rooms for classes for teaching languages, yoga, Indian music and dance. The building committee received no objections from the temple's neighbours towards this development, especially since it was considered that it would not result in any loss of services to the surrounding areas.

Later still, in 1983, some work was done to the building and it was later found that the work was done without a planning approval, this work included extensions to the front of the building and alterations to the facade and side elevations, also extensions side and rear of the building.³⁰ Later these permissions were granted for all of these additions, although the size and accommodation of the building had been increased considerably. Especially taking the fact that the site had no parking or servicing facilities, also the appearance of the building had been substantially altered. However, in the planning committee report into the matter, the building was considered to have no significant impact on the services of adjacent land, and there appeared, 'in essence little to warrant refusing planning permission for this development.'

The *mandir*'s committee were granted permission in 1996 to build a new community centre, but it was never built, until a new design submitted by GUG architects in 2002 that was eventually built. This was to be located next to the temple, on leased land that was previously part of the town hall.³¹ A justification for granting permission to this development by the planning department made reference to various policies in the local Unitary Development Plan (UDP) that support the provision of community facilities, particularly in Southall town centre.³² However at this point it has become evident within the planning documents that council attitudes have started to adapt to the needs of minority communities in Southall in particular, and in the UK in general. This development of granting permissions of ethnic community centres by the local council started in the area around 1983.

Architecture:

The temple itself consists of an entrance space that leads onto a large hall, on one side, and another small door to a corridor behind in which are located other amenities such as toilets and shoe storage facilities. The vestibule also gives onto a food storage area where food is served on special occasions, with this food being generally donated by the worshippers themselves. There is then also a staircase that takes one up to the first



Figure 89: Façade of the mandir



Figure 90: Sikhara on the community centre

floor where language classes and yoga lessons takes place.

The actual facade of the Vishwa Hindu Mandir has not altered dramatically since it was converted from a church hall. Instead, there have been additional elements added to the exterior of the mandir that signify it as a Hindu temple, specifically to the façade. These include:

1- Three white *sikhara*-shaped structures sitting on top of the entrance porch, and another on the corner of the community centre. Although these shapes identify with the traditional form of Hindu temples, yet the meaning behind them is lost and this is partly due to their location, as described in the last chapter, traditionally the *sikhara* is positioned directly above the *garbhagrha* and could represent several meanings as their position up towards the sky makes the worshiper closer to God.

2- Another feature is the golden *kalasa* which is located on the top of the community centre's *sikhara*, which might have been located there to symbolise new life and growth. However, the position and the materials used do not necessarily give the intended effect that of a harmonious element of the temple that conforms to principles and doctrines of the Hindu faith, rather it gives the impression of separate element that is forced on the temple. This was enhanced by the fact that even the community centre, which has no religious purpose in itself, is also given a tower. This certainly stresses the point that these towers were only added visually for the purpose of expressing Hindu identity, not for their function within the building.

Because the temple is a converted building, therefore, the interior spaces do not conform to the traditional principles of Hindu architecture. The principal *murti*, the main deity, is not located at the centre of the temple, therefore, it is not situated under the *sikhara* as used by traditional Hindu temples, again failing to create the cosmic axis explained before. There are a number of deities that are worshipped here, these *murtis* are all situated on a stage at the front of the room. The worshippers then follow a route that surrounds the room, praying to each deity, but full circumambulation is not possible due to the location of the deities in one section only.



Figure 91: View from the street to the Community centre



Figure 92: Entrance to the *Mandir*

Interior:

The large hall is where the worshipping ritual takes place. The deities are located along the length of the back wall, all sitting on a stage. They are grouped in twos and threes, and are full figured, with a great focus on their dress to emphasize their importance. Another feature worth pointing out is the *sikhara* shrine-like structure which is placed over each group of deities to place more attention on them. The worshippers start the prayer ritual by going over to the left-hand side of the hall and making their way towards the deities, stopping either to read or donate money on plates located under each group of deities. Another feature that particularly conveys the feel of traditional Hindu temples is the arches over the columns in the prayer hall; here the materials and shape of these arches resemble traditional temple construction, despite being fabricated out of plaster to which is applied traditional patterns and colour schemes. The suspended ceiling is also lowered to give one an enhanced feeling when praying. The stage ceiling however is not lowered in the same way as the rest of the prayer hall, and is indeed 500mm higher than in the rest of the room. The rear wall of the stage is coloured blue to represent the sky, giving the sensation of worshipping outdoors. The hall floor is covered with a striking patterned carpet which complements the softer colour scheme used for the ceiling and walls. The main entrance of the temple also follows the same decorative scheme but with two-toned coloured marble on the floor. When worshippers enter the building they are automatically directed towards the smaller entrance into the shoe-storage area and toilets. Once the worshippers have entered the prayer hall from this side entrance, many of them sit on the floor and recite verses of the holy books or just meditate. The main door of the prayer hall is hardly ever used as the point of entry, although some people do exit from it, especially if there happens to be a large congregation present. In addition, there is a back entrance to the building located at the end of the corridor and vestibule. People generally use this access point for other activities such as bringing food or engaging with other amenities in the temple. Today, however, more and more worshippers tend to use it because it also connects to a parking space belonging to the adjacent school, an institution which in turn belongs to the temple. Therefore worshippers who come by car often park there and enter through the back entrance into the temple.



Figure 93: Interior photos of Vishua Hindu Mandir



Figure 94: Interior photos showing the stage of the Deities

The interior plan also does not reflect any reference to symbols and meanings that are related to Hindu temples in India. But this does not act as any real hindrance from the fact that the *mandir*'s purpose of carrying out its main functions in the intended way, although some rituals have had to be adapted slightly. Worshippers are still able to pray to various *murtis*, and the *pandit* is still able to hold services. The temple has an added function which is not available in Hindu temples in India, since it acts as a community centre where different types of classes are performed.

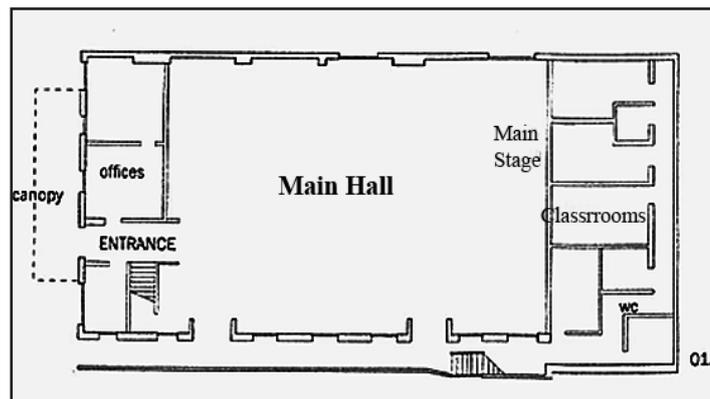


Figure 95: Ground floor plan of the mandir

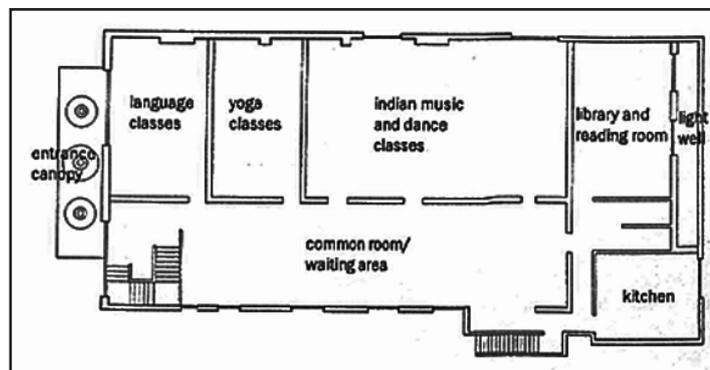


Figure 96: First floor plan of the mandir

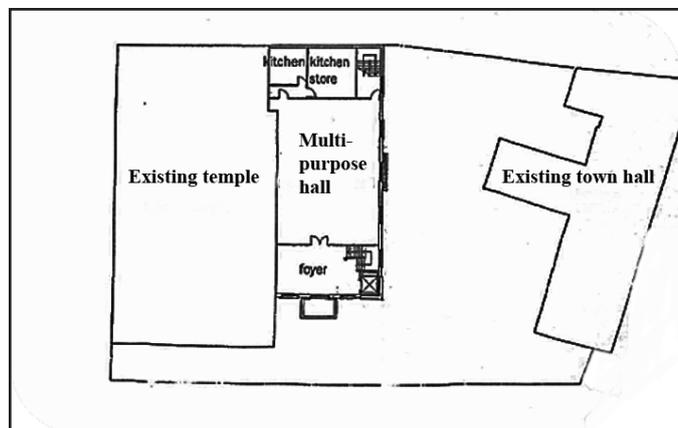


Figure 97: First floor of the community centre. (Design by GUG Architects).



Figure 98: Exterior photos of Shree Ram Mandir

The exterior of the temple building itself does not resemble a typical *mandir* form because it is not a purposely built, it is housed in a building designed as a church that is purposely built because of planning restrictions, it also does not represent a typical Hindu temple architecture but still it has more of a Hindu or Indian influence than the temple reflecting the need of the local Hindu community to express their Hindu identity. Yet, it is quite clear that the only Hindu symbol on the exterior is the *sikhara*, and again it is worth pointing that it is only used in its literal form not as a ritualistic and integral part of the temple, as the case in the Hindu temples in India. However, it was suggested by the committee members that the building could have taken a more expressive way in reflecting the Hindu culture if the planning authorities would have permitted more cultural elements to be added and adhered to. In the case of the community centre the planning authorities specified that the exterior of the community centre should blend in with the surrounding buildings because it is located within a residential area so that the building had to blend in with a domestic scale not as an imposing structure. The external materials used for the Vishnu Mandir are largely but not exclusively those of wood, stone and marble, in order to conform to traditional Hindu temple construction. There is however a brick feature as a hybrid element that conforms to the local council's recommendation about how to blend the building into the rest of the architecture in the street. From talking to worshippers, they generally seemed satisfied with the temple itself. They say that it is a good space for them, especially in terms of the placement of the deities as the focal point. And if the three *sikhara* structures are added to the temple entrance to promote a sense of cultural identity, these elements will undoubtedly satisfy the wishes of the worshippers as well as the committee that runs the temple. Although this temple does not conform overall to traditional ritualistic features, such as the precise location of the *khalsa*, nonetheless in terms of its function and symbolism it appears to be much appreciated by the local Hindu community in Southall.

4.2. Shree Ram Mandir

The temple of Shree Ram Mandir was in fact the first Hindu temple to be created in Southall, and has been used as such since 1971. Sitting on the site of what was formerly St John's Hall, the temple is still situated adjacent to the Protestant church of that name. The old church hall was purchased by the Hindu community as a place to use for communal prayer, but with the growing numbers of Hindus coming to Southall, and the limited space that the hall provided, the decision was eventually taken to demolish and replace it with a larger and far more appropriate building. Yet in 1982, the *mandir*'s

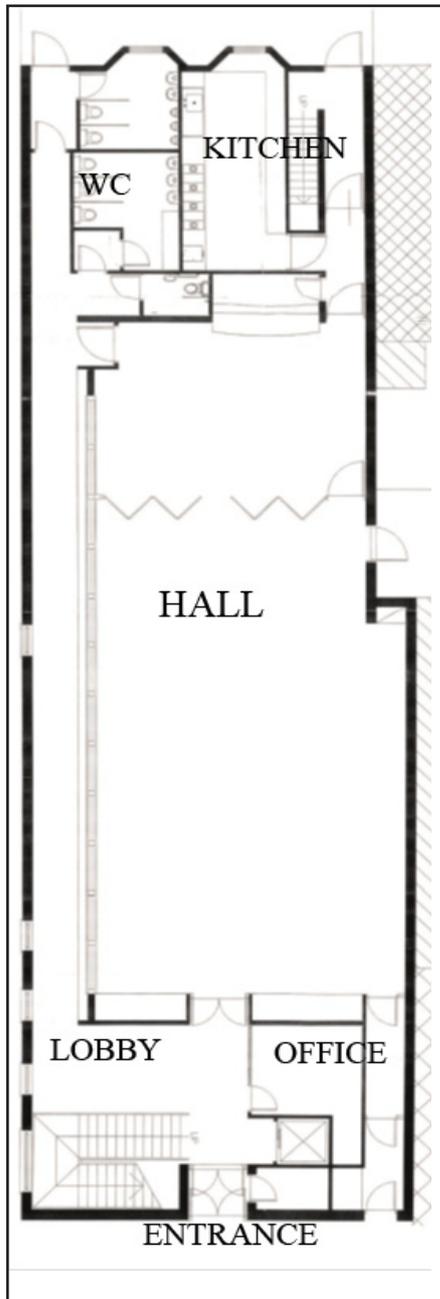


Figure 99: Ground floor plan

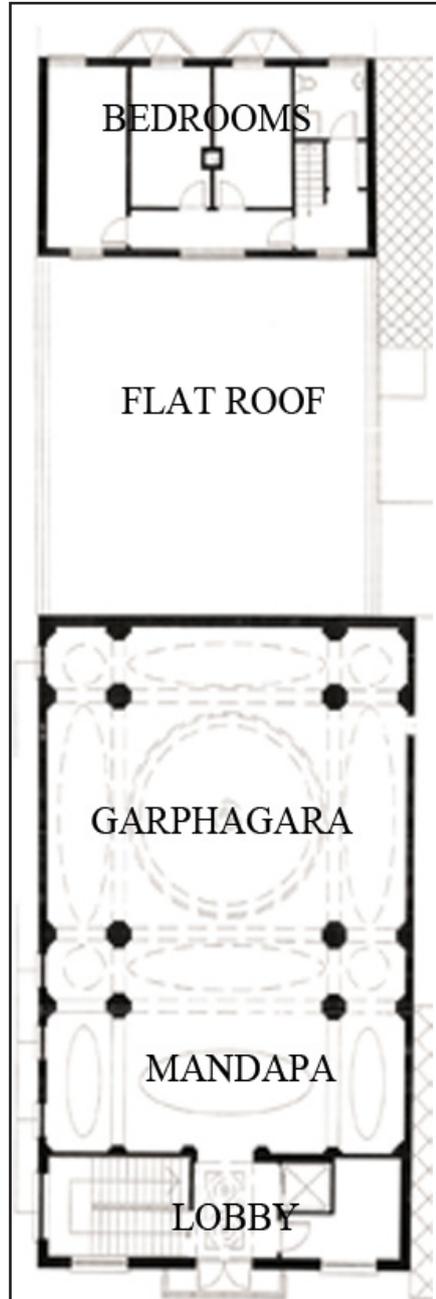


Figure 100: First floor plan

committee board were granted permission to demolish the existing building and to build a two-storey building in its place, but this scheme was not carried out. It received many objections from the local residents and shop owners who wrote objection letters to the local council, which included waste disposal and drainage problems, as well the noise and level coming from the temple, and the potential congestion of the street from car parking. Furthermore, in 1991, the temple committee applied for a new permission but this time it was for extending the building. However, this application was also refused on the ground that the site would be overdeveloped, especially with the lack of off-street parking within the area and ultimately disturb the surrounding local residents. Later a compromise scheme for the *mandir* was reached for its expansion and thus was granted a planning permission in 2000. The scheme was to demolish the existing building of the temple as well as the two houses to the rear on Elmsfield Road 15, 17. And in its place to build a larger *mandir* with clear Hindu elements on the top of the building. The temple will include an elaborate *sikharas*, shops, kitchen and use the two rear buildings for sleeping accommodation.³³ However, the existing building, does not include any elaborate *sikharas* they were scaled down and simplified. The finished building took 70 weeks to completed the work finished in July 2006.³⁴ And the committee applied for an enhancement of the façade on King Street which was granted in 2006. The scheme included the addition of 3 small *sikharas* at parapet level.³⁵



Figure 101: Interior of Shree Ram Mandir



Figure 102: Proposal for Shree Ram Mandir that was granted permission in 1982 by the Architectural and Research Partnership

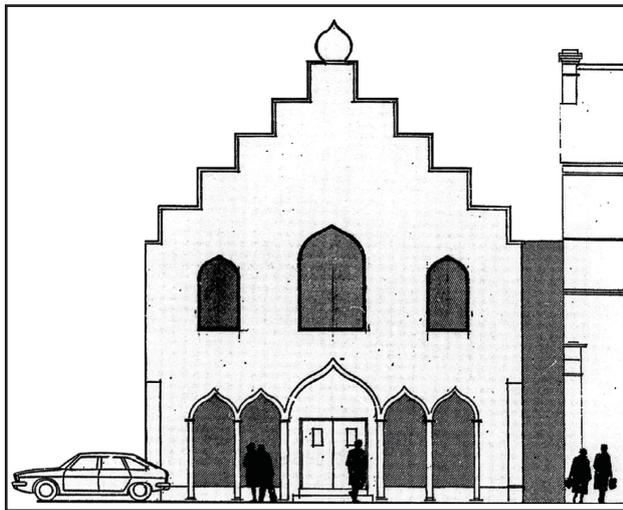


Figure 103: Proposal for Shree Ram Mandir that was refused permission in 1991



Figure 104: Elevation of mandir to King Street, as designed by Suresh Patel. The sikharas have not been developed to this extent

Architecture:

The temple is a purpose-built *mandir*. However, due to site restriction, the design of the temple was also restricted to be able to fit within the guidelines of the planning authorities. The exterior of the building consists of an entrance door, dome and a plain façade that resembles the materials used for the surrounding buildings that is of light coloured brick. The entrance door and the *sikharas* are the only indicators of the function of the building as a Hindu temple. The entrance door consists of an Indian wood carving motif which is visible only from a close distance. The *sikharas* on the other hand are in the middle of the roof and they are also only visible from the side of the building. Therefore, its location in the middle of the roof and the larger of the towers sits directly above the centre of the stage where sits the main *murti* of Ramu, this alignment of *sikhara* and the location of the *murti* forms the symbolic axis between the point where the *murti* sits and the heavens above. Making this essential element of the temple a successful example unlike the previous temple the Vishua Hindu Mandir. The exterior also includes small windows are small and there is a decorated balcony also with an Indian motif that sits above the entrance door. The rear of the building is connected to the two houses on Elmsfield Road where there is accommodation for priests and classrooms for students.

The interior consists of a ground floor where the kitchens and offices are located, and the first floor encloses the main hall or prayer hall which usually has 50 people present at any point, and there is hymnal singing on three days a week: Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. When full, the temple can hold around 350 people in its main hall, and there is also a small hall downstairs that can be used as well if needed, especially on special occasions. Yet in order to meet the diverse needs of the range of people who worship here, the plan of this *mandir* differs markedly from those in India. The social spaces, such as the office, shoe store, dining room, classrooms and library, are all situated on the ground floor, whereas in Indian temples they are all situated on the floor above. Here the prayer hall is situated on the first floor. As with the Vishwa Hindu Mandir, many deities can be worshipped here. As is explained on the *mandir's* website, this is due to the openness of the temple, inviting people of different backgrounds to worship. 'in a town where there are so many religious traditions that consider themselves truly Hindu, despite their different cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds, and which cannot support financially a place of worship of their own'.³⁶ The *mandir's* in this temple are placed on an L-shaped stage. The worshippers can start from any end of the L-shape

and make their way along to the end of the stage, then praying to each deity they pass. In this temple as well, there are several elements that do not conform fully to Hindu rituals and they are:

- 1- Circumambulation is not fully possible here, because there is a long route around the *murtis* therefore full circumambulation is not possible but there is a flow of movement around so it could be considered semi successful in achieving this part of the ritual.
- 2- The *garbha-dana* ceremony, where the pot of sacraments is buried, cannot take place because the prayer hall is located on the first floor.
- 3- The location of the prayer hall in the Shree Ram Mandir is on the first floor which causes problems because as the worshippers arrive the only thing that is visible is the langar, the kitchen, and the community centre which does not necessarily indicate its main use as a house of worship, especially if compared with the previously discussed Hindu temple where the prayer hall is on the ground floor as well; although Hindu rituals do not stress where the prayer hall should be located.
- 4- Another ritual that is carried out is the *havan*, but this takes place in the dining hall on the ground floor, due to fire regulations which require the placing of a large extractor fan rather than where it is usually located within the prayer hall in most Hindu temples in India.

As noted, the temple is not only used for religious activity: it also functions as a community centre which embraces many types of events for local organisations, or else gathers volunteers together for community work. There are Hindi language classes for young people, and rooms for the large-scale celebrations of holy days, which often include famous guest singers who are brought in from India or from around Britain.

The temple is open throughout the day with Brahman priests in attendance. It means that individuals and families can enter and freely undertake *darshan*, *pranam*, individual prayer and offerings, or prayers offerings with the assistance (in Sanskrit) of a priest, following all of which *prasad* is received. The main prayer ceremonies are performed by the priest at 7am and 7pm every day. For the rest of the time the hall remains open for any worshipper to use. Visitors say their prayer to their deity of choice, but they bow their head and fold their hands as a sign of respect to all of the other deities. Praying in Hindu is very much undertaken on a personal level: sometimes the priest can bless and read for the worshipper if asked to do so, but it is not actually necessary. The Shree Ram Mandir temple has also been made open to Nepalese people who cannot

find a place locally to worship, as well as in the case of immigrants from Mauritius who have also been openly welcomed.

The exterior and interior of Shree Ram Mandir has some elements that conform to Hindu architectural features and Hindu ritualistic features. These include, the *sikharas*, which were incorporated into the design according to the traditional Hindu rules and symbolic significance, thus making them more successful in meaning more than our previously discussed temple. The other elements, is that of the positioning of the *murtis*, which have not been possible to incorporate fully because this temple adapted to worship a number of deities, and thus accommodating Hindus from various backgrounds in West London, which was also due to the restrictions of building on a small site. More space is also needed for the community centre but due to site restrictions there is no room for expansion anywhere in Southall.

An essential feature that was taken into consideration prior to the construction of the building was the need to direct the deities so that they looked towards the east, which was easily achievable without major architectural contortions, given that the building's main orientation is indeed in that direction. The architectural style is clearly recognisable as a Hindu temple but at the same time it is not extravagant in design. Rather, the main focus was on framing the full-size deities brought over from India.³⁷

Another explanation other than the restriction of space for locating the prayer hall on the first floor was made by the temple's head priest, Sandeep Bhatia. He stated that 'the modern temple design, especially within new urban areas, is mostly done on two floors, the ground floor being the social-public area and the first floor as the worship section. This was mainly done to respect the sanctity of the space and to provide a quiet area for devotees to worship in peace'.³⁸ Also, according to the same priest, this kind of sectional organisation is a fairly recent trend in temple design – as found all over the world, including the Indian subcontinent – and it is due to the increasingly multi-functional role of modern Hindu temples. This was clearly manifest during my visits to the temple, when there were as many as 200 people in the ground floor spaces between the entrance, food area and offices, creating an atmosphere of families and friends socializing. By comparison, the first floor praying areas had only about 25-30 people during the course of my visits. All this emphasized the statement made by the priest about the social/religious split inside the temple.

This particular temple conforms to Peach and Gale's fourth stage of the planning cycle 'embracing and celebration' – re-becoming more accepting of purpose-built religious buildings that express the identity of the groups that wish to use them. The planning authorities also set out certain conditions regarding this temple throughout its history and they are: After the refusal of the proposed alterations in 1991, a number of reasons were given that range between the lack of parking, the adverse effect on the neighbours and the overdevelopment of the land. These problems were also noted in the proposals submitted in 2000, but that design was later granted a planning permission. However there was no clear reason for granting this design and not the previous one planning permissions by the local authorities, unless comparing this situation with other planning histories of other houses of worship in the area, and the tendency within the past decade of the planning department within the council to ease the restrictions for building houses of worship that belong to the multi-ethnic community that is increasing in number in Southall.

4.3 Key aspects of Southall's Hindu temples

There are certain fascinating architectural and cultural aspects of the Hindu temples in Southall that could be categorized as being unique, whether in terms of their location, their service to the community, or their cultural features. These aspects include:

1. Shree Ram Mandir was not only the first temple of its kind in Southall, but also as well as in nearby areas such as Harrow, Ealing and Hounslow. Even though since then many more temples have opened in west and north London – especially the enormous and more famous Hindu temple in Neasden – yet because worshippers have become so used to driving large distances to visit this original temple in Southall, they still continue to do so. This is for reasons of prayer as well as the other community services that the temple provides, and above all the pioneer status that this particular temple still holds among its devotees.
2. The architectural style used for both of the current Hindu temples in Southall wasn't felt to be of particular importance, largely because of the existence of the temple in Neasden³⁹, which is an undoubtedly monumental and ostentatious building. Instead

these Southall temples are mainly intended to serve the Hindu communities in a much quieter and understated manner, both in terms of their spiritual and secular purposes.

3. As noted, special importance was given to the size and direction of the deities, and these represent a statement and display of prominence for each of the temples especially because they had to be brought over especially from India.³⁴
4. There is a strong sense of openness and welcoming in both Hindu temples in Southall, even for non-Hindus such as myself. The temple clergy were particularly helpful in terms of providing the necessary historical and architectural information needed for this study (in notable contrast to the clergy in all of the other kinds of religious buildings in Southall).
5. The Shree Ram Mandir accommodates worshippers from many ethnicities as well as worshippers from many surrounding areas, and it clearly serves the southern part of town as compared with the other Hindu temple in Southall, which accommodates mainly people from the northern districts.
6. The Vishwa Hindu mandir contains a large library of Punjabi books and newspapers which attract substantial numbers of visitors throughout the day – whereas Shree Ram Mandir is a favourite place for a number of older women to meet and socialize from day to day.
7. While congregational modes of worship are increasing in popularity and social importance amongst British Indians, both of these Hindu temples continue to perpetuate the more usual Indian pattern of individually performed worship. People, with or without their families, drop by the temple during the day, while collective participation is generally only undertaken at specific times. This fact was also highlighted by Baumann in regard to the congregations of the two temples, when he states that the fact ‘the two [Hindu] congregations have failed to differentiate into two sub-communities is remarkable. Sikh gurdwaras and Christian churches showed quite the opposite trend ... There may well be supra-local reasons for this, such as the continuing importance of domestic worship.’²⁴¹

8. These two examples of *mandirs* in Southall, one of them converted and one new-build, demonstrate that in both cases the traditional temple layout from India simply could not be replicated. The form of worship and rituals also had to be adapted due to certain restrictions faced in London, as well as the need to cater for Hindus from a variety of backgrounds. As a result the Hindu community has had to compromise in terms of the layout of the mandir and with regard to the way they perform their religious ceremonies and rituals. Knott explains that traditionally Hindu worship must follow extensive requirements; the correct enactment of rituals, which are to be carried out at the right time of day and year by a fully educated practitioner, all in a building that has a specific layout.⁴² She also notes that at times these requirements can be difficult to achieve, even in India, let alone in the Britain. However, Sandeep Bhatia, the committee member I spoke to, stated that the requirements for the temple building are easier to fulfil in India, because, ‘in India you can do what you want, you can build it how you want to build it.’ In England, these rules change depending on many planning and legal requirements. The planning department also has a very large role to play in the appearance of these buildings. While they have allowed, and even welcomed, exotic features such as the *sikharas* on the roofs and elevations of the two Southall *mandirs*, other restrictions, such as using materials that match existing buildings, ensure that these buildings mostly blend in with their surroundings.
9. It is also significant that the two *mandirs* in Southall claim that there are no differences between them. They are dedicated to different deities (one Vishnu, and the other Ramu); however, in an attempt to cater to all of the Hindu community, a large number of *murtis* have been installed, and both *mandirs* carry out the same services.

