

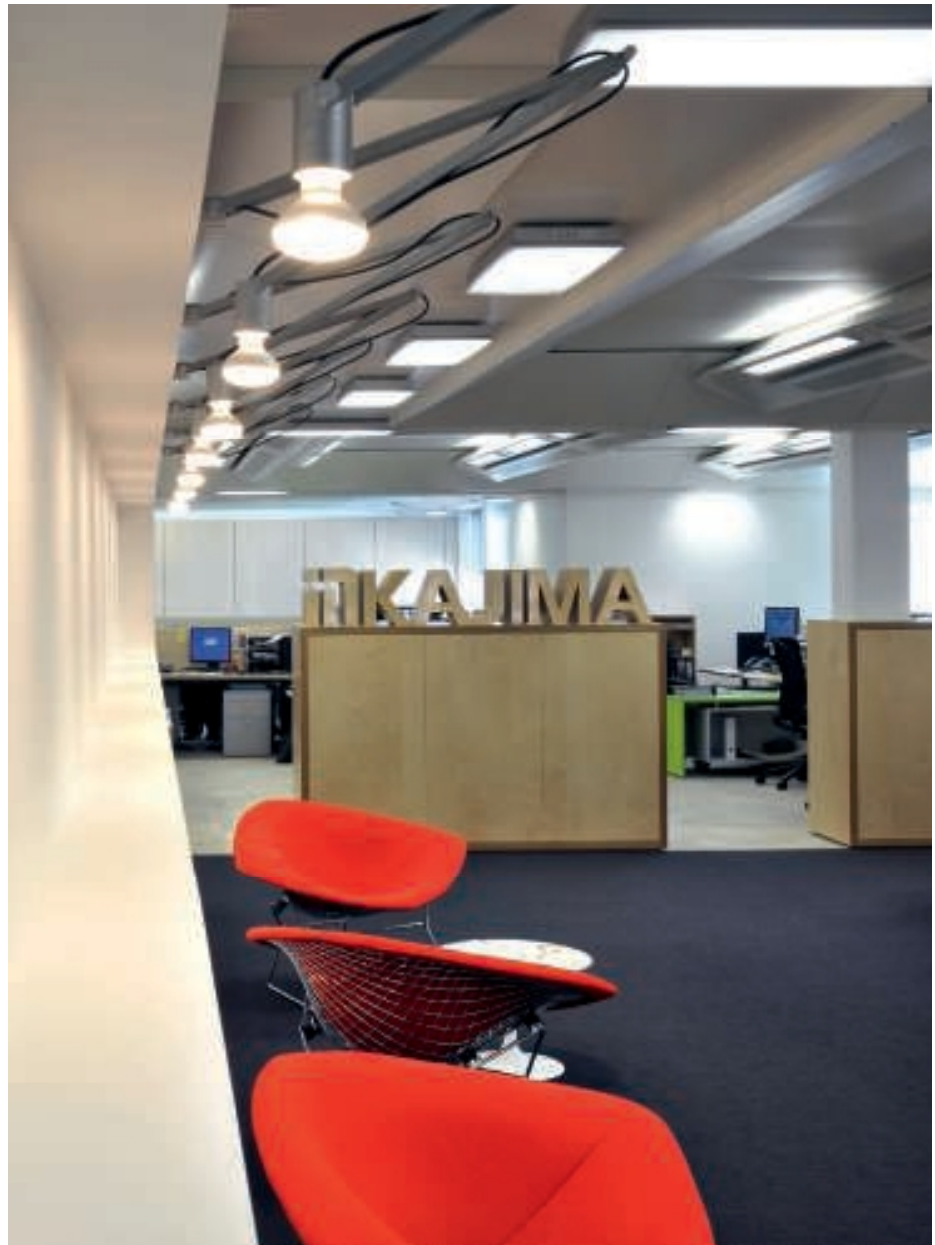
Property Values

We may well be an interiors title - the clue is in our name, after all - but we still have a bit of a passion for and fascination with great architecture. No surprise there. After all, many of the most impressive interior schemes we have been fortunate enough to study have been housed within Britain's signature pieces of architecture. Today is a perfect example of this.

We're in the capital to take a look at the new offices of Kajima, an award winning project developer and property investor, at the iconic 55 Baker Street London.

The firm delivers and manages high quality buildings for both the public and private sectors. Based in London and part of Kajima Europe, its principal operating businesses are project development, property investment and community engagement.

Kajima has three principal operating businesses in the UK. Kajima Properties is a property investor with a number of properties in Central and Greater London, including the





▶▶▶ iconic Stockley Park development. Kajima Partnerships is a leading PFI/PPP provider specialising in health, education and civic buildings, whilst Kajima Community promotes and manages the community use of schools and other public facilities.

The parent company, Kajima Corporation of Japan, is one of the world's largest construction and development companies, with operations in over 20 countries.

We're met in the jaw-dropping, vast entrance lobby of the former M&S building – now the site for the dramatic landmark development designed by Ken Shuttleworth of Make Architects – by Paul Forbes of de Metz Forbes Knight Architects, the firm responsible for the design of the new Kajima scheme.

Located on the 6th floor, the 8,000 sq ft office had been occupied by a global network of accounting firms and needed to be completely remodelled to meet the needs of the incoming Kajima team.

