

Revisiting the Shopping Mall

A research on how the Brewery in Romford can be revitalised for the contemporary needs of the 21st century.

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Figure 1: one of the three main shopping areas in Romford: the Brewery

Preface

I have always been very fascinated by the city and am always trying to understand the relationship between urbanism and architecture. Choosing the Architectural Design Crossovers Graduation studio gave me the opportunity to focus on a particular urban problem and pose possible answers through design on multiple scales. Throughout my research, I investigated infrastructure and fragmentation and ended up with a particular area within Romford town centre, UK. This area is currently occupied by a shopping centre which is called the Brewery. From this point on, I decided to focus my research paper on shopping centres.

Shopping centres and malls intrigue me in a certain way. I find this peculiar

typology appealing because of its short yet hectic history, its zeitgeist and its predominant factor on urban landscapes all across the world.

With this research paper I tend to find out why shopping malls were born, how they changed over time and how they can actually be reinvented for contemporary needs. The research I conducted was based on extensive literature, analytical mapping, case studies and feedback moments with J. van Lierop. Through these methods I was able to answer the research questions. In this way I would like to thank J. van Lierop for his guidance and support during the research.

I hope you enjoy your reading,

Quinten Smits
Delft, 5th of May 2023.

keywords

Shopping Mall, Shopping Centre, Modernism, Revalorisation, Transformation, Urban Renewal, Victor Gruen.

Introduction

Although shopping malls are a relatively new typology, the purchase of food, clothing and goods are as old as cities. Marketplaces and bazaars were not only visited to acquire these above-mentioned items, but it was also a place for people to meet each other or to simply have a look at what was offered. When people go for shopping, they are looking for both social interaction and entertainment.

Shopping has seen a tremendous turn since the 20th century. Starting around the 1920's, the United States' mass production of cars radically changed cities and led to explosive suburbanisation. The aggressive growth of suburbs as well as the depopulation of downtown areas laid the foundation for the shopping mall in the 1950's since the basic needs of people moved with them. Soon Europe had met the shopping mall and it did not take long after that for the entire world to have met this new phenomenon. This trend continues up until today and particularly in Arab, African, Asian and South American countries. Only seventy years after its birth, the shopping mall has taken over the entire world and is not planning to leave anytime soon.

Despite the growing amount of new shopping variations, a number of older shopping malls in the United States and Europe are struggling to stay afloat or are even vacant. Moreover, these so called 'dead malls' are having a hard time to fit in and furthermore contribute to a better urban environment.

The Brewery in Romford is an excellent example of this. Nowadays the United Kingdom has more than 750 shopping centres all across the country where most of them are

located within town centres.¹ With its enormous parking lot, unfortunate mix use and lack of integration with the rest of the town centre the Brewery takes up a significant amount within the towns centre and can be classified as a typical modernistic scar.

With new urban paradigms, obsolete shopping areas such as the Brewery in Romford offer a unique opportunity to be redeveloped and revitalized into contemporary mixed-use environments. Looking back, what can we learn from the shopping mall?

Within the graduation project in Romford as part of the Architectural Design Crossovers studio, a general research into the shopping mall as a heritage of the 20th century and a specific research into the Brewery in Romford would be highly fruitful. In order to guide this paper a research question has been formulated: How can the Brewery in Romford be revitalised for the contemporary needs of the 21st century?

To help answer this primary question, four sub questions have been formulated. These questions are: Why was the shopping mall invented? How did the shopping mall evolve throughout the last 100 years? What spatial problems does the Brewery nowadays face? How are similar shopping malls being revitalised?

The first part of this research paper investigates the origins and the development of the shopping mall in general. Then, it zooms into one particular shopping centre, the Brewery in Romford, UK and discusses its three main spatial problems. Finally, the paper addresses one urban transformation concept and afterwards discusses two precedents

1. George Hammond and Chris Cook, "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of the Shopping Centre," *Financial Times* (*Financial Times*, May 16, 2022), <https://www.ft.com/content/1f024fd8-ade5-4468-9cb0-0a73d2a66364>.

where obsolete shopping malls have been revitalised into mixed-use areas.

The first two sub questions about shopping malls in general will be answered through literature research.

The next sub question about the Brewery in Romford will be clarified by mapping specific elements of the shopping centre. The last sub question will be analysed through both literature research and precedents.

1. The invention of the shopping mall

To understand the shopping mall of today it is important to trace its origins and to find out why the typology of the shopping mall was created.

