

ERF 503 KNYSNA

Proposed Rezoning and Departures



VPM PLANNING

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1. INTRODUCTION

VPM Planning has been appointed by The Knysna Muslim Council N.P.O., the owners of Erf 503 Knysna, to prepare and submit the following applications to the Knysna Municipality (See Power of Attorneys and Company Resolutions attached as **Annexure A**).

- I. Application in terms of Section 17 (1) of the Land Use Planning Ordinance, 1985 (Ordinance 15 of 1985) for rezoning of Erf 503 Knysna from “Single Residential” to “Institutional” zone , to allow for an Islamic Centre.
- II. Departure Applications in terms of Section 15 of the Land Use Planning Ordinance, 1985 (Ordinance 15 of 1985) for :
 - a. the relaxation of the lateral and rear building lines from 6m to 0m.
 - b. the relaxation of the provision of on- site parking;
 - c. the relaxation of the coverage from 60% to 70%;
 - d. the relaxation of the height restriction of 12m to allow a dome of 15.2m in height.
- III Council's permission to create a public parking area on a Portion of the Remainder of Erf 211.

2. BACKGROUND

Erf 503 Knysna was originally zoned for “Single Residential” purposes and contained a dwelling house. In October 2006 the property was rezoned to “General Residential” to allow a three storey block of flats. In 2008 the Municipality granted permission for the demolition of the existing house with the intention to start construction of the block of flats. With the sudden collapse of the property market that followed since 2008, the developers had to abandon their plans and the zoning has subsequently lapsed back to “Single Residential”.

3. PROPERTY INFORMATION

3.1 LOCALITY

Erf 503 Knysna is a vacant plot in the Central Business District of Knysna. The property is situated at Nr 18 Rawson Street as indicated on the attached Diagram 1 and Figure1 below.



Figure 1: Locality with in the Knysna CBD

3.2 PROPERTY DETAIL

Title Deed Description:	Erf 503, in the Municipality and Division of Knysna, Western Cape.
21 Digit code	C06900050000050300000
Title Deed Number:	T 2762/2014 (Attached as Annexure B)
SG Diagram Nr:	SG 6388/2007 (attached as Annexure C)
Title Deed Restrictions:	None
Property Size:	Erf 503 – 1277 (One thousand two hundred and seventy seven) m ²
Property Owner:	Knysna Muslim Council NPC
Bonds:	None



4. BIO –PHYSICAL SITE ANALYSIS

4.1 TOPOGRAPHY

The site has an even gradient and is situated between 3-4m above Mean Sea Level (MSL).

4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The site is vacant with no sensitive environmental features evident. The property is not situated in Critical Biodiversity Areas, Ecological Support Areas, or Protected Areas and does not contain any protected plant species. The activities will not trigger any listed activities in terms of the NEMA regulations.

4.3 IMPROVEMENTS

The site is vacant.



Figure 2: View of the Site from Rawson Street



5. PROPOSAL

5.1 THE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The purpose of the application is to obtain planning permission to build an Islamic Centre in Knysna. The aim of the Islamic Centre is to provide a multi-faceted support centre for the Muslim community in Knysna. The centre will serve as a place where Muslims can come together for prayer as well as a Centre for information and education. The local congregation consists of approximately 250 followers. The Centre will make provision for a congregation of ± 300 people to accommodate visitors and future growth over time.

This Centre will also be accessible to all the residents of Knysna and tourists who would like to know more about the Islamic faith and history.

The proposed Centre is illustrated on the attached Site Development Plan (Diagram 5). The proposed development of the Islamic Centre consists of the following facilities:

- Prayer area for males (approximately 250 people)
- Prayer area for females (approximately 100 people)
- 2 x Classrooms
- 2 x Ablution areas (male and female)
- 2 x Toilet areas (male and female)
- 1 x Office
- 1 x Boardroom
- 1 x Library
- 1 x Caretaker Facility (bedroom, bathroom and kitchenette, lounge)
- 4 x Storerooms
- 8 x On-site, off-street parking bays
- 57 x Off-site, off-street parking bays

5.2 OPERATIONAL DETAIL

The Centre will be open from an hour and a half before sunrise to two hours after sunset. The congregation gathers only once a week as a group. The communal gathering takes place on a Friday between 12h30 and 14h00.

