

BuildingFutures
AWARDS
2011

Award Category: Most Sustainable Construction

Project: West Herts College, Watford

Client: West Herts College

Project Team: Weedon Partnership LLP (Executive Architects)



More than just a campus for West Herts College, this four-storey, state-of-the-art building contributes to Watford Council's vision of a cultural quarter within the town centre area of Watford. Designed to be a welcoming presence for both students and the wider public, the new building delivers on all fronts.

The development provides purpose-built further education and higher education facilities, which meet the college's current and future requirements. It consists of a quadrangle teaching block and a linear arm or public wing – or 'street' - extending towards Hempstead Road. A four-storey glazed entrance atrium sits between both buildings.

The layout was developed around the concept that the entrance atrium and the 'street' will provide the focus for activity. It is the point at which students, staff and visitors enter the College and provides a valuable, flexible space, which can be used for events and displays – as well as providing a range of working learning environments that are visible to inspire interest.

West Herts College placed sustainability at the heart of the design process from the outset. Sustainability elements include solar heating on the roof, to provide hot water for the building; a green roof to provide an insulation layer, which reduces heat gain in the summer and heat loss in the winter; a biomass boiler, supported by four gas boilers; rainwater harvesting, filtered and used in toilet flushing; rainwater retention, delaying the time for rainwater to enter the sewer system; internal lighting with automatic switches, activated by ambient light levels and movement; and solar shading for the street, atrium and refectory areas.

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To demonstrate the benefits to students and the community, the College has reception displays showing the equivalent amount of electricity being saved from the solar panels, and the amount of rainwater collected and used by the college. The College provides an exciting experience for the students and an intriguing resource for the local community.

Judges comments:

“What is really exciting about West Herts College is that so many of the scheme’s sustainable solutions present educational opportunities, and over time will be incorporated into the curriculum. I was also highly impressed with the Estates team, who were actively engaged in ensuring that the new technologies and controls systems were working well and that the building meets the needs of staff and students.”

“The layout and design of this development is conducive to inspiring not only students at the college but also people in the local community. Visibility is at the heart of its design which allows a great synergy between public and private spaces allowing the College to display the great work it does.”