

The Failure of the Preservation of Brutalism in Birmingham, England

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Introduction

“It may be kind of homely, but it sure is sweet. Industrial Revolution put it on its feet, but it’s a long, long way. Boy, I’ve got the Birmingham Blues.”¹ Jeff Lyne, leader singer of the Electric Light Orchestra paints the stereotypical picture of Birmingham in a couple of lines. Nikolaus Pevsner does not begin his section on Birmingham in his series *The Buildings of England: Warwickshire* in a wholly positive light, either. “There have been no dramatic events in the history of Birmingham . . .”² This is not an attack on Birmingham’s supposed lack of history, but merely a comment. Birmingham’s seeming lack of storied past is a constant reference. It is referred to as simply an industrial, hard-working, market town. It was seen as a place to work, not to live. De Toqueville described the city in 1835 as having:

. . .no analogy with other English provincial towns; the whole place is made up of streets like the rue du Faubourg St Antoine [in Paris]. It is an immense workshop, a huge forge, a vast shop. One only sees busy people and faces brown with smoke. One hears nothing but the sound of hammers and the whistle of steam escaping from boilers.³

These varied observations all offer a similar perspective onto Birmingham—painting it as an industrious, middling sort of town. This preconception still holds true. In travelling to Birmingham, I was stopped at immigration in Ireland. The agent asked my purpose for traveling; I stated I was visiting Birmingham to study its postwar architecture. My statement was met with a derisive chuckle from the agent: “It’s a good place for that . . .” His reaction underlines a major reason for Birmingham is the focus of this thesis—it is frequently pushed to the side in favor of other cities. Although this is not ideal for a city that seeks to be a center of culture, it seems fitting, given its history. Birmingham is located in the middle of England, with other cities a couple hours away. Despite its reputation as a gloomy and dreary city, Birmingham is bright and

¹ “Birmingham Blues”, Electric Light Orchestra

² Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Warwickshire*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd. 1966. 98.

³ Ibid.

vibrant. Because of these reasons, I was often asked “Why Birmingham?” A lack of scholarship on Birmingham, the dismissal of the city, and my fascination of Brutalism led to the research on this topic. Of course, what worked in one city did not work for others. Each city merits its own discussion of its postwar reconstruction efforts, and this is Birmingham’s account.

Birmingham does not often appear to be on people’s minds. It is not a city people choose to visit, and there seems to be little understanding about the city. Birmingham is often referred to as the “Second City,” but according to recent polls, more people believe Manchester to be the “Second City.”⁴ The questions posed seem to be vague, so people may interpret the question to mean, “Which city is more prominent in British media?” It currently ranks second behind London in population and GDP. Birmingham’s desire to be named the Second City occurred during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as the city further cemented its status as an important research, technical, and retail center. The generational divide evident in the result of the poll mentioned above highlights the growth Birmingham experienced during the twentieth century.

Birmingham does not appear in sources about Brutalism, in comparison to other major cities. It does however receive a brief mention, in reference to the Birmingham Central Library, the Inner Ring Road, and/or the Bull Ring. However, Birmingham was a major center of reconstruction, following the destruction of World War II. London is often at the heart of Brutalist preservation, or even discussions about postwar architecture. Other cities fall to the wayside as a result of a lack of research, and buildings are left vulnerable thanks in part to a lack

⁴ Despite Birmingham following behind London in population, GDP, etc., there is a generational divide on this. Younger people view Manchester as the Second City, but older people see Birmingham as the Second City. This divide is also highly regional. <http://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/birmingham-mailbmg-poll-battle-second-city/>; <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/05/21/manchester-uks-second-capital/>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-politics-19635618/birmingham-can-people-name-england-s-second-city>. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/more-people-think-manchester-uks-12433529>

of scholarly discussion about them. Birmingham recently faced a major blow to the visible history of its postwar reconstruction and Brutalist buildings by having the Central Library torn down at the start of 2015.⁵ There were many attempts to list the Central Library, all of which failed. All failed. If one of the best examples of Brutalism in England can fail to be listed and protected, what does that mean for lesser known examples in a city determined to see them turned to ash and rubble?

In existing accounts of postwar reconstruction Birmingham has received much less attention than London, as mentioned earlier, and Coventry. In sources about the West Midlands, Coventry tends to dominate the discussion, particularly the scale of the bombing damage Coventry experienced and the high-profile debates about the rebuilding of its cathedral. A potential reason for the lack of inclusion may be chalked up to Birmingham not having a major landmark that was the focus of rebuilding. In Coventry, the cathedral reconstruction by Sir Basil Spence during the 1960s has received considerable attention in scholarly discussions of postwar reconstruction and Brutalist architecture. The cathedral serves as a symbol of the city. Some of Birmingham's primary architectural symbols, the Bull Ring Shopping Centre, the Rotunda, and Birmingham Central Library, were not the subject of repair, like the Coventry Cathedral, but new constructions in the postwar era that all might be characterized as Brutalist buildings. Although that all might be characterized. Brutalism has a special connection to Britain, as it started with the Smithsons, was written by Reyner Banham, and major examples include the Barbican Centre, the National Theatre, Trellick and Balfron Towers. If Brutalism is British, then, why are more cities not included in discussions of this architectural style?

⁵ "Birmingham Central Library: Demolition Work Begins", *BBC News*, December 14, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-35092981>.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter looks at the beginning of postwar reconstruction in Birmingham. The city was a target for German bombardments during World War II, because of the research and manufacturing that occurred there. Following the war, the city was able to adapt to new planning ideas and architectural styles. Birmingham's reconstruction worked in two phases: from 1942-1960 and secondary from 1960-1975. The first phase focused on providing essential infrastructure for the city to get back on its feet, and the second phase offered more of a cosmetic, incremental approach. Buildings during the second phase further the growth of the city.

The second chapter focuses on three buildings constructed between 1945 and 1975. The order of the buildings works in a procession. Starting at the Bull Ring Shopping Centre, a visitor could either walk through the building or drive under it, leading to the Ringway Centre on Smallbrook Queensway (Figure 1). From there, the road connects to the Birmingham Central Library. The three buildings are the most notable Brutalist buildings in Birmingham. I discuss what qualifies each building as Brutalist, or even New Brutalist. The distinction comes down to the layout and appearance. I also discuss other Brutalist buildings which have been largely unrecognized in the existing scholarship.

The third chapter looks at more recent preservation and conservation efforts in England and especially in Birmingham. The process of protecting historic sites is tied to different organizations, and there are different processes to follow in protecting individual buildings. Organizations that deal with modern architecture will be the primary organizations considered. I then look at efforts undertaken in Birmingham, paying close attention to the role of the specific organizations involved. I also look at the issues surrounding postwar preservation in Birmingham.

Birmingham chose a deliberate path when faced with reconstruction. The city did not have official city plans and the councillors opted to use local architects when possible. This created a specific experience of the city. Birmingham was rebuilt for Brummies by Brummies. Birmingham built its own identity and image. They reclaimed their image and decided how others would view the city. The result being a fashionable, modern city, fit for transportation and people needs. The destruction of the postwar rebuilding removes that narrative from the city's visual heritage. Birmingham is becoming less about itself as an independent city, but more about how it can adapt to fit the future. By attempting to fit in with other cities, Birmingham is losing identity—a city that will continue to thrive and survive on its own.

Chapter One: Destruction and the Beginning of Reconstruction

Although Birmingham's heritage has strong ties to the Victorian era, efforts before and after World War II have defined Birmingham's spirit. With Birmingham's prominence in the war effort, the Germans left the city in a state of despair. The bombings lasted from August 1940 to April 1941. Birmingham faced some of the worst of the destruction in England, both in terms of casualties and physical destruction.⁶ Devastation was spread across the city, rather than concentrated in one area (Figure 2). On average, one bomb fell per ten acres, though the map suggests a greater density.⁷ In 1941, the Cabinet Committee on the Reconstruction of Town and Country reviewed the damage.

The destruction of part of the city centre and the deterioration of much of the rest reinforced the City Council's determination to carry out as complete a clearance as possible of the business district and the inner areas after the war, and make a fresh start.⁸

The bombings effected the major areas of Birmingham: the Bull Ring and Market Hall and the "Big Top", which was the New Street and High Street corner (Figure 2). The three sites are adjacent to each other. The Luftwaffe's intention for Birmingham was to "cripple the city's industrial war effort."⁹ The factories, however, were widely spread around the city, making Birmingham the subject of prolonged and less narrowly targeted bombings.¹⁰

Birmingham was targeted because many industries operated in and around the city. At the outbreak of World War II, the Midlands became an important location for production of heavier

⁶ David Thoms, *War and Society 1938-1945*, 104.

⁷ David Adams and Peter Larkham, "Bold Planning, Mixed Experiences: The Diverse Fortunes of Postwar Birmingham", *The Blitz and its Legacy: Wartime Destruction to Postwar Reconstruction*, London: Ashgate (2013): 139.

⁸ Adams and Larkham, 140; Three other cities were chosen: Coventry, Bristol, and Southampton. Out of the three cities, Coventry is the closest to Birmingham. It too is a West Midlands manufacturing city. The comparison between reconstruction in Birmingham and Coventry would serve a good topic

⁹ Thoms, 108.

¹⁰ Thoms, 104-8

armored vehicles and components (Figure 3).¹¹ The area served as a manufacturing and engineering center, with construction of aircraft and vehicles.¹² Birmingham also served as a center of scientific research. Two major/influential events occurred at the University of Birmingham. The first, and potentially more influential, was the Frisch-Peierls memorandum of 1940. Written by German scientists, Otto Frisch and Rudolph Peierls, the document stated there is a “possibility of construction a ‘super-bomb’ which utilises the energy stored in atomic nuclei as a source of energy.”¹³ The memorandum continues to roughly outline how to create such a bomb, erstwhile stressing the effects the bomb would have—most, if not all of the effects of which are negative. The focus of the memorandum is largely on fallout and what can be done if others have the same information about “super-bombs”, which would be nothing at that point in time. This document is highly important because of the discovery that a large bomb is possible.¹⁴ The other significant scientific discovery made at the University of Birmingham was the cavity magnetron, which is able to “produce large amounts of power very efficiently”.¹⁵ The magnetron allowed for the Allies to build small, efficient radars that could register the movement of ships, planes, and submarines. Many historians believe the use of these radars contributed to the Allied victory.¹⁶

Though the major areas affected by the Blitzes were in the center of the city, the loss of the architecture does not seem to be felt. The loss of the space is more apparent. The Market Hall

¹¹ Thoms, 37.

¹² Thoms, 37.

¹³ “Frisch-Peierls Memorandum, March 1940”, *Atomic Archive*, <http://www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/Begin/FrischPeierls2.shtml>.

¹⁴ The memorandum led to the creation of the MAUD committee. The MAUD committee’s primary focus was to investigate the use of uranium to the war effort. Following MAUD’s findings, University of Birmingham professor, Mark Oliphant, traveled to the United States to discuss pushing the project there further, as the U.S. was not researching as much as the British were. The intervention by Oliphant led to the Manhattan Project focusing on how to create the bomb, and not if they could.

¹⁵ “Cavity Magnetron”, *Engineering and Technology History Wiki (ETHW)*,

¹⁶ Though it had a victorious past, it is now primarily used for microwave ovens.

was used even though it lacked a roof.¹⁷ The appearances of the previous Bull Ring are not mentioned. Through the loss of spaces, the Victorian architecture stood. The architecture may have survived because of the sheer number of Victorian buildings. Birmingham holds Victorian architecture in high esteem. There a couple of potential reasons for this. First, the city flourished during the Victorian age. The retention of the architecture keeps a direct and secure link to their prime day. Second, the buildings survived the Blitzes. Because these buildings survived the bombing, it is possible the citizens of the city see the buildings as strong and sturdy—a good representative of reconstruction and continuing on in the face of adversity. The strong Victorian heritage becomes a speed bump during reconstruction. Their removal hinders construction and development and instantly marks the new construction as different. New construction did not fit with the fabric of the well-established Victorian architecture. Birmingham faced tension between two sides: those who sought to keep historical architecture and those who sought to create new, modern architecture.

Rebuilding Birmingham

Following the war, Birmingham faced similar issues to those with which many other cities around England were grappling, particularly how to respond to extensive damage from bombardments. Rebuilding was an absolutely necessary choice, but also a conscious one. It would be impractical to build an entirely new city, although rebuilding in place also suggests that the inhabitants can and will move past the devastation. It shows their morale was not brought down, in spite of the Germans' attempts. The chance to rebuild inspired not just the councilors. Future Birmingham architect, John Madin, sought great change for Birmingham. John Madin (1924-2012) was a prominent Birmingham architect—he was born and educated in the city.

¹⁷ Adams and Larkham, 139.

Madin always had a mind for architecture and city planning. He attended the Birmingham School of Architecture, a school he compared to the architecture schools in Liverpool and the AA (Architectural Association) in London. The architecture school all but removed Classical architecture training, outfitting Madin with a more modernist approach. Madin often had grand ideas for Birmingham. At age 16, in 1940, he wrote:

I hope to see in the near future a greater and a more beautiful Birmingham, and I also wish that I shall be one of those lucky men who will, with care and sympathy, be able to graft out City into the finest in the World. If this war has ever done anything for the British people, it has given the enlightened ones of the general the chance to create a better and healthier place to live in The German bombs have stricken down so many of our towns' buildings that it will be a simple matter to widen our thoroughfares and build new offices and shops.¹⁸

When he was 27, he also designed a Christmas card with a before and after of how he thought Birmingham should look. Though he did not fully achieve his predictions for the city, he was able to contribute designs, as he was prolific.¹⁹

While the city mourned their losses, city officials took the chance to rebuild, recognizing the opportunity given to them, just as a young Madin had. Birmingham's city center was the target during the Blitzkrieg. As a result, the center became the primary place of reconstruction and it is where most of Birmingham's modern architecture is or was located. Ideas for renovation plans were being considered in 1917, however World War I and II prevented action.²⁰ No plans were officially created for the city, despite discussions and desires. The city of Birmingham did not have a cohesive sense of reconstruction, either. Manzoni worked piecemeal, which resulted in a hodge-podge of buildings and designs.²¹ City Engineer and Surveyor Herbert Manzoni was

¹⁸ Christopher Madin foreward, *John Madin*, London: RIBA Publishing (2011): VII-VIII.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ David Adams, "Everyday Experiences of the Modern City: Remembering the Postwar Reconstruction of Birmingham". *Planning Perspectives* 26 no. 2. April 2011. 244.

