Ministry of Sound to take over Westfield London House of Fraser space

By Nigel Taylor - 24 June 2022

With experiences becoming ever more important in post-pandemic retail, this move must be music to the ears of one major shopping centre. Ministry of Sound is to take over the former House of Fraser store at the Westfield London mall in Shepherds Bush.

The famous nightclub brand is set to “remix” its offer, creating flexible offices, a gym for “fitness raves”, a dedicated members’ bar and a separate public-facing rooftop bar/restaurant. It expands on its previous transition that saw the brand launch a members’ club with flexible workspace and a gym in 2018 on Borough Road, near its original south London venue.

The second site will open at the Shepherd’s Bush mall in Q1 2024, with conversion of the 115,000 sq ft former department store beginning at the end of this summer. It comes two years after Westfield London first applied for plans to redevelop the HoF site.

Financing the multi-million-pound project will be shared by Westfield and Ministry of Sound Group, according to The Guardian newspaper.

Lohan Presencer, the chair of Ministry of Sound, said the new venue would also include hot desks, and an event space for parties, product launches and conferences.

He said Ministry expected a minimum of 4,000 people a day to visit. The group’s original members’ club now has a waiting list for new sign-ups.

“We are building a genuine community and it is proving increasingly popular,” Presencer said. “Who wants to go into a boring office? People want something that brings people together and gives them a reason to come back.”

Scott Parsons, the UK chief operating officer of Westfield’s parent group, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield, said: “Repurposing of retail spaces is a good thing. With a shopping centre the size of Westfield London we will have a
Repurposing of retail space is a good thing. With a shopping centre the size of Westfield London we will have a critical mass of leisure, retail and food and beverage and we are adding to the mix by repurposing space.

“The 2,000 people working in the co-working space at Ministry will be adding to the footfall and sales at Westfield and those people will have hundreds of shops [and] a leisure offer right on their doorstep.”

Westfield London is also in the process of finalising the conversion of the former Debenhams store into a mix of retail, food and leisure space.

Although the House of Fraser brand is owned by Frasers Group, bought for £90 million in 2018 by Mike Ashley, the vast majority of the department stores closed over the following years, including the flagship on Oxford Street in January, to be redeveloped into mixed-use retail and offices, while the 150-year-old store in Vitoria is expected to close later this summer.

Others around the country remain empty although some, including Richmond in south London and Altrincham, near Manchester, are being converted into a multi-million-pound retail and leisure centres.

By Nigel Taylor

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