



ERIC WRIGHT
PARTNERSHIPS



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COMING TOGETHER
THROUGHOUT THE LIFECYCLE
OF A BUILDING

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Introduction

Buildings form part of an identity for communities, whether they are large or small, urban or rural, old or new. They play a critical role as a focus-point for regeneration in our towns and cities. Even the smallest building can enrich the fabric of an area and the community experience. They also play a critical role in delivering against the carbon zero agenda.

Buildings form part of an identity for

However, buildings can come under threat if they are neglected both internally and externally. They may fall victim to decay and damage, with the risk of becoming outdated or obsolete. It can also have a negative impact on reputation, health and wellbeing, and staff morale. Therefore, it's crucial that building owners and occupiers have an understanding on the outputs of their building and what those outputs need to be. Education is key to ensuring proactive measures are taken so that buildings may support overall business objectives.

In addition to the usual concerns building owners have around health, safety and operational efficiency, they are now facing new challenges such as lower occupancy rates, space utilisation, and hygiene. Further, there is growing evidence that buildings play a pivotal role on the health and wellbeing of the people who occupy it.

In this paper we look at the key challenges that have led owners, occupiers and managers to rethink how they present and operate their buildings. We will review how they are optimising

and repurposing their spaces to better serve their occupants and the surrounding communities, and to attract people to their premises. We will also look at how to utilise our spaces more effectively and ask; how can we best showcase the way in which buildings are operated and managed to demonstrate how they have a positive impact on an entire community?



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BUILT

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ENVIRONMENT

CHAPTER 1

Refurbishing and restoring our existing building stock

There are two broad and compelling reasons why the refurbishment and restoration of the UK's current building stock is an essential undertaking.

First, the UK government has set out a target to transition to a net zero society by 2050. As part of its commitment to the principles of the Paris Agreement, signed and adopted by 196 parties at COP 21 in December 2015, the UK has pledged to do what it can to keep global temperature rises to within 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels.

Thanks to enormous advances in construction techniques, the use of more sustainable building materials and development of renewable power, newly constructed buildings are far more energy efficient than their predecessors. However, the elephant in the room is that 80% of the buildings that will be around in 2050 have already been built. It is a reality we must face up to. Around 25% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions

are derived from the built environment therefore net zero by 2050 will not be achieved without decarbonising the current building stock through refurbishment and restoration projects. This includes buildings operated within both private and public spheres, the latter alone (including hospitals and schools) accounting for around 2% of all UK emissions.

Second, refurbishing and restoring our existing building stock offers the opportunity to enhance the social purpose of individual buildings. As well as making structures more efficient, these projects also unlock the opportunity to help buildings perform their functions better and give more back to those that use them. The key functions of many buildings may have changed over time. In such instances, refurbishment is an opportunity to bring them in line with a new sense of purpose. This will be explored in more depth in Chapter 2.

The need for a holistic approach

Although in many cases refurbishment and retrofitting projects will be primarily motivated by energy efficiency and the net zero agenda, it is vital that such developments are approached with a wide lens.

Net zero should not be viewed in isolation for several practical reasons.

First is the risk of oversimplifying what can be and often are a complex series of works. Replacing a gas boiler system in a hospital or school with a heat pump, for example, requires deep consideration of several factors beyond the implementation of the unit itself.

The age and condition of the building will have a significant say in how the refurbishment and retrofitting work will need to be carried out. This requires intricate understanding of the building techniques and materials used at the time of the original construction.

Equally, the function of the building must also be taken into account, as any work should not carry a detrimental impact to the ability to fulfil its purpose – instead, there should be scope and imagination of thought to enhance this fulfilment.

There is also the matter of working with other important sectors and stakeholders. Take the electrical sector, heat pumps require large amounts of electricity to function. Is there adequate grid capacity? Will the building's own electric systems be able to accommodate the new addition? What obstacles need to be overcome to ensure everything runs smoothly and safely? These are just some of the critical questions that need to be asked.

There are also funding issues to overcome. While the price of gas has soared in recent times, electricity per unit is typically more expensive – this must be budgeted for as future running costs play a critical part in the deliver of the net zero agenda. The broader issue of funding needs to be considered altogether when planning a refurbishment/retrofitting project.

Often projects of this nature involve multiple sources of funding that are often siloed. This is especially the case with schools, which rely on pooling different streams of finance

to undertake different types of remedial work. Net zero and energy efficiency projects are often funded separately to conditional maintenance and capital projects and the future impact on revenue funding, for example.

