



*Faculty – Grade II\* listed city centre church built in 1725-6 and later enlarged, added to, and remodelled – Major reordering to include: Removal of wooden draught lobbies and creation of new glazed welcome area; Re-ordering of sanctuary including retrospective permission for the introduction of a nave altar; Installation of internal and external lighting scheme; Resurfacing of external car park – DAC recommending proposals for approval – Objections received from Historic England, the Church Buildings Council, Historic Buildings and Places, and the Victorian Society but no-one elected to become a party opponent – Faculty granted*

**Application Ref: 2021-064049**

**IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF  
THE DIOCESE OF BLACKBURN**

Date: Easter Sunday, 9 April 2023

**Before:**

**THE WORSHIPFUL DAVID HODGE KC, CHANCELLOR**

**In the matter of:**

**St George the Martyr, Preston**

**THE PETITION OF:**

**FATHER DAVID CRAVEN (Parish Priest)**

**and ROBERT FEELEY and**

**JANELLE THOMPSON (Churchwardens)**

This is an unopposed petition, determined on the papers and without a hearing.

Objections were received from Historic England, the Church Buildings Council, Historic Buildings and Places, and the Victorian Society but none of them elected to become a party opponent.

The following cases are referred to in the Judgment:

*Re All Saints, Hooton Pagnell* [2017] ECC She 1

*Re St Alkmund, Duffield* [2013] Fam 158

*Re St Laurence, Combe* [2022] ECC Oxf 5

## JUDGMENT

### Introduction and background

1. This is an online faculty petition, dated 20 December 2022, by the parish priest and the two churchwardens of this Grade II\* listed, city centre church (situated within the Winckley Square Conservation Area). As described in the petition, the proposals are for:

Reordering works including:

- (1) The removal and disposal of two wooden internal draught lobbies at the north and south entrances to the church.
- (2) The installation of a new glazed entrance porch to the north door and a wooden glazed screen to the south door.
- (3) The removal of three rows of pews and pew platforms at the west end, reconfiguring the heating pipes and making good of the tiled floor.
- (4) Removal and disposal of a nave altar, installed previously without permission, and the introduction of a new bespoke altar.
- (5) The removal of the raised plinth from the centre of the sanctuary and the installation of a carpet.
- (6) The introduction of a hanging cross, taken from the now demolished church of Holy Trinity, Preston to be hung on wires above the sanctuary entrance.
- (7) The installation of an internal and external lighting scheme.
- (8) The resurfacing of the external car park.

All in accordance with North West Design Collective drawings numbered 2119.01.02, 03, 05, 06, 2119.03.01, 04B, 06C; a quotation from Ormsby of Scarisbrick Ltd dated 7 April 2022; a quotation, specification, drawings and data sheets from Anthony J Smith (Glos) Ltd dated 26 April 2022; a quotation from FTS Merit dated 25 May 2022; and a quotation from The Imacadam Group Ltd dated 1 June 2022

Using quotes provided by potential contractors, alongside advice from the church architect, the total estimated cost of the works is some £100,000. According to the petition, conversations are ongoing with the local planning authority regarding the installation of the exterior lighting. This will be progressed once further details from the contractor have been received; but it does not appear to the petitioners that there will be any issues about applying for planning permission.

The petitioners anticipate that the work will begin within a month of the faculty being granted; and, depending upon the availability of materials, their hope is that the work will be completed within six months. The proposal has the full support of the District Church Council.

2. The City Parish of Preston comprises two churches: The Minster and Guild Church of St John the Evangelist and the Parish Church of St George the Martyr. Both churches are Grade II\* listed places of worship. They are both of significance to the city and beyond; and the parish consider that it is imperative to ensure their proper upkeep and repair. The parish maintain an Anglo-Catholic liturgy, ensuring a place for those who prefer this style of worship. The Minster has a civic role to play within the city by hosting mayoral services and other events throughout the year. It also has a key role to play in the Preston Guild celebrations, which take place once every twenty years. Both churches were reordered between 1997 and 2003 as part of Parish Prospect Preston, and this involved significant refurbishment and renovation. The reordering has enabled both churches to be accessible for community use, and they are used for many events each week for people from across the city, including concerts, exhibitions, meetings and performances.

3. Amongst the many documents uploaded in support of the application, there are annotated photo sheets and images showing the areas of the church the subject of the proposed reordering and the proposed location of the new lighting and cable runs; floor plans and elevations; architectural drawings and specifications of the proposed works, with data sheets, quotations and estimates; and a liturgical statement explaining the reasons for the proposal to remove the existing nave altar and how this will help to achieve a more seemly and dignified celebration of the Mass, fulfilling the church's aspirations to become a centre of Anglo-Catholic worship, and also improving views of the tabernacle and the apse at the east end of the church. Annexed to this judgment is an annotated photo sheet showing images of the areas of the church affected by the proposed reordering.

#### The church building

4. The church of St George the Martyr was first listed as a Grade II\* building on 27 September 1979. The listing entry reads:

Church. 1725-6 (as-chapel-of-ease), enlarged 1799 (probably by addition of transepts), cased in stone 1843-4 (and tower probably added at this time), chancel added 1848, nave raised and remodelled 1884-5 by Garlick, Park & Sykes. Sandstone ashlar with slate roofs. Nave with north and south aisles, north and south transepts, apsidal chancel, and a porch in the form of a small 3-stage tower attached to the west end of the south aisle. Simple Romanesque style (developed from plain Georgian style of original). The nave and aisles were in one vessel before 1884, the transepts and chancel then being of full height, but the nave now has an added clerestory with pilaster strips and corbel table, a large circular multifoil in each bay, and at the west front a small added baptistry and a wheel window. Otherwise, the exterior is almost as it was in the mid C19, with round-headed openings throughout. The tower/porch has a doorway with moulded surround in a gabled doorcase, a pilastered 2nd stage with one window and a corbel table, and a slightly set back belfry stage with 2 narrow louvred windows and a corbel table in each side, and a parapet with a pierced roundel in the centre and simple corner

pinnacles. The south aisle has 3 bays with corbel tables (and buttresses replacing pilaster strips), and one tall window with much stepped reveal in each bay; the north aisle has 4 bays in matching style but with a doorway in the 1st bay matching that of the tower. The transepts have pilaster strips and corbel tables, and broad 2-bay gable walls with matching windows, and roundels in the gables. The small apsidal chancel also has pilaster strips and corbel tables, and 3 windows. INTERIOR: 6-bay aisle arcades (1884, replacing galleries) with square waterleaf capitals to the columns and roll-moulded 2-centred arches; tall wall-shafts to semi-circular arched trusses under a flat ceiling with painted panels; painted murals throughout, by C Almquist of Sweden (recently restored); C20 gallery inserted in south transept.

5. Attached to the south-west entrance to the church, and approached from the interior of the church through the southern draught lobby, is the church hall. According to the entry at page 512 of the volume of *Pevsner's Buildings of England for Lancashire: North* (edited by Clare Hartwell and Nikolaus Pevsner in 2009) this is "... instantly recognisable as the work of Francis Roberts. Understated, finely finished, in random coursed sandstone with a graduated Cumbrian slate roof and a glazed lantern with deep eaves."

6. Neither the listing entry nor the entry in *Pevsner* mention either the pews or the draught lobbies within the church.

#### The Statement of Significance

7. The application is supported by a helpful, but partisan, 17-page, illustrated Statement of Significance, prepared by the church architect, which was amended in November 2022 following what is described as "an extremely beneficial and positive meeting" with a member and officers of the Church Buildings Council (the **CBC**). The Statement notes that: "*The proposals ... have not been altered but the statements have been improved to help justify the reasoning behind the proposals.*" I would endorse the criticism made of an earlier iteration of this Statement by Mr Matthew Saunders of Historic Buildings and Places, in his further consultation response of 27 July 2022 (referenced below), that "*a Statement of Significance is meant to be a disinterested assessment of quality and interest*" rather than a justification of the reasoning underlying the proposals which form the subject of the faculty application.

8. In a section headed 'Overview', the Statement of Significance suggests that

... the complete preservation of all historic fabric is not wholly necessary in order to conserve the historical significance of this Grade II\* listed church. The removal of some items to support the continued use, mission, presence and accessibility of the church significantly outweighs the harm.

The heritage value and significance of the Church of St. George the Martyr lies mainly in its history as a chapel of ease being extended and altered during the time of great growth in the town and local area. This element will not be affected by the proposal. However it is the interior which holds the most interest and value of the building, which is, almost entirely, highly decorated with painted murals by Carl Almquist of Sweden and has a rare Father Willis organ.

The Statement notes that the Church is on the Heritage at Risk Register as having '*significant issues associated with the 1843 stone encasement of the earlier church, including multiple fracturing of the stone caused by expanding iron cramps*'.

9. Under the heading '*The Brief*', the Statement records that the proposals for the re-ordering works include the following:

#### THE SANCTUARY

- The resurrection of a timber decorated hanging rood at the chancel arch.
- Replacement of the timber painted altar with a simple stone altar and introduction of feature red carpet.
- Removal of the two raised steps and dais to create a safer high altar area and eliminate the trip hazard caused by the two raised steps.

