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# **The Point, Milton Keynes**

## **Analysis of Architectural Quality and Potential for Listing Report**

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Richard Coleman Consultancy has been commissioned by Hammerson plc to undertake investigations into the architectural quality of The Point, Milton Keynes and produce a report examining the potential for listing the building.
- 1.2 This report identifies: the historic development of the site and its immediate area; reviews the current building in terms of historic and architectural merit; identifies and assesses other works carried out by The Point's designer; identifies and assesses The Point against contemporary recreation buildings constructed at the same time. In defining the site this report looks at both the landmark element of the pyramid and the larger 'box' multiplex building behind it.



Figure 1.1: The Point, Milton Keynes.



## 2.0 Site Context

- 2.1 The site is located in the centre of the former New Town of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. The site is bounded to the north by Midsummer Boulevard and Centre MK Shopping Centre; to the east by South Tenth Street and open-air car parks; to the south by Avebury Boulevard and residential development; and, to the west by South Ninth Street and the Midsummer Place Shopping Centre (see Fig 2.1).
- 2.2 The site is not located within a conservation area, and has no listed buildings situated within its surroundings.

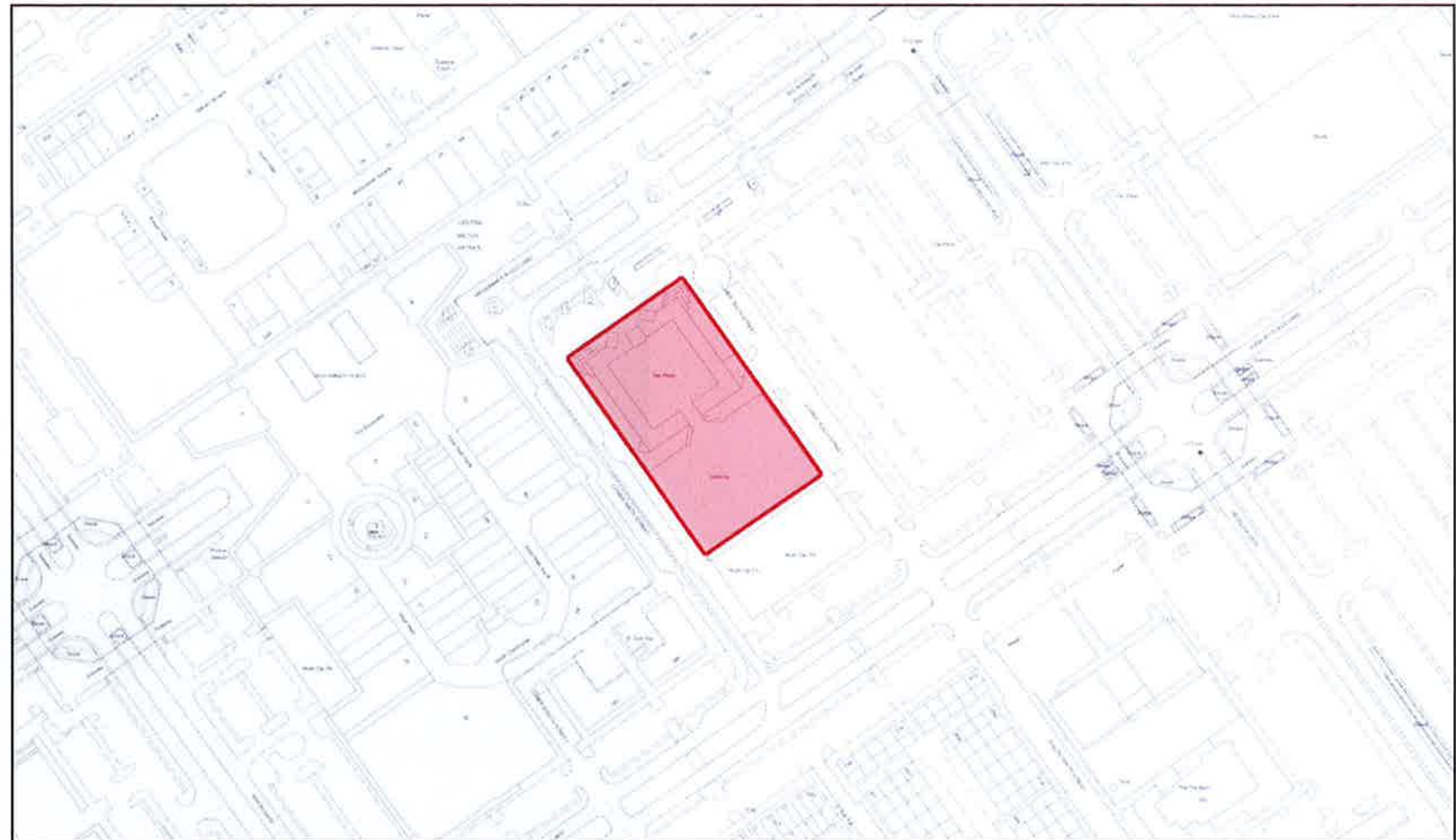


Figure 2.1: Site Boundary Plan (Source: O.S.).



Figure 2.2: Typical view of a tree lined avenue in Central Milton Keynes.



Figure 2.3: View inside The Centre MK, the 1970s shopping mall at the heart of the Central Milton Keynes.



Figure 2.4: View of The Centre MK outdoor market and shopping mall buildings behind.