²¹ Peter Larkham and David Adams, "Walking with the Ghosts of the Past: Unearthing the value of Residents' urban Nostalgias", *Urban Studies* vol. 53, no. 10 (2016): 2006.

the primary person behind the push for new ideas. Manzoni (1899-1972) served as the City Engineer from 1935-1963. Manzoni disregarded historical precedents, believing they hinder progression, though he did believe in maintaining “a few monuments [represented as buildings or actual monuments] as museum pieces to past ages.”²² The influences for the reconstruction came from many sources. Most of the influences, however, are highly indicative of modern urban planning ideas. Different areas of Birmingham were subject to different influences. The major idea Manzoni, and architects working with him, took was the human experience, such as the streets in the sky idea. Many of the buildings featured in this thesis had “socially inclusive spaces” as part of their designs.²³

Manzoni influenced the layout of Birmingham through the creation of the Inner Ring Road. The plans discussed in 1917 primarily concerned traffic flow. Once Manzoni became the City Engineer, the wars passed, and there was better financing, traffic infrastructure could be addressed. Initial plans proposals offered sweeping changes to the city. Manzoni’s idea was to imitate American cities, which meant, for the British, gridded city plans, better infrastructure for transportation (i.e. cars), and wider spaces. Recreating American cities, especially postwar, was not unique to Birmingham. The idea of better infrastructure was one of the issues those in power sought to fix. In a 1929 article in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, the reporter states:

the arterial road system . . . was originally well laid out, but, unfortunately, these roads were all too narrow for present-day traffic. [. . .] There were roads in Birmingham planned 150 years ago sufficiently wide for modern traffic conditions, but now so built up as to make them but half the width originally planned.²⁴

²² Sir Herbert Manzoni quoted in Andy Foster, *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Birmingham*, New Haven: Yale University Press (2016): 197; David Adams, “Everyday Experiences of the Modern City: Remembering the Postwar Reconstruction of Birmingham”, *Planning Perspectives* 26 no. 2 (April 2011): 244.

²³ Mark Clapson and Peter Larkham, “Bold Planning, Mixed Experiences: The Diverse Fortunes of Postwar Birmingham”, *The Blitz and its Legacy: Wartime Destruction to Postwar Reconstruction*, London: Ashgate (2013): 146.

²⁴ “Relieving Traffic Congestion”, *Birmingham Gazette*, December 17, 1929.

The push for redevelopment also meant money. Many cities wanted to raise the amount of money from income rates by developing their own land, often in the form of commercial and retail spaces. Birmingham councilors agreed to keep the rates as low as possible, except for spending on the roads. The city's debt was twice that of other authorities by 1967.²⁵

Birmingham's debt highlighted how important the councillors saw the redevelopment. The fix to roads came in the form of ring roads, most importantly the Inner Ring Road (Figures 5-7).

The ring road had a transformative effect on the postwar development of Birmingham. The first plan was approved in 1943, but the project did not start until 1957. The Inner Ring Road took fourteen years to build, although once it was essentially finished, crews went back to work on it.²⁶ The new scheme required a bill to be passed in parliament, which did so in 1945. It was the largest local scheme to come before Parliament.²⁷ The road diverted traffic away from the city center and was designed primarily for traffic with few shop, office, or warehouse frontages. Traffic congestion was considered an issue for quite some time prior to the renovations, so the new road system was seen to be a critical improvement. Spreading over 1,200 acres, this development required extensive demolition and rebuilding, beyond what was destroyed during the war.²⁸ The creation of the ring road required demolishing old streets and buildings, including those that had been spared from German bombardments.

The plan envisioned seven main junctions, incoming arterial roads, and large traffic islands. The design was successful in its intentions insofar as it eased the flow of traffic and kept pedestrians and vehicles apart, however, the exact roads Manzoni envisioned as part of the Inner

²⁵ Elain Harwood, *Space, Hope, and Brutalism: English Architecture 1945-1975*, New Haven: Yale University Press (2015): 322-323.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 323; Adams and Larkham, "Bold Planning", 143.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸

Ring Road are unclear. I have outlined what I perceive to be the Inner Ring Road, based on road construction, the buildings that were constructed as part of the Ring Road scheme, and the separation of spaces. Larkham provides a map of the original Inner Ring Road, though the date is unknown. The design of the original ring road was dropped, possibly before or shortly after 1961, once the Ringway Centre opened and the effects between the store fronts on the road and vehicular and pedestrian traffic were realized.²⁹ With store fronts directly accessible on the road slowed traffic down, with people crossing and cars slowing down. Manzoni's experience and knowledge as an engineer are evident, however, it is obvious that the ring road was not designed by an architect. The ring road earned its reputation as a "concrete collar" through the distinct separation between the residential and commercial.³⁰ The separation meant that areas of the city and communities were divided.

The ring road created a distinct city center, but it also made access to it more difficult, especially for pedestrians. The new city center radically transformed central Birmingham, however, the city attempted to use the construction of the new city center as a means of projecting a new image of Birmingham as the "second city" of England. Martin Hampson has compared the postwar rebuilding to the destruction wrought earlier by Victorian railways, which swept aside all buildings in their path.³¹ This is a poignant statement to make. Much as Victorian railways removed all in its path for something new and modern, Victorian architecture was being removed for another new and modern development. The cycle contributes to the idea of Birmingham as a continually moving and changing city. It plays an important role in the preservation of historic architecture, which will be discussed in chapter three.

²⁹ Adams and Larkham, "Bold Planning", 144.

³⁰ Adams, "Everyday Experiences" 256.

³¹ Mark Hampson, *Images of England: Central Birmingham 1950-1980*. Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press. 2017.

Addressing the transportation issue fixed other matters beyond the infrastructure. The city councilors sought to create a separation of the residential (homes) and the commercial (city center) zones with a highway, or ring road. The layout of the city is structured so that it has market space in the center, surrounded by suburbs and boroughs radiating out from the center. The creation of the ring road further cemented the commercial, retail center of the city. The reformation of these spaces was the most drastic change Birmingham underwent in the immediate postwar period. The ring road reorganized the city.

The ring road is not a Brutalist structure in a conventional sense, however its influence on city development is significant. The biggest contribution are the store fronts. Many adopted a Brutalist or Art Brut style. These imposed fronts further serve as the concrete collar, visually separating spaces. The buildings are tall, blocking the view behind and around their facades. The grayness creates a sense of impending doom. The concrete appears run down, and when it rains, it looks worse. The streets feel as though it were pulled from a dystopian 1950s. The separation between private and commercial is clear. It is a concrete barrier.

As a result of the Inner Ring Road, shopping and commercial enterprises became the heart of the city center. The city was established by being a market city. Shifting this focus meant that Birmingham would no longer be in touch with its roots. The councilors did not consider not rebuilding marketspace, so the loss of the market identity was not a threat, despite the actual destruction of the markets. Focusing on restoring the market space following destruction speaks to Birmingham's attempts to push past the rubble and continue on. Rebuilding and creating markets provides opportunities for those who live there. It also draws people to the city. Birmingham's first purpose built complex with shops and offices was a product of the postwar reconstruction. It was considered innovative. By also providing office space, it offered

the chance for people to work once again in the city. Of course, being able to even get to work was an issue, with the ring road. Despite the literal hurdles to get to the city center, it has become a bustling place, especially with the Bull Ring Shopping Centre.

Brutalism: Definition and Usage

An issue in identifying postwar architecture is the use of the term "Brutalism". This thesis will attempt to reconcile the conflicts surrounding Brutalism and preservation efforts in the city of Birmingham. There are a variety of definitions and interpretations on what exactly is Brutalism. The origin of the term "Brutalism" is unclear. Reyner Banham offers a few possibilities, in his book, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* the most common and accepted origin is from Le Corbusier's *béton brut* at Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles.³² The term "Brutalism" itself lends to difficulty in research. Reyner Banham's foundational text *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* refers to Brutalism as "New Brutalism", but many other references to the term as simply "Brutalism". When sources refer to New Brutalism, it is in the context of the Smithsons, though they themselves began to refer to it as "Brutalism" from the mid-1950s and on.³³ With the originators of meaning behind Brutalism dropping "New" from the title, the term possibly solidified as "Brutalism".

The exact definition of Brutalism depends on the source. The Smithsons are seen as the source of the term "Brutalism", or more specifically, "New Brutalism". The first mention of "New Brutalism" came in the December 1953 issue of *Architectural Design*. The Smithsons described a house in Soho London that was not built. They wanted the house "to have no finishes at all internally—the building being a combination of shelter and environment."³⁴ The building

³² Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation (1966): 16.

³³ Peter and Allison Smithson, and Jane B. Drew, E. Maxwell Fry. "Conversation on Brutalism". *Zodiac* 4. 1959. 73-81.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

materials used would also have an unfinished appearance. “In fact, had this been built it would have been the first exponent of the ‘new brutalism’ in England . . .”³⁵ They referred to this appearance as a warehouse.³⁶ In an April 1957 issue of *Architectural Design*, the Smithsons wrote a couple of paragraphs outlining the impetus behind “Brutalism”. In this, they layout what they sought out of Brutalism:

Any discussion of Brutalism will miss the point if it does not take into account Brutalism’s attempt to be objective about “reality” . . . Brutalism tries to face up to a mass-production society, and drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces which are at work. Up to now Brutalism has been discussed stylistically, whereas its essence is ethical.³⁷

The Smithsons intended for Brutalism to be a rejection of academia, or “contemporary” architecture.³⁸ Their approach was to embrace machinery and use it for designs.³⁹ The Smithsons also believed Brutalism should reflect material honesty. In a 1959 interview for *Zodiac*, an Italian architecture magazine, the Smithsons compared buildings not reflective of their structures as being “built as if they were not made of real material at all but some sort of process material, such as Kraft Cheese.”⁴⁰ Their Hunstanton School building is the beginning of built Brutalism and is often the start of English Brutalism.⁴¹

Reyner Banham is the most used source on Brutalism. His 1955 article “The New Brutalism” is the start of analyzing Brutalism outside of the design groups involved, namely the Smithsons.⁴² He outlines three points the New Brutalists took: “Memorability

³⁵ Peter and Alison Smithson, “House in Soho, London”, *Architectural Design*. December 1953. 342.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.; This also calls back to Frank Lloyd Wright’s *The Art of the Machine*.

⁴⁰ Peter and Alison Smithson, and Jane B. Drew, E. Maxwell Fry. “Conversation on Brutalism”. *Zodiac* 4 (1959):

⁴¹ The Unité d’Habitation in Marseilles is most often considered the beginning of Brutalism.

⁴² Reyner Banham, “The New Brutalism”. *Architectural Review*. December 1955. 354..

as an Image, Clear Exhibition of Structure, and Valuation of Materials, ‘as found’.”⁴³ He states:

. . . the New Brutalism, if it is architecture in the grand sense of Le Corbusier’s definition, is also architecture of our time and not of his, nor of Lutbetkin’s, nor of the times of the Masters of the past. Even if it were true that the Brutalists speak only to one another, the fact that they have stopped speaking to Mansart, to Palladio, and to Alberti would make the New Brutalism, even in its more private sense, a major contribution to the architecture of today.⁴⁴

While Banham was not a totally removed scholar (he was familiar and friendly with the Smithsons), he provided the foundation for other scholars to work from. His book, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*, asks exactly what the title states. Banham attempts to argue for Brutalism being an approach to design. He starts by evaluating the Smithsons and their influences. Since the Smithsons stated New Brutalism was consciously designed, Banham started his argument that way. He offers valuable international and material comparisons, allowing for scholars to realize Brutalism is not simply concrete. However, as he began to further draw comparisons with various architects and their designs, he concluded Brutalism is ultimately a style. Outside of the Smithsons, most architects used Brutalism as an aesthetic. Banham’s assertion that Brutalism was a style is fair. The Smithsons’ ethic of truth in materials led to a particular appearance.

Despite a lack of total inclusion in many sources, there were a couple of scholars and texts that were immensely influential. The primary resource was Elain Harwood’s *Space, Hope, and Brutalism: English Architecture 1945-1975*.⁴⁵ Her monolithic survey should be considered as one of the crucial texts for not just Brutalism, but Postwar English architecture. She organizes

⁴³ Banham, “The New Brutalism”, 361.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Elain Harwood, *Space, Hope, and Brutalism: English Architecture 1945-1975*, New Haven: Yale University Press (2015).

her text according to typology, which allows for readers to gain a sense of how methods were used across particular types. It also allows for the reader to consider the methods used between cities, rather than isolate each city in a section and attempt to remember what was stated previously. One of the drawbacks to her crucial text is its size. Because she attempts to provide a survey of works across a very wide spectrum, many buildings are left out which may not be seen as critical to her argument. In regards to Birmingham, she focuses on the primary aspects of postwar reconstruction and sites that are linked closely with the identity of the “Second City”. She discusses many buildings in Birmingham, though almost all are not Brutalist. The only building that she mentions enough to gain a subheading in the index is the Bull Ring Shopping Centre.⁴⁶ She does not discuss the Library, for reasons unknown.

Another major resource is *Redefining Brutalism* by Simon Henley. His text successfully redefines, or at least reorients, Brutalism. He breaks Brutalism down into different potential materials and appearances, which is often one of the aspects that causes the most confusion. The primary materials are brick, dubbed “Brickalist”, and concrete.⁴⁷ He looks at what has happened in the past 50-60 years since the Smithsons work and Reyner Banham’s writings. Henley also looks to the future and recognizes that Brutalism is coming into its heyday of revivals.

Brutalism often gets caught between a rock and a hard place. It is treated as “red-headed stepchild” stereotype. It is seen as “ugly”, hard to maintain, cold and uncomfortable (literally and figuratively). People’s immediate reaction to Brutalism drives the experience and interpretations they have with the buildings. Brutalism is often associated with state-sponsored projects, so these buildings physically represent the presence of government. Brutalism is also seen as being poorly constructed buildings. Brutalism exists outside of public works—it was used privately, publicly,

⁴⁶ Harwood, 677.

⁴⁷ Simon Henley, *Redefining Brutalism*. London: RIBA Publishing (2017).

big structures, not as big structures, etc.⁴⁸ Brutal buildings in Birmingham are mostly aesthetic. The influence behind buildings of the 1950s and early 1960s approach the buildings more in line with the Smithsons. Architects used concrete and brick, but it lies more in the architect who designed the buildings and when the buildings were designed. The major buildings being focused on are made of concrete—The Bull Ring Shopping Centre, the Ringway Centre, and the Birmingham Central Library. The Bull Ring Shopping Centre and the Ringway Centre embrace the idea of designing for humans, seen with Le Corbusier’s Modulor idea and the Unité d’Habitation, which was embraced by many architects in England at the time.⁴⁹ Throughout Birmingham, there are many more concrete buildings that deserve attention, as well, such as Corporation Street Shopping Centre and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. These buildings are not under direct threat at this time.

The definition of Brutalism is difficult to state in one sentence. Brutalism began as a design approach, rather than an approach to appearance. Over time, however, Brutalism became an “aesthetic”. This transform can be seen with other styles, such as Neoclassical. Most styles begin with a purpose, only to become a shorthand for appearance. The evolution of Brutalism in Birmingham somewhat mimics this transformation. Initially, buildings were built with a purpose to serve the people and designed with an appearance in line with the Smithsons’ “warehouse” appearance. Later buildings would resemble the stylistic change Brutalism underwent.

⁴⁸ The style also often gets compared to Soviet construction. There is likely some similarities, as there were material rationings and ideas being exchanged, however, not enough is known by the author to discuss this.

⁴⁹ This can be seen with James Stirling’s Ham Commons, many of the Smithsons entries for housing estates (Golden Lane, Robin Hood Gardens), Park Estate in Sheffield, the Barbican Centre, etc.

Chapter 2: Brutalism in Birmingham

For the second phase of reconstruction, occurring roughly between 1960 and 1975, the approaches can be summed up as being more about amenities and cosmetic appearances, not providing necessities. The buildings built replaced existing buildings that did not need to be replaced or were buildings that were being “upgraded” and modernized. The case studies featured could be considered revolutionary for their time periods, locally and nationally. The buildings are the Bull Ring Shopping Centre, 1961-64, by Sydney Greenwood and T. J. Hirst; the Ringway Centre, 1957-61, by James A. Roberts; and the Birmingham Central Library, 1969-1973 by John Madin. The shopping centre and the library were the largest of their types constructed in England. The Ringway Centre was one of the first buildings completed for the Inner Ring Road scheme.

