DOMINANT POSITION

Leader of the pack The office markets in Coventry, Walsall and Wolverhampton are growing but are still far behind that of Birmingham. Ian Halstead reports

Birmingham has dominated the West Midlands office market for so long that its pre-eminence has been taken for granted, but the predators to its throne are now gathering force.

After several difficult years, the Midland corridor market is on its way back up, with first-half 2006 take-up figures at 153,000 sq ft - ahead of the 2005 total.

And British Land's decision to add a further 690,000 sq ft of office space at Blythe Valley Business Park near Solihull has helped confirm the recovery. Meanwhile, the launch of UrbanSplash's Port Didsbury scheme in December will provide 380,000 sq ft of office space.

The region is also experiencing significant moves in the main urban areas outside of Birmingham, in Coventry, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

GVA Grimley's national head of business parks, Carl Potter, who chairs the British Council for Offices' Midlands chapter, believes Coventry's small office market is growing.

"Coventry has high demand from local companies looking for space, and they have been making inroads into the city centre," he says.

“The Employment & Skills Council in Coventry has also been active in supporting small businesses, which is helping to drive demand and investment in the area," he adds.

The market in Walsall is also on the up, with several major developments underway. The completion of the new Civic Centre is expected to boost the local market.

Wolverhampton has seen a surge in speculative development, with several new schemes planned in the coming months. The city is also home to several major businesses, including Tata Steel and Jaguar Land Rover.

Overall, the office market in the West Midlands is showing signs of recovery, with demand increasing and new developments helping to drive the market forward.