

Prime Comment

Inside knowledge from the Prime Team

‘A landmark building is a bit of a contradiction in that it needs to stand out while, at the same time, being perfectly integrated with its surrounding environment. At Shelton the design team achieved this integration by removing visual barriers between the building and its canal-side setting. This provides a very welcoming public space that everybody can enjoy even if they’re not visiting the centre.’

Peter Sargent, Group Design Director
Prime (UK) Developments Ltd



and visitors. Breaking with convention, it was agreed to locate the GP surgeries on the first floor, with the PCT clinical services based on the ground floor where they could provide a concierge service to the practices – directing only those requiring GP services to the first floor. The scheme also had to fulfil its role as a local landmark. As the first sizeable new build for many years in Shelton, it was expected to signal the beginning of a wider regeneration and inspire confidence in the future.

Following approval of the building design by all parties, Prime applied its open and precise competitive tendering process to choose a suitable building contractor. Prime’s policy is to commission local contractors whenever possible, subject to quality, cost and sustainability requirements. This allows the construction phase to provide employment and training opportunities while contributing to the local economy. Following the tendering process, Thomas Vale’s Stoke-on-Trent office was selected as the main contractor.

As construction got underway, it was important to keep the community engaged with the project and informed about progress. This was achieved in various ways, including press releases, site visits for community groups, leaflets and posters placed in GP surgeries, and regular bulletins on the Prima 200 website. Dr David Philips, one of the GPs due to move into the new building, visited the site regularly to take construction photos which he put up on a dedicated website. He also made large prints for display in his surgery waiting room. “I very much wanted to let people know what was going on. I got to the site about once a week and always included a standard picture taken from the same spot on the bridge. I must admit that I enjoyed it because it forced me to keep an eye on things and check on progress.”

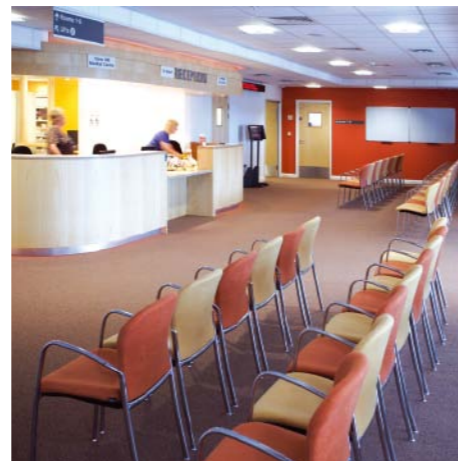
Completed and commissioned on schedule, the new centre more than lives up to its landmark aspirations. Its considerable visual

presence is enhanced by its projecting roof, which appears to float above the building. The fully glazed, double height entrance lobby is imposing yet welcoming, and is flanked by terracotta clad projections reflecting the use of red brick in the locality. Landscaping around the centre sweeps down to the canal edge, incorporating the waterway into the overall scheme and providing a pleasant open space where people can relax and watch the canal boats negotiate the locks.

The core test of any new LIFT facility is whether it fulfils its primary purpose of providing improved access to services and a better experience for service users and staff. Here too, the centre has been meeting its objectives since it opened in May 2008, successfully accommodating the needs of the individual GP practices and providing a base for community nurses, midwives and health visitors. The centre offers an extensive range of treatments and therapies along with diagnostic, screening and health education services. It also holds regular outpatient clinics and has an on-site pharmacy – increasing convenience for patients.

For Ian Gibson of NHS Stoke on Trent, early reactions to the new centre have been encouraging. “People are very pleased with the building. The GP practices that moved in are absolutely delighted because they have room to develop and the environment for patients and staff is so much better. We’re already able to offer a wider range of health services locally, including a diabetes service that will save many patients a trip to the acute hospital. I think local people really do appreciate the fact they’ve now got a high quality building and a very pleasant public open space close to where they live.”