#### THE WEST END

- Removal of two Victorian glazed and dark stained porches/vestibules to both north and south entrances to create an accessible entrance into church and enable wheelchair bound people to independently access church whilst maintaining a weather and wind proof barrier.
- Removal of three rows of pews from each of the two banks of seating to create an accessible entrance into church and an accessible area to the west end of church around the font and baptistry. This also enables an area to be created for a moment of pause and reflection at the west end of church to enable a view of the highly decorated interior of the church.
- Installation of a new larger glazed porch to the north entrance and the creation of a matching screen to the internal southern entrance.

#### LIGHTING SCHEME

- Replacement of the internal modern brass chandeliers with directional and flood lighting discreetly fixed to internal roof trusses to create both uplighting and pin point spot lighting to best enhance the internal decoration. This scheme has been designed by church lighting specialist Anthony Smith.

10. The description of the church interior includes the following:

Vestibules : The existing Victorian internal porches, to both the north and south entrances, are constructed in dark stained timber to two sides with a flat ceiling over. The timber structures are tall and slender in elevation with solid lower sections with two stages/layers of glazed leaded lights with semi-circular heads over. The leadwork to the glazing is intricate and delicate in design although the glass is plain with a slight opaqueness. The joinery is also delicate with slender panels and posts. The existing mosaic flooring echoes the plan form and layout of the porch with a mosaic tiled patterned border bounding the perimeter of both porches.

Unfortunately the joinery, on both porches, has been affected in the past by insensitive alteration, with holes made in some of the lower panels to allow for modern services and heating pipework. The lead comes to the glazed work lacks ferramenta bars and as such the glazed panels are rather severely buckled and bowed. This is especially prevalent on the north porch which forms the main entrance to church. The glazed panels are in severe need of repair.

**Pews :** The pews are reputed to have been introduced into the building at the time of the re-ordering works by Preston architects, Garlick, Page and Sykes in 1884-5. They are of a dark stained oak benches terminated with plain upright ends. Benches are long with central divisions and are in two banks on either side of the central aisle. The front and rear pews have a bank of large bore heating pipes forming an early form of radiating heat. These are still functioning and form part of the heating system.

**Lighting :** The existing lighting system was installed as part of the re-ordering works carried out in the late 1990s where hanging brass chandeliers, made by Great British Lighting in Fleetwood, were installed. The church is rather dimly lit and the chandeliers are proving difficult to change the lamps due to their height. The chandeliers hang in the centre of the main nave and are quite obtrusive within the church, restricting a full view of the nave and the fine tempera painted murals to the interior.

11. Having related the history of the church, and described its existing features, the Statement goes on to address the proposed changes in more detail:

### **THE SANCTUARY**

- **The introduction of the existing oak and lime wood rood hung from the centre of the chancel arch.**

The rood has been restored by Ormsby's of Scarisbrick and will be hung utilising two stainless steel twisted tension cables with jaw terminals fitted to the end of each cable. There is a double truss at chancel arch and it is proposed the cables to be fitted to the internal face of the truss with stainless steel lag bolts. The cables will be fixed to the crossbar of the cross via the existing hooks. Design of the wire hanging system and restoration of the rood has been designed and specified by Ormsby's of Scarisbrick.

- **Replacement of the timber painted altar with a simple stone altar with a red carpeted insert and removal of two raised steps and dais to create a safer high altar area and eliminate a hazard.**

The existing timber painted altar is proposed to be removed and replaced with a new ashlar stone altar. The existing altar is not at the correct height for its function and is not original to the church. It is crudely and garishly painted and does not sit comfortably within the elegant interior of the church.

The new altar proposed will be constructed in Longridge ashlar stone to match the existing stone of the interior of the church. The simplicity of the altar is designed with solid ashlar hand tooled stone blocks with fine lime

mortar joints. The matching stone mensa will be profiled to match the moulding on the existing columns within church.

The raised dais for the high altar is finished in limestone with two stone steps around the altar. The close proximity of these steps to the altar and the existing structure at the apse arch causes a cluttered and hazardous space and it is proposed to remove the steps to correspond with the lower dais level. The proposal includes for a limestone threshold or border defining the altar space utilising existing limestone and re-worked.

A luxurious red plain carpet insert will then define the high altar space and a new stone altar will be brought forward to align with the centreline of the first arcade of the chancel.

## **THE WEST END**

**• Removal of two Victorian glazed and dark stained vestibules to both north and south entrances to create an accessible entrance into church and enable wheelchair bound people to independently access church including the removal of three rows of pews.**

Timberwork : The existing vestibules are constructed in dark stained oak with half glazing throughout in the fixed screens and double doors. The condition of the timber structure is in a good condition but has had numerous holes inserted within it to allow for services etc in the past which not only affects the look of the structure but limits the use of the porch as a weather and wind buffer. The size, orientation and internal dimensions of the existing porches mean it is impossible for a wheelchair bound person to have unaided access in to the church. The internal dimensions of a compliant porch needs to be a minimum of 1500mm between opening door swings. This is impossible to attain within the constraints of the existing porch dimensions. Extensive design exercises have been carried out to amend and adapt the existing timber screens to retain parts of them within a new porch. However the size of the porch needed means the timber framework would be unfeasible to adapt without wholesale dismantling resulting in an ad-hoc and mismatched whole which would severely detract from the beauty of the interior and create a jarring addition to the painted interior.

Glazing : The leadwork is in a poor condition with approximately 75% buckling and bulging. This is a significant hazard for a public building of this nature especially to main entrance areas which will be used by all visitors. The glazing is single glazed and historical glass which will not be safety glass which does not conform to current regulations. The single glazing and thin timber panelling does not offer any thermal or acoustic properties or quality to the interior conditions of the church. The retention of the glazed panels has been investigated in detail in order to try to retain these and incorporate them into the new design of the porches. In order to make the glazed panels safety compliant the leaded lights would need to be encapsulated within two sheets of safety glass, either laminated or toughened glass, in order to re-introduce them into new glazed screens/doors.

Doors : The existing vestibule doors are not wide enough to allow a wheelchair through a single door leaf and therefore a new wider door(s) is needed in order to have access for all and to be DDA compliant.

Existing screens and doors offer no thermal qualities and this is a concern for the church with rising energy costs and ageing congregations.

General : The existing vestibules create a narrow walkway in-between the back of the pews which is not adequate width to allow a wheelchair through thus restricting the movement of the all members of the congregation throughout the church interior.

The existing vestibules create a rather aesthetically restrictive and darkened entry to the church which restricts the view into the unexpected lightness of the interior of the church. The darkness of the oak creates an unwelcome heaviness to the west end when viewed from the nave and east end sanctuary. As stated earlier the lobbies are not wheelchair friendly and it is currently impossible for a wheelchair bound person to enter the church unaided by others. The proposal includes the removal of the two oak vestibules to both north and south entrances and replacement with fully glazed and light oak tall porches. The doors to the north entrance will be automated to allow automatic opening and the porch size will be increased to comfortably allow an accessible entrance for all. The south entrance will be formed with a screen only which will echo a similar aesthetic and construction as the north porch. The glazing will be safety glass and have manifestations at the appropriate height and scale. The existing tiled mosaic floors within the porch areas will be retained and a new carpet mat inserted over the top. This mat well will be loose laid in both these areas to preserve the historic mosaic tiles. A ceiling will be incorporated within the porch areas and have integral downlighter lighting in these areas which will be independently switched from the main church. The height of the new porches will be set by the height of the existing north door arch. A glazed high level section on the west side, adjacent to the west end windows, will create a view to the existing windows and a new window cill will be formed creating an area for noticeboard/tv screen for display and notices.

Pews: The creation of two new glazed vestibules to a size which will accommodate an accessible entrance will mean the removal of three rows of pews to both two banks of benches. This proposal also includes for the alteration and reintroduction of the two cast iron banks of heating pipes to the rear of the last pew and their relocation in line with the first column of the aisle arcade. This will create a much needed area at the west end of church to congregate around the font. The removal of these pews would have an impact on the significance of the church interior but it is considered that the church would still read as a 'substantially pewed' church.

The existing pews are set on a raised timber plinth and this will be removed and reduced in line with the removal of the pews.



The newly exposed floor will then be finished in a red terracotta square tile with black narrow border tiles to match those elsewhere in the church; aisles, front of nave etc.

An extract from 'Our Churches and Chapels' by Atticus Hewitson printed in 1869 states the following;

*The pews in St. George's are of the old, fashioned, patriarchal character. They are of all sizes an irregularity quite refreshing peculiarises them; there are hardly two alike in the building; and a study of the laws of variety must have been made by those who had the management of their construction. Private interests and family requirements have probably regulated the size of them. Some of the pews are narrow and hard to get into -- a struggle has to be made before you can fairly take possession; others are broader and easier to enter; a few are very capacious and might be legitimately licensed to carry a dozen inside with safety; nearly all or them are lined with green baize, much of which is now getting into the sere and yellow leaf period of life; many of them are well-cushioned--green being the favourite colour; and in about the same number Brussels carpets may be found. There is a quiet, secluded cosiness about the pews; the sides are high; the fronts come up well; nobody can see much of you if care is taken; and a position favourable to either recumbent ease or horizontal sleep may be assumed in several of them with safety.*

Taking note of the above extract it would seem to affirm the pews we see today were added in the re-ordering works carried out in the late 1880s .

