Buildings
Culture & entertainment

Auckland Castle, Tower and Faith Museum, Durham

23 May 2024

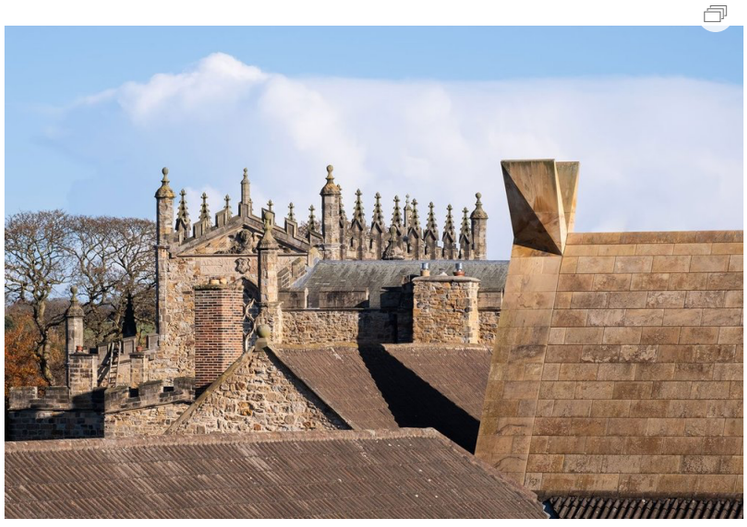
Three-in-one centre for arts, culture and heritage offers moments of amusement, reflection and education, earning Níall McLaughlin and Purcell North East Building of the Year and Conservation Awards

Auckland Castle, Tower and Faith Museum. Credit: Nick Kane

2024 RIBA North East Award
2024 RIBA North East Building of the Year sponsored by EH Smith
2024 RIBA North East Conservation Award

Auckland Castle, Tower and Faith Museum, Durham
Níall McLaughlin Architects & Purcell for The Auckland Project
Contract value: Confidential
GIA: 4189m2

Auckland Castle is a grade I listed medieval episcopal palace that has been the seat of the Bishop of Durham for nearly a millennium. Sitting to the north of Bishop Auckland, it is nestled between the rivers Wear and Gaunless. Since acquiring the site in 2012, the Auckland Project has been transforming it into a centre for arts, culture and heritage for locals and visitors. As part of the transformation, a collection of elements with differing forms and uses has been delivered. The Auckland Tower and Faith Museum, both by Níall McLaughlin Architects, are welcome new additions. The Tower acts as a beacon for the town and gateway to the Castle grounds, while the Faith Museum with its compelling barn-like form provides space for exhibition displays on faith in Britain. Painstaking conservation works to Auckland Castle by Purcell help safeguard its historic fabric for future generations.



Auckland Castle, Tower and Faith Museum. Credit: David Valinsky

1 of 4

/ We are innovation /

Dedicated to an ongoing collaborative process with the ceilings industry

zentia
Above all, you

Most popular

1 Zero to Hero – design a venue for our fantasy games
2 Navigating the Building Safety Act's position of Principal D...
3 HydroNess, Inverness
4 How well-designed buildings are both airtight and breathable
5 An Office and Two Houses, Inverness
6 Phoenix Bridge takes 3D printed technology a step nearer com...
7 Danube Street, Edinburgh
8 North Gate Social Housing, Glasgow

