

Bennetts Associates

Knowledge Buildings

The new generation of knowledge buildings contains a hybrid of education, research, workplace and cultural uses.



We are one of the UK's leading architectural practices, with a widely recognised reputation for being in the vanguard of sustainability and the current drive towards Net Zero Carbon.

Our work in the education and knowledge sector is celebrated for its architectural quality, it's focus on user experience and its support for innovative learning environments. This is evidenced by the repeated trust placed in us by leading educational and professional institutions.

We are an employee-owned trust and certified B Corp[®] with studios in London, Edinburgh and Manchester.



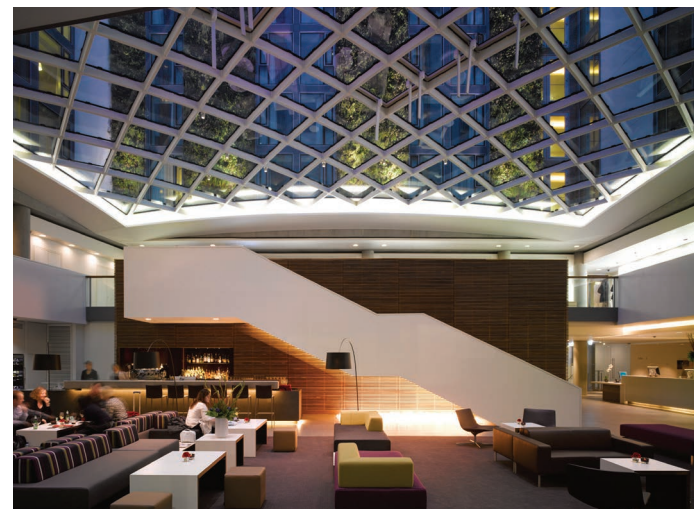
Workplace



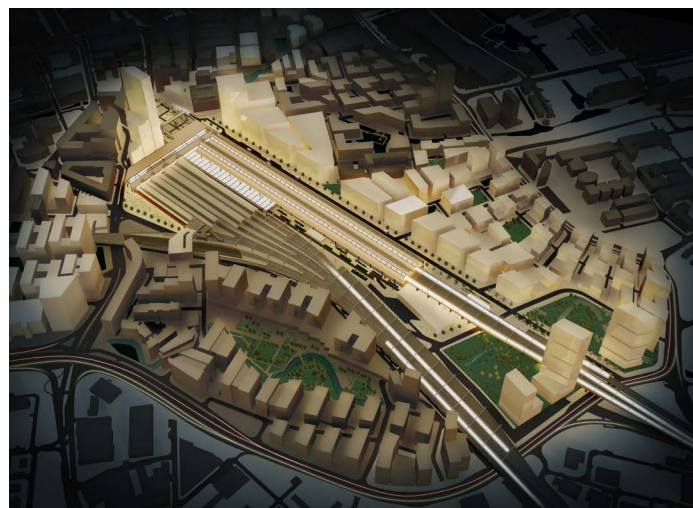
Education



Culture



Hotels



Masterplanning



Historic & Reuse

We don't bring the preconceptions of a house style. We wear our experience lightly, bringing a fresh perspective and curiosity to every project.

For us, a portfolio that spans sectors is more than accident or strategy. It actively informs our approach to design. We started out in the commercial world, on projects that demanded rigour, discipline and economy. As we designed more cultural, performance and higher education buildings, we were able to draw on that experience. These are spaces for people, conversation, serendipity.

How do we stay ahead when the world, the very nature of our work and the tools we use are changing so rapidly? By embracing opportunities with curiosity and an open mind. We see every project as a step forward, as a new experiment that builds on our existing body of knowledge. We enjoy the limitations of a brief or the constraints of an existing building – not as obstacles, but as prompts for fresh thinking. We never take our work or this responsibility for granted.

