

## **General Statement of Significance**

(Form 1A) [Historic England Statement of Significance parts 1 & 2]

This document is already on the Diocesan website, on the page for your parish; (click the words *Church SIF Form* to the right of the title of your church).

You need to check that it is correct. If it is not correct, please send the corrections to the DAC secretariat at Church House, Penrith.

The Form 1a in itself is guidance for the sort of things which need to be said about a church and its setting. But, to give more detail:

**Significance** is “the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.”

### **Detail**

When describing your Church, start from a long way off and appreciate it in its environment. The Church might dominate the village or town, or be isolated or tucked away down a path. The Churchyard might be full of monuments and a home to wildlife, or a cramped space apt to fill with rubbish. Move in and describe the Church, starting at the west end and working systematically round. Then move inside, and again describe the Church from the west end to the east. When you come to write the Statement of Significance, it is not necessary to list every item. If the fittings are all of one date and modest, this is all you need to say. A check-list is provided of the things to look out for. This check-list does not have to be filled in and submitted. A summary of the terms often used in assessing significance is also provided, again for your use only if you find it helpful.

The font, pulpit or stained glass might be significant; these can be described in more detail, as will those areas or features directly affected by the proposal, described in Part II of the Statement of Significance. Think about the impact of the proposal not only in terms of the physical impact on the building, Churchyard or contents, for example insertions into the fabric, trenches in the Churchyard or removal of pews, but also in terms of the visual and aesthetic impact of the proposed changes. The impact of any changes on the use of the Church by the congregation and by the wider community should also be taken into consideration.

### **Useful sources and advice**

Many parishes may feel that they do not have the expertise to produce such a document. There is however much help available, either from the DAC who may be able to help or to suggest someone who can, from your architect, from the local authority (perhaps the Conservation Officer) or from the available literature, which is often far more extensive than one might think.

Useful sources include the “Buildings of England” series, often referred to as “Pevsners”. The Victoria County History may have very little or an enormous amount. There may be a report by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME), now part of Historic England. The local library, museum and Diocesan and County Record Centres are always worth a visit, and the CCC library and case files may also be useful. If your Church is listed, there will be a listing description, ask your local planning authority. These are also being made available through

the “Images of England” project, on the Historic England web site. Some Churchyards, or parts or objects within them, may have statutory designations, Historic England and Natural England are the organisations concerned here.

### **Archaeology**

For archaeological information, contact your Diocesan Archaeological Adviser through the DAC. You may find useful information on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR, now often known as the Historic Environment Record, HER) maintained by your local authority. Contact details for these can be found on the English Heritage web site.

### **Environment**

The Churchyard and Church may be of ecological significance, as a home to flora and fauna (not just bats and flowers), your DAC and local authority and the project “Caring for Gods Acre” may be able to help you with this. Such sources should only be used as a guide, as they are sometimes out of date or contain errors. Look at the Church and its surroundings with your own eyes, and express yourselves in your own words.

### **Conservation Management Plans for major Churches**

Some Churches will be so complex and significant in various ways that the parish may wish to consider commissioning a Conservation Management Plan. The CCC has produced guidance on how to do this, available from the Churchcare web site.

### **Optional terminology for defining levels of significance:**

- Exceptional - important at national to international levels.
- Considerable - important at regional level or sometimes higher.
- Some - usually of local value only but possibly of regional significance for group or other value (eg a vernacular architectural feature).
- Local - of local value.
- Negative or intrusive features - those which actually detract from the value of a site. (eg a concrete boiler house adjacent to a medieval Church.)