



West Offices

Safeguarding heritage - shaping York's future

How York's original railway station became the modern, highly efficient headquarters and customer centre for City of York Council



The best way to preserve old buildings is to find viable new uses for them



The restored courtyard enhances the approach to the customer centre.



Old and new elements of the building work in perfect harmony.

The award-winning redevelopment of the Grade II* listed West Offices complex - the site of York's original railway station - provides a model for the sustainable regeneration of older buildings.

Designed and delivered by York Investors LLP – a joint venture between Buccleuch Property and York-based S Harrison Developments Ltd – the new £32 million 150,000 sq ft complex comprises four storeys of open plan office space, a flexible customer centre and 40 meeting rooms.

The move by City of York Council from 17 locations to two will contribute an estimated £17million in efficiency savings for council tax payers over the next 25 years.

Excellent design, respect for the building's rich heritage, and innovative use of sustainable technologies have won praise from a range of conservation and heritage bodies including English Heritage and York Civic Trust.

Thanks to the vision and skill of City of York Council, the developers and their professional teams, this important heritage building now has a new and sustainable future as it provides a focal point for the delivery of improved services to the city and its residents.

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West Offices

is now home to City of York Council
and the focal point
for service delivery



Delivering first class services is at the heart of our philosophy. Our commitment is to provide excellent value for money; working collaboratively with partners is an integral part of that programme.

Shaping the future

York is a very special place – to the 200,000 people who live here and to the seven million or so visitors who come to the city every year. It is a beautiful city, steeped in history, and that is a heritage we are pledged to uphold and celebrate.

But we are a modern city too, attractive to inward investors and positively 'open for business'.

When developers S Harrison and Buccleuch Property came forward with the proposal to take a deteriorating historic building, safeguard its heritage and create a modern, sustainable headquarters from which we could efficiently deliver improved services and achieve significant operational cost savings, we took note.

In competitive tender, they demonstrated the excellent value for money that West Offices offered, and presented a design concept which perfectly matched our space need aspirations within a remarkable landmark building.

On budget, on time and exceeding expectations, West Offices is now home to City of York Council and the focal point for service delivery. The £32million redevelopment of the former railway station complex has enabled us to move our office-based teams from 17 disparate and unsuitable buildings into just two – improving efficiency and saving costs.

The process has had a remarkable impact on the council's business. It has provided the catalyst for us to explore and revise our working practices beyond what we would otherwise have envisaged; in tough times for local government, the move has galvanised the team and had a positive impact on morale.

Its delivery has involved fantastic co-operation between the private and public sectors in what has proved a model of collaborative working.

Kersten England

Kersten England
Chief executive - City of York Council



(l-r) Ann Scott of S Harrison, Tracey Carter from City of York Council and Cllr Julie Gunnell view work in progress.



Ann Scott of S Harrison hands the keys to leader, Cllr James Alexander while Sandy Smith of Buccleuch Property, Kersten England and Cllr Julie Gunnell look on.

Conceiving and delivering such a remarkable outcome required a visionary team with a breadth of skill and experience.

Teamwork pedigree

To work, the scheme had to be financially viable as well as practically deliverable to an exacting specification, on a complex site, within a fixed and tight timescale.

The two organisations which together formed the joint venture delivery vehicle, York Investors LLP, combined their own complementary pedigrees with support from trusted and skilled associates, the majority York and Yorkshire based. For over twelve months before they actually won the tender to deliver West Offices, the design and management team worked with consultants and with their preferred main contractor, Miller Construction Ltd, to identify and engineer out issues before they arose and to plan meticulously the delivery schedule.

Buccleuch Property

- part of the Buccleuch Group which is chaired by the 10th Duke of Buccleuch - has an extensive portfolio of historic and listed buildings and an excellent reputation for sound management.

Forged over a 700 year history, the group has a solidity and strength that few can rival.

Its sensitivity and respect for the achievements of the past gives Buccleuch a strong foundation from which it develops and builds for the future. People, property and land are the lifeblood of the organisation - a unique strength and experience which it brings to all its business relationships.



