

Neutral Citation Number: [2019] ECC Nor 3

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT

DIOCESE OF NORWICH

**In the matter of
EARLHAM, ST. MARY**

-and-

**In the matter of
THE PETITION OF DIANA ROWLANDSON, VICAR, AND
CHRISTINE MORETON, CHURCHWARDEN**

Judgment of the Chancellor

November 18, 2019

1. This is a Petition for substantial reordering of this Church, which is situated very close to the University of East Anglia in Norwich. It had been first considered by my predecessor in title, Arlow Ch., and she felt a visit to the church was essential in resolving what is a radical proposal on the one hand and serious and clearly articulated reservations by Historic England and the Victorian Society on the other. I took over from Arlow Ch. on September 2, 2019 and noted she had courteously left open the question of whether I would wish to see the church. I had a strong initial feeling that had Arlow Ch. thought a visit was necessary then I would do so. That hardened into a certainty when I considered the papers. The visit itself, which was key to the judgment I have formed, proved to have been essential.
2. So, I will begin, not with the usual recitation of agreed facts, but with my impression when I visited the church. As I approached, it appeared on the righthand side, adjacent to a service road for parking. It has a striking appearance but also a feeling of being somewhat cut-off.
3. However, any suggestion that it was a church that time had forgotten was dispelled by the reception I was given by the Rev'd Diana Rowlinson. She was accompanied by a very longstanding parishioner and member of the PCC who injected her love for the church into my tour together with a practical sense of reality. Mr. Les Bailey of Spire Property Consultants Ltd, was also present and assisted me with a description of the scope of the project.

4. I am afraid I found the church, whilst a fascinating building, to present a depressing air. The proportions of the furniture were unusual with the pews in the nave dominating the small church disproportionately and those in the north end of the church at right angles to the nave having little, if any, sensible function since the view from them is extremely limited. Turning left from the south west entrance is a small room in a poor state with a ladder to a thin gallery that is dominated by the organ. Unfortunately, this organ (a Bevington installed in 1966) was damaged by water ingress and crumbling plaster in 2015 and has since been dismantled for repair. The organ pipes are housed in a cabinet in a kind of Gothic style of painted white wood which came from another church. This is another feature that seems incongruous in this church. Such heating as there is comes from radiant heating units perched high in the roof area. I was told the Church had a small but loyal congregation of around 8-12 people who amongst other things wish they could worship in warmth. The vestry, if such can really be called, is very small and should one wish to be as cruel as to swing a cat, this would not be the space to try it. The floor in the nave, north transept and vestry is tiled. To the naked eye it looked in poor condition and unremarkable.
5. There are some very attractive features: the rood screen and lectern, dating to the fifteenth century and the stone octagonal font which is thought to predate this building of the church (the third building) and is fourteenth century. I am told that the interiors were repaired and refurbished in 1843 and the altar rail was presented by John and Laura Gurney. Both the pews and the pulpit are described in the Statement of Significance as “unremarkable” and “machine made” from the late nineteenth century. My visual inspection did not cause me to doubt that description.
6. Until one arrives at the chancel and sanctuary, I am afraid that the overall impression is of a very interesting interior into which people, no doubt with generous and kindly intent, have placed disparate furniture and objects that somehow seem incongruous in the mediaeval simplicity of the overall surroundings.
7. The chancel, raised by two steps from the nave, and the sanctuary, raised by a further three steps are very different areas. The floor tiling is instantly more attractive and in much better condition; the monuments on the walls have a much better feeling of belonging than elsewhere in the church and are interesting both historically and aesthetically. On the north wall is an interesting black marble monument to the Bacon family and on the south wall is a circular bas relief of the annunciation carved in wood in 1880 and presented to the church in 1936. This was so striking that it actually caused me to stop saying something in mid-sentence when I caught sight of it.
8. The description of particular items in terms of significance is described by the Petitioners as thus:
 - a. Nave, 15th century, two 2 light windows with “Y” tracery and brick drip moulds. The roof is stainless steel, the steel being placed there in the 20c. Significance: High.
 - b. Chancel. 15c with tombs of the Bacon family below and monuments. Significance: High.
 - c. North Transept (19c), traceried window: Significance: Low-Moderate.
 - d. Tower – low square west tower with 1 bell installed 20c. Diagonal buttresses. Base from 12c but higher level and battlements 16c. Significance: High.

