



Barton Willmore to create botanical garden in the Arabian desert



Barton Willmore has seen off HOK to win the international design competition to create a \$170 million (£84 million) botanical garden in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The contract to design the 160ha King Abdullah International Gardens (KAIG) was won by a joint venture, which included the UK's Natural History Museum and engineer Buro Happold.

The centrepiece of Barton Willmore's proposal is a 8ha 'palaeobotanic' building. Formed of two interlocking crescents (*pictured above*), the building will accommodate a sequence of 'controlled environments', each of which will include examples of existing species and also 'the ghosts of species that have been lost'.

The eco-friendly scheme also includes an external 'Wadi Garden' – the central space enclosed by the crescent – and an enclosed 'Garden of Choice'.

Nick Sweet, project director, said: 'In this day and age, we are all, to one degree or another, fearful of the rapid climate change occurring in the world and many are uncertain about how to respond.'

'We wanted to use the scheme to tell the story of a single piece of land through time. It might be a desert now, but there was a time when rivers flowed here and forests grew,' Sweet added.

The project is due for completion in spring 2010.

