



## **CASE STUDY: Londoneast-uk Business and Technical Park, London, 2013-2018**

### **The Assignment**

When global pharmaceutical company Sanofi announced its manufacturing plant in Dagenham, east London, would close in 2013, the Sanofi Board agreed to sell the site in a strategic sale – in a regeneration initiative to attract new businesses and new jobs to a location which had been a major source of employment for 80 years.

The aim was to sell-off vacant land and state-of-the-art research & development and manufacturing buildings to individual companies, creating a business and science & technology environment to breathe new life into the site – more than replacing all the jobs being lost.



Sanofi appointed SOG to co-ordinate and manage this major programme. The aims were to ensure a positive legacy for the site; attract new business; generate a reasonable financial return for Sanofi as a result of the sale and, importantly, to guarantee the regeneration process did not interrupt the production of life-saving medicines still being manufactured at the location during the lead up to closure.

Sanofi turned to SOG after learning of the organisation's expertise following the success of the company's regeneration of a major site at The Heath in Runcorn, Cheshire, which was transformed by SOG into an award-winning Business and Technical Park that has generated several thousand jobs from more than 120 large and SME firms which operate from the Park.

From its unique business model at The Heath, SOG created a consultancy under the name of 'Fusion' to offer specialist regeneration advice, guidance and project management services to organisations considering closing or downsizing large sites. The Fusion process assesses future opportunities and whether new job-creating programmes can be found for such locations.

## The Solution

SOG's Fusion team coordinated the site sale in a strategic process coordinated in conjunction with commercial property experts, Savills.

Crucial to the regeneration master-plan was retention of specialist manufacturing, research and development buildings for use by other science-related companies. These unique buildings and their highly specialised infrastructure, covering some 17 acres, were destined to be demolished unless a new owner could be found.



SOG Group purchased these empty buildings along with some associated plots of land and in May, 2015, officially launched Londoneast-uk Business and Technical Park to operate as a sister site to The Heath.

SOG carried out a major refurbishment programme on these facilities and put a small, but dedicated, sales and marketing team in place to find new residents to fill the space. By the end of 2018 42 small and SME businesses had been attracted to Londoneast-uk bringing over 500 jobs – more than were working at the site in the lead up to the closure of the pharma plant. SOG sold Londoneast-uk to Be First, a trading company owned by the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, in 2019 which now runs the business park.



SOG also recommended an innovative scheme for part of the site being sold to form London's first new film studio to be built in over 25 years. The studio, which will sit at the heart of a cluster of support businesses, with the wide range of skills required to service the requirements of a major film operation, is expected to generate in excess of 3,000 jobs over the next few years.



Londoneast-uk now sits at the heart of a thriving location where, in addition to the new film studio, one of Europe's largest data centres is under construction. There's a number of other large projects – including a hotel and regional offices for the UK's largest Trade Union, Unite. A pub/restaurant has also been built at the entrance to the site and the most recent development revealed is the creation of a major satellite research facility for University College London.

## The Challenge

The Dagenham programme required meticulous planning and support from all stakeholders and the local community. Essentially, it required both public and private sectors working side by side with a shared vision to deliver a major regeneration project with no public funding subsidies.

Communications were key to ensuring that the programme could be implemented with the backing of all interested parties. Following a public consultation process, coordinated by SOG, the masterplan for the Dagenham site received planning permission without a single objection being raised – an achievement considered to be unprecedented for such a major project.

## The Verdict

The goal was to rejuvenate the location in a 10-year plan, which was actually achieved inside 5 years, with all the original aims of Sanofi delivered.

***Cllr Darren Rodwell, The Leader of London Borough of Barking & Dagenham:*** "In Dagenham SOG Group were an instrumental partner in attracting £2b of inward investment through masterminding the regeneration of a major former pharmaceutical site in the Borough that has created hundreds of new jobs.

"Londoneast-uk is a superb example of what can be created when the public and private sector share a vision and work together to maximise the opportunity. Stakeholders, including Government and business leaders, need to come here to see the remarkable achievements that have been attained in such a short space of time."



***George Freeman, former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Life Sciences:*** "This is a brilliant example – Sanofi working with SOG – pioneering a new way of rapidly converting a site of 20th century big pharma research into an innovator, a catalyst, an incubator for the small companies of tomorrow. Little companies that couldn't afford the world-class facilities on their own at this site will be able to access world-class facilities to do their research."

