

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/25/0973	Case Officer:	Anna Tidey
Application Type:	Full Application		
Proposal:	Provision of new ramps and step including extract fan and soil vent pipe outlets through roof.		
Site:	St Marys Church , Windmill Lane, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 2DS, , ,		
Validation Date	8 Apr 2025	Overall Expiry Date:	5 Jun 2025
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Permission	Recommendation Date:	27 Jun 2025
Target Date:	3 Jun 2025	Recommending Officer Signature:	Anna Tidey

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	0
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Signed and Agreed By:	Stephen Ashdown	Date:	27 Jun 2025
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/25/0973

**St Marys Church , Windmill Lane, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 2DS, ,
Provision of new ramps and step including extract fan and soil vent pipe outlets through roof.
Mr G Loving**

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

None received.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

Flood Risk & Drainage: We have no objection to the proposed development on flood risk and drainage grounds. Due to the nature of the development, drainage should be managed via Building Regulations/Control.

Naturespace Newt Officer: There will be no likely impact on great crested newts or their habitats' as a result of the proposed development. No comments.

TOWN COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

East Grinstead Town Council: None received.

INTRODUCTION

This application seeks planning permission for works to provide new access ramps, and a step, and also new extract fan and soil vent pipe outlets through the existing roof at the church at St Marys, on Windmill Lane in East Grinstead.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None found.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

St Marys Church shares a large site together with a Church Hall and St Marys Church of England School, located on the eastern side of Windmill Lane, to the north side of the A22 London Road in the built up area boundary of East Grinstead.

The approach to the church frontage is finished with tarmac up to the building, and adjoins the in/out vehicular access and exit points to the site from Windmill Lane. There is an adjacent frontage car park for the hall, church and school buildings. The arched entrance door into the church lobby has a low step to allow entry from the hard surfaced front elevation.

To the front of the church there is a large beech tree which is growing within a designated garden area. The tree and associated garden space is surrounded by a low boundary wall to divide it from the vehicular and pedestrian access route to the church and school.

A part of the application site including the church building and its immediate setting falls within an area in risk of Surface Water Flooding.

APPLICATION DETAILS

This application seeks planning permission for a new accessible entry ramp with new steps across the front doorway and lobby. The proposed double ramped addition measures 9m wide by approx. 2.6m deep. The addition includes the provision of two 1.15m wide, 1 in 15 gradient paved ramps leading up to a central 1.8m deep by 2.14m wide landing area, finished in paving slabs. The ramps are to be edged in brick walls with stretcher capping, into which 0.7m high open black painted metal handrails are proposed.

A set of two 2m wide steps are also proposed to allow direct access onto the 0.2m high paved platform, which face directly towards the church entrance.

The proposed floor plans for the church also show the provision of a new toilet, flower preparation room and a separate accessible toilet within each side of the church entry lobby. The proposed elevations indicate that new Keymer tile vents are to be installed into the existing tiled lobby roof to serve the accessible toilet. New inner glass doors are proposed as the pair of arched doors to the main doorway will be fixed open to allow the use of the new entry arrangements. The proposed floorplan indicates a café area within the church building.

The application has been supported by the submission of a Design & Access & Planning Statement, which is available to view on the planning file. This details the following points regarding the proposal:

- Planning permission is sought for the works to create a flexible and inclusive space within the Church incorporating new kitchen and toilet facilities.
- The project aligns with the Church's vision to become the hub of the local community and to serve the parish.
- The Parish Hall is operating at full capacity, resulting in community groups being turned away due to lack of space.
- The proposed reordering of the Church will provide additional space to accommodate a growing range of community services, alongside regular worship.
- The addition of toilets, a kitchen servery and a cafe area will significantly enhance the Church's ability to offer hospitality.
- The Church is used by disabled people with wheelchairs and families with prams. There is no level access into the building. At present, disabled access is only possible with a temporary folding ramp.
- The proposal will provide a safe and independent access for all users and ensuring the Church is accessible for everyone.
- The ramp has been carefully designed to minimise visual impact. It is symmetrical in layout, featuring a simple metal handrail and a matching brick kerb that complements the existing brick facade of the Church.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LIST OF POLICIES

Planning legislation holds that the determination of a planning application shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Using this as the starting point the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the District Plan, the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan and Site Allocations DPD.

National policy (which is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance) does not form part of the development plan, but is an important material consideration.

Mid Sussex District Plan

The District Plan was adopted at Full Council on 28th March 2018.

Relevant policies:

- DP17 Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC
- DP25 Community Facilities and Local Services
- DP26 Character and design
- DP28 Accessibility
- DP41 Flood Risk and Drainage

Site Allocations Development Plan Document

The SADPD was adopted on 29th June 2022. It allocates sufficient housing and employment land to meet identified needs to 2031.