S Harrison

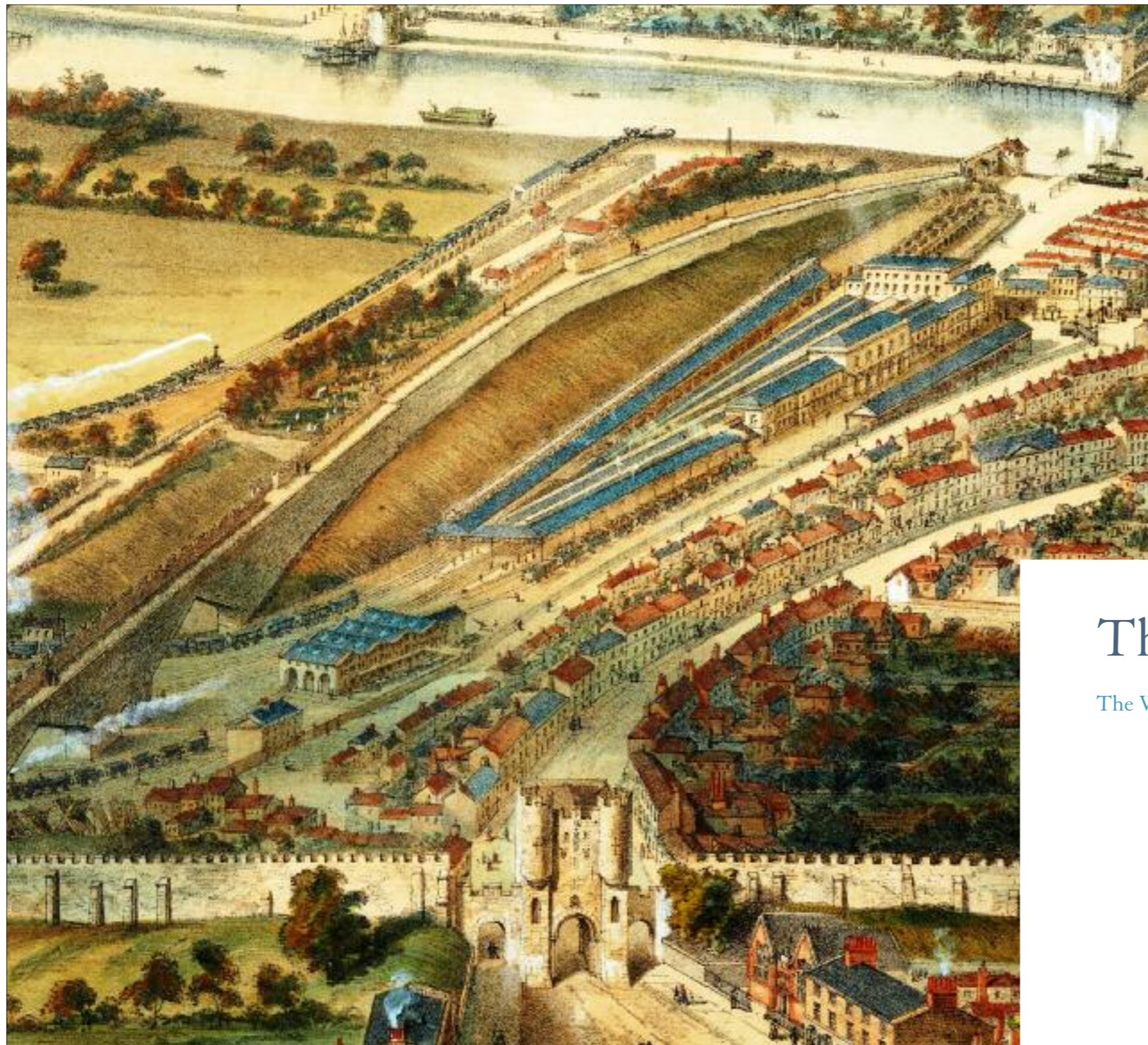
is one of the region's most successful privately owned property and development businesses with a reputation for quality and delivery. The company is renowned for its partnering approach, working closely with the communities it serves.

It has an impressive portfolio of live and completed projects covering residential, retail, leisure, commercial, industrial, educational and mixed-use schemes across the Midlands and the North of England.