### 3.0 Historic Background

- 3.1 This section briefly looks at the historic background of the development site and its wider setting. It uses a series of historic maps which illustrate the changes in the urban form.
- 3.2 Milton Keynes was designated as a New Town by Parliament in 1967. Its location was chosen for equidistant position between London, Birmingham, Leicester, Oxford and Cambridge with the intention that it would be self sustaining and eventually become a major regional centre in its own right. Although it was built on rural countryside its planned boundaries included the existing towns of Bletchley, Wolverton and Stony Stratford and many smaller villages. The 1958 OS map in Figure 3.1 reveals the former rural character of the countryside surrounding the development site and what is now the Milton Keynes urban area.
- 3.3 Milton Keynes became the largest of the so-called “new towns” built in the UK during the 1960s. When the boundary of Milton Keynes was defined, some 40,000 people lived in the “designated area”. By the 2001 Census, the population had reached 177,500 (181,000 in the contiguous urban area) and is projected to exceed 300,000 by 2030, making the New Town area substantially larger than many official cities.
- 3.4 The 1987 OS map in figure 3.2 reveals the extent of the urban development at Milton Keynes with Milton Keynes Shopping Centre and The Point. The site is surrounded by large scale development, chiefly carried out during the 1970s and early 1980s, including the main shopping centre. The design and planning was delegated to the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC). Its strongly modernist designs featured regularly in the architectural magazines of the day. They set in place the characteristic grid roads between districts and the intensive planting and park-land that are so appreciated today. However, the Government wound up MKDC in 1992, transferring control to the Commission for New Towns (CNT) and then finally to English Partnerships in joint partnership with Milton Keynes Council.
- 3.5 The 1990 OS map in figure 3.3 again shows the large scale development in Central Milton Keynes. This includes the construction of the Food Centre in the late 1980s which is shown to the northeast of The Point opposite the main shopping centre. By 2000 the centre had undergone further development which saw a more high-density

approach to construction (see Figure 3.4). This included the new food halls building in the late 1980s, and more recently an extension of the shopping centre at Midsummer Place and new residential and office developments closer to the retail centre.

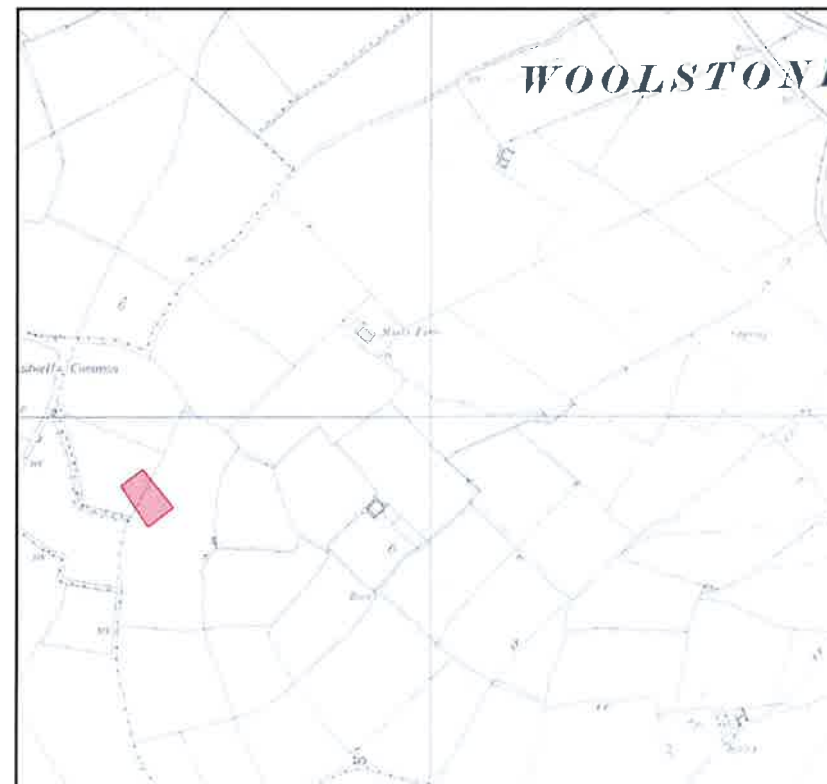


Figure 3.1: Site Boundary Plan overlaid on 1958 OS Plan (Source: O.S.).

