

A guide to developing Church building projects



Spire 
Support Services

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1. Introduction

The Diocese of Norwich is blessed with the presence of over 653 churches within its jurisdiction, the majority of which are medieval. Many of these buildings are in areas where the population is declining, others are in growing communities, and which require great financial commitment to maintain.

It befalls the incumbents and PCCs – as custodians of these churches – to help adapt and grow their places of worship responsibly to serve the changing congregation and wider community.

Church building projects and the re-ordering of church interiors to provide what are regarded as essential facilities is not an undertaking for the faint-hearted.

They necessitate commitment and hard work from those involved, with the drive and determination to see things through over the sometimes long timescales involved.

They require careful consideration and collaboration to create something that is fit for purpose, both for the present and the future. They need the ability to be sustainable and adaptable according to the needs of the church; they need to be sympathetic with the existing site, building and use.

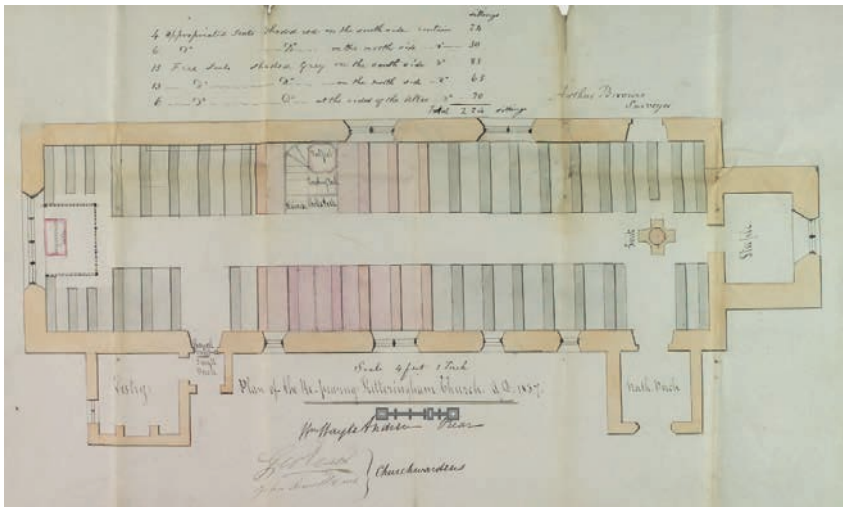
The completion of a well-thought out scheme that complements the church, stands on its own two feet and serves its users well is an asset to the whole community for years to come.

Spire recognises the difficulties and challenges face by you and are here to help you through this undertaking at every stage.

So, how do you start on the journey of adapting your church to the needs of the 21st Century and beyond and how can Spire assist in your journey?

Read on...

Ketteringham Church floor plan from 1837



2. Initial thoughts and ideas...

As a PCC you need to hone in on the reasons behind instigating a project and establish your needs. A good place to start is by considering the following:

Strengths – e.g. a proactive PCC, potential local donators, thriving community

Weaknesses – e.g. little fund-raising capability, no car-parking

Opportunities – e.g. potential facility users, growing community, income opportunities

Threats – new / other facilities nearby, poor building condition, dwindling community



It's a good idea to create some mind maps or write down thoughts to bring out ideas involving you, the wider congregation and others who might use the church facilities. Other user groups might want to do their own, as they will be more focussed on their specific needs.

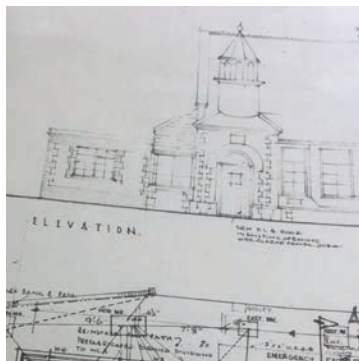
As a starting point, think about the following areas (remembering the previous headings):

- How did the perceived need come about?
- What are you trying to achieve?
- What do you want to provide?
- What style of worship do you undertake / would you like to undertake?
- What is significant about the church building?
- What liturgical requirements / restrictions are there?
- Who are you trying to serve / accommodate?
- What do you feel is lacking?
- What do you feel is positive?
- Is there somewhere else locally that could provide what you are looking for?
- What is good / bad about what you have now?
- How much money could you raise?
- Are there any issues to address with the existing church – repairs for example or floor levels?

