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# Imperial College's £200m 'rent-a-lab' complex opens in west London



By Jonathan Prynne Consumer Business Editor @JonPrynne | 26 October 2016



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A £200 million "rent-a-lab" complex for businesses seeking to convert "deep science" breakthroughs into commercial drugs and other products opens today in west London.

The 13-storey I-Hub, next to the A40 flyover, is the first building other than student accommodation to be completed at Imperial College's £3 billion White City campus. It has more than 50,000 sq ft of "wet-lab" spaces for hire by companies that want to collaborate with Imperial researchers.

The rest of the 187,000 sq ft complex will be used as "incubator" and "accelerator" space for businesses that do not need a laboratory.

About 40 per cent of the building will be occupied on opening, with interest from Europe, America and Asia. It is expected to be full within three years. A second part of the complex, a Molecular Science Research hub, is due to open in 2017.



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The initial tenants have not yet been named but areas of research they are said to be involved in include new inhaled medicines to treat life-threatening respiratory infections.

The building is being opened tonight by Imperial College vice president Professor David Gann and Hammersmith and [Fulham](#) council leader Stephen Cowan.

London has a chronic shortage of laboratory space despite five of the world's leading 25 universities and research institutes for life sciences and medicine being located in or within 50 miles of the capital.

Professor Gann said: "If we are going to have a crack at the most horrendous diseases then we need these spaces. Places like the Crick Institute at St Pancras are big engine rooms of bio-medical science tackling cancer and the other big diseases but we also need new companies that are going to take the ideas out into the market."

The Government contributed £35 million to the building, with £25 million coming from the College's own resources and the rest from private sector backers.

The campus straddles the A40 with seven buildings — including a 35-storey residential tower — either complete or under construction on the northern half and a planning application for the southern half expected to be submitted next year.

About 10,000 scientists, technicians and support staff will work at the 25-acre campus when it is complete in the mid-2020s.

The Imperial College campus is one element of the broader £7 billion White City regeneration zone.

This also includes the former BBC Television Centre being turned into apartments, a hotel, a private members' club and offices, a new John Lewis department store at the Westfield London shopping mall and 1,400 homes at Berkeley's White City Living scheme.

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## How universities can drive an inclusive recovery

*Innovation districts like the one around our White City Campus can drive collaboration and provide a place-based approach to economic recovery*



By Andrew Czyzewski

Many of us wonder when our societies and economies will return to a degree of normality. What will various sectors look like in a world where further coronavirus outbreaks are a very real threat? Will there be lasting changes to industry and business? What about healthcare, education and research? Even government itself?

These are open-ended questions to which we are still formulating answers. But one thing the crisis has shown us is that these different sectors can work together collaboratively to come up with innovative solutions to pressing problems to bring benefits across all segments of society.



Professor Chris Toumazou with his DnaNudge COVID-19 test

For example, personal genomics company DnaNudge, based at White City and led by Imperial's Professor Chris Toumazou, worked with frontline clinicians to develop a rapid, point-of-care COVID-19 test.

After successful patient trials in April it was approved by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The Department of Health and Social Care has ordered [5.8 million of these high-speed DnaNudge COVID-19 test kits](#) to be used in NHS hospitals from September.

During the crisis we've also seen [pharmaceutical companies sharing knowledge and data](#) with each other and with public researchers on a scale not seen before. Among firms leading this new wave of collaboration is Novartis – whose UK headquarters is at White City, amongst a growing life sciences cluster.

"The industry is truly coming together on this. We're galvanizing our

collective innovation power and global footprint to end this pandemic as quickly as possible,” says Novartis CEO Vas Narasimhan.

“**Coronavirus has shown us the agility, creativity and innovative thinking of our world-leading institutions, scientists and researchers to tackle this disease and save people’s lives. We want to harness this expertise to rejuvenate science and research across the UK, building a future that is greener, safer and healthier.**

— Science Minister Amanda Solloway MP

The UK government’s [R&D Roadmap](#), published in July 2020, calls on industry, research organisations and local authorities to drive collaboration to “boost productivity, improve public services, create high-quality jobs and deliver economic and societal benefits to communities across the UK”.