1.1 Prologue

It is essential to see that typologies such as shopping arcades, department stores and eventually shopping malls arose from a growing societal demand. Markets or Bazaars are possibly as old as cities. These typologies arose where people would come and trade their goods with others. These trades however consisted of basic necessities. Shopping for pleasure though can be closely linked to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century in Europe. The emerging middle class or bourgeoisie increased the demand for luxurious goods. Through time, shopping for pleasure became accessible for more and more people since living standards improved which resulted in more spare time and money to spend. Nowadays we cannot imagine a world without shopping for pleasure. It has become a part of us.

1.2 The shopping arcade

The shopping arcade was not only the first architectural intervention for shopping, it eventually also functioned as a transitional phenomenon. It was a fairly simple structure: a roof above a narrow street with shops to protect people from the rain and sun. A first attempt to manipulate the environment while shopping. Invented in Paris, the shopping arcade developed over time from a more typical market street to a peculiar place for the bourgeoisie to find all the luxurious products which fitted in their exclusive lifestyle.² The shopping arcade soon started to appear worldwide. Famous shopping arcades which can be found up until today are the Galerie Vivienne in Paris (1826), the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele

II in Milan (1861) and The Arcade in Cleveland (1890).

1.3 The department store

Although shopping arcades were beautifully decorated from the inside, they barely made an impression within the cityscape. In the department store, the reflection of consumption was also extended to the exterior of the building. The first department stores, grands magasins were constructed in Paris around 1850 and it did not take long before this new typology was found all over the world. The big difference with its predecessor, the shopping arcade, was that now for the first time a building was to be designed completely in favour of the shopping experience. Big display windows, restaurants, grandiose atria to interact, multiple levels of stores to linger around and an intriguing architecture to entice people in became the standard for this new type of building.³ Some examples of department store buildings which still exist are the Bon Marché in Paris (1850), A.T. Stewart in New York (1851) and Harrods in London (1880).

1.4 The strip mall

All of the above-mentioned typologies had one aspect in common; they were all situated within city centres. Around the 1920s, a new form of urbanism in the United States was emerging. Since American centres often were chaotic, congested, dirty and dangerous, coming with a car towards these shopping areas was a real hassle. Modernism had found the solution to this problem by separating industry with commerce and residential life. When suburban areas were built all over the United States, American households with consumer needs were in the need of amenities. Architects and urban designers tried to respond

2. Dietrich Erben, "Conspicuous Architecture: The Shopping Arcade, the Department Store, and Costumer Culture," in *World of Malls* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2016), pp. 25-29.

3. Dietrich Erben, "Conspicuous Architecture: The Shopping Arcade, the Department Store, and Costumer Culture," in *World of Malls* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2016), pp. 29-33.



Figure 2: Galerie Vivienne, Paris

to this growing question by inventing the suburban shopping typology. The suburban shopping typology was not only a result of fragmentation but also tried to act on the new customer dreams that media together with advertisements spread. The first solution to this was the suburban strip mall. This strip was no more than a line of stores located next to one of the main arteries of growing cities which usually consisted out of groceries, pharmacies, service and hardware stores with a common parking lot. Up until today, you will find endless variants of strip malls all across the world, but they are primarily common in the United States.

1.5 The shopping centre

Soon these strip malls had to deal with the same car related issues which could be found in the city centres. And although these strips were convenient, big parking lots in front of stores were not the ultimate shopping experience. In order to create a real shopping sensation, the shopping centre was created.

One of the first regional shopping centres was Shopper's World in Framingham (1951) and the name perfectly reveals the intention of the fifties. With this new archetype cars would be eliminated from the shopper's environment and were parked outside or on top of the shopping centre so they would not interfere with shopping. Green and benches would now also be integrated within the public spaces between the buildings. Because of suburban developments, there was space enough for designing such big complexes and with the incomes of households moving to those areas being well above American average, the new inhabitants of suburban

areas had money to spend. From this point on, people would actually go to shopping centres to not only buy but also to look and spend the day simply enjoying themselves.

1.6 The shopping mall

By building shopping centres and experimenting with them, architects started to find out more about this new building type. One of the pioneers to design the early shopping mall was Viennese architect Victor Gruen. After fleeing the Second World War in 1939, he wanted to translate the European city centre to the American suburb. Gruen designed the first heated and air-conditioned shopping centre named Northland Center in Detroit (1954) which consisted of eighty shops, a theatre, a post office and an auditorium.⁴ He furthermore wrote the 1960 *Shopping towns USA: The Planning of Shopping Centres* where he shared his experiences with the world. He wrote that air conditioning was the key to larger shopping buildings, because doors and windows were no longer needed for ventilation. These buildings were furthermore cheaper to construct and heat.⁵

With these insights and the extreme temperature fluctuations of Minnesota, the first entirely roofed and air-conditioned shopping centre (from now on called shopping mall) was designed by Gruen in 1956: Southdale Center in Edina and is up and running up until today. For Gruen it was much more than a shopping mall. With combining shopping with social functions just as he did with Northland Center, he thought of the Southdale Center as a new catalyst for the communal life which was lacking in American suburbs. It essentially was an action against urban sprawl.⁶

4. *The Gruen Effect, Thought Maybe*, 2009, <https://thoughtmaybe.com/the-gruen-effect/>.

