

Neutral Citation Number: [2019] ECC Bla 3

Application Ref: 2019-029380

In the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Blackburn

In the Matter of Haslingden, St James the Great (Grade II)

In the Matter of a Petition dated 15th January 2019 presented by the Reverend David Stephenson, Vicar, Roy Pinkerton, Churchwarden, and Kaye Ridings, Churchwarden

Judgment

1. The church has ancient roots, but the current building dates from 1780. It was enlarged and a tower was added in 1827, and later alterations occurred in the C19th. The current proposals, relating to the window protection, have attracted some adverse comment, but in dealing with that, no extended judgment is required.
2. The petitioners seek permission to renew the protective coverings to the windows on the two levels of this Georgian church building, which claims to be the (geographically) highest church in the country. The protective 'plastic' has been in place for many years, and it has deteriorated because of the effects of weather, including sunlight, and in places has been broken. This is a long-term project anticipated to last for around 5 years, as funds are gathered to cover the costs, which are put at around £27000.
3. The DAC are supportive, but the Georgian Group have raised the question whether a wire mesh with fixings into the joints between the stones would look better and be more effective, and also, and this is an important point, would provide better ventilation than the solid 'plastic'. It is certainly within my experience, that in times past contractors sought to seal the protective material around each window, thus preventing ventilation, which lead to all sorts of further problems.
4. At first, matters rested there after this initial response from the Georgian Group, but at my request, the parish priest, Fr David Stephenson, responded to their concerns in a helpful letter. The parish were satisfied from their proposed contractor, that issues of ventilation had been taken fully into account, but they wished to pursue the 'full' covering rather than to change to wire grilles. Their chief reason I apprehend is that this will provide better protection against 'weather' than the grilles could possibly do.
5. A subsidiary reason that occurs to me, is that the whole scheme will take a long time to implement, and if the parish were otherwise minded to go for the grilles, there would be a mix of protection for an extended period until all the 'plastic' were removed and replaced entirely with grilles. That would look odd, and do nothing overall for the appearance of the building.

6. The Georgian Group has indicated that they do not wish to become formal objectors in this matter and have asked that I take their points into consideration when I come to a decision. That I am very happy to do.
7. It seems to me the practical issue of more extensive protection being afforded against the weather in this high and exposed location, by the 'plastic', is a good and sufficient reason for the parish to continue with their original proposal. Once the issue of proper ventilation has been addressed, as I am satisfied it has, there is no reason to prefer the grilles. The overall appearance during the works will in my view also be better. The contractors are a well-known and well respected firm in the diocese.
8. A faculty will therefore issue; the petitioners may have until 31st August 2022 to complete the work, that is, three years or so. This long period will hopefully allow them sufficient time to raise the funds.

John W. Bullimore
Chancellor
22nd August 2019