

4.0 Design Proposals and Pre App discussions

4.1. Concept and Site Strategy

This design proposal outlines the development of nine residential dwellings located in Worthing, West Sussex. The project aims to deliver high-quality homes that respond to the local context, while providing functional and attractive living spaces. The scheme is carefully designed to enhance the area's character, incorporating local architectural typologies and referencing the existing church, addressing community needs, and integrating sustainable design principles.

The proposed development is located in a well-established residential area, aiming to create a sense of place that seamlessly complements its surroundings. The design approach focuses on delivering homes that balance modern living requirements with thoughtful design features, reflecting both contemporary and traditional elements found within the locality.

The scheme will consist of a mix of medium to large 4bed housing types. Each unit will benefit from private outdoor space, ample natural light, and an emphasis on energy efficiency. The layout and arrangement of the homes have been designed to maximise space, ensure privacy, and create a strong community feel within the development.

The design prioritises the following key considerations:

- Respecting and enhancing the existing local character and streetscape.
- Promoting sustainable design features and materials.
- Providing accessible and functional outdoor spaces for all residents.
- Ensuring a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing architectural language with a link to the history of the site.

This proposal aims to contribute positively to the local housing provision while setting a standard for thoughtful and contextually appropriate design.

The following sections will detail the site context, design approach, architectural character, landscape strategy, and sustainability features of the development.



Early sketch proposal

4.2. Massing - Design Development

Following detailed site analysis and confirmation of the brief, a series of massing plans were developed in order to refine the layout in its current arrangement. A summary of these design iterations are set out below:



The site access for the nine new houses will be retained, with new road access from the southern terrace, though there may be potential resistance from highways authorities.

The southern terraces do not align with the terrace typology seen on Ham Road or the semi-detached typology on Chesswood Road.

The front-to-back arrangement of the new units is restricted, which could lead to potential overlooking of private amenity spaces.

North facing gardens to most units.

Further exploration is required to assess the separation distances from the northern neighbours, which may influence internal layout configurations.. Additionally, there is no planned relationship between the development and the memorial garden.

The access road may present challenges for larger vehicles turning on-site, and its design is likely to limit placemaking opportunities, as it may function solely as an access route.



A new access has been created, allowing entry into the heart of the site without adding another access point onto Chesswood Road, which helps limit potential highways objections.

While the southern terraces do not fully align with the terrace typology on Ham Road, semi-detached units have been introduced to better match the character of Chesswood Road.

The front-to-back arrangement of the new build units has been extended to include a landscaped buffer, reducing the potential for overlooking private amenity spaces.

Separation distances from the existing northern neighbours have been increased, now exceeding policy compliance.

North facing gardens to most units.

The memorial garden has been formalised, with limited overlooking or interaction with the new houses.

Additionally, the internal road layout has been refined to improve vehicle manoeuvrability and incorporate discreet parking spaces, hidden from view along Ham Road and Chesswood Road. This access road provides opportunities for placemaking.

4.3. Massing - Design Development



A new access is being created to lead into the heart of the site, without adding any new access point onto Chesswood Road, which helps minimise potential objections from the highways authority.

The southern terraces have been reoriented to face east, better aligning with Ham Road, while retaining a semi-detached unit to Chesswood road.

The new northern section of the layout also provides the opportunity to re-orient the northern units, which could help mitigate the impact of north-facing gardens. Although separation distances to the existing northern neighbours are reduced, the unique layout of these non-standard house types offers the potential to create architecturally inspiring family homes.

The memorial garden has been formalised, with limited overlooking or interaction with the new houses.

Additionally, the internal road layout has been refined to improve vehicle manoeuvrability and incorporate discreet parking spaces, hidden from view along Ham Road and Chesswood Road.

The access road provides opportunities for placemaking.

4.4. Massing - Pre-App site plan

Northern separation distances respond to the layout, allowing the space to create unique, inspiring family homes, see first floor plan.

