the changing church

a guide to developing and adapting church buildings

Working in partnership with
Diocese of Chelmsford
The Church of England in Essex and East London
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An extension in the form of a new aisle at All Saints, Stock
The care, maintenance and development of our church buildings and churchyards is of vital significance in the mission and ministry of the church. It is of huge importance that any changes which take place are done sensitively and carefully, and that they take account of the aesthetic and pastoral needs of a parish or chaplaincy, and the community which it seeks to serve. The Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 sets this out very clearly, as follows:

Any person or body carrying out functions of care and conservation shall have due regard to the role of the church as a local centre of worship and mission. (Part One: General Principle: Paragraph One)

I commend to you this booklet. It sets out clearly the procedures in our diocese for making applications for permission to change or develop a church or churchyard. More important, it also gives guidance and advice about the role of a PCC and others in the vision needed to ensure that our buildings are places of welcome, prayer and strength to all who come to them, and that they play a relevant part in the life of the local community.

I very much hope that you will find this booklet a useful and practical resource. May our prayer be that the church buildings in our diocese continue to play an important part in the furthering of the Kingdom of God.

Rt Revd John Perry
Bishop of Chelmsford
Bishopscourt
Margaretting, Ingatestone
Essex

Essex churches not only provide the background to our spiritual lives, they also provide the historical background to our existence in this great county of Essex. It is important therefore that any work that is done to these important buildings is carried out sympathetically, is in keeping with the environment of the building, and as far as possible meets the needs of the congregation. Whilst we do not want ugly uniformity, we are looking to promote a high standard of design and I hope that these guidelines will be helpful in achieving this.

Cllr C. Manning-Press
Members’ Suite
County Hall
Chelmsford
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The vision

When a Parochial Church Council (PCC) begins to consider reordering, developing or extending the church building, there may be any number of reasons:

- A growing congregation needing more space.
- A small congregation using an excessively large building.
- A wish for a style of liturgy not easily accommodated in the building at present.
- A need for community use, e.g. concerts, meetings.
- Greater accessibility for disabled people.
- Rising maintenance costs.
- A need for social facilities, e.g. toilets and a kitchen.

The reason or reasons may appear to suggest an obvious solution. However, discussion about one need often leads to a wider vision which brings other requirements into focus. Sometimes, the obvious solution of, say, an extension, can be shown to be unnecessary and an internal solution may be found. Sometimes the need presented may not require a solution within the existing building at all, but requires a different response in another building or on another piece of ground.

This booklet is offered not only to help PCCs reflect on the process, constraints and possibilities in church adaptation, but also to help them stop and consider, "What, in fact, are we about here? What is really needed for Christian worship and mission?" Being bold, imaginative and ambitious does not necessarily involve the most obvious or costly solution, and a phased approach may be the answer if large scale plans are finally agreed.

It is suggested that this booklet is read as a whole, even if it is then decided that only parts of it need to be referred to in detail for what is finally proposed.

The symbolism of church buildings

It is a fatal mistake for a PCC to rush into plans which show how various rooms and activities could fit together. The initial task must always be to consider what any existing or new building might say about God and our relationship with Him. Buckingham Palace and Heathrow Airport each stand for something different. Similarly, so do Westminster Abbey and a tiny remote chapel. They both address and influence those who use them - and those who do not!

Examples of this will be obvious. A church with a spire points with cerebral precision to a doctrinally defined God, whereas a church with a dome indicates that the mystery of God envelopes the gathered people. The size and position of pulpit and altar will declare the value placed on Word and Sacrament. The siting of the font or baptistery will speak volumes about our theology of Christian initiation. Seating which faces one end of a lofty church will seek to address the numinous God, whereas seating placed in a circle in a small church will encourage a focus on the immanent God. Economic seating for a passive congregation experiencing regulated liturgy gives clear messages about how we understand God, people, and the relationship between the two. Even the size of doors has an effect: a large door opening into a huge hard space will diminish the ego, whereas a domestic door opening into an intimate soft foyer will encourage confidence. Each may have its place in our relationship with God, but a decision has to be made and no decision is ever neutral. There is no absolute right or wrong in any of this. What is at stake is that the appropriate theologies for the context should be acknowledged and symbolised.

The primary question, therefore, is not what can or should we do with this building, but rather what is the role of this building? Do we wish to proclaim Christ as King (ruling us), lamb (suffering on our behalf), servant (enabling us), healer (making us whole), preacher (declaring God's truth), or what? Within the parish does the congregation see itself as soldiers of Christ needing a castle, ambassadors for Christ needing an embassy, or the body of Christ needing a home? Is the church to be seen as a hospital, a training and education centre, a school for learning, a retreat centre, a lighthouse or a lifeboat? Such considerations will determine not only the internal arrangement of spaces, but also the external architecture.
Similarly, the way in which the various spaces within the building relate to each other also conveys powerful messages. Is this building proclaiming a God only interested in religious liturgical activity, or a God who rejoices in the fullness of human life? It is a comparatively recent phenomenon for the split between sacred and secular activity to be so pronounced architecturally. Historically, there is evidence that many churches were used as parish meeting rooms, court rooms, social centres, places of sanctuary and even market places on occasions. Playgroups, coffee mornings, lunch clubs and discussion groups all seem somewhat pale by comparison!

So what activities should or could be catered for? How will the necessary facilities and decoration be realised as both functional and expressive of our theology? Will ornamentation be simply bought in, or will it demonstrate both local aspiration and local culture? Heating, lighting, audio systems, floor coverings, screens, platforms, walls and building materials all proclaim who we are, what we are about and the God we serve.

Of course there will be a host of historical constraints that accompany the building we inherit. Working sensitively and creatively within these will be vital. The point, however, is that it is crucial for both the PCC and the appointed architect to understand not only the aspects of faith presented by the existing building, but also the aspirations of faith that the present situation both offers and demands in any new building.

It will be obvious this is an exercise demanding information, knowledge, wisdom and prayer!

**Liturgical issues**

While the overall shape of a church building will symbolise powerfully one or more understandings of God, the internal shape will have a determining effect on the liturgical uses possible. Prior to considering any issues about current trends in worship, there are more basic questions that should be addressed:

- How does this building currently help or hinder a developing relationship with God?
- What is the effect of this building on the relationship between worshippers?
- What is the relationship between space, movement, furniture and spirituality?
- What are the liturgical aspirations of the whole congregation, including the minister, preacher, musicians, servers, Readers, etc?
- What are our current liturgical needs and what flexibility is required for possible future developments?

Any building will impose some constraints and there will always be a tension between theological and functional issues. A long narrow nave with columns and arches will tend to give the message that our worship is about formality and hierarchy. Many 19th-century Protestant churches were built deliberately to look like concert halls, with the pulpit and pipe organ as the dominant visual elements, in the same way as theatres of that time had organs alongside a podium for the master of ceremonies. Some more recent churches have created sanctuaries that compare with entertainment spaces complete with stage, lighting and theatre-style seats. Whatever is claimed about liturgy being the work of the whole people of God, there is truth in Winston Churchill's statement 'We shape our buildings and ever after they shape us'. Issues to be considered therefore may include any of the following:

- A font by the main door speaks of entry into God's church through baptism, but if there is insufficient space to gather round such a font, it may be preferable to move the font to a distinct baptistery area.
- A nave altar may help new eucharistic practices but large pillars destroying sight lines may make a sense of belonging difficult for many in the congregation. Thus a sense of the immanence of God proclaimed by the nave altar is destroyed by the effect of pillars.
- Fixed rows of pews are easy to maintain, but tend to inhibit physical participation and an emphasis on the immanence of God. In fact, they proclaim a message of formality and hierarchy. This is not changed simply by replacing pews with more comfortable chairs if again they are placed in rows.
- A chancel reordered to bring the clergy nearer the people may result in an empty space as the visual focal point of the building.
- Pulpits are used much less frequently these days, so what provision is being made for effective preaching (including being seen and heard) and for discreet but good use of audio-visual equipment?
If an organ or music group, or a choir or singing group, are used as an aid to, rather than the focus of, worship, do they really need to be in front of the congregation? Where is the best place acoustically?

