

# 2023 Kent Property Market Report

The annual guide to investment  
& development in Kent





## Cover:

The Birds by Julia Clarke, at Conningbrook Lakes, Ashford, commissioned by developers Chartway Group and Latimer Developments in partnership with Ashford Borough Council.

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CREDIT: GOODMAN



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CREDIT: QUINN HOMES

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CREDIT: AMY GOODMAN/DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL



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# Welcome

**Welcome to the 32nd Edition of the Kent Property Market Report.** The report is produced by Kent County Council, Caxtons and Locate in Kent.

The **Caxtons Property Market Analysis** reviews property deals and activity during 2022-23 and covers:

- **Market Outlook**
- **Science & Business Parks**
- **Offices**
- **Industrial & Distribution**
- **Retail**
- **Rural (courtesy of Savills)**
- **Residential**

An update on **Inward Investment** and future opportunities is provided by Locate in Kent. Locate in Kent also outline their Investment Prospectus 'Investing in Kent: for future generations'.

In **Leisure and Tourism** Visit Kent review the year and recent investments as well assessing the recovery of the sector from the pandemic.

The **Infrastructure and Regeneration** section features current and planned developments. It focusses on Kent's growth areas, the continuing regeneration of Kent's coastal towns and rural communities, housing initiatives as well as significant investment in road and rail infrastructure.

**Green Infrastructure** highlights projects that support sustainable development.

The **Strategic Developments** pages feature a comprehensive list of sites, useful contact details and a location map.

The full report can also be found at [www.kentpropertymarket.com](http://www.kentpropertymarket.com)

**Caxtons Property Consultants** provide market leading advice to people in property delivered by a professional team of property managers, agents, and chartered surveyors. An independent, long-established firm we offer expertise in management, sales, lettings and acquisitions, valuation, lease advisory and insurance, to businesses and individuals across commercial and residential sectors in Kent and the South East.

**Kent County Council** works with public, private and voluntary sectors to support economic growth by encouraging and supporting businesses; working closely with specific sectors to promote growth and finding ways to fund business critical infrastructure and unlocking key development sites.

**Locate in Kent** provides a comprehensive, confidential and free business relocation and advisory service for all companies looking to relocate to or expand in Kent and Medway.

The producers of the report thank sponsors and contributors:

- **Clear MPW**
- **DHA Planning**
- **Hollaway**
- **MHA**
- **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors**
- **Thomson Snell & Passmore**

We hope you find the report useful and informative.



**Derek Murphy**

Cabinet Member for Economic Development,  
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Chairman & Director, Head of Valuation  
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**Simon Ryan**

Investment Director, Locate in Kent

# Caxtons' Property Market Outlook

This year's outlook presents a markedly different picture to that of 2022, when in late summer, inflation peaked at 10.1%, the effects of which we have since seen ripple through the UK economy. High inflation continues to hamper the UK property market, albeit in August and September 2023, inflation – the consumer prices index (CPI), rose by 6.7% over 12 months, down from the 6.8% reported in July.

While it is expected that the UK will avoid a recession, the UK's interest rate at 5.25% represents a 15-year high, up from 2.25% that we reported this time last year. However, The Bank of England's decision not to raise rates in September is a positive for the property market.

The ONS estimate that GDP fell by 0.5% in July 2023 following growth of 0.5% in June 2023. Looking at the broader picture, GDP increased by 0.2% in the three months to July 2023.

Construction cost inflation appears to have stabilised at 3% and is expected to reduce to 2.5% by 2024. (ONS). There are other indications that the economy is improving slightly, and the fundamentals within our economy are stronger now than in previous downturns.

The investment Property Forum (IPF) consensus of independent forecasts shows 'all property' returns have reduced slightly but office and standard retail forecasts have improved, to 3.3 and 5.1 respectively. On the other hand, retail warehouse and industrial returns are predicted to fall for the period 2023 to 2027.

Mounting household costs continue to affect spending on the high street which is still struggling with the move to e-commerce. However, green shoots can be seen as coffee shops, hospitality and independent traders open new stores and consumers demonstrate they still want to visit the town

# 5.5%

UK All property return forecast for 2023-27, down from 6.4% for 2022-26.

IPF survey of independent forecasts for all UK commercial property, September 2023

## UK Total Return IPF Consensus Forecasts, average over 2023/27 period



Source: Investment Property Forum Survey of Independent Forecasts for UK Commercial Property, September 2023. Forecasts derived from 23 leading fund/investment management houses and consultancies



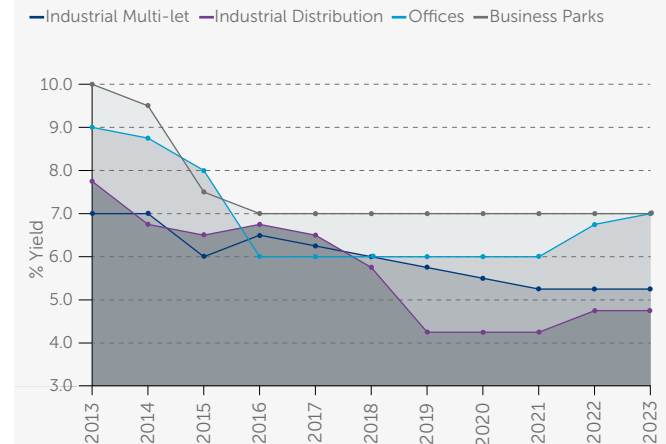
Aegel Trade Row, Quarry Wood Industrial Estate Aylesford.

# 9.78%

Average industrial and distribution rental growth in Kent, 2023, slightly ahead of last year.

Caxtons

## Kent prime yields



Source: Caxtons

centre. What can't be ignored is the consistently high number of closures on the high street, with more than 17,000 shops closing across the UK in 2022, nearly 50% more than in 2021. However, Kent's out of town retail, similar to the rest of the UK, continues to flourish with Bluewater and Ashford Designer Outlet attracting new names. Some national retailers, especially supermarkets such as Aldi and Lidl are pushing ahead with expansion plans with many new openings in Kent this year and a number planned for next year.

Now the hybrid office working model is here to stay, companies are slowly consolidating their office requirements and coming to terms with what size they require. The market is swinging back to the demands of the tenant with shell and bespoke floor plates being offered. Landlords also have to be mindful of the ESG needs of the tenant and that by 2027, office buildings must have an EPC rating of at least C. This in turn will increase the specification

of the building and may have an impact on rents, as could supply which is slowly tightening in Kent due to the continued loss of office space to residential conversion. Although there has been minimal rental uplift in Kent since the last report, as usual those locations commutable to London, are seeing growth. Sevenoaks is experiencing both rental growth at 17% and speculative development off the back of this.

**Although the county has seen limited business park rental growth this year, occupancy levels are at an all-time high due to the quality of what is on offer.** Kings Hill has achieved 17,014ft<sup>2</sup> (1,580m<sup>2</sup>) of transactions over the last 12 months involving 5 tenants. In addition Kent is offering some of the largest floor plates in the South East. Although not in one suite, Crossways Business Park is offering 20,663ft<sup>2</sup> (1,920m<sup>2</sup>) at Riverbridge House. Nationally and specifically in 'the golden triangle', science park take-up has never been higher. Kent continues to offer a similar high standard of accommodation to its contemporaries further afield. Kents' two largest business parks, Discovery Park and Kent Science Park, both offer bespoke accommodation tailored to the requirements of the sector, including new starter units.

**Industrial rental growth in Kent is slightly ahead of last year's figure at 9.78% with Maidstone and Medway achieving 18%, well ahead of the South East average.** There continues to remain a lack of stock which has gone some way to help take up. Clearbell's LOC8 in Maidstone has practically pre-let the whole of its first phase and part of its second phase. Relatively low land values historically in Kent compared to areas around the M25 have made development feasible. Although similar to the rest of the UK, values have

dropped 25 to 50% in some locations. However, significant transactions are still going ahead, with G-Park Sittingbourne's sale to Panattoni with a GIA of 644,549ft<sup>2</sup> (59,882.2m<sup>2</sup>) on the 10.56ha site at Kemsley being one such example. Kent offers the largest speculative buildings in the South East at Panattoni Park Aylesford – 630,000ft<sup>2</sup> (58,528m<sup>2</sup>), and Bericote's Powerhouse, Dartford – 302,790ft<sup>2</sup> (29,728m<sup>2</sup>). Kent also has several sites for design and build such as Goodman's London Medway Park.

**With the UK investment market seeing yields move out in May 2023 by at least a point, yields are now moving back in with industrial multi-let investments at 5.25%.** Investors are picking up well priced assets, particularly industrial and will not wait for any further correction in the market. Although there are fewer investments on the market, one of the largest sales within the industrial market in the South East was achieved at Ridham Dock comprising 119 acres (48ha) and Medway One in Rochester is being offered comprising 583 acres (236ha). Kings Hill Business Park is also being offered, quoting £68.2m.


**Residential sales are seeing their biggest drop in a decade hindered by soaring borrowing costs and the withdrawal of Help to Buy,** making it harder for first time buyers to get on the property ladder. Annual house price growth in September edged down to -5.3% (Nationwide), but Land Registry figures for Kent show a much more mixed picture with some areas seeing increasing prices and others seeing decreases.

Land values have dropped by 10-11% from their peak although some volume housing developers and SMEs are re-starting building as construction and labour costs start to level out. There continues to be a problem with nutrient neutrality in the River Stour catchment area. The government has made proposals to ease the restrictions.

**The economy is showing early signs of improvement** and while times are still uncertain, we have a better picture of the likely impact of the economy on the property market in the coming months. Key indicators suggest that the Kent property market is capable of weathering the storm.



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Aldi, Kings Hill, opened in late 2022.

CREDIT: CAXTONS



# Science and Business Parks Performance

The ever-evolving life science sector continues to grow with R & D spending forecast to rise to 2.4% of GDP by 2027 from its current level of 1.7%. Rents in this market are rising across the UK as supply lags demand. Although demand in the 'golden triangle' of London, Cambridge, and Oxford is accelerating there is plenty of interest in other locations both from occupiers and investors. According to the department for International Trade, 50% of life science jobs are in the East or South East.

Counties such as Kent offer more affordable rents for occupiers and lower living costs for employees with potential for stronger rental growth compared with more established locations. Some companies involved in life sciences are still evaluating the type of asset required but demand for lab space continues to be high. Manufacturing will also remain a key part of the process and is creating demand for buildings offering both warehouse and office accommodation.

The two main Science Parks in Kent, Discovery Park and Kent Science Park are enjoying continued take up.

Discovery Park, the thriving hub for life sciences and innovation, has seen a surge in demand from businesses across London and the South East, with over 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup> (743m<sup>2</sup>) of laboratory space let since the beginning of 2023. The site continues to benefit from the high demand for laboratory space and is an attractive destination for businesses able to see opportunity outside the 'golden triangle', seeking high-spec facilities and an improved quality of life.

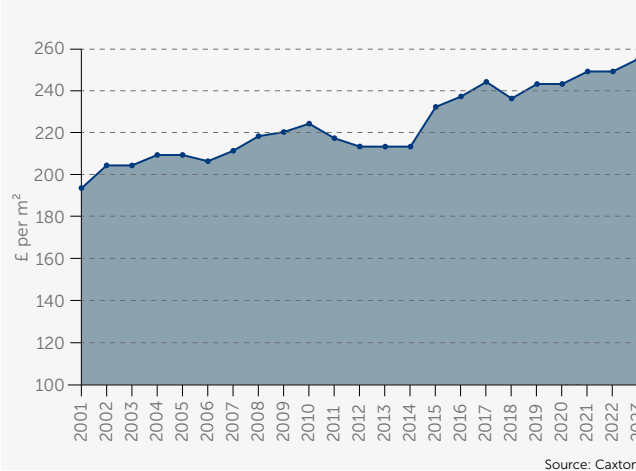
Discovery Park's importance to the county's office market remains strong, welcoming more than 20 companies, including Saga Services Limited and Girlings Personal Injury Claims. The recent addition of Kent's only Barclays Eagle

# £324m

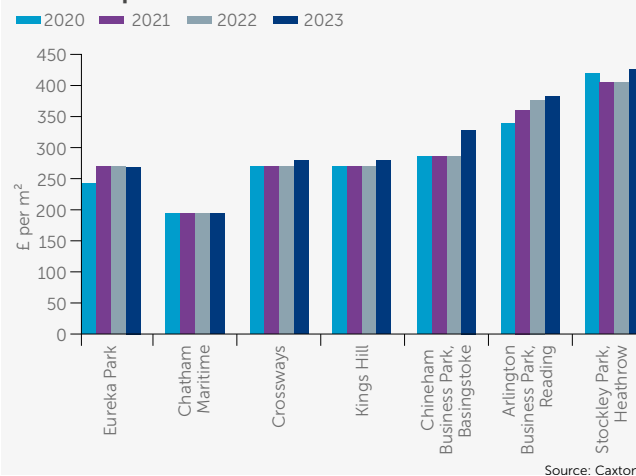
Annual economic value of Discovery Park to the UK economy.

SQW

Kent average prime business park rent



Business park rents



# 17,014ft<sup>2</sup>

Space let to five tenants at Kings Hill in the last year.

