

PAPER E
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The United Reformed Church
Southern Synod

Manse Policy

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1. Introduction.

In October 1995, Southern Synod approved and introduced a “Policy for vacant manses” that, in effect, meant that all the manses and manse funds vested in the United Reformed Church (Southern Synod) Trust Ltd (subsequently referred to as the Synod Trust) would be held in common.

The URC Manual provides that the proceeds arising from the sale or letting of property should be applied to such charitable purposes connected with the work of the URC as the Synod Trust sees fit. It is the approved practice of the Synod Trust that manses and funds arising from their sale or letting should only be used for purposes connected with the accommodation of “church workers” – Ministers and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs). The underlying theology and ecclesiology of the URC is that we are a “connexional” or conciliar church, a family. Particularly in an age when few Ministers have only one congregation under their care, it is appropriate for Manse property to be held in one pool or fund, for the benefit of all the churches.

Manses are held in trust for the purpose of housing "church workers" under the terms of the URC Act. Part II of Schedule 2 of the Act sets out the Trust provisions. Clause 5 relates to the sale of redundant manses, Clause 2e to letting and Clause 2c to the exchange of manses. The resources relating to manses are held and administered by the Synod Trust in a ‘Manse Fund’, for the benefit of all the local churches in the Synod.

The provisions of Part II of Schedule 2 to the URC Act apply. The decision of the Church Meeting is normally required in order to enable the relevant Synod Committees to give the Trustees the power of sale. Redundant manses will normally be sold or, if the manse is integral to a church site, or where other exceptional circumstances prevent sale of the property, management will be transferred to the Synod Office. The capital arising will be added to the Manse Fund (paragraph 2c & 2d). Income arising will also be paid into the Manse Fund, for which the approval of Church Meeting is required (paragraph 2e).

Manses should not be retained and regarded as investment vehicles.

2. The aim of the Policy.

The aim of the policy is to ensure that all Ministers (including CRCWs) are accommodated in appropriate properties, up to an agreed standard, from the resources of the Manse Fund. Redundant manses will normally be sold. If a pastorate needs a manse, it will be provided. The location of the manse is for the convenience of the pastorate and must be agreed by all churches in the pastorate.

3. Types of Manse.

The Synod Trust holds two types of Manses:

- A) Pastorate Manses: Those provided for Minister’s serving local pastorates. The pastorate meets certain defined costs in respect of the running and the upkeep of the property (see Appendix 1). They are also responsible for the day to day management of the property.
- B) Synod Manses: Those provided for Ministers serving as Special Category Ministers or in a Synod strategic appointment. With these manses, Synod Office is responsible for all running and repair costs (unless otherwise agreed). The day to day management of the property will be dealt with by the Minister’s Management Group (see Appendix 7).

4. The Agreed Standard.

The agreed standard is an ideal to be aimed at in purchasing manses and improving existing ones. The agreed standard may be relaxed in exceptional circumstances where it cannot be satisfied by property within the community in which the pastorate is set, e.g. on a new housing estate or where the area predominantly consists of flats. It may not be possible to replace manses that are on church sites or that do not meet all the other elements of the agreed standard. The agreed standard is as follows (mostly as approved by General Assembly 2003 under the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee, Appendix E):

The ideal is:

- A lounge, dining room (separate if possible) and study (ground floor recommended), Ground Floor W.C. At least four bedrooms *
- Sound construction, good thermal insulation with double glazing if possible, full central heating and water heating, modern reasonable sized kitchen with cooker and adequate space for larger electrical appliances. Bathroom (with modern equipment including shower), curtain rails & light fittings, telephone points and internet connectivity (including study), adequate power points.
- Security locks where possible and smoke detectors.
- Manageable garden
- Convenient (typically walking) distance from the church, or one of the churches in the pastorate, but ideally not on the same site as the church or next door to it. The location and the property should be such as to make resale straightforward.
- Reasonable access (e.g. avoid steep slope and excessive steps to front door, not on busy traffic route).
- EPC equal or better than band D.

