

Project Information

Client:

Girls' Day School Trust and Aaron Evans Architects

Description:

Major refurbishment works to the head teacher's house at the prestigious Royal High School in Bath

Value and Duration:

£250k over 10 Weeks

Date Completed:

December 2019

Smith & Brenson Case Study

Cambridge House

Brief Summary

This project consisted of major refurbishment, high-specification works to a four-bedroom head teacher's house within the grounds of The Royal High School, Bath, on behalf of existing client Girls' Day School Trust, a leading network of 25 independent girls' schools across the UK.

We were awarded the project following a detailed tender process with the client, with whom we have developed a strong working relationship with over many years and have gained a deep understanding of the operational rhythms of the school and how best to adapt our working practices to accommodate as a result. A successful project outcome was achieved, on budget and within a tight timescale.

Description of Works

The project required the complete refurbishment of all rooms within the property, including four bedrooms, two lounges, kitchen, laundry room and the conversion of the existing garage into a guest suite. It also required significant mechanical, electrical and plumbing works, closely following architect's instructions and in support of the Trust's environmental sustainability aims, a state-of-the-art heating system.

This was a luxury refurbishment project featuring specialist installations such as scribed stone worktops in the bathrooms, natural slate fire hearth and shelving, bespoke stainless steel and wood shadow gap detailing.

Challenges

The greatest challenge was the project programme timescale as there was only a short window of opportunity to complete the works between the incumbent head teacher moving out and the newly-appointed head and their family moving in.

Another challenge was the client's budget and the complexity of the M&E element of the project.

In light of the fact that the school was open while works on site were in progress, we had to ensure our working practices did not present any safety concerns or otherwise to the school staff, pupils or visitors.

The school is in a residential area which represented certain challenges in respect of management of noise and deliveries to site. The weather also presented challenges as the project was undertaken during the winter months.

Solutions

We were pleased to achieve project completion in just 10 weeks, following close adherence to the project programme and regular, close contact with the client, site team and contractors. We installed internal dryers to help adhere to the tight deadline, especially as it was undertaken over the winter.

To combat challenges relating to the client's budget, we undertook an innovative, value engineering exercise to reduce costs without compromising the quality of installations and finishes. We were successful in achieving this primarily as a result of our close working relationships with existing trade partners and the use of our own operatives where possible. The complexity of the M&E element was overcome by the early-appointment of a specialist M&E contractor to manage this critical part of the project.

As we have undertaken many projects at The Royal High School in the past, we have become accustomed to how the site operates and our responsibilities as a respected and trusted contractor. Vehicle and pedestrians thoroughfares were clearly marked and managed and parking restricted in line with the client's wishes. Site operatives van-shared where practical in order to reduce the numbers of vehicles on site.

The challenge of clearly communicating details of close, residential neighbours of the school in respect of noise and disruption was achieved via process of making contact with affected parties and providing them with contact details should any issues arise. Deliveries were also carefully planned in terms of timing and standard site operating times agreed with the client prior to works commencing.

Outcomes

A consistent site and project management team, supported by key tradespeople and surveyors, was applied to the project to ensure key knowledge was maintained and readily available and lines of communication kept open throughout.

Our standard de-brief following completion of the project, undertaken by the Project Manager and attended by key members of the management and site team, ensured that relevant information was captured and any lessons learned for future projects. A detailed O&M manual was also created and presented to the client on completion of the project. In addition to this, we delivered a 'how to' session with the new head teacher and their family once they moved in, to ensure they understood how to use the various installations throughout the house, which was much-appreciated.

Smith and Brenson were very pleased to provide such a prestigious refurbishment for one of our valued clients under extremely tight timescales. We are proud of the fact that we continue to work with Girls' Day School Trust and The Royal High School following completion of this prestigious project.

Smith and Brenson Case Study
Cambridge House

Before Photos



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Cambridge House

After Photos

