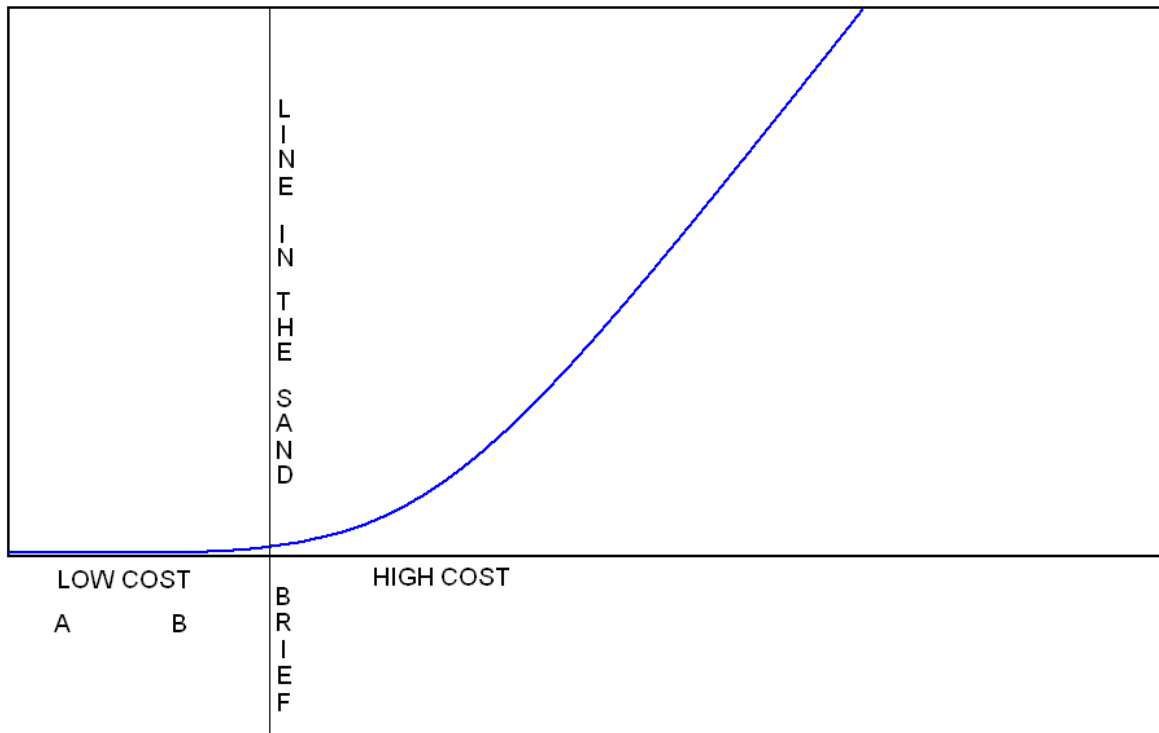


# BEFORE LIFTING THE PENCIL



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## **BEFORE LIFTING THE PENCIL**

Architects are problem solvers but before they can solve a problem the problem has to be defined. Why am I here, why are you here? It is because we all realise that many projects do not run smoothly or economically and this is usually because of a lack of clear understanding between The Parochial Church Council's and their Professional Advisors.

Any project starts with an idea, an idea or a need for change. I hope everyone here would agree this is where a project starts - but the purpose of my talk today, which I have entitled **BEFORE LIFTING THE PENCIL**, is to define where, in my opinion, the brief fits into that process. This is very important because very few successful projects are realised in the absence of a fully developed brief.

Investment in time and energy into achieving a well formulated brief saves time, money, aggravation and the potential of poor results and in the long term pays handsome dividends. Remember it is absolutely essential to achieve a highly developed brief from which and on which your architect can grow an ultimate design which will excite and respond to the needs of the brief.

