LEISURE MANAGEMENT ARTICLE

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Retail Parks are continually adapting to our ever changing lifestyle and spending patterns. The last few years have seen gradual variations from retail warehouse park developments typically comprising DIY, electrical and furnishing warehouses and the introduction of new types of "park" developments.

The creation of DIY and Electrical superstores for large space users such as B & Q, Comet and Currys, often in stand-alone sites, combined with mergers including Homebase / Texas and Focus Do It All, has led to a burgeoning market in their former retail warehouse units. Reacting to market forces, these vacant units are often re-let to non-traditional retail park tenants such as Boots or sub-divided, creating opportunities for new categories of retailer to take smaller units. Retailers moving in to Retail Parks over the last 18 months include Au Naturale, Borders, Harry Corry Textiles, Holiday Hypermarket, Mamas & Papas, Mecca Bingo and The Carphone Warehouse. However, whilst clothing and sports goods chains like JD Sports, JJB Sports and Matalan continue to open large numbers of stores, the vast majority of tenants on Retail Parks are still traditional DIY, Electrical and Furniture & Carpet stores.

A growing number of Retail Warehouse Parks, having become weekend destination shopping centres for families, now include one or more stand-alone fast food outlets, such as McDonalds, Pizza Hut or Burger King. Many of these are built as additions to the original development, while others formed part of the original proposals. Other leisure occupiers have also moved in to Retail Parks. Out of a total of 563 "retail parks" currently trading, 20 now feature a cinema, 15 include bowling alleys and 10 have health and fitness centres. As other occupiers also include bingo halls, hotels, restaurants and public houses, these changes have led us to define a new type of retail development in the report **Shopping meets Leisure 2000**. We have classified 24 of these developments as *Retail and Leisure Parks*, 515 as *Retail Parks* and 24 as *Shopping Parks*. These differ from the 63 *Leisure Parks* we separately identified, where virtually every development is anchored by a multiplex cinema and the majority, or all, of the tenants are leisure occupiers.

Anthony Walker debated the classification of different types of leisure developments in the October 1999 issue of Leisure Management. **Shopping meets Leisure 2000** differentiates between *Leisure Parks* and 44 other *Leisure Schemes* but encountered similar difficulties in classifying some schemes. The same questions can now be asked of predominantly retail "park" developments as described above. The sixth classification our research identified is the emergence of 7 combined *Shopping & Leisure Centres*, such as the O2 Centre in Finchley Road, London, The Arcadian in Birmingham and the Bargate Centre in Southampton.

Retail and Leisure Parks

Location	Retail and Leisure Park	Size (Sq. Ft.)
Bolton – Horwich	Middlebrook Retail & Leisure Park	700,000
Ellesmere Port	The Coliseum at Cheshire Oaks	322,000
Wigan	Robin Park	310,000
Swindon	Greenbridge Retail & Leisure Park	300,500
Derby	The Meteor Centre	287,500
Glasgow - Drumchapel	Great Western Retail & Leisure Park	285,000
Sheffield	Drakehouse Retail & Leisure Park	214,000
Swansea	Parc Tawe Retail Park - Phase 1	212,000
Poole	Tower Park	210,000
Wakefield	Westgate Retail and Leisure Park	208,000
Newport (Wales)	Newport Retail Park	203,689
Norwich	Norwich Riverside	200,000
Falkirk	Central Retail Park	159,000
Eastbourne	Sovereign Harbour Retail Park	127,163
Liverpool	Edge Lane Retail Park	120,000
Redditch	The Quadrant	120,000
Bristol	Avon Meads Retail Park	117,000
London - Dalston	interchange	111,000
Barrow-in-Furness	Hollywood Park	110,000
Preston - Walton-le-Dale	Capitol Centre	109,000
Inverness	Inshes Retail & Leisure Park	95,000
Kilmarnock	Queens Drive Retail & Leisure Park	73,000
London - Catford	Catford Island	66,000
Liverpool - Aintree	Grand National Retail & Leisure Park	45,000

Source: **Shopping meets Leisure 2000** (TW Research Associates / Lunson Mitchenall)

The table above shows the 24 *Retail and Leisure Parks* currently trading, while a further 12 schemes, such as *Ocean Park* in Southport, are under construction or in the process of development. Some existing schemes were purpose-built, whilst others have evolved over time through additional phases. Most schemes are also adjacent to other retail or leisure developments. Many *Retail and Leisure Parks* have a fairly even split between retail and leisure occupiers and developers of several other schemes are planning to build extensions incorporating cinemas and other leisure facilities which may increase the number of hybrid schemes still further.

