



**CHAWTON
HILL** CHARTERED
SURVEYORS

GENERAL COMMERCIAL AND LEISURE



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CHAWTON HILL

Chawton Hill is made up of an enthusiastic and dedicated team of RICS Chartered Surveyors, construction consultants and project managers. Our RICS Chartered Surveyors and project experts deliver exceptional construction and surveying support to all our clients. From co-working spaces to community hub facilities and regeneration projects, our team of experts is dedicated to ensuring the success of your projects in the commercial sector.



The John Lewis Building, Kingston upon Thames

This brief guide provides some insight into how we assist people in the commercial sector and selected examples of past work. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.



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ABOUT CHAWTON HILL

At Chawton Hill commercial, leisure and hospitality projects form a significant part of our business.

Our commercial experience covers a range of projects, from regeneration to community hubs, leisure centres, and hospitality projects across the UK.

In our projects, local community and accessibility requirements are an important focus. We are able to also save both time and money for you on your projects.

You can be confident working with Chawton Hill that we have experience working with projects in your sector to the very highest standard.

Client commissions range from minor alteration works and building condition surveys and schedules of condition, to the design and project management of new buildings and sensitively detailed extensions or adjustments and refurbishments.

Key Experience and Services:

Restaurants, leisure facilities, fast food outlets, office and work spaces, mixed-use developments, retail, care and residential facilities, community centres, regeneration and redevelopment projects.



Restoration of Old Spitalfields Market

Project Details

Old Spitalfields Market has long been a community 'hot spot', bringing together both historic and modern influences. Originally a rural food market, it later grew into a major Victorian wholesale produce hub. In the 2000s, it underwent significant restoration, transforming into the popular arts, fashion, and food destination it is today. The restoration carefully blended historic architecture with modern retail, food stalls, and surrounding commercial development.

The roofed market is enclosed on three sides by mixed-use Victorian terraced blocks. These feature double-aspect shops at ground level, forming part of the market, with residential accommodation across the upper three floors. The area is often described as a 'melting point' between East and West London. Chawton Hill acted as specification and project manager. Our role included preparing specifications and securing listed building consent. We also oversaw the repair and restoration of windows, roofs, and external facades.

Works extended to the surrounding blocks on Brushfield Street, Lamb Street, and Commercial Street, including full external decorations. The project was delivered in two phases, with a focus on the repair and restoration of windows to the flats above Spitalfields.

Delivery and Design

Over the years, Spitalfields Market has continued to develop and adapt. This growth has led to the construction of residential flats surrounding the market, adding to the area's vibrancy.

Working in collaboration with MMC Decorators, who acted as the main contractor, the project successfully delivered the restoration of windows, roofs, and external facades. The aim was to enhance the living environment for residents and improve the experience for tenants, while carefully maintaining the historic character.

Challenges

Although phase 1 of the repairs and restoration have now been completed successfully, the project presented several challenges. Due to the market and flats being listed and located in a conservation area, they were classified as listed buildings. Obtaining the necessary statutory approvals and listed building consent paperwork required significant time. This was to ensure that the materials used, techniques, and colours applied matched the existing.

In addition, the logistics were quite challenging. Ensuring that the ground floor retail units and market hall could be open for business during the works and access was not impeded by the scaffolding.

Outcome

With great teamwork from the Chawton Hill team and MMC Decorators, the building facades have been renovated and restored. This has given the residents and visitors a more comfortable environment. Whilst being able to appreciate the historic appearance of the conservation area.

A big thank you to all the project team for their support and collaboration. If you're interested or need help with design, specification and project management, feel free to [get in touch](#) with the Chawton Hill team today.



Residential Conversion in Leatherhead

Project Details

This project involved the conversion of the upper floors of [21 High street Leatherhead](#) into one-bedroom residential apartments. While retaining the existing shop on the ground floor, lower ground and basement floors. The property, previously used as office and banking space, was brought back into use to provide much-needed residential accommodation. The property is located in a Conservation Area and the changes to the fenestrations and external appearance had to be sympathetic and in keeping with the historic character of the building.

Our role included preparing the architectural design, applying for planning permission, preparation of the specifications, contract & tender documentation, contract administration and supervision. Project completion was achieved in mid- January 2026. Works included adapting the existing structure and layout to suit residential use while ensuring compliance with updated Building Safety and Fire Regulations.

Building Safety Act 2022

Although the building measured approximately 8 metres at the front, the presence of a basement unit at the rear which did not initially form part of the development. This increased the overall building height to over 11 metres. Under the BSA and associated fire safety guidance, [residential buildings over 11 metres](#) fall within enhanced safety requirements. As a result, the project was required to comply with more stringent fire safety provisions. This included the installation of a new sprinkler system to all five levels of the building. These regulatory changes came into force after the project planning had commenced:

- Requiring design revisions
- A comprehensive fire strategy
- Additional works to ensure full compliance with current legislation.

Challenges

The most significant challenge on the project was the impact of regulatory change to the design and cost of the project. Updated fire safety requirements meant the scope of works had to be amended. Resulting in the addition of a sprinkler system at a cost of approximately £70,000. These changes contributed to the overall project cost doubling from its original estimate. Careful contract administration, cost management, and clear communication with the client were essential in managing expectations and progressing the works compliantly.

Outcome

Despite the challenges, the project was successfully completed and delivered in line with current building safety standards. The former building has been transformed into modern residential accommodation, with fire safety and long-term compliance embedded into the design. This project highlights the practical impact of the Building Safety Act on smaller-scale residential conversions and the importance of early consideration of building height, use, and regulatory thresholds. [Get in touch](#) with the Chawton Hill team to find out how we can help deliver your project. To ensure that your project is in line with current building safety and regulatory requirements.



