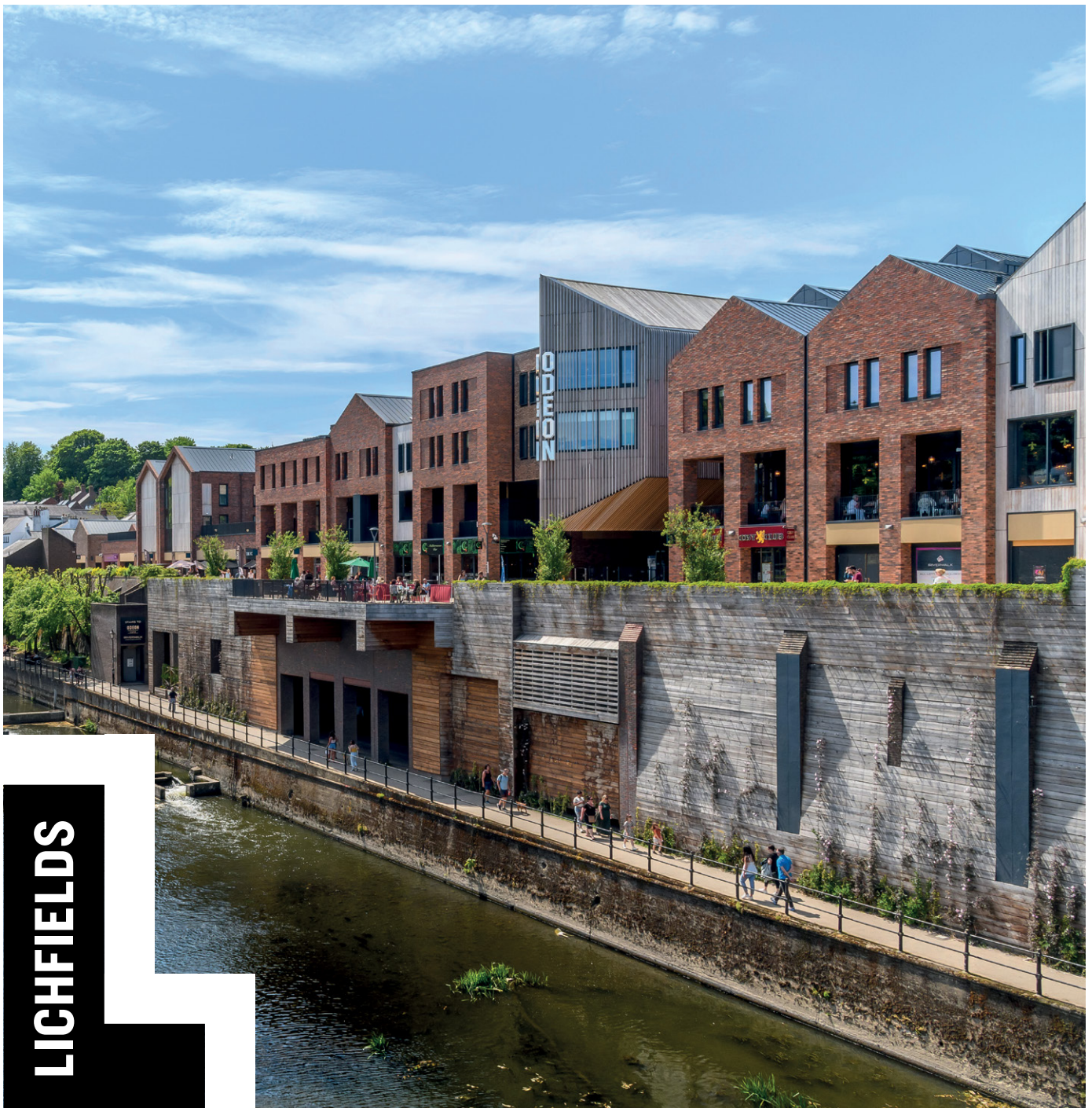


Out with the old, in with the new

Guiding principles for successfully repurposing town centre buildings



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Executive summary

Over recent years, our town and city centres have been subject to significant change, most notably through reduced demand for retail floorspace, and this has resulted in a growing interest in repurposing.

