

**Conservation Officer Comments
Amended Plans or Further Details**

**Architectural & Historic
Buildings Consultants**

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Application Number:	AWDM/1296/25
Location:	St Charles Borromeo Church Chesswood Road Worthing West Sussex
Proposal:	Demolition of Church and Presbytery and erection of 9 houses (2 x 5 bed 7 x 4 bed) plus access, parking, landscaping and retention of memorial garden.
Case Officer:	Mrs J Fox

	Further Information Required
✓	Design Review Required
	No objection - no harm
	No objection - harm is negligible or mitigated
	Objection - less than substantial harm
	Objection - substantial harm
	Objection – Total Loss

Site and Surroundings:	<p>The LPA's duties are reinforced within Section 16 of the NPPF, Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.</p> <p>As such, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Other elements held within Section 16 will also be considered as will Local Policy.</p> <p>The church is located on the junction with Chesswood Rd and Ham Rd and is a interesting architectural design accommodating a corner plot location. The building is of a crucifix form layout and the tower is located centrally to that crucifix with projecting ranges forming the extents of the crucifix.</p> <p>As Chesswood Rd runs from the West to the East the character of the street scene evolves. The prevailing character towards Worthing hospital is that of Flint boundary walls with large detached villas of Victorian or Edwardian original this character gradually gives way and moves in a chronological fashion through to buildings of the early to mid 20th century and then finally onto development that is largely of late 20th century origin with some pockets of Victorian development still being present.</p> <p>The church was designed by the noted architect, Henry Bingham Towner, and dates from 1962. Built of what appears to be a form of reconstituted stone, the church occupies a landmark corner location and contributes a strong and positive presence when viewed along Ham Road and Chesswood Road.</p>
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	<p>Immediately adjacent to the west of the site is the Presbytery being a rather unimpressive residential house of late 1960's or early 1970's origin.</p>
<p>Drawing Errors:</p>	
<p>Comments:</p>	<p>The proposal seeks the demolition of the building in order to develop a new residential accommodation.</p> <p>The building is of some historic interest mainly due to the association with Henry Bingham Towner. The architectural style is also of some interest being a 20th century interpretation of a traditional church form that is typical of Towners work such as Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Queen of Peace, in Rottingdean or The Church of St Thomas of Canterbury, in Mayfield.</p> <p>The Presbetyry, though designed by Towner, is not considered to be of such merit to warrant retention. It possesses very little of what could be considered as architectural cohesion with the church and is fairly typical for its period and fairly non-descript.</p> <p>The church possesses a strong presence but is certainly more restrained when compared to churches of the 19th century. Tracery benefits from leaded lights but not stained glass, the central tower is more reminiscent of italianette architecture rather than the neo gothic typical in this country, making the tower seem somewhat stunted by comparison. It is also accepted that it would be challenging (though not impossible) to bring the building into an alternative use such as creating residential units within the church.</p> <p>It is also noted that a certificate of immunity has also been issued in respect of the church with the Secretary of State having no intention of Listing the building.</p> <p>Turning to conservation principles, with the exception of the historic association with its designer, the church is not of a value to warrant listing as the secretary of state has declared. Indeed, when taking the same values to assess local importance, it is of limited aesthetic value with low historic and communal values, and with no evidential value.</p> <p>In considering the building's limited heritage value and somewhat challenging architectural attributes, these attributes lead to a limited degree of ongoing viability in any other use, it is considered that the building should be recorded and placed in the HER if approval is given for its demolition. The justification for demolition is on the basis that conversion to residential or another use may only hold a limited degree of success and such actions should be reserved for instances where the retention of the historic building is essential due to the degree of significance afforded to the building. In this case that significance is considered to be insufficient.</p> <p>Turning to the proposed design, the proposal is considered to be excessive in scale for a residential development in this area. The church is a place for religious worship and as such is afforded a strong presence on the street scene, being a significant landmark of greater height. The use of the land for residential purposes requires the scale to be reflective of</p>

the surroundings being typically 2 storeys and set back from the roadside. The Blocky character of the proposed creates a stark and rather blunt character on this prominent location and does not adequately reflect residential context which is exacerbated by the material choices in particular the roof finish.

The national design guide refers to 10 characteristics of good design, context, identity and built form being a few of them. In this instance it appears that the proposed has paid insufficient attention to these requirements or the requirements of local policy.

In reference to the national planning policy framework paragraph 216 requires local authorities to consider the heritage significance of non designated heritage assets when making a balanced planning decision, in this respect it is considered that the proposal would cause harm by way of the demolition of the church however in doing so certain public benefits including the provision of much needed housing would be realised and although paragraphs 213 and 215 of the NPPF are not points of consideration in this case (as the building is not a designated heritage asset) nevertheless there is ongoing benefits to the wider community albeit at the loss of a building that possesses some limited historic and architectural interest.

However, the potential demolition and loss of the church is considered a separate matter in relation to the proposed design of which raises objection and is considered to fail to meet the requirements of Policy DM24 of the Local Plan

Simon Richard

Conservation Consultant for and on behalf of Adur and Worthing District Council

Date of Comment 2/2/26



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