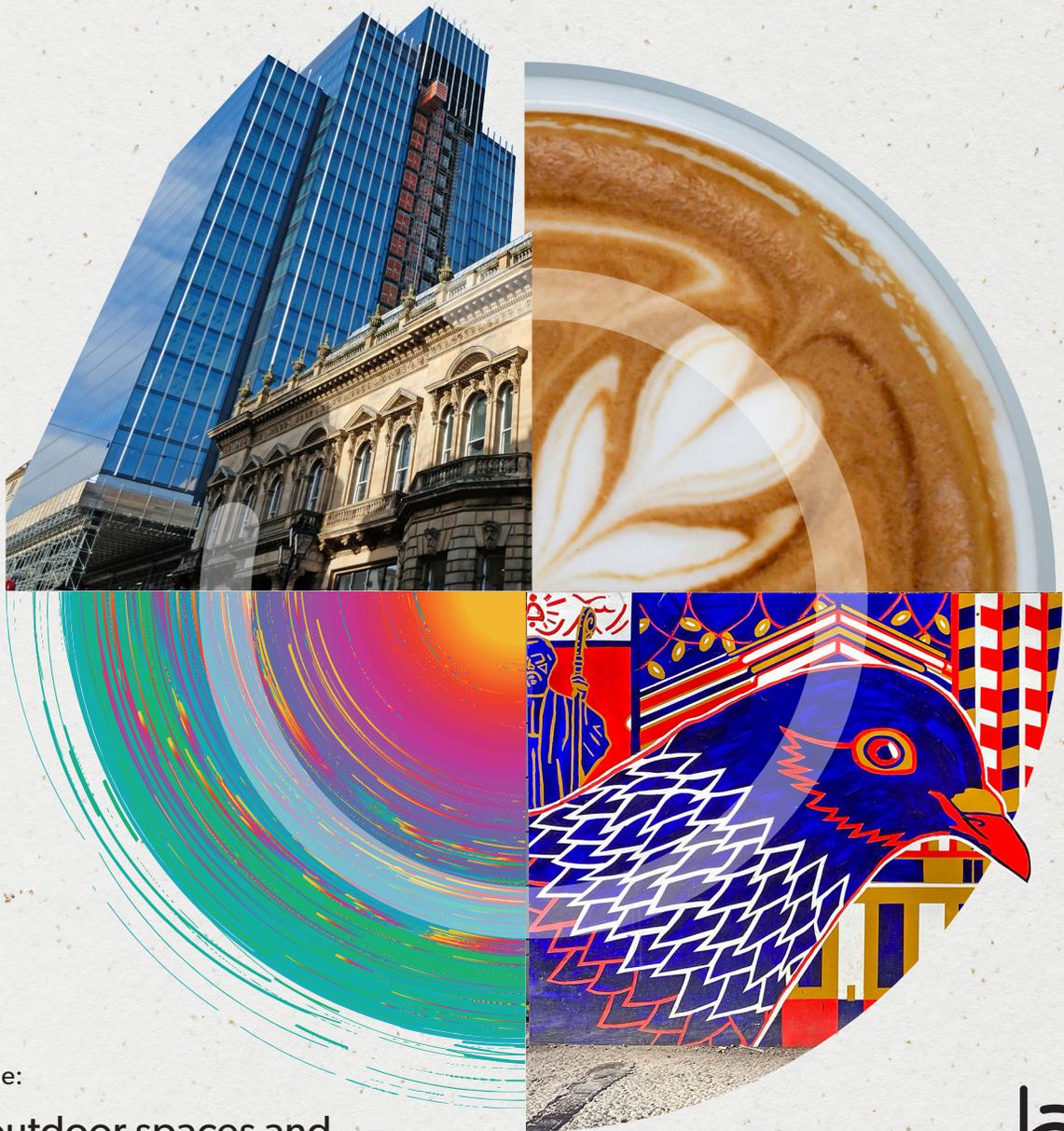


+ More than just business...

COLMORE

Spring 2021

LIFE



In this issue:

New outdoor spaces and events as District prepares for summer with a difference



SPRING colmorebusinessdistrict.com

Welcome

Seeing your sun-kissed selfies at the reopening of Chamberlain Square felt like a landmark moment in the story of Birmingham city centre.

This beautiful space (pictured below), flanked by Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Town Hall and the developing Paradise scheme, offers somewhere to sit with a coffee and watch the world go by.

After lockdown, Birmingham's open spaces will prove more popular than ever and it is this new approach to outdoor life that is taking a lead in so many Colmore BID projects to cater for a new-look Business District.

We can't wait to see bustling bars, restaurants and coffee shops when government guidelines permit and it is exciting to see our venues innovating and coming up with new ideas for outdoor dining.

We're also playing our part with our parklets offering a place to meet friends safely, while the Summer in the Square events will create a welcome food, drink and music attraction in the heart of the city at Victoria Square.

In this issue of Colmore Life we speak to City Centre Inspector Chris Harrison, whose job it is to police the city centre with a new strategy to respond to the new world in which we live and work.

We talk to Henrietta Brealey, the new CEO of the Greater Birmingham

Chambers of Commerce, who reflects on how the city's economic fortunes are changing by the day and what business districts need to do to attract companies, shoppers and visitors.

And as the Grand Hotel's stunning restoration completes, we look back at the life of visionary Isaac Horton, whose creative thinking inspired so much of the Colmore Business District as you see it today.

It is wonderful to be back in the District and I hope to meet you again soon – perhaps in the new-look Chamberlain Square.

**MICHELE WILBY, CEO,
COLMORE BID**



THE BID TEAM

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**SPRING
2021**

Parklets get a colourful finish



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A man with Grand ambition



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View from new Chamber chief



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DID YOU KNOW? Birmingham's Clean Air Zone comes into effect on June 1, 2021. The Brum Breathes website features all the latest information about which vehicles will have to pay, where the CAZ covers and more. Visit brumbreathes.co.uk

A watercolour and ink drawing of how Victoria Square could look



City's Victoria Square to come alive for summer

Victoria Square will be a hive of activity once again this summer after Colmore BID, in partnership with Retail BID and Birmingham City Council, announced Summer in the Square to support the city's leisure and hospitality industry.

The Square is being transformed into a new space allowing visitors and those working in the city to enjoy their favourite bars and restaurants outdoors.

The space will feature socially distanced seating for 120

people, a band stand for live music and entertainment as well as four beach huts with vendors from across the District selling a range of food and drink. The space is free for anyone to use and will be open 24/7. Seating and food huts featuring popular coffee shops and restaurants from the District have

been opened with the band stand following shortly. A full programme of summer events will be announced over the coming weeks.

Michele Wilby, CEO of Colmore BID said: "Over the course of the past 12 months we have continued to consult and support the businesses in our District by any means possible. Summer in the Square will allow for increased outdoor seating in the District, in a safe and measured way."

Visit www.colmorebusinessdistrict.com



BIDS JOIN FORCES TO SAY CHEERS TO HOSPITALITY

Birmingham's five city centre BIDs – Colmore, Retail, Westside, Southside and Jewellery Quarter – are joining forces to celebrate and promote the reopening of hospitality businesses.

The 'Cheers to Hospitality' campaign encourages people to support venues when the time is right and restrictions allow. It is the first time the BIDs have collaborated in such a way to help promote the venues that make Birmingham a great place to visit.

Among the Business District venues to feature are Dirty Martini, Purecraft, Primitivo and Urban Coffee.

The marketing campaign features prominently in all BIDs' social media and web content with a combined reach of hundreds of thousands of followers.

Click here for more information.

COLMORE

LATEST NEWS FROM THE DISTRICT

Lowdown

DID YOU KNOW? Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games organisers and partner Severn Trent have unveiled plans to deliver the first carbon-neutral games event with the creation of 2022 acres of new forests in urban areas across the West Midlands.

After Covid, how will the Business District of the future look?

COLMORE BID LAUNCHES RESEARCH PROJECT

Colmore BID is leading a unique study called The Future Business District to help shape a response to long-term recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study will have a strong emphasis on place – not just on the future of office working – but where workplaces co-locate and the important link with the recovery of the high street, city living and cultural institutions, as well as the transport, air quality and climate challenges cities face.

Alex Bishop, co-head of leading UK law firm Shoosmiths in Birmingham, has been appointed as chair of the advisory panel for the study. She is being joined on the panel by, among others, leading consumer behaviour expert Rory Sutherland, social entrepreneur Rosie Ginday MBE of Miss Macaroon fame and think-tank boss Andrew Carter from Centre for Cities.

The project is being supported by Colmore's neighbouring business improvement districts – Retail, Westside, Southside and Jewellery Quarter.

City-REDI at the University of Birmingham has been appointed as lead Research Partner. It will work alongside the Office of Data Analytics at the West Midlands Combined Authority. Support also comes from UK Research and Innovation and the Centre for Cities think tank.

Mike Best is a senior director at national planning consultancy Turley and a board director of Colmore BID. In a blog post about the Future Business District project, he calls for a reinvention of business districts across the country.

