

NEW USES FOR FORMER PLACES OF WORSHIP



ENGLISH HERITAGE

2010 (updated 2012)



CONTENTS

This document provides advice on the conversion to new use of historic former places of worship. It is primarily intended to be of benefit to new or potential new owners or occupiers of such buildings. It will also provide clarity for local authorities on the approach taken by English Heritage when advising on proposals for re-use. It should be read in conjunction with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), its associated Practice Guidance and any relevant Local Authority planning guidance.

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INTRODUCTION

Historic places of worship are at the heart of our sense of national and local history and identity. Through its grants and advice English Heritage supports the efforts of congregations to keep these important buildings in use for worship wherever possible. There will, however, be instances when a place of worship has to close, perhaps because there is no longer a pastoral role for it, where two or more congregations have merged or where the congregation is unable to maintain the building. This is an ongoing phenomenon, which results in religious buildings of architectural, archaeological, artistic and historic importance becoming redundant and in need of a new use.



1
Vacancy and lack of regular maintenance make redundant buildings extremely vulnerable to decay and vandalism.
© Sara Crofts.



2
A Victorian church building in London which for 25 years was used as a theatre, is now returning to use for worship. In London and some other cities there is a demand for buildings to use for worship.
Nick Chapple © English Heritage.



3
St Sampson's day centre for elderly people in York – a community use which has proved sustainable for more than 30 years.

Thousands of former places of worship in England are now in non-worship use, including more than 2,500 that are listed. The range of new uses is very broad, including community, domestic, retail, office, educational, industrial, sports, museum and entertainment use. Some buildings have a varied history featuring a number of different religious and secular uses. This is not a simple process of secularisation – many redundant places of worship are taken on by new congregations and some buildings have returned to worship use after periods as secular buildings.

Where a use has ceased, English Heritage is supportive of schemes for re-use that can give a sustainable future to a building while retaining as much as possible of its special historic and architectural interest. This entails finding a use that is appropriate to the historic character and fabric of the building and which is economically viable in its particular location. Ideally, the new use will also allow for regular public access to the building.

Any alteration of an historic place of worship for new use must be founded on an understanding of the building, its history and its place in the community. More so than in many other building types, the fixtures and fittings – of a place of worship constitute a large part of its historic character and schemes for conversion should allow for their retention wherever appropriate. Some degree of compromise in use may be necessary to help retain the significance of the building or parts of it.

It can be very challenging to adapt this most sensitive of building types to new use, but there are examples of successful re-use of historic places of worship, where new use and building have been intelligently and sensitively matched and changes have been planned so as to preserve the building, its features and setting. In these cases the historic building has continued to be an asset to its community, after worship has ceased. While there may be no conversion for new use that is perfect in every detail, satisfactory outcomes can be achieved through a variety of approaches as illustrated in this guidance.

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UNDERSTANDING HISTORIC PLACES OF WORSHIP

In order to identify an appropriate new use for a former place of worship, and to guide its adaptation for that use, it is essential to understand the significance of the building, its contents and setting. Through such an understanding, the likely impact of any changes can be assessed. Proposals for alteration or extension will be assessed by weighing the need for changes to enable a new use against their impact on the significance of the place.

It can hardly be overstated how sensitive many historic places of worship are. In older churches practically everything will have an impact on something of historic value, much of which may not be immediately apparent – buried archaeology in the churchyard or concealed wall paintings for instance. Moreover, the individual elements gain significance from being part of an ensemble and intervention in one part will affect the whole. A proper assessment of significance is vital therefore to come to a realistic idea of what is possible in a particular building.

Assessing significance

Each place has its own significance and must be assessed on an individual basis, but English Heritage recommends the application of the following process to arrive at an informed and inclusive statement of significance for any place (including those not statutorily designated).

The first two stages of the process are aimed at identifying the heritage values of the place, i.e. its potential to yield evidence about the past (**evidential values**); its ability to illustrate aspects of architectural and social history and its associations with people and events of the past (**historical values**); its design and visual appeal (**aesthetic values**) and its social, symbolic and spiritual meaning to people (**communal values**).

Understand the fabric and evolution of the place

Many older places of worship have grown by accretion and rebuilding over the centuries, while more recent ones are likely to have been built in fewer phases and may be the work of just a single architect. Whatever the age, an assessment should be made of the significance of the architectural design and character, external composition, internal plan form and volumes, aesthetic qualities and decorative schemes. Are there archaeological remains that provide evidence of the development of the building or earlier uses of the site? Does the building give evidence of local building materials or styles?

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Places of worship and their associated structures and land need to be understood and appreciated as a whole. The setting makes a contribution to the significance of the place.
Rebecca Lane © English Heritage.



2

UNDERSTANDING HISTORIC PLACES OF WORSHIP

Identify who values the place and why they do so

The importance of the building in the life of the community needs to influence thinking about its future. Significant events in the lives of local people, such as baptisms, weddings and funerals will have taken place there. How has the building been used by the local community and how is it viewed by them? Are there memorials or graves that have particular meaning for people? Is it regarded as the heritage of all, or as the meeting place of a few? How long has the building been closed for worship and how does this affect its value to local people.

