



# Building for Faith

A guide for faith groups to meeting their needs for spaces and places in the East of England

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Our research and experience shows that faith groups are flourishing in this region, and contributing to its life and well being in a number of ways. It also shows that a significant number are either seeking new premises, or looking to expand existing ones.

The region remains an area of growth, and new developments and villages will eventually appear. Within these there will be opportunities for new places of worship and community buildings, and the Cambridgeshire Horizons study 'Faith Facilities in New Developments' gives guidelines for land release to faiths in order to enable them to build new communities.

There remains a need for guidance to faith groups who want to serve an existing community, but need more space to do so. This leaflet, based on the experience gained from faith groups around our region, is intended to give early advice to such groups. It is hoped that the advice it offers will be regularly updated in the light of changes in legislation, the economic climate and feedback from our readers.

## **IDENTIFYING ACCOMMODATION NEEDS**

There are a number of ways that the need for more, different or adapted accommodation can arise for faith groups.

These may be internal, such as:

- Increasing number of attendees
- Changes in the nature of the use of the premises, for examples more activities for the young, elderly, or those with disabilities
- Use of the facilities at different times
- Need for more parking, possibly to ease relations with neighbours
- Deterioration of the premises to the point where modernising or rebuilding needs to be considered
- New funds from grants or legacies intended for specific functions or facilities
- Need to be more environmentally aware/reduce carbon footprint e.g. with better insulation, different heating

Or external such as:

- New opportunities for collaborating/partnering with other faith, community or commercial entities so that you can make better use of property in your locality
- Changes in road layouts, parking restrictions or other major developments
- Storm, flood or fire damage or vandalism to your premises or those nearby

- Legislative changes requiring different standards, such as increasingly rigorous food hygiene regulations, disability access etc.

Whatever the stimulus for changing your accommodation, change will present challenges. It is important to keep positive, taking opportunities to create an environment that will be good for your current activities and enable new ones.

At this stage, as the need for change becomes apparent, keep your thinking as broad as possible; the danger is to act too quickly and not consider all options fully at the outset.

Consulting widely within your own organisation about your perceived needs (at local and national level if appropriate) is a good place to start. Encourage a brainstorming approach and ‘think the unthinkable’: there might be excellent potential in some of the more wacky ideas! Getting the views of younger people is particularly important, as they will be using the changed facilities well into the future.

This is the time to also think about sharing with others, and whether it could bring benefits and economies of scale. Major property changes can require substantial capital investment, and there may be alternatives such as renting premises, seeking to share your development with public sector services, community or interfaith groups. There may well be synergy in sharing with other groups within your faith tradition, or even with other faiths. There is far more chance of getting grant assistance if the schemes include clear benefits to the wider community and if sharing accommodation with others is a potential solution.

Another worthwhile exercise is to “audit” your current usage of property – for example is valuable space used for storage which could be moved off-site? Reviewing current usage will help in trying to develop the brief for your new premises; designers will need information on floor areas used, and other indicators such as number of attendees as they seek to develop spatial ideas for you.

It is widely known in the property professions that every hour spent thinking through at early stages will save many hours of time and expense later, and greatly increase the chances of the final development really meeting the need.

## **TIME TO LOOK AT ALL THE OPTIONS**

Before deciding on how to take your project forward, there are a number of questions to consider.

### Time issues

- How long term is the need for accommodation change? A short term problem might be solved with a temporary structure or by renting extra space nearby.
- Do you have a deadline for getting the accommodation changes made? Do not underestimate the time involved in planning, contracting and construction activities.
- You might need to phase in accommodation changes, for example if funds are not assured for the total scheme. If so which elements take priority?

### Existing facilities

- Can changing the way you use the facilities you already have, reduce the need for new accommodation?
- Would alterations and extensions to current premises be sufficient?
- Is there space available to develop on your existing site? Might adjacent properties be available for purchase?
- If you plan to move away, do you need professional advice on disposing of current premises and seeking new?
- Do you know of available buildings or land that might suit your needs?
- Are there any features in your current premises you want to preserve or move into a new facility?

### Financial

- What is your budget for new capital expenditure? How much can you spend on initial investigations and early designs/planning applications?
- Will regular maintenance costs increase and are running cost budgets available?

### Community relations

- Who do we need to give early warning of our possible accommodation changes, and who do we need to keep regularly updated on any project?