## Carrying the momentum of collaboration

How do we ensure that the sort of collaborative innovation we’ve seen during the crisis continues to happen going forward – and crucially that all parts of our society take a stake in the process and derive benefit from the outcomes?

Part of the answer may lie in creating innovation districts that are embedded within the communities which they aim to serve – engaging members of that community in meaningful ways as well as drawing in businesses, local government, startups and SMEs; and university research groups.



For several years Imperial has served as an anchor institute in an exciting new innovation district at White City, encompassing the [White City Opportunity Area](#) and Imperial's own [White City Campus](#). There are also strong links with nearby Hammersmith Hospital (run by Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust) and Imperial's Hammersmith Campus.

## A place-based approach

What does being an anchor institution mean in practice when creating an innovation district? A deep, strategic relationship with local government is certainly a key foundation stone, and something [Imperial has been developing with Hammersmith and Fulham over a number of years](#).

In pursuing a local industrial strategy – called [Economic Growth for Everyone](#) – Hammersmith and Fulham Council has worked closely with Imperial, forming a Partnership for Growth and Innovation. One outcome of the partnership has been the '[Upstream](#)' initiative which delivers targeted interventions and events that connect academia, innovators, entrepreneurs and corporates, allowing them to collaborate. Ultimately, the vision is to transform the borough into a global beacon of innovation and inclusive growth.



Following the pandemic, Upstream pioneered a switch to online networking, with the '[Deep Tech Network](#)' encouraging the growth of a digital innovation community amongst White City-based startups, industry and academia. The first virtual event took place in June and attracted people from further afield in Europe and Asia, demonstrating a key benefit of

virtual networking.

Fundamentally, this approach is different to the numerous initiatives like Enterprise Zones, Business Improvement Districts and various forms of clusters and research parks, which have had mixed success in the UK.

As a leading research-intensive university, Imperial has extensive experience of assembling various health, industry, and government partners on collaborative projects; which it is now applying on a broader canvas at White City, taking on stewardship role to spearhead place-based innovation and convene people and networks.

“It is no accident that the global hubs of innovation are located in proximity to deep scientific capabilities and the universities that underpin them. Universities provide a never-ending flow of high-quality, independent ideas, activated by their talent and facilities

— Professor David Gann, Professor of Innovation and Technology Management



## Towards inclusive innovation

Historically, independent research, experimentation and innovation have been the preserve of academic staff with access to grant funding, or spinout companies with significant backing.

A number of years ago, Imperial made the decision to actively open up the innovation space – noting that this highly creative process greatly benefits from a diversity of thinking and approach.

Initially this focused on one of the most diverse groups within Imperial, the student community. An outdated view of universities is that academics teach and carry out research, while students are taught. But that is increasingly being challenged.

One initiative that has proved to be transformative is the [Imperial College Advanced Hackspace \(ICAHS\)](#). Now based at White City, ICAHS aims to create a diverse community of creative people and makers who are empowered to fulfil the potential of their ideas and even change society through innovation. This is done through the provision of dedicated workshop facilities, networking events, 'hackathons' and



maker challenge competitions, technique tutorials and extracurricular taught modules.

The [Invention Rooms](#) at White City contains the largest node of ICAHS, which for the first time gave all members of the hacking community access to purpose-built facilities, including a cutting-edge workshop with 3D printing and digital manufacturing, woodwork and metalwork, and a bio-lab for synthetic biology and molecular fabrication.



During the height of the pandemic, volunteers from ICAHS partnered with Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust to rapidly produce PPE for healthcare workers. [An entire floor of Imperial's I-HUB in White City was converted to assemble more than 50,000 disposable visors](#), which are supporting Trust staff on the front lines of the coronavirus crisis. The project was supported by Imperial's donor-backed [COVID-19 Response Fund](#).

