

HISTORY

The original development was completed in 1976 by Capital & Counties Plc in partnership with the City of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Introduction

The development comprises a Regional Shopping Centre on a site of approximately 10 acres in the Centre area of Newcastle, which is the Capital of the North East, serving a catchment area of 2.7 million. The scheme forms approximately one third of the central shopping area and is part of a programme of re-development promoted by the City of Newcastle. The agreement between the City and Capital & Counties was signed in 1972.

Original Design Concept

The Shopping Centre was designed on two levels being the shopping malls, lower level providing service roads and storage areas in the form of an "F" linking to the existing shopping areas of Northumberland Street, Grainger Street and The Grainger Market. The malls form pedestrian streets and eventually the majority of the centre shopping area will be completed pedestrianised. At various access points of the scheme, changes in the level are made by staircases, ramps, lifts and escalators. There are car parks to the North and South of the scheme providing 1250 parking spaces and a bus concourse situated at service level under the North Block, which caters for 200 buses per hour at peak periods. A rapid interchange point at Greys Monument and adjacent to one of the main pedestrian entrances to the scheme. The malls give access to three public houses and a Recreation Centre which provides an indoor rink for bowls and has squash courts, sauna and sundry activity hall with ancillary bar and catering services.

Main Contractor

Phase I and Recreation Centre.
Leslie & Co (Northern) Limited.

Phase II
Sir Robert Mcalpine & Sons Limited.

Clients

Capital & Counties plc and the City of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Site

The site is irregular and covers some 4.5 hectares (10 acres) in the shape of a letter F. Eldon Square is in the heart of the central area of Newcastle upon Tyne and the site had to be developed in accordance with the planning framework established by the City Planning Department.

The original site lacked the necessary area to accommodate the major space users and extensive negotiations were undertaken by the developers and the City to acquire most land in the Northern section to facilitate the incorporation of these large users.

Brief

The brief was to design a building that would house a large variety of shops and major stores and include a new City market, bus Concourse, car parking, offices, entertainment uses and cinemas. The City also required the North façade of Nelson Street to be retained. The Planning and design evolved through some 32 schemes from 1968 to 1972. Immediately prior to commencing construction in January 1973 the cinema complex over the South block was replaced with a new brief to provide a multi use recreation centre for the City and the design of this major element evolved in parallel with the construction of the shopping areas below it.

Due to the size and complexity of the development, it was decided to build in two phases, Phase I (Greenmarket, West Block, South Block and Recreation Centre) starting in January 1973 and finishing in March and October 1976. Phase II (North Block, North East Block and Northern car park) starting in July 1973 and finishing in September 1976.

Town Planning Requirements

The scheme had to integrate with the central area planning concept established by the City Planning Department.

The new shopping malls from part of the new system of City streets being developed in the central area and they had to tie in with specific proposals for the central area e.g. The pedestrianisation of Northumberland Street, the new metro station at Greys Monument, the central area car parking and motorway strategy and the need to provide covered vehicular servicing to all adjacent properties forming an integral part of the development site. Due to the City pedestrianisation proposals, vehicular access for servicing could only be from the West, i.e. Percy Street and Newgate Street.

Accommodation

The Centre provides accommodation for the John Lewis Partnership (Bainbridge) five other major stores and approximately 110 smaller units. The City has provided an extension to the City Market, the Bus Concourse and Eldon Leisure which are integral parts of the scheme.

Rents and Charges

Capital & Counties had also resolved where possible in the development to charge rents of a turnover basis, being a rent commensurate with the amount of trade down, but subject to a minimum figure, which is reviewed periodically to 80% of market value. Where rents were agreed prior to opening day the agreed rents were increased by an appropriate Government index. Other charges for shop units will be made to recover landlords expenditure on management, insurance, repairs, servicing and separate charges made to recover costs of supplying hot and chilled water for tenants own air conditioning equipment.

Merchants Association

Retailers are obliged to join and pay the subscription to the Merchants Association who in turn organise promotions, features etc. This association is essential to the company policy of partnership with retailers established by the rent negotiations.

Development Progress and Programme

Phase I of the scheme included the Greenmarket extension, Greenmarket block, South block and West block. Construction began on 1 January 1973 and was completed 1 October 1975.