There was even a satisfying outcome for the derelict but historically significant Wharfingers Cottage, as it was carefully renovated to preserve its character and is now home to Prima 200.



Project at a glance...

Shelton Primary Care Centre, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent

Statistics

Size 2,854 square metres
Client: NHS Stoke on Trent

Services and Facilities

- Three GP Practices
- Asylum Seeker and Refugee Medical Screening
- Child Health Services
- Chronic Disease Management
- Community Nursing
- Health Visiting
- Midwifery
- Minor Surgery
- Outpatient Services
- Pharmacy
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Psychiatric Nursing

Benefits

High profile landmark building helps to restore community confidence in Shelton’s wider regeneration. Offers much improved local access to health and social care services, together with an attractive amenity shared by all. Provides a pleasant environment for service users and staff with room for further expansion and service integration.

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Shelton



waterside revival

A junk-strewn site once occupied by a derelict pot bank and flanked by a section of the Caudon Canal, wasn’t the most promising setting for a landmark project intended to give fresh impetus to Shelton’s much-needed regeneration. So the success of Shelton Primary Care Centre is all the more satisfying...





Shelton is one of the most deprived areas of Stoke-on-Trent. It has low average incomes, and a higher than average incidence of diabetes, chest illness, cancer and drug addiction. Students from the local college and university mean that a relatively high proportion of the population is transient and the area also needs to accommodate a significant number of asylum seekers and homeless people. These pressures have been compounded by a lack of investment stretching back many years.

When NHS Stoke on Trent identified Shelton as the location for a new integrated primary care centre to be commissioned under the LIFT programme, this presented a valuable opportunity not only to tackle the community's major health inequalities by providing better access to more services, but also to revitalise the neighbourhood and give it new hope. Prime, as development partner of Prima 200 (the North Staffordshire LIFT Company), was responsible for delivering the scheme.

The proposed site for the development was on land formerly occupied by a pot bank – the traditional bottle kilns that could once be seen in their thousands, belching smoke across the skyline of the Staffordshire potteries. The site was owned by British Waterways which, as part of its own residential development aspirations, was keen to restore a section of the Caudon Canal which ran alongside, and

also to rescue and preserve the historically significant Wharfingers Cottage, a derelict residence once occupied by the wharf keeper. Prime worked very closely with Prima 200, NHS Stoke on Trent, British Waterways, Stoke City Council, and local regeneration agency RENEW North Staffordshire, to develop a scheme that would meet the objectives of all the parties and be acceptable to the planning authorities. The good relationships established over many years between Prima 200 and Stoke City Council helped to resolve any design and technical issues as they arose. The development work encompassed the past as well as the future: an archaeological survey was commissioned to establish the site's historical pedigree.

It was vital that the community was engaged and involved as the scheme progressed, especially as a number of previous development proposals for the area had promised much but never come to fruition and, understandably, some parts of the community were deeply sceptical about the new plans. Prima 200 and NHS Stoke on Trent ran joint public consultations and press liaison, in addition to embarking on a concerted effort to establish a continuing dialogue with community groups – a major task given there were well over 100 to keep in contact with.

