

# Grade Boundaries

Rolfe Kentish welcomes a new arrival in Cambridge by Eric Parry Architects



## Words

Rolfe Kentish

## Photos

Dirk Lindner

Arriving in Cambridge by train there was, for many years, a large sign, illuminated at night, announcing 'Cambridge University Press'. Now a new symbolic gateway has arrived in the shape of The Triangle, the 35,000-square-metre headquarters of exam

## Explore More

### Events & Exhibitions



The Architecture Room at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition takes a holistic view of sustainability, says curator Spencer de Grey



'Contemporary Cartography': architects take on

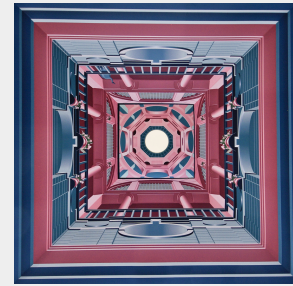
board Cambridge Assessment, designed by Eric Parry Architects (EPA).



Cambridge station was completed in 1845, together with an adjacent goods yard and mill. No doubt to appease the university, which had already stipulated that the station was located a mile from the city centre, the mill buildings were topped out with references to San Miniato al Monte and the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, while the station building echoes the loggia of the Ospedale degli Innocenti. In 2010, the redevelopment of land around the station began, with office space for more than 2,500 workers, homes for 600 residents and 1,100 students, and 400 hotel rooms; further buildings are planned. Not all reviewers have been sympathetic. “An embarrassment to the city: what went wrong with the £725m gateway to Cambridge?”, asked Oliver Wainwright in The Guardian last year. EPA’s Triangle should help to counter this view.

Cambridge Assessment has roots which go back 160 years. A not-for-profit department of Cambridge University, it incorporates several exam boards and provides English language and admissions testing, serving over eight million learners in 170 countries, and employing over 2,500 staff.

**modern mapping  
at London’s  
Building Centre**



**Installations by  
You + Pea and  
Etcetera Studio at  
RIBA**



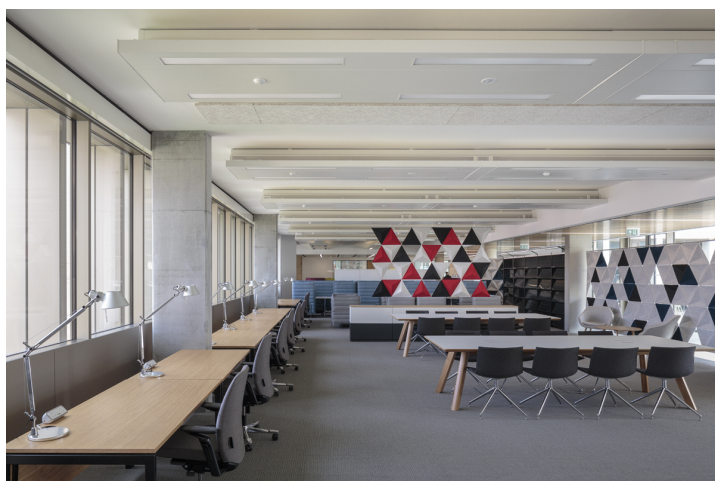
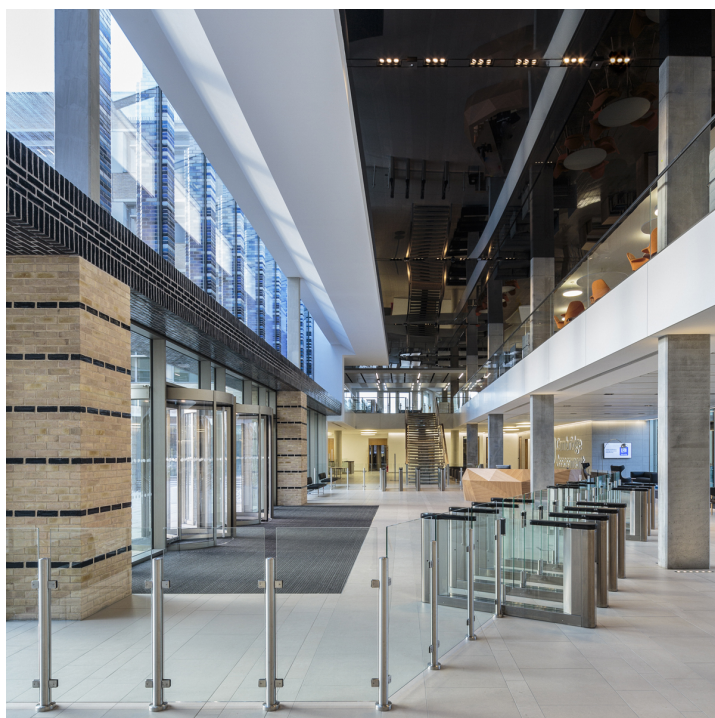
**Fantastic Feats: a  
six-month  
programme of  
architectural  
events in London**