- e. South Porch 15c with brick quoins and stepped gable added in 17c. Significance High.
 - f. Octagonal font 14c with traceried bowl and panelled shaft: Significance: Moderate to High.
 - g. Lectern formed from coarsely carved angel (15c) possibly from a hammerbeam roof. Significance: High
 - h. Rood Screen with cusped and crocketed ogee arches (15c with Victorian Panels). Significance: High
 - i. Reredos – carved oak 19c incorporating text of Decalogue, Lord’s Prayer and Creed. Significance: Moderate.
 - j. Organ – Bevington mechanical action pipe organ 19c and cabinet in Gothic style. Significance: Low.
 - k. Altar table and rail: Oak, donated 19c by Gurney family. Significance: Low-Moderate.
 - l. Communion plate 17c. Significance: Moderate.
 - m. Pulpit. Oak. 19c unremarkable. Significance: Low-Moderate.
 - n. Pews – unremarkable oak pews with some panelled backs and plain bench ends. Late 19c. Significance: Low.
 - o. Monuments 17c and 18c floor tombs. Walls of chancel contain 17c monument to members of the Bacon family and circular bas relief of Annunciation. Other 18c - 19c memorials on nave walls. Significance: Moderate-High.
 - p. Floor: Victorian floor from elements of previous schemes. Significance Low-Moderate.
9. I inspected all of this except the communion plate. I will turn to my evaluation later. There are some differences but none of substance for the purposes of this Petition.
10. The Petition identifies six interior areas that would be affected by the proposal.
- a. The nave would be cleared of the fixed pews and pulpit and the floor level raised. The impact of this is assessed as having a high impact on the visual impression of the space, but it is submitted that it will have a low impact on the actual fabric and structure of the nave. It is said that this will have the effect of returning the church more to its mediaeval roots and, in fact, draw attention to the architectural features of the building. Stackable chairs will be used when necessary for daily activities and it is proposed to introduce underfloor heating.
 - b. The bottom of the tower would contain one lavatory. It is pointed out correctly that at present it serves simply as a storage area. It is also important for the projected future of the church.
 - c. The North transept would contain a kitchen. This is a later addition and it is said that it contains little of architectural significance. It is said that its setting there will not impact visually on the church as a whole.
 - d. The sanctuary floor would be lowered and the chancel furniture reconfigured. Although the sanctuary floor will therefore be lower to the rest of the chancel the actual flooring will be unaffected. The monuments on the floor will still be visible. It is proposed to use the chancel independently of the nave for small congregations on Sunday and for private prayer at other times. The Reredos and Rood Screen will be unaffected. The lectern will be moved from the nave to the chancel. There will be an archaeological watching brief to give assistance in respect of tombs beneath the chancel.

