



**CHAWTON
HILL** CHARTERED
SURVEYORS

ECCLESIASTICAL

Guidance and experience in the ecclesiastical sector



CONTENTS

- 3.Foreword
- 4.About Chawton Hill
- 5.St Patrick's Church, Wallington
- 6.Places of Worship Renewal Fund: What Churches Need to Know
- 8.Heritage Buildings & Listed Buildings: Challenges and Solutions
- 10.A new Church building for Caterham, Surrey
- 11.Is it Important to Look After Your Church Fabric?
- 12.Changing Your Church Layout or Use?
- 14.St Mildred's, Lee – New Church Hall
- 15.Improving EPC Ratings for Your Assets. How Chawton Hill Help
- 17.Inclusive Design

CHAWTON HILL

Chawton Hill's years of ecclesiastical experience has helped us to successfully deliver multiple projects such as church halls, extensions and community buildings. Whether working within conservation or greenbelt areas, we have a refined strategy that works within the ecclesiastical sector. Let us support you with project management, cost control and quinquennial or planned maintenance surveys.



This brief guide provides some insight into how we assist people in the ecclesiastical sector and selected examples of past work. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.



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ABOUT CHAWTON HILL

At Chawton Hill ecclesiastical projects form a significant part of our business.

Our years of ecclesiastical experience has helped us to successfully deliver multiple projects such as church halls, extensions and community buildings. Whether working within conservation or greenbelt areas, we have a refined strategy that works within the ecclesiastical sector.

Our approach to sympathetic design & use of innovative techniques and materials minimise the impact of new or redeveloped premises.

Among Chawton Hill's team are experts in planned maintenance and Quinquennial Inspection Reports. These provide a graded and prioritised list of any required church repairs and planned maintenance. They cover areas such as the general repair of the building, maintenance, sustainability, safety of the structure, unsafe floors and access.

Key Experience and Services:

Church buildings, church halls, extensions and community buildings.

You can be confident working with Chawton Hill that we have experience working with projects in your sector to the very highest standard.

Client commissions range from minor alteration works and building condition surveys and schedules of condition, to the design and project management of new buildings and sensitively detailed extensions or adjustments and refurbishments.



St Patrick's Church, Wallington

We were delighted to be invited to the opening of the new hall at St Patrick's church in Wallington, Surrey. Chawton Hill acted as Employer's Agent and QS on this project. The goal being to create a new church hall for St Patrick's church in Wallington.

The church identified that their old church hall served them well, but after many years, was showing its age! More than that, it didn't provide the room and facilities needed to take the church to the community. The project involved the demolition of the old hall. We then levelled the site and constructed a new, two-storey building to provide a new building with multiple spaces for use by different church and community groups in the years to come.

The aim was to deliver the hall in time for late 2022, which we achieved, by working closely with both the client and contractor.



Successful delivery of the project saw us overcoming a number of challenges. These included material/supply chain shortages and cost increases. We worked closely with the contractor, Hystar to minimise cost and supply chain disruption, through sourcing alternative suppliers and materials.

Read more about the project on the [church's website](#). If you need help ensuring the successful and cost-effective delivery of a similar project, [get in touch](#) today.



Places of Worship Renewal Fund: What Churches Need to Know

New Funding Available for Listed Places of Worship

The Government has launched the [Places of Worship Renewal Fund](#), a new £92 million programme designed to support repair projects at listed places of worship across England. Delivered by [Historic England](#), the fund is open to listed churches, chapels, synagogues, temples and mosques that hold regular public worship services. Grants are available for repair and preservation projects, with funding streams ranging from smaller repair schemes through to major projects [worth up to £1 million](#).

With the first round of expressions of interest closed on 14 June 2026, churches considering repair works may now have access to funding that can help bring long-needed projects forward. However, securing funding is only part of the challenge. Understanding the condition of a building, prioritising repairs and managing project costs are all important steps in ensuring repair works can be delivered successfully.

Why Understanding Your Building's Condition Matters

Before applying for funding, it is important to have a clear understanding of the condition of the building and the repairs that may be required. For many churches, this starts with a [Quinquennial Inspection Report](#). A quinquennial inspection is a detailed survey carried out every five years by a suitably qualified surveyor. It provides a comprehensive assessment of the building's condition and identifies any defects, maintenance issues or repair requirements.

