

Corus Colors

The Merchant Group call centre

Case study





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The Merchant Group call centre Cork, Ireland

Architect: O’Riordan Staehli Architects

Contractor: PJ Hegarty and Sons

Cladding contractor: Hern Roofing and Cladding

System manufacturer: Tegral Metal Forming

System type: Built-up

Profile type: Feature, half-round and sinusoidal profiles

Colorcoat® product:

Celestia® (walls)



Sirius



Orion



The client and the brief

Call centres are a building type that has evolved with the rapid development in communications technology over the past two decades. Early examples were usually converted warehouses and were generally unsophisticated buildings. Nowadays, call centres are purpose-built, high-tech buildings.

The Merchant Group Call Centre, located on the IDA Business and Technology Park at Model Farm Road in Cork, is a good example of such a building. The client required high standards of accommodation for its workforce and a comfortable working environment.

Context and site

The building is located at the eastern end of the Park terminating the Estate Road. The site is perched 20 m above the River Lee with panoramic views of the river and the backdrop, the Lee Fields. The prominent siting of the building is a welcome addition to the skyline of the city above the Lee Valley.

The building and parking are integrated as a whole within the site. The overall scheme comprises a series of bands going in an east-west direction. Each band is occupied by building, parking or grassed areas. The parking is sheltered by strategic planting. An access road encircles the building. The approach to the entrance atrium is by a bridge crossing a pool situated in front of the facade.

The plan is coherent and simple, consisting of two zones, the administration/entrance area and the call-handling area. All the administration and support accommodation is placed in cellular offices in the central block, with the phone desks being located in an open plan office on one wing.

The building is relatively shallow in width, with substantial areas of glazing along both sides. Despite this, air conditioning is required because of the heat-gain generated by the high density of computer equipment. However, the shallow depth of the building presents a good opportunity for the phone personnel to have clear views outside.



Construction and details

Structure: The building consists of three floors, with a plantroom situated on the roof. The main building construction is of reinforced concrete, the floor slabs being supported by circular columns. The foundations are a combination of pad footings and strip foundations bearing on bedrock. The main roof is of steel construction, whereas the roof-level plant room is of composite steel/ concrete construction.

Windows and glazing: Fenestration is provided in double glazing with powder coated frames. The external pane is solar reduction glazing and internal pane is heat retention glazing. The three-storey atrium is glazed externally in a structural glazing system complete with diffraction film. The horizontal louvers that shade the south facing windows are constructed of powder coated silver perforated aluminium, and are restrained by fine vertical stainless steel cables.

Façade and cladding: The main building façades used Colorcoat Celestia® cladding laid horizontally with two different profiles. A half-round profile was used on the more important north and south elevations. This presented a highly textured façade with a strong horizontal emphasis, alternating with areas of glass and articulated by the horizontal louvred sunshades.

The flanking east and west elevations were clad with a more finely corrugated sinusoidal profile, pierced at regular intervals by small porthole type windows. This provided a simple, sheer, unbroken rectangular façade with a pleasing matt finish. Both types of wall cladding used Colorcoat Celestia in Sirius and Orion, emphasising the different elevations. The plant room was clad in the same sinusoidal profile, again using Colorcoat Celestia.

The wall system consisted of an external profiled sheet, 130 mm insulation panels and internal bright-white liner panels. These were supported on sheeting rails fixed with brackets to the main structure.

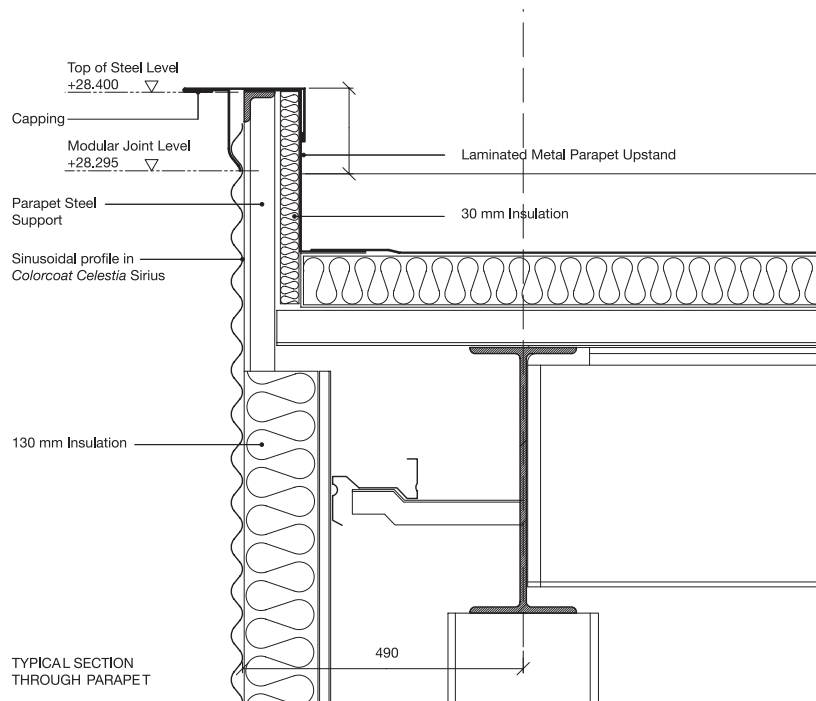
The capping and flashing details were kept neat and simple throughout, with minimal overlaps at corners and roof and ground line. A low roof upstand formed by the cladding hid the integral gutter and roof, thus maintaining the basic cubic volume of the building.