Repurposing is clearly a logical solution for many buildings that have fallen vacant. It is usually the most cost-effective and the most sustainable option - and it often enables heritage assets and other buildings of cultural significance to be retained.

However, it is also often more complex than it may at first seem. It is not always viable in isolation and many repurposing schemes involve some form of extension or linked development to ensure financial viability.

Furthermore, current building regulations often present real challenges - in both physical and viability terms - that are not obvious at first sight.

This Insight considers these various issues and draws upon Lichfields' practical experience of helping to deliver viable repurposing schemes in the real world. In doing so, it shares the lessons we have learnt and identifies a series of guiding principles to assist others in successfully promoting the repurposing of built assets.

O1 Introduction

Over the last decade, our town and city centres have experienced significant change.

A range of factors have contributed to this - from technological advances, which have supported the growth in online retailing, through to wider social and economic changes - but the end result has been significant changes to the mix of uses within our centres, and higher rates of vacancy.

Shopping centres have been particularly hard-hit, and as a result of declining footfall, most have experienced reduced demand from retailers and /or had to address sudden change as a result of retailers falling into administration. In many cases, this has culminated in significant voids, leaving centre owners to ponder what to do with large and seemingly inflexible spaces.

It is not just the owners of purpose-built shopping centres who are facing such challenges; many buildings in other parts of our town and city centres are no longer viable for their former use. Take, for example, department stores. Once the 'anchor' of the high street, and the key driver of footfall, such stores have, in many cases, lost their allure. Cue the demise of former stalwarts such as Debenhams, and the restructuring of others, which has inevitably seen a rationalisation of portfolios and store closures.

What to do? Well, where once the only logical answer seemed to be to knock down and start again, there is now a growing recognition of the opportunities available through the repurposing of existing buildings. The world has evolved and, when it comes to planning and development, wholesale demolition and re-build is now often a less straight-forward option for investors. Increases in construction and development finance costs mean that the repurposing of existing buildings, which benefit from a reduced delivery programme due to removing demolition and construction processes, will be more viable.

There is also a growing impetus to deliver environmentally sustainable development, and this is increasingly influencing decision-making when it comes to considering whether to repurpose assets or demolish and redevelop. Linked to this is the need to consider embodied carbon.

Demolition leaves a big carbon footprint and this was one of the key issues given by the Secretary of State's decision in refusing planning permission last year for Marks and Spencer's plans to redevelop its flagship Oxford Street store¹.

While this decision was subsequently quashed by the High Court², the Government could well respond by introducing stronger policy and guidance through the proposed new National Development Management Policies (NDMPs), which require that planning decision-makers place greater emphasis on re-use over demolition and redevelopment³.

Of course, the concept of repurposing buildings for adaptive re-use is nothing new.

There are lots of examples from the recent past - including, for example, the former Barkers Department Store on Kensington High Street in London, which was converted into offices in the late 1980s, with retail at ground floor level - and the former Baltic Flour Mills in Gateshead; an iconic building on the banks of the River Tyne, which was converted into the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art. These early pioneers saw the opportunity to reimagine buildings whose former use was no longer viable, and find new uses to bring such buildings back to life.

Fast forward to the present and there is now a much greater level of interest in repurposing in all parts of the country, with developers looking to explore ways of repurposing buildings before turning to demolition and re-build - a trend which is opening up new opportunities - and challenges - in planning and heritage terms.

This Insight explores the opportunities for repurposing buildings in town and city centres. It draws on Lichfields' experience of delivering such projects and the lessons learned, providing a useful guide to others looking to realise the opportunities that can be afforded through repurposing.

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¹ APP/X5990/V/3301508

² Marks and Spencer plc v SSLUHC [2024] EWHC 452 (Admin)

³ Section 94 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 inserts Section 38ZA into the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004



O2 Issues driving town centre change

Whilst historically, town centres were the focus for shopping activity, the past four decades have brought about significant change in the way people shop. The growth of large foodstores, retail parks and out-of-centre shopping centres in the 1980s and 1990s offered the first competitive alternative to high streets⁴.