One of the latest purpose-built *Retail and Leisure Parks* is *The Coliseum at Cheshire Oaks* between Ellesmere Port and Chester, where the leisure elements opened in December 1999 and the retail units opened last month (see box feature). There are few traditional retail park tenants, with newcomers including Boots, Borders, Dixons, Game and Holiday Hypermarket with a wide variety of restaurants and public houses together with a 15 screen Warner Village Cinema.

The largest *Retail and Leisure Park*, at 700,000 sq. ft., is *Middlebrook Retail & Leisure Park* in Bolton, which has more than 30 units including traditional retail park tenants Comet, Currys, Great Mills, Homestyle by Fads and several furniture stores. Less traditional tenants on the scheme, which was developed in phases by Orbit Developments, include Allders at Home, Boots, Holiday Hypermarket, Hollywood Bowl, Mill House Inns and a 12 screen Warner Village Cinema.

The smallest *Retail and Leisure Park*, at 45,000 sq. ft., is being developed by CTP Taylor Woodrow. *Grand National Retail & Leisure Park* in Aintree, Liverpool, currently has 4 units with consent for a further 25,000 sq. ft. of non-food retail. Tenants are KFC, Big Steak Pub / Wacky Warehouse, Fitness First and Wayfarer Lodge.

From our research it seems likely that the number of *Retail and Leisure Parks* and *Leisure Parks* are set to increase at a higher rate than the number of *Retail Parks* over the next few years. At the end of last year only 62% of “park” schemes under construction or in development were traditional *Retail Parks* compared to 82% of existing “park” schemes. The number of converted *Retail Parks* will also increase due to the factors outlined above and perennial problems in obtaining permission for new schemes are likely to lead to more hybrid schemes being developed to satisfy local needs.

> **Notes**:
> A *Retail Park* is defined as a purpose-built development with at least three units covering 30,000 sq. ft or more of lettable floorspace, solely comprised of retail warehouse units. They have a minority of units occupied by traditional high street comparison goods retailers and usually, but not always, dedicated surface car parking.
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> A *Retail and Leisure Park* is defined as a purpose-built development with at least three retail warehouse units covering 30,000 sq. ft or more of lettable floorspace, with a considerable proportion of leisure occupiers and, usually but not always, dedicated surface car parking.

Trevor Wood is a Retail Analyst with TW Research Associates and edits **Going Shopping 2000** and **Shopping meets Leisure 2000**.

Shopping meets Leisure 2000 was published by TW Research Associates in conjunction with Lunson Mitchenall and is the first comprehensive research publication to look at both retail and leisure parks, listing tenants and other important information for the majority of schemes. Copies are available at £95 per copy within the UK, 190 Euros within Europe or $190 outside Europe from Trevor Wood, TW Research Associates. Tel: 00 44 1494 715846.

The Coliseum Box entry

The Coliseum at Cheshire Oaks is located between Ellesmere Port and Chester at junction 10 of the M53, immediately adjacent to McArthur Glen Designer Outlet Cheshire Oaks, the David Lloyd Leisure Club and Blue Planet Aquarium. The scheme was developed by THI in conjunction with Equitable Life, who forward funded the retail element, while the leisure element is owned by THI Leisure Partnership. The 191,000 sq. ft. leisure units opened in December 1999 in time for the important Christmas trading period and the remaining 131,000 sq. ft. of retail units opened at the end of March 2000.

Tenants are Au Naturale, Bella Pasta, Boots, Borders, Burger King, Chiquito, Curry Stop, Dixons, The Entertainer, Exchange Diner, Frankie & Benny's, Game, Heroes, Holiday Hypermarket and JD Sports. Other tenants are JJB Sports, The Link, Pizza Hut, Quinceys, Super Bowl, Big Steak Pub / Wacky Warehouse and a 15 screen Warner Village Cinema incorporating an iWERKS 3D Auditorium.

With occupiers such as Borders and Holiday Hypermarket having long opening hours as well as the 15 cinema screens, nightclubs and restaurants, it is important to note there are also 2,150 free surface car parking spaces. Letting agents for the few remaining vacant units are Lunson Mitchenall, Mason Owen & Partners and Tushingham Moore.

Stuart Fyfe of Lunson Mitchenall said, *"We think that The Coliseum at Cheshire Oaks will become a major destination centre as it brings the attractions of leisure, retail and entertainment together for almost a million people within a 30 minute drive time."*