Related

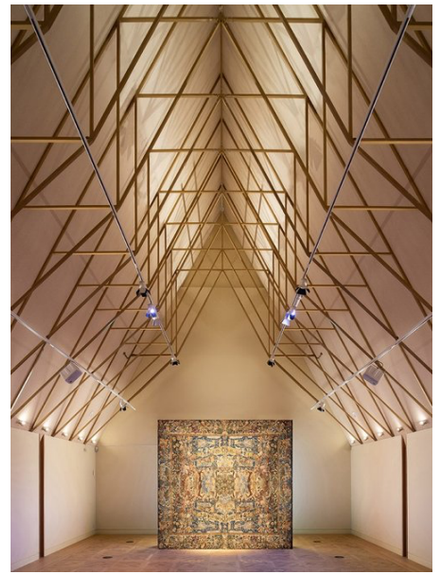
2024 RIBA Awards in numbers

The Burrell Collection, Glasgow

The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh

First glimpsed as you cross the Newton Cap Viaduct to the town, the Tower's pointed timber structure peeks above the surrounding townscape. Its prominent setting to the north-east of Bishop Auckland Market Place makes this a focal point for the town, ideal as a welcome building for the Castle. Inspired by historic siege towers, its now weathered larch timber frame is impressive and enticing. The events hall, within the angular roof form of the Tower's base, offers a light, welcoming space for the local community. Visitors are encouraged to advance up the Tower via the enfolding external stair with its protruding metal platforms providing an oversized playground for all ages.

The Castle itself has undergone substantial enhancements including the conservation of state apartments and domestic rooms and the provision of new learning, catering and retail spaces. The aim was to improve accessibility and energy efficiency while preserving the building fabric. Purcell deserves praise for its seemingly effortless incorporation of a fully accessible visitor route – not to be underestimated in a listed building with a warren of internal levels at play. Building services including heating and ventilation have been entirely renewed and existing fabric upgraded sensitively.



Auckland Castle, Tower and Faith Museum. Credit: David Valinsky

1 of 5

The vibrant colour scheme, guided by a detailed architectural paint analysis, draws you further through the sequence of spaces before progressing into the vaulted corridors. These have been reworked to enable use as further exhibition space connecting visitors to Níall McLaughlin's Faith Museum. On arrival the large picture window, initially seen on the approach to the building, reorientates, offering refreshing views over the grounds to the river below.

Local Cop Crag sandstone, detailed with care and obvious pride, glows in the afternoon sun, weathering subtly. The prominent roof finials enhance the bold and considered medieval barn form, where the solidity of the stone contrasts with the internal thicket-like roof structure, which floats ethereally above the main exhibition space.

The ambition of the brief and its thorough execution mark Auckland Castle as a valuable extension to the town, offering visitors and locals moments of amusement, reflection, and education while supporting the longevity of the built heritage.

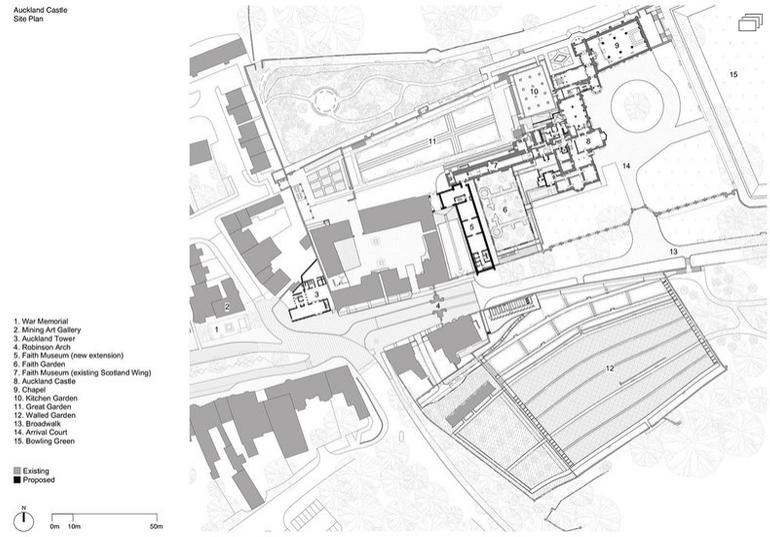
See the rest of the RIBA North East winners here. And all the RIBA Regional Awards here.

To see the whole RIBA Awards process visit architecture.com.