The screen to the south entrance will match that of the north entrance but will be half glazed. As well as creating a draught and acoustic buffer from the hall, also forms and maintains the small altar dedicated to St. George. The statue of St. George will be re-located on the altar situated in front of the new screen. The existing crest above the doors to the south vestibule will be re-located above the south entrance on the south aisle wall.

## **THE LIGHTING**

### **• New lighting system throughout the interior**

A new lighting system is proposed throughout the interior of the church to replace the existing lighting introduced in the 1990s. It is proposed to remove the large brass chandeliers and replace them with discreet LED floodlighting and pin point spotlighting to create a subtle and creative interior light to enhance the internal features of the church. The system and design has been specified and designed by church lighting experts Anthony Smith.

The system can be easily controlled and adapted via an iPad. The positions of the new light fittings will be carefully and discreet located on the roof trusses at high level and will be keenly directed to relevant areas of the church to give a variation of light from pools of light or reading to pin point lighting to highlight altars and statues. The positioning of the fittings at high level and the removal of the hanging large chandeliers will remove the cluttered nature of the interior and give space and adequate light to fully enjoy the glorious murals decorating the walls.

- **New exterior lighting**

The church is proposing to install floodlighting to the north and west sides of the exterior of the building. Presently there is no exterior lighting of any note and it is the desire of the church to not only make the entry and exit from church safer but to also highlight the existence of the church within the city. The scheme has been designed by FTS Merit. The scheme includes the installation of black coloured uplighters fixed to the facade at clerestory level in-between the circular clerestory windows and one per bay at low level. At the west end there will be a floodlight positioned at the top of the baptistry to highlight the west end gable and the cross to the apex. Two uplighters will project and highlight the west side of the tower.

12. The Statement summarises the impact of the proposals as follows:

The heritage value of The Church of St. George the Martyr lies mainly in the evidential value of the building's construction and its encasement in stone. Its communal and historical value of the church's evolution from chapel to church, is also of high value together with the building's association with the growth of the town and city.

There is high evidential value relating to the town's inhabitants forming a congregation and their links to the growth of the city and links to the industrial past.

The interior of the church has high aesthetic and historical value corresponding to the sumptuous tempera mural paintings and its links to the great Victorian artist, Carl Almquist and remodelling carried out by noted local architects, Garlick, Page and Sykes.

### **The Sanctuary proposals**

The Rood itself has a high aesthetic and historical value and when installed in the interior of St. George the Martyr it adds to the aesthetic of the interior and the history of the church building and its evolution. As stated in the previous notes in this document, the history and evolution of the Rood, to be installed in to St. George's, could not be more appropriate as it was designed and made for Holy Trinity Church which originally stood close to the church and when it closed the congregation moved to St. George's. It would seem that there is a physical geographical proximity and link to St. George's as well as a devotional link.

The present garishly painted altar is not part of the original church and it is not known where this comes from and has a negative impact on the aesthetic value of the interior. Its removal and replacement will greatly enhance the aesthetic and historical value of the interior. The introduction of a new simple stone altar on a carpeted bed is designed to sit calmly alongside the decorated interior and not battle or detract from it. This addition will add aesthetic value to the interior.

The existing dais is assumed to be part of the original design intention of the 1880s remodelling but has been refinished in limestone during the 1990s remodelling and therefore holds moderate historical value. The juxtaposition of the rear steps to the structure and the creation of a trip hazard here, significantly outweighs the negative impact the removal of this element will have on the historical value of the interior.

### **The West end proposals**

Although the removal of the Victorian vestibules, which are of moderate to high aesthetic and evidential value, will result in the loss of historic fabric, the benefit to the building as a whole, to allow access for all, significantly outweighs this loss and will enhance the use and longevity of the building. The adaptation and re-use of part of the existing structure will result in a piecemeal and ad-hoc finished design which will have a negative effect on the high value of the significance of the fine interior.

The addition of new lighter vestibules/screens will allow the visitor a more unhindered view of the church and encourage the visitor to move deeper into the building to further experience the interior and the ultimately the vision, mission and continuity of the church. The porch structure and integral glazing should be saved and stored safely on site to be potentially used elsewhere in the church and potentially used within the raised choir area to be developed at a later date.

The mosaic floor to the existing vestibule areas, although not original to the Chapel of Ease, are assumed to date from the remodelling works of the 1880s and are of high aesthetic and historical value. The proposals do not seek to remove these but will be left in situ, to the underside of the new loose laid flooring and will remain intact until such time that this intervention should be reversed.

Similarly, the pews are thought to date from the 1880s and are of moderate aesthetic and historical value. Although these proposals seek to remove a small number of these from the back of the two banks of pews resulting in the loss of some historical items, a large proportion of the pews still remain. The removal of this small number does not detract from the overall value of the pews as a whole within the church and the church remains as a good example of a Victorian 'pewed' church. Their historical significance and value is maintained.

Indeed the removal of the pews creating a larger space at the rear of the church to enjoy the splendour of the interior and to utilise the baptistry effectively, significantly offsets the loss. The pews removed will be saved in a safe place for possible re-use elsewhere in the church. The heating pipes will have a section of straight pipework removed but the large banks of pipework will be carefully removed and re-located therefore no loss of fabric. The floor beneath the pews will result in the loss of the timber platform but the interior of the church will be greatly enhanced by the introduction of matching tile

finish to echo that of the terracotta and black tiled finish elsewhere in the church.

### **The Lighting proposals**

The aesthetic value of the exterior is of moderate significance but will not be affected by these proposals save for the external lighting which would essentially highlight the stone facade and its problems. This could serve as a prompt and impetus to highlight the problems to the wider audience to gain greater support for the repair scheme.

The internal lighting scheme will greatly enhance the interior of the church. The removal of the modern brass chandeliers will have a positive impact in the aesthetic value of the church enabling a cleaner and uncluttered view of the interior.

### *The Statement of Need*

13. This is dated December 2022. It begins by providing general information about the Preston Resourcing Parish which comprises two churches: The Minster and Guild Church of St John the Evangelist and the Parish Church of St George the Martyr. Both these two churches are Grade II\* listed places of worship, and both are of significance in the City and beyond. The Minster and St George's were reordered between 1997 and 2003 as part of Parish Prospect Preston, and this involved significant refurbishment and renovation. Over £600,000 of national Church of England Strategic Development Funding was used to further upgrade the fabric and facilities of the Minster in 2019, whereas the same funding application for St George's only included support for urgent works identified in the 2015 Quinquennial Inspection Report. St George's is committed to becoming a centre of Anglo-Catholic excellence for the church in Preston, the Diocese, and further afield. This bold vision embraces a determination to stand as a thriving and active church in which all people are welcome. Remaining rooted in the richness of the Anglo-Catholic tradition, and sustained by the sacraments and prayer, St George's hopes to be a church for the whole community, making a lasting difference in people's lives, and making Christ known in all places. This is enveloped in the church's vision statement of '*Make God matter to people and make people know that they matter to God*'.

14. The Statement of Need identifies what is needed: As part of the parish's bold vision to offer Anglo-Catholic excellence, the District Church Council have recognised that a number of fabric improvements will be necessary. These are required to ensure that the worship space and auxiliary areas are suitable and equipped for the worship, mission and outreach that forms the life of St George's. At the current time, the church is regularly the venue for concerts and lectures, and the parish are hopeful to expand events to welcome as many people from across society as possible. They are keen to ensure that events have a missional focus and seek to find innovative ways of engaging the local student population, including exploring opportunities for more contemporary worship within the catholic tradition. The works set out in the application are part of a phased approach to fabric improvements that together form a capital project titled '*Fit for Purpose*'.

15. All of the improvements identified in this phase are related to enhancing St George's welcome, increasing its visibility, and also supporting the ordinands who will join the church. Ultimately it is also a contribution towards achieving the parish's vision of excellence in all areas

of church life. There are therefore five projects which St George's seeks permission to progress and realise:

**Firstly, we hope to introduce a glazed entrance on the interior of the building.**

There are currently two porches of a Victorian style that form a vestibule upon entering the building from both the north and south entrances. At present their purpose is limited and they block any clear vision into the church upon arrival which is proving detrimental for encouraging new people to step over the threshold. Furthermore, the manual operation of the doors and small interior space is a limiting factor for those with accessibility needs. As such, we wish to remove both current porches and introduce a purpose built clear glazed alternative for the north side entrance. This will include a door that can be operated using a push button as well as a noticeboard to share notices and service information. As well as providing a welcoming entrance, the space will be hugely valuable for retaining heat in the main church building whilst the doors are open for visitors every day of the week. The entrance will be of wooden construction to remain in keeping with other furniture around the church. As a result of the building of the Parish Hall in 2000 that is accessed from the south door of the church, it has been determined that a porch on this side of the building is no longer required. Therefore, it is proposed that instead a matching screen echoing the design of the glazed entrance will be built to separate the entrance from the rear of the altar that sits very close to this area. In order to facilitate the introduction of a glazed entrance that is of appropriate dimensions for accessibility regulations, we wish to remove the rear three rows of pews and install a suitable flooring in their place matching the surrounding tiling. The removal of the pews will also provide an area at the west of the church far more suitable for gathering and welcoming people into church as well as appreciating the fine art work visible within the building. Heating pipes currently attached to the rear pew will move forward to the new back row and will be attached using the same brackets as are being used at present.

