

Re – Planning Application DM/26/1377 Proposal for 9 new build homes. Land At Mill Lane Sayers Common West Sussex

Albourne, Sayers Common & Twineham Parochial Church Council (ASCAT PCC) would like to make the following comments, observations, and requests for further information in response to the above planning application.

ASCAT PCC is responsible for overseeing the maintenance and upkeep of the place of worship and public amenity that is Christ Church Sayers Common, including its graveyard/churchyard and Church Hall. These are all located on the western boundary of the application site. They are both Non-Designated Heritage Assets and also Community Assets.

Christ Church is a Victorian parish church with flint walls and a terracotta tiled roof, the church hall is of brick with flint highlights with a terracotta tiled roof. (see Figure 1 and 2)

The graveyard around the church is still open to new burials and includes Commonwealth War graves. Parts of it are specifically managed to encourage wildlife. Both it and the church are open to all residents to visit and sit in as a place of peace and contemplation. The Church Hall and Churchyard are used on weekdays during term time by Isabello's Preschool and open to community groups at other times.



Figure 1: Christ Church

Figure 2: Church Hall



Figure 3: Views of the Western boundary of the site from the Church yard

It is unfortunate that we have not had any direct contact from or engagement with the applicant with regards to this application, or any of their previous ones, with regards to its potential impact on our Church and Churchyard .

Impact of development on the setting of the Non Designated Historic Asset of the Church and Churchyard

1. It is noted that the number of proposed houses on the site has almost doubled from the original 5 of the previous planning application to 9. The new site layout now shows that they are lined up along the western side of the site including the whole of its boundary with the church and its graveyard.
2. The applicant has not included a heritage statement outlining the impact of the development on the setting of the Non Designated Historical Asset of the Church and Churchyard. They have not provided any illustrated images of the site as viewed from the Churchyard either pre or post development. This includes the view in autumn, winter and spring when there would be no leaves on the trees.
No ground height levels have been provided for the site both pre and post development so we do not know what the finished height of the houses would be against the height of the church, and how visible they would be from the church site.
3. The materials for the houses of roofs of metal terracotta coloured zinc roofs and larch cladding on the walls would be unique to the village and its environs. The more ubiquitous local materials used in the Church and Church hall, and around Oakhurst are not being use. We are therefore unclear as to how this would be sympathetic to the appearance of the church.
4. It is understood that the applicant would erect a new fence at the rear of the gardens, between the site and the churchyard but it is not clear what material would be used or its height. Mention is made of planting vegetation between the two sites but full details of this have not been provided, clearly hedging consisting of species native to Sussex would best fit in with the current boundary.
5. We would therefore request more information and details are provided for the above so that we are able to understand more fully the impact of the site on the setting of our Church and Churchyard. This would enable us to evaluate how the proposed development would impact the Church's, historic building and grounds and its congregation. We would also request that a site visit is made by the planning department, including to the churchyard, to assess these issues and that their consultation response is not just based just on a desktop assessment.

New Footpath from the site to Oakhurst road

6. The applicant has advised that they wish to establish a footpath along a strip of land going west from their site up along the southern boundary of the Churchyard and exiting onto the Oakhurst roadway.
7. Prior to the building of the A23 bypass in the 1990s this strip of land was part of footpath FP25- HU which ran between the Church and Langton Lane. The building of the bypass severed this connection making it redundant. In 1999 WSCC therefore raised a Public Path Order planning application with MSDC, planning reference HP/081/99 Extinguishment of footpath 25 South of

Christ Church Old A23 London Road Sayers Common, removing it as a footpath and Public Right Of Way (PROW) which was accepted.

8. It is noted that WSCC PROW Officer is not mentioned by MSDC in their list of consultees for this application. We would ask that they are consulted on this matter to see if they would be willing to reinstate the footpath as a PROW given that it would not now terminate in a dead end but would form a through route to Mill Lane via the site in question. This would be very useful to the residents of Sayers common and also help to fulfil the original intention for footpath FP25-HU which was missed out in the 1992 Department Side Roads Order mentioned in the documents held by MSDC for HP/081/99.
9. We would also suggest that a planning condition is made to prevent this strip of land ever being used as vehicle access to the site and for it to remain solely as a footpath for pedestrians.
10. Since it ceased to be a footpath this land has not been maintained and has become overgrown with trees and undergrowth. No ecological or topographical survey has been undertaken by the applicant of this land and we would ask that this is done before any work is undertaken on it. There is also a drainage issue at its western end which causes flooding of the pavement and road surface of Oakhurst road (see point 21).
11. It would be helpful if details of the applicant's proposed boundary materials and street lighting for the footpath could be provided so that we can understand their potential impact on the setting of the Church, Churchyard and Church Hall.

