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Planning. Design. Economics.

**Response to Invitation to Comment on
English Heritage Stage 1 Report on The
Point, Midsummer Boulevard, Milton
Keynes**

English Heritage Case No. 475407

Hammerson plc

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Introduction

- 1.1 Hammerson plc has been invited to comment on the Consultation Report (19 October 2012) undertaken by English Heritage (EH) of The Point at Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes. This Stage 1 report will provide the factual basis upon which English Heritage will base their recommendation to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport as to whether the building should be listed due to its special architectural or historic interest. A separate Stage 2 report will include the English Heritage recommendation as to whether or not the building should be listed.
- 1.2 Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP) has been instructed by Hammerson to provide an assessment of the architectural and historic interest of the building against the statutory tests for inclusion on the statutory list.
- 1.3 This assessment is based on a consideration of the Stage 1 Report, archival research, consideration of the statutory provisions applicable to listing, English Heritage guidance relating to cinemas and an inspection of the building.
- 1.4 A separate report has been prepared by Richard Coleman Citydesigner entitled "*Assessment of Historical and Architectural Significance* " and a Statement from Ignus Froneman of the Heritage Collective, which should be read in conjunction with this assessment.
- 1.5 The Map supplied by EH to identify the building in the Stage 1 report is inaccurate and should be amended at its south-eastern boundary to omit the walkway between the cinema box and multi-storey car park. This does not form part of the building footprint.

The Statutory Tests for Listing

- 2.1 The “*Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings*”, March 2010, published by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), provides the statutory criteria against which the building will be assessed.
- 2.2 Buildings can only be added to the statutory list if they have demonstrable special architectural or historic interest (the statutory criteria). The stringent tests for inclusion require that the buildings are of importance to the nation for their interest in architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship or that they are important examples of a particular building type and technique such as a building displaying technological innovation or virtuosity and significant plan forms.
- 2.3 With regard to historic interest, the test for inclusion on the list requires that a building illustrates important aspects of the nation’s social, economic, cultural or military history or exhibits close historical associations with nationally important people or events.
- 2.4 In addition, the Secretary of State may take into account the extent to which the exterior of a building contributes to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings of which it forms part and whether the building contains a man-made object or structure fixed to the building which is worthy of preservation on the grounds of its architectural or historic interest.
- 2.5 The DCMS document contains general principles which may also be applied by the Secretary of State when considering adding a building to the statutory list. These are:
- 1 Age and rarity;
 - 2 Aesthetic merits;
 - 3 Selectivity;
 - 4 National Interest;
 - 5 State of repair.
- 2.6 Paragraph 12 of “*Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings*” deals with recent buildings and states:
- “buildings of less than 30 years old are normally listed only if they are of outstanding quality and under threat”.*
- 2.7 In practice for a building to be of “outstanding quality” it should normally be capable of being added to the statutory list at grade II* or above.
- 2.8 The Point was opened in November 1985 (construction began in August 1984). Calculating from the date of construction the building is 28 years old, and falls into the category of recent buildings. Hence it must satisfy the test of being of “outstanding quality” if it is to be added to the statutory list.

English Heritage Selection Criteria for Cinemas

In April 2011 English Heritage published a *"Listing Selection Guide to Culture and Entertainment"* which provides non-statutory guidance on cinemas and states (page 10):

"Many of the same considerations for listing theatres apply to cinemas (see English Heritage 1999), but instead of stage equipment it is worth noting the survival of a cinema organ in situ. Completeness is important, although earlier fabric may survive hidden behind later alterations, such as screens. Exceptionally, once-common features such as an external pay box may survive. Given the numbers built, careful selection is required, but a surviving exterior with particularly good decoration and a fine canopy may well be enough to make a pre-1914 cinema listable on its own.

Architectural quality and extent of alteration will be key considerations for later cinemas. Reorganisation (precipitated by government to bolster the home film-making industry) in 1927-8 lead to standardisation and a new generation of cinemas for sound films: large, sometimes with tearooms and organs, usually classical in style, but occasionally moderne. They need to be assessed in the context of their chain: each had distinctive styles and in-house architects and designers, to which the gazetteers by Allen Eyles are useful aids (see 'Select Bibliography'). Reversibility of alterations can be a consideration needing special consideration. Post-war cinemas are usually part of larger office developments and their inclusion depends on the architectural quality of the whole".

It also states at page 7 that *"Post-1945 cinemas are rarely of interest."*

Description of The Point

The concept design for The Point was by Neil Tibbatt of Tibbatts and Co, a Birmingham based interior design group. Tibbatts' design was taken forward and developed by architects Building Design Partnership (BDP). The lead architect was Alec Stevenson of BDP's Manchester office. Images of The Point are provided in Appendix 1.

Exterior

The Point comprises two elements: one, the ziggurat inspired three-storey building which comprises mirror-glazed boxes which recede in size and contain a variety of uses combined with a red-painted, steel pyramidal frame enclosing the ziggurat; and, the other a rectangular box at the rear of the site (south-east) which contains the multiplex cinema. These two elements are linked by a short glazed walkway.

The main approach to The Point is via the Centre MK (the Milton Keynes Shopping Centre) and across Midsummer Boulevard. From the shopping centre, covered porte-cochere pedestrian crossings (characteristic of Milton Keynes) screen the approach to The Point (Image 1).

On its north-west side, an area of hard landscaping, broken up by small trees and shrubbery, provides a setting to The Point with 'boomerang' shaped benches. Mature London Plane trees line Midsummer Boulevard, visually separating The Point from Centre MK (Image 2). The surfacing comprises square concrete pavers.

The glass ziggurat and steel frame are located on four shallow steps, constructed of concrete paving slabs (Image 3). The concrete paving slabs abut the ziggurat on all sides.

The main, north-western elevation of The Point (Image 4) comprises the principal entrance which is recessed into the ground floor glass box (it is noted from English Heritage's report that the doors, door furniture and surrounding glazed panels are all replacements). An entrance canopy protrudes from the steel frame and contains signage above. The roof of the canopy now comprises MDF, it is not known what the original material was. On the north-east side is a separate entrance to the Gala Bingo hall. This is constructed of clear glass with blue framing. Steps lead down to the bingo hall at basement level. On the north-west side is a newsagent kiosk, built into a clear glass structure, which prevents access to what was once an alternative access to the basement bingo hall.

The main building, of three receding storeys, has its own independent structural frame and as such is quite separate from the red-painted steel frame. The building is clad in mirrored glass with metal frames and metal windows. Occasional glazed panels have been replaced with darker glazing or MDF

panels. Secondary fire-escape exits are provided on the side elevations. These are metal framed double doors. Concrete paved terraces are located on the roof of each storey of the building, providing outdoor space at ground, first and second floor levels. The terraces are enclosed by the red-painted steel frame. Pairs of fibre-glass clad ventilation ducts are located on the terraces on either side of the building at ground, first and second floor levels (Image 5).

- 4.8 The red-painted steel frame, comprising horizontal and vertical trusses enclosing the ziggurat, appears to be a decorative element although secondary sources from the time of construction state that it serves as a wind brace. It also gives a visual prominence, announcing the leisure complex. It reaches 21m in height. Its lack of structural integrity is emphasised by some of the vertical columns finishing just above ground level resting on floating spheres (Image 6). The four principal arms of the frame are aligned with the four corners of the ziggurat and terminate in metal spheres attached to the ground. This frame originally supported red-neon lights. These have since been removed.
- 4.9 At the rear of the ziggurat two spiral stairs link the ground and first floor terraces. Access to these is prevented by mesh fencing (Image 7).
- 4.10 A clear glazed walkway with a white aluminium frame (Image 8) links the rear of The Point with the cinema box to its south-east, containing 10 screens. Due to the change in level across the site (the land rises to the north), the walkway is located beneath the height of the ground floor terrace of The Point. Slatted screens enclose servicing at basement level of The Point on either side of the glazed walkway (Image 9).
- 4.11 There is a clear distinction between The Point and the cinema box. The two buildings are separate, being linked only by the glazed walkway. On either side of the walkway, glazed metal framed entrances are provided to the cinema lobby. Today these are the only visitor entrances to the cinema that remain. The original design intent was for cinema users to access the cinema via the main entrance through The Point, walking through the building and the glazed walkway to the cinema lobby at the rear. Internally the walkway has since been blocked off and this linkage between the buildings no longer exists.
- 4.12 The multiplex cinema (currently operated by Odeon) is contained within a rectangular flat-roofed box which is approximately 8m in height (Images 10 and 11). The box has no windows and is clad in off-white metal panelling. It shares many of the utilitarian characteristics of the multitude of multiplex cinemas throughout the country.

Interior

- 4.13 Originally The Point contained a bar and restaurant at ground floor, a nightclub at first floor, with the upper-most glazed box containing the light rigging for the nightclub, and a bingo hall at basement level. In 1995 the first floor was converted to a Health Club.

- 4.14 Today the point contains offices and a temporary café at ground floor (the café is in residence only whilst its own premises are redecorated). The original ground floor layout has been entirely lost. The offices now prevent access to the cinema walkway link to the rear (Images 12 and 13).
- 4.15 A youth/community café is now located at first floor level. The interior of the café has been recently decorated and due to alterations during the 1990s, virtually no original 1980s fittings appear to have survived (Image 14). The metal stairs leading from ground to first floor level and the spiral staircase leading from second floor level to third floor level remain (Images 15 and 16).
- 4.16 The bingo hall at basement level remains in use today. The extent of refurbishment since 1985 is not clear but the layout and fittings appear typical and uninspiring (Image 17).
- 4.17 The cinema auditoriums, housed to the rear of the rectangular box are typical of multiplexes of their time. There are no internal distinguishing features. The lobby, visible from the outside, has been fitted out in "corporate" Odeon interior décor. Large steel columns, with marble bases remain within the double height foyer (Image 18). The cinema originally provided 2,026 seats. In 2005, the BFI Film Handbook identifies that the easyCinema contained 2,038 seats, while the Odeon website confirms that the cinema currently contains 1,822 seats plus an additional 26 wheelchair spaces.