Awards

Bennetts Associates' major projects have all been recognised for the quality of their design in awards, press coverage and exhibitions. Among over 200 awards won to date, a number stand out:

- 33 RIBA Awards
- Three times shortlisted for the Stirling Prize
- Two-time winner of the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award at the British Construction Industry Awards
- Four times Project of the Year at the British Construction Industry Awards
- 11 Civic Trust Awards

Genuine sustainability underpins all truly long-lasting architecture. We are recognised as an industry-leading pioneer of sustainability. We are the first architects in the world to sign up to the UN's Climate Neutral Now campaign and to set science-based targets, and are the architects with the highest B Corp score in the UK.

Leadership

We are the first and only architectural practice in the world to have approved science-based targets and be carbon neutral via the United Nations Climate Neutral Now framework. We were founder members of the UK Green Building Council, are involved in the RIBA sustainable futures group, and most recently have been heavily involved in developing embodied carbon guidance for designers in partnership with LETI. Our latest business targets go well beyond the standard 50% reductions demanded by race to zero, requiring us to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030.

Practicing what we preach

As part of our science-based targets we have begun studies on how to retrofit our London and Edinburgh studios to net-zero standards, building on their historic use of 100% renewables. This is alongside our general programme to put climate action at the heart of our business including giving staff extra holidays to use low-carbon travel, committing to go plastic free, and developing a tool to help staff understand their carbon footprint in the context of project decisions.

Data driven practices

We believe that genuine sustainability underpins all truly long-lasting architecture. It must though be supported by evidence and hard data. We push for all projects to have post-occupancy, becoming Building Use Study partners to enable us to carry this out ourselves, and are publically committed to carry out at least one per year. We will undertake embodied carbon analysis on all projects and publish results on our website, targeting all completed projects by 2030 to be LETI A rated.

Driving Net Zero Carbon design

Through the UKGBC and our involvement with LETI we have been helping to define net-zero targets, and are currently working on a number of projects aligned with the UKGBC net-zero framework (both in operation and in construction). We understand, however, that it is not enough to have a number of pathfinder projects, and so now all projects have a series of meetings with our in-house sustainability team to enable net-zero design, including briefing meetings with clients and in-house embodied carbon analysis.





“... a truly exceptional teaching and research environment.”

