

STRIDE TREGLOWN

Thinking Universities

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The thoughts put forward in this edition of 'Thinking Universities' focus on four issues which are particularly important for the Universities and Student Living sectors, both now and in the years to come.

Creative reuse has evolved from the simple refurbishment of existing facilities towards a far more dynamic reinterpretation of existing stock. Our Interiors and Building Surveying teams complement our Architectural teams to provide an innovative approach to reuse. Together, they create facilities fit for the 21st century.

Wellbeing becomes more important within the university world every year. Our student living team is always looking for ways to design schemes that enhance the student experience. Our buildings accommodate diverse groups of students by ensuring a diversity of offer; from undergraduates and postgraduates to family living facilities.

At the heart of our work is the desire to make places that students, staff and visitors want to use. Academic

placemaking can only be achieved when meaningful engagement occurs between our team and the end users. By listening to students and academics, we understand what they need and can deliver the right solutions for them. Our 'Inhabitant' magazine is a testament to the value we attribute to this process.

Finally, the digital world is ever present and our teams are continually pushing the boundaries on what is possible; whether it's simply extrapolating HESA data into a 3D environment or creating a 'digital twin' that estates teams can interface with via their CAFM software. We are always looking for the most appropriate solution that will deliver more than the sum of its parts.

I hope you enjoy reading our thoughts. Please get in touch – we'd be delighted to discuss any of our approaches or projects with you.

Matt Tarling
Director, Head of Universities



Bethan Hellings, Senior Interior Designer

Bethan is the lead designer for the £40m refurbishment of the University of Reading Library. The final phase of this four year project is due to complete late 2019.



Creative reuse – is it worth the effort?

Just like us, buildings have to continually evolve and adapt to modern life. Sometimes they have a tough time keeping up. When they are neglected for too long, buildings can become expensive, inefficient, ugly and unfit for purpose. And the thought of solving those problems is overwhelming.

Many will discount re-use and refurbishment as a viable option. It can be a laborious process of research, analysis, planning and preparation - *"It's just easier to build new!"*

The University of Reading faced many issues with their existing library. Over the years the building had undergone many ad hoc interventions. It was filled with asbestos, the mechanical system was failing, the roof was leaking, the carpet was threadbare and the finishes were mismatched. Worst of all, the building was struggling to keep up with modern student needs because the layout was inefficient and study space was scarce.

Despite all of the building's problems, we worked with the University to prove that refurbishment was the best option.



University of Reading Library

There are so many amazing benefits to keeping an existing building like Reading Library. There's the obvious moral and ethical reasons for sustainability and minimising environmental impact. It's also important to preserve history for future generations to enjoy. To build new with beautiful materials such as solid wood, brutalist concrete, aged brick and bespoke metalwork would be unattainable with a modern budget.

However, the reason I find most compelling is a human one; retaining a sense of place. What does the building mean to people? The library has been the heart of the campus for over fifty years. It's an institution. Staff know the ins and outs of every corner and have

run a stellar service there for years. As worn as it was, the building helped people through their most stressful times and is held in great affection. So yes, it had its problems, but it just needed some TLC.

We live in such a throwaway culture. When something doesn't meet our needs or isn't in style, we trade it in for a newer, shinier model. But I think we should view our existing buildings in the way we view classic cars and vintage clothes. They're cool and distinctive. Let's take care of them. With good design and a thorough approach, your efforts will be rewarded with something that money can't buy - a unique building full of stories, history and life.

Kieran Lilley, Divisional Director

Kieran leads our Student Living team. Together, they have rolled out more student beds than any other practice, delivering accommodation direct to universities, including Reading, Bath and Liverpool, as well as for private providers such as Unite, GSA, Fusion Students and Aparto.



Student accommodation should support healthy communities

In the 15 years we have been designing student accommodation, students' needs have changed. They expect to be able to exercise on site, study in groups, cook together, dine together and socialise in wild and wonderful ways. We have seen a widening of the market offer, with some pushing the envelope of affordability while others are seeking greater levels of luxury.

Despite this, there's been a convergence in one key value: wellbeing. Halls are viewed as homes away from home and

the quality of student experience is vital. To this end, we have seen our briefs adapt to focus on both the physical and mental wellbeing of students.

Overall layout and adjacencies are fundamental to wellbeing. The idea of *"living in the building, sleeping in the bedroom"* is one the sector is starting to adopt, and for us, this makes perfect sense.

Although there is still a place for studio apartments, the days of providing



Nova, Fusion Students, Nottingham

minimal social space within these developments have gone. Research shows that students are more isolated within studio developments and common spaces become critical in helping communities develop.

