

John
Robertson
Architects

Building on the past
Shaping the future



Building on the past



Shaping the future

'There is a conviction underlying the work that is clearly about the modern city as a practical and enjoyable blend of old and new, about respecting the best of the past while providing a worthy legacy for the future'

Kenneth Powell







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AN INTRODUCTION TO JOHN ROBERTSON ARCHITECTS BY PAUL FINCH

In summer 2012, as part of the London Festival of Architecture, John Robertson Architects presented a vision for the Square Mile which surprised a substantial breakfast-time audience who might have expected a routine history of the immediate commercial future.

Instead, JRA presented a radical proposition which gave some City worthies cause for thought. On the one hand, what was envisaged was a substantial greening of the City core, with more open space and the virtual abolition of car transport. On the other, a massive expansion of City fringe locations, creating a ring of development around a version of 'city beautiful'. River development and the transformation of Smithfield into a new cultural quarter added zest to the mix.

The proposal suggested there might be middle ground to be explored which encouraged the concentration of financial and other invisible services within the City, but also promoted those non-commercial aspects of City urbanism which have made it an increasingly attractive place for conducting global business. In a sense, the proposition represented an approach inherent in the history and work of JRA itself, reconciling apparently contradictory attitudes to the creation of architecture and urban design, through consideration of first principles and analysis of desired outcomes.

At a pragmatic level, this means declining to jump into one of those convenient boxes marked 'commercial architect' or 'executive architect' or 'no-style

multi-disciplinary practice' or 'boutique specialist'. Robertson talks about his aversion to the notion that either you are a practice that can design but cannot deliver, or alternatively that you can deliver but can't design.

Unusually, JRA has ploughed three simultaneous architectural furrows over the past 20 years, giving it financial stability and consistent standards. The first is new architecture, mainly but not exclusively commercial; second is 'delivery architecture', that is to say production drawings or checking protocols in relation to designs by other architects; and finally what Robertson calls 'repositioning architecture', more usually, perhaps simplistically, described as retrofit.

This is an unusual combination because many UK practices would be averse to being delivery architects/ executive architects unless the design architect had no UK office. That is not a view JRA shares, and its relationship with Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners which produced the Montevetro building in Battersea and the Neo Bankside apartments next to Tate Modern, is an example of a sound working relationship.

Design and delivery

Robertson notes that efficient delivery architecture is a skill and practice in its own right, and that it should be valued as part and parcel of the world of architecture in its broader sense. He also notes that to satisfy both client and design architect, there is a huge advantage in approaching this area of architectural practice as active architects working in their own right on new buildings, rather than simply offering an executive architecture service. This idea of practice, where being a design architect does not exclude other types of work, is most apparent in relation to the repositioning/retrofit work of the practice. There is a big difference between 'conservation architects', whose essential modus operandi is to keep things as much as similar as possible, especially working in conservation



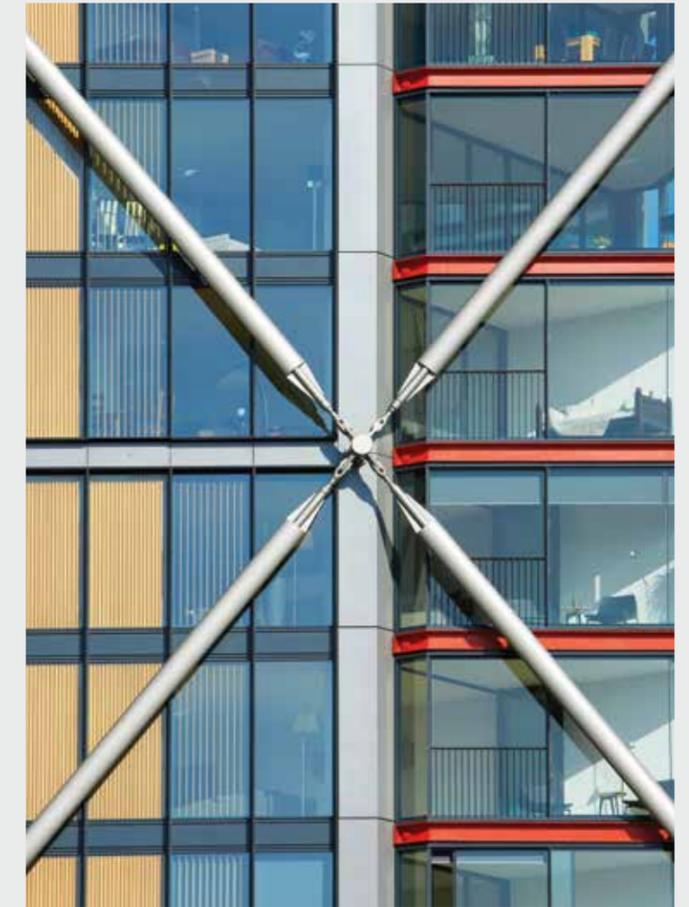
JRA's radical vision for the Developing City



Bush House North East Wing, London



The Montevetro Building, London



Neo Bankside, London designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, delivered by JRA

areas and with listed buildings, and architects like JRA, whose approach to the existing is to maximise its potential while working with the existing spirit.

The most significant JRA projects of this sort, one from the practice's first decade, the other currently under construction, exemplify this approach. In the case of the Daily Express building on Fleet Street, there was a threefold challenge: first to restore the existing listed building to a first-class condition; second to design an adjacent office building which would complement but defer to the star of the show; and finally to masterplan and deliver a complex triangular urban block development for occupation by a major financial institution.

Not so far away, and still in progress at the time of writing, the Bush House complex at the southern end of Kingsway comprises four buildings, the best known of which was the headquarters of the BBC World Service for many decades, but which again comprises a complex urban block now being reinvigorated for the 21st century, keeping the best of past grandeur while upgrading for today's requirements.

Architecture over engineering

A similarly complex project, but of a quite different nature, is the addition of new office space above the Crossrail station at Moorgate, where the intervention above ground is entirely predicated on the engineering condition below: what you see can only be properly understood from understanding the section.

These commissions are at the bigger end of the JRA scale, at about £150 million, but as befits a general practice, there is plenty of work at a smaller scale, both spatially and financially. Sometimes it is the reworking of a lobby and some upper floors, such as The Helicon building in the City of London, where the work of the original architect has been acknowledged and respected.

Elsewhere in the City an intriguing project for the City Corporation involves a retrofit of Great Arthur House on Chamberlin Powell & Bon's Golden Lane Estate, where among other things the curtain wall needs complete replacement (with residents in situ). That is a very different challenge to the commercial bread-and-butter business of taking a 20 year old SOM office building, 199 Bishopsgate, and sorting it out to meet sophisticated

tenant requirements without disrespecting the intentions and approaches of the original designers.

This latter sort of commission has been a staple of the JRA diet, partly because rental values in the City have shown little increase in real terms over the last 20 years. The attractions of upgrading rather than demolishing and starting again are therefore significant, especially where there is little prospect of a big increase in space because of planning restrictions. In the case of the Bishopsgate project, the construction costs tell the story: retrofit £129 per square foot, demolish and rebuild £215.

Contextual modernism

The financial and cost context is only one of the considerations informing the attitude of JRA to the commissions it undertakes. John Robertson uses the phrase 'contextual modernism' to describe its working method, that is to say taking the best elements from the existing but seeking the sort of improvement that the original architects may not have been able to achieve.

The spectrum of challenge is broad. At a banal level, how do you deal with a floor-to-floor height of 3.2 metres, not untypical of office buildings from the 1950s through to the 1970s? Working on buildings at Broadgate, where the equivalent is 4.1m, is a very different kettle of fish. If you address this range of situations on a regular basis, you develop skills to find effective solutions.

At a more fundamental level, that aspiration to improve Modernist buildings relates to an admiration for, and belief in, the architecture of the US giants that John Robertson admired as a student: Mies, Kahn, Kevin Roche, Saarinen; Or perhaps for the quality that they delivered, or implied could be delivered, given the appropriate contexts.

Where possible, JRA is always interested in mixed uses as part of 'repositioning' projects, though achieving that is not always easy. It has never shied away from pushing new standards for workplace efficiency, as a string of British Council for Offices Awards suggests. It has begun to seek work outside the UK, with two competition-winning schemes under its belt, one in Copenhagen and most recently in Beirut. This is changing the practice's own context and scale of ambition.

The question this 20th anniversary publication raises is how the practice can make the most of its unusual combination of expertise, built work and collaborative engagement with other architects.

The foundations have been laid for a continuing contribution to the idea of architectural practice, and to the way we think about buildings, their immediate environments, and the city – not just the City of London.



Great Arthur House, London



199 Bishopsgate, London



BankMed, Beirut



120 Fleet Street, London,
corner detail

Origins

John Robertson Architects, founded in 1993 and known as Hurley, Robertson and Associates until 2004 when John Hurley retired, quickly demonstrated how distinctive modern design could transform the character and value of existing buildings and complicated sites.

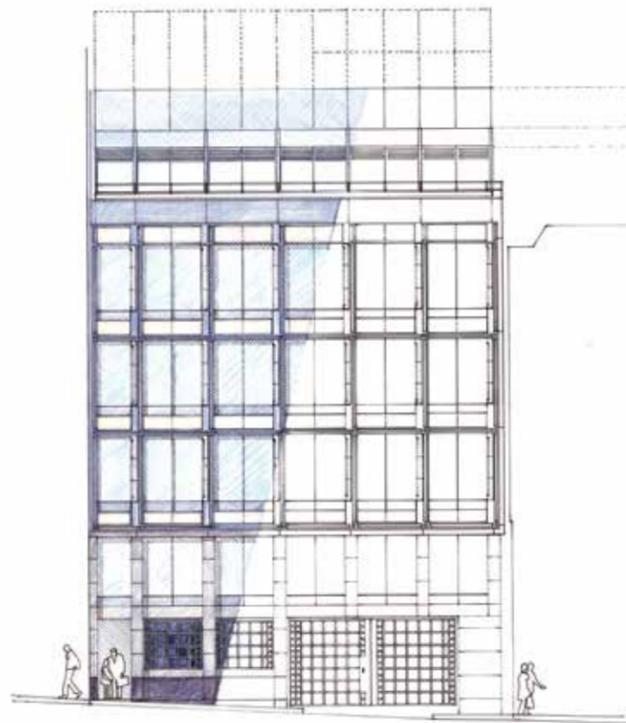
These seeds grew into John Robertson's concept of 'contextual modernism', an approach to design which picks up on the precision and clarity of modernism, enhances its context by subtle adjustment rather than major statements.

Within a decade we had completed a major redevelopment of the Daily Express site, wrapping a vast new office around its magnificently refurbished Art Deco core, and the ground-breaking One Great St Helen's, which pioneered the British Council for Offices standard specification.

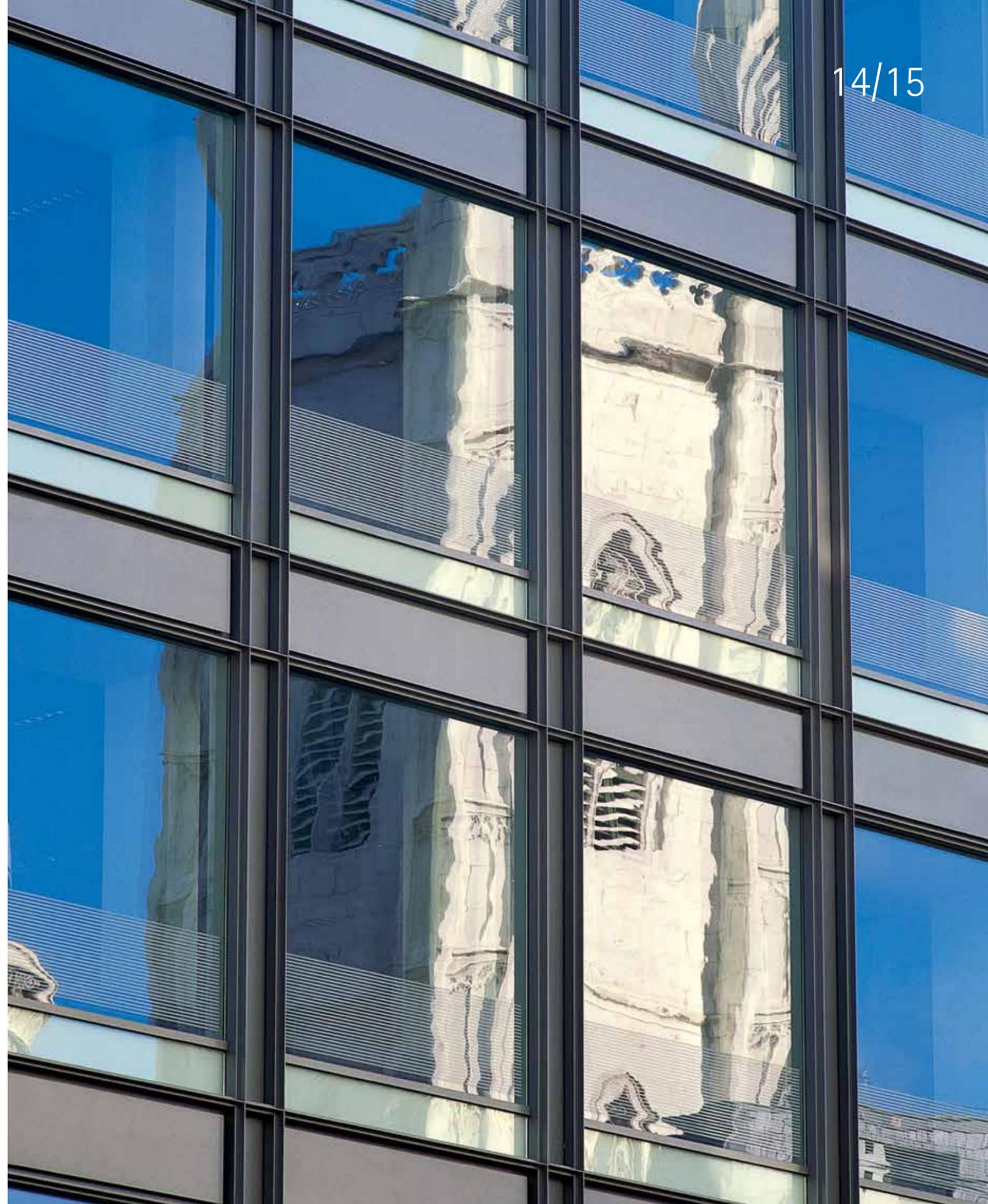


50 Cannon Street, EC4

Remodelling a nondescript 1970s design at 50 Cannon Street for Guardian Assurance was one of our first 'repositioning' projects, where we brought the internal space up to contemporary standards and re clad the exterior to meet changing expectations for energy consumption as well as a new identity in the market. The main frontage is a narrow strip onto Cannon Street but the bulk of the building is in the centre of the block, sandwiched between a listed Georgian terrace and a Victorian office. Our new facade fits this disparate context, responding to the conventions of urban architecture with a vestigial arcade and traditional materials at ground level, supporting a neat and undemonstrative grid of steel and glass above. Inside a new entrance lobby and new servicing cleverly inserted within very restricted floor to ceiling heights turns the new image of outside to valuable efficiency within.



Above: The new facade fits with its historic neighbours
Right: The elevation matches traditional and contemporary materials
Far right: Modernism in context

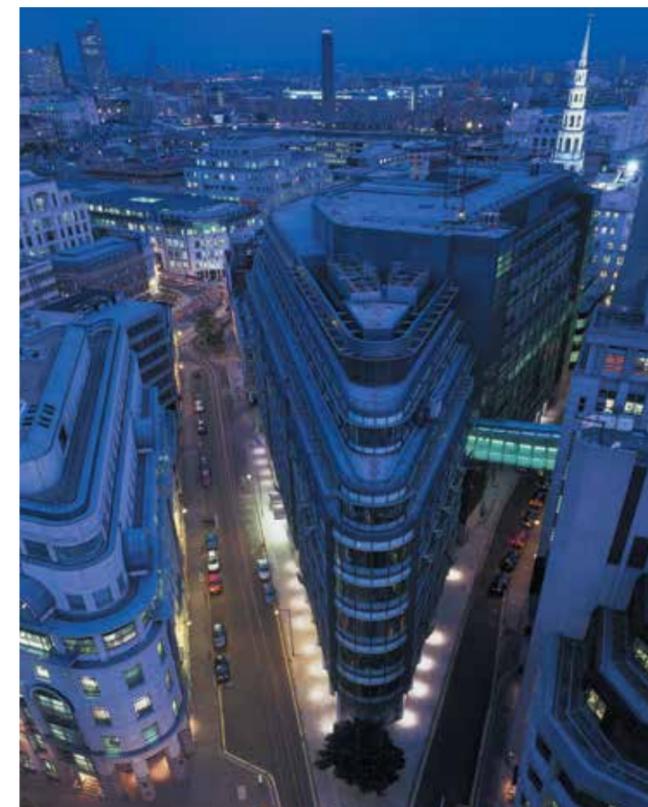




120 Fleet Street, EC4

Developed as offices and printing works for the Daily Express in the 1930s, the site of 120 Fleet Street came up for redevelopment when changes in printing technology led newspapers to abandon prime property in central London. It was an early opportunity to develop our ideas for contextual modernism, and to prove that this approach could reconcile the need to fit a historic context and generate a massive uplift in value by providing the office space with the flexibility, quantity and configuration needed in today's market.

The site comprised a whole city block with Owen Williams' iconic art deco building which had to be retained, and a swathe of semi-industrial buildings which needed replacement. We separated the new and old frontages to Fleet Street with a new entrance which allows for a far larger people flow than the 1930s foyer. The new frontage melds into its context with retail at ground level, a palette of stone, steel and glass which picks up on the basic massing and storey heights. The same compositional principles extend to the side streets, though without stone to reflect their different status in the urban fabric. Setting back from the building line allowed us to add several floors and a considerable amount of extra space at high level. Inside we created the vast flexible floorplates needed by the occupier, a north American investment bank and added a bridge to their adjacent property in Peterborough Court.



