



Cabot Circus is a 1.5 million sq. ft. scheme underpinning the retail-led regeneration of Bristol's Broadmead shopping area. In Broadmead there had been only one significant redevelopment since the 1950s. The retail offer lagged well behind the demands of one of Britain's most affluent catchments and in terms of national retail provision in 2002, Bristol was only ranked 23rd.

The Council as planning authority and a major land owner was keen to promote the development, as it represented the third and final part of an overall strategy for the City Centre as a whole. Already, a new office quarter had been developed at Temple Quay. Leisure, waterside offices and living accommodation had been developed at Harbourside. The Council therefore wanted to bring forward an appropriate retail-led facility as the centrepiece of a regenerated shopping offer.

The Council initially carried out retail planning research, to establish an appropriate quantum and location for retail expansion, and site marketing took place in 1998-2000. This fed into the adoption of an updated planning strategy for the Broadmead Regeneration Area. Following the Council's consideration of two competing schemes, Bristol Alliance, a Joint Venture between Hammerson and Land Securities, was established with the specific purpose of developing the identified site, which lies to the east of the established Broadmead area. The Alliance worked alongside Bristol City Council to deliver the project. This collaboration included the securing of a masterplan-led outline planning permission and a Compulsory Purchase Order.

As soon as the site had been assembled, construction began apace, with the objective of opening the doors to the public in September 2008. This programme led to a construction effort that has rarely been witnessed before,

with the 1 million sq ft of retail and leisure floorspace being built in just over two years following completion of the enabling works. Team work within and between the Council and the Alliance lay at the heart of achieving the development to a tight timescale.

The main scheme houses a conventional retail mix, but provides floorspace for tenants of a scale that had not previously been available in Broadmead. A new 13 screen cinema and catering uses complement the wider shopping offer.

The whole development is supported by a 2,600 space car park, which meets exceptional design standards, to address safety issues and complement the quality of the rest of the scheme. The development also includes 280 student bedspaces, 240 apartments, 20 affordable family houses and a 150 bed, 3 star hotel. The development also includes a site for 150,000 sq ft of offices. Importantly the scheme has provided new public spaces and pedestrian streets including the main central space to Cabot Circus, a new piazza around the restored Quakers Friars buildings and a community open space in the St. Jude's area.

Cabot Circus is not an alien 'mall' dropped into Bristol's core. It has open streets, which are available to the public at all times. A striking

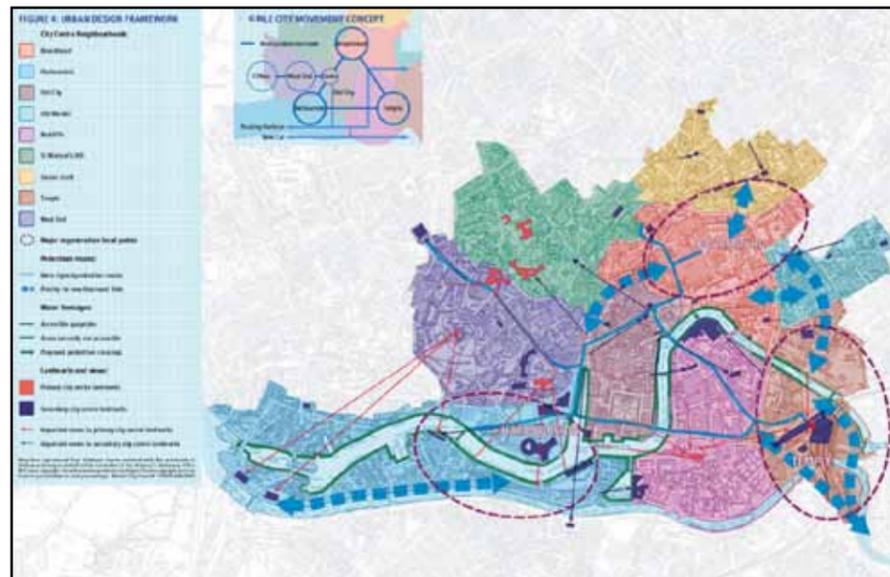
and artist-designed roof is provided at high level to offer some protection from the worst of the elements.

