

Guidelines for Alterations to Churches in the Diocese of Westminster

**Application process for
the refurbishment and
reordering of churches
and installation of
artworks**



2016

Introduction

*When churches are built, let great care be taken that they are well suited to celebrating liturgical services and to bringing about the active participation of the faithful. **Sacrosanctum Concilium 126***

The Diocesan Art and Architecture Committee (A&A Committee) has been established by authority of the Ordinary as a committee of the Diocesan Liturgy Commission to assist him with his responsibilities concerning the churches of the Diocese.

*All who are involved in the construction, restoration, and remodelling of sacred buildings are to consult the diocesan Commission on the Sacred Liturgy and Sacred Art. The diocesan Bishop, moreover, is to use the counsel and help of this commission whenever it comes to laying down norms on this matter, approving plans for new buildings, and making decisions on the more important issues. **General Instruction of the Roman Missal 291***

In planning work to churches parishes will find essential guidance provided by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England Wales in their book *Consecrated for Worship* published by CTS (ISBN 1 86082 384 X).

The Diocese of Westminster has a long and rich tradition of church building, covering nearly 300 years. These churches are works of faith designed to enable the worthy celebration of the liturgy, and themselves to encourage men and women to raise their minds and hearts to God.

Nearly every parish church has a long and venerable history. It has been the place for countless sacramental celebrations, and will have a place in the hearts of the families and individuals who have worshipped there in times of joy and times of sorrow. All churches need to be treated with the greatest of respect.

Churches will also require work to be done on them from time to time. Sometimes this will be simply to maintain the fabric of the building, sometimes because there is need to adapt to changing circumstances. The A&A committee must approve any alterations to church buildings which does not involve replacement of like with like. Changes to the decoration, the fittings or the lighting of a church, as well as to the liturgical arrangements can have a significant impact on how the environment provided by the church contributes to the worship of the community of faith that gathers there.

One regular reason for work being considered necessary in a church is the recognition that the contemporary liturgy makes distinctive demands on church buildings in comparison to those demanded even forty or fifty years ago. These demands are not limited to alternative arrangements of the sanctuary — in particular they also affect the processional areas of the church, the places dedicated to the sacraments of baptism and reconciliation, and the place of entry into the church.

The Committee and the Liturgy Commission are available to advise and assist parishes with processes of formation and information at any stage of a particular project. Both bodies strongly recommend that these processes be engaged with as soon as thought is being given to change.

Whenever change is being proposed, there needs to be reasoned argument as to why it is necessary; and what it is intended to achieve. Many churches have been reordered, for example, in recent decades. Sometimes that reordering has not been entirely satisfactory and corrective work may be necessary. However one of the important qualities to be achieved in liturgical space is a sense of permanence. In particular where a reordering of a reordering is proposed, every effort needs to be taken to ensure that the new arrangement will be more satisfactory and will give the impression of permanence.

Always priority should be given to quality of design and the quality of workmanship. Churches are designed to serve for generations and any work in carried out in them should also meet the

same expectations. Church commissions whether architectural or artistic should ensure that the desire to save money is balanced by concern for the quality of design and the materials used. In some cases it will be clear that permission to proceed with a particular work can be given readily and straightforwardly.

In other cases a somewhat longer and more formal process of approval needs to be undertaken. Except when strictly like for like work is being proposed, this will always be the case with listed buildings, for which approval needs to be obtained not only from the Art and Architecture Committee but also from the Historic Churches Committee, which has statutory authority regarding listed buildings.

Incomplete or inadequate submissions will not be considered by the Committee. In order to avoid unnecessary delays parishes are invited to make contact with the Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee at the earliest opportunity. This will enable a first discussion of the project, and allow him to offer guidance as to how the project may best be pursued, and the Committee's expectations.

All change has to be handled with sensitivity and should not be a matter for the parish priest alone. The Art and Architecture Committee remind parishes of the Diocesan requirement to obtain the approval of the Diocesan Finance Board for expenditure over £5,000 and £10,000 in the case of Building Works.

Where work involves changes to the liturgical space in particular the Art and Architecture Committee will expect to see evidence of a broad consultation with the parish as a whole.

The dates of the meetings of the A&A committee are published on the A&A pages in the Resource section of the Diocesan Website. These dates are chosen to coordinate with meetings of the Historic Churches Commission.

The Diocesan Liturgy Commission and the Art and Architecture Committee exists to facilitate the Cardinal in fulfilling his responsibility to safeguard the Patrimony of the diocese so that it serves the liturgical and spiritual life of the people of the diocese.

Fr Allen Morris

Chairman

Diocesan Liturgy Commission

Canon Peter Newby

Chairman

Diocesan Art and Architecture Committee

Application Process

Stage One:

Preliminaries

This is the most important stage as it will set the tone for the rest of the working process, and its correct implementation will make it possible for the Art and Architecture Committee and the Historic Church's Committee (where applicable) to process applications smoothly and efficiently.

