

City grows out its fringe with warehouse remake and new public space in Spitalfields, City of London



Ben Adams Architects design for 21 New Street

Ben Adams Architects has secured planning permission for an inventive reworking and extension of 21 New Street, a converted wool warehouse in Aldgate between Shoreditch and the City of London.

Designed for developer Aviva Investors, this project transforms the original 19th-century warehouse, badly converted to office use in 1981, to increase the amount of office space in the building by 40% to about 80,000 sqft and is hoped to achieve a BREEAM “Excellent” rating.

The building is a significant new contribution to the City Fringe, increasingly the area for creative workspaces, innovative restaurants, bars, pop-ups and Tech, and one which threatens to usurp the more sensible City of London.

Ben Adams Architects' design will rationalise the floorplate through the careful integration of a new, efficient concrete core within the existing cast iron and timber structure.



A cross section of the plans for 21 New Street

Working carefully in this conservation area, the architects have added two new storeys at the top of the building by removing an old mansard at level 6 and replacing it with a three storey extension that tapers back from the original roofline. This addition is clad in a mix of perforated, opaque and textured panels in contrast with the original buff masonry of the warehouse building. Roof terraces unfold at each level of the extension.

At the ground floor level, BAA have enhanced the public realm with a new courtyard and a public thoroughfare running through the courtyard to connect New Street to Catherine Wheel Alley.

At basement level, an old car park is converted to provide 3,500 sqft of commercial office space along with bike spaces, showers and changing rooms.

“For BAA this is a great opportunity to reinvent this historic building, and the public space that surrounds it,” says Ben Adams of Ben Adams Architects. “We want to reinvigorate the courtyard and make sure that more people have access to it, contributing even in a small way to a more open city.”

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Ben Adams Architects

Established in 2010 Ben Adams Architects has developed a reputation for elegant, contextual architecture balancing function with ingenuity, and rationale with delight.

The practice is particularly skilled in working with complex sites and existing hybrid buildings. By identifying strengths and weaknesses hidden by redundant space or earlier interventions, BAA help unlock potential through design. Social spaces, rationalised circulation and urban connectivity all add experiential and commercial value.

Ben Adams Architects’ portfolio, across a range of sectors includes offices, cultural projects, residential homes and buildings. The practice designed the strikingly modern design showroom on Northampton Road in the Clerkenwell conservation area. New works include projects for Derwent London, London Square, Great Portland Estates and Angelo Gordon along with a new home for the Jewish Museum in Camden and Albert House, an experimental co-working space for The Office Group in the heart of Tech City.

The practice's work is underpinned by extensive research and development. From the properties and appropriateness of materials to evolving urban typologies, research roots the practice in a wider context, and helps to inform its criteria for successful architecture.

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