Relate identified heritage values to the fabric

Some parts of the building will contribute more to its heritage values than others. Understanding the development of the building will enable different values to be attached to the various components of it, based on considerations such as survival of historic fabric, quality of design or association with a particular designer or with local or national events. Does the character of the building derive from the surviving medieval fabric or the 19th century restoration? Is the 20th century addition as significant as the original building?

Consider the relative importance of the identified values

While it is desirable to sustain all the heritage values of a place, this is not always possible, so it is important to consider their relative importance to help decide what should be protected. Does the significance of the building derive more from its contribution to the landscape than from the quality of its interior? Is it a building's community role or historic associations more than its architectural design that makes it significant?

Consider the contribution of associated objects and collections

In some cases the fixtures and fittings such as pews, pulpits and fonts, will have been removed in whole or in part at the time of closure; in others there may be

covenants in place regarding their future treatment. The age, rarity and quality of design of remaining internal furnishings should be assessed and also their relationship with the place. This will enable consideration of the impact on the significance of the place either of accommodating existing furnishings and fittings in the new use, or their removal for appropriate relocation or disposal.

Consider the contribution made by setting and context

Many places of worship lie at the heart of a historic landscape or townscape. They (and their burial grounds where they have them) often have an important relationship with conservation areas. An assessment should be made of the contribution made by setting and context to the significance of the place. How has the setting changed over time? What are the key views of the building? What positive features should be preserved or enhanced and what negative features might be improved?

Compare the place with other places sharing similar values

The significance of a place can be understood by comparing it with other places with similar heritage values. Listed buildings have already been identified as being of national importance on the strength of their heritage values. Is the building considered an outstanding example of the work of a particular designer? Have the furnishings or decorative finishes survived more completely than elsewhere?

Articulate the significance of the place

The considerations outlined above are normally best brought together into a 'statement of significance'. This is a summary of the heritage values currently attached to a place, how they inter-relate and how in combination they constitute its significance. If all parties with an interest in the future of the building can agree to the statement of significance it should be easier to agree a way forward.

EXAMPLE OF A SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

'The church is of considerable historic interest as the oldest surviving building in the town. Despite the loss of its historic setting as a result of road-widening, it retains value as a feature in the townscape, visible from all of the principal streets. It is a typical example of urban church architecture, but particularly well-built, with added interest arising from its early use of cast-iron. The building, though plain in appearance, is of some architectural quality. Behind the reversible alterations of the 1980s lies an original, galleried Georgian interior. Most of the contents including the organ were removed by the church at the point of closure. Memorials to local people, including some notable figures in the Industrial Revolution contribute to its historic value. The site may contain below-ground evidence relating to the earlier chapel.'

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IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE NEW USES

Keeping historic buildings in use is the best way of making sure they stay in good repair. When a place of worship becomes redundant, for whatever reason, proposed new uses should be considered against the standard of the optimum viable use, i.e. a use that is capable of providing the most sustainable future for the building with the least harm to its heritage values.¹

While English Heritage's primary concern is with the appropriateness of a new use in terms of the impact on historic character and fabric, there will be others who are more concerned about what is appropriate in a place of (residual) spiritual significance. The symbolic or spiritual values of the place need to be considered in deciding its future. It is not unusual for the vendor of a redundant place of worship to place restrictions on the new use, so as to avoid what it considers improper use, thus setting clear boundaries on the range of possible new uses.



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A Methodist church converted for use by a Greek Orthodox congregation. The character of the interior has been changed considerably by the introduction of new furnishings and decoration, but the changes are reversible. The old pews have been retained and the fabric of the original building remains little altered. Michael Wingate © English Heritage.

In general, the preferred option when a place of worship closes would be for re-use by another congregation, provided continued maintenance could be assured. A new liturgy can have a considerable impact on the character of the interior; but it is likely to necessitate fewer physical interventions in the fabric of the building than many non-worship uses.

Some buildings have a greater capacity to accommodate physical change or a new use than others. Decisions on this should be guided by the assessment of significance, as discussed above, and should take into account the sensitivity of the building and its setting to change. Where the interest of the building is principally in its external appearance and its role in the townscape, there will be greater capacity for change internally. The grade of a listed building is not always an indication of the capacity for change, as can be seen in the example of St James, Warter (see p.9).

For those which are considered to be of such historical and architectural significance that they should be conserved with minimal or no intervention, the most appropriate future will usually be preservation by a charitable trust. By vesting a particularly sensitive building in a trust in perpetuity it is protected from the possibility of repeated changes of ownership or use. Although the trusts will normally seek to make use of the buildings as much as possible, such uses – concerts, lectures, meetings – are usually relatively undemanding since they can be accommodated without making changes to the structure, without removal of fixtures and fittings and with only limited new facilities.

