



Faculty – Grade II listed, Victorian, village church (founded in 1840, with the chancel and north chapel added by G. E. Street in 1860, and the remainder rebuilt by J. O. Scott in 1887-90, with various later alterations) – Reordering of the interior to create meeting rooms, an office, a servery, a café area with retractable screen, toilets and storage, the overhaul of the heating and lighting systems, and the removal of most of the pews/benches in the nave – DAC recommending the proposals for approval – The CBC and Historic England content to defer to the DAC – The Victorian Society raising objections, principally to the treatment of the floor, the design of the glazed screen, and the number of pews/benches to be retained, but not wishing to become a party opponent, leaving the faculty application formally unopposed – Whether proposals causing harm to listed church building – Level of harm – Whether any harm to the significance of the church outweighed by the benefits of the proposals – Faculty granted subject to extensive conditions

Application Ref: 2023-081959

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT
OF THE DIOCESE OF OXFORD

Date: Sunday, 4 January 2026

Before:

THE WORSHIPFUL CHANCELLOR HODGE KC

In the matter of:

Holy Trinity, Sunningdale

THE PETITION OF:

The Reverend Jon Hutchinson (Vicar)

Bea Emmerson (Churchwarden) and

Paul Cartwright (Churchwarden)

This is an unopposed, online faculty petition, determined on the papers and without a hearing. Objections were received to this petition from The Victorian Society but they did not wish to become a party opponent

The following cases are referred to in this Judgment:

Re Jesus College, Cambridge [2022] ECC Ely 2

Re Holy Trinity, Clapham [2022] ECC Swk 4, (2023) 25 Ecc LJ 276

Re St Alkmund, Duffield [2013] Fam 158

Re St Laurence, Combe [2022] ECC Oxf 5

Re St Luke the Evangelist, Maidstone [1995] Fam 1

Re St Mary, Headington [2025] ECC Oxf 5

Re St Peter & St Paul, Aston Rowant [2019] ECC Oxf 3, (2020) 22 Ecc LJ 265

Re St Stephen, Redditch [2025] ECC Wor 2

JUDGMENT

Introduction and background

1. This is an online faculty petition, dated 14 November 2025, by the vicar (the Reverend Jon Hutchinson) and the churchwardens (Bea Emmerson and Paul Cartwright) seeking authorisation for the extensive reordering of the interior of this Grade II listed, Victorian village church to create meeting rooms, an office, a servery, a café area with retractable screen, toilets and storage, to overhaul the heating and lighting systems, and to remove most of the pews in the nave. As described in the petition, the works include:

A new floor and finishes, with underfloor heating across the nave, aisles and transepts.

A new heating system and the delivery of heat sourced from an air source heat pump and gas hybrid system.

A mezzanine floor across the back two bays of the church, facilitating an upper room, meeting room, storage, and toilet.

A church office, crèche, servery, and café space below the mezzanine, with two more toilets, (one being accessible), lift and stairs to the 1st floor.

Glazed retracting screens to separate the café space from the worship space.

Insulation and new heating source to the chapel.

Returning the vestry to an open meeting room.

New tables and chairs; the removal of most of the pews in the nave, with six pews retained, choir-style, in the chapel.

Appropriate quinquennial inspection repairs taking advantage of this package of works.

New lighting across the nave, aisles and transepts.

Moving the font to a better missional position.

New internal porch doors, new glass door to the office, additional sliding doors to the porch for heat retention (retaining the current oak doors which are to be repositioned).

Remodelling the dais at the east end of church, and the musicians area, re-orientating the visual display screens and sound system, and relocating the audio-visual desk.

Removing the wooden sliding screens and sliding doors from both transepts.

Increasing storage area capacity to include foodbank storage.

Associated relocation of certain internal monuments.

Introduction of a fire alarm system.

Reordering the parking, and the provision of an electric vehicle charger.

2. At their meeting on 21 November 2023, the Parochial Church Council (the **PCC**) of Holy Trinity Sunningdale unanimously decided to 'go live' with this project. This meant that they committed themselves to the plans and programme they had previously shared with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (the **DAC**), and to developing this project through to fruition under the catch-phrase '*Transforming Trinity*'. This enabled fund-raising to begin in earnest and pledges to be honoured. According to the petition, the estimated cost of the proposed works is some £1,747,000. The PCC's current balance of funds that are available for this project is £395,000. The PCC also hold gifts and legacies totalling some £743,706, with a further £243,700 already available from grants and fundraising. £364,594 is still being sought. It is hoped that the works will start within two to six weeks after the date the faculty is granted; and they are expected to take some nine months to complete.

The church

3. According to the petitioners' Statement of Significance, Holy Trinity Church is a Grade II listed building in the conservation area of the old village of Sunningdale, in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, and the Archdeaconry of Berkshire. The church stands on a triangular site which was originally an old gravel pit that existed on Sunningdale Common. One acre of land was donated to the parish as the site for a new church in 1839. The grounds are enclosed by Church Road to the south, Trinity Crescent to the west, and High Street to the north and east. The original church was designed by Robert Ebbles and was completed on 22 October 1840. The chancel and a north chapel were added by George Edmund Street in 1860. The remainder of the church was rebuilt by John Oldrid Scott in 1887-90; and there are various later alterations and additions. Although Sunningdale has grown over the decades, and is situated on the A30, only nine miles from Heathrow, the position of the church in the old village, and open land nearby (Tittenhurst Park, Coworth Park and Broom Hall Farm), create a rural setting for the church.

4. The church was first listed on 3 March 1972. The listing entry is unusually full. It reads:

Summary

Summary

Parish church, founded 1840, chancel and north chapel added by GE Street 1860, the remainder rebuilt by JO Scott 1887-90, with various later alterations.

Reasons for Designation

Holy Trinity Church, Sunningdale, of 1860 by GE Street and 1887-90 by JO Scott, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * Architectural interest: an interesting fusion of High and Late Victorian Gothic Revival, its overall stylistic unity masking subtle differences between Street's severely muscular east end and Scott's richer and looser treatment of the tower, transepts and nave;*
- * Stained glass: a varied and interesting scheme including glass by a number of important Victorian designers, and with an exceptionally good east window of the 1930s by Ninian Comper.*

History

The district of Sunningdale, amid the heathlands of the Berkshire-Surrey border, was sparsely populated until the C19. There were enough inhabitants by 1840 to require the building of a church, a neo-Norman brick box with a west tower. In 1860 the then incumbent, the Revd W. C. Raffles Flint, rebuilt the eastern part of the church as a memorial to his uncle, Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore. The additions, designed by the diocesan architect G. E. Street and reflecting the Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology of the period, comprised a long chancel with side chapel and organ chamber, plus new fittings throughout the church. Between 1887 and 1890 the remaining original fabric was pulled down and replaced by a new nave, transepts and crossing tower by J. O. Scott. The organ chamber was rebuilt and enlarged in 1900, followed by the vestry in 1907, and in 1935 the east window was renewed by the artist-architect Ninian Comper. More recent alterations to the interior, in the 1970s and early 2000s, have included the glazing-in of the transepts and north-east chapel.

George Edmund Street (1824-81) was one of the foremost church architects of the High Victorian Gothic Revival. He began his career in the office of George Gilbert Scott before setting up in independent practice in 1849; the following year he was appointed architect to the Diocese of Oxford, where he built and restored numerous churches. In 1855 he published his influential study of 'The Brick and Marble Architecture of Northern Italy', which (along with the writings of John Ruskin) helped popularise the use of Italian Gothic motifs among English architects. His own large body of work ranges from the Italian brick polychromy of St James the Less, Westminster (1861) to the muscular early French Gothic of his last and largest work, the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand (1868-82).

John Oldrid Scott (1841-1913) was the second son of George Gilbert Scott, the leading British architect of the Victorian era. He trained in the office of his father, and inherited the practice after the latter's death, continuing a number of his projects including the buildings of Glasgow University; he also worked with his brother, George Gilbert Scott Jr., on St John's RC Church (later cathedral) in Norwich. His best-known independent work is the neo-Byzantine Greek Orthodox cathedral in Bayswater, London, completed in 1882.

Details

Parish church, founded 1840, chancel and north chapel added by G. E. Street 1860, the remainder rebuilt by J. O. Scott 1887-90, with various later alterations.

MATERIALS: red brick with bands and dressings of blue brick and Bath stone, along with knapped flint flushwork in Scott's additions. Mixture of slate and clay tile roofs with ornamental cresting; shingled spire.

PLAN: cruciform plan comprising four-bay aisled nave with south-west porch; transepts and crossing tower; and chancel with organ chamber to the south and chapel and vestries to the north.

EXTERIOR: Scott's work of 1887-90 forms the majority of the fabric, including the nave, aisles, porch, transepts and tower. The style here is an Arts and Crafts-inflected version of 'early Middle Pointed', i.e. English Gothic of c.1250, with simple bar tracery and cusped lancets, given a decorative aspect by the variety of colours and materials especially the use of banded voussoirs and chequerboard flushwork, the latter appearing in the gables, under the eaves, beneath the west window and elsewhere. There is a good deal of ornamental ironwork, including scrollly strapwork door-hinges and decorative box gutters and rainwater heads. The west front is particularly richly treated. The four-light west window with its spiky Geometric tracery is flanked by tiers of gabled niches and by chunky stepped buttresses of complex form. (Beneath the window are the foundation stones from 1840 and 1887.) The gabled aisle to the left has two lancets and a cinquefoil. The north aisle wall has blind arcading between the buttresses, framing three three-light windows and a north-west doorway beneath a triangular hood-mould. The projecting south-west porch has a doorway of two shafted orders flanked by niches and diagonal buttresses; in the gable above are eight stepped brick lancets over bands of flint and limestone. The nave roof sweeps down low over the unbuttressed south aisle, which has two gabled half-dormers with triple lancets flanking a small quadruple lancet. The transepts are slightly lower than the nave, and project only a few feet beyond the aisles. The south transept has a triple-lancet window with a chequerboard tympanum; the north transept has two two-light windows flanking a half-octagonal stair turret. The crossing tower is a massive angle-buttressed construction with blind arcading and a small bullseye window on each side; the east, north and south sides also have prominent clock-faces. Above are bands of checkerboard and carved quatrefoils, and then the sturdy broach spire with its tall hipped lucarnes. The east end is mostly Street's work of 1860, despite the alterations to the organ chamber and vestry in 1900 and 1907, and to the east window by Comper in 1935. The style is subtly different, High rather than Late Victorian, with sterner, more 'muscular' forms and harsher polychromy without flushwork. The chancel has two lancets to the south and a large traceried window to the east; the wiry bar tracery - three shallow-arched lights and a big octofoil - is Comper's, replacing Street's heavy plate tracery. The north chapel still has its original east window, comprising four uncusped lancets and a bullseye; to the right is the low vestry block. The rebuilt organ chamber to the south has its own gable (Street's original was a lean-to), with stone checker-work and thin lancets.

INTERIORS: the nave is broad and low, with wide aisles but no clerestory. The inside walls are brick-faced with stone bands and dressings; the stone arcades have compound piers and diagonal abaci. The nave and north aisle have crown-post roofs with close-set rafters. The crossing arches spring from sturdy octagonal piers, with a triple opening over the nave arch and engaged shafts to the chancel arch. From the north transept, a double archway with a cinquefoil roundel above opens into the side chapel. The chancel itself has a barrel roof, the

section over the altar divided off by a boldly cusped timber arch forming a ceiled canopy with moulded ribs and painted stencilling. To the left, a broad double archway opens into the side chapel; the arches have stone cusping and toothed brick surrounds, and are divided by a stubby marble column with an outsize foliated capital. The east wall is dominated by Street's built-in reredos. The central section is of coloured marble (red, pink, green and cream) and features an embossed Maltese cross framed by columns and a rich foliate cornice; the outer sections are of bold polychromatic tilework in red, black, white and green. To the right are a stone sedilia and a piscina, and to the left an aumbry, both with trefoil-arched heads and slender marble shafts.

