

ALEXANDRA HOUSE, DOVERCOURT, HARWICH

Brief description of the project, design objectives and how these have been achieved:

This unique 47 bed Care Home with Nursing and Dementia with a 14 bed Extra Care scheme adjacent is situated in a key location in Dovercourt overlooking the Estuary of the River Stour on the Essex Suffolk border.

This innovative scheme for MHA refurbishes an existing Care Home which was originally a Hotel, into high quality self contained Extra Care apartments offered on a mixed tenure basis to older people who may be in need of Care but able to enjoy an independent lifestyle. The design of the adjoining new Care Home posed the challenge of producing a residence with the same architectural language to complement the very strong and distinctive style of the existing building, yet not to detract from it, but to enhance and be an equally important element of a whole design.

The new Care Home provides independence and privacy for individuals, as well as communal areas for activity, dining, socialising and interaction. The individual bedrooms are spacious, and the large, double glazed windows allow fantastic sea views from many of the rooms. The kitchen and laundry are located within a small extension to the old building which serves the new Home via a new glazed link.

Summary of how the objectives of the project have been achieved in terms of the following key aspects:

Resident comfort/well being

Residents of the Home enjoy their own private, bright and airy single room with attractive views out to sea. All rooms come with high quality furnishings and are en-suite.

A dedicated Care Team is available 24 hours a day, providing flexible support tailored to individual needs. A range of new technology is utilised at Alexandra House to make daily living easier and safer.

With a range of thoughtfully integrated facilities, Alexandra House offers residents the opportunity to be part of a friendly community.

The attractive sitting and dining rooms in both buildings look out to sea, creating constant interest with large amounts of shipping coming into the port of Felixstowe, Harwich and Ipswich on a daily basis. Within the existing building the ornate sitting and dining rooms have been refurbished providing an elegant suite of communal rooms for residents of the apartments to enjoy.

Accessibility and mobility

The scheme is fully DDA compliant throughout, both internally and externally, with wheelchair access to all areas that residents would wish to enter. Wheelchair accessible lifts provide access to the first and second floors in each building.

All bedrooms have an en-suite bathroom with grab rails and level-access shower and toilet. Slip resistant flooring here and in the kitchen aids day-to-day peace of mind.

Externally all footpaths are suitable for wheelchair use, and garden areas provide opportunities to sit and watch the sea or sit in the rear garden and be sheltered from the wind. These have been sensitively designed to allow people with limited mobility to make good use of the garden.

Staff needs

Staff have high quality facilities including rest room, changing areas, training room and offices.

Design features/innovation

This project sets out to redefine Care and Extra Care accommodation in this area of North Essex, on a site with previously outdated accommodation.

The design of the Care wings has proved to be an effective way for staff to manage the Home whilst still providing rooms with visual interest for residents.

The remodelling of the existing building to create 13 Extra Care apartments has wherever possible maintained the feel of the existing communal rooms, from when the original building was a Hotel. The existing sun porch has been refurbished creating a great place to sit and watch the world go by on a sunny winter day. The ornate plasterwork to the ceilings in the old entrance hall have been repaired and redecorated creating the feeling of a Country House Hotel.

Meeting registration and market requirements

The ageing demographic of the population of North Essex has given rise to greater demand for Care and Extra Care accommodation. This scheme provides improved Care facilities on the same site and the opportunity for residents to live in a development which looks out across the estuary of the river Stour and one of the busiest ports in the UK providing a constantly changing scene of weather, tide and shipping; a must for those who love the sea - I've put my name down!

Cost effectiveness

The overall cost of the development was £6 million.

The Care Home has been built on a part of the garden which was unused by residents of the old Home creating a more financially viable development by increasing the number of residents on site.

Cost efficiency was achieved through the following:

- Use of local materials and labour, reducing transport costs.

- Package price developed with the Client, the Quantity Surveyor and the Contractor to drive out as much inefficiency from the scheme as possible and create the maximum value for the client.
- Any Landlord / Tenant changes were generally costed and agreed in advance of being executed by the Contractor.

NB: The Employer's Requirements set out the high specification and finishes required by the end user.

Aesthetic features

The design of the new Care Home was developed in close consultation with the Planners. Designed in harmony with its location, the scheme is located on the edge of the Dovercourt Conservation Area. Consultations with the Parish Council indicated that a building that was similar in style to the original Hotel was the preferred option.

The new building is predominately rendered to match the existing building with a series of large gables under a steeply pitched roof matching the bays of the existing building.

A new glazed link has been provided as a semi-internal space linking the two buildings and providing access to the rear car park.

Environmental consideration

The new building has been designed to meet Code 3 and the existing building has been upgraded wherever possible to enhance its thermal performance. New double glazed windows have been provided throughout the development.