

MechSlip detail and design makes a statement in three-storey Thurrock Civic Centre project.



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James Mann MCIAT, Senior Design Manager at Kier Eastern



PROJECT NAME

**THURROCK CIVIC CENTRE,
Grays, Essex**

BRICK FINISH



A0054A Ivanhoe Cream Original

CLIENT

Thurrock Council

INSTALLER

A20 Limited

ARCHITECT

LSI Architects

PRODUCT

MechSlip Brick Cladding System



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Innovative brick cladding system MechSlip has proved vital for a project that is set to kick-start huge regeneration plans for Thurrock thanks to Aquarian Cladding Systems. The new three-storey Civic Centre, designed by LSI Architects, built by Kier Construction (Eastern) and clad by specialist cladding contractor A20 Ltd, incorporates a council chamber, cafe, registrar service, staff offices, committee rooms and service area for the public.

LSI Architects selected the MechSlip Brick Cladding System, supplied by Aquarian Cladding Systems, to achieve a non-combustible, through-coloured, textured brick façade, which provided sufficient mass to ensure a statement building that was not subservient to the surrounding buildings.

The new building allows the council to reduce its carbon footprint, decrease running costs and provide new multi-functional community space, allowing the current Civic Centre to be redeveloped to provide much needed town centre homes on a brownfield site.

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Thurrock Council and LSI Architects wanted to enliven the surrounding streets with a building whose elevations have sufficient mass whereby they would not be subservient to the elevations of the adjoining red brick-clad, four-storey Council offices and a multi-coloured buff brick-clad seven-storey apartment block.

Quality, performance and safety were also paramount and, after considering several brick cladding options, the mechanically-fixed, non-combustible MechSlip clay brick cladding system was specified. It was considered the most effective and robust solution to achieve an attractive, durable façade and meet the budget

and programme requirements of the main contractor.

It also enabled the desired design to be achieved. The overall building design was based on the arrangement of two brick slip-clad halves split by a central glass curtain-walled spine of circulation. Each brick half was ‘carved’ to provide entrances, views in and out, and with robust facades to the heavily pedestrianised surrounding streets.

To achieve this, the facades were designed with an array of brick detailing that would be difficult to achieve using conventional brickwork. The use of stack bonded soldier courses and vertical stretcher bond to create feature panels perfectly illustrates the attraction and flexibility of a brick cladding system. Even at ground level, the use of MechSlip to create 135deg chamfered portico columns demonstrates what can be achieved with such a robust and adaptable solution.

Aquarian Cladding worked closely with A20 to create the bespoke brick pieces and Paul Richards, Aquarian Cladding’s Managing Director said: *“It was precisely this level of attention to detail, during the design and installation process by A20, that was key to the success of the facades package.”*

“With so many features including changes in bond pattern and orientation, accurate setting out was also imperative to ensure brick-course alignment. As a result, the finished building is an authentic example of the versatility of the product and workmanship of the installation team.”

1610m² of the MechSlip system was supplied to site, comprising 28 and 48mm thick brick slips produced by Ibstock Kevington, mechanically fixed to a 6063T6-grade aluminium support system from Ash & Lacy.



As the site was in the heart of Thurrock town centre with heavy pedestrian traffic, and flanked by a railway line and Grays station, vehicular access was restricted to one road in and out. With the adjoining Thurrock council office remaining fully operational whilst the building was constructed, consideration also had to be given to ensure safe access for its daily visitors.

This meant articulated vehicles were too large to access site and all deliveries required close liaison between the Aquarian order processing team and A20 site manager.

To ensure materials were scheduled with sufficient advanced notice prior to vehicle arrival and enable safe off-loading, A20 used Aquarian’s bespoke site scheduling system, a live computerised system designed to allow up to date delivery input from both supplier and customer.

In total 11 deliveries were made to site on vehicles of varying sizes, all of which were made on time with materials safely offloaded.

Cladding was predominantly carried out from mechanical access platforms to ensure flexibility to the programme and no additional allowances needed to be made to accommodate the façade work, with wet trades less than conventional brickwork as the system is predominantly a dry solution.

James Mann MCIAT, Senior Design Manager at Kier Eastern, commented: *“Aquarian Cladding and A20’s close collaboration on the detailed design, supply and installation of the brick slip façade cladding at Thurrock has resulted in a landmark civic building completed on budget and on time. Kier and Thurrock Council are very pleased with the façade, and we look forward to working with them again in the future.”*

Jazz Rigden, Aquarian Cladding’s Sales Director, said: *“To ensure careful management of this complex project from start to finish, our sales team supported A20’s designers prior to orders being placed and the operations team made regular site visits to provide practical and installation support to their construction team. “It is unlikely any other brick cladding solution could have been used as cost-effectively and efficiently as MechSlip to create a façade of such high quality.”*