More recently, shopping habits have evolved as a result of technological and social trends, which has in turn led to changing retailer requirements. The High Streets 2030 Commission, published in 2017/18, identified a 'tipping point' where shop closures and changes in consumer habits were forming systemic issues that needed to be addressed.

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the pace of change, with online purchases accounting for 37.8% of total retail spend at its peak in January 2021. Although this has fallen to 26.3% in January 2024, it remains substantially higher than in 2008, when retail spending online was less than 5%⁴. Combined with the cost-of-living crisis, these shifts in spending patterns have created what is widely seen as a 'perfect storm' for retailers.

Challenges facing shopping centres

Shopping centres, formerly a focal point for town centre retailing, have borne the brunt of the changes in shopping behaviour identified above - and the pandemic and ongoing cost of living crisis have also impacted harder on shopping centres than other retail locations as shown in Figure 2.1⁵.

Over the long term, it is clear that town / city centre shopping centres have experienced higher vacancy rates than high streets and retail parks.

Shopping centre footfall has similarly stayed persistently lower than before the pandemic (around 16% lower in September 2023 than September 2019) and has performed less well than for retail overall (around 10% lower over the same period).

Furthermore, even after several years of decline, data from the Local Data Company (LDC) suggests that there was a further net loss of 7,800 shops in 2023. It is evident, therefore, that there remains too much retail floorspace in our town and city centres.



Decline of the department store

Once the jewel in the crown of town centre shopping provision, the number of department stores on our high streets has been in sharp decline over the past decade. In fact, approximately 85% of the department stores formerly traded by the main operators have closed down⁶.

Many of the department store casualties have been high profile, with Debenhams ceasing trading at the start of the pandemic and House of Fraser going into administration prior to that, in 2018. Whilst House of Fraser was bought out and is now owned by Frasers Group, only around 30 of its stores remain trading today.

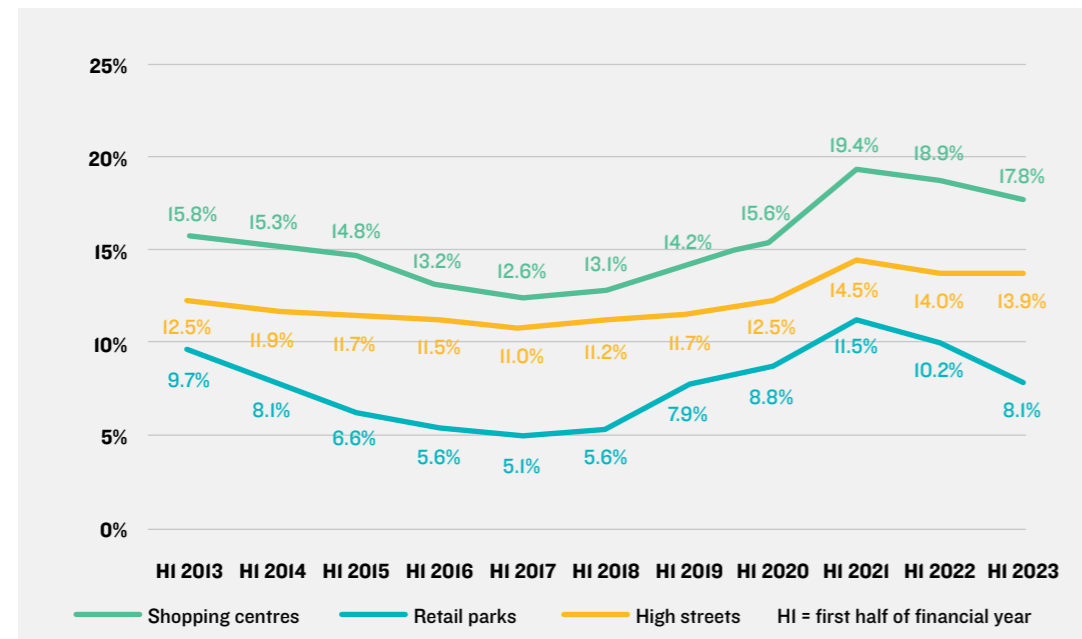
Other department store operators have also gone through significant restructuring. For example, John Lewis closed 16 stores during the pandemic, including that at Grand Central in Birmingham, which had opened with much fanfare, and at a cost of £35 million, less than five years earlier.