If space is needed for drama or dance, for weddings or funerals, how is that area to be used on other more regular occasions?

Is there a need for a specific place for quiet prayer?

In discussion of these matters, there will often be some compromise, for no building will ever be totally neutral. The use of the space available is the supreme issue both liturgically and architecturally. In the final analysis, the physical layout of the building will speak far more powerfully about the relationship between an individual and God than any verbal proclamation through the liturgy.

However, it needs to be remembered that there are many churches which can seem to contradict all our theories and which are experienced simply as powerful and holy places which have been loved and prayed in, and have witnessed the grace of God in people's lives. They serve as a reminder that all our decision-making needs reverence, insight, humility and, above all, prayerfulness.

Community needs

Before making hasty decisions about what rooms or facilities are needed, there are fundamental questions the PCC must answer:

1. Why does the Christian community need any buildings at all?
2. How can its buildings facilitate Christian mission?
3. How effective or ineffective are the present buildings?

Because the expense may be considerable, and because this may be the only opportunity for attempting to adapt the church in this way, it is important to get the decisions right. So, remembering that 50 years is not, in fact, a very long time, we need to consider the following:-

1. The local community:
   a. how has it changed over the last 50 years?
   b. how could it be described now?
   c. how do we envisage it in 50 years time?
2. The congregation:
   a. how has this changed in the last 50 years?
   b. how could it be described now?
   c. how might it develop over the next 50 years?

Within the stated aspirations for mission, the social context and the realities of congregational life, which of the following are essential, desirable and possible:-

Meeting rooms How many users?
Counselling room How many rooms?
Hall for 'soft' activities (e.g. concerts) Number of users?
Hall for 'hard' activities (e.g. youth club) Size of halls?
Clergy vestry
Choir vestry
Store rooms
Kitchen facilities Snacks or meals?
Toilets (including baby changing) Number? Plumbed or composting?
Etc. etc.

Which of these spaces could share accommodation? Which of them should ideally be closely linked?

Having established the needs of the church for more effective mission, the PCC can now begin to ask what is possible in and around the existing church building. The architect will work on design problems and offer creative solutions, usually with different options for the PCC to consider. It is at this stage that simple sketch designs with probable capital, running and maintenance costs will be discussed and prayed through.
preliminary steps

The statement of need

Under the *Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2000*, proposals which involve ‘significant changes to a listed church’ have to be accompanied by a Statement of Needs (see Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) guidance note). This is ‘a document which sets out the reasons why it is considered that the needs of the parish cannot be met without making changes to the church building and the reasons why the changes are regarded as necessary to assist the church in its worship and mission’. The preparation of a Statement of Needs will be an opportunity to draw together the considerations outlined above.

Local community and partnership

Partnerships with other bodies may be possible. The first discussions should always be with the local authority planning department which should be able to advise if there are any community needs which have been identified as requiring accommodation. Equally important will be an awareness of any local groups which may be looking to redevelop or change their own accommodation.

In Chelmsford Diocese, churches have been built in partnership with doctors’ surgeries, local authorities, housing associations, schools, and national charities. Other possibilities might include youth centres, day centres for the elderly, sports halls, libraries, health centres, pre-school agencies, etc. These days ecumenical partnership should always be explored as a matter of course.

There can be large savings in the provision of shared facilities and spaces, and such partnership can make an important statement about the relationship of the Christian Church to the actual needs of the local community. It will, however, always be important that the credibility, distinctiveness, freedom and integrity of the Church and its mission are not compromised. This will be true both in the architectural statement about the relative importance of the various components, and also in the way that ongoing maintenance and management is organised.

Historic fabric and the statement of significance

The presumption in managing listed buildings is that there should be as little interference with the historic fabric as possible. It is therefore essential to ensure that alterations made to a church do not damage the historic fabric or that any harmful effect they might have on the historic fabric is kept to a minimum. To assess the effect of any works on the historic fabric, it is necessary to have an understanding of the history of the church, how it has developed, and what aspects of it are of the greatest historical and architectural significance. An assessment should then be made of the impact of the proposals on the building. This should take into account the following factors:

- are the proposals reversible?
- will they lead to a permanent reduction of the historic elements that make up the building?
- will the proposals alter the character of, or diminish, historically significant parts of the building?

The *Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2000* require that when proposals are made for ‘significant changes to a listed church’, a parish will have to prepare a Statement of Significance for inclusion with the application. This should be a document which summarises ‘the historical development of the church and identifies the important features that make major contributions to the character of the church’. The preparation of a Statement of Significance should make it possible to address the issues that will arise in trying to avoid damage to the historic fabric and in assessing the impact of the proposals on the church. The descriptions and analyses of churches to be found in the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments survey of Essex will serve as an excellent starting point for preparing Statements of Significance of medieval churches, though it has to be borne in mind that any work carried out after 1714 was not included in the descriptions. Care must be taken not to overlook Georgian, Victorian and 20th century work, and to assess properly the significance of the restorations that so many churches underwent in the 19th century, including the fixtures and fittings installed at that time.
In view of these requirements, it would be helpful if parishes were to have a Conservation Plan for their church. A Conservation Plan is a document drawn up to inform the management and use of a building and its curtilage. It sets out to establish why a place is important, and to show how that significance can be managed.

Although it has been argued that alteration to the fabric of historic churches should be kept to a minimum, it is not proposed that change is impossible or out of the question. Whilst some more significant buildings may not be capable of alteration or extension, churches should not in general be regarded as sacrosanct and inviolate, and must be adapted to modern needs if they are to serve the communities of our towns and villages. Indeed, they have always been subject to change, often through extension and growth, and even demolition and total replacement. The change from apsidal to rectangular east ends, the addition of towers, aisles, chapels, galleries and porches, and the raising of roofs to provide clerestories, have all contributed to creating the complex character of our older churches, each of which is an individual blend of styles and particular component parts which makes them of enduring interest to succeeding generations. Because each church is so individual, it is impossible to lay down rigid guidelines for reordering and the provision of new facilities: the approaches outlined below are possible solutions which may or may not prove to be applicable in particular cases.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

From 2004, this Act will affect all churches. For the moment, it will have immediate effect upon churches where changes are considered, whether new buildings or internal changes are proposed. The Act seeks to ensure that those responsible for buildings to which the public have access take all reasonable actions to make their buildings as easy to use as possible for all visitors with disabilities. This includes learning disability and impairment of sight or hearing, as well as physical disability. Many churches have already provided ramps, sound systems, large print hymnals and prayer books, and clear signs, but many have not.

When changes are proposed, it will be advisable to consult with the local authority health and safety officer and access officer, although with larger schemes this will be part of the architect's brief. Before embarking on a project, it will be advisable to have a disability audit prepared for your church. This is a once-and-for-all study which will highlight any deficiencies in the buildings insofar as the disabled are concerned.

More information on this subject is available in an excellent book, *Widening the eye of the needle* (see Bibliography).

The brief

The brief is a logical progression from the statements of need and significance. The importance of having a clearly thought through brief cannot be over-emphasised. Without one, it is a potential waste of time and money proceeding any further or engaging an architect.

Choosing an architect

The DAC will require that any scheme for the alteration of the church or the provision of new facilities be designed, and the works supervised, by an architect. The DAC can provide a list of architects with such experience, and also issues a guidance note on *Appointment of architects or surveyors*. It would not recommend any parish to undertake a 'design and build' contract, which leads to the architect being employed by the contractor and a loss of control by the parish. The architect appointed need not be the architect responsible for the quinquennial inspection, but an architect experienced in church work is, however, essential. If a short list is drawn up of architects, then they should be interviewed and the proposals discussed sufficiently for the parish to have an idea of their general design approach, a statement of the fees involved, and where other work by the architects can be inspected. The appointment of an architect should be backed up by a written agreement.