FITTINGS: *the stone font, at the west end of the nave, has a circular bowl with inset crosses, resting upon four short marble columns. This and the arched stone pulpit by the chancel arch belong to Street's work of 1860. The nave pews, of unknown date, are simple open benches with Y-shaped ends. In the aisles are decorative electroliers bearing gilded monograms. The organ case, of 1907, projects into the south transept. The traceried chancel screen, of oak upon a stone base, is of 1888; there are more screens between the north transept and chapel. The simple oak chancel stalls were installed in 1903; the altar furnishings are of similar character. (For the built-in reredos, see previous section.)*

STAINED GLASS: *the west window (1899) is by Clayton and Bell and shows the Annunciation, Nativity, Presentation and Adoration of the Magi with SS Peter, John, Stephen and Paul. Three of the north aisle windows - Dorcas, Martha (both 1902) and the Resurrection (1899) - are by the same firm, as are the four small lancets in the south aisle: the Agony in the Garden, Jesus and Veronica, the Entombment and Noli Me Tangere (all 1899). The south transept window (1888), showing the Risen Christ with the Virgin and St John, is by Burlison and Grylls, as are two in the south aisle: the Transfiguration (1896) and Simeon (1899). Another of the south aisle windows, a Nativity with angels (1892) is by C. E. Kempe. The north transept contains two windows by Heaton, Butler and Bayne: the victory at Rephaim (1905) and the calling of Samuel (1912). The east window glass (1935), like the tracery, is by Ninian Comper, and shows Christ in Glory with the Virgin and SS Helena and Elizabeth of Hungary.*

MEMORIALS: *in the nave, by the south-west door, is a wall monument to Admiral Prince Victor of Hohenlohe-Langenburg (d.1891), a half-nephew of Queen Victoria who became a noted sculptor after a career in the Royal Navy; it bears a recumbent effigy in relief by the sculptor Feodora Gleichen, daughter of the deceased. Beneath the west window is a memorial plaque to Prince Victor's wife, Princess Laura of Hohenlohe-Langenburg (d.1912), with lettering, figures and foliage in flat relief. In the north aisle is a wall monument to Captain Lionel West, killed in action in April 1915; a relief panel shows the dying soldier watched over by the Crucified Christ. In the sanctuary, to the right of the altar, is a brass memorial to the Revd W. C. Raffles Flint (d.1884), who rebuilt the chancel in 1860 as a memorial to his uncle, Sir Stamford Raffles - a fact commemorated by a black-letter inscription on the wall opposite.*

The Statements of Significance and Need

5. The application is accompanied by a 24-page Statement of Significance and Photographic Record (with four appendices) This was first produced in August 2024, and revised in February 2025. It describes the setting of the church, the exterior and interior of the church

building, and its fittings. There are four appendices describing: (1) the timeline of the development of the church and its architecture, (2) the new chancel and chapel added by G. E. Street in 1860, (3) the history of the pews and their movement, and (4) a photographic record of the interior and exterior of the church which, taken in conjunction with the many photographs included elsewhere within the Statement of Significance, provides a comprehensive view of the church building. I have taken the photographic images that appear at the end of this judgment from this document.

6. The Statement of Significance explains that following the 1887 re-build, and the addition of the organ in 1890, there was very little change (other than minor cosmetic adaptations) to the interior of the church for a considerable time. Some pews were removed to create the children's corner below the organ pipes in the south transept in 1938. The church is not symmetrical. The south aisle is narrow (3.1m) and has a lower sloping roof compared to the north aisle, which is much wider (4.0m) and has a higher pitched roof. The pews to the south of the nave are 3.1 metres in length and terminate in line with the pillars. The pews to the north of the nave are 4.2 metres in length and reach well into the north aisle. The reredos is ornately tiled and decorated across the width of the sanctuary and has white painted walls above. The roof above the sanctuary is highly decorated, but otherwise the interior relies on the contrasting brick colour and stone decoration. The aisles are of a dark red tile lined with black tiles, and the flooring under the pews is parquet in a herring-bone pattern. The pews match one another across the whole church and have been built to fit specific spaces. The first major internal change, in 1974, was the creation of the church room. The pews were removed, and timber and glass sliding doors were installed to enclose the north transept, which is currently used as a warm space for the weekly café. The linear progression east down the north aisle leads straight to the chapel, with the view obstructed by the wooden beam and the sliding doors, which the parish intend to remove as part of their re-ordering proposals. In 1989, a perspex and timber frame was constructed to separate the chapel from the chancel. Further works were completed in 2004, including re-opening access from the vestry to the Chapel, improvements to the screening and soundproofing between the Chapel and the Chancel, restoration and conservation of the beautifully decorated ceiling over the Sanctuary, screening to the south transept, and a new removable stage/raised dais area to the nave, and the commissioning of two new stained glass windows for the Chancel, representing the signs and seasons (Genesis 1:14).

7. The setting of Holy Trinity, and the church building itself, are both assessed as being of high significance. That is because the architecture, and the form, of the church are typical of the Victorian era, and of the work of Street and Scott, and thus have historic value. The church is a listed building, as are the gateways on the north and south sides. Whilst not unique by any means – with St. Anne's being a very similar church at Bagshot – Holy Trinity has a very pleasing appearance in its setting. It holds a place of great affection in the local community, and by those who used to live locally and now live away. The significance of the church interior is also assessed as high. That is because the architecture and the materials used in its building create a wonderful interior; and whilst not unique or outstanding in any specific respect, nevertheless they are a fine example of Victorian church design. The pews are made of pine and are of identical construction for the whole church. They are fastened directly into the parquet floor. Over the years a considerable number of pews have been removed, and the remaining pews have been deliberately placed in the nave and further forward as part of a seating experiment under a temporary minor re-ordering licence to inform the Transforming Trinity project. The bulk of the remaining pews are in the nave; and with the exception of those that abut a pillar, they are

either 3.1m or 4.2m in length. The parish believe the pews to be the original Street design, with additional pews from 1887 made to the same design. They are somewhat unremarkable, and other than the familiarity of them in situ, they have no advantageous significance. The parish assess them to be of moderate to low significance. The development of the church over the years is said to suggest that the pews at Holy Trinity are not highly significant as furniture, other than by virtue of their association with the architects under whose direction they were installed. They are claimed, in truth, to be rather plain, somewhat scruffy, pitch pine; and they have suffered from having had heating elements bolted on underneath them. The parish consider that this particular design of bench is not one of Street's finest; and their significance is, perhaps, diluted by the existence of many similar ones elsewhere, including a commercial version shown in Messrs Jones & Willis's catalogue. The parish are also mindful that the pews in the north and south aisles were removed under temporary licence in 2012. Although the parish consider the value and significance of the pews to be rather low, nevertheless to remove them completely would be to lose their connection with the development, and the history, of this church. The parish, therefore, fully intend to keep the choir pews, and to retain a number of other pews in suitable locations as a reminder of the work of Street and Scott, and as a connection with their inheritance.

8. This application is also supported by a detailed, 88-page illustrated Statement of Need, incorporating no less than eight appendices. This, too, was first drafted in August 2024, and revised in February 2025. The vast majority of this Statement of Need has remained unchanged. The key amendments are:

(1) The omission of the proposals for solar panels and battery storage. Without any sub-contractor to carry out these works, the parish do not have the necessary full report on viability, structure, maintenance, etc to meet the DAC's requirements, so the parish have withdrawn this aspect of 'Transforming Trinity' until they have the necessary sub-contractor in place.

(2) The parish believe that a new access route adjacent to the servery through a new west end door would provide a valuable addition to the church, but objections raised by Historic England make this a contentious issue. The parish have therefore withdrawn this aspect of the project, and, in time, hope to accumulate the evidence and a stronger case for a new door, bearing in mind the intervention this would make to the west end of the church.

9. It is impossible to reproduce the Statement of Need in any detail within the confines of this judgment. This document explains how, in 2003, Holy Trinity acquired the lease of the Coronation Memorial Institute (**CMI**) building on Church Road, giving it access to a small hall, rooms, and offices, and enabling it to open the Rendezvous café. In 2012 this lease expired, and the decision was taken not to renew it at commercial rates, resulting in the loss of the facilities at the CMI building. Archdeacon's licences were granted permitting a temporary servery at the west end of the church, the removal of the pews from the north and south aisles, the relocation of the offices to the south aisle, and the creation of a café in the north aisle. It is these works which have provided the impetus for the present 'Transforming Trinity' project.

10. The Statement of Need purports to set out a "*compelling case for an imaginative and creative re-ordering of Holy Trinity, Sunningdale*". In it, the parish express their

... wish to safeguard all Street's work and imaginatively adapt the large space Scott created.

The challenge for our architect Mark Goodwill-Hodgson has been to develop Holy Trinity in a way that celebrates and honours the church building; a way that allows us to experience the building in a new way.

Transforming Trinity is church re-imagined with a focus on the worship experience remaining authentic. Mark has skilfully planned an interior that meets the criteria of a missional church committed to the community it serves.

The Victorian architects have given us a legacy we wish to fully utilise as we seek to equip the church with the facilities it has needed for a considerable time. This document will provide the rationale for the preferred option, and the journey we have undertaken to reach this point

...

The parish explain how 'Transforming Trinity' seeks to equip the church facilities to extend what is possible through the creation of a community hub:

We are an inclusive church, firmly part of the community where we can provide a sanctuary for troubled minds, a place to have a coffee, a place to pray, a place to meet our friends, a comfortable place for all to enjoy whatever the activity.

Sadly though, the building is not welcoming. It's dark and badly lit. It's cold and the heating solution untenable. We are painfully short of facilities (rooms, kitchen, toilets) and although everyone loves the classic architecture and feel, the uneven floor and freezing draughts minimise any appreciation. It's not a place that is easy to welcome people in, indeed we know people who stay away because of how cold it can be.

Transforming Trinity is about renewing a classic and beautiful Victorian church to create a community hub, making it fit for our times, open to all, and providing a legacy for generations to come. A church where the facilities, rooms and spaces match our aspiration to extend the love of God to all. Our welcome is warm and genuine. We want the building to feel that way too ...

The latest plans show an imaginative use of space to create new facilities whilst simultaneously releasing existing spaces.

Broadly speaking our plan is to return the middle and east end of church to a more authentic design by removing the enclosures around the north and south transepts. The west end of church will have a more radical redesign creating a stunning upper room that benefits from the whole west window. The ground floor will house the café, and social space.

11. The 'Transforming Trinity' project has led the parish to reflect on the needs they have as a parish church, how they can create a community hub, and how they can cherish their building and create a sustainable future, with new facilities that will aid the mission and ministry of the church. The Statement of Need purports fully to describe the new facilities that this proposed major re-ordering will produce, explain their rationale, and provide a clear and convincing justification for all of them. Amongst other benefits, the parish point to: (1) the new crèche, which will release the Chapel as a place for worship and small groups; (2) the creation of a stunning new upper room across the west end of the church, lit by its immense west window, and enclosed with a glass screen extending to the roof, which will permit the return of the north transept as an open space for worship; (3) the small meeting room, storage spaces, and additional

toilet facilities; and (4) the new social space, served by a fully equipped kitchen, allowing the parish to operate a café and serve refreshments whenever required.