5.0

Assessment Against Listing Criteria

5.1

The Point has been assessed against the DCMS statutory document “*Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings*” as well as the non-statutory English Heritage selection guide on cinemas. From these documents a number of applicable criteria have been selected for this assessment as follows:

DCMS Statutory Criteria

- 1 Architectural Interest
- 2 Historic Interest
- 3 Group Value
- 4 Man-made object/structure

DCMS General Principles

- 5 Age and Rarity
- 6 Aesthetic Merits
- 7 Selectivity
- 8 National Interest
- 9 State of Repair

5.2

In addition the following are also considered:

- 1 Changes to the Original Building
- 2 Views of the Local Planning Authority (MKC)

5.3

The Richard Coleman Citydesigner Report (November 2012) focuses on the architectural quality of the building and provides information on the building type. It has been supplemented by archival research, journal and newspaper articles on The Point which are referred to within the text below.

Architectural Interest

Conceived by an Interior Designer

5.4

The ziggurat design was conceived by interior designer, Neil Tibbatt, with architects BDP acting as consultant architect and engineers (see paragraphs 5.26-5.30 for further assessment of the role of BDP). A Building article notes, “*That an interior design group should dictate the external shape is not entirely surprising. The joint developers...were keen to get the interior concept right before considering an appropriate building envelope. The Point is therefore one of the few buildings to have been purposely designed inside-out. According to Mr Tibbatt, the list of facilities required and the definitive seating capacities of each area led naturally to a tiered design*” (Building 16 August 1985, p36).

- 5.5 Neil Tibbatt featured in an interview for Interior Design in May 1986. The article states *"Tibbatts' original presentation was, concedes, Neil Tibbatt, a rush job. But the one central element that was retained and he believes had a lot to do with swinging the contract the Bass way, was the external 'pyramid' concept..."* Bass' whole business plan was based on looking for a catchment of 25-30 minutes driving time,' explains Tibbatt. 'So we knew we had to offer something with a very strong identity, with all the components put together for a total impact and cohesive identity.'... 'the client,' he adds, 'was conscious that what we had to create was an environment, not a building. It had to draw and attract the customers."
- 5.6 The original designer therefore appears to confirm that:
- 1 The pyramid concept was a rush job and not carefully conceived.
 - 2 The business plan is based on an outmoded and dated concept of driving times, now contrary to the British sustainability agenda.
 - 3 A strong identity was required for all the components together and was aimed at drawing attention to the building and giving prominence to the Bass logo. As such, it exhibits something of a stage prop or 'gimmick' rather than a serious piece of post-modernist architecture. The original raison d'être for the building, is no longer applicable, making the strong identity for the building redundant and the gimmicky exterior dated.
 - 4 Bass/AMC's interest was not in creating an outstanding building but rather a building constructed to a tight budget and an environment that attracted customers and hence profit.
- 5.7 Tibbatt explains of the design of the cinema foyer, that he wanted an impressive entrance with a strong identity to draw people down from the restaurant. AMC found the proposals too opulent. In the final fit out *"Columns, banners and mirrors combine for what Tibbatt calls the 'grand portico theme', with a scattering of reference, in marble finishes and lights, to cinemas of the past"* (Historic Image 19). This original interior has been almost completely lost by the fit-outs of successive cinema operators and tenants, including the easy-Group, who created an unsuccessful easyCinema in 2003 and subsequently the Odeon in 2006.
- 5.8 Tibbatt discusses the design approach to the interiors of the ground floor of the ziggurat. *"Image is less precisely defined in the area of food and beverage offers. While Tibbatt concedes it's an area that needs further work, it is, he maintains, a question of fine tuning, not a re-evaluation of the concept."* Of the raised restaurant area he stated *"A little too formal possibly.'* Says Tibbatt now. *'In our presentation of it our perception was a little too high. It needs loosening up in some of the detail."* See Historic Images 20, 21 and 22 of the interiors of the ziggurat.
- 5.9 Tibbatt concludes *"A lot of what we have done here would upset the purists. But last week they took £120,000 over the counter. That's the object of the exercise, not to win design awards...It's the people who make the spending decisions, not the designers that we listen to."*

- 5.10 The lack of consistency and jumbled styles of the interior design is reinforced by a Building article of February 7 1986 which states of the central ground floor mall *"The impression of diversity is enhanced by a pot-pourri of current styles of décor – from Post-Modern to Hi-Tech, taking in palm-court Art Deco and health-food striped pine en route."* (p37).
- 5.11 Of the interior of The Point cinema auditoria, the Film Review of March 1988 states, p52, *"The cinemas were not beautiful but they were spacious and clean."* In other words they simply met a commercial brief for the operator similar to other multiplex cinema developments of this period.
- 5.12 From the reporting at the time, it is clear that the interiors which have since been lost were of limited interest even when first conceived.
- 5.13 In terms of the ziggurat, allowing the interiors to dictate the approach to the exterior of the building and the loss of those original internal uses has had a fundamental impact on the functionality of the building and its architectural integrity.

The pyramid concept

- 5.14 In terms of the pyramid as a concept, as highlighted in the article "A plethora of pyramids – The new crystal palaces" (undated), whilst traditional Egyptian pyramids were monuments, built of masonry to last forever, *"Contemporary pyramids house the living and are not envisaged as everlasting...These pyramids, albeit to date smaller than those of ancient times, are built of steel and clad with translucent plastics. They take but weeks to build and are of modular construction."* (A plethora of pyramids - p1).
- 5.15 Work began on site at The Point in August 1984, with completion scheduled for October 1985 (Building, 16 August 1985). This approximately 15-month build programme emphasises the simplicity of the construction and modular design. *"Fast track design and construction was used to meet a 70 week construction programme"* (A plethora of pyramids, p8).
- 5.16 The red-painted pyramid frame is *"Allied with its powerful role in the marketing and promotion of the complex"* (A plethora of pyramids, p8), a red triangle being Bass Leisure's logo. The redundancy of the leisure complex in its current form and the change of ownership make the pyramid a redundant facet of its design. Further description of how the interior was originally conceived to service the uses emphasises that the change of layout of the building and its lack of integration with the existing uses (office, temporary café) has undermined the architectural design, function and purpose of the building:

“The Point can accommodate 6,000 pleasure seekers at any one time. Visitors enter beneath an electronic newscaster board which promotes the various activities on offer, presents new headlines and emits computer-generated graphic advertising. Once inside the visitor is treated to a totally-controlled internal environment, either bathed in sunlight or stimulated by atmospheric lighting. Paved and planted areas provide walkways, seating and circulation malls. Access is readily available to a multiplicity of facilities including restaurant, bar, brasserie, amusement area, discotheque, 1,500 capacity bingo club and 2,000 plus capacity 10-screen cinema.

Movement patterns within the centre have fully justified the developers’ faith in the cross-fertilisation of interest, which had formed the basis of the conceptual thinking. A high volume of usage has been generated and a high proportion of users move around the complex during a single visit in order to take advantage of the various facilities” (p8).

- 5.17 An article in Building Services, July, 1986 is also worth noting. It states that *“Due to a cut in budget (of about 35%) the extra cost of air conditioning became excessive, so a forced ventilation system with supply and extract units in the ceiling void was installed...the units on all floors take in and exhaust air through the futuristic looking funnels which can be seen on the terraces.”* The ventilation ducts on the terraces were clearly not an integral element of the design of the building but a later add-on and serve to undermine, together with the poor quality concrete pavers, the quality of the outdoor terraces and clutter of this space.

- 5.18 The 30-year masterplan for Milton Keynes was published in the local newspaper the Sunday Citizen on October 21, 2001. At this time The Point was shown on the masterplan as a site for redevelopment. The newspaper reported that a leading council architect accepted that the building is not architecturally significant and is outdated. *"Architect Andrew Armes from Milton Keynes Council, said '...it is not seen as an architecturally renowned building.'"*

- 5.19 The fact that the internal uses and interior design of the ziggurat so dictated the architectural exterior of the building emphasises its poorly conceived design, lack of flexibility and a resulting building that is ultimately ‘of its time’ and no longer adaptable to other needs. Budget cuts further compromised the quality of the pyramid and its surrounding space. The Richard Coleman Citydesigner Report, November 2012, provides further information on the lack of architectural integrity and quality of the ziggurat.

- 5.20 A well-designed building is usually considered to be adaptable to new uses. The lack of demand for the original uses – large scale ground floor bar and restaurant, and first floor nightclub with a top floor box providing space for a lighting rig that is now outdated – has resulted in a building that is now rapidly becoming redundant and dated in its appearance.

Standard cinema box

- 5.21 The AJ (19 July, 1989, p59) states *“Although the multiplex has been the saviour of cinema as a mass entertainment form, its effect on architecture must be regarded as rather less of a cause for celebration. The new-generation picture-palaces are largely indistinguishable from the superstore or shopping centre neighbours, and the flamboyant excesses of cinema history have sadly been distilled into the ubiquitous blind, bland box.”*
- 5.22 A Building Services article, July, 1986 reinforces the standard nature of the design of the box element *“As the building was similar to previous US experience by AMC there was an example to follow for the design of services”*. It goes on to describe the interior of the cinema auditoriums *“The interior design by Tibatts and Co. was based on the use of the standard US sound absorber wall panels hung off the plasterboard faced partitions. The seats and carpets act as good absorbers but, unfortunately, cost savings resulted in a reduction in carpet area and the number of wall mounted sound absorbers...Seating was arranged with two side aisles rather than a central aisle against advice from the US.”*
- 5.23 The standard AMC design was picked up by many of the reporting journals at the time, for example:
- The cinema block *“is designed according to a standard American Multi-Cinema pattern”* (Building 16 August 1985, p36).
 - *“The cinemas fit into an AMC-designed standard format rectangular box at the rear of the site”* (Architects Journal, 7 December 1988, p72).
 - *“A standard design and specification for the cinema complex is an integral part of AMC’s successful formula.”* (Building, 7 February 1986).

