

[2019] ECC Gui 1

**IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF  
THE DIOCESE OF GUILDFORD**

Date: 22 March 2019

**IN THE PARISH OF FARNHAM  
THE CHURCH OF St Andrew**

**In the matter of a petition** to install new audio-visual equipment

**JUDGMENT**

1. Mr Ptolemy Dean, the architect appointed under the Inspection of Churches Measure 1955, has now responded to my invitation for his comments upon the concerns earlier raised by Historic England. It has enabled me to remodel the Memorandum I drafted on 12 October 2018 and to incorporate much of its contents into this judgment.
2. In a letter dated 13 August 2018, Ms Liz Pollard, Assistant Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas of Historic England expressed her objections in pre-application advice. She freely acknowledged the recent and successful reordering which had swept away a series of piecemeal alterations to reveal the simplicity of the late-mediaeval work and the church's impressive internal space. I have seen and admired the pavilions constructed within the west end of the nave which serve as additional internal spaces in a church which has no available church-hall to serve it. She considered the scheme had been carefully considered, retaining the highly significant mediaeval work and increasing an appreciation of the internal character resulting in a tranquil and serene space.
3. Ms Pollard was far less appreciative of the proposals to install the new A/V equipment. She pointed out that as a Grade 1 listed building, St Andrews Church was of exceptional interest with only 2.5% of buildings listed at this grade. Her objection was directed towards the TV screens and speakers within the aisles. She considered that the success of the recent reordering lay

partly in its cohesive and considered approach and that extended to the introduction of modern materials and the location of speakers and light fittings discreetly located within the roof space so that they did not compete with or intrude upon the simplicity of the buildings internal character.

4. In contrast, she considered that the proposed TV screens and speakers fitted to the columns forming the arcade in the nave would be highly visible. As such she considered they were likely to jar with the church's established internal aesthetic. Her solution was to investigate alternative locations for the speakers and to establish their necessity given the uncontroversial location of a drop-down screen at the chancel arch which, when retracted, would not be visible. She suggested consideration be given to screens mounted on mobile units which could be removed at the end of each session when used, stored and re-installed when next required.
5. Her objections were, in part, directed towards what she considered to be the 'unfortunate' failure to provide a Statement of Significance or a Statement of Need. She rightly pointed out that petitioners who fail to produce these documents as part of their scheme fail to demonstrate that they have a proper understanding of the building's significance including the aesthetic and historic values which contribute to its internal character and which justify the proposed scheme. I consider that this is an important comment by Historic England because it goes to the decision-making process. It is not simply enough to make an application. Particularly with controversial elements, the petitioners have to show that, notwithstanding the importance of the building as a Listed Building, the petitioners have thought-through the implications of the proposed works and thereby balanced in a proportionate way the public interest in preserving an important building or interior on the one hand and the introduction of new elements which, without a clearly established need, would best be avoided.
6. I am satisfied that the petitioners had taken the criticisms of Historic England to heart. The papers before me include a Statement of Significance and a detailed Statement of Need. The latter, in particular, addresses in section 2 the needs; in section 3 how the proposals are said to meet those needs; in section 4 the justification for the proposals by explaining why those needs cannot be met without the proposed changes and in section 5, the justification, where there is a likelihood of harm, such that the benefits provided by the proposed works would outweigh that harm. They address the concerns of Historic England.
7. First, I am satisfied that the introduction of an audio-visual scheme must be designed to benefit all of those seated in the church. It cannot reasonably be

introduced as a half-measure. The drop-down screen, hidden by the chancel arch when not in use, offers those sitting in the nave with an uninterrupted view. That is not so with those sitting in the aisles. Were it otherwise, the petitioners could not reasonably have contemplated the cost of installing aisle screens.