A brief must be more than a 'Statement of Need' which you will need to prepare to support a Petition for Faculty - and some may think that this will suffice as a brief - It will not - the brief must be the result of a thorough analysis of the ideas and desires set down in the Statement of Need.

Prior to the formal appointment and therefore dialogue with your professional advisor The Parochial Church Council should have identified who would be leading the appraisal, who would be collating needs which cover the overarching requirements of the project, who would be reviewing the fund raising or finances and who would be collating this information to enable The Parochial Church Council to clearly instruct their appointed architect to formalise the briefing document.

As an aside it is important to realise that whilst you may have set up a procedure where various people are appointed to deal with certain aspects of the project. It is also a very good trait to get each person to step outside their natural character and look at the other person's problems – the treasurer looking at the aesthetic problems, the retired engineer looking at the flower arrangers requirements.

Expect this to be a difficult process, it will cover conflicting views, it will contain all the normal data like physical requirements of actual things and lists of accommodation for objects and people. However it is essential you reach a consensus before meeting your architect to go through the process of developing the formal briefing document.

Even when you meet your architect do not think the process is complete or will be easy. Your architect will guide you through the key requirements. These will embrace psychological information about feelings and states of mind, worries, likes and dislikes all of which have the most profound effect on the physical aspect – character, form and material of the final building project.

The brief is not a brief unless the briefing document not only states the problem but also understands the problem. Many buildings are simply statements of problems, problems perpetuated in the built form. A good building uses the problem and helps it create its own solution. The problem remains but is absorbed and enjoyed in the final goal.

So make sure that you approach your pre-formal brief analysis with an

**OPEN MIND – NO PRE-CONCEIVED IDEAS - BY STEPPING OUTSIDE YOUR NATURAL CHARACTER – AND ENSURING A CONSENSUS HAS BEEN REACHED**

To reach a point where a draft briefing document can be prepared for debate and review, and then become the document which will form the basis of the project, the following is a process, covered by simple headings, which can be followed – **Who, What, Why, When, Where and How**

**WHO**

The Parochial Church Council must decide who on your committee is going to be your single spokesman to your architect. Clear lines of communication are of paramount importance for any project to be successful.

You will also need to identify on your committee those people responsible for your own internal information gathering – fund raising, public meetings, history and collation of information from these various sources.

**WHAT**

Explore your own views on the physicality of space; would this spoil the interior of the church, does it reduce the light. What effect does the project have on the outside of the church? Are there archaeological reasons why the project can not be carried out in a particular location?

What are the functions – does a single toilet serve 200 people when the interval comes during a concert. Are three toilets too much to serve the normal congregation?

Decide on the quality you wish to achieve

Think about the Emotional Characteristics – what happens when you realise that you do not like the result of the answer to the brief. [You did not tell the architect that the windows should not be bigger than 1m square and you have been given a glass box] - Test this well

Consider the financial parameters and the analysis of cash flow

Think very carefully about what do you not want – things such as a big debt, a modern building, or a pastiche?

**WHY**

For record purposes, write down the aims of your project and why you are entertaining the undertaking. It is important here to understand that you can not design for averages [Do not look at the solution in the next parish and say we want our project to be just like that] and it is pointless to try. Every project will have its own problems which must be understood and to this understanding must be brought imagination.

Ask - Is there anything missing or wrong with the existing

Does anything existing need to be enlarged, reduced or brought up to date?

Do we need to do this project at all – sometimes it is better to do nothing.

**WHEN**

Prepare a time frame within which you wish to achieve your aims.

Draw up a programme.

Analyse when you require money to support the programme and how much money you need to complete the programme. No contract should be entertained if funds are not available to complete the project at the point of signing the contract.

Bear in mind when drawing up your programme once your professional advisor has been instructed there are a substantial number of legislative hurdles to negotiate including:

|                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Listed Building Consent      | Biodiversity             |
| Planning Permission          | Church Buildings Council |
| Petition for Faculty         | English Heritage         |
| Building Regulation Approval | Various societies        |

These negotiations will take time and will have an affect on your programme.

