bm Commercial • PROPERTY

Congestion must be tackled to make Worthing the place to be

by Stuart Clark MRICS

of Marshall Clark LLP

As a practice, Marshall Clark works closely with a range of commercial property clients ranging from individuals to large property companies.

All have been affected by the change in economic conditions.

Watching and reading economic indicators, we hope the worst of the recession is behind us.

But looking at the commercial property market locally there are some factors which won't change in the foreseeable future – one being the need for Worthing as a major commercial centre to see road network improvements.

When we work with people and companies looking to relocate, almost every time they focus in on the relatively-constant congestion and difficult communication problems in and around the A24/A27 at Worthing.

As local surveyors, we would endorse the undoubted need for a proper bypass, but if this proves impossible, we need a major re-think of the through-flows of traffic and a system by which congestion can be moderated.

Occupational costs are another major factor which people take into account when considering properties. We manage a varied portfolio of buildings with advice starting with the clients' occasional required input on rent reviews, lease renewals and finding new tenants up to a comprehensive input on for example running a multi-occupied office building.

We were appointed managing agents for the prestigious and historically-significant Worthing Dome complex in 2009. Acting for the landlords, we have worked closely with them in continuing a long-term strategy for the building's maintenance coupled with the day-to-day running costs.

By way of another example, acting for an investment company we were tasked with searching and finding a suitable investment property for their ownership.

Having identified a major office building in Horsham the Marshall Clark team have carried out the following:

- Negotiation and acquisition of the property.
- Management services following acquisition including rent collection.
- Discussions with tenants on lease renewal.
- Following the tenant's decision to vacate (the property was surplus to requirements) advising on the building's condition.
- Negotiating with the tenant to see their compliance with the need to repair in accordance with the lease.
- Overseeing the comprehensive refurbishment of the office building to bring it up to date.
- Marketing the offices.
- Reviewing the occupational costs of the new building.

Critical analysis of all costs were undertaken so as to arrive at a level of service charge (to be paid by the tenants) which is sensible and competitive.

We have found service charges which are too high (sometimes through a lack of cost control) are, in the current economic climate, a major disincentive for people/companies who wish to occupy the accommodation.

Running the building for the owner includes rent collection, maintenance, payment of running costs to the building via a service charge and regular liaison with the tenants.

In our experience, gone are the days when landlords could leave their tenants alone in the hope they would look after their buildings.

We are finding it is now a case of teamwork in obtaining the right balance in supporting the tenant/occupier and working with them for the benefit of everybody. A tenant which has a successful business is much more likely to be able to pay the occupational costs on the client's building.

Understanding the building, the tenant's requirements and any difficulties they have are an important part of the teamwork which should be established.

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