

Press release

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Electronic Arts European Headquarters - Chertsey, Surrey

The first phase of the new European Headquarters campus for Electronic Arts, designed by Foster and Partners, opens on 1st June 2000.

The dynamic building sets a new standard for working environments for the world's leading computer games software development company, providing high quality workspace and an extensive range of on-site facilities for Electronic Arts' UK personnel.

Foster and Partners was invited in January 1997 to participate in a limited competition to design the masterplan for Electronic Arts' European headquarters, at the Hillswood Business Park being built by P&O Developments in Chertsey, Surrey. The competition brief included a mission statement from David Gardner, Electronic Arts' European Managing Director:

"We want a strong sense of quality, creativity and openness in our World. We try to work like a family, we have the same values. Each person has a different role, but we share the same ethics, we trust each other, we don't work from rulebooks, just guidelines. We each have a place and are highly valued, we call all of this our culture, which we highly prize"

The resulting building brief was unique, requiring a spectacular and stimulating working environment - reflecting Electronic Arts' position as market leader in its field - conforming to institutionally accepted standards of office design and space-planning flexibility.

The building is the first phase of a two-phase development which, when completed, will provide a total of 17,968m² of accommodation. Bounded to the north by an existing eighteenth-century lake, the phase 1 and 2 buildings are formed as a group of five 'fingers' of three-storey office accommodation, linked to form two blocks of contiguous floorplates. The buildings are linked by a sweeping glass wall, which provides environmental protection to a dramatic concourse-like atrium, which forms the social focus of the Electronic Arts Campus. This 'street' functions as an animated showcase for Electronic Arts' world, providing primary circulation at ground level and acting as an environmental buffer between the individual blocks of office accommodation and the landscape beyond.

Focussed around the street and occupying almost a third of the new campus, are facilities for Electronic Arts' staff. These include a state-of-the-art media centre for presenting company products; a games arcade; gymnasium, sports pitch and changing facilities; library; shop; sports bar and 170-seat restaurant, which opens into the atrium and onto an external covered terrace overlooking the lake.

The building employs a low-energy environmental strategy and a range of new technology building systems. Internal comfort conditions are maintained by a mixed-mode ventilation system combining

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displacement ventilation with free cooling from the exposed thermal mass of the building's structure. Supplementary ventilation and cooling is provided at the perimeter by either motorised opening windows linked to the building management system, or four-pipe fan-coil air conditioning for use in warmer weather. Heat gains are minimised by extensive use of external vertical and horizontal brise soleil systems as part of the low-energy faade design.

A combination of indirect and direct lighting is provided by suspended low-glare fittings on the lower two floors, and a bespoke services bulkhead feature on the second. Each light in the building is individually controlled by a computerised lighting-control system combined with a room by room presence detection. State of the art audio-visual presentation equipment is provided throughout the building, one of the largest installations of this kind in Europe. A 'Dect' portable telephone system allows staff to be contacted directly anywhere in the building over a portable network.

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