Queens Promenade Regeneration, Kingston

Project Details

Our roles as contract administrator and project manager involved guiding the project from the planning application to the delivery. The Queen's Promenade project is part of RBK's wider regeneration initiative to revitalise the banks of the Thames. Delivered in collaboration with [Queen's Promenade Friends \(QPF\)](#), a local charitable community group, the project focused on restoring and reimagining a Victorian riverside lavatory. The aim being to create a clean and functional facility for the public use.

Delivery and design

Partnering with RBK's [regeneration team](#), we played a pivotal role in reworking the original Victorian layout of the building. The redesign transformed the space to accommodate four cubicles instead of three. There is now one accessible and three unisex, as well as dedicated storage for cleaning staff and QPF volunteers.

The building's exterior was brought to life with a mural by local artists **Sunnie and Harriet of [ninetyfiveprints](#)**. Their designs can also be seen on other nearby buildings along the promenade. This creative addition reinforces the community identity and heritage of the riverside location.

Challenges

While the works themselves progressed smoothly and we managed to get the project delivered within budget, an unexpected water leak further up the embankment delayed progress slightly. Close liaison with Thames Water was required to resolve the issue and ensure the building remained protected and fit for purpose.

Outcome

The project represents a successful collaboration between RBK, Queen's Promenade Friends, local councillors, and the Chawton Hill team. Thanks to council funding and support, the building has been restored to serve the public once more, blending practical improvements with a celebration of local heritage.

Thank you to all on the project team for their collaboration and support. Should you need help on contract administration and project management please don't hesitate to [get in touch](#) with one of the Chawton Hill team today



Surbiton Library Update Completed

Project Details

Great news – another Chawton Hill project completed recently. We supported Kingston Council with their work on improving and restoring Surbiton library following its closure for repair and maintenance work in September 2024.

The library which serves the community of Surbiton is open five days a week and has a range of community facilities including copying, scanning, technology facilities and of course, books. The library was built next to the Civic Offices and Fire Station, on Ewell Road in Surbiton, in the 1930's and the library is regarded as a building of landscape merit.

Delivery and design

The works included redecorating the old crittall windows inside and outside. This included the removal of old lead-based paintwork. The team then decorated the majority of the interior and varnished the main door.

Challenges

The ceiling had been stripped as a result of previously removed asbestos. As a result, we had to repair the substrate, replaster and then decorate it whilst also rehangng the lighting. The total project cost was around £130,000.00.

Outcome

We were pleased to work with RBK's property (capital works) team and contractors [Russell Cawberry](#) to monitor cost and progress. The project came in within a tight budget and in time for re-opening ahead of Christmas 2024.

As always, should you need help or support with a similar project, please [contact the team](#) today.



Fusebox Kingston Royal Opening

Project Details

Directors, Dave and James were honoured to receive an invitation to the official opening of Fusebox Kingston. The formal project opening by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh was at the start of July 2023. Constructed in the basement of the John Lewis building and housed in the footings of the ancient Kingston Bridge, the project provides a unique space for local group, Creative Youth. The 750 square metre space features areas for performance, exhibitions, creative practice, socialising, co-creation and more.

Delivery and design

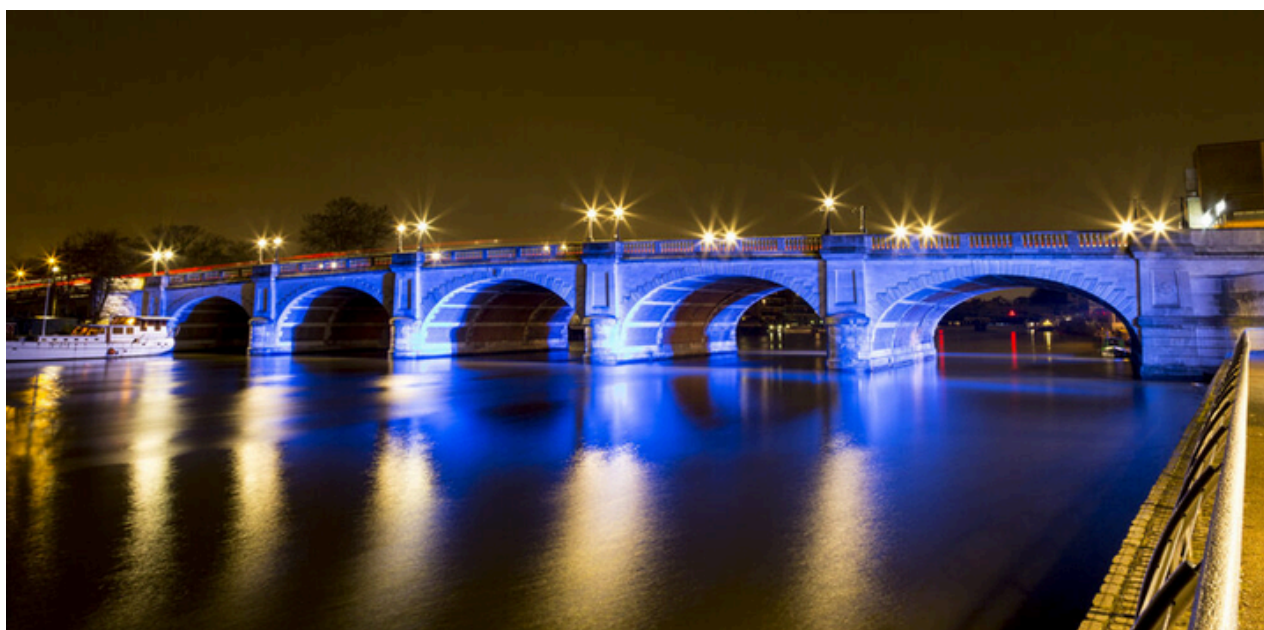
Chawton Hill supported Kingston Council with specification and management of the strip-out works on the Fusebox project. Our support included coordinating information between RBK, JLP and Creative Youth (and their contractors). We provided assistance with the lease negotiations (demise drawings, escape routes, service routes etc).