- What support do you have within the PCC and wider community?
- What support is there in the local authority?
- Are you working in conjunction with the community?

This may seem a lot to think about, but the aim is to get all thoughts in the open, in no particular order, maybe linking in with each other to start to formulate some core requirements. This can be an enlightening experience – no holds barred! This exercise is vital to produce a valuable document to provide to designers, funders, local councils and the Diocese; it will likely form the PCC’s ‘statement of need’ as well, which is required for faculty approval.

Spire is familiar with the steps of this process and can be of assistance by helping you to focus on the key issues as well as providing information around what needs to go into the development of a brief to ensure an outcome that fits your needs and that of external bodies.



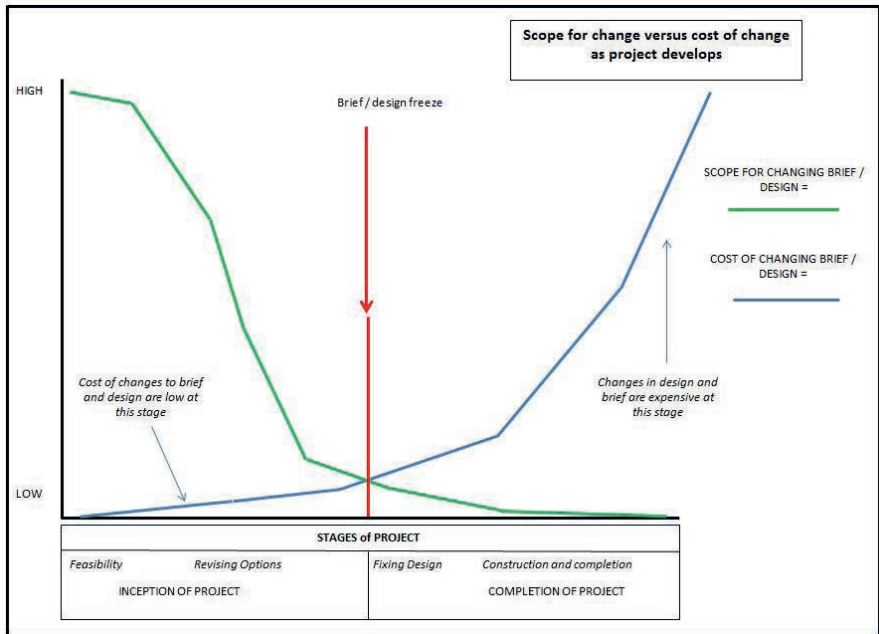
3. Finances

3.1. *Budgeting and initial spend*

It is always a lovely idea to have an unfettered approach to developing a design or concept for a project – allowing creativity to flow unrestricted - and using this approach many parishes have spent untold thousands on the production of schemes and drawings which, quite frankly, are very unlikely ever to see any hope of becoming reality. It is easy to get carried away and engage a designer to produce drawings and schemes far too early in a project, giving them no idea of a budget or financial constraints - truly a designer's dream - and the results are likely to reflect this; beautifully-designed buildings that are financially unachievable.

It is likely that you will need to commit some initial funds to developing a formal brief and to carry out an initial feasibility study in order that something worthwhile can be presented to potential funders as well as the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and other interested parties. This shows your commitment to the project and can often be off-set as part of a grant application at a later stage. Equally importantly, money spent wisely now will direct further financial commitment down a much more productive route.

*Change versus cost in a project –
the later the change, the more expensive it becomes!*



Spire is focussed on helping you achieve your aims. As part of the Diocesan family we are interested in the outcomes of projects and the long-term benefits that they deliver to your Church and the wider community. We know the difficulties and practicalities of raising funds for projects such as this, as well as the demands and requirements that need to be satisfied; to this end, we work closely with the DAC and Diocesan fund-raising team. Our aim is to guide you on budgeting issues and develop innovative concepts based on realistic finances whilst incorporating the most appropriate design, materials and fixtures.