Above: The vast new building fills the island site
Below: Sequence of construction photographs
Left: The refurbished art deco building still draws the eye





Left: Contextual modernism scales the large new building to fit with its neighbours

Below: (From top to bottom) Elevation to the west (Shoe Lane), elevation to the east (St Bride Street), elevation to the south (Fleet Street)



One Great St Helen's EC3

20/21

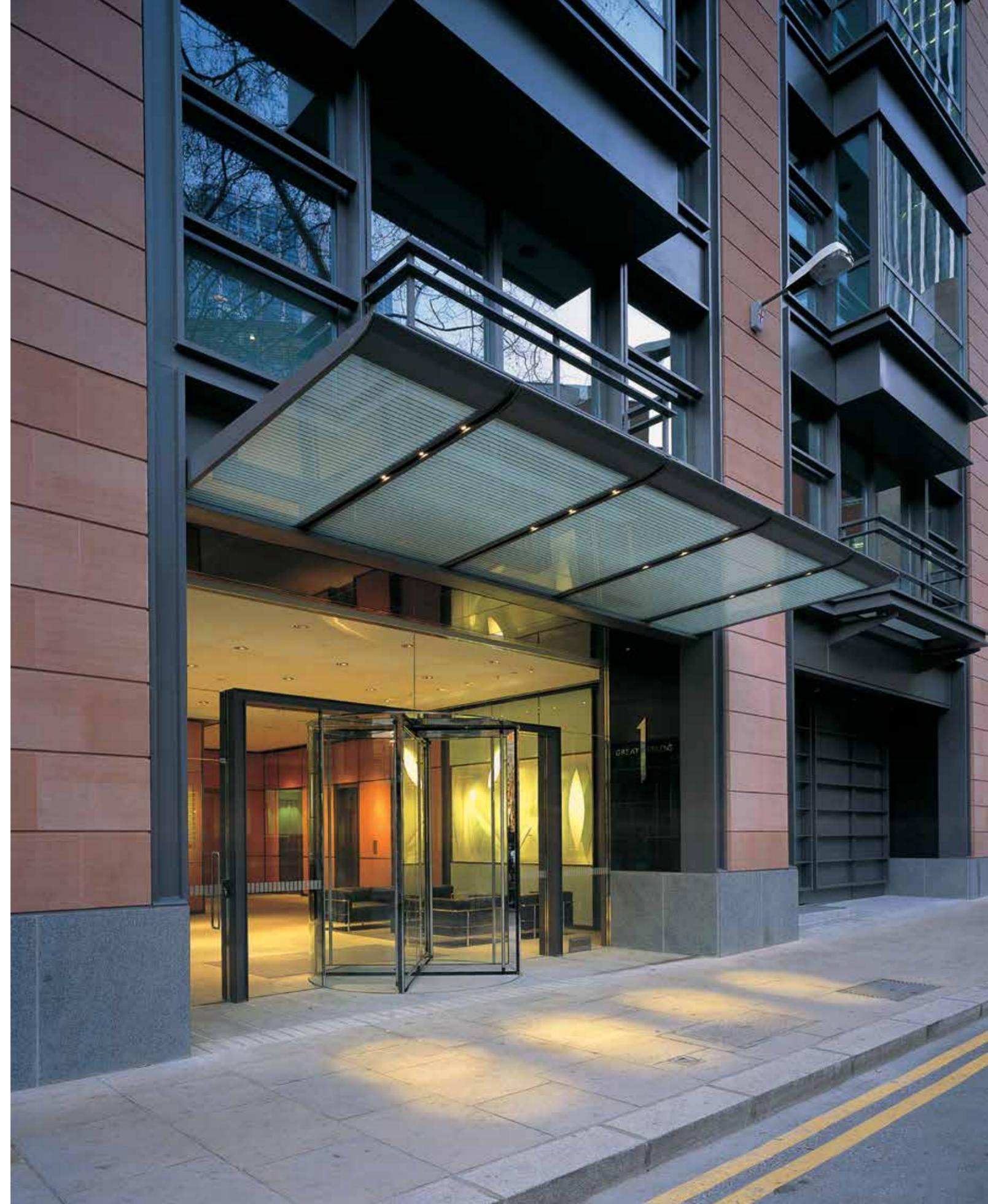
Through close collaboration with developers Greycoat, this project helped to define the emerging British Council for Offices standard specification which set new standards for commercial efficiency and worker satisfaction in office buildings. The nine floors are rational, easily adapted and the building can be let to multiple tenants, though it has always been occupied on a single let. Contextual modernism proved to be a way of finding extra value by optimising these new standards within the specific conditions of the awkwardly-shaped site which faces a listed medieval church and a distinguished modernist tower.

A finely detailed stone facade faces the church, reflecting its character and marking the entrance at a point where various pedestrian routes meet. A second stone-clad tower containing a secondary core helps to anchor the building in its site. Between these two 'bookends' is a curving, gridded facade which faces the modernist tower, while its shape maximises daylight in the interior. The tenant, Hiscox, has taken advantage of this shape with a public café at ground level, which spills out onto the public realm and acts as a gallery for its collection of contemporary art. The synthesis of design and occupier's intention have allowed this building to retain its presence in the urban fabric, even as vast developments like 30 St. Mary Axe and the Leadenhall Building have risen nearby.



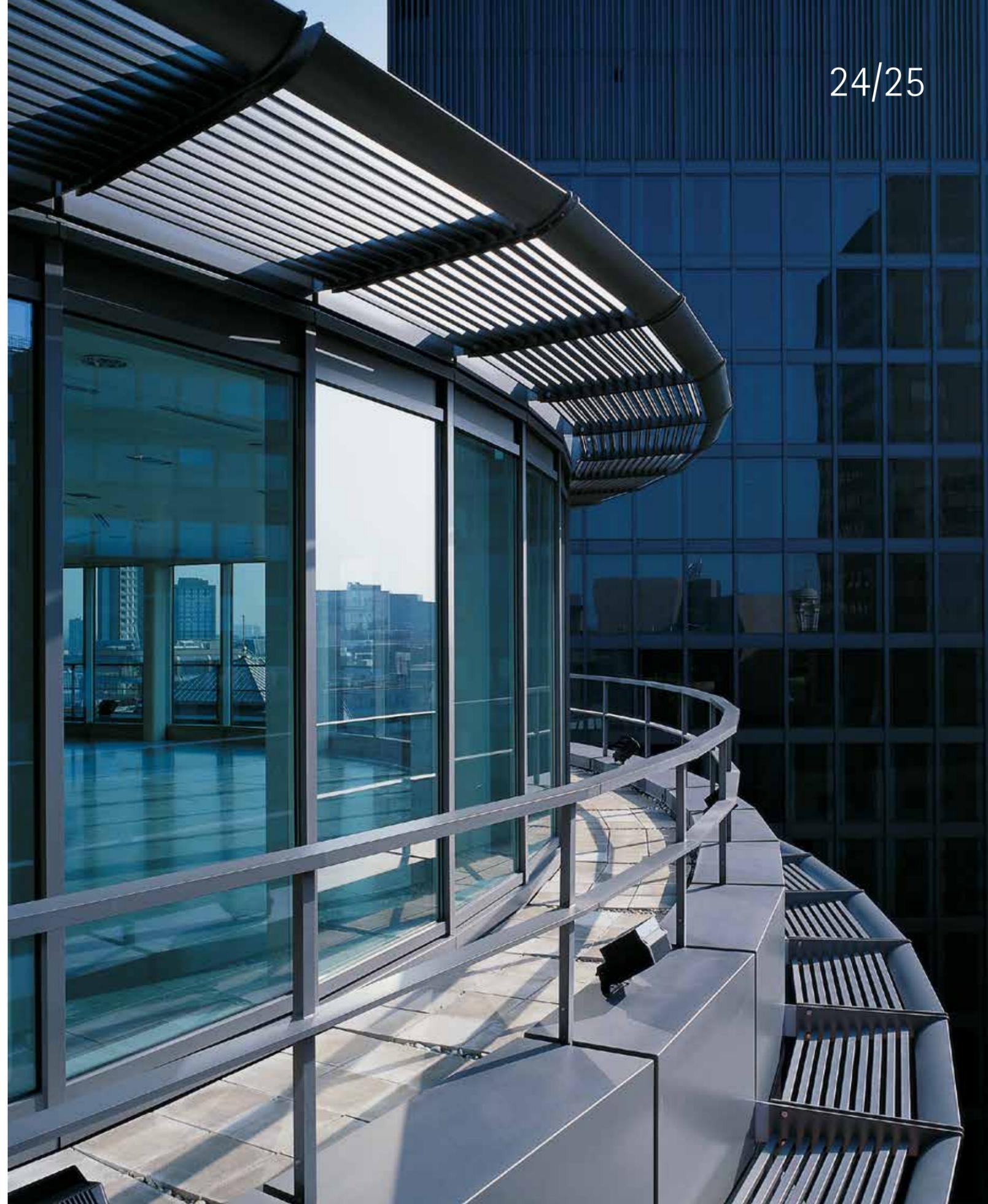


Above: Two stone-clad 'bookends' frame a curving facade
Right: The entrance is at a point where pedestrian routes converge





Clockwise from top: There is a lively café at ground floor; the curving facade responds to a neighbouring modernist tower; sketch showing the composition; entrance foyer





Adaptations

Successful urban architecture is about adaptation – adapting sites and buildings to optimise their value in changing physical, commercial and social contexts.

The underlying strategy is to identify how a given site or building can adapt to meet emerging patterns of use and need. Creativity and lateral thinking align our technical and delivery skills in the most effective way for each project.

Urban Identity

Some commercial organisations have always had the means and the confidence to project their identity beyond their sites and immediate surroundings. These developments remain powerful landmarks long after the patterns of commerce and office work they supported have become redundant.

But our understanding of the balance between public and private activities, and between identity and operational needs, can optimise their value as landmarks and as workplaces.

Aldwych Quarter, WC2

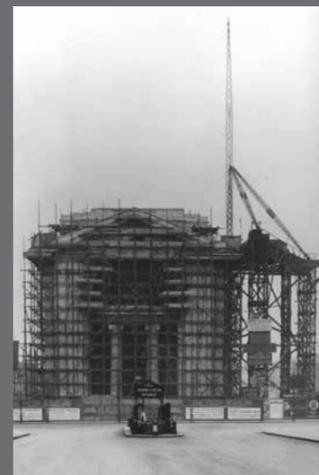
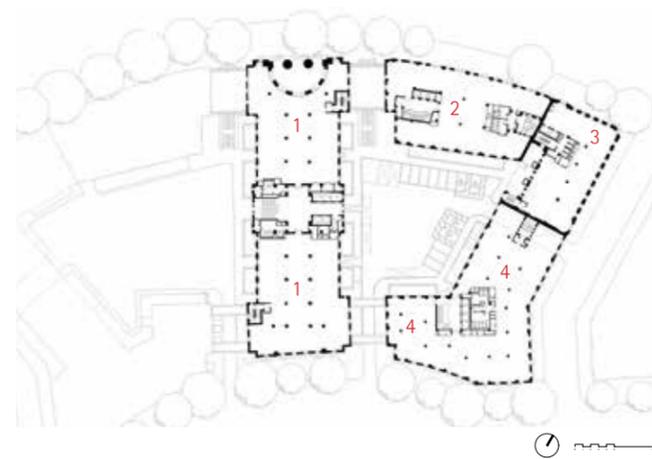
Bush House brought new standards of urban design to commercial architecture when it was built in the 1920s. Its American developer Irving T Bush ensured it took full advantage of its prominent site marking the end of Kingsway with a monumental arch, and a sculpture by Malvina Hoffman symbolising the relationship between Britain and the US. Now after more than 70 years as the home of the BBC World Service we are revitalising it to provide workplaces for the 21st century within one of the 20th century's most remarkable commercial complexes.

Completed in 1923 to designs by the American Harvey Corbett, who had already built New York's Bush Tower and would later have a hand in the Rockefeller Center, Bush House and its adjoining South East and North East wings showed that commercial architecture could match the institutional grandeur of its neighbours, Marshall Mackenzie's Australia House, and the Indian High Commission by Herbert Baker. Melbourne House by Trehearne Norman and Preston dates from 1928.

All were built to a very high standard, with impressive entrance foyers, lobbies, stairs and fittings. Our goal is to recover and enhance these original features, and to strip back nearly a century of accretions in the office areas so that we can introduce modern IT and services, and new occupiers can draw on both a high quality working environment and a powerful identity to drive their success.

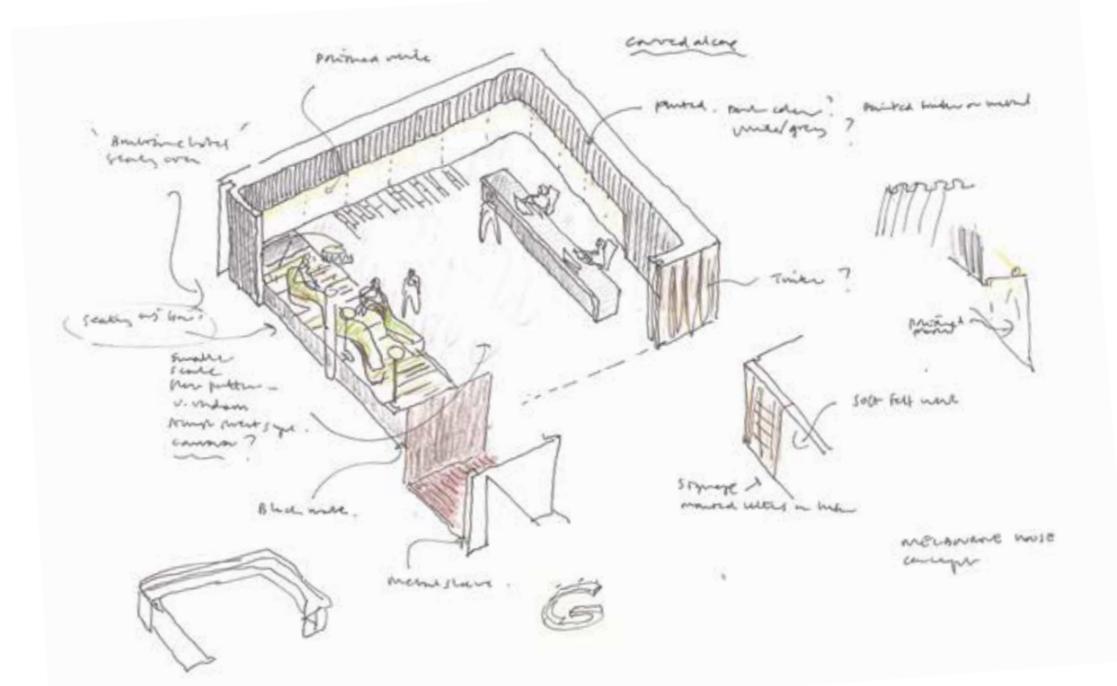
Aldwych Quarter Plan

- 1 Bush House Centre Block
- 2 Bush House North East Wing
- 3 Melbourne House
- 4 Bush House South East Wing





Clockwise from top left: Melbourne House, Bush House – South East Wing, Aldwych Quarter (inset sketch), Bush House North East Wing



Clockwise from left: Bush House Centre Block Reception Area, Melbourne House Reception, Melbourne House Reception concept sketch

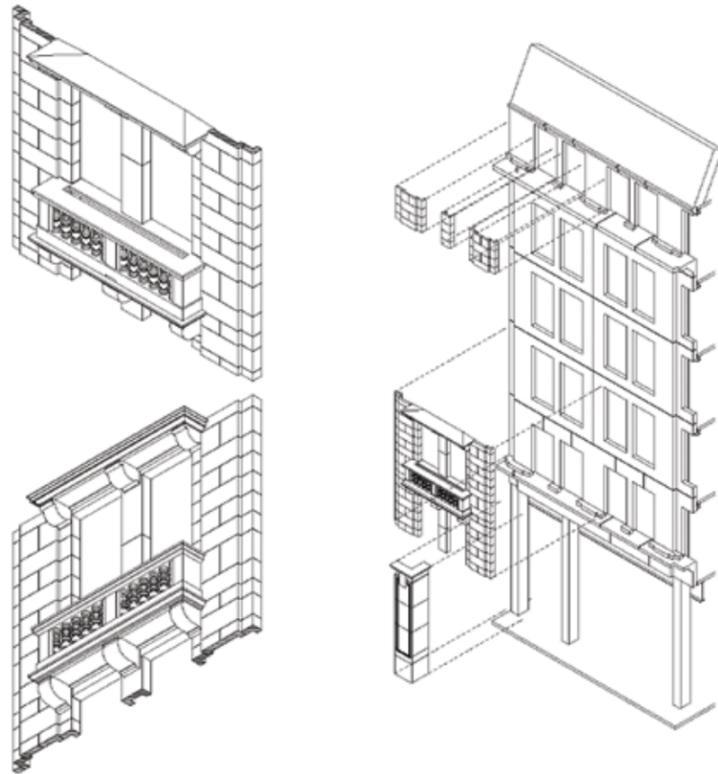


Park House, Finsbury Circus, EC2

Finsbury Circus has some of the City of London's most impressive commercial architecture and our remodelling of the Grade II listed Park House drew on this context to add value in two ways. By restoring Gordon and Gunton's powerful Edwardian baroque facade and selected internal features we strengthened the building's strong identity and historic qualities.

Secondly we showed that adding 7,000 sq.m. to the rear of the site was in line with Gordon and Gunton's uncompleted intentions, and on this basis the planning authority backed the demolition of the Victorian terrace which was on it.

The result was a massive uplift in value, with in effect a new office building with institutional standard and flexible floorplates with the identity and character of a historic building, in one of the City's most attractive and well-served locations – as its occupiers Cisco, Bloomberg and City Index have discovered.