Prologis



CREDIT: DISCOVERY PARK

Discovery Park's new incubator labs opened in April 2023.

Lab has further enhanced its desirability, connecting the park to one of the UK's largest networks of co-working and incubation communities for start-up and scale-up businesses.

A report by SQW into the economic impact of Discovery Park, Kent's largest community of science and innovation companies, suggests it's worth more than £324m a year to the UK economy. The opening of the new Thanet Parkway station in July, offering high speed services to London, is another welcome boost to the park and its appeal to inward investors.

Kent Science Park near Sittingbourne, is a biotech incubator made up of high specification labs, office and coworking spaces across 47 buildings. **New starter units from 250ft<sup>2</sup> to 750ft<sup>2</sup> (23 to 70m<sup>2</sup>) will soon be available at the refurbished Venture Building.** Aimed at small to medium start-ups, this newly refurbished building will house labs for businesses in diagnostics, medtech, food technology, hydroponics or agri-tech. The labs have access to a range of specialised equipment and facilities.



LETTINGS							
Date	Location	Landlord	Tenant	Floorspace ft <sup>2</sup>	Rent (pa)	Lease term	Agent/s
Jul '23	Second floor, 1500 Eureka Park, Ashford	Smiths Medical International	Saga Group Ltd	12,147	£242,940	Underlease to April 2025	Caxtons/Cushman Wakefield
Mar '23	39 Kings Hill Avenue, West Malling	Prologis	GW Highways	2,389	£59,725	10 years	Altus

SALES							
Date	Location	Vendor	Purchaser	Floorspace ft <sup>2</sup>	Capital value	Agent/s	
Sep '22	Building 143, Artillery Way, Discovery Park, Sandwich	Genea Biomedx UK Ltd	Stadium Capital Investments	14,500 sq ft unit on 2 acre site	£1,300,000	Smith Woolley	

The business park market for larger office floorplates in Kent continues to gain momentum, with the number of transactions close to where we were pre-pandemic. Typically, demand has also come from those companies who find that home working does not suit them. Green credentials are also high up on the agenda of both landlords and tenants.

The serviced office model continues to be attractive with landlords such as IWG (formerly Regus) actively looking in many parts of Kent, although seeing competition from landlords looking at alternative leasing practices to fill voids. Conqueror Court in Sittingbourne for example now has dedicated service office provision.

**One of the largest floorplates to become available in 2023 is at Crossways, Dartford known as Riverbridge House** totalling 20,663ft<sup>2</sup>(1,920m<sup>2</sup>) over 3 floors. Similarly, Blake House comprising 2,612ft<sup>2</sup> (243m<sup>2</sup>) to 5,760ft<sup>2</sup> (535m<sup>2</sup>) and Flagship House, Victory Way comprising 8,705ft<sup>2</sup> (809m<sup>2</sup>) are also currently being marketed. Quoting rents have now reached £28 per ft<sup>2</sup>.

**Chatham Maritime is also offering one the largest floorplates in the area, The Fitted Rigging House** from 812ft<sup>2</sup> (76m<sup>2</sup>) to 5,339ft<sup>2</sup> (496m<sup>2</sup>) with rents reaching £18 per ft<sup>2</sup>. Innovation Park Medway at Chatham has land to accommodate up to 107,639ft<sup>2</sup> (10,000m<sup>2</sup>) of commercial space including B1, hi-tech office and R&D accommodation. The Park is part of the North Kent Enterprise Zone. Two locations are currently being marketed – the South and Northern Site comprising 28 plots for sale or lease for B2 and E(g).

**The Gillingham Business Park, the mixed-use industrial estate comprising 689,561ft<sup>2</sup> (64,062m<sup>2</sup>) of industrial, trade counter and office accommodation set within 127 acres, continues with its very low void rate.** The former Lloyds building comprising 38,998ft<sup>2</sup> (3,623m<sup>2</sup>) has sold for £3.9m (£100 per ft<sup>2</sup>) to Bapchild Motoring World (Kent) Limited. Their former premises, Unit 2 Ambley Green comprising 10,175ft<sup>2</sup> (945m<sup>2</sup>) has come to the market with a quoting price of £1.45m. At Unit 4, Solicitors Martin Tolhurst Partnership LLP have taken 6,324ft<sup>2</sup> (588m<sup>2</sup>). In addition, The Courtyard with buildings ranging from 1,553ft<sup>2</sup> (144m<sup>2</sup>) has seen several lettings over the last 12 months.



39 Kings Hill Avenue.

**Over the last 12 months Kings Hill achieved approximately 17,014ft<sup>2</sup> (1,580m<sup>2</sup>) of transactions involving 5 tenants,** including 6,997ft<sup>2</sup> (650m<sup>2</sup>) at 18 Kings Hill Avenue to NHS Property Services Ltd, 2,424ft<sup>2</sup> (225m<sup>2</sup>) at 35 Kings Hill Avenue to Gerald Eve LLP, 2,965ft<sup>2</sup> (275m<sup>2</sup>) in 39 Kings Hill Avenue to Magrock Ltd and 2,389ft<sup>2</sup> (222m<sup>2</sup>) in 39 Kings Hill Avenue to G W Highways Ltd and 2,239ft<sup>2</sup> (208m<sup>2</sup>) in 2 Kings Hill Avenue to Slender Winter Partnership Ltd. Headline rents were generally increasing overall. In addition, the former KCC offices at 50 Gibson Drive has been sold for a change of use to a care home.

Saga closed its Enbrook Park site in Sandgate in Spring 2023. The firm will establish two new office hubs in Kent, one at Discovery Park and the other at Eureka Park Ashford where Saga will take the residue of the lease of the former Smiths Medical suite. The 96 acre (39ha) business park located off Junction 9 of the M20 offers design and build plots up to 10 acres (4ha).

The Kent Medical Campus, home to KIMS Hospital, Cygnet Healthcare and higher educational facilities has had significant success with science and medical related SMEs at the council owned 37,000ft<sup>2</sup> (3,429m<sup>2</sup>) Innovation Centre.

**Although there are few investment sales to report, Kings Hill is currently being marketed at a guide price of £68.2million which represents an 8.82% Net Initial Yield.** The Business Park comprises 492,041ft<sup>2</sup> (45,712m<sup>2</sup>) on 63.2 acres with 14 assets, 5 long leasehold interests and 36 tenants in total. In addition, the Science Park investment market continues although concentrated within the 'golden triangle'.

# Office Performance

**The office market continues to show continued signs of improvement as companies reassess their occupational requirements.** Opinions about levels of return to the office, both currently and in the future vary but it is clear that hybrid working is here to stay. According to figures from Savills, take up of offices in the South East rose 6% in 2022 compared to 2021, with grade A accounting for 87% of take up. The data was further evidence of the flight to better quality offices.

**Kent however is still to see any significant rental growth with the exception of Sevenoaks which trades off its proximity to the city and road connectivity.** The town has seen a 17% increase in rents this year. Although Dover has seen rents increase by 57% this is very much an isolated figure due to little availability over the last few years. Kent overall has seen a 5% increase this year compared to 12% over the last 3 years and 16% over the last 5 years.

**The supply of offices in Kent continues to reduce due to refurbishments, lack of development and conversion to residential.** An example of conversion to residential includes Becket House, a former BT call centre in Canterbury where planning has been re-applied for, for 53 flats following a rejection due to the reduction in employment land. In addition, a fully let investment at Weald Court in Tonbridge sold to a residential developer. Quoting terms were in the order of £3.65m (8.5% Net Initial Yield).

**The market is slowly swinging back to the demands of the tenant with bespoke and even shell accommodation being offered.** Employers need to offer quality accommodation to persuade employees back to the office, and to entice younger companies and staff to offset the brain drain from Kent's universities to London and other larger cities around the UK. Enhancements on offer include collaboration space and shared spaces where companies can socialise and share ideas with other companies in the building. Hawley

# 5%

**Increase in Kent average office rent in 2023. 17% in Sevenoaks.**

Caxtons



**The substantially refurbished Crescent Court, Tunbridge Wells.**

Mill in Dartford is an example of where 'welfare areas' have been set aside for staff. The offices are offered from 2,500ft<sup>2</sup> (232.26m<sup>2</sup>) to 8,729ft<sup>2</sup> (810.95m<sup>2</sup>). A newly completed office refurbishment at Crescent Court Tunbridge Wells is offering suites of 4,139ft<sup>2</sup> (386m<sup>2</sup>) to 16,940ft<sup>2</sup> (1,574m<sup>2</sup>) of space over 4 floors. The building has exposed ceilings as part of its offer to the market, and is rated EPC B.

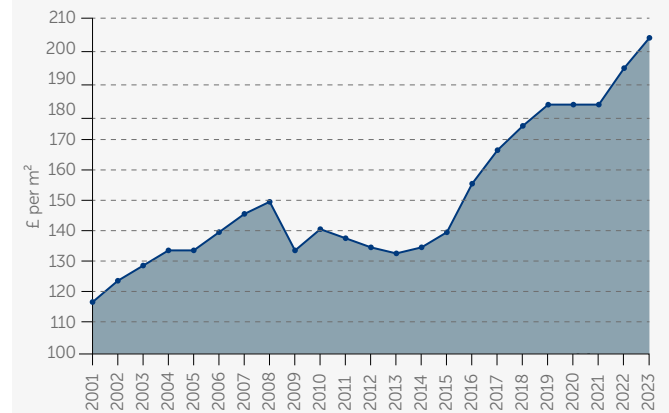
**The environmental, social and governance (ESG) element of commercial buildings is fast becoming a major priority.** In the South East, 54% of newly rented office space will fall short of rating C or above, the minimum requirement by 2027, unless improved or refurbished (Knight Frank). This is prompting environmental improvements to office space including solar panels and electric charging points. As many leases fall within this period, and with occupiers avoiding property with a low EPC, the supply and demand imbalance is already pushing rents up in some parts of the South East.

# 20,663ft<sup>2</sup>

**Floorplate of Riverbridge House at Crossways Dartford, one of the biggest available in 2023.**

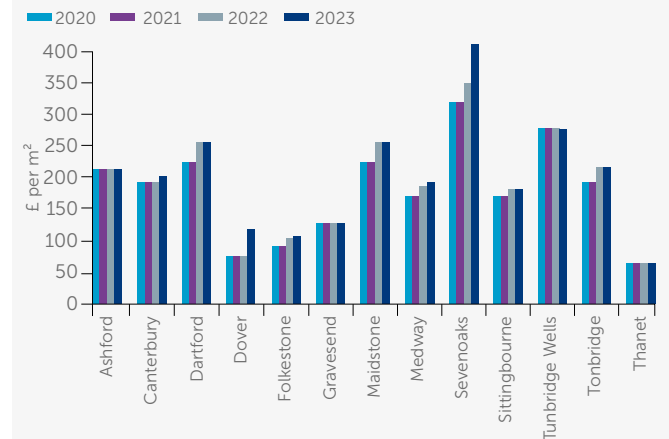
Caxtons

**Kent average prime office rent**



Source: Caxtons

**Office rents**



Source: Caxtons



LETTINGS							
Date	Location	Landlord	Tenant	Floorspace ft <sup>2</sup>	Rent (pa)	Lease term	Agent/s
Oct '22	Unit 1 Priory Gate, 29 Union Street, Maidstone	Private	NHS	3,273	£62,187	3 yrs	Sibley Pares/Watson Day
Oct '22	B3 Staplehurst Lodge, Sittingbourne	Swan Construction	Pro Legal Group Ltd	1,515	£14,000	5 years FRI	Harrisons
Sep '22	5a Brewery Lane, Bligh's Meadow, Sevenoaks	abrdn	Power Health & Fitness	1,050	£24,000	10 years. TOB end of year 5	Salisbury & Co.

SALES							
Date	Location	Vendor	Purchaser	Floorspace ft <sup>2</sup>	Capital value	Agent/s	
Mar '23	Medway House, London Road, Maidstone	Brachers Property LLP	Heritage Designer Homes	12,749	£1,500,000	Caxtons	
Jan '23	Bridge House, 97-101 High Street, Tonbridge	The National Spiritual Assembly of The Bahai of the UK	S&O Residence	12,000	£2,275,000	Durlings	
Dec '22	7 Bank Street, Ashford	Kingsfords	Private individual	2,279	£300,000	Stafford Perkins	
May '23	Regent House, Twistleton Court, Dartford	Private individual	PAD Holdings	1,725	£520,000	Altus	

Also, landlords will be spending more on refurbishments, potentially pushing rents on. Nonetheless, rents for non-compliant secondary and tertiary offices are set to continue to fall. Kent has its fair share of secondary office accommodation and with a typical lease length of 5 years, market activity will be shaped by these criteria. Town centre refurbishments may be an opportunity for developers to make a profit without having the risk of a full development project.

**Serviced office providers continue to look for management agreements with existing landlords**, where the provider offers the initial set up charges for a share of the profit. This has taken over from lease agreements. Landlords are continuing to come up with new ideas to let vacant space. Hybrid working shows occupiers require 30% less space than occupiers with office-based staff.

