

Rt.Hon Steve Reed MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Boardman House  
London E15 1NT

Date:10-.03.2026

Dear Rt Hon Steve Reed MP,

Re: sale of the Bharat Hindu Samaj Temple -New England Complex in Peterborough

The Hindu Council UK wants to raise the issues with regard to the proposed sale of the building that houses the Bharat Hindu Samaj Temple at the New England Complex in Peterborough. We wish to express our deep concern about the process that has been undertaken and the profound implications it carries for the Hindu community in the city and the wider region.

For more than forty years, the Bharat Hindu Samaj Temple has served as the only Hindu place of worship in Peterborough. Since its establishment in the New England Complex in 1986, it has become far more than a religious building; it is a vital spiritual, cultural, and community hub for thousands of local residents. The temple serves more than 13,000–18,000 Hindus across Peterborough and neighbouring counties and provides a wide range of services including cultural education, elderly support programmes, youth activities, and charitable initiatives that strengthen community cohesion and wellbeing.

We note with concern that the New England Complex was placed into a competitive bidding process despite the temple community having occupied and maintained the premises for decades and having previously sought to purchase the property. Reports indicate that the temple trustees submitted a significant bid to acquire the complex but were ultimately unsuccessful in the council's selection process.

As you will be aware, the matter has now entered legal proceedings. The Bharat Hindu Samaj charity has initiated a judicial review of the decision-making process, and the High Court has already issued an interim injunction preventing the council from taking any "irreversible step" toward the disposal of the complex while the case is considered.

We therefore write at a time when the community is awaiting the outcome of that judicial review, which raises serious questions about transparency and fairness in the process.

Our concern is that the approach taken by the local authority may not adequately reflect the obligations placed upon public bodies under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 – the Public Sector Equality Duty. Public authorities must give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In this case, the protected characteristic of religion is clearly engaged. The potential loss or destabilisation of the only Hindu place of worship in Peterborough would have a disproportionate and deeply harmful impact on the Hindu community.

Firstly, advancing equality of opportunity requires public bodies to recognise and address the specific needs of religious communities. For Hindus in Peterborough, the temple is not merely a venue but a central place of worship, cultural identity, and community support that cannot easily be replaced.

Secondly, fostering good relations between communities requires sensitivity in decisions affecting minority faith groups. Allowing the long-standing Hindu community, which has maintained and served the site for over four decades, the opportunity of first refusal would demonstrate respect for their place in the city's social fabric and reinforce trust in public institutions.

Thirdly, processes that place such a community at a structural disadvantage by requiring it to compete in an open market sale for the very building it has occupied for decades, risk indirectly undermining the duty to eliminate discrimination and to properly consider the needs of those sharing a protected characteristic.

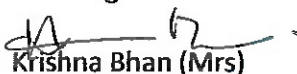
While we fully recognise that local authorities must consider financial responsibilities and value for taxpayers, the Public Sector Equality Duty requires that these considerations are balanced with the impact on protected communities. The social, cultural, and religious value of the Bharat Hindu Samaj Temple to Peterborough is substantial and longstanding.

In light of these issues, we respectfully urge that the concerns of the Hindu community are given serious consideration, particularly while the judicial review process remains ongoing. A fair and equitable resolution should recognise the temple's forty-year presence and ensure that decisions affecting this community fully comply with the Equality Act and the principles of fairness and community sensitivity.

The Hindu Council UK remains committed to constructive dialogue and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further. We hope that, with your support, a solution can be found that protects the rights and heritage of the Hindu community while maintaining positive relations across all communities in Peterborough.

Yours sincerely,

Best Regards.

  
Krishna Bhan (Mrs)

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