All three were created in efforts to appear at the forefront of modern architecture. During the time period between 1960 and 1975, concrete Brutalism took hold, particularly in Birmingham. The primary example is the Birmingham Central Library, but the Bull Ring Shopping Centre and the Ringway Centre also represented what was occurring with the early Brutalists, exhibiting more of an ethical approach, though the Bull Ring Shopping Centre served as the transition between an ethical approach to the aesthetic approach. These buildings were also connected by Smallbrook and the inner ring road. These buildings were notable contributions to English modern architecture and engineering. All three also are centrally located, with the Inner Ring Road linking all three sites. The Inner Ring Road also served as a catalyst in their construction.

Bull Ring Shopping Centre

Retail and commercial spaces were part of the first phase of reconstruction, which was to provide resources for the city. The Ringway Centre was the first to be finished, but the Bull Ring Shopping Centre was the largest retail space. This allowed for the revitalization of the city center. The city's history is directly related to markets. The creation of the Bull Ring Shopping Centre served as a sort of physical remodeling for the city—if the city started with markets during the Medieval age, then why not use markets to restart the city following the war? The formal creation of the new indoor Bull Ring Shopping Centre had to take into consideration the Ministry of Transportation's request for a separation of pedestrian spaces and roads.⁵⁰ The Bull Ring Shopping Centre was situated at the heart of the city and served as a pedestrian and vehicular thoroughfare (Figures 8-10). The Bull Ring Centre also served as the entrance into the new city center. A symbol of Modernism and reconstruction, the Bull Ring stood as a beacon of light, of hope, and continuation.

The construction of the Inner Ring Road served as a catalyst for the new Bull Ring. City councillors saw the opportunity to create a more centralized, and yet separate, shopping center during a 1958 roundtable.⁵¹ This was spurred on in part by the Ministry of Transportation's request for separation of urban functions, but other city officials were also interested in the idea, with Manzoni leading the charge.⁵² The start of the 1960s saw the plans drawn up and in 1961, the architects Sydney Greenwood and T.J. Hirst were chosen, as the designers. Constructed lasted until 1964, with the official opening occurring May 29, 1964.⁵³ The Bull Ring Shopping

⁵⁰ Andy Foster, *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Birmingham*, New Haven: Yale University Press (2016): 85.

⁵¹ Ibid; Adams and Larkham, "Bold Planning", 142.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Pevsner, 123; Foster states construction lasted until 1964 (pg. 85). The Bull Ring may have been still under construction at the time of print for Pevsner, as his book was published in 1966. However, since the official opening took place in 1964, the end date used will be 1964.

Centre was located in the center of the newly redesigned city center. The design took inspiration from America, but rather than relegate the mall to the outskirts of the city, councillors chose to place it in the center of the city. The decision to place the center in the city, rather than outside of the city, was an interesting choice. As designers sought to separate transportation and pedestrians but also embrace cars, an obvious choice would be to place it outside the city. This would have allowed for easier separation, but also it would have justified the push for better transportation infrastructure. But by placing the Bull Ring near the historic heart of the city, it reinforced the connection between Birmingham's market history and it created a more accessible location compared to a placement in the outlying boroughs.

The Bull Ring Shopping Centre was one of the first indoor shopping centers in England.⁵⁴ The plan of the building was oriented east-west. The Centre consisted of more than just stores—it served as a junction point. Included within the design were a retail stores on two stories, a multi-level parking garage, a multi-level office block, and a bus terminal (Figures 10-12).⁵⁵ It has also been consciously described as “a large block of indoor shopping squares and markets.”⁵⁶ The Bull Ring was situated on three-acre site. Pevsner praises the layout, stating, “Its other chief distinguishing and novel features are multi-level shopping and circulation of considerable complexity (it must be remembered that there is direct access to the building on five different levels), and completely covered shopping.”⁵⁷ The Bull Ring Shopping Centre challenges what may be considered Brutalism. The elevations featured a mix of materials, with the parts of the façade clad in travertine.

⁵⁴ Adams and Larkham, “Bold Planning”, 145.

⁵⁵ Pevsner, 122

⁵⁶ Foster, 85.

⁵⁷ Pevsner, 123.

The Shopping Centre may seem like a stereotypical Brutalist building; however, it exemplifies New Brutalism. The approach Greenwood and Hirst took related to the ethical approach the Smithsons sought in their designs. Greenwood sought specific circulation; he stated “People must not be allowed to take short cuts . . . the concourses they use cannot be more than 30 ft. wide and must have shops on both sides.”⁵⁸ The appearance is geometric and the material shows the construction process. It blended different materials, in different fashions. The materiality was on display and created a shopping “warehouse”.

Reception about the innovative Bull Ring Shopping Centre was mixed. It has been named one of the worst plans initiated during the 1960.⁵⁹ Though he praised the layout, Pevsner was not impressed with the appearance. Pevsner states:

BULL RING CENTRE. One of the most important shopping centre yet built in this county, and certainly one of the largest and most comprehensive [. . .] Here the planning and technical considerations continue to be efficient, but the architecture is unquestionably disappointing. The elevations, both external and internal, are all of conventional commercial character with their typical gimmicky detail of the 1960s. The various elements of the complex, moreover, are quite unrelated to one another due no doubt to the complicated road pattern, which was determined before the buildings were thought of and which has divided the land available into three different sites. Apart from its aesthetic qualities it should be considered how far this design will influence future shopping centres, because the Bull Ring Centre depends on some basic conceptions which make it unique [. . .] These aspects [building in relation to site, American influenced design, and the circulation and accessibility of the centre] are probably of more far-reaching importance than its architecture.⁶⁰

By calling it “gimmicky”, Pevsner suggests the building’s appearance was a faddish. Andy Foster, author of the current edition of the *Pevsner Architectural Guides* on Birmingham, stated the Bull Ring Shopping Centre was one of the worst 1960s large-scale architectural designs,

⁵⁸ Quoted in *Modernity Britain Book Two: A Shake of the Dice, 1959-62*, David Kynaston, *Modernity Britain Book Two: A Shake of the Dice, 1959-60*. New York: Bloomsbury (2015), 267

⁵⁹ Foster, 85

⁶⁰ Pevsner, 123.

however, he does not explicitly state why. The only explanation offered is that the Bull Ring was “notorious for its pedestrian subways.”⁶¹ However, it does seem the dislike is so ubiquitous that a new shopping center, now dubbed Bullring, was met with enthusiasm.⁶²

Ringway Centre

The Bull Ring Shopping Centre drew passers-by through the complex, exiting onto Smallbrook Queensway; the road also travelled under the Bull Ring, physically linking the sites.⁶³ On the southside of the street, a formidable slightly undulating building runs along the street, turning the corner onto A38. This is the Ringway Centre (Figure 13). The Ringway Centre is a “continuous development” that runs along the south side of the road (Figure 14).⁶⁴ The Centre was completed in 1961.⁶⁵ The Centre was also created by local architect, James A. Roberts. Roberts’s involvement emphasizes Birmingham’s approach of utilizing local talent in reconstruction efforts. This is also seen with the Birmingham Central Library.

The Ringway Centre has six stories, comprised primarily of office space, with shops on the ground level, that open out to the road, and a car park in the basement. It is made of glass and concrete, with, in Pevsner’s words, a “quiet and effective elevation that follows the slight bend in the road.”⁶⁶ The façade is primarily composed of glass and steel, worked in a Miesian fashion, with engaged I-beams (Figure 15). There is an expression of material and how the material can be used. This imitates the Smithsons’ approach to Hunstanton School, representing an approach

⁶¹ Foster, 33.

⁶² “Historian Says Bullring Lacks Heart”. BBC News. September 4, 2003. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/west_midlands/3078514.stm; Larkham and Adams, “Unearthing”, 2012, 2017.

⁶³ The name of the street is Smallbrook Queensway, but the name of the street, and the building, can sometimes be found under “Smallbrook Ringway” or “Smallbrook Queensway”. The street was changed from “Ringway” to “Queensway”, when Queen Elizabeth opened the street. The shift in the name seems to be a more modern approach by newspapers, in particular.

⁶⁴ Pevsner, 127.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

in the building material. concrete panels have been compared to op art, though it does not engage the eye like op art (Figure 16). The panels, while decorated, still show how concrete can be used. The light troughs are made of concrete as well, though with the aggregate showing. The curves of the troughs once more show how concrete can be made and utilized in structures. The curved form is used throughout other Brutalist examples. There are seven bays between each light, with the support spilt between the beams. The lights are positioned on the second through fourth concrete lintels.

Roberts was able to allow for more investment by creating storefronts on the ground level, allowing for commercial retail, and also, in a way, extending the Bull Ring Shopping Centre.⁶⁷ Pevsner mentions that Sydney Greenwood was involved, though there are no other mentions of Greenwood's participation.⁶⁸ Greenwood was the architect behind the Bull Ring Shopping Centre. Pevsner's observation could be related to the construction of the Smallbrook road running under the Bull Ring, linking the two sites. With both men involved with the Bull Ring Centre and the Ringway Centre, there is a direct correlation between the flow from the Bull Ring onto Smallbrook.

The construction of Centre was spurred by the construction of the Smallbrook Ringway, the road, itself. Road started construction in 1957, which marked the start of the Inner Ring Road construction in general.⁶⁹ The integration of shops and roads was part of the initial 1943 plan, however, this design was quickly abandoned, possibly once the Ringway Centre was completed. The elimination of shop fronts located on major roads was in part because of the Ministry of Transport's insistence on separation of urban functions, but also in part traffic slowed because of

⁶⁷ The Bull Ring area has largely comprised of shops anyway.

⁶⁸ Pevsner, 127.

⁶⁹ Adams and Larkham, "Bold Planning", 143

the popularity of the shops.⁷⁰ Manzoni's Public Works Department worked with developers to get the most rentable space, "without questioning their aesthetics."⁷¹ Only three offers were received for the creation of a new building. The frontage was described as the longest in England.⁷² Larkham compares the façade and "its emphasis on the horizontal line" to cars quickly driving by.⁷³

There does not seem to be much written about people's reactions at the time. Pevsner did not state his opinion of the Ringway Centre. An article in a 1976 issue of the *Birmingham Post* stated that a seed store that was in operation since 1895 in this site was forced to close, as the cost of the dying business was too much to remain open.⁷⁴ In the ensuing years, more people have spoken out in support or derision of the Centre. The primary complaint people seem to have is about the traffic congestion. People have also spoken out against its appearance, with others fully supporting it. This issue will be taken up in more detail in the next chapter, as the Ringway Centre is being considered for drastic renovations.

Birmingham Central Library

The Birmingham Central Library is one of the definitive architectural symbols of postwar Birmingham (Figure 17). As result more has been published on it than many other contemporary buildings. The Birmingham Central Library is often one of the major postwar sites that gets mentioned for a few reasons. It was a physically expansive and domineering site, commanding

⁷⁰ Harwood, 322-323.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Harwood, 323.

⁷³ Adams and Larkham, "Bold Planning", 143-4.

⁷⁴ "Seed Merchant to Close After 81 Years", *Birmingham Post*, March 3, 1976, pg. 8 ; "I have to take out £400 a week to find sufficient profit to cover the overheads alone, and then I have got to pay my staff and make deliveries. I come at the end of the queue."

control of the Chamberlain Square and able to visually compete with the large City Council building and influenced by major designers such as Le Corbusier.

In 1939, the City Council decided a new library was “an urgent necessity”.⁷⁵ The existing city library was a Victorian Gothic structure, or Lombardi Gothic Victorian as suggested by Foster.⁷⁶ It was built between 1864-5 by local architecture firm, Martin & Chamberlain.⁷⁷ In 1879, the building burned down and was rebuilt by J. H. Chamberlain.⁷⁸ Following World War II, the library experienced an increase in book and archiving holdings, making the Victorian library outmoded.⁷⁹ However, nothing happened until the previous site was needed for the new Inner Ring Road.⁸⁰ By 1959, twenty years later, the City Librarian chose the new site, to the west of City Council and to the north of the Town Hall, “a stone’s throw from where it is now,” and by 1960, the general location was agreed upon by the city councillors.⁸¹ Later that year, a competition was held and designs came in, though none were chosen until 1964.⁸² The initial plan was to “provide accommodation, in line with modern standards of library planning, for all the various parts of the Birmingham public libraries service which were previously distributed over a number of buildings in the central area of the city” (Figure 18).⁸³ It was not until 1964 that a firm was chosen—John Madin Design Group, now referred to as JMDG.

⁷⁵ Peter J. Larkham and David Adams, “The Un-Necessary Monument? The Origins, Impact and Potential Conservation of Birmingham Central Library”, *Transactions of the Ancient Monument Society* (January 2016): 104.

⁷⁶ Foster, 77.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Larkham and Adams, “The Un-Necessary Monument?”, 104; The Library and Complex plans were approved supposedly to push along the Inner Ring Road construction.

⁸¹ Foster, 77

⁸² The city architect submitted a drawing, but was rejected.

⁸³ Ribet, “Architect’s Account”, *The Architect’s Journal*, May 22, 1974, 1140

The John Madin Design Group was selected in 1964. Ove Arup & Partners were the structural engineers and the main contractor was Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons.⁸⁴ Construction began in 1969, with the main shell complete in 1971 and finally finished in 1973. The choice to use a local architect was very much in line with how Birmingham often handled its projects.⁸⁵ This underscores the importance of local architects in the city.

The Birmingham Central Library's exterior was eye-catching. There were two parts of the building, but functions seem to have been blurred between the two. Architects and historians have explained this division corresponded to the reference library and the lending library. However, in plans, the term "lending library" seems to have been applied to both sections of the building. Architect Robert Ribet also states, "With a million books the reference library had to provide the most significant visual form and the penetrating image of its inverted ziggurat does just this."⁸⁶ The exterior material was pre-cast concrete and cast-in-place, however, Madin wanted Carrera marble.⁸⁷ Le Corbusier's influence is most apparent in the use of the ribbon windows.

The Central Library can be identified as Brutalist through its appearance, the layout, and arguably the scale (Figures 21-28). As stated, the exterior material was pre-cast concrete. The concrete panels showed the wood grain in the setting panels. Both buildings were geometric. The layout privileged circulation. The Library featured a courtyard, that was later filled with water features.⁸⁸ While the Library focused on the human interaction, the scale was oversized, which

⁸⁴ Foster, 77

⁸⁵ Alan Clawley, *Twentieth Century Architects: John Madin*, London

⁸⁶ Ribet, "Architect's Account", *The Architect's Journal*, May 22, 1974, 1148.

⁸⁷ Larkham, "The Un-Necessary Monument?", 114.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

was the main reason for the new library, which was intended to provide better accommodation for the books and patrons.

The new construction of the Library proved controversial. People's primary concern was for Victorian architecture. One of the main reasons for the reaction could be that citizens saw the Victorian Library as a symbol of perseverance in the face of the German Blitzes. The Library withstood absolute destruction only for it to be deemed outmoded, and thus it went out with a whimper, rather than a bang. The new and Victorian libraries were located in close proximity to one another. The Victorian library fit within the fabric of the Chamberlain and Victoria Squares, which serve as the city center. The two squares are joined by walkways, only to be divided by the Town Hall. Located within this area are city council buildings, monuments, and a museum, in addition to restaurants. One of the most noted Victorian buildings, the School of Art, was located roughly 100 feet from the new library's location. The City Council Building was across the street, done in a Neoclassical style. The Town Hall is done in a Classical style (Figures 27, 32-33). The inclusion of geometric, Le Corbusian influenced forms made of concrete would disrupt the Edwardian and Victorian landscape one saw while standing in the administrative city center. Modern architecture was perceived to have posed a threat to ideas and values people held dear, especially when confronting memories of the war.

