

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF THE DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM
IN THE PARISH OF ST PETER AND PAUL COLESHILL

JUDGMENT

By Petition dated the 2 March 2015 the Vicar and Church Wardens of St Peter and St Paul Coleshill seek a faculty authorising a major re-ordering of the Parish Church.

The precise details of what they seek are as follows:

- a. To level the floor throughout the Nave, removing pew platforms and all carpets.
- b. To alter the flooring around the altar and font using existing stone and new stone elsewhere.
- c. To introduce an underfloor heating system throughout the Nave and in the upper room.
- d. To introduce fan convector radiators in the Nave and Chancel.
- e. To remove pews from the side aisles and introduce chairs.
- f. To introduce a "pod" kitchen at the rear of the south aisle.
- g. To introduce screening in the north aisle to create a space that is reasonably soundproof and can be separately zoned in terms of heating.
- h. To install a disabled toilet in the north porch.
- i. To convert the tower so that it becomes the principal entrance housing a new toilet and flower cupboard with sink.
- j. To remove the ceiling from the upper room which cuts across the west window.
- k. To relocate wall monuments from the Upper Room into the Nave and to clean other monuments and effigies.
- l. To redecorate the church and clean the windows.
- m. To introduce a new lighting scheme.
- n. To create three disabled parking bays within the churchyard outside the west entrance.
- o. To install a cycle rack.
- p. To landscape the area outside the north porch.

1. This Petition has had a number of different changes during the currency of the Parish's discussions with the DAC and various heritage bodies. The present position is that the DAC recommend the proposals for approval subject to the following provisos:
 - i. The wiring routes for the new lighting system are submitted to the DAC before the installation takes place and
 - ii. The Parish's submitted scheme of archaeological work is carried out before the re-ordering work commences.
2. The SPAB raise concerns about the proposed cleaning of the monuments and also about the installation of the underfloor heating system, given the potential for archaeological damage. This latter point can of course be addressed by the installation of a condition in the Faculty that an archaeological watching brief is undertaken throughout the work that is proposed.
3. On the 1 April 2015 MD Walpole raised concerns and observations about some of the proposals for re-ordering. He expresses concerns about the removal of the memorials from the tower back into the body of the church and says that such memorials have no religious significance for a worshiping congregation. I have to say I disagree with him. They are, as the heritage bodies point out a "memento mori" and I think that the returning of them to the body of the church is merely a return to the situation as it was pre 1859 when there was a major re-ordering of the building. I am more sympathetic however to his concerns about the cost of cleaning the monuments. His concern is shared by the SPAB as they feel that this is a risk that by cleaning the memorials there may be some damage to the historical patina.
4. It is against this background that I have to consider the Alkmund criteria. It is clear that this is a major re-ordering and as such will represent a significant change to the aspect of the Church. However it does seem that much of what is proposed will enable the church to be returned to the way that it looked prior to the Victorian re-ordering; and there is a considerable element of "reversibility".
5. I have considered the Statement of Need prepared by the Parish and it does seem that much of what is proposed will bring the building into a situation which is fit for present day purposes and in particular will enable the Church's mission in Coleshill to be carried out more efficiently and to greater purpose. The removal of carpeting from the Chancel means that the Victorian tiled floor will once again be displayed and the removal of the pews will enable the pillars to be more easily seen. I accept that the Parish need a new room and that that can only be obtained by partition screens which will principally be made of glass to minimise the impact. The blocking off of the north porch which will create a disabled toilet is a present day necessity and can be seen in the context of an encouragement for those disabled persons who wish to attend the church. The pod

kitchen is somewhat at odds with the concept of a 14th century building but again that is reversible and its presence will not prevent the viewing of one of the significant treasures of the church, the CAM window. The heating system was installed in Victorian times and is not as efficient as modern day systems and thus its replacement will improve the carbon footprint, a significant issue given the views expressed by the Bishop of Birmingham. There will be better accessibility and the view of the celebration of Communion will be improved for all. The entrance from the west end will enable the church in its entirety to be appreciated which is a significant advantage. The installation of office space and meeting spaces represent an appropriate use of the space within the building and enables the church to develop its Mission. Most significantly, the proposals will enable the building to be used more flexibly and more creatively. The replacement of the pews (often subject to complaints about their lack of comfort) by chairs will again improve the ability of the church to reach out into the community and return to the position of pre-eminence in the community which it enjoyed for the first five hundred years or so of its existence.

6. St Peter and Paul is a magnificent 14th century building with significant alterations during the Victorian times. It commands an exalted position in Coleshill. It is a grade I listed building with grade II listed items in the churchyard. The interior of the church has a number of significant features, perhaps preeminent of all being the Norman font. There are significant monuments to the Digby family and the tower has a ring of ten bells.
7. It seems to me that the proposals which have been long thought out and which have enjoyed significant consultation with the various bodies are a happy compromise between the need to preserve the magnificent historical aspects of the church and the need to promote modern day worship. I am clear that they represent a significant movement in adapting the church to present day requirements without destroying the major historical identity that the church possesses.
8. For those reasons I grant the Faculty although at this stage the evidence before me does not persuade me that it is necessary for the monuments to be cleaned. If the Parish wish to proceed with this, and I acknowledge there may be good reason for it, then I will require further details before granting a Faculty authorising this. If on the other hand the Parish does not think the cleaning is necessary (and I appreciate it may only be clear one way or another once the monuments have been moved) then no further action will be required.
9. Subject to that I grant the Petition with the following conditions:
 - a. The wiring routes for the new lighting system shall be agreed by the DAC before the installation takes place and in default of agreement the matter shall be referred to the Chancellor.

- b. The Parish's submitted scheme of archaeological work is carried out before the re-ordering works commence and will be referred to the DAC upon the same terms.
- c. The Parish ensures that an archaeological watching brief is in place in respect of any of the excavation work proposed both inside and outside the church.

Mark Powell QC

Chancellor of the Diocese

26 October 2015