5. James J. Farrell, "Inventing Malls," in *One Nation under Goods: Malls and the Seductions of American Shopping* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2010), pp. 3-9.

6. Irene Meissner, "Southdale Center," in *World of Malls* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2016), pp. 43-44.



Figure 3: Southdale Center, Edina

2. The evolution of the shopping mall

After finding out more about the intentions of the shopping mall it is important to look at its evolution over the last hundred years. Did the premise of the shopping mall withstand and what changed during this period?

2.1 Unexpected results

The suburban shopping centre was an immediate success and Victor Gruen got commissions all over America. Americans really enjoyed driving their cars towards these new town centres within suburban America but Gruen underestimated the forces of consumption. With this enormous success, merchandisers saw the opportunity to redevelop the social spaces of these suburban shopping centres into more retail spaces to maximise profits. This critical change in strategy made the shopping 'town' into the shopping mall and this idea quickly spread all across America. In doing so, life was drained out of the city centres to these suburban shopping malls. This unforeseen effect was never Gruen's intention.

From this point on, Gruen focussed on renewal projects within city centres to reverse this trend. He redistributed his suburban concept to the centre of the city with Midtown Plaza (1962) as his first attempt. His intentions with Midtown Plaza were to create a pedestrian-friendly indoor square within Rochester's harsh, car-orientated environment. Midtown Plaza consisted of shops, an auditorium, a sidewalk café, benches, art, some fountains and an office tower with a hotel and restaurant on top. For twenty years, it was both economically and socially vibrant but in the end it simply could not win from the depopulation of the city towards the suburbs and its countless

new shopping malls.

In the late 1960s, Gruen returned to Vienna and was confronted by the unexpected results of his very own work. Where Gruen used the city centre of Vienna as inspiration for the to be created suburban American centre, he now saw these shopping machines pop up at the edges of Vienna attacking his own ideal of urban life. His original shopping centre was designed as a social catalyst for the suburbs of America, but was never intended to reach European city centres.⁷

2.2 A turning point

From the 1960s up until the 1990s, the shopping malls were the place to be. Since many of the buildings back then did not have air conditioning, it was really a place where people could escape from the heat or cold. Since the eighties, some of the more popular shopping malls have been able to keep growing, but most of the smaller ones have struggled or have already been shut down. More and more shoppers started to see that the mall had become too big and took too much of their time. Online shopping would eventually also play a big role in this. It seems that erasing social functions from the mall started to catch up on her.

One significant response to these developments was for new shopping centres to mimic traditional downtown areas. The traditional shopping centre was turned inside out: streets full of shops with sometimes housing on top and some parking right in front of the shops made shopping appeal more accessible again.⁸

7. *The Gruen Effect, Thought Maybe*, 2009, <https://thoughtmaybe.com/the-gruen-effect/>.

8. Robert Bruegmann, "Shopping Reshapes the Metropolis," in *World of Malls (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2016)*, pp. 91-97.



Figure 4: Mall of the Emirates, Dubai

9. Andres Lepik, "World of Malls," in *World of Malls* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2016), pp. 6-7.

10. Bikini Berlin, "Bikini Berlin," About / bikini berlin - the concept shopping mall, accessed January 3, 2023, <https://www.bikiniberlin.de/en/about/>.

11. Greg Petro, "Shopping Malls Aren't Dying - They're Evolving," *Forbes* (Forbes Magazine, April 5, 2019), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gregpetro/2019/04/05/shopping-malls-arent-dying-theyre-evolving/>.

2.3 The show must go on

Although there is a significant amount of dead shopping malls, the typology of the shopping mall has not yet disappeared. In Dubai for example, the famous Mall of the Emirates combines a 22.500 square meter Ski resort with over 630 retail stores and more that hundred restaurants. Another example is the Bikinihaus in Berlin which is the first concept shopping mall worldwide.⁹ The mall is home to a number of intentionally

curated boutiques and eateries. Next to that there are several modular pop-up boxes which can be rented for a limited amount of time. By carefully mixing well-known brands with pop-up stores, the mall creates opportunities for young designers to present their products or work to a substantial number of visitors.¹⁰

"The shopping mall is not dying, but just evolving."¹¹

3. The Brewery: an obsolete prophecy

The previous two chapters provided insight into the invention and the evolution of the shopping mall. This chapter will look into the Brewery which is a shopping area in Romford, UK. First, a general introduction to the shopping area will be given. Afterwards key spatial problems with this area will be summed up.