This space also provided greater scope and opportunities for Imperial's external collaborators in industry and the third sector to get involved in events and innovation activities – one example being a [Hackathon which ran at White City with BP and Amazon](#).

Crucially, the Invention Rooms also contains a [Reach Out Makerspace](#), where local school children in White City can get involved in making and innovating, and where local community members can attend courses and programmes to develop their science and tech skills.

The fact that the ICAHS is co-located with the Reach Out Makerspace gives Imperial students a unique perspective on how innovation can have a transformative impact on local communities. Indeed, Invention Rooms Associate Ahreum Jung acts as a bridge between the Makerspace and Hackspace, in order to identify opportunities for synergies.

**“We’re very keen to involve the community surrounding our new campus. The community cohesion that has been developed through engagement programmes, such as those at the [Invention Rooms](#), has been truly magical and inspirational to watch. Imperial is adapting to the changes in our society and are creating districts to support that change.**

— Professor Maggie Dallman, Vice President (International), Associate Provost (Academic Partnerships)

One community initiative that has proved enormously successful is the [Maker Challenge Programme](#). This allows 14 to 18 year-old students from schools local to White City to develop their own prototypes and gadgets at the Invention Rooms. Students take part in weekly sessions where they gain a range of skills from hands-on use of 3D printers and laser cutters, to product development, team-building, and presentation and communication skills to help turn their innovative ideas into reality. These skills are then put to the test as each project group assembles a prototype ahead of the final showcase event.

It's not just young people either. [Agents of Change](#) is a pioneering place-based community leadership network for women who have an active interest in driving social change in the north of Hammersmith and



Fulham. The aim of the network is to support, empower and connect female community leaders of all ages, sectors and backgrounds to drive positive social change.

"Agents of Change provides opportunities for personal growth, business development, and gaining new insights. It is the ideal programme to go on to do better for yourself and better for others." - Carol Fraser, vegan nutritionist and entrepreneur.



In many ways Imperial has been on a journey together with the local community in recent years, engaging in the different ways described above. Having these foundations and numerous links already in place proved immensely valuable as an unprecedented crisis hit in the form of the coronavirus pandemic.

"In White City what we've tried to do is make sure that local people feel informed. We can help inform them, we can help interpret the sometimes complicated messages and information that's put out there on coronavirus, and we can continue to support them as we do normally in the scientific discovery space", Professor Maggie Dallman says.



Naomi and Hannah, working on their science backpacks at home

For example, Imperial's teams have partnered with the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham's Family Assist team to identify 241 children who would most benefit from receiving their own '[Science Backpack](#)' during the lockdown. Four different backpacks were designed to engage children aged from 6 to 16 years old and contain science-inspired

activities that can be easily done from home, with all equipment provided.

The Science Backpacks were made possible through financial support from Novartis (based at White City) and the Mohn Westlake Foundation. Importantly, recipients of the Science Backpacks have also been invited to The Invention Rooms for dedicated 'making sessions' once the UK coronavirus restrictions make it safe and feasible.



In recent years Imperial's ['What the Tech!?'](#) weekly drop-in sessions have proved particularly successful in providing free tech support and advice for elderly residents. Again, this has proved critical at a time when online activities have added importance.

“**Helping the elderly to stay connected through technology during COVID-19 has been a heart-warming experience and has opened my eyes to the many things we take for granted in today's society.**

— Neema Nkontchou, Undergraduate in the Department of Bioengineering

Feedback from participants has shown that the sessions are useful to stay connected with friends and family and accessing services online, but also show that residents have appreciated the opportunity to speak to someone and share their worries around coronavirus.

Josie, a local White City resident, was having difficulties making online payments. Thanks to Neema, she has been able to manage her finances online: “In the beginning I was not very good, I was struggling to pay my bill online and Neema helped me to sort this, that's how it started. We talk now as friends and she is really lovely.”

