AHR has completed the new Keynsham Civic Centre and One Stop Shop for Bath & North East Somerset Council. In addition to providing the Council with high quality offices, civic facilities and public realm which will reinvigorate Keynsham town centre, the project is on course to be one the lowest energy consuming public buildings in the UK targeting a DEC A rating.

Keynsham Civic Centre has recently won a number of prestigious awards including RIBA South West Award, RIBA South West Sustainability Award, and British Council for Offices Corporate Workplace and Innovation Awards for the South West, Thames Valley & South Wales region.

The new development has replaced 1960s buildings to provide 68,000sqft council offices, a library and one-stop shop, 20,000sqft retail, two new pedestrian streets, a market square, car parking and highways improvements.

AHR responded to the challenge of the constrained and sloping town centre site creating two new pedestrian streets and a cluster of inter-locking buildings. This allowed over 50% of the site to be given over to new public realm and better integrated the development into the existing urban grain. Careful orientation of the buildings and an innovative acoustic louvre window system allowed full natural ventilation to be used throughout, despite the location within a busy town centre.

At the heart of the brief was Bath & North East Somerset Council's objective of creating a highly efficient, robust and flexible building that would minimise energy consumption and maintenance while providing first class civic facilities and a high quality workplace embodying a 'one council' culture.

AHR has built on extensive in-house research and worked closely with Environmental Engineer Max Fordham to develop a pioneering environmental strategy for the project: it is the first in the UK to implement BSRIA Soft Landings to target an exemplary DEC A rating, which it is expected to achieve in 2017 once it has been in use for two years. This rating will confirm Keynsham Civic Centre as one of the lowest energy consuming public buildings in the UK. The offices have already achieved an outstanding EPC A rating and the project is almost carbon neutral.

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AHR

AHR has a long-standing reputation for award-winning design and the creation of innovative places and environments.

AHR is one of the UK's most established architecture and building consultancy practices, with experience dating back to 1835. Today AHR has evolved into an international business encompassing 450 staff in 12 offices.

Recent and current projects include new civic offices for Blackpool Council, the St Enoch subway station in Glasgow, a major residential development for the 2017 World Expo in Kazakhstan, and the multi award-winning Al Bahr Towers in Abu Dhabi.

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Every aspect of the design of the building was considered to provide optimal environmental performance, starting with the building's orientation and form which reduced the requirements for mechanical ventilation and lighting. An innovative timber (CLT), steel and concrete structure not only created bright and welcoming interiors but also reduced heating requirements and construction time.

One of the key objectives for the project was to facilitate a workplace transformation, allowing the Council to adopt a more flexible way of working which would also improve communication, collaboration and efficiency across teams and departments. AHR responded to this by arranging four wings around a central atrium which incorporates a large breakout area two touchdown decks. The atrium is the heart of the building, creating visual connectedness and opportunities for spontaneous meetings as users move across the building.

Keynsham Civic Centre has provided Bath & North East Somerset Council with a landmark building which positions it at the heart of the community it serves and which embodies its commitment to that community and to its staff to be an exemplary Council, investing wisely, making a positive impact in every aspect of its work and looking to the future.

Derek Quilter, Divisional Director of Property and Project Delivery at Bath and North East Somerset Council said: "AHR demonstrated a detailed understanding of the client brief and had a clear vision for the architectural response. Their approach to consultation, listening and responding with well-considered design options has proved invaluable."

Adam Spall, Architect at AHR who led the design of Keynsham Civic Centre, said: "AHR was very pleased to be selected to design the new Civic Centre as it was clear from the outset that the brief was both pioneering and challenging, aspiring to the highest standards of sustainable design. This project is much more than a new office building for the Council: the ambition of the client has been to spark regeneration, enhance the public realm, improve connectivity, and instil community ownership in the project.

It sets a high bar for future development within the county, creating an impressive precedent by a local authority which aims to lead by example. We are delighted that the efforts of the team have been recognised with two RIBA regional awards."

– ENDS –

Project team

Client: Bath & North East Somerset Council

Architect: AHR

Environmental Engineer: Max Fordham

Structural Engineer: Hydrock

Contractor: Willmott Dixon

Sustainability Statement

Keynsham Civic Centre and One Stop Shop is a test case for an innovative approach to delivering exemplary building performance, and a truly sustainable building.

It is expected to achieve an exemplary DEC A rating in 2017 once it has been in use for two years, and will be the first project in the UK to achieve that rating applying BSRIA Soft Landings, including a two-year aftercare period. The DEC A rating will also confirm it as one of the lowest energy consuming public buildings in the UK.

From the outset of the project Bath & North East Somerset Council was determined that the new development would achieve outstanding building performance and be resilient to changes in climate and use. The Council incorporated a target of a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) rating of A into the project brief. To ensure that this target can be met and that the project goes beyond compliance requirements to achieve nearly zero energy use in operation, Soft Landings requirements have been incorporated into the contract.

Max Fordham developed an energy performance baseline accompanied by an Energy Risk Register that would track the design features and components that had bearings on energy performance from design to completion, such as U values, floor to floor heights, thermal mass and window systems. Comparing operational energy performance against such a baseline during the first year of the building's operation became feasible

and was the contractor’s responsibility.

As part of the BSRIA Soft Landings process, the team engaged with the client’s facilities management team from an early stage to better understand occupant behaviour and operational needs and ensure that management factors could be taken into account early on in the design. As a result of this for example, use of the building outside of core working hours is contained to a dedicated out-of-hours working suite.

A ‘passive first’ approach was applied to every aspect of the architectural and services design, including orientation, daylight, form, ventilation, structure, acoustics and cooling. As the project progressed, the design was honed to remove unnecessary complexity in mechanical and electrical systems and to improve resilience. Energy efficiency was balanced with occupant comfort and simple intuitive systems.

Elements of the environmental approach have been embedded into the design of the building. In order to achieve natural ventilation, an innovative hybrid structural frame was developed which consisted of steel portal frames with a cross laminated timber (CLT) frame. The upper floors of the offices were constructed entirely using a CLT frame. The hybrid frame solution provided significant cost savings and also achieved many of the sustainable benefits of a timber building with the structural efficiency of a steel frame. In order to provide thermal mass, 50% of the floor slabs are pre-cast concrete planks which incorporate cooling pipework to future proof the building against potential climate change and increases in occupation density. Narrow floor plans of c.15m were optimised for cross ventilation.

The offices have already achieved an outstanding EPC rating of 5: almost zero-carbon and placing the project well on course to achieve the DEC A rating. in 2017. The clear target of the DEC A rating ensured that the project team could work together cohesively towards a clear and common goal, resulting in a more efficient and productive project, and a more resilient building. The teams were able to share data relating to building performance that would otherwise remain with the engineers or contractors.