

Proposed Internal Alterations &
Mezzanine Floor
For Church Hall
at
Calne Free Church
Church Street
Calne
SN11 0HS
Heritage, Design & Access Statement
Prepared for
Calne Free Church



Ref number: 25005 HDAS01
By: Dale Roberts
Date: May 2026
Revision:
Status: PLANNING



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1. Site & Building Identification

- 1.1. Listing: Grade II (List Entry Number 1247331, listed 22 December 1995)
Date of construction: 1868 (mid-Victorian period)
Architect: W. Stent of Warminster
Original cost: £6,000
Original use: British Schools (educational) and Free Church chapel
Current use: Church hall and place of worship (Use Class F1(a))

2. Historical background

2.1. Foundation and Religious Context (1866-1868)

The building was constructed following a significant religious controversy in Calne in 1866. Eighty-nine parishioners left St Mary's Church (the parish church) in protest against the Reverend John Duncan's High-Church practices, which they considered inconsistent with Protestant principles. This breakaway congregation, led by the Harris family (prominent Calne bacon curers and major local employers), established the Calne Free Church as a nonconformist alternative.

The hall was built first and opened on 7 January 1868 as "British Schools" - a nonconformist educational institution serving the community. The adjoining church building was consecrated on 28 July 1868. This dual educational-religious function reflects the nonconformist commitment to both spiritual worship and community education, characteristic of mid-Victorian dissenting movements.

2.2. The Harris Family and Social Context

The Harris family's leadership of this project demonstrates the intersection of commerce, religion, and social responsibility in mid-Victorian provincial England. As major employers in Calne's bacon curing industry, the family's investment of £6,000 (a substantial sum in 1868) in a combined school and chapel building reflected both their religious convictions and their commitment to worker education and community welfare.

2.3. Continuous Use (1868-Present)

The building has maintained its original dual educational and religious purpose for over 155 years, representing an unbroken tradition of nonconformist worship and community service. This continuity of use contributes significantly to its communal value as living heritage rather than a preserved historical artifact.

3. Architectural Description

3.1. Style and Character

The building exhibits characteristics of mid-Victorian Gothic Revival architecture adapted for nonconformist religious and educational use. Unlike contemporary Anglican churches influenced by the Ecclesiological movement (which promoted elaborate Gothic Revival), this building demonstrates the simplified, utilitarian interpretation of Gothic appropriate to nonconformist chapels and educational institutions.

Key architectural features:

- Steep-pitched roof (52.3°) typical of Gothic Revival

- Stone mullioned windows with splayed jambs
- Local Wiltshire stone construction
- Utilitarian institutional character reflecting educational origins
- Vertical emphasis and pointed arch windows
- Honest expression of structure and materials

The architecture represents W. Stent's interpretation of national Gothic Revival trends through a local, vernacular lens, prioritizing function and economy while maintaining architectural dignity appropriate to religious and educational purposes.

3.2. **Roof Structure - Victorian King Rod Scissor Trusses**

The roof structure is of particular architectural and engineering significance, comprising Victorian king rod scissor trusses at approximately 3-metre centres.

Truss construction:

- Wrought iron king rods: Vertical tension rods (minimum 25mm diameter) running from the ridge down through the centre of each truss
- Diagonal scissor bracing: Timber members crossing in X-formation from the foot of one rafter chord to near the apex of the opposite rafter
- Structural connection: Iron king rod passes through the intersection point of the diagonal timber members
- Adjustable system: Threaded rod end with large nut tightened against the underside of the diagonal bracing, allowing periodic adjustment as timber seasons
- Decorative detailing: Stop-chamfered edges to diagonal bracing members and purlins - characteristic mid-Victorian decorative carpentry

Engineering significance

This construction demonstrates the mid-Victorian transition from traditional all-timber roof construction to hybrid timber-and-iron systems, reflecting the engineering innovation and material advancement of the 1860s period. The use of iron tension rods allowed for more efficient load distribution, longer spans with less material, and reduced ridge deflection compared to solid timber king posts.

The combination of functional ironwork (tension rods with adjustable nuts) and decorative timber detailing (stop-chamfering) exemplifies mid-Victorian craftsmanship where structural efficiency and aesthetic quality were integrated rather than separated. The adjustable threaded system demonstrates sophisticated understanding of timber movement and structural maintenance - the nuts could be periodically tightened to maintain tension as the timber seasoned over time.

Current condition

The entire roof structure is currently concealed behind a crude false ceiling installed in the 1960s-1970s. This later intervention completely obscures the Victorian craftsmanship and architectural interest of the original roof structure, preventing any appreciation of the stop-chamfered detailing, the timber-and-iron construction system, or the spatial quality of the original volume.

4. Significance Assessment

4.1. Evidential Value: High

The building retains substantial evidential value through:

- **Original roof structure:** Complete Victorian king rod scissor trusses with wrought iron rods, diagonal timber bracing, stop-chamfered detailing, and adjustable threaded connections
- **Construction methods:** Hybrid timber-and-iron construction typical of substantial 1860s institutional buildings
- **Material evidence:** Local Wiltshire stone, Victorian carpentry techniques, iron production capabilities
- **Spatial evidence:** Original plan form and volume (currently obscured by false ceiling)
- **Educational function:** Physical evidence of British Schools provision
- **Religious dissent:** Material evidence of nonconformist architectural patronage

4.2. Historical Value: Very high

The building possesses good historical significance:

- **Religious history:** Direct physical evidence of the 1866 religious controversy and nonconformist breakaway movement
- **Social history:** Harris family patronage demonstrating the role of industrial wealth in religious and educational provision
- **Educational history:** Original function as British Schools - part of the national nonconformist education movement
- **Local history:** Connection to Calne's industrial development (bacon curing industry) and religious life
- **Continuous use:** Over 155 years of unbroken service to the same religious community

4.3. Aesthetic Value: Medium

The building exhibits modest aesthetic value appropriate to its utilitarian institutional character. The aesthetic value is not exceptional compared to elaborate Victorian Gothic churches, but this restraint is itself characteristic and appropriate to nonconformist principles which valued function and economy over ornament and display.

4.4. Communal Value: Very high

The building possesses exceptional communal significance through continuous use by the same congregation for over 155 years, ongoing role in local religious and social life, and intergenerational continuity. Unlike many Victorian buildings that have lost their original use, this building remains intimately connected to the community that created it.

5. Planning History

Listed Building designation: The building was listed at Grade II on 22 December 1995 (List Entry 1247331).

Planning and Listed Building Consent applications since listing:

The following applications have been submitted to Wiltshire Council for works to the listed building:

Recent structural repairs (2020-2023)

PL/2023/03346 - Discharge of Condition No 3 (CEMP) on 20/10137/FUL. Partial Discharge of Conditions approved 11 August 2023.

PL/2023/02900 - Discharge of conditions 3 (Samples) relating to 20/10954/LBC. Partial Discharge of Conditions approved 7 July 2023.

PL/2022/01869 - Move existing kitchen in the church hall internally to create a larger kitchen. Approved with Conditions 29 April 2022.

20/10954/LBC (Listed Building Consent) - Demolition and rebuilding of rear boundary wall (already partially collapsed), along with underpinning of flying buttresses to the church hall. Ancillary structural repairs to the rear church wall. Approved with Conditions 1 September 2021.

20/10137/FUL (Full Planning Permission) - Demolition and rebuilding of rear boundary wall (already partially collapsed), along with underpinning of flying buttresses to the church hall. Ancillary structural repairs to the rear church wall. Approved with Conditions 1 September 2021.

Earlier boundary wall and buttress repairs (2017)

17/03617/FUL - Partial dismantling, repair, and rebuild of retaining wall, including works to two buttresses. Application submitted 3 April 2017.

17/04221/LBC - Partial dismantling, repair, and rebuild of retaining wall, including works to two buttresses. Application submitted 2 April 2017.

Other applications

N/12/03377/ADV - Replacement Notice Board. Approved with Conditions 30 November 2012.

N/06/01538/LBC - Erection of scaffolding to carry out high level repairs to stonework and roof. Approved with Conditions 2 August 2006.

16/09647/TCA - Fell 1 Twin-Stemmed Sycamore tree in conservation area.

N/96/01044/LBC - Erection of security gates. Approved 10 July 1996.

Summary of planning history

The planning history demonstrates responsible stewardship of the Grade II listed building since its designation in 1995. All applications relate to essential maintenance and repair works, minor internal reconfigurations, or ancillary works (notice boards, security gates, tree works).

