

INVITATION TO TENDER

For the Provision of a Café Operator at Southwell Minster



February 2026

Southwell Minster

Church Street

Southwell

NG25 0HD

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1. Introduction:

1.1 Project Title: Appointment of Café Operator for The Refectory at Southwell Minster

Client: Southwell Cathedral

Location: The Refectory, Church Street, Southwell, NG25 0HD

Southwell Minster Chapter invites tenders from experienced café operators to manage and operate the on-site café located within the grounds of Southwell Minster. The café plays a key role in supporting the visitor experience and generating income to help preserve the Minster, a Grade I listed site.

1.2 Tender Objectives:

- To appoint an operator who can deliver a welcoming, high quality, profitable and financially sustainable café service.
- To ensure operations respect the spiritual, architectural, and historical significance of the Cathedral.
- Southwell Minster is committed to promoting ethical and sustainable trading and actively supports the principles of Fairtrade. While we do not require that all products supplied or sold within the café be Fairtrade certified, we encourage operators to use Fairtrade goods where practicable and to outline in their proposal how they will support the Minster's values through responsible and sustainable sourcing.
- The Minster strongly encourages the use of locally sourced and seasonal produce wherever reasonably practicable. Tenderers should indicate how they will prioritise local suppliers within their proposed catering offer.
- Reinforce the relationship between the café and the Minster and become the preferred choice for providing the catering for events across the site.
- Work with the Minster team to develop a joint brand and offering that supports the Cathedral's objective of becoming a premium visitor destination and events space.
- To enhance visitor experience through excellent hospitality and thoughtful menu design.
- Create a must visit location within the locality, which will increase footfall and drive growth for Southwell Minster.
- To reinforce the Minster's status as a parish church and its central role within the local and regional community, including with families, local groups, schools, music societies and other organisations.



2. Tender Procedures:

2.1 Tender Process:

The tender process will follow a 3 stage review, which will enable a fair and transparent process to be followed. The 3 Stage Review Process will include:

Application: The response to this Tender Document.

Informal Interview: 3 highest scoring applicants will be invited to a formal interview, which will include a max. 15 minute presentation.

Due Diligence: Financial & Operational due diligence will be carried out.

2.2 Tender Submission Requirements:

The tender must be submitted digitally, via email with the reference “**Refectory Tender Bid**” in the email subject line. All attachments must be submitted as a PDF and all tenders must be submitted to:

Michael Gilbert – Buildings & Estates Manager

michael.gilbert@southwellminster.org.uk

2.3 Tender Return Documentation:

The interested parties **must** submit the following information:

A. Organisation Profile: This should include the following information:

- Trading name
- Year opened
- Locations of other operations
- Mission, Vision & Values
- Organisational Structure
- Key Personnel Profiles
- Relevant experience & proven track record
- Compliance Framework



B. Proposed Operational & Strategic Methodology:

Provide a detailed methodology to cover the following topics:

- Understanding client's requirements
- Service Delivery Approach
- Mobilisation & Transition Plan
- Operational Systems & Processes
- Staffing Strategy
- Quality Assurance Framework
- Menu Development & Innovation Strategy
- Sustainability & Environmental Strategy
- Customer Engagement & Experience Strategy
- Risk Management
- Performance Reporting to Client

C. Draft Menu: Provide a draft example menu including provisional pricing structure

D. References: At least two references with examples or case studies, from previous or current clients / operations, demonstrating your recent experience.

E. Financial Proposal: This should include:

- Propose a Base Rent (Option B)
Propose a percentage for the Turnover Rent (Option B)
- Proposed a Fixed Rent (Option A)
- Provide a 5 year cashflow and profit & loss forecast.
- Investment Plan for Equipment.

F. Sub-contract: List of any services the operator proposes to sub-contract.

2.4 Legal & Compliance:

- Bidders must comply with UK food hygiene, employment, licensing and health & safety laws.
- All personal data handled under the lease must comply with GDPR standards.
- The Minster will provide terms & conditions of the contract to run the café.

2.5 Tender Submission Deadline:

All tender submissions must be received no later than **Noon on Friday 20th March 2026**.

