

**PLANNING STATEMENT
FOR EXTENSIONS & ALTERATIONS TO MADINAH COMMUNITY CENTRE AT 102,
RUGBY ROAD, HINCKLEY**

INTRODUCTION

This planning statement is submitted on behalf of the Madinah Community Centre which occupies the site at 102, Rugby Road, Hinckley in support of a planning application made to Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council for full planning permission for change of use from first floor flat Class C3 to community centre Class F2, with a first-floor extension and ground and first floor internal alterations to improve the facilities which can be provided at the Centre.

Madinah Community Centre is run by local volunteers with funding by donations from the local community. The Centre for the most part provides a space for prayers for the local Bangladeshi community but also provides a facility for teaching Islamic studies including Quran classes and other services including dispute resolution, marriage counselling and support for local women.

Since the opening of the community centre in 2015 it has provided vital facilities and services to the Bangladeshi communities in the Hinckley and Burbage area and the remains the only place of worship in the Hinckley area.

The Bangladeshi population in the Hinckley area has steadily increased over the last 20 years and gradually become diversified.

SITE LOCATION & SURROUNDING AREA

The site is set within an area of mixed use on the edge of the Hinckley town centre and is located on Rugby Road.

The character of the area has changed significantly within the last few years with the construction of the Hinckley Hub and new two and three storey residential developments along Rugby Road and Willowbank Road replacing old factory units.

Vehicular access is via Willowbank Road and there is a hard surfaced area to the rear of the building providing parking for 6 no. cars including a disabled parking space and 3 no. cycle hoops.

There are 2 no. Leyland Cypress trees along the Willowbank Road boundary.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The proposal includes a first-floor extension on top of the existing flat roofed single storey extension and a small ground floor extension which fronts Rugby Road, Hinckley.

The internal alterations include inserting steel beams to facilitate replacing the existing domestic staircase and providing a new staircase 1200mm wide.

USE OF THE BUILDING

The property was originally built as a semi-detached dwelling in 1923 but has previously been used as a hot food takeaway and since 2014 as a community centre which is being used by the vibrant Bangladeshi community of around 100 – 120 people in the Hinckley and Burbage area.

The proposal is to increase the available internal space enhancing the facilities where members of the community can meet on irregular, but structured occasions with others with the same cultural roots. Examples of meetings undertaken at the community centre include:

- Assistance to new residents moving into the area.
- Mother tongue classes for children.
- General discussion regarding cultural matters.
- Friday prayer meetings.

HOURS OF OPENING

The community centre is open and available for use from 08.00am to 20.00pm, but it is not used consistently throughout the opening hours because of the small clientele available to use it. For some periods of the day the building is closed.

PLANNING HISTORY

The property has a long and complex planning history. More recent planning applications are listed below.

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| 12/00749/FUL | The property was granted permission for use as a hot food takeaway granted on appeal. |
| 13/00958/FUL | Permission was granted for a first-floor extension to provide a self-contained residential unit comprising two flats with an external staircase. This approval also includes the hard surfacing of the entire rear garden area to provide car parking and manoeuvring space. |
| 14/00648/COU | The property was granted permission for change of use from Class A5 ground floor hot food takeaway to Class D1 religious community centre upon appeal. |
| 15/00074/COU | Change of use from Class A5 ground floor hot food takeaway to Class D1 Bangladeshi meeting centre and alterations to front elevation (revised proposal). |

PRINCIPAL

The site is located within the urban boundary of Hinckley, and the principal use of the site is established.

The NPPF promotes the retention and development of local services and community facilities in small towns and villages, such as local shops, meeting places, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship as part of planning for prosperity.

The NPPF also recognises community facilities including places of worship in having a key role in enhancing the sustainability of neighbourhoods and residential environments. It is in this context of an improved community facility that the current proposal should be considered.

Studies have shown that provision and ease of access to health and community facilities have positive impacts on wellbeing and healthcare. Such facilities need to be accessible to all sections of community, including those without a car, the disabled or other social, economic or physical characteristics limiting their mobility.

Therefore, the principal of development is considered acceptable in accordance with the Local Plan, Places for Everyone and the NPPF.

SUSTAINABILITY

The property is positioned in a highly accessible and sustainable location where such community facilities are to be located as dictated by local and national policies, within the heart of the community.

ACCESSIBILITY

Other modes of transport besides the car such as a bus would also be suitable for users of the Centre and it is considered that promotion of these modes will be beneficial to manage arrivals and departures from the site with convenient access to the bus station and bus stops within close vicinity of the site.

The Centre is located within the heart of the community and is easily accessible by foot and many local people who visit the Centre live within a walking distance of the site. Walking is the most important mode of travel at the local level and offers the greatest potential to replace short car trips.

Cycle hoops are already available to provide an alternative method of transport to the site other than by car and the local community would be less reliant on parking at the site.

The NPPF states that LPAs should approach decision making in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development and requires them to look for solutions rather than problems and seek to approve applications for sustainable development wherever possible.

FRIDAY PRAYER & MANAGEMENT PLAN

Friday prayer is when there is the largest congregation at the Centre. This prayer takes approximately 20 minutes in total from an individual entering the Centre and then leaving. It should be noted that this congregation is the only prayer which attracts both locals living around the Centre and people who work in nearby businesses and offices. The Centre is proposing several measures as part of a Management Plan which would ensure that there are no severe detrimental impacts on the highway.

These measures include:

- On Fridays there shall be a car parking warden to oversee the parking on the site and when full requesting worshippers to park at nearby public car parks or at local designated on-street parking spaces such as those that are available along Rugby Road.
- Two Friday prayers will be in operation to split the number of patrons at the Centre at any one time. Typically, the first prayer will be at 12.30pm and the second prayer will be at 13.30pm (times may be adjusted depending on seasons, but typically the prayers will be an hour apart providing ample time for worshippers to exit the premises and car park).
- Nearby workers will be encouraged to attend the 12.30pm prayer, as most attend during their lunch breaks. The local elderly would be advised to visit the 13.30pm prayer.
- The Centre will announce and encourage members of the congregation to use other modes of transport besides the car such as walking, using public transport and cycling.
- Car sharing would be positively encouraged.
- Notices would be displayed at the Centre advising patrons to use healthy modes of transport.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities play an important role in quality of life. Places of worship perform several different roles and are a central feature of community life.

Some places of worship are in old buildings that need refurbishment and improvement to bring them up to modern standards and this is the main reasoning behind the new planning application.

The proposed extension will provide a much-needed space to provide additional facilities to the benefit of the local Bangladeshi community.

The proposal would provide a better and larger community facility and therefore reduce the need to travel, provide focus on young adults and children and help further their education without the need to travel long distances.

CAR PARKING

A car parking capacity assessment has been prepared as a separate document.

FLOODING

The development site is in flood zone 1, which is an area with a low probability of flooding.