

Press release

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New tower for Willis in the City of London

Foster + Partners has completed a new UK headquarters for Willis at 51 Lime Street in the City of London. The project is significant in both urban and environmental terms. Open and integrated at street level, its shops and cafés extend the spirit of nearby Leadenhall Market; and its progressive environmental strategy surpasses statutory carbon reduction targets by more than 20 per cent.

The development comprises two separate buildings which step down to a public plaza. Located to the east of the Lloyds Building, the 9-storey building at 1 Fenchurch Street responds to the smaller scale of Billiter Street and Fenchurch Avenue, while the 28-storey Willis Building rises to the west of the site. The smaller buildings concave façade shapes the plaza and its curved corners maintain important view corridors, as well as reinstating an historic route through the site. A fringe of shops, cafés and bars at its base together with linear seating and landscaping, combine to enhance the public realm.

On plan, Willis London headquarters has been developed as a series of overlapping curved shells while its section is arranged in three steps. The roof terraces overlooking the plaza on the lower two steps are directly accessible from the office spaces. Both buildings have a central core to provide open floor plates and maximum flexibility in use. The entire development is visually unified by its highly reflective façade. The pressed form of the panels and their mica finish give them depth and texture. A dynamic effect is established through the interplay of solid and glazed panels arranged in a saw-tooth pattern, the fins also increase insulation while reducing glare and solar gain.

Together with the highly efficient services equipment and systems in the building, the façade design is integral to the energy strategy, which is rated BREEAM Excellent.

Norman Foster said: Thirty years ago we worked with Willis to challenge the conventions of an office building. Today, we are delighted to have completed their new UK headquarters at 51 Lime Street. A collaboration with both Willis and British Land, this building has come out of a very different design process, yet continues the practices commitment to developing humane, flexible and dynamic workplaces that are both informed by, and woven into, the urban fabric.

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