



Former St. Stephen's Church, Hamsland, Horsted Keynes

Design and Access Statement | April 2026

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Introduction

This Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been prepared to support a Full Planning Application for residential development on the former St. Stephen's Church site in Hamsland, Horsted Keynes.

The full planning application is for residential development, parking, landscaping and access.

The Document

This document summarises the steps taken to analyse the site and context and illustrates how the proposals have been shaped by the local character and evolved to respond to pre-application comments from Mid Sussex District Council.

Full details of the access, layout, appearance, scale, massing and landscaping are included within this document and submitted for approval to ensure the delivery of a sustainable high-quality development within the site.

This DAS should be read in conjunction with the technical plans/drawings and other documents accompanying the application submission.

Site Location

The site is located in the village of Horsted Keynes in the Mid Sussex District of West Sussex, England. Horsted Keynes lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), now designated as a National Landscape.

The site is situated to the south of Hamsland and currently contains the vacant building of the former St. Stephen's Church.



Wider Location Plan

The Site and Its Context

The Site

The site covers approximately 0.09 hectares and includes areas of hardstanding as well as the former St Stephen’s Church building.

Hamsland Road forms the site’s northern boundary, while the eastern edge is defined by a hedge and small trees. To the west and south, the site adjoins land that benefits from planning permission (ref. DM/20/4692) for residential development, with the western portion proposed for access.

Development around the site varies, with single-storey bungalows set within large front gardens located to the west, continuous two-storey terraced houses with small- to medium-sized gardens positioned to the north of Hamsland on slightly elevated ground, and a small two-storey cottage together with 1.5-storey bungalows situated to the east.

The small two-storey cottage sits close to the edge of the pavement, with its main entrance and windows facing west toward the site’s north-eastern corner. There are several smaller trees along this boundary that provide partial screening to the cottage’s side garden.



Cottage to the east of the site



Terraces to the north of Hamsland



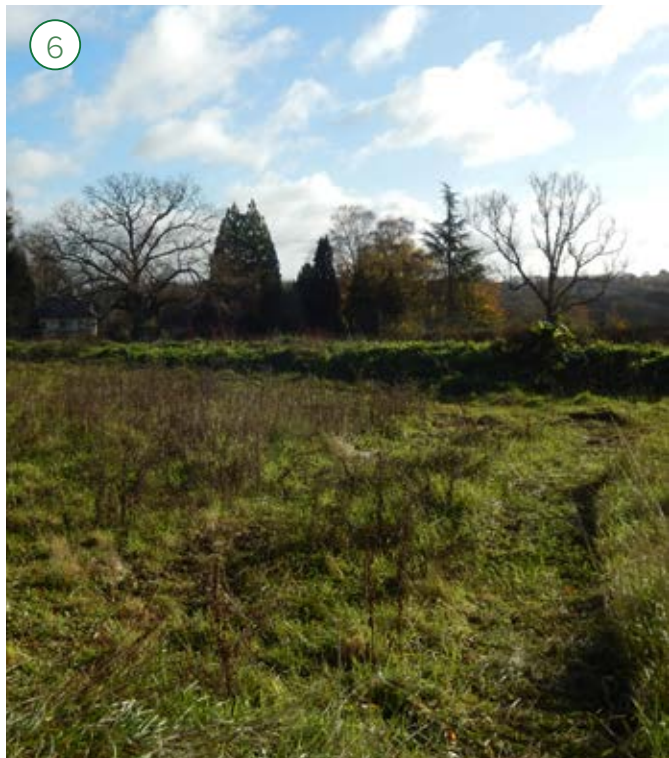
Bungalow located to the southwest of Hamsland



The site with the old church building



West of the site and proposed access to new residential development to the south



View from the site to the south onto land of consented application



KEY

- SITE BOUNDARY
- PHOTO LOCATIONS

Site Location Plan

Land of consented application for residential development

Hamsland

Summary of Constraints and Opportunities

CONSTRAINTS

- Neighbouring property – The main entrance and principal elevation of a small two-storey cottage overlook the north-eastern corner of the site
- Existing boundary hedges – small hedges located along the eastern and southern boundary
- Adjacent proposed development – A new access and residential development is proposed to the west and south of the site, respectively.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Enhance frontage – The site has the potential to provide an enhanced frontage to Hamsland, set back to allow for an appropriate buffer and separation from the adjacent cottage
- Retaining and enhancing boundary hedges – Redevelopment of the site will retain existing small hedges as part of boundary vegetation
- Improve corner treatment – The proposal will also help reinforce and enhance the corner of the new proposed access serving the consented development to the south of the site.