Notably, the recent structural works (2017-2021) addressed serious structural issues including a partially collapsed boundary wall and the need for underpinning of flying buttresses - essential conservation works to prevent deterioration of the listed building. The kitchen reconfiguration (2022) improved functionality without external alterations or harm to significant fabric.

The consistent pattern of obtaining Listed Building Consent for works demonstrates the church's commitment to proper statutory procedures and careful stewardship of this heritage asset.

Undocumented alterations

Physical evidence indicates certain alterations that pre-date the listing or for which planning records are not available:

1960s-1970s (approximate date based on construction type): Installation of crude false ceiling in main hall, completely concealing the Victorian king rod scissor trusses with wrought iron rods and stop-chamfered detailing. This intervention is of no heritage value and actively harms the building's significance by preventing appreciation of the original roof structure, spatial volume, and architectural quality.

Date unknown: Installation of current ground floor toilet facilities (likely 1980s-1990s based on fittings and finishes).

The removal of the harmful false ceiling and replacement of outdated toilet facilities forms a key component of the current proposal and represents a significant heritage benefit.

6. Proposed Works

6.1. Internal Alterations

Removal of false ceiling

The existing false ceiling (installed 1960s-1970s) will be removed entirely. This later intervention is of no heritage value and actively harms the building by concealing the Victorian roof structure and stop-chamfered detailing, obscuring the original spatial volume, and preventing appreciation of the king rod scissor trusses. Removal will reveal concealed Victorian craftsmanship for the first time in 50+ years.

Mezzanine first floor construction

A new mezzanine floor will be inserted to create additional usable space (60m² usable area with >2.0m headroom). The construction will be:

- **Independent structure:** Steel beams and timber joists forming a self-supporting floor platform
- **Positioned mid-bay between roof trusses:** Steel beams located between existing king rod scissor trusses, avoiding disturbance to masonry at truss bearing points
- **No fixings to historic fabric:** Floor structure entirely independent
- **Reversible:** The inserted floor can be removed in future without damage
- **Reveals trusses from above:** First floor occupants will have close appreciation of the king rod scissor trusses and stop-chamfered detailing

Additional elements

Internal staircase: Three-flight quarter-turn staircase (18 risers @ 180mm, goings @ 250mm, 1000mm width) complying with Part K institutional/assembly stair standards.

Platform lift: Wheelchair accessible lift (1125mm x1425mm) providing compliant accessible route.

Ground and first floor store cupboards

A new ground floor store cupboard will be provided adjacent to the platform lift and two first floor cupboards to replace existing storage space removed to accommodate the new staircase and lift. This maintains essential storage capacity for church equipment and materials.

First floor office with stepped access

A small first floor office will be created at the front of the building (above the main entrance), accessed via internal steps from the first-floor hall level due to the lower ceiling over the toilets creating a level difference. The office will be lit by the existing large stone mullioned window above the main entrance door, which will be opened up and restored to provide natural light to this space.

First floor ceiling alterations

The existing plaster and lath sloping ceilings at first floor level will be removed and replaced with new insulation and plasterboard with skim finish. This work is necessary to accommodate thermal upgrades and provide appropriate ceiling finishes for the new first floor accommodation while revealing the base of the Victorian roof trusses.

6.2. External Alterations

Re-roofing and thermal upgrade

Complete re-roofing with salvage and re-laying of existing clay pantiles (95% salvage), installation of breathable membrane system, counter-battens for ventilation, thermal upgrade achieving U-value 0.20-0.22 W/m²K, and repair/reinstatement of historic timber louvre ridge ventilators.

Conservation rooflights

8 No. conservation-style rooflights (low profile, slim frames):

Southwest elevation (Church Street side): 3 rooflights serving the first floor hall. These are not visible from Church Street as the adjacent church building conceals most of this elevation.

Northeast elevation (rear, facing The Pippin): 5 rooflights serving the first floor hall. These are not prominently visible as mature trees conceal most of this elevation, the building is set back behind a car park, and 2 of the rooflights are hidden behind the Small Hall roof.

All rooflights are positioned on secondary elevations with minimal visual impact.

Opening and restoration of existing windows

Three existing large stone mullioned windows will be opened up and restored to provide natural light to the new first floor accommodation:

Window above main entrance (southwest elevation): Currently blocked or obscured, this window will be opened up and restored to provide light to the new first floor office. The window is positioned on the principal Church Street elevation

but at high level, and its restoration represents a heritage benefit by revealing an original architectural feature.

Window on southeast elevation: An existing large window will be opened up and restored to provide light to the first floor hall. This window is on a secondary elevation and its restoration reveals original fenestration.

Window on northwest elevation: An existing large window will be opened up and restored to provide light to the new stair well. This window is on a secondary elevation and its restoration reveals original fenestration.

All window restorations involve removing any blocking, repairing stonework, restoring glazing, and making good any deterioration. This represents heritage enhancement by revealing and restoring original architectural features rather than harm.

Widened rear door and wheelchair access ramp to Small Hall

The existing rear door to the Small Hall will be widened and heightened to create a 1100mm wide x 1981mm high opening suitable for wheelchair access with a new stone lintel to match existing. New stone jambs and quoins will match the existing. A new single-leaf timber door with vertical boarding will match existing external door styles elsewhere on the building.

A 5-metre long timber wheelchair access ramp (1:12 gradient, 1 metre wide) will be constructed at the Small Hall rear entrance, providing level access from external ground to the internal floor level (rise approximately 385mm at base of ramp due to ground slope). The ramp will be a freestanding timber structure on concrete pad foundations with handrails both sides, edge protection, and 1.0m x 1.0m level landing at the top. This is positioned on the southwest secondary elevation with minimal public visibility.

External fire exit door at base of stairwell

A new external fire exit door will be formed at the base of the new internal stairwell to provide direct emergency egress from the stairwell to the exterior, in compliance with Building Regulations Approved Document B (fire safety) requirements for protected stairways.

The new door opening (1160mm overall width x 1981mm height to underside of existing stone window cill) will be positioned directly below an existing large stone mullioned window with narrow steel casement frames (overall window height 3.45m). The existing stone window cill will act as lintel over the new door opening, with strengthening provided if structurally required.

New stonework to the door opening will feature chamfered stone jambs and quoins matching the existing window above, maintaining consistency with the building's mid-Victorian architectural detailing. A new double-leaf timber door (one large leaf plus one smaller slave leaf) will be installed with vertical boarding to match the style and proportions of existing external doors elsewhere on the building. The door will be fitted with fire exit specification ironmongery including panic hardware or push bar and will open outward for emergency egress.

This fire exit door is positioned on a secondary elevation and is not visible from Church Street (the principal frontage). The positioning below the existing stone mullioned window creates a logical compositional relationship between the door and window and minimizes the extent of cutting into undisturbed historic masonry by utilizing the existing window cill as lintel.

6.3. Justification for Proposed Works

Community need and functional requirements

The proposed alterations are driven by genuine operational need and the church's commitment to providing an inclusive, accessible, and functional community facility serving approximately 100 regular congregation members plus wider community use.

Accessibility deficiencies - current situation

The existing building has significant accessibility limitations that prevent full community participation:

- **No wheelchair accessible toilet:** The current ground floor toilets do not include a wheelchair accessible facility. This excludes wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments from attending services, meetings, and community events of any significant duration. This is a fundamental barrier to participation and contravenes the Equality Act 2010 duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- **No wheelchair access to Small Hall:** While level access exists to the Large Hall (church hall) via the main entrance, the Small Hall is at a higher level (approximately 390mm rise, 2 steps each 195mm) and is accessed internally through a narrow doorway. Wheelchair users cannot access the Small Hall, which is an essential complementary space used for refreshments, children's activities, meetings, and overflow during services and events. The absence of wheelchair access to the Small Hall significantly restricts how wheelchair users can participate in church activities. The internal level change makes an internal ramp unworkable (would require approximately 5 metres length consuming valuable floor area), necessitating the external ramp solution to the Small Hall's rear entrance.
- **No access to first floor:** The existing building has no means for wheelchair users or people with mobility impairments to access any upper level space. The proposed platform lift addresses this exclusion.
- **Inadequate circulation between halls:** The existing single narrow door (approximately 800mm wide) between the Large Hall and Small Hall creates a bottleneck for circulation, particularly problematic during events when congregation members move between spaces for refreshments, activities, or overflow seating. The narrow doorway combined with the 2-step level change is extremely difficult for wheelchair users and people with mobility aids, and impossible for wheelchair users to negotiate independently. For events involving both halls, the restricted connection undermines the functional relationship between the spaces.

