

Application Process:

for the refurbishment
and reordering
of churches
and installation
of artworks

Westminster Diocese

Easter 2006

Introduction

When churches are built, let great care be taken that they are well suited to celebrating liturgical services and to bringing about the active participation of the faithful.

Sacrosanctum Concilium 126

The Diocesan Art and Architecture Committee has been established by the Cardinal as a committee of the Diocesan Liturgy Commission to assist him with his responsibilities concerning the churches of the Diocese.

All who are involved in the construction, restoration, and remodelling of sacred buildings are to consult the diocesan Commission on the Sacred Liturgy and Sacred Art. The diocesan Bishop, moreover, is to use the counsel and help of this commission whenever it comes to laying down norms on this matter, approving plans for new buildings, and making decisions on the more important issues.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal 291

Westminster Diocese has a long and rich tradition of church building, covering nearly 300 years. These churches are works of faith designed to enable the worthy celebration of the liturgy, and themselves to encourage men and women to raise their minds and hearts to God.

Nearly every parish church has a long and venerated history. It has been the place for countless sacramental celebrations, and will have a place in the hearts of the families and individuals who have worshipped there in times of joy and times of sorrow. All churches need to be treated with the greatest of respect.

Churches will also require work done on them from time to time. Sometimes this will be simply to maintain the fabric of the building, sometimes because there is need to adapt to changing circumstances. The Art and Architecture Committee should always be consulted where there are changes to a church building which does not involve replacement of like with like. Changes to the decoration, the fittings or the lighting of a church, as well as to the liturgical arrangements can have significant impact on how the environment provided by the church contributes to the worship of the community of faith that gathers there.

One regular reason for work being considered in a church is the recognition that the contemporary liturgy makes distinctive demands on church buildings in comparison to those demanded even forty or fifty years ago. These demands are not limited to alternative arrangements of the sanctuary – in particular they also effect the processional areas of the church, the places dedicated to the sacraments of baptism and reconciliation, and the place of entry into the church.

The Committee and the Liturgy Commission are available to advise and assist parishes with processes of formation and information at any stage of a particular project. Both bodies strongly recommend that these processes be engaged with as soon as thought is being given to change.

Whenever change is being proposed, there needs to be reasoned argument as to why it is necessary, and what it is intended to achieve. Many churches have been reordered, for example, in recent decades. Sometimes that reordering has not been entirely satisfactory and corrective work may be necessary. However one of the importance qualities to be achieved in liturgical space is a sense of permanence. In particular where a reordering is proposed, every effort needs to be taken to ensure that the new arrangement will be more satisfactory and will give the impression of permanence.

Always priority should be given to quality of design and the quality of workmanship. Churches are designed to serve for generations and any work in carried out in them should also meet the

same expectations. Church commissions whether architectural or artistic should steer a middle course between the desire to save money, and the desire for extravagance.

In many cases it will be clear that permission to proceed with a particular work can be given readily and straightforwardly.

In other cases a somewhat longer and more formal process of approval needs to be undertaken. Except when strictly 'like for like' work is being proposed, this will always be the case with listed buildings, for which approval needs to be obtained not only from the Art and Architecture Committee but also from the Historic Churches Committee, which has statutory authority regarding listed buildings.

Incomplete or inadequate submissions cannot be agreed by the Committee. In order to avoid unnecessary delays parishes are invited to make contact with the Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee at the earliest opportunity. This will enable a first discussion of the project, and allow him to offer guidance as to how the project may best be pursued, and the Committee's expectations.

All change has to be handled with sensitivity, and should not be a matter for the parish priest alone. The Art and Architecture Committee will expect to see in formal submissions for work to be carried out evidence that the work has been considered also by the parish Finance Committee. Where work involves changes to the liturgical space in particular the Art and Architecture Committee will expect to see evidence of a broader consultation with the parish as a whole.