The building will also be used as a Centre from where the followers of Islam are called to pray. This Prayer or Salah times refers to times when Muslims perform prayers and is called out from the mosque five times a day. The exact times of these calls depends on the position of the sun and therefore fluctuates with the seasons. The first prayer begins at pre-dawn, and the last one is after dusk.

Though most of the five daily prayers prescribed in Islam can take place anywhere, all men are required to gather together at the mosque for the Friday noon prayer. Mosques are also used throughout the week for prayer, study, or simply as a place for rest and reflection, but this is done on an individual needs basis.

5.3 ARCHITECTURE

Because of the common function of the mosque as a place of congregational prayer, certain architectural features appear in mosques all over the world. The most fundamental necessity of congregational mosque architecture is that it be able to hold the entire male population of a town (women are welcome to



Figure 3: Front elevation with proposed heights

attend Friday prayers, but not required to do so). To that end the Islamic centre must have a large prayer hall. This prayer hall is designed to hold ± 300 people which are sufficient for the current and future demand for the Knysna Community. As indicated on the SDP, the prayer hall is not aligned with the erf boundaries, but twisted in a north-north east direction to facilitate the correct prayer direction (facing Mecca).

The prayer hall is adjoined to an open courtyard, called a sahn. The courtyard has a fountain, which is important for ritual cleansing done before prayer.



Figure 4: Architectural Impression of the Islamic Centre

One of the most visible aspects of mosque architecture is the minaret, a tower adjacent or attached to a mosque, from which the call to prayer is announced. The minaret also serves as a visual reminder of the presence of Islam. The concept of a minaret is based on Christian churches with their bell towers. Consequently, mosque architects borrowed the shape of the bell

tower for their minarets, which were used for essentially the same purpose—calling the faithful to prayer. The proposed centre contains 4 minaret measuring ± 18 m in height. The height restriction of 12m in the Institutional Zone, specifically exclude church towers. It is submitted that the Minarets serves the same function and form as a church tower and is therefore excluded from the height restrictions.

Most mosques also feature one or more domes. A dome has significance within the mosque—as a symbolic representation of the vault of heaven. The Islamic Centre has 1 large dome with an external



diameter of 9,0m and several smaller domes with radii of $\pm 1\text{m}$. The main dome measures $\pm 15.2\text{m}$ in height with another tower on top of the dome.

5.4 PARKING PROPOSAL

The zoning scheme requires that on-site parking have to be provided at a ratio of at least 1 parking bay for every 5 seats provided in all the buildings on the site. The center only provides for 8 on-site parking bays. On-site parking will be sufficient to accommodate the daily off-peak congregants but not the weekly, peak period main congregation.

As an alternative to the provisions of on-site parking, the zoning scheme makes provision that an owner may, with the consent of the Council, where it is of the opinion that it is undesirable or impractical from a planning point of view to provide the required parking area on site, acquire the prescribed area of land for the provision of parking elsewhere in a position acceptable to the Council, provided he registers a notarial deed against such land to the effect that the Council and the public shall have free access thereto for the purpose of parking, provided further the owner shall be bound to level this land and to provide it with a surface, stormwater, kerbs, marking and maintain it to the satisfaction of the Council; cost of registration of the servitude to be borne by the owner.

Taking cognizance of the scarcity of land in the CBD, there is not enough space on the site provide parking as required. The limited space on the erf has to be optimally used for the building. It is proposed that the undeveloped and unmaintained open space between the Bowling Club and Hedge Street be utilised for parking. Presently the site serves as an informal overflow parking area during occasional public events held at the high school sport fields. The Muslim Council undertook to upgrade this area into a more formal parking area that can be used by the larger public. They would only require the use thereof on Fridays between 12h00 and 14h00, and twice annually for the festivals of Eid between 06h00 and 08h00, subject to annual and seasonal fluctuations.

The proposed parking layout shows that 57 parking bays can be realised on this site. In total a number 65 parking bays will be provided. A congregation of 325 could therefore be accommodated according to the ration set out in the Zoning Scheme. In reality, the Islamic Centre would not require this much parking as more than half of the congregation make use of public transport.

Application is made for Council's consent to utilise a portion of public land, situated on the Remainder of Erf 211 Knysna as a public parking area;

5.5 ENGINEERING SERVICES

The *Guidelines for Human Settlement Planning and Design* published by CSIR was used to determine the demand requirements for the development. This was supplemented by the experience of Mr Omar. Essa (B Tech (Urban); Pr Tech Eng), who has been dealing with developments of a similar nature.



