

recently completed:
2 Aldermanbury Square, London

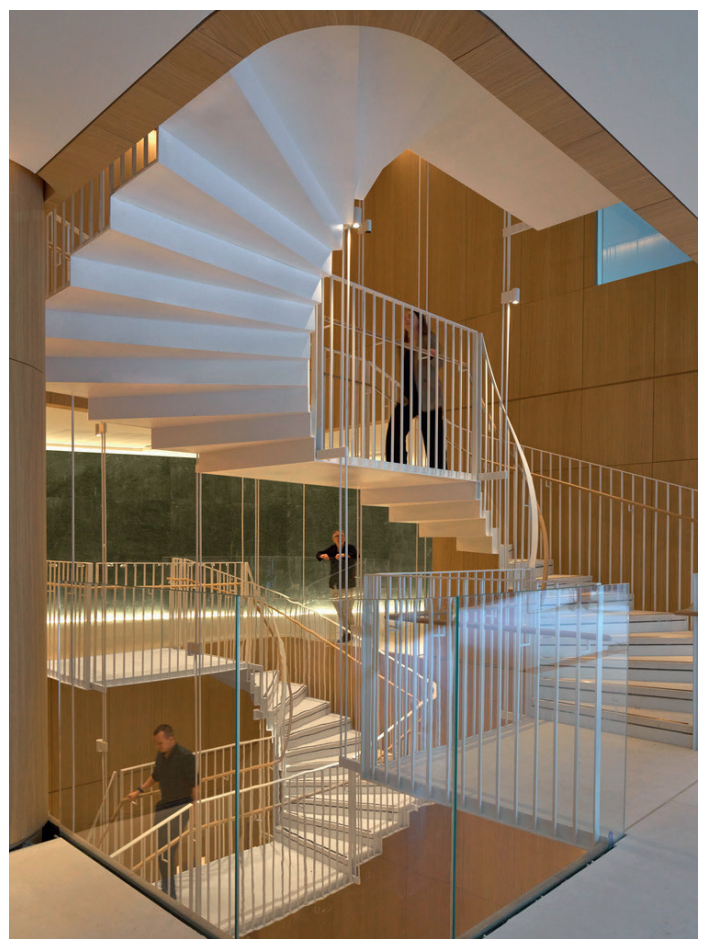


recently completed: **2 Aldermanbury Square, London**

2 Aldermanbury Square is a major new BREEAM Outstanding office development for Great Portland Estates (GPE), in the City of London. Adjacent to the Guildhall and surrounded by a concentration of designated heritage assets, the project is situated in one of the most historically sensitive locations in the City, demanding an approach that balances architectural ambition with a careful contextual response. Delivered to shell and core readiness, the new building almost doubles the amount of floor area formerly on the site, better engages with the street and adjacent public spaces, and improves pedestrian experience.

With a gross floor area of 29,700 sqm across 13 storeys of large consistent floor plates, this is a flexible future-ready workspace. On the ground floor a generous double height reception and welcoming lobby space include a feature staircase which connects health-spa quality end of trip facilities in the basement with a lounge on the first floor. A panoramic roof terrace commands views of the City while inset balconies punctuate the overall building massing and provide additional amenity. The whole is clad in a striped veil of white metal cladding that manages solar shading and light-spill without restricting views; the high gloss finish reflecting the changing colour of the sky.

The project presented a convergence of challenges: a constrained urban site, a requirement for best-in-class commercial accommodation, a complex environment for servicing, and an ambition to achieve meaningful sustainability targets within a heritage context. Our response was to treat these constraints as drivers for a more rigorous and inventive design process.



2 Aldermanbury Square replaces City Place House. Built in the 1980's this building performed poorly environmentally, was disengaged from its physical environment and no longer met contemporary workplace expectations.

At the beginning of the commission and while the existing building remained in occupation, we worked closely with GPE to undertake a comprehensive comparison of options including refurbishment, extension, and redevelopment. This iterative process was grounded in a clear objective: to deliver the highest quality workspace with the lowest possible carbon impact, while maintaining commercial viability for GPE.

Our initial response imagined the retention and reuse of the existing structure, extending the building to increase area. Detailed whole-life carbon analysis demonstrated that the additional carbon required to support the necessary building adaptations would be consequential however. A new-build solution would significantly enhance spatial quality, flexibility, and long-term asset value, and achieve superior environmental performance as well as provide the opportunity for material selection that favoured a low-embodied carbon approach. This evidence-led decision making process, anchored in carbon and cost appraisals, was critical in aligning sustainability ambitions with commercial outcomes.

The resulting scheme doubles the floor area of the original building. A modest increase in height was calibrated to respect a protected view corridor from the dome of St Paul's Cathedral and surrounding townscape views that protect the setting of the Guildhall.

Circularity at scale

A project-wide carbon budget was established at the outset of the design process, informing decisions on everything from structure, to envelope, and services, to landscaping and public art. A key strategy was the retention and reuse of existing groundworks, removing the need for excavation and the associated embodied carbon of new pile foundations. City Place House's steel frame was deconstructed, with over 1,500 tonnes 'harvested' to provide almost 80% of the steel frame on another GPE project.

