



NEW STEEL WINDOWS – OFFICE REFURBISHMENT IN A POST-COVID WORLD

At the time of writing there is fierce debate around the future of office working in a post-COVID world. The work from home order continues yet there is hope on the horizon that restrictions will soon be lifted.

Companies headquartered in London and other cities around the country have announced changes ahead of restrictions being lifted – for example, retailer John Lewis has said all new job vacancies will include the option to work flexibly; and, KPMG has heralded the introduction of a four day fortnight which will see staff spending four days in the office in every two weeks to focus on in person collaboration and training. Meanwhile other business leaders are arguing for a full return to pre-pandemic ways of working - David Solomon, the boss of Goldman Sachs, has called remote working an ‘aberration’ - while Government cites the demise of city centre support businesses and decreased use of public transport as detrimental to economic recovery.

Whatever the outcome, it is safe to surmise that the office of the future is going to look and feel quite different. If more flexible or ‘hybrid’ ways of working become the norm, then office space will need to be adapted to

accommodate different needs - for example, rather than simply providing banks of desks, a variety of meeting spaces will be required, from formal training areas, to intimate thinking spaces and informal social zones where workers can relax and chat with colleagues.

Equally, interior architects need to pay greater attention to the growing wellness trend. Almost as soon as coronavirus hit our shores, workplaces were identified as breeding grounds for the virus due to the long hours spent by personnel in front of a screen in often dark, airless offices, breathing in other people’s carbon dioxide. In January 2021 the Government announced proposals which would see the ventilation in new offices providing fresh air 50 per cent faster than the current minimum standards.

Of course, one of the easiest ways to improve air quality and increase the amount of natural light is to include new

Above, new steel windows by Clement introduce an abundance of daylight to promote a feeling of wellness at Douglas House in London

windows in a scheme. Opening the windows regularly will keep the air fresh within the office and prevent the spread of viral particles usually recirculated by air conditioners and heaters. Increased exposure to bright daylight during working hours not only improves an individual's immune system and circadian rhythm, studies have proved that it also leads to greater productivity and creativity.

Including new glazing, such as steel-framed windows, screens and rooflights by Clement will promote a sense of wellbeing as a result of exposure to the maximum possible natural daylight. Smart glass can be added to the specification to combine solar control with high light transmission or acoustic laminated glass to block out unwanted sounds.

Take London's 188 Fleet Street, refurbished a few years ago by HD Architects to house a publishing company. Just 100 metres away from the Royal Courts of Justice, the 35,000 sq ft building was formerly home to bankers Coutts and Co and was tired and in need of updating. The renovated office benefits from a number of striking internal steel screens manufactured by Clement, which feature throughout the office - these help to divide the different working areas and contribute to the amount of natural daylight that filters through the space.

Architect, Martin Helyer, said of the project: "The lighting scheme was an important feature of this office refurbishment which incorporates a dynamic daylighting