Figure 5, 6 and 7: Proposed off-site parking area



5.5.1 Water

The water demand requirements for an Islamic Centre are not defined in the Guidelines. However, the Guidelines used for Churches are 2000 l/erf/day. Furthermore, the Guidelines offers a demand of between 65-90 l/seat/day for community halls and restaurants but between 15-20 l/pupils/day for schools. None of these Guidelines sufficiently covers the demand requirements for the Islamic Centre.

The consumption of water in the Islamic Centre is limited to the use of toilets and ablutions, except for the caretaker, who would be residing on the premises. The consumption patterns for the facility also varies extensively from Saturday to Thursday (off-peak) compared to the peak period on Friday when the main weekly congregation attends the noon prayers. During the off-peak periods it is estimated that on average approximately a dozen people will attend the five daily prayers at a time, or a daily attendance of approximately 50 people. On Fridays between 12h00 and 14h00, the current peak attendance is approximately 100 to 150 people, increasing to almost 200 in school holiday periods. The new prayer facility has been designed to accommodate approximately 300- 350 people.

In the above context, the following demand requirements have been determined:



- The average daily water demand is estimated at 50 ℓ/person/day for 50 persons, i.e. 2500 ℓ/day or 0.03 ℓ/s.
- The bulk storage requirement for the development would therefore be 5000 ℓ, based on 48 hours storage of the average daily water demand.
- The peak water demand is estimated at 50 ℓ/person/peak day for 350 persons, i.e. 17 500 ℓ/day or 0.20 ℓ/s.
- The minimum size of pipeline required to accommodate the peak flow above is 16mm, which equates to the minimum erf connection size provided by most local authorities. It is proposed that a 25 mm connection be provided, if available.

The Developer will also investigate the potential of rainwater harvesting for the purposes of limited irrigation and for alternate use in toilet systems, if necessary.

5.5.2 Sanitation

The Guidelines are not specific in terms of the design demand requirements for sanitation. The facility will be provided with a full waterborne system. For design purposes, it is estimated that approximately 80% of the water consumption will be released into the sanitation system, with the balance accounting for water losses or domestic consumption.

Based on the above, the following demand requirements have been determined:

- The average daily sewage run-off from the development is estimated to be 2000 ℓ/day or 0.02 ℓ/s.
- The peak sewerage run-off is estimated to be 14 000 ℓ/day or 0.16 ℓ/s.
- The peak run-off can be accommodated within the minimum pipe size of 110mm at a grade of 1:60. The flow capacity for this pipe size is 7.2 ℓ/s at a velocity of 0.9 m/s.

5.5.3 Solid Waste

The Guidelines are not specific in terms of the solid waste calculated for this type of development. It is assumed that the development will make use of the wheely-bin roadside collection system currently employed by Knysna Municipality.

The nature of the development does not lend itself to the generation of normal domestic waste, other than for the caretaker facility. It is therefore estimated that the maximum solid waste generated from the development will not exceed the 120 ℓ/week. Nevertheless, it is proposed that 2 x 120 ℓ wheely bins be provided for the development.



5.5.4 Electricity

The Islamic Centre does not require any special energy generation requirements. The development will include the use of solar geyser systems for the ablution and caretaker facilities. It is estimated that the minimum electricity supply of 60 Amp should be sufficient for the energy requirements of the Centre.

6. COMPLIANCE WITH KNYSNA ZONING SCHEME

6.1 PROPOSED NEW ZONING

It is proposed that Erf 503 be rezoned to “Institutional Zone”. This zone allows: institutional buildings, places of worship as a primary land use.

The Knysna Zoning defines a “place of worship” as a church, synagogue, mosque, temple, chapel or other place for practicing religion and includes any building in connection therewith but does not include a funeral parlour with related chapel, which forms part of such parlour;

The proposed land use complies with the definition of a worship zone.

6.2 PROPOSED DEPARTURES

The General purpose of a zoning scheme is to determine use rights and to provide a development control for each specific use rights. Knysna Zoning Scheme applicable in the area became operative in 1992. That is more than 22 years ago. At the time some provision were made for large worships sites, but these have long since been utilised. The zoning parameter applicable to the “Institutional Zone” is clearly intended of large plots of land. New church groups have to reside on smaller available properties and the strenuous development restriction may have to be relaxed to accommodate a sizable building.

