



Civic Centre, Chester-Le-Street, Co Durham For Chester-le-Street District Council

The new Civic Centre replaces four dispersed sub-standard buildings. It contains three departments, a council chamber, committee rooms, staff cafeteria and public offices. The office space was required to be moveable to allow for future re-organisation and except for some private offices and meeting rooms it is open planned, the general public having easy access to every department. The Council can rent out some areas for functions and the building can be doubled in size if required in future.

There is a main pedestrian route from west to east. Part of this forms a public concourse with offices and interview rooms on each side. Should the offices need to be enlarged this will be done by eastward extension of the pedestrian route.

The two burolandschaft spaces occupy the eastern zone. There is a mezzanine upon and below which compartmented offices are located. These can be rearranged or added to without impinging on the burolandschaft space.

The central zone is a two storey space with roof lighting. Semi-mature trees create a conservatory within which the restaurant and meeting rooms are located and which is overlooked by adjacent offices.

The building is wedge shaped with a fall in ground level from the eastern entrance and car park. The mall is a glazed steel barrel vault following the gradient of the roof. This is totally enclosed and forms a transitional space between the exterior and interior of the building.

Poor ground conditions required a lightweight building. The building structure is therefore entirely of steel and consists of five 37m span structural hollow section lattice girders, supported near their centres over the burolandschaft spaces, running to a two storey steel portal frame.

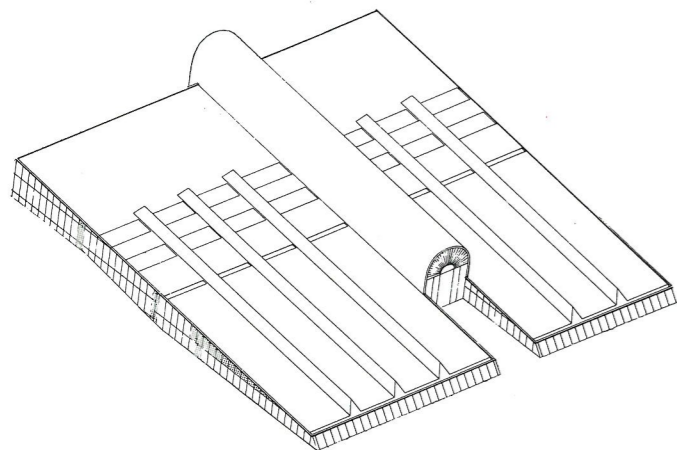
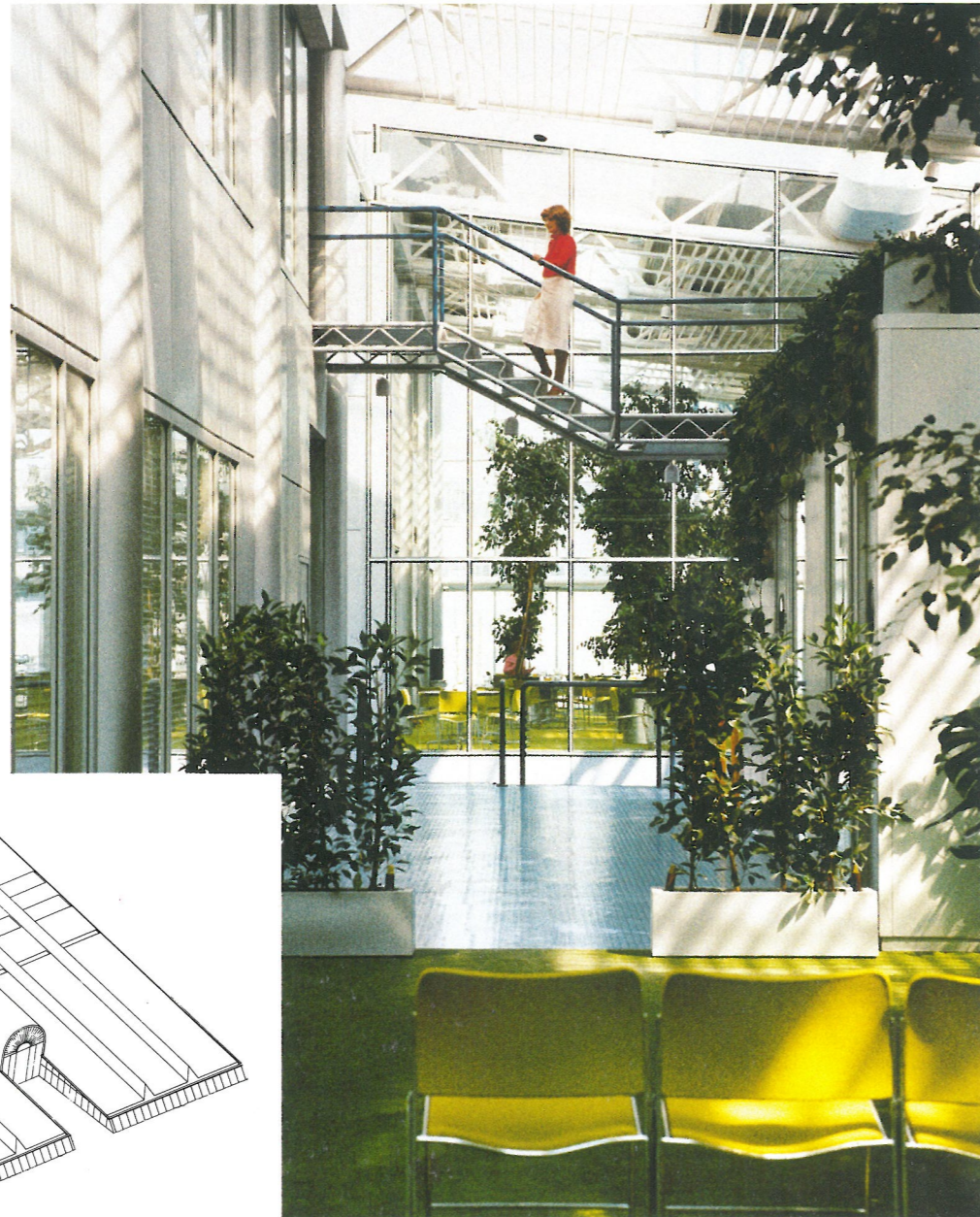
This is enclosed by a lightweight, well insulated 'curtain wall'. The roof is a sandwich construction utilising a self-finished long span profile to form the acoustic soffit (eliminating purlins) with spacers, insulation and the outer skin of silver coloured PVF2 coated steel to match the walls. Demountable steel faced insulated partitions are used internally.

The architects were commissioned in November 1979. Because a rapid programme was required, a management contractor was appointed in May 1980 and work started on site in the same month. The building was occupied in May 1982, the total cost being £3 million.

Architects: Faulkner-Brown Hendy Watkinson Stonor

Structural Engineers: Cundall Johnston & Partners

Steelwork Contractors: Westbury Tubular Structures Ltd



Judges' Comments

A fine example of the use of structural steel to create an exciting and attractive civic building with scope for expansion should the need arise. The vaulting over the pedestrian mall and the tubular girders over the offices allow the services to be distributed in a simple and elegant manner.