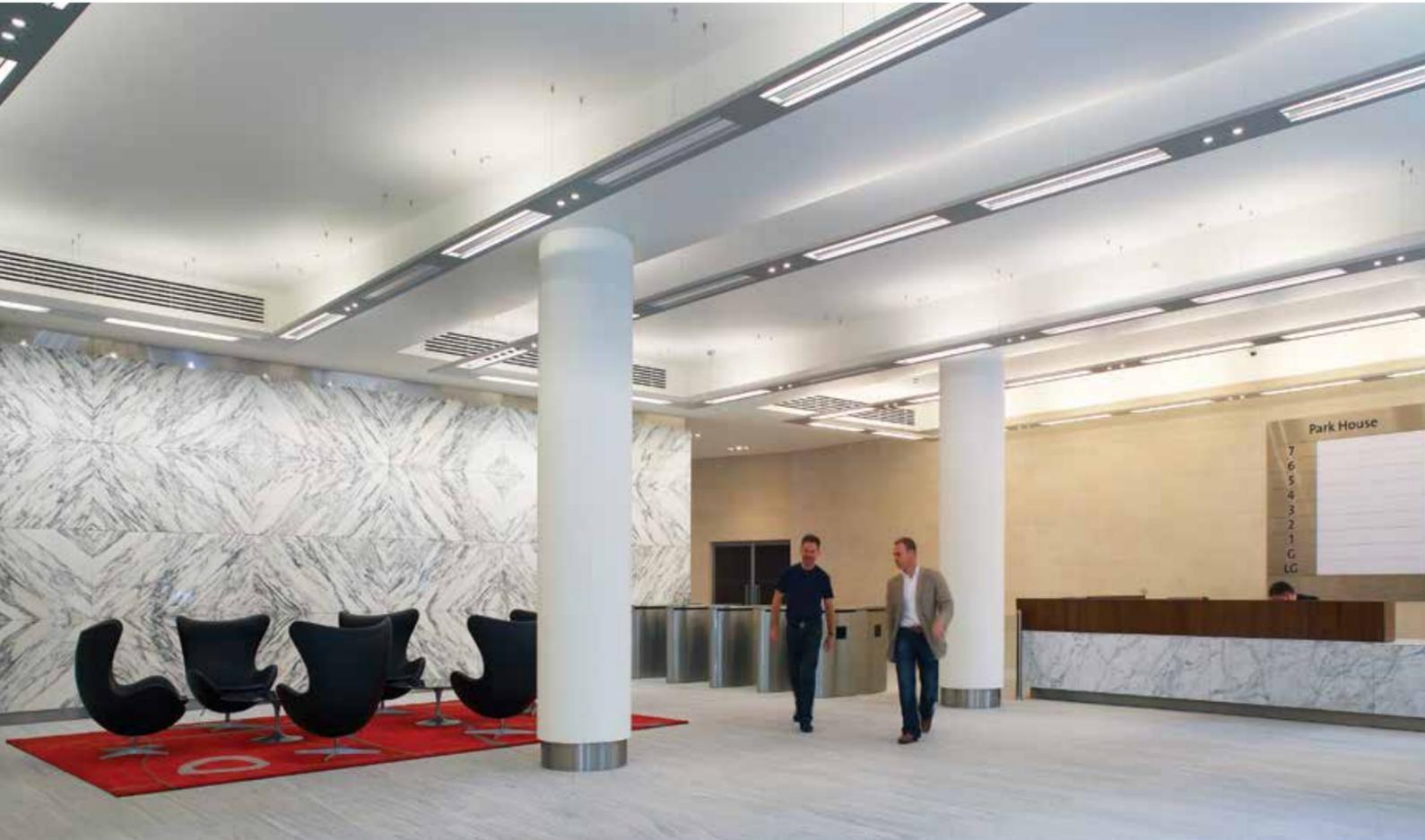
Facade to Eldon Street



Eldon Street elevation looking towards Liverpool Street Station



The project added 7,000 sq.m. to the rear of the site at Eldon Street



Above: The new foyer has a contemporary feel
Right: The entrance at Eldon Street connects to the main foyer reached from Finsbury Circus
Inset: Typical floor plan





Contrast between the historic entrance hall (left) and the contemporary atrium (right)



Infrastructure

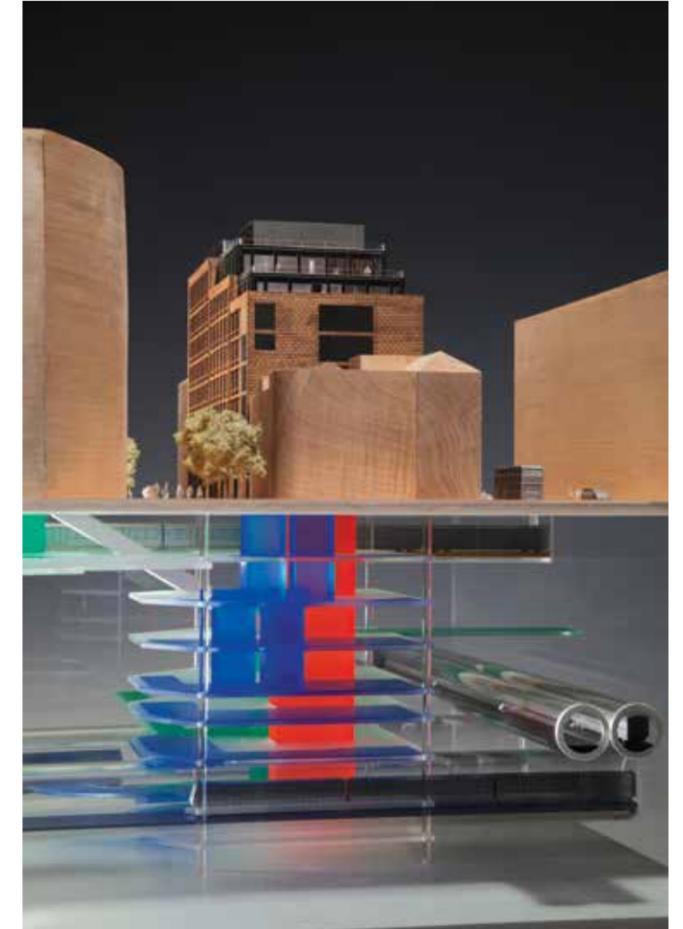
The relationship between infrastructure – largely subterranean – and buildings which are mainly above ground is vital to the success of any large city. Crossrail and the upgrade to Thameslink are transforming values and opportunities across London. New tunnels and stations create new sites, and exploiting these to the full draws on a wide range of our skills, from imagining an appropriate identity for these emerging hubs, to coordinating design and production information with the infrastructure engineers.



101 Moorgate Oversite Development, EC2

On a site above the western end of Liverpool Street's Crossrail Station, 101 Moorgate replaces a substandard building with one which exploits the commercial and environmental opportunities of its time and location. Its external appearance develops the theme of 'contextual modernism', using faience cladding, a material brought to the City of London by the great Dutch architect HP Berlage in Holland House a century ago. Its durability and capability to articulate the facade with distinctive colours and relief patterning make it eminently suitable to today's commercial architecture.

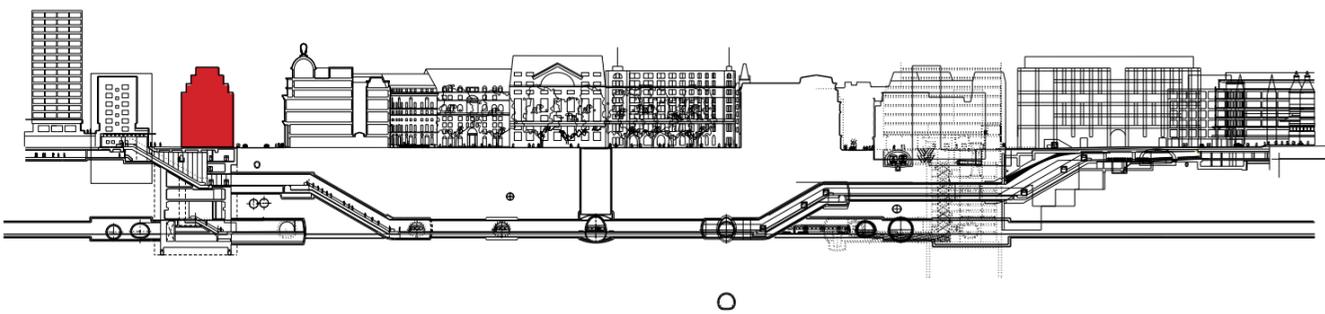
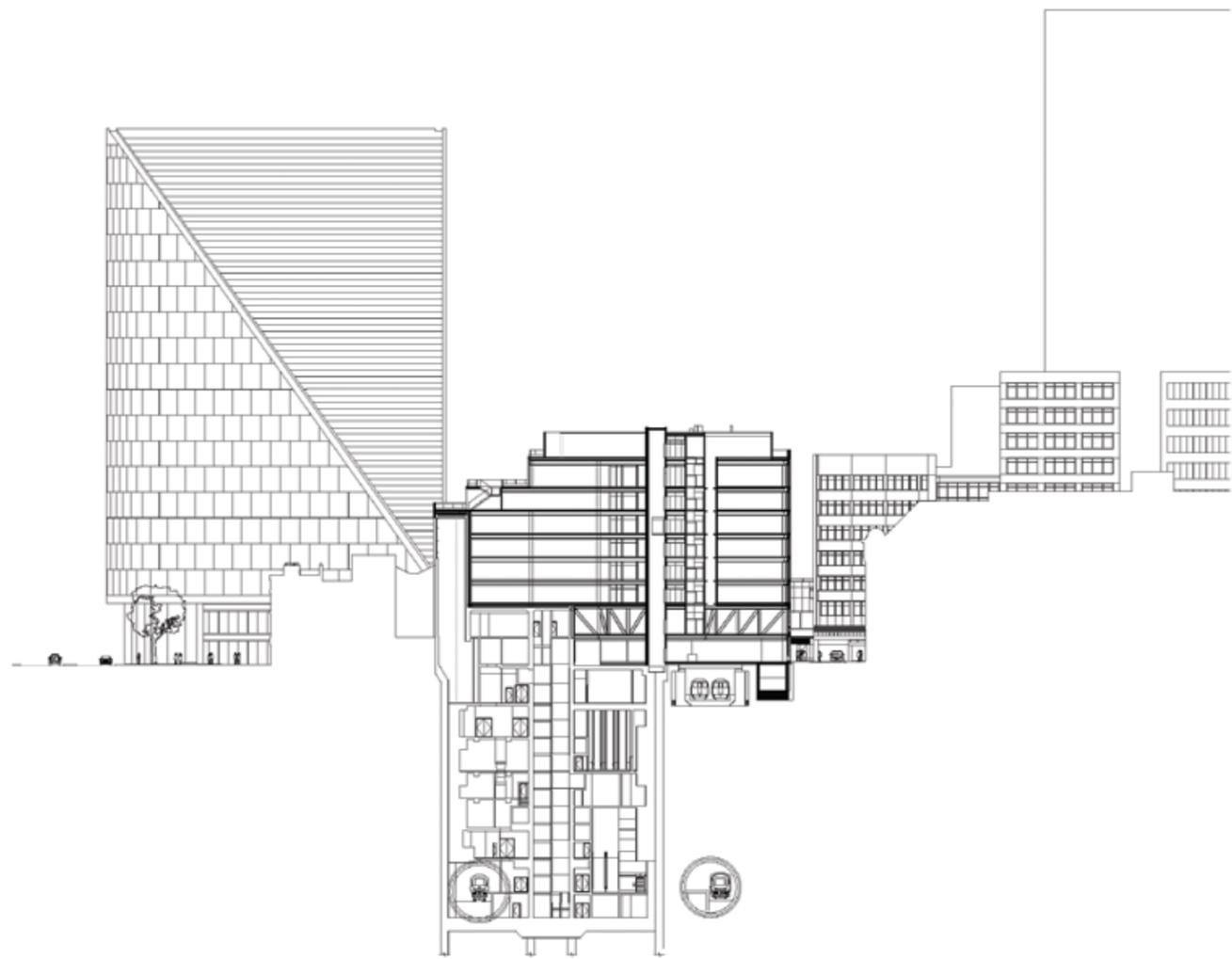
Here it helps to maximise commercial potential on a busy street frontage and also to relate to adjoining listed buildings. The quality of the internal spaces depends on cleverly inserting the core between the 30m transfer structure above the 'Crossrail box', to optimise the efficiency and flexibility of the relatively narrow floorplate. Maximising daylight and insulation, and with features like sunshading, sedum roofs, geothermal piles for heating and photovoltaic panels generating around 6 per cent of its electricity needs, the building will gain a BREEM Excellent rating.



Far left: View from Moorgate and Moor Place
Above left: View looking north along Moorgate
Above: Model shows the building above ground and the Crossrail infrastructure below

101 Moorgate Crossrail Oversight Development,
view from north





Top: Section looking east, the new building has to fit the Crossrail engineering 'box'
Above: Section looking north, the station runs between Moorgate and Liverpool Street with an entrance either end (JRA building highlighted)
Right: View from Finsbury Circus towards Moorgate

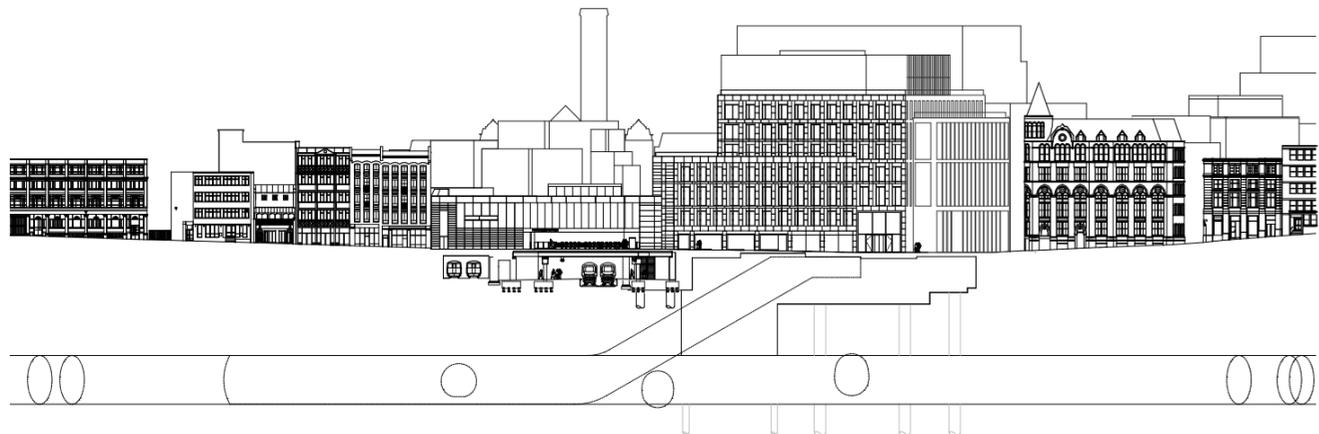




Cardinal House, Farringdon Crossrail Oversite Development, EC1

Our scheme for an office building over the Cowcross Street entrance to the new Crossrail Farringdon Station captures the area's inherent value and adds to it through design. When Crossrail and the Thameslink upgrade are complete it will be one of London's premier office locations, central and with outstanding links across the city and beyond. Our building will bring that latent value to fruition. The surrounding urban grain makes a prime site for our 'contextual modernist' approach because it helps to repair the public realm, complementing the narrow streets and small courtyards on one side, and addressing the canyon of Farringdon Road on the other. It also allows us to develop a palette of materials including faience, terracotta and anodised aluminium that will give the building a clear, contemporary identity and fit with the mixed range of neighbours in Farringdon Road.

Top left: Views of the office building from Farringdon Road
Top right: Cowcross Street elevation and urban context
Below: Cowcross Street elevation and infrastructure

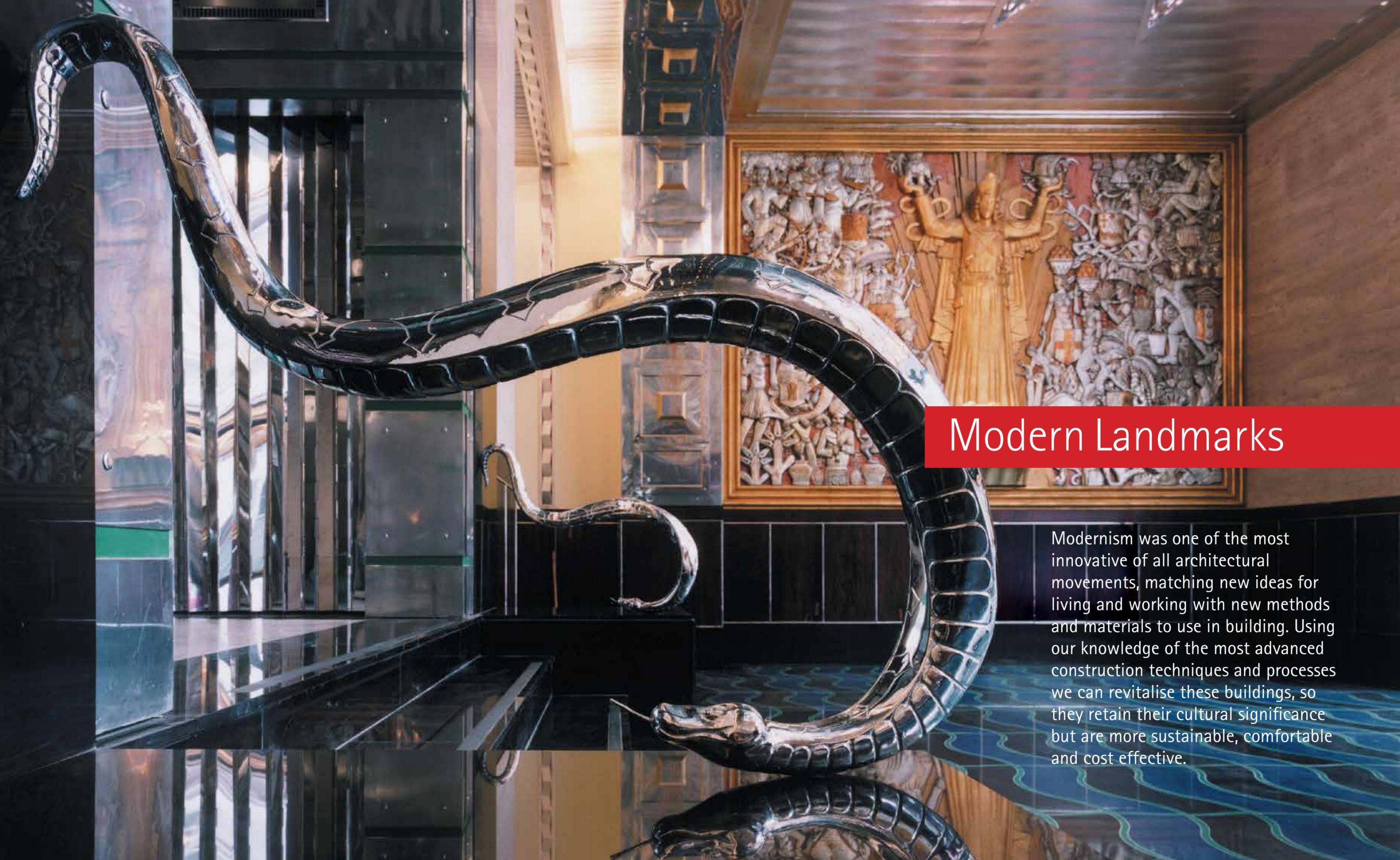




Above: Study model for the facade

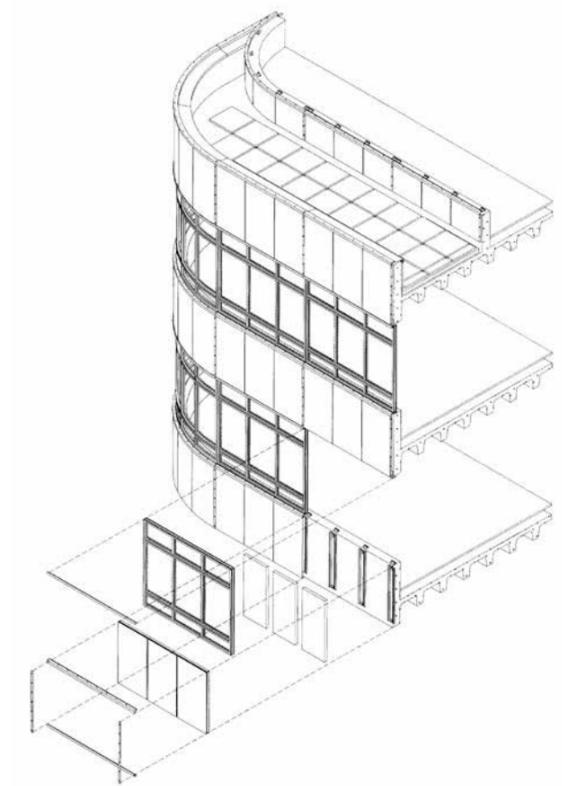
Right: The design fits within the ground level street pattern and the points of support provided in the Crossrail engineering infrastructure below





Modern Landmarks

Modernism was one of the most innovative of all architectural movements, matching new ideas for living and working with new methods and materials to use in building. Using our knowledge of the most advanced construction techniques and processes we can revitalise these buildings, so they retain their cultural significance but are more sustainable, comfortable and cost effective.