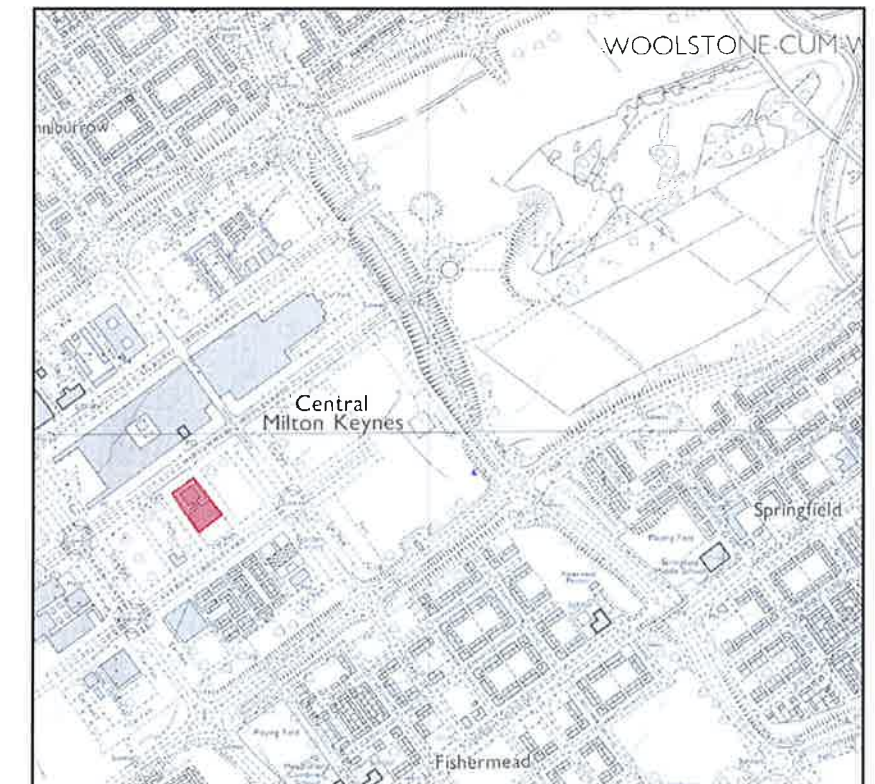


Figure 3.2: Site Boundary Plan overlaid on 1987 OS Plan (Source: O.S.).

### 3.0 Historic Background

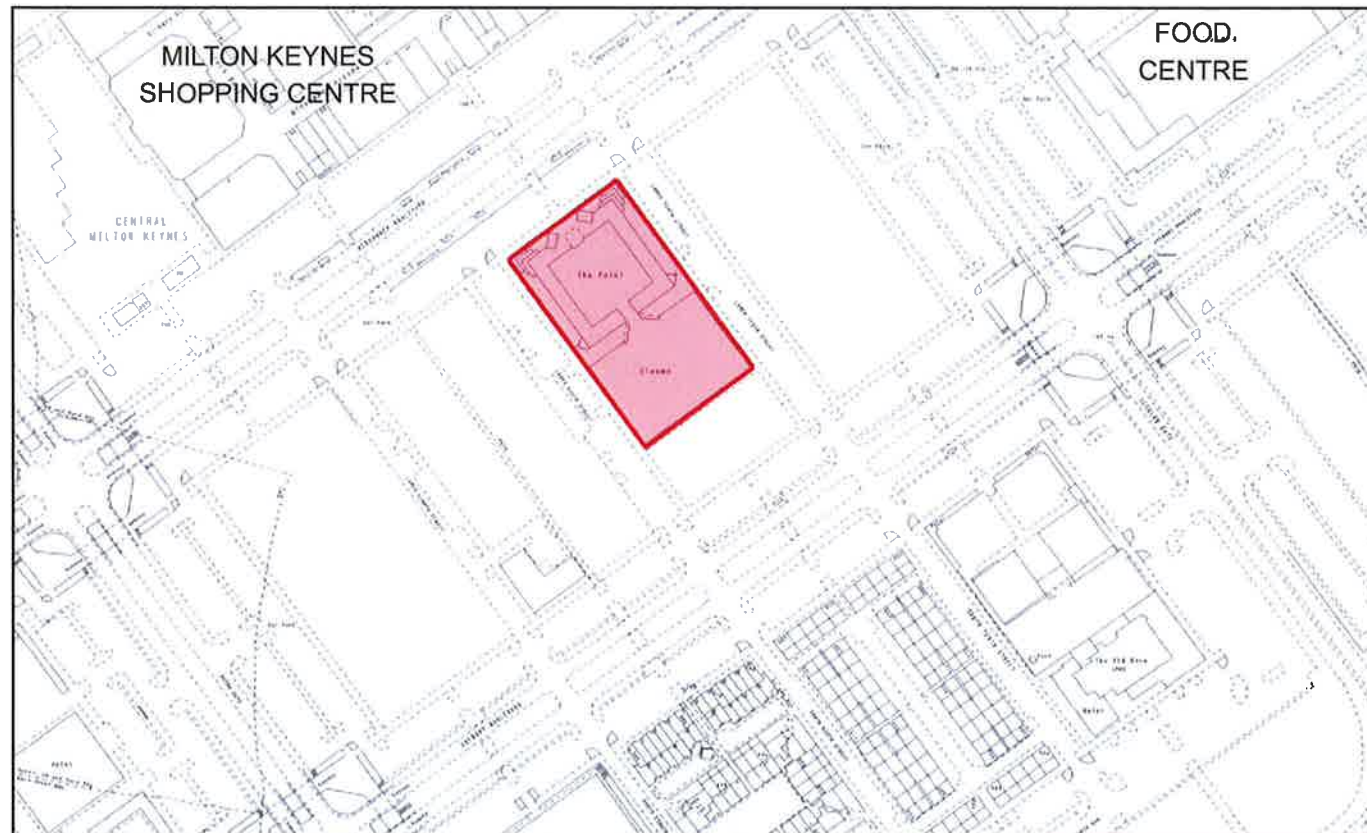


Figure 3.3: Site Boundary Plan overlaid on 1990 OS Plan (Source: O.S.).

