



PAUL VICK
 DIRECTOR OF PAUL VICK ARCHITECTS
www.paulvick.co.uk

Paul Vick Architects recently won *Finance Monthly's* Game Changers Awards 2018. They are 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 as does their 100% planning permission record on over 100 projects. The company's Cambridge educated Director Paul Vick discusses the challenges faced by clients today.

Q What are the biggest challenges facing development?

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. Digital connectivity has laid bare how many different stories there are trying to make sense of the chaos of data and disordered world we work in. They have to stare through the fog of unknowns and lean on past performance, current valuations and economic indicators – any crutch, in fact, to mitigate 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.

And when the only constant is change, designing only for today's conditions is a sure way to guarantee a sub-optimal solution.

Q What are the key issues clients face in relation to UK regulations and what are the incentives to encourage foreign participation?

Planning permission is a definition of viability – without it buildings don't get built, investment is not forthcoming, and you are left with stranded assets. Stories of intransigent planners, vocal neighbours and delay are commonplace. Sometimes this is a result of an incomplete understanding of the process and the pressures planners face.

Our job at Paul Vick Architects is to confront uncertainty and negotiate remaining unknowns and trends intelligently in relation to the client's brief. At the same time, we approach value from the start to enhance your business plans. The model we have developed addresses economic, use, identity, community, environmental and cultural values together to give opportunities for multiple users and positive feedback loops for your benefit. There is not much point in receiving planning permission for a care home, student hostel or hotel without enough rooms to make it viable for example.

The UK is known as being a structured and reliable environment to work for long-term interests – essential to successful construction projects.

The traditional distance of the developer to the user has become shorter. The public nature of development means users and neighbours have a louder public voice. They can be your supporters and market, and the developer seen as a catalyst for regeneration. An understanding of user needs is not just important to the planning process specifically, it is also important to the conception pre-planning and the physical detail delivery of it for user satisfaction.



Low Energy Towers, UK. Credit: Paul Vick Architects

For an office owner-occupier, that might mean design that attracts the best staff, encourages them to stay longer, work more productively and, ultimately, to make a more profitable enterprise. For investor-developers, that might mean private rented housing designed with a marketing cachet for cultural and social opportunities that commands premium rents, long leases and zero voids. For a museum, it might mean spectacular staging in and outside galleries themselves to create a destination powerful enough to attract people away from their screens.

Q Can you give examples where you have created value enhancement above client expectancies?

Apartments and Penthouses, London, UK. After some study, we agreed in a pre-application with

the council that 100% increase in area would be acceptable. Previous consultants had thought only 25% was possible.

New Mini-Department Store, West End, London, UK. Our design increased the visibility of selected brands and improved the management and speed of stock delivery in store to boost client's customers' loyalty.

Daylight Studio, London, UK. Our design anticipated the client's need to adapt over time to new media and alternative revenue streams, leaving them very satisfied.

Regeneration of a historic site with 7,000sqm of offices and retail, 80-bed care home, boutique hotel, low-energy homes, and museum, UK. The key objective is to design a destination to drive footfall, room occupancy, and sustainable client revenue.

Start-Up Hub, Innovation Warehouse, London, UK. Eschewing the trendy playroom motif, our fit-out supports growing, developing and selling ideas, and has nurtured several entrepreneurs who have turned into unicorn businesses.

Glass Bridge and Office Fit-Out for Global Communications Company HQ, London, UK. Our design crystalizes an identity that emphasises connectivity and facilitates idea-sharing.

Q What is your overall vision?

The magic needed to turn the faceless development appraisal with all its risks and changing parameters into successful 'output' value is understanding the various 'input' values. The examples above are about how user motivation and inspiration are harnessed - attracting them to come, stay, and return, as well as the word-of-mouth marketing will make the development attractive and relevant for longer. Focusing on the user is essential for any business.