

Brindleyplace

Birmingham, United Kingdom

Project Type:
Mixed-Use/Multi-Use

Case No:
C034019

Year:
2004



SUMMARY

One of the largest mixed-use projects ever attempted in the United Kingdom (U.K.), Brindleyplace is a master-planned development situated between the Birmingham and Brindley Loop canals in Birmingham, England, approximately 185 kilometers (115 miles) northwest of London. This seven-hectare (17-acre) project features office, retail, residential, and cultural uses surrounding public squares.

FEATURES

- More than 102,000 square meters (almost 1.1 million square feet) of office space in ten buildings
- 143 apartments and townhouses above 9,290 square meters (100,000 square feet) of shops, restaurants, and bars
- Project also includes a 240-room hotel, a 900-space multistory parking garage, a 340-seat theater, and the National Sea Life Centre, England's largest aquarium

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SPECIAL FEATURES

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- Project also includes a 240-room hotel, a 900-space multistory parking garage, a 340-seat theater, and the National Sea Life Centre, England's largest aquarium

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www.brindleyplace.com

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION

At seven hectares (17 acres), Brindleyplace is one of the largest mixed-use projects ever developed in the United Kingdom (U.K.). The result of a public/private partnership, Brindleyplace has transformed a formerly isolated, derelict site into a major hub of activity in downtown Birmingham. With its mix of office, retail, residential, and cultural uses situated around public squares and access to the canals, Brindleyplace is now one of the city's choicest locations for living and working. The project has also served as a catalyst for downtown residential development. New housing has sprung up around Brindleyplace, and more and more people are choosing to live in the city center.

BACKGROUND

In the early 1980s, Birmingham was forced, like many other industrial cities around the world, to search for new strategies to revive its flagging economy. The city chose to use its canal system as a catalyst for urban revitalization.

For nearly 300 years, Birmingham's economic life had centered on its canals. During the early years of the industrial revolution, over 322 kilometers (200 miles) of canals were built to connect Birmingham to the larger region and to the rest of England, placing the city at the heart of the national canal network. Although all the canals are connected, those in Birmingham and in the surrounding Black Country were built in stages, by different companies, between 1768 and 1799. James Brindley, a pioneering canal engineer, built the Birmingham canal in 1768; it was one of several canals used to transport coal, ore, and finished products for the metals industry. As the canal system grew, so did the city's manufacturing base. The Birmingham and Fazeley Canal, which runs through the heart of the Brindleyplace development, was completed in 1789, providing the link to the Coventry Canal and to the waterways east of the city. Although many of the canals have been filled in over time, over 80 navigable kilometers (50 miles) remain within the city itself.

The city's industrial economy, long based on metals manufacturing, was in decline by the 1930s. As industry began to abandon Birmingham, the city began to abandon its canals. The towpaths became derelict, and the channels became filled with silt. Heavy bombing during World War II destroyed much of the remaining industry. As part of the post-World War II nationalization of the railroads, the British Transport Commission, which had been established in 1948, acquired all rail and canal routes. In 1958, management of the canals was placed under the control of British Waterways, which is still responsible today for overseeing mooring practices, maintaining towpaths, and ensuring water quality and supply.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Like many cities, Birmingham attempted to design its way out of decline in the 1960s. And like many cities, it chose to invest in a highway megaproject, the Inner Ring Road, which circled the center of the city and effectively cut it off from surrounding neighborhoods. Many historic buildings were demolished to make way for this "concrete collar"; 20 years later, planners would encounter a major challenge in attempting to mitigate its effects. The 1960s also saw the development of Cambrian Wharf, a high-rise mixed-use development along the canal, north of the city center, that was the city's first attempt at an inner-city revitalization project.

By the 1970s, the city had decided to focus its economic redevelopment strategy on business tourism; plans for the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) were undertaken in 1975. At that time, there were no purpose-built convention centers in the U.K. The plan was to capitalize on the city's location at a "crossroads of opportunity"—the meeting place of not just the national canal system but major rail and motorway routes as well. Debate ensued over whether to build the NEC near the city center or on a greenfield site on the perimeter. The choice of a city-center location—a 16-hectare (40-acre) site along the canal, just outside the Inner Ring Road—would be key to the city's future redevelopment.

