



# rose hip

'The Rose Bowl is a significant landmark building – and its location in Leeds city centre gives the University heart and presence.' We're chatting with Sue Holmes, Head of Estates for the fast growing and ambitious Leeds Metropolitan University.

far more than just being the new home of Leeds Business School, The Rose Bowl project encapsulates the stance of further education in Britain today. This is a story that takes in marketing, architecture and the fulfilment of a strategy for the University and Leeds itself. Underpinning those high vaulting aims though, are intelligently rationalised processes and future proofing that make the Rose Bowl far more than just an icon of glass and steel.

Appropriately, we're not meeting Sue in the impressive new Rose Bowl itself – the tour was to come later. We're actually meeting in one of Leeds Met's older buildings – typical enough of the blocks that were built to house the new universities of post-war Britain. It gives Sue a chance to explain the basic need for university buildings that are fit for purpose.

'These '50's and '60's blocks do not provide a good learning environment. The racetrack shape, with the service core in the centre, creates a narrow footprint. Long thin spaces of 4.5m width are very limiting – fine, I suppose, for the old courses of 15 students, but completely inappropriate for today. Also, the cost of refurbishment is increasingly expensive. It's been a vicious cycle in the public sector ▶▶▶▶▶▶

## case study



►►►for years; not enough funding means maintenance suffers...it's obvious where that leads to.

'The location of The Rose Bowl is significant in itself – its horseshoe shape facing and mirroring the 19th century Civic Hall. There was a desire to have something iconic in the heart of Leeds Civic Quarter. People are fascinated by its structure – some say it's back to front – and by its glazed cladding which creates a sense of mystery about what lies inside. The glazing means a lot of interesting reflections – in mid-afternoon it almost looks like the surface is being projected onto.

'Sheppard Robson has designed an iconic, fascinating building – which is a facet of our marketing approach. The University has committed to investing over £130 million in the estate development plan between 2005 and 2015. This is a strategy dedicated to creating an innovative, cutting edge learning landscape. The Rose Bowl is part of that strategy, providing a state of the art learning environment for Leeds Business School. What's more, it's at the heart of the regional capital's civic, education, business and cultural quarters.'

It's clear that this integrated approach is part of Leeds Mets' vision of being a world class regional university. Further education is competitive, and this is a university that's competing on a world stage. Providing a state-of-the-art facility within a signature five storey building helps attract business students – especially if everything is in place to help them engage with the local and regional business community.

The Rose Bowl's enduring success will be based on more than these strategic and marketing initiatives though.

'It's cutting edge, but the infrastructure has to be right,' says Sue. 'Flexibility is critical to the success of this building. For example, in the teaching rooms we've already wired in two walls for teaching delivery. We've done a lot of thinking about future proofing.

'I joined about 2½ years ago, when the project had already started. I looked again at the brief and asked a lot of questions about value. There was a long slow process of consultation with the faculty and with students about the learning environment. We looked at everything in detail from how we use the open plan offices to how we market. This process involved trial work, sample rooms and we constantly monitored feedback. What you achieve is consensus. The feedback has been extremely positive, but it's taken a lot of hard work.►►►►►

## case study



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‘A key part of my approach was to understand the relationship of circulation to working space. Once we knew what getting 2,000 people in and out of the building actually means we reshaped ideas on the scheme. The whole process involved challenging and encouraging the professional consultants, the contractors and all the individuals involved to foster communication and a team approach to the project. And so, the original brief was adapted, with a more pragmatic design perspective. A parallel piece of work was the drawing up of an appropriate design specification and standards. It was holistic,

based on ease of maintenance and value. It’s not rocket science, but it can be difficult to achieve on a big project. We actually ended with something joined up!

‘It’s worth pointing out that my colleague Greg Barnes was the first appointment – to head up the vital area of purchasing. Looking at whole life costings, he put rigour into the process, covering everything from taps and light fittings to furniture. The furniture was supplied on contract by Broadstock, who supply a lot of major university contracts like this. They’ve been proactive and responsible, do well in occupancy evaluations and we have a healthy relationship.’

Our tour of The Rose Bowl revealed the size and complexity of the project. For example, Broadstock supplied furniture for over 2,000 teaching spaces and seven tiered lecture theatres ranging from 64 to 250

seats. The open plan administrative areas are furnished with 200 individually powered Broadstock Beam workstations, twinned with flexible Silverline storage – in fact taking all the filing capacity into consideration, The Rose Bowl has over 2,500 linear metres of storage.

‘This is a very visual building. When you are inside, you can see into five or 10 spaces from almost wherever you are. You are seeing the delivery of education. It’s an important point; you could say The Rose Bowl is not only an architectural icon, it’s a landmark in terms of the psychology of students. Visible teaching spaces are interesting along the lines of ‘If you can see me perform, then I will perform better’. The Rose Bowl has helped open a different dialogue about the teaching and learning experience – people are more open, and behaviour is different. The deep light penetration makes people feel better too.’

The Rose Bowl does not only house teaching spaces, but is the base for the faculty’s academic and support staff. In addition, it is home to Student Services staff and carries the main catering function for the whole campus – and the Civic Hall too, with a stylish 290 seat cafe area. This is an impressive building on every level, with high quality pragmatic finishes throughout. With its dramatic core at its centre, The Rose Bowl is architecturally dramatic, stretching an appropriate canvas for the dynamics that the university seeks to create.

Spend time in Leeds (we also visited Land Securities’ massive Trinity Retail development) and the aspirations of the city become clear. Leeds is a city that sees itself on a world stage, as a regional centre of excellence. The Rose Bowl is an important part of the University’s strategy that links with this vision ●

## essential ingredients

Client:	• Leeds Metropolitan University Business School
Architect:	• Sheppard Robson 0161 233 8900
Main Contractor:	• BAM Construction 0113 290 8800
Interior Furnishing:	• Broadstock 01625 431979
Systems Furniture:	• Broadstock 01625 431979
Storage:	• Silverline 01638 582700