

DESIGN & ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

Works to United Reformed Church, Holt
89 The Street, Holt, Trowbridge, BA14 6RS

December 2025

1. Introduction

This statement accompanies the full planning application for works to the site at the United Reformed Church, Holt.

The church hall is Grade II listed. The site therefore benefits from Ecclesiastical Exemption and, as such, a separate Listed Building Consent application will be submitted to the United Reformed Church South Western Synod Listed Building Advisory Committee for determination.

Supporting Documents:

In addition to this statement, the following drawings have been produced, which should be taken into consideration in support of this application:

3343_PA-103 - Site Location Plan	3343_PA-129 - Existing Church Southwest Elevation
3343_PA-104 - Existing Site Plan	3343_PA-166 - Proposed Hall Elevations
3343_PA-105 - Proposed Site Plan	3343_PA-167 - Proposed Church Northwest Elevation
3343_PA-125 - Existing Hall Elevations	3343_PA-168 - Proposed Church Northeast Elevation
3343_PA-126 - Existing Church Northwest Elevation	3343_PA-169 - Proposed Church Southeast Elevation
3343_PA-127 - Existing Church Northeast Elevation	3343_PA-170 - Proposed Church Southwest Elevation
3343_PA-128 - Existing Church Southeast Elevation	

2. Site

The site is located on the main road through the village of Holt, The Street.

The site comprises the main church building, the church hall, two outbuildings used for storage, and two areas of hardstanding used for car parking, together with their associated access routes.

3. Description of Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for the following works, associated with a new heating and power strategy for the site, improved accessibility, and the rationalisation of window and door openings:

- Minor works to the site including the installation of Sheffield cycle stands, bollards to provide protection to the building edge, and planted screening to photovoltaic battery storage
- Installation of a ramp and handrails to the main entrance to the church
- Infilling of a redundant boiler room door to the church
- Removal of redundant mechanical service runs to both buildings and installation of new ductwork and terminals
- Reconfiguration of a ground floor window and entrance door in the south-east elevation of the hall
- Installation of a photovoltaic array and associated battery storage

4. Use

The existing use of the site is as a place of worship. The proposed use remains unchanged.

5. Amount

The application site has an area of 501 square metres, comprising the building footprints and their associated cartilage for external interventions. No additional floorspace is proposed.

6. Layout and Scale

The overall layout and spatial arrangement of the site will remain unchanged. There is no proposed change to the scale, height or massing of any building on the site.

8. Landscaping

Two Sheffield cycle stands will be installed within the secondary car park to encourage sustainable modes of travel to the site, in accordance with national and local policy objectives.

Bollards will be installed to the south-west corner of the church building, replacing an existing temporary scaffold fence. These will provide permanent protection to the building fabric from accidental vehicular impact during manoeuvring, whilst maintaining a tidy and ordered appearance.

Low-level shrub planting of appropriate species will be introduced to provide visual screening to the proposed battery storage. The planting has been selected to integrate with the existing landscape character of the site.

No further changes are proposed to the existing soft or hard landscaping.

9. Appearance

The removal of redundant mechanical service runs will result in a clear visual improvement to both buildings by reducing clutter. New ductwork and terminals have been carefully located away from the principal elevation facing The Street, minimising their visual prominence.

The photovoltaic panels are integrated into the tiled pitched roof surface. The selected roof slope has been chosen as it does not affect the setting of the listed hall building and is not visible from public viewpoints. Mature planting along the northern site boundary, together with the presence of the neighbouring Beak House, screens this roof plane from views beyond the site. As a result, there is no impact on the character or appearance of Holt Conservation Area (refer to the Heritage Statement below).

Other minor interventions include the infilling of a redundant boiler room door to the church, the reconfiguration of a ground floor window to the hall, and the replacement of the existing hall entrance door. The existing doors are in poor repair and their replacement will enhance the overall appearance of the building. The window reconfiguration has been designed to create a more balanced and harmonious elevation, reflecting the proportions and arrangement of the adjacent ground floor window. Materials will be carefully selected to match or complement the existing fabric and will be of a high quality appropriate to the historic context.

10. Access

A new ramp and handrails are proposed at the main church entrance to provide permanent step-free access. This intervention will significantly improve inclusivity and accessibility for all users, whilst being sensitively designed to minimise its impact on the historic fabric and setting of the building.

11. Heritage Statement

A separate application to the United Reformed Church South Western Synod Listed Building Advisory Committee will address the impact of the proposals on the statutory listed buildings. This Heritage Statement considers the impact of the development on Holt Conservation Area, which is a designated heritage asset.

