



Highgate East Camden & Islington NHS Trust



Highgate East is a new, 78 bed mental health inpatient facility for the North London NHS Foundation Trust on the Whittington Hospital site. The facility includes adult acute and older adult wards with therapy, support and administration space.

The project came about through the Trust need to relocate inpatient accommodation from the existing St Pancras site and the Whittington site was chosen as it enabled the creation of a mental health campus, being opposite the existing Highgate Mental Health Centre on Dartmouth Park Hill (now Highgate West). The colocation with the Whittington Hospital also enables the physical health needs to be met, particularly for the older adults.

Within an urban context, the building helps to destigmatise mental health in the heart of the community with a residential aesthetic. With multiple storeys, the design incorporates safe and secure roof terraces or sky gardens to enable residents to have access to fresh air. Green walls are also included to optimise connections with nature and views out onto landscape.

The building used a panelised brick façade system to optimise pre manufactured value elements and contribute towards the target of 70% for Modern Methods of Construction.

Location: London, UK

Scope: New build

Brief: 78 bed mental health inpatient unit

Floor area (GIA): 8,747sqm

Completion date: February 2024

Architect: Ryder Architecture
Structural Engineer: BAM D
M&E Engineer: BAM SE
Contractor: BAM Construction
Landscape: Ryder Architecture

Highgate East has been designed to sit amongst existing healthcare buildings, how did the site and surroundings influence the design of the building?

The restricted site, adjacent to the Grade II listed Jenner building, posed town planning and construction logistics challenges. These were overcome through consultation with the local authority and design review panel and development of quality design detail that took references from the site. The building form and height respects that of the Jenner, and the public realm landscape design creates a boulevard between the buildings to enhance the setting of the heritage asset.

How did the planning requirements affect the overall design of the building?

The planning process was very well structured and collaborative. Ryder met with the local authority planning team and conservation officer in a series of workshops to ensure all challenges were met. This also included the appointment of a critical friend to comment on developing design proposals. Several Design Review Panel sessions with other architects were also arranged to help inform the design. At all times the public were kept updated and informed through personal visits to neighbours and wider open house forums.



What were the key design considerations when putting together the interiors strategy to ensure the design is calming and reassuring for patients?

A variety of different space has been provided to suit the needs of the individual, including small intimate areas for quiet reflection and larger spaces for social interaction. All service user areas are flooded with light and have views out to help orientation. Secure 'sky gardens' have been provided to give access to fresh air and give connection with nature, allow activity, recreation and horticultural therapy. The wards are designed with zones of progressive privacy with the busier support spaces at the entrance, shared day spaces in the semi private central zone and bedroom areas and quiet rooms in the private zone at the end of the ward.

In what ways does the building allow for interaction between the local community and the building?

With its urban context, the aspiration of the building design was to destigmatise mental health by creating an overlap between the Trust services and publicly accessible zones to blur the boundary between the service and the community. Active frontages are incorporated with glazed, welcoming facades to a café in the reception area and with office accommodation facing Dartmouth Park Hill and the main thoroughfare through the Whittington Hospital. This is complimented with extensive landscaped areas creating calming public realm spaces. The building is of human scale so as not to intimidate.

“The design of Highgate East feels more like a modern hotel than a traditional NHS mental health facility. The building includes a sports hall for service users and space for a new community café which will be open to the public, helping to break down traditional barriers and destigmatise views of mental health.”

- Jinjer Kandola NLMHP Chief Executive



Client / Patient Perspectives

How did your client and end users perceive the project?

If they were involved in stakeholder consultation - what points did they raise? How were these addressed by the design - and what feedback did you get from these groups post occupation?

"Coming here to see the building, after many months of engagement with Ryder and the team, brought a tear to my eye, it is so lovely. They have listened to us. When you suffer from a mental illness, you shut yourself away and you are in a dark space. Coming here you're in the light and it feels so comfortable. If you are ill and you come here, you will get better."

- Nicky Baker, Service User Representative

"We are delighted with the new hospital and the benefits that it offers to our service users and staff. Ryder has understood the importance of good design, how to create a therapeutic environment and the improvement to wellbeing that this can bring. They have been brilliant at working with service users and staff to co produce the design of the building.

The quality of light inside, good air circulation, clear ward layout and sensory rooms will help ease distress. Access to fresh air and the ability to connect with nature on the roof terraces will enable safe and secure recreation and relaxation. Having some control over their environment, such as individual bedroom temperature control, will support services users' independence and recovery.

The generous exercise hall will give both services users and staff the opportunity to improve their physical wellbeing and health.

As well as providing a good therapeutic environment, the facility will also give our staff a good environment to work in with bright spacious office and meeting spaces and relaxation areas."

- Dr Vincent Kirchner, Chief Medical Officer



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Construction cost: £57.5 m
Overall cost: £83m
Procurement Route: D&B
Status: Complete
Completion date: February 2024



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