Stimulated by the scheme, the Council, Broadmead Management and the Alliance were successful in promoting a Business Improvement District (BID) for the remainder of Broadmead. This provided some £1.7 million of business ratepayers' money into a fund of over £11 million, to secure improvements to the public realm throughout Broadmead

ENHANCEMENT OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Cabot Circus has transformed a 15ha site at one of the main routes into the city. The site formerly comprised a collection of underused sites for car parking and office accommodation, which created a poor townscape comprising service yards for the former retail accommodation. Using an anchor retail store of iconic design, together with road re-modelling, this entrance to Bristol has been changed beyond all recognition and now provides a more appropriate sense of arrival to the commercial centre of the city.





The site also embraces parts of the post war shopping area mainly in secondary retail use. The area has been visually transformed by Cabot Circus but also by associated development to the east. In particular, the realignment of Bond St provided the opportunity to improve its visual quality, provision for buses and cyclists and importantly, to introduce additional street level crossings to better connect the shopping area to the adjoining neighbourhoods of St. Paul's and St. Jude's.

Social and physical benefits have arisen in the St Jude's area, particularly through the creation of a new open space, larger family sized affordable housing and (currently under construction) streets designed as shared spaces.



Although a principal objective of the scheme was to enhance the retail and leisure offer of Bristol City Centre, the development also embraced the integration of other parts of the city. Of particular interest is the area around Quakers' Friars, which is an area centred on a listed complex of former Dominican Friary buildings that was previously characterized by unsympathetic car parking and retail service areas. Through careful masterplanning, the area has been transformed into a vibrant area comprising retail, leisure and residential uses. The transformation and enhancement of the listed buildings themselves now provides an appropriate centre-piece for a new public square.

A particular feature that draws the overall scheme together is the comprehensive public art strategy that has seen innovative installations in all areas of the development. Particularly striking is the glazed roof, which covers some of the streets in Cabot Circus. Designed by Artist, Nyan Kulkarni, in conjunction with Chapman Taylor, the roof is both weather protection and a work of art. This is arguably the most visible of many public art interventions in the scheme, a process managed by an agreed public art strategy and project managed by InSite Arts.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Fundamentally, the scheme sets out to capture predicted growth in retail spend at the heart of the city centre, making very intensive use of previously developed land and with good transport choices. Cabot Circus has also established exceptional levels of integration with the existing shopping in Broadmead. The streets in the scheme are natural extensions of Bristol's existing prime shopping streets, and parts of Broadmead, outside the scheme, have also seen footfall growth.

Working with Hammerson and Land Securities through their planning advisors Turley Associates, the Council was keen at the outset of the scheme evolution in 2001 to promote a comprehensive assessment of the sustainability potential and achievements of the scheme under

environmental, economic and social areas. It was the first major scheme in Bristol to devise a bespoke sustainability checklist. This checklist was a precursor to later adopted Council planning policy on sustainability assessment. The Development Agreement entered into between the Council and the Alliance and the planning conditions set out high expectations to maintain the commitment to sustainable development throughout the process.

Regarding energy and resource use, early work by the Alliance showed that this would not be best served with high profile provision of wind turbines and photo voltaic cells. Instead, maximum energy efficiency would be achieved through embedded features. From the start of the enabling works, the developers set about recycling all waste that could be reasonably used and many of the materials were locally sourced. In the event, an early assessment of



the sustainability achieved showed that the scheme would qualify for the then BREEAM target of 'Very Good'. At that stage the Alliance took the decision to increase the investment in the scheme's services, in order to gain an 'Excellent' rating. Rainwater harvesting and double flush toilets were added, along with other initiatives. This enabled Cabot Circus to be the first City Centre regeneration project in Britain to achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' rating.

The Alliance's efforts continued after completion of the development. They have engaged retailers into the process and over 80% of waste from the scheme is recycled. The Alliance and the Council are both pressing for increased usage of the Freight Consolidation Service for retailers, which reduces the amount of heavy lorries in the city centre.