In 2006 the Committee will meet on 6th February, 8th May and the 4th September. These dates have been chosen to coordinate with meetings of the Diocesan Historic Churches Committee. Dates for 2007 and subsequent years will be posted on the Diocesan website as and when they are confirmed.

The Liturgy Commission and the Art and Architecture Committee are available, not only for the assistance of the Cardinal, but also for the assistance of the clergy and lay faithful of the parishes of the Diocese. Their members are eager to be of help in any way that they can.

Fr. Allen Morris

*Chairman
Diocesan Liturgy Commission*

Fr. Peter Newby

*Chairman
Diocesan Art and Architecture Committee*

Application Process

Stage One: Preliminaries

This is the most important stage as it will set the tone for the rest of the working process, and its correct implementation will make it possible for the different Diocesan Committees, the Art and Architecture Committee, the Historic Church's Committee (where applicable) and Diocesan Surveyor to process applications smoothly and efficiently.

The Parish Priest and the Parish.

1. The first contact. Normally this could be the Diocesan Surveyor, (currently Chris Fanning), owing to his involvement with the regular maintenance of Churches and because of the service the Diocesan Surveyor can offer with regard to practical recommendations about the maintenance and repair of church property.
2. If the work envisaged is larger than the above, and involves any form of re-ordering, Chris Fanning will suggest that the Parish Priest makes contact with the Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee (currently Fr. Peter Newby, Parish priest of St. Mary Moorfields) to organise an informal visit and explain the necessary paperwork.
3. Parish Priests may instead wish to contact directly their Bishop, the Financial Secretary or the Chairman of the Liturgy Commission. Whoever is the first point of contact will pass on all details to the Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee, who in turn will inform the Chairman of the Historic Churches' Committee should this be necessary.

The most important task at this stage is to contemplate the potential scope of works, the need to consult with the parish laity, and to discuss the project, whether architectural or artistic, informally with the Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee.

Until this stage is completed there is generally no need to employ any professionals (e.g. liturgical designer, lighting designer). It is strongly recommended that the parish does not engage an architect or artist without first obtaining the approval of such an action from the Art and Architecture Committee and the Diocesan Surveyor. Failure to observe this recommendation has in the past caused difficulties with regard to fees and the quality of design.

Stage Two: Development of a design brief

Once the first stage of the Application process has led to agreement on the scale of the necessary works, the next stage is to prepare a detailed brief. This should include a description of the church as it presently laid-out (including its history etc.), the features that need addressing in the proposed works, and your expectations of what the proposed architectural or artistic work should achieve.

This draft should be submitted to the Art and Architecture Committee for its approval.

If the project being considered is an extensive restoration/re-ordering of a Church this is likely to be very costly. It may well be that a parish could not afford for all the work to be carried out at once. However there are considerable advantages at this stage of ensuring that the full scope of potential work is taken into consideration, even if what is established as necessary is carried out

in a phased operation over a number of years (for example re-ordering of sanctuary and restoration of church followed by renewal of baptismal font: followed by work on narthex). Establishing a long term plan avoids the disadvantages of dealing with matters piece meal. It allows for better planning, achieves a more consistent design and helps avoid unnecessary costs.

Stage Three:

Appointment of an architect/designer/artist

The Committee would be happy to assist in the appointment of an architect, designer or artist where appropriate.

In some circumstances consideration should be given to inviting a number of professionals to make submissions against the approved brief.

Stage Four:

Completion of Documents and preliminary submission.

