

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF SOUTHWARK

RE: ST ANDREW, CROYDON

JUDGMENT

Introduction

1. This is a petition dated 31 August 2010 in respect of the internal re-ordering of St Andrew's Church, Croydon. It is made by the Priest in Charge, Fr Keith Sylvia, and by the Churchwardens, Mr Roger Coles and Mr David Matthews.
2. The works are Phase 1 of a three part scheme which are designed to revivify St Andrew's Church as a local centre of worship and mission. Originally the petition was in respect of all three phases, but there are issues still to be resolved in respect of phases 2 and 3. On 24 November 2010, I gave leave to amend by removing phases 2 and 3 from the current petition.
3. In a certificate dated 24 November 2011, the proposals are the subject of a recommendation by the DAC.
4. English Heritage, the appropriate amenity societies and the local planning authority have all been consulted on the proposals. The Victorian Society has submitted an objection, but does not wish to become a party opponent.
5. I am also taking into account an objection by Mr Philip Hendry. The position here is that he has not formally objected to the current petition but, by a letter dated 28 September 2009, he did object to an earlier scheme, which was in substantially the same terms. I treated this as an objection to the present petition, and, on 10 September 2011, the Registrar wrote to Mr Hendry asking him if he wished to become a party opponent. Mr Hendry has not replied and accordingly I am going to take his objection into account as if it had been made to the present petition, recognising that not all that Mr Hendry said is now relevant to that petition.

6. Mr Hendry has raised one matter which I should deal with at the outset. Fr Sylvia is Priest in Charge, and the presentation to the living has been twice suspended. It is evident, accordingly, that there could be pastoral re-organisation in this part of Croydon. It would not make sense to spend a lot of money on the church, only for it to become redundant shortly thereafter. I asked the then Acting Bishop of the Diocese, Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham, for his views about this aspect of the matter. By a letter dated 10 November 2010, he has written to the Registrar as follows:

...any pastoral re-organisation would include the church and its redevelopment would not prejudice any such consideration. The project is to be self-financing and will leave the building much better fitted to worship and mission than it is at present. The development has the support of the Bishop of Croydon and the Archdeacon of Croydon.

In these circumstances, it seems to me that the particular concern raised by Mr Hendry has been addressed.

7. Against the background that there are no parties opponent who have asked for there to be a hearing, I have not myself identified any reason why a hearing is required.
8. I visited the Church on 28 October 2011.
9. It will be helpful to say at the outset that I shall grant a faculty as prayed, subject to conditions.

St Andrew's Church

10. St Andrew's Church is of some historical and architectural interest. It is listed Grade II. Both the listing and Pevsner ascribe it to Ferrey, but I have been told that it is essentially by Woodyer, which makes it more interesting. It is an attractive, but not an outstanding building. The fittings are of a generally high standard. It is pewed, but the pews are not contemporaneous with the building. There was a re-ordering scheme in the 1980s which removed some of the pews and placed a Holy Table in front of the chancel screen.

The need

11. I begin by reminding myself that it is for the petitioners to justify any change to a church. Accordingly the question of need is an important one, independent of any question of harm arising from the proposals.
12. The church halls nearby are no longer available for use by the parish and are to be sold. I am not sure how intrinsically suitable they were, and in any event they would need money being spent on them if they were to continue in use. This does not seem to be an option.
13. Accordingly, if the church is to have hall facilities, realistically they need to be provided within the church site. There is nothing unusual about this, and such relocation has the benefit of making the facilities more directly accessible. If such provision is – as one would hope – used by the community, it brings the community into the church building. The downside can be that it reduces church capacity, but this is a fairly large church and this would not be a concern at the present time.
14. Within the worship area, the existence of the pews inhibits flexible use.
15. The heating, lighting and electrical installations are old and need renewing.
16. This part of Croydon is an urban priority area.¹ The Church has special links with St Andrew's Church of England High School, and the school use the church. In a letter dated 23 January 2011, Mr David Matthews, the school's headmaster, has written to the Registrar as follows:

We need the new church. We need a building which is attractive so that we can attract others to it, to experience the outreach – spiritual, pastoral, social – which the church and school partners want to make available. At the most basic level, we need a building with lavatories and adequate heating.

¹ When it was first built, the Church was known as *St Andrew's Church for the Poor*.

The detailed proposals

17. Reference should be made to the detailed plans to understand the totality of what is proposed. I shall here outline the principal proposals.
18. Against this background of the need outlined above, the parish have brought forward proposals which involve creating a discrete worship area with flexible seating. The existing pews would be removed. There would be an area of tiered seating at the ^ew^est of the church, incorporating, underneath, a "welcome counter", a WC for those whose mobility is impaired, and a store for the flower arrangers. It is thought that the ^etⁱered seating will be particular useful when the building is used by St Andrew's School, as well as for concerts.
19. The chancel behind the screen would become a flexible hall/function/meeting space, as would the Lady Chapel.
20. A new prayer chapel would however be created on the north side of the church.
21. An innovative feature of the proposals is a liquid crystal glass screen which would be installed behind the existing screen (which would remain) and divide the worship area from the hall facilities. When an electric current is activated, the screen will appear white and be opaque; when it is not activated it will be transparent and allow views from the church into the hall area behind and vice versa. The need for separation at certain times between the two parts of the church is apparent; and the avoidance of a permanent opaque barrier (which would usually be what would be proposed in a scheme of this kind) is a considerable improvement on this.
22. The existing vestries would be refurbished, and a new kitchen and WCs would be provided.
23. The pipe organ would be removed.
24. There would be new heating and lighting and electrical installations, as well as audio visual equipment and hearing aid loops.