**New co-working spaces continue to be developed.** Examples include IslandWorks at the Dockyard Church Sheerness, which recently opened offering meeting rooms and a coffee shop as well as co-working space. The Church has been completely restored since being destroyed by two fires. A £9.8m restoration was undertaken by The Sheerness Dockyard Trust, the owners of the building. In addition,

Trading Post Tenterden, is a commercial business community consisting of 4 new build offices of 3,000ft<sup>2</sup> (279m<sup>2</sup>) each and an eatery and wellness centre.

**Freeholds have continued to be popular with Self-Administered Pension Funds and owner occupier investors.** How long this will continue with rising interest rates is debatable. There remains a lack of availability within town centres although there are more opportunities elsewhere. Apple Barn, Hythe Road, Smeech near Ashford is offering a grade A barn conversion comprising 7,730ft<sup>2</sup> (718.12m<sup>2</sup>). East Point, High Street, Seal, near Sevenoaks is also available on a freehold basis comprising 1,453ft<sup>2</sup> (135m<sup>2</sup>).

**Sevenoaks once again offers the only speculative office development in Kent**, following on from the completion last year of Salters Business Centre along Coldharbour Lane comprising 420ft<sup>2</sup> (39m<sup>2</sup>) to 3,411ft<sup>2</sup> (317m<sup>2</sup>). 1 Oakhill Road, Sevenoaks has recently been completed offering suites from 367ft<sup>2</sup> (34m<sup>2</sup>) to 6,561ft<sup>2</sup> (610m<sup>2</sup>). Ground and second floors are under offer. At One Suffolk Way, Sevenoaks the entire 3rd floor 3,825ft<sup>2</sup> (355m<sup>2</sup>) was let to Birketts LLP. Quoted rent was £38ft<sup>2</sup> Clearbell are offering an 11,141ft<sup>2</sup> (1,035m<sup>2</sup>) office at LOC8 in Maidstone as part of their new Business Park at Junction 8 of the M20.

**The South East investment market slowed over the last 12 months with prime net initial yields moving out.** Although there were very few office investment sales in Kent, Hawley Mill, Hawley Road in Dartford is currently being marketed comprising 75,987ft<sup>2</sup> (7,060m<sup>2</sup>). The quoting terms are £10.5m (6.25% Net Initial Yield). The BT premises at 45 Church Street, Maidstone East invited offers at £1.96m (4.5% NIY) benefitting from a 71-year unbroken lease and has now been sold.



**The Trading Post, Tenterden, a mix of offices to rent, co-working space, eatery and wellness space.**

CREDIT: FRUITBOWL MEDIA

# Industrial and Distribution Performance

Following a slowdown within the UK industrial and logistics market over the past 12 months, Kent continues to buck the trend with rental increases of 9.78% overall, up from the three year average of 6.55%, primarily due to lack of stock within the county. The investment market had seen yields moving out over this period by at least a point and land values reducing in some locations in the UK by as much as 50%. We have hopefully hit the bottom of the market and are seeing yields improving slightly and land values holding firm.

In a recent national survey, nearly half (46%) of developers and investors expected industrial and logistics asset values and rents to increase in 2023 despite major market and policy pressures. 39% expected occupier demand to increase. Kent has already seen an increase in rents particularly in Aylesford and Maidstone, in line with its 3 year average of 18%, due to lack of stock and the lower base of rents in the South East.

**Kent continues to offer several of the largest logistics units in the South East** including Bericote's Powerhouse Dartford with its speculative 302,790ft<sup>2</sup> (29,728m<sup>2</sup>) having now reached practical completion, and Goodman's Crossways Business Park totalling 580,000ft<sup>2</sup> (53,903m<sup>2</sup>) within 3 buildings, where only one unit of 240,840ft<sup>2</sup> (22,374m<sup>2</sup>) is available. Wrenbridge's 5-unit Dartford X also has only one building available of 75,277ft<sup>2</sup> (6,994m<sup>2</sup>) and Clearbell's speculative 380,000ft<sup>2</sup> (35,316m<sup>2</sup>) business park, LOC8 in Maidstone has now pre-let the majority of Phase 1 with only a single unit left of 58,833ft<sup>2</sup> (5,465.8m<sup>2</sup>). The second phase is now underway with six units from 15,339ft<sup>2</sup> (1,425m<sup>2</sup>) to 36,398ft<sup>2</sup> (3,398m<sup>2</sup>) to be completed in Q3 2024 with 30% already under offer.

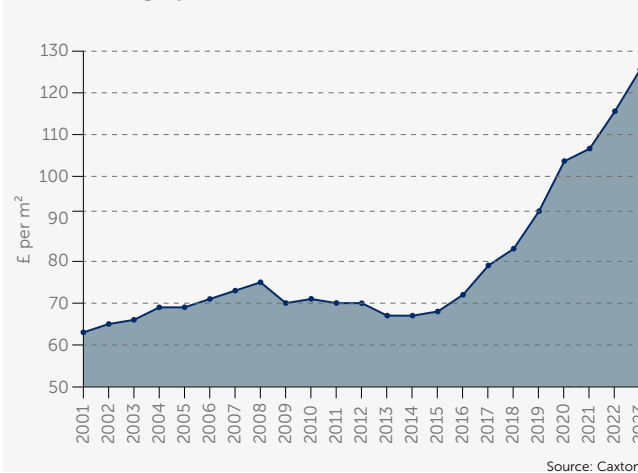
Panattoni Park Aylesford off M20 Junction 4 now has four tenants – DHL, Evri, Fowler Welch and Marley. Totalling 297,036ft<sup>2</sup> (27,595m<sup>2</sup>), all four buildings have a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating. Construction has also been completed

# 46%

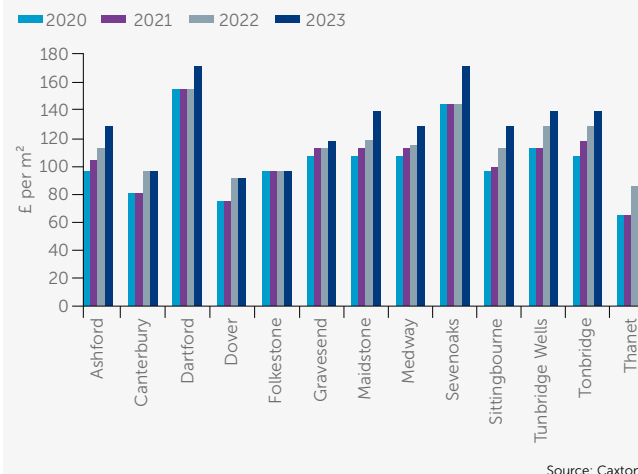
Of UK developers and investors expect industrial and logistics asset values and rents to increase in 2023.

Forsters LLP

Kent average prime industrial and distribution rent



Industrial and distribution rents



# 302,790ft<sup>2</sup>

Size of Bericote's Powerhouse Dartford, which reached completion in 2023.

Caxtons



DHL at Panattoni Park, Aylesford.

on a pre-let 144,000ft<sup>2</sup> (13,387m<sup>2</sup>) facility and planning submitted for a 630,000ft<sup>2</sup> (58,528m<sup>2</sup>) distribution centre. When fully occupied the development will support an estimated 3,000 jobs.

Saxon 53, Sittingbourne comprising 52,586ft<sup>2</sup> (4,885m<sup>2</sup>) GEA is in the course of construction with practical completion in Q4 2023, and Tavis House Business Centre in Tunbridge Wells comprises six industrial/warehouse units totalling 88,533ft<sup>2</sup> (8,225m<sup>2</sup>). In Aylesford, Click developed by Wrenbridge and Bridges Fund comprising four units totalling 302,844ft<sup>2</sup> (28,134m<sup>2</sup>), will see practical completion in Q1 2024. The first two units comprising 29,514ft<sup>2</sup> (2,742m<sup>2</sup>) have now been let to one occupier. With Amazon having vacated the building, Unit 1 Invicta Riverside, Aylesford is available comprising 93,925ft<sup>2</sup> (8,726m<sup>2</sup>) on a sub-lease. In addition, 15 Quarry Wood Industrial Estate is coming available comprising 51,601ft<sup>2</sup> (4,794m<sup>2</sup>).



LETTINGS							
Date	Location	Landlord	Tenant	Floorspace ft <sup>2</sup>	Rent (pa)	Lease term	Agent/s
May '23	Unit B1, LOC8, Ashford Road, Maidstone	Maidstone Property Holdings Ltd	Zehnder Group UK Ltd	c.45,275	£475,387.50	10 yr term, 5 yr tenant break, 5 yr rent review 3.5 mths rent free FRI terms	Caxtons/CBRE
Feb '23	Dartford Works, Burnham Road, Dartford	IM Properties	CMT	40,871	£592,630	10 years	Altus
Apr '23	The Warehouse & Workshops, Howt Green near Sittingbourne	Kite Packaging	Precon Products Ltd	18,590	£138,500	10 years FRI	Harrisons
Oct '22	Unit 4-8 Union Park, Bircholt Road, Maidstone	Private landlord	Europcar Ltd	16,790	£140,000	10 year lease, 5 year break & review	Sibley Pares
Jun '23	22 Chapman Way, Tunbridge Wells	BJ Babb Ltd	Boggatti Foods	10,516	£62,500	3 years	Durlings
May '23	Unit 20, Mountfield Road Industrial Estate, New Romney	Private landlord	Screwfix	9,883	£65,000 (£6.60 psf)	10 years FRI	Stafford Perkins
Jul '23	B8 Lakeside Park, Neptune Close, Medway City Estate, Rochester	United UK Propco 4 Ltd	Time Christmas Ltd	6,129	£69,500	10 year term, 5 year rent review	Caxtons/ Watson Day

SALES							
Date	Location	Vendor	Purchaser	Floorspace ft <sup>2</sup>	Capital value	Agent/s	
Jun '23	Conningbrook Depot, Ashford	KCC	Private	1.4 acres	£1,285,000	Sibley Pares	
Feb '23	1 & 2 Crown Quay Lane, Sittingbourne	Private	Private	18,922	£770,000	Harrisons	
Nov '22	Unit 1 & Unit 4, Poulton Close, Dover	Colourchoice UPVC Limited	Greener Lighting Solutions	10,484	£810,000	Smith Woolley	
Mar '23	Units 18/19 Eurokent BP, Ramsgate	SandiKent Ltd	Private	3,365	£320,000	Caxtons	
Feb '23	Unit J Sidelands Farm, Wye	Sidelands Property Holdings Ltd	Ward Utilities Ltd	1,690	£200,000	Stafford Perkins	

Further east at Ramsgate, Aviator can accommodate 180,021ft<sup>2</sup> (16,724m<sup>2</sup>) with the adjoining Manston House also offering 174,161ft<sup>2</sup> (16,180m<sup>2</sup>). Orbital East in Dartford comprising 121,029ft<sup>2</sup> (11,244m<sup>2</sup>) is currently being marketed and Unit 5 Dolphin Park, Sittingbourne comprising 30,272ft<sup>2</sup> (2,812m<sup>2</sup>) is currently being refurbished and will be available in Q4 2023. **The former Gallery Warehouse at Castle Road, Sittingbourne is one of the only available freehold logistics sheds to be offered for sale in Kent, comprising 114, 435ft<sup>2</sup> (10,631m<sup>2</sup>).** The building is also available to lease.

At the Joseph Wilson Industrial Estate, Whitstable, Mattressnextday Limited have completed the purchase of

a 39,000ft<sup>2</sup> (3,623m<sup>2</sup>) showroom and warehouse building. Practical completion was on 1 September 2023. Travis Perkins PLC will open their brand new 17,000ft<sup>2</sup> (1,579m<sup>2</sup>) Whitstable branch in June 2024 also at the Joseph Wilson Industrial Estate.

Swanley Distribution Link comprising up to 168,000ft<sup>2</sup> (15,607m<sup>2</sup>) will become available having now got full planning permission. It will be constructed by Goya and funded by Hillwood. In Paddock Wood, Gallagher will be constructing units from 3,000ft<sup>2</sup> (279m<sup>2</sup>) to 70,000ft<sup>2</sup> (6,503m<sup>2</sup>) at a new development known as the Hop Exchange within the next 12 months. At Medway One, Uniper have secured outline

planning consent for up to 3.39m ft<sup>2</sup> (314,939m<sup>2</sup>) of B2/B8, sui generis uses to include energy and a lorry park across 172 acres of developable land, and the site is now on the market.

**There have been several larger lettings this year.** These include Location Works, Burnham Road Dartford comprising two units totalling 40,871ft<sup>2</sup> (3,787m<sup>2</sup>) let to CRM logistics. Also, Easylife have agreed to lease a new 42,000ft<sup>2</sup> (3,902m<sup>2</sup>) facility currently under construction, for completion in the autumn at Walbrook West, Queenborough, Isle of Sheppey. This is another significant multi-million investment by Medichem Properties at the large Walbrook scheme. Construction at Walbrook Business Park, also along

**Industrial and Distribution Performance**

Continued

CREDIT: GEORGE WILSON DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED



**18 units (each 1,000ft<sup>2</sup>) completed in September at Joseph Wilson Industrial Estate, Whitstable.**

Queenborough Road, began earlier this year, and will provide some 30 business units ranging from 1,000ft<sup>2</sup> (93m<sup>2</sup>) to 38,000ft<sup>2</sup> (3,530m<sup>2</sup>). 3-5 Millen Road, Sittingbourne comprising 30,103ft<sup>2</sup> (2,797m<sup>2</sup>) is also being offered to let as is the South Site along Crete Hall Road Northfleet comprising 72,643ft<sup>2</sup> (6,749m<sup>2</sup>).

