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## Statements of Significance and Need

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Please note that this guidance is currently in draft/consultation form and we are in the process of updating our advice. If you have any comments, feedback or questions, please do contact the DAC Team using the contact details at the end of the leaflet.

More guidance, including templates, is available from the Church Buildings Council:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/statements-significance-and-needs>.

### What are Statements of Significance and Needs?

Statements of Significance and Need are helpful tools for parishes developing a project to change the inside or outside of their listed church buildings. They are required when applying for permission to carry the project out. The Statements help parishes and those giving advice and deciding whether to grant permission understand the church building and churchyard and how the proposal will affect it. They describe the building and how important it is, and what the project is, why it is needed and why it is justified when the impacts on the building are taken into account.

They are an excellent opportunity to improve understanding of the building, its importance and functions. Developing these documents at an early stage of any project will help shape the proposals and ensure they are appropriate for the building and meet the needs of the parish.

This guidance will help you to write your Statements of Significance and Needs to maximise the potential of a project and to assist in the application process.

### Statement of Significance

A Statement of Significance is a document which sets out the special interest of your church and churchyard. This means that whilst it is helpful for the document to set out the broad history of the church, it is also very important to look at the reasons why people value the building and churchyard. This should result in an overall assessment of your building and will help you to understand what you have got, which is an important first step.

Statements of Significance may not need to be created for each project. If you want to check whether the Statements will be needed, please contact the DAC Team (contact details at the end of the leaflet).

You should consider how people value the building as a place for worship and mission, as a historic building which is part of local, regional and national heritage, a community building, and as a local landmark.

The text-box to the right provides background to the use of significance as key to conservation. The term is usually used by heritage professionals to aid in decision-making

#### What does heritage significance mean?

Significance is a fundamental principle of heritage and conservation. A good assessment of significance will help you determine whether changes are appropriate. For many years, Historic England have used four key principles to help determine how people value historic places:

- Evidential value
- Historical value
- Aesthetic value
- Communal value

For more information on these, and what they mean, visit [Historic England's website](#), but this document will help you to assess the significance of your church building without taking each of these in turn.

processes. In your Statement of Significance, you do not have to use the four values defined by Historic England – unless you think they will help you – because the advice in this leaflet will help you to assess the significance of your church building step-by-step.

## Statement of Needs

A Statement of Needs is a separate document – although they can be done as one – which explains the needs of the church/parish/community and how the proposals will help meet the identified needs. This will help to establish why the proposals are needed and, if the proposals are likely to cause harm to the building's significance, it will explain why the benefits outweigh the harm to the significance of the building. Therefore, the Statement of Needs should link and refer to the Statement of Significance.

Further guidance about writing your Statement of Needs can be found below. It will help you think about what to include and how to assess the impact of the proposals.

### Why do we need Statements of Significance and Needs?

As well as the opportunity Statements of Significance and Needs provide for PCCs to improve understanding of their building and churchyard, their needs and possibilities and limitations provided by the building, there is a legislative requirement for the statements. They are required when making a faculty application for a listed church (under [Rule 4.3 of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015](#) and the 2019 amendment).

Additionally, the statements allow those considering the application, including external bodies such as Historic England, the DAC and the Chancellor, to reach their decisions quickly and fairly, equipped with the basic facts, secure in the knowledge that the parish has a clear idea of what it wants to achieve and is aware of the potential consequences.

## Writing Statements of Significance and Needs

Many parishes may feel that they do not have the expertise to produce these documents, particularly the Statement of Significance, but, as users of the building and churchyard, they will often know far more than they think.

Before you start writing a new Statement of Significance, first check three things:

1. Has anyone else previously written a Statement of Significance for the church? If so, you could use this document as a template, and check that everything that is mentioned in this guidance has been included – if it hasn't, then add it in.
2. Is your church listed? If it is, then check the **listing description**, which is available online at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>. This will provide a summary of the building and its key architectural features. You can begin to assess the architectural significance of the building after reading the description; if your church has medieval origins, this will have a high level of significance as it will be amongst the oldest buildings in the country. The description might also have references to other useful sources, or could highlight parts of the building you had not noticed.
3. Guide books or similar leaflets which have been created for visitors to your church building – these have often been researched by someone in the parish and will contain lots of useful information.

Once you have checked the above, the next step should be to check other sources to ensure you have a clear overview of the building and its history. Please see the list of sources in the box on the next page. Many sources will say the same thing about the building but taking a look at a range of sources – some of which might be contradictory – should help you get an idea of the most important parts of the building.

There are plenty of other useful resources available online but do be aware that they might contain errors or be out of date. Look at the church with your own eyes and express yourselves in your own words.

## Some sources of information about your church building

Listing Description <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/> [if your building is not on this list, i.e. not nationally listed, search to see if your Local Planning Authority has a local list including locally important buildings]

Conservation Area Appraisal Document from your Local Planning Authority (this should be online)

The *Buildings of England* series, often referred to as Pevsner – held in local libraries, or contact DAC team.