There is a limit to the number of buildings that can be preserved in this way, because of the resources available to the trusts. They are often referred to as 'the safety nets', which reflects the fact that other viable uses are normally considered first and only if none is forthcoming will a trust step in to protect the building.

¹ See Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide paragraphs 88-90.

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IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE
NEW USES

TYPES OF NEW USE

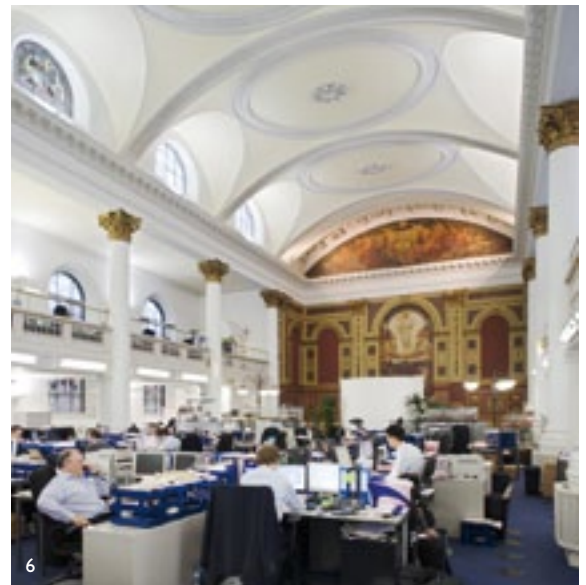
If re-use by another religious group is not possible (and preservation by a trust is not practicable) an alternative use must be sought which can give a sustainable future to the building while retaining as much as possible of its special historic and architectural interest. Conversion to alternative use which preserves the most significant internal and external elements is to be preferred to demolition. Local authorities will often formulate a planning brief to guide potential future owners, which will set out the uses most likely to be acceptable.

Single vessel use

The form of conversion most appropriate to former places of worship will be one which involves what can be termed 'single vessel use'. The traditional place of worship developed for just such use, being essentially a place to bring together a large number of people in one space, with certain functions allocated to smaller subsidiary spaces within the building. This form of use generated the open interiors, impressive proportions and long sight lines that characterise these buildings and which it is important to retain. Certain uses are more naturally single vessel uses than others but with careful design other uses can be based very largely on single vessel use.

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Single vessel use: a neo-classical church of the 1820s converted to office use. The subsidiary spaces in the building are fully utilised for meeting rooms, toilets and kitchens, so the open character of the former worship space can be preserved.



THE SAFETY NETS

A small number of charitable trusts exist to take ownership of redundant places of worship for the sake of their preservation. This allows for the retention of fittings, fixtures, monuments and decoration and is the most appropriate way of dealing with buildings of the highest architectural and historic importance. The three main, national trusts are:

The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), a national charity which cares for historic churches of the Church of England that are no longer required for regular worship. It was founded in 1969 and has taken more than 340 buildings in its care, more than any other heritage organisation in the country except English Heritage and the National Trust. It is financed by a grant from central government and by a grant from the Church Commissioners' comprising in part a portion of the proceeds from the sale of closed churches.

The Friends of Friendless Churches, founded in 1957 to care for buildings of historic interest, architectural merit or beauty in any part of the British Isles, for 'public access and the benefit of the nation'. A small, voluntary organisation working in partnership with the Ancient Monuments Society, it now owns over 40 buildings and acts as the equivalent in Wales of the CCT.

The Historic Chapels Trust, created in 1993 to take into care redundant chapels and other non-Anglican places of worship in England of outstanding architectural and historic interest. Buildings in the care of the Trust include former Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Quaker, Roman Catholic and Unitarian places of worship. The running costs of the Trust are supported by English Heritage.



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Coanwood Friends Meeting House has an intact eighteenth century interior, which would have been almost impossible to convert to another use without losing historic character and fabric. It is now in the care of the Historic Chapels Trust. Sanne Roberts © English Heritage.

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IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE
NEW USES

Shared use

Two examples, one large and one very small, show how both commercial and community use and both public and private benefit can be secured, by sharing the use of a former place of worship.



Boones Chapel in south east London was built as an almshouse chapel and mausoleum in 1682. The tiny building lay unused and increasingly derelict from 1945 until the Blackheath Preservation Trust bought it and repaired it for use as office space in 2006-08. The chapel is open to visitors for at least 30 days a year with a changing series of exhibitions on show. The office furniture can be turned into display cases for the exhibitions or put away to transform the space when it becomes public. All support services are located in a new build annexe.

Rook Lane Chapel, in Frome, Somerset is a large grade I listed former Congregational chapel, built 1707 and significantly altered in 1862. It closed in 1968 and its condition declined severely until the 1990s when it was compulsorily purchased and repaired. In 2002-03 it was converted by NVB Architects to give office space for themselves and an exhibition and concert space for the town (leased by the Rook Lane Arts Trust). A new gallery was inserted, replacing the one lost when the

building became derelict, and is used as office space by NVB Architects. An extension was built to the rear of the chapel, providing a café and toilets with more office accommodation above.

8

Boones Chapel interior. A jib door gives access to the new build annexe.
© Tim Crocker.