Life Span

- 5.24 The Point was conceived for a moment in time and exhibits qualities of an almost temporary nature. The approach to its architecture reinforces this temporary quality. An article in Building (16 August 1985, p36) notes that the *“new entertainment complex in the centre of Milton Keynes strongly reflects the changes which have taken place in modern leisure requirements. The multi-purpose complex includes a restaurant, brassiere, nightclub, bars, bingo hall and ten cinema auditoria.”* The Point was designed and built to serve the specific requirements of the entertainment industry in the 1980s and indeed specific operators, namely AMC and Bass Leisure. Leisure requirements have evolved significantly since the 1980s (including digital technology within cinemas and different choices of leisure venues) which makes The Point ‘of its time’. The megaplex theatres (housing 20 or more screens) became popular in the late 1980s, soon after the construction of The Point. The high turnover of tenants and current lack of use for the spaces within the ziggurat element of The Point and the more attractive and up-to-date leisure centres nearby (Xscape) reinforces the fact that The Point was built to meet the demand for a specific mix of uses, within a period of time, for a specific operator and this no longer exists due in large part to the nature of the design of the ziggurat.

Summary of Architectural Interest

- 5.25 Based on the above it is difficult to see how The Point can meet the listing criteria on the basis of the strength of the architectural quality and the test of being an "outstanding" building.

Historic Interest

- 5.26 The importance of BDP as a practice is referred to in The Richard Coleman Citydesigner Report (November 2012). However, BDP's role was simply to take forward Neil Tibbatt's concept. BDP acted as executive architects and provided structural and mechanical engineering services and lighting design.
- 5.27 Of the many articles appearing in architectural and design journals at the time, some of which interviewed the key designers involved in the project, not one links the building in any way to the theories of the architectural group Archigram. There is no evidence that the theories and approaches of Archigram can be linked to The Point.
- 5.28 A tenuous connection between the influences of Archigram and The Point are through BDP, as Mike Webb one of the founders of Archigram also worked for BDP. However, this connection is particularly flimsy as the design was conceived by Neil Tibbatt and not BDP and the lead architect from BDP was Alec Stevenson, not Mike Webb.
- 5.29 It should be noted that the original proposal was for an 80 ft crystal pyramid of mirrored glass with the windowless silver block at the back, for the 10-screen cinema. The interior was to have an atrium with landscaping and vegetation. However, due to budgetary restrictions Bass/AMC revised the design to the 70 ft ziggurat structure, with the featureless box at the rear. (Unpublished Lecture, Stuart Hanson). This further reduces the theory that Archigram influences were key, as Bass/AMC were influential in Neil Tibbatt's final design and the construction of the building. The final design - the red-painted pyramid - also exemplified the Bass logo, emphasising Bass's influence.
- 5.30 There is no evidence that the red-painted steel pyramid is redolent of Mike Webb's 1959-62 thesis project called the Sin Centre Entertainment Centre for Leicester Square, barring the fact that they both involve cinemas. The Sin Centre was a theoretical paper based scheme of around 20 years earlier than The Point. We know that Bass/AMC and Neil Tibbatt (in Tibbatt's own words) were not interested in architecture and design but were interested in getting customers through the door - *"we were keen to get the interior concept right before considering an appropriate building envelop"* and *"what we had to create was an environment, not a building. It had to draw and attract the customers"*. It is unlikely that a hypothetical scheme from 20 years previously influenced the developers/interior designer who came up with the design concept.
- 5.31 As an example of a post-modernist building, the corporate influences and commercial requirements that had undermined the quality of post-modernist

architecture by the mid-1980s are evident in The Point. The Point cannot be considered to be an "outstanding" example of post-modernist architecture.

- 5.32 With regard to the claim that the "*design is noteworthy as a relatively early use of architectural computer-aided design (CAD)*", even a cursory review of the history of CAD indicates that early computer design packages such as SKETCHPAD, displaying features of modern CAD, were in use as early as 1963. The first commercial applications of CAD during the 1960s and 1970s were in large companies in the car and space industries, as well as in electronics. Initially only large companies could afford the computers capable of performing the calculations. CAD packages have evolved dramatically since then, such as with 3D in the 1970s. Advances in programming, computer hardware and the affordability of CAD packages in the 1980s allowed more versatile applications of computers in design activities. Whilst British architectural practices may only have just begun moving to the use of CAD in the 1980s, the fact that a building was designed in 1985 using a CAD package, which have been shown to have been around in some form for the previous 20 years, is not of special historic significance warranting the buildings inclusion on the statutory list.
- 5.33 As The Richard Coleman Citydesigner Report and this assessment demonstrates, The Point fails to demonstrate any kind of technological virtuosity, has nothing interesting about its plan form and has no association with any particular historical event or nationally important persons. It therefore fails to meet this criterion for listing.

Group value

- 5.34 The Point occupies an isolated site and has no relationship to Centre MK nor to any other buildings. Central Milton Keynes was planned between 1968 and 1972. The Point was completed in 1985, some years later than the now listed Centre MK and Lloyds Court (unlisted).
- 5.35 At the time of building, MKDC restricted the building height of the development on the site to three-four storeys to reflect surrounding storey heights. This meant that, when first built, The Point was more visible than today as the adjacent plots were either undeveloped or of a similar three-four storeys in height (see Images 23 and 24). The Point was especially more visible at night when it was lit with red neon lights (see Image 25). Today heights of buildings within Milton Keynes have increased and the surrounding plots have been developed, this means there are very limited clear views of The Point from surrounding streets. Some locals have described it as a landmark building but this is likely to stem from the time when The Point was illuminated, which would have made it a more prominent feature of the townscape, and prior to the intensification of surrounding development.
- 5.36 The lighting has been removed and the building no longer plays a prominent night-time role. Even if The Point was illuminated today, it would not be a landmark element of the townscape due to the intensity and increase in height of surrounding buildings.

- 5.37 The exterior of The Point does not contribute to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings, has no group value and fails to satisfy this criterion.

Man-made Object/Structure

- 5.38 The red-painted steel frame is arguably a man-made object/structure that is attached to the building as a decorative element - it serves no structural purpose. Within the 'Architectural Interest' section of this report and in The Richard Coleman Citydesigner Report, this frame has been assessed for its architectural quality. It is not of "outstanding" architectural, or even special interest that would warrant the building's inclusion on the statutory list. Neither is it of special historic interest.

Age and rarity

- 5.39 The Point was opened in November 1985, some 27 years ago, and critically for this assessment is less than 30 years old.
- 5.40 The Point was developed by an Anglo-American partnership – Bass Leisure and American Multi-Cinema (AMC). AMC ran the cinema element whilst Bass Leisure operated the other facilities (Architects Journal, 7 December 1988, p72).
- 5.41 The Richard Coleman Citydesigner Report (November 2012) provides background history on AMC and the multiplex cinema type. It emphasises the fact that multiplex cinemas are of American origin, the concept developed from the idea of shopping malls which established in America from the 1950s onwards. At around the time of the opening of The Point AMC had already built over 150 new-build cinema complexes in the US (Building 7 February 1986, p38).
- 5.42 The Point formed part of AMC's multiplex development programme in the UK. Soon after the opening of The Point, AMC had 10 firm deals for multiplexes at the sites listed below, with most opening in 1987 (Chartered Surveyor Weekly, 7 August 1986, p436). It also had another 12 deals near to conclusion. AMC's development programme was set back by six months due to the complexities of the British planning system (see paragraph 5.48 below for more in relation to the ease of planning with The Point). If it was not for this, other multiplexes would have followed much sooner and possibly close to the time of The Point therefore undermining any serious claim that it was the first multiplex in the country pioneering this building type. It was simply at the front of the queue and part of a very major building programme by AMC. The committed projects at the same time as The Point (and hence the next AMC multiplexes of 8-10 screen cinemas to be opened) were:
- 1 Glasgow west: Clydebank Regional Centre, phase three
 - 2 Glasgow south: East Kilbride Olympia Mall
 - 3 Glasgow east: Parkhead Forge Mall

- 4 Dundee: Heritage Centre
 - 5 Newcastle: Metrocentre, phase three
 - 6 Warrington: Westbrook Centre
 - 7 Rotherham: Parkgate Centre
 - 8 Sheffield; Waterthorpe Mall
 - 9 Dudley: Merry Hill Centre
 - 10 Bristol: Cribbs Causeway.
- 5.43 The Film Review of 1988, clarifies that it was AMC's aim to have 30 multiplexes by 1991.
- 5.44 The second British multiplex (an eight screen complex) was opened by Cannon-Thorn at Salford Quays at the end of 1986 (Chartered Surveyor Weekly, 7 August 1986, p436). Cannon-Thorn also had a planning application in at this time to develop a 17-screen complex at Great Windmill Street, London. The article also notes that CIC hoped to open three multiplexes in 1987 at edge-of-town sites – including High Wycombe and Solihull. In 1986, Rank were committed to finding eight or nine multiplex sites as quickly as possible.
- 5.45 The number of multiplex cinemas opening in the UK in the following years grew rapidly. Sites were generally based on “easy access by road and plentiful parking space” (Film Review March 1988, p52). There are now approximately 290 multiplexes distributed throughout the country. As a cinema type it is therefore commonplace. None are listed, which illustrates that few if any exhibit any architectural or historical distinctiveness and can not be claimed to be a rare cinema type (see the section on Selectivity below for more information on the listings of cinemas).
- 5.46 In terms of the ziggurat pyramid, its architecture is clearly post-modernist but the pyramid was actually a relatively popular building type and became commonplace. UK examples included Bletchley Leisure Centre, Milton Keynes; and The Pyramid, Stockport. Pyramids were generally of modular construction, designed to be quickly and easily erected with a short-term life span.
- 5.47 The Point at 28 years old is a modern building and there are close to 300 examples of a similar building type within the UK, none of which has been listed for their special interest.
- 5.48 The Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) actively sought to develop the new leisure complex site and held the planning powers for new buildings in Milton Keynes. MKDC had very flexible mixed-use, commercial outline planning consents (Commission for New Towns 6:1 consents) on all Central Milton Keynes grid sites which sped up the planning process. The lack of red-tape for this site may have been the only reason The Point was able to be constructed before the second UK multiplex at Salford Quays. An earlier proposal by Granada for an entertainment complex, including a three-screen 600 seat cinema, for a different site in Milton Keynes, was turned down by MKDC in 1979. This emphasises the tenuous link that The Point has to being the first

British multiplex cinema. It appears not to be due to the particular innovative nature of The Point that it claims this title, but due to the vagaries of the British planning system. The more relaxed planning system and design criteria of the Development Corporations during the 1980s allowed the car-based entertainment centres, including The Point, to flourish and take shape relatively quickly.