"The longer the pandemic goes on – and even with a vaccine rollout in 2021 most people of average working age are looking at the second half of the year before they can get back to anything like 'normal' – our current working arrangements start to feel like the new normal.

"Combine that with a host of paradigm shifts that are going on in the background like climate change and Brexit, it's less and less likely that the new will feel like the old," he says.

Figures from Centre for Cities' High Street Recovery Tracker show that

footfall in Birmingham city centre had only recovered to 31% of its pre-pandemic levels by early December with expenditure at 17% (the lowest of any city in the UK).

The Worker Index (a more accurate reflection of what's happening in the Business District) was as low as 7% at the start of December from a 'high' of around 15% during the summer.

"These are figures that cannot sustain any of the supporting businesses which make up the ecosystem of a business district," says Mike.

"This picture is similar in all English core cities, along with Glasgow, Belfast and Edinburgh, whilst for some reason Cardiff and other Welsh cities are faring better.

"We have to reinvent city centres and business districts. The future business district has to make good business sense for companies as a place to co-locate, whether they are a large corporate, an SME or a small independent, and for individuals as a place to work at least part of the time. And that future has to embrace climate change and all it brings in terms of how we choose to travel, the need for clean air in our city centres, and our long term commitment to zero carbon."

"The future business district has to make good business sense for companies as a place to co-locate"

Tap here
to find out
more about
the Future
Business
District study



DISTRICT'S VISITORS TO ENJOY OUTDOOR DINING THIS SUMMER

Birmingham City Council has revealed new temporary measures to support leisure and hospitality businesses as they reopen from lockdown.

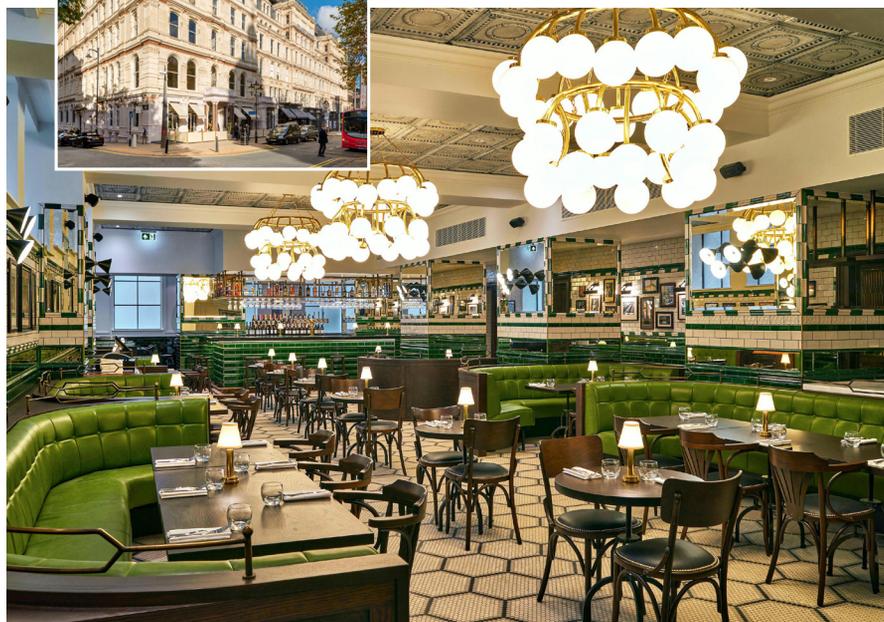
Since the UK Government announced the Roadmap out of Lockdown in February 2021 the Council has approved 18 new Temporary Pavement Licences from businesses looking to place seating on public pavements outside their premises as they re-open.

The licences were introduced last year as a means of supporting the economy through a quicker, cheaper application process.

To support businesses in Colmore Business District, additional footway widening has taken place on Church Street to allow for social distancing outside. Two additional parklets on Church Street, funded and delivered by the BID, are also being installed and will be in addition to five parklets that they introduced last year (see following pages).

To facilitate new Temporary Pavement Licences on Waterloo Street, the road is closed to vehicles between 11am and 11pm. The closure covers the loop from Colmore Row to the top of Victoria Square, and will also support Colmore and Retail BID in their joint venture to transform Victoria Square in to an outdoor seating space (see page 3).

Michele Wilby, CEO of Colmore BID, said: "The measures we introduced last year have been positively received by the District and city. Over the coming months we intend to build on this with a number of new schemes including Summer in the Square and the introduction of two additional parklets."



New-look Grand arrives in style

Dubbed the city's 'sleeping beauty', the Grade II-listed Grand Hotel on Colmore Row is welcoming guests once again after its painstaking and sensitive restoration.

The hotel boasts 185 bedrooms and suites, including a two-bedroom penthouse apartment; Madeleine cocktail bar and Isaacs – a neighbourhood brasserie; and ten meeting and event spaces, including the stunning Grand Ballroom.

"We cannot wait for people to come and enjoy The Grand," said Peter Kienast, The Grand Hotel Birmingham's General Manager.

Partners in the restoration of the hotel include Hortons' Estate, Birmingham City Council, Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP, and Finance Birmingham.

Isaac Horton:
A man
with grand
ambitions.
TAP HERE
TO READ



Public spaces

BID's outdoor parklets get a bright new look

TALENTED ARTISTS BRING COLOUR TO DISTRICT'S STREETS

Interview and
photography:
Stacey Barnfield

Colmore BID called on leading artists and designers to add a touch of creative flair to the District's five parklet outdoor seating areas.

Located near cafés, bars and restaurants on Waterloo Street, Church Street, Colmore Row and Barwick Street, the parklets, which were unveiled in the autumn of 2020, offer a place to enjoy a latte with friends or colleagues as the District emerges from lockdown.

Each parklet has capacity for around 20 people within four defined areas; seating with a low table for coffee and drinks, an area for dining with a high

table, standing room only and an area that has been specifically designed to be accessible for wheelchair users.

'We feel passionately about the need for more investment in the greenery and artworks of urban landscapes'

table, standing room only and an area that has been specifically designed to be accessible for wheelchair users. Colmore BID commissioned Birmingham City Council's award-winning nursery team to add floral decorations, keeping with the BIDs ethos to 'green' the District. The BID worked with EventMen to design each parklet for its specific location, ensuring they

meet relevant planning, licensing, safety and equalities standards.

Colmore BID also commissioned different artists to give the structures an eye-catching finish.

Among these were Birmingham-based creative duo Anna and Luke, who collaborate under the Window Artists collective.

Window Artists feel passionately about the need for more investment in the greenery and artworks of urban