Prof Sir Timothy O’Shea
Principal, University of Edinburgh

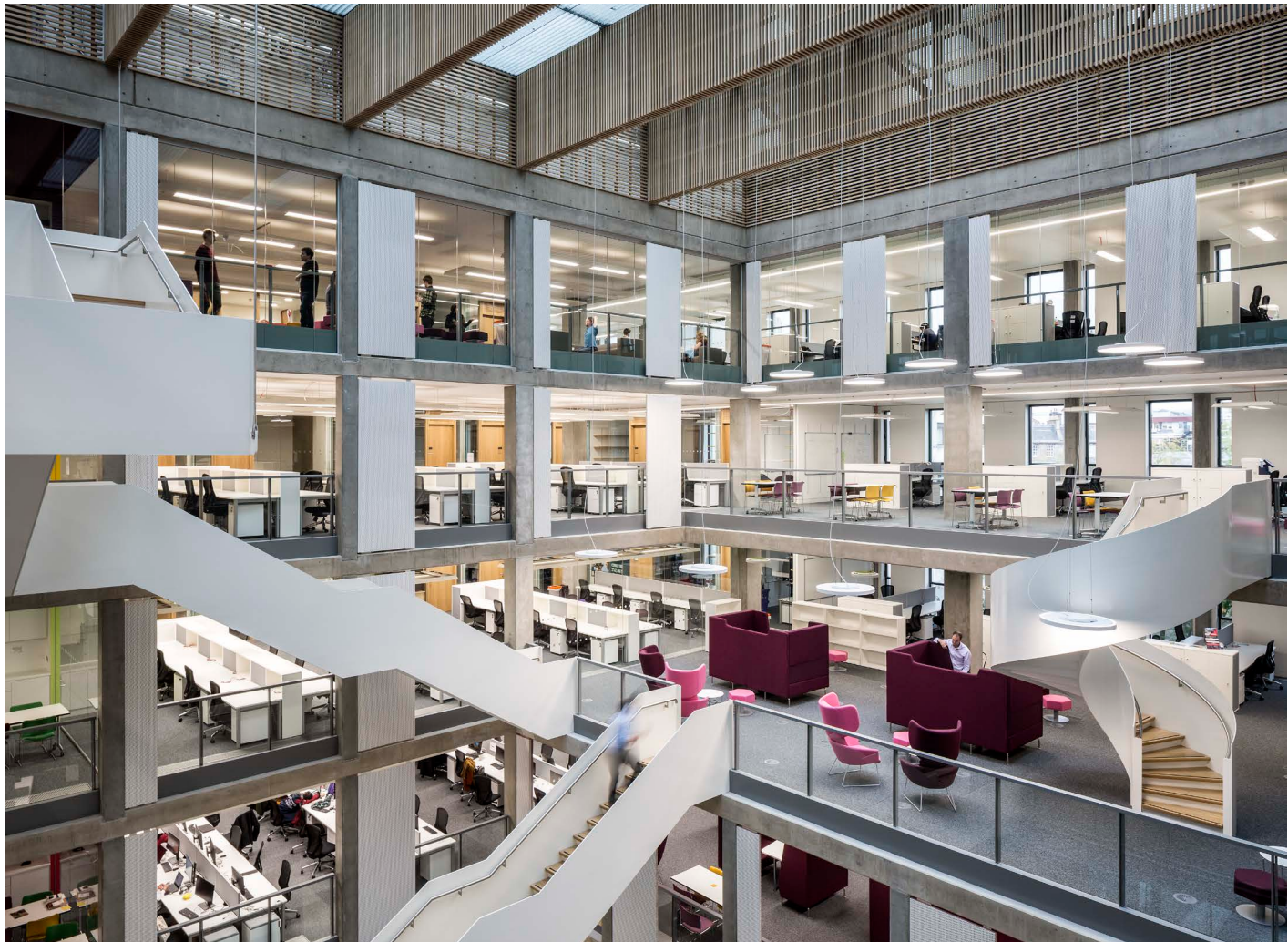
Project Details				
Edinburgh Location	University of Edinburgh Client	21,000 m ² Area	£120 million Value	2024 Completion
Carbon Data				
362 kgCO ₂ e/m ² Upfront Carbon (A1-A5) Total	-31 kgCO ₂ e/m ² Sequestered Carbon	529 kgCO ₂ e/m ² UK NZCBS Limit		

The Edinburgh Futures Institute is based in the Old Royal Infirmary, a Category A-listed Victorian hospital in the centre of Edinburgh, which was purchased by the University of Edinburgh in 2015. Our role was to take the building from dereliction to create a radically collaborative space for learning and research.

The fabric of the building has been carefully restored, with unsympathetic extensions removed, dry rot repaired and key architectural features reinstated. New accommodation and pavilions are interwoven alongside the original wards and the great 150-metre-long corridors. These provide the circulation framework to encourage chance encounters and informal social learning.

The original clocktower entrance has been reopened, now framed by a public plaza – discreetly under its stone lies a vast 450-seat event space. Flexible teaching, co-working and project areas are spread across five floors and include specialist facilities, such as digital maker spaces and exhibition zones. Bold colours guide wayfinding internally, while outside, the courtyards, gardens and cafés invite students and the wider public into the site.

By recycling a hospital to create the new Institute, the embodied carbon emissions are well below half that in a typical new build. Operational carbon is reduced through connection to the University’s central plant and fabric upgrades.



Potterrow and Bayes Centre
Education

“We live, work and play in the best building in Scotland.”

Mike Fourman
Head of Informatics, University of Edinburgh

Project Details

Edinburgh Location	University of Edinburgh Client	16,000 m ² / 9,500 m ² Area	£60 million Value	2018 Completion
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Bayes Centre is the final phase of the Potterrow Development and follows on from the construction of the Informatics Forum buildings in 2008, which provided spaces for world-class collaborative research in the areas of virtual reality, robotics, artificial learning, intelligent systems, computational linguistics and bioinformatics.