Cabot Circus has made significant improvements to the local transportation network and quality of local streets, with a particular problem junction on the road network being improved in capacity by over 30% as a result of the scheme.

It is considered that Cabot Circus sought and has achieved high standards in liaison and



communication with the local community. A process of stakeholder involvement was originally set up by the Council's planning and property team to look first at issues raised by the principle of retail expansion and secondly to help assess the then competing proposals. When the Alliance was formed and selected as developer, a senior officer in the Alliance team managed the process as a full time job. This was supported by the main contractors, whom the Alliance obliged to nominate a similar senior officer into the liaison role. Throughout the development, for instance, the Alliance produced a weekly bulletin describing the works planned for the coming week.

On employment matters, the Alliance in partnership with the Council and other agencies, developed training and access to jobs initiatives. This scheme did not just leave staffing and retail management to tenants. At Cabot Circus, a large majority of retailers and other employers have complemented the Alliance on the role that they played in securing the staff necessary to open the scheme successfully. The Alliance, working alongside other employment bodies, organised Jobs Fairs, hosted a Cabot Circus jobs website (where employers could interact with potential employees), maintained a data base, and even took a 'Jobs bus' out into the local communities.

ORIGINALITY

A number of aspects of this project pushed the boundaries of the role of planning and planner, such as:

- Joint working from the late 1990s between Council planning and property interests to promote development and the use of market testing to inform planning policy formulation; i.e. to improve deliverability of planning strategy and policy.
- Early use of a bespoke sustainability assessment process as described above.
- Developing and consolidating the acceptance of the masterplan-led approach to larger projects. Using a set of masterplan principles that can allow refinement and

evolution to the masterplan so that the scheme has a managed degree of flexibility to respond to changes in scheme content.

- Securing a shift, when the scheme concept was evolving in 2000, in the way that large-scale city centre retail schemes respond to context. First, a strong policy framework was established in the Broadmead Shopping Area Strategy 2001 requiring strong physical and visual linkages between new and old shopping areas and to the adjoining neighbourhoods. Second, the scheme was required to strike a better balance between providing weather protection and providing a city street experience, achieved here by the use of partial loose fit roof glazing.
- Adopting an early collaborative approach between the Council and Developer, now enshrined elsewhere within 'Planning Protocol' and Planning Process Agreements.

ISSUES TO BE OVERCOME

On a project of this scale there were many issues to reconcile, but two areas of particular note relate to pre-application consultation and the negotiation of planning obligations.

From the start, the project required a credible consultation process and this was initially driven by a collaboration between planning and property at the Council. It developed the idea of independent facilitation and consultees helping to steer the design of the process. The developer was required to continue a process of similar quality. As the project developed, the consultation mechanisms were refined to respond to circumstances, such as the setting up later in the process of a Neighbouring Community's Forum to look at more local issues, such as the implementation of Section 106 contributions.

This helped to ensure positive relationships were maintained with local residents throughout the construction process. The Alliance and the Council also encouraged the developers of the individual plots to embrace the consultative approach during the preparation, submission and determination of the various reserved matters applications.

Key issues within the planning assessment of the scheme were those reflected in the Section 106 agreement, namely Affordable Housing, Traffic & Air Quality impact and local



Employment, Training & Trading Initiatives. These were all considered in the context of very high development costs from land assembly and infrastructure. Judgments were required between competing demands for policy based and mitigation based obligations. A role of the planning team was to comprehensively review all of the potential planning and corporate expectations from the scheme. This helped the Council prioritise its approach to negotiation. Ultimately, matters of particular concern to adjoining neighbourhoods were given priority as listed above.

QUALITY OF PROFESSIONAL WORK

Ultimately the test of the quality of the professional work lies principally in the quality of the outcome. However, the processes used



have been important for achieving a quality outcome as well as the collaborative approach adopted by the professional staff within the City Council and those advising the Alliance.

