

Tenants signing up for £18m innovation building

by John Cole

LUTON's new £18.5 million innovation centre on the Butterfield technology park has begun taking deposits from future tenants.

Solid enquiries backed by cash have risen past the 20 mark in the past few weeks as a marketing campaign gets under way to pull tenants into the giant 96-unit building as quickly as possible.

But as Brian Andrews, executive director for Basepoint, the centre operator, expressed his delight with the interest being shown - he did not disguise his annoyance over a failure by building contractors to keep to schedule.

Basepoint Business and Innovation Centre, to give it its full title, is several months adrift of its completion target, which means it will not now be up and running until the end of June.

The delay does not seem to be deterring interest "but it means we have not yet started on the fit-out of furnishings and equipment", said Mr Andrews, 48, who is in overall charge of 20 Basepoint enterprise centres around the UK.

The approaching opening after 30 months of construction work at the site off the A505 Hitchin Road is heartening news for Luton Borough Council and the East of England Development Agency (EEDA), the principal stakeholders in the venture. But the new centre, which will eventually be populated by 450 entrepreneurial business people, now throws a long shadow over the town's existing innovation centre at The Spires in Adelaide Street and its spin-off at Britannia House in Leagrave Road.

Detailed talks are in progress over the future of the 25 or so small businesses sheltering under the wing of the Luton & Dunstable Research and Innovation Centre.

It has been run by former university staff for the past ten years and



In June it will be hello to this...



...and a sad goodbye to this

their future is also under consideration.

The borough council has joined forces with the University of Bedfordshire to help the IT and technology driven businesses in The Spires to find alternative accommodation.

A university spokesman revealed that external fund-

ing for the innovation project had come to an end and the lease at The Spires would expire in August.

He said it had always been the intention to help the Spires' businesses to relocate to the Basepoint centre but he added that the university was also speaking with other external parties

to investigate other opportunities, which would be passed to tenants once confirmed. In addition, university staff will be having one-to-one meetings with tenants to offer them guidance and support," he said.

The innovation project

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