

# The Real eState with Peter Bill

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“Trumpery” means having little worth. What worth will Donald Trump prove to the UK as president? In property terms, it will be worth watching the actions rather than words of UK agents and funds with strong ties to America.



Trumpery: (Late Middle English): “the practice or beliefs that are superficially or visually appealing, but have little real value or worth.” The New Oxford Dictionary of English labelled the present practices of Donald Trump, long before Grandpa Friedrich moved from Germany to America in 1885, changed the family name to Trump from Drumpf, then made a modest fortune from bawdy houses.

Guessing the impact on the UK economy of a New York developer-turned-president is above my columnist grade. But here is a clue for those seeking knowledge of how Trumpery will impact UK property: watch carefully what real estate concerns with US ties do - or don't do - in 2017, not what they say. CBRE, JLL and C&W are hardly likely to complain in public; neither will US property funds like Blackstone, Carlyle and Apollo. But you don't need to bug boardrooms to guess all must fear the corporate hesitation being engendered by an unpredictable president-elect.

At 7.30am on November 9th I was with the boss of a major UK property company. Both of us were more interested in our phone screens than chatting about the state of UK market. Trump was about to pass the finishing line of 270 electoral college votes. After a few minutes, that moment arrived. A moment you know you will never forget; not in the death of Princess Diana league, but a moment seared in the memory. “What business hates is uncertainty,” my interviewee said, after recovering from the news. “What we have now is uncertainly. People will stop taking decisions.” Imagine, if you will, the boardroom uncertainties – not just among the aforementioned. The property world will continue to turn. But that motion is already slowing, post Brexit. Having Trump at the White House wheel will cause corporate vehicles to dab the brakes that little bit harder.

Days before the US election Trump forecast his win would be “Brexit plus, plus, plus.” On November 14th the Centre for Business and Economic Research said British businesses had abandoned investment plans worth £65 billion since June 23rd. Gulp. “Uncertainty about the UK's future in the single market” is to blame, says the CBER. Is there a bright side? Yes. The UK real estate has recovered well since the Brexit vote. It is entirely possible that America's political misfortune will boost Britain's economic fortunes. It is entirely possible the agents and funds mentioned above will direct more capital to Britain's and less to a home market facing potential turmoil. But, to repeat, watch what firms do, not what they say.

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