

STORES

The UK's fourth-largest grocer opened a new-look store on Edgware Road in Colindale last month – a successful blend of tradition and novelty. **John Ryan** visits

Morrisons improves it

A quick look at the big-box grocery provision in Colindale a few weeks ago revealed a serious omission.

Morrisons had a store, but it was a little off piste as far as the arterial Edgware Road is concerned. On March 8, this changed as the grocer opened a 43,000 sq ft store on the site of the former Oriental City, an Asian food complex that ceased trading in 2008 and which has lain empty since.

The result? A Morrisons store that is some distance from other branches in terms of look and feel and which is aimed at families and the diverse demographic that characterises this part of northwest London.

As in other Morrisons stores (the Weybridge branch is notable in this respect) lately, a heavy emphasis has been placed on the 'fresh' message, but other elements, such as wider aisles and a Party zone have been added as part of the blueprint.

Party on

For those arriving at the store by car, there is a large, free, underground car park that leads, via a long travelator, up to the single-floor store.

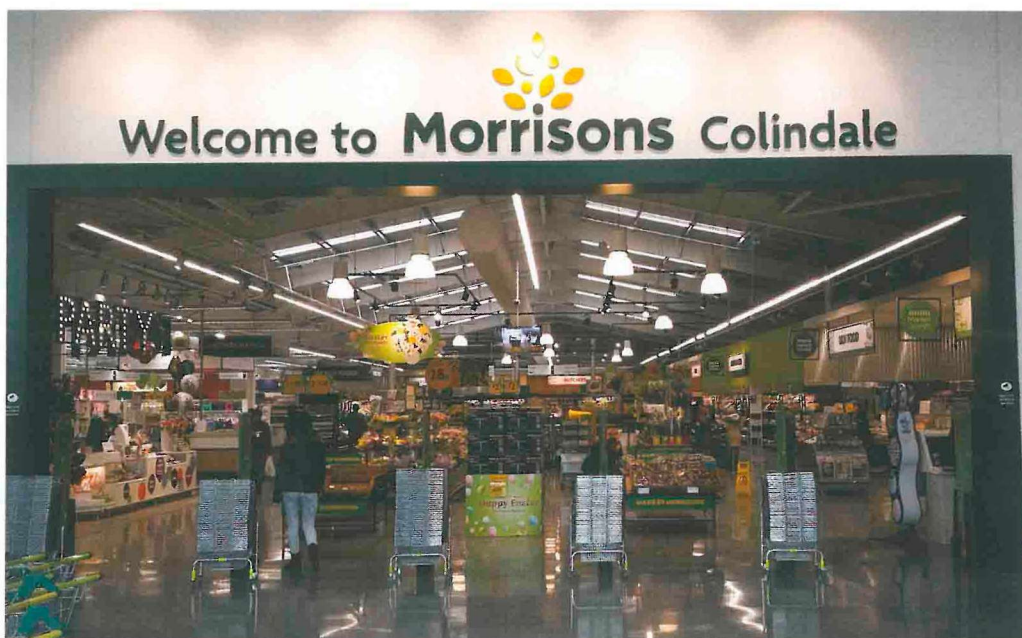
And the first thing the visitors are likely to see is the Party zone. Store manager Jonathan Potts is quick to point out that this highly distinctive part of the store is not just about children's parties, in spite of the guest appearance of Peppa Pig on opening day.

Instead, there are bottles of Champagne and wines, plus balloons with ages on them, from 18 to, possibly optimistically, 100, as well as the inevitable party bags and things to fill them with.

This is a celebration space for everybody and, in terms of layout, it is directly next to a florist area, representing a potential double whammy for the grocer.

Both the Party zone and a florist are to the left of the fresh department, while to the right there is a 'fresh to go' area aimed at the lunchtime set.

The latter serves as an introduction to the fresh department, which dominates this part of the shop with low



MORRISONS, COLINDALE

Address 399 Edgware Road, London

Opened March 8, 2016

Size 43,000 sq ft

Highlights Nutmeg kidswear, the Party zone and fresh department

Store fit-out Itab UK

units that afford views across the whole area. Much of the store equipment has been clad in unfinished vintage wood, to enhance the "market feel", according to Potts.

Overhead, ambient light is provided in the shape of standard white neon lights, but in the fresh area this is hardly noticeable owing to pendant lights above the mid-shop displays. Worth perhaps noting was the fact that

on the day of visiting, Morrisons had done what so many others in the sector do – it had partially obstructed the view into 'fresh' with a stack of microwave ovens. Generally, however, it was the best-looking part of the shop.

'Street' view

Then to the Market Street area. This was picked out in green with faux

More pictures of the new-look
Morrisons in Colindale on
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s outlook at Colindale



bricks and black-and-white tiles used to delineate the butcher (there was a separate Halal counter), the fishmonger and bakery along the back wall. Presentation standards were high with the shelves well stocked.

Beyond was ambient food, a wide health and beauty aisle and the wines and spirits department. Shoehorned into all of this is the Nutmeg own-brand kidswear department.

This is a supermarket interior that feels both welcoming and the sort of place that shoppers will quickly claim as their own

Potts was quick to point out that this new-look Nutmeg is "by far the best in the country" and that it has a number of essential differences from what might be found in other branches of Morrisons. Foremost among these is probably the fact that it is not high-rise.

Down with the kids

Prior to Colindale, the majority of Nutmeg shop-in-shops featured high

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units that, effectively, created walls in the department. In this store, these barriers have been removed simply by altering equipment heights.

Stand on the walkway that divides Nutmeg from the check-outs and it is indeed child's play to inspect the area at a glance and to work out where the various elements are located.

Child mannequins are seated on plinth cubes, again the only branch where this has been done, according to Potts, who also draws attention to the fact that not all of the equipment has been laid out in straight lines.

This is about making the department more interesting and fostering the sense that the Nutmeg customer is in a separate part of the store.

Much of the rest of the store is, to an extent, Morrisons standard, although both presentation standards and the signage are of a generally higher spec than is likely to be encountered in other branches. Wayfinding is, in consequence, straightforward here.

Better cafe

There is rarely much that is glamorous about supermarket cafes – they are the sort of places where shoppers may well end up because, after a monotone shopping experience, any kind of cake and bun will taste OK. This generalisation does not apply in Morrisons Colindale, where the shopper may actually wish to be there.

On arrival at the Market Street Cafe, which offers 'Classic Meals', tea and coffee, among other things, the visitor sits at simple wooden tables and chairs with yellow-and-black pendant lights above.



Presentation standards and signage are of a generally higher spec than in other branches



The cafe is divided by stained wood-clad walls, while signs on each table offer free wi-fi.

This is a supermarket interior that feels both welcoming and the sort of place that shoppers will quickly claim as their own. Potts says he doesn't get up to Bradford (Morrisons' head office) that much at the moment: "They come to me."

On the basis of what is on view in Colindale, it is not hard to see why this should be the case.