In addition, the following guidelines are suggested:

- The property ideally should be less than 100 years old and not listed.
- Preferably not more than two floors.

A checklist for the purchase of a new manse can be found in Appendix 5.

* Where a ground floor study cannot be provided, it is expected that one of the bedrooms is used/adapted as the study.

5. Purchases, Modernisation and Extensions.

There may be a need to provide a new manse, either because of a new role in Synod, the coming together of congregations or because the existing manse is incapable of being upgraded economically to fulfil its role and meet the manse standard. Under such circumstances the local pastorate, the Area Property Advisor and Synod Property Officer will liaise and agree a suitable purchase. The cost of the purchase and modernisation will be borne by the Manse Fund.

If, on the recommendation of the local pastorate and the Area Property Advisor (or the Synod Property Officer if there is none) and on receipt of an appropriately completed Manse Form (see Property Request Forms), the appropriate Synod Committee agrees that an existing manse requires modernising or extending to meet the agreed standard, the Manse Fund will be responsible for items as detailed in Appendix 1. The Manse Fund will not pay for any extension or structural work requested by a Minister solely for the purposes of housing other family members.

No major improvements to, or replacement of, a manse will be undertaken against the wishes of a Minister who is the current occupier except where health & safety is in jeopardy. Care will be taken to avoid works being undertaken which could give rise to a tax liability for a Minister occupying a manse.

6. Manse Inspections.

Responsibility for the care of manses and the implementation of the Manse Policy is shared by the local pastorate and the Synod Trust. It is recommended that the local pastorate appoint either a person or working group to work with the occupier. The manse should be inspected annually by that person, assisted by the Area Property Advisor if required, using the form in Appendix 4 and given a full building survey (similar standard to a Quinquennial Survey) every 10 years or at a vacancy. The cost of the full building survey will be met from the Manse Fund.

Where work is identified (on either the inspection or full survey) that is not urgent but will require input from the Manse Fund, a budget cost is to be forwarded to the Synod Property Officer for inclusion in the financial forecast for the Synod Manse Fund. If a full building survey recommends that an asbestos survey should be carried out, this will be paid for from the Manse Fund, but the cost of any electrical inspection (recommended every 5 years), gas inspection (annually), or any other survey, is normally borne by the pastorate.

7. Maintenance.

During the occupation of a manse by a Minister and when the stewardship of the property is the responsibility of the local pastorate as defined in point 3, it is expected that occupants ensure that properties are well looked after, clean and tidy. The role of the person/working group is to deal with items of disrepair and also be responsible for applications to the manse fund and for overseeing annual manse costs.

To ensure manses are well maintained whilst occupied by a Minister, pastorates can claim from the Manse Fund up to a maximum of £1000 per year for the expenses of repairs and maintenance against receipted invoices. This does not include regular service charges (e.g. heating boiler) or regular garden maintenance costs. The unexpended balance of this £1000 allowance in any year may be carried forward for one year (this would not apply while a manse is let, as maintenance costs are recovered from rental income).

8. Costs.

The financial responsibilities of the local pastorate and the Manse Fund are set out in Appendix I to this policy and may be varied at any time by decision of the relevant Synod Committees.

The full cost of purchasing manses and, if required, of bringing them up to the agreed standard, will be borne by the Manse Fund.

While the manse is occupied by a Minister or is vacant pending reoccupation, the responsibilities of the local pastorate comprise:

- Council tax. Most local councils will exempt the property from council tax when it is vacant and awaiting occupation by a Minister of religion.
- Buildings insurance. The Synod Office will require evidence of adequate buildings insurance cover.
- Utilities (When occupied these are the responsibility of the Minister)
- Items (not covered by insurance) as defined "LP" in Appendix 1.

Where the Manse Fund is financially responsible for any urgent or non-urgent work on a manse, a Manse Form must be submitted to the Synod Office (together with appropriate quotes or estimates) and approved by the Synod Property Officer (and the Synod Property Committee if the cost is £10,000 or more) before work is started. In the event of emergency work, where this process may cause a delay, the Property Officer should be contacted.