Submissions after this time and date will not be considered. Southwell Minster is hoping to award a contract to the successful organisation by **June 2026**, with the lease starting from **1st July 2026**. Only one Tender is permitted per Tenderer.

2.6 Tender Queries:

We welcome relevant queries from all interested bidders to ensure a clear and transparent tender process. These questions must be submitted by **Friday 6th March 2026.**

Any questions must be submitted in writing by email to the contact below. Please ensure that all questions are concise and reference the relevant section or clause of the tender document.

Please be aware that your query, together with our response will, to ensure transparency and fairness, be circulated to all undertakings expressing an interest on an anonymised basis. If you consider that your query discloses commercially confidential information you must, with or upon your query, clearly indicate which information you consider is commercially confidential and why. Southwell Minster will then exclude this information from any circulation.

2.7 Site Visits:

A date for site visits will be arranged. Visits outside of these dates may be arranged, but this will not be guaranteed. Please email to register and organise a time. Site Visits are not Mandatory but are strongly recommended.

2.8 Tender Evaluation Criteria:

The tender submissions will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Relevant Experience (25%) – proven track record of café operation and hospitality.
- Strategic & Operational Methodology (35%) – Clear & concise strategy that meets the requirements of the scope. This will cover the tender evaluation criteria set out in Section 1.2.
- Pricing (40%) – A competitive price

2.9 Contact Information:

The main point of contact for tender queries is:

Michael Gilbert – Buildings & Estate Manager

E: michael.gilbert@southwellminster.org.uk

3. Background & Site Information:

3.1 About the Site:

Southwell Minster is a Grade I listed building welcoming approximately 80,000 - 100,000 visitors annually, including worshippers, tourists, school groups, and community groups. It is thought that most of the visitors are domestic. The site lies approximately 10 miles north east of the city of Nottingham. Directly to the east is the Newark, where the mainline railway connects the north and south of the country. Newark and the surrounding areas are areas from where people commute to London, and families move to Southwell due to its highly regarded schools.



The population of Southwell was recorded at 7,491 in the 2021 census.

There is an 90 space car park opposite the Minster, with a further 5 car parks located throughout the town. There is a bus stop directly outside the Minster Shop and café.



3.2 About the Café Space:

- The current café offering known as “The Refectory” is located to the north of Southwell Minster, accessed on foot off Church Street.
- Indoor seating capacity: Approx. 64 (with opportunity for expansion as Option 2)
- Outdoor terrace (subject to weather): Approx. 15.
- The Refectory building was built in 1996, which incorporates the Southwell Minster Gift shop in the north end of the building. The café underwent a major refurbishment in 2014, which included an extension incorporating a larger Kitchen/ Served space.

3.3 The Local Market:

There are several food and beverage operations in the town centre, which at the time of writing included:

- French Press
- The Old Theatre Deli
- The Crown Pub
- Scoozi
- Alfresco Café
- Chess Master Café
- Admiral Rodney Pub
- Mughai Rasoi
- Spice Club
- Jack Dempsie’s
- Gossip’s

The above demonstrates the competition especially in the coffee shops and café sectors. The cafes are relatively small in scale and offer limited capacity. The café at the Minster is the only one in close proximity to the Minster. This would to a certain extent be the unique selling point (USP).



4. The Proposals

4.1 The Building:

There will be two potential options relating to the use of the building for the purposes of a café, these options will be:

- **Option 1** – Cathedral Shop remains in the building and café space is as existing, refer to **Appendix A**. The Gross Internal Floor Area for Option 1 is approx. **170m²**
- **Option 2 (preferred option)** – The Cathedral Shop is relocated & the café will have access to the entire building, refer to **Appendix B**. The Gross Internal Floor Area for Option 2 is approx. **258m²**

It is proposed that the lease period will be a minimum of 5 years.

4.2 Capital Investment:

It is proposed that the capital investment will be the responsibility of the Café operator, in return for a rent free period. The rent free period to be agreed will be dependent on the level of investment proposed.

Should there be any capital works to the external fabric such as adding windows will be carried out by the Minster. No direct financial liability for the café operator if the Minster initiates and carries out the capital works.

4.3 Inventory:

All the existing Kitchen equipment is the property of the existing tenant and will be removed prior to the new lease commencing.