In 1988, Birmingham hosted the Highbury Initiative, an intensive, 48-hour "urban regeneration brainstorming session" that became the basis for a 13-year implementation strategy. Two recurring themes emerged at Highbury: first, the city had no clear visual identity—it was impossible to draw a map of its center from memory; second, the Inner Ring Road had strangled the center, separating it from the surrounding historic districts. In response to these findings, the city decided to develop a pedestrian-friendly concept for the city center—and, as part of that concept, to downgrade the Inner Ring Road. The Birmingham Urban Design Strategy (BUDS) was a result of the Highbury Initiative. As part of BUDS, the city commissioned a city center plan that would give the center a clearer identity.

The city council hired consultants Tibbalds, Colbourne, Karski, and Williams to design the plan. Their goals were the following:

- To relate the buildings to the streets;
- To create "people-friendly city centers" for the commercial, sports, and convention areas;
- To make better use of the area's natural topography;
- To encourage development in distinctive quarters; and
- To foster the development of new landmarks and open space.

The canals became the backdrop for this plan, knitting together a total development area that now amounts to 820 hectares (2,025 acres). The city decided to abandon the 1960s-era U.S. planning model of inward-looking malls and other developments that universally have fallen out of favor. Instead, plans emphasized permeability and were designed so that new construction would create a “necklace of places” within the center city.

But before development along the canals could proceed, the city needed to address the problems left behind by their former users. The sediments in the canals and the land alongside them were contaminated by cadmium, zinc, and other heavy-metal residues and would need to be dredged; the cost of this task—£2.2 million—was largely covered by the European Union’s (EU’s) Project Aquarius.

Fish had vanished from the waterways long ago, but reed beds had sprung up over the years in the stagnant waters, providing homes for other kinds of wildlife. Consequently, British Waterways undertook wetlands mitigation to make the canals navigable once again: towpaths were restored and canal walls shored up. The city’s decision to open a Brussels office to lobby the EU for redevelopment funds proved to be a good one: over the course of the 1990s, Birmingham received approximately £25 million in EU funds for environmental cleanup and infrastructure improvements. Much of the EU money was used for remediation of the site of the former brass foundries, as were “derelict land grants” from the central U.K. government.

The preservation of landmarks and habitats will continue to influence development along the canals. There are over 1,000 listed (landmark) structures on the waterways in and around Birmingham, as well as ancient monuments and sites of particular scientific interest such as reed beds and endangered species’ habitat. And the fish are back.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

During the 1980s, the city spent £6 million assembling the Brindleyplace site; in 1987, it issued a request for proposals with three main directives:

- Increase the viability of the plan for the city center while addressing the city’s requirement for a mix of uses that will promote a high level of pedestrian activity;
- Ensure that the site, as the natural extension of the west end of the city center, is integrated into its surroundings and has strong pedestrian links to the traditional prime office zone; and
- Create a workable plan for the development, including a substantial increase in office space, that will lend itself to phased implementation.

The city also wanted to make the most of the canal system and to open it as much as possible to increased public use. Given that the canals have an average width of about 4.6 meters (15 feet) and are located some 4.6 meters (15 feet) below the city grade, they were an asset that would have been easy to obscure. Any designs would need to carefully take into account both the opportunities and constraints presented by the canals. (For example, to avoid creating the effect of canyons, development would have to be layered away from the canals.) To ensure that the developer would be guided more by concern for quality than by concern for profit, the city opted to forgo an opportunity to sell the property for its maximal market value, in favor of finding a developer that would maximize the site’s overall development potential.

