



Tilbury Douglas has been appointed to lead the construction of St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, which will be the UK's first purpose-built biophilic primary school. The contract is part of a pilot scheme for the Department for Education (DfE).

The new school, which is part of St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust, will replace the original school, which was destroyed by fire in October 2020.

Biophilia is an approach that focuses on connecting those inside a building with nature and increasing biodiversity through design. The new building will be net zero carbon in operation.

The new school, which will comprise five single-storey buildings connected by covered walkways, will be predominantly constructed from low-carbon timber, employing structurally insulated panels and modern methods of construction.

With mechanical and electrical engineering being delivered by Tilbury Douglas Engineering, the new school will have a natural ventilation strategy and air source heat pumps alongside renewable energy, such as photo voltaic (PV) solar panels. Besides PV, some of the roofs will be green wildflower seeded to maximise biodiversity and local ecology.

Simon Butler, managing director of building central at Tilbury Douglas, said: "We are proud to be the main contractor responsible for delivering this innovative pilot scheme for the DfE, as it will enhance pupil experience and influence the next generation of school design.

"We are working collaboratively to ensure the best possible learning environments are afforded for the pupils and teachers, with excellent standards of daylight, air quality, comfort and wellbeing. This is supported by the biophilic approach, focusing on landscaping and connecting building users with outside."