

RETAIL BID BIRMINGHAM EDIT

FREE QUARTERLY: SPRING 2017



2017 events:
We want
you to get
involved

DATES FOR
THE DIARY:
PAGES 4 & 5



INDEPENDENT THINKING

WE MEET THREE UNIQUE CITY CENTRE BUSINESSES EXPANDING AND INNOVATING

EDIT magazine is brought to you by



Retail Birmingham is the Business Improvement District (BID) for Birmingham city centre's retail area and has been supporting its members since 2007, promoting, enhancing and developing the shopping and leisure experience in the city centre.

While the retail environment is forever changing with the challenge of shopping online, the Retail BID firmly believes in supporting the shopping experience delivered by retailers in the city centre, maintaining Birmingham's position as the regional capital for shopping.

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FROM THE EDITOR



These are interesting and exciting times for historic New Street as key people come to the table to begin the process of giving it a new lease of life.

Retailers clearly see its potential, as the building work to open a H&M in place of the old BHS store gathers pace, along with several other openings and launches in recent months; most notably tech giant Apple at the junction with Corporation Street.

This is the oldest and most well-known street in town and its buildings and public spaces should reflect this. One hopes the first New Street Summit (see opposite) set the wheels in motion for a new New Street.

Meanwhile, Metro Mayors are on the agenda with candidates campaigning to win your vote on Thursday, May 4.

This is an entirely new role for the West Midlands and each of the six mayoral hopefuls are campaigning for support with different ambitions and priorities they believe the region should be tackling.

I interviewed Conservative candidate Andy Street to ask him how his extensive career in retail as the boss of John Lewis would benefit city centre businesses and help them tackle the issues they face, should he be successful on May 4. Read his responses on Pages 8 and 9.

Finally, a big congratulations to Great Western Arcade store Loki Wine, which was named business of the year at one of the biggest awards bashes in the city.

Loki is a great example of what retailers can achieve through innovation, fresh thinking and great products and it is great to see the team being recognised for this.

Stacey Barnfield

FROM RETAIL BIRMINGHAM



As we start our third term it's also the 10-year anniversary of the Retail BID and during this time we have seen significant change in the city centre and the retail industry.

Birmingham is going through a period of strong growth with more businesses and importantly more people moving to the city, to live, work and study.

In 2016 Birmingham welcomed the highest number of visitors on record, with tourist numbers reaching 39 million and tourism revenue hitting an all time high of £6.5 billion. As we look forward to the next five years, we plan to attract more shoppers and visitors to the city centre through engaging digital campaigns, activities and events and to

continue to support you.

There's soon to be a new Retail BID board in place and some exciting team changes, which we'll announce in the next issue of Edit. There's also some new member working groups that have been set up to guide the work through and we'd like to get you involved, so please do get in touch if you can spare some time in the coming months, it's a good way to meet fellow retailers and be part of what we do.

Please also do let us know all of the great things you are doing in your business with new products, services and in-store events and we'll help promote them to customers through shoppinginbirmingham.com and our growing social media channels.

There's a lot happening this year in the city centre and the Retail BID team will keep you updated through personal visits, Edit magazine and retailbirmingham.co.uk.

Steve Hewlett, Retail BID manager

Key partners attend New Street Summit



'Great opportunity' for historic thoroughfare

Key stakeholders have met for the first time to plan a new era for New Street.

The first 'New Street Summit' took place in March and was attended by Retail BID, relevant property owners, retail managers and representatives from Birmingham City Council.

Among those was Cllr Ian Ward, Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council, who will now take a lead role in the project to breathe new life into the historic street.

A reimagined New Street is one of the key priorities of Retail BID's third term.

The street is Birmingham's most prominent thoroughfare, linking High Street and Bullring to the Town Hall, Victoria Square and Brindleyplace beyond.

Working with key partners such as the city council, the BID's ambition is re-energise New Street as a premier destination

and retain its role as an exciting place for business that is appealing, safe and accessible.

The street received a boost with news that global fashion brand H&M is to open a flagship store in the unit previously occupied by BHS.

This follows a new branch of TSB, which recently opened on New Street and Apple's high-profile launch in the historic 128 New Street is helping attract visitors to the area.

Retail BID Manager Steve Hewlett said: "This is a great opportunity to get the basic foundations of a great street right and to match the newly-refurbished spaces at Corporation Street, Grand Central and Mailbox.

"We hope the first of our summits has started that process and we're looking forward to continuing work on this scheme."



Apple's New Street store and the view of the street from Waterstones, top



Retail BID's marketing and events plan

2017-2022 RETAIL BID TERM BEGINS

Retail BID Birmingham is working with its member businesses to understand the key issues and themes that need to be tackled as the BID begins its third term.

The BID secured a third five-year term following a successful Renewal Ballot of its city centre member businesses in October 2016.

A total of 79% voted in favour of the Retail BID continuing, with 86% in rateable value.

A Business Improvement District (BID) is where local businesses in a defined area vote to invest together in additional projects and services to improve their business environment. There are now well over 200 BIDs in towns and cities across the UK, with 11 of these in Birmingham alone.

The BID works in partnership with Birmingham City Council and organisations on a number of projects and services, from marketing and promotion to street cleaning and security.

Another key element of Retail BID's third term is a programme of creative and engaging events that will generate footfall and promote the city centre [see Pages 4 and 5].

The BID is developing the city centre experience to support Birmingham's leading retail offer and to create new opportunities for leisure, evening economy and cultural businesses to thrive.

GET INVOLVED: SPEAK TO ASSIA AT THE BID TO BE A PART OF THESE EVENTS AND

Packed diary of events to bring visitors to city centre



JULY: BEAUTY WEEKENDER

JUNE/SEPT: EID SHOPPING

Retail BID is working with members and partners to plan a packed schedule of shopping and cultural events to help generate city centre footfall throughout 2017.

Key campaigns throughout the year will include Spring/Summer, Autumn/Winter, Christmas and also targeted Eid shopping activity and a focus on the independent sector.

Website and social media shopping hooks will be established for key retail dates: Valentine's Day, Mother's Day,

Father's Day, Halloween and Black Friday.

New events for 2017 include a Beauty Weekender between July 1st-2nd, which will be a whole weekend dedicated to the beauty offer in the city centre.

The weekender will involve various beauty events and activities across the city centre with demonstrations, workshops and tutorials and is an opportunity to showcase stores and to drive footfall for this key sector.

Following the success of previous Eid campaigns, a 2017 marketing drive to ensure the city centre stays at the forefront of shoppers' minds will be launched

with a targeted local campaign including outdoor, print and digital promotion.

The Big Sleuth bears trail in July and August and the International Jazz and Blues Festival in July will herald the start of summer with family-orientated attractions that will ensure visitors enjoy all parts of the city centre.