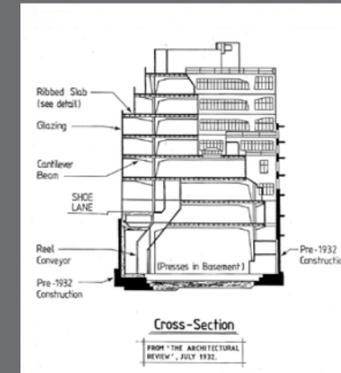
The Daily Express Building, EC4

Lord Beaverbrook, founder of the Daily Express, recognised the catalytic effect innovative architecture can have on an organisation when he commissioned the newspaper's headquarters in the 1930s. Our restoration recreated its art deco features but where appropriate upgraded them to modern standards. We recreated the entrance hall with its sculptural fittings and evocative wall reliefs from photographs. The exterior looks almost exactly as it did when the building opened, but by replacing the original steel-framed single glazing with post-tensioned aluminium and double glazing, we massively improved its thermal performance. It provides conference facilities for the occupier of 120 Fleet Street, the large office complex we designed around it. Deliberately discreet and restrained – but elegant and efficient, the new building introduced our concept of 'contextual modernism' and acts as a setting for the jewel of the Daily Express.

Far left: by creating a curved corner we fulfilled the original designer's intention

Above left: The restored facade almost exactly replicates the original

Above: Isometric of facade, by using pre stressed aluminium we were able keep the same size of frame and increase strength to take double glazing





We restored the magnificent art deco entrance hall, whose decoration symbolises the Daily Express proprietor Lord Beaverbrook's doctrine of 'Empire Free Trade'; a sea-like floor connects Britain to the Commonwealth of dominions and colonies

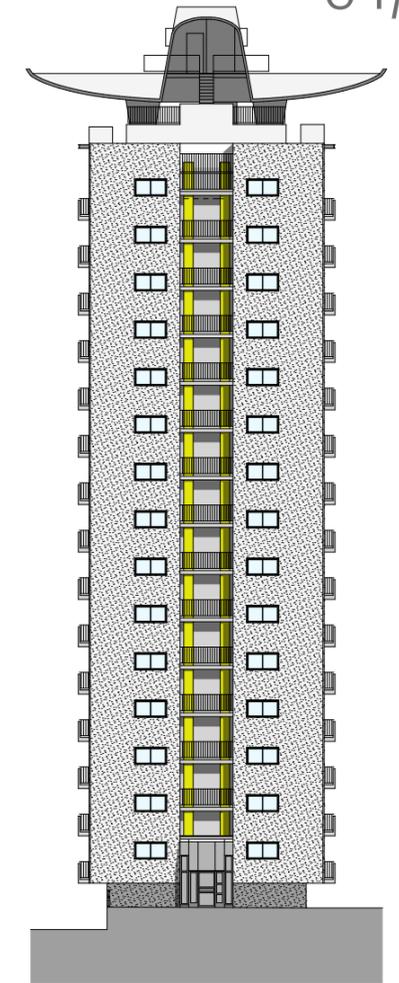
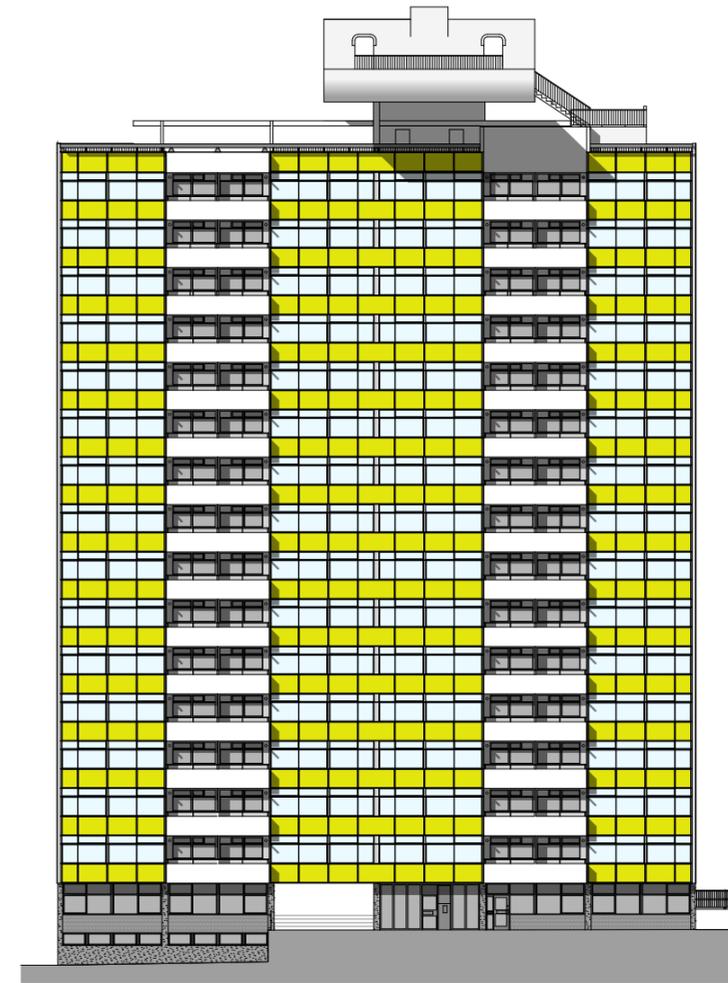
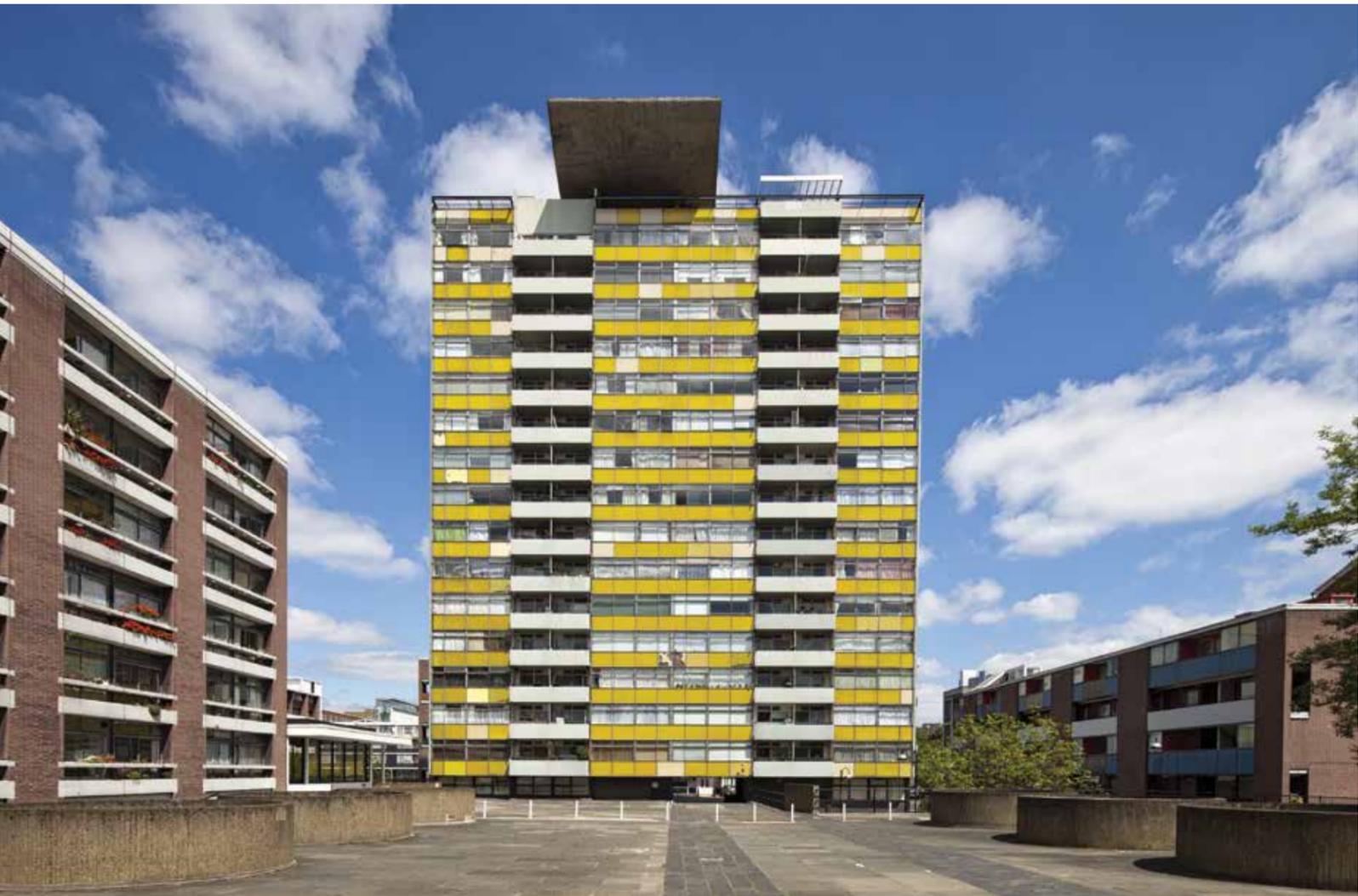
Great Arthur House, EC1

Great Arthur House is the centerpiece of the Golden Lane estate in Clerkenwell, one of the most successful post war public housing schemes. We are upgrading its technical performance, improving quality of life and reducing running costs for residents, while respecting Chamberlin Powell and Bon's Grade II-listed design.

Replacing the main facades is the most technically challenging task. As well as replicating the original appearance they have to include double glazing, and be installed with residents still in occupation. After analysing the structure to find where extra load could be carried we designed a wall panel system that spans between strong points but includes the same palette and proportions of steel frame, glass and yellow spandrel panels as the original. The result significantly reduces energy loss and sound transfer between apartments.

We are conducting wide-ranging consultation with residents so they keep abreast of progress, the impact on their lives, and the benefits they will enjoy in completion.

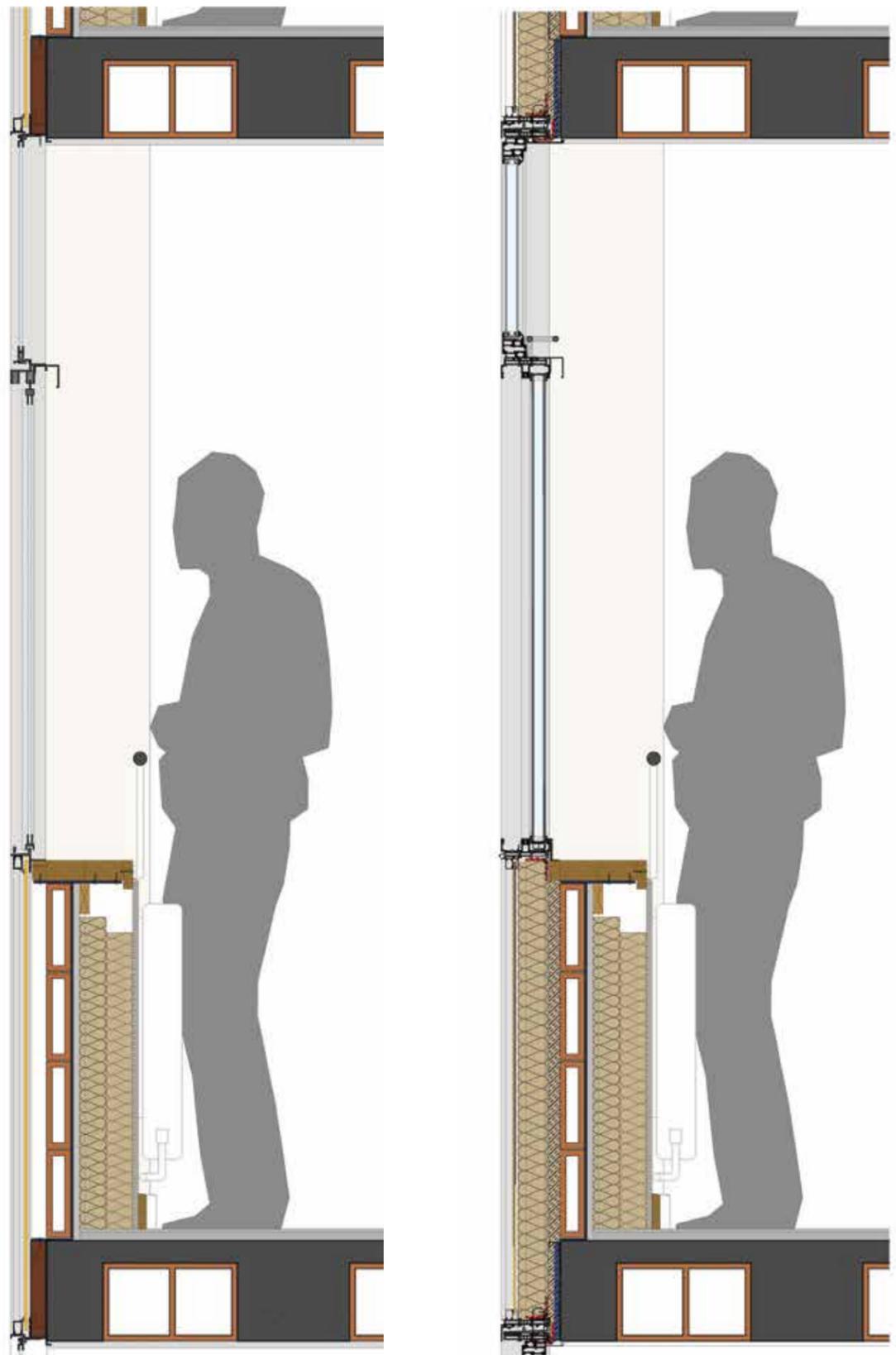
Below: The striking facade is showing its age
Right and far right: East and north elevations, we are recreating the appearance of the original while upgrading its performance



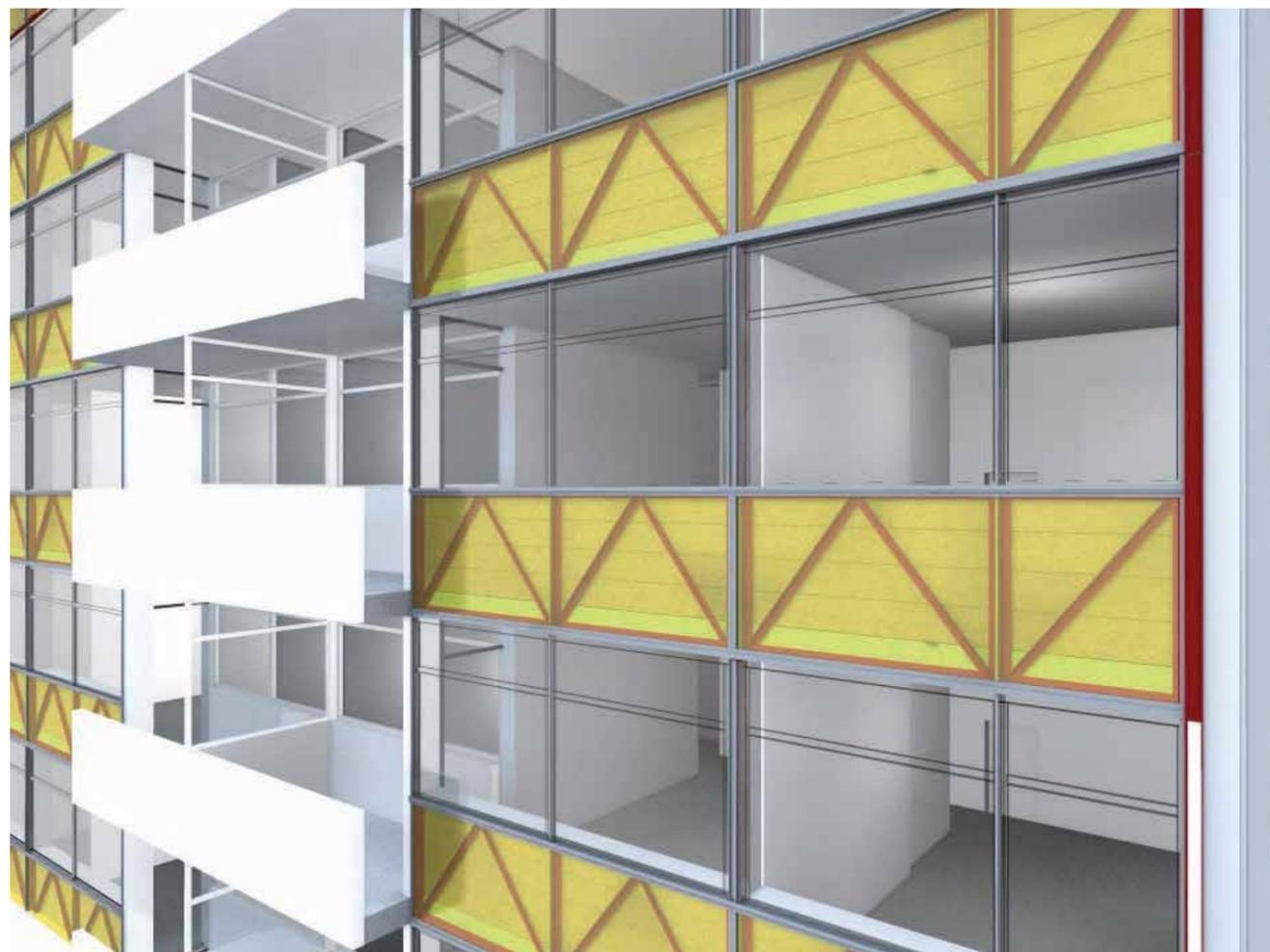
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Chamberlin, Powell and Bon won the competition for the Golden Lane Estate which had attracted many entries from leading architects. Their design set a precedent for high quality social housing that was rarely matched.