Phase II of the scheme includes the North block and the North East block. It begun on site July 1973 was completed in March 1976.

Architects

Chapman Taylor Partners.

Partners in Charge: R.G. Chapman, N.L. Woolner.

Consultants

Structural Engineers: Felix J Samuely & Partners

Services Engineers: Steensen Varming Mulcahy & Partners

Quantity Surveyors: A.E. Thornton Firkin & Partners

Graphic Design: Unit 5 Design Limited

Landscaping: John Raven

Organisation

The main principles governing the design solutions were;

1. The route as a generator for the building form.
2. The need to find an architectural expression that would be flexible in relation to the changing townscape context inherent in 10 acres of a City Centre.
3. The necessity of finding a structure that is flexible and allows for change and growth during design and construction and to a lesser extent, in the future.
4. The recognition and acceptance of change as a positive element in the design process from inception.

The scheme is structural around the pedestrian malls which formed the principal arteries of movement. They connected the existing established shopping areas of Newcastle – Northumberland Street, Greys Monument and the Grainger Market – with the new bus concourse, car parks and the underground station at Greys Monument, now in the course of construction. The malls slope to follow the gradients of the site and this concept represented a radical departure from the traditional shopping centre planning.

A planning grid of 6m was chosen at an early stage as this dimension represented the optimum as far as single shop units were concerned. Having established this grid, it was possible to work in multiples of it, i.e. 12m by 6m and 12m in major space users where large clear spaces were required, and in units of 4m in the Greenmarket area where there was a limited need for smaller units on a 4m grid.

Malls

These run from one third of a mile from Northumberland Street to Greys Monument and the Grainger Market. The mall width and height varies depending upon the scale of accommodation served by it.

The malls are punctuated by a series of concourses located at strategic points where the direction of the routes changes and interchange can take place from bus, car or metro into the mall system.

Wherever possible, the opportunity has been taken to provide views out of the scheme so that the pedestrian has a constant reference point to old Eldon Square and other 'known' city landmarks.

Shops

These are planned around the malls and vary in size from 280,000 sq ft for the John Lewis Partnership to 50 sq ft in the Greenmarket for stall holders. The major space users are located throughout the malls at strategic points of pedestrian flow generation. The largest of these, Bainbridge for the John Lewis Partnership, is on four levels in the North Block and is planned around the North concourse which rises through the store. Pubs and cafes are located throughout the malls with views overlooking the square.

Greenmarket

The new market for the City was an extension of the existing Grainger Market. It was designed around a large double height volume through which escalators rise to connect with the mall system.

Bus Concourse

This is underneath the North Block and four escalators and two lifts gave direct access to the North concourse above.

Offices

40,000 sq ft of offices are above the shopping on the west side of old Eldon Square.

Car Parking

There are two car parks, each of approximately 750 spaces.

Eldon Leisure

This major entertainment use is over the shopping in the South Block and runs the entire length of Blakett Street. The accommodation comprises two multi purpose sports halls, indoor Bowling Green, square courts, fencing, judo, sauna, restaurant and bars.

Service Roads

These run at a level of 6m below the malls and feed storage areas on either side that connect with the shop units above. As the roads approach Northumberland Street and Greys Monument, they fall 6m below the existing ground levels and provide basement service access to the buildings adjoining the development site.

Cost

Total contract cost approximately £26 million.

Costs paid by the City: Eldon Leisure £2.3 million.
Car Parks, Bus Concourse, Market and Service Roads
- £9 million.

Land costs: £7.9 million.

Structure

The main structural system was in site reinforced concrete with large open span steel frames for Eldon Leisure and the concourse roofs.

Services

The distribution pattern for the services followed the malls and service roads and feeds off into the various uses alongside. The main plant for the development is situated in the podium and on the roof of the west block.

The entire development was air conditioned, including the malls and concourses. A distribution network from the central plant feeds hot and chilled water throughout the development to local plantrooms serving the developers areas. Individual tenants provide their own plant which in turn is fed from the central hot and chilled water system. Air intake and extra systems are organised behind a system of louvers that form an integral part of the lead cladding panels.