- e. The organ and cabinet would be removed from the west gallery. This will clearly have a high impact. However, it is said that it will improve the view to the west particularly by the removal of the cabinet. These items were twentieth century introductions.
 - f. The gallery would be widened with a new stairway. It is said that the present access to the gallery by ladder is both unsafe and unsightly and that the visual impact will only be improved.
 - g. The porch would be enclosed with glass doors and windows. It is said that the impact here will be moderate. The oak doors will be retained and can be open when the church is in use allowing passers-by to see into the church. The impact on the walls and gable will be low.
 - h. It is agreed that the suspension of a timber floor above the current nave floor will self-evidently remove it from view. I am told a photographic record will be made of the floor and, of course, the floor will still be there and the floor suspension is capable of reversal.
11. There is an important seventh consideration and that is the cumulative effect of the proposals and, indeed, the Petitioners would wish me to consider that because, it is in the totality of the project that its justification lies.
12. Accordingly, it is necessary to turn to the question of why these proposals are put forward. It is said that without additional facilities it will be difficult in the medium and long term to sustain the ministry. The need is put in this way:
- a. A need to have a functional space in which the congregation can meet. Presently there are these obstacles. There is no running water. The building is very cold in winter. Even if people are tempted to stay there is no room to circulate and mix because of the dominant effect of the pews. Likewise, children (who presently only come to the church to be baptised) have no area for them. The provision of food and drinks is very difficult. There is no lavatory.
 - b. This church has one very obvious potential source of new congregants and visitors as it is extremely close to the campus of the University of East Anglia. The university is a secular institution with no particular religious affiliation. It has a multi-faith centre. I am told that around 30% of the student population identifies as Christian. As part of its mission St Mary's has identified a need to provide a place where students may also find support off-campus. This has a wider context. As opposed to student-led events, St. Mary's could provide the base for a Christian welcome to international students. The suggestion is that a cafe-style space with small tables would be both functional and welcoming.
 - c. The church would aim to provide some Sunday evening services during term time and also to be open for private prayer which it is envisaged may include some events with prayer as the particular focus. The aim is also to be able to run courses in Christianity such as Alpha and Christianity Explored with light communal meals. This will include the use of music and drama.
 - d. Even bolder and wider work is planned with meetings of church leaders from different churches within the diocese. The arrival of a new vicar (living in the vicarage) and a curate from the deanery with a focus on student ministry would mean a significant new role for this church. What I am being asked to consider is a dramatic reordering of this church with an equally dramatic widening of its mission and future.

- e. This possibility has arisen because the church has the promise of a large benefaction from a donor with the purpose of developing a Christian Centre for students. The cost of approximately £500,000 therefore will be met in this way.
 - f. The Petitioners did consider other options such as an extension but this was rejected because of the size of the church and the historic nature of the building.
13. The present usage of the church is restricted to a tiny congregation that is unlikely to grow. The church is kept locked during the week due to a history of vandalism and a relatively high crime rate.
14. The reviewer for the website norfolkchurches.co.uk was unable to gain access in 2010 although better arrangements have now been made but describes the church as being opposite “beautiful Earlham Park” and “not far from the entrance to the main campus” of UEA and comments that “thousands of people must pass this church every day” but says that it “sulks miserably in its unkempt churchyard, a feeling of shabbiness and abandonment beginning to take hold”. The reviewer comments that “Mortlock makes the interior sound quite interesting, if appropriately gloomy: there is a surviving late mediaeval screen stained dark brown, and even a western gallery – it must feel quite cramped inside.”
15. There have been some improvements to the appearance of the churchyard since this review in 2010 but I recognised the feelings of the reviewer as I walked through it and I cannot help but commend the prescience of his belief that the inside must feel cramped. It does.
16. Proper consultation took place and the pre-consultative advice of Historic England was encouraging but understandably wanted to have greater detail. Following the receipt of additional information, Historic England made further observations that were again supportive with some detailed suggestions. The one matter on which Historic England registered concern was the proposal to add a glass door to the porch although some modifications were suggested such as a more solid door with some vision panels or adding glass to the inner porch doorway with the existing timber door adapted to swing outwards, hiding the glass door when shut.
17. Finally, on August 19, 2019, Historic England gave its final observations:
 - a. It remained generally supportive of the project but had some concerns about some aspects. The replacement of the existing gate remained a concern. This is amplified by Historic England pointing out that the proposal would affect the essential openness of the porch.
 - b. Issues were raised about the prominence of signage.
 - c. The flooring should be sensitive to the different internal spaces.
 - d. The Petitioners were asked to consider whether the removal of all pews was essential and to the issue of storage of chairs when not being used.
 - e. With respect to the audio-visual system, moveable screens were suggested as an alternative to fixed ones with screens located at a high level.
18. Historic England does not wish to become a Party Opponent. The Victorian Society wrote on May 31, 2019 to register serious concern with what was proposed, the

impact it would have on this Grade I-listed building and what was described as the inadequacy of the documentation provided.

