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The [Church Buildings Council](#) seeks to support dioceses in working with parishes and other stakeholders where the future of a church building is being considered, to help them make informed decisions about their future including any changes which might be made to improve their sustainability as buildings for mission and community service and outreach. Â This might include physical changes to the building or new forms of governance, partnership and management.

This might be carry on as before with support and advice, or adopting new partnerships or uses which are complementary to worship, perhaps within a new Model such as [Festival Church](#). It might also mean closure as a place of worship, when consultation has shown that all other options are exhausted and this is the right way forward.

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Interior view of St Mary's church Fairford  
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## What Is An Options Appraisal?

The first step in this process is considering all the possibilities, which we call the **options appraisal** process. The Church Buildings Council (CBC) offer a conversation with diocesan staff, the Archdeacon and any other parties concerning the factors which have led the parish to consider the future of the building (or exceptionally, by special request from the diocese and our agreement, a group of churches) as a functioning place of worship. Â

This can be as simple as a telephone call, or a Zoom or Teams meeting, before agreeing on the next steps. Â

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To initiate this process, please [contact](#) Dr Joseph Elders by using the "Initiate an options appraisal process" selection.

- Such an early conversation should enable a suitable and effective way forward to be discerned, which could be as below, ranked from light touch to full statutory process, with escalating levels of CBC involvement;
- To take forward an agreed plan of action with the church, with no further CBC involvement
- To take forward a plan of action with CBC officer advice

- In some cases where it is felt to be justified, convene a formal meeting of all stakeholders (normally including the relevant amenity societies and Historic England) to discuss the way forward, with delegations from the diocese and CBC
- Following the above and by agreement with the diocese, the CBC may compile a formal Options Appraisal Report\* which explores the outcomes of this meeting and suggests one or more ways forward. Â This is a resource-intensive process, which is discretionary and will be rare
- If the above steps are not successful or realistic and another way forward is not obvious, to compile a Church Buildings Report as set out in [Section 21, subsection 6 of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011](#) (for which a formal PCC resolution is required), which may lead to formal closure as a place of worship, although other outcomes are possible.

\*An Options Appraisal Report is similar in content to a Church Buildings Report, but has no statutory status, that means it can be confidential to the diocese and parish and other stakeholders, as required. No outcome is assumed.

It helps churches or groups of churches facing particular challenges where there is no desire for closure to consider constructive ways forward, and offers an opportunity to think about the potential of a particular church and to [explore complementary uses in addition to worship](#).

Should no way forward be found through the options appraisal process and the PCC petitions for consideration of closure, the report can easily be converted into a statutory **Church Buildings Report** as required by the Measure, so there is no double handling and the legal process can begin with no delay, with the submission of the report to the CBC at one of its regular meetings.

## What is a Church Buildings Report?

A Church Buildings Report is part of the formal legal process set out in the [Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011](#), which a diocese follows when it has received a petition for closing a consecrated church (or part of it, see Legal Options), following the Options Appraisal process.

It comprises an assessment of the significance of a church building, its furnishings and its churchyard. It covers the architecture of the building and its place in the landscape, the archaeology of the church and churchyard, the work of craftsmen and artists, the history of the church and its people and the natural environment. We use the guidelines for assessing significance set out in our guidance on [Statements of Significance and Statements of Needs](#) and on [Conservation Management Plans](#).

It also assesses the potential for change to the building that might help it become sustainable if the decision is made to keep it open. This is considered in a wide sense in line with our policy to promote [open and sustainable churches](#). It might involve additional uses that support mission or alternative uses that could sit alongside worship and mission and provide an income. The report helps the diocese in their discussion about the future of the building. It will be considered alongside pastoral and financial factors in the context of the [diocesan strategy](#).Â

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## The Structure of the Church Buildings Report

A Summary Report (Part 1) is compiled in the first place, which focuses on defining the significance, sustainability and condition of the church building in its local, diocesan and national context. This may involve making suggestions about changes which might be made if the church were to continue in use for worship. This report will normally be a maximum of 10 pages long, suitably illustrated with maps and plans, and will be formally considered and if necessary revised at a full meeting of the CBC.

Should the church building, following receipt by the diocese of this report and any necessary consultation, be recommended for closure as a place of regular worship and a Scheme under the Measure is approved by the Bishop, the detailed Inventory (Part 2) is added, and this fuller report is considered by the CBC's Statutory Advisory Committee. This body then gives its advice on the possible future uses of the building and site as part of the closure process, as set out [here](#)

## How to request a Church Buildings Report

Requests should come from the diocese, normally the Pastoral Secretary. We recommend that you ask for the report as early as possible, normally after a formal petition for closure has been submitted to the diocese by the PCC.

To request a Church Buildings Report:

1.

1. Obtain a resolution from the PCC as set out in the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

2. Download our form

[PDF copy](#)

[Word copy](#)

3. Fill it in and make sure it is endorsed on page 2 by the diocese's Pastoral Secretary

4. Send it to us by email with your supporting documents and any information you wish to add (see instructions and contact information in the downloadable form)

2.

## What happens after we receive your request for a church buildings report?

We do some research and arrange a site visit with the local contact.

Once a draft report is ready, it needs to be approved by the [Church Buildings Council](#). In the rare cases where the CBC has previously compiled a full Options Appraisal Report, this will be reformatted and submitted to the Council as the Church Buildings Report.

We send the final report to the Diocesan Pastoral Secretary for circulation. We also send a copy to the incumbent and the Church Commissioners.

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## Next steps

The CBC will recommend the level of our future involvement:

- Level 1: Report and letter with recommendations
- Level 2: Report and letter, follow up with advice (e.g. on grant aid)
- Level 3: One or more follow up visits and advice
- Level 4: Intensive support (this will be rare) with advice on
  - [Complementary use](#)
  - [Funding](#)
  - [Setting up trusts](#)
  - [Conservation management plans](#)
  - [Environmental audits](#)

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## Also of interest

### [Think outside the box](#)

[Make wider, more imaginative use of your church building](#)

### [Develop a community project](#)

[Let us help you through all the project steps](#)

## Request an archived church buildings report

We give access to groups with a formal interest in historic churches

## Diocesan strategic reviews

Integrated thinking about church buildings with mission and ministry

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**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/church-buildings-council/how-we-manage-our-buildings/struggling-churches-options>