Rather than simply highlighting problems, the report helps churches understand which repairs are urgent, which should be planned in the medium term, and which can continue to be monitored. This creates a clear roadmap for future maintenance and investment. Many funding providers also expect applicants to demonstrate why works are needed. A recent quinquennial inspection can provide valuable evidence to support a funding application while helping trustees and church committees make informed decisions about future repair priorities and maintenance budgets.

At Chawton Hill, our team has extensive experience carrying out quinquennial inspections and planned maintenance surveys for churches and ecclesiastical buildings.



Places of Worship Renewal Fund: What Churches Need to Know

What Will the Fund Support?

The fund is primarily focused on repair and preservation works. This may include structural repairs, roof repairs, masonry repairs and other conservation works required to protect and preserve historic buildings. Professional fees associated with these projects may also be included as part of a funding application.

Historic England may also consider accessibility improvements, alterations and building adaptations where they form part of a wider repair project and help improve the long-term usability of the building. However, the fund is not intended to support routine maintenance, standalone kitchen or toilet projects, or net-zero improvements where no repair works are required. For churches considering an application, reviewing the guidance carefully before submitting an expression of interest is essential.

Planning Repairs and Managing Costs

Repairing historic churches has never been straightforward. Specialist materials, conservation requirements and ageing buildings can all add complexity to projects. Recent changes to [VAT arrangements](#) have also increased financial pressures for many places of worship. This means careful planning and budgeting are becoming increasingly important when preparing repair projects. Understanding likely project costs at an early stage can help churches make informed decisions about priorities and ensure funding is directed where it will have the greatest impact. This is where professional cost advice can be particularly valuable. Through our [quantity surveying](#) and cost planning services we can support you with your plans.

Preparing a Strong Funding Application

A successful funding application is often built on good preparation. Having up-to-date building information and realistic cost estimates can strengthen an application and demonstrate the need for investment.

Chawton Hill regularly supports churches and community buildings. We can help with building surveys, [project planning](#), cost management and project delivery. We support you from the identification of a problem through to completing repair works on site.

Thinking About Applying?

If your church is considering applying to the Places of Worship Renewal Fund, some useful first steps include:

- Confirming whether the building is listed.
- Reviewing your most recent quinquennial inspection report.
- Identifying any urgent repairs and maintenance issues.
- Understanding the likely cost of the proposed works.
- Reviewing the funding criteria and application deadlines before submitting an expression of interest.

For further advice on church projects, find our article, [Heritage Buildings & Listed Buildings: Challenges and Solutions](#), useful if you are planning repairs or alterations to a historic building.

Whether you are considering applying for funding, planning future repairs or simply looking to better understand the condition of your building, [get in touch](#) with the team.

Heritage Buildings & Listed Buildings: Challenges and Solutions

As much of the UK moves towards Net Zero, there are many challenges surrounding working on listed or heritage buildings. In this article, we'll be looking at some of the things to consider, to help lower your carbon footprint. It is important to be mindful of these requirements whilst working with listed buildings, so you don't get caught out.

This article will provide some suggestions and rules to be aware of. Be mindful of these points and always seek advice whenever you are working on a listed or heritage building.

Preserving Significant Aspects

First, examine the significance of the different parts of the building. Consider focusing new works on the areas of less significance, so areas of most historical significance are retained as much as possible. It is important to consider that the original methods of construction may have used harmful materials, for example, many older buildings tend to have lead paint, which is hazardous to health. A surveyor can help by assessing the extent of risk, and advise on safe management whilst preserving the historic features. Surveyors can then help coordinate with specialists, ensure compliance with health and safety and heritage regulations and prepare clear specifications for the work.

Integrating Modern Amenities / Sustainability

It can be quite tricky to preserve the [historical aspects of a listed building](#) whilst adding in modern amenities. Additions such as insulation, solar panels and sound systems may require innovative solutions to attain listed building consent. So how can a surveyor support you in this process?

Solar Panels

There are specific requirements to be met when installing [solar panels on listed buildings](#). When applying for permission, you need to specify how the panels will be installed and how they will visibly fit with the existing building. The structure is required to be in good condition before installation and the [solar panels](#) should not cause any damage to the structure.

A surveyor can help by evaluating the feasibility of adding solar panels and proposing discreet options like solar slates or [ground-mounted](#) panels. They can also assist with submitting planning permission and recommending energy storage to enhance efficiency. The main goal is to do so with minimal alterations. It is also important to contact your local authorities to be informed of likely requirements pertaining to whether your building is grade I, grade II* or grade II listed. Again, a good surveyor can be helpful in guiding you through the process and working with specialist contractors to advise on technical requirements. Dave Edwards from Chawton Hill and Chris Wright from [Powercor](#) go into more detail on [PV and Solar Options](#) in this article.