This will be followed later in the year by the return of the Weekender arts festival, which drew in thousands of extra visitors to the city centre when it was last held in the autumn of 2015.

Writing in the BID's 2017 marketing plan, which is being shared with all member businesses, Retail BID Deputy Manager Assia Sohaib said: "Website and social media content will be driven by key campaigns, events and activity in the city centre.

"We will continue to work closely with our members and partner organisations to promote the city centre offering. Content will be supported with competitions, offers and giveaways."

Assia is looking for retailers to get involved in the events schedule, and added: "We want all our city centre businesses to play their part in the festivals and events. Give me a call to get involved on 0121 643 3896."



PROMOTIONS - CALL 0121 643 3896

Key dates and promotions for the year ahead...

APRIL

- Easter
- Where to go for personal shopping experiences
- Graduation ceremonies – where to eat
- Simplyhealth Great Birmingham 10K run – sports attire, healthy eating features
- Hottest SS17 beauty trends
- Student night

MAY

- School holiday activities

JUNE

- Father's Day gift guides
- ICC Champions Trophy – overnight stays, what else you can do in the city
- Eid Campaign – focus on beauty, menswear & children's wear

JULY

- Beauty Weekender
- School holidays – street performances & in-store activity
- Big Sleuth
- Independents focus
- International Jazz Festival

AUGUST

- Big Sleuth
- School's out – street performances & in store activity

SEPTEMBER

- Eid Campaign
- Birmingham Weekender
- Flavour Fortnight

OCTOBER

- Birmingham International Marathon
- Student night
- Halloween features
- Diwali

NOVEMBER

- Poppy Day
- Bonfire Night
- Black Friday
- Cyber Monday

DECEMBER

- Christmas gift guides, events & activities

JANUARY

- Sales
- Get fit

City centre-wide Flavour Fortnight for autumn 2017



Flavour Fortnight will be a city centre-wide celebration of Birmingham's food

A city centre-wide celebration of Birmingham's booming food and drink scene will take place this September.

Flavour Fortnight will offer city centre visitors the chance to enjoy special menus at reduced prices plus other promotions and offers at dozens of city centre restaurants and cafes.

Any venue in a participating BID area that offers a sit-down meal and can offer an exclusive 'Flavour Fortnight' deal is being invited to take part.

It is being held between September 1st and 17th.

Organised by Retail BID and Colmore BID – two of the Business Improvement Districts for the city centre – Flavour Fortnight will be the first food promotion of its kind to encourage more visitors to eat out in all areas of Birmingham city centre.

Flavour Fortnight will have its own

website where diners can find out which restaurants are taking part, along with supporting print literature, social media accounts and dedicated branding and logos. This is being finalised and will be available during the summer.

Retail BID Deputy Manager Assia Sohaib said: "We want to shout about the world-class food and drink offering in Birmingham city centre and it is great to be working with Colmore BID to do this."

Lucy Elvin of Colmore BID added: "Flavour Fortnight is a great opportunity to have your business promoted to customers across the region and raise your profile.

"We want as many restaurants, hotels, cafes and bars as possible to be involved."

**GET INVOLVED IN FLAVOUR FORTNIGHT:
CALL RETAIL BID ON 0121 643 3896**

City agency appointed for new campaign

Birmingham-based agency Gung Ho has been appointed to work on an eye-catching and engaging city centre promotional campaign to be unveiled later in the year.

Gung Ho successfully pitched for the marketing commission, which will contain bold, visual messages about shopping and dining in Birmingham.



NEW-LOOK WEBSITE AND EMAIL STRATEGY

The Retail BID website has been improved to make it easier for member businesses to keep up to date with city centre news and events.

The BID is also working on a new digital communication strategy with regular email 'e-shots' covering latest announcements affecting the BID area.

retailbirmingham.com is now easier to navigate with a stronger emphasis on latest city centre updates and business profiles.

The BID is also updating its email database to make sure members' details are correct.

Assia Sohaib, BID Deputy Manager, said: "We will continue to release our popular Edit member magazine in print on a seasonal basis, with regular email updates added to the schedule."

Does the BID have your contact details?

Email assia.sohaib@retailbirmingham.co.uk

Acclaimed city artist Temper to make his mark on The Big Sleuth

Sought-after artist who secured the biggest bid at Big Hoot owl trail to paint Retail BID bear

Celebrated Birmingham artist Temper will be designing one of the two Retail BID-sponsored Big Sleuth bears on show at this summer's popular art trail.

Retail BID is backing The Big Sleuth with two sponsored bears and in addition to Temper's bear, the BID has also teamed up with iconic explorer, Bear Grylls, who will design one of the 165cm tall sculptures.

Famed for his role as Chief Scout and wilderness TV shows, and with an upcoming live arena tour Endeavour, Bear was the first celebrity to put paw to paper and show his support for The Big Sleuth.

The Big Sleuth, so named because sleuth is the collective noun for a group of bears, is the highly-anticipated sequel to The Big Hoot, which attracted more than 800,000 visitors in 2015 and raised over £625,000 in total for Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity.

Temper's Re-Tail owl, sponsored by Retail BID, was the most valuable bid at The Big Hoot auction, selling for an incredible £18,000.

During a 20-year career in mixed media arts Temper has received widespread acclaim with sold-out collections in galleries across the UK.

A Peaky Blinders-themed bear, which has been approved by the show's creator Stephen Knight, will also feature as part of The Big Sleuth trail.

The bear will be painted by Birmingham-born artist Jon Jones, who has won widespread acclaim



Birmingham-based artist Temper with his Re-Tail owl, which was part of The Big Hoot

for his Peaky Blinders portraits, and is now represented by Washington Green Fine Art Group Ltd, whose UK network of galleries includes Castle Fine Art in the Mailbox.

Over 200 designs have been submitted for The Big Sleuth by national, regional and local artists, of which up to 100 will now be brought to life, thanks to the corporate sponsors who have helped to put the trail on.

Working in partnership, Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity and creative pro-





Explorer Bear Grylls

ducers Wild in Art will bring the sculptures to Birmingham for 10 weeks during the summer, showcasing the extraordinary creativity of some of the most talented artists across the region.

At the end of the free public art trail, which is expected to attract thousands of local, regional and national visitors to the city, the bears will be auctioned with all proceeds once again going to Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity.

Steve Hewlett, Retail BID Manager, said: "Temper was a knock-out success for the Big Hoot trail and helped to raise thousands for charity while adding his own, unique style of art to the attraction. We're sure his Big Sleuth bear will prove to be just as popular this summer."

Elinor Eustace, Deputy Director of Fund-raising at Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity, said: "We are absolutely delighted to have well-known artist Temper and legendary adventurer Bear Grylls involved in The Big Sleuth, thanks to our friends at Retail Birmingham.