Founded in 1952, it is now based at The Chocolate Works in York. Its own Grade II listed headquarters - Stanley Harrison House - demonstrate how older buildings can be successfully, sustainably and sensitively returned to productive use.



To work, the scheme had to be *financially viable* as well as *practically deliverable*



Clockwise from top - an 1858 bird's eye view of the station within the city walls (picture courtesy of Peter Brown); unsightly additions to the original structure which were removed to open up the courtyard; the view of the site from the city walls in 2009; the earliest artist's impression of the 1840 station.

The building had
no viable future

The history

The West Offices site has always played an important part in the city's history.

In Roman times it had been part of the walled civilian colonia and housed a number of important buildings including two substantial bath houses.

In mediaeval times the site had been occupied by a friary and in the seventeenth century the Telford family established a nursery gardens there which enjoyed a national reputation amongst horticulturalists.

By the 1830s a large part of the southern end of the site was occupied by the York House of Correction which had been built in 1814.

George Hudson chose the site for York's new railway station which opened in 1841. He beat off a challenge from rival George Stephenson who had wanted to locate the railway station outside the city walls.

The station was built at a cost of £7,786,8s and the trainshed roof canopy was commissioned at a cost of £5,8s per square yard.

In 1853, the world's first integral railway hotel was added. It was built in eleven months at a cost of £29,7s,1d below the £8000 estimate.

By 1877 the current station, outside the city walls, was completed and the West Offices complex began a long decline.

During the 1960s it was used merely as a sidings and rolling stock cleaning area and was falling into disrepair.

By the 21st century the original station, along with various later additions and extensions, was being used as short-term office and storage accommodation for a range of railway related and other businesses. The building had no viable future, and was in danger of being added to the English Heritage register of listed buildings "at risk".





An accessible customer centre at ground floor level.



The business and staff café is located under original cast iron pillars adjacent to the inner wall of the 1853 hotel.

Meeting a challenging brief

With around 1300 office-based staff housed across 17 different locations, City of York Council needed to rationalise its space requirements if it was to meet its commitment to combine cost-savings with improvements in service delivery in its new flagship building.

At the same time, the council demanded space to accommodate many of its partners, to increase collaborative working and deliver genuinely integrated service provision.

To reflect the council's teamwork approach it needed extensive open plan floorplates – from chief executive downwards, no council employee has "an office". Working is open, communicative and transparent, reflecting the ethos of the organisation.