## **WHERE**

Is there sufficient space inside to achieve your needs? Would this have any significant impact on the interior of the building, visually, archeologically, does it impede access or diminish the seating?

Could the accommodation be outside is it best suited outside? Should it be attached or detached.

Does this have any significant effect on the aesthetic appearance of the building or impact on the historic fabric of the building?

If the church has bells has access been left available for removal and have the bell ringers been consulted.

If you are considering moving the font, establishing a nave altar or re-arranging the pews does this have an effect on liturgy?

## **HOW**

Governance – Consider the importance of the lines of communication [one instructor]

How do you raise the money – what are the requirements for making grant applications and can these be met.

Operation of your building whilst the work is in progress.

How do you wish to undertake the procurement of prices and contractors?

- Do it yourself – always consider it is best to have the work overseen by your professional advisor. Are they happy to undertake the work in this manner?
- Parish Contractor – your preferred option of contractor
- Negotiated prices
- Competitive tender.
- NB: Your architect, once appointed will assist you in this process

## **THE INITIAL DRAFT**

Your architect will prepare an initial draft briefing document which you will have the opportunity of discussing with the parish and members with your committee, alterations can and must occur here if the briefing document does not portray the full extent of the information arising from your pre-formal brief analysis. This document is then amended by the architect and returned to the parish who will at this stage need to formally sign off the document.

## **READ THIS COLD – LOOK FOR ANY LOOPHOLES OR DEFICIENCIES**

**Because this provides the definition and detail of the problem to be solved.**

## TWO FINAL WORDS OF WARNING

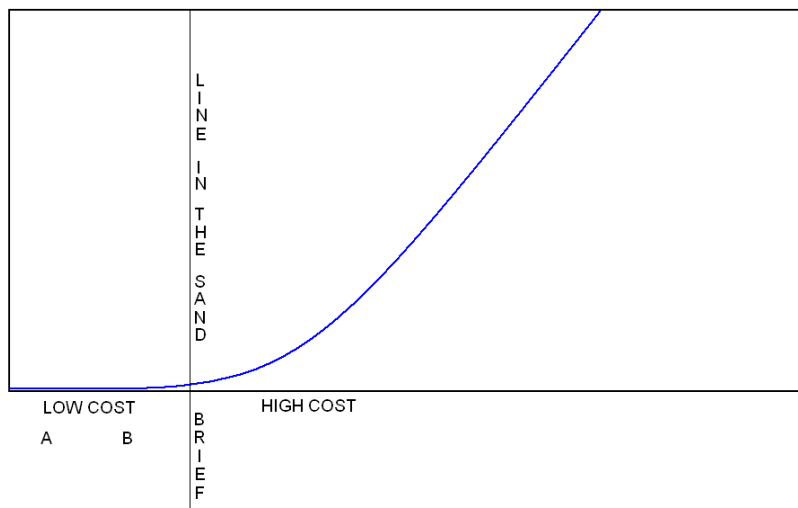
1. What can sometimes go wrong is that your architects in their enthusiasm and willingness to help will join in and commence design too early before the signed off brief has been achieved. Unfortunately this early enthusiasm can result in expensive redesign later, which will carry significant cost. Avoid this at all costs.
- 2 With the increasing need to use churches for secular purposes to raise funds to maintain the fabric sooner or later there will come a requirement to comply with the same rules as any other public building – public health [cream teas cake stalls hand wash basins] , toilet accommodation [number provision requirement] full compliance with disabled discrimination, and fire [protection and escape].

## ENSURE YOU HAVE FUTURE PROOFED YOUR BUILDING

At this stage you have reached a point where

### A LINE DRAWN HAS BEEN DRAWN IN THE SAND

Once this line has been drawn you have reached the point where changes in the formal brief will cost money, cause delay and lead to frustration. Avoid this at all costs and remember:-



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