

# Case Study

## Centre for business excellence

**asb law** is one of the largest regional law firms in the UK. Employing more than 250 people across its offices in the south east, it has a 100-year connection with Kent. Their new operation at Eclipse Park represents a significant step forward in driving forward their ambitious development plans.

Madeleine Thomson, asb law's senior partner in Maidstone explained: "We wanted a better quality office space and environment. At asb law we are very much part of Maidstone's knowledge-based economy and enjoy working with other strong professional services in this area at a time when Maidstone is growing its reputation for business excellence."

► Maidstone Borough Council continued...

Nick Threlfall, managing director of chartered surveyors Watson Day, has seen particular growth in commercial development: "The trend is for a healthy demand in readily available office space in purpose-built office parks. From corporate headquarters to smaller premises, Maidstone has a commercial offering to suit all businesses". Maidstone offers the best in Kent.

## Capital for investment

At Eclipse Park in Maidstone, Gallagher Properties is developing the site in three stages to deliver more than 400,000 sq ft of office space. Towergate, Europe's largest insurance intermediary, will occupy the first building during its second phase of development. Max Carruthers, operations director of Towergate, which chose Eclipse Park for its new headquarters because of its strategic location, said: "The excellent road and transport links from the site provide fast access to the rest of Kent and London."

By road, the nearby M20 provides direct access to the M25 – Maidstone is 37 miles from the City of London (under one hour by train), 35 miles from the Channel Tunnel and 30 minutes drive from Ashford International and Ebbsfleet International stations. And with an award-winning park and ride scheme, it offers quick and easy access to the town centre.

## Making the connection

Accessible to a 790,000 strong workforce, Maidstone's businesses have a highly-skilled workforce to draw from. Towergate wanted to be part of a knowledge-driven environment where there is opportunity for business-to-business interaction. Max Carruthers

commented: "The new HQ will give us room to expand. Plus, Maidstone is a commercial catchment area for readily available, quality skilled employees. This will be vital when we recruit 250 new members of staff."

## Driving growth forward

Maidstone is driving commercial growth in Kent. It has proved a magnet for media companies - a growing sector attracted to the stylish blend of hi-tech culture and heritage. Maidstone also offers investors a choice of development. The £75 million Springfield Business Park will provide offices of exceptional quality and be one of a limited number of locations in Kent that can deliver a business park environment in a town centre setting. Due to open in 2010, the business park is positioned in a natural environment benefiting from open green space and countryside views. This type of offering is set to transform the commercial landscape of Maidstone.

### Maidstone key facts

- £320 million investment programme
- 500,000 sq ft planned office space
- 60% lower than London (office rents)
- £100 million retail development
- 1,000,000 sq ft retail space
- 10,000 new homes by 2026
- 6,500 new jobs by 2026

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