The Café operator will need to provide all equipment and furniture required to provide the proposed café offering. All furniture will need to be agreed upon with Southwell Minster prior to purchase or supply.

4.4 Operating Hours:

- Minimum requirement: 09:00–17:00 daily.
- Extended hours will be required for major events, concerts, large services, and seasonal peak periods, with reasonable advance notice provided.
- The café operator can offer extended opening hours at the discretion of the Minster.

4.5 Access Rights to the Site:

The Café operator could be made the preferred catering partner to the Minster Site, with the following exceptions:

- In house meetings such as Friends of Southwell Minster.
- Continued use of the Minster Hospitality Cupboard for our own needs.
- Any function or events associated with the Office of the Bishop.
- Internal catering within the Minster Offices.
- Informal catering provided by school groups/for school events.

Southwell Minster would not have any rights to the use of the Café facilities for its own use.

4.6 Responsibilities:

4.6.1 Core Responsibilities Include:

- Daily operation of the café, 7 days a week.
- Delivery of a high quality café orientated menu with a balance of light meals, cakes, hot/cold drinks.
- Provision of options for dietary needs (GF, vegan, dairy free).
- Ensuring an environment appropriate to a place of worship.
- Maintaining cleanliness of café, external seating area, toilet facilities and customer areas generally.
- Maintaining the interiors of the building in good repair.
- Maintain the external decoration in a good condition.
- Provision and training of all café staff.
- The café operator will be responsible for the Utility payments including water, electricity & gas.
- Offer a varied Children's Menu.
- Ensure that the cafe is accessible to people on lower incomes

4.6.2 Additional Responsibilities to be developed during the agreed lease period:

- Provide catering offerings for the events held in the Minster, which can include the use of the commercial Kitchen to the Archbishops Palace.
- Catering for Weddings and private functions.

4.7 Customer Experience Requirements:

- Friendly, respectful service with a personal touch.
- Staff to be aware of the Cathedral's religious nature.
- Noise levels must be controlled during specific sensitive events at the Minster.
- Consistency in the overall quality of the offering.
- A well thought out display, giving a clear indication of the offering.
- Ability to offer online bookings.
- Café staff should feel a part of the Minster Team. Training will be provided to Café staff to include the history of the Minster and information on upcoming events.
- Cash payments are to be accepted as an alternative to card payments.

4.8 In-house events & Catering:

Southwell Minster hosts a wide range of events throughout the year, including exhibitions, fairs, concerts, guided tours, and other community and cultural activities. We are seeking a café partner who can also act as a preferred supplier for catering at these events, offering a cost-beneficial solution that aligns with our operational and financial objectives. This could include the use of the Commercial Kitchen facilities located off the State Chamber.

The successful partner will demonstrate flexibility and creativity in providing catering options that enhance the visitor experience while maintaining competitive pricing. There is significant growth potential for a supplier who can collaborate with us to deliver high-quality, tailored catering services for both small and large-scale events. This partnership should aim to create mutual value, ensuring affordability for the Minster while enabling the supplier to benefit from increased exposure and business opportunities through our diverse event program.

4.9 **Rent Proposal/ Finances:**

We propose **TWO** Options for the rental agreement for the operation of the café:

OPTION A - TURNOVER RENT:

- **Base Rent:** The Tenant shall pay to the Landlord a fixed annual base rent per square meter, payable in monthly instalments. The Café operator is to propose a fixed annual base rent as part of their Tender Return. (this will increase annually with inflation).
- **Turnover Rent:** In addition to the base rent, the Tenant shall propose a turnover rent, being a sum equal to a percentage of the Tenant's gross turnover for each accounting period. The Café operator is to provide this percentage figure as part of their Tender Return.
- **Turnover Calculation:** Gross Turnover means all revenue received by the Tenant in the course of or in connection with the business carried on at the Premises, including but not limited to cash sales, card sales, online sales, and click-and-collect orders fulfilled at the Premises, but excluding VAT, returns, and staff discounts.
- **Turnover Rent Threshold:** Turnover rent to be paid only if the gross turnover for the accounting period exceeds the base rent, with the sum payable being calculated on the amount by which the gross turnover exceeds this figure.
- **Reporting:** The Tenant shall keep and maintain complete and accurate accounts and records relating to its gross turnover in accordance with standard accounting practices. The Tenant shall provide the Landlord with certified accounts for each accounting period within ONE month of the end of that period. The Minster reserves the right to inspect all records or to commission an auditor to do so

OPTION B - FIXED RENT:

- **Rent:** The Tenant shall pay to the Landlord a fixed annual rent per square meter, payable in monthly instalments. The Café operator is to propose a fixed annual rent. (this will increase annually with inflation).

