

CHURCH SEATING - THE EXETER DAC APPROACH

Guidance note

From the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches
2016

THE REMOVAL OF PEWS

1. There is no 'in-principle' presumption against the removal of pews in whole or part from churches.
 2. The Committee take the position that for every church, every case will be judged on its merits.
 3. If the removal of pews in whole or part is proposed it must be supported by a very well-considered **Statement of Need** which is more than just a list of future operational intentions or speculation.
 4. This Statement will be considered against a comprehensive Statement of Significance which fully describes the intrinsic value of the building and its contents.
 5. In certain instances, such as:
 - Where the pews are part of the **original design** of the church.
 - Where the pews are part of an **overall design** for the interior of the church.
 - Where the pews are designed by a particularly **well-recognised designer or architect**.
 - Where the pews are of considerable **age and/or rarity**.
 - Where the **craftsmanship** in carving and construction is exceptional.
 - Where the **materials** used are significant examples of the period of construction.
 - Where ill- judged removal could seriously **damage the ensemble of the whole**.
 - Where the pews contribute significantly to the **setting** of other more significant features
- It is unlikely that the committee would recommend the wholesale removal of pews.
6. The case for the removal of pews will be **informed by the replacement seating** be it bench or chair.



THE INTRODUCTION OF BENCHES AND CHAIRS

7. Once again each case will be treated on its merits.
8. That said, the Committee favour the use of moveable benches over chairs as a principle because:



- Benches give a more **complete visual construct** when the church is in repose.
- Benches bring **conformity and regularity** to the building.
- Benches have **simplicity** without being uncomfortable, nor inflexible from the point of view of moving.
- Benches are more flexible in the **number that can be seated**.
- Benches have a **unifying, sharing** effect.

9. Where the uses to which the church is being put have a compelling need for clear space, and a variety of activities beyond that required for regular worship, the introduction of chairs will be sympathetically considered.
10. In these cases the committee will have attention to:
 - The **ease of moving and stacking** of the type of chair.
 - The **visual impact** of the chairs set in traditional rows when the church is in repose. In this sense flat topped chair backs are preferred to curved tops.
 - The **colour of the wood** of the frame of the chair in the context of the general surrounding wood colour.
 - Whether upholstery is proposed - chairs with padded backs and seats are considered less favourably than unpadded backs and seats.
 - The likely **longevity** of the chairs in terms of maintenance and cleanliness.



Please see the Church Buildings Council's guidance note on Seating for further information - http://www.churchcare.co.uk/images/Seating_March_2015.pdf