Outcome

It's an absolute pleasure to see such an innovative project come to fruition. Congratulations to everyone involved in the project and we look forward to seeing it develop over the coming months and years.

More details on the opening and the project itself, along with photos of the opening are available [here](#). There's a detailed look at the project on the '[Ian Visits](#)' site.

Should you need help with similar work on a project you're considering or working on, [get in touch today](#).



Fire Reinstatement Works

Project Details

Chawton Hill was able to assist the client with the whole process to restore their fire-damaged home in Croydon, South London.

The house saw significant fire damage throughout that needed repairing. Many of the rooms needed to be stripped of all damaged materials and the necessary repairs made to make the space safe and habitable again. During the strip-out, we revealed the original Victorian brickwork and timber studs giving us a rare insight into the history of the building.

Chawton Hill was employed as the lead consultant, principal designer, and contract administrator. Our role saw the preparation of a detailed specification and drawings for the site. This included everything to rebuild the rooms from the framing and brickwork to the finishing touches.

Our role was also to get approvals from the loss adjuster and manage the whole tender process. The process involved obtaining competitive quotations from contractors and presenting the best options. The project saw some of our team in project management and contract administration duties as well.

Chawton Hill were able to deliver the project with no major complications and within budget. Thank you to the team and Landway Construction for their dedication to this project.

If you are looking for a principal designer or contract support for an insurance or reinstatement project, [get in touch today](#).



KFC Gillingham

Project Details

We're delighted that another project has completed successfully for our friends at KFC. This time we've been supporting the team on the refurbishment of a store in Gillingham, Kent.

The restaurant has undergone a full brand refresh and is now ready to serve customers for the coming years. The project, as usual, saw a quick turnaround and careful management of resources to ensure minimal downtime for the store.

As with other refurbishments in the brand, the refurbishment brought the restaurant up to the latest KFC branding and customer experience. Working with approved KFC suppliers, the restaurant received new signage, new internal and external fixtures, and equipment. We installed new furniture along with a revised counter, as well as decorations and new lighting.



Thanks as always to the project team, and we look forward to continuing our relationship with KFC with their ongoing refresh programme going forward.



Town Square Co-Working Space

Project Details

the next stage of our regeneration project in Kingston upon Thames completed recently. The 'Town Square' co-working space in the former Calendars Restaurant is almost ready to take its first members. The Coworking and small business experts, Town Square Spaces will operate the hub on behalf of Kingston Council. They recently unveiled the new space alongside its vision for supporting local enterprise.

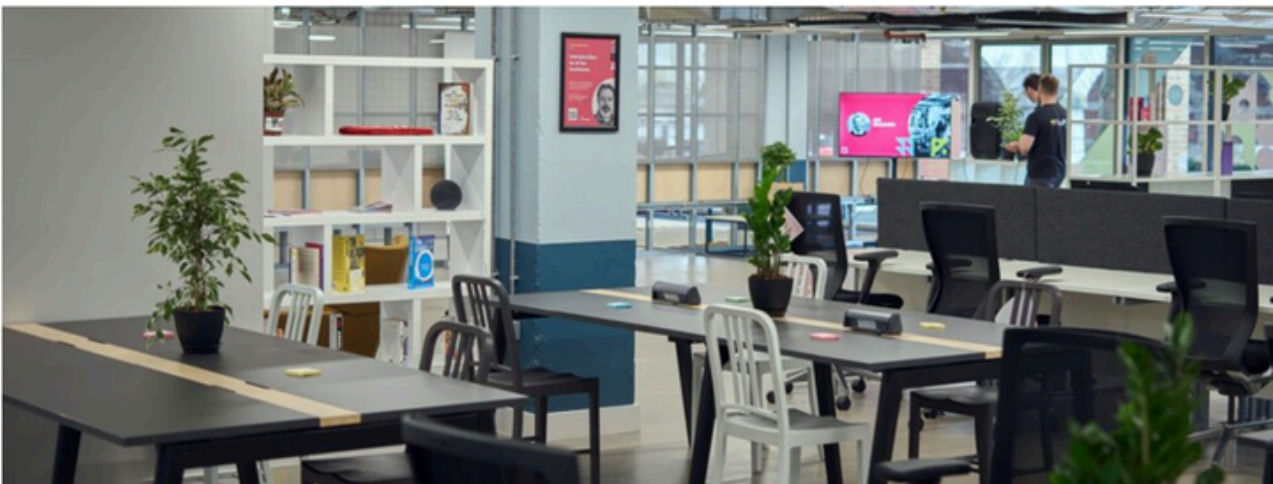
The modern workspace will have five small and medium offices. It also has a coworking space for up to 60 people, meeting rooms and an on-site cafe. Chawton Hill's role as Principal Designer and Lead Consultant has seen us supporting the client with a safety and coordination role across the project since 2021.

