

Meeting on 29th July 2026 about the re-development of the former Steyning Grammar School site

On 29th July, as a representative of the Steyning Society, I attended a meeting with the developers of the former Grammar School site, Church Barn Steyning Ltd, to view an early presentation of their initial designs and discuss any issues. Most of the other guests were residents living by the site in Church Street or the Lower High Street who will be most directly affected.

Note that the site includes the listed Grade I Brotherhood Hall and adjacent houses in Church Street as well as the Victorian and 1950s school buildings at the rear. The stated aim of Church Barn Steyning, working with architects Morgan Cam, is 'a heritage-led scheme that sensitively restores these historic buildings to active use, sitting comfortably within the character and townscape of Steyning'. They stressed that proposals were at an early stage and invited our input as local residents and interest groups.

We were shown some of the research done into the history of the site, which included examining old maps and photographs. Buildings to be retained are not just those with statutory listing but also 'interesting' ones, such as the much-loved boiler house. We were told that the aim is to restore the historic courtyard space and create connections between buildings making the public feel welcome.

Brotherhood Hall is designated as holiday lets. The advantage of this is that historic architectural features such as the different levels of the floor and the feeling of height can be retained. Also, crucially, it means that the building will remain in single ownership. The houses adjacent in Church Street are to remain as single dwellings. The Hall's original front door will be restored, as will public access through a previously-existing twitten between the Hall and Chatfield House. Buildings to the rear of the Hall are currently attached to it. These will be removed to reveal the back elevation of the Hall. The Victorian Headmaster's House will be converted to apartments.

The fifties school buildings will be demolished. The scheme is for mixed housing of high quality reflecting the Steyning architectural vernacular, surrounded by gardens, grouped round a central courtyard. Vehicular access to the site will be from School Lane and the Lower High street.

There was a lively question and answer session after the presentation. Concerns were mostly about increased traffic generated by the new houses, particularly in School Lane which is narrow, well-used by pedestrians and has no pavement. It was pointed out that this will cause particular problems for disabled people attending the dentist's surgery in Church Street which has disabled access further down School Lane. People living by the borders of the development were also worried about car parks. We were assured that car parking will be minimal and discreet, placed at two separate sites near the perimeter by the High Street and School Lane, with no car access between them. Visitors will be expected to park in Fletcher's Croft car park.

The meeting ended with participants applauding the developers for their appreciation of the sensitivity of the site and their enthusiasm for engaging with residents at an early stage. The former Grammar School is a prominent and extremely interesting site which brings unique problems. We hope that these can be solved in the best way possible. A wider public consultation will follow in the coming weeks.
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