**Statement of Significance (Listed Buildings)**

When making an application for works on a heritage asset, you now need to produce a Statement of Significance (SoS) under the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012 para 128). The following is a quote from it.

*“The level of detail in the Statement should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than sufficient to understand the potential of their significance”.*

To assist in producing the SoS, we offer the following guidelines:

A SoS is an important tool to help both your worshipping congregation and the people outside of the church community to understand the significance of the church building and its fabric and fittings.

Ideally every church should have a Statement, not just in the event of an application to the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee (LBAC) being made. It should be a Statement that you revisit at regular intervals over the years and consider at all times to be a working document. It is a useful resource for anyone with responsibility for your church’s fabric and encourages good stewardship of your heritage building.

It should be **prepared independently of any LBAC application,** reviewed annually so that any recently obtained historical material or changes, such as an extension or reordering, can be incorporated, and a copy should be given to the Quinquennial Surveyor to include in their Quinquennial Inspection Report. You may find it advantageous to seek a suitably qualified Architect to assist in producing the SoS.

This three-part pack is designed to help you organise your thinking as you prepare a Statement:

* Part One – Ten points to consider as your starting point.
* Part Two – The check list helps you to organise and share the tasks involved.
* Part Three – The resources list points you to the information you will need.

Try to make the Statement interesting and readable. Avoid making lists and using tables to display the information and don’t be tempted to cut and paste paragraphs of academic material into the text. Be factual, concise and to the point.

The Statement should not be to too long – two sides of A4 should be sufficient – but this will be determined by the importance of your building.

Use a clear font like Arial or Times New Roman and make sure the text is not less than 12 point.

Create, store and send your Statement electronically, especially if it is accompanying a LBAC Application. This makes the document easier to amend, share and read.

Nominate someone to take responsibility for the Statement. The Eldership needs to take ownership of it and ensure that it is up to date and accessible at all times for others to view. If the person who created it moves away, for example, it remains the property of the Elders.

**Part One: Ten Points to consider as your starting point**

1. Begin by writing down **basic information** about your church such as its Listing grade – I, II\* or II. Attach to the SoS a copy of the List entry as to why the building was Listed. If it is in a Conservation Area, state the name and determine whether it is part of a Scheduled Monument site. If there are important statements in the Conservation Area Report pertaining to the church building, include them in the SoS.
2. Put together a **summary of your church’s history** in a simple, factual and accurate form without unsupported comments or value judgements, e.g. don’t refer to Anglo Saxon origins if no evidence can be cited. It should explain **the reasons why the church is the way it is,** starting from the earliest known and recorded origins. It should include details of when it was built, who built it, and the name of the Architect if they can be identified.
3. It is important to **include a plan of the church,** date shaded to clearly show the age of different parts of the building. It need not be to scale, but it should be as accurate as you can make it.
4. Consider how to describe **your church in the context of its surroundings.** State what contribution the church makes to the physical character and quality of them. Does it have landmark value on an eye catching site? Are there sightlines and vistas of the church that are valued, e.g. the south side of St Mary’s Warwick is in a Canaletto painting. Consider what contribution the church’s setting makes to the significance of the church itself (see Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning, Note 3 on ‘The Setting of Heritage Assets’ at <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/>). If yours is an urban church, what **impact** does it have on the streets around it in terms of architectural style and scale?
5. What is the significance of the **overall impression of the church?** Be descriptive and use simple terms like large or small, spacious or cramped, light or dark, etc.
6. Is the church a **significant feature of county/national/international life,** e.g. St Mary Magdalene Church, Cobham in Kent is famous for its brasses of the de Cobham family.
7. **Comparative judgements** on the merit of individual elements **should be kept to a minimum** unless they are from verifiable / professional sources. Statements such as “the organ is not considered a good example of this maker’s work” should be omitted unless they can be verified.
8. **Include details about your church grounds.** Identify the oldest grave (if any) and find out if any graves are Listed in their own right. If parts of your church grounds have been re-ordered, record it here. Consider the age of your trees. Find out if any of them have Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on them and determine whether the grounds of the church are significant in their own right as a landscape feature. Trees in Conservation Areas benefit from protection and should also be identified.
9. When the LBAC application is made for changes to the church, the SoS is one of the necessary accompanying papers. The basic document should be **supplemented with more information** concentrating on the particular areas of the fabric or furnishings that would be affected by the proposed changes. For example, an application for removal of pews requires as much detail as possible on their age, who made them, type of wood, if there are pew platforms to be removed as well and information on what is beneath them, i.e. solid floor or earth. Just as important is the inclusion of photos of the areas affected by the proposed changes, marked up to give an indication of the likely end result.
10. When the church is developing proposals for change, **consideration should be given to the presumption of preserving features identified** in the SoS as having special interest. Every effort should be made to minimise harmful impacts. Where proposals would have an adverse impact on, or lead to the complete loss of, features of special interest, then a very clear and convincing justification for the work will be required. This justification should be set out in the ‘Statement of Need’. A narrative should also be provided on the various alternative options considered as part of the design process and why the final proposal is considered the optimal in terms of both preserving features and meeting the need of the congregation.

