



Press information

Ground broken for third phase of construction at the Leitz Park Wetzlar

Headed by Dr Andreas Kaufmann, the company group from Salzburg, Austria, invests in four more buildings that are scheduled for completion in 2018.

Wetzlar, 7 June 2016. The next step on the way from a vision to a reality: today, the breaking of the ground for the third phase of the Leitz Park complex is the next big step forward in the development of Wetzlar as a location for innovation and manufacturing and as the foremost centre of the optical industry in Germany.

Today, around 250 invited guests, among them Dr. Christoph Ullrich, President of the Giessen administrative district, Manfred Wagner, Mayor of the City of Wetzlar and Wolfgang Schuster, District Administrator of the Lahn-Dill region, joined Dr. Andreas Kaufmann, majority shareholder and chairman of the advisory board of Leica Camera AG, and Oliver Kaltner, chairman of the executive board of Leica Camera AG, to celebrate the expansion of the Schanzenfeld site at the south-east gate of the City of Wetzlar.

Over the next two years, the company group from Salzburg, Austria, headed by Dr Andreas Kaufmann, will be investing in the construction of four further buildings that will expand the gross floor area at the complex by an additional 26,000 square metres. On completion of this third phase of construction in 2018, the Leitz Park complex will have been expanded by an attractive World of Leica Experience – featuring a museum, the Leica archives, a Leica Galerie and an outlet store – a 4-star hotel, a building for CW Sonderoptik GmbH and an office building.

‘We are very pleased to see how the Leitz Park is today already accepted and appreciated

by the citizens of the region and the employees of the companies on our site', says Dr. Andreas Kaufmann. 'Breaking the ground for the start of the third phase now marks the next milestone in our ambitious project: the expansion of the Leitz Park to create the foremost centre of the optical industry in Germany. I am certain that this next phase of development will make the site even more attractive and further increase its international charisma'.

For investor Dr. Andreas Kaufmann, the beginning of this new phase of construction is the next logical step in the ambitious development project that began in 2002 with the acquisition of a holding in Uwe Weller Feinwerktechnik GmbH and the subsequent purchase of the Schanzenfeld, a former military site. With the relocation of VIAOPTIC GmbH to the Leitz Park site and the construction of its centrepiece, the new company headquarters of Leica Camera AG, the vision of establishing a new centre for the optical industry in Wetzlar, its traditional home, was soon transformed into concrete realities. In 2014, 100 years after Oskar Barnack's invention of the legendary Ur-Leica in Wetzlar, the employees of the world-renowned camera manufacturer moved into the ultra-modern production and administrative complex in the Leitz Park. After 25 years in the nearby town of Solms, the company had finally returned to its birthplace, the city from which the Leica brand had set out to conquer the world.

Dr. Christoph Ullrich, President of the Giessen administrative district, said with great pleasure, 'With this act of breaking the ground for the third phase of construction of the Leitz Park today, you are investing not only in your company, but also, above all, in this location in Central Hesse'. Central Hesse has a long-established tradition as an interface for the optical industry. Today, this business segment with enormous potentials still plays a particularly significant role in shaping the region.

Manfred Wagner, Mayor of the City of Wetzlar, added: 'Our historic cathedral city with close connections to Goethe and a long heritage as the home of the optical industry is currently in a state of extremely dynamic growth and development. What has been created here on the site of the former Spilburg Barracks is an extremely attractive technology and business park with more than 2,000 jobs. The first two phases of the Leitz Park project have contributed much to a story of success that is visible far beyond the boundaries of our Central Hesse region. I am pleased to see the ground being broken today for the third

phase of this project and the beginning of a new chapter in this story of success. My particular thanks go to the Kaufmann family for their engagement and their commitment to Wetzlar as a centre of industry.'

The plans for the overall project, developed by Frankfurt architects Gruber + Kleine-Kraneburg, impressively document the architectural concept of the Leitz Park they designed and realised for Leica Camera AG and how it is embedded in the community. The plans foresee the construction of an architecturally outstanding, high-tech centre in the heart of the City of Wetzlar that will serve as an open and publicly accessible venue for the citizens of the region and visitors from around the world. Further to this, they depict an ultra-modern working environment and a world of experiences in which development and production, science and culture, gastronomy and living meet in perfect harmony.

The Leitz Park will be further enriched by the construction of an attractive hotel operated by the arcona HOTELS & RESORTS Group. With 129 rooms and suites in modern design, the hotel will offer its guests contemporary comfort, a restaurant for 120 diners and a spacious banqueting area with up to 500 square metres of space. Its leitmotif will be dedicated to the numerous facets of photography and will reflect and interpret them throughout the hotel.

'The relocation of Leica Camera AG in 2014 was one of the most important milestones in the realisation of the project. The new World of Leica Experience, its museum and the archives will offer visitors from around the globe a more intense experience of the Leica brand and an opportunity to immerse themselves completely in the fascinating history and culture of Leica photography. The modern hotel and the expansion of the gastronomic landscape will not only be of particular benefit to local enterprises, but also to the City of Wetzlar and tourism in the region', explains Wolfgang Kisselbach, managing director of Leitz Park GmbH and, in this function, responsible for the entire site and its buildings.

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