



From 16th Century Hall houses to Stunning Contemporary Homes

Poole Phillips Mixes Old and New with AutoCAD Revit Architecture Suite

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Paul Phillips, a partner at Poole Phillips

“It is what some might call a “Grand Design’s” type of house,” says Paul Phillips, a partner at the Worcestershire-based architecture and interior design practice, Poole Phillips, talking about a recent design for a private client. The design for a new home in a quarry setting is as innovative and cutting edge as they come with electric turntable for parking the car and its own fitness and leisure centre accessed by a glazed link.

In some ways this project is a typical one for Poole Phillips; the firm prides itself on its creativity and use of cutting-edge ideas. But, in other ways it’s a complete contrast – much of its work involves the refurbishment, restoration and conservation of listed buildings, although usually with a touch of contemporary flair added on the way.

For example, it has recently completed the design for the restoration and enhancement of South Stoneham House, a grade II listed building which is to be used as a conference centre. The combination of an historic house dating from 1708 with a modern glass structure is a bold mix that demonstrates its commitment to clear, confident architecture.

It is this dedication to positive design that led Poole Phillips to invest in AutoCAD Revit Architecture Suite (Revit Architecture) around 18 months ago. Phillips says that the building information modelling software helps them experiment and try out the ideas that lead to these original designs. “Revit Architecture helps us translate and visualise the possibilities that are in our head,” he says. “It helps us make them real in a very effective way.”

Experimenting with alternatives

As Phillips explains, the practice has always been strong on the visualisation side of CAD. “We do a lot of feasibility studies and with these it always helps to be able to show a client something truly tangible.”

To do this, they would draft the design in AutoCAD and then give it to an Autodesk VIZ specialist at the practice to create a virtual image.

“However, we recognised that it was time to consider alternative methods. We were spending a lot of time co-ordinating drawings and could see that anything that could cut down this task – and help improve accuracy at the same time would be worth considering,” he says. “As this also coincided with our VIZ expert moving on from the practice, it seemed clear that we needed a good 3D modelling tool.”

As AutoCAD users, the AutoCAD Revit Architecture Suite appeared an obvious next step. The package is designed for architects that don’t want to waste their knowledge of AutoCAD or their investment in legacy data – yet are still ready to enjoy the benefits of building information modelling, including automatically co-ordinated construction documents.

The software enables users to prepare design proposals with Revit Architecture and then finish construction documents and enhance details with AutoCAD. It also gives flexibility in resourcing projects; firms can use Revit Architecture to minimise tedious updating tasks and costly co-ordination errors, while deploying AutoCAD for projects requiring large pools of trained staff.



"This was right for what we wanted – and because we are still using AutoCAD, as well as Revit Architecture it has been a seamless transition," says Phillips. "Also Revit Architecture's visualisation capabilities compensate for the loss of VIZ skills."

Now the use of Revit Architecture is well entrenched in the practice's workflow. "It's particularly good for concepts as users can produce a model relatively quickly. You can then spin and play with the model to experiment with "what-if" scenarios which is good for getting to the most appropriate solution to a challenge."

Because of Revit's automatic co-ordination, changes and refinements are quick and easy to make. When a user makes a revision to the design, however small, all other drawings and documentation updates accordingly.

The new software particularly came into its own with the design of Quarry Haven, the striking, modern house. "It's an interesting concept – an airy upside down house with elevated living space to make the most of the striking views and glass curtain walls to maximise the natural light," says Phillips. "Using Revit enabled us to explore all possibilities and come up with a very pleasing result."

The practice also uses Revit Architecture to model alternatives for its work on listed buildings. "We're currently working on the restoration of an historical 16th century hall house and this work is much more specialised," he explains. "But Revit is a very flexible tool and once again it helps us to realise our ideas very effectively."

Dave Dalton of Poole Phillips' Autodesk reseller, 3 Ways Design, agrees: "We are seeing a growing take-up of Revit among small, but forward-looking architectural firms seeking better co-ordination but, at the same time, greater versatility," he says.

Phillips says that the practice still has a lot to discover about Revit Architecture. "It's capability is huge – it's a great tool and we're 100 per cent committed," he concludes.

For more information

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