

In the matter of All Saints, Ripley

Judgment

1. This is a petition for the reordering including of a grade II* listed church. It comprises:
 - (1) Removal of the existing nave pews and replacement with up to 160 Rosehill Chantry chairs; lowering of existing pew platforms to level of nave floor, and reinstatement of timber floor boards; installation of 4 twin electrical sockets on either side of the central pier on the north and south nave arcade.
 - (2) Modification of the middle choir pews and reader pews.
 - (3) Removal of middle pew in the Ingilby Chapel; relocation of the reader pew and reduction in width of the existing pew platform.
 - (4) Provision for securing a ladder in the Choir Vestry to enable safer access to storage space.

Consultation

2. The statutory consultation can broadly be summarised as follows:
 - i. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings elected not to comment.
 - ii. Historic Buildings and Places (formerly the Ancient Monuments Society) remarked that “broadly speaking, there does seem to be weight in [the petitioners’] arguments”.
 - iii. The Victorian Society did not respond.
 - iv. Historic England indicated an intention to comment but never did so.
 - v. The local authority was not consulted and the court declined to direct special citation.
 - vi. One parishioner wrote a letter of objection but chose not to become a party opponent. The author’s name is recorded in the court file.
 - vii. The DAC recommended the proposals.
3. The letter of objection was directed to the removal of the pews. It maintains that their removal, and replacement with modern chairs, would spoil the aesthetic of the church. It speaks disparagingly of the interior of Ripon cathedral and asserts that the proposals are unfitting for a fourteenth century church. It mentions the acquisition of the building from Sir Thomas Ingleby in 2014 and remarked on how well it has been maintained since. It says the building is widely admired.
4. The petitioners have provided a gracious response to the letter of objection acknowledging that opinions differ but giving a cogent explanation for what is proposed.

Assessment and disposal

5. Applying the *Duffield* framework I am drawn to the conclusion that harm to building will be marginal, that the justification for the proposal is convincing, and that the balance therefore comes down in favour of the granting of a faculty. And I so direct.