

01 March 2019

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I first met Richard when we carried out a competition tender process for an office refurbishment and extension scheme in London in 2014. The project had a construction value of c.£14 million and involved working with some challenging existing buildings and a compromised site. Richard approached the challenge with both design flair and commercial realism – a combination I have not found in any other architect. Richard led the project from start to finish, attending every single meeting throughout. Richard and his team were able to come up with a design which added c.50% of net space to a tight site that had already been intensively developed only 15 years before.

Right from the start, Richard was extremely keen to understand the commercial implications of his decisions. He insisted on attending meetings with agents and wanted to understand the appraisal in great detail. At every meeting, he pushed the wider design team hard to deliver commercial solutions and understood the cost plan and budget inside out. Whilst Richard unquestionably has amazing architectural design flair, unlike many architects I have worked with, he has no ego at all. Unwaveringly, he strives to make sure that as his client, I am always happy with the direction of the project and makes no attempt to protect his own design ambitions at the sacrifice of the viability of the project. In my experience, that is extremely rare and hugely valuable.

The project was put forward for a design award and hugely surpassed my own expectations of what was achievable on the site.

Off the back of this first project, Richard has become a great friend of our business. I personally have completed three further jobs with Richard and he has continued to provide the same unique balance of design flair and commercial understanding. Most importantly for me, no matter how big or small the job has been, Richard has remained 100% involved and has attended all meetings, understanding the project inside out. Richard has a strong team behind him who are able to support tight timescales, but Richard has always remained extremely close to the job. I think I am also right in saying that the team have never missed an agreed deadline and apply strict professionalism to everything that they do.

Richard has completed a c.30,000 sq ft office refurbishment in Birmingham for me, which has attracted great attention amongst the Birmingham office market as a product which is ahead of its time for the city. The job has not yet reached practical completion, but the interest for space in the building has been remarkable. Richard encouraged me to push the boundaries of what may be expected of a typical Cat A refurbishment in Birmingham and I am delighted that I took his advice. We are achieving lettings at rents that are significantly ahead of competing stock in the same market.

Most recently, we were looking to appoint an architect to complete a shopping centre refurbishment. Whilst not necessarily Richard's background, I was extremely keen to work with him to deliver the project. Richard and his team have demonstrated great versatility in learning about shopping centre architecture and have come up with some extremely innovative and transformational designs on a limited budget (c.£2 million). Yet again, Richard has taken great interest in how our proposals will impact the footfall figures and how his designs can help support existing retailers.



Off the back of all the work that Richard has done for me, he has completed several other projects for our business, and I am confident that anyone you asked would give very similar feedback.

I would have no hesitation in recommending Richard to you. He is a fantastic architect and a real pleasure to have in the team. If it helps, I would be very happy to discuss my experience with you over the phone.

Yours sincerely,

**Christian Birrell**  
**DTZ Investors**