

Out of office

WSP's new head office at Knightsbridge Office Park in Bryanston takes the traditional notion of the office park and turns it inside out.

PHOTOGRAPHY GRAEME WYLLIE AND MICHAEL SCHMUCKER

The first building completed in the Knightsbridge Office Park on Sloane Street, Bryanston, is the new headquarters for WSP. The client called for elegant, understated architecture that emphasises the spaces between and around buildings.



From top Mature kapok trees were salvaged from the original site and integrated with the landscaping; each building in the office park will feature a roof garden like this one, with views and outdoor relaxation and entertainment spaces; the interior design of the WSP building emphasises a strong outward orientation and connection with greenery and natural surroundings.



Knightsbridge Office Park in Sloane Street, Bryanston, designed by Boogertman + Partners, takes the traditional notion of the office park and breathes new life into it for a contemporary way of working and living, where collaboration, innovation and wellbeing are emphasised.

The first building in the office park was recently completed as a new office for engineering professional services firm WSP. It is the first of seven buildings that are planned for the office park, and is part of the first phase of the development, comprising three buildings.

Lead architect Gerhard Boer says that he and his team sought to reinvigorate the office park typology. They conceptualised the office park as just that: a densely treed urban parkland

with buildings nestled in the landscaping, integrating the natural and built environment. "The brief from our client was to design a simple, elegant architectural solution," says Boer. "The idea was to emphasise the spaces between the buildings rather than the buildings themselves."

All seven office buildings overlook a central facility with a roof garden, referred to as 'Central Park', which houses a shared restaurant, boardroom and entertainment spaces, and various other outdoor office facilities. When completed, it will function as a shared gathering space, providing a venue for meetings, events, relaxation and outdoor seating.

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“We designed the park as a precinct that would activate social interaction between the inhabitants of all the buildings,” says Boer. The landscaping includes a running track that threads its way through the urban forest as well as other casual outdoor seating and pause spaces.

The original office development on the site, dating back to the 1980s, included a number of mature trees, which were salvaged and transplanted along the periphery of the development. Not only will this treed border provide a visual barrier, enhancing the tranquillity of the environment, but because the trees are already mature, they impart a sense of character to the surroundings. Boer points out that the treed periphery and central focus enhances the ‘inward-looking’ orientation of the development. The close relationship between the building and the natural surroundings creates a rapport with the landscape and a sensory experience that fosters wellbeing.

The gardens are designed to improve ecology and encourage biodiversity, but it is important to note that the landscape is designed to be useful to people not only to improve the urban ecosystem, but also to ensure its sustainability.

The interior design principles employed in WSP’s new headquarters, also by Boogertman + Partners and led by Gisela Patlansky, continue the biophilic approach. The colour palette is inspired by nature - drawn specifically from aerial photographs taken across Africa. Greenery is incorporated into the interior spaces, and natural materials are used where possible.

The arrangement of the interior spaces around a central spine connects workspaces and, like the broader concept of the landscaping and central park, encourages, movement, socialisation and collaboration. High-quality natural light, low VOC paints, carpets and sealants, and high fresh air rates also enhance wellbeing.

The building achieved a 4-Star Green Star Design rating from the Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) at the end of last year. Interestingly, Boer says that they have not immediately sought an as-built rating, but will monitor the building’s performance for the next year, and then apply for a rating as an existing building to ensure that all building services operate optimally.



Top The interior colour palette is drawn from aerial photographs taken of various African landscapes, and emphasises a connection between interior and exterior spaces. **Bottom** The gardens are largely indigenous, designed to improve ecology and biodiversity in the context of a useful manmade environment.

PROFESSIONAL TEAM

- OWNER:** Emira Property Fund **ARCHITECTS:** Boogertman + Partners
- ELECTRICAL ENGINEER:** WSP **FIRE ENGINEER:** WSP
- ELECTRONIC ENGINEER:** WSP **MECHANICAL ENGINEER:** WSP
- CIVIL ENGINEER:** WSP **SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT:** WSP
- WET SERVICES ENGINEER:** WSP **PROJECT MANAGER:** Orb Consulting
- QUANTITY SURVEYORS:** RLB Pentad **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** AED & The Gardeners
- MAIN CONTRACTOR:** Archstone Construction 