9

Rook Lane Chapel. The building was derelict and the grounds overgrown when it was passed on to Somerset Building Preservation Trust which carried out repairs.
© English Heritage.

10

Rook Lane Chapel. The new extension was built behind the chapel on the site of earlier, derelict buildings. Note that it comes up only as high as the eaves level of the old chapel, minimising its impact on views of the historic building.
© NVB Architects.

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IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE
NEW USES**Low impact uses**

Former places of worship are generally most suited to low-impact uses, which do not require the introduction of large amounts of new services, do not threaten to damage the fabric of the building by their daily activities and are compatible with retention of at least some fixtures and fittings.

Typical low-impact uses are community centres, small museums or heritage centres and studios for artists or craftsmen. Should such a use cease, the mark left on the building will normally be relatively minor, but generating enough income from such a use to cover the upkeep of the building can be challenging.

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Most places of worship make natural auditoriums so performance use can be accommodated with few alterations, as shown here at the Landmark Arts Centre, Teddington.

12

Low impact uses, such as the Manchester Jewish Museum demand less intensive use of space so are more likely to allow for retention of fixtures and fittings of a former place of worship.



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IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE
NEW USES**Community use: Council Chamber/Heritage Centre,
Belper, Derbyshire**

The former chapel of St John was founded in 1260 and retains a simple, medieval appearance with a vernacular character, in spite of restoration in 1870. The grade II listed building was declared redundant in 1986 although it had already been disused for many years. Belper Town Council converted it to community use in 1989-90, from designs by Derek Latham Architects. The building remains in the ownership of the diocese of Derby which is paid a peppercorn rent by the Town Council.

The adapted building provides office space and a meeting room for the council in the west end of the nave, separated from a larger multi-use space to the east by full height, partly glazed screens. The 19th century vestry was converted to provide an office for the Town Clerk, a kitchenette and toilets. Disabled access is via a moveable ramp in the south porch, and a stone-paved ramp into the main east space. The sloping nave floor was levelled but the four steps up to the chancel were retained.

Externally, no additions or significant changes have been made. The conversion has had little impact on the closed burial ground and the current use is hardly expressed externally.

Internally, the sub-division of the historic volume has disrupted a sense of the medieval interior, although the partition is reversible. The levelling of the nave floor is not reversible, but the walls, windows and roof structure are intact, and the conversion generally has a 'light touch'. No historic seating remains in situ, although some 19th century pews have been re-set at the west end. Retained features include a 17th century stone altar, a 19th century reredos and relocated medieval font.

The building is considered a pleasant working environment by the staff and provides attractive, low-cost community facilities. There are current concerns about raising funds to address continuing structural movement at the west end. The community use is said to be reliant on a car park on adjacent land owned by the parish, but this may be developed. The high cost of heating was cited as a concern. Otherwise, this case shows how a small church or chapel can be adapted for a sustainable community use straightforwardly and with a light touch.



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IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE
NEW USES**Rural places of worship**

It is generally much harder to find a new use for a place of worship in a rural area, because the population needed to sustain many commercial and community uses does not exist. As a result, the vast majority of conversions in rural areas are to domestic use. A recent example which provides an exception to the rule and possibly a model for other village churches and chapels is the former church of **St James, Warter, East Yorkshire**.



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The church was built in 1862-3 for the local landowners. It is listed grade II and lies within a scheduled monument, the site of an Augustinian Priory. The church is notable for the quality of its Edwardian fitting out, with chancel furnishings by the antiquary and architect John Bilson, stained glass by Robert Anning Bell and monuments by George Frampton and Gilbert Bayes.

In 1996 the Yorkshire Wolds Building Preservation Trust took on the church in order to preserve both building and churchyard. With the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund and LEADER+ (a EU-funded initiative for the support of rural communities)², the Trust raised funding for the repair and adaptation of the building. It was re-roofed and a kitchen installed in the tower area with toilets in a lean-to structure on the north side of the building (a former boiler house).

The adaptation has been carried out with very little impact on historic fabric or the important 20th century furnishings, save the formation of an opening in the north tower wall to connect the kitchen and WCs. It has not been necessary to adapt or remove any of the distinctive green-blue pews or the chancel furnishings.

15

Furniture, fittings and stained glass have all been retained in the new use.

© David Neave.

Since 2006, there has been a successful programme of concerts, lectures, exhibitions and workshops. The church building is being used to help in the wider social and economic regeneration of the area through tourism (as part of the East Yorkshire Church Tourism Initiative), training in heritage interpretation and supporting local businesses such as the village post office. This case provides a good example of how a former place of worship can continue to be an asset to a rural area, which may be lacking other community resources.

Setting it up did, however, require substantial amounts of public funding, which will not necessarily be available in other cases and while the current use is prospering, the future of the building will depend on continued commitment and enthusiasm of the local community. The income is presently enough to cover annual running costs, but a reserve fund will need to be built up to meet future repair and maintenance needs.

² LEADER and the Historic Environment, English Heritage 2008.