The proposed Site Development Plan does not comply with the zoning scheme parameters applicable to the Institutional Zone. The site is relatively small which make it impossible for them to comply with the rather restrictive development parameters applicable to the site:

The table below set out the building parameters applicable to the Institutional Zone and how the proposal compares with these parameters:

Institutional Zone	Parameters	Compliance
Maximum coverage	60%	70%
Floor factor	1	Below 1
Height	At most 12m above the natural ground level below a given point or portion of the building, except that this restriction shall not apply to church towers.	The building its self is below 8m in height : Minarets are ± 18 m height, but is regarded as church towers that does not have a height restriction The dome is 15.2m height and although it is also a religious structure, such as the minarets, it is a part of the roof structure and a departure will be required.
Parking bays	1 bays per 5 seats	Only 8 on-site parking bays are provided and 57 off-site
Building Line	6m on all boundaries	Street 6m Lateral Building lines 1.5m – 0m Rear Building lines 0m – 2m

Table 2: Zoning Parameters

In terms of Section 15 (1)(a) of the Land Use Planning Ordinance, an owner of land may apply in writing to the local authority for an alteration of the land use restrictions applicable to a particular zone in terms of the scheme regulations concerned. In order to comply with the Institutional zoning, application is made for the following departures:

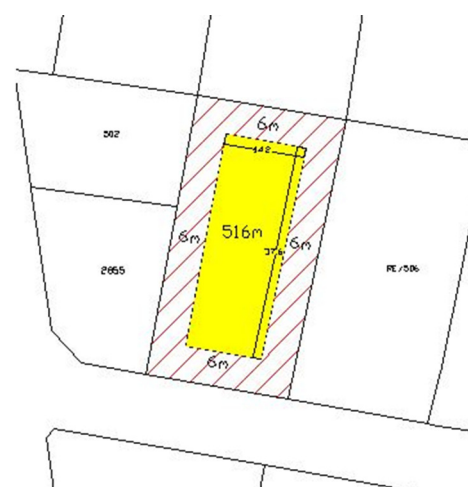
6.2.1 Building lines

Application is made for the relaxation of the lateral and rear building lines from 6m to 0m .

As indicated on the adjacent diagram, the 6m building lines on this site reduces the development footprint from 1277m to 516m; this implies a 60% reduction in available land. It is requested that Council approves the relaxation to allow a building that is big enough to cater for the needs of the local Muslim community.

Although application is made for 0m building lines, only certain part of the building will be on the boundary. The core building will be ± 1.5 m away from the western lateral Building line, except for a ramp and some stairs that will be closer than 1,5m. The core of the building will

Figure 8: Building lines



also be more than 2m away from the eastern lateral building line, but there is a row of decorative pillars \pm 1.5m away from the building.

Due to the slightly twisted position of the prayer hall, only \pm 5.5m of the main building will be on the rear boundary of the property. There are no windows or doors planned on this boundary.

6.2.2 Coverage

Application in terms of Section 15 of the Land Use Planning Ordinance, 1985 (Ordinance 15 of 1985) for the relaxation of the coverage from 60% to 70%; Bearing in mind the scarcity of available land in the CBD, it is requested that Council allow the approval of the relaxation to allow a building that is big enough to cater for the needs of the local Muslim community.

6.2.3 Height

Application is made in terms of Section 15 of the Land Use Planning Ordinance, 1985 (Ordinance 15 of 1985) for the relaxation of the height restriction of 12m to allow a dome of 15.2m in height. The dome measures \pm 17m in height with a radius approximately 8,46m.

