

# Manchester Brick Specialists

When Manchester Brick Specialists found the perfect historical location in which to exhibit their timeless products, its showroom fit-out required an innovative design approach, with the flooring specification being no exception. Expona Commercial PUR offered a suitably enduring solution.

**Location:** Ancoats, Manchester

**Products:** Expona Commercial PUR

**Sector:** Retail

Established in 2013, Manchester Brick Specialists (MBS) has cemented its place as one of the UK's most prominent industry suppliers and distributors.

Their extensive range of high-quality bricks includes wirecut, clamp, pressed and traditional handmade options. Backed by 100 years of industry expertise, leading brick manufacturers meticulously craft the products on offer, adhering to strict quality standards.

MBS strives to empower architects, developers and builders by providing them with inspired design solutions that transform projects and create lasting positive change.

As such, their showroom in Ancoats, Manchester, needed to double as a creative hub. It was to be a place of connection for project specifiers, allowing them to browse products, build relationships, and foster a sense of community under one roof.

Fittingly, its location is deeply rooted in industrial history, sitting within Royal Mill, an early 20th-century cotton mill. Completed in 1912, it holds Grade II\* listed status, reserved for "particularly significant buildings of more than local interest."

The mill showcases Edwardian Baroque architecture featuring Accrington brick, an iron-hard building material from nearby Lancashire, another area central to this former industry.

After decades of neglect and decay following its closure, the mill underwent a £65 million restoration, reopening in 2008 to offer apartments, offices, and shops. Thankfully, the modernisation retained many original features, most notably exposed brickwork in the atrium.

Ripple, a retail design and manufacturing agency based in Oldham, Greater Manchester, undertook responsibility for the showroom design. They provided an end-to-end service which involved overseeing each stage of the project, from concept to completion.

Their experienced Design Team had previously worked on the MBS Head Office in nearby Prestwich. At the helm of decision-making was Daniel Wolfenden, Design and Marketing Director.

The process was collaborative from the outset. MBS offered a vision, not a restrictive brief, allowing Ripple to work with interpretive freedom.





A paramount concern within the showroom was its raised showroom deck, a key component of this non-standard fit-out, which had to support product display units holding over 400 brick samples without compromising on visual appeal or room flow.

Collectively, Wolfenden and his team overcame this obstacle, transforming the distinctive mill unit into an inviting and creative space.

When specifying the showroom flooring, the brick weight loads and anticipated footfall from clients demanded a highly durable product.

Aesthetically, MBS loved the warmth, texture and design versatility of wood-effect vinyl flooring from Polyflor. Ripple therefore curated a selection of robust samples, mixing shades and finishes, ahead of reaching a consensus.

The showroom now boasts approximately 160m<sup>2</sup> of Sherwood Oak Parquet (4123) from Polyflor's trusted Expona Commercial PUR collection, laid in a herringbone pattern.

As the project lead, Wolfenden was particularly impressed by the company's sample service, which provided Ripple with a tangible experience when researching their flooring requirements.

"The support from our Polyflor rep was brilliant," he commented.

"Responsive, flexible, and collaborative throughout. We've now used the company across several projects. They are a 'go-to' when we need a practical, easy-to-install solution that doesn't compromise on finish."

Integrated Property Solutions, a trusted Ripple contractor, managed the flooring installation. They were able to acquire the services of a specialised flooring contractor with suitable experience for a project of this nature.

Inventively, planks from different batches of Sherwood Oak were mixed during installation, embracing natural shade variations in tone and texture across the floor. This subtle step created a dynamic, authentic finish that complemented the overall design.

The completed showroom at Royal Mill now functions as intended, allowing clients to be inspired by the past whilst considering their future construction projects in the company of like-minded specifiers.

“ In any showroom, materiality carries weight, literally and figuratively.

At Manchester Brick Specialists, we required flooring that could support heavy product displays whilst tying together its industrial character and modern purpose. Expona Commercial PUR from Polyflor delivered both.

Mixing planks from different boxes added texture without feeling contrived, playing a significant role in how the space is read and experienced.

The flooring looks brilliant, adding warmth and tactility to the showroom. It also holds up beautifully under daily use

Daniel Wolfenden, Design and Marketing Director, Ripple

