

The Toy Store targets Hamleys in UK launch

BY BEN COOPER

Gulf-based retailer The Toy Store plans to open in the UK and to take on Hamleys with an Oxford Street flagship.

The Toy Store, which is owned by Gulf Greetings, could make its debut in London before Christmas ahead of an ambitious roll-out.

It has a target of 15 stores in the UK and franchises in a number of key international markets.

Gulf Greetings has appointed David Justice, partner at London-based property agency MMX Retail, to find suitable London locations.

Gulf Greetings group commercial director Mark Handley said that Gulf Greetings is already in talks with Bluewater owner Lend Lease and Westfield London, as well as a third landlord with an Oxford Street property.

He said opening stores in “all three locations” may be an option.

Handley told *Retail Week*: “Oxford Street is the key location for us but it could take 12 to 18



The Toy Store plans to open 15 stores in the UK including a London flagship

months. Hamleys has had it too easy for too long – it's had no competition. I think we'll take market share very quickly.

“Our model is very much about entertainment. It's going back to the days when Hamleys was a magical experience – it's just not there any more.”

Once The Toy Store has established a London base it will seek to

open more stores in the UK in “key locations” including the Trafford Centre and Meadowhall.

Gulf Greetings is also looking at international expansion via franchise partners. It has appointed an agent to handle its Asia operations, and is in talks with a number of potential franchise partners in Russia and the CIS, Turkey and India.