"With the summer fast approaching, we're getting un-bear-ably excited for The Big Sleuth trail. We're sure the two celebrity bears will prove extremely popular during the project, which will encourage residents and tourists to get active and enjoy being outdoors, exploring the magnificent beauty and heritage of our city."



Louise McCathie, Birmingham Children's Hospital, at a recent Big Sleuth sponsors' event

Big Sleuth bear designs revealed so far...



THE BEES KNEES



WHO LOOKS OUTSIDE, DREAMS; WHO LOOKS INSIDE, AWAKES



BANTEAY SREI BEAR



SUNNY

Mayor candidate **Andy Street**: We should take pride in our city centre

Former John Lewis boss talks to Edit magazine about high street challenges and opportunities

West Midlands Mayor candidate Andy Street has pledged to use his high-profile retail experience to support Birmingham city centre businesses if he is elected.

The former John Lewis managing director is one of six candidates hoping to be chosen for the new role of Mayor for the West Midlands with voters going to the polls on Thursday, May 4.

The Mayor will oversee £8 billion of investment, create jobs and provide skills for young people and have control over transport infrastructure and housing.

They will also be a global ambassador for the region, selling it on the world stage to help drive investment and tourism.

And despite rough sleeping and homelessness falling outside Mayoral responsibilities, Conservative candidate Mr Street has vowed to 'put his shoulder' into the social issue and lead a task force that will pull together relevant organisations.

Few would argue Mr Street's nine years at the helm of John Lewis best places him to comment on the challenges and opportunities facing Birmingham's retail economy; a sector that contributes millions to the city each year and employs thousands in a variety of roles.

Mr Street highlights Grand Central at New Street station, the Metro extension and a 'first-class' cultural offering as suc-

cesses in which Birmingham should take great pride.

However, he is also keen to address social issues such as homelessness if he is selected as Mayor.

"This is not officially in the Mayor's role but I have taken the opposite approach," Mr Street told Retail BID's Edit magazine in an exclusive interview.

"It's such a clear and prominent social issue I am personally going to put my shoulder into this and lead a task force that will be about co-ordination between different agencies.

"You won't solve this just through the police doing something alone, or the council doing something alone. Let's pull all the agencies together.

"The Department for Work and Pensions needs to be part of this task force because these people need to have a step into work," adds Mr Street.

"Look at the work the charity St Basils does for rough-sleeping among youths.

"The figures are very low in Birmingham because St Basils has been successful with individual cases, making sure we get through to the root causes.

"We do that with younger people but have no similar structure for adult rough-sleeping so that's why I will personally lead this task force.

"Of all the things we have written about



during this campaign, it's this that has had the most take-up. People feel really strongly about this and that's why we talk about it in our Renewal Plan."

Mr Street says there is no single answer to solving challenges faced by high streets across the UK in light of online shopping growth, public transport access and changes to consumer behaviour.

"This depends on which high street we're talking about. There isn't one answer," he says.

"Compare a big city centre like Birmingham to a small market town or a suburb and they're totally different.

"If we're talking about a city centre we have to have the latest formats for the shops. You've got to have more than just the products; you have to have the great services people want these days, like catering and a leisure offer."

Among Retail BID's third term objectives are a re-imagined New Street and to build on the Birmingham 'Experience', which will encourage visitors to spend more time in the city centre, an ambition Mr Street is keen to encourage.

"It's great news that a Lego Store is coming to Birmingham and we'll get further leisure attractions around the Smithfield development at the wholesale markets.

"The cultural offer around Birmingham city centre is really first-class," he says.

"It's about that total destination, being able to jump on a train from anywhere across the Midlands and have a full day out in Birmingham city centre."

Public transport and road improvements feature heavily in Mr Street's West Midlands Renewal Plan; a 48-page manifesto he hopes will convince the region's four million-plus population he is the man for the job of Mayor.

"Let's look at what's happened so far. It's a positive story with the refurbishment of New Street station the best example of this.

"Look at the numbers for the last 15 years and the growth in the use of rail coming into the city centre is a really good news story. This has driven Birmingham's retail renaissance.



"In our Renewal Plan we talk about having £2 million specifically for public transport improvements across the West Midlands on the back of HS2 investment.

"We will re-open railway lines south to Moseley and north to Castle Vale and work has already started on the extension of the Metro.

"Cycling is also an important project and we want a 40-fold increase in the use of bikes. Five per cent of people in London commute by cycle, here in the West Midlands it's 0.5 per cent. There is a great opportunity.

"All these things come together to enable people to get into the city centre."

With Birmingham often quoted as the 'BIDs capital of the UK', Mr Street is keen to see the membership-led organisations prosper.

"BIDs are critical and I want to work with them," he says.

"When I was at John Lewis I always encouraged full participation with BIDs and in various cities we actually led the formation of them.

"Why? They are local enough and relevant enough to make a difference. You can see here how the different BIDs focus in a different way.

"Take what Colmore BID has done against what Southside BID has done, against what Retail BID has done; they're all working on their precise local or sectoral issues. That would not happen otherwise."



Mayoral candidate Andy Street says we should take pride in developments such as Grand Central, top, and is determined to get more people cycling

ANDY STREET ON HOMELESSNESS...

You won't solve this just through the police doing something alone, or the council doing something alone. Let's pull all the agencies together

ON THE CITY CENTRE 'EXPERIENCE'...

It's about that total destination, being able to jump on a train from anywhere across the Midlands and have a full day out in Birmingham city centre

ON ACCESS TO THE CITY CENTRE...

Look at the numbers for the last 15 years and the growth in the use of rail coming into the city centre has driven Birmingham's retail renaissance

ON THE FUTURE OF THE HIGH STREET...

We have to have the latest formats for the shops. You've got to have more than just the products; you have to have the great services like catering and a leisure offer



WILDWOOD OPENS ON NEW STREET

The first Wildwood restaurant in Birmingham has opened.

The restaurant has launched at the site of the former Yorkshire Building Society on New Street.

Wildwood is a chain of 52 restaurants with the aim of serving 'great food delivered by friendly staff in a relaxed, homely environment'.

The other Wildwoods are mainly in the south of England but also in Liverpool and Edinburgh. Midland sites include Stratford-upon-Avon, Telford, Worcester and Ludlow.

The new restaurant will generate 40 new full and part-time jobs and will open from early morning to late evening.

It is the latest addition to New Street following the opening of Apple store and the anticipated launch of Byron Burgers.

Wildwood's extensive menu covers a grill section of burgers from around £10, stone-baked pizza, pasta and risotto dishes.

A flavour of Temple Street's new venues

From Mexican street food to New York chic; global tastes on offer in city centre

A number of restaurants have announced exciting plans to open new venues in the Temple Street area of the city centre.