These accessibility deficiencies are not merely inconvenient - they represent fundamental barriers to equal participation in religious and community life. While wheelchair users can access the Large Hall for worship services, they cannot access the Small Hall for the full range of church activities (fellowship, refreshments, children's groups, meetings), which is contrary to the church's inclusive mission and legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Toilet facilities - inadequacy of existing provision

The existing toilet facilities are inadequate in several respects:

- **No wheelchair accessible toilet:** As noted above, this is a critical accessibility deficiency.
- **Outdated fittings and finishes:** The existing toilets date from approximately 1980s-1990s based on fixtures and finishes. They are worn, inefficient (old flush mechanisms waste water), and do not meet contemporary standards for hygiene or user experience.
- **Insufficient provision for congregation size:** The existing facilities are inadequate for a congregation of approximately 100 persons attending services and events. Building Regulations Approved Document G (Sanitation) requires adequate provision based on occupancy - the current facilities fall short of this standard.
- **Poor layout and accessibility:** The existing toilet configuration does not provide appropriate separation, privacy, or accessibility for diverse users including families with young children.

The replacement toilet provision addresses all these deficiencies while meeting contemporary Building Regulations standards (Parts G, M, and H) and providing dignified, inclusive facilities appropriate to a community building serving diverse users.

Widened doorway between halls - functional justification

The widening of the doorway from the large hall to the small hall from approximately 800mm (single door) to 2000mm (wide opening with sliding folding partition) is justified by functional need:

- **Improved circulation:** During services and events, congregation members need to move freely between the two halls for refreshments, overflow seating, children's activities, and simultaneous multi-space events. The existing narrow doorway creates congestion and bottlenecks.
- **Wheelchair and mobility aid access:** The existing 800mm doorway with 2 steps (each 195mm) is impassable for wheelchair users. Even for ambulant users with mobility aids (walking frames, mobility scooters), the narrow doorway combined with steps is extremely difficult and potentially unsafe. The widened opening to 2000mm with new stepped access (3 risers @ 130mm, 270mm goings, handrails both sides plus central handrail) provides comfortable, safe access for ambulant users with mobility aids, though wheelchair users will still require the external ramp route to the Small Hall.
- **Flexible space utilization:** The wide opening with sliding folding partition allows the two halls to be used as separate spaces (partition closed) or as

a single large, interconnected space (partition open). This flexibility is essential for accommodating different event types and congregation sizes. For example, midweek services might use the large hall for worship with the small hall for children's activities (partition closed), while community events might use both halls as one large space (partition open).

- **Fire safety compliance:** The new stepped access through the widened opening provides a clear, safe route between the halls. The wide opening improves emergency egress capability compared to the existing single narrow door.
- **Visual and acoustic connection:** When the partition is open, the two halls function as a unified space with visual and acoustic connection. This is particularly valuable for events where activities in both halls need coordination (e.g., fellowship events, community gatherings).

The doorway widening is proportionate to the functional need and represents the minimum intervention necessary to achieve adequate circulation and accessibility between the two halls.

External wheelchair ramp - necessity and alternatives considered

The provision of an external wheelchair accessible ramp and widened rear door to the Small Hall is essential to provide wheelchair access to this important complementary space. The Small Hall is at a higher level than the Large Hall (approximately 390mm rise, 2 steps internally each 195mm). Alternative approaches have been considered:

- **Internal ramp:** An internal ramp from the Large Hall to the Small Hall (through the widened doorway) would require approximately 5 metres length to achieve the necessary 390mm rise at the required 1:12 gradient (Part M). This would consume valuable floor area in both the Large Hall and Small Hall, create circulation difficulties, and significantly reduce the usable space in both halls. The external ramp solution avoids internal space loss and is more practical.
- **Platform lift only (no ramp):** Relying solely on an internal platform lift for all accessibility would create operational difficulties (lift requires maintenance, may be out of service periodically, slower than ramp for many users) and would not provide the robust, always-available accessible route that a ramp provides. The ramp provides independent access for manual wheelchair users, powered wheelchair users, mobility scooter users, and people with other mobility impairments without requiring mechanical assistance.

The external ramp and widened rear door to the Small Hall represent the most practical, robust, and least intrusive solution to providing wheelchair access to this essential space. The ramp is positioned on the southwest rear elevation where it has minimal visual impact and does not affect the principal Church Street frontage. The 5-metre ramp (accommodating a rise of approximately 385mm from base to threshold due to ground slope away from the building) provides

independent access for manual wheelchair users, powered wheelchair users, mobility scooter users, and people with other mobility impairments without requiring mechanical assistance or consuming valuable internal floor area.

External fire exit door - Building Regulations compliance

The new external fire exit door at the base of the stairwell is required to comply with Building Regulations Approved Document B (fire safety). The internal stairwell serves the new first floor mezzanine (occupancy up to 60 persons) and must provide a protected route for emergency egress.

Building Regulations require that a protected stairway serving a first-floor space must discharge directly to a final exit or to a route leading to a final exit that is sufficiently protected from fire. The new external fire exit door at the base of the stairwell provides this required final exit, allowing occupants descending from the first floor to exit directly to the exterior without having to travel through the ground floor hall spaces.

This arrangement is the standard and most effective fire safety solution for buildings with mezzanine floors served by protected stairways. Alternative approaches (such as requiring first floor occupants to exit through ground floor spaces) would not provide the level of fire protection required by Building Regulations and would compromise the safety of the stairwell as a protected escape route.

The door is positioned on a secondary elevation where it has minimal visual impact on the listed building's character while delivering essential fire safety compliance. This represents the minimum intervention necessary to achieve Building Regulations compliance for the protected stairway.

Equality Act 2010 and inclusive access

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on service providers (including places of worship) to make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers that prevent disabled people from accessing services. The proposed alterations directly address this legal duty by:

- Providing wheelchair accessible toilet facilities (currently absent)
- Providing wheelchair access to the Small Hall via external ramp (currently absent - wheelchair users can only access Large Hall)
- Providing platform lift access to first floor (currently absent)
- Improving circulation and access between spaces (widened doorway)

These adjustments are reasonable and proportionate. They enable the church to fulfil its mission of providing inclusive worship and community service accessible to all, regardless of disability. Currently, wheelchair users can attend worship services in the Large Hall but are excluded from the full range of church activities that take place in the Small Hall (fellowship, refreshments, children's groups, meetings, events) - a situation that is both ethically problematic and legally non-compliant.

Sustainable use and building viability

The proposed works secure the long-term viable use of the listed building by:

- **Meeting contemporary standards:** Buildings that do not meet basic accessibility and facility standards struggle to attract users and become underutilized. By providing accessible toilets, wheelchair access, and improved circulation, the building becomes fit for contemporary community use.
- **Expanding user base:** Accessible facilities enable the church to welcome wheelchair users, older people with mobility impairments, families with young children, and others who currently cannot use the building. This expands the potential congregation and community user base.
- **Increasing capacity:** The mezzanine first floor provides additional usable space (60m² with adequate headroom) that increases the building's capacity and functionality without requiring new construction or site expansion.
- **Ensuring continued maintenance:** A building in active, viable use receives regular maintenance and care. The improvements proposed will help ensure the congregation remains able to maintain and care for this Grade II listed building for future generations.

The conservation of heritage assets is best achieved through sustainable, viable use. Buildings that cannot accommodate contemporary functional needs risk falling into disuse and deterioration. The proposed works enable this mid-Victorian church hall to continue serving its original community function while meeting 21st century accessibility and facility standards.

Summary of justification

The proposed works are necessary and justified to:

- Address critical accessibility deficiencies (no wheelchair accessible toilet, no wheelchair access to Small Hall, no access to first floor)
- Comply with Equality Act 2010 duties to make reasonable adjustments
- Replace inadequate, outdated toilet facilities with provision meeting contemporary standards
- Improve circulation and accessibility between the two halls
- Increase building capacity through mezzanine floor (additional 60m² usable space)
- Secure long-term viable use of the listed building serving its original community function

All proposed interventions are the minimum necessary to achieve these objectives and have been designed with careful attention to minimizing heritage impact while delivering essential functional improvements.

6.4. Implementation Phasing

The proposed works will be implemented in two phases to align with the church's fundraising capacity and operational requirements.

Phase 1 - Toilet Refurbishment (Immediate Implementation)

Phase 1 comprises the complete replacement of the existing outdated toilet facilities with new provision meeting contemporary Building Regulations standards (Parts G, M, H):

- Demolition of existing toilet facilities (fixtures, fittings, partitions, services)
- New toilet layout providing wheelchair accessible toilet, three unisex toilets, and accessible basin facilities
- New internal partitions, plumbing, electrical installations, drainage connections, and floor finishes
- Compliance with Equality Act 2010 through provision of wheelchair accessible toilet

Phase 1 works are entirely internal within the footprint of the existing ground floor toilet area. No alterations to the external envelope, no creation of new floor area, and no impact on the Victorian roof structure. Phase 1 delivers immediate accessibility benefits by providing wheelchair accessible toilet facilities for the first time, addressing a critical deficiency that currently excludes wheelchair users from attending services and events of any significant duration.