The Bayes Centre brings together researchers, students and start-ups working in data technology, design informatics, mathematics and robotics. It completes the University of Edinburgh’s Potterrow development, alongside the Informatics Forum and Dugald Stewart Building, to form a cohesive urban block.

The building’s sandstone and polished concrete façades continue the material language of its neighbours, with a colonnaded entrance opening onto Potterrow and a courtyard café at its heart. Public routes across the site are retained and enhanced by new tree planting, creating a sense of permeability and welcome.

Inside, a five-storey atrium forms the social heart of the building, connecting open-plan workspaces, labs and meeting areas. A café and breakout terraces encourage interaction between disciplines, while a rooftop garden provides views across the city and Arthur’s Seat.

By concentrating previously dispersed departments in one place, the Bayes Centre fosters collaboration and innovation, establishing a new model for academic and industrial partnership within the University’s estate.



“This beautiful structure will help support us in showcasing and draw attention to the important work of the lab.”

Susan Postlethwaite
Professor of Fashion Technologies and Director of the Robotics Living Lab at Manchester Fashion Institute

Project Details				
Manchester Location	Manchester Fashion Institute Client	76 m ² Area	£1 million Value	2024 Completion
Carbon Data				
468 kgCO ₂ e/m ² Upfront Carbon (A1-A5) Total	-340 kgCO ₂ e/m ² Sequestered Carbon (A1-A3)	640 kgCO ₂ e/m ² UK NZCBS Limit		

A circular, low-carbon timber pavilion celebrating sustainable fashion innovation.

Designed for Manchester Fashion Institute, this single-storey timber-framed building provides an adaptable space for exhibitions, workshops and research into robotic and sustainable fashion technologies.

The design champions locally sourced materials: a Douglas fir structure, UK-grown straw insulation panels and a blackened larch cladding that protects the breathable wall system beneath. These bio-based materials lock in biogenic carbon and achieve an upfront embodied carbon figure of 468 kgCO₂e/m² (A1–A5), with a further –340 kgCO₂e/m² sequestered — aligning with the Net Zero Carbon Building Standard targets for higher education projects to 2030.

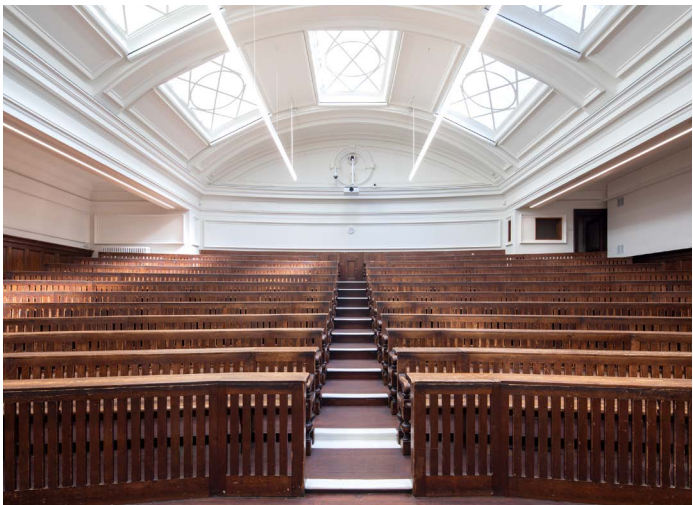
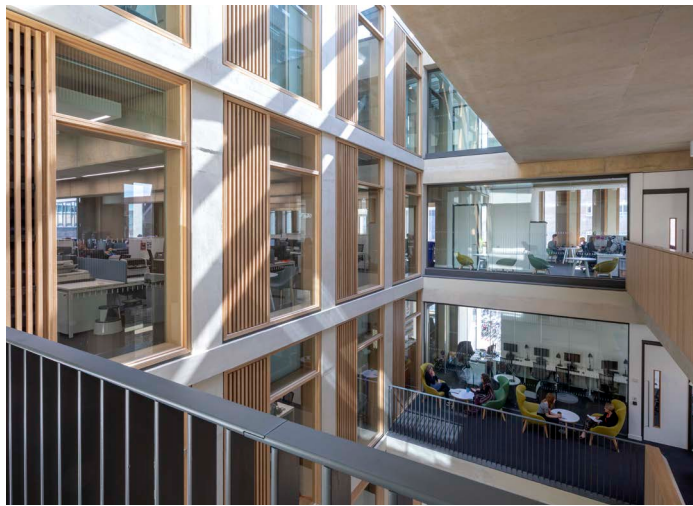
Passive ventilation and carefully balanced glazing reduce the need for mechanical cooling, while the expressive waffle soffit of the timber structure defines the interior. Located within a previously underused courtyard, the pavilion creates a new focal point for the Manchester Metropolitan University campus.