Las Iguanas, Jackson & Rye and Wahaca have submitted plans to open on the street, which already hosts the Trocadero pub and Botanist bar at the restored Cheltenham House.

Meanwhile, award-winning pie company Pieminister will be opening a restaurant next door to Michelin-starred Adam's Restaurant in Waterloo Street later in the year.

Wahaca will be opening on 13 Temple Street, serving Mexican street market small plates and cocktails.

The chain has applied for planning permission to convert the basement and ground floor property previously occupied by TSB Bank.

Wahaca prides itself on 'bringing the spirit of Mexican market eating to the UK: respect for quality ingredients, passion for vibrant, fresh and honest food and the pleasure of sharing with others'.

It was founded by Marl Selby and 2005 Masterchef winner Thomasina Miers who was inspired to launch her own restaurant after travelling around Mexico.

Wahaca proved phenomenally successful with Londoners when it opened its first branch in Covent Garden in 2007.

Las Iguanas is planning to open in the unit once occupied by Temple Street Social in the historic Somerset House building.

The restaurant specialises in food with a Latin flavour, with the menu taking inspiration from South American, Indian, Spanish, Portuguese and African dishes.

Stylish American-themed Jackson & Rye will be bringing its New York-inspired menus to the former Serenity beauty salon



at Somerset House. The chain currently only has locations in the south of the country – five restaurants in London and one in Guildford.

Birmingham is the chain's first opening in a city outside London.

Serenity is relocating to a new and improved unit further along Temple Street.

The move allows Serenity to expand on its extensive list of services such as hair removal, waxing, massage treatments, skin consultations and manicures and uses leading skincare brands such as Environ, Jan Marini and Guinot.

Pieminister will be opening a restaurant next door to award-winning Adam's restaurant in Waterloo Street and is planning to renovate the current empty office space into a restaurant serving an array of quality made pies.

One of Jackson & Rye's London restaurants gives an idea of how the chain's Temple Street venue could look



Work underway on the New Street H&M store and one of the planning application visuals for the new frontage, inset

Flagship H&M for New Street

Global giant takes old BHS site and begins work on facelift and canopy removal

Exciting plans have been lodged for a flagship H&M store on New Street in Birmingham city centre.

The old BHS building has stood empty since August last year when the firm went bust.

Now, fashion brand H&M has submitted a planning application with Birmingham City Council to completely refurbish the huge shopping space and transform it into a new store, bringing new visitors to the historic street.

The global retail giant is also hoping to change the entrance by adding a new mirror polished stainless steel canopy to the shop front.

H&M's plans follow the opening of a new TSB bank on New Street, while key retailers

are in discussions to take the soon-to-be-vacant Primark site when the budget fashion brand moves to the giant Primark Pavilions on High Street, which is expected to be ready in 2018.

A revamped New Street is one of the key themes of Retail BID's third term and discussions about public realm improvements, public safety and visitor appeal are ongoing, with the support of the city council and key stakeholders.

Steve Hewlett, Retail BID Manager, said: "We are delighted to welcome H&M to such a prominent site and we're looking forward to further announcements about New Street in the near future."



...and new Starbucks for Cherry St

Coffee shop operator Starbucks is planning to open a new venue in the city centre. The chain has applied for planning permission to convert the ground floor of the five-storey building at 10 Cherry Street opposite House of Fraser which previously housed a Carphone Warehouse.

**UNION STREET STORES TO GET NEW FRONTAGE:
SEE PAGE 24**



Tasty treats at the Godiva chocolate strawberry dipping station

NEW FOOD ARRIVALS AT SELFRIDGES

Wood-fired pizzas with a unique sourdough base have arrived at Selfridges Birmingham with the launch of the Lasan Pizza. Birmingham restaurant royalty, Aktar Islam, and his chefs from the successful Lasan Group are bringing a quality unseen in the city before and it officially opened in the iconic Birmingham Selfridges Foodhall on Thursday 6th April.

Aktar Islam, director at Lasan Group, said: "The bases are made with a combination of white and wholemeal flours. The wholemeal adds flavour as well as goodness and creates a lighter and slightly more ready texture than you find in ordinary pizzas."

Izza Pizza brings carefully-sourced ingredients of the highest quality from near and far, to create a picture perfect pizza for diners and shoppers and it is all about that base.

Sam Watts, General Manager at Selfridges Birmingham, said: "We are thrilled to welcome such an innovative restaurateur who is responsible for opening some of Birmingham's finest eateries to our house. Izza Pizza has something that will appeal to all of our shoppers and will soon become a Selfridges Foodhall staple."

As if pizza wasn't indulgent enough for shoppers, Selfridges Birmingham has also welcomed Archie's, which offers a selection of shakes and smoothies, and a Godiva chocolate strawberry dipping station. There is food and fun for the entire family with all of the of the food offerings in the Selfridges Birmingham Foodhall.

Motionhouse dancers
Martina Bussi and
Alasdair Stewart
at Birmingham
Weekender 2015



How you can get involved in city's biggest arts festival

Retail BID helping streets to come alive with dance, art and theatre... and you can play a part

Birmingham's biggest arts festival, the award-winning Birmingham Weekender, will return from Friday 22nd to Sunday 24th September 2017.

Retail BID is supporting Weekender and helping to bring it to the city centre after the success of Weekender 2015.

Weekender promises a packed weekend of free outdoor theatre, dance, music, art installations and hidden performance across the city centre, from Broad Street to Digbeth, including the city's retail heart, with a South Asian focus as part of Utsav, Birmingham's Year of South Asian Arts & Culture.

Led by newly-appointed Festival Directors Graham Callister (Birmingham Hippodrome) and Piali Ray (Sampad), this is the chance to see Birmingham's major arts organisations alongside shining lights from the city's independent scene, plus invited international artists and a number of significant new commissions.

Steve Hewlett, Retail BID Manager, said: "The city centre is going to come alive this autumn with thousands of extra visitors enjoying the family-friendly and free events all weekend.

"Retail BID is delighted to be a key supported of Weekender and we hope city centre businesses will get involved as partners, sponsors or supporters."

The opportunities for businesses to be a part of Weekender include:

■ **Becoming a partner for a major individual event or geographical area of the festival.**

■ **Hosting an event or part of the programme in your premises.**

■ **Aligning your business or personal profile with Birmingham, a city on the rise, attracting global investment with quality of life.**

■ **Hospitality for clients, stakeholders, employees and business partners over the September weekend or for café and restaurants the opportunity to create a special Weekender menu or cocktail.**

■ **Engaging employees through the Weekender volunteering scheme, engaging with artists and audiences as ambassadors for Birmingham.**

■ **Brand promotion through Birmingham Weekender's physical and digital media platforms including a 48-page A4 brochure**



A volunteer at Birmingham Weekender 2015

(50,000+ copies) and website (which saw 34,000 users in September 2015).