- 5.49 The Designers Journal of June 1986 states of The Point *“Hailed as revolutionary in introducing the multiplex (multi-screen) cinema to this country, on the one hand, and dismissed as a one-off that is only suitable for new towns on the other, The Point has attracted a great deal of attention. In fact, the multiplex is nothing new: it has existed in Europe and Scandinavia for several years, and is simply an extension of the multiple screens we already have. And according to Chuck Wesocky, managing director of AMC Entertainment (UK): ‘we spent two years researching the marketplace, and it was never our intention just to do a one-off. There are 10 other developments currently under way, two on greenfield sites, but the rest in multi-use units, mostly retail’”*.
- 5.50 A Film Review article of March 1988 (p52) confirms that Rank and EMI had converted most of their old Odeon and ABC cinemas to three-screen “film centres” in the 1970s. There has, therefore, been a British precedent for multi-screen cinemas since the 1970s.
- 5.51 In terms of being the first multiplex cinema, an interview with Vincent J Guzzo, AMC’s development director, in Building (7 February 1986, p33) identifies that the original completion date had been fixed in April 1983 for October 1986 but *“...this was curtailed by a full 12 months as AMC became concerned that its concept might be plagiarised.”* The Salford Quays multiplex opened at the end of 1986. It is clear The Point was only the first multiplex by default. The UK market was opening up to the American concept and any one of a number of multiplexes could have claimed this title. There is nothing special or innovative about The Point for being the first multiplex cinema, given that over 150 multiplexes already existed in the US, that there were various British multi-screen cinemas that had already been adapted from earlier venues and a plethora of multiplexes were about to open within the following months in the UK.
- 5.52 Based on the above it is clear that The Point fails to satisfy the listing criteria in relation to either age or rarity.

Aesthetic Merits

- 5.53 The 'Architectural Interest' and 'Group Value' sections of this assessment has shown that in the case of The Point, the appearance of the building - its intrinsic architectural merit and any group value - is not of special interest.
- 5.54 The 'Historic Interest' section also shows that The Point fails to demonstrate any kind of technological virtuosity, has nothing interesting about its plan form and has no association with any particular historical event or nationally important persons which may warrant its inclusion on the statutory list.

Selectivity

- 5.55 The Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings states:
- " Where a building qualifies for listing primarily on the strength of its special architectural interest, the fact that there are other buildings of similar quality elsewhere is not likely to be a major consideration. However, a building may be listed primarily because it represents a particular historical type in order to ensure that examples of such a type are preserved. Listing in these circumstances is largely a comparative exercise and needs to be selective where a substantial number of buildings of a similar type and quality survive. In such cases, the Secretary of State's policy is to list only the most representative or most significant examples of the type."*
- 5.56 A search of The National Heritage List for England identified 158 listing entries for cinemas¹. Each of these was reviewed and only one was a post-war cinema; the Curzon Mayfair (grade II) which dates to 1957 and was designed by Sir John Burnet, Tait and Partners (List Entry No. 1272023). The listing description indicates that the interior of this cinema "...is the most elaborate and best surviving of the post-war period". Whilst it is not a multiplex cinema it is an example of a multi-use building which incorporated a restaurant, offices and apartments along with the cinema. From this search no later listed cinemas have been identified.
- 5.57 A search for "Pyramid" identified 14 listed pyramid structures. None of these was post war. A search for "Retail Park" identified 77 entries. None of these was post war. It is known, however, that there are listed post-war shopping centres.
- 5.58 The best surviving post-war cinema forming part of a mixed-use development - the Curzon Mayfair - is already listed. This is an example of a cinema of better architectural quality from the post-war period than The Point. Arguably, another post-war cinema of better architectural quality (unlisted) is Harbour Lights in Southampton.
- 5.59 To our knowledge, buildings of a similar type (multiplex cinemas) have not been considered of listable quality on historic grounds. Nearly 300 exist today, meaning preservation via listing is not necessary.
- 5.60 In relation to this principle, this assessment has shown that The Point is not worthy of listing on architectural grounds. The Point is also not a particular historical type (either a multiplex cinema or a pyramid) that warrants preservation and hence listing.

¹ Note other cinemas may be listed as part of larger developments e.g. the Renoir Cinema which forms part of the listed Brunswick Centre, which did not show up on this search.

National interest

- 5.61 It is questionable whether a ubiquitous American import - the cinema element being one of a standard US featureless box - should be celebrated as of British national interest, particularly given that the development model is so at odds with current British thinking in terms of the sustainability agenda and approach to town planning which seeks to limit car use and revitalise town centres (as opposed to car-based out of town sites).
- 5.62 The multiplex cinema concept developed from the idea of the US shopping malls. This is a comparable import from the US, although the same significance is not attached to shopping malls. Being the first of a particular building type does not mean it should be listed, it should only be listed if it is of significant architectural interest. See Section 5.0 of The Richard Coleman Citydesigner Report (November 2012) which highlights that even though Lloyds Court was the first commercial building completed in the Milton Keynes New Town it is not of sufficient architectural or historic interest to warrant its listing, whereas the much higher quality and little altered Centre MK was considered of listable quality.
- 5.63 Britain has its own adapted cinemas that are earlier examples of multi-screens (note the English terminology for these cinema types, rather than the American terminology of the multiplex). These adequately display the evolution in cinema-going within this country, with a move to showing more than one film on single premises.
- 5.64 The Point is of "sentimental" interest due to its claim of being the first British multiplex cinema. It is the first of a particular type of cinema (an American import) but that does not infer historic significance in the national context. It is one example of a huge number of multiplexes that were rolled out in very quick succession over a period of a few years. The cinema box element is now severed from the ziggurat which further destroys the architectural integrity of the building.
- 5.65 Setting aside its clear lack of architectural interest, the building type (a multiplex cinema), like shopping malls and retail superstores, does not make a major contribution to the British national historic stock that needs to be preserved or celebrated and hence can not be considered to be of national interest.

State of Repair

- 5.66 The Point has been maintained to an acceptable standard of repair that ensures the cinema can continue in use and that alternative, albeit generally temporary (ground floor café, first floor community centre) uses can be accommodated within the building. A large-scale overhaul of the interior and exterior of the ziggurat would be required to bring it up to 21st Century standards. In 1994 £750,000 was spent on refurbishment. Today, extensive refurbishment would be considerably more. The current owner is unlikely to

invest such sums in an outdated building. The result of listing would therefore serve to mothball the building which would then suffer from neglect, unless an alternative owner could be found.

Changes to the original building

5.67

The Point has been extensively altered since it was constructed in 1985. The principal changes are set out below:

- 1 The redundancy of the original uses housed with the ziggurat and a high turn over of subsequent uses has resulted in continual alterations to the internal floor plan. An article in Leisure Week dated 13 May 1994 stated that Bass had closed the centre for three months for a £750,000 overhaul. It states *"inside the building will be almost unrecognisable"*. Alterations included redesigning The Bar and moving it to where The Brasserie restaurant used to be. The Bar's former site became a Deep Pan Pizza restaurant. A family entertainment centre had been created by extending and redecorating the existing arcade. The Club nightspot on the top floor was replaced by a Health Centre comprising gym, dance studio, sunbeds and changing rooms.
- 2 Direct access between the two elements of the site - the ziggurat and cinema box - has been severed, which undermines the functionality and architectural approach of the two, undermining the completeness and quality of the building as a whole.
- 3 Offices, currently located in the ground floor, have blocked the central mall access to the cinema box to the rear. The glazed link walkway has become redundant. The offices have enclosed the original open-plan floor layout and undermine the original design concept for the building. The offices further undermine the interest of the building.
- 4 Limited original internal layouts, fixtures and fittings remain within the ziggurat and the cinema. However, the original quality of these is questionable. The cinema foyer is usually regarded as the only space of interest within multiplexes (as the auditoria had become smaller, with a lack of ornamentation and cannot compete with the decoration of the purpose built cinemas of the first half of the twentieth century). In the case of The Point, it can be seen that strip outs of successive operators/tenants have reduced the importance of the foyer. It is now a standard Odeon interior and certainly could not be described in any way as "outstanding".
- 5 The outdoor terraces do not appear to be used any more.
- 6 Canopies originally fixed to the exterior of the building, which were an integral part of the design and provided screening from the sun, have been lost (Image 26).
- 7 The red-neon lighting that was so integral to the design of The Point has been removed from the red-painted pyramid.
- 8 One of the bingo entrances has been blocked off by a newsagent kiosk.

- 5.68 Some of the key Planning Permissions which have authorised these changes are:
- 1 MK/276/90 – Erection of two buildings to house a waste compactor and store – 15 June 1990
 - 2 MK/1212/90 – Refurbishment of ground floors and alterations to front elevation – 15 November 1990
 - 3 99/01302/MK – Change of use of first floor from dance studio (Class D2) to offices (Class B1) – 11 October 1999
 - 4 01/01949/FUL – Alterations to existing glazed entrance pod to bingo club – 11 February 2002
 - 5 03/2013/MKCOD3 – Installation of Kiosk incorporating telecommunications antenna – 20 February 2004
- 5.69 Together these changes have undermined the functionality and architectural integrity of the building and further diminish any architectural interest the building may have had.
- 5.70 Images 27-29 in Appendix 1 show early floorplans for the building.