If, as a result of the Manse Policy only, Synod agrees a house move within the Synod area, all expenses incurred in the relocation, including removal costs, will be met from the Manse Fund.

In cases where Ministers have an equity share in a manse, they will be expected to contribute to the costs of the property. The normal running costs will be met in the usual way by either the local pastorate or the Manse Fund, depending on the type of manse (see paragraph 3). Costs in respect of capital improvements or an extension will be shared according to capital equity ratio in the property. In exceptional cases, the Manse Fund will meet all the costs, but the Minister's equity share in the property will be reduced accordingly.

9. Vacant Manses.

Whenever a manse is vacated, the future of the manse will be reviewed in consultation with the pastorate. With the agreement of the parties, a short term letting may be undertaken whilst the review takes place.

When a manse is not redundant, but is not immediately required for occupation by a Minister or other church worker, three possibilities arise:

- A) It may be let on a short-term basis during a Ministerial vacancy. The pastorate will receive all the rental income from the let, which must be designated to be used to pay for repairs and maintenance on the manse.
- B) The manse should be handed over to Synod so that it may be let for the duration of a Ministerial appointment when not required by a Minister. The rental income will be paid into the Manse Fund.
- C) The manse may be sold with 100% of the net sale proceeds going to the Manse Fund.

When a manse is retained and let during a short-term vacancy, the pastorate will arrange and pay for any necessary work prior to the let and also after the let and before the arrival of the new Minister. Any work that is the responsibility of the Manse Fund (see Appendix 1) must be applied for on a Manse Form. All other work will be paid for by the pastorate using rental income received. If the rental income is not sufficient to meet the cost of all the work required for the let and to bring the property in line with the requirements for a new Minister, an application for financial assistance can be made to the Manse Fund. If there is an excess of rental income over repair costs, then the monies must be held against future repairs until it is exhausted. In such circumstances, the pastorate will not be entitled to the annual manse grant until rental income is exhausted. A simple income and expenditure account must be sent to the Synod Finance Officer at the end of a vacancy.

A manse may be let only on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. The landlord in any tenancy agreement must be the URC (Southern Synod) Trust Ltd and the Synod's version of the agreement document must be used (see Appendix 2).

If a pastorate decides it cannot let the manse during the vacancy, they will still be responsible for arranging and paying for all necessary work on the property, but they can apply to the Manse Fund for financial assistance, explaining why the manse was not let.

10. LEP's/Joint Pastorates.

Joint pastorates and ecumenical situations where a Minister serves a number of congregations and a manse cannot be identified specifically with any one local church or denomination and all the churches of the pastorate or LEP ought to share responsibility. Synod Committees, in drawing up or approving arrangements for joint pastorates or ecumenical partnerships, must be careful to set out clearly the responsibilities of each local church or participating body for the care and costs of the manse. For LEP's refer to Appendix 6.

11. Terms of Settlement (Manse matters).

Terms of Settlement for a Minister appointed to either a local pastorate or a Synod role clearly define the following manse-related items. These must be agreed with the Minister and local pastorate on behalf of the Synod once agreed by the Moderator and Synod Area/United Area Pastoral Committee