A complete system of security and fire control runs throughout the scheme and this is monitored from central rooms located in the West Block.

Finishes

Externally, the buildings present a number of faces, depending on the particular location within the context of the City. The buildings around old Eldon Square are clad in Sussex West Hoathly stock brick with infilling lead panels and they form sheltered colonnades and terraces around the square. The set back upper levels are clad in zinc.

In Clayton Street, the building adjoins a conservation area and were clad in local stone with infilling lead panels. In Nelson Street façade by John Dobson has been retained and restored and the new shopping fitted in behind it. At the two principal entrances to the scheme in Northumberland Street and Greys Monument, use is made of reflective glass elevations which reflect the ever changing visual pattern of Northumberland Street, and at Greys Monument reflect the collection of handsome buildings including the Art Nouveau Emmerson Chambers and Greys Monument itself.

Internally, the malls were designed to present a series of changing views and spaces with the malls sloping to follow gradients of the site. The malls are divided by a series of concourses where the low level of lighting in the malls is contrasted with the introduction of natural lighting from above. The malls are designed to provide a background to the changing shop front display and are finished with dark brown aluminium slatted ceilings.

Tiled floors in a variety of patterns, internal brick planting areas and sunken carpeted seating areas.

Certain special features are incorporated including a double height water feature and a free standing circular restaurant together with play features for children.

A specially designed system of signs and lettering was developed for the scheme by Unit 5 design working with the Architects. Eldon Square itself has been revelled and landscaped to tie in with the development, and new terraces in brick have been provided around the square. These give access to the shopping malls and bus concourse. A specially commissioned sculpture “**Man with Pigeons**”, by Andrew Wallace is now located at the entrance to the Centre Management offices.

The Mall Names

Mall names were chosen to reflect the history of the local area;

Earls Way

Named after Earl of Douglas (Douglas Way) who fought in the Border Wars.

Hotspur Way

Named after Harry Hotspur who fought against Earl Douglas, the Scot, in the Border Wars.

Chevy Chase

One of the Border battles between Douglas and Hotspur was called Chevy Chase. C. 1386

Pennon Place

On one occasion Earl Douglas flaunted a Pennon (a pennant), he had captured from the Percies, taunting Hotspur to follow him to Otterburn where a battle took place (1388).

Prudhoe-Chare

Named after Prudhoe Street. The Percy's Dukes of Northumberland once owned Prudhoe Castle:- (Percy Street, Northumberland Street and Prudhoe Street).

Whitecross Way

The fascinating name comes from the old markets of Newcastle. Many of these were held near the White Cross – literally a market cross which stood near Newgate. It was erected during the 14th century and pulled down in 1773. You can still see the exact site of the White Cross – it is marked by a cross on the mini roundabout in Newgate Street.

High Friars

This is taken from the old High Friars road which ran from just inside Newgate – a gate in the old town walls – to the Franciscan or Grey Friar’s house. The site of this is where Lloyds TSB now stands in Grey Street. The original street was demolished when the Centre was built, but High Friars mall ensures the link with monks from the 13th century Newcastle is retained.

Eldon Way

Eldon is a famous Newcastle name and this mall is probably connected with John Scott, the first Lord Eldon, who lived between 1751 and 1838. He was born into relative poverty, he prospered in later life and became Lord Chancellor of England – a position he held for some 25 years.

Sidgate

Centuries ago, this was the original name for Percy Street – and comes from ‘the road to the Side’ or to the Side Gate in the old town walls. Before it was demolished with the building of Eldon Square, Sidgate ran parallel to Blakett Street from Newgate to Clayton Street.

Newgate Street

Named after a large gate in Town Wall that stood at the junction of Newgate Street and Gallowgate.

Cordwainers

Cordovan or Cordwain is goatskin leather that came from Cordova in Spain. A cordwainer made shoes with this leather.

Refurbishment & Extension

An extensive refurbishment in 1988 opened up many ceiling areas, creating new atriums, with new lighting and signage throughout the Centre. In 1989 the Newgate Street extension opened offering an additional 80,000 square feet in the south side of the Centre – this included a Food Court, extra mall space for new shops and provided a link to the south end of the City.