

Pair reach chequered flag at Silverstone

Two parties are closing in on the purchase of Silverstone racing circuit and its associated development land, in a deal first tipped by *Property Week* (news, 07.06.13).

Private equity company Lloyds Development Capital is in advanced negotiations over a management buyout of Silverstone Circuits – the body that hosts the British Grand Prix.

Meanwhile, developer MEPC is close to purchasing 200 acres surrounding the development land.

The transactions between the two parties and the British Racing Drivers Club are understood to be structured as two separate agreements that are “inter-related”.

The British Racing Drivers Club struck an agreement in 2009 to stage the British Grand Prix for 17 years, paving the way for the redevelopment of the Northamptonshire circuit.

It is believed MEPC would pay £40m for the development land. LDC is said to be investing millions of pounds in backing a management buyout of Silverstone Circuits.

It is understood the racing track and facilities would be leased back to Silverstone's present owner, the British Racing Drivers' Club, which would use the funds from the sale to invest in the running of the circuit.

James Andrew to make City debut

James Andrew International is to open its first City of London leasing office and has poached BNP Paribas Real Estate director Lisa Moran to head it.

Moran worked in the agency's City leasing division for just more than 14 years, and will open the James Andrew office towards the end of this year.

The office will likely be in the “City core” and opened in time to coincide with the firm's 40th anniversary.

Moran, who will work as a central London leasing director alongside James Andrew's Mark Kleinman, will be seeking fresh recruits for her new team.

Kleinman and Moran worked together on subletting 80,000 sq ft of offices to law firm Field Fisher Waterhouse on behalf of Man Group at Riverbank House earlier this month.

US REIT's Crawley digital additions

■ Digital Realty to develop two data centres on former Glaxo site

BY ALEX THERRIEN

Digital Realty has bought half of a former GlaxoSmithKline site in Crawley, West Sussex, where it plans a pair of data centres totalling more than 250,000 sq ft.

The US data centre REIT, which is spearheading US efforts to gain a foothold in the UK data market, expects to develop 12 acres of freehold land that it has bought from LaSalle Investment Management and Exton Estates, joint owners of the Principal Park site at Manor Royal.

It is understood to have paid more than £1m an acre. It was granted full planning permission this month, and construction is expected to start this year.

It has submitted plans for two data centres of 130,000 sq ft each in Crawley, and is now seeking prelets.

Digital Realty made its first UK investment in 2005 and now has seven sites around London and

one in Manchester. It spent £715m in summer 2012 on three centres, in Croydon, Woking and Watford, totalling 761,000 sq ft.

Its scheme at Principal Park, which also includes a 7,900 sq ft data hall and 1,900 sq ft substation, will be the first new development on the vacant brownfield site. LaSalle and Exton bought the land in 2011.

The site was previously occupied by pharmaceuticals company GlaxoSmithKline and metal manufacturer Carpenter Technology. It has planning consent for laboratories, warehousing and distribution, and processing areas.

Crawley council's planning committee is due to consider the plans at the beginning of September and has recommended them for approval.

The centre would allow storage and distribution of vast quantities of electronic data, and will also include ancillary office accommodation.

It will also require cooling

and back-up power facilities.

The data centre sector is booming on the back of burgeoning social media and businesses' cloud computing requirements. Growing numbers of companies are seeking to expand the internet capacity and data-storage capabilities. Digital Realty and other data centre providers allow companies to buy data storage and processing capacity without having to pay for or maintain the physical infrastructure.

Digital Realty has 105 data centres totalling 20m sq ft across North America and Europe.

Adam Levine, vice-president for sales at Digital Realty, told *Property Week* in May: “We are always looking for standing investments and we have seen an increase in the demand for sale and leasebacks in the European market.”

“We are always looking at speculative development, but nothing definite.”

Jones Lang LaSalle and Dowley Turner Real Estate are the letting agents at Principal Park.

Plymouth Argyle wins higher ground

Higher Home Park, Akkeron Group's £50m 492,216 sq ft retail and leisure scheme surrounding Plymouth Argyle Football Club, has been granted planning consent by Plymouth City Council.

The scheme proposed by entrepreneur James Brent is in the “Britain's Ocean City” area and already benefits from significant levels of footfall generated by

Plymouth Argyle, the Life Centre and Central Park.

It will contain nine shop and restaurant units, an ice rink, a 121-bedroom hotel, medical centre, cinema with 10 screens, including an Imax screen, and parking for 360 cars.

A new grandstand of 4,800 seats will be constructed within the ground, which

will house a further four shop and restaurant units facing on to the new Higher Home Park scheme.

Montagu Evans advised on planning.

