





Our opening question, almost to ourselves, is: Do serviced offices do better business in this financial climate, or not? We can't quite decide. Certainly this is a period of great change and activity – and many an expert has been quoted as saying that this is a great time to start up new ventures.

All this, however, is irrelevant unless you – the serviced office provider – can offer the right solution. We all know the name of the 'leading' provider in this market and no doubt have certain perceptions of what is on offer and what quality of environment and facilities we can expect. To use an automotive analogy, they are Ford Mondeos, and today we are going to look at a Jaguar.

Situated in the heart of the City of London's financial area, opposite the Stock Exchange and adjacent to the Bank of England, Warnford Court, which has recently undergone substantial upgrading, provides a rare opportunity for those companies seeking small suites to acquire excellent office space on reasonable terms for one, two or three years. The location alone sets this apart from ▶▶▶▶▶

case study



►►► the mainstream. But there is far more to this facility than mere ease of access to London's financial hub. In fact, the location almost dictates that, in order to attain success, this environment requires a certain level of quality, style and facilities.

The building is owned by Esselco, a private property business whose superior serviced office offering also includes Green Park House in Mayfair. The Interiors Group, working with Scott Brownrigg Interior Design, was appointed to refurbish Warnford Court, which is a prominent Victorian building in Throgmorton Street. Built in 1884, Warnford Court is in a robust Neo-classical style which features a stunning facade on Throgmorton Street.

We are met in the bright, contemporary reception area by The Interiors Group's Andy Black and Scott Brownrigg Interior Designer Cristiano Testi, who guide us downstairs to a luxurious breakout area and tell us about the complex and challenging project here. 'It was probably three months into our structural planning that we changed the principal usage of the building; ►►►



►►► extremely flexible solution. People can move in and be good to go from day one.

'One of the major things that changed was the introduction of furniture as part of the scheme. Originally, furniture wasn't even considered apart from reception space furniture and breakout areas. With this new idea furniture became something that was offered as part of the tenancy, so there was space planning involved, as well as selection of desks, storage and task seating.'

A major challenge facing the team from the outset was integrating the cutting edge scheme sensitively and effectively within the historic architecture, in order to comply with the rigorous requirements of the Conservation Area. Scott Brownrigg's Planning team were successful in ensuring that a number of complex applications were granted.

The 55,000 sq ft is laid out over six main floors. Having once served as the offices of the Bank of England, the internal layout

consists of almost 100 suites of varying sizes. The internal fit-out was both tired and dated, whilst the level of circulation facilities, sanitary accommodation, DDA provision and general amenities was not in line with design guidelines or the building's location.

Andy reveals that the brief dictated that the team stick within the confines of the original building. This was clearly not as straightforward as it may initially appear. Such were the shortcomings in the infrastructure here that the team faced a number of major challenges, ranging from the introduction of a modern AC and ventilation system, through to the reworking (and, in some places, the re-homing) of air ducts, light wells and lift shafts. To cater for the high end office space, all M&E equipment will be fully replaced throughout the building, with some major associated structural works needed to carry out this task. 'Initially the brief demanded as

much lettable space as possible,' Cris reveals, 'with only the bare essentials when it came to common areas. That, to an extent, followed through when the serviced model started. The client team then took a different point of view, with the public areas, the common areas and the 'wow factor' helping to drive the price per desk up and the desire up. This became about driving the quality up and justifying the costs. From the first space planning count, the desks have actually been reduced slightly – quality rather than quantity.'

'The client has two great approaches to this whole thing,' Andy tells us. 'One, that this should be design led with the appropriate value engineering where relevant.

Two, because this was a multi-tenanted space, with leases ranging from six months to three years, the client made our lives easier by acquiring back a number of the spaces himself, so that we could move the project forward in larger sections. This even included the tiny little coffee shop at the front of the building to allow the front façade to be completed with the reception. He's been brave and instrumental in keeping this moving forward – as a result it's now only one small area that will run through until March 2011'

The project thus far has involved 1,000's of man hours, often overnight, for the project team, and has also involved the relocation of a number of tenants to space elsewhere in the building. If you think your current single-tenant project is complicated, just imagine the logistics behind this programme!

Whilst The Interiors Group rolled its sleeves up and set about gradually re-modelling these amenities, Scott Brownrigg Interior Design set about designing a sensitive scheme that would lift the overall look and feel of the building and address any shortcomings in facilities.

The Interiors Group have delivered the scheme over an ingeniously developed three-year programme, enabling the building to continue to be let and generate revenue during the refurbishment.

The new design includes a major intervention on the Throgmorton Street facade, with a wheelchair-accessible lift at street level that is discreetly integrated into a new glazed facade. The main reception area and the common areas, such as corridors and WCs, have been redesigned to the highest standards of finish and detailing. The suites have received a significant facelift as well as being equipped with state-of-the-art

case study



connectivity, and a host of elegant meeting rooms are provided, available to hire with full AV infrastructure.

As mentioned earlier, the main lifts in the building were removed from their previous location in the stairwell, which has been restored to its former glory with the addition of brilliant artwork. New, improved passenger lifts have been constructed in one of the original light wells.

Scott Brownrigg Interior Design has created a sympathetic yet stunning scheme to off-set the prestige and gravitas of the building, this has lifted the overall look and feel, and, equally importantly, addresses the shortcomings in facilities.

The Interiors Group has now delivered over 80% of an ingeniously developed three-year programme within two thirds of the timeframe, enabling the building to continue to be let to over 70 tenants in occupation during the complex refurbishment.

Each of the completed suites is clean, flexible, spacious and modern – a perfect blank canvas for potential tenants. The Logic systems are, as previously mentioned by Cris, generously space planned, while further amenities in the shape of formal meeting suites, including a concierge style service, is available to all tenants.

During our tour of the space we note a number of great design touches, including the re-working of beautiful original balustrades, the clever oversized, illuminated door frames that demarc each of the suites, the stunning light scheme and finishes used throughout reception, the smart tea and coffee zones that double as informal breakout areas on each floor and the clever mix of natural and artificial light throughout.

There are, however, two elements that really do stand out. Scott Brownrigg Interior Design specified an astonishing ‘chandelier’ which sits in the stairwell, floor to ceiling.

The stunning 21m high tubular, colour changing light feature cuts through the six floors, bringing a cool 21st century touch the Victorian grandeur surrounding it. The aforementioned artwork also deserves further mention. Providing fantastic glimpses of colour throughout the building, the collection is something of a passion for the client, and is captained by the astonishing ‘hanging’ city gent in full working regalia who is, literally, tied up in red tape.

The Esselco brand and style has been reflected in the interior providing an environment of professional quality and one

where start up businesses and existing tenants are proud to call their home. It’s easy to see why the market has so quickly recognised Warnford Court as a market leader.

We’ll leave the final words to Andy. ‘In many, many ways this is one of the most unusual and most rewarding projects we have ever been involved with.’

essential ingredients

Client:	• Esselco LLP
Interior Design:	• Scott Brownrigg Interior Design 020 7240 7766
Fit-Out Contractor:	• The Interiors Group 01932 779999
Project Manager:	• Quantem Consulting 020 7240 5800
M&E Services:	• The Interiors Group 01932 779999
Systems Furniture & Storage:	• Logic Office 020 8538 5964
Flooring:	• InterfaceFLOR, Bonar Floors, Strata Flooring, Amtico
Seating:	• Orangebox 020 7837 9922