Phase 1 is funded and will commence immediately following grant of Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission.

Phase 2 - Mezzanine Floor and Vertical Circulation (Future Implementation - Estimated 7 Years)

Phase 2 comprises the remaining works to create additional capacity and full building accessibility:

- Removal of harmful 1960s-1970s false ceiling revealing Victorian king rod scissor trusses
- Installation of mezzanine first floor (60m² usable area, maximum 60 persons occupancy)
- New three-flight staircase (18 risers @ 180mm, 1000mm width, assembly building compliant)
- Platform lift (1125mm x 1425mm) providing accessible vertical circulation
- First floor office above main entrance
- Ground floor and first floor store cupboards
- Widened doorway between Large Hall and Small Hall with stepped access
- External wheelchair access ramp and widened rear door to Small Hall
- External fire exit door at base of stairwell
- Complete re-roofing with salvaged clay pantiles and thermal upgrade
- 8 No. conservation-style rooflights
- Opening and restoration of three existing blocked stone mullioned windows
- First floor ceiling alterations

Phase 2 works are subject to fundraising and are estimated to commence approximately 7 years from the date of consent. The church is committed to securing the necessary funding through grant applications, community fundraising, and reserved funds to deliver the full scheme as designed.

Phasing Justification

The phased approach is driven by financial constraints rather than design considerations. The proposed scheme has been designed as a coherent whole, with each element contributing to the overall objectives of heritage revelation, accessibility improvement, and building capacity enhancement. However, the church's current financial position allows immediate implementation of Phase 1 (toilet refurbishment) only, with Phase 2 dependent on successful fundraising over the coming years.

Implementing the scheme in phases does not compromise the design integrity or heritage benefits:

- Phase 1 delivers immediate accessibility benefit (wheelchair accessible toilet) addressing a critical Equality Act 2010 deficiency
- Phase 2, when implemented, will deliver the full heritage benefits (revelation of Victorian trusses), accessibility benefits (lift, ramp), and capacity benefits (mezzanine floor)
- The Victorian roof structure remains protected and unaltered during Phase 1, awaiting Phase 2 ceiling removal and mezzanine insertion
- All external alterations are deferred to Phase 2, minimizing disruption during Phase 1

Permission Duration and Commencement

The applicant requests that the planning permission and Listed Building Consent be structured to accommodate phased implementation, with separate commencement notices for each phase. Phase 1 will commence within 3 years of the date of consent. Commencement of Phase 1 will preserve the permission for Phase 2 implementation at a later date, subject to compliance with any pre-commencement conditions applicable to Phase 2 works.

This approach ensures the church can deliver essential accessibility improvements immediately (Phase 1) while securing design approval for the full scheme (Phase 1 + Phase 2) under current planning and conservation policies, avoiding the risk of future policy changes that could jeopardize the heritage and accessibility benefits of the complete proposal.

7. Design & Access

This section addresses the design approach, scale, appearance, layout and access considerations for the proposed alterations.

7.1. Use

Current Use

The building is in use as a church hall and place of worship (Use Class F1(a)). It serves a congregation of approximately 100 regular members plus wider community use for meetings, events, children's activities, and social gatherings.

Proposed Use

The proposed works do not change the use of the building. It will continue to function as a church hall and place of worship (Use Class F1(a)). The alterations enhance the building's ability to fulfil this use by improving accessibility, providing modern facilities, and increasing capacity through the mezzanine first floor.

7.2. Amount

The proposal involves internal alterations only with no increase in building footprint or external volume.

Ground floor: Replacement toilet facilities including wheelchair accessible toilet, new staircase (18 risers at 180mm), platform lift (1125mm x 1425mm), ground floor store cupboard, widened doorway between Large Hall and Small Hall (from 800mm to 2000mm with sliding folding partition).

First floor: New mezzanine floor providing 60m² usable area (with minimum 2.0m headroom), accommodating maximum 60 persons. First floor office (15.1m²) above main entrance. Two first floor store cupboards.

External: 8 No. conservation-style rooflights on secondary elevations. Re-roofing with salvaged clay pantiles and thermal upgrade. External wheelchair access ramp (5m long x1m wide) and widened rear door to Small Hall. External fire exit door at base of stairwell. Opening and restoration of three existing blocked stone mullioned windows.

The amount of development is the minimum necessary to achieve essential accessibility improvements, replace outdated facilities, and increase capacity while preserving the building's historic character.

7.3. **Layout**

Ground Floor Layout

The ground floor layout is adapted to accommodate improved accessibility and circulation while respecting the existing spatial arrangement. The Large Hall remains the principal worship space with direct entrance from Church Street. New toilet facilities (including wheelchair accessible toilet) replace outdated provision in a reconfigured layout meeting contemporary Building Regulations standards (Parts G, M, H).

The new staircase and platform lift are positioned at the north end of the Large Hall where they can access both ground and first floors efficiently. The staircase is a three-flight U-shaped configuration with two quarter landings, complying with assembly building requirements (180mm rise, 250mm going, 1000mm width). The platform lift is positioned adjacent to the staircase, providing compliant accessible vertical circulation.

The doorway between the Large Hall and Small Hall is widened from approximately 800mm to 2000mm with a sliding folding partition, improving circulation and allowing flexible use of the spaces separately or as a unified whole. New stepped access (3 risers at 130mm, 270mm goings, handrails both sides plus central handrail) provides safe transition between the two hall levels for ambulant users.

First Floor Layout

The first floor mezzanine is positioned within the existing roof space, making efficient use of volume currently concealed by a false ceiling. The mezzanine provides 60m² of usable space with minimum 2.0m headroom, configured as an open hall for fellowship activities, meetings, and overflow seating. Maximum occupancy is limited to 60 persons to comply with fire safety requirements for a single protected stairway (Building Regulations Approved Document B).

The first floor office (15.1m²) is positioned above the main entrance, lit by the existing large stone mullioned window which is opened up and restored. The office is accessed via internal steps from first floor hall level to accommodate the level change created by the lower ceiling over the toilets below.

The layout positions the mezzanine structure between existing Victorian king rod scissor trusses, avoiding disturbance to historic fabric at truss bearing points. The independent steel beam and timber joist construction ensures the mezzanine can be removed in future without damage to the historic structure, demonstrating best practice in reversible intervention.

External Layout

The external wheelchair access ramp (5m long, 1:12 gradient) is positioned at the Small Hall rear entrance on the southwest secondary elevation, providing

independent access to the Small Hall for wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments. The ramp is a freestanding timber structure minimising visual impact and avoiding alterations to the principal Church Street elevation. The external fire exit door at the base of the stairwell is positioned on a secondary elevation below an existing stone mullioned window, creating a logical compositional relationship and minimising cutting of undisturbed historic masonry by utilizing the existing window cill as lintel.

7.4. **Scale and Massing**

Internal Scale

The internal alterations are scaled to fit within the existing building envelope without increasing external volume. The mezzanine first floor is inserted within the roof space, with floor level positioned to provide a adequate headroom (minimum 2.0m) while revealing the Victorian roof trusses from the first floor level. The relationship between ground floor ceiling height (lowered by 170mm to 2.7-2.8m) and first floor headroom (approximately 2.4m minimum under roof truss chords) is carefully calibrated to maximise usable space while maintaining human scale and comfort.

The staircase is scaled to assembly building requirements with generous dimensions (1000mm width, 180mm rise, 250mm going) providing safe, comfortable circulation for the congregation. The platform lift is dimensioned to Building Regulations Part M standards (1125mm x1425mm) providing compliant wheelchair accessibility.

External Scale

External alterations are modest in scale and positioned to minimise visual impact. The 8 No. conservation rooflights are low-profile, slim-framed units positioned on secondary elevations (3 on southwest Church Street side concealed by adjacent church building, 5 on northeast rear elevation concealed by mature trees and car park, 2 hidden behind Small Hall roof). The rooflights are subordinate elements that do not disrupt the overall roof plane or massing.

The external wheelchair ramp is a modest 5m x1m timber structure appropriate to its functional purpose. The widened rear door to Small Hall (1100mm x1981mm) is proportioned to match existing door and window openings on the elevation.

