

WORKPLACE ACOUSTICS

sponsored by Armourcoat Acoustic

Hoare Lea

Project One 1 New Street Square, London

WINNER

This is Deloitte's new flagship London HQ, housing 5,500 employees. Deloitte's philosophy was that design could affect cultural change. The sound environment would be key to successfully operating the building; directly linking to the health, wellbeing, and productivity-potential for Deloitte people.

The ambitious aspiration to create this new type of inspirational workplace presented multiple challenges; demanding a willingness to embrace fresh approaches, original thinking, and the need to scrutinise acoustic quality beyond conventional guidance. From this new kind of collaborative design and delivery process, innovation ensued and knowledge was gained; information that can positively feed into the creation of modern, acoustically-optimised, workplaces.

Collectively questioning standards led to altering Deloitte's 'Workplace design guide', and a change to the WELL standard. Stakeholders needed to understand the end-product:

How would these new spaces sound? Would there be spill of disruptive noise? Would the spaces work? A range of demonstration techniques, auralisations in particular, enabled informed decisions.

The judges noted the range of challenges extended beyond those associated with open plan spaces and included an auditorium connected directly onto workspace via a feature stair and an executive director's offices adjacent to one of the key client event spaces. This project is an example of good collaboration with an engaged client and a very joined up approach. It shows how acoustic consultancy is not just about using physics and numerical modelling but involves demonstrating what the client should expect as a result.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Adrian James Acoustics

Fletton Quays, Peterborough

The project comprised the conversion of a very large Grade II listed Victorian railway shed to open-plan Council offices. The client was particularly sensitive to acoustic conditions because many of the staff would be re-locating from cellular offices, so that there was a built-in resistance to the concept of open-plan offices. The consultants developed a scheme using

soffit-suspended rafts and acoustic wall panels. This is in itself not innovative, but the use of acoustically absorbent high-backed furniture items was. These combined with the more conventional screens to reduce direct noise transmission between work positions and different zones in the open spaces. This reduced the reliance on conventional inter-desk screens and so avoids the "rabbit hutch" or "maze" effect which so often arises in acoustically efficient open-plan offices. The use of informal "chat spaces" away

from the workstations has greatly reduced one of the main causes of irritation in open plan offices while encouraging healthy mobility around the offices.

The judges liked this example of the issues involved in moving to open plan particularly within the constraints of a heritage building. There was a high level of collaboration with the interior designer and a determination to use both the visual impact and the acoustic quality of the space to overcome the occupants' initial hostility to change.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Apex Acoustics

New acoustic design method for open plan offices

This new method of assessing the acoustic requirements between specific workstations in an open plan office is particularly suitable to assess areas for different types of use, for example a breakout or meeting area impacting on workstations intended for non-collaborative work. It can be used for assessing requirements within agile

(activity-based) working environments, or for the partial refurbishment of more traditional open plan layout concepts with assigned desks. The approach focuses on workers' acoustic needs in open plan offices and offers a design method to address those needs. It is inspired by the emerging soundscape concept that the individual's perception of the acoustic environment is key to acoustic satisfaction. The results are easy to communicate amongst the wider design team.

With no end product it was not possible to judge its significance until the principles have been applied to a project. However, the judges liked the approach which was easily understood and should provide a useful assessment tool. The project also receives an award for innovation both in relation to its adoption of the soundscape principles and use of a novel descriptor – liveliness - for the acoustic environment in open plan offices.