



leisure design & build



Center Parcs Woburn Forest

A focus on the £250m resort in Bedfordshire

- **Designing a Center Parcs for the 21st century**
- **Introducing new innovations at Aqua Sana spa**
- **Creating leisure spaces that entertain and delight**



The leisure experience

Maber iD says it has sought to create authentic experiences that entertain, educate, inspire, inform and delight when devising leisure spaces at Woburn Forest.

WOBURN Forest offers a vast range of indoor sports and leisure activities as well as numerous restaurants, bars and retail outlets. Having worked at other Center Parcs sites, architectural and interior design specialist, maber iD, designed a range of leisure facilities for the new village including The Leisure Bowl, Sports Hall, Sports Cafe, Guest Services, a purpose built conferencing facility and the Pool Plaza entrance with retail outlets, creating a small shopping area that leads guests to the Subtropical Swimming Paradise.

"We were briefed to look at not only individual schemes, but also the interconnected, interrelated, interior and exterior spaces alongside the value added components that could be incorporated into the environments that would enhance, enrich, augment and amplify the unique experiences of being at Center Parcs. This meant that, the combination of retailing, food & beverage and leisure environments would need to be presented in a holistic way," explains ▶



Sports Hall

The Sports Hall includes squash courts, badminton courts, table tennis area, roller disco rink, climbing wall and changing facilities, together with an events platform/viewing stage.

The Sports Hall presented numerous challenges due to the scale of the volume and accommodating the variety of activities successfully within the large space. "It was crucial to also evoke the Center Parcs brand throughout and not create the ambience of a local authority or school sports hall, or an over branded sports club," says Radcliffe.

Circulation routes are picked out against the playing courts, the climbing wall has its own distinct vertical identity but, doesn't shout down its horizontal play surface neighbours. The two glass fronted squash courts sit white and quietly illuminated, housing their noisily competitive and acoustically suppressed occupants.

The Sports Hall is also used during evening hours when the Roller Disco fires up, the soundscape and flashing lights totally transforming the hall, the roller skaters adding to the cacophony and atmosphere.

Pool Plaza

The brief here was to create a welcoming and open entrance experience with three retail outlets, toilet facilities, a Buggy Parc, seating/waiting area, lift access to the upper level restaurant and retail area, entrance to the Subtropical Swimming Paradise (STSP) changing area, a STSP viewing area and directional signage. And maximise daylight into the area wherever possible.

"The route into the Pool Plaza was planned to be as logical as possible to coax guests into the Subtropical Swimming Paradise changing area without the need for directional signs. When designing the space, the architectural volume immediately suggested a sweeping curved wall on the right hand side of the space, this physically and subliminally directs pedestrian flow. The sweeping wall formed a useful enclosure, this enabled the architect to house the toilet facilities neatly, house a lift shaft and provide a large Buggy Parc," says Radcliffe.

The same curvilinear line that describes the wall is echoed in the feature ceiling planes and the tiled terrazzo floor pattern which is picked out in contrasting watery blues and sandy yellows, the line this time splitting the colours, like an incoming or outgoing tide.

The left hand side of the space houses three retailers in individual shop units. The units are designed with glass sliding/folding partitions allowing the three unit facades to be completely opened up to the plaza space, encouraging a free flow across the retail thresholds.

The ceiling carries five plastered-in rippling, concentric circular light fitting bezels, adding an element of fun to the space, each gives the impression of a pebble having been dropped in water, the ripple effect captured in white plaster. The main curved ceiling feature steps down into the space curving away and terminating where it meets a lower dropped circular doughnut shaped ceiling, the inner circle stepping back up again. The outer edges of these ceilings are emphasised by linear LED lights in red. Again these act as subliminal signs. Beyond the ceilings is a large viewing window providing glimpses into the pool area.

Mosaic and sliced polished pebble wall tiles hint at the experiences to come by making a subtle reference to materials associated with swimming pools, water sports clubs and saunas.



Sports Cafe

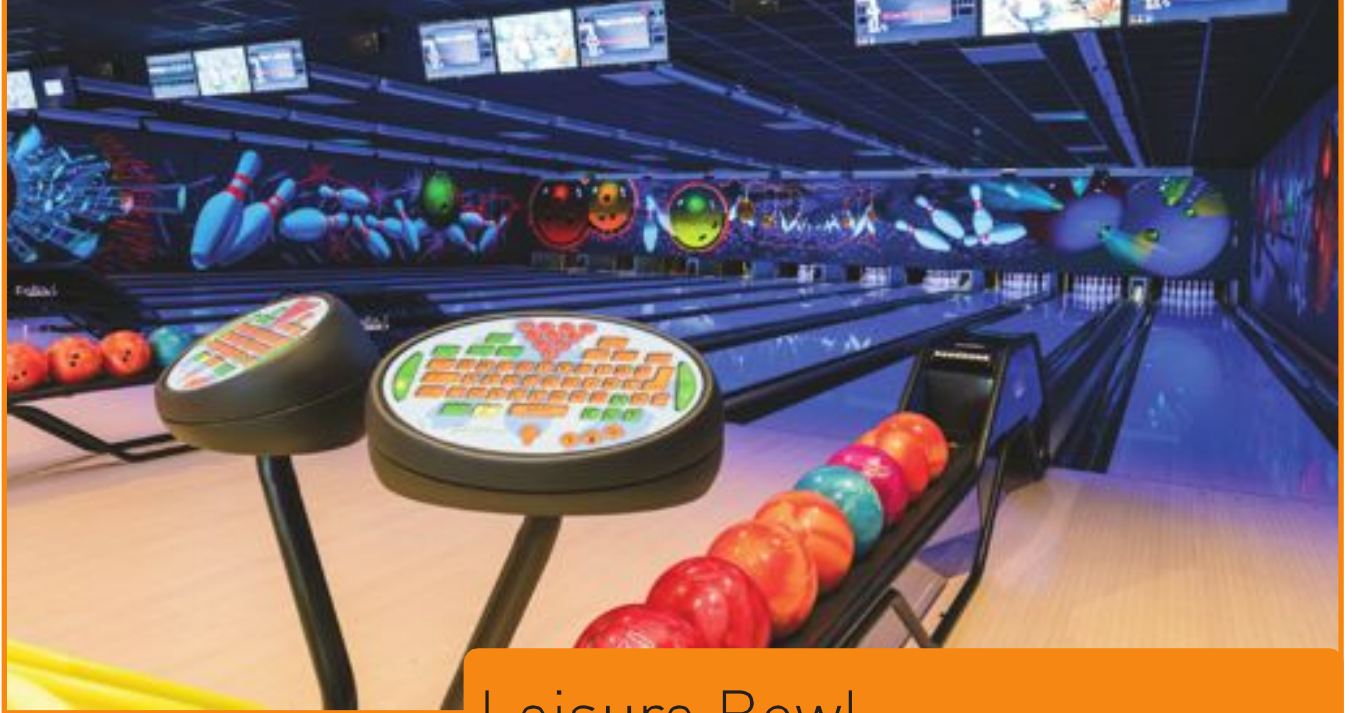
Designed to appeal to the whole family, the Sports Cafe has a minimum of 320 covers, each of which has views of a TV screen.