19. The Victorian Society said that the Statement of Significance fell “woefully short” of what the faculty jurisdiction system requires of it. It fails to provide a clear, detailed and objective assessment of the significance of the building, in particular the interior, where the vast majority of works would be implemented, and the various elements of it that would be most affected. Partly as a result it was said to have failed in its second obligation, to provide an objective assessment of the impact of the works proposed on the church’s significance. The Victorian Society found it “nigh on impossible” for anyone assessing this scheme to gauge accurately the full impact of what was proposed.
20. The Victorian Society felt on what it described as “fairly rudimentary information” that the interior of St Mary’s appeared a genuinely multi-phase and extremely interesting historic church, demonstrating elements and additions from the early medieval period onwards. It said that what was envisaged was an unusually thorough scrape of the interior, the richness, density, and varied and high quality fittings of which would be almost totally dispensed with. In addition, the Victorian Society thought the historic floor levels and surfaces would be almost all altered, lost or concealed from view. The view of the Victorian Society was that, in totality, much of what gave the interior its special character, appearance and interest would be lost, or at least the integrity of it so eroded that it would lose much of what makes it special. It was said that no genuine assessment of the nave benches and chancel stalls is provided and on this basis alone the Victorian Society objected to their disposal. It comments that although the organ may have arrived only relatively recently in this building, it is an attractive, if surprising, piece in its own right and, perched on a gallery that is presumably C19, but which has the character of a Georgian structure, and looks rather appropriate. It sits comfortably in an interior densely populated with fixtures, fittings, memorials and other aspects of interest. It says it can see no justification for an entirely new floor through the nave, transept and tower and that the loss of the pews, even if one were to accept such a thing, does not necessitate this. Indeed, it is said that it is evident that the historic floor, punctuated with a large variety of ledgers, memorials and inscribed stones, is both interesting and bestows character on the interior. It thought that level access into the building could surely be far more sympathetically achieved.
21. The Victorian Society noted that the interior as it currently survives is largely as it was reimagined in the nineteenth century and said that the Statement of Significance must consider this aspect of the building’s significance (and the impact of the proposals on it) far more rigorously.
22. The Victorian Society observed that, given the significance of the building and the comprehensive nature and impact of what is proposed, an extraordinarily compelling and robust case from need would have to be presented, detailing how the church would be used day-to-day, what would go on here (and why), who and how many would be involved, and precisely why what is proposed is considered the best way of meeting needs that are clear and demonstrable, and demonstrating alternatives that have been explored and subsequently and justifiably dismissed.

23. The Victorian Society thought that many of the specified needs (such as level access to much of the building, improved heating, lighting and AV and an accessible lavatory) could be relatively easily met without contention. However, the Victorian Society considered that the need for almost wholesale clearance and reflooring of the interior is not articulated, or at least not justified.
24. The Victorian Society did not doubt that there were restrictions presented by the present interior - small, and densely furnished – and made clear that it was not asserting that the church was beyond any form of alteration. It acknowledged also the opportunity presented by a donor keen to assist the parish, and the possibility of engaging more actively with nearby university students. It wondered whether what was proposed was the best way of achieving these goals, or perhaps whether it was not even the best place to try. Certainly, the society went on, this is not, on the basis of the documentation, the best informed of proposals. The impression conveyed by the application is that far too much is trying to be squeezed into the historic structure, and that the option of an alternative site for what is desired (or at least an extension) should be explored. It concludes by saying that were the proposals to proceed a grade I-listed church interior would be left little more than a shell, and its Grade I-listing threatened.
25. On August 5, 2019, Arlow, Ch. directed the Petitioners to provide an assessment of the history and significance of the pews and pulpit, including the chancel pews.
26. The Petitioners responded that they had searched the Norfolk Records Office, consulted with the Care of Churches Buildings Team, reviewed publications such as Pevsner's *The Buildings of England*; Mortlock *The Guide to Norfolk Churches*; Trevor Cooper's *Pews, Benches & Chairs* and the National Heritage List for England without success.
27. On August 7, 2019 the Victorian Society wrote to the Court indicating it did not wish to become a Party Opponent.
28. I have dealt so far with the proposals inside the church. There are also proposals relating to its exterior including landscaping, the improvement of pedestrian access, lighting and signage. These do not, in my judgment, bear upon the historical or architectural significance of the church although the Petitioners should bear in mind the observations of Historic England in respect of signage. These improvements are clearly necessary and frankly overdue.
29. Listing. It was first listed on February 26, 1954. The church is Grade 1 listed. Its details show Details are "*C12, C13 and later. Flint rubble with stone and some red brick dressings; rendered chancel, lead roof (north transept tiled). Nave, Chancel, north transept, west tower and south porch. Two 2-light nave windows have Y tracery with brick drip moulds, traceried north transept window. West tower has diagonal buttresses, stair turret at north-east corner, belfry windows and crenellated brick parapet. 2-centred arch of south door inside a porch with brick quoins and stepped gable. Niche above outer arch. Interior (not inspected during the re-survey) is noted as having octagonal font and rood screen with ogee-leaded lights.*"

