

What was the point, of The Point?

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'Where was the UK's first multiplex cinema?', 'You know! that big pyramid in Milton Keynes!?'



Figure 1: The Original Tickets for the Cinema, (Time Emotion, 2023).

Throughout cinematic industry, the high ticket prices and the rise of TV channels had a huge impact. Milton Keynes changed the game in 1985, (MKFM, 2020) with their brand new (and very shiny) £7.5 million pyramid of multiscreen cinematic experiences. At the time, Milton Keynes was still trying to establish itself, this was a phenomenal, new and exciting addition to the town and greater regions. Many small, singular screen, sites were closing at a rapid pace across the UK. Racked seating, large screens and such high quality audio were uncommon for any cinema at the time, this made The Point a fantastic sightseeing, tourist attraction for many surrounding towns and cities.

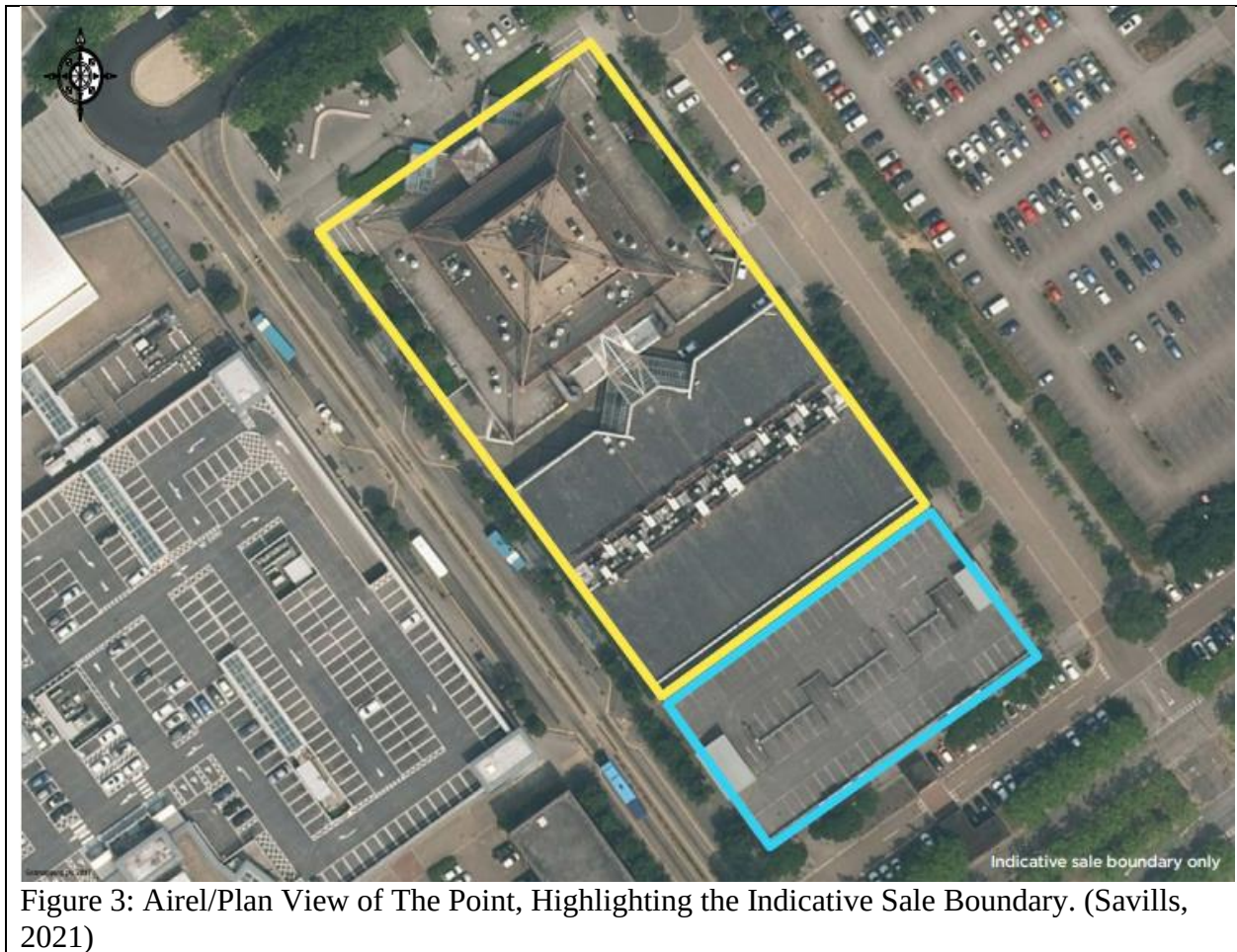
The Point was built by Stanley Durwood's company, AMC (American Multi Cinema). Making cinema history in the United Kingdom, (Jones and Wesoky, 2020). There were many design constraints during the designing and planning of The Point, there was a great limitation of the land size that the MKDC were offering, making it a challenge to create a building that fit the aesthetic of the surrounding buildings whilst still containing all the leisure and entertainment that was agreed in previous discussions, (Jones and Wesoky, 2020). For the architects working on this development, they had to incorporate the newness of what AMC was trying to accomplish, whilst turning it into an iconic landmark. It was decided that a ziggurat was an ideal answer, facing north-west alongside Midsummer Boulevard which is an iconic street/road in Milton Keynes which many people find a point of interest. Additionally facing the main shopping centre so people could see the new and fantastic addition. Geographically on the top of hill and commercially it resides at main roads, also immediately opposite a range of bus stops and their