Cottage to east of site

KEY

SITE BOUNDARY

EXISTING ROAD

EXISTING VEHICULAR ACCESS

EXISTING BUILDING

EXISTING TREES (CATEGORY C)

ROOT PROTECTION AREA

EXISTING HEDGE

ADJACENT BUILDING FRONTAGE

SENSITIVE EDGE

PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY

AREA OF HIGH RISK OF SURFACE WATER FLOODING

+92.18

 SPOT LEVELS



Hamsland Street

Adjacent Cottage

HOK-18HK

1220

Land of consented application for residential development

Proposed Development

Character Influences

Horsted Keynes, located within the High Weald National Landscape, has a strong visual and physical relationship with its surrounding countryside and with landscape features. The central and northern parts of the village, particularly around the elongated village green, form the historic core where most of the traditional and listed buildings are found.

The architectural character of the village reflects a blend of historic and modern styles, from the Grade II listed Victorian railway station designed by T. W. Myres, to vernacular brickwork and tile-hung buildings in the older areas, as well as newer developments that incorporate more contemporary/less traditional designs.

SCALE

Buildings within the village are predominantly two storeys, with some single-storey bungalows becoming more common in the southern areas.

SET-BACKS AND BUILDING LINE

Building alignments and set-backs vary throughout the village. Some properties are positioned close to the back of the pavement, while others feature medium or large set-backs, contributing to a varied streetscape.

BUILT FORM AND TYPOLOGIES

The village accommodates a variety of building forms and typologies. Houses are predominantly wide fronted, with some narrow gable fronted units. Building types include cottages, former stable blocks, farmhouses, small rural dwellings, barns, Victorian terraces, and some bungalows.

ROOF ARTICULATION

Most buildings feature pitched roofs with eaves running parallel to the street, except for the narrower frontages that display gabled ends. Roofscapes are often enhanced with gable ends, dormer windows, and prominent chimney stacks.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILING

Buildings typically have simple forms yet incorporate characteristic features such as entrance canopies, bay windows, dormers, and centrally or end-positioned chimney stacks.

PARKING

Parking is mainly provided off-street, either within plot boundaries or in courtyards with hard-standing and garage buildings.

BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

Boundary treatments commonly consist of small to mid-height hedges, low-level planting, and picket fencing, contributing to the village’s soft and rural character.

Materials

Red brick is the principal material, providing a unifying element across the village. Brickwork is generally plain, with arched or flat brick window and door heads. Red tile hanging is also typical, particularly on upper storeys above brick or render. Light roughcast render and timber boarding are also present within the village, though they are less commonly used.

Roofs are generally finished with small plain clay tiles in red and brown tones.

Other Guidance Considered

The character of the proposed development has also been informed by the following design guidance documents:

- Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (Consultation Draft, August 2019)
- High Weald Housing Design Guide: Building Better, Building Beautiful in the AONB (2019)
- High Weald AONB Guidance on the Selection and Use of Colour in Development, which will be consulted during material selection.



