LONDON OFFICE

Ms Bethan Tinning
Horsham District Council
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Direct Dial: 0207 973 3627

Our ref: P10007395

20th November 2026

Dear Ms Tinning

T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, RECTORY LANE, WEST GRINSTEAD, RH13 8LR
Application No. DC/26/1716

Thank you for your letter of 13th November 2026 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Summary

The scheme proposes a small extension to the south elevation of the grade I listed St George's Church, a medieval building of Norman origin occupying a prominent rural setting at the heart of the West Grinstead Conservation Area. The extension would provide an accessible WC and a vestry/meeting room, linked to the church through the existing Norman doorway.

Following extensive design revisions, the extension has been reduced in scale and refined to respond more sensitively to the church's significance and setting. While providing the facilities necessary to support the church's ongoing use and long-term conservation, the extension would remain subordinate to the historic building, enable the removal of the existing detracting portable lavatory, and facilitate the reinstatement of the south chapel for liturgical use.

Historic England does not object to the proposals and considers that, subject to appropriate archaeological investigation and mitigation, the scheme would not unduly harm the significance of the listed church or the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any Information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.

Historic England Advice

Description of the Proposals

The proposals seek to improve the church's facilities through a new extension providing an accessible WC and vestry/meeting room, supporting community use and the church's long-term sustainability.

The single-storey extension would be constructed on the south elevation between the tower buttresses and connected to the church via a glazed link inserted through the existing Norman doorway.

The design adopts a contemporary approach informed by the historic building, with lime-rendered masonry walls, a roof combining zinc and Horsham stone, and three tall, narrow slot windows that subtly echo the proportions of the church's lancet openings.

Internally, ramps would provide level access to the glazed link and accessible WC, while a small landing and staircase would enable the south doorway to continue functioning as an emergency exit if required.

Significance of the Site

St George's is a remarkably well-preserved example of a small rural medieval church of Norman origins. Occupying an isolated position within a large churchyard at the heart of the West Grinstead Conservation Area, the church stands apart from the village amidst open fields on the edge of the Weald and adjacent to the River Adur. This tranquil rural landscape forms an important aspect of its setting and contributes significantly to its special interest.

The evolution of the building remains legible in its surviving fabric. The earliest phase is represented by the 11th-century nave and a Norman doorway dating from around 1150, now reset within the south aisle.

The church was substantially enlarged in the early 13th century, when the south aisle was added and a buttressed tower constructed at the southeast corner. Further expansion followed in the late 13th century with the construction of the present chancel and adjoining south chapel. By the 15th century, the church had assumed much of its current plan form through the addition of the timber-framed north porch.

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The building underwent ‘restoration’ under the architect E. P. Warren in 1890. The application of the external cement render may date from this campaign, although it is likely that the church had previously been finished with lime render.

The church derives its highest significance from the survival of substantial original and early historic fabric. This, combined with the building’s historic, architectural and archaeological values, underpins its designation as a grade I listed building.

Impact of the Proposals on Significance

The current proposal is the result of extensive pre-application engagement with Historic England and an iterative design process undertaken by the church’s conservation architect.

Alternative locations within the church were explored by the parish but, ultimately, they were discounted, as they would have resulted in greater harm to the significance of the listed building. The chosen approach of constructing an addition along the south elevation is considered the least harmful option, avoiding the need for new openings in the historic fabric while preserving the legibility of the Norman doorway.

Nevertheless, the south elevation remains a sensitive location. The church’s buttressed tower contributes to its architectural interest and, together with this frontage, is prominent in views across the surrounding rural landscape and the Adur Valley. Consequently, development in this location has the potential to affect the church’s significance through its impact on both the historic fabric and its wider setting.

Accordingly, we considered that the original bold, flat-roofed design would have been unduly prominent and harmful. In response, the scheme has been substantially revised, introducing a simpler form, a lower roofline, a pitched element clad in Horsham stone, and a more restrained elevational treatment.

The revised extension is modest in scale, contained within the width of the tower, and clearly subordinate to the church. The glazed link allows continued appreciation of the Norman doorway while minimising intervention to the historic fabric, and the use of contextually appropriate materials and lancet-inspired openings establishes a contemporary yet sympathetic relationship with the historic building.

On this basis, Historic England considers that the proposal would not materially harm the significance of the church. In addition, the removal of the existing detracting portable lavatory situated between the south chapel buttresses would benefit both

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the setting of the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The extension would also accommodate vestry, storage, and choir library functions, enabling the south chapel to be reinstated as a liturgical space and allowing for a greater appreciation of the 15th-century Halsham tombs.

The church lies within an Archaeological Notification Area associated with the medieval moated site and historic landscape of West Grinstead, and ground disturbance may affect buried archaeological remains and human burials within the churchyard. An archaeological assessment should therefore be undertaken at an early stage, and all excavation works should be carried out under an archaeological watching brief.

Historic England's Position on the Proposals

Historic England supports the proposals recognising both the efforts made to achieve an appropriate design and the need for improved facilities. The new extension will enable the church to continue serving as a place of worship and centre of community activity, thus supporting its sustainable future and ongoing conservation.

The proposed extension represents the most appropriate solution among the options considered. It strikes a balance between meeting the church's functional requirements and conserving its significance by remaining visually subordinate to the historic building, minimising intervention in the historic fabric, improving accessibility, enabling the removal of the detracting portable toilet, and facilitating the reinstatement of the south chapel to its intended liturgical use.

We welcome the substantial revisions made through the pre-application process, which have resulted in a scheme that responds more sensitively to the church's significance, architectural character, and rural setting.

Subject to appropriate archaeological investigation and mitigation, we consider that the proposals would not unduly harm the significance of the grade I listed church and character and appearance of the conservation area.

Recommendation

Historic England has no objection to this application. Any harm to the significance of St George's Church and the West Grinstead Conservation Area would be limited and

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counterbalanced by the heritage benefits of helping to secure the long-term sustainable future of the listed building.

Yours sincerely

Luciana Gallo

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