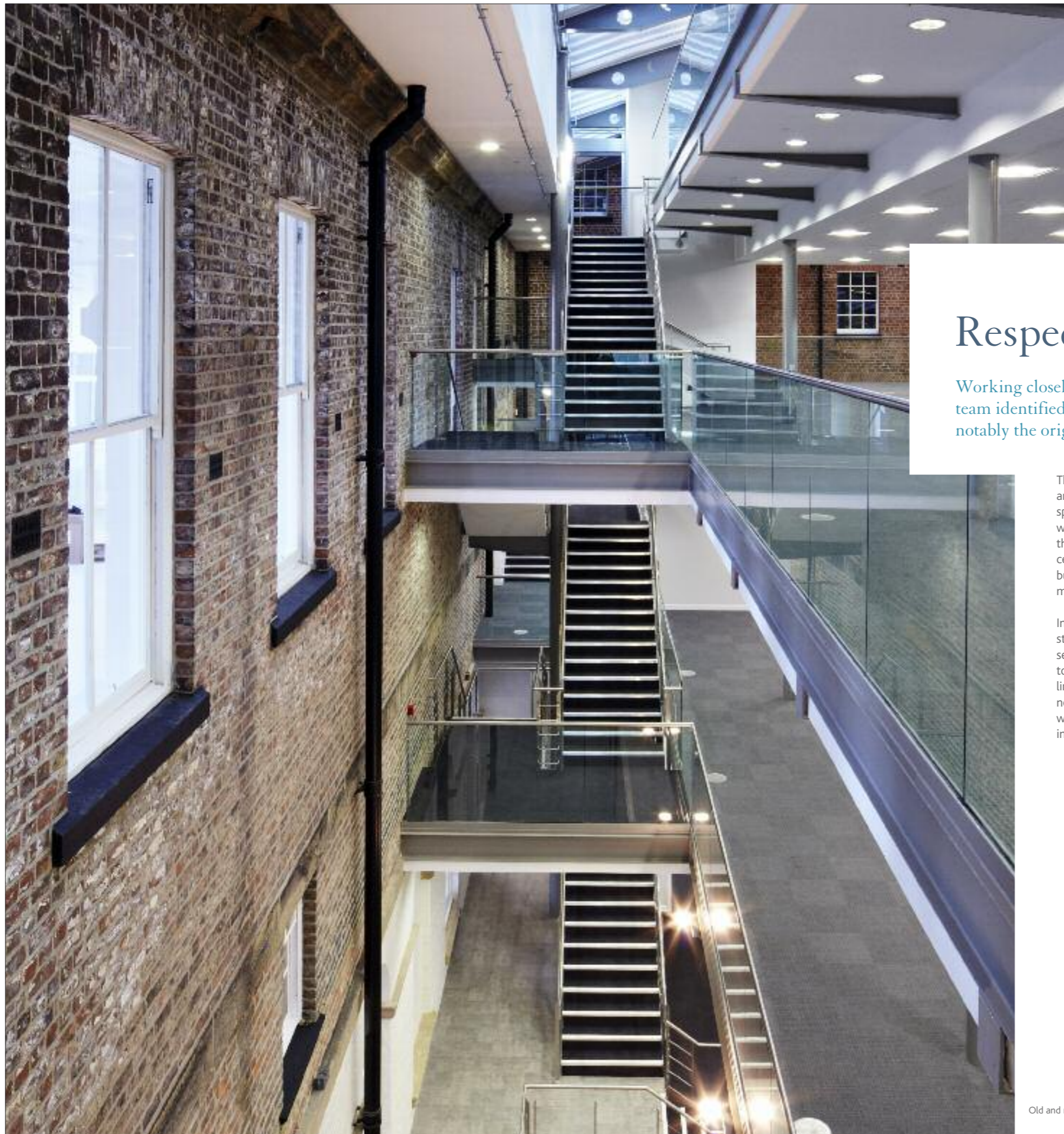
The brief also required cellular spaces for meetings and politicians, and an accessible customer centre at ground floor level, providing a welcoming interface for anyone wishing to access council services.

As a civic building, it was required to achieve BREEAM excellent rating, and the council was exacting in its specification for energy performance and use of energy from renewable sources.

Finally, York deserved a statement building which would reflect its rich historical heritage – a headquarters of which the whole city could be proud.

York deserved a statement building which would reflect its rich historical heritage

The original booking hall now forms the main entrance to the customer centre. Locally created public art features in the courtyard and within the building.



Cross section from the new gable end towards the original station hotel showing how the new floors and roof sit within the original structure, self-supported and connecting to the old building via bridge links.

Respecting the past

Working closely with English Heritage and local conservation organisations, the team identified elements of the original structure which needed to be retained, notably the original arrivals and departures wings and the original station hotel.

The central U, where the tracks and platforms were, provided space for the open plan floorplates which were essential in meeting the client's space needs. The cellular design of the original buildings provided the required meeting spaces.

Ingeniously, by making the new structure and its northlight roof self-supporting and connecting it to the original building via bridge links, the whole 150,000 sq ft of net floorspace was delivered without compromising the integrity of the listed structure.

The vertical lightwells provide light and visual appeal, also acting as chimneys which draw warm air up through the building. Natural ventilation and passive night-time cooling using the thermal mass of the Victorian building are part of the sustainable strategy.

The courtyard becomes a welcoming arrivals space and customers enter the building, just as the original GT Andrews design conceived, through the impressive 1840s façade and what was originally the station's booking hall.

150,000 sq ft of net floorspace was delivered without compromising the integrity of the original structure



© The Press (York)

The site received a
**Considerate Constructors
 Award** rating it in the top 5%
 within the UK

The Olympic torch passed the building during construction.



Chris Hale (left) from S Harrison and Bill Woolley of City of York Council show aspects of the building under construction to English Heritage chief executive Simon Thurley (centre).