The memorial garden now has formal front elevations and passive surveillance

The new southern layout enables better orientation for northern units, reducing north-facing gardens.

The road layout improves turning and hides parking from Ham and Chesswood Roads.

The access road enhances placemaking, adding character and community feel.

Southern terraces now face east, improving the Ham Road connection,

Lower front garden walls offer privacy and ownership for residents



Semi-detached unit maintains Chesswood Road context.

No new access on Chesswood Road, reducing objections and allowing more landscaping.



4.5. Pre-App Response

Main Planning Concerns & Recommendations

ECE Comments

- **Loss of Community Facility:** Need comprehensive marketing evidence (agents, platforms, interest, pricing, offers).

To be provided as part of the planning consultants and clients statement

- **Preferred Approach:** Convert the church instead of demolition to retain character and reduce embodied carbon.

To be covered within the DAS, see conversion section

- **Current Proposal Issues:**

- o Too low in density and not optimal use of site.

Current viable scheme proposed by the client is 9 dwellings and the site area is 0.30ha = 30dph. The policy for Worthing is generally 35 dph which = 10.5 dwellings.

- o Poor housing mix not aligned with SHMA recommendations.

To be provided as part of the planning consultants and clients statement

- o Fails to reflect or reuse church design features/materials.

The viability of the re-use of the church materials and features has been reviewed and omitted due to costs, see planning consultants and clients statement•

Amenity Considerations:

- o Must meet national space standards and local garden space guidelines.

To be provided as part of the planning consultants and clients statement. The site is with a sustainable location and has close links to amenity areas, inc. the beach. All gardens are of a good size, with some units, the semi and terrace, provided with additional amenity terraces.

- o Daylight/sunlight/overlooking impacts on adjacent homes (esp. Ashwood Close) must be assessed via BRE studies.

See sections within the DAS to justify scale against the Northern boundary and assumed BRE Daylight/sunlight/overlooking impacts on adjacent homes - All window to the existing houses to the north of the site will retain at least 27% VSC with the new development.

- **Character & Appearance:** Design should respect the prominence and scale of the existing church.

The design has been developed to respect the prominence and scale of the existing church. The proposed scheme reflects the church's material palette, and in terms of scale and massing, is considered to provide an acceptable form of development within this context.

Following discussions and suggestions from the planning officer, the scale and massing of the end terrace along Ham Road have been increased. This creates a more prominent marker building and helps to successfully turn the corner between Chesswood Road and Ham Road.

- **Access & Highways:** In sustainable location; cycle storage needed. Further input from WSCC Highways advised.

To be provided as part of the highway consultants travel plan and planning information submission.

Tracking shown within DAS

All houses will be provided with self container lockable cycle and bin storage within the rear gardens or within the curtilage of the house

4.6. Conversion of existing buildings

An exercise to convert the site and the existing building was undertaken following the pre-application advice.

The outcome of this exercise proposed a scheme comprising 9 units — 8 within the existing buildings and 1 new-build located in the north-west corner of the site.

This proposal was reviewed by the client, structural engineer, main contractor, viability consultant, and local agents.

The following is a summary of the challenges that arose during the process, which ultimately led to the decision not to pursue conversion, but instead to demolish and redevelop the site as a new-build scheme:

Design Challenges

1. Volume and Scale Mismatch

Churches typically feature vast, open interiors with very high ceilings. Creating liveable, efficient spaces within this volume without losing the building's character or over-compartmentalising it can be difficult.

2. Poor Daylight Penetration

Ecclesiastical buildings often have narrow stained or frosted windows set high in thick walls, leading to poor natural light levels, especially at the lower levels of a residential scheme.

3. Awkward Layouts

The linear, nave-centric plan of many churches does not easily lend itself to subdivision into sensible residential units or rooms.