There are no policies deemed relevant to this application.

Neighbourhood Plan

East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan, made November 2016.

Policy EG3 Promoting Good Design

Other Material Considerations

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 - 2039 - Submission Draft (Regulation 19)

The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption, the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current District Plan 2014-2031 and its policies will have full weight. In accordance with the NPPF, Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies of the emerging plan according to the stage of preparation; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies; and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) is currently at Examination and the stage 1 hearings were concluded on the 31st October 2024. There are unresolved objections to some of the Policies in the draft District Plan and as such, only minimal weight can be given to the Plan and this planning application has been assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan.

Relevant policies:

DPS2 Sustainable Design and Construction
DPS4 Flood Risk & Drainage
DPC6 Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC
DPS6 Health and Wellbeing
DPB1 Character and Design
DPH12 Accessibility

Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' SPD that aims to help deliver high quality development across the district that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. The Design Guide was adopted by Council on 4th November 2020 as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications. The SPD is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

ASSESSMENT

It is considered that the main issues that need to be considered in the determination of this application are as follows:

- Design
- Impact on residential amenities
- Accessibility
- Flood Risk/Drainage
- HRA Assessment
- Biodiversity Net Gain

Design

Policy DP26 of the District Plan seeks to promote well located and designed development, to protect valued characteristics of the built environment for their historical and visual qualities and support sustainable communities and create accessible environments. The wording of Policy DP26 states:

'All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:

- * is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;*
- * contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;*
- * creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- * protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;*
- * protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;*
- * does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29);*
- * creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;*
- * incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;*
- * positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;*
- * take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;*
- * optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.'*

As the site is located in the built up area of East Grinstead the development plan in this part of Mid Sussex consists of the District Plan and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood Plan Policy EG3 is relevant, which states:

'Policy EG3 - Promoting Good Design

Planning permission will normally be granted where development proposals meet the following criteria:

- a) The form of the proposed development is proportionate and in keeping with the scale, height, materials and site coverage of the surrounding area;*
- b) The layout of the proposed development respects the topography and character of the site, protects important landscape features and does not harm adjoining amenity;*
- c) The proposal does not result in the loss of buildings or spaces that would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area;*
- d) The proposal ensures satisfactory means of access for vehicles and pedestrians and provides adequate parking, cycle storage and refuse facilities on site;*
- e) The design of new buildings and the layout of spaces, including footways, car and cycle parking areas, should be permeable and provide connectivity with neighbouring areas;*
- f) New development must be inclusive and where appropriate make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access for those with mobility impairment; and*
- g) The design of new developments must result in the creation of a safe and secure environment and incorporate adequate security measures and features to deter crime, fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour; and*
- h) Proposals make provision for green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement.*

Due to infrastructure constraints within the town, all new development proposals, which generate a net increase in traffic (excluding householder applications), will be required to contribute towards improving the walking and cycle network related to the development and be of a recognised acceptable standard.'

Also relevant in the determination of the application is the design guidance contained in the Mid Sussex Design Guide, which seeks good design in all forms of new development.

The proposed appearance of the proposed external access works are considered to accord with Policy DP26 and Policy EG3 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan and with the relevant Design Guide principles.

Impact on residential amenities

In assessing the potential impact of the proposed works upon the neighbouring amenities consideration needs to be given to District Plan Policy DP26. Policy DP26 requires that 'All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of the new dwellings.'

In addition Principle DG45 in the Design Guide refers to the need to consider privacy of existing and future residents and it is noted that privacy may be affected by the relationship of buildings to each other.

The church building is located in an area of established residential properties. The nearest houses to the proposed external works are sited some 38m (approx.) to the west at Nos 5-15 Windmill Lane.

It is considered that the spacing of the proposed development and the scale of the works will not cause significant harm to the privacy or outlook of the immediate residents.

The proposal accords with the requirements of Policy DP26 of the District Plan, and also with the requirements of Policy EG3 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan and the relevant principles of the Design Guide.

Accessibility

Policy DP25 of the District Plan: Community Facilities and Local Services states:

'The provision or improvement of community facilities and local services that contribute to creating sustainable communities will be supported.'

Where proposals involve the loss of a community facility, (including those facilities where the loss would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs locally) evidence will need to be provided that demonstrates:

- o that the use is no longer viable; or*
- o that there is an existing duplicate facility in the locality which can accommodate the impact of the loss of the facility; or*
- o that a replacement facility will be provided in the locality.*

The on-site provision of new community facilities will be required on larger developments, where practicable and viable, including making land available for this purpose. Planning conditions and/ or planning obligations will be used to secure on-site facilities. Further information about the provision, including standards, of community facilities will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document. Community facilities and local services to meet local needs will be identified through Neighbourhood Plans or a Site Allocations Development Plan Document produced by the District Council.'