A post-occupancy evaluation is underway to assess performance against design predictions — part of an evidence-based approach to closing the gap between ambition and delivery.



“Here we have a modern, state-of-the-art building made specifically with people in mind. It offers students the best possible experience of student support, and it offers staff the best possible environment in which to support those students”

Stephen Toope
Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge



Project Details

Cambridge	University of Cambridge	6,720 m ²	£29 million	2019
Location	Client	Area (NIA)	Value	Completion

The Student Services Centre consolidates support functions previously scattered across the city into a single, welcoming building at the historic New Museums Site. Working with potential users, the design clarifies a complex brief while respecting the surrounding listed fabric.

Three listed structures are interwoven with a new brick and concrete addition. At its centre, a light-filled atrium serves as an orientating space, connecting entrances, offices and social areas while allowing discreet routes to private consultation rooms.

The flexible examination and teaching hall can be reconfigured for events or social use, complementing a refurbished 250-seat lecture theatre. Throughout, durable materials – brick, concrete and timber – are left exposed for longevity and warmth.

Outside, new courts and pathways improve circulation through the site, replacing outdated extensions with coherent public spaces. The reused stone portal from the former Examination Halls forms the main entrance – a gesture that ties the University’s past to its future commitment to student care.



St Antony's College
Education

“We are delighted with the design and the quality...and are sure that the Gateway Buildings will greatly aid us in what is becoming an increasingly competitive global market for post-grad education.”