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IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE NEW USES

High impact uses

Commercial uses such as restaurants, pubs, shops, offices or sports facilities are likely to have a greater impact on the building, through the conversion itself and through daily use, but if they generate funds for ongoing maintenance and repair they may prove to be more sustainable. Many will also be uses that enable continued public access and engagement.

The most common type of high impact re-use is residential or domestic. There are drawbacks which are characteristic of residential conversions, in terms of the extent of subdivision which is generally involved (and which can be all too evident on the exterior of the building) and the lack of public access to the buildings once they have been converted.

In a lot of cases, particularly small nonconformist chapels of a more domestic character and smaller parish churches, places of worship can be suitable for conversion to a single family dwelling. Use as a single residential unit is preferable to multiple residential use, on the grounds that

it will always come closer to being a single vessel use, is likely to have less impact on the exterior and setting of the building and will require fewer alterations to bring in services.

Despite the drawbacks, English Heritage recognises that there will be cases, for example where the significance of the building lies primarily in its landscape or townscape contribution, in which the intervention necessary for residential use will be acceptable in order to secure a sustainable use for the building and hence its conservation. We further recognise that there will be cases where residential conversion is the only viable alternative to demolition.

Nevertheless, care needs to be taken to find the best way of creating the private spaces needed in a domestic building and the right location for introduction of services. It may be that subsidiary spaces already exist in the form of meeting rooms, vestries, transepts or the areas beneath galleries. In places of worship designed with a clear eastward focus, it would be preferable to confine subdivision to the west end of the building.

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16

Internal subdivision for multiple occupancy is typically reflected on the exterior by an array of extra window and door openings which are collectively detrimental to the architectural and aesthetic values of the building.

17

Rooflights are often the only external indications of conversion, but can be visually damaging. The need for them requires justification and their location must be carefully considered. Conservation rooflights which do not stand above the plane of the roof should be used in preference to the raised examples shown here. Sanne Roberts © English Heritage.

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IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE
NEW USES**Commercial use: Manchester Climbing Centre**

The former church of St Benedict is a grade II* listed building of 1880, in inner-city Manchester. The church was closed in 2002 and sold to a consortium led by a well-known rock climber, for use as a climbing centre. Internal alterations were designed by Buttress Fuller Alsop Williams. Permissions were secured and the conversion work achieved quickly and the centre opened in 2005.

Steel-framed climbing walls were erected in the nave and a mezzanine was installed in the chancel to provide two levels for a cafe, shop and 'bouldering' cave. Toilets were installed in the former vestry and the Lady Chapel now contains the reception area. The attached presbytery was refurbished for use as community rooms.

The scale of the building would have suggested there was little chance of avoiding significant sub-division if a viable new use was to be found. Yet in this scheme the volume of the nave has been retained, with views of both the east and west windows, so that it remains a dramatic and impressive space. The climbing walls and the mezzanine are fixed to footings below the floor and therefore free of the walls. The horizontal subdivision affects the spatial character of the east end, although no significant fittings were affected and architectural features and finishes are visible.

Conversion to a climbing centre has given this building a sustainable long-term future and contributed to local regeneration. The early success of the centre enabled a maintenance fund to be established. Regular inspection of the exterior of the building, including valley gutters has helped to keep it in generally good condition, although some repairs are still needed. Despite the high running costs, the building is well-suited to its new use: its height is ideal for climbing walls and it has been possible to accommodate other activities within the existing ancillary spaces, minimising the need for subdivision or extension.

18/19

Interior looking east/Exterior from the south west.



18



19

Charity law and optimum viable use

The places of worship of most faiths and denominations are the responsibility of trustees who will be subject to the general law of trusts when disposing of any assets and this will normally oblige them to obtain the highest price possible.

While the responsibility of trustees to obtain the best price is understood, this consideration needs to be seen in the policy context of obtaining the optimum viable use compatible with the preservation of the fabric, interior, and setting of the historic building. Proposals

should not be based on hope value or unrealistic property values and the price paid should reflect the condition of the structure and the constraints implicit in the statutory protection afforded to listed buildings.

There are alternatives to disposal at full market value, which may have a benefit for the protection of the special interest of the building. The main options are set out in a guidance note from English Heritage and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). (See Further Information.)

4

ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS FOR NEW USES

General principles

English Heritage considers that schemes for the conversion of redundant, historic places of worship should:

- be based on a full understanding of the architectural, historic, archaeological, cultural and community significance of the building
- be founded on a clearly stated and demonstrable need
- respect the significance of the building, its contents and setting
- minimise intervention in significant historic fabric
- achieve high standards of design, craftsmanship and materials
- identify and address any major repair issues at the outset

The following advice focuses on four broad areas of design, but each building will present its own challenges which will require more specific advice.