Though some disliked the Library because of its modern appearance, many liked the building. Architect Robert Ribet praised its design and development.

. . . this building has its roots in one of the strongest freethinking traditions of the western world, that of the free city of Birmingham [free of religious involvement in government, universities, etc.] . . . always a city of ingenuity rather than assets, it opened its doors to the deprived in thousands, and found itself as a consequence in a golden age of wealth and inventiveness . . . it is therefore perhaps not surprising that this library is also a pioneer, the first in the country seriously to attempt the vastly wider

role in public library service already accepted completely in the United States and Scandinavia.⁸⁹

Ribet continues his praise and states the Library “challenged even the British Museum” for its reference facilities.⁹⁰

Other Brutalist Structures

The three case studies featured in this chapter represent the major goals Birmingham sought in the postwar reconstruction—a new shopping center, offices linked with the roads, and a new library. The buildings also represent the different phases of reconstruction for Birmingham—the first phase, which consisted of necessities, and the second phase, which dealt with more cosmetic buildings. The three also were key buildings for the city’s identity—the Bull Ring being one of the first indoor shopping centers in Britain; Smallbrook being inextricably connected to the ring road; and the Library being a monumental piece of architecture, dedicated to rebuilding and accommodation. Outside of these three buildings, Brutalism was used extensively throughout the city. The uses varied as well as the material. The case studies featured concrete as a defining material, but there were examples of brick Brutalism (or “Brickalism”).⁹¹ Examples of this range from churches, Carrs Lane, to car parks.

Located to the west of the site of the Central Library is Graham Winteringham’s Reparatory Theatre (Figure 29). This building can be seen as a secondary building in Birmingham’s landscape. The building also represents the cosmetic and cultural change in Birmingham. In addition, the structure complicates definitions. There is an apse-like glass projection, classifying it with New Formalism, but the rear, where the flies for theaters are

⁸⁹ Ribet, 1141; He also draws comparison the free-thinking city to “philosopher manufacturers friends of Jefferson and Franklin, influencing the development of the young American state . . .”

⁹⁰ Ribet, 1141.

⁹¹ Henley, 65.

located, appears more Brutalist. The Theatre often is included in discussions on Brutalism in Birmingham, with Andy Foster labelling it as one of two good examples of the style in the city.⁹² The Birmingham Repertory Theatre complicates the interpretation of Brutalism in Birmingham, but it also shows the fluidity of architecture and architectural terms. Along with the Bull Ring Shopping Centre, these buildings show how architects could include Brutalist elements, much like an architect can include Classical elements. The Birmingham Repertory Theatre, referred to now as the Rep or Rep Theatre, was designed by Graham Winteringham of S.T. Walker & Partners in 1969-71, with an addition added by the same firm and architects. It was built near the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, establishing the area as an arts and culture location. It stands to the east of the Chamberlain Square, which is where the town hall and other civic buildings are located. Chamberlain Square and the surrounding area is the cultural and political center of Birmingham.

Another example of concrete Brutalism in the city is Corporation Square (Figure 30). The Square, as identified by its signage, highlights the lack of scholarship on Brutalism in Birmingham. The first example is the Square, also referred to as the Corporation Square shopping precinct. It was designed by (Sir) Frederick Gibberd in 1963-1966, with job architect Gerald Goalen.⁹³ Andy Foster refers to this as one of Birmingham's best 1960s retail shopping development, which is a fair statement, though what he basis that judgement on is unclear. It is made of Portland stone, with slit windows over a recessed ground floor. Foster's account is one of few that discuss this location, hereon referred to as the Square. The site presents what could be considered a textbook example of Brutalism—concrete, geometric, large, with hints of an attempt at creating a social, equalizing open space (the square). For Brutalist structures built

⁹² Foster, 33; The other being the now torn down Library.

⁹³ Ibid.

following the early-mid 1960s, this represents the aesthetic change. The lack of discussion on this site represents a problem that will be addressed further in the following chapter on preservation.

The miscommunication in what the building is seems to stretch back to scholarship contemporary with its construction. In Pevsner's *The Building of England: Warwickshire* (1966) he describes a building called the Colonnade Development. The location described matches-- "large site bounded by Corporation Street, Bull Street, Dale End, and Priory Ringway." The architect is the same—Sir Frederick Gibberd. The date listed is 1963-5, which is roughly the same date as Foster's. The material description even matches. The only difference, which could severely influence research capability, is the name used. The current name used, Corporation Square or the Square, refer to its location and appearance—it is a square located on Corporation Street (the primary entrance is located on Corporation, at the very least). It does not appear different today than from Pevsner's description in 1966, "The architecture is a conscious (rather self-conscious) plain Portland stone contrast to the frantic use of materials elsewhere, e.g. in the Bull Ring. Bare walling, slit windows." ⁹⁴

The Ringway Centre, Bull Ring Shopping Centre, and the Birmingham Central Library represent the two phases of postwar reconstruction Birmingham experienced. The first phase provided necessary services with ties to the economy and rebuilding, such as stores. This is seen with the construction of the Ringway Centre, which is most closely aligned with the new Inner Ring Road, and the Bull Ring Shopping Centre. The Central Library represented the second phase of reconstruction, which provided a remodeling of available services. The existing library worked and the city could have made additions, however, they wanted a larger space. The case

⁹⁴ Pevsner, 124.

studies also were representative of the transformation of the interpretation of Brutalism. The Ringway Centre marks the influence of the Smithsons' approach with regards to an ethic with a basic aesthetic. The Bull Ring Shopping Centre served as a link between the ethical and the aesthetical approach. The Central Library culminated in an aesthetic approach.

Chapter 3: Preservation in Birmingham

One of the most important ways to experience architecture, and the history of a locality, is to walk around, see, and experience a building or sites. When we lose these, we lose history. Photos and documents can capture the formal qualities and people's experiences with the sites, but the physical presence cannot be captured. Architectural preservation is always an on-going battle, and always will be. Every person will have their own opinions on what to preserve, why something should be protected, how to conserve, and even whether to preserve in the first place. Brutalism is a hot topic in preservation debates currently. This is in part because Brutalism is coming on, and reaching, the unofficial/official fifty-year minimum requirement before being seriously considered for preservation action. Another reason, one that plays more into why there are debates, is the question of aesthetic quality. Brutalism is a very divisive style and it seems to be representative of "you either hate it or you love it" statements. The style takes on an underdog quality. There has been so much hate and dislike, that if no one stood up for it, it would be wiped clean from physical architectural landscapes. Birmingham prides itself on moving forward and being an ever-changing city. Because Birmingham does not have a strong historic past, like that of London, it allows for the city to adapt easier to proposed changes. Some of the preservation efforts in Birmingham have involved organizations from the local to the national level. The local and regional groups are the most involved with preservation.

People have a perception of how England appears. It often takes the form of architecture when Britain was the dominant empire, which ranges but the length of Victoria's rule was significant. English architecture is seen as being Neoclassical and Victorian—modern was not English. If it's not stone or brick nor influenced by past ages, then it should not be British. The irony is Brutalism is British.

For those who seek to remove Brutalism from Birmingham, their justifications lie with maintaining Victorian, and to an extent Edwardian, architecture. Birmingham cemented its status as a city during the nineteenth century, primarily through industrial and artistic production. The tension between technology and artistic production would result in the Arts and Crafts movement. The influence of the Arts and Crafts movement is seen in its architecture. The city is heavily decorated with red brick Victorian Gothic architecture. A.W.N. Pugin designed a church on the north side of the city center, called St. Chad's. One of the most famous Victorian Gothic examples in Birmingham was the Victorian Reference Library, designed by Martin & Chamberlain in 1865, and again following a fire in 1882 by J. H. Chamberlain.⁹⁵

Victorian architecture stands as an issue for preservation in Birmingham. The city pits the Victorian works, seen as traditional, against new works, seen as modern. Currently, the city seeks to define itself as an ever-changing, progressive city, however those in charge also want to maintain the city's Victorian past, by removing works deemed unsightly from sight. This issue is not unique to Birmingham, though. The rough appearance of concrete brings out strong opinions in those who experience it. Birmingham city councilors stated they wish to see the concrete removed simply because it is unappealing when it rains.⁹⁶ With the use of Brutalism in a heavily Victorian city as Birmingham, there are stark and drastic differences in the appearance of the city. The Victorian architecture used red brick in a Gothic revival style. The Brutalism that would come following reconstruction was gray, browns, and more natural, earth tones. There are some brick Brutalist buildings, but those still came under scrutiny.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Foster, 8-13, 20-23.

⁹⁶ "Don't Call Me a Philistine", Barry Henley, February 17, 2017, <https://www.birminghampost.co.uk/business/commercial-property/opinion-dont-call-philistine-12610312>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Organizations

The major preservation organization in England is Historic England, the statutory body over English Heritage.⁹⁸ For a building to be protected by the government at the highest level, it needs to be listed by Historic England. Historic England is a public body that seeks to “protect, champion, and save places that define who [they] are and where [they] have come from as a nation.”⁹⁹ They seek to ensure English heritage persists and that future generations can learn about their heritage and “historic environment”.¹⁰⁰ Historic England achieves these goals by advocating for places, identifying and protecting heritage, supporting change, understanding the places, and providing expertise at a local level.¹⁰¹ Historic England protects sites covering all of England’s history, even up to the present-day. Historic England protects buildings and site through legal protections.

Another important national organization is the Twentieth Century Society, also referred to as C20. The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979. The organizers recognized there was a “need for a specialized conservation society” that focused on the period following 1914, which was the limit of the scope of the Victorian Society.¹⁰² The Twentieth Century Society’s prime objectives are to conserve, protect, and educate. Education seems to be the primary objective. They state “with education comes appreciation”.¹⁰³ Under the Twentieth Century Society, there is a regional group, as well. It is C20 West Midlands. Their focus is the West Midlands region, but Birmingham and Coventry tend to be the major city centers of concentration.

⁹⁸ Official name is Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England.

⁹⁹ “What We Do”, *Historic England*, <https://historicengland.org.uk/about/what-we-do/>

¹⁰⁰ “What We Do” <https://historicengland.org.uk/about/what-we-do/historic-englands-role/>

¹⁰¹ “What We Do” <https://historicengland.org.uk/about/what-we-do/historic-englands-role/>

¹⁰² “About Us”, *Twentieth Century Society*, <https://c20society.org.uk/about-us/>

¹⁰³ Ibid.

There are two local, grassroots organizations. One of the local groups, arguably the most prominent local group, is called Brutiful Birmingham. Mary Keating, the leader behind the group, often writes op-ed pieces on behalf of the organization and herself. The group is organized primarily through social media, where membership is open to anyone who is concerned.¹⁰⁴ Within the social media pages, members share photos of architecture around the city or they share news about existing structures. Another local group is the Birmingham Modernists. Membership between the two seems to blend together—architects, practitioners, and those who are interested make up the organizations' membership.

The city council, while not an organization as the above are, is still highly influential in the conservation of Brutalism. As part of the planning committee, a conservation and heritage panel was created. The intersection of conservation, politics, and architecture creates issues. The city councillors' involvement highlight the bigger picture of political influences. Despite the few vocal anti-Brutalist councillors, there are opposing councillors, such as Fiona Williams, who has come out and expressed her frustration at the failures to list and save Brutalist architecture. She stated that, "Every generation should be able to leave their mark, even if it is not well executed."¹⁰⁵ She also serves on the conversation and heritage panel.

Preservation in Birmingham

There are many issues surrounding the preservation for postwar buildings, despite the groups that are actively working. The primary issue in preservation is the people, city councillors and those in powerful political positions in particular. The total number of councillors who dislike the Brutalist structures is unknown, but there are few vocal ones. As in many cases, the

¹⁰⁴ "Brutiful Birmingham", <https://www.facebook.com/Brutiful-Birmingham-139223999758814/>.

¹⁰⁵ "Don't Call Me a Philistine", Barry Henley, February 17, 2017, <https://www.birminghampost.co.uk/business/commercial-property/opinion-dont-call-philistine-12610312>.

few vocal may just represent a minority, however, their comments are echoed across communities across the country. A lack of understanding, or respecting the past, plays into not preserving. It becomes difficult to argue for the preservation of buildings that are deemed less than the ideal when the ideal is demolished. The “less than” now represents the best a city has to offer, which may not be a good example, leading to people pushing further for a building’s removal. Councillors seem to want to update and modernize the city. Updating the city means they leave a mark of contemporary times, however, that is coming at the loss of previous buildings. It becomes the cycle of the Victorian Library versus the Madin Library.

The Birmingham Central Library was the focus of a major preservation debate, that extended outside of the city. As a result, the Central library has dominated the discussion on preservation of Brutalism in Birmingham. In the “Listing Selection Guide: Culture and Entertainment Buildings”, Historic England mentions the Birmingham library, stating “[t]he humane and practical qualities of modern libraries with their wide range of facilities and extensive artworks like Holborn (opened 1960) and Birmingham (1969-1973) have yet to be fully appreciated.”¹⁰⁶ The listing process for libraries is determined by their time periods, in which they were constructed, whether nineteenth-century, inter-war, and postwar. For postwar construction, the guide states:

The postwar period favoured a more informal style and image for libraries. Detailing is often subtle, and the survival of planning details such as vistas and fixtures of high quality will boost the case. Look for balconies, reference sections and a meeting room, perhaps with a café and heraldic or artistic decoration. Group value with other civic buildings may be a factor too.¹⁰⁷

The Birmingham Central Library fits this description. It was not decorated, and there were balconies, along with the larger building being a reference library itself. The Library was rejected

¹⁰⁶ “Listing Selson Guide: Culture and Entertainment Buildings”, *Historic England*, pg 5.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

three times for listing, though reasons are unknown. The first listing attempt took place in 2003, but the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment disagreed with the listing, calling the Library an “example of failed planning with little to distinguish it from other competent municipal designs of the time.”¹⁰⁸ The second attempt at listing was in 2008. This time, the reasons for listing were the boldness and monumental scale of the building; the architectural quality; the library’s importance to Birmingham; the library represented a period of rebuilding during Birmingham that is being quickly lost; and “it is unique.”¹⁰⁹

A guide published by Historic England, states that the Library was to begin demolition once the replacement was built, since the existing Library was “rejected for listing against English Heritage advice”.¹¹⁰ Coun Fiona Williams claimed Historic England did not help as much as they could have to help protect the Library.¹¹¹ However since the organization fought to list the Library on three separate occasions, Historic England appears to have been as involved as they could have been.

Councillor Barry Henley, once chairman of the conservation and heritage panel stated, “You can’t simply say ‘keep a John Madin building because it’s a Madin building’ if nobody will rent it, nobody will occupy it—there’s not point it being derelict.”¹¹² The councillor would happen to be somewhat correct in his assessment—buildings should not be saved purely because they were done by an architect, however, where he diverges from this understanding is he focuses heavily on the financial and economic reuse of a building.

