



The Architecture of value: reaching the parts of the investment appraisal numbers can't reach.

Paul Vick Architects have won AI's prestigious Global Excellence Award 2017 for Best Architecture Firm. A growing, agile practice based in West London, their unique blend of skills and experience is backed up with a client-savvy world-view that sets them apart in their profession. Here, their Cambridge-educated director Paul Vick puts value in capital construction projects under the microscope to reveal its hidden anatomy.

It's easy to see why clients are sometimes surprised by architects. For starters, they don't just do what's asked of them. They keep pushing you to try different things, consider aesthetic appeal, rethink your carefully informed and worked out brief, and suggest more capital expenditure, as though it were their business to engineer your investment plan. When you're not used to this kind of thing, it can be uncomfortable.

Challenging expectations

If all you want is planning permission and a viable building - foundations, floors, walls, doors, windows and roofs – delivered on time and to budget, you need to think again. If the only important factors for you are to keep the weather out, keep people safe, make them comfortable, with the space arranged so that they can do the things they need to do well, you're missing a trick. Architects can seem to complicate matters because buildings are complex, a fact they understand better than any other professional in the construction game.

A culture clash?

No doubt this picture exaggerates the mismatch in expectations. Many clients absolutely 'get' the need to test ideas, especially in a sector that, because of regulatory and geospatial constraints, resists the commoditised pattern-book approach. However, the stereotype has an air of familiarity to all of us who have ever been in the position of procuring commercial developments. There is a culture clash that can polarise opinions to the detriment of ultimate success.



Regeneration of 20-acre Royal Ordnance Depot, Northampton. Sold by the previous owner because the planning obstacles were too great, Paul Vick Architects' 100% planning permission record and experience are being brought to bear. The proposed uses aim to appeal to both demographic need, make the most of the grade 2*Listed asset and in a way that makes business sense. Click [here](#) to know more about the project.

Risk and uncertainty

Armed only with a commercial need, a strategic target, and an investment appraisal, risk and uncertainty loom large in the average construction client's mind. Staring blindly through the fog of unknowns, they lean on past performance, current valuations, economic indicators – any crutch, in fact, to mitigate their risk. After all, huge sums of money are involved and whether they spend equity or take on debt, it all has critical implications for the wellbeing of their organisation.

The flip side: opportunity and innovation

All this can be anathema to architects. Their education and passion encourage them to embrace the unknown and trains them to solve problems creatively and iteratively. Since the sector is inevitably hostage to unknowable fortune – difficulties in planning, unforeseen ground conditions, volatile material or labour prices, and so on – responsiveness is spliced into the architects' very core. They are so used to dealing with uncertainty that they forget how disconcerting the prospect is for the people who are bearing the lion's share of the risk.

Speaking the same language

At my practice we have vowed never to forget. Remembering means that we take the time to allay fears and are primed to pre-empt concerns right from the off. If we speak our clients' language, less is lost in the translation. Similarly, we can spot a googly as it comes out of the hand, giving us the time to reassure our clients that, with some fancy footwork, the ball can still be hit for six.

Call us to discuss ideas for your project.

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Paul Vick Architects continues its 100% planning permission record with new build, listed buildings and those in conservation areas.

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Paul Vick architects have won

- Best Architecture Firm Global Excellence Awards 2017
- Construction Advisor of the Year United Kingdom Finance Monthly Global Awards 2017
- Architecture Firm of the Year West London Build Awards 2017
- Most Innovative Architectural Firm West London Build Awards 2016

Paul Vick was a juror for the International Property Awards (UK and Europe) 2016 and 2017, a juror on the [World Architecture News](#) Residential Future Projects Awards 2016 and has lectured on 'Value enhancement and inspiration' at Le Plan, Venice (2016 and 2014), Schrodgers (2014), NLA (2013). An excerpt has been published by [Magdalene College Cambridge](#).