Town Square Kingston is at the heart of Kingston's Riverside regeneration delivering a new creative and knowledge quarter on Kingston's riverside. This includes the Fusebox project, a new cultural space, managed and led by Kingston's homegrown youth arts charity, Creative Youth.

Town Square Kingston is supported and delivered in partnership with the **BIG South London programme**. This South London-wide programme seeks to unlock knowledge-based economic growth in the area. It received funding from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

It's been a pleasure to work with the project team, including: **TPM Studios** (Architect), **Ridge and Partners** (MEP Engineers), **Pick Everard** (Quantity Surveyor) and **Osborn Associates** (Fire Engineers).

We look forward to working with all involved on the final stages of this brilliant regeneration project at the heart of Kingston town centre. The next stage sees the team working on the former 'Essence Nightclub', to become another Town Square co-working space.



Oxshott Community Hub – Scout and Guide Centre

Project Details

We're delighted to announce the Oxshott Scout and Guide Centre (Oxshott Community Hub) project is complete. The original Scout and Guide building in Oxshott was constructed in 1968. The old building was very much of a temporary nature, being timber and lacking any insulation. This made it particularly inefficient as well as costly to run and maintain.

Chawton Hill helped with a range of matters, including the design development, preparation of sketch design drawings, submission of the planning application, and preparation of tender documentation. We supported as principal designer, project manager, and contract administrator.

The project was procured as a design and build contract, funded primarily through the 'Your Fund Surrey' community projects fund. This funding allowed the group to construct a new, larger facility on the site of the original.

Some of the challenges we faced during the project included particularly wet weather and the discovery of a large amount of asbestos within the foundations of the old building. However, with some rescheduling and good teamwork, the project was completed in good time for the new term in September.

The new building is intended for use by the Scouts and Guides alongside other community groups. The project aims to improve facilities for all kinds of users from across the Oxshott area.

The building has an intended lifespan of at least fifty years and is built to the latest standards of energy efficiency and sustainability. It features new catering and accessibility features such as toilet and baby changing facilities.

Thanks to the project team, including **Cravencroft Limited**, and **Building Design Studio**.



The Fircroft Centre, Kingston upon Thames

Project Details

During the COVID pandemic, this community building, in Surbiton, in the borough of Kingston upon Thames was found to be suffering from structural defects. The local authority engaged a project team, including Chawton Hill, to identify a way to remediate the issues and take the opportunity to refurbish the building.

Chawton Hill were appointed as the contract administrator and principal designer on the project. The aim was to refurbish and update **the Fircroft Centre** in Kingston Upon Thames. We worked closely with the project team to deliver the project quickly and within budget. The project threw some particular challenges our way, but we were pleased to resolve those and deliver a project that provides outstanding facilities for the coming years.

As the project was to refurbish a Victorian community facility, there were a number of considerations.

The need for sensitivity to the local community and accessibility requirements were an important focus. One innovation we employed was the full replacement of the fire doors to lobbies. This was an alternative to the more costly option of attempting to fire rate existing doors, or replace original glazed screens around the main stairwell lobbies. We were also able to specify the use of an 'evac chair' rather than retrofitting evacuation ramps to the existing building, saving time and money.

We were also able to save both time and money by using an innovative resin injection technique for part of the building that required underpinning. Instead of traditional underpinning which would have required deep, narrow trench excavation.

Huge thanks as always to the entire project team for the delivery of another successful project.



Kingfisher Leisure Centre, Kingston

Project Details

Chawton Hill successfully completed the demolition project at the Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Kingston. Following structural issues with the previous building, the council took the opportunity to look at options for a new centre on the site.

The first stage of the project saw the demolition of the old Kingfisher leisure centre, which Chawton Hill project managed. A slightly unusual project, we were required to administer a National Federation of Demolition Contractors contract. The contract provided only limited scope for dealing with the typical issues we would normally find in a standard construction contract.

As a key piece of public infrastructure in the borough, we were mindful of the needs of various stakeholders. There was also some confidential information involved in the project which required sensitive handling. Additionally, we had to take care around the numerous planning stipulations for the project. These had to be discharged both before and during its execution.

Archaeological Risks

Included in the scope was a requirement to execute archaeological works which required careful management to ensure minimal impact upon the planned completion date for the works. We were delighted that the project finished on time and within the planned budget, subject to a few additional requests from the employer.

Another key requirement for the project was that of sustainability, something we see more and more on projects. Though demolition was unavoidable, almost 100% of the demolition materials were recycled or crushed and reused on-site.

Thanks to the entire project team and we look forward to seeing the new project develop.

Project Team:

RBK, R Collard, Pick Everard, Ridge & Partners, Temple, Chawton Hill.



KFC – Beckton

Project Details

Chawton Hill were engaged as Project Managers on this project to refurbish the **KFC** at Beckton in East London. Our first KFC project, the works included the replacement and refurbishment of fittings and decorations both in and outside the property, with a fast turnaround.

The refurbishment brought the restaurant up to the latest KFC branding and customer experience. Working with approved KFC suppliers, the restaurant received new signage, new internal and external fixtures, and equipment. We installed new furniture and a revised counter, as well as decorations and new lighting.

Outcomes

The new restaurant was successfully delivered, with key learning around ensuring we were able to make the most of the KFC approved supply chain, ensuring the programme ran to time and within budget, having careful regard to lead and delivery times.



Kingston Riverside Regeneration Project

Chawton Hill are lead consultant for the Kingston Riverside regeneration project, supporting as project managers, contract administrators and principal designers.

