

# + Unity Place Santander's new UK HQ and technology Hub

Milton Keynes, United Kingdom



## The What

A ground-breaking purpose-built workplace for Santander. A fit-for purpose hub, designed specifically with Santander's specialist tech personnel in mind, which will now become the Bank's new UK HQ.

## The How

State-of-the-art and built for purpose, Osborne+Co will provide Santander with a tech hub that's been built with people in mind from the very beginning, employing the very latest thinking in workplace design collaboration space, and health and wellbeing.

## The Results

A fit for purpose space for up to 6,500 employees means Santander can truly optimise and centralise their tech operation, simultaneously increasing productivity and staff well-being with the best possible work environment. The building design has already become Santander's new global benchmark for excellence in its future buildings.

## Key Stakeholders

- Milton Keynes Council and leadership Planning Department
- Milton Keynes Development Partnership Santander UK Executive Leadership & Real Estate Leadership
- Santander Employee Interest Groups Community Interest Groups
- Regional Government Stakeholders including local MP's Business Lobby Groups

## Osborne+Co. Role as Developer

- Equity Investor
- Design development and management
- Securing Planning
- Community Liason
- Procurement
- Construction Delivery



**PARTNERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT AT SCALE**



**BUILD TO SUIT  
DEVELOPMENT**



**500,000FT<sup>2</sup>**



**£180M**

## Overview

Osborne+Co leading of Santander's new HQ in Milton Keynes dates back to 2017 when Osborne+Co approached Santander with the idea of a radical transformation of its Milton Keynes footprint and a focus on creating a future-proofed, sustainable and fit for purpose HQ.

Following an extensive RFP process, Osborne+Co were appointed the developer of the Unity Place building.

As part of delivering this scheme, Osborne+Co led a land assembly process to create the site. This involved acquiring land from Santander, Milton Keynes Council (MKC) and Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP).

Our design was developed in collaboration and partnership with Santander to create a building that would house a significant proportion of their UK headcount balanced with creating a building that provided for the wider Milton Keynes community.

## Planning Approach and Process

Santander was a key stakeholder as the majority landowner during the planning process which further required a detailed and extensive consultation approach with both statutory and non-statutory consultees, well in advance of planning submission.

The assembled site was not zoned for office and the assembly required the acquisition of Milton Keynes's unique 'classic infrastructure' which is a legacy of its history as a New Town.

This involved careful analysis and stakeholder management as well as detailed negotiation around re-providing public amenity as part of the agreement to extinguish certain elements of public land.

From a design and operational perspective, it was a priority for the Council to see the building have more permeability than the current generation of buildings in the city, inspiring us to develop its mixed-use credentials and bringing the public into the building.

The site also brought its own complexities, and as part of this application, Osborne+Co also negotiated and delivered the temporary off-site relocation of parking and the complicated diversion of key utilities.

Overall, our planning application was the largest non-retail application to date in Milton Keynes and was characterised by very close engagement and collaboration with our key stakeholders and granted unanimously and in record time.



## The Product

The new Unity Place building, when complete will be the highest specified building in Milton Keynes. The building comprises 500,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of highly sustainable, connected and collaborative space.

The building will bring together every business line in Santander under one roof, which at this scale, presents significant complexity in comfortably accommodating each business in line with best practice and providing a physical space reflective of Santander's culture.

Integrating these business units, balancing the needs of these internal customer and their working patterns and styles requires choreographing the design of the building correctly from the outset thinking not only about how people use their space today but more importantly how they will use it in the future.

Santander as a partner has taken a highly progressive view towards incorporating innovation, clustering and community/SME integration as a key outcome for their real estate footprint.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Unity Place was a high profile scheme with an atypical range and breadth of stakeholders that bridged National Government, Regional Government, a partner in Santander (real estate and Executive Committee), local development partnerships, community/neighbourhood groups, business groups and other real estate groups.

At the outset, Osborne+Co developed a communication and engagement strategy that spanned from initial meeting through to after completion of the building.

As part of this detailed programme of stakeholder engagement, we set up and facilitated a series of stakeholder workshops with local stakeholder groups, as well as public consultation events.

These events sought opinions and input on different development options and resulted in a preferred option being taken forward that gained the support of the local community.

This process of engagement aided pre-application discussions with the Local Authority and further supported the case for approval.

Clear messaging, disciplined engagement planning and transparent feedback loops were vital to managing the highly diverse and occasionally contradicting priorities of each stakeholder group.

Through this experience and further project experience globally, we have developed a deep specialism in stakeholder management, particularly complicated and high profile developments and schemes where there is an actively involved landowner.

## ESG Approach

Unity Place will be one of the most sustainable and environmentally forward looking buildings in the UK on completion. Led by Osborne+Co in consultation Santander and our stakeholders, the building will set a new benchmark for projects focused on optimal ESG outcomes. The building and how it operates has also undergone a transformation during the pandemic to ensure it meets best practice for Covid-19 operations.



## Health and wellbeing benefits

Occupant wellbeing is integral through the design of building, provision of facilities and integration into the community – for staff and wider public

- Naturally lit workspace with a range of workplace and collaboration settings to foster innovation while catering for neurodiversity
- A range of external amenity spaces throughout the building provide breakout and collaboration space for employees, including rooftop running track, garden bridges and social terraces
- Onsite health and fitness facilities
- Onsite healthy food offerings
- Smart building technology to monitor occupancy and building use

## Environmental impact

The building strives for environmental excellence in terms of design, construction and building operations

- BREEAM Very Good rating
- Carbon neutral (with carbon offsetting scheme) supported by a range of renewable energy systems
- Increased biodiversity to an urban area with a range of plantings throughout the building

- The entire Ground Floor and First floor will be dedicated to Financial and broader industry innovation space through the delivery of co-working space and an accelerator programme managed by a best in class operator, jointly selected and delivered by Santander and Osborne+Co
- The concept is to create a space that encourages interactions between the Bank's employees, bank customers, local business and other SME's and creates a focus hub in Milton Keynes and the wider micro-region for innovation and collaboration.

## Social impact

Unity Place has a strong purpose to contribute and support the local economy by tackling challenges to sustainable small business growth and by supporting the community through local job creation and education

- Public access and community functions at ground floor of the building
- Community management programme for use of facilities
- Incubator space for local businesses and start-ups
- Programmes to support education and employment with links to new university

