

Commercial Proper

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Police in £20m forensic HQ deal at business park

Force's science unit will create jobs

Lizzie Murphy

WEST Yorkshire Police will build a new £20m support centre for its fingerprinting and forensic work next year after buying the site from a developer.

The force is relocating its scientific support unit to Calder Park in Wakefield after buying 80,000 sq ft from Peel Holdings and obtaining planning permission.

Construction is due to start in early 2010 and will take about 18 months to complete, although a spokesman said the force had not appointed anyone to carry out the work yet.

The department is currently housed in several buildings in and around the police headquarters in Wakefield. The new building will bring the facilities together in one place.

West Yorkshire Police said it hopes the move will create new jobs in addition to the 200 staff who will relocate to the unit.

Nick Hey, development director at Peel, which also owns Robin Hood and Liverpool John Lennon airports and the Trafford Centre in Manchester, said: "This is fabulous news for Calder Park and will boost the region's economy with the prospect for long-term jobs in addition to those created during construction."

A FLAGSHIP FOR CALDER PARK

West Yorkshire Police's 80,000 sq ft scientific support unit will become the flagship development at Calder Park when it is built and

developers hope it will encourage more international private companies to relocate to the site.

The business park, which is located at J39 of the M1, is already home to more than 70 occupiers including George Wimpey, The Highways

Agency, Miller Homes, and Mitsubishi.

It is set in over 100 acres of dedicated nature reserve, which developers say has a lower density of development than any other business park in Yorkshire.

Over the last 10 years, 45 acres of Calder Park has been developed, leaving 55 acres still awaiting development.

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Set on a site of 240 acres, the development includes over 100 acres set aside for a nature and bird reserve and is the largest speculative office development in the Wakefield area.

Mr Hey added: "The impact the market has had on the construction industry has been dire. This sale is positive and is keeping people in jobs."

WSB Property Consultants and Savills are the agents for the scheme.

Paul Fairhurst, head of Savills in Leeds, said: "West Yorkshire Police's decision to locate their regional scientific services here is great news, for Wakefield and the region."

Robin Beagley, head of WSB Property Consultants, added: "This is the largest and most significant deal to happen in Wakefield in over a decade and is a reflection that we are starting to see signs of improvement in sentiment from business in the area."

Peel Holdings last sold a piece of land at Calder Park in 2008. Mr Hey said: "Things really slowed down 18 months ago. There are now positive signs out there but what we have got to watch is the Government cutting off public money before the private sector has recovered. That could send us straight back into recession."

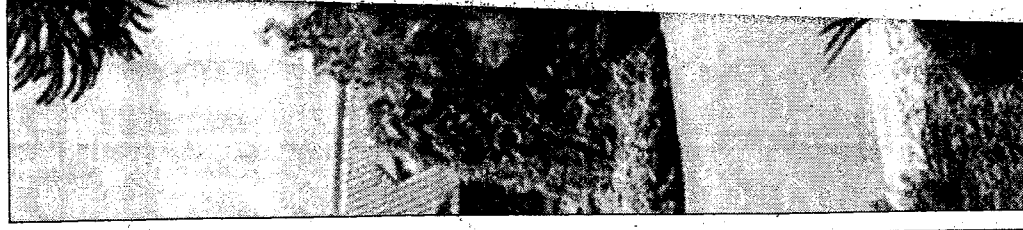
"While there are green shoots, they need to be clearly managed to make sure they don't die in the ground."

Looking to the future, Mr Hey added: "I think we'll see more private investment coming back in over the next 12 months. I genuinely hope we have got a flagship building going forward which will encourage big investors to come into the area because we have got some prime sites at Calder Park."

"It's ideal for a multi-national corporation head office. There are very few sites of similar standing which can offer a 25-acre site to a company."

Over the last 10 years, 45 acres of Calder Park has been developed, leaving 55 acres.

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STAR QUALITY: has been upgraded

The aims

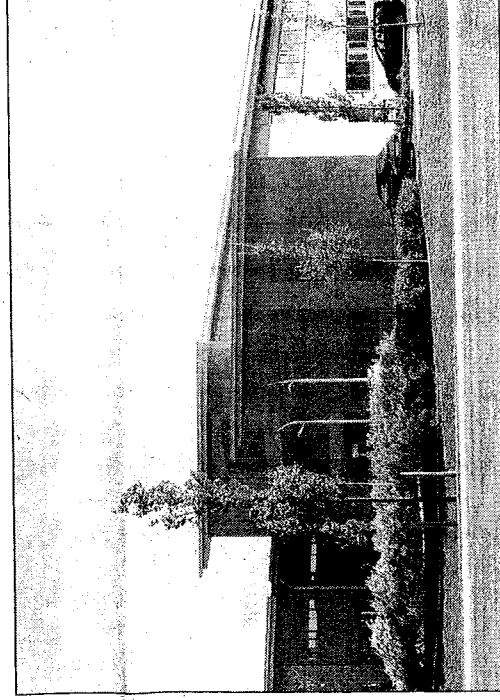
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IDEAL LOCATION: Calder Park at J39 of the M1 at Wakefield is home to more than 70 occupiers in addition to the new West Yorkshire Police centre. Its operators hope to attract even more major investors.