

CASE STUDY: listed buildings

LAING O'ROURKE

Grand Ocean
SALTDEAN

The site history

When it opened in 1938 the Ocean Hotel occupied a site of around 4 acres with 344 bedrooms and a dining hall that could seat 300 people. It consisted of a main building shaped like a crescent which contained the whole of the public rooms and some of the bedrooms, and there were six other buildings which contained bedrooms and bathrooms only.

During the winter season the six detached blocks were closed down and the main building, with its 130 bedrooms, run as a separate hotel. An outdoor swimming pool (later enclosed) was built between the buildings.

During the war the hotel was taken over by the Auxiliary Fire Service and later became a fire service college which was officially opened by the then Home Secretary Herbert Morrison. It was used throughout the war and was not handed back until 1952 when the lease was acquired by Billy Butlin for £250,000. Its doors were opened as a holiday centre again on 2 May 1953, after an army of workmen had spent the previous six months restoring the near-derelict building. It soon became popular with honeymooners and Billy Butlin later said the hotel was one of the best investments he'd ever made.

Sold in July 1999 to the Grand Hotel Group the hotel remained open until January 2005. Planning permission was granted in June 2005 to convert the site into apartments. The main building, which is Grade II listed, was refurbished with apartments upstairs and commercial/community facilities on the ground floor.

The site has been used for filming episodes of the TV serial Poirot.





The site now

The site was developed into what it is now, including 5 new blocks, by Explore living – sister company of Lang O'Rourke. It includes a surgery, a gym which we maintain, secure underground parking and 235 apartments.

The issues we faced

When we were instructed to manage the development the main issues were the site location, and the poor state of the buildings. Situated on an exposed part of the coastline, we constantly have to battle with the elements, extreme weather conditions, and storm damage.

The communal grass is on a podium which makes it difficult to manage.

Being Grade 2 listed brings it's own limitations and issues, which we have had to consider with major repair works.

There is a fair amount of anti-social behaviour in the area, with non-residents coming onto the estate so we have installed CCTV at a cost of around £25,000 to address this for the residents.

The development is heavily tenanted, which means there is a relatively high turnover, it's not a simple development. With a spine road that runs through the middle of the site, access is extremely difficult, meaning residents have to arrange with us or the RMC to get access when moving in or out.

What's happening now

There are currently three directors on site who we hold face to face meetings with three times a year, to go through all of the budgets and year end accounts.

We are currently working with the RMC Directors on a major NHBC claim in excess of £1million. In the first 3 years of build when it was handed over there were issues with flat roofs which had to be replaced. The developer undertook the works but we were party to the project, helping out with leaseholder queries.

We have an onsite caretaker who is our man on the ground helping out with resident enquiries and maintenance works. He carries out minor works which helps to keep the service charge down.

There is a solar water system on the roof, which is a top up system for residents, however it has never worked, and we're trying to get the developer to replace it for a better system.

Future plans

The development has been marketed as a high quality site, with luxury apartments but the reality is there's a lot of maintenance to do. We face an on-going struggle to manage the building and necessary repairs, but we have a fantastic team both on and offsite and the caretaker especially helps to keep resident relationships positive.