

In the matter of St Andrew, Bishopstone

Judgment

1. This is a petition relating to a significant project comprising a proposed extension to the west end of the north aisle of this spectacular grade I listed church,¹ of Saxon origins and largely untouched since a restoration in the nineteenth century. Its northern aspect is notable for the expanse of its roof which reaches almost to the ground and is referred to by one of the consultees as a ‘cat-slide’ roof.



Saint Andrew's Church, Bishopstone, East Sussex

1st June 2009



View from the south-west corner of the churchyard

2. The extension will house a vestry, accessible lavatory and flower area. The project also includes the introduction of a ‘tea point’ in the base of the tower. The Diocesan Advisory Committee issued a notification of advice dated 16 January 2026, declaring that it did not object to the proposals, albeit with some technical provisos. The notes of the DAC’s consideration of the evolving project are supportive in principle. In relation to the proposed extension, they recorded the support of Historic England, the Church Buildings Council and Historic

¹ Its official list entry is surprisingly brief and reads: ‘Notable for its Saxon work in the south porch and tower, but mainly Norman - Early English. C12 Font and medieval coffin lid. St Andrew's Church, Wall of Churchyard and enclosure to east and the Almshouses form a group’.

Buildings and Places (formerly the Ancient Monuments Society). They also noted that planning permission has been granted by the South Downs National Park Authority. Early consultation had led to comments and suggestions being adopted and incorporated into later iterations of the project.

3. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, at a relatively late stage in the consultation process, whilst accepting the need for an extension, raised concerns about the location which had been chosen, whilst conceding in an email of 20 April 2023 that ‘there is no optimal location’. It recommended that the parish consider alternative locations and strongly favoured a stand-alone building (as opposed to a contiguous extension) which necessarily would leave the remaining Saxon and Norman architectural detailing entirely untouched.
4. The parish engaged fully with the SPAB and a site visit duly took place in June 2023. Although the SPAB appears to suggest otherwise, it is tolerably clear on the documentation that serious and thoughtful consideration was given to all their comments and observations, including proper evaluation of the alternatives proposed for the positioning of the extension.
5. Chancellors are guided in their determination of cases such as these by what is called the *Duffield* framework. There is heavy presumption against change, particularly where (as here) proposals will cause measurable harm to the significance of a grade 1 listed building. Undoubtedly the proposed extension will result in harm to what is undoubtedly an outstanding parish church, but not perhaps as significant as the SPAB suggest. However, the justification for the works, now long in gestation, is powerful as even the SPAB concedes.
6. In this instance the central issue is whether there is a viable means of achieving the parish’s objectively worthy ambitions, which will be less invasive for the medieval fabric of this church. I have concluded on the material before me that there is not. Every alternative means has been professionally investigated and dismissed on sound and defensible bases. I give due weight to the observations of the SPAB, while also noting (i) that they are an outlier amongst professional consultees, all the others either supporting or at least ‘not objecting’ to what is proposed and (ii) that a highly experienced national park planning authority has seen fit to grant planning permission. Whilst a grant of planning permission cannot be determinative, it is a weighty consideration, particularly when the application of the *Duffield* framework independently militates in favour of granting a faculty.
7. I make one final observation. One feature of the petition which clearly exercised the DAC was the continuation of fossil fuel-based heating. I note the reasons for this and the pledge on the part of the parish to move towards net zero as this becomes practicable. I intend holding the parish to their pledge.
8. The faculty is not to be issued until the costs of and occasioned by these proceedings have been settled by the petitioners.