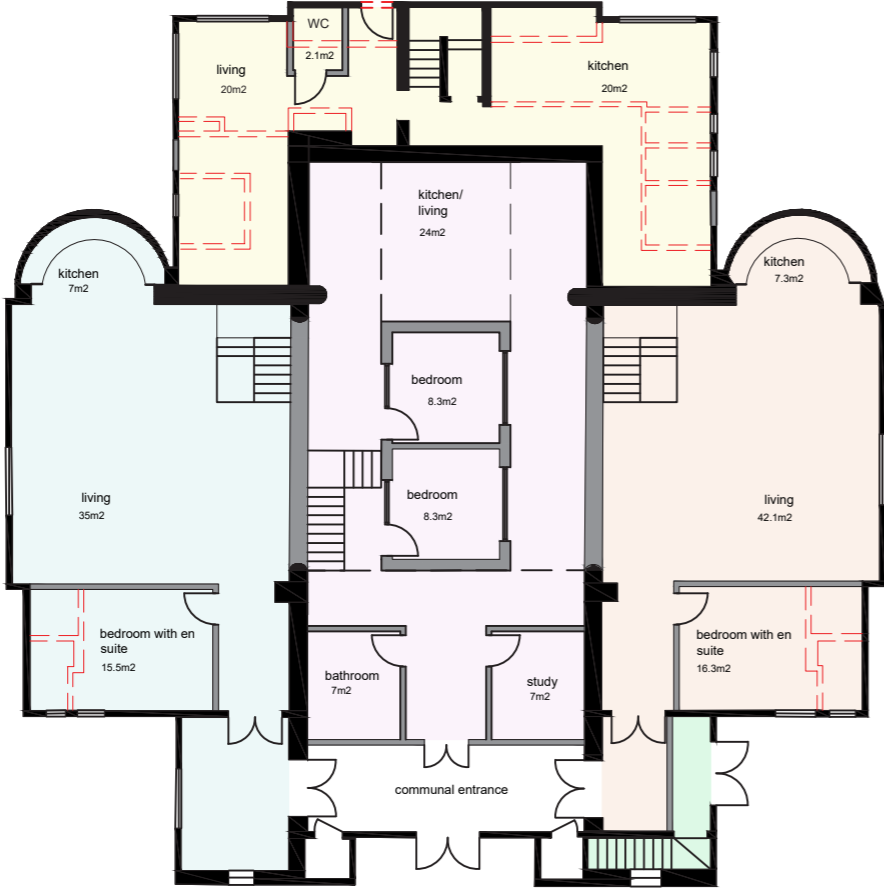
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4.7. Conversion of existing buildings