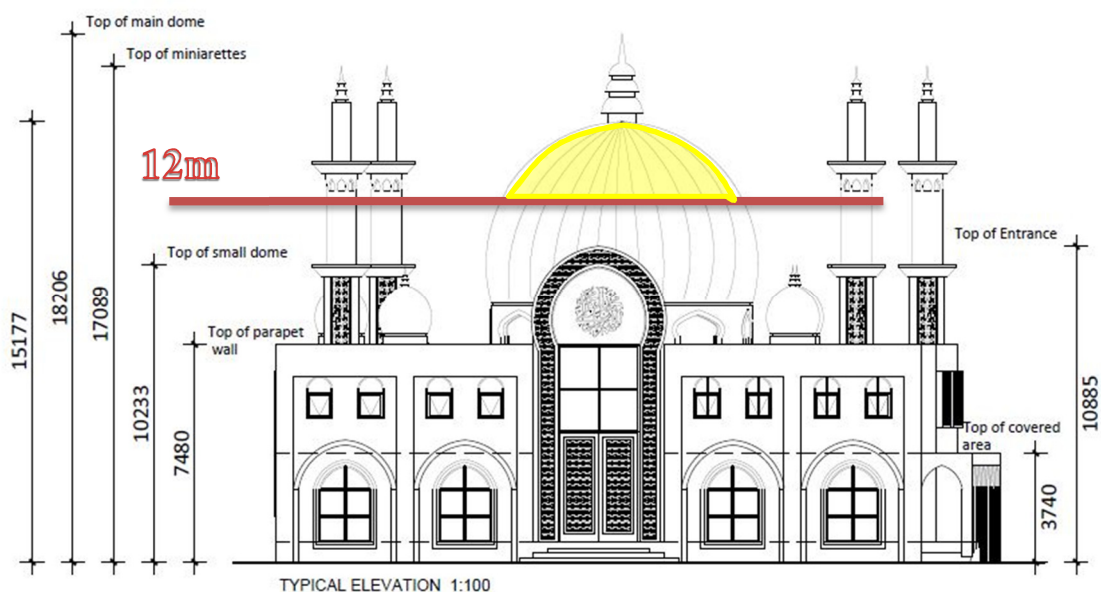


Fig.9 Front Elevation of the Islamic Centre

The proposed centre contains 4 minaret measuring \pm 17m in height, as well as a dome tower that measures \pm 18.2m in total extend. The height restriction of 12m in the Institutional Zone, specifically exclude church towers. It is submitted that the Minarets and dome tower shares the same function and form and is therefore excluded from the height restrictions.



The design followed the principles of religious architectural concerned with the design and construction of places of worship and sacred or intentional space, such as cathedrals, mosques, synagogues, and temples. As illustrated on the pictures below, many cultures devoted considerable resources to their sacred architecture and places of worship. A dome has been used in the design of religious buildings since Roman times to ornate religious buildings. The Dome possesses significance within these buildings as symbolic representation of the vault of heaven.



Fig. 10 St Peter Basilicca in Rome



Fig. 11 Synagouge of Jerusalem

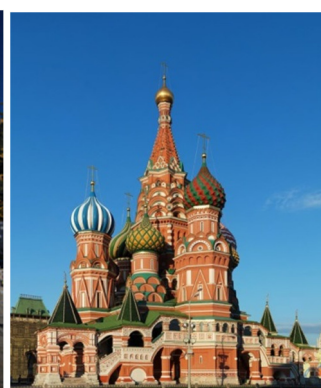


Fig.12 St Basil's Cathedral Moscow

A section of the dome will trangress over the 12m height restriction applicable in the Institutional zone. Based on the fact that this is a religious building, it is requested that the height restriction of 12m be relaxed to allow the dome structure.

6.2.4 Provision of on-site parking

Application is made in terms of Section 15 of the Land Use Planning Ordinance, 1985 (Ordinance 15 of 1985) for the departure of the provision of on-site parking. The Zoning Scheme requires 1 on-site parking bay per 5 seats.

As discussed in par 5.4 the site does not have enough space to for on-site parking. Basement parking was considered, but due to the low water tables in the area, the construction will be too expensive. For congregation of 300 people, 60 parking bays will have to be provided. At an average ration of 25m² per parking bay this would require 1500m² which is more space than the site itself. It is practically not possible to provide this amount of parking on the site.

The parking proposal will allow for:	8	on-site parking bays
	57	off- site parking on municipal land
	65	Bays in total

At a ratio of 1 bay per 5 seats, a total of 325 seats will be allowed, which is more than sufficient for the needs of the Islamic Centre.

Many of the Churches in the CBD also have a similar problem of being situated on small but conveniently located mid-town properties, they can also not provide on-site parking and mostly rely on available on street parking and public parking areas in the vicinity. These include the following places of worship



Fig.12 Other church in the CBD

7. NEED

In terms of the NEMA principles, when considering an application the decision making authority must have regard to a number of specific considerations including specifically having to consider “**the need for and desirability of the activity**”. In this instance, need refers to the demand for the particular land use. Is there a need for an Islamic Centre in Knysna? The proposal will be motivated by confirming the **need** for the planned Islamic Centre.

