

Webbs goes all out on food hall

BY **ANDREW DON**

Webbs Garden Centre in Wychbold, Droitwich, has hired a top design agency in a £1.7m redevelopment of its food hall and restaurant.

It briefed Cada Design, whose prestigious client list includes Harrods, Fenwick and Fortnum & Mason, to transform the Worcestershire food hall into "a food destination".

The work has been phased and Dudley Clifford, head of food at Webbs, told *FFD* the butchery counter, and a Himalayan salt-aged beef room, would not open until July.

The redevelopment also includes its own bake-off operation and a deli counter, which features a range of French cheeses but is also "very strong" on British cheeses like Fowlers cheddar, Croome Cuisine's honey & fig cheese made from Webbs' own honey, Brie de Meaux, Cornish Brie and Barkham Blue.

The counter also offers locally crafted pies, hand-made scotch eggs, charcuterie, pesto and fresh pasta.



Webbs revamp of its Wychbold outlet has been designed by Cada, which has also worked for Fenwick and Fortnums

The new format boasts an in-store gelateria selling 12 homemade ice creams, which currently includes Worcestershire rhubarb & custard crumble, using local rhubarb.

The new wine, beer and spirits department has "a wall of wine" with an enomatic machine for sampling wine at the correct temperature.

The redesign also includes a new grab-and-go coffee and food offer

for those in a hurry, a "chocolate library" and a hot chocolate fountain.

The new open-plan development sees the refurbished food hall flow through to the re-imagined restaurant – 18,000 sq ft in total – that now uses ingredients sold in the food hall.

Cada used metro shelving, timber and a colour palette of black and white to "let the food do

the talking". It removed the ceiling above the food hall to create a sense of scale and developed a standalone identity based on the Food at Webbs brand.

Clifford said the rationale behind the expenditure was creating a "destination".

"Retailing is all about customer experience now," he said. "It's like being in the leisure business. We are an attraction in our own right. People come for a day

out with us and we are best in class now."

The food hall and restaurant is just one tranche of a two-branch business that sells everything from snakes [not to eat] to mini greenhouses.

Webbs other store in West Hagley, Sourbridge has a 100-cover restaurant and 269 sq ft of food retail.

Elements of Food at Webbs will be implemented into the outlet, Clifford said. www.webbsdirect.co.uk

Holwood Farm shop adds dining mezzanine in £250k upgrade

BY **ANDREW DON**

Holwood Farm Shop in Keston, Kent, is in the throes of a £250,000 capital expenditure project to expand the business.

A new mezzanine floor featuring the enlarged coffee shop has opened, doubling the number of covers to 30, and installation of a kitchen has enabled it to upgrade from merely sandwiches, paninis and soups to hot food.

The mezzanine overlooks the farm shop, which is also getting a new 230 sq ft butchery that owners Gary Mercer and Sarah Clout hope will be

A preparation room will be added at the end of the barn in which the shop is sited.

Mercer said the shop would also expand its greengrocery and install more fridges to support that – moving from the covered porch area outside the main shop.



"We're not looking to pay back all of that capital expenditure through the shop," said Mercer, adding that it would be recouped through the increase in the asset value.

Mercer said the motivation behind the expansion of the farm shop, which is now in its fifth trading year, was to accelerate the growth of the business.

"When you look at the really successful farm shops they have a balance of a good deli counter and a luxury restaurant," he said. "That's the way to increase basket spend."

The Co-op to bolster food provenance

The Co-op Group is increasingly following where specialist food retailers lead with its retrenchment on provenance issues, as disclosed in its full-year results last month.

The society, which sold £7.1bn of food last year, up 1% on the previous year, said food provenance really mattered to its customers.

It was committed to selling only British meat by May 2017. It said this would make it the only major food retailer to stock 100% own-brand fresh British beef, chicken, pork, lamb, bacon and turkey.

It has also committed

in its chilled ready meals, pies and sandwiches, except those featuring a continental meat such as chorizo.

Its food business was using digital technology to improve efficiency in a variety of ways and it was looking into the provenance of goods in its supply chains, seeing if tracking this digitally could give it a competitive edge.

Pre-tax profit fell from £23m to a £74m loss which reflected a £74m increase in finance changes and a writedown that related to its 30% stake in The Co-op Bank. Group revenues rose