

Retailer unveils distribution centre plan

WORK is under way on one of the largest distribution centres in the UK, being built for supermarket giant Waitrose at Magna Park.

The 940,000 sq ft unit, on a site totaling 45 acres between Milton Keynes and the M1, is due to open next year.

It is being built by developer Gazeley, which specialises in logistics and distribution warehouses and owns Magna Park, and will become Waitrose's national distribution centre supplying its expanding UK network of supermarkets and convenience stores.

Pivotal

Waitrose supply chain director David Jones said the retailer plans to open 38 new stores this year and to grow its online activity.

He added: "The decision to open our first National Distribution Centre marks a pivotal moment in our supply chain history and reflects our phenomenal growth."

Construction work is due to complete in November. Magna Park is Gazeley's flagship UK logistics park, already accommodating two million sq ft for John Lewis, River Island and AG Barr plc.

The Waitrose warehouse is the third building at Magna Park for the John Lewis Partnership after completion of a new 670,000 sq ft e-commerce distribution centre.

Workers unite in bid for bus route

PEOPLE power has led to the launch of a lunchtime shuttle bus service for the 1,700 staff working at Tilbrook and the retail centre at Kingston.

The service, which began late last month, has been set up by Go Travel Solutions, the organiser of the SmartGo Milton Keynes sustainable travel initiative, following an overwhelming vote in favour of the service by workers on the estate.

High-profile companies including Red Bull Racing, cycle importer and distributor Trek UK, Kingston Foods and IT outsourcing provider T Systems have joined forces to create the Tilbrook Travel Hub for their staff, who plan to carshare, cycle or walk to work together. The combined approach created a critical mass to justify a pilot shuttle bus service and other initiatives enabling staff to arrange travel plans with fellow estate employees who live near to them.

Now Smartgo Milton Keynes is looking to take the Tilbrook Travel Hub model to other estates and business parks in Milton Keynes.

The Tilbrook scheme took shape in 2013 with a staff survey of Red Bull's employees as Red Bull Racing prepared plans for its new building extensions. The strong message came back that travel to work and the ability to park on site was a major concern.

Red Bull Racing set up an intranet page

through which its staff can find car sharers, cycle buddies and walk buddies, reserved 12 precious parking bays for carshare users - around 100 staff use this regularly - and are installing brand new cycle racks.

But when the focus turned to improving public transport services to Tilbrook, Red Bull Racing required a pitstop. "We hit a wall when it came to critical mass," says project co-ordinator Louise Watson.

It was then that Red Bull Racing sought help from Go Travel Solutions and Milton Keynes Council to organise an estate-wide survey of the 22 businesses based at Tilbrook, to which 17 responded, representing some 1,700 workers. "We had enough people on the estate in order to lobby the transport companies for a trial lunchtime bus service to Kingston," says Louise. "From our travel survey, it was evident that there is not only a huge desire within our staff to reduce single car occupancy but also to be able to access the wide range of shops and amenities during the working week."

The service by Aylesbury-based Z&S Transport costs £2 return and runs between noon and 2pm every 20 minutes. Z&S spokesman Toby Parsons said: "We believe it can offer a model for other parts of Milton Keynes and for further improvements in Tilbrook."



● Louise Watson with Red Bull Technology head of infrastructure Terry Brice; Toby Parsons of Z&S Transport; Go Travel Solutions managing director Robin Pointon.

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EEZY EXECUTIVE



Lisa Spearman, private client partner at chartered accountants Mercer & Hole, looks back on her career and her inspiration as the practice begins celebrations of its 25th anniversary in Milton Keynes.

'Everything's sexy about tax'

AGED 13, Lisa Spearman cast envious eyes towards her best friend at school. "She lived in the poshest street in Stourbridge and had ponies," she says. Her friend's father ran a one-man accountancy practice in the West Midlands town. "I asked if I could come and work for him. He said yes."

So began a love affair with accountancy that has grown stronger over a 25-year career. Now private client partner at accountancy firm Mercer & Hole in Milton Keynes, Lisa still remembers the day she knew her future profession.

"I went at 13, closed his files off and did some office work. He paid me £125 for six weeks work. I had never seen so much money in my life... and he had to tell me how to cash a cheque."

The accountant also had Radio 1 DJ Peter Powell among his clients at the time. "At the time, he was the coolest of the cool. I thought 'So, my friend's dad is working with Peter Powell and people like him, earning so much money and living in the poshest street in Stourbridge. This is obviously the job to have'."

And, she says, it still is. "Everything's sexy about tax. It never stops developing, whether legislation changes or people's circumstances change. It presents a huge intellectual challenge combined with having a very real effect on people's lives."

Lisa studied law at university with the intention of working in tax. She began her career at Deloitte, then moved to London firms Binder Hamlin and Smith & Williamson, where she rose to become a director, before having her two children. It was during maternity leave to have her second child that the opportunity arose in 2003 to work at Mercer & Hole.

Today, as private client partner, she is still doing the job she loves. "I love dealing with real people, real problems and trying to help."

Her skill at tax planning and knowledge of capital gains tax and inheritance tax matters allows Lisa to advise on a broad range of tax and trust issues. An acknowledged expert on the tax consequences of offshore trusts, and residence and domicile issues, she leads Mercer & Hole's specialist team that focuses on non UK domiciled clients.

She is chairman of the ICAEW Tax Faculty's Private Client Committee, leading its working party on non-domicile and residence matters. Lisa is also a member of the ICAEW Tax Faculty technical committee.

She is proud to work at a firm boasting one of the highest proportions of female partners among accountancy firms across the UK, currently six out of a total of 17.

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Lisa Spearman

Many of her clients are based among the many international businesses located in Milton Keynes. Lisa's work brings her into contact with international advisers in the USA and Latin America, central Europe and Scandinavia. But much of her work is very locally focused as the first generation of Milton Keynes business owners begins to make way for new blood. "The dynamic of Milton Keynes is changing," she says. "The people who came to Milton Keynes and flourished are now coming to an age where they want exit."

Her private client work focuses on tax efficiency, particularly planning for inheritance, capital gains and income taxes. "It is about identifying the clients' aims and helping them to achieve them," she says.

With family still in the West Midlands and in-laws in North Wales, Lisa and her husband chose to move north of London to be closer to their families. "We stuck a pin in the map and it landed on Milton Keynes," she says. "It is such an easy place to live and if I never left its boundaries again, I'd be a happy lady."

That does not include her regular trips following MK Dons FC home and away and to motor racing events in the UK and in Europe. "I am a petrol head," Lisa confesses. She is also an avid Tweeter.

On her future, she is certain. "More of the same," she says. "I am so lucky to do a job that I adore."

She recalls going back to her friend's father's accountancy firm the following year, when she was introduced to compiling tax returns. Lisa was hooked.

"I used to rush home from school to watch the Budget on television. My mother was really concerned about me. But tax grabbed me hook line and sinker."

Milton Keynes

25

Years