Professor Margaret MacMillan
Warden, St Antony's College, Oxford

Project Details

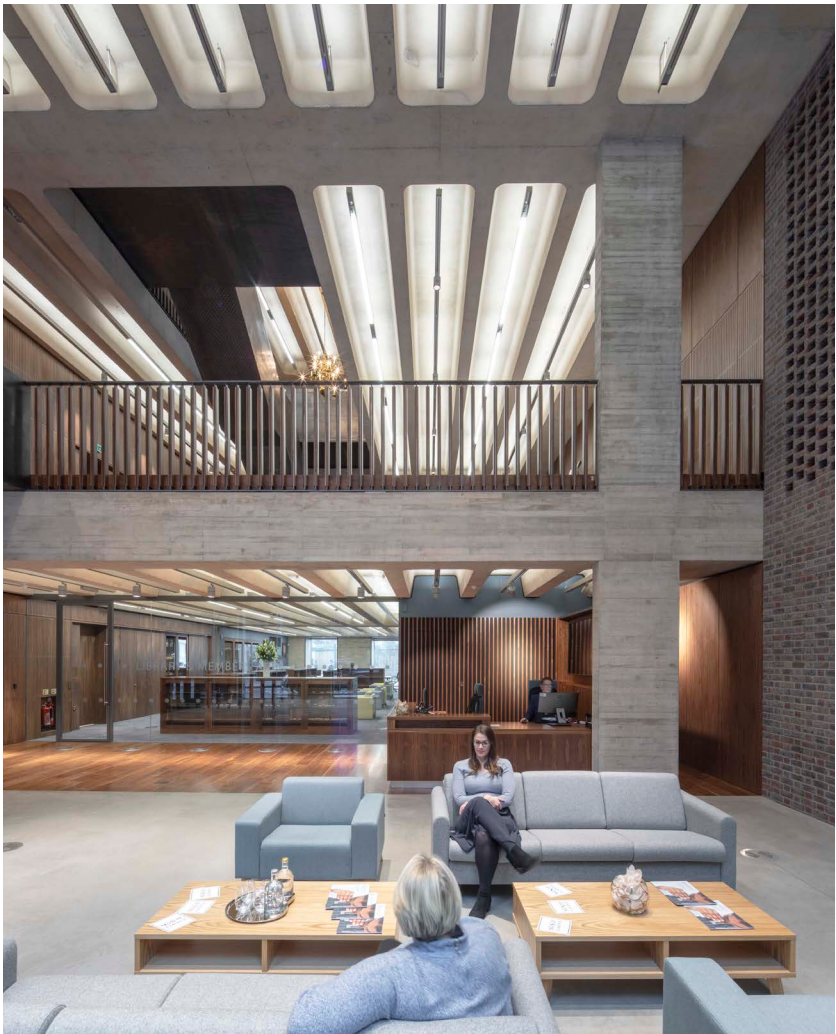
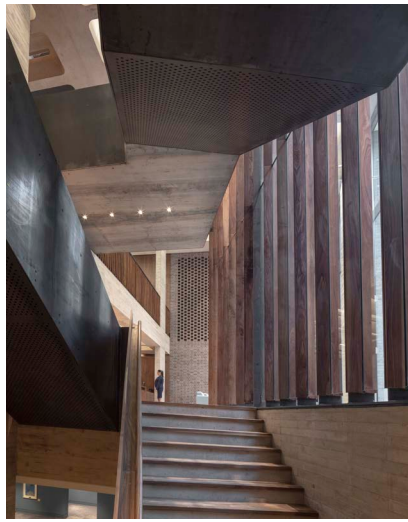
Oxford	St Antony's College	2,360 m ²	£7.5 million	2013
Location	Client	Area	Value	Completion

The five-storey Gateway Buildings are a significant addition to St Antony's estate, defining a new presence for the college on one of the main routes serving the city centre.

St Antony's is one of Oxford University's newer colleges but the estate previously suffered a lack of presence and a disparate grouping of buildings at odds with its highly acclaimed academic reputation. Bennetts Associates' design has addressed these issues in a highly symbolic manner that roots St Antony's firmly in the Oxford college tradition.

The new buildings announce the location of the college prominently on the Woodstock Road, frame an engaging main entrance sequence and enclose the central quadrangle for the very first time. In combination with a strong contemporary expression, the physical identity of St Antony's has been transformed and now sits confidently amongst its peers. The project comprises a new main entrance, porters' lodge, 54 en-suite study bedrooms, offices for college staff and meeting/work space within glazed rooftop pavilions.

The Gateway Buildings feature passive design principles such as sensible glazing ratios, natural ventilation and planted roofs to renewables systems such as ground source heat pumps fed from pipework under the lawned quadrangle and solar arrays for hot water production – the main energy demand in student residences.



“An efficient, attractive and flexible headquarters that will benefit its members and staff for decades to come.”

