



01 Left: A computer generated image of the potential reception area at 109-111 Farringdon Road

02 Above Right: The recently planned 2nd floor of 109-111 Farringdon Road

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Conservation versus modernisation

CG Pettersson of Redab looks at how new regenerative methods can ensure that property not only retains its true character, but can look stylish at the same time

REDAB, THE SWEDISH owned company which has been based in London since 1994 has made its name developing buildings with historical listings in the Midtown area. Their past portfolio includes 7-9 Bream's Building built in 1896, 4 Snow Hill built in 1894, 146-148 Clerkenwell Road built at the turn of the last century and 77-79 Farringdon Road built in 1880.

The philosophy of the company is to keep the historic element of the building while also enhancing original features, but also recognise the need to provide modern comforts such as heating and cooling, and the provision of extra power for today's workspace.

Redab believes that you have to

treat buildings as a living thing that needs nurturing in order to move forward. In all of the buildings mentioned above, careful modifications have been made to suit the current requirement for disabled access as well as the wide array of Health & Safety regulations.

Michael Raibin of Hatton Real Estate is looking forward to seeing Redab's future developments. "The properties that have been developed by Redab are constantly pushing the ceiling rents in the Midtown area, they seem to have the knack of knowing what potential tenants need and want, also, their enthusiasm for properties and their design is infectious".

CG Pettersson believes that: "Buildings cannot stand still, especially buildings that have historical interest. By investing in a redevelopment where the old and the new can work side by side, creating useable space enables the building to move forward. The developments that Redab carries out allow the building to function for another 70 to 100 years, left

as they are; they would become unsuitable for use and left to crumble. Our way means that these buildings are preserved for future generations. To update a building over 100 years old isn't easy as the end users look for function over style, therefore certain facilities have to be available such as air-conditioning, power and accessibility".

Redab favours under floor air-conditioning as provided by Protek. "It is perfect for older buildings as being under floor it is practically invisible, no ugly ceiling fixtures, plus all other services can be run under the floor, such as power and communication cables, also it is extremely energy efficient, a more recent requirement by end users", says Pettersson.

Peter Dewar of Crossland Otter Hunt agrees: "Sustainability and energy consumption has become a top five item on the list for my clients looking for potential space, and the under floor air-conditioning system used by Redab Properties Plc has been proven to be one of the best, providing a healthy

work environment along with low energy consumption. It is also very easy to explain to my clients how and why, it works so well".

One of Redab Properties Plc current projects in partnership with Sätilla Sphere run by the family Grebelius of Gothenburg is 109-111 Farringdon Road, also in Midtown. A Grade II listed building; Redab is currently in discussions with Islington Planning Department regarding planning consent to develop the building.

Built and developed in 1864, the building was designed by Henry Jarvis for William Dickes, a chromolithographic printer. There is evidence to suggest that the building's present appearance is the result of an exercise that refaced two existing properties rather than fully redeveloping the site. Currently the building is run with short lease office space although the use of space is not premium, and the facilities are limited.

Redab's idea is to reflect the original building's design while keeping the historical features such as Oak beams, steel columns,

exposed brick such as they did in 77-79 Farringdon Road. All original structure features will be kept and conserved. When the building is developed each floor will be also fully accessible by a lift, there will be toilets and tea-points on each floor.

Their proposed scheme has the full support of leading historical consultant Kevin Murphy of KM Heritage, who agrees that in order for 109-111 Farringdon Road to survive it needs to evolve to be a useful commercial building and says: "109-111 Farringdon Road has special architectural historic interest as an example of a Victorian workshop and it is a fine example of the Venetian Gothic style facade. Behind the elaborate facade to the building, it was a utilitarian working building that was made in a simple and economic fashion using the cheapest construction possible; internally and externally the building has been heavily altered. Architecturally, the building is a good example of how the needs of commerce were accommodated in a pragmatic solution that provided

high standards of space and light. Behind the 'face' of the building is a largely generic and plain set of spaces and fabric, now heavily altered by nearly a century and a half of use. Any distinctive character is now confined to the facade. Redab's scheme will see a substantial investment in the building, and this will provide it with a long lasting, sustainable future. In order to make this feasible, the accommodation needs to be greater on quantity and quality". Pettersson is also hoping to install a new 'easy walk' staircase, specifically designed to look like an original feature.

Although there is some contention with the planners that the existing stairs are of historical interest, Kevin Murphy disagrees: "A narrow and steep staircase that is potentially unsafe and which is an effort to climb for able-bodied users of the building, let alone those with mobility difficulties. The existing staircase has, like a good deal of the building, been substantially altered and, in case,

was a generic and unremarkable design".

Redab also plan to add more useable space to the property by adding an extension at high level with a roof terrace set back from the front of the building, which will have a limited visual impact from street level.

Richard Susskind of Susskind & Company, who is one of the largest real estate agents for the Midtown area, believes the invisible impact of the roof extension and terrace is a useful selling point "Having some outside space can make quite a difference when my clients are looking for new offices". And it seems the 304 Shareholders of Redab Properties Plc agree, they are very happy with Redab's most recent results in from their auditors Brindley Jacob showing an average return on past properties being at an impressive +49.7%.

Pettersson believes there are still a number of potential buildings ripe for redevelopment in the Midtown area, and the next step is to seek further funds from a broad spectrum of shareholders ■