If you knock down a tatty bullring with low ceilings and which is non-navigable, general horrible and no anchor tenants like a department store,

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in “The Un-Necessary Monument?”, 113.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 114.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Neil Elkes, “Birmingham’s Better Off”, November 28, 2016 <https://www.birminghampost.co.uk/news/regional-affairs/birminghams-better-without-tatty-1960s-12238050>

¹¹² Neil Elkes, “Birmingham’s Better Off”

and build a better one that everybody wants to go to, there's a net gain there. I don't think people should to keep things fossilized when you can improve them.¹¹³

He disregards heritage in lieu of usability. Another factor in the debates is the upkeep and the utility of Brutalism. Coun Barry Henley rightly addresses this issue. He also stated:

We are better off now that the NatWest building in Colmore Row has been demolished, we're better off now the Central Library has gone. What we can regret is that the central before that, the Victorian one, was not preserved. We're actually correcting a mistake by getting rid of that (1970s) one.¹¹⁴

This mentality places the blame on the building itself, rather than on those who were in charge. Destroying the 1970s library did not, and will not, bring back the Victorian Library. If practitioners were to use this method, destroying what came after because it led to the destruction of the predecessor, then very few buildings would stand. Though exteriors may differ, the stories are the same. Often a new library is built to replace a previous (or non-existing) library, then becomes too small for the holdings, it is eventually destroyed.

Birmingham lost two prominently labelled examples of Brutalism—now the best examples are sites that did not previously compare. Using local architects was a deliberate choice by the city. Those architects are familiar with the city and approached the designs with good intentions, along with design *ala mode*. Coun Barry Henley wrote a retort, titled “Don't call me a philistine”.¹¹⁵ He defends his stance and claims he appreciates modern architecture. Henley claims Brutalism does not have the “elegance and beautiful lines of Modernism.”¹¹⁶ Larkham quotes the Chairman of Birmingham Civic Society, Freddie Glick, who stated, “Visitors to the city . . . are confronted with this import from post-revolution Russia . . .”¹¹⁷ Glick's comments

¹¹³ *ibid*

¹¹⁴ Elkes, Birmingham Better Off

¹¹⁵ “Don't Call Me a Philistine”, Barry Henley, February 17, 2017.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

highlight the misunderstanding of what constitutes Brutalism. It is an English architectural style, akin to Arts and Crafts, though without the emphasis on historicism. The Birmingham Central Library was celebrated by historians and architects for its clean line work, executing the influences from Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn, and for the functionally designed interior. The Birmingham Central Library was designed in respect to the architecture surrounding Chamberlain Square where the Town Hall and City Council chambers are located. The Town Hall was built in 1830s in a Greek temple style, while the City Council building is a Neoclassical design building.

Even with attention the Birmingham Central Library received, Birmingham councillors are still pushing for removal, or drastic changes, to Brutalist buildings. The Ringway Centre is one of the next major targets for “modernization” for the city center (Figure 36). New proposals do not change the building itself, other than adding two tall towers. The façade is what makes Smallbrook the building it is today. The primary motivation for changes to Smallbrook are aesthetic, as is often the case with Brutalist structures. Coun Gareth Moore stated “he could not wait to see it go . . . ‘It’s horrendous. It’s a God-awful building, it has no architectural merit. Concrete is not suitable for these buildings.’”¹¹⁸ The Ringway Centre, however, does have architectural merit. The building represents the first phase of reconstruction by a local architect. Roberts played with the façade. He used op art as part of the exterior, with projecting curved light troughs and the store fronts are recessed.

Some councillors have also suggested recladding the Ringway Centre, using Madin’s 123 Hagley Rd Offices as the example of how it could work. At Madin’s offices, the current exterior

¹¹⁸ Neil Elkes, “Brutalist Smallbrook Queensway Approved for Demolition”, January 20, 2017, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/brutalist-smallbrook-queensway-approved-demolition-12478584>

resembles the original appearance. It also blends better with Birmingham architecture, as it is constructed out of brick. Recladding or changing the exterior of the Ringway Centre would change the Centre's appearance, thereby losing its character. James Roberts purposefully designed Smallbrook to appear the way it does.¹¹⁹

Councillors have spoken out against Smallbrook Queensway, though not to the level and intensity that they spoke out against the Central Library. Few have defended it, as well. The local organizations, Brutiful Birmingham and the Birmingham Modernists, along with Twentieth Century Society West Midlands, have not spoken much about what was occurring with the Ringway Centre as of late. The Central Library still dominates preservation conversations groups, primarily Brutiful Birmingham.

Of the case studies mentioned in the previous chapter, the Bull Ring Shopping Centre is not part of the discussion on preservation currently. This is in part because the Bull Ring Centre was replaced by a more “modern” appearing mall. The Bull Ring's replacement offers a glance into the vision the councillors have for the city and provides a potential insight into how the city sees itself and its future, which is being realized by the new Library of Birmingham, as well. The 1950s Bull Ring Shopping Centre was demolished around the turn of the millennium.¹²⁰ The main feature of the new Bullring is “The Blob” (Figures 37-39). The Selfridges Blob can be seen as being prestigious because Selfridges only has a few brick and mortar stores.¹²¹ The Blob relates no more or less than the Brutalist structures to the existing Victorian fabric. If the councillors can approve and accept an amorphous retail store, then why do concrete structures have to come down? They may need maintenance, but many building materials do as well. The

¹¹⁹ Harwood, 323.

¹²⁰ “Historian Says Bullring Lacks Heart”. BBC News. September 4, 2003.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/west_midlands/3078514.stm.

¹²¹ “Our Stores”, *Selfridges*, <http://www.selfridges.com/US/en/features/info/stores/Birmingham>.

Blob is not the only contemporary modern structure. The new library, called the Library of Birmingham, is a series of boxes, stacked on top of one another in tiers, like a square wedding cake, decorated with metal ornamentation (Figure 31). The design of the new Library recalls Madin's, with a rectangular form and an open center, travelling up the levels.

People may applaud themselves for replacing "outdated" structures with modern iterations, but they are working within the zeitgeist, just as architects were doing during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. By looking back at postwar buildings with contempt, councillors (and others who want the buildings removed) work in an anachronistic mindset. By interpreting and recognizing the city as a place that tries to adapt to circumstances, it allows to view certain buildings with more respect to their function. The Central Library was one of the biggest libraries built in western Europe and it was cutting edge at the time in its design. It was such a commodity that *The Architect's Journal* wrote an article on the library. Today, public libraries serving as cultural centers are not revolutionary, which means by viewing the past with a current-day lens, the meaning of the building is lost. Styles and tastes change.

Brutalism in Birmingham has not been included in discussions of postwar reconstruction. Birmingham, however, has a lot to offer to discussions. As the city worked independently from the central government to rebuild, Birmingham controlled its own narrative. It offered an example of local government involved with reconstruction. Birmingham created its own identity and appearance as a result. The loss of these buildings removes the city's postwar heritage. Though Brutalism is a divisive approach to architecture, seen primarily as a style, it still holds importance as a now historic approach. It was, and is, representative of education and practice at the time, along with a sense of overcoming adversity and destruction.

Conclusion

Brutalism in Birmingham is facing rough times. Two of the three buildings have been lost, with the third being threatened. The Brutalist examples used are and were not the sole examples in the city. These buildings deserve recognition as well. Birmingham has a variety of concrete and brick Brutalist structures. Though these structures are not currently under threat, because they are lesser known, they could very well fall under the wrecking ball. The Birmingham Central Library was arguably one of the best buildings in Birmingham and because it was outdated and unadaptable, it came down. If a prominent building for the city, and the nation, can be torn down because it cannot be changed and/or it is considered unattractive, then where does that leave buildings with little merit to be saved, other than their age? By removing the best Brutalist example in the city center, the current best example is not the best Birmingham has to offer.

Birmingham's had two reconstruction phases. The first served to rebuild the city and provide necessary changes the city had been seeking. The second phase was a more cosmetic approach. Cultural centers, such as the Library, were built. This coincides with the shift in Brutalism from the Smithsons, New Brutalism, and an ethical approach, to an exposed concrete appearance. When Brutalism began with the Smithsons, there was a conscious approach to design with a basic aesthetic appearance, called a "warehouse aesthetic" by the Smithsons. Over time, as the term was being used more by those not within the Smithsons circle, Brutalism came to represent an aesthetic. This aesthetic is not as cohesive as one might see with Neoclassicism, but rather through the use of material, best seen with concrete in large-scale designs.

If the buildings are not known about, because of a lack of inclusion in scholarship, these buildings could be the next to fall. If the Birmingham Central Library, a respect and/or well-known building can come down, then any can. The use of Brutalism throughout the city, and by

multiple architects shows the style was definitively in full force. There are examples of Brutalism in cities, but sometimes those quick mentions are treated as asides, rather than a main idea—Brutalism was present in postwar Britain.

Birmingham is often left out of discussions on postwar architecture. The city, however, exemplified self-expression using architectural styles that were popular and defining during reconstruction. By removing those buildings, the city is left with no visual record of its history. If a statue of Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson, who only visited Birmingham, can continue to be on display, then buildings directly tied to Birmingham's history have the right to exist, as well.

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Illustrations

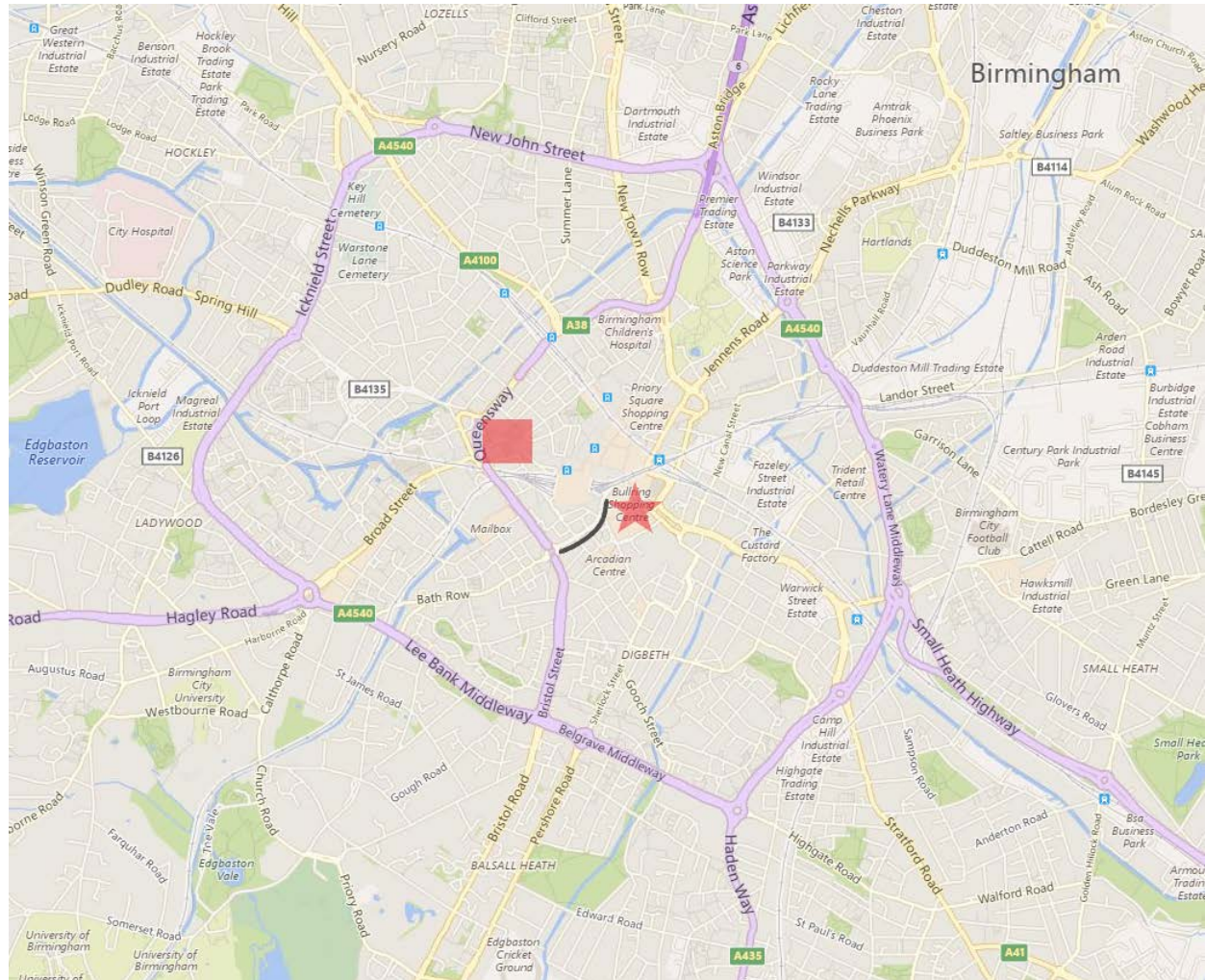


Figure 1: Location of case study sites. The red star is the Bull Ring Shopping Centre. The black line is the Ringway Centre. The red square is the Birmingham Central Library. Image taken from Bing Maps.



Figure 2: Map of hit locations, with the Bull and Big Top in red. Image from Library of Birmingham, Local History LF75.82



Figure 3: Map of England, with the West Midlands county highlighted. Image taken from Wikipedia, By Nilfanion