In parallel, we published a client-led research initiative exploring the use of BIM to unlock the material commodity value of buildings like 2 Aldermanbury Square. The project's Material Passport Platform provides a framework for future adaptability and the reuse of materials, embedding long term resource efficiency into the building's lifecycle.



Operational performance was addressed with equal rigour. The facade design incorporates solid cladding below desk height to reduce solar gain and cooling loads, improving energy efficiency while maintaining high levels of daylight and occupant comfort. The veil is designed to a carefully calibrated depth of 400mm, while the 'petal' detail widens as it rises up the building; together these details provide the necessary shading.

The final building surpassed the 572kgCO₂e/m² project target, a carbon footprint below the threshold set by the Net Zero Carbon Building Standard, as well as BREEAM Outstanding and NABERS 5-star Design for Performance ratings. 2 Aldermanbury Square is one of the most environmentally progressive office buildings delivered in the City of London to date.

Repairing the public realm

A central ambition was to reconnect the building with its historic setting. The design introduces a series of carefully integrated public realm interventions that enhance permeability, legibility, and amenity.

On London Wall, raked columns hold the workspace floorplates 11m above street level allowing the pavements to be substantially widened improving pedestrian movement and dwell time. A new pedestrian route linking London Wall and Basinghall Street strengthens connections through the site and introduces new planting and spaces to sit - a moment of relief within the dense urban fabric - while enhancements to the elevated walkway network re-engage with the City's layered circulation system and link through to the Barbican. A significantly rationalised building servicing strategy allows the ground plane to be prioritised for people rather than vehicles. This integration of servicing, public realm, and architecture is fundamental to unlocking the site's full potential.

Artwork by Brazilian artist Alexandre da Cunha has been commissioned for Basinghall Walk, the new public route created between 2 Aldermanbury Square and its neighbour 40 Basinghall. Occupying the underside of the bridge, the piece uses the footprints of a diverse group of individuals arranged in circular patterns, which da Cunha describes as "transposing the ground to the sky".



Commercial performance and delivery efficiency

Throughout the design and delivery process, we engaged closely with prospective tenants, testing bespoke requirements and accommodating potential modifications. The scheme was fully pre-let during construction to Clifford Chance as their new global headquarters, confirming the building's status as a super prime lettable office.

Piers Blewitt, Director of Development Management at Great Portland Estates said *"The building embodies our design aspirations, successfully doubles the capacity of the previous site and sets a new sustainability benchmark."*

"Through close collaboration with our consultant team, the design was moulded to achieve the highest levels of passive energy control while minimising the embodied carbon of the completed structure. This outcome surpasses GPE's 2030 sustainability targets five years early and aligns with Clifford Chance's aspirations for their new headquarters. The architecture balances a high-performance, forward-thinking workspace with a significant contribution to the urban fabric, a key priority for the City of London. Meaningful new public realm was delivered through the creation of Basinghall Walk, the new City Walkway and public garden, alongside generously proportioned new paved streets."

“Meanwhile, the selection of natural materials and finishes was chosen to embody the project’s sustainability goals. We are delighted that these design principles have been adopted by Clifford Chance’s fit-out designers. This ensures aesthetic continuity throughout the building and demonstrates the inherent flexibility of the base-build design to accommodate occupant requirements.

“By balancing modern workspace design with a much-improved public realm, the project delivers lasting value to the City, and we look forward to welcoming Clifford Chance to their new home.”

Gwyn Richards, Planning and Development Director, City of London said *“GPE and the City of London worked collaboratively over the proposals for the redevelopment of 2 Aldermanbury Square balancing viability with the sensitive nature of the site beside the Guildhall and within the LVMF. Of great importance to the City was the delivery of meaningful public realm, including a new ground floor public route and active retail units that improves accessibility together with public amenity and green spaces and these objectives have been met.”*

Artur Carulla, Partner at Allies and Morrison added *“We set out to demonstrate that a commercial building on a constrained City site can deliver high quality workspace alongside meaningful public realm contributions, while meeting industry leading sustainability targets. Large scale circular strategies, including the retention of existing groundworks, the use of material passports, and a commitment to recycled procurement, significantly reduced embodied carbon. At the same time, an environmentally optimised facade minimises operational energy demand by lowering cooling loads. The result is a positive addition to the local fabric, achieving a carbon footprint below the threshold set by the newly established Net Zero Carbon Building Standard.”*

Location	London EC2
Uses	Workplace
Client	Great Portland Estates
Status	Completed
Size	29,700 sqm
Expertise	Architecture
Environmental	BREEAM Outstanding; NABERS Design for Performance 5-star; WELL Core Gold Enabled
Collaborators	Architect: Allies and Morrison; Structure: Arup; Services: Sweco; Facade: Arup; Civils: Arup; Planning: DPQ; Acoustics: Sweco; Building Control: Sweco; Cost: Gardiner & Theobald; Project Management: Cogent BC; Artist: Alexandre da Cunha; Art Consultant: Modus Operandi; Contractor: Bovis

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.