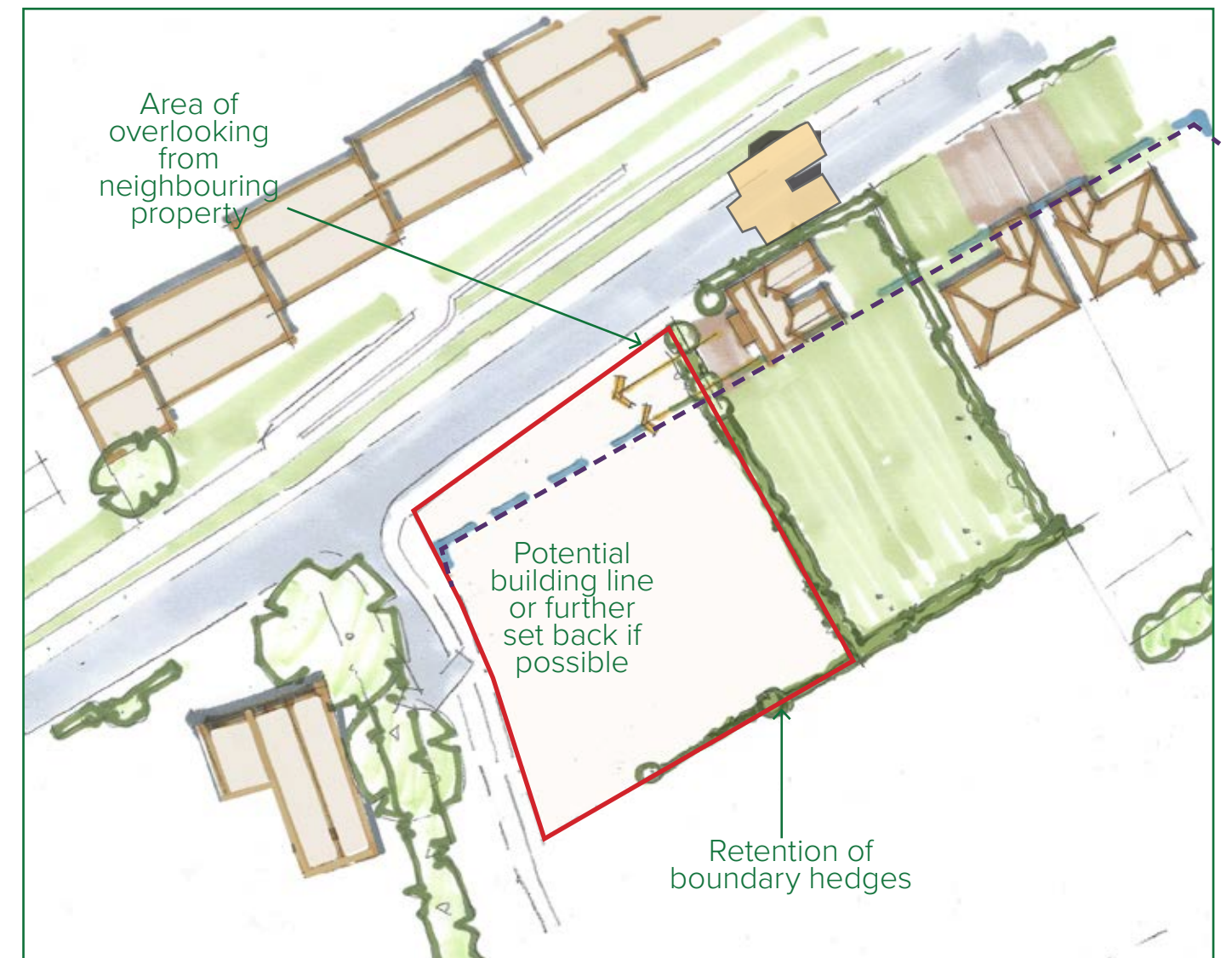


Sample of frontages and building found within the village of Horsted Keynes

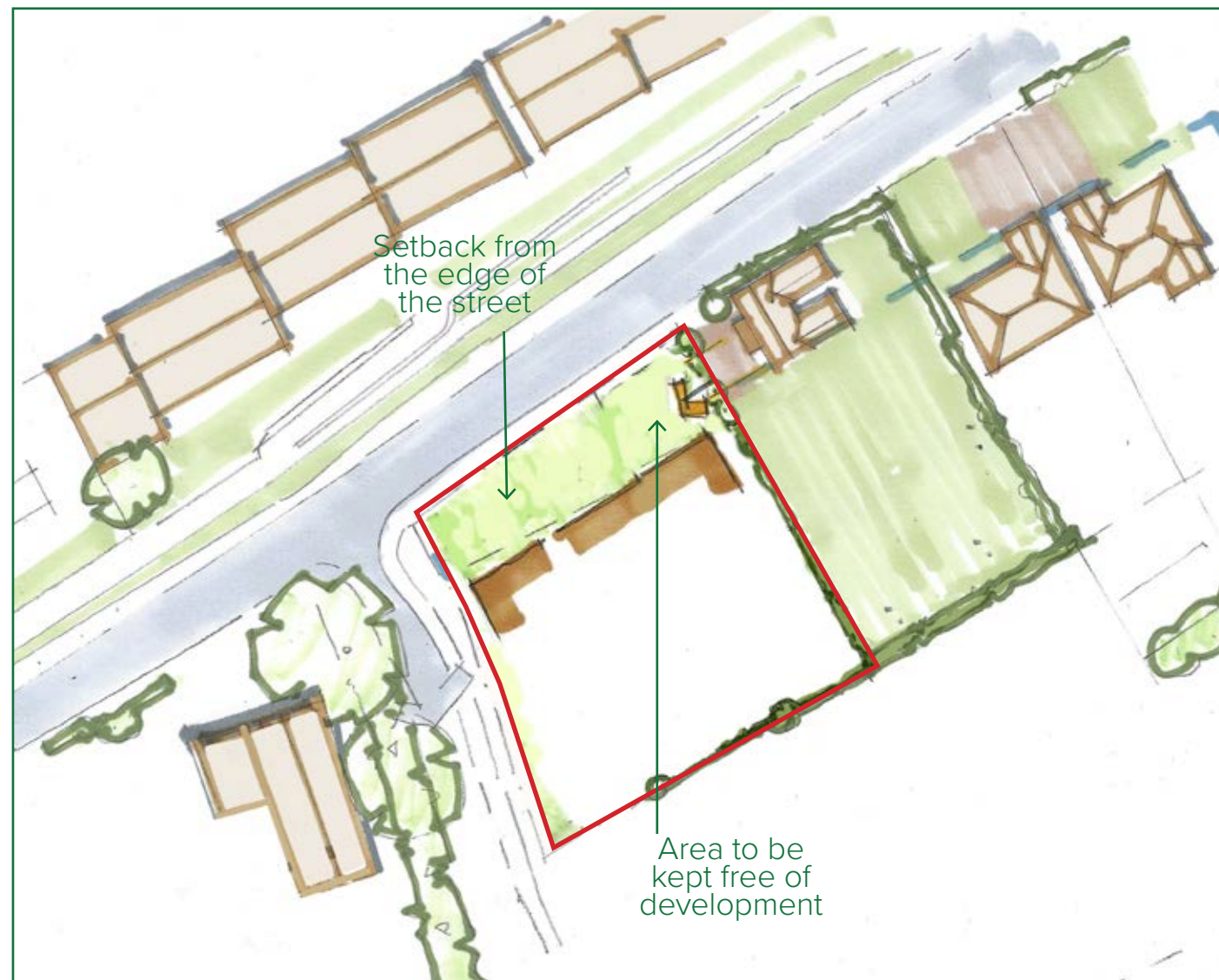
Design Concept

The design concept provides a solution that sensitively responds to the site and its immediate context, with a layout that strengthens the street frontage with a residential edge while also safeguarding the amenity and privacy of neighbouring properties.

Working with Landscape



Respecting Neighbours



Providing Active Frontages



Design Evolution

Planning Pre-application Engagement

A pre-application enquiry was submitted to North Hertfordshire Council, followed by a site visit meeting with the Case Officer on 19 December 2025. The purpose of the engagement was to discuss the emerging layout, design approach and key planning considerations prior to submission.

PLANNING CONTEXT

The Case Officer confirmed that the District Plan examination is recommencing, with hearings anticipated in January (now confirmed as taking place in February and March 2026). It was also confirmed that the Council does not currently benefit from a five-year housing land supply, which is a material consideration in the assessment of residential proposals.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The Officer advised that the site lies within the defined Built-Up Area Boundary, where residential development is supported in principle

However, additional supporting information was requested to justify the closure of the former church use, including evidence relating to the reasons for closure and the availability and accessibility of alternative facilities.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

The overall design approach was considered generally positive, particularly the traditional architectural style reflecting the character of the Conservation Area. Notwithstanding this, the Officer provided detailed design advice, including:

- Avoiding plots being positioned too closely to each other or neighbouring site boundaries
- Seeking improved integration with the neighbouring development site to the south
- Reducing the visual impact of prominent flank walls; and avoiding close-boarded fencing along the access road to ensure a more appropriate streetscape.

