

COMPANY:

Sandwell MBC Urban Design

PROJECT:

Lancaster House, Oldbury




**THE ASH & LACY
AWARDS 2010**

In 2005 as part of the Decent Homes Government Initiative, a number of high rise blocks within Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council were placed on a programme for refurbishment. One such block was Lancaster House, situated in Oldbury, West Midlands, on a main through road and very visible from the M5 motorway.

Lancaster House is a ten storey block containing 112 flats. At ground level there are 15 shop units and adjoining the block is a community building serving the wider public. Because of its location, and the size of the block, it was felt that a complete external refurbishment was required. This view became necessary following extensive structural surveys that showed degradation to brickwork and concrete elements of the block and inherent flat roof problems. There is a basement-level approached from the rear of the block which contains storage areas and refuse rooms.

As the main entrance to the block was approached from the main road frontage there was severe congestion between residents, shopkeepers and delivery vehicles and it was felt that forming a new main entrance to the block at the rear would alleviate the problems. To the rear of the block, external garages and a residents' community room were demolished to form a car parking area and a three storey atrium was built to form the new rear entrance.

In order to overcome flat roof problems, the decision was taken to form a steel frame over the existing, finished with aluminium sheeting. Within the steel frame eight new flats were constructed complete with balconies.

The existing lift and staircases were extended to serve the new flats which necessitated raising the existing lift shaft and motor room. This was clad with aluminium profiled sheeting from Ash and Lacy with the roof over having a curved profile. The material used for the main roof sheeting, the lift motor room and the atrium roof was Ash and Lacy Ziplock system.

This material has been used very successfully on other blocks being very versatile, lightweight and, perhaps more importantly, sustainable.

Because the sheeting material is lightweight but strong, due mainly to the Ziplock jointing technique, the steel frame sections forming the new roof structure could be reduced in size which greatly assisted in reducing the overall loadings imposed to the existing building. The material can be cut and formed on site which was a great advantage when working with a building that was built in the 1960's where uniformity did not seem to matter unduly.

The curve of the new lift motor room roof presented no problems with the Ziplock sheeting and provided the exact appearance that we were looking for. The pity is that, being eleven storeys up, no one else can see how well it performs.

Sandwell MBC strongly supports local businesses and with Ash and Lacy based in Oldbury only three miles from the site not only is the product excellent but the service and delivery can be very much relied upon.