

INNOVATIVE APPROACH CREATES AWARD-WINNING PROJECT



A flexible and innovative approach to creating additional classroom and associated spaces at Mellor Primary School in Greater Manchester allowed both unusual material choices and numerous design changes to be accommodated successfully.

Rhodes & Partners were invited to handle all the structural engineering work, from concept through to completion. The school itself is set in a striking rural landscape, and plays an integral part of the village's life, so the school's expansion was regarded as a high-profile community project. This was reflected in a strong environmental and sustainability focus, which involved the use of Glulam beams, rammed-earth tyre foundations, straw bale walls and natural wool insulation. This required a structural design solution which varied considerably from the typical steel, masonry and concrete models.

However, budgetary constraints meant that some cost savings were required, and this resulted in many changes to the original design over the course of the project. The use of 3-D technology allowed Rhodes & Partners to work closely with the client, design team and contractor to agree changes quickly and efficiently. Visible elements such as the innovative superstructure were retained, while more traditional materials were substituted in areas such as the foundations and substructure which would not be seen. This also allowed the project to benefit from some of the key principles contained within the Level 2 Building Information Modelling framework.

The extension – which was opened by Professor Brian Cox - has since gone on to win various awards, including a RIBA Northwest Award, and both the Education Project of the Year and Judges' Choice awards from the Structural Timber Association.



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