Shared bathroom facilities have been growing in popularity from the early townhouses delivered 10 years ago to the cluster flats of today serviced with shared facilities. At the University of Exeter, the Student Guild requested that 20% of new on-campus accommodation is at a lower rental level with shared facilities.

Keele University has gone further with approximately 80% of their new accommodation featuring shared bathrooms. Inclusion is key here. Instead of entering the cluster via an empty corridor, students access their bedrooms through a generous communal living space full of the possibility of interaction.

Our most recently completed schemes for the University of Bath provide common study rooms shared between two cluster flats and centrally located quiet group rooms. These spaces were in addition to the traditional kitchen, living and dining rooms.

Having been so popular with students, we introduced similar spaces into postgraduate accommodation completed in 2018.

It seems we all agree that wellbeing is an essential focus for any accommodation. But perhaps it should extend further than the envelope of the building? Recent research suggests that students have a desire to participate in the greater community. So the next challenge is to find ways to break down barriers between the student population and the area they live in.

We are now designing a number of student accommodation schemes that integrate co-living facilities. The next step will be to open up some communal facilities to the wider community. We are already exploring opportunities for one university to share their library and catering facilities with a nearby senior living scheme.

Whilst we are still some way from the Dutch models of students living with elderly residents, I would welcome this approach here in the UK. After all, 'student living' is simply just 'living' and it's a healthy community that has true longevity and value.



The Beatrice Shilling Building, Royal Holloway, University of London



Cora Kwiatkowski, Divisional Director

Cora manages teams in our higher education, student accommodation and workplace sectors, often acting as design and project lead or client advisor. Having led multi-disciplinary teams for over 10 years in the UK, Cora's expertise has previously been applied to projects in Germany, Sweden and Switzerland.



Making room for soul

Along with a variety of physical, social and digital experiences, destinations and activities, a successful building or campus needs its own identity. One important factor for students is still the 'instagrammable' campus, but this does not necessarily mean expensive buildings with the highest specifications. What it does mean is places with soul, that are well-designed and that have their own identity.

Engaging with the inhabitants is key to creating a future sense of belonging. People use space in different - and sometimes surprising - ways. Small scale improvements and 'sample areas' can be a test bed for rapid prototyping, leading to new ideas that are easily realised. This helps us to better understand what works for students, staff and academics and design solutions for them from that learning.

Early and ongoing conversations are essential to capture inhabitants' aspirations. When developing an evolutionary research centre for University of Bath, the department worked closely with us; from the design brief and initial plans, right down to the furniture colours. Instead of designing from theories, we drew from decades of lived experience. The outcome? A building regarded as home.

Mixing different groups in a building also helps to create a strong student and academic community. The Beatrice Shilling Building at Royal Holloway University of London is home to the Department of Electronic Engineering, but the 24/7 open-access social spaces are now used and loved by the wider university community. This brought more variety and vibrancy across the department's threshold, and meant that the department's innovative work – easily observed from the social spaces through

large lab windows – was made available to a much wider, diverse audience.

Universities will always have specialist requirements, but we can engineer these spaces to be more efficient. At the Health and Life Sciences Building for University of Reading and the Life Science Building for University of Kent, we promoted a shared asset culture to stakeholders. Not only does this increase space utilisation – which is cost efficient - but it brings people together. The sharing of space leads to sharing of conversations and the cross-fertilisation of ideas and innovation.

The success of any place and space we create is best measured by those who use them and how well they are used. Through our inhabitant journey we understand that ownership comes from understanding why spaces are created in the first place. With ownership comes identity. Spaces with soul become homes for learning, teaching and discovering.



The Beatrice Shilling Building, Royal Holloway, University of London

Keith Deaney, Associate BIM and Digital Consultant Keith delivers exceptional BIM advice as we phase into a more digital design remit, correlating with the construction industry's increase in the use of virtual reality and drones.



It's time to learn how to dance with your digital twin

Universities are complex estates. Their portfolios are built from a range of buildings and campuses. Technology is advancing quickly, and university estate teams can tap into the world of data to become more efficient. We are now seeing the rise of the digital twin; a virtual model of the university estate.

This pairing of the virtual and physical estate allows for real-time analysis of data and monitoring of systems. It's an incredibly powerful tool for facilities management and has massive real-world potential. It can improve space utilisation, enable proactive maintenance, and allow for fast in-depth reporting.