3.1 A brief introduction

The Brewery is a shopping area in Romford which is one of the metropolitan centres identified in the London plan. Romford's town centre has two main functions: on the one hand it is an important retail destination in the east of Outer-London. On the other hand it is a local centre for its direct hinterland. Romford is exceptionally well connected to public transport which makes it a popular commuter town. Next to its connectivity, it is the leading retail and leisure area of the London borough of Havering.¹²

The Brewery was built in 2001 on the site of the former Star Brewery which had been around since 1708. The only remaining parts of this legacy are its chimney and some buildings facing the high street of Romford which now function as the museum of Havering. Together with The Liberty and The Mercury it forms the shopping heart of Romford.

The shopping area of the Brewery consists of two earlier discussed shopping archetypes which are a strip mall and a shopping mall.

3.2 Car-orientated landscape

Car-mobility was one of the main factors while designing the Brewery. Parking takes up for almost 40% of the site and the Brewery has 1742 parking spots in total from which 616

are directly in front of the strip mall. Lastly the Brewery offers free parking on Sundays and also free when you visit Sainsbury's. Main reasons to provide free parking is to make it an attractive destination for people. Although the parking lot in front of the strip mall is most of the days quite occupied, the remaining parking deck on top of the strip mall remains abandoned.

The strip mall of the Brewery does not have a pleasant public space since most of amenities face the excessive parking lot. The public space of the Brewery is basically dominated by the car, something which Gruen ironically tried to solve in America by creating the first shopping centres. Many others have discussed cars and their influence on pedestrians. Following David Appleyard and Anne Vernez, parked cars have a bad influence on street life since they dominate the open spaces as seen in figure 5, leaving little and not inviting spaces left for the people.¹³

3.3 Unfortunate mix-use

The Brewery includes 37 amenities: 9 retail stores, 17 fast-food restaurants, 2 health clubs, a supermarket, a bank, a charity office, a petrol station, a 16-screen cinema, a bowling centre and an indoor play centre for kids. The remaining two spaces are currently vacant. Looking into its offer, the Brewery has incorporated several retail, leisure and services. Sadly, almost all amenities are clustered together dividing the shopping area in small fragments and together with those two chosen typologies fail to create a diverse shopping experience. For example, the Vue cinema, Namco Funscape (bowling and arcade games) and Kidspace are all located on the first floor of the inward-

12. Borough of Havering, *BBP Regeneration, and Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design*, "Romford Town Centre Development Framework," Havering, June 2015, <https://democracy.havering.gov.uk/documents/s15499/Item%201b%20-%20RDF%20Brochure%20-%20not%20on%20agenda.pdf>.

13. Anne Vernez Moudon and Donald Appleyard, *Public Streets for Public Use* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1987).



Figure 5: The Brewery in Romford

orientated shopping mall which results in a dead mall for most of the day as shown in figure 9.

Even though the Brewery incorporated both social and commercial functions, it misses the point of Gruen to create a vibrant place for people to meet and spend the day. Maybe this was never the intention of the Brewery at all, but walking around in its shopping area feels like a missed opportunity.

3.4 What happens at the back?

Another typical spatial issue that comes with these shopping typologies is their service area which usually is located at the back of the strip- or shopping mall. The idea behind this principle was to separate

the pedestrian from logistic activities and CIAM members including Gruen and Le Corbusier stressed this 'humanisation of the city' already in 1951.¹⁴ By doing so, goods can be delivered during daytime while not interfering with the shoppers. Although this spatial configuration creates a good shopper's environment, it generates a new problem at the back. The so called service or back area of the shopping area most of the time is seen as dead leftover space and really tears up city centres apart, especially in places such as Romford where pedestrians are directly confronted with this service area while moving from the Brewery to the city centre and vice versa.

14. Leonardo Zuccaro Marchi, "Victor Gruen: the Environmental Heart," *The Journal of Public Space*, 2017, <https://www.journalpublicspace.org/index.php/jps/article/view/258/257>.