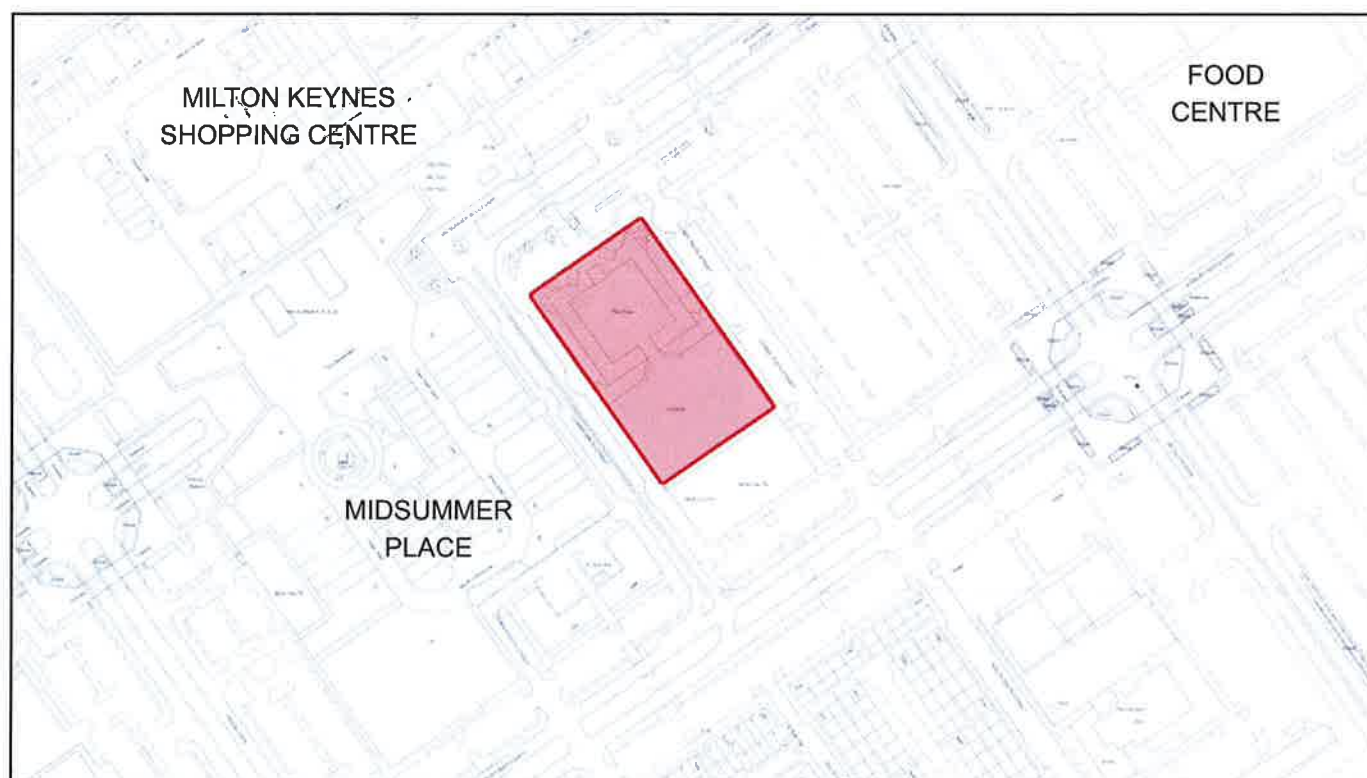


Figure 3.4: Site Boundary Plan overlaid on 2000 OS Plan (Source: O.S.).



## 4.0 Building History

4.1 In the 1980s there was a real need for leisure amenities for the rapidly increasing population of Milton Keynes. The town's Development Corporation responded by drawing up a list of all the facilities required and invited developers to tender their designs. The brief was fulfilled by an Anglo-American partnership formed by Bass Leisure and American Multi-Cinema (AMC). Their collaboration resulted in the £9million scheme which included a multiplex cinema with ten screens, a 1500-seat bingo hall, a nightclub, restaurants and amusement arcades, which opened to the public in November 1985.

4.2 Inspired by an ancient ziggurat pyramid, the design of the centre which was conceived by the interior designer Neil Tibbatts, reflected the physical arrangement of the facilities within. The Building Design Partnership (BDP) was responsible for the architecture, structural, mechanical and electrical engineering, and acoustics of The Point. Alec Stevenson of the Manchester branch of BDP was the main architect of the project and, although the American investors were not impressed with the amount of bureaucracy and difficulty encountered in the building process, it is claimed that a 'fast track design and construction was used to meet a 70 week construction programme'.

4.3 The building included:

- A bar and restaurant area;
- A bingo hall in the basement;
- A ten screen Cinema at the rear (housed in a separate 'box' construction; and
- A nightclub on the top level

The bingo hall and social centre (at basement level) required more space than the pub and restaurant level above, which in turn, needed a larger area than the club on the second floor. So the development followed a system of tiers with the smallest, top 'building block' housing the lighting rig for the nightclub.

4.4 The cinema, which followed AMC's standard design, was constructed as a simple rectangular box at the rear. It is linked to the main 'pyramidal' structure by a short glazed walkway.

4.5 The central mall on the ground floor was devised to connect most of the facilities and offer an enclosed area for customers to meet. It was described as having a jumble of styles and décor "from Post-Modern to Hi-Tech, taking in palm-court Art Deco and health- food striped pine en route – which spill out on the mall in playful abandon" (Building, 7 February 1986,).



Figures 4.1-4.3: From the top current views of the interior: the community centre at 1st floor level; the new night club part of the restaurant area at ground; and the bingo hall at basement level.

