Award Category: **Design Excellence sponsored by Salus**

Project: **North Hertfordshire Museum & Hitchin Town Hall**
Hitchin

Client: **North Hertfordshire District Council**

Architect: **Buttress Architects, Appleyard & Trew, Thomasons, Borras Construction, Silcock Leedham, Mather & Co.**

This scheme comprises the refurbishment of Hitchin Town Hall and the integration of the North Hertfordshire Museum Service, merging the existing facilities into a single destination in the centre of Hitchin.

The development is located within a Conservation Area and includes the refurbishment and redecoration of the Grade II Listed Town Hall, and the conversion of a three storey Victorian Workmen's Hall and Gymnasium to accommodate an entrance foyer, shop and café facilities at ground floor level, and the North Herts Museum Service at first floor level.

A two storey main entrance, to the right of the Town Hall, forms a single point of entry to the complex. Planes of glass, red brick and sandstone reflect the palette of materials used in the historic Town Hall, however expressed in a modern design, set back from the street frontage to avoid disruption to the symmetry and grandeur of the Town hall.

A key principle of the scheme is the reduction in the number level changes between each facility. A principal lift and stair core connects the floor plates of the Workmen's Hall with the Town Hall and the Gymnasium Building easing circulation and access.

Inside there are staff facilities, an education area and a dedicated area for local studies. The Museum element includes a temporary exhibition space. Environmental controls allow travelling exhibitions from national collections to be exhibited, as well as temporary local displays.

Judges comments:

"This complex community project to combine three very different buildings with multiple floor levels has been skilfully handled. The fusion of old and new will certainly enrich the visitor experience. The judges wish it every success in the future."