

Better than the Bullring!

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WESTFIELD Derby is one of the country's top 10 shopping centres, according to retail experts.

The £340m redevelopment of the former Eagle Centre opened just over a year ago, boasting more than 175 shops.

Now, retail analyst Trevor Wood Associates says the centre's transformation means it has risen from 51st place to 10th in its list of top shopping centres.

That new position means that Derby's centre beats the Bullring in Birmingham, Highcross in Leicester and Nottingham's shopping centres.

The top 10 placing could also help Westfield attract even more top stores to Derby.

Centre manager Janine Bone said she hoped to build on the dramatic improvement.

"We're delighted that we've reached the top 10 in these rankings, which is the icing on the cake of our first year of trading," she said.

"We hope the centre will go from strength to strength, with new retailers due to open before our peak Christmas period."

The rankings were calculated by giving scores for how attractive the shopping centres were to shoppers, retailers and investors.

Points were given for the type and quality of shops already in the centre, transport links to it, opening hours and how many people visited.

In its first 12 months since opening in October 2007, Westfield Derby attracted 25 million shoppers.

The centre's overall score was 5,299, compared with the 3,212 points it scored when the same analysis was carried out in 2006.

Elizabeth Hildred, of Abbey Street, Derby, shops at Westfield regularly and thinks the centre deserves its new position in the top 10.

"I've shopped at Leicester's Highcross since it opened and didn't think that was as good as the Westfield centre," she said.

"I have young children and the facilities in Westfield for them are great. I also think it has loads of big-name stores in there, so it should be in the top 10. It is good news for Derby to have such a big shopping centre."

John Forkin, director of Marketing Derby, which attracts inward investment to the city, said the latest ranking was great news for the city.

"Westfield has catapulted Derby into a different league.

"These types of tables and rankings are important to the people who make investments and if you are not on the table, you don't count. To be in the top 10 is superb."

Trevor Wood, founder of the retail analysts who compiled the information, said the list of top shopping centres was an important tool to retailers when deciding where they would open their next store.

"Clients in America and New Zealand buy the review, so they can look at them. Often, they want to take up a unit in one of the top 50 centres and will then look at which one suits them. It could help Derby attract even bigger stores, but Westfield are working on doing that themselves as well."

The latest report is the second time Westfield has helped Derby climb industry league tables.

In May, rankings released by research company CACI showed that Derby as a city was number 38 in the top shopping destinations in the UK – a rise of 15 places.

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