5. Sikh temples in Southall

Given the sizeable number of people of its faith in Southall, it is perhaps not surprising that there are a total of nine Sikh temples in the area. They are as follows:

1-Gurdwara Nankar



Figure 105: Photographs of Gurdwara Nankar

2-Shri Guru Ravidas Sabha



Figure 106: Photographs of Shri Guru Ravidas Sabha

3-Ramgarhia Sabha



Figure 107: Photographs of Ramgarhia Sabha

4- Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Park Avenue)



Figure 108: Photographs of Sri Guru Singh Sabha

5-Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Havelock Road)



Figure 109: Photograph of Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha

6-Guru Granth Gurdwara



Figure 110: Photographs of Guru Granth Gurdwara

7-Gurdwara Miri Piri Sahib



Figure 111: Photographs of Gurdwara Miri Piri Sahib

8-Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar



Figure 112: Photographs of Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar

9-Shromani Akali Dal

Given the need to reduce the number of examples studied in this chapter, I have chosen the two *gurdwaras* that belong to the same committee because one of them is the largest *gurdwara* outside of India, and it is purpose-built: the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha on Havelock Road. The other, which is of the same name but sits on Park Avenue, is a much smaller *gurdwara* and sits in a converted building. They both offer the extremes of how the Sikh community worships in Southall. First we will look at the smaller temple on Park Avenue.

5.1. Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Park Avenue)

The first temples or *gurdwaras* in Britain were first established by Sikhs from the Indian subcontinent who had emigrated in the 1950s and early-1960s. By then a significant

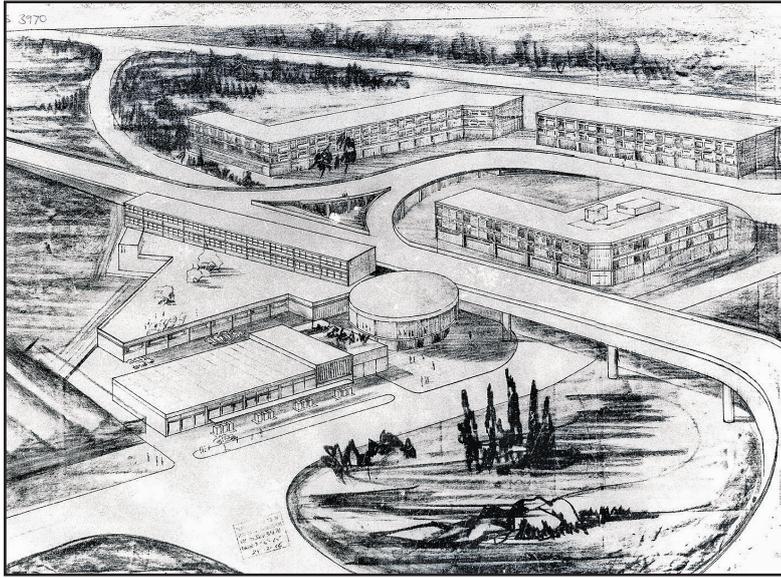


Figure 113: Proposal for the Park Avenue gurdwara designed by Ivan Nellist and Ian Blundell in 1965.

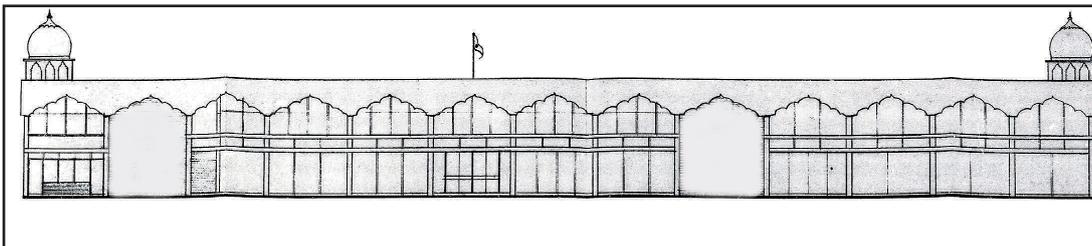


Figure 114: The existing elevation of the Park Avenue gurdwara, showing the proposed alterations by Swaran Singh in 1984

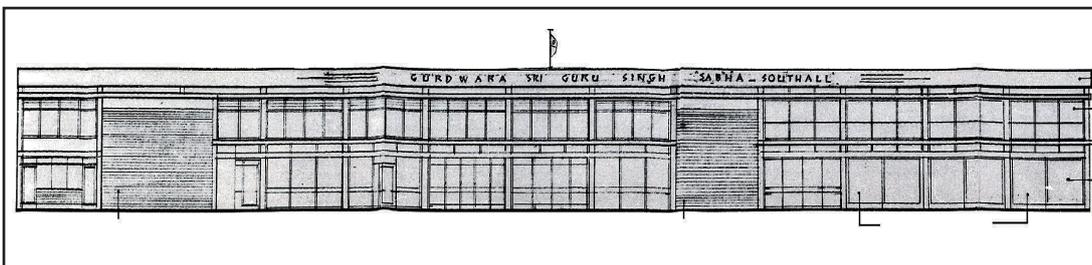


Figure 115: The existing 2011 elevation of the Park Avenue gurdwara

number of Sikhs were living in Britain, and the main congregational gathering tended to be held at the Shepherd's Bush Gurdwara. Then, in order to accommodate the rapidly growing number of Southall Sikhs, a board called the Southall Sikh Cultural Society was established in 1960. This organization held its Sunday services at Shackleton Hall until it moved to 11 Beaconsfield Road. The emigration of many Malaysian and Singaporean Sikhs led to the formation of yet another group, called Sri Guru Nanak Singh Sabha. The two groups remained independent until 1964 when they merged as the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (SGSSS). The first *gurdwara* on Park Avenue dates back to 1952 when it first appears in the planning files, having previously been the site of the Vibrated Concrete Company Ltd. Later there had many changes to the use of this building, it changed from offices to a car showroom and to a supermarket before it became a *gurdwara*.⁴³

The committee of SGSSS first bought this site in 1984 as an extra space for the existing *gurdwara* on Havelock Road.⁴⁴ Due to the extra space that was needed for the increasing Sikh community in the area. Also the design that was proposed for the redevelopment of the Havelock Road site proved to be too expensive for the budget and it could not be carried out.⁴⁵ The committee agreed on proposed exterior alterations on the Park Avenue *gurdwara*, and plans were approved in 1984 with additional panels on the façade and the addition of four domes on the roof.⁴⁶ However, these plans were not implemented for the exterior due to lack of funds, apart from the alterations for the interior which were implemented by the committee and it was believed to have cost £1.22 million. These interior alterations suggest that these took place because it was essential to worship. But still they did not completely abandon the idea of a larger scheme proposed over the following decade, such as an extension at roof level and two-storey side and rear extensions, but these too were not carried out. The alterations that have been made to the exterior of the Park Avenue *gurdwara* are the addition of very small extensions to the side and rear of the building, as part of the kitchen. Indeed, the only addition that suggests the building is indeed a Sikh temple is the flagpole, a clear symbol of Sikhism, which was erected in 1987, the same year as one was erected at the other *gurdwara* on the Havelock Road site.

Architecture:

The *gurdwara* is located next to the train station on Park Avenue. Its location was believed to be an advantage because of its location within an open site and the availability



Figure 116: Exterior photos of the main and side entrances to the Park Avenue gurdwara

of parking spaces. These two elements ensure the prominence of this gurdwara and its popularity among the Sikh population in the area. Also according to the committee, these two elements could prove to be essential for extra space in the case for future expansion if needed.

The exterior of the existing building consists of orange/yellow coloured tiles that makes up the roof canopy and continues throughout the other elevations of the building. The rest of the elevations however, follows a very industrial pattern that was popular in 1960s furniture showrooms, which consists of panels and glass. The only element in the exterior of the building that could describe it as a *gurdwara* are the *Nishan Sahib* flag on the main entrance of the building and the signs identifying the name of the *gurdwara* that are located on the main and side entrances of the building. These signs are written in both English and Punjabi script.

The main door leads to the interior entrance which encloses the two shoe storage areas located on either side of the entrance door, also it encloses the main prayer hall and the *langar*. The main prayer hall or the *diwan hall* is located opposite the entrance and covers almost the entire length of the building on the ground floor level yet with the full double height of the entire building. And since the building is a converted showroom the space that was dedicated for offices on the second level which covers one side of the width of the building over the *langar* area. The interior walls are covered by windows to enable the people to view the main prayer hall. There is also a generous size *langar*, or food preparation area, which crosses the whole width of the west side of the building. The first floor contains another smaller prayer room, and the *granthi's* rooms and the committee offices. The main hall also has a side entrance that is dedicated to wheelchairs which sits slightly on a lowered ramp than the rest of the prayer hall enabling disabled worshippers to listen to the prayers. The interior is decorated rather very simply, the main prayer hall is minimally decorated with plain white walls and a patterned floor carpet, the east side of the gurdwara contains the stage of the Guru Granth Sahib *palki*, which is the only highly decorated element in the room apart from the square patterned orange, blue and white carpet which contrasts in colour and pattern to the entrance carpet of a green colour and a busy pattern and again clashes with the rugs that cover the *langar*. This, according to the committee member Mr Ajit Singh, is due to the nature of the donations from the members of the congregation who donate items that do not match or complement the space also due to the lack of funds. The *langar* however, has some wall hangings that are photographs depicting key moments in the history of Sikhism.



Figure 117: Prayer hall



Figure 118: Entrance to the prayer hall



Figure 119: Langar (food preparation area)

The Park Avenue *gurdwara* is extremely busy, indeed it is always busier than the larger counterpart *gurdwara* on Havelock Road. Ajit Singh explained that when the congregation had to temporarily move to the Park Avenue site during the construction of the newer *gurdwara*, many people simply never moved back. The Park Avenue *gurdwara* contains many features that make it even more accessible and popular with its worshippers:

- 1- The prayer rooms and the entrance are all on one level, i.e. the ground level, and therefore a lot of the older members of the congregation come here for worship because it has easy access for them, especially for wheelchair users. It also seems to be easier to attend many other community functions such as socialising with friends, working in the *langar*, or helping to organise events.⁴⁷
- 2- This single-storey layout also achieves one of the key purposes of the traditional *gurdwara*, which is, the central focus on the Guru Granth Sahib. Because the prayer hall can be seen immediately when entering the *gurdwara*, its decorative *palki* draws attention straight to the statue.

The Park Avenue *gurdwara* has had no extensions, and the only addition to the exterior is large marquee at the exterior elevation of the building, yet the committee is now intending to apply for extensions that are needed to create spaces for wedding ceremonies, perhaps another prayer hall, and classrooms. If these were built however, they would still all continue to be on ground level, as the community has experienced the logistical problems of having the *gurdwara* spread over a number of floors at the Havelock Road building which we will see later.⁴⁸

Historically, the planning document records reveal that there was never a great deal of objection to developments on the Park Avenue site. This is probably due to the fact that this *gurdwara* is not directly next to any residential areas, and no large alterations have ever taken place. Certainly this building conforms to the second stage of the planning cycle suggested by Peach and Gale, in relation to the development of religious buildings, that of a ‘larger-scale conversion with minimalist change.’⁴⁹

5.2 Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Havelock Road):

The year 1964 saw the first purpose-built *gurdwara* built in the Southall area. It was situated on Southall Green, and acted as the headquarters of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha



Figure 120: Photos of the *gurdwara* in the 1980s on the Havelock Road site.
(Council archives)

group.⁵⁰ When a dairy building at Havelock Road was subsequently put onto the market, it was quickly purchased to be redeveloped for the 300th anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh's birth in 1666. An application was submitted to the local council for the demolition of the dairy building and the construction of a three-storey *gurdwara*. The proposal for this *gurdwara* however received great opposition from local residents. Their main objections were the use of the building as a Sikh place of worship, the adverse impact on amenities through noise generated by the 'religious chanting' and 'feasting', as well as traffic congestion and the overshadowing it would cause to some houses.⁵¹ Another factor at the time was that there was still a substantial White community living in Southall, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, there was then a heightened element of racial contestation in local politics. Therefore support for such a scheme by White residents would perhaps not have been expected. The planning application was refused on the grounds that the site was not capable of providing accommodation for the demands of the *gurdwara*, there were inadequate parking facilities, and it would cause disturbance to neighbours. An appeal was made the following year and was again refused. Throughout the 1970s there has been small alteration to this *gurdwara*, and the quality of the building was highly deteriorating, with unacceptable sanitation and food preparation facilities.⁵² Therefore by 1989, the council applied for a new planning permission to renovate the building, and the planning committee finally agreed especially the inadequacies of the existing *langar* and toilet facilities. Then the committee commissioned the architect, M.S. Mangat, to do these renovations. He stated that this scheme was to be designed so that it did not resemble or be compared to a church, mosque, or Hindu temple. He believed indeed, that his design was successful in 'marrying old Indian architecture with a modern structure,'⁵³ and thus giving it an image of Sikhism. And this scheme did not have much local opposition especially within the council members. A local Labour Councillor, Thomas Cheesman, raised concerns with the overdevelopment of the site, stating that, 'the design, although most delightful, should be on an open site like Ealing Common.'⁵⁴ This design however proved to be too costly,⁵⁵ so the redevelopment scheme was not built, and the alternative site on Park Avenue was purchased to allow expansion. Later they erected the *Nishan Sahib* flag in 1987 outside of the main entrance marking a more prominent presence in the area.

The acquisition of the Park Avenue site in 1994 was to enable the closure of the Havelock Road *gurdwara* and to redevelop it as a more prominent looking temple which would give an adequate image of the growing Sikh community in the area. The local council's justification for granting permission for this ambitious plan stated that

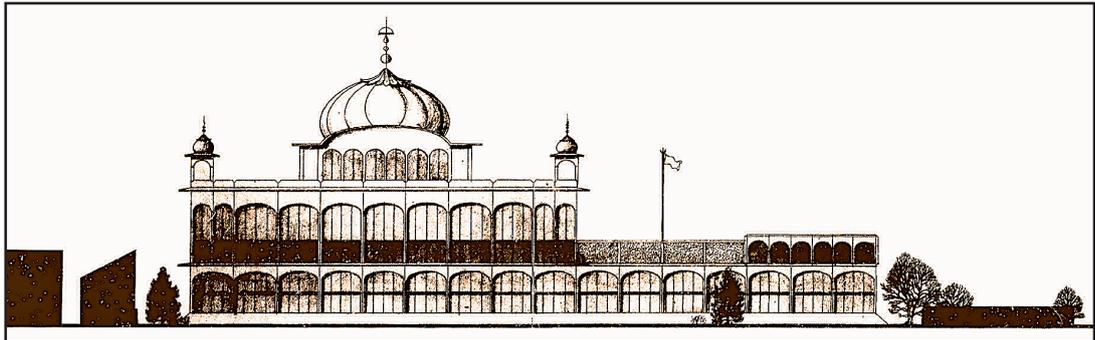


Figure 121: Proposal for a new gurdwara in 1978 by V.D. Gajjar

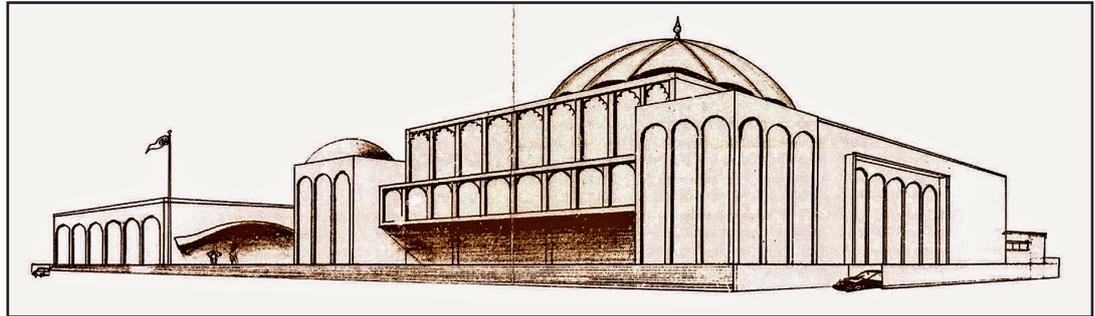


Figure 122: Proposal in 1981 by M.S. Mangat

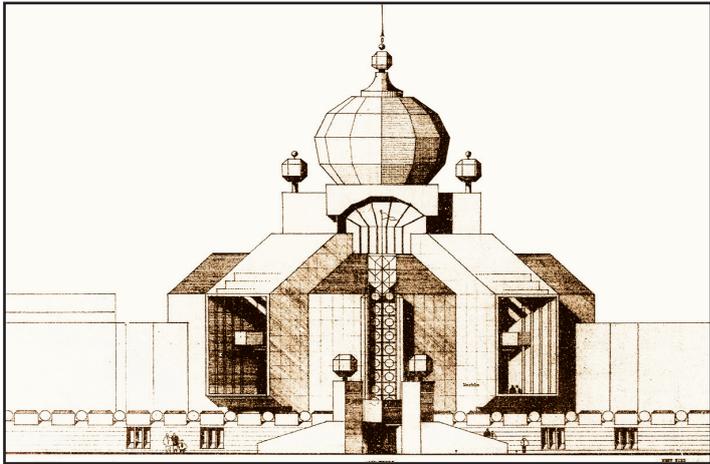


Figure 123: Proposal in 1992 by Flora Associates

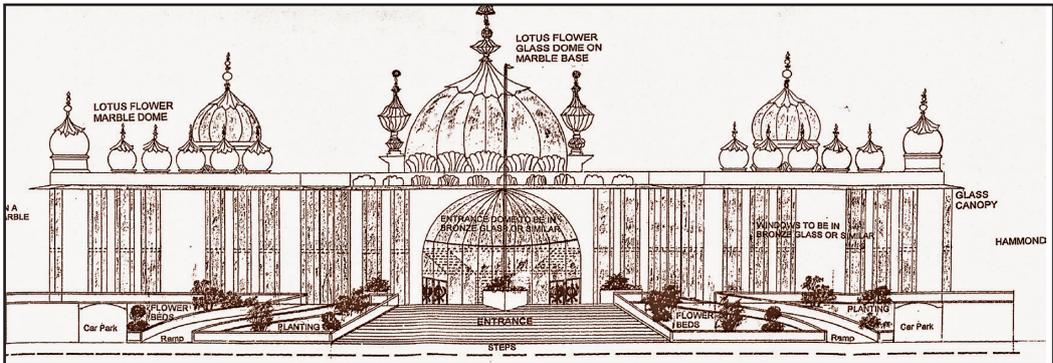


Figure 124: Proposal in 1995 by Lacombs Ltd.

the 'ornate redevelopment' was 'an exciting introduction to the townscape of Southall', indicating that the planning department had by then moved to what Peach and Gale term the 'embracing and celebration' phase.⁵⁶ The local council also stated that this new *gurdwara* development fulfilled the requirement to foster a wide range of community facilities in the borough.⁵⁷ These statements by the local council certainly marked the beginning of a new phase towards the growing awareness of the council to cater for the needs of the then minority communities in the area. And in 1981 a set of plans that were altered from the scheme by M.S Mangat has been resubmitted and slightly altered by Architects Co-Partnership (ACP) in 1998, that was approved and later completed. This scheme was considered to provide 'an important community building which would also contribute significantly to the built environment as an attractive landmark building without giving rise to any material loss of amenity to neighbours.'⁵⁸ Architects Co-Partnership (ACP) won the competition to design the temple. This particular practice was a British firm that had previously worked a lot on airport design. The building committee discussed with the rest of their Sikh community what was needed and intended from the design of the new temple, and the result of all this input was the demand for a modern interpretation of the traditional *gurdwara*. The local planning department offered no objections to the intended designs, and hence no restrictions were imposed on the choice of materials or on the use of obvious Sikh references. This was because the climate of opinion within the planning department had changed considerably by that time, with a Sikh planning officer being in charge of the case. It was agreed by all that the new building should form a prominent landmark in Southall to convey symbolic meaning and foster cultural identity within the Sikh community – not just in Southall, but also in Britain and abroad.

The architects themselves felt, and were also encouraged by the building committee, that it was important to visit India in order to see original *gurdwara* architecture within its natural climate, as well as to inspect what were the materials used to see how these would fit within the English climate.⁵⁹ However, it appears debatable as to who decided exactly which *gurdwaras* they were to visit, whether it was the architects or the building committee. In any case, staff from ACP went over to the Punjab, and visited nine different towns and cities to examine around 40 *gurdwaras* there.⁶⁰ What soon became obvious to them is that Sikh *gurdwaras* differed significantly in design and size, as well as in materials and methods of construction. As a part of their visit, they were encouraged to try to identify certain elements that could be seen as essential to *gurdwara* architecture – the idea being that these elements could then be reproduced in

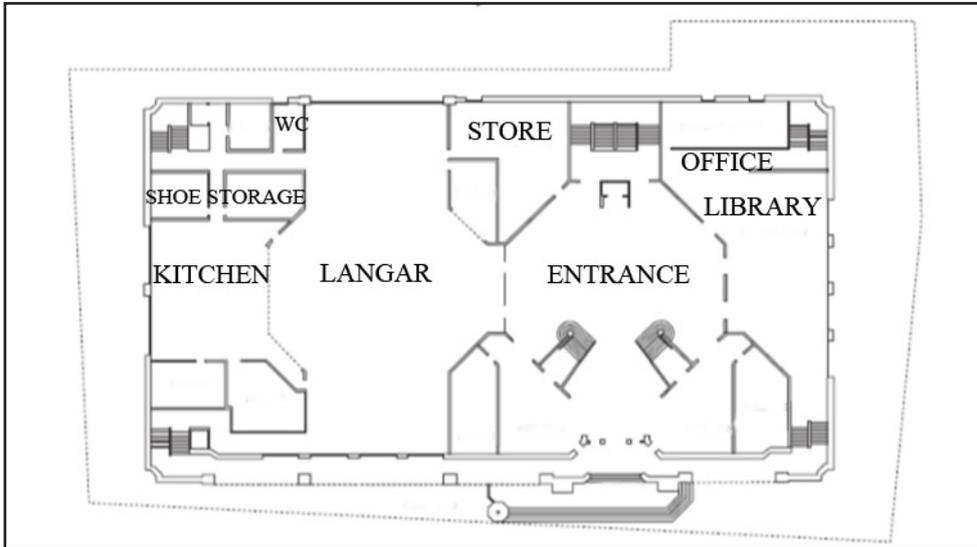


Figure 125: Ground floor plan of the gurdwara on Havelock Road

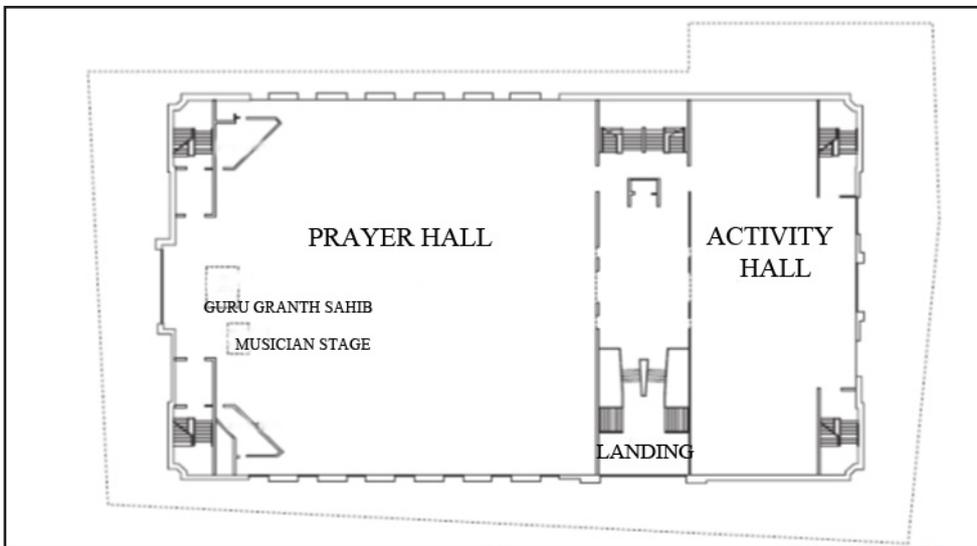


Figure 126: First floor plan

(Source: Ealing council records)

a new interpretation to fit within the context of the London cityscape. The elements they defined were:

- 1- Domes: these are an important element in Sikh temples, especially the use of fluted dome across the Punjab. The domes are traditionally decorated with finials at the top and leaf patterns at their base.
- 2- Materials: traditionally marble is used for the exterior of Sikh temples in India.
- 3- Entrance terrace: the external terrace or gathering space of a gurdwara leads directly into the prayer hall where the Guru Granth Sahib is situated.⁶¹ This expresses the central focus on the holy book, as well as presenting the religion as being open and accessible to all.
- 4- Flag: The Nishan Sahib flag is regarded as a vital element of a gurdwara as it signifies the presence of the Khalsa in the neighbourhood
- 5- *Langar*: however this room for eating food does not traditionally have a fixed position in relation to the prayer hall.
- 6- Interior decorations and motifs: internal decoration varies amongst gurdwaras, but there is characteristically shaped stonework, particularly in terms of the shape of columns and the scalloped arches over doors and windows.
- 7- Jali screens: the use of these screens is very popular in gurdwaras in India, and ACP observed that the screens are used as means of security while also ensuring airflow throughout the building.

The redesigned and expanded Havelock Road gurdwara was opened in March 2003, and as noted is the largest *gurdwara* anywhere outside India. It cost £17 million to build, which is considered a huge amount of money in comparison with the modest plans for the other *gurdwara* on the Park Avenue site.

The gurdwara on Havelock Road thus gives the image of an imposing Moghul-style building that has been described as ‘one of the largest regeneration projects in Southall’, befitting the ambition of the local Sikh community to ‘create a temple second only to the Golden Temple in Amritsar’.⁶² The temple has the capacity to hold 10,000 people and it can serve up to 20,000 meals during weekends.

As mentioned previously, *gurdwaras* generally serve two purposes: spiritual and temporal. This is especially true of the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Havelock Road. The temple is open at all times for individual prayer and as well as for communal prayer. There are also other functions that are performed such as weddings, baby naming



Figure 127: Exterior photographs of Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Havelock Road

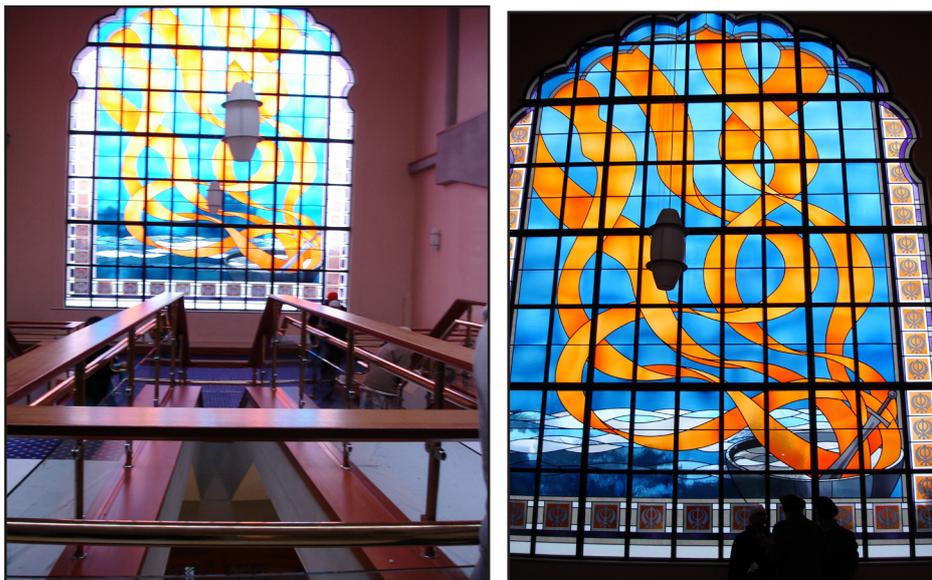


Figure 128: Photographs of the main stained glass window with its Sikh symbol

ceremonies. But the temple has clearly been built at a far larger scale than its daily activities actually require. While the *gurdwara* can take 10,000 people, or for some festivals as many as 15,000 people can occupy all the three floors, on a normal day its worshippers are usually somewhere around only 200-300 people.