12. Throughout their discussions and lengthy seating experiment, the parish have been mindful of the primary function of Holy Trinity, which is to be a place for worship, and a place that inspires worship. Their desire is for nothing to intrude upon the worship space which might serve to distract or compromise the worship. In many other churches, the parish have noted stacks of chairs and tables, and play equipment stacked to one side, just as can be found in the church's current configuration. The parish aspire to provide a worship space that can seat 120 people comfortably, and expand to 300 for larger events. That numbers may, very occasionally, exceed this target has been taken into account. Above all, the parish want the worship space to be uncluttered, and devoted to worship, so that the beauty of the church architecture, the windows, and the liturgical furniture all lend themselves to reverence and awe. The parish's desire for flexibility in changing the size of the worship space takes into account the range of services they hold as a church, the occasional offices, and the use of the church by local primary and secondary schools. As well as safeguarding their main space for worship, the parish also wish to keep the chapel as a quiet place to pray and to worship.

13. The reconfigured church building will pay attention to access, light levels, warmth, sound quality, and visibility. The experience of the former CMI building demonstrated that a developing church requires suitable facilities for children and families. Whilst the parish appreciate that these do not guarantee growth, they consider that not having them certainly impedes growth. Re-capturing the community hub that was created at the CMI building is as important an aspect of *'Transforming Trinity'* as dealing with the practical issues presented by the church building, and creating the spaces the parish need. The parish intend to give more opportunity to share the church building with the local community, in the knowledge that there is a local shortage of spaces for people to meet.

14. To achieve all of these ends, the parish are satisfied that a creative adaptation of the church interior is the way forward. They aim to resolve the issues they face, and provide the additional spaces they consider they need, without diminishing the experience of being in Holy Trinity. Creating a new office releases the vestry, creating a new crèche releases the chapel. The mezzanine helps delineate the worship space and the social space on the ground floor, and the upper room replaces the north transept with a bigger space for multiple purposes. The additional small meeting room will be of great benefit.

15. The Statement of Need addresses the impact of the proposals as follows:

The design places the worship space much further forward than where it has crept back to over the years. The removal of the enclosures round the transepts will allow worshippers to experience the church more as it was designed by Scott, with all the new rooms and services behind where worshippers sit. A modest dais, new imaginative lighting, flexible seating, effective heating and a safe, flat floor will allow worshippers to enjoy the church to the full in their worship. The new dais will enhance communion when using a parish altar to gather around - as noted by the CBC.

The mezzanine floor across the west end is a radical intervention in the building, but not unique, many churches have used their height to provide additional space. The design we propose will place the new structures in the last two bays of the west end and the glass panels between worship and social space will help delineate the two areas.

Although the mezzanine inevitably reduces natural light on the ground floor, the lighting study and design shows the minimal impact upon the church, indeed the upper room will benefit enormously from the west window and the regular worship space will continue to receive light from this source.

Our seating experiment has demonstrated that we can successfully reduce the volume of space for seating without reducing the capacity we plan to accommodate.

Although the design changes the experience and appearance of the church at the west end, the gain of a beautiful upper room and the facilities created will more than compensate for any loss.

16. The Statement of Need addresses the issue of mitigation thus:

The PCC's determination to keep the Street chancel and chapel, pulpit, font and lectern, and restore the front of the church to something like its previous layout are a significant sign of their attitude towards making sure the church remains authentically a Victorian building of significance.

Although solar panels are sought and impact the exterior appearance at the less visible east end, they are essential to support a modern heating solution. How can we lead by example if we place appearance over sustainability?

The structures at the west end will change that part of the building significantly, but the beauty of the upper room and the beautiful view across the rest of the church will make it gallery like. It will allow the church and community to experience the building in a new way.

With imaginative and sympathetic LED lighting, the architecture and structure of the building will be fully appreciated and the gloom of the interior transformed.

All the stained glass will be retained of course and all the memorials, with those impacted by these changes finding places of prominence elsewhere. We shall safeguard the sculpture of Prince Victor making sure it is fully visible and well-lit and make sure the nativity window (in the new office) is fully visible.

Although new furniture is envisaged, some pews will be kept as a reminder of the church's heritage and the new storage capacity will leave the worship space free of stacked chairs, tables and clutter.

17. Part Nine of the Statement of Need addresses the development of the present design proposals, and the several different options that had previously been considered and discarded. Part Ten addresses the justification for the radical changes that are now proposed. This explains that in July 2023 the DAC asked for further information justifying aspects of the project: the upper room, why an open ground floor was preferable, the sliding glass screen separating the social space (the café) from the worship space. This section sets out why the parish consider these aspects to be relevant and necessary, acknowledging them to be a radical intervention at the west end of the church building. To support this explanation, two tables (at Appendix Eight) set out the current, and the proposed use of the church building (and the restrictions the parish currently experience) and outline how the church building might be used once it has been redeveloped. The parish acknowledge that a mezzanine across the west end of the church building is a radical intervention, which will reduce the impact of the large open nave which one

experiences upon entering the church. But the parish feel this loss is more than compensated for by the creation of the upper room, and the capacity to host different events simultaneously. Forward of the mezzanine floor, the experience of the worship space will be as it is now (but without the existing screens and sliding doors which enclose the transepts). It will be authentic, revealing the architecture and design more clearly than at present. When looking westward from the worship space, the building will still retain its integrity and proportions. The west window, pillars, and arches will still be visible, albeit with a new structure within the church building. To set against the reduction in the size of the nave is the upper room, which will be dominated by the immense west window. In particular, it will be a gloriously lit space in the early evening. When the parish have held inter-generational worship at 6 pm in the evening, the numbers (25-35) lend themselves to being in what will be an amazing space.

18. The parish also explain why the mezzanine is to be enclosed, and not an open gallery. Even if heating were not a consideration, the parish intend to have sufficient seating on the ground floor, and they will have no need for a gallery for any overflow. The parish are mindful of the need to clean a large expanse of glass (similar to that which they now have around the north transept); but enclosing the upper room creates a great deal more flexibility, and a space that can be used simultaneously with other events. The parish have also supplied a detailed justification for the moveable glass panels that can be used to separate the social space at the west of the nave from the main worship area. The parish intend to zone the heating across the whole building, and the social space will be separate from the worship space. It would not be cost effective to heat 380 sqm as opposed to 63 sqm (i.e. the whole of the open ground floor instead of just the social space and servery). The glass screens create a smaller space within a much larger building. This will be helpful when running the café, or an evening event in the café space. The parish have deliberately planned that everything to the east of the glass screens will be authentically of the church (Victorian, Street, and Scott, with the existing enclosures removed). The ability to divide the two spaces allows for transition, expectation, and appropriate activity: The café will be here; the worship will be there. The church's architect has produced a sketch showing the view of the nave westward from the new dais (which I have reproduced at the end of this judgment). The west window is still visible; and one still has a sense of the architecture and the structure of the church building, although the upper hall is enclosed. In this sketch, the lower glass partitions are closed; and they bear a Trinitarian design simply in order to show that the glass panels are there. The two new structures are visible: the crèche in the north aisle, with a meeting room above, and the office in the south aisle. The parish also explain that the purpose of the decals - the manifestations on the glass - is both to be there and not to be there. They will allow the glass to be seen, thereby preventing accidents; but they do not in any way detract from the view of the chancel.

Planning consent

19. On 13 June 2025, the Council of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead granted full planning permission (under Application No: 24/02620) for the "*creation of a mezzanine floor, use of part of the building for a crèche and café, one air source heat pump with enclosure, automatic doors to the south elevation, alterations to the fenestration, photo-voltaic panels, a new terrace, an electric vehicle charging point, cycle racks and hardstanding*".

Consultation

Consultation

20. The DAC have consulted on the parish's revised proposals for this church. Earlier proposals, which included an extension at the west end of the church and the installation of solar panels on the roof, were considered at a site visit in 23 October 2023, which was attended by representatives of the Church Buildings Council (the **CBC**), Historic England, and the Victorian Society. Their resulting advice is reproduced at Appendix 7 to the Statement of Need. I set this out below, together with the response to the second round of consultation in April 2025.

(i) The CBC

21. Holy Trinity is a Grade II listed church, however, given the striking exterior and interesting phasing, it might be considered for a listing upgrade to II*. The church was founded in 1840, with the chancel and the north chapel being added by G. E. Street in 1860. The 1840s sections of the church were demolished and rebuilt by J. O. Scott between 1887 and 1890, with various later alterations. It is proposed to reorder the interior of the church, removing the vast majority of the pews and the 1970s screens at the east end, removing the existing floor, and installing underfloor heating, which is to be powered by an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP), with additional under-pew heating in the chancel. It is proposed to introduce chairs to the nave, and to build an area at the west end which would incorporate a café, office, meeting rooms, and toilets; a portion of the facilities are to be provided on a mezzanine level. It is further proposed to build a small extension at the west end with a patio area for the café. A separate proposal for solar panels is being submitted by the parish but the CBC additionally comment on those proposals.

22. The CBC was grateful for the comprehensive and detailed statements of significance and needs, which were helpful in understanding the reasoning behind the proposals. The CBC supports the principle of the proposed reordering. It explains that the proposed arrangements to create permanent sacred space towards the east of the church have a liturgical integrity and would work equally well using the high altar or a nave altar on the new permanent dais. The proposed new seating arrangement lends itself to this sort of parish and "*people style*" of eucharist, with God's people gathered around the altar, and offering the possibility of smaller, more traditional worship within the chancel, with collegiate style seating.

23. The CBC welcomes the proposal to make the chapel more easily accessible, both for services and for private prayer. The CBC strongly asks that this space is permanently fully accessible. It was mentioned that the carpets in the chapel and the chancel might be removed. The CBC would welcome this proposal.

24. Various positions for the font have been explored. The current proposed location at the west end of the worship space, in the south aisle, makes the most liturgical sense. It is proposed to carefully lift and relocate the tiles surrounding the font, to be re-laid in its new position. These are the most interesting tiles currently visible in the church, and the CBC supports this proposal.

25. The replacement flooring material has not yet been proposed. The current woodblock and simple tiled floors are degraded. The CBC would have no objection to a stone or wood floor. The new flooring should have some demarcations, perhaps along the aisles, to avoid creating a stark, blank space. This can also be achieved by using different sizes of tiles, which help to break up the monotony of a single coloured floor. The parish might find the CBC's guidance on historic floors useful.

26. The CBC does not object to the removal of the majority of the pews, provided that a small number are retained as an example, and are used in a meaningful way. The proposed new seating will be an important element of making the proposals acceptable. The PCC should follow the CBC's guidance on seating.

27. The proposed west-end area is impactful but the CBC considers that the size of the space is justified. Detailed elevations of the mezzanine level will be helpful in understanding the full impact of the proposals.

28. The CBC has no objection to the proposal to remove the 1970s screens at the east end. However, these screens were carefully designed, and are well-incorporated, so it would be desirable to re-use the screens, perhaps as part of the new west-end space. This would avoid waste, and would incorporate a thoughtfully designed part of the church's history. The CBC has no objection to the removal of the 1970s inner porch doors, provided that a replacement is carefully designed, considering the unusual arch shape above.

29. The PCC proposes to introduce solar panels on the southern slopes of the chancel, organ loft, and north aisle. The CBC supports these proposals, which will have a minor visual impact, but which it considers would not harm the significance of the church. The PCC should ensure that the number of panels provide adequate KWh to meet their needs, as set out in the CBC's guidance on solar panels.