Dr Suzy Lishman CBE
President, Royal College of Pathologists

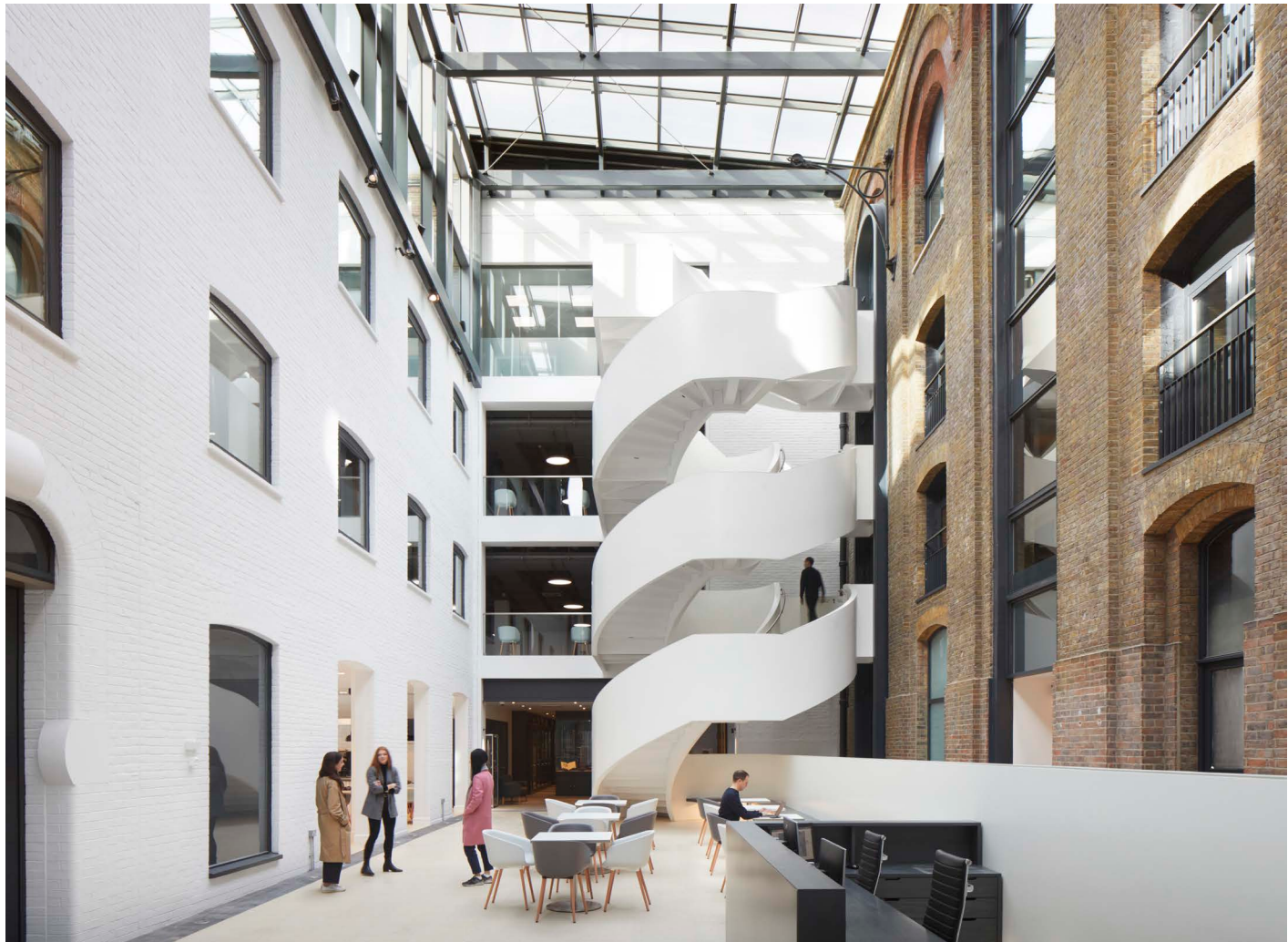
Project Details				
Aldgate, London	The Royal College of Pathologists	4,500 m ²	£17.5 million	2019
Location	Client	Area	Value	Completion

The new London headquarters of the Royal College of Pathologists is a highly flexible, enduring building designed to support the College’s growing international membership, research and public education programmes. Based in Aldgate on the City’s eastern edge, the building replaces an existing office block and enables the College’s relocation from its former West End home.

flexible layouts, anticipating future change. Set-backs on the first, third and fourth floors open the building up with balconies and triple-height volumes, bringing daylight deep into the building. In every detail, this is conceived as a distinctive, adaptable home for the College, supporting its operations and providing an inspiring workplace for members and staff for decades to come.

