

December 27, 2023

DLF Emporio Limited: Rating upgraded to [ICRA]AA+; outlook revised to Stable from Positive

Summary of rating action

Instrument*	Previous Rated Amount (Rs. crore)	Current Rated Amount (Rs. crore)	Rating Action
Long-term – Fund-based/ Non-fund based – Others	1.00	1.00	[ICRA]AA+; upgraded from [ICRA]AA with change in outlook to Stable from Positive
Total	1.00	1.00	

*Instrument details are provided in Annexure-I

Rationale

ICRA has taken a consolidated view of DLF Cyber City Developers Limited (DCCDL) and its subsidiaries collectively referred to as DCCDL or the consolidated entity or the Group, given the close operational, financial and managerial linkages between the Group entities, shared brand name, along with a common treasury team.

The rating upgrade factors in the Group's sustained growth in scale and improvement in the leverage position. DCCDL's rentals are estimated to grow by 11-13% in FY2024, driven primarily by rentals from new assets (for full year), which were operational only for a few months during the previous year, higher leased area by around 4% and steady ramp-up in the occupancy levels to 92% as of September 2023 (90% as of December 2022). Further, ICRA expects the NOI to increase by 4-5% in FY2025, aided by commencement of rentals from the new assets of around 3.3 msf scheduled to be operational during the year. The gross debt reduced to Rs. 18,962 crore as of November 2023 from Rs. 20,896 crore as of March 2023. ICRA expects the dependence on incremental debt for ongoing capex to be limited, and the capex to be funded through the operational surplus. The gross debt is expected to be around Rs. 19,200 – Rs. 19,600 crore over the medium term. Consequently, the leverage as measured by gross debt to NOI is estimated to improve to around 4.0 times as of March 2025 (Net debt/NOI to remain at around 4.1 times as on March 2024) from 5.6 times as of March 2023.

The Group operates one of the largest commercial real estate portfolios in the country spread across office (35.6 million square feet (msf), 90% of total leasable area) and retail segments (4.1 msf, 10% of total leasable area) in attractive locations as of September 2023. The under-construction portfolio stood at 5.3 msf with healthy pre-leasing at 89% as of September 2023 compared to 47% as of December 2022, with an additional development potential of around 25.0 msf, as of September 2023. The Group's portfolio is spread across Gurugram, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Noida and Chandigarh with a reputed and diversified tenant mix comprising leading multi-national and Indian corporates, wherein the top 10 tenants contribute to ~25% of the revenues as of September 2023. The retail assets are situated in prominent micromarkets of the respective cities, thereby enhancing their marketability.

The ratings continue to derive comfort from DCCDL's strong parentage, with 66.67% stake held by DLF Limited (DLF) and 33.33% by the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC). DLF is one of the largest real estate developers in India. It has an established track record of successfully developing and leasing commercial as well as retail assets across multiple geographies, while GIC is the sovereign wealth fund of Singapore having a track record of over four decades and strong investment portfolio. The Group enjoys strong financial flexibility on the back of its parentage, large portfolio, established relationships with reputed tenants, and lenders.

The ratings, however, remain constrained by the Group's exposure to geographical concentration risks, with 59% of the leased area as of September 2023 concentrated in Gurugram with high average rentals for non-SEZ assets, resulting in exposure to migration risks of tenants to more competitive micromarkets. The ratings factor in the vulnerability of the portfolio to the lease expiry and market risks. The risk is partially mitigated by reputed tenants and lower-than-market rentals for the SEZ assets.

The ratings note the exposure to refinancing risk as a part of the consolidated debt is unamortising in nature. However, the risk is partially mitigated by the comfortable leverage and the Group's strong financial flexibility. The Group has a demonstrated track record of timely refinancing at competitive interest rates in the past. Further, the debt coverage metrics are exposed to interest rate risk. The cyclical nature of the sector and vulnerability to external developments constrain the ratings. The ratings consider the market risks for the under-development projects. Nevertheless, the healthy pre-leasing and the Group's long and established track record in successfully developing and leasing out office as well as retail space mitigate the risk. Any large dividends or capex outflows adversely affecting the Group's liquidity will be the key monitorable.

The Stable Outlook reflects ICRA's opinion that the Group will benefit from the large portfolio of completed assets with reputed tenant profile and healthy occupancy levels, comfortable leverage position and strong financial flexibility.