Financing is undoubtedly a major practical consideration. Ideally, a holistic approach to funding needs to be adopted to ensure whole life costs are considered – this should incorporate both revenue and capital funding, an approach which requires detailed scenario planning and foresight into how a refurb will impact ongoing cost bases.

Heritage buildings and minimal intervention

The UK's building stock also includes a not insignificant number of heritage buildings that are also widely in use and need to be brought in line with efficiency targets.

In England alone, there are approximately 400,000 listed buildings that carry significant historical and architectural interest. These include many important institutional buildings such as schools, universities, hospitals and prisons.

They pose a practical challenge when it comes to enhancing energy efficiency. Heating

and hot water account for 40% of energy use and 20% of greenhouse gas emissions in UK buildings – for heritage buildings, these proportions are likely to be higher in many cases due to their age and relative lack of insulation compared to more modern counterparts.

Despite these challenges, a minimal intervention approach is necessary when dealing with protected sites. By this, we mean retrofitting and refurbishing in a sympathetic way that interferes as little as possible with the historical and architectural integrity of the building, whether that involves procuring specific materials or avoiding contact or alteration of critical building components which are often themselves individually protected. Open and early dialogue with planning authorities and other relevant stakeholders are critical to the success of any refurb project involving a heritage building.

Eric Wright Partnerships has an extensive background working with heritage buildings. In our experience, although different listed buildings do carry different levels of protections and considerations, it is important to always engage proactively, be prepared to compromise and have alternative plans in place. An adaptable approach is paramount.