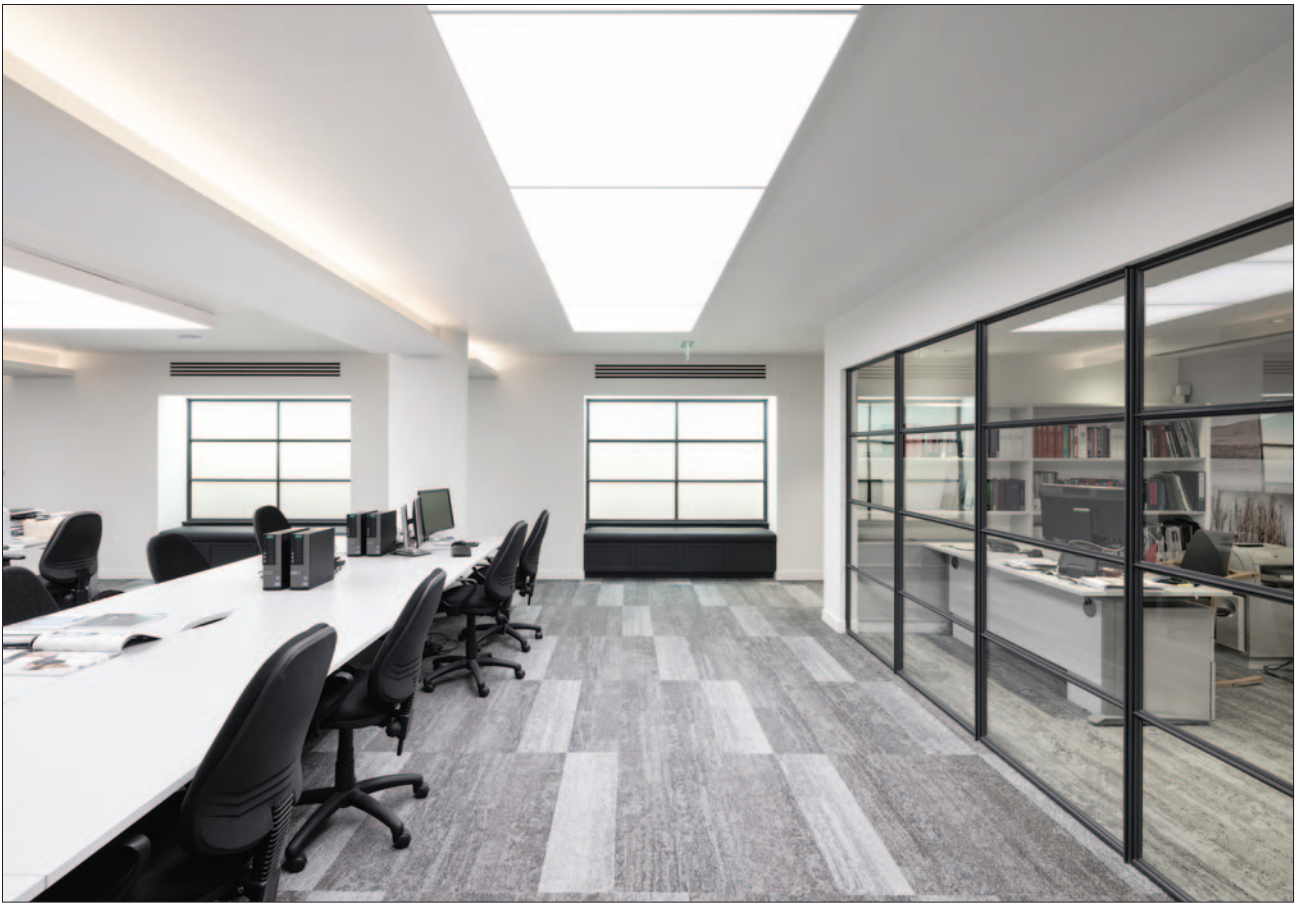
system to control the light intensity of the space, which in turn helps to maintain staff's natural body clocks. Clement's internal steel-framed windows maximise the amount of light in the office, thus contributing to the overall wellbeing of the office workers. We chose Clement windows due to their external aesthetic aiding the feel that the space was not purely internal."

The Douglas Building which sits on Great Titchfield Street in London's West End is a recent example of an office refurbishment project with the wellness theme at its core. A great example of 1930s Art Deco architecture which was known formerly as The Media Village, Douglas House was acquired by service office providers The Office Group (TOG) from landlords The Langham Estate in 2019. TOG together with Note Design Studio transformed the building with a colourful concept that blends the distinctive 1930s features while giving a sense of fluidity, openness and light throughout.

As its former name suggests this area of London is a hub for local media and IT businesses operating out of the West End and the brief for the building was to create a flexible workspace where people can feel stimulated by their environment thereby leading to greater productivity. The building includes a number of different spaces - collaborative work spaces, meeting and innovation rooms, an oxygen recharge room, a meditation room, a parents' room and a roof terrace - which are all integral to enabling and inspiring everyone who uses the space.



Above, Clement W20 suite of steel sections with genuine T bars in RAL 7016 (Anthracite Grey) at 188 Fleet Street in London



Above, the refurbished offices at 188 Fleet Street



Above, the façade of Douglas House in London featuring new Clement steel windows to introduce the maximum amount of light possible to the building

Well ventilated and an abundance of natural light are the buzzwords of the COVID era and the 300 new steel windows from the Clement EB24 range which were chosen by office fit out and refurbishment contractors Parkeray perfectly facilitate both. Polyester powder coated in Pure White and furnished with Warren handles in a satin chrome finish the windows lend the building a contemporary look on the outside as well as supporting 21st century ways of working inside.

Clement steel windows were also chosen for the restoration of 6 Middle Street, a double-fronted office building set within a busy part of the City of London near Smithfield Market. Surrounded by narrow cobbled streets it is situated on the boundary of the Smithfield Conservation Area.

Architects Hale Brown designed the interior with high ceilings and large windows and switched to a system of natural ventilation. Blenheim House Construction selected windows from the Clement EB24 range because they best suited the original look of the building and allowed for the maximum amount of light and air to flow throughout the building. Natural light flow was an important aim of this high specification refurbishment – each floor provides light-filled flexible workings spaces and central to the building is a mezzanine which creates a dramatic light-filled double height space.

The windows are polyester powder coated in matt RAL 9005 (Jet Black) and finished with Selborne handles powder coated to match the frames.

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Above, new steel windows from the Clement EB24 range at 6 Middle Street in the City of London