Skype Headquarters

Complete	Area	Client	Architect
2013	UK England	Skype	TP Bennett

Founded in 2003, Skype is a media technology company specialising in providing voice chat and video calls.

This state of the art headquarters in London covers 89,400 sq feet and is home to 380 staff. The office interior uses a quirky, bespoke design to create a working environment that eases collaboration between the range of Skype's groups and teams and accommodates their different ways of working.

Over three floors the spaces cluster around a series of hubs and the centrepiece of the building is a chill area that provides a gathering space for informal meetings, hot-desking and eating.

The ceiling of the chill area is adorned with rows of large, hanging circular raft absorbers that mitigate sound travelling across the room and create invisible corridors that weave throughout the building.

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Services provided

Sandy Brown was appointed by Skype to provide acoustic consultancy on the Category B fit out of their new London offices. This included:

- achieving the required level of sound insulation for sensitive cellular spaces
- ensuring that reverberation within the meeting rooms and booths met the requested performance
- mitigating reverberation and noise build up in the central chill area and sound transmission to adjacent spaces which are connected to it
- controlling noise from building services to acceptable levels within the building and noise from proposed new rooftop plant to nearby sensitive premises.

Special acoustic features

The client provided a detailed and high performance acoustic specification to work to that was based on the Skype offices in Stockholm. Confirmation of the performance requirements of the specification involved collaboration with the acoustic consultant for the Stockholm offices.

The design of the meeting rooms and booths incorporated carefully detailed wall and door separations and extensive acoustic absorption to comply with the sound insulation and reverberation requirements of the specification. A UX lab was also part of the project which required a suitably designed studio style observation window.

Each of the acoustically sensitive spaces also had stringent background noise requirements which necessitated careful placement of ventilation terminal such that noise emission did not cause the criteria to be exceeded.

The central chill area is inter-linked via the open central staircase to the vending areas above and below. These spaces are also open to nearby offices. The potential for disturbance meant that control of reverberation and noise build up was an important consideration in our design. An acoustic model of the central chill area, staircase and vending areas was created so that we were able to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the acoustic treatments in mitigating potential sound transmission to the open plan office areas.

Because the design proposed new rooftop plant, environmental noise surveys and a detailed assessment were carried out in relation to the noise from this and to establish appropriate criteria to protect the occupants of nearby sensitive buildings in line with the requirements of the landlord.

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