Statements of Significance and Needs

Proposals which involve more than minor alterations to the fabric of the church need to be accompanied by the above documents. This brief guidance explains what is required; the Church Buildings Council has provided further guidance for more complex schemes which require more detailed statements. These statements should be agreed by PCC.

Statement of Significance

The aim is to identify those features that make important contributions to the character of the church. This provides an analysis against which the implications of future changes can be assessed.

1. Is the building listed? If so, record the listing and date together with anything significant from the listed building description. If it’s not listed, say so.
2. Set the scene by detailing the area surrounding the church to place it in its local context. Include a few brief details about the community, urban or rural, the size of population, local industry etc.
3. When and why was the church built? What contribution does it make to its local setting? What is its significance to the worship and social life of the community?
4. Summarise the historical development of both the building and the site including the graveyard.
5. Record the introduction of fittings and furnishings e.g. pews, font, chancel screen and organ where these are known and don’t forget to include any recent changes. Note items of special significance; these may be architectural, or could be a work of art or an historical connection with a famous person etc.

Finally, you should describe the impact that the proposed changes will have on the fabric and layout of the church (n.b. this is important information which should be thoroughly detailed and not glossed over).

Statement of Needs

The aim is to make clear the reasons why the needs of the parish cannot be met without making changes to the church building, and why the changes are regarded as necessary to assist the church in its worship and mission.

1. Set out the needs.
2. Explain the reasons why you consider these needs cannot be met under the present arrangements.
3. Set out how the proposed changes (for example, reordering or partitioning the church) will allow you to meet these needs.
4. In considering the proposals and before arriving at a final decision, the Chancellor will be looking for evidence from the Statement of Needs to answer the following questions:

   i. Have the petitioners proved a necessity for some or all of the proposed works, either because they are necessary for the pastoral well-being of the parish, or for some other compelling reason?

   ii. Will some or all of the works adversely affect the character of the church as a building of special architectural interest?

   iii. If the answer to ii is yes, then is the necessity proved by the petitioners to such an extent that a Faculty should be granted?

Once prepared, these statements will be key documents, not only for your architect or surveyor but also for the Lichfield Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), the Church Buildings Council, Historic England and other parties potentially likely to be consulted e.g. amenity societies. They will enable a constructive and realistic consideration of the way in which parish needs can be met whilst having regard to the importance of the building.

Kristina Williamson, Church Buildings Development Officer
Tel. 07805 772626, kristina.williamson@lichfield.anglican.org