



The Diocese of Southwark

17 October 2023

To: Incumbent-status clergy (Rectors/Vicars/Priests-in-Charge/Team Vicars etc);
Churchwardens / District Wardens
PCC Secretaries / DCC Secretaries
Deanery Lay Chairs

Dear colleagues,

REINFORCED AUTOCLAVED AERATED CONCRETE (RAAC) AND CHURCH BUILDINGS

As a number of you may be aware, in recent weeks there have been various media organisations and newspapers reporting on safety concerns in schools and other buildings, regarding 'RAAC' ('Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete').

Please read this letter carefully, if you and your PCC / DCC are responsible for any of the following:

- any building (place of worship, parish hall, church/community centre or similar) that was constructed any time between the 1950s and the 1990s, or
- any buildings of an older date but which had any extensions or annexes added at some point in between the 1950s and the 1990s (e.g. store-rooms, offices, kitchens/WCs, vestries)

particularly if the relevant buildings/areas have any flat or shallow-pitched roofs.

The Diocese is here to help parishes where there are concerns, but for any churches and other parish buildings, this situation is the responsibility of the PCC corporately. If this might apply to you, please share this letter and the guidance with your whole PCC.

We wish to give reassurance and balance on this topic. Though the potential consequences are very severe (risk to human life, and damage to buildings) if a ceiling were to collapse, the likelihood of this occurring in any particular building in the diocese is very low. At the time of writing, we are not yet aware of any examples of RAAC (as a material) even having been found in any Southwark Diocese church buildings, let alone potentially unsafe examples. More usually, RAAC was used in larger-size buildings (e.g. theatres or shopping centres), and particularly public buildings commissioned by Local Authorities, like schools, hospitals, and court-rooms.

However, if your PCC is responsible for any buildings where RAAC might be present, please follow the helpful guidance from the Church Buildings Council, which has been recently published online: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete>

From:
The Archdeacons of the Diocese