

Site and Ecclesiastical Architecture in Akure, Nigeria: The Critical Nexus

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Abstract: *Site and architecture work together to build common theme, sense of place and setting. They mutually complement and enhance each other; thus promoting intended use and desired behaviours within the particular designed space. The emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigerian religious terrain resulted in multiplicity of worship centres across the nation's human settlements with varying qualities of architectural environments. This paper takes a succinct look at the emerging architecture and bemoans the evident neglect of the potentials of positive setting in enhancing the goals of such centres. It puts forward appropriate professional and policy recommendations for better performance.*

Keywords: Architecture, Ecclesiastical, Christianity, Church, , Pentecostalism Site, Worship centres

1. Introduction

The history of Christianity in Nigeria up till date is in three phases. The first attempt to introduce Christianity to the geographical area later known as Nigeria was in Benin/Warri areas of Niger Delta in the 15th Century. It was carried out by the Catholic Portuguese Missionaries. However, the attempt was a failure because of some factors already clearly stated by some eminent scholars like Ryder, Ade Ajayi, Erivwo, Lamin Sanneh and Peter Clarke.

Ade- Ajayi (1965) mentioned in his work, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, that The C.M.S. was the largest and the most significant in this period. Being part of the established Church and based in London. It had the greatest influence in the British government. They established their mission in Badagry in 1845 and they led the expansion into the Yoruba country. In other words, the C.M.S. (Anglican) played a prominent role in the evangelization of Nigeria. Apart from the Anglican mission, the Methodist, Baptist and Catholic denominations also made their impact felt in Nigeria before the end of the 19th century. However, the contribution of each mission to this common factor was not equal in men, material, and length of service or significance.

The European Christian Missionaries made a second attempt to Christianize Nigeria in the 19th century. The Christianization of the country between the 19th-21st centuries came in two phases. The first phase was led by the Methodist mission in September, 1842 under the leadership of Thomas Birch Freeman. He entered Abeokuta through Badagry which became an entrepot to Yoruba land. The town of Abeokuta became the "sunrise within the tropics". He was followed closely by Henry Townsend, a missionary of the Church Missionary Society (Anglican), who equally settled in Abeokuta in December, 1842. The missionaries were given a rousing welcome and hospitality by Sodeke, the traditional ruler of Abeokuta. These earlier missionaries were followed by the Baptist and Roman Catholic in the evangelization of Yoruba land. The Christian Missionaries equally visited the Eastern part of Nigeria almost at the time they visited Yoruba land. The Christian missionary enterprise was delayed in the Northern part of the country because of religious and political factors.

It is evident that Nigeria's religious landscape was once dominated by the Catholic and Anglican churches, but today there is a rising wave of evangelical and Pentecostal movements, many of which are "African Initiated Churches," independently started in Africa by Africans: Christ Apostolic Church, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Living Faith Church Worldwide, Christ Embassy, Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Movement, The Synagogue, Church of All Nations, Celestial Church of Christ, and Dominion City—to name a few. (Unah 2017). Due to increasing population and demanding growth emanating from scriptural evangelism these churches unavoidably impacted on land resources without appropriate guidelines on site specifics. The consequence is the depreciation and delimitation to the hallowed reverence and awe stricken emotional approach to centres of worship excepting perhaps the interior.

All spaces, interior and exterior, are designed to support one or more specific activities pursuant to their central goal of theme. The behavioural qualities of the activity will influence the form that the space takes (Brogden, 1979). Conversely, the form of the space affects people's perception of the space and hence the way they use it. Thus, there is an inherent relationship between behaviour, perception and form. The task of architecture is the careful synthesis of these components to provide a positive visual language which all buildings of all ages, according to Heimsath (1977), are supposed to broadcast or blare forth. Conventionally, ecclesiastical buildings are of note in this domain as their architectural settings are germane to creating archetypal spiritual environment, which Akingbohunge (2005) described as an ethos of inspirational site.

This is a conspicuously missing ingredient in the architecture of the generation of emerging Pentecostal worship centres of the last five decades in Nigeria. While the designs of the internal spaces may provide some measure of inspirational site, those of the external spaces rarely offer the essential complementary site capable of enhancing spiritual development. The objective of this paper is thus to provide:

- The significance of the relationship of architecture and sites An overview of emerging trends in ecclesiastical architecture
- A highlight of inducing factors of the trend
- The criteria for positive site

This will provoke necessary advocacy for and stimulate appropriate design of building environment to contribute to the goal of ecclesiastical buildings.