Lighting plays an important role in differentiating space functions and particularly circulation routes across the large cafe. Curvilinear lines are utilised to direct guests to activities such as the bowling lanes, the House of Games and to the large visual display wall. A glazed elevation offers views to the forest and provides daylight into the cafe.

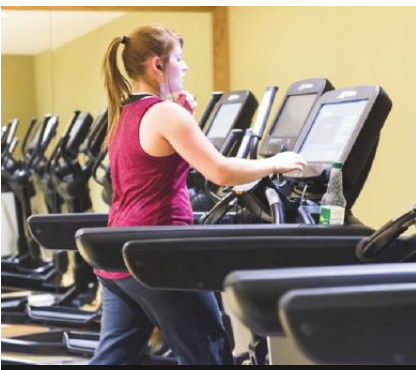
The choice of materials, colours and decoration in the cafe show no allegiances to particular sports, sports

teams or sporting heroes. Instead colour has been considered in terms of the Center Parcs brand colours as well as maintenance and practicality. The colours used in the upholstery and carpets have been chosen to coordinate with the colour changing LED feature lights throughout the cafe.

To add a sense of fun for younger guests, bespoke balustrading separating the dining areas from the snooker and pool playing areas is based on the abacus. The counting balls have been substituted with drilled pool balls, each ball spins but doesn't slide left and right to prevent trapping little digits.



Leisure Bowl



Equipped by Life Fitness, the 81sq m gym at Woburn Forest features a suite of equipment from the supplier's Discover SE and Optima ranges. These include the Life Fitness Elevation Series Discover SE equipment with features such as TV, Internet and LFconnect. The company has also completed a gym refurbishment at Center Parcs Elveden Forest and will be carrying out refurbishments at the Whinell Forest, Sherwood Forest and Longleat Forest sites by the end of 2015 as part of a contract worth £250,000.

Designed to accommodate 200 guests, maber designed the Leisure Bowl using a 'leisure street scene' concept, with a clearly identifiable curved pedestrian route running from the main entrance through the bar to the dedicated bowling area at the far end of the building. Along the street are the leisure attractions, the House of Games together with the Adult House of Games, the serving bar with booking station for the bowling, the Disco dance floor and the Ten Pin Bowling hall. The route is emphasised by a subliminal way-finding curvilinear line in both the flooring materials and the dropped feature ceiling, the ceiling line being amplified by the addition of concealed LED linear lighting.

"We devised a range of materials for the Leisure Bowl that would evoke a sense of a traditional pub, like the pool table lighting solution which has a

traditional yet reinterpreted deep box shade, but, at the same time provide that night club ambience for late evening revellers," says Radcliffe.

"We were mindful that we couldn't afford to exclude family groups throughout the day so, things like the carpet patterns, the upholstery materials, wall colours, timber window blinds to control natural light (yet still provide views out), general artificial lighting and feature lights and finally furniture groupings were crucial in helping to achieve the appropriate scene setting for the day and night time guests."

The environment has a lively demeanour with bespoke elements of furniture like the high backed double sided and curved seating unit in the Bowling lanes area, providing a touch of individuality to prevent the Leisure Bowl looking like a branded high street offer.

► Chris Radcliffe, head of interior design at maber architects.

"The designs and specifications of furniture, fittings, equipment, mechanical, electrical/technological installations and all building materials, not only have to be fit for purpose and satisfy the demands of today's sophisticated holiday makers and all Center Parcs personnel, but also need

to reflect and reinforce the corporate brand, throughout the organisation.

"We have worked with Center Parcs on a Design Code for the five villages that sets out a route map for achieving a consistent, memorable and working environment for everybody. The Design Code includes a clear statement on the Center Parcs brand and their ethos. Visual guidance is provided

by the inclusion of architectural plans and elevations, three-dimensional perspectives, precedent images and specifications.

"The aim is to provide clarity regarding a visual code by the use of appropriate and agreed building materials, textures, colours, furniture, fittings and equipment."

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