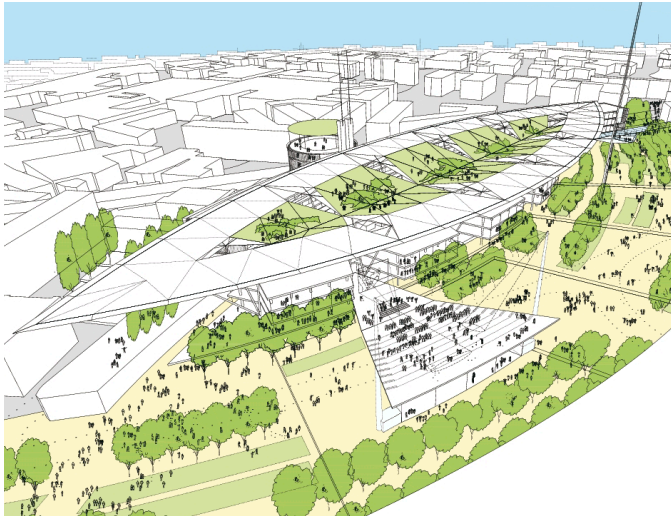




New Library

Birmingham, UK





Location
Birmingham, UK

Structural Engineer
Arup

Date
2002–2006

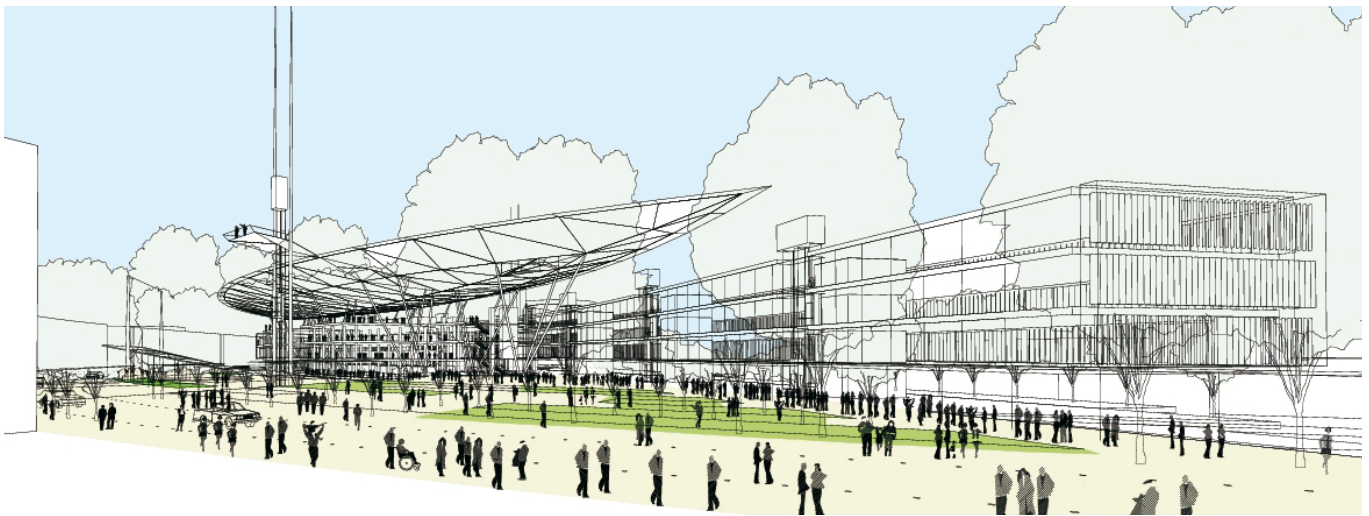
Services Engineer
BDSP Partnership

Client
Birmingham City Council

Cost Consultant
Gleeds

Cost
£130 million

Gross Internal Area
35,000m²



The new library would make a vital contribution to the cultural landscape of a dynamic city that has established a lead in the campaign for urban renaissance in Britain.

The new Library of Birmingham will be a major cultural and educational resource and a potent engine for urban regeneration. The library, replacing a 1960s building, was to be located in Birmingham's Eastside, a neighbourhood previously isolated by a motorway that is now the subject of radical redevelopment proposals.

The brief for the project was far more than the replacement of the existing library (one of the best-stocked and popular libraries in Britain) – it also incorporated a vision of the public library as a learning resource for all, an inviting place where books are available alongside many other media. The collections include the outstanding Shakespeare Library and a photographic archive of international importance.

The aim was to anticipate the ongoing needs of a large and growing body of users, while creating a building that will be a cultural landmark and symbol of renewal. The site for the

library was located in a new park at the heart of Eastside, where park-related activities would draw people into the library and library events will animate the park. The main pedestrian route from the city would pass through the site, assuming the form of a great galleria between the library and a separate block planned to house a broad range of community and cultural activities. An oversailing canopy spread across the building, supported on structural 'trees' and topped by a 'sky park'.

The roof was to protect the south façade, as well as creating a powerful form that defined the urban presence of the library. The reference library occupied the three upper floors, with lending and children's libraries, exhibition spaces, foyers and auditorium below. Reading rooms and offices were placed around the edge of the building where they would benefit from views of the park, with stacks and archives at the centre benefiting from secure, climate controlled conditions.