



Award Category: Retrofit for the Future sponsored by Willmott Dixon

Project: Bentley House - accommodation for the elderly Hertford

Client: Signature Senior Lifestyle

Architect: PRP



Bentley House was a semi-derelict five storey mid-80's office building, and had been empty for several years, before it was redeveloped into a residential care home comprising a range of one-bedroom suites and studio suites, plus communal facilities.

The exterior of the building has been remodelled to give it a modern, residential character. The ground floor, which was formerly the office car park, has been lowered to provide an adequate floor to ceiling height. This forms the new main entrance foyer and also accommodates a café, restaurant, shop and hobbies room for residents. The upper floors include a bistro, cinema, emporium, lounges and space for art, music, cooking and other activities.

The new care home is designed around the needs of the residents, for example window sills have been lowered to make them more suitable for care home use. The roof has been replaced completely with new dormer windows to allow extra light into the building.

The home is surrounded by several mature trees, colourful planting at the main entrance, and a tranquil courtyard in the centre of the site.

Judges comments:

“This scheme is an extraordinary transformation of a redundant office building into a luxury care home. The adaptive reuse of the existing building has reaped economic, environmental and social benefits. The interior design is masterful and gives a homely domestic scale to a multi-residential care home. Great care was lavished on detailed design to promote way finding, orientation and subtle assistance. The design themes on each floor reflect the legacy of the adjacent playhouse—such as ‘The Pirates of Penzance’ and other thespian floor levels. Formal certification of the environmental sustainability of this remarkable scheme would aid marketing and dissemination.”