Section through wall assembly:
original (above); as proposed (above right)



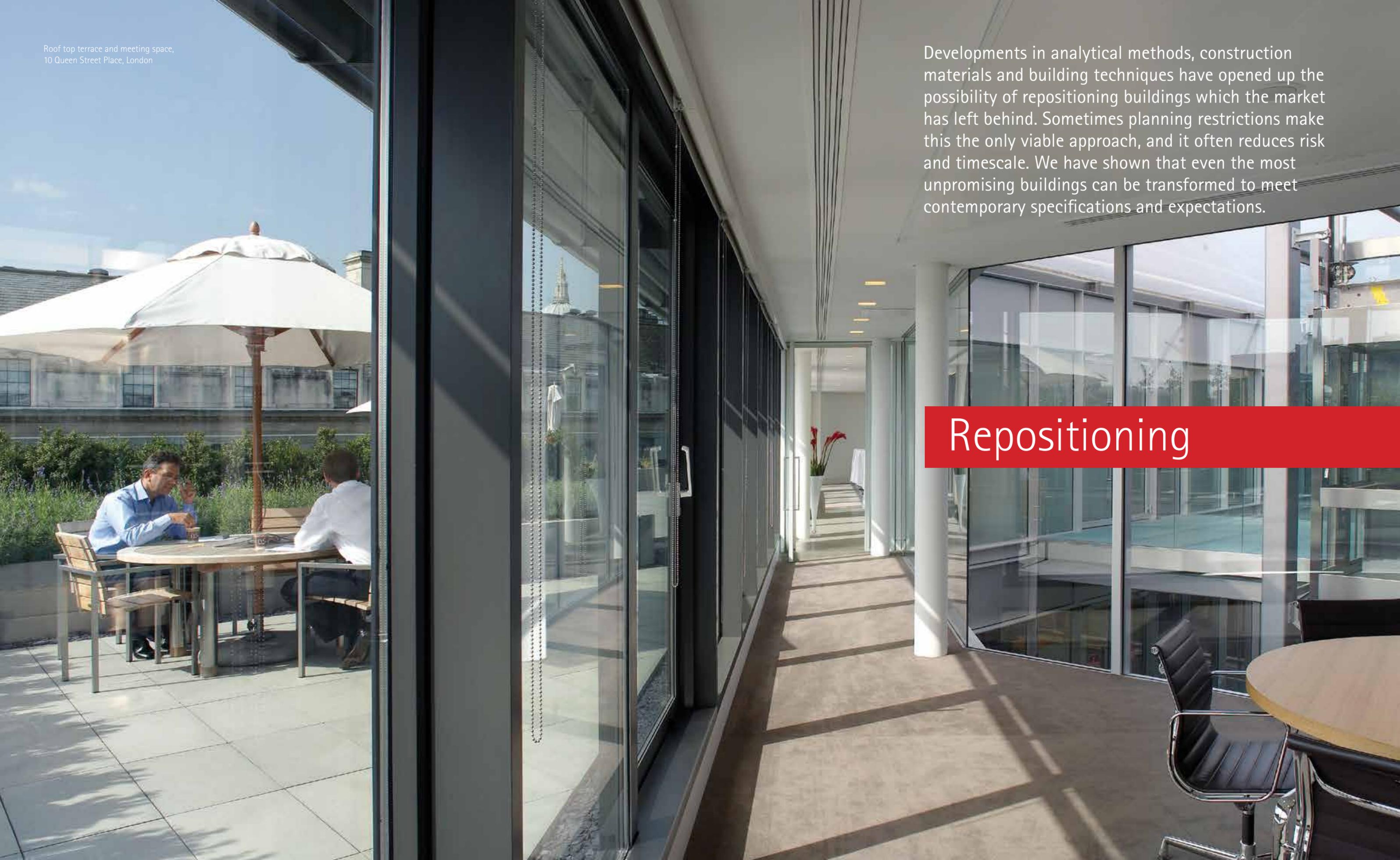
Top right and left: the condition has degraded to a point that detracts from the residents' lives

Above: Trusses spanning between flank walls transfer the extra load of double glazing to strong points in the structure

Roof top terrace and meeting space,
10 Queen Street Place, London

Developments in analytical methods, construction materials and building techniques have opened up the possibility of repositioning buildings which the market has left behind. Sometimes planning restrictions make this the only viable approach, and it often reduces risk and timescale. We have shown that even the most unpromising buildings can be transformed to meet contemporary specifications and expectations.

Repositioning





The roof terrace enjoys a splendid view over the river



10 Queen Street Place, EC4

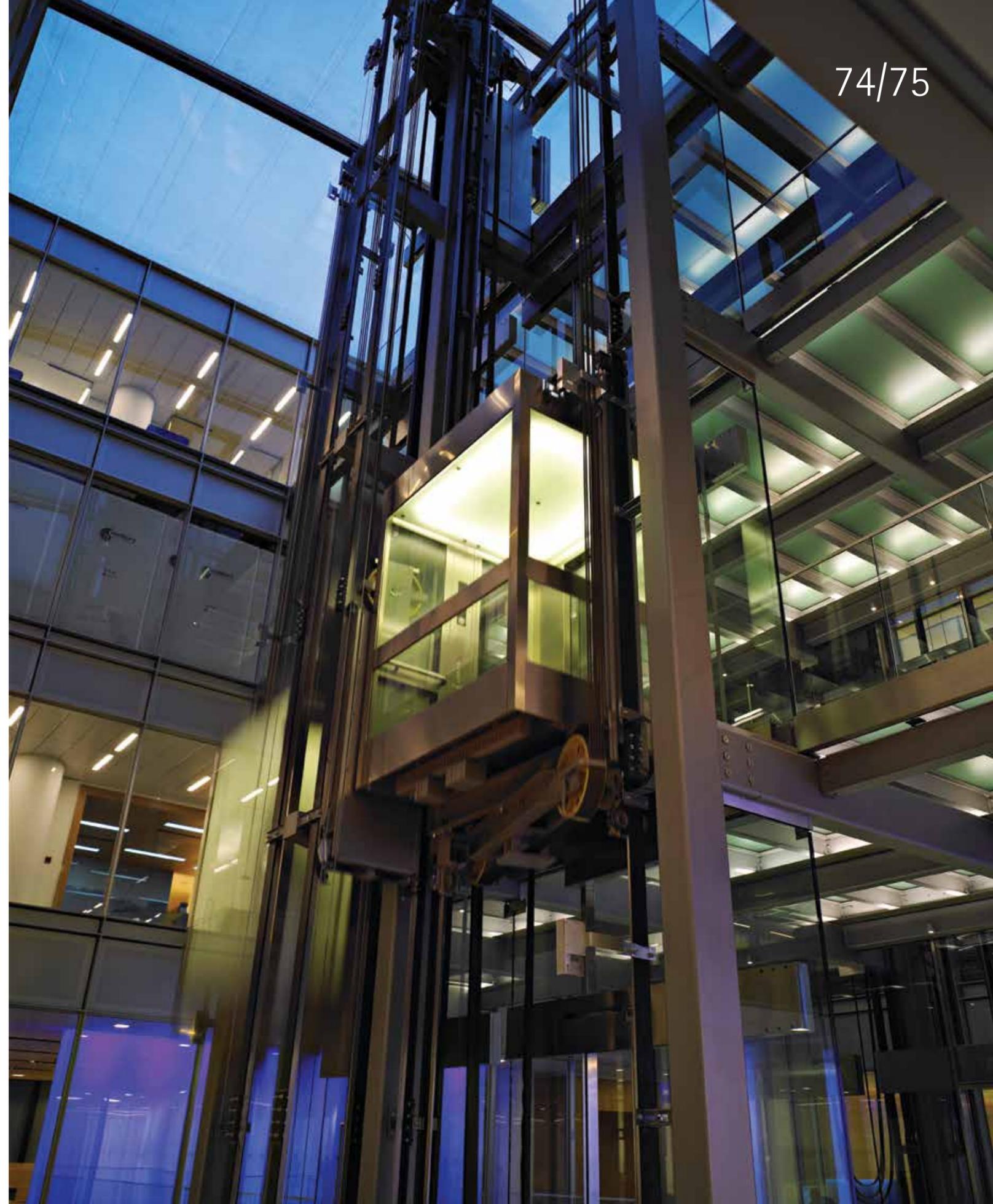
This attractive and efficient riverside workplace for a leading law firm was once an ungainly leviathan with the vast dealing floors of the late 1980s. It joined the elite ranks of office buildings when it was sold for a sum which gave it the lowest rental yield ever agreed in the City as a result of our remodelling. Adding space, improving the attractiveness and flexibility of existing accommodation, and creating new amenities, such as atria and a roof garden all helped to give it that premium value. A relocated entrance and rationalised circulation stress the new identity and improved efficiency. Advanced methods of structural analysis identified where atria could be inserted to bring daylight into the middle of the floorplate, the lost space offset by infilling useless perimeter atria. Modern plant freed up much of the roof for a new office floor, and though St Paul's view corridors prevented it covering the whole building, we turned the remainder into a stunning roof garden with views across the river and wi-fi enabled so it is a working as well as relaxation space.



Far left: 10 Queen Street Place is a large riverside block
Above: We retained the high quality granite cladding
Inset: Sketch showing the new atria locations and the roof terrace



Above: The new atria bring light into the deep plan and provide circulation between floors
Right: The new central atrium's main circulation core





New Brook Buildings, WC2

A new facade that fits disparate forms into their Conservation Area setting and massively improves the quality of the interior, extra space over the underused service yard and a new, unified image all give this 1950s building a new presence in the increasingly important Midtown office market. The challenge was similar to many commercial refurbishments: poor energy performance due to inadequate plant and facade; a layout and dispersal of accommodation that failed to exploit the site and developable volume; and a planning regime that made wholesale redevelopment uneconomic because it would result in less area. Each solution was particular, and here the redesigned facade addresses aesthetic as well as functional needs.

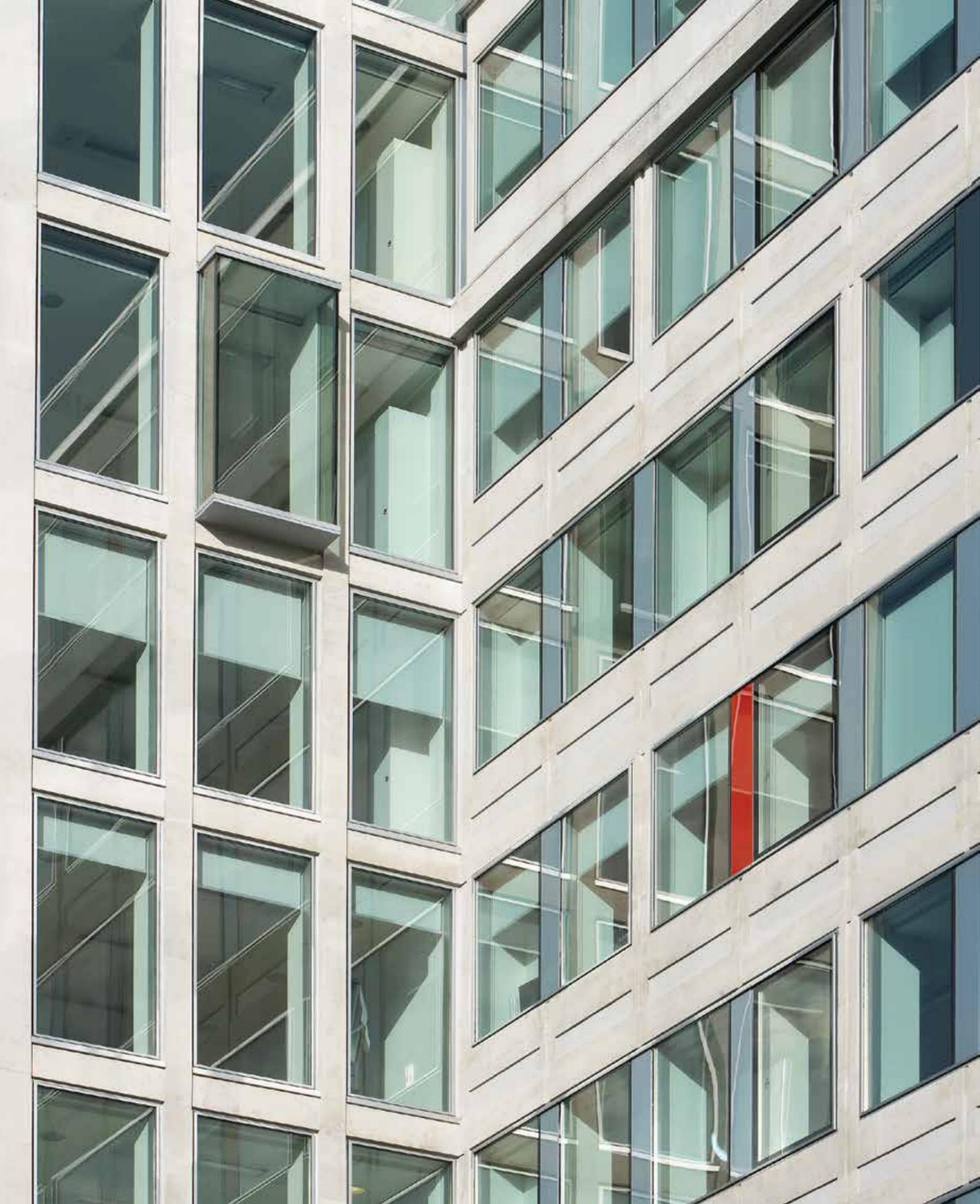
As well as improving performance it stresses the horizontal and vertical elements of the building to clarify its identity. Occasional oriel windows protrude to break up the facade, but also to add congenial break-out spaces to the office interiors. A controlled dash of colour completes the enhancements to the building's appearance and contribution to the cityscape, while an expanded and upgraded entrance improves its presence on the street.



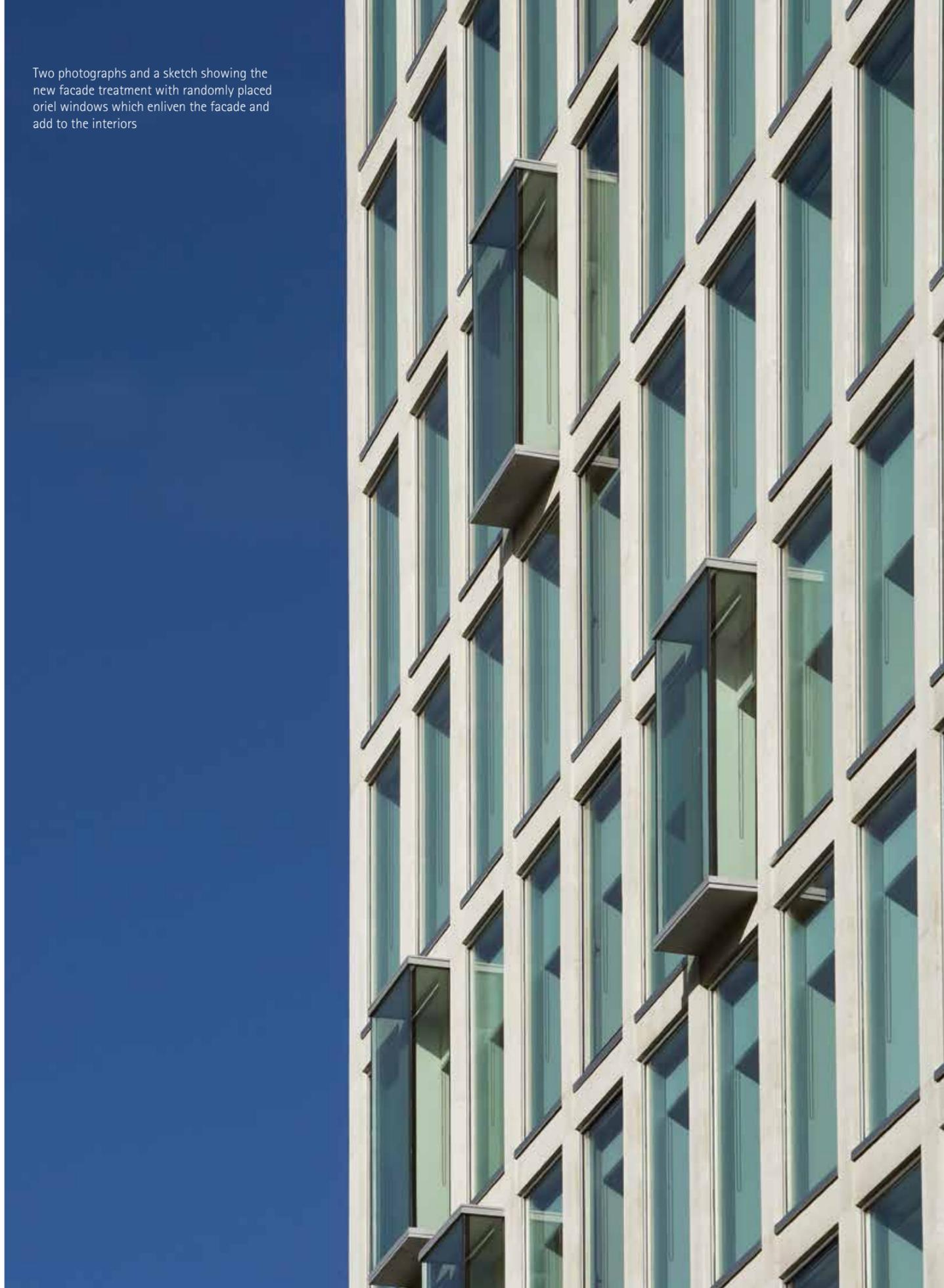
Top: The remodelled entrance foyer
Above: Frontage to Great Queen Street
Right: The enlivened facade gives the building a new urban presence