Detailed Description:

There is no adopted Conservation Area Appraisal for Holt, other than a historic leaflet prepared by Conservation West Wiltshire, likely dating from the time of designation in 1974. In the absence of a formal appraisal, the following assessment is based on observations of the character and appearance of the conservation area, with particular reference to the application site.

The conservation area encompasses much of the village, extending southwards to include several farmsteads and northwards to areas of open space with recreational value and the former leather factory. Twentieth-century residential extensions to the north, east and west are largely excluded.

The historic development of Holt centres around Ham Green on the south-western edge of the settlement. Buildings in this area represent a broad range of architectural periods dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The village contains a mix of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century vernacular buildings alongside Georgian and Victorian architecture. Buildings are typically two storeys in height and constructed from random rubble stone or red brick, with slate or tiled roofs. Red brick is particularly characteristic of the village's historic industrial buildings, while ashlar stone is evident in some more formal Georgian properties.

Significance:

Holt Conservation Area is of moderate to high architectural interest due to its aesthetic and fortuitous value, arising from its incremental development over several centuries around a clearly defined historic core. Collectively, the buildings within the conservation area illustrate the architectural and social evolution of the settlement.

Many buildings date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and display polite architectural detailing such as sash and bay windows, although earlier vernacular buildings are interspersed throughout the village. The varied use of materials, including red brick, stone and render, contributes to the richness and diversity of the street scene. The presence of green spaces, including the grounds of The Courts and smaller pockets of greenery along The Street, reinforces the village's verdant and semi-rural character.

The conservation area is also of moderate historic interest, reflecting the medieval plan form of the village and illustrating patterns of early settlement. The prevalence of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings is indicative of Holt's prosperity during this period, driven by its development as a spa town and the growth of local industry. Later twentieth-century buildings illustrate subsequent phases of expansion.

Contribution made by the site:

The site occupies a central position within the conservation area, located between the principal road through the village and the pedestrian route connecting Ham Green with the village core and Village Hall.

Set slightly back from the main road frontage, the site provides a sense of relief within the streetscape, with the church tower acting as a local landmark. Together, the church and hall form an important component of the group of historic buildings along The Street and make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Although the two buildings differ in architectural character, they collectively illustrate the social and religious development of Holt during the nineteenth century. In addition to the parish church of St Katherine, which reflects a long-standing tradition of Christian worship in the village, the presence of a non-conformist chapel is of particular historic significance. The growth of the congregation to the extent that the original hall became insufficient demonstrates the strength and influence of non-conformist Christianity within the community. This reflects wider national trends during the nineteenth century, when non-conformist denominations played a significant role in religious life, education and social reform, particularly within rural settlements.

In its current form, the site makes a high positive contribution to the character and appearance of Holt Conservation Area.

Impact of Proposed Development:

Given their limited scale and discreet siting, the proposed works will have a negligible impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area. The majority of interventions are not visible from public viewpoints and, where visible, will result in an overall enhancement through the removal of clutter and the improvement of building fabric.

The proposed ductwork and terminals on the south elevation of the hall are located away from the principal elevation facing The Street. These elements are necessary to support the continued use of the building as a community facility and, due to their height and positioning, will have minimal visual impact when viewed from The Walk.

The photovoltaic panels will only be glimpsed from outside the site. Their flush-mounted design ensures they sit comfortably within the roof plane, significantly reducing visual impact. As a result, their installation will preserve the character and appearance of Holt Conservation Area.

12. Conclusion

The proposed works represent a carefully considered and proportionate response to the ongoing use, maintenance and environmental performance of the United Reformed Church site. The interventions are modest in scale and have been designed to respect the architectural and historic significance of both the individual buildings and their wider conservation area context.

The proposals will deliver tangible benefits through the repair and enhancement of building fabric, including improvements to windows and doors, the removal of redundant services, and the provision of inclusive access. In addition, the introduction of a new heating and power strategy, incorporating building-integrated photovoltaic technology and battery storage, will significantly improve the energy efficiency of the site and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

These measures align with the objectives of Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy CP41, which supports sustainable construction and the use of renewable and low-carbon energy technologies where sensitively integrated. The proposals also reflect national policy objectives to address climate change whilst conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Overall, the development will sustain and enhance the significance of the heritage assets, preserve the character and appearance of Holt Conservation Area, and secure the long-term viable use of the site in a sustainable and inclusive manner.