This project involves three riverside units within the **John Lewis Partnership** building. Originally a restaurant, a nightclub and an undercroft, the units have been vacant for years. The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames' (RBK) regeneration team aims to bring this section of the riverside back into use with the funding they have secured.

Currently, this area is a cut-through from Canbury Gardens to the town centre riverside. In contrast, the area on the opposite side of the bridge is lively, with many restaurants and attractions. The hope is that this project will revive this area which has sat idle with little to offer for too long.

The strip-out of the building comes next, then the next step will be fit-out. Chawton Hill's role is to progress the scheme.

We are working on the fit-out design for two of the three units. The areas that were previously a restaurant and nightclub, will now become a new flexible office space. The space's design is both modern and sustainable, with views over the river.

However, the undercroft will be developed by a local community group, **Creative Youth**. An arts charity will be providing a shared exhibition and performance space. The council's aim over the next 10 years for these spaces is for it to create 500 new jobs in the community and boost the local economy.

After that, the final step will be the public realm works. Interestingly, this phase of the project's design was part of a competition. The winner of the competition was **WR-AP** an architecture practice in Teddington. The firm won as a result of their low-cost, environmentally friendly ideas which include a living wall. They envisage a vibrant new public space for the community. Find out more about the ideas WR-AP have for this area.



Inclusive Design

When it comes to designing a new building, or retrofitting an old one, you'll understand the importance of putting inclusive design principles at the heart of what you do. It is no longer enough to add a wheelchair ramp to the front entrance and assume your job is done. Whilst a ramp will make the building accessible for wheelchair users, accessibility does not always equal inclusivity.

Accessible design meets the minimum mandatory requirements for access and facilities for those with disabilities. These are covered in the Government's statutory guidance document Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M.

Inclusive design looks beyond this, creating spaces that work for the needs of everyone. The aim is to enable and empower those that use a building going beyond a one-size fits-all solution. A helpful starting point here is the RIBA's Inclusive Design Overlay.

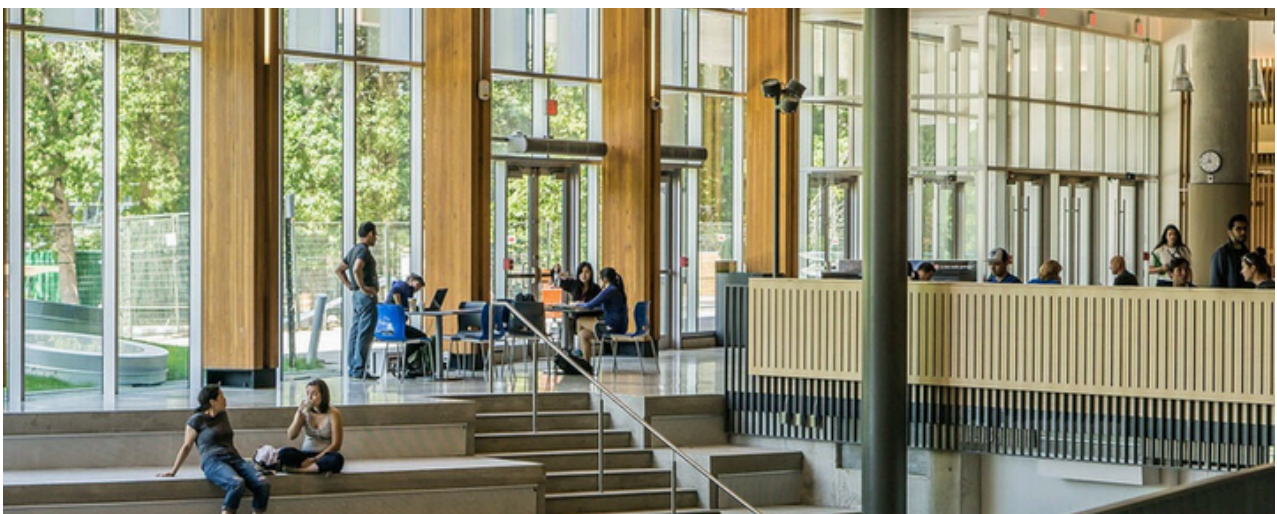
In this article, we'll cover some of the ways the built environment can embrace inclusive design principles.

What's Covered

By its very definition, inclusive design needs to cover the needs of the population. It can be tricky to pin down exactly where to focus efforts, in order to design a building that works for all. However, most design approaches agree there are three main areas to consider:

- **Abilities:** This covers a wide scope of physical and intellectual abilities, plus factors such as age, body type, medical conditions and physical fitness.
- **Gender & Sexuality:** Male/female and LGBTIQ+ identities.
- **Faith & Culture:** Covers differing cultural and religious needs.

The first step is to understand the demographics of your users (and potential users) and what their varying needs may be. For example, if there is a large Muslim community in your area, you may consider designing spaces that can be used as prayer rooms. If you expect your user base to be elderly, or less steady on their feet, handrails may play an important part in the design.



Inclusive Design

The Principles

1. A people first approach:

By putting users at the heart of your designs you can remove barriers and improve access for all. It is important to include as many people as possible in the design stage. Having a diverse team can help us see issues we may not have considered.

2. Acknowledge diversity and difference

The environment needs to meet as many needs as possible. This can be tricky, but identifying barriers early in the design process can help. Think beyond accessibility requirements and consider what barriers may be experienced by people with learning difficulties, mental ill health, visual impairments and hearing impairments.



3. Offer Choice

It is not always going to be possible to design one solution that suits all users. Even within one group, users will not be homogenous and their needs may vary. Avoid aiming for the minimum targets and consider the variance across your user base.

