



photography Jeroen Verrecht

## WISSELBEKE CASTLE & GROUNDS, MERELBEKE

- repurposing the castle site, transforming it into a care site: building assisted housing and transforming the existing castle into residences with additional facilities
- 42 approved assisted houses with additional facilities (service centre and catering), 6 of which are in the repurposed neo-classical castle, and the other 36 newly built assisted dwellings with parking facilities on the castle grounds.
- private client

### STUDY

2014 - 2016

### REALISATION

2017 - 2019

### CLIENT

CAAAP

### DESIGN TEAM

Abscis Architecten

### LOCATION

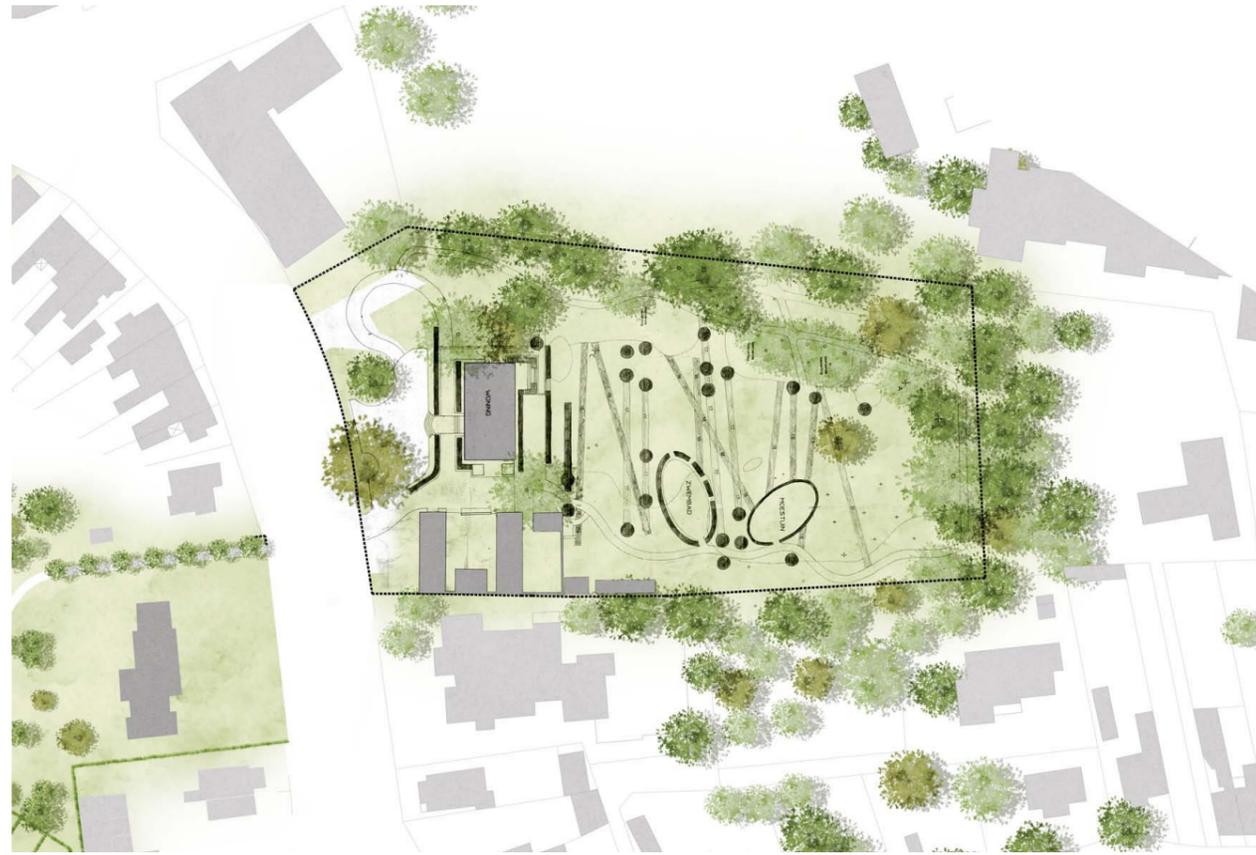
Hundelgemsesteenweg 588  
9820 Merelbeke

### GROSS AREA

4 425 m<sup>2</sup> (building)  
11 500 m<sup>2</sup> (grounds)

### COST PRICE

€ 4 701 500  
excl. VAT en fees



## WISSELBEKE CASTLE & GROUNDS, MERELBEKE

The Wisselbeke castle site was repurposed as a care site by transforming the existing castle into residences with additional facilities and through the construction of assisted housing. In doing so the goal was to create contemporary yet timeless architecture designed for permanent residence.

The presence of made-to-measure care added considerable surplus value to the project. The project is designed for older people who wish to live comfortably, assured of health and safety and at the same wish to remain completely independent. The project has close ties with the village community of Merelbeke but is also attractive for older people from Ghent and its surroundings.

The Wisselbeke castle site consists of its neoclassical style castle, its wooded grounds and its former coach houses. During its transformation into a care site a number of issues were discovered in relation to the coach houses that could have seriously jeopardized the whole development. Because of their limited size and position which would have rendered access to the new site impossible, the houses had to be demolished to make way for new constructions. The goal in approaching these new buildings was to create contemporary yet timeless architecture designed for permanent residence. Care was taken to comply with the legal requirements and norms for assisted housing.

The presence of made-to-measure care added considerable surplus value to the project. Though each care apartment has its own outdoor area / terrace and comfortable living space, the

projects also provides a number of additional shared communal areas. Sitting and relaxation areas will be provided in the main hall of the new building and a shared drawing room will be installed on the ground floor of the castle. The grandeur of the castle and its highly accessible location are considerable advantages and will generate added value for the residents. A number of facilities can be accessed directly via the drawing room and central hub: the meeting area and the hub are linked to each other to be able to offer a complementary set of services. The hub is a centrally located, multifunctional informal space where people can meet and exchange important information on a daily basis.

The gardens were already re-landscaped during an earlier phase following a design in which taller (fruit) trees were kept and play a central role. Given the presence of the tall trees and the beautiful new contemporary landscape design, the castle gardens add much value to the site. The tall trees were preserved as much as possible, in spite of the many changes that had to be carried out to make the site accessible.

High levels of access is a key element in the design of the whole site. The grounds are crisscrossed with a central covered walkway (the red carpet) that invites residents and their visitors to go for walks, take a rest, meet people, etc. Differences in level have been resolved by creating gently sloping paths. Next to this, all buildings are provided with a lift, rendering the whole site accessible to all. Life-long and inclusive living is the norm/aim.