- a) The identity of the person or working group (referred to in section 6) responsible for maintenance of the fabric, fittings and services (as referred to in Appendix 1).
- b) The Minister is to keep the manse clean and tidy and to tend the gardens.
- c) In order to minimise the risk of costly repairs and to enable an insurance claim to be made as appropriate, the Minister is to report any damage to the responsible party (identified in paragraph 1) and co-operate with any remedial works or the insurance claim.
- d) The Minister is to make good wilful or deliberate damage to the property, including breakage of glass, caused by his/her family or visitors.
- e) The Minister is to ensure that the smoke (and fire and intruder alarms if fitted) are useable and used.
- f) When the time comes to vacate the property, the Minister should return the property to Synod in the same good, clean state and condition as it was when he/she moved in (subject to reasonable wear and tear).
- g) In order to facilitate the above there shall be an annual manse inspection conducted by the responsible person or working group using the criteria as laid down in the Synod Manse Policy.
- h) The pastorate, in conjunction with Synod where appropriate, will ensure that the property continues to be structurally sound including in particular external features such as guttering, roofs, fences etc.; will see that the boiler is serviced annually; will replace plumbing, wiring, or fixtures of the property which fail other than through willful damage; will see that the intruder and fire alarm (if applicable) is regularly serviced. The responsibilities of the pastorate are referred to in detail in Appendix 1.
- i) The current manse provided will not be changed except in exceptional circumstances e.g. Disability and Mobility Issues.

12. Additional Occupants.

Manses are provided for the Minister and their spouse/partner in pursuance of their role as a Minister and their children under the age of 18. Where any person whether or not a family member aged 18 or over who is not in full-time education and not the Minister or their spouse/partner is residing in the manse on a permanent basis, the Synod must be notified of this and they must sign a legally binding agreement to say that they will not reside in the manse any longer than the Minister.

13. Authorised use of Manse.

The Minister, their spouse/ partner, or any other occupant, must not run a business from the manse except with the specific prior written permission of the Synod Trust.

14. Retired Ministers

When a Minister reaches retirement, and is unable to move immediately the Minister may, in agreement with the URC (Southern Synod) Trust Ltd and pastorate, reside in the manse for a period of up to three months rent free. Upon retirement, a short-term tenancy agreement will be drawn up by the Trust. After the initial three-month period is completed, rent, council tax, water rates and buildings insurance will need to be borne by the Minister.

15. Disputes.

Where any disputes arise over the interpretation and application of the Manse Policy that cannot be satisfactorily resolved with the Synod Property Officer, they shall be referred to the Synod Property Committee.

16. Appendices:

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THE FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL PASTORATE AND THE MANSE FUND

The financial responsibilities of the local pastorate or other body responsible (LP) and the Manse Fund (MF) in maintaining existing manses are as set out in the table below,

Minor improvements and routine repairs costing less than £10,000 that are the financial responsibility of the local pastorate will not need specific approval from the Synod Property Officer or Property Committee. Improvements and repairs that are the financial responsibility of the Manse Fund must be requested on a Manse Form, quoting the agreed Church Meeting minute and accompanied by at least 2 estimates. If the requested work is estimated at £10,000 or more, it will require Synod Property Committee approval.

When a new or replacement manse is purchased by the Manse Fund, the Fund will meet the costs arising from preparing the property up to the “agreed standard” (paragraph 4 and Appendix 5 of the Manse Policy) prior to occupation by the new Minister. This includes all necessary redecoration and repairs, the provision of security and safety features and the provision, cleaning or replacement of carpets and floor coverings, if necessary.

If an existing pastorate manse already meets manse criteria, no consideration will be given to replacing the manse, either prior to the arrival of a new Minister or during a Minister’s occupation, except in exceptional circumstances sanctioned by the Synod Property Committee. Furthermore, the Manse Fund will not pay for any extension or structural work in order to allow members of the Minister’s family to live in the manse except in exceptional circumstances.

When a manse has been let during a vacancy (paragraph 8 and Appendix 2 of the Manse Policy) and is again to be occupied by a Minister or other church worker, the pastorate will arrange and pay for any necessary work before the let and any further work necessary before the arrival of the new Minister, using rental income received. If the rental income is not sufficient to meet the cost of all the work required, an application for financial assistance can be made to the Manse Fund in the normal way. If there is an excess of rental income over repair costs, then the monies must be held against future repairs until it is exhausted. In such circumstances, the pastorate will not be entitled to the annual manse grant until rental income is exhausted. A simple income and expenditure account must be sent to the Synod Finance & Trust Officer at the end of a vacancy.

