# Hackney’s historic furniture factory transformed into a sustainable creative hub with full occupancy



Mowat & Company has completed an extensive transformation of a historic four-storey former furniture factory located on the Benyon Estate in De Beauvoir, Hackney. Originally constructed in the early 20th century for the Herbert E. Gibbs furniture company, the building has been sensitively adapted into mixed-use creative studios designed to accommodate a diverse community of contemporary businesses. The project, commissioned by the Benyon Estate, was motivated by the need to address significant long-term disrepair, including a leaking roof, broken windows, poor quality past alterations, and a lack of disabled access.

The architectural practice approached the refurbishment with a focus on conservation, sustainability, and integration within the wider creative co-working ecosystem that the Benyon Estate fosters. Drawing on original archive drawings from the late 1920s, Mowat & Company, assisted by Structure Workshop, retained the building’s distinctive industrial character while upgrading facilities to meet modern standards. The refurbishment preserves key historical elements such as exposed and painted brickwork, combined with oak detailing and restored timber floors, which subtly reference the building’s heritage as a timber furniture production site.

Among the principal interventions is the re-landscaping of the front courtyard and creation of an accessible entrance, which significantly improve physical access and aesthetic appeal. The introduction of a new connection to the rear shared courtyard enhances tenant interaction by linking the studios directly with an adjacent café, fostering a stronger sense of community. The front of the lower ground floor was expanded, with both front and rear lightwells introduced to enhance natural lighting for the studios. A notable architectural feature includes replacing an enclosed foyer with a new reception area and an open-sided oak staircase that improves circulation and encourages tenant interaction.

Internally, previously subdivided spaces have been opened up to create flexible studio shells now occupied by a variety of tenants, including a hairdresser, pottery studio, photography studio, and gym. This open-plan approach supports the building’s new mixed-use function while allowing tenants to tailor their spaces. The refurbishment also introduces critical energy efficiency improvements. Double-glazed Crittall-style windows and rooflights, along with upgraded insulation, have been installed to boost thermal performance. Furthermore, the building now benefits from low-carbon heating and cooling solutions, including solar panels and air source heat pumps, reflecting a strong commitment to sustainability.

Since the building’s completion, occupancy rates have increased markedly from 70% to full take-up, with four key tenants returning following refurbishment. Energy costs have reportedly reduced, and the project has succeeded in integrating the building more fully into the Benyon Estate’s wider network of creative workspaces, enhancing both its operational viability and community value.

This project aligns with Mowat & Company’s broader architectural philosophy, which centres on imaginatively adapting and sustaining old spaces to accommodate future uses while respecting their historical context. Their portfolio features several similar restorations that balance conservation and contemporary needs, maintaining the character of industrial buildings as vibrant spaces for modern enterprises. Notably, their work on other parts of the De Beauvoir Road estate, such as the reception upgrade at 92-96 De Beauvoir Road with the use of natural, locally sourced materials, complements the ethos apparent in the Herbert E. Gibbs factory refurbishment.

