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In at the deep end

Orthodontist David Gale converts a domestic property into a specialist centre

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inding the ideal premises to convert into a dental prac-
tice can involve months of targeted searching. It’s fair to say that most would probably con-
sider a domestic property with an indoor swimming pool as an unlikely and somewhat unusual candidate for refurbishment.

However, orthodontist David Gale, not put off by the building's atypical feature, has converted its interior into a fabulous Specialist Orthodontic Referral Centre in a prime Hampshire location.

David's search for a new location began in 2006 after five successful years' operating out of rented premises in Fareham. It was clear the practice was outgrowing its premises and as the building could not be altered to meet new regulations, he began to look for an alternative location in which to create a specialist orthodontic centre.

**Proportions**

The property David settled on was a large private house with an indoor swimming pool just five hundred metres down the road. Chosen because of its ideal proportions to convert into a purpose designed specialist practice it also benefited from two hundred adjacent public car parking spaces and direct access to the M27 making it easy to reach from Portsmouth, Southampton and South Hampshire.

David acquired the building in 2006 and, after almost a year in planning, the redevelopment work started in earnest. He re-
calls the overall objectives of the project: “I gave my architect a challenging brief, to transform the current building and pool into three surgeries and a lecture theatre. All the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and new proposed cross-infection legislation had to be met and the layout needed to ensure efficient workflows could be put in place to enable a NHS and private specialist dentistry business to be viable.”

**Complex work**

The work required was extensive: “The refurbishment was fairly complex and involved removing the back of the property, building an extension, stripping out all the electrics, plumbing and waste services and removing all floors, ceilings and some walls before being rebuilt. The lecture theatre was installed over the top of the swimming pool. The project took eight months to complete and we opened the new practice in February 2008.”

David turned to DESS Ltd to procure all the practice equipment and dental chairs and Planmeca for the radiographic equipment. David had worked with DESS since 2001 and used their services in his previous premises. He explains why he chose to use them for this project.

“The DESS team has always delivered an excellent service so I had no need to consider alternatives for the refurbishment project. They were fully involved in all aspects of the surgery design, dental equipment selec-
tion and procurement. Using the same software as the architect they modelled surgery layouts to ensure all the equipment fitted to a layout we were happy with.”

On the choice of dental chair David explains: “I chose Bel-
mont equipment for my previous practice as it was highly recom-
manded by my dental dealer. Despite intensive use over five years the chairs proved to be ex-
tremely reliable so they were my first choice for the new practice. I chose the Cleo I model for all the surgeries as I wanted a ‘knee break’ chair so patients could get in and out quickly and easily and so we could talk with them sitting up. A lot of orthodontics is com-
munication. The small footprint of the Cleo I means that the team can move around the chair more easily.”

**A show of success**

In 2010 on the back of the success of the new practice, David decid-
ed to carry out further enhance-
ments, converting the existing lecture theatre into a three chair orthodontic therapist treatment suite. This time the six-week project was ‘self-contained’ and with the builders working over the weekend to join the new suite to the main practice, there was no disruption to patients.

Reflecting on the refurbish-
ment and the practice he has cre-
ated David feels that although it
took nearly two years from pur-
chase to completion, this kind of
project can’t be hurried. He has the
utmost praise for the project team.

“I have to say that we all re-
ally enjoyed working together
and have stayed in touch. I’ve
treated many of their chil-
dren since so it’s been nice for
them to benefit from the new
practice they helped to build.”

When asked what advice he
would give anyone undertaking
a similar project David is clear:
“You really need to choose peo-
ple with a good reputation. They
almost certainly won’t be the
cheapest but in the long run it is
cost effective as it saves mistakes,
chasing up and your stress. I’d
also really recommend employ-
ing a building contract manager
so you don’t need to micro man-
age the project and can keep the
day job going. Mine was planned
and managed by an architect and
an independent quantity surveyor
so my main role during the build-
ing was to make quick decisions
when required, so I didn’t hold up
progress.”

The move to the new building
has enabled David and his team
of 17 staff to provide a much
improved service to more than
10,000 patients.

“Not only is the practice a
bright and welcoming environ-
ment in which to be treated, it is
also laid out to maximise the ef-
ficiency of workflows for the staff
and to ensure we can stay ahead
of regulatory requirements. I am
hopeful we have thought of eve-
rthing and the building is future
proof.” Of course, time will tell.

For more information about
the David Gale Specialist Ortho-
donist Referral Centre please visit
www.david-gale.co.uk.

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**About the author**

David Gale is a registered specialist
orthodontist with The General Dental
Council, and is a member of the British
Orthodontic Society and British Dental
Association. His main objective is to
help every patient achieve his or her
ideal smile, in a relaxed and friendly
environment. David qualified from
university as a dentist in 1989 after
which he worked within the U.K. hospi-
tal service. He became a Fellow of the
Royal College of Surgeons of England
in 1993 having gained the Fellowship
in Dental Surgery (oral surgery). Fol-
lowing a postgraduate education in
most of the dental specialties David
was selected for a three-year orthodon-
David was awarded the Membership
in Orthodontics from the Royal Col-
lege of Surgeons of England and also
gained a university Masters in Science
Degree in orthodontics. Following fur-
ther higher specialist hospital training
David was awarded the Fellowship in
Orthodontics from the Royal College
of Surgeons in 1999, which led to con-
sultant accreditation in 2000. David
worked as the consultant orthodontist
at the Royal Hospital Haslar, Hamp-
shire for two years. David has authored
scientific papers and has presented
lectures at National and International
specialist conferences. He is also a Na-
tional Dental Nurse examiner. In 2002
David set up the Specialist Orthodontic
Referral Centre in Fareham which is
now his professional home.