Views of the Local Planning Authority (MKC)

- 5.71 The Central Milton Keynes (CMK) Alliance Plan is currently out for consultation until 7 December 2012. This document contains a policy for the protection of heritage assets within Milton Keynes (Policy G2). It identifies The Point on the Proposals Plan (Figure 14, p78) as a site for retail/leisure uses and as an "underdeveloped" site on Figure 12, p7 implying that its redevelopment is encouraged (Figures 12 and 14 are included in Appendix 1 of this report - Images 30 and 31).
- 5.72 The CMK Development Framework Review Draft SPD, prepared by Milton Keynes Council (August 2012) is also currently out for consultation until 12 November 2012. Within this document, Figure 1, p13 does not identify The Point as a Building of Heritage for CMK (Figure 1 is included in Appendix 1 of this report - Image 32). Paragraphs 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 state the following:
- "There are buildings in CMK that follow a common design philosophy and epitomise the architectural thinking in Milton Keynes at the time, in the 1970s and 80s in particular. They follow a modernist and minimalist approach reflected through for example, significant amounts of mirrored glazing and sleek / clean buildings lines with very simple building forms. The minimalist approach is complemented well by its landscaped setting. The mirrored glass in particular reflects the greenery of the London Plane trees and the surrounding context.*
- Examples of buildings that adhere to a minimalist approach and could be considered of local significance include:*
- *the centre:mk*
 - *Lloyds Court*

- *Norfolk and Ashton House*
- *Buildings around Station Square (Phoenix House, Stone and Webster House, Elder House)*
- *Former Bus Station*
- *Milton Keynes Library*

Other buildings of significance include:

- *Christ the Cornerstone Church*
- *Milton Keynes Theatre and Gallery*
- *Magistrates Court*

These buildings should be protected (and where appropriate refurbished) unless it is demonstrated with evidence that it is not commercially viable to refurbish them."

5.73 Both these documents were prepared recently for the purposes of consultation. One must assume that consideration of the heritage interest of key buildings in the town centre would have been thoroughly considered prior to preparation of the various Plans given the crucial importance of providing an evidential base to support plan preparation. It is clear that The Point is not considered by MKC as a heritage asset that contains any special architectural or historic interest that justifies even local listing, therefore, confirming that the Local Planning Authority does not believe it exhibits any historic or architectural quality.

5.74 The Council's Principal Design and Conservation Officer also produced a note on The Point for the Development Control Committee (10 May 2005). This stated that, as a modern building, The Point is not worthy of listing. It would not meet the criteria for a building of outstanding quality (i.e. grade II*) and any listing application would fail. This opinion was informed by discussions with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] from English Heritage; the latter is generally recognised as the UK's leading expert on the listing of 20th Century architecture.

6.0

Conclusions

6.1

For a building to be included on the statutory list it must exhibit qualities of **special** architectural or historic interest. Buildings that are less than 30 years old must also be "**outstanding**"; a test orders of magnitude greater than "**special**".

6.2

The Point complex exhibits neither quality and does not merit inclusion on the statutory list because as we have shown:

Architectural Interest

6.3

The Point is 'of its time'. The current lack of use for the spaces within The Point and the more attractive and up-to-date leisure centres nearby (Xscape) reinforces the fact that The Point fulfilled a specific need within a specific period of time. It is now outdated and not easily adaptable to new uses. A well-designed building is usually considered to be adaptable to new uses.

6.4

In terms of the ziggurat, allowing the interiors to dictate the approach to the exterior of the building and the loss of those original internal uses has had a fundamental impact on the functionality of the building and its architectural integrity. The interiors are not original and have been subject to successive changes. In terms of the cinema box, the interiors are seen to have originally been of limited architectural interest. The co-joined buildings do not meet the listing criteria based on the quality of their interiors.

6.5

The building is not an important example of cinema architecture and does not display any technological virtuosity or interesting plan form.

6.6

The architectural quality of the ziggurat is not outstanding a conclusion reinforced by the work of Richard Coleman Citydesigner. The Point does not meet the listing criteria on the basis of the strength of the architectural quality of the ziggurat.

Historic Interest

6.7

The design concept for the ziggurat was by an interior designer, Neil Tibbatt, with BDP acting as architectural consultant and taking the initial concept forward. There is no evidence that the theories and approaches of Archigram can be linked to The Point. In addition, the fact that a building was designed in 1985 using a CAD package, which had been around in some form for the previous 20 years, is not of special historic significance warranting the buildings inclusion on the statutory list. There is no association with any particular historical event or nationally important people or events and hence the building lacks any demonstrable historic interest.

Group Value

- 6.8 The exterior of The Point does not contribute to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings. It therefore does not have any group value.

Man-made Object/Structure

- 6.9 There is no man-made object or structure attached to the building that requires preservation based on its architectural or historic interest.

Age and Rarity

- 6.10 The Point is less than 30 years old. There are nearly 300 examples of multiplex cinema types within the UK. The Point is not of significance because of its age or rarity.
- 6.11 The American-Multiplex cinema type does not make a major contribution to the British national historic stock that needs to be preserved or celebrated. The Point was one of a number of multiplexes being rolled out during the late 1980s. English 'multiple screen' cinemas had also been introduced in the 1970s.

Aesthetic Merits

- 6.12 The Point does not show obvious external visual quality, technological innovation, or aspects of social or economic history that would warrant its inclusion on the statutory list.

Selectivity

- 6.13 The best surviving post-war cinema forming part of a mixed-use development - the Curzon Mayfair - is already listed. This is an example of a cinema of better architectural quality from the post-war period than The Point.
- 6.14 To our knowledge, buildings of a similar type to The Point (multiplex cinemas) that number just less than 300 have not been considered of listable quality on historic grounds.
- 6.15 The assessment has shown that The Point is not worthy of listing on architectural grounds. The Point is also not a particular historical type (either a multiplex cinema or a pyramid) that warrants preservation and hence listing.

National Interest

- 6.16 The Point is of "sentimental" interest due to its claim of being the first British multiplex cinema. It is not of significant national historic interest. It is one example of a huge number of multiplexes that were rolled out in very quick succession over a period of a few years, again, English 'multiple-screen' cinemas had been introduced in the 1970s.

- 6.17 Setting aside its clear lack of architectural interest, the cinema type does not make a major contribution to the British national historic stock that needs to be preserved or celebrated.

State of Repair

- 6.18 The state of repair is not relevant for considering whether a building meets the test of special interest.

Changes to the Original Building

- 6.19 The Point has been extensively altered since it was constructed in 1985. Together these changes have undermined the functionality and architectural integrity and interest of the building, particularly the severance of the two key elements of the site.

Views of the Local Planning Authority

- 6.20 The Point is not considered by MKC as a heritage asset that contains special architectural or historic interest that is worthy of protection.

Postscript

We have received a copy of the Cinema Theatre Association's (CTA) application for The Point to be added to the statutory list of buildings (5 June 2012). Our assessment of whether The Point meets the statutory listing criteria addresses the majority of the points raised. However, a response on individual points is provided below.

- 1 **Title:** The architect that the CTA has attributed to The Point is misleading. It notes "*Building Design Partnership with Neil Tibbatts as interior designer*". Our assessment has shown that the building was designed from the inside out and that the architectural concept for the exterior was designed by Neil Tibbatt in conjunction with Bass/AMC, with BDP providing architectural, engineering and lighting services to take the concept forward. See paragraphs (5.4-5.13).
- 2 **The Point within the historic context of the cinema as a building type:** Our assessment has shown that The Point was one of a number of multiplex cinemas being rolled out in the mid-late 1980s and was only the first by default - due to the more relaxed planning controls of MKDC. The multiplex was an American model. At around the time of the opening of The Point, AMC had already built over 150 new-build cinema complexes in the US (see paragraphs 5.39-5.52).
- 3 The CTA states "*the development of the multiplex was responsible for significant changes in the way films were viewed.*" The viewing of multiple films within one venue had already been established within Britain since the 1970s with the conversion of purpose-built cinemas (e.g. Odeon and ABC) to multi-screen venues (see paragraphs 5.61-5.65).
- 4 With regards to the CTA statement the "*primary space of interest is the foyer with its ticket points and concessions stands*". Our assessment has shown that the original design concept for the foyer of the standard box element of The Point was watered down by AMC. In any event, this original interior has been almost completely lost by the fit-outs of successive cinema operators and tenants, including the easy-Group, who created an unsuccessful easyCinema in 2003 and subsequently the Odeon in 2006. The architectural quality of the foyer does not warrant its inclusion on the statutory list.
- 5 The CTA imply that Milton Keynes was chosen as "*an ideal testing ground*" for introducing multiplexes in the UK. Paragraphs 5.39-5.45 show that AMC had 10 committed UK projects at the time of the opening of The Point. Paragraph 5.48 explains that it was just due to the relaxed planning restrictions of MKDC that The Point came forward first. Indeed the opening date of The Point had to be brought forward from October 1986 by 12 months due to the real possibility that a rival company would open a multiplex prior to AMC. The Salford Quays multiplex opened at the end of 1986. It is clear The Point was only the first multiplex cinema by

default. This debunks the theory that Milton Keynes was specifically chosen to be the first UK multiplex cinema.