The developer that was selected—Rosehaugh plc—acquired seven hectares (17 acres) at Brindleyplace, adjacent to the canal, on a 150-year lease for £23.3 million. The acquisition price included monies earmarked for the construction of the International Convention Centre (ICC) and Symphony Hall, which were to be located across the canal from Brindleyplace. Under this arrangement, Brindleyplace plc, a subsidiary of Rosehaugh, would be the master leaseholder, provided that it met various development obligations. A project manager was appointed from within the municipal government to coordinate activities across departments and to cut through red tape.

Initially, the key component of the city’s vision for Brindleyplace was a 23,225-square-meter (250,000-square-foot) festival marketplace; the £80 million development was to include an arts and crafts market and leisure center, as well as a 2,000-space parking garage that would link the ICC to the proposed national aquarium. Despite the city council’s enthusiasm, opinions were divided about the prospects for the marketplace: even James Rouse reportedly thought it was a bad idea. And, since the economy was in the grips of a recession, lenders were reluctant to bankroll the plan. With the festival marketplace apparently a nonstarter, Rosehaugh submitted a second proposal for an office development.

The Rosehaugh office development was based on a 1991 master plan, created by Terry Farrell and John Chatwin, that had drawn heavily on the Highbury principles and BUDS. The plan was organized around a system of public squares, linked to one another and to the rest of the city center by pedestrian pathways. Density would be high to maintain the urban character, but building heights would be in keeping with the four- to five-story structures on adjacent Broad Street, Birmingham’s traditional main street. The stone and brick that were characteristic of Birmingham buildings would be the favored construction materials.

In 1992, Rosehaugh went bankrupt, and its assets were purchased by Argent plc for £3 million in 1993. Under the original agreement with the city, five years still remained to develop Brindleyplace. The fire-sale price meant that Argent had more money available than Rosehaugh had to invest in the redevelopment of the site. Thus, Argent was able to undertake a higher-quality, higher-cost development than Rosehaugh might have been able to afford.

Nevertheless, financing the project became a challenge. Aside from the recession and the site conditions, lenders tended to be suspicious of mixed-use development, a factor that had an important implication for Brindleyplace. The lenders' requirements meant that housing had to be more segregated from retail and office uses than the developers had originally planned on, which created a more "horizontal" rather than "vertical" arrangement of uses. In addition, the phased development required by the city in its request for proposals became a key part of the project's financing strategy: capital for subsequent phases was negotiated as each prior phase reached completion.

BUILDING BRINDLEYPLACE

Under the agreement with the city, Argent was required, at its own expense, to build the first 5,575 square meters (60,000 square feet) of speculative retail and restaurant space at the Water's Edge site, across the canal from the ICC, as a gateway into the main Brindleyplace development. The developer was also required to refurbish the Oozells Street School building, a landmark in the decorative style known as Ruskinian Gothic, and to lay out the main square. As part of the original buyout agreement, the addition of these requirements to the £3 million site acquisition price meant that Argent's investment would reach nearly £8 million before any income could be realized.

The phased construction and funding approach, however, proved successful, and allowed the next several phases of mixed-use office development to proceed. The Water's Edge development was completed and partially leased by 1994, with full lease-up in 1995. Designed by Benoy Architects and Designers, the project consists of shops, restaurants, and bars situated around a piazza on the pedestrian thoroughfare that passes through Brindleyplace and leads to the main square.

British Airways Pension Trustees then acquired one parcel of the office development, and agreed to provide initial funding for the speculative construction of Number One. General confidence in the economy was rising along with the buildings of Brindleyplace, making subsequent phases more attractive to investors. Sales of the surrounding land—to Berkeley Homes, Greenalls Pubs, and the Institute of Electrical Engineers—provided the capital for the construction, in 1995, of the main square and the major infrastructure. As the larger development area began to take shape in 1996, Argent was able to prelease 11,150 square meters (120,000 square feet) of office space to British Telecom, which made possible the construction of Number Five. Also in that year, the sale of land to the National Sea Life Centre and a prelease to Lloyd's TSB Bank underwrote the construction of Number Two.