The combination of profiles and the complementary Colorcoat Celestia silver colours provided an external face befitting the high-tech nature of the activities within the call centre.

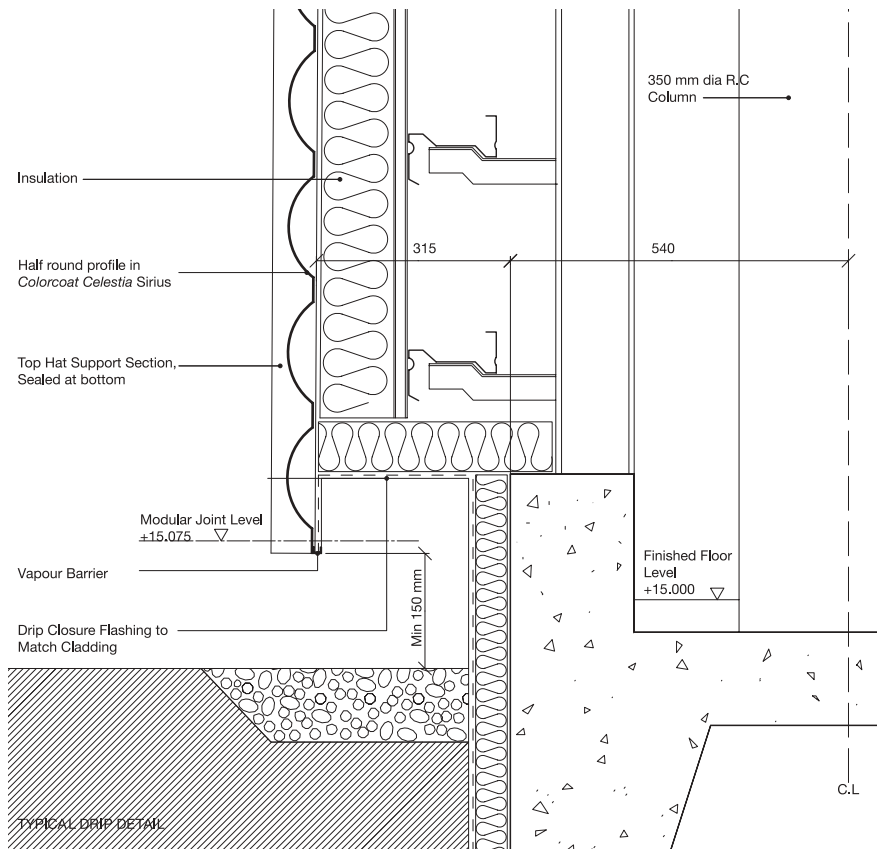
Awards:

- 12th Colorcoat Building Awards – Winner Best Use of Profiled Steel.