- 6 The CTA note that cinema going had been in serious decline and that "*the development of the multiplex completely turned this situation around and heralded in a new and to this day successful era of the cinema.*" It was the large-scale rolling out of multiplexes in the late 1980s that achieved this revival in cinema going, not the individual development of The Point, which has been shown to be the first by default only.
- 7 The CTA's claim of the influence of Archigram and Mike Webb's thesis project is shown to be misleading and unfounded (see paragraphs 5.26-5.30). BDP did not establish the design concept for the ziggurat. This was done by Neil Tibbatt and Bass and was influenced by the internal requirements of the building. There is no evidence to connect the paper theories of Archigram from 20 years previously with The Point, beyond the very general concept that the practice of Architecture grows and develops as new theories are introduced to the canon.
- 8 **The development of The Point in the context of Milton Keynes:** AMC were not appointed to "design" The Point in particular. They imported their standard cinema box format (see paragraphs 5.21-5.23). This section of the CTA's assessment does not contribute in any way to justifying how The Point meets the criteria for listing due to special architectural interest.
- 9 **High Tech and Postmodern:** CTA state that "*The Point consists of two interconnected primary architectural forms*". Whilst this was originally the case, CTA make no mention of the fact that the ziggurat has now been severed from the cinema box to the rear and it is no longer possible to move internally between the two. CTA also do not give enough weight to the fact that Neil Tibbatt was the interior architect who came up with the design concept for The Point. They state that BDP was appointed as architects and then reproduce a BDP press release that emphasises BDP's role by stating "*the design concept for The Point was produced in conjunction with interior designer Neil Tibbatts and developed on BDP's Acropolis computer aided design system*".
- 10 CTA then theorises on the influence of the 'paper architecture' of Archigram and on Robert Venturi's "the duck and decorated shed". There is no basis for these claims. The Point does not exemplify the decorated shed which is described as "*the architecture of the anonymous box that applies symbols on the street front façade that are then read to identify the meaning and purpose of the building*". There are no decorations or symbols on the cinema box. It is a completely plain, windowless metal-clad box. Both the ziggurat and the cinema box emphasise how the principles of post-modernist architecture were undermined by corporate requirements by the mid 1980s. The Point cannot be considered as a pure example of post-modernist architecture.
- 11 CTA emphasise the importance of lighting at The Point - "*lighting was a very important part of its architecture; this building was all about light*

shows and projection but also very much about the red triangle that was the Bass trademark". This may have been the case when first built but today the lighting and projections have all been removed. CTA notes of the red triangular space frames "their dramatic illumination with red neon strip lighting could be read in darkness as a landmark beacon to the entertainment centre". At no point do CTA confirm that this element of the architecture has been lost for many years and The Point does not function in this manner any more.

12 The use of Computer Aided Design as a drafting and design tool:

Paragraph 5.32 of our assessment sets out a brief history of the use of CAD. Whilst British architectural practices may only have just begun moving to the use of CAD in the 1980s, the fact that a building was designed in 1985 using a CAD package, which have been shown to have been around in some form for the previous 20 years, is not of special historic significance warranting the buildings inclusion on the statutory list.

13 The use of the iconic pyramid shape within an international context:

The CTA list notable buildings using the pyramid shape, including the pyramid entrance to the Louvre in Paris. It then states *"The Point, leads the development in the 1980s and predates the Louvre pyramid by several years. It is a landmark in Milton Keynes and an iconic building."* The CTA's point here is not clear, is it claiming that as a landmark building in Milton Keynes it provided an international influence? This is very doubtful given its temporary nature, quick construction period and budget cuts that influenced the end design resulting in a building of limited quality. Our assessment on the limited architectural quality of the ziggurat element is set out in paragraphs 5.14-5.20 and is discussed in more detail in The Richard Coleman Citydesigner Report (November 2012).

14 The architects and designers: Again there is no acknowledgement by CTA that BDP were merely architectural consultants on the building. CTA give them prominence as architects and state that the connection between BDP and Archigram is significant. This may be true, but the Archigram founder, Mike Webb was not involved in the design of The Point. The stronger influences of Neil Tibbatt and the clients, whereby the internal organisation of the building, the interior design and the creation of a commercial environment were more important than the exterior, are set out in our assessment at paragraphs 5.4- 5.13 and 5.26-5.30.

7.2 It can be seen that the reasons put forward by CTA for the listing of the building are tenuous or unfounded. Our assessment has shown that the building is not of special architectural or historic interest. It is not an "outstanding" building of less than 30 years old that warrants listing status.

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- 3 Building Services, Vol. 8, No. 7, July 1986 - More to the Point: Building Design Partnership
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- 7 A Plethora of Pyramids - The New Crystal Palaces (undated, from RIBA library), (page 8).
- 8 Sunday Citizen, October 21, 2001 - We're Missing The Point! (page 3).
- 9 Leisure Week, 13 May 1994 - Creating a new Point of Interest.
- 10 Chartered Surveyor Weekly, 7 August 1986 - Coming Soon: Your Multiplex.
- 11 Film Review, March 1988 - Point Taken: The Trend Towards Multiplex Cinemas.
- 12 Architects Journal, 19 July 1989 - Revitalising the Picture Palace (page 59).
- 13 Stuart Hanson, The Point: Birth of the Multiplex, Unpublished Lecture, DeMonfort University, Leicester.

Appendix 1 Current and Historic Images



1. Approach to The Point from Midsummer Boulevard, 2012



2. Landscaping to the north-west of The Point, 2012



3. North-eastern and north-western elevation, 2012



4. North-western elevation, 2012



5. Flues on terrace at ground floor, 2012



6. Floating steel-frame structure, 2012



7. Spiral staircase to the rear (south-east side) connecting ground and first floor terraces, 2012



8. Entrance to cinema (south-east side) together with glazed walkway between cinema and ziggurat, 2012



9. Service area screening (south-east side), 2012



10. South-western side of cinema box, 2012



11. Walkway between rear of cinema box (on right) and multi-storey car park (on left), 2012



12. Entrance lobby within the ziggurat which now comprises offices. This area would originally have been open plan and would have led to the walkway link to the cinema, 2012



13. Offices now blocking the walkway link to the cinema box to the rear (ground floor level), 2012



14. Interior of first floor - currently a youth cafe, previously the nightclub, 2012



15. Spiral stair between first and second floor, 2012



16. Main staircase between ground and first floor, 2012



17. Basement bingo hall, 2012



19. Interior of cinema foyer, c.1985



20. Informal eating area in the ground floor of the ziggurat, c. 1985



18. Foyer to cinema, 2012

THE POINT: CURRENT AND HISTORIC IMAGES



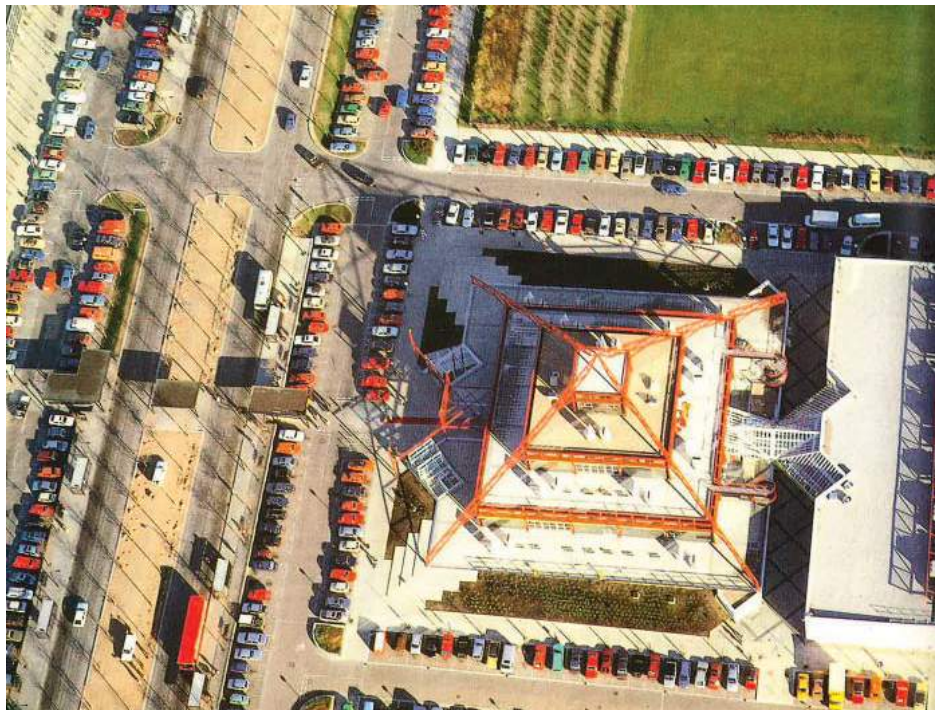
21. The Bar, ground floor of the ziggurat, c. 1985



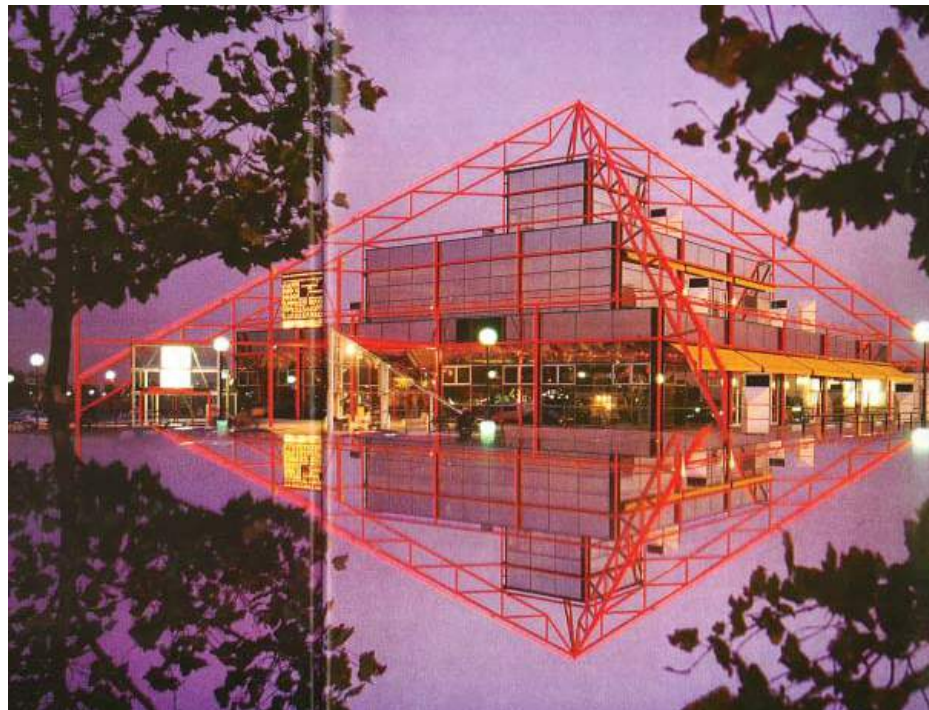
22. Raised seating area in first floor nightclub, c.1985