Figure 6: site



Figure 7: parking space of the Brewery



Figure 8: parking lot in front of the Brewery



Figure 9: first floor of the Brewery



Figure 10: ground floor functions of the Brewery

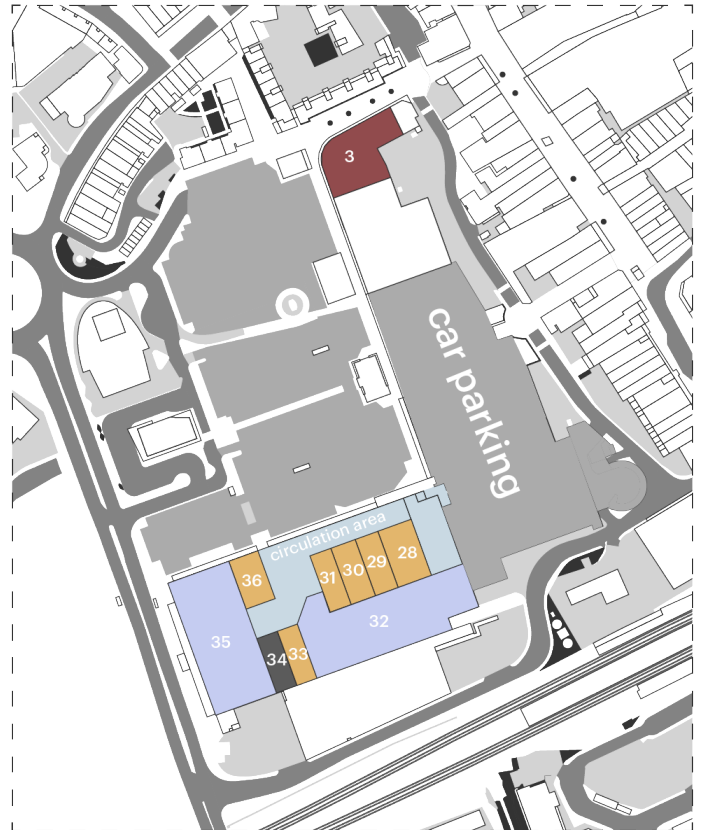


Figure 11: first floor functions of the Brewery

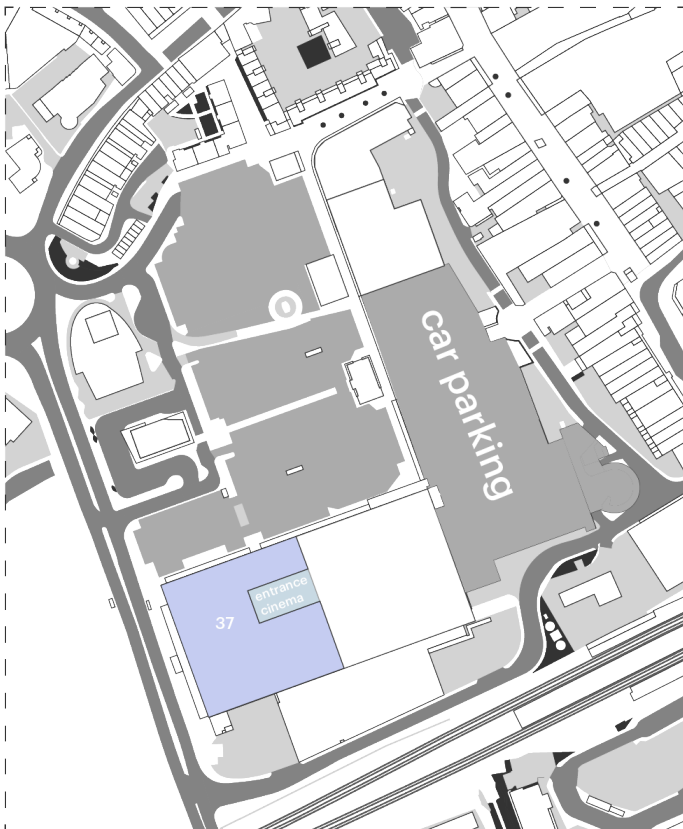


Figure 12: second floor functions of the Brewery

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Dulce Romford</i> | 20. <i>Smyths Toys</i> |
| 2. <i>The Entertainer</i> | 21. <i>Nuffield Health</i> |
| 3. <i>TK Maxx & Homesense</i> | 22. <i>Cosmo All You Can Eat</i> |
| 4. <i>Costa Coffee</i> | 23. <i>Toby Carvery</i> |
| 5. <i>Wagamama</i> | 24. <i>Sainsbury's</i> |
| 6. <i>Five Guys</i> | 25. <i>The Range & Iceland</i> |
| 7. <i>Fridays</i> | 26. <i>Ahava Community</i> |
| 8. <i>Pure Gym</i> | 27. <i>Sainsbury's Petrol</i> |
| 9. <i>Hobby Craft</i> | 28. <i>Pizza Express</i> |
| 10. <i>Patisserie Valerie</i> | 29. <i>Frankie & Benny's</i> |
| 11. <i>Taco Bell</i> | 30. <i>Nando's</i> |
| 12. <i>Hays Travel</i> | 31. <i>McDonald's</i> |
| 13. <i>Poundland</i> | 32. <i>Namco Funscape</i> |
| 14. <i>Vacant</i> | 33. <i>Kaspa's</i> |
| 15. <i>Starbucks</i> | 34. <i>Vacant</i> |
| 16. <i>Metro Bank</i> | 35. <i>Kidspace</i> |
| 17. <i>Boots</i> | 36. <i>Zizzi</i> |
| 18. <i>Turtle Bay</i> | 37. <i>Vue Cinema's</i> |
| 19. <i>VFM</i> | |