4. Flexible Use

The best way to achieve this is to truly understand how the building will be used. Consult with the client and end users, discover what happens now and what the space might be used for in the future. Consider design changes which can serve multiple purposes. For example, ramps instead of staircases can make buildings more accessible for wheelchair users, those pushing prams and carrying large luggage.

5. Convenient and Enjoyable

By removing barriers, you can create an environment that is easy to use for everyone. How will users move around the building? Is signage sufficient? Give users the confidence in your space and they will be able to make effective, independent choices about how they use it.

If you apply these principles to your designs, you'll find your buildings become accessible for more users.

Solar Power for Schools and Offices?

Recent news revealed that 2023 recorded a consistent temperature of 1.5 degrees above average. It seems now that there's no doubt that the climate crisis is here to stay. So is the key question now, how can we limit the potential risks?

One solution is renewable energy.

PV and Solar Options

There are lots of routes to achieving this, but one popular solution is solar or 'photovoltaic' (PV) energy. Chawton Hill has been working with Powercor on several projects. One of Powercor's specialisms is the installation of PV systems in schools.

There are many advantages to installing PV systems, from providing education opportunities to students, to energy savings or even feed-in tariff revenue from the national grid. But what are the potential costs, risks and key considerations when moving to solar power?

We caught up with Dave from Chawton Hill and Chris from Powercor to find out more...

Chris: What are the benefits of PV systems and how easy are they to maintain?

A big bonus of course is de-carbonisation. Depending on the size of the array (the number and scale of panels fitted) you can often have a surplus of energy for your building. This in turn means you can potentially sell surplus energy to other users or the grid, making it not just a green energy source, but a revenue source too.

Dave: What are the costs of installing panels, and how long does it take to recoup that cost?

With a return on investment of just three years in many cases, the cost can be recouped far more quickly than most other decarbonisation investments. Certain bodies can also apply for financial support or in some cases funding for energy efficient projects. This means that the capital investment cost can be relatively low.

Chris: Are PV panels truly sustainable? Can you measure the long-term (embodied) carbon cost including the mining of materials to make them, etc?

The carbon trail is a concern, and with it still being early days, things are evolving all the time. Panels generally start life in China, although some come from the US. However, panels generally have a life expectancy of 25 years at least, so it will be some time before life-expired panels are a major concern.

There are already regulations in place for the disposal and recovery of materials in end-of-life panels and we've no doubt that over time, the ability to re-use and recycle materials will improve.

Solar Power for Schools and Offices?

Dave: What's your role in the process? How does Chawton Hill add value to the installation of PV panels?

Chawton Hill can help in several ways across the process of panel installation. This starts with feasibility studies and assisting with planning regulations. We also bring access to our wide network of specialist engineers, designers and experts who can help ensure the installation is completed on time, on budget and in compliance with the law. One thing you don't want is to find that you've installed the panels but haven't complied with planning regulations or requirements of your local authority.

Chris: Given the British weather, and the fact that during the 'sunniest' period of the year, schools are closed, can solar energy really be cost-effective?

This is the classic question that comes up regularly. Yes, a lot of schools are shut in the summer, but many do now use their spaces in the summer – summer clubs, staffing activities etc. There may still be a surplus, but we can use that for other things.

St Georges in Weybridge is a good example of a school where the team added £1 million of solar equipment, but now finds ways to use the energy when there's a surplus – car charging, cooling, etc. and as mentioned there's a possibility to earn money by feeding energy back to the grid. Slewing is one option, where you can sell energy to other partners.

There are many options to ensure the PV panels are still working even if your staff are on holiday.

And In fact, though many people associate PV with bright sunshine, they can be very effective in standard daylight. One client had one of their most efficient months in February 2023.

Dave: From experience what do you find the hardest to manage on school projects – how can clients help make the project as successful as possible?

Some of the biggest challenges tend to be around listed buildings. The risks and challenges here are particularly interesting. Council/conservation officers can then need involvement and things become potentially more complicated and protracted. We've had good levels of success by keeping on top of the latest changes in regulation and ensuring we communicate well with all the parties involved.

Live schools are often a challenge for any construction project and solar panels are no exception. If work is planned for areas that are in use, then the key is trying to ensure we don't interfere with day to day school activities. We also need to deal carefully with logistics of deliveries.

Solar Power for Schools and Offices?

Regulation

Chris also mentions several rules and regulations coming into play, which qualified advisors can assist with. In particular, insurers and the Fire Protection Association have issued RC 62 to tackle the risk of fire associated with panels. These and other considerations need to be taken into account on any PV project.

He talks about the importance of ensuring your systems are working efficiently once installed. The team use a product called "Simble". This connects a range of 'Internet of Things' devices, to provide a one-stop overview of energy performance.

The aim is to ensure systems run as efficiently as possible, identifying the benefits of installing PV and other equipment such as low-energy lighting.

The opportunities for reducing energy usage, feeding energy into the grid and benefitting from solar power are set to expand.



RAAC Surveys & Remediation for Theatres & Other Buildings

Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) is a lightweight 'bubbly' (i.e. 'aerated') form of concrete. It was mainly used in flat roofs in the UK from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s. Whilst it exists in buildings in both the public and private sectors, it is more prevalent in schools, hospitals and public buildings such as theatres.

RAAC was seen as a cheaper and easier alternative to concrete. However, it is less durable and, typically has a lifespan of around 30 years. There is therefore a risk it can fail, leading to structural collapse. As a result the government were jolted into action to mitigate the dangers.

