

+ Santander Unity Place

Milton Keynes, United Kingdom



The what

This ground-breaking workplace is purpose-built for Santander. A fit-for-purpose hub designed specifically with Santander's specialist tech personnel in mind 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 built with people in mind from the beginning, employing the 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 optimise and centralise their tech operation, increasing productivity and staff wellbeing 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 and real estate leadership
- Santander employee Interest groups and community interest groups
- Regional government stakeholders including local MPs and business lobby groups

Osborne+Co role as developer

- Equity investor
- Design development and management
- Securing planning
- Community liaison
- Procurement
- Construction delivery



**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
PARTNERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT AT SCALE**



**UK HQ AND
TECHNOLOGY HUB**



500,000 FT²



£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 was appointed the Unity Place building developer.

Osborne+Co led a land assembly process to create the site and deliver this scheme. 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 statutory and non-statutory consultees before planning submission.

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

This involved careful analysis, stakeholder management, and detailed negotiation around re-providing public amenities 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 bring the public into the building.

The site also brought its 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

When complete, the new Unity Place building will be the highest specified building in Milton Keynes. The building comprises 500,000 sq ft of highly sustainable, connected, 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 practices and providing a physical space reflective of Santander's culture.

Balancing the needs of internal customers and their working patterns and styles requires choreographing the design of the building correctly from the outset. By integrating these business units, we need to think about how people use their space today and, 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. These include connecting the 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.

Osborne+Co developed a communication and engagement strategy that spanned from the 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 proceeding with the option that gained the widest support of the local community.

This engagement process 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 each stakeholder group's highly diverse and occasionally contradicting priorities.

Through this and other global project experiences, we have developed a deep specialism in stakeholder management, particularly in complicated and high-profile developments and schemes involving an actively involved landowner.

ESG approach

Unity Place will be one of the UK's most sustainable and environmentally forward-looking buildings on completion. Led by Osborne+Co in consultation with 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 building design, provision of facilities and integration into the community – for staff and the 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 a 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

LEED & BREEAM green credentials

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

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

- Entirely dedicated ground and first floor for Finance
- Broader industry innovation 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 businesses and other SMEs
- Establishing a focus hub in Milton Keynes and the broader micro-region for innovation and collaboration

Social value projects as part of the development

Unity Place has a vital purpose of contributing to and supporting 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 on the ground floor of the building
- Community management programme for the use of facilities
- Incubator space for local businesses and start-ups
- Programmes to support education and employment with links to a new university

