

Pre-Purchase Condition Inspections Guidelines

These Guidelines have been produced to assist congregations who are considering purchasing a property and who wish to engage a person or company to carry out a condition assessment of that property prior to purchase.

The purpose of such an inspection is to inform the congregation and Presbytery of any potential costs that the congregation is likely to incur in making the building fit for use and to understand the extent and value of any maintenance or repair works that may be required in the future.

Whilst on the surface this may seem a straightforward matter, in practice there are a number of matters and pitfalls that congregations need to take into account before engaging a person or company to undertake such an inspection.

Issues that the Congregation should be aware of before engaging a person or company to undertake the pre-purchase condition assessment.

1. The Church Architect does not undertake pre-purchase condition inspections due to the issues in getting professional indemnity insurance to cover such work.
2. There are a number of qualified people who can undertake such work. However, it should be remembered that, as a result of potential legal action for failures to properly identify every possible fault and accurately cost the remediation works, there is a potential to pad reports and estimated costs, in order to protect themselves from such action.
3. There is a need to clearly identify in writing what the congregation's expectations are in relation to the inspection to be carried out. As a minimum the following requirements should be included in the brief:
 - a. A requirement to meet the inspector onsite to discuss matters and to identify the more substantive issues that need to be addressed.
 - b. A written report which includes a list of items that need to be addressed together with an estimated cost to rectify each issue. Each item is to be prioritised according to the urgency in which these works are to be carried out e.g. urgent, within 12 months, within 5 years and issues to be monitored.
4. If the building to be purchased is to have extensive works undertaken and funds have been allocated to carry out these works, then it may be more prudent to leave the assessment of maintenance and rectification works until the works are underway and the fabric of the building has been opened up to reveal the true extent of rectification works required. Any works can then be undertaken as a variation to the works being undertaken.
5. Avoid engaging people or companies that feed into a design and construct style rectification service because of the lack of financial accountability and transparency.
6. Not all defects are of equal weight and not every defect needs to be addressed immediately. Defects that cause water damage and inundation are a high priority to be addressed whereas some cracking, whilst unsightly, only needs to be monitored to see whether it is getting worse or is it stable.
7. A better result may be obtained by using a local builder known to the congregation to provide a list of works and estimates to assist the congregation in determining whether to proceed with the purchase of a property.