**WATERLOO STREET,
BY MARK MCLURE**

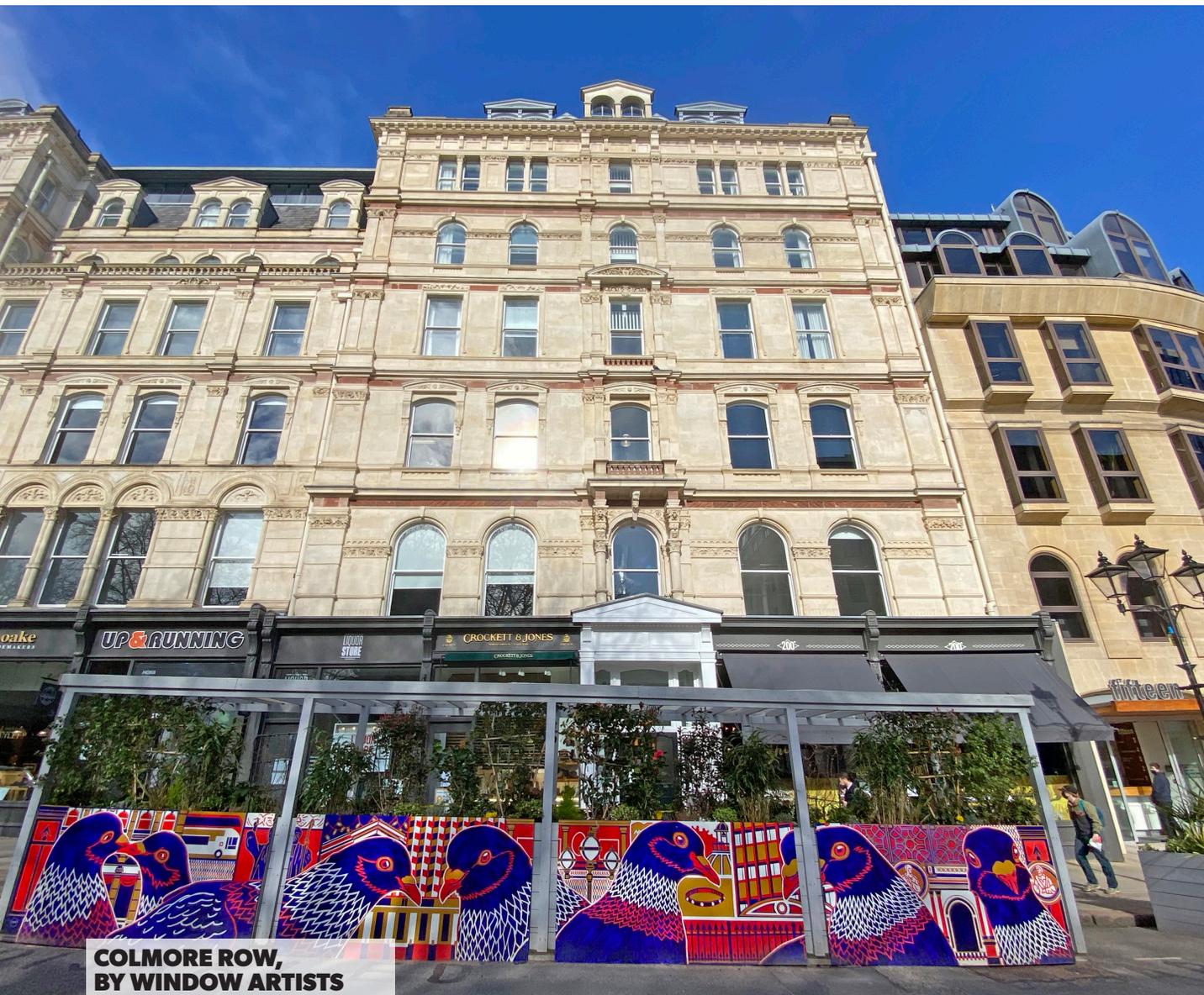


*Anna and Luke, aka
Window Artists, in
their studio*

landscapes. Reflecting on their parklets on Colmore Row, outside 200 Degrees Coffee, and Church Street, outside Hotel du Vin, the creative duo explained more about how they approach such a specific commission.

"When first given a site-specific brief we will often grab a coffee, something yummy and take a walk around the surrounding area with our camera and sketch pads," said Anna.

"This stage is very important to us. Our eyes are fresh. We like to let the area itself inspire us. Then we jot down our collective ideas. Our observations of form, materiality, the shadows cast by buildings, the architecture and so on. This all helps to form the foundations of



COLMORE ROW, BY WINDOW ARTISTS

our ideas.” Anna and Luke understand the importance of ‘greening’ city centres and this is reflected in their work.

“Both of us feel very passionately about the need for more investment in the greenery and artworks of urban landscapes,” added Anna.

“To slow things down, to encourage the observer that is in us all, to look at and question the art or to quite literally smell the roses.”

Graphic designer Mark McLure was raised in the Midlands and now works from a studio in East London. He seeks inspiration from the buildings of the cities in which he works, using this to inform his artworks on the Barwick Street parklet, outside Primitivo, and Waterloo Street, outside Purecraft Bar & Kitchen.

Mark’s work embraces bespoke surface design alongside public art, sculpture and gallery works, both in 3D relief and on paper – all in his bold,

geometric style. The resulting works build on the idea of a graphic landscape – drawing on the structural shapes of the built environment, combining them with graphic motifs such as signage, letterforms, chevrons and other markings.

“My work is originally inspired by structural forms and the architecture of cities and buildings,” he explained.

“These shapes have become simplified and abstracted to the basic

*Continued on
the next page*

Public spaces

From previous page

forms that I build up to create my works. For the Colmore BID parklets – the ‘city’ part of the brief was halfway there.

“I aimed to suggest a cityscape/skyline of buildings – but with the addition of curves and organic shapes to hint at trees and leaves.”

Illustrator Matt Sewell painted the Waterloo Street parklet near Theatrix. His artwork was inspired by a project he was working on earlier in 2020.

“When the theme of Green In the City came through I immediately thought about the book I had just completed called *Save Our Birds*, which is about the UK’s most endangered birds, causes and conflicts and also ways we can help.

“I chose the Black Redstarts featured on my parklet as they are extremely rare and one of the only places they are found here in the UK is in Birmingham.

“There have been a handful of pairs taking roost in Brum over the past few years, to help them there has been an initiative to create green roofs helping them thrive. I wanted to celebrate this in my artwork.

“Greening the city is massively important to me. Recent reports show so many of our everyday urban birds are facing serious declines. Birds such as house sparrows and starlings once so commonplace are disappearing – the only thing we can do is create more feeding and nesting opportunities for our feathered friends.”

Michele Wilby, CEO of Colmore BID, said: “We love the colourful, creative finishes to our new parklets.

“The spaces aren’t just for use by people visiting nearby venues though. You can have meetings with colleagues, catch up with friends or even take your own packed lunch out there. We want these spaces to become a permanent feature within the city.”



**CHURCH STREET,
BY WINDOW ARTISTS**



**BARWICK STREET,
BY MARK McLURE**



**WATERLOO STREET,
BY MATT SEWELL**



A digital image of the new-look Cornwall Street
Courtesy Broadway Malyan

DISTRICT PLANS TO PUT PEDESTRIANS FIRST ARE TAKING SHAPE

Colmore BID's plans for a reimagined Cornwall Street have taken a step forward after contractors began construction work on the project.

Cornwall Street is at the heart of the Business District and home to restaurants Zen Metro, Purnell's and Opus.

The BID is leading a public realm project to transform the space between New Market Street and Newhall Street to make it more pedestrian friendly with new lighting and seating to stop and dwell. It is expected to take six months to complete the project.

Meanwhile, Birmingham City Council's contractors, McPhillips, are working on the first phase of the wider Snow Hill Public Realm programme – funded by the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership, Colmore BID and the City Council.

The first phase will focus on improving public realm along Colmore Row and Livery Street. Work will include removal of the right turn from Livery Street onto Colmore Row, meaning all traffic will

turn left onto Colmore Row. This will also see the Livery Street bus stop moved to the main pedestrian entrance for Snow Hill Station and taxi ranks on Colmore Row being moved to create a new rank at the top of Livery Street.

The project will also see changes being made to the current one-way traffic, making it a two-way system between Livery Street's junctions with Cornwall Street and Barwick Street, to enable exit from Snow Hill car park and Livery Street via Barwick Street or Cornwall Street.

The road is being reconfigured and as well as the installation of high-quality paving, soft landscaping is also underway with the planting of several, new six-metre trees.

Melanie Williams, Chair of Colmore BID's Outstanding Places working group and partner at DWF Law LLP, said: "The BID team with others have worked hard over the course of the last five years to bring this project to fruition and it sends clear signals of our ambition to make our public spaces more user and pedestrian friendly."

CITY GETS £4.5M TO PROMOTE ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEMES

Birmingham City Council has been awarded circa £4.5 million as part of the second tranche of funding from the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund.

The funding comes from a £13 million allocation to Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

An engagement programme with residents and businesses on how they would like to see the funding used in their communities is already underway.

Cllr Waseem Zaffar MBE, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment at Birmingham City Council, said: "This second tranche of funding gives Birmingham a real opportunity to continue transforming our transport network, reduce air pollution, and provide our citizens with more opportunities for active travel.

"In the second half of 2020 we delivered a wide range of emergency transport measures to support walking, cycling, public transport and social distancing across the city.

"Working closely with our communities and key stakeholders, we will start to transition from a focus on the Emergency Transport Plan to the longer-term picture and progression of the Birmingham Transport Plan.

"We want to focus on supporting a green recovery and will seek community input at every stage, with future schemes being delivered throughout 2021."

The Active Travel Fund supports the improvement of active travel (cycling and walking) provision and safety in towns and cities.



As Birmingham emerges from its coronavirus shutdown, Inspector Chris Harrison is optimistic about the months ahead.

During our Zoom interview for Colmore Life magazine he asks if this positivity comes across. It does, and it's wonderfully refreshing during such difficult times.

With a 26-year service record Insp Harrison is able to highlight a CV that covers all areas of police roles including CID, murder investigation, training new recruits, football match-day management, the criminal justice system, workplace assessment and – his one true passion – neighbourhood policing.

His latest role and the one he intends to 'hang his hat on' is city-centre policing across Birmingham, working from the force's Digbeth station.

Leading a team of 106 police officers, 12 sergeants and 12 PCSOs to deliver policing in the city centre, Insp Harrison works alongside co-ordinator Sgt Dale Quiney. Between them they marshal staff and consider every detail brought to their attention and how it should be prioritised.

Because of its city centre location, he describes his role as one of the most significant and important in West Midlands Police. At a personal level it 'feels like home'.

"Neighbourhood policing in Birmingham city centre is critical for the force," he explains, from his office in Digbeth.

"The position has been a bit of a stepping stone in recent times but it needs someone to bring stability, especially when you consider what's going to be happening in Birmingham in the next few years.

"I feel really fortunate to be given this opportunity where I can end my career spending the next four years working hard in the city centre because, as many people know, after 30 years in service I have to retire.

"I've achieved so in much my career and this is the pinnacle. If it is my last post it's something I want to hang my hat on as I leave and be able to say with pride, 'yes, I did that'."