Stripping the building back to its core.



New floorplates and old brickwork combine.

Delivery - the construction process

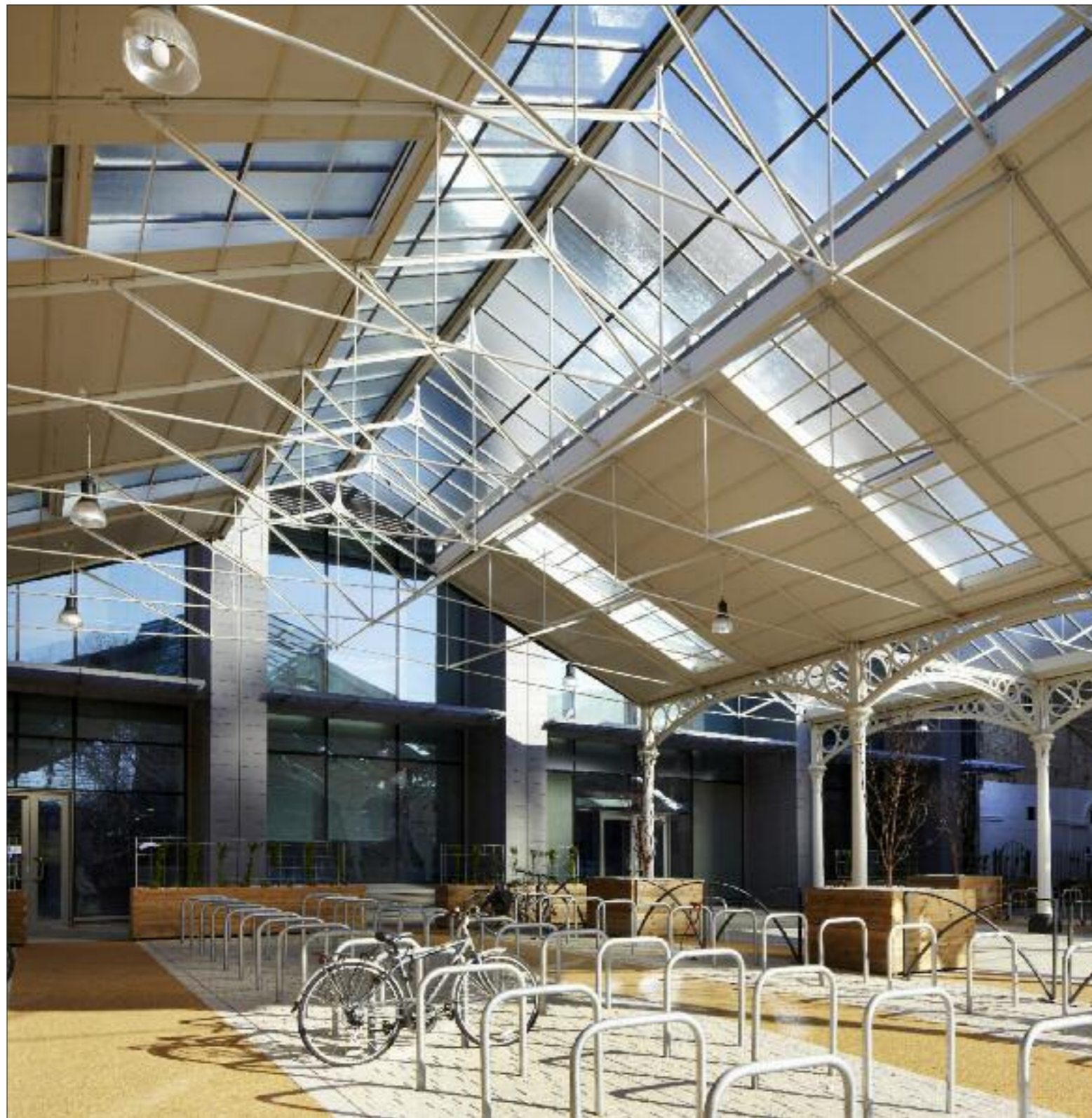
The developers and main contractors Miller Construction worked closely with Building Control, City of York Council and special interest groups before and during the construction programme. With their own regional headquarters located next door, English Heritage maintained a keen interest throughout the project.