The Argent Development Consortium was formed in 1997, with a loan from a consortium of German banks; the partners are Argent plc, the British Telecom Pension Scheme, Citibank, and the United Bank of Kuwait, now Ahli United Bank. The Argent Development Consortium financed the construction of two additional speculative office buildings, a multistory parking garage, and a theater.

PLANNING AND DESIGN

The site comprises 102,190 square meters (1.1 million square feet) of office space, residential apartments and townhouses, two hotels, an art gallery, restaurants and cafés, and a health club. All of the buildings are oriented around one of the two major public open spaces (Brindleyplace Square and Oozells Square) that have been overlaid onto a grid of connecting pedestrian paths. While cars are able to drive into the development at multiple entrances, there are no connecting through-streets, thus slowing down traffic and making Brindleyplace very comfortable for pedestrians.

To the north and east, Brindleyplace is bordered by canals, with Broad Street as its southern border. Many of Brindleyplace's bars and restaurants are located at the Water's Edge, so called for its presence adjacent to the canal. In the northeastern corner of the site sits the National Sea Life Centre, bounded on two sides by the canal.

Brindleyplace Square: The main square, which is surrounded by the initial buildings of the development, is the heart of Brindleyplace. The square was designed by Townshend Landscape Architects to be a natural extension of the series of public spaces that run through the center of the city, and to provide an organizing element for the structures that would surround it. It features a fountain, a terraced area that can be used as a performance space, and a café designed by Piers Gough. Townshend took advantage of the 0.9-meter (three-foot) slope across the site to create a series of distinct spaces within the square.

The buildings surrounding the square (Two, Three, Four, Five, and Six Brindleyplace) were the work of different architects but were all designed to address the public space and one another, and to fit into Farrell and Chatwin's master plan. The selection of the architecture firms was itself a key part of the design approach. The developers wanted to avoid large commercial firms that "churn out commercial space by the square foot" and to work instead with smaller firms. The developers also sought out firms with which they could collaborate, by working directly with the designers and making their vision understood firsthand. The result is a collection of buildings that, although generated simultaneously, have the quality of structures that have been assembled over time. The buildings are harmonious without being individually anonymous, and bear a strong "family resemblance" to one another without being clones.

Two Brindleyplace (Allies and Morrison Architects) provides 6,970 square meters (75,000 square feet) of office space on seven floors that surround a full-height atrium. To accommodate the diagonal cut of the route from Water's Edge, an indentation was made in the building's principal facade, which overlooks the main square and features a

freestanding, fully glazed stair tower and a six-meter-high (20-foot-high) colonnade with a double-height entryway. The colonnade forms the base of the building's three-part composition; the middle is formed by the office grid and the top by a recessed floor surrounded by terraces.

At Two Brindleyplace, the details of each facade differ slightly to reflect their surroundings. The front is the most formal and deliberate, while the side facing Oozells Street is slanted and asymmetrical. The simpler back is the service side, providing access to the parking garage and loading docks. The exterior walls are of load-bearing brick on a steel frame. Fenestration in silver-gray painted metalwork forms a continuous lattice, serving as both a counterpoint to the masonry and a link to the white-plastered interior. The recessed upper story and the back wall of the colonnade are also painted white to enhance the sense that the building has an inner layer.

Three Brindleyplace (Porphyrios Associates, Architects), at the meeting point with Water's Edge, dominates the main square, and its 50-meter-high (164-foot-high) tower has become a Brindleyplace landmark. It features 8,500 square meters (91,500 square feet) of office space on six floors (stepping down to three stories on the canal side). The main entrance leads through a double-height arcade into a foyer—which, in turn, leads to a seven-story glazed central atrium. A ground-level arcade clad in ashlar stone surrounds the atrium. The middle section is ringed with columns that reach to an upper loggia with a glazed roof. Broad balconies overlook the atrium, and office ceiling heights are 2.7 meters (nine feet). The interior post-and-spandrel construction contrasts with the bulkiness of the exterior, which is of self-supporting brick masonry and ashlar stone. Reconstituted stone was used in all the architectural projections and rusticated surfaces. The entry portals, with half-round arches descending into load-bearing Doric columns, are almost Venetian in design.