It is important that parishes appreciate the fee costs attached to the early stages of a scheme when various feasibility studies are undertaken. Such architectural work is usually charged on a time and expenses basis, and it is therefore advisable that the parish is clear about its needs, and should guard against unnecessarily elaborate design drawings before the proposals are finalised. Agreement on fees before any work is begun is essential.
The budget

It will obviously be vital that the PCC has a realistic approach to the total cost of the project and all possible sources of income. An indication of these should be given in the brief. Any feasibility study prepared by the architect should include costings and give an order of cost for the total project, which includes fittings and fixtures. Be prepared for escalating costs as ideas are progressed: few, if any, projects ever fall within the earliest estimates!

It is always preferable to think ambitiously with regard to the quality of materials and standard of work. Cheap alternatives for public buildings invariably result in higher long-term costs.

Fund-raising events, direct giving and grants will all be the most usual sources of funding. The Friends of Essex Churches produce a helpful booklet, and your archdeacon will have lists of grant-making bodies. In every case, however, local committed giving will not only impress other fund providers, but will be an important factor in rooting the project in local aspiration and ownership.
The ecclesiastical and civil planning systems

Churches in use for worship are treated differently for planning purposes to other buildings, inasmuch as normal listed building controls do not apply. Their historic and architectural importance, and their role in the community, means that they are special cases that need to be handled sensitively. This importance is reflected in what is known as the ecclesiastical exemption, a privilege which dates from 1913 and gives churches qualified exemption from scheduled monument, conservation area and listed building legislation, so long as they operate their own controls instead. In the Church of England, these controls take the form of the Faculty Jurisdiction, whereby approval or faculty is granted by the Chancellor of the diocese on the advice of the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches.

The exemption normally applies to all buildings and structures within the curtilage of a listed church. It does not apply, however, to structures within the curtilage that are individually listed in their own right (i.e., any structure which has its own individual entry in a statutory list). In these cases, listed building consent is required for any works of demolition, alteration or extension that affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

Exemption from listed building controls has the effect that parishes can make alterations to the interior of the church subject to obtaining faculty but without the need to apply to the local planning authority. However, there are limitations on the scope of the exemption. First, it is a requirement in certain cases to consult with English Heritage, the national amenity societies, and the planning authority at an early stage in a project (see below, Preliminary consultation). Second, works that materially alter the exterior of the church, or which constitute development as defined by the General Development Order, require planning permission which has to be sought from the local planning authority. As a consequence, projects such as an extension to a church or a detached building in the churchyard, will need both planning permission (from the local planning authority) and faculty (from the Chancellor of the diocese).

Although this may seem complex, the procedures can be straightforward if the parish co-ordinates its consultation with, and application to, the planning authority and the DAC to run simultaneously. It is therefore advisable at an early stage, when ideas are being explored, to make a preliminary inquiry to the DAC which should lead to a meeting being called which will bring together the parish, their architect, the DAC, the local planning authority, and representatives of English Heritage and the national amenity societies. Such a meeting will identify constraints on what is possible as well as giving the parish the benefits of the views of people with long experience of addressing these problems. The legislation, procedures, and role of the various consultees, are explained in more detail below.

Preliminary consultation

Under the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2000 (rule 3), parishes are required to seek the advice of the DAC before submitting a petition for faculty. Where the proposed works are likely to affect the archaeological importance of a church, or the special historic or architectural interest of a listed church, or involve the demolition of the exterior of an unlisted church in a conservation area, then the applicant must also consult English Heritage, the appropriate national amenity society, and the local planning authority. Advice from these bodies must be taken into account, provided it is received within 28 days, and should be forwarded by the parish to the secretary of the DAC. (Further information on the role of these consultative bodies is given below).

Faculty Jurisdiction

The way Faculty Jurisdiction operates in regard to church fabric is contained in the 1991 Care of Churches Measure, the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules and the Code of Practice which explains how the legislation works. All buildings and land which are consecrated are subject to Faculty Jurisdiction. In addition, the bishop may direct that unconsecrated buildings should also fall within the control of the jurisdiction.
Faculty Jurisdiction is administered through the Consistory Court of the Diocese by the Chancellor, who is an ecclesiastical judge. This imposes a form of control which is wider than that which arises under the civil planning legislation. No work affecting the fabric of the church either externally or internally may be carried out without a faculty.

It is for the Chancellor to decide whether a parish has established a need for the proposed works, and to assess their architectural suitability. The Chancellor is assisted by the DAC. The parish applies to the DAC for a certificate recommending their proposals to the Chancellor. This committee considers the merits of the scheme and either recommends it or reports its reasons for being unable to do so.

Members of the DAC have between them a wide range of expertise. As well as the archdeacons and other members of the clergy, the committee includes representatives from the diocesan synod, architects, persons appointed in consultation with local authorities, English Heritage and the National Amenity Societies, and specialist advisers on organs, archaeology, bells, clocks, heating and structural engineering. They assess plans for extensions and other works, and advise parishes about any amendments considered desirable. They follow criteria similar to those applied by planning authorities considering applications for listed building consent for works to secular buildings - for example, as to materials, design, layout, windows and doors, and roof form. Discussions between the DAC and the parish may develop until the plans reach a stage where the DAC feels able to agree a certificate recommending them to the Chancellor.

All petitions for faculty are advertised by way of a public notice displayed at the church concerned. If there is no objection, and the DAC has recommended the scheme, the Chancellor may then grant a faculty without holding a Consistory Court. A parish is free, however, to submit a petition for faculty to the Chancellor with a ‘not recommended’ certificate from the DAC, but the Chancellor will then almost certainly hold a Consistory Court so that the proposal can be fully investigated in public. This gives an opportunity to be heard both from individual petitioners and from bodies such as the planning authority and local and national amenity societies.

Archdeacons’ licences

If the PCC wishes to rearrange or remove furniture, or introduce furniture in order to experiment and test local reaction before embarking on a major scheme of reordering, this may be a helpful way forward. Such experiments may be carried out under an archdeacon’s licence. The minister and a majority of the PCC may apply for a licence, using the authorised form, for a temporary period not exceeding fifteen months. It is important that the action proposed is reversible, that the fabric of the church is not damaged, and that anything removed is stored safely and carefully. At the end of the period specified, all items must either be returned to their former arrangement, or a faculty application must be lodged for proposed work not later than two months before the expiry date. If at the end of the period specified more time is required, then it will be necessary to apply to the Chancellor for an interim faculty.

Planning permission

As has been explained, planning permission is required for any building operations, unless they affect only the interior of the building, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This means that any external alteration, and any addition, requires planning permission from the local planning authority, usually the Borough or District Council. This is given by the elected members on the planning committee, who are advised by the officers of the planning department. Local planning authorities must seek the views of English Heritage and the appropriate national amenity societies when considering applications for development which affects grade I or II* listed buildings or their setting.

When considering an application, the planning authority is required to take into account any factors which they consider to be material. These will include planning constraints, such as whether the works are within a designated conservation area and whether they will affect any protected trees; functional matters, such as the overshadowing of any neighbouring buildings, the adequacy of provision for car parking, and the suitability of any new access to the highway; and aesthetic considerations, such as the overall appearance of the proposed building works.
As mentioned above, the local planning authority has to be consulted by the parish in the case of works likely to affect the historic or architectural importance of a listed building, or the archaeological importance of a church, or of works involving the demolition of the exterior of an unlisted church in a conservation area.

In assessing applications or consultations, the planning authority will take into account government advice on listed buildings and conservation areas contained in Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment. This sets out criteria for the operation of the controls contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Although churches may be exempt from this legislation, the guidelines set out in PPG 15 are of national currency and will be familiar to members of the DAC as well as to planners and officers of English Heritage.