The building has a public dimension, with facilities for major conferences and meeting rooms, as well as more private offices and overnight accommodation for members. The exterior is designed to express the life of the College and the different activities within. Brick columns and recessed windows give a clear, legible sense of order and concrete bands run across the façade to mark each floor. At ground level, the brick columns are larger to signal the double-height entrance. A stepped-back sixth-floor pavilion, clad in zinc, differentiates the upper floor from the main building.

Internally, the exposed coffered concrete slabs that unify the range of spaces play a key role in the passive cooling strategy. The virtually column-free floors allow



“We are delighted to have found a home which will safeguard and enhance the College for future generations.”

Professor Lesley Regan
President, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

Project Details

Southwark, London	The Royal College of Obs and Gynae	56,000 ft²	£20 million	2022
Location	Client	Area	Value	Completion

Carbon Data

180-265 kgCO2e/m²
Upfront Carbon (A1-A5)
Total

At 10–18 Union Street in Southwark, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists’ new headquarters unites two existing buildings — a converted 19th-century hop warehouse and a 1980s office — around a light-filled central atrium. The building supports over 200 staff and provides flexible workspaces, conference facilities and a public café.

A sweeping helical stair links all floors, joining the two structures and creating a sculptural focal point. At its base, a new reception and events space sits within the glazed atrium, which floods the interior with daylight and opens the College to the public realm.

The design approach prioritised reuse and light-touch adaptation: much of the original structure and fabric were retained while creating a fresh, contemporary working environment. A bespoke perforated feature wall, forming the College’s crest, serves both acoustic and symbolic functions – visible from every level and illuminated throughout the day.

RCOG’s new home exemplifies how careful adaptation can deliver modern performance within historic fabric, supporting wellbeing and collaboration in a setting that reflects the College’s mission.



The Suttie Centre

Education

“The infrastructure has been extremely well planned to meet all the targets, allowing the University and the medical profession to share facilities in the perfect environment to mutual advantage.”

Ian Suttie,
Principal donor for the Suttie Centre for Teaching and Learning in Healthcare

Project Details

Aberdeen	University of Aberdeen	6,500 m ²	£13 million	2009
Location	Client	Area	Value	Completion

The Suttie Centre for Teaching and Learning in Healthcare brings together NHS Clinical Skills Training and the University of Aberdeen Department of Anatomy to provide a building which augments the key relationship between the University and the NHS and provides interdisciplinary education for all healthcare professions.

The underlying vision for the Suttie Centre was not only to promote clinical excellence but also to act as an inspirational environment for students and professionals. This is vitally important to both attract and retain the highest quality students and staff and thereby retain Aberdeen’s long history of excellence in health education. Spaces are therefore deliberately configured to help formal and informal interaction. The building houses contemporary and historic artefacts as a learning resource and an important link to the history of medicine and its particular resonance with Aberdeen.

The design achieved a BREEAM ‘Excellent’ award in 2008, with the highest rating to date in the ‘Bespoke’ category. The building, (6,500 m² gross) makes use of the thermal mass of an exposed concrete structure and is largely naturally ventilated. Elements of the building have therefore been computer modelled to predict future summer temperatures in rooms to ensure they do not overheat, particularly with the knowledge that temperatures are set to rise because of global warming.

The site, in the north of the Foresterhill campus, is ideally placed for both institutions and offers an opportunity for a new external social space and a link to the adjacent walled garden at Foresterhill House. This provides a quiet and leafy spot in a busy campus. Plant species were being sourced with their medicinal use in mind, thereby relating the building’s function directly to its landscape setting.

Bennetts Associates

London

1 Rawstorne Place
London EC1V 7NL
+44 (0)20 7520 3300
mail@bennettsassociates.com

Manchester

38-42 Mosley Street
Manchester, M2 3AZ
+44 (0)161 674 0135
manchester@bennettsassociates.com

Edinburgh

3 Boroughloch Square
Edinburgh EH8 9NJ
+44 (0)131 667 7351
edin@bennettsassociates.com