

Starting a Building Project

This document is not intended to give full details on how to start a project, as there are much more detailed resources available on the Church of England Website. It is simply a guide to help churchwardens, clergy and PCC members identify the key things that need to be discussed and agreed at the start. Not all of the sections below will be relevant to every project, but that will become clear as you develop your project.

Starting any project can seem quite daunting if you have not done anything like this before, but with the right team and a clear vision, things will soon drop into place.

Vision

Having a clear vision is the most important part of any project. It is very easy to start with an idea rather than a vision and then end up heading off in completely the wrong direction.

For example, you could have an idea to remove some pews to create an open multi-use space, however without the vision as to why you are doing this it is unlikely to serve the purpose that it perhaps could and you may find it difficult to enthuse other members of the church and the community.

The vision needs to be focussed on the mission of the church and once you have got a clear vision, then ideas of how you can fulfil that vision will follow. It is always best to think big and perhaps “outside the box” at the start, as God may lead you in directions that you had perhaps not considered.

Prayer

Establish a pray group or meeting that specifically focusses on the vision and pray into that vision.

Create a project team

It is important that you have a team to lead the project. Even the smallest projects work best when you have someone to discuss any decisions with. As the creation of the project team and how it functions is so important, a separate document has been put together on this.

Research

It is important to understand what is actually needed and depending on the vision you have this may involve engaging with the wider community. Getting as much information together at the start will hopefully avoid too many delays as the project develops.

Project Structure

If the project will involve running activities and events or perhaps trading as a business. E.g. a café, gift shop; you may want to consider establishing a separate registered charity. This won't be relevant for most projects but if you think it might be it is worth investigating this early on, so you can make that decision as the project develops.

Understand your building

It is important that you understand your building and the history of it. Unless you have a modern building, it is likely that the building will have changed many times since it was first built. In most cases you will need a statement of significance for any faculty applications that may be required, so it is good to make a start on this now if you don't already have one in place.

Developing your ideas

Now that you hopefully have a clear vision of what you want to achieve and an understanding of the building and community needs, you can start to develop a brief for your architect. It is important to think about the sustainability of your project and this includes 3 areas.

Financial sustainability – what impact will this have on the finances of the church in the longer term, will there be an ongoing financial commitment for the project? You may be able to get a grant that will cover the running costs for a number of years but how will you cover those costs when those funds run out. This will form part of your business plan.

Environmental sustainability – how will your project have a positive impact on the environment? This could involve the physical environment around the church building or it could involve the reduction of carbon into the environment. With the ambitious target of reaching Net Zero Carbon by 2030, all projects need to have this a key element of the project in a relevant way.

Capacity – what capacity does the church have to sustain the project in the long term? Will it require lots of volunteers to support the activities that the project will facilitate? This is something that needs careful consideration.

Appointing an Architect

Most building projects are likely to require the services of an architect or designer and it is important that you choose the right person for the job. You can find other information on the process of tendering for an architect, but we are just going to consider some of the key points here.

In general terms it is usually good to get your Quinquennial Inspector involved early on in any project and they may be the right person to develop the project as they know the building well and understand what may be possible with the building. However, they may not have the capacity to take this on or you may want someone who has undertaken similar projects elsewhere.

Whoever you appoint, it is important that you give them a clear brief as to what you want them to do. This brief will have arisen from the vision, your initial research and how your thoughts have developed so far. Try not to keep the brief so narrow that they are unable to demonstrate their creativity.

At this stage it is also very important to understand and agree the fees that they are going to charge you for each part of the design process. Are you definitely appointing them to do the whole project now or do you just want to agree fees to get you to a certain stage in the process. Again, there is lots of information available online to help you make these decisions.

Next step... [Developing a Project](#)