To date Retail BID, Colmore BID, Bullring, Mailbox, Bullring Markets and BCU have been confirmed as event sponsors alongside funding confirmed from Birmingham City Council and Arts Council England. Midland Metro are confirmed as Travel Partner and What's On are media partner.

New partners would therefore benefit from the combined reach of Culture Central and our partners with a 500,000 strong electronic database; collectively 150,000 facebook likes and over 250,000 twitter followers.

The 2017 festival will build on the success of the first Birmingham Weekender, which took place in 2015.

Birmingham Weekender is brought to the city by Culture Central, the cultural development agency for Birmingham.

Follow Weekender on social media for programme announcements:

www.birminghamweekender.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BhamWeekender

Twitter: @BhamWeekender

WHAT'S ON AT WEEKENDER 2017

Birmingham Weekender organisers have revealed the first confirmed commissions for 2017, which include:

■ **Working with the team behind Moseley Folk Festival, Victoria Square will transform into a three-day participatory dance experience, called Square Dance. Along with headline DJs, Square Dance offers a chance for anyone to get up and dance and includes mass dance lessons. Square Dance is a central hub for the whole Weekender, a place to eat, drink and dance together in the heart of the city.**

■ **Birmingham Hippodrome will present a spectacular outdoor evening of drumming and pyrotechnics, Clash of the Drums, on Saturday 23rd September.**

■ **Rangeeli – Colours of Birmingham, a parade featuring the amazing Harminder, a magnificent Indian elephant made of metal, reclaimed bicycle parts and other recycled materials.**

■ **On Sunday 24th September the Bull Ring Open Markets will be transformed into an Alternative Village Fete. This one-off Sunday opening will see the market traders setting up stall alongside interactive performances, installations and quirky stalls, embracing the best bits of a village fete with a Brummie twist.**

■ **Birmingham Contemporary Music Group will perform a new piece of music created especially for Birmingham's canals on narrow boats.**

■ **The Big Idea 17; a major new co-commission from International Dance Festival Birmingham and Birmingham Weekender, will be produced by DanceXchange, who are currently taking submissions from dance artists working in the Midlands.**

Loki raises a glass to GWA expansion

Having already established itself as a hotspot for independent retail, Great Western Arcade also has its sights on being a prominent part of Birmingham city centre's night-time economy.

The arcade is hoping to shine both day and night after Loki Wine, one of the city's most talked-about drinks retailers, announced expansion plans.

Loki Wine has won awards for its vast selection, knowledgeable sommeliers, and innovative tasting events.

Now taking steps to match the size of its reputation to the size of the store, Loki Wine is expanding its Great Western Arcade site by taking over the adjacent unit

Merging units 35 and 36, Loki Wine will increase its ground floor area to 1,200 sq. ft., doubling the current square footage of the downstairs space and the store's presence in the arcade.

The improvement works are expected to take around four weeks.

Loki Wine opened in GWA in 2012 and has enjoyed continual growth in sales year-on-year since. 2016 was the pinnacle of this progress, with 25 per cent increase from the previous year.

Innovative drinks retailer to merge into next-door Great Western Arcade unit



Last year also saw Loki Wine's events sell-out across the board. With this, the decision was made to expand the current unit and increase the capacity. Loki Wine will now be able to host events for up to 70 people and still have an area reserved for private tastings. Alongside the property expansion, the drinks range will grow too, with more spirits and beer options.

Phil Innes, founder and owner of Loki Wine, said: "Since we opened our

doors in 2012, the arcade has continued to improve and is now home to some of the best independents that the city has to offer.

"There is a real buzz surrounding GWA, especially with the new openings and the focus on quality retail. We are sure that it will remain the primary destination for premium products in the foreseeable future, and we look forward to Loki Wine continuing to be part of this offering."

Speaking about Great Western Arcade's growing hospitality market, centre man-



ager James Roberts said: "We've seen a surge in our F&B offering, which has influenced our decision to take steps to make Great Western Arcade suitable for both day and night trade.

"This has included getting the green light for improvements to the arcade's exterior lighting and signage, additional security, and more flexible opening hours. Retailers like Loki Wine have helped ensure that the city is excited for GWA's evolution, and we are looking forward to seeing how this continues to progress."

Phil Innes, founder and owner of Loki Wines



Phil Innes of Loki Wine with Paul Faulkner, Chief Executive, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

Store wins major business award

Loki Wine was named Business of the Year at this year's Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce awards.

Loki, which employs six people, clinched the awards with their innovative model in using new technology and allowing customers to try wines before buying. And the multi-award-winning business has invested heavily in ensuring their young staff are expert in wines to a high level, including the Diploma in Wine.

When he established Loki Wines in 2012, owner Phil Innes named the business after the Norse god who delighted in causing mischief for other gods. He says they share the same anti-establishment ethos. The company is planning to

expand with new stores in Harborne and Moseley. Chamber chief executive Paul Faulkner said: "Loki is an outstanding young business and their enterprise and innovation impressed everyone. They certainly live up to their reputation of having one of the most innovative retail models in the UK.

"They have brought in new ideas for selling wine in a relaxed environment and have used new communications platforms to drive a business that is multi-award-winning and has impressive expansion plans. They are also great advocates for Birmingham.

"All of those factors are why we are proud to announce them as the first Business of the Year chosen by the GBCC."

They certainly live up to their reputation of having one of the most innovative retail models in the UK



Verve Festival at Waterstones.

Picture: Rackesh Patel

VERVE FESTIVAL OF POETRY TO RETURN

The Verve Festival of Poetry and Spoken Word will return to the city after organisers hailed this year's debut event a success.

Taking place between February 16-19, Verve was the city's first poetry-only literature festival and featured some of Britain's most exciting poets, along with a special focus on Birmingham's poetry scene.

Held at Waterstones Birmingham and sponsored by Retail BID, Verve featured over 30 individual poetry events that ranged from readings from prize-winning poets, spoken word slams, theatrical poetry slots, open mic events, and workshops, plus a children's mini festival.

Audiences for individual poetry events ranged from 80 to a sell-out 120, with a highlight being the lunch-time launch of *This Is Not Our Final Form* – a Birmingham Themed Anthology of Poetry published by The Emma Press – which featured 20 of the 30 poets included.

Verve lead programmer and Manager of Waterstones, Stuart Bartholomew, said: "Our Poets on a Podium strand highlighted four up-and-coming local poets who have a massive future in poetry; Helen Calcutt, Amerah Saleh, Jasmine Gardosi and Geraldine Clarkson.

