

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF THE DIOCESE OF BRISTOL

In re Garsdon, All Saints

JUDGMENT

1. The petitioners apply for an amendment to a Faculty regarding the introduction of upholstered metal chairs to replace 7 pews that were removed under Faculty. The CBC, SPAB and the Victorian Society raised objections to the introduction of such chairs on the basis that wooden chairs would be more appropriate to the setting of the Church, and are very difficult to keep clean and stain free particularly during the Covid pandemic.
2. I asked the Petitioners to deal with the objections and they have provided full and thoughtful responses. I summarise the responses below, but mean no disrespect to the Petitioners by doing so.
  - (1) a dark wood stain will make the church seem dark;
  - (2) it would be difficult to obtain a matching stain and do not want to introduce a third shade in addition to the organ and pew colours;
  - (3) the chosen metal frame design is value for money for the level of use anticipated (i.e. infrequently);
  - (4) a moderately upholstered chair is the most comfortable and fitting solution to their needs (non-scientific but practical research);
  - (5) the coloured upholstery will (i) match the aisle carpet; (ii) compliment the altar frontals; and (iii) help alleviate the feeling of darkness in the building;
  - (6) the staining of wooden may need to be renewed over time;
  - (7) the church is maintained to very high standards and the upholstery will be cared for;
  - (8) a high level of wear and tear is not expected given the use anticipated (see above);
  - (9) the chosen design is, in fact lighter and more easily stackable than equivalent wooden chairs;
  - (10) the church's design means it will not be affected by the acoustic issues sometime experienced with upholstered chairs; and
  - (11) the chairs will add an informal feel and make the particular space where they will be positioned more inviting to unaccustomed visitors without making the church look like an office.

3. I have also had the benefit of seeing photographs relied on by the petitioners.
4. Having considered the matters thoughtfully raised by the CBC, SPAB, and the Victorian Society and the responses given by the Petitioners I am persuaded that the chairs petitioned for will be appropriate in the particular circumstances of this case. I am sure that the petitioners will bear in mind the concerns of the amenity bodies and the assurances they have given in their submissions to me over the next few years.

14<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Justin Gau,  
Chancellor of the Diocese of Bristol