Before he reaches that moment, however, Insp Harrison is needed to help steer the city centre through

'We have to set the foundations now to help create a safe, welcoming environment that people want to visit or work in'

WEST MIDLANDS POLICE HAS APPOINTED A NEW CITY CENTRE INSPECTOR TO HELP BIRMINGHAM'S RECOVERY FROM THE CORONAVIRUS SHUTDOWN. COLMORE LIFE MEETS HIM

Interview and photography: Stacey Barnfield

Interview: Insp Chris Harrison

its post-pandemic recovery, the 2022 Commonwealth Games and a changing high street and Business District that includes new bars, restaurants and hospitality venues.

He explains how joining the city centre team during the November 2020 lockdown gave him and his colleagues time and space to take stock of operations to see what they did well and what they needed to develop.

"Practises that have been going on for years – just because that's what we do – we've had a chance to have a really good look at," he says.

"We're going to come out of this so much stronger as a policing team. We're in a position to be able to understand what our true priorities are."

Insp Harrison welcomes the phased approach to reopening the city centre as the Government's four-step 'reboot' of all areas of business, social and family life comes into effect.

"In terms of day-to-day, post-lockdown policing, the schools-first approach will give us chance to work with partners in a structured and targeted way, for example working alongside Transport for West Midlands around bus services.

"For the return of non-essential retail in April, we have a new retail model that has come into force, which has redesigned the way we patrol and our offender managing.

"We have a team of officers looking at the day-to-day goings-on in the city centre, focusing on retail alone.

"We're going to be there to tell offenders, 'this is your new policing team, this is your warning, this is about you recognising you're not going to have an easy time in the city centre'. It's very much a post-Covid preventative approach."

For this to be its most effective, Insp Harrison highlights the importance of partnerships with Business Improvement Districts, their wardens and street patrol teams.

"The one thing I've noticed comparing my previous positions in neighbourhood policing to where I am now is the foundations that are in place. They are incredible.

"The patrol teams and wardens are integral and very much part of the

policing family. It's not just lip-service, I'm proud to work alongside the teams, shoulder to shoulder.

"The daily briefings, the joint patrols, the shared intelligence, it's come on so much compared to where we were in neighbourhood policing ten years ago.

"In terms of our relationships with BIDs, they're such a positive force to get things done and gather intelligence. We can't function without this communication. It's incredible and like nothing I've ever experienced. I can't help but succeed!"

This relationship will be at its most significant as the night-time economy opens its doors and the city centre sees restaurants and bars once again busy with people enjoying a night out.

Colmore Business District, in particular, now has a growing evening economy helping to change the face of an area traditionally known for 9-to-5 office-based, sectors such as professional services, law and finance.

"Well it's fantastic, isn't it?" he beams, with an unmistakable element of local pride. "You look at all the new places around Colmore Row, Bennetts Hill, Waterloo Street, then the tram heading towards the west of the city centre to Broad Street and Brindleyplace, the whole city is opening up. It's so exciting.

"My only hope is this isn't to the detriment of other areas and that we get the footfall in all parts of the city. We want more people in the city, enjoying themselves and having a great night out across town."

How will Insp Harrison and his teams tackle this sudden return of evening visitors when lockdown measures permit?

"We're intrigued to see how the public reacts to the reopening," he says.

"I want all licensees and the business owners to understand we're 100% behind the night-time economy and we absolutely want a return to what we enjoyed previously, and more.

"There's a wonderful opportunity with the Commonwealth Games coming along and this city needs to thrive on the basis of bringing more



customers and footfall back into Birmingham.

"To do this, we have to make our customers feel safe and to ensure Birmingham offers a great night out.

"Our emphasis isn't just about high-visibility policing near bars. We're going to be working closely with licensees to make sure their customers feel safe in other ways. There's so much work we can do sharing information, data and introducing preventative measures."

Insp Harrison believes Birmingham is in a good position to recover quickly from the pandemic, with the Commonwealth Games giving the city a goal at which to aim.

"We're going to be the centre of attention, aren't we?" he smiles.

"Not every other city has that to aim for on the back of all this. Other cities are having to pick themselves up post-lockdown without that target.

"If we're going to capitalise on the great things coming in 2022, we have to set the foundations now to help create a safe, welcoming environment that people want to visit or work in."

Partnership: Insp Chris Harrison with John-Jo Von Johnson, Colmore BID's Street Operations Manager

Our Future City Plan



COUNCIL UNVEILS MASTERPLAN TO REDEFINE CITY CENTRE WITH NEW GREEN SPACES

Birmingham City Council has released initial details of a proposal to radically transform the city centre over the next two decades.

The masterplan, called 'Our Future City Plan: Central Birmingham 2040, Shaping our City Together', includes schemes to create opportunities for growth in green industries, improve health and wellbeing through access to green spaces and make cycling and walking easier and safer.

The impact of Covid-19, climate change and wider societal changes have prompted the launch of the project, which will replace the Big City Plan, launched in 2010.

The vision for Central Birmingham seeks to strengthen the links with the city centre and its integration with the surrounding inner city areas. It has been launched as a consultation process inviting developers, businesses and local communities to comment.

'De-trafficking' infrastructure and open spaces – walking, cycling and

2040

City's vision for a new central Birmingham

tram routes – will be prioritised to help generate footfall across the city centre, particularly in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

New residential developments with terraces and spaces to socialise will be at the forefront of developers' agendas. Plans will maximise the potential of the city's 'blue infrastructure' – its world-famous canal network – by converting old industrial routes into retail, leisure and office-fronted spaces, while

reimagining the 'concrete collar' inner ring road with a reduction in car usage and more green spaces.

The vast Smithfield scheme on the site of the former Wholesale Markets and Martineau Galleries developments, which will front the HS2 station, are being described as exciting opportunities to help build on the city's regeneration success story, helping to connect the city core to neighbouring suburbs and transport networks.



LANCASTER GATE

'15-MINUTE' BIRMINGHAM

The future development of Central Birmingham 'needs the city to be more things to more people', according to Michael Davies, planning director for Savills in Birmingham.

Mr Davies, whose comments follow the launch of Birmingham City Council's Future City Plan, welcomed the ambitious plans and believes that, through strategic planning and development, Birmingham could become a '15-minute city' – a concept in which daily necessities, such as work, shopping, entertainment, schools and recreation, are all within a quarter of an hour's walk or cycle from your home.

Birmingham has undergone significant development in recent years, with large investment into its transport links both into and within the city itself and research from Savills has shown that residential values increase around new transport infrastructure in Birmingham, as well as in Manchester and London.

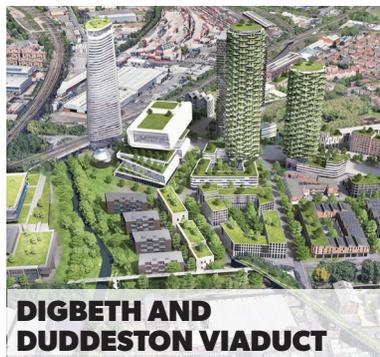
Following the Metro's extension from St Chads to Grand Central in 2016, house prices within 500m of Metro stations grew 5% faster than values between 1km and 2km away. Savills estimate that new Metro and rail stations in Birmingham could trigger a house price uplift of 0.7% per year, having observed similar effects in London around the Jubilee Line extension (2.5% uplift per year) and around Manchester Metro stations (1.5% uplift per year).

"People are willing to pay more for properties with greater connectivity," says Davies. "But the value uplift also reflects other improvements triggered by the infrastructure improvements. Often, opening new transport links will attract new businesses to an area such as shops, cafes, and restaurants, which make the local area more appealing. By reducing reliance on cars, these areas become less congested."

Davies believes any future development should utilise some of the city's current infrastructure and widen the type of accommodation available.

"Through introducing a more varied selection of accommodation in the city, the creation of spaces that promote greenery and family living, and moving away from a focus on student and apartment living, Birmingham could quite conceivably become a 15 minute city within the next 20 years," says Davies.

'People are willing to pay more for properties with greater connectivity'



DIGBETH AND DUDDESTON VIADUCT

main centre of development activity in our city over the last 30 years, investment in the city centre has provided jobs, homes, improvements to sustainable transport, new cultural destinations and educational opportunities.

"With the opportunities of HS2, expansion of the Midland Metro and the Commonwealth Games on the horizon, the city will continue to be a major regional, national hub and centre for international investment.

"This plan marks a major change from previous approaches to the city centre, with a clear intention to spread the benefits of development and investment into inner city areas.

"The release of an early engagement document such as this is intended to seek feedback from a wide spectrum of voices including individuals, organisations and communities to ensure all of Birmingham's communities are shaping the city together."

■ Feedback received during a consultation period between January-March 2021 will inform the Our Future City Plan draft framework to be released in summer 2021 for further consultation.

