



Benenden's new bistro
style dining room

Photography: Robert Greshoff

Lee Evans Partnership completes contemporary dining room extension for Benenden Girls School 24.06.11

Benenden is one of the leading boarding schools in Britain. The project involved sensitive extension to the existing dining facilities accommodated in a mid-twentieth century addition attached to the rear of Hemsted House, a Victorian listed building set in a designated historic park and garden.

The school has consistently sought to provide innovative and interesting buildings and the principle objectives of the project were to improve the design and appearance of this existing extension and create a modern bistro-style dining room and café. The challenge was to avoid pastiche and create a modern intervention which complimented Hemsted House's Victorian heritage.

Contemporary in design, the new single storey building uses a limited palette of both traditional and modern high quality materials which include Istock Bexhill red bricks, aluminium, timber and glass. The detailing is precise and the design intentionally simple and elegant harmonising well with the surrounding landscape and other buildings. A discreet glazed link is used to connect the new extension to Hemsted House. The front elevation of the new extension is also highly glazed and divided into four sections, each with folding doors, separated by robust timber columns capped with an aluminium finial detail. These doors flood light into the dining room and capitalise on the scenic views out over the historic park, and when open allow the students to spill out and enjoy the gardens beyond.