

KNIGHT

Consulting

ARCHITECTURE – SURVEYING - PLANNING

Design and Access Statement

Site: Tokar Industrial Estate, Yapton Lane, Walberton BN18 0AS

Proposal: Erection of a single storey church building with capacity for 144 persons along with creation of associated car park.

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of the planning application submitted on behalf of River of Living Water for the proposed “Erection of a single storey church building with capacity for 144 persons along with creation of associated car park”.

The purpose of this statement is to explain the design rationale behind the revised proposal and to demonstrate how the development has evolved from the previously approved scheme, whilst ensuring that the proposal remains appropriate in terms of scale, appearance, access, and impact on the surrounding area.

Importantly, the site already benefits from an extant planning permission (Reference: WA/29/24/PL) for the “Erection of a two storey church building with capacity for 340 persons along with creation of associated car park”. This approved scheme forms a significant planning consideration and provides the benchmark in which it is believed this application should be assessed.

2. Site Background and Planning Context

The site is located on Yapton Lane, which connects off of the A27 Arundel Road. The entirety of the site is approximately 5.582 acres (2.259 hectares) however this application relates to the smaller area as per the supplied location plan.

The existing site is occupied as mixed usage, with industrial units running within the site along with other areas presently used for activities related to Yapton Free Church (YFC) and in 2022 had received confirmation for a material change of use of the land for the church (WA/59/22/CLE). Within this application, permission for a portacabin building was granted retrospectively which houses toilets and classrooms/meeting rooms for the church. These facilities are used in conjunction with the temporary marquee which was approved in 2023 (WA/25/23/PL) for the duration of three years and has since been extended through application WA/9/26/S73 for a further three-year period.

In late 1999, the applicant purchased the site and has since used it for a variety of regular Christian related events, including:

- Travellers of the road Fellowship. 2003
- Glory Road Ministries. 2004
- Sussex Christian Outpouring. 2008
- Cosham Baptist children & youth summer camps. 2009 – 2018
- Coastlands Church Baptisms. 2012
- Ladies Christian Meetings. 2013
- Christian Outreach Centre Youth Meetings. 2014
- Coastland Church Sunday Meetings. 2015 - 2018
- Community Drive in Movies. 2020
- Yapton Free Church Sunday Meetings. 2021
- Ukraine Humanitarian Donation Collection Centre. 2022
- Heart Publication Paper Christian Monthly Meetings
- Alternative Sunday meeting venue for YFC during the summer months only

As mentioned, planning permission has previously been granted for a substantially larger church development on the site, hereafter referred to as the extant consent. The extant consent approved a two-storey church building comprising a footprint of 730sqm with a maximum width of 35.2metres and maximum length of 26.6metres. The ridge height was 8.45metres above ground level and had an occupancy rate of 340 persons.

The approved scheme represented the long-term vision for the church and was accepted by Arun Council as an appropriate form of development on the site.

However, since the grant of planning permission, financial constraints affecting the charity have necessitated a reconsideration of the project delivery strategy. As a result, the applicant is now seeking permission for a de-intensified and more deliverable first phase of development, reducing both the scale of the building and the occupancy of the church.

The revised proposal therefore seeks permission for a single storey church building with a reduced congregation capacity of 144 persons, while retaining the extant associated car parking and site works. The scheme is materially smaller and less intensive than the extant consent in terms of built form, occupancy, operational intensity, and likely environmental impacts.

3. Design Principles

3.1 Design Principles

The approved two-storey scheme was developed to meet the church's long-term aspirations and operational needs for a congregation of up to 340 persons. While the extant scheme remains implementable, the applicant has undertaken a review of project viability and financial deliverability. This has led to the decision to pursue a more modest and proportionate development which:

- Reduces Construction Cost;
- Simplifies building form and structural requirements;
- Allows delivery of a church facility in the short to medium term.
- Provides a building that better aligns with the current congregation needs;
- Retains the opportunity for future intensification if funding becomes available.

The revised design therefore represents a pragmatic reduction in scale rather than a departure from the established principle development already accepted on site.

3.2 Amount & Scale

The proposal significantly reduces the intensity of the development when compared to the extant consent. For instance: the removal of the first floor and associated reduction in capacity results in the proposal reducing the visual prominence in both the reduced bulk and massing. The occupancy reduction will reduce the traffic generation compared to the extant scheme which will reduce the noise and activity levels on the site.

It is believed that the proposal represents a clear reduction in planning impact.

4. Layout

The proposed site layout follows the broad principles established under the extant planning permission and retains the overall development strategy previously accepted by Arun District Council. The church building remains positioned in a logical and functional arrangement within the site, with associated parking, circulation space and access routes designed to support the intended use.

The layout has been informed by the operational needs of the church whilst ensuring safe and efficient movement for both vehicles and pedestrians. Vehicular access to the site remains as per the extant permission with the overall layout ensuring that users can move safely and legibly between the parking areas and the church building without conflict.

Importantly, the revised proposal benefits from a significantly reduced occupancy when compared to the extant consent – representing a less intensive use of the site whilst maintain a coherent and practical layout appropriate for the place of worship.