Heritage Buildings & Listed Buildings: Challenges and Solutions

Insulation

Listed buildings are more likely to struggle with retaining heat.

Single glazed windows, the material of the walls and the type of heating used can all affect the heat retention of a listed building. In order to improve energy efficiency, you may want to install insulation. However, there are requirements when it comes to insulating these structures. Making [changes to original features](#) can be problematic, as reducing the cross ventilation that these structures are designed for can cause issues with condensation and mould.

A surveyor can assist in conducting [thermal imaging](#) and heat loss assessments to identify gaps that are allowing heat to escape. They can then recommend breathable insulation materials, which can help prevent moisture building up and [damp](#) damaging the structure. A surveyor can also help you through the process of attaining Listed Building Consent (LBC) and ensure you are in compliance with the conservation guidelines.

Replacing windows can be costly as you may be required to ensure they match the original windows on the structure. Another option for retaining heat is [changing the heating system](#). This, along with changing the lighting are options that can help achieve higher heat and energy efficiency.

Sound Systems

Sound is another feature that may be problematic within an older building. High ceilings and hard surfaces are prevalent in listed buildings. This can lead to [unwanted echoes and poor sound quality](#).

An acoustic assessment can help evaluate the buildings' existing sound insulation. A surveyor may recommend ways to [improve acoustics without damaging significant features](#). This could range from discreet cabling and vibration control methods, as well as suitable mounting techniques. If structural changes are necessary, a surveyor will guide you through the process of obtaining the required permission.

Funding

You can get funding for refurbishing listed buildings from a range of different places, including government grants and charities. [Historic England](#), [the Architectural Heritage Fund](#) and [The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#), are some of the organisations that help preserve historical value. You may be able to get grants from local councils for Grade I and Grade II Listed buildings.

At Chawton Hill, we regularly support clients through the process of applying for funding. Working on listed / heritage buildings whilst preserving their historical value can be quite challenging, but there are many resources available to make this process achievable. By keeping up with the latest policies and consulting a surveyor, you can ensure that your refurbishments do not disrupt the historical value and significance of the building you are working on. At Chawton Hill our surveying team can help you apply for planning permission and funding to work on your heritage project. We will provide guidance to keep you compliant to the many regulations that come with listed buildings.

[Contact us](#) if you'd like help with any of the issues outlined in this article.

A new Church building for Caterham, Surrey

At a cost of £32 the land in Francis Road (then known as Elizabeth Road, Caterham) was purchased on 12 May 1894 for a new church building to be called Oak Hall. The church building was completed in July and August at a cost of £206 and opened on Thursday 13 September 1894.

Fast forward 125 years and Oakhall has a new church building in the heart of the Caterham community which has been shortlisted for a [2019 South East LABC Building Excellence Award](#).

Chawton Hill undertook the roles of Project Manager, Quantity Surveyor and Principal Designer calling on over 18 years of ecclesiastical experience to deliver another exceptional church building. A building that invites people in to a large multi-use auditorium, office space, cafe, classrooms and nursery complete with generous new parking areas.

The project involved the demolition of derelict offices, a local eyesore for many years, removal of foundations and reworking of ground levels, erection of a new steel framed building over clad with a variety of materials including textured blockwork, through-colour rendering, brickwork and glazed curtain walling.

The new church is striking in appearance due to the variety of roof levels with varying pitches, interesting and varied façade treatments and large glazed areas. Inside the building the finish is of high quality, including hardwood joinery, acoustic folding partitions, various flooring types and excellent sanitary & services provisions. These are all highlighted by the vast amount of natural light afforded by the clever use of large glazed elements.

Chairing client briefing and design team meetings, we were able to effectively coordinate design requirements and balance aspirations within the project budget. Regular collaboration between the client and consultant teams, and latterly the Contractor's team helped facilitate the delivery of a project that everyone who was involved can be proud of and achieves high levels (EPC B rating) of energy performance and sustainability. For example PV panels and a heat recovery system for the meeting rooms and the crèche were used to maximise energy efficiency and carbon reduction.

"a fabulous building which is already making an impact" is how Peter Thompson (former Operations Director) describes the [new Oakhall church building](#).