**Slate Scape: Junya  
Ishigami’s 2019  
Serpentine Gallery  
Pavilion**



Before moving into the new building, Cambridge Assessment was spread over 11 sites around the city. The Triangle building will be able to accommodate up to 3,000 staff by 2025. The 2.5-hectare site was made available by the demolition of the 1981 Edinburgh Building, a warehouse belonging to Cambridge University Press. It is well located, just 15 minutes' walk from the station, next to a cycle path, the busway (serving North West Cambridge, the city centre and Biomedical Campus), and with road access from the broad residential Shaftesbury Avenue.



From the train The Triangle's curved and angular forms, the belvedere tower,

## Architecture Today June 2019



[VIEW THE DIGITAL  
EDITION](#)

## Specification Today June 2019



[VIEW THE DIGITAL  
EDITION](#)

warm buff brick, precast stonework and brise-soleil resonate with the urban approaches to Milano Centrale or Florence's Santa Maria Novella stations. The curved elevation and subdividing street of Giovanni Muzio's 1920s Ca' Brutta, and the layered facade and black-stuccoed entrance hall ceiling of Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio also come to mind. There's even a classicising remnant of rustication in the ground-floor brick piers, marked by inlaid glazed bricks at the entrance and recessed elsewhere, not unlike HP Berlage's Holland House in London. Alvar Aalto was among the 'other tradition' modernists to employ brick and ribbon window cladding on a concrete column-and-slab structure with intermediate precast spandrels. The theme was developed by Leslie Martin at Oxford's Law Library and Colin St John Wilson at the British Library. At the Triangle, Parry uses precast stone spandrels, rather than powder-coated or anodised aluminium, and glazed clay brick for the mullions and transom of the entrance screen.

Parry's ambition for the project, won through an invited competition in 2013, was to create "an inspiring new group of connected buildings", ranging from four to five storeys in height. These are shallow plan-depth fingers set around raised landscaped podia with a central arrival court and garden. The main facades are formed of horizontal bands of brickwork laid in lime mortar, combined with light coloured self-finished precast stone elements. A tower, marking the site from the railway and busway approaches into Cambridge station, "is scaled to the local context and will not compete with the taller landmark buildings in Cambridge", suggests Parry.





The triangular geometry of the constrained site, its north-south orientation, and the requirement for good daylighting and shallow floor plates gave rise to a configuration of two linked buildings with three raised courtyards. The north building comprises a main block with three fingers separated by two of the courtyards. The south building, at the acute end of the triangle, consists of a main block and a finger leading to a curved 'prow' that embraces an east-facing courtyard. The link building, approached through a street-level forecourt and entered through a glass and glazed-brick screen, contains the reception area, staff cafe and restaurant, and library. Visible through the reception hall is another planted courtyard to the east. The building is necessarily impermeable, essential for the confidential tasks of setting and marking examination papers. While the triangular site is filled to the perimeter, the sub-urban location did not lend itself to mixed-use development, what with one side bordering the rail and bus ways, another housing, and the third, with the entrance courtyard, facing Shaftesbury Road, within the Cambridge University Press campus.

