

Case Study - Abbott Laboratories Dartford Expansion

The expansion of Abbott Laboratories was supported by Dartford Borough Council in order to secure employment and investment in the area.

The company was founded in 1888. Nowadays it develops, manufactures and markets healthcare products and services for prevention and diagnosis, treatment and care. Its headquarters are in Chicago and it has 60 manufacturing sites around the world, employing over 70,000 people.

Abbot was experiencing problems expanding its facilities in Europe so a partnership was formed in April 2003 to demonstrate commitment and desire for them to expand in Dartford. The partnership consisted of Dartford Borough Council, Locate in Kent, Kent County Council, SEEDA and DTI Bioscience Unit.

Abbott identified a suitable site next to its existing plant north of Dartford town centre. The site was once a gas works and there was significant cross contamination. Although Abbott was aware of this contamination, the extent and the costs of remediation were significantly underestimated. This meant costs for the project spiralled and alternative sites entered the frame.

The partnership helped Abbott resolve these issues and the project moved forward. Without the partnership the investment and employment opportunities would have been lost to Dartford.

Dartford Borough Council used its connections with Thames Gateway and the ODPM to facilitate the project. It also ensured a swift decision on Planning and approved an Environmental Strategy that required less emphasis on direct land cleaning but provided for monitoring so that later action could be taken if necessary.

Abbott is now developing the Dartford site. It received £100,000 in direct financial support against a project investment of £39million that will create 125 new jobs - 80% of them graduate level candidates.