

Manchester's First Street Hub reaches completion milestone

12 months ago



A new state-of-the-art government office building in Manchester's city centre has hit a key stage in its construction.

The [Government Property Agency](#) (GPA) has confirmed it has accepted the handover of its new hub in First Street after the building reached practical completion of its Category A (Cat A) fit out and lease commencement. Works were completed by BAM Construct UK appointed by developer Ask Real Estate.

This latest milestone continues the countdown to ready for service, with the nine-storey circa 12,000 square metre building now ready for the internal fit-out to commence.

Once complete the hub will accommodate around 2,600 civil servants from departments including the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), and the Department for Education (DfE). It is expected that more than 150 roles will be relocated to Manchester from across several different government departments and agencies once the hub is operational.

The building forms part of the Government Hubs Programme supporting economic growth across the UK. The programme is rationalising the government's estate in towns and cities across the UK, playing a pivotal role in delivering modern, customer-focused and varied workspaces where civil servants can thrive. The design recognises that different types of work require different spaces to enable collaboration, creativity and community regardless of how people choose to work.

Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Office, Georgia Gould, said: "It's great to see the Manchester First Street Hub move onto this next stage of construction.

"UK Government Hubs across the country help to consolidate our estate. Not only cutting waste by removing old inefficient buildings from our portfolio, but also giving people across the country the chance to work in the Civil Service, and driving economic growth in the local area."

Georgina Dunn, the GPA's Interim Director of Capital Projects, said: "It's very gratifying to reach this significant stage in the programme. This new state-of-the-art office will provide a home for civil servants from across the government in Manchester, making it one of the largest hubs for cross-departmental collaboration and operation outside London. The GPA remains immensely proud of the industry-leading sustainability, accessibility and workplace standards delivered by the Government Hubs Programme."

A competitive tender process for the subsequent fit-out works has completed with the GPA due to make an announcement in the next few weeks.

John Hughes, Managing Director at Ask Real Estate said: "Bringing the GPA hub to practical completion is a huge testament to our commitment to driving sustainability in the workplace sector. Achieving a NABERS 5.5 Design for Performance rating – the first building in Manchester City Centre to reach this milestone – supports the high ambitions set by HM Government.

"First Street and its extended neighbourhood will be boosted significantly when the GPA takes occupation."

The £105m development was forward-funded by Pension Insurance Corporation (PIC), a specialist insurer of defined benefit pension funds, which will use the secure, long-dated and index-linked cashflows to pay the pensions of its policyholders over the coming decades.

James Agar, Head of Real Estate Origination at PIC, added: "We are delighted to have reached practical completion on such an important project for PIC. The First Street hub is a great example of what can be achieved through public private partnerships.

"The sustainability and ESG focus of this best-in-class building are clear to see, these were a key element of our investment case for the asset which will help us to pay the pensions of our policy holders.

"The building deepens our relationship with the GPA and will assist the UK Government in delivering the transition to Net Zero. We look forward to the GPA taking formal occupation of the building and welcoming more than 2,500 civil servants to the site."

The First Street Hub is in the heart of Manchester and a few minutes' walk from Oxford Road and Deansgate rail stations. It has been designed to be class-leading, meeting inclusive and accessible design standards.

Lead developer Ask Real Estate and its joint venture partner, Richardson, secured a full pre-let of the Grade A BREEAM Excellent office building to the GPA which then signed a lease with building owners PIC in 2022.