

Wates reaches milestone at University of Oxford's £200m science hub

2 years ago



Construction at the University of Oxford's largest project to date, the £200m Life and Mind Building (LaMB), has reached its latest major milestone, with the circa 270,000 sq ft reinforced concrete structure now complete.

Wates is delivering the project on behalf of Oxford University Development (OUD), the £4bn partnership between [Legal & General](#) and the [University of Oxford](#). The project will be the university's largest teaching and research facility. It will house 800 students and 1,200 researchers from across the Departments of Biology and Experimental Psychology, significantly improving the way those disciplines are taught and explored.

The milestone was celebrated with a topping out ceremony on 15 February, attended by stakeholders from across the delivery partnership including Wates, project managers Arup, cost consultants Arcadis, architects NBJJ, structural engineer Ramboll, and building services engineer Hoare Lea.

The scheme consists of two wings a four-storey building dedicated to office accommodation and subject testing booths and an adjoining five-storey block with flexible, specialised laboratory space. It has been designed to provide maximum flexibility and foster collaboration between departments, linked by a central atrium and lower and ground floor teaching centre.

LaMB replaces the Tinbergen building, which closed in February 2017 and has been designed from inception to support long-term sustainability. Using a blend of both BREEAM Excellent targets and Passivhaus principles, the building is intended to be Net Zero Carbon in Operation by 2030.

Wates is now progressing with the building envelope and fit-out of the build, which will see 140,000 hours

of mechanical and electrical installation alone. Of these, more than 38,500 hours will be carried out at Wates' offsite manufacturing facility, Prism, including the manufacture of 22 mechanical and electrical risers, more than 600 distribution modules and fully prefabricated pump rooms.

The Wates team started on site in November 2021, with final handover scheduled for late 2024.

Mark Tant, Managing Director of Wates Construction, said: "LaMB will support potentially world-changing scientific research and its significance cannot be overlooked. We, and all our partners, have worked closely with OUD to ensure this build will meet the highly complex requirements needed by its end users, support long-term sustainability goals, as well as the wider Oxford community.

"With the structure now complete, you can see how this state-of-the-art scheme slots into Oxford's historic skyline. We're honoured to deliver such a monumental project for a prestigious institution and I, and all our teams, look forward to progressing to completion next year."

Anna Strongman, CEO of OUD commented: "To reach this point, not only on the Life and Mind Building, but across a number of projects in such a short timescale is testament to the scale of OUD's ambition. We are focused on delivering socially sustainable developments for all in Oxford and also aim to set a new bar for university-backed development."

Mike Coplowe, Senior Development Manager, Legal & General added: "Topping out at the Life and Mind Building is a significant milestone for our partnership with the University of Oxford. Legal & General is committed to investing in the UK education and life sciences sector, and we are extremely proud of what we have achieved so far through OUD.

"The partnership is specifically aimed at driving investment into world-leading innovation, while attracting and retaining talent on a global playing field. To achieve this, we are matching these facilities with an equal drive in delivering much needed housing and amenities for the people that keep Oxford innovating."

Tim Crow, Project Director at Arup, said: "The Life and Mind Building will be transformative for biological and psychological sciences in Oxford. The co-location of departments will support innovative thinking and multi-disciplinary communication a catalyst for scientists to solve some of our major global challenges. Having managed the project since the initial strategic planning in 2017 it is great to see the building now taking shape."