**Sites offering design and build solutions include Goodman's London Medway Park, Rochester offering land to accommodate over 500,000ft<sup>2</sup> (46,469m<sup>2</sup>)** and Panattoni Park, (formerly ABRDN – Aberdeen Standard's G Park), Sittingbourne which can accommodate up to 651,000ft<sup>2</sup> (60,478m<sup>2</sup>). Further east, Phase 2 Waterbrook Park owned by GSE can offer up to 290,000ft<sup>2</sup> (26,941m<sup>2</sup>) on their 17.5 acre (7.07 ha.) site. Further south, Yalding Enterprise Park offers design and build plots up to 500,000ft<sup>2</sup> (46,447m<sup>2</sup>) on its 40 acre (16.18ha) site. MLM Crayford, the former AG Thames site will provide up to 160,240ft<sup>2</sup> (14,886m<sup>2</sup>) in three units with practical completion in Q4 2024. Finally, District Park in Manston can accommodate up to 182,146ft<sup>2</sup> (16,922m<sup>2</sup>).

**Open storage sites saw an increase in demand and growing rents nationally amid increasing interest from occupiers and investors, especially in the South East where demand in terms of enquiries is double the number of sites.**

According to Carter Jonas enquiries rose to 400 in 2022 from 248 in 2021 and less than 100 in 2019. Ridham Dock comprising 71.31 acres (28.9ha) has sold to Mileway. Quoting price was £45.69m, 5.73% NIY.

**There have been few site sales**, although ABRDN (Aberdeen Standard) have sold their 33acres (13.3ha) site in Sittingbourne known as G-Park to Panattoni. Kingstanding Business Park in Tunbridge Wells comprising 33 acres (13.3ha) is under offer. The U & I owned site currently has planning consent for offices. Link 249, Eurolink East, Sittingbourne at 2.4 acres (1.0 ha) is also for sale with quoting terms in the order of £1.25m an acre, and 7, Upper Mills Road, Aylesford comprising 80,122 sq ft (7,443.6) on 2.85 acres (1.15ha) has sold to an owner occupier.

**Due to the sharp downturn in the investment market, fewer investments have come to the market.** Multi-let yields are now settling at 4.75% and single let yields at 5.25%. Euroway Trade Park, Aylesford comprising 88,472ft<sup>2</sup> (8,219m<sup>2</sup>) within

7 units was sold to Orchard Street for £14.5m 4.96% NIY. In addition, two of three assets in a portfolio sale known as the Trio Portfolio, three and five acre industrial estates in Folkestone are being sold comprising 44,341ft<sup>2</sup> (4,119m<sup>2</sup>) within buildings on the three acre site and 61,787ft<sup>2</sup> (5740m<sup>2</sup>) within buildings on the five acre site. Quoting terms are in the order of £12.675m (7.7% Net Initial Yield).

A further portfolio known as Project Spears sold by Blackrock to Mileway included the Vestry Trading Estate, Sevenoaks comprising 192,229ft<sup>2</sup> (17,859m<sup>2</sup>). The Riverdale Industrial Estate Tonbridge site comprising 16,593ft<sup>2</sup> (1,541m<sup>2</sup>), was sold for £2.35m by Savills IM at just under the 5.5% quoting NIY. Rochester Trade Park comprising 39,996 ft<sup>2</sup> (3,716m<sup>2</sup>) sold to Industrials Reit. Quoting terms were £7.61m, an NIY of 6.68%.

Finally, Logicor purchased Bercicote's 12 unit multi-let scheme at Dartford known as Logicor Park comprising units from 3,290ft<sup>2</sup> to 5,874ft<sup>2</sup> (306m<sup>2</sup> to 546m<sup>2</sup>).



CREDIT: CLEARBELL

**LOC8 Business Park, Junction 8, M20, Maidstone.**



**Crossways 241.**  
CREDIT: GOODMAN





# Retail Performance

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that 27.48% of UK retail sales were made online in July compared to 19% pre pandemic, a rise of 45%. More than 17,000 shops closed in the UK in 2022, nearly 50% more than in 2021, with major chains such as Joules and TM Lewin closing some 6,000 shops and the loss of 151,000 retail jobs. The value of retail trading over the summer was up and down, reflecting the weather, but overall, in May to July 2023 retail values were up 3.1% on the same period of 2022. This is evidence that consumers are still willing to spend, particularly on cheaper and discounted items. Food price inflation remained high at 17% in the first half of the year but dropped to 13.6% in August.

With the backdrop of retail sales continuing to decline long term as the economy slows down and inflation weighing heavily on household's purchasing power, retail sales are expected to rebound in the next 12 months into 2024 and to more optimistic levels in the next 5 years. This is a result of sales growth continuing to be driven by on-line sales, the government announcing that they do not plan to introduce a rating downward transition scheme, greatly assisting retailers, and the April 2023 rating revaluation which will see a 10 to 40% reduction in retailers' rateable values.

As a result of the pandemic, with working from home and hybrid working, several new food and beverage outlets have opened on Kent high streets, often filling voids especially from more traditional retail such as footwear and clothing, and those resulting from bank closures.

The high street continues to see more administrations among national chains, especially retailers who have not successfully adapted to e-tailing. Fashion retailer M&Co went into administration for the second time with outlets throughout Kent, and Cath Kidson who had three stores in Kent, closed their last store at Ashford Designer Outlet in June.

# £561 per m<sup>2</sup>

Average Kent High Street Zone A retail rent.  
Cradick Retail



An in-store Waitrose recently opened at Dobbies Garden Centre in Gillingham.

Administration discussions continue with Paperchase who had stores in Bluewater, Tunbridge Wells, and Canterbury following closures already in Sevenoaks and Maidstone. In October all 14 Kent branches of Wilko closed after the chain went into administration, and this will have a far reaching impact on town centres and shopping malls.

**Nonetheless, retailers who are moving with the times and fully understand their consumer are making headway.**

The baby clothes retailer, Nyas's Boutiques have recently opened their 3rd Kent store in Maidstone. Poundland are expanding, and Hotel Chocolat who have a three-year expansion plan for 150 new outlets in the UK, have just opened up a high street store in Sevenoaks.

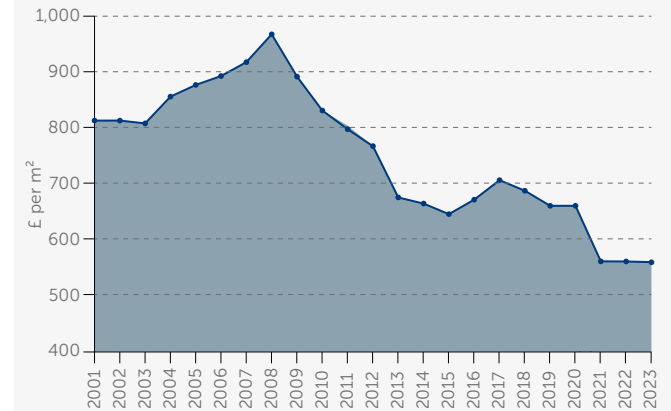
Consolidations on the high street also continue with the likes of leading retailers Boots, who are planning to close 150 stores in the next 12 months. This may particularly affect town centres with more than one branch, such as Maidstone. As a result of voids and falling rents, landlords with underperforming assets may seek an alternative and higher value use, such as conversion to residential.

# 17,000

Number of shops that closed in the UK in 2022, nearly 50% more than in 2021.

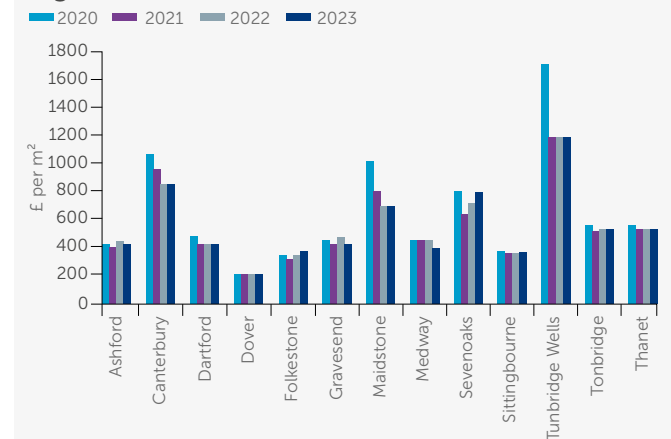
ONS

Kent average prime retail rent



Source: Cradick Retail

High Street Zone A retail rents



Source: Cradick Retail



LETTINGS							
Date	Location	Landlord	Tenant	Floorspace ft <sup>2</sup>	Rent (pa)	Lease term	Agent/s
May '23	62 Mount Pleasant Road, Tunbridge Wells	SIPP	Elysian Homes	G – 1,370 B – 1,120	£45,000	18 months	Durlings
Jun '23	Ground Floor Premises, 34 Canterbury Road, Hawkinge	Milestone Leisure Accessories Limited	Innovation Flooring	1,480	£19,500	6 years	Smith Woolley
Nov '22	61 Week Street, Maidstone	Private landlord	Subway Franchisee	936	£40,000	15 years, 5 yr reviews, 6 & 11 yr break	Sibley Pares

SALES							
Date	Location	Vendor	Purchaser	Floorspace ft <sup>2</sup>	Capital value	Agent/s	
May '23	17-25 New Rents, Ashford	Venus Properties Ltd	Redeemed Christian Church of God City of Redemption Parish	3,650	£450,000	Stafford Perkins	
Nov '22	12-14 Gabriels Hill, Maidstone	Private individual	Private purchaser	2,646	£490,000	Sibley Pares	
Jul '23	45 High Street, Whitstable	Private clients	Meadow Stag Properties Ltd, let to Fat Face	1,860	£500,000	Caxtons	

The former Debenhams department store at 220/246 High Street Chatham comprising 130,425ft<sup>2</sup> (12,116m<sup>2</sup>) is available to let or redevelop. Sub-divided units from 5,000 to 130,000ft<sup>2</sup> (465 to 12,077m<sup>2</sup>) are available. The building is currently an E Class and has potential for leisure, community, cultural and educational uses. There is also scope for residential development in upper parts.

High Street Zone A average retail rents in Kent remain unchanged at £52ft<sup>2</sup> (£561m<sup>2</sup>) but in Sevenoaks rents reached £74 ft<sup>2</sup>, (£800m<sup>2</sup>) an increase of 11% on 2022.

**The out-of-town retail market continues to strengthen, primarily due to the improved shopping experience offered by centres with associated food and leisure uses for the family and of course the infrastructure for access and parking.** Garden Centres continue to evolve. Dobbies Garden Centres have welcomed a Waitrose food hall to their store in Gillingham. Waitrose has been trading for over 50 years in Kent and currently have 11 outlets throughout the county.

**Ashford Designer Outlet has further expanded its offering of designer brands and popular restaurants.** New brands such as Jack and Jones, Hugo, Carvela and The North Face have been welcomed, with more to follow by the

end of 2023. The outlet also celebrated the opening of a new Nando's restaurant as well as expanding some of the existing brands including Clarks, Nike, Mountain Warehouse and Wagamama all of which increased square footage to accommodate more product lines and guest space.

Bluewater will become the only place fans of Europe's biggest YouTube collective the 'Sidemen' can buy their official merchandise. The creators opened their first ever retail store in the Upper Rose Gallery of Bluewater, next to Apricot.

**The food and beverage sector continues to expand in retail parks as well as on the high street.** For example dessert chain Creams Café is planning to double its stores in the next 3-4 years. Kent is well represented with stores at Bluewater, Rochester, Chatham, and Maidstone.

**National food retailers continue to expand.** Plans by Lidl include new stores in north Tunbridge Wells, north Sevenoaks and Paddock Wood. They opened a new store in Tunbridge Wells, next to Homebase in February and will develop a store close to Medway Valley Retail Park. Aldi also announced plans for new stores in Tunbridge Wells, Strood and Paddock Wood and a new store recently opened at Kings Hill. Morrisons plan to close their Faversham store due to insufficient trading, but

Costco are looking to establish their first store in Kent, at a site in the Maidstone/Medway/M20 area.

**Finally, there are no major retail investment transactions to report this year.** The Great Hall, Mount Pleasant, Tunbridge Wells comprising 40,802ft<sup>2</sup> (3,791m<sup>2</sup>) has been marketed for £7.3m (7.26% Net Initial Yield). The mixed-use development is let to Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd.



**The new Nando's at Ashford Designer Outlet.**

CREDIT: CAXTONS

# Rural Performance

## Farmland values in the South East reach new highs

The value of prime arable land in the South East has reached new highs in 2023.

According to analysis from rural property agents Savills, prime arable land traded at an average of £10,605 an acre in the South East in the first three quarters of this year, an increase of 7.9% year on year, and a 1.2% increase since the end of March 2023, when values hit £10,475 per acre, the highest since the previous record in June 2015, when values reached £10,334. This compares with an average increase across Great Britain for prime arable land of 2.5%, to average £10,200 per acre, for the same period.

