

If all health centres were like this...

A “pioneering” sustainable health centre in London has been shortlisted for this year’s **Royal Institute of British Architects** Stirling Prize. **Ella Taylor** looks at its green features.



“The project is exemplary in its approach to sustainability and includes the use of recycled materials, natural ventilation and night-time purging of internal space temperatures,” says the RIBA of the **Kentish Town Health Centre** by **Allford Hall Monaghan Morris**, adding: “Why can’t all health clinics be like this?”

The Jenga-inspired health centre is architecturally interesting and colourful, with bold coloured shapes splashed across the walls of the reception and waiting areas, all with the common theme of health, intended to uplift staff and patients.

A cantilevered base and piled structure meant that as many trees as possible could be kept on the site, often sitting very

close alongside the building, greening it physically, by absorbing CO₂ in the area, and aesthetically.

The trees had caused structural problems for the previous 1970’s-built health centre, as the roots dried out the clay underneath, unbalancing the foundations and damaging a whole wing so much that the whole building must be demolished, rather unsustainably, but necessarily. Now though the trees are an important part of the design, surrounding the building and influencing a public garden, small terraces for patients and rooftop terrace for staff.

The theme of trees pops up again with the oak sprung floor in the gym and some other non-clinical areas. The whole centre

has underfloor heating, recycled materials were used as much as possible and electric charging points for cars are provided.

Dr Roy Macgregor began the RIBA-sponsored competition that asked architects to design a new health centre in Kentish Town. He said the completed building is now “a place to visit rather than a place to come and get healed.”

Kentish Town Health Centre is mainly built from reinforced concrete, with the second floor made from a lightweight steel frame and the upper floors covered in an insulated render system from **Envirowall**.

A mixture of mechanical and natural ventilation systems cool the centre. Natural air comes through openings at



Inside the colourful health centre and, below, the 2005 Prize winner was the sustainable Scottish Parliament building

the edge of the building and sky lights. At night windows can be manually opened, leaving mesh panels to protect from rain and security threats, while allowing in cool air. In the main corridors and waiting areas ventilation is automatically adjusted through a temperature monitoring system.

Rooms without sky lights use passive ventilation systems boosted by fans powered by photovoltaic cells. Some other rooms don't have enough external openings to give enough natural ventilation, so in these cases mechanical ventilation from a central air handling plant on the roof is used.

A total of six projects were shortlisted for the Stirling Prize. The other five were 5 Aldermanbury Square, London, by **Eric Parry Architects**, Liverpool One Masterplan, Liverpool, by **BDP**, Maggie's Centre, London, by **Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners**, Bodegas Protos, Spain, by **Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners** and Fuglsang Kunstmuseum, Denmark, by **Tony Fretton Architects**.

Sunand Prasad, RIBA president, said: "This year's shortlist really embodies the wide ranging spirit of the RIBA Stirling Prize: from a winery to health centres, from an art museum in open country to major transformations of dense inner city areas. This is a fascinating set of schemes; the

judges have a hard but eagerly anticipated decision to make."

The Stirling Prize judges this year include **Benedetta Tagliabue**, architect, **Sir John Sorrell**, CABE chair and **Thomas Heatherwick**, a designer. Bookmakers' favourite to win is Fuglsang Kunstmuseum, with odds of 3/1. Kentish Town Health Centre is forth favourite with odds of 5/1, given by **William Hill**. The winner will be announced on 17 October.

► <http://www.architecture.com/Awards/RIBASTirlingPrize/RIBASTirlingPrize2009/RIBASTirlingPrizeShortlist2009.aspx>



The Stirling Prize and sustainability

Liverpool One: The Liverpool One masterplan involved linking nearly 40 new and refurbished buildings of different uses designed by over 20 different architects with the existing areas. Terry Davenport, head of BDP's northern retail team and the Liverpool One masterplan, said: "Masterplanning takes in a broad range of disciplines and plays a key role in the delivery of sustainable urban regeneration."

Bodegas Protos: Thermal ground mass is harnessed to create cool storage space in this Spanish winery, while an air system makes use of both the warm daytime and cool night time temperatures, cooling the building for free.

Accordia by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios: Last year's Stirling Prize winner was this Cambridge-based housing development, which also received a Building for Life gold standard and a BREEAM/EcoHomes rating of 'Very Good'. On a brownfield site, it used stock bricks, copper and FSC timber. Insulation materials are zero ozone-depletion rated and green sedum roofs were used on flats. Dual-flush toilets, A-rated appliances and excellent public transport links green the development.

The Scottish Parliament by EMBT/RMJM:

The 2005 winner kept sustainability as a central element of the design, using lots of oak and a green roof, natural ventilation and lighting where possible, solar panels to heat water and the re-use of demolition material from the site's previous buildings.

30 St Mary Axe by Foster + Partners:

Popularly known as the Gherkin, "London's first ecological" skyscraper won the Stirling Prize in 2004. Its continuous skin makes up the curved walls and roof, helping to preserve energy, while natural ventilation reduces the need for air conditioning.