The building sits firmly in the tradition of large-scale Western civic and institutional typologies that extends from Dudok's Hilversum town hall and Wright's Johnson Wax to Hertzberger's Centraal Beheer and Foster's Bloomberg. The ground floor contains an auditorium, archive and multiple meeting rooms for visiting examiners and exam writers. Car and bike parking is accessed from the north and east via a perimeter road; the first floor spans over and forms a true piano nobile. From the large double-height entrance hall, stairs lead to the first floor. The shallow open-plan office fingers, 19 metres from side to side, have excellent natural lighting and views. Glare is significantly reduced by external solar shading. The concrete soffits, walls and columns are left fair-faced. Multi-service finger beams extend from lower central spines to provide air, light, security and communications. There are four main service cores and four subsidiary escape stairs. The tower has large meeting rooms from the second to the sixth floors and a belvedere on the seventh.

The overall form of the building, with its three podium-level and two ground-floor courtyards, is seemingly carved from a single triangular mass, yet at the same time it is articulated as a set of extrusions, terminated with 'gables' or stop-ends. There are six main facade types, which differ according to orientation and location. The predominant type is to the east, west and prow of the perimeter, and the north and south facades to the link courtyard. Columns, on a nine-metre structural grid, and floors are expressed by precast concrete pier casings and lintels, with continuous ribbons of brickwork between sill and lintel. The ground-floor columns are encased in rusticated nine-

inch brickwork. Powder-coated aluminium windows alternate with solid opening panels, and incorporate an anodised aluminium brise soleil.

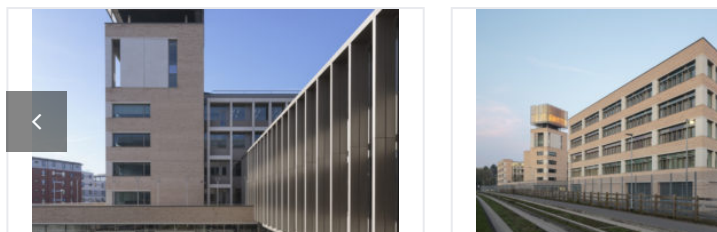
The facade depth – relatively generous for the type – gives a zone for relief modelling of 450-550mm for the brick elevations and 900mm in the courtyards, allowing for a maintenance walkway. The second facade type, facing onto the three podium courtyards, consists of a freestanding trabeated precast concrete brise soleil set 600mm in front of aluminium windows and rendered spandrel panels. The shape and spacing of the piers varies to maximise solar shading, as at Parry's 30 Finsbury Square (2002). The upper parts of the three-sided courtyards – which suggest academic cloisters – can be glimpsed from beyond the site. The gable facade type – used at the end of the northerly 'fingers' and by the main entrance – comprises deep-set individual windows separated by precast piers. Another variant occurs between buildings of different height, in which precast framing is used instead of brick to articulate the *dégagement*. The entrance elevation to the link building has closely-spaced glazed-brick piers in front of a glazed facade, while its rear courtyard elevation has simpler vertical aluminium fins in front of aluminium windows. The Triangle features a major two-part art commission, one at the entrance and the other at the top of the tower. 'In Other Words', by artists Vong Phaophanit and Claire Oboussier with EPA, features layers of script in different languages enamelled onto the glass. The tower artwork, subtly lit at night, is in warm parchment colours, and the 33-metre-long entrance artwork, in shades of indigo, is integrated with the glazed bricks.



By responding to the long-term ambitions of Cambridge Assessment, Eric Parry Architects has given specific form and identity to a building that otherwise might have been anonymous, undifferentiated grade-A office space – examples of which abound around the railway station. Added to this, bringing together disparate departments from eleven sites around Cambridge is a significant challenge, not least in terms of human resources, but one that this welcoming building will go a long way to facilitate.

---

## Additional Images



---

## Download Drawings

Cambridge Assessment, Eric Parry Architects

---

## Credits

### Architect

Eric Parry Architects

### Landscape architect

Grant Associates

### Interior designer

BDP Interiors

### Structural engineer

Ramboll UK

### M&E engineer

Max Fordham

### Acoustic consultant

Ramboll Acoustic Consultants,

### Facades

Goyer France

(windows, curtain walling)

### Artwork prints on glazing

Sedak

### Bricks

Irvine

Whitlock, Ibstock (inc glazed bricks), St Joris (link building piers)

