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### There's life in the old dog yet...

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Despite rumours to the contrary the Midlands is still the best location in the country. And based on that belief developers continue to be extremely active in the region.

Nigel Dolan of Gazeley says that following the Credit Crunch there are plenty of "opportunities for developers with money who can bid strongly for sites".

Mark Fitzpatrick of GVA Grimley explains: "Landholders have taken a knock on land prices with the general drop in the property market and where you might have seen ten to 15 bidders you are now only seeing five or six but there are still an awful lot with their own money and they are willing to spend."

Richard Ludlow of Gerald Eve adds: "Developers have to look at sites now because it can take anything up to three to five years before you can get a spade in the ground - if you are lucky."

The big players are taking full advantage of these circumstances. ProLogis has not been backward incoming forward and has secured preferred developer status subject to planning for a large tract of the former Peugeot site at Ryton near Coventry.

The site was bought last year by Trenport, the owner of Home Delivery Network, which delivers goods purchased through 'Littlewoods Shop Direct' home shopping catalogue and on-line shopping and a number of other retailers.

The 142-acre site was acquired because Home Delivery Network needed to replace and expand its outdated facility in Droitwich and could not find anywhere suitable. Luckily the owners of the company are extremely rich and were able to outbid other developer rivals for the site.

Trenport submitted plans for a new sortation centre on a 33-acre plot last year. The facility is a single 15m high cross-docked warehouse totalling 232,744 sq ft with a 33,528.16 sq ft ancillary office building over three storeys as well as an 8,629.52 sq ft garage, a security hut and a fuel island.

The proposals include 483 off door trailer bays, together with a further 122 on door trailer bays. There are 150 'tractor' bays and ten 'shunter' bays. Around 276 car parking spaces will be provided for staff along with cycle parking in accordance with adopted standards.

That still leaves a sizeable area still to be redeveloped, which Trenport is now trying to secure planning on. The 64-acre site known as Plot B is the one where ProLogis has been selected as preferred developer for a price in the region of £60m.

The plans envisage a 1.3 million sq ft business and logistics park with up to 30 per cent being assigned for manufacturing use although the application has been made on the basis that this mix will not be the subject of a controlling planning condition.

In another deal KN Drinks Logistics, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kuehne + Nagel, has expanded its network with the opening of a new 168,700 sq ft regional distribution centre at Hams Hall near Coventry, which was developed by Wrenbridge.

Unipart Logistics snapped up Barberry Developments and GE Real Estate 157, 500 sq ft building known as Barberry 157 in Burton-upon-Trent, to serve its ten-year contract with bookseller Waterstone's.

