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**Built environment communications specialists**

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THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO RETAIL & LEISURE PARKS 2011:
VACANCY RATES DOWN AS COMPARISON STORES EXPAND OUT OF TOWN

The retail warehousing vacancy rate has fallen to 9.2%, from its mid 2009 peak of 11.8% and 20% down on last year's figure; the vacancy rate for schemes with open A1 planning permission is 7.9%. According to Trevor Wood Associates' *'The Definitive Guide to Retail & Leisure Parks 2011'*, the reduction in vacancy rates is largely due to increasing demand for out-of-town stores from traditional high street retailers such as Argos and Next and budget retailers such as Home Bargains and TK Maxx.

The Guide, which analyses 1,478 schemes throughout the UK, found that many of the stores vacated by retailers which entered administration or CVA, such as JJB Sports, Land of Leather and most recently Focus, helped dynamic comparison goods retailers to expand. Argos, B & M, Best Buy, Dreams, Dunelm, Go Outdoors, Home Bargains, Homesense, Matalan, Next, Pets at Home, Smyths Toys, The Range and Wren Kitchens occupied 2.7 million sq. ft. of vacant retail warehousing floorspace during the past eighteen months and this has resulted in more space taken than became available for the second year running.

Many of the former DIY stores have been occupied by the supermarkets and are no longer considered to be retail warehouses. For example, Marks & Spencer Simply Food trades from the former JJB Sports in Cambridge and the former Borders in Newbury whilst Tesco trades from the former Focus in both Bromley and Crowborough; Asda recently agreed a deal for six Focus units. Many others that were not taken up have been granted change of use to residential, industrial or offices.

Large space users, such as B & Q, the largest non-food retail park tenant, Comet and PC World continue to either downsize and sub-lets units or close down marginal stores. Retailers such as Lee Longlands Clearance and many national retailers are taking temporary stores allowing them to clear excess stock or test the market whilst the landlords minimise short-term liabilities: There are currently about seventy units occupied in this way.

The most significant growth in the top thirty tenants is by B & M which has increased its floorspace by 33%. Argos, Carpetright, Currys, Halfords and Pets at Home, are each present on more than 200 schemes. Over 950 different tenants trade from all schemes, 350 of these only occupy one unit and the vast majority of occupy less than five units; 165 tenants occupy ten or more units.

The research shows that the total retail warehouse market grew marginally to 173.80 million sq. ft. in 2010 from 172.50 million sq. ft. in 2009 and 140.00 million sq. ft. in 2001. The proportion taken by comparison goods retailers (excluding DIY) has risen to an all time high of 51.3% in 2010 compared to 48.9% in 2009 and just 46.7% in 2002.

Peak rents achieved on retail parks range from £8.00 per sq. ft. to £105.00 at Fosse Park, Leicester, with the majority of parks recording rents between £10.00 and £20.00; 28% have peak rents above £25.00 per sq. ft. and 10% above £35.00 per sq. ft. The entry level for the Top 100 Retail Park Rents has risen from £32.50 to £34.70; 20% of the current peak rents were set by occupiers which subsequently went into administration or entered into a CVA.

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Of the 99 leisure schemes listed, 48 incorporate cinemas, 19 include a bowling alley or family entertainment centre and 42 have gyms. Night-clubs can be found on 60 schemes while 84 incorporate a hotel, and three include theatres. 70% of Leisure Park peak rents were in excess of £20.00 per sq. ft. and peak rents ranged from £12.00 per sq. ft. to £42.50. Cineworld, Frankie & Benny's, McDonalds, Nando's and Pizza Hut are present on more than 50 schemes

Trevor Wood, senior partner, Trevor Wood Associates, said: "The overall benefits of accessibility, parking, rents and footfall means that despite the administrations and disposals by many retailers considerably increasing the amount of space available, the demand from dynamic retailers means vacancy levels have dropped for the second year running. "

Other Key Findings:

The Guide identified 1,478 schemes that are trading or in the course of construction. 232 schemes have development proposals of some kind, of which 163 are Retail Parks and 20 are Leisure Parks.

Top Retail Park - Middlebrook Retail & Leisure Park, Bolton
Top Retail Park Tenant -B & Q
Top Leisure Scheme - The O2 Entertainment District, Greenwich, London
Top Retail Park Rent - £105 per sq ft, Fosse Shopping Park, Leicester
Top Retail Warehouse Cluster - Westwood Road, Broadstairs
Top Investment Manager, Retail Parks - British Land
Top Investment Manager, Retail Warehouses - British Land
Top Managing Agent - Savills
Top Letting Agent - Wilkinson Williams

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Notes for Editors
Trevor Wood Associates was established in 1987 and is a leading, independent, provider of information on all retail and leisure schemes in the UK.

Trevor Wood Associates 'The Definitive Guide to Retail & Leisure Parks 2011' analyses 1,478 schemes, including; 100 Leisure Parks, 99 Leisure schemes, 850 Retail Parks, 65 Shopping Parks, 35 Retail and Leisure Parks and 298 Retail Warehousing developments.

Trevor Wood Associates has the most comprehensive retail warehousing database in the United Kingdom, with detailed information for every one of the 13,000 retail warehouse units currently trading or under construction as well as the development pipeline.

Trevor Wood Associates also publishes - *'Going Shopping 2011 - The Definitive Guide to Shopping Centres'*, the authoritative analysis of shopping centre and factory outlet developments within the UK incorporating the widely quoted hierarchy of UK Shopping Centres, covering over 900 schemes.