	LP	MF	
Roofs (including garage roofs)	x	x	Replacement or complete re-surfacing Repairs & maintenance
Fascias & soffits	x	x	If complete replacement is justified (perhaps with uPVC) Normal maintenance, repair & decoration
Timber/uPVC cladding	x	x	If complete replacement is justified Normal maintenance, repair & decoration
Glazing	x	x	Provision of initial or outdated double glazing. Replacement of units in listed buildings/conservation areas All other repairs (and replacements)
Doors	x	x	Replacement of external doors for reasons of security All other repairs and replacements

	LP	MF	
Structural repairs		x	All items not covered by insurance
Insulation Roof insulation		x	Provision or upgrade to meet recommendations in EPC
Cavity Wall insulation		x	Provision
Decoration (interior & exterior)	x		
Rainwater goods & drainage		x	If complete replacement is justified
	x		Normal maintenance, repair & part replacement
Driveways		x	Initial provision, replacement or upgrade
	x		Repair & Maintenance
Fences & boundary walls		x	If complete replacement is justified
	x		Normal maintenance, repair & part replacement
Central heating		x	Initial provision, system enhancement & boiler replacement
	x		Maintenance, repairs and annual landlords gas safety checks
Bathrooms & toilets		x	Replacement of sanitary ware and shower units,
	x		Repairs and decoration
Kitchens		x	Replacement of units, cooker, and integral equipment (where necessary).
	x		All other work
Carpets & permanent floor coverings	x		Provision & replacement
	x		Cleaning & repair
Curtain rails & poles	x		Provision and replacement
Security		x	Initial provision
	x		Maintenance, repair & replacement
Health & Safety requirements		x	Initial supply of items required to comply with safety regulations.
		x	Asbestos Survey.
	x		Maintenance.
Main services, Gas, Electricity and Water		x	Supply, upgrade and replacement
	x		Regular inspection
Gardens and Sheds	x		Regular Maintenance
	x		Sheds
		x	Maintenance of Trees with TPOs.

THE LETTING OF MANSES

The Policy for the Letting of Manses is set out in paragraph 9. The following are more detailed arrangements:

As soon as the manse becomes vacant, the Synod Property Officer will arrange an appropriate survey (or surveys) of the building, paid for by the Manse Fund. If it is decided to keep the property all necessary work identified by the survey(s) and agreed with the pastorate will be arranged by the pastorate. Items normally paid for by Manse Fund under the Manse Policy (see Appendix 1) will then be reimbursed to the pastorate.

Throughout the vacancy, the local pastorate is responsible for paying the buildings insurance and (when not let) council tax and utility bills.

It will often make good sense to let a manse during a vacancy. An Assured Shorthold Tenancy, under the Housing Act 1988, provides good protection to the landlord and tenant. Under this agreement, the minimum period for which a manse can be let is six months (although longer is possible) and this period is known as the 'Term Certain' in the Tenancy Agreement. If the tenant is in occupation after the 'Term Certain' then they will be 'Holding Over'. Under the Agreement the landlord will be responsible for repairs to the structure and services and to keep the property insured whilst the tenant is responsible for the payment of utility bills and the council tax and to keep the property (including the gardens) clean and tidy, fair wear and tear excepted.

It is the responsibility of the local pastorate to find a suitable letting agent. The agent should be advised that the Trust acts as landlord and that they must contact the Synod Property Officer. The agent will then be advised of the Manse Policy and Trustee's requirements and the terms of appointment. The advantage of employing an agent is that the management of the tenancy is independent of the local pastorate and should be effective. The disadvantage is that the agent will charge a fee - maybe up to 15% of the rent.

The Letting Agreement document that must be used is the one approved by the Synod Trust and the Synod Office will provide this. Under no circumstances must the letting agent's version of the document be used.

