

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF LEICESTER

IN THE MATTER of MARKET HARBOROUGH, ST DIONYSIUS

IN THE MATTER of a PETITION FOR REORDERING

CHANCELLOR BLACKETT-ORD

The Feast of Chad, Bishop of Lichfield

2 March 2020

JUDGMENT

1. There is a Petition before me for a faculty for the substantial reordering of the fine Grade I listed parish church of St Dionysius at Market Harborough.
2. The church is prominent in Market Harborough. It is mainly 14th and 15th century with a particularly fine 14th century ashlar tower and fine crocketed spire. Internally, there are galleries accessed by stairs which are dated 1836 although their look is Georgian. A substantial restoration in 1857 combined many of the older features.
3. The church is a successful church. In 2017 it was designated as one of the six “resourcing churches” in Leicester. This means it has additional resources to enable it to reach out to the town and its surrounding villages with a particular aim towards people who are not part of any Christian community.

4. It usually has four services every Sunday. Occasional services (a funeral, Christingle or school Christmas service) can exceed over 400 in the congregation.
5. It needs more space in the nave, aisles and chancel with moveable seating; a team administration office; an enclosed meeting space; a new kitchen, refreshment point and toilets; a welcoming entrance, and improved audio-visual systems, Wi-Fi, heating and lighting.
6. The problem is that its site is confined within the city centre, with virtually no scope for enlargement of its plan.
7. At site visits in January 2012 and October 2014 the DAC gave encouragement for a fairly full refurbishment and in May 2014 Ellis Scott of English Heritage (as it then was) also gave cautious encouragement.
8. After that time a vigorous but well-conducted discussion ensued in which the major conservation and national church bodies made useful suggestions which were adopted or sensibly considered by the team vicar James Pickersgill and the Re-ordering Project Committee of the PCC under the chairmanship of Rennie Quin.
9. When I first began to study the papers which accompanied the Petition I was pessimistic. I thought that it would be almost impossible to devise a scheme which would, on the one hand, satisfy the considerable needs of the congregation and on the other hand preserve the very valuable historic and architectural characteristics of the church.

10. What I then found was a story of constructive criticism being sensibly considered and discussed with care, and a solution hammered out which is acceptable to all parties.
11. I must particularly express my admiration for the moderate tone in which the argument was conducted. Those involved on the one hand were the DAC, the team vicar and the chairman of the reordering project. On the other were Ellis Scott of English Heritage, followed by Janine Dykes at Historic England, Lisa McIntyre and Keri Dearmer for CBC (Church Care), Sara Crofts, Rachel Broomfield and Elgan Jones of SPAB, Sophia Laird for the Victorian Society, and James Darwin for the Georgian Group. The architects were Michael Clews and David Spragg of Acanthus Clews.
12. Perhaps none of these individuals were totally satisfied with the result, but that is inevitable. What they achieved is a result which everyone could live with. There was only one small matter which caused me some concern, and which I will not mention, because it was explained and satisfied me almost as soon as I raised it.
13. Everyone involved should be congratulated. It has been a fine bit of work.
14. I allow the Petition as asked.
15. The complexity of the work has led the DAC, whilst recommending the works, to express thirteen provisos on the manner in which the work ought to be carried out. I adopt their suggestion, and the thirteen provisos will be conditions of the faculty.

16. On that basis, I allow the Petition as asked.

MARK BLACKETT-ORD
Chancellor
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The Registrar to Leicester Diocese