

Neutral Citation Number: [2024] ECC She 4

**DIOCESE OF SHEFFIELD
In the Consistory Court**

Her Honour Judge Sarah Singleton KC
Chancellor

In the matter of SPROTROUGH ST MARY THE VIRGIN - Petition to create a social area at the west end of the south aisle by installing a kitchen hub in this space

Judgment

The Works

1. The works subject to this Petition are the creation of a social space including a kitchen hub to be located at the west end of the south aisle of the church. This is the most modern part of a well looked after Grade 1 listed building. The works are a modest start to a larger scheme of reordering to be presented to this Court in stages.

The purpose of the proposed space and kitchen hub is:-

- A) to provide a flexible space for younger worshippers and seating for social gatherings and wider community events.
- B) to improve disabled access and to provide wheelchair space
- C) to create modern kitchen facilities

I note that a public consultation in 2021 recorded widespread approval of the overall plan.

The Church

2. The Church is a late Norman structure, extensively re-ordered in 1912/14 by Sir Ninian Comper. It is at the heart of a broad and active community of worship and fellowship.

The Application

3. The DAC considered the works at their meeting of 26th November 2023 and recommended them for approval.

Public Notice Requirements have been complied with and no objections have been communicated to the Registry.

The CBC and four national relevant amenity societies have been consulted and raise no objection to the works having been assured that they do not impact any ancient features of the church. Indeed the proposals are welcomed as modest and well planned.

The only issue raised by the Victorian Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was their recommendation that the wood of the kitchen hub be stained a dark not a light colour apparently to match other wood in the church. The Petitioners considered this in consultation with their quinquennial architect and have maintained their preference for light staining. At my request, the DAC considered this issue at their meeting of 16^h April 2024 and agreed with the Petitioner's preference for light staining of the wood.

Decision and Reasoning

4. I am quite satisfied that these works do not impact the historical and architectural significance of the Church Building or affect any feature intended to be protected by the listing. I am reassured, as are Historic Buildings and Places, that the pews affected are modern 20th Century pews. Medieval panels have been incorporated from another now closed church into some other pews, which are not in this part of the building.
5. The issue of whether the oak staining of the kitchen hub should be light or dark I consider to be a narrow one affecting an ultimately removable feature. It seems to be more a matter of taste than a serious question of historical significance. The Victorian Society's reference to the lighter stain being, in their view, "jarring" tends to confirm that impression. The DAC support the Petitioners on this issue and I see no particular reason to depart from the Petitioners' preference in respect of it. I assume that the comments of SPAB on the details of how the joinery of the kitchen hub should be crafted to fit into the proposed space will also be taken into account by the Petitioners when that, presumably end stage of the project, is reached.
6. I am happy to direct that a faculty be issued and wish this project Godspeed.

Sarah Singleton KC

Chancellor of the Diocese of Sheffield

20th April 2024