

DERWENT
LONDON

SPACE



2023



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SPACE

Welcome to the 2023 edition of Space. What Derwent London has experienced is a period of new insights about our tenants and their requirements in a post-pandemic working landscape, as well as the ever evolving development and sustainability journey of our buildings.

With openness and learning in mind, this edition of Space features articles about the newly opened Soho Place, and the state-of-the-art Nimax theatre on the same site. We preview Old Street's newest offering from Derwent, The Featherstone Building, Hugh Pearman talks to CEO Paul Williams, while some of the team provide an insight into the joined-up thinking behind DL/78, the new Derwent community space in the heart of Fitzrovia. We table a discussion with Peter Lowe from Benchmark and hear about a community project between Square Mile Farms and the Green Schools Project.

We hope you enjoy the read.

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**Front Cover &
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Soho Place W1

2023



Turning the Corner

Soho Place is over a decade in the making, but the vision actually began over 20 years ago. It is a project where ambition and complexity met. Design writer Ali Morris found out how the development came to fruition.

It's not typical that a single building can set the tone for a new area of a global city like London, but Soho Place, Derwent London's most complex project to date, has done just that. Located at the junction of Charing Cross Road and Oxford Street, a formerly down-at-heel corner of central London, Soho Place sits on top of and wraps around TfL's Tottenham Court Road underground station and the new Elizabeth line station, which sits five storeys below ground. A linchpin of this emerging neighbourhood, it provides a new link between Soho Square and all the regeneration that has occurred in this area, around Centre Point and Eamshaw Street.

The site was destined to be demolished to make way for a new transport station, but CEO Paul Williams

“Soho Place is a great example of the public and private sector working together to create a project for commerce, culture and public realm, which has been the corner stone for the regeneration of the east end of Oxford Street.”

— Richard Baldwin, Director of Development at Derwent London

felt there was a ‘better way’ leading to a unique public/private collaboration with Crossrail.

The scheme, designed by London-based architects and long-term collaborators AHMM, Arup engineers and built by Laing O’Rourke, consists of two buildings connected by a new public realm—Soho Place. The buildings are referred to as ‘icebergs’, as there are five storeys of complex construction and development below.

The main building that sits to the north, 1 Soho Place, is a ten-storey, double-tiered volume that provides 191,000 sq ft of office space which was pre-let to Apollo Global Management and G-Research. This sits above 36,000 sq ft of retail space, split across 5 units. With an address of One Oxford Street, the retail is situated in an exceptional shopping location, and with the opening of the Elizabeth line, it looks set to energise the east end of Oxford Street.

The second building, 2 and 4 Soho Place, sits to the south and is home to a new 600-seat theatre, London’s first ever purpose built, flexible, in-the-round theatre space, as well as being the first in the West End for over 50 years. Nimax Theatres has been granted a 125-year lease and they opened in October 2022 to great reviews. There is also 18,400 sq ft of offices above the theatre, the entirety was pre-sold.



Soho Place's exterior, clad in a layered grid of steelwork, travertine stone, glass and lattice metal screens have a rich, ordered appearance influenced by twentieth-century modernism and, in particular, the work of Mies van der Rohe. As the building rises upwards it twists away from Charing Cross Road so that the upper floors disappear out of view from street level. This not only makes its huge volume less imposing but also creates expansive roof terraces on the upper floors that open up new views across the capital.

The interior includes references to London's architecture, the precast concrete panels in the lobby and stairwell recalling the bush-hammered concrete found in Brutalist icons such as Denys Lasdun's National Theatre and Chamberlin, Powell and Bon's Barbican. Meanwhile, the white glazed bricks and Crittal-style internal windows reference the capital's Victorian-era industrial architecture. Other local details include the bespoke leather and travertine bench seating and leather-wrapped handrail in the lobby, which were made by local leather-workers Bill Amberg Studio. A timber floor by Danish brand Dinesen and timber wall cladding adds warmth to the cool steel and concrete. The result is an interior that is respectful of its surroundings and feels unique yet comfortingly familiar.

As with all Derwent London buildings, the internal spaces are generously proportioned and filled with light, surfaces are kept raw, and structures exposed to maximise volume and reduce waste.

In the building's central core, a dramatic suspended steel staircase sits exposed alongside the lift lobby encouraging occupants to use the stairs more and the lifts a little less. This not only promotes exercise with obvious physical health benefits but also promotes social interactions, which are proven to boost mood and productivity.

The project had many collaborators and moving parts to consider, not to mention the many challenges, including around site assembly, it faced over the years, from the compulsory purchase of the original site by Crossrail to more recently the global pandemic. "Soho Place was due to complete before Christmas 2021 and ended up finishing in February 2022, which is actually incredibly impressive given the circumstances," says Project Manager Jo Benson, recounting the unique challenges that the last two years of the build presented. "It was already an extremely complex project having to build over a major live transport hub and then the pandemic just added a whole new layer of challenges. However, these challenges were met head on and admirably by the whole team."

The success of the pre-lets was in no small part down to the design and quality of the building. Employers are more aware than ever that to attract



“Soho Place is the construction of a Swiss watch built on an urban scale, all intertwined with and sitting over, an iceberg of new Crossrail infrastructure.”

— Simon Allford, Executive Director at AHMM

and retain the highest calibre of employees they need to provide offices that are more than just a desk and computer.

The glass lift shafts lined with white glazed bricks funnel daylight from the roof into the centre of the open-plan office floor plates, which also benefit from 3.2 metre volumes and wraparound glazing on the exposed sides. As well as the generous volumes and daylight, customers are increasingly interested in the building’s green credentials. In the case of Soho Place, the fact that it is the third property in the developer’s portfolio to achieve net zero carbon is one of the aspects of the design that the team are most proud of. “What we’re trying to do is reduce the embodied carbon and the operational carbon right down to a bare minimum, which means doing things leaner, cleaner and greener,” informs Development Manager, Benjamin Lesser. “For instance, all greywater from the building is recycled, 115 sq m of solar PV panels provide an onsite source of renewable energy, a biodiverse brown roof supports wildlife and 347 cycle racks along with shower facilities support sustainable travel.”

