

# Transforming the 1970s Herman Miller factory for **Bath Spa University**

Plans to transform the 1970s Herman Miller factory, now part of Bath Spa University's Locksbrook Campus, aimed to retain a lot of the original features, while changing its use from a factory into different teaching and practical spaces.

The refurbishment of this Grade II listed building called for our very best acoustic and fire protection solutions and over 160 hours of expert consultation to overcome unique, complex design challenges and technical performance requirements.

## **Bath Spa University**

Situated on the River Avon in Bath, the Herman Miller Factory, has undergone a major refurbishment to provide **Bath Spa University** with

a mix of teaching facilities, workshops and social spaces for the University's School of Art & Design.

**Project:** Bath Spa University

**Building Type:**  
Refurbishment, university

**Client:** Bath Spa University

**Architect:** Grimshaw Architects

**Contractor:** Willmott Dixon

**Specialist Contractors:**  
Topfix Interiors

**Key Benefits:**

- Sound insulation
- Fire protection
- Improved fixing strength
- Durability
- Reduction in repair and maintenance costs
- High levels of impact and abrasion resistance
- Extended building life span

## Combined expertise to achieve the shared vision

The interior layout of the existing building was reconfigured to create an open plan floor with a series of fixed workshops, flexible studio spaces, social areas and meeting rooms.

The tall ceilings, high walls, fire protection, and acoustic requirements – along with the demands of restoring and retaining a lot of the original features – meant we needed to source innovative solutions and collaborate with all parties involved on the intricate detailing to achieve the best results.

We worked closely with Grimshaw Architects to advise on the fire protection of complex steel work and the integration of new partition systems. We were also trusted to provide ongoing technical support to the main building contractor, Willmott Dixon, and subcontractor, Topfix Interiors to ensure the project left a positive legacy for current and future generations



In total, we provided 130 hours of technical support and a further 30 hours of specific project detailing to bring value to the customer through higher productivity, trusted solutions and reduced long-term costs.

## Integrating new with old for the perfect finish

Several high performing solutions were selected to achieve multiple objectives throughout the building, such as GypWall Single Frame, GypWall Single Frame Enhanced, GypWall Shaft, GypWall Resilient, GypWall Twin Frame Independent, GypCeiling MF and FireCase.

One of the main challenges of the job was deflection. The iconic yellow steel beams are part of the original design, but when loaded there's a lot of movement. To overcome this, we drew up details for the project that ensured this movement was accounted for, meaning the solutions stayed where required, with no cracking of the plaster finishes to increase durability and maximise performance.

The workshop areas were also complex due to their seven-metre tall walls, fire, acoustic and robustness requirements. Another one of our innovative solutions was to introduce Rigidur H board, as it meant less plywood could be used in these areas, helping to future-proof the space by giving it the flexibility to change and evolve over time.

To overcome the complexity of the fire protection between old and new steel work and integrated partition systems, we introduced Glasroc F FireCase to help keep the encasement dimensions to a minimum and reduce the requirement of metal framework, which provided the customer with time and cost savings.

The end result is a unique building that embraces its heritage, making sure all the new elements intertwine with the old.

## Bold ambitions then, now and for the future

From when the building was first designed as the Herman Miller factory to the recent refurbishment that transformed it into part of Bath Spa University's Locksbrook Campus, flexibility, collaboration and technical expertise have always been integral to this building's success.

Thanks to our collective know-how and collaborative approach, we were able to specify the best solutions to meet the complex needs of this refurbishment project and build a better future for everyone.



**We wanted a building and campus that would encourage our students to work more ambitiously than they already are, in a space that would allow them to collaborate with one another. We also wanted an art and design school that would be fit for the future. It's the relationship between the three main parties – British Gypsum, Grimshaw Architects and Willmott Dixon – that has resulted in something which I consider to be phenomenal as an academic institution.**



**Daniel Adams,  
Head of School,  
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