Key rating drivers and their description

Credit strengths

Sustained growth in scale and resultant improvement in leverage – The Group operates one of the largest commercial real estate portfolios in the country spread across office (35.6 msf, 90% of total leasable area) and retail segments (4.1 msf, 10% of total leasable area) in attractive locations as of September 2023. The under-construction portfolio stood at 5.3 msf with healthy pre-leasing at 89% as of September 2023 compared to 47% as of December 2022, with an additional development potential of around 25.0 msf, as of September 2023. DCCDL's rentals are estimated to increase by 11-13% in FY2024, driven primarily by rentals from new assets (for full year), which were operational only for a few months in the previous year, higher leased area by around 4% and steady ramp-up in the occupancy levels to 92% as of September 2023 (90% as of December 2022). ICRA expects the NOI to grow by 4-5% in FY2025, aided by commencement of rentals from the new assets of around 3.3 msf scheduled to be operational during the year. The gross debt reduced to Rs. 18,962 crore as of November 2023 from Rs. 20,896 crore as of March 2023. ICRA expects the dependence on incremental debt for the ongoing capex to be limited, and the capex to be funded through the operational surplus. The gross debt is expected to be around Rs. 19,200 – Rs. 19,600 crore over the medium term. Consequently, the leverage as measured by gross debt to NOI is estimated to improve to around 4.0 times as of March 2025 (Net debt/NOI to remain at around 4.1 times as on March 2024) from 5.6 times as of March 2023.

Diversified lessee profile, supported by favourable location and high quality development – The Group's portfolio is spread across major cities such as Gurugram, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Noida and Chandigarh with a reputed and diversified tenant mix comprising leading multi-national and Indian corporates, wherein the top 10 tenants contribute to ~25% of the revenues as of September 2023. The retail assets are situated in prominent micromarkets of the respective cities, thereby enhancing their marketability.

Strong promoters with established track record – ICRA derives comfort from DCCDL's strong parentage, with 66.67% stake held by DLF Limited (DLF) and 33.33% by the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC). DLF is one of the largest real estate developers in India. It has an established track record of successfully developing and leasing commercial as well as retail assets across multiple geographies, while GIC is the sovereign wealth fund of Singapore having a track record of over four decades and a strong investment portfolio. The Group enjoys strong financial flexibility on the back of its parentage, large portfolio, established relationships with reputed tenants, and lenders.

Credit challenges

Exposure to refinancing risk – Part of the consolidated debt is unamortising in nature. However, the risk is partially mitigated by the comfortable leverage and the Group's strong financial flexibility. The Group has a demonstrated track record of timely refinancing at competitive interest rates in the past. Further, any large dividends or capex outflows adversely affecting the Group's liquidity will be the key monitorable.

Exposure to geographical concentration and market risks associated with ongoing development – The Group's leasing portfolio of 39.7 msf is spread across seven cities. However, around 59% of the leased area as of September 2023 is concentrated in Gurugram with high average rentals for the non-SEZ assets, resulting in exposure to migration risks of tenants to more competitive micromarkets. Moreover, the Group had under-development commercial office projects of 5.3 msf as of September 2023, exposing it to execution and residual market risks. Nevertheless, the healthy pre-leasing at 89% as of September 2023 and the Group's long and established track record in successfully developing and leasing out office as well as retail space mitigate the risk.

Vulnerability of commercial real estate sector to cyclicity – The Group's portfolio is exposed to risks arising from the cyclicity in the sector and vulnerability to exogenous shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which could impact the cash flows. Further, the debt coverage metrics are exposed to the interest rate risk.

Liquidity position: Strong

The Group's liquidity position is strong, backed by cash and equivalents of around Rs. 750 crore (includes encumbered balances in the form of DSRA of around Rs. 326 crore) as on November 30, 2023. Additionally, the likely healthy cash flows from a diversified portfolio are expected to cover its interest obligations, dividends and capex requirements, while majority of the scheduled principal repayments are estimated to be refinanced in the medium term. The Group has refinanced loans of around Rs. 4,700 crore during April 2023 till November 2023 and plans to refinance NCD of around Rs. 600 crore in January 2024.

Rating sensitivities

Positive factors – ICRA could upgrade the ratings if the Group is able to successfully achieve significant ramp-up in occupancy and leasing income from the portfolio (including under-development assets), resulting in a substantial improvement in the debt protection metrics, while maintaining a strong liquidity position, on a consistent basis. Specific credit metrics that could lead to a rating upgrade include gross debt to NOI reducing to below 2.5 times on a sustained basis.

Negative factors – Negative pressure on the ratings could arise in case of a significant decline in the occupancy or rentals of the completed portfolio impacting the debt protection metrics, or in case of any large dividends or capex outflows, which adversely affects the company's liquidity and leverage position. Specific credit metrics that could lead to a downgrade of DCCDL Group's rating include the gross debt to NOI increasing above 5.0 times on a sustained basis.