Town centres at a crossroads

As principal drivers of footfall, the closure of department stores has been bad news for many town centres, leaving landlords to ponder how they can be re-used and local authorities exploring what will drive footfall in the future.

However, attracting occupiers into these spaces has never been more challenging, and this reinforces the need for landowners, investors and local authorities to think creatively - and work together - in finding solutions.

Figure 2.1: Unit Vacancy Rates



Source: Local Data Company: Shopping centres, then and now: 2013-2023

⁴ Local Data Company: Shopping centres, then and now: 2013-2023 www.localdatacompany.com/blog/shopping-centres-then-and-now

⁵ MRI OnLocation index, 2023 vs 2019: Shopping centre index www.mrisoftware.com/uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/MRIOnLocationFFWeeklyPoExample.pdf

⁶ Storepoint, 2023

03 Opportunities for repurposing

The multifaceted issues that have led to a decline in the occupancy of buildings for retail use in our town centres are forcing investors, landlords, local authorities and other key stakeholders to take stock and contemplate how best to move forward, in a context of evolving economic, environmental and social influences.

What is repurposing?

To the uninitiated, repurposing can be defined as the adaptation of an existing building to provide a use that is different to that which formerly existed or for which the building was designed. In its narrowest form, it is about the adaptive re-use and function of a building.

A typical example of repurposing will involve retaining the majority of a building's exterior structure whilst the internal layout is reconfigured to facilitate a new use. While such works often involve the removal and / or installation of fixtures and fittings, many buildings do need to be more substantially altered to meet the requirements of the new use.

Repurposing in order to achieve a viable re-use may involve - where physically and structurally possible - an extension of the existing building. The result is a densification of use or what is sometimes termed 'expansive re-use'. A mixture of retrofitting and partial redevelopment of an existing building may therefore be required to deliver a viable repurposing scheme.

An early pioneer of repurposing was developer Urban Splash, whose founders saw the opportunities posed by vacant and often derelict buildings in town and city locations. Embarking on such projects in the 1990s, by the mid-2000s, the developer had successfully delivered a number of large repurposing schemes such as Fort Dunlop in Birmingham.

More recently, and in response to the challenges posed to bricks and mortar retailing, investors and landowners have been actively engaged in repurposing former shopping centres and department stores around the UK.

A notable example in London is the repurposing of the former Whiteley's shopping centre in Bayswater - a £1.5 billion overhaul designed by the eminent architect Norman Foster that will deliver a mixed-use residential, hotel, retail and food and beverage offer in a Grade II listed Edwardian building.

In Birmingham, the closure of the former John Lewis store in Grand Central - the shopping complex that sits atop the redeveloped New Street Station - is being repurposed by owners Hammerson as 'Drum'. With its name a nod to the drum-like appearance of the building's exterior, the project is set to deliver around 20,000 sq m / 200,000 sqft of 'wellbeing designed' office space, following the granting of planning permission in 2023.

Elsewhere, 23% of former Debenhams stores have been earmarked for repurposing⁷. One such example is the Thistles Centre in Stirling, where planning permission has been obtained by developer Scoop AM to subdivide the floors to create a mixed-use scheme consisting of two retail stores, a food hall and leisure facilities, to include a gym and family entertainment centre.

Intervention through the planning system

The need to help business respond more easily and readily to changing demand through the planning system has long been highlighted. One of the recommendations set out in the Portas Review of 2011 was that restrictive aspects of the use class system must be addressed to make it easier for businesses to change the use of high street properties.

Partly in response to this - and the general need for greater flexibility - the Government introduced changes to the Use Classes Order in September 2020⁸.

The new Class E (Commercial, Business and Service uses) allows buildings to be used more flexibly with a wider range of permitted uses - including not only retail, but also food and drink, financial and professional services, indoor sport and recreation, medical services, creches/nurseries and offices.

Alongside the changes to the Use Classes Order, permitted development rights were broadened through amendments to the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) in 2021⁹, thus aligning with the use class amendments. Together, these changes make it easier and simpler to deliver changes of use - particularly from retail to residential.



