

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL MAIN ENTRANCE (AREA 5)

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The Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham is a striking piece of architecture. A dramatic overhead cover sweeps up from the car park to the main building, where the glass of the walls and roof of the atrium make for a brightly lit entrance. Behind this lie all the departments of the main hospital. We often notice the architecture of distinctive buildings like these, but don't always think about the planning involved in designing the movement of people through an important node like this.

A sign above the rotating doors proclaims 'QEHB Main Entrance'. A second entrance is round the corner. The healthy image of people buying fruit from a fully stocked stall at the entrance is rather tempered by a gathering of people in dressing gowns whose craving for a cigarette has brought them out from the wards into the cold.

A constant stream of people head through the doors, many in wheelchairs, some using walking sticks and frames, one using a long white cane to try and work out how the revolving door works. Several are wearing masks, indicating their vulnerability.

How have they all got here? Taxis, cars and ambulances are all jostling for position, trying to get their passengers as near to the entrance as possible. Double and single decker buses are swinging round the loop to the row of bus stops where their passengers will get on and off. The large number of parked bicycles tell us that a lot of staff and patients have cycled here. People on foot and others in wheelchairs are coming up the walkway from the busy multi-storey car park, while others are approaching along the path from the University railway station. A row of black cabs waits to take people home again.

The people approaching and leaving this node carry a large range of emotions – anxiety or relief, pain and discomfort, healing, grief or elation. It's clearly a very significant node in the lives of the people of Birmingham.