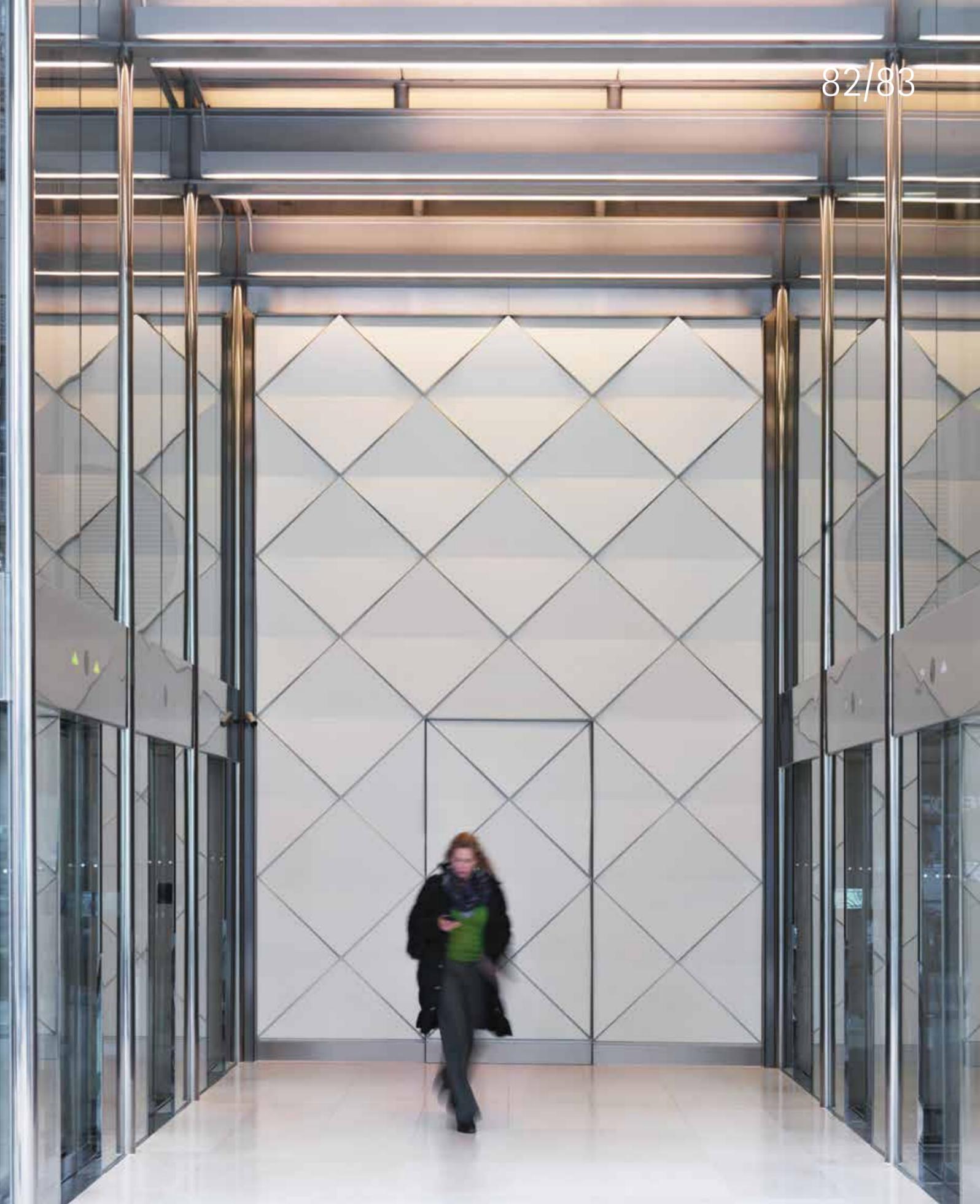






Two photographs and a sketch showing the new facade treatment with randomly placed oriel windows which enliven the facade and add to the interiors





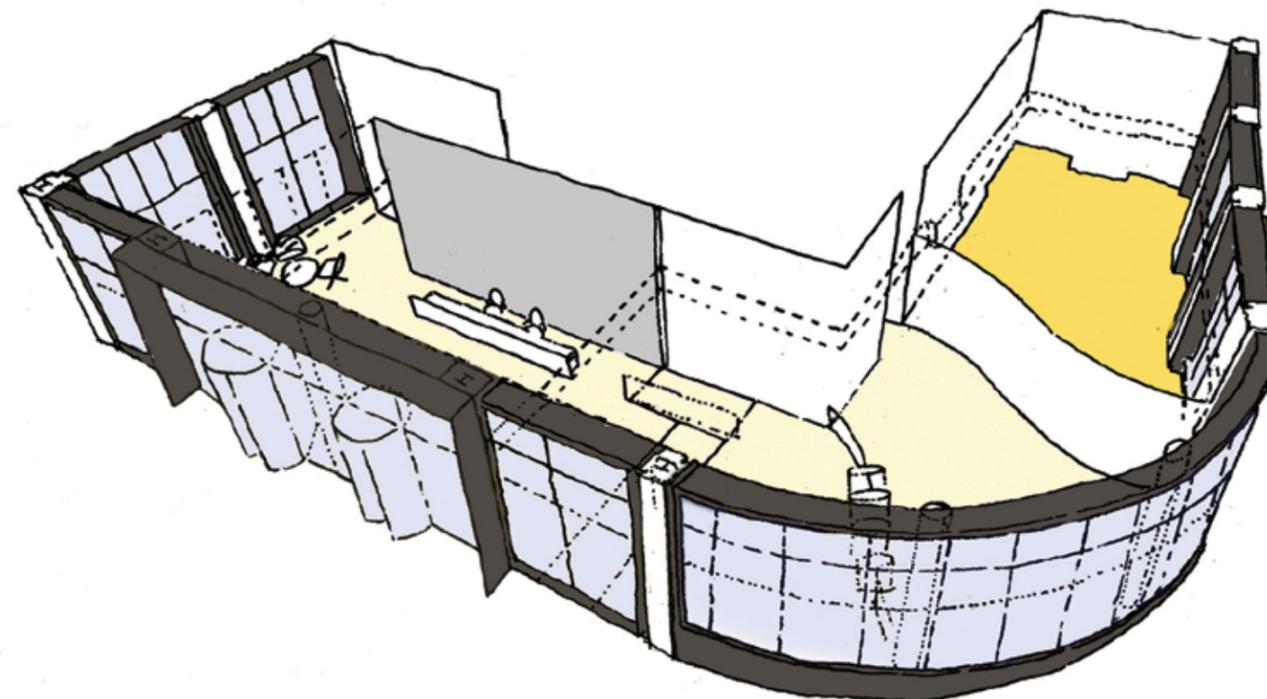
The Helicon, EC2

Finished in 1996 to designs by Sheppard Robson, the Helicon building helped to start the rejuvenation of Moorgate with its high tech detailing and provision of substantial modern retail units along the street frontage. Our brief was to reinforce the building's strengths while recalibrating it for the location's evolving commercial status – and remaining partly occupied throughout. We upgraded about 5,574 sq.m. in the top four of its eight office floors, and remodelled the atrium to increase the daylight it brings to the workplaces and its value as an amenity. We also reconfigured and rationalised the entrance sequence from pavement to lift lobby, keeping the radiating glass drum which is the most striking feature of the original design but adding a feature to the wall which recalls the work of Harry Bertioia. Improving the flow of people through the foyer enhances the building's identity and resets its relationship to the public realm, making it generous and welcoming as well as enjoyable.

Top and above: We have upgraded the foyer within the original design
Right: New lift lobby

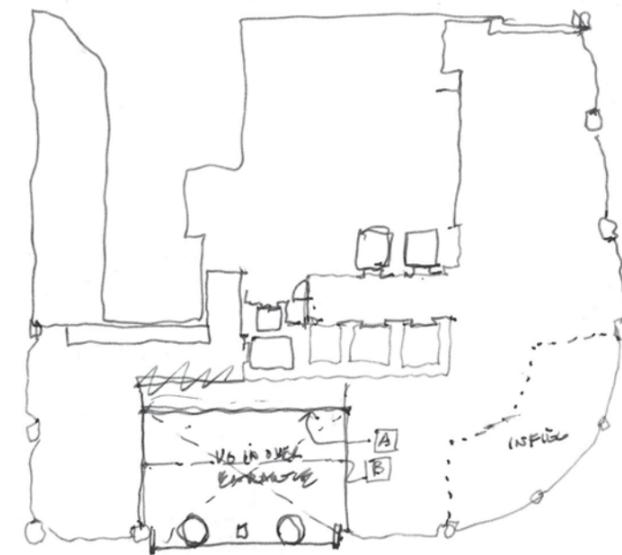


We moved the entrance from the corner to Bishopsgate. Earlier phases of Broadgate are visible to the left and the right, where Exchange House straddles the rail track



199 Bishopsgate, EC2

Our refurbishment of 199 Bishopsgate shows how Broadgate can continue to set the pace in the City office market. We upgraded the office space beyond the level it set in the 1990s, and improved its environmental performance from a high standard when it was built to the exacting measure of today's BREEAM Excellent rating. Carbon emission drops from 939 to 361 tonnes annually; water consumption also falls and sedum roofs encourage biodiversity. The keys to these improvements are the reconfigured core, centralising plant in the basement and on the roof rather than separately on each floor, and reglazing with energy efficient glass. The result adds to and increases flexibility of layout and subdivision of the office space. Meanwhile the expanded entrance, relocated to Bishopsgate with onyx and travertine marble finishes that recall SOM's translucent Beinecke Rare Books Library at Yale, strengthens its identity as a 'commercial palazzo'.



Top and above: Studies for the entrance which was relocated from the corner to face Bishopsgate



199

199

The new entrance on Bishopsagte with a sketch for the foyer behind.

Level 11
Level 10
Level 09
Level 08

Level 07
Level 06
Level 05
Level 04

Level 03
Level 02
Level 01





The future

Architects have to acknowledge the past, work in the present, but design for the future. Rapidly changing economic conditions, as well as social and environmental needs, increase the need for architects to understand our obligations to previous generations and those to come.

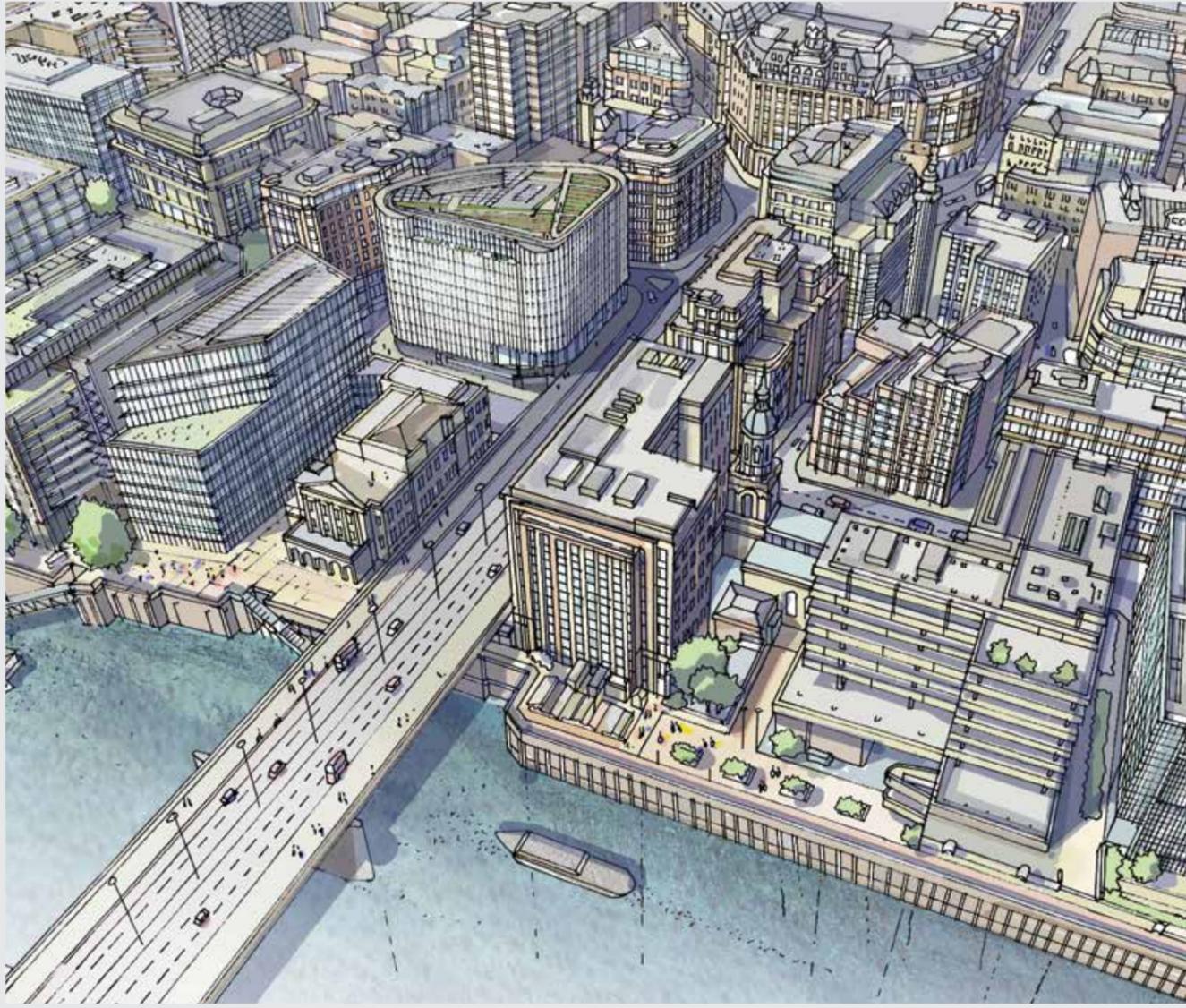
We believe architecture can play an important role in the emerging world. Cities will continue to grow, commerce will be increasingly global, and sustainability will be ever more important. Our approach, rooted in contextual modernism, offers ways to respond to these challenges.

Proposed roof terrace at 33 King William Street, London

A series of projects show how contextual modernism, supported by strong technical expertise can continue to create value in urban locations, in several parts of London and overseas.



Projects in Progress

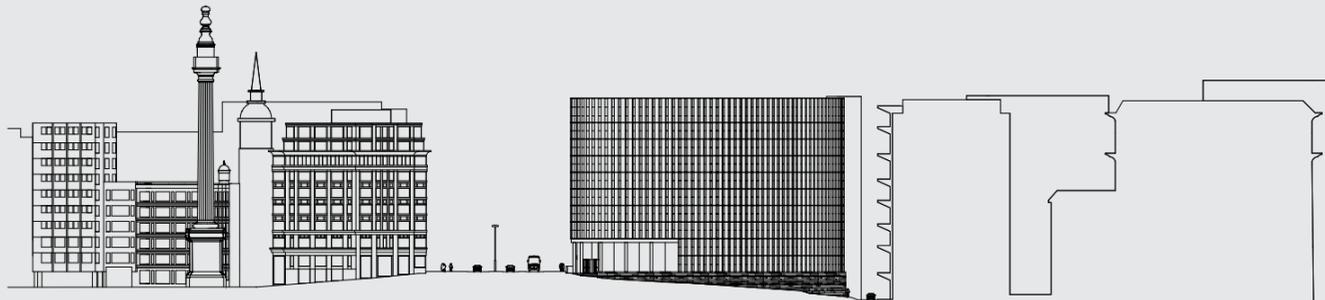


33 King William Street, EC4

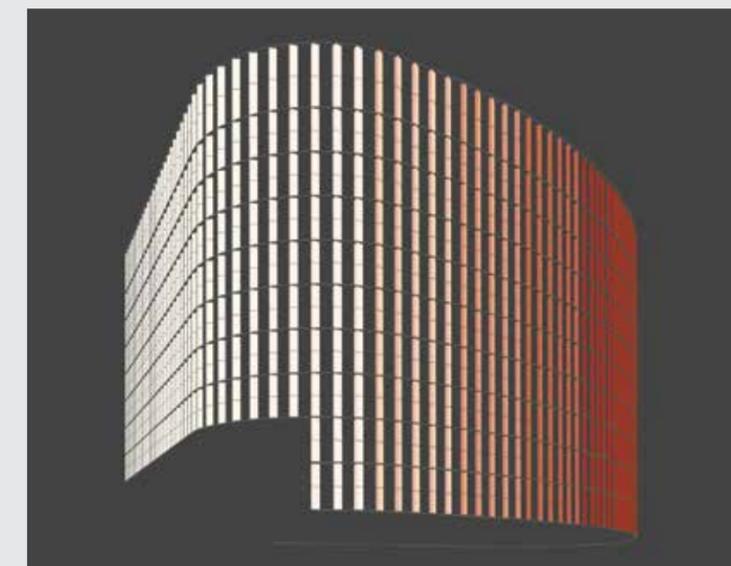
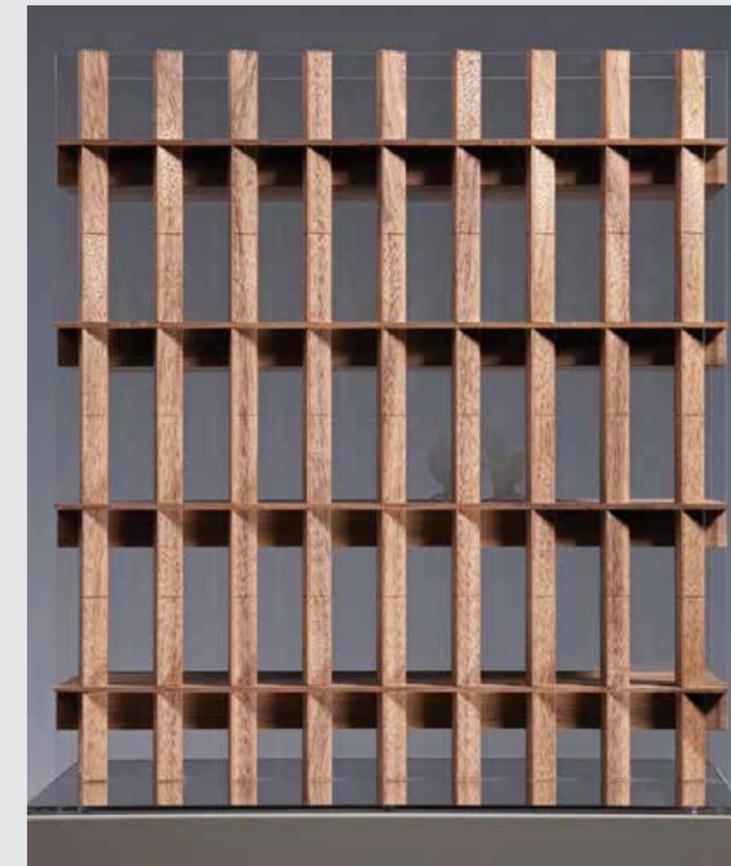
Situated at the point where King William Street turns onto London Bridge, the site is magnificent with views along the bridge to the river. But as the existing building shows, the level changes and road positions make it awkward. Our design directly draws on our 'contextual modernist' approach to address the surroundings and to propose a suitably striking image and identity for a building which increases the quality and quantity of accommodation to draw out the site's inherent value and character. A boundary-hugging plan maximises volume and brings daylight in from all sides. The facade, which wraps the irregular curving form, addresses the issues of urban design. Its base, in keeping with its relationship to the roads, is a dark granite, while above it becomes a filigree of stainless steel and faience cladding, glass, windows, frame and sunshading.