Over the last 3 years we have helped the University of West of England understand the benefits of a digital estate through the Bristol Business School. What started as a project based level 2 Building Information Modelling (BIM) journey has now blossomed into a digital campus-wide strategy. All new work follows protocols and standards we helped to develop. Their investment has recently accelerated into their existing assets. Over the next few years their entire campus will be mapped into their Computer Aided Facility Management (CAFM) software.

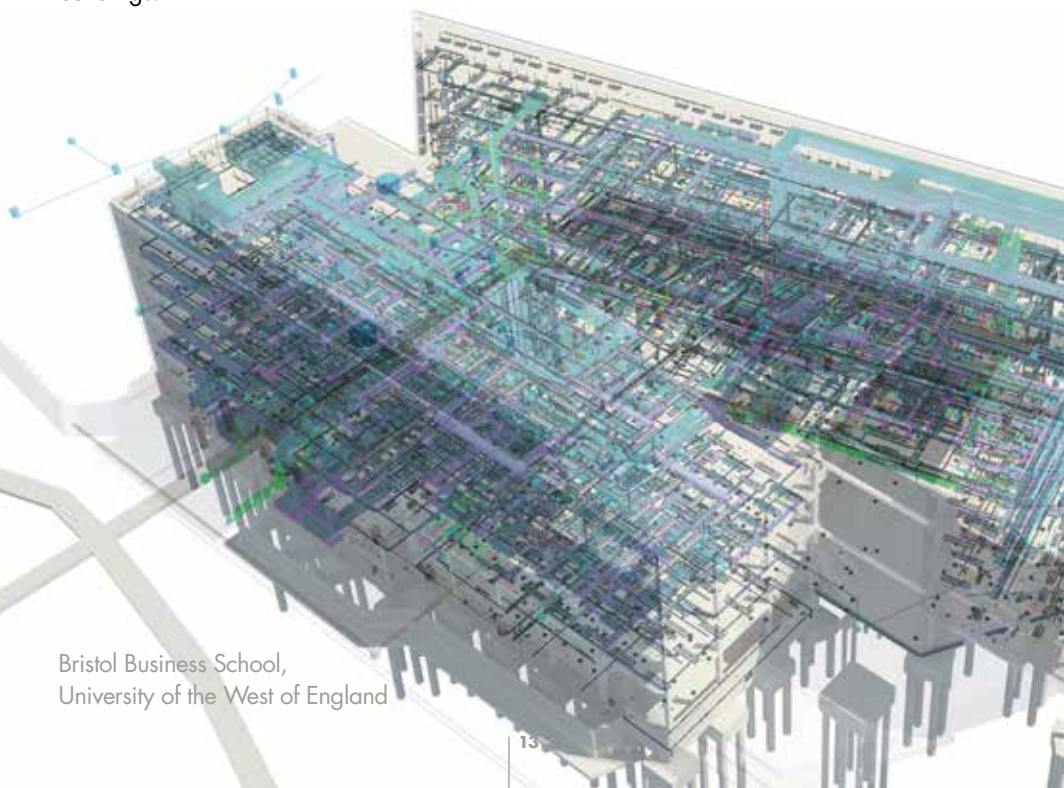
Others are being more cautious. And rightly so. The upfront financial, resource, and time investment can be significant. But it doesn't have to be. We're in favour of the step by step plan - like learning to dance; start small and start right. Then add in complex moves when you're ready.

Initially, an amount of time is required to investigate far reaching outcomes and understand potential end results. However, the first step is creating a campus wide digital twin of space. This simple model is used to automate Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) reporting and to understand space utilisation. Discovering high and low demand helps define future masterplans and investments. In turn, this leads to creative reuse of underutilised space or buildings.

Over time, this simple digital twin can evolve into a tool for asset management, building service performance and facilities management. The digital journey to creating a twin increases productivity, leads to behaviour change and resilience.

This step by step approach will work if all the steps have been planned. That means getting naming conventions correct. Writing protocols for data handling. Ensuring secure storage. Upskilling teams.

This is the journey we are starting with a number of universities. Like all journeys, it starts with a single satisfying step, but can blossom into an all-singing, all-dancing strategy.



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STRIDE TREGLOWN

We promote a new form of architecture. One that isn't driven by ego.

Instead, we focus on the needs of our clients and the people that use our projects. Our aim is to make spaces and places that people love to use for generations to come.

We have worked with over 30 international universities to deliver teaching facilities and student accommodation. Our people-led approach means we understand what students, academics, vice-chancellors and estates teams need.

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BRISTOL
CARDIFF
LONDON
MANCHESTER
PLYMOUTH
SOLENT
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INTERIOR DESIGN

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