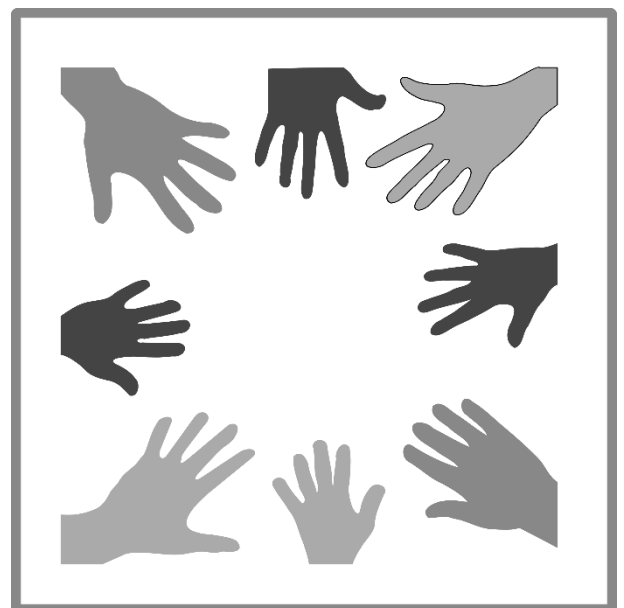


MISSIONAL BUILDINGS

Guidance



STARTING POINT

The headings and questions are designed to guide and assist the building review process.

The conclusions drawn from each section will suggest a starting point for gathering review actions. These actions will combine to form a Church Building Sustainability Plan.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

- This is a mission tool.
- We are working in a period when we are all discerning the ways in which the nature of Church and the facilities it needs will change, and the way this will shape us needs to be considered at the start of the process.
- Synod can use this information to advise and work with you.
- Regular review and compromise will part of the process of working through the plan.

CREATING A BUILDINGS PLAN

It is important to recognise the influence inherited buildings have upon the nature and life of the Church. The success of the appraisal will depend upon understanding and seeing past the familiarity and the natural relationship between the building and the occupiers. The building to a great extent determines how we see ourselves and what we feel able to do and this should not be allowed to dominate or distort long term mission planning.

Therefore, your vision should not be restricted by adopting a starting point which assumes that all, or parts, of the building – whatever shape or size, whether ‘listed’ or not - cannot be changed for conservation, attachment or financial reasons.

Church families often fail to consider seriously what might be the right thing to do owing to concerns about affordability. It is important that your existing buildings and your financial limitations do not constrain thinking about future mission possibilities at too early a stage of the mission vision process, even if compromises become inevitable further down the line.

The questions posed below will not apply equally to every Church family, but it is likely that most will need to be considered to some extent in facilitating mission. It can help to understand this through the lens of a buildings review.

The Building Action Plan should be shaped at each stage by an understanding of the nature and needs of the community and the church family.

1. LOCATION

The location of most Church families within the community is fixed by inertia and the buildings they occupy, and past investment in buildings can discourage relocation consideration.

However, particular aspects of the site and immediate surroundings may no longer serve the purposes of the Church family or may limit reaching out and longer-term development.

Good stewardship requires a realistic assessment of the mission potential, since further investment in the wrong location will extend the period before the problem is addressed and may not be the best use of the funds available.

Remember that investment in the wrong location, unless it overcomes the problems, tends to perpetuate the problem for a further generation.

LOCATION ISSUES

1. Do you serve a local community or a gathered Church family from a wider geographical area?
2. Knowing the broad nature of your mission and recent and prospective developments in the community or area you serve, are you in the right location? If not is this a significant limitation?
3. Are other Churches better located?
4. Are your buildings easy to recognise and find?
5. Are there local factors which create barriers between the community and the Church buildings? (Possibly a partially concealed location, difficult access, lack of on-site parking or vehicular access and lack of future expansion space.) What sort of impact does this have upon the way the Church relates to the community and how would you change it?
6. Does your location significantly restrict improvements or alterations to the buildings you occupy?

2. BUILDING FABRIC, MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

Include significant maintenance, management and general compliance issues. These may be determined by a quinquennial survey where relevant.

3. ACCOMMODATION

These questions seek to develop an understanding of the difference between the building you occupy and the one you need. It is a mission strategy facilitating question.

BASIC FACILITIES

Taking account of the following, and other relevant factors produce a schedule of the accommodation needed and a schedule of existing accommodation for comparison:

1. Room sizes and flexibility in use
2. Ability to accommodating future change.
3. Relationship of rooms and accessibility into and around the building.
4. Adequate and suitable toilet facilities.
5. Catering and hospitality facilities
6. Safeguarding and general security requirements.
7. Any specialist facilities for children and adults.
8. Reception and welcoming facilities, single point of entry.
9. Administration facilities.
10. Storage.

