The Conran Building

Squire & Partners' retrofit of the Grade-II listed Conran Building at 22 Shad Thames preserves Hopkins' High-Tech architectural legacy while transforming it into a contemporary workspace.

Photos
Andy Stagg

Squire & Partners has completed a sensitive refurbishment of the Conran Building, a recently listed landmark in the historic Shad Thames district of London. Originally completed in 1991 by Michael and Patty Hopkins for renowned designer David Mellor, the building was later acquired by Terence Conran, who adapted it as headquarters for his design, retail, and restaurant businesses. The latest intervention by Squire & Partners enhances the architectural integrity of the structure while upgrading its environmental credentials, modernising it for a new generation of occupants.

A significant example of High-Tech design, 22 Shad Thames features a lean, modular concrete frame that provides flexible workspace configurations. The refurbishment retained and restored the robust lead cladding, reinstated Hopkins and Mellor's original recessed lighting and granite flooring, and reintroduced a glazed conservatory to the uppermost level. Non-original paint was stripped from soffits and columns to expose the raw concrete, while carpet tiles were replaced with natural timber flooring to echo the material purity of the original construction.

"Working with a recently listed building with a long design heritage called for a meticulous approach to retrofit," said Bettina Brehler, head of sustainability and partner, Squire & Partners. "It was imperative that our intervention upgraded the building to meet the highest environmental standards to preserve its legacy into the future. We upgraded the existing light fittings to operate as LED's, replaced the gas heating with an air source heat pump for heating and cooling, provided cycling facilities to encourage active commuting, refurbished the existing window frames and replaced some of the glazing to upgrade the thermal performance of the building."

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Existing window frames have been refurbished and fitted with upgraded glazing to improve thermal performance, while a gas heating system was replaced with air-source heat pumps that power a VRF heating and cooling system. End-of-journey facilities, including cycle storage and showers, meanwhile encourage active commuting.

The redesign also sought to enhance the character of the 16,000 square foot workspace. Crittall-style windows define meeting spaces, furnished with original Conran-designed pieces and framed photographs of Terence Conran throughout his career. The ground-floor reception area has been reimagined as a welcoming arrival sequence, referencing its past as Mellor's showroom. Generous terraces on the top and ground floors offer riverside views, while ornamental glazed balconies punctuate the façade.

"The Conran Building is a design classic which we have repurposed in a sustainable manner thinking about modern workspace, power and data requirements," said senior partner at Squire & Partners, Tim Gledstone. "The revitalised building helps to preserve the heritage of Shad Thames, paying homage to its storied past, whilst now providing transformed high-quality contemporary workspace that sets the standard for future projects in the area."

Chris Lanitis, co-founder and chief investment officer of Amazon Capital added: "Arguably the coolest building in Shad Thames with a superb design heritage, the Conran Building makeover by Squire & Partners proves that landmark buildings do not need to be knocked down, they can be sensitively repurposed and the architecture given a new lease of life."

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