



Building Better End of Life Care: North London Hospice

Set in a suburban residential area, North London Hospice is a distinctive and dignified new building supporting people with a terminal illness at end of life and their carers. Completed in May 2012, the £1.8 million building fulfils the aspiration to increase the provision of palliative care in a contemporary, beautiful and non-clinical environment.

Before the charity opened this new day centre in 2012, all services were delivered out of its facility in Finchley. However, responding to a significant increase in demand, the development of a new centre in Winchmore Hill, Enfield, in 2012 has tripled the charity's capacity to serve up to 300 of the 800 people per month diagnosed with a life-limiting illness across the boroughs of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey, North London. A key objective of the design was for the new centre to be inclusive, encouraging patients and their carers to drop-in for a chat, join in creative therapies or undergo treatments.



Written for the Housing Learning and Improvement Network by
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About North London Hospice

North London Hospice has provided care and support services for outpatients from Barnet, Haringey and Enfield for almost 20 years. The Charity's vision is that everyone living in the London Boroughs of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey should receive the specialist palliative care that they require to minimise their symptoms, maximise their quality of life and to live and die with dignity.

In 2009, the Charity approached architects Allford Hall Monaghan Morris with a view to increasing the provision of palliative care in the community of Enfield. Over the course of three years the client, architect, design team and user group developed a brief and building to meet patient needs in a non-clinical environment.



The building was 40% funded through a Department of Health grant, and the remaining funding is derived from charitable donations raised by North London Hospice. For more about North London Hospice, visit: www.northlondonhospice.org

About the site

Located on a prominent corner opposite a large green space in a suburban area of Enfield, North London, the site was previously occupied by a disused NHS health clinic known as 'The Laurels'. In recent years the building had fallen into disrepair and was derelict. Neighbours, local residents and planners welcomed the demolition and subsequent erection of a new building.

Form

Set on a prominent corner in a quiet residential area of north London, the massing of this brick building is broken down into two north facing gables with circulation interleaved between. A single-storey multi-pitched extension at the rear completes the L-shaped plan and frames a south-facing private courtyard for the enjoyment of patients. Conceived from both the inside-out and the outside-in, the expansive windows set around a simple palette of brick and timber, ensure a series of light and airy spaces that are well-connected – both physically and visually – with their external environment.



An 'open house'

A generous porte-cochère receives visitors into a meet-and-greet space, leading through to a large multi-purpose daycare room and open plan kitchen and café area. Smaller rooms for creative therapies, a rest room, sluice and a hairdresser support the key ground floor spaces whilst the first floor houses clinical, interview and teaching activities. The pitched attic spaces at second floor house offices and a staff room, which also enjoys a recessed balcony lined with a GRP brick soffit.

One of the driving design principles was the desire to offer patients views and access to the north and south courtyards. Large expanses of full-height glazing at ground level open out onto gardens whilst balconies at first and second floor offer external amenity space to staff. In addition, the brick work is drawn into key internal spaces such as the entrance, kitchen and daycare rooms to emphasise connectivity between inside and out with the added benefit that the roughness of the brickwork provides acoustic absorption.



Feedback from North London Hospice:

"Environment is important for both staff and patients and our building on Barrowell Green has a welcoming modern feel with natural light streaming in. The building allows our patients to enjoy the views to the garden which they can easily access. For our patients it is important to emphasise 'living' and not just illness and the building has a balance between the regulatory/clinical aspects of a healthcare building and feel of, albeit, a modern home."

Dr Chris Baxter, Medical Consultant

Materials & Method of Construction

This is a steel frame building, clad in brick with a large insulated cavity that allows the building to achieve U-values that exceed building regulation requirements and help fulfil the Charity's sustainable agenda. All steel and pipework is concealed within the cavity, with brick slip access panels located externally at lower levels thus maintaining clean façades.

The exact location, size and detailing of each window was carefully considered to maximise light, natural ventilation and frame views. In several instances brick reveals, sills and adhesively bound head bricks have been deployed to make the windows appear 'frameless' and enhance connectivity.