"But what stuck out most was the wonderful atmosphere across the four days – it really felt like a celebratory festival for the city. It isn't a question of whether Verve will happen again. It simply has to!"

Grotto raises £8,100 for hospital charity

House of Fraser attraction visited by more than 4,000 children

House of Fraser's popular Christmas Grotto raised an incredible £8,100 to support the pioneering work of Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity.

The grotto, which was located on the fifth floor of the department store, was open from the end of November until Christmas Eve and donated £1.20 from every ticket purchased to the charity's £3.65 million Star Appeal, to help construct the UK's first paediatric Rare Diseases Centre.

In all, over 4,200 children visited the experience, meeting Santa's elves before being presented with a gift from the big man himself.

Parminda Sahota, Store Manager at House of Fraser, said: "We're extremely pleased to be able to donate over £8,000 to such a worthy cause. This is thanks to our customers, and the team involved, in making the grotto such a success."

Saranne Moreno, New Business Man-

ager at Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity, said: "We were incredibly grateful to House of Fraser for supporting us over the Christmas period and helping to raise such a fantastic amount for our Star Appeal.

"The money raised will go a long way to making a huge difference to the lives of our brave children and their families living with a rare or undiagnosed condition, taking us one step closer to making their dreams a reality."

Assia Sohaib, Retail BID Deputy Manager, said: "We're very pleased the grotto raised such an amazing figure for a cause that affects so many local people and touches the hearts of many."

Every year Birmingham Children's Hospital treats more than 9,000 patients living with rare or undiagnosed conditions. These children often face huge challenges and obstacles growing up, with many families spending a lot of time seeing different specialists on different days in different departments. To change this, the Star Appeal will build a brand new centre which will provide a single place within the hospital for all assessment, treatment and research.

Alison Berneye, Managing Director at Magenta Star, Assia Sohaib, Deputy BID Manager at Retail Birmingham, Parminda Sahota, Store Manager at House of Fraser and Saranne Moreno, New Business Manager at Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity



'New, unique' tenants open at Bullring

Centre on a high in 2017

We've started the year on a high, following what was an exceptionally busy Christmas period, we've kick-started 2017 with three new tenants as well as announcing a number of upcoming new store openings.

Smashbox, T2 and New Look Men have already joined the expanding line-up at the centre and will soon be joined by Ben Sherman, Coach and Russell and Bromley.

Smashbox chose the centre to open its first standalone store in the region. The store, which opened in February, offers the brand's full cosmetics range as well as a catalogue of make-up masterclasses and workshops for customers.

Tea specialist, T2, which offers over 200 teas and blends, has proved popular with tea lovers across the region since opening its first store in the region last month.

Completing the line-up is New Look Men. The dedicated menswear store demonstrates the increasing demand we've been experiencing within the men's fashion category and joins our expanding portfolio of menswear-only retailers



including Zara Men, Luke 1977 and Pretty Green at LinkStreet.

All three brands bring a new and unique offering to Bullring, strengthening its already outstanding offer at one of the centre's busiest entry points from Rotunda Square.

Luxury brand, Coach, will be opening on Bullring's Upper East Mall later in the coming months offering a full range of bags, footwear, outerwear and accessories in what will be the brand's second standalone store outside of the capital. Premium footwear and accessories brand, Russell and Bromley, will also joining the Upper East Mall with its first store in the West Midlands.

The recently redeveloped LinkStreet, located on the walkway between Bullring and Grand Central, continues to be a big focus for the centre. During the second half of 2016 we saw a number of new tenants including Cereal Killer Café, Barber Barber and Irregular Choice, as well as the innovative start-up vegetarian restaurant, Not Dogs. The restaurant, which unusually offers a range of meat-free hot dogs and burgers,

Tea specialist T2 offers 200 teas and blends

'Another major focus for us is ensuring that we provide exceptional facilities for our customers'

recently featured on TV's Dragon's Den.

This month we welcome the hugely popular Ben Sherman to LinkStreet offering the brand's full range of collections in its first standalone store in the region.

Creating the right atmosphere together with providing the very best customer service for our shoppers is so important in shaping their overall experience and we will continue to focus on delivering the very best of both.

Another major focus for us is ensuring that we provide exceptional facilities for our customers, including our toilets and award-winning car parks. During the first quarter our Centre Car Park has undergone major improvement works including resurfacing, along with new signage and wayfinding to ensure that we're offering the highest level of car parking facilities in the city.

Our events schedule also aims to add to our customer experience with free activities for shoppers to participate in.

Michaela Moore,
General Manager at Bullring



The lowdown on Hush Hair & Beauty



Beauty salon's founders talk about ten years of growth and the changing face of the city centre

There's much more to Hush Hair & Beauty than meets the eye.

After launching in 2006 with just a single unit on Stephenson Street the hair and beauty salon now occupies three stores at ground floor level.

But it doesn't stop there.

It's only when you go downstairs to see the basement salon and treatment rooms that Hush Hair & Beauty's decade of growth becomes clear, with an additional 2,000 sq ft of space below street level for the extensive list of services Hush Hair now provides.

This veritable treatment Tardis was founded by Daniel Craig and James Holmes.

The management team are proud to be at

the helm of such a successful business and take enormous pride in what they have achieved over the past decade.

Hush Hair & Beauty provides a bespoke salon experience and uses the latest hair products from experts such as L'Oreal and Redken & Kerastase.

Hush also offers high quality hair extensions, hair keratin smoothing and treatments, as well as bespoke hair and wedding beauty services for brides, bridesmaids and family members.

The in-house beauty salon complements the hair salon with professional beauty therapists experienced in waxing, Dermalogica and Decleor facials and body treat-

ments, massages, manicures & pedicures, nail services, eye treatments and spray tanning.

Exposed brick walls and upcycled doors, handles and other fittings that are being creatively re-used after they were discarded during renovation works on the floors above Hush give the salon a smart, contemporary interior in keeping with the building's heritage.

Daniel and James talk about their experiences of running Hush Hair & Beauty while Birmingham's retail scene has changed and evolved around them.

"We opened the business in February 2006 in just one unit and grew a team over two years. By the end of 2008 we expanded into the unit next door," said James.

"We started with six sections and we are now up to 21 and six backwashes.

"We now offer women's cuts and colours, men's cuts and colours, we then go into beauty, massages, facials, pedicures and manicures.

"It's a massive list!"

"Some people still don't know we offer all these services," added Daniel. "Downstairs there's a beauty salon bigger than the space on the ground floor.

"The reception will soon go back to brick and the dividing wall will come down to open it up so people can get an idea of the space downstairs."

The Hush philosophy is to invest in staff to keep the best workers with the business, which meant a commitment to expansion to accommodate more juniors, during uncertain financial times.

