

DESIGN & ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

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

January 2026

1. Introduction

This statement accompanies the full planning application for works to widen the vehicular site access point, referred to below as the gateway, at 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-106 - Site Location Plan	3343_PA-108 - Proposed Site Plan
3343_PA-107 - Existing Site Plan	

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 to widen the existing vehicular access from The Street, located on the northern site boundary. The width of the gateway opening will be increased from 3.18 m to 4.8 m, with the widening undertaken in an easterly direction.

The access will be reconfigured through the removal of a section of the existing cock-and-hen boundary wall, which currently chamfers inwards at the access point. The wall, including the chamfer, will be reinstated in a wider alignment to reflect the increased access width, with the adjacent verge adjusted accordingly.

The proposed widening will allow two vehicles to pass at the narrowest point of the access and will improve intervisibility between vehicles travelling along The Street and those entering or leaving the site. These works will result in a marked improvement in highway safety.

4. Use

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

5. Amount

The amount of development is not applicable to this application.

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

The grassed verge adjacent to the access hardstanding will be re-graded to suit the updated turning circle.

9. Appearance

The existing boundary walls are formed in natural rubble stone. The proposed boundary walls will be reconstructed using the same stone, salvaged from the existing walls, and reconfigured to accommodate the widened access.

10. Access

Vehicular access and safety will be improved by these proposals. No other changes to access are proposed.

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:

Owing to their limited scale, the proposed works would result in a negligible impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area. The existing access has an informal appearance, with a single timber gatepost remaining from a historic arrangement, and is not considered to be of high significance within the context of the site or the wider conservation area.

The proposed reconfigured access would closely reflect the character of the existing arrangement, with the chamfered cock-and-hen wall stepping down towards the entrance retained, albeit in a wider configuration. The use of salvaged natural rubble stone will ensure continuity of materials and appearance.

When considered in relation to the modest scale of the works, the resulting improvements in highway safety are substantial, representing a clear public benefit with no material harm to the significance of the conservation area.

12. Conclusion

The proposed widening of the existing vehicular access represents a modest and carefully considered intervention within Holt Conservation Area. The works are limited in scale, retain the established character of the access arrangement, and make use of salvaged natural rubble stone to ensure continuity with the existing boundary treatment. As such, the proposals would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and result in no material harm to its significance.

The development accords with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 58, which seeks to conserve and enhance designated heritage assets, and Core Policy 57, which promotes safe and efficient access arrangements. The improved visibility and ability for vehicles to pass safely at the access point deliver clear highway safety benefits, which represent a public benefit arising from the proposals.

In light of the above, it is concluded that the proposals are acceptable in planning terms and should be supported.