- | | |
|---|--|
| vacant | circulation space |
| food/drinks | supermarket |
| service | health |
| retail | leisure |



Figure 13: service area behind the Brewery



Figure 14: service area behind the Brewery

4. The revitalisation of the shopping mall

Throughout this paper it becomes evident that the mall either needs to adapt or die. Now that the invention of the shopping mall has been investigated and the spatial problems of the Brewery have been addressed, it is interesting to zoom into one of the contemporary urban transformation concepts to get a grip on how shopping areas like the Brewery can be revitalised. After discussing this urban tendency, two reference projects will be analysed and will serve as a source of inspiration for the redesign of the Brewery.

4.1 '15-minute city' concept

The 15-minute city concept is a relatively new urban planning model and was introduced by French Colombian urbanist Carlos Moreno in 2016. Although it did not immediately hit, it gained enormous attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. This new urbanist approach to the city highlights the importance of redistributing public services such as leisure, housing, business and retail across the city all within a 15-minute radius by bicycle or foot which would result in healthy, unexpected human interactions to achieve higher quality of life.

In short, the 15-minute city idea consists of four main elements:

proximity, density, diversity and digitalisation. Proximity indicates to services and facilities being close. Density refers to the compact city model where people can provide by their own resources. Diversity suggests on the one hand a mixed-use built environment where housing, commerce and leisure come together. On the other hand it aims for a social mix of users. Lastly, digitalisation monitors the three elements and makes it possible to smartly adjust and adapt the urban environment to the needs of users.¹⁵

For both the Brewery and Romford in general, this concept could inspire to critically look at its current program and see what elements of the 15-minute city concept could be implemented to combat the monofunctional zoning and to create a much healthier, mixed centre for people to spontaneously meet again. As seen in this paper, shopping was once meant to reunite people and act as a social catalyst within suburban areas. Backed up by the 15-minute city concept, it could mean that obsolete shopping malls would need to look back to its roots and find ways to accommodate a variety of functions and services once more.

15. Zaheer Allam et al., "The Theoretical, Practical, and Technological Foundations of the 15-Minute City Model: Proximity and Its Environmental, Social and Economic Benefits for Sustainability," MDPI (Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, August 20, 2022), <https://www.mdpi.com/1996-1073/15/16/6042>.

