

**Bennetts Associates designs new
Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Southwark**

- Sensitive retrofit knits together a 19th century hop warehouse and 1980s office building
- Provides a multitude of flexible spaces to support new ways of working
- Part of a programme of modernisation by the College, celebrating its role as a hub for women's health
- Central sculptural staircase unites a previously disconnected site

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has relocated to a new building designed by Bennetts Associates. The building at 10 Union Street in Southwark knits together two existing buildings, a converted 19th century hop warehouse and a 1980s office building by creating a new atrium.

The new building provides office spaces to support innovative ways of working for the College's more than 200 staff, as well as conferencing facilities and a public café. It will enable the College to provide a fully accessible building with an emphasis on health, wellbeing and sustainable design. The College previously occupied leasehold premises in Regent's Park, and the move allowed them to occupy a city-centre location and own their own building for the first time.

The new building is designed to accommodate the College's growing space requirements in the coming decades. It celebrates its role as a hub for women's health globally, providing a multitude of flexible educational, workplace, social spaces, as well as meeting and working areas for members from the UK and around the world.

The creation of a new democratic and inclusive HQ for the historic medical institution forms part of a wider programme of modernisation by the College. Bennetts Associates' design combines clear wayfinding with a high level of accessibility and facilities that cater for a diverse range of needs and requirements including a prayer room, family room and gender-neutral toilet provision.

The new Royal College project builds on Bennetts Associates' years of experience working on low-energy buildings through adaptive re-use and refurbishment of two existing buildings. The project has been carefully designed to a high sustainability standard and is on track to achieve a post-construction BREEAM rating of 'Very Good', supported by the maximum retention of the existing historic buildings and a sensitive interior restoration. By carefully exposing key elements of the original building fabric, including the brickwork and trusses, Bennetts Associates has created a characterful space with a sense of history.

The four-storey glazed atrium covers the courtyard space between the two buildings serving to increase levels of natural light throughout the building, particularly in the central meeting area below. With a ground floor café and drop-in space that can be used by both visiting members and the local community, the atrium has been designed to be an active and engaging space that promotes wellbeing.

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A key feature of the atrium is the sculptural stair that serves a multi-functional purpose: as a wayfinding device by making circulation visible, in rectifying the disparate floor height between the two original buildings, and by solving structural issues of the old hop warehouse. The stair creates opportunities for people to meet and share ideas while also encouraging movement and a flow of people between the two component buildings.

With a unique understanding of the space requirements at Royal College sites following years of work for similar institutions, the Southwark building has been designed to carefully integrate new building services, sophisticated IT and conferencing technology, supporting the requirements of modern work and events spaces, whilst facilitating ever more important virtual interactions.

Simon Erridge, Director, Bennetts Associates, says, *“10 Union Street is a new hub for women’s health which is designed to bring people together to share ideas and experiences. It is a model for the kind of flexible, social workspace that will become essential in a post-Covid world. The light-touch sustainable design approach we have taken transforms the experience of using the buildings whilst re-utilising most of the existing building fabric on the site”*.

Bennetts Associates has previously worked with two other medical Royal Colleges, creating a new HQ for the Royal College of Pathologists in 2019 and the Royal College of Ophthalmologists in 2015

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Project team:

Client: Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

Architect: Bennetts Associates

Project Managers/QS/CA: Burke Hunter Adams

Contractor: 8build

Structural Engineers: Integral Engineering Design

Services Engineer: KJ Tait

Helical stair Subcontractor: Littlehampton Welding Limited

Acoustic Consultant: MACH Acoustics

Fire Engineer: JGA Fire

CDM: David M. Eagle

About Bennetts Associates

Bennetts Associates creates sustainable and enduring architecture.

The practice has completed a diverse portfolio of cultural, workplace and education projects in both the public and private sector, ranging from masterplans to small historic buildings. As one of the UK’s leading practices, its work has been celebrated with more than 190 awards over 30 years and has recently earned Building Design’s Office Architect of the Year 2020 award. Bennetts Associates is an employee-owned trust with studios in London, Edinburgh, and Manchester.

Bennetts Associates is responsible for many prominent projects, most recently the Royal College of Pathologists and the London Borough of Camden headquarters in London, Storyhouse in Chester, the Bayes Centre for the University of Edinburgh, and Jaguar Land Rover in Warwickshire. The practice is currently working on Facebook’s London HQ in King’s Cross, the Woolwich Creative District in London and the University of Edinburgh’s Futures Institute.

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Bennetts Associates leads in its field in sustainability - in April 2019 they became the world's first architects to secure Science Based Target approval and commit to the UN's Climate Neutral Now campaign. The practice is a founding member of the UK Green Building Council and the first architecture practice in the world to report company impacts using the GRI Guidelines.

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