30. The CBC does not consider that the proposed extension is currently adequately justified. The west end wall of the church is of a beautiful design which would be obscured by an extension. While the CBC sympathises with the desire to be able to have outdoor seating, it does not consider the archaeological and visual impact are yet fully justified. It considers that the PCC should focus on the reordering, and once this has proved successful, consider whether the extension is needed, and how it would best be achieved.

31. In an email sent on 3 April 2025, the CBC notes that since it previously advised on the proposals, in October 2023, these have been revised. The CBC commends the decision to omit the extension, and expresses itself content to defer to the DAC in this instance. However, it draws the DAC's attention to the guidance on floors, especially the undesirability of carpet in a historic building.

(ii) Historic England

32. Historic England comment that this is a beautiful church, and a "*very good*" Grade II, with an accomplished and attractive interior that, despite having been done in two phases, has considerable coherence. The exterior is also quite fine, particularly the noted views from the southern aspect.

33. Historic England observe that they appreciate, and are grateful for, the considerable amount of work that has gone into the information for the project thus far, which makes understanding the aspirations of the church very clear. Their overriding advice is to encourage the church to consider whether their aspirations can be met through a more compact scheme, which could help to reduce the harm caused by the scheme, and would also help to minimise the costs of the project. In particular, the café space is large, and would have a high demand for staff or volunteer time. Historic England think that it would be a useful exercise to have a business plan for the café space that explores the local market in Sunningdale, the need for staffing and other resourcing, and considers whether a café of the size proposed can be justified, and

whether a smaller space could meet the parish's needs. Historic England know of café spaces in London that have fewer tables yet have considerable numbers of customers during the working week. Historic England query how many people would visit the café each day it is open, and whether that need demands the size of the café space proposed.

34. In response to specific elements of the proposed reordering, Historic England consider the pews to be coherent and attractive and they are not out of place in J. O. Scott's nave. Therefore, they think their removal will cause some harm to the church through the loss of the furniture itself but also the loss of the pewed layout. However, it is an element of the scheme that Historic England could see being justified to enable the church to use the nave, aisles, and transepts for the range of uses the church want to accommodate. Underfloor heating, and relaying the floor surface, is also likely to be possible without undue harm; but Historic England would encourage replacement flooring which is sensitive to the Victorian aesthetic of the building, and that tiling could be of the most sensitive type (rather than stone).

35. Historic England consider that the repositioning of the font would only cause limited harm, especially if the decorative floor tiles are carefully lifted and relayed. Again, this is likely to be justified to enable the west end of the church to accommodate a separated space.

36. In conclusion, Historic England think that the current proposals would cause a high level of harm to the interior of the Grade II building, and that the proposed west end exterior extension would damage this very handsome exterior. They therefore encourage the church to again revisit the need for the size of café proposed, and whether the proposed space can be rationalised. This would have the dual benefits of reducing harm to the church building through a smaller intervention, and resulting in a less costly building project. Historic England do acknowledge that opening up the north transept, and the reuse of the chapel for worship represent clear benefits to the church.

37. In an email sent on 23 April 2025, Historic England comment that the church's proposals respond to a detailed case for the various spaces proposed within the church and to close working with the DAC and the CBC. Whilst maintaining their view that the proposals will result in clear harm to the interior of the church through obscuring the western end of the building, thereby diminishing the ability to experience the full scale and design intention of the nave, Historic England consider that the case for the proposed rooms is well-made. Historic England welcome the amended scheme, which removes the proposed exterior extension to the west end of the church, rationalising the space for the café area. They state that they have no further comments to add; and they defer all detailed materials decisions to the DAC.

(iii) The Victorian Society

38. The Victorian's Society's original consultation response was composed by James Hughes, a Senior Conservation Advisor. This proceeds under a number of headings (although I omit all discussion of the solar panels), as follows:

Treatment of main body of church

Cumulatively it is the internal interventions that would have the greatest impact on the character and appearance of this fine church. The parish is rightly proud of its G. E. Street heritage; but it is worth bearing in mind, firstly, that the Street chancel furnishings have been lost; and, secondly, that of course the majority of this building is the work of J. O. Scott, to whom the building owes much of its quality and its architectural coherence and

consistency. Externally, it is remarkably impressive; a dazzling and dramatic set piece. The interior too is full of interest, and is surprising for its sense of space and breadth, which is only really appreciated in person.

Benches

There was nothing said at the site visit (prior, at least, to my own premature departure), and there is little in the papers, to support or justify the wholesale clearance of the benches from the nave and aisles. Granted they are relatively modest pieces; but they bear Street's unmistakable signature, and, in our view, they are of considerable significance in the context of this building. Had Historic England fully appreciated the provenance and interest of the benches when it considered the building for upgrading a decade ago, it is quite conceivable that the church would now be II. In any case, its decision not to upgrade the building was surprising at the time, and in hindsight is utterly mystifying. We would oppose the wholesale loss of the benches, and urge that a meaningful number of them are retained.*

Font and tiles

As others have noted, the context of the font's encircling tilework is significant, and if the font is to be relocated – which in principle we raise no issue with – it will be essential that the tiling moves with it.

Floors

While there was also very little discussion of the treatment of the nave and aisle floors more generally, we suggest that the present woodblock and – particularly – tiles are a significant element of Scott's interior and should be either preserved, or, in the event of the floor being re-laid, reinstated. We would hope that any reordering will also entail the removal of carpeting from the east end of the church.

Western subdivision and mezzanine

Any mezzanine structure at the west end would clearly have an enormous impact on the historic interior, especially one of the size that is envisaged, occupying as it would half of the nave. In principle we would be content to see a degree of subdivision at the west end, and in the aisles; but we would question the scale of what is proposed, specifically at the west end of the nave. To a great extent also the acceptability of any subdivision will be reliant on the quality of its design, which evidently requires a great deal more refinement. We are concerned by proposals for full-height glazing up to the roof, which seems highly impractical, as well as carbon intensive and financially costly. How, apart from anything else, would these surfaces be cleaned? Partitioning off quite so much of the nave will of course also greatly reduce seating space in the main body of the church. Might this prove problematic for larger services or events?

The proposed plans appear to make little use of the aisle, beyond partitioning off their west end for an office and crèche. It feels likely that there is scope to make better use of these spaces, which otherwise might be somewhat redundant. Is there scope then to accommodate additional facilities in the aisles, relieving pressure on the west-end structure and potentially enabling its reduction in size?

The north transept room in which the site meeting was convened clearly serves a useful purpose. The plans would see these partitions removed. But might a north transept room – perhaps one slightly reduced in size from the existing – continue to serve a vital function, and reduce the need for so large an intervention at the west end?

Extension at west end

We would strongly oppose an extension on the west end of the building. The argument was made on site that a far more substantial extension was proposed and granted planning permission in the past. That may well be; but that consented scheme was to serve a very different, and all-encompassing, purpose than the extension proposed now, which would be nothing more than a rather constrained – and in our view unjustified – café overflow area. Scott conceived of the west end as a great cliff-like termination, and made full use of its extensive elevations, which play host to a wonderful display of diverse structural polychromy. Any addition at the west end would disrupt and undermine these fundamental qualities and should be avoided.

39. The Victorian Society's response to the second round of consultation was provided on 2 April 2025 by Connor McNeill, a Senior Conservation Adviser. He comments as follows:

Sunningdale is a highly significant Victorian church noted for the involvement of two prominent architects. Street's work here is rightly regarded as of the highest significance, but the church was substantially rebuilt, very finely, by J. O. Scott and is a testament to his skills as an architect and designer. The building remains substantially intact. The exterior is characterised by the interplay of complex forms and detailed decorative treatment in stone, brick and flint. The interior is characterised by its spaciousness and width. The building is remarkably harmonious and coherent despite differences in style between both architects. This is noticeable in the interior where Street's chancel still forms the architectural focus and Scott retained his pulpit, font and benches. The accommodation of increased facilities within the church has been considered for some time since the loss of the Coronation Memorial Hall in 2012. Ultimately, any proposal will be a compromise in deciding what facilities and uses can be accommodated alongside the sensitivities of the building. In previous consultations, the Victorian Society raised serious concerns with the subdivision of the interior, the extension, the loss of benches and the historic floor. We are grateful for the recent amendments, which omit the proposed extension and visually prominent solar panels.

West end subdivision and mezzanine

Despite previous concerns, the Victorian Society now accepts the principle of subdivision at the west end of the building. However, we maintain concerns about the full-height glazing and detailed design of these interventions. The scale of interventions will have a high impact on the character of the interior, and this would be increased by full-height glazing. Glazing is never invisible; and whilst allowing the west window to light the nave, it would still appear as a significant barrier, especially in its proposed form with multiple timber mullions. This would cut off a substantial part of the nave volume from the rest of the building, seriously changing, and reducing the ability to appreciate, the spatial qualities of Scott's interior. We urge the parish to explore the option of a mezzanine, but without a full-height glazed partition. This would contribute the same amount of space, but significantly reduce the intervention's impact on the interior, as the internal space could still be appreciated to a large degree. We ask that the parish carefully review the needs and uses of this mezzanine level,

and whether a fully enclosed space is fully justified against the harm to the building's significance. How often will an additional space, separated from the nave, be necessary? An open gallery space has the added benefit that it can be used in conjunction with the rest of the building for certain events. We remain concerned with the detailed design of these interventions, the elevations of which are dense and heavy, and would ultimately increase the imposition of these interventions on the interior. A lighter design idiom, which sought to read as something independent of the historic structure, could be more successful, reading as a secondary intervention into the building.

Floor

The Victorian Society welcomes the intention to retain the decorative tiles as part of the font's relocation. However, we remain concerned about the other proposals for the floor. We reiterate our previous comments that the proposals should seek to retain, or at least reinstate, the historic floor as part of any works. The imposition of a curved dais, accentuated by new tiling, would impose a curved planform into a building whose plan is characterised by its rectilinear quality. The border of tiling does not respect the building's plan, it extends beyond the boundaries of the nave, and its extension into the aisles appears arbitrary. We are also unconvinced that the laying the tiles diagonally around the curved dais would be aesthetically successful. If the curved dais is approved, the omission of the surrounding area of tiling, and it sitting simply with the existing arrangement, would lessen its impact on the significance of the interior. The proposed floor finishes raise further concern; engineered timber and carpet are not suitable finishes for a historic building. We recommend that other options are explored in line with statutory guidance.

Benches

We are grateful for the information included within the statement of significance that establishes that the benches are by Street, with some later supplements by Scott. The benches are distinctive; and, although based on a common Y-bench end, they are interestingly articulated in a characteristically Street manner. Street was a meticulous designer, down to the smallest detail; and these benches must be considered an important aspect of Street's original conception of the building. We remain concerned by the proposed substantial removal of benches in favour of loose seating. This would impact the significance of the building. We recommend the parish explore options of shortening and retaining a substantial number of benches; this would provide a compromise to preserve the significance of the building whilst providing increased flexibility.

Conclusion

The Victorian Society appreciates the amendments the parish has made to earlier proposals, and the difficulties of finding a compromise that serves their needs within the parameters of the building and its significance. This is a highly significant building, the work of two important architects. This advice has sought to identify grounds for compromise that could create an acceptable scheme.

40. The parish responded to the feedback from the Victorian Society (and also from the CBC and Historic England) by way of a letter from the Rector to the DAC, dated 30 April 2025, as follows:

It was encouraging that neither Historic England nor the CBC had any further comments to make following the changes made to our plans after their first visit and feedback in 2023.