**Part Two: Check List for compiling a Statement of Significance**

Use this to assist you as you assemble the information for your Statement:

**Part One**

* Name of Church
* Synod Area or United Area.
* Listing – provide Listing Grade and List description.
* Conservation Area (if applicable).
* Archaeological significance of the building as a site. Is it in a SSSI, for example, or a Scheduled Monument?
* Define your building in terms of its wider significance. Is it a nationally or internationally important place in terms of its heritage or what it offers to the visitor? Is it a local, county or regional landmark?
* A description of your location and setting.
* A description of your church’s historic and current **use** by the congregation and local community, if applicable.
* Encapsulated summary of your building’s history including architects, craftsmen, etc.
* Significant events or personalities associated with the church or its grounds.
* A site plan and ground floor plan, with dimensions.
* Describe the materials used for the building, i.e. identify the kind of stone or roof material featured.
* A general description of your building as it is today with photos showing main elevations and any features of special interest.
* A description of your church grounds and any significant monuments within its boundary. Describe any buildings flora or fauna associated with it.
* Consider the following and make a summary of each if they have significance:

Lecterns, Fonts, Stained Glass, Pews, Monuments, War Memorials, Organ, Plate (note where kept), Communion Rails & other woodwork or metalwork (this is not an exhaustive list).

* All public sources consulted should be listed at the back of the SoS.

**Part Two**

This important part of the Statement depends on the kind of work you are proposing to carry out. You will need to write a summary appropriate to each application that assesses **the impact that the particular change will make to the fabric of the building.**

For example, the impact of the replacement of a stained glass window will be different from that necessitated by re-ordering to accommodate toilet or kitchen facilities.

Part Two will be added to Part One when an application for the LBAC is made and will be unique to that application.

**Part Three: Useful resources for researching a Statement of Significance**

* **Determine your listing**

Access the Historic England website at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>. Use the advanced search option, as the main search can be rather sensitive.

It may be useful also to access the ‘images of England’ website at <http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/> and search for your church. This is a national archive driven by Historic England (HE). All churches are featured if they are listed. There is also a good thumbnail sketch about the architectural merit of your building included. If your listing appears to be at odds with what you already assumed, do check with HE.

* **Describe the material used**

Take a tour around your site noting the different stone used in the building and in the church grounds. There may well be something in the thumbnail on materials used in the building. Summarise the kind of burial ground (If applicable) you currently manage, highlighting the graves that are important in terms of age, notoriety or character.

* **General resources to identify detail about your church building and its history**

See if someone has written a history of the church or of the locality. Try the local library or the Historical Society. Through the local library, find out about the county archive office and try them for information.

Search for Local History publications, historic maps, old photos / postcard collections, local / county archives, Conservation Area character appraisal (prepared by the Local Authority), architectural guides and articles referring to the site.

The internet may well provide information on the building and its history.