**Secondly, with the daily celebration of the Mass central to the life of our church and also considering our forthcoming responsibilities for the formation of missional Anglo-Catholic priests through our role with Ladyewell House [a specialised centre of formation for ordinands from the Catholic tradition who are preparing for the sacred priesthood], necessary improvements to our Sanctuary space have been identified.** The current sanctuary altar was introduced by the former incumbent without a faculty and is unsympathetic to the surrounding features. We therefore wish to remove and dispose of this altar. The next element is to remove the current two step stone platform in the middle of the sanctuary on which the altar currently stands to provide a level space. These steps are a trip-hazard for all members of the sanctuary party and limit the number of concelebrants. Once the floor has been levelled, we wish to install a red carpet in the space where the steps formerly stood and on top of this introduce a purpose-built stone altar of simple design. This design will be sympathetic to the surrounding space and will complement the surrounding stone floor. Additionally, the stone altar will not detract from the impressive

artwork in the nearby Apse or from other parts of the liturgy. To complete the improvements, we wish to install a hanging rood that has been in the possession of the parish for a number of years having previously been a part of the now demolished Holy Trinity Church. A history of the rood can be found in the Statement of Significance.

Thirdly, **St George's is currently poorly lit.** The combination of ineffective chandeliers and the installation of poor-quality floodlights have meant that the lighting is dim and does not capture the magnificence of the interior decoration. We therefore wish to install a bespoke lighting scheme that can provide suitable lighting for our various liturgies and events. This new system will include the removal of all current light fittings, including the five nave chandeliers.

Fourthly, **as a city centre church situated alongside a key public highway, we wish to improve our visibility.** We are aware that the building currently sits in darkness overnight and feel it is important to change this if we are to develop into a recognised church community throughout the city. As such, we wish to install exterior floodlights discreetly attached to the exterior of the building to illuminate the church overnight on the north and west elevations. This will also allow us the opportunity to soak the building in a particular colour in support of national events.

Finally, **we wish to resurface our south side car park.** In our work to welcome new people, it is unfortunate that often their first encounter is with our crushed stone car park surface that fills with water during periods of poor weather and also easily travels into footwells. The current surface also causes issues with our drainage system during winter months. As such, we hope to apply a black tarmac surface with blocks set in this to indicate spaces. Additionally, lighting posts will be installed alongside suitable drainage to improve visibility and ensure safety.

Alongside the above works, refurbishment works are taking place to the Sacristy and Office to ensure they too are fit for purpose within the wider vision of St George's. As this is a like for like replacement, List A permission has been granted by the Archdeacon.

16. **Arising from the parish's formation of their vision to become a centre of Anglo-Catholic excellence is the development of a four phased capital project, 'Fit for Purpose'.** This encompasses an array of fabric improvements which the parish hope will ensure that, over the next five to ten years, the building and its surrounding grounds are able to support the parish's desire to be a thriving Christian witness in the centre of Preston. The parish's decision to phase the work is predominately practical in that it allows for fundraising and also the necessary time to be given to each element of the programme. The Fit for Purpose project includes the repairs highlighted in the most recent quinquennial inspection report, notably the repair of the cramps to the stone cladding and the refurbishment of the Father Willis organ as well as other matters. Beyond necessary works such as these, developmental improvements such as the remodelling of the gallery area so that it can be an accessible space have also been included. The works included in this faculty application relate to phase two of the scheme, with the repair of the cramps included

in phase three. During 2021, phase one of the Fit for Purpose project was completed. This included works to the parish hall, the sound system, and the Lady Chapel, the installation of an external noticeboard and flagpole and continued improvements to a once very overgrown external garden. Considered as a whole, phase one has made a huge improvement to the church building and grounds.

17. The present proposals comprise:

(1) A glazed Entrance

The church currently contains two wooden porches, one at each of the north and south entrances. These are small vestibule-type structures with frosted lead-lined glass and manual operated doors. The DCC are aware that the porches are currently a barrier to efforts to welcome new people into the church as there is no visibility into the nave until the door is opened. Additionally, the doors do not allow for independent access for those with accessibility needs, thereby impacting upon their access to the church. Furthermore, in former years there have been amendments to heating pipes and other utility arrangements that have left holes in the woodwork. The positioning of the current structures in relation to the fixed pews results in very narrow entrances to the north and south aisles and also a congested welcome space at the rear of the church. It is therefore proposed that the two current wooden vestibules are removed, along with three rows of pews. Suitable matching tiled flooring will be installed where pews have been removed, and repairs to the flooring on which the current entrances stand will be undertaken. Heating pipes that are currently attached to the rear pews will be fixed in the same position on what will become the new rear pews, using the brackets currently being used.

On the north side of the building, a purpose-built glazed entrance will be installed. This will be constructed of oak to match other furniture around the church, and will have clear glass etched with the church logo in a small number of panels. The dimensions are appropriate for accessibility requirements, the doors will be operated using a push-button, and a solid roof will allow for spotlights. Additionally, a noticeboard will be affixed to the right-hand wall to display service information and other notices. For the south side of the church, where a door leads into the Parish Hall, it has been agreed that an entrance structure is not required. Instead, a matching screen echoing the design of the glazed entrance will be installed to separate a chapel from the entrance. This design has been proposed after considering a number of designs. The District Church Council consider this design to offer a purposeful structure which not only will allow people to instantly learn information about the life of the church, but also be introduced to the wonder of the space, and therefore be encouraged to step beyond the threshold.

(2) The sanctuary

The sanctuary is the central worship space in the life of St George's and currently features a raised central space on which stands the main altar. The parish are aware that there is currently no faculty for the installation of this altar, which was introduced by the former incumbent, and permission is therefore sought for its disposal along with the matching candlesticks.

Upon the removal of the current altar, the parish also wish to remove the raised steps that are both a trip hazard and restrict possibilities for concelebration. This will result in a level sanctuary area which, from an aesthetical perspective, will be far more desirable as there will then be three distinct levels increasing from the west end to the apse. In place of the raised steps, a red carpet will be installed leaving the stone floor exposed in the remainder of the large sanctuary. The

parish then wish to install a stone altar of a simple, yet sympathetic, design to stand in a central position on the red carpet. This design reflects the formation of the stonework in other parts of the building, and its simplicity is intended to focus the attention of worshippers on what is taking place during the celebration of the Eucharist, and not encourage unnecessary distraction.

To conclude the improvements, the parish wish to install a hanging rood that has been in the possession of the parish for a number of years, having originally been a feature of Holy Trinity Church, which was later discovered and returned by Bishop Robert Ladds. This will be positioned above the entrance to the sanctuary, hanging from two black wires, and will not obstruct any surrounding artwork. Instead, the parish consider this to be an installation that will complement the new altar, and frame the sanctuary as the central space for the worshipping life of the church.

### (3) The internal lighting scheme

The current lighting scheme has been an issue for a number of years, with lighting levels extremely poor and a lack of creativity possible due to an aged system. With a highly decorated interior, and a desire to offer Anglo-Catholic excellence, the current lighting fails to offer justice to the building and is a limiting factor during liturgies. It is therefore proposed that all of the current lighting fixtures are removed, including the five chandeliers that are positioned above the central aisle of the nave. In their place, purpose-built spotlights will be installed in discrete, yet appropriate, locations. The system will be operated by a tablet device, and all fixtures will be black in colour. A bespoke lighting scheme has been designed by Anthony J Smith (Glos) Ltd, and has been pursued as a result of a lighting report by Mr Mike Overton, the Diocesan lighting adviser.

### (4) The external lighting scheme

Modern retail developments around the church building have meant that the visibility of St George's has been negatively impacted. Nevertheless, the parish hope to be a recognisable presence in the city centre, and also contribute to national events, by illuminating the building in a particular colour in support of specific causes. However, more generally, the parish would like their church building to be lit overnight on a daily basis. Therefore, it is proposed that a total of twenty-one discrete spotlights should be fixed to the north elevation of the building, one each side of each window and one on the north-west corner. Additionally, a floodlight will be added to the roof of the baptistry to illuminate the west elevation, and two further spotlights on the west side of the tower. The lights will be powered using a mains supply attached discretely to the building as a black cable.

### (5) Resurfacing of the south car park

Since the developments of 1999/2000, the south side car park has been covered in a crushed stone that experiences movement as a result of water and is often walked into church. There are also problems relating to the stone filling surrounding the drains. The District Church Council would therefore like to resurface the car park in black tarmac, with suitable drainage and five post lights. Spaces will be marked using blocks to match those used on the north side car park.

### Consultation responses

18. The Diocesan Advisory Committee (the **DAC**) have consulted widely on the proposals with the following results:



### (1) Historic England

Historic England provided some initial comments at the pre-application stage, when they raised concerns over the removal of the draught lobbies and pews and about the lack of detail of supporting information. In a letter dated 4 August 2022, Historic England continued to maintain their concerns in relation to the loss of the lobbies and the pews, and they considered the justification provided to be insufficient to justify the harm that these changes would bring about. Historic England considered that the proposals would constitute a low level of less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II\* listed church building.

The proposals seek to remove the existing Victorian dark stained timber lobbies to the north and south side of the building at the western end. The northern one, which is the main entrance, is to be replaced by a timber framed glass version, though larger to provide disabled access and space to manoeuvre a wheelchair. The southern lobby will be replaced with a similar screen. The lobbies appear to date from the time of the Garlick, Page and Sykes restoration in the late 1800s. They are evidence of conscious design, as part of the wider scheme of renovation and remodelling, and therefore they have significance as part of the architectural composition associated with a major refurbishment of the church. Their loss would constitute less than substantial harm to the building's significance.

