

Plus X Innovation Hub, U+I Regeneration Project

Earning our stripes at former Preston Barracks site

£14m

/ Project value

June 2018

/ The project commenced

July 2020

/ The project was completed

Designed to support the “next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs”, the Plus X Innovation Hub (Brighton) is a state-of-the-art seven-storey building located in the heart of Preston Barracks, a former army barracks dating back to 1793. Accommodating up to 550 people, the sophisticated 53,000 sq ft “physical and digital making facilities” are driving business support, innovation and collaboration, and making a positive local impact across Brighton and Hove. The construction programme for the £14m regeneration project began in June 2018 and concluded in July 2020, with the concrete-framed commercial hub achieving a BREEAM Excellent rating. The building features the city’s first rooftop terrace, with edible plants, solar panels, and an air quality monitoring system to measure CO₂, dust and humidity. Significantly, Plus X is on track to become one of only a handful of international properties to be accredited to Platinum standard by the WELL Being Institute.

The brief

Specialist regeneration and property developer, U+I, appointed us to deliver a new commercial hub for start-up and SME businesses as part of its major Preston Barracks redevelopment in Brighton. The single stage design and build scheme has delivered the first Plus X facility in the UK.



“The design, featuring flexible floorplates, bold use of colour and contemporary materials, is as innovative as the occupiers who are moving in.”

Richard Upton
Chief Development Officer at U+I

“With a range of different state-of-the-art workspaces and facilities, Plus X Brighton has been designed to support companies of all sizes: from entrepreneurs, start-ups to scale-ups and larger corporate occupiers, enabling businesses to grow but stay within the building.”

Richard Upton
Chief Development Officer at U+I

The challenges

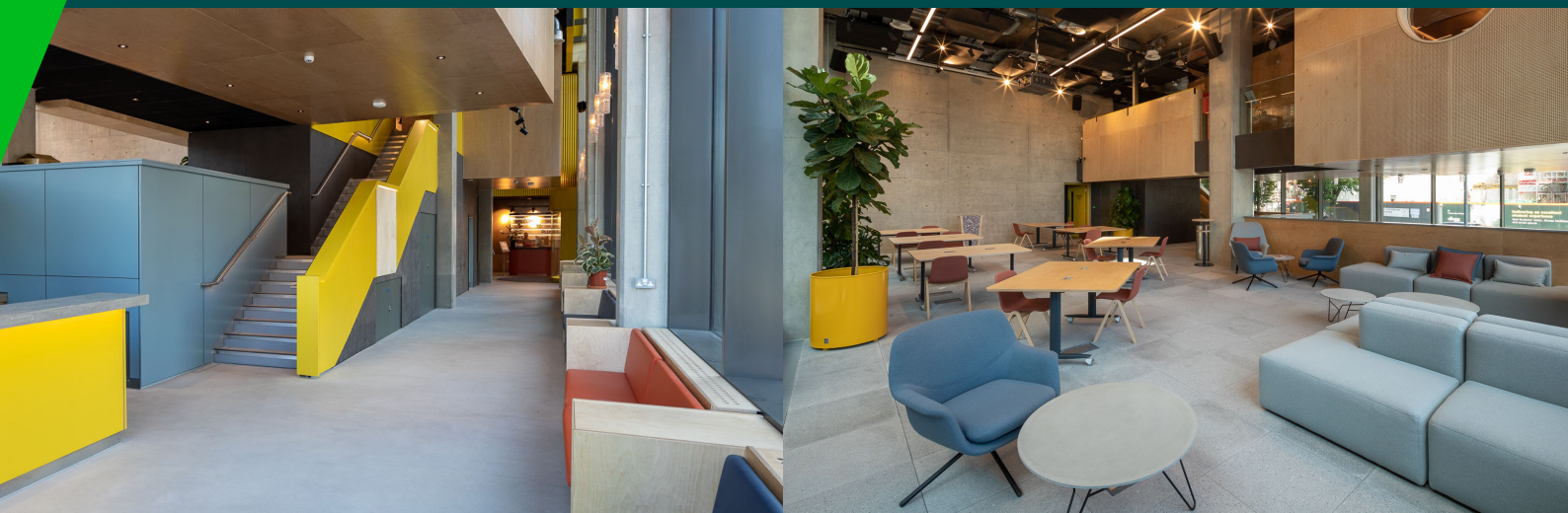
Before enabling works commenced, the team thoroughly investigated the integrity of the ground conditions, with due consideration given to the site's former operation as an army barracks and residence for the MoD. Pole probing to a depth of 20m in search of unexploded ordnance (UXO) was completed and revealed no trace of UXO. This meant that only minimal out-of-the-ordinary ground preparation work was required. Unexpectedly, a further challenge that the team contended with was the relocation of slow worms after a small number were found.

The solution

Blending “beautiful architecture” with an “inspirational interior”, the Plus X Innovation Hub has created a “fertile environment that drives prosperity”. The concrete-framed seven-storey building is strikingly clad in yellow and grey corrugated aluminium, and offers flexible workspaces with a wealth of facilities, including media studios, prototype workshops and product labs. To promote end-user innovation, the building was embellished with features that make it fit-for-purpose. On the ground-floor, three “dirty, noisy workshops” were built, contrasting with quieter areas in the block that are equipped with meeting rooms and open-plan floors. A bespoke acoustic strategy was adopted, including the installation of high-density block work in the areas where machinery was based. Acoustic treatments were also applied to some of the panels, removing the hardness so noise does not “bounce around”, while the Hub's in-situ concrete frame has helped prevent excessive sound reverberation. Notably, we achieved a high-quality pour of concrete by utilising detailed full-work drawings. Given that 90% of the building's ceilings, and 20% of the walls, are characterised by exposed concrete, getting this process right was critically important.

Outputs & Benefits

- / **Programme:** Completed on programme and on budget
- / **BREEAM:** BREEAM Excellent
- / **WELL Being Institute:** Targeted Platinum standard
- / **Ventilation:** The machinery within the building includes woodwork apparatus. When in use, the dust from the wood can create an explosive atmosphere. To combat this, we installed a specialist blast ventilation system to ensure a safe and breathable atmosphere
- / **Forward planning:** Brighton's plethora of construction work impacted on concrete supplies. This required rigorous forward planning in comparison to other projects, leading to the instruction of separate contracts with three different suppliers
- / **Coordination:** With three different construction firms working in close proximity, we effectively coordinated our works and deliveries so as not to interfere with the other contractors



For more information on how we're delivering lasting impact:

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