To achieve net zero, the residual carbon is offset using an accredited tree planting scheme. “We’ve got to build less but more efficiently,” states Head of Sustainability John Davies. “By 2030 Derwent



London is aiming for its entire portfolio of buildings to be net zero carbon so we’re currently retrofitting existing buildings to make them greener too.”

As an invested developer, Derwent views each project as an opportunity to push boundaries, building on what has gone before to create something that will stand the test of time and enrich its occupants’ everyday lives. “To see the designs come to fruition, to see the quality of the construction and how it’s been executed is just amazing,” concludes CEO Paul Williams. “We feel really, really proud of Soho Place.”

The completion of Soho Place not only marks a significant milestone for Derwent but also for London, which celebrates the emergence of a new cultural hub with a new theatre, new public space and a green building at its heart.



Yet, what Nica instinctively understood was that to attract the best talent in the future, the theatre would need to have the best facilities. “Bringing all these different parties together,” adds Jo, “ensured a best-in-class kind of product. So there is a fantastic rehearsal space, green room, restaurant and bar. Beautiful dressing rooms with natural light, which are not tucked away in the old coal cellars. It is purpose built from the ground up as a theatre for the 21st century.”

“It’s all about the experience of people using it, which also depends on the experience of the people working there, in order to run it smoothly” adds Rosie. “There was a push for quality right across the project. Creating that perfect West End theatre experience led every single element of the design. It’s also set up for digital innovation, so it’s completely up to date.”

“It’s an intimate (600 seats), but highly flexible auditorium” explains Jo. “We tested six different configurations, which went very well.” The extensive testing of the auditorium was above and beyond what would be expected in a normal office environment, and a big learning experience for everyone involved. “This has probably been one of the closest collaborations we have ever had with one of our tenants, and we have really learnt how collaborating with a client or tenant can really lead to an excellent product” says Rosie. “The difficulties that come along with that, in terms of the juxtaposition of priorities, and how you can come to an alignment to produce something really amazing. I think that is one lesson we take away from it.”

“The legacy of it for Derwent London is realising that the way you enthuse people is having something unique about the project they are working on,” adds Jo. “The fact that it is the first new theatre in the West End for over 50 years, and the fact that most of the people involved will never work on a theatre again, it’s that legacy that enthuses people.”

The new @sohoplace theatre, situated within Derwent London’s Soho Place development, is the first new theatre to open in the heart of the West End for over 50 years. Right from inception, the project has been an exercise in complexity. Project Managers, Jo Benson and Rosie Scott, have lived and breathed the project and take great pride in the final outcome: a state-of-the-art space, fit for the future, which hopes to attract the finest directors, actors and producers to work there.

As part of the Soho Place scheme, an arts and culture building was incorporated as a replacement for the London Astoria, which was formerly on the site. Once Derwent London had produced an early proposal for a theatre, a close collaboration began with Nica Burns, CEO of Nimax Theatres. “Nica was able to bring her own experience and vision to the scheme. What she understood was that Theatreland needed a new flexible kind of theatre. She knew the right partners to bring on board, including Haworth Tompkins as the auditorium architects, and Charcoal Blue, an innovative theatre consultancy. It was a passion project for Nica right from the beginning.” Says Rosie.

“I was incredibly privileged to be working with Derwent London who hand-picked the most outstanding team—all leaders and innovators in their sectors—to deliver this challenging build.”

— Nica Burns, CEO at Nimax Theatres



In Conversation:

Paul Williams talks to Hugh Pearman

Derwent London's Paul Williams joined what was then Derwent Valley Holdings in 1987 when it was launched and he's been involved in pretty much everything since. In 2019 he succeeded John Burns as CEO, meaning he steered the ship through the pandemic and recent significant political and economic uncertainty.

Among much else, he is driving Derwent's declared intention to be a net zero carbon business by 2030. When we meet, he tells me of progress on one of the Group's plans to help achieve that. As well as considering embodied carbon across the portfolio and in their developments, Derwent London understand the importance of working with their occupiers and all stakeholders collaboratively to deliver on shared ambitions to tackle climate change.

Having planted several years ago 107 acres of new woodland on land Derwent owns to the north of Glasgow, which will help lock up increasing amounts of carbon as it grows, planning consent was recently granted for a 107 acre 'solar park'. The Caledonian Solar Park will feed directly into the National Grid, which runs past the site, producing enough renewable electricity to supply the equivalent of nearly half of Derwent London's managed portfolio.

Following the delivery of its first all-electric building at 80 Charlotte Street, a key requirement is for future schemes to be all electric where possible and supplied using renewable tariffs. The development of the solar park will be yet another achievement on the journey to net zero.

Williams takes me through the recently completed developments and those currently on site. Soho Place, designed by AHMM, is now complete and the offices are fully let. This 285,000 sq ft mixed-use development above the Tottenham Court Road Elizabeth line station has been many years in the making as the Crossrail construction project inched forward. The project also includes a new theatre (the first in the West End for over 50 years) operated by Nimax Theatres, which opened in October 2022.

Finishing around the same time as Soho Place was The Featherstone Building, on City Road, designed by architects Morris+Company, and sits next to Derwent London's White Collar Factory and Oliver's Yard properties. It will be home to the company's next 'members club'. The original club, DL/78, is on Charlotte Street and provides a mix of facilities, from touch-down work-space, meeting rooms, a café and wellness centre. The impact it has had with the portfolio's office occupiers has been notable says Williams, drawing members from all across the portfolio, not just the Fitzrovia neighbourhood.

