

RELIGION: Warning of tensions after Protestant march gets go-ahead

Orange parade in city sparks fears

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PROTESTANT Orangemen are to stage a controversial parade through Coventry, despite fears it could provoke religious tension.

Coventry City Council has given permission for the Orange Order to march through Earlsdon to the War Memorial Park on June 20.

Organisers believe in a tolerant society people of faith should be allowed to express their beliefs and traditions.

But throughout the history of "the troubles" in Northern Ireland, such Orange Order parades have sparked civil unrest and violence. Catholics have accused the Orangemen of sectarianism and of being deliberately provocative by marching through their communities.

Many in Coventry's 30,000 strong Irish community believe the scars



MARCH... Orangemen in Ireland

from Northern Ireland's decades of violence are still present in Irish families who came to live in the city.

One Coventry man, who contacted us but didn't want to be named, has

already voiced his objection to the parade.

He said: "My family left Northern Ireland to get away from this sort of thing. We never thought it would be happening here in Coventry."

Orange Order parades - with marchers wearing striking traditional Orange regalia - commemorate the victory of William III or William of Orange, against the Catholic James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

The Orange Order is accused of being a sectarian organisation, partly due to its exclusion of Catholics and some denominations of Protestants.

The Grand Orange Lodge of England lists Coventry as having an Orange lodge.

A city council spokeswoman said: "Any decisions about refusing any group permission to march in the city are not made by the council alone and rely heavily on police advice. The only grounds available to

prohibit a public march are on the grounds of a risk of serious public disorder.

"The events safety group, which includes representatives from all the emergency services, the council, CVOne and others, requires all march organisers who want to use the public highway to apply for a road closure order to ensure the safety of the participants and other road users.

"This is only granted where the events safety group is satisfied that appropriate stewarding and physical road closures are in place and have been resourced by the group wanting to hold the march.

"As the Orange Order has fulfilled these requirements the events safety group had no grounds to refuse the granting of the appropriate road closure order for the march. Other towns and cities around the UK also host these marches regularly."