Moreover, prayer in the Havelock Road *gurdwara* involves reading from the scriptures, incorporating singing and music. The holy scriptures are brought out from the special rooms located at the gallery level in the morning, and then they are read by the priest who opens the book at random and starts to read from the left-hand page. Later on comes a citation, accompanied by music, followed by an explanation from the priests at special times. The worshippers pray twice, early in the morning and late at night; they come in the temple and face the scripture shrine, then walk towards it and bow their head, or sometimes they lie prostrate, or they sit or listen to the readings and music.⁶³ Later still, or before they leave, the worshippers give a donation (as a token of respect) in a specially designated place. When leaving, the worshipper does not present their back to the holy scriptures; instead they leave by walking backwards, as in all Sikh temples.

Architecture:

The Havelock Road *gurdwara* is designed to be an imposing building which can be seen from very far away, and hence it operates on a monumental scale. However, it also sits on a very restricted site it is surrounded by housing on three sides, and a main road on the fourth side. As a result the building's functions need to be spread over a number of storeys. Therefore, the architects took this restricted site into consideration in the design, while trying to implement the elements discussed previously that they identified as the essential features of Sikh temples. The elements were implemented in the following manner:

1- The main central dome that sits above the holy book is finished in gold leaf, while the surrounding ten smaller ones are white, as is common with domes in India.⁶⁴ A rectangular dome sits above the main entrance, which also is a feature of Indian *gurdwaras*.⁶⁵ The planning documents reveal some last minute alterations that had to be made to certain elements of the domes during the construction phase so as to avoid visual similarities with Islamic architecture. Thus the first error that ACP had to get round was that the dome shape originally specified was of Mughal design. A second error was that the dome on the roof of the prayer hall had been specified as being



Figure 129: The main prayer hall



Figure 130: View from the smaller prayer hall (or activity hall).

copper, which in time would have turned green, a colour that is more often associated with mosques.⁶⁶

2- In terms of materials, the architects initially suggested that Portland stone was going to be used as a more climatically-suitable alternative to more traditional Indian marble, as shown by the planning documents, but it was soon realised that this would be too expensive and also unsuitable because it would become discoloured due to general pollution and fumes from the gurdwara's kitchen.⁶⁷ So instead ACP used German polished limestone for the main section of the building, and Brazilian granite for the floor and for the entrance columns.⁶⁸ Also according to the ACP spokesperson, they originally thought of having more ornamental doors and windows, similar to gurdwaras in India, but this could not be achieved within the budget. Therefore, the architects employed simplified versions of the ornate carvings found on window and door arches in India.

3- Due to site restriction, there couldn't be the usual exterior front terrace to express the openness of the gurdwara, and the prayer hall had instead to be located up on the first floor. And as an alternative to the front terrace, a large entrance hall was situated on the ground floor to serve as a gathering space for worshippers, especially during important Sikh festivals.⁶⁹

4- At SGSSS in Havelock Road, the Nishan-Sahib flag is located at the main entrance to the building, a very prominent location which can be seen from the main road, thereby conforming to traditional Sikh gurdwara design.

5- The *langar* or food area is a rather large room with a hatch opening onto the kitchen area. The middle section has long rugs on the floor for people to sit and eat on, and located in the two sides of the room are chairs and canteen-style tables for people wishing to sit in the western style. This latter element is new to Sikh temples, as traditionally in all gurdwaras the food is eaten on the floor.

6- The level of internal decoration is not very elaborate in this gurdwara. The pattern adopted is continued by the timber beams which form the structure for the dome that appears to float above the prayer hall. However, this particular Southall gurdwara also has one very distinctive feature that sets it apart from others of its kind, this being the use of stained-glass windows as a motif borrowed from western architecture. Indeed it has stained-glass windows on all its four facades, a clear indication of being an example of hybrid architecture; indeed, it is the first British gurdwara to incorporate such indigenous elements that embody the architectural heritage of the city it is located in. The design, however, which is set into the stained glass on the main façade is that of the symbol of Sikhs, the khalsa. The design itself carries a clear symbolic significance,

khalsa emblems are located on three sides of the window, and in the bottom right-hand corner, when viewed from inside the building, is a khandra; the double-edged sword which rests inside a big bowl, out of which arise five saffron-coloured bands (saffron being the symbolic Sikh colour). There are a further three stained-glass windows on the other three façades; the window on the main façade mainly brings daylight into the entrance area and the stairs that lead up to the upstairs halls, while two of the other stained-glass windows provide daylight for two smaller prayer halls, and as such are identical in design. There is also a band of clerestory windows which surrounds the main gallery.

7- In this gurdwara, the Jali screens are used for decoration purposes only, in the sense of screens in front of windows, around the perimeter of prayer hall, for the timber railings on the staircase, and in the langar area to screen off the washing section.

The existing building therefore consists of three floors along with a basement level that houses the parking spaces. The ground floor plan features two octagonal areas: the west octagon contains the entrance foyer, library, office and vertical circulation, while the east octagon has the langar. The entrance also contains a panoramic lift that reaches all three floors for wheelchair users, as well as for elderly people who find it hard to take the many stairs. The first floor consists of two halls, one larger and another smaller. The main prayer hall also has an octagonal plan and sits directly above the langar. The rest of the first floor contains the second space which is a multi-purpose hall. The second floor then consists of a gallery overlooking the main prayer hall – again conforming to an octagonal shape – as well as a committee room and priests' accommodation.

In terms of its interior arrangement, the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Havelock Road varies greatly. The ground floor includes the entrance with its huge open space of marble floors and marble-clad walls and stairs (no expense was spared). The entrance also includes toilets, library, lift and the food preparation area. The library however is designed to occupy a large prominent area in order to highlight the significant role that this particular gurdwara is undertaking as the most important monument in Britain of Sikh identity. Therefore the library area includes shelves with a multitude of books, as well as tables for scholars or guests who wish to read there. The topics of these books range from Sikh religion to Indian culture, politics, history, etc. There is a reception area next to the library, with an information desk and offices for the staff and the director of the gurdwara, along with a general-purpose meeting room. A marble staircase with wooden balustrades rises up to the first floor. The landing of these stairs looks back

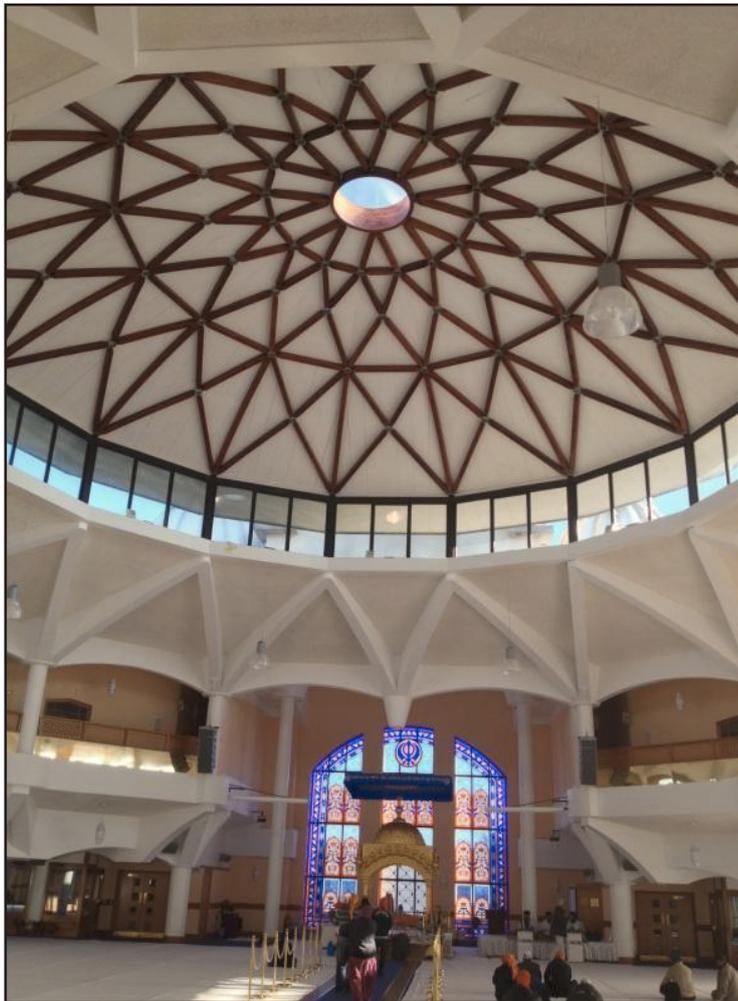


Figure 132: Photos showing children visiting the temple

down over the main stained-glass windows of the entrance façade. The next floor consists of two additional spaces for prayer: a huge open main hall that contains the central shrine, defined by an embellished golden canopy, where the scriptures are kept; and then a second smaller hall that is used for smaller special occasions. This hall also has its own central shrine but in this case the shrine ‘only’ has a silver canopy on top. The second floor consists of a gallery around the main temple with a ribbed dome with clerestory windows on top, and it provides extra space for worshippers, especially at the time of the main festivals. The gallery also provides rooms for prayers at night, where the scriptures are kept, and so after dark these rooms are left open.

Points about the architecture of SGSSS:

- The spokesman from the building committee, Mr Ajit Singh, explained that initially they wanted an even larger site for the intended gurdwara but that it was also seen as vital to have the building located in Southall, as the majority of the congregation lived there. The site the building now sits on was the only one offered by the council and thus, given the non-availability of any larger site within the Southall area, they decided to remain on Havelock Road. According to the building committee, the key aim of the design of the new SGSSS was then to create a modern interpretation of a traditional gurdwara . This ambition has led to some important aspects of the building:

- The traditional Sikh features that have been retained are primarily the external architectural elements, as mentioned previously such as the main dome and the symbolic flag, since they enhance the appearance of grandeur. The gilded dome stands out from the smaller white ones, signifying the position of the Guru Granth Sahib below. Apart from another one indicating the position of the main entrance, the remaining nine domes do not seem to have a specific purpose, and so are there for visual effect. However, the design of the domes was also intended by the building committee, and the architects, to make the building stand out from the surrounding area with its typical British houses. Moreover, while these forms do have spiritual meaning, their presence was also to reinforce the sense of ‘Sikhism’ or ‘non-Britishness’ of the building. The decision to change the colour of the dome, as discussed previously, certainly demonstrates the concomitant desire for the building to stand apart from those of other religious communities in Southall.

- The design also has some elements that embody the idea of hybrid architecture,



Figure 133: Photo showing the extra space on the stair landing

with a borrowing from indigenous architectural forms. Prime among them are the stained glass windows. The two stained-glass windows in the two prayer halls have an intended purpose of drawing attention to the Guru Granth Sahib, while the third gives prominence to the building's entrance. As other examples, the building stones from Europe were used to comply with English weather, not to suit Indian tradition, and the overall plan layout of the gurdwara had to be altered to suit the site limitations.

- The use of octagonal room plans is not a new feature to this purpose-built gurdwara. Indeed it refers back to the earliest forms of gurdwaras, which were often based upon such geometrical shapes. However, the octagonal forms in the Havelock Road building are not immediately apparent to the user since they are set within the larger rectangular plan. And other elements seen as essential to gurdwaras in India, such as a front pool and gateway, were not used in this gurdwara for reasons that could not be explained by the president of the gurdwara.⁷⁰ Hence when a visitor enters for the first time, the location of the prayer hall is not at all clear, nor is the fact that the main emphasis of the building is in fact on the floor above.

- Some features within the gurdwara carry no obvious cultural meaning, such as the prominent panoramic lift, and it is in fact now sealed off behind advertising boards. This happened over time because of the maintenance cost of running a panoramic lift that was hardly ever being used, and the reason for it not being used is that many of the elderly or disabled people prefer instead to go to the gurdwara in Park Avenue: that is certainly simpler for them, as it is on one level and thus can provide direct access for wheelchairs.⁷¹

- Another element worth mentioning here is the staircase. Since the main room on the ground floor is octagonal and sits within the overall rectangular plan, this creates some awkward corners and redundant spaces, notably for the staircase and its landing. Part of the problem was the decision by the building committee that a double staircase would portray a grander image, which in turn created a dilemma for the architects to place it within the confined octagonal entrance. ACP decided that these double stairs would stop at a foyer/landing level, which has a triangular plan within a semi-circle, and is only around 30 sq metres in size. From this landing, another set of stairs rises up a few steps to the first floor.⁷² From an architectural point of view is an obvious waste of space as this area cannot be used to any great extent. If the concept had involved just a single staircase, it would not have been an issue, yet because of the importance of making a display of grandeur was regarded as more important than the success of the building's internal planning.

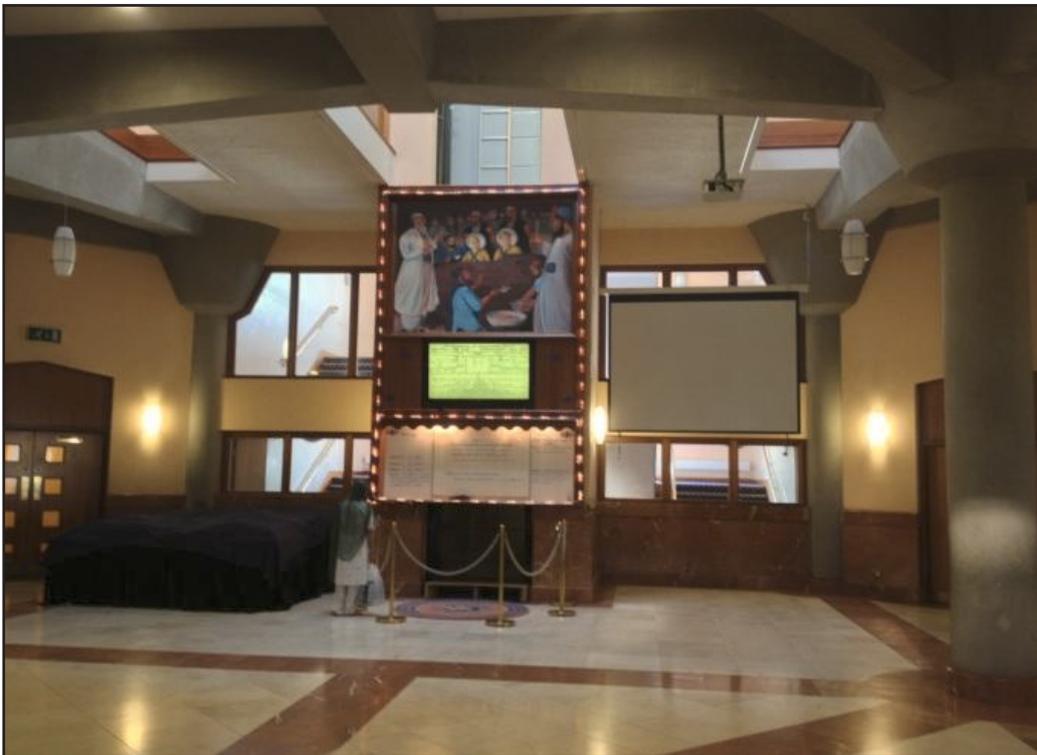
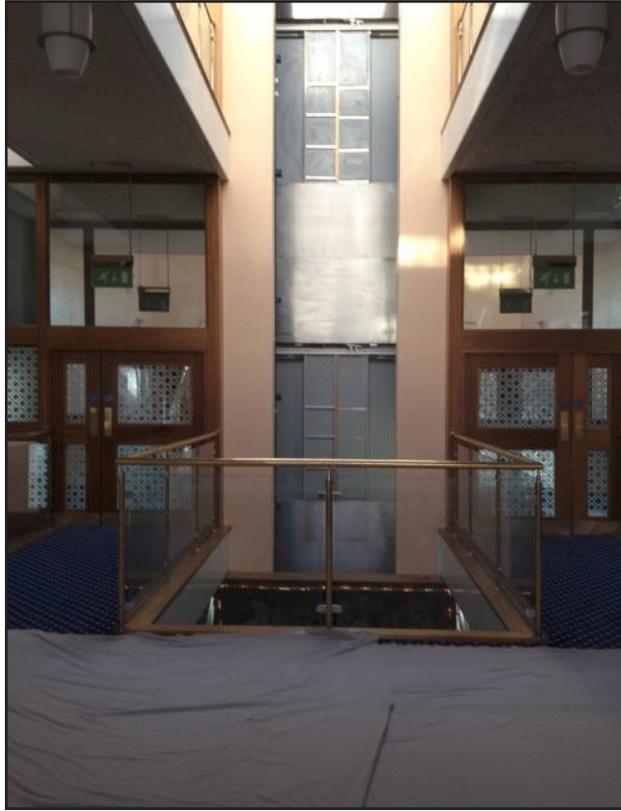


Figure 134: Top photo showing the lift on first floor level, and the bottom photo showing the signs that cover the lift on ground level.

5.3 Key aspects of Southall's *gurdwaras*

We have focused here on the two *gurdwaras* that belong to the same organising committee because they offer such very different and contrasting examples of Sikh religious architecture in Southall. These contrasting examples however result in some interesting points:

- 1- The first *gurdwara* is a converted showroom that sits on a relatively open site in a very central location. It also has had minimal external alterations and few internal rearrangements. And the second larger *gurdwara* is a great contrast since it is such a vast redevelopment on a very restricted site. It is located within residential developments, and yet possesses highly visible symbolic elements of Sikhism. In comparison it is very evident that since building a highly monumental *gurdwara* reduced the need by the Sikh community in Southall to add more external elements or symbols of the Sikhism on the other *gurdwara* in Park Avenue.
- 2- While the Sikh community is satisfied with the external appearance of the Havelock Road *gurdwara*, the internal layout is not seen as successful, causing regret amongst the committee and leading to much of the congregation still worshipping at the Park Avenue site. The Park Avenue *gurdwara* fulfils its practical functions more successfully, and also conforms to some of the earliest requirements for *gurdwara* architecture, such as the Holy Book being the clear focus of attention and accessible to all.
- 3- The example of the *gurdwara* on Havelock Road shows a perfect representation of the changing attitude of the planning process over time. There was initial acceptance of change of use from a dairy factory with small alterations, and refusal for large redevelopment plans. This slowly changed to accept new-build proposals that gradually increased in scale and expression. This is particularly surprising considering its location amongst residential streets, and the impact the building obviously has on its neighbours. When considering the planning cycle described by Peach and Gale, it would seem that the Park Avenue site might have been more suitable for development, due to its prominent location next to the train station, and sited away from residential property. Despite the fact that the *gurdwara* at Park Avenue functions more effectively, Ajit Singh explained that if for any reason they had to sell one site, it would be Park Avenue. The *gurdwara* on Havelock Road may not be nearly as practical, but it is the result of hard work, a great deal of money and stands as a more prominent

reflection of the importance of Sikhism in the area.

- 4- In architectural terms, the local, smaller *gurdwaras* tend to be less ornate and simpler in architectural form than other Sikh temples. When asked about the reason for such simplicity in form, some of the worshippers attribute this to three factors: finance, function and purpose. And these reasons were particularly explained by one worshipper who stated: ‘There are three reasons for this – unlike Hindu *mandirs*, we Sikhs need our temples to have a sufficient space to pray, meet other families, and believe it should not cost too much because it is paid for by our own donations’. However, this is definitely a general position to which the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Havelock Road is an exception.
- 5- When the committee member for the SGSSS in Havelock Road was asked whether the reason for building such a large ornamental *gurdwara* was to demonstrate Sikh cultural identity within the urban realm, he denied it. Instead he favoured an honorific explanation, stating ‘that God likes to be shown that he is important to us and having large buildings is a show of respect to him’. This is certainly not the only reason for building such huge structures, as shown by research by scholars like Gerd Baumann, who suggest that creating larger monumental buildings serves as an important demonstration of cultural identification and strength, especially within immigrant communities.⁷³
- 6- Moreover, when asked about the attendance in the SGSSS in terms of the caste system, the same priest mentioned that it was intended for all Sikh people, and he denied the fact that some *gurdwaras* were for certain caste groups only.
- 7- The SGSSS in Havelock Road appears to be a friendly and hospitable space due to its welcoming staff and the open nature of its architecture, certainly when compared with other *gurdwaras* in the area. In fact, it is now even included as one of London’s lesser but distinctive tourist venues in a new guide for of the city’s attractions prepared under the direction of the Greater London Authority.⁷⁴ This is because the buildings and symbols of multicultural identity are an increasing part of what is generally referred to as ‘cultural tourism’, where generally well educated visitors like to visit not the main clichéd destinations, but places which express the ethnic diversity in a place like London.
- 8- A new and common concept among the Sikh population in Southall is the description that ‘Sunday is temple day’. This concept doesn’t exist at all in the Punjab, only among British Sikh residents, and, moreover, this notion is also borrowed as another hybrid feature from British religious customs. Significantly, this feature is also now quite popular within most of Southall’s different Sikh

communities.

- 9- The committee spokesman for the SGSSS on Park Avenue, Mr Ajit Singh, when asked about if religious symbols are integral to the Sikh faith, confirmed that these elements are not integral but are helpful to signify that the building is a spiritual place, and to celebrate it as the house of God. Although plans were approved in 1984 to add large domes to the roof of the smaller gurdwara on Park Avenue, the lack of such features is not currently therefore seen as a problem amongst the community.
- 10- Many members of the Sikh community privately regard the SGSSS on Havelock Road as a 'missed opportunity' and complain that because it is so impractical, this causes a lot of the congregation to worship at the Park Avenue site. Some worshippers also expressed regret to me that the architects did not use the space more efficiently, but for that they blame the committee rather than the architects, for not foreseeing the need for extra facilities, such as teaching classrooms. It is striking that the major showpiece of Sikh architecture in Southall – indeed outside India – is seen as being so flawed in its design, and is relatively underused as a result. This shows that the act of ethnic communities finally getting the chance to design an iconic scheme does not always work out well.

Reflections on the SGSSS:

The end result is that the SGSSS in Havelock Road is easily the biggest and most prominent religious building in Southall, and is often referred to as an example of how Ealing Council promotes multiculturalism – something which again conforms to Peach and Gale's idea of the 'embracing and celebration' stage of planning.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, many people in the Sikh community believe that this *gurdwara* could have been built in a way that could have better promoted Sikhism as the mainstream religion in Southall. However, these local people also readily accept that the greatly restricted site made it all but impossible to achieve better design results. Therefore, the *gurdwara* is widely seen as achieving its intended purpose to reflect the cultural identity of Sikhs not only on the scale of the local community, but also on a more national and indeed international level. As a result the gurdwara was visited and recognized by many influential and important people including Prince Charles and then Prime Minister Tony Blair, which clearly still gives the local Sikh community a great sense of pride as well as helping them to be recognized as a forceful component within London in general and Southall in particular.

6. Mosques in Southall

In order to analyse and explain the range of mosques which exist in Southall, certain considerations need first to be outlined and addressed:

1. The idea of Islam is that it is a truly global religion, and thus is not meant to be particularly associated with any certain region, certainly when compared to the previous examples of houses of worship discussed above. Therefore, each mosque absolutely has to be analysed by association with the specific ethnic backgrounds of worshippers that use it.
2. It is not clearly or totally agreed whatever the elements that are considered to reflect Islamic architecture. And, indeed, what is Islamic architecture? It is essential therefore to identify the precise purpose and function of each mosque, and then juxtapose these findings against their architectural design.
3. It is also vital to identify and keep in mind the architectural/cultural elements of Islamic belief, and trace how they are reflected in architectural form.

In order to address more fully the issues stated above, a useful statement has been given by Ernest J. Grube in questioning the nature of Islamic architecture. Grube states:

‘... the first question we ask ourselves is whether there is such a thing as ‘Islamic architecture’. Do we mean the architecture produced for and by Muslims to serve Islam as a religion, referring, consequently, only to that architecture which did serve a religious function – the mosque, the tomb, the madrassa? Or do we mean all the architecture produced in Muslim lands? And if this should be so, what does ‘Islamic’ mean in this context? If ‘Islamic’ is not an adjective defining a religious quality, should it be understood as a word that identifies a special kind of architecture, that of civilization reflecting, or determined by, special qualities inherent in Islam as a cultural phenomenon?’⁷⁶

Another insight into what Islamic art and architecture might – or might not – be is provided by Oleg Garber. According to Garber, an alternative and far more common interpretation of the adjective ‘Islamic’ is that it refers to a culture or civilization in which the majority of the population, or at least the ruling element, profess the faith of Islam. In this fashion, Islamic art is intrinsically different in kind from, say, Chinese

art or Spanish art, for there is no Islamic land or Islamic people as such. He also goes on to point out that if Islamic art and architecture does exist, then it would have to be one that has overpowered and transformed a great many ethnic or geographical traditions, or else one that created some peculiar kind of symbiosis between local and pan-Islamic modes of artistic behaviour and expression. In either instance the term 'Islamic' would be comparable to those more general terms like 'Gothic' or 'Baroque', and tends to suggest a more or less successful cultural moment in the long history of native traditions.⁷⁷

So what, then, is Islamic architecture? In another study on this subject by Martin Frishman and Hasan-Uddin Khan,⁷⁸ they came up with three conclusions that reflect the influences on mosque architecture. Their first point was that the architectural development of the mosque contrasts with that of church design due to the relative importance of regional differentiation. Each region of the Islamic world rapidly evolved a stylistic image of its own religion, in part at least as a result of local climatic conditions and the availability of building materials combined with related craft skills. Secondly, in contrast to the history of the church, sectarian divisions within Islam never affected architectural appearance or style. Finally, the restricted range of liturgical procedures (limited essentially to the readings of the scriptures and the act of prostration which accompanies prayers) is identical throughout the Muslim world.⁷⁹

Therefore, based on these studies, we can arrive at several factors that influence the term 'Islamic' architecture, particularly in the case of mosques. These factors are: firstly, that the architectural form of mosques doesn't derive from any fixed or existing form, and has always been adapted to fit the function, as can be seen especially in the case of the earliest mosques; secondly, the emphasis in early mosque architecture was mainly on the interior, and it was only in later stages and after the realization by ambitious heads of states that the mosque architecture could express issues such as wealth and power, that a focus on the exterior began such that monumental mosques emerged; thirdly, because of this lack of a specific form, the cultural/regional influence of existing forms and architectural styles has always been reflected in mosque architecture, as anyone who has been to Cairo and Istanbul will know only too well; fourthly, the key elements associated with mosques are the *minaret*, the *minbar* and the dome, yet all are similar to features found in the houses of worship of other religious houses, and thus the *minaret* is the equivalent of the Christian church's bell tower, the *minbar* is another form of pulpit, and domes are also of course strongly associated with churches



Figure 135: Jamia Masjid Mosque

and synagogues; and fifthly, the other key features that are associated specifically with mosques are textual, notably calligraphy and other written symbolism, through the painting of holy words such as ‘Allah’ and ‘Mohammed’ in large letters in Arabic.

From all of the above, it becomes clear that the issue of what constitutes Islamic architecture is a broad subject, and in fact is probably too detailed and complicated to enter into for the purposes of this specific research. Instead, what concerns us in terms of the study of mosques in Southall is two questions. What are the elements that are most associated with mosque architecture in a country like Britain and how do these influence the architecture of Southall’s mosque? The second question would ask how are these cultural/regional elements reflected in particular local mosques in the area? There are in fact only four mosques to be found in Southall, given that it is largely a white British, Sikh and Hindu area of London. These mosques are:

- 1- Jamia Masjid Islamic Centre.
- 2- Central Jamia Masjid Mosque.
- 3- Abubakr Mosque.
- 4- Ahmadiyya Muslim Association

6.1 Jamia Masjid Islamic Centre

The Jamia Masjid Islamic Centre was the first-ever mosque in Southall. Curiously, it is located in a quiet residential street and occupies two otherwise typical London terraced houses. And therefore this location within a residential area prompted lots of controversy, so in 1968 the Southall and District Residents Association wrote to Ealing Council stating that the house at 103 Townsend Road was being used as a Muslim place of worship and hence was being used illegally for this purpose. The council responded by attempting a few site inspections, and later issuing an enforcement notice in 1974. But the Muslim local residents committee appealed this notice in 1975 for the unauthorised use of the building as a place of worship, and another in 1978, for the unauthorised structure to the rear of the building. In 1979 however, the owners were prosecuted for non-compliance to these enforcement notices. Yet the mosque was not shut down yet still the congregation continued to use it as a house of worship. Then the committee acquired the adjacent property at 101 Townsend Road. Nevertheless, the mosque committee continued to apply for permissions to retain both of the properties to be used as a place of worship and an education centre, in 1987 and 1991 consequently.



