



CGI: Eclipse Business Park



Café culture



Fremlin Walk, award winning shopping centre

Point of growth

In 2006 Maidstone achieved Growth Point status, ensuring a £320m investment programme in the area will take place over the next 20 years. The programme will create 11,000 new homes and up to 10,000 new jobs by 2026. High quality design and good planning will ensure Maidstone sees distinctive and sustainable developments result from the massive investment. Maidstone Borough Council and its key partners have therefore set out economic development and growth strategies and are master planning new communities.

Strengthening the town centre

A major part of the Council's strategy is creating a higher quality retail and leisure offer to attract and retain expenditure. The pace of progress in meeting this objective has been brisk. Fremlin Walk, which opened in 2005, is ranked in the top ten retail centres in the region and top 50 in the UK. With more than 1.5m sq ft of floor space, it equates to Bluewater in size. In addition, a multi-million pound initiative with the Royal Institute of

British Architects means Maidstone's High Street is set for a major makeover. Ensuring the town centre offers the most beneficial trading environment will mean Maidstone is well placed to attract new private sector investment coming out of the recession.

Space to grow

Kent's county capital has more to offer than an enhanced town centre; Maidstone has the largest economy in Kent. There are 7,000 businesses of all sizes, all facing up to the economic challenges and many creating new opportunities. The town's prestige business park, Eclipse Park, is already home to a wide range of businesses including Towergate Partnership (see case study), asb Law, DHA Planning and Software of Excellence.

When complete the park will total over 16 acres of Grade A commercial development and deliver more than 400,000 sq ft of floor space alongside a quality hotel. Nick Yandle, chief executive of developer Gallagher Properties, said: "The excellent road and transport links from Eclipse Park provide fast access to the rest of Kent, to London and Europe." Much lauded

for its sustainability, the buildings feature 'green' roofs, sustainable urban drainage systems and rainwater harvesting.

Space to enjoy

Maidstone has several key advantages over many of its competitor locations. Proximity to London and the continent, excellent transport links, lower housing costs, ready supply of skilled labour and availability of quality commercial properties all make for a highly attractive proposition. Throw in Growth Point Status, £320m and the promise of a great place to live and relax, and Maidstone is ideally placed to weather the economic storm and emerge as an even better investment location.



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