

The 'best small building in London' gets two Stannah Xtralifts

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With its impressive period design, A-rated energy efficiency and superb location, Suffolk St James has undoubtedly earned its reputation as the 'best small building in London'.

This architecturally significant five-storey refurbishment was originally built in the 1950s and offers 18,050 sq ft of boutique office space, within easy walking distance of St James's Square, Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square.

The vision of architects Stiff + Trevillion has created an impressive CAT A office refurbishment designed in the spirit of net-zero carbon principles with a clear focus on accessibility and occupier wellbeing.

The completed refurbishment now provides exceptional environmental performance with an EPC A-rating and BREEAM 'Excellent'.

Inclusive design is evident throughout the building with step-free access to all areas provided by two Xtralifts from Stannah.

The challenge

The design brief for Suffolk St James's focused on a comprehensive refurbishment to create CAT-A offices on the 1st to 4th floors, along with a striking reception on the ground floor. The lower ground space provides studio/gym, bike store, kitchen and a further CAT-A office. There is a large roof terrace on the 5th floor.

The challenge on this project was to replace the existing single 10-person lift and create step-free access

to all five floors, including the 2,000 sq ft roof terrace and lower ground floor level.

The existing 750 kg, 10 person lift was installed in 1997, meaning it had older technologies that wouldn't support the vision for a CAT-A office. The new design also required two lifts with specific functionality to improve accessibility and convenience for users as well as incorporating bespoke finishes. This meant the development of an additional lift shaft. Both the architect and lift consultants were looking for a solution that minimised the amount of building work in creating this additional lift shaft space.

Stannah was provided with a detailed brief that listed the components required and an interior design vision to help in selecting the finishes. The latter were chosen to support the architect's overall design vision for the building, which required the lobby, car doors and interiors to visually complement other internal elements.

In terms of logistics, being located in central London required careful coordination of deliveries to avoid disruption to nearby businesses and residents.

The solution

Stannah was able to utilise its extensive experience and bespoke capabilities to deliver two 9-person Xtralifts that met the lift consultant's specification and architect's design vision. The solution also satisfied the installation requirements of BW Workplace, including Stannah engineers being present during the install.

Stannah proposed two 9-person lifts, rather than two 10-persons, because it better aligned with the constraints of the existing lift shaft space, and in doing so mitigated building works.

The Xtralift, from the Stannah passenger lift core range, is an energy-efficient, high-performance gearless traction lift that is available from 6 to 33 passengers. Capable of travelling up to 45m (potentially up to 16 floors), it is ideally suited to low and medium-rise usage.

All Xtralifts from the Stannah core range are supplied with intelligent controls to enable full diagnostics and remote monitoring. A car preference key switch isolates the movement of the car and landing doors to allow easy and safe cleaning by the facilities team at Suffolk St James.

The requirement for energy efficiency was addressed at Suffolk St James because Xtralift achieves an A-rating energy certification in accordance with VDI 4707. This is done by incorporating, as standard, LED lighting, stand-by shutdown mode, signalisation dimming, gearless and low consumption traction drive as well as an optional regenerative motor.

BW: Workplace Experts carried out the installation at Suffolk St James with guidance and support throughout from the Stannah team. This involved removing the existing lift and co-ordinating building works on the lift shafts.

BW: Workplace Experts said: "When it comes to prestigious projects like Suffolk St James, it is a challenge to balance the overall design with the finer attention to detail. The client and design team were delighted with the approach taken by Stannah in delivering a bespoke energy-saving lift installation. The outcome has certainly lived up to the very high expectations on this project."

“Considering the bespoke nature of the lifts at Suffolk St James and the way in which a small adaptation on lift capacity avoided unnecessary building works, Greycoat Real Estate, the client, were delighted with the end result.

“Right from the start, we appreciated having Stannah lift experts on site to help us overcome the challenges. They were with us every step of the way through to handover.”

The result

Accessibility was an important aspect of the refurbishment at Suffolk St James: giving every person step-free access to all areas of the building. The refurbishment achieves this whilst meeting the open protocol requirements set by the lift consultants and designers. An open protocol lift system means that customers are not tied to Stannah for maintenance and repair.

It was an achievement in itself to minimise the amount of building works in the lift shaft area, a factor that was critical to meeting the programming and spatial requirements of the architects.

A factor that made this possible was the experience of the Stannah team, who have extensive knowledge of lift installation in new build and refurbishment properties.

The lifts at Suffolk St James will be in use daily, with remote monitoring providing the client with confidence that they will be a low maintenance, hassle free addition to this extra-ordinary office development.

All Stannah lifts are certified according to the Lifts Regulations 2016 (2016 No. 1093), and post-installation servicing at Suffolk St James will be delivered by highly-trained Stannah engineers.

Image Credit – Philip Vile Photography