Left: The building has a large and prominent site just north of London Bridge
This page and inset: The facade reduces solar gain and maximises daylight





Above: North elevation showing the Monument
Below: The lobby has a futuristic feel



Facade studies, model (top), CAD image (above)



33 King William Street on the left and
The Monument Estate on the right flank
the northern approach to London Bridge



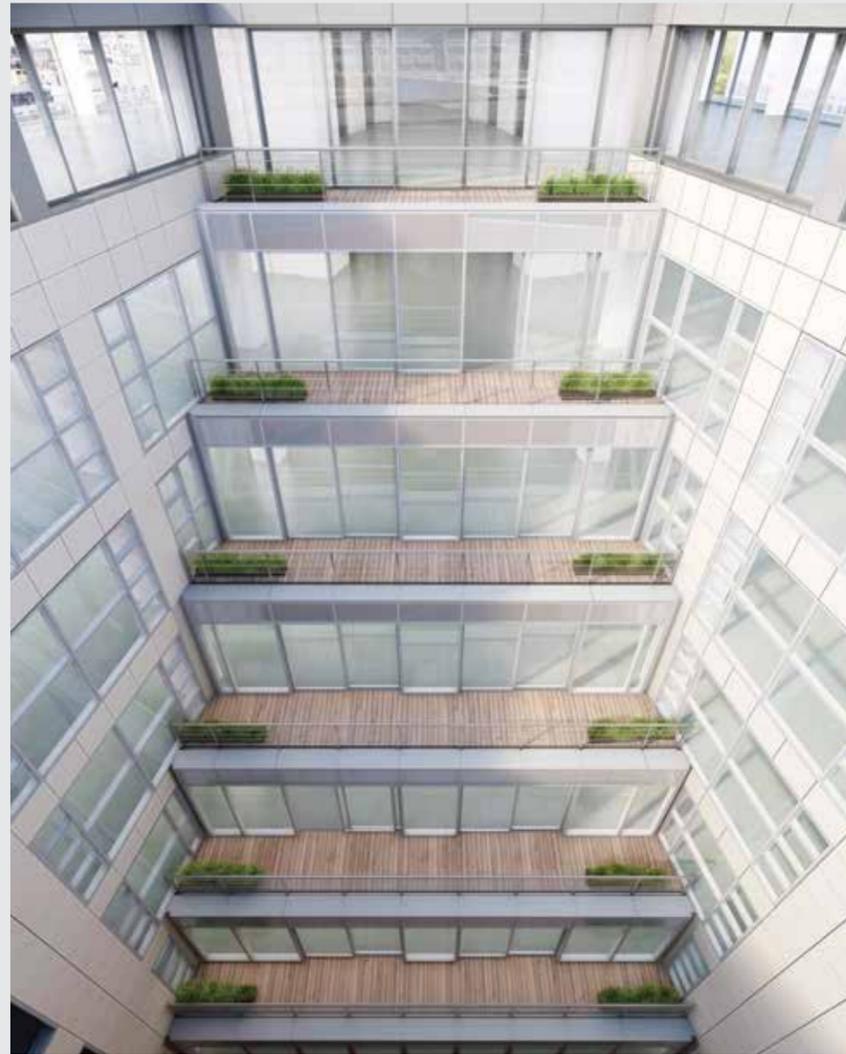
The shape of the new building compliments the giant classical column of the Monument



The Monument Estate, EC3

Our challenge in this project was to add more value than an existing planning consent. We set out to add flexibility and exploit the potential of the site to increase the appeal of the office space. A retail base drives activity at ground level, following the now established practice in the City. The entrance to the offices is clearly articulated, and the upper storeys are calm and elegant. Taking a cue from the giant Corinthian order of the Monument itself, the sweeping curves of its facade are faceted to reflect the fluting of the column. Internally the shape gives efficient, flexible space, with the additional benefit of views in this diverse and rewarding part of the City. History and contemporary commerce complement each other.





Left: Infilling the light well adds much of the new space our design creates
Below: The spacious new foyer

39 Victoria Street, SW1

At 39 Victoria Street we added more than 2,000 sq.m. office space – about 30 per cent – to a tired 1980s commercial building, changed its appearance and energy performance with a new façade, and so enable it to attract occupiers who need to be at the heart of the UK's government district. The Department of Business, Innovation and Skills is almost next door, Scotland Yard opposite, and the Houses of Parliament themselves a short walk away, past Westminster Abbey and the Supreme Court.

Like all successful repositionings, the key was to understand the potential of the base building, the character and market of its immediate area, and how to match the two in a way which bestows a strong, contemporary identity. We found we could partly infill a lightwell to add space, redesign the entrance which together with a new façade gives the building an entirely new image, and replace the plant with more efficient systems which bring it up to the BREEAM Excellent standard. Now offering nearly 9,000 sq.m., it is suitable for subdivision or a single let.



Academy House, 161-167 Oxford Street, W1

A mixed range of shops, with Soho on one side and Fitzrovia on the other, and some fine early 20th century commercial architecture all contribute variety to the eastern end of Oxford Street. Our refurbishment of this 1980s building on the corner with Poland Street draws on the potential of each of these characteristics. Externally the new lively-coloured faience clad facade establishes a presence for it in the urban fabric, simultaneously reflecting the creative energy of Soho and the Edwardian baroque flourishes of the Mappin and Webb building opposite, while contrasting with the black marble art deco Pantheon alongside. The internal reconfigurations update its workspace to modern standards as the modifications to the exterior realise the potential of Westminster Council's 'Opportunity Zone'.

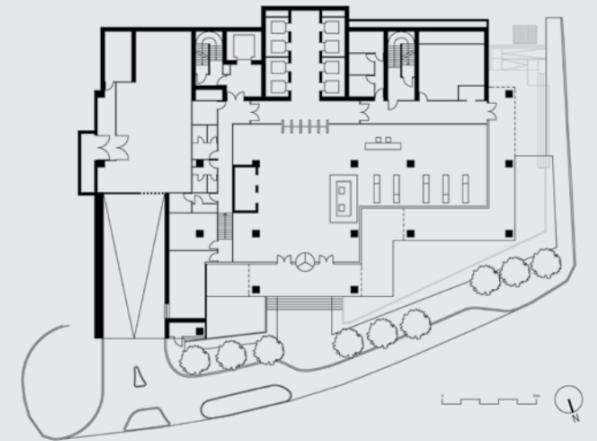




BankMed, Beirut

108/109

An invited international competition entry for the BankMed headquarters in Beirut allowed us to demonstrate how our contextual modernist approach and ability to design effective workplaces could work in a different climate and culture. The project is part of the ambitious programme for reconstructing downtown Beirut's Central Business District. We turned an inevitably complex building envelope shaped by rights of light and site boundaries to advantage, making three towers each with an 'office finger' of different length. Between them are two atria and linking them is a technical wall with lifts, WCs and plant. High performance glass and solar shading reduce heat gain. The composition balances the complexity of the rights of light envelope and the variety of workplace needs, with an overall identity which complements and makes a cluster with bank's existing headquarters. The faceted perimeter gives views to Mount Lebanon in one direction and the Mediterranean in the other, while the stepped atria ensure a variety of views across the interior. At ground level there is a plaza which gives public access to the banking hall in the base of one of towers, and reception desks to guide visitors to the offices above.



Above: The design has three towers with two atria between them
Right: A public plaza at ground level gives access to the banking hall
Top right: Ground plan

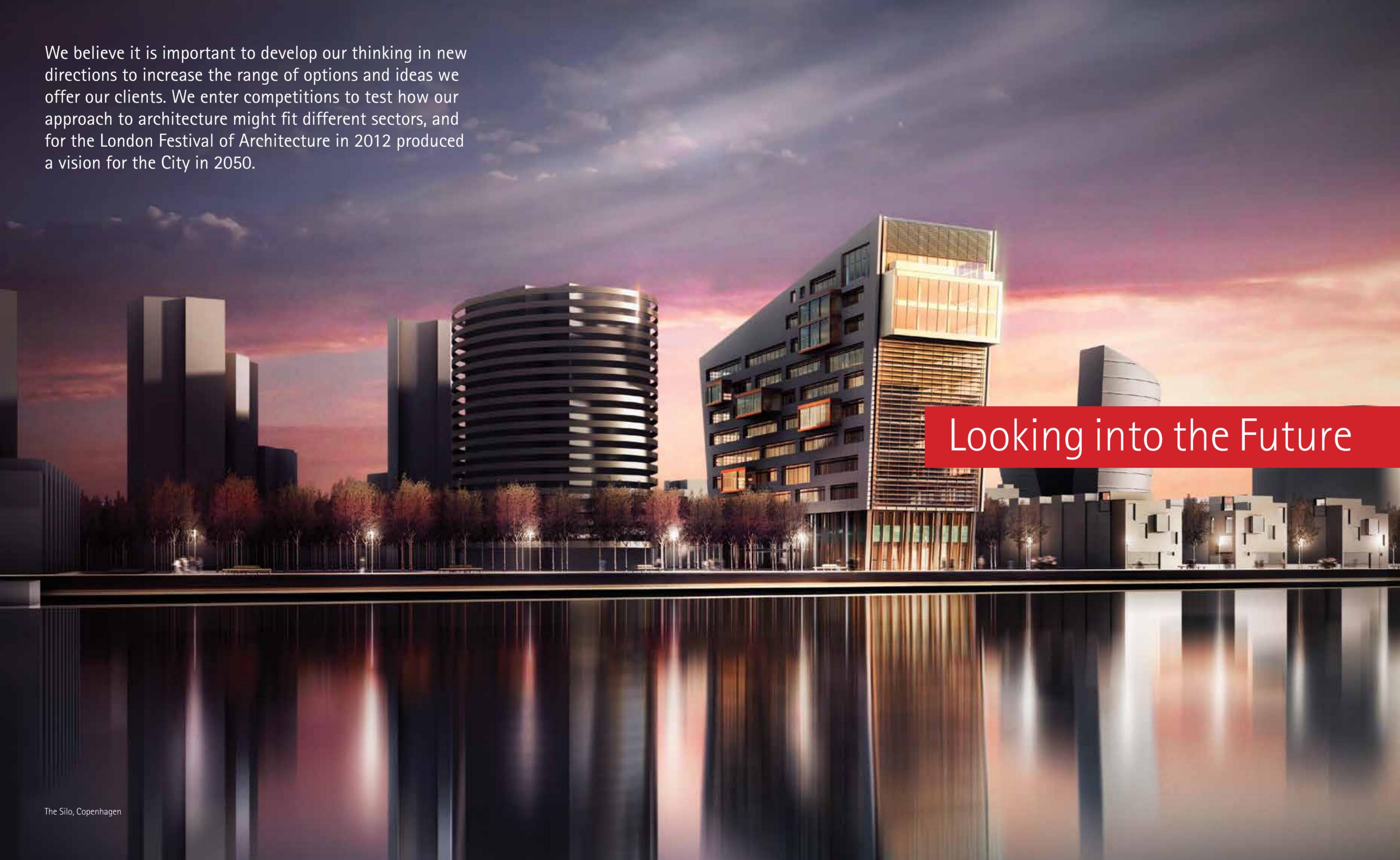


Above: The atria between the office towers bring light and a sense of space to the interiors
 Right: One of Beirut's tallest buildings, the views from high level are spectacular

Below: View across Beirut to Mount Lebanon
 Below right: At ground level, there are visual links to the surroundings



We believe it is important to develop our thinking in new directions to increase the range of options and ideas we offer our clients. We enter competitions to test how our approach to architecture might fit different sectors, and for the London Festival of Architecture in 2012 produced a vision for the City in 2050.

An architectural rendering of a modern city skyline at dusk. The sky is a mix of purple, pink, and orange. In the foreground, a row of trees with autumn-colored leaves is illuminated by streetlights. The buildings are dark with some windows glowing. A prominent feature is a tall, dark building with a curved, ribbed facade. To its right is a taller, more angular building with a grid-like facade and a large, illuminated section. The entire scene is reflected in a body of water in the foreground. A red rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text "Looking into the Future".

Looking into the Future



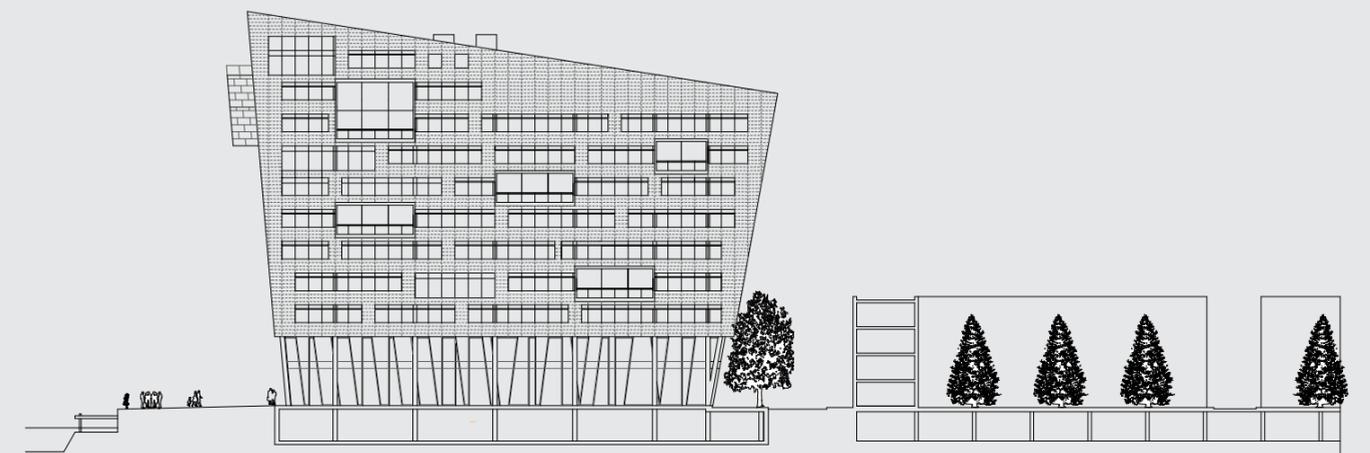
The Silo, Copenhagen

Our first significant overseas project was a competition-winning scheme for a waterside site within a masterplan for regenerating a large area of Copenhagen's redundant port area. Our brief was to recycle a grain silo for residential use. It is a large volume with a strong presence which provides a hint of history in the emerging urban quarter, which will have a lively public realm on the attractive waterside setting. Later we were asked to examine how it could be redeveloped for commercial use. We showed how the silo could provide efficient and congenial – and naturally ventilated – office space, with the extensive amenities expected in Denmark on the first floor, where they make an interstitial zone between the public realm at the ground and the private workspace above. Our studies showed how the reuse of this structure could adapt to evolving priorities as the masterplan unfolds.

Left: The site is in a regenerating part of Copenhagen's former commercial harbour

Above: The waterfront has become a leisure amenity

Below: Redeveloping the Silo provided a scale-shift building on Copenhagen's waterfront





Above: The proposal was for three towers and a low rise block

Above right: We maximised the number of apartments with river views



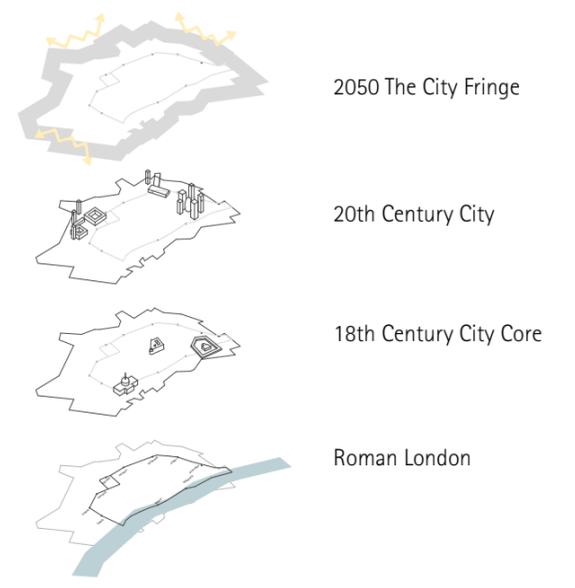
The site is adjacent to Canary Wharf and across the river Thames from the Millennium Dome

Glengall Wharf, E14

Our competition entry for this site on Millharbour, just south of Canary Wharf, combined high value apartments with high density development. We started by placing the accommodation around the perimeter to create an urban block, but complicated Rights of Light corridors limit the height across part of the site, while allowing much higher buildings in others – and a total of 634 units. This suggested a series of towers rising from a podium, which had the advantage of shaping and serving the public realm at ground level by building out to the street line, and creating premium value high rise apartments. The tower plan also maximised value, with only one circulation core at the perimeter, leaving a larger clear area and maximum flexibility and panoramic views for the apartments themselves. A palette of aluminium or stainless steel, zinc and render enlivened the elevations and helped to overcome the shift in scale, while projecting winter gardens broke down the exterior surfaces further and added to the attraction of the apartment interiors.

A VISION FOR LONDON 2050





The City

Our vision for London in 2050, first presented by invitation of the Festival of Architecture in 2012, was an opportunity to explore how our knowledge of how development in the City works and where it will go in the future. We proposed three main themes: a de-carbonised, pedestrianised but largely preserved historic core; enhanced peripheral areas with new building types and mixes of activities, and improved connections with neighbouring areas; and a leisure-based eco park along the river.