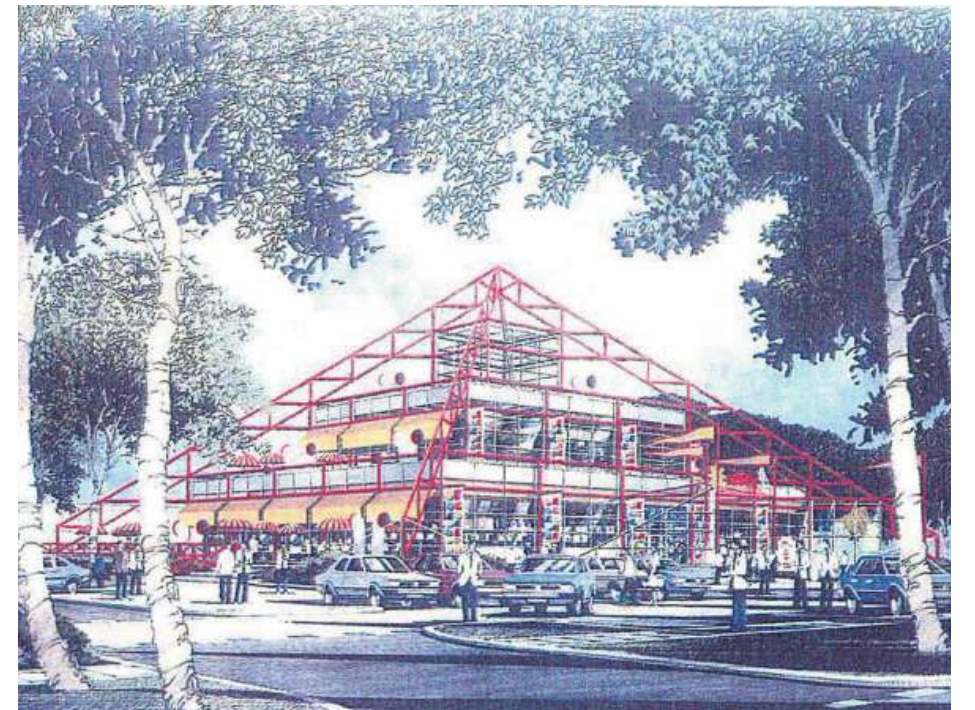
23. Construction of The Point, March 1985, showing prominence of building when first erected.