7.1 THE NEED OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN KNYSNA

Islam is one of the largest religious groups in the world but in South Africa it is a minority religion, practiced by less than 1.5% of the total population, according to estimates obtained from Wikipedia.

The Muslim population in Knysna consist of approximately 50 families - totalling just over 250 individuals. They have been practising their religious activities in a rented temporary facility in the Lamco Building in Hornlee since 2004. This premises measures only about 110m² and has become severely overcrowded, with inappropriate ablutions facilities. There is a definite need for larger and more suitable formal premises.



Since Knysna is a major tourist destination, as well as thoroughfare for people passing between the metropolitan areas of Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, there is also a need to cater for a growing number of Muslim tourists and travellers. Over holiday periods, the situation is exacerbated which creates substantial inconvenience for Muslim tourists and visitors to the area and proves a logistical nightmare for the Knysna Muslim Council. Over the last two seasons, the Knysna Muslim Council had to rent 2 containers to accommodate the tourists and visitors to the area. Before, they had to make use of the open space between the Lamco Building and Gladstone Street, which exposed the congregants to the elements. Due to the inconvenience, tourists then preferred to rather attend the mosque in George which is over 60km away.

7.2 THE LACK OF WORSHIP SITES IN KNYSNA

The Knysna Muslim Council has been pursuing the procurement of a permanent facility since 2008. They started the process by engaging with the Knysna Municipality to establish if there were any Worship Sites available. In 2011, they received a letter from the Municipality stating that there is an over-demand and under-supply of worship sites in Knysna. The Municipality confirmed that they will not be able to assist until they have completed a land audit, after which available land will be put out to tender to all church groups. To date no such tender was forthcoming, nor the result of the land audit.

The Knysna Muslim Council was forced to go to the private market in search for a property. They have launched a fundraising exercise among the wider Muslim community and have been able to raise sufficient funds to buy a property. They have looked at many alternative sites in the CBD and also in the eastern suburbs. They have finally managed to secure Erf 503 Knysna. The site does not currently have the correct zoning, but since there is a confirmed under-supply and over demand of appropriately zoned worship sites, there is an obvious need to rezone appropriate sites to allow religious institutions.

7.3 THE NEED TO RESPECT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa, the Bill of Rights, contains a number of provisions dealing with religious freedom. Section 15 states that everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion. Section 31 in particular protects the right of persons belonging to a religious community to practise their religion together with other members of that community, and to form, join and maintain voluntary religious associations.

Section 9, the equality clause, furthermore prohibits unfair discrimination on various grounds including religion and requires national legislation to be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.

8. DESIRABILITY

The application will further be motivated by investigating the **desirability** of the property for the planned land use. Desirability refers to the place, i.e. is the land suitable for the type of land-use/activity being proposed and how will it fit in and impact on the surrounding environment?

8.1 LOCALITY

Location is critical when establishing a public place of worship. It should be located within established urban areas with convenient access to the population that it response to. The Islamic Centre will serve the Muslim Community which is not confined to a specific residential area. Many of the members of the congregation works in the CBD in the day and as indicated on the attached Locality map, most places of employment and commerce is within a 500m radius from the centre. There are also a number of members that resides in the northern township and they will arrive by public transport. In terms of reliance on public transport, a central location is also beneficial. The taxi rank is only 300m away from the site.