2. Site and Architecture

Sites are specific locations, designed or non designed, generated by ecological, technological or cultural influences and experienced by people who encode and decode meanings from it. Buildings and sites can be designed to read as one entity, as the dynamic interplay between architecture and nature of the site, or as discrete entities (Motloch, 2001). Site and architecture work together to build common theme, sense of place and setting. A successful site is designed to promote intended use and desired behaviours. It explores people-environment relationships, exploiting landscape of high relevance and deep meaning. This enables the environment to evoke strong mental images and be remembered over extended period of time. It possesses capacity for stimulating deep, personal, spiritual meditation and intercourse in patrons, which are central in ecclesiastical architecture. Akinduro (2002), aptly pointed out that the most basic element of religion is worship and it is expressed in two major ways namely, meditation and ritual. Meditation gives depth and positive effects to ideas imparted while it, at the same time, provides opportunities for inspiration.

Training which these centres offer is a natural component of every human enterprise. Educationists agree that training environment profoundly affects responses. Recent behavioural evaluation researches (Heimsath, 1977) confirm a direct relationship between physical environment and behaviour. While secular training may be feasible in just any available architectural environment, spiritual training requires a unique and serene architectural setting (earthly paradise) to enhance deep meditation and foster inspiration to produce spiritual development. This desired setting derive from biblical antecedents that godly people of bible days often retired into the woods (forest) for personal meditation, supplication and refreshing. Today's ecclesiastical architecture must seek to provide this natural training habitat for the adherents.

3. Emerging Trend in Nigeria Ecclesiastical Architecture

The latter half of the last century in Nigeria witnessed the dawn and development of Evangelical and Pentecostal Movements within the Christian religious sect. These movement are more dynamically evangelical in church planting than the erstwhile orthodox sects. By the turn of the century, the phenomenal growth and spread of worship centres left almost every other street of major towns in the Christian dominated Southern Nigeria with at least a worship centre. In some cases, more than two centres (though they may not be of the same name) can be within a

single street. This remarkable spread and the size of adherents involved make the architecture of the centres a worthy concern, as it constitutes a tangible proportion of the cityscape.

It is significant to observe that most of the centres did not evolve from professional architect's practise but from quacks with some connections with the user denominations. It is a common feature for some to be token donations from some faithful and simply require mere renovations, which the ministers direct and supervise. In a good number of cases where lands are purchased, site selection criteria hardly go beyond proximity to members and cost of the land.

The development of acquired lands presents another problem as its architecture is seen as a commodity. Emphasis is thus placed on the enclosure, in terms of its possible optimum coverage, capacity and liturgical conformity. Development is usually in phases on account of financial constraints, even when the design is not so planned, and it is most commonly done in-house. Since occupation often times precedes completion, external works and landscaping are hardly executed if at all they are programmed.

The environment is therefore left to the imagination of zealous and concerned adherents and or ministers who in most cases are architectural illiterates. All manners of environment thus result, having neither direction nor attraction, comfort nor care, order nor organization, soothing nor fragrance, shade nor shadow, and with severe effects on indoor conditions.

Achunike (2004) asserts that "Pentecostals have a very high sense of aesthetic. This is evidenced in the architectural beauty of their churches and their interior decorations." Pentecostalism has succeeded tremendously in influencing the aesthetic set-up of the mainline churches in Nigeria. One cannot but admire the beauty around the "sanctuary" of the pentecostal churches, which very often meets the state-of-art. Even personal dressing codes or habit of many pentecostal pastors will not leave much to be desired from a gentleman. Therefore both the church set-up and the person of the pastors are influencing the mainline churches positively. In spite of the aesthetic building envelope, facades and interior, the outward spatial worship spaces are often neglected overbuilt poorly landscaped and if at all it is attended to mostly it is finished with grey infrastructure.

Ukpong (2006) observed that Many Christians now pay attention to the beautification of their churches, and many priests and ministers in the mainline churches now pay more attention to their public decorum and posture.

