

BENCHMARKING: COST AND TIME FOR REFURBISHMENT

With Fiona Corcoran, Partner

Carefully considering the key constraints that prevail in existing buildings will inform the early decision making stages and whether to proceed on the basis of refurbishment or knock down and rebuild.

The common held view is that refurbishment saves time, money and reduces risk. Yet the margin of difference isn't always as great as one might think. Clients often want refurbishment projects to be indistinguishable from new build schemes; modern, flexible workspaces with generous floor to ceiling heights, column free spaces, with intelligent low energy services, performance façades and grand reception spaces. The complexity comes in achieving this in and around an existing building. Ultimately, the limitations posed by the existing building will dictate the extent of any time and money savings that can be achieved.

Challenges

In any refurbishment scheme, it is important to consider several key issues relative to the existing building to determine whether refurbishment is indeed the right route.

- Presence of contaminants and hazardous materials e.g. asbestos
- Condition of the existing structure and capability to adapt (e.g. create column free space, create double height space)
- Potential for the existing structure to support additional net internal area (e.g. infill atriums, extensions, additional storeys, etc)
- Ability to meet current energy performance standards relative to façades, services, etc
- Existing storey height and its ability to accommodate desired servicing strategy and incorporate raised access floors and suspended ceilings, if desired
- Size and number of existing risers and their flexibility to incorporate additional fresh air
- Size, condition and location of existing cores (stairs, lifts, WCs, etc)
- Space to accommodate growing demand for back of house facilities (e.g. cycling and showering facilities).

Partner view Fiona Corcoran



Opting for refurbishment over new build can present many benefits; reduced risk, lower cost and a quicker return to market. It needn't mean an inferior product either. However, the condition and limitations of the existing building will significantly impact on the extent of any cost and time savings that can be achieved.

