

Case Study: New City offices for Investment Bank, Nomura



“We have been recognised by our clients, peers and the media for the speed and ambition of our project.”

Paul Spanswick, Chief Administrative Officer, EMEA
Nomura

Nomura, the major Japanese investment bank who bought key parts of Lehman Brothers and over 90% of its existing staff in Europe, needed new offices; the lease on their property in Canary Wharf was running out and they required more space to deal with their increasing size. The 500,00ft² office development in the City of London that Nomura moved into, originally known as Watermark Place was, coincidentally, a newbuild that Applied Acoustic Design (AAD) had originally consulted on. AAD were subsequently appointed by Nomura as acoustic consultants for the new fit-out.



Nomura's new UK financial centre at One Angel Lane in the City of London



A wide variety of meeting spaces

As a major financial centre, the building required dealer floors for trading, back office support floors, client floors with meeting rooms, as well as lots of dining rooms for client entertaining purposes, and a huge kitchen. In total the building provides 12 floors and two basements. The 10th floor for was set aside for senior executive offices, with panoramic views across London. In addition, the client wanted a small TV recording studio plus associated editing suites for in-house corporate videos and global presentations. There was also a requirement for a dedicated video conference room. “The outstanding challenge on this project was the time-critical factor,” explains AAD’s Mark Bishop.

“The client had to move in a very short space of time – in fact, from making the decision to move, to actually getting the first people in was about nine months, which required quite a huge effort from all parties involved.” As Watermark Place, renamed ‘One Angel Lane’ by Nomura, was essentially just a core, serious modifications were necessary to the building. Two atriums were completely filled in to create extra office space, there was a great deal of structural works, and many changes in mechanical services, as well as alterations to the ceilings. In addition to all these changes, a large 220-seat auditorium was built into the lower ground floor and, adjacent to this, a gymnasium and health centre. This proved another significant challenge as, noise-wise, the juxtaposition of a gym,

an auditorium and health centre is not the most ideal set-up. Added to which, the auditorium was specified with very high-tech AV systems.

Another 'noise' issue that AAD successfully consulted on was that associated with the need to add extra refrigeration, because the loads that Nomura were putting on the building were greater than it had originally been designed for. As a consequence, additional cooling was necessary, which involved adding some new chillers on the roof. The challenge there was two-fold: a) the noise output had to be minimised because of planning restrictions, and b) the chillers had to be very low profile because, when originally built, the development was pushed up as high as it possibly could be, meaning there was no extra height or space available. "The answer was some purpose-designed low-profile chillers, which sit discretely underneath the parapet," explained Mark Bishop. "We went to Italy to witness the successful acoustic testing of the bespoke design, to ensure compliance."



Nomura's busy trading floor

Furthermore, new plant rooms to deal with the required extra cooling load had to be put within the building on three of the office floors, ensuring extra air could get to the dealer floors. Keeping the noise and vibration from those plant rooms out, so that it didn't affect the people working adjacent to them, was another challenge. In some cases there were offices occupied by senior bankers on the trading floor, directly abutting the newly built plant rooms. However, all staff were pleased with the way the sound had been contained.

Another task for AAD was to ensure that the new air conditioning systems worked within their parameters. Additionally, an architectural angle that had to be addressed was ensuring that the partitioning and ceiling systems were installed such that the correct levels of sound insulation existed between the offices and meeting rooms, as well as ascertaining that the levels of reverberation in critical rooms, such as video conferencing, was adequately addressed.

"The transition went more smoothly than any of us could have imagined and business performance was maintained throughout. You anticipated the risks and managed them out, thereby setting the standard for excellence." Paul Spanswick, Chief Administrative Officer, EMEA, Nomura