### Precast lintels, piers

Cambridge  
**Facade consultant**  
FMDC  
**Quantity surveyor**  
Aecom Cambridge  
**Public artwork**  
Vong Phaophanit and  
Claire Oboussier  
**Main contractor**  
Bouygues UK  
**CDM**  
Sweett Group  
**Project manager**  
Turner & Townsend

and brise-soleil  
Verheyen  
**Lighting**  
Whitecroft  
**Balustrades, handrails**  
Handrail  
Design, Frapont (link  
building, feature stairs)  
**Roofing**  
Cambridge Flat  
Roofing, Alumasc  
Hydrotech Hot Melt,  
XPS insulation and  
BluRoof Drainage  
System  
**Lifts**  
Otis

---

Share this  
page



---

Explore more

Works

Brick

Concrete

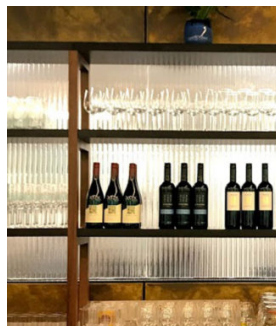
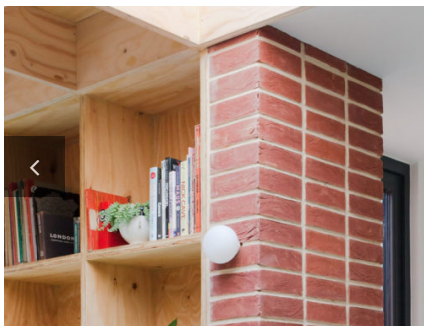
Eric Parry Architects

Glazing

Workplace

---

Related Posts





[Advertising & Marketing](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact us](#) |  
[Privacy & Terms](#) | [Newsletter Sign Up](#)



[Advertising & Marketing](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact us](#) |  
[Privacy & Terms](#) | [Newsletter Sign Up](#)

