

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF THE DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM

IN THE MATTER OF THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, HALL GREEN

JUDGMENT

1. By Petition dated the 18 February 2015 the Church Wardens of the Church of the Ascension Hall Green seek a faculty authorising the installation of an Audio Visual System within the church. The proposal comprises a drop down screen to be located in the Chancel, with two television screens to be located in the north and south transepts and a projector to be located above the west gallery.
2. The Church of the Ascension is a remarkable Queen Anne Church completed in 1704, although in 1860 it was extended. It is a grade II* building. It is rightly described by Historic England as having special interest due to its date, with later additions in the same style presenting a unified appearance. The current Chancel and Nave, although extended, appear as a single coherent context with a very strong architectural form, reinforced by the ceiling moulding and cornices.
3. Historic England go on in their consultation document to say “although it will detract from the aesthetics of the space, it is accepted that, in principle, a descending AV screen box could be suspended beneath the Chancel ceiling as no viable alternative is available and the roof structure is a modern replacement”.
4. In my judgment the petition has made out a compelling case for the installation of the AV system. The Parish has had extensive consultation with the DAC and subject to matters that I will mention below the DAC support the application.
5. I bear in mind the “Alkmund” criteria and am satisfied that the harm to the church by the installation of the system can be mitigated by conditions and that the need for the installation in order to improve the mission of the church outweighs the harm that the installation with cause.
6. The DAC recommends the grant subject to the following conditions:
 - a. The descending AV screen box shall be mounted beneath the Chancel ceiling in line with the ceiling moulding at the west end of the Chancel.
 - b. The repeater screens in the transepts should be fixed into plaster rather than onto the gallery woodwork.
 - c. All components should be colour matched to the existing ceiling to remain as unintrusive as possible.
7. It seems to me that that is an appropriate approach designed to mitigate any visual harm that the installation will cause and in those circumstances I grant the faculty subject to the conditions set out in this judgment.

8. I am told that the work can commence immediately but to avoid any further difficulty I direct that the work be completed within six months from the date of this judgment.

Mark Powell QC

22 October 2015