Figure 136: Photographs of the entrance of the mosque with its designated shoe storage area

Again both cases were refused. And still the mosque continued to exist, and later the council issued a new enforcement notice, which the committee also appealed but this time with success, and a permission was finally granted in 2003 for the use of 101 and 103 Townsend Road as a Muslim place of worship. In 2009, the mosque was found to be again in breach of planning regulations because of the erection of a canopy in the rear garden. Later the mosque applied for a lawful development certificate in 2009, claiming that the structures had been there for over four years. This application, and another made in 2010 were both refused due to unsatisfactory evidence.⁸⁰ Generally, the worshippers for this mosque are from the descendants of poor immigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Since this mosque was the first in Southall, it still stress that its main task is to serve the local residents of the original Muslim community in the area. As Muslims from other ethnicities and countries arrived in Southall, the need to create other places for communal worship became apparent, and that is why other mosques were subsequently built.

Architecture:

The architecture of the Jamia Masjid Mosque has not altered that much over time; in fact it represents a clear case of use and adaptability. Externally, it has stayed in conformity with the other ordinary houses along the street. Apart from its entrance, where there is a designated area for shoe storage on the hidden rear face of the front garden wall, so that worshippers can place their shoes there before entering the mosque, it appears as if it is just another London terraced house. The only feature that shows that this building is a mosque is the sign that states the name of the mosque, as well of course as the shoe racks. The architecture also is fully adapted from terraced houses and later adapted for the purpose of prayer – clearly there was no reason for this mosque's existence here except for its very specific function and ritualised patterns of use. This conclusion was also stressed by the *imam* of the mosque, who stated that 'our mosque was the first mosque in Southall, and since the teachings of Islam stresses the importance of communal prayer, there was a need only for an area that is large enough to accommodate the growing number of Muslims in Southall'. The *imam* also mentioned the fact that his mosque welcomes all Muslims from all the ethnicities in Southall. Yet this particular declaration was later questioned by other Muslim members that I spoke to in Southall who expressed their resentment that this mosque in particular is not as accommodating and welcoming as the Abubakr Mosque, for instance. Indeed, they termed it as a 'bi-partisan mosque'.



Figure 137: Interior prayer areas in the mosque

Internally, the Jamia Masjid Mosque, as with most terraced houses in the area, consists of two floors. The ground floor contains an open area designated for prayer. To achieve this, internal partitions have been demolished to create full-width prayer halls on both the ground and first floor. The ground floor also has a room for ablution and toilet facilities. The floor is covered by a specially designed carpet that shows the direction of Mecca (the *qibla*), which is where all Muslims pray towards. This particular feature is intrinsic for praying, and indeed most of the times when a new mosque is purposely built, its orientation will be towards the *qibla* – in the case of England, this means facing towards the south-east. In such cases of purpose-built mosques, the marks on the carpet would face straight towards the *minbar* and so there is less need for it to be specially demarcated. But in the Jamia Masjid Mosque, set within an ordinary London terrace that was never laid out to face Mecca, the carpet design needs to show clearly devotees where to kneel for prayer.

A second floor consists of smaller areas for prayer (these are sometimes used for female worshippers, if they attend). Another room on the second floor is designated as a kitchen; this is not particularly an element found in all mosques, yet since this mosque is mostly attended by the South Asian community, and the element of food is central to South Asian culture, then a kitchen is provided here. The ablution area required for preparation for Muslim worship is located on the ground floor next to the entrance, and this also acts as the main bathroom area. An outside courtyard to the rear entrance of the building is covered by a canopy so that it too can accommodate more worshippers, especially on special occasions. This external area at the rear is at times used as a secondary area for serving food.

According to one female worshipper, ‘we do not come here to pray except for special occasions such as Eid and Ramadan, we do not really need to come since Islam teachings stresses upon the men praying in the mosque, and women are encouraged to pray at home’. The interpretation of this lady is certainly accepted within Islamic doctrines, but then it is also culturally contested or ignored by many other Muslims. This is particularly evident in other mosques in Southall.

A document dated 1975 shows a letter written from the mosque committee to an Ealing MP, Sidney Bidwell, showed that they were willing to move the site of the mosque, but due to their financial situation this was not possible. Having been served with an enforcement notice, they explained to Bidwell their urgent need for a place of worship, and requested his help finding alternative, reasonably priced permanent



Figure 138: Kitchen and ablution area of the mosque

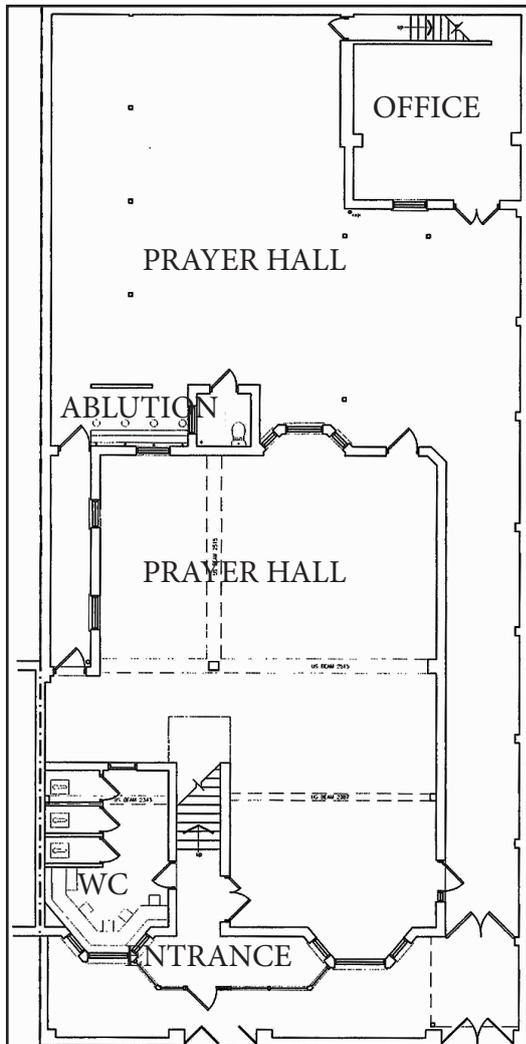


Figure 139: Ground floor plan

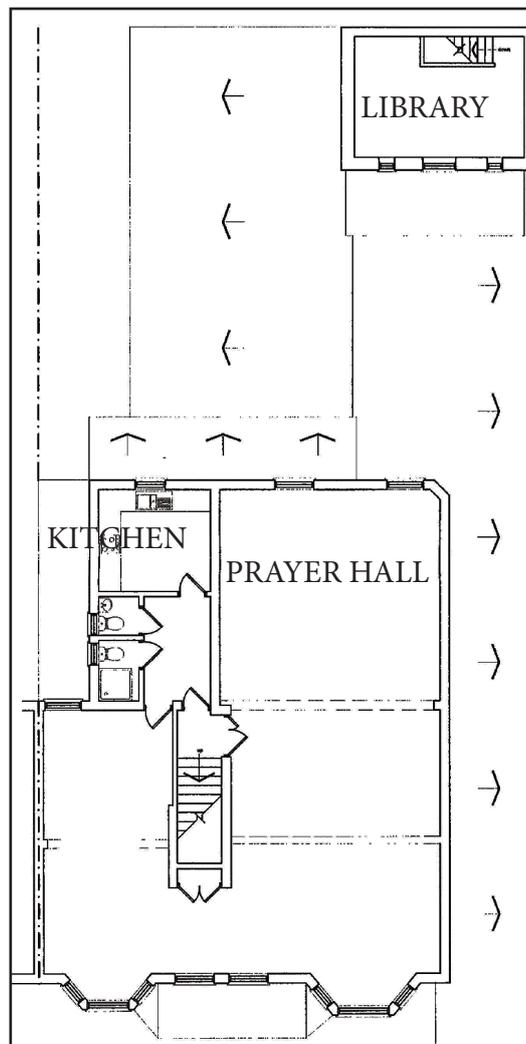


Figure 140: First floor plan

premises.⁷⁷ This situation certainly infuriated the community and they demanded a house of worship that is accepted and treated lawfully by the council, therefore the planning department granted permission for the use of this building as a mosque in 2003 as mentioned previously. This change of attitude by the council is reflected in the document, 'Planning for a Multi-Racial Britain', which was referred to when justifying why the change of use should be granted:

'A key point in these guidelines is the fact that worship and community facilities are known to be largely localised and that a degree of flexibility should be exercised in the provision of facilities for ethnic minorities that may not be as wealthy as other groups.'⁸¹

Hence, Ealing Council's planning department initially found the adaptation of a residential unit to a place of worship unacceptable, but as they gradually became aware of the needs of the Muslim community, it seems they became sympathetic to the fact that perhaps this development was all the latter could afford.

Apart from internal alterations such as the taking down of partition walls, not many changes have taken place to the form of this house to make it into a mosque. This was because:

- 1- The history of illegal use of the building as a place of worship made the relationship with the council very tense. However, in recent years the relationship has been considerably better.
- 2- Gaining permission for any change of use often takes a very long time, which would make the committee for the mosque less willing to make any investments and permanent changes to the building.
- 3- The building is within a residential area, which makes any alteration to the exterior more problematic. It would not be possible to add a dome or minaret to this building without remodelling the whole roof, which would be extremely costly, and very unlikely to be granted permission due to the location on a residential street.
- 4- The canopy structures covering the side passage and rear garden have again been found to be unauthorised structures and are being threatened with removal. It is clear that the space provided by these canopies is very much essential to house the congregation; at the date of writing this thesis, the mosque still had not been forced to take the canopies down. This suggests a slightly ritualistic aspect to the situation, with the council only issuing notices for formality's sake.



Figure 141: Central Jamia Masjid Mosque

Another insight into cultural heterogeneity of the Southall Muslim community is provided by Gerd Baumann, who suggests that the Muslim community of Southall, in ethnological terms, is a reflection of the fact that Islam, unlike say Sikhism and Hinduism, has expanded its practitioners to the most diverse parts of the globe. Its spread has established a global community of believers that is held together by no real common bond, save for uniform religious observances. All Muslims worship the same God in the same sacred language; yet even a good knowledge of Koranic Arabic, which takes years to acquire, does not enable them to communicate with each other in ordinary everyday discussion. This daily conversation is thus done in English or Punjabi, Urdu or Mirpuri, Malaysian, Pashto or Somali. Nor would Muslims expect, any more than Christians do, that the bond of a shared faith should render their multiplicity of cultures mutually intelligible or even compatible, let alone ‘the same’.⁸²

Muslim Southallians are thus members of a highly global community, but that community is one of faith, and its bounds far exceed the horizons of any one culture or any one person’s cross-cultural competence. Muslims, even more clearly than Hindus and Sikhs, are members of religiously defined local communities, yet much of the social life by which they perform and re-create their culture relies upon the mutually independent cleavages of language, regional background, national loyalties, class, and other factors that cut across the boundaries of all communities.⁸³ Also, since the Jamia Masjid Mosque is located right in a residential area, it tends to attract local people who by definition come from close ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, it is not really as open to cultural diversity as the other Southall mosques. This was particularly echoed by a conversation between two worshippers regarding their relationship with the mosque:

Worshipper 1: ‘I used to come to pray in this mosque since it first opened.’

Worshipper 2: ‘Me too.’

W 1: ‘We were then only about 30 Muslim families in Southall, but now there are so many.’

W 2: ‘I used to live far away and walk a long distance to come to this mosque. But now, although there is a mosque close to where I live, I still come to this mosque, because all my friends are here. Plus we speak the same language.’

W1: ‘I know a lot of Muslims who prefer to go to other mosques because they live close by.’

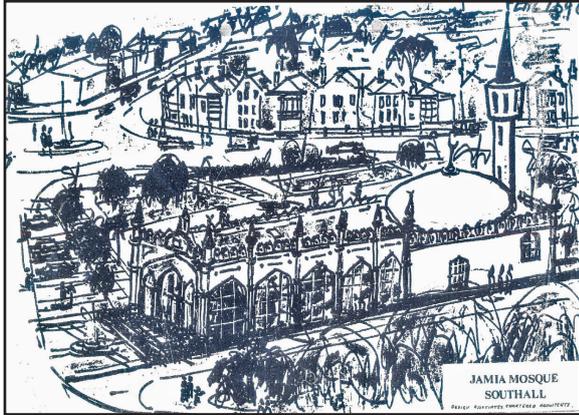


Figure 142: Sketch of the proposal for Central Jamia Masjid by Design Associates Chartered Architects in 1976-77

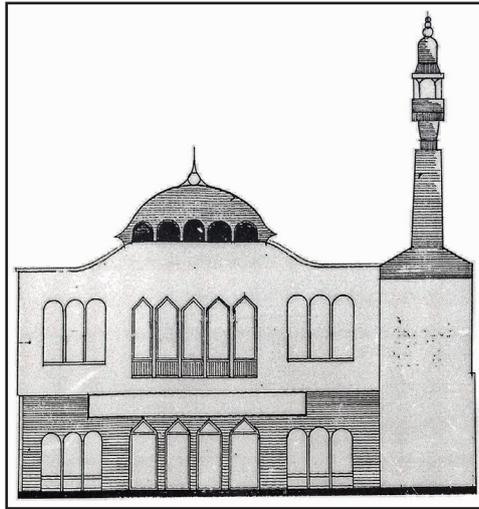


Figure 143: Proposed elevation of Central Jamia Masjid Design Associates Chartered Architects

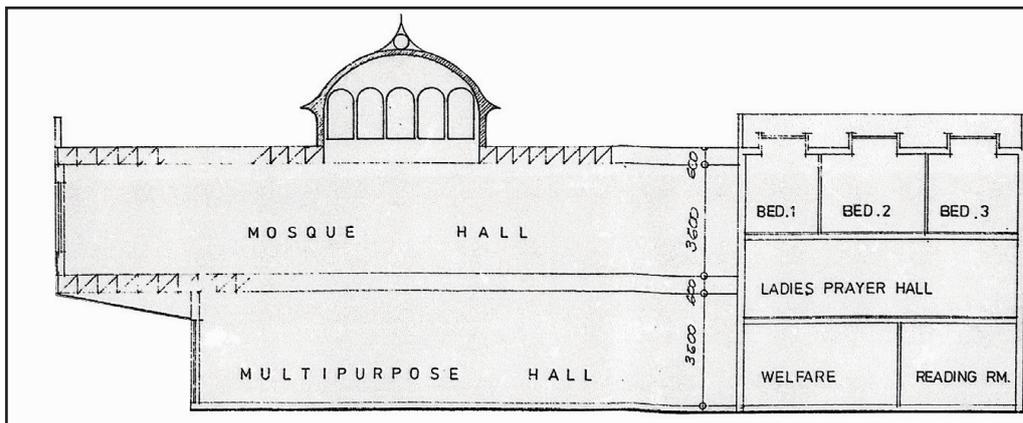


Figure 144: Section of Central Jamia Masjid by Design Associates Chartered Architects in 1976- 77

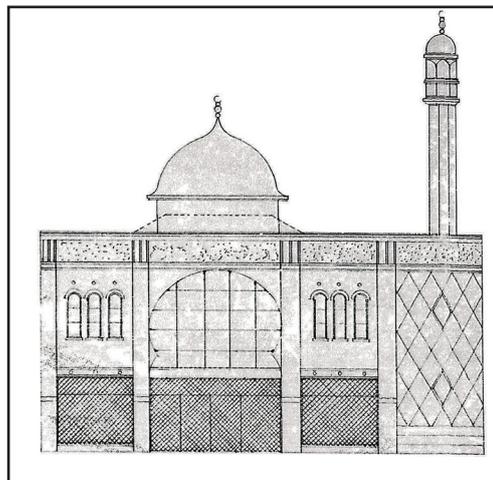


Figure 145: Design submitted in 1997 by D.T.F. Nang for a first floor extension to Central Jamia Masjid. (All plans on this page are from council records)

And when I asked both of these men about the style of the building, which looks of course like a standard London house, and if there were any other interior or exterior elements they would like it to have, they both answered only that they ‘would prefer a larger space for prayer’. There seemed to be no problem with its simple everyday domestic appearance, or the fact that in no way does it look like a ‘typical’ mosque.

This example shows that despite the importance placed on external signifiers by many religious communities in Southall, and around the world, they are not in fact perhaps that necessary. This pair of terraced houses, although experiencing problems accommodating the number of worshippers, still carries out all the functions necessary for a mosque. It also demonstrates the determination of the Muslim community and the importance for them of having a permanent place of worship.

6.2 Central Jamia Masjid Mosque

The Central Jamia Masjid Mosque occupies a building that was substantially enlarged in 1990, and unlike the other mosques in Southall, it is the only one that is actually purpose-built. Therefore, certain key features of mosque architecture can be found here, such as the *minaret* tower and a large central dome. The Central Jamia Masjid Mosque is situated in an open area just to the south of Southall’s main centre. It is an area that does not lie on the main commercial streets, yet is one that encloses a multitude of different types of houses of worship. This is because this part of Southall had larger plots of land available, in which various local communities were able to build more substantial houses of worship, and so this is why so many of the larger houses of worship are located there. Furthermore, the site of this mosque was originally used as a car garage. In 1975, the Muslim community applied for permission for change of use of the site to a mosque. This was met with much opposition from local residents, perhaps the most objection of any building in this study. The council received 15 letters of objection, as well as a petition signed by 745 people. Hence the application was refused in April 1976, on the grounds that:

‘... it results in the use of an aged building as a mosque creating an intensification of use of the building which gives rise to conditions prejudicial to the amenities of adjoining residential properties by virtue of noise and general disturbance.’⁸⁴

The Muslim community continued to use the building as a place of worship. And as the

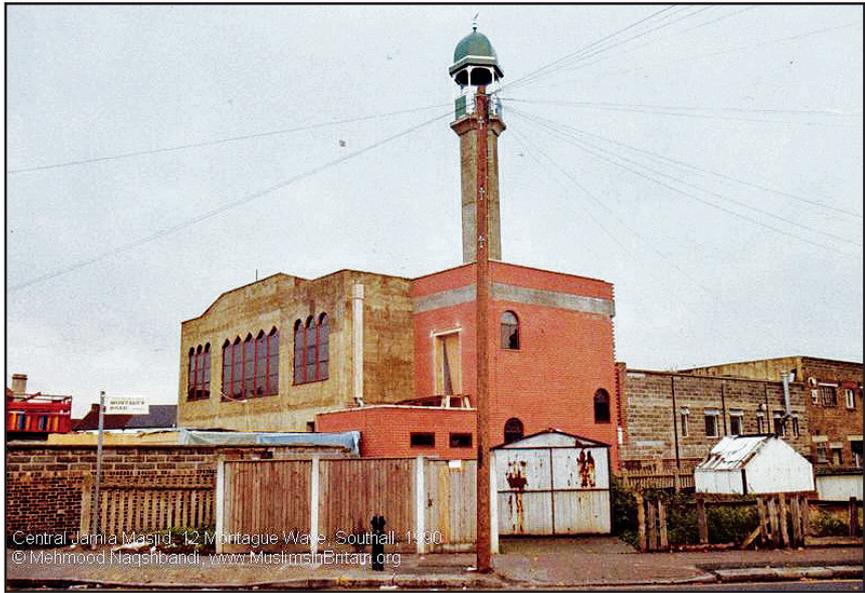


Figure 146: Exterior in 1990 during renovations.

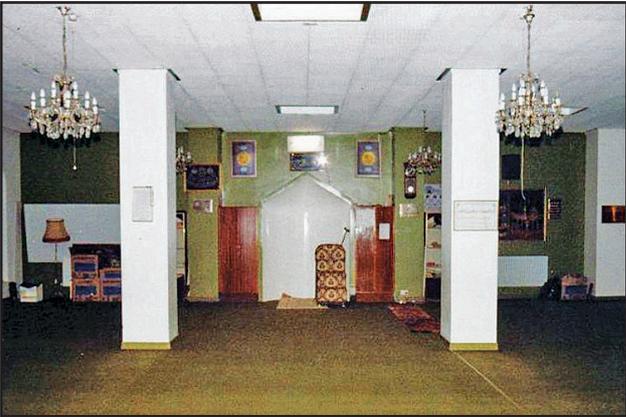
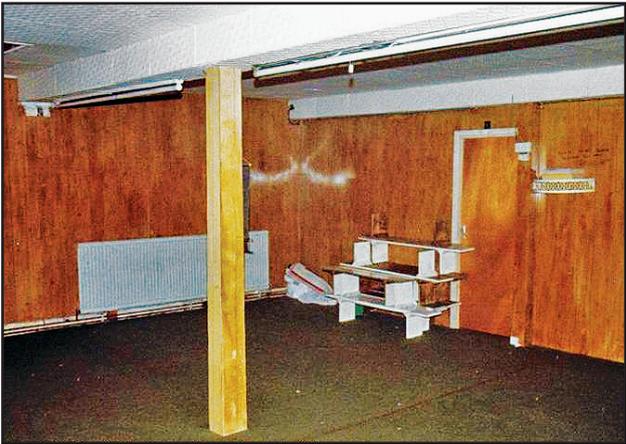


Figure 147: Prayer halls in 1990 before the latest renovations were carried (All photos on this page from council archives)

past example, an enforcement notice was issued in 1976 and the appeal was also blocked against the refusal by the applicants. Later that year prosecution action by the council was enforced, pending the outcomes of planning application 1, which involved the application for a purpose-built mosque, and application 2, which involves the continued use of the existing building temporarily until the building of a new mosque. And in 1977, a temporary consent was given for the use of this mosque and was later renewed until an agreed scheme for renovation was reached. And in 1982 a granting permission for a permanent consent was issued. In 1988⁸⁵ the work on the building started but it was carried out in phases. And in 1992, another permit was granted for the addition of a new dome for the reason of ‘enhancing the elevation,’⁸⁶ This dome however is not yet constructed. And since 1997 many alterations have taken place under permitted development. Such as the canopy that covers the courtyard of the mosque to shelter the worshippers who cannot fit inside the mosque during Friday prayers. The initial application for this structure was refused on the grounds that the extra congregation would cause disturbance to neighbours, and that it would reduce the number of parking spaces in the area, as well as that it would give an overbearing and dominant effect on the surrounding area.⁸⁷ Also some concerns were raised that the canopy might in time become the footprint for a more permanent structure.⁸⁹ Therefore, a second application for this canopy was granted, because a slightly altered design was considered to have less impact on the residents of the area, and conditions were set defining the hours of use, and insisting that the area must be used for car parking at all other times.

Architecture:

The exterior of the Central Jamia Mosque consists of a red-brick building accompanied by an 18-metre-high marble-clad *minaret*. Large windows cover almost all of the main façade of the building, and as mentioned, there is a large green dome that forms the roof of the building. The exterior entrance of the building is covered by the aforementioned canopy to protect one from the weather, especially given that this entrance area can also be used for prayer when needed on major religious festivals and other occasions. This mosque is a clear example of the attempt to express identity through the use of special Islamic mosque architectural elements such as the dome and the *minaret*, which in this case have no particular use other than emphasising the architectural importance of the building as an Islamic building. The red-brick façade of the building is a specific architectural element that acts as a hybrid feature because it makes it blend more into



Figure 148: Interior photos of the mosque prayer halls on the ground floor

the surrounding context, in contrast to its soaring *minaret*. Another key feature of Islamic architecture that is included in this mosque, apart from the *minaret* and the dome, is the open use of calligraphy and symbolism. On the façade above the entrance, there is sign in Arabic featuring a popular verse from the Koran, and this particular sign incorporates bold golden lettering with Islamic representations. Calligraphy is used in the interior of the mosque as well, with, for example, holy verses being drawn on the glass doors that open into the prayer hall. The forecourt, covered by the entrance canopy, provides access to the mortuary as well as the entrance for male worshippers.

The ground floor contains the toilets and facilities for ablution before one enters, if one is a man, a 4m male prayer hall. A staircase leads to a second male prayer hall, exactly the same size as the one below. A separate entrance at the side of the building, accessed via an alleyway, is for female worshippers. The prayer halls all contain a *mihrab* to indicate the direction of prayer, and to serve as the position from which the *imam* leads the prayers. The prayer halls themselves are not orientated towards *qibla*, so the manner in which the worshippers orientate themselves is in fact askew to the walls of the room. As well as the presence of the *mihrab* indicating the direction of *qibla*, the patterned carpet is also laid to run in that direction - again, askew to the walls. This leads directly into a stairwell which provides access to a much smaller female prayer hall, as well as a toilet and ablution facilities. The rear part of the building houses a library at the ground floor level and accommodation for the priests on the first floor. The mortuary on the ground-floor is used to cleanse bodies for prayers before being taken to the burial ground. As mentioned previously, this has to be done as soon after death as possible, so having specific facilities in the mosque speeds up this process. A secondary area in the mosque also operates as a school (*madrassa*) for local Muslim children. Despite the fact that this area is entirely empty and only furnished with a prayer carpet, children still take religious and other types of classes there.

Although the Central Jamia Mosque is designed with these common elements of Islamic architecture included, it is notable that the mosque's worshippers are mainly immigrants from Pakistan. Since they represent the local community in the area around the mosque, as a consequence the congregation is not nearly as multi-ethnic as those who attend the other major mosque in Southall. This fact was explained to me by clerics from the mosques as well as worshippers. One cleric explained why the mosque was built: 'Southall's Muslim community grew so much and so fast, that the need for other mosques was clearly needed. And since we had purchased a large new plot,



Figure 149: Interior photos of the mosque prayer halls on the first floor

we wanted to have a mosque that looks like a mosque'. Another cleric expanded by saying that 'in Southall there are nice looking *mandirs* and *gurdwaras*, yet there were no nice looking mosques, and we [the Muslim community] are larger than the Hindu community in Southall – therefore we needed a mosque that shows we exist'. This reflects similar views by worshippers, who expressed to me their other concern about the need to have *madrassas* as available to Muslim children just as those found locally in Hindu *mandirs* and Sikh *gurdwaras*.

The mosque's purpose according to the *imam* of Central Jamia Masjid, is to provide a place to pray, and to maintain direction of *qibla* by the use of carpets as well as giving a prominent place for the *mihrab* and to place it again directed towards the direction of the *qibla*.⁹⁰ Therefore this mosque has fulfilled its intended function in this case but it could have used extra space to provide more function in its role as a community centre in a better environment rather than using the prayer hall as the rooms to give lessons to children at, as well as not having enough space especially during Friday prayer and Muslim religious festivals so the congregation are forced to pray outside the building and on the streets.

Another drawback to this building according to the *imam* of the mosque is that because this is a purpose-built mosque, the prayer rooms could have been directed towards the *qibla*, yet because of site restrictions this was not possible and instead a directional carpet pattern was used instead. However in planning records some earlier plans for the design of the building were much larger, and the committee of the mosque was hoping to be able to purchase adjacent land. But later this was not to be possible, because the planners set conditions which insisted on stating the number of car parking spaces that should be provided, and that was not possible because the area available for the mosque building was small and cannot possibly adhere to these requirements so eventually the mosque committee abandoned these plans.

When the *imam* was asked if he or the Muslim community were satisfied with the external appearance of the mosque, he answered that the external features could have reflected the building's religious purpose in a more expressive manner. Earlier designs for this mosque show far more decorative elevations, and the use of a wider range of materials, such as tiling and marble. Ealing Council enforced some restrictions, such as the number of windows on certain elevations, but no other limits referring to the external appearance are recorded in the planning documents.⁹¹ The high expense of such

decorative features could thus be the reason for the simplification of the façade. The 18-metre high *minaret* and large dome do certainly stand out amongst the surrounding buildings, but the overall form and material of the main bulk of building tend to blend in with the existing streetscape.