We head into the Kajima home, where we are welcomed by Alan Longshaw, the firm's Technical Director & Head of Community Use. Sitting ourselves in one of the bright new meeting rooms to the front of the space, we ask our host and guide to

tell us about the reasoning behind the relocation. 'We were coming from a pretty dilapidated building,' Alan admits. 'It was an old building that was gradually deteriorating. Being a property development company, and having a dilapidated building that we owned, we decided to move offices and develop our original building. That was really the driving force behind the project.'

'Our property team then found this space. We were looking in a fairly limited area close to Baker Street and Marylebone and this space meant that there would be hardly any disruption for our staff. This is fabulous. It is a great building and we also have great facilities surrounding us. So the first big plusses for us are that the staff think this is wonderful and when we bring our clients in here they can see that we are a serious company. This accommodation now supports the reputation that we have built in this industry over the years.'

We move on to talk about the process and the formation of the project team here. Paul recalls: 'Our appointment here came about through The Interiors Group, who were assisting the agent in finding a suitable space for Kajima to move to.'

'I think that, at that time, a decision still

hadn't been made as to how the project was going to be delivered – whether it was going to be traditionally tendered or would go down the design and build route. We have got a relationship with The Interiors Group that dates back a number of years and we've delivered a number of projects together, including fit-outs for DP9 and Select Models, and always had a successful working relationship.'

'That may have been an advantage,' Alan smiles, 'but this was very much a straight forward tender process – and if The Interiors Group answered the questions we asked better...'

The Interiors Group clearly did answer the questions posed to them by the client. So what was the edge that The Interiors Group had over their rivals? 'Strength in depth,' Alan answers. 'They clearly showed us what they are about, they showed they knew how to go about working within existing buildings, and how to manage the building management as well as the client. That was a significant factor.'

'The Interiors Group had carried out a couple of fit-out projects in other parts of this building, so they probably had an advantage in knowing how the management processes of the building

Case Study

work, and would work,' Paul says. 'This isn't the most straightforward building – it has a fairly complex management structure.'

The client team briefed dMFK to provide a new layout and design to reflect the organisation and message that they want to portray, which entailed stripping out the entire area. We move on to ask what Kajima wanted from its new facilities. 'We wanted accommodation to support our position in the market,' Alan explains. 'We wanted to be fairly modern, but not excessively so. We wanted this to be of a good standard, but not expensive.'

'We went through a thorough briefing process, and, as Alan mentioned earlier, there are a number of disciplines and departments working alongside one another,' Paul tells us. 'We needed to understand this and we interviewed each of the departments – discovered who they are, what they do and what their relationships with the other departments are. This was one of the issues with the old building – because of the size of the floorplates, teams were divided and separated. There were synergies and relationships which were difficult to maintain because of that.'

'The accommodation here almost dictates the layout,' Alan continues. 'It does not, however, dictate the relationships – that came later. We had to select who would and could sit where. From there we could fit the CE office and meeting rooms around the outside.'

These meeting rooms are now grouped together towards one end of the new 'L-shaped' space, with two spines of open plan work space running along the main axis. Support spaces run alongside the work area whilst a generous breakout space overlooks a quite amazing roof terrace.

Whilst retaining carpet in the open plan area, The Interiors Group stripped out the existing carpets, replacing them with dark textured carpets in the reception and circulation areas, and contrasting sharply with the main work area carpets. The meeting rooms themselves are further defined through the use of rich green broadloom carpeting – giving the spaces



just a touch of added luxury and opulence. Not that this scheme is an opulent one. Wall panelling, joinery and desk dividers, all in Finnish birch plywood, create a calm, monolithic feel and a sense of uniformity. Circulation routes are defined by a combination of full height birch plywood wall panels and half height plywood joinery units.

Bright splashes of red and lime green work against the calm, clean palette, whilst a number of the building's original MAKE fit-out elements are skilfully blended into the Kajima home – notably throughout the meeting suite.

There are just a couple of elements that we haven't yet mentioned. Firstly, there is no reception desk – and we can see why. The building has a vast general reception desk with communication to Kajima's

reception staff. The entrance area of the Kajima office is fairly limited and is devoted to a waiting area for guests. These two facts make a secondary reception up here on the 6th floor completely unnecessary.

Secondly, other than a transparent sign on the glass partition at the entrance, there is very little Kajima branding here – apart from two very large, very cool and very obvious exceptions.

Continuing the theme of quality joinery, large format wooden letters spelling the company name are arranged straight ahead of you as you walk into the space, and a second set sits in the breakout area to the far end of the office.

The new Kajima home sits comfortably at 55 Baker Street – and that should in itself make the project team here a very happy and satisfied one ●

essential ingredients |

Client • **Kajima** | Fit-Out • **The Interiors Group** 020 7495 1885

Interior Design • **dMFK** 020 7435 1144 | Joinery • **Edward Williams Furniture** 01296 712 504

Reception Furniture • **Knoll International** 020 7236 6655

Meeting Rooms • **Knoll International / Vitra**

Breakout Furniture • **Vitra** 020 7608 6200

Feature Lighting • **Modular Lighting** 020 7681 9933

Carpets • **Quadrant Modular** 01622 719 090

Meeting Room Carpets • **Christy Carpets** 01908 308 777

Hard Flooring • **Forbo** 0800 0935 258

Breakout Lighting • **Flos** 020 3328 5140 / **Tom Dixon** 020 7400 0500