

# Steel by design



Retail therapy in Gloucestershire is about to get a significant boost once the steel-framed Cotswolds Designer Outlet opens its numerous doors in Spring 2025.

Renowned for its position on the confluence of the River Severn and River Avon, its grand 12th century Abbey and numerous medieval and Tudor era buildings, the Cotswolds Designer Outlet will on completion add another notable attraction to the historic market town of Tewkesbury.

Said to be ideally positioned as a new **retail destination**, the outlet is located on the edge of the Cotswolds and adjacent to junction 9 of the M5 and A46 trunk road.

Millions of tourists visit the region every year, creating a ready-made customer base, while the development will also hope to tap into the significant catchment area that lies along the motorway corridor between Bristol and Birmingham.

Regency spa town Cheltenham is 20 minutes away, Bristol less than an hour and Birmingham just 60 minutes, which equates to a resident catchment of almost 10 million people living within a 90-minute drive of the outlet.

Funded by property developer Robert Hitchins, the Cotswolds Designer Outlet will be delivered in phases, and when fully complete, it will create

a 17,187m<sup>2</sup> destination with up to 90 high-quality fashion, lifestyle and food & beverage brands.

The outlet is also part of a much wider 250-acre scheme that includes a garden centre that opened in 2022, and 1,310 new homes, which are currently under construction and will be delivered by Persimmon, Charles Church and Barratt Homes.

Simon Tothill, Property & Development Director at Robert Hitchins, comments: “The Cotswolds Designer Outlet has the potential to make a meaningful, lasting contribution to the region’s growth; the combination of a strong location, thoughtful design and a hugely positive response from leading brands, has us highly optimistic for its future success.”

Designed by architects Roberts Limbrick, the scheme’s design has been influenced by the area’s architectural surroundings and inspired by local materials to create a contemporary Cotswolds village style, which is said to balance modern with traditional.

To this end, the design of the project features 18 separate **steel-framed** buildings. Each of the buildings can be sub-divided into a number of separate units, depending on client demands. At

present, phase one’s buildings will be divided into 55 units in total.

Creating this high-end village environment, a number of **cladding** finishes will be used on the structures, including stone, slate and brickwork. Topping the buildings, various styles and forms of pitched roofs are used, further enhancing the desired look.

The roof of each building slightly differs from its neighbour, a subtle design feature that will create a genuine sense of ‘village character’ within the overall scheme. The pitches, which are generally located at gable ends, vary from 45 degrees to 60 degrees. Most of the buildings also have a flat roof area that accommodates plant.

“Structural steelwork has been used for its **speed of construction**. It offers the best framing solution for the complex geometry of the roofs and the creation of the desired internal spans of the buildings,” explains Bouygues UK Project Manager Jack Chami.

Each of the 18 buildings slightly differ in size, with Building Q, the largest structure, which sits in the centre of the outlet. The adjacent Unit R, also in the centre of the development, is the next largest.



Click here on our digital version to see some drone videos of the steel frame, taken after the erection programme had been completed.



Some of the units have mezzanine levels, while others can have an extra floor added at a later date.

These two buildings both have full-footprint first floor levels, creating valuable extra storage space for the potential tenants.

These upper floors have been **compositely formed**, with steel beams supporting metal decking and a concrete topping. Working in tandem with the project's steelwork contractor – William Haley Engineering – SMD is supplying and installing the development's composite flooring, which also includes the flat roofs.

Adding further client flexibility to the project, most of the other buildings have been designed to have partial mezzanine levels, while others have the flexibility to have an upper level added if there is a client request for the extra floor space.

"The ground floor slabs have been designed to be thicker, towards the rear of each building, in order to provide the capacity for mezzanine columns to be installed," explains Clarkebond Project Engineer Sam Bartley.

"The mezzanines take up approximately 50% of each building's footprint and they are free-standing structures supporting a lightweight flooring solution."

The structurally-independent design means

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each mezzanine can not only be retrofitted to the buildings, but can also be easily removed, if a future tenant does not require it.

Based around a **column grid** pattern of 7.5m intervals, the steel framed buildings have internal spans of 9m. Offering plenty of retail floor space, the structures are and can be subdivided along these column lines.

Avoiding the need for internal bracings, which would not have been desirable for retail tenants that usually want open-plan shops, the buildings have been designed as space frames. This design means all of the bracings are located either in perimeter walls or in the roof structure.

As part of the initial programme, early works included a cut and fill package that formed an even plateau on the greenfield site. The entire plot was then stabilised, before foundations and services were installed.

Although most of the buildings have pad foundations, five buildings in the scheme are supported on piles, due to the topography and the amount of infilled ground on this part of the plot.

The Cotswolds Designer Outlet is due to open in Spring 2025. ■



Visualisation of how the outlet will look when it opens next year.

#### FACT FILE

**Cotswolds Designer Outlet, Tewkesbury**

Main Client: Robert Hitchins

Architect: Roberts Limbrick

Main contractor: Bouygues UK

Structural engineer: Clarkbond

Steelwork contractor:

**William Haley Engineering**

Steel tonnage: 1,300t



The Cotswolds Designer Outlet is part of a much wider scheme that is transforming 250-acres of land on the outskirts of Tewkesbury.



Creating the desired village look, the buildings have different forms and styles of roof.