



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD
Art & Architecture Committee

HANDBOOK
FOR PARISHES

2020

DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Art & Architecture Committee



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Dear Fathers,

Re: Application Process for the refurbishment and reordering of churches and installation of artworks.

For some time now, there has been lacking in the Diocese a clear application process for the refurbishment and reordering of churches and installation of artworks, so, the Art and Architecture Committee along with the Historic Churches Committee would like to remedy that with immediate effect.

In this diocese, there are a great variety of churches, both new and old. They have 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. With this in mind, all our churches need to be treated with the greatest of respect.

Parish Priests and their committees can readily inform themselves about the historical significance of their building where doubt exists. The Listed Building descriptions are available online through Historic England's website, and the Bishop's Conference online resource "Taking Stock" provides a wealth of useful information.

Of course, there will be times when the same churches will require work done on them, and, in the event that there are changes to a church building which do not involve simple maintenance, the replacement of like with like,

the Art and Architecture Committee should always be consulted (pursuant with provisions of Diocesan Law, cf. Ad Clerum dated 17th May 1985¹), as well as the Historic Churches Committee where applicable.

Changes to the sanctuary, layout of the church, decoration, or indeed the lighting of a church, can have significant impact on the sacred environment provided by the church, the numinous quality which helps to set a church building apart from secular buildings to the glory of God.

The Art and Architecture Committee is available to advise and assist parishes in this process 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 in recent decades. Sometimes that reordering has not been entirely satisfactory and corrective work may often be necessary. However one of the important qualities to be achieved in a liturgical space is a sense of permanence. In particular, where a reordering of 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. However obvious it may seem to some, reordering should always take into account liturgical requirements, not merely aesthetic preferences.

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

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. This will always be the case with listed buildings, for which approval needs to be

1. Ad Clerum 3/85 dated 17th May 1985:

“3. Reordered Churches

May I remind you that –

- (a) All plans for new churches and all plans for the re-ordering of existing churches must be approved by the Diocesan Commission for Liturgy.
- (b) Once a church has been built or re-ordered, with the express approval of the Commission, then it must not be altered in any way without my approval.”

obtained not only from the Art and Architecture Committee but also from the Historic Churches Committee, which has statutory authority regarding listed buildings, under the Town and County Planning Acts, Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Order) 2010. As regards Churches in Conservation areas the Art and Architecture Committee will consult with the Historic Churches Committee as a matter of good practice as opposed to a strict statutory obligation.

Incomplete, sketchy or inadequate submissions cannot be agreed by the Committee. Parishes should demonstrate the seriousness of their intent by well-prepared information. 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 as well as the Chairman of the Historic Churches Committee where applicable. 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.

We attach hereto the new application process for the refurbishment and reordering of churches and installation of artworks.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Mark Reilly

on behalf of the Art and Architecture Committee



A view of a recent liturgical space within a church of the Diocese, showing many of the things, both furnishings and finishes, for which Art & Architecture agreement would be required.

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR THE REFURBISHMENT AND REORDERING OF CHURCHES AND INSTALLATION OF ARTWORKS

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 Art and Architecture Committee, and the Historic Churches Committee (where applicable) and Diocesan Surveyor (where applicable) to process applications smoothly and efficiently.

The first contact: The Parish Priest makes contact with the Chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee (currently Fr. Mark Reilly) to organise an informal visit (as well as organising an informal preliminary visit from the Chairman of the Historic Churches Committee where applicable). 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 Fr Mark, who will also liaise with other members of the 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 agreement for such an action from the Art and Architecture Committee. 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, the work is likely to be very costly; it may well be that a parish could not afford to carry it all 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 piecemeal. 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 or advise on 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. In certain cases a design competition may be appropriate, and the Committee would be able to advise upon the suitability and procedures of this.

STAGE FOUR: COMPLETION OF DOCUMENTS AND PRELIMINARY SUBMISSION BY PARISH PRIEST.

The following documents will need to be completed and MUST be sent electronically to the Art and Architecture Committee using the email address: *aac@dioceseofbrentwood.org*

1. **Statement of needs/purpose.** An overall idea of what the Parish Priest and community wish to achieve by the re-ordering. This exercise should involve the whole church building, 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 to Parish.** Which elements in the church are of particular aesthetic and historical interest, and especially appreciated by Parish Priest and Parishioners? This document should be more than a copy of the Listing description, or the “Taking Stock” entry, but should address the liturgical and pastoral relevance. 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 measured 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 sketches of proposed artwork. Reorderings require a detailed measured plan, but not necessarily a full design, at the outset.

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 unfortunately a number of submissions have 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 several 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.
- 2) **to suggest amendments 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 concerns the Committee would ask for the scheme to be submitted again with further amendments;
- 3) **to reject the scheme**. This should rarely be necessary if the above guidelines have been adhered to.

Should the scheme meet with the Art and Architecture Committee's approval, the Chairman of the Liturgy Committee will send the Parish Priest a letter of agreement to proceed.

The subsequent progress of the project will depend on the civic status of the building concerned.

a) **Conservation areas:** In the case of churches in Conservation areas, the Art and Architecture Committee will consult with the Historic Churches Committee as a matter of good practise as opposed to a strict statutory obligation, and, then, send the Parish Priest a letter of agreement to proceed.

b) **Listed churches:** In the case of listed churches, this letter of agreement to proceed from the Art and Architecture Committee 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 a letter of agreement to proceed has been issued by the Chairman of the Liturgy Committee.

c) **Other churches:** In the case of churches other than listed churches, once the letter of agreement to proceed has been issued by the Chairman of the Liturgy Committee 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.

[Please note that if expenditure is in excess of £10,000, approval will need to be given by the Finance Board.]

Moving ahead: Parishes are advised that, even after letter of agreement to proceed 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 letter of agreement).

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 SIX: COMPLETION OF TENDER PROCESS AND CONSTRUCTION ON SITE

This stage of 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 Art and Architecture Committee should be consulted.

STAGE SEVEN: COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT

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



STARTING YOUR APPLICATION

All contact with the Chairman or Secretary should be sent to the Committee email address: aac@dioceseofbrentwood.org