Is it Important to Look After Your Church Fabric?

Someone once said that priests and clergy, like anyone, are more skilled in some areas than others. Some are good with money, some better with pastoral care, some better at preaching. Wherever the skills lie, a thing that's sometimes overlooked by priests and people alike, particularly on heritage buildings is the need to care for the church fabric itself.

The Heart of A Church

The people are at the heart of a church, of course, but looking after the church fabric will ensure the people of the church have a focal point for worship. The church community can come together in comfort in a warm, well-maintained building. A well-maintained building can also help contribute to the life of the wider community. It can serve as a venue for events, meeting place for groups like scouts and guides, and much more. The adage 'a stitch, in time, saves nine' is completely true when it comes to building maintenance.

So what are the key things to remember when maintaining a church building?

The Key Areas of Church Fabric Maintenance

The Churches' trust cite three key areas:

- Inspection
- Maintenance
- Minor repairs

Inspection is where Chawton Hill can help. The team of expert surveyors we work with can provide detailed and clear reports to help you identify what tasks to prioritise in terms of maintenance and repair. The team can provide you with a prioritised list of elements of repair, identifying when and what needs doing, to ensure you have a manageable programme and help you budget works. Working to a schedule, we help you ensure your church fabric stays in top condition and is fit for generations to come.

Chawton Hill's experience also means we can help you with design, and finding the best, most efficient and economical suppliers to carry out work where needed.



Changing Your Church Layout or Use?

Increasingly churches are realising they have a valuable community asset that can be used not only on a Sunday or a few days a week. They can provide value to the community throughout the week. Not only that, but allowing differing uses can also raise valuable income to help support and maintain increasingly expensive buildings and estates. Changing your church layout and use can bring a new lease of life to the church, but what are the practical things to think about?

Examples of things we have come across in recent years include the addition of cafes and coffee shops, the opening of nursery facilities, night shelters or even offices for start-up businesses. Each of these will come with its own considerations. They range from safeguarding to licensing and health / safety issues.

In this article we'll focus on the construction elements, but there are some helpful guides to the more spiritual and practical aspects at this page from the Church of England.

What should you consider if thinking of flexible uses for your church? What are the main risks and pitfalls to avoid?

Changing Layouts

If you're considering changing the use as well as the church layout, you may need to consider changing the layout or design of your building. From a construction perspective there are a number of elements to think about. Depending on whether your church is part of an organisation like the Church of England or not, you may firstly need to think about what restrictions your organisation has in place such as faculty requirements, etc.

Next, is your building subject to any heritage restrictions, such as listings or conservation areas? Usually you will be aware of these. If not, your local authority will keep details of all heritage buildings and conservation areas in the area. Special consideration and advice will be needed if any of these issues apply.

Design: It pays to have someone experienced in design working with you. A qualified architect or designer will be aware of the numerous options for materials and suppliers. Most importantly, they will be able to look at the spatial design of your assets. They will help you make the most of the space you have available, regardless of shape or size.

Assessing What You Have

Consider the existing church layout and materials before starting work. A surveyor can identify issues like asbestos or RAAC roof planks. Early professional advice helps reduce the risk of unexpected costs later in the project.



Changing Your Church Layout or Use?

Efficiency and Sustainability

If making changes to your building fabric, you may wish to think about ensuring any changes incorporate the latest features for sustainability and minimising waste. The materials used (or re-used) can make a big impact on the environment in which we live. Construction remains one of the most damaging activities we do as humans, so the more sustainable we can be, the better.

Again, a qualified surveyor / project manager can help to ensure costs are controlled and projects are delivered in the most effective way to minimise the impact on the environment. From ground source heat pumps to assessing the 'embodied carbon' in a building – there are many things to consider here.

Changing Layouts

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Classic examples of considerations for a church might include:

- Lighting: is it sufficient and efficient? Can it be easily maintained without need for a tower scaffold or multiple people to undertake maintenance.
- Heating: again, will it be efficient and is it practical for the building?
- What is access and egress like? How will people circulate around the building if different uses are required?

- Can regular activities such as funerals, services, etc continue unhindered if weekday use changes?
- Power sockets: are there enough – why are there never enough?!

Funding

- Funding may be a challenge. Many people fear the dreaded thermometer of fundraising, used by so many churches in the past! There are many options for funding.
- Funders may range from generous benefactors and bequests to lottery funds, to your own church body. It's worth doing the research and putting the applications in. Again, surveyors are often well-versed in helping clients apply for funding for projects, just get in touch and we'll be glad to advise.



