

Sophi Taylor Visitor Centre, Cambridge

Client: National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB)

Value: £1.1m

Status: completed 2013

Our new low-energy visitor centre has received a major accolade for its sustainable design. The highly energy-efficient building, in both its construction and operation, has been recognised with the top BREEAM 'Outstanding' rating, making it one of the most sustainable buildings in the country.

We incorporated a number of low-carbon strategies into the scheme including cement replacement and recycled aggregates in foundations and external works, together with a cross laminated timber (CLT) primary structure. A 3D computer-generated model was created to enable precise off-site manufacture of structural panels to the

required geometry. The external envelope has high levels of thermal insulation and the building is designed to be 'zero carbon' in use - power is generated by a large array of photovoltaic panels, and heating is provided by a biomass boiler which also serves the nearby research glasshouses. As a water saving measure, rainwater is harvested into enlarged cisterns for flushing WCs.

The building provides a series of meeting rooms and seminar spaces with state-of-the-art AV facilities for visitors to the Institute's Innovation farm adjacent to their Cambridge headquarters.