Policy DP28 of the District Plan states, in part:

' All development will be required to meet and maintain high standards of accessibility so that all users can use them safely and easily.'

This will apply to all development, including changes of use, refurbishments and extensions, open spaces, the public realm and transport infrastructure, and will be demonstrated by the applicant.'

The proposal will improve the accessibility of the church building for existing and new community uses. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in this case to accord with the aims of District Plan Policies DP25 and DP28.

Drainage

The site falls within an identified area for surface water flooding. The relevant District Plan Policy is DP41. This states:

'DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage

Proposals for development will need to follow a sequential risk-based approach, ensure development is safe across its lifetime and not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. The District Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) should be used to identify areas at present and future flood risk from a range of sources including fluvial (rivers and streams), surface water (pluvial), groundwater, infrastructure and reservoirs.

Particular attention will be paid to those areas of the District that have experienced flooding in the past and proposals for development should seek to reduce the risk of flooding by achieving a reduction from existing run-off rates.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be implemented in all new developments of 10 dwellings or more, or equivalent non-residential or mixed development unless demonstrated to be inappropriate, to avoid any increase in flood risk and protect surface and ground water quality. Arrangements for the long term maintenance and management of SuDS should also be identified.

For the redevelopment of brownfield sites, any surface water draining to the foul sewer must be disconnected and managed through SuDS following the remediation of any previously contaminated land.

SuDS should be sensitively designed and located to promote improved biodiversity, an enhanced landscape and good quality spaces that improve public amenities in the area, where possible.

The preferred hierarchy of managing surface water drainage from any development is:

- 1. Infiltration Measures*
- 2. Attenuation and discharge to watercourses; and if these cannot be met,*
- 3. Discharge to surface water only sewers.*

Land that is considered to be required for current and future flood management will be safeguarded from development and proposals will have regard to relevant flood risk plans and strategies.'

The application has been considered by the Council's Flood Risk and Drainage Team. They raise no drainage objections to the proposal. Therefore there are no relevant drainage issues.

HRA Assessment

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the competent authority - in this case, Mid Sussex District Council - has a duty to ensure that any plans or projects that they regulate (including plan making and determining planning applications) will have no adverse effect on the integrity of a European site of nature conservation importance. The European site of focus is the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The potential effects of development on Ashdown Forest were assessed during the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process for the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031. This process identified likely

significant effects on the Ashdown Forest SPA from recreational disturbance and on the Ashdown Forest SAC from atmospheric pollution.

A Habitats Regulations Assessment has been undertaken for the proposed development in this planning application.

Recreational disturbance

Increased recreational activity arising from new residential development and related population growth is likely to disturb the protected near-ground and ground nesting birds on Ashdown Forest.

In accordance with advice from Natural England, the HRA for the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, and as detailed in District Plan Policy DP17, mitigation measures are necessary to counteract the effects of a potential increase in recreational pressure and are required for developments resulting in a net increase in dwellings within a 7km zone of influence around the Ashdown Forest SPA. A Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) mitigation approach has been developed. This mitigation approach has been agreed with Natural England.

This planning application does not result in a net increase in dwellings within the 7km zone of influence and so mitigation is not required.

Atmospheric pollution

Increased traffic emissions as a consequence of new development may result in additional atmospheric pollution on Ashdown Forest. The main pollutant effects of interest are acid deposition and eutrophication by nitrogen deposition. High levels of nitrogen may detrimentally affect the composition of an ecosystem and lead to loss of species.

The potential effects of the proposed development are incorporated into the overall results of the transport model prepared for the Mid Sussex Transport Study, which indicates there would not be an overall impact on Ashdown Forest. This means that there is not considered to be a significant in combination effect on the Ashdown Forest SAC by this development proposal.

Conclusion of the Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Habitats Regulations Assessment concludes that there would be no likely significant effects, alone or in combination, on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC from the proposed development. No mitigation is required in relation to the Ashdown Forest SPA or SAC.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain this application comprises development below the de-minimis threshold meaning that this development is exempt from providing biodiversity net gain.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The proposed introduction of a new ramp and steps and other minor external changes to the roof of the building are appropriate in terms of design, and will not impact harmfully upon the character and appearance of the church building or the residential street scene.

It is considered that the new additions will not cause significant harm to the neighbouring amenities. The proposal accords with the aims of District Plan Policy DP26 and also with the requirements of Policy EG3 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan and the relevant principles of the Design Guide.

The proposal accords with District Plan Policies DP25 and DP28 to enhance access into neighbourhood facilities, and is therefore considered acceptable.

Consequently this application is recommended for approval.

Decision: Permission

Case Officer: Anna Tidey

