

# Ashford Designer Retail Outlet Centre



The white, undulating tent form defines the unique identity of this public building, providing a visual contrast with the flat landscape of Ashford.

Place/Date  
**Kent, England 1996 - 2000**

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Client  
**BAA McArthurGlen UK Ltd**

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Cost  
**£21 million**

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Area  
**19,510 m<sup>2</sup>**

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Cost/m<sup>2</sup>  
**£1,076**

Architect  
**Richard Rogers Partnership**

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Structural Engineer  
**Buro Happold**

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Services Engineer  
**John Brady Associates**

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Quantity Surveyor  
**Davis Langdon & Everest**

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Landscape Architect  
**Derek Lovejoy Partnership**

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Main Contractor  
**Galliford Northern**



This new retail centre occupies a former railway and engineering site adjacent to Ashford International Station in Kent. The 210,000 ft<sup>2</sup> factory outlet centre, aims to attract visitors from all over Europe. It is estimated that the retail centre has a capacity for approximately 3,000 visitors at any one time.

All the retail units open on to an enclosed car park for 1,400 cars. The units are enclosed in an IRGE tensile roof that springs from the surrounding landscape, providing a sense of enclosure and place and flexibility for the retail units.

The scheme comprises 22 bright orange steel masts supporting a tensile fabric roof approx. 1 km in length and covering an area of 30,000 m<sup>2</sup> which provides shelter for the single storey retail units below. The units are insulated 'boxes' that are designed for ultimate flexibility, capable of undergoing rapid reconfiguration.

The distinctive tent structure is festive in spirit, unites the centre and announces it proudly within the 30-acre site. It is undulating in form, rising to high points whose vertical masts act as counterpoints to the horizontal nature of the development and local topology. It wraps around the edge of the leaf-shaped plan and joins the northern end of the site.

Visitors entering via the northern end of the complex encounter a tourist information centre, a public display area, management suites and a food court. Those travelling by car will arrive from the southern end of the site and park in the landscaped car park.

Servicing to the retail outlet centre is accessed by a service road at the rear of the retail units, which is concealed from view by the 3m-landscaped embankment. The embankment gently slopes up to the eave-line of the retail units. To the outsider, an impression of self-containment and privacy is given for what is, in reality, an ever-changing public space.