Looking at the above influences of Pentecostalism on mainline churches, it is obvious that Pentecostalism is a force to reckon with in the contemporary Christianity. It has created permanent impact on the churches, and the Christian faith and practice cannot be the same after the explosion of Pentecostalism. The explosive impact has given birth to multiple places of worship lacking in spatial standards, bereaved of landscape enrichment items. The deteriorating consequence has resulted in phantom spiritual experience which has a negative repercussion on society. Current

decadence in societal morals can partially be attributed to the shallow superficial Christianity void of deep spiritual impartation due to poor environmental quality of ecclesiastical worship centres.

This counterproductive situation is to be expected as long as internal and external spaces are treated as discrete entities. The situation becomes unwholesome for an ecclesiastical centre where comfort, peace, repose, meditation, interaction, inspiration and paradise experience are to be hallmarks. Instead, the effects will be discomfort, less interactions, dreary fellowship, less impact, brevity of meditation and dismal spiritual development.

4. Inducing Factors for Current Practise

A number of causative factors account for the prevalence of this trend of ecclesiastical architecture across the country. Most formidable is the apparent deficiency in client's briefs that most often fail to make specific demands aimed at these vital design criteria thus providing a leeway for the incompetent designer.

Another notable factor is the appreciating traditional land problem. Land is a static asset of escalating and recurring demand for growing developments with a resultant soaring value and price. This is usually very pronounced in developed urban core and residential areas, which are focal areas for worship centres. Available land areas are usually limited in such prime locations while the option of moving out to places of better land availability is rendered unworkable by transport related considerations.

The physical planning and development control regulations in the country is also a major issue. The subsisting liberal system that accepts designs of human habitation without licensed architect's seal cannot provide better performance. The body of knowledge and processes required to handle fundamental issues of this nature fall within the precinct of professionals in architecture.

Building regulations and controls with respect to external spaces of developments are deficient in specific requirements that are relevant to developmental themes/goals to adequately provide design tasks for evaluation process before and after building approval is another issue requiring clinical attention. According to World Bank, (2005), the built environment in many developing countries particularly Nigeria is fast decaying. The factors responsible for this can be attributed to rapid urbanization, rural-urban migration, and decades of steady economic downturn, decay of urban infrastructure and negligent urban housekeeping. It has been revealed that less than twenty percent of all state capitals, Akure inclusive and major urban centres across Nigeria have any form of physical development plans to guide their growth. This implies that eighty percent of the major cities have no development plan.

There is evidently a low level of physical planning in towns and cities as well as rural settlements in ensuring that lands are properly classified and laid out. This situation can be attributed to poor management of land by the different tiers

of government in the country. At present less than 20 per cent of state capitals in the country have any form of Physical Development Plan to guide their growth. Some of these are Awka, Owerri and Port Harcourt while Lagos cannot boast of a composite or broad base plan for Metropolitan Lagos." no town or city in the South-western part of the country had a development plan to guide its growth. Since the Lagos Regional Development Plan (1980–2000) expired, the state government has not been able to come up with another comprehensive document to address new urban growth challenges, although work is ongoing on the preparation of development master plans for some areas of the state. Apart from individuals, the experience of private estate developers, vis-à-vis land access or ownership has been most discouraging. This has also affected the number of houses that could be delivered by private investors and services on their plots. The poor and less privileged are squeezed into compact units Church Integration

Emphasis on the Interior; Benign Neglect of the Exterior

Akure like many other state capitals have quite a list of churches whose site are virtually occupied by building structure with less regard for the external worship environment which is indeed the starting point of hallowed reverence and meditation. Car parking spaces are scarce and the fear of car theft and risk associated with street parking equally has created its own distraction that erodes the overwhelming feeling of absolute devotion to the almighty creator in the course of worship.

In his account on the city of Ibadan Nigeria Joseph (1997) noted that In the 1970s, when orderliness reigned in Ibadan, churches were built with maximum conformity to planning regulations, societal overall aesthetic appeal, beauty and comfort of users and neighbours.. Aside from the expansive worshipping area, ample parking spaces were provided to discourage street parking and minimize the likely inconvenience to other road users. In some churches, complementary buildings, such as schools and clinics, which provide services to the immediate and remote communities could be found (Shope, 1954).