St Mildred's, Lee – New Church Hall

Project Details

St Mildred's old church hall was constructed in the 1960s. It served the church and the community for many years. The hall was forced to close in 2019 due to its serious structural deterioration. When it became clear that a new hall would eventually be required. The effort to replace the hall was launched in 2009 with the creation of a fund.

Since 2019, the St. Mildred's Sunday morning children's programme has been taking place on two converted double decker buses.

Delivery and design

We are pleased to announce that Chawton Hill have been appointed as the project manager on the proposal to replace the old church hall. The new structure will be open to everyone and is intended to blend in with the church's architectural style.

It will offer 600m² of adaptable, naturally lit space with a kitchen, toilet facilities, meeting rooms, a huge hall area and a flexible open foyer. The proposed multi-use project will enable St Mildred's Church to continue serving the local area and provide an important community facility.

Outcome

Assuming the required funding is acquired, the plan is to begin construction on the new facility next year.

We are very excited to work on and see the final outcome of this project. Keep an eye out for more updates on the St Mildred's project [here](#).

Should you need support with project management on your project, don't hesitate to [get in touch today](#).



Improving EPC Ratings for Your Assets. How Chawton Hill Help

As most of us now know, buildings account for around 40% of global carbon emissions. This applies whether in the construction, operation or other phases of their existence. This has brought sustainability into sharp focus in recent years.

The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating scheme was introduced into England and Wales in 2007 for residential properties. The scheme was then extended, and now applies to a range of buildings including all factories, offices and public sector buildings. More recently, buildings have to display their actual, rather than just theoretical energy use.

The aim is to give buyers or renters of property an opportunity to see what the energy rating of their building is. As a result, they will be able to make informed decisions on the basis of that rating. Many tenants will include EPC Ratings for buildings they are taking on. The government has also set a target for 2027, when all buildings will need to be rated C or above.

For many landlords, this will mean there is work to be done to achieve that status.



Opportunities and Options

Possible options Chawton Hill can assist with include:

- Insulation – whether floor, wall, or ceiling, insulation can be one of the most effective and cost-effective ways to improve efficiency. Good application of insulation can improve energy consumption by around 46%.
- Glazing – we've supported many clients with refurbishment or wholesale replacement of windows. Options also include secondary glazing, which can be helpful in heritage buildings. This can impact energy consumption by around 25%.
- Door replacement – just replacing old door units with sealed, fire-rated modern doors can help to reduce costs and improve efficiency.
- LED Lighting and PV systems – we've worked with our friends at Powercor to help clients install low energy lighting and solar panel systems. These not only reduce energy bills, but during quiet periods, provide a source of income through feed-in tariffs to the national grid. For more on this take a look at our article in Construction Management.
- Heating and Water – the installation of modern, energy-efficient systems for heating and water can significantly reduce bills. Even small changes such as fitting modern thermostatic radiator controls help improve EPC ratings and reduce energy use by up to 18%.

All these measures and more can have a significant impact on the energy use in buildings. The best option for your asset will usually depend on the nature of the building and the ease with which each method can be implemented.

Improving EPC Ratings for Your Assets. How Chawton Hill Help

EPC Experience and Support

Over the past 24 years, Chawton Hill has helped a range of clients implement numerous changes and improvements to buildings. Ultimately, reducing energy use is not just a matter of improving the building's rating on the EPC scale. It will almost always have a significant impact on the cost of running and the likely yield in the case of letting properties. As you might expect, improving energy efficiency in the built environment is good business.

Examples of past projects which have delivered significant energy benefits include:

- St Lukes School rooflight replacement.
- Nescot College window replacement.
- Kingston Riverside regeneration project.
- Oxshott community hub redevelopment.

We've also worked on other projects which have featured the installation and replacement of lighting and energy systems to schools, colleges and other clients.

Critical to ensuring success (though we would say this) is taking good advice. An experienced advisor can ensure the measures you implement are right for your building. Should you need any help or advice on implementing changes to improve the energy efficiency of your assets, get in touch today.



Inclusive Design

When it comes to designing a new building, or retrofitting an old one, you'll understand the importance of putting inclusive design principles at the heart of what you do. It is no longer enough to add a wheelchair ramp to the front entrance and assume your job is done. Whilst a ramp will make the building accessible for wheelchair users, accessibility does not always equal inclusivity.