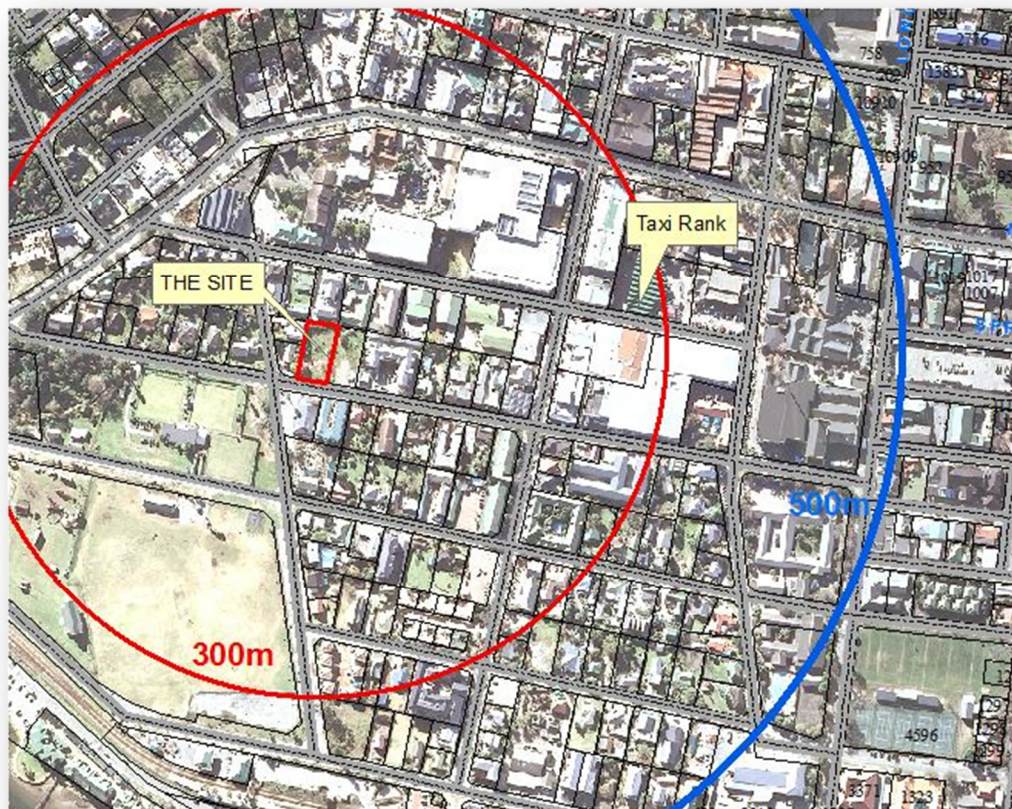


Figure 13: locality in relation to urban amenities



8.2 BIO-PHYSICAL SITE CHARACTERISTIC

The biophysical character of the site has been carefully assessed and was taken into account during the choice of location:

- The site does not contain any natural vegetation and has been earmarked for development. The conservation value of the development area can be described as non-existent;
- The property is suitable for development in terms of gradient (slopes not steeper than 1:4);
- The site is not subject to flooding;
- The site does not contain any historical structures.
- The site is already supplied with the required infrastructure.

It can be concluded that the site has limited constraints which classify this site as highly desirable for development.

8.3 URBAN CONTEXT

Urban context concerns the broader setting of a development – including its existing physical surroundings, its social and economic environment, and a strategic view of the area in which it is located and its role over time. All land use changes should make a positive contribution to an area's character, protecting and contributing to its valued natural, built and community qualities.

The introduction of a mosque in the CBD implies a change in the urban context. It is inevitable that the Mosque will have a physical as well as a religious presence in the CBD. The question is whether this change in the urban context is detrimental or beneficial to the CBD.

There are a number of forward planning documents that set out the strategic view of the area. The most important of those are the Provincial SDF and the Knysna SDF and the urban Conservation Area Guidelines and the Lower Central Enhancement study.

8.3.1. Provincial Spatial Development Framework (2009)

The PSDF is a policy document that will be applied in terms of the conformity principle; it does not create or take away any rights to use land, but upgrading of existing rights will have to conform to the policies contained in the PSDF.

The policies are grouped according to 3 prime objectives:

- Socio-economic Development
- Urban Restructuring

- Environmental Sustainability

We submit that the planned Islamic Centre conforms to the prime objectives of the PSDF.

- **Socio-economic Development**

The development will create opportunity for people to freely practice their religion in an area that is easily accessible to all.

The development will also result in a foreign investment of between R10million and R15million in to the local economy.

- **Urban Restructuring**

The overarching objective of the PSDF is the restructuring and integrating the existing inequitable urban system created during the separatist apartheid era. The Islamic Centre will allow the Knysna CBD to imbrace our country's secular democracy with freedom of religion that has often been supressed in the past. The Islamic Centre will become a new cultural symbol in town that reaches across the racial divide.

- **Environmental Sustainability**

Most undeveloped urban spaces are weed lots, garbage strewn, and high crime areas that most urban residents consider blights on the neighbourhood. The optimal use of urban land to serve a public need could be regarded as contributing towards the long-term sustainability of the environment.

Furthermore, the central location will minimise the required inputs of energy to get to and from the premises.

8.3.2 Knysna Spatial Development Framework November 2008 (KSDF)

The site is situated in an area that has been identified as the Core Business District. The SDF aims to retain and enhance the CBD as the core of the town warns against bowing to pressure for out-of-town shopping centres and malls, which undermine the vitality and functionality of the CBD.



