



## In practice

*Three architecture firms that have  
designed their own studios*



£10

*Building study*

# TAILORED TO FIT

The AJ visits HAT Projects,  
Gort Scott Architects and  
Moxon: three practices that  
have recently designed  
their own offices

Words Rob Wilson  
Photography Jim Stephenson



# GORT SCOTT ARCHITECTS

Founded 2001

Number of employees 30

26

Gort Scott's new office in Bermondsey is a reworked former factory. The practice has given it a bold new street presence by revealing the original brick façade and added two matching brick-faced upper storeys, modelled to echo the old. Internally, the new exposed steel frame of the upper floors reprises the 19th century cast iron columns below. It feels as though the project has amplified the bones of the original building in a contemporary take.

'It's true of many of our projects: that we want to maintain a strong connection with the context and the site by taking on the detailing and DNA of the existing building,' says Jay Gort, one of the practice's two directors.

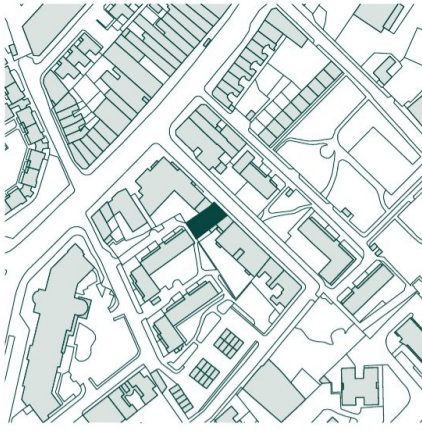
'One contractor suggested we pull it down and start from scratch: it would be cheaper,' adds Fiona Scott, the other director. 'But you can't recreate the character that is there: our ethos is to keep what you find if you can – of course there's a carbon saving inherent in this, too. We've always had an interest in remaking pieces of city and contributing to the public realm, not just focusing on the thing itself but on how what you do is going to change the thing – socially and economically – in a positive way.'

**'OUR ETHOS IS  
TO KEEP WHAT YOU  
FIND IF YOU CAN'**









## ‘THERE’S A DYNAMIC NATURE TO THE SPACE. FLEXIBILITY SUITS US’

The new upper storeys contain open-plan workspaces augmenting the original first floor space, each independently accessible off a reworked stair. At ground floor level there’s a commercial retail unit, now let to a solicitor.

The practice relocated last year from a rented space in Dalston. ‘We needed more space but it was more about autonomy and security. Rents in Dalston were going through the roof,’ says Scott. ‘We didn’t set out to design a vanity project. We originally thought we’d just take on an old light industrial space around there and convert it. We knew people who’d done this five to 10 years before. But, by the time we came to look, it was impossible.’

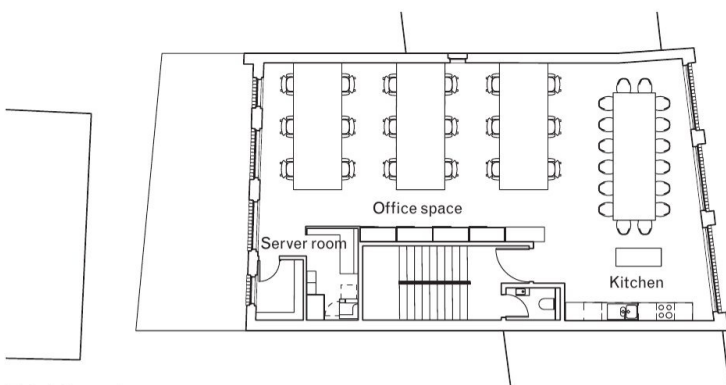
It wasn’t just a question of affordability. ‘What we discovered,’ says Scott, ‘was that you often can’t buy a commercial space unless you are a developer. It wasn’t the money – at one point we had a cash offer on a place – but somehow for someone like us with a personal interest in the property it was all a bit too complicated.’

In the event they looked further afield, found the building in Bermondsey, and went in half-and-half with an existing client to buy it. Gort Scott owns the top two floors and a roof terrace above, planned to complete for the summer.

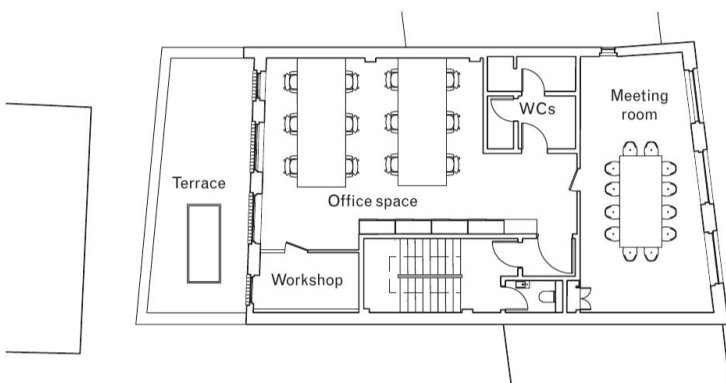
‘It’s largely open-plan, maintaining the good natural cross-ventilation. We have a kitchen on the top floor with a large table where every Thursday we cook together,’ says Gort.