### Environmental sustainability

- How important is it that you demonstrate environmental concern in any new accommodation?

## **DEFINING THE BRIEF**

Once you have discussed these issues, and have at least preliminary answers to most, you will be able to start writing a brief that can be given to external advisers such as designers, architects, potential funders; as well as to people in your group who may not yet have got involved.

The clearer the brief, the better and more cost effective will be the response you get. So this is the time to look at the questions that will help you write a good brief.

- How do you explain any faith specific aspects that affect our requirements to consultants and contractors who might not have experience of working on faith projects?
- Can you give a rough estimate in floor areas (square metres) as to how much space we require.
- Try to give floor areas for each function within your building e.g. public areas.
- Can you estimate other space requirements, for example number of car spaces/ number of visitors/ number of meals per week, number of religious services with times and days of the week, main types of community activity?
- Is there an existing example elsewhere similar to what you want, that could be used a guide?
- Do you have plans/drawings/legal deeds to existing premises to hand?
- What is your estimated life expectancy for the new accommodation?
- What security and caretaking factors should be considered?

## **FINDING RESOURCES**

At an early stage in planning, it is essential to list all possible available resources, as this will help guide you through the decision-making process. The appendices in this leaflet give some websites and other sources of potential advice and help to faith-based projects.

Resources obviously include the finances you already have available, or can raise internally or externally. But there are many other ways in which a project can be supported, and money saved, by tapping into expertise on the doorstep.

For example, there will be people in your organisation who have useful skills and experience, such as architects, surveyors, property managers. Some schemes can make good use of volunteers to undertake physical work.

Does your organisation have regional, national or international links, or a central department with expertise in property matters?

Beyond your faith group there could be support to be found through the local inter faith groups, for example, some other faith groups might have extensive knowledge of property and construction matters, and might be very willing to share their experience.

## **USING CONSULTANTS AND CONTRACTORS**

Once you have produced an outline brief and have a clear idea of resources available for the project, the next step is to select your lead professional advisor. The type of adviser to lead the project will depend on the nature of the scheme:

- If you are thinking of developing a new site or making changes to your existing property then a planning consultant and architect would be a good idea. (If you cannot afford any professional help then Planning Aid may be able to assist you.)
- If a lot of buying and selling, or renting of existing property is involved a surveyor/estate agent with relevant experience might be a good starting point.
- If the scheme is mainly altering existing buildings with some minor new work, a building surveyor could be a good lead consultant.
- If the scheme is primarily new buildings or has a significant aesthetic element then a local architect would be a good choice.
- If the scheme is mainly changes to external areas then a landscape consultant might be advisable.

There are also a number of building contractors with experience of working on heritage buildings in our region; some of these contractors offer a 'design and build' solution which can offer good value.

The appendix gives details of relevant professions and contracting organisations in the East of England.

If a member of your faith community is active in property work locally they will have a useful network of consultants and contractors who can be approached for quotes. When considering potential contractors, ask if they have specific experience of working on faith projects and any record of respecting the unique aspects of accommodating your faith's requirements.

## **FINANCIAL, INSURANCE AND LEGAL ISSUES**

When embarking on a significant change to accommodation it is usually worth setting up a dedicated bank account and expenditure and income records for the project, to keep them separate from your other finances. This is particularly the case if you are dealing with external funders.

It is also essential to check you have adequate insurance for public liability and property responsibilities, and that this will remain valid as changes take place.

A point that sometimes gets overlooked is the importance of checking that your constitution does not limit your potential project. For instance, if you are going to run commercial activities such as a shop or café on the new premises, your constitution may need to be updated to allow for this. If the new project will introduce catering aspects you also need to check Food Safety regulations.

If the new premises will involve increasing staff numbers, engaging with volunteers, involvement with children or vulnerable adults there might well be new requirements such as CRB checks or Health and Safety notices to display. Access for disabled visitors or staff will need to be thought through.

If the project is going to involve significant buying and selling of land or property you will need to hire a lawyer experienced in conveyancing; ask your usual legal advisers if they have the relevant experience or can recommend suitable firms for this somewhat specialised activity.

## **ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS EXEMPTIONS**

The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Order 1994 allow certain "Ecclesiastical buildings for the time being used for ecclesiastical purposes" to be exempt from Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent.