The external fire exit door (1160mm x1981mm) is positioned below an existing 3.45m high stone mullioned window, creating a vertical composition where the new opening is clearly subordinate to the existing window above.

The building's overall scale and massing remain entirely unchanged. The alterations respect the mid-Victorian Gothic Revival character of the building through appropriate scaling of new elements relative to the existing fabric.

7.5. **Appearance and Materials**

External Appearance

The external appearance of the building is carefully preserved with minimal visible change. The principal Church Street elevation remains entirely unaltered, maintaining the building's contribution to the street scene and conservation area character.

Roofing: Complete re-roofing with salvaged clay pantiles (95% salvage rate) ensures continuity of appearance. The existing 350mm x450mm double-roll

pattern clay pantiles are carefully removed, salvaged, and re-laid on lime mortar (NHL 3.5). The roof pitch (52.3°), ridge line, and eaves line remain unchanged. Historic timber louvre ridge ventilators are carefully removed, repaired (timber treatment, replacement of decayed sections, repainting), and reinstated to original positions with weatherproof lead flashings, maintaining their functional and decorative contribution to the roofscape.

Conservation Rooflights: 8 No. conservation-style rooflights with low profile and slim frames are selected to minimise visual impact. The rooflights are positioned on secondary elevations with minimal public visibility. The northeast rear elevation rooflights (5 No.) are largely concealed by mature trees and the building's set-back position behind the car park. The southwest elevation rooflights (3 No.) are not visible from Church Street as the adjacent church building conceals most of this elevation.

Window Restoration: Three existing large stone mullioned windows are opened up and restored, revealing original architectural features. The window above the main entrance (southwest elevation, Church Street side) is positioned at high level and its restoration represents a heritage benefit. Windows on southeast and northwest secondary elevations are also restored, reinstating the building's original fenestration pattern.

External Doors: New external timber doors (wheelchair ramp access to Small Hall, fire exit at base of stairwell) are vertical boarded construction matching the style and proportions of existing external doors elsewhere on the building, maintaining consistency of detailing across elevations.

Stonework: New stonework to widened door openings features chamfered stone jambs and quoins matching existing mid-Victorian architectural detailing, demonstrating respect for the building's character. Matching Wiltshire stone is sourced for new work, with lime mortar (NHL 3.5) pointing matching existing.

Wheelchair Ramp: The 5m x 1m external timber ramp is finished in preservative-treated timber with non-slip surface coating. Timber handrails (50mm diameter) both sides and 100mm high edge protection upstands provide safety. The ramp is a functional, honest contemporary structure appropriate to its purpose, clearly distinguishable from historic fabric while remaining visually modest and unobtrusive on the secondary rear elevation.

Internal Appearance

Internal alterations are designed as clearly contemporary interventions, honest in expression and distinguishable from historic fabric, following conservation best practice.

Mezzanine Structure: The independent steel beam and timber joist floor structure is expressed honestly with fire-rated boarding to achieve 60-minute fire resistance. The steel beams are positioned to align between existing roof trusses, and the structure reads as a contemporary insertion within the historic volume. From the first floor level, occupants have close appreciation of the Victorian king rod scissor trusses, wrought iron rods, diagonal timber bracing, and stop-chamfered detailing - features concealed for 50+ years by the false ceiling.

Staircase: The three-flight timber staircase with hardwood treads, plywood risers, and timber handrails/balustrade is contemporary construction complying with Part K assembly building standards. The stairwell partition is positioned 20mm from the existing historic diagonal truss chord (which remains exposed in the first

floor hall) with flexible sealant filling the gap, ensuring no fixings to the historic structure.

Materials Quality: All new materials are specified to appropriate quality standards. Hardwood stair treads with non-slip finish, plasterboard and skim finish to partitions and ceilings, mineral wool acoustic/thermal insulation, fire-rated materials where required by Building Regulations. The approach prioritises durability, compliance with contemporary standards, and honest expression of materials rather than pastiche replication of Victorian detailing.

7.6. Access and Inclusivity

The access improvements are the central driver of the proposed alterations and address critical deficiencies in the existing building that prevent full community participation.

Existing Access Deficiencies

The current building has fundamental accessibility barriers that exclude wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments from full participation in church activities:

- **No wheelchair accessible toilet:** The existing ground floor toilets do not include a wheelchair accessible facility, excluding wheelchair users from attending services, meetings, and events of any significant duration. This contravenes the Equality Act 2010 duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- **No wheelchair access to Small Hall:** The Small Hall is at a higher level (390mm rise, 2 steps each 195mm) and wheelchair users cannot access this essential complementary space used for refreshments, children's activities, meetings, and overflow. Wheelchair users are restricted to the Large Hall only, significantly limiting their participation in church life.
- **No access to first floor:** No means exists for wheelchair users or people with mobility impairments to access any upper level space.
- **Inadequate circulation:** The existing single narrow 800mm doorway with 2 steps (each 195mm) between the Large Hall and Small Hall creates bottlenecks and is impossible for wheelchair users to negotiate independently.

7.7. Sustainable Energy and Environmental Performance

The proposed alterations incorporate significant sustainable energy measures that substantially improve the building's thermal performance while respecting its heritage significance.

Roof Thermal Upgrade

The complete re-roofing works (Phase 2) deliver comprehensive thermal improvement achieving U-value 0.20-0.22 W/m²K, substantially exceeding Building Regulations Approved Document Part L minimum standards for existing listed buildings (which typically permit higher U-values in recognition of heritage constraints). The roof construction comprises:

- Salvaged clay pantiles re-laid on lime mortar (95% salvage rate ensuring material conservation)
- 38x25mm tiling battens and counter-battens creating 25mm ventilation cavity
- Breathable roofing membrane (sd value max 0.30m) allowing moisture movement while preventing water ingress
- 80mm rigid PIR insulation between existing rafters

- Intelligent vapour control layer with taped joints
- 25mm insulated plasterboard internal lining

This breathable construction approach ensures long-term building health by allowing the historic timber structure to breathe naturally while delivering modern thermal performance. The ventilation cavity and breathable membrane prevent interstitial condensation, protecting the Victorian timber roof structure from moisture-related decay.

Energy Demand Reduction

The thermal upgrade significantly reduces the building's heating demand and associated carbon emissions. Current heat loss through the uninsulated roof accounts for approximately 25-30% of the building's total heat loss. The proposed U-value of 0.20-0.22 W/m²K represents approximately an 80-85% reduction in roof heat loss compared to the existing uninsulated construction (estimated U-value 2.0-2.5 W/m²K).

For a building of this scale (approximately 127m² ground floor plus 60m² mezzanine first floor once Phase 2 is complete), the roof thermal upgrade will deliver:

- Estimated 20-25% reduction in overall building heat loss
- Corresponding reduction in heating fuel consumption and carbon emissions
- Improved thermal comfort for building occupants
- Reduced heating costs supporting the long-term financial viability of the church's community mission

Sustainable Construction Approach

The proposals demonstrate sustainable construction principles appropriate to heritage buildings:

- Material Conservation: 95% salvage and re-use of existing clay pantiles, avoiding embodied carbon of new materials and preserving historic fabric
- Reversibility: Mezzanine floor structure is entirely independent and reversible, allowing future adaptation without waste
- Adaptive Re-use: Maximizing the utility of the existing building fabric through efficient spatial planning (mezzanine insertion) rather than new construction
- Longevity: Breathable construction methods ensuring the building's structural health for continued long-term use
- Timber Preservation: Repair and retention of historic timber louvre ridge ventilators maintaining traditional ventilation systems

Policy Compliance

The sustainable energy measures comply with:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023: Supporting the transition to a low carbon economy while conserving heritage assets (paragraphs 152-158, 190-208)
- Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 41 (Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy): Delivering energy efficiency improvements appropriate to the building's heritage significance
- Building Regulations Approved Document L2B: Achieving thermal performance standards for alterations to existing buildings while maintaining special characteristics of listed buildings

The approach balances heritage conservation with climate change mitigation, demonstrating that historic buildings can contribute to carbon reduction targets through sensitive, appropriate thermal improvements.

7.8. **Ecological Considerations**

The proposed works have been designed with consideration for potential ecological impacts, particularly regarding protected species that may utilise the historic building.

Ecological Context

The building is a mid-Victorian structure (1868) constructed from local Wiltshire stone with clay pantile roof covering. Buildings of this age and construction type can provide roosting opportunities for bats (particularly in roof voids, under tiles, and in crevices in stonework) and nesting sites for birds (swifts, house martins, house sparrows).

