





# Wear on the Ball

'CitySpace is exactly as its name suggests - a space for the city, for all to benefit.' Councillor Paul Watson, Leader of Sunderland City Council, describes CitySpace succinctly and accurately. Yet the facility is not a council building, it's part of the University of Sunderland - and as clear a demonstration of a modern civic university's identity and role that one could wish for.

**W**e're on Wearside visiting the impressive FaulknerBrowns Architects designed CitySpace. This is a place that gives new meaning to the word multi-purpose. The intelligently designed space skilfully blurs boundaries, yet it offers diversity without losing direction or a sense of focus.

As FaulknerBrowns Alistair Stripp explains, a rigorous consultation process was a key component of the development framework. 'Led by Andrew Kane, FaulknerBrowns carried out a clear analytical process which resulted in the identification of the key issues and drivers for the project. The result was that although changes would be inevitable, we had a core set of constant values. We consulted with the University's senior management group, the faculties, the Student Union...by the end of the process over 30 stakeholders had been consulted. The four core issues that emerged helped underpin the need for a flexible modern centre that could sit at the heart of the campus. The issues were: a social



## Case Study



don't push then you wouldn't get a building like this.

'What we don't do is tell Sunderland University how to do it. We discuss everything with everyone, from the cleaners to management – and we listen to what they say. We use that knowledge on all our projects; we learn from our experience with other buildings we've worked on together. For example, take the flooring we've used here. Where we're sitting right now you can see a combination of Artego rubber flooring and Desso Reclaim carpet tile. We've specified these after consultation with the staff who have to maintain the facility. We've looked at sustainability issues for a BREEAM Excellent building – Reclaim is mostly made of recycled waste. We've looked at durability, colour, cost, availability and past experience. In the case of flooring, really useful knowledge has been gained by practical use at the Murray Library next door.

'Everything is thought through and tested. Everything has to be spot on. Another example is the coordination of the glazing and concrete in the space. This involved highly bespoke design which necessitated very precise detailing, quality control and time management. The successful result is a new iconic landmark for the city.' ●

▶▶▶▶ competitive ingredient in the overall university mix. Today's students are looking for a full experience; they need to be impressed by the city, the facilities, the attitude – everything.

It's important to note that seeking additional revenue from visitors to CitySpace was not a driver for us at all. For example, you see no student bar here, no retail concessions. Our research clearly showed that demand was for a real social hub and sports space that was open to all. Universities can sometimes seem rather stuffy places, where the local community maybe feels that it doesn't belong. What we've done here is make a place for everybody.'

At that exact moment, a gaggle of happy kids (proudly in their Sunderland AFC red and white striped kit, of course) ran out of the main sports hall. Point proven!

We spent some time discussing and viewing the highly considered design of the building; a BREEAM Excellent building what's more. As Alistair explains, the architecture and interior design is highly contextual in every sense. Beyond its location and its relationship with what surrounds it, there is a context for CitySpace in the way FaulknerBrowns and the University of Sunderland work, and have worked, together.

'This is an important point,' says Alistair. 'CitySpace is not a one-off building. We have had an excellent relationship with the University for some years, and have developed a good number of significant projects for them. What you see here is not a stand alone piece of architecture – it's something that's been created based on our mutual experience. Even better, CitySpace builds on years of experience and adds a considerable amount of innovation...we both want to push the boundaries. They're a strong client, and we're a strong practice – we challenge each other. A good designer is happy to be challenged by the client: if you



### essential ingredients

Client • **University of Sunderland** | Architect • **FaulknerBrowns** [www.faulknerbrowns.co.uk](http://www.faulknerbrowns.co.uk)

Structural Engineer • **Buro Happold** [www.burohappold.com](http://www.burohappold.com) | M&E Engineer • **Atkins** [www.atkinsglobal.com](http://www.atkinsglobal.com)

Quantity Surveyor • **Todd Milburn Partnership** [www.toddmilburn.co.uk](http://www.toddmilburn.co.uk) | Project Manager • **Elliott Dent** [www.elliottdent.co.uk](http://www.elliottdent.co.uk)

Contractor • **Morgan Sindall** [www.morgansindall.co.uk](http://www.morgansindall.co.uk) | Concrete Cladding • **Trent** [www.trentconcrete.co.uk](http://www.trentconcrete.co.uk)

Flooring • **Desso** [www.desso.com](http://www.desso.com) **Artigo** [www.artigo.com](http://www.artigo.com)

Fabrics • **Camira** [www.camirafabrics.com](http://www.camirafabrics.com)

Architectural Hardware • **HardwareSupply** [www.hardware supply.co.uk](http://www.hardware supply.co.uk)

Door Laminates • **Egger** [www.egger.co.uk](http://www.egger.co.uk)

Grid Glazing System • **Technal** [www.technal.co.uk](http://www.technal.co.uk)

Coloured Glazing • **Vanceva** [www.vanceva.com](http://www.vanceva.com)