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Brooklands, Cambridge



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Brooklands is a new workplace campus in central Cambridge, containing the city's first major Net Zero Carbon* office building. It fills a gap in the Cambridge workspace market, meeting tenant expectations for high-quality space while at the same time offering sustainable, characterful buildings that contribute to the city. 6,000 sqm of flexible workspace is arranged across two buildings (B1 and B2) around a courtyard garden, linked by a colonnade. Brooklands aligns closely with the government's strategic growth agenda for Cambridge and its ambition to boost the knowledge economy. Growth in Cambridge is not limited to expanding the city's fringes, it also involves optimising existing urban areas and bringing underused sites to life in a sustainable and sensitive way.

The Brooklands site occupies a dual context, straddling both the leafy residential Brooklands Avenue Conservation Area and the CB1 business district around Cambridge station. This required a nuanced design response which evolved to include a layering of building scales, an articulated silhouette and carefully composed roofscape. The design has been widely praised by Cambridge planning officers, and delivers the required quantum of space, including large floorplates to satisfy the commercial brief.



Two buildings take their place on the site. Adjoining the end of the existing Victorian terrace on Brooklands Avenue, B1 has a composition of large north-facing windows overlooking the street. A double height dormer provides an eye-catching sense of arrival whilst the building's overall 3-storey massing remains sympathetic to its Victorian neighbours. Passing through an opening under the feature window brings the visitor into the courtyard via a colonnaded pedestrian route. B1's domestic proportions and shallow floorplate permitted a partial CLT structural solution with exposed timber soffits on the upper floor. Interior spaces have excellent levels of daylight and views across the courtyard.

Adjacent to a substantial office block on Clarendon Road, B2 is a considerably larger structure standing 5 storeys tall, providing generous commercial floorplates over five floors. The top floor has a loft-like character, with exposed CLT soffits and north facing rooflights under the sawtooth roof. Floors two, three and four all have roof terraces integrated into a series of cut outs on the north and west-facing facades which step down in scale as they meet Clarendon Road.

The two buildings' palette of locally characteristic materials – predominantly light coloured brick, reconstituted stone and metalwork elements – provide a warm backdrop to the generous courtyard garden at the heart of the site.

Achieving an EPC rating of A+ and meeting the RIBA Challenge 2030 new building office energy targets, both buildings are designed to high fabric performance standards, employing air source heat pumps, variable refrigerant flow units and maximising solar collection with 870 sqm of predominantly south facing PVs on the carefully oriented roofs.

The basement houses end-of-trip facilities with secure storage for 300 bicycles accessed via a 1:4 stepped cycle ramp. Brooklands achieved Active Score Platinum.

Future flexibility for tenants has been built in. A 'soft spot' within B2's second floor provides the potential for a future open plan staircase that could link floors one and two. The development's future-proofed digital infrastructure has earned it WiredScore Platinum. This commitment to longevity is further reinforced by the tenant design guide we were commissioned to produce, supporting future fit-outs that work best for tenant and building.

The high-quality workspace interiors are complemented by Brooklands' rich variety of external amenity spaces including terraces and planted areas. The landscaped courtyard fulfills multiple functions: it's a biodiverse, calm amenity space for tenants, a buffer zone between Brooklands and its neighbours, and provides a pedestrian route across a 'garden campus' unique within the Cambridge workplace market.



Paul Eaton, Partner, Allies and Morrison said “With its locally inspired forms, rhythm and materials, Brooklands stitches into its sensitive context, while providing a significant amount of high-quality new workspace to support Cambridge’s ongoing success as a centre for global innovation.

“The project’s two buildings frame a shared garden court, edged by a colonnade that forms a new publicly accessible route through the site. Inside both buildings, high-quality workspaces have character and ample natural daylight, while the sustainable all-electric approach to design makes a meaningful contribution to Net Zero aspirations for our clients, future tenants and the City of Cambridge.

“The project was developed in a highly collaborative way, with the design team and client working closely with local planning officers.”

Jamie Garrett, Director, Wrenbridge said “Allies and Morrison have been exceptional partners on the Brooklands project, combining creativity, professionalism, and a deep understanding of our ambitions. They skilfully navigated the Brooklands Avenue Conservation Area, delivered large, tenant-friendly floorplates, and crafted a design that respects the site’s heritage while engaging neighbours. From the linking colonnade to the distinctive sawtooth roof, their attention to detail and coordination created a calm, elegant backdrop that prioritises tenant wellbeing.

“When we raised our sustainability goals late in Stage 4 to target net zero operational carbon and a fossil fuel-free building – a first for Cambridge’s workplace market – they adapted the design with agility and focus, working closely with contractors SDC to achieve this ambitious milestone without compromising quality. Allies and Morrison consistently turned complex challenges into smart, elegant solutions, helping bring our vision to life.”

Location	Cambridge, UK
Uses	Workplace
Client	M&G, Wrenbridge
Status	Completed
Size	Site area 3,700 sqm; B1 1,058 sqm GEA; B2 8,718 sqm GEA
Expertise	Architecture, Interior Design (lobby)
Environmental	EPC A+, BREEAM Excellent, ActiveScore Platinum *Net Zero Carbon: Operational net zero carbon through on-site renewable energy generation
Collaborators	Structure, Civils: Ramboll; MEP, Sustainability: Couch Perry Wilkes; Landscape, Planning: Barton Willmore (now Stantec); Quantity Surveyor: Stace; Transport: SLR Consulting; Fire: Hoare Lea; Ecology: MKA Ecology; Main Contractor: SDC



ABOUT ALLIES AND MORRISON

Allies and Morrison is a practice of architects and urbanists based in London, Cambridge, Manchester, Dublin, Jeddah and Toronto. We design beautiful buildings that have long life and can adapt over the generations. We also shape enduring places, new pieces of city or settlements at any scale. All our projects are concerned with the crafting of detail and an appreciation for the uniqueness of each context.