PLANNING STATEMENT

Application for Mixed Use (F1 Education and Continued Community Use), Installation of Internal Safeguarding Fencing and Reinstatement of Front Gate

Ruckinge Village Hall, Hamstreet Road, Ruckinge

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement supports a full planning application seeking:

- Change of use of Ruckinge Village Hall from Use Class F2 (Local Community Use);
- To a mixed use comprising:
  • Use Class F1 (Learning and Non-Residential Institution) for operation of a pre-school; and
  • Continued community use;

Together with:
- Installation of internal safeguarding fencing; and
- Reinstatement of the front car park access gate.

The proposal will enable operation of a full-time, year-round pre-school while retaining the building's established role as a community facility.

Development has not yet commenced.

2. Site Description

Ruckinge Village Hall is located on Hamstreet Road within the village of Ruckinge. The building benefits from established vehicular access, on-site parking and external amenity space.

The surrounding area is rural/residential in character.

The building was historically used as a school until approximately the 1950s before transitioning to use as a village hall. Educational use therefore forms part of the historic character and function of the site.

3. The Proposal

3.1 Mixed Use Arrangement

The application seeks permission for mixed use comprising:
- Use Class F1 (Learning and Non-Residential Institution) — pre-school; and
- Continued community use of the hall.

The pre-school will operate:
- Monday to Friday
- 7:30am – 6:30pm
- All year round

Outside of these hours, the hall will remain available for community hire, parish activities and village events.

The scale of the pre-school will be proportionate to the size and layout of the existing building and subject to Ofsted registration requirements.

3.2 Internal Safeguarding Fencing

The proposal includes secure internal fencing within the existing curtilage to separate:
- The car parking area; and
- The designated external play area for children.

This fencing:
- Does not alter the external boundary of the site;
- Is operationally required for safeguarding;
- Improves separation between vehicles and children;
- Is proportionate and contained within the site.

3.3 Reinstatement of Front Gate

The reinstatement of the front car park gate will:
- Improve site security;
- Enable controlled vehicular access;
- Enhance safety during drop-off and collection periods.

4. Principle of Development

The proposal represents a sustainable enhancement of an existing community facility.

The reintroduction of educational use is consistent with the site's historic function as a former school. While the building has operated as a village hall for many decades, educational activity is not unfamiliar to the location.

Importantly, the proposal does not result in the loss of a community facility. Instead, it strengthens its role by combining early years provision with continued community access.

5. Residential Amenity

Pre-school operations are limited to weekday daytime and early evening hours.

There is:
- No weekend pre-school operation;
- No late-night use;
- No expansion of the building footprint.

Noise associated with children's outdoor play is typical of educational use and confined to reasonable daytime hours.

Evening and weekend community use will remain consistent with the hall's historic lawful use.

6. Highways and Safety

Ruckinge Village Hall benefits from established vehicular access and on-site parking provision, including adequate space for safe drop-off and collection within the site boundary.

The layout allows vehicles to enter, park, manoeuvre and exit without reliance on on-street parking. Drop-off and collection activity will be short in duration and managed within the existing curtilage.

The scale of the pre-school will be proportionate to the size and layout of the building and subject to Ofsted registration requirements. The use will operate within the capacity reasonably supported by the site's existing access and parking arrangements.

The internal fencing and reinstated front gate will further enhance safety by:
- Allowing controlled vehicular access; and
- Ensuring clear separation between vehicles and children's external play space.

The proposal is therefore not expected to result in unacceptable highway impact.

7. Visual Impact

All fencing is internal and contained within the existing curtilage.

There is no material alteration to the external character of the building or surrounding rural

setting.

8. Conclusion

The proposed mixed use development:
- Retains and enhances community infrastructure;
- Reintroduces educational use consistent with the site's history;
- Provides essential year-round childcare;
- Improves safeguarding and site safety;
- Causes no material planning harm.

Planning permission is respectfully requested.

Planning Portal Description of Development:

Change of use of Ruckinge Village Hall from Use Class F2 (Local Community Use) to a mixed use comprising Use Class F1 (Learning and Non-Residential Institution) and continued community use, to enable operation of a full-time pre-school (Monday to Friday 7:30am–6:30pm, all year round), together with installation of internal safeguarding fencing to separate car park and outdoor play area and reinstatement of front car park access gate.