

# The changing face of Whitby Business Park



Staff at Whitby sea foods packing scampi in the factory on the industrial eastate w131423

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**Whitby Business Park has long constituted a vital base for small industry in the district, but in recent years questions have been raised about the infringement of retail outlets on the soon-to-be-expanded site off Stainsacre Lane.**

Now, with rumours continuing that a deal is already in place for a hotelier and pub chain to move in, consultation has begun on a new area action plan for the park.

Some have felt that shift has led to a loss of “clear definition” at the business park, in the words of Whitby mayor John Freeman. He highlighted the Co-operative supermarket chain, which had been denied a plot on the business park, prior to setting up shop on Langborne Road.

However, in recent times businesses such as Lockers Fish, Whitby Seafoods or Botham’s have been joined by Sainsbury’s and Homebase.

Scarborough Borough Council’s planning manager, David Walker, explained there had been no conscious change in local policy on behalf of the local authority.



The business park is instead benefitting from a national Government initiative introduced a decade ago which said stores could infringe on industrial sites so long as the project leaders could demonstrate a need for the development among residents and that town centre sites were not readily available.

A 2007 retail study found there was capacity for 6,700 square metres of retail floorspace in Whitby, but this has now been filled by Homebase, Sainsbury's and the Co-op.

In 2010 a further study confirmed the town's limited catchment population could now support only minor developments.

Mr Walker reaffirmed the authority's commitment to encouraging non-retail business at the park but the consultation will also look at opening up the business park to an increased mixture of uses.

The containment of development to the business park also allows the local authority to 'hold the line', ensuring development does not take place elsewhere in the district.

"We're creating an environment where investment can take place," he said.

A £3.5 million plan was last year announced which would see the infrastructure around Cholmley Way extended by 14 hectares, meaning the business park would cover a total of 35 hectares.

This would expand the business park in the direction of East Whitby Community Primary School and create space, which the draft action plan said should be utilised by a new public house and hotel. With no pub located on the east side of the town, outside the harbour area, this could be seen as a boost for the community, as well as providing accommodation to support the potential potash and wind farm developments.

Preparatory work has begun on land adjacent to the business park, including wildlife studies, and Travelodge has been said to have expressed an interest in the sites. In 2009 the hotel launched a joint initiative with Marston's, where they would search for and develop sites together. Rumours a deal is already in place, however, have been strenuously denied by both SBC and the two companies. But David Kelly, economic development manager of regeneration services at SBC, said discussions are ongoing. "Nothing can happen until we build the infrastructure," he said.

The draft Whitby Business Park Area Action Plan was published on 21 March.