5. Appearance

The transition from a two-storey building to a single-storey structure results in a substantial reduction in visual bulk, height and massing of the development, creating a building that is less dominant within the site and its wider surroundings.

Whilst simplified in form, the proposal retains the civic presence expected of a place of worship and continues to provide a recognizable and dignified building suitable for its intended use. The design seeks to balance practicality and economy with architectural quality, ensuring that the building remains functional, attractive and proportionate.

The reduced height and roof form contribute to a softer visual impact when viewed from surrounding land and public vantage points. In comparison with the extant consent, the proposed building presents a less prominent built form and a more restrained architectural expression, which assists in integrating the development within its countryside context.

The proposed material palette and detailing are the same as approved within the extant consent and offer the agricultural connection desired because of the location.

6. Landscape and External Works

The external works proposed as part of the development remain unchanged from those approved under the extant planning permission. This includes the associated car parking provision, circulation areas, access arrangements, and wider site infrastructure necessary to support the church use.

As such, the application does not seek to alter or intensify any element of the previously approved external layout. The established parking strategy and site configuration remain entirely consistent with the consented scheme, which was accepted by ADC as appropriate in both design and functional terms. The retention of the extant external works ensures that the overall site framework remains as previously assessed and approved, with no additional land take, no alteration to access geometry, and no change to the relationship between built form and surrounding external areas.

The only material change relates to the reduction in the scale and occupancy of the church building itself. In practical terms, this results in a less intensive use of the same external environment. The parking areas and circulation routes will therefore experience reduced demand compared to those of the extant consent, with fewer peak-time movements and a lower overall intensity of activity across the site.

7. Access

Access arrangements for the site remain entirely as approved under the extant planning permission, with no changes proposed to vehicular access, pedestrian routes, or site entrance geometry. The established access strategy therefore continues to serve as the basis for the development.

Vehicular access into the site remains suitable for the intended church use and benefits from the approval already granted for a significantly larger congregation of 340 persons. In comparison, the current proposal reduces the operational intensity of the use through a lower occupancy of 144 persons. This reduction is material in planning terms and is expected to result in a corresponding decrease in traffic generation, particularly during peak arrival and departure periods associated with services and events.

Pedestrian access within the site similarly remains unchanged and continues to provide safe and legible movement routes between the parking areas and the church entrance. The existing approved arrangement ensures appropriate separation and clarity of movement, and this is maintained in full within the current proposal.

In terms of inclusive access, the development continues to provide step-free access, appropriate parking provision, and suitable circulation arrangements to ensure that the building is accessible to all users. These principles formed part of the extant consent and remain integral to the delivery of the current scheme.

Overall, the access strategy is unchanged from the previously approved development. The only substantive difference arises from the reduced scale of the building and its lower occupancy, which results in a less intensive use of the existing approved access arrangements and a reduced impact on the surrounding highway network.

8. Supporting Technical Reports and Future Proofing

A number of technical consultant reports submitted in support of this application continue to reference the extant approved scheme rather than the revised single-storey proposal. This approach has been deliberately adopted for practical and evidential reasons.

Firstly, the River of Living Water charity has sought to reduce the scale of the development due to financial constraints, and commissioning a wholly new suite of consultant reports would create a disproportionate additional financial burden in circumstances where the revised proposal is materially smaller and less intensive than the development already approved.

Secondly, the reports prepared in respect of the extant consent assess a development scenario that represents a clear worst-case position. The approved scheme incorporates a larger building, a greater occupancy of 340 persons, increased operational intensity and a more substantial built form than that now proposed. As a result, the technical evidence prepared for the extant consent provides a robust assessment framework against which the current application can reasonably be considered.

The proposed development, by contrast, falls materially below these previously assessed thresholds in terms of built scale, occupancy and operational effects. It therefore follows that the impacts arising from the current proposal would be less than those already assessed and accepted by the Local Planning Authority.

Retaining the extant technical assessments also provides a future-proofed evidence base should the charity, at a later date and subject to the necessary planning considerations, seek to intensify the church use toward the previously approved capacity. In this respect, the consultant reports continue to serve a practical function whilst ensuring that the planning assessment remains robust.

9. Planning Balance and Conclusion

The site benefits from an extant planning permission for a substantially larger and more intensive church development comprising a two-storey building with capacity for 340 persons and associated parking.

The current proposal seeks to deliver a more modest and financially viable form of development by reducing the building to a single-storey structure with a congregation capacity of 144 persons. In doing so, the proposal materially reduces the scale, height, built mass and operational intensity of the development when compared with the extant consent.

The revised scheme therefore offers a number of planning benefits. Its reduced physical scale lessens the visual impact of the building, whilst the lower occupancy reduces traffic generation, parking demand, activity levels and the wider operational effects associated with the use. The proposal remains wholly consistent with the principle of development already accepted on the site but does so in a more proportionate and deliverable manner.

The supporting technical evidence, whilst referencing the extant consent, provides a robust worst-case assessment and demonstrates that the revised proposal falls materially below the impact levels already considered acceptable.

Taken as a whole, the proposal represents a pragmatic and sensible revision to an already approved form of development. It enables the delivery of a church facility in a financially realistic manner, meets the current operational needs of the charity, and retains flexibility for future growth should circumstances permit.