

Guildford, 16 November 2010: For the third year running, Britain's tallest sustainable Christmas Tree, measuring 94ft to the top of its shining star, stands proudly over the Christmas festivities at the Cheshire Oaks Designer Outlet in Ellesmere Port, South Wirral. Courtesy of the design by the Guildford team at Thomasons, the nationwide civil and structural engineers, the 9.5 ton tree, with a classical conical and tapering shape, stands firmly bolted down on a prepared base.

Thomasons, working to a brief from Springfield Decorations & Displays Ltd, designed the entrancing structure using lightweight steel box sections, using a clever profile and material that together give strength, stability and sustainability. The design allows for easy re-use, with enduring components that are simple to erect and maintain, including all 100,000 lights and 80,000 decorative baubles.

"It's undeniably stunning when it's all lit up," says Chris Shorter, Thomasons' director, "but it's also a serious and successful piece of design that has clearly met the client's brief in full."

The tree is probably one of the more unusual commissions that Thomasons has undertaken in recent years. Their work usually involves more conventional building design and structural issues. However Thomasons is also noted for their interesting and innovative treatment of glass in structures, especially in retail outlets. The Westfield London Shopping Centre at White City includes a number of examples of their work. Thomasons' clients include such well-known high street names as Selfridges, Harvey Nichols, Arcadia, TK Maxx, Carphone Warehouse, Early

Learning Centre, Foyles, Starbucks, Pret A Manger & Jamie's Italian.