

# Building your dental dream

Setting up a squat practice in a 2,500-plus square feet space gave **Simon Oldham** the scope he needed to realise his dream

## Simon Oldham

Practice principal of Hertfordshire Dental Group



Simon opened his second Hertfordshire Dental Group clinic in April.

Formerly home to a branch of The Edinburgh Woollen Mill, it is in a prime position in the bustling market town of Hertford and ideally suited to make that material difference to his burgeoning patient base.

It is also within striking distance of his original practice in the neighbouring town of Ware.

With an increase in local interest but without room for expansion, Simon began his search for the complementary second location in January 2021.

He recalls: 'Due to the pandemic, several empty shop units were available.'

'I viewed three commercial properties in Hertford town centre and, after seeing the size and position of this site, the decision was easy.'

He enlisted the help of Anglian Dental to sympathetically restore the building to create a modern practice without losing any original character features. The fit-out took 12 weeks.

## Background

Simon graduated from the University of Birmingham in 1999, working as a dental associate in central London and Hertfordshire for many years until 2007, when he became principal of Ware Dental Practice.

He worked hard with his team to construct a solid and loyal patient base. Fast forward to 2021, and he was ready to expand.

And so, with a long-established presence in Ware – and keen to build on this reputation for excellent clinical care, advanced implant dentistry and cosmetic smile design – he sought to replicate his successes with a new clinic.

When the ideal location offered itself up, he seized upon it, keen to capitalise on its heavy daytime foot traffic and eager to enjoy a prominence given by the surrounding established retailers.

'It is located in a town centre position in a busy pedestrian zone and is a large unit, with potential for future expansion.'



'A blank canvas enabled me to create the desired design and layout without restriction.'

'I worked closely with an architect to maximise the space and use it effectively,' Simon says.

## Creating a luxurious hotel lobby

The French green fascia has immediate kerb appeal with arched statement windows and vintage-style shop lights that add to this.

Inside, blessed with this vast space, Simon was determined to maintain the airy and light interior. The waiting room is very open, as are the walkways to the surgeries.

The design includes a 'hidden decon' concept that ensures dental nurses are out of sight of patients in the waiting area; the open corridors optimise flow and efficiency.

A tasteful, visually pleasing slatted wood feature cordons off the corridors.

A bespoke reception desk curves to the side of the welcoming open space where low comfortable seating, coffee tables and a drinks station provide a quiet place for waiting patients.

It has an ambience akin to a luxurious hotel lobby.

The practice includes a CBCT room area, plant room, storage, staff room, bin store, and TCO room.

## Choosing the right equipment

Two surgeries opened with the original build – one was added in November with another still empty.

High on Simon's wish list was top-quality equipment

and cabinetry – the solid surface worktops, and handle-free frontals with plinth lighting add the desired elegance.

And, due to colleague recommendations and previous positive experiences with Belmont Cleo II chairs and Belmont touch X-rays, Simon chose these once again for the surgeries for their 'reliability, functionality, high quality and minimalist aesthetics.'

Aesthetic appeal is apparent throughout the practice. It matters as much to Simon as patient comfort and functionality for the team.

'I wanted the clinic to look aesthetically pleasing and be functional,' he adds.

The colour palette is one of greens and greys and splashes of black.

With the slatted wood statement walls and a lot of glass to allow for natural lighting, opting for earthy tones, he says, 'creates a fresh, calm and relaxing environment.'

## 'Seamless from start to finish'

Before embarking on the project, Simon feared it would prove stressful, especially as his clinical work came first. Thankfully, 'it was seamless from start to finish.'

'I had weekly on-site meetings with my design-and-build team to provide updates on progress, which gave me the opportunity for feedback.'

'I was in regular daily email contact with my site manager and project manager and found communication key to a successful fit-out.'

The Anglian team was professional, thorough, and very efficient.

'We asked a few companies to look at our design concept – Anglian responded quickly.'

'They were the most approachable company without any barriers when dealing with the team.'

## Clear vision

Having gone through the process of setting up a squat practice and realising his vision – all whilst juggling the running of an existing clinic – has he any insight to share with colleagues?

'Have a clear vision, and a good design-and-build team.'

'Take the time to find the correct layout and ensure it is future-proofed for expansion.' **D**