The Synod Property Officer must sign the Tenancy Agreement on behalf of the Synod Trust because it is not legal for a local Church or its officers to enter into a Tenancy Agreement for a manse: only the registered Trustees of the property have that power and they must fulfil all the requirements of the Charities Act 2011. These include the requirement to seek advice from a suitably qualified person that the terms agreed are the best that can be obtained in the market-the letting agent should be able to provide this advice but if not then the Synod Property Officer will appoint a suitably qualified person. The Synod Trust should only act after approval for the letting of a manse has been given by the relevant Church Meeting(s) and the Synod Property Officer, after consultation with the Area Property Adviser (where appropriate).

The pastorate will receive all the net rental income from the let, which must be designated to be used to pay for repairs and maintenance on the manse. A simple income and expenditure account must be sent to the Synod Finance & Trust Officer at the end of a vacancy.

Periodic inspections should be made of the property during the vacancy. The local pastorate must advise the Insurers when the manse becomes vacant and when it is let. The rent should be reviewed annually and two months' clear notice of rent increase must be given to the tenant. If an Assured Shorthold Tenancy is in force, the Landlord must give one month's notice to quit on expiry date. If the tenant is "holding over", two months' notice must be given. The timing of the Notice should take into account the need to carry out repairs and redecorations after the tenancy, prior to occupation by a church worker.

It is clear that in order to maximise rental income and ensure the building is kept in repair and returned in a timely manner for occupation by the new church worker, a considerable amount of liaison and co-operation will be needed between the local pastorate and the Synod Trust.

THE AREA PROPERTY ADVISER

Each Synod Area and United Area shall appoint an Area Property Adviser (APA) who will be a member of the Synod Property Committee. Such a person will provide a single point of contact for the Synod Property Officer in matters relating to the manses in the area. The Area Property Adviser will assist with finding a suitable new or replacement manse for purchase, the assessment of current manses and their suitability and, where necessary, give guidance to a local pastorate in carrying out any agreed improvements or major repairs to a manse. Such a person will need to:

- understand the Synod Manse Policy and the agreed standards for manses and therefore be able to assess whether an existing or prospective property meets those standards;
- be aware of potential weaknesses in buildings and have keen powers of observation to enable a reliable assessment of the condition and facilities of a property;
- ideally, have some concept of how houses could be improved or extended;
- be able to visit properties, often in an emergency or at short notice;
- ensure that an informal annual inspection of all manses in their Area is undertaken by a person from the local pastorate, accompanying them if required, to determine whether urgent work is necessary and ensure a report is sent to the Synod Property Officer;
- have some knowledge, or be prepared to acquire it, in the process of obtaining quotations for building works.

In summary, the Area Property Adviser need not be a professional. When a major piece of renovation or extension is to be carried out, the Synod Trust will employ suitable professionals to draw up a schedule of work and, on occasion, to supervise the work. The local pastorate will remain responsible for oversight of the routine work and, where they are able, some of the larger projects. The key requirement is for someone who can rapidly build up an awareness of what the Synod Trust needs in a manse property and how that can best be achieved (i.e. advice about renovation, extension or replacement).

The Synod Property Officer will liaise with the Area Property Adviser and, where appropriate, with relevant Synod Committees to identify priorities for works or disposals as above

**SOUTHERN SYNOD
MANSE POLICY
INSPECTION REPORT**

This is an inspection of the general condition only and is not expected to be carried out by a professionally qualified person.

Where any work is identified that will require Manse Fund input a budget cost, where possible, is to be shown for this to be included in future Manse Fund Forecasts.

Manse Address.....

Date of Inspection.....

Inspected by

Occupied (Yes/no)

Subject of inspection	Satisfactory	Needs further investigation	Repair/ remedy needed	Details and other comments (including room where appropriate) plus budget costs where required. If unable to answer a question please indicate in this column.
EXTERNAL				
1. Boundary fences/walls in good state of repair/decoration				
2. Gates in good working order and good state of decoration				
3. Paths, driveways, paving etc. in good order and safe				
4. Garden in good order				
5. Trees and shrubs under control				
6. Garage in good order				
7. Roof coverings in good state of repair (no leaks)				
8. Chimneys & flashings intact (ground observation only)				
9. General condition of walls (Pointing etc)				
10. No vegetation growing on walls (preferable)				
11. Damp proof course minimum 150mm (6in) above external ground				
12. Rainwater goods intact (no leaks) and clear				
13. Drains and manhole covers in good order				

