

Bluewater Shops at Helvar for new Control System

Bluewater is one of Europe's largest shopping and leisure centres and in the United Kingdom it became the blueprint for successful retail destinations following its opening in 1999.



THE SITE located in Dartford, Kent, boasts a huge variety of entertainment and shops from family play areas to the world's leading fashion houses. However, one area that needed a revamp was the Wintergarden which houses the food court. London-based Lighting Design International (LDI) was called in to see how it could help and deployed a Helvar lighting control system to bring new life to the old site.

The brief set by Bluewater was not to update but to completely transform the dated and poorly-lit Wintergarden to combine an exciting, contemporary aesthetic with improved functionality – making the space easier to navigate, encouraging visitors to return throughout the day and into the evening.

Upon its first visit LDI highlighted some obvious improvements that could be made to the existing halogen setup. Crucially, given the vast glass fronting of the area, there was no accounting for the fluctuating natural light levels and in general it was clear that effective lighting design had not previously been a major consideration.

LDI wanted to make visitor experience paramount, by enhancing daytime and evening ambiance, visual comfort and navigation, while adding feature lighting for improved atmosphere and charm. Increased levels of daytime illumination, less visual 'clutter', improved technology and energy saving were also essential prerequisites.

Featuring a Helvar 458 dimmer, the system operates via photocell and timed control so the ambient lighting changes throughout the day. Project designer, Graham Rollins of LDI has created specific scenes that utilise colour and gobos to increase drama and patterned effects. Ethernet and DMX control give maximum flexibility and variety of scene setting.

Connected to a Helvar router a number of LED dimmers react to feedback from the photocell sensor. During the day the sensor will override the system to deploy a lighting preset, depending on the external light levels. Settings account for a variety of scenarios including, Bright Day, Dull Day, Early Evening, Late Evening, Night, Cleaning and Off. Master control of the system comes via Helvar's 924 touch screen which is password protected to minimise use to just staff. A series of pages have been set up on the interface which allow staff to select different zones within the food court and set light scenes, plus a colour recall page for DMX colour changing.

It was important for spaces to feel impressive, light and voluminous during daytime, and then intimate during the evening. To create the desired engaging and contemporary look, LDI introduced a splash of colour with infinity coffers in the mall link, uplights to the trees in the atrium and roof

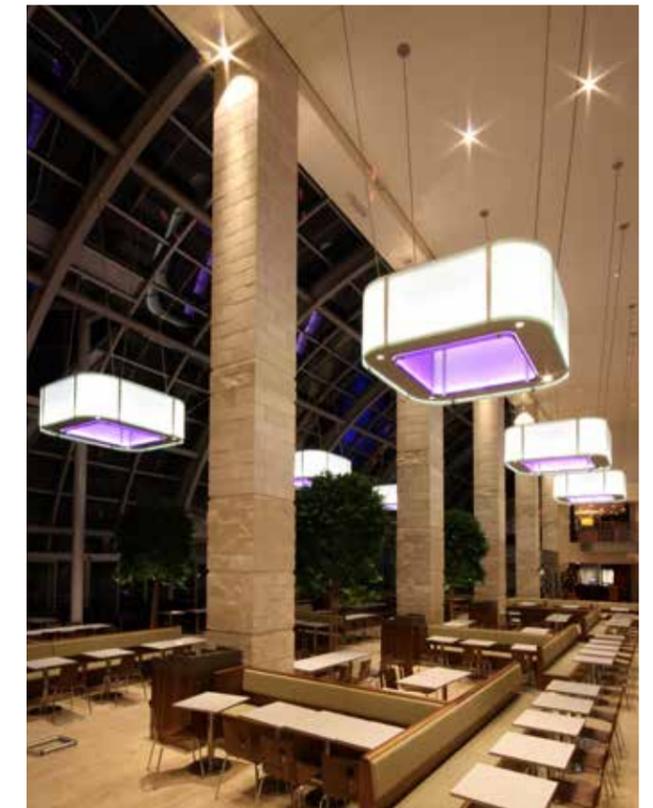
structure and refreshed colour uplighting to the iconic lake glass towers.

Coloured feature lights then linked the three individual zones (mall link, atrium seating, lower seating) with the same identity, while allowing white light to be dimmed to create a comfortable, cosy atmosphere during the evening.

Increase light levels to the mall access and ground floor food counters now provide a better balance compared with day lighting experienced in the central atrium. Lighting contrasts were historically too large, with daylight contributing over 7000lx in the atrium and patchy existing light levels ranging from 21lx to 120lx. LDI used an organic array of 2000lm 3000K Xicato dark light DAL downlighters to provide a minimum of 350lx. Light across the space is now colour consistent, high colour rendering and efficient with low glare.

Impressively low loads were achieved from the resulting configuration with an installed power density of 9.6W/sq m, daytime operational power density of 7.2W/sq m and evening operational power density being 3.2W/sq m.

The end result in the Wintergarden is now in keeping with the rest of the Bluewater retail and leisure spaces with extremely positive feedback having been received from issued from staff and customers alike. The revived space is functional, warm and welcoming with a lighting scheme that offers energy efficiency and the desired level of flexibility and adaptability over the course of a full day.



TEXT Ashley Balachandran, Wildwood Public Relations
PICTURES Lighting Design International LDI