

In the matter of St John the Baptist, Westfield

Judgment

Following my directions of 6 November 1999, the petitioners agreed that I determine this matter on written representations. These were duly supplied and set out with economy and lucidity the background to the petition and the reasons for the choice of the proposed carpet. The secretary of the DAC has supplied me with a letter indicating in a little more detail its reasons for not recommending the selection despite being agreeable to the principle of carpeting the nave and chancel.

Initially, when viewing the small sample in isolation, I found myself in agreement with the DAC in that the colour of the carpet and, more particularly, the angular nature of the pattern are not what one would expect to find in a church of this age and type, or indeed in any church. However, my concerns were to a large extent allayed upon seeing samples in position within the church during the course of my visit on Monday. The colours are seemly and appropriate when seen with the terracotta of the existing stone and the blue of existing furnishings. Though less 'mottled' than one might ideally wish, the visual effect of the design is not as dominant when the carpet is viewed *in situ*. I am fortified in this opinion by the view expressed by the Archdeacon of Lewes and Hastings who had seen the sample in the church; by my consideration of alternative samples of plainer carpets kindly obtained by Mrs Dawn Archer, churchwarden, none of which seemed right; and the ultimately fruitless efforts of the parish in finding any realistic alternative.

Since the life of any carpet is limited and will be present in the church for a relatively short period in the overall scheme of things, I consider that where all factors are more or less equal the voice of the parish should predominate, especially when, as here, that voice is measured and responsible. It is they who will have to live with it. Whilst it may not be my personal choice nor that of the members of the DAC, the proposed carpet in this particular church is far from inappropriate. The laying of carpet throughout the nave and chancel will create a sense of unity where there is currently disparate and uneven flooring and will enhance the worship and mission of the parish at a time of particular outreach to its youth.

I therefore order that a faculty pass the seal on condition:

- (1) that prior to the installation of the carpet a photographic record is made of the interior of the church generally and, in particular, of the gravestones which will be covered over;
- (2) that the inscriptions on each gravestone are recorded in writing and maintained with the photographic record;
- (3) that no damage results to the existing floor;
- (4) that the work is completed within 4 months.

I should like to extend my thanks to the incumbent and churchwardens for their hospitality at the time of my visit.

Mark Hill
Chancellor

19 January 2000