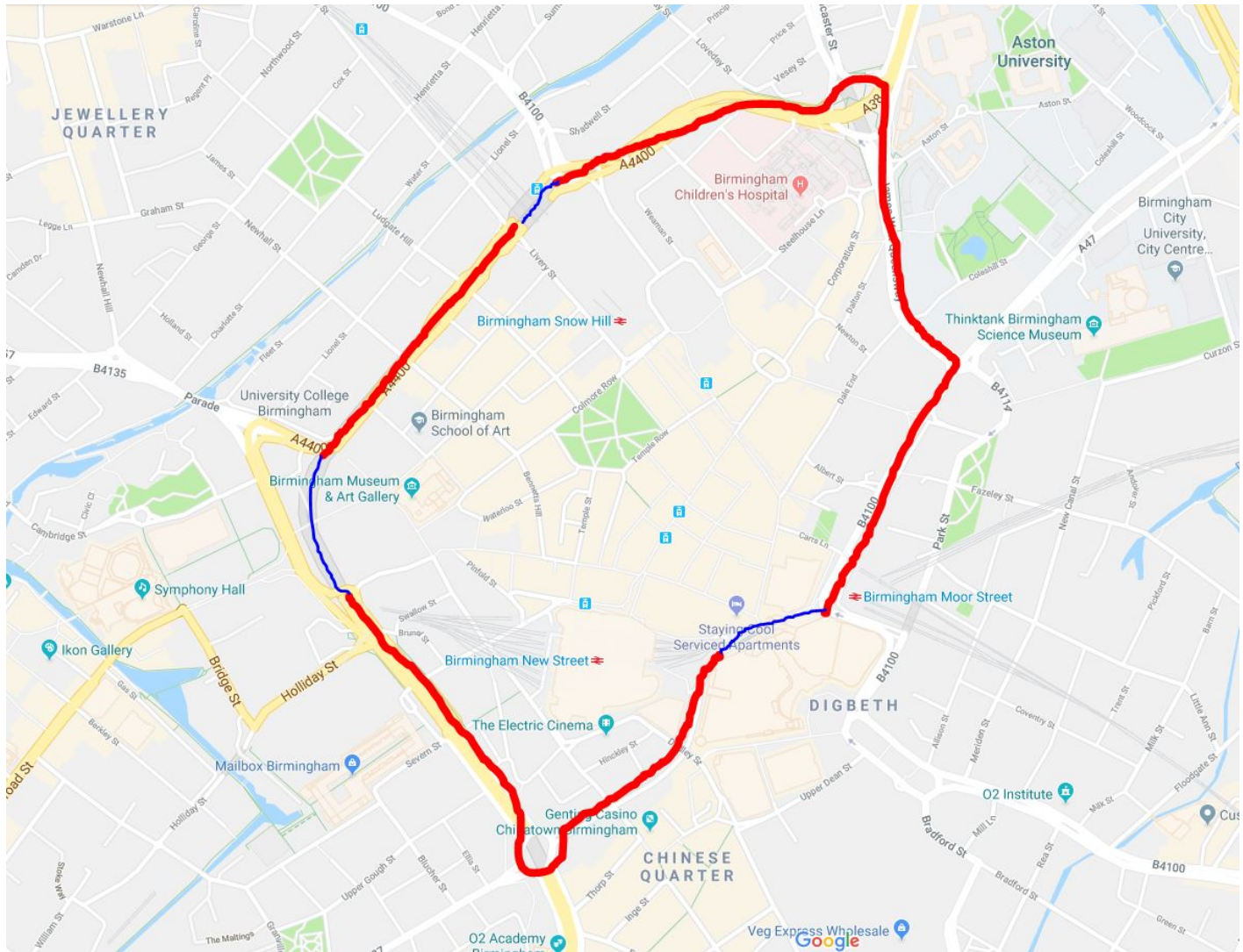


Figure 6: Inner Ring Road. Blue lines represent tunnels. Bing Maps and author

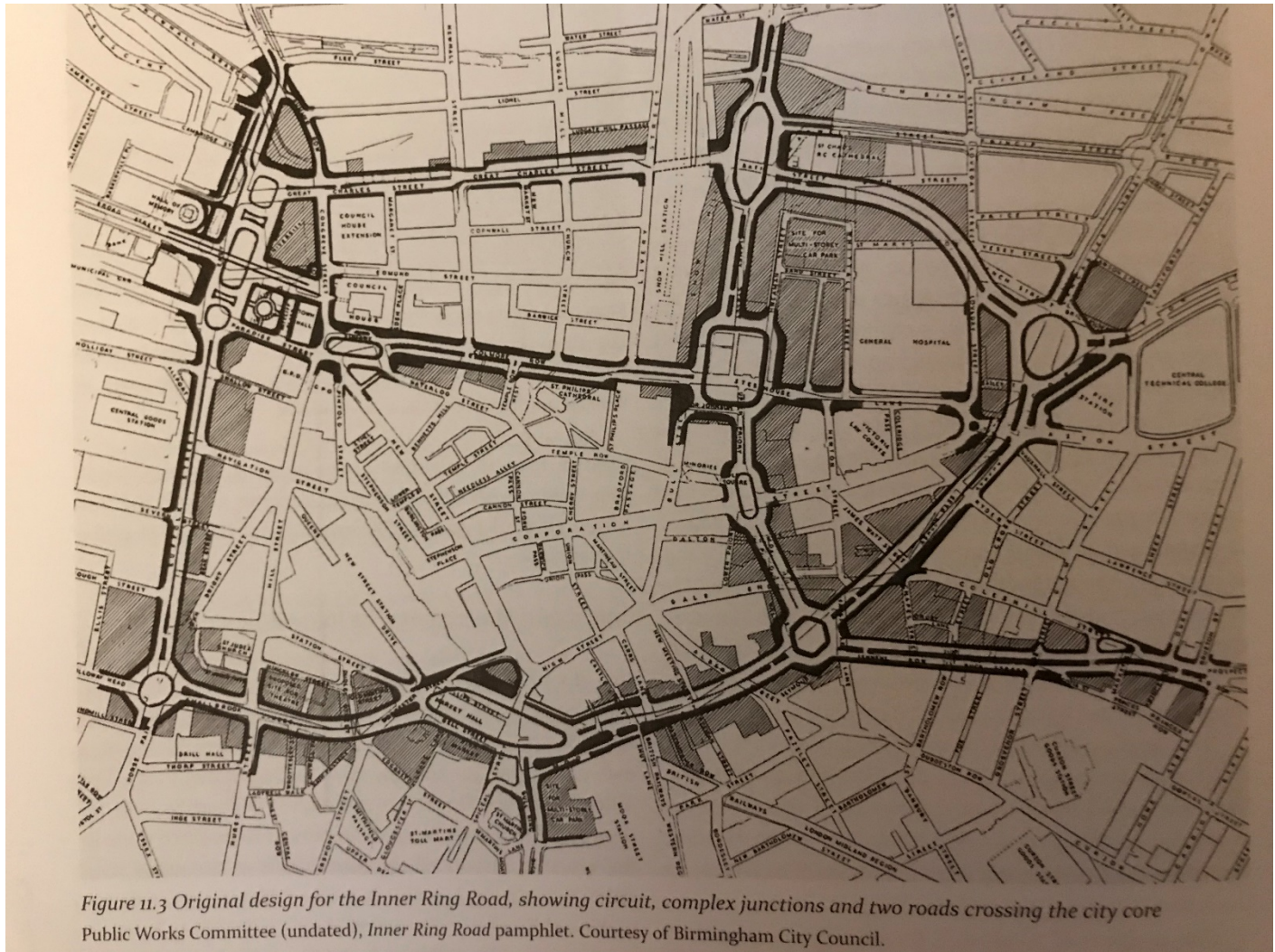


Figure 7: Inner Ring Road plan from possibly 1943. Image of David Adams and Peter Larkham's chapter.



Figure 8: Bull Ring under construction in 1961. Image taken from City of Birmingham Public Works Committee, Inner Ring Road Scheme, July 17, 1961.



Figure 9: Bull Ring open air market, c. 1978. Image from Warwickshire Geographic Survey WK/B11/6348

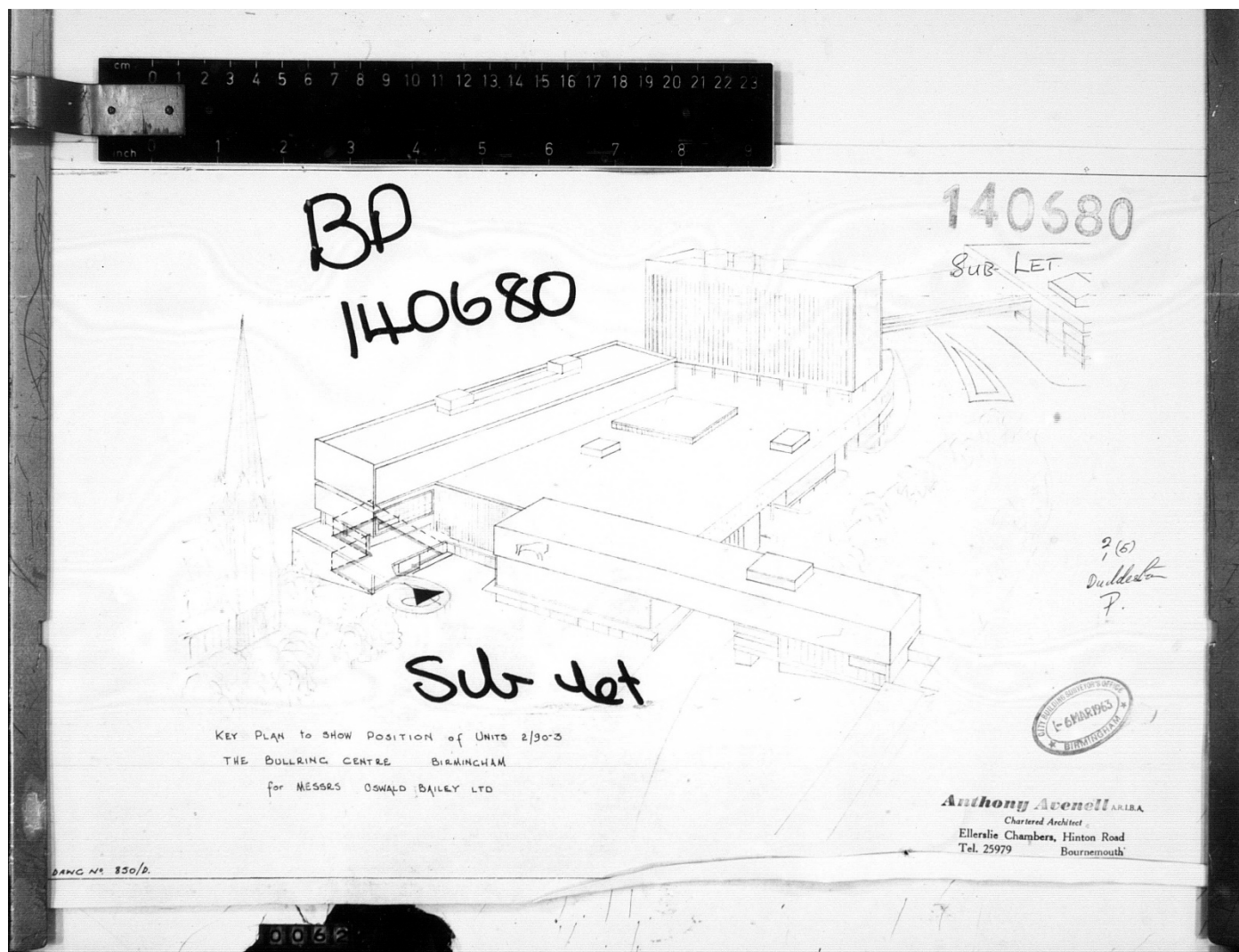


Figure 10: Overview of site. City of Birmingham BBP 140680: Bull Ring Centre Reel 1.

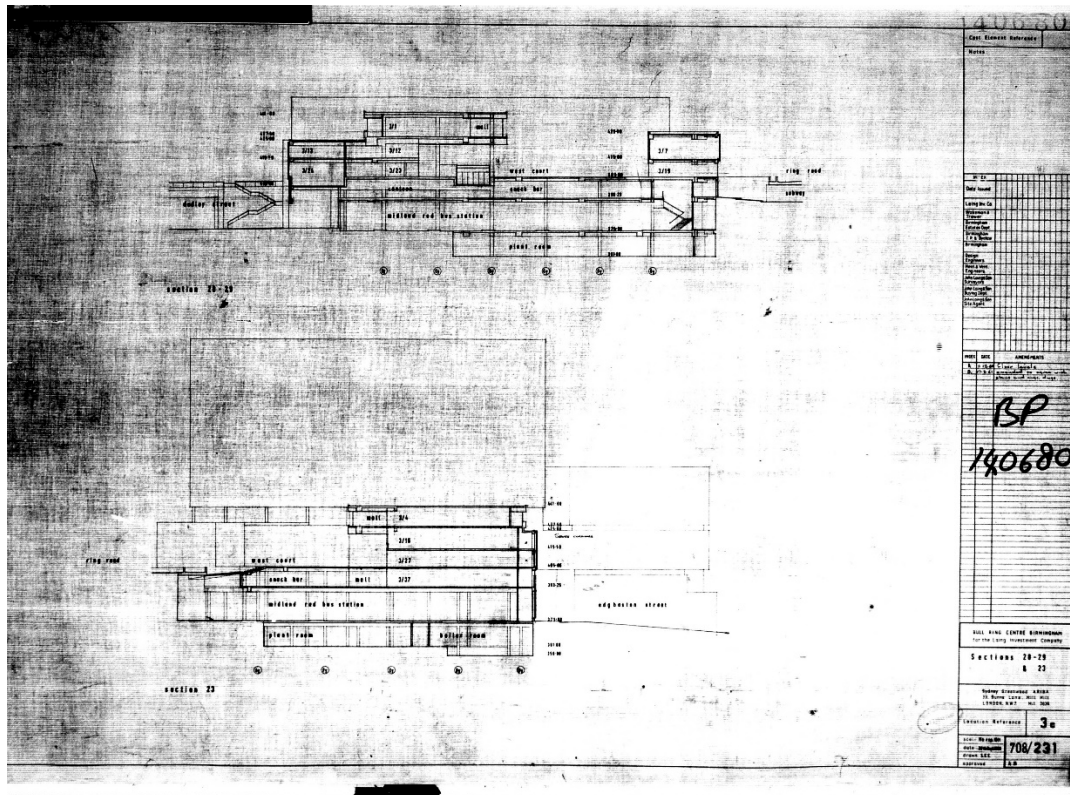


Figure 11: Example of a section. City of Birmingham BBP 140680: Bull Ring Centre Reel 1.

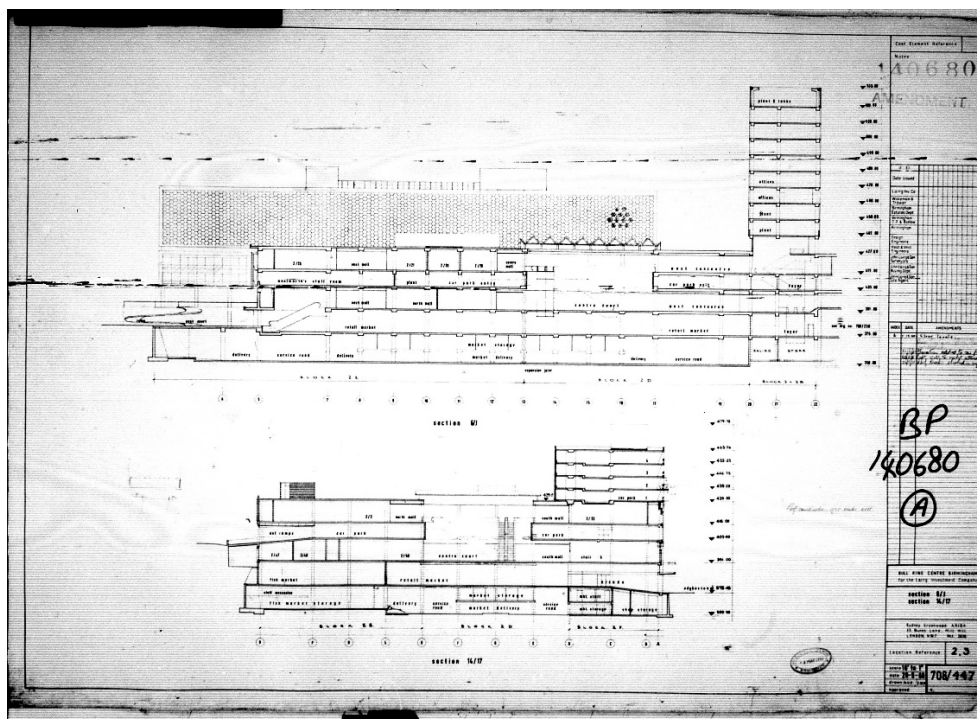


Figure 12: Example of a section. City of Birmingham BBP 140680: Bull Ring Centre Reel 1.



Figure 13: Ringway Centre in the background, with the Bull Ring Shopping Centre in the foreground. Image taken by Phyllis Nicklin in 1966. University of Birmingham.



Figure 14: Ringway Centre to the right of the photo. The curve of the building is shown. Image taken by Phyllis Nicklin in 1966. University of Birmingham.



Figure 15: Ringway Centre. The projecting lights are better seen from this angle, along with the play of space. Image taken by Phyllis Nicklin in 1966. University of Birmingham.



