

# Design and Access Statement

Accessibility to Holy Trinity Church, Hepworth has long been an issue. The building has 3 entry doors, all inaccessible by wheel-chair users as they are all approached by 3 steps. The principal entrance has a threshold which is 19" above the surrounding ground outside the church. This presents a problem not only to wheel-chair users and to others with mobility issues, but to those pushing prams or buggies or moving heavy loads into or out of church, such as undertakers. This affects many who may wish to enter the church to worship, to visit, to attend events, to work or to take part in the activities of local groups who use the church for their meetings.

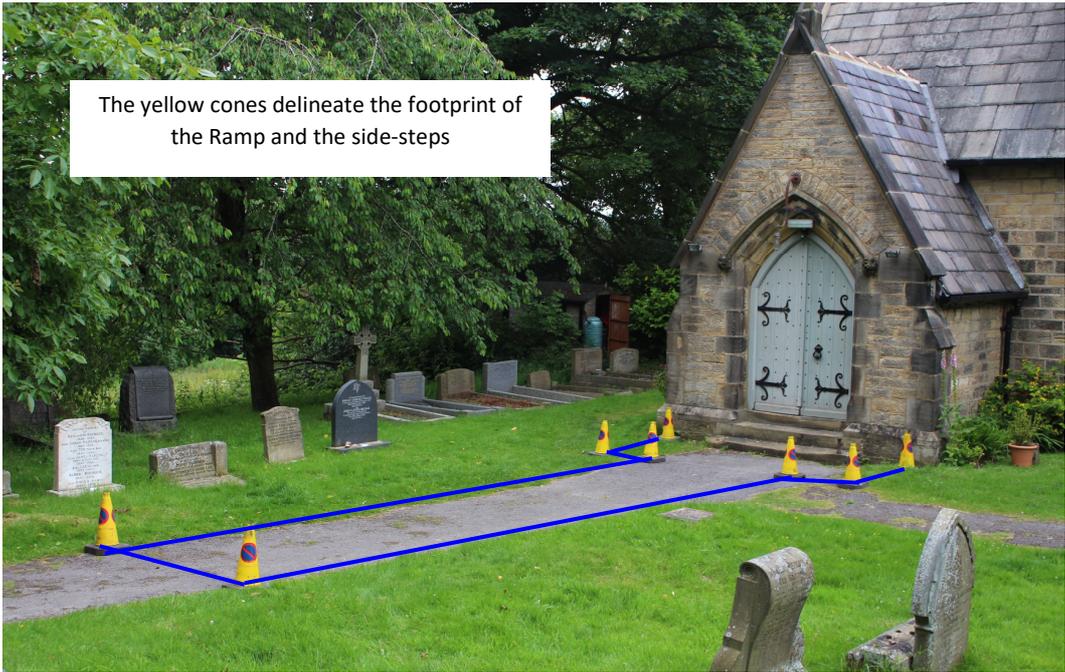
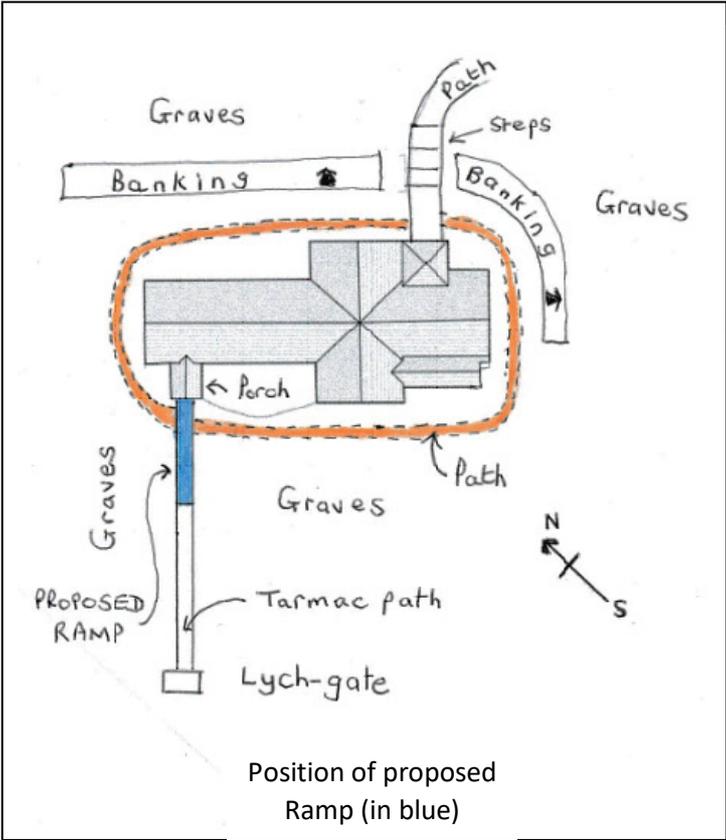
The law requires that, where reasonably practicable, access to public buildings should be made possible for everyone. In the recent past, a light-weight movable ramp (6' long) has occasionally been used to enable wheel-chair users to enter church at the principal entrance, but it has proved unsatisfactory, due partly to its construction and due partly to the steepness of the incline. On one occasion, a user with a heavy electric wheel-chair attempted to use it and came off the ramp, causing him some physical injury. We wish to address this situation by creating a permanent ramp which is both safe and as aesthetically pleasing as possible in the context of a Grade 2 listed Victorian building within a Conservation Area. We have been encouraged to do this by individuals within the village community who have (a) provided us with plans for a ramp, prepared, pro bono, by a local architect, and (b) obtained pledges of some financial assistance from two local organisations, namely the Hepworth Community Association and the Hepworth Community Singers.