3.2. External funders

If you are likely to need external funding, there are some things to consider regarding funders' requirements in terms of 'outcomes' for a project. A good place to start regarding how to go about fund-raising in a number of innovative ways is by contacting the Diocese Parish Funding Support Team, based at Diocesan House. Their knowledge and experience will be particularly valuable.

Spire has experience in helping PCCs through the process from initial enquiry to development and delivery stages, working with the Parish Funding Support Team to unlock suitable funding sources and ensure the best possible applications.

You need to be mindful of the key points that funders look for in applications:

■ Engagement

Funders such as the Lottery will want to see that you have fully engaged with the wider community to ensure any award will have maximum benefit, particularly around engaging a wider and larger range of people with heritage.

■ Sustainability

Funders will want to ensure that projects can ‘stand up’ and that further funding will not be requested for the same outcomes in the future. They will want to see that the heritage asset (church) is in better condition on completion of the project and that the facilities will continue to be used and potentially generate an income to support running costs and upkeep.

■ Value for money

Funders will normally want you to have gone through a process to demonstrate ‘value for money’ and as such, you should be considering the following:

- Have you approached at least two or three designers?
- Have you formed a brief and budget for them?
- Have you asked them for to quote for specific stages of a project?
- Are they addressing your brief and your budget?

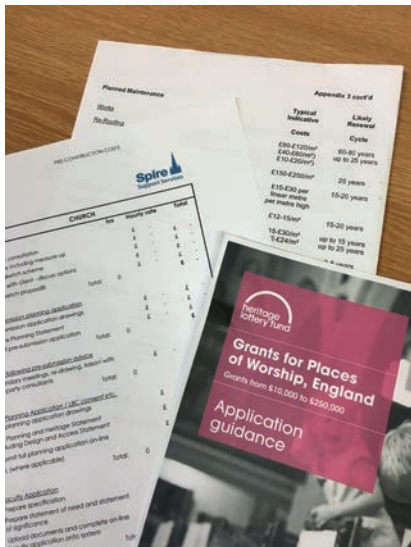
3.3. Other project costs

It must not be forgotten that the construction costs of a project are usually only part of the financial picture. Other costs may include:

- VAT – this may be reclaimable but needs to be factored in
- Planning and building regulation fees
- Specialist surveys – ecological, topographical, archaeological, structural, historical, asbestos etc.
- Professional fees – architectural and / or surveying services, project management, fund-raising consultants
- Service connections and alterations – water, electricity, sewerage, lightning protection

These are usually included as part of the project costs by funders such as Heritage Lottery Funding, but need to be factored in.

Spire can co-ordinate the varied professional consultants that may be required as part of the process, and will obtain quotes for specialist services to ensure value for money. Liaison with those involved with planning, the Diocese faculty process, building control and other interested parties is something that Spire does for many of its clients and we have built up good relationships with those teams to help facilitate collaborative working in order to achieve your aims as smoothly as possible.



Costing all elements of a project is essential to prevent issues later on...



Perhaps this church is a little too far gone for a grant application!