Early workshop style discussions on concept and approaches between the Alliance's design team and the Council's planners and urban designers helped to develop trust and a shared commitment to quality. The Council's project officer operated as a bridge between the Council's planning assessment team and the Alliance, helping to oil the wheels of discussion.

A key piece of collaborative work at the early



stages was the establishment of a series of masterplan principles that set parameters for the evolution of the scheme Masterplan. The parameters covered such matters as important vistas, access points, pedestrian routes and the relationship of active frontages to streets. The outline permission, granted in 2003, had a seven year lifespan, to allow the Alliance to finalise matters with anchor users, and to develop the design. This (then) innovative structure secured the achievement of important principles for the Council but allowed the Alliance the flexibility to adjust the scheme, without having to re-run the planning process. Testimony to the success of this approach was the inclusion within the masterplan of a major cinema into the scheme, not envisaged initially.

The core of the Alliance's architectural and urban design input was provided by Masterplanners, Chapman Taylor. Significant design was also undertaken by Wilkinson Eyre (concept, Car Park), Alec French (Quakers Friars) and Stanton Williams (House of Fraser). Even where Chapman Taylor designed individual buildings, the Alliance required different job architects to bring a degree of diversity in design but within an overarching approach to design.

A MODEL FOR ELSEWHERE

Many of the valuable learning points from this scheme are touched on elsewhere. In summary, the most significant are:

- Consultation was inclusive and organised before developer ideas were brought to the table; consultation was maintained through to scheme completion.
- The role of partnerships at many levels: Council planning and property resources being used together; Council land ownership combining with the Alliance's financial resources, development skills and expertise; the Council, the Broadmead Board and the Alliance working together in securing funding for environmental

improvements beyond the development site.

- The commitment and management of an extensive range of temporary and permanent public art projects.
- The development of modern city streets and the strong physical integration between new and old.
- A Masterplan-led outline planning permission.

THE PLANNERS ROLE

Looking back over 10 years on this project, the Council's planning service has been working with others to deliver development management throughout this time. The scheme was born out of the Council's then pioneering and visionary document

development; managing the prioritisation of the Council's corporate requirements and expectations from the scheme; devising a bespoke sustainability assessment process in partnership with Bristol Alliance's planning consultants, Turley Associates.

- Leading on the coordination of post decision approvals under planning and highway powers for new streets and spaces to be adopted by the Council and now working with the Alliance to secure a planning compliant scheme using an agreed condition monitoring schedule.

It has to be recognised that many of these roles could not have been carried out successfully without good collaboration with the Alliance's planning advisors, who brought experience from elsewhere for use and adaptation in the Bristol context



"The City Centre Strategy" that promoted three major regeneration areas, including Broadmead. The establishment of a dedicated Broadmead Project Officer within the Council's Planning Services at the beginning of the project, to complement the planning assessment team was crucial in the following key areas:

- Joint working with the Council's Property team to assess the potential for retail growth and the best location for this; conducting early stages of public involvement and consultation on the development opportunity; briefing of senior officers and members on scheme progress; to assess scheme approaches during the process of developer selection and, not least, to build the case for CPO.
- Adoption of an updated policy framework to support major retail expansion.
- Working with the Broadmead Board and others to maximise regeneration beyond the immediate development site by securing environmental upgrades to the rest of the shopping area funded in part by a Business Improvement District.
- Helping to facilitate pre-application dialogue between the Council's planning assessment team and the Alliance in evolving the masterplan-led approach to

CONCLUSION

Cabot Circus shows that it requires a long term commitment by all parties to secure large-scale regeneration. With collaboration and application of resources it is possible to achieve quality development that brings wider economic, social and environmental benefits. The scheme has brought much more than just a rejuvenated retail offer to central Bristol, but a measure of its success is that even after only a few months trading, the shopping area is now ranked 12th in the UK. The residential, leisure and retail uses have added a vitality to an area that was previously an eyesore on the main approach to Bristol. It integrates well to the rest of the shopping area and has improved connections to local neighbourhoods. The role of planners and planning as a visionary, enabling and coordinating process is exemplified in this project.