DIOCESE OF LICHFIELD

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DAC Guidance Note on the Provision of Church Parking

Context

Vehicle parking is not a trivial item; it is necessary in order that people of all ages and abilities may access our church buildings safely and with ease. However a car park is often thought of as purely a practical requirement and not as an area of landscape value with the potential to enhance or detract from the setting of an historic church building. This note sets out some of the matters that need to be considered when contemplating the creation or improvement of church parking.

Design

Sustaining the quality of a new car park requires good initial design and construction, followed by proper management and maintenance. *Therefore it is advised that either the church architect or a suitably qualified landscape designer should be employed to design the proposals.* It should be noted that creating a car park on a greenfield site will require planning permission from the local authority and that, as part of this process, it may be necessary to carry out an archaeological survey; this will present the PCC with an additional cost.

Materials

Choice of materials is important. Traditionally, paved areas around churches were often of stone in the form of slabs, setts or cobbles. Introducing such paving was thought to add to the dignity and sophistication of the church building and these materials worked well with horse drawn transport.

Modern vehicular traffic, although it causes less surface wear, applies high forces which can crack or dislodge traditional paving so in *heavily trafficked areas*, these materials may not be suitable; smaller sized stone such as setts are more robust but larger slabs may crack under pressure. For parking areas with limited use (i.e. used once or twice a week), traditional materials will be suitable and in rural areas it may be appropriate to retain a turf surface re-enforced with a strong plastic mesh to prevent erosion; this mesh system can also be used over gravel.

Gravel over mesh

'Grasscrete' mesh car park

Where tarmac is used, there are more attractive alternatives than a 'black top' finish. The use of gravel as a 'top coat' provides a surface that it softer on the eye and more in keeping with other traditional building materials. In resin bound surfacing the gravel is mixed with the resin. The material is then trowelled down to a smooth finish similar to a screed (with no loose stones). For more information on car park surface materials, see Appendix 1.

Laying a resin bound driveway

Incorporating some soft landscaping either to provide a boundary to the whole car park or to delineate areas for different use can also help a parking area blend with its surroundings; any planting should be of low level so that it does not obstruct pedestrian or driver sightlines.

Signage

To be most effective, signs should be used sparingly. Designers should begin by assuming a total absence of signs and introduce them *only where they serve a clear function*.

Marking disabled bays

It is possible to demarcate bays for the use of disabled visitors without covering the car park surface with highly visible yellow paint. This can be achieved by positioning setts in the corners of the bay, dividing the bays with e.g. brick paviors or by a simple sign on a small post (see images below).

The 'usual' disabled marking

Setts at corners only

Line of paviors

Discreet disabled parking sign

Cycle parking

The greatest parking demand is usually for cars, but there is also a need to consider provision for cycles and motorcycles. The Church Buildings Council has produced a guidance note on cycle parking in churchyards: http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/guidance-advice/all-guidance-notes

Access to Roads

If proposing a new vehicular access to a public road, a pavement cross-over (or 'haulingway') must be constructed to the satisfaction of the Local Highway Authority. Planning permission is not required for access to a *non-trunk or non-classified* road but you should always consult the local authority about your proposals.

Trees

If they are in a Conservation Area or are subject to a Tree Preservation Order, trees are protected. In Conservation Areas, all mature trees over 7.5 cm in diameter at a point 1.5 metres above the ground are protected and should not be felled, pruned or cut at the roots without notification to the local planning authority. The owner is required to give at least six weeks' notice of their intention prior to the works being carried out. Any size trees with Preservation Orders on them require approval from the local planning authority before works are carried out.

Legislation

The Equality Act 2010 promotes improved access for disabled people *but does not override other legislation,* such as Planning (e.g. the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990), Health and Safety or Highway Acts. Therefore service providers are required to make *reasonable adjustments* to physical features to avoid discriminating against disabled users. In

sensitive locations, architects/designers will have to assess whether access adaptations that follow standard design guidance are 'reasonable' or not.

Appendix 1 Car Park Surfacing Materials

Grass

Suitable Locations:	Over-flow car parks or car parks with infrequent use particularly in rural areas and that are likely to be used mainly in dry conditions.
Positive qualities:	Very low or no visual impact when not in use, permeable surface, low cost.
Negative qualities:	Quickly degraded in poor conditions, not suitable for steeply sloping sites

Reinforced Grass

Suitable Locations:	Over-flow car parks or car parks with infrequent use particularly in rural areas
Positive qualities:	Very low visual impact when not in use, permeable surface,
Negative qualities:	Not suitable for steeply sloping sites

Loose Gravel

Suitable Locations:	Flat, rural sites and flat, urban sites with limited use
Positive qualities:	Attractive appearance, permeable surface
Negative qualities:	Loose material washed or pushed onto adjoining areas; prone to rutting; difficulty in marking out parking bays; uneven surface for disabled users, wheelchairs and pushchairs; potential for vandalism and damage from loose stones.

Resin Bound Gravel

Suitable Locations:	Sites in rural or urban areas
Positive qualities:	Attractive appearance, smooth surface, easy to sweep, no loose material, can be used on sloping sites; good, even surface for disabled users, wheelchairs and pushchairs; range of colours and aggregate sizes available.
Negative qualities:	More expensive to apply and maintain; *excessive* use can dislodge aggregate

Natural stone setts/flag paving

Suitable Locations: Urban sites and formal settings; must use small size units for areas to be used by large vehicles.

Positive qualities: Attractive appearance, hard wearing, low maintenance, reasonable surface for disabled users, wheelchairs and pushchairs and suitable for sloping sites. Smooth and textured surfaces and range of colours available

Negative qualities: Expensive

Concrete and clay setts/flag paving

Suitable Locations: Urban sites and formal settings but must use small size units for areas to be used by large vehicles.

Positive qualities: Attractive appearance, hard wearing, low maintenance, reasonable surface for disabled users, wheelchairs and pushchairs and suitable for sloping sites. Some patterns designed to give an attractive 'natural stone' appearance. Smooth and textured surfaces and range of colours available

Negative qualities: Cheaper ranges are not as attractive as natural stone and can give an 'urban' character. Some coloured concrete products are prone to fading over time.

Tarmac

Suitable Locations: Heavily used car parks in urban locations

Positive qualities: Smooth surface, hard wearing, low cost, low maintenance, easy to repair, variety of colours and finishes, easy to mark out parking bays and directions. Permeable varieties of tarmac are available.

Negative qualities: Poor visual appearance and harsh, 'urban' character.

Kristina Williamson, Church Buildings Officer & DAC Secretary, December 2017.