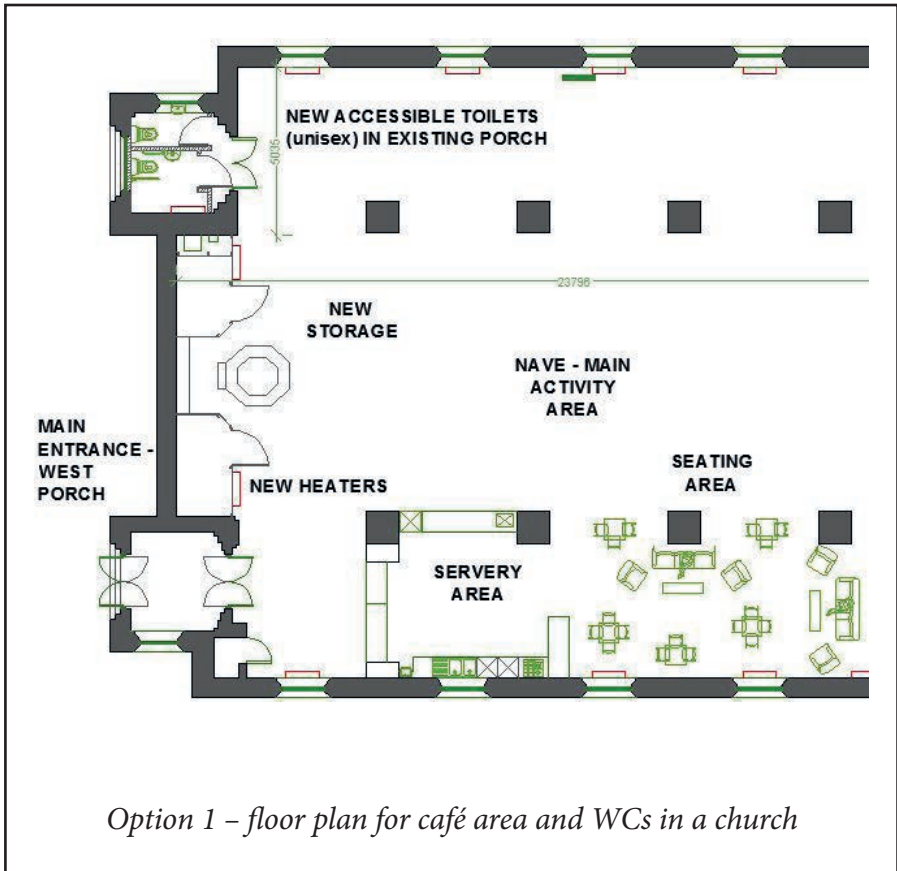
4. Feasibility Studies

It is sensible to have some finances available (probably hundreds of pounds rather than thousands) at an early stage to enable you to engage designers to produce some options. The feasibility needs to be centred on your prepared brief and will probably consist of sketched options at this stage to get some design ideas around what is possible in building terms. Depending on the instructions given, it is also possible for the designer to give some budget construction costs, however the cost of a project will be dependent on the final specification; costs vary greatly depending on, for instance, types of heating installation, provision of drainage options and materials selected.

A feasibility study is useful in several ways:

- It is achievable with a limited and finite financial commitment
- It provides some 'concrete' ideas for you to consider
- It allows you to get a 'feel' for the designers, to see who you might want to work with
- It gives a ball-park figure to help discussions around funding issues

Spire can assist in helping you to develop a robust brief, focussing on key aims to ensure any options that are presented do fulfil your requirements. We can also progress further to a full feasibility study, illustrating those options whilst having a clear picture of your aims and objectives.



5. Collaboration

An important part of adapting, changing and / or extending a church is to get on board those who have a critical role in the 'permissions' process.

It is little use progressing an idea or concept that is unlikely to attract approval from the local authority, the DAC, Historic England or other consultees that might be involved. It is essential therefore, to discuss ideas with the appropriate officers to clarify the general direction in which the brief is taking the project. It is really helpful for them to understand why a project is important and what enhancements it will bring to the community and heritage asset in order for them to be supportive.



*Alone we can do so little,
together we can do so much...*

Helen Keller
1880 - 1968

Whilst consultees may want a visual representation of what you are proposing in terms of extending the building for instance, they should be able to advise in principle and can probably give some direction in terms of what may or may not be acceptable for development, re-ordering etc. as well as outlining the processes that surround their requirements. Having some design ideas from a feasibility study may help the discussions as well.

The Parish Funding Support team can also give guidance around what is realistic in fund-raising terms and will be happy to discuss proposals.

