



MORRIS+COMPANY

## The Ratan Tata Building: Design Highlights

This fact sheet highlights the key design elements of the Ratan Tata Building, emphasising its harmony with Somerville College's vision while pushing forward architectural and environmental innovation aligned to

### Architectural Vision & Context:

- **Bold yet Sensitive Intervention:** The Ratan Tata Building is a dynamic architectural addition to Somerville College's historic Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ), blending heritage, sustainability, and contemporary design.
- **Contextual Harmony:** Located near iconic structures like the Radcliffe Observatory and Blavatnik School of Government, Ratan Tata Building design respects its surroundings, using form, materiality, and massing to complement the historic and modern architecture around it.
- **Curved Façade Design:** Inspired by Oxford's curved façades, the building features a soft, undulating form that enhances its distinctive silhouette while integrating with nearby buildings, creating a welcoming and engaging street presence.

### Sustainability & Innovation:

- **Net Zero Carbon Target:** Designed following Passivhaus principles, the building aims for net zero carbon operation through a fabric-first approach, featuring a highly insulated, airtight envelope, and on-site renewable energy systems such as air source heat pumps and rooftop photovoltaics.
- **Low Carbon Construction:** A regenerative mass timber frame minimises embodied carbon, ensuring long-term durability with a life expectancy of over 100 years. The building's cladding reflects the surrounding heritage, marrying longevity with aesthetics.

### Iconic Design Features:

- **The Oculus:** A circular opening above the main entrance maximizes natural light and serves as a symbolic gesture of "examination, observation, and openness," visually connecting the building's interior with its surroundings.
- **Multi-functional Spaces:** The building houses 10 tutor offices, seminar rooms, flexible event spaces, and a lobby, promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration and social interaction. A flexible ground-floor space opens to the public, fostering community engagement.

### Inclusion & Connectivity:

- Transformative Site Concept: The project shifts the site from a 'Wall' condition to a 'Node,' representing Somerville College's values of openness, inclusivity, and progressiveness, inviting public and academic interaction.

- Seamless Integration: The building creates new connections between the public realm and the College, integrating with neighbouring institutions like the Blavatnik Centre and the Schwartzman Centre for the Humanities, reinforcing Somerville College as a hub for academic and public collaboration.

### **Materiality & Heritage:**

- Stone & Timber: The design integrates limestone—a key material in Oxford's architectural history—and timber to create a dialogue between the historic and contemporary structures, while also softening the building's appearance.

- Sophisticated Façade: The delicate façade mullions and understated yet elegant detailing creates a visually coherent structure that stands on its own without overpowering its architectural neighbours.

### **Community & Collaboration:**

- Inclusive Academic Hub: The building fosters cross-collegiate collaboration through flexible, adaptable teaching, study, and event spaces, enhancing equity and inclusion within the College and the wider academic community.