Derwent London is now underway with two more exciting developments in Marylebone and Fitzrovia. 25 Baker St. W1 by Hopkins Architects is a mixed-use scheme of 298,000 sq ft, which includes c.200,000 sq ft of office space, a boutique retail courtyard and an apartment building, together with affordable housing.

The second is the redevelopment of Network W1 in Fitzrovia, incorporating 132,000 sq ft of offices and 5,000 sq ft of retail as well as a mews development of 23 affordable homes. Piercy&Company are the architects who have designed this exemplar low-energy project.

In terms of longer-term pipeline, Derwent London have recently announced the purchase of the former Moorfields Hospital site on Old Street which provides an exciting opportunity for a super site of a new c.800,000 sq ft mixed-use campus. Derwent will be working with architects AHMM, also incorporating the best of the historic buildings on the site, and designing for London's future Businesses and Talent. Williams confirms Derwent London's vision to be to 'craft inspiring and distinctive space where people can thrive' and this will be the ambition in this project as with any other.

Working patterns are changing as hybrid work has become more common. The importance of the office is however recognised for its role in re-energising people, bringing colleagues together and facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills to the next generation. "It's about peak occupancy rather than average occupancy," says Williams. Desk layouts tend to be more spacious; he cites a reversal of the trend of the last 20+ years of giving employees less space. Businesses are now moving to 10 sq m per person or more compared to the pre-pandemic norm of eight. Informal break-out spaces and club-like facilities, both inside and out, like those Derwent London provides, are part of a trend in the wider market.

Being an office-based organisation itself, Derwent London applies this thinking in consultation with its own staff, implementing policies focused on diversity, wellness and sustainability: the company is certified for the National Equality Standard. Its workforce has been boosted to over 180 people by bringing individual building managers in-house as part of the Derwent London family, a reminder that it is an investor as well as a developer, stewarding its buildings over the long-term. The company takes its responsibilities seriously, whether that is its annual funds for community projects in the Fitzrovia/West End and Tech Belt areas, or its long-term support for Teenage Cancer Trust, now in its 30th year.

Long before the pandemic Derwent London has been instrumental in driving the market for a better, more flexible kind of workspace. Derwent London have always been pioneers in truly understanding what businesses need from their real estate, developing relationships and listening to their occupiers remains key in all they do. "We're definitely seeing a flight to quality in what's become a polarised market" says Williams "and demand for top quality offices." Derwent's purpose, which they strongly believe in, is to design and curate long-life, low carbon, intelligent offices that contribute to London's position as a leading global city.

The Featherstone Building, in Old Street, is one of Derwent London's most futuristic projects; crammed with as many digitally intelligent features as it has beautiful architectural details. Yet, through sensitive and thoughtful design, the building looks like it could have been in place for the last 100 years. We talk to Matt Massey, Project Manager, and Caroline Haines, Development Manager, to find out more about an exercise in refinement.

The Featherstone Building

With the completion of The Featherstone Building, Derwent London's contribution to this important pocket of London is further enhanced. With Oliver's Yard opposite on City Road and White Collar Factory, situated by the roundabout, there is now a trinity of properties that all have a slightly different profile. The Featherstone Building offers 123,000 sq ft of office space, 2,400 sq ft of retail space, and has 3.125 metre floor to ceiling heights on all 11 floors.





There is a beautifully designed double-height reception area and both a large rooftop pavilion on the 10th floor, and private terraces on the 4th, 5th and 10th floors. It's not only amenity rich, but it's both a net zero carbon building and one of Derwent London's first Intelligent Buildings. If anything, it sounds like an extremely complicated project, but as Matt and Caroline explain, it was actually just about applying a lot of recent learning and experience within Derwent to create something new. To an extent, it was White Collar Factory that acted as a prototype for

“The space stays cool through the use of concrete core cooling, with chilled pipework that runs through the slabs.”
— Caroline Haines

The Featherstone Building. “The White Collar Factory concept was formed through learning taken from great industrial buildings of our past and this was applied to The Featherstone Building, which has high ceilings, openable windows, flexible space, lots of light and, importantly its concrete structure is also the final finish.” says Caroline. “The space stays cool through the use of concrete core cooling, with chilled pipework that runs through the slabs. Featherstone is definitely a development on that idea, where we have improved and refined that original concept even more.”

“The Central Utility Plant system applies artificial intelligence machine learning to take a holistic view, automatically making changes to the plant in real time.”

— Matt Massey

Internally, the embedded pipework system had been improved. “Tempered fresh air is delivered through the floor which means a cleaner more refined and more flexible soffit. This provides further benefit for our occupiers as it makes any fit-out a lot quicker and easier.”

In the evolving world of the workplace, one of the biggest takeaways from White Collar Factory was that tenants really enjoyed being able to control their own space. The same principle applies at The Featherstone Building, but with the addition of a new Intelligent Building system, the level of efficiency that the building can work at is further improved. “It’s a very efficient building,” explains Matt. “It’s the first new building in which we have put our integrated Intelligent Buildings platform, developed in partnership with Johnson Controls. There are two core elements, first the mechanical and electrical equipment all report back into Johnson Control’s



Open Blue platform, which monitors the energy use and the performance of the building plant. Then the Central Utility Plant system applies artificial intelligence machine learning to take a holistic view, automatically making changes to the plant in real time. This drives up the building’s efficiency and drives down faults, allowing cost and carbon savings to be realised.”

Designed by architects Morris+Company, the quality of finish throughout the building really shines through. “The materials are really robust, like the brickwork and the metalwork, and then all the smaller details were well thought out,” explains Caroline. “Like the concrete details in reception and the oak handrail that runs all the way through the core. When you are walking up the stairs, it feels so nice on your hand. It’s that kind of precision and real thought that goes behind it that is noticeable.”

