

# **Former Marks & Spencer to undergo £8m transformation**

The former home of a Marks & Spencer store in the West Midlands is set to undergo a £8 million conversion project to create new town centre offices.

The high street retailer moved out of its base of 34 years in Leamington's Royal Priors Shopping Centre in November to a new site on Leamington Shopping Park since when the unit has been unoccupied.

Plans are now afoot to turn the unit into 30,000 sq ft of offices, including adding an extra floor and a roof terrace, which developers say could create 400 jobs in the Warwickshire town.

An application for the additions is currently being considered by Warwick District Council's planning team while consent was awarded last year for a change of use from retail to offices and to make alterations to the Satchwell Walk entrance.

The plans would be one of the first in the country to see shopping centre retail space converted into offices and discussions have commenced with two potential occupiers, according to the agency charged with leasing the space.

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Bill Wareing, owner of Wareing & Co, said: "It is fantastic that, despite the disruption covid-19 has caused, companies are still looking to back the town centre office as a viable

option.

“With changes to the work-from-home guidance recently announced by the Government, more workers are predicted to come back into the office and many companies simply want more attractive spaces for their staff to work in.

“This transformation of the former Marks & Spencer’s store is a great example of that and will bring new jobs in high-skilled occupations into the town centre which is brilliant news for Leamington’s high street businesses.

“The town centre is attractive for companies to base themselves in thanks to its excellent transport links, independent high street businesses, cafés, restaurants and its charming setting.

“Consumers’ changing habits and the challenges of the pandemic meant it was difficult to market the unit to a major retailer but, if high streets are to prosper, different thinking is needed.

“We look forward to helping Leamington’s economy recover post-pandemic.”

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