



TAKING THE LEAP... *Maybe.*

Stay vs Go Guide

2025 EDITION



Introduction

Hybrid working is set to continue the evolution of our working patterns but physical office space is expected to remain as a core part of business strategies going forward. According to research conducted by KPMG, 62% of UK CEOs expect their companies to make a full return to the office by 2027.

As more businesses establish new guidance and expectations about working in the office, there will continue to be growth, the expansion and contraction of space as well as shifts in ways of working and changing requirements for hybrid teams. All of this change will increase pressure on workspace and will force businesses to make decisions on their office space. At some stage every organisation will face the decision to invest in refurbishing their existing office or move to a new one.

It is likely that a business will deal with this scenario at least once in their business journey. A whole manner of factors can influence a decision on whether staying or going is best for a business, therefore it is important to understand the context, and any potential consequences, behind each option.

This guide has been developed to help businesses decide whether to refurbish an existing office space or relocate and fit out a new one is crucial to business success. By looking into the impact of costs, space utilisation, people and culture and other key factors related to office moves and refurbishments.



So Should you Stay or Go?

The 'Stay vs Go' debate links to a decision that Workplace and Real Estate professionals have to make in relation to their office space.

'Stay' relates to office refurbishment and staying in the office space you currently occupy.

An office refurbishment involves reimagining your existing space and making the relevant changes to your working environment without having to move. Refurbishment is more than simply making small cosmetic updates to an office.

While the interior design of your space can be responsible for enhancing experience and staff wellbeing, a reconfiguration of your space or even a full reorganisation of how your business runs operationally is all about enhancing performance and reimagining your environment with a goal in mind.

'Go' refers to office relocation where a company would find a new office to move into.

An office relocation involves physically moving to a new premises and designing a customised workplace for your business. This is an opportunity to create a tailored environment to align the business with long-term expansion goals, talent acquisition and new ways of working.

Moving office requires CapEx but it can also help set the long-term trajectory of a business and help provide the foundation for future growth.

There are benefits to both office refurbishment and office relocation and every business should weigh up all their options before making their final decision. If you are looking for guidance and advice on where to start with Stay or Go, you can speak directly to one of our team now on...

Common Stay vs Go Scenarios

With Stay vs Go being one of the most common challenges for businesses to navigate when making decisions on commercial real estate, it is important to understand some of the events that can begin the process. Here are some of the typical scenarios that create a Stay vs Go debate.



Lease event
(A lease expiry, break clause or rent review)



Underutilisation of low performing space



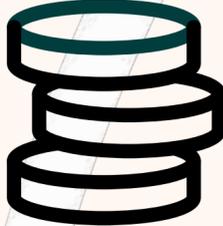
Growing or shrinking of office space



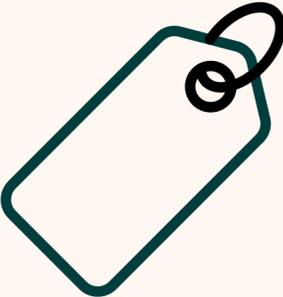
Implementation of
New ways of working
(i.e. Hybrid Working)



Strategic location change
(i.e. proximity to clients)



Cost
(i.e. too expensive or better incentives elsewhere)



Brand or culture updates
(i.e. merging multiple brands under one roof)

Signposting your direction

Now you're aware of some of the potential scenarios that will create a 'Stay vs Go' debate, it is important to get to terms with the drivers, or the events that are motivating you to make a decision. In some scenarios the drivers will be financial which is not always the type of messaging you want to portray across the business but wherever possible it is a good idea to signpost your direction.

Why is this so important?

Engagement with your people is crucial to the success of any office refurbishment or relocation and bringing your staff along on the journey can be the difference between success and failure. Managing this step of the process is key and provided it is considered properly, you are more likely to retain staff engagement and buy-in to the project.

This is part of the change management process and is all about positioning the move or refurbishment with your people so they understand if/how it will impact them. Based on the common scenarios highlighted, find a way of building a narrative that keeps people connected to what you are doing and signpost the direction the business is moving in.

In the early stages of the project, giving visibility is important but don't manufacture a story to the point that it loses its value.



Case Studies

A Standout STRATEGY

When footwear retailer Pavers reached a crossroads with their existing office, the question was clear: stay and refurbish, or move and start fresh? Their headquarters no longer supported the way the business worked. Space was tight, collaboration areas were limited, and the building's infrastructure couldn't meet the needs of a growing, hybrid workforce.

