

D PROPERTY OWNERSHIP 3 Listed Buildings (PRN 661)

NB: It is essential to read not only the advice in the PLATO document but follow the procedure set out below.

1 Scope (SYN): This procedure must be used by all churches of the URC whose buildings are used primarily as a place of worship AND are (1) Listed (2) Listed and in a Conservation Area (3) in a Conservation Area though not listed. A church is NOT given a choice as to whether to use the URC Procedure or the secular Listed Buildings Procedure it MUST use the URC Procedure.

Note: A church in Group 3 does not need to seek the equivalent of conservation area consent through the URC procedure, unless the plans include the total or virtually the total demolition of any building. The law on conservation area consent is complicated, so in such a case it is essential for the church to contact the LBAC Secretary for guidance and (if an application should be necessary, for assistance in completing the application).

Please note: The LBAC is an advisory committee acting on behalf of the Synod Resources Committee (Property Committee) who gives approval or refusal for the work to proceed.

The final decision on applications made under the Procedure is taken by the Synod Resources Committee (SRC) advised by the Listed Building Advisory Committee (LBAC). Both committees have a statutory duty to keep precise records (available for inspection by the public or the auditors of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport) regarding the progress timetable, consultations and decisions relating to each application dealt with under this Procedure.

2 All churches covered by this legislation must ensure all their buildings receive regular professional inspections at intervals of not more than five years. Churches in all three categories named are expected to send the reports of such inspections to the LBAC (if in Groups 1 and 2) or the SRC (if in Group 3). The SRC must notify the Local Planning Authority if a building in any of the 3 groups ceases to be used for worship or is closed altogether. It is strongly recommended that, for insurance and other such purposes, such a building is not closed and fully vacated until it is about to be sold or demolished.

A PROPERTY SURVEY (as opposed to a Structural Survey) should be undertaken by a professional architect or surveyor. An appendix detailing what such a survey involves is available from District Secretaries and the Synod Office. A list of approved firms is also available from the Synod Office.

3 Churches in all groups should note - Local Authority Planning Consent might be needed as well as Listed Building Consent and a separate approach has to be made by the local church to the local authority. Listed Building consent is not a replacement for Local Planning Consent. A Listing applies to the INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR of a church, and to adjoining structures, and to anything within the curtilage of a church. When any building work is planned, INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE CHURCH, contact should be made with the LBAC Secretary for an informal chat about the plans. (This includes interior decorating).

4 Application procedure for churches which are (1) Listed or (2) Listed and in a Conservation area

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- (a) The Church approaches (i) LBAC Secretary then (ii) URC Area Secretary informally and outlines the planned work. On receipt of favourable responses, the church prepares formal plans and supporting material and submits them to the District Council.
- (b) On gaining District 'Approval' certificate, the church applies to the Synod office for a FORM 1. The Church is strongly recommended to contact its Local District Planning Authority, in case the work planned might involve a planning application to the local authority as well as a Listed Building Application through the URC Procedure.
- (c) The Church fills in a FORM 1, and sends it (with District 'Approval' certificate and all supporting material) to the SYNOD OFFICE for the attention of the SRC Convener.
- (d) Synod Office sends THREE COPIES of the entire application to the LBAC Secretary. The Synod Office arranges: (i) for notice of the proposals to be posted outside the church and (where appropriate) in the local newspaper; (ii) for one whole application to be sent to each of the FIVE statutory Consultative Bodies, who must reply within 28 days.
- (e) In the light of the replies received, the LBAC considers the application and reaches its recommendation: full or partial approval or refusal. The LBAC Secretary then notifies this recommendation to the church and the SRC Convener on a FORM 2 A/B/C. Note: there is a procedure allowing a church to re-submit an application which at first gains only partial consent. Advice on this issue is available from the Synod Office.

The final decision is conveyed separately to the church by the SRC (on FORM 3) after consideration of the LBAC advice. Where the decision is favourable, a FORM 3 recording 'consent' will be accompanied by FORM 4, which the church must return to the SRC when the work has been completed.

5 Timescales

From the receipt of the application to informing the SRC of its recommendation should take the LBAC no longer than 10 weeks.

From receipt of the LBAC's recommendation, the SRC should reach its final decision on the application and inform the church within 3 months.

6 General matters

- (a) Any work carried out will be monitored by members of the LBAC.
- (b) If consent is refused, or if conditions deemed unreasonable are imposed concerning the proposed work, the applicant church has a right of appeal via the Synod Officers.

There is a special 'fast track' procedure to deal with cases of emergency where urgent action is required to prevent major hazard or damage.

7 De Minimis List

The following items would normally be outside the scope of the URC Procedure. If not listed here, you must assume they are within the Procedure. If in doubt consult the LBAC Secretary.

- (a) Introduction of loose furniture, furnishings and minor fixtures in the vestries and other ancillary rooms. (The disposal of furnishings from Listed Buildings is specifically within the procedure)

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- (b) Fire extinguishers (unless to be wall-mounted in a Listed Building).
- (c) Replacement carpets and curtains.
- (d) Routine maintenance internally and externally and minor repairs on a “like for like” basis.
- (e) Works of routine maintenance to electrical fittings or equipment (if done by an NICEIC registered electrician) or to heating equipment. (Rewiring, new light fittings, new heat emitters and pipe-work are specifically within the procedure).
- (f) Works of routine maintenance (only) to clocks, organs, bells and bell-frames.
- (g) Routine maintenance to paths not amounting to resurfacing.
- (h) Routine maintenance to notice boards not amounting to repainting.