The Victoria County History - <https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history> (available online through British History online <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/>)

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) – Hertfordshire churches only <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/search/series/rchme>

*Bedfordshire Churches in the Nineteenth Century* by Chris Pickford (Bedfordshire Historical Records Society series) – held in local libraries, or contact the DAC team.

Local archives e.g. Hertfordshire Archives (hold Faculty records across the diocese) <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/> and Bedfordshire Archives (<https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/ArchivesAndRecordOffice.aspx>)

The Historic Environment Record <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/CHR/>

Your Local County Wildlife Trust website might provide information about your churchyard, including if it has been designated a Wildlife site.

## Statement of Significance – Format

It's important to remember that the Statement of Significance is more than simply a descriptive history of the building and churchyard; it should show why it is important to all who are interested in it. It, therefore, should not be pages and pages of description or repetition of the sources outlined above. Use photographs to illustrate the building, e.g. in an appendix, and if you want to highlight an area in particular, e.g. a particularly significant feature, or the area subject to the proposal.

The Statement of Significance should consist of two parts:

**Part I: A general account and overview of the importance of the church**, to those who use it and the wider community. This background information could support all faculty applications for significant changes. To save time when a project emerges, it's a good idea to keep this document up-to-date. A good idea would be to review this section with each Quinquennial Inspection Report. A useful approach would be to organise the section into sections:

- **The setting of the church and the churchyard** (consider whether the church is in a conservation area – you might need to search your local authority website – or if it is the only old or community building in the area, or if the church is set aside from the village etc. For the churchyard, are there any listed monuments, is it home to wildlife, is it capturing carbon in its grass or trees, how is it managed, how is it used by the local community, or is it a cramped space? Describe the surroundings, such as other nearby buildings, e.g. Vicarage, church school, farm/manor?)
- **The main elements of the church (e.g. tower, nave, chancel etc.) and exterior appearance** (are different elements of the church different ages? Where are the older parts of the building? Is the church still as it was when it was built? Do you know the name of the architect and/or have original designs?)

- **The interior (views, levels, arcades, uses of different parts of the building etc.)** (Have any internal elements been identified in the listing description or other sources? What are the uses for the different parts of the church?)
- **Notable fittings and contents (font, monuments, woodwork etc.)** (are any of the fittings significant? If there are pews, do you know how old they are, or if they are the same age as the building? How old is the font? Are there any important windows or memorials in the church? These could have local, regional or national importance. If all the internal features are of one age, and modest, that is all you need to say)
- **Timeline (of changes and developments, including recent, this could include changes to the building, internal fittings, memorials and the layout)**

There could be additional parts of your church, or parts within, which do not neatly fit into these categories but it is worth including them if they are important and special to anyone who uses the building or within the community.

**Part II: The significance of the particular area affected by the proposal** including the potential impact of the works. This part will be written specifically for each individual proposal and should include more detail. If the works are to a particular fitting/fixture, you will need to determine its age (if possible) but you might also want to consider its value for people depending on how it has been used in the past. For example, a medieval font has high significance in terms of age, and it is likely that hundreds, or even thousands, of people have been baptised in the font, giving it even greater communal and religious significance. Even a more modern font will have that same communal and religious significance. It is also worth noting whether the particular area/object enhances the significance of the building overall. If a poor intervention in the building has occurred in the past, the area itself might not be contributing to the significance of the building.

#### **Ways to describe the importance of church buildings**

- **Outstanding** – one of England’s best (usually Grade I or Grade II\*)
- **Special** – a high quality historic asset (usually Grade II)
- **Local** – mainly valued as a feature of the local scene; usually unlisted (or locally listed, if applicable)

#### **Ways to assess the impacts of proposals on the character**

- **Positive** – enhances character and appearance
- **Neutral** – neither enhances nor detracts
- **Negative/Intrusive** - detracts

It is also important to discuss the potential impact of the proposals on the significance of the area, as should have been determined. Some proposals will have a positive impact on significance, for example will remove clutter or will reveal significant architectural features. Others will have a negative impact but don’t panic, you should justify this in the Statement of Needs, and it might be that it will negatively impact one thing, but will positively impact another.

Set out which options have been considered by the PCC and the impact these would have on the proposed area.

### **Statement of Needs – Format**

The following suggested format sets out a way of presenting a Statement of Needs in order to cover all the relevant information to ensure it serves both the parish and those who are involved in the faculty process. Much of the guidance contains questions to help you consider your specific needs, so some of them may not be relevant to your project.