Phase 1 Works - No Ecological Survey Required

Phase 1 comprises toilet refurbishment only, involving entirely internal works within the existing ground floor footprint. Phase 1 works include:

- Demolition of existing toilet fixtures, partitions, and services
- Installation of new toilet facilities, partitions, plumbing, and electrical services
- Internal alterations only with no disturbance to roof structure, roof void, external walls, or any potential bat roosting or bird nesting features

No ecological survey is required for Phase 1 as the works do not disturb any features with potential for protected species. Phase 1 works will not affect the roof structure, roof void, external stonework, or any external features.

Phase 2 Works - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Required

Phase 2 works involve disturbance to the roof structure and roof void, creating potential for impacts on protected species if present:

- Complete re-roofing with removal and re-laying of clay pantiles
- Removal of internal false ceiling exposing the roof void
- Installation of conservation rooflights
- Restoration of blocked stone mullioned windows
- External alterations (ramp, doors)

Prior to commencement of Phase 2 (estimated circa 7 years from date of consent), a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) will be commissioned from a suitably qualified ecologist to assess the presence or likely absence of protected species, particularly bats and nesting birds. The PEA will:

- Conduct an internal and external inspection of the building to identify potential roosting/nesting features
- Assess the likelihood of protected species presence based on habitat suitability and evidence
- Identify any requirement for further phase 2 surveys (emergence/re-entry surveys for bats, breeding bird surveys)
- Recommend appropriate mitigation measures if protected species are confirmed or likely to be present

Rationale for Deferring Survey to Phase 2

Ecological surveys have limited validity periods (typically 12-18 months maximum) due to the dynamic nature of species populations and seasonal variations. A survey conducted now would be invalid by the time Phase 2

commences (estimated 7 years). Commissioning the PEA immediately prior to Phase 2 commencement ensures:

- Survey findings are current and reflect actual site conditions at the time of works
- Survey methodology and best practice guidance are up-to-date
- Any required mitigation measures or protected species licenses reflect the actual ecological baseline immediately prior to works
- Compliance with current ecological legislation and guidance at the time of Phase 2 implementation

Pre-Commencement Condition

The applicant accepts a planning condition requiring that no Phase 2 works shall commence until:

1. 1. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority
2. 2. Any further surveys identified as necessary by the PEA have been completed and submitted to the Local Planning Authority
3. 3. Any necessary protected species mitigation licenses have been obtained from Natural England
4. 4. An Ecological Method Statement detailing mitigation measures has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority

This condition ensures full ecological compliance for Phase 2 works while avoiding the inefficiency and cost of premature surveys that would be invalid by the time works commence.

Timing of Phase 2 Works

Phase 2 re-roofing and roof void works will be timed to avoid the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) unless a nesting bird survey (conducted as part of the Phase 2 pre-commencement PEA) confirms absence of active nests. If bat roosts are identified, works will be undertaken under an appropriate Natural England bat mitigation licence with ecological supervision.

Biodiversity Enhancement Opportunities

The Phase 2 re-roofing works and building alterations present opportunities for biodiversity enhancement integrated into the development:

- Installation of swift bricks or bat boxes within the restored roof structure if appropriate locations are identified during the Phase 2 PEA
- Retention and repair of historic timber louvre ridge ventilators which may provide access for roosting bats or nesting birds
- Sensitive landscaping around the external wheelchair ramp with native planting if appropriate

Any biodiversity enhancement measures will be designed to complement the building's heritage character and will be agreed with the Conservation Officer and Ecologist as part of the Phase 2 pre-commencement approval process.

Compliance

The ecological approach complies with:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended): Protecting wild birds, their nests and eggs
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended): Protecting European Protected Species including bats
- NPPF 2023 paragraphs 180-182: Conserving and enhancing biodiversity

- Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity): Protecting and enhancing biodiversity
This phased approach to ecological assessment ensures compliance with all relevant legislation while ensuring survey information is current and valid at the time works are undertaken.

7.9. Proposed Access Improvements

Wheelchair Accessible Toilet: A new wheelchair accessible toilet (minimum 1500mm x 2200mm per Part M) provides dignified, compliant facilities. The enlarged toilet includes appropriate grab rails, emergency alarm, accessible basin, and sufficient manoeuvring space for wheelchair users. This addresses a fundamental accessibility deficiency and enables wheelchair users to attend services and events.

Platform Lift: A new platform lift (1125mm x 1425mm) provides compliant accessible vertical circulation to the first floor mezzanine, enabling wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments to access first floor facilities for the first time. The lift is specified to Building Regulations Part M standards with appropriate controls, emergency alarm, and safety features.

External Wheelchair Ramp to Small Hall: A 5m long, 1m wide external timber ramp at 1:12 gradient provides independent wheelchair access to the Small Hall via the widened rear entrance. The ramp includes timber handrails both sides (900mm height), 100mm edge protection upstands, and 1.0m x 1.0m level landing at the top. This enables wheelchair users to access the Small Hall for fellowship, refreshments, children's activities, meetings, and events - full participation in church life rather than restriction to worship services in the Large Hall only.

Widened Doorway and Stepped Access: The widened opening between Large Hall and Small Hall (from 800mm to 2000mm) with new stepped access (3 risers at 130mm, 270mm goings, handrails both sides plus central handrail) provides comfortable, safe circulation for ambulant users with mobility aids. The sliding folding partition allows flexible use of the spaces.

Equality Act 2010 Compliance: The proposed access improvements directly address the Equality Act 2010 duty on service providers (including places of worship) to make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers preventing disabled people from accessing services. The alterations are reasonable and proportionate, enabling the church to fulfil its mission of providing inclusive worship and community service accessible to all regardless of disability.

Building Regulations Compliance: The access improvements comply with Building Regulations Approved Document Part M (Access to and use of buildings), Part K (Protection from falling, collision and impact - stairs), Part G (Sanitation, hot water safety and water efficiency), Part H (Drainage and waste disposal), and Part B (Fire safety).

8. Heritage Impact Assessment

8.1. Less Than Substantial Harm (NPPF Para 202)

The proposed works would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II listed building through physical interventions including insertion of steel beams and floor structure, creation of stairwell and lift shaft enclosures,

installation of conservation rooflights, widening of rear door opening, and introduction of contemporary insertions clearly distinguishable from historic fabric.

The harm is assessed as less than substantial because the principal elevation remains entirely unaltered, all interventions are reversible, no destruction of significant historic fabric occurs, and external alterations are limited to rear/side elevations.

Specific alterations - heritage impact

Toilet replacement and wheelchair accessible toilet:

The complete replacement of existing toilet facilities with new provision including wheelchair accessible toilet involves:

- **Removal of existing toilets:** The existing toilets date from approximately 1980s-1990s and are of no heritage significance. Their removal causes no harm to heritage values.
- **New internal partitions and services:** The new toilet layout requires new stud partitions, fixtures, and services (plumbing, electrical, drainage). These are entirely internal works within a ground floor area that has been subject to previous modern alterations. The works do not affect significant historic fabric.
- **Wheelchair accessible toilet provision:** The enlarged wheelchair accessible toilet (minimum 1500x200mm per Part M) is a contemporary functional requirement. While it represents new intervention, it addresses a fundamental accessibility deficiency and delivers substantial public benefit by enabling wheelchair users to access the building for the first time.

Heritage impact: The toilet replacement causes no harm to significant heritage fabric (existing toilets are modern and of no significance). The intervention is entirely internal in a previously altered area. The provision of wheelchair accessible facilities delivers substantial accessibility benefit that outweighs any minimal impact from internal alterations.

First floor office and ceiling alterations:

The creation of a small first floor office above the main entrance, accessed via internal steps, involves:

Internal partitioning: New stud partitions to create the office enclosure. These are reversible contemporary interventions in the first floor mezzanine area.

Internal stepped access: A short flight of internal steps (approximately 3-4 steps) to accommodate the level change created by the roof pitch. These are necessary to access the office space and represent honest contemporary construction.

Removal of existing plaster and lath sloping ceilings: The existing first floor ceilings (likely dating from when the false ceiling was installed in the 1960s-70s) will be removed to allow for thermal upgrades and to reveal the base of the Victorian roof trusses. This represents removal of later, non-original fabric of no heritage significance.

New insulated ceiling: Replacement ceiling with insulation and plasterboard provides appropriate thermal performance while maintaining access to view the revealed roof trusses from the first floor level.

Heritage impact: The office creation and ceiling works cause no harm to significant historic fabric. The existing ceiling is modern and of no heritage value. The removal of this ceiling actually enhances heritage significance by revealing the base of the Victorian roof trusses. The office partitioning is reversible and does not affect the principal architectural features. The stepped access is a necessary functional element that represents honest contemporary intervention.