Analytical approach

Analytical Approach	Comments
Applicable rating methodologies	Corporate Credit Rating Methodology Rating Methodology for Debt Backed by Lease Rentals
Parent/Group support	Not Applicable
Consolidation/Standalone	For arriving at the ratings, ICRA has consolidated the operational and financial profile of DCCDL, and its subsidiaries given the close business, financial and managerial linkages between the Group entities, shared brand name along with a common treasury team.

About the company

DLF Emporio Limited (DEL) was incorporated in 1999. It developed an ultra-luxury retail mall in Vasant Kunj under the brand name DLF Emporio. DLF Emporio Mall is a fashion mall catering to high-end merchandise. The leasable area of the mall is 0.3 msf with occupancy of 96% as of September 2023.

About DLF Cyber City Developers Limited

DLF Cyber City Developers Limited is involved in the business of developing, setting up and maintaining of commercial offices, retail spaces, technology parks and software parks. In December 2017, GIC, Singapore acquired 33.33% in DCCDL and the balance 66.67% is held by DLF Limited. The company operates one of the largest commercial real estate portfolios in the country spread across 39.7 msf of area at the consolidated level (along with its subsidiaries) with an occupancy of 92% as of September 2023. The assets are spread across Gurugram, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Noida, and Chandigarh. Apart from this, it has 5.3 msf of under-development projects in Chennai and Gurugram as on September 30, 2023.

Key financial indicators (audited)

DCCDL – Consolidated	FY2022	FY2023
Operating income	4,373.4	5,269.2
PAT	1,014.9	1,396.1
OPBDIT/OI	76.1%	75.9%
PAT/OI	23.2%	26.5%
Total outside liabilities/Tangible net worth (times)	3.6	3.8
Total debt/OPBDIT (times)	6.1	5.2
Interest coverage (times)	2.2	2.6

PAT: Profit after tax; OPBDIT: Operating profit before depreciation, interest, taxes and amortisation; Amount in Rs. crore

Source: Company data

Status of non-cooperation with previous CRA: Not applicable

Any other information: None

Rating history for past three years

Instrument	Type	Current rating (FY2024)				Chronology of Rating History for the Past 3 Years			
		Amount Rated (Rs. crore)	Amount Outstanding as on November 30, 2023 (Rs. crore)	Date & Rating in FY2024		Date & Rating in FY2023	Date & Rating in FY2022		Date & Rating in FY2021
				Dec 27, 2023	April 18, 2023		Dec 28, 2021	Sep 30, 2021	
1 Fund-based/ Non-fund based – Others	Long Term	1.00	-	[ICRA]AA+ (Stable)	[ICRA]AA (Positive)	-	[ICRA]AA- (Stable); reaffirmed and withdrawn	[ICRA]AA- (Stable)	[ICRA]AA- (Stable)

Complexity level of the rated instruments

Instrument	Complexity Indicator
Long-term – Fund based/Non-fund based – Others	Simple

The Complexity Indicator refers to the ease with which the returns associated with the rated instrument could be estimated. It does not indicate the risk related to the timely payments on the instrument, which is rather indicated by the instrument's credit rating. It also does not indicate the complexity associated with analysing an entity's financial, business, industry risks or complexity related to the structural, transactional or legal aspects. Details on the complexity levels of the instruments are available on ICRA's website: [Click Here](#)

Annexure I: Instrument details

ISIN	Instrument Name	Date of Issuance/ Sanction	Coupon Rate	Maturity Date	Amount Rated (Rs. crore)	Current Rating and Outlook
NA	Long-term – Fund-based/ Non-fund based – Others	January 2021	-	-	1.00	[ICRA]AA+ (Stable)

Source: Company

[Please click here to view details of lender-wise facilities rated by ICRA](#)

Annexure II: List of entities considered for consolidated analysis

Company Name	DCCDL Ownership	Consolidation Approach
DLF Cyber City Developers Limited (Holding Company)	-	Full Consolidation
<u>Subsidiary companies</u>		
DLF Assets Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
DLF City Centre Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
DLF Emporio Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
DLF Info City Developers (Chandigarh) Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
DLF Info City Developers (Kolkata) Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
Nambi Buildwell Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
DLF Power & Services Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
DLF Promenade Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
Richmond Park Property Management Services Limited##	100%	Full Consolidation
Fairleaf Real Estate Private Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
DLF Info Park Developers (Chennai) Ltd	99.99%	Full Consolidation
Paliwal Real Estate Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
DLF Lands India Private Limited	100%	Full Consolidation
DLF Info City Chennai Limited	100%	Full Consolidation

Source: Company data, ICRA research

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