The following documents will need to be completed

1. **Statement of needs.** An overall idea of what the Parish Priest and community wish to achieve by the re-ordering. This exercise will involve the whole Church, even if only a small part of any larger plan is being considered for change at the present moment. The Committee is anxious to view all proposals within the context of the whole Church, to ensure that a phased programme of changes will fit with the liturgical celebration of the sacraments and aesthetic vision of the Church.
2. **Statement of significance.** Which elements in the Church are of particular aesthetic and historical interest, and especially appreciated by Parish Priest and Parishioners? Which pieces have been given by donors who either live or whose descendents live in the Parish?
3. **Plans of current arrangement.** Site plan of Church, and floor plans of Church as existing, as well as photographs of the interior, and exterior of the Church
4. **Plans and drawings of proposals,** This submission should include elevations of new sanctuary furniture if relevant, description of proposed materials, (such as floor surfaces) or colour sketch of proposed artwork.

At this stage there is no need to have detailed drawings of every element in the design. The Committee is interested in the general scope of the work and ideas behind it, as well as evidence that the Church has been looked at as a whole.

Please note that many submissions have unfortunately to be turned down owing to a lack of information and lack of clarity as to what is being suggested. Consultation with the Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee will avoid delay because of incomplete submissions.

Stage Five:

Review of the project by the Committee

The Committee normally meets three times a year to consider submissions, and at each meeting will choose one of the following courses of action:

1. To accept the proposals as given, so the project may be advanced to the next stage (include sending their outline approval to the Historic Churches Committee where appropriate)

- 2) suggest emendations to the proposals, whether liturgical, architectural or artistic, and should these be minor, provisionally give approval once these have been agreed. Should there be more serious concern the Committee would ask for the scheme to be submitted again with further emendations.
- 3) to reject the scheme. This should rarely be necessary if the above guidelines have been adhered.

Should the scheme meet with the Art and Architecture Committee's approval the Chair of the Liturgy Commission who will issue the appropriate Certificate of Approval.

In the case of listed churches this Certificate needs to accompany the submission of the proposed works to the Historic Churches Committee, which has statutory authority over the works, and whose authorisation is necessary before any work can begin. The statutes of the Historic Churches Committee do not allow them to approve works until such time as the Certificate has been issued by the Chair of the Liturgy Commission.

In the case of other churches, once the Certificate of Approval has been issued by the Chair of the Liturgy Commission the approved works can proceed to working drawings/detailed design stage.

Should the scheme be unsuccessful or further discussions be necessary the Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee will contact the Parish Priest.

Stage Six:

Detailed design and contact with other Diocesan Bodies.

Once a project is approved, the Chairman of the Liturgy Commission will be asked to issue a Certificate of Approval .

In the case of listed buildings this Certificate must then be forwarded together with the other necessary papers to the Diocesan Historic Churches Committee for its consideration of the project. Details of the responsibilities of the HCC may be found on the Diocesan website and parish manual.

In the case of non-listed buildings, once the Certificate of Approval has been obtained from the Liturgy Commission parishes may proceed to obtain tenders for the necessary works.

Parishes are advised that, even after the Certificate of Approval has been issued, it is important to remain in contact with the Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee. It will generally be necessary to submit further detailed working drawings to him for approval (sometimes this will be a formal requirement of the Approval).

These drawings will be reviewed to ensure that the work is being carried out in accordance with the Approval given. The detail of a design has a great impact on how a building is experienced so it is essential to get these details right.- e.g., the quality of seating, the colours of the sanctuary etc. Too many good proposals have resulted in unsatisfactory results because of a lack of close supervision at this stage.

Stage Seven:

Completion of tender process and construction on site

This stage is the work is normally the remit of the Diocesan Building Surveyor, but should it be necessary to change/adapt designs in the light of construction difficulties, the Chairman of the A & A Committee should be consulted.

Stage Eight:
Completion of the project

The completion of any project should be notified to the Chairman so that a photographic record may established, and for their possible publication in different architectural/conservation magazines.

The ordering and refurbishment of Churches and the installation of Art works © Diocese of Westminster, 2006. Issued by the Diocesan Liturgy Commission and Art & Architecture Committee, with the approval of Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor.

For further information on the role of the Diocesan Liturgy Commission and Art & Architecture Committee visit the Diocesan web site www.rcdow.org.uk