Plate 1: Worshippers, dressed in traditional attire, attend a church service at the Living Faith Church, also known as the Winners' Chapel, in Ota district, Ogun state, Sept. 28, 2014.
Source: REUTERS/Akintunde Akinley

Between 1975 to 1979, the Ibadan population rose and church development had kept pace with this growth without any adverse effort on the urban planning system, urban infrastructure and societal psyche. Among the then prominent churches were Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Jehovah witness, Seventh Day Adventist, Apostolic and Redeem among others. The downfall of the Nigerian economy in the 1980s and subsequent political crisis of 1993 were the impetus for a substantial number of manufacturing industries within Ibadan to terminate their productions (Iyanda, 2004). In the wake of this development, many manufacturing sites and warehouses were left vacant. The vacuum created led to the conversion of such buildings and manufacturing sites into worship centres without a commensurate restructuring of the environment to enhance the spiritual demands of environmentally influenced devotional worship in most locations in Ibadan, Akure and Nigeria in general.

The Exterior of the Orthodox

The neglect of site in ecclesiastical setting is not a recent phenomenon. The orthodox churches paid more attention to the interior of their cathedrals more than its surrounding environment. Hart (2012), observed that despite their sometimes complex general forms, Orthodox churches (as compared to western medieval churches) have relatively plain and unadorned exterior surfaces. Hagia Sophia in Constantinople is a prime example. The emphasis is very much on the splendour of the interior, with its icons, gilding, wall paintings and metal oil lamps. It is a design of asceticism, reflecting the adornment of the inner person rather than the embellishment of the outer. Perhaps it is also an affirmation of the physicality, the “massness” of the building, as compared to, say, the Gothic, which through its large windows, thin columns and flying buttresses tries to dematerialize rather than transfigure the mass. Any adornment that is present in most traditional churches aims to represent mass transfigured rather than dematerialised - a subtle but theologically vital distinction. And so any carvings present are relief carvings (Georgian churches often, for example, have carved reliefs placed apparently randomly within the walls).

It is also needful to express the notion of culture and mode of worship in the exterior of ecclesiastical environment in order to stay attuned to the original concept of worship without import or foreign colouration. This is not to encourage syncretism but rather a reinforcement of freedom and inner self expression in the mode of adoration and worship. This view is further supported by Hart (2012) while stating that Whenever Orthodox churches are built in a mission culture it is extremely important that their design remain true to timeless principles and also reflect the unique character of that mission culture. The churches must be incarnate in their environment and not a foreign import.

Study Area

Ondo state capital, Akure is the study area for this research work. Akure became the state capital on February 1st, 1976. The state is located at the southwestern part of Nigeria as shown in plate 1. Akure lies on latitude $7^{\circ} 15'$ North of the equator and on longitude $5^{\circ} 5'$ East of the Greenwich

meridian. Its altitude is about 370 meters above sea level and it is situated at about 450 kilometers North East of Lagos. Following the city's historical evolution, Akure is divided into twelve zones and four innermost neighborhoods. The four innermost neighbourhoods which form the core area of Akure include: Erekesan-Erekefa, Idaiagba-Ijemikin, Okegan and Obanla. It has been established that these areas lie within 3 kilometers radius of the King's palace and the Oja Oba market (Fadamiro, (2009).



Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the location of Ondo State
Source: www.googlemaps.com

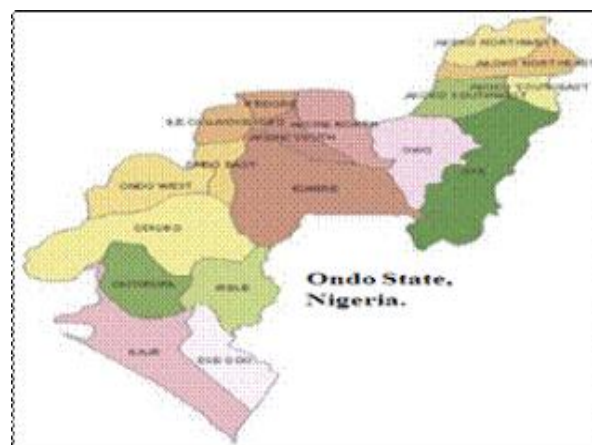


Figure 2: Map of Ondo state showing Akure south Local Government Area
Source: www.googlemaps.com