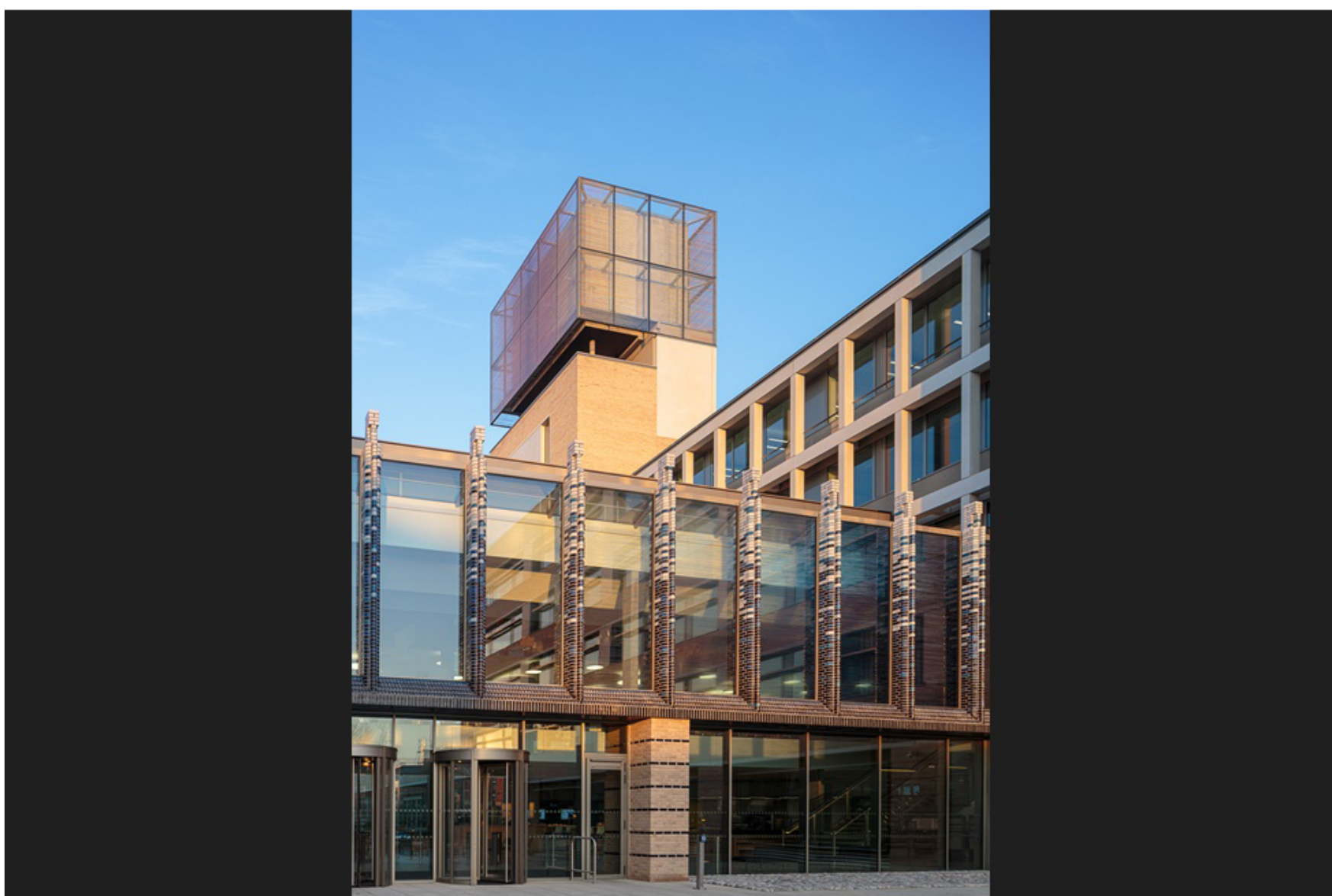


< | BUILDINGS

FIRST LOOK

# Eric Parry Architects echoes Aalto in Triangle Building for University of Cambridge

5 NOVEMBER, 2018 • BY GEORGE KAFKA



The 40,000m<sup>2</sup> scheme provides a new HQ for Cambridge Assessment, home to the University's exam boards

Named after its triangular site, the Triangle Building brings the staff of Cambridge Assessment