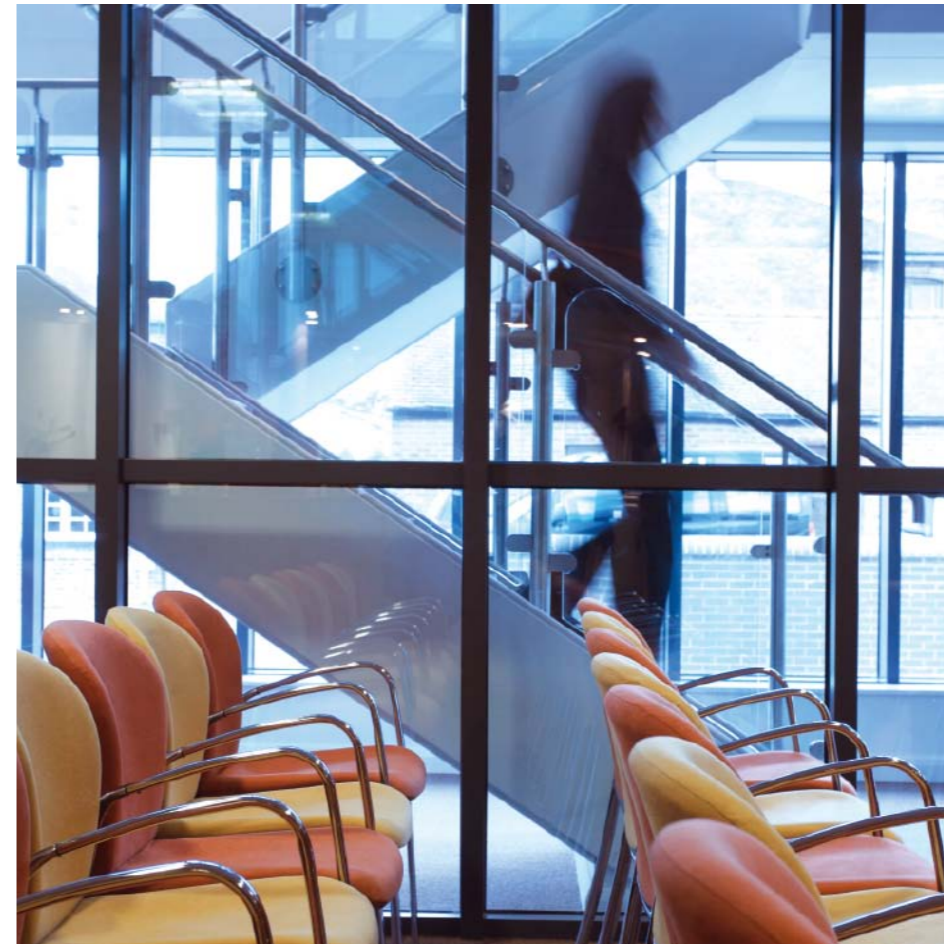
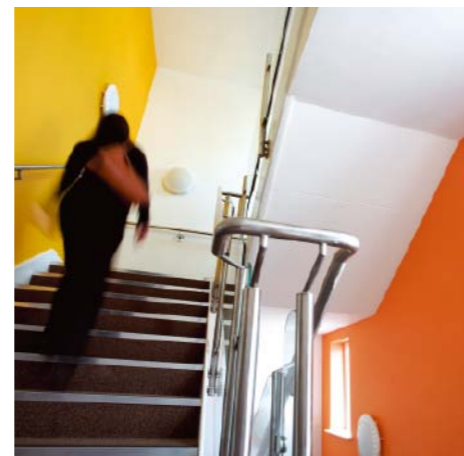
Ian Gibson of NHS Stoke on Trent was Head of Planning during this critical phase. "The LIFTCo

was very proactive in establishing links with local councillors and residents' associations with the help of the City Council and the regeneration agency RENEW. We were really keen to engage people so they felt it was their building. We held a number of public meetings, some of which were specially tailored to minority groups so we could identify any cultural issues to be considered in the design. We also commissioned an arts organisation to work creatively with local schools and community groups to help them express their views about the scheme."

This creative consultation took many forms. With some groups creative writers used storytelling and poetry; with schools, a folk musician helped children create songs about the centre. But was all the effort worthwhile? Prima 200 Chief Executive, Dr Ann , believes it was time well spent. "I think we've got a much better product that has been accepted and embraced by the community. As health schemes play an increasing role in regeneration, we've got to ensure they reflect wider community aspirations. That means finding ways to engage people in the development process as positively and openly as we can."

With a patient list of approximately 15,000 and an extremely wide range of services on offer, it soon became clear through discussions with the PCT and clinicians that the configuration of the three storey building needed a fresh approach to handle the predicted flow of staff

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