Certainly this mosque's planning history is a clear demonstration of the changing of the planning authorities' attitude throughout the years. At the beginning they issued an enforcement notice against the use of the factory building as a mosque, later they seemed more lenient when they allowed the continued use of the building while the designs for the new building were being altered.⁹² And thus this building gives a good example of Peach and Gale's third planning stage⁹³ in which a new-build mosque with certain religious features is allowed, but the religious expression of the building is purposely made to look more domesticated in order to keep in character with the surrounding areas of British architectural styles. Moreover, when focusing on the orientation of the prayer rooms as well as the addition of certain elements to the completed design as the *minaret* and dome, this can certainly stress the fact that this building was a converted not a purpose-built building.

Therefore, initially the local residents issued many complaints to the use of this site as a mosque, and these objections, started to be reduced in numbers until the 1990s. Later the additions that were made since the completion of the main part of the building highlights the fact that there is an increase in size and needs of the local Muslim community. And that the planning authorities' attitude changed also to cater for these needs as mentioned previously.



Figure 150: The existing exterior of the mosque.



Figure 151: Proposed façade of the mosque (Image from council records)

5.3 Abubakr Mosque:

Previously, the Abubakr Mosque was located in a small house in Villiers Road in Southall. But since then, and given the growing number of immigrants, especially the mounting number of Somalis who now live in Southall – as well as other Muslims from North Africa and Pakistan – a much larger space for communal prayer was needed. The only other sizeable mosque, the Central Jamia Masjid, simply could not cope with the growing numbers. This resulted in an overflow of worshippers on Fridays, to the extent of the clergy having to perform prayers in two congregations on the same premises. Therefore, a decision was made to purchase another space, particularly once the old Southall Town Hall came on the market. The Abubakr Mosque trustees successfully put in a bid to buy that building. But due to pressure from other local communities and from the neighbouring Hindu temple, Ealing Council then refused to finalise the sale and eventually withdrew the offer altogether – all this despite the issue having been referred to court of law by the trustees of Abubakr Mosque.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the planning application to extend the original house in Villiers Road was refused and a closure order was served on that property. Outraged, many thousands of Muslim worshippers took to the streets and Ealing Council quickly offered an alternative venue for the mosque. But in the opinion of the trustees, that offer from Ealing Council was still inadequate and too expensive, and came with too many stringent conditions attached. So the search for appropriate premises went on, and only ended with the successful acquisition of West End House on The Broadway, right in the heart of Southall's commercial area.

West End House was a disused 1950s office building which offered 1,200 square meters of space spread over four floors. There is also a vehicular parking access via a ramp leading to a basement space to the side of the building from the West End Road. As noted, this building is located in a prime location, being right in the heart of Southall; in fact it is one of the first structures that is seen by any visitor to the area. After suffering yet another refusal of planning permission by Ealing Council in July 1998 for these new premises, based on reasons of anticipated traffic congestion, the trustees continued to pursue the matter through to legal appeal, while also re-applying with some improved parking facilities. Eventually, after a decade of struggle, persistence and persuasion, the necessary planning permission was granted for the conversion of West End House into Abubakr Mosque in June 1999.⁹⁵ Today the mosque serves a diverse mix of Muslims from all parts of the world, with people from Pakistan, India, Somalia and North Africa constituting the majority of the worshippers. The mosque also provides a multitude of

SPACES / USES	SQM		
	EXISTING	PROPOSED	EXTENSION
Stairs, Circulations, Foyers and Stores	520	623	103
Toilets & Ablutions	198	198	
Car access, Ramp and Courtyard	142	100	-42
Parking	182	184	2
Bike Stand		29	29
Entrance		59	59
Kitchen	30	30	
Boiler and Electric room	27	27	
Funeral Services	72	72	
Book Shop	21	22	1
Sports Hall, community centre and Day Centre	206	249	43
Office	67	84	17
Prayer Hall for Ladies	83	83	
Prayer Hall for Men	328	392	64
Classrooms	427	427	
Science room	67	67	
ICT Room	39	39	
Library	29	29	
Staff Room	19	19	
Area available for School use		226	226
TOTAL	2457	2959	502

Table 15: Breakdown of the floor areas and spaces for each use.
(Ealing Council records)

functions other than prayer. It acts as an educational and recreational institute, with these ancillary activities comprising half of the second floor as well as the two additional floors. Since then and particularly as the popularity of the mosque grew especially that many more ethnicities came to pray in this mosque, on the 20th March 2009 a new proposal was granted by the council for the re-cladding of the existing Abubakr Mosque and extensions comprising a two storey side/rear extension – including a roof terrace, two-storey front extension to include a new entrance, alterations and raising of the roof height to create a further floor with a *minaret* and dome.

Architecture:

The exterior of the Abubakr Mosque is not surprisingly that of a typically dreary 1950s office building, an effect which looks positively surreal once the mosque signs are placed outside. This mosque is a clear example of adaptation and reuse of a space – an ordinary office – without any change to the exterior form. This particular feature would also conform to Peach and Gale's second stage of 'larger-scale conversion with minimalist change'.⁹⁶ No elements of Islamic or mosque architecture are visible on the building, stressing its role primarily as a piece of functional architecture. The dull form and façade of the building does not seem to affect the attitude of worshippers when asked about the architecture and its suitability for the act of communal prayer. One worshipper said: 'When we heard they wanted to build a third mosque in Southall we wanted a prominent looking building, yet we also knew that it would be easier to purchase an existing space rather than build a new one. Even so, we did not think that West End House was the right type of building. But after it was purchased and we used it. It was OK, a very spacious place. However it needs to look slightly neater and more religious.' Another worshipper's view echoes this point: 'Buildings that are used to pray to Allah (God) need to look appropriate with minarets and Islamic design and ornamental interiors. Look at the large Sikh *gurdwara*, it is very nice and grand looking. It presents a good image about Sikhs. We need the same to show that we are a prominent community in Southall and we also have a good cultural background.' Such views however do not seem to affect or bother the *imam* or other clerics of the Abubakr Mosque, who believe that the main purpose for the building is just to provide a sufficiently capacious place to accommodate Islamic worshippers in Southall. The imam also tellingly pointed out that 'the teachings of Islam respects the humility of a space; it does not have to have a monumental scale, embellished exterior or an ornamental interior to be blessed by God'. This specific point in itself reflects the diversity of the



Figure 152: Façade and interiors of the mosque



Figure 153: Book store and ablutions area

understanding of religious doctrines and their reflection in mosque architecture.

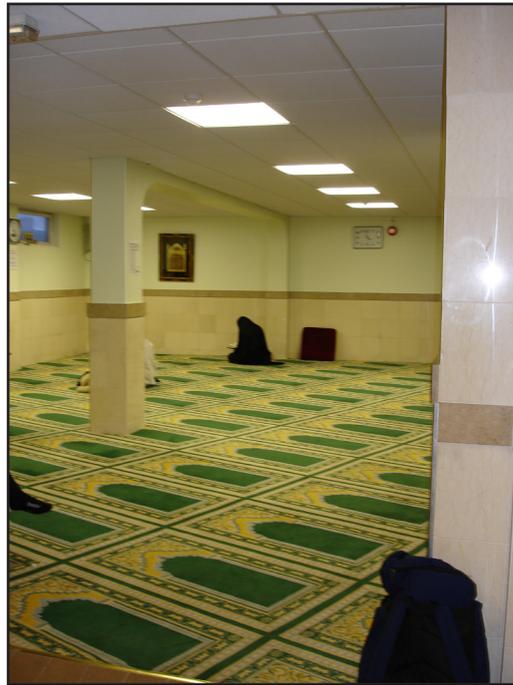


Figure 154: Interior of ladies' prayer room

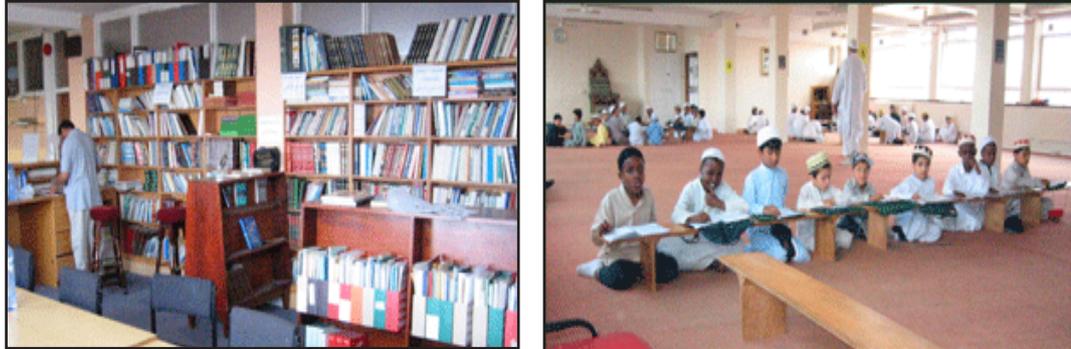


Figure 155: Library and madrassah areas on the second floor.

(Source: The mosque's website)

The interior of the Abubakr Mosque consists of a prayer space that takes over the entire ground floor with a field of columns representing the structure of the original office building. The floor has a plain carpet, and not the specially-patterned prayer carpet as seen in the previous mosques. There is also a designated room for ladies to pray (a feature that doesn't happen in any other mosque in Southall). This room, on the other hand, has the special carpet design. The ground floor also caters for the bathrooms, an ablution area, and an Islamic book store. The second floor contains a large library space with an extensive range of books and journals, etc, as well as rooms designated for

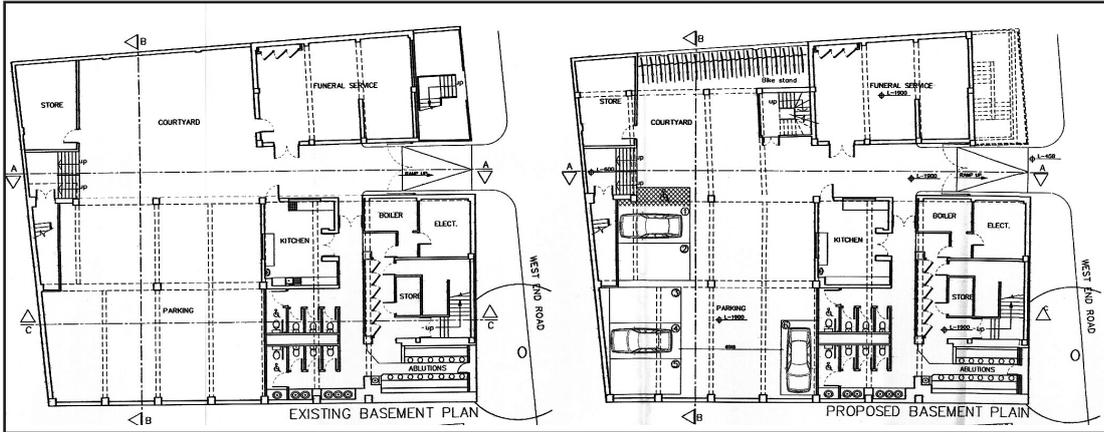


Figure 156: Existing basement plan

Figure 157: Proposed basement plan

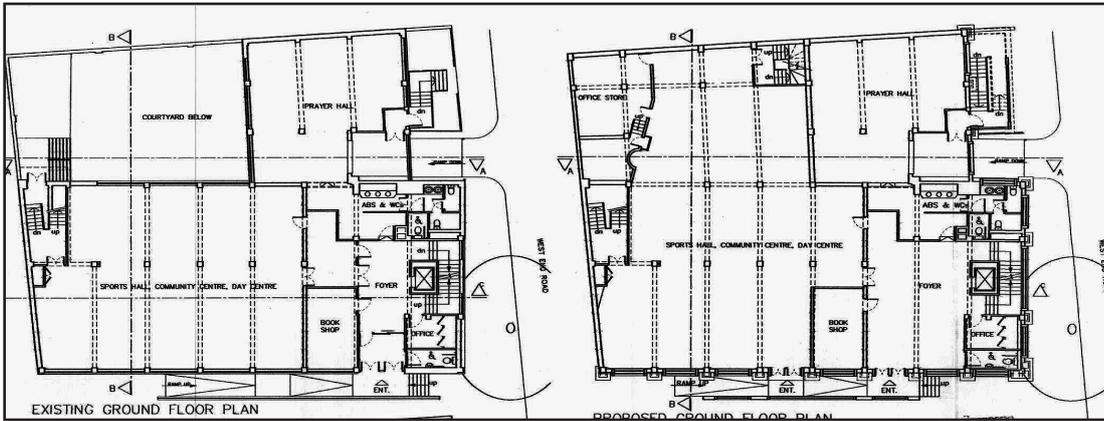


Figure 158: Existing ground floor plan

Figure 159: Proposed ground floor plan

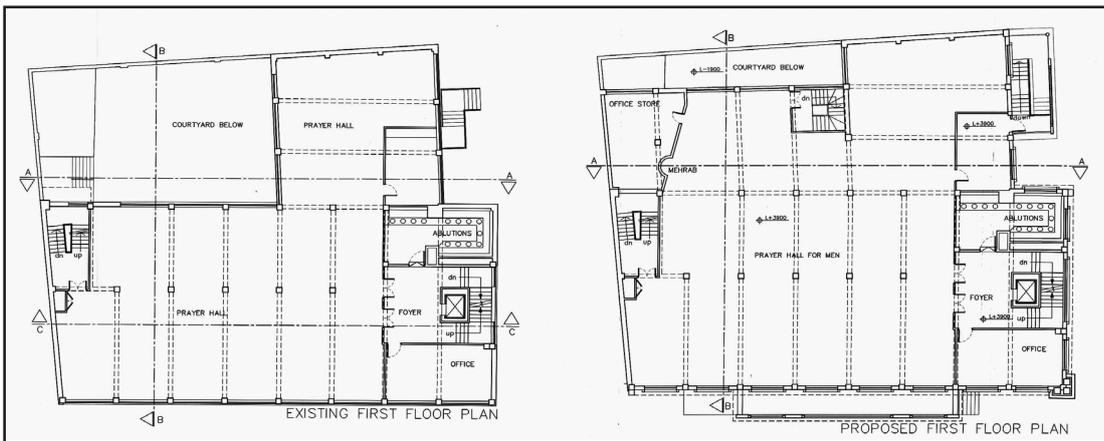


Figure 160: Existing first floor plan

Figure 161 Proposed first floor plan

school classes that offer various vocational courses. The third and fourth floors comprise mainly offices and *madrassa* classrooms. The Abubakr Mosque is currently open but undergoing further major refurbishment. And since the *imam* spoke to me regarding the unnecessary symbolism of the mosque, the committee have in fact decided to carry out a major facelift for the building to make the building ‘more mosque-like’, and the council has granted them the permission to alter the mosque’s interior and exterior.

This will involve recladding the façade with a grill-like structure to emphasize the entrance doors, as well as the use of coloured stone (yellow, grey and light grey) to add interest to a façade that does not resemble any of the other religious buildings in Southall. A glass pyramid dome is to be placed on the roof as well as a yellow stone *minaret* on one edge of the building, providing the Islamic symbols and signifiers that the worshippers would have liked to add to the mosque to make it more dominant amongst Southall’s other mosques. In other words, conforming to Peach and Gale’s fourth stage of ‘embracing and celebration’⁹⁷ the symbols of the mosque by its users and the local planners.

When the mosque committee applied for the alterations they offered an interesting rationale for the new development: ‘the existing building is unattractive and incompatible with the street scene. A distinctive Islamic façade will provide interesting architectural character to the street scene and contribute to the image of Southall’⁹⁸, as an ‘international gateway for excellence in multiculturalism and commercial development’.⁹⁹ They also added that the external appearance of the building will aim to convey its function as mosque – thus enhancing the mosque’s presence on the high street especially that the local Muslim community makes up 11.44% of the total Southall population and hence ‘they will have a sense of pride and belonging in this dynamic hub where diverse communities coexist fusing their skills, experience and culture’.¹⁰⁰ Another point they made is that the existing religious and educational facilities will be increased and improved, thereby contributing to the programme objective of developing community and leisure facilities in the Southall Strategy Action Plan.

The basement, however, will still retain the existing functions such as the funeral service area, store room, kitchen, toilets, ablution areas, boiler and electrical room, as well as a car park for six parking spaces. The ground floor will retain the existing functions of book store, ablution area, ladies prayer room and the entrance foyer. The area that is currently used as a prayer room and community centre will be enlarged by 43 sq.

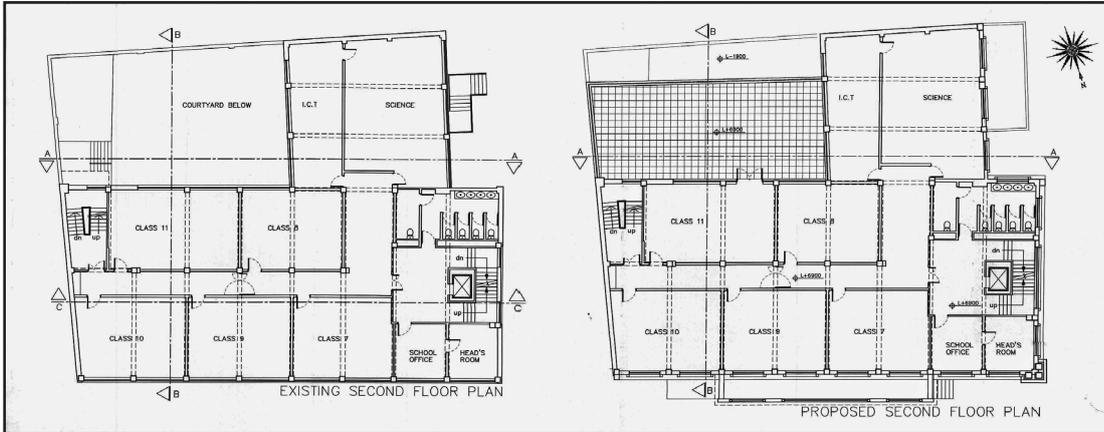


Figure 162: Existing second floor plan

Figure 163: Proposed second floor plan

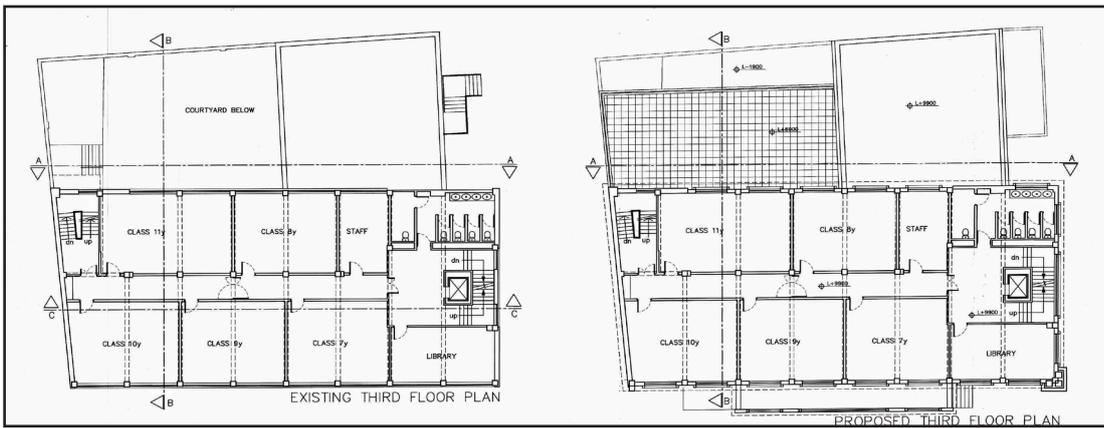


Figure 164: Existing third floor plan

Figure 165: Proposed third floor plan

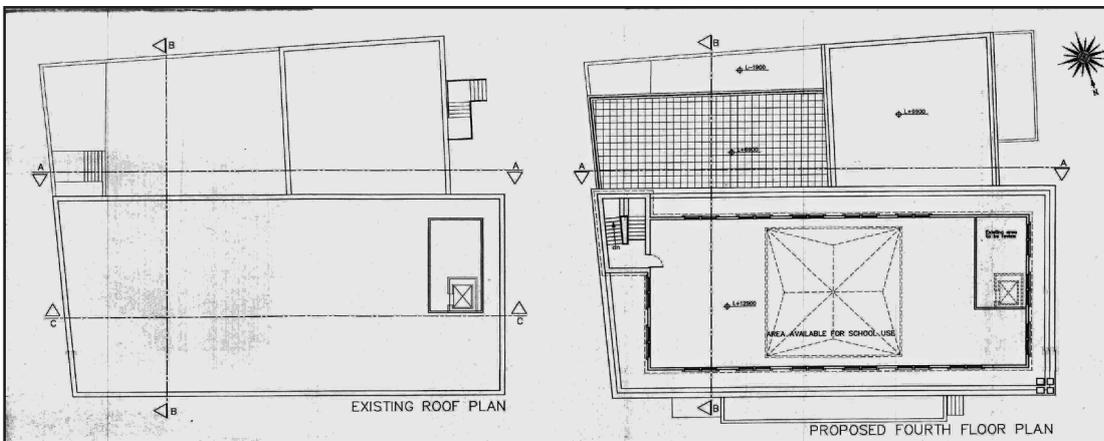


Figure 166: Existing roof plan

Figure 167: Proposed fourth floor plan

metres, to allow it to be used as an extra accommodation for the use of worshippers on special occasions. The first floor will hold the main prayer area for men and be enlarged by 64 sq. metres to the south east above the ground floor extension to provide extra accommodation for worshippers. The second floor will also retain the same plan with the existing provision of five classrooms with accommodation for 45-50 people and five toilets. There is a terrace from one of the classrooms that leads to the roof extension; the classrooms on this floor are for girls only. The third floor also retains the five classrooms for girls as well as the library and staff rooms. The fourth floor is an added floor that would have a covered area of 241 sq. metres for additional children's activity area. Tellingly, the façade of the existing building was also heavily criticized by the mosque committee in the proposal for change. They stated: 'The current building façade is monotonous and characterless and the new cladding would help to add more interest to the cityscape'.

There are certain points that need to be addressed with the additional architectural features in the new design proposal of the mosque to offer greater understanding of the process of a successful design that would satisfy the users as well as the effects of this scheme on the Southall cityscape and the planning department. These points are:

1. The prominent location of this mosque on the main road in Southall, The Broadway seems to suggest that the committee of the mosque is also relying on the Muslim visitors coming to Southall. Indeed there seem to be many visitors to the mosque who come from neighbouring areas as well as people from further away. And because these Muslim visitors to the mosque come from other places, the committee has decided to benefit from the enhanced prominence on the main street to promote their status among the other mosques in Southall.
2. The façade of the mosque also prompted some debate in the planning stages. The planning documents show that there were initially some concerns regarding the proposed design of the building expressed by the planning committee, especially in terms of the façade, which was seen as 'overly busy'.¹⁰¹ Therefore the architects of the proposed design, RDP Architects Limited, addressed these complaints in several ways:
 - The cladding to The Broadway elevation was simplified by removing the pseudo-columns and frieze.
 - Reducing the number of sub-arches and mullions in the windows.
 - Making the lower and upper levels of the façade similar in treatment.

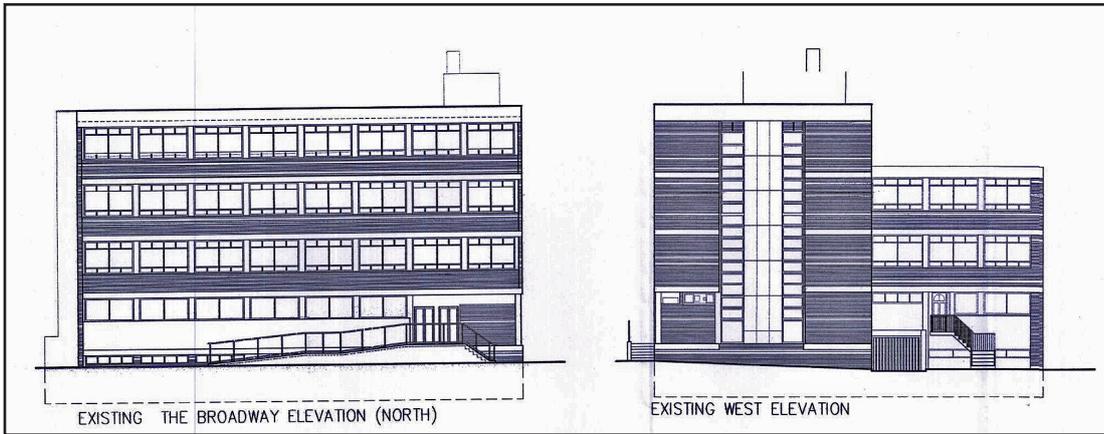


Figure 168: Existing elevation from The Broadway and West End Road.

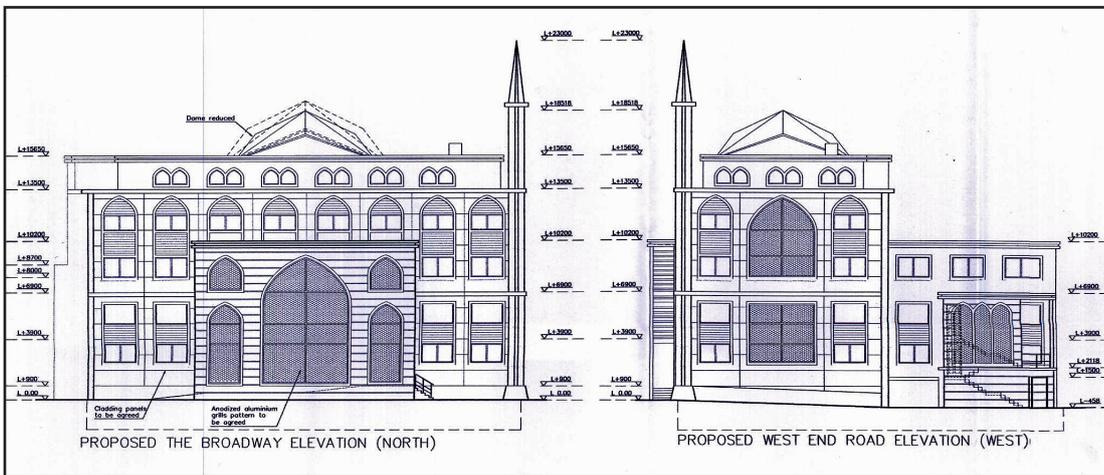


Figure 169: Proposed elevations from The Broadway and West End Road.

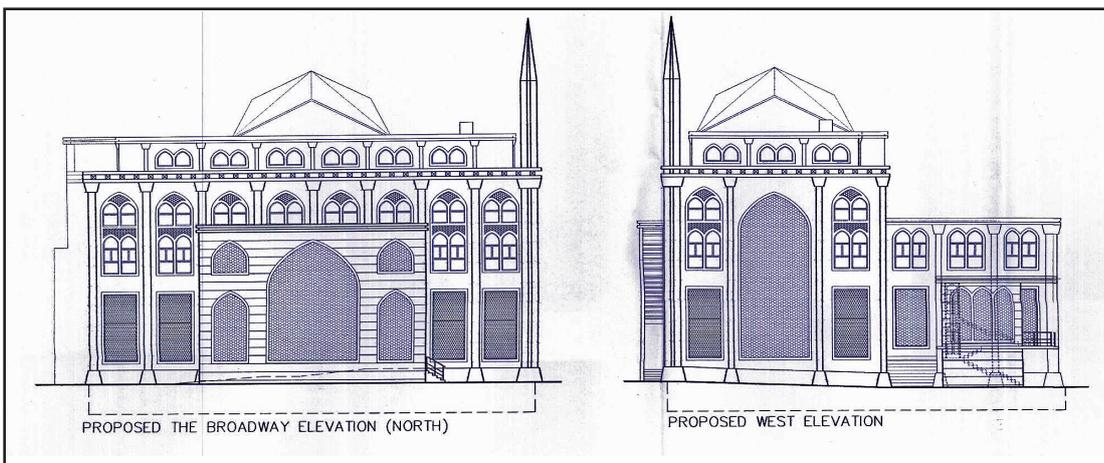


Figure 170: Proposed elevations that show the original proposal prior to the insertion by the architect of the dome and scaled-down windows over the entrances.