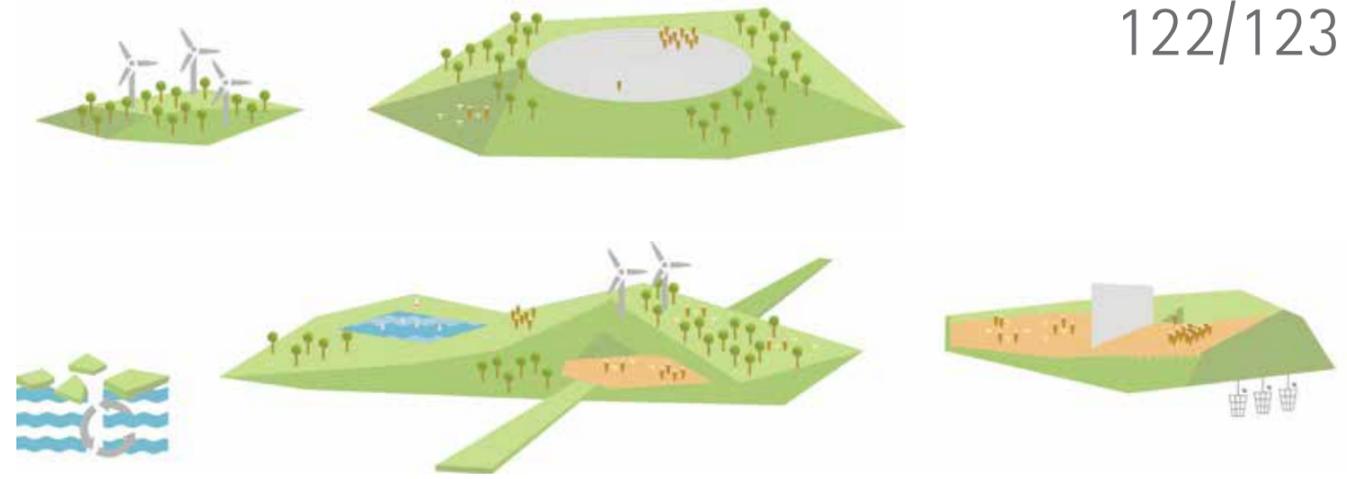
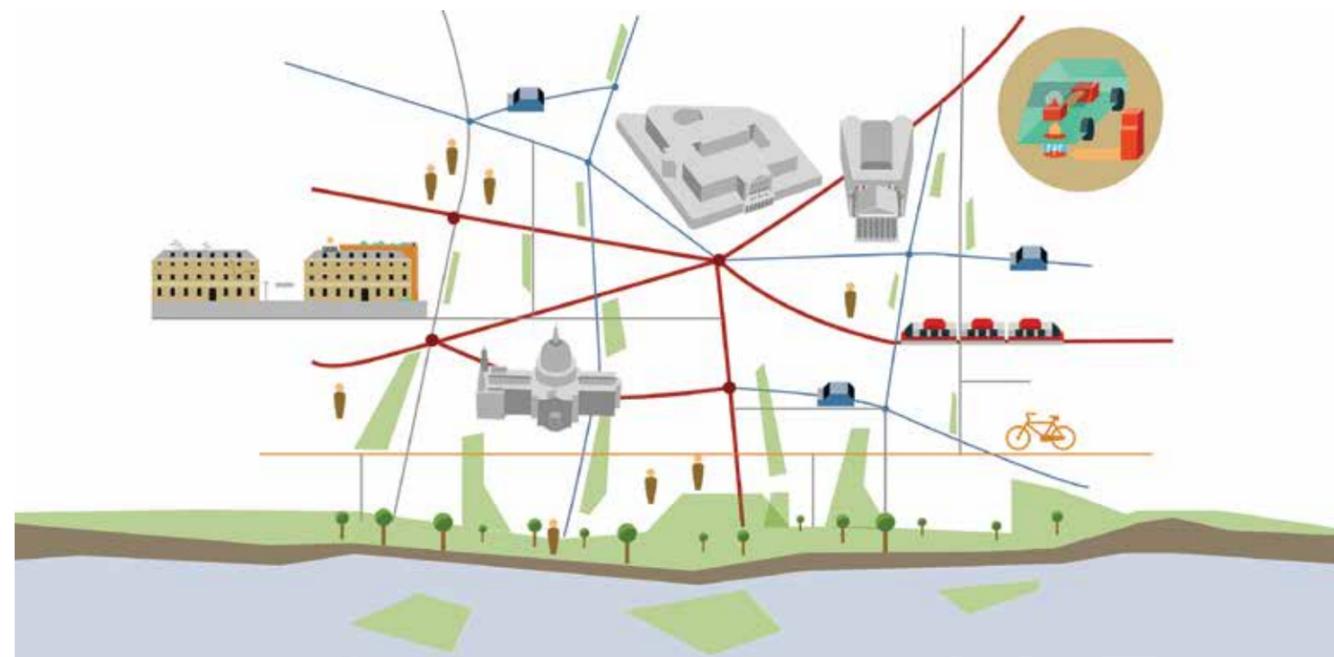
We looked in particular at two peripheral areas as well as the core and the river: Aldgate, where large scale development can take place to produce large, flexible buildings that are future-proofed against changing needs of financial and professional occupiers; Smithfield, where underused cavernous spaces offer scope for cultural and leisure activities and creative organisations that support them, all fed by the new transport hub at Farringdon; and the river park.

Overall we foresaw new technologies which will allow greater density of occupation, more mixing of activities, and greatly reduced energy and carbon consumption. All this will take place within the City's historic grain, making use of its proximities and adjacencies to promote interaction for work and pleasure with a lively ground plane.



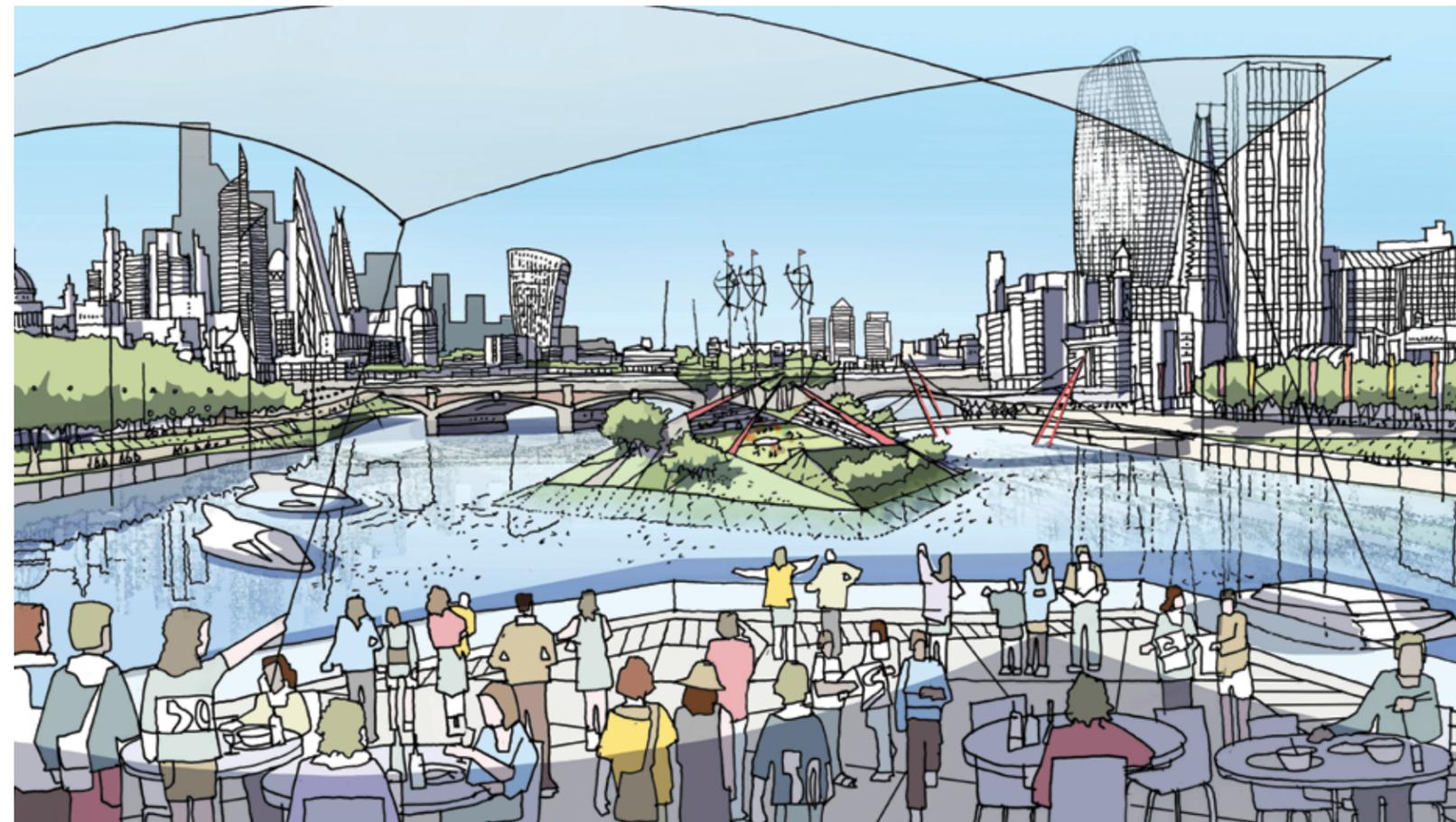
City Core

Rather than wholesale redevelopment we suggested that the City Core could be retrofitted to enhance sustainability and sociability. Better transport infrastructure to bring people to termini around the City, and encouraging alternatives to motor transport like cycling and walking within the core itself, will significantly improve the attractiveness of its public realm as well as improving its carbon footprint. Buildings which become obsolete for original purposes might be retrofitted to other uses, or if totally redundant, selectively and carefully redeveloped. The result will be an almost entirely pedestrianised core, still focused around business but with a wider mix of uses than now.



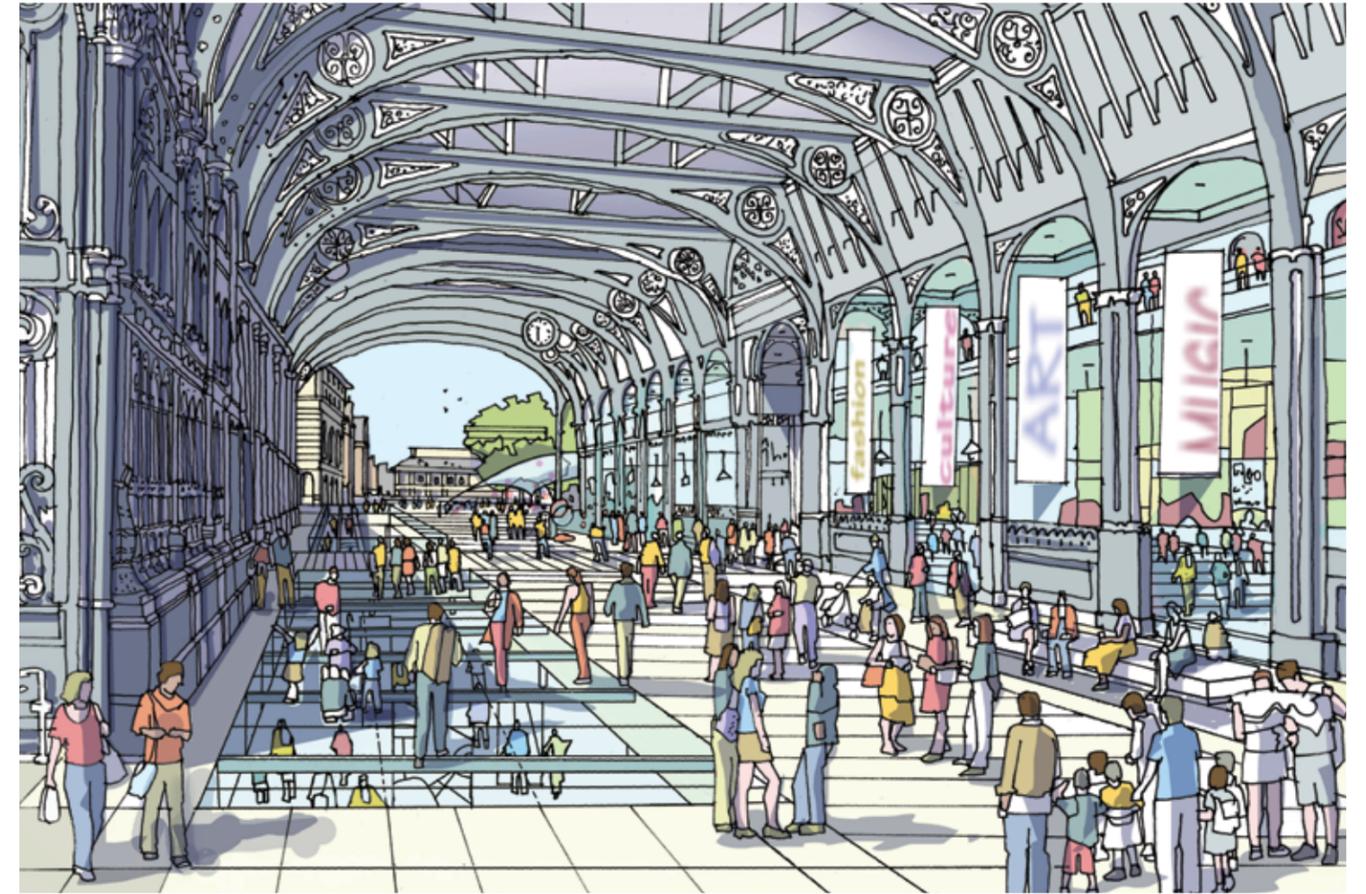
Thames River Park

Our proposal exploited the river's potential as a recreational and energy resource for London. A riverside walkway would become a major thoroughfare from the Temple to the Tower, while islands in the river would provide a variety of new amenities, from green oases and swimming facilities, to eco-habitats and water purification, as well as staging posts in new pedestrian and cycle crossings between north and south banks.



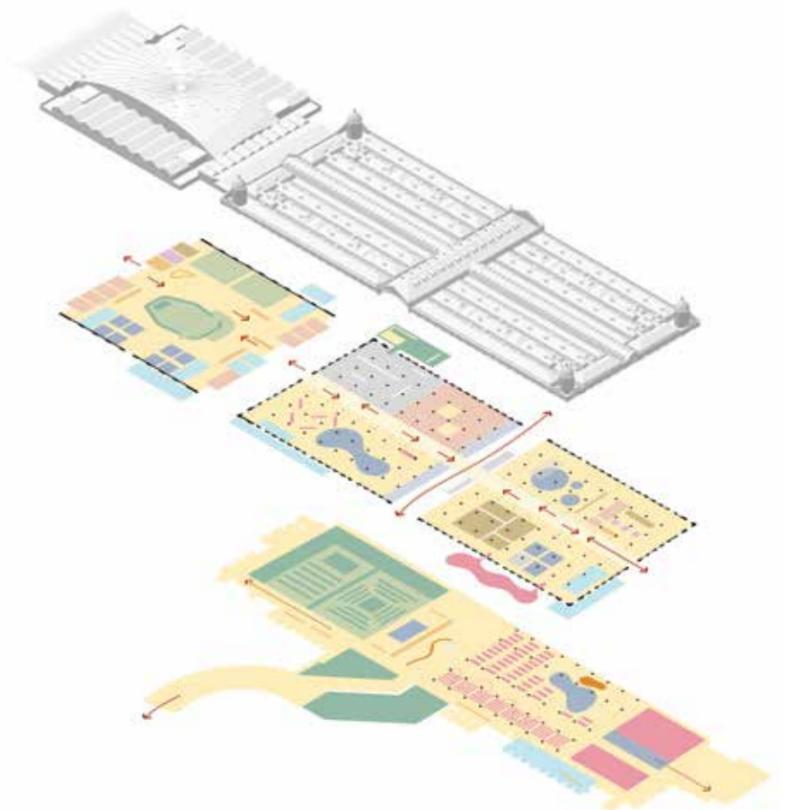
Aldgate Financial Centre

Aldgate is one part of the City with potential for wholesale redevelopment, so here we proposed a new financial centre, and new hybrid building typologies to provide the scale and flexibility of space that financial services might need in a generation's time. These new buildings will be set within a landscaped 'high park' and clustered to achieve synergies between offices and trading rooms, live/work units, residential apartments and technology, and research uses. George Dance's St. Botolph's Church will be set in a new urban piazza, providing a focal point for the enlivened public realm which will reach beyond the edge of the City towards Whitechapel.



Smithfield Cultural Quarter

Assuming that the meat market will move, we proposed a strategy for Smithfield that would foster a new cultural quarter on the north western corner of the City. Cultural venues could make use of the cavernous spaces, some of them underground, for interaction and display – with many types of workplace clustered around them. With Farringdon Station providing direct links across and beyond London, it would be one of the most accessible locations within London for visitors and workers alike.



Awards

2013
AJ100 Awards:
Practice of the Year
Shortlisted

AJ100 Awards:
Fastest Growing Practice
Shortlisted

AJ100 Awards:
Best Place To Work:
South East & London
Shortlisted

AJ100 Awards:
Value Excellence Award
199 Bishopsgate, London EC2
Winner

2012
AJ100 Awards:
New Entrant of the Year Award
Shortlisted

AJ100 Awards:
Value Excellence Award
New Brook Buildings, London W2
Highly Commended

London Planning Awards 2011/12:
Best New Place to Live
Highbury Gardens, London N7

2010
The British Council for Offices Awards
New Brook Buildings, London WC2
Finalist

The British Council for Offices Awards
107 Cheapside, London EC2
Finalist

2009
The British Council for Offices Awards
Park House, Finsbury Circus, London EC2
Finalist

2008
The Office Development Awards
20 Cursitor Street, London EC4
Shortlisted

LTA's National Tennis Centre wins 'Best of the Best' at the BCO Awards

2007
Business Week and The Architectural Record Awards
10 Queen Street Place, London EC4
Citation for Excellence

BRE Environmental Assessment Award:
Rating Excellent under EcoHomes 2005
Phase 2
Greenwich Millennium Village, London SE10

2006
British Council for Offices Award:
Best Refurbished/Recycled Workplace in London
10 Queen Street Place, London EC4

BRE Environmental Assessment Award: Rating "Excellent"
under EcoHomes 2003
Greenwich Millennium Village, London SE10

2002
British Council for Offices Award *Commendation*
Commercial Workplace Category
The Daily Express Building and 120 Fleet Street, London EC4

Civic Trust Award Commendation
Greater London Region
The Daily Express Building Restoration, Fleet Street, London EC4

2001
Royal Fine Art Commission Trust
Building of the Year Award
The Daily Express Building Restoration, Fleet Street, London EC4

City Heritage Award
Daily Express Building Restoration, Fleet Street, London EC4

2000
British Council for Offices Award
Best Commercial Office Building
South East Region
One Great St Helen's, London EC3

National Homebuilder Design Awards *Commendation*
Best Apartment Building
Montevetro, Battersea, London SW11

1999
The Building Awards
Up and Coming Architectural Practice of the Year
Winner

The National Homebuilder Design Awards
Best New Housing Development of the Year
The City Quay, St Katharine's Dock, London E1

1998
The Building Awards
Up and Coming Architectural Practice of the Year
Runner Up

IT Manager of the Year Competition
Building Manager of the Year
Shortlisted

Civic Trust Award
50 Cannon Street, London EC4
Commendation

1997
The Building Awards
Up and Coming Architectural Practice of the Year
Shortlisted

1996
The Building Awards
Up and Coming Architectural Practice of the Year
Shortlisted

British Industrial Agents' Society Award
Maxii Centre, Theale, Berkshire
Runner Up

Clients

Aldar PJSC
Aviva Investors
BankMed
British Land plc
Bellhouse Property Partners
Berkeley Homes
The Blackstone Group International
Cambridge Education Group
Cardinal Lysander
The Carlyle Group
Carillion Construction Ltd
Castlethorn UK
Church of England Pension Board
The City of London Corporation
CORE
Countryside Properties
Crosstree Real Estate Partners
Delbanco Meyer and Company
First Base
Fladgate LLP
Goldman Sachs International
Greenwich Millennium Village Ltd
Greycoat plc
Helical Bar
Henderson Global Investors
Itochu Europe Ltd
Kajima (UK) Limited
Kato Kagaku & Co. Ltd
Laing O'Rourke
Land Securities Plc
Linklaters
Malvern House
The Mercers' Company
Native Land
Nordkranen A/S
Prudential Assurance Company Ltd
Rockpoint
RREEF
St James Urban Living
Standard Life Investments
The Worshipful Company of Carpenters
The Worshipful Company of Plaisterers
Topland
Wainbridge

Credits

Design and art direction

Gavin Ambrose

Text and curation

Jeremy Melvin

Introductory text

Paul Finch

Design assistant

Eleanor French

Images

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Alexander, Max: 4, 5, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 24, 25, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63

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Young, Xavier: 22, 23, 24, 25, 75