Subject of inspection

14. External decorative condition satisfactory
15. Timber generally in good condition (no obvious signs of infestation)

INTERNAL

16. Floor coverings in good order
17. Ceilings undistorted – no major cracks
18. Walls in good order – no excessive cracking
19. Internal decorative condition satisfactory
20. Windows free of cracks and in good order
21. Sanitary fittings generally sound, free from cracks, etc.
22. Internal plumbing in good order
23. Central heating operating effectively and efficiently
24. Adequate loft insulation

SAFETY

25. Evidence of gas safety check within past year
26. Smoke detectors in working order
27. Date of most recent electrical inspection
28. Electrical appliances operating effectively - check no damage to cable and no excessive lengths of flex.
29. No evidence of asbestos
30. Loft space accessible and uncluttered
31. No excessive rubbish in the property

Satisfactory	Needs further investigation	Repair/ Remedy needed	Details and other comments (including room where appropriate) plus budget costs where required. If unable to answer a question please indicate in this column.

Manse Purchase Checklist

Construction	Traditional brick/block and tile	
Property age	Ideally less than 100 years old and not listed.	
Location	Ideally within walking distance of the church; or one of the churches in the pastorate. Purchase of a manse adjoining the church should be avoided.	
Requirements		
Lounge	Required	
Dining Room	Separate if possible	
Study	Downstairs is recommended (where not possible a bedroom may suffice)	
Kitchen	Modern, reasonable size	
Hall	Large enough to provide for hanging coats	
Bedrooms	At least 4	
Bathroom & Toilet	Modern equipment including shower	
Downstairs Toilet	Essential	
Garage	Garage and/or adequate parking	
Grounds	Paths, gates and fences in satisfactory repair. Garden manageable. No evidence of invasive species	
Storage space	Required	
Facilities & Equipment		
Central Heating	Full	
Water heating System	Required	
Bathroom equipment	Modern equipment including shower	
Kitchen equipment	Cooker and adequate space for larger electrical appliances	
Double Glazing	Desirable	
Power points	Adequate number	
Telephone points	Including one in study	
Internet connectivity	Required, especially for the study	
Security	Security locks on external doors - and windows where possible. A security alarm may be desirable depending on the area	
Smoke detectors	Required on each floor	
Curtain rails	All rooms	
Light fittings	All rooms	
Carpets and floor coverings	Provided	
Accessibility	Excessive steps, steep slopes etc. should be avoided.	
Gas appliances	Servicing of appliances and boilers is essential and inspection of appliances and a landlord's certificate issued	
Electrical wiring	Include in main survey of property	
Heat Conservation		
EPC	Equal or better than band D	
Roof insulation	Good thermal insulation applicable to the type of property. All pipes and tanks to be lagged where required	
Wall insulation		

MANSES IN LOCAL ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIPS

Special factors affect manses in LEPs and it is necessary in each case to decide whether such manses come within the Synod's Manse Policy and, if they do, whether any special factors should apply. There appear to be three types of LEP manse:

- Manses that are subject to a Sharing Agreement, regardless of whether or not the property is vested in the Synod Trust. These manses are not covered by the policy.
- Manses housing Ministers in LEPs, which are vested in the Synod Trust but not subject to a Sharing Agreement. These manses are covered by the policy.
- Finally, there are manses housing (sometimes United Reformed Church) Ministers in LEPs that are not vested in the Synod Trust (i.e. are vested in one of the other denominations or independent trustees) and not subject to a Sharing Agreement. These manses are not covered by the policy

Difficulties may arise as a result of these differences and inconsistencies and so it has been necessary to adjust the policy to make the situation fairer and clearer.

Type 1.