“We like to try and use different architects, and we’ve enjoyed working with Morris+Company, who have got a really good pedigree,” says Matt. “We had some great conversations with them, just to get the details right. We challenged each other. Partly to make it buildable, but also to get the aesthetic to work with the other buildings in the Old Street village.”



With DL/78 at 80 Charlotte Street and accompanying DL/ App, Derwent London is continuing to break new ground creating a physical and digital community space, which provides meaningful extra amenity for the office occupiers in the Derwent London portfolio. Space talked to Derwent London's Emily Prideaux, Director, Michael Simons, Digital and Innovations Manager and Ally Clements, Customer Engagement and Communications Manager, to find out more.

DL/

Enjoying DL/78 is easy. It's a beautifully thought out double-height space that delicately balances an exposed industrial aesthetic with a softer, more domestic, sensibility. A voluminous and light creation, DL/78 is a place where materials, furniture, fixtures, artworks and greenery are all layered together in a way which induces a sense of tranquillity and warmth. Working in collaboration the Derwent London design team, architects MSMR, and engineers Arup, the 6,600 sq ft space has been designed with total flexibility in mind. It has a large conference room, a range of different meeting and wellness rooms, catering facilities and an expansive central lounge space. It is, however, not a co-working space, nor a serviced office. Or not one in the traditional sense. So what actually is it and how does it fit into both the Derwent London ecosystem and the wider serviced office sector?

We start with a little context. Derwent London has a long-established reputation for being "specialists in great design and quality architecture", says Emily, "and we continue to lead the way and push the boundaries in this regard". Alongside this however, the big movements in the real estate sector over the last decade or so have changed the idea of real estate providers just being about the bricks and mortar

to something much more dynamic. There is now an acknowledgement of the importance of being an effective service provider and the idea of having a community that is your client base. The serviced office sector effectively "opened the eyes of the occupier community, and the demand in London, to a whole different world of community", explains Emily. "What it meant for us was that the in-depth conversations that we were having with forward-thinking businesses were telling us that they wanted more from real estate. They wanted more from the landlord, and we wanted to be ahead of the curve in terms of what we could provide and the trust of the landlord." All of these discussions naturally resulted in Derwent London asking itself the question: "Should we be doing something else?" Can we do this differently and provide what it is we believe our occupiers and members really want?" However, a number of factors played against this, Emily explains. "We are very confident and know our expertise very well. We deliver great quality office buildings and provide the best flexible canvas for a business to mark their stamp on it."

"We are never going to tell Google or Microsoft, or Boston Consulting, Arup or Sony, or any of our tenants, how they want their office to look. They are all

very established brands, their landlord to some extent needs to be a little anonymous, they need to be able to go in and make their office look like their office. But we can still provide more, that little extra around the edges.”

“The beginning of DL/78 was asking ourselves how we could incorporate all the best of the industry to ensure that we can provide the very best to the businesses within our portfolio,” says Emily. A key to developing the right idea was first acknowledging that a large proportion of Derwent London’s 5.3 million sq ft of community is in London and the individuals using the buildings every day didn’t really know who their landlord was. This may be in part due to Derwent just being a discreet landlord, perhaps a bit too anonymous. “There aren’t many service providers in life who don’t connect directly with their end users,” says Emily. What was also recognised was that there was a lack of opportunities for tenants to connect with each other, to meet and greet, and share business or ideas, because everyone has their own individual space.

“So the DL/78 idea was really about how we could create a central space for our tenants and community to meet in, but also for us to meet our tenants in, and for us to be able to hear directly more about what they want. We wanted to create both physical and digital space for us to give our members and occupiers tangible benefits and also where we could receive and respond to direct feedback—proving ourselves a occupier centric responsive Landlord which can offer personality and humility,” explains Emily. A more practical aspect was also thinking about how to help provide some of the smaller businesses within the portfolio with some of the more advanced facilities that they may not have in their own space. DL/78 would give them access on a pay-as-you-go basis to things like a big boardroom, or a big space for an event or party, or a place for those town-hall moments. “It was also about building a community, building a space where we could physically bring people together for TED Talks, wine tasting, dance classes even, or have a presentation about what we are up to on the sustainability agenda, or have a party at Christmas,” adds Emily. “It’s a space to provide additional amenity and service, yes, but also to bring people together and build connections.”

It’s an ambitious agenda for DL/78, and one that is not easy for a PLC to undertake. It’s not something that will generate profit in the formal sense, but rather, the profit is the cultural capital it generates and the added value it provides to the businesses who chose to join the Derwent London community. An essential part of that being successful is also ensuring that the community has a digital place to meet, along with the new physical space. So, to coincide with the opening of DL/78, the new DL/ App was launched.



“For us, it’s a way of knowing our customers better, understanding what they want, and getting live feedback from them. It’s important to have both a physical space in the offices, but also a digital space within the App.”

— Emily Prideaux



Michael Simons, Derwent’s Digital and Innovations Manager, has been the driving force behind it. “The App allows us to talk to people who turn up to a building and don’t necessarily know it is a Derwent London building. We are bringing in the right technology to give the onsite team all the tools they need to effectively communicate with all of those people. We have around 300 office tenants across the portfolio, estimated around 40,000 to 45,000 end users, or members. It’s a lot. There is a real scale.” The joined up thinking behind the physical and digital space is proving crucial in growing the community. “The App is like an extension of the DL/78 space,” adds Ally, “and even if tenants don’t want to use the space, they can still benefit from being a member, with all of the

digital content available.” Michael gives us a live tour of the App. “It has a noticeboard for news, offers and events. You can book meeting rooms and then there is a whole section dedicated to all of the different Derwent London content that is published. We have approached the App and the space together, in a very collaborative way. We take all the learning that Ally and the team has had on site and evolve the App to reflect that.”