HERITAGE

Heating and hot water
account for

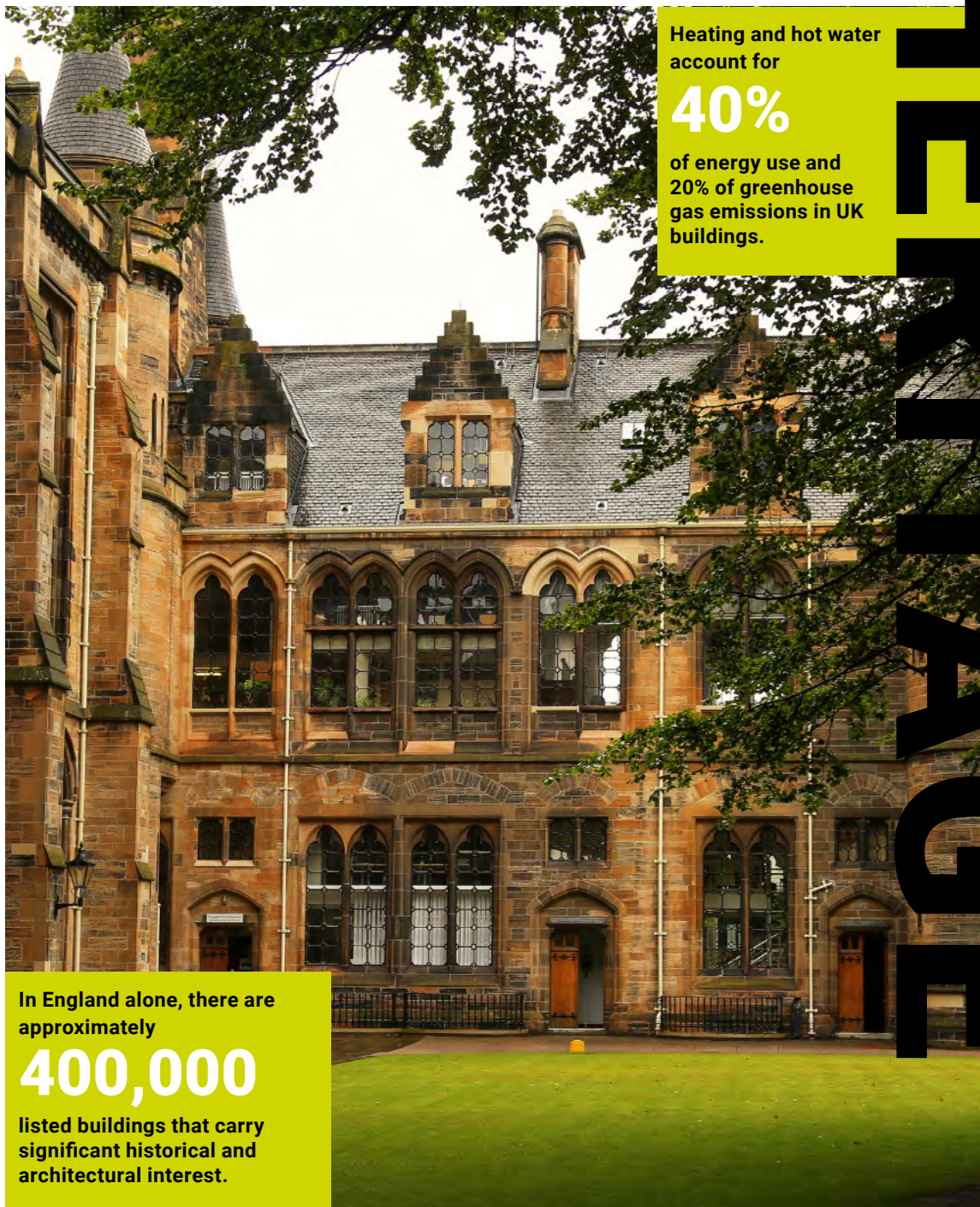
40%

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CHAPTER 2

Buildings as a facilitator and catalyst for bringing communities together

Buildings are far more than the sum of the building materials and components that comprise them.

Humans are inherently social beings. At the most fundamental level, we rely on cooperation to survive and thrive – humans live in families, work in teams, negotiate through economic alliances and political coalitions, and seek purpose through many different forms of fellowship.

For communities to thrive, they need access to spaces where people sharing common interests, goals and experiences can come together to connect, exchange and cooperate.

Buildings enable these connections to be created and nurtured, and there are a huge variety of building types that form community spaces. From schools, churches and village halls to historical sites, pubs and healthcare facilities (and many, many other buildings in between),

communities require a range of safe and inclusive places to thrive.

This community-driven, social focus should feed into what defines a successful building. Indeed, the business case for the LIFT buildings One Partnership manage (Eric Wright Partnerships joint venture with Community Health Partnerships), are about supporting communities, especially those which are deprived.

The company has a long history in helping to provide people with equal access to a range of community assets.

In the healthcare space, for example, it could be about transforming a building so that it may provide a range of treatments – a central hub that promotes wellness, brings health expertise closer to patients, and makes communities feel more valued and comfortable addressing their health concerns.

Eric Wright Partnerships also

works with several schools to help build communities. In Blackpool, for instance, students have been closely involved in the refurbishment of their site after it was subject to vandalism. Their artwork will form a feature wall in the repaired library area, offering a more personal and engaging space that carries greater meaning than a standard white canvas.

Many schools and hospitals are also housed in listed buildings, which themselves form another category of community assets because they carry intrinsic value to local people. Here, Eric Wright Partnerships has completed a number of projects which have involved retaining elements of important historic sites to retain their personal value.

For example, on one site, The Phoenix Centre, Heywood, we retained original stained glass windows and an archway. Another site in Rochdale also reflects its history and

MIND



For better
mental health

Mind Café: Building communities in Rochdale

Working closely with Community Health Partnerships, One Partnership and Rochdale and District Mind, Eric Wright Partnerships helped to transform the Mind Café at Nye Bevan Health Centre in Rochdale.

A £25,000 project, £20,000 of which was donated by One Partnership and £5,000 donated by Eric Wright Facilities Management, the café now provides a modern, brighter and more suitable space for local Rochdale communities, along with a tasty and healthier menu.

Rochdale and District Mind is a not-for-profit organisation, meaning any of the profits generated in this new space are channelled back into the charity. The space, completed in July 2022, is used to provide mental health and emotional wellbeing services in the community, as well as offering opportunities for users to gain work skills, qualifications and confidence. In addition, the café offers a relaxing space for health centre patients and staff to meet, eat and work from in a non-clinical setting.



More information can be
found at: rochdalemind.org.uk/our-cafes

Another key benefit is that the new space facilities stronger ties between the health centre and Rochdale and District Mind – the organisations involved in the project came together to support a local charity, their volunteers and service users, activity which is essential to ongoing community building.

CAFÉ

importance. The name 'Croft Shifa' was submitted by a local resident in a naming competition and brings together the history of the site. It was built on the former site of Croft Mill, and the ethos of healing, curing and relieving through the Arabic word, Shifa. No matter the building, there is a responsibility to act as a responsible citizen. This can also aid in the objective of building strong and sustainable communities – for example, simple behavioural messages can help encourage positive behaviour such as healthy eating and sound hygiene.