Meetings with neighbours were set up to explain the building process and numerous groups were invited to tour the site during construction. An archaeology weekend opened the site to local people and a day-long seminar was staged to explain to the business and professional community the history and vision for the important York site.

Throughout the construction phase the local and national media were welcome visitors to the site.

In over 310,000 hours worked, the rigorous management of Health & Safety ensured there were no reportable site incidents or accidents.

The site received a Considerate Constructors Award rating it in the top 5% within the UK.



Before developers Buccleuch Property and S Harrison Developments Ltd could bring forward their £32 million scheme they had to ensure that a unique and historic cast iron canopy housed within the U-shaped station buildings could be moved, restored and relocated.



The canopy as it was in the early part of the 20th century, and the remnants as they stood, hidden from view, before they were restored and relocated.

Relocating the canopy

Originally the canopy structure ran above the rail lines to the full length of the platforms and beyond, towards the city walls. For York Civic Trust and the railway heritage lobby, securing the future of the historic railway canopy - unique but in a state of ill-repair - was vital to the city's heritage, providing visual evidence for the building's original purpose. However, if the canopy remained where it was, even the most imaginative architect and developer could not meet the council's open plan space requirement.

In a solution which suited everyone, the developers dismantled and restored the remaining canopy and relocated it on the exterior of the new glazed gable-end of the building, where canopy once stood, and in full view from the adjacent city walls. The solution not only preserved the structure but re-introduced it to the public domain, elegantly articulating the original railway heritage of the building. Vivality, it released the whole of the building for restoration and regeneration, back to civic use.

Giving the canopy a viable new use, rather than simply retaining it as a relic or monument, gives it a sustainable future. The canopied area now provides a breakout space for council staff, and covered cycle parking as part of the city's green travel policy, on a virtually car-free site at the heart of the city's transport hub.

Materials and workmanship

There was serious corrosion of the bolted structure and the framework was actually affixed through the station walls.

Every single beam, truss, spandrel and pillar was salvaged and reinstated.

Many of the cast-iron sections had to be metal stitched – an innovative process which involved re-bonding cracked sections without heat, thus avoiding the risk of distorting the beams.

Whereas the structure in its original location was affixed to walls on three sides, in its new location it is now freestanding. It is testimony to the Victorian engineers and to the skills of the restoration team that, with the addition of a small number of additional tie-bars and a new structural deck to give it extra rigidity, the canopy is good for at least another 100 years and more.



...elegantly articulating the original railway heritage of the building



All elements combine to provide an excellent working environment

The north light roof features solar PV panels on the south facing planes. The basement houses biomass boilers and CHP units.

West Offices achieves a BREEAM “excellent” rating and an impressively small carbon footprint. The new offices carry a “B” EPC rating – remarkable, given that around 50% of the complex is actually of Victorian origin.

Sustainability - delivering BREEAM excellence

The building delivers a 55% carbon reduction improvement over building regulations against an original requirement by the council for 30% reduction.

The environmental design was conceived to work with the existing building, utilising existing features to enhance comfort and reduce energy demand. It makes the most of the thermal mass of the existing structure to pre-cool incoming air and provide an efficient night-time cooling strategy.

The heavy masonry walls of the existing building that now form part of the internalised space provide the thermal mass required for the building to be largely naturally ventilated. Low carbon heating technologies and heat recovery (from server rooms, for example) also form part of this strategy.

