

EARL STONHAM VILLAGE HALL

FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT AND FIRE SAFETY ACTION PLAN

Issue No.	Author/Owner	Date of Assessment	Reviewed by Management Committee on	Comments
OO1	Chairperson	3 February 2020	24/02/2020	Approved

Fire Risk Assessment

Organisation Name:	Earl Stonham Village Hall Management Committee
Premises Name:	Earl Stonham Village Hall
Address:	Earl Stonham Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 5HJ
Responsible Person:	Tony Turner
Position:	Chairperson

INTRODUCTION

This fire risk assessment has been carried out to meet the requirements of the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended) and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. It is also intended to assist the management committee of the village hall to make decisions regarding the risks arising from a fire at the premises.

DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING

The hall complex is a single storey building, comprising two older sections, constructed in the 1940s, linked by a more modern extension for the entrance area, with a disabled toilet. An aerial view of the site and a layout plan are attached (Appendix 1). The main hall is approximately 60' x 20', and the second unit comprising the club room, kitchen and toilets is of similar size.

The building is of concrete block construction, with a metal roof that has insulation (of unknown type) beneath it. All internal doors are of wooden construction but are not fire doors. Therefore, the building must be considered as a single compartment for fire assessment purposes.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

The building or parts of it are hired out for social activities and meetings.

PERSONS AT RISK

The maximum licensed capacity of the main hall is 220 persons, seated. There could be a separate activity in the club room, so the maximum number of persons at risk is about 250. This may include people with impaired mobility or those with visual and/or hearing impairments.

The only people likely to be engaged in lone working are the Chairperson and the Cleaner.

There are sufficient means of escape should the premises be operating at full capacity.

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF IGNITION

The nature of the activities does not lead to many sources of ignition. Potential sources of ignition during foreseeable normal activities are heat from electric heaters and lights, electrical equipment malfunction or overload, and arson.

The main hall is heated by radiant electrical heaters mounted at ceiling level. The kitchen has two 4-ring electric cookers and halogen ceiling heaters. Spotlights may be used for drama productions. A periodic inspection of the existing electric installation was last carried out on 31 July 2017. An upgrade to the electrical installation in the main hall is planned as part of the refurbishment of the main hall.

The exact position of spotlights could vary according to the needs of any production, and it is possible that these could also cause overheating of curtains or scenery. Apart from this, there is little likelihood of combustible items being close to the heat sources.

Portable electrical equipment in the building is in good condition, and is subject to PAT testing.

Rubbish bins (wheelie bins), which could be a target for vandals, are placed just outside the front door. This is considered to be the optimum place to ensure that they are used (and not abused by users of the nearby recycling centre). While they may present a potential fire risk to the building if set alight maliciously, the balance between this and the bins not being used appears to favour the current location.

At the back of the building, dead vegetation could also be a source of fire. Weed blanket has been applied to kill the vegetation but there is still some growth and further work is needed to reduce the risk of fire.

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Actions Required	By whom	By when
Continue to make users aware that flammable materials must be kept away from the radiant electrical heaters and spotlights	Chairperson	01/03/2020
Ensure weed blanket is laid to kill off the remaining vegetation with weed killer applied as necessary	Chairperson	30/04/2020

SOURCES OF FUEL AND OXYGEN

Items are stored on top of the kitchen store and these include boxes, papers and cushioned mats, however there are no sources of ignition close by. Some tins of paint are stored in a store cupboard along with sheets of wooden boarding and pieces of timber.

The only significant fuel loads are furnishings, including the stage curtains and the curtains in the club room which are not fire retardant.

Actions Required	By whom	By when
Continue to monitor items that are stored, disposing of those when they are no longer required	Chairperson	Ongoing
Consider treating the curtains in the club room to ensure that they are fire retardant	Management Committee	24/02/2020

CONTROL MEASURES

1. Smoking is not allowed in the building;
2. The building fixed electrical installation undergoes a periodic inspection;
3. Portable appliances are subject to regular PAT testing.

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MEANS OF ESCAPE

The building is well provided with fire exits. There are 2 fire exits from the main hall, one from the club room, and one from the corridor near the kitchen, in addition to the main entrance. All fire exit doors lead directly to the outside of the building. They are all fitted with "crash bars" to enable them to be opened easily in an emergency and are marked with signs complying with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996. The number of exits and the travel distances involved are suitable for the number of persons likely to need to escape.