Among the suggestions are:

- A38/St Chad's Queensway transformed into new green spaces in the areas between the Business District, Jewellery Quarter and Gun Quarter
- 'Park Birmingham' will create a new green space at the city's retail heart
- New green spaces in Digbeth could connect to Duddeston Viaduct Skypark
- Lancaster Gate could become a gateway to the city, reducing the dominance of the A38 and adding new green spaces

Councillor Ian Ward, Leader of Birmingham City Council, said: "As the

History & Nostalgia

Isaac Horton: A man with Grand ambitions

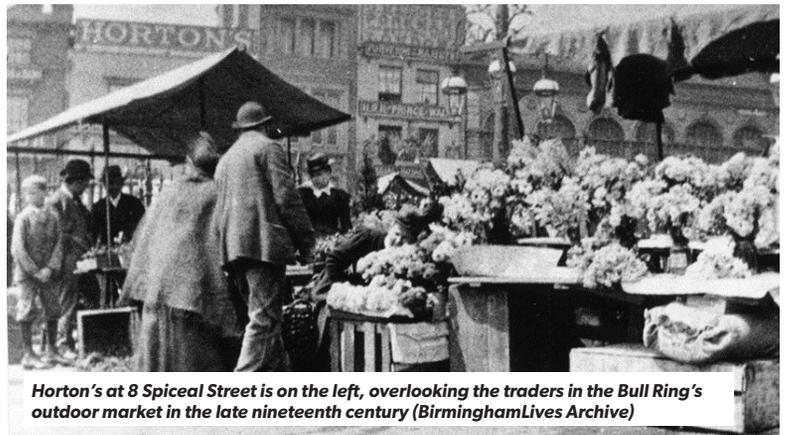
PROFESSOR CARL CHINN SHARES THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF THE MAN BEHIND THE GRAND HOTEL

The founding of Hortons' Estate – the family-owned property management company – can be traced back to Isaac Horton, who used income generated by his family's provisions, butchery and cheese factoring concerns to create a substantial property and provisions business.

Isaac was born in 1821 to Harriet and Benjamin, a butcher in West Bromwich – a town on the cusp of rapid growth driven by the power of industry.

An aspiring man, Benjamin Horton did well and in a period when the vote was restricted to a few men, he was enfranchised by owning the freehold of his butcher's shop in Lyng Lane. He continued to work there until the later 1850s, by which time his income was derived from his ownership of other properties and when he died in 1881, he classified himself not as a tradesman but as a 'gentleman'.

Benjamin Horton left £2,745, a substantial sum bearing in mind that an unskilled labourer would not earn even



Horton's at 8 Spiced Street is on the left, overlooking the traders in the Bull Ring's outdoor market in the late nineteenth century (BirminghamLives Archive)

£1 a week. Still, this legacy was tiny compared to that of his oldest son, Isaac. He died a few months before his father and left a personal estate of £200,000, to which could be added property worth half a million pounds in Birmingham, West Bromwich, Wolverhampton and Walsall and which would become part of the Horton Estate.

The tribute on Isaac Horton's memorial at his grave in Key Hill Cemetery is from Shakespeare's Hamlet: 'He was a man, take him, for all in all I shall not see his like again'. They are meaningful

words for Isaac Horton's achievements can only be regarded as astounding. Though his family was of the middling ranks, they were not wealthy when he began his business life and it was through his own endeavours that he became one of the most important figures in Victorian Birmingham.

Aged 20 in 1841, he was working at his father's butcher's shop in West Bromwich but filled with ambition as he must have been, he soon set off on his own account. A decade later, he was a butcher and provision merchant on the



Pictured left: Birmingham from the dome of St Philip's Church in 1821 – the year of Isaac Horton's birth. The street to the right is what would become Colmore Row

(Birmingham Museums Trust)

Workers on one of Isaac Horton's new buildings (Horton Estates)



town's High Street, its main shopping thoroughfare, and employed eight servants and assistants. Five of them, including a housekeeper, lived with him on the premises.

A leading figure amongst local tradesmen, in 1852 and in the parish church of Aston, Isaac Horton married Sarah Scolefield, whose father was also a butcher. Later that year, Isaac sold his business in West Bromwich to focus on a new venture trading as a wholesale pork butcher in Wolverhampton.

Always looking for new opportunities, in 1858 Horton opened up as a wholesale and retail pork butcher at 8 Spiceal Street, one of the most prominent positions in Birmingham's Bull Ring, the focal point of the town's traders. A large building, it was also home to the Horton family, a pork butcher's assistant and two housemaids.

As a young man in the 1840s, Horton had bought houses in West Bromwich. Praised as one of the shrewdest and thriftiest of men who invested his savings, he went on to purchase the freeholds of his pork shops. By 1862, when he was still only 41, he owned the freehold of a number of premises in the busiest parts of central Wolverhampton as well as shops with houses in Dudley, West

Bromwich and Walsall. In addition, he had bought his two pork shops in Dale End and Smallbrook Street, Birmingham. He would go on to buy cheap prices properties elsewhere in the city with long leases on.

Then, in the 1870s, he made a major leap of imagination and capital investment by moving into New Street, which was vying with Colmore Row to become Birmingham's most prestigious thoroughfare. Horton made a major contribution to that development by having his builders demolish older buildings and replace them with grand structures such as the Midland Hotel (later the Burlington Hotel). Close to the original entrance of New Street Station, it was admired as elegant and spacious after its opening in January 1874.

Less than two years before his untimely death, the most striking and important of Isaac Horton's buildings was opened; the Grand Hotel on Colmore Row. Along with New Street, Colmore Row was in the throes of an architectural transformation making it, as one commentator pronounced, 'one of the stateliest avenues in the kingdom'. This radical change began in the early 1870s with actions taken by the Council. It instigated work on the palatial-style Council House at the Victoria Square end of Colmore Row and carried out wide-ranging improvements along the whole street by removing projecting buildings and road widening.

With an astute eye for opportunities for high-quality developments, Isaac

Horton was amongst the first to recognise the emergence of Colmore Row as one of the most important streets in Birmingham, a process he himself stimulated with the building of the Grand Hotel on land bought between Church Street and Livery Street.

Previously occupied by several large houses, this spot was very close to the Snow Hill Station of the Great Western Railway and he was acutely aware of the trade a hotel could gain from railway passengers.

Now an extremely wealthy man, Isaac Horton was focusing increasingly on his building projects and in September 1880, he offered for sale the goodwill and possession of his very extensive and highly profitable pork butcher's business in Spiceal Street.

Unhappily, within weeks, he was dead. Always intent on closely supervising his investments, he was overseeing building work in High Street, Birmingham when he was taken ill, dying aged 59 in November 1880.

According to newspaper reports, ten years previously Isaac Horton had slipped from a ladder, sustaining an internal injury which rendered him liable to seizures, one of which was fatal. The obituaries in local newspapers emphasised that whilst he had taken no part in municipal or political affairs, he was esteemed.

By personal industry and successful speculation, he had amassed a large fortune and an estate including nearly one-third of the property in New Street.

Property

‘Covid has had an impact on how we work. One thing that is consistent is the birth of the better office’

AS LOUISA RYLAND HOUSE IS REBORN, THEO HOLMES OF CBRE DISCUSSES NEW WORKSPACES IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

By Stacey Barnfield

One of the most impressive buildings in the Business District is being refurbished into grade A office spaces.

Built in 1882 to serve as the Parish Offices and Board of Guardians and more recently occupied by Birmingham City Council, Louisa Ryland House on Newhall Street is a fantastic architectural example of the buildings that were built during that period. A Grade II listing is recognition of the building’s historic significance.

Now, after almost 150 years and – most recently, a proposed site for WeWork – it is being given another new lease of life that will see it transformed into an office building fit for the 21st century, whilst retaining much of its period character and charm.

Euro Properties Investment has instructed CBRE and JLL’s Birmingham office agency teams to market the 86,000 sq ft building.

Some of the space will be designated as flexible office accommodation aimed at start-ups and growing businesses while other planned amenities include a roof terrace, external courtyard, café and cycle hub with changing facilities.



“As well as offering modern interior styling, with high-end furnishings, fixtures and fittings, giving the communal areas and amenity spaces a boutique hotel vibe, the building offers occupiers a range of solutions to their office accommodation needs, be it flexible scale-up space or more traditional office suites,” explained Theo Holmes, director in CBRE’s Birmingham office agency team.

“Careful thought has also been given to well-being, with a roof terrace and courtyard providing natural outdoor space for tenants to enjoy.”

Jonathan Carmalt, director in JLL’s Birmingham office agency team, added: “The mix of flexible floorplates, which can be reconfigured to suit different size requirements, and the potential to split the space to provide a separate self-contained office with its own access, means Louisa Ryland House will appeal to a range of occupiers.”

The sensitive refurbishment of Louisa Ryland House comes at a time when the



purpose of post-pandemic offices is being scrutinised by landlords, tenant businesses and employees.

CBRE’s recently published report ‘Tomorrow’s office: future directions for portfolio and workplace strategy’ offers an insight into occupiers’ thinking when it comes to office-based

working, with 27 per cent saying it will become more important.

However, as the report highlights, there is tension between the desire to provide a place for social interaction, collaboration and culture and the need to accommodate more home based and flexible working, according to Holmes.

