

## Building The BullRing



In November 2000 Birmingham City Council's Building Consultancy Service were appointed to provide the Building Control services for the New BullRing project.

The selection of Birmingham City Council's Building Consultancy Service (BCS) team by the developer the Birmingham Alliance and their design and build contractor Sir Robert McAlpine, was a reflection of the strong bid Building Consultancy put forward emphasising their unique links and working relationships with other council departments, The Access Committee for Birmingham and the West Midlands Fire Service, enabling a "one stop approach" for the project.

The BullRing project, costing over £500 million, was to be constructed and open for trading in less than three years, a major task for any developer and contractor to take on. Building Consultancy quickly became an integral member of the team responsible for delivering the project on time and fully in compliance with the Building Regulations.

Previously the Sir Robert McAlpine team had worked on the West Quay shopping development in Southampton so the BCS team visited West Quay and met with the Southampton Building Control Surveyors and Fire Officer. The visit gave a valuable insight into the job ahead.

On the BullRing project, the need to establish and maintain good communications systems and working relationships with the client team, design team and construction teams was essential. Roger Hassam MRICS, led the way by drawing on his extensive experience of working on large scale building projects, such as the International Convention Centre and Millenium Point.

Weekly meetings were held with the McAlpine design team, with initial discussions centring around fire strategies and the fire precautions to be incorporated.





**This plan is only one of several levels with no two levels being the same. No less than ten tower cranes were needed during construction**

Once these strategic design decisions had been agreed the various sub-contractors were required to make a "toolbox" presentation to enable the site teams to agree construction methods and materials for each of the 260 works packages that would be needed to construct the Building.

The BCS team attended all "toolbox" talks involving a Building Regulation element so that they could advise the sub-contractors about the critical information they would need to supply for compliance to be checked and confirmed. A strong relationship and understanding with key section engineers developed through these working discussions.

To keep all the parties involved in the project informed on progress of their on-site activity the BCS team prepared monthly reports detailing the approvals of the various Building Regulation elements which ranged from A (Structural Stability) to N (glazing)



The BCS team's commitment was reflected in their daily site presence, which involved evening, weekend and bank holiday working to prevent delays.

The traditional base foundations, for example, required a great deal of input from the team when many of the 410 bases turned out to be below the water table, giving rise to problems early in the project. The development of a close working relationship with the McAlpine Geotechnical engineer resident on site ensured foundations were constructed to programme.

McAlpine provided the team with an office within own their main office complex close to the site and having had regular weekly meetings with the design team, the BCS team now needed to address the site and construction teams.

Weekly working-lunch meetings were introduced to discuss constructional difficulties which had been identified during the previous weeks activity - and to agree on a programme of rectification. A system to formalise these issues was also put in place to assist the programme.



After two and a quarter years of construction the development reached the handover stage with a phased programme for each of the 150 shell store units to be released to the new tenants for fitting out.

A tenant handbook detailing the Building Regulation elements specific to the BullRing shop units. was prepared and sent out. As the Centre was scheduled to open in less than twelve months the BCS team assumed that they would receive the first wave of applications just after Christmas 2003. The team had committed to check plans and communicate back to each fit out agent within a three-week timescale and to follow up with meetings and inspections on site as fitting out work progressed. However it was July before a sudden flood of fit-out applications hit the BCS team – and the Centre had to be completed by 4 September!!



## Commissioning

Meanwhile McAlpine had reached the important commissioning phase and they also required much of the team's time. It would be necessary to call upon reinforcements and suddenly the benefit of being part of the UK's largest Building Control Service became obvious! Additional surveyors were quickly drafted in from their normal duties to support them.

As the opening date drew closer so did the intensity of activity both on and off site. Witness commissioning of the important base builds and landlord's life safety systems were carried out late into the night - and often into the early hours of the morning to satisfy the programme.

Once the main-build life-safety systems were fully commissioned and witnessed, it was down to each individual fit out contractor to check their own life safety systems - Fire Alarm System, Sprinklers and Emergency lighting. Unless all three worked perfectly their shop would not be allowed to open – and no one wanted to see shops not trading on the opening day.

Building Consultancy and West Midlands Fire Service worked closely with a specialist team from Gardiner Theobald Management Services to form several teams consisting of a Building Control Surveyor, a GTMS member, and a West Midlands Fire Service Officer, in order to cope with the large number of units needing to be checked and approved within the time left.

Eventually the 4th September arrived and thanks to a huge combined effort by all concerned the new BullRing opened to the public at 10am, right on schedule!



## The Future

Now that the BullRing is complete what does the future hold for Birmingham City Council's Building Consultancy Building Control? With the incredible regeneration of Birmingham continuing apace they already have their sights set on a number of major projects.

Trevor Haynes, Head of Building Consultancy explained "With full involvement already taking place in the construction of a new super hospital in the South of Birmingham - and the new Eastside city centre re-development representing 10 more years worth of construction work - the future's looking bright for Building Consultancy in Birmingham.

"We have also recently secured a number of contracts providing building regulation advice for the Ministry of Defence across England and Wales - whilst the number of private sector partners using our services across the UK under the National Local

Authority Partnering scheme continues to increase. We have successfully partnered with Marks and Spencer for a number of years and recently we have developed new partnerships with over twenty leading national and local organisations. Under this scheme we'll be very pleased to discuss how we can help any clients with their latest project, wherever it is, in the Midlands or elsewhere in the UK".