Indeed, since lockdown, Imperial staff and students have continued to provide vital support to the local community, whether through delivering surplus food to local food banks and community projects, or supporting Queen's Park Rangers Community Trust to digitise their exercise classes for older residents to keep active at home.



**Responding to emerging challenges**



The SME community has been particularly affected during the pandemic; but it will also prove instrumental in the recovery. These companies tend to be agile, innovative and able to pivot in response to crises and emerging challenges.

Indeed since 2010, there has been a 30% growth in the number of businesses in West London, with close to 113,000 operating in 2018 – significantly higher than the growth in businesses in England overall (22%). Of these businesses, more than nine in ten (91.7%) were micro businesses, with less than 10 people.

In Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea, which the White City Innovation District straddles, the period between 2010 and 2018 saw an increase in the share of businesses taken by those in the information and communication, professional, scientific and technical sectors.

One example is [MediSieve](#), based at the [White City Incubator](#) in the I-HUB. The company has pioneered a revolutionary new method for treating blood-borne diseases by removing pathogens directly from a patient's bloodstream using nano-scale magnets. MediSieve's technology circulates a patient's blood outside their body, similar to a dialysis blood loop, in order to capture and remove specific disease-causing agents. Recently, they have been [exploring ways of using their technology in the treatment of coronavirus](#).

Companies like MediSieve will provide the bedrock for driving economic growth and jobs locally and nationally.

A recent [independent report by WPI Economics](#) on White City and Imperial highlighted how important it is that innovation districts accommodate organisations at different stages of their growth and development. This ensures that businesses born in White City, stay in White City, and draw others in, in a virtuous cycle.

A business might begin life as an idea in the Advanced Hackspace at The Invention Rooms, with the making of a prototype. Once a business plan is developed, the start-up might move to the Incubator and, with more progress, attract capital to be able to grow the idea. Once it becomes more successful, it will need more space and more staff, meaning that a move to Scale Space or the I-HUB might be appropriate.

For example in 2015, three Imperial PhD students came up with an idea for an affordable test for surface contamination with a simple colour changing spray. They were able to develop and iterate their prototypes at the Advanced Hackspace, which was pivotal in helping to secure investment and take their product to market. Their company [Fresh Check](#) is currently in bespoke lab space at the White City Incubator in the I-HUB. Originally targeted at the food industry, the FreshCheck spray is now receiving interest from a broader range of industries who are [looking to ensure general hygiene during the pandemic](#).

**“Location is key for a small company like us. By their very nature startups can be agile and think on their feet but they also need the right environment and space to be able do this. Since we've been at the Incubator we've managed to get the support, flexibility and networking opportunities when and**