“Covid-19 has undoubtedly had an impact on how we work,” he said.

“Corporate occupiers have had to reevaluate their real estate strategies to take into account social distancing, in the short term, and in the longer-term a possible shift towards more home based and flexible working.

“One thing that is consistent is the



birth of a better office, with a flight to quality as occupiers look to enhance their working environments. This is one of the reasons why we have seen no impact on rents during the pandemic.

“Buildings that can offer flexible accommodation, shared meeting space, wellness features, such as enhanced air quality, sustainable design and integrated technology, such as apps, will be high on occupiers’ wish lists. Offices that support health, hygiene and wellbeing are also likely to become more important.

As for the future of city centres and business districts, Holmes believes they will be as relevant, if not more, post-Covid than before.

“If there’s one thing we have missed during lockdown it’s physical and social interaction,” he adds.

“Whether that’s in the office or in the pubs and bars after work with friends and colleagues, or the chance meeting in the street with a client as you’re walking back to the office in-between meetings. Some things just can’t be recreated or replaced by working from home.”

Who was generous Louisa Ryland?

THE WEALTHY HEIRESS WHO GAVE SO MUCH BACK TO BIRMINGHAM

Louisa Anne Ryland was heiress to the Ryland family business and a multi-million-pound fortune created through the wire drawing industry.

She was born on January 17, 1814, at the Laurels, Edgbaston, the only child of Samuel Ryland and Ann Pemberton.

When their daughter was still young, the Rylands moved from Birmingham to Warwick but tragedy struck the family as Ann died when Louisa was still a baby.

Her father never remarried and when he died in 1843, with Louisa being the only child, she inherited estates worth millions of pounds in Ladywood, Sparkhill, Small Heath, Northfield and Moseley.

For 28-year-old Louisa, such an inheritance wasn’t to be used for further personal gain. She quickly set about using her new fortune and vast areas of land to support those who needed it most.

Her most generous gesture came in 1873 – the same year as Joseph Chamberlain became mayor – when she handed to the Council the freehold of 66 acres of land in Moseley to be used as a free park. This became Cannon Hill Park; to this day one of the most popular open spaces in the city.

She also contributed to the construction of the Birmingham School of Art on Margaret Street – just yards away from Louisa Ryland House – one



of Birmingham’s finest examples of Victorian red-brick Gothic architecture and now part of Birmingham City University’s Faculty of Arts, Design and Media.

Louisa continued to provide generously to hospitals, churches and schools until her death in January 1889.

When she died, her estate was valued at more than £2 million and her will is described as an extraordinary lengthy and complex document, mentioning more than 100 people. Executors were given strict instructions that any bequest was spent in the way Louisa instructed and, interestingly, individual heirs were told to add Ryland to their surname or forfeit their inheritance.

Property

‘Quality of space and the wellbeing of staff are – rightly – the over-riding considerations right now’



MAKING THE OFFICE FUTURE-PROOF. BY ROB GROVES OF ARGENT

As the developer-managers of Paradise, we have a duty to examine everything that has happened over the past year and respond accordingly.

Our aim to bring an exemplary new development to the heart of Birmingham is starting to come to fruition. We are in the process of creating jobs, skills and educational opportunities along with wider investment in the city. Already, in our first two buildings, occupied by a range of international, blue-chip businesses like PwC and DLA Piper, we have space for more than 5,000 staff.

Across the entire development we will have the capacity for more than 15,000 workers and the opportunities to create many thousands of new jobs. The knock-on effect of the new office occupiers will also open up benefits across the city for all of its citizens.

By strengthening trade and international links, creating new places to do business and delivering for people, we are establishing Paradise as the best place to work, for all the right reasons.

We take our obligation to do things properly very seriously.

Over the past year we have continued to successfully sign new tenants not just for our office space, but also for new restaurants and bars to ensure there is life in and around the development right round the clock. So, as well as helping create jobs, Paradise is also about creating a whole new piece of city that gives something back to all who come into contact with it.

The public realm around Paradise

– with new pedestrianised streets and squares – is as important, if not more important, than the buildings themselves, and we recognise that public space needs to be a destination in its own right.

But back to the office space. There has been discussion about the future of the office throughout the Covid 19 pandemic. With millions of people working from home some commentators have suggested we don’t need offices anymore.

Of course, like most things in life, it’s not quite as simple as that.

The truth is, this year has actually seen the birth of a new type of demand in office space here in Birmingham and around the world. That demand is for a new and better office environment that is ultra tech enabled, smart, green and healthy.

Quality of space and the wellbeing of staff are – rightly – the over-riding considerations right now. Our brand new buildings, with their large and light, spacious and flexible floorplates, can provide this in abundance. And this focus, on providing the very best business space in Birmingham, is already paying dividends.

As well as One Chamberlain Square being fully let to PwC, and Two Chamberlain Square in demand with firms like DLA Piper, Mazars and Knights already announced and with more lettings likely to be announced throughout 2021, we are already seeing the fruit of this approach.

Naturally, we want this success to be



CARING FOR A CITY TREASURE

Cleaning and caring for a 140-year-old Portland stone monument required a specialist contractor, in this case, Midland Masonry, who had the expertise to not only do a great job in repairing and restoring the Chamberlain Memorial, but also understand how important it is to the people of the city.

The structure was designed by the notable Birmingham architect John Henry Chamberlain (no relation, but personal friend of Joseph Chamberlain) and was paid for by a public appeal which raised over £3,000 (nearly £500,000 today). It is 65 feet tall and is in the neo-gothic architectural style, reminiscent of the Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens in London.

shared by the rest of the Colmore Business District. By providing more Grade A office space for corporate occupiers we are encouraging more people to work and dwell in this part of the city.

One key part of what occupiers are looking for in their post-Covid working environments is increased circulation space on their floors. When companies occupy multiple floors there is the possibility of creating soft spots in our buildings – internal staircases providing connections between one floor and the next without resorting to traditional ‘core’ staircases. This aids the movement of staff and clients and creates more break out space as well.

With greater flexibility and measures like those mentioned above, Paradise is helping companies bring new working practices into reality. By the time major office occupiers return to their buildings – which we all hope will take place later this year – we should all be better equipped to cope with an office environment once more.

As well as making physical changes to our buildings, we are putting ever more emphasis on placemaking – ensuring that once people are here, they have a positive experience in the wider environment, especially throughout the public realm. Our vision for this corner of Birmingham is to create a part of the city that can play its part in lifting the whole city.

Combine ground floors, dynamic public realm with great working space and you start to create a truly inspiring environment that will stand the test of time. This is what we’ve always wanted at Paradise from the very beginning.

Workplaces need to keep on thriving through interaction. People need to see, talk to and seek guidance from their colleagues and peers. We may not be spending all of our professional time in the office in the future, but it will still be an essential central hub for collaborative working, meeting clients, and for sharing and building corporate culture.

As our city and region emerges from the Covid pandemic and moves forward stronger and more united than before, we will do so with greater purpose and greater focus than ever.

Paradise is proud to play its part in that process.



JO BARKER

**Job Title: Senior Assistant
Director, OPSS**

**Company: Office for Product Safety
& Standards (OPSS); within the
Government's Business, Energy and
Industrial Strategy Department**

FIRST OF ALL, TELL US ABOUT THE DAY JOB

As a UK product regulator set up to protect people and places, OPSS has been involved in some of the biggest issues in the UK in recent years; including the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, helping businesses prepare for leaving the European Union, and supporting local authorities to enforce Covid-19 regulations. Largely based in our Birmingham office, on Priory Queensway, my team helps ensure OPSS makes a real difference, by getting our messages across to businesses, regulators and consumers.

SHARE WITH READERS A FEW BUSINESS DISTRICT FAVOURITES?

After so long away, I'm feeling nostalgic for the coffee I would pick up from Costa on the way into the office and longing for the chance to nip round to Philpotts to choose a sandwich from such a great selection of bread and fillings. I want to sit in Cathedral Square in the sunshine and go for a drink after work with my colleagues in The Old Joint Stock. I also loved to be surprised by the fantastic new venues that are always popping up and I'm hopeful this will continue to happen after we get through this pandemic.

THIS FEATURE IS CALLED AFTER HOURS... WHAT'S YOUR POST-WORK PASSION?

I have always loved writing. Whilst my career has been varied, from journalism to PR to the civil service, the golden thread running through it all has been storytelling.



'I hope my story will encourage anyone going through a hard time, whatever the reason, but I'll be happy if it helps people decide what to have for dinner'

After Hours

**YOUR PASSIONS
AND PROJECTS
OUTSIDE THE 9-5**

Whilst I have posted some of my work on various websites, my main creative claims to fame so far, have been a play I wrote for my fellow brownies in the 1970s and a couple of front pages of the Birmingham Mail in the 1990s. Having written professionally for almost 30 years, The Joy of Jars is my first novel.

