Part of the British high street since 1863, the Co-op is the UK’s largest mutual retailer with a turnover of over £13 billion. In 2009 the retailer commissioned a new 400,000 ft², 16 storey head office building in Manchester to provide a modern working environment and facilities which will allow greater freedom for flexible working by its staff.

Born and raised in Manchester, the retailers' decision to build their new headquarters in the city was a clear sign of the renaissance of their business and their confidence in the future, as well as their desire to play a part in helping to make Manchester a 21st century leader in sustainable development.

The Co-operative Group stipulated demanding sustainability targets for their new offices using a building energy strategy, developed through extensive research into UK and European benchmark buildings as the key to minimising the building’s environmental impact.

The client team set an ambition for a new building that would be good for their business, good for staff, good for the communities which surround it and good for Manchester.

Our multidisciplinary design team have more than delivered, with the building achieving the highest score ever under the BREEAM accreditation scheme, earning it the highly coveted status of BREEAM Outstanding.

The building’s Combined Heat and Power (CHP) installation is a key component of the carbon reducing measures, enabling the company to control the majority of their own heat and power supplies.

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3D BIM technology was used extensively to coordinate the structural engineering, architecture and building services, as well as the basis of energy models. BIM was also used to develop fly-through films and animations to communicate design ideas to the client and within the construction team.
The design meets both theoretical Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) A Rating and more importantly, has the potential to deliver an actual Display Energy Certificate A rating which determines the building’s energy in use.

Integration into the local public transport links was also key to the Co-op and the building will be easily accessible by cycle routes, and close to bus and tram routes.

The building was also the subject of a climate change study funded by the Technology Strategy Board. This reviewed the building’s resilience and capacity to adapt for future climate scenarios, both overheating and surface water flooding.

A bespoke innovation credit was awarded by the BRE in recognition of the team providing industry thought leadership in this area at the time. This was one of four bespoke innovation credits awarded by the BRE for this project.

The building sets a new benchmark for commercial office design, achieving a balance of sustainability, operational efficiency, space flexibility and high quality.

The project succeeds in translating the client’s ethical approach to society and the environment in their business through their commitment to deliver a truly outstanding building.