Akure is divided into two local government areas. These are: Akure North and Akure South local government areas (plate 2). According to Olamiju and Oyinloye (2013), Akure is made up of two Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely: Akure North and Akure South with corresponding land area coverage of 676.7 km^2 and 318.0 km^2 respectively. Each of these Local Government Areas constitutes a sub-region that forms the Akure region. The state capital has witnessed tremendous growth in its population, which has increased from the influx of people from neighboring towns, villages and other cities. The city is relatively peaceful and the urban renewal scheme of the erstwhile Governor Mimiko administration has enhanced the visual appearance of the urban built environment compared to former administrations inputs. The roads within the Akure metropolis have been expanded and re-

tarred, while newly designed streetlights have also been installed, making the streets well lit at night. Well designed bus stop shelters have been erected and adequate lay-byes provided for drop offs. Most prominent and eye catchy are the newly constructed roundabouts at First Bank junction with very attractive and compelling views of water fountains and the Fiwasaye junction roundabout with the Ondo state's new logo and very welcoming green synthetic grass installations. These two roundabouts became spots of attractions at the time they were constructed in early 2012, many residents visited to take photographs and identified with the aesthetic urban developments within the city.

At various locations within the city of Akure abound a lot of worship centres housing different categories of churches ranging from the orthodox, Pentecostal and evangelical; whose headquarter addresses are as shown below in Table 1

Table 1: List of churches and their headquarters location in Akure

S/N	Name Of Denomination	Category	Address
1	Deeper Life Bible Church	Pentecostal	Deeper Life Camp Ground, Yobel Road, Akure
2	Foursquare Gospel Church	Pentecostal	FUTA Road, Akure
3	Christ Apostolic Church	Evangelical	Apatapiti Road, Akure
4	Kingdom Hall of Jehovah witness	Orthodox	Besides Winners Lodge, Akure
5	Power And Glory Tabernacle a.k.a. The Reformation Centre	Pentecostal	PGT Close, Akure
6	The Gospel of Jesus' Victory Int'l Ministry	Pentecostal	Ijoka Road, Akure
7	Redeemed Christian Church Of God	Pentecostal	Mokin, Akure
8	First Baptist Church	Orthodox	42 Oba Adesida Road, Akure
9	Church of Christ	Pentecostal	13, Leo Hospital Road, Akure
10	Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries	Pentecostal	Plot 5/10 Industrial Layout, Akure
11	St Don Bosco Catholic Church	Orthodox	Araromi Street, Akure
12	Dominion City	Pentecostal	Oyemekun Road, Ondo State Library Board, Akure
13	Seventh Day Adventist Church	Orthodox	Ijapo, Akure
14	The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (Trem)	Pentecostal	KM 1, Ilesah/ Owo Expressway, Akure
15	The Lords Chosen Charismatic Revival Church	Pentecostal	12/14, Ajifa Street, Oshinle, Akure
16	All Saints Anglican Church	Orthodox	Broad Street, Akure

Source: <https://naijaguru.com.ng/akure/akure-religion/>

At the 2006 national census, the National Population Commission (NPC, 2006) gave the population of Akure as 353,211. The figure should have grown beyond that, between then and the time of this write up, about ten years later when it is expected that another national census should

take place. Akure is currently one of the beneficiaries of World Bank Project (i.e. Millenium City Development Goal).Despite the inherent potentials of Akure becoming a great commercial and industrial city with its associated tourism site like the famous Idanre hills, it is sadly observed that the growing city has no revised and functional master plan. Tofomowo (2008) regretted that Like many other Yoruba settlements, Akure founding, growth and development, is not rooted to colonization. Though the city had a master plan but the inability of the master plan to function as an effective development control tool calls for its frequent revision.

5. Criteria for Positive Setting

Positive setting is the product of harmonious ordering of man-made and natural environment to support human activities that can engender the realization of the goal of the centre. It entails giving physical and spatial expressions, meaning, relationship and expected behaviour to domains within the architectural environment. These can be conveyed through materials, colour, form, size, furnishing, texture, scale and landscape using the elements and principles of design. For appropriate setting, four criteria are relevant. They include:

5.1 Project Objectives

Identification of clear and specific objectives affecting the project is fundamental to generating a positive setting. These objectives derive from four basic sources:

- Client's Objectives
 - Users' Implicit Objectives
 - Fiscal and Public Development Controls
 - Environmental Impact Implications
- These will act together to shape the pattern of the setting.

5.2 Site Analysis

This is a technical task of eliciting the total site potentials, capabilities, constraints, climate and environmental impact analyzes of the project site in relation to the intended use and for purposes of effective and efficient planning. It is often diagrammatically presented using the project site. The site for ultimate worship encompasses environmental beauty, communal cohesion, health and sustainability as shown below.