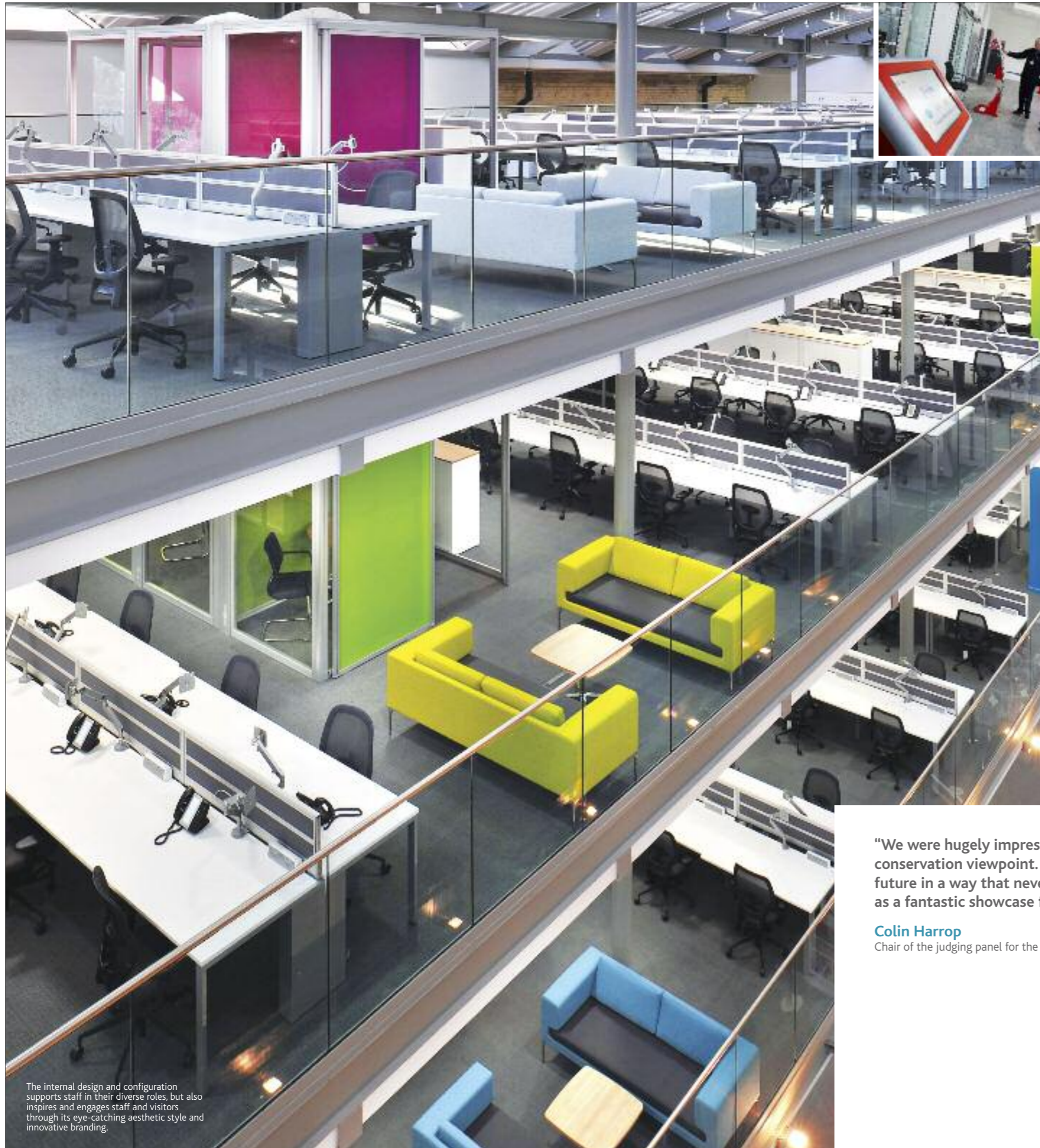
The north light roof optimises the beneficial natural daylight whilst minimising solar gain. South facing planes of the roof structure house solar PV panels, from which all of the energy generated is used within the building.

A number of features designed into the building help to reduce energy demand. Lower lighting levels and automatic light switching combine with heat recovery from file server rooms to reduce energy demand. Rainwater harvesting and water saving controls are all integrated into a building management system which allows all aspects of building services to be remotely monitored.

A gas fired combined heat and power unit acts as the lead boiler and generates electricity. Most of the heat demand is provided by bio mass boilers which deliver thermal energy with a minimal carbon footprint. Gas fired boilers are installed to meet the peak demands and to provide backup. The peak summer cooling loads are provided by a chilled water system that is generated by an absorption chiller.

All elements combine to provide an excellent working environment within a low-energy, low carbon footprint building.