Widened doorway between large hall and small hall:

The widening of the existing doorway from approximately 800mm (single door) to 2000mm (wide opening) involves:

- **Alteration to existing opening:** The existing doorway between the halls will be widened by cutting out masonry. This involves physical alteration to the 640mm thick masonry wall between the two halls.
- **New lintels and structural support:** The widened opening requires new steel beam and concrete lintels to support the masonry wall above and the new first floor structure. This represents structural intervention in the historic fabric.
- **New stepped access:** Three concrete steps (130mm rise, 270mm going) are required to transition the 390mm level change between the Large Hall and Small Hall. Handrails will be provided both sides plus central handrail on posts for safety. This is a contemporary intervention creating a functional connection that improves on the existing narrow doorway with steps.
- **Sliding folding partition:** A modern sliding folding partition will be installed to allow the opening to be closed when required. This is a reversible contemporary intervention.

Heritage impact: The doorway widening involves physical alteration to historic masonry fabric and represents less than substantial harm. However, this harm is minimized by: (1) the intervention is to an internal wall, not external elevations; (2) the wall between the halls is utilitarian rather than architecturally significant; (3) the wide opening improves the functional relationship between the two halls, which were designed to work together as complementary spaces; (4) the stepped access is honest contemporary construction, not pastiche; (5) the intervention is proportionate to the functional benefit (improved circulation and accessibility).

External wheelchair ramp and widened rear door to Small Hall:

The provision of external wheelchair access to the Small Hall involves:

- **Widening of existing rear door to Small Hall:** The existing rear door opening will be widened and heightened to create a 1160mm wide x 1981mm high opening suitable for wheelchair access. This involves cutting out stonework including formation of new chamfered stone jambs and quoins to match the existing window above. The existing stone window cill will act as lintel over the new door opening (with strengthening if required).

- **New external timber ramp:** A 5-metre long timber ramp (1:12 gradient, 1 metre wide) will be constructed at the Small Hall rear entrance providing level access from ground to door threshold. The ramp is a freestanding timber structure on concrete pad foundations with handrails both sides, edge protection, and 1.0m x1.0m level landing at the top.
- **New door and frame:** A new single-leaf timber door will be installed matching the vertical boarding style of existing external doors elsewhere on the building.

Heritage impact: The rear door widening and ramp represent physical alteration to the listed building's external envelope and constitute less than substantial harm through: (1) creation of enlarged opening in external masonry wall; (2) alteration of existing door opening below significant stone mullioned window; (3) introduction of contemporary timber ramp structure on rear elevation of the Small Hall.

However, this harm is minimized by:

- **Secondary elevation:** The alterations are on the rear elevation of the Small Hall, not the principal Church Street frontage. The rear elevation is not prominently visible from the public realm.
- **Appropriate detailing:** The timber door matches existing external door styles.
- **Modest scale:** The ramp is a relatively modest 5-metre long x 1-metre wide timber structure - functional but not visually dominant.
- **Substantial public benefit:** The ramp and widened door provide the only practical means of achieving wheelchair access to the Small Hall. This delivers critical accessibility benefit that enables wheelchair users to participate in the full range of church activities (fellowship, refreshments, children's groups, meetings, events) rather than being restricted to worship services in the Large Hall only.

External fire exit door at base of stairwell:

The formation of a new external fire exit door at the base of the internal stairwell involves:

- **Creation of new opening in external masonry wall:** The new door opening (1160mm wide x1981mm high) requires cutting through the external stone masonry wall. This involves physical alteration to the listed building's historic fabric.
- **Positioned below significant stone mullioned window:** The door opening is located directly beneath an existing large stone mullioned window (3.45m high) with narrow steel casement frames. The window is a character-defining feature of the elevation, and the intervention occurs within the same vertical zone.
- **New chamfered stone jambs and quoins:** The door opening will be finished with chamfered stonework matching the existing window above, requiring skilled stonemason work and sourcing of matching stone.
- **Use of window cill as lintel:** The existing stone window cill will be utilized as the lintel over the new door opening, with structural strengthening if required. This involves structural intervention to a historic element.

- New double-leaf fire exit door: A contemporary timber door with fire exit hardware (panic bar/push bar) will be installed. The door will match existing external door styles (vertical boarding) but is clearly a modern intervention.

Heritage impact: The external fire exit door represents physical alteration to the listed building's external envelope and constitutes less than substantial harm through: (1) creation of new opening in historic external masonry wall; (2) intervention below a significant character-defining stone mullioned window; (3) cutting of stonework including alteration/strengthening of window cill used as lintel; (4) introduction of contemporary fire exit door with modern hardware on an external elevation.

However, this harm is minimized and justified by:

- Building Regulations requirement: The external fire exit door is not optional - it is required by Building Regulations Approved Document B to provide a compliant protected escape route from the first floor mezzanine. Without this door, the mezzanine floor and stairwell cannot achieve Building Regulations compliance. The intervention is therefore necessary to enable the overall scheme.
- Secondary elevation: The door is positioned on a secondary elevation, not visible from the principal Church Street frontage. The visual impact is limited to a less prominent part of the building.
- Appropriate detailing: The chamfered stone jambs and quoins match the existing window above, demonstrating respect for the building's architectural character and mid-Victorian detailing. The careful stonework detailing minimizes the visual incongruity of the new opening.
- Logical composition: Positioning the door directly below the existing window creates a vertical compositional relationship that is more coherent than a door positioned elsewhere on the elevation. The door-below-window arrangement has architectural logic.
- Minimizes cutting of undisturbed fabric: By utilizing the existing window cill as lintel, the intervention minimizes the extent of cutting into undisturbed historic masonry. This represents a more conservative approach than creating an entirely new opening elsewhere.
- Door style matches existing: The vertical boarded timber door matches the style and proportions of existing external doors on the building, maintaining consistency of door detailing across the building's elevations.
- Fire safety benefit outweighs harm: The door enables compliance with life-safety Building Regulations, providing a protected escape route for up to 60 persons from the first floor. This substantial public benefit (life safety) outweighs the less than substantial harm to heritage significance.

The external fire exit door, while involving alteration to historic fabric, is a necessary intervention to achieve Building Regulations compliance and cannot reasonably be avoided. The design approach (positioning, detailing, materials) minimizes heritage harm while delivering essential fire safety requirements. The intervention is proportionate to the safety benefit achieved.

Opening and restoration of existing windows:

The opening and restoration of two existing stone mullioned windows involves:

Removal of any blocking or infill: Historic windows may have been blocked internally or externally at some point. Removal of blocking restores the original fenestration arrangement.

Repair and restoration of stonework: Any deteriorated stone mullions, jambs, or surrounds will be repaired using traditional materials and techniques. Missing elements will be reinstated to match the original.

Glazing restoration: Appropriate glazing will be installed, respecting the character of the original narrow steel casement frames where these survive, or reinstating similar sympathetic glazing where they have been lost.

Heritage impact: The restoration of blocked or obscured windows represents a heritage benefit rather than harm. It reveals original architectural features, restores the intended fenestration pattern, improves the building's appearance, and demonstrates appropriate conservation of historic fabric. The window above the main entrance is particularly significant as it restores a feature on the principal elevation that contributes to the building's architectural composition and symmetry.

This intervention causes no harm - it actively enhances the heritage significance of the building by revealing and conserving original features.

Cumulative impact assessment

Considering all proposed alterations cumulatively (toilet replacement, doorway widening between halls, external ramp and door to Small Hall, external fire exit door at base of stairwell, mezzanine floor, staircase, lift, first floor office with stepped access, ground floor store cupboard, ceiling alterations, window restorations, rooflights, re-roofing), the overall impact remains less than substantial harm because:

- The principal Church Street elevation remains entirely unaltered
- All major external alterations are on secondary rear/side elevations (Small Hall rear door and ramp, stairwell fire exit door, conservation rooflights)
- Internal interventions are reversible and do not destroy significant historic fabric
- The Victorian king rod scissor trusses are retained in entirety without alteration
- Each intervention is the minimum necessary to achieve essential functional objectives
- The works deliver substantial heritage benefits (removal of harmful false ceiling, revelation of concealed Victorian structure, building preservation through viable use) and substantial public benefits (accessibility, improved facilities, community service) that clearly outweigh the less than substantial harm

The harm identified is real but limited in extent, affecting secondary elements and elevations rather than the building's principal character-defining features. The balance between harm and benefit strongly favours consent under NPPF paragraph 202.

