

Greenwich Millennium School & Health Centre

Completed: 2001

Cladding: Larch – locally sourced and preservative treated

Designed by: Edward Cullinan Architects (ECA)

Photos courtesy: ECA and English Partnerships

Brief description:

The Greenwich Millennium School and Health Centre were built as part of the Greenwich Millennium Village project for English Partnerships.

Both the two-form entry primary school and the Health Centre face south, over landscaped gardens and playgrounds, to benefit from passive solar gain and daylight, whilst brightly coloured automated awnings keep out unwanted heat and glare from the summer sun.

The consistency of the external cladding of vertical European larch boarding, on the more public elevations, helps to unify the buildings. A vertical board design was chosen utilising two boards on the outer face overlapping a narrow board on the inner layer to add visual surface texture and width. Board on board designs are ideal for ensuring any movement of the boards caused by moisture content changes is not noticeable. At the roof line, intermediate boards are extended to meet a horizontal capping .

European larch was selected because it can be left exposed to weather naturally and has a higher density than most other softwood cladding options and as such is more resistant to physical damage. The larch was sourced locally but because supplies were insufficient to enable all sapwood to be excluded it was pre-treated with preservative in accordance with Wood Protection Association Commodity specification C6 (cladding). Had it been possible to exclude all sapwood then the heartwood of larch is considered to me “moderately durable” (resistant to fungal decay) and is often used without treatment when good detailing and installation practices can prevent moisture uptake and retention. The treated larch was left to weather naturally. The cladding was prefabricated on site prior to fixing with stainless steel ring shank nails by hand. Full length double boards were secured with pan head stainless steel screws and washers to facilitate their easy removal and replacement .