4.6 Over the mirror-glazed stepped structure are four tubular steel lattice beams which extend from the four corners of the base and meet 21m above the ground. Painted red and illuminated by neon light the girders were intended to be visible from a distance. The structure has a strong identity, and was built to attract customers to an 'environment' as opposed to a building. Its profile has been described as sitting well next to the rectilinear 1960s shopping centre nearby, although its 'superslick' composition is generally seen as "not architecturally significant" (Milton Keynes Sunday Citizen, 21 October 2001). The designer himself, Neil Tibbatts, stated that "A lot of what we have done here would upset the purists. But last week they took £120,000 over the counter. That's the object of the exercise, not to win design awards" (Building, 16 August 1985).

4.7 At the time of its completion it claimed to be the first multiplex in the UK, although already in 1986 Chuck Wesocky, the then managing director of AMC, stated that "It was never our intention to do a one-off. There are 10 other developments currently underway" (DJ Magazine, June 1986) with similar complexes being built or conceived in Glasgow, Dundee, Newcastle, Warrington, Rotherham, Sheffield, Dudley and Bristol (please see section 6.0).



Figure 4.4: Shown here is a photo of the elevation shortly after the opening of The Point.

## 4.0 Building History

- 4.8 As well as the centre no longer being lit at night, the old nightclub at first floor level appears to have lost its popular appeal and has been used as a gym before its current employment as a community centre. There is however a restaurant and nightclub now at ground level. It is reported that as early as 1993 the club had been battling for trade against new bars and nightspots in Milton Keynes. The cinema facility also has "seen its 10 screens dwarfed by the Xscape complex on Avebury Boulevard" (Milton Keynes Sunday Citizen, 21 October 2001).



Figure 4.5: The Point stands out in the midst of Milton Keynes' city lights.



## 5.0 Background Information on the Designer

- 5.1 This section looks in detail at the works of Architects BDP, the designers of The Point, Milton Keynes.
- 5.2 BDP (originally Building Design Partnership) is a successful multi-disciplinary practice of architects and engineers, founded in 1961 by the late Professor Sir George Grenfell Baines, “arguably the first modern British architect to engage fully with the complexities of the modern commercial world” (The Times, 14 May 2003).
- 5.3 BDP is considered the first and largest UK example of the multi-disciplinary building ethos: architects, engineers, landscape architects, interior designers, cost consultants and specialists in everything from energy to electronics, all working in teams together. They are a wide ranging practice but also claim to be ‘Europe’s foremost designer of shopping centres’. Their website also reads that since the design of The Point they have included cinema clusters in many of their retail/leisure complexes across Europe. Some of these are:
- Cinemas at Whiteleys of Bayswater, London
  - Tres Aguas Centre, Madrid
  - Smaralind Centre, Reykjavik
  - Le Geode, La Villette, Paris
  - And more recently Cineworld, St. Helens, an 11 screen multiplex with a wine bar.

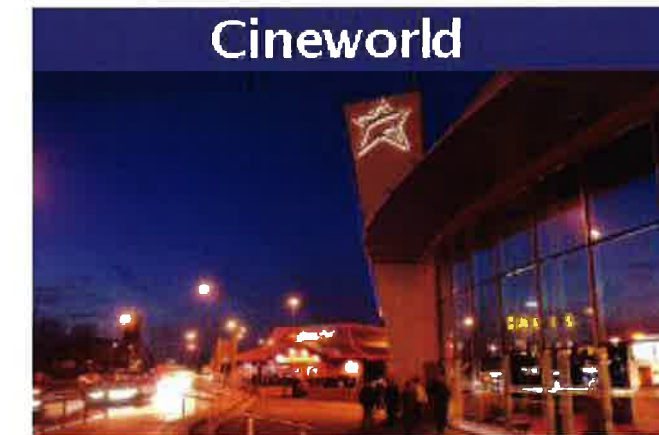


Figure 5.1: Cineworld, St. Helens.



Figure 5.2: Whiteleys Shopping Centre in Bayswater, includes cinemas.



Figure 5.3: Le Geode, La Villette, Paris.

## 6.0 Background Information on the Building Type

- 6.1 The word multiplex is of American origin, a jargon expression originally meaning 'a system of simultaneous communication of two or more messages on the same radio transmission or telephone line'. The term was popularly adopted to mean 'more than one cinema screen' or the projection of the same film in more than one theatre, at the same time.
- 6.2 Stanley Durwood of American Multi-Cinema (now AMC) pioneered the concept of the multi screen cinema or multiplex in 1963, with his two side-by-side theatres at Ward Parkway Centre in Kansas City, US. His insight came from the realisation that demands on cinema staff are not constant but come in bursts at the start and end of the movie. By staggering the starting time of films, projected in several linked auditoriums, one sole team of employees would be able to keep all of them operational.
- 6.3 The idea of the multiplex cinema was also conceived as a way of dealing with the unpredictable response the public may have towards films. There would be enough space to respond to an overwhelming successful film, which may be screened in two, three or more rooms, or the opportunity of showing a small budget film outside of an art house environment. Multiplexes were also conceived in part to combat the growing entertainment options at home.
- 6.4 Multiplex complexes, also referred to simply as Multiplexes, combined the idea of attracting customers to view films with a complete leisure experience, within an enclosed, clean and easily accessible environment. The concept developed from the idea of shopping malls which had become very popular in America as early as the 1950s. They offered convenience, indoor facilities and a wide selection of stores, and responded to the rising 'suburbanisation' and the popularity of the car. Retailers of course viewed entertainment environments as a way of luring shoppers. In their time, the multiplexes (and later megaplexes – see section 10.0) of the 80s and 90s were considered as a rock solid basis around which to wrap a range of retail and catering options. Together these facilities produced a relatively standard formula for high-yielding, 'cash-cow' style investments.
- 6.5 Milton Keynes lacked a traditional high street and possessed a young, mobile and affluent population. Also, its grid system and layout was conceived to accommodate the motorcar. In this respect it shared a lot of similarities with the American suburban environment. This may have convinced AMC that the tried and tested formula offered by the multiplex and entertainment centre could be exported outside the US.

