







## Case Study

comfortable and not forcing them into a culture they don't want.'

As we begin a tour of the space, John tells us a little more about the origins of the project. 'We were very lucky. We were looking at exactly the right time. There's something about this area that suits us an organisation, so when the site came up we got heavily involved in bidding for it.'

'We were very impressed with Squire and Partners – apart from the fact that they are just down the road from here, we really liked their understated style. We didn't want flashy, fully-glazed stuff – we wanted this to be modest, we wanted longevity and we wanted quality without opulence. The fact that they knew the local authority and were local, so that we could communicate regularly, certainly helped – but we really liked their design from Day 1.'

The true heart of the new UNISON home is the wonderful covered courtyard that links the new structure to the listed building next door. This not only provides the standout facility, but also the greatest challenges for the team. 'The building is listed for its historical significance,' Michael explains. 'This is an incredibly important building and we wanted to help provide a soul to the new campus of buildings – we always drew a little red heart in the centre. No matter how much you love modern architecture, it's difficult to recreate the soul and character of a piece of history in built form – you can see all the creases and wrinkles, and we've tried to embrace them. The fact that it was formerly a hospital building meant that it has very good floor-to-ceiling heights, but the wards and the bell-tower and other areas did present challenges – for example, we have lots of different floor heights that the new buildings had to respond to.'

It should also be said that, wherever possible and suitable, original finishes and decorative elements have been left in the old hospital building as a nice reminder to its past.

The two sides of the new UNISON space are further linked with a dramatic walkways between each of the floors, whilst the management has ensured there is no 'us



and them' when it comes to quality of office space and facilities.

The open office spaces are bright and spacious, with wayfinding colours and graphics developed with MAMMAL cleverly demarking each floor. Moving further up the building, we are shown a great outdoor decking area and – as we reach the summit – another stand-out facility; the hugely impressive council debating chamber, which features fantastic joinery, advanced presentation equipment and suitably sits immediately below the illuminated UNISON side at the top of the building.

We haven't even mentioned the TV/radio studios, press rooms, conference facilities and catering facilities, nor the important fact that the UNISON HQ is as

green as grass and smart as an Egghead. The scheme achieves over 50% carbon reductions above Part L of the Building Regulations and the CHP biomass boilers and photovoltaics ensure that 20% of energy is from renewable sources. Indeed, upon completion, the new HQ achieved a score of 73.53% and was awarded a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent'.

We've taken far too much of our hosts' time and, as we thank them for their hospitality, we are led enthusiastically by John over to the side of the reception space, through a door and into an amazing new museum that has been set up by the guys here in reverence to the former hospital and the incredible work done by Elizabeth Garrett Anderson.

Now that really is a wonderful contrast ●

### essential ingredients |

Client • **UNISON** | Architect & Fit-Out Architect • **Squire and Partners**

Project Manager • **Drivers Jonas** | Planning Consultant • **Gerald Eve** | Quantity Surveyor • **Davis Langdon** | Structure • **AKS Ward**  
Services • **Foreman Roberts** | Furniture Consultant • **JS Office Environments**

Systems Furniture • **Senator** 020 7388 7621

Task Seating / Conference Room Seating • **RH** 020 8683 9930

Soft Seating • **Allermuir** 020 7251 8059

Steel Storage • **Triumph** 01685 384041

Meeting Tables • **Sven Christiansen** 01384 400120