

Delancey latest to scale back life sciences plans as Islington lab scheme becomes offices

By Tom Lowe | 14 July 2026

KPF-designed proposals for north London's Knowledge Quarter amended to 'better reflect today's occupier requirements'



KPF's revised plans for York Way

Delancey has become the latest developer to row back on life sciences after switching most of a laboratory-led scheme in Islington to offices.

The original KPF-designed scheme at 176-178 York Way, approved in June 2024, had been billed as the latest addition to the life sciences district around King's Cross known as the Knowledge Quarter.

But the eight-storey building, which would have contained 60% laboratory space and 40% office space, will now have just two floors of laboratory space under revised plans approved by Islington council last week.

The rest of the building will be occupied by office space with some education and community space on the ground floor, with the change to offices, which require lower floor heights than laboratories, allowing an extra storey to be added to the building without changing its height.

This has allowed the total amount of floorspace offered by the scheme to be increased by around 2,500sq m, from 16,000 in the original scheme to 18,500 in the amended proposals.



Consented Scheme

Proposed Scheme

Original proposals on the left, with the revised plans on the right

Delancey's change in strategy for the project marks the third major laboratory scheme in the Knowledge Quarter over the past year to be hit by a downturn in the life sciences market.

US drug maker Merck, known as MSD in Europe, pulled out of a 10-storey AHMM-designed life sciences building opposite King's Cross station in October last year after saying the UK was not competitive enough.

And in April this year British Land asked Camden council to remove a planning obligation requiring it to provide a minimum of 16,500sq m of life sciences space in its £600m overhaul of Euston Tower, designed by 3XN.

Delancey said Islington council's approval for the amended York Way scheme had enabled the project to "better reflect today's occupier requirements".

"The approved flexibility will allow us to respond to rapidly evolving demand across the AI, technology and life sciences sectors, while ensuring the building remains adaptable as those industries continue to evolve," the firm added.

The project team for the scheme is largely unchanged although Arcadis has been replaced by CPC on costs and Atelier Ten has been replaced by Hoare Lea on MEP.

The rest of the team includes project manager Gardiner & Theobald, structural engineer Arup, facade consultant Eckersley O'Callaghan, landscape architect Publica, planning consultant DP9 and laboratory consultant Buro Happold.