

WEST STREET CHURCH – DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Date: February 2022

West Street Church, a Grade II listed chapel located at the eastern end of West Street in East Grinstead, is home to a vibrant congregation seeking to enhance both the internal facilities and the external appearance of the church complex. The site comprises three interconnected buildings: the main church, the entrance foyer, and a small adjacent hall.

1 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1.1 Replace the Existing Entrance Structure

The current single-storey entrance building is architecturally incompatible with the historic chapel and was constructed using mismatched, oversized brickwork. It disrupts the original proportions of the listed façade and lacks proper insulation and structural integrity. The proposal seeks to replace this with a more fitting and well-built alternative.

1.2 Create a Welcoming and Transparent Entrance

A new entrance of high architectural quality will be introduced, designed to be open and inviting. It will reconnect the building with the public space in front and restore visibility to the original façade proportions of the listed church.

1.3 Improve Integration Between Buildings

The new entrance design will harmoniously link the church and the small hall, both internally and externally. The foyer roof will extend to shelter the hall entrance, and Corten steel-style cladding (Kingspan Oxidised 0010) will be used for the roof fascia and vertical panels.

1.4 Enhance the Small Hall's Front Elevation

The same Corten steel-style cladding (Kingspan Oxidised 0010) will be applied to the front of the small hall, creating a unified architectural language across the site.

1.5 Upgrade the Small Hall's Interior

Improvements include better natural lighting through clerestory glazing and a roof light that opens views to the previously hidden side of the church. Enhanced thermal insulation will make the hall more comfortable and usable year-round.

1.6 Modify the Small Hall Roof Profile

The current north-facing roof slope causes water damage to the chapel's side wall and its large south-facing window. The proposal retains the visible south slope and replaces the north slope with vertical clerestory glazing set back from the chapel wall. This change improves visibility of the chapel's side elevation and resolves longstanding weathering issues.

1.7 Respect Existing Site Boundaries

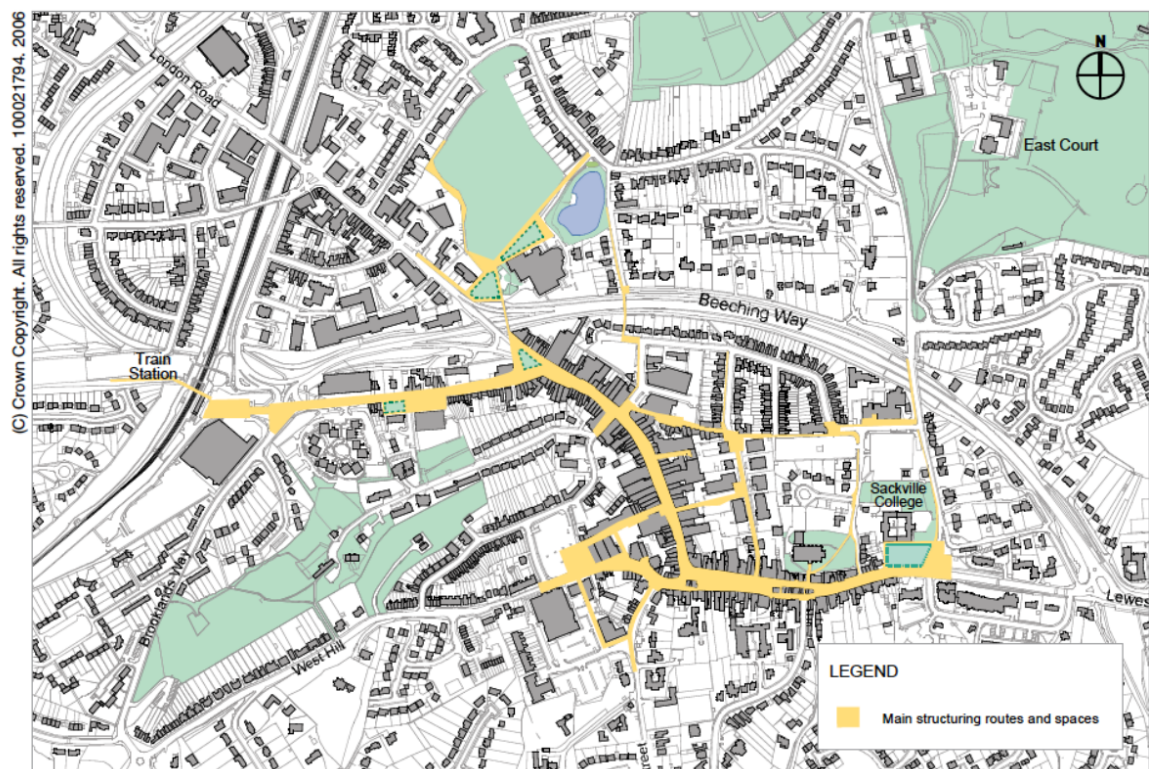
The new entrance building will remain within the footprint of the existing structure to honour legal covenants with the neighbouring Chapter House, which shares access to the forecourt.

1.8 Introduction of a New Internal Staircase

The current double timber staircase to the gallery is bulky and intrusive. A new straight-flight stair, aligned with the church's main elevation, will be hidden behind an existing partition. This change removes obstructive bulkheads and opens up the under-gallery space. The gallery itself will be reconfigured into a single, unified area, improving functionality. A balustrade will provide safety while maintaining visual connection between the gallery and staircase.

1.9 Contribute to Public Realm Improvements

In line with the East Grinstead Town Masterplan (2006), which envisions West Street as a key pedestrian route and public space. The revised entrance porch enhances the public realm and gives prominence to the listed building. Though the Masterplan has seen limited implementation, this project could serve as a catalyst for future regeneration, forming a gateway between the High Street and the proposed town square.



2 ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

2.1 Level Access:

The new entrance will eliminate steps and provide level access from the public pavement, improving accessibility for wheelchair users.

2.2 Reduced Entrances:

The number of entry points will be reduced from three to two, both with level thresholds.

2.3 Internal Connectivity:

The narrow doorway between the main hall and side hall will be widened and made wheelchair-compliant, improving internal circulation.