into one building after being previously spread across eleven locations. Eric Parry Architects' brief was to create a headquarters that would allow the 160-year-old company, one of the largest employers in the city, to grow on one site.

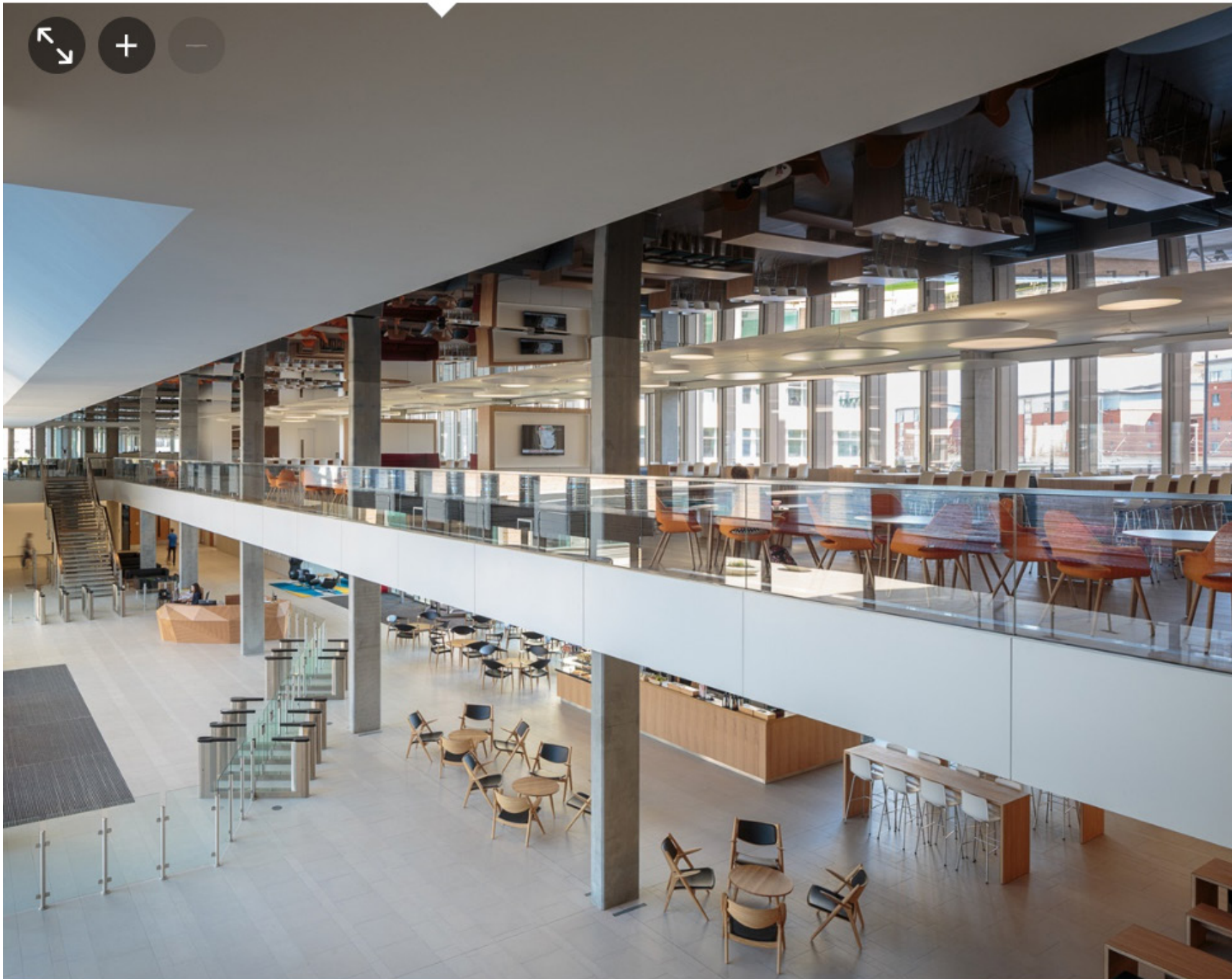
**ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS | CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT CENTRE**