The Parish Priest and the Parish.

1. If a parish is considering alterations to a church as explained above they should, in the first instance, contact the Chair of the A&A committee. They may also wish at the same time to speak to their Bishop/Episcopal Vicar and the Financial Secretary about the need for the project and the financial implications.
2. The chair of the A&A Committee will organize an informal visit to discuss the project and explain the process for obtaining A&A approval.
3. If necessary the Chair of the A&A committee will inform the Chair of the HCC

The most important task at this stage is to contemplate the potential scope of works, the need to consult with the parish laity, and to discuss the project, whether architectural or artistic, informally with the Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee.

Until this stage is completed there is generally no need to employ any professionals (e.g. liturgical designer; lighting designer). The A&A Committee maintains a list of architects and designers approved to work in the Diocese of Westminster. Firms can be added to this list by following the steps contained in the A&A Committee Form A1 stage 3. This list is available on the A&A pages of the Diocesan Website. It is strongly recommended that the parish does not engage an architect, designer or artist without first having them added to the Diocesan List. Projects will only be approved by the A&A Committee if designed by an Approved Architect or Designer.

Stage Two:

Parishes should complete Part 1 stage 1 & 2 of the A&A committee Application form (Form A1) at this stage

Development of a Design Brief

Once the first stage of the Application process has led to agreement on the scale of the necessary works, the next stage is to prepare a detailed brief. This should include a description of the church as it presently laid out (including its history etc.), the features that need addressing in the proposed works, and your expectations of what the proposed architectural or artistic work should achieve.

This draft brief should be submitted to the Art and Architecture Committee for its approval.

Development of a Design Brief (Cont'd)

If the project being considered is an extensive restoration/re-ordering of a Church this is likely to be very costly. It may well be that a parish could not afford for all the work to be carried out at once. However there are considerable advantages at this stage of ensuring that the full scope of potential work is taken into consideration, even if what is established as necessary is carried out in a phased operation over a number of years (for example re-ordering of sanctuary and restoration of church followed by renewal of baptismal font: followed by work on narthex). Establishing a long term plan avoids the disadvantages of dealing with matters piece meal. It allows for better planning, achieves a more consistent design and helps avoid unnecessary costs.

Stage Three:

Parishes should complete Part 1 stage 3 of the A&A committee application form (Form A1) at this stage

Appointment of an Architect/Designer/Artist

The Committee would be happy to assist in the appointment of an architect, designer or artist where appropriate. In some circumstances consideration should be given to inviting a number of professionals to make submissions against the approved brief.

Stage Four:

Parishes should complete Part 1 stage 4 of the A&A committee application form A1 at this stage

Completion of Documents and Preliminary Submission

The following documents will need to be completed

1. Statement of needs. An overall idea of what the Parish Priest and community wish to achieve by the re-ordering. This exercise will involve the whole Church, even if only a small part of any larger plan is being considered for change at the present moment. The Committee is anxious to view all proposals within the context of the whole Church, to ensure that a phased programme of changes will fit with the liturgical celebration of the sacraments and aesthetic vision of the Church.
2. Statement of significance. Which elements in the Church are of particular aesthetic and historical interest, and especially appreciated by Parish Priest and Parishioners? Which pieces have been given by donors who either live or whose descendants live in the Parish?
3. Plans of current arrangement. Site plan of Church, and floor plans of Church as existing, as well as photographs of the interior, and exterior of the Church
4. Plans and drawings of proposals, This submission should include elevations of new Sanctuary furniture if relevant, description of proposed materials, (such as floor surfaces) or colour sketch of proposed artwork.

At this stage there is no need to have detailed drawings of every element in the design. The Committee is interested in the general scope of the work and ideas behind it, as well as evidence that the Church has been looked at as a whole.

Stage Five:

Review of the Project by the Committee

The Committee normally meets four times a year to consider submissions, and at each meeting will choose one of the following courses of action:

<p>1.1 The A&A Committee accept the proposals as submitted. The project may be advanced to the next stage. A Certificate Of Approval will be issued by the Chair of the Liturgy Commission</p> <p>1.2 The approved works can proceed to working drawings/detailed design stage.</p> <p>1.3 Listed Churches The Certificate of Approval should be submitted to the Historic Churches Committee (HCC) by the Client (Parish Team). The Chair of the HCC Rev Peter Harries may be contacted at 01279 654063.</p> <p>Note The HCC has statutory authority over the works whose authorisation is necessary before any work can begin. The statues of the Historic Church Committee do not allow them to approve works until such time as the Certificate has been issued by the Chair of the Liturgical Commission</p>
<p>2. The A&A committee require minor emendations to the proposals. These can be approved by the Chair of the A&A committee after which a Certificate of Approval will be given.</p>
<p>3. The A&A committee require major emendations to the proposals. The Committee will set out its concerns in its full report and will be available to advise on what is required. (If you require advice you may contact the Chair of the A&A committee) The date of the next committee meetings are on the A&A website if you wish to resubmit your proposals.</p>
<p>4. The committee are of the opinion that a proposal should not be implemented. It will explain the reasons in its full report.</p>

Stage Six:

Parishes should complete Part 2 stage 6 & 7 of the A&A committee application form (Form A1) at this stage (stage 5 of Form A1 will be completed by the A&A Committee.

