

Guidance Note Reordering - Alterations and Extensions

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A successful alteration or extension to a church is a great enhancement to parish life.

This note describes the processes to be followed to avoid pitfalls.

Reordering and extension

Once a PCC has decided in principle to think about a reordering proposal, take the following steps:

- Consult the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). The DAC is always willing to visit and advise parishes, so an excellent first step is to ask DAC members to visit and advise. They will be aware of what solutions have worked well in other places, and what particular issues need to be faced in particular circumstances.
- Visit places recommended by the DAC where successful

solutions have been put in hand.

- Think carefully about your needs. It is easy to get fixed on particular solutions at an early stage such as building an extension or taking out pews. But the early-stage thinking needs to concentrate on what you need (i.e. space for meetings, new facilities) and why you need it.
- Avoid imprecise thinking and in particular the word 'flexible'.
- Remember that most church reordering is small-scale. Think about the big picture, but don't be over-ambitious.

- Think holistically. Try to develop an overall plan for the church, taking into account its liturgical needs, and other issues such as wheelchair access.

- Prepare an initial **Statement of Significance and Needs**. The statement will set out the significance of the building and the relevant parts, and set out in some detail the parish's needs.

- Consult again with the DAC, and also where necessary as advised by the DAC with English Heritage and any other consultees such as the national amenity societies, the Church





Buildings Council and the local planning authority.

- Prepare a brief for the architect, taking into account the needs expressed, and the comments made by the consultees.
- Appoint an architect for the work. Although it is often the case that inspecting architects are used for alteration and extension work, it is quite possible to appoint another architect. Ask for advice from the DAC, and look carefully at the experience of candidates in undertaking work to historic churches.
- Where the proposals are likely to be major, consult the church and wider community. Hold a public meeting and ask for views.
- When the architect has prepared initial drawings, consult again with the DAC and other consultees, as well as with the PCC and parish.
- Raise the money for the work!
- Subject to comments received, ask the architect to produce tender drawings and to seek tenders.
- Ask the PCC to pass a resolution to apply for a faculty and (subject to the

grant of a faculty) to enter into a contract for the work.

- Apply for formal advice from the DAC and subsequently petition for a faculty.

Liturgical reordering

If liturgical reordering is being considered, think carefully about the following issues:

- Remember each church is different. What works in one location may not work in another.
- If a second altar is proposed, justify why this should be necessary. Although nave altars have been a common development, why should your church need one? With reasonable sight lines and a good sound system, people sitting in the nave can feel involved with liturgical action in a chancel.
- Think carefully about how each part of the building is used liturgically, and how the visual foci would work in relation to one another. How will due prominence be given to the altar which is primarily used in worship? Two altars along the main axis of a building is visually confusing.

- Consider carefully the design and positioning of pulpits and lecterns.

• Similarly with the font, think about its positioning and how well it works liturgically. The Canons of the Church of England say that the font shall normally stand near the principal entrance in well-ordered surroundings. There is good liturgical foundation for this.

Just as the candidates for baptism are asked if they 'turn to Christ', the congregation can turn in their places to face the place of baptism.

- If different arrangements for baptism are being considered, think of whether bold innovation might be developed, such as adapting a font for baptism by affusion.

The House of Bishops has advised that, in general, there should only be one font in a church. Therefore any portable or temporary font should be avoided.

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