It is worth noting the importance PPG 15 attaches to the setting of listed buildings, often a crucial issue if building in the churchyard is contemplated, especially if it is in a conservation area (para. 2.16-17). It also recognises the need to reconcile the preservation of the character and historic interest of old buildings with their ability to continue to function in a modern age. ‘Achieving a proper balance between the special interest of a listed building and proposals for alterations or extensions is demanding and should always be based on specialist expertise; but it is rarely impossible, if reasonable flexibility and imagination are shown by all parties involved’ (para. 3.15).

**English Heritage**

Local authorities must seek the views of English Heritage when considering applications for development which involve the demolition, in whole or in part, or the material alteration, of a grade I or II* listed building; or which affect the setting of grade I or II* buildings, or in Greater London of grade II buildings. English Heritage must also be consulted over applications for development at unlisted buildings in conservation areas in cases where the new building will have a floor space in excess of 1000m² or will be more than 20m high. Where English Heritage has given a grant for the upkeep of a listed church, they will almost certainly have imposed a condition requiring the parish to seek their approval for any works that affect the character of the building (which may of course include internal alterations). As has been seen, English Heritage is also one of the bodies which has to be consulted by the parish in the case of significant works likely to affect the historic character and archaeological importance of the building.

Churches in use are not scheduled under the Ancient Monuments Act 1979, but the land beneath and around the church building may be. In such cases, any proposals involving ground disturbance of any sort will require scheduled monument consent, which is granted by the Department of Culture Media and Sport on the advice of English Heritage.

**The national amenity societies**

Local planning authorities are required to give notice of applications for listed building consent which involve the alteration or demolition of any part of a building to the national amenity societies. They comprise the Ancient Monuments Society, the Council for British Archaeology, the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society, and the 20th Century Society. Similarly, as has been seen, the amenity societies have to receive notification of faculty applications which involve significant works of alteration, extension or demolition to a listed church, or which involve demolition (partial or complete) of an unlisted church in a conservation area. The national amenity societies are a source of expertise on the buildings in their spheres of interest. It may assist parishes to consult with them at an early stage when significant alterations to a church are contemplated. (Contact details can be obtained from the DAC secretary or the Council for the Care of Churches).
the options

External v internal changes

In the early stages when changes are being considered, one of the most important decisions is: should the additional accommodation be provided within the envelope of the existing church building or should it be within a new building?

The factors that may influence whether an internal or external solution is adopted include the following:

1. Is there space within the church?
2. If there is space, is it in a convenient part of the church?
3. What effect would internal changes have on the character of the church?
4. Does the church lend itself to external addition i.e. how sensitive is the external setting of the church?
5. Can access into an attached addition be effected without damaging any historic fabric?
6. What are the archaeological implications of internal or external changes?
7. Archaeological investigation may be required by the Chancellor and the local planning authority. If so, the cost will have to be borne by the parish.
8. Could a detached building be accepted in the churchyard, i.e., how sensitive is the setting of the churchyard and its ecology?
9. Is there the possibility of a new building being sited outside the churchyard where faculty consent would not be necessary?
10. What are the cost implications of an external as opposed to an internal solution?
11. What are the relative advantages, in terms of implications for the payment of VAT, of internal changes, an extension, or a free-standing building?
adapting your church - internal changes

General

Before contemplating any changes the parish should take into account the character of the existing building. This will influence all subsequent decisions. Age, historic importance, size, the type of any existing subdivisions will all be important, as will all major fixtures, the organ, font, pulpit, monuments, pews, screens and stalls. Consider the existing facilities: are they adequate? Will the location of the boiler, switchgear, radiators etc. create problems?

Most internal changes fall into one of two categories: alterations for new accommodation (toilets, vestries, kitchens, meeting rooms etc.) or changes for liturgical purposes (re-ordering). Many projects will include both types and they pose similar problems in relation to the internal character and fabric of the church. These problems are discussed below.

Consideration should always be given to the possibility of reversing the changes, particularly with re-ordering schemes. Experimental schemes with an Archdeacon's Licence will often be a useful intermediate stage.

The provision of new, or the alteration of existing, sub-divisions within the building will change the appearance of the interior. With historic churches such changes wherever possible must avoid the destruction of early fabric or important fittings and fixtures. Although there is considerable historic precedence for screens, the appearance of new partitions or screens must be in harmony with the existing furnishings and respect the internal spaces and views within the building.

Changes which involve the removal or re-siting of fixtures, such as screens, choir stalls, and fonts, can be the most contentious. The need for such alterations must be convincing and specific. The re-siting or method of disposal should acknowledge the object's value.

All changes must take into account two particular concerns: escape routes in an emergency such as fire, and the needs of the disabled. Both of these are areas which are controlled by statute described elsewhere. Exits and changes in level are critical and may influence the way changes are designed. In the light of the requirements of the Disabilities Discrimination Act, it may be that when any major change is contemplated, an access audit of the building should be undertaken.

New accommodation

The provision of new accommodation within the church will involve the construction of screens or partitions. These may be solid or glazed, or a combination of both. In most cases reducing the sound transmission through the partition will be critical. In such cases the more solid the construction the more effective the sound reduction. For toilets, ceilings will be essential. Substantial construction will reduce sound transmission.

The location of new rooms within the church will in part depend upon their use. Toilets and kitchens should be towards the back (liturgical west) and near the entrance. The conversion of vestries near the chancel into toilets is not generally a sensible proposal. Kitchens and toilets should ideally be close together for the easy provision of water and drainage.

Thorpe-le-Soken church, showing the successful partitioning of part of the south aisle with a glazed screen in an oak frame
Tower bases have often been used for both of these purposes but in churches with a west tower door, the traditional processional route may be compromised by such development. A tower base and west window framed by a lofty gothic arch can also present an important vista, the loss of which could be to the detriment of the interior of the church. The west door emphasises the traditional east-west axis, now little used but an essential part of the design of many late medieval churches, the tower base acting as a porch or lobby prior to entering the nave through the grand tower arch. Next to the chancel arch, the tower arch is often the largest element in the church and its grand scale can be diminished by the insertion of an insubstantial screen. The addition of a large west organ will also reduce the impact of the tower arch and, in such a case, every effort should be made to ensure that the organ case and pipes are of sufficient scale to compensate for the loss of the arch.

When considering changes inside a tower, care must be taken to ensure that bells can be removed safely and economically. Sufficiently large traps in the floor are needed together with an open area of floor beneath the trap. The simplest way out for the bells will always be through the west door if there is one. If not, then another clear route out of the church must be maintained. A screen across the tower arch must have a door or doors wide enough to accept a bell on a trolley.

Disused north or south porches have been successfully adapted, but this involves the permanent loss of an alternative entrance/exit and an erosion of the symbolic role of the porch.

Churches with galleries, particularly at the west end, have ideal areas under them for use as separate rooms, but if the entrance to the church is from beneath the gallery care must be taken not to produce a tunnel-like approach. The construction of a new gallery at the west end may be one approach to providing new accommodation. A gallery can be an independent structure causing very little disturbance to the existing fabric, though its foundations may have archaeological implications. The insertion of a gallery or mezzanine has been used quite commonly in larger Victorian churches.

Where there is sufficient space, the partitioning off of one or two bays of an aisle can be the most effective way of providing a meeting room, vestry, Sunday school or kitchen accommodation. As the partitioning is likely to involve infilling a gothic arch and will be an integral part of the church interior, the quality of the design and the materials will be important.

Reordering

Before contemplating reordering, consideration must be given, not only to current wishes and needs but also to possible future requirements. Vision for the future should be part of the planning process. Space management and layout should not just reflect present needs or trends but should also look ahead and ensure a flexible approach which can accommodate changes that cannot at present be envisaged. Flexibility is essential in the promotion of any form of change. Consultation and publicity are also essential to ensure that the whole parish and congregation accept the proposals.

