



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches

What to expect from a DAC visit

Why a visit?

PCCs often embark on exciting new projects that will affect their church building. These may include installing a WC and kitchen, or a new re-ordering to allow for alternative liturgy or wider community use. Such projects will naturally require a faculty and an early meeting with representatives of the Diocesan Advisory Committee can be helpful in two respects: It can help the DAC understand better the reasons behind the proposals, and secondly it allows the PCC to share their hopes and aspirations in a wider forum.

A site visit may be proposed by the PCC before any paperwork has been submitted, or alternatively, by the DAC once some preliminary drawings have been received. A visit should always be regarded as a positive step. Visits will be arranged at a mutually convenient time taking into account clergy days off and regular activities at the church.

This leaflet describes what to expect from such a visit and what can be done to prepare for the meeting.

Who will come?

The DAC has a number of specialists at its disposal – there is a list in this leaflet – as well as architect and lay members. The Secretary will attempt to ensure that the appropriate specialists are present at the meeting.

In order to be as efficient as possible, the DAC may well visit a number of churches on the same day. This means that some advisers coming to the church may not be pertinent to your project but may be needed at the next church on the itinerary. Some advisers will join the group half-way round a series of visits, so while we try and use as few cars as possible, we may turn up in more than one or two vehicles.

Visiting parties will tend to number five or six including the Secretary and his assistant. The Archdeacon may be among the party and may chair the meeting. The

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Assistant Secretary will take notes of the meeting. Meetings generally last for about 30 - 45 minutes. It is therefore important that the DAC is aware of any other issues the PCC would like to discuss prior to the visit so that time can be properly allocated.

Anybody else?

Occasionally, other organisations will be invited to the visit. These may include Historic England, the Victorian Society, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), the Church Buildings Council (CBC) and the local authority. This may seem overwhelming but these bodies may have a role in granting permission and it is useful for them to understand why the project is required. A 45 minute meeting can save a huge amount of correspondence. However, if it is important that these bodies are represented it may take some time to arrange the meeting as diaries for representatives are often full for weeks in advance.

Unless the project is at a very early stage it is often preferable to have the PCC's architect present. This is ultimately the PCC's decision and it will be up to you to ask him / her but when arranging the visit the DAC Secretary will suggest whether he thinks the architect should be present. It is up to the PCC to decide who should attend from its membership but it is better if more than one person is present.

What happens?

The meeting will start with everyone introducing themselves including the PCC representatives. We will then normally ask someone from the PCC to explain the project to us. The DAC representatives will be listening to you. If a DAC member leaves the group then this may be that his / her specialism is not required at this visit and they are admiring your building or else they wish to view a particular piece of the building from a different angle. During the course of the visit it may be necessary for a short break in proceedings so that the DAC representatives can examine the proposals in context and discuss matters among themselves.

After the PCC's explanation of the project the DAC and other parties may ask questions. Some will sound rather naive but please be patient – the PCC may have been discussing a project for many months and this may be the first time the DAC has heard your plans.

It is likely alternatives to your proposal will be suggested. This is not unusual and is a way of considering the options and eliminating them. The DAC and others may have seen a number of similar projects elsewhere and will want to share with you what has worked in another church. This is not necessarily to dismiss your plans but part of finding the best solution.

At the end of the visit the chair will sum up what has been discussed. It may be that you will hear the initial comments of the visiting party or they may wish to discuss it further in full committee. Comments made by the visiting party are subject to ratification by the DAC.

The follow-up

The written report will be issued after it has been seen by the DAC. You will receive under separate cover comments from any of the other groups attending. The report will suggest what steps the PCC may wish to take.

Major projects may require more than one visit. If this occurs the Secretary will do his best to ensure the same members of the DAC revisit so that continuity occurs.

More information

Please contact the DAC Secretary on 01473 298533 or email james.halsall@cofesuffolk.org for more information or to arrange a visit. Please visit the DAC web-pages for more useful notes on how to look after your church www.cofesuffolk.org

v.3.0 October 2015