Beyond these spaces, more enclosed ones open out, housing a workshop, telephone room, showers and bike storage. But Gort Scott is already reconsidering the layout, as the practice is growing and already looking to expand into the first floor. ‘There’s a

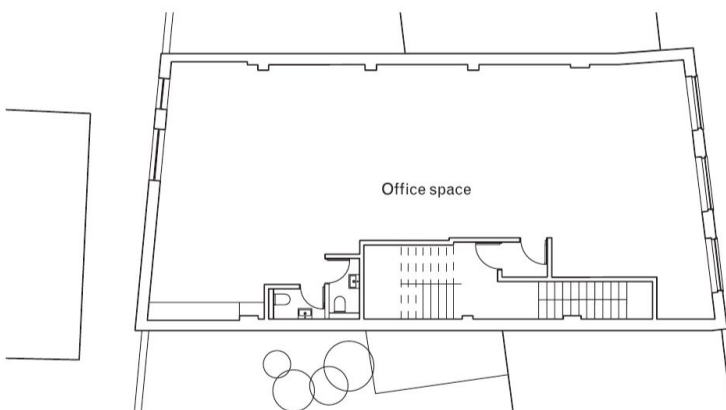




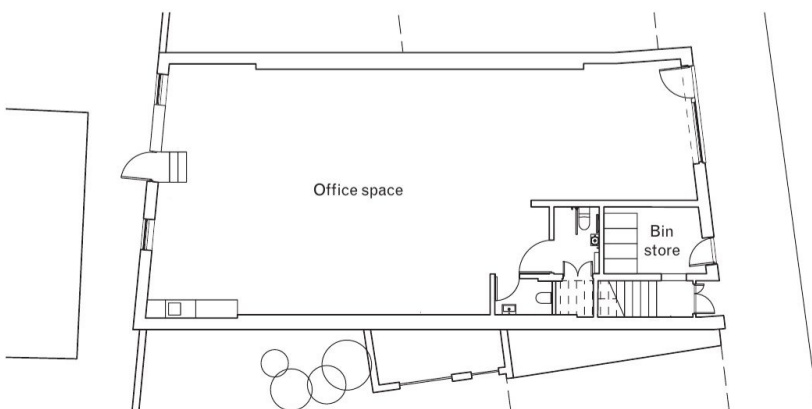
Third floor plan



Second floor plan



First floor plan



Ground floor plan



### Project description

Gort Scott's new offices in Bermondsey occupy what was once a decaying industrial building, now refurbished and extended to provide 469m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space. Two of the building's four storeys house functional studio spaces for Gort Scott's expanding practice. At ground and first floor, flexible, commercial space is provided for complementary tenants.

Our approach began with the removal of metal cladding which was incongruent with the material palette of the surrounding area. Underneath, a rich, texturally varied brickwork and a simple visual hierarchy was discovered and would come to inform the architectural principles for renovation.

The design raised the roofline to match the adjacent buildings, allowing for a roof terrace above the additional floor. Remodelling the original façade, the original red brickwork was restored and repointed. New brickwork added to the main elevation continues the existing rhythm and order. Window openings have been enlarged, to create office spaces with high levels of natural daylight. The reordering of the façade is enhanced by a tight series of dentil brick courses above windows. To the rear, another two mixed brick sets have been used, differentiating between old and new. *Jay Gort, practice director, Gort Scott Architects*



dynamic nature to the space. Flexibility suits us,' says Scott.

The project was funded by 'saving up money, a loan and a friendly bank' but proved a learning experience. Gort says: 'We started out saying we'd do it cheap-as-chips but found it's just expensive to build things – something you realise when you are the client, developer, architect and contractor to an extent as well.'