30. The Realities. It is important to understand what the reality of this church's position is. The proposal to re-order the church by allowing it to serve as a Christian Centre for students whilst retaining the capacity for it to be available for worship is the subject of the benefaction. The donation is not there for other alterations, enhancements, building extensions or the like. Therefore, on the one hand, there is this proposal. On the other, there is the certainty that this church will continue with a very small, though loyal, congregation. Its significant features, architecturally and historically, will remain whilst the church stands, in an increasing state of dilapidation. Its doors will be locked so that few, if any, will see its interior – whatever its listing. That is the context in which I have to consider the onerous test laid down for me in *In Re St. Alkmund, Duffield* [2013] Fam 158.
31. Would the proposals, if implemented, result in harm to the significance of the church as a building of special architectural or historical interest? The answer to that is in the affirmative.
32. How serious will the harm be? That is a matter that will be considered shortly. It is a complex question in this case. The greater the harm, the greater the benefit that will need to be demonstrated to justify the proposals and, if serious harm is to be caused to a Grade 1 listed building, the justification will need to be exceptional.
33. How clear and convincing is the justification for the proposals? That too will be considered but I find it a less difficult question to answer than that of how serious the harm will be. In determining that question I am bound to consider whether a viable alternative would achieve the same or similar results for the justified purpose.
34. The Harm. At first sight, it must appear that a re-ordering as substantial as this must create a high degree of harm: however, I am considering both the individual significance of specific features and the totality of the significance created by the building of the church and its furniture collectively. Whilst whether features are interesting, different, special, appropriate or have any other attributes is relevant to the assessment I have to make, it is the significance of the church as a building of *special architectural or historical interest* that ultimately I am judging.
35. Here, my judgment is that the analysis is far from straightforward.
36. I remind myself of the particular significance of certain features and now give my judgment on these. I will then deal with the church as a whole and give my conclusions on justification. These are the items capable individually of significance as identified by the Petitioners.
- a. Nave, 15th century, two 2 light windows with “Y” tracery and brick drip moulds. The roof is stainless steel, the steel being placed there in the 20c. Significance: High. I agree with this assessment and these features remain undisturbed and perhaps better able to be seen in a less cluttered church.
 - b. Chancel. 15c with tombs of the Bacon family below and monuments. Significance: High. I agree with this assessment also and am satisfied the Petitioners have in place proper measures to protect these tombs.
 - c. North Transept (19c), traceried window: Significance: Low-Moderate. I would assess this as moderate. It is not proposed to interfere with this feature.