Internal subdivision

The spatial qualities of their interiors are fundamental to the architectural values of places of worship and to the way they are experienced. Hence, the advantages of single vessel use explained above. If, however, subdivision is necessary, the handling of the internal volumes of the building will be one of the key aspects of the adaptation scheme. To be acceptable, any works of subdivision, whether vertical or horizontal, should work with rather than counter to the main volumes and axes. Where smaller, discrete spaces are required in order to facilitate the new use, it might be possible to provide these

without affecting the main spatial qualities, for example by using space at the base of a tower or under a gallery. It may also be possible to create new gallery or mezzanine accommodation, possibly at the former liturgical west end or within the aisles, which are traditional ways of creating more space within a church building.

In cases where more some horizontal or vertical subdivision is considered acceptable, new floors and partitions should take account of existing architectural features such as floors, plinths, capitals, arcades, string courses and most importantly windows. While in such cases there is inevitably an impact on the original spatial qualities of the building, with sufficient design flair and imagination it is often possible to create new spaces of real interest and quality. Whatever the use, the needs of users are likely to evolve, so partitions should be of lightweight and reversible construction wherever possible and scribed around existing mouldings and cornices.

A more novel way of providing extra space is the use of inserted structures or 'pods' within the building, where the new and old are both clearly legible. In the angular and sometimes irregular architecture of gothic churches such an approach is often more sympathetic than large floor slabs and screen walls. Pods have the added advantage of being more easily reversible.

Whatever the approach taken to planning the interior, the internal spaces and circulation should work around the existing entrances and exits, so as to avoid the need for intervention in the historic fabric to provide new doors.

20/21/22/23/24

A variety of approaches can be taken to the organisation of space inside a former place of worship, as illustrated opposite.

Wherever possible, it is desirable not to subdivide the interior. At the National Centre for Early Music in York (20), an extension (see p.14) which houses kitchen, toilets, offices and other facilities has enabled the use of the former church as a single, adaptable space for various events.

The Tourist Information centre in Ipswich (22) shows how, instead of inserting hard divisions, furniture and equipment can be used to organise space in a way that complements the divisions formed by the existing architecture, and is completely reversible.

On a larger scale, it may be appropriate, as proposed at All Souls, Bolton (21), to insert pods to create a number of defined spaces within an interior. In this case the very broad, aisleless space of the nave did not offer any obvious opportunities for a more natural subdivision.

In an arcaded interior it is usually more satisfactory to restrict any subdivision to the (liturgical) west end or aisles, as shown in the Garden Museum, London (23) and DIG Archaeology in York (24).

Care should be taken to ensure that any inserted object or structure is not too dominant in the space and does not conflict with existing elements, principally windows and arcades.

21 © Churches Conservation Trust.

22 Nick Chapple © English Heritage.

23 © David Grandorge.

4

ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS FOR NEW USES



4

ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS FOR NEW USES

Additions

In the right circumstances an extension (or separate ancillary structure) makes it possible to use a former place of worship in a less intensive way and thereby avoid the need for internal subdivision, which has clear benefits for the preservation of its character. Locating modern services in an extension can reduce intervention in the fabric of the historic building.

Creating external additions to historic places of worship has some inherent difficulties. In the first place, consideration should be given to whether the benefits of the extension would outweigh the added maintenance and service requirements that come with the extra space. Building in churchyards must also take full account of any buried archaeology and human remains. Obtaining permission can be difficult when land has human remains in situ, because relatives and other interested parties may object.

Extensions will require skilled and sensitive design because the effect on external character of the building is likely to be significant. It is desirable for the extension to be made clearly subsidiary by its siting, size and external finishes, so as not to compromise the setting of the historic building. The junction between the extension and existing fabric needs particular attention. There may be an existing or blocked doorway that provides a natural way to link the old and new structures. English Heritage starts with a presumption against loss of historic fabric so any new openings would need a strong justification.

Additions can be designed in such a way as to form a harmonious composition with the building to which they are attached and consequently appear to be a natural development from the building. The form, roof pitches and volumes traditionally presented by aisles, transepts, vestries and porches provide an established vocabulary for extending such buildings, even when the extensions are for the purpose of facilitating a new use. Without necessarily aping the style of the existing building, an extension can harmonise with it by use of matching or complementary materials and a high level of workmanship and detail.

Buildings that have grown by accretion over centuries are often capable of further addition. Less easy to add to harmoniously are buildings that are manifestly the work of a single designer or display a degree of architectural completeness.

A new detached building can offer significant advantages to offset the possible inconvenience of not being integrated into the existing building. It can be designed to serve its purpose with less rigid constraints in terms of scale, design and materials than would apply to an attached addition. The archaeological, townscape and wildlife importance of the site, as well as the setting of the historic place of worship, need to be considered when deciding whether there is a suitable location for a detached building.