Publication: The Architects' Journal  
Date: 05 November 2018  
URL: <https://bit.ly/2DnKJVS>

**.ing**



The Triangle consists of two main blocks connected with a bridge-like structure and surrounded by open space. The bridge contains a double-height reception marked by a stylised façade of glazed bricks ranging from indigo to cream, that create a street-facing entrance plaza.



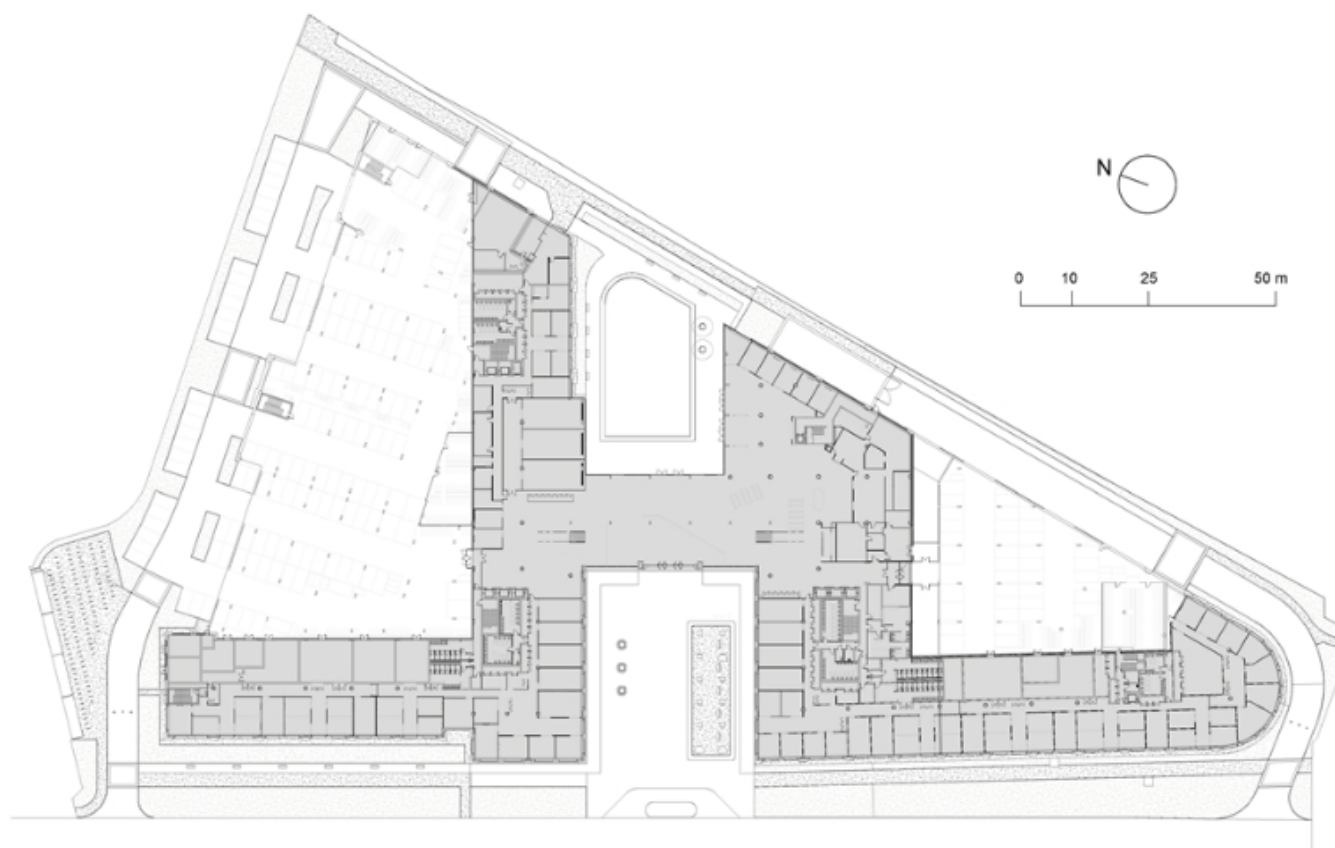
To the north of the central plaza, an E-shaped block contains office accommodation separated with gardens landscaped by Grant Associates. The C-shaped southern block curves from a prow at its narrowest point to a 39m-tower containing meeting rooms. Its glazed upper storeys are illuminated at night to create a 'recognisable beacon'.

The material palette of brick, glass and precast concrete is designed to echo mid 20th-century institutional buildings, such as Alvar Aalto's National Pensions Institute in Helsinki. It also responds to its varied context with the railway line to the east, large-scale offices and the printworks of the Cambridge University Press to the south and west, and newbuild housing, including the Stirling Prize-winning Accordia development to the north.

## Architect's view

Cambridge Assessment is one of the world's most respected education institutions. Our new headquarters, the Triangle Building, provides an inspiring, stimulating and uplifting workspace in surroundings that are commensurate with the international stature and ambition of the organisation. The Triangle Building is a major new academic building in a town renowned throughout the world for its architecture of education and learning. Our design draws on the atmosphere of Cambridge colleges, blending their mix of materials and focus on landscaped exterior spaces with an institutional modernity appropriate to a company headquarters on this scale.

*Eric Parry, director, Eric Parry Architects*



ground floor plan

SOURCE: ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS

Ground floor plan



## Project data

**Completion** September 2018

**Gross internal floor area** 38,562m<sup>2</sup>

**Gross (internal + external) floor area** 41,600m<sup>2</sup>

**Form of contract or procurement route** NEC Option A Contract, Design & Build, Two Stage Procurement

**Construction cost** Undisclosed

**Architect** Eric Parry Architects

**Client** Cambridge Assessment

**Structural engineer** Ramboll UK, Cambridge

**M&E consultant** Max Fordham Light Consultants

**QS** Aecom Cambridge

**Public art artists** Vong Phaophanit and Claire Oboussier Art Consultants: Commission Projects

**Interiors** BDP Interiors

**Catering consultant** Tricon

**Planning consultant** Carter Jonas Cambridge

**Landscape consultant** Grant Associates, Bath

**Acoustic consultant** Ramboll UK, Cambridge

**Project manager** Turner & Townsend

**CDM coordinator** Sweett Group

**Main contractor** Bouygues UK

**CAD software used** Bentley Microstation (RIBA Stages 0 to 2); Revit (RIBA Stage 3)



ERIC PARRY

ALVAR AALTO

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE