

APM Project Management Awards



WINNER'S

CASE STUDY



Category **Community Project of the Year 2012**

Winner **Old Fire Station, Oxford**

Allen Construction Consultancy

Sponsor **project**
THE VOICE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Overview

Nestled in the heart of historic Oxford is the city's iconic Old Fire Station. Built in 1896, the building served as a fire station until 1971 but, despite being home to numerous uses over the decades, has stood empty in recent times. However that's no longer the case.

Oxford City Council earmarked the 19th Century building for a full-revamp – aiming to tackle the problem of homelessness in the city and provide a home for the arts. Working alongside homeless charity Crisis, the city council appointed Allen Construction Consultancy to manage the vision of the city's Crisis Skylight Centre, which

offers accredited education, training and employment for homeless people.

It is home to the Crisis Skylight Café – providing work experience and the chance to gain vocational qualifications in the catering industry – and also Arts at the Old Fire Station, an independent arts company, which now has an auditorium, a gallery and studio spaces.

Despite facing financial restrictions and a raft of time-consuming obstacles, the project has revitalised a key city centre asset into a place of change for the whole community.

Objectives

The vision for the project was to create a unique, dynamic and inspirational centre for creativity, skills development and enterprise in Oxford.

Brought together under one roof in a "two organisations, one building" approach and through interconnected spaces, people from across the city will meet, learn, network, participate and ultimately move forward in their lives.

The scope of the project remained broadly consistent throughout although there were some changes to ensure the widest flexible use of the theatre space, with the introduction of loose seating in lieu of the usual retractable seating.

Challenges

Amid tight budgets, the uncertain economic climate and a limited time frame to complete the project, ACC delivered in the face of adversity.

With the initial contractor ROK going into administration when a crucial part of the demolition work had already been carried out, swift action was needed to mitigate costs and delays.

A robust plan was quickly put in place – leading to the appointment and commencement of a new contractor within weeks.

Not only that, substantial amounts of asbestos were discovered on site despite the clear results of the initial asbestos survey. Again, decisive action helped to reduce the extent of the delay following the discovery of the 'hidden' asbestos.



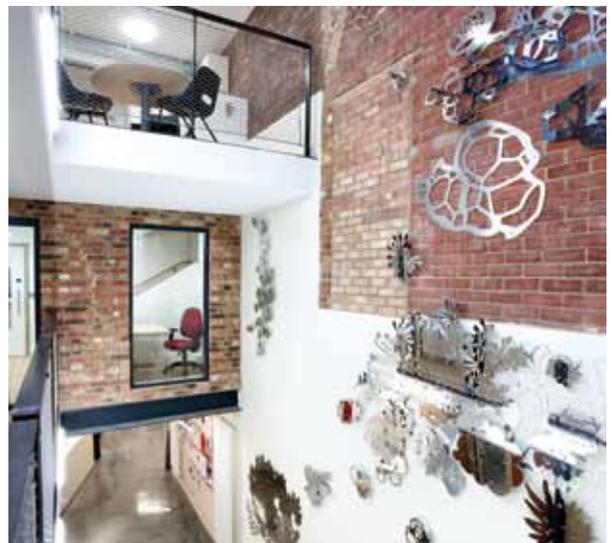
Resources

Resources for the Old Fire Station redevelopment included the budget, time allocation and a high-level of human resource input.

The financial resources to design and execute the building refurbishment were initially secured through a successful bid to the Department of Communities & Local Government (DCLG) for Places of Change Programme (PCP) funding, secured by Crisis in conjunction with Oxford City Council.

Each organisation's resource requirements were determined and aligned after the release of the building from the current leaseholder.

As project managers, Allen Construction Consultancy developed, secured and managed the additional consultant and contractor resources to deliver the project.



Co-ordination

Communication between the three parties involved – Crisis, Oxford City Council and Arts in the Old Fire Station – and project managers Allen Construction Consultancy was the key to success.

Despite more than 200 people being part of the process, ACC delivered a comprehensive stakeholder and communications plan throughout the project to ensure effective management, integration and participation of all identified groups and individuals.

Inevitably, with new organisations working together to deliver such a unique facility, there were inevitably stress points on relationships. However, the project environment ensured that views could be expressed at all levels.

At regular meetings, differences were addressed and, via the continual positive reinforcement of the end vision, vital momentum and morale was maintained without major conflict

Successes

The Old Fire Station in Oxford is now seen as an efficient, accessible and inspiring place that has been welcomed by all and meets the original vision.

While enjoying an active role in Oxford's arts and cultural offering, it also provides a springboard into education, training and employment for some of the city's most marginalised residents.

Centre users were involved throughout the project, painting and decorating hoardings of the building as well as providing artwork for the official opening.

This has given a platform to talented artists to develop their skills and, in the process, provided a fresh insight into the plight of the homeless and the wider community benefits that the Old Fire Station can bring.

Allen Construction Consultancy believes the building is a real community asset that will help change lives, as well as providing a resource well beyond its physical accommodation.



The APM Project Management Awards have been celebrating project management excellence since 1993 and the broad range of categories is designed to make entry possible for projects and companies of all sizes and complexity.

The awards reflect the invaluable contribution project managers make in all sectors of society and the event provides an opportunity for industry professionals to meet with colleagues and entertain guests as well as celebrate at one of the year's most exciting events.

Highly regarded in the project management industry, the awards reflect the dedication and talent that helps to shape the project management community and the world around us. The finalists, winners and sponsors of the awards attract national publicity for their achievement and involvement. Winning an award provides invaluable recognition and kudos to the careers of winners.



For more details on the awards and how to enter or attend, visit apm.org.uk/awards or email awards@apm.org.uk

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