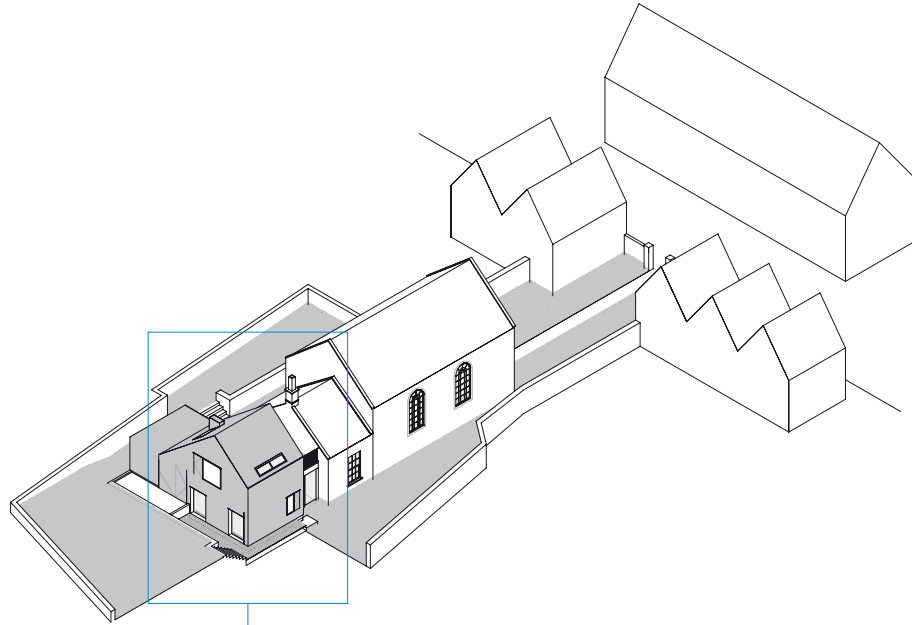
25

The single-storey addition to the left of the picture acts to complete the enclosure of this urban churchyard. The facing brick on the new building is matched in colour and bond to the brick on the tower.

4

ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS
FOR NEW USES

26



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26/27

An addition at the rear of a typical nonconformist chapel in a small West Country town, replacing earlier small-scale additions of no special interest. The chapel is now in domestic use and the addition was designed (by Jonathan Tuckey Design) to provide bedrooms and bathrooms, leaving the undivided former worship space as a generously-sized living room. Siting the new build at the rear of the plot and sinking it into the ground so that it does not rise above the roof line of the chapel gives it an appropriately subsidiary relation to the historic building.

© Jonathan Tuckey Design/James Brittain © VIEW.

28



28

A detached building offers slightly more flexibility in terms of design but should still make a positive contribution to the significance of the historic asset. This very modest addition, by providing extra space and services has allowed the interior of Boones Chapel (see p.6) to remain undivided. If the needs of the building user changed it could be removed or expanded more easily than an addition attached to the chapel.

© research design.

4

ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS FOR NEW USES

Fixtures, fittings and internal decoration

Retention *in situ* of historic wall monuments, reredoses and other fixtures is usually the most appropriate option, although there may be cases where careful relocation within the building under appropriate supervision may be justified. If the subject matter or iconography of the monument or fixture is such as to conflict with the nature of the new use, or if the monument or fixture is in a position where it is susceptible to damage as a result of the new use, consideration might be given to its being appropriately screened or enclosed, taking care that this does not create a microclimate which hastens the decay of the object. In such cases the advice of a conservator should be sought.

29

The fittings, stencilling and stained glass of this church by AWN Pugin can still be appreciated even though the rest of the building has been subdivided for offices and workshops.

30

Bar-restaurant use sits uncomfortably with the religious symbolism of this interior, but has secured the immediate future of the building and provides a measure of public access.

31

In a busy café, the reredos and altar rails have been retained and now form a play-pen. A more dignified use would be preferable in view of the cultural significance of such a space.

Stained glass should normally be retained. It is among the things most readily identifiable with places of worship and some will be by designers of note. Often a stained glass window will be a memorial too so it has associative as well as artistic value. The character of a place of worship can easily be lost by replacing coloured glass with plain and the loss of lead comes, which will change the quality of light inside the building as well as its external appearance.



4

ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS FOR NEW USES

Churchyards

The relationship of a historic place of worship with its surroundings, now and in the past, can be an important part of its significance. The protection afforded to buildings also extends to their setting³.

Churchyards are places of great historic and aesthetic importance in their own right, and form an intrinsic part of the interest of many churches. Many urban churchyards are valuable open spaces. Both urban and rural churchyards can be the habitats of plants and wildlife, some of which may have legal protection. They may also remain wholly or partly in use for burials after the place of worship itself has closed.

A new owner will have to take account of the need to obtain permission for any disturbance of burials, of the archaeological significance of below-ground and some upstanding churchyard structures, and of the possible wildlife and ecological significance of the churchyard. Many churchyards lie in conservation areas where, in addition to the normal planning controls, permission may be required from the local authority for certain works to trees.

It is rare that there is sufficient justification to clear historic graveyards and monuments. Historic gravestones and monuments should be retained, not least because they remain the property and responsibility of the families who erected them. New service lines and pipes should be laid under existing pathways as far as possible and to reduce the possibility of disturbance should be at the minimum depth permissible. Any proposal to create car-parking within a churchyard would have to demonstrate that the chosen location and form of construction respected the archaeological significance of the site and the setting of the building.