- 6.6 Although the striking shape of The Point makes it uncharacteristic "the other components are the blue-print model for multiplexes: numerous small cinemas grouped together in one building, trading in combination with quality restaurants, shopping and ample single level car parking". (Chartered Surveyor Weekly, 7 August 1986). Other well represented features of the American integrated leisure centre are a 'themed' and dramatic exterior, open spaces which allowed people to congregate, and a variety of entertainments which would change quickly throughout the duration of a patron's visit (like films) in order to always offer a new diversion.
- 6.7 In its first years, The Point did appear to fulfil its function. In a 1989 RIBA Journal article it was described as enjoying an unprecedented success, having a broad appeal to a variety of generations and attracting patrons from a 50-60 mile radius. Apart from the cinema screens, the complex was praised for its car parking, spacious interiors and a dynamic atmosphere. A new standard of cleanliness and organisation inherited from the American scene had also been set in contrast, for example, to the old Art Deco picture palace.
- 6.8 This type of development has become outdated quite quickly. Multiplex cinemas were superseded in the late 1980s by megaplex theatres where 20 or more screens are on offer. The first example of a megaplex being the Kinepolis in Brussels, which opened in 1988 (with 25 screens and a seating capacity of 7500).
- 6.9 Today it is argued that a new breed of mixed-use entertainment centres are sought, which offer innovative and cultural projects, rather than standard 'anchors' such as multi-screen cinemas, bowling alleys and night clubs. It is suggested that the future may rest with landmark projects, such as the Lowry Centre and Tate Modern, which illustrate the desire for leisure-led redevelopment combined with the interests in arts and culture and a high quality environment.
- 6.10 Since 1985 almost 200 multiplexes have sprung up in the UK, most of them in suburban areas. In fact, in 1986 AMC had already "10 firm deals for multiplexes and another 12 near conclusion". Most of the ten were expected to be opened by 1987, the first one in early autumn at Clydebanks and Newcastle. Not only AMC was racing to construct multiplexes all over the country, Cannon-Thorn's 35000 sq ft, eight screen, complex at Salford Quays was near completion in 1986, and a 17 screen complex at Great Windmill Street in London was well advanced in its planning by that year also (Chartered Surveyor Weekly, 7 August 1986). Other 'entertainment centres' to open the following year were planned by CIC at High Wycombe and Solihull and both would provide restaurants, bars, crèches and car parking.



Figure 6.1: 1950s Mall in the US



Figure 6.2: Kinepolis megaplex in Brussels, opened in 1988



Figure 6.3: The Lowry Centre, Salford opened in 2000



## 7.0 Photographic Survey of the Building

- 7.1 The following series of photographs illustrate key features of the building. The captions indicate the degree to which these features are, or are not architectural attributes.



Figure 7.1: Main entrance route to The Point where views of the building are cut off



Figure 7.2: General confusion around the entrance



Figure 7.3: The profile of the expressed structural frame has landmark quality but closer inspection shows that it only holds itself up. The actual building enclosures operate from a quite different, conventional structural principle



Figure 7.4: The structure is made of crude elements which are derived from a geometry lacking visual benefits. The vertical elements hang nearly to the ground and provide no support



Figure 7.5: Crude nature of the lighting strip fittings



## 7.0 Photographic Survey of the Building



Figure 7.6: Clash of geometries, structural ideas and component details



Figure 7.7: The foyer of the basement bingo hall has no design merit



Figure 7.8: The basement bingo hall has no architectural or interior design qualities



Figure 7.9: The foyer of the ground floor night club is of recent design



Figure 7.10: The interior of the nightclub at ground floor level is of very recent origin



Figure 7.11: Much altered interior of the multiplex 'box' foyer



## 7.0 Photographic Survey of the Building



Figure 7.12: Lack of structural integrity expressed in the multiplex interior



Figure 7.13: The principal stairway in the building is mean in its size and muddled in its architectural language



Figure 7.14: Poor quality main stair



Figure 7.15: The entrance elements do not work in harmony with the overall pyramidal structure. The arrangement of ground floor elements is poorly related to the surrounding landscape



Figure 7.16: The terrace at first floor level presents a poor sense of space. It has been covered with net to deter birds



Figure 7.17: At the upper levels, the steel verticals hang and are expressed as such, to no great architectural advantage, with 'floating' spheres



## 7.0 Photographic Survey of the Building



Figure 7.18: Main structural support is founded on inadequate materials and express a notion of rotation which does not form part of the structural language



Figure 7.19: The positioning of certain structural elements gives rise to a visually weak expression of stability



Figure 7.20: The unresolved complexity of steelwork geometry severely diminishes the quality of the architecture



Figure 7.21: As above, the unresolved complexity of steelwork geometry severely diminishes the quality of the architecture



## 8.0 Listing Criteria and Assessment

8.1 Pursuant to section 1(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the "Act") the Secretary of State must compile a list of buildings of "*special architectural or historic interest*".

