

UNDER ONE ROOF

With an abundance of new shopping centre developments and refurbishments in the pipeline, what makes these the go-to retail and leisure destinations of the future? Retail Focus finds out.

Text: Lyndsey Dennis

Last year was prominent for shopping centre openings in the UK, including The Broadway in Bradford and Birmingham's Grand Central, and 2016 looks set to be a significant year too.

In its Shopping Centre Development Report, Cushman & Wakefield says this year will see an estimated 157,935 sq m through six new schemes and four extensions. Yorkshire & Humberside is leading the way in delivering new shopping space with Victoria Gate in Leeds. Chelmsford Bond Street is another notable development.

Over the next two years, London is expected to have an additional 111,483 sq m of extra space through three new schemes and two extensions. Westfield London's extension of 74,322 sq m is the largest amount of new space being constructed in the city, taking its total floor space to more than 222,967 sq m after its completion in 2016. Looking beyond to 2017, major developments in the pipeline include

Westfield and Hammerson's Croydon development, and the extension of Brent Cross by Hammerson and Standard Life.

In London, Westminster Council has approved plans to redevelop Whiteleys shopping centre in Bayswater. Plans by Foster + Partners will see a £1 billion mixed-use scheme comprising apartments and townhouses arranged around an inner courtyard with retail units, a boutique hotel, gym and leisure facilities including a basement cinema, all built behind the existing Grade II-listed existing 1911 facade.

Victoria Gate Leeds is due to open in late 2016 and will house one of the largest John Lewis stores outside of London, as well as a casino, 30 stores, restaurants, cafes and leisure space. Project developer Hammerson is working with construction contractor, Sir Robert McAlpine and Leeds City Council on the scheme.

'In our multichannel world, we believe it's always going to be important for customers to have a physical experience when they're shopping,' says James Hepburn, development manager at Hammerson. 'It's something that shoppers will always want, and with shopping centres like Victoria Gate the aim is to create a full experience, not just with the retail stores but with the lifestyle and leisure aspect.'

The design of Victoria Gate takes inspiration from the architectural character of the Bloomfield Building in Leeds and the striking features of corner facades on neighbouring buildings. The scheme

Photo supplied by Aquila

Above: Bond Street in Chelmsford will boast 25 retail units, five restaurants and a five-screen boutique cinema.

Bottom left: Royal Victoria Place in Tunbridge Wells, Kent will receive a £70 million extension.

includes a twin arcade with luxury retail and aspirational brands at ground level connecting the existing retail with the Victoria Quarter and the upper level restaurants, as well as space for additional leisure use. Each arcade will feature an ornamental roof with feature lighting.

White Rose shopping centre in Leeds will also receive a 6,038 sq m extension, including an 11-screen Cineworld IMAX multiplex and six additional restaurants. The leisure extension follows the 1,858 sq m £7 million dining destination named The Balcony that was installed in 2014.

'This injection of restaurant brands and an IMAX cinema will provide our customers with some quality leisure options to further improve their shopping experience,' explains Mike Thomas, portfolio manager at Land Securities. 'Finding this balance between retail and leisure is increasingly important in the current shopping centre climate; it is an expectation that has to be met with equal measures of quality and innovation. This is reflected in a number of new architectural features with





retail developments

the extension particularly focused on the outside public area.'

John Lewis will also open a 1,207 sq m anchor store at Westgate Oxford, which is due to open in October 2017, where Laing O'Rourke is the principal contractor and Chapman Taylor is delivery architect. 'Delivered by the Westgate Oxford Alliance, a joint venture between Land Securities and Crown Estate, the 74,300 sq m shopping destination will include over 100 stores, 25 restaurants and bars, a boutique cinema, rooftop terrace dining and public spaces. The new development will also complement

Above: White Rose shopping centre in Leeds is set for a 6,038 sq m extension.

Below: Victoria Gate Leeds will house one of the largest John Lewis stores outside of London, as well as a casino, 30 stores, restaurants, cafes and leisure space.

Bottom right: Westgate Oxford is set to transform the city with a 74,300 sq m shopping and leisure destination.

Bottom: A £60 million refurbishment has begun at Meadowhall in Sheffield.

as a diverse range of building materials to integrate.'

Royal Victoria Place in Tunbridge Wells, Kent will receive a £70 million extension including more than 16,072 sq m of retail, food and beverage, leisure space and a cinema. Designed by Haskell, the architecture of the extension respects the proud heritage of Tunbridge Wells while introducing modern, contemporary units that will attract prestigious, global brands.

In Sheffield, work has begun on a £60 million refurbishment of Meadowhall, co-owned by British Land and Norges Bank Investment Management, which is due to complete late 2017 and is designed by BDP.

'The refurbishment will create distinct districts within the centre, each with an offer and character of its own. The works will also enable a number of retailers to install double height shop fronts,' explains Paul Case, retail development manager for British Land. 'Placemaking is at the heart of what we do - both the physical environment and the services we offer. Creating places people prefer is our key focus across the British Land portfolio and we apply the same principle to Meadowhall. We are carrying out a refurbishment of the centre to bring Meadowhall up to date with the



the natural beauty and heritage status of the city,' says Bert Martin, development director for the Westgate Oxford Alliance.

'We monitor shopper behaviour in each of our retail destinations to ensure we are up to date with the latest trends and preferences. This means we can stay mindful of what shoppers expect from today's shopping centres and relay these insights back to inform how our new centres are designed,' explains Martin.

In autumn 2016, a new retail and leisure development will arrive in Chelmsford, Essex called Bond Street. Also anchored by John Lewis, the scheme will comprise 25 retail units, five restaurants and a five-screen Everyman boutique cinema.

'Bond Street is an open scheme designed to function as a traditional shopping street, extending the existing prime high street,' explains Neil Ridley, development consultant at Aquila Holdings, which is investing £150 million in the scheme. 'Its design allows expression

of individual retail brands by allowing store design to be incorporated rather than providing homogenous flush shop frontages. The scheme has sought to maximise use of the river frontage as well as providing an open space to benefit from this.'

Ashley Turner, chief executive at WCEC Architects, which is working on the scheme, says: 'By collaborating closely with the conceptual designers, our detailed design work has addressed a number of site-specific challenges, including complex elevations and spatial constraints, as well



demands of modern customers and further enhance the visitor experience.'

As Cushman & Wakefield says: 'It is becoming increasingly clear that those shopping centres that offer convenient, well-located establishments provide a "destination" appeal - complete with leisure components and all a shopper could need under one roof - are the winners of the future.' **Rf**