Figure 16: Close-up of bridge linking two halves of the Ringway Centre. Image taken by Phyllis Nicklin in 1966. University of Birmingham.



Figure 17: Etching of Birmingham Central Library, image from Birmingham & Five Counties Architectural Association Trust (B&FCAA Trust)



Figure 18: Exterior of Birmingham Central Library, image from "Birmingham Central Library Timeline", BBC
<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-23081886>

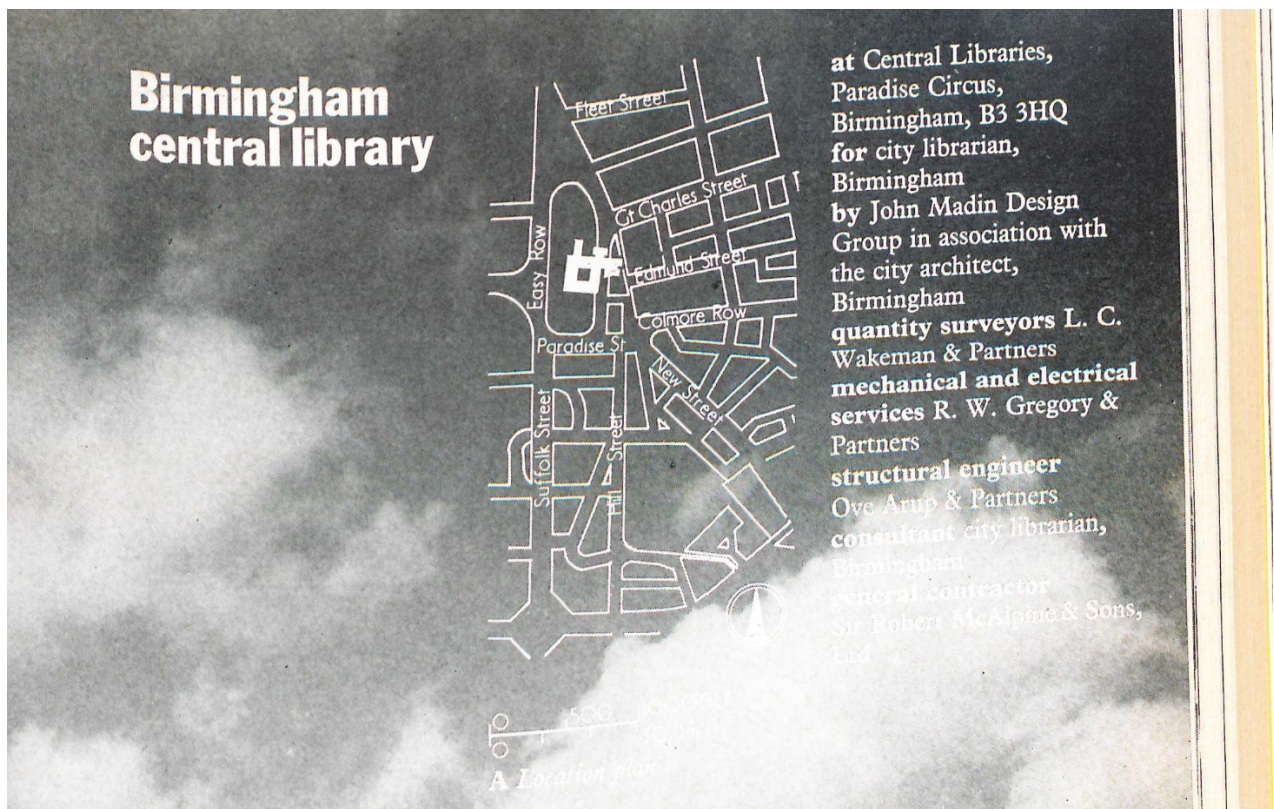


Figure 19: City plan with Library site, taken from Architect's Journal, issue 159, June 1974.

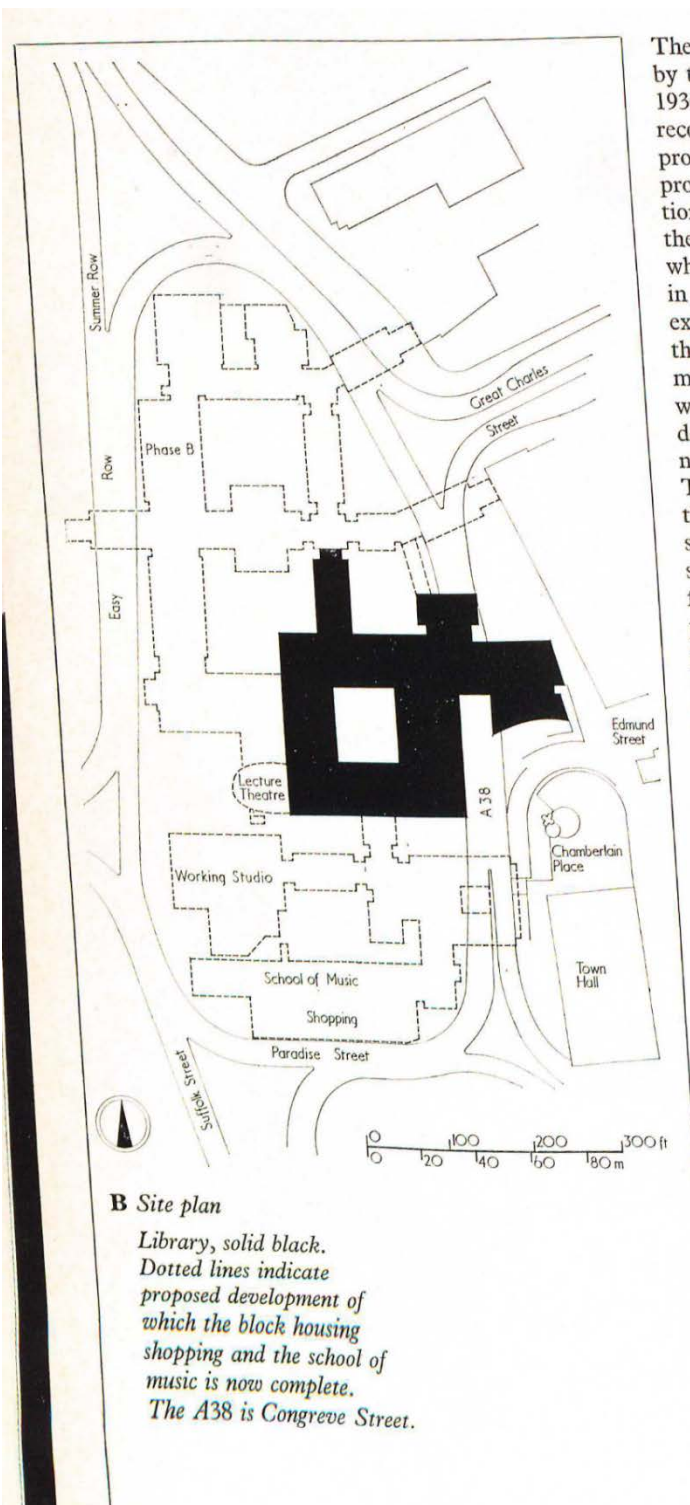


Figure 20: Site plan, taken from Architect's Journal, issue 159, June 1974.

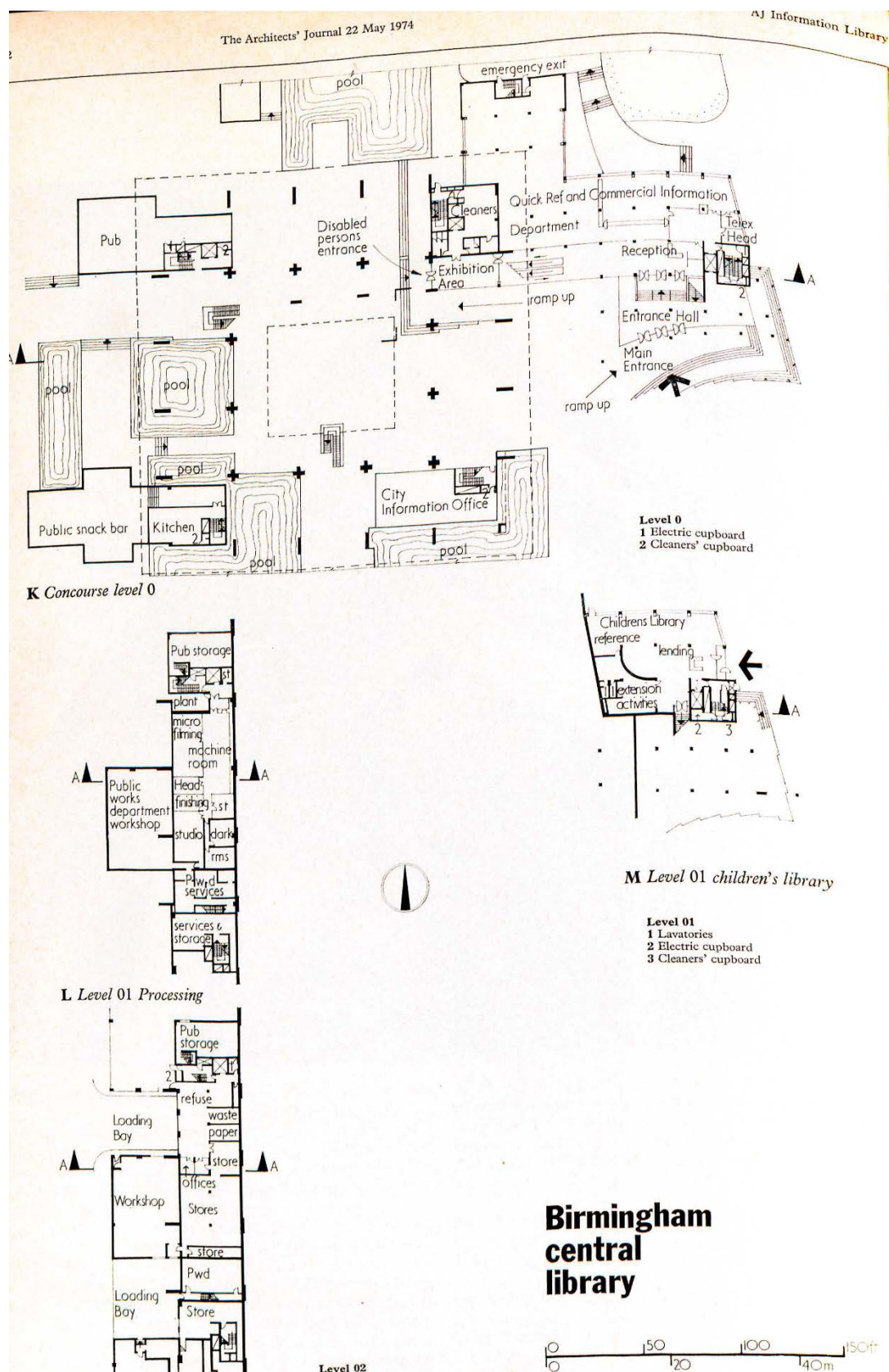


Figure 21: Plan, taken from Architect's Journal, issue 159, June 1974.

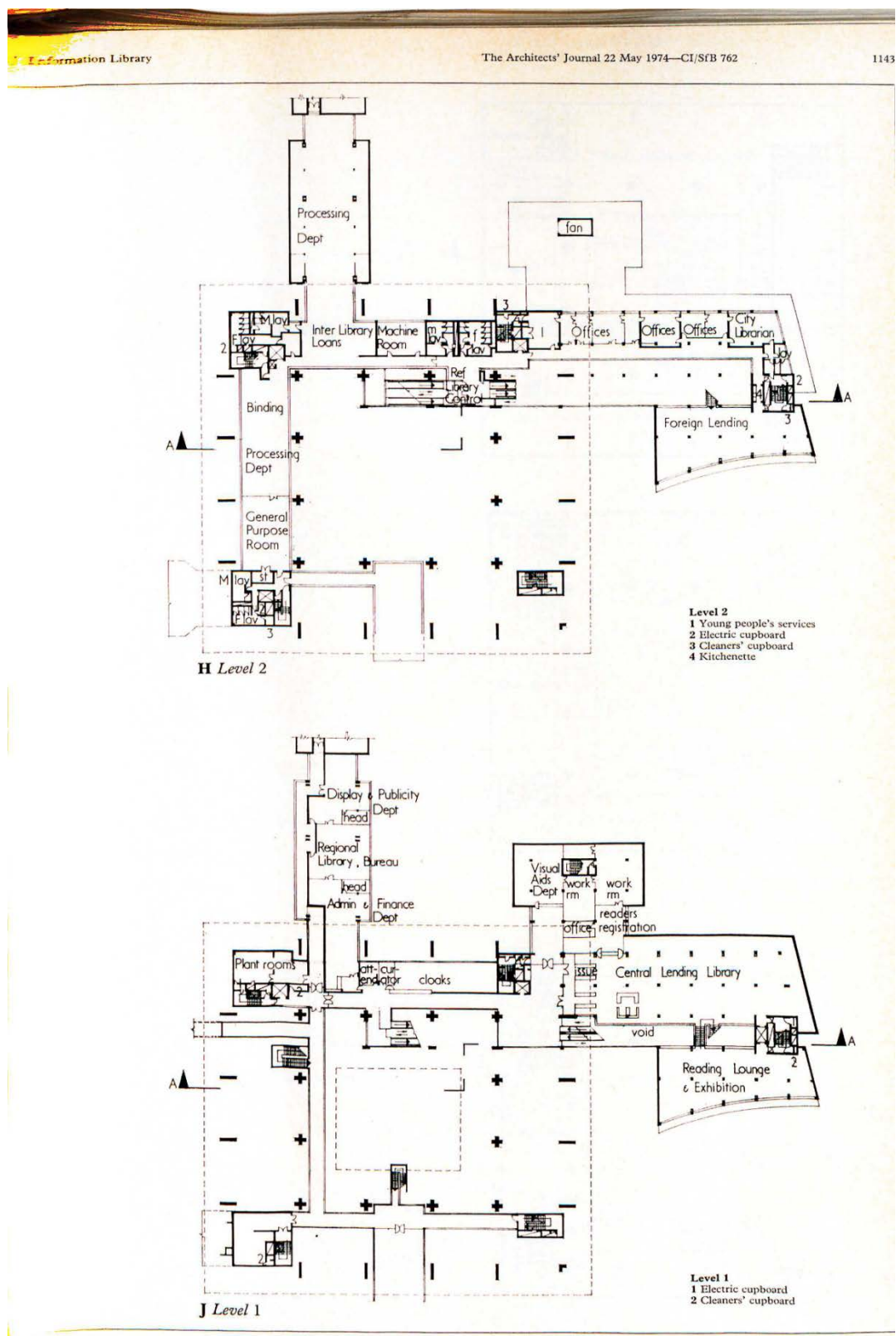


Figure 22: Plan, taken from Architect's Journal, issue 159, June 1974.