Changes to the interior for liturgical purposes can range from a quite minor re-arrangement of furniture to wholesale changes to chancel, nave, aisles and chapels. The most common change is the construction of a dais projecting out from the chancel into the body of the church to enable a nave altar to be positioned where it is
visually and physically accessible. The detail of the dais is important. If made of timber, care must be taken to provide ventilation to the void to ensure that rot will not develop.

When this type of change is considered the future of the chancel must also be addressed. It may have a use as a chapel for small weekday services. In such a case it might be that the chancel arch could be completely enclosed with a screen which could provide a suitable backdrop to the nave altar and make the chancel/chapel a discrete quiet space. Alternatively the chancel may be seen as a place to locate a music group, in which case the character of the space will be changed significantly.

Although they may sometimes be seen as encumbrances, pulpits are often important and valuable pieces of furniture. If it is agreed that an important pulpit may be removed, the DAC will need to be assured that it will have a satisfactory future.

Fonts are also sometimes resited during reordering. Large medieval fonts may be seen as inconvenient in a small church. However, such fonts are often major art works which were designed to be an integral part of the building. Consequently re-siting will be preferred to disposal. The traditional site, opposite the south door or at the west end of the nave, may not be seen as fitting in with a redesigned west end and congregations may wish to have a better view of the baptism. Resiting, possibly towards the front of the nave, perhaps where the pulpit previously stood, has sometimes been approved.

In reordering schemes it will usually be necessary to address the question of seating. Existing fixed pews may be seen to impose too rigid a layout to suit flexible service patterns. However, before making any proposals for change, the quality of the pews must be assessed. Are they of great age? What is their artistic merit? Are they part of a complete furnishing scheme such as those designed by outstanding 19th- and 20th-century architects like Sir Charles Nicholson? What is their condition? It is unlikely that faculty consent will be given for wholesale removal of important pews. Some churches have taken the pews out and removed the platforms so that they may be rearranged for special occasions. It may be that particularly important pews may be resited elsewhere in the church if the present location is seen to be unsuitable. The method of heating will be influenced by a change in the pew layout or the change to chairs. If pews are to be replaced by chairs, the pew platforms will need to be removed and replaced by new flooring. It may prove difficult to integrate new flooring with an existing historic floor. This work may also have archaeological implications.

The design of all new furniture and fittings introduced into the church in a reordering scheme must be given careful thought. The designs should relate to the existing building and those fittings which are to be retained. Only the best quality design should be seen as good enough. Standard catalogue items will rarely be the most suitable, and the commissioning of artists to design items such as altar tables, candle stands, aumbries etc. will ensure that each church retains its individuality.

Areas set aside for a music group can present particular problems. They risk being cluttered with music stands, cabling, microphones, speakers and other paraphernalia. In designing a music area, the impact of all this equipment should be considered and mitigated as far as possible. If a music group is a regular feature of the liturgy, then it may be that semi-permanent provision should be made for them, their equipment being rationalised and discreetly kept in a secure and suitably screened area. A gallery or side chapel might be suitable for this purpose. It is not necessary for either a music group or an organist to be in full view of the congregation.

The location of an organ may be critical when a church is reordered. Moving an existing instrument will be costly and may have other implications in regard to sound quality and visual impact. If, in a reordering scheme, it is thought that an organ may have to be moved, the DAC organs advisers should be consulted at an early stage.

In any reordering scheme thought should be given to the area immediately inside the main door. Here, where the visitor gains the first impression of the church, there is often a clutter of hymnals, church guides, postcards, notice boards and a bookstall all fighting for attention. All these are essential but rarely are they organised into any sort of visual harmony. A reordering project is the time for some fresh thinking.

 Carpets may be a vexed matter. There is no doubt that many will see their introduction as making the church more comfortable. Some, however, will question as to whether a church should take on a domestic or commercial character: the appearance of age-old stone or brick paving is part of the essence of many churches
along with the stained glass, stone arcades, timbered roofs and plastered walls. In practice, the introduction of carpet will have a considerable effect on the acoustic qualities of the building.

Some reordering schemes from the start envisage the use of the church for public performances, choral and orchestral concerts and drama presentations. In such cases the involvement of the fire officer and building inspector at an early stage becomes particularly critical.

**Archaeology inside the church**

The provision of new facilities within the church, or reordering schemes, should, if possible, avoid lowering of the floor level or excavation, since these works are likely to damage archaeological deposits. A typical response to such proposals is that the parish and their advisers should try to mitigate the archaeological damage by modifying the design of the scheme. In cases where this is not possible, it will be a requirement that there should be an archaeological intervention beforehand and a watching brief as work proceeds.

*Relaying the floor in the vestry in Stebbing church uncovered medieval graves*
adapting your church - external alterations

The options

If there is insufficient space within the church to supply the congregation’s needs, then it is necessary to look to the spaces outside it and possibly consider an extension, though some churches may be so complete of their type, or have developed in such a way, that they are impossible to extend satisfactorily. It is essential that, in arguing their case for a project of whatever type, a parish makes it clear that they have explored all the possible options and thought hard and long about them. Their case will be stronger if they can show that they have done this.

The usual options are:
- an existing building near the church or churchyard.
- a new free-standing building in the churchyard.
- an ‘organic’ extension to the church using the traditional form of an aisle, chapel, transept or porch.
- a cloister-like extension.
- a linked extension.

Having narrowed down the options, it is then recommended to consult the DAC.

Free-standing buildings

In considering this option, it is worth while first looking beyond the churchyard to see whether there is a nearby building which might be suitable and available for purchase. If practicable, this could prove much the simplest and most economical solution.

In the churchyard itself, there is long historical precedent for erecting free-standing buildings. In the past such buildings have included chantry chapels, priests’ houses, bellcages, guildhalls, schoolrooms, or the cottages often found on the boundary which flanks the village street. Although the problems presented by a free-standing building will not be as acute as with an extension, the fact that the building is detached from the church cannot be an excuse for indifferent design or cheap materials. In most cases, the buildings will affect the setting of the church, and in general terms the principles set out below for extensions should apply. A detached building may be built under faculty, but if the churchyard is closed a pastoral scheme will be necessary (see below, Building in the churchyard). Planning permission will be necessary and English Heritage will probably have to be consulted.

Aisle, chapel, transept and porch solutions

Serious attention should be given to extensions in the form of an enlargement of the body of the church following the organic pattern in which medieval churches evolved by adding an extension in the form of an aisle, chapel, transept or porch. There can be no doubt that at a theoretical level this is the most satisfactory solution to the problem of extension. That it is often not adopted is a measure of our modern lack of confidence, but there are specific reasons as well:
1. the disturbance and change to the historic fabric, in particular the problem of old windows and doors affected by the new addition.
2. the possibility that it could conflict with the simultaneous use of the church during services.
3. the possibility of differential settlement between the two buildings.
4. the possible lower cost of a detached or linked building.

These difficulties may be countered by the following arguments:

1. this will depend on individual circumstances, but it may be acceptable to block windows whilst retaining their outline and tracery, provided that adequate light levels in the church can be maintained. Old doorways can often be unblocked to provide access to the new extension.
2. Medieval church walls are usually substantial enough to provide good sound insulation between the two different uses.
3. techniques exist for building next to an existing structure in a way that allows the two buildings to move separately.
4. building next to the church wall can produce cost savings. One wall of the new building will be the existing church wall. If the extension has to be tall to match the height and massing of the existing building, then it may be possible to accommodate two storeys within it. It is a fallacy to suppose that a detached or linked extension will be more economic because it can be built of cheaper materials: any building in close proximity to the church will have to be of high quality materials.

