

In the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Chichester

Petition No. 2021-061349

In the matter of Christ Church, Worthing

Judgment

1. A petition is sought for the following works at Christ Church, Worthing, which is a grade II* listed building.

Reordering of the west end of the church including; the removal of the pews and associated raised pew platforms between the West end of the worship space and the first pair of Nave columns and the introduction of a new insulated suspended floor that is level with the retained central aisle; relocation of three large bore cast iron radiators to the new ‘pew line’ by the said pair of columns, and introduction of wet trench heating within the new floor structure; the introduction of footings beneath the new suspended floor structure (in anticipation of the potential future reinstatement of a gallery above); introduction of a tea point/servery; upgrades to mechanical and electrical installations and creation of new foul drainage connection to Grafton Road; introduction of storage cupboards along the West wall, and conservation repairs to the plasterwork and leaded lights at the West end of the worship space.

2. These proposals have been subject to consultation with detailed correspondence passing between the DAC, the inspecting architect, Historic England and the Victorian Society. I do not need to rehearse the detail of the matters raised, but I do wish to compliment the parish, Mr Julian Vallis (the inspecting architect), Mr Connor McNeill of the Victorian Society and Ms Alma Howell and Ms Louise Hughes (of Historic England) on their constructive engagement and to thank Dr Emma Arbuthnot and Mr Greg Moore of the DAC for their professional input, and for facilitating the consultation process. It represents the faculty jurisdiction working at its very best, with restrained objections articulated respectfully and accompanied by proposed revisions more likely to be acceptable. The readiness of the parish to meet these concerns wherever possible has taken the heat out of these proceedings. I note in particular that abandoning the relocation of the font lead to the preservation of a representative sample of valued box pews, and that vinyl is no longer pursued as a floor covering.
3. The local planning authority, Adur and Worthing Council, chose not to participate in the consultation process, presumably content to leave the ecclesiastical authorities to determine the matter. An initial approach was made to the Church Buildings Council, but this seems to have been overtaken by events. By the time the matter reached me for directions, it was in such a form that mandatory consultation with the CBC was not, in my assessment, required, nor did I consider the Court would be assisted by discretionary consultation, particularly in the light of the emergent consensus. The DAC issued a Notification of Advice on 17 August 2021, recommending the proposed works, in their revised iteration.
4. Observations from Historic England and the Victorian Society led to the parish refining and updating its statement of significance and need. It is a model of clarity, and if I am right in

detecting the hand of Mr Julian Vallis in its drafting, I commend him for the care he has taken.

5. In consequence, I can be swift and economical in the application of the *Duffield* framework. The proposals might result in harm the significance of the church as a building of special architectural or historic interest, although it will not be of great significance. The justification for the work is clear and compelling, as the consultees concede. The public benefit would unquestionably outweigh the harm. Indeed even if the level of harm were greater than my assessment, the public benefit would still be strong enough to justify it. There is no obvious alternative which would result in a lesser degree of harm.
6. A faculty will therefore pass the seal. It will be subject to the following conditions:
 - i. the works will be completed within 18 months or such extended time as the Court may permit;
 - ii. the works are to be carried out under the direction of Mr Julian Vallis, inspecting architect;
 - iii. the works are not to commence until the court costs have been paid in full;
 - iv. engineered oak flooring is to be used instead of vinyl;
 - v. the parish should consider staining new timber to match original wooden fittings;
 - vi. the colour/tone of the kitchen cupboards are to be approved by the Court.
 - vii. no pews or other fittings are to be disposed of without prior permission of the Court.
7. The costs of and occasioned by this petition will be paid by petitioners.
8. Nothing in this judgment has any bearing upon such future petition as may be brought in relation to the introduction of a gallery or other works in the church, which will be determined on their merits based on the evidence adduced.