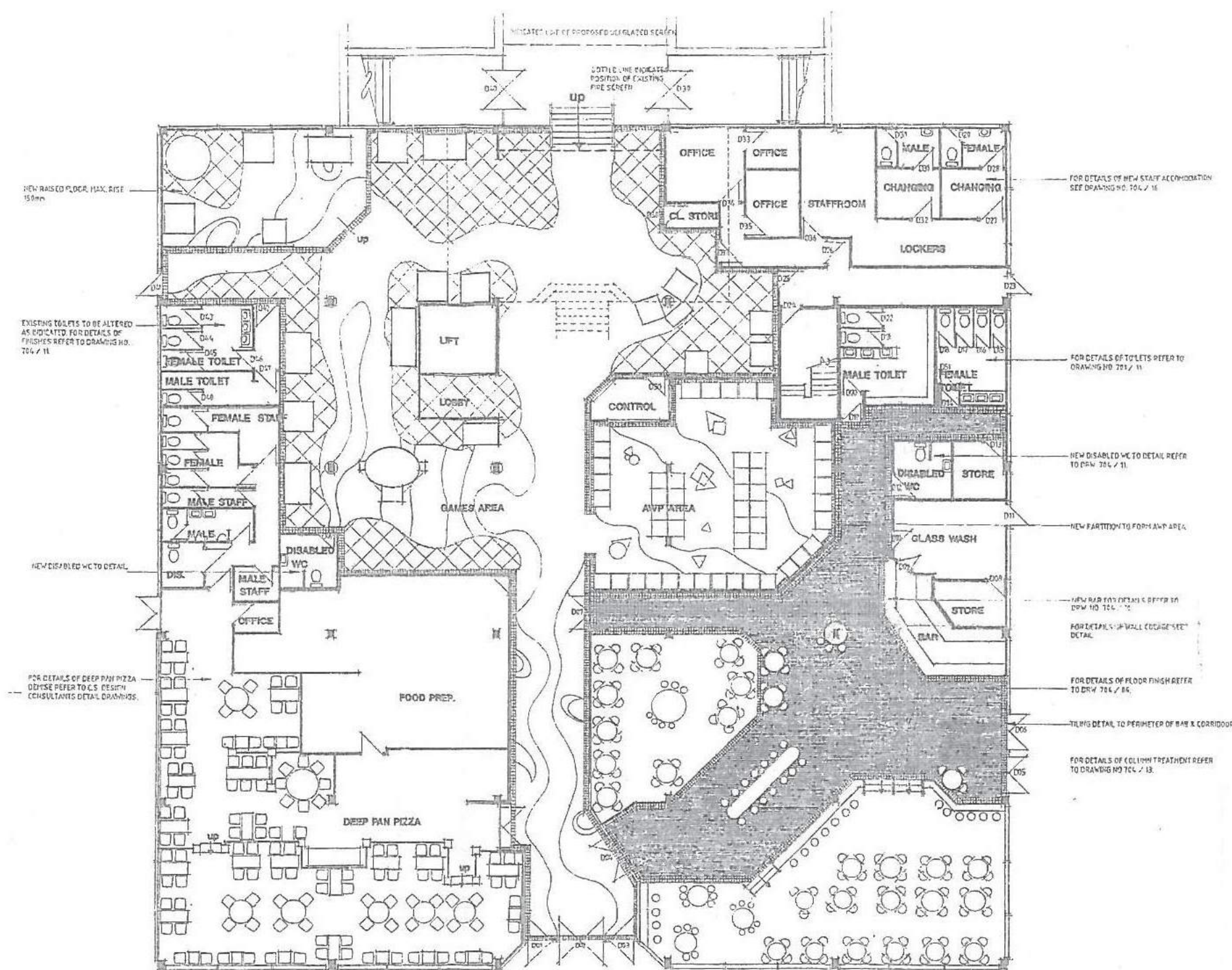
24. Aerial view c. 1985



25. The Point at night, c. 1985



26. Artists impression, showing original canopies, published 1985



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN

REVISED DRAWING NO. 704 / 11

E - GENERAL REVISIONS

D - DELETED

S - SUBSTITUTIONS

A - GENERAL REVISIONS

05.11.93

14.12.93

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BASS LEISURE ENTERTAINMENT

PROJECT

THE POINT - MILTON KEYNES

DWG. TITLE

PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN

DATE

DEC. 93

SCALE

1:100

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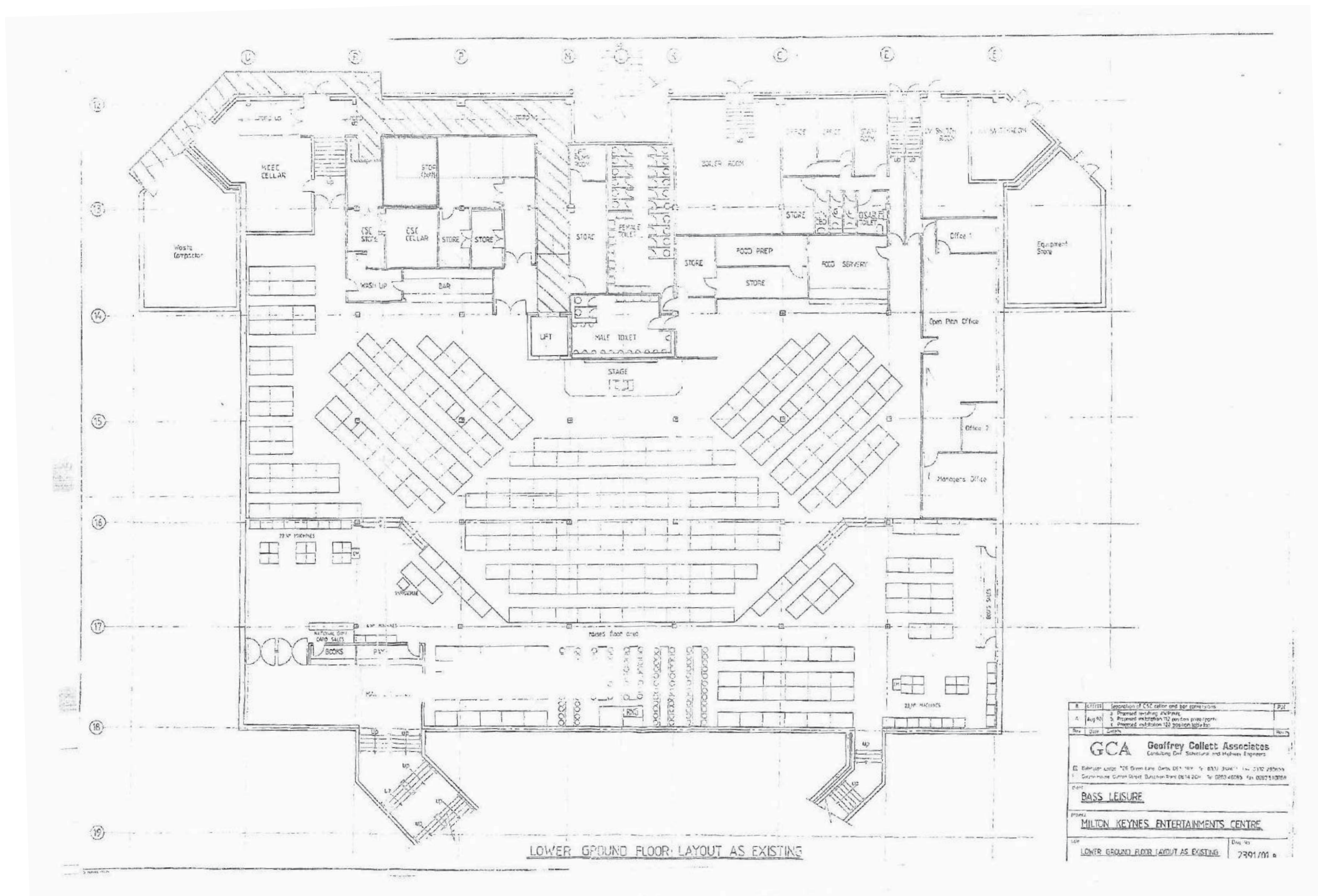
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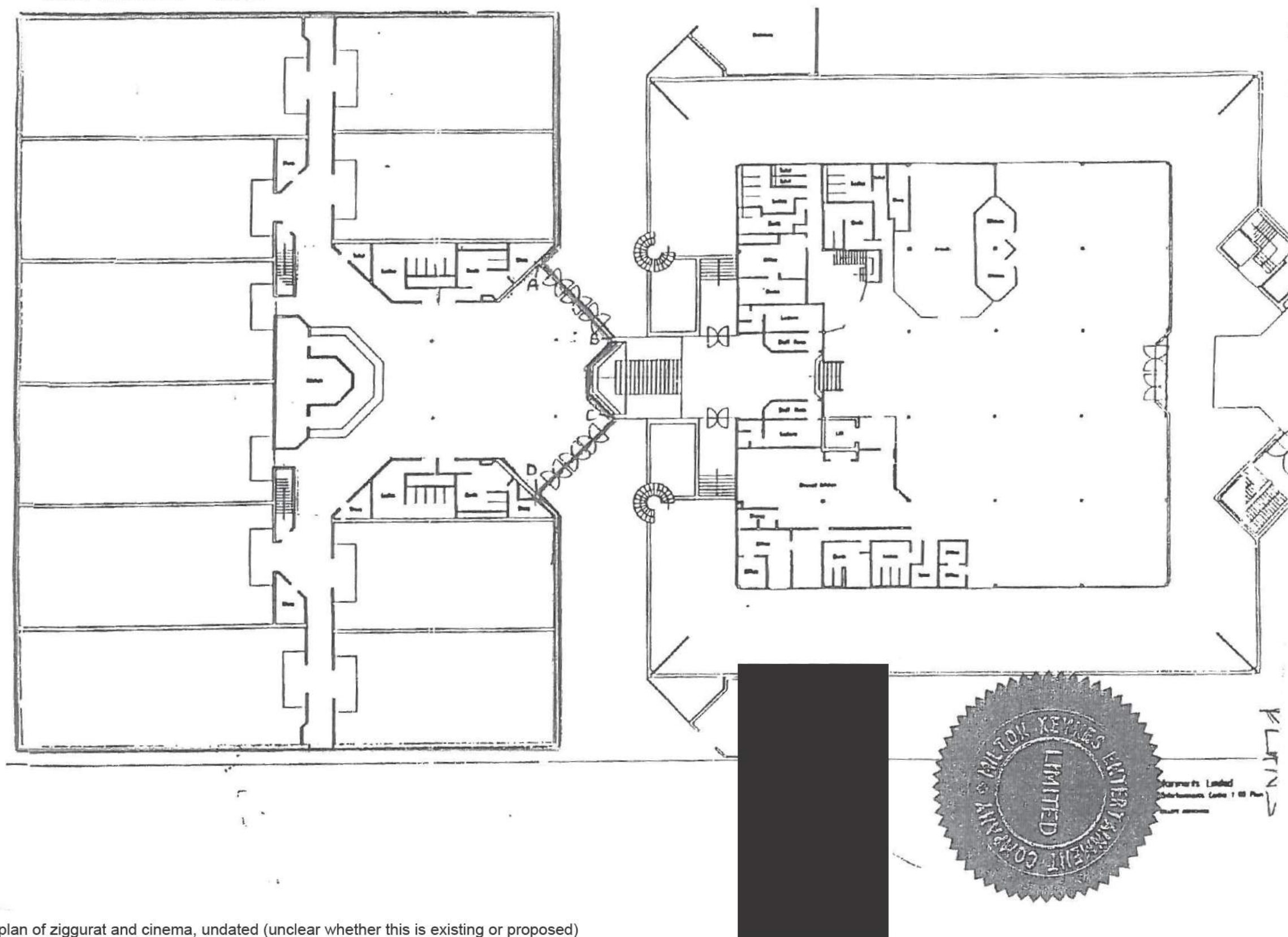
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27. Proposed ground floor plan, 1993, including Deep Pan Pizza at north-east corner. It has not been confirmed whether this layout was fully implemented.



28. Basement layout as existing in August 1990



29. Floorplan of ziggurat and cinema, undated (unclear whether this is existing or proposed)



30. Figure 12 of Central Milton Keynes Alliance Plan 2012 identifying The Point as an underdeveloped site

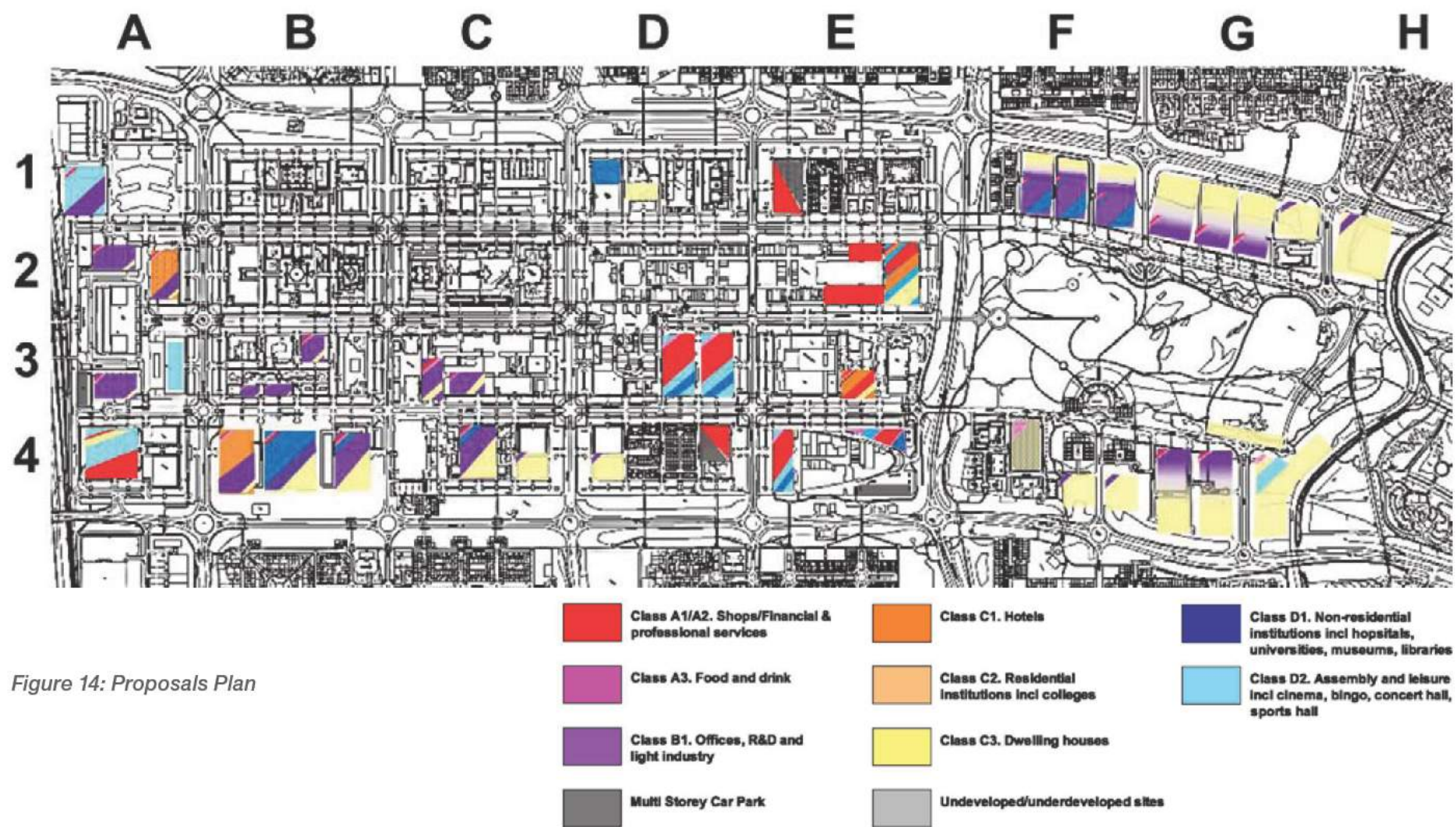


Figure 14: Proposals Plan

31. Figure 14 of Central Milton Keynes Alliance Plan 2012 identifying The Point as a site for proposed retail/leisure uses.



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32. Figure 1 of the CMK Development Framework Review Draft SPD 2012 showing Buildings of Heritage in Milton Keynes - The Point is not identified.



**Nathaniel Lichfield
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