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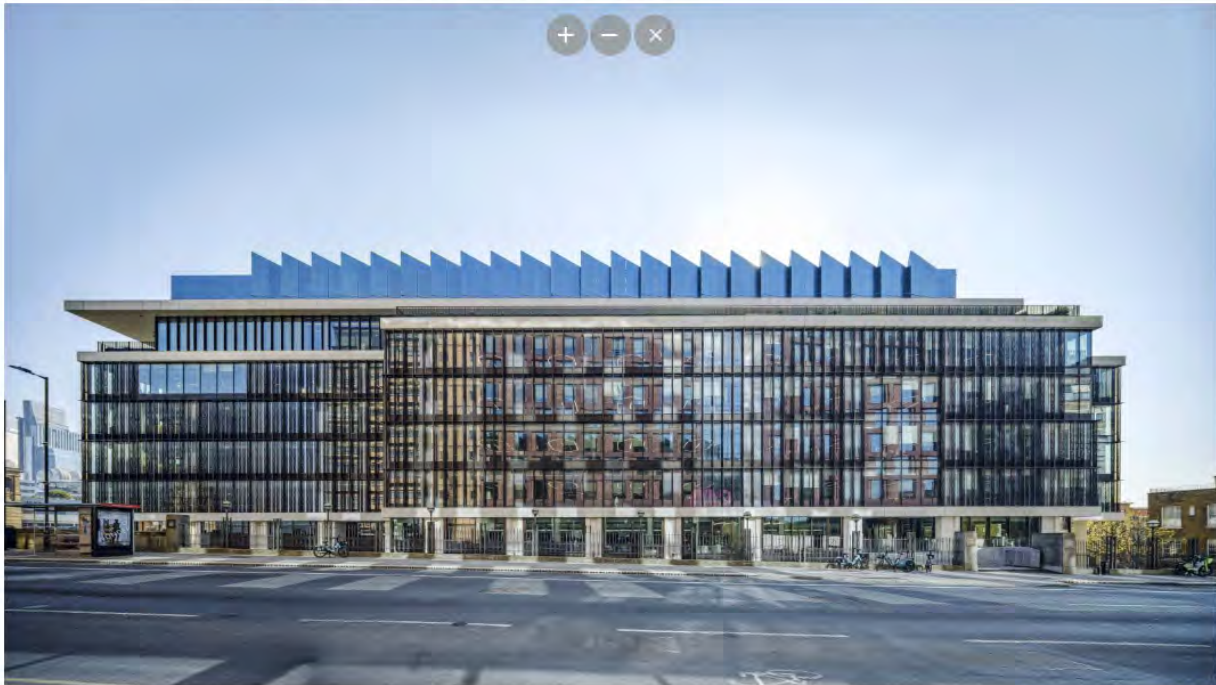
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FIRST LOOK

BDG transforms former FT HQ into campus for marketing giant WPP

26 JANUARY 2026 • BY ROB WILSON, PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM SOAR



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Source: Tim Soar

BDG Architecture + Design (BDG) has completed the retrofit of the former *Financial Times* HQ into a new campus for its parent company WPP

The One Southwark Bridge scheme has reworked and upgraded the 1980s building with a new lightweight, thermally-efficient façade developed with Squire & Partners.





The project creates a new campus for WPP, the marketing and communications giant of which BDG is a wholly-owned subsidiary.

The building, which has stood empty since the *Financial Times* vacated it in 2019, has been reworked both internally and externally, significantly upgrading its environmental performance and improving the surrounding public realm.

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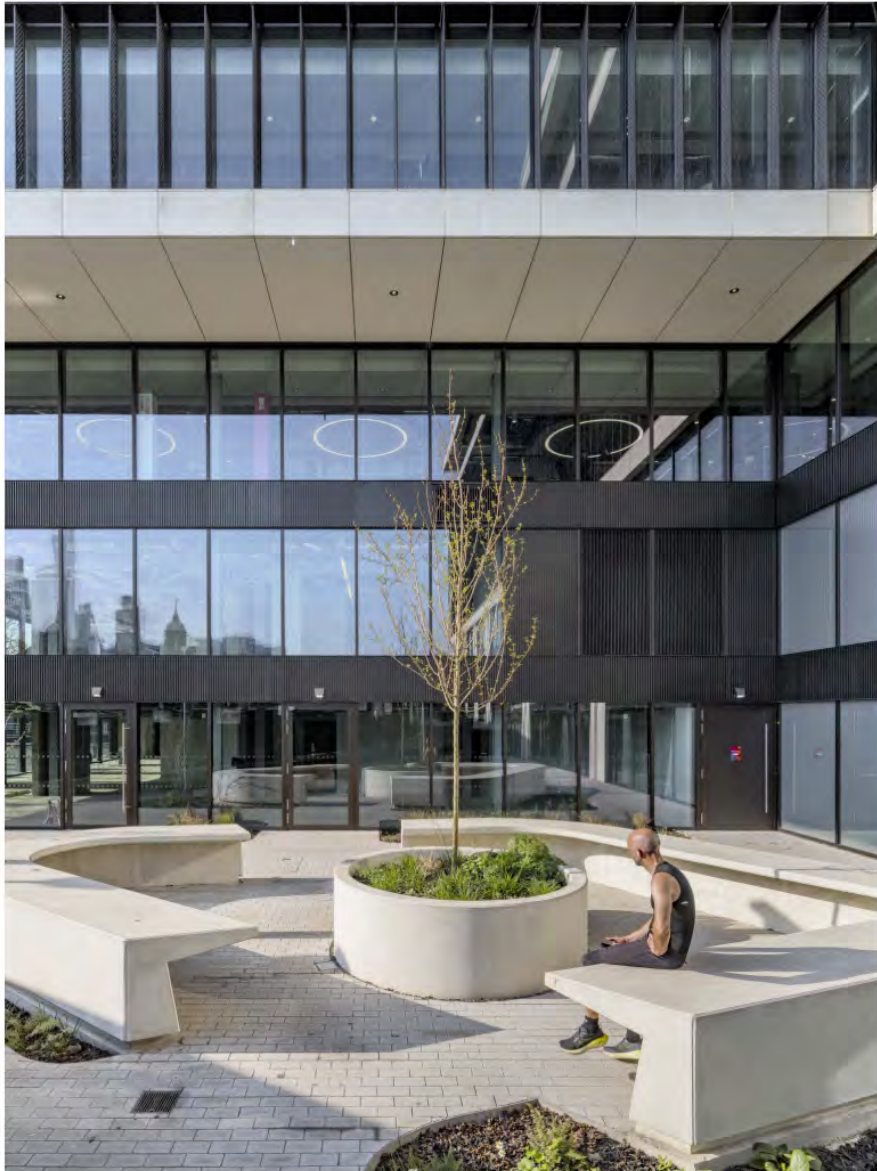
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Externally, the outdated façades were removed and the building stripped back to its concrete and steel structure before a new lightweight, thermally-efficient façade was installed, developed in partnership with architect Squire & Partners.





