

In the matter of St Bartholomew, Maresfield

Judgment

1. A faculty is sought for various works at St Bartholomew, Maresfield to provide two toilets (one wheelchair accessible) and a kitchen in the south transept and install glazed screens between nave and each transept.
2. The church is grade I listed, Norman in origin, with transepts added by J Oldrid Scott in the nineteenth century. The listing statement says little on the interior, referring particularly to a Jacobean pulpit and communion rail.
3. The Statement of Significance and Statement of Need have been prepared by the parish's inspecting architect, Mr Peter Pritchett. The former is well illustrated with good quality photographs such that I consider I can fairly dispose of the matter without visiting the church. Consultation about the proposals begun in 2016. The current iteration has been revised, more than once, in response to recommendations and suggestions.

Diocesan Advisory Committee

4. On 21 June 2019, the DAC issued a Notification of Advice recommending the works.

Church Buildings Council

5. The CBC was involved from the beginning of the consultation process and made constructive observations which were largely adopted by the parish, omitting certain more adventurous features. It was content to defer to the DAC thereafter.

Victorian Society

6. The Victorian Society elected not to become a party opponent but invited the Court to take into account the content of an email written to the parish's inspecting architect on 4 July 2019. The Society conceded the principle of the introduction of the facilities into the south transept, but queried the size of the kitchen and the need for two, rather than one, toilet. The Society observed that the partitioning of the north transept would obscure views of the rose window, and accentuate the narrowness of the unaisled interior. The petitioners have gone as far as they can to meet these comments.

Historic England

7. A letter of 24 May 2019 expresses Historic England's appreciation to the parish for making changes to the original proposals to take into account their observations. They comment that the light-touch glazed screen will achieve the necessary separation of space while 'retaining an appreciation of Scott's design intentions'. The kitchen and toilets will 'see

minimal change to Scott's scheme or intervention to the building'. They recommended the retention of the north transept's single pew, and the inspecting architect has confirmed it will be retained.

Local planning authority

8. The Senior Heritage Officer of Wealden District Council, in a letter of 4 June 2019, considered that proposal was 'a practical and sympathetic way to provide the required toilet and kitchen facilities in a reversible manner with minimal intervention to the church fabric'. She also intimated approval for the glazed screen for the north transept.

Society for the Protecting of Buildings

9. The SPAB were kept fully informed of the proposal in its various iterations but did not engage. I am satisfied that they have no comment to make.

Public notice

10. No objections were received in the registry following public notice.

The Duffield framework

11. I remind myself of the guidance of the Court of Arches in *Re St Alkmund, Duffield* [2013] Fam 158, and the burden which lies on the proponents of change to listed buildings. There will be a degree of *harm* to the significance of this church as a building of special architectural or historic interest, but it will not be substantial and the changes will be entirely reversible with negligible impact on the fabric. The *justification* for them is clear and convincing. Even the consultees who have expressed reservations accept the need for toilets and kitchen/servery facilities and the use of the transepts as self-contained meeting spaces. In my assessment, notwithstanding the observations of the Victorian Society, the public benefit from the works will considerably *outweigh* the harm. I am fortified in this conclusion by the assessment of Historic England that 'the current proposals achieve an effective balance between the parish's aspirations and the significance of the building in the least harmful and practical way'.
12. In deference to the Victorian Society, and adopting the practice commended in *Re St Peter & St Paul, Aston Rowant* [2019] ECC Oxf 3, I ask myself whether the proposal could be achieved in a less harmful manner. A smaller kitchen and a single toilet might lessen the harm, but I am satisfied on the evidence, bolstered by the support derived from the other consultees, that scaling down these facilities would compromise both the vision and purpose of the project.
13. It follows that a faculty should issue, and I so direct.