8.2. Heritage Benefits - Substantial and Demonstrable

The proposed works deliver substantial heritage benefits that outweigh the less than substantial harm:

- **Revelation of concealed Victorian structure:** Removes harmful false ceiling, reveals king rod scissor trusses for first time in 50+ years
- **Window restoration:** Opening up and restoring two blocked/obscured historic stone mullioned windows reveals original architectural features and restores intended fenestration pattern
- **Building preservation:** Essential roof repairs, breathable construction, thermal upgrade extends building life
- **Sustainable use:** Maximizes utility of heritage asset, efficient use of building fabric
- **Accessibility:** Platform lift provides compliant accessible route, disabled ramp
- **Reversibility:** All major interventions reversible without damage to historic fabric

8.3. Conservation Principles

The design follows established conservation principles:

- **Minimal intervention:** Independent floor structure, no fixings to historic trusses, trusses remain unaltered
- **Honest expression:** Contemporary insertions clearly distinguishable from historic fabric
- **Respect for fabric:** All significant fabric retained, traditional materials for repairs
- **Sustainable conservation:** Breathable construction, thermal upgrade, viable use ensures maintenance

9. Planning Policy Compliance

The proposed alterations have been assessed against national and local planning policy and comply with the requirements for Listed Building Consent and planning permission.

9.1. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023

Chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

The proposals accord with NPPF Chapter 16, which requires that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. The proposals conserve the significance of the Grade II listed building through:

- Retention of all significant historic fabric including the complete Victorian king rod scissor trusses with wrought iron rods, diagonal timber bracing, and stop-chamfered detailing
- Removal of harmful later alterations (1960s-1970s false ceiling) that actively conceal heritage significance
- Reversible interventions that can be removed in future without damage to historic fabric
- Revelation and celebration of concealed Victorian craftsmanship and engineering

- Securing long-term viable use through essential accessibility improvements and facility upgrades

9.2. Public Benefits

Paragraph 202: "Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal..."

The Heritage Impact Assessment (Section 8 above) demonstrates that the proposals result in **less than substantial harm** to the significance of the Grade II listed building through physical interventions including insertion of steel beams and floor structure, creation of new openings, and introduction of contemporary elements.

This less than substantial harm is **clearly outweighed by substantial public benefits** including:

- **Heritage benefits:** Revelation of concealed Victorian roof structure, removal of harmful false ceiling, building preservation through essential repairs and thermal upgrade, long-term protection of historic fabric, educational value of revealed craftsmanship
- **Community benefits:** Improved accessible community facility serving congregation and wider community, enhanced provision enabling full participation for wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments, maintains viable use of Grade II listed building for continued community service
- **Accessibility benefits:** Wheelchair accessible toilet, platform lift to first floor, external ramp to Small Hall, widened circulation, compliance with Equality Act 2010 duties
- **Sustainability benefits:** Thermal upgrade significantly improves energy efficiency (U-value 0.20-0.22 W/m²K), reduced heating costs and carbon emissions, efficient use of existing building fabric, breathable construction ensures long-term building health
- **Economic benefits:** Maintains and enhances viable use of heritage asset, local employment during construction, long-term building maintenance secured through active congregation
- **Balancing Exercise:** Required by NPPF Paragraph 202 strongly favours consent, as the public benefits clearly and demonstrably outweigh the less than substantial harm identified.

9.3. Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted January 2015)

Core Policy 57 - Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping

The proposals comply with Core Policy 57's requirement for high quality design that responds positively to the existing built environment. The design approach demonstrates:

- Careful attention to scale, with external alterations modest and positioned on secondary elevations
- Appropriate materials matching existing (salvaged clay pantiles, Wiltshire stone, lime mortar, timber doors)
- Contemporary interventions clearly distinguishable from historic fabric, following conservation best practice

- Minimal visual impact on the principal Church Street elevation (entirely unaltered) and conservation area character
- Honest expression of new work rather than pastiche replication

Core Policy 58 - Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment

The proposals comply with Core Policy 58's requirement to conserve and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets. The scheme demonstrates conservation and enhancement through:

- Removal of harmful later alterations (false ceiling) that actively diminish significance
- Revelation of concealed Victorian craftsmanship (king rod scissor trusses, stop-chamfered detailing, wrought iron work)
- Restoration of blocked windows, revealing original fenestration pattern
- Retention of all significant historic fabric without loss or destruction
- Reversible interventions respecting the principle of minimal intervention
- Securing long-term viable use through essential accessibility and facility improvements

The proposals represent best practice in heritage-led design: balancing conservation of significance with necessary adaptation to meet contemporary functional needs and legal duties.

Core Policy 41 - Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy

The proposals comply with Core Policy 41 through comprehensive thermal upgrade of the roof (U-value 0.20-0.22 W/m²K) significantly exceeding Building Regulations Part L minimum standards for listed buildings. The breathable membrane system, salvaged pantile re-laying, and traditional materials ensure long-term building health while delivering energy efficiency improvements. The thermal upgrade will reduce heating costs and carbon emissions, contributing to climate change mitigation while preserving heritage significance.

Core Policy 67 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity

The proposals have neutral impact on biodiversity. The re-roofing works provide an opportunity to install swift bricks or bat boxes if ecological survey identifies suitable locations, delivering minor biodiversity enhancement.

9.4. Calne Conservation Area

The building is located within Calne Conservation Area. The proposals preserve and enhance the conservation area's character and appearance through:

- No change to the principal Church Street elevation, preserving the building's contribution to the street scene
- Restoration of blocked windows on the principal elevation, enhancing architectural character
- Re-roofing with salvaged traditional clay pantiles maintaining roofscape character
- Minimal visual impact from secondary elevation alterations (rooflights, ramp, doors)
- Continued viable use of a positive contributor to conservation area significance

Conservation Area Consent is not required as no demolition of unlisted buildings in a conservation area is proposed. Listed Building Consent addresses all heritage considerations for this Grade II listed building within the conservation area.

9.5. Conclusion on Planning Policy Compliance

The proposed alterations fully comply with national planning policy (NPPF 2023 Chapter 16, Paragraph 202) and local planning policy (Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policies 57, 58, 41, 67). The proposals represent a carefully considered balance between heritage conservation and necessary adaptation to meet contemporary accessibility standards and legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The substantial public benefits in heritage revelation, building preservation, accessibility, and sustainability clearly outweigh the less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II listed building, satisfying the requirements of NPPF Paragraph 202 for Listed Building Consent.

10. Conclusion

The proposed alterations to Calne Free Church Hall represent a carefully considered and balanced approach to adapting a Grade II listed mid-Victorian building for continued community use while revealing and celebrating its hidden heritage significance.

The removal of the harmful false ceiling and revelation of the Victorian king rod scissor trusses with stop-chamfered detailing transforms the building from one where significant heritage is concealed to one where it is visible, accessible, and appreciated. This alone represents a major heritage benefit.

The inserted mezzanine floor, while a contemporary intervention, is designed with full respect for the historic structure through independent construction, reversibility, revelation rather than concealment (80-85% of trusses visible from first floor), and positioning to avoid disturbing historic fabric.

The external alterations are minimal and carefully positioned with no change to principal Church Street elevation, conservation rooflights on secondary elevations only, traditional materials and breathable construction for roof repairs, and disabled access on rear elevation.

The strategic decision to limit occupancy to 60 persons eliminates the need for an external fire escape staircase and fire exit through a historic window - both of which would have caused substantial heritage harm.

The proposal delivers substantial public benefits in heritage revelation, building preservation, community facility provision, accessibility, and sustainability. These benefits clearly outweigh the less than substantial harm identified, satisfying NPPF Para 202 requirements.

The design demonstrates best practice in heritage conservation: minimal intervention, reversibility, honest expression of new work, respect for historic fabric, and sustainable viable use. The building will be preserved, its significance enhanced through revelation of concealed features, and its community service role secured for future generations.

11. Supporting Drawings and Documents

This Heritage, Design and Access Statement is to be read in conjunction with enclosed drawings and documents:

Drawings:

25005 / P001	Site Location Plan
25005 / P002	Site Block Plan
25005 / P050	Exg GF Plan
25005 / P051	Exg Roof Plan
25005 / P052	Exg Elevs (1)
25005 / P053	Exg Elevs (2)
25005 / P054	Exg Section
25005 / P110	Pro GF Plan
25005 / P111	Pro FF Plan
25005 / P112	Pro Roof Plan
25005 / P113	Pro Elevs (1)
25005 / P114	Pro Elevs (2)
25005 / P115	Pro Sects
25005 / P116	Phasing Plan

Supporting Documents:

25005 / SP01	Site Photographs – External
25005 / SP02	Site Photographs - Internal
25005 / FRA01	Flood Risk Assessment