What is the current situation? And what is being done to the buildings that are affected?

Schools

On 8 February 2024, the government confirmed plans to permanently remove RAAC from all schools and colleges in England. It also advised that all work to remove RAAC will be funded through grants or the School Rebuilding Programme.

There are over 22,000 schools and colleges in England. From those, 234 have confirmed RAAC so far. The DfE has indicated that 119 of these schools will need one or more buildings rebuilt or refurbished. There are 110 schools and colleges where work to remove RAAC will be less complex and extensive. A further five educational institutions have alternative arrangements in place.

Hospitals

The NHS in England put in place a rolling programme to identify RAAC in hospitals after the RAAC alert issued by The Standing Committee on Structural Safety (SCOSS) in 2019. As of 17 October 2023, there are 42 hospital sites with confirmed RAAC in the programme.

The Department of Health and Social Care states that the programme is backed with significant additional funding of £698 million from 2021 to 2025 for trusts to put in place necessary remediation and failsafe measures.

What you need to do if you suspect RAAC?

The first thing you need to do is arrange for a survey of the building to determine whether RAAC is present. At Chawton Hill, the team have been carrying out widespread surveys to identify RAAC.

If RAAC is found, we can help find an engineer to come and assess its severity and identify the next steps. In the event it is deemed low risk, then it will just need monitoring. If it is more serious, then remedial action might be needed, and work may need to be carried out. We're always happy to help where we can.

RAAC Surveys & Remediation for Theatres & Other Buildings

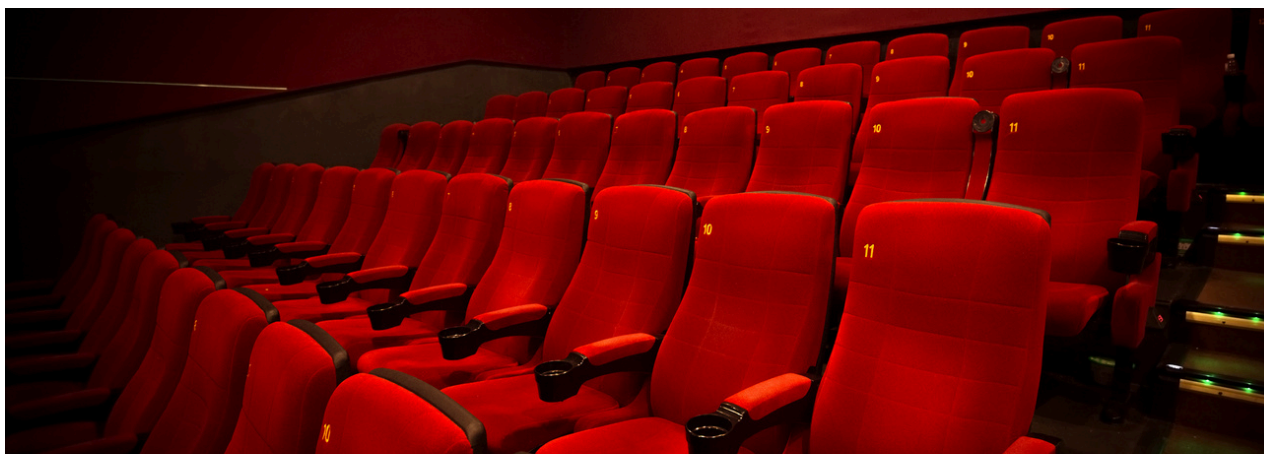
Considerations and costs

The remedial works that need to be done will vary from building to building and depend on a variety of factors. These include building size, location, and use. This will then have an impact on how long the work will take and the cost. It is also important to consider the implications for the people who use the building. Whether it's residents in a house, patients in a hospital or students at a school.

If substantial structural work needs to be done – e.g. a whole new roof deck, then the building may be out of action. It can be difficult to arrange work around school times. We can help with scheduling, to identify the most efficient and least disruptive time to schedule any works.

There's also the added risk of encountering other harmful materials such as asbestos. Again, Chawton Hill have several trusted suppliers who we can draw. This will help minimise risk and ensure everything is done to ensure safety and legality when tackling such issues.

It's important to consider the legal implications too. The public sector has received a lot of attention but the prevalence of RAAC in the private sector should not be overlooked or underestimated. The Defective Premises Act 1972 imposes a duty of care on landlords and constructors. It would be advisable for a building owner or operator of a property built between 1950s and 1990s to organise a survey if they suspect RAAC could be present.



Planning Permission How Can a Surveyor Help?

At the time of writing, interest rates remain high, yet property price rises show little sign of slowing. The construction pipeline is expected to increase.

As a result, many building and property owners are seeking planning permission. This is often to extend, develop and make more space, or make better use of their existing space.

Many developments need permission from your local authority before they can go ahead. So how do surveyors fit into the process? How can you ensure success and avoid making mistakes in the planning process?

Do You Need Permission?

Firstly, establish if you need approval.

The government has been quite generous in recent years with the definition of 'permitted development'. Many changes and extensions are classed as 'permitted development'. As a result, they don't need permission. Some may still require notification to the authority even if permission is not required. So, it's a good idea to take advice on where your project sits in the system.

Permitted development is something of a minefield & subject to a range of criteria. These include the position of the project relative to the building, materials used, purpose, and various other matters. The good news? This is what surveyors are trained to understand. A surveyor can guide and advise you on what is or isn't permitted in your area.