- d. Tower – low square west tower with 1 bell installed 20c. Diagonal buttresses. Base from 12c but higher level and battlements 16c. Significance: High. I agree with this assessment. It is a particularly attractive feature of the church.
- e. South Porch 15c with brick quoins and stepped gable added in 17c. Significance High. Likewise, I agree with this assessment. This has been the object of some considerable comment by Historic England and, I understand, the planning authority and the original plan has been modified by the Petitioners so that the original door will open outwards and the glazed door placed behind it giving an open view of the porch when the building is in use. Whilst this does represent an alteration, I am satisfied that the compromise that has been achieved limits considerably any diminution of its ‘open’ characteristic.
- f. Octagonal font 14c with traceried bowl and panelled shaft: Significance: Moderate to High. I agree with this assessment and am satisfied that its relocation will in no way diminish its contribution to the significance of this church.
- g. Lectern formed from coarsely carved angel (15c) possibly from a hammerbeam roof. Significance: High. I agree with this assessment. It will be retained.
- h. Rood Screen with cusped and crocketed ogee arches (15c with Victorian Panels). Significance: High. I agree with the assessment of this screen and approve its retention within the re-ordered Church.
- i. Reredos – carved oak 19c incorporating text of Decalogue, Lord’s Prayer and Creed. Significance: Moderate. The Reredos has some interest and its significance is, in my judgment, low to moderate but it will be retained in any event.
- j. Organ – Bevington mechanical action pipe organ 19c and cabinet in Gothic style. Significance: Low. The organ’s significance as an organ I would agree is low or low-moderate, but the real issue is its significance in this church and its state. It is proposed to remove it.
- k. Altar table and rail: Oak, donated 19c by Gurney family. Significance: Low-Moderate. I agree with this assessment. These will be retained.
- l. Communion plate 17c. Significance: Moderate. I do not need to trouble with this as the proposals do not include it.
- m. Pulpit. Oak. 19c unremarkable. Significance: Low-Moderate. I would assess the pulpit’s significance as low.
- n. Pews – unremarkable oak pews with some panelled backs and plain bench ends. Late 19c. Significance: Low. I would assess the significance of these pews as low and, in this church, they seem incongruous. I note there were suggestions that some might be retained but, having seen the church, I judge that the effect would simply be ugly and curious.
- o. Monuments 17c and 18c floor tombs. Walls of chancel contain 17c monument to members of the Bacon family and circular bas relief of the Annunciation. Other 18c - 19c memorials on nave walls. Significance: Moderate-High. I assess the monuments and the bas relief in the chancel to be of high significance and I am pleased to note they are remaining. The suggestions for re-fixing of the memorials on the nave walls and the hatchment in the north transept will in my judgment give greater coherence to their presence. The hatchment, for instance, seems almost to be randomly placed in the north transept where its effect is lost.

- p. Floor: Victorian floor from elements of previous schemes. Significance Low-Moderate. The Victorian floor in the nave is not in particularly good condition and the proposal to raise the floor will, whilst extinguishing a view of it, preserve it. The chancel floor will be retained and it is clearly in much better condition and I would assess those tiles as of moderate significance.
- q. Other aspects such as the modest changes to the height of the gallery, proper access instead of by ladders, the modest provision of a lavatory and use of the area at the west end can do nothing but improve its current state as will the plans for the extremely narrow and small existing vestry. The removal of the rather pointless pews in the north transept will have no effect on the significance of the church in *Duffield* terms. The catering facilities in the north transept will affect its appearance, although its current state adds little, if anything, to the significance of the church. Were the scheme to have been in the nature of retaining the nave as it is with catering facilities in that transept, I may have had considerable worry as to whether the effect would have been incongruous in the context of a small church. However, this reservation is of considerably less moment in the context of this re-ordering.
- r. The arrangements allow of a completely fresh approach to heating. The church has so far only been able to afford unsightly radiant heating installed high up. I gained the impression it was not much use to the congregation. These plans will make the church a warmer and friendlier place.

37. The totality of the scheme will, of course, affect the church interior very considerably. It will present to the eye an entirely different picture from what is there now. I do not accept the Victorian Society's observation that in effect it is hollowing it out into a shell, particularly as the important and really significant features will remain, but I do accept that it is certainly a major change to this church, certainly as least as great as those that have gone before.

