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Foster + Partners wins competition to design Alibaba's new HQ in Shanghai

Foster + Partners has won the competition to design the new headquarters for Alibaba – the Chinese ecommerce giant – in Shanghai. As a new signature building for the company, it is set to showcase their unique working culture to the public.

Luke Fox, Head of Studio, Foster + Partners said: "We are delighted to be designing the new Shanghai headquarters for Alibaba, the world's largest online retailer and e-commerce company. Our design emphasises the importance of communication, the integrity of the working community and above all, the creation of an image that reflects the standing of Alibaba. The scheme is truly designed from the inside out, centred on a dynamic, sheltered public space capitalising on its amazing location with its views of the Huangpu River and the Bund."

Situated at Xuhui Riverside – a new, vibrant part of the city – the building boasts stunning views of the Huangpu River and the Pudong CBD. The building is formed around a central heart that opens up to create a large public urban room, inviting people in. This creates an active social core, with viewing terraces overlooking the central space as well as the building's principal entrances opening onto it. The building is designed to be extremely transparent, allowing people a glimpse into the world of Alibaba as well as preserving views to the outside.

The unique building form has been guided by an innovative design process that uses a genetic algorithm to evolve the optimal massing. The algorithm combines several aspects that are crucial to the project such as, being highly responsive to the environmental conditions, maximising outside views, and the specific area requirements for different functions, to create the most appropriate form. The design optimises the massing to provide the best year-round user comfort in the central public space, protecting it from strong winter winds and the harsh summer sun, while creating tailored workspace solutions for the different departments at Alibaba.

The desk arrangements, break-out spaces and meeting rooms are all carefully considered to encourage collaboration and teamwork. Visual and physical connectivity will encourage interactions. Natural light and external spaces animate the workspaces and create a more focussed and engaged workforce. Following a modular approach, the design will utilise off-site production for quality control, reducing wastage, and minimising on-site operations to create an efficient construction programme.

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For further information

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