routes, (Kanda Consulting, 2015). The Point was extremely popular and exciting for people in general but especially the 1980's as people gathered and flocked from miles around just to see the outside, let alone the entertainment inside.



Figure 2: Original Picture of The Point. (Simpson, 2020)

When you think of The Point, in its name or an image, one thinks of the ziggurat itself. At least this is the piece that most people see and refer to, the other 50% of the footprint is the building behind the ziggurat facade, it is formed of concrete and steel, blending in nicely with the rest of Milton Keynes' elevations, so often unnoticed. The main screening area is in this back section, upon entrance to the cinema, it feels extremely tardis-like as you go through and past all the receptions, bars, cafes and entertainment.



One of the main design points for this building was to make it feel as futuristic and exciting as possible. This was perfectly executed for the release date in 1985 by giving the feel of a maze structure. Proceeding down some stairs upon entry, winding in and around all sorts of exciting entertainment, eventually leading to the cinema screens, guests felt like the building was much larger than they originally thought. Half of this building is effectively in disguise, moving around inside, through tunnels and exciting, dimly lit rooms with feature lights would have created a fantastic atmosphere and excitement for all who visit.

The overall construction of The Point is through steel frames and mirrored glass in a ziggurat formation. The materials utilised throughout were chosen to feel contemporary, fresh and unique. The ziggurat also used to have red lighting going up the main red steel frame of the ascending pitch line. This could be seen for miles around, additionally from the A5 road as people drove into Milton Keynes, as the town at the time was originally designed to never have a building taller than the highest tree, quickly adding to its iconic configuration.



Figure 4: The Point, Original Pitch Line Lighting, (Tumblr, 2013).

The partially mirrored glass covering the ziggurat is an excellent use of lighting for the building itself but also for the city. As many people know, Milton Keynes has always been contemporary, leading the way in city design, most of the buildings in the city centre are predominantly glass, retaining reflective qualities. The Point was such a topic of interest as it was the first 'non-box' structure, meaning that it wasn't *just* a concrete, steel and glass square, stuck onto some foundations by the side of the road, its appearance made it go further than that before you had even stepped inside.

The whole point was to create a touristic space for locals and visitors to come and enjoy themselves. After the first year of opening and making over 1 million admissions, (Wright, 2017) the entertainment within expanded vastly, adding in games arcades, nightclubs, a bingo hall with a small newsagent, pizza restaurants and a health club. After finding out some individual experiences through interviewing, The Point was a huge attraction and exciting for everyone in the late 1980s and into the '90s. Anna discussed her adventures at The Point as a child; 'about 40 minutes of anticipated travelling and we arrived, I was about 13 at the time and it was the first multiplex cinema, most other cinemas that you might have seen were all seemingly dishevelled and boring for a child, well, they were after seeing The Point! It was like walking into a spaceship of fantasy, even if the movie was bad, it was amazing just to be there... The ticket prices were affordable and you could see the big red pyramid as you drove to and from Milton Keynes like a big pin on a map, with you wanting to get there or waiting to go back!'



Figure 5: Image of Elevation of The Point, (Court, 2011).

Summarising what has been studied, The Point and its development through time added to many people's lives and assisted Milton Keynes in its growth. It is clear why every time demolition or retrofitting is mentioned, the people rally to 'save The Point', because it was futuristic and had its magnetism, remaining to be an iconic piece of architecture. Going forward, when one looks at buildings, they should be seen for more than just their aesthetics, but why they are there, what they brought to the place that they are situated and the memories that they may have evoked and experienced.

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Figure List

Figure 1: Time Emotion (2023). *The Point - Milton Keynes - A sad ending*. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fl5GxC2SNNg> [Accessed 12 Jan. 2024].

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Figure 3: Savills (2021). *THE POINT 602 Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes MK9 3NB Redevelopment Opportunity*. [online] pp.1–6. Available at: <https://thepoint.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/20210709-SavillsMarketingBrochure.pdf> [Accessed 12 Jan. 2024].

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