

# CASE STUDY

## GILBERT-ASH: NEW THINKING, NOT NEW BUILDINGS

This case study outlines how Gilbert-Ash used circular thinking to save emissions by avoiding the destruction and replacement of the Bartlett School of Architecture, instead choosing to re-purpose the existing structure.

### What was the issue?

In the £20 million refurbishment of its world-renowned Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London wanted to double the amount of research and teaching space. The usual approach to this sort of project would be to demolish the original building, then to design and construct a new building in its place.

However, the project team, including contractor Gilbert-Ash, saw this project an important opportunity to embrace circular economy thinking by reusing the existing building structure as a central design principle for the project.

### What Gilbert-Ash did

The refurbished Bartlett building is a stunning example of the art of the possible. A retrofit of the original 1970's building stock transformed a dark, cramped space into a beautiful award-winning structure, whilst dramatically reducing carbon emissions from new construction materials.

Circular economy thinking has extended into the design of the building's interior. Communal spaces are deliberately versatile. Gilbert-Ash developed bespoke furniture on a Kee Klamp steel frame which can be taken down and rebuilt in different sequences to free up the space in the building in the future and avoid the need to procure further materials.



## 400 tonnes

*of carbon were saved by retaining the original concrete frame*

This approach also saw Gilbert-Ash shortlisted for the Open City Stewardship Award.

**THE REFURBISHED BARTLETT BUILDING IS A STUNNING EXAMPLE OF THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE**



### What did Gilbert-Ash learn?

- Because an additional floor was added, lightweight materials had to be used for the flooring and façade to ensure that the building's foundations were not overloaded.
- One of the inherent challenges of retrofitting this structure was that the existing floor-to-ceiling heights were significantly lower than those of a new building; this was problematic when installing mechanical and electrical services into the project.
- Gilbert-Ash used point cloud survey information and 3D modelling of the structure to design out any pinch points. It is recommended that other retrofitting projects take this approach.



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