Impact on the Ecology of the Churchyard

12. We note that there was a large amount of degradation of the biodiversity of the site, with the felling of more than 17 trees and clearing of undergrowth, prior to the ecological surveys taking place. We are saddened at the impact this has already had on the amount of wildlife entering the Churchyard.
13. We would appreciate greater clarity concerning the planting by the applicant of trees and vegetation along our eastern and southern boundaries of the site. It would be helpful to have confirmation of heights of the planting and that species native to Sussex will be used. This is to assist with our wildlife management of the churchyard, our understanding of their impact on the setting of the Church and Churchyard and allow us to assess the impact on our maintenance of our hedge line and trees.
14. The applicant's "*Arboricultural Impact Assessment*" indicates that there might be some incursions by the installation of fencing to the Root Protection Areas (RPA) of some of our boundary trees. We would appreciate more details of this so that we can assess the impact on our trees.
15. We note that the applicant has not conducted a Night-time Bat Walkover (NBW) of their site. On 30/04/2026 a community bat walk took place in Sayers Common organised by Hurst Rethink and led by the Sussex naturalist Michael Blencowe. This included a visit to the churchyard at 9pm during which a large number of the vulnerable Serotine Bats and some Soprano Pipistrelle bats were seen and identified within it. In view of this we believe that a more detailed look at how bats are using the applicant's site would be important.

The Proposed Surface Water and Foul Water Drainage of the site

16. Very little information has been provided about the surface water drainage management plan for the site and we welcome the Flood Risk & Drainage Team's request for further information.
17. We note that applicant appears to wish to use the ditch which lies between the western boundary of the site and the churchyard as part of its drainage scheme. If this is the case, we would welcome details of how it proposes to keep this ditch clear of obstructions and prevent residents from tipping rubbish over their boundaries and into it.

18. It may be of use to know that the Church's undercroft has suffered from Groundwater Flooding most winters and required a pump to avoid the flooding damaging the boiler housed in that space. Therefore, it would be advisable for the applicant to test their site for groundwater depths to check for potential issues and avoid worsening the current problem.
19. The applicant's plans indicate that the site's foul water is to drain westwards along the line of the new footpath to Oakhurst road. At the moment there are no Public Sewage Pipes along this section of the that road. Both the Church Hall and the former Vicarage rely on Septic Tanks. The nearest connection to the public sewage network would appear to be about 20 to 30 meters south of where the footpath would join Oakhurst road. We would therefore welcome clarification of whether a new public mains sewage pipe will now be laid along Oakhurst road to reach a new manhole access to be built at this point.
20. The applicants plan mistakenly shows the water in the surface water ditch flowing east along the line of the proposed footpath connecting to Oakhurst road. This would have the water flowing uphill from Oakhurst road to the site!
It should be noted that currently this drainage ditch overflows at the eastern end of the proposed public footpath. It would be good to know how this will be avoided in future and how this ditch will be maintained.

The issue of Noise Levels from A23 and the site

21. We do have concerns about the changes to the level of noise from the A23 roadway that the site would cause. We experienced an increase in noise levels in the church & churchyard following the previous clearance of vegetation of the site. The volume varies considerably depending on the direction of the wind.
22. These concerns have not been reduced by the Environmental Protection Officer advising in their consultation that they are not convinced that the development as proposed "*will not result in residents experiencing significant adverse impact from noise and that sufficient mitigation measures have been included within the proposals.*" We therefore await further information from the applicant in response to this and that National Highways are happy with any noise reduction infrastructure build along their boundary.
23. The impact noise from the site itself on the Churchyard and Church have not been considered by the applicant. We would therefore ask if this could be examined to provide reassurance that it would not significantly impact on their setting and use.

We are always open to and would welcome any contact and engagement from the applicant to help provide us with understanding and reassurance regarding our concerns of the potential impact of their development on Christ Church and its Churchyard.

We will continue to monitor developments regarding the concerns and requests for information that we have raised above, and we reserve the right to make further comments on the matter as the planning process proceeds.