The research also shows that although prime arable land remains the most valuable farmland asset, poorer quality pastureland is still in high demand among buyers looking for environmental opportunities. The average price for 'all types' of farmland in the South East – pasture and arable – sits at £9,270 an acre. This is a rise of 8.4% compared to September 2022. Nationally, 'all types' of farmland traded at an average of £8,196 an acre in the three months to the end of September – a rise of 7.7% when compared to the same period last year.

Chris Spofforth, Savills head of rural agency in the South East, said: "Well-equipped commercial farms and significant acreages of bare arable land are often being bought in competition by buyers with capital gains rollover funds who have a time sensitive window for investment.

"This demand has helped support values and there have been cases where the prices paid are significantly more than the current averages recorded. It will be interesting to monitor how current levels of demand play out during the rest of the year, as those motivated by rollover relief acquire the properties that

# 7.9%

### Increase in prime arable land values in the South East September 2022-2023.

Savills Research

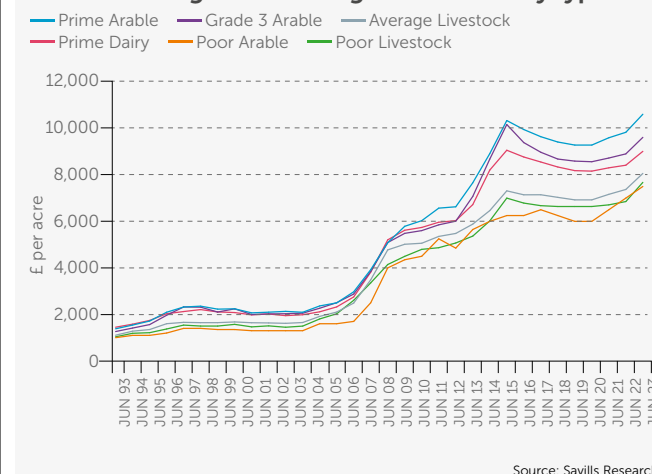
they need and investors can achieve guaranteed rates of return from bank interest as opposed to alternative investments.

"Driven by buyers looking for environmental solutions and opportunities, such as woodland creation, adopting regenerative agriculture principles, and peatland and wetland creation, values for poorer quality pastureland have also increased."

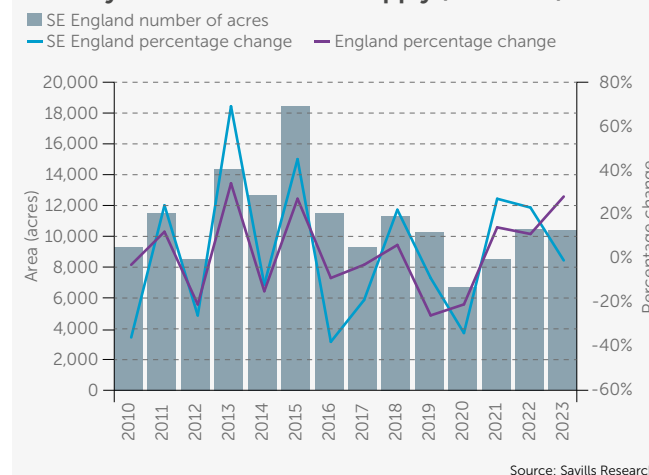
In the South East, despite a decrease of -13% in supply at the half year point (year on year), by the end of September a total of 15,500 acres of farmland were marketed in 2023, an increase of 16% compared to the same period last year and accounting for 15% of farmland marketed in England so far this year.

Nationally, the number of 50-to-100 acre parcels of bare lowland offered for sale has substantially increased.

### South East England – average land values by type



### Publicly marketed farmland supply (end June)



Analysis of the first six months of each year shows from 2009 to 2021 across Great Britain, when interest rates were consistently low, an average of 55 farms were launched. In contrast, the average for 2022 and 2023, since interest rates have started to rise, is 79 farms, an increase of 44%.

Chris adds: "One of the primary motivators for current farm sales is retirement, either where there is no successor or where the next generation does not want to farm. Debt is also creeping in as a reason for a sale – a factor which may become stronger if interest rates continue to rise.

"Farms and estates with a significant proportion of the value allocated to residential assets are also being more affected by rising interest rates in some cases. It is now critical for new launches to have the right marketing strategy, possibly including flexible lotting, as well as realistic guide prices. That said, best in class properties in the popular locations are still highly sought after and deals have been agreed within a few weeks of launch at prices in excess of the guide price."

Since the end of 2021, interest and confidence is renewed in the market for agricultural investment properties let on longer term leases. Evidence from the first half of 2023 indicates that guide prices for these properties are in most instances being exceeded, despite improving supply, and private investors are generally the most active and competitive buyers.



These buyers are following a patient capital approach, consciously giving up the opportunity for higher interest rate returns in the bank, for the longer-term prospect of land value growth and a capital gain when the secure tenancy ends.

The fastest growing agricultural sector in the South East is viticulture, with demand very much focussed on Kent and Sussex.

“Though it remains niche, there are certainly more people looking at the sector as a potential investment,” adds Chris. “Interest in the UK vineyard sector fluctuates from year to year. Currently, potential buyers are from the UK, the US, South Africa, Italy and Germany alongside the higher profile French buyers of UK wine estates.”

Competition for land is currently leading to increases in average values, but base rates climbing to higher than

expected levels could reduce demand and lead to a more restrained rate of value growth over the next year or two.

Chris adds: “Historically, the Bank of England base rate and farmland values in Great Britain have been negatively correlated. We’ll be closely monitoring how the balance of supply and demand plays out over the coming months.”

**Chris Spofforth**

Head of Rural Agency in the South East, Savills



CREDIT: SAVILLS

Land comprising 134 acres (34ha) to the south of Kent Water is being marketed by Savills for a guide price of £950,000.

# Residential Performance

Last year's report stated that 'the residential sector is performing strongly'. Unfortunately, that cannot be said of 2023 with the rising cost of living, particularly mortgage costs and energy, reducing the demand for homes and as a result, house sales and housebuilding.

In September 2023 across the UK on average, house prices were 5.3% below the August 2022 peak (Nationwide), prices having fallen for each of the last seven months, and the weakest outturn since July 2009. This was more than the 4.7% drop predicted by city economists. It is expected that house prices will continue to drop but opinions differ about how much and for how long.

Analysis of Land Registry figures (see table on opposite page), shows that prices in Kent increased by 2%, slightly more than the South East at 1.8% and substantially more than England and Wales at 0.1%. The different areas of Kent show a very mixed picture with Dover and Tunbridge Wells showing increases of 11.7% and 10.1% respectively but Ashford, Canterbury, Swale and Maidstone all seeing decreasing prices.

New build average prices (see chart) have stayed the same or increased slightly in the west and north of the county and decreased slightly in the east, with the exception of Canterbury. The challenging affordability picture and oversupply in some parts of Kent, help explain why housebuilders are reporting more difficulty selling properties on some sites, and why housing market activity has been subdued in recent months. There were 87,010 completed house transactions in the UK in August, 16% lower than August 2022 and 1% higher than July 2023. (Gov.uk)

Some housebuilders have stopped buying land for the time being despite land prices having dropped 10 to 11% from their peak. Nonetheless some volume housebuilders are

# 2%

Average increase in Kent house prices Q2 2022 to Q2 2023.  
Land Registry

re-starting building and SME housebuilders may do so now construction and labour costs are levelling out, although financing costs are still high. More properties are expected to come onto the market in the near future.

**Kent continues to be attractive to Londoners, especially those interested in rural locations.** For Londoners and all house purchasers, the important factors in location have in some cases changed from where the station is, to how good the internet speed is, and how sustainable/cheap to run the property is.

**In several areas of mid and east Kent which fall in the River Stour catchment area, nutrient neutrality continues to be a problem.** Although some sites are finding acceptable on-site solutions such as reed beds or constructing their own wastewater disposal plant, nutrient neutrality continues to be a problem, resulting in a backlog of applications which is taking its toll on the number of homes built. The government has announced its intention to address this situation.

**Despite all these challenges, residential schemes continue to be brought forward and built out.** The first 8,500 homes at Otterpool Park near Hythe were approved by Folkestone & Hythe District Council in April 2023. The developers are a company set up by the council and 22% of the houses will be affordable. At Ebbsfleet Garden City, 3,383 of the planned 15,000 homes have been completed. For more information, see the Ebbsfleet Garden City section on page 29.

**In Kings Hill, Bellway also has construction underway over four separate housing areas to provide a total of 350 homes of various sizes and affordable housing, along with open space.** Bellway recently acquired from Countryside Properties their 132 home scheme, ranging from 2 bedroom apartments to 5 bedroom houses and construction is underway. Clarion Housing Group has delivered 166 homes,

## Average new build price range by location Residential new build land values by district council

Location	New build average price achieved (£/ft²) Houses & Apartments	
	June 2022	June 2023
Ashford	£330 – £475	£320 – £475
Canterbury	£385 – £650	£385 – £660
Dartford	£425 – £555	£425 – £555
Dover	£305 – £500	£305 – £480
Folkestone and Hythe	£350 – £650	£350 – £625
Gravesham	£400 – £525	£400 – £525
Maidstone	£375 – £525	£375 – £525
Medway	£340 – £475	£340 – £475
Sevenoaks	£575 – £950	£585 – £970
Swale	£305 – £475	£305 – £475
Thanet	£325 – £550	£325 – £530
Tonbridge and Malling	£450 – £600	£450 – £610
Tunbridge Wells	£475 – £800	£475 – £815

Source: RPC Land & New Homes

of which around two thirds are affordable. Anchor Lifestyle Developments has completed construction of its 75 assisted living apartments for the over 55's and the first residents are already in occupation. Aldi opened in Autumn 2022. Planning permission has been granted to Aspire, care home developers, for the site known as 50 Gibson Drive.

**Major progress has been made on delivery of the masterplan for 1,000 new homes and 107,639ft² (10,000m²) of commercial space, at the harbour in Folkestone.**

The site's owner, Folkestone Harbour & Seafront Development Company, has secured planning permission and is awaiting reserved matters approval for more than 200 new homes across three plots, and applied for permission for another 100 homes on another plot. Shoreline – the development of 84 apartments, townhouses, duplexes and penthouses – is almost complete and the site has been soft-launched for sales.

**A 4,000-home 'garden city' – Mountfield Park, in south Canterbury has been given the final sign-off** after developers Corinthian Homes agreed to help to fund





**New housing at Pottery Grove, Deal.**

improved roads, schools and healthcare facilities. The 550 acre site is also set to have two new primary schools, offices, community spaces, sports facilities, and a health centre, and is likely to take up to 20 years to fully develop.

**Quinn Homes have been active. 103 homes have now been completed and sold at Pottery Grove in Deal, with a further 20 started.** Build has also commenced on 25 apartments in a statement new building at the entrance to Pottery Grove which is the redevelopment of a brownfield site and encompasses a new relief road in partnership with SELEP and Dover District Council. At Eddington Park, Herne Bay development continues. More than 70% of the homes were sold to local first-time buyers. Construction has now started on the first phase of Grove Park in Sellindge, a 162-home development which is the largest EPC 'A' rated new development in Kent.

**In a planning case of national interest, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove rejected Berkeley's 166 home scheme in Cranbrook.** Berkeley have applied to the High Court for a statutory review of the decision following the plans being previously approved by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the planning inspector.

**Proposals continue to come forward for later living accommodation.** In addition to the Aspire proposals at Kings Hill, plans for a later living community of more than 500 homes has been approved at an old gravel quarry site in Aylesford. The development around a lake at Aylesford Quarry is for a complex of 250-age restricted homes for the over 55s, plus 191 extra-care homes and apartments for the over 65s, and an 80-bed care home. Churchill retirement homes have purchased a site in north Canterbury for a new development.

**Rents continue to rise and while increases may ease a little as the year continues, they are still forecast to rise 6.5% in 2023 (Savills) given the lack of homes to rent and inflationary pressure on landlords.** Rising costs, labour shortages and economic uncertainty have slowed the growth of the Build to Rent market after a rapid expansion, but 50,000 were nonetheless under construction nationwide in June 2023.

**It is hard to predict how the cost of living, mortgage rates and changes in house prices will affect housebuilding and housebuilders over late 2023 and into 2024,** but with price drops levelling out in recent months, it is expected that the market will settle down somewhat during 2024.

### House price change in Kent, South East and England and Wales to end Q2, 2023

Location	Change Q2 2022 to Q2 2023	Average price Q2 2022	Average price Q2 2023
Ashford	-2.2%	£390,505	£381,757
Canterbury	-1.3%	£397,295	£392,172
Dartford	0.7%	£380,551	£383,426
Dover	11.7%	£335,965	£375,123
Folkestone and Hythe	3.8%	£336,001	£348,850
Gravesham	1.8%	£369,851	£376,576
Maidstone	-3.8%	£393,546	£378,623
Medway	0.4%	£317,917	£319,140
Sevenoaks	-7.0%	£667,647	£621,156
Swale	-4.6%	£337,896	£322,506
Thanet	2.2%	£347,769	£355,524
Tonbridge and Malling	2.6%	£463,785	£475,685
Tunbridge Wells	10.1%	£533,437	£587,304
Kent	2.0%	£408,299	£416,528
South East	1.80%	£450,554	£458,685
England and Wales	0.1%	£359,382	£359,728

Source: Land Registry



**Proposals for housing for sale, Stangrove Estate, Edenbridge.**

## Leisure and Tourism Performance

### Sector performance

Visit Kent's latest Economic Impact Model shows signs of recovery for Kent's tourism industry with the value of Kent's visitor economy increasing to £2.6bn, a 60% increase from 2020, and 51.5 million combined day and overnight trips undertaken in the county in 2021, compared to 33.4 million in 2020.

