

Sikh Gurdwara uses discreet CCTV

The Gurdwara fulfils a number of essential roles in a Sikh community, being both a place of worship and a meeting place for the social needs of the community. Everyone is made welcome at a Gurdwara, regardless of their religion, and followers of the Sikh faith attend regularly at all times of the day. When the biggest Gurdwara



outside India, the £20 million Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, opened in Southall earlier this year, it included a sophisticated CCTV system that balanced two objectives - maintaining the welcoming and spiritual ambience of the Gurdwara, while giving a level of security commensurate with a magnificently appointed building and its twenty thousand visitors each week.

Southall's new Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha is a building of which the whole community is justly proud. The £20 million construction cost was raised by contributions from across all communities and faiths, and the result is a stunning four storey building of the highest quality, with serene and spacious marbled halls and staircases, illuminated by natural light wherever possible.

Extensive facilities

The vast main congregation hall is constructed without pillars so that there should be no obstruction to the view of the central feature of the hall, the seat of The Guru Granth Sahib with its gold-leaf covered Palki, or canopy. There is also a second, smaller, congregation hall and Palki. Each of the halls has a magnificent stained glass window in traditional Sikh colours of blue and saffron.

Facilities include the Langar, a huge kitchen providing free vegetarian food for eighteen hours of the day for all visitors, a well-stocked library, an underground car park with spaces for 92 cars, and a large shoe room – essential when twenty thousand visitors each week are observing the requirement to remove their shoes before entering. The busy building has people in it for 22 hours of each day.

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The challenge for the CCTV system, and installers Wessex Fire and Security, was threefold. First, to meet the operational requirement for security in a building of this type – essentially open to thousands of visitors with no entry security, a high profile building within the area, and one where there are valuables in terms of artefacts, cash, and possessions in cars. Second, to ensure that the system is not excessively intrusive, and is consistent with a spiritual place. Third, and a very pragmatic challenge – the building is large, and the walls and floors are predominantly marble, with the rest stone and concrete, so the physical installation of the cabling had to be carefully planned.



New building

It was fortunate that this was a new building, so conduits for CCTV cabling could be installed before the final floor and wall coverings were put in place, with an excellent cosmetic result. For communications, twisted pair cabling using NVT kits was selected, because of its capability over the very long cable runs of such a large building, the compactness and resultant ease of installation of twisted pair cables, and the cost advantage over co-ax cable.



Discreet but visible

There are 20 cameras in all covering the building, and two main viewing points, one in the reception area and one in the office suite. Recording takes place on two Columbus Triplex digital recorders.

Four PTZ cameras, Dennard D2050 colour/mono domes driven by a Dennard 16 camera telemetry controller with

remote keyboard, watch over the basement car park. Fixed Vista hi-res colour cameras cover the car park entrance and exit. Outside the front of the Gurdwara four Vista colour vandal resistant domes have complete view of the entrances. Within the building most of the cameras are colour hi-resolution. All key points of the building are covered by these discreet but visible installations, and two further covert cameras in sensitive areas complete the system.



Unique installation contract

Nigel Farris, Technical Manager of Wessex Fire and Security, explained how he set about the contract. "This was a most interesting contract – in some ways unique, but requiring exactly the same engineering principles as we would apply to any other CCTV contract. For example we started with a solid specification and operational

requirement, drawn up between the Trustees of the Gurdwara, the local police crime prevention officer, and ourselves. The other partner in the installation was Norbain, who we use for almost all our equipment. The Vista equipment was perfectly suited to the need, with its excellent price/performance value, and as usual Norbain demonstrated reliable delivery with good technical back-up and advice. Finally, the installation was very satisfying – Wessex Fire and Security are very proud to be associated with, and contributing to the security of, such a wonderful building".

Community centre

Dr. Parvinder Singh Garcha, a trustee and General Secretary of the Gurdwara, said: "Our ambition and prayer was to build a Gurdwara befitting the Sikh diaspora in Europe, a proud homage to our forefathers and a magnificent heritage for our future generations and the local community; and with the blessings of God we have succeeded. The Gurdwara is the most important building for the Sikh Community and is also a focus for the wider community. It covers a total area of 60,000 square feet and can accommodate 3,000 people for prayer and serve 20,000 meals, in the holy Langar (free community kitchen staffed by volunteers), in an average week. The Gurdwara also serves as a community centre."



"The CCTV system is there to prevent problems, and from our experience to date it works very well - we've had very few incidents. Those we have experienced have been captured by the cameras and the digital recorders, and we've been able to follow up an incident with the police as required. This new Gurdwara has been a remarkable project – there were 40,000 people in the streets outside when we opened in March of this year – and the CCTV system is, for the management, an important part of helping us to fulfil our Sewa (volunteer duty) to the Sangat (holy congregation) of the Gurdwara."