



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Statements of Significance

**Guidance for Parishes**

Church Buildings Council  
March 2011

Church House  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3AZ

## CHURCH BUILDINGS COUNCIL

### STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE; GUIDANCE FOR PARISHES

The Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2000 define a Statement of Significance as “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 purpose of the Statement of Significance is to help you, the parish, explore the strengths and potential that your church holds for worship and mission, and to help those in the Faculty system advise you and assess your plans for change. A Statement of Significance should be prepared by every parish, and should accompany a faculty application and balance the separately prepared Statement of Need, for which guidance is also available on the Churchcare web site, found at: <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/legal.php>.

This guidance includes a template to help you to write your Statement of Significance, which should be divided into two parts, as explained below. It should include a ground plan and map of the local area and at least two photographs, normally one of the exterior, one of the interior. The notes in the expandable boxes will guide you as to the sort of things to include.

In assessing significance you may wish to use the following customary terminology.

- **High** – important at national to international levels
- **Moderate-High** – important at regional or sometimes higher
- **Moderate** – usually of local value but of regional significance for group or other value (e.g. vernacular architecture)
- **Low-Moderate** – of local value
- **Low** – adds little or nothing to the value of a site or detracts from it

**Part I: The church in its urban / rural environment** should provide an overview of the significance of the church, and the contribution of its setting to that significance.

Part I should be compiled before any specific proposal has been worked up, and can be re-used for each faculty application. This means that you do not have to start from scratch each time, although of course it will have to be kept up to date.

**Part II: The significance of the area affected by the proposal** should provide a more detailed description of the significance of the particular part of the church and / or its curtilage affected by the proposal scheme, and the potential impact of the proposed works.

Part II will be prepared in draft form for any pre-application consultations, and finalised to accompany a faculty application when a scheme has been worked up, taking the information in Part I into account. This will ensure that the Statement is kept up to date, and relevant to each particular application. This should not be a justification of your scheme, which should be in the Statement of Need.

The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and sufficient to understand the impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset.

The PCC should be able to produce the Statement itself in collaboration with their architect and the DAC. However, in the case of large and complex churches the PCC may need to consider acquiring professional help. In some cases a Conservation Management Plan may be required, consult the relevant CBC guidance on Churchcare.

You may find that there are some sections which are not relevant to your application. Where this is the case please state that the section is 'not applicable'.

Church Buildings Council

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**Basic facts**

Parish:

Dedication:

Benefice:

Diocese:

Address:

Grid ref:

Local Planning Authority:

County:

Statutory Listing of church:

Statutory designation for structures and objects within churchyard:

Conservation Area:

Scheduled Monument:

Tree Preservation Orders:

Protected Species:

County Wildlife Site (or equivalent, or SSSI):

Any other designations:

## **Part I: The church in its urban / rural environment.**

### **1.1 Setting of the Church**

How does the setting out of the church contribute to its landscape / townscape value and to its significance?

*Are there distant or near views which are valued by the congregation / wider community / visitors / experts? How do the trees contribute to the setting? What is known of the landscape design and history of the churchyard, including extensions? Are there archaeological remains? Are adjacent buildings similar, complementary or contrasting in age, style, materials or age? How are the boundary and entrances marked? Are the monuments, war memorials significant?*

## 1.2 : The living churchyard

What is the significance of the natural heritage of the site?

*Is the church or churchyard used by protected species or species with Biodiversity Action Plans? Are there any ancient, very prominent, rare or unusual trees? How good a habitat is the churchyard for fauna and flora?*

### **1.3: Social History**

What is the historic and present use of the church and churchyard by the congregation and wider community? How does this contribute to its significance?

*Are there any significant events or personalities associated with the church? Are there important memories associated with the church or churchyard? How has the community served by the church changed over time?*

#### **1.4: The church building in general**

Provide a description of the church.

*What is the history of the church; when was a church first established on the site and how has it changed over time; who are the architects, artists and other craftsmen who have been involved; have there been any significant benefactors and has this affected the choice of architect / artist or the incorporation of any monuments in the church? How does work carried out on the church link to international, national, regional or local architectural and artistic movements? What is its plan form, spatial quality, building materials used, how it is lit and heated? What is the theological 'message' communicated by the exterior and interior of the church?*





## **1.7 Significance for mission**

What are the strengths of the building as it is for worship and mission? What potential for adapted and new uses does the church and its setting already have with little or no change?

## Part II: The significance of the area affected by the proposal.

This should “zoom in” and provide a description of the particular part of the church and / or its curtilage affected by the proposed scheme, the significance of these, and the potential impact of the proposed works. This can be compiled in this way, building on the information assembled for Part I:

- First, identify the parts of the church and/or churchyard which will be directly or indirectly affected by your proposal. You may need to describe these in more detail than in Part I

*Which parts are directly, which parts indirectly affected?*

- Second, set out the **significance** of these particular parts, **low**, **moderate** or **high**.

- Third, describe and assess the **impact** of your proposal on these parts, and on the whole. Characterise impacts as either **low**, **moderate** or **high**.

*Impacts could include loss, alteration, obscuring, change of setting and change of use*

- Finally, explain how you intend, where possible, to mitigate the impact of the proposed works on the significance of the parts affected and the whole. This should include an assessment of the environmental impact or effects of these changes

*How reversible are the impacts?*

## 1.8 Sources consulted

List the sources consulted. These may include:

- 'Buildings of England' series by Pevsner
- Reports by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME), now part of English Heritage
- The local history society
- The local museum
- Diocesan Record Centre
- County Record Centre
- County Biological Records Centre
- Historic Environment Record (HER), maintained by your local authority.
- Victoria County History (VCH)

Statutory designations and descriptions for churchyards, churches or objects within them can be checked through your local planning authority, English Heritage and Natural England (Nature Conservation significance). Useful web sites include:

- Churchcare <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/>
- Shrinking the footprint [www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org)
- Heritage Gateway [www.heritagegateway.org.uk/](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/)
- Magic [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)
- Caring for God's Acre [www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk](http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk)