

Self-storage and roadside: conveniently growing potential

Emerging developer Danescroft is keen to find new development angles. **David Hatcher reports**

Business experts often say success is all about finding your niche. And for the management team at Danescroft, they want to make their niche roadside.

The developer has created a new division within the business called Danescroft Roadside & Commercial and recruited Joanne Close earlier this month to help with acquisitions.

The Palmer Capital Partners-backed company was part of a consortium called Azure Properties that bought 104 Texaco garages for around £70m in June 2005 but now it wants to look at individual sites as well as portfolios. The consortium was backed by all of Palmer Capital's venture capital companies and REEFF, the property fund management arm of Deutsche Bank.

Roadside focus

"We are focusing on roadside development," says David Civil, who is joint managing director alongside Dominic Fryer. "But we don't just want to look to fuel and forecourt, we want to look at more unusual roadside uses, too."

Civil says there is scope for Danescroft to use its

experience in the healthcare market as well, having worked on six schemes in the UK over the past two years that have provided more than 400 care beds.

It could develop in partnership with healthcare operators with which it has already embarked on ventures, such as Barchester Healthcare, Cannon Healthcare, BUPA Care Homes and Simner.

"Clearly there is consolidation in automotive at the moment, which in itself brings opportunities," says Civil. "Specifically, that can often also mean applying for change of use which can include trade counters or residential."

Having backing from Palmer Capital has meant it has access to both the £250m Palmer Capital Development Fund II and the £225m Palmer Capital Active Fund II. Although Civil says there are no particular spending targets for the rest of the year, the equity should allow Danescroft to move quickly when purchasing.

"The growth in convenience retail is what we are basing our strategy upon," says Civil. "It is a sector that has not been entirely ignored by other developers," he continues, "as most have some sort of roadside assets in their portfolio, but we want to make ourselves the most active roadside developer in the UK." ■



Road test (left to right): Civil and Fryer bought a portfolio of Texacos, including one at Sandy in Bedfordshire (above), but say they will now focus on unusual roadside uses