

# HOW TO WRITE A GOOD STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND STATEMENT OF NEEDS

Statements of significance and statements of need are two different but important documents which can be extremely useful when planning for the future of your church building. This guidance sheet is intended to help you understand how they can be useful and how to start putting them together.

Since 2001 it has been necessary to have both a statement of significance and statement of needs to accompany any faculty proposals which are likely to have a major impact on a listed church building. In addition to faculty petitions, statements of significance and need can also be used to support applications for grant funding or Planning Permission. However, we want to encourage all churches to use statements of significance and need to plan for the future, whether they are considering making any kind of applications or not.

## WHAT IS A STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE?

A Statement of Significance outlines what is most important and special about your particular church. It should put your building into a wider context and explain why certain things are significant. Though they take some time and effort to put together, a good statement of significance will only need updating when major changes or additions have been made, or if new historical information about your church is uncovered. A statement of significance should also make clear what impact the proposals are likely to have upon the church building, referring back to the statement of need and identifying how this may or may not change.

## WHAT IS A STATEMENT OF NEEDS?

Unlike a statement of significance, a statement of needs is specific to a particular proposal for change, and is an opportunity for a PCC to explain what it is aiming to do and why.

Putting together a statement of need can be a useful opportunity for your parish to think through likely questions and challenges before they are raised by others involved in the faculty or planning process. It can also help to identify options which you might not have thought of before. Where possible, use facts and figures to support a statement of need. Perhaps carry out a survey of the congregation, or keep a record of times when something you don't have has been requested. Canvassing the wider community is also worthwhile and adds credibility to your proposals.

## WHERE SHOULD WE START?

Nominate someone to take responsibility on behalf of the PCC for writing these statements. It need not be the same person who writes both, but the authorship of the documents should be made clear.

Aim to make your statements interesting, readable and factual. Try not to use lists or tables and don't copy large chunks of academic text. It is better to be concise and summarise the information that you collect, so that your statements do not become too long. Make sure that once written, your statements are formally agreed by the PCC, saved electronically, and updated as and when necessary.

**The Churchcare website has a very helpful template for both statements which can be downloaded from:**

[www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/guidance-advice/statements-of-significance-need](http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/guidance-advice/statements-of-significance-need)

## SECTION A: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As a starting point, open your church's profile on the Church Heritage Record (<https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/churches>) to view basic information including the church's dedication, listing grade, whether it is in a conservation area, scheduled ancient monument, or subject to any other designations. This information will automatically create your Form 1a when you apply for a faculty.

### **HISTORY, DESCRIPTION, CONTENTS, CHURCHYARD & SETTING**

**SETTING** - Try to set the scene. Where is your church, and what contribution does it make to its setting? Is your church surrounded by open fields, acting as a landmark to its local community, or is it tucked behind a busy urban thoroughfare, and only visible to those who know where to look? This information may be obvious to you but to anyone from outside the parish reading your proposals, it is vital to understanding your church.

**HISTORY** - You could probably write a book about most church's histories but what is needed here is just a simple summary of key dates, events and people which have shaped the way your church appears today. Did the lord of the manor lavish wealth on a new chapel, did the church get rather drastic treatment by the Victorians, or has it remained largely unchanged since it was built in the 14th century? A ground plan which has been coloured or shaded-in to show the phases of the building's development is an extremely useful addition. Even if you can't include a phased plan, a clear floor plan is worth including in your statement, and details of how to source one can be found in Section C.

**DESCRIPTION** - A useful place to start is with your church guide book, the listing description, and the Buildings of England entry (see Section C useful books list), if they exist. Section C gives some suggestions for how to source this kind of information. Don't make this section too long and where possible use a few pictures to save a thousand words. It's also worth mentioning the materials your church is constructed from. Be specific; 'blue lias' for example is much more informative than just 'stone'.

