

SOMETHING'S BREWING

MONEY speaks to **Ian Ritchie**, founder of world-renowned Ian Ritchie Architects, on his latest project: Trident Park and The Brewhouse.



M What attracted you to take on this project?

I For an architect, the client's qualities are always of paramount importance to a project's success: good projects require good clients. When we were invited to enter the competition, I was impressed by Farsons for several reasons. They had engaged an experienced international company to find the right architects through an international competition, which showed they were seeking the best professionals in the industry and were interested in quality. They travelled to see us, which indicated they were interested in getting to know us and how we worked and being active and involved in the design process. They also appeared open to new ideas and seemed to share our design and environmental values. These last points were remarkably attractive. Although Farsons are a renowned and very successful brewery in Malta, they had never embarked on a significant real estate property development before. The project was of a scale that would provide scope for expressing new design thinking. The project also interested us because it was in Europe, and we are a European firm with experience in France and Germany, Spain, Italy, and other countries.

M What inspired the design, and what was the main goal you set yourself to achieve?

I As we had sensed and hoped, the client was part of the inspiration from the beginning of the project, which allowed us to design something with them that would be unique not just to Malta but also new on the international real estate scene. They were consistent in their willingness to set sustainability standards, respect for Malta's cultural and architectural heritage, the island's landscape, and quality of life. The design was inspired by Malta's historical evolution—its architecture, urbanism, and the



influence of European traditions, particularly from Italy—and its geology and climate. These offered the potential of engaging with landscape and water on an island that has historically treasured both because of their degree of scarcity. The design was informed by the recognition that creating a working space is not only about responding to the client's desire for a good return on investment but fundamentally about creating a beautiful, diverse environment in which workspace is only part of the equation. People need and want a combination of facilities to give them an overall sense of mental and physical contentment. Farsons were open to exploring ways to achieve such an environment.



M What are the core elements the project is based on regarding the project's environmental impact and what sustainability initiatives were taken (such as carbon output, recycling water, BREEAM certification, etc.)?

I The first move in a sustainable design approach was retaining the 200m long Art Deco façade and Art Deco colonnade of the original building and repurposing and retrofitting Farsons' Old Brewhouse. The seven new ultra-low-energy office buildings orientated east-west are relatively shallow in plan (c.15 m), help shade each other, and have opening windows to allow cross-ventilation,

views out, and natural light throughout the day. This eliminates the need for air-conditioning and reduces electricity use, as does efficient, bespoke low-energy lighting designed by us in collaboration with Brandi Licht and Castaldi. The office buildings are clad in white concrete panels and vertical solar shading screens. This helps reflect and reduce solar gain while increasing the thermal mass, providing stability against temperature fluctuations. The six courtyards are planted with colourful flowering trees, climbers, and bushes, including herbs. They will be partially shaded by the office buildings, contributing to the cooling effect, as will water features in some of the gardens. Two reservoirs will store over 2500 m³ of rainwater reuse, and washbasins will be fitted with low-flow rate taps and infrared technology to avoid water waste.

M What is/are, in your opinion, the most unique/differentiating factor/s in the project's design?

I The Trident Park and The Brewhouse developments are unique because they combine the essential qualities of Maltese architecture, urbanism, and landscape with the central paradigm of sustainable and healthy environmental design. Everyone who works in Trident Park will enjoy natural ventilation, perfumed with the flowers and vegetation typical of the Mediterranean climate. Courtyard gardens, spaces to meet and engage in conversation with others, indoor and outdoor exercise space, and places serving good food and beverages combine to create a campus for living. This is a different approach from the high-rise, air-conditioned and hermetically sealed all-glass developments now being built, which are currently destroying the beautiful built heritage of Malta that survived World War II bombs.



M Were there any particular challenges in designing the project, and how did you address them?

I When working abroad, we always have collaboration topmost in our minds, and we were fortunate to have been introduced to Alex Torpiano and his company, TBA. Without them, the project would have been much more challenging to realise. Designing with Professor Doug King, we brought some thinking about environmental innovation, new ways of envisioning natural and artificial lighting, and re-interpretations of sun shading, which were quite demanding upon Malta's industry. For example, the design introduces Malta state-of-the-art environmental technologies such as thermo-active building systems through water-based floor slab cooling. Perhaps the most demanding, and not just in Malta, is achieving the rigorous quality of construction we are used to as a practice when building our designs. Our practise prides itself on prioritising quality over quantity and, in doing

so, often exceeds the client's expectations. This requires motivating local industry and demonstrating that we can—and want to—work openly with them. Open collaboration with the industry, the consultants, and the client is central to the entire design and realisation process. We invested considerable time and effort in trying to achieve this. The project's success will be measured by the quality of the outcome and the perception and experience of those who will enjoy the space. 🍷

For more information on Trident Park and The Brewhouse office leasing options, get in touch by calling 9953 9007 or 9945 5694, or emailing info@tridentparkmalta.com or info@thebrewhousemalta.com.

Ian Ritchie is the director of Ian Ritchie Architects, a Royal Academician and member of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin. He is Honorary Visiting Professor at Liverpool University and advises Backstage Trust. He is a former Governor of the RSC and advisor to The Ove Arup Foundation. He has chaired many international juries, including the Stirling Prize. He has written several books, and his art is held in several international museums.