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⁷ Local Data Company: FY 2023 Retail and Leisure Trends Analysis

⁸ The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020

⁹ The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

Does it add up?

It is important to acknowledge that repurposing will not always be cost-effective. For example, buildings with existing or structural defects, or with load bearing restrictions where upward extension is required to drive value.

Moreover, there is clearly also a need to meet current building regulation requirements, and this can sometimes present challenges in terms of financial viability.

However, where there is an identified market demand and the ability to achieve values and / or rental levels needed to support the wider viability of the proposals, the lower costs involved when compared with demolition and redevelopment, coupled with faster project delivery, can make repurposing the most practical and viable option.

Rising construction and development finance costs are also contributing to the increasing interest in repurposing. Rampant inflation over recent years has driven up these costs considerably and, whilst there has been some

stabilisation more recently, the threat of inflationary pressure remains - in particular, in relation to the cost of materials due to rising shipping costs in the context of ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Building costs are forecast to rise by 15% over the next five years¹⁰.

While retail uses may still - in strong locations - attract higher rental income, repurposing suitable buildings provides the opportunity to attract new occupants (including, for example, health and education uses) who will not necessarily be susceptible to economic downturns and may be secured on longer leases, thus providing more certainty and reduced risk.

In this regard, Galliard DVS, the owners of the Eastgate Shopping Centre in Basildon have plans to convert the former Debenhams department store into a new NHS Community Diagnostics Centre, bringing a new healthcare use right into the heart of the town centre.



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A more sustainable approach

The UK is legally committed to decarbonisation with a target of achieving net zero by 2050¹¹. One of the key drivers for this will be the need to decarbonise new development across its whole lifecycle. Indeed, the World Green Building Council estimates that buildings are responsible for 39% of global carbon emissions¹² and decarbonising the built environment sector is seen as one of the most cost-effective ways to mitigate the worst effects of climate change.

Historically, planning policy has sought to reduce carbon emissions during the operational stage of development, for example by encouraging energy efficient and now zero carbon development. However, this has ignored the CO₂ impacts arising from the end-of-life and construction phases of development, including the manufacturing and transportation of materials - otherwise known as 'embodied carbon'.

When considering options for redevelopment of an existing building / development, demolition and re-build can create a big carbon footprint and this is something that will be of increasing importance when making investment decisions. The potential for further regulation and more stringent planning policy requirements, together with heightened expectations from occupiers, means that repurposing suitable buildings, rather than demolishing them, is likely to become increasingly attractive.

Embodied carbon within the whole lifecycle of buildings is being given increased consideration in building ratings systems.

For example, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) is set to introduce Version 7 of BREEAM during in 2024, which will strengthen the role of embodied carbon in its sustainability performance assessments.

It will focus on updating its assessment methodologies for whole life carbon and energy credits, that will apply to in-use and refurbishment schemes as well as new construction and fit-out. The upshot of this is that greater consideration will need to be given on the use of materials and products based on embodied carbon, which will serve to further incentivise investors and developers to repurpose suitable buildings, instead of demolishing them in order to meet environmental targets.

Cultural significance

Whilst a building may be statutorily or locally listed, or lie within a designated conservation area, thus warranting retention in planning terms, there is also value in retaining buildings that represent cultural as well as built heritage.

The attractiveness of some buildings may not be immediately apparent; however, their cultural importance may be significant for local people and others who could be influential in the planning decision-making process. This has seen increasing support for the retention of buildings whose architectural value may be viewed more subjectively but represents a period or association with people that is culturally symbolic.

One such example is Brutiful Birmingham, a pressure group that has mobilised support in recent years for the preservation of modernist and Brutalist architecture in Birmingham from the 1960s and '70s. The group has written more than 60 articles in the local media which discuss the merit and value of the city's Brutalist buildings, discouraging their demolition by offering examples of repurposing through sympathetic upgrade.

Buildings for which there is a cultural (or nostalgic) value can appeal to a range of end users, including those who want to live and work within the reimagined spaces that can be created. Retaining such buildings and in some cases adding to them helps to drive cultural-led regeneration of town centres.