Overall, the Benyon Estate’s investment in this low-carbon, accessible creative hub reflects a sensitive and pragmatic approach to heritage building reuse in London’s evolving urban landscape, ensuring that historic industrial architecture continues to play a dynamic role in the city’s cultural and economic fabric.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[2]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[3]](https://www.mowatandco.com/projects/90-de-beauvoir-road-hjd48-hlz6w), [[4]](https://find-an-architect.architecture.com/mowat-company/london/90-de-beauvoir-road)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[2]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[3]](https://www.mowatandco.com/projects/90-de-beauvoir-road-hjd48-hlz6w), [[6]](https://www.mowatandco.com/architecture/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[2]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[3]](https://www.mowatandco.com/projects/90-de-beauvoir-road-hjd48-hlz6w), [[4]](https://find-an-architect.architecture.com/mowat-company/london/90-de-beauvoir-road)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[2]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[3]](https://www.mowatandco.com/projects/90-de-beauvoir-road-hjd48-hlz6w), [[4]](https://find-an-architect.architecture.com/mowat-company/london/90-de-beauvoir-road)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[2]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[3]](https://www.mowatandco.com/projects/90-de-beauvoir-road-hjd48-hlz6w), [[4]](https://find-an-architect.architecture.com/mowat-company/london/90-de-beauvoir-road)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[2]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[3]](https://www.mowatandco.com/projects/90-de-beauvoir-road-hjd48-hlz6w), [[6]](https://www.mowatandco.com/architecture/), [[7]](https://www.mowatandco.com/interiors)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article), [[5]](https://www.mowatandco.com/projects/92-96-de-beauvoir-road-reception), [[6]](https://www.mowatandco.com/architecture/), [[7]](https://www.mowatandco.com/interiors)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings-design-and-specification/mowat-and-company-upgrades-former-herbert-e-gibbs-furniture-factory-into-low-carbon-creative-studios/5137950.article> - Mowat & Company has completed the transformation of a four-storey former furniture factory on the Benyon Estate in De Beauvoir, Hackney. The early 20th-century building, originally constructed for Herbert E. Gibbs furniture company, has been adapted into mixed-use studios for a community of creative businesses. The project addressed long-term disrepair, including a leaking roof, broken windows, poor-quality alterations, and lack of disabled access. The design retains the industrial character of the former factory while upgrading it for new and returning tenants. Key interventions include a re-landscaped front courtyard, accessible entrance, and a new connection to the rear shared courtyard to link tenants with an adjacent café. The refurbishment introduces double-glazed Crittall-style windows, rooflights, and improved insulation to enhance thermal performance. New solar panels and air source heat pumps provide low-carbon heating and cooling. Since completion, occupancy has risen from 70% to full take-up, with four key tenants returning post-refurbishment. Energy costs have been reduced, and the building is now integrated into the Benyon Estate’s wider network of creative workspaces.
3. <https://www.mowatandco.com/projects/90-de-beauvoir-road-hjd48-hlz6w> - Mowat & Company secured planning permission in February 2023 to adapt and restore Herbert Gibb’s old furniture factory at 90 De Beauvoir Road. The four-storey building is being transformed to host multiple contemporary businesses. The design retains the industrial character of the former factory while upgrading it for new and returning tenants. Key interventions include a re-landscaped front courtyard, accessible entrance, and a new connection to the rear shared courtyard to link tenants with an adjacent café. The refurbishment introduces double-glazed Crittall-style windows, rooflights, and improved insulation to enhance thermal performance. New solar panels and air source heat pumps provide low-carbon heating and cooling. The project aims to integrate the building into the Benyon Estate’s wider network of creative workspaces.
4. <https://find-an-architect.architecture.com/mowat-company/london/90-de-beauvoir-road> - Mowat & Company secured planning permission in February 2023 to adapt and restore Herbert Gibb’s old furniture factory at 90 De Beauvoir Road. The renovation aims to improve accessibility, connectivity, and thermal performance, conceived as part of the wider co-working community in the De Beauvoir Block managed by the Benyon Estate. The building will host multiple contemporary businesses, providing a new lease of life to the existing structure.
5. <https://www.mowatandco.com/projects/92-96-de-beauvoir-road-reception> - Mowat & Company adapted the old carriage entrance to upgrade the reception at 92-96 De Beauvoir Road using London Plane Timber. The new reception separates and better organises the spaces, increasing security while reducing drafts and energy use. A bespoke reception desk made from locally sourced London Plane Timber complements the natural, warm materials of the block. The design includes signage and post boxes to better organise the space, accommodating high levels of visitors and deliveries.
6. <https://www.mowatandco.com/architecture/> - Mowat & Company is an architectural practice specialising in imaginatively adapting and sustaining old places. Their portfolio includes projects such as Hambledon Vineyard, adapting the UK's first commercial winery into a new era of wine tourism, and Carlyon Road, a refurbishment for Sykes Timber, a family-owned business founded in 1862. The practice focuses on retaining the industrial character of former factories while upgrading them for new and returning tenants, as seen in their work at 90 De Beauvoir Road.
7. <https://www.mowatandco.com/interiors> - Mowat & Company designs imaginative ways of adapting and sustaining old spaces for future uses. Their interior projects include the Hambledon Vineyard Restaurant, adapting the UK's first commercial winery into a new era of wine tourism, and the reception at 92-96 De Beauvoir Road, upgrading the old carriage entrance using London Plane Timber. The practice focuses on retaining the industrial character of former factories while upgrading them for new and returning tenants, as seen in their work at 90 De Beauvoir Road.