After reviewing both options, relocation emerged as the right strategic move. Refurbishing would have delivered short-term improvements, but it couldn't solve the underlying issues – limited flexibility, outdated services and a layout that restricted team connectivity.

Location
Type of Project
Size
Client Sector
Timescale
Value

York
Design & Build
20,000 sq ft
Retail
14 weeks
£1,800,000

By moving to a new site in York, Pavers gained the opportunity to design a workspace that truly reflected their culture and ambitions. Partnering with Rhino Interiors Group, they created a purpose-built 20,000 sq ft office that blends open collaboration zones, focused work areas and social spaces designed to bring people together.

EST. 1971

Pavers

Feel Great Footwear.



Does Your Existing Office Space Still Work?

There might be a temptation to move to a new office and use it as an opportunity to press ‘reset’ and solve all the problems of the previous office. By relocating and starting fresh with a blank canvas space you can move past some of the issues in your previous office, but is it always better to move?

Here are some examples to show the considerations relating to some of the key drivers involved in the Stay or Go debate.

	Reasons to Stay	Reasons to Go
 Office Space	Existing space has the option to be reconfigured to meet needs	Office simply too small or too large for current needs
Location	The current location remains strategic and accessible for staff and clients.	Need to be closer to clients, talent, transport hubs, or sector clusters.
Financials	Good lease terms available with landlord / refurbishment offers value over relocating.	Lease expiry, rent increase, or better financial terms available elsewhere.
Workplace Experience	Office interior needs updating but building offers great amenities	Current building doesn't offer good choice of amenities or offer wow factor



Does Your Existing Office Space Still Work?

When you are considering your options and looking at whether it's better to stay or go, it is important to understand what problems or restrictions you are coming up against. Challenging your ideas about your existing office is an important step to understanding whether your office is fit for purpose or not. There will always be an option to move offices but if you're already in a great location or you've got great terms with your landlord, don't throw all that away just to start again. In some cases, you may not be able to find a building/location that suits your needs better than you already have!

At Rhino, one of our main services is our People and Place survey which helps to capture a snapshot of an organisation and how it operates. Importantly this process captures data-driven insights about workplace performance.

Taking the time to truly understand how your building is supporting your people and your business will enable you to make better, less emotional decisions about your office space. Interrogating what the pain points are and how those issues can be resolved may offer some innovative solutions that are more cost effective than moving.

[I was thinking it would be nice to include a mini case study here where you helped a client refurb an office rather than move? I'm not sure which is best for this but I've always thought it appears more genuine for a design firm to talk about the pros of refurbishing rather than just pushing for people to move offices.]



What is the true cost of Stay or Go?

One of the most important, if not the most important, factors associated with an office project is cost. The first cost organisations must look into the cost of the lease. In some circumstances, you may be able to renew your lease in your current space at a better rate than taking on a new one.

It is also important to see what options you have beyond the base rent. Landlords are able to offer contributions towards fit-outs in their buildings which can be a great incentive to relocate. To ensure you get these negotiations right, and to go in your favour, partner with a reliable commercial agent. They will be able to assist you in getting the best deal on your existing or new office space. Beyond that, you may also be able to negotiate rent-free periods which will again help you save some costs when it comes to moving.

When deciding whether to stay or move, the financials behind a refurbishment or a relocation are crucial but there is often a 'hidden' cost that can influence a decision. These are some of the costs that are important to look out for when weighing up choices:

- Dilapidation costs
- Legal and agent fees
- Fit-out costs
- Relocation fees
- Furniture
- Branding costs
- IT & AV upgrades
- Paying rent on temporary space
- Productivity/output loss



These costs are just some of the more common elements of a move or refurbishment that it is beneficial to be aware of. Being able to make decisions relies on having the right information so make sure to ask questions to your commercial agent or fit-out partner that will give you a better idea of what your budget needs to cover. It is good practice to run a full cost-benefit analysis before spending any budget. If you need support with creating a cost-benefit analysis ahead of your move, speak to one of our experts.