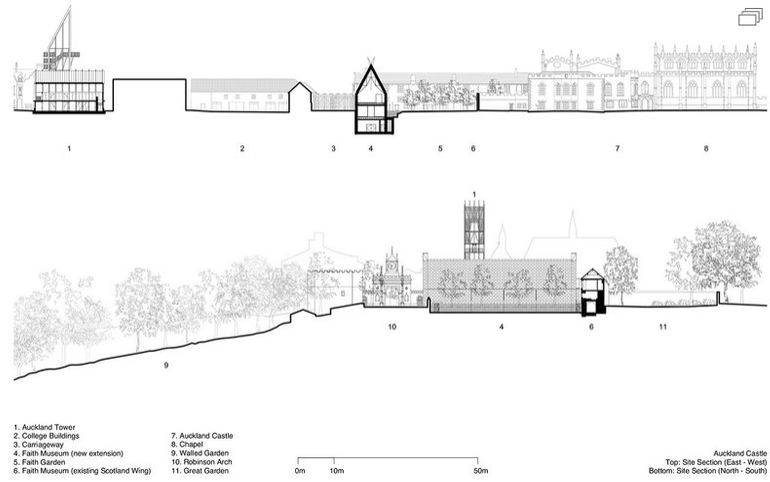
RIBA Regional Awards 2024 sponsored by EH Smith and Autodesk

Credits

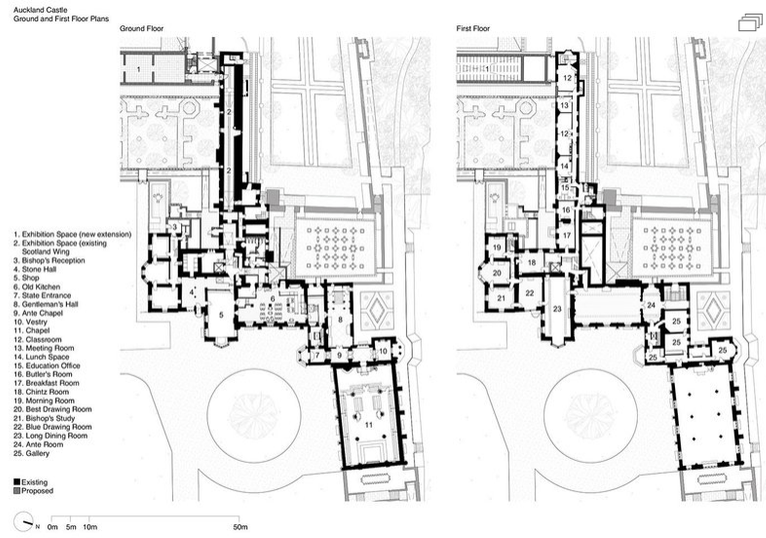
Contractor Meldrum
Structural engineer The Morton Partnership
Environmental/M&E engineer TGA Consulting Engineers
Quantity surveyor/cost consultant Thornton Firkin
Landscape architect Pip Morrison
Lighting design Sutton Vane Associates
Stonemason Classic Masonry
Building Control Bureau Veritas



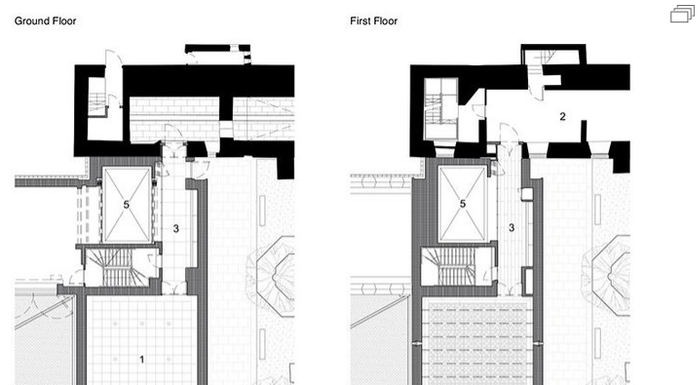
Credit: Níall McLaughlin Architects & Purcell