The idea of evolving a community and digital platform together, is at the heart of what the DL/78 idea is about. “For us, it’s a way of knowing our occupiers better, understanding what they want, and getting live feedback from them,” adds Emily. “We want to talk directly to them, not just at a corporate

level, but with this different comms channel of day-to-day life. We’ve got a real customer facing team now, and that is giving us a totally new knowledge base.”

The final part of the jigsaw is the simple idea of joining up the different Derwent London campuses within London, and the DL/78 concept is central to that, with a sister space scheduled to open at The Featherstone Building in Old Street later this year. “I think the campus idea works for us. We are only in London, so we know our sub-markets and our villages very well, and we know what works.” Says Emily, “When we have community spaces in both Old Street and Fitzrovia, it will give our office occupiers further flexibility and optionality.”

Refurbishment of Francis House

The completion of the major refurbishment of Francis House marks a new stage in the development of a quadrant of buildings on Derwent London's Victoria Estate. We talked to Senior Project Manager, John Turner, about the project.

Dating from the late 19th century, Francis House was originally built as a furniture warehouse to serve the Army & Navy store on 101 Victoria Street. It forms one part of a quadrant of Derwent London buildings on the site, known as the Victoria Estate, comprising Greencoat and Gordon House, 6 Greencoat Place and Francis House itself. Now completed, the building provides 38,200 sq ft of high-specification office space, which has been entirely pre-let to the global communications firm, Edelman, on a 15-year term.

John told us the story of the refurbishment. "By virtue of Francis House being a former depository for the Army & Navy stores furniture department, it has got very high ceilings and is a bit different from the other buildings on the estate. It feels quite

spectacular inside with the vaulted, coved ceilings and heavy structure, which was partially stripped back to reveal cast-iron riveted columns and beams, which we love and have left refurbished and exposed. So there is about a 4.5 metre floor-to-ceiling height, making a really impressive space." Edelman, the new tenant, will undertake the Cat A fit-out.

Justin Westcott, Chief Operating Officer, Edelman UK & Ireland, explained the reason for their decision to move into the building. "For us, an office has got to have a pull factor and be somewhere our people want to spend time. Francis House does just that and reflects how we want to work in the future, a hub for collaboration, creativity and connecting with each other and our clients."

Derwent London's task has been to prepare the building for the Cat A fit-out, and to redesign the reception, communal parts and lift areas. "We have stripped the space out and completed the base build works," explains John. "What services we have installed are low energy consumers and we have improved the sustainability credentials of the building. Including removing the gas supply to make it an all-electric building now, as part of our net zero carbon aspirations."

A major part of the works was on the upper floor, which posed a different challenge due to the fact that the building had been bombed during the war and partially rebuilt in the 1950s with mezzanine floors added within a rear annex, offering much less generous spaces. Some of the mezzanines have now been removed to improve the overall footprint. Externally, the building is a real gem and at street level provides an attractive frontage for passers-by to enjoy. "It has a really handsome façade," says John. "The brickwork and rendering has been repaired and cleaned externally and the windows have been renewed and it's quite a transformation." A new entrance ramp and glass balustrade leads visitors up to the other main area of Derwent London's recent works, the reception. "The design aesthetic internally is a bit more like an old warehouse feel. So we have lots of exposed brickwork and columns and there is a galvanised steel screen fitted with reeded glass, forming the bicycle store." A large existing valve wheel has been retained as a feature in the bicycle store. The lifts have also been renewed and in keeping with the feel of the old goods lift, the lift shaft has been encased in a bespoke bronze coloured mesh. With a new EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) rating of B, up from a D, the overall energy performance of the building is markedly improved. It is no surprise that Edelman has committed to the building for the next decade; it's a perfectly situated historic gem of a building, now modernised and refined into somewhere that feels both light and airy, and a little bit grand too.

"For us, an office has got to have a pull factor and be somewhere our people want to spend time. Francis House does just that and reflects how we want to work in the future a hub for collaboration, creativity and connecting with each other and our clients."

— Justin Westcott, COO at Edelman UK & Ireland



Design writer, Duncan Riches, gets to grips with the tricky topic of wellness, taking a look at some of the approaches to the subject from London's leading designers and architects.

Wellness at Work

Roof terrace at 80 Charlotte Street W1

In the last few years, the whole idea of 'wellness' has gained greater traction and importance in all areas of our cultural life. It's a tricky term, much unloved, but it does work in that catch-all way, where it can be applied to a whole range of different ideas about how humans live, and of course, how they work. The fact that wellness is now, more than ever, being considered at the conceptual level of design and architecture, and at the outset of projects, can only bode well for the future of the spaces and buildings and those that eventually occupy them. It's encouraging to see that not only do Derwent London's newest buildings have the idea of wellness hard-wired into their very fabric, but for years they have been pushing the envelope to factor wellness into the design process, knowing how important it is to the success of a building. In a recent range of communications by Arup, both tenant and engineering partner on the 80 Charlotte Street project, they highlighted the key areas that make the building a place where people can work with a sense of wellness. The building provides ample natural light, excellent air quality, and access to a wide range of amenities, including an outdoor pocket park and roof terrace, which both bring nature into the mix. Something that is also very important to Arup was the fact that the building has equality of access to spaces within it, and that those spaces feel inclusive. Naturally, there are standard desking set-ups and meeting rooms, but there are also quiet spaces and places where people can retreat to. It's a new kind of building, and a signpost to the future.

There are a number of London-based design and architecture practices who are pushing the boundaries of what wellness actually means. A notable example is the values-driven practice of Ilse Crawford, Studioilse, who work in a particularly human centric way and see design as a 'frame for life'. Or architects, Squire & Partners, who place wellness, sustainability and historical sensitivity right at the centre of their work. Shoreditch's Waugh Thistleton Architects have earned many plaudits for their commitment to make healthy buildings out of sustainable timber, while Holland Harvey Architects of Viner Street, working alongside Caitlin Henderson Design, have just furnished a London hotel with entirely eco-friendly

products and natural materials. All approach wellness in different ways, but it is a central theme now, for both clients and working practices.

