

ForFarmers

Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Planning Class B1 - Office

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Richard Cooper



Artisan (UK)
Developments

Creating Space for Business



ForFarmers, the international agricultural feed business and European market leader, had outgrown its 3 East Anglian operating sites.

They had identified the ideal location for the development of a new flagship Regional Office, bringing 120 members of its workforce together under one roof.

The extension to the Rougham Industrial Estate afforded ForFarmers the perfect location to build their office, sitting alongside an existing feed mill, and in the heart of East Anglia.

Richard Cooper, a former Board Member of ForFarmers, was retained to steer the new office development through.

Whilst Richard had significant experience of managing property decisions and transactions on behalf of the Group, ForFarmers (UK) had never built an office before. "We'd built mills, but we'd never built an office block – this was quite a radical departure from what we've had in the past. When you are dealing with an office building there are so many different and varied aspects you can have...and that was a complete revelation to us."

The first cost plans nearly stalled the project. Recognising the need to take cost out of these draft plans, whilst maintaining the integrity of the final

build, Richard asked his commercial agent, Savill's, for advice on who could help him crystallise the plans into a viable project. Savill's put forward Artisan as exactly the sort of development partner that Richard needed to deliver a first class development for a viable budget.

Richard met with **Michael Eyres** (Artisan's Managing Director) and to use his words, "We got on pretty well... we felt we could work with these guys... the chemistry was right."

With the addition of Artisan's construction arm Artisan (UK) Projects Ltd, the delivery team was in place.

At Artisan, Michael immediately began to put forward alternative solutions to deliver the ForFarmers office as proposed, but within a more achievable budget. Richard and Michael worked closely together, evaluating the pros and cons of each choice.



Naturally, every Artisan building is bespoke, and ForFarmers had a clear vision for the design of their building. The final specification is the result of careful consultation between Artisan and ForFarmers to strike the right balance between cost and design.

Richard Cooper recognised this as one of Artisan's key strengths on this project: "We had a fairly clear idea of what we wanted. When Artisan came in, they pared some of the costs back... there's no question that Artisan saved us a lot of money, for instance, by changing the way the glazing was done. That was a good process...a very useful sanity check."

Artisan used a formal Joint Contracts Tribunal (JCT) contract mechanism to contract with its construction arm so that ForFarmers could have complete peace of mind about the way in which that process would work.

Artisan's combined role as developer, project manager and contractor to deliver the building was another key strength, from ForFarmers' point of view.

"Once the Development Agreement was concluded, it was all switched over to their operations...fantastic, with a fabulous grasp of the detail...and they project manage... That's a real plus point."

At the end of the design and development process, Artisan agreed a Project Cost Plan containing a fixed maximum, so ForFarmers' total cost risk to Artisan was capped in advance of building commencement.

“Artisan was excellent at working through various [funding structure] iterations with us....and that's a strength of dealing with someone who understands the market.

Importantly, the construction budget was tendered on an open book basis, with agreed fixed margins for overhead and profit.

ForFarmers had the assurance that there would be no hidden surprises. Artisan

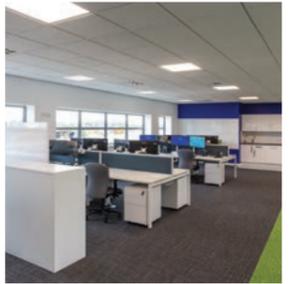
made sure they had highlighted any risk areas. ForFarmers could then agree where it was appropriate to include an agreed contingency within the fixed price, or where they'd prefer to set aside a contingency allowance outside of the agreement.

The first major issue to be dealt with was ensuring that the site would have major public highway access, and Artisan worked closely with the Local Authority and ForFarmers to help solve this crucial viability issue.

A second issue arose around the optimum scheme funding structure. ForFarmers needed to consider the viability of the scheme from a funding perspective. Various alternatives were in the mix, including the option for ForFarmers to pre-sell the investment, and Artisan's expertise and responsiveness to this issue proved invaluable. "Artisan was excellent at working through various [funding structure] iterations with us....and that's a strength of dealing with someone who understands the market...they work through the project with you and give you a view on the return."

Artisan provided lots of advice on value engineering all aspects of the base building to deliver the final building at the right place. This started from the ground up where Artisan recommended a suspended reinforced concrete ground slab.

As part of the design choice process, they invited ForFarmers to visit other Artisan-developed buildings so that ForFarmers could see with their own eyes that alternative design solutions could lower costs without affecting the overall impact of design.



ForFarmers in particular were attracted by the option to use ribbon windows instead of full height glazing.

They also opted for alternative composite roof and wall cladding materials to bring character to the design at lower cost.

As Richard Cooper says, "A lot of the things we came across as we talked it through with them we hadn't really given any serious thought to previously."

Artisan gives all its clients advice on how to enhance the environmental efficiency of their buildings, and as part of this process, ForFarmers opted for solar panelling on the roof, which also ensured that environmental building regulations were satisfied.

A fundamental requirement of any building project is ensuring that timetables are adhered to, and ForFarmers discovered that they were in particularly safe hands in this regard:

"We have monthly site meetings for project management. That's a huge and complex function that we haven't got the expertise to do. Artisan are meticulous....right down to the Site Manager." Artisan is meticulous at the pre-planning stage in order to ensure every member of the delivery sub-team has sufficient lead in time to make sure all deadlines are met.

As we have seen earlier, Artisan's open book process allowed ForFarmers to see and check every aspect of the project cost before they signed their agreement. This allowed ForFarmers to make informed decisions about where to allocate spend. As Richard Cooper sums up, along with Artisan's responsive and collaborative working style, this approach delivered great value for money, "I could have managed the whole process myself. But ultimately, from a cost, time and risk point of view, for me Artisan is the best option."

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To sum up the Artisan experience, for ForFarmers:

- 1 **Easy to deal with people** who inspire confidence from the outset.
- 2 **Know the planning system** inside out and help turn plans into viable projects.
- 3 **Work with you** to deliver a project at the right cost for you by highlighting cost efficiencies that save money but maintain quality.
- 4 **Financial nous** – investigate and explain different funding structures.
- 5 **Open and clear:** open book on costs and margins, clear contract terms, no hidden surprises.
- 6 **Seamless handover** from planning to construction.
- 7 **Meticulous project management:** build delivery is exactly as planned
- 8 **Experts at delivering buildings,** who save you the need to learn to be a buildings project or site manager
- 9 **Value for money** – a winning combination of expertise, attitude, responsiveness, and financial savvy.
- 10 **A high quality outcome:** A building to be proud of.



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