

Community spirit wins the day

A striking new community hall in Oxted, Surrey, picked up the Best Public Building/Community Project award at the LABC South East Building Excellence Awards



A community project in the true sense of the word, the award is a fitting tribute to the combined efforts of all those involved – from Tandridge Building Control, who worked in partnership with Molyneux Architects and local developers Farnrise Construction, to the fund raisers and grant-making organisations who raised the money for the build.

The brief given to Molyneux Architects and Farnrise's Design and Build architects, Hazle McCormack Young, was the new Community Hall should be in keeping with the town's Arts and Crafts vernacular while also considering the need for low running costs, incorporating

"green" materials and products and making best use of renewable resources as well as effectively harnessing the solar and geothermal potential of the locality.

A design team approach to the project was taken from the outset and this was especially important as the new hall was to be sited over a burial ground which meant a specialist archeological survey (MOLAS) had to be carried out, resulting in the discovery of remains which had to be re-interred before work could begin.

Problems were also encountered when trenches caved in unexpectedly due to the instability of the sand found at lower level, which meant that the site was reduced by 600mm. The

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combined expertise of Building Control's and Farnrise's engineers meant this was quickly and efficiently resolved with little detriment to the program of works.

The new Community Hall was opened by HRH the Duke of Kent. It caters for local youth, educational, fitness, voluntary, mother and toddler and church groups as well as being the permanent home for Crossroads, the respite care charity. Its facilities include a large light and airy multi-functional hall, kitchen area and individual offices/meetings rooms.

There were several key factors that contributed to winning the award. The skills of the architects, for their uncompromised approach to the original design brief and awareness of the limited financial resources available. Their attention to detail was first class, including the use of locally sourced, sustainable materials, such as the striking oak cladding to the hall's exterior as well as the installation of solar panels to the south facing roof to maximise the potential for





water heating. Likewise as increasing energy costs had been raised as a concern by the committee responsible for the development of the hall, it was decided to use intelligent control technology to manage the water-based under floor heating which is served by a biomass heat-generating source.

Farnrise Construction are also to be highly commended for the efficient way they ran the site and their proactivity in liaising with Tandridge Building Control. Together, they developed a strong

working relationship and were able to overcome any obstacles as they arose, and each complemented the other's professional skills and knowledge.

Equally, the hall's Appeal Committee could not have done without the project management skills of Alan Chapman of the W T Partnership, and a local resident. He liaised with Farnrise Construction on their behalf to ensure continuity of the build and good channels of communication.

As a community project

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built on a relatively tight budget, everyone concerned feels the outcome has been a great success, and the new building is in keeping with the local surroundings and reflects quality craftsmanship.

With the use of sustainable and renewable material it should stand the test of time and is a testament to the collective skills and experience of building control, local companies and craftsmen.