¹⁰ BCIS Building Forecast (March 2024)

¹¹ The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019

¹² World Green Building Council: 'Bringing embodied carbon upfront' (September 2019)



Riverwalk

Client:	Clearbell Capital LLP	Timescales:	2014 - ongoing
Location:	Durham	Cost:	£35 million
Development:	Shopping centre redevelopment in a sensitive historic setting		

Following years of decline, resulting in high levels of vacancy, the Gates Shopping Centre in Durham fell into administration in 2012. This was a purpose-built centre that had first opened in the mid-1970s but had become tired and suffered high levels of vacancy.

The shopping centre was subsequently acquired by Clearbell Capital in 2013 whose vision was to remodel the centre so that it could accommodate a new, broader mix of town centres uses, thus repositioning it for a sustainable and viable long-term future.

In 2014, Clearbell appointed Lichfields to advise on options for repurposing and redevelopment at the centre.

What was notable from the outset was that the centre lay in a very prominent location in Durham City Centre, within a Conservation Area, whilst also being adjacent to Durham Cathedral and Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Clearbell's scheme, branded the 'The Riverwalk', proposed the repurposing of the existing shopping centre and creation of a new riverside promenade in order to deliver a rebalanced shopping and restaurant offer, a six-screen multiplex cinema, and student accommodation.

Given the highly sensitive location of the site in the context of multiple designated heritage assets, a collaborative approach between the applicant and local planning authority - Durham County Council - was vital. One of the key issues was the need to ensure that the scale and massing of enlarged elements of the original building complex was appropriate in relation to the sensitive historic setting.

A forward-thinking approach, involving extensive dialogue with the Council and Historic England from an early stage, ensured that this issue was resolved before the planning application was submitted in June 2015.

The application submitted was comprehensive - and supported by a detailed heritage impact assessment and an Environmental Statement - and this approach worked effectively, enabling the local planning authority to grant planning permission within just 13 weeks.

The new scheme opened in Summer 2019. However, just as lettings began to gather pace, the pandemic struck, resulting in a series of public health restrictions, hampering Clearbell's prospects of finding occupiers for the remaining vacant units at the development.

Evolving the consented scheme to address the unforeseen issues brought by the pandemic was imperative.

As the economy opened up again, the development was repositioned once more - this time with the primary focus being on a stronger food and beverage offer, alongside a broader range of leisure uses.

This was achieved through a carefully considered strategy to enhance the newly created public realm, utilise outdoor areas more fully to benefit from the site's stunning views, and improve signage and legibility across the scheme.

Clearbell utilised the opportunities opened up through the introduction of Class E uses in the amended Use Classes Order to broaden the range of commercial uses within the development away from traditional retail occupiers to ensure they met the market requirements of the time, whilst also adding to the scheme's overall vitality and viability.

Today, The Riverwalk is a thriving example of how a tired old shopping centre can be reimagined by expanding the range of uses in a way that capitalises upon and responds sensitively to its location, whilst also retaining the flexibility to keep evolving to meet changing market demands over time.





Howells Department Store

Client:	Thackeray Group	Timescales:	2022 - ongoing
Location:	Cardiff City Centre	Cost:	£100 million
Development:	Redevelopment of Grade II* listed department store		

After being given what proved to be a five-year grace period following its originally intended closure in 2018, the House of Fraser store in Cardiff - formerly Howells - finally closed its doors in April 2023. The store's closure typified the decline in department store retailing, evident by a general lack of investment and a deterioration in the general condition of the building.

In 2022, Thackeray Group appointed Lichfields as part of a wider team, including Patel Taylor and Purcell, to develop a masterplan for the redevelopment of the site.

At its heart would be the retention of and enhancement of the principal building - Grade II* listed and dating to 1865 - and a series of interconnecting buildings of various quality, significance and age.

Given its statutory listed status and high architectural quality, the appointed project team embarked on a thorough process of heritage assessment and design, collaborating with Cardiff Council and Cadw, to develop a sustainable vision for the building and a framework masterplan to deliver it.

Local knowledge and extensive experience in the planning of city centre redevelopment was imperative, as was the ability to work closely with the Council to bring to fruition a shared vision for the former store, and an effective site-wide masterplan.

