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St Paul's Knightsbridge reinforces the church's future programme of openness tailored for the C21st and beyond.

Redefining Innovation

Paul Vick Architects was recently selected as Acquisition Intl.'s Most Innovative Architecture Firm 2018 London in the 2018 Global Excellence Awards. On the back of this win, we profiled Paul Vick Architects to discover more about the award-winning services they provide.

Identifying ever wider attitudes across society, Paul Vick Architects' particular approach looks at how clients' assets may be improved long and short term. Their approach has resulted in a 100% planning permission record as well.

The ongoing regeneration of £24m, 20-acre Royal Ordnance Depot in Northampton is clearly a challenge Paul Vick architects has embraced and develops threads of their earlier thinking. The depot was located in the centre of the country to allow munitions to reach any coast quickly in the event of Napoleonic invasion. A spur of the Grand Canal was created, and this runs down the middle of the site and is visible today. Sold by the previous owner because the planning obstacles were too great, Paul Vick architects' experience is being brought to bear.

At the start up hub, the practice designed for Innovation Warehouse (IW) and the Corporation of London at Smithfield Market in London for example, both formal as well as informal spaces were designed to assist IW's investment and growth programmes. This is quite contrarian to many current ideas that the informal space should be prevalent in a start-up hub for example. This approach has engaged directly with how one goes about developing new business ideas and getting them sold. This has worked, and IW has created a number of unicorn businesses.

In 2017, the practice gained planning permission for a new office space and a glass bridge to enable the expansion of the global HQ of a telecommunications company in London. Centralising the reception (and its staff costs), the new construction sets out an identity that emphasises connectivity whether this is in the highly visible and lit glass bridge, the office desk layouts or the refectory and its ability for small or collective meeting. The project is currently under construction.

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“Innovation is not just about new technologies. It is the adding of value to knowledge which has broader possibilities. It is a process that includes discovery, understanding, and then use. With today's knowledge and technology, we can do more with less.” Paul Vick says.

“The notion of longevity is also particularly interesting not just in getting longer use of a property asset but also when you consider that buildings can help you live longer. What is that worth to you? The question of value does not really get much bigger. This was the question we approached in designing the low energy 1st Age to 3rd Age, low energy house ‘Beeches’ in the west country.” Paul Vick observes. “We had been told by the care community that being able to stay in your home longer, in a known environment that you had control over, with support as required and a beautiful and appropriate design was conducive to better health and long life. Historically, good health is often seen as needing to be put right when it goes wrong. Health in buildings is often medicalised and clinical, or the psychological addressed as a ‘greenwash’ or ‘artwash’.” Their proposal for a 12-low energy storey, pin tower in London looked to embrace these ideas in a different format.

The enhancement of people's lives and life experience is clearly evident in the work which makes the buildings popular amongst the user and market, depending on how you look at it. The practice recently defined this as the need for cultural edge.

The practice recently defined the need for cultural edge. And this includes across commercial and residential sectors as well as identifying an increasing professionalism to how cultural organisations go about their work. And clearly, their ability to then channel this to create viability through exciting, value intensifying planning permissions helps.

“Since all experience takes place through the places we inhabit, we should train our crosshairs not just on output values but on these nurturing input needs by setting the stage for an improved life experience or ‘self-actualisation’ if you like. For some, this is still a religious motivation, but also spiritual solace is likely to be found in our leisure activities at sports, a beautiful landscape, a gorgeous gallery, a spectacular museum, a buzzing theatre and even work. As such, we anticipate growing demand for all these. Get these places right and you sow the seeds for long-term premium value. However, get these places wrong and you will be chasing the competition and be unable to adapt.

“Design that creates authentic experiences that tap naturally into fundamental human needs is powerful, particularly the need to leave the world a better place for our children and enable the next generation. Doing so fulfils all the commercial needs for football, loyalty, staff retention, productivity, thinking, good health, happiness and word of mouth marketing.”