



All Saints is a classical iconic Grade I listed building sitting on the site of a great Norman church.

Situated in the centre of the town the church had been running a café for over two decades but needed to upgrade and install new facilities.

The aim of the project was to re-energise the building and attempt to make people more aware of what the church had to offer.

How did you start?

There has been an in-house café open in the church for 24 years which was run by a paid full-time manager and volunteers, some of whom were from a 'back to work' scheme. The café had been making a profit, but about 3 yrs ago moved into loss and in the summer of 2008, the manager decided enough was enough. Also the equipment needed replacing and there was no capital to pay for things like a new Cappuccino-making machine.

Additionally the local Environmental Health people wanted the café up-graded and there was only one toilet. So the parish took the decision to bring in an external operator.

Who were your main partners in developing and implementing this project?

The new operator, Tony Ansell, who already runs the Abington Park Café, required a lease for his investment of 25 years. Mr Ansell spent £135,000 on the up-grade and fit out, resulting in a café that has much larger seating areas all made to a very high standard.

Work was also done to ensure that the café was sound-proofed to ensure minimum disturbance to the main church and this appears to be working well. The lease is set up so that the Café has separate metering and billing for all utilities.

Responsibility for cleaning the café, the toilets and the tables area outside under the portico all lie with the cafe. In addition the café also pays for rubbish collection for both the business and the church itself. The operator is a practising Roman Catholic, so he understands the Christian environment in which he is working and in particular how a church works and the liturgical requirements.





This was important to the church concerned and has made a huge difference in working relations. The lease also allows the church to give 24 hours notice of a significant event – e.g. a big funeral for which the café has to close for up to 3 hours. However, this is a very rare event, the café having been specially designed to ensure that it does not interfere with normal church life.

What was the total cost of the project?

The entire project cost just over £185,000, of which £135,000 came from the private partner (the café operator) and £50,000 from the church.

What was the funding strategy?

The Church agreed to pay for (and raised £50,000) to install toilets at the West End. Relocating the Sacristy from the West end to the East end freed-up space for the toilets to be placed in this location where they would be more easily accessible.

How long did it take from start to finish, from initial proposal to the building being completed and opened?

A legacy from a former Churchwarden enabled the church to begin work on the new Sacristy, located at the East end of the Church; this work was completed in September 2008. Work immediately began on the new Lavatories (2 mens, 2 ladies and 1 disabled) and the refurbishment of the Narthex and Coffee Shop. The refurbishment was completed in December 2008, and the Coffee Shop re-opened on 26th January 2009.

What were the main difficulties/problems you encountered?

The incumbent found that getting the lease authorised under the faculty system quite easy although lawyers appointed to sort out the lease itself have proved very expensive. None of those involved from the church or café were trained in legal matters so were learning as they went along especially in determining which clauses needed to be included in contract. Café manager said that 'it seemed quite a complex procedure and the costs were higher than normal.'



One of the new west end lavatories



The simply refurbished Narthex



What went particularly well?

The use of the Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 2006 allowed the signing of a 25 year lease which includes a full licence (the café serves alcohol) giving the church and the operator some stability.

A reversion clause has also been inserted so that if the operator sells on his lease, the church has first refusal so that they can chose a new leaseholder. This extra control was felt to be very important as due to the full licence the café could otherwise in theory become a bar.

Outcomes:

The café has now been up and running for almost a year and both it and the new bathroom facilities have been well received. The previous café had only been open 9.00am-2pm Monday to Friday and if a replacement had not been found, the church was in danger of having to close apart from services.

In addition the project has provided better facilities for the active church music department helping to invigorate the community activity that takes place within the building.

Successes:

The new café now opens 9.00am to 6.00pm every day – and there has been a very noticeable increase in size of congregations, especially at the three daily services. More people and a more diverse cross-section of people are now visiting the actual church.

The church has now started providing additional types of literature and information to meet the needs of new types of visitor. The banners and signs advertising “All Saints Café” have made more people realise that it is a church where many people used to think it was the town hall!

To find out more visit the All Saints website at: www.allsaintsnorthampton.co.uk/