8.2 Section 1(3) of the Act states that the Secretary of State may take into account not only the building itself but also: (a) any respect in which its exterior contributes to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings of which it forms a part; and (b) the desirability of preserving, on the ground of its architectural or historic interest, any feature or structure fixed to the building or forming part of the land and comprised within the curtilage of the building.

8.3 The criteria which the Secretary of State applies in listing are set out in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) note 15: *Planning and the Historic Environment*.

The main criteria are contained in its paragraph 6.10 and are:

- **architectural interest:** the lists are meant to include all buildings which are of importance to the nation for the interest of their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship; also important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms. Paragraph 6.10 of PPG15 requires that architectural interest should be of "importance to the nation".
- **historic interest:** this includes buildings which illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history;
- **close historical association:** with nationally important people or events;
- **group value:** especially where buildings comprise together important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning (e.g. squares, terraces or model villages).
- **Age, rarity and selectivity** are also relevant criteria (paragraphs 6.11 – 6.13), particularly where buildings are proposed for listing on the strength of their historic interest. PPG15 states that "the older a building is...the more likely it is to have historic importance". In the case of buildings dating from the post-1914 period, "only selected buildings" are normally listed. Buildings less than 30 years old can only be listed if they are "of outstanding quality and under threat". PPG15 guidance suggests that the approach adopted for twentieth century listing is to identify "*key exemplars*"

for each range of building type. Although the external appearance of a building – both its intrinsic architectural merit and any group value – is a key consideration, buildings may also be important for reasons of technological innovation (paragraphs 6.10 and 6.14, PPG 15). Paragraph 6.16 of PPG15 states "the emphasis in these criteria is on *national significance*" (our emphasis).

8.4 Not all these criteria will be relevant to every case, but a particular building may qualify for listing under more than one of them.

## 9.0 Assessment of the Point in the Context of the Listing Criteria

9.0.1 In the previous section of this report, and in PPG 15 (Part 2, paragraphs 6.10 – 6.14), the relevant criteria for listing buildings are set out. Below, the interest of The Point is set out and assessed against each of the criteria:

### 9.1 Architectural Interest – PPG15 paragraph 6.10; first criterion

9.1.1 The Point was built in 1985. Although its external structure appears to not have been subjected to serious alterations, it has been found to have several stylistic shortcomings.

9.1.2 Elain Harwood, an English Heritage Listing Inspector and leading post-war buildings historian, notes that listed post war buildings must be of exceptional quality right down to the fine detailing of the building. This is not the case here as the whole structure was designed for maximum visual impact and there was no real concern for quality or refined detailing. Inadequate expression has been given to structural support and elements of the composition demonstrate visual weakness and a muddled architectural language. The appearance is inspired by the crude elements of the American shopping mall and entertainment complex structure which has no vernacular roots or ambition to be architecturally valuable.

9.1.3 A great many of the interiors have been altered and hold no real design merit. They are generally of a mediocre quality and are of no particular architectural value or interest.

### 9.2 Technological Innovation

9.2.1 Although this form of building type could arguably have been seen as novel in 1985, as the Point claims to be the 1<sup>st</sup> multiplex in UK, the new cinematic technologies and entertainment centre innovations were based on American examples. AMC were in fact applying the blueprint for American multiplexes of which they had a vast experience, having built similar examples in Kansas City (as early as 1963), Arizona, California, Nebraska and Texas (by 1969).

9.2.2 Similar examples of the technology in film projection and acoustics can be found in many city centre and suburban branches of multiplexes across the country. As set out in section 4.7, by the late 1980s, AMC multiplex cinemas were built in Glasgow, Dundee, Newcastle, Warrington, Rotherham, Sheffield, Dudley and Bristol.

9.2.3 In addition, the innovation brought about by multiplexes has been superseded by megaplexes (see 6.7), IMAX cinema systems and other forms of entertainment experience.

### 9.3 Architectural Interest

9.3.1 The design is a crude attempt to express a presence which the building type does not lend itself to. The execution of the structure and its details, plus the inadequate relationship between the structure and the envelope, is neither of architectural importance nor of technological innovation or virtuosity. This is not a building which is architecturally important to the nation.

### 9.5 Historic Interest – PPG15 paragraph 6.10; second criterion

9.5.1 These criteria include 'buildings which illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history'. Built in 1985 The Point is not a building of national importance in terms of historic interest. There are numerous examples of multiplex complexes in the UK, which date from the same era. The Point is part of Central Milton Keynes, a quickly developed, 'new town' environment. It does not possess any outstanding qualities to differentiate it from its surrounding. Many buildings sprung up at a similar time of expansion in the area, in response to private investment and the demands of a growing population.

### 9.6 Close Historical Association – PPG15 paragraph 6.10; third criterion

9.6.1 There is no close historical association with this building. No significant historical events or people have any link to it.

### 9.7 Group Value – PPG15 paragraph 6.10; fourth criterion

9.7.1 The Point forms part of Central Milton Keynes, but this environment does not constitute an important architectural or historic unity. Though Central Milton Keynes does represent a specific form of post-war, new town planning, The Point does not constitute a particularly fine example of it, nor does it contribute to a particularly fine example of planning, such as a square, terrace or model village.