Churches coming together to form an LEP and entering into a Sharing Agreement for their manse no longer come under the provisions of the Synod Manse Policy. This is because, under a Sharing Agreement, quite specific arrangements are agreed in respect of the particular situation and circumstances pertaining. There may be significant inconsistencies in the treatment of LEPs at the time of purchase of a manse because each situation has been treated on an ad hoc basis. Further differences arise as a result of varying policies and financial circumstances of the other participating denominations and whether another property is being sold to provide capital resources. Methodist Circuits differ in their attitude and resources and there are differences between the denominations' standards of manse accommodation. Much of this is inevitable and possibly insurmountable.

Those manses that are shared with the Methodists are usually included in the Circuit's provisions for care and upkeep. The LEP will contribute to the associated costs through the Circuit Assessment and so the specific costs of repair and maintenance are not apparent to the LEP. The Manse Fund will contribute to capital costs as laid down in the Sharing Agreement.

The following criteria will be used to determine whether a particular LEP would be eligible for this type of assistance:

- URC 'presence' in the LEP
- other resources (of ministry and money) which the URC contributes or has contributed to the LEP

Type 2.

It is only when such a manse is occupied by a non-URC Minister that any difficulties may arise because the expectations of the other denomination and/or its Minister may be different from those of the URC. In effect there is no difference between these manses and those in URC-only situations and this must be made clear to other denominations.

In any ecumenical situation where the manse is owned by the United Reformed Church, the standard of accommodation would be determined by the Assembly Guidelines and the Synod Manse Policy.

Type 3.

The only difficulty arising with this Group is when major work is required on the property and the denomination that owns the manse asks whether the United Reformed Church is willing to contribute to the cost. Synod may take the view that such situations tend to 'balance out' with those in which

property is owned by the United Reformed Church and made available for Ministers of other denominations.

Without a Sharing Agreement, the Synod does not have a liability for major repairs to the fabric of such property and normally no grants would be made in such situations.

Notes:

- In view of the complexity of LEPs and the ecumenical situation generally, each such situation will need to be dealt with on an individual basis and consultation will need to take place between the Moderator, the Synod Property Officer and the Ecumenical Officer to ensure that the most suitable arrangement is made. This must then be put in writing and agreed with the appropriate authorities of the other denomination(s) involved and with the LEP.
- In view of the setting-up of United Areas within the bounds of the Synod, special provisions may be necessary for the care of property, including manses and the financing of the latter.

ACCOMMODATION FOR MINISTERS NOT IN PASTORAL CHARGE

In addition to manses provided for a Minister in pastoral charge, manses are provided for those in Special Category Ministry or Synod strategic appointments. In such cases, it is recommended that, as far as possible, the same policy guidelines be applied to both pastorate manses and those used for Synod purposes. However, the purchase and maintenance of the property needs to be carefully managed to ensure the matters usually covered by the local pastorate are covered satisfactorily. In the case of Synod manses, the management team for the post will have responsibility for oversight of the property and will arrange to carry out the maintenance and oversight duties normally covered by the local pastorate. The services and support of the Area Property Adviser, or a representative of a church local to the property, could be used to assist in this task.

Where a property is transferred from one category to another, a full inspection and inventory must be made before transfer and responsibilities must be clearly established.

Where scoping for the post is split with a local pastorate, the split of responsibility for financial and practical matters in connection with the manse must be clearly defined.

When purchasing a manse for a strategic/special category Minister, the exact requirement for the post must be made clear at the outset in order that any specific requirements are clearly defined. The Sponsoring Group are responsible for defining any specific requirements that may require deviation from the Manse Policy (say major storage, additional rooms, etc.) and these must be agreed by the Pastoral Committee and the Synod Property Committee. The Sponsoring Group must include in the pack presented for agreement of the post the provision of manse accommodation including any variations required to the Manse Policy in order that additional costs can be allocated.

Where the specific post is a short term fixed period appointment, the provision of a manse will need to be reviewed. In these cases, renting a property may be more suitable. This must be agreed when the scope for the post is prepared.