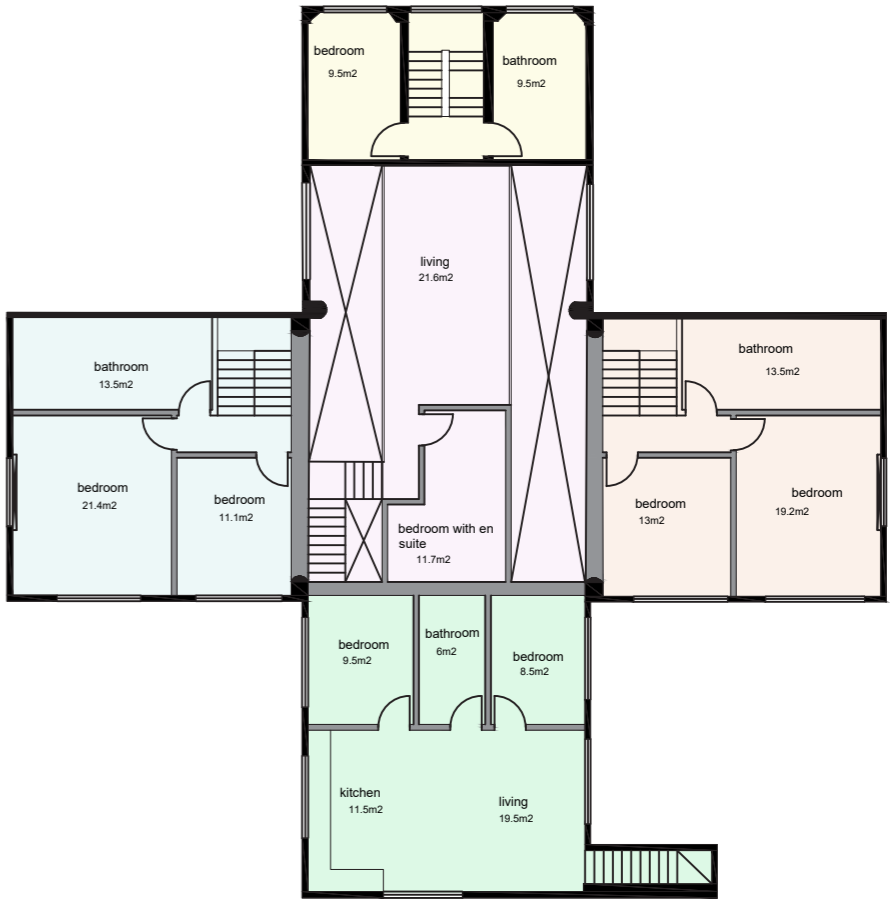
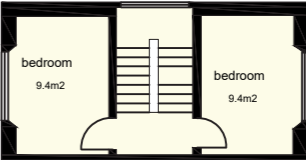
Schedule of Accommodation

- Unit 1 - 3B - 144.6m²
- Unit 2 - 3B - 144.6m²
- Unit 3 - 3B - 150.2m²
- Unit 4 - 3B - 128.3m²
- Unit 5 - 2B - 67.3m²



Ground Floor

Second Floor



First Floor

4.8. Conversion of existing buildings

Schedule of Accommodation

- Unit 1 - 1B - 50.7m²
- Unit 2 - 1B - 60.9m²
- Unit 3 - 2B - 79.3m²



Ground Floor

First Floor

4. Loss of Character

Attempting to insert modern living spaces while preserving the ecclesiastical character often leads to compromises that satisfy neither conservation principles nor practical residential needs.

5. Acoustic Challenges

High vaulted ceilings and hard surfaces cause significant reverberation. Adapting the building acoustically for domestic comfort is complex and may require intrusive measures.

Practical Challenges

1. Structural Modifications

Inserting new floors, mezzanines, or staircases into a church often requires extensive structural intervention, which may not be straightforward due to the original load paths and materials.

2. Heating and Insulation

Churches are notoriously difficult to insulate and heat efficiently due to their large volume, solid walls, and lack of existing thermal fabric. Retrofitting can be expensive and may conflict with heritage restrictions.

3. Access and Egress

Many churches have limited entry points, steps, or narrow doors, posing problems for accessibility, fire escape routes, and general circulation in a residential setting.

4. Cost Inefficiency

The costs of adapting services (plumbing, drainage, electrical) to a building never intended for residential occupancy can be prohibitively high compared to a new build or a simpler conversion.

Client Conclusion

‘As the client, we undertook this feasibility exercise with a genuine interest in retaining and repurposing the existing church building. We recognised the architectural and historic value of the structure and were committed to exploring all reasonable avenues for its conversion into high-quality residential accommodation.

However, through collaboration with our design team, structural engineers, viability consultants, contractors, and local agents, it became clear that the constraints imposed by the building’s form, fabric, and layout presented insurmountable challenges. The cumulative impact of the design, structural, and practical issues made the scheme unviable both from a financial perspective and in terms of delivering a sustainable, liveable end product.

While the decision not to proceed with conversion was not taken lightly, we are confident that a new-build approach will better meet current housing standards, environmental performance expectations, and the needs of future residents—while also enhancing the character and contribution of the site within its local context.

We remain committed to delivering a high-quality scheme that responds positively to the site’s setting and the aspirations of the local community.’