

DIOCESE OF SHEFFIELD

In the Consistory Court

Her Honour Judge Sarah Singleton QC
Chancellor

In the Matter of St Helen Burghwallis

Judgment

1. The works proposed

By their petition of 21st December 2021 the Petitioners seek Faculty permission to renew and repair the roof the Church of St Helen Burghwallis which is a Grade 1 listed church.

They describe the works in the documentation they have submitted as follows:

Due to a partial collapse on 17th October 2020.

Renewing, repairing and replacing all the roof as a whole, reusing 70% of the existing sound tiles is more cost effective than renewing piecemeal at different dates. The incorporation of insulation in the rebuild will reduce future heating running costs and also adhere to the fifth mark of mission – 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth'. Enabling the St Helen's church to work towards net zero carbon emissions.

The Petition confirms that all the necessary funds for these works are in place.

The two notable features of what is proposed are:

1. The intention to reuse as many of the existing roof tiles as possible (70% is estimated)
2. The plan to incorporate insulation in the new roofing for the reasons expressed in the description of work.

2. The History and Architectural significance of the Church

Historic England describes the church thus:

The Grade I listed St Helen's Church is a core landmark of the small village of Burghwallis, with several surviving architectural features hinting at a pre-Conquest construction. Most of the surviving fabric dates from the 14th century onwards. The church was comprehensively restored in the mid to late 18th century. The 12th century tower was rebuilt in the early 1890s. The distinctive combination of large

quoins with 'herring-bone' style masonry comprising the thick walls of the nave and chancel is also of particular interest, as are the battlements and finials at rooftop level.

A fuller narrative of the church's long and fascinating history is found on the Burghwallis Parish Council website sourced from the work of local historian Margaret Burns.

3. The DAC and Historical Amenity Societies

At their December 2021 meeting the DAC recommended the works for approval subject to this proviso:

That the work is subject to a rigorous monitoring process, both before or after the work takes place, to make sure that the introduction of the insulation does not have a detrimental effect on the building.

During consultations the DAC recommended consultation with Historic England, The Victorian Society, The 20th Century Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB).

Historic England replied fully.

The Victorian Society and the 20th Century Society replied to say they had no comment on the works.

SPAB did not reply but were included in the formal DAC invitation during the consultation period and I therefore infer that they have no separate comment.

Historic England's comments on the works are set out in their letter of November 2021 to the incumbent and joint Petitioner, the Reverend Christopher Herbert.

They read as follows:

Historic England supports the proposal to renew the existing roof re-using existing red clay tiles and replacing them like-for-like where necessary. New rather than reclaimed tiles to match existing should be used where the existing ones cannot be salvaged. The installation of insulation above rafters should be carefully accommodated without causing harm to the interior roof timbers and decorative ceilings of the church (only accessed from above) and with minimal disturbance to external historic fabric. The chancel and nave gable apex crosses contribute to the special significance and historic character of this Grade I listed building. No justification for their replacement has been provided. If these features are salvageable, they should be retained and restored.

We would advise against the use of standard NHL 2 and 3.5 unless its past use in the areas affected by the development has been identified. The mortar used for the roof renewal works should be customised to match existing historic mortar and be suitable for the stonework used for the construction of the church. The analysis of historic mortar on site should ideally inform the mortar specifications proposed. This will help to ensure that the new mortar looks right and performs well. We urge you to refer to the guidance provided in our document 'Repointing Brick and Stone Walls' (2017) and

'Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating Pitched Roofs at Rafter Level'
(2016) available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/find/a-z-publications>

The Parish were asked by the Registrar to respond to Historic England and have confirmed that they agree with Historic England's views in respect of the chancel and nave gable apex crosses and that conservation and repair would be preferable. They propose to review this once high-level access equipment is in position.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

These are works of essential maintenance and renewal and therefore uncontroversial in a legal sense, they are necessary and will not result in harm to the significance of the church as a building of special architectural or historic interest; on the contrary, if they are not undertaken harm will result.

The plans to conserve, repair and reuse the roof tiles and the acceptance of the principle that the chancel and nave apex crosses should be retained and repaired rather than replaced if possible are attractive and proper features of the proposed works. The inclusion of insulation if that can be done in sympathy with the ancient structure and decorations is also a positive feature of these plans.

I propose therefore to direct that a Faculty issue to permit these works subject to the proviso suggested by the DAC and that they be undertaken in accordance with Historic England's suggestions. In the event, once high level access is obtained, that the condition of the chancel and nave apex crosses is such as to prevent compliance with these provisos the Petitioners may, after consultation with the DAC and further notification to Historic England apply to the Court for directions to vary the relevant proviso.

HHJ Sarah Singleton QC
Chancellor
2nd May 2022