The three rows of pews closest to the lobbies are also proposed for removal to create more space for the replacement lobby and screen. Again, these pews seemingly date from the 1884-5 remodelling and have similar significance to the Victorian draught lobbies, and are important elements of ecclesiastical architectural composition. The loss of these pews would cause less than substantial harm to the building's significance.

The replacement altar, whilst aesthetically pleasing, is a replacement of an existing altar. Supporting information suggests that the provenance of the existing altar is unknown and of an unknown date. Historic England were therefore unable to determine the level of impact the replacement of this altar might have without further information.

The proposed new internal lighting scheme is a replacement of a C20<sup>th</sup> lighting scheme. Historic England consider this element of the proposal to be beneficial as it will better highlight the spectacular artwork within the church, allowing for improved appreciation through having less visual clutter at upper levels. Historic England consider the same to be true of the proposed external lighting scheme. Improved lighting will help to highlight, and better reveal, the significance of the church inside and out. Whilst some elements of the scheme are beneficial, Historic England consider that other elements could cause a low level of less than substantial harm to the building's significance.

Historic England refer to national policy relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, as articulated in section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework. They cite from paragraphs 189, 195, 197, 199, 200 and 202.

Historic England consider that it is positive that consideration is being given to the ongoing function of the church, and its ease of use for congregations. However, they are mindful that the church is on the Heritage at Risk register and that there is serious concern over stone cladding and failing of the cramps. They strongly urge giving attention to this issue, and that it is regarded as a priority. They question whether the efforts and finance set aside for the proposed internal works would not be better spent in addressing these known concerns first. Historic England

maintain their concerns regarding the removal of the existing timber vestibules and pews. The assessment of significance of these elements is limited - that for the lobbies is simply a physical description. Historic England appreciate the desire to upgrade access and provide a welcoming environment for all; but they do question whether there are any alternative methods which would allow the repair and retention of fabric with possible modification. Equally they feel that the need to remove three rows of pews has not been satisfactorily justified: the floor plans indicate that their removal would facilitate the new lobby and screen, and it is stated that the new space generated would be used for visitors. However, this alteration does not appear to be critical to securing the on-going use and conservation of the building. Historic England recommend giving further thought to these elements, and that these proposals should be clearly justified, and the public benefits defined.

Overall, Historic England entertain concerns regarding the applications on heritage grounds. They consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in their advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 189, 195, 197, 199, 200 and 202 of the NPPF.

In a further letter dated 8 December 2022, Historic England note that the crux of their previous concerns had related to the loss that the proposed scheme required, including the removal of C19<sup>th</sup> draught lobbies and pews, and the replacement of the existing altar. They had identified that the former two elements of the proposal would result in harm, whilst highlighting that further information was required to make a judgment about the impact of the latter.

Historic England note that the church has provided further justification in relation to the removal of the pews and the draught lobbies, but had not amended the design. As such, Historic England still identify that the loss of these elements would result in harm to the significance of the church. In particular, their loss would remove some of the ability to read and understand the historic evolution of the church, removing the evidence these elements provide of the changing way in which the church has functioned and of changing tastes in ecclesiastical architecture.

The current altar has also made some contribution to the understanding of the evolution of the church, although it was not an exceptional example in its own right. There would therefore be a very low level of harm associated with its replacement. However, it was noted that concerns had been raised over the design of its replacement by Mathew Saunders, in his response for Historic Buildings and Places. That was significant, as any replacement altar would need to be of significant artistic and architectural merit to integrate sensitively into the church. Historic England therefore recommend that the decision maker should give weight to these concerns when determining the application.

Historic England still believe that the proposals would have an adverse impact on the significance of the church of St. George the Martyr, albeit at the lower end of the potential spectrum of harm to this significance. However, they note that the applicants have identified a number of benefits that they believe would arise from the works, including improved equal access, and a more welcoming and viable church. It would be for the decision maker to assess the weight that they placed on these benefits, but Historic England agree that there would be some heritage benefit if the decision maker should conclude that the works are necessary to allow the building to continue in church use. That was because this was the use for which the building was constructed, and the use which best conserved its special historic and architectural interest. It was also positive that the church had engaged with Historic England's concerns about

its inclusion on the Heritage at Risk Register. It would be vital for the church to continue to respond proactively to these issues, in order to ensure that they are addressed before they escalate.

## (2) The Church Buildings Council

In a letter dated 18 August 2022, the day after the CBC's site visit, Dr Claire Smith, a church buildings officer, records that the CBC were pleased to see the vision of the church to become a centre of excellence, and their ambition to have an impact in the diocese and beyond. There was clearly a great opportunity for the church to reach into the community, as well as engaging students at the nearby university. The CBC understood the current proposal as one phase of a wider project which would seek to address the condition of the building, the condition of the organ, and other enhancements, in due course. Their comments related solely to the current proposals.

The proposal documents had been much improved since the CBC's advice at the pre-application stage. The CBC appreciated the work that had already gone into developing the proposals and producing these documents. There were some areas, particularly concerning the proposed removal of the porches, pews, and altar, where viewing on site had made more apparent the impact of, and the rationale for, the proposals. The statements of significance and needs were crucial to assessing the significance of the elements affected by the proposals, and articulating the justification for any harm caused. The CBC considered that improvements to both statements would be beneficial to make a stronger case for the proposed works, and to enable decision makers and consultees to understand the potential benefits for mission and welcome.

The element of the proposal which had the most impact on the significance of the building was the proposed removal of the Victorian north and south internal porches. The CBC appreciated the architectural merit of these features as a contributor to the building's significance. The CBC were not wholly opposed to the principle of their removal, but they considered that this would require strong justification. At present, the justification for removal was lacking, and was particularly weak for the south porch. The CBC understood that the dimensions of the porches might be prohibitive for compliant equal access. The CBC's guidance on access to church buildings supports equal access for all, and if it was not possible to adapt one or both of the porches, this should be set out clearly in the statement of needs.

From the site visit discussions, the CBC understood that several iterations of design had been considered. For both porches, they considered that it would be useful to see an options appraisal, including partial retention or reusing elements. The lead and glazing, particularly on the north side, was buckled and bowed. The CBC recognised that health and safety regulations around strengthening or encapsulating the glass would be a constraint, and it would be helpful if the options appraisal showed the impact on the heritage of making it compliant, were it to remain in use. Should retaining or adapting the porches prove unviable, the CBC would welcome a stronger design for any replacement structures. An innovative design could be part of revealing the church's elaborate, and unexpected, interior. It could contribute to arriving in the church as an aesthetic, as well as a practical, experience. A transitional space could also be useful for accessibility, thought of in broader terms than physical access needs.

On the site visit, the CBC had found there to be missional and access benefits to removing the proposed rows of pews (effectively three rows, with the rear pew being moved for the relocation of the heating pipes). The CBC judged that while the proposed removal of those pews would

have an impact on the church's significance, the church would still read as substantially pewed. This should not be seen as a precedent for any further pew removal; but the CBC were content with this aspect of the proposal.

After inspection on site, the CBC had no objections to the removal of the altar. The supporting documents should demonstrate that the existing altar was not significant by any objective standard of assessment. Close-up photographs might be usefully deployed for the existing altar, and improved drawings of the proposed new altar to accurately reflect its design and craftsmanship would be beneficial.

Following the CBC's previous advice letter, it was content to leave consideration of the internal and external lighting schemes, and the car park resurfacing, to the DAC, noting that carbon footprint and impact to ecology will be considerations for the lighting schemes, and welcoming the adjustment of the lights before final fitting, particularly in relation to the murals, and recognising the opportunity for soakaway drainage in the car park.

In an email dated 14 December 2022 (timed at 16.18, and thus after the meeting at which the DAC was to recommend the proposals for approval by the court), Dr Smith recognised that the parish had made amendments to the documents which reflected the CBC's comments on the justification for the removal of the draught lobbies and pews, particularly in the section of the revised statement of significance addressing the proposed changes at the west end in more detail. Overall, however, the proposals were little changed. The CBC therefore maintained its position as set out in its letter of 18 August 2022, where they sought further justification for the removal of the porches, and a stronger design should replacement structures be necessary. If the parish were resolved to pursue the current proposal, the CBC was content for a decision to be made based upon its current advice.

In a further email dated 1 February 2023 Dr Smith stated that the CBC did not wish to make any further representations, nor to become a party opponent; but they trusted that the chancellor would take their comments into consideration when making their judgment.

### (3) Historic Buildings & Places (formerly the Ancient Monuments Society)

In his pre-application consultation response dated 1 June 2022 Mr Matthew Saunders, the ecclesiastical caseworker, stressed the thoughts of other consultees on the need for the Statement of Significance to address in much more detail the interest of the pews and the rather splendid double-height porches to the north and south. The latter were unusual for their imposing height, and were far less dark than other storm porches because of the generous amount of glazing, so imaginatively articulated with the fancy casing (or lead framing). Mr Saunders would wish to know more about their authorship and why they could not be modified rather than replaced. Mr Saunders was also not sure why the new altar had to be so utilitarian, and he asked for the design decision to be further explained and justified

In a further consultation response dated 27 July 2022, Mr Saunders wished to revisit two aspects of the proposal:

First, the double-height porches -- The Statement of Significance seriously underestimated their interest. It did not attempt any date or author although one was clearly looking at late-Victorian work. The relevant entry was largely devoted to their perceived shortcomings, but a Statement of Significance was meant to be a disinterested assessment of quality and interest.

