KEY FACTS

Location: Northern Quarter, Manchester  
Classification: Large scale community infrastructure  
Type: Mixed-use  
Size: Multi-phase project in Smithfield area of Manchester’s Northern Quarter  
Total Capital Cost: £120 million  
Client: Manchester City Council

Project team details This is a large scale, multi-phase scheme, and a number of specialist consultants have been involved over the years, including:

Architects: BDP, Stephenson Bell, Mills Beaumont, Leach Rhodes Walker, Mark Weintraub Associates  
Engineers: Shepherd Gilmour, Hulley & Kirkwood, Integra, RPS Group  
Contractors: Alfred McAlpine (Carillion), Eric Wright, John Sisk  
QS: Baker Hollingworth, Appleyard & Trew

Third party certification: The fourth and fifth phase hotel buildings both secured BREEAM ‘Very Good’ accreditation

PROJECT SUMMARY

This is a substantial mixed-use development where Muse has now developed 318 apartments in three phases together with a highly successful mix of ground floor uses, including offices, art galleries, café bars and shops. The fourth and fifth phases comprised 230 bedroom 4/5 star
Crowne Plaza and 192 bedroom Holiday Inn Express hotels. Planning permission has been secured for the sixth phase - a residential building of 77 apartments - and the scheme has been masterplanned for a further phase of mixed-use development, involving redevelopment of the listed ‘Mackie Mayor’ building. Northern Quarter retains all the charm, character and heritage of the area while blending in new and complementary building developments for businesses and residents alike. The neighbourhood has evolved a personality very much its own. Situated a mere five minute walk from the city centre, Northern Quarter is a place of creativity: music, art, design and craft - all flourishing within a compact network of intriguing streets.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Building orientation/site issues:

The award-winning first phase utilised the listed façade of the former historic fishmarket walls. A Grade One listed building has been refurbished and a large public courtyard, framed by new and old buildings, has been created behind the walls. Individual buildings have been orientated to reflect the city’s historic grid pattern and, wherever possible, to minimise solar gain.

Transport:

Development involved major accessibility issues, and both connectivity and access were improved through the introduction of a one-way system on the streets adjacent to the scheme. The new transport interchange located immediately adjacent to the scheme has benefited residents and visitors alike. Facilities for cyclists include on-site cycle racks for both the residential units and the fifth phase hotel.

Energy Efficiency:

Air-source heat pumps enable between 5 and 10% of the fifth phase hotel’s energy requirements to be met by a renewable energy source.
Water Efficiency:

Water leak detection has been incorporated within the fourth phase hotel’s public toilet areas. All hotel room bathrooms were modular pod units supplied with high efficiency water flush systems. The sixth phase residential scheme will include low-waste flushing systems.

Materials:

The development site falls within the Smithfield Conservation Area and is also adjacent to the Shudehill Conservation Area. All new development therefore had to take into account the sensitive location and relationship to existing and important listed buildings - all within one of the city’s most important heritage areas. Designers had to take this into account at all stages to ensure that new buildings had a clear relationship with the old, acknowledging the characteristics of massing, colours and materials. Materials for the first two phases include brick, external render, metal cladding and feature glazing. The third phase residential features a blue engineering brick envelope with inset glass balustrade balconies. The Crowne Plaza Hotel has a feature glazed frontage while The Holiday Inn Express hotel has a terracotta rainscreen, aluminium cladding and feature illuminated ‘light wall’.

Indoor Environmental Quality:

Balconies to the residential unit enable natural light to be maximised. Full height glazing with coloured interlays was used for the north-facing elevation of the fourth phase hotel, again to maximise light penetration. Both the fourth and fifth phase hotels feature energy-efficient air conditioning systems with lo-NOx boilers.

Operations and Maintenance:

The Smithfield scheme has been developed through a long-term relationship with the City Council and, to encourage community support, a Smithfield Representatives Partnership was established at the outset of the project as a way for residents to discuss any recommendations for the area. Muse has an active interest in this group, pro-actively responding to any concerns or recommendations. Muse also liaises closely with the estate management and residential management companies.

Waste Reduction:

Prior to the submission of all planning applications, extensive consultation was held with highways and public health officers to establish an access and building servicing/waste management strategy for the development. This had to take account of the nature of the adjoining narrow, unadopted streets and the need to establish a one-way servicing system. Hotel construction included podded manufacture of bathrooms to minimise on-site waste. Site waste management programmes were operated through the scheme’s contractors.

Biodiversity:

The Smithfield scheme has transformed an inhospitable surface car park into a mixed-use development which, in 2010, was named ‘Best Neighbourhood in Britain’ by the Academy of Urbanism. A tree-planting programme has been implemented within the scheme’s principal public square, as well as within the public spaces between the buildings, and shrubbery and landscaping has been introduced around the perimeters.
OVERARCHING SUSTAINABILITY ACHIEVEMENTS

The development restored local pride in Manchester’s Northern Quarter. What was previously considered a ‘no-go’ area by many is now a centre for thriving businesses, two hotels and a popular farmers’ market. Muse’s mixed-use approach attracted many new businesses and residents to the Northern Quarter and continues to act as a catalyst for further investment. Transport systems have been improved as part of the scheme and local employment has increased. A direct contribution to community projects plays a key part in the success of Smithfield, with local music, art, craft and design groups flourishing. The urban design context is vital in this conservation area, and our buildings acknowledge the massing, colours and materials of adjacent buildings. Historic materials have been re-used wherever possible.

WHAT LESSONS WERE LEARNED AND WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THIS PROJECT?

- It is essential to produce a well-considered masterplan right at the outset, and to develop that masterplan through consultation with all stakeholders
- Subsequent development has to be worked up within the remit established by this masterplan
- Connectivity should be promoted as a key driver of masterplan design
- Developers need to engage in open and honest discussion with both planning authorities and representatives’ groups
- It can be rewarding to challenge design teams to think laterally. At Smithfield, this has resulted in a successful blend of old and new - six new buildings which are all different yet harmonise with each other and with the existing streetscape
• Franchisors and occupiers should be involved at a very early stage of the project to share with them the standards of design to which their buildings must aspire.
• Early consultation with planning and conservation officers is instrumental in gaining support for design and planning applications.
• Developers should engage in regular and robust dialogue with adjoining owners, Council representatives, building contractors, consultants and occupiers to ensure that each phase is delivered to budget and to programme.

AWARDS WON FOR THE PROJECT:

• Named ‘Best Neighbourhood in Britain’ by the Academy of Urbanism, December 2010.
• ‘Best Mixed Used Project’ at the Regeneration and Renewal Awards 2011.

PROJECT COMMENTS/PRESS/QUOTES:

“Smithfield has been transformed beyond all recognition. What was once referred to as an uninviting area is now a place where people want to live, work and invest.”
Mike Payton, Ician Developments Director

“Flagship schemes, such as Smithfield, have set a lead, which others are now following.”
Manchester City Centre Strategic Plan 2009-2012, Manchester City Council / Cityco

“The Northern Quarter is a key element of the regeneration of Manchester city centre and this scheme is further evidence that it remains a thriving residential and commercial location.”
Sir Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council

“We’re incredibly proud of what we’ve achieved at Smithfield over the last ten years which has paved the way for the revival of the Northern Quarter into one of the most creative and vibrant areas of Manchester city centre. We now look forward to delivering this next phase of development and enhancing this unique part of the city centre.”
Wes Erlam, senior development surveyor at Muse Developments