Our plans have adapted and moved a long way to accommodate the concerns of the DAC and amenity societies, not least removing the west end extension, the west door, and the solar panel arrays, reducing the enclosed spaces on the ground floor, aisle partitioning, ensuring all the stained glass windows remain fully visible, relocating the lifts and stairs. We have also committed to keeping a number of pews and re-ordering the chapel with pew seating. This latter shows our willingness to listen and accommodate where we can. Our preference would be to keep the chapel carpeted and an open space, but we have committed to removing the carpet and reinstalling fixed pews.

On balance I think that we have listened and accommodated many of the requests made and there is a rationale for keeping in place those things commented on in this letter. I would also want to highlight how strong the local support is for change; for example, our parish council have given a very significant sum towards creating a community hub.

Concerning the feedback from the Victorian Society, it is pleasing that they have now accepted the rationale and need for the west end subdivision. These facilities are the key to Transforming Trinity.

The question of the mezzanine becoming a gallery rather than an enclosed space was raised by the DAC, and we submitted further evidence concerning this in September 2023, demonstrating the need for the upper room to be enclosed. We believe this explanation was accepted by the DAC. The document explaining our rationale is attached.

The VS are concerned about the amount of glass the screening would create and the timber mullions supporting the screen. The glass is the least intrusive solution allowing light from the west window to continue into the nave, and the whole building to be fully appreciated rather than effectively being seen as two separate areas. The timber mullions are necessary with structural concerns and safety in mind, and the design of them picks up details of the Victorian windows, not least the west window, creating an interesting and satisfying cohesion between screen and window.

Concerning the floor, we intend to replicate the existing implementation by utilising red tiles across the back, down the aisle and across the front, just as it is now. The midnight blue tiles will be retained to recreate the border of the walkway but, as we have discovered with repairs, it is virtually impossible to re-use all of the existing red tiles without them becoming an unsightly patchwork of shades. They wear and discolour differently across the building. Matching and relaying all of them would be impossible, but we will endeavour to use as many as is possible.

For underfloor heating, engineered oak flooring is by far the best solution. It retains some of the character of the Victorian building whilst being technically suitable. Our choice will be a high-quality engineered wood (a sample of which will be agreed with the DAC subcommittee).

The carpets will be removed in the chancel and sanctuary, north transept and chapel; but we will be using carpet in the room used as a crèche and the office as the most suitable solution for their function and purpose.

Concerning the pews, it should be noted that in our research we discovered Street removed box pews and installed moveable benches, clearly anticipating the opportunity to re-arrange their configuration so that the church space could be used for different purposes.

Health and safety now require us to fasten these pews to the floor, which is unacceptable with new underfloor heating and defeats the purpose of creating the largest open space for Sunningdale residents to use, something highly appreciated by the local Parish Council, who have given a large grant to support the project.

Some pews will be sensitively shortened via a method and supervision of the DAC sub-committee, and six of these will be reinstated in the chapel. Others will be kept in various locations across the building, as indicated on the plans: in the porch, under the sculpture of Prince Victor, under the west window (upper room), and in the vestry.

Adding further pews restricts a key element of the Transforming Trinity project: that of creating an adaptable worship space, to be used for a wide variety of purposes by the community. Even shorter, moveable pews are heavy and unwieldy. To prevent them from tipping, the foot profile would need to be lengthened. This in turn creates a trip hazard. We believe the pews we are intending to keep bear a significant witness to the church history and culture from the past, and that keeping more will inhibit the proposed use of the building as a community hub, a key reason for Transforming Trinity.

Dais: The creation of a curved dais lends itself to contemporary worship and the use of a parish altar, something noted by the CBC in their feedback in September 2023:

“The proposed arrangements to create permanent sacred space towards the east of the church have a liturgical integrity and would work equally well using the high altar or a nave altar on the new permanent dais. The proposed new seating arrangement lends itself to this sort of parish and people style of eucharist with God’s people gathered around the altar, with the possibility of smaller more traditional worship in the chancel with collegiate style seating.”

Our liturgical practice and theological understanding are very different from the Victorian era; for example, our use of screens displaying all the liturgy and worship material and the necessity of being able to see the screens.

In times past the clergy led from the ‘platform’, i.e. the raised chancel, seated in desks behind the rood screen. In our culture, we lead from a temporary platform in front of the rood screen. Although the dais design is a new departure from the linear appearance of the church, our indicative seating demonstrates that we have moved away from straight rows, all facing forward. The new dais and seating suit the style of our worship now enjoyed, gathering around the altar.

Concerning the tiling around the new dais. It is consistent with the existing red tiling that is across the front of the crossing adjacent to the chancel. If one considers the chancel as the old platform (it being raised), then having tiling around the new platform serves the same function as it always did; a walkway between seating and platform. The reason for adopting the feature diagonal pattern is due to the curve of the platform, and this solution is often used in this context. Its non-directional pattern deliberately creates a feeling of movement around the platform as people approach the altar for communion.

We believe that the concessions made demonstrate our commitment to the enjoyment of Holy Trinity as a Victorian Church of note; and the new structures and developments lend not only to mission and ministry, but an enjoyment of this iconic building in a new way.

We have written previously about our commitment to keep the chancel and the chapel by G. E. Street; but, in truth, very little of Street's work is visible, other than the shape of the chancel and the tile work and reredos. The altar, altar rail, choir pews, rood screen, and the organ chamber are all after Steet's work; yet his influence can still be seen. By removing the carpet, we will display more of his original tile work.

Likewise, the chapel has been compromised from its original construction, with two windows bricked up to two thirds their height to accommodate the new vestry built in 1905.

Our Transforming Trinity project will change the interior space in a quite radical way, as has been accepted and appreciated. However, it will tell the story of an evolving church and ministry, with evidence of its whole history on display. Creating a community hub will allow this building to be used and appreciated seven days a week, and not just for formal worship on Sundays.

We trust this explanation and rationale for the plans, as they are, can be accepted as our way forward.

41. Connor McNeill responded, on behalf of the Victorian Society, by way of an email to the responsible church buildings officer, dated 21 May 2025, as follows:

Thank you for forwarding the parish's response to our concerns, we are grateful for their response to our concerns. However, I cannot see that their response offers any concessions to address our concerns and the proposals remain unchanged.

In our response we identified several areas for compromise that could create a more acceptable scheme such as the treatment of the floor, the design of the glazed screen, and the number of benches that could be retained. For example a more sensitive and appropriate treatment of the floor would still allow the parish to achieve its aims of flexibility, but with less harm to significance. Likewise, with an amended design of the glazed screen that could provide greater visual and spatial interaction between the nave and mezzanine space. Considering the clear information about the significance of the benches, the retention of six shortened benches in the side chapel would not constitute meaningful retention and we urge the parish to revisit options to retain a greater number, perhaps shortened and adapted to ensure they are moveable and stable.

I realise this may not be a welcome response, but there are clear areas of compromise that could result in a proposal that is less harmful to the significance of the building while still allowing the parish to achieve its stated aims. While these options are still available the Victorian Society must maintain its concerns with the proposal. I hope these comments are of assistance.

42. This represents the end of the consultation process.

43. When the petition was first submitted to me through the Online Faculty System, on 14 November 2025, the Registry Clerk drew my specific attention to the views of the Victorian Society. On the following day, I directed that special notice of this faculty application should be

given to the Victorian Society, pursuant to rule 9.3 of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015, as amended (the **FJR**), giving 21 days for them to respond indicating whether they would wish to become a party opponent to this petition or simply have the court take their objections into account. By email dated 9 December 2025, Connor McNeill responded, on behalf of the Victorian Society, stating that they did not wish to object as a party opponent, but that they hoped that the Chancellor would consider their previous consultation responses when making his determination. This I have duly done.

The DAC's Notification of Advice

44. The DAC's Notification of Advice (**NOA**) was issued on 13 November 2025. The NOA recommends the revised proposals for approval by the court, subject to extensive provisos, as follows:

Case-specific provisos:

- (1) Details of the precise pipe runs, cable routes and new openings, where these affect historic fabric, as discussed on the visit of 15 September 2025, are to be agreed with the church's architect, the DAC's M&E adviser, and the Church Buildings Officer (the **CBO**) prior to any work beginning. In particular, this includes the external wall penetrations for inlet and outlet vents, and the details of the inlet and outlet vents for ventilation and for the air-conditioning/heating system serving the Upper Room on the first floor.
- (2) A revised Electrical Specification is to be provided, and agreed with the DAC's adviser and the CBO prior to any electrical works commencing. This Specification is to be project-specific, shall reflect the nature of the work in a historic building, and fully incorporate the current diocesan guidelines on electrical installations. In the event of any conflict with the electrical specifications and drawings for the work, these guidelines are to take precedence.
- (3) Finishes: samples for the following will need to be agreed with the CBO and the DAC subcommittee prior to work beginning on these aspects: (a) engineered wood flooring, (b) architectural joinery and glazing (detailed joinery drawings are also to be agreed), and (c) kitchen joinery.
- (4) A suitably qualified conservator's specification and schedule of works for the careful relocation of the font, the surrounding floor tiles, and the monuments to be relocated are to be agreed with the CBO prior to this work taking place.
- (5) The design for the manifestation on the café partition glazing is to be agreed with the CBO and DAC subcommittee prior to installation.
- (6) Details of the lighting design in the café area and the Upper Room, including the proposed luminaires, are to be provided and agreed with the DAC lighting adviser before work on this aspect proceeds.
- (7) The choice of chairs and tables will need to be agreed with the CBO and the DAC subcommittee prior to their purchase; and, in accordance with the DAC's feedback, the chairs should incorporate a wooden seat and back.
- (8) Before works begin to lay the new patio area, resurface the car parking area, and excavate channels for new drainage, water supply, gas supply or other services, a programme of archaeological work covering these areas, including a Written Scheme of Investigation (**WSI**),

shall be prepared for review by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser (**DAA**) before being submitted to the local planning authority for approval. The advice of the DAA shall be observed with regard to the discovery of any human remains and significant archaeological deposits. No spoil is to leave the churchyard; and any charnel must be reburied with due reverence.

(9) In planning and executing the work, the parish and their contractors are to be responsible for complying with the relevant legislation protecting bats and the terms of the Bat Licence; and they shall engage an ecological consultant to advise on mitigation measures, and to carry out any monitoring work.

(10) Since the DAC cannot verify whether any proposed heating installation will be efficient and provide the desired level of comfort, the parish are advised to seek independent advice as to the suitability of the proposal for their needs.

Standard provisos:

(1) A photographic record and measured drawings are to be made of all parts of the church affected by the works before these begin; and copies are to be deposited with the DAC and placed within the church log book.

(2) The PCC should be aware that it may have responsibilities for health and safety during these works under the Construction Design Management Regulations 2015.

(3) The church's insurers are to be informed of the works.

(4) Should the terms of any grant funder require the parish to display a plaque recognising their contribution, the parish is to seek the approval of a DAC officer to the proposed location and fixing method of the plaque.

Exceptions to the NOA:

Although the potential installation of solar panels has been included within the planning consent, it is excluded from the scope of this faculty; and a separate faculty application will be required for any proposed provision of solar panels.

45. The NOA records that objections have been raised by The Victorian Society (specifically on the treatment of the floor, the design of the glazed screen, and the number of benches to be retained) and these have not been withdrawn. The DAC's principal reasons for recommending that the works and proposals should be approved by the court, despite those objections, are that it considers that "*the treatment of the floor, the design of the glazed screen, and the six benches to be retained are both reasonable and acceptable*".

