

From soybean cakes to medicine

The Danish Medicines Agency was established in 1997, but we regulate areas that date back over 400 years.

In the summer of 2003, the Danish Medicines Agency moved into the old soybean cake factory, which was the very heart of Islands Brygge in the 20th century.

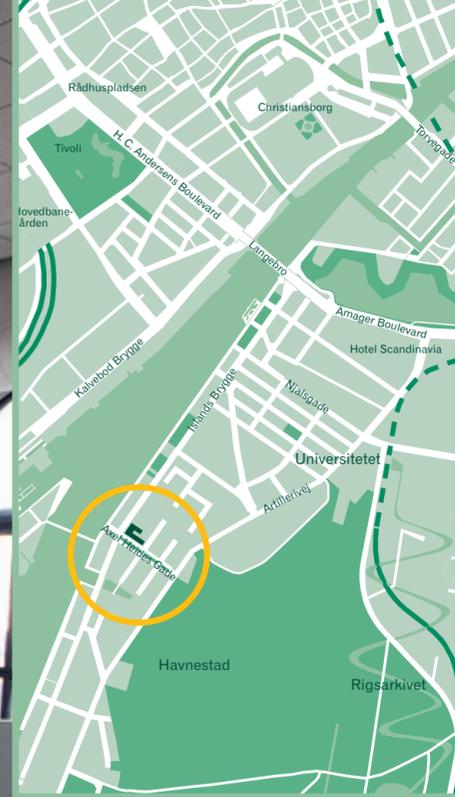
The old factory buildings beautifully combine history with new architecture and modern materials, and every day we, who work in this environment, enjoy this blend of old and new.

Jytte Lyngvig
Chief Executive Officer
Danish Medicines Agency

The Danish Medicines Agency aims to ensure the availability of effective and safe healthcare products – medicinal products, medical devices and new therapies – and we promote the proper use of such products.

Read more about the Danish Medicines Agency at www.dkma.dk

LP Charisma is used for lighting up all high-ceilinged rooms at the Danish Medicines Agency – a pendant specially developed for this type of room by PLH architects.



Havnestad is a very attractive new district covering 220,000 m² in the centre of Copenhagen. Many new businesses and homes in the area are located in former industrial buildings.

Havnestad – a new district in Copenhagen

Since 2001, Islands Brygge (Iceland Quay) has experienced rapid development, and a new district of the city, Havnestad (Harbour Town), is rising like a phoenix from the ashes of the run-down, reeking hull of worn-out industrial buildings. The majority of these buildings belonged to the old soybean cake factory, which used to shroud the whole area with an air of abandonment and bleakness. Many locals can probably recall the characteristic sweet odour from the old soybean cake factory – an odour that engulfed the whole neighbourhood while the factory was still in production. This was a real nuisance that made Islands Brygge less attractive in those days – at least to people with sensitive noses.

Those days are gone, and the whole area around Islands Brygge has transformed into a lively and fashionable neighbourhood with the added benefit of a central location in Copenhagen: It only takes you 15 minutes to walk to City Hall Square and five minutes to the Islands Brygge Metro station. The district now displays a mixture of old residential buildings and small shops to the north, and new residential buildings and office buildings to the south. The southern part of Islands Brygge has nearly completed its transformation from closed down industrial sites to new buildings, and the western part is characterised by the entrance to the harbour and a green waterfront park, where one can find both the Islands Brygge house of culture and a popular harbour bath.

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As owner of the Danish soybean cake industry, the East Asiatic Company (EAC) was left with the big site on the southern part of the quay when production stopped in 1991. The generally poor economy at the time, and uncertainty about the scale of pollution of e.g. mercury and nickel as well as the ensuing decontamination costs meant that the site lay almost deserted for a number of years until a local plan for the whole area was drawn up. It contained both a local plan devised by the City of Copenhagen and a specific plan drawn up by the EAC in cooperation with the contractor NCC. The overall plan required the redevelopment of the entire area to be self-financing and the decontamination costs to be covered by sale of land.

PLH architects had drawn up the master plan, which zoned the 220,000 m² for 50 % housing and 50 % businesses (later changed to 70 % housing and 30 % businesses). They won the Town Planning Prize in 2003 for their visionary project, along with the EAC, the City of Copenhagen and the residents of Islands Brygge.

The land sold faster than anyone had dared to hope. Several developers recognised the potential in a centrally located district with a mixture of housing and businesses. Better times for the construction industry meant that buyers soon lined up, and by the end of 2001 all building sites were sold – several years ahead of schedule.

