

# An analysis of St. Stephen's shopping centre, Hull.

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St. Stephen's shopping centre in Hull opened in 2007 as a direct competitor to nearby Princess Quay, and has proved a massive success in the local area, creating over a thousand new jobs and winning several national awards. Central to its success has been well-executed architectural and interior design, which breaks from contemporary shopping outlet convention.

Princess Quay is a perfect example of the traditional American mall-style shopping centre layout. Spread across multiple floors, connected with elevators, escalators and walkways, the building is laid out to provide maximum retail opportunities on the floor space available. St. Stephen's breaks from this spectacularly, by creating an indoor version of the stylish, modern European high-street. Laid out in one long "street", the building gives the impression it is carved from glass, bathing the inside in natural sunlight during the day, and the night sky in the evening. Interestingly, the layout provides equal retail opportunity to any lot on the ground due to its street-like nature, which gives each letting similar desirability - a contrast to Princess Quay's multiple floored structure.

The selection of businesses using the St. Stephen's centre is important to its financial success. The aforementioned impression of a European high-street must be backed up with retail outlets that one might find there - at the forefront of the centre, big British and European brands advertise their wares. Next, Topshop and H&M are all immediately visible, and provide powerful pulling-power to attract the stereotypical shopper.

The inclusion of a 24-hour Tesco onto the site as a popular amenity is a masterstroke of marketing nous. Shoppers entering the complex to visit Tesco, for whatever reason, are led past all the retail outlets in an enclosed environment. Other amenities on the upper level in the food court provide a similar effect - including Starbucks, Subway and Nando's.



The adjacent Paragon Interchange (Hull's combined bus and rail link) provides a mass of foot traffic past and through the St. Stephen's complex - not just of visitors to Hull, but people waiting for public transport at the Interchange. Since traffic through the building is principal to its success, the nearby transport link is a fantastic source of this.

Overall, the effectiveness of the design decisions involved in the development of St. Stephen's, whether they were geographic, architectural or interior, can be judged by both the centre's success and the feeling of the individual shopper when visiting the outlet. Those involved wanted to portray a feeling of a modern European high-street, and have - I feel - achieved this quite successfully.

# Commentary and analysis

This piece was written primarily as an analysis of the St. Stephen's shopping centre, the design decisions involved, its contrasting nature to the nearby Princess Quay shopping centre, and the effectiveness of the project.

In writing this piece, I primarily used objective language, spliced with descriptive and congratulatory terms where appropriate. In justifying the effectiveness of the design decisions made, I used descriptive language to describe how the centre was "bathed in natural sunlight".

The piece was written on my personal experiences of the outlet, and some comparisons I had passively drawn between the St. Stephen's and Princess Quay shopping centres. I had a broad idea of my main points of discussion, and wrote spontaneously based on these.