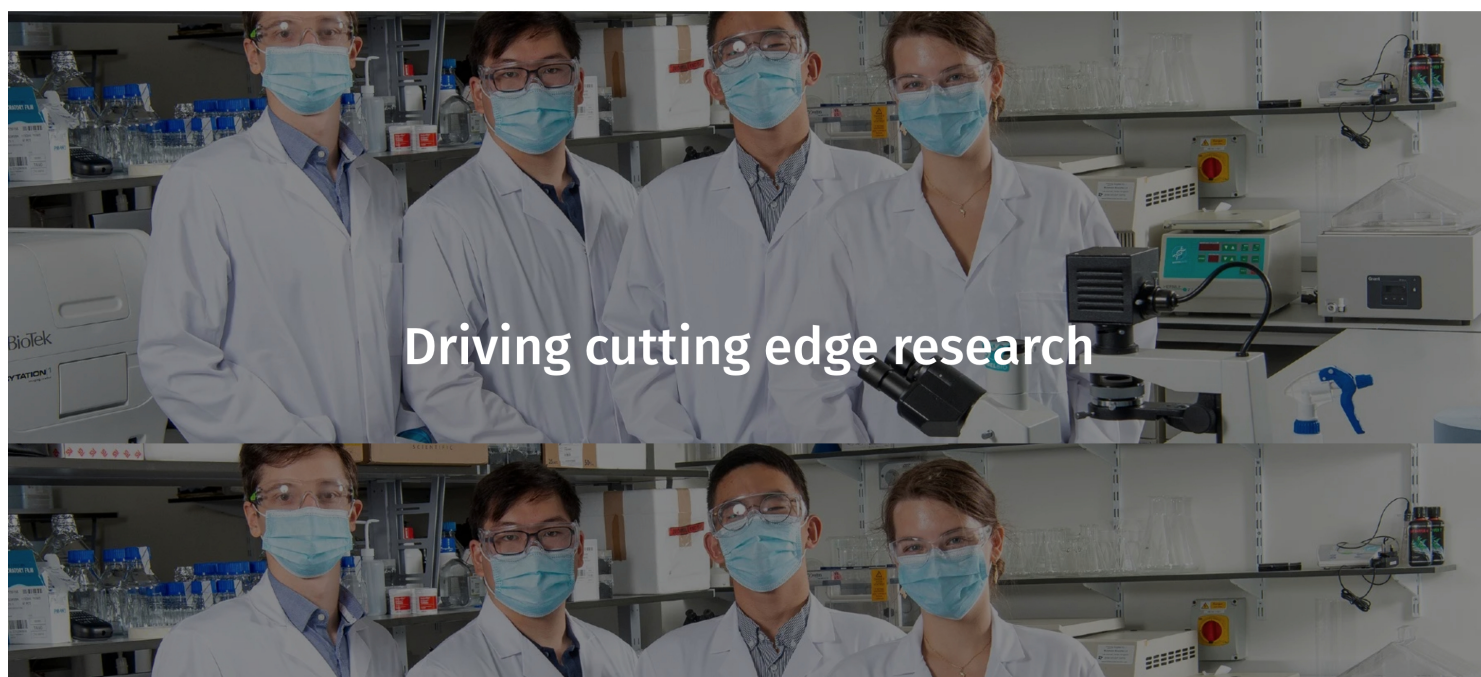
## where we need it which has been very helpful

— Alex Bond, Co-founder and CEO of FreshCheck

As well as supporting businesses to grow at each stage of their development, this ecosystem stimulates a steady flow of businesses through the various stages, meaning that as one business grows, they open up space for the next entrepreneur looking to develop a new idea.

The innovation district at White City will grow in an important new direction in 2020, following the opening of [Scale Space](#) – a joint venture between Imperial and digital venture builder Blenheim Chalcot - offering tailor-made space for high-growth businesses. Crucially it is the UK's first community created specifically to help innovative businesses accelerate growth.

Early next year, Imperial College Business School will open a purpose-built facility in Scale Space dedicated to teaching and research, providing students with the opportunity to forge connections with the wider White City ecosystem.



Underpinning the broader innovation ecosystem described above, Imperial continues to pursue the fundamental research which it is perhaps best known for. At the White City Campus this is characterised by multidisciplinary collaboration – which is embedded in the very fabric of the buildings and lab spaces. The work that takes place here will provide the backbone of the technologies and industries of the next 50 years – whether that's quantum computing and cryptography, synthetic biology, artificial intelligence and deep learning or regenerative medicine.

In 2018 the [Molecular Sciences Research Hub](#) (MSRH) opened at White City, providing a new home for Imperial's Department of Chemistry. Designed to encourage collaborative scientific working, it brings together nearly 800 scientists, clinicians, engineers and business partners under one roof to work together in a way that they have never been able to before.

Based within the MSRH, the [Centre for Rapid Online Analysis of Reactions](#) (ROAR) is the first national centre for the study of reactions, focusing on data-centric chemistry. Finding the right way to synthesise new molecules with desired properties, such

as potential medical drugs or novel materials, can take a long time, sometimes years. With the aim of making the synthesis of any desired molecule 'as easy as dialling a number,' ROAR will tackle this by automating chemical process and creating a wealth of data about the synthesis steps involved in creating a new molecule.