TECHNICAL MATTERS

- The Officer advised that the potential noise and amenity impacts associated with air source heat pumps and other plant may require assessment through a noise report, subject to final layout and equipment positioning.

PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

- It was indicated that any Section 106 requirements are likely to be limited to contributions associated with Ashdown Forest.



The Proposal

The Layout

The proposed layout includes the following features:

- The proposed layout comprises three new three-bedroom homes, each with private amenity spaces/ gardens and generous front gardens designed to maintain a soft, green character along the street
- Parking areas are located to the side of the properties, with access provided from Hamsland.

- 1 3 bed corner turner house with enhanced detailing addressing both streets
- 2 Drive through parking bays to minimise visual dominance of cars
- 3 Semi-detached houses set back to avoid overlooking and shading of neighbouring property
- 4 Brick boundary wall with low level hedge to street
- 5 Entrance paths
- 6 Bicycle/storage sheds



Street Elevation



HAMSLAND

BURGHURST
COTTAGE

GARAGE / SHED

MERLEA

Site Layout

LAND SOUTH OF ST. STEPHENS CHURCH
(CONSENTED SCHEME)

Housing Mix & Building Heights

The proposed development comprises the erection of three two-storey, three-bedroom dwellings, all designed to be fully compliant with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS).

The scale and height of the dwellings have been considered to reflect the prevailing two-storey character of surrounding residential development and to ensure an appropriate and proportionate form of development within the site and its village context.



Front Elevation



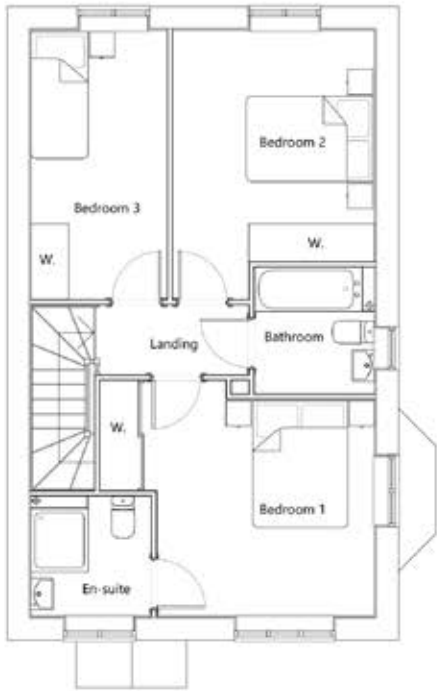
Side Elevation



Rear Elevation



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

3 Bed Corner turner house



Front Elevation



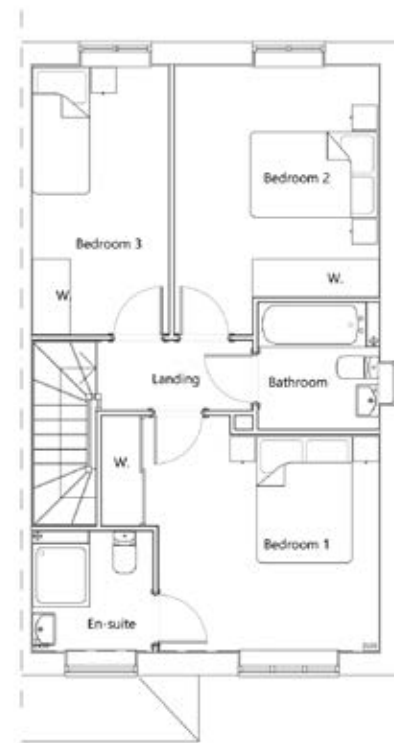
Side Elevation



Rear Elevation



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



Front Elevation

3 Bed Semi-detached

Parking & Refuse

CAR AND CYCLE PARKING

The proposed development incorporates tandem parking bays located to the side of the dwellings, helping to minimise the visual prominence of vehicles within the street scene and maintain an attractive residential frontage.

Secure cycle parking will be provided within garden sheds located in the rear gardens of each dwelling, ensuring convenient and covered storage for residents.

The accompanying site plan illustrates the location and arrangement of all proposed vehicle and cycle parking spaces.

REFUSE

Each dwelling will benefit from dedicated refuse and recycling storage areas within the rear gardens, positioned in close proximity to driveways to allow convenient movement of bins to the roadside on collection days, without adversely affecting the streetscape or residential amenity.

