

**Neutral Citation Number: [2023] ECC She 2**

**DIOCESE OF SHEFFIELD**

**In the Consistory Court**

**Her Honour Judge Sarah Singleton KC**

**Chancellor**

### **Judgment**

#### **Concerning the Petition of the Priest in Charge and Churchwarden of St Mary's Ecclesfield for the Reinstatement of a Medieval Altar (Stone Mensa) in North Transept Chapel**

##### **The Church**

1. The Church of St Mary in the Parish of Ecclesfield is a Grade 1 listed Church. It is a fine medieval cruciform structure; the tower was rebuilt in the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century. The Church occupies a prominent hillside position reflecting its substantial importance as a Parish dating back to the times when Ecclesfield was the principal settlement of Hallamshire.

##### **The Works**

2. At present the North Transept is a somewhat crowded space including various artefacts of no historical or architectural significance except for a medieval stone Mensa which is stored leaning against a wall obscured from view. The proposal under consideration is to create a prayer chapel in the space by clearing it except for the Mensa which would be moved to a central position to rest on a stone base to create a small altar which could be used to serve Holy Communion.

3. The works will enhance the North Transept considerably by removing modern clutter and creating a space more conducive to reflection and prayer than at present. As far as I can see the plans are reversible. The plans did include the installation of two ancient stone crosses located elsewhere at present. The DAC has advised, and the Parish has accepted their advice, that the plans to install of the ancient crosses should be separated out from the rest to proceed later with consultation.

##### **DAC Response**

4. The DAC recommend these works for approval subject to a proviso that the stone Mensa is monitored for any deterioration in its condition and the DAC and QI Architect reinvolved as necessary should that occur. As I have explained the DAC does not suggest consultation with the relevant Amenity Societies is necessary. I am aware that this last conclusion was not unanimous, and the issue has generated controversy to the extent that, sadly, two highly valued members (one of each view on this matter) have resigned.

## **Conclusion**

5. I am satisfied that these works do not affect the significance of this beautiful and ancient space as a building of special historical or architectural significance and should be supported and permitted. I agree with the DAC that consultation on this aspect of the plans is unnecessary. There is enthusiasm and a momentum for these works to be got on with. In my view they can be viewed as works of simple restoration. I have directed, on the online system that a faculty issue subject to the DAC Proviso to ensure the Mensa's condition is monitored during and after placing on the stone base.

**Sarah Singleton KC**  
**Chancellor of the Diocese**  
**7<sup>th</sup> August 2023**