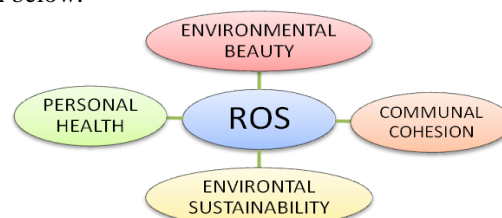


Figure 3: The important Role of open space in Urban settlement

Source: Olanusi unpublished Field Work, (2017)

5.3 Program Analysis

This analysis involves also a diagrammatic scheme illustrating essential internal and external activity spaces with their pattern of relationships. It is a task of developing an ordered and efficient arrangement of spaces with a coherent visual image compatible with the goals and expectations of the project. It focuses on the spatial, behavioural and perceptual contexts taking cognizance of land, water, plant and other available resources of the site.

5.4 Resources Analysis

Operations of ecological forces have provided landform palettes with unique visual resources for potential designers to explore for appropriate project setting. A number of potential materials, plants, water body and technology are also available for exploitation.

1) Landform

Landform can be preserved in its natural form or modified to suite intended use. It can be used or manipulated to create enclosure, separation or unification. It can be used to vary site climate for desired comfort requirement as well as direct drainage pattern.

2) Water Body

This is a vital natural element of the environment to which people respond spontaneously, watching reflections and can be used to advance people-environment intercourse, thereby enriching the placeness and memories of such locations. It also can be used as a climatic modifier.

3) Plants and Landscaping

Nature provides a good setting for meditation and spiritual inspiration. A blend of well ordered landscaping and the building structures will continue to the culturation of the residents and depth of training. Other uses of plants and landscaping according to Fadamiro (1998) include:

- Traffic Control
- Providing Background
- Softening Harsh Building Line
- Reduction of Wind Velocity
- Provision of Fragrance
- Screening
- Focalization
- Boarder Lining
- Enclosure
- Shading
- Framing a View
- Relief of Bare Spots
- Providing Accent
- Noise and Dust Screen.

4) Walkways and Enrichment Items

Enrichment items include natural and artificial elements, which are formed by nature or man and are either present on the site or moved to the site. They are intended to enrich the experience of patrons. Walkways can be made of different materials, texture and colour to match intended experience.



Plate 1: ROS in University of Agriculture Abeokuta

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Buildings do not exist in isolation, rather they exist in spatial, behavioural and perceptual context. Consequently, architecture must seek appropriate relationship between the building design, the building site and the environment to proclaim and promote the purpose of the project.



Plate 2: ROS- Street Furniture and Trees
University of Agriculture Abeokuta

Source: <http://www.cometonigeria.com>

Ecclesiastical buildings over the ages are symbolic both in type and context, reflecting unique images of collective idea and of spiritual significance acquired overtime. Both the building form and the site jointly contribute to this attribute. Design efforts must therefore accord optimum consideration to the two aspects of the single task. Building site should be critically viewed for its potential to reinforce the activities within the building being designed and to extol the central theme of the overall composition. Traditional building forms with strong images have evolved in response to particular site and situation constraints. Whatever the site situation, prime consideration must be given to the design with the purpose of its interior counterpart space to advance their common goal. Central to this goal is the provision of a place of good repose characterized by serenity, which is germane for meditation and spiritual impartation. While the structure must be spirit lifting and satisfy liturgical requirements, the complementary environment must be designed drawing from biblical antecedents of nature providing good setting for deep spiritual adventure. In pursuance of this appropriate policy implications will include:

- 1) Monitoring the location of worship centres on layouts to ensure adequate spread and in the developed areas. With appropriate and conducive environment coupled with effective impartation, moral and social standards will be improved and the goals of the centres will be achieved. Multiplicity of the centres will become advantageous.
- 2) Upward review of minimum land area requirement for worship centres and the downward review of percentage of coverage area to land area with a view to providing adequate external space for spiritual intercourse among adherents.
- 3) Explicit site plan by licensed architect reflecting the detailed use of the external environment including landscaping and all enrichment items should be subjected to thorough evaluation before approval.
- 4) Repositioning of the Development Control mechanism to eradicate ineptitude and provide efficient enforcement of development regulations. Decentralization of the erstwhile Planning Authority into development areas of towns with full community participation for sustainable efficiency.

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