Detailed Design and Contact with other Diocesan Bodies

In the case of non-listed buildings, once the Certificate of Approval has been obtained from the Liturgy Commission parishes may proceed to obtain tenders for the necessary works.

The Project Leader and the Diocesan Surveyor will be able to advise the parish in relation to identifying suitable contractors to tender for the work.

Parishes are advised that, even after the Certificate of Approval has been issued, there will be a requirement to remain in contact with the Chairman of the A&A Committee. It will generally be necessary to submit further detailed working drawings to him for approval. These drawings will be listed in the A&A Certificate of Approval These drawings will be reviewed to ensure that the work is being carried out in accordance with the approval given. The detail of a design has a great impact on how a building is experienced so it is essential to get these details right e.g. the quality of seating, the colours of the sanctuary etc. Too many good proposals have resulted in unsatisfactory results because of a lack of close supervision at this stage.

Stage Seven:**Completion of Tender Process and Construction on Site**

This stage of the work is normally the remit of the Parish Team and the Project Leader., The Diocesan Surveyor is available to advise the Client (Parish Team) in supervising the project leader and other professionals. Should it be necessary to change/adapt designs in the light of construction difficulties, the approval of the Chairman of the A & A Committee must be sought and received in writing.

Stage Eight:**Completion of the Project**

The completion of any project must be notified to the Chairman so that a photographic record may be established, and for their possible publication in different architectural/conservation magazines.

General:**Compliance with Diocesan Procedures**

It is the responsibility of Parish Priests under Canon 532 to ensure that the parish goods are administered in accordance with the law.

1. The Parish Priest is responsible for building work carried out in his parish. He most probably will be assisted by a Building Committee and Finance Committee.
2. When the Parish Priest and/or Building Committee follow the Diocesan Procedures the parish will benefit from a successfully completed project.
3. In cases when the Parish Priest decides not to follow Diocesan Procedures, or permits a Building Committee to ignore Diocesan Procedures, certain consequences will follow.

Procedures in cases where parish priests/parishes fail to follow diocesan procedures:

1. When it comes to the attention of the A&A Committee that a Parish is undertaking work without approval from the A&A committee, a member of the committee will contact the parish and instruct the parish to halt construction work pending an investigation.

OR

- 1.1 If a Parish has completed work without approval from the A&A committee a member of the A&A Committee will contact the parish and arrange to visit the parish to ascertain the extent of the work.
2. The A&A Committee are aware that halting construction projects can be very costly. The responsibility for this however will lie with any parish which has begun work without seeking the proper approval.
3. The parish will be asked to submit a full application for approval of the works to the A&A committee.
4. The A&A committee will assess the request in the usual way and in accordance with its published meeting dates. If the works are not approved parishes will be required to undo work carried out without permission, or to carry out remedial work at their expense.

5. Breaches of the Diocesan Guidelines by Parish Priests/Parishes will automatically be communicated by the A&A committee to the Financial Secretary, Bishop/Episcopal Vicar with responsibility for the Deanery in which a parish is located, the Vicar General, the Ordinary and the Parish Priest.
6. For works carried out after approval the A&A committee will visit the parish by arrangement with the parish priest to ensure that the works are executed in accordance with any such approval.

OR

- 6.1 For remedial works carried out in accordance with any judgement made by the A&A committee the A&A committee will visit the parish by arrangement with the parish priest to ensure that such works are executed in accordance with said judgement.
7. The A&A Committee acts on behalf of the Ordinary therefore in the event of a parish not co-operating with the above procedures the A&A committee will compile a report detailing the facts of any breach of their procedures and any failure by the parish to comply with the steps required to remedy such breach. This report will be sent to the Ordinary who will decide what further action needs to be taken. Such report will be copied to the Financial Secretary, Bishop/Episcopal Vicar with responsibility for the Deanery in which a parish is located, the Vicar General and the Parish Priest.

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For further information on the role of the Diocesan Liturgy Commission and Art & Architecture Committee visit the Diocesan web site <http://rcdow.org.uk/diocese/art-and-architecture-committee/>