**CHURCHYARD** - It is important to include some information about your churchyard, particularly if you have any tombs or monuments which are listed in their own right. Churchyards can play an important part in the setting of the church and if you have any information about how the churchyard may have changed over the years it is worthwhile incorporating into your statement. What contribution do any trees, monuments, boundary walls, fences or lych gates, make to the setting? What impact does the churchyard have on the overall significance of the church? Don't forget to mention whether your churchyard is still in active use for burials or the internment of ashes.

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHURCH SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL & HISTORIC INTEREST**

- Where possible try to categorise the significance of the church along the following lines:

- High – Nationally or internationally important
- Moderate-High – Important at regional or sometimes higher level.
- 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

## SECTION A cont.

**PARTICULAR ITEMS OF SIGNIFICANCE** - Use this section to make clear the particular highlights of your church. You might have important wall paintings, an ancient screen, or a particularly special font, or you might have monuments to a famous family, or links to a significant historical event. This part does need you to make some value judgments about how significant things are and if you are struggling with this, please do ask us for help.

**IMPACT ON THE SIGNIFICANCE** - Try to be honest and clear about the effect a proposal will have on the building and its significance. Consider not just the physical impact upon historic fabric and space, but also the impact upon character. Rather than attempting to dismiss or minimise any problems, accept potential concerns and make clear how this impact could be minimised or explain how your proposal is the least damaging way of achieving the maximum benefit. Your case for change will be much more robust if you have properly understood and appreciated its full impact.

## SECTION B: STATEMENT OF NEEDS

A statement of needs should be rather like a good story. It should draw you in by giving a clear picture of what the situation is, and excite the person reading it with what it is you want to do.

**GENERAL INFORMATION** - Try to describe the character of the parish both in terms of the worshipping congregation and the wider community. Explain what you currently do or don't do and any strategic aims you are working towards.

**YOUR NEEDS** – Explain how you would like what you currently do to change. Be as specific as possible in giving evidence of needs. Rather than stating 'we need flexible seating', explain what you cannot do at the moment and how this affects you, and then compare this to what you hope new seating would enable you to do.

**EXPLANATION OF PROPOSALS** - Once you have made clear what it is you need, outline the various options which you have considered. There is rarely a single solution to a problem, and even if the range of options have been discounted, it is always worthwhile explaining why they wouldn't work, and

why the option you are now presenting is the best or only way forward.

**WHY YOU NEED THIS** – Explain what prompted your proposals, and why the needs you have already explained can't be met any other way.

**JUSTIFICATION & EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT** – If your proposal is likely to harm the significance of your church, try to measure this against any wider public benefits such as liturgical freedom, mission outreach, widening the use of the church. In addition, giving evidence of support from the congregation and ideally from the local community, will help to support your case. There are numerous ways of carrying out consultation, including surveys, open days and exhibitions which you can use to explain what you are hoping to do and collect feedback. This can all be recorded and used to support your statement of needs. If there is opposition to your proposals, acknowledge it and state how you are planning to meet the objections, whether by adapting your proposals or by explaining more fully why your proposals can't sensibly be amended.

## SECTION C: USEFUL RESOURCES FOR RESEARCHING YOUR CHURCH AND CHURCHYARD

**LISTED BUILDINGS AND SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS** - You can read the full listing description, or scheduled monument record for your church via the Church Heritage Record (<https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/churches>) These descriptions often incorporate bibliographic references which can be useful to follow up and although they can be a bit academic, they are a useful starting point for why your building is important.

**CONSERVATION AREA STATUS AND TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS (TPOS)**-The records for Conservation Areas and TPOs are held by local authorities so you should contact your local council to find out whether your church is affected. Some councils have details of their conservation areas online, but do check with them if you are not sure.

**ARCHAEOLOGY** - Archaeology records which cover the Diocese can be accessed by contacting your county archaeologist at the local Historic Environment Record (HER). This is also linked to the Church Heritage Record. The Gloucestershire HER is based at County Hall, Gloucester, contactable on 01452 425688, or email [her@gloucesershire.gov.uk](mailto:her@gloucesershire.gov.uk)

The Heritage Gateway is also useful for checking national archaeology records and is available online at: [www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/) If you need to access the paper records, they are held at the Historic England Archive in Swindon and you can contact them on 01793 414600.

**AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY(AONB) /SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSI)** You can check whether your church and churchyard fall within an AONB, or SSSI by contacting Natural England. There are websites which you can use to search for yourself, and each AONB has its own main office which you can contact for further information: [www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/](http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/)

**CHURCH BUILDINGS, THEIR HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE** There are many places you can investigate to source information on your church building. After checking your listing and any local guidebooks, if you have them, the internet might be your second port of call for information. Though you may need to be a bit cautious about some information (sites like Wikipedia can be unreliable) there is lots of useful information on the web, not least at British History Online ([www.british-history.ac.uk/](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/)) which is a huge digital library of information and is free to register.

**The Historic England Archive** (<http://archive.historicengland.org.uk/>) is also a useful national resource and now has a good portion of its archive catalogues online for you to check. They have a number of photography collections scanned which you can view online, but their huge archive of over eight million photographs, slides, plans, reports and records is available to view in person in Swindon. You can also submit free of charge searches directly to their enquiry and research services teams, or make an appointment to go in and view things for yourself. They can be contacted at: Archive Services, Historic England, The Engine House, Fire Fly Avenue, Swindon, SN2 2EH Telephone: 01793 414600 Email: [archive@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:archive@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

Your **local records office** is also likely to be a good source of information. The Diocese's formal archive is deposited at the Gloucestershire Archives at Clarence Row, Gloucester GL1 3DW Tel: 01452 425295 ([www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives)) but there are other collections which may also prove useful. Their catalogue is online or you can arrange to visit in person.

Try to find out if there is a local history society. The people involved might not be church-goers but they might have an interest in the church building and be willing to help. Sometimes these history groups build up fascinating local archives which are potentially very helpful when writing about your church and its place in the local community.

Church Plans Online has over 400 records for the Diocese of Gloucester on its website which is free to look at: [www.churchplansonline.org/](http://www.churchplansonline.org/) and your QI architect/surveyor may also have a ground plan you can use.

For churches which feature medieval stained glass the Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi (CVMA) ([www.cvma.ac.uk/index.html](http://www.cvma.ac.uk/index.html)) has a useful picture archive of windows that have been recorded by them.

The Historic England 'Listing Selection Guides' for Commemorative Structures and Places of Worship (download from <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/selection-criteria/listing-selection/> or contact 0370 3330607 for alternative formats) may help with the difficult job of assessing your church's significance. These documents help you to understand why your church or its monuments might be listed and how they might compare in terms of significance with other similar structures.

#### **USEFUL BOOKS:**

- The Buildings of England - Gloucestershire 1: The Cotswolds, by Verey and Brooks, 1999
- The Buildings of England - Gloucestershire 2: The Vale and Forest of Dean, by Verey and Brooks, 2002. There are other county volumes available which provide coverage for the entire diocese.
- Church Bells of Gloucestershire, by Mary Bliss and Frederick Sharpe, 1986
- Pews, Benches and Chairs, edited by Cooper and Brown, 2011
- Cotswold Churches, by Verey, 1976
- Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire, edited by Lack, Stuckfield and Whittlemore, 2005
- Inside Churches: A Guide to Church Furnishings, by National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS), 1989
- Hallowed Ground: Churchyards of Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds, by Lees, 1993
- Porch and Pew: Small Churches of the Cotswolds, by Lees, 1993
- The Victoria County History of Gloucestershire – Ten volumes, published from 1907 to present (volumes VI, VII, VIII, X & XI are in Church House). Volume XIII is currently being researched.

Don't forget to also check your local library. Many have local studies sections which might incorporate books on churches. The catalogue for the Gloucestershire library service is online at: <http://prism.talis.com/gloucestershire/home>

Further advice about writing statements of significance and need can be found on the churchcare website at: [www.churchcare.co.uk/](http://www.churchcare.co.uk/)

If you need any help or support in producing your statements of significance and need, please contact Natalie Fenner or Adam Klups on 01452 410022 or by email on [dac@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:dac@glosdioc.org.uk)