

Spotlight on King's Lynn – EDP Spring Business Review 24 April

John Weston, of Brown & Co, reports on the fortunes of major public and private sector projects in the town over the past six months, a period which has seen considerable activity in a number of areas.

The final hurdle to the relocation of the College of West Anglia to a new 17-acre site has been overcome. If their forecast timescales can be met, the college will move from its current town centre site to a new campus within the NORA scheme on the southern approach to the town by autumn 2010.

The acquisition of Campbells UK operations by Premier Foods last year has resulted in the not unexpected announcement of the closure of their Hardwick Road factory. Recognised by its distinctive tall brick chimney, which has served as a local landmark for more than half a century, most production will be transferred to neighbouring plants in Long Sutton and Wisbech. Originally occupying an almost rural position on the edge of King's Lynn, next to the railway, this 35-acre site is now sandwiched between the southern by-pass and two major retail parks and lies directly opposite a third. Given its size and prominence, the site will be one of the most important redevelopment propositions to arise in King's Lynn for many years.

Staying on Hardwick Road and opposite Campbells, ground-works have now started on the new 45,000 sq ft B&Q retail warehouse development. This follows the recent demolition of the Jaeger factory, which stood on this corner site since the Hardwick Estate first opened. Jaeger had earlier relocated their warehousing, distribution and offices to the former Porvair premises within the town. The company maintained their Hardwick retail presence in Paxman Road alongside the long established Caithness Crystal Visitor Centre, which was acquired, refurbished and re-launched at the turn of the year under Tollit & Harvey Ltd, advised by Brown & Co.

The prognosis for another Lynn project, however, the Boal Quay Marina, appears to be more challenging following the recent announcement that the intended connection with the country's inland waterway network has effectively been abandoned. Leaving only a sea-going facility in prospect this will unfortunately serve to limit the potential of this ambitious scheme.

Further west the thriving Port of Sutton Bridge, with its established connections with Europe, the Baltic and Scandinavia, has recently come on to the market. Close by Brown & Co recently completed a major sale of the entire Wingland Enterprise Park to a UK based developer of industrial estates. This substantial site, totaling over 21 hectares (54 acres) was originally created through a consortium lead by South Holland District Council (with EU support) and benefits from its strategic location next the A17 as well as proximity to the port itself. It is now designated as a Major Employment Area in the Local Plan.

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