Accessible design meets the minimum mandatory requirements for access and facilities for those with disabilities. These are covered in the Government's statutory guidance document Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M.

Inclusive design looks beyond this, creating spaces that work for the needs of everyone. The aim is to enable and empower those that use a building going beyond a one-size fits-all solution. A helpful starting point here is the RIBA's Inclusive Design Overlay.

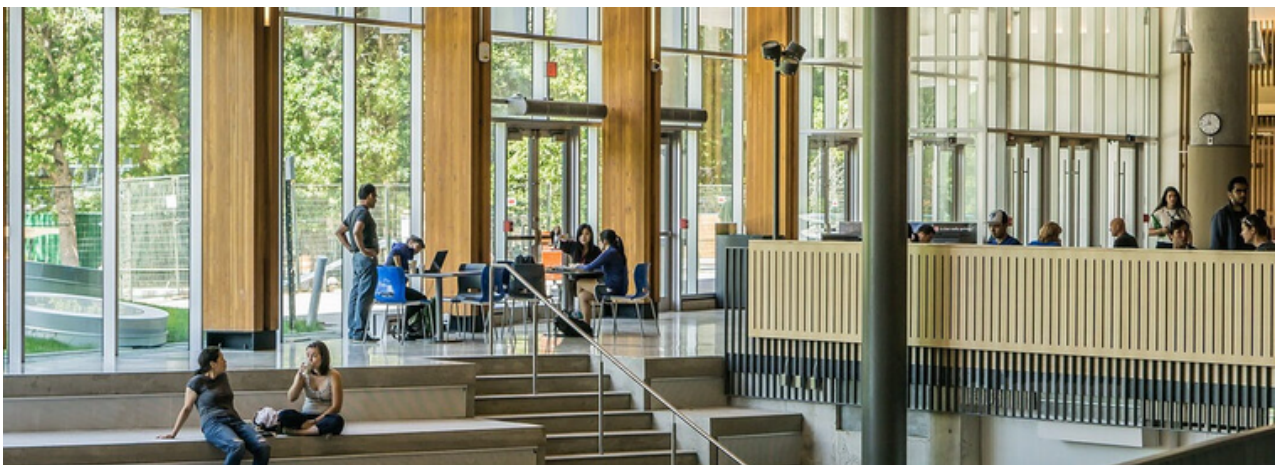
In this article, we'll cover some of the ways the built environment can embrace inclusive design principles.

What's Covered

By its very definition, inclusive design needs to cover the needs of the population. It can be tricky to pin down exactly where to focus efforts, in order to design a building that works for all. However, most design approaches agree there are three main areas to consider:

- **Abilities:** This covers a wide scope of physical and intellectual abilities, plus factors such as age, body type, medical conditions and physical fitness.
- **Gender & Sexuality:** Male/female and LGBTIQ+ identities.
- **Faith & Culture:** Covers differing cultural and religious needs.

The first step is to understand the demographics of your users (and potential users) and what their varying needs may be. For example, if there is a large Muslim community in your area, you may consider designing spaces that can be used as prayer rooms. If you expect your user base to be elderly, or less steady on their feet, handrails may play an important part in the design.



Inclusive Design

The Principles

1. A people first approach:

By putting users at the heart of your designs you can remove barriers and improve access for all. It is important to include as many people as possible in the design stage. Having a diverse team can help us see issues we may not have considered.

2. Acknowledge diversity and difference

The environment needs to meet as many needs as possible. This can be tricky, but identifying barriers early in the design process can help. Think beyond accessibility requirements and consider what barriers may be experienced by people with learning difficulties, mental ill health, visual impairments and hearing impairments.



3. Offer Choice

It is not always going to be possible to design one solution that suits all users. Even within one group, users will not be homogenous and their needs may vary. Avoid aiming for the minimum targets and consider the variance across your user base.

4. Flexible Use

The best way to achieve this is to truly understand how the building will be used. Consult with the client and end users, discover what happens now and what the space might be used for in the future. Consider design changes which can serve multiple purposes. For example, ramps instead of staircases can make buildings more accessible for wheelchair users, those pushing prams and carrying large luggage.

5. Convenient and Enjoyable

By removing barriers, you can create an environment that is easy to use for everyone. How will users move around the building? Is signage sufficient? Give users the confidence in your space and they will be able to make effective, independent choices about how they use it.

If you apply these principles to your designs, you'll find your buildings become accessible for more users.



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