

Specifiers select glass wool insulation for revival of historic city building

Iconic London shopping centre Whiteleys, which closed in 2018, is undergoing a £1 billion transformation into a Norman Foster-designed mixed-use scheme named The Whiteley. For insulation manufacturer **URSA**, the project represents one of its largest single specifications.

The former Whiteleys shopping centre in London's Bayswater is the setting for an impressive property redevelopments in Europe - a multi-million pound regeneration to convert the century-old shopping arcade into a high-end luxury residential, hotel, restaurant and retail complex covering more than 90,000m².

The restoration will protect the site's heritage and help create a pedestrian-friendly Queensway. The proposals provide a mix of apartments and townhouses along with the new public amenities including a cinema and variety of restaurants. It's a world away from William Whiteley's first store - a drapery shop which he opened on Westbourne Grove in 1863 before moving to the then new-build Bayswater site in 1911 to establish London's first department store.

For URSA, it is one of its largest single project specifications, with more than 5,000m² of its glass mineral wool insulation specified for the project. The manufacturer is working alongside contractors Laing

O'Rourke and architects Foster and Partners.

Ian Claydon, technical manager for URSA UK, said: "This is undoubtedly one of the largest building projects in Europe and being part of that is incredibly exciting. We have worked closely with the architects to ensure that they have the best possible specification for their project and that is undoubtedly URSA's glass wool insulation.

"Glass mineral wool is the most efficient and user-friendly thermal and acoustic insulation material, both environmentally and from a cost-effective point of view. It is suitable for use throughout a structure, providing the most efficient insulation solution available on the market today."

Ian added: "We'll continue to work closely with the contractor and architect to ensure products are delivered to site in line with the construction team's needs. This is a long-term project and vast on every scale; we will continue to partner with distributor Encon

Insulation, in Maidstone, which has been instrumental in this specification."

Contractors have already installed URSA Cavity Batt 32 glass wool slab treated with water-repellent additives, and glass mineral wool for first-class thermal and acoustic insulation. The manufacturer is also working closely with specialist contractors Lyons & Annoot, as Mark Guest, regional sales manager at URSA UK, commented: "Talking through the initial enquiry from Lyons & Annoot, the client was impressed by our quick response and ability to provide swift technical reassurance with an open approach. Being able to supply products immediately by working with the Encon network enabled URSA to cut delays associated with COVID that were previously thought inevitable and costly."

The historic 110-year-old shopping center has been closed for two years after a prolonged decline following the opening in 2008 of Westfield shopping centre nearby. The project, about five minutes' walk from Kensington Gardens, has become London's most fashionable development, with facades on Queensway and Porchester Gardens being retained and refurbished.

The scheme includes 139 one to five-bedroom luxury flats and townhouses. Starting prices are expected to be in the region of £1.5 million. With a fit-out contract of around £111 million, the properties will occupy a unique space of almost 28,000m² and are expected to be completed in 2023. In addition, the building will offer a spa, pool and exclusive communal workspace together with 20 luxury shops and restaurants and 110 hotel rooms courtesy of the Six Senses luxury hotel/spa chain.

The project aims to retain the essence of the building, which at its opening in 1911 was the height of luxury, with a theatre and a rooftop golf course before being listed in 1970 and converted into a shopping centre in 1989. The works will respect the iconic façade, central courtyard and dome of the old building, which will be restored as well as the majestic and historic interior staircase, which will form the centerpiece of the hotel's ground floor. **rci**

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