Four Brindleyplace (Stanton Williams Architects) is by far the most modernist of the buildings fronting the square. The exterior of this seven-story, 10,590-square-meter (114,000-square-foot) structure makes use of glass and Belgian brick in almost equal measure, and the colonnade at its base is formed of precast concrete. Designed for multitenant occupancy, the building has a range of environmental control systems, including natural ventilation, and offers views from its 1,860-square-meter (20,000-square-foot) open-plan offices. Three service cores run through the structure, and a glazed atrium, measuring 40 meters (130 feet) long and 30 meters (99 feet) high, provides light and air to the building's center. A 930-square-meter (10,000-square-foot) restaurant occupies the ground floor, extending outdoors onto both the square in the front of the building and to the canal behind it. The basement includes a two-story parking garage.

Five Brindleyplace (Sidell Gibson Architects), at the western edge of the main square, is also organized around an atrium. Occupants of all seven floors have views of the square; lit at night, the heart of the building is plainly visible from across the square. The energy-efficient structure includes upflow air conditioning and window openings that were kept as small as practical. Towers mark the entrance of the castlelike construction of brick and reconstituted stone. Because the building is deeper than it is wide—35 by 85 meters (114 by 279 feet)—its interior has a slightly cavernous appearance, an effect that is enhanced by stepped balconies at the far end of the atrium that are draped with green hanging plants. Designed in consultation with the tenant, British Telecom, the interior was intended to create spaces in which staff and visitors will feel welcome and be able to congregate easily. Visible circulation, glass elevators, a prominent spiral stair near the entrance, and dramatic bridges traversing the atrium were all designed to contribute to a feeling of openness.

Six Brindleyplace (Allies and Morrison Architects) faces both the main square and Oozells Square. The seven-story building contains 8,730 square meters (94,000 square feet) of office space, 420 square meters (4,500 square feet) of restaurant space, and basement parking. The entrance through the three-part facade leads from the main square through a colonnade and lobby to a raised atrium illuminated by a glazed roof. Balconies open on three sides of the atrium. The service core forms the fourth wall. The red-brick facade is offset by deeply recessed windows.

Oozells Square: Oozells Square, also by Townsend Landscape Architects, was designed to counterbalance Brindleyplace Square. Flanked by cherry trees, the square features a small inlet of water that diagonally bisects the site and leads the eye to sculptures designed by Paul de Monchaux. The surrounding art galleries and restaurants activate the otherwise calm square.

The square is surrounded by the Ikon Gallery and by buildings Seven, Eight, Nine, and Ten. To convert the historic and architecturally notable Oozells Street School into the Ikon Gallery, Levitt Bernstein, the designer, transformed the large, light-filled classrooms on the first and second floors into 4,160 square meters (44,800 square feet) of exhibition space. A shop, a café, and administrative offices are located on the ground floor. Argent donated the school building to the Ikon Gallery, which then obtained construction funding from the National Lottery and the European Regional Development Fund.

Nine Brindleyplace (Associated Architects) is a mixed-use building that bridges Broad Street and Oozells Square. Its design complements the adjacent Presbyterian church, built in 1849, and provides 3,395 square meters (43,000 square feet) of office space and 2,490 square meters (26,800 square feet) of restaurant space. The restaurant space can easily be subdivided to meet tenants' needs.

Eight and Ten Brindleyplace, both by Sidell Gibson, were the last two office buildings to be developed. Eight Brindleyplace is a mixed-use structure with 13 floors: the first eight floors offer 8,545 square meters (92,000 square feet) of office space; the five floors above comprise 35 apartments. To minimize the apparent height of the building, the residential floors are stepped back, but they still provide views of Birmingham and the surrounding landscape. Ten

Brindleyplace features 5,760 square meters (62,000 square feet) of high-quality office space, and serves as a transition between Brindleyplace and Broad Street, marking a definitive end to the development. With 7,896 square meters (85,000 square feet) of office space set around a courtyard entrance, Seven Brindleyplace (Porphyrios Associates) straddles both Brindleyplace and Oozells squares.

