

## IN BRIEF

**Friars Walk scheme steps up pace**  
Newport's £100m Friars Walk retail and leisure scheme has been granted planning permission by the city council's planning committee. Queensberry Real Estate, the development subsidiary of the UK arm of Multi Developments, will demolish existing buildings in the John Frost Square area and develop a 390,000 sq ft scheme with a department store and 30 shops, in addition to a six-screen cinema and a new bus station.

**Retail network expands into US**  
The International Retail Network, the group of retail property consultancies that advises retailers on overseas expansion, has expanded into the US with the appointment of the Dartmouth Company as a member. Dartmouth specialises in the leasing and sale of retail properties. The network is now represented in Germany, Ireland, France, Spain, Belgium, the UK and the US. Kitchen La Frenais Morgan is the founder UK member.

**Holland Park homes get green light**  
The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea last week granted consent to Chelsfield Partners for a residential-led scheme at 205 Holland Park Avenue in west London. The Allford Hall Monaghan Morris-designed development will have five linked pavilions that will rise from four to 10 storeys and contain 50 flats and 8,500 sq ft of studios for artists.

# Whitgift revamp reaches impasse

■ Hammerson and Westfield at loggerheads over development of Croydon centre

BY KAT SPYBEY

The redevelopment of Croydon's Whitgift Centre has reached a deadlock after the owners picked different development partners.

Hammerson was this week chosen as the preferred partner for the redevelopment of the 580,000 sq ft property by two of the long-leasehold owners, Royal London Asset Management, which owns 25% of the long leasehold, and Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, formerly Anglo Irish Bank, which now controls Howard Holdings' 50% long-leasehold interest.

However, the decision follows Westfield's announcement in November 2011 that it had obtained an exclusive agreement with the shopping centre's freeholder and 25% leaseholder, charity the Whitgift Foundation, to explore options to redevelop the mall.

To be able to undertake a redevelopment of the centre, Hammerson will now need to come to an agreement with the freeholder, or join forces with the charity's chosen partner, Westfield.

Hammerson told *Property Week* it is keen to talk to the foundation but discussions with Westfield were "not on the agenda" at present.



Face off: we investigated whether Hammerson and Westfield could work together to revamp Whitgift

The Whitgift Foundation this week described Hammerson's selection as "inexplicable" and said its agreement with Westfield was "binding".

The education charity said it continued "to invite the leaseholders to be part of this solution and to work with us in Croydon's best interests".

Westfield has said it "remains determined" to develop the mall.

*Property Week* revealed last month that Hammerson and Westfield were the frontrunners for the leaseholders' stake, after they were shortlisted alongside Lend Lease and Grosvenor.

Hammerson is now expected to buy a stake of 18.75% for around £40m.

Hammerson bought the nearby Centrale shopping centre last year,

and is now drawing up plans for a phased redevelopment and refurbishment of the Whitgift centre which could extend the mall to up to 1.6m sq ft.

In February, the REIT announced that it will sell its office assets to focus purely on retail.

However, any redevelopment could be delayed even further because of the adjoining Alders department store. The shop is owned by Delancey and Area Property Partners, which have appointed Franc Warwick to advise on the asset. Should it be put up for sale, it could become a ransom strip to the eventual successful developer.

Lawrence Hutchings, Hammerson's managing director of UK retail, was adamant Hammerson could "move very swiftly" on Whitgift and progress it "simultaneously" alongside its extension of Brent Cross Shopping Centre in north London.

"We have got the skills base and the capital to do that," he said.

He added: "We have a vision to kickstart the much-needed retail-led regeneration of Croydon and the key to that is uniting the retail core."

Jones Lang LaSalle advised Royal London and IBRC.

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## Topland buys Bath hotel

Topland Group has bought the Royal Crescent Hotel in Bath from the Von Essen portfolio for around £19m after the Livingstone brothers pulled out of the sale.

The grade I-listed hotel is in the heart of the crescent and comprises 29 bedrooms and the Bath House Spa.

The Livingstone brothers' London & Regional was selected in September 2011 as the preferred bidder for Von Essen's flagship hotels, Cliveden House and the Royal Crescent, but only completed

the purchase of Cliveden in February.

Topland will appoint Vision Asset Management to manage the operations of the hotel.

Topland group chairman Sol Zakay said: "Topland has used its war chest to 'purchase for cash' and will continue to do so to expand its portfolio."

Christie & Co marketed the hotel for administrators at Ernst & Young.

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■ Topland's future plans, p40



### Just the job

Following the Malaysia Grand Prix (pictured) at the end of last month, the world's biggest motorsports marketing agency has leased 4,415 sq ft of office space on the Cadogan Estate. Just Marketing International has taken the second floor of 86 Duke of York Square in London's Chelsea at £49.50/sq ft until December 2016, with three months rent free and an option to break in December 2014. CBRE acted for Cadogan Estates; James Andrew International advised Just Marketing. ■