



Award Category: Retrofit for the Future sponsored by Willmott Dixon

Project: Conference Centre extension
Harpenden

Client: Rothamsted Centre for Research and Enterprise

Project Team: Archial NORR, Ernest Pasterfield and Partners, Cunnington Clark, Scott White and Hookins, SDC



The Rothamsted Centre for Research and Enterprise (RoCRE) provides an international focus for leading agri-tech science and innovation. Building on this international brand, the conference centre extension delivers a state-of-art facility.

The original lecture room was built in 1983 as a multi-purpose facility; and a restaurant and meeting rooms were added in 1997. The scheme incorporates and extends the existing facilities in a seamless manner, and provides a 300 seater auditorium that makes full use of the challenging topography, with offices, flexible meeting and seminar rooms, catering support and toilets. The extension is joined to the existing Centre by a new internal street.

The Conference Centre lies at the heart of the Campus and respects the height and mass of the existing buildings. This was achieved by minimal excavation and following the slope of the existing site.

The building materials reflect those used across the Campus and include red brick, aluminium cladding, curtain walling and roofing.

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A systems control and monitoring network is included throughout the building, linked to a site wide Building Management System.

Judges comments:

“This impressive extension provides a state-of-the art conference auditorium. The venerable and important research facility has grown organically. So, the recent intervention has allowed the retention and reinvigoration of the existing hexagonal conference space, into an ancillary exhibition function. Natural and passive ventilation strategies are augmented with simple mechanical ventilation in the auditorium. The judges were particularly impressed with the subtle integration of mechanical services to the latter. Robust detailing and specification ensures optimal whole life costs. This strategic site intervention should ensure a healthy future for agricultural research.”