

ELLIS COURT ESTATE (FORMER SELLY OAK HOSPITAL) (AREA 4)

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I have driven past the redevelopment of the former Selly Oak Hospital site many times, and was interested to take a look once the builders' hoardings came down. Most of the new houses and flats are now inhabited, but there are still a few builders still there, finishing off the final phase.

The 43 acre site became available for redevelopment when Selly Oak Hospital closed and moved over to join the Queen Elizabeth Hospital site in 2010. I'm not entirely sure what this new district is now called. There is an area called Ellis Court in the centre, named after the original Chief Medical Officer. Estate Agents seem to be using 'The Oaks'.

The district contains a wide range of housing in terms of affordability. Various heritage buildings have been preserved and integrated into the new development. Mature trees and open space have been preserved in parts of the site, but there is high density building in other parts.

The district is linked by red brick, used for the oldest to the newest buildings. The names of the roads link up the district with its history – Arkell Way, after the architect of the workhouse infirmary, the forerunner of the hospital. Heroes Drive presumably alludes to the years that Selly Oak was the centre for military medicine, following the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Escelie Way intrigued me – until Google told me that it was the original name for Selly Oak, Escelie being changed into 'Selly' over the years. Matron's walk, Ward Place and Tower View are self-explanatory.

The original grand entrance to Selly Oak Hospital has been renovated, and stands in the centre of the estate. Behind is a mixture of fairly high density semi-detached and terraced houses and flats, some owner occupied, others rented. They lead down the hill to a gateway onto the Birmingham and Worcester canal towpath. The historic high water tower at the top of the hill dominates many of the views. This is now up for sale – anyone fancy a 'grand designs' project?

The trees and grassland along Raddlebarn Road have been preserved, and the superior houses on this stretch have been built to match the Bournville Village Trust design style on the opposite side of the road.

There is a cluster of Victorian historic buildings from the days of the workhouse further along Raddlebarn Road – the gatehouse, the Well house (ie housing the well) and the former nursing school in one of the workhouse buildings.

Across Raddlebarn Road the original Woodlands Nurses Home still stands, now converted into apartments with views across the preserved cricket pitch and new pavilion. The housing in Woodlands Drive, bordering on the Bournville Trust Estate, is built to very high standards, with a variety of style details, gables, and detailing in the brick work. There is a mixture of red brick, red and black mottled brick, and rendered houses, giving variety. Some have single garages, some double garages, and all the houses overlook green space, with a children's playground. The houses in the road behind are not as big, and some have car parking spaces in front, instead of garages. The roads in this area of the development relate to the history of the area as a sports ground for hospital staff – Centurian Way, Boundary View, Pavilion Way.

Photos:

1. Detached house on in Woodlands Drive
2. The renovated main entrance to Selly Oak Hospital (Matron's office was the little round building on the left, and the Porter's Office on the right)
3. Detached houses fronting onto Raddlebarn Road, with preserved mature trees and grassland.
4. Higher density two and three story residences.
5. One of the two playgrounds, looking up to the water tower.
6. Part of the Kings Norton workhouse complex, later used as the nursing school.
7. High density town houses.
8. The historic gatehouse.
9. The former Woodlands Nurses Home, built 1907. Now apartments.
10. Superior housing in Woodlands Drive, overlooking green space and the cricket pitch.

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