#### Project data

**Project name** 55 Leroy Street

**Start on site** September 2016

**Completion date** October 2018

**Gross internal floor area** 469m<sup>2</sup>

**Form of contract** JCT Traditional

**Construction cost** Undisclosed

**Structural engineer** engineersHRW

**M&E consultant** Or Consulting

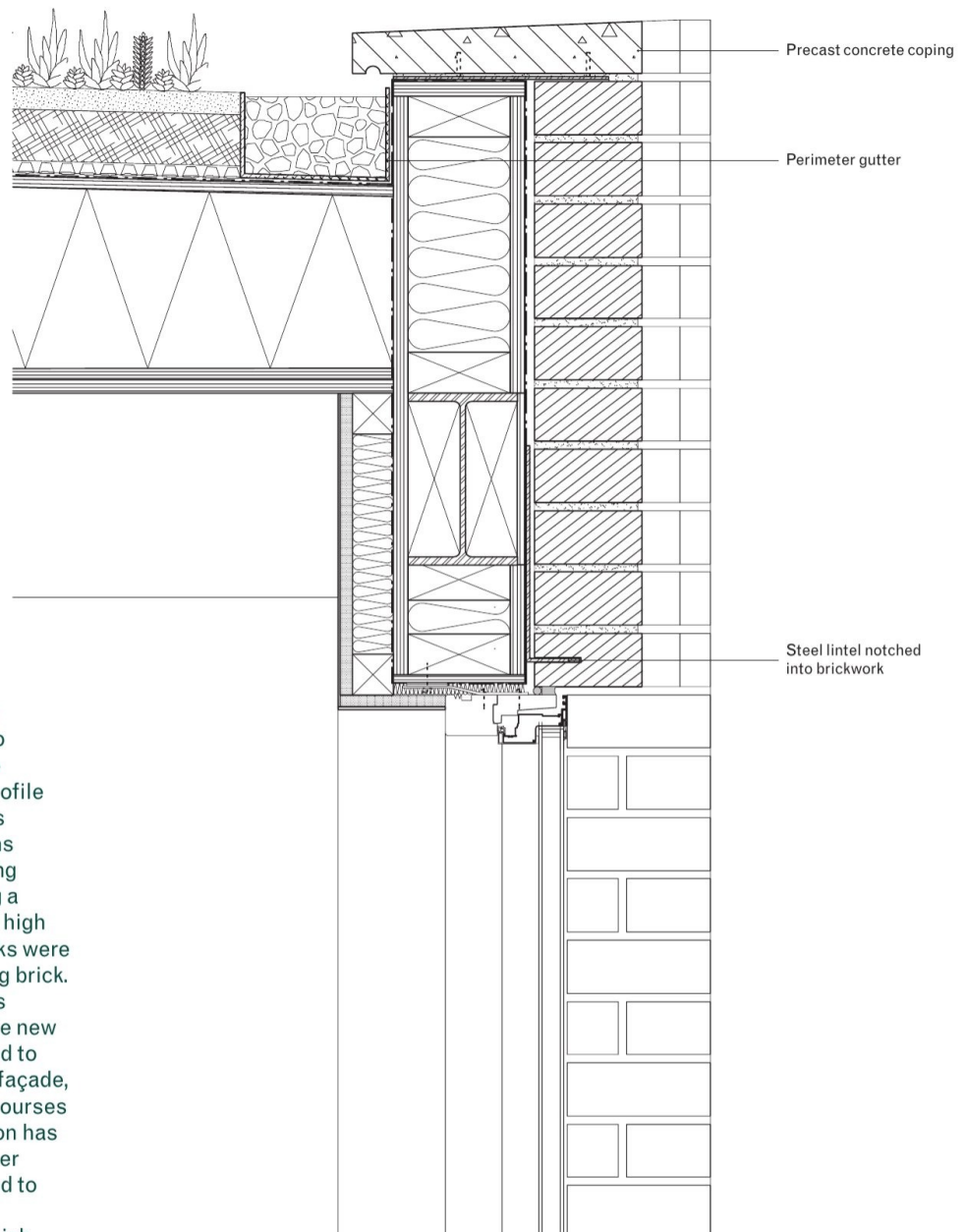
**QS** Appleyard & Trew

**Right to light consultant** Right

**Of Light Consulting**

**CAD software used** Vectorworks

**Predicted design life** 100 years



### Specification

The precast parapet to the building has been colour-matched and cut to the profile of the dentil brick course below to maintain the distinctive profile against the sky. We chose materials for the alterations and new additions to the building to respect the existing and streetscape, while establishing a presence that can be seen from the high street. Three different types of bricks were selected to complement the existing brick.

Close attention was paid to areas where new brickwork meets old. The new brickwork was laid in a Flemish bond to continue the rhythm of the existing façade, and in a tight series of dentil brick courses above windows. Where the extension has added floor space to the rear, another two mixed brick sets have been used to distinguish it from the original.

Timber herringbone strutting, which was discovered in the existing building once the dropped ceiling was removed, was also re-introduced in the new ceilings. These are visible from the street through the large windows and become a key decorative element of the internal studios.

We have created an internal aesthetic of exposed raw materials using brick, timber and metal. Red oxide colour beams and fenestrations accent this. A bespoke kitchen island on wheels helps to make the open-plan kitchen a flexible space and enables big communal lunches, shared between employees.

*Jay Gort, practice director,  
Gort Scott Architects*

Façade detail

0 0.75m