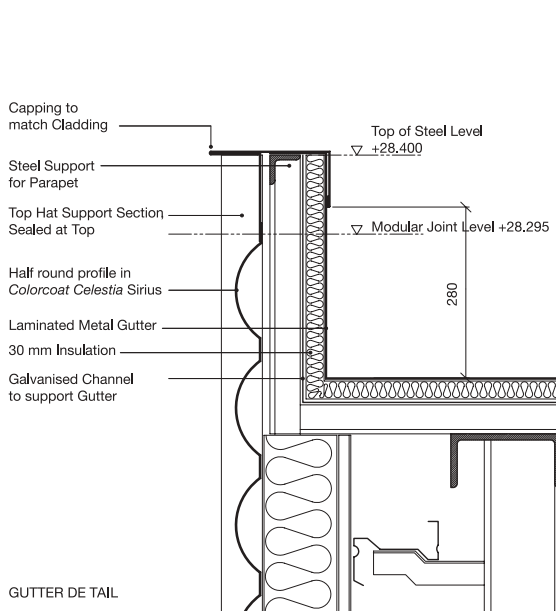




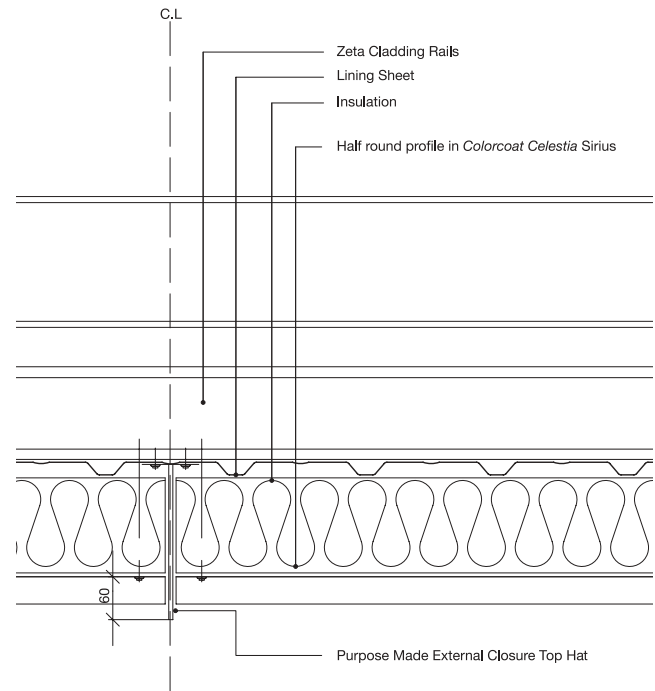
East/west parapet detail



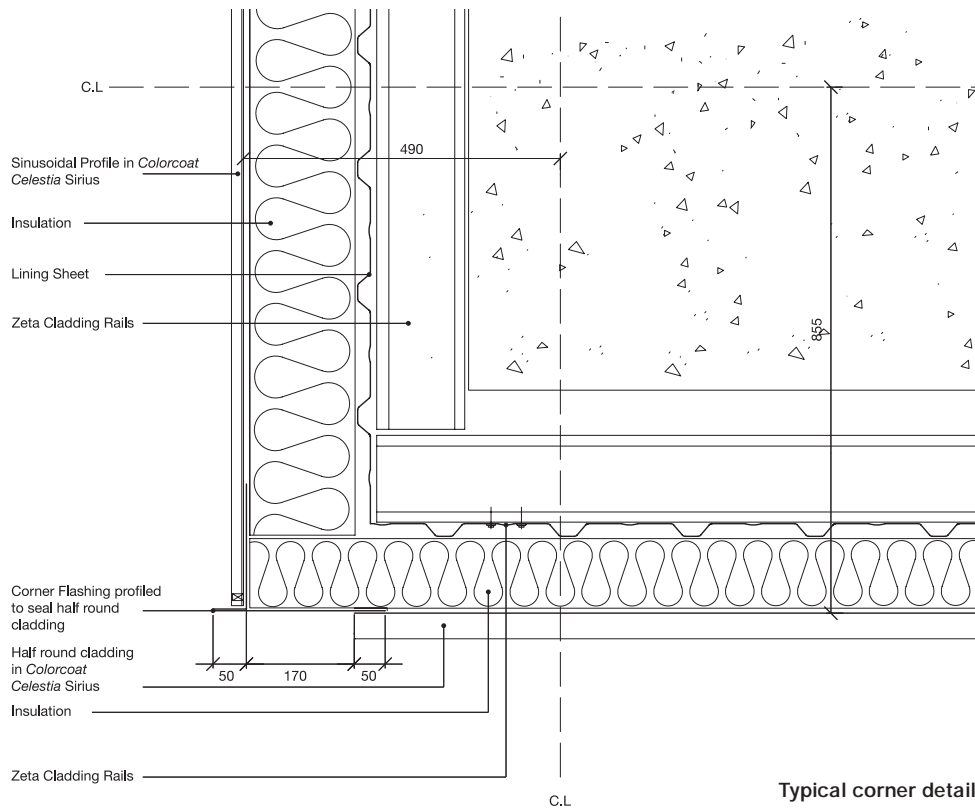
North/south drip detail



North/south parapet detail



Vertical cladding joint



Typical corner detail