



NEW COLLEGE
OXFORD

New College, Oxford

New College is one of the constituent colleges of the University of Oxford. Founded in 1379, it is one of the largest Oxford colleges with over 700 students. Its spectacular buildings and gardens are located in the very heart of the city, set against the medieval city wall.

As is common in the older Oxford Colleges, the space was poorly configured for contemporary dining, and so a major design project was launched to create a catering space that met both the logistical and social requirements of the college.

Background

There were numerous issues with the design of the space in the College – the kitchen and dining hall were on different levels with poor interconnectivity between floors and the spaces couldn't cater for both traditional formal seated meals and cafeteria-style casual dining. The College, therefore, needed to completely re-think how it ordered and equipped the spaces, but within the constraints of permitted development.

Brief

Litmus was briefed to help the College overcome five key challenges:

- ▶ Insufficient storage capacity, location and access;
- ▶ Poor access between floors, with considerable manual handling risks;
- ▶ Congested Buttery (servery) space, creating hazards during Formal Hall service;
- ▶ Poor building infrastructure; and
- ▶ Antiquated equipment.

The three key aspirations the College wanted to be able to provide for both its catering team and students:

- ▶ Facilities that improved the service experience and quality of food for students and staff;
- ▶ An environment that the catering team enjoyed working in and that both attracted and retained the best staff; and
- ▶ A kitchen equipped and future-proofed to meet the multitude of dining requirements within College.

►► *This was a very satisfying project – not only did we have the opportunity to work with one of the most prestigious and well known Colleges in the country, but we also were able to get our teeth into the whole design process which also saw us lead the tender process to select the main kitchen installation supplier.* ◀◀

Joe Parfitt, the Litmus Partnership

Approach

Joe Parfitt, the Litmus Partnership, said: “We began by conducting a College-wide Consumer Insight engagement programme. This involved one-to-one interviews with Fellows and College staff – including the catering team – and focus groups with students from the Junior and Middle Common Room. This helped us understand what mattered most to College members and formed the basis of an online survey that produced quantifiable opinions.

“The outcome was a design brief that set out the challenges of the current operation and what needed to happen to meet the needs of the College going forwards. A significant finding was that students wanted a social “hub”, providing a comfortable bespoke deli café/bar that was also conducive to study.

“We became an integral part of the project design team, creating layout options, equipment schedules and service drawings through further consultation with the chefs and front-of-house team. We also presented the intended scheme to the student body, so that they could see how their survey feedback had influenced the design.

“The biggest challenges faced were ensuring we secured planning consent and approval from Historic England particularly since the scheme involved some major structural interventions and also specifying and procuring the temporary cooking and dining facilities needed for the two-year project duration.”

Outcomes

The project was completed in March 2015 and with it bought a transformation to the catering services at the College including:

- Introduction of energy efficient and highly versatile cooking appliances;
- Improved function flow and zoning in the kitchen;
- A helix tray return conveyor spanning two floors;
- Vastly improved interconnectivity between floors, with resilience against lift breakdown;
- Theatre cooking in the service Buttery and expanded surface and access space for the banqueting function; and
- An informal café and bar to meet the casual dining and social space requirements of the students.

For more information about Litmus get in touch:

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