How to successfully meet evolving demands

It is equally important to consider that the needs of people and communities change over time.

This will inevitably impact the purpose of buildings and therefore what defines the success of a building adaptation project.

The key to ensuring such developments are successful, lies in communication between all stakeholders. At Eric Wright Partnerships, the approach centres around encouraging people to talk about the problems they have rather than skipping straight to the end solution.

For example, a school may come forward with a request for three new classrooms. Rather than take this at face value, an understanding of why those classrooms are needed should be generated. If it is because the school has more pupils taking science GCSEs or because demand for after school activities is growing, this will significantly impact what kind of space is required.

The same logic applies to healthcare buildings. For instance, if the rationale for the refurbishment is because more people are requiring hip replacements, a fuller picture should be painted first. Key questions such as how patients will be assessed need to be answered. This information can then be built into the proposals. In this example, buildings with courtyards could be converted into multi-purpose, adaptable and flexible spaces. The healthcare centre can thus assess people in this space rather than taking them to another location.

Sometimes no modifications are required to a space and it could just be utilised better by its building users. By having a long-term management arrangement of the estates managed by Eric Wright Partnerships, it ensures we are in position to support public sector bodies in understanding the capabilities of

their existing space rather than creating more.

This is just one of the ways that Eric Wright Partnerships seeks to maximise value and ensure evolving community needs are met with every building adaption project. No matter the need being served or nature of the building, it is critically important to properly engage with the organisation in question and understand their needs fully.

This will help to avoid several common pitfalls that lead to project failure. These include a lack of commitment, a lack of engagement, a lack of governance and misalignment of expectations around timeframes and budgets.

On many levels, success is about making sure the right people are involved as early as possible, including the people and communities who will be using the new space or spaces. If the people that work at and use spaces can describe what they need and define what success looks like, the development teams can help them to build a vision of what is needed, working with them closely to suggest and find optimal solutions.

This level of understanding is important and is only achievable through a partnership approach.

CHAPTER 3

Challenges facing owners, occupiers and managers

All buildings, at some stage or stages through their lifecycle, will present various challenges to owners, occupiers and managers in their quest to obtain the highest possible value from their built assets.

The exact nature of these challenges will differ depending on numerous factors, including building type, size, age, user profile and location. Eric Wright Partnerships has extensive experience working with public sector and their buildings, particularly hospitals and educational institutions, and some of the obstacles encountered will be equally applicable to other forms of buildings and community assets.

This includes ensuring spaces are better utilised, not only to better serve communities but also to relieve financial pressures for all sectors of society and the economy as costs continue to surge.

There is an abundance of opportunity in health buildings to better utilise assets and unlock a variety of benefits. Working with one of our public sector partners, for example, Eric Wright Partnerships reviewed the capacity of 35 of their best quality NHS buildings. The capacity of those buildings was calculated at around 11 million patient appointments per year which, theoretically, could accommodate 82% of the region's primary care needs. Given there are also around 400 GP surgeries across the area with their own clinical capacity, it quickly becomes apparent there is a real opportunity to utilise the NHS Buildings more efficiently and this work highlights the impact space optimisation could have, especially within larger buildings.

Key to better utilising space is generating a deep understanding of building users' needs. Doing so can uncover opportunities to transform structures into more

valuable community assets by leveraging them better during quiet periods.

Spaces in larger NHS buildings, for example, may not be required for their primary purpose constantly through the day and evening. Here, community spaces such as heat hubs can be created which can be used by members of the community struggling with fuel poverty. In turn, this helps to promote wellbeing and could reduce demand on healthcare services. Other challenges faced by building managers are more nuanced. Within some healthcare estates, for instance, backlogged maintenance and cost structures associated with this can lead to perceptions that contracts are too expensive.

However, some NHS buildings have contracts that included all the maintenance and lifecycle costs to ensure buildings are kept in a constant state of good repair with less likelihood of drastic remedial

HEALTH



There is an abundance of opportunity to better utilise assets and unlock a variety of benefits in the health service.

SERVICE

action being needed. Indeed, maintenance and replacement of key equipment such as boilers are covered and will be carried out as and when needed. By looking at the whole lifecycle and taking a preventative approach, building managers can avoid the costs incurred by ensuring minor problems don't escalate to something more serious.