The subsequently agreed masterplan reimagines the former department store as a new destination, comprising a vibrant mixture of retail, leisure, office and residential uses within an attractive public realm. The former store building is to form part of a series of interconnected buildings, which are to be delivered in a phased manner.

The masterplan-led approach provided a firm foundation upon which to secure planning permission and Listed Building Consent for relevant phases of the scheme. The first phase, approved in 2023 and comprising the development of a roof terrace on the iconic Percy Thomas building, will see the delivery of 25,000 sq ft of office and leisure-use space.

The second phase - concentrating on the former department store building itself - will see the partial demolition of some elements and upward extension of the building to deliver 61 studio apartments and flexible commercial floorspace.

Whilst delivering an expansive re-use of the former department store building, the masterplan-led approach has enabled careful consideration to be given to how the repurposing of the building will be used to enhance the setting of buildings around it.

In particular, the scheme will open up views of the neighbouring Bethany Chapel and Sunday School buildings - engulfed for decades by the department store - to once again stand independently, delivering additional leisure or retail uses and contributing positively to the public realm.

Subsequent phases of development will see interventions being made to the St Mary Street block and the buildings fronting Trinity Street, which shall in turn provide a mixture of other retail, leisure, hotel, office and residential uses.

Having a masterplan-led approach when dealing with the repurposing of the former department store building, as part of a more comprehensive scheme involving other buildings and elements, has been critical to ensuring that subsequent planning applications can progress smoothly and in a timely manner.

A piecemeal approach to planning would not have been an effective approach on the Howells scheme, where it was essential for the public benefits to be considered holistically and balanced against any perceived harm to heritage assets.





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Deptford Market Yard

Client:	LandsecU+I (formerly U+I Group)	Timescales:	2011 - 2019
Location:	Deptford (London Borough of Lewisham)	Cost:	£50 million
Development:	Heritage-led Mixed Use Regeneration Project		

Once a largely derelict and under-used two-acre site, Deptford Market Yard is an award-winning example of how heritage assets deemed to be at risk can be transformed through repurposing, helping to catalyse wider town centre regeneration.

The Deptford Carriage Ramp is the oldest surviving railway structure in London and was on the Heritage at Risk Register for 14 years. A Grade II listed building, it is carried by a series of brick arches rising from Deptford High Street up to the level of the tracks. Beneath the ramp, a few of the arches were formerly in use, though most had lain undeveloped and vacant for some time.

In addition to the Carriage Ramp, the site also included the Octavius Street car park to the west and St Paul's House - a building dating back to 1915 whose space had formerly been used as offices by Lewisham Council but had since become partially vacant. These three elements lay at the heart of Deptford District Centre, immediately south of Deptford Railway Station.

The client's vision put the restoration and repurposing of built-heritage at the heart of their scheme, which would culminate in the successful delivery of a residential-led mixed-use development, helping to drive the transformation of what had been an

undervalued district centre into one whose high street was subsequently recognised as one of the 33 'coolest' high streets in the world in 2022 by Time Out magazine¹³.

The vision would see the historical railway arches restored and repurposed for use by 14 independent retailers, together with seven shops above the carriage ramp and two restaurants in the Market Yard. Planning permission was also obtained for 132 homes in a new residential building, designed by Rogers Stark Harbour Partners, and repurposed St Paul's House to a restaurant with affordable housing above.

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent was obtained to refurbish the listed carriage ramp accessing Deptford Station and to insert makers' spaces in the arches beneath - establishing a public market area. Securing planning permission required demonstration of the planning, heritage, social and economic benefits that would be achieved through the scheme. Subsequent amendments to the scheme design were subsequently obtained, together with amendments to the planning conditions, in order to evolve the repurposing project by introducing additional uses to meet market demand.

Central to the development was the desire to see place-making, rather than property development, as an overarching objective; a location which successfully embraces, enhances and develops the identify and community of Deptford. As a result, creative and meaningful consultation was key in bringing the site forward for redevelopment.

The project commenced in 2008 when, inspired by Deptford's railway heritage, LandsecU+I drove a derelict 1960s commuter railway carriage down Deptford High Street and into the site. The carriage was then repurposed and converted into a café by London artist Morag Myerscough, and for the next five years became a hub of activity hosting art installations and creative industry events.

