

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GENERAL TRUSTEES

BUILDING A NEW MANSE

1. Introductory

This paper, which is based on the experience of the General Trustees' Fabric Committee, is designed to assist Financial Boards and their professional advisers by highlighting points which should be borne in mind when consideration is being given to the preparation of plans of a new Manse.

Plans of all new Manses require the approval of Presbytery and of the General Trustees. Both bodies are concerned to ensure that the standards of construction and planning are acceptable looking to the fact that a Manse may have many different occupiers over the years. Plans should be prepared by a suitably qualified professional adviser who is acting on behalf of the Congregation. No contract for the erection of a new Manse should be placed until the plans have been approved by Presbytery and by the Trustees.

2. Site

The site should be acquired or chosen at an early stage and so far as is possible it should be an attractive one with good light, access and general amenity with services laid on or adjacent. A proper clear title free of restrictive conditions should be obtained. To some extent the choice of site affects the type of house to be provided as it is important that the house is designed for the site so that it blends in with its environment. The garden should be laid out at the same time as the house is built and should be designed for easy working. The cultivated garden should be small. The Solicitor of the Church has delegated powers from the General Trustees to act in connection with the acquisition of sites and to apply towards the price any relevant available funds.

3. Construction

The construction of the house should be substantial and the materials used should be of proven durability, requiring a minimum of maintenance in future years. As indicated above, regard should be paid to the surroundings of the house, consideration being given to the use of indigenous materials which blend in with the neighbourhood.

It should be borne in mind that the outlay on a Manse does not consist only of the initial capital cost but also running costs. Areas of painted wood are expensive to maintain and, if exposed wooden features are to be incorporated, chemically treated timber should be used. It is very important to consider the lasting qualities of materials in connection with roof coverings which must be well detailed.

Insulation is an important factor in the choice of construction, both in connection with heat loss through external and internal walls and roof and sound penetration through internal walls. The General Assembly of 2001 urged Congregations when erecting new buildings to consider adopting standards of insulation similar to those applied in Sweden.

4. Planning

Although cases are considered on their merits, the Trustees' normal minimum requirements for a new Manse are three public rooms (lounge, dining room and study) and four bedrooms,

one of which can be of a minimum size. In addition to the main bathroom, a kitchen and, if possible, a utility room, there should be a compartment (preferably linked to a cloakroom) providing a wc and wash-hand basin. This compartment should be near the study so as to be convenient for visitors and it is desirable also, if space permits, to incorporate within it a shower so that it can serve as a bathroom.

The overall floor area of the house should not be less than 130 square metres. The size of the study is particularly important. The General Trustees do not consider a study 3 metres x 3 metres adequate. The minimum size should be in the region of 14 square metres and it is of value if one wall is capable of being shelved completely outwith this area. A wall covered with books also helps greatly as a sound barrier. The study should have a good aspect, south to south west if possible and be well ventilated as there may be occasions, particularly in country charges, where it will be used for classes, committee meetings etc. It should also be easily and quickly heated.

The lounge should be as generous as possible and should be exclusive of the dining area which ideally should be a separate room of 13 square metres which can double as a family room. The kitchen need not be too large if there is a utility room capable of taking a washing machine, spin drier, etc. but it should be spacious enough to accommodate a breakfast bar. There should be space for a freezer. Bedrooms can be of normal size provided that the main bedroom and one other are capable of taking twin beds. En suite facilities in the main bedroom are an advantage. Built-in furniture should be provided or at least recesses formed which can take wardrobe fittings either free standing or, at some later date, purpose made fittings.

The entrance hall should be of as generous dimensions as practicable. A one metre wide passage is on the narrow side and something about 2 metres by 2 metres should be considered as a minimum.

5. Heating

Central heating is highly desirable not only from the point of view of the comfort of the occupants but also for the benefit of the structure. The most appropriate type in most cases will be a low pressure hot water system with radiators. The heat source will normally be a boiler located in the kitchen or utility room. This would also serve a calorifier to supply the domestic hot water service. Radiators should be controlled by individual thermostatic radiator valves which allow bedrooms, dining rooms, etc to have minimal heat when not in use. Where mains gas is available this may be the most economical heat source and in country districts consideration should be given to liquid gas which will require a large storage tank but which may be preferable to solid fuel or oil. If the latter is used the storage tank should be at least 3,000 litres capacity so as to take advantage of larger deliveries at a cheaper rate.

Energy conservation is an important factor which should be kept in view throughout the process by attention to the selecting of a site which is not exposed, the orientation of rooms and the overall shape of the house. A porch or vestibule at the back door is beneficial but energy conservation does not necessarily involve any great capital outlay if the basic principles are followed of minimising areas of heat loss and avoiding situations which hold damp or frost. Reference is made to the booklet "Heat and Light" which can be purchased from/

from the General Trustees

6. Condensation

Over the years the General Trustees have received a number of complaints regarding condensation which is prevalent in modern buildings where volumes are smaller and where there is less general ventilation. It arises from a combination of heating, insulation and ventilation problems and all forms of insulation and heat conservation will help to reduce the conditions which lead to the trouble. Double glazing helps and should be incorporated; heavy curtaining of windows is also useful and glass wool quilting 10 centimetres thick in the loft generally reduces the loss of heat. Air circulation and ventilation are most important and leaving bedroom doors slightly ajar to a hallway which has some natural ventilation is beneficial. Bathrooms and kitchens which are sources of hot moist air should have extractor fans.

If feasible, a ceiling ventilator in the upper hall of a two-storey Manse ducted to a roof ventilator will work wonders to air a house. This takes the place of bedroom fireplaces which in traditional buildings were invaluable in preventing condensation from becoming a problem.

7. Storage

More than the minimum of dry storage is necessary and advantage should be taken of any roof space which is available by making sure that the access hatch is at least one and a half metres square. This will allow for a loft ladder if required. Externally some form of garden store is essential and the bigger the better.

8. Security

The installation of external security measures such as perimeter protection (in the form of hedging and fencing), lighting, alarms and, in certain areas, CCTV should be considered. Internally, electrically-powered smoke alarms should be fitted as standard.

9. Garage

If possible, it is desirable to have a garage designed so that it is attached to the Manse and incorporates a small garden storage area.

10. Insurance

Prior to the commencement of the building of a Manse the position regarding the insurance of the structure should be checked with the Contractor. In cases where the title is being vested in the General Trustees the Manse will require to be insured with the Church of Scotland Insurance Company Limited, 67 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2JG (0131 220 4119) and they should be contacted at an early date. Staff there will be happy to give advice.