46. In the NOA, the DAC advises that these works and proposals are likely to affect the character of the church as a building of special architectural or historic interest, and also any archaeological remains existing within the church or its curtilage, although not the archaeological importance of the church. Notice of the proposals has therefore been displayed on the diocesan website, under rule 9.9 of the FJR, in addition to the usual public notices, which have been displayed on noticeboards inside and outside the church between 13 November and 13 December 2025. No objections have been received in response to any of these public notices. The NOA also records that, in the opinion of the DAC, the parish's explanation of how, in formulating the works or proposals, the parish have had due regard to the net zero guidance

(issued by the Church Buildings Council under s. 55 of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007) on reducing carbon emissions is adequate.

The legal framework

47. Since Holy Trinity, Sunningdale is a Grade II listed church building, the court is required to have regard to what have become known as the *Duffield* guidelines when determining this faculty application. These are named after the decision of the Court of Arches in the leading case of *Re St Alkmund, Duffield* [2013] Fam 158, and have been considered, and refined, in later cases. The court must first consider whether the implementation of these proposals would cause any harm to the significance of this church as a listed building of special architectural or historic interest. If so, the court must then consider how serious that harm would be, and how clear and convincing is the justification for carrying out the proposals. The court must bear in mind that there is a strong presumption against proposals which will adversely affect the special character of a listed building. Where a church is listed Grade I or II*, only exceptionally should serious harm be allowed. The court must ask itself whether the petitioners have demonstrated a clear and convincing justification for their proposals, in terms of any resulting public benefits which would outweigh any resulting harm. At paragraph 87 of their judgment, the Court of Arches made it clear that in this context, '*public benefit*' includes:

... matters such as liturgical freedom, pastoral well-being, opportunities for mission, and putting the church to viable uses that are consistent with its role as a place of worship and mission.

48. As I observed at paragraph 19 of my judgment (in this diocese) in *Re St Laurence, Combe* [2022] ECC Oxf 5, following the *Duffield* guidance, the court must bear in mind that:

- (1) The burden rests on the petitioners to demonstrate a sufficiently good reason for making any changes to a listed church building;
- (2) The more serious the harm, the greater the level of benefit that will be required before the proposals or works can be permitted; and
- (3) Only exceptionally should serious harm be allowed to a building which is listed Grade I or II*.

The court must also consider:

(4) Whether the same, or substantially the same, benefits could be obtained by other proposals or works which would cause less harm to the character and special significance of the church building. As I pointed out in my judgment (also in this diocese) in *Re St Peter & St Paul, Aston Rowant* [2019] ECC Oxf 3, (2020) 22 Ecc LJ 265 at paragraph 7:

If the degree of harm to the special significance which would flow from proposed works is not necessary to achieve the intended benefit because the desired benefit could be obtained from other less harmful works, then that is highly relevant. In such circumstances, it would be unlikely that the petitioners could be said to have shown a clear and convincing justification for proposals which would, on this hypothesis, cause more harm than is necessary to achieve the desired benefit.

49. In *Re St Stephen, Redditch* [2025] ECC Wor 2 (in the Diocese of Worcester) Chancellor Humphreys gave consideration (at paragraphs 27 to 32 of her judgment) to the meaning of the

expressions ‘*serious harm*’ and ‘*substantial harm*’, specifically in relation to proposals for the creation of further rooms on a mezzanine level to be introduced above the ground floor of a Grade II listed church building as part of major re-ordering proposals. As I understand her judgment, the Chancellor was of opinion that no issue could be taken with the propositions: (1) that ‘*substantial harm*’ should be equated with ‘*serious harm*’; (2) that this represents a ‘*high test*’, with the key being the seriousness of the degree of harm to the significance of the particular church building in question; and (3) that for harm to the significance of a church building to be considered as ‘*serious*’ (or ‘*substantial*’), its impact must be such that its significance is either vitiated altogether, or is very much reduced, so that very much, if not all, of that significance is “*drained away*”. At paragraph 33 of her judgment, Chancellor Humphreys concluded that:

Ultimately therefore, the determination of the level of harm to the significance of [the church] caused by the proposals is a matter for me, informed by the representations of both the petitioners, the objectors and by the other evidence in the case. Similarly, the weighing up of the public benefit of the proposals and balancing them against the harm is also a matter for me, taking into account the evidence filed in the case.

I agree with, and would endorse, this description of the task that befalls me. For a fuller description of the decision-making function and process involved in assessing the degree of harm to a listed church building, and weighing public benefit and the church’s needs against such harm, reference may usefully be made to paragraphs 87 to 96 of the characteristically full and detailed judgment, borne out of his considerable experience as a diocesan chancellor, of Chancellor Petchey (in the Diocese of Southwark) in *Re Holy Trinity, Clapham* [2022] ECC Swk 4, (2023) 25 Ecc LJ 276.

50. At paragraph 81 of my judgment in *Re Jesus College, Cambridge* [2022] ECC Ely 2 (delivered as Deputy Chancellor of the Diocese of Ely) I referred to the requirement enshrined in s. 35 of the *Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018* to have due regard to a church’s purpose. This provides that:

A person carrying out functions of care and conservation under this Measure, or under any other enactment or any rule of law relating to churches, must have due regard to the role of a church as a local centre of worship and mission.

I explained that the statutory predecessor of that section (s. 1 of the *Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991*) had been considered by the Court of Arches (Sir John Owen, Dean, and Chancellors Goodman and Sheila Cameron QC) in *Re St Luke the Evangelist, Maidstone* [1995] Fam 1. This was the first occasion on which the Arches Court of Canterbury had sat in its new constitution of a three-member court. At page 7 of the report, the Arches Court held that in the absence of words expressly limiting the wide jurisdiction long enjoyed by chancellors, the section could not be said to apply to chancellors, since they were not persons who carried out “*functions of care and conservation*”. Rather, in carrying out their functions under the faculty jurisdiction, chancellors were required (in the words of what is now s. 7 (1) of the 2018 Measure) to “*hear and determine ... proceedings for obtaining a faculty*”. However, the Arches Court went on to make it clear that: “*If the section had applied to the chancellors it would have added nothing to the existing duty and practice of chancellors.*” I recorded that I understood this to mean that, independently of s. 35, when exercising the faculty jurisdiction, a chancellor should have due regard to the role of the particular church as a local centre of worship and mission. I also note, and bear in mind, the Court of Arches’ observation (at page 8 of the report) “... that a church is a

house of God and a place for worship. It does not belong to conservationists, to the state or to the congregation but to God.”

Analysis and conclusions

51. As is always the case, I am extremely grateful to the CBC, to Historic England, and to the Victorian Society for their helpful comments upon the parish’s evolving proposals, and their constructive contributions to their evolution. There can sometimes be a tendency for parishes to treat statutory consultees as an impediment to the implementation of their plans. However, as a Chancellor seised with the occasionally unenviable task of determining sometimes contentious development proposals, I always find the invariably well-informed contributions, rooted in their deep knowledge and experience, of the CBC, Historic England, and the national amenity societies with a particular interest in churches or works the subject of a particular faculty application, of immense value and assistance to me. These serve to underpin the ecclesiastical exemption, which performs such an important function in achieving the essential compromise between the interests of conserving, and preserving, important examples of this nation’s invaluable built heritage whilst ensuring that its ecclesiastical components can continue to serve their primary function as living and working exponents of the role of a parish church as a centre of worship and mission in and to its local community. Neither the parish, nor any statutory consultee, should regard themselves as competitors, vying to achieve a successful outcome from the Chancellor’s determination. Rather, they should aspire to work together (as in my experience they generally do) to produce the best possible outcome for all relevant stakeholders. This present faculty application provides a paradigmatic instance of such a collaborative approach. As the parish have acknowledged in their feedback to the second round of consultation, they have responded by adapting their proposals, moving a long way to accommodate the concerns of the DAC and the relevant consultees, not least by removing from their proposals the originally intended west end extension, the west door, and the solar panel arrays. The parish have also committed themselves to keeping a number of the pews/benches, and re-ordering the Chapel with bench seating, thereby showing their willingness to listen to, and accommodate, the views of consultees where they can sensibly do so. In this particular instance, although they do not all speak with one voice, the several consultation responses have been of considerable assistance to me in arriving at my determination of this faculty petition.

52. Since this faculty petition is not formally opposed, I am satisfied that it is expedient, in the interests of justice, and in furtherance of the overriding objective of the FJR, for me to determine this application without a hearing, and on the basis of the considerable quantity of written material, photographic and visual images, and design drawings that have been uploaded to the Online Faculty System and is available to the court. Acting in this way will save expense, and will enable the court to deal with this case proportionately, expeditiously and fairly. I have not found it necessary to visit Holy Trinity. That is because the considerable number of helpful images of the church that have been included within the documentation uploaded to the Online Faculty System have given me a very clear impression of the interior of this magnificent, and significant, church building. In considering this faculty application, I record that I have had due regard to all of the consultation responses, to the observations and responses of the parish, and to the terms of the DAC’s NOA.

53. Following the approach of Chancellor Humphreys in *Re St Stephen, Redditch* [2025] ECC Wor 2, it falls to me, as Chancellor, both to determine the level of harm that the implementation of the present proposals will cause to the significance of Holy Trinity, and also to weigh up the

public benefit of those proposals, and then balance them against that harm. However, my determination must be heavily informed by the representations, and evidence, presented by the petitioners and the statutory consultees. In this case, happily, the views of the CBC and Historic England, and the advice from the DAC, all largely coincide; and they amount to an endorsement of the parish's present (and revised) proposals. It is the Victorian Society who maintain their opposition to aspects of those proposals, most notably the treatment of the floor to the nave, the height and design of the glazed screen, and the reinstatement in the chapel of only six of the pews/benches (sensitively shortened), with the retention of only a few more in various locations elsewhere within the church building. The Victorian Society oppose the wholesale loss of the pews/benches, and they urge that a meaningful number of them should be retained. For the reasons that follow, I prefer the analysis, the reasoning, and the conclusions of the CBC, Historic England, and the DAC.

54. Unusually, I must consider the degree of significance of this listed church building. It is the view of the Victorian Society that had Historic England fully appreciated the true provenance and interest of the pews/benches when it considered the building for upgrading a decade ago, it is quite conceivable that the church would now be listed II*. They characterise Historic England's decision not to upgrade the building as "*surprising at the time, and in hindsight [as] utterly mystifying*". The CBC notes that Holy Trinity is a Grade II listed church, "*but given the striking exterior and interesting phasing, it might be considered for a listing upgrade to II**". Historic England comment that Holy Trinity is a beautiful church, and a "*very good*" Grade II. I have no doubt, based not only upon my own assessment of this church building, but also the views of others well qualified to opine on the matter, that, in the course of time, the significance of Holy Trinity is such that it may well qualify for upgrading to Grade II* status. It is not for me, as Chancellor, to embark upon the re-grading of a listed church building. In *Re St Mary, Headington* [2025] ECC Oxf 5, however, I noted that there was general recognition that an unlisted church building – in that case, a late, modernist work by Nugent Francis Cachemaille-Day, built between 1956-8 – might achieve listed status in the near future. In light of that, I considered that I should not altogether ignore the *Duffield* principles that would apply had the church already attained the status of a listed building. Similarly, in the present case, I consider that I should proceed on the footing that Holy Trinity, Sunningdale is a "*very good*" Grade II listed building that may, in the future, qualify for upgrading to Grade II*.