Figure 14: Extract from the Knysna Spatial Development Framework 2008



The document states that in order to maintain the vitality of the CBD. It should focus on:

- **Keeping** existing businesses in the CBD;
- **Attracting** new investment to the CBD;

The planned project will inject approximately 10-15 Million Rand in to the Knysna Economy. The project will further more result in a unique building that will contribute to embrace the vibrant and cosmopolitan nature of the town.

8.3.3 Urban Conservation area

The Conservation Area Guidelines does also not prescribe a specific architectural style, but rather aim to retain and also enhance the cultural heritage and aesthetic qualities of the conservation area. The planned Islamic Centre is situated within the Urban Conservation Area, but taken into consideration the religious architecture, it does not comply with the specific elements controlled in the Urban Conservation areas Guidelines, but in that lays its beauty and uniqueness. Council is requested to allow a deviation from these guidelines in this instance to allow this cultural specific building that will become a landmark in Knysna.

8.4 IMPACT ON THE SURROUNDING AREA

Anticipated impacts include a Visual Impact, Traffic Impact and Noise Impact:

8.4.1 Visual Impact

The planned Islamic Centre will be an imposing building and will have a visual impact, albeit not a negative one. It will introduce a new and interesting style of architecture into the Town Centre. Presently the town centre is a mixture of different architectural styles that includes anything from Victorian to Art Deco. This building will add to the interesting mixture of the architecture and will in the future also contribute to the long history of the town.

8.4.2 Traffic impact

Road access will be provided via the existing road network. In general the Islamic Centre will not be a significant traffic generator. It is only during the Friday afternoon prayer that the congregation will gather together at the Centre. The average amount of cars expected at such a gathering will be 10-15 vehicles which will hardly impact on the traffic flow in the CBD, where high traffic volumes are expected.

Many of the members of the congregation work in the CBD and will therefore be able to walk to the premises. The premise is also less than 300m from the taxi rank that is also a form of transport for those



who work and live in the northern areas. In fact, more than 50% of the congregation lives in the northern areas and does not have their own transport.

The traffic that will be generated will not collide with peak traffic volumes associated with the CBD on a Friday afternoon. The nearby primary school closes at 13h00 on a Friday, causing a short peak of higher traffic volumes during this time when children are being picked up.

The traffic generated by the mosque will not add to the congestion as they start to arrive at the Centre from around 12h00. Before 13h00, the majority of the congregants area already settled for the official lecture which starts from 13h00, followed by the prayer which concludes around 13h45, after which everybody disperse at their leisure.

8.4.3 Noise Impact

The call to pray by way of outdoor loudspeakers is frequently met with opposition in communities where Islam is a minority religion. Main stream Muslim teaching accepts that these practices can be varied in non-Muslim countries, where the customs of the non-Muslim majority should be respected. In this regard the Muslim Council has already agreed that they will not broadcast the early morning pre-dawn prayer over the loud speakers. This is normally the time of day when people are still sleeping. There will thus only be 4 call times, each last approximately 3 minutes.

Considering the typical noise factors in the CBD – traffic, the enhanced audio systems of some vehicles, restaurants and entertainment venues, machinery etc., it can be expected that the noise impact will be less than what it would be in a quiet residential area.

Furthermore, the prayer calls does not last the entire day and will not be intolerably loud. The call to prayer lasts approximately 3 minutes each, 4 times a day – that is 12 minutes in total per day. The impact will thus be in very short burst. Typical noise assessments are based on how loud the noise is and how long people are exposed to it.

It is submitted that the typical level and length of noise at mosques are acceptable and in compliance with international norms of hearing safety; moreover, it does not present any risk to hearing in the long run. The only risk is that of mild irritation by cultural and religious intolerant individuals.



9. CONCLUSION

Application is made for the rezoning of Erf 503 from “Single Residential” to “Institutional” and several departures to allow the construction of an Islamic Centre in Knysna. The successful application will result in a multi-faceted support centre for the growing Muslim community in Knysna who long for a place of worship where they can enjoy their constitutional right to practise their religion together. The centre will introduce a new and interesting style of architecture into the Town Centre and will also act as an educational centre for everyone who is interested to learn more about other cultures and religions. The Islamic Centre will no doubt become a landmark in Knysna and will deepen the already well-established cultural heritage of the town.