The choice of a light textured brick was an integral part of early design stages, planning and followed throughout detailing and construction. Both client and architect wanted the building to feel airy to instil a domestic sense of well-being.

The acoustic performance of the rooms was a key consideration for hearing impaired visitors, and highly absorbent, very fine textured plaster and brick were selected to reduce sound. In smaller, non-clinical rooms, such as interview rooms where

bereavement counselling might take place, soft furnishings and carpets have been specified to absorb sound and create a more private and cosy environment. In these rooms, free standing lamps and dimmable lighting help create a non-intrusive environment for patients and families. Throughout the building all WCs are designed for disabled use with contrasting finishes on all doors that visually contrast with adjacent wall colours.

Inclusive Design

The design and management for reduced mobility is a large component of palliative care. To reduce walking distances, a small car park has an additional entrance and exit to permit private ambulances and cars to reach the canopy and deliver patients directly to the main entrance.

Passing through the draft lobby, visitors enter a meet and greet area with sofas and a recessed information screen. A large floor to ceiling corner window immediately connects visitors to the landscape beyond. The landscaping layout and seating has been designed to allow wheelchair users to circulate in between planting beds and join fixed seating areas. The south facing courtyard is completely level and contains a series of bespoke benches, whose height, back and arm rests have been designed to suit the ergonomic needs of patients.

Sustainable Design

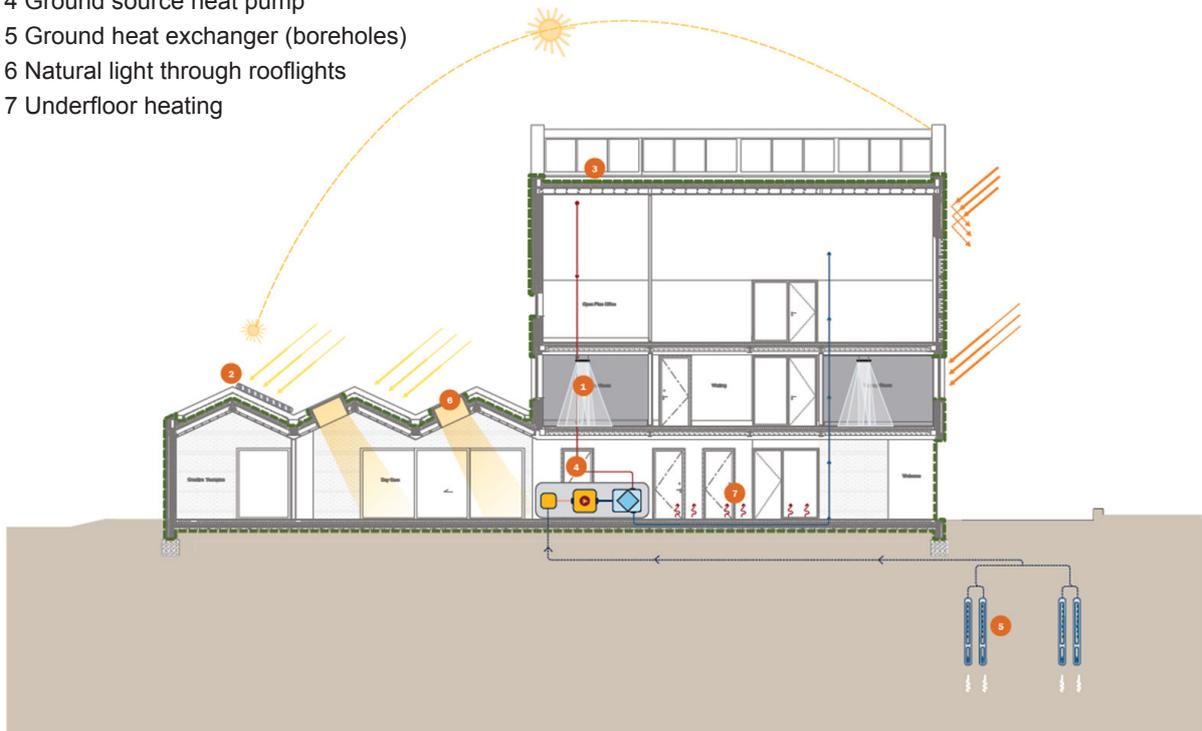
North London Hospice stipulated a highly energy-efficient building. This was achieved using Passivhaus principles, primarily increased air tightness, increased thermal insulation and a heat recovery system.