The lower levels are clad in textured glass reinforced concrete (GRC) panels inspired by the stony, silty deposits left on the Thames riverbank at low tide. Further up the building, dark bronze, perforated aluminium fins respond to the orientation of the building, bringing different levels of solar shade across each elevation. A blue sawtooth roof crowns the building, inspired by a printworks that once stood on the site, and concealing all the M&E plant, which was relocated from street level.



The landscape around the building has been redesigned to improve the public realm, making it fully accessible and reconnecting it to the surrounding streets. As part of this, the north elevation of the existing building has been cut back at ground level to widen the river path and accommodate a new public café.

Internally the new workplace offers hospitality-led amenities for around 3,000 employees with general office space, meeting rooms, collaboration spaces and various shared areas for social activities and hosting clients.





The building's usable area has been increased by approximately 50 per cent by extending existing floor plates, adding a new level and the moving of the mechanical plant to the roof. The scheme has seen almost 75 per cent of the original structure retained, saving approximately 60 per cent embodied carbon compared with demolition and rebuild, and has achieved a BREEAM Outstanding rating.

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Architect's view

The transformation of One Southwark Bridge was never just a technical building exercise: it was about understanding how the client actually works as a creative community and remodelling the space to support its needs and ensure future adaptability. Spending time with the client's teams helped us shape

a building that can evolve with them. We organised the workplace vertically, with shared and social spaces at ground, first and seventh floors, and flexible workspace on levels two to six.

Equally important was opening the building back up to the city. For decades it stood as a kind of island, closed off from its neighbours. Reworking the public realm became a chance to invite people in, by making the perimeter fully accessible and creating a new courtyard garden to the east. It's the first time the public can truly walk around and experience the building at close quarters. We've widened the Thames path and opened a new public café overlooking the river which makes a huge difference to the way the building engages with its surrounding.

Working with an existing building presented a number of challenges, including low existing floor-to-ceiling heights, a fortress-like public realm, and the need to expand the building's capacity without compromising its architectural coherence. We added an additional storey and extensions to the building (increasing the internal floorplate by 50 per cent) and retained a substantial amount of the existing structure (almost 75 per cent). By working with what we inherited, not against it, we've been able to modernise this building for new future in a sustainable way.

Toby Neilson, principal director, BDG Architecture + Design



Client's view

One Southwark Bridge marks a significant milestone for WPP in London. Our primary ambition when developing the brief was to create a campus that reflects the scale and diversity of our business while fostering collaboration and creativity. The potential of the original building – and its close proximity to our other two London campuses – made this the ideal location, but the existing structure lacked the space and flexibility we needed.

We also wanted the campus to go beyond a traditional workplace. It had to feel welcoming and future-ready, with hospitality-led spaces that inspire our people and support a variety of ways of working.

As a result, the building is designed to be flexible and to bring people together – both internally and for visitors. State-of-the-art AV and technology make collaboration easy and keep us connected across our global network, while the hospitality-focused spaces offer the perfect setting for hosting clients and events in an environment that feels as welcoming as it is functional.

David Laver, head of real estate & workplace services, WPP, UK & EUR Region



Project data

Location 1 Southwark Bridge Road, London, SE1

Start on site April 2022

Completion December 2024 (base build); March 2025 (fit-out)

Gross internal floor area 21,400m²

Form of contract Design & Build

Architect BDG Architecture + Design

Client WPP

Façade concept design Squire & Partners

Lead interior designer BDG architecture + design

Amenity spaces concept design Universal Design Studio

Structural engineer Webb Yates

M&E consultant HDR

QS Quantem

Main contractor Structure Tone

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