"We had enough hairdressers to fill the salon and it became apparent that as the juniors were about to qualify there was nowhere for them to work," said Daniel.

"So when the next-door unit became available we were in no place to afford it but knew we had to do it to keep those juniors. Our staff mean everything to us.

"We've got people who came to us almost out of school and they've been with us for eight or nine years. They now have husbands, wives and children.

"We employ 21 people and I think there are now eight babies among them!"

Repeat custom is critical to the ongoing success of Hush, according to Daniel.

"We have some customers who have stuck with us through the years and are now



Hush Hair & Beauty's Daniel Craig and James Holmes and the salon's basement area (main picture, opposite)

parents, bringing their daughters in for treatments. We love that. It tells us we're doing something right," he said.

And what about the widespread changes to Birmingham city centre in the past decade, with Grand Central launching in the autumn of 2015 and the Metro tram extension now running past the salon's front door.

The next phase of the Metro will see it continue along Stephenson Street, on to Pinfold Street and then towards Centenary Square.

"Years ago we were on the wrong side of town but these days it's very much the right side of town," said Daniel.

"The footfall, the area, the way it has been built up, the new entrance to the train station, all these occupied units... there's so much going on around here.

"When we first came to this street there was only us and a clothes shop further down. There was nothing. Now all the units are taken and people are familiar with Stephenson Street. We're in a great place."





disorderboutique #specialized #knitwear at #disorderboutique by #Milliefiori



organiquebham Easter is coming so I have prepared special gift sets for you!



smithsoniagifts More Victorian and vintage goodies on the way!!!

No.50 adds touch of style to Pinfold Street

Co-owner Jordan Quinn talks about evolving from digital to 'bricks and mortar' retail

Running a 21st-century fashion and lifestyle boutique requires as much knowledge of emerging digital technology as it does today's clothing trends.

That's the verdict of Jordan Quinn, co-owner of No.50 Heritage & Lifestyle on Pinfold Street, one of the newest arrivals in the city centre's diverse fashion scene.

No.50 stocks leading brands such as Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, Alpha Industries and Novesta in its contemporary store that was converted from a former café in the summer of 2016.

Jordan, who runs the business with his brother Jamie, has spent two decades working in menswear in the city, beginning with a Saturday job before progressing to shop management and menswear buying.

He also has extensive experience of digital sales after launching No.50 as an online-only offering in 2011 before moving into 'bricks and mortar' retail last year.

"I grew up in Birmingham and got into

retail when I was about 18, with a Saturday job," said Jordan.

"I loved the lifestyle and being in that crowd of people and my passion evolved from there.

"After moving into shop management and menswear buyer I felt like I could have a go at doing this myself.

"I had a vision of bringing something different to the city."

Birmingham's retail sector has changed beyond recognition since the 1990s, according to Jordan.

"Growing up in the retail trade in Birmingham back then was a lot different to how it is these days," he said.

"Digital is central now. It's crazy how things are changing in retail with augmented reality and 3D. These things were happening in the films we grew up watching and now they're real!

"When I first started in retail 20 years ago there were eight or nine good independent fashion stores. There's a lot less now but there's always room for more," added Jordan.

"A lot of shops started as a traditional store then realised the way the world was going in terms of online so they added a website.

"We're the new generation. We couldn't have afforded to simply 'arrive' and start paying overheads and rent so we had to build ourselves up from the lowest point, which is online, with low overheads and all our own IT work and management.

"We're trying to keep an eye on the tech trends, with apps, watches and how fashion fits in. Customers are more and more demanding these days. It's about fulfilment today, or within the hour. It's something we will always try to evolve with," he added.

Jordan talks about how No.50 made the move from online to physical store, with





a short-term pop-up launch to gauge feedback from customers.

"The store was an old greasy spoon café. We had to strip it down and start from scratch with the interior," said Jordan.

"It has been open since August 2016 after a pop-up from the website to gauge the public response. This was great for us.

"We then started contacting the brands we wanted to work with to build relationships and explain what we're about."

Jordan's brother Jamie brings his background in art and design to No.50, by taking care of the store fitting, branding and marketing.

"Jamie helps with our online offering and making sure the background IT is as it should be," added Jordan. "We worked together when we started the

online business. We have different visions with my retail background and Jamie's design background. We have our healthy debates!"

Jordan 'fell in love' with the unit on Pinfold Street after spotting it while he was out arranging deliveries to customers.

"We always wanted somewhere in the city centre of our hometown," he said.

"When we started the online business we were using the Post Office over the road. It was then I spotted this unit had become available and fell in love with it.

"It's got a lovely, traditional look to it, with a nice cross-section of people coming up and down Pinfold Street and with Grand Central nearby.

"The Midland Metro extension, which will come up and down Pinfold Street, should

Jordan Quinn outside No.50 Heritage & Lifestyle on Pinfold Street

also help when that's up and running in a few years."

And what about the future for No.50? How does Jordan see the brand and store evolve? "We've signed a long lease and looking forward to developing for the future. It's early days and we're determined to create our own identity as an independent and try to bring brands to the city that aren't being offered elsewhere."

"We will always evolve," he added. "We've sold pieces we designed and had made for the store like the hangers, lighting etc. which has prompted us to introduce a small homeware offering in store.

"It's great when people come in saying 'I really like that, can you get me one?'

"It's nice to be dynamic and grow naturally as a brand."

Spring is all about new beginnings; from new season collections and new menus, to brand new openings, there's never been a better time to explore premier lifestyle destination, the Mailbox.

Welcome to Birmingham

Having opened in December, Tom's Kitchen Birmingham has already become one of the city's favourite spots. Serving up an unmissable selection of British classics, it's the simple ethos of using seasonal and locally-sourced ingredients that makes it a must-visit. Having chosen Birmingham for its foodie reputation, and diverse mix of people, this is the first UK opening outside of London for critically acclaimed chef, Tom Aikens.