The People Factor: What you MUST consider

When it comes to your workspace, the decision isn't just about leases, budgets, or square foot. It's about people. In fact, the impact of a move or refurbishment can affect staff engagement and wellbeing if it's not managed correctly. The People Factor of an office project should be treated in the same way as other parts of the project as the new environment should be about improving their productivity and happiness at work. The most successful office refurbishments and relocations place employee perspective right at the centre of the process.

What you should consider:



Commute times

A new location might look perfect on paper, but if it adds 40 minutes to half your team's day, you will likely experience pushback and disapproval. Connections to public transport links, local amenities and things like end of trip facilities like showers and bike storage play a huge role in retention and satisfaction.



Quality of environment

With the increased focus on workplace wellbeing, access to natural light, air quality, data connectivity and acoustics are now playing a key role in commercial office space. More modern buildings now have accreditations to demonstrate their performance levels in these areas and these are things that really matter to staff.



Talent attraction

It's a tried and tested method; great environments help to attract top talent. Getting the balance of the right location and a well-considered workspace can become a huge advantage when it comes to attracting new talent but also demonstrating to existing staff that you're investing in the workplace.

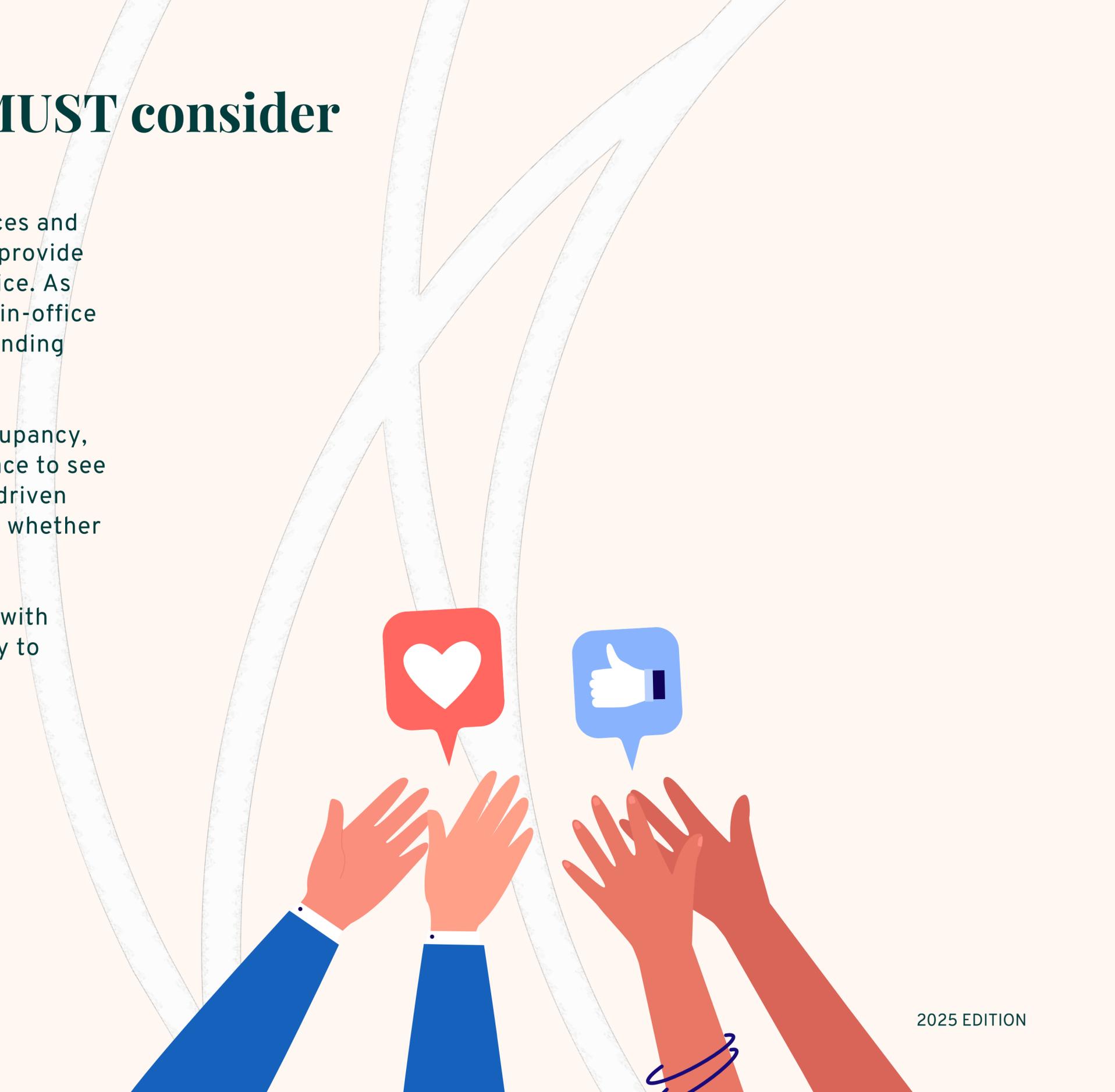


The People Factor: What you **MUST** consider

Understanding what staff want can come from a variety of sources and while in-person workshops can be fruitful, they may not always provide the solutions to how to support collaboration or focus in the office. As part of our People & Place study, we measure data and observe in-office behaviour to create more reliable, data-driven ways of understanding what would benefit your people in a new working environment.

For example, you can track desk booking and meeting room occupancy, review office attendance and also watch how people use the space to see what works and what doesn't work. This process will offer data-driven insights and solutions to improving your workspace and tell you whether you need to move or stay in your existing office.

Whether you stay or go, keeping communication channels open with your staff is crucial. Ask for feedback on certain features and try to involve people without handing them the full decision.



You want to move, **but where?**

Relocating and moving to a new office always brings that excitement of a clean slate and a chance to leave old behaviours behind but wanting to move and having a building to move to is not always possible.

The commercial office market is in a difficult period at the moment where there is limited stock of prime Grade A office space. Securing quality office space has become so competitive now that many businesses are opting to take pre-let space in buildings that aren't complete. In layman's terms, companies are having to plan many years in advance of potential office moves if they want to move into the best buildings.

With the current state of the commercial office market being so highly competitive, office refurbishment is proving to be a great solution for businesses, particularly those that already occupy quality buildings with good amenities.