4.10 **Finances:**

- 4.10.1 Utility Bills:** The Tenant shall be solely responsible for arranging for, and paying promptly for, all utility services supplied to the Leased Premises, including but not limited to electricity, gas, water, sewage, and telecommunications, from the Commencement Date of this Lease. The Tenant shall transfer all such utility accounts into its name within 10 days of the Lease Commencement Date and shall provide proof of account transfer to the Landlord upon request.
- 4.10.2 Financial Forecast:** Provide a 5 year cashflow forecast and profit & loss forecast to demonstrate anticipated growth over the lease period.
- 4.10.3 Investment Plan for Equipment:** Provide a brief investment plan for café equipment, which demonstrates a commitment to providing a quality offering.
- 4.10.4 Discounts:** Café Operator to propose a suitable method for rewarding customers from Cathedral Staff and Volunteers.

4.11 Sustainability & Environmental Requirements

The café operators must:

- Minimise single use plastics.
- Offer sustainable packaging.
- Implement recycling and composting for organic waste.
- Prioritise local and ethical food suppliers.
- Avoid environmentally harmful products.

4.12 Menu Expectations:

Operators should propose:

- A menu aligned with the Cathedral's values (simple, wholesome, community minded).
- Seasonal and locally sourced ingredients.
- Premium hot drinks with speciality coffee/tea options.
- Family friendly items.
- Healthy options.
- A draft menu with pricing must be included in the tender response.
- Offer Fairtrade options where practicable.

4.13 Signage & Promotion:

4.13.1 An agreement will be made regarding the branding and signage, which should link with wider Southwell Minster signage strategy and brand.

4.13.2 The promotional material should be:

- Professional and not hand written.
- Neat and easily readable menu boards
- External signage i.e A boards to be displayed with prior agreement with Southwell Minster.
- Corporate product signage will not be allowed externally.

4.13.3 The café operator should promote our services and events being held in the Minster. This can be achieved through notices within the building and promotional material on the tables.

5 Draft Contract Summary:

Contract Term: Minimum 5 years with optional 2 year extension.

Operator Responsibilities: Staff, supplies, day to day maintenance, customer service and maintaining the interiors in good repair.

Cathedral Responsibilities: Structural repairs, Boilers, fire alarm systems (unless otherwise specified).

Revenue Structure: Combination of Base Rent + Revenue Rent (to be finalised).

6 Health & Safety Requirements:

- **Hygiene** - Maintain a 5 star hygiene rating.
- **Fire Safety** – training and awareness of evacuation points.
- **Allergens** – clear labelling and staff training.
- **First Aid** – at least one trained staff member during all opening hours.
- **Martyn’s Law** - The Tenant shall comply at all times with all obligations applicable to it as an occupier and operator of a café under the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (as amended) and any statutory guidance issued under it (“Protect Duty”).
- **Safeguarding** - Southwell Minster is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for all. The appointed café operator must demonstrate an equivalent commitment and work in full cooperation with the Minster’s safeguarding policy. The operator to appoint a safeguarding lead.
- **Accessibility** - The Tenant shall comply at all times with all applicable accessibility and equality legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, in connection with the operation of the café from the Premises.

7 Reporting:

7.1 The operator of the Café will be required to provide a quarterly report to include the following:

- General overview of operations.
- KPI Tracking to include monthly covers, customer satisfaction, staff training rates.
- Partnership Activities with Southwell Minster.
- Revenue figures.
- Visitor numbers.
- Customer Feedback Summary.
- Income.
- Complaints Data

The format of the report is to be agreed on commencement of the lease.