We propose that a ramp be constructed on about 9 linear metres of the tarmac pathway which leads away from the church porch (on the south side of the church) in the direction of the lych-gate. It will have a gentle gradient of 1 in 20. The top landing of the ramp will lead into the porch. On each side of the top landing, a set of 3 steps will lead down to ground level. These steps will allow people an alternative means of entering or leaving church.

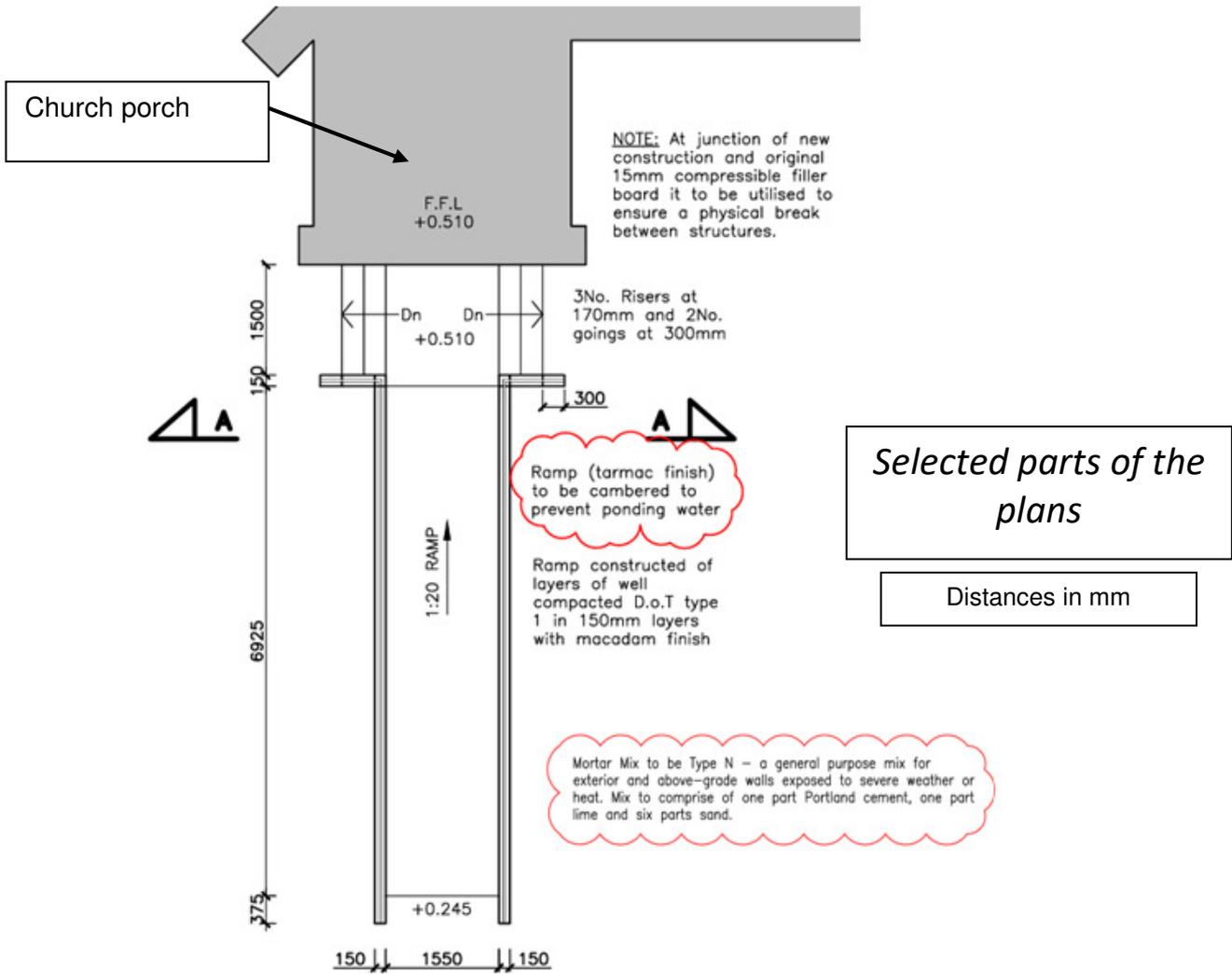
At the porch end, the ramp will cut across a part-grass / part-tarmac path which runs around the whole of the outside of the church building. With a ramp in place, pedestrians who wish to use this path to circumambulate the church will have two options: they may choose to cross the ramp using the steps or choose to walk *around* the ramp by initially walking parallel to the ramp and in the direction of the lych-gate. The first photo below, taken from the lych-gate and looking towards the porch, shows the situation at present. The drawing shows the proposed location of the ramp. The second and third photos show the footprint of the ramp and the associated steps to the sides. The final diagram, copied from the plans, gives more detail of the ramp.



At present



The yellow cones delineate the footprint of the Ramp and the side-steps



Proposed Floor Plan

We have considered employing a *movable* ramp which would be cheaper and might be less visually intrusive than a permanent one. However, if the ramp is to be strong and safe, moving it would (in the case of the example we considered) require at least two able-bodied, competent volunteers each time it were moved from whatever suitable storage facility could be found for it. This requirement would probably seriously restrict its availability and use. We see a permanent ramp as the only viable solution to our problem. We have considered an alternative option, that of re-grading the churchyard adjacent to the principal entrance, but have been advised by two architects (our church architect and the one from the local community) that this would be impracticable in our situation. We have also considered a permanent ramp at the tower entrance, at the rear of the church. We have rejected this alternative as it would largely obstruct the path around the church. In addition, the path to it would be a grass path, unsuitable in wet weather. We also see a ramp at the 'front' of the church as being a more inclusive solution: everyone, the mobile and the less mobile, will be able to enter church together, at the principal entrance.

In the design of this ramp we have given thought to the requirements of village residents and others who wish to walk around the church on the existing paths. It will be clear from the photos and diagrams, above, that the total width of the ramp (1.85 metres) will mean that it occupies much of the width of the tarmac path on which it sits, even allowing for the encroachment of graveyard grass onto the tarmac path. As previously explained, the ramp also cuts across the path around the church. To mitigate these problems we are proposing to widen the tarmac path in the vicinity of the ramp, so that it runs alongside the side walls of the ramp. This will enable pedestrians to walk from the lych-gate, towards the church, on either side of the ramp, and access the existing footpath which goes around the church.