

BuildingFutures
AWARDS
2011

Award Category: Design Excellence

Project: Windhill Churches Centre, Bishop's Stortford

Client: St Joseph's Catholic and St Michael's Anglican Churches

Project Team: Stephen Morgan



A new community centre in Bishop's Stortford has been built to accommodate the needs of both St Joseph's Catholic Church and St Michael's Anglican Church. It provides an open hall space, smaller rooms for group activities and office accommodation, for the use of both churches.

Key design aspects focused around the precise requirements of the two churches. For example, there was a crucial need to respect and enhance the views of the building from the many adjacent vantage points. As a result, the external elevations are contemporary and incorporate large areas of full height glazing, with horizontal solar shading. This gives the building a modern and contemporary look and feel, whilst ensuring that the building benefits from the glorious views of the parkland to the south, including St. Michael's churchyard and ancient yew trees.

As the site is a particularly densely-treed site, it seemed fitting that timber should play a large part in the design concept and construction of the centre - from the areas of cedar cladding and the green oak cloistered approach to the Centre, to the large GULAM beams that support the contrasting planes of the mono-pitched roofs. This ensures that the building complements and enhances its surrounding environment.

In addition, the new Windmill Churches Centre has taken on board the extremely difficult site access and is now fully accessible to elderly and disabled visitors - as is the external access to the centre, with shallow ramps and an externally accessed lift that serves all levels of the building.

Judges comments:

“The judges were impressed with this unique project and felt that the venture had been perfectly executed. The novel use of space not only takes advantage of the fantastic views, but also complements the natural setting with a stunning largely timber structure.”