If we think about buildings as systems, and the people who occupy them as an integral part of making that system healthy, then it makes total sense that designers and architects should be ensuring that those people are feeling good—healthy, rested, and productive. Yet, it is worth mentioning that the very notion of work is not something that anyone necessarily does to maintain their health. Work is necessary, for a whole host of reasons, but it's not always healthy. Exercising, socialising, playing, laughing, eating (well), are all things that most people would recognise as being healthy. Work, in some cases yes, but probably for many people, less so. So perhaps the next challenge for our societies is to elevate our working lives to something that feels more health inducing in general. Derwent London are already asking: Why do we sit down so much? Why are we looking at screens so much? Why are we so focused on digital platforms? Why are we not more creative? Why are we slave to the tyranny of email?

From a creative industry perspective, what is actually quite encouraging is that there seems to be a new generation of young designers who are asking these types of questions. For around a decade or so, it seemed that they were solely focused on projects that were about creating objects that were sustainable. Which was no bad thing, but now they seem to be employing a more holistic approach to design, and are less interested in creating objects at all. A good example is furniture designer Sebastian Cox, who insists on working with wood procured from forests in Britain that he knows. He has also just taken on the management of a forest in Kent. In a recent interview he explained why: "When you tell someone that we felled the tree to make the furniture, it communicates such a clear picture in so few words around who you are and what you do. It then opens up quite holistic conversations about how we use our land, and how we grow resources, and what that means for growing food, or for biodiversity, or sequestering carbon. Suddenly we are exposing ourselves to some really big conversations."

This is not the flashy crowd pleasing designer of 10 or 15 years ago, this is something entirely different. What designers like Sebastian are asking now is this: "How can we prototype a more sustainable way of living?" This encompasses every aspect of our lives, from how we live and work, to what kind of impact we are having on the environment around us. Importantly, it also acknowledges the possibility of a better future. Their approach feels soulful, restorative and spirited. Let's hope their findings are of great value, and can filter up into mainstream culture, for the betterment of everyone.

25 Baker St. Update



Derwent London is delighted to report that demolition is now complete and construction teams have commenced on site at its newest major scheme, 25 Baker St. W1. This two-acre, mixed-use development, designed by Hopkins Architects, occupies an entire island site on land owned by Freeholder, The Portman Estate to the west side of the busy Baker Street thoroughfare. In the words of Derwent London Development Manager, Piers Harrop, this 298,000 sq ft project is mixed-use in the true sense of the word, it has “a bit of everything” including 218,000 sq ft of office space, 20 retail units across 28,000 sq ft and 51 new residences (41 private and 10 affordable).

Due to be completed by H1 2025, the scheme’s nine storeys of Cat A office space are located within a vast Portland stone-clad palazzo-style building on Baker Street while the bulk of the residential units, developed in partnership with Native Land, are housed in a modern take on a Georgian townhouse on George Street.

Crucially, the site is completely permeable thanks to a single-storey central courtyard filled with lush greenery, outdoor café seating and a tightly curated retail offering that will not only serve as a welcome oasis of calm in Marylebone, but will also connect the area’s various localities. Realised in a palette of stone, brick, precast concrete and oak, Hopkins Architects’ design for the office building, includes all the hallmarks of a Derwent London scheme: long-life, loose-fit and low carbon, offices are open plan and generously proportioned with 3.2 metre ceiling heights and 7.5 metre wide window bays.

To build the scheme, Derwent London has teamed up with contractors, Laing O’Rourke, using a DfMA-led approach, which means many of the build components are produced off-site, saving time and slashing carbon emissions in the process. 25 Baker St. will be Derwent’s fourth net zero carbon building and its first NABERS UK certified scheme, thanks to features such as all electric heating and cooling, greywater harvesting, openable windows, an expansive, biodiverse green roof and locally sourced materials where possible. 314 cycle racks and a feature staircase will encourage activity to boost occupants’ physical and mental wellbeing.

Notably, 25 Baker St. will also be one of Derwent’s Intelligent Buildings. “This means we can monitor in real-time, occupancy, air quality, temperature, energy performance and plant maintenance,” explains Harrop.



A Green Collaboration

The usually tranquil courtyard of Oliver's Yard was alive with the sounds of excitable school children for a joyous afternoon in spring last year, as a new collaboration between Derwent London, the Green Schools Project and Square Mile Farms got underway. It's an initiative that seeks to inspire the next generation with some practical sustainable experience and knowledge.

“What interested us with The Green Schools Project was that it was taking sustainable ideas directly to children, who are essentially the future...”

— Helen Joscelyne

St. Monica's Primary School in Hoxton is just a short stroll away from Derwent London's Old Street village, and as a Year 4 class from the school made the walk over. Space took a few moments to talk to the key participants in this new collaboration, which has all the hallmarks of learning through doing, found in progressive education. Derwent London's Community and Social Value Manager, Helen Joscelyne, began by giving us some background. “We were first approached by The Green Schools Project, who are trying to bring the whole issue of sustainability, net zero and emissions to schools.” Set up in 2015 by former teacher, Henry Greenwood, whose experience working as a Sustainability Co-ordinator in Enfield's Kingsmead school had convinced him that real practical application of sustainable ideas could actually help schools save money, help save the planet, and in turn create a generation of young people with genuine skills and knowledge of how to tackle the subject. So far they have worked with 130 schools. “What interested us with The Green Schools Project was that it was taking sustainable ideas directly to children, who are essentially the future, and asking: What did they know? Were they aware of it? What does it mean?” explains Helen. “Crucially, it's not just about the rhetoric behind it, but about what they could do themselves to get involved. They work out the carbon emissions of the school, how that works,

and then ask what the school can do to reduce it? The project gives the school an original baseline and a report, and then they have under their own control ways of making a difference in their school. Sustainability is a subject with a lot of literature about it, but this brings in that practical aspect, the hands on, and we like the two coming together.”