11. Car access and parking.
12. External spaces.

SIGNIFICANT RESTRICTIONS

Review and record any significant aspects of the buildings which make it difficult to provide the environment required.

1. Building too small or too large.
2. Historic building or one which has extensive family and community embedded memories.
3. Heating, cooling, ventilation and other internal environment challenges.
4. For buildings added to and altered over a period of time, has this process produced a coherent and efficient layout and circulation?
5. Accommodation spread over more than one building.
6. Access to toilets and refreshment facilities for all users.
7. Age and nature of the building fabric and any limited lifespan.
8. Fire safety and other significant facilities management issues.
9. General accessibility to the building and all parts within the building for all users taking account of the variety of mobility, visual, hearing and all of those other human conditions which are addressed in more detail in the Equalities Act,
10. Confused entrance arrangements.

4. FACILITATING

'We shape our buildings, and thence they shape us'. Winston Churchill. Buildings inherited from past generations (even mid-20th Century) can reflect a different approach to reaching out and being Church. Just like inherited ways of doing things, this can unwittingly shape how the Church sees itself and what it is called to do.

The separation of the Worship space from Halls and other spaces used for outreach and by the community is a common element of buildings added to over a period of time, which may not reflect the nature of the Church family today.

Worship spaces which have remained significantly unaltered since being shaped by previous generations do not always facilitate and reflect the way we seek to worship now. Issues can arise in relation to the seating layout; the way any platform can be used; ease of seeing and hearing worship leaders (particularly in spaces designed for elevated pulpits); the theology of the layout (e.g. centrality – or otherwise - of the pulpit and organ); the suitability of the area where Worship is conducted, particularly if the existing pulpit and platform are not used; the nature of the decorations and furnishings; the control of natural light and the ability to enhance worship with lighting, audio and video technology; and the degree of comfort we now expect.

GROWING THE FRINGE

Produce a diagram or simple explanation showing what aspects of the building are suitable or needed to:

1. Make contact / welcome everybody who uses the building, growing the fringe.

2. How the building can be used to make contact with those on the fringe to draw them closer to the Church family and to pass on your faith.

THE WORSHIP SPACE

1. Does the size, location, furnishings, layout, and fittings such as pews, organ and pulpit of the Worship space reflect the nature of the Church family today and facilitate the ways the family seeks to worship and use the space?
2. To what extent does the nature of the Worship space dictate patterns of worship and use?
3. In what ways would you seek to change, or increase the use of, the space?

THE OPEN DOOR

1. Visible means of offering a presence and 'being there' every day.

5. DO YOU NEED YOUR OWN BUILDING

Buildings can be slow to change and adapt to changing needs and for some activities using suitable spaces in the community may be more effective. Building ownership problems and viability often lead to Church closure. Shared community or Church use of buildings may be a realistic opportunity for some and this needs to be considered before committing to an existing situation.

SOME STARTING POINTS

1. Do you need your own building?
2. Are some aspects of your work better located in other places and not necessarily in buildings owned by the Church?
3. Might your mission strategy lead you to consider sharing buildings with other community partners, or other Church families?
4. Would Synod assistance help you to explore these issues with other Church families and denominations?

6. OUR HERITAGE AND TELLING OUR STORY

Church buildings reflect the churchmanship of the generations who influenced their construction and re-ordering. This can sometimes tell an important story of the Christian and wider community. Church Buildings can hold embedded memories for individuals and communities of significant events and personal life events.

There is a secular expectation that we will maintain 'listed' and other buildings which mark secular historical events or have architectural and townscape features worthy of recognition. These buildings can be changed to improve their effectiveness today, subject to an understanding of their heritage, and it is not helpful to assume therefore that a 'listed' building must be maintained unaltered.

SOME STARTING POINTS

1. Do you feel the need to maintain parts or all of your building for the reasons set out above?
2. If you are maintaining a 'listed' or locally significant building, to what extent does this shape the life of the Church?
3. Do you use your building to tell our Christian story, can you welcome the community and visitors and assist them in interpreting what they see?
4. To what extent do you encourage community involvement in the building, can this be increased as a means of reaching out?

7. REFLECTING THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH FAMILY

The Churches buildings are your corporate statement or 'shop window'. We often form judgements about individuals and organisations based on the buildings they occupy. The appearance of our buildings probably speaks louder than notice boards and will strongly influence the community perception of the Church family. These messages can include:

- A closed door/building within a lively community may speak of Church as just for Sunday and disinterested in the life of the community.
- A building from the past may suggest a faith which is no longer relevant today.
- A badly maintained and shabby building sends out a message of apathy or decline.
- Walls/front gardens/private spaces may create a barrier between the building and the community.
- The lack of a clear, welcoming and easily accessible entrance may make it a secret place.
- The building may not speak of being the Church family home or reflect the nature of the family.

