

DAC Visits

Sheffield Diocesan Advisory Committee



**CHURCH
BUILDINGS**

Introduction

Visits are an important part of the faculty process as the DAC has a legal duty to report its views of all major proposals to the Chancellor who will consider their comments when determining the grant of a faculty. DAC visits offer the opportunity to explore and discuss ideas for your church building in a friendly and supportive environment. They help ensure plans are understood by all concerned and the best possible solution can be found for your church.

Depending on the works proposed it is common for others to be involved in this process. Representatives from the Church Buildings Council, Historic England, the local planning authority and/or the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) may wish to attend a meeting along with members of the PCC and the church architect. Engaging with statutory bodies at an early stage can help avoid problems and offer new ideas you may wish to incorporate into your plans.

It is important that a site visit should be as helpful to you as it is for the visiting members. The best way to preserve our buildings is to keep them in use. Members of the DAC and amenity bodies such as the Church Buildings Council and Historic England have considerable knowledge and experience of church buildings and how they can support both mission and the wider community. Ask questions and use their expertise which is free and without prejudice. Each church is unique and the aim of a visit is to ensure the best possible solution for your circumstances.

What happens before the visit?

A parish may request a visit at any time to discuss its ideas or plans. Alternatively, a visit may be requested by the DAC and/or amenity bodies. Several options and advance warning are useful to ensure all who need to attend can do so.

Who attends?

Members of the PCC, churchwardens and the Incumbent are expected to attend. Your architect will also need to attend if the proposal(s) will affect the fabric of your building, e.g. drainage to be put through the wall of a listed building, removal/addition of walls, windows, doorways, new services such as a kitchen, toilet or meeting room; all major re-orderings or significant repairs to the fabric. Others can include:

- Local Planning Authority – when a project will affect the external appearance of the church
- Historic England
- Victorian Society
- Georgian Society
- C20th Society
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
- Church Buildings Council

If a specialist adviser is unable to make the visit, s/he will arrange to do so at a later date.

You will need to inform of any health or safety hazards such as going into an area which is not usually open to the public including a roof-space or cellar, or where space may be confined or access difficult. Please state the nature of the risk involved.

Please provide information concerning access or parking, or whether or not toilets are available.

What information do you need to provide?

Please provide electronically all available information to those intending to visit at least a week prior to the meeting so that members can read through them and understand your aims.

- Statements of Significance
- Statement of Need

- A list of the proposals
- Photographs/plans of the areas to be altered
- An outline plan and/or sketch of the proposals

What happens on the day?

Elect a spokesperson to chair the meeting and provide copies of all documents. The chair is usually the incumbent, Archdeacon or DAC Secretary. You may ask your architect to explain the plans in more detail and answer any technical questions. The meeting usually starts inside the church for introductions and the presentation. Attendees will begin to arrive in advance of the visit, so if your church isn't normally open during the day it is helpful if you can unlock it around an hour before the meeting is due to start.

After the initial meeting members and others will usually tour the building and it is helpful if church members could be on hand to answer any questions raised. Not everyone will be familiar with your church: this could be the first chance they've ever had to see inside and they'll be interested to get to know it better, which in turn helps them to put your proposal in context. Photographs are often taken as aids for future discussion.

The Meeting

Introductions are made and the purpose of the meeting is outlined by the Chair together with an outline of the proposal(s), why change is needed now, how the PCC arrived at the solution(s), what aims or shortcomings it seeks to address and how the proposal(s) will better support the mission of the church.

The impact the proposals will have upon the building needs to be addressed. The greater the change or intervention proposed, the greater the need for doing so has to be demonstrated. Allow time for questions. Walking around the building indicating where work will take place will help to explain your proposal and the impact it will have.

What happens next?

At the next available DAC meeting the Secretary will provide a report to the full Committee who will further discuss the proposals. They will also consider the views of other organisations, such as the CBC or Historic England. Some organisations only meet quarterly so ensure you allow time for all reports to be received. It is important to take all views into consideration when finalizing your plans. Should you disagree with the advice given, you will need to explain why your preferred solution should be accepted. A report summarizing all these views and the recommendations of the DAC will then be sent to the church. This can indicate that:

- The DAC will offer full support to the application as it stands or with provisos
- More information is requested from the church
- Additional reports are needed from amenity bodies or other specialist advisers
- Amendments are advised
- The proposal is considered unviable

Large schemes can take a considerable amount of time to evolve. Consultation at an early stage with the DAC, other organisations and wider community will help ensure to develop your ideas before settling on a course of action. This is essential as it allows your plans to change before you commit to the expense of architect's drawings or discover that your ideas do not find favour with those whose support you will need. Please do not hesitate to request additional visits from the DAC if this will help you refine your plans.

Individual Visits

For insurance purposes, please contact the DAC Office if you need a visit from a specific DAC specialist. The office will be pleased to contact the specialist on your behalf and arrange a visit.