It should be noted, however, that in the main hall the fire exits are built on a raised plinth 6" above floor level which would make egress difficult for those with impaired mobility or a visual impairment. In addition, external ramps are required for 3 of the exits to facilitate escape from the building. It is planned to locate portable ramps adjacent to each fire exit in the main hall, although these could be a trip hazard in their own right. In the meantime, all hirers of the main hall will be alerted to the need to ensure arrangements are in place to support those with a mobility or visual impairment to exit the main hall via the fire exits and this will be added to user guidelines.

Emergency lighting is provided over all fire exits (both inside and outside), in the toilets and toilet corridor, and in the entrance lobby. There is also emergency lighting in the stage area and exit from the stage requires steps to be negotiated.

There is regular testing of the emergency lighting to the recommended schedule. The recommended routine is a functional test monthly, a 1-hour duration test every 6 months, and a 3-hour duration test once a year. The extended duration tests should be arranged so that there is adequate time for the batteries to recharge before the hall is occupied.

Actions Required	By whom	By when
Complete works to external ramps for all fire exits where they are required	Chairperson	01/06/2020
Make available portable ramps for 2 fire exits in the main hall	Chairperson	01/06/2020
Ensure regular checks on the emergency lighting system are carried out and recorded	Chairperson	01/04/2020

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COMMUNICATION

Raising the alarm

The building is equipped with a fire alarm system with manual call points. There are sounders throughout the area, backed up by flashing lights. There is no flashing light in the club room. The alarm sounds only in the premises and is not linked to an external monitoring service.

The fire alarm system is subject to monthly testing with all call points tested and was last serviced in September 2019. The system is serviced annually (the recommended service interval is 6-monthly but as the system is regularly checked by the system installer, this is not deemed necessary). There is a fire alarm logbook.

Calling the Fire Brigade

The responsibility for calling the fire brigade falls to the person finding the fire, who could be a hall user and not necessarily the hirer of the premises or organiser of the event.

Establishing that all persons are accounted for

The responsibility for checking that all persons are accounted for is also that of the hirer/organiser. It is suggested that the assembly area should be near the recycling centre, as this is away from the building and away from the entrance. There is currently no signage to indicate the location of the assembly area.

Actions Required	By whom	By when
Continue to undertake the programme of regular tests of the fire alarm system	Chairperson	Monthly
Review the existing Conditions of Hire to ensure that the arrangements and responsibility for calling the Fire Brigade and establishing that all persons are accounted for are sufficiently clear	Management Committee	01/04/2020
Develop an emergency plan to be given to all hirers and event organisers	Management Committee	01/04/2020
Place a sign in the car park adjacent to the recycling centre to mark the assembly area	Chairperson	01/04/2020

MEANS OF LIMITATION OR INTERVENTION TO PREVENT SPREAD

Automatic – sprinklers etc.

There is no automatic means of intervention to limit the spread of fire. Therefore, any fire when the building is unattended could spread without any intervention.

Manual – extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are provided in the main hall (2 x water), club room (1 x dry powder), kitchen (1 x dry powder) and in the corridor between kitchen and stage (1 x dry powder). The hazards associated with the acidic nature of dry powder have been considered and are acceptable in this environment. There is a fire blanket in the kitchen. This provision of fire extinguishers is considered adequate and suitable, except that the dry powder extinguisher that is missing should be replaced by a water extinguisher. There is a sign next to all the fire extinguishers in the building to indicate the type of extinguisher. The fire extinguishers are serviced annually by Flameskill.

Hall users should not be encouraged to fight a fire, if it would put them in danger of being trapped by the fire. The fire extinguishers should only be used where a person finding a small fire is confident that they can prevent it from spreading by use of an extinguisher.

Fire service response

The hall is approximately 5 miles from Stowmarket fire station and approximately 6.5 miles from Needham Market and Debenham fire stations. All are retained fire stations, and so the time for response from any of these stations is likely to be at least 15 to 20 minutes. During this time, a fire could spread throughout the building, because there are no partitions or fire doors to limit its spread.