SOME STARTING POINTS

1. It is difficult to see a familiar building as others see it, but what messages does your building send out and what messages would you chose it to say. Perhaps ask the community outside the Church family what messages your building sends out. Which of them are a true reflection of the Church family and which need to be rectified?
2. In what ways do the buildings and their furnishings speak to the Church family? Which (if any) parts or aspects of your buildings are important to the Church family and should be retained and preserved in the longer term?
3. What should todays Church building look like?

8. SPIRITUALITY

Church buildings work on a variety of levels and the spiritual dimension or 'thin place' can be a significant worshipping community and wider community asset.

SOME STARTING POINTS

1. Spirituality within the community is not necessarily expressed through inherited non-conformist Christian spaces, is this something to explore?
2. Is a permanently accessible place for community personal reflection needed? Does the theology expressed in the building reflect the nature of the Church family?
3. How can the building be used to develop community spirituality?

9. ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND VIABILITY

SOME STARTING POINTS

1. Do you have the skills within the Church family to manage the buildings?
2. Do you need external assistance to manage asbestos, accessibility, fire safety, users' health and safety issues for example?
3. Do you plan and budget for annual or cyclical maintenance and repair? Do you have the financial resources to support the mission of the Church and run and properly maintain the buildings? If finance is a current or approaching problem what measures need to be taken before it is too late?
4. As lettings do not normally fully cover the costs of running and maintaining premises, what type of building would you need just to meet the Church's needs?
5. Do you feel a requirement to maintaining buildings primarily used by others?
6. Do you think that you are able through your resources, supplemented by grants and loans, to carry out the longer-term large-scale conservation and repair works which may be required in the next 20 years – including some 50 or 100 year events like roof, wiring, brick and stone refurbishment and window replacement?
7. Do you consider that your buildings or part of them have reached the end of their economic life?

10. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Statement 10 of Vision 2020's Mission Framework requires us to take responsibility for the environmental impact of our activities, buildings and the way we use them. Addressing Climate Change and other major issues regarding natural resources and waste management now requires significant action and Churches have recognised their role in playing their part and acting as an example to those around us based upon our Christian understanding of creation.

The Synod Environmental Policy commits us to ensuring that its buildings and land are environmentally friendly" and the resulting Action plan summarise the current expectations and approaches that will assist in achieving the Policy objectives.

The United Reformed Church Environmental Policy sets the challenge of achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2030.

As an extension to this commitment all Churches are encouraged to set a Net Zero Carbon target for their buildings which sits alongside the longer-term government and COP 26 aims. This is effectively the intention where possible of achieving a balance between the discharge into the atmosphere of greenhouse gasses which are largely responsible for climate change.

And the gasses extracted from the atmosphere. In this case in relation to occupying, managing and maintaining our buildings.

This is becoming a significant factor in building management and the implications and pressures to respond will increase over the next few years, including the likelihood that Building Regulations approval for alterations will carry the requirement for significant improvements to the performance of the remainder of the building. Because the technology for sustainable heating and power generation and the standards for the performance of the building envelope and its use of fuel and natural resources like water and sunlight are currently developing performance targets for Church buildings may be challenging. However, responsible stewardship should encourage critical consideration of where we are.

As well as developing a Synod advisory programme to achieve this all churches are encouraged to join the ECO Church programme which provides guidance and information and work their way through the three achievement levels.

We set out below the Synod programme and this needs to read alongside the Eco Church programme and the Eastern Synod Environmental Sustainability Checklist designed to assist in compiling an Environmental Sustainability Plan.

SUGGESTED APPROACH, THE ORDER AND POSSIBILITIES WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE NATURE OF THE BUILDING:

1. **STARTING POINT.** Take the basic energy saving measures covered by the Eco Church introductory questionnaire, these will include changing to LED lighting, draft proofing and temperature and time control of heating system.
2. **LAND.** The way land and churchyards are managed can be an increased source of carbon offsetting improving the Churches carbon footprint.
3. **MAINTENANCE.** Consider the carbon footprint and limitation of fossil fuels in repairing and maintaining the buildings.
4. **GREEN ELECTRICITY.** Switch to using electrical energy produced from renewable resources.
5. **PV.** If achievable look at generating electricity on site using PV panels. Take advice regarding the installation and the appropriate capacity.
6. **INSULATION.** Reduce fabric heat losses by improving insulation to floors, walls and roof where possible, taking advice to ensure that the appropriate approach for your building is used to avoid condensation and fabric deterioration.
7. **WINDOWS AND DOORS.** Reduce fabric heat loss through windows, doors and gaps around windows and doors. Care needs to be taken to ensure suitable ventilation.
8. **DECARBONISE HEATING.** - This will probably mean changing the heat source from fossil fuel gas or oil boilers to electric heating or electric air source or possibly ground source heat pumps. Other options such as hydrogen may become viable over time and whilst planning for this major change does need to start at an early stage its implementation is suggested as the last task allowing for change and the significant building fabric upgrading required.