You want to move, **but where?**

To help make your decision on whether you really need to move, or whether you just want to move, here are five questions to ask yourself:

- Is there a better building/space available now?
- Does it significantly improve your business?
- Does it work for your people?
- Think commute, working patterns and amenities.
- Does it work for your clients?
- Is it in the right area and does it make the right impression?
- Does the budget align with your ambitions?
- Long term strategy vs short term fix.
- Is the timing right?
- Lease terms or market conditions may impact this.

Once you've answered these questions, it should give you a better idea of whether relocating office provides you with a better opportunity at that moment.

In our experience, moving only makes sense if you've found a space that's going to give you a better layout, improved infrastructure, real growth potential or another set of benefits. If the gains aren't tangible and strategic, the smarter investment might be in the space you already have.



Other considerations

Before making any decisions, you need to know what your best options are as well as what you can and can't do from a legal standpoint. Here's some other considerations to factor into your search when deciding on Stay vs Go:

Get a commercial agent

A commercial agent is a valuable asset to your business as they will know the landscape and the current market trends. They can give you a clear picture of what's realistic as well as what the Supply, demand, rental rates, and emerging locations are which can all shape your leverage when negotiating a renewal or scouting new premises.

If you need an agent but don't know where to start, your design partner will be able to recommend one to you.

Review your lease obligations

A lease is a legally binding contract and knowing what you can and can't do while under these terms is vital. There are clauses which outline things like early termination penalties, renewal conditions and potentially more hidden clauses that can have a knock-on effect on your decision. It is crucial to get clarity before you make any changes or take any actions.

Regulations and compliance

In the same way a new home must meet certain standards, any new space must meet health and safety standards, accessibility requirements, and wellbeing guidelines. While these regulations can seem cumbersome, they are there to protect you, your business and your people. Ensuring your space is compliant, as well as following any other legal requirements, will prevent costly fines in the future.

While these details may seem overwhelming in addition to the already challenging process of deciding to stay or go, we can help you navigate all of these considerations. Partnering with us on an office refurbishment or relocation project isn't just about the design of your office, it spans the whole process to make sure your project is a success.

Creating EXCEPTIONAL SPACES

If you are deciding whether to Stay or Go and want to discuss your plans or get advice on what the best steps to follow are, get in touch with one of our workplace experts today. We have worked across a number of sectors throughout the UK and assisted businesses with both office refurbishment and relocation projects.



Our focus is on creating strong connections and building partnerships that will last for many years to come.