This formed a key focal point in the community consultation on the scheme and encouraged people to visit the site.

It was also crucial to strike the right balance between the new development, and the restoration and repurposing of the carriage ramp and arches. This was important from both a viability and a design perspective - in order to ensure that the residential element within the scheme was both sensitively designed and sizeable enough to cross-subsidise the heritage restoration.

Through engagement with the local community, LandsecU+I realised that a distinctive local high street offer was essential to the character of the market. Local start-up businesses were invited to apply through an open call out for the commercial units. Through a careful selection process, LandsecU+I created a particular sense of place that has fit in with the local community whilst supporting local enterprise.

The market yard created a new high quality and welcoming public realm - a significant contrast to the unwelcoming and underused surface car park and market storage area. The Carriage Ramp and arches create a unique environment that draws on the history of the site and provides a new chapter for active uses at the site.

The scheme's contribution to heritage conservation has also been recognised, being winner of the 'Best Heritage Led Project at the 2017 London Planning Awards and the Placemaking Award at the 2017 Property Week Awards. It has featured as one of ten case studies in Historic England's 'Investing in Heritage at Risk' (2018).

Today, the scheme connects Deptford High Street and Deptford Station, drawing visitors into what had been a disused part of town whilst creating new jobs for independent start-ups. The scheme exemplifies how repurposing can be used to drive wider, cultural-led regeneration through a place-making approach.

¹³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-62693537>

04 Learning the lessons: guiding principles for successful repurposing

Given the challenges currently being experienced, repurposing schemes can transform existing buildings and bring a new lease of life to areas into our town and city centres. We have identified a series of guiding principles to assist others in promoting successful repurposing schemes in the future.



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1 Viability is key

Transformative change cannot happen unless it is viable, and a clear focus on viability is essential from the outset. Redevelopment / new build development is often needed to ensure repurposing schemes are viable.

2 A bespoke approach is needed

One size does not fit all. A range of different types of building can be repurposed - from shopping centres and department stores shopping centres through to railway arches - and each requires a bespoke response.

3 Need for a broad mix of uses

While retail can play a part, a mix of uses is often required - from food and beverage to residential and student accommodation - and even health and education uses.

4 Flexibility and adaptability are key

Given fast-paced and changing consumer demands, it is important to adopt a planning and design strategy which allows for flexibility of use and adaptation over time.

5 Making a robust case for development

Making a robust case for change is central to successful repurposing schemes. This requires understanding, evidencing and articulating economic, social and environmental scheme benefits.

6 A holistic approach

There is value in a masterplan approach which looks at sites holistically and how they are tied into the wider centre is often important in enabling a full appreciation of a scheme's benefits.



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7 Develop a shared vision

Getting others' buy-in to the overall vision – through genuine engagement with key stakeholders and the local community – is always helpful and often critical to success.

9 Heritage can be a real asset

Heritage assets bring challenges but also enrich repurposing schemes, adding character and interest. Where buildings are at risk, repurposing can help to secure the long term future of the asset.

8 Don't forget about place-making

While not always seen as the first priority, place-making – and high quality public realm, including open air spaces where people can dwell – add real value and can be key to the delivery of successful schemes.

10 Sustainability is at the heart of repurposing

Re-using buildings is inherently sustainable and this is widely understood and supported. It is also an increasingly important issue for both developers/ investors and occupiers given both cost benefits and the increased focus on environmental performance.

The Lichfields perspective

What makes us different? We're not just independent but independent-minded. We're always prepared to take a view. But we always do that for the right reasons – we want to help our clients make the best possible decisions.

We have an energetic entrepreneurial culture that means we can respond quickly and intelligently to change, and our distinctive collaborative approach brings together all the different disciplines to work faster, smarter, and harder on our clients' behalf.

Sharing our knowledge

We are a leading voice in the development industry, and no-one is better connected across the sector. We work closely with government and leading business and property organisations, sharing our knowledge and helping to shape policy for the future.

Publishing market intelligence

We are at the forefront of market analysis and we track government policy and legislation so we can give fresh insight to our clients. Our Think Tank is a catalyst for industry-leading thinking on planning and development.

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