



Doing it right

EBL Group, which has recently completed the build of 17 new homes in Oakmere, believes in preservation and regeneration, putting Cheshire's history first



Cheshire is filled with beautiful, often historic, buildings, but you might be surprised at how many don't have any form of a protection order on them, making them easy targets for developers that find it easier, and cheaper, to tear them down and build new instead.

This is not the approach taken by EBL Group, who have developed a reputation for their sympathetic restoration and repurposing of heritage buildings, including many churches and chapels. When MD Eddie Basnett first laid eyes on The Old Police Station and Courthouse, in Oakmere, he knew it would be a tragedy to destroy the elegant building, even though it would be the easier, and cheaper, option.

'We have, I believe, instead created a tasteful acknowledgment of the original building. Yes, it costs more to do it our

way, but it's more respectful of our heritage, I think, and maintains those important links to our past.'

The building, which was constructed around 1872, had been left to decay for over 30 years, and was sadly derelict.

'We worked hard to not only renovate the existing building, preserving the existing style and features, without compromising on contemporary comfort, but also how we might unite the look and feel of this building with the brand-new houses we planned to build alongside it,' Eddie says.

'We took a holistic view of the entire development. It would be disrespectful of the residents of the new buildings not to create a clear visual link between their homes and the homes created within the police station and courthouse. The 17 properties, ranging from a 5-bedroom semi-detached home to duplex apartments and two-bedroom houses, all tie together aesthetically into an elegant whole.

'We couldn't replicate the brickwork across the old and new buildings, but we ensured that we used the same roofing materials across the development. We then added terracotta finials to the apex of the roofs and gables on every building, which draws them together. We also used a synthetic version of the stone used in the lintels and cills in the old building to replicate the style in the new builds. We chose to use black uPVC window frames in both, replacing

the original painted wooden frames in the old building; they cost more, but are more sympathetic to the build and look very smart. Finally, we ran metal railings across the whole front of the site, replacing the original railings but replicating the design – a finishing touch that just brings the whole thing together.'

Internally each property is finished to a high standard, with EBL fitting contemporary bathrooms and kitchens in neutral colours, and enabling buyers to add their own, personal touches to their new homes, and clever ideas, like providing the wiring for an electric car plug point should the homeowner need it now or at some future point, abound.

'I am so proud of what has been accomplished here,' Eddie says, 'that I have had a plaque made that lists the names of every individual man and woman that worked on the site, just to thank them for their efforts and recognise their part in this project's success. I believe our role, as builders of new homes, is to protect and preserve, not flatten, build boring boxes and move on. Oakmere is a lovely place to live; it's right in the heart of beautiful Delamere, yet just a short drive from Chester. Residents deserve something a bit special, for this very special part of Cheshire.' ♦

The properties are for sale through Adams Estate Agents, Stockton Heath, adamsea.co.uk.