THE 15-MINUTE PARIS

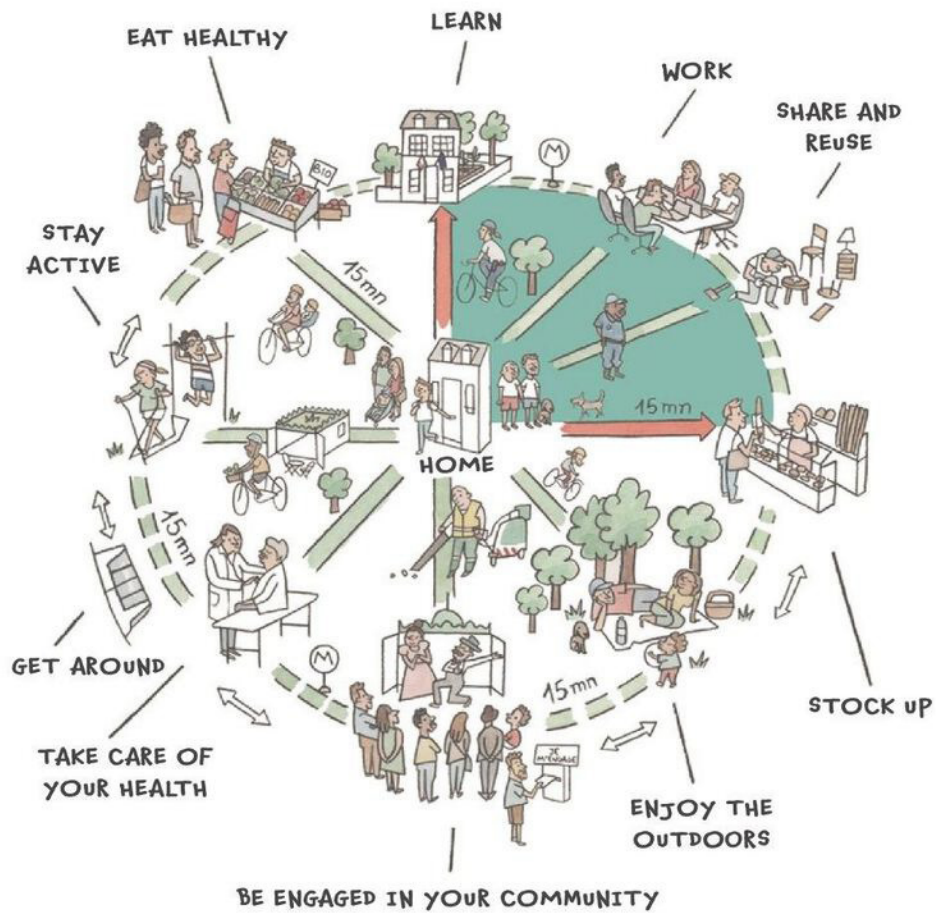


Figure 15: the 15-minute city diagram

4.2 Precedents of refurbished shopping malls

Since dead malls are not a new occurrence, it is helpful to look at other shopping malls who are planning to transform or have already been redeveloped into mixed use areas.

4.2.1 Belmar, United States

Belmar is located in Lakewood, Colorado and is one of the first redevelopment projects turning a former shopping mall into a mixed-use downtown area. Belmar replaced the Villa Italia Mall in 2004 which had been built in 1967 and was a highly successful cultural and economic centre. By the 1990s Villa Italia had to compete against several, newer shopping malls which eventually resulted in demolishing most of its buildings in 2001.

The city of Lakewood decided to find parties who were willing to transform Villa Italia into a real downtown. Instead of one monolithic shopping

box, Belmar was transformed into 22 walkable city blocks with over 50 new buildings embedded in a new network of streets, parks, sidewalks and eight bus lines.¹⁶ Nowadays Belmar is anchored by a 16-screen cinema, two supermarkets and a bowling alley and consists of almost 80 stores, 20 restaurants, 26.000 m2 of office space, 2000 new homes, urban parks and plazas, a hotel and artist studios.¹⁷

It is interesting to see that the redevelopment of the Villa Italia mall did not solely focus on refurbishing the mall itself, but rather looked to transform the area as a whole. The visionary ideas of a city centre for the 21st century has worked out by creating a mixed-use area to bring back life into the once so popular Villa Italia Mall. The car has mostly disappeared from the streetscapes and new buildings and their program have adapted to the pedestrian which together enhance life between buildings.

16. *Retrofitting Suburbia, Retrofitting Suburbia | TED Talk, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.ted.com/talks/ellen_dunham_jones_retrofitting_suburbia.*

17. *Continuum Partners, "Belmar History," Continuum Partners - Commercial Real Estate Developers, March 14, 2018, <https://continuumpartners.com/project-page/belmar-history/>.*



Figure 16: A figure ground map of the redevelopment of Villa Italia into Belmar (1975, 1995, 2015)

Figure 17: Villa Italia, Lakewood in the seventies



Figure 18: Interior view of Villa Italia, Lakewood



Figure 19: Belmar, Lakewood



4.2.2 Mizner Park, United States

Boca Mall, Boca Raton in Florida was a conventional shopping centre surrounded by parking lots. Boca Mall opened its doors in 1974 and throughout roughly fifteen years it was anchored by different stores and offices. The Boca Mall shut its doors already in 1989 and was demolished to make way for Mizner Park, a mixed use 'village within a city'.

The main concept for Mizner Park is the linear green space which is surrounded by three to five story high buildings. At Mizner Park offices, shops, apartments, a cinema, a bowling alley, a 1800-seat concert hall and a museum can be found which together with four big parking garages close off the green space. An amphitheatre is located at the northern end of Mizner Park where several public events are being held throughout the year.¹⁸

Up until today Mizner Park functions as a true downtown area. Just as with Belmar, the refurbishment of Boca Mall brought public life back to an obsolete shopping destination by creating a mixed-use area with a linear park at its centre. From 1990 up to 2002, the properties around Mizner Park saw a 14-fold increase in value and the project has inspired other cities to critically look at their decaying shopping centres.¹⁹

Although the discussed precedents are not very new, they show connections to the 15-minute city model as explained above. Both Belmar and Mizner Park have created a mixed-use area all within walking distance where people will meet (un) intentionally.

