

London fit-out pipeline has halved, says study

Office projects take 47% hit but bank mergers offer hope

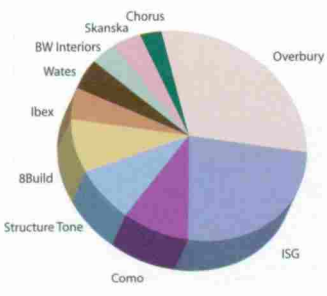
THE NUMBER OF OFFICE FIT-OUT projects out to tender in central London has slumped by almost half in the past 12 months, according to a report from Metropolis Property Research.

Its study, covering work on new or refurbished space of more than 20,000ft² between 2004 and 2008, has found that 5m ft² of projects are under way in the capital.

Metropolis managing director Andy King says: "This looks pretty healthy until you realise it includes the new 1.7m ft² JP Morgan building [at Canary Riverside in Docklands], which won't provide fit-out work for three years." Not including that, the project pipeline for London is 3.1m ft², down 47% on the previous year. And as King points out: "Central London figures usually mirror the whole of the UK."

It's not all bad news though. The

Top 10 interiors contractors on London projects, 2004-08



report predicts that as development plans are put on hold, the fit-out market will be sustained as landlords entice tenants to stay by redesigning offices or turn to refurbishing secondhand space.

Looking ahead, the report says the consolidation of banking groups is likely to present a new wave of demand for 1m-plus ft² offices.

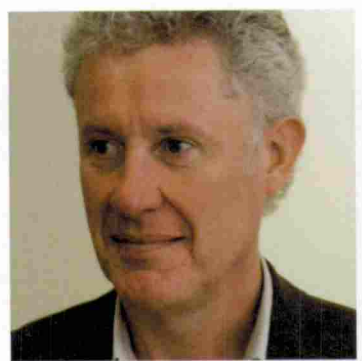
The report also provides a top 10 ranking of interiors contractors and

architects over the period. Two fit-out firms dominate the scene – Overbury taking the largest market share, with 29%, closely followed by ISG with 25%. The chart (left) identifies the other key players in the central London market.

Meanwhile, largely because of its involvement in the JP Morgan project, Gensler leads the field for architects, with a 20% market share, followed by Pringle Brandon and MCM with 17% each.

Simon Jackson, Gensler's principal of workplace, welcomed the study's findings but was keen to point out his practice's achievements elsewhere in the UK, particularly on the headquarters building for law firm William Fry in Dublin.

Although he agreed the London market is flat, he added: "There are still smaller scale opportunities of less than 25,000ft² to be had."



Jennings to judge AIS awards

TIM JENNINGS, MANAGING director of design consultancy ttsp, has agreed to judge the interior fit-outs category in this year's AIS Contractors Awards.

Jennings, who trained as an interior designer, has worked at ttsp for 26 years, the past six as managing director. The firm specialises in interior design, workplace consultancy, architecture, masterplanning and refurbishment in both the public and private sector. It was responsible for the designs that helped Phoenix Interiors win the ceilings category in last year's awards for its contract at Nomura, London. It has also been involved in projects for clients including the Home Office, UBS and Southwark County Council.

AIS chief executive Simon Forrester said: "Ttsp has worked closely with AIS members on a variety of projects. We are particularly pleased Tim agreed to judge our interior fit-outs shortlist."

Jennings said he was "delighted" to be judging the award and added: "The celebration of quality and success in design and construction is more important than ever in the prevailing tough market conditions."

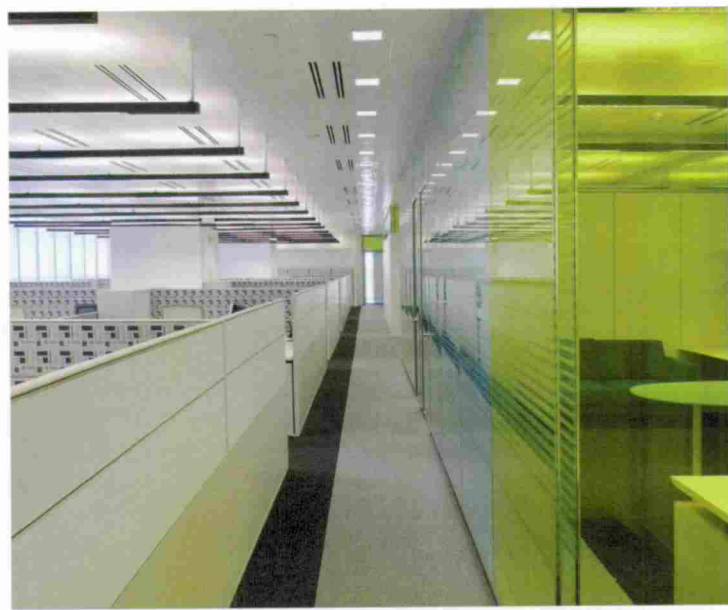
This year's award winners will be announced at the AIS President's Lunch on 9 June. For more information on the awards go to www.ais-interiors.org.uk

SAS opens in Abu Dhabi

SAS INTERNATIONAL HAS OPENED an office in Abu Dhabi to support the metal ceiling manufacturer's work in the Middle East and enable resident staff to provide a better service to local projects.

SAS has operated in the Middle East for more than 20 years, supplying products to projects such as the Doha Science and Technology Park in Qatar and the Bahrain Financial Harbour. It has four offices in the UK and one in Ireland. The Abu Dhabi branch is its first outside the British Isles.

www.sasint.co.uk



Middle ground: the Abu Dhabi office is SAS's first outside the British Isles