**The cloister**

In the case of a large extension, or when it is required to provide a complex of buildings, then a cloister or courtyard solution might be appropriate.
Linked extensions

Church extensions have often taken the form of detached structures connected by a narrow link, often no more than a glazed corridor. The extensions themselves are generally either a pavilion or what is often referred to a ‘chapter house’; or else a church hall type building with a dominant long axis rather larger than the chapter house. This type of solution is prompted by a concern not to encroach on or alter the fabric of the church, and to leave it visually intact. It may succeed in this, but in fact it cannot avoid having an impact on upon the exterior of the church, and the link usually appears as a weak feature and the whole complex as an awkward intrusion into the churchyard, separated from the church by a narrow, dark, dank strip of useless ground. Nor should it be assumed, as has sometimes happened in the past, that a lower standard of design and materials are acceptable on a linked building. For these reasons, alternative ways of extending the church should be fully investigated before opting for a linked building.
building in the churchyard

It will be clear from the outset that building in the churchyard will not be a straightforward procedure. Advice should be sought at an early stage from the archdeacon, the Diocesan Registrar and/or the secretary of the Diocesan Pastoral Committee. The importance of early consultation cannot be over-emphasised. The main factors to be taken into consideration are set out below. A further chapter then addresses the design problem presented by extensions and identifies principles that might be followed in resolving it.

The law

Every consecrated churchyard, and every unconsecrated churchyard which is in the curtilage or the surrounding area of a church, comes within the Faculty Jurisdiction. Any building which is to be erected there thus requires a faculty.

Some churchyards which are full are closed for burials and are classed as disused burial grounds. The Disused Burial Grounds Act 1884 forbids the erection of any building upon a closed churchyard unless it represents an enlargement of the church. An extension may therefore be built under faculty, but a detached building may not. If a detached building is desired, a pastoral scheme can be initiated under section 30 of the Pastoral Measure 1983 which provides for the appropriation of part of a churchyard for such purposes as a church extension or a hall. Such a scheme transfers the site from the trustee ownership of the incumbent to the Diocesan Board of Finance, which would continue as custodian trustee if it agreed to transfer the land to the PCC as the managing trustee. A Section 30 scheme also removes the legal effects of consecration from a site, unless access is via consecrated land where the Chancellor would still have some control. The building is consequently outside faculty jurisdiction unless the bishop chooses for some special reason to make it subject to faculty.

Burials

The disturbance of burials when building within a church or in a churchyard is inevitable, as there will be many unmarked graves even in an apparently vacant part of an ancient churchyard. If an area of the churchyard with no or few marked burials can be selected, then matters will be simplified. However, if they cannot be avoided, a memorial can be removed and the remains left in situ if the foundations of an extension are designed not to disturb them.

If the project is proceeding under faculty jurisdiction, the Chancellor will need to be satisfied either that there is to be no disturbance of human remains, or will give directions providing for the exhumation and re-interment of any that might be uncovered. If the project is proceeding by a pastoral scheme, then the Home Office administers a comparable role either issuing a Dispensation or an Exhumation Order. The procedures make provision for the consideration of the wishes of those with a personal interest in any interment. Section 30 of the Pastoral Measure 1983 makes provision for burials within the last 50 years, and Schedule 6 of that Measure makes further provision for burials within 25 years.

Gravestones, memorials and monuments

If gravestones are to be moved, then there are two main considerations. First, there are the personal interests of those associated with the memorial: there should be diligent attempts to trace and consult such parties individually. Secondly, there is the need to conserve and record memorials of historical or aesthetic importance. If gravestones are to be moved, then they should be recorded and re-erected elsewhere in the churchyard, the new position being indicated in the faculty application. Some monuments may be of special artistic importance
and so warrant particularly sensitive treatment. In exceptional circumstances, they may be listed under the Town and Country Planning Act, in which case they are subject to listed building consent as well as faculty.

If the extension is to be built under faculty, the Chancellor, after receiving advice from the DAC, will give direction about the disposition of memorials. If the section 30 procedure applies, the bishop, in association with the DAC and the Church Commissioners, will give the directions. A condition of both procedures would be a full and satisfactory record of the existing monuments, comprising a description, photographs and a copy of the inscriptions. This record should be deposited with the Diocese and the local Record Office. This is a task with which the local family history society may be able to help.

**Nature conservation**

An extension or new building may cause problems for wildlife. There may be threats to trees, to lichens on monuments that might have to be moved, to the flora and fauna of the grassland that will be lost, to the fauna and flora of any walls that are affected (e.g. bats, insects, and lichens). The DAC, or other body, may require one or more surveys and studies of these issues before or after considering the proposals. PCCs will need to be prepared to pay for professional surveys, though sometimes officials may be able to help or it may be possible to find suitable volunteers. Copies of any surveys should be deposited with the appropriate biological records unit as well as submitted with applications. For information on where to deposit records, contact the county wildlife trust.

Where nature conservation is an issue, the ideal is to avoid the sensitive areas, e.g. not building onto biologically diverse grassland or not building near trees (which generally means keeping well beyond the drip-line of the canopy). If that is not possible, mitigation may be next best option. It may be that less important trees could be lost, or that if headstones are moved, they retain their original compass orientation and shadow patterns, or any turf dug up is translocated to another area with much less interesting grass.

During building work there are threats to trees and grassland. These include compaction or disturbance of the ground, shading by contractors’ hoardings and compounds, localised pollution from waste, accidental damage to the bark of trees, and disturbance to fauna, e.g., nesting and roosting birds. Consideration for plants and animals should be taken in all cases. Where trees or grassland have been identified of importance for nature conservation, these areas should be off-limits to the building contractors.

Should trees need trimming or felling, reference should be made to the Chancellor’s guidance paper, *Practical notes on trees in churchyards*.

**Archaeology**

Any ancient church is a site of archaeological importance. The choice of the location for building a church was not made at random: the site was selected because it was of ancient significance, or because of its position within a tenurial holding or the overall pattern of landholding, or because of its proximity to a settlement or the lord’s dwelling, or as a result of other factors which we do not understand. Some churches occupy prehistoric or Roman sites. They are key elements in understanding a local settlement pattern. Churches have also been shown to have often been preceded by timber structures, either on the same or on an adjoining site, whilst the remains of free-standing buildings such as priests’ houses, chapels and belfries may be found in churchyards. Churchyard boundaries have been subject to alteration, having been moved and encroached upon. Medieval churches themselves are extremely complex buildings, having been rebuilt and altered over the centuries. Any information on how they have evolved is of great value.

![Diagram](image)

Stapleford Tawney, St. Mary, foundation of an earlier building discovered on the north side of the church on the site of a new extension
The Church of England recognises that it has a responsibility to respect and care for the archaeology of the many historic buildings and sites of which it is custodian. Diocesan Advisory Committees have a responsibility for archaeological as well as historical and aesthetic matters. Their membership includes an archaeologist, the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser. The DAC has issued a guidance note on archaeology, *An archaeological policy for the Diocese.*

Archaeology is a material consideration in determining planning applications. Government advice on archaeology in the planning system is contained in PPG 16, *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning.* It is now accepted policy that where an archaeological constraint is identified, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate how it will be provided for within the scheme. This means that the parish, or its architect or consultant, should make a submission with the application explaining the archaeological implications of the scheme and what measures will taken to respond to them. They should take advice from the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser, the County Heritage Conservation Record (formerly the Sites and Monuments Record), or an independent archaeological consultant. Information about what is known of the archaeology of a church site can be found in the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments county surveys, in the journals of the county historical and archaeological society and antiquarian publications, and in the county Heritage Conservation Record. The cost of assessing the archaeological implications of the scheme, and of any investigatory or recording work deemed to be necessary, should be allowed for in the project budget. The architect’s specification for the job should also include reference to archaeological matters, particularly the treatment of human bone, the need to stop work in any area where an archaeological discovery is made until it can be investigated, and the need to make allowance for any programme of archaeological work that may have been agreed or become necessary.