The premises have external access on three sides. Water should be available from fire hydrants on the A1120 nearby, so that once the fire service arrives, there should be no delay in applying water to the fire.

Maintaining the fire precautions and risk reduction measures

The Chairperson undertakes regular monitoring to check that fire precautions and other risk reduction measures are effective and carries out a safety inspection once a month, covering the following items:

- Check fire alarm system, by activating one call point.
- Check emergency lighting using key in test points

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- Check that fire extinguishers are in position and seals have not been broken
- Check all fire exit doors open easily • Check contents of first aid box(es).
- Carry out visual inspection of condition of kitchen electrical equipment

Likely impact of fire on

Life: MEDIUM to LOW, because of easy escape routes from all parts of the building. Improvements can be made to the robustness of the alarm system and emergency lighting and if implemented, would reduce the risk to LOW.

Property: MEDIUM. A fire could spread unchecked because of the lack of partitioning within the building and cause significant property damage.

Heritage: LOW. The building has no significant architectural merit.

Environment: LOW. There are no sources of pollution that would result from a fire.

Amenity: HIGH. The building provides an asset to the local community and its loss could disrupt the activities of local groups.

Actions Required	By whom	By when
Formalise the arrangements for a member of the management committee to carry out a monthly safety inspection	Management Committee	01/04/2020
Management Committee to undertake quarterly review of the actions set out in this document	Management Committee	Quarterly

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The fire assessment has identified a medium risk of loss of the building in the event of fire. The main risk is an electrical fault through overloading – however this is very unlikely as the electrical installation is fully up to the latest regulations. The highest risk is of users putting up flammable decorations adjacent to the heaters in the main Hall and this will be addressed by the planned refurbishment of the main hall. In the event that a fire breaks out, there is little more that can be done to prevent a fire from spreading and causing significant damage.

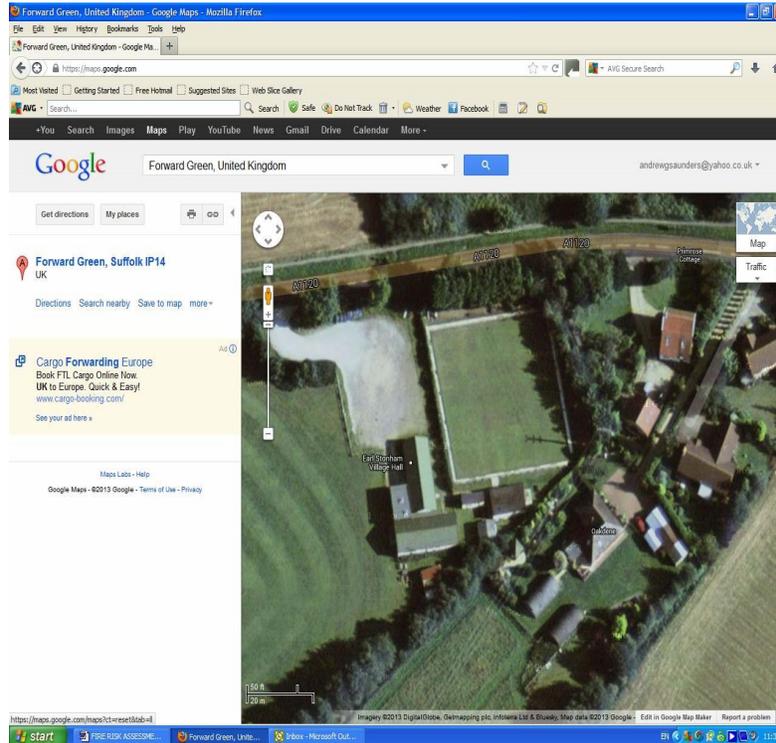
The risk to life is considered medium to low because of easy escape routes from all parts of the building. Regular checking of the alarm system and the emergency lighting will give increased confidence that these systems will work when needed and enable a safe evacuation of the building.

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Other regular checks have been recommended. These will ensure that all planned arrangements are working, avoiding unforeseen problems.

Appendix 1

Earl Stonham Village Hall – aerial view of the site



Fire Risk Assessment

Earl Stonham Village Hall – Internal Layout (not to scale)

█ denotes fire exit

