

## **St Albans Civic Society Awards Evening October 14<sup>th</sup> 2014 The Maltings**

The St Albans Civic Society held its annual awards evening at the Maltings on October 14<sup>th</sup> 2014. Each of the projects considered was completed before the end of 2013. Projects examined, included interesting developments which contributed to the life and image of the city.

After a careful selection process, from nearly 30 nominations, four projects were commended and received certificates: Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre; Cadoxton Place, Avenue Road; The Skin Shop, Chequer Street; and St Columba's College. One project, primary school provision with linked reception and administrative facilities at Samuel Ryder Academy was awarded the Society's plaque as the winner for 2013. The certificates of commendation and the plaque was presented by the Mayor of St Albans City and District, Councillor Geoff Harrison

This year's awards group were: Tim Boatswain, Michael Dunckley, Jude Dyson and Alan Smith.

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**Details of the short-listed projects, and the award winner, are given below. The four commended projects are listed first, followed by the Award winners. Photographs of the five projects are available on One Drive or disc (if requested)**

### ***Commendation***



**WESTMINSTER LODGE LEISURE CENTRE**

*Instigator: St Albans City & District Council  
Architects: Peter Simpson/ AFLS+P*

*Contractor: Willmott Dixon Construction*

Faced with an ageing and dilapidated leisure centre, which was not fit for purpose, the Council took the bold decision to invest in a brand new building with a greater range of facilities to meet the growing needs of its residents. Not without the inevitable controversy for such a major development using public money, the new leisure centre provides magnificent amenities: an eight lane swimming pool, training pool, a “children's water confidence area”, sports hall, fitness suite, cycling studio, youth gym, two studios, climbing walls, crèche, children's play area, and a café/bistro. At the heart of the building is the superbly designed and finished Verulamium Spa, offering a series of treatments and a suite of different temperature areas, based on the ancient Roman baths. Recognised as a very sustainable build, the Centre, along with excellent management and expanding revenue, has proved an enormous success in increasing the public's participation in health and fitness.

### ***Commendation***



***ST COLUMBA'S COLLEGE, King Harry Lane – Extensions to Gymnasium, New Foyer, etc.***

*Instigator: St Columba's College*

*Architect: Steve Bowles, HFP Architects, Wendover*

*Contractor: Quinn London Ltd., Mill Hill NW7*

How an extension can radically change the character and appearance of a building! The original rather “tired” and dated building is transformed by enclosing former open balcony areas with curtain walling, which, with its brise soleil, gives it a fresh, enlivened and more contemporary appearance; and also improves the environmental credentials. This results in existing spaces being optimised and improved, even though the extension was largely limited to the original footprint. The existing main Hall of the College has been successfully refurbished and modernised, as, too, the extended welcoming Foyer.

Notable, too, is the ingenious feat of engineering involving the excavation of the void below the Hall. This was carried out whilst still keeping the building standing and the school operational during construction. It provides valuable additional space, vital within the imposed limitations!

Altogether, this is a serious and commendable scheme which should prove highly beneficial in the future.

### ***Commendation***



***THE SKIN SHOP AND CLINIC, Chequer Street - Refurbishment***

*Instigator: Jane Lewis*

*Contractor: C.S. Lewis Property Services, Crowne Construction*

A superb example of how the minimum of intervention can yet produce such an excellent result. In spite of costs being deliberately kept low, the decorative scheme and general styling are consistent with, and enhance the character of this quite fine example of a shop building of its period. No more is this evident than in the beautifully (and lovingly!) restored shop front and the carefully preserved fine internal plasterwork details. The simple décor and furnishings within alleviate any over-emphasis on the clinical, given the nature of the business carried out here.

We were impressed by the integrity with which this scheme has been carried out on such a limited budget.

### ***Commendation***



***CADOXTON PLACE, AVENUE ROAD – conversion into town houses***



*Instigator: Townstone*  
*Architect: Jonathan Tucker, Net Assets*  
*Contractor: Loop Construction*

When St Raphael's, Avenue Road, a residential care home for visually impaired women, decided to close, Townstone purchased the property and embarked upon a novel and daring reconstruction: rather than adopting a standard conversion by dividing this large, three storey, property into a set of horizontal apartments, the decision was made to create eight vertical freehold homes. By utilising the existing structural walls and a considerable amount of ingenuity, each property is contained within its own vertical shaft. Although the footprint of the building occupies most of the site, outside space and parking facilities have been created for each property. The eccentric dimensions and imaginative reconstruction, along with an immaculate finish, have created a unique and exciting series of homes. As well as preserving a significant Victorian house, Townstone have brought, much needed, new dwellings to the Conversation area of the City.

### ***Awarded the Civic Society's Plaque***



***SAMUEL RYDER ACADEMY, Drakes Drive – New Primary School Unit***

*Instigator: Matt Gauthier, Head Teacher, Samuel Ryder*  
*Architect: Architecture PLB*  
*Contractor: Balfour Beatty*

The principal achievement of this project is its impact upon the general community of St Albans – not least in the provision of much needed primary school capacity.

The simplicity, clean lines and suitable, pupil-friendly scale of the primary school unit and the linking reception and administrative facilities enhance the existing school buildings admirably. Both internally and externally the bright and spacious feel successfully serves the aim of stimulating and encouraging students and staff alike, and provides excellent state-of-the-art facilities. The whole scheme has been carefully detailed to meet the need for a tough, yet attractive environment with excellent green credentials. This, together with the enhancement of the library and staff areas within the existing building, is altogether highly commendable.

As the first brand new school to be built in the area for a generation, here is noteworthy evidence that real change for the better is taking place. This project is a real credit to all involved.