The internal design and configuration supports staff in their diverse roles, but also inspires and engages staff and visitors through its eye-catching aesthetic style and innovative branding.



RICS Pro-Yorkshire Project of the Year 2013.



Sir Ron Cooke (picture courtesy of Purple Marbles).



Green Apple Awards 2013 winner.



RTPI Awards shortlisted.

What others say

Those who work in the building have praised the design and ambience.

"It gives the feeling of being part of one big organisation."

"The range of different workspaces provides greater choice on where best to work and meet with colleagues. It needn't be at a desk or in a formal meeting room. It might be the cafe, or a sofa. You have a different discussion as a result."

"This is a model for the sustainable redevelopment of older buildings. With remarkable vision the developer has created a new open-plan structure within the envelope of the existing building without compromising its integrity."

Simon Thurley
Chief executive - English Heritage

"... a down-at-heel, historically important building has been restored and developed to become a fully functional, environmentally friendly structure that not only preserves the best of the past but also combines sensitive restoration with quality and creates an enduring heritage resource."

Professor Sir Ron Cooke
York Civic Trust

"We were hugely impressed by the City of York Council HQ from a commercial, design and conservation viewpoint. The Council HQ blends the aims to conserve the past and provide for the future in a way that never compromised the obligation to produce a great building. The scheme acts as a fantastic showcase for the history and future of the region."

Colin Harrop
Chair of the judging panel for the RICS Pro-Yorkshire 2013 awards



Exceeding the brief - delivering for the people of York



York is a city with a rich history and an unrivalled heritage. At the same time, it is a modern, progressive city, open for business.

West Offices brings together these two complementary facets of York to create a modern, efficient, cost-effective, sustainable and extremely functional headquarters and customer centre. It will deliver cost-savings of £17 million over the next 25 years.

It provides flexible space which the council can share with its city partners as the team develops its inclusive, co-operative approach to customer service provision for the city's community and beyond.

Bringing staff together at West Offices not only rationalises the council's property portfolio, with all the associated cost-savings, but also fosters more co-operative working, providing service delivery efficiencies which are both cost-effective and benefit customers.

At the same time, by bringing back into productive use an important part of York's railway history, the move to West Offices safeguards the past by giving it a new future in the form of a civic amenity of which the whole city can be proud.

J. M. Alexander

Councillor James Alexander
Leader - City of York Council



*the move to West Offices
safeguards the past
by giving it a new future in the
form of a civic amenity*

A range of meeting spaces.

With thanks...

to the team involved in the conception and delivery of West Offices, headquarters and customer centre for City of York Council.

Harrison

S Harrison Developments Ltd
Stanley Harrison House
The Chocolate Works
Bishopthorpe Road
York YO23 1DE
01904 654444
www.s-harrison.co.uk



Buccleuch Property
27 Silvermills Court
Henderson Place Lane
Edinburgh EH3 5DG
0131 524 0910
www.buccleuchproperty.co.uk



City of York Council
West Offices
Station Rise
York YO1 6GA
01904 551550
www.york.gov.co.uk



Crease Strickland Parkins Ltd
Bishopgate House
1 Bishopgate Street
York YO23 1WH
01904 641289
www.csparchitects.co.uk

ARCHITECT



Ward Cole
Fosse House
Roman Wharf
Lincoln LN1 1SR
01522 513032
www.wardcole.co.uk

CONSULTING ENGINEER



Rex Procter & Partners
3 Blenheim Court
Leeds
West Yorkshire LS2 9AE
0113 243 3731
www.rpp.co.uk

EMPLOYER'S AGENT

millier

Miller Construction (UK) Ltd
Miller House
Pontefract Road
Normanton
West Yorkshire WF6 1RN
0870 3364317
www.millerconstruction.co.uk

MAIN CONTRACTOR



MDA Ltd
Unit 4, Fox Oak Park
Common Rd
York YO19 5RZ
01904 488486
www.martindesignassociates.com

BUILDING SERVICES CONSULTANT

sovibrant

SoVibrant
Hornbeam House
Hornbeam Park
Harrogate HG2 8QT
01423 789388
www.sovibrant.co.uk

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& WORKPLACE STRATEGY