3. The dome and *minaret* also received some criticism for their original design from the planning committee. They stated that ‘the dome is considered too bulky and out of scale’.¹⁰² Therefore the architects addressed this complaint by reducing the height and size of the dome by 1 meter in height and around 2 metres in span. These changes seem to have agreed with the planning department, who then approved the design scheme without any change to the *minaret* size or form.
4. The extension to the prayer areas was introduced in an attempt to enable more worshippers to pray in the mosque because this space is very much needed especially, on special Muslim occasions such as Eid and Ramadan.
5. The school and roof extension were also approved after complaints about the location of one class-room terrace that led to the roof terrace. These complaints were issued by neighbours because of the close proximity of the building to the houses behind it. But the council approved the terrace after the assurance of the mosque committee that schoolchildren would not go on the roof unsupervised and thus create noise in the neighbourhood.
6. The ladies’ area was a very important addition that is intended to highlight the area for female worship with its separate access from West End Road. This access ultimately proved to be somewhat controversial because the committee wanted to have a completely enclosed door for ladies to enter the mosque, so that they would not need to use the main entrance and have contact with men. This separation of the ladies and men’s sections highlights the cultural interpretation of religious tradition and reflects the background of the users of the mosque. Another interpretation was given by a lady regarding female attendance: ‘Since the Abubakr Mosque is located on a major road, next to shops and restaurants, therefore it attracts all sorts of Muslims from many ethnicities. Therefore it is easy for a family consisting of men, women and children to enter to pray in the mosque; that being, the women and children go into the ladies’ section.’ Also according to the mosque committee, the introduction of separate access makes it even easier for female worshippers.

The mosque, however, lacks a feature that is very important in prayer rooms and as seen in Central Jamia Masjid. The problem is that that people praying on the second and first floors cannot hear the prayers by the *imam* on the ground floor; in Islam the *imam* reads the prayer and the worshippers recite it after. In this case, it could be solved by an intercom or speaker system that would enable the worshippers to hear the prayer

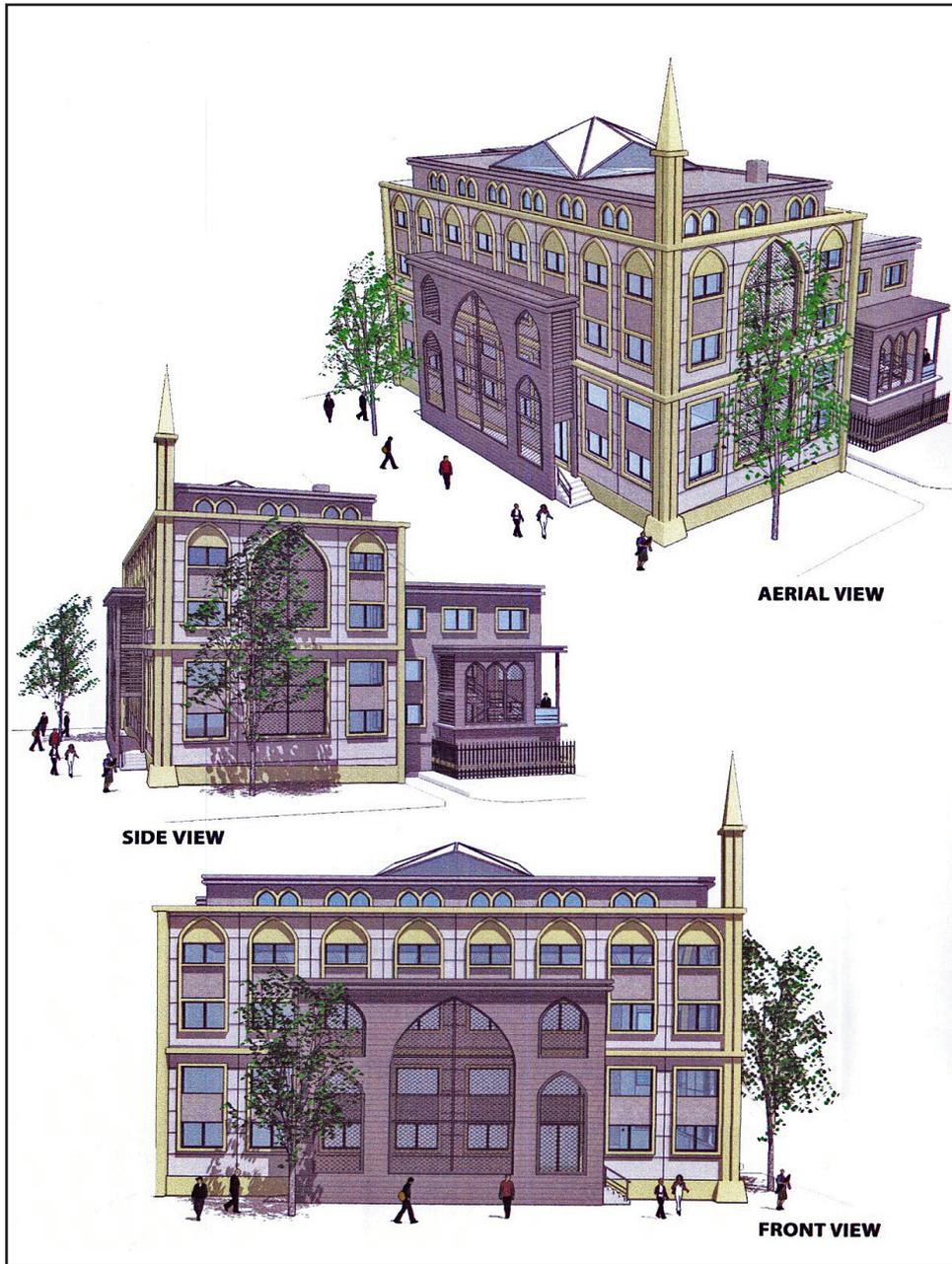


Figure 171: General views of the proposed building.
(Source: Ealing council records)

on the condition that this does not cause any disturbance on the surrounding street (especially given that Muslims pray five times a day and the last prayer is at dawn). So there is always a concern from planning departments in many mosques in London regarding the introduction of speakers for prayer, not only in Southall's mosques.

The current stage in renovation: November 2012

The mosque at present has achieved only around 30% of its goals in terms of renovation. The mosque committee's greatest challenge is their impoverished financial situation. They had to rely on donations from wealthy Muslims for the renovation works. However, not everyone who promised to donate actually did so; others gave a small initial sum but then stopped. Soon enough there was no new money coming in. According to the imam who is chairman of the mosque, the money received by these donors to date is around £100.000, while the collected donations received from other members of the community, especially during the month of Ramadan, is £135.000: this adds up to only £235.000 of the £1.5 million needed to complete the renovation. The designers of the mosque, RDP Architects, provided a refurbishment scheme that was carried all the way through to getting the full consent of Ealing Council. However, the mosque committee then decided to build the project with local small contractors to a schedule that was, initially at least, based on the architects' scheme. But due to the shortage of funding only small sections actually are being rebuilt. One also has to take into consideration that the mosque is still fully functioning and is visited 5 times a day by worshippers, and in addition it is also used for the girls' school which occupies the second and third floors. For these reasons, a number of compromises are being made:

1- The basement is going to still be used as previously and thus there have been no alterations to this level at all; in time it will have a small parking area as well as the current toilets and ablution areas.

2- The ground floor, especially the entrance area, will experience the greatest alteration because it was hitherto consisted of smaller subdivided spaces and but is now to be enlarged by demolishing some interior walls as well as changing the location of the bookshop from the left-hand side of the entrance to the front facade in a space previously used for storage. The entrance to the ladies' area and the main prayer rooms are to stay the same; likewise the staircase will stay in the same place and only minor resurfacing treatment will happen. The current situation of the entrance hall has wooden planks



Figure 172: Building under renovation on 6th August 2011



Figure 173: Building under renovation on 14th November 2012

material is marble, yet as the *imam* explained, this might have to change depending on funds.



Figure 174: Ground floor entrance, showing the new book shop.

3- The main prayer room on the ground floor will see some superficial changes to the wall treatment as well as the carpeting, as will the ladies' area when funding is possible.



Figure 175: Ground floor prayer room



Figure 176: Model showing the new design for the mosque, located on the ground floor level

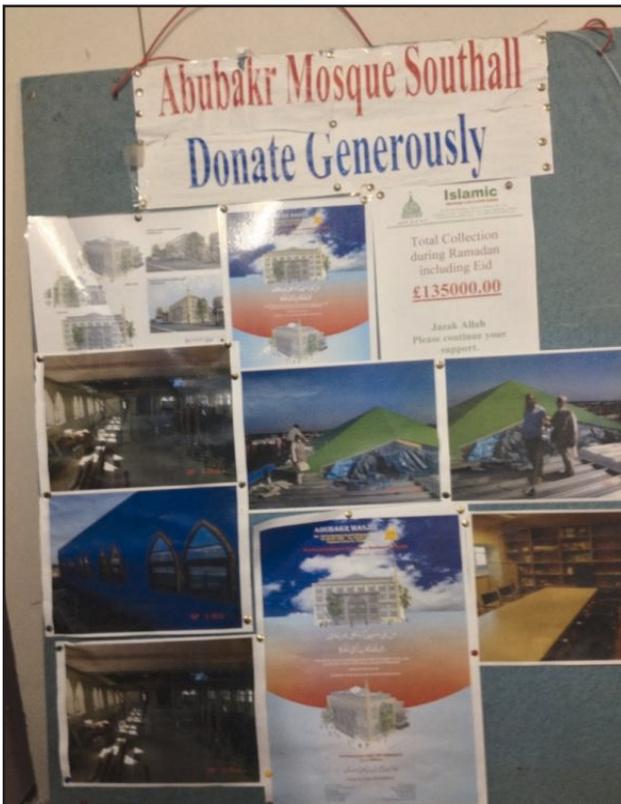
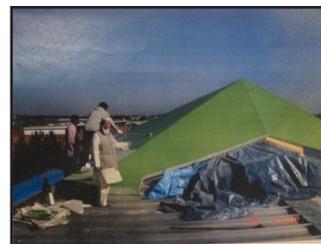


Figure 177: Advertising board showing the various stages of the renovation



4- The ladies section will stay the same in terms of size and location, perhaps only minor floor and wall treatments will be introduced again when funding is possible.

5- The small office for the *imam* on the right-hand side of the entrance will also stay more or less the same. However, that whole section is now covered with metal boxes for money donations, posters and flyers on the wall, a model of the new project for the mosque, and photographs showcasing the completed elements of the renovation works. Hence the entrance is acting also as a promotion area to raise money

6- The first floor is receiving the highest amount of refurbishment work at the moment, for two reasons. Firstly the smaller prayer room is only used during special occasions and festivals or for young boys' religious classes as a *madrassa*. Therefore to start the renovation here first creates the least disruption for worshippers. Secondly, this hall can act as a 'live' model of what the end result will be and so is being used to encourage further donations. However, since the mosque redesign involves detailed plasterwork for the ceiling and columns, the workers who specialize in this are highly skilled craftsmen from Morocco who currently reside in France. But due to the shortage of funds, and visa problems, they are not always available to complete the work; this just around 50% of the work has been done so far. Other offices on the first floor are mostly remaining the same as before. The girls' school which occupies the second and third floors will also stay the same.



Figure 178: The first floor prayer room, showing the intended colour scheme as well as the panelling motif on the ceiling



Figure 179: Details of the intricate pattern on the ceiling panels

covering the floor until the new floor material can be obtained. The intended flooring

7- There is an office on the first floor for the imam of the mosque and other members of the committee that will stay the same and in the same location.

8- The fourth floor of the mosque has a high proportion of the renovation to date because it comprises the roof and the dome over the main prayer space.



Figure 180: Photos from the girls school (Courtesy to the school's website)

9- Scaffolding currently covers the facades, but the mosque exterior will eventually be the single most altered element in the renovation scheme. The facade will be given coating materials, and a new 'Islamic' stylistic treatment, along with the addition of a minaret. Hence it is the most anticipated feature for building committee members, as well as local Muslims. They are expressing a great deal of pride and satisfaction because it will enhance the cultural image and identity they want to portray to the local community and visitors, enabling them to stamp their presence in Southall in a more tangible way like other groups such as Hindus and Sikhs.

10- The exterior of the building will eventually see the single most altered part of the intended renovation. The facade should include new treatment and covering materials as discussed previously, in addition to the minaret. A scaffolding currently covers the façade and perhaps this is the most anticipated feature that gives the committee members as well as the locals, the most pride and satisfaction because it is what will enhance the image they want to portray and the identity they want to express to the local community as well as visitors, because it will enable them to staple their presence within the area in a more tangible way as the other significant communities in Southall such as the Hindu and Sikhs.

Reflections on Abubakr mosque:

According to the *imam* of the mosque, they are in desperate need for donations as they fear the renovations will take much longer to be completed than they had wished for. Originally the project was to be completed by late-2012 or the beginning of 2013. However, because of the current situation, no completion date is on the horizon. Yet in spite of this problem, the mosque committee and worshippers do not seem too bothered by the disruption the refurbishment is causing; everyone just goes about their tasks as if nothing is different. The only real disruption is in entering from the street, which is narrower due to scaffolding and piles of building materials obstructing the entrance. The first-floor praying hall is obviously currently out of order as the work is not yet finished, which means that when there are special occasions, the main prayer space on the ground floor isn't large enough for everyone to pray. On these occasions, such as for Friday prayers and Islamic festivals, worshippers simply use the enlarged entrance hall for extra space. The mosque committee is currently conducting a renewed campaign for donations, although they are still very much short of funding. The most productive source seems to be people who come to the mosque and give money because they are pleased with the renovation scheme and what the mosque is going to look like after completion, especially taking into consideration the state of its previous façades. These worshippers also can relate closely to the intention to install a minaret and a substantial new dome. It will obviously take some time, but in future the Abubakr Mosque will start to make its mark as a major expression of Muslim identity in the Southall area.

The fourth mosque in Southall serves specifically the Ahmmadiya community.¹⁰³ Technically, it is not actually a mosque in the traditional sense, and is currently located in a small house in Villiers Road. Although communal prayer is performed in this place, it mainly functions as a meeting space for the Ahmmadiya community, who are mainly South Asians. The Ahmmadiya community also possesses a large mosque in Tilford in Surrey, which is a far more important centre for their religious worship.

6.4. Key aspects of Southall's mosques:

A number of general points can be made from an analysis of these case-study mosque buildings:

1. Location is perhaps the single major factor in defining Southall's mosques. It determines the type of worshippers (locals or visitors), the size of congregation, and ultimately the architectural form.
2. There are certain features of Islamic architecture that are used only in the purpose-built mosque, such as *minaret*, dome, calligraphy, etc., and since they are clearly not needed for the purpose of prayer, we can conclude that they are used essentially as representational elements to promote religious identity.
3. Certain elements of mosque interiors – such as the presence of a designated area for ladies, or not – reflect the broad interpretation of Islamic doctrines based on the ethnic/regional background of the particular body of worshippers. Mosques in Southall often have designated areas for females to pray, yet in some mosques this consists of an enclosed room whereas in others it is just an area within the main space. This feature could be attributed to cultural connotations: for example, for people who come from countries where a stricter approach to Islam is practised, the separation between male and female prayer areas is much more rigidly enforced.
4. Although there are undoubtedly certain issues of marginalization shown towards Muslims living in Southall, since they are generally a poor community, the day-to-day conduct among the people especially in the houses of worship does not reflect this disadvantaged status.
5. The politics behind the granting of building permissions to mosques and other houses of worship is still very much a matter of hot debate in Southall. It seems to depend on whichever community's house of worship carries more favour with the local council. This particular point is closely linked to the level of political representation by that community's representatives in the local government, and here again Muslims are somewhat disadvantaged.

6. In a cultural context, some elements that are more associated with cultural activities rather than religious influences are to be found in mosques in Southall, such as in the example of the kitchen area found in the Jamia Masjid Mosque.
7. Due to socio-political reasons, and the desperate need to find a place for worship – as was the case with the Abubakr Mosque – the major issue is often not so much about architectural form or what it signifies; instead, the purpose is simply to ensure a place to use for communal worship.¹⁰⁴ In the case of the Abubakr Mosque, the building is after all just a basic disused 1950s office block, and couldn't possibly be more unsuitable or anachronistic in its physical form. Yet we can see after the increased importance of the mosque highlighted by its location, a more prominent form that would give the image of a mosque is clearly now favoured by the users and the mosque committee, so as to represent the identity of the users was adopted.
8. The increased awareness by the planning department in Ealing Council reflects the changing understanding from the council and conforms to Peach and Gale's four-stage cycle for the planning process. This can especially be seen in the Abubakr Mosque when the council was very opposed at the beginning to offer a building for the mosque to locate in, or later on agreeing to any alteration that would enhance the form of the building into a clearly visible symbol of a mosque building.
9. It is striking how often the architectural form of the mosques in Southall are not to do with their external physical appearance, but takes more the form of a clear physical partitioning of pre-existing internal space.
10. Muslims do not expect that the bond of a shared faith should render their multiplicity of cultures mutually intelligible or even compatible, let alone the idea that they are 'the same'. Muslim Southallians are thus members of a global community, but that community is one based on shared faith, and so its boundaries far exceed the horizons of any one cultural group or any one person's cross-cultural experience. By the same token, they are also members of a local Muslim community, which again is not co-extensive with their own ethnic culture. It is only to be expected, then, that Muslim Southallians from East African backgrounds, or from

Punjabi or Gujarati backgrounds, see closer cultural affinities to others from the same background even if they are not of the Muslim faith.¹⁰⁵

11. Aside from ethnic differences, there are also cross-cutting distinctions established by religious practices and conceptions. Some of these are associated with mosques; as an example, the Central Jamia Masjid Mosque and its affairs are run primarily by believers from the Pakistani Punjab. It thus follows a strict interpretation of Muslim doctrine which leads it, for instance, to desist from celebrating the Prophet's Birthday, lest believers might be confused into worshipping Mohammed himself, rather than the 'One God'. In contrast, Southall's Jamia Masjid, the first-ever mosque in Southall, does observe the Prophet's Birthday, and some of its members even suspect that 'the people in the Central Mosque don't respect the Prophet'. Regular worshippers at this Jamia Masjid Mosque say that their congregation and belief system 'is for all kinds' – thereby associating the Central Mosque with a stigma of orthodoxy, and its management committee to the political endorsement of 'traditionalist' Pakistani leaders.
12. The mosques studied here vary greatly in design; however, all of them have experienced long battles with the local planning authority to gain permission to establish a place of worship at these locations. This contestation is understandable in the two cases of the Central Jamia Mosque and Jamia Masjid Mosque, as both buildings are in residential areas, and residents and planners feared congestion on the roads and disturbance from religious services. The Abubakr Mosque has a very different location, being on the main road and not in a residential area. Yet it too has had many battles with the planning authority and from the residential area located at the back of the mosque.
13. The Muslim communities in Southall has showed strong determination to retain these buildings as mosques, and this determination paid off especially in the case of the purpose-built mosque Central Jamia Masjid and Abubakr Mosque through the addition of a dome and a *minaret* to assert their presence. However, Jamia Masjid offers much less scope for redevelopment, and its location made any additions or alterations problematic, such as the unauthorised canopies that have been erected

to the side and rear of the property.

14. The two mosques, Jamia Masjid and Central Jamia Masjid, experience severe lack of space resulting in the congregation spilling out onto the streets during Friday prayer. The large congregations are due to an increasing Muslim community, which is now growing faster than the Hindu and Sikh communities because the majority of newer immigrants to Southall from Somalia and Afghanistan are Muslim. The growing Muslim community may indicate the need for even larger mosques but perhaps the proposed extension to the Abubakr Mosque might help to alleviate this problem. The problem is especially acute because there are very few suitable vacant sites in Southall to build on.
15. The development of these mosques also demonstrates the local planning authority's changing attitude to the building and adaptation of religious buildings in the area. However, the change in attitude seems to have come about slower in the cases of these mosques than the other religious buildings studied before, as in this case permanent permission for change of use was only granted in 1982 and 1993 respectively. The reason for the length of time taken to grant planning permission for the mosques is not clear. It may have been due in part to the political climate, or due to the fact that these mosques were located on problematic sites.

7. Conclusion:

The attempt to find a common discourse between the notions of culture, community and ethnicity in Southall is of course an extremely problematic one, precisely because of the difficulty of trying to explain all the different models of integration between the people of Southall and their diverse ethnicities, religions and cultures. Yet an alternative means of understanding this relationship can be proposed by this study, which comes through the idea of 'Southall culture'. That can be said to combine all of these notions collectively. The common notion of culture, which can reflect such issues as race, heritage, and religious homogenization, as described previously, can be misleading, because in Southall the shared heritage that each ethnic community equates with its own culture clearly differs, of course, from one to the other. To many South Asians in Southall, the culture of their respective communities is predicated upon their religious heritage and the historical dynamics found in the Indian sub-continent. Therefore, we

can assume that members of each community interpret their equation of culture and community in terms of a different perceived heritage.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, the notion of community can also be misleading if it is taken for example when referring to the Muslim community vs. the Sikh community, since the first comprises several ethnicities, while the latter is a single ethnicity. Therefore, to achieve a common narrative for the analysis of houses of worship in the area, the use of the term 'Southall culture' is the preferred concept for this study when referring to issues concerning the people of Southall – as well as to the use of the word 'community' to describe the five main communities which Southallians themselves generally refer to. Consequently, since the focus of this study concerns the architectural study of houses of worship, some common features need to be taken from the previous analysis between communities and their houses of worship, as well as for the reasons behind their use. In doing so, the attempt is to address the argument discussed at the beginning of this study, thereby discovering the links between architectural form and religion on one hand, and the relationship between culture and religion on the other hand. From the previous analysis of the different houses of worship and their respective locations, as well as the worshippers and their diverse ethnicities and their history of immigration, some key points can now be established:

1. There are basically three reasons for building the various houses of worship studied in this chapter: firstly, to create a useful space for the act of worship; secondly to create a building that reflects the identity of its users; and thirdly to create an architectural form that resembles the idea of what this specific form symbolizes to these users, specifically in terms of their religious doctrines.
2. Wherever the house of worship serves a multi-ethnic congregation, then its form is not of central importance; instead, its function is of greater concern. And the opposite case applies as well. If the house of worship serves a single community, as the case of the largest Southall *gurdwara*, then the need seems to be for a bolder and more sophisticated form to reflect the cultural identity of these users.
3. In general, the mosques and churches of Southall tend to cater for more multi-ethnic congregations, whereas *gurdwaras* and *mandirs* seem to address a more homogeneous ethnic congregation.
4. Certain patterns of previous discrimination between different ethnic

communities in Southall are rooted in their cultural and social history, and these factors are then reflected in houses of worship. This is most clearly seen in the resistance to mosque building.

5. The various communities in Southall often face different heritages to appeal to or indeed overcome. The confirmation of a unitary West Indian or indeed an African community may be plausible on the strength of a shared heritage of exploitation or oppression; however, the unification of an Asian community, by contrast, must first overcome the deep divisions between old and new, inclusive or exclusive, religious belief, caste, and other differences. Southall's South Asian communities may fuse what was seen as distinct on the sub-continent, or differentiate what seemed unitary there.¹⁰⁷
6. In Southall, internal differences of emphasis in worship and faith are widely associated, and indeed roughly aligned, with different community heritages. As in the case of many South Asian Anglicans, who received their religious education from missionaries on the Indian sub-continent, likewise, the religious heritage of many West Indians is predicated on a predominantly Evangelical understanding of Christian scripture.¹⁰⁸
7. The religious buildings such as *gurdwaras*, *mandirs* and mosques – especially the ones used by the South Asian communities – have assumed the role of a community centre, more so than in India or the countries that people originally come from. Places of worship therefore replace the traditional *biradari*, or village connections that do not exist otherwise in Southall, and also provide educational functions to ensure young members of the community maintain the religious tradition.