There was a grandeur to the two storeyed form which was unusual for a storm porch and a subtlety to the composition – five top lights sit over four below, the central two being slightly wider, to denote the doors, whilst on the return, three lights sit over three. The whole sits on a solid panelled plinth of rectilinear shape to add strength and grounding whilst there was a greater design formality to the glazed lights, those on the ground floor taller and more generous in size, those in the attic consistently smaller. This gradation was subtle and satisfying, and was emphasised by the scheme of fancy coming which constitutes the glazing. Mr Saunders noted the care with which the glazier has designed the coming so that the topmost design, in the attic, was effectively repeated on the ground floor but then effectively doubled but with the lower section given a bottom margin light with one transverse line rather than two shown at midriff level and again just below the *'fanlight'*. All the time the generous glazing made for a light-filled box so unlike many other Victorian porches which do indeed appear dark and uninviting by comparison. The porch is so tall that visitors are effectively lit both from the side and from above. Historic Buildings and Places would deplore the destruction of such refined work. The new documentation contained no evidence that the possibility of retention, repair and modification to meet present needs had been explored – something which would, *prima facie*, appear possible.

Second, the proposed new altar -- Again Historic Buildings and Places were no defenders of the present altar, which looked both very over-heated and yet shallow in detail compared with the refinement of its setting. However, they failed to understand why the new altar must be so banal and utilitarian. Even granted that it would be concealed throughout much of its liturgical life by frontals, the mensa looked as if it was supported on plain block walls. Was this worthy? Surely greater design flair could be displayed.

In an email dated 6 December 2022, Mr Saunders commented that it was good to see the introduction of the hanging rood. He was also grateful for the extra information and the tweaking to the design of the internal porches. He was very struck by the fact that all the consultees had expressed initial concern at the loss of the present porches. Historic Buildings and Places continued to feel regret at their loss; but in light of the resolve of the parish on this matter, they were prepared at this stage to defer to the DAC.

However, they were going to stick to their guns on the new altar. Whilst it was presumably the case that what was shown on drawing 21.19.03.06 would nearly always be concealed by a range of altar frontals, determined by the liturgical seasons, what was proposed was less *'simple'* than banal. The use of buff sandstone would help to contextualise it, but the motif of what looked like sections of standard walling with jointing topped by the mensa did not appear to acknowledge the sacred quality of what was being proposed. Rather more in the way of design flair would seem amply justified. But at this stage, and on this matter, too, Historic Buildings and Places would defer to the DAC

#### (4) The Victorian Society

On 16 August 2022 the Society's Senior Conservation Adviser, Mr James Hughes wrote raising significant concerns, particularly with the proposed loss of the glazed draught lobbies. As had already been pointed out by Mr Saunders, the lobbies were unusually fine examples of their type: large, capacious, carefully and consciously detailed, to a surprisingly high quality of craftsmanship and design. They were really rather splendid structures, which were likely to be contemporary with the work of Garlick, Park and Sykes, and the restoration and refurnishing work that the

firm had carried out to the building in the 1880s. The Victorian Society were uneasy that the Statement of Significance placed so much emphasis on articulating justifications for the replacement of the lobbies: that was not the purpose of a Statement of Significance. As far as its analysis of the quality and rarity of the lobbies was concerned, and their contribution to the character and appearance of the interior, the Victorian Society considered the Statement to fall short. These were impressive structures, the removal of which would cause harm to the special interest of a building of very high significance. The presumption must be that they were retained, and all options for the retention of the lobbies (involving their adaptation, if demonstrably required) would need to be explored before the principle of removal could be seriously contemplated.

Like Historic Buildings and Places, the Victorian Society were unconvinced by the drawings uploaded to the system of the proposed new altar. As depicted, the altar appeared to the Society to be surprisingly crude and artless. Something more responsive, and of genuine quality, was surely both possible and desirable here. Whilst the principle of removing the present dais might well be acceptable, the Society did not consider carpeting to be an appropriate floor covering for the reordered space. A high quality hard floor surface of some sort (as presently exists) should be the aspiration.

#### *The applicants' response to the consultation responses*

19. In October 2022, and in anticipation of the revisions to their Statements of Significance and Need, the parish produced a response to the consultation responses. Similar issues were raised by a number of consultees and so the parish did not respond separately to each and every issue.

#### (1) Historic England

(a) Concern regarding the removal of the draught lobbies:

See response to the same query from the CBC.

(b) Concern relating to the removal of three rows of pews:

Considering the need for equal access opportunities, any modification to the size of the lobbies directly impacted the pews as they were in such close proximity. In short, to allow for changes to the porches, removal of the pews was necessary. Nevertheless, as highlighted by the CBC following their visit, even with the three rows of pews removed, the church would still read as if it were fully pewed. This was helped by the fact that the proposed new back row would be in line with the rear stone pillar and therefore would not immediately suggest to first-time visitors that any changes had taken place.

(c) A query regarding the provenance of the existing altar

The altar was installed at the request of the last incumbent shortly before his retirement. The structure was generally poor, apart from the mensa, and had been produced by Mr Terrance McGunigle. Therefore, the parish did not consider there to be any provenance for this altar, but would actively seek another place of worship which would be able to use the marble mensa.

(d) Confirmation of their support for the new lighting schemes

This support was gratefully received and it was hoped that the desired results would be successfully achieved.

(e) A request for further information regarding the public benefits of the scheme

The central aim of this scheme was to encourage the growth of the worshipping community of the church and the parish considered all of the works to be necessary for the embedding of their vision and for reaching new people. However, they also hoped that the scheme would enable the church to be accessible for everybody. They wished for the church to be a place where everybody could step comfortably over the threshold, be welcomed, and learn what it meant to follow Christ. All elements of these works would help people to become aware of the church's presence and contribute to a warm welcome from which their discipleship could grow.

(f) Acknowledgment of the church's position on the *'Heritage At Risk Register'*

The parish are aware of their current listing on the *'Heritage At Risk Register'* and they had completed urgent repair works on a small number of metal cramps in 2016. Furthermore, they had since commissioned a full survey of the external cladding and had received a report outlining the estimated costs and order of priority. This had been factored into the parish's current phased fabric works, with the proposed developments included in this application relating to phase two. The repair of the stone cladding makes up a large part of phase three, and the parish hope to begin the necessary fundraising within the next one to two years. They believe it necessary to complete the tasks relating to phase two before the stone cladding as they consider such works to be necessary to enable the further growth of the worshipping community which in turn helps to progress the works contained in future phases of the project.

(g) Consideration of the repair and retention of the existing porches

See response to the same query from the CBC.

(h) A query relating to the use and conservation purposes of the new welcome area

The larger space at the rear of the church would actively enable the church to provide a warm welcome. Furthermore, there would be opportunities to engage in hosting exhibitions and other events which would ideally bring people into the life of the church. Crucially, with the embedding of a culture of small groups in the life of St George's, additional spaces were often required, and this proposed welcome area was likely to be useful for this also. Finally, the church was often used for civic events and other city-wide functions, such as an annual Arts Festival, and the availability of a welcoming space at the rear of the church would be a huge benefit when greeting large numbers of new people.

(2) The CBC

(a) Concern regarding the removal of the two draught lobbies

The parish are aware that it is likely that the lobbies were introduced at the same time as the pews. Crucially, the porches do not provide equal accessibility for everybody as they are unsuitable for wheelchair users due to the lack of space for a turning circle. Instead, those using a wheelchair are required to enter via the Parish Hall, which rather takes away from the initial wonder of the building. Entering through the south porch also requires support for wheelchair users as the narrow dimensions do not allow for independent operation of the doors. With regards to the possibility of modifying the porches to improve access, it has been highlighted that such changes would

require protection to be added to the glass panels to bring the structure in line with current regulations. Such additions would certainly detract from their significance and aesthetic appeal. The installation of a screen to match the new north side porch would provide a balance and symmetrical appeal when looking down the church as well as clearly defining the division between the worship space and the Parish Hall.

(b) Acknowledgment of the lack of significance of the current altar

The current altar was produced by Mr Terrance McGunigle, having been commissioned by the previous incumbent. Following production, this was installed without a faculty. Aside from the marble mensa, the remainder of the construction was of poor quality.

(c) Recognition of the carbon footprint and ecology of the lighting and car park works

Mindful of the church's carbon footprint, LED lighting would be used for both the internal and external lighting specifications. Furthermore, careful consideration would be given to the operating hours of the external system so that unnecessary power was not used. Additionally, suitable drainage would be installed as part of the car park works.

(3) Historic Buildings and Places

(a) Query regarding the date and author of the porches

Based on information provided by Historic England, the parish are of opinion that the porches were installed during the late C19<sup>th</sup> as part of the improvement works completed by Garlick, Page and Sykes.

(b) A note regarding the double height and well-lit nature of the porches

The parish are most grateful for the extensive comments received on the design features of the porches, but they do not consider them to be double height. Furthermore, the style of glass, although large in quantity, does not allow for the porches to be well lit. Instead, the dark wood contributes to a dark box-type structure which creates a barrier for those stepping over the threshold for the first time. It is only once a visitor opens the door from the porch that they first glimpse the beautiful artwork within the church, something the parish wish to change as a result of the new design.