Right next to the MSRH, another innovative research and innovation facility opened in 2020. The [Sir Michael Uren Hub](#) brings together engineers, clinicians and scientists to develop new and affordable medical technologies. They will combine the latest medical research and engineering to improve the treatment and diagnosis of diverse medical conditions, from finding ways to cure dementia to creating bionic limbs.

The Sir Michael Uren Hub will host the UK Dementia Research Institute (UK DRI) Care Research & Technology Centre. Here scientists, engineers and doctors will investigate technologies that can be integrated into a person's home – from artificial intelligence and robotics to sleep monitoring. The ultimate goal is to enable people with dementia to live safely and independently for longer in their own homes.

## Ensuring healthy communities locally and globally

Researchers from Imperial's School of Public Health have been at the forefront of the global response to the coronavirus pandemic. The advanced [epidemiological modelling](#) they have provided has helped to guide government policy in the UK, US and lower and middle income countries around the world. It has helped to save many thousands of lives. As part of Imperial's response to coronavirus, [teams have also been exploring people's views](#), experiences and behavioural responses to the



outbreak in the UK and elsewhere. They have launched an online community involvement initiative to gather insight from members of the public, aiming to establish a network for ongoing community engagement.

In 2023, the [School of Public Health will move to White City](#). The new multidisciplinary hub will provide collaborative, flexible, and interactive spaces for the College's world-leading academics, talented students, and outstanding community engagement with the local White City community. With a focus on intervention and prevention, the School will harness the power of data and technology to understand trends in population health and bring health innovations to those who need it most.

From this base at White City, Imperial's teams of researchers will have an even stronger footing to respond to pressing public health challenges, including new emergent infectious diseases, air pollution and antimicrobial resistance.



An entire floor of Imperial's I-HUB in White City was converted to assemble disposable visors for NHS workers.



## The future of collaborative innovation



Ghena Hammour, a Research Assistant based in Imperial's Department for Electrical and Electronic Engineering, working at home in White City on better care for Dementia patients.

Clearly the new reality of life and work with coronavirus presents challenges in terms of place-based innovation and discovery. But these activities must resume to secure our future and we have to make better use of the precious opportunities when we can meet, convene and collaborate to the greatest effect and be more strategic about our interactions.

The rapid adaptation to new ways of working as a consequence of the pandemic has also opened an opportunity on which we can now capitalise: the ability to work across physical and virtual environments in a seamless way.

The White City Innovation District continues to grow and evolve as all stakeholders pool their collective experiences and learnings from working together in order to forge a path forward.

But what is very clear is that innovation districts must adapt and embrace the challenges posed by coronavirus and continue to choreograph collaboration and knowledge exchange in a more pragmatic way.

Giving universities and their local partners a greater mandate to drive inclusive growth at a local level could create an extended network that will make our societies and economies more resilient to future challenges.

Indeed, the research and innovation taking place at White City strengthens the ability of Imperial to work with partners across the UK to create growth and jobs in all regions and nations.

A [new interactive map](#) highlights how our work with academia, industry and community partners drives economic growth, uplifts skills and improves health outcomes across the UK. It also demonstrates how our discoveries and inventions are solving key challenges and advancing technologies that underpin our vital public services and industries.

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# Novartis headquarters opens in White City, London

In a formal ceremony, the new headquarters for Novartis has been opened in White City, London, in close proximity to Imperial College London's research campu x



Matt Hancock, with Vas Narasimhan, Mari Scheiffele (General Manager UK & Ireland, Novartis Oncology) and Haseeb Ahmad (credit: Novartis UK).

Novartis announced yesterday that their new headquarters has formally opened in White City Palace, London. The facility will bring the company close to Imperial College London's new research and innovation campus.