The number of tourism jobs across the Garden of England also increased by 18%, to 58,791 and accounted for 8% of total employment in Kent in 2021, despite the government furlough scheme ending in September that year.

While the tourism and hospitality picture remained challenging throughout the region in 2021, these figures do show that the county's visitor economy performed above the national average across several areas. The overall results show that Kent benefitted from extremely high levels of domestic overnight tourism spending. When compared to the national growth of 64%, Kent's domestic overnight tourism spend increased by an incredible 97% on 2020, generating £477m in 2021. This is indicative of the strong tourism product in Kent that appealed to consumers.

Following evidence of a stronger recovery than expected, VisitBritain has upgraded their inbound tourism forecast for 2023. They now forecast 37.5 million inbound visitors, 92% of 2019 levels, spending £30.9bn, up 9%. This is largely due to spend from visitors from USA up 42% to a record £6bn, further supported by strong spend figures from major European markets, including France and Spain. It has also recently been announced that the UK has been added to China's list of safe places to travel to and it is expected that this will see the return of this traditionally high-spend market.

The Visit Kent Business Barometer has shown that our average occupancy rate for serviced accommodation in

# 51.5m

**Day and overnight trips to Kent and Medway in 2021, a 54% increase on 2020.**

Visit Kent Economic Impact Model

2022 remained high and above national average at 78%, with it reaching almost 90% during the summer months. These figures demonstrate that there is demand for overnight stays in the county and opportunities for more good-quality accommodation to meet this demand.

Following our attendance at The Annual Hotel Conference last year, we have already seen interest from investors and hotel brands in the development of potential hotel sites around the county. We will continue to build upon this work and will once again attend the conference in partnership with Locate in Kent later this year.

### Emerging trends and consumer behaviour

As expected, financial concerns are the biggest barrier to travel in 2023 according to the latest VisitBritain sentiment

tracker. However, 75% of UK adults still intend to take an overnight UK trip in the next 12 months and will still prioritise spending valuable time with loved ones but will be looking to do this more cost-effectively.

In response to this, the Visit Kent summer 2023 consumer campaign, *It's in Our Nature...* aims to showcase Kent's unique destination offer to strengthen positive perceptions of "Brand Kent" and presents the high-quality experiences on offer to encourage people to stay longer and spend more.

Sustainability is a key theme of the campaign and earlier this year we launched the Kent Tourism Sustainability Action Plan, during Kent Day celebrations at the House of Commons. The action plan is centred on three priority themes of community, nature and climate and provides a framework for the wider sector to use as a roadmap to help play our collective part in tackling and responding to the climate crisis and recovery.

Flexible work patterns continue to impact visitor trends. The latest wave of Kent residents research carried out at the beginning of 2023 showed that in light of the pandemic, 49% of all respondents work from home to a degree. Many indicated that they are using more local cafes and shops as a result, as well as accessing outdoor spaces for walks or cycling more often.



The restored 17th century house, Boys Hall, Ashford.

CREDIT: HOLLAWAY STUDIOS



Globally, we are also seeing a growing trend for ‘bleisure’, mixing business with leisure. This is either extending a business trip for purely leisure reasons or staying longer for a ‘workcation’. The MMGY Travel and Tourism Integrated Advertising Agency’s Portrait of European Meeting & Convention Travel 2023 showed that 60% of business events delegates were likely to extend their business trip. This shows that when people do travel for work, they want to make the most of their time away, looking for new experiences and immersing themselves in local communities.

### Private sector investments

Over the last 12 months, we’ve seen exciting developments from the private sector, some of which include:

**No.42, Margate** – part of the GuestHouse hotel group, the beachfront boutique hotel has 21 stylish bedrooms, four food and drink outlets including rooftop cocktail bar with views across the town, as well as treatment rooms.

**Boys Hall** – following extensive restoration of the 17th Century house in Willesborough, Ashford, Boys Hall offers nine unique bedrooms with restaurant, pub and terrace.

**Richborough Roman Fort** – the English Heritage site located just outside Sandwich reopened in early 2023 following a dramatic transformation of the visitor experience and amphitheatre, showcasing the site’s history as the Roman gateway to Britian.

**Chapel House Estate** – luxury wedding and events venue set in 35 acres (14ha) of land just outside Minster. The estate includes lodge accommodation which sleeps up to 34 people in total, a converted rustic barn and state-of-the-art purpose built events space.

**Uber Boats** – At the end of 2022, Uber Boats by Thames Clippers purchased the world’s oldest surviving cast iron pier, Gravesend Town Pier, expanding the River Bus service further east and helping support the growth of the Thames Estuary.

**Folkestone Harbour Arm** – The thriving Harbour Arm have added six new traders to their collection, strengthening their all year round offer: Portenio, Sail Box, Le Coq Rotisserie, Brewing Brother Beachside, Saffa Bru, Baoboba.



CREDIT: FOLKESTONE HARBOUR & SEAFRONT DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

**Exterior of Brewing Brothers Folkestone Harbour, the largest restaurant to open to date with 3,035ft<sup>2</sup> (282m<sup>2</sup>) outdoor deck for alfresco dining.**

**Tudor Peacock** – due to open in November 2023, the wine bar and shop will serve and sell wines from across Kent, as well as offering tutored wine tasting experiences in the 14th century building in Chilham.

**Luxury hotel chain The Pig** – announced plans for a second location in Kent at Groombridge Place, Tunbridge Wells, opening in 2025. The Pig prides itself on showcasing local produce through their 25-mile radius menu.

**Chapel Down** – gained approval for a new winery in Bridge at Highland Court Farm. This development will also allow them to expand their tourism offer at their Tenterden site.

**London & Paris Hotel** (The former Gillespie’s pub) opened in Folkestone after being transformed into a boutique hotel with a fine-dining restaurant.

**Shepherd Neame** – have invested in several flagship properties around the county including a transformation of the Duke of Cumberland in Whitstable which opened in August and a £1.4m renovation of The Crown Inn, Chislehurst.

### Government funding projects

The visitor economy also benefits from very significant public sector investments secured through the government’s Levelling Up Fund:

- **Ramsgate Future** – Green port, heritage investments and skills and refurbished attractions at the Royal Harbour.
- **Medway** – Development of creative industries, skills and cultural assets.
- **Canterbury** – Improvements to welcome and wayfinding, as well as development of heritage assets and events.
- **Dover Beacon** – Focusing on skills, green space and active travel improvements.
- **Folkestone and Hythe** – Public realm improvements as well as improving welcome and wayfinding for visitors.
- **Sheerness Revival** – Includes leisure investment, skills and public real improvements.

[www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk)

[www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk](http://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk)

Email: [enquiries@visitkent.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@visitkent.co.uk)

## Inward Investment and Sector Focus

The strategic role of Kent is as important to Britain today as it was recognised to be by our ancestors. When Julius Caesar came to Britain in 54BC, he judged the people of Kent to be the most prosperous in the country due to the area's ability to produce and trade.

Today's government leverages Kent and Medway's strategic location, diverse economy and potential for growth to boost GDP and deliver its levelling up agenda – creating jobs, improving infrastructure and enhancing economic competitiveness. Kent and Medway is the UK's South East gateway and expansion here means greater prosperity for the whole country.

Over the next 25 years, the Kent and Medway area can deliver some 250,000 new jobs and over 230,000 new homes – adding £23bn Gross Value Added (GVA), which is an increase of nearly one percent, to the nation's total GVA.<sup>1</sup>

As we works towards achieving net zero, Kent and Medway's future jobs prospects will come from sectors including new methods of food production, evolving communication technologies, life science R&D, advanced manufacturing and green energy.

In these sectors, the Kent and Medway has the potential to lead the nation's economy through the skills being built, the investment being made and the innovation taking place right now.

### Tomorrow's World

Science led innovation that is being developed here in Kent and Medway, supported by world-leading research and clusters of innovators across science, engineering and technology more generally, have chosen to build their success in the area.

Some 59,500 jobs are supported by Kent's life science sector, accounting for 9.3% of all local jobs. The sector continues to deliver with the number of jobs increasing by 16.7% over the last five years.

Discovery Park has recently opened a new flexible laboratory complex designed for start-ups and growing companies, part of a mission to become a world leading science park over the next five years, driving improvements in healthcare through innovation and collaboration.

Kent Science Park announced the launch of 14,000ft<sup>2</sup> (1,300m<sup>2</sup>) of new start up and scale up laboratories. This followed a £2.5m (US\$ 3.175m) building refurbishment project. It will add to 565,000ft<sup>2</sup> (52,490m<sup>2</sup>) of existing research and development space with a tenant base that spans life sciences, virology, food technology, environmental technology and drug R&D.

Growing Kent and Medway is Britain's world-class research, innovation and enterprise cluster supporting growth in technology-driven horticulture, fresh produce packaging, and food and drink processing and its supply chain. It is helping to support and scale up business growth.

Investment has included a green tech-hub for advanced infrastructure, including a wine innovation centre at NIAB, East Malling; the Maidstone Innovation Centre at Kent Medical Campus; the opening of a Medway Food Innovation Centre at the University of Greenwich campus in Chatham Maritime; and a biotechnology hub for sustainable food and drink at the University of Kent. It includes an accelerator programme offering support for businesses at all stages of development who have invested in innovative food and drink production.

Kent and Meway is leading the development of steaks made from plants, animal food made from seaweed and autonomous vehicles letting technology take the strain. Medicines made from cannabis, hydrogen fuel plants fuelling buses, growing fruit in controlled environments all year round and systems that halve the amount of household water that goes down the drain are also being developed.

This is a taste of tomorrow's world and it's already happening in Kent and Medway today.



Click on the QR code to download the full Locate in Kent Investment Prospectus 'Investing in Kent: for future generations'.

1. Source: University of Kent - see methodology in Locate in Kent Investment Prospectus



### Enabling Investment

Since Locate in Kent's inception in 1997, our mission has always been to create new jobs through supporting investment in economic growth, especially inward investment. Locate In Kent's consistent approach to delivery is based on three unreplicable assets, our network, our insights and our pipeline. No other organisation could reproduce these assets that have been established in the area over decades.

Between April 2019 and July 2023, Locate in Kent supported more than 330 business investment projects in the Kent and Medway area. We have overseen some 9,427 jobs created. With 4,139 jobs from 87 inward investment and major projects, 44% of those inward investment projects were Foreign Direct Investments (FDI).

The Locate in Kent Property Portal handled almost 68,000 property searches (over 1300 each week) and registered over 26,000 new users to access the site in the year to 30 August 2023. Each user typically looks at four properties. Half of the property searches were for industrial space or employment development land, the outcome being 341 property enquiries generated and distributed directly to agents.

Right now, Locate in Kent's active pipeline contained 67 employers with requirements for industrial space. The mean requirement is 43,751ft<sup>2</sup> (4,065m<sup>2</sup>).

### Levelling Up Kent and Medway

Government can continue to leverage the area's strategic location, diverse economy and potential for GDP growth and deliver its levelling up agenda – creating jobs, improving infrastructure and enhancing the area's economic competitiveness.

Investing in Kent will reduce the gap between economically prosperous areas those that have traditionally been left behind, fostering more inclusive growth and prosperity for the future.

Locate in Kent has set out the bright legacy for future generations if the investment needed today is enabled, allowing Kent and Medway to continue to underpin Britain's economy for the next century and beyond.

## State-of-the-art lab? Manufacturing facility? Grade A office? Co-working space?

When it comes to finding the right place in Kent and Medway to grow your business, location is everything.

Our **Property Portal** makes the job so much easier, allowing you to search for available **business units** or **office space** that meet your needs.

Connected to all leading **estate agents** you'll quickly have a list of potential locations that tick all the right boxes.

**155k** property searches  
since August 2021

**50k** new users accessed the site  
since August 2021



Scan to learn more >



# Kent Growth Space Initiative

## Join Locate in Kent in the 'Big Conversation' on growing Kent's employment space if you are an:

- Investor
- Employer
- Occupier
- Agent
- Developer
- Landowner
- Local and national government

This 'Big Conversation' has now been running for 12 months and generating valuable feedback about the employment space requirements of businesses, investors and other organisations.

A proposal is now being developed, for a practical study to deliver against the objective of unlocking business and employment opportunities. Feedback will be invited from industry and other stakeholders.

The work will make a full assessment of individual sites. This will include the site's prospects for delivering a supply of new employment land and premises suitable for a whole range of organisations whether private enterprises, public or third sector.

### How would this be done?

A brownfield-first approach would be adopted in order to consider the potential for regeneration, and the extension or consolidation of existing sites, where practical. Land close to public and private transport routes and existing infrastructure would also be prioritised. This could include smaller sites and those already assessed as unsuitable for other forms of development but with realistic potential for employment-related development.



CREDIT: GOODMAN

### Crossways 241.

Responding flexibly to accommodate existing Kent businesses and sectors will also be a priority. It is recognised that ensuring these businesses have access to modern, flexible and affordable space is central to retaining and enhancing Kent's attractiveness as a business location.