This exemption applies to buildings of the following denominations: Church of England, Roman Catholic Church, Methodist Church, Baptist Union of Great Britain, and the United Reformed Church. Relevant works proposed by all other denominations and faiths require listed building consent and conservation area consent in exactly the same way as similar works to secular buildings. This exemption does not extend to Planning Permission.

The six 'exempted' denominations each have their own internal arrangements for dealing with proposed works, which would otherwise be covered by Listed Building Consent or Conservation Area Consent, independent of local authority control.

If your building belongs to one of these six denominations, then you should make contact with your national body to seek advice – all the contact details are to be found at the end of Appendix A.

## **PLANNING PERMISSION**

### **Existing Facilities**

When considering alterations or extensions you need to ensure that the correct permissions are obtained eg planning permission, building regulations permission etc. If the building is a “Listed Building” or in a Conservation Area then additional consents may be required.

There are several factors to take into account when considering extensions and alterations

- Think about the design relationship between new building work and that of the existing building particularly if the existing building is listed or in a conservation area.
- Can the extra buildings/facilities be accommodated satisfactorily on the site or will it affect other local residents eg through buildings being too close to residential properties, or will it cause the loss of car parking on the site?.

### **Considering moving?**

If you are considering moving to new premises or site then you should always check with the local planning authority as to whether or not planning permission is required and if it is likely to be granted.

The local planning authority may have specific policies relating to places of worship. There will almost certainly be policies relating to the development of community facilities which include places of worship. If your proposal is in line with the policies the greater chance of planning permission being granted.

Things to consider:

- Are the premises in an area where many of your worshippers live or will there be a demand for car parking and can this be fitted in on the site?
- What additional activities do you think will take place eg playgroups, religious instruction, youth clubs, weddings, social functions etc. Can the site accommodate the cars and vehicles that may need to access the site for these activities?
- Are there any local residents who may be affected by noise and disturbance from the use of the site as a place of worship including the extra activities?
- Changing the use of a building normally requires planning consent e.g. a house to a place of worship or a warehouse adapted as a wedding venue.

- If the building is already in community use eg a cinema, it may not require planning consent but it is always advisable to check with the local planning authority first before buying the property.

If your scheme is going to need planning permission a useful source of advice and guidance may be *Planning Aid*, whose details are in the Appendix. *Planning Aid* can help people to:

- Understand and use the planning system
- Participate in preparing plans
- Prepare their own plans for the future of their community
- Comment on planning applications
- Apply for planning permission or appeal against refusal of permission

## **MANAGING ACCOMMODATION PROJECTS**

Many faith organisations have a culture of being very collaborative and making decisions only after extensive consultation. Whilst this is a good approach to getting broad consensus to property initiatives, once the brief and instructions have been decided, there needs to be tight management of the project.

Ask right from the outset for estimates that include contingencies for possible problems, and insist that estimates are realistic even if challenging. Regular cost reports should be requested and changes to contracts should be kept to the absolute minimum, as changes after the work is has started can be expensive and make it more difficult to keep costs under control.

You need to consider how to give designers and contractors an indication of the quality you expect, and one way to do this is by referring to work you have seen elsewhere.

Once planning and construction get underway the consultants and contractors will require a main point of contact when they raise questions and need decisions made speedily. Delays in responding can result in time and costs escalating. It is therefore good practice to appoint an internal team to manage property projects. The team needs to have a clear figurehead who has been given delegated authority to make speedy decisions.

As well as appointing your own project lead, it is good practice to set fixed dates and times for reviewing progress with consultants and contractors. Property projects can be difficult to keep on track and you should show you are monitoring progress closely and will want explanations for delays (with advice on any cost implications).

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

As you are considering making changes or moving, this is a good time to review your existing facilities in terms of environmental friendliness and sustainability. For example, an old heating systems could be worth replacing with a more modern fuel-efficient one that emits less harmful effluent. Increasing insulation is another potential money saver in the long term.

When specifying your requirements for new works, ask designers and contractors how sustainable the materials and systems they are suggesting are. You could also ensure at the planning stage that adequate space and provision is made for handling refuse efficiently and maximum advantage can be taken of recycling services.

## **WIDER RELATIONSHIPS**

A new building scheme or an extension of premises is sure to impact on the wider community. So it is important to plan for this from the beginning.

Classic publicity and celebration points in building work include

- Laying foundation stones
- “Topping out” when the highest point is in place
- Handing over the keys on completion

Local politicians and celebrities might well want to be involved, but be alert when planning ahead for celebrations, as building timetables are often unpredictable.

