

East Anglia York Tavern, Norwich, Norfolk

Andrew and Joanne Bolton have breathed fresh air into the York Tavern in more ways than one since taking on the Enterprise Inns leasehold just over two years ago.

What was once the top pub in this part of Norwich had, says Joanne, “lost its character and been taken over by a clique of customers”. She adds: “Even on Friday and Saturday nights, there would only be between 10 and 15 in the pub, because locals considered it a rough place to visit.”

To reverse the decline, the Boltons decided to dissuade the existing clientele by removing the jukebox, taking out Sky Sports and introducing Sunday lunch. Andrew says: “Pretty much straightaway, they left — and people who used to frequent the pub returned.”

Joanne and Andrew also set about making the pub more suitable to accommodate the effects of the smoking ban. The rear of the pub has a courtyard bounded by an old pavilion, which has been restored and converted into a children’s play area, while an overgrown bowling green has been transformed into a well laid-out beer garden and play area.

The courtyard has been radically improved, with a three metre-square motorised canopy with lighting and electric heaters as its centrepiece. Seating is provided for 30 people and the courtyard has been enhanced with plants and floral displays. A new doorway was put in the rear wall to make access to the courtyard much easier. Andrew says: “The courtyard was designed sensitively so that smokers did not feel they were being pushed outside.”

Everyone seems to welcome the pub’s transformation and trade has lifted considerably as a result of Andrew and Joanne’s hard work.

