

**Neutral Citation Number: [2023] ECC She 4**

**Diocese of Sheffield**

**In the Consistory Court**

**HHJ Sarah Singleton KC Chancellor**

In the Matter of St John the Evangelist Goole - Carved Stone Pinnacle Removal

### **Judgment**

#### **1. The Application**

The Petitioners in this matter seek permission for the permanent removal of a stone pinnacle from the roof of the church. On the 24th of February 2023 I granted an interim faculty for the removal of the pinnacle having been advised by stonemasons who were working on the roof of the church that it was dangerously unstable and could fall at anytime causing injury loss and damage. The experienced specialist stonemasons had been carrying out previously authorised works of repair and renewal. The Petitioners have worked with the Diocesan Resourcing Churches Buildings officer and the DAC and have come to the conclusion that it is not practical nor affordable to replace the removed pinnacle. The proposal is for removal for the foreseeable future and for the base to be rendered weather proof with a capping stone.

#### **2. The Church**

I thank the petitioners for a useful and vivid description of this church in their statement of significance. St John the Evangelist is a grade 2 listed church constructed between 1843 and 1848. It is a good example of Victorian gothic revival architecture. Goole was a town which had only recently developed at the time this church was built. It was an important inland port created by the construction of the Aire and Calder canal to a junction with the River Ouse. The church construction was paid for by the Aire and Calder Navigation Company. The church is important to the local community. It is estimated that more than 10,000 people visit per year for services, occasional offices such as weddings, baptisms and funerals and for events. Pevsner describes the church as, "remarkably large and stately, with nave and transepts and a crossing tower with a fine tall spire supported by elegant flying buttresses...".

#### **3. The impact of the works**

The Statement of Significance describes the roof of the church and the Petitioners' case that the necessary permanent removal of this feature will cause minimal harm to the significance of this church as a building of historical and architectural note as follows:-

*The decorative pinnacles play an important role in demarcating the relative importance of the elevations of the church, the 'front' and 'back' so to speak. Somewhat unusually the most decorative elevation, the parapet of which is adorned with tall pinnacles, faces away from the town and looks towards the docks, while the plain north elevation, with no pinnacles, effectively the back of the church, faces what is now the town centre. This speaks to the*

*patronage of the church, the historic importance of the docks and the shifting focus of the town over time.*

*Fortunately, all of the pinnacles on the south elevation have been able to be repaired in situ as the loss of one of these would have had a detrimental impact on the significance of the building. The pinnacle on the west elevation apex was essentially transitional, smaller and less decorative than those on the south parapet, but more decorative than the plain parapet of the north elevation. While its loss does have some impact on the historical and aesthetic significance of the church, it does not prevent the relative importance of the elevations from being understood or diminish the building as an example of the Victorian Gothic Revival aesthetic. The benefit of preventing a potentially catastrophic fall, if the pinnacle were to become detached, outweighs any minor harm to significance.*

The Petitioners have followed the advice of the DAC and taken a number of photographs recording the pinnacle in situ before removal.

#### **4. Consultation and Public Notice**

The Petitioners have given notice of these works to Historic England, the CBC and the Victorian Society. They have each confirmed that they have no comment to make. The Petitioners have also informed the relevant local planning authority who have confirmed they do not object to the proposal of permanent removal. Notices of the proposal have been properly displayed and no objections have been received.

#### **5. DAC**

The DAC have recommended the works for approval at their meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023. Their proviso that photos and measurement of the removed finial be carefully filed so that a replica might eventually be created when funds permit has been complied with.

#### **6. Decision and Reasons**

The removal of the carved stone pinnacle in February 2023 was essential to prevent a potentially catastrophic incident of it falling from the church roof. The in situ photographs that were taken demonstrate, even to the amateur eye, how precarious it was. I am persuaded by the evidence of the Petitioners that, for the foreseeable future, it would be impractical to impossible to replace it either by repair and reinstallation or by the construction of a replica. The harm of the permanent removal is relatively small having regard for the transitional position occupied by this pinnacle. It was, fortunately, not one of the tall striking pinnacles on the south elevation which have been repaired in situ. In all the circumstances therefore, I do direct that this Faculty be issued.

Sarah Singleton KC

HHJ Sarah Singleton KC  
Chancellor of the Diocese

17<sup>th</sup> December 2023