32

Car parking is one of the key issues for re-use of any kind. For many uses it is essential, but can have a serious impact on the setting of the historic building and archaeological importance of the site. Excessive hard landscaping around a church, except in some urban locations, creates a sterile and unsympathetic setting for the building. A small area of reinforced grass can be an unobtrusive way of creating a parking area, provided there is a discrete and accessible place to put it.



³ Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Chapter 9.

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ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS FOR NEW USES

DEVELOPING PROPOSALS FOR A NEW USE

Potential owners are encouraged to contact the local planning authority, and where relevant English Heritage and the National Amenity Societies as early as possible to discuss any proposals for re-use.⁴

Issues that need to be explored include:

- What designations apply to the property, e.g. listing?
- Are any of the relevant consents already in place?
- What relevant documentation is needed to inform decisions, e.g. list description, local development plan?
- What are the heritage values of the place and what is its significance?
- What types of use are likely to be acceptable to the local planning authority?
- Is planning permission for change of use required?
- What alterations are likely to be permitted?
- What covenants have been or will be placed on the property by the vendor?⁵
- What are the likely parking, amenity space and access requirements?
- What are the likely requirements for an archaeological report?
- What is the condition of the existing fabric; what repairs are needed?
- What funding might be available to help with repairs or conversion costs?
- How will regular maintenance of the building be managed?

Planning and legal requirements

Works for the alteration or extension of a listed former place of worship, in any manner which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest, will require listed building consent.

If the development affects a grade I or II* listed building or its setting, or involves the substantial demolition of a grade II building (this would include removal of major internal fixtures), the local authority will consult English Heritage and relevant amenity societies before determining the application.

Planning permission and, if relevant, building regulations approval must be obtained from the local planning authority for any change of use, any new building, and any alteration or extension that materially affects the external appearance of the building. Conservation area consent may be needed for works to trees in the curtilage of the building.

Building in a churchyard or the conversion of a crypt or mausoleum which causes disturbance of human remains will require further authorisation from the Ministry of Justice. Unauthorised disposal of human remains, tombstones or monuments is prohibited.

⁴ The Church of England has its own procedures for agreeing the use and sale of closed churches. These will usually involve discussion with the local planning authority covering most of the issues mentioned here. It can also offer guidance on the significance of closed churches and the likely impacts of alterations. Listed building consent and planning permission will normally need to be in place before the Church will confirm the sale of its property.

⁵ A churchyard may remain partly or wholly in use, particularly if there are recent burials. Continued public access for the tending of graves may be a condition of the disposal of the property.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

The HELM website holds a library of free publications on a wide range of conservation issues:
www.helm.org.uk

Specific guidance

Cadw 2003 *Chapels in Wales: Conservation and Conversion*

Department for Communities and Local Government,
Department for Culture, Media and Sport, English
Heritage 2010 *PP55: Historic Environment Planning
Practice Guide* or any subsequent replacement under
the NPPF.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport, English
Heritage 2010 *Options for disposal of redundant churches
and other places of worship*

English Heritage 2008 *Conservation Principles, Policies
and Guidance*

English Heritage and the Church of England 2005
*Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains
excavated from Christian burial grounds in England*

English Heritage 2007 *Paradise Preserved*

Latham, D 2000 *The Creative Re-use of Buildings*,
2 vols, Donhead

The Closed Churches Division of the Church
Commissioners has extensive guidance on its website,
relating to Church of England buildings only:
[www.cofe.anglican.org/about/churchcommissioners/
pastoralandclosedchurches/closedchurches](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/churchcommissioners/pastoralandclosedchurches/closedchurches)

Guidance for places of worship which may be useful

English Heritage 2003 *New Work in Historic Places
of Worship*

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings 2007
SPAB Statement I: Church Extensions

Church Buildings Council 2007 *Statements of Significance
and Need Guidance* available at www.churchcare.co.uk

Methodist Church Resourcing Mission Office 2004
Statements of Significance and Need available at
www.methodist.org.uk

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CONTACTS

English Heritage regional offices**East Midlands Region**

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East of England Region

01223 582 700

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South West Region

0117 975 0700

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West Midlands Region

0121 625 6820

westmidlands@english-heritage.org.uk

Yorkshire and the Humber Region

01904 601 901

yorkshire@english-heritage.org.uk

Amenity Societies**Ancient Monuments Society**

020 7236 3934

office@ancientmonumentsociety.org.uk

Council for British Archaeology

01904 671 417

www.britarch.ac.uk/contact

Georgian Group

0871 750 2936

info@georgiangroup.org.uk

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

020 7377 1644

info@spab.org.uk

Twentieth Century Society

020 7250 3857

caseworker@c20society.org.uk

Victorian Society

020 8894 1019

admin@victoriansociety.org.uk

For Church of England buildings only:**Church Commissioners**

Closed Churches Division

020 7898 1781

Full list of staff contacts at:

www.cofe.anglican.org/about/churchcommissioners/pastoralandclosedchurches/closedchurches

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