LÆGEMIDDEL
STYRELSEN
DANISH MEDICINES AGENCY



The Danish Medicines Agency's domicile in Islands Brygge

From old industrial plant to open workspace

In 2002-2003, an old soybean cake factory in the Islands Brygge district of Copenhagen was transformed into a streamlined modern workplace with the utmost respect for and sensitivity towards the original architecture.

The most impressive feature of the former soybean cake factory is the enchanting and beautiful encounter between old and new, which the architects have successfully created in this old industrial plant. Ever since the East Asiatic Company (EAC) founded the soybean cake factory in 1909, it has had a substantial impact on the Islands Brygge district of Copenhagen – architectonically and economically. It was a factory that provided several thousand jobs. Originally, the factory imported soybeans all the way from Manchuria

for oil manufacture and cattle feed. Production was later expanded to oils extracted from coconut, rape and flaxseed for use in the production of food, soap, paraffin wax, etc.

The factory closed in 1991 after a ten-year downturn, but a new era dawned at the old factory a decade later, in 2001. Actually, it had already begun in 2000 when some of the factory buildings were acquired by the Sjælsø Group, which wanted to preserve as much of the original buildings as possible and redevelop

the site for business premises lease. The Sjælsø Group cooperated with PLH architects, who restored machine shops, power house, boiler room and production facilities with great sensitivity and creativity and turned them into office spaces. They also added new buildings where necessary.

Part of the soybean cake factory became the 12,000 m² headquarters of the Danish Medicines Agency.



In the Danish Medicines Agency's canteen, the ceiling colours mirror the oak parquet floor with darker wood stripes. The chairs are designed by Nanna Ditzel.

Converting the old industrial buildings was an exciting task for the architects. Not least because the Danish Medicines Agency from the onset was keen on designing the buildings based on ideas about flexible office spaces and work processes.

The new office spaces were intended to contribute to breaking any rigid organisational patterns that often characterise large organisations and companies. Instead, the Agency was to work in a more project-oriented process, allowing teams to cooperate in flexible project areas across divisions.

The ideas were realised by open-plan working environments – with visibility and dynamics to facilitate

internal communications – combined with plenty of study and conference rooms providing ample opportunities to work undisturbed.

Even the actual buildings posed an architectonic challenge. "It was amazing to enter the old, almost bombed-out buildings, which were practically a shell," explains Rikke Haugård Sejersen, who was one of the PLH architects involved in renovating the buildings from the onset. "The floor was wet, and the windows and columns in the high-ceilinged room gave the impression of a cathedral. It was very inspiring."

The working group went on a field trip to the Netherlands, where they studied Dutch modernists like Rem Koolhaas and Willem Jan Neutelings.

The Danish Medicines Agency's kitchen is located in a cube-shaped box with glass walls. The freestanding steel staircase leads to a platform with conference rooms.



Photography: Anders Sune Berg

The Danish architects were particularly impressed by the Dutch architects' aesthetic outlook on the character of the buildings' original materials.

Directly inspired by this, they devised a design proposal that used the existing materials as decoration to emphasise the unique atmosphere of the site. This also added an informal, relaxed feeling to the office environment. The new parts of the building constructed during the project are of the same unpretentious, industrial character.



At the Danish Medicines Agency, characteristic elements are retained from the building's days as a soybean cake factory, for example the old concrete silo pipes that once funnelled coal down to the boilers. The pipes now constitute a sculptural element in the office design.

The Danish Medicines Agency is housed in the former factory's power plant and boiler room. Here too, the large, high-ceilinged rooms have been turned into communal facilities.

The canteen is set up in the power machine room, a magnificent hall with a steel roof spanning over 18 metres. The masonry is painted white, interspersed with beautiful, tall arched windows. This is contrasted by the ceiling's ventilation shafts and the original steel beams, which have been painted black against a background of naturally coloured chipboard that insulates the angled ceiling.

The ceiling colours mirror the oak parquet floor with darker wood stripes – an additional finesse adding

beautiful colours and contrast in terms of materials. In the middle of the room, the huge space is interrupted by a cube-shaped box accommodating the canteen kitchen; large glass panels are inserted into the walls, elegantly alternating between stripes of frosted and clear glass.

A free-standing steel staircase leads up to a deck with an uninterrupted view of the canteen. Conference rooms are installed here – a single large room just above the kitchen and two smaller, circular rooms, which quite unpretentiously appear to be made of corrugated cardboard.

In general, the architects wanted to preserve as many memories of the old industrial buildings as



Above the Danish Medicines Agency's canteen is an informal, circular conference room.

possible throughout the complex. At the Danish Medicines Agency, for instance, the characteristic, old concrete silo pipes that used to feed coal to the boilers are preserved. These huge, funnel-like shapes endow the office area with exciting, sculptural effects.