25. A new vehicle entry from Southbridge Road would be created together with new car parking spaces and a turning area.

The objections

The Victorian Society

26. The Victorian Society originally had a detailed concern about the tiered seating. That concern has been met. Their objection is one of principle: they object to the loss of the existing chancel as an integral part of a Victorian church. They refer to the impact of the scheme as *extremely detrimental*.
27. I note first of all that the DAC have recommended the proposals, and that English Heritage and the local planning authority do not object.
28. The Church Buildings Council originally had concerns about both the tiered seating and the liquid crystal screen. However, having been supplied with more detail, and having discussed the matter with Mr Graham Doyle RIBA of the Lee Evans Partnership, it now supports both aspects of the scheme.
29. It seems to me that although the proposals will make the building a better building to use - for worship, for use ancillary to worship and for the community – there is no getting away from the fact that they will adversely affect its historic and architectural character. Nonetheless there seems to me to be a clear case as regards need; and by need, I do not simply refer to the “plant” that is required to accommodate the church’s existing activities but also what is required to equip the church as a local centre of worship and mission for the future. I consider that that need outweighs any harm that would be caused.
30. I think that four comments are in order.
31. First, this is an important and attractive church, but it is not outstanding.

32. Second, the liquid crystal screen is an important feature which will mitigate the harm, and enable the interior of the church to continue to be "read" as one building.
33. Third, what I am doing by granting a faculty is seeking to enable the parish to continue its ministry to the people of South Croydon from this building. If I were not to grant a faculty, it is evident that that future ministry would be in doubt, the more particularly since pastoral re-organisation is in the offing. If the building does not continue as a church as currently proposed, it seems to me very unlikely that its future as a listed building, uncertain in any event, could be better than it is under the present proposals.
34. Fourth, I have had in mind in considering this matter the secular guidance applicable to applications for listed building consent, and the Government's concern that there should be equivalence between the secular and ecclesiastical regimes. It seems to me that if the planning authority, the London Borough of Croydon, had had concerns about the grant of a faculty in this case, it would have brought those concerns to my attention.

Mr Hendry

35. What I have said generally in respect of the Victorian Society's objections applies also to the detail of Mr Hendry's other concerns.
36. I deal with those detailed points hereunder.

Loss of pews

37. The pews are not original to the church. If flexibility is to be achieved in the worship area, their loss is inevitable. A number of "specimen" pews can, and will be retained in the re-ordering.

Effect on the rood screen and cross

38. Although the rood screen and cross are evidently affected by the proposals, they will be retained, and the impact on them will be reduced by the provision of the liquid crystal screen.

Loss of the chancel and sanctuary fittings

39. The screen to the Holy Table and riddle posts are to be relocated in the new Prayer Chapel.

Effect on the pulpit

40. The pulpit will be relocated approximately 2.5m from its present location.

Loss of the Lady Chapel and adverse effect on the Ninian Comper window in the chapel

41. The need for “church hall” space is considered above. It is not proposed, as Mr Hendry suggests, that this area should become a café, although it will have more general community use. The proposals will have no direct effect on the window²

Loss of the pipe organ

42. The DAC does not object. (The particular relevance of this is that it receives expert advice in respect of organs, and in this particular case it has considered an independent report on behalf of the parish from Mr Ian Bell, a well known expert on organs). The organ – which is a good one – will be going to a good home: I have granted a faculty for its installation in All Saints’ Church, East Sheen. One may regret the loss of a pipe organ from the church, but it requires a strong musical tradition to sustain such an organ, and that is not present here. It seems to me that it would not be appropriate to seek to continue to burden this parish with an organ in need of restoration, and which, when restored, would not be seen to be of particular value.

Conclusion

43. None of the detailed points raised by Mr Hendry has led me to a conclusion that a faculty should not be granted in this case.

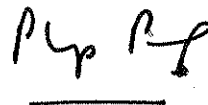
² Note that the Phase 2 proposals for an exterior extension seek to preserve natural light to the window.

Additional matter

44. I satisfied myself on site that the provision of a new access from Southbridge Road need not involve any disturbance of the burial area at the east end of the church, and that no such disturbance was proposed under Phase 1.

Detailed order

45. I direct that a faculty should issue.
46. This will be subject to the following conditions:
- (a) a full specification of the works (including details of the new access from Southbridge Road) is to be supplied to the DAC for agreement before the works are begun; in the event of disagreement, the matter is to be referred to the Court
 - (b) the works is to be completed within 30 months or such further period as may be allowed
 - (c) the works are to be completed to the satisfaction of the Church's Inspecting Architect.
47. Note that the works permitted do not include repairs to the stonework and windows (which, accordingly, will need to be the subject of a separate petition)
48. I am grateful to Fr Sylvia for the assistance with which he has provided me in consideration of this petition. He has evidently put an enormous amount of work into bringing this project to this stage – no doubt together with others in the parish. I hope that the works will begin soon, and that – as everyone will hope – the scheme is a great success.



PHILIP PETCHEY

Chancellor

21 March 2011