

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 28 July 2026 12:38:23 UTC+01:00
To: "Caroline Grist" <Caroline.Grist@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/26/1080 Catholic Church of St Stephen, Hamsland, HK

Hi Caroline

Comments on the above planning application. My apologies for the delay in getting these to you, which has been caused by pressure of other work.

The current proposal relates to the redundant Church of St Stephen, which is located in Horsted Keynes, and is for demolition of the building and construction in its place of 3 houses (1 detached and 2 semi-detached), with associated accesses, parking and hard and soft landscaping. The proposal has the potential to affect a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets:

St Stephen's Church.

The application site is currently occupied by the redundant Catholic Church of St Stephen, which dates from 1970, and as such is broadly contemporaneous with the surrounding housing development. As the submitted heritage statement comments, it is typical in its form and design of purpose-built churches of that period, being of a Modernist design with a steeply pitched roof and vertically elongated coloured glass windows, and internally visible timber A-frame. The statement also notes that it is consistent with the surrounding residential development.

In the absence of LPA-adopted criteria, the statement makes an assessment of the potential of the building for consideration as a non-designated heritage asset based on criteria set out in Historic England Advice Note 7, although the quoted version of this guidance is now superseded by the 3rd edition published in May of this year. I do not however agree in all matters with this assessment. To consider the value of the building based on the most up-to-date edition and the criteria set out within it:

- Age:
Whilst the church does not represent an early stage in the development of Horsted Keynes, it does *'represent a period of development in the local area that made an important contribution to its character and distinctive identity'*, in that it is part of an extensive and cohesive 1970s extension of the historic village core, which has undoubtedly had a marked impact on the village's character. The guidance also notes that *'The age of a heritage asset may add to its value, but newer assets may be considered too where they meet other criteria.'*
- Rarity:
Although purpose-built 1970's churches may not be particularly uncommon on a national scale, they are not in my experience numerous within Mid Sussex, and in fact I struggle to think of other buildings of this type and period within the area. I would also consider that it does represent a *'good, representative example'* of a modest church of this era, bearing in mind that we are not considering

exceptional interest, which might result in eligibility for national listing, but rather interest within the local context. As noted above, it displays several architectural features which would make it typical of church building in this period.

- Design, Architectural, Aesthetic or Artistic Interest:

The submitted heritage statement has not identified an association with any known architect. However, as noted above St Stephen's is typical of church building of this period, albeit a modest example, and displays several architectural features which are of some interest in this context, including its roof form, internally visible A frame, and fenestration, in particular to the street facing elevation. In my opinion it is a moderately attractive building within the street scene, although the current poor state of upkeep of the church and its grounds to an extent reduces this positive contribution. I would not go so far as to suggest that this was deliberate neglect in the terms of paragraph 209 of the NPPF, nor am I aware of how long the building has been in the applicant's ownership, but nonetheless I do consider that the recently deteriorated state of repair of the building and its setting should not be allowed to unreasonably influence any decision relating to its value in the local context.

- Landmark or Streetscape Status:

As noted above, in my opinion the church is of value in the street scene of Hamsland for the reasons set out above. I do also consider that by virtue of its unique architecture and of the space around it, it does represent a landmark within the local context of the 1970s extension of Horsted Keynes.

- Historical Association:

As a former church, the building does have a strong, albeit relatively short-lived, association with the religious practice of Horsted Keynes, specifically Catholicism, and will have represented a focal point for the local community for the period of its use.

- Archaeological or Evidential Interest:

I would not consider the church building itself to hold this interest; it is outside my remit to comment on the archaeological potential of the site.

- Social or Communal Value:

For the reasons set out above I do consider that the building holds a degree of social or communal value.

- Collective or Group Value:

The former church does arguably possess some group value with other current or former places of worship within the village, which speak of the religious and communal life of the community over time. These would include St Giles Church of England Church (Grade I listed), the Martindale Centre (formerly a Congregational church) and the Horsted Keynes Mission Hall, also a former Congregational church (Grade II listed).

In my opinion, St Stephen's Church is of sufficient interest when viewed against these criteria to be viewed as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA), of a low-mid level of architectural and historical interest within the local context.

The current application would result in the demolition and hence the total loss of significance of this NDHA.

Horsted Keynes Conservation Area:

The boundary of the Horsted Keynes Conservation Area lies a short distance to the north-east of the site. However, the area within which the Church is located has a distinctly different character to the Conservation Area, being as noted above a 1970's extension of the historic village core. The existing building on the site is an intrinsic part of that 1970's development. The site is also separated from the boundary of the Area by intervening development of a mainly 20th century date.

The Council does not have an adopted character appraisal for the Horsted Keynes Conservation Area, but the Council's document '*Conservation Areas in Mid Sussex*' provides a brief high-level analysis of the Area and its key features. The Area constitutes the historic core of the village, which has grown up over many centuries in close connection with the surrounding rural landscape. The extensive countryside views which are identified within the Council's document help to place the core of the village within its historic rural context, and contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Although the Area is separated from the site by intervening development along Hamsland, it may be part of the views or vistas obtainable from the gardens of properties to the east within the Area on Bonfire Lane and Wyatts Lane. These views would be currently largely rural, although the site would appear as part of the existing 1970s development along Hamsland.

In my opinion, the site currently therefore makes a neutral contribution to the setting and significance of the Conservation Area in its current state.

The proposed new development of three houses will result in an intensification of the development on the site, which will have a slight urbanising impact in terms of the setting of the Conservation Area, including the approach to it along Hamsland/Bonfire Lane. This impact would be cumulative with the approved development of 30 houses to the field directly to the south of the Church (DM/20/4692), although this development would also be likely to screen new buildings constructed in place of St Stephen's Church in the above-mentioned views from properties within the Area. On balance, I would consider that the proposal will have a slight negative impact on the setting of the Conservation Area, resulting in harm at the lowest end of the less than substantial scale.

Wyatts, Wyatts Lane:

This 17th century or earlier Grade II listed building is located about 300m to the southeast of the site, separated from it by fields, including those for which there is an existing consent for the construction of 30 new houses.

The listed building is the former farmhouse of Wyatt's Farm; a former agricultural building survives to the east of the house which would be likely to be regarded as curtilage listed, and the farmstead is recognised in the West Sussex Historic Farmsteads and Landscape Character Assessment as a historic farmstead of the Medieval period. Based on the information in front of us, I would consider that the

farmhouse will be likely to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a Sussex farmhouse of its period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn. It also has group value with the former outbuilding. This outbuilding will possess similar values as a former farm building of its type and period.

As such, the surviving rural setting of the historic farmstead will be considered to make a strong positive contribution to the special interests of the listed and curtilage listed buildings within it, in particular those parts of those interests which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values. The proposed development on the application site will result in an intensification of development on it and may be visible at the crest of the hill rising up from Wyatts Lane towards the village. However, if constructed, the previously approved housing development would be likely to prevent any potential intervisibility between the site and Wyatts or its immediate setting. On balance, I would consider that the proposal may have a slight negative impact on the setting of Wyatts, resulting in harm at the lowest end of the less than substantial scale.

Thanks,

Emily

Please note that this advice is given at Officer level only and is without prejudice to the formal decision of the District Council.

Submit your planning application online.
<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk>

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