

STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE AND NEEDS



If you're seeking permission to make a permanent change to your church building, then the application needs to be accompanied by documents called Statements of Significance and Needs.

This only applies if your church is listed – they aren't usually required for faculty applications involving unlisted churches.

The aim of these documents is to:

- explain what you want to do
- why you want to do it
- the impact of your proposal on the building

They're crucial in helping the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) to give you good advice and making sure your application is processed smoothly and promptly.

Writing Statements of Significance and Needs can sometimes feel like a worrying prospect, especially if you've never done it before. That's understandable, but there's no need for concern. It's not an exam and we're keen to help you get them right.

We want to help you and ensure you get a fair hearing.

It isn't obligatory to have final drafts of your Statements of Significance and Needs ready when you first approach the DAC, but writing them can be a very useful exercise.

It can help to clarify your thinking and crystallise your proposal eg, once you understand which features make your church historically and architecturally significant, you'll understand where there may be scope for change. It's also very useful in helping you to formulate a brief for an architect.

If you're still unsure what to do, the DAC Office can provide examples of Statements of Significance and Needs from old applications to give you a sense of how they should look.

Remember:

- There's no one correct way to write them - every church is unique and every proposal is unique.
- There's no need to write reams either - only the hard and fast requirement is clarity.

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Statement of Needs

This is the 'why' and 'how' of your application.

Imagine that you're explaining your proposal to someone who's never heard about it or visited your church before. Perhaps consider:

- How did the project come about?
- Why do you want to do it?
- Did you look at any other ways of achieving what you wish to do? If so, why did you decide against them?
- Does your proposal address a shortcoming in the building or its services? If so, what is that and what problems does it cause?
- How will what you wish to do improve the life of your parish?
- How will it help to further mission?

Taking some time to set out the justification will pay dividends.

A proposal that involves major change but has been well thought through and shown to be the only viable solution will get a much more sympathetic hearing from the DAC than a low impact proposal whose rationale isn't clear.

Your application may include:

- Drawings of the building as existing and as proposed
- A written proposal
- Professional information, such as literature from the manufacturer of equipment that you plan to install.

Sometimes it can take a little while to make sense of an application consisting of a large number of different documents, so it's really useful to include a summary of the proposal in the Statement of Needs.

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Statement of Significance

This divides into two sections.

1 Section One

The first sets out the history of the building:

- When was it built?
- Who designed it, if known?
- How has the building evolved over time?
- What are its architecturally and historically most important features?
- Does it contain any notable artworks or fittings?
- What is the date of the bells?
- Who made the organ?
- Are there any famous historical figures or events associated with your church?

Do include plans and photographs of the building, both up-to-date and historical.

The DAC team can help supply or direct you towards sources of background information.

You may already have a church guide with this information. This can be an excellent basis for a Statement of Significance, but doesn't necessarily replace it - it's important to tailor the information to each particular proposal.

2 Section Two

The second part should explain what the impact of the proposals will be:

- Will it be visual (ie somehow change the appearance of the building inside or outside) or physical (i.e. necessitate the demolition or alteration of fabric)?
- Will fittings need to be removed or relocated?

This section is really important because it will guide the response of the DAC and the external bodies that we'll need to consult – such as Historic England, the national amenity societies and, sometimes, the Church Buildings Council.

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Tips to writing your Statements

Don't assume prior knowledge on any else's part

Many of the people involved in the decision-making process won't have been party to the discussions with the DAC. They may not even know your church. It's helpful to provide background information.

Illustrate!

A picture really does tell a thousand words. If you don't have any digital photographs of your own, the DAC team can send them or take them for you. Don't forget to provide information about the part of the building affected by your proposal. Include photographs of this area and use captions and, if necessary, annotations such as arrows to explain what they show if it isn't immediately obvious.

Keep it concise and focused

Everyone involved in the decision-making process is busy. The easier you make it to understand what's proposed and why, the more quickly and easily you will obtain your faculty.

Keep it proportional

If you're planning a major scheme costing thousands of pounds that will change completely the appearance of your church, then a comprehensive account of the building is essential for the Statement of Significance. Likewise, detailed information about parish life and the demographics of your village or town may also be vital to help establish the justification. But for a minor proposal, a couple of paragraphs should be sufficient for each.

If you're planning on installing equipment, include data sheets for each item of hardware. These should include an illustration of it and specifications, such as the dimensions. You can usually download these from the manufacturer's website. State clearly what's going to be installed, how many items and where. If you're installing electrical equipment, explain how the wiring will be routed.