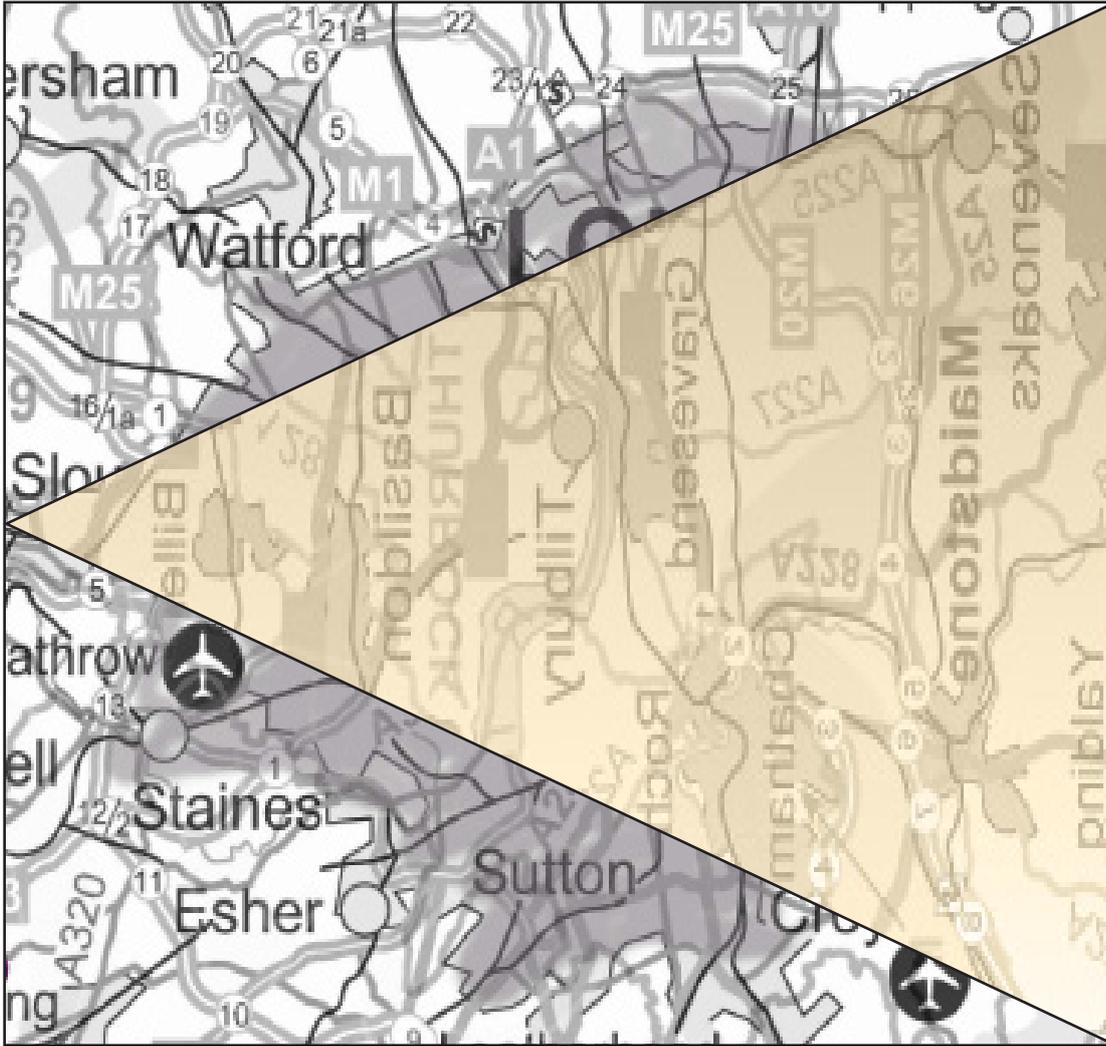
Furthermore, within the findings of this chapter on religious buildings in Southall, certain architectural features also become apparent:

1. Generally the different religious communities place a high importance on the external expression of religious buildings, using elements that are uncommon to the traditional British landscape, such as domes, *sikharas* and *minarets* to identify their presence, and to make a statement of their lasting presence in Southall.
2. Certain architectural types of houses of worship, such as *gurdwaras*, which generally serve a specific ethnicity, have an architectural form

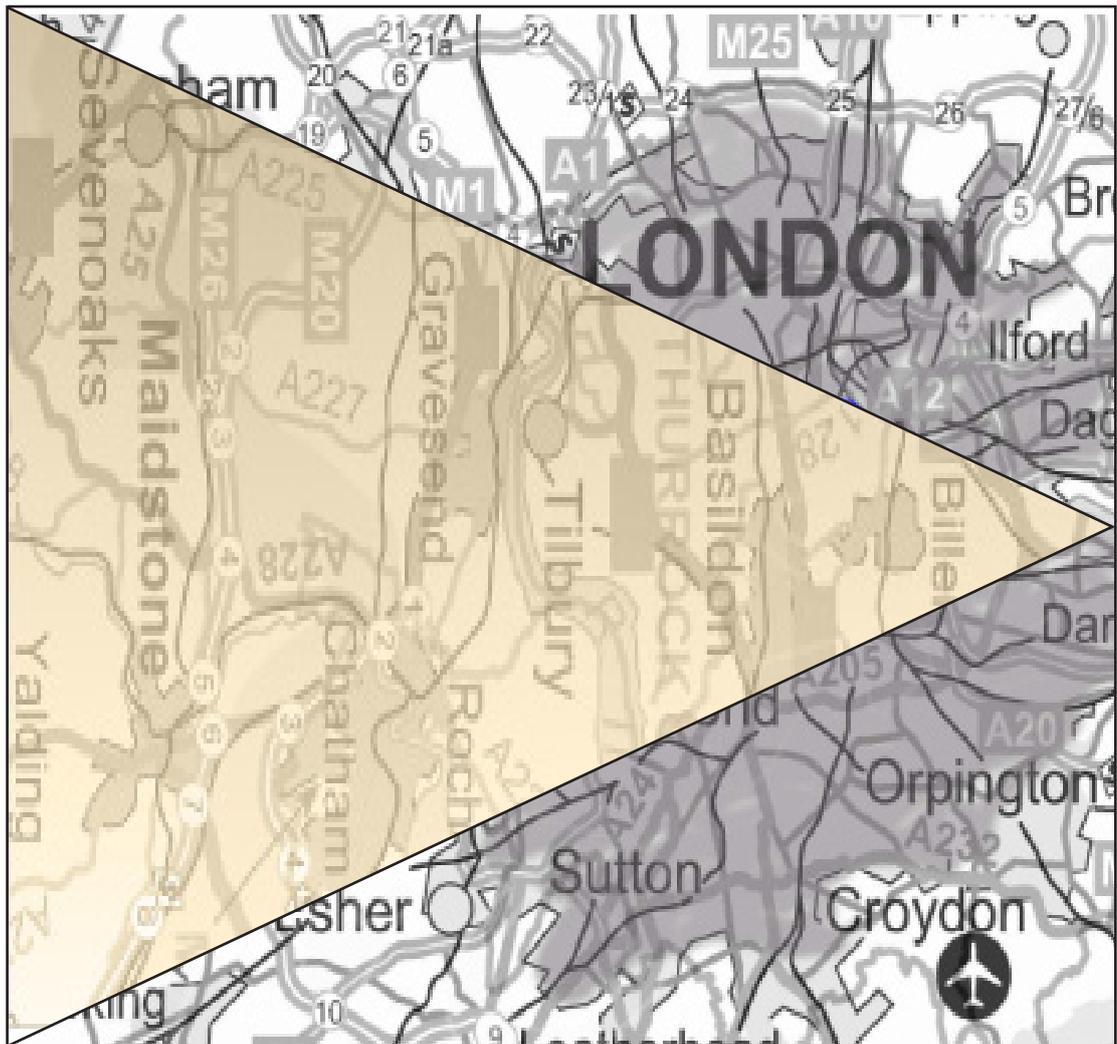
intended to reflect South Indian culture – in contrast for instance to those mosques which serve multi-ethnic communities. Architectural form, however, does not necessarily borrow from any specific culture. On the other hand, certain forms are adopted particularly in order to reflect the cultural identity of the user, and are often hybridised with British elements.

3. Where traditionally such religious features hold symbolic importance and meaning, this is often lost when it is tried to be reproduced in Britain, due to site restrictions, funding issues, or the concern of planners to conserve the character of an area.
4. The lack of space in Southall proved to be a problem when developing most of the buildings under study. Houses of worship thus have immense difficulty catering for the large congregations and in some cases this has resulted in the necessity of using temporary structures. Traditional internal layouts have also had to be compromised due to the restrictions of sites. Most of these places of worship would not consider moving to a larger site out of Southall because the majority of the congregations still live in the area. These religious institutions also have strong ties to the area, having survived through the difficulties of the early years of settlement – as such, their presence is a statement of this accomplishment.
5. Houses of worship however do not seem to need a certain style of architecture for the purpose of worship. In other words, communal worship can take form anywhere, as is seen in the Abubakr Mosque, for example. Therefore, we can safely say that culture and architecture are connected, and culture and religion are connected – yet, while architecture can certainly be used to reflect the values of religion as a cultural entity, it is not in fact essential for religious practice itself.
6. Cultural heritage, on the other hand, is always essential to architecture, especially within a global milieu. This can be seen in the attempt by Christian churches to add new functions and areas to satisfy their South Asian congregation, because culturally the element of food is so essential in South Asian culture. A similar pattern is also being formed in Southall's Hindu and Sikh temples.

Thus to speak of a 'Southall culture' is certainly possible in light of the many years of integration that has taken place between Southall's multi-ethnic communities. There is certainly some degree of fusion between their various cultural heritages, and also in terms of fusion with more indigenous British culture. The study of the houses of worship of Southall therefore demonstrates this act of cultural fusion – mixing similarities, differences and other factors to create what has to be seen as a successful, if complex, model of cultural integration. This study into the new cultural landscape of Southall could of course be taken much further than this dissertation, given that religious buildings only constitute one element of the built environment. Housing, social institutions, industrial buildings and the high street all reveal their own changing patterns of cultural reproduction in a new context. Somali cafes are beginning to replace Indian restaurants, food shops and restaurants are increasingly displaying the Halal sign. As the local community continues to change with the arrival of new immigrants, it will be interesting to observe what further changes will take place within the streetscape of Southall to reflect these varying communities. With this thought in mind, it is now time to draw the strands of this thesis to a conclusion



Conclusion



This thesis has highlighted some of the roles that religious buildings in London play in the everyday life of their users, as well as more generally for their particular ethnic communities. However, the previous analysis of religious buildings in Southall, as well as the other examples looked at in Chapter 2, has shown that a new role has emerged – i.e. the complex relationship between the identity expression of immigrant communities and the architecture of their houses of worship. Another angle that this

thesis focused on was the role that religion and culture plays in the building of new immigrant communities in a global city like London. As well as examining these factors in light of current issues of importance – such as multiculturalism, cultural diversity, national identity, and community cohesion – the aim was also to bring these debates to the foreground. Therefore, in this concluding section I will attempt to demonstrate the architectural findings which have resulted from the analysis in the previous chapters, and then tie these findings to ideas of identity expression through architectural symbolism. Furthermore, the focus in this thesis on religious buildings used by ethnic communities was intended to foresee how the phenomenon of religious buildings can impact on our future amidst many changing factors such as government legislation, which greatly affects this type of buildings, notably in relation to concepts like multiculturalism and community cohesion.

In the cases of Islamic, Hindu and Sikh religious architecture in Britain, and especially in England, the extent of religious representation has gradually become more prevalent over the last few decades. This only gradual emergence was due to the initial opposition by the British population towards the introduction of cultures and religions that were perceived by them to be ‘alien’, according to Gale and Naylor.¹ Gradual acceptance of such ‘alien’ cultures, as well as an acceptance of the needs of such places of worship by local planners, led to a growth in these religious buildings – and in more recent years, to an increased external manifestation of religious symbolism through the architecture. This change was initially manifested most markedly by South Asian immigrants. When they first arrived in Britain they helped to establish houses of worship in the form of *mandirs*, *gurdwaras* and mosques, as could be seen in the late-19th century through the building of the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking, which was paid for by an English convert to Islam. To these displaced ethnic communities this act of establishing houses of worship ensured the retention of their practices, rituals and way of life.

Since those pioneering days, the factors involved have become far more complicated. Therefore, this study set out some key objectives for the research to achieve. Firstly, to describe the role that religious architecture plays today in the everyday life of immigrant communities, as well as the change over time from the point of view of UK planning authorities. Secondly, to highlight the fact that even within a single local council, the planning parameters that govern religious building are never uniform due to many reasons that vary in each instance because of the shortage of suitable locations,

politically motivated prejudices, etc. Thirdly, to draw attention to the links between theories of multiculturalism, community cohesion and national identity as they affect immigrant communities. Fourthly, to distinguish between those symbols that are associated with architectural form and others which are more associated with culture or religion, so as to uncover the significance of meaning of identity expression through religious architecture.

This concluding section will hence start by describing the new political scene in which these concepts and architectural findings could contribute to the enhancement of the life of immigrant and local communities. This will then be analysed by dividing them based on the three categories discussed in the introduction to this thesis: architectural, cultural and religious factors. And the final step will be to discuss the findings by relating them back to the main research hypothesis.

The current political scene

Even as late as 1990, Norman Tebbit's infamous 'cricket test' remarks – that immigrants should demonstrate their Britishness by supporting England against the cricket teams from their countries of origin – illustrated the blinkered attitude that immigrants 'should be prepared to immerse themselves totally and utterly in that country'.² However, attitudes regarding racial and ethnic difference in British culture were by then already shifting from 'assimilation' to 'multiculturalism'.³ From the 1970s, many people in the western world began to realise that the simplistic assimilation/exclusion model did not work, and so they began to accept the necessity of a multicultural society 'as an ideal landscape where the solution to social ills was to promote a harmonious, tolerant, and positive relationship among different ethnic groups with high social cohesion'.⁴ A world-view that emphasised the need for immigrants to assimilate into the mainstream British culture has thus given way to pluralism that 'rejects a monocentric view of human experience: assimilation (monocentrism) is out, hybridity (multiculturalism) is in'.⁵ This trend continued such that by the end of the twentieth-century, there was 'the sense that the previous Labour government ... embraced – or at least tied to manage – cultural diversity',⁶ in the face of what was becoming an ever more multi-ethnic nation. This goal of multiculturalism was explicitly articulated in the 2001 White Paper, which asserted that 'our society is based on cultural difference, rather than assimilation to a prevailing monoculture', and indeed that 'the diversity is a source of pride, and it helps to explain our cultural vitality, the strength of our economy and our strong international links'.⁷

Yet amongst the current Conservative-led Coalition government, attitudes have hardened specifically in regard to the phenomenon of religious architecture. This has also been affected by the on-going and ever-changing political scene in London in particular, which has seen the emphasis shift the focus from one ethnic community to another, as in the case of the current debate about mosque buildings. We have also seen in the case of Southall how the notion of culture and community integration could be viewed as a successful model of a multicultural society – yet this obviously didn't affect the thinking of the Conservative-Liberal government when it suggested that 'state multiculturalism' had failed, and thus a new concept needs to be explored to give a new direction for communities to embrace social cohesion. David Cameron, the current Prime Minister, when he first reignited the debate about this subject, spoke out at a debate hosted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission:

'State multiculturalism is a wrong-headed doctrine that has had disastrous results. It has fostered difference between communities ... And it has stopped us from strengthening our collective identity. Indeed, it has deliberately weakened it.'⁸

Cameron defined state multiculturalism as 'the idea that we should respect different cultures within Britain to the point of allowing them – indeed encouraging them – to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream.' He also criticised the apparent suggestion from the Archbishop of Canterbury for the possible adoption of Sharia law⁹ in some areas of the UK, claiming that 'state multiculturalism' was leading to schoolgirls in Bradford somehow disappearing from school or being forced into marriage. He also committed the Conservative Party to promote the idea of national integration. His clear criticism of multiculturalism was manifested when he stated: 'Multiculturalism was manipulated to entrench the right to difference – which is a divisive concept. What we need is the right to equal treatment despite difference.'¹⁰

Such comments touch upon the work of Bhikhu Parekh, who has also stressed the fact that in order to develop a coherent political structure within a multiculturalist society, 'a need to appreciate the importance of both unity and diversity and establish a satisfactory relationship between them'.¹¹ Parekh suggests six principles which apply to the common issue of reconciling between the demands of unity and diversity, these being: structure of authority, justice, collective rights, common culture, multicultural education and national identity.¹² Moreover, Parekh writes: 'Like any other society, a multiculturalist society needs a broadly shared culture to sustain it. Since it involves

several cultures, the shared culture can only grow out of their interaction and should both respect and nurture their diversity and unite them around a common way of life'.¹³ Last, but not least, we come to the issue of national identity – a term that is politically used whenever circumstances suggest there is a national conflict or a political conflict of some kind, raising the issue into the foreground. This became apparent when David Cameron called for the end of state multiculturalism, linking it to political events such as the 7th July 2005 tube bombings in London. Such traumatic events trigger the need to have a common view in a desire to prevent catastrophes as well as bond societies together. But as a result of this debate about the end of multiculturalism, many groups in immigrant communities considered such comments to be prejudiced and leading to the alienation of some religions. And according to an article in *The Guardian*, Cameron's comments prompted some Muslim and anti-fascist groups to question the prime minister's judgment and sensitivity to the issues, 'saying he had handed a propaganda coup to the hard-right English Defence League as 3,000 of its supporters marched through Luton chanting anti-Islamic slogans'.¹⁴ According to the same article, some of the English Defence League demonstrators now boasted that the prime minister was finally 'coming out against extremism'.¹⁵ The timing of Cameron's speech was widely criticized because it was made at an international security conference, making the Muslim community feel specifically targeted.

Many critics within faith communities certainly considered the Prime Minister's words to be a direct attack on the Islamic communities in Britain when he criticised 'state multiculturalism' and argued that the UK needed a stronger single national identity to stop people turning to extremism. Others however were more ambivalent, such as the Chairman of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, Trevor Phillips, who pointedly refused to criticise Cameron's claim that multiculturalism had failed. Instead, he said that Cameron 'may have made life a bit more difficult for himself by combining a speech on terrorism with one on integration but said he was right to say it was not the role of government to tell people to embrace multiculturalism'. He then added: 'People don't choose not to integrate mostly. There are a few people on the edges who don't want to integrate with anybody else but most people, if they don't mix, it's because they don't have the choice.'¹⁶ Another commentator in a similar vein was Cecile Laborde, who in an article asked: "Which 'multiculturalism' was Cameron referring to when he delivered his speech in Munich on February 5th? The Prime Minister did not claim to contest the fact that British society is multicultural, multi-ethnic and multiracial.

Rather, his target was what he called state multiculturalism – the policies implemented by the government in order to ‘manage’ cultural diversity.” She then went on to attack British policy on this subject because of its strong focus on issues such as the provision of equal opportunities, extensive anti-racism and anti-discrimination legislation, which according to her:

‘... has consistently pursued policies of minority integration into British society ... Yet, on the whole, British policy, while alternating between multicultural, difference-sensitive rhetoric and (increasingly) appeals to shared nationality and citizenship tests, has pursued a not wholly unsuccessful course of culturally-sensitive integration. One becomes British not through cultural assimilation or declarations of patriotic loyalty but, rather, through participation with others in the labour market, local schools, neighbourhood life, civil society associations, and local and national politics. When things go well, one becomes British through mixing and mingling and working and arguing with others Brits, of diverse origin.’¹⁷

The highly charged political scene in Britain in recent years carries echoes of a very similar incident, albeit on a grander scale, in relation to the plan to build a mosque in New York close to ‘Ground Zero’, the area which was obliterated through the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre. This plan for a mosque and community centre was turned into a global controversy by the media. Many people resented the whole idea and held demonstrations to oppose the granting of permission to build this mosque, which was by then inflammatorily named the ‘Ground Zero Mosque’ by the press. Many people argued it would be an ‘inappropriate reminder of the incident’. The developers argued that the project was only ever really intended to be a community centre with an associated prayer space, and hence wasn’t a true mosque, yet this did not seem to help and so the project remains unbuilt. Nonetheless, the ‘Ground Zero’ controversy is illuminating for several reasons:

- 1- The fact that it was the physical location of a mosque so close to a politically charged scene which created the tension and mass opposition.
- 2- That it was misinterpretations and miscommunications between the developers and New York’s media which ignited this situation.
- 3- Even though exactly the same location was already being used by the local Muslim community as a prayer space, it was the scale of the new mosque, and its overt architectural expression, which made the issue so heated.

The architect for the project, Michel Abboud, gave a fascinating seminar at the Architectural Foundation in London in November 2010 in which he explained the scale and design of the mosque. He noted that the mosque was intended as a community centre for all people of the area, regardless of their faith and gender. A prayer space was indeed to have been located in the basement and was intended to accommodate up to 10,000 worshippers. However, elsewhere in the building, Floors 8 and 9 were to provide a swimming pool and basketball courts for all the public, while the top floor was to be dedicated as a museum for memorabilia for the catastrophe. And the main feature of the building was to be an innovative design involving a flowing plaster façade that filtered light in an intricate way. The pattern of the façade was based on intricate Islamic calligraphy with clear connotations of religious symbolism. However, due to the controversy which erupted, the scheme is unlikely ever to be built. With this unfortunate example in mind, the following section will piece together the key themes of this thesis.

Findings of the study

1- Religious factors

Many concepts within current political theory, such as the multiculturalist and secularist theories discussed in Chapter 1, also serve to highlight the importance of religion, especially within immigrant communities. Bhikhu Parekh believes that multiculturalism shows the important need for religion if we want to understand the many facets of culture, as compared to secularist theory which proposes the withdrawal from religious beliefs in order to encourage harmony and cohesion between different communities. Parekh also attacks the concept of secularist theory by suggesting that ‘it discriminates against religious persons and violates the principles of equal citizenship ... [and] it is impractical for there is no way of enforcing it. It is counterproductive as it is likely to alienate religiously minded citizens from the political system and create a crisis of legitimacy’.¹⁸ Parekh observes instead that there is a trend in religious thought that functions as a vital element within communities generally and immigrant ethnic communities in particular. Of this he writes:

‘The social and political involvement of religion should not surprise us. Religious people generally seek wholeness in their lives and do not think it is possible or desirable to separate their private and political concern.’¹⁹

Certainly an emphasis on religious belief was central to the research for this thesis, especially in the case of Southall, with its multitude of ethnicities and religious communities living side-by-side successfully. Parekh highlights the role of religion in general by stating:

‘Religion is a fact of social life and, so long as it remains so, no state can remain indifferent to it. Given its legitimate secular interest in public order, public morality, public health, social harmony and individual freedom, the state is rightly concerned that religions should not pose a threat to all these by inciting mutual hatred, unduly curtailing their member’s liberties, following immoral or unhygienic practices, and so on.’²⁰

The issue therefore is what should be the right balance for the state/religion separation, given that the state needs to respect the will of all people to practise their particular religion. As seen in our specific case studies, the level of harmony in Southall between its various communities and their diversity of religions and culture is in stark contrast to the highly controversial Finsbury Park Mosque, and the way that some of its clergy used religion to establish their own political agenda and motives. Therefore, we can assume that religions and their built architecture can help to achieve certain goals in establishing cohesive roles in the community; some of these goals are political, as we saw in aforementioned examples, or are related to cultural identity through a focus on proving one’s own self-worth, as in the example of the Neasden Temple. Furthermore, there is another important element to this emphasis on religion as the medium for local political and cultural participation, as Brenda O’Neill notes:

‘Religion shapes political and citizen engagement in multiple ways: by developing a value system that encourages community involvement; by providing opportunities for participation; and by encouraging the development of skills that provide the ability to participate ... religion is often a call to action. Its impact on engagement depends, not surprisingly, on the relative importance that it plays in an individual’s life. The greater its importance, the greater its impact.’²¹

Indeed, on the subject of faith communities and the involvement of government legislation, Richard Farnell has written:

‘Leaders of faith groups aspire to a recognised role in regeneration but are liable to resist uncritical co-option into government agendas. Conversely, the pronouncements of national politicians and senior civil servants often assume that, with a little encouragement, people of faith will participate in the implementation of official

policies and plans. Many professionals at the local level, whether in local authorities, regeneration agencies or third sector bodies, view faith organisations with a degree of suspicion and experience some difficulty in developing and maintaining good, productive relationships.²²

This was certainly an issue in Southall due to the sheer multitude of faiths and religious houses that exist in that area. This situation of multiple communities of faith within areas of London, and their direct involvement in local government policies, is particularly apparent given the need to build new houses of worship. Whether planning permission was granted easily or not to a building proposal varied hugely, specifically in terms of mosque building due to high prominence of the Islamic faith in political controversies at the moment. The difficulty of acquiring a disused government building to convert into a mosque, or instead of obtaining permissions for a new structure, was particularly difficult for the Islamic community in Southall – especially when compared to the case of the Central Mosque in Regents Park when it was originally built in 1944, with help from government grants. The current problems of mosque building in London, however, started with the radical take-over of the Finsbury Park Mosque and continued with great momentum until the events of 11th September 2001 in New York and the attacks on the London's underground on 7th July 2005. These events continue to dominate media discussion and government policies about mosque building – leading, as mentioned previously, to the frequent opposition by many citizens against the construction of new mosques in their areas.

Thus in general, based on the research here, some pointers can be provided as to how religion affects the everyday life of immigrant communities. In Southall, specifically, an interesting case is created by a few Christian churches which are used by the Indian Orthodox community. The main changes to these churches occur on the ceremonial and social levels, not in terms of the actual architecture, when compared to other religious buildings for the South Asian community such as *mandirs* and *gurdwaras*. This because Christianity is a religion that is not usually associated with South Asian ethnic groups, whereas of course Hindu and Sikh religions are. This leads on to a crucial observation, which is that religious beliefs and practices do not ultimately seem to be particularly influenced by the architectural form of their houses of worship. Indeed their form is often more associated with cultural life rather than specific issues of religious doctrine, as can be clearly seen in the mosques in Southall which at present take the form of buildings that are only used for prayer and no overt symbolic references (even though

there are now plans to change that in one of the mosques by incorporating Muslim symbols into the facades). These intended renovations to the Abubakr Mosque; are intended to enhance the image of the Islamic community in Southall, especially now that there is an increase of the number of Muslims within the area. Therefore it would appear that the establishing of mosques for religious purposes only is not enough to express their identity: an overt image is clearly needed, and that is the reason that this mosque is renovating by adding a dome and a minaret to a building that will be used in exactly the same way with no extra space to be added for prayer or other religious functions. What is desired is the additions of Islamic symbols.

It is also significant that all the buildings that have been discussed in this thesis have assumed the role of community centres. Particularly in Southall, these places of worship have replaced the traditional *biradari*, or village social connections, which simply do not exist in the area. Furthermore, the purpose of the houses of worship is also to provide educational functions to ensure that young members of the community maintain the given religious tradition.

Religious practice is hence an essential element of everyday life that is widely practiced within immigrant communities in places like Southall, but it seems to operate largely independently of architectural determinations.

2- Cultural and social factors

As a key part of this conclusion, there is a need to focus again on concepts that have been discussed previously: multiculturalism, national identity, assimilation, diversity and identity. On the subject of ethnic cultures in relation to wider society, Bhikhu Parekh notes that some critics argue that a person can be happy with their culture, just so long as it enables them to lead a reasonably good life, and as such there is often no need for them to have access to others. He writes: 'Also this person can argue that since self-consciousness, critical self-knowledge and so forth plants doubts about the value of one's way of life and deny one the minimum certainties necessary for a stable life, they are not desirable virtues, at any rate for him and others like him who would rather live by their simple faith than risk losing it in search of higher truths.'²³ Parekh expands upon this issue by introducing the contrasting concepts of a 'homogeneous society' and a 'culturally diverse society'. Since he is considered to be the 'father' of ideas

about multiculturalism, he of course personally favours a culturally diverse society, even if he still acknowledges that a homogeneous society possesses its own strengths. Parekh states of the latter that 'it facilitates a sense of community and solidarity, makes interpersonal communications easier, sustain a thick culture ... and can count on and easily mobilize its members' loyalties'. But he also points to the many weaknesses of a homogeneous society: 'it also, however, has a tendency to become closed, intolerant, averse to change, claustrophobic and oppressive, and to discourage differences and dissent'. This he attributes to the fact that 'its limited resources for internal resistance, it can be as easily mobilized for evil as for good purposes'.²⁴ He makes another comparison between the two models: 'a culturally diverse society can reproduce most of the desirable qualities of the homogeneous society, but the reverse is not the case ... that there is no obvious reason why a culturally plural society should not develop a sense of community, solidarity, common loyalties and a broad moral and political consensus'. By contrast, 'a culturally homogeneous society cannot provide the creative tension of an intercultural dialogue, expand imagination and moral and intellectual sympathy, and so forth'. Parekh concludes that 'although a culturally diverse society is not better in all aspects, it is likely to achieve a better balance of the qualities desirable in a good society'.

Through this analysis, Parekh is also acknowledging the role of modern technology and globalisation, given that no society today can ever really insulate itself against external influences. He thus suggests a formula for better co-existence:

'... since cultural diversity characterizes almost all -societies albeit -in -different degrees, they must either find ways of coming to terms with and even profiting from it, or suppress or marginalize it by somehow homogenising themselves. The latter is impossible because it involves an unacceptable degree of internal repression, limited contacts with the outside world, control of the media, total bans on foreign literature and technology, and even this has no chance of success.'²⁵

This critique also includes false claims to nationality, because 'every definition of national identity - is necessary selective and must be relatively simple to achieve its intended purposes'.²⁶ In this light, Parekh stresses the point that national identity tends to delegitimize or marginalize other groups, plus it oversimplifies the history of a community. According to him, the danger is in terms of 'glorifying the role of some groups and denigrating that of others. A definition of national identity can also

become a vehicle for silencing dissident voices and moulding the entire society in a particular image with all its authoritarian and repressive implications'.²⁷ Hence the concept of national identity when applied cannot ever produce optimum levels of community cohesion. This also puts the focus back upon the concept of assimilation. However, Parekh recommends that assimilation should always be left to the given community's choice whether to do so or not, as was discussed in more detail in Chapter 1. Whenever it is forced this suggests that the government is implicitly attempting to ignore the cultural heritage of key groups of its citizens. This very point was of course highlighted in the immediate reaction of many leaders of immigrant communities to David Cameron's speech about the 'failure' of state multiculturalism.

All of these observations certainly relate to the research in this thesis, especially if we take the case of Southall, since it is such a clear example of a culturally diverse society. Noha Nasser uses the term 'Kaleido-scape', since this for her represents 'an integrated approach to the study of Southall, using conventional urban morphological methods to link global forces to cultural phenomena at a local scale'.²⁸ Nasser's texts certainly offer an insight into why Southall has become such a model of integration: 'Southall's intricate web of social solidarities and their multiple identities in the making of a place has been a process of social negotiation and contestation. In many respects, Southall's evolution into a Kaleido-scape has followed the trajectory of Britain's fractured, and often antagonistic, path to multiculturalism.'²⁹ She also points out that in the past, and especially the last four decades, 'British multiculturalism has had to come to terms with the failure of state-directed projects to assimilate ethnically marked settlers who were expected to erase their identities and histories as a price of admission into the host society.'³⁰ In Nasser's view this represents the end of these forms of state policies which are no longer sustainable, and so in conclusion she states:

'Kaleido-scapes represent sites where local identities meet global practices. To a certain extent the kaleido-scape is a local construct; it expresses and reflects the cultural norms, way of life, symbols, and identities of the primary user ... The mixture of the local and the global is clearly expressed in the built environment. The forms of its expression are not an authentic or pure reproduction of the homeland, but a new hybrid urban morphology that combines local vernaculars with global (or imported) elements.'³¹

On this subject of diversity, it is here useful to focus again on the three categories offered by Parekh: subcultural diversity, perspectival diversity and communal diversity.