Once Helen found out that Square Mile Farms, the Vertical Farming business, who were already in residence in the receptions of Oliver's Yard and The White Chapel Building, were able to do school visits, the idea for a collaboration was formed. Benjamin Dean, the Chief Operating Officer at Square Mile Farms gives us an overview of how their model works. “We bring hydroponic vertical farming into the city-scape to make unproductive spaces productive and reconnect our client communities with food. We install farms across buildings within the city, and then we manage those farms for our clients to provide food, and a little bit of education for those communities to make better food choices.” Sophie Burton, the Marketing and Community Manager at Square Mile Farms explains what they are doing today. “Today we are doing a bit of a harvest takeover. The school group is going to harvest, learn about hydroponics (growing without soil) and urban farming, and why we are doing it. They will harvest specific plants, and there will be a bit of a biology lesson in terms of teaching them how to keep them growing. We are doing two sessions, with two groups, who will swap around midway through, with the second group learning how to grow microgreens, which are little shoots of lots of varieties that are grown in a super dense way, they are very nutritious. They will all get a kit that they can take home; here they will learn the skills to use it.”

Right on cue, an enthusiastic group of school children descend on Oliver's Yard, and somewhat unsurprisingly are very keen to get stuck in with harvesting and growing straight away. They may have interrupted the serenity of this classic Derwent London space, but as Helen noted earlier, “Here at Oliver's Yard we have this really spacious area where we can host and invite groups in, and this project is a great way to open up the building to others.”

Space sat down with Peter Lowe, from Benchmark, and Derwent London's Group Architect, Tim Hyman and Art & Interiors Manager, Rebecca Lesser to discuss a working relationship that has been forged over three decades of projects.

Working with Benchmark

Space: Can you remember what the first project was you worked on with Derwent London?

Peter Lowe: My first one was for Gresse Street, the Charlotte Building. When I joined Benchmark twenty years ago, I was a project designer, my first one was a desk with Douglas fir fronts and a stainless steel top. But Benchmark was working with Derwent long before that.

Tim Hyman: My first project with Benchmark was the Angel Building.

PL: I worked on Angel too, it was similar to Gresse Street, it had the Douglas fir, with white Dinesen boards.

TH: There were built-in feature walls, an integrated reception desk. So they were quite architecturally designed pieces. The project completed in 2010.

Rebecca Lesser: Mine was more recent than that. It was bespoke work for our Furnished + Flexible spaces, as well as 25 Savile Row.

Space: Do you know how the working relationship between the companies first began?

TH: I think the conversation began because Benchmark were doing some reproduction mid-century Jens Risom chairs, which Simon Silver saw in Rocket Gallery, which used to be in the Tea Building. I think that possibly sparked it off.

PL: We still have the rights to them and still make them. AHMM were also pivotal at the beginning. We used to do a lot of work with them. There is always that three-pronged relationship; there is the architect, there is us and there is the client.

RL: There was also the close relationship with Sean Sutcliffe (Founder of Benchmark). It was always about

craftsmanship and the level of quality you get from Benchmark. It's very similar to the way that we work with Bill Amberg. It's rare that we have a building that doesn't have a bit of Bill Amberg and a bit of Benchmark in it.

PL: I think there is a real appreciation from Derwent's side of the craftsmanship. I think Derwent knows where to do it, and where not to do it. I remember Simon Silver taking us around Brunel Building and stressing that. That's what we do, I think when we make things we know where to go that extra bit, and where not to.

TH: There is a difference between people who do architectural timber work, and there are joiners, and there are cabinet makers. Benchmark has real cabinet making skills. The quality is exquisite, perceptible. While you may not notice it straight away, you really do notice it if it's not there.

PL: We want to produce lovely things, and things we like to make as well. Some things are fun and interesting, some things make you pull your hair out, because they are quite challenging. We don't mind that. It's important for us to get it right, because we know it's worth getting it right.

TH: They are happy collaborations. A team effort between the architect, us and the artisan.

Space: **Is the relationship more involved now? Does it start earlier on a project?**

TH: It's not necessarily from the first stage of a project, because buildings can take 10, 15 years. But for the stage of work Benchmark is involved with, they are involved very early, with the architectural teams, in detailed development of particular spaces.

PL: I was talking with Piercy&Company about the Network W1 project the other month, and they are about three years away, but we are just starting to talk about materials. We don't mind imparting knowledge to help people early on a project.

Space: **Can you give us a sense of what working together on 80 Charlotte Street was like, particularly in DL/78?**

RL: DL/78 was quite different to work on than most of our projects. DL/78 was finished in July 2021, and we had started to talk about it in November 2020. So, it was a lot quicker. We also knew we had quite a few constraints. A lot of the furniture, like the desks, had to be able to be flipped up and moved out so we could change the space around with maximum flexibility.





Bar 80 at 80 Charlotte Street W1

Also, we wanted very specific bespoke pieces made, in particular the shelving for the library area as well as the credenzas and café banquettes. They also helped refurbish old pieces that we purchased for the space too. We had antiques arriving, some of which were in a poor state. Benchmark carefully repaired them, and they look great. It was a good collaboration.

PL: It's interesting, because you look at DL/78 and it's quite a different project, but the bar at 80 Charlotte Street was a more traditional project for us.

TH: The bar is actually made with not one jot of timber, I mean in the finishes. It's ceramic and brass, with concealed lighting. It does have a timber sub frame. It begs the question: why would you go to a cabinet maker to make your metalwork? Because they treat it exactly the same way. It doesn't matter what material it is, we are happy to approach Benchmark.

