

Chesterfield Market Hall

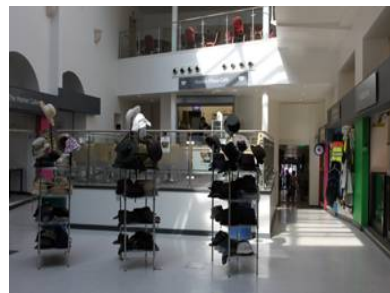
Short description of the project

Chesterfield's Grade II Victorian Market Hall was built to proclaim the town's commercial pride, but after its interior was altered drastically in the 1980s the use of the building declined, with units over time becoming increasingly difficult to let. Now the hall, owned by Chesterfield Borough Council, is once again offering retail space at the heart of the town, in a style which is radically contemporary but fitted to the building's significance.

The Market Hall's refurbishment required visionary leadership and a commitment to collaboration between local players. This was backed up by the Council's interdisciplinary regeneration team which combines planning, economic development, tourism, town centre management, markets and arts and culture.

The project cost £5.1m, and the team mounted a sufficiently persuasive case to raise £2.0m from ERDF and the Heritage Lottery Fund. In recognition of the scheme and other successful plans and schemes, the Council's regeneration team earned the award of 'Placemaking Team of the Year' from Planning and Regeneration and Renewal magazines.

The council is now reaping the payback from this investment, having increased revenue from £258,000 pa to over £400,000 as a result of the renovation.



Images (left to right): Chesterfield Market Hall in 2014 © English Heritage; Assembly room after refurbishment © Chesterfield Borough Council; Interior of the Market Hall after refurbishment © Chesterfield Borough Council

What would have happened without this project?

The Market Hall, built in 1857 by Danes & Sons, announces one's arrival in Chesterfield's commercial heart. The market place is one of the most imposing in the East Midlands, surrounded by proud Georgian townhouses, Victorian shops and more recent retail premises, and still hosting a market four days a week. The Market

Hall dominates and defines the whole space, not least because of its imposing clock tower. From the beginning the market hall accommodated traders' stalls, and on the upper floors an impressive assembly room provided a venue for civic functions.

However the 1980s saw drastic renovations and an unsympathetic extension when much of the Victorian interior was removed. Traders' stalls were replaced with retail units which were unable to meet the changing needs of either retailers or customers, whilst a complicated system of ramps made access challenging. Over time the Market Hall ceased to fulfil its intended function. It entered a period of gradual decline which was to combine with the closure of collieries and engineering factories to create a wider loss of economic confidence in the town centre.

What has the project achieved, or difference has it made?

If the decline of the Market Hall symbolized Chesterfield's economic ill-fortune, its regeneration now expresses the town's renewed confidence. The building has been comprehensively and sensitively repaired, using traditional building techniques. The majority of the 1980s extension has been replaced with a sympathetic new extension providing a range of starter business units.

The Market Hall's regeneration in 2013 hinged on redesigning new internal retail spaces from scratch with all units having prime frontage and easy access. In the gutted interior of the hall the Council has removed the 1980s interior and its inappropriate system of ramps and corridors. Now retail units suited to today's needs surround an open central café space in a new glazed atrium which gives views of the tower and lets light flood in. The new interior of the ground floor fulfils the needs of today's retailer for flexibility and utilities. The design is resolutely contemporary, but despite its contrast with the building's Italianate style it succeeds in safeguarding its remaining significance as a heritage asset. The bold intervention in the interior is already enabling the Market Hall to recover its original purpose and to revitalize and diversify Chesterfield's retail offer, providing for small and new/start up retail business.

The upper floors host a wide range of social and economic activity. and the creation of a new suite of office accommodation for start-up businesses. The scheme included refurbishment of the beautiful 1857 Assembly Hall, now let for meetings and events and a premier civic space for the community.

Before the scheme, the site comprised 68 commercial units, of which 20 were vacant. The annual income was £258,000 but declining. Following the refurbishment there are 64 units, with only one remaining to be let at the time of writing, and total revenue in the region of £400,000.

What were the main lessons learnt or challenges overcome?

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interdisciplinary regeneration team which combines planning, economic development, tourism, town centre management, markets and arts and culture. The project cost £5.1m, and the team mounted a sufficiently persuasive case to raise £2.0m from ERDF and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

What is the future of the project?

The scheme illustrates what can be achieved when a wide range of local partners are committed to a shared vision. A much-loved local landmark has been brought back to life and placed on a sustainable financial footing, transformed from a loss-making burden to its owner so a source of income. Furthermore the wider local economy has benefited from the arrival of new business and a more varied and distinctive retail offer.

In recognition of the scheme and other successful plans and schemes, the Council's regeneration team earned the award of 'Placemaking Team of the Year' from Planning and Regeneration and Renewal magazines. Judges were particularly impressed by an 'inspiring narrative of getting things done'. The refurbishment has also earned the award of 'Best Small Indoor Market' from the National Association of British Market Authorities.

In terms of conservation the approach to the Market Hall is emblematic of best practice. Traditional building skills were employed to ensure the historic building was comprehensively repaired and the Assembly Rooms re-opened, recognising their high significance. Meanwhile a more flexible approach was taken to the gutted ground floor – a dynamic example of constructive conservation in action.

Images are available in original case study submission

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