The Joy of Jars is a fictionalised, (hopefully) funny account of my life as a single mum. A tale of heartburn, cooking sauces and second helpings of love, it is part rom com, part memoir, part cookbook. Sally, has been a VERY single mum for fourteen years. When the lack of a man in her life - or her bed - becomes the teatime news, she questions her trusted recipe for survival and wonders if she should add a dash of spice.

I enjoy telling amusing anecdotes and there were plenty of them ready for me to put into this book. I was lucky, with a good job and caring family and friends but I understand just how hard it can be. I hope my story will encourage anyone who is going through a hard time, whatever the reason, but I'll be happy if it helps people decide what to have for dinner.

WHAT PUSHED YOU TO WRITE THE BOOK?

The single parent charity, Gingerbread launched a debut novel competition, to mark their



100th birthday in 2018 and to highlight their 'One in four' campaign against stigma and reduced accessibility to services. I was celebrating a personal half century the same year and thought, 'if not now, when?'

Gingerbread wanted entries that celebrated the highs of being a single parent as well as recognised the lows. Looking back, I knew I had probably made better friendships and had more fun, going it alone, than might ever have been the case as part of a couple. I also believed, fourteen years on and with a new

After Hours



partner, I could now reflect on the hard bits in ways that might help others.

I decided to focus on how we all handle difficulty in our own way. One of my coping mechanisms was to rely on jars of cooking sauces for easy teatimes, after a busy day at work. To the point where my friends were regularly joking that I should write a cheat's cookbook.

It was an incredible feeling when my first chapter was shortlisted and then got down to the last three, from around 250 submissions.

Following positive feedback from the competition judges, I continued writing *The Joy of Jars*, fitting it around my family life and job. I self published on Single Parents' Day, in March this year, and will be 'paying it back', by donating a share of the profits to Gingerbread.

HOW COULD READERS FIND OUT MORE OR GET INVOLVED?

The Joy of Jars is available now on Amazon. If readers

enjoy it, I'd love them to leave a review. I have set myself a '500 paperbacks/£500 pounds' fundraising challenge for Gingerbread; donating £1 for each of the first 500 books sold, including e-books and sharing a minimum of 25% of any personal profits in the first year.

Anyone interested can read my book posts at thejoyofjars.wordpress.com or follow me on social media:

Facebook: @
thejoyofjarsbook
Twitter: @joannebarker
Instagram: @thejoyofjars



5-MILE CYCLE FOR CHARITY

Colmore Business District-based national charity Cure Leukaemia is inviting cyclists within the District to take part in Festival de Cyclism at the NEC, Birmingham on Friday 28th May, World Blood Cancer Day.

Cyclists will have the chance to ride a 5-mile closed road circuit around the world-famous events venue alongside ex-England and Wolves footballer and blood cancer survivor Geoff Thomas (pictured above) and Cure Leukaemia co-founder Professor Charlie Craddock CBE. Riders of all abilities are welcome and will be free to cycle as many laps as they like in 3 hours. Then all are invited to witness a genuine world record attempt and super-fast time trial to finish the day!

Entry is a £500 charitable donation to Cure Leukaemia which includes a custom HUUB jersey, pre-ride breakfast, in-ride nutrition, post-ride refreshments, mechanical support and an invitation to watch the TT Race and Guinness World record attempt.

All funds raised from the event on World Blood Cancer Day will go towards the £1million target of Geoff and his Tour 21 team who will ride the full Tour de France this summer, one week ahead of the professionals for Cure Leukaemia. If you would like to take part, please email gemma@cureleukaemia.co.uk

Wellbeing

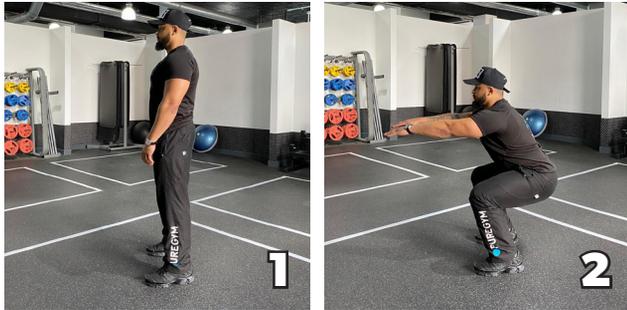
During lockdown we worked with some of the personal trainers from PureGym Snow Hill. The team have provided two workouts, one for at home and the other for those of you that have gone back to the gym. **Conor, Joe, Kieran** and **Yvonne** are available for advice and sessions. Click their names for more info!

If you have an injury, disability or medical condition which can be affected by exercise please consult a medical professional before taking part.

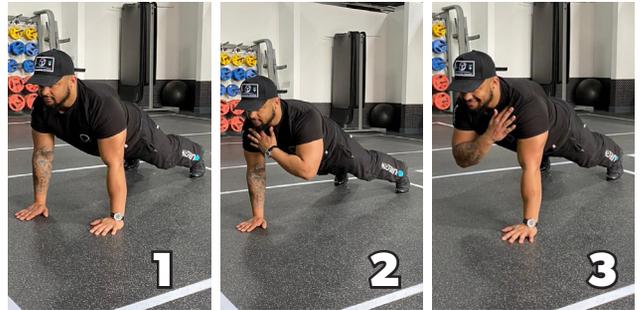
Both circuits 40 seconds on, 20 seconds rest. All movements to be completed in a controlled manner. Repeat circuit 2-3 times depending on fitness level.

BODYWEIGHT CIRCUIT

1. Bodyweight squat



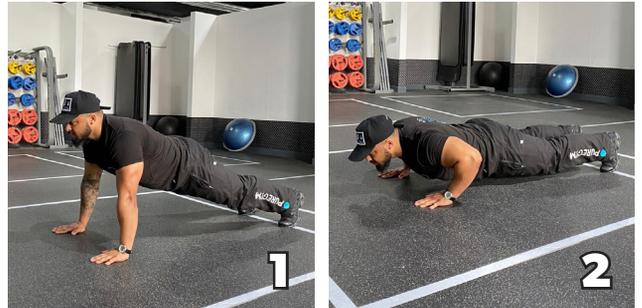
2. Plank shoulder taps



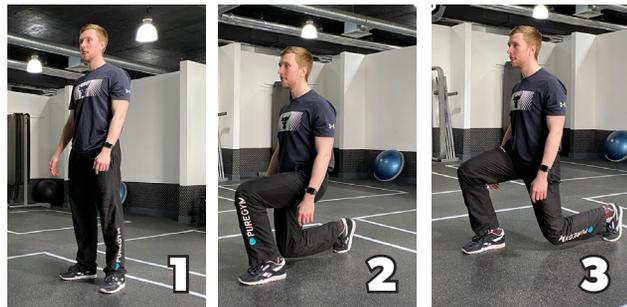
3. Glute bridge



4. Press up



5. Alternating lunges



6. Russian twist



LOWER BODY CIRCUIT

1. Goblet squat



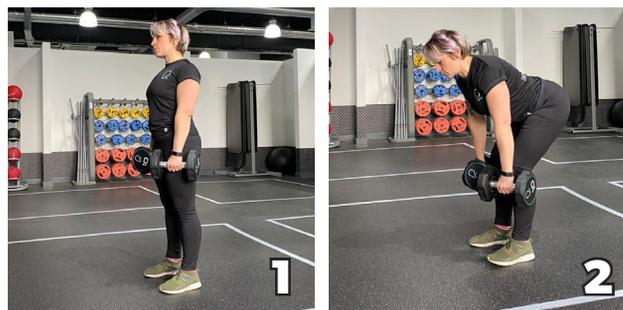
2. Shoulder press



3. Bent over rows



4. Romanian Deadlifts



5. Incline flyes (or floor flyes if no bench available)



6. Bulgarian split squat (20 sec per leg)



Mental Health UK

Mental Health Awareness Week takes place from 10th to 16th May, 2021 and this year Colmore BID is inviting you to attend a series of mental health-focused events to help find a better work/life balance.

Monday 10th May, 6-7pm**Mindfulness for Mental Health**
 Tuesday 11th May, 8-9am**Yoga & Mindfulness Meditation**
 Thursday 13th May, 12-12.30pm**Guided outdoor meditation** (in person)
 Friday 14th May, 12-1pm**Mindful Walking & Creative Writing**
CLICK HERE TO VISIT THE COLMORE BID EVENTS DIARY



I've become convinced the future of the office, and city centres, is very much alive and kicking

NEW GREATER BIRMINGHAM CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE CEO HENRIETTA BREALEY WRITES EXCLUSIVELY FOR COLMORE LIFE MAGAZINE ABOUT THE PANDEMIC AND HOW CITY CENTRES CAN RECOVER

Well. It's been quite the 12 months.

From the pandemic to Brexit to social movements that have rocked the world – this time has certainly earned its place in the history books.

As a business community, as in society as a whole, the impacts have not been evenly felt. This challenge, and how we combine our collective excellence across the city to address it, will be front of mind as I commence my role as CEO of the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, succeeding Paul Faulkner.