Initially support must come from within your own worshipping community – if they are not committed, no-one else will be persuaded! Once there is internal agreement to the plan, there needs to be a process of informing and consulting with everyone who may be affected. This will include:

- Neighbours (current and future)
- People who use your services
- Any funders you may have
- Your regional body (e.g. Diocese) or national body, if you have one
- Other local faith groups
- People you may deal with already in the public sector such as FaithLink or Diversity Officers in your Local Authority, and your local police

The type of consultation will depend on the scope and impact of your plans, and could range from informal meetings with individuals through to a full-scale public consultation with literature and public meetings. Early personal meetings with selected representatives of groups will indicate what is likely to be appropriate and welcomed.

As plans start to become firmer, and you have held some informal meetings, there is likely to be media interest. Be prepared for this from the start, by having a simple ‘Holding Statement’ explaining the basics. This can be issued quickly in response to early enquiries.

Once you have something more specific and detailed to talk about, it is important to become proactive with the local media, meeting a small number of key journalists to give all the background, then issuing press releases when there is a ‘landmark stage’.

If your plans involve raising funds from within the local community, you will need a phased and carefully considered public relations programme to support this effort.

Be prepared for negative or hostile responses to your plans. This means brainstorming all the possible objections and concerns in advance of 'going public' and deciding how you will respond to them. Bear in mind that part of the consultation process is being prepared to change or adapt if there is good reason to do so.

If you have a web site, add pages specific to the project, and make sure they are kept up to date.

The East of England Faiths Council has leaflets on media guidance for faith groups, and also provides an IT Helpline for faith groups in the region, so do make use of those – details in Appendix B.

## **ONCE THE PROJECT IS COMPLETE**

Hopefully your new or altered premises should be more energy efficient and reduce maintenance and energy costs, but if you are increasing size or usage of the buildings you will need to budget for increased running costs, such as electricity, cleaning etc..

There may be a potential income for your new premises, for example rooms not in use all the week could be let out for use by community groups, keep fit or art classes for example. If your scheme provides car parking can the spaces be hired out when not required by your organisation?

Moving to a new area or changing the accessibility of your premises might need you to think of caretaking or security measures. Your local police should be able to advise on measures to reduce the possibility of theft or vandalism.

After any new building work there will be "teething troubles" and you will need to agree a system for notifying the contractor of "snags" to be remedied in the maintenance period. It is also very important to get all the log books and manuals for all new equipment from the contractors.

Sharing your experiences of altering your accommodation can be very useful to other interested parties, such as your local interfaith group. Also be prepared to give clear feedback during the work and at the end to all involved in the project, so they may improve performance in the future, and know if you are pleased with the outcome.

## **APPENDIX A – USEFUL CONTACTS**

### **Planning Aid**

1st Floor, 38 Cambridge Place,  
Cambridge, CB2 1NS  
01223 350 850  
07779 225273  
[eeco@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:eeco@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)  
[www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

Planning Aid East of England is a service run by the Royal Town Planning Institute (Royal Town Planning Institute, 41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL Registered Charity 262865 in England & Wales and SC037841 in Scotland) and funded by



### **GO-East**

Eastbrook House  
Shaftesbury Road  
Cambridge  
CB2 8DF  
Tel: 01223 372918  
Fax: 01223 372862  
Email: [PlanningCasework@goeast.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningCasework@goeast.gsi.gov.uk)  
[www.go-east.gov.uk](http://www.go-east.gov.uk)

The Government Office for the East of England's main role is to advise and act for ministers on important planning issues affecting the region. It also acts as a communication channel for regional stakeholders and the public on planning issues that affect regional or national concerns. Central to the Government Office's function is promoting cultural change to produce positive planning to deliver sustainable communities.

### **East of England Faiths Council**

Unit 37  
St John's Innovation Centre  
Cowley Rd  
Cambridge  
CB4 0WS  
Tel.: 01223 421606  
Email: [eefc@cambcatalyst.co.uk](mailto:eefc@cambcatalyst.co.uk)  
[www.eefaithscouncil.org.uk](http://www.eefaithscouncil.org.uk)

EEFC is the Regional Faith Forum, providing a clear point of contact in the region with bodies of local, regional and national governance. It supports faith and inter faith groups, and undertakes consultation and research functions. Its objective is to ensure that faith communities are an effective stakeholder in the region, by building capacity in the sector and making input to regional development at strategic level.