Local authority and other public sector assets would ideally be part of the site assessment process, including mixed-use sites. This might include provision for home or garage-based businesses in need of small 'lock up' units or other new models for providing such entrepreneurial workspace.

The output from this work will be practical, focussing on a list of sensibly considered commercially viable site options. These could be worked up into fully appraised development schemes, by investors or developers with an appetite to do this. The aim of this piece of work would be to establish a full and comprehensive 'long list' of prospective sites within a functional economic geography, ranked according to how they score for deliverability when assessed against standard criteria.

### Taking this work forward

The intention is to explore a co-commission between local property agents or site finders and a planning consultancy, to partner with local authorities engaged in economic development.

This will ensure that full use is made of existing desktop and other research/consultation activity linked to Local Plans and economic growth strategies. This would include employment land assessments, previous calls for sites, mapping of utilities and digital connectivity, sector strategies, local stakeholder details and active property or land agents.

We would welcome contact from businesses, investors, developers or anyone within the property sector who may have comments or suggestions about how we might best take forward this work. We will also be contacting the database of interested parties who have already expressed an interest in the 'Big Conversation' about Kent's future employment space.

**Registration is open with Locate in Kent, the inward investment agency for Kent at:**

[www.locateinkent.com/big-conversation](http://www.locateinkent.com/big-conversation)

**Further information**

[www.locateinkent.com](http://www.locateinkent.com)



## Kent County Council Village and Community Hall Grant Scheme

Community buildings are at the heart of village life and are an essential and indispensable feature of any area, offering a place where all members of the community, young and old, can meet. Such buildings are important components in sustaining inclusive and active communities, particularly in rural areas where fewer venues and services are available. They have developed an increasingly multi-purpose role as a social centre, arts space, sports venue and now with education, health or retail services – usually all within easy walking distance.

The economic contribution of the network of community centres in Kent is significant. They support jobs, either directly (e.g. cleaners, caretakers, grounds maintenance) or indirectly (pre-school staff, shop and post-office staff, fitness instructors, caterers). They also make use of local builders, electricians and other local trades and businesses.

In Kent there are around 400 village halls and many more community sports and recreation centres, social clubs, and church halls, and their importance to the health of our communities is growing. The majority are small charities run by local volunteer trustees and are heavily reliant on fundraising. A leaky roof, poor kitchen or toilet facilities, a cold, damp hall or simply not enough space, leads management committees to turn to Kent County Council's Village and Community Hall Grant Scheme.

Over the last 25 years, over 200 community halls throughout Kent have benefitted from over £4m in grants from Kent County Council to support the building, refurbishment and development of facilities that provide vital space for the communities they serve.

### Recent examples of supported projects:

#### Painters Forstal – new community hall

Residents of Painters Forstal, near Faversham, lost their meeting place when it was sold several years ago and devoted much time and effort in a bid to build their own community hall. Completed in spring 2023, the state-of-the-art building boasts modern amenities and ample space for all sorts of community activities. It is equipped with a large, versatile main hall that can be divided into two completely separate rooms, a fully-equipped kitchen, and a light and airy entrance lobby that is perfect for smaller groups and meetings. Floor to ceiling bi-fold doors open out on to a covered patio space and an enclosed garden area looking over the surrounding fields.

#### St Faith's Centre – new community hall

St Faith's has a long history of service and support to the residents of Ringlestone and Springfield, Maidstone. The previous hall on the corner of Chatham Road and Moncktons Lane was a much-loved and much-used community facility. It was built in 1935 but was determined as being no longer fit for purpose. The new and specially designed, multi-purpose building, opened on 30th July 2023.

The centre is now a modern, bright, accessible, and safe environment for both the existing community and those in the new communities being developed close by. The centre will be both a community centre and the local Anglican Church.

#### For more information about the grant scheme:

[www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/community-grants-and-funding/village-and-community-hall-grant-scheme](http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/community-grants-and-funding/village-and-community-hall-grant-scheme)



St Faith's Centre new community hall, Maidstone.

CREDIT: MARK BEEVES/KENT COUNTY COUNCIL



New village hall Painters Forstal, near Faversham.

CREDIT: MARK BEEVES/KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

## Green Infrastructure

### Low Carbon Kent

Kent and Medway firms have continued to benefit from Low Carbon Across the South and East (LoCASE) funding for SMEs with projects to improve the efficiency and performance of their buildings and operations as well as business development grants for those in this growing sector. In the financial year 2022/23 the Low Carbon Kent team managed to support 266 SMEs across Kent and Medway with £1.6m in grant funding. This will help them save over 1,000 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> annually, reduce utility costs by upwards of £700,000 and help create 80 new jobs in the low carbon economy. In addition it will launch 10 new products and services and support the wider transition regionally to a more efficient sustainable future.

Green infrastructure projects include lighting, glazing, insulation, heating upgrades and renewable energy generation with around 50% of these using local installers, architects and other suppliers in the sector.

### Grants help make KCC's buildings more energy efficient

The KCC Energy Team have been successful in two further Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme bids, which both focus on heat decarbonisation. The first bid was for over £430,000 to replace the gas boilers at Dover Discovery Centre with an air source heat pump. The work will be carried out over the next two years as part of a wider retrofit programme.

The second bid was for over £1.4m to fund air source heat pumps in Worrall House, at Kings Hill, Yew Tree Centre in Dartford, Ashford Gateway Plus, and the offices in Oxford Road, Maidstone. The projects will be completed over the next year and the grants will also help fund:

- a full Business Management System (BMS) upgrade at Worrall House;

- double glazing, new BMS, and LED lighting for Yew Tree House;
- lighting (LED) at Ashford Gateway
- double glazing, new BMS, LED lighting and solar panels at Oxford Road

### Kent County Council's first Solar Park – fully operational

Back in 2021 KCC made a successful bid to government for a grant to reduce our own energy costs and carbon emissions ranging from replacing lights, installing double glazing, heat pumps and solar panels on our roofs. But by far the largest of the projects was the purchase of a large (21MW) solar park. The original site in Kent fell through but an alternative site that met all the grant criteria was found in Somerset. This site completed its commissioning phase earlier this year and is now operating at full capacity. It is known as Bowerhouse 2, covers 94 acres (34ha) and has 39,256 solar panels on stilts so the land can still serve as flood alleviation and grazing.

In May, it produced 50% more electricity than KCC used. KCC benefits not just from a rebate on our electricity costs but the income from the surplus generated. As well as reducing KCC's energy costs, the solar park is expected to generate at least £1m a year for KCC for the next 40 years.

### Managing flooding in Gravesham

KCC Flood and Water Management Team has gained funding from the Lower Thames Crossing fund for a Surface Water Management Plan for Gravesend. This is the first of nine projects from KCC to be approved. The project will look at causes of surface water flooding and opportunities to reduce the risk in Gravesend, with the intention of developing schemes to reduce flood risk, such as retrofitting sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS).

### Environment Act update

The government has now published the long-awaited response to the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) regulations and implementation consultation, which closed in February 2022. There are still many unknowns and the regulations and guidance are, as yet, outstanding, but the requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain becomes mandatory in November 2023 (April 2024 for small sites). KCC's Biodiversity Net Gain Officer was appointed in March, funded by KCC and the Kent districts councils and will work with the planning authorities to ensure Kent is ready for the implementation. Government has also published the regulations and statutory guidance for Local Nature Recovery Strategies, providing KCC with more detail on how the authority will be expected to develop the Strategy for Kent and Medway.



Bowerhouse 2.

CREDIT: LASER ENERGY/COMMERCIAL SERVICES KENT LTD



## Solar Together Kent

The map shows the encouraging spread of solar installations on buildings across Kent and Medway. As solar panels become a more frequent sight in residential areas, installations are likely to become socially normalised and incentivised.

The collective buying scheme, Solar Together Kent, is currently in its third phase and allows residents and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises to purchase solar panels and storage batteries with vetted installers, at prices lower than the general market price. Applicants can register their interest across spring and autumn registration periods each year.

Over 1,370 homeowners accepted this offer from the first phase of the scheme earlier this year and over 1,000 surveys and 580 installations were completed by the end of August.

In 2022, throughout Solar Together Kent Phase 2:

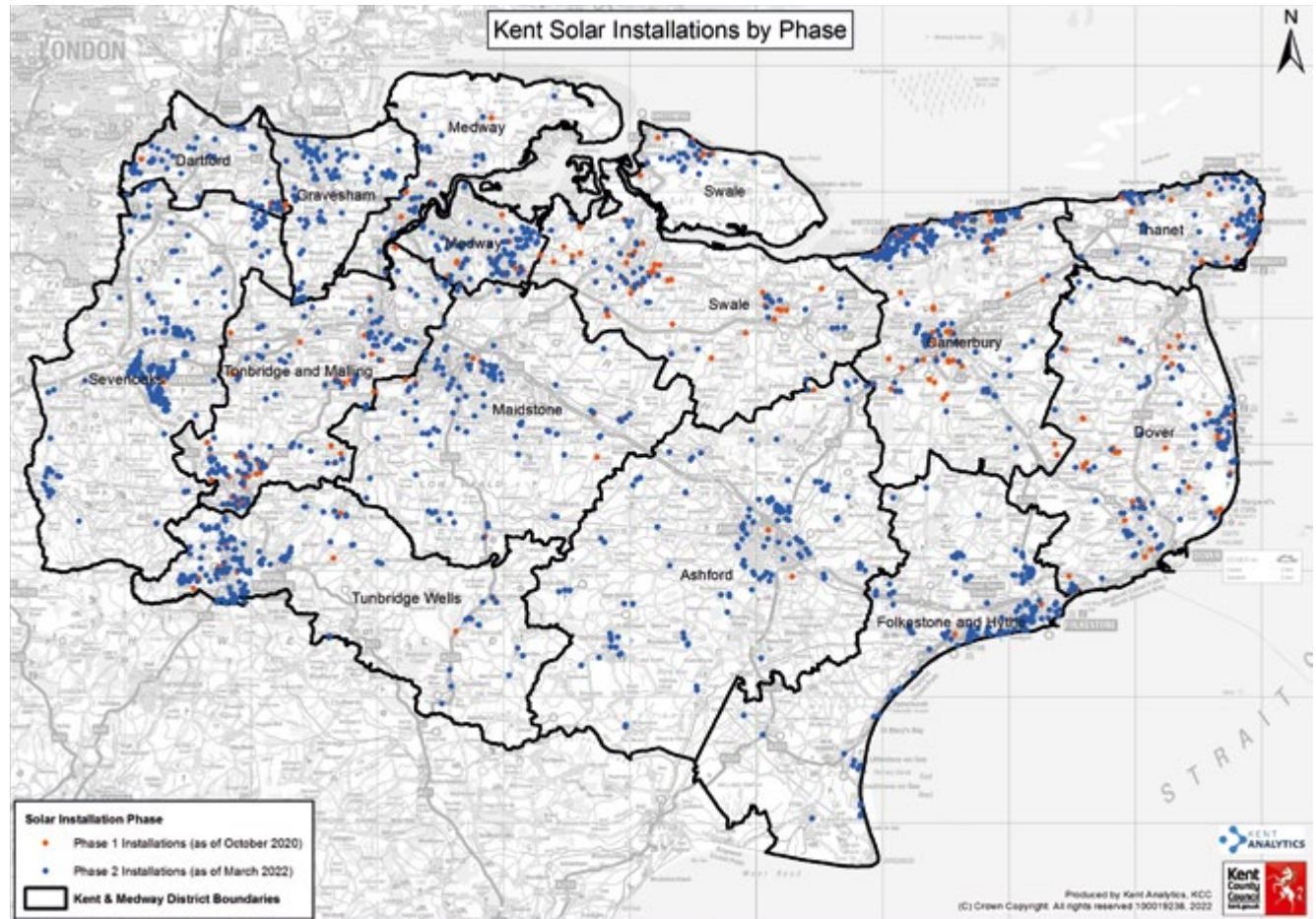
- Over 11,600 residents registered their interest.\*
- Over 1,470 Solar PV systems were installed, totalling 6.7MW of installed capacity.
- 95 additional customers had battery storage installed.
- Kent residents invested over £13.8m in renewables, which is set to deliver approximately 39,000 tonnes of carbon reduction over 25 years.

All Kent's district councils and Medway Council now promote the scheme and a direct mailout was sent to over 100,000 residents across the spring and autumn periods in Phase 3 this year.

So far in 2023, during Solar Together Kent Phase 3:

- Over 9,300 residents and SMEs registered their interest.
- Of almost 1,400 surveys and subsequent installations planned after registrations in the spring, over 1,000 roof surveys and 700 installations were completed by mid-October 2023.

It is expected that Solar Together Kent will continue to build on progress so far and contribute to county-wide emissions reduction targets as well as national home efficiency targets.



\*Expressions of interest may not translate into installations due to a roof not being suitable, the financial, or other circumstances of the customer.





