

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0088
Valid 03/04/2025

RUDYARD METHODIST
CHURCH LAKE ROAD
RUDYARD

PROPOSED ACCESS RAMP,
REPLACEMENT ROOF TILES
AND DEMOLITION OF A
CHIMNEY

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the character and appearance of the host building and that of the area (with consideration for the impact on the significance of the Conservation Area as a designated heritage asset)
- Impact on the Green Belt

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Rudyard Methodist Church dates c.1912 and was built to replace the former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel on Camrose Hill. The building is low-rise with Gothic-revival detailing including tracery on the gable end window. The building is identified as a positive building in the Conservation Area Appraisal (2016).

PROPOSAL

The provision of a new permanent access ramp and steps at the main entrance, within the current approach apron and car park area. Car parking provision is not affected by the proposals. The edge of the new ramp and landing will be protected by a raised stone kerb, the design of which reflects some of the parapet detailing to the existing entrance porch. The opportunity will also be taken to rationalise the drainage around the entrance which is currently subject to ponding.

Permission is also sought for the replacement of the red plain roofing tiles with Staffordshire blue plain clay tiles which are more commonly found within the village and the general Staffordshire Moorlands area.

There is an existing chimney stack to the rear of the church which has been redundant for some time since the replacement of the original coal-fired boilers with an alternative heating system. The chimney has required ongoing maintenance to overcome water penetration problems so it is proposed to dismantle the chimney in conjunction with the re-roofing works. It is anticipated that the stone can be reclaimed for use in the access ramp kerb.

The applicant submits that:

The church has been regularly in use for church services and also forms an important social hub for the village. The roof tiles and battens have now reached the end of their useful life and require replacement. The increasing need to provide disabled and wheelchair access is proving difficult as the current removeable metal ramp is both too steep and too cumbersome to manipulate into position and into storage.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

SMD Design Guide SPD

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 29th May 2025
Neighbour consultation period ends: 29th May 2025
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Horton PC: Fully support this application

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No Objection. The proposal is to improve the main entrance to Rudyard Methodist Church by the construction of an access ramp. The replacement of roof tiles and the demolition of a chimney is also forms part of the proposal. It is considered the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the adopted highway therefore I have no objection (application number SMD/2025/0088).

Canal and River Trust

No comments within consultation period

Conservation Officer

Overall, the proposal would result in a very minor harmful impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area through the introduction of modern feature across the principal elevation. This would be contrary to s.72 of the Act. With reference to the planning policies, this would be 'less than substantial harm' to the designated heritage asset (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework), but at the lower end of the scale of harm. There is clear and convincing justification for this level of harm (par.213 of NPPF) in terms of improving access and the works have been sympathetically designed to the architectural interest of the building and

surrounding Conservation Area. Therefore, there are no objections to the proposal from a conservation perspective.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on the Green Belt

The settlement of Rudyard, including the Methodist Church, is in the Green Belt. Development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions that appear in the closed lists in the NPPF.

One such exception is the enlargement or alteration of a building providing it does not result in a disproportionate size increase over and above that of the original building.

The alterations proposed here would not result in disproportionate size increase and therefore, it is development provided for by the exception. The development would not be inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt.

Principle of Development

In the smaller villages and other rural areas outside of a defined settlement of a larger village or town, Local Plan area strategy policies SS9 and SS10 apply. The smaller villages (SS9) such as Rudyard, shall provide only for appropriate development which enhances community vitality or meets a social or economic need of the settlement and its hinterland. The other rural areas (SS10) will provide only for, inter alia, development which supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas.

Additionally, supplementary Local Plan Policy C1 (sustainable communities) makes support for proposals which protect, retain or enhance existing community facilities.

The proposed alterations deliver merits and benefits in all of these regards. The church has been regularly in use for church services and also forms an important social hub for the village. The roof tiles and battens are said to have now reached the end of their useful life and require replacement. The increasing need to provide disabled and wheelchair access is proving difficult, we are told that the current removeable metal ramp is both too steep and too cumbersome to manipulate into position and into storage.

Impact on Character and Appearance and Significance of the Conservation Area (designated heritage asset)

The proposed ramp would be raised and would be enclosed by a stone edging and posts which would be no higher than 0.5m. As set out in the Design, Access and Heritage Statement, this enclosure to the ramp has been designed to mimic some of the parapet detailing elsewhere on the building. Whilst the ramp would be an overtly modern feature and would slightly intersect features on the principal elevation, the structure would be low-rise and simple in its design. It would not overbear or distract from the architectural interest of the church and there is clear and convincing justification for it in terms of improving access to the building. The proposed elevation also indicates a simple metal handrail to the front elevation, which would be discreet and simple so as to not distract from the building's external appearance.

The supporting information states that the works would involve replacing the red plain tiles with Staffordshire blue plain tiles. Red clay tiles were commonly used in the late-19th and early-20th century Gothic revival design of buildings. Nevertheless, the existing tiles have weathered to quite a dark appearance and Staffordshire blues and blue-grey slates are a common feature in the locality. Whilst this change in material would alter the appearance of the building, it would not be a harmful alteration and would likely blend in with the overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposed removal of the chimney would have a negligible impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as this feature is not of high architectural value or decoration and there are limited views of it from the street.

Overall, the proposal would result in a very minor harmful impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area through the introduction of modern feature across the principal elevation. For the purposes of planning policies, this would be 'less than substantial harm' to the designated heritage asset (the significance of the Conservation Area) (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework), but at the lower end of the scale of harm. There is clear and convincing justification for this level of harm (par.213 of NPPF) in terms of improving access and the works have been sympathetically designed to the architectural interest of the building and surrounding Conservation Area.

The development would relate sympathetically to the host dwelling, adopting a design approach that makes best endeavours in those regards. There would be no harm to the character and appearance of the area and no conflict with policies SS9, SS10, and DC1 of the SMD Local Plan or the Design Guide SPD.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The development would not be inappropriate in the Green Belt. It would deliver benefit and merits with regard to the enhancement and support of community facility and sustainability to comply with Local Plan Policies SS9, SS10 and C1.

Overall, the proposal would result in a very minor harmful impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area through the introduction of modern feature across the principal elevation. For the purposes of planning policies, this would be 'less than substantial harm' to the designated heritage asset (the significance of the Conservation Area) (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework), but at the lower end of the scale of harm. There is clear and convincing justification for this level of harm (par.213 of NPPF) in terms of improving access and the works have been sympathetically designed to the architectural interest of the building and surrounding Conservation Area.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 28/05/2025

X *Jane Curley*

Signed by: Jane Curley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council