55. At paragraphs 22 to 28 of this judgment, I have summarised the reasons why the CBC supports the principle of this proposed reordering, and also the positive benefits that it considers that this will bring about. In particular, the CBC welcomes the opening up of the chancel and the chapel for worship and for private prayer, with the carpeting removed. It also endorses the proposed new seating arrangements, with people gathered in front of, and around, an altar on a new permanent dais creating a permanent sacred space towards the east of the church which will lend itself to this parish's "*people style*" of Eucharist, whilst still offering the possibility of smaller, more traditional worship, and private prayer, within the chancel and the north chapel. At paragraphs 33 to 37 above, I have summarised the views of Historic England. They consider the pews to be coherent and attractive, and as not being out of place in J. O. Scott's nave. They therefore, consider that their removal will cause some harm to this church, both through the loss of the furniture itself, and also the loss of the pewed layout. However, this is an element of the proposals that Historic England can see as being justified in order to enable the church to use the nave, the aisles, and the transepts for the range of uses that the parish wish to accommodate. Historic England acknowledge that opening up the north transept, and the

reuse of the north chapel for worship, both represent clear benefits to the church. They consider that the parish's revised proposals respond to a detailed case for the various spaces proposed within the church, and to close working with both the DAC and the CBC. Whilst maintaining their view that the proposals will result in clear harm to the interior of the church by obscuring the western end of the church building, thereby diminishing the ability to experience the full scale and design intention of the nave, Historic England consider that the case for the proposed rooms is well-made out. The Victorian Society recognise that the pews are relatively modest pieces but they point out that they bear G. E. Street's unmistakable signature; and, in their view, they are of considerable significance in the context of this particular church building. The Victorian Society oppose the wholesale loss of the pews/benches, and urge that a meaningful number of them should be retained. They maintain their concerns about the full-height glazing and the detailed design of this intervention, the scale of which will have a high impact on the character of the church interior. They are also concerned about the proposals for the floor.

56. In my judgment, the implementation of these aspects of the parish's current proposals would cause a level of harm to the interior of this "*very good*" Grade II listed church building. It is generally accepted that the pews/benches which were introduced into this church building by G. E. Street, and the design of which was adopted as part of J. O. Scott's later additions, are relatively modest. They are, nevertheless, attractive, pieces of church furniture. But their true significance lies both in their provenance, as the work of two notable Victorian architects, and in their history, as forming part of the coherent development of this church building into a composite Victorian whole, thereby making them an important part of the parish's inheritance. I acknowledge that, as such, they are of moderate to high significance. In my assessment, the composition, and treatment, of the floor of the nave is largely, if not entirely, a response to the nature, and layout, of the pews. The pews/benches, and the floor, go together. I find that the removal of the pews/benches will cause some degree of harm to this church building, through the loss both of the furniture itself, and also the pewed layout. That harm is aggravated by the proposed changes to the original flooring of the nave. It will be mitigated by the retention, and restyling for re-use, of a very limited number of these pews/benches. I also find that the parish's proposals, even in their revised form, will result in further clear harm to the interior of the church building by obscuring internal views of the western end of the building, so diminishing the ability to experience the full scale and design intentions of the nave and the west end. That harm is mitigated by the opening up of the eastern part of the nave, the aisles, and the transepts, the return of the north chapel to its intended function as a place of worship, and the ability of the parish to use these spaces for the range of uses they wish to accommodate, and their preferred manner of worship. The new crèche will release the Chapel as a place for worship and prayer, and for use by small groups; the creation of the new upper room and the café space across the west end of the church will permit the return of the north transept as an open space for worship. These findings are entirely consistent with the views so clearly and fully expressed by Historic England and the CBC. They are also consistent with the advice I have received from the DAC.

57. Weighing the benefits that will flow from these proposed changes against their detriments, I would categorise the resulting degree of harm to this "*very good*" Grade II listed church building as being at the lower end of the scale of "*moderate to high*". Whilst this degree of harm can be categorised as '*significant*', I do not consider that it can fairly be characterised as '*serious*' or '*substantial*' harm under the high threshold of the key test I have set out in paragraph 49 above. In my judgment, the detrimental impact of the proposed changes to Holy Trinity is

not such that its significance is either vitiated altogether, or very much reduced, so that very much, if not all, of that significance would be "*drained away*". There is no destruction of existing historic fabric, and minimal alteration to it. Therefore, although these proposed changes will have a major impact upon the internal appearance of parts of the church building for the duration of their use – which, given the substantial costs involved, will, hopefully, be for a lengthy period - it is not possible to say that they will permanently cause substantial harm to its significance. Ultimately, if at some time in the future, the proposed changes no longer meet the needs of the worshipping, and local, community, they could be removed, and the original interior layout could be restored, with little continuing impact of the current proposals. Internal views of the western end of the church building will be partly obscured, and the openness of the west end of the nave will disappear; but they will not be irreparably destroyed for evermore. And there will be compensatory benefits, in terms of the opening up of the eastern part of the nave, the aisles, and the transepts, and the return of the north chapel to its intended function as a place of worship. All of these will contribute to, and enhance, the overall significance of the church. The most serious, and permanent, detriment to result from the implementation of these proposals will be the loss of the majority of the pews/benches introduced into the church by G. E. Street, and J. O. Scott. But whilst these bear Street's unmistakable signature, they are relatively modest pieces, which are not highly significant as items of church furniture, otherwise than by virtue of their association with the architects under whose direction they were installed. Some original examples will remain within the church; and should times and styles of worship change, these could readily be replicated for future use.

58. Nevertheless, since I am satisfied that some appreciable degree of harm will be caused by the parish's current proposals, I need to move on to consider whether such harm is outweighed by the need for these proposals, and the public benefits they would bring. I must also proceed to consider whether the same, or substantially the same, benefits could be obtained by other proposals or works which would cause less harm to the character, and special significance, of this church building (as the Victorian Society seek to maintain). Whilst this further consideration is not articulated expressly in any of the *Duffield* questions, it is implicit within the fourth of them: "*How clear and convincing is the justification for carrying out the proposals?*" If a desired benefit can practically be achieved in a way that causes less harm to the significance of the listed church building, it will not be necessary to cause that harm in order to obtain the resulting benefit. Whilst it is necessary to keep these two different aspects of the fourth of the *Duffield* questions firmly in mind, in this case (as in many others) it is convenient to address them together.

59. In answer to the fourth of the *Duffield* questions, I am entirely satisfied that the petitioners have established a clear and convincing need, and justification, for these proposals if Holy Trinity, Sunningdale is to fulfil its role as a centre for worship and mission for, and to be of service to, its local community; and that, overall, the benefits for mission and community use outweigh the heritage harm to the architectural and historical significance of this "*very good*" Grade II listed church building. That need has been fully set out in the documents uploaded by the parish to the Online Faculty System in support of this petition, as summarised earlier within this judgment. It has been recognised, and accepted, without qualification, by the CBC and Historic England in their consultation responses (as set out above). I find the parish's response to the second round of consultation feedback, by way of the letter from the Rector to the DAC dated 30 April 2025 (which I have cited at paragraph 40 above) to be entirely convincing. It does not seem to me that the Victorian Society's responsive email dated 21 May 2025 (and cited at paragraph 41 above) really engages with the points the Rector has so persuasively and

convincingly made. In the present case, I have no hesitation in finding that the role of this particular parish church as a local centre of worship and mission trumps any resulting damage to its significance as a “*very good*” Grade II listed building. However unwelcome this may be to the Victorian Society, in this particular instance it is appropriate for me to bear in mind, and apply, the Court of Arches’ observation in *Re St Luke the Evangelist, Maidstone* [1995] Fam 1 (at page 8 of the report) “... *that a church is a house of God and a place for worship. It does not belong to conservationists, to the state or to the congregation but to God.*” On the basis of the same material, I am also satisfied that the same, or substantially the same, benefits could not be obtained by alternative proposals or works which would cause any lesser degree of harm to the character, and special significance, of this church building

Disposal

60. Overall, I am satisfied that the parish have fully justified, as being in the public interest, the extensive, and ambitious, reordering proposals they have carefully developed with the object of advancing the worship and mission of this church so as to meet the needs of its worshippers and the wider local community going forward, despite the harm that they will cause to the significance of this magnificent, and inspiring, church building. I look forward to viewing this church when the works have been completed in due course; and I wish the parish well in their endeavours to grow both the Christian faith and the church community, and to serve the wider local community, in Sunningdale. As I have previously recorded, I would wish to extend my sincere thanks to the CBC, Historic England, and the Victorian Society for their detailed consultation responses, which have helped to shape the final proposals (albeit not to the extent that the Victorian Society would have favoured); and which have assisted me in understanding, analysing, and finally resolving the issues that ultimately remained in dispute in this case. As always my thanks also go to the church buildings team, and to the DAC, for their customary hard (and in this case, prolonged) work on this online faculty application.

61. For the reasons I have given in this judgment, I have arrived at the clear conclusion that I should grant this faculty application, albeit subject to extensive conditions. Reflecting both the provisos in the NOA, and my own concerns, I propose to impose the following conditions:

(1) Details of the precise pipe runs, cable routes and new openings, where these affect historic fabric, as discussed at the visit of 15 September 2025, are to be agreed with the church’s architect, the DAC’s M&E adviser, and the Church Buildings Officer (the **CBO**) prior to any work beginning. In particular, this includes the external wall penetrations for inlet and outlet vents, and the details of the inlet and outlet vents for ventilation and for the air-conditioning/heating system serving the Upper Room on the first floor. All fixings are to be non-ferrous, and are to be made into mortar joints or plain plaster.

(2) A revised Electrical Specification is to be provided, and agreed with the DAC’s adviser and the CBO prior to any electrical works commencing. This Specification is to be project-specific, shall reflect the nature of the work in a historic building, and fully incorporate the current diocesan guidelines on electrical installations. In the event of any conflict with the electrical specifications and drawings for these works, these guidelines are to take precedence.

(3) Finishes: samples for the following will need to be agreed with the CBO and the DAC subcommittee prior to work beginning on these aspects: (a) engineered wood flooring, (b) architectural joinery and glazing (detailed joinery drawings also to be agreed), and (c) kitchen joinery.

(4) A suitably qualified conservator's specification and schedule of works for the careful relocation of the font, for the surrounding floor tiles, and for the monuments to be relocated is to be agreed with the CBO prior to this work taking place.

(5) The design for the manifestations (decals) on the café partition glazing is to be agreed with the CBO and the DAC subcommittee prior to installation.

(6) Details of the lighting design in the café area and the Upper Room, including the proposed luminaires, are to be provided and agreed with the DAC lighting adviser before work on this aspect proceeds.

(7) The choice of chairs and tables is to be agreed with the CBO and the DAC subcommittee before any orders are placed for their purchase; and, in accordance with the DAC's feedback, the chairs are to incorporate a wooden seat and back.

(8) Before any works begin to lay the new patio area, resurface the car parking area, or excavate any channels for new drainage, water supply, gas supply or other services, a programme of archaeological work covering these areas, including a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), shall be prepared for review by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser before being submitted to the local planning authority for approval. The advice of the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser shall be observed with regard to the discovery of any human remains and significant archaeological deposits. No spoil is to leave the churchyard; and any charnel must be reburied with due reverence.

(9) In planning and executing the work, the parish and their contractors are to be responsible for complying with the relevant legislation protecting bats and the terms of the Bat Licence; and they shall engage an ecological consultant to advise on mitigation measures, and to carry out any monitoring work.

(10) Since the DAC cannot verify whether any proposed heating installation will be efficient and provide the desired level of comfort, the parish are advised to seek independent advice from an appropriately qualified heating adviser as to the suitability of the proposal for their needs.

(11) A photographic record and measured drawings are to be made of all parts of the church affected by the works before these begin; and copies are to be deposited with the DAC, and placed within the church log book.

(12) The church's insurers are to be informed of the works before they begin; and the parish are to follow any recommendations or requirements they may make or impose.