18. June Williamson and Ellen Dunham-Jones, "Mizner Park," *Retrofitting Suburbia*, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://retrofitting suburbia.com/>.

19. Cooper Carry, "Mizner Park," Cooper Carry, January 20, 2023, <https://www.coopercarry.com/projects/mizner-park/>.



Figure 20: A figure ground map of the redevelopment of Boca Mall into Mizner Park (1980 and today)

Figure 21: The Boca Mall, Florida in the eighty's



Figure 22: Interior view of the Boca Mall, Florida



Figure 23: Mizner Park, Florida



5. Conclusion

The research question *How can the Brewery in Romford be revitalised for the contemporary needs of the 21st century?* can be answered via the discussed sub questions. Firstly, it is essential to understand why the typology of the shopping mall was created in the first place. Throughout research it has been evident that the shopping mall grew out of an increasing demand for shopping as a leisure activity. Its origins can be found in Europe and were always within existing cities in different forms. Shopping facilities within the United States often came with problems related to safety and traffic and with modernism as the new urban paradigm the first shopping strips along infrastructural arteries were designed. Cars were however still a problem with this new typology and this is how architects came up with the shopping centre; an ideologic space without any interference of cars. From this point on, the shopping mall arose which was a further development of the shopping centre, creating an indoor, climatized space which creates a perfect climate for shoppers all year round. The father of the shopping mall, Victor Gruen saw the shopping mall as more than a machine for capitalism. He wanted to create catalysts for American suburbs with both commercial and social spaces where people could actually meet and spend time together. It was in a way his reaction to urban sprawl.

Subsequently the paper investigated the mall's evolution throughout the last 100 years. What started out as a promise eventually turned against Victor Gruen himself. The shopping mall was an enormous success and social spaces within the mall started to disappear to maximise profits. Next to that, the success of the shopping mall

started to drain the life out of the cities towards the suburbs. It did not take long before the shopping mall started to pop up everywhere around the world. Victor Gruen wanted to create a centre for suburbs in America but never wanted to attack European city centres which inspired him in the first place. Getting rid of social functions within shopping malls eventually took its toll on her popularity and with e-commerce being more popular than ever, traditional shopping malls are dying. Fortunately, some shopping malls are adapting to contemporary tendencies, building on its potential.

After looking into the invention and the evolution of shopping malls, the paper zoomed into the Brewery which is a shopping centre in Romford, UK. Although this shopping centre is barely twenty years old, it faces three spatial problems: the Brewery is being dominated by a car-orientated landscape, there is an unfortunate mix of functions and the surrounding areas must deal with its exposed backs which serve as service areas.

Finally, the research explores the "15-minute city" urban transformation concept, which consists of proximity, density, diversity, and digitalization. Two case studies, Belmar and Mizner Park, have been analysed to understand more about former shopping malls that have already been transformed into mixed-use areas. Since their refurbishment, these locations have seen an increase in popularity and property value, with cars giving way to pedestrians and social functions returning, as Victor Gruen initially intended.

6. Discussion

This study investigates how the Brewery in Romford, UK can be revitalised for the contemporary needs of the 21st century. To answer this question both relevant literature and case studies have been analysed. The outcomes of first two sub questions of this research paper are predominantly based on American literature, which has influenced the direction of this paper. However, given that the substation portion of the evolution of shopping malls had taken place in the United States, there is a justifiable reason for using it.

The third sub question was addressed by analysing the spatial challenges of the Brewery, using analytical drawings and pictures captured on-site. These drawings provide a clear understanding of the spatial issues which the Brewery is facing. The drawing on different functions of the Brewery was however based on both Google Maps and information found obtained from the Brewery's website, which could be outdated. Nonetheless, this drawing can be used as significant changes are not highly predictable.

The first part of the final sub question has been answered through

literature research. Due to the limited length of this paper, one of multiple strategies for urban renewal have been discussed. The choice of the '15-minute city' model is based on its recently gained traction, particularly because of the COVID-19 pandemic which highlights the importance of having access to essential services close to home.

The latter part of the final sub question focussed on analysing two precedents. Since both precedents are located in the United States, these transformations could differ from cases within the United Kingdom. Also, these former shopping malls have been transformed between 1990 and 2015 which could mean that their approaches and outcomes may have evolved since that time.

The outcomes of this paper have had a strong influence on the masterplan designed for Romford's city centre. Because of its findings, the masterplan refurbishes the Brewery into a mixed-use area focussing on soft-mobility and multifunctionality, supported by a green-blue spine designed to reconnect Romford with the Green Belt.

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