

PRIAN CASE STUDY OVERVIEWS

Birmingham: Bullring

Background

The market at the Bullring dates back to 1166. The site next to St Martin's church has been the evolving centre of retail life in Birmingham since then. The previous Bullring development next to the remodelled New Street station was opened in 1964. It had 32,000 sq m. of retail space and was squashed between the alignment of the then new ring road. Also included was the Rotunda, a circular office block designed by local architect James Roberts, and affectionately known among the design fraternity as Jim's jam pot.



New Icons

The new Bullring completed in 2003 incorporates the Rotunda, now refurbished as flats and retained as a local icon, together with the 1960's Bullring relief sculpture. However the Selfridges store, a free form clad in a skin of 15,000 spun aluminium discs provides a new and memorable icon within the new 110,000sq m of retail space, three times the 1964 scheme.



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Multi Level Site

Three levels of shops, cafes and restaurants cascade down the site, which falls some 19 metres from top to bottom. Each level therefore has a ground floor entrance and the scheme links back to the city centre through easily navigable paths, slopes and stairways. Full advantage has been taken of the steep hill to fit in wide viewing galleries as well as people places, for casual meetings, waiting, sitting and enjoying the view.



Street Furniture & Design Detail

The strong design image is carried through to the detail. Street furniture in the newly created public areas are unashamedly modern in style. The seats overlooking St Martin's church encourage visitors to stay longer than many other shopping centres would allow. Their shape and feel encourages a state of relaxation reminiscent of deck chairs on a beach. Tree guards neatly finish off the paving with a confident and modern visual style.



Conclusion

The restraining presence of the ring road has been removed. A new public plaza has been created. The scheme is firmly established as an important example of new public realm and a retail destination which has resulted in both critical recognition and popular appeal. Traders in other parts of the city are conscious of the commercial draw of such a combination. On the first Saturday of trading the scheme attracted 330,000 shoppers.

