O'Donnell + Tuomey has won an international design competition for a new £25.5 million Student Centre at the London School of Economics. The new facilities on LSE's Aldwych campus will include a student union reception, bars, entertainment venues, media facilities and offices.

O'Donnell + Tuomey describe the project: "The architectural intentions for the design of the building is to create an active Student Union, the appearance and contemporary character of which should be inviting, welcoming and even prosoking to its users. Our aspiration is for a democratic, everyday, unusual architecture of useful beauty. The site is located at the knock-on-point confluence of the network of narrow streets that characterize the LSE city centre campus. We are creating a public space at the threshold of the Student Union on axis with St Clement's Lane, pulling pedestrian street life into and up the building inside the building open staircases spiral around the central lift shaft that forms a skewering pivot-point at the centre of gravity of the plan. These wide stairs with slow steps make a flowing continuous ribbon of movement from street to roof garden, a vertical building working as a single organism. Space flows freely in horizontal plan and vertical section creating a variety of diagonal break-out spaces at landings and crossings throughout the building.

The exterior walls are clad in bricks recycled from the old St Philips hospital buildings, in places each brick offset from the next in an open work pattern. The glazing is held in timber frames. The folded, chamfered, casted and fractured facade is tailored in response to specific lines of sight along approaching vistas and from street corner perspectives. Like a Japanese puzzle, the design is carefully assembled to make one cohesive volume from a complex set of interdependent component parts.

The key principle of truly sustainable design is to opt for robust solutions which focus investment on building elements with the longest life cycle. A particular advantage of the cut-away (non-centralized air-conditioning) configuration of the scheme is that every space enjoys natural light and ventilation. This approach has practical advantages for the low-cost and energy efficiency of the building services systems. It is better to design a fundamentally efficient building and this strategy serves to simplify building servicing strategies, reducing costs and allowing expensive targets such as carbon neutrality to be achieved."