

Small Heath site to be 'shop window to world'

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Birmingham-based building consultancy Fusion – and the financial commitment of Advantage West Midlands – have persuaded an historic firm that deals with hazardous chemicals to take a new site in the city.

The company known as W Canning – but now owned by US conglomerate MacDermid Inc – was founded in 1785 and is developing an 83,000 sq ft research and manufacturing base on a five-acre brownfield site in Small Heath.

All 100 existing jobs will be preserved by the relocation from its present Bordesley site and, despite the ongoing economic volatility, the workforce is expected to expand after the move, which is on course for summer 2009.

MacDermid's UK managing director, Lance Phasey, says the firm's US parent wants to make the new location in Golden Hillock Road into an international showcase for its products and services.

"MacDermid was formed in 1922, by a Scottish engineer who had emigrated to Connecticut, and now operates in more than 20 countries," he said.

"The move has given us the opportunity to base our global R&D and marketing operation here, and now 'Clan MacDermid' wants to make us into a shop window for the world."

It's a happy ending to a long saga over a new site for MacDermid, as Fusion director Steven Jelfs explained.

The former Bordesley plant was located within the area designated as East-



Roger Richards from MacDermid Inc, Steve Jelfs from Fusion Building, Lance Phasey from MacDermid Inc, Steven Holland from AWM and Nick Young from Fusion

side, Europe's largest urban regeneration scheme, and it took many months and much negotiation to agree that the company would look for a new site and relocate by 2009.

Phasey says the current city council, and its Locate in Birmingham arm, have both been very helpful in the firm's attempts to find suitable premises.

"We didn't want to leave Birmingham, as it was unlikely that our entire skilled workforce would be able to relocate with us. We did consider Redditch, but when

we heard about the Small Heath site, it sounded ideal," he said. "We knew AWM had bought the site for employment purposes, but when we saw the old BSA factory and realised how much work was needed, we did start to think again."

"However, Steven and his colleagues were able to come up with various ideas as to how we could make the place suitable, such as where the new laboratories could go, how the drainage could be improved, and how the appearance of the building could be transformed."

Buying the Small Heath site was a £3million investment for AWM.

"The BSA factory was tired industrial space from the 80s, whereas now we have a good quality plant here, and the move has also freed up expansion land for Eastside," said head of asset management, Steve Holland.

"We gave MacDermid a rent-free period to account for the cost of the fit-out, and now they have signed a 25-year lease, which is a measure of their commitment to Birmingham."