

TDO

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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PRESS RELEASE

GREAT SUFFOLK YARD: THE OFFICE OF THE FUTURE ON OLD GROUND

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TDO's major £20 million redevelopment of an inner-city block in Southwark has completed, and is now welcoming tenants.

Great Suffolk Yard is a 7,623m² commercial development in the Liberty of the Mint Conservation Area in Borough. Three existing buildings and four new buildings enclose a central yard to create a thriving new multi-aspect workspace peppered with terraces. The retrofit and new-build project reinstates the warehouse and yard typology that characterises the area. The project was created by Southwark developer Tailored Living Solutions (TLS) working with local architectural practice TDO. A significant project in scale and complexity, Great Suffolk Yard has provided valuable lessons about determining when to retrofit or rebuild.

The site represents a piece of Southwark's rich and layered history. Archaeological finds of Roman burial plots and grave items were discovered during pre-construction excavations, and the investigation dated the first development of the plot to medieval times. The site is made up of industrial buildings from different periods – the earliest dating from 1850 – which have been altered over the years. Built around a central yard, providing valuable communal leisure space with access to 100 underground bicycle parking spaces, the eclectic existing buildings reflect the area's industrial history.

TDO, who are based just a few hundred yards away in a converted railway arch, conducted extensive research and worked closely with Southwark's planning officers to develop a scheme which is embedded in the neighbourhood.

The site has three street frontages: Great Suffolk Street, Toulmin Street and Pickwick Street, with long views along Great Suffolk Street. The surrounding context is a mix of post-war residential blocks, a parade of shops and cafés, and the three-storey red brick Libertine pub and adjacent Charles Dickens Primary School.

The client brief required a contemporary commercial development which offered the flexibility to be let either as a single building or to multiple tenants, with a 1:6 or 1:8 capacity. This presented a tension between the requirement of the plan – to provide connected open plan floor space – and the elevations and character of the site, which called for conserving a family of distinct buildings.

The site is characterised by a mixture of brick types and tones, stone details, concrete banding, framing and lintels, timber doors, metal windows, corrugated metal roofing and tiled roofs.

TDO's strategy has been to divide the plot into key massing elements, rebuilding it holistically through a series of new buildings, rooftop extensions and roof terraces. The result is a sense of spatial generosity, vistas and connectedness that unifies the buildings.

The buildings include:

- **The Sea Building** - an 800m² corner building which has been extended by two storeys. The extension is differentiated by a glazed red brick, in contrast to the plain brick below, to delineate new from old. A black metal, set-back top level completes the corner of the plot.
- **The Town House on Great Suffolk Street** - the last of a 19th-century terrace that stood on the site, which has gained a mansard roof extension.
- **The Carriageway Building on Great Suffolk Street** - a new building that draws on the industrial language of the area and creates a purposeful entrance from the street to the central courtyard.
- **The Engineering Building on Great Suffolk Street** - a new building with heights ranging from three to six storeys, and an outdoor terrace linking to the front-facing Great Suffolk Street.
- **The Works** - a fine historic workshop building which has been retrofitted with a new corrugated metal mansard roof providing three new storeys set behind recessed terraces facing Toulmin Street.
- **Pickwick Corner** - an example of the area's warehouse typology, retrofitted with a new folded metal roof that runs up and over the adjacent Pickwick Buildings. A new forecourt provides cycle and car parking.
- **Pickwick Building on Pickwick Street** - formerly a low-quality warehouse, it has been rebuilt as a building of three bays, ranging from two to four storeys. The new Pickwick Buildings have been designed as a set with Pickwick Corner, rising in the middle two buildings to four storeys.

The transformed central yard space at the heart of the scheme, accessed from both ends of the site, provides daylight and natural ventilation to the workspaces. A new network of exterior metal walkways along the perimeter buildings has opened up routes into the yard from all levels of the buildings, animating the yard and creating a sense of community across the site. When the ground floor café arrives, the yard will become a dynamic communal space at the hub of the development, complementing the new roof terraces which offer spaces for retreat and reflection.

Internally, the original buildings have been stripped back to their cores, exposing brick walls and increasing daylight levels. Emulating a raw, industrial aesthetic, services are exposed throughout. New additions are characterised by fair-faced blockwork and self-finished materials, drawing a clear distinction between new and old. Floorplates have been designed to create a clear sequence of spaces across the site, suiting a single tenant or multiple tenants.