Pre-Application

If you establish that permission is necessary, you'll need to consider whether you need a pre-application meeting or not. This process allows discussion of plans with a planning officer without going through the planning process. It gives an indication of whether your proposal is likely to succeed at planning.

Pre-application advice also helps you to avoid the possible costs and time of submitting a formal application only to have it rejected. At which point you may be back at the beginning of the process!

Full Planning Permission

A full planning application requires the submission of several documents, drawings and paperwork. The submission is reviewed by planning officers and your local authority, then is either approved or rejected.

Not all councils are the same, so it pays to work with someone who knows what your local authority will (or won't) accept. Chawton Hill have experience with many authorities throughout the South East, so can help ensure the best chance of success.

You may also find, subject to the complexity of your project, an architect will be helpful. They can ensure designs are acceptable to the authority and will pass approval.

Like surveyors, Architects spend many years learning what does and doesn't work on the design of buildings. While Architects are not legally required, they can be very helpful in speeding up the process and ensuring both a practical and visually attractive design.

Planning Permission Needed? How Can a Surveyor Help?

What are the Risks?

Of course, the ultimate risk of not going through the process properly is that your application may be rejected. This may not be catastrophic, but it will be time-consuming and annoying.

In the worst-case scenario, if you have a project completed without the right planning permission, it may be retrospectively denied. You may end up having to demolish anything you've built.

Then you will need to re-instate the property back to its original condition. As you can imagine, that is a problem. There are plenty of examples of that happening.

Like most things in life, you can do all this yourself. But often, obtaining professional advice can help to make things quicker and easier, and a lot less stressful.



How much? Tackling Material Price Fluctuations in Construction Projects

Nobody working in construction over the past few years can have failed notice price fluctuations and huge cost increases, particularly around materials. As project managers and surveyors we keep a close eye on the cost of our clients' projects. It is our role to do our best to ensure the project delivered is the project commissioned, not only in terms of time and quality but also cost.

We have heard of suppliers who will only fix the price of materials for a few hours. Yet Employers will almost always want to manage the risk of cost over a project period which could be several months or years. These price fluctuations can be incredibly challenging. In some cases, it can be the difference between a successful project and a financial disaster.

So: What solutions are available then, to tackle these huge increases in cost, when very often we are required to commit to a project cost at the outset?

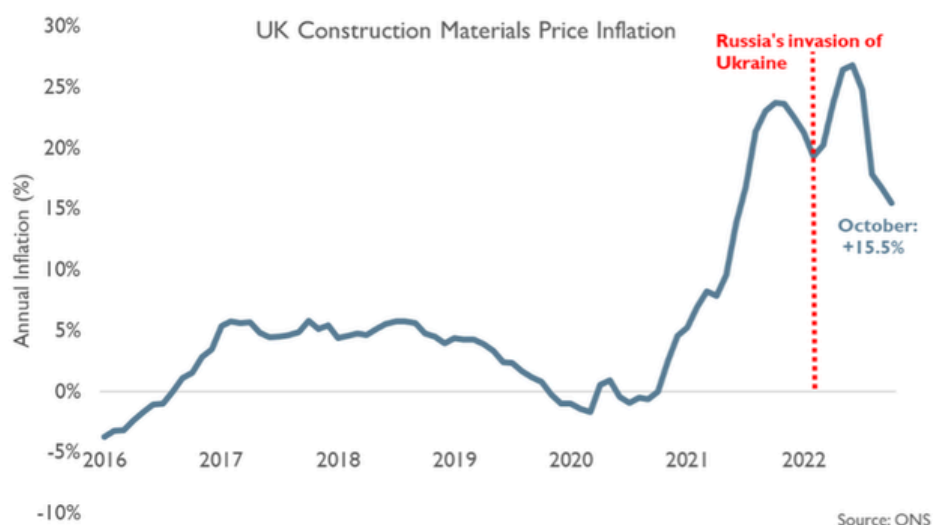
The Contract:

There are some contractual options available. Most of the main forms of construction contracts have a 'fluctuation' clause or option in them. This can allow for a price 'index' for an item that will allow for the fluctuation of that item over time. However, selecting the correct index is key to success. It's important to bear in mind that price indices may work in either party's favour over the course of a project.

Some other possible solutions include:

"Cost Plus".

Here the Contractor works to the cost of the materials, plus a percentage or margin to cover profit and overheads/preliminaries. This, unfortunately, is unlikely to be popular with many Employers!



How much? Tackling Material Price Fluctuations in Construction Projects

Two-Stage Procurement:

Allowing for a second stage of procurement spreads the risk across the project period. The contractor will be appointed to carry out the first stage of the works. They will then generally be appointed later for the second stage. At the second procurement point, an updated cost tender can be submitted. This in turn avoids committing to a fixed cost at the earliest stage.

Early Orders:

It may be possible to place an order early, thereby fixing the price of the item. However, this may be an issue if delivery is then made and storage is needed. A project we know of in London, ended up storing 1000s of kitchens in a warehouse during the pandemic, just to ensure they could deliver them as required by the contract.

Alternative Specifications / Value Engineering:

This is a process we are very familiar with at Chawton Hill. Substituting identical or similar materials and supplies for those specified, by agreement with the employer can prove a very helpful solution. It helps with the challenge of materials that either escalate in cost or become unavailable. This was a technique we successfully employed on a recent project in Surrey.

Ultimately it may not be possible to do much about cost increases. But there are ways of mitigating the risk of the huge fluctuations we've seen in recent years. By using an experienced advisor with a strong network of suppliers and good industry knowledge, it's possible to minimise risk. In some cases, it's possible to completely avoid risks.





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