



Vision Commercial Kitchens

Case Study
Ashton Park Garden Centre



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The brand new, purpose built, Ashton Park Garden Centre boasts the largest outdoor plant area in Tameside and offers just about everything for the gardener. Ashton Park also houses a new 150 seat café and a continental style coffee shop. As Catering Supervisor, Marc Appleton is responsible for the centre's new kitchen and front of house servery.

Marc Appleton

Restaurant/Coffee Shop Manager

Can you outline your role here at Ashton Park Garden Centre?

As the catering supervisor I'm responsible for what goes on in the restaurant, both front of house and in the kitchens, ensuring that the service and food are of a very high quality. I also have to make certain that everything is standardised so that when customers return the quality is the same. I have a head chef who runs the kitchen for me, but I'm in charge of ensuring everything runs smoothly as well as dealing with all the health and safety practices, sourcing suppliers and getting materials in at the right prices.

How did you first hear about Vision Commercial Kitchens?

I first worked with Vision around six years ago at the Barton Grange Garden Centre in Cheshire, which has now been taken over by the company that own Ashton Park. Vision also fitted out Café Med in Woodford when I was working there although I didn't work with them closely I did end up working in the café. So I'm familiar with Vision and the work they have done. I know the quality of their work and what we can expect when we have them in.

At what stage did you get involved with Vision in terms of the planning process?

It was a few months before we opened; initially I was involved fairly loosely in all of the communication between the Garden Centre and Vision just so I knew what was going on and what to expect. I then became involved in the whole design and development process down to details such as selecting the crockery, the theme of the restaurant, the colour scheme and the design of counters and how we would run them. I was also consulted about the equipment we needed to go in the kitchen.



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So did you have to liaise closely with the chef and with Vision?

When we started the fit out, we didn't have a head chef so I had to wear the hats of both the head chef and front of house manager which meant I had to be very much involved in the design of the kitchen. Vision were on hand to advise at all times which was crucial for us. With their experience in the industry we felt totally reassured.

With the restaurant being customer facing, were you conscious of the look and feel of the counters in particular?

Absolutely, the counters are a key feature in the restaurant and we wanted them to create a clean, fresh environment but also to give a warm and welcoming ambience hence the burgundy colour we chose for the counter fronts. We also used high quality materials such as granite on the surfaces. Storage space was essential too when considering the counters. It was vital that we had enough storage space for the range of food on offer.

Were there any specific design or planning issues?

The design of the restaurant is very much menu based; you need to know what sort of food you're going to be serving and have an idea of how you are going to be serving it in order to plan around it. The first large cabinet for the cold food needed to accommodate a wide selection. Following this the hot food area had to be large enough for us to put the hot food out on as well as give us the scope to use it as a hot plate as we do a lot of food to order. This wasn't actually in the original designs as the food was meant to be ready to just plate up by the servery staff. However with the staff and the equipment we've got we can now produce high quality food to order. I think it's fantastic that we are able to produce fresh food onsite using fresh ingredients with no microwaves!

How do you feel Vision contributed to the overall process?

I can't stress enough how supportive Vision were throughout the project, Jack Sharkey and John Orton were on site a lot of the time. They were extremely co-operative and always took on board the comments we made when we needed bits and bobs tweaking, as projects like this often do. As you go along you notice things that need changing because it's very different seeing things on paper to seeing them in real life. It was vital that we got it right and Vision were more than accommodating.

Were there any special circumstances with the project?

We had very tight deadlines towards the end. When the garden centre build dragged on it meant we had less and less time. We had originally planned on having two weeks to get the centre and the staff fully organised before the grand opening which meant having the restaurant completely finished. In the end this turned into just four days. Vision worked immensely hard at the end of the project to ensure that we had some time to get in, prepare ourselves, carry out dummy runs and get the feel of the place, which was essential for the opening.

With such tight deadlines, did you come across any problems or issues that Vision had to overcome?

Towards the end of the project it was basically 'all hands on deck' to get everything completed on time. I guess it was the usual last minute chaos with everything going on at once but Vision got it all organised. We knew everything would come together in the end and it did.

Do Vision support the kitchen and servery now they are all up and running?

Yes, the service and maintenance Vision offer is very good. Every piece of equipment has a code on it so if anything goes wrong we can

just call them, quote the code and they will have somebody out the next day to have a look at it. It's crucial to the business and the Vision team are incredibly helpful. In my experience it's the same people you talk to which is great as it means you build up a strong relationship and, as a result, get to know each other well. Inevitably there are things that go wrong with new equipment especially when you've got such a lot in a new build like Ashton Park, so there were things that needed attention but they get sorted out, as and when we need it.

It's still early days, but how successful would you say the project has been so far?

Well, we're still building the business at the moment and concentrating very much on increasing footfall. The café seats just over one hundred and fifty for food and coffee and the aim is to get a high volume of people in but we don't want people waiting in long queues hence the separate food and coffee counters. The counters themselves are long to enable us to spread everything out. The feedback so far has been that it all looks very impressive.

How would you describe the relationship you have with Vision?

It's very strong and they pop in regularly to see us. Inevitably there are little creases that need ironing out along the way but considering the number of parties involved and the scale of the project communication has been excellent.

Do you plan to work with Vision in the future?

It almost goes without saying that we will definitely be continuing our relationship with Vision. They are currently quoting for one of the other garden centres but, at the moment, I'm personally preoccupied with getting Ashton Park off the ground. I would definitely recommend Vision and they would certainly be my first port of call.



Vision Commercial Kitchens provides a full service to a growing number of clients throughout the UK from its base in Manchester. The company is one of the few in the industry to have gained ISO9001:2000 accreditation.

Vision has proven capability covering:

- Full AutoCAD design and planning service
- Equipment specification, sourcing and supply
- Project management and installation
- Full after sales service and warranty management

Vision's capabilities are demonstrable across a wide range of completed projects including restaurants, hotels, bars, schools, colleges, nursing homes, hospitals and the MOD. Clients include many of the leading names in the industry such as Malmaison, Hotel du Vin, Leon and various local authorities as well as numerous main contractors working in both the private and public sector. The company was formed by its four founding directors who have over 60 years combined business experience predominantly in the commercial kitchen industry.

Vision is a member of CEDA, The Catering Equipment Distributors Association, the industry's representative body. All members work to the highest standards as defined within CEDA's 'code of good practice'.



Vision Commercial Kitchens Ltd

Turning ideas into reality

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