

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF THE DIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK

IN THE MATTER OF THE CHURCH OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI, WEST WICKHAM

AND IN THE MATTER OF A PETITION BY THE VICAR AND CHURCHWARDENS FOR THE
INSTALLATION OF A NEW LIGHTING SYSTEM

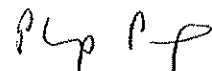
JUDGMENT

Introduction

1. This is an unopposed petition by the two churchwardens (Mrs Christine Mew and Mr Michael East) and a PCC member (Mr David Curtis) for the replacement of the existing lighting at the church with new lighting. The parish is currently coming to the end of an interregnum of about a year, which explains why the Vicar has not been joined as petitioner¹. Although the DAC does not object to the proposals, it has not recommended them to the Court. In circumstances where the DAC had expressed reservations about the proposals, it was evidently appropriate for me carefully to consider those reservations. Having done so, it is appropriate for me to explain my decision in a short judgment.
2. The proposed works were considered by the DAC at meetings on April 2014, September 2014, October 2014 and November 2014, and there was a site visit on 5 August 2014. It was the meeting in November 2014 that led to the "do not object" advice. The petition was lodged on 8 April 2015. In accordance with rule 5.3, notices were displayed on noticeboards inside and outside the church between 9 March 2015 and 6 April 2015. There were no objections to the proposals.
3. The church of St Francis in West Wickham was designed by JE Newberry and CW Fowler and built between 1935 and 1936. (Situated as it then was in the Diocese of Canterbury, the church was consecrated by Cosmo Gordon Lang, then Archbishop). It is a very attractive church. From the outside, indeed, it appears nothing remarkable and the colour of the bricks used in its construction is unattractive. Inside, however, it is a spacious and attractive, drawing particular character from the high columns and arches which separate the main body of the church from the aisles. It has an east window, installed in 2010, of high quality and the arrangement whereby a second holy table has been introduced at the east end of the nave is a very successful one. The fittings are generally of high quality. The church is unlisted.
4. The current lighting dates from 1970. It is in fact rather elegant, its major feature being four pendants of twelve lights each, hung in the body of the church.
5. That lighting system is now of course old and not very energy efficient. It predates the nave altar and east window and when it was installed there was, I think, a screen separating the chancel from the nave. There is concern that even to the main body of the church it supplies insufficient light.
6. The new scheme has been designed for the Parish by Mr Graham Smith of C.E.S, a firm which specialises in ecclesiastical and heritage lighting. Putting the matter simply the proposal is to provide light from two sources, namely a series of 6 pairs of "wall washers" in the body of the church supplemented by appropriately placed fixed lights (including potentially higher levels of lighting for the east end, the area between the nave and the chancel, and the west end).

¹ I am told by the present petitioners that Canon Mervyn McKinney, the Vicar until his retirement last year, was fully involved in the working up the present proposals and was fully supportive of them.

7. I visited the church on 22 July 2015. Mr East and Mr Curtis also both attended at that time, as did Mr Smith of C.E.S and the Church's Inspecting Architect, Mr Daniel Golberg. I am grateful to them all for their help. Although no-one from the DAC attended, it had set out its views in writing and, in the light of my visit, I was able to understand its reservations. I remain very grateful for all the advice that the DAC gives me and, more particularly, with the care it has taken over this case. A mock up of a wall washer had been installed on the south wall.
8. The DAC initially raised a specific concern in respect of the original about shadowing. This has been addressed by an amendment to the design of the wall washer. Shadowing is a technical matter. If there were any residual concern (and I am not sure that there is), it cannot be unacceptable in the light of a decision not to recommend (as opposed to a decision to object).
9. The heart of the DAC's concern goes to the flexibility of the proposed arrangements. Now there is no doubt that the proposed arrangements will be flexible in that it will be possible to light the church and different parts of the church in an almost infinite number of ways, within the constraint of the lights being fixed. If the lighting were done by spotlights on lighting rods, it would be possible to achieve even **greater** flexibility by repositioning the spotlights on the rods.
10. I think that it is necessary to consider what this flexibility might be used for. Seating in the nave is currently by way of traditional wooden chairs². Accordingly there is potential to use the nave in a non-traditional way for services or meetings in the round. Mr Smith accepts that the lighting arrangements that he has designed do not at present accommodate such potential uses although, at a cost, they could do so in the future by the addition of a further circuit.
11. I do not think that the extra flexibility that might be secured by an alternative system represents a reason for turning away the current proposals. There are no current proposals to use the nave other than in a traditional way; and, if an area is needed for flexible use, the north aisle evidently provides a good sized space.
12. The DAC would also prefer lighting spotlights on rods to "wall washers" from an aesthetic point of view. Having seen a mock up of a wall washer I think that for this modern but traditional church lighting using wall washers is appropriate.
13. Accordingly I propose to direct that a faculty should issue. The work is to be completed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Church's Inspecting Architect. If there are not already good quality photographs of the church as it is currently lit (with the four pendants) such photographs should be taken and put in the church's records.
14. The Petitioners are confident that they will raise the £50,000 or so additional funding required for the scheme without too much difficulty and I hope that this proves to the case. I am sure that the new lighting will be appreciated both by the congregation and the wider community, and will encourage, as one would wish, the fullest use of the church.



PHILIP PETCHHEY
Chancellor
31 July 2015

² There are long term plans to replace them, but only with a different design of chair.