(c) Possibility of the retention, repair and modification of the existing porches

As mentioned in the response to the query from the CBC, the modification of the porches brings with it a number of challenges. Based on the lack of equal access provided by the porches, the parish do not consider it possible for them to be retained, and they are keen to see a structure which straight away allows people to experience the wonder of the church interior and be encouraged to come within to find out more about the Christian faith.

(d) Concern relating to the design of the new altar

The architect has given considerable time to designing a stone altar which relates well to the surrounding building features. Whilst the structure is simple, this is intended to allow the eye to be drawn to what is taking place on the altar, pointing the focus to where it is necessary. Furthermore, the parish are keen for the beautiful artwork of the surrounding walls and the apse to be a key feature in that area of the church and for this not to be negatively impacted by an overly elaborate altar.



(4) The Victorian Society

(a) Concern regarding the removal of the draught lobbies

See response to the same concern from the CBC.

(b) Query relating to the design of the new altar

See response to the same query from Historic Buildings and Places.

(c) Question regarding the suitability of carpet in the sanctuary

The addition of the carpet is intended to frame the altar that stands upon it. Furthermore, it is hoped that it will help to highlight the significance of what takes place at the altar during the Mass. Prior to the refurbishment works of 1999/2000, the sanctuary space was covered with a carpet. The carpeting will only be installed on a small area within the wider sanctuary, and it is intended to enhance, and not to distract.

The Diocesan Advisory Committee

20. At a meeting held on 14 December 2022, the DAC recommended all of the reordering proposals for approval by the court, on condition that drawings showing the position of the external lighting and cable runs are submitted to the DAC secretary and agreed by the DAC lighting adviser before commencing those aspects of the works. In their Notification of Advice, dated 20 December 2022, the DAC acknowledged, and advised, that the proposed reordering was likely to affect the character of the church as a building of special architectural or historic interest. Notice of the proposals has therefore been published in accordance with rule 9.9 of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules as amended (the **FJR**). No objections have been received in response either to the rule 9.9 notice or to the display of the usual public notices (which expired on 19 January 2023).

21. The DAC's Notification of Advice recites that objections have been raised by Historic England, the CBC, and the Victorian Society which have not been withdrawn. The DAC record that their principal reasons for recommending the proposals for approval, despite those objections, are as follows:

The DAC recognise that the draught lobbies are of moderate historical significance and the removal of the lobbies will cause harm to the significance of the church. However, it is of the opinion that the benefit to the church as a place of mission and ministry outweighs any harm to the special character of the listed building from the removal of the lobbies for the following reasons:

(1) The PCC wish to comply with the regulations set out by the Equality Act 2010 regarding access into a public building. The lobbies hinder that goal.

(2) Should the lobbies remain, they would need extensive refurbishment for the glazing to be made safe.

(3) The removal of the lobbies and pews will allow a space to be created at the west end to improve the experience for families gathering at the font and enable a gathering space for missional events. There is currently no space within the body of the church for small group gathering and circulation.

(4) The DAC acknowledge that the PCC have considered options for relocating or reconfiguring the existing lobbies before deciding that the only option available is removing and disposing of the lobbies.

The DAC agree that the sanctuary improvements will be of liturgical benefit and will create a space safe for sacramental worship. The altar design is a matter of taste, and the DAC fully support the petitioners' choice and reasons for the design, especially as the current nave altar is considered garish, badly constructed from flimsy material, and entirely out of keeping with the simplicity of the rest of the sanctuary area. The DAC do not object to the carpet in the sanctuary, if it has an appropriate breathable backing and underlay.

### Determination of the petition

22. On 11 January 2023, special notice of this petition was sent to the CBC, the Victorian Society and Historic England. The only response has been from the CBC, who state that they do not wish to make any further representations, or to become a party opponent; but they have asked me to take their comments into consideration when arriving at my judgment. In determining this faculty application, I have had regard to all of the consultation responses I have summarised above.

23. Since this is an unopposed faculty petition, I am satisfied that it is expedient in the interests of justice, and in furtherance of the overriding objective of the FJR, for me to determine this petition without a hearing, and on the basis of the considerable volume of written and illustrative material that has been uploaded to the online faculty system (the **OFS**) and is before the court. Notwithstanding the helpful photographic images of the church interior contained within the supporting documents uploaded to the OFS, and the level of detail shown on the plans, I considered that it would be of assistance for me to view the interior of the church. I therefore made a previously unannounced visit to the church to attend the service of Sung Mass at 10.30 am on the Third Sunday of Lent (12 March 2023). I spoke to the Parish Priest, Father David Craven, and to others involved in the proposed re-ordering, and I was able to view the church building, both inside and out, from both the north and the south. I observed the opening and closing processions between the sacristy and the sanctuary, and I joined with the congregation in receiving Holy Communion. I noticed how the chandeliers hanging in the centre of the main nave are quite obtrusive and restrict an uninterrupted view of the nave towards the east end of the church and the fine painted murals to the interior. Although I saw no wheelchair users, I did observe the difficulty that one couple experienced in bringing a relatively modest baby 'buggy' through the north lobby of the church. I enjoyed coffee and cake with the congregation in the meeting room of the church hall after the service.

24. Before my visit, and after undertaking a preliminary overview of the papers, I had invited the Diocesan Registry to inquire of the DAC whether the removal of only one of the draught lobbies - probably that on the north side – might reduce the harm to the interior of the church building whilst fulfilling the parish's needs. After discussing this suggestion at some length, the DAC offered the following comments:

- Removing one lobby would not meet the needs as expressed by the petitioners and would affect the integration between the spiritual area of the nave and the west end, sweeping through the south door into the hospitality area of the parish centre.
- Removing only one lobby would unbalance the visual aesthetic of the west end, especially as the north is to be redesigned as a modern glazed entrance.
- Once only one lobby is removed the significance of the interior is already harmed.
- Removing only one lobby will be a frustration to the parish and will not meet the objectives of creating a fully accessible church building.

Overall, the DAC agreed that the scheme ought to be *'all or nothing'*. Either both lobbies are removed, recognising that this will harm the character and significance of a listed building, or both lobbies should remain. I am grateful to the DAC for their further consideration of the proposals affecting the west end of the church. I received their comments only after I had made my visit to the church; but they merely confirmed, and served to reinforce, the impressions I had formed during the course of that visit.

#### The legal framework

25. At this point, it is convenient for me to set out the legal framework by reference to which this faculty petition falls to be determined. Listed church buildings used for religious worship enjoy an exemption from the need to obtain listed building consent from the local planning authority before any works can lawfully be carried out to them. The reason for this ecclesiastical exemption is that, through the faculty system, the Church of England applies equivalent levels of transparency, openness and rigour in maintaining appropriate levels of protection for that significant part of the national heritage that church buildings represent. As Chancellor Singleton KC (in the Diocese of Sheffield) explained at paragraph 20 of her judgment in *Re All Saints, Hooton Pagnell* [2017] ECC She 1:

... churches, particularly listed churches, constitute a tangible and spiritual history which touches everyone including the people of the past, the present and the future including those from within and from outside our church communities and from within and outside their geographical area. They connect us to each other and to those who went before us and to those yet to come by our mutual and continuing appreciation and enjoyment of their beauty and history. These buildings need and deserve to be preserved, renewed and improved, expertly, professionally and within a process open to public scrutiny. That is my understanding of the purpose of the strict law which applies to listed buildings generally and within the Faculty Jurisdiction as applied to listed churches generally and Grade 1 and 2\* listed in particular. Within the church the preservation and development of beauty and history is undertaken to the glory of God.

26. Since the Church of St George the Martyr, Preston is a Grade II\* listed church building, I must have regard to, and apply, what have become known as the *Duffield* guidelines (named after the decision of the Court of Arches in the leading case of *Re St Alkmund, Duffield* [2013] Fam 158), as explained and expanded in later cases. It is sufficient for me to refer to (and paraphrase) the following summary of the relevant principles (as they apply to a Grade II\* listed

church building) which I have taken from my recent decision (in the Diocese of Oxford) in the case of *Re St Laurence, Combe* [2022] ECC Oxf 5 (at paragraph 19):

*... for the purposes of the present case, which concerns a Grade [II\*] listed church building, I must consider:*

*(1) The degree of harm that these proposals, if implemented, would cause to the significance of the church as a Grade [II\*] listed building of special architectural or historic interest; and*

*(2) Whether the petitioners have demonstrated a clear and convincing justification for their proposals, in terms of any resulting public benefits which would outweigh that harm.*

*In doing so, I have to bear in mind:*

*(a) That the burden rests on the petitioners to demonstrate a sufficiently good reason for making any changes to this listed church building;*

*(b) That the more serious the harm, the greater the level of benefit that will be required before the proposed works can be permitted;*

*(c) Since this building is listed Grade [II\*], only exceptionally should serious harm be allowed; and*

*(d) Whether the same, or substantially the same, benefits could be obtained by other works which would cause less harm to the character and special significance of this church building.*

#### Analysis and conclusions

27. Consistently with the advice of the DAC, and notwithstanding the concerns so helpfully and cogently expressed by all of the consultees (for which I am most grateful), I am satisfied that the petitioners (on whom the burden rests) have made out a good and sufficient case for the approval of all the reordering proposals sought by this faculty application. I agree with the DAC's reasons for recommending the court to approve this faculty application, notwithstanding those concerns. The parish, and the DAC, are to be commended for their willingness to listen to, and engage with, the concerns properly raised by the consultees. The DAC are a specialist body required by s. 37 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018 to advise the Chancellor on matters relating to the grant of faculties. They must review and assess the degree of risk of harm arising from proposals for any alterations to places of worship or their contents. In this case, the DAC recognise, and they have advised, that the proposals are likely to affect the character of this church as a building of special architectural and historic interest. Notwithstanding this, they are content that all the elements of the present reordering proposals are fully justified, and supported by appropriate evidence; that the present reordering scheme is the least harmful way of achieving the aims and aspirations of the parish; and that any harm to the significance of this church is outweighed by the public benefits to be conferred as a result of the proposals. They have therefore recommended those proposals for approval by the court; and have provided cogent reasons for doing so (which I have recorded at paragraph 21 of this judgment). Just as I should not simply 'rubber-stamp' the considered and reasoned views of the DAC, so should I not disregard them without good reason.