For city centres, two questions stand out:

■ *The future of the city centre business district: will businesses keep their offices? Or has remote working worked so well, many will want to do it forever?*

■ *The future of high streets: after the*

retail and hospitality casualties of the pandemic have been counted, what will our future city centre look like?

Research from Centre for Cities, the independent think tank, has shown that city centres have fared worse on footfall through the pandemic than their local centre counterparts. For the past 12 months, the usual crowds of daily commuters into glittering business districts, have stayed home.

The pandemic has also hit hospitality and non-essential retail (among others) hard. A number of familiar high-street chains from Topshop to Prezzo as well as much-loved independents have closed their doors. It has been an unbelievably challenging 12 months for this sector and the people who have worked so hard to build businesses within it.

However, it finally feels as though the light at the end of the tunnel is getting closer.

In just the last month we've seen high profile investments announced for Birmingham from the BBC and Department for Transport. The Commonwealth Games is a bright spot on the horizon for a resurgence in our visitor economy and local pride. HS2, a truly transformative investment for the region and nation, is already driving local jobs and impact.

Our Quarterly Business Report for Q1, our temperature check for regional business sentiment, showed the highest levels of business confidence in increasing turnover since the onset of the pandemic.

While there are certainly many lessons learned and positive practices many will want to keep from this time, as the

View From The Chamber

pandemic has worn on I've become convinced that the future of the office, and city centres, is very much alive and kicking.

A recent YouGov poll showed that 18 per cent of workers want to stay home based full-time (for context – according to this poll – 13% of workers were already doing this pre-pandemic). Thirty-nine per cent are done with the whole thing and want to be back in the office full-time and, same again, 39 per cent want to keep a blend of home and office working.

From my conversations with businesses, the future for the office may look a bit different – more of a blend of home and remote working, different types of working space to facilitate hot desking and collaboration spaces. A “day in the office” may not start at 9am and end at 5pm with congested journeys at either end for everyone. But the office remains at the heart of their plans.

I'm also heartened by reports from our hospitality members that booking enquiries are coming in thick and fast for as soon as they can reopen. I'm certainly looking forward to getting back to Colmore to visit longstanding favourites like Opus and Hotel du Vin. A cuppa in the kitchen (for the 8 millionth time) isn't quite the same as in BMAG's fabulous Edwardian Tea Room.

We know rebuilding our battered and bruised high-streets will not be easy. In the immediate term, it is critical that the Government continues to prioritise and enhance direct support for businesses most impacted by restrictions.

But this is also an opportunity to look at how we can shape our high-streets for the future, encouraging more “can't get elsewhere” experiences through creating conditions fit for independent businesses to flourish. To work to attract people through arts, cultural and food festivals and celebrations – something many Business Improvement Districts like Colmore are already leading great work in. And of

I'm looking forward to getting back to Colmore to visit favourites like Opus and Hotel du Vin



course – capitalising on the opportunities that the Commonwealth Games and festival 2022 will bring.

We're Birmingham. For all the challenges this city faces (and self deprecating quips we make), we're a melting pot of ambition, talent and youthful energy from the world over. If anyone can do this – we can.

Coming in to all of this as the new CEO of the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce – I'm excited. I've never been one to shy away from a challenge.

Over the coming months we want to prioritise four things:

1) *Continuing to support businesses through this unpredictable time (on both COVID-19 and Brexit) through timely, straightforward information and guidance, peer learning and showcasing and promoting our members reopening at every stage of the roadmap*

2) *Championing the needs of those furthest from unlocking and most in*

need of support through continued lobbying efforts and working closely with regional partners and stakeholders

3) *Looking to the future to create opportunities for business to engage with the key agendas of the day, and future - everything from environmental sustainability to the Commonwealth Games and HS2*

4) *Taking care of our people here at Team Chamber*

We're a not-for-profit, employing some 90 members of staff helping customers and members with everything from growing their profile and finding customers locally to trading internationally.

Our people are our business and they care passionately about helping local organisations achieve their aspirations. Like, no doubt, many of those reading this, getting the transition to a new post-pandemic normal right for the team is a top priority. We look forward to sharing this journey, and learning from the experiences of our members and networks as we finally begin emerge from this life-changing experience.

Business news

Growth Hub on hand to assist restart from lockdown

TEAM EXPANDS TO OFFER MORE HELP AND ADVICE TO COMPANIES LOOKING TO BOUNCE BACK

Businesses looking for advice to recover from the effects of lockdown or navigate the new trading relationship with the EU are encouraged to contact the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) Growth Hub.

The GBSLEP Growth Hub covers all of Birmingham and Solihull, as well as north Worcestershire and southern Staffordshire. The team has grown recently, and now includes 18 business support professionals. They have in-house specialists in funding and finance, manufacturing, tech, and the UK transition to name a few.

When you contact the hub for help, you'll be put in touch with the advisers who will best understand your individual sector and circumstances.

The Growth Hub is no longer only a place for growing businesses to seek support. Since the start of the pandemic, the team has been helping some of the hardest-hit SMEs in the region to pivot into new markets, access grants, and protect their workforce from redundancy.

The Growth Hub has helped a creative agency to receive grant

'The Growth Hub has helped a creative agency to receive grant funding to take their business in a new direction'



funding in order to take their business in a new direction since losing their hospitality clients due to lockdown.

"If you're looking to adapt your business, take your sales online or pivot into new markets, speak to a Growth Hub adviser," explained a spokesperson. "Whatever help your business needs – from help with writing bids or managing your company's marketing and sales to accessing grants or getting investment-ready, the Growth Hub is your one stop shop for advice. To grow your business, call 0800 032 3488 or visit the website, where you can also chat online."

CURRENT PROGRAMMES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Here are just a few examples of the kinds of support the Growth Hub can refer you to. Just tap on the event you're interested in to go to the website.

■ **Get a free digital health check to see how you're doing with digital adoption compared to other SMEs in your industry. Digital experts will also help you pinpoint areas of opportunity to improve your profitability.**

Free training sessions to begin a new career in digital sector

Nearly 1,500 people are benefiting from free training to start a new career in the digital sector.

The Government has made a further £2 million available to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to hold more of its popular digital bootcamps, which are flexible courses being delivered full or part time.

This builds on the £5 million retraining that the WMCA has already delivered over the past 18 months to equip more than 1,200 people with valuable digital skills.

The latest round of bootcamps is now underway, training nearly 300 local people in the skills local employers need to fill vacancies now and in the future, with further bootcamps due to start between now and June.

The bootcamps are a key part of the WMCA's plans to implement its Digital Roadmap, which sets out five missions to digitise the region, including becoming the UK's best digitally connected region and increasing access to digital opportunities by tackling digital exclusion.

West Midlands mayor Andy Street said: "Retraining and upskilling have such critical roles to play in our region's economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, and are a cornerstone of my jobs plan to help 100,000 people into work in the next two years.

"We know that training in the skills of the future that employers want and need is a crucial way to help people bounce back



into employment quickly, and technology is an area of huge employment possibilities that we must help people get the right skills in.

"The sector offers new, exciting, and future-proof jobs, and digital bootcamps are a great way of helping local people get involved.

"The extra £2 million we secured from the Government has enabled us to fund a new series of these bootcamps, which are already up and running. I would urge anyone who has fallen out of work or who is worried about their future employment, to see what training options are available through the WMCA."

The extra funding for digital bootcamps is part of a Government drive announced by Prime Minister Boris Johnson last autumn to boost the country's economic recovery by transforming the skills and training system.

To find out about more about starting a new career in digital, or improving your existing skills, [click here](#).

- **Be paired with a successful leader** for up to 12 months of one-to-one mentoring support with the Mentoring for Growth programme.
- **Contact the new GBSLEP Skills Hub for a free analysis** of your training needs, and ongoing support as you work towards developing a talented workforce.
- **Free regional events from the Growth Hub and partners** are listed here. The team can point you to the ones that will be helpful for you, and let you know what else is coming up.
- **Account management support.**

BOOST FOR CITY WITH DFT HQ NEWS

The Department for Transport (DfT) has announced the creation of a second headquarters in Birmingham and a northern hub in Leeds as part of plans to create 650 jobs in the cities. It is the latest step in the government's drive to move 22,000 Civil Service roles from London to communities across the UK by 2030.

Grant Shapps, transport secretary, said: "This is a historic move for the department and part of a significant wider culture change across Whitehall.

"Transport is absolutely vital to the local communities we serve and having hubs in major cities like Birmingham and Leeds will offer a fresh perspective on how we can better serve these areas."

The Birmingham headquarters will include new ministerial offices, with ministers expected to spend a significant amount of time there.

BIG PICTURE

Did you know that 103 Colmore Row will be the first commercial office development in the Business District to benefit from the city's District Energy Scheme?

The scheme is a pivotal part of Birmingham City Council's climate change strategy, which aims to cut CO2 emissions by 60 per cent by 2027.

As the first private office development to benefit, 103 Colmore Row will obtain all of its heating requirements from the system, negating the need for onsite fossil fuel burning boilers. It is a highly sustainable and cost-effective solution.

Picture: Ross Jukes