PL: We have a metalworking shop, and a finishing shop. We are predominantly timber, but we do metalworking. There was a stage at Benchmark when I was doing mitred glass boxes with lights in them.

“In the way that we are designing the next generation of buildings. There needs to be a fundamental truth to how you source and use your materials, and an honesty in what they look like.”

— Tim Hyman

That was the rage back in 2004–5. Every job was a glass box, but we approached it in the same way. It's got to be perfect.

RL: Benchmark has specialist people they can pull in, for example with the banquet seating at DL/78 in the café where they did the leather upholstery.

PL: It's true, we are woodworkers, but we will do the upholstery. If we can't do something because we need to talk to a laser cutter, or a water jet cutter, we have lots of people we talk to. They are equally passionate about what they do. We have lots of partner relationships. We try to do a lot in-house, but we also recognise when we need to leverage our relationships.

TH: Benchmark approaches everything with the same level of diligence.

Space: **How does sustainability fit into both Derwent London and Benchmark ecosystems now?**

TH: I think we have never naturally been profligate. At Derwent we try to do things that are commensurate with the area that you are in and that is right for the space. Just let the materiality be the materiality.

So, we have always been sustainable because it has been the correct use of natural materials in the right place. We are very much of London, therefore our buildings are contextual in their areas. Which leads you to use appropriate and commensurate materials. We were talking to someone this morning and saying wouldn't it be great if 50% of the materials on projects, came from within 50 miles. This is something that Rebecca came up with as well, we are all looking at species of trees, we are looking at elm, at ash, with ash dieback, and thinking what can be used.

PL: It could be said that Derwent London buildings are quite classic, they are not going to be ripped down in 10 years. Sustainability to us is also about longevity. From Benchmark's point of view, we have been environmentally conscious for a long time. We would always make arguments against using anything that is not sustainable. It has to be FSC Wood (Forest Stewardship Council) at the very least.

RL: We had an independent company assess a fit-out of ours, and the Benchmark furniture scored really highly in sustainability terms. It is tricky with the furniture industry as there is a lot of greenwashing.

PL: Sean started Benchmark 38 odd years ago and he was laughed at when he said he wouldn't make that table in rosewood. He stuck to his guns, and he would say that back then everyone called him a hippy and

laughed at him. We are now in the process of changing our upholstery too, we are looking at natural upholstery that has no fire chemicals in it. Our whole range has not changed over, but we are trying.

RL: There aren't universal standards either, and that's also a problem.

PL: You have to create your own standard in a way. It does take time, EPDs (Environmental Product Declaration) are very useful, but they do cost more time and money to do. I think that is why Benchmark is not a company that makes things that just get sent out. It's sometimes hard, but we know it is right, and it will be worth it. We've already started to see the value. It's what we do, we have that passion.

TH: Designers now need to take into consideration the materials that they are using. It was like a subliminal message way back when, not a conscious thing. It's just that we knew we were working with likeminded people. It's far more overt now. In the way that we are designing the next generation of buildings. There needs to be a fundamental truth to how you source and use your materials, and an honesty in what they look like. Simon Allford was giving a talk a couple of years ago, and he said that sustainable buildings should look like what they are. That is good appropriate architecture. It really is, and we shouldn't be afraid of that. We will always make them look beautiful in their own way, but they should be truthful and honest.

Space: **What is the next project we will likely see a collaboration on?**

TH: I think the next thing we are really excited about working on together is Network. The journey of that building speaks of a more humanistic approach to architecture. It has a more organic feel to it, and we are going to have some fun working with Benchmark on this project.

RL: And the next DL/ space has been given the go ahead at The Featherstone Building, so there will be some lovely opportunities to work together there too.

Unknown London

Morley College

Hugh Pearman

Morley College started life in Waterloo, in the 1880s as a by-product of the Old Vic Theatre, which was then a music hall. Social reformer, artist and suffragette, Emma Cons ran a series of ‘penny lectures’ there for the people of the area. Such was the demand that in 1889 Cons, backed by a legacy from philanthropist Samuel Morley, opened ‘The Morley Memorial College for Working Men and Women’ a few streets south on Westminster Bridge Road.

By the start of the 1970s it was time for a big refresh. Ambitious principal Barry Till commissioned architect John Winter for an expansion plan, rejecting a young Norman Foster who he didn’t get on with. Winter was a gifted architect and teacher who had assisted the birth of the ‘high tech’ movement in architecture, teaching among others Michael Hopkins whose firm has designed Derwent London’s latest development at 25 Baker Street W1.

Winter’s first move of 1973–5 was a large new lightweight building that wrapped right round the back and side of the existing college buildings, connecting all the departments and providing extra classrooms and lecture space. Clad in a taut skin of pale bronze aluminium panels, it still looks good today.

Next came a meeting hall and studio building on the adjacent King Edward’s Walk. There, Winter changed his style entirely from smoothly urbane to tough industrial. From 1979 to 1982 he designed and built what is one of London’s most outré educational buildings. True, it picks up on the rhythm of the Victorian terraced houses along the rest of the street. But there the resemblance ends.

Winter clad the building, roofs included, in profiled Corten steel, the kind that needs no paint and over time naturally oxidises to a rich conker colour. It is fashionable today, one of the Derwent London palette of materials, but back then highly unusual in architecture. He had previously used the material to clad his own (now listed) 1967–9 house in Highgate. Anticipating a startling colour contrast that would take years to fully achieve, for the college he specified window and door frames and trim in bright yellow-coated aluminium.

At the front, the building follows the street line, while at the rear it cascades down and out to provide larger floor plates. As this district is rediscovered and transformed, with Derwent London investing in the area, this unique building deserves to become a cherished landmark.





"Volcanoes mix minerals, melt them in their fire and expel a new mineral, a new rock. I think this is not far from what I do."

Fernando Casasempere, *Geology Rebuilt*, 2022.

Porcelain, stoneware, minerals.