

Neutral Citation Number: [2020] ECC Gui 1

**IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF
THE DIOCESE OF GUILDFORD**

Date: 2 March 2020

**IN THE PARISH OF ADDLESTONE
THE CHURCH OF ST PAUL**

In the matter of a petition for a faculty for the installation of Solar Panels on the main church roof in accordance with the Statement of Need and Solar PV Proposal from Wey Valley Solar.

JUDGMENT

1. St Paul's Church is an attractive church built in 1838 church as a preaching hall for 600 people in box pews. In 1855 a small chancel was added and in 1883 there was a major reordering with new central and side aisles and an extended chancel. In 1900 the choir vestry and apse was added. Following a major fire in 2003 the church was rebuilt without roof beams, with a level nave and gallery for chairs rather than pews and new windows. A new door and porch lead to a chapel for private prayer and the chancel was adapted as a chapel for small services. A new south west porch was built on the Church Road side to provide a better entrance and meeting place. St Paul's is not listed nor in a conservation area.
2. The petitioners seek permission for Photo Voltaic Panels on the main church roof in order to generate electricity for church use and export to the National Grid. The PCC wishes not only to save about 18% on its energy bills (total savings are hoped to be about £1,000p.a.) but to champion the environmental benefits of green sustainable power within the local community. The church hosts a daily preschool and coffee shop and so those as well as the church and church office will use the generated electricity.
3. Wey Valley Solar Co-operative will provide solar panel arrays on the church main south roof providing just over 10kwh. They must be installed this month to attract government subsidies. There is no substantial cost to the church for the installation as it is funded through the tariffs and the lower electricity charge to the church. Wey Valley Solar takes

the financial risks and also does the maintenance of the installation for 20 years. After this the panels become the property and responsibility of the church.

4. The PCC satisfied a number of DAC queries about the effectiveness of the overall project, the best arrangement of the panels on the roof and structural concerns. In order to address the aesthetic impact on the building the PCC chose frameless black panels to reduce their visual impact (lessening their visibility against the roof tiles). The design of the cable run from the inverter to the main board in the boiler room will follow the natural contours of the building where possible. Although the Wey Valley Solar Co-operative has most of its experience in state schools in Surrey it is a member of the wider Energy4All not-for-profit social enterprise group and I am satisfied that they are an appropriate partner for this very different type of building.
5. When the petition was first presented it had a number of deficiencies which have now been remedied. The petition was returned by the Registry with comments from both myself and the Worshipful Andrew Jordan which needed to be addressed by the Parish. There are now appropriate petitioners, a PCC resolution, a properly completed petition, there is approval from Ecclesiastical Insurance and the petitioners have consulted the relevant planning authority and the inspecting architect. The PCC minutes show that careful consideration was taken over the proposals.
6. The guidance from English Heritage in relation to listed buildings is useful to take into account when considering church buildings. This suggests that it is not considered sympathetic to a building's appearance to have a solar panel or other equipment fixed to any of its main elevations. Where climate change measures impact upon heritage assets, the benefits to society in terms of climate change remediation must be weighed against the harm caused to the heritage asset. The proposals must be put into the context of the whole building and its local environment. I should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of utilising their positive role in place-shaping. The public benefit of mitigating the effects of climate change should be considered and weighed against the amount of harm to the significance of heritage assets.
7. The planning authority have advised that the equipment must be sited, so far as is practicable, to minimise the effect on the external appearance of the building and the amenity of the area. I note that the all black panels will match the existing colour of the church roof tiles. The planning authority requires that when no longer needed the equipment should be removed as soon as reasonably practicable. The other planning conditions for mounting are met. Wey Valley Solar are using a hook & rail mounting system which is MCS accredited and panels will not be within one metre of the external edge of the roof or a wall.
8. I have considered the visual impact of the main elevation from around the church, the adjoining roads and from neighbouring properties. The photographs provided and those available on the internet from Google Street View have been helpful. I note that the panels are not readily visible from within the church grounds due to the angle of the roof and the arrangement of the building. The church is surrounded by trees to the south and so the panels are largely hidden from sight from Church Road by those trees. The panels are not

readily visible from School Road. I am satisfied that the visual impact of the panels is reduced by the design on the building and the trees around it.

9. In any event the church is surrounded on all sides by modern housing and buildings and on the south side it is opposite the modern buildings of Addlestone Youth Centre. It would not be out of keeping with the locality to have discreet, modern solar panels on the south roof. The petitioners have satisfied themselves that the visual impact is unlikely to result in any adverse comment from the church family or others in the immediate community. I am also reinforced by the architectural heritage expertise on the DAC which has recommended this petition.
10. I am satisfied that the visual impact of the solar panels will be relatively modest and can be accommodated without serious impact on the heritage value of the building. Fixing the equipment does not damage any historic fabric as much was rebuilt after 2003. Installation is reversible by removal of the panels. It is important that cabling, pipework, fuse boxes or other related equipment is accommodated discreetly. I am satisfied that the proposal has a net environmental benefit.
11. In those circumstances I direct that a faculty should be issued.
12. I impose conditions of the faculty:
 - a. For the removal of the equipment, including cabling and boxes, and making good of the fabric as soon as the solar panels fall out of use.
 - b. Any lease or licence with Wey Valley Solar should include a provision for any disputes to be adjudicated by the consistory court of the Diocese of Guildford.
 - c. Installation and maintenance must be undertaken in a manner which is consistent with the sacred use of the building.

ANDREW BURNS QC
DEPUTY CHANCELLOR