The Spine has been designed by Robert Hopkins, regional director of the multi-award winning architectural and building consultancy practice AHR, which was founded in 1835. The practice works across the UK and internationally.

Robert has extensive experience in the education sector, working across all levels of projects, from schools to higher education and refurbishment works to multi-project programmes, with a specific focus on innovative thinking.

He is particularly passionate about health and wellbeing in design and the optimisation of buildings and spaces to enhance the wellness of its occupants.
The Spine design

The Spine gets its name from a distinctive staircase on the north elevation of the building which is similar in form to vertebrae and visible from the outside. In addition, Robert has designed the façade for The Spine as a response to the narrative of the human skin. A striking Voronoi pattern includes 23 million individual polygons applied in a frit pattern to the glazing of the building. A curtain wall system has been used which helps to give a distinct connection to nature for occupants of the building.
The Spine will be built according to principles established in the WELL Standard. Launched in October 2014 after 6 years of research and development, the WELL Building Standard is the premier standard for buildings, interior spaces and communities seeking to implement, validate and measure features that support and advance human health and wellness.

WELL was developed by integrating scientific and medical research and literature on environmental health, behavioural factors, health outcomes and demographic risk factors that affect health with leading practices in building design, construction and management.

The standards consist of seven concepts – air, water, nourishment, light, fitness, comfort and mind. These concepts incorporate a total of 102 features of a building that can be designed to optimise the health of the occupants of the building and create an environment to promote a healthy and happy workforce.
Biophilia

The WELL standard includes biophilic design features – the use of repeating patterns in nature which have a naturally calming effect on the mind. For The Spine, the architects and designers have introduced plants at various levels which will also improve air quality.

The naturalistic environment will use a natural colour palette. The design echoes that of the development of a tree through the rise of the building, with earthier colours for the lower floors that merge into greener, leafier colours and patterns and the introduction of blues on the upper floors.