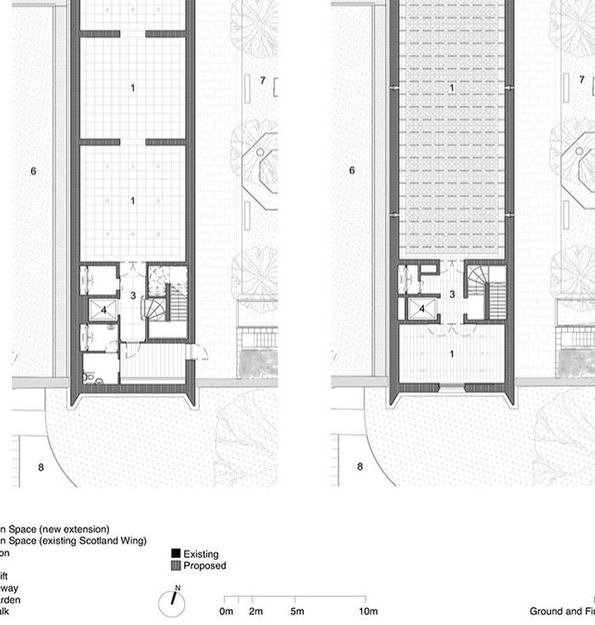


Credit: Níall McLaughlin Architects & Purcell

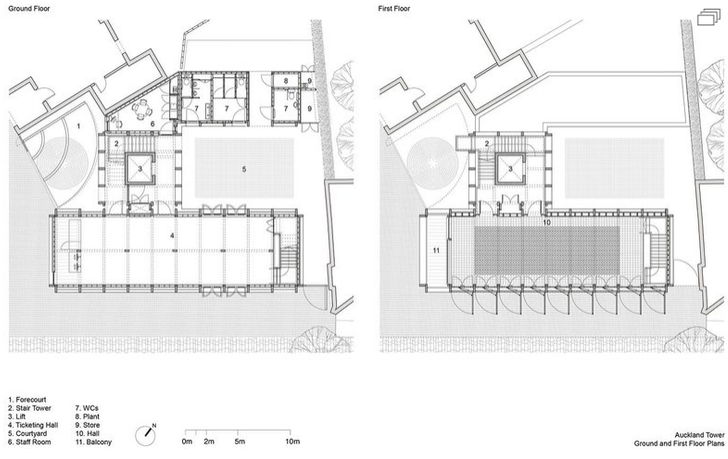


Credit: Níall McLaughlin Architects & Purcell





Credit: Níall McLaughlin Architects & Purcell



Credit: Níall McLaughlin Architects & Purcell

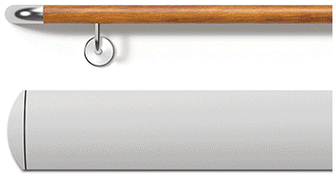
Credit: Níall McLaughlin Architects & Purcell

Region: North East
More: Culture & entertainment, Niall McLaughlin Architects, Purcell, 2024 RIBA North East Award, 2024 RIBA North East Building of the Year, 2024 RIBA North East Conservation Award, 2024 RIBA Regional Award, Durham

Share this article

Construction Specialties

Discover Our Wall Protection >



Latest articles

Products

Webinar: Addressing Onsite Safety using Fall Protection Systems

Webinar: Addressing Onsite Safety using Fall Protection Systems

United Kingdom

Products

PiP Design for Sustainability Webinar 2024

PiP Design for Sustainability Webinar 2024

United Kingdom

Intelligence

The irrepressible spirit of Hong Kong practice

How is China's economic slowdown affecting architecture in Hong Kong? We speak to three practices

Rest of the world

Farrells, Collective, Arup, China, Business clients & services,

Newsletter signup

Sign up to receive regular briefings, updates and our weekly newsletter – all designed to bring you the best stories from RIBAJ.com

Your email

Register