## 9.8 Other Considerations

### 9.8.1 Age and Rarity – Paragraphs 6.11 and 6.12

Paragraph 6.11 states that, in considering a building for listing, 'age and rarity are relevant considerations, particularly where buildings are proposed for listing on the strength of their historic interest'. It goes on to say that 'only selected buildings from the period after 1914 are normally listed', and that consequently 'greater selection is necessary to identify the best examples of particular building types' in buildings from this era. Furthermore, the guidance states that buildings less than 30 years old can only be listed if they are of 'outstanding quality and currently under threat'. In practice this means buildings under 30 years old which do become listed are normally of the elevated grades of II\* or I, and such listings are rare. Examples include Bucknell and Hamilton's Paddington Maintenance Depot (built in 1966-68 and listed grade II\* in 1994), Alison and Pete Smithson's Economist Group building (built 192-64, listed grade II\* in 1988), and Foster Associates' Willis Carroon building (formerly Willis Faber and Dumas) (built 1972-75, listed grade I in 1991). These are all buildings of exceptional architectural merit which mean they can be listed even before the normal 30 year period from construction has elapsed. The Point, designed in 1985, is not comparable in terms of architectural or historic interest to such buildings.

### 9.8.2 Selectivity – Paragraphs 6.13

Paragraph 6.13 states: 'where a building qualifies for listing primarily on the strength of its intrinsic architectural quality or its group value, the fact that there are other buildings of similar quality elsewhere is not likely to be a major consideration'. Paragraph 6.13 goes on to say that the "Secretary of State's aim will be to list the best examples of the type which are of special historic interest". In the view of The Richard Coleman Consultancy, the Point is not of sufficient architectural interest or group value to be listed on this basis, and in considering the Secretary of State's aim to list the best examples of a particular type, notes that numerous examples of multiplex complexes are visible and/or still in use in the country, none of them listed. The inclusion of The Point onto the statutory list of nationally important buildings would be inappropriate and would add nothing to enhance the already thorough list of architecturally and historically significant buildings.



## 10.0 Conclusion

- 10.1 The Point was an attempt to create a landmark cultural building in the early days of Milton Keynes' 'new town' status. It was a bold move and it introduced the American model of a multiplex cinema building, at a time when cinema going was in a lull. 'The Point' itself however, though it succeeded as a landmark with its pyramidal framework, was actually a subsidiary element to the multiplex of cinemas which were accommodated in a lower box-like building to its south. The pyramid 'marked' its principal entrance and provided an upper level nightclub space.
- 10.2 There is nothing more remarkable, architecturally about the cinema building than the fact that it was a first in the UK; it is little more than a shed. Indeed, the architectural critic Nikolaus Pevsner described The Point as "a pyramidal stack of boxes" and a "big metal-panel-clad shed". It is quite certain that the intentions of the developers were not to produce a building of architectural value but a quickly constructed conspicuous structure to lure patrons and shoppers from a distance.
- 10.3 The landmark building is actually a three stage ziggurat containing two levels of accommodation and a third level 'lantern' originally intended for nightclub light rigging. Compared to its overall image, therefore, the built enclosure is relatively small. One could say that this is 'generous' architecture, or one could say it is deceitful. One must question, however, whether it is architecture at all as, once its formal elements have been dissected, a considerable flaw in concept is discovered. This flaw is to do with it being in fact, two structures. The ziggurat has its own steel structure within its glass envelope whereas the pyramid, as outlined, is considered as a quite separate element. The two are aesthetically deemed to be in support of each other, but in fact what appears to hold everything up is simply holding itself up. The vertical elements hanging from the raked girders simply hang. This is poor architectural practice and results from a grandiose idea which turned out to be too big for the relatively small commodity it contains.
- 10.4 Instead of realising that the idea was over ambitious, the basic form went ahead without authenticity. There is some honesty in the detail in that the separation of the two elements is quite clearly expressed. It amounts to 'honest dishonesty' in design terms and in comparison with other contemporary exercises, where a building's structure is explicit in the design, it does not even show up on the architectural

excellence radar. We cite such buildings as: the Pompidou Centre in Paris by Piano and Rogers; Sainsbury's at Canterbury by Ahrends, Burton & Koralek; Sainsbury's Centre at Norwich University by Foster & Partners; Homebase store in Brentford by Grimshaw; Plantation Place in London by Arup Associates. All these examples express structure which is actually doing the load carrying job it purports to do.

- 10.5 The structural expression of The Point is also made from crude elements of steel, welded together without articulated joints. No joy or theme is apparent in the method, nor geometry of connections. This is illustrated in the photographic survey.
- 10.6 In conclusion, The Point is a rather superficial edifice whose image is not fully realised in the structural principle, its relationship to the built enclosure, or in the details of steel connections. It provided a temporary 'town centre' image and landmark for a limited time, but as an architectural creation its time is over. Unlike many Victorian structures such as railway sheds, glass houses and such masterpieces as the Crystal Palace, The Point is neither demountable, nor reusable elsewhere. It is all to do with image rather than innovation. In terms of its design it does not fulfil the criteria for architectural interest.
- 10.7 For these reasons, we do not believe The Point will satisfy any of the listing criteria included in PPG15 *Planning and the Historic Environment*. It is not of either significant architectural or historic interest. It is not a key exemplar of a twentieth century building type and is not of the outstanding quality required to merit the listing of a building under 30 years old. Therefore, it is unlikely that The Point will be placed on the statutory list.