

5th October 2017

## Creating a benchmark in healthcare design

Healthcare flooring specialist, Gerflor Limited, talks with Damien Day, Associate at Kennedy FitzGerald Architects, and Andrew McKeown, Associate Director at Avanti Architects, about the award-winning Banbridge Health & Care Centre to gain an insight into the challenges they faced when designing a healthcare facility which is upheld as a benchmark of its type in Great Britain & Northern Ireland.

Gerflor is the proud supplier of some 3000m<sup>2</sup> of flooring that met the necessary specification criteria for the new, £15m health complex, which brings together a number of health services into one state-of-the-art health and care centre in the town of Banbridge, County Down, Northern Ireland.

The centre is located on the Banbridge Health Village site alongside existing Polyclinic and GP services. It provides outpatient treatment facilities, a diagnostic suite, a daycare centre for adults with learning and physical disabilities and is a centre for Trust administration.

As it has become a landmark building, we wanted to learn more about the ideology behind its concept and about the collaboration and commitment needed to create and deliver a purpose-built facility, which is a prime example of excellence in unified, public sector healthcare and social care.

Banbridge Health & Care Centre was designed by Kennedy FitzGerald Architects in association with Avanti Architects for the Southern Health & Social Care Trust. Developed on the site of the former Banbridge hospital, it represents the trend for sympathetically re-inventing old, central sites within the community where they are recognised and accessible for pedestrians, bicycles and public transport.

Acknowledged for outstanding architectural merit, Banbridge Health & Care Centre has received an unprecedented number of awards including RIBA Regional and National Awards. It also scooped the Royal Society of Ulster Architects' (RSUA) Best Public Building over £3m accolade, having been described by the judges as 'a calm, uplifting civic building deftly interwoven into its site, a tangible affirmation of the value of the public domain'.

It was also a winner at the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland's (RIAI) Best Health Building Award, while at the Building Better Healthcare Awards it won the overall Grand Prix Health Building Design Award and Best Primary Care Development. The judges said: 'This rigorously-modern building answers a complex and challenging brief on an equally challenging sloping site'. Last but not least, Banbridge received 'highly commended' in the Healthcare Design under 25,000m<sup>2</sup> category of the European Healthcare Design Awards.

### Challenging site

An enabling works contract cleared the site of existing buildings, spoil demolitions and sub-structure of the old Banbridge Hospital. Over 250 human burials dating from the time of the Banbridge Workshouse (1840s) on the site were also exhumed and reinterred. At this stage the site topography was also re-profiled to suit the main building contract to follow.

The new building is designed over four storeys. These levels step across the site from the upper level to the lowest level. Two central landscaped courtyards bring views of landscape, natural light and ventilation to all of the clinical, daycare and staff areas.

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“We viewed the steeply sloping site as an exciting opportunity rather than a constraint and by allowing the building to step across the site we were able to create different environments for clinical, staff and daycare accommodation. Each area could feel distinct but be connected via vertical circulation”.

“This means that daycare clients can come up via the lift and access podiatry, physio, therapy and dental clinics without leaving the building – previously services were dispersed around the town and appointments required bus journeys, inconvenience and expense.”

“We placed the daycare centre at the lowest site level which felt more secluded and private. Outpatient clinics were best suited to the upper site level where the public could readily access services and links with the GP services and the Polyclinic on the site could be established.”

“Because the building steps down the site the mass of the building is not immediately apparent. At the upper public level the building looks like a two-storey building in keeping with the health village context”.

## **Team effort**

But how do you begin a project like this?

*“By analysing the site, the schedule and the brief and by speaking to your client and working out their requirements. We seek to establish a clear brief at the outset of the project and review it at every stage of the design right through to completion.”*

Kennedy FitzGerald and Avanti have established a good working relationship over the last 15 years with projects such as Grove Health and Well Being Centre, Portadown CTCC, Gransha Mental Health Crisis Unit and the continuing re-development of the Ulster Hospital. At Banbridge the collaboration has produced another high quality health building by working closely with the client, suppliers and contractors, including main contractor, Felix O’Hare & Co.

*“Staff at Kennedy FitzGerald and Avanti have a wealth of knowledge and experience based on learning from past projects; it’s an invaluable resource when considering new products, systems and materials. As an architect you must also take cognizance of new ideas and developments and work with suppliers that can offer the right level of support”.*

*“When selecting finishes for health buildings we have to consider infection control, ease of maintenance, cleaning regimes, aesthetics, longevity and robustness. Environmental credentials of every product are also very important to us too.”*

Banbridge has since received an ‘Excellent’ BREEAM rating.

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## The design approach

*"At Banbridge HCC it was about natural light and space with a clear, simple circulation diagram. Waiting areas relate to outside space and landscape and when moving through the building you are aware of where you're going, where you've come from, how you came in and how you'll get back out again".*

The products for the internal fit-out were also selected to aid people's ability to get around the building.

*"The trust wanted a resilient flooring that fulfilled the necessary attributes but was also neutral to match the ceramic tiles used in the circulation areas."*

Biophilic design - bringing the outside in - is a big buzz word in the industry at the moment and Banbridge Health & Care Centre certainly ticks that box.

*"It's a natural instinct to want to have as much daylight as possible with a view to nature. It creates a therapeutic space. So when people are sick it's about improving their time in hospitals and residential care. It's proven that they get better sooner if they have a view towards nature. But it's not just about the patient, it's about the staff as well, making their day better and giving them a nicer environment to work in."*

Banbridge Health & Care Centre reflects healthcare design aspirations by focusing as much on well-being and lifestyle as healthcare. Being involved with a building that has received much critical acclaim is highly rewarding and Gerflor is delighted to be associated with a building that is the result of vision, expertise and collaboration.

*"Kennedy FitzGerald and Avanti are very proud of the completed building and the awards recognition that it has achieved. It provides a calm refined solution to the clients brief utilising what could have been considered a complex site and provides much needed health facilities for the town of Banbridge. Most importantly feedback from staff and patients who use the centre has been unanimously positive."*

Learn more about Gerflor solutions, ask for a free sample or contact us to speak to a specialist today by calling 01926 622 600, emailing [contractuk@gerflor.com](mailto:contractuk@gerflor.com), or visiting [gerflor.co.uk](http://gerflor.co.uk) for the latest innovations.

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