The new headquarters were opened by Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, together with Vas Narasimhan, Chief Executive Officer at Novartis, Marie-France Tschudin, President of Novartis Pharmaceuticals and Haseeb Ahmad, Managing Director of Novartis Pharmaceuticals in UK, Ireland and Nordics, and Country President, Novartis UK.

"The UK life sciences sector is at a crossroads, with many opportunities available for cutting-edge innovation and partnerships. White City is fast becoming one of the UK's most exciting new hubs for life sciences and puts us in the perfect position to continue working with our partners to find new ways to innovate and collaborate to build a healthier tomorrow," commented Ahmad.

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To coincide with the opening of the new headquarters, Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research (NIBR) will host a scientific symposium for around 200 UK scientists at the Imperial College London campus location in White City. The symposium will give UK scientists the opportunity to learn more about the NIBR's scientific priorities and how they can work with the organisation.

Professor Alice Gast, President of Imperial College London, said: "Novartis is a leader in the world of medicines and we welcome them to White City. Their move is another sign that White City is

By [Victoria Rees](#) (European Pharmaceutical Review)

12 February 2020

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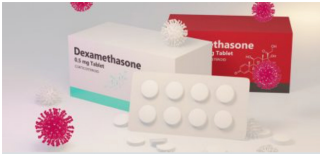
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medicine and we welcome them to White City. What more is another sign that White City is becoming a vibrant and exciting life sciences cluster. There are unprecedented opportunities for academia, businesses and entrepreneurs in White City as our campus provides strength and leadership in molecular sciences, bioengineering and public health and close proximity to our medical research and translation work at Hammersmith Hospital. Imperial and Novartis' proximity will enhance our collaboration as we work together to tackle healthcare challenges of our time."

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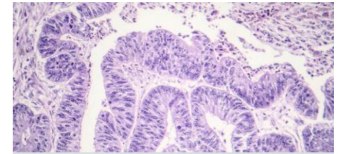
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By [Jonathan Pryn](#) Consumer Business Editor @JonPryn | 06 January 2020



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**B**eauty giant L'Oreal is to open a huge new London headquarters for its 1,000 staff close to the former BBC TV Centre in [White City](#).

The French-owned cosmetic company, which has Dame Helen Mirren as its UK ambassador, announced today it is to take out a 15-year lease on six floors of a new building at the White City Place development.

The ground floor will be occupied by the L'Oreal Academy, which trains more than 10,000 hairdressers a year. The company, known for its "because you're worth it" slogan, has been based in Hammersmith for 20 years and is due to move to the offices in autumn 2023.

The arrival of such a high-profile tenant will be seen as another boost for the £8 billion regeneration of the once run-down area along Wood Lane, north of Shepherd's Bush.

Other brands that have moved to White City Place — the site of the former BBC Media Village where Watchdog, Rogue Traders and The Thick Of It were filmed — include fashion designers Ralph & Russo, online luxury fashion retailer Yoox Net-a-Porter and ITV Studios.

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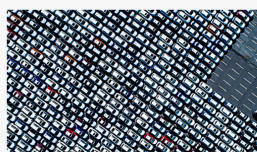
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The new building, designed by architects Allies and Morrison, has a total floor space of over 240,000 square feet and will include an outdoor terrace for up to 250 people.

Nathalie Bleach, operations director of L'Oreal UK, said the company had looked at a number of sites but White City Place had been selected because of its transport links, proximity to the new Imperial College campus and Westfield shopping centre, and the potential for recruiting highly skilled staff.

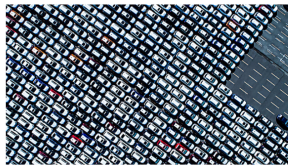
David Camp, chief executive of White City Place developers Stanhope, said L'Oreal would be a great addition to the fantastic mix of creative and fashion companies already based at White City Place and help cement White City's position as a leading global business district.

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