Challenges associated with ESG

Ensuring building assets both meet the needs of people and carry a greater social purpose are crucial components of environment, social and governance (ESG) responsibilities – another major consideration and challenge facing owners, occupiers and managers.

In addition to adding social value, buildings must also play their part in helping the country to decarbonise. Around 80% of the buildings we will have in 2050 have already been built, meaning the optimisation of existing assets will be critical to the UK's ambition of reaching net zero by 2050.

Optimising, repurposing, and designing space therefore needs to incorporate ESG responsibilities. Doing so will require a broad approach to building investments that factors in an array of ESG-related challenges.

The first, and most stark at present, is related to cost. Spiralling energy prices have altered the playing field – where making savings (by using less) was seen as crucial to freeing up funds to invest in making buildings greener, inflated prices have made such savings necessary simply to survive.

In the short term it would seem from our experience that although public sector organisations will be unable to afford the investment required to reach the net zero targets. They will have to work harder at identifying funding opportunities and focus on smaller projects on individual buildings which involve installing LED lights, photovoltaics and heat pumps as an alternative to gas boilers as part of the lifecycle process.

The issue is further complicated on older buildings that require greater amounts of work to decarbonise, if achievable at all. Eric Wright Partnerships recognises these issues and is working with its public sector partners to navigate this challenging agenda. Whilst we recognise there are a number of factors out of our control, we have taken a pragmatic view and use our skills and experience to work with our partners and deliver this difficult agenda. As an example, we use our strategic estate

planning skills to ensure the public sector buildings are fully optimised and those that are no longer fit for purpose, disposed of and the funding recycled. In addition we are preparing bids for grant funding for a range of ESG projects and where grants have been awarded, we are working with our partners to implement these projects.

Adopting a partnering ethos

Once again, these types of complexities facing owners, occupiers and managers can at least in part be addressed effectively through a partnering ethos which champions positive stakeholder engagement. This is central to the way in which Eric Wright Partnerships works.

The answer is not always to simply spend large sums on building a brand-new space. By truly understanding client and community needs, it is possible to fulfil objectives by making better use of what already exists.

Building mature relationships is critical to this end. It is vital that all parties (public and private) are pulling in the same direction towards a shared vision, and that proper conversations are held in an environment of mutual respect and honesty.

These dialogues need to be grounded in realism on all sides. Regarding public sector buildings, private sector stakeholders must acknowledge the need to generate value for money. It must also be acknowledged that private sector firms need to be profitable in order to exist.

High profile contracts can and have failed because of misalignment in these areas, making it even more important

to ensure the right people are engaged with as early as possible.

This includes the people who are using or will be using the spaces in question. Building owners, occupiers and managers need to be brave and prepared to take on board feedback that could lead to altering plans and strategies.

Eric Wright Partnerships routinely engages building users such

as patients and building users in forums and participation groups, activities which have led to positive changes being implemented to the design and operation of buildings.

Indeed, it is the embracement of a partnering approach that has enabled the company to continue developing community assets for more than two decades.

GET IN TOUCH

Eric Wright Partnerships is here to help



Eric Wright Partnerships is part of the Eric Wright Group, which is owned by the Eric Wright Charitable Trust. The business delivers tailored consultancy and property development services to the people who are responsible for estates. We work with clients to drive efficiencies and deliver better spaces that really work for the people who work in them, and the communities that use them.

We combine our consultancy expertise with deep knowledge of sustainability best practice, compliance requirements and the unique challenges our customers face, and build

productive relationships to ensure we deliver the best value, solve their challenges and create spaces they can be proud of today and in the future.

We help to create health, education, public and private sector environments that work cost-effectively, efficiently and sustainably.

Under One Partnership, we work with Community Health Partnerships to deliver healthier buildings for the NHS. Bringing together our collective skills and experience, we deliver estates projects that result in better

spaces for NHS staff and better outcomes for NHS patients.

If you would like to discover more about how we can support building owners, occupiers and managers, don't hesitate to contact us:

- **Phone:** 01772 698822
- **Email:** enquiries@ericwright.co.uk
- **Website:** ericwright.co.uk
- **LinkedIn:** Eric Wright Group

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ERIC WRIGHT

PARTNERSHIPS

PART OF THE **ERIC WRIGHT** GROUP

Eric Wright Partnerships
Sceptre House
Sceptre Way
Bamber Bridge
Preston
PR5 6AW

