

Landscape at the heart of Rushden Lakes retail scheme

Nature meets retail at pioneering Rushden Lakes shopping and leisure scheme

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The [UK's first retail scheme](#) to offer both shopping alongside more unusual activities such as birdwatching in nationally important wetlands has opened. Situated in the Nene Valley, Northampton, the shopping and leisure scheme combines shopping and restaurants with extensive opportunities for outdoor activities within the rich natural habitats of the surrounding wildlife reserves.



Comprising approximately 400,000 sq ft of new retail and restaurant accommodation (phase 1), the former gravel extraction pit includes a square mile of lake and SSSI woodland, a boathouse and boardwalk with alfresco waterside dining, wet play area, central water feature and rill. Up to 5 million people are expected to flock to the scheme in the first year and admire the lakeside setting which is home to over 20,000 migrating birds.

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Richard Willmott

Lead project [Landscape Architect Richard Willmott](#) said: ‘The scheme is genuinely unique and sets the benchmark for experiential retail development with nature at its heart. The external elements have been designed to sensitively integrate

into their context and landscape and include many bespoke features such as fluid tessellated paving patterns, pre-cast furniture and a central boulevard water feature. The robust language of materials and detailing are intended to reflect the industrial heritage of the site. A significant amount of external space and investment is devoted to public areas, enhancing the attraction of the development and providing a series of distinctive spaces.’

Formerly a derelict and run down site which provided unsecurable access to fly tippers, motorbikes and 4x4s with associated damage to the SSSI and RAMSAR designated wetland and woodland, the development of the site has created a symbiotic partnership with the adjacent reserves. Significant funding for improvements to the reserves, increased public access and ongoing maintenance has resulted from the development, while the setting enhances the customer experience and affords unique leisure opportunities and access to the wider Nene Valley.

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