Several nonoffice projects round out the Brindleyplace development. Symphony Court, with 143 apartments and townhouses lining the Brindley Loop and Canal, was the first to offer city-center living options. Rents for one- and two-bedroom units range from £950 to £1,750 per month. The National Sea Life Centre, designed by Norman Foster, features 3,595 square meters (38,700 square feet) of exhibition space and contains the largest collection of marine creatures in Europe. The Crescent Theater, original to the Brindleyplace site, was rebuilt by Argent on a corner site near the canal, providing the theater with much-needed backstage space. The City Inn Hotel, offering 240 rooms and a restaurant terrace that overlooks the Crescent Theater, opened in 2001.

EXPERIENCE GAINED

The Birmingham experience demonstrates that even a modest body of water can be a major asset when the surrounding development is carefully planned. The success of Brindleyplace has firmly established the importance of the canal system as an organizing element: it will continue to be the backdrop for urban regeneration as it wends its way through the rest of the city.

Brindleyplace has also shown that master planning can be used to foster, rather than undermine, innovative building design. Each structure features a unique style and character while functioning as a part of the whole. High-quality design is essential to the creation of lively, round-the-clock environments that function as “people places” while lending prestige to the surrounding buildings. Tenants also care about good design and are willing to pay for it: at £269 per square meter (£25 per square foot) for offices and £323 per square meter (£30 per square foot) for retail space, average commercial rents at Brindleyplace are among the highest in the U.K.

The development has also been the catalyst for another significant transformation in downtown Birmingham: people—especially wealthy people who never before would have seriously considered living in the city center—are choosing to move there. Brindleyplace has generated other intown residential projects along the canal, including the Mailbox, which opened in December 2000 and forms a second key destination along the canal, just 549 meters (600 yards) from Brindleyplace. In the “vertical” mixed-use tradition once rejected by lenders, the Mailbox—Europe’s largest mixed-use center—is a 130,060-square-meter (1.4 million-square-foot) former general post office that now features 200 luxury apartments, 23,000 square meters (247,578 square feet) of office space, and high-end retail.

Brindleyplace has benefited from the flexibility of its master plan, which provided overall structure yet allowed for innovation and nuance—and for adaptation by developers, architects, and end users. The result was a development that was intended to please everyone, yet that retains its internal logic and integrity. It was also important that the developers chose to work with architects and designers who were willing to participate in a dynamic planning process. Finally, Brindleyplace proves the importance of linking a site to the rest of the city. Pedestrian routes in and out of the site, although carefully analyzed and strictly engineered, were meant to feel natural, and are experienced as part of a continuum with the chain of squares and streets beyond.

The city’s commitment, through the master-planning process, to creating links not only within the project but also between Brindleyplace and the rest of the city (including the downgrading of the ring road) is consistently cited as the key to the development’s success. Connectivity was also a theme in the design of the open spaces and the buildings that surround them, which were conceived as both independent elements and thematically linked features. Similarly, the links between the canalside sites and the waterway were designed to complement, rather than overwhelm, the canals. As Birmingham continues the redevelopment of its canals, this system of connections will continue beyond Brindleyplace.

PROJECT DATA**LAND USE INFORMATION**

Site area (hectares/acres): 7/17

Site or Building	Type of Space	Square Meters/Square Feet	Number of Residential Units
Water's Edge	Retail and entertainment	5,575/60,000	
The Mailbox	Retail	130,060/1,400,000	
	Office	23,000/247,578	
	Residential		200
Number One	Office	6,375/68,600	
Number Two	Office	6,970/75,000	
Number Three	Office	8,500/91,500	
Number Four	Office	10,590/114,000	
	Restaurant	930/10,000	
Number Five	Office	11,150/120,000	
Number Six	Office	8,735/94,000	
	Restaurant	420/4,500	
Number Seven	Office	7,895/85,000	
Number Eight	Office	8,545/92,000	
	Residential		35
Number Nine	Office	3,995/43,000	
	Restaurant	2,490/26,800	
Number Ten	Office	5,760/62,000	
	Retail	465/5,000	
National Sea Life Centre	Museum	3,595/38,700	
Ikon Gallery	Art Gallery	4,160/44,800	
Symphony Court	Residential		143