8. Second, I am satisfied there is a demand created by the regular use of the aisle seating. The church has properly set out to be a focus for community activities which extend beyond its liturgical use. Whilst I appreciate that many churches operate both as a church and as a place for community events without the need for audio-visual equipment of any sort, save perhaps for a sound enhancement system, this church, like many others, may legitimately see its mission as being enhanced by such a scheme.
9. Third, I am not persuaded that mobile screen units are the solution. There is, of course, the perennial problem of storage. The mobile screens will not disappear when not in use; rather, they will be stored, perhaps *en masse* in a side chapel or in the pavilions where their impact is likely to be less attractive than if they were to remain on the aisle columns. Church volunteers being church volunteers, there are bound to be occasions when they are left in an aisle until someone else moves them. There is also the hazard of loose wiring upon the floor and the intrinsically greater risk of damage when delicate screens are moved.
10. The Diocesan Advisory Committee made 4 recommendations which I endorse. The first three must form conditions which are to attach to the grant. First, the Samsung screens should have white or no borders and manage any images so they blend with the white background when screens are 'at rest'. Second, the screen should be no wider than the width of the pillar ensemble against which they are set. Third, the DAC are to approve details of the fixings to the pillars. Finally, the views of the Inspecting Architect were to be sought.
11. These are clearly designed to minimise the impact of the screens and to strike the correct balance between the aesthetic impact of the introductions of the screens and their utility.
12. The second element of the scheme was the introduction of speakers which it was originally intended were to be attached to the aisle columns, thereby significantly increasing the intrusive 21<sup>st</sup> century element. It is the relocation of the speakers that has become the more recent focus of attention.

13. In acknowledgment of the views of Historic England and the DAC I directed that the views of the Inspecting Architect, Mr Ptolemy Dean, be sought. I recalled that he was the architect responsible for the very successful remodelling of the interior which has been widely praised. He is perhaps the most distinguished ecclesiastical architect of the present day. His most prestigious role is currently as the Surveyor of the Fabric of Westminster Abbey. He was responsible for the recently opened Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries and the star-shaped Weston Tower designed by him. His views were sought upon the introduction of David Hockney's window, the Queen's Window, now placed in Westminster Abbey.
14. Hazelwood Sound and Vision Limited have produced a scheme containing three options dealing with the location, and type, of speaker required in the building. Option 1 is the replacement of the existing high-level speakers, requiring 4 cabinets, angled down to project the sound beam. Their high location, some 5 metres above the congregation, would result in poor, uncontrolled sound in some of the frequency ranges, likely to muddy the amplification of male voices. However, the increased costs of this alteration would be £3,000, the cheapest of the three options.
15. The second option is the introduction of what are described as steerable beam loudspeakers to be mounted on the aisle columns housed in a more rectangular cabinet which might be mounted vertically and therefore appear less intrusive. However, the speaks measure 172 (W) x 215 (D) x 714 (H) . These would cost an extra £6,000.
16. Finally, there is the option to install 4 steerable beam loudspeakers at high level. These would clearly be the best option aesthetically and would produce enhanced intelligibility. The additional cost would be £12,000.
17. Mr Dean clearly favours not having the speakers attached to the columns which would not address 'our visual concern about clutter', concerned as he is, 'about the beauty of this ancient building'. In my judgment this rules out the second option as a viable solution. The screens must, of course, be visible: that is their *raison d'être*. Not so, the speakers. Although Mr Dean favours either the first or the third option, the first option rules itself out as the speakers will not produce clear, intelligible sound. As Hazelwoods state, "This [option] largely negates the main reason for replacing the presently installed speakers since their location is the cause of poor vocal intelligibility in church." In other words, the very reason why the petitioners seek to replace them.

18. My reading of the combined effect of Mr Dean's comments and the suggestions from Hazelwoods is that, in reality, there is only one viable route to pursue. That is the third option and the installation of 4 steerable beam speakers at high level. If that results in a higher cost, then I consider that is the true cost of the audio-visual scheme that the petitioners seek to introduce.
19. I grant a provisional faculty to permit the introduction of an audio-visual scheme but subject to the following conditions:
- (i) The Samsung screens should have white or no borders and manage any images so they blend with the white background when screens are 'at rest';
  - (ii) The screen should be no wider than the width of the pillar ensemble against which they are set;
  - (iii) The DAC are to approve details of the fixings to the pillars;
  - (iv) No speakers should be affixed to the aisle pillars; permission is conditional upon the installation of 4 steerable beam loudspeakers at high level.
20. As I have not had a hearing upon this petition and have not, therefore, heard whether the petitioners object to the conditions I have provisionally imposed, I grant them liberty to apply within 21 days of receipt of this judgment to respond by making further representations in writing or to seek a hearing. If no such response is made, the judgment will be made final.

ANDREW JORDAN  
CHANCELLOR