This is a steel frame building, clad in brick with exceptional levels of thermal insulation to minimise heating requirements. Background ventilation in winter is provided by a mechanical ventilation system with heat recovery. For the rest of the year, the building is designed to be naturally ventilated through openable windows. In addition solar collectors, rainwater butts and a Ground Source Heat Pump (operating at an efficiency of up to 146%) all assist in fulfilling the Charity's green agenda.



KEY

- 1 Energy efficient lighting & occupancy sensors
- 2 Solar collector for domestic hot water
- 3 High performance building envelope
- 4 Ground source heat pump
- 5 Ground heat exchanger (boreholes)
- 6 Natural light through rooflights
- 7 Underfloor heating



The building has been designed from inside out and outside in. The exact location, size and detailing of each window is carefully considered to maximise light, reduce solar gain to the south façade, aid natural ventilation and frame views to the surrounding green the result is a carefully proportioned whole.



Externally, sustainable drainage strategies have been implemented to attenuate the effects of drought and floods in the UK, especially in the South East region of the UK. The design and specification of hard surfaces and build ups within the landscape design assists the drainage of surface water in a sustainable manner. For instance, the top surface of the car park is a porous resin bound aggregate and the sub-base has a 30% void ration. The green roof over the one storey day care extension equally helps reduce ground water run-off.

Internally, the second floor office and ground floor day care are 'truss-free' open plan spaces. Roof lights to the second floor office are a dramatic addition to the space and provide good natural lighting and cross-ventilation.

Lessons learned

A couple of lessons have been subsequently learned; in particular:

- The Café area is very large, bright and provides a hub for patients to integrate, this has been very successful at the hospice. It is important to the hospice to create a social environment where patients can socialise and the café area lends itself to that, and
- In terms of aspects that might have been done differently, incorporating a larger passenger lift would have been beneficial to patients accessing the clinical and interview rooms on the first floor.

Conclusion

The North London Hospice provides a welcoming and friendly community space for users, staff, carers and local residents to come together. The simplicity of the plan and subtle palette of materials and colours help to create a building that feels domestic and familiar. The extensive use of large windows and rooflights allow light to flood the spaces and provide views to the landscape providing a sense of wellbeing and calm, and add a special dimension to this charity's new home.

Awards

North London Hospice has won numerous awards for its outstanding design. For example, in 2013, it won the Grand Prix Building Better Healthcare Awards today. About the building the judges said: *"it is simple in that it is basically three materials – brick, white plaster and wood – but it is very impressive. This raises the bar and shows what can be done."* The hospice was also awarded Best Community Healthcare Design and was highly commended in the Best Primary Care category.

Note

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Housing Learning and Improvement Network.

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Tim Soar and AHMM for reproducing images used in this case study.

About Allford Hall Monaghan Morris

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Winner of this year's coveted Stirling Prize for the UK's best new building (Burntwood School, a large comprehensive girls' school in Wandsworth, London) Allford Hall Monaghan Morris are an award winning practice that aspire to make buildings that are satisfying and enjoyable to use, beautiful to look at and easy to understand.

www.ahmm.co.uk

About the Housing LIN

The Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) is the leading 'learning lab' for a growing network of housing, health and social care professionals in England and Wales involved in planning, commissioning, designing, funding, building and managing housing, care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults with long term conditions.

Previously responsible for managing the Department of Health's Extra Care Housing Fund, the Housing LIN is called upon by a wide range of statutory and other organisations to provide expert advice and support regarding the implementation of policy and good practice in the field of housing, care and support services.

Further information about the Housing LIN's comprehensive list of online resources on end of life care can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Housing/EndOfLifeCare

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