**Faith groups with recent project experience**

Contact local faith groups to find out about any projects undertaken in your locality

**Interfaith groups**

EEFC can advise on contact points for interfaith groups in your locality.

**Diocesan Property Services**

Contact via your area's Diocesan Office - should be able to give general advice on property management in your locality

**Diocesan Press Advisors**

Contact via your area's Diocesan Office for advice on publicity and media management related to accommodation changes

**Local Authorities**

Contact for Planning and Building Control and Health and Safety guidance – details in local Phone Book

**Property Professionals****Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors**

Mill House

Mill Court

Great Shelford

Cambridge CB22 5LD

Tel: 01223 470570

Fax: 01223 843931

Email: [easternregion@rics.org](mailto:easternregion@rics.org)

**Royal Institution of British Architects**

RIBA East

The Studio

High Green

Great Shelford

Cambridge

CB22 5EG

Tel: 01223 566285

Fax: 01223 505142

Email: [riba.east@inst.riba.org](mailto:riba.east@inst.riba.org)

**Royal Town Planning Institution**

4 Opus House,

Elm Farm Park,

Great Green, Thurston,

BURY ST EDMUNDS,

Suffolk, IP31 3SH.

Tel: 01359 233408

Email: [eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk)

Building Contractors  
National Federation of Builders Limited  
55 Tufton Street,  
London, SW1P 3QL  
Tel: 08450 578 160

### **Ecclesiastical Buildings Exemption advice**

*The Church of England* has its own website which offers information and advice to those who are directly responsible for these buildings on the ground which is [www.churchcare.co.uk](http://www.churchcare.co.uk) . The Church of England's mechanism for regulating changes to its church buildings, their contents and churchyards for those churches whose primary use is a place of worship, is the Faculty Jurisdiction System. For information, please go to <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/legal.php?GA> . There is also guidance to be found on developing a church building at: <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/develop.php>

For the *Methodist Church* go to:  
<http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=churchlife.content&cmid=165>

For the *Roman Catholic Church* go to:  
[http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/index.php/ccb/catholic\\_church/catholic\\_bishops\\_conference\\_of\\_england\\_and\\_wales/departments/christian\\_life\\_and\\_worship/patrimony\\_committee/care\\_of\\_churches](http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/index.php/ccb/catholic_church/catholic_bishops_conference_of_england_and_wales/departments/christian_life_and_worship/patrimony_committee/care_of_churches)

For the *Baptist Union of Great Britain* go to: <http://www.baptist.org.uk/resources/a-z.html>

For the *United Reformed Church* make contact with your relevant Synod:  
[http://www.urc.org.uk/contact\\_us/synods/synods](http://www.urc.org.uk/contact_us/synods/synods)

## **APPENDIX B – PUBLICATIONS**

### **Churches and Faith Buildings - Realising the potential**

A new joint publication from the government and the Church of England will help faith groups identify sources of funding to make their buildings more sustainable, by enhancing the facilities and services they offer to local communities. It also discusses the importance of churches relating to local authority structures like LSPs (local strategic partnerships), and regional bodies like Regional Development agencies, the significance of projects and services delivered by churches, and the squeamishness of some funders to fund faith-based projects. 'Churches and Faith Buildings: Realising the Potential' can be downloaded at [http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/publications/5991.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/5991.aspx).

### **Faith Facilities in New Developments**

Research and recommendations on making land and buildings available to faith groups in new villages and settlements, undertaken by Cambridgeshire Horizons. Contact EEFC for more information and a summary of the findings, or download at [http://www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/documents/publications/research/faith\\_facilities\\_study.pdf](http://www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/documents/publications/research/faith_facilities_study.pdf)

**The partners involved in the production of this booklet are:**

**East of England Faiths Council**

The East of England Faiths Council is the Regional Faith Forum, providing a clear point of contact in the region with bodies of local, regional and national governance, and with the voluntary and public sectors. It supports faith and inter faith groups, and undertakes consultation and research functions. Its objective is to ensure that faith communities are an effective stakeholder in the region, by building capacity in the sector and making input to regional development at strategic level.

**Planning Aid**

Planning Aid offers free and independent casework advice from a qualified planner, and community planning activities.

*Whilst we have endeavoured to provide current advice, we cannot take any liability for errors, omissions or responsibility for the success of projects.*