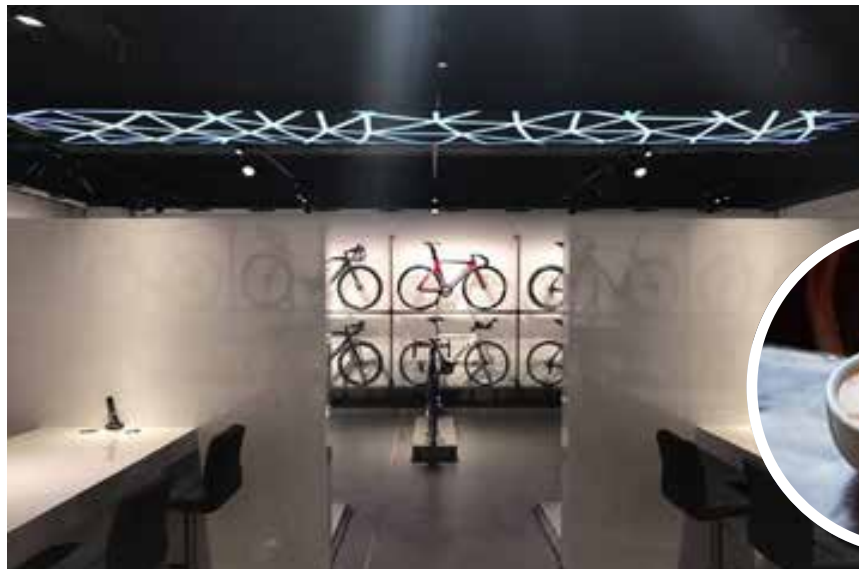
Alongside the restaurant, there's another eatery branding Tom's name in the Mailbox, with the opening of Tom's Kitchen Deli. Found in the Urban Room, it's the perfect spot for food lovers on the go. Open seven days a week, from breakfast through to after-work drinks, the freshly prepared and seasonal daily menu includes sandwiches, soups, homemade cakes, snacks and more, so you can upgrade your lunch break in style.

Pedal power

Joining an already exciting mix of lifestyle and homeware brands on Level 1 of the Mailbox, Ribble is a cyclist's ideal destination. The stunning showroom is home to the award-winning collection of bikes, each with unmatched customisation to help you build your perfect ride. With all bikes designed and built here in the UK, you can rest assured they're designed to go the distance, whether you're taking on a cycling challenge this year or just a keen social rider. As the bike brand that Olympian Bradley Wiggins started his cycling career with, head in-store at the Mailbox now to explore the impressive selection of road, leisure and track bicycles.

Coffee break

There's always time for coffee, and you'll find it hard to resist the classic Italian



Mailbox newcomer Ribble and Caffè Nero, below



There's more to the Mailbox this Spring

Premier city destination showcases host of new arrivals for 2017

blends on offer at the newly opened Caffè Nero. The elegant coffee shop, found on Level 3 of the Mailbox, is perfect for an on-the-go caffeine boost or leisurely lounging, with a selection of small bites and snacks on offer too.

Harvey Nichols

At the heart of the Mailbox, Harvey Nichols is the ultimate home of luxury retail. Showcasing over 200 of the world's most desirable womenswear, menswear, beauty, food and wine brands in a unique shopping environment, there's nowhere quite like Harvey Nichols anywhere else in the city. Focusing on delivering an unrivalled in-store experience, you'll find the Concierge team on hand to help with any queries, while the expert team of stylists offer guidance on product size and fit, as well as outfit tips

and trend inspiration. The perfect destination for all your fashion, beauty and gift needs, shop the new season now at Harvey Nichols Birmingham.

Two of a kind

Mailbox is celebrating two years of Everyman Cinema and Gas Street Social. Having opened in 2015, Everyman Cinema is already one of the region's most popular silver screens. With signature sofa seating, and a gourmet menu of meals, snacks and drinks that can all be delivered to your seat, there's no better way to experience the latest releases.

Casual dining meets expert cocktails Gas Street Social. With a menu featuring classic British dishes, plus a selection of social plates that are perfect for sharing, enjoy freshly prepared cuisine alongside industrial themed chic.

Michelin-starred Atul confirms city opening

The Mailbox has confirmed the arrival of twice Michelin-starred chef from Benares London, Atul Kochhar.

Atul, renowned for his ability to combine his Indian heritage with his love of British ingredients, will open his new restaurant concept – NRI by Atul Kochhar.

Located at the front of the Mailbox, NRI by Atul Kochhar will span over 5,000 sq ft and will showcase high-quality spiced dishes that draw inspiration from everywhere Atul has ventured, from Malaysia and Japan to South Africa and beyond.

Cooked fresh on-site from one of the restaurant's two kitchens, the menu will offer a number of hot and cold small plates, grilled dishes, sides and desserts, all served within an environment reminiscent of colonial India, complete with high ceilings, hanging lanterns and copper and dark stone.

As well as the food, NRI by Atul Kochhar will have its own bar serving a variety of lagers, craft ales, wines and cocktails – including the Passion Fruit Chutney Martini with seven different types of chilli.

Sitting within NRI by Atul Kochhar will be Atul's exclusive dining room called The Chef's Table by Benares – a 24-cover standalone space overlooking a private kitchen where Atul and his team will be working and serving Michelin-quality prix fixe menus.

"I'm very excited to be opening my new concept in Birmingham, a city which I have long admired for its diversity and food culture," said Atul.

"There is a complex plethora of Indian cuisine that has developed outside of India and each of my dishes tells a beautiful story – stories that I am keen to share with Birmingham."



Atul Kochhar is bringing his concept restaurant 'NRI by Atul Kochhar' to The Mailbox



Birmingham's first easyHotel

EASYHOTEL OPENS ON JOHN BRIGHT ST

Travellers to Birmingham can now take advantage of a 'super budget' easyHotel in the city centre.

The budget hotel chain has opened its first property in the city on bustling John Bright Street, located just a short walk from Birmingham New Street station.

The new hotel has 86-rooms starting from just £19.99 per night

Guy Parsons, easyHotel's CEO, said: "The opening of easyHotel Birmingham marks an exciting time for the brand.

"We are expanding rapidly both in the UK and across Europe, and I'm delighted that Birmingham is the first city to open this year. Birmingham is a vibrant city with a rich history and so much to see and do.

"Along with its six universities and internationally reputed arts scene, the city is also the UK's fourth largest tourist destination.

"We are confident that easyHotel will appeal to business customers and leisure visitors alike and look forward to building our brand presence in the city."

EDIT SPRING 2017: THE LAST WORD



A computer-generated image showing how the building could look, and the building at present, below

Facelift for Union Street stores

Plans part of wider city centre investment by building's owners

Plans have been submitted to Birmingham City Council to give stores fronting High Street and Union Street a facelift.

Aberdeen Asset Management, which owns the building, has applied to install double height windows to the shop fronts at ground and first



floor level in a move that will continue to breathe new life into the area, with a huge new flagship H&M planned for just around the corner on New Street and a giant Primark set to take over Pavilions.

The building on the corner of Union Street and High Street, opposite M&S, currently houses Pandora and WH Smiths.

Aberdeen Asset Management says the work planned forms part of an investment in the area.

Deputy Head of UK Property Asset Management Stephen Walker says: "We

have commenced a programme of work with the intention of modernising this building and this will involve creating new frontages where appropriate.

"Terms are agreed for a major retailer to occupy the former BHS unit on New Street and we are in discussion with several other new occupiers.

"We are investing in this site, along with others in Birmingham and the West Midlands, to ensure that we attract the best possible tenants and provide important jobs and services to the region."