*These phase plans of Rivenhall church illustrate how archaeological recording can reveal the complex history of a building which seemed to have been totally reconstructed in the 19th century (courtesy of W J Rodwell)*
Where building work has archaeological implications, the presumption is that the archaeological remains should be preserved \textit{in situ}. It is often possible to mitigate the impact of the proposals by designing the foundations so that they do not damage the archaeology. This also of course has the benefit of reducing the archaeological costs of the project. It is particularly important to avoid deep ground level reduction in the area of building work inside a church or of an extension outside a church, as this might interfere with burials or the remains of earlier buildings. Often it is possible to design a raft foundation which is not so deep that it disturbs burials or archaeological deposits.

A project involving groundworks inside or outside the church, or alterations to the fabric of the church building, will almost invariably be required to make provision for archaeology by the DAC when an application is made for faculty, and by the curatorial or development control archaeologists advising the local planning authority should planning permission be required. This will usually take the form of conditions attached to the faculty and the planning permission. The archaeological work will be monitored by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser and the curatorial archaeologists.

In general, an essential preliminary is to excavate a trial trench or test pit beforehand to evaluate the archaeological deposits. The information from such an evaluation may be required to be submitted with an application for faculty or planning permission. This work can also serve as a soil test for a geotechnical assessment of the load-bearing properties of the ground, and may be of use if it is necessary to examine the foundations of the church. If this indicated that there were burials or archaeological deposits that would be disturbed by the building works, and no way could be identified of mitigating the impact of the latter, then permission would either be refused for the work, or preservation by record, in the form of an excavation, would be required. If the investigatory work had indicated that the site was of low archaeological potential, it may be recommended that a watching brief be carried out by an archaeologist who would visit and make records as the work proceeds.

Archaeology at church sites includes not just below ground deposits, but the fabric of the church itself and memorials. Any alterations to the church walls should be monitored for evidence of earlier builds or wall paintings. Whilst details of of relatively recent repairs may not seem of great importance, they can be of value for understanding the building, and for its future maintenance and management. Gravestones, as already mentioned, should be planned and recorded if they are to be moved.
design principles for extensions

Introduction

It has been seen that only a limited range of accommodation is normally contained within an extension, but each church is so different that the circumstances will not be directly comparable. However, a series of design solutions are set out below identifying some of the principles that underlie church architecture, and relating them to the types of extension described above. It is hoped that these will be a stimulus to, and a framework for, the discussion and formulation of design solutions.

Designing a church extension is not an easy matter. Not least among the problems is the absence today of any generally accepted architectural style, in contrast with the situation in the past. However, this document does not seek to exclude modern innovative solutions.

The accommodation to be provided in an extension involves a number of diverse spaces, each with its own requirements:

1. the main hall requires a relatively high ceiling and substantial glazing (the need for black-out facilities should not be forgotten).
2. small meeting rooms require lower ceiling heights and smaller areas of glazing.
3. kitchen and toilets require lower ceiling heights, small areas of glazing, and ventilation.
4. the link, if required, involves a multi-directional circulation space.

Any simple expression of these requirements within a single building will involve a structure of considerable visual complexity. Windows of varying sizes can too easily result in abrupt changes in visual scale. The kitchen and toilet accommodation generally represents a minimal physical volume, usually too small to generate a satisfactory block form. The principal challenge seems to lie in the formulation of a standard articulation of the spaces to resolve all these latent difficulties.

A recurrent problem is that of massing. As a modern single storey building, a large extension, particularly if it has pitched roofs, risks looking very domestic. This can to some degree be overcome by skilful treatment of the building and roof forms.

Understanding the design of the historic church

Any extension must respect the character of the existing building, so that the final effect is one harmonious composition. In the Middle Ages, there was not the clear separation that exists today between ecclesiastical and secular architecture, and a similar architectural language was used for all building work. Medieval practice is relevant to this problem, and can supply useful clues to a successful approach. It used the current architectural style, modified by local traditions and building materials. The new building would represent the reworking of a pre-existing standard solution influenced by local circumstances. It benefited from an inherited architectural vocabulary, and each example formed a new refinement on an established theme. Novelty for its own sake is rarely present, and variation of detail is a principal merit. Nor was it pinched and mean in scale, but of generous proportions harmonising with the scale of the church.

The form of the building was normally determined by the limitations of contemporary building practice. Masonry walling and pitched roofs were the principal elements involved, and a building composed of simple geometrical volumes was the usual outcome.
In the later Middle Ages, the appearance of churches was subtly influenced by the increasing popularity of low-pitched roofs behind wall parapets.

It is important to understand this architectural language, which may be outlined as follows:

(a) pitched roofs normally span across the narrower plan dimension.
(b) the longitudinal emphasis of the ridge gives a directional emphasis to the resultant form.
(c) following from this, door and window openings can fit most naturally into the ends of the block (though many medieval churches have a side entrance).
(d) there are ways of modifying the form so as to suppress the directional emphasis. Some of the most obvious ways are by means of cupolas and buttresses, and by other features such as parapets and belfries. Hipped roofs can also be useful if allied to these modifications. Some form of device to modify the directional emphasis should be adopted if it is intended to place the openings in the long sides. It should be remembered that the arch form itself provides a two-dimensional simulation of a gable and thus a powerful directional effect.
(e) block forms of a square, circular or polygonal plan require roofs that reflect their geometrical shape.

Clearly there are other aspects of medieval architecture that should be borne in mind. In particular, the use of thick heavy masonry walls, together with relatively small arched or square-headed openings, produces an effect of permanence and repose. A structural ‘bay’ system, real or implied, results in a steady rhythm of similar modules, important in suggesting a strong sense of order. In later church building, however, from the 15th to the 18th centuries, and also in the 20th century, a sense of light and space may make an important contribution to the character of a building and help create a sense of unity for those using it.
Many 15th- to 17th-century churches have low leaded roofs behind parapets. Although possibly expensive to construct and maintain, parapets can be used in larger extensions. Since they diminish directional effect, minor projections can be accommodated without damage to the composition.

The changing liturgical practices adopted by the established church in the post-medieval period are reflected in the more open ‘preaching box’ style of building where such features as aisles and transepts may be only implied. With the coming of the Gothic Revival in the 19th century, however, medieval building forms were re-established, and this style of architecture remained popular into the 20th century. The coming of new technologies and materials in the early years of the 20th century brought completely new styles of architecture: this new International Style began to influence the style of church buildings and especially their interiors as the 20th century developed.

**Halls and ancillary rooms**

The basic rectangular unit can be subject to a number of simple variations:

Ancillary rooms will often be large enough to be expressed as additive boxes with independent roofs:

Such subsidiary structures as kitchens, toilets and storage areas, treated in this way, could reasonably express their functions by means of lower ceiling heights and a less formal fenestration pattern than that of the hall. However, there is more frequently a need for relatively small multi-functional extensions that are of insufficient size to justify such a clear articulation of the various parts. In such cases, it will usually be necessary to achieve an overall unified exterior appearance, and to suppress the internal complexity. This clearly presents a sophisticated architectural problem in subordinating the differing fenestration needs of, for instance, a kitchen and a hall, to an overriding formal pattern.

**Aisles, chapels and transepts**

Almost every medieval parish church has been extended or altered structurally to accommodate changes in liturgy, subsidiary chapels, increases in population etc. Such extensions were designed pragmatically, following the best stylistic approach of the period, using the traditional materials of the region. In practical terms, this is still the most obvious way to enlarge a church, although as indicated earlier there are problems if the work affects historic elements. The forms which such extensions may take are best established by a study of the existing church. They may include aisles with pitched roofs or shallow single pitched roofs with parapets, chapel-like extensions, or generally on larger churches, transept forms with roofs at right angles to the main axis.