Reuse of the existing buildings combined with carefully composed new additions also dramatically reduced the amount of waste that would have been generated, and takes advantage of the significant embodied energy on the site. The building has achieved BREEAM Excellent and WELL Gold certifications, which attest to Great Suffolk Yard's credentials for both environmental sustainability and user wellbeing.

The development has also received a WiredScore Platinum rating. Continuing the commitment to sustainability, the property is being managed by TSP, a certified B Corporation, ensuring that high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability are maintained during operation. Subject to tenant approval, Great Suffolk Yard will be working towards a green operational phase for the building.

TLS has now moved its team into the fourth floor of the Sea Building, and the variety of tenants across a range of sectors - Pizza Hut (European HQ), brand and digital marketing agency Koto Studio, clinical and regulatory consultancy Lumanity, real estate advisors Henshall & Partners, Mace, architecture studio Architype, MCM architecture, engineers Hydrock, sports food brand Huel, post-production company Nomad, and Volt Bikes who are operating a workshop and cafe in the building – testifies to the appeal of the spaces on offer.

Public routes through the buildings are signalled by Staffordshire Blue tile, and act as a navigational tool. The wayfinding signage has been designed by Richard Ardagh Studio. Lettering cut out from metal stencil plates, and paint applied to the brickwork by traditional signwriter Ash Bishop convey a raw, textured presence, highlighting the buildings' industrial heritage, and referencing the materials and manufacturing that took place there.

Josh Chadd, Director, Tailored Living Solutions, said:

"As our first completed workspace building, Great Suffolk Yard has been a pivotal project for us. It started on site when Covid hit, and businesses started thinking differently about the workplace, prioritising natural ventilation, external amenity spaces, connectivity and a sense of place. TDO's design for Great Suffolk Yard always had all of these attributes at its heart and as the project evolved we became more steadfast in our resolve to create a durable and adaptable workplace which is very much part of its neighbourhood and supports the wellbeing of its tenants."

Doug Hodgson, Director, TDO, said:

"From the outset we knew this would be a complex and ambitious blend of retrofit and new-build to create a long lasting, robust, loose fit building for the future. It has been a careful process of stitching, repairing and rebuilding to create flexible architecture which can respond to the changing market. We've resurrected the yard typology, ubiquitous to this area of London, creating a permeable block in this lively street, using self finished durable materials throughout to enhance the sense of continuation from the street. It's multi aspect and multi-access, with opportunities to be outside, and it creates a collegiate atmosphere between tenants which in turn feel connected to the neighbourhood."

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Download link for photos and plans:

<https://tinyurl.com/tzdhktdu>



NOTES TO EDITORS

Location: 127-131 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 1PP
Site area: 2,088m²
GIA: 7,623m²
Schedule: Start on site March 2020; completion June 2023
Construction Value: £20 million
Client: TLS
Architect: TDO
Architect team: Doug Hodgson, Ben Rowe, Joseph Cassar, Abigail Yeaden, Jeff Chu, Sam Young
Contractor: RI Works
Structural engineer: Axiom
Quantity surveyor: Cast
Project management: Cast
Sustainability consultant: Alphacello
Placemaking graphics: Richard Ardagh Studio with sign writer Ash Bishop
Photography: © Ed Reeve, © Taran Wilkhu

TDO is a creative architecture studio founded by Doug Hodgson and Tom Lewith in 2012 with fellow Bartlett graduate Owen Jones. Working from a retrofitted railway arch in central London the studio specialises in sustainable urban development, with a focus on modern methods of construction.

TDO's approach is characterised by simple forms, intersecting geometries and exposed materials. Built works to date include: Old Church Street, an infill townhouse in Chelsea (2015); Fab House, low-cost modular terrace housing in North Shields, for Places for People and Urban Splash (2018); the headquarters for The Modern House, Southwark (2018); and Greenwich High Road, a new residential building with street level commercial space, Lewisham (2021). and the retrofit of railway arches along the Low Line, Southwark (2022).

The practice is currently working with Human Nature to establish an MMC strategy for The Phoenix, a sustainable mixed-use development on a 7.9-hectare brownfield site in Lewes, East Sussex. The practice featured in The Architecture Foundation's New Architects 3 (2016) and The Architects' Journal's 40 under 40 - a showcase of architecture's brightest up-and-coming talent (2020).

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