### **Section A: General Information**

This section should set out information about the parish, congregation and community and help interested parties understand what activities are already going on in the building and churchyard (and on other related sites, e.g. church hall, if appropriate). It is useful to have this information available for any proposal, but you

may wish to tailor the level of detail according to the scale of the parish's needs and of the impact of meeting these. You could consider the following questions:

- How many people live in the parish/village/town? How many people are on the electoral roll?
- How many people attend services on average? What services do you regularly hold throughout the week/month?
- What is the general make up of the congregation e.g. predominantly elderly/wide variety/growing numbers of pre-school children?
- If there is a Sunday school, creche or other similar groups, give details of what age-groups meet together and what the average attendance is.
- Is the church normally left open in daylight hours?
- What is the churchyard used for? E.g. fete, photography, educational purposes.
- What other community facilities are available in the local area?
- Does the parish have a church hall or other buildings? An indication of their size, facilities, distance from church and state of repair can be helpful, if relevant
- When was the last Quinquennial Inspection Report? Are there any major outstanding issues that were highlighted in the report?
- Explain briefly how the project will be financed, e.g. grants, existing funds, bequest, fundraising (more detailed information about this is required later in the faculty process)
- Have there been changes in the parish or community that are relevant to how the needs of the parish have changed or which have prompted the new proposals now e.g. a new vicar, introduction of music group, new housing development in the village bringing new families, worsening situation with church hall, a bequest to spend?

## **Section B: The needs**

The next stage in the Statement is to explain the needs of the parish now and in the longer-term. Often, proposals may develop from your parish's Mission Action Plan priorities and, in such cases, you should make sure you refer to this in this section. You may find it helpful to describe the needs using headings, such as:

- *Facilities* – such as toilets/kitchens. Do you already have these? If you don't but want to create new facilities, how would it improve use of the building? Which groups are prevented from using the building, but would be able to do so with improved facilities?
- *Space* – does the existing space of the church limit meetings? Does the space limit use of the building by certain groups?
- *Access* – how is access restricted in the building? Who is prevented from accessing the space? How big are the issues affecting access?
- *Liturgy* – does the current arrangement of the building limit worship? Are temporary solutions used to enable different types of liturgy?
- *Environmental* – does the church have an EcoChurch award, or is it working towards one? Are there plans to reduce the building's environmental impact?
- *Other* – what other needs/limitations are faced by the people using the building? Which groups and community members are unable to use the building?

If you have prepared a brief for your architect explaining what you want to achieve then you could include this for reference.

Be clear about whether uses and activities are aspirational or more definite – are there particular existing groups that want to make use of the church, but cannot due to the lack of heating or other facilities? Explain why you consider meeting the need(s) outlined is necessary now and in the immediate future in order to assist the church in its worship and mission.

## **Section C: The proposal**

The next stage is to explain what it is that you are proposing in order to meet the needs that you have set out in section B. Try to think about some of the discussions at PCC, fabric committee or other similar

meetings, where often the project has been discussed at length with options reviewed and analysed in detail.

You need to explain what other options you have considered and why they were dismissed, especially if they involve impacts on elements included in the Statement of Significance. Be honest and don't exaggerate. If there was a viable alternative but the PCC preferred this proposal then explain why. Others will ask this question.

If the project is at an early stage then you can use simple amateur sketches or marked photos to illustrate ideas. Wherever possible include a complete floor plan of the church as this greatly assists people in visualising the layout of the building.

If the project is large and you need multiple rooms / toilets then explain how you envisage the space being used. Explain which rooms will need to be used simultaneously. If it helps, include a chart or timetable of projected weekly use to illustrate what you are expecting.

If the project has a particular element of liturgical reordering it could be helpful to explain your expectations and what you want the result to achieve. The word 'flexible' is often used but does not necessarily demonstrate what you are hoping for. Try and be more specific if you can. Use examples and explain how you would use a flexible space to meet the needs you set out in Section B.

### **Section D: Support and practicalities**

Your project may provide a facility for wider users than the church congregation. If so, explain here what research you have undertaken into possible uses and explain why you believe the project to be viable. It may be useful with larger projects to prepare and include a Business Plan. This is also an opportunity to show evidence of support from potential users.

Will the project affect the maintenance and upkeep of the church building or churchyard? If it increases costs, is it likely to generate income that can meet these? If it will not generate income, how will what is needed be found? Include this information here.

### **Section E. Justification**

The final stage is to explain how the proposals relate to the Statement of Significance and to justify the alterations that are to be proposed in the context of your particular building and churchyard. The Chancellor will use the Duffield questions (see <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/church-buildings-council/how-we-manage-our-buildings>, under heading *How will your chancellor make their decision?*) which demonstrates the importance of understanding the impact of the proposals and of clearly and convincingly justifying the proposals.

If you are proposing something that will impact on, change the setting of, or move something that has been highlighted as important in the Statement of Significance, this is the opportunity to explain why you consider this is necessary. Refer back to other options that you considered and explain how you weighed up the benefits against the significance of the object/item in question.

**Additional information and advice is available from the DAC team. Contact details are available at [www.stalbans.anglican.org/dac/who-s-who-in-buildings/](http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/dac/who-s-who-in-buildings/).**

Diocesan Office, Holywell Lodge, 41 Holywell Hill, St Albans, Herts, AL1 1HE  
Email: [dac@stalbands.anglican.org](mailto:dac@stalbands.anglican.org) Tel: 01727 818138