6. Keeping records

It is useful to keep records of meetings held and tasks carried out as time spent involved with the project can be included as your contribution to the financial input of a project. It is also helpful to record discussions, options and decisions made to ensure all that should be involved can be informed and to ensure a clear path for decision-making. A checklist is a good way of ensuring the key points have been addressed in an orderly manner.

Including key members of the community in meetings helps keep a project on track and avoids conflict and argument at later stages – good records are essential to demonstrate that the process has been conducted openly, fairly and inclusively.



7. Finally...

Change doesn't always sit comfortably with some and there can sometimes be resistance to it; however it is a natural reflection of communities and their changing needs to adapt to the environment and the circumstances of the time. Church buildings have adapted to those needs for centuries and will continue to do so. The change needs to be carefully managed to fit in with the significance of the church's heritage and theological needs, whilst reaching out and caring for the wider community. This takes resilience and determination!

It is for the PCC to identify the best path for change in their church in order to provide something meaningful and fit for purpose going forward; good and thoughtful preparation is the key to that progression.

Spire has a particular affinity and appreciation of your needs and aims as a Christian organisation, being part of the Diocese of Norwich, and strives to help you in supporting your mission and ministry aims as the centre of all we do for you.



*Stained glass window designed
for a church school, depicting
St Withburga, Dereham*

8. Spire – how we can help

Spire was set up by the Diocese of Norwich as it was felt there was a need for some assistance through the Diocese for PCCs and others around the development and maintenance of their buildings, be they churches, church halls, schools or other church-owned buildings.

We work closely with the Care of Church Buildings team and the Parish Funding Support officers at the Diocese to help bring projects to fruition.

Spire provides advice and professional services to help you maintain, refurbish and develop your assets to maximise their value, both financially and for the benefit of the parish. Whilst we are a commercially-run entity, any surplus money we do generate goes back into the Diocese to support your mission and ministry aims - the growth and development of the Christian faith. This means that when you spend funds on a project, some of it will return to your parish rather than just going out to the private sector.

Spire's office is based at Diocesan House; we work closely with the Care of Church Buildings team (including the DAC) who are responsible for advising on suitability of potential schemes, and the Parish Funding Support team who assist PCCs with raising funds.

We have two surveyors who are experienced in delivering varied projects for diverse clients, covering all building types from historic buildings to contemporary.

8.1. Services we offer

We cover a variety of project types such as:

- building conservation works
- refurbishment works
- conversion works
- new-build works
- development and disposal of sites
- compliance issues such as accessibility in buildings

We offer a full range of services including:

- Historic Building Conservation
- Condition surveys
- Assistance with developing a brief
- Feasibility studies
- Option appraisals
- Design-work
- Specifications
- Assistance with grant applications
- Procurement – tendering, contractor selection, appointment
- Budgets – estimating and detailed costings
- Project management
- Contract Administrator role
- Health & safety advice and compliance
- Specialist reports
- Property appraisal and disposal

9. Contact us

If you are thinking of developing your church or church building and would like to talk through an idea, concept or potential project, no matter what stage you are at, please do get in touch with us. We will be happy to visit you to discuss your plans. You can also visit us at our office, where other teams can be on hand to offer their specialist advice on for instance, fund-raising.

Address: 109 Dereham Road, Easton, Norwich, NR9 5ES

Phone: 01603 882333

Email: office@spiresupport.co.uk

Website: www.spiresupport.co.uk

10. Other useful contacts in the Diocese

Parish Funding Support team:

Address: Diocesan House, 109 Dereham Road,
Easton, Norwich, NR9 5ES

Phone: 01603 882328 (Geoff Freeman)
01603 882326 (Robert Culyer)

E mail: geoff.freeman@dioceseofnorwich.org
robert.culyer@dioceseofnorwich.org

Website: www.dioceseofnorwich.org

Care of Church Buildings team:

Address: Diocesan House, 109 Dereham Road,
Easton, Norwich, NR9 5ES

Phone: 01603 882350 (Matthew McDade)
01603 882351 (Caroline Rawlings)
01603 822359 (Margaret Mallet)

E mail: dac@dioceseofnorwich.org



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