38. I do not concur necessarily with the Victorian Society's conclusion that "the interior as it currently survives is largely as it was reimagined in the nineteenth century". It is my view that this church has suffered from too little thought being given to it as a whole, and I am dubious whether there was a "reimagining" of it in the nineteenth century. It does not surprise me that the Petitioners have not found any assistance as to the history of the nave and chancel pews and the pulpit. They appear to the eye to be very ordinary and, in the case of the nave pews, do not contribute to a sense of proportion in the church as a whole. The Victorian contribution to the significance (in the *Duffield* sense) of many, many churches is considerable. It does not, however, follow that all Victorian changes (or those of any other era) have that effect just by virtue of having happened under Queen Victoria (or any other monarch). An example of that, dominating the western end of the Church, is the Bevington organ, of mid-Victorian origin but installed in 1966. It is out of proportion with the church generally and the gallery specifically. Unfortunately, it is now badly damaged. I am dubious as to any contribution it makes to the architectural or historical significance of this church.

39. Having made that assessment, I turn to the justification put forward by the Petitioners for this re-ordering. In the ordinary course of events, one might have hoped for some alterations to make the church more welcoming and useful – the sort of suggestions helpfully made by the Victorian Society. However, as I have already made clear that

is not the choice facing this particular church. Indeed, given its location, I very much doubt whether such alterations would have made any difference to the size of the congregation.

40. The issue here is the church has the possibility of achieving the one thing that utilises its location, namely to develop a connection with UEA that will bring new people to the church, which will offer support to young people, some of whom may find living away from their homes or countries very disorientating. The aim will be to use the nave area for activities more associated with a Christian Centre and the chancel area for worship and to keep and maintain its present congregation, who, I am told, are broadly supportive of the proposals. This will also mean that the church is not just for students but also for its congregation. I was told that even in its present state, some overseas students have felt a connection with the church, but also that despite the welcome from people, it is clear it cannot do much with that interest in its present state. As the review in 2010 made clear, the closed churchyard combined with a frequently closed church gives a gloomy and unwelcoming appearance however much that is belied by the people met if once you can get inside.
41. Alternatives have been considered but I can see how that would be difficult other than by building some kind of extension which seems unlikely to be possible given the space occupied by the church and, in fact, even if something were possible, more likely to damage its interesting external appearance.
42. It has happened, that through the generosity of a donor, the reality of making the connection between Christians at UEA and wider projects will be possible and is already causing much interest. The church will come back to life again. The donor has not sought to affect my decision in any way, but the interest is in establishing a student Christian Centre so that the wishes of the donor, the particular asset of the closeness of this church to the university has given a particular chance to this church which is unlikely to come again. It is clear to me that there is a need for such a centre, that it is a very important development for the mission of this church specifically and that instead of a declining and rather sad building despite having some wonderful features, it has a chance to flourish and have a new phase of its long existence.
43. Although I assess the damage to individual items of significance will be small, I accept that the change to the overall character of the church will be great. It is my judgment that its medieval features will not be damaged by this change although the effect of the whole will be different. It is my judgment that the justification is exceptional in this case and the combination of circumstances unique.
44. Accordingly, whilst I have found the issue of significance a complex matter in the case of this particular church, I have, in fact, found the question of justification straightforward and compelling. I have no doubt that this Petition should be granted as requested and that the Faculty should accordingly pass the Seal.
45. May I thank all the interested parties for their hard work and observations in this case. I have taken them all into consideration. The visit to the church was particularly instructive and helpful in this application. The major issue for Historic England has been the south porch and I am glad the Petitioners have amended the proposals in this regard having considered what was said by Historic England and the planning

authority after initially having been disinclined to do so. Applications work best when there is that spirit between those wanting to re-order and those whose function it is to advise and comment upon them.

46. There was a degree of frustration in some of the early observations of the Victorian Society and it is important that Petitioners do appreciate that for important consultative bodies with limited resources, the greater the degree of particularity that can be given, the simpler is the task to assess the scheme. I have not on this particular occasion agreed with some of the Victorian Society's observations, but I am always grateful for the expertise and assistance that this society gives to protect and enhance the extraordinary contribution to our churches made in that particular era. My viewing of this particular church assisted me considerably in drawing the conclusions I have, and together with the specific opportunity presented here, which may not arise again for this church, I have found the proposals entirely justified.
47. I impose one condition. If audio-visual equipment is to be affixed to the permanent structures of the church then its positioning is to be agreed with the DAC who will refer back to me if agreement cannot be reached.