(13) Should the terms of any grant funding require the parish to display a plaque recognising the funder's contribution, the parish are to seek the approval of a DAC officer to the proposed location and fixing method of the plaque.

(14) The parish are to comply with the conditions contained within the planning consent granted on 13 June 2025 by the Council of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (under Application No: 24/02620), subject to such variations as may be permitted by the local planning authority (and approved by the DAC).

(15) The parish are to seek the advice of a DAC officer as to: (a) the precise number of pews/benches to be retained, their relocation, and re-styling; and (b) the disposal of the other pews/benches.

(16) Although the potential installation of solar panels has been included within the relevant planning consent, this is excluded from the scope of this faculty. A separate faculty application will be required for any proposed provision of solar panels.

62. In the first instance, I will allow twelve (12) months for the completion of these works. I well appreciate that that this timescale may prove to be unrealistically 'tight', and I would be prepared to consider any necessary extension as this period nears its end. But in fixing this initial 12 months' period for the works, I bear in mind: (1) the disruption to the church's worship, and the mission and community life of the parish, that the carrying out of these works will cause; and (2) the escalation in construction costs and professional fees that will result from any appreciable extension of this timescale.

David R. Hodge

The Worshipful Chancellor Hodge KC

The Second Sunday after Christmas

4 January 2026

The location of the church



Aerial view of the church from the south-west



Aerial view of the church from the south



The exterior of the West End



The church interior, looking east



The chancel and the sanctuary



The north chapel from the sanctuary



The south aisle looking west



The north aisle looking west



The enclosed north transept



The partly enclosed south transept



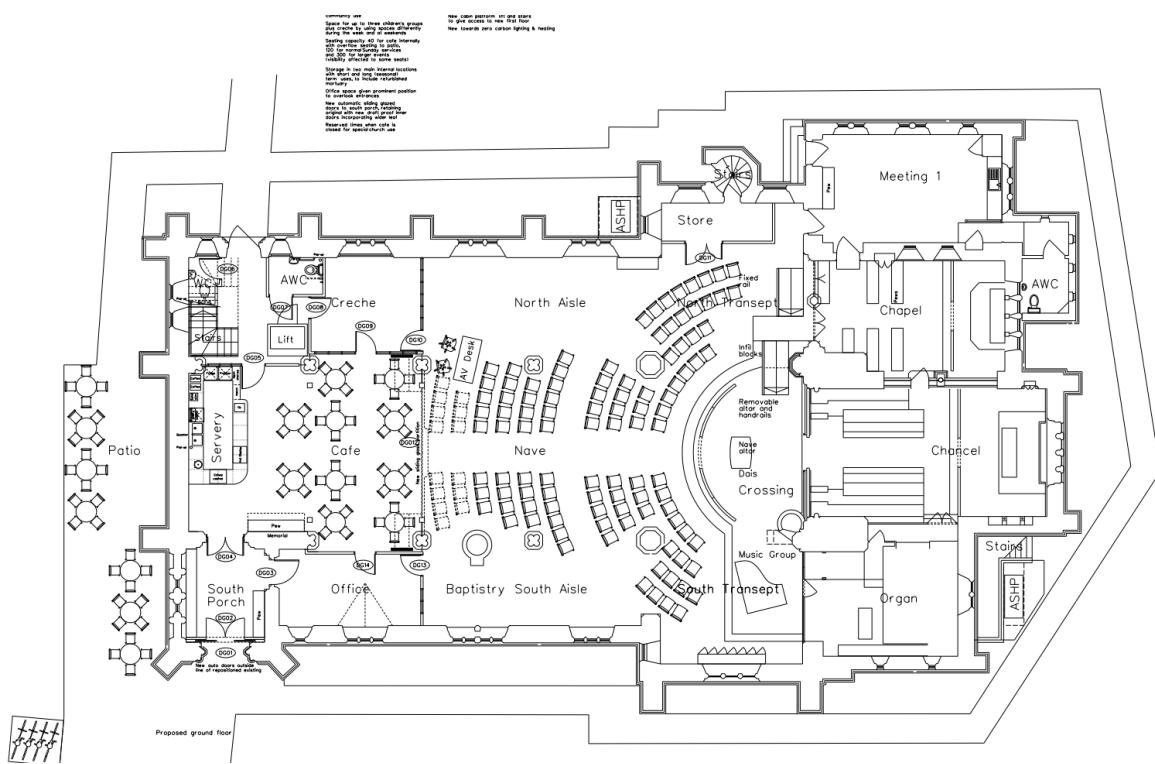
The pews



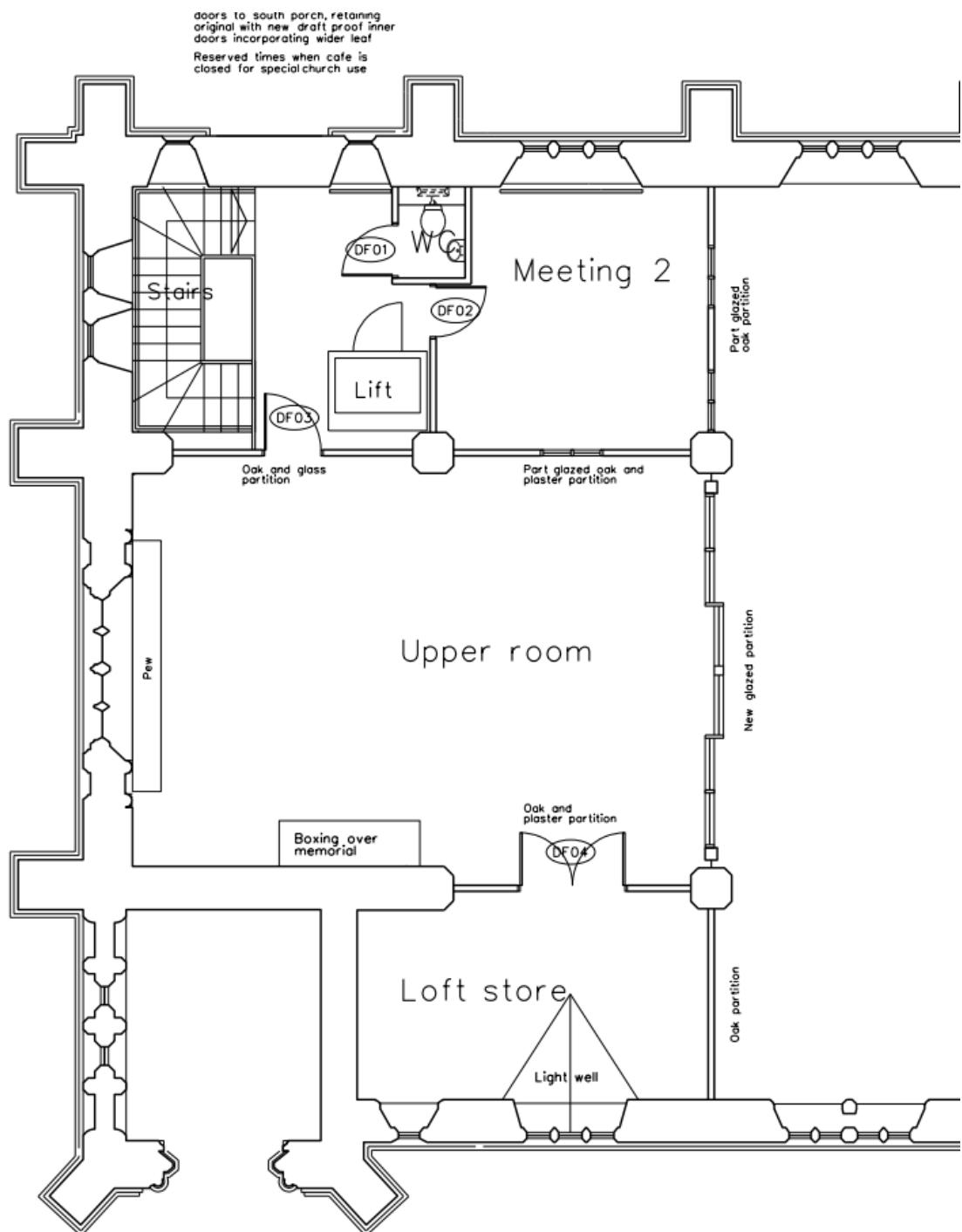
The font



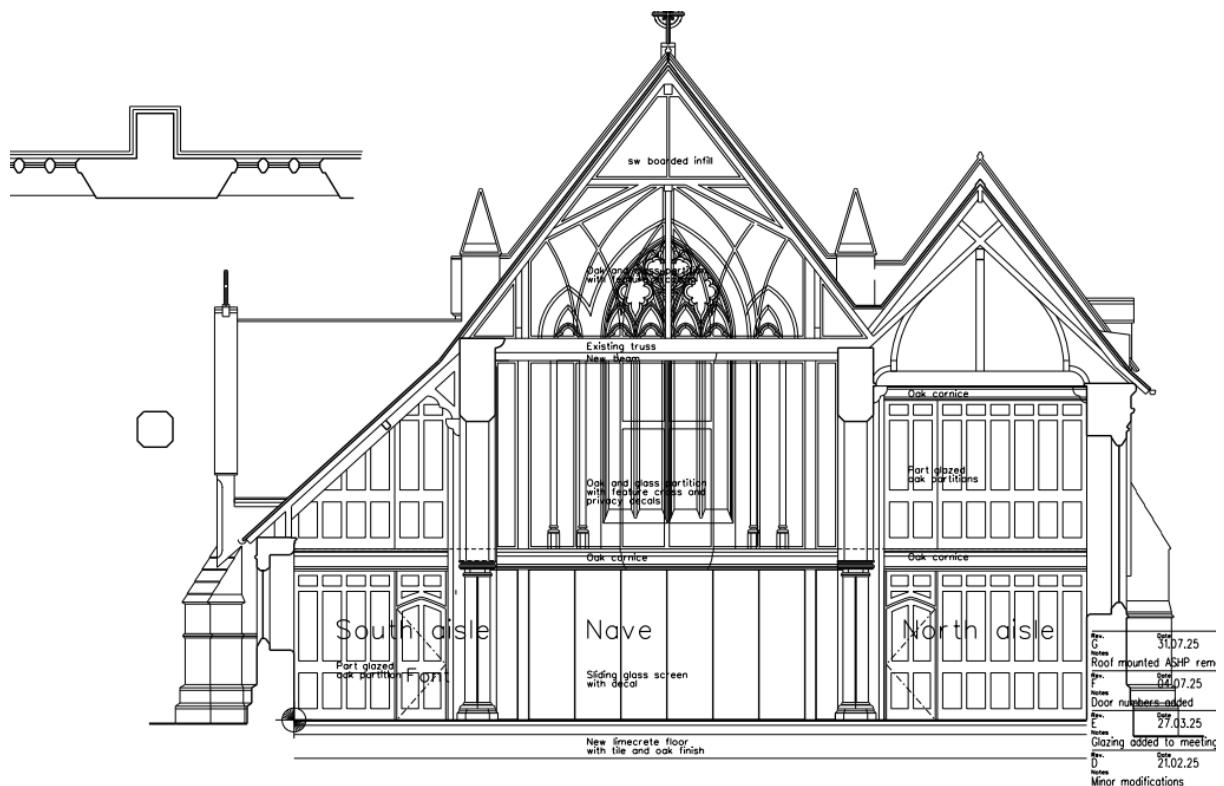
Plan of the proposed ground floor level



Plan of the proposed upper mezzanine level



Drawing of the proposed west end of the church interior



Architect's sketch showing the view of the nave looking westwards from the dais

