

BUILDING ON PAST SUCCESS FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

Since its establishment in 1982 the Barberry Group has acquired a reputation as one of the most successful privately owned property development and investment companies in the West Midlands. Though relatively small in size, with only 12 directly employed staff, it has managed to assemble a portfolio of developments across all property sectors that would put many larger companies to shame. CIN recently spoke with Construction Director, Mike Winters and Project Manager, Jason Jasper, to find out more about its activities.

"The first projects that we did were industrial schemes for the old West Midlands County Council, which ceased to exist in 1984," began Mr Winters. "Within two or three years we were doing industrial and commercial developments in our own right and also various projects in conjunction with funds. Within ten years we were involved with more significant office schemes in Birmingham including some major developments within the central area. The first of these was the refurbishment of a major Birmingham landmark building being the former Lewis's department store in Corporation Street. Some 300,000 sq ft of top quality office space was created behind the original stone façade with occupiers including the Lord Chancellors Department and a major accountancy practice. This project was undertaken jointly with Richardson Developments and we went on to create a total of almost

1m sq ft of office accommodation within the commercial heart of Birmingham. At the same time, Barberry was undertaking its own developments ranging from specialist refurbishments in Edinburgh's historic New Town to a major office and distribution warehouse scheme based on the former Gordon's Gin distillery in Basildon, Essex."

One of the most recent projects that Barberry has been involved with is the development of a 160,000 sq ft distribution unit in Burton-on-Trent which has been let to Unipart which handles the contract for national storage and distribution for Waterstones. The scheme was located on former brewery owned land and followed the development of Barberry Court, a scheme of small self contained office units

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Jason Jasper, Project Manager



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undertaken on an adjoining site. "Barberry Court was an office scheme of traditional two storey buildings," said Mr Jasper. "We built two blocks with ten units and aside from one they are all fully let or sold. The Unipart distribution site will generate circa 500 jobs for the local community".

Like any other successful developer Barberry's main aim as a business is to successfully identify opportunities and to develop schemes either by itself or as a joint venture, something which has been demonstrated by the many successful partnerships over recent years. In achieving this the small, personal size of the business is viewed as a definite positive. Rather than being tied to specific targets Barberry is able to follow the opportunity and the flat management structure allows decisions to be made quickly. "We are able to move quickly and are able to target specific items and areas where we feel we can bring benefit to our activities," confirmed Mr Winters. "We had one or two very significant sales last year at what you would say was the top of the market that has put us into a good situation where we can pick and choose from the opportunities that are put before us at the moment, which due to the current state of the market is important."

Mr Jasper added: "Another positive is that we have in-house expertise, both from a construction point of view as well as the property angle. This helps the balance in being able to look at the property aspects together with the technical complexities. I think both complement each other extremely well."

Operating as masters of its own destiny Barberry is able to make the decision to only commit to an opportunity if it believes it is able to add value to it and if it is available at the right price as Mr Jasper concluded: "We are monitoring the current market very closely and remain ready to move quickly to secure anything which fits our brief. By being a bit more prudent we are in a position to buy sites where we can take advantage of the downturn in the market. We are not about quantity - we are about quality."

After successfully dealing with previous periods of market difficulty the Barberry Group looks set to repeat this feat in 2008 thanks to this approach to its activities. The Group recently announced the acquisition of Phoenix Retail Park and Lion Way Retail Park in Swansea for £10.3m, thus demonstrating that there are still opportunities out there in the marketplace. Barberry Group looks set to build on its past successes as it moves into the next phase in its history.



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Wishing them continued success for the future.



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