

Chelmsford Diocesan Quality Standard Guide for Parsonages

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide a brief but clear indication of the quality and standard of housing that the Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance aims to provide for existing parsonages.

This is a guide and not a complete synopsis of housing policy. There are other forms of information on housing that should be read in conjunction with this document such as The Resident's Guide, and the other information available on our website www.chelmsford.anglican.org.

Background

We aim to provide clergy and their families with a house that provides a good working base for parish ministry and a comfortable family home.

Houses across the diocese vary in many different ways. We have some historically significant houses, many 1960s/70s houses, some newer houses; we have purpose-built vicarages and other houses which have been purchased and adapted. It is generally recognised that it is preferable to provide clergy with a purpose built parsonage. In reality this is often not possible, particularly where for example housing in the parish is all of one type, or there is not space for a purpose-built vicarage.

As needs change over the years, standards change, and, nationally important lessons were learned which helped form the basis of the 'Church Commissioners Green Guide for Parsonage Houses' which sets the standard for new build homes. The Green Guide remains an essential template in the construction of a new house. The Green Guide is often quoted (or misquoted) as setting the standard for what clergy should expect from a property but, as it states "in a purchased house or alteration of an existing house it may well not be possible to meet the criteria. However (it) may help serve as a point of reference".

Drawing on the Green Guide and the experience of our property team and Houses Committee members past and present, the aim of this guide is to form a more definitive point of reference.

Even so, it should be borne in mind that there are always going to be circumstances where it is simply not possible to meet our criteria. The Houses Committee takes a view on the case for adaptation or replacement if this is a viable option. In doing so, the Committee balances needs, priorities and budgets to provide the best quality housing that it can for our clergy.

For ease of use the following details have been described on a 'room by room' type basis.

ACCOMMODATION

Ground floor

Many existing houses have a ground floor configuration that is not ideal in terms of separating the study access and WC from the rest of the house and this often cannot be achieved without major building work and excessive expenditure. However, where it is practical to do so and at reasonable cost this should be provided.

Entrance

Ideally at the front of the house and clearly visible to visitors. The entrance should be through a secure lobby with separate access to the study, the ground floor WC and hall door to rest of house. The front entrance door, and door to hall, should be of external grade and lockable.

Study

To be fitted with 24-30m of adjustable shelving and a sufficient number of power points. If a study is considered to be too small then all possible alternatives (such as internal reorganisation or the availability of an office, meeting room, church hall, etc. elsewhere) will be explored before an extension is considered which is fully in line with Green Guide recommendations.

Ground Floor WC

Low level WC with hand wash basin. Floor vinyl. Mechanical extraction if no natural light and ventilation.

Hall

Have sufficient natural light and ventilation.

Living Room

Be of sufficient size for family relaxation and social life and have sufficient natural light and ventilation.

Dining Area/Room

Be of sufficient size to accommodate a dining table, chairs and cupboard. Have sufficient natural light and ventilation.

Kitchen

Have sufficient storage units, a good size stainless steel sink with mixer tap and be well laid out and ergonomically functional. To provide spaces for free standing cooker, fridge freezer and dishwasher (and washing machine if no separate utility room). The kitchen should ideally be designed to allow occasional family meals if space permits. Floor vinyl. Mechanical ventilation.

Utility Room (existing)

Existing room to have sink and base unit with small work surface and space for washing machine, tumble drier, and if space allows, freezer. Utility rooms can be created by the conversion of an attached outhouse/fuel store if it is practical and cost effective to do so.

First Floor

Bedrooms

4 bedrooms - typically 2 double and 2 single with natural light and ventilation and adequate means of escape in the event of fire.

Bathroom

To provide a bath, large pedestal basin, low level WC, shower with good flow rate (unless separate shower room elsewhere), floor vinyl, mechanical ventilation if necessary.

2nd Bathroom/Shower Room

This can be provided where there is sufficient space and existing available services and can be achieved at reasonable cost. To include shower with basin and WC, floor vinyl, mechanical ventilation.

Separate WC

Where there is an existing separate WC it should incorporate a hand wash basin if space is available. Mechanical extraction if no natural light and ventilation. Floor vinyl.

Landing

Should have natural light and ventilation, access to an airing cupboard (unless located elsewhere) which should be adequately shelved.

GENERAL INFORMATION - INTERNAL

Internal Redecoration

Internal décor, carpets, furnishings etc. are the responsibility of the resident and PCC except in the case of posts that have no parish to offer assistance. (In such cases the Board will, following Periodic Survey, organise the redecoration of up to half of the house if needed.)

Replacement windows

The criterion for replacing windows is condition. When condition has deteriorated to a point where repair is uneconomic windows will be replaced with maintenance free double glazed units providing there are no planning restrictions applicable. Secondary glazing is not provided except where excessive noise nuisance is proving a problem or heritage requirements mean this is the only viable option.

Heating System

To provide a boiler of adequate size to heat the domestic hot water system and a central heating system of radiators in all habitable ground and first floor rooms with thermostatic valves to radiators and thermostatic control of stored hot water. The system to be tested and maintained on a yearly contract.

Alternative Heat Source (e.g. Gas Fires)

These can be installed, if provided by the resident, in the study and living room if there are existing facilities to accommodate this. The Board will only maintain gas fires but not replace or provide new.

Electrical Installation

To provide adequate lighting to all rooms and have sufficient socket outlets throughout. Periodic testing to be carried out at recommended intervals and during vacancy. Mains powered smoke detectors and Carbon Monoxide detectors are now being progressively fitted, normally as part of vacancy works.

Roof Space

To be adequately insulated and have safe access to storage tanks. Mains wired electric light.

GENERAL INFORMATION - EXTERNAL

Boundaries

To be fenced where necessary and where our responsibility to an appropriate height and maintained thereafter. Front entrance gates can be provided where security is considered an issue.

Trees

Major indigenous trees only to be maintained by the Property team and other trees only when presenting a danger to people or property.

Patio/Paths/Drive

A small concrete paved patio can be provided at the rear of the house. Drive and entrance paths to the house to be well lit, safe and not present a tripping hazard to visitors.

External Lighting

Hard wired and robust lights to be fitted at front and rear entrances. The installation of security PIR lighting.

Garden Sheds

A timber garden shed and base can be provided for the storage of garden equipment where there is no garage available with the house.

Security

Grants are available through the Property team for the provision of an alarm system, CCTV, and window/door locks, chains bolts etc. (Please note that grants for security measures do not cover repairs and maintenance or maintenance contracts.)

Solar PV Panels

Solar panels have been installed on some vicarages where they have been shown to be viable. Given the current regulatory environment, it is sadly unlikely that solar panels will be installed on further properties excepting new builds. Please also see the Residents Guide for further information about solar panels.

Cavity Wall Insulation

Residents are welcome to arrange for cavity wall insulation and additional loft insulation which are often offered free by energy companies. A progressive programme of installations is being undertaken across the diocese to improve cavity insulation.

Smart Meters

Smart gas and electricity meters are being installed by energy suppliers by 2020. Please notify the Property team of your installation.