In the analysis of the case-study buildings in this thesis we repeatedly encountered all three categories. The example of the Shah Jahan Mosque was certainly initiated in an attempt to create subcultural diversity, given that it was built by people who were either influenced by ‘orientalist’ thinking, or else belonged to a multitude of ethnicities later on who attended the mosque. A classic example of perspectival community came in the Finsbury Park Mosque and its highly politicized role within the community. The building highlights this type of diversity through the way that the previous users of the mosque were highly critical of the dominant British culture and all its ways of life. As for communal diversity, when describing the area of Southall as a complex community with a mixed population, the whole area becomes a vivid representation of this category. Yet if we try to describe each case-study building using Parekh’s three categories, then we can also see many overlaps and mergers between them.

Therefore, we can highlight several points based on our previous discussion on the social and cultural levels:

- 1- Communities tend to interact with other cultures – as well as the dominant white British culture – in differentiated ways that depend on crucial issues such as background, belief system, etc., as can be seen in Southall.
- 2- Immigrant communities tend to change through the process of mixing with the prevailing culture, and these changes will then affect later generations on many different levels ranging from the use of language and social practices through to direct assimilation.
- 3- Immigrant communities also tend to develop a new hybrid culture when they are living in their new country, which again comes to affect subsequent generations.
- 4- Certain terms are continually being forced onto certain societies – such as race, ethnicities, multicultural, diversity, community cohesion, integration, etc. – as a result of government policies. Not surprisingly, this has its supporters as well as critics, and today there seems to be a trend within the current British government to develop new policies to deal more specifically with immigrant communities in terms of assimilation and integration, purportedly to achieve a more harmonious level of co-existence.

3- Architectural factors

Before summing up the study's findings on the architectural level, it is worth mentioning again some theories of other scholars about the architecture of immigrant religious buildings in Britain. In this regard, Richard Gale has carried out an interesting study of planning history by tracing the fates of three purpose-built mosques in Birmingham. Gale places the clear responsibility for the creation of successful religious buildings onto the planning profession. This, he argues, is because planners are responsible for the social boundaries that are set during the design development of any new religious building, and are therefore crucial for the resulting meanings and associations that such buildings are allowed to articulate. It is the planners' decisions, and more specifically the framing conditions that they set, which eventually determine the physical outcome of such buildings. The general desire of local planners to preserve the qualities of the existing urban landscape then needs to accommodate also the demand of different ethnic groups to express their identification within the built environment.³² Gale's study reached some interesting conclusions. Firstly, that it was necessary for immigrant groups to engage as directly as they could with planning procedures and 'continue to be hegemonic in their relation to the processes through which the urban environment is (re)produced'.³³ Secondly, that this hegemony is not absolute but relative, and hence the 'engagement of Muslim and other religious groups with planning procedure can be effective in redefining the constraints that urban planning imposes'. Thirdly, that town planning can perform an important role in relation to the design of purpose-built religious structures by not only framing, but also mediating, issues of formal and aesthetic contestation.

Hence, the changing attitude of planning laws in Britain towards the design of religious buildings has a vital impact on their development, since the final decision is taken by the planners as to what designs will or will not be realised. Peach and Gale accordingly identify two sets of principles that planners generally rely on in their consideration of social and aesthetic principles:

- Socially, the concern to uphold local amenity is set against certain practices of the faith communities, leading to the adaptation of certain aspects of worship, such as the hours of services, or omitting the function of the *minaret* given local opposition to hearing the daily Muslim call to prayer.
- Aesthetically, planners are concerned with maintaining the existing character of an urban

area, and ensuring that new developments fit in with the surroundings. Although many of the buildings studied in this thesis possess at least some religious signifiers, they are usually scaled down, or are applied to a building that is itself nondescript and/or lacking in expression in order for any changes to blend in more with their surroundings.³⁴

This also brings us back to complex attitudes of local authorities in such areas to the notion of multiculturalism, which often becomes a local vote-winner. Nasser stresses this point by stating: ‘Sponsoring these prominent urban features was also a means for the local authority to lever political influence by demonstrating its active engagement with multiculturalism’.³⁵ She then cites the example of Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha on Havelock Road which used to be in a converted dairy building, as was noted previously. On the same note, Biondo uses his study of mosques in Britain and the USA to suggest three main categories: ‘An immigrant Muslim community that wishes to build a mosque in the US or Britain faces several major issues internally. First is the question of an overall historical or regional style. A new mosque can be built with a regional or internationalist orientation that is inclusive or exclusive towards sectarian or ethnic differences and non-Muslims. In Southern California and Northern England purpose-built mosques can be classified according to one of three types: international-inclusive, international-exclusive, and regional-exclusive. All three involve a range of interpretations of *ummah* and *dawah*, or pan-Islamic unity and social outreach to non-Muslims respectively’.³⁶ Biondo’s mosque types hence associate the architectural form with the specific cultural background of the users, and similarly Nasser relates the presence of architectural elements to the purposes and needs of the particular religious house in question.

Architectural features of religious buildings in this thesis

- 1- Over time there are certain architectural elements that seem to have diminished in importance in religious houses, while there are other elements that came to be more important; similarly, other elements have changed their roles. The presence of *sikharas* on the roofs of Hindu temples has, for instance, diminished in architectural importance. Noha Nasser observes that ‘the *sikharas* were often constructed of intricate stonework but in their displacement from India to Southall they have been reduced to mimesis, with no structural meaning, the plaster-cast ‘*sikharas*’ have simply become identity markers, type of simulacra which have become detached from the labour processes that produced them.’³⁷

A symbol that has taken on new meanings but essentially serves no functional purpose is the *minaret*, coming merely to represent a feature of Islam, not its original purpose for the call to prayer. Another example of an aspect that has changed meaning is the demand to orient the Islamic mosque towards Mecca, which is frequently unrealised due to space restrictions, planning rules, or lack of budget. But this is not something that should be seen in any way as a problem.³⁸

- 2- Thus in the case of mosques, it is hard to define what should be considered an architectural style associated with culture given that Islam is not associated with a single geographical or cultural region. But even this has not stopped certain symbols coming to be associated with mosques, such as *minarets* and domes. Nasser writes: ‘South Asians have drawn inspiration from transnational imaginings in which cultural flows of “Islamic” idiom and symbolism have been reemployed as markers of Muslim presence. And the places they have created are the result of the on-going dialogue between the cultural norms of the Muslim community and British built form’.³⁹
- 3- Specifically in the case of Hinduism, it is not only the architecture of religious buildings that has become adapted, but also the actual manner in which certain rituals are carried out; this is much less so in the cases of Sikhism and Islam, whose rituals can more easily be accommodated within existing buildings. As a consequence, traditional *mandir* architecture is governed by more rules and symbolism than *gurdwaras* and mosques. In turn, this means that it is particularly difficult for *mandir* architecture to be replicated accurately in Britain. Therefore Hindu architecture can usually be criticized more readily than the other religious buildings in terms of adding elements that serve solely as identity markers, thereby losing the meaning for which they were traditionally designed.
- 4- A lack of hierarchy or even clarity in the management of many of the religious buildings frequently causes conflict amongst their communities. Sean McLoughlin notes that the leadership of such buildings is generally the responsibility of a management committee made up of volunteers who are democratically elected. There is often no overriding institution that governs the funds and development of a community’s place of worship. As a result these institutions are ‘mostly run by committees of first-generation migrants with their own power bases and agendas.’⁴⁰ McLoughlin also makes the comparison between Irish Catholic immigrants and more recently settled Muslim communities, when she observes

that: ‘Unlike the Irish Catholic immigrants with whom they are sometimes compared, Muslims in Britain have no ecclesiastical hierarchy or system of trained parish priests.’⁴¹

- 5- We can see from the case-study buildings in this thesis that the group which repeatedly faces the most difficulty in gaining planning permission for the establishment of a permanent place of worship is the Muslim community. This does not necessarily mean that this is always the case across Britain, but certainly the mosques studied in this thesis, particularly in Southall, have highly problematic histories and very restricted sites. This also needs to be set against a context in which the Muslim community has experienced increased racial prejudice from the British press and other groups in British society, notably since the terrorist attacks in New York in 2001 and London in 2005. As a result, the development of mosques is likely to cause contestation in many areas of Britain, even if in fact the aims and results of mosque building are no different to that of creating *mandirs* and *gurdwaras*.
- 6- Generally, religious communities place a high importance on the external expression of their religious buildings, using elements that are uncommon to the traditional British landscape, such as domes, *sikharas* and minarets to identify their presence, and to make a statement of their lasting presence in Southall and other parts of London. But at the same time, we have also observed that the meaning of some traditional religious features that hold symbolic importance is often lost when reproduced in Britain, due to many factors such as site restrictions, shortage of funding, or the concern of local planners to conserve the character of an area.
- 7- The lack of space in Southall and elsewhere has proven to be a problem when developing or renovating most of the buildings analysed in this thesis. Houses of worship have immense difficulty catering for the large congregations and in some cases this has resulted in the need to use temporary structures. Thus we have observed that traditional internal layouts have often had to be compromised due to the restrictions of the sites. However, and seemingly in Southall in particular, most of these places of worship would not consider moving to a larger site outside the area as the majority of their congregations live within it. These religious institutions also have strong ties to the area, having survived through the difficulties of the early years of immigration and settlement, thus their presence is a proclamation of this accomplishment.

8- Above all, the changing attitude of planning laws in Britain towards the design of these religious buildings has to be seen as having had an important impact on their development; probably to a greater extent than for more normative kinds of buildings. It is therefore essentially the role of planners who decide on what design is to be implemented. This decision is based on social and architectural set of codes that are considered by planners for each building application, but there are hidden structures which need to be negotiated, which is why local ethnic groups are so keen to see Hindu, Sikh or Muslim officials in the local planning department. There are then codes which apply in each instance when deliberating on the creation of houses of worship in an area such as Southall, and which can be classified as follows:

- Social codes: these include how the planning department can maintain certain local amenities and social norms which are then set against certain practices of the faith communities, leading to the adaptation of certain aspects of worship, such as hours of services for each religion, or the curtailing of rituals as the Muslim call to prayer.
- Architectural codes: planners are greatly concerned with maintaining the existing character of an area, and ensuring that new developments always blend in with the surroundings especially if located within residential areas, as can be seen so clearly in the case of Vishua Hind Mandir in Southall. Religious buildings that wish either a monumental scale or certain architectural elements as religious signifiers are often scaled back, or toned down in their expression, in order for them to become more harmonious with the surroundings.

But these kinds of objections to these houses of worship being developed has obviously decreased over time as host communities have become more accepting of new religions, and different ethnic groups.

Hypothesis in terms of the issue of cultural identity

Based on the analysis of immigrant communities and their religious buildings in this thesis, we can now restate the hypothesis about why ethnic communities feel such a deep need to build religious houses. This desire arises in two ways. The first is the obvious requirement for faith communities to have a place for prayer, no matter where it has to be accommodated, as can be seen in the case of Abubakr Mosque in Southall,

which is basically just a converted 1950s office building. Such examples of houses of worship tend to take on many diverse architectural forms as well as any sizes and types, as could equally be found in the formal expression of faith schools like the Krishna Avanti School in Harrow. A second and very different purpose is manifested through large, purpose-built monumental religious houses, which are generally the result of an attempt to express the identity of the users – and their culture – but which are not solely, or even primarily, for the purpose of religious practice. Therefore, in terms of this second motive, the desire to express identity by an immigrant community through monumental religious houses is for a purpose which is not ultimately religious. This observation serves therefore to disprove two common misconceptions:

1. The idea that faith buildings of any denomination are simply the result either of religious purpose or identity expression. It is for this very reason that Biondo argues that mosque architecture offers such a good example of how identity is socially produced by material practices rather than mental beliefs. He adds that, in Britain, mosques reveal not only how the Muslim community thinks of itself, but also how it sees its relationship with the non-Muslim host society.⁴² Again, this is a reading which can be also seen in examples such as the Finsbury Park Mosque or Krishna Avanti School.
2. The idea that there is a direct association between notions of culture and religion. In actuality, this form of association relies on many disconnects between what could be considered religious expression and what is considered as a marker of cultural identity. This was seen in Southall in the case of Abubakr Mosque which claims to represent the Islamic community, yet in fact the users of the mosque come from extremely different cultures and ethnicities. Therefore the proposed elements for the refurbishment of the building are the *minaret* and dome, which are borrowed symbols of Islamic identity in general and do not therefore really relate to any specific ethnicity or cultural tradition. Nasser similarly distinguishes between these notions in her study of South Asian Muslims in Britain and their mosques:

‘As part of the place-making process, these new forms of spatialized social relations and practices have been translated into a distinctly Muslim identity constructed in inherently contested contexts. This does not mean that Muslim identity is monolithic. Rather, identity has taken on multiple forms contingent on finer divisions within the Muslim community, local conditions, and regimes of power. Indeed, in Britain, Muslim identity has partly been constructed as a means of resisting the ideological framework of multiculturalism, which attempts to homogenize cultural difference.’⁴³

Domes and *minarets* are therefore non-functional elements of Islamic buildings in Britain, but have nonetheless become the most prominent (and contested) elements of mosque architecture here. They make a clear reference to historic models of Islamic architecture, and also represent the political and economic priorities of the local Muslim community. This is also why Biondo considers their use to be overt expressions of Muslim presence, standing out from the traditional British urban landscape, and thus making their own particular claim on public space and public representation.⁴⁴ They act as a sign that the community has overcome prejudice and gained the confidence to assert its identity, as well as a marker of the community's durable presence in an area.⁴⁵ This certainly applies to Sikh and Hindu symbolism as well, as was seen in the case of the Hindu *sikharas*, given that these architectural elements are also not essential to religious ritual. They too have come to represent notions of cultural identity. Gurphal Singh explains the association between religious belief and religious buildings of immigrant communities in his analysis of *gurdwaras* in Britain, when he associates the success of their integration into host communities by their capacity to meet the needs of the new generation. He states:

‘In a climate where Eastern religious traditions are now easily conflated with transnational terrorism or ‘rotten multiculturalism’ that are viewed as threatening western values, gurdwaras (like mandirs and mosques) have an important role to play in multicultural Britain. How successfully gurdwaras respond to this challenge will be determined as much by the ‘homeland’ politics of the Sikh community as their capacity to meet the changing needs of all generations of British Sikhs, the majority of whom are now British born.’⁴⁶

Therefore, based on all the analysis in this thesis, we can make the claim that by accepting diversity in all aspects of daily life – whether it is cultural, religious or even architectural – the resulting diversity in cities like London should never lead to social dispute. In discussing the work of many scholars who have studied the architectural design of houses of worship within immigrant communities, this study has uncovered many points for understanding this kind of phenomenon. Therefore, what interests me about this discussion is how to interpret these buildings in a way that can develop the theory of global cities further into the future, based on the likelihood that for genuine, broad-based religious worship to take place, then it needs to do so in low-key, humdrum, converted buildings. Therefore all attempts to create bold visual statements of religious faith, such as the mega-Sikh temple in Southall or the ostentatious Neasden Temple, do not actually seem to be about religious belief as such, but instead need to be interpreted as highly charged cultural statements. Neither of these two situations –

low-key genuine religious worship or high-end cultural markers through over religious symbolism – can possibly claim to be more important than the other in terms of the life of ethnic communities in London. They are just different in aim, and affect the cityscape in different ways. By studying these phenomena within the confines of specific cultural backgrounds, such as those of South Asian groups, or supra-geographical religions such as Islam, the findings of this thesis show that the observation of these two different motives apply to all religions and all houses of worship in some manner. In this regard, this dual purpose of houses of worship – religious belief and/or cultural expression – ought to be encouraged amongst all the ethnic groups in London. The consequent urban landscape will serve as a statement of the ever more inclusive and multicultural society in future and in the coming decades. London of the future can learn from places like Southall today, particularly in its acceptance of such a diverse range of houses of worship.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

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1. The concept of culture within immigrant communities of London

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98 Parekh, pp. 196-197.

99 *Ibid.*

100 *Ibid.*

101 *Ibid.*

102 Nick Johnson, Building an Integrated Society, in *Identity, Ethnic Diversity and Community Cohesion* ed by Margaret Wetherell, Michelynn Lafleche and Robert Berkeley (London: Sage Publications, 2007), p. 25.

103 The Commission of Racial Equality is a commission that was established by the 1976 and its goals are as follows:

- To encourage greater integration and better relations between people from different ethnic groups.
- To use its legal powers to help eradicate racial discrimination and harassment.
- To work with government and public authorities to promote racial equality in all public services.
- To support local and regional organizations, and employers in all sectors, in their efforts to ensure equality of opportunity and good race relations.
- To raise public awareness of racial discrimination and injustice, and to win support for efforts to create a fairer and more equal society.

104 Johnson, Building an Integrated Society, p. 25.

105 *Ibid.*

106 The Cattle Report is a report of the independent review team commissioned by the Home Office on community cohesion chaired by Ted Cattle. It was commissioned for the purpose that some areas, such as Oldham and Burnley, established local enquiries to find out more about the particular circumstances in their own communities which gave rise to these events. The Home Secretary's response was to set up a Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion to examine and consider how national policies might be used to promote better community cohesion, based upon shared values and a celebration of diversity. At the same time, the Home Secretary also established a Review Team, led by Ted Cattle, to seek the views of local residents and community leaders in the affected towns and in other parts of England on the issues which need to be addressed to bring about social cohesion and also to identify good practice in the handling of these issues at local level.

107 The Local Government Association was created by the local government in 1997 to be its voice in the national arena. It is based in Westminster, close to the Houses of Parliament and Whitehall, its function is to lobby and campaign for changes in policy, legislation and funding on behalf of the member councils, the people and the communities they serve.

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- 140 Benjamin Beit-Hallami and Michael Argyle, p. 138.
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- 144 *Ibid.*, p. 131.
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- 8 Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 121.
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- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 482.
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- 47 Gerd Baumann, p. 72.
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- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 477.
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- 52 Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1992), p.19.
- 53 Richard Taylor, *How to Read a Church* (London: Ebury Press, 2003), pp. 31-38.
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- 58 Andrew Walls, pp. 79-82.
- 59 The suppliant is lowered in water backwards while the baptizer (a pastor or any baptized believer under the authority of the local Baptist church) invokes the Trinitarian phrase found in Matthew 28:19 or other words concerning a profession of faith.
- 60 Gerd Baumann, p.92.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
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2. The Serampur mission founded by William Carrey (1793-1834) in collaboration with two other Englishmen, Joshua Marshman and William Ward.
3. The Mission Movement started in Calcutta by Alexander Duff in 1830. One of the notable and new features of these missions was the pride of place given to the Bible. Protestant missionaries had the Bible translated into several regional languages of India and other East Asian countries, and this helped to popularize it. The Serampur mission gave great importance to education and journalism.
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- 69 Michael William Meister, p. 396.
- 70 M.A. Dhaky, *Encyclopaedia of Indian temples Architecture* [online] Available from: http://www.ignca.nic.in/ks_32.htm Accessed on 20th May 2011.
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- 73 *Ibid.*
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- 75 Simon Weightman, 'Hinduism, ' in John. R. Hinnells (ed.), *Living Religions* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 263.
- 76 *Ibid.*
- 77 Kim Knott, Hindu Temple Rituals in Britain: The Reinterpretation of Tradition. In: Burghart, R., (ed.) *Hinduism In Great Britain. The Perpetuation of Religion In An Alien Cultural Milieu*. (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987), p. 177.
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- 79 Simon Weightman, pp. 269- 299.
- 80 Hermanta Kanitakara and Owen Cole, p 13.
- 81 Gerd Baumann, p. 78.
- 82 S Sayyid, V.S Klara, pp. 113-117.
- 83 Gerd Baumann, p. 81.
- 84 Just over half of the British Hindus live in London, with Harrow and Brent having the largest concentration. Other larger communities are found in Leicester, Birmingham and Bradford, and developed there as a result of immigration from India, Eastern Africa and Sri Lanka. There are an estimated one billion Hindus worldwide; there are about 600,000 adherents and over 140 temples in Britain alone.
- 85 Gerd Baumann, p. 80.
- 86 *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- 87 Ceri Peach and Richard Gale, p.476.
- 88 *Ibid.* p. 122.
- 89 Steven Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora: comparative patterns* (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 92.

- 90 Maureen Michaelson, *Caste, kinship and marriage: a study of two Gujarati trading castes in England*, PhD thesis, University of London School of Oriental and African Studies.
- 91 Steven Vertovec, pp. 90-95.
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- 93 David Bowen, *Hinduism in Great Britain*, 'The evolution of Gujarat Hindu organizations in Bradford', in R. Burghart (ed), (London: Tavistock, 1987), pp. 15-31
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- 95 Gerd Bauman, pp. 80-85.
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- 103 Henry J. Walker, p. 93.
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- 106 Gurharpal Singh, 'Gurdwaras and Community Building Among British Sikhs', *Contemporary South Asia*, June, 15 (2), p.155. [online] Available from: Informaworld <www.informaworld.com> Accessed on 1st May 2011.
- 107 Henry J. Walker, p.11.
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 2. Using tobacco or intoxicants in any form.
 3. Eating of meat.
 4. Committing adultery.
- 112 According to British law, in 1983 the House of Lords recognized the Sikhs as an 'ethnic group'. The case, known as *Mandella v. Dowell Lee* (1983), had to determine whether the wearing of the turban infringed uniform regulations at an English school. The final ruling produced a translation of the dominant discourse into British law, determining that Sikhs constituted an ethnic group.
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- 114 W. Owen Cole, p. 319.

- 115 John Solomon, *Race and Racism in Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 40- 41.
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- 118 Gurharpal Singh & Darshan Singh Tatla, pp. 30- 40.
- 119 *Ibid.*, p. 54
- 120 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- 121 Gerd Baumann, p. 73.
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- 4 *Ibid.*
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 - 8 *Ibid.*
 - 9 *Ibid.*
 - 10 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
 - 11 All listings here are based on information in local council records and telephone directories.
 - 12 Mass times are announced on a sign outside the church as well as on its website.
 - 13 These numbers are gathered according to the main priest of the church of St Anselm's, Father James Crampsey.
 - 14 Quote from Father James Crampsey to author, 13th March 2008.
 - 15 Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England London: the North West* (New Haven, CA: Yale University Press, 1991), p.192.
 - 16 Malabar Catholics are Catholics from India, or East Syrian Rite and also known as Chaldean, Assyrian, or Persian Rite.
 - 17 In Rome, churches have stairs near to the altar and it is quite common to see people climb up then on their knees as an act of penance.
 - 18 I. L Trood, *Post war church building in the Diocese of London*. Photocopy of parts of the book found within the archives of Christ the Redeemer church.
 - 19 Mainly the common knowledge of West Indians that they belong to Pentecostal churches yet historically the root of the Christian church belongs to the Anglican church due to colonialism.
 - 20 This is based on comments from the vicar of the church, Father Nigel Orchard, as well as worshippers who live near the church.
 - 21 T F T Baker, p. 52.
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 - 23 Quote from Pastor Boyd Williams.
 - 24 Although the Vishwa Hindu Kendra was successful in obtaining a large grant from the Greater London Council.
 - 25 Steven Vertovec, pp. 136-37.
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 - 27 Kim Knott, p. 178.
 - 28 *Ibid.*, p. 179.
 - 29 Steven Vertovec, pp. 136-37.
 - 30 Planning document reference: 20239/4 M.F.
 - 31 This was stated by an anonymous committee member in an interview with the author.
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 - 36 Ealing Grid For Learning, *Shri Ram Mandir* [online]. Available from http://www.lgfl.net/lgfl/leas/ealing/web/EGFL1/teaching_learning/subjects/REandSACRE/glimpses2/southwest_tour/sw_9.htm> Accessed on 8th May 2011.
 - 37 There is a particular importance for having a full-size deities, since it is a sign of respect as well as gives a prominence for the *mandir*.
 - 38 Interview with the *mandir*'s head committee member, Sandeep Bhatia, taken by me on 5th July 2008.

- 39 The temple in Neasden is in close proximity to the two temples in Southall. Therefore, the Hindu congregation of the Borough of Ealing, and the surrounding areas have a variety of Choices of where to worship.
- 40 Also compared to the small size of the deities in the monumental Neasden temple
- 41 Gerd Baumann, pp. 80-81.
- 42 Kim Knott, p. 171.
- 43 Planning document reference: S0977 M.F. 08590/19
- 44 That *gurdwara* ultimately changed to a bigger one.
- 45 Planning document reference: 8590/21 M.F. 2/4.
- 46 Planning document reference: 8590/23 M.F. 1/3.
- 47 This interview with committee member, Mr. Ajit Singh, was undertaken on premises on 16th March 2008.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 Ceri Peach and Richard Gale, p. 482-484.
- 50 Gurharpal Singh, & Darshan Singh Tatla, pp. 72-73.
- 51 Planning document reference: 9172/5 M.F. 3/5.
- 52 Planning documents reference: 9172/6 M.F. 1/1.
- 53 Planning documents reference: 9172/7 M.F. 1/3.
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 Estimated by local newspaper to be around £3 million.
- 56 Ceri Peach and Richard Gale, p. 484.
- 57 Planning documents reference: 9172/16 M.F. 2/11.
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- 59 Interview with Richard Adams from ACP Architects, he was the architect involved in the design scheme for the Gurdwara. Taken on the 20th November 2012.
- 60 Noha Nasser, Southall's Kaleido-scape, p.
- 61 R. Adams, *Description Of Architectural Design Process* (Hertfordshire: Architects Co-Partnership, 2003), p. 9.
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- 63 Each page of the scriptures has a special classical musical major.
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- 67 R Adams, p.62.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
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- 73 Gerd Baumann, p. 112.
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- 84 *Ibid.*,
- 85 Planning document reference: 16963 M.F. 1/7.
- 86 Planning document reference: 16963/3 M.F. 1/2.
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- 88 Planning document reference: P/2005/0090 H.C.
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- 90 Interview with the *imam* of the mosque.
- 91 Planning documents.
- 92 Temporary permission for use of the existing building was only granted for three years, while the designs were finalised for the purpose built mosque, however the old building was actually in use for twelve years.
- 93 Ceri Peach and Richard Gale, p. 484.
- 94 This information is based on information stated on the mosque's official website: <http://www.abubakrmosque-southall.org>.
- 95 Planning document reference: DC1118308-4-00015_081021_57_01_A.
- 96 Ceri Peach and Richard Gale, p. 482.
- 97 *Ibid.*, p. 484.
- 98 Planning document reference: DC1118308-4-00015_081021_57_01_A.
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- 100 Planning document reference: DC1118308-4-00015_081021_57_01_A.
- 101 *Ibid.*
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- 103 The Ahmmadiya is a movement within mainstream Islam that follow the teachings of Mirza Gulam Ahmed. This movement started in India, and later divided into two branches, with the main branch having its main headquarters in London.
- 104 Communal worship is essential in Islam, especially for Friday noon prayer. Therefore, Muslims need a space for the prayers to gather.
- 105 Gerd Baumann, p.127.
- 106 *Ibid.*, p. 190.
- 107 *Ibid.*, p. 194.
- 108 The Caribbean region stands culturally between Latin America and Afro-America, and much of it was colonised by British and other European nations, and thus its version of Christianity clearly bear the religious influences of all of these.

5. Conclusion

(Pages 490-530)

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