7.2 The operator of the Café will be required to provide an annual report to include the following:

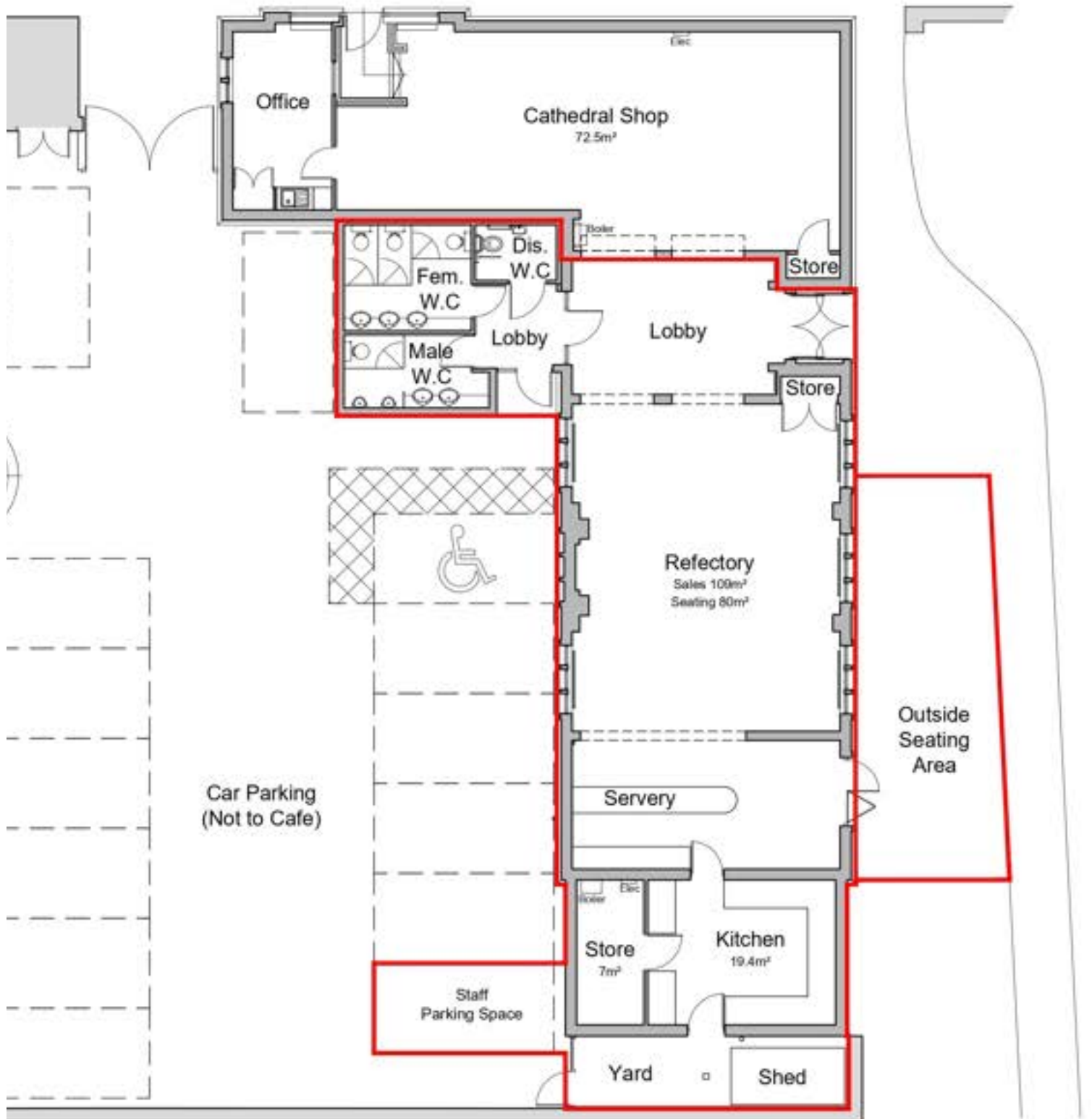
- Strategic Review.
- Future Plans

The format of the report is to be agreed on commencement of the lease.

8.0 Appendices:

- **Appendix A:** Floor Plan – Option 1.
- **Appendix B:** Floor Plan – Option 2.

APPENDIX A: FLOOR PLAN - OPTION 1



APPENDIX B: FLOOR PLAN - OPTION 2