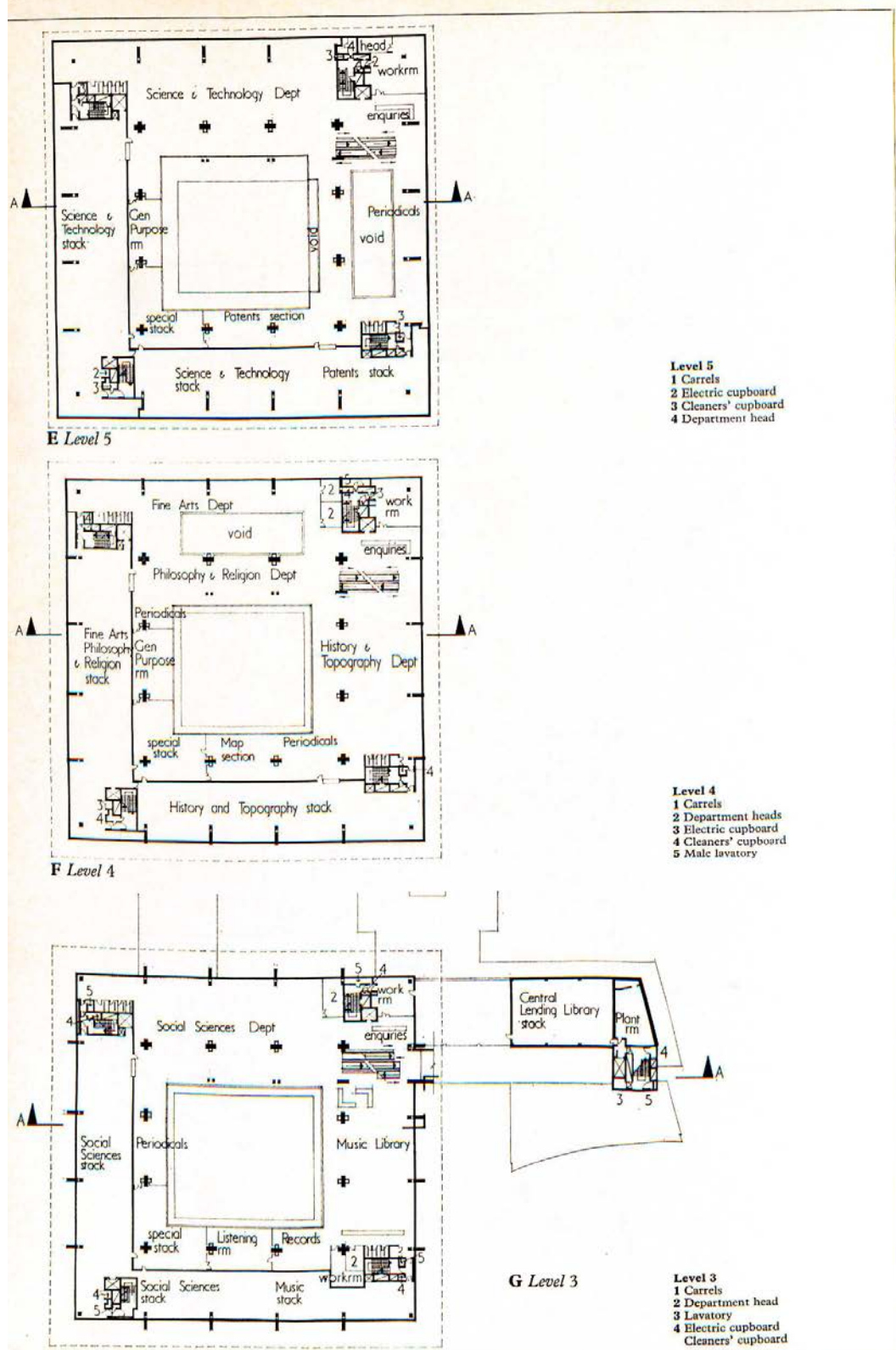


Figure 23: Plan, taken from Architect's Journal, issue 159, June 1974

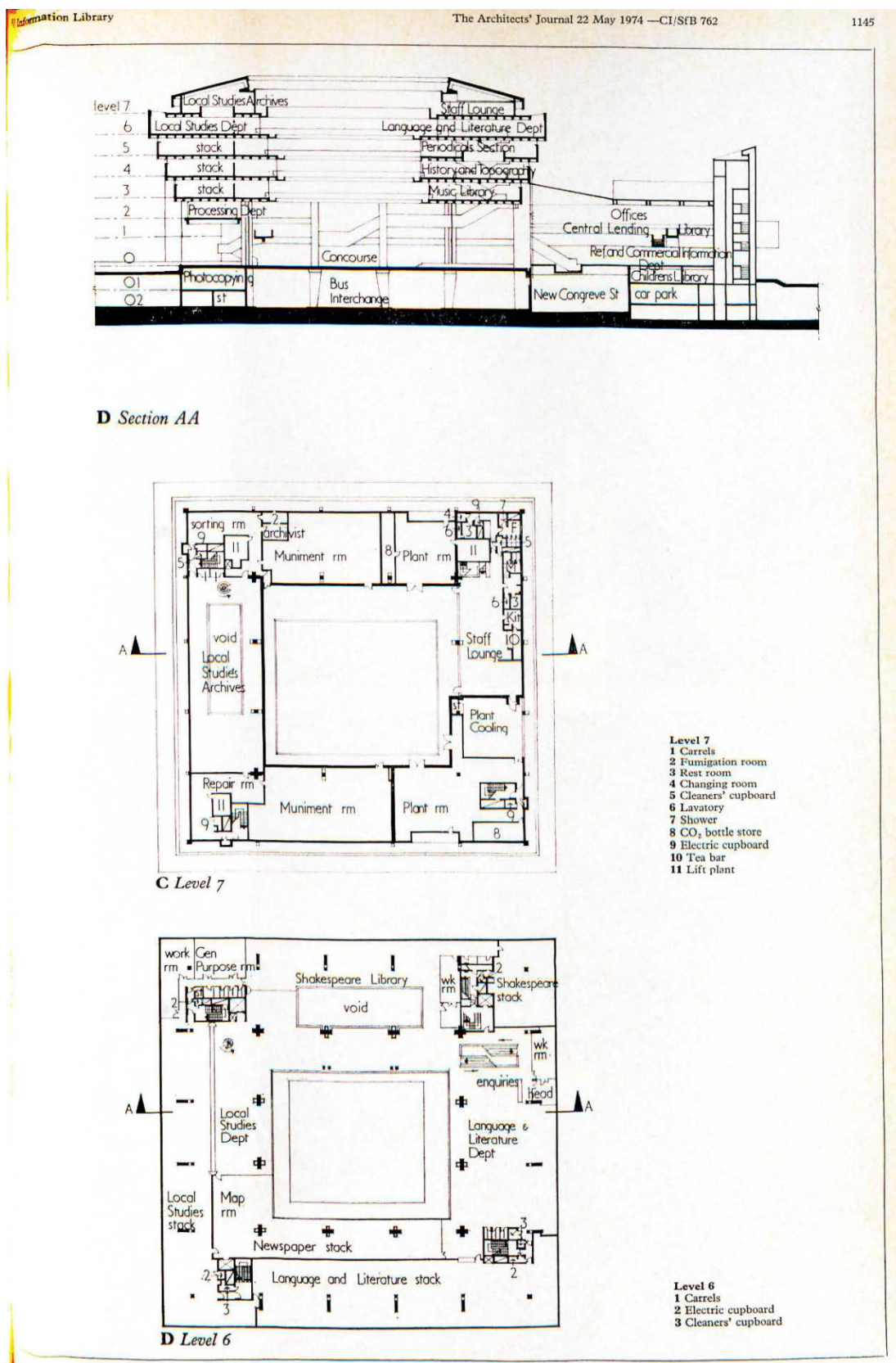


Figure 24: Section and plan, taken from Architect's Journal, issue 159, June 1974

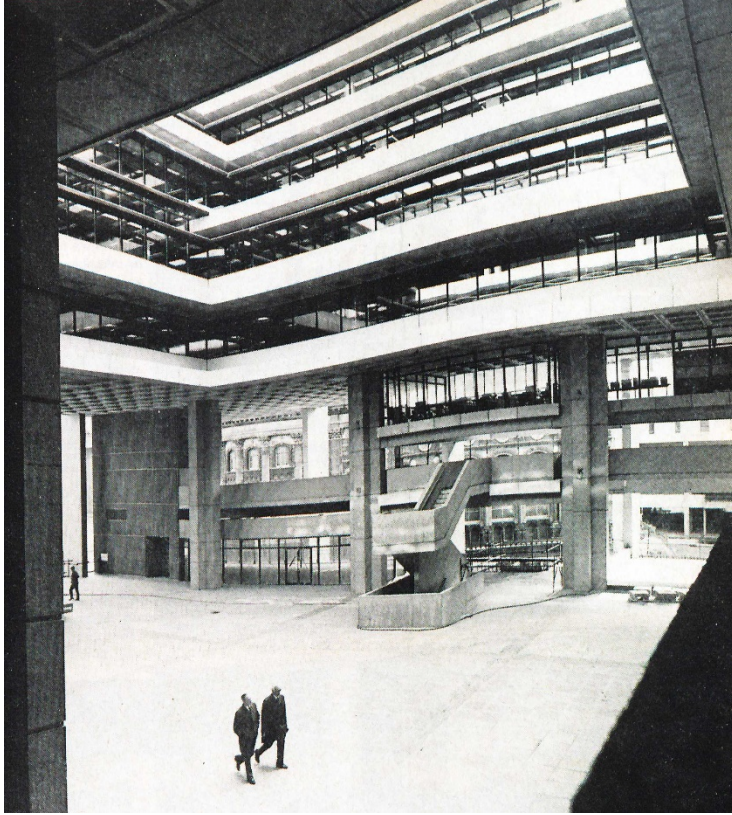


Figure 25: Interior courtyard, taken from *Architect's Journal*, issue 159, June 1974

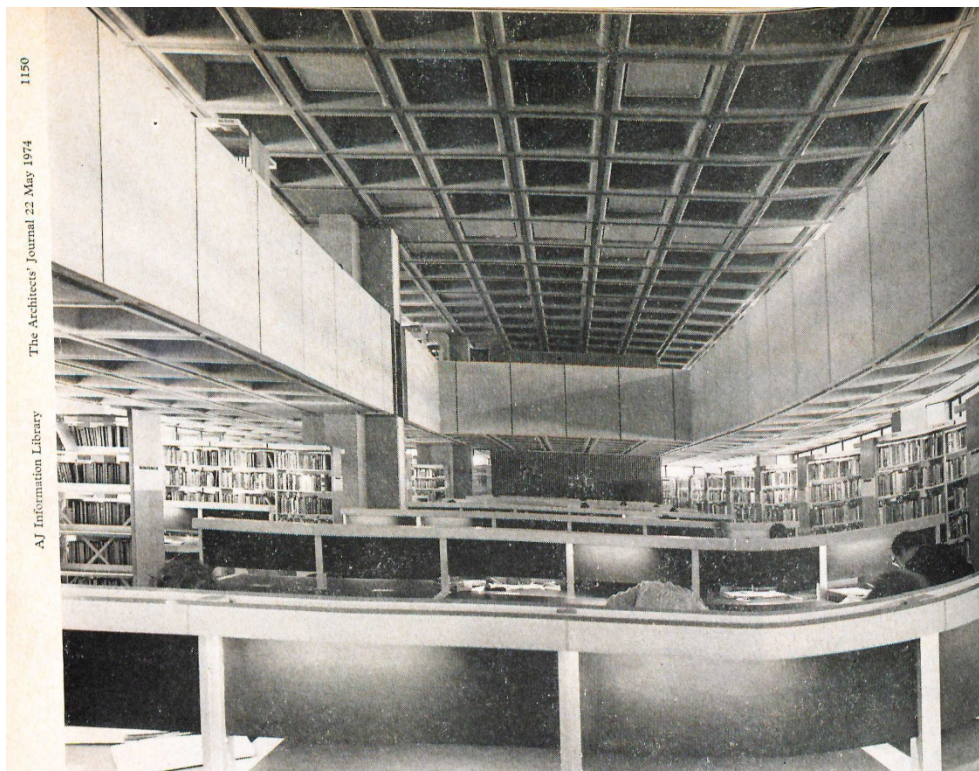


Figure 262: Interior, room with balconies, taken from *Architect's Journal*, issue 159, June 1974

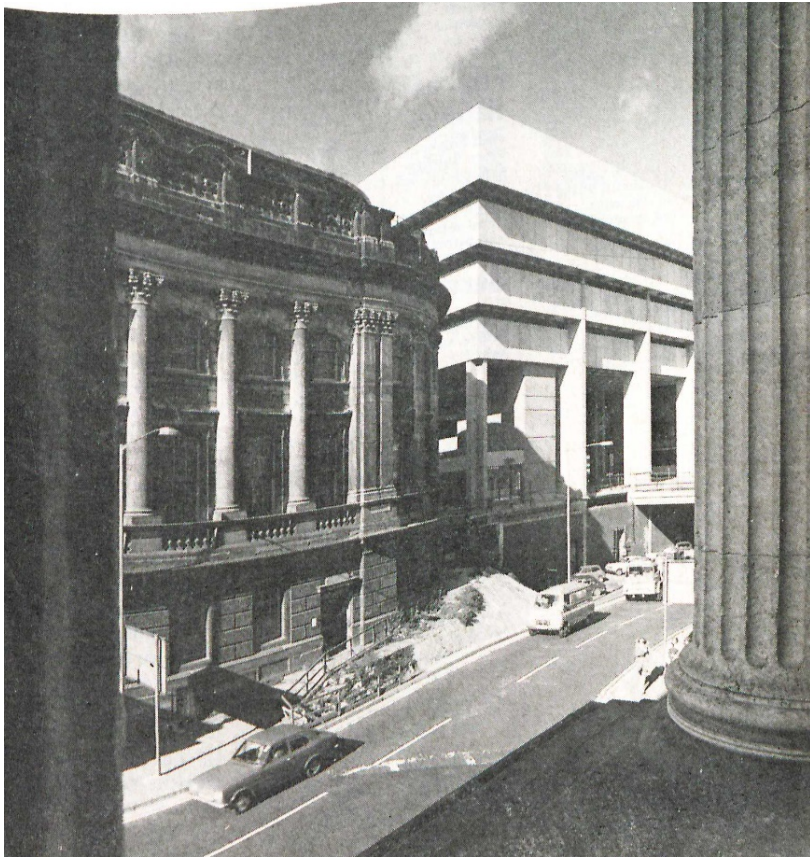


Figure 27: Exterior of Library, taken from Architect's Journal, issue 159, June 1974



Figure 28: Exterior, eaves of ziggurat, taken from Architect's Journal, issue 159, June 1974



Figure 29: Birmingham Repertory Theatre, image from Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/art/repertory-theatre>



Figure 30: Corporation Square, image taken by author



Figure 31: New Library of Birmingham, image taken by author



Figure 32: Former site of Central Library, image taken by author



Figure 33: Former site of Central Library, image taken by author



Figure 34: Birmingham Central Library during demolition, image from the Institution of Civil Engineers
<https://www.ice.org.uk/news-and-insight/the-civil-engineer/august-2016/deconstructing-a-landmark-bham-central-library>



Figure 35: 123 Hagley Road, JMDG Offices, image from Birmingham & Five Counties Architectural Association Trust (B&FCAA Trust)



Figure 36: Smallbrook Queensway proposal, image from Norr, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/business/smallbrook-queensway-demolition-set-go-12445340>



Figure 37: Aerial of new Bullring. By West Midlands Police - Flickr: Can you identify this aerial shot?, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17218546>



Figure 38: Selfridges, photo taken by author



*Figure 39: Selfridges, facing towards the church. Image by Chris Hepburn,
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/business/business-energy/11459002/birmingham-bullring-retail-powerhouse.html>*