The detailed design principles for all these forms are the same as those illustrated earlier. However, if the extension is an enlargement of the nave seating area, its internal treatment must relate more closely to the existing church interior than with other forms of extension. Wall and floor finishes should harmonise with those of the existing church, the treatment of door and window openings should be influenced by existing patterns, and very particular concern should be given to the internal design of the roof.
Linked extensions

As already indicated, these are potentially unsatisfactory design solutions, the link tending to be a weak element forming shady and damp areas against the side of the church.

There will however be occasions when the practical advantages will outweigh these intrinsic difficulties. The problems are best confronted by utilising the link as a welcoming entrance, rather than as a blind neutral corridor. The drawing on the left demonstrates a possible solution to the link problem, in which provision for two-directional movement gives rise to a cruciform layout covered with a traditional arrangement of pitched roofs.

It avoids the weakness of a glazed passageway, and provides for full circulation in all directions. Another possibility is to make use of a lean-to, or an extension of an aisle roof into a catslide, to form a link.

Ancillary rooms are most readily accommodated in buildings of a rectangular ground plan. The following diagrams illustrate the variety of visual effect and massing which can arise when a hall is combined with separately expressed ancillary rooms in a linked extension.
Polygonal extensions

Modern extensions of polygonal form can be found throughout Britain. The popularity of this approach is no doubt linked to the concept of the chapter house, which may have some relevance to at least part of the building’s function. However, such extensions present serious disadvantages, unless intended to provide one single large room. Such a room, when polygonal in shape, can seem far from ideal when catering for a multiplicity of uses! Where smaller spaces are needed, they assume impractical shapes, and even the main hall is often strangely misshapen. Where ancillary rooms are added to the exterior of a polygon, the concept is easily compromised in an ungainly fashion. Such a building is difficult to extend should it ever become necessary to do so.

Materials and details

Exterior materials, including roof coverings, should be of the highest possible quality, and appropriate to the particular church. In south-eastern England, the parish church is frequently differentiated from the other buildings of its settlement by the use of stone or flint. In such cases, the use of these materials for the extension will provide a strong unifying effect and stress the ecclesiastical character of the new building. Similarly, whereas most secular buildings have windows and doors of painted timber, weathered oak is a more customary feature of parish churches. Alternatively, there are occasions when it might be appropriate to emphasise the secular nature of an extension, particularly where it is physically separated from the church. In such cases, the vernacular materials of the area, such as red brick, plaster or weatherboarding, could well be appropriate.

Where traditional masonry walls are employed, they should be, or appear to be, of a thickness and mass compatible with traditional construction. It would wise to adopt a consistency of approach and avoid mixing vernacular and polite materials and features in an extension. There may be occasions when large glazed areas may be appropriate without damaging the overall unity. However, be aware that glass is not really invisible: it should be perceived as a large window or door rather than as an ambiguous void.

Detailed design aspects, such as the articulation of the structure and the design of the openings, provides ample opportunities for individual expression. The mere copying of historic detail is invariably insufficient: it can however make a potent and symbolic contribution to the appearance of a new building when transmuted in an inventive way. Given a simple harmonious grouping as described above, the detailing can be used to express an ordered harmony and the sense of the relative importance of the various elements so commonly found in our ancient churches. Care should be taken to ensure good weathering properties, so that the building will gain in visual quality with the passing of time.

A polygonal linked extension at Rivenhall dating from the 1970s
A prayer

Lord, you are present everywhere in heaven and on earth.
Your radiance rests on places where you have set your name.
Bless these houses of worship, witness and work that they might reflect your glory,
inspire your world, and serve your kingdom.
In Jesus' name. Amen.
Schemes to go and look at

It is always helpful to go and see what has been done elsewhere. The following lists include most of the schemes which have been implemented in the Chelmsford Diocese in recent times. It is not argued that all or any of them are to be imitated, but visiting them should help provide a clearer picture of what the problems are, how things can be made to work, and a vision of what might be achieved.

**INTERNAL REORDERING**

Belchamp St. Paul, St. Andrew  tower screened off  
Bradbwell on Sea, St. Thomas  rear gallery  
Felsted, Holy Cross  chapel and tower screened off  
Great Baddow, St. Mary  major scheme  
Greenstead, St. Andrew  chancel, and rooms and kitchen at west end  
Harold Wood, St. Peter  major reordering  
Hatfield Broad Oak, St. Mary  reordering, new facilities, phased scheme  
Langham, St. Mary  gallery  
Little Waltham, St. Martin  tower screened off  
Moulsham, St. John  major reordering  
Plaistow, St. Martin  major reordering  
St. Osyth, SS. Peter and Paul  transept screened off  
Seven Kings, St. John  major reordering, including division of nave  
Sible Hedingham, St. Peter  tower screened off  
Stambourne, St. Peter  tower screened off  
Stisted, All Saints  aisle screened off  
Terling, All Saints  tower screened off  
Thorpe le Soken, St. Michael  rear room and kitchen  
Victoria Dock, Ascension  major reordering  
Walthamstow, St. Michael  enclosure of west end  
Wendens Ambo, St. Mary  tower screened off

**EXTERNAL ADDITIONS**

Aveley St. Michael  extension  
Barking, St. Margaret  large extension  
Brentwood St. Thomas  extension  
Broomfield, St. Mary  extension  
Coggeshall, St. Peter  extension  
Colchester, St. Botolph  extension  
Colchester, St. John  extension larger than church  
Colchester, St. Stephen  extension larger than church  
Dovercourt, All Saints  extension  
Debden, St. Mary  extension  
Elmstead, St. Anne & St. Laurence  extension  
Frinton, St. Mary  extension  
Great Baddow, St. Paul  extension  
Great Bardfield St. Mary  extension  
Great Bentley, St. Mary  extension  
Great Burstead, St. Mary  extension  
Great Totham, St. Peter  extension  
Harlow, St. Mary and St. Hugh  large extension  
Hatfield Peverel, St. Andrew  large extension
Hawkwell, St. Mary aisle extension
Hornchurch, St. Andrew octagonal extension
Ingatestone. St. Edmund large extension
Kelvedon, St. Mary large extension
Lawford, St. Mary extension
Little Burstead, St. Mary small extension
Little Clacton, St. James extension
Little Hallingbury, St. Mary small extension
Little Totham, All Saints small extension forming a north 'porch'
Maldon, St. Mary octagonal extension
Marks Tey, St. Andrew small extension
Nazeing, All Saints extension
Plaistow, St. Martin large extension with community partnership
Ramsey, St. Michael extension
Rayleigh, Holy Trinity large extension
Rivenhall, St. Mary extension
Roydon, St. Peter extension
Sandon, St. Andrew extension
Shenfield, St. Mary extension
Southchurch, Christchurch large extension
Springfield, All Saints two extensions
Stansted Mountfitchet, St. John large extension
Stapleford Tawney, St. Mary extension
Stock, All Saints extension
Stratford, St. John extension
Thundersley, St. Peter extension larger than church
Tiptree, St. Luke extension
Walton, All Saints small extension
West Mersea, SS Peter & Paul large extension
Wickham Bishops, St. Bartholomew extension

DETACHED BUILDINGS
Ashdon, All Saints timber parish room
Black Notley, SS. Peter & Paul parish room
Bulphan, St. Mary parish room
Copford, St. Michael toilet block
Langham, St. Mary 18th-century school house adapted
Little Waltham, St. Martin timber parish room
Sheering, St. Mary parish room
Theydon Garnon, All Saints 'gatehouse' parish room
Walthamstow, St. Peter in the Forest Peterhouse

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS
Fordham, All Saints bought house in parish
Newport, St. Mary renovated adjacent historic building
Rainham, St. Helen café over the road
West Horndon, St. Francis own adjacent bungalow
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The Victoria County History of Essex has three volumes of bibliography, an invaluable source of information on churches, and contains descriptions and histories of churches in those parts of the county which have so far been covered, which include the boroughs of Barking, Newham, Redbridge, Waltham Forest and Havering, as well as Epping, Ongar, Harlow, Colchester, Lexden, Brentwood and Thurrock.

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