

Hymn from the Village



We must have walked up and down Cheapside hundreds of times over the years. The famous London street stretches from the Bank of England up to St Paul's and has, over the past decade or so, moved on a fair bit.

Whilst the street once housed small, independent retailers and cafes, it now boasts the leading brands, the impressive One New Change shopping centre and a host of new corporate residents. On a sunny day like today, Cheapside feels like a bustling, exciting inner-city village.

We're not just passing through the village today, however. We're here to take a look at the new home of one of these new Cheapside residents.

Ignis Asset Management is a new model asset management company. Formerly Resolution Asset Management, the firm was renamed in November 2008. Whilst being owned by the Phoenix Group, a London Stock Exchange listed company, Ignis operates totally independently and manages around £76 billion of assets on behalf of UK and overseas retail and institutional investors. This robust capital base provides long-term financial stability, an important consideration for investors.

Ignis comprises a series of small, highly experienced entrepreneurial investment teams, both within the proprietary Ignis investment teams and the Ignis joint venture teams. Talented individuals work best in small teams where they have the freedom to follow their convictions and there is clear accountability for delivering results





▶▶▶▶▶ The Ignis multi-boutique structure consists of a broad range of proprietary teams in Glasgow and London complemented by a small number of joint venture boutiques.

This is, therefore, an organisation that requires tailor-made and quite specific working facilities and environment.

The challenge here was to help Ignis employees to feel they were part of one company, both through physical space and by enhancing brand and user experience.

Ignis had brought together several businesses under one brand. A lack of prestige and personality was causing significant problems not only in attracting and retaining staff, but also in attracting the right level of corporate client. OPL were brought on board by Ignis to transform the Cheapside environment, and the firm's Chris Stewart greets us in the smart, bright Ignis reception. Before we embark on a tour of the space, we begin by asking Chris about the cultural and business issues he and the team were faced with here. 'The problem that Ignis had when we first met them was that they were in Sentinel House in Marylebone – not a great building, and certainly not a great place for an asset management company to be – and they also had a small office near St Paul's. So they had that split, together with a third parent site in

Glasgow. It was fragmented and clients would rarely go to Sentinel House – to be honest, they wanted to keep clients at arm's length.

'They were looking to relocate to a central, single floorplate, found one – and were then gazumped. This was a fall-back option – it is a floor and a half. The only person who really had the skill set to undertake a project of this size and scale at Ignis was Joyce Hardie, Head of Facilities here – who undertook the Ignis project in Glasgow. We were one of probably 12 design and build firms who were asked to pitch – and two were asked to move forward to the final stage.

'Fairly early on in the process we recognised that Ignis had a real question mark in their heads: how do we get to that perfect office solution? We're not really sure what the journey is. They'd never done this before, they'd never done it on a design and build basis and they'd never done anything like this in London. There was, we felt, a disconnect between London and Scotland and a certain amount of confusion about the whole process.

'So our pitch was developed around the methodology of getting the perfect office – rather than just giving a turnkey solution, let's talk about the journey. The vast majority of the pitch was simply talking to

Ignis about every single step of the process – what we'd do, where we'd take them, what sort of impact on management time all this would have, what sort of meetings we'd have...all the key phases involved in building a brief together – without disrupting or impacting negatively on the business. I think that's what won us the job. I think we understood our client – and they understood us.

'The early stage was all about information gathering for us. The good thing that Ignis did was to recognise that the key players in the business had to have an involvement, so we had a design brief meeting with every one of the department heads, led by the COO Tim Roberts and Chris Samuels the CEO.

'We gathered all the opinions, all the different ideas for different areas, all their needs and, luckily, a similar theme on look and feel started to emerge.'

Ignis, we learn, have been through a number of brand changes over the past few years, and were keen not to overstate the brand throughout the workspace, but rather adopt a clean, fluid, professional style. 'Tim Roberts and Chris Samuels were very keen to go and see other installations,' Chris continues. 'So we took them all over London – not just to offices that we'd built. We really wanted to give them as wide a ▶▶▶▶▶

Case Study



range as possible – and I think that really solidified a lot of ideas in their heads, and also gave them a language which they could use to talk to us which they didn't have previously. We also looked at a number of furniture showrooms, got mock-ups organised – and that also helped them a great deal.'

As we begin our tour of the impressive, bright and open Ignis space, we ask Chris to tell us how this detailed research has now been translated into a fully functioning office scheme. 'The overall theme here is one of a central community – of one business where everyone knows everyone else, where there is interaction and communication.'

'So we came up with an office landscape which is like a village. The village is green is the centre, where people can come to meet and play; the town hall is the very grand formal meeting areas; the neighbourhoods are where the staff stay and work most of the time. That is how we've zoned these working areas.'

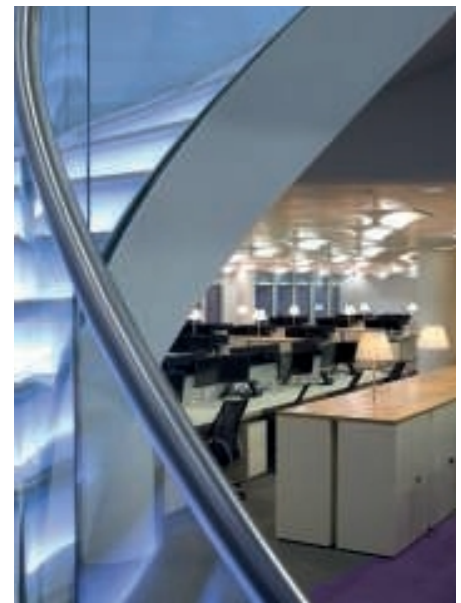
'The town hall is the front of house, client facing area, which also acts as a

business lounge. Clients will fly into London and use this space – it is set up for all their requirements, with a concierge service and extremely professional facilities and provisions on hand.'

OPL has developed a solution that fits the Ignis brand and the complex needs of the employees working within the organisation. This includes the addition of a dramatic central staircase that allows people to move throughout the Ignis home without having to head out into the central core of the building, a complex and flexible meeting and conference suite, and a number of smart multi-use areas for more informal meeting, working and relaxing. The staircase, we understand, posed a particular technical challenge due to the base build concrete floor being a post-tensioned cable construction, rather than the staircase itself being post-tension.

The design detail throughout the new Ignis home is also extremely smart – in both senses of the word. The mix of furniture, fittings and finishes helps to subtly and cleverly divide the village into its zones, whilst also softening certain areas, whilst

providing signature focal areas elsewhere. Oh, and did we mention that the entire design and build programme took just 15 weeks, and was delivered on time and on budget? A new village within a new village. We like that ●



essential ingredients |

Client • **Ignis Asset Management** | Design & Build • **OPL Group** 020 8704 6600

Project Manager, Main Contractor • **OPL Group** 020 8704 6600

Furniture • **Vitra, Knoll International, Unifor, Humanscale, Orangebox, Davison Highley, Boss Design, Walter Knoll**

Ceramic Floor • **Domus Tiles** 020 8481 9500

Carpets • **InterfaceFLOR** 08705 304030 **Desso** 020 7324 5500

Storage • **Bisley** 0207 436 7111

Joinery • **Furniture Contracts** 01306 628336