Boundary

FRONT GARDENS

The front gardens are designed to provide an attractive streetscape while maintaining a clear distinction between public and private realms. Each plot will be defined by small to medium height hedging along the front and side boundaries.

Planting within the front gardens will comprise a combination of small ornamental trees and low-level soft landscaping.

BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

The side garden boundary of the corner plot adjoining the new access, to the development to the south, will be enclosed by a 1.8-metre-high brick boundary wall. The wall will be constructed using the same material as the ground floor of the dwelling, ensuring a cohesive and integrated appearance within the overall elevation.

Elsewhere, boundary treatments will comprise 1.8-metre-high closeboard timber fencing between rear gardens.

Materials

The accompanying plan identifies the proposed materials for the dwellings, including external wall finishes, roof materials, and boundary wall treatments, to ensure clarity and consistency in the overall design approach.

The materials proposed reflect the predominant local materials found within the surrounding area, thereby reinforcing the development’s integration with its context.



KEY

- SITE BOUNDARY
- TRADITIONAL MULTI-RED FACING BRICK, INCORPORATING OCCASIONAL BLUE BRICK DETAILING
- TILE HANGING (ON THE FIRST FLOOR)
- 1.8M HIGH BRICK BOUNDARY WALL (TRADITIONAL MULTI-RED FACING BRICK, INCORPORATING OCCASIONAL BLUE BRICK DETAILING)
- TIMBER FENCING
- SMALL TO MEDIUM HEIGHT HEDGES
- TILE ROOF
- CYCLE STORAGE
- ALLOCATED PARKING
- HARDSTANDING BIN STORAGE

Parking, Refuse Boundary and Materials Plan

1. REFUSE BOUNDARY AND MATERIALS PLAN
2. PROPOSED SCHEME

Appearance

The Street Elevation illustrates how the development will sit within its surrounding context, the frontage along Hamsland, and how the buildings are designed to reflect the local character and materials.



Proposed materials and architecture detailing



Tile hanging on upper floors of corner dwelling



Fascia and gable vent window detail



Bay window addressing side elevation



Traditional multi-red facing brick, incorporating occasional blue brick detailing on ground floor and vertical element of front elevation

Small-medium height hedge defining plot boundary

Sustainability

The proposed development at the former St. Stephen's Church site in Hamsland, Horsted Keynes has been designed to respond to national policy, and the objectives and policies of the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan (adopted May 2023), which forms part of the Development Plan for the parish.

The Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision to ensure that new development conserves and enhances the environment, minimises adverse environmental effects, and delivers development that is sustainable in the long term. In particular, Policy HK11: Low Carbon Design and Renewable Energy Schemes supports built development that is carbon neutral or as near to carbon neutral as possible and strongly encourages the incorporation of low energy and renewable technologies and passive design measures to reduce energy demand.

Furthermore, Policy DP39 (Sustainable Design and Construction) of the District Plan requires that all development proposals in Mid Sussex must seek to improve the sustainability of developments. In response, the design of the new homes will be designed to accord with Policy DP39 by embedding sustainable principles in layout, construction, and operation including the following:

- The site layout and dwelling orientations have been optimised to maximise natural daylight and enable effective cross-ventilation, reducing reliance on artificial lighting and mechanical cooling. High-performance building fabric (including enhanced insulation and airtightness) will minimise energy demand

- Efficient, low-carbon energy solutions will be incorporated, including air source heat pumps, ensuring a significant proportion of energy is derived from renewable sources. The small scale of development limits the feasibility of communal heating; however, individual systems will be designed for high efficiency
- Materials will be responsibly sourced, prioritising durability, low embodied carbon, and opportunities for reuse and recycling. Construction waste will be minimised through careful specification and site management, with recycling facilities integrated for future occupiers
- Water efficiency measures will ensure consumption does not exceed 110 litres/person/day, including low-flow fixtures and fittings
- The scheme has been designed with climate resilience in mind, including appropriate shading, ventilation, and material choices to mitigate overheating, alongside landscape measures to support biodiversity and environmental quality.

Overall, the development delivers a proportionate, policy-compliant approach to sustainable design, improving environmental performance while responding appropriately to its rural context.





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