DEVELOPMENT COST INFORMATION

Rosehaugh plc site acquisition cost: £23.3 million
 Argent Group plc site acquisition cost: £3 million
 Total development cost: £238.3 million

DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

Rosehaugh leased site: 1989
 International Convention Centre built: 1991
 Argent bought Rosehaugh's assets: 1993
 Water's Edge opened: 1995
 Brindleyplace Square (main) completed: 1995
 One Brindleyplace completed: 1995
 Five Brindleyplace completed: 1996
 National Sea Life Centre opened: 1996
 Symphony Court completed: 1996
 Argent Development Consortium formed: 1997
 Two Brindleyplace opened: 1997
 Ikon Gallery opened: 1997
 Oozells Square completed: 1998
 Three Brindleyplace opened: 1998
 Crescent Theater opened: 1998
 Four Brindleyplace, Six Brindleyplace, and Nine Brindleyplace completed: 1999
 Eight Brindleyplace and the City Inn Hotel opened: 2000
 Construction on Seven Brindleyplace and Ten Brindleyplace began: 2002
 All construction completed: 2004

DIRECTIONS

From Birmingham International Airport: Take Airport Way heading northwest toward Main Avenue. Make a soft right turn onto International Drive. International Drive becomes Airport Way. At the third roundabout take the second exit onto Bickenhill Lane. Pass one roundabout and at the second roundabout take the third exit onto A45. At the next roundabout take the second exit onto the Small Heath Highway/A45. Pass through one roundabout and on the following roundabout take the first exit onto Bordesley Middleway/A4540. Then, at subsequent roundabout take the second exit onto A4540. At the next roundabout use the third exit onto Belgrave Middleway/A4540. Take a right when the road forks and continue on A4540. At the next roundabout take the fourth exit to

Broad Street. On the following roundabout take the fourth exit again and exit onto Brunswick Street. Follow signs to the Brindleyplace parking garage.

Driving time: 25 minutes in nonpeak traffic.

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Argent Group plc

The seven-hectare (17-acre) Brindleyplace development—one of the largest mixed-use projects ever attempted in the United Kingdom—is composed of buildings oriented around public areas: Brindleyplace Square, Oozells Square, and the Birmingham and Brindley Loop canals. Adjacent to the canal, the shops, bars, and restaurants of the Water's Edge project are arranged around a piazza and a pedestrian walkway that goes to Brindleyplace Square. A footbridge over the Birmingham Canal leads to the International Convention Centre.



Brindleyplace Square was designed both to relate to the surrounding buildings and to be a distinctive "address" at the heart of the development. The café, designed by Piers Gough, is the principal focus of the square. The water feature captures and reflects light throughout the day; the Miles Davies sculpture evokes Brindleyplace's historic past.



Oozells Square was designed to have a strong identity that would complement, but not compete with, the main square. A rill runs diagonally across Oozells Square, leading the eye to the tower of the Ikon Gallery.



The National Sea Life Centre, located near the intersection of the Birmingham and Brindley Loop canals, is one of a series of attractions that bring visitors from throughout the United Kingdom to Brindleypalce.



Argent Group plc

Three Brindleyplace is prominently located at the head of Brindleyplace Square. The structure's civic facade fronts the square, and the rear of the building steps down three stories toward the canal.



Set on a triangular site across from the Brindley Loop Canal, Symphony Court offers flats and townhouses with parking. The footbridge connects to Bridleyplace.



Argent Group plc

Five Brindleyplace, which houses the headquarters of British Telecom, is positioned at the western side of Brindleyplace Square. The atrium reduces the perceived bulk of the building and was intended to create a sense of continuity with the public realm.