28. Certain aspects of the proposals are entirely non-controversial: the proposals for the alterations to the internal and external lighting of the church building and the resurfacing of the south car park will cause no harm whatsoever to the appearance, the setting or the significance of the church; rather, they will be entirely beneficial. In particular, the removal of the chandeliers which hang in the centre of the main nave will afford an uninterrupted view of the nave towards the east end of the church, and of the fine painted murals to the interior.

29. I am also satisfied that the works to the sanctuary will cause no harm whatsoever to the appearance, the setting or the significance of the church, and that the petitioners have demonstrated a clear and convincing justification for these works, in terms of the resulting benefits for the church's liturgy and worship. The installation of the hanging rood cross from the former church of the Holy Trinity will be positively beneficial to the Anglo-Catholic tradition of St George's. I agree with the DAC that the changes to the sanctuary will be of liturgical benefit, and will create a physically safer space for sacramental worship. The design of the new altar is a matter of taste and, like the DAC, I fully understand, and support, the petitioners' choice and reasons for their new design, especially as I find the current nave altar to be ghastly, poorly constructed from flimsy materials, and entirely out of keeping with the simplicity of the rest of the sanctuary area. I consider that the proposed stone altar will be sympathetic to the surrounding features of the church building. I do not subscribe to the objections raised by Historic Buildings and Places. Whilst the structure of the new altar is simple, this will allow the attention of worshippers to be drawn to what is taking place at the altar, concentrating their focus upon the liturgy of the Eucharist, including the Eucharistic prayers and the celebration of Communion. I sympathise with the parish's wish for the beautiful artwork of the surrounding walls and the apse to be a key feature of this area of the church, and for this not to be negatively impacted, or attention to be distracted, by an overly elaborate altar. The carpeting will only be installed on a small area within the wider sanctuary, and it is intended to frame the altar that will stand upon it, helping to highlight the significance of what transpires at the altar during the Mass. Before the refurbishment works of 1999/2000, the sanctuary space was covered with carpet. Like the DAC, I have no objection to the introduction of a small area of carpet into the sanctuary provided it has an appropriate breathable backing and underlay. Since the altar will have been dedicated to its sacramental role in the celebration of the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, it should not be profaned by any secular use which might result from its sale or disposal for any non-liturgical purpose. Any disposal of the altar must therefore be undertaken with particular care. As a last resort, the altar should be burnt or broken up and buried within the church or other consecrated grounds.

30. The petitioners have satisfied me that the removal of the north and south lobbies, and of the rear three rows of pews (bearing the numbers 34-36, 37-39, 72-74 and 75-77) will cause only moderate harm to the significance of the church building; and they have demonstrated a clear and convincing justification for these works, in terms of the public benefits that will result from more equal and welcoming access to the church building and thus for the church's mission and viability. I acknowledge the architectural and historic merits of these lobbies. Whilst it is regrettable that they have to go, I am satisfied that there is no viable alternative, if there is to be free and unrestricted access to the church building for all worshippers and visitors; and that the resulting benefits to the church as a place of worship, mission and ministry outweigh the moderate harm to the special character of this listed church building that will follow from the removal of the lobbies. Whilst I was initially attracted by the notion of preserving the southern lobby, having now visited the church, I am persuaded that this is not a viable option, for the

reasons so clearly articulated by the DAC (as set out at paragraph 24 of this judgment). I am therefore satisfied that the same, or substantially the same, benefits could not be achieved by any alternative works which would cause any lesser degree of harm to the character and special significance of this church building. If, as appears to be the general consensus of opinion, the lobbies formed part of the 1884-5 re-modelling by Garlick, Park & Sykes, then the Royal Arms bearing the date MDCCCXLII (1842) must have been relocated from elsewhere within the church, and added to the top of the southern lobby, at about this time. There can therefore be no harm in relocating those Arms to the southern wall of the church, above the entrance which leads to the church hall. I am satisfied that the removal of the rear three rows of pews will cause, at most, only moderate harm to the significance of the church building. I agree with the CBC's assessment that St George's will continue to present as "*substantially pewed*"; and that my approval of this part of the present proposals should not be viewed as setting any precedent for any further pew removal in the future. I am satisfied that the petitioners have made out a clear and convincing justification for this very limited pew removal in order to facilitate equal access and egress around the new entrances at the north and south doors at the rear of the church, and to free up much-needed welcoming and gathering space at the west end of the church. Having visited the church, I am satisfied that this is the case, notwithstanding the proximity of the adjoining church hall.

31. Since I recognise the architectural and historic value of these two lobbies, it will be a condition of this faculty that they should be dismantled and the constituent parts carefully labelled by skilled craftsmen, and placed in safe storage within the faculty jurisdiction so that they can be re-assembled at a later date. They are not to be disposed of except under the authority, and in accordance with, a further faculty of this court. A similar condition as to safe storage and non-disposal is to apply to the three rows of pews that are to be removed from the rear of the church. Since I too recognise the concerns expressed by Historic England resulting from the church's inclusion within the Heritage at Risk register due to multiple fracturing of the external stonework caused by expanding iron cramps, and the need for this to be addressed as a priority, and in light of the parish's indication that the repair of the stone cladding makes up a large part of phase three of their proposed programme of works, and that they hope to begin the necessary fundraising within the next one to two years, I will also impose a condition that within three years of the completion of the works authorised by this faculty (or such further period as the DAC may allow), the parish are to apply for a further faculty to carry out the necessary works to address the fracturing of the external stonework caused by expanding iron cramps so as to secure the removal of the church building from the Heritage at Risk register. But for a condition along these lines, I might have taken the view that the 'At Risk' works should be prioritised over the present proposals; but I am prepared to accept the assessment of the parish that it is necessary to complete the works included within phase two before the stone cladding on the footing that such works are necessary to enable the further growth of the worshipping community, which in turn will help to progress the works contained in future phases of the project.

32. For these reasons, I will grant the faculty as asked. The faculty will be subject to the conditions that:

(1) Before commencing any works, the parish are to notify the church's insurers, and they are to comply with any recommendations or requirements that the insurers may make or impose.

(2) Before commencing the external lighting works: (a) drawings showing the position of the external lighting and cable runs are to be submitted to the DAC secretary and agreed by the

DAC lighting adviser; and (b) the petitioners are to obtain any necessary planning and other consents, and comply with any conditions the local planning authority may impose (subject to such variations as may be permitted by the local planning authority).

(3) Each of the draught-proof lobbies is to be dismantled and the constituent parts carefully labelled by skilled craftsmen, and placed in safe storage within the faculty jurisdiction, so that they can be re-assembled at a later date. They are not to be disposed of except under the authority, and in accordance with, a further faculty of this court.

(4) The pews that are removed are to be placed in safe storage within the faculty jurisdiction so that they can be available for re-use in the future. They are not to be disposed of except under the authority, and in accordance with, a further faculty of this court.

(5) The Royal Arms bearing the date MDCCCXLII (1842) are to be relocated to the southern wall of the church, above the entrance which leads to the church hall.

(6) If the existing altar cannot be disposed of for some purpose consistent with its former sacramental role, it should be burnt or broken up and buried within the church or other consecrated grounds.

(7) Within three years of the completion of the works authorised by this faculty (or such further period as the DAC may allow) the parish are to apply for a further faculty to carry out the works necessary to address the fracturing of the external stonework caused by expanding iron cramps so as to secure the removal of the church building from the Heritage at Risk register.

I give the petitioners permission to apply to the court, by letter to the Registry, for any further directions concerning the carrying-out of this faculty, or for its variation, in the event of any difficulties presenting themselves. The works are to be completed within twelve (12) months of the grant of the faculty, or such further period as the court may allow. In the usual way I charge no fee for this written judgment.

33. In conclusion, I must thank the parish, the consultees and the DAC for the evident care and attention that they have devoted to this faculty application. Their work has certainly contributed to a fully informed analysis and decision. I must also apologise to the parish for the length of time it has taken me to produce this judgment.

*David R. Hodge*

The Worshipful Chancellor Hodge KC

Easter Sunday, 9 April 2023



South and North Draught Lobbies





**Pews to be removed**



Chancel Altar



**Apse and Chancel**