



Property Strategy 2024–2035

The Diocesan Property Strategy is a crucial framework to support the mission and ministry of the Diocese of Southwark. It focuses on managing diocesan properties, comprising primarily parsonages, and Glebe properties and land; with the primary purpose of sustaining parish ministry which includes housing clergy, curates and some others. The strategy also emphasises sustainability, cost-effectiveness, and the alignment of property use with Southwark Vision 2024–2035, which aims to grow and diversify the Diocese, including our commitment to the environment.

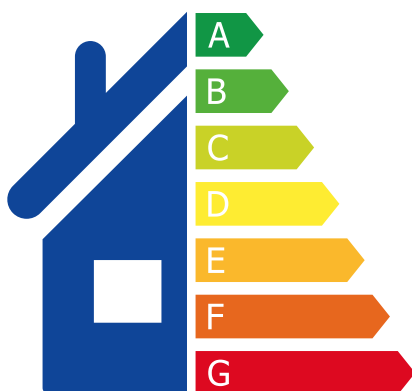
The Diocese is responsible for more than 400 residential properties used to provide housing for incumbents, assistant clergy, curates and others in ministry. The Diocese also has some Glebe land that from time to time is licensed to occupy, leased or developed in consultation with local parishes. A review of Glebe land was completed in 2024.

Parishes may have their own properties and these, with the use and development of parish land, church halls and some parish residential properties, also involve a role for the Diocesan Board of Finance as Custodian Trustee. Churches, church graveyards and consecrated land also involve the Diocesan Office through the Diocesan Advisory Committee. Working with parishes to understand that the parsonage is not a parish-owned asset, but a clergy household home, is an important feature of our relationship with parish officers. Churchwardens are particularly important during vacancies and their contribution is highly regarded by the Property Team and Archdeacons. Where properties are rented in a vacancy, the income contributes to property improvements, repairs and maintenance.

Southwark Vision 2024–2035 was endorsed in November 2023, with the priorities of valuing all of our parishes, sustaining parish ministry, recognising the need for healing in our communities and our environment, and growing our Diocese. These all have property implications.

This Property Strategy follows from the strategy first developed in 2017 and reflects significant changes since then. It focuses on the residential housing, Glebe land and other resources attributed to the South London Church Fund and Southwark Diocesan Board of Finance.

The Property Strategy consists of ten core principles, in which the objectives are underpinned by levers to enable them to be achieved.



“ I have been very grateful for the prompt action to rectify the situation when I had no hot water. Thank you!
– feedback from clergy ”

Core Principles

1. Own property for the primary purpose of mission and ministry
2. Serve the diocesan priorities
3. Resource and implement Southwark Vision
4. Ensure policy and resource allocation are working together
5. Leading, enabling and serving within the agreed parameters
6. Future-proof parish ministry
7. Support incumbents
8. Maintain existing parsonages
9. Act prudently to build up diocesan resources
10. Buy and sell in accordance with agreed protocol



Key Data Includes

- + 40% of parsonages have had capitalised refurbishments/improvements since 2015
- + More than 80% of parsonages have had repair and/or maintenance works undertaken between 2015 and 2023
- + Condition surveys have been undertaken in most parsonages
- + 64 quinquennial inspections have taken place since they recommenced, post-COVID
- + 193 properties' Energy Performance Certificate data has been collected



Key Levers

- + Develop 10-year plan for replacement parsonages which are not fit for purpose
- + Improve EPC rating in 80% of parsonages by 2035, prioritising double glazing and insulation by 2030 (especially during vacancies) by utilising designated funds and further funding opportunities
- + Equip Eco Vicarages to be fit for purpose as clergy housing by installing efficient systems so they can be retained
- + Identifying options for the use of Glebe land following an independent review
- + Review Glebe and Board properties to ensure they meet diocesan objectives and are better placed to support mission and ministry



Objectives

1. To ensure that by 2035 all parsonages:
 - a. are considered fit for purpose as family homes for clergy households taking into account cost of living, and clergy well-being;
 - b. are actively being managed towards Net Zero Carbon policies of the Diocese of 2030, and a backstop of 2035;
 - c. are located appropriately for mission and local Mission and Pastoral plans.
2. To ensure that by 2035 the Diocese has some diocesan owned deanery-based Glebe or Board provisions within each Deanery to ensure that curates – and new ministry as needed – can be placed in the parish.
3. To reinvigorate the partnership with parishes, to ensure that parishes are given sound advice in the use of their own property assets, addressing curate's housing in a parish where there is a curate's house, supporting and enabling parishes when there are development projects, and providing and enabling greater information to PCCs about parsonages as primarily clergy household homes.
4. To ensure that the Diocese has flexible housing to meet the needs of the Diocese; including smaller units of accommodation for example, apprentices, and single-person households, and to be able to address temporary housing needs.
5. To ensure that the Diocese can continue to meet its growth and operational aspirations through effective stewardship of property when not in parish clergy use: such as charging market rents and regularly reviewing all long-term care-taking and tenancies to avoid long-term tenancies which limit scope for ministry and mission use.
6. To ensure that Glebe housing, land, and surplus housing stock can be used for income generation, and so continue to support stipends, mission and ministry, and the implementation of Southwark Vision 2024–2035.
7. To continue to ring-fence the cost of major property refurbishment of parsonages within the appropriate diocesan resources.

This evolved Property Strategy, expressed through the Core Principles, Objectives and Levers, is intended to reflect the changes and challenges of recent years, and opportunities ahead, enabling us to serve and support our parishes to be Christ Centred | Outward Focused.



The Diocese of
Southwark