# Infrastructure and Regeneration

## North Kent

### DARTFORD

The borough of Dartford is in the heart of the Thames Estuary growth area at a pivotal point between Greater London, Kent and Essex. It has excellent connections to central London, the South East and UK and the continent via the strategic road and rail network. The intersection of the A2 and M25 and the Dartford Crossing provides a unique locational advantage to attract investment interest and drive growth. Dartford railway station is the most popular in Kent with Elizabeth Line services at Abbey Wood (to Canary Wharf, the West End and Heathrow) just one stop and 12-minutes away by train. Businesses and residents are now closer than ever before to the London Underground – the first Elizabeth Line services opened in May 2022.

Latest Census data confirms that Dartford had the fastest growing population proportionately in England (20.0% increase 2011-2021). Economic indicators highlight the strong economy, with Dartford in the top 5% in terms of employment and in the top 20% for GVA per head, workplace earnings and job density.

Development opportunities in the borough are supported by an up-to-date Local Plan, a consistent future 5-year housing land supply and a well-developed Infrastructure Plan. Funding mechanisms, including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), are in place to bring forward the infrastructure required to support new development. New infrastructure plans to support this growth are progressing and delivering.

Improvements to the A2 Bean and Ebbsfleet junctions are now complete serving demand from Bluewater shopping centre and major development at Ebbsfleet Garden City. The proposed large mixed-use site at Ebbsfleet Central,



The 'Glimmer Twins' sculpture, High Street, Dartford.

providing a high profile, high quality urban hub for the Garden City at Ebbsfleet International Station, will also see significant new infrastructure and investment. The location will also benefit from the upgrade to the national road network when the proposed Lower Thames Crossing comes forward to relieve the Dartford Crossing and increase the resilience of the local road system.

### Economy

Strong economic development interest in Dartford was highlighted by the establishment of a state-of-the-art distribution facility for Amazon, on the former Littlebrook Power Station site. Further business premises, offering a

variety of unit sizes, are now being released at Littlebrook, close to M25/A282 Junction 1A.

### Dartford town centre

Progress has been made in taking forward private and public investment.

Dartford Town Centre Framework sets a high standard of development, identifying improvements to accessibility and environment. New development is coming forward in and around the town centre, with many new homes occupied already and a further 2,300 dwellings identified to come forward in the new Local Plan. It is expected that the increased

CREDIT: AMY GOODMAN/DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL



levels of residential development in the town centre will significantly support the future vibrancy of the town.

Private investment on key sites is being complemented by £12m of public funding for transport and public realm improvements. This has increased to £19m with the addition of s106 contributions, CIL funding and council funding in order to extend the improvements to all key streets in the town.

A much enhanced and pedestrian-friendly new space, Market Square, has been created linking the High Street with Central Park. This delivers an enhanced setting for new residential and commercial development under construction as well as providing a great new events space for the town centre. An uninviting subway is being replaced with street level crossings and a new piece of landscaped public realm. Bus stop locations have been rationalised and new green roof bus shelters are being rolled out across the phases.

Improvements to the High Street itself are nearing completion including new granite paving, lighting and landscaping and a new enhanced space at One Bell Corner providing a destination piece of public art, Amy Goodman's 'The Glimmer Twins' set against the backdrop of a high quality green wall, all unveiled in August 2023. High quality durable granite is being used as surface treatments across the town centre with bespoke planters and steps featuring across the town. Further phases are planned to come forward over the next two years improving cycling and walking connections and signal improvement at junctions.

These works complement the recent regeneration of the Acacia site, at the northern end of Central Park. The site now has a number of refurbished buildings offering opportunities for leisure and hospitality, much improved public car parking and significant improvements to the public realm and the River Darent.

Residential development immediately north of the town centre has strong developer interest and further sites in the area are identified in the new Local Plan. South of the town centre, at Lowfield Street, construction is well underway. The proposal will provide 711 homes in total and support the continued rejuvenation of the town centre.

**For further information:**  
[www.dartford.gov.uk/policy-1/planning-policy](http://www.dartford.gov.uk/policy-1/planning-policy)

### **EBBSFLEET DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (EDC)**

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation celebrated the 3000th home in Ebbsfleet in July 2022. Despite the uncertainty of the housing market, 632 homes were completed in 22/23. The delivery rate at Ebbsfleet continues to be one of the highest in the country and there are more than ten times the number of homes in Ebbsfleet compared to when the Corporation was established in 2015.

#### **Residential Updates (numbers to date):**

Detailed Planning Consent	5,603
Homes completed	3,705
Affordable Homes	1,155

#### **Green and blue space**

In July 2022, EDC celebrated the opening of Platinum Jubilee Park in Ebbsfleet and now the final phase of consultation is currently underway for the Major Urban Park in Ebbsfleet. Running through the centre of Whitecliffe, between Alkerden and Ashmere, it will be the largest area of parkland in Whitecliffe and will connect Castle Hill Lakes to Alkerden Lane. Spanning 48 acres (9.71ha) equivalent to 24 football pitches the park will contain a new public square, sports and

recreational facilities and connections to the wider footpath/cycle network. Detailed proposals will lead to a submission in late 2023 to provide a public space for both new residents and those in Swanscombe and Greenhithe.

#### **Power to Ebbsfleet**

A new electricity grid site has been energised, providing essential new power infrastructure for the development. The main grid site will be supported by two main electrical substations, required by the new development, to power up to 15,000 new homes, schools and businesses. UK Power Networks' new grid substation is a central part of an electrical engineering project that will deliver 77 megawatts of power, unlocking the potential for new neighbourhoods, homes, jobs, schools and leisure facilities, and could also enable the connection of low carbon technologies as the UK progresses towards Net Zero.

#### **Ebbsfleet Central**

EDC has submitted the outline application for the first phase of new development located around Ebbsfleet International Railway Station. This is the first application of the Ebbsfleet Central Masterplan, named Ebbsfleet Central East, and split into three parcels – Northfleet Rise, Station Gardens



**Platinum Jubilee Park, Ebbsfleet Garden City.**

CREDIT: EBBSFLEET DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

and River Park. Current parking facilities around Ebbsfleet International Station will be re-provided and the area transformed into modern new offices and contemporary apartments. There will be places for people to enjoy arts and culture alongside fitness and wellbeing, with amenities to support the growing and existing communities of north Kent.

The outline application for Ebbsfleet Central East paves the way for further progression towards delivering 'the heart' of Ebbsfleet, comprising of mixed use residential and commercial opportunities spanning up to 5 million ft<sup>2</sup> (485,000m<sup>2</sup>). The plan for Ebbsfleet Central East comprises approximately 2,100 homes, up to 1,076,391ft<sup>2</sup> (100,000m<sup>2</sup>) of office floorspace, and up to 107,639ft<sup>2</sup> (10,000m<sup>2</sup>) of retail floor space to include supermarkets, bars, restaurants, and cafés. Alongside this, a Health and Wellbeing Hub has been proposed for primary healthcare (GP services) and other community wellbeing space.

### Alkerden

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation have approved Henley Development's application to bring forward a new District Centre in Whitecliffe, to be known as Alkerden Market Centre. The proposals include 83 affordable homes, a nursery, gym, neighbourhood green public open space and Morrisons supermarket and café. The development will provide amenities to the growing community and create over 100 jobs. The scheme has been designed to achieve BREEAM Excellent and will deliver against a number of garden city principles:

- mixed tenure homes and affordable housing types,
- provision of a range of jobs,
- enhance the natural environment,
- green infrastructure network,
- strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities
- integrated and accessible transport systems with walking cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.



### Proposals for Northfleet Harbourside.

Alkerden Market Centre will be the centerpiece to the wider development, with commercial, retail and community facilities. On completion, the Fastrack service is proposed to run through Alkerden Market Centre, providing efficient, connected transport for residents. There are also plans for a community building, Alkerden Hub, which is proposed to include lifelong learning centre and faith space.

Planning permission has also been granted to Redrow Homes for 91 units in the growing Alkerden Village. Redrow will deliver the scheme, designed to embrace the local topography, providing a high-quality scheme with a diverse range of home styles to meet the needs of occupiers. It includes a range of apartment buildings and housing overlooking the adjoining green infrastructure and open spaces as well as providing informal pocket orchards, edible forage trails and community growing beds for residents to enjoy. It will also provide a range of homes for affordable rent to address local need and help tackle current shortages of socially rented larger family housing.

### Northfleet

Bellway Homes will build 130 homes as part of a riverside regeneration project after securing approval from Ebbsfleet Development Corporation. Harbour Village will provide a link between the existing community and the River Thames. It is being built on the former Northfleet Cement Works and, once complete, will provide over 550 homes including affordable housing, new open spaces, a Fastrack bus link and a community centre. The first phase is underway with 121 homes and Chimney View Park, the first open space at Harbour Village to be opening soon. The proposals will incorporate and preserve historic features relating to the site's rich history as a cement works which were uncovered when construction began on site. The wider development at Northfleet will create new employment spaces, restaurants, bars, shops and a community centre. An expansive area of parkland is proposed with a playing pitch and heritage interpretation park.



## GRAVESHAM

At the heart of the Thames Estuary, Gravesham is poised to benefit from major infrastructure and regeneration projects. This last year has seen momentum build with key projects completed, in delivery and in the pipeline.

The borough has 11km of Thames riverfront and excellent transport links to London and the South East, from High Speed One (23 minutes to Central London, 17 minutes to Stratford International), to the prospect of rapid river transport via Uber Boats by Thames Clippers.

Further regionally significant transport infrastructure is being considered, from the Lower Thames Crossing to Crossrail. Gravesham is the gateway to London, the Estuary and Kent.

### Place Making on Gravesham Riverside

Despite economic challenges, Gravesham Riverside projects are in delivery and in the pipeline, including emerging plans for a borough-wide design code and the creation of Gravesham Community Investment Partnership between Gravesham Borough Council and Hill Group.

The Charter is a pioneering partnership between Rosherville, the council's wholly owned company, and developers Reef Group, for 242 new built-to-rent homes and resident and public parking on Gravesend riverside. Show flats have been completed and despite recent challenges around the build, the project will complete in 2024, with locally led marketing by building managers, Touchstone, starting in the coming months. The project has been shortlisted for a national

housing award and is part of an exciting, mixed-use vision for the town centre.

Gravesham's visitor economy is growing swiftly. Uber Boat by Thames Clippers' plans to establish a service from Gravesend have taken a step forward with their acquisition of Town Pier, as part of a strategy to extend the reach of the service east along the Thames Estuary and further into Kent. Trial services have sold out and a commuter service is planned. This is part of shifting the gravity of the town back to the river, with improvements planned to St Andrew's Gardens, and a growing independent offer on the historic High Street of small businesses, artisan makers, tap-rooms and restaurants.

A key gateway site to Gravesend's historic High Street, the former Woolworths building at 1-2 King Street has also completed, providing ground floor commercial units, with Starbucks coming to town.

Works have started on the former police station site, with plans for 75 homes for retirement living being brought forward by Churchill. Joseph Homes is working to unlock regeneration at Albion Waterside – a mixed-use, place-led riverside scheme that will deliver up to 1,500 homes and 48,438ft<sup>2</sup> (4,500m<sup>2</sup>) of commercial space.

Northfleet Harbourside is a project subject to an outline planning application, proposing a 50 acre (20.23ha) new neighborhood with Ebbsfleet United Football Club at its heart. A vibrant place bringing jobs, creating opportunities, and delivering new local services for all the community. The proposals include a new multi-purpose 8,000 capacity stadium with improved facilities and function space for the club, 3,000 jobs, parklands and green public spaces, shops, restaurants/cafes and 3,500 new homes.

Planning consent has been granted for a new leisure centre at the existing Cascades centre. The new building responds to Gravesham's health inequalities and will connect all residents, schools and sports and leisure clubs to an exemplar wet and dry activities centre. It will be a new regional anchor for sports and leisure and set the standards for energy efficiency in line with the council's ambition to be operationally net zero by 2030.



Under construction: The Charter development, Gravesham Riverside, Gravesend.

CREDIT: SARAH KNIGHT/ROSHERVILLE/REEF GROUP

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

### Business Space

Gravesham's creative sectors are seeing speedy growth. The improvement programme has included re-invigorating the 1980's St George's shopping centre. Phase 1 has made the centre more welcoming, attractive and user-friendly. The recently opened council-led St George's Arts Centre turned a vacant unit into a community hub in the heart of the centre, providing a total of 3,500ft<sup>2</sup> (325m<sup>2</sup>) of flexible gallery and co-working space overlooking a public square.

Further plans for St George's Centre are in the pipeline to support Gravesham's creative sectors. The council is bidding for funds to support redevelopment of the retail location as a flexible workspace hub within the town centre, to provide a mix of small office suites alongside a range of bookable spaces, and meet the needs of micro and growing businesses.

### Gravesham Community Investment Partnership (GCIP)

The Hill Group and Gravesham Borough Council formed a new partnership to build affordable homes in the borough. The GCIP will identify locations and develop suitable sites for new council-owned homes, in a bid to help reduce the number of households on the borough's housing register, which currently stands at more than 1,000.

#### For further information:

Email: [Economic.development@gravesham.gov.uk](mailto:Economic.development@gravesham.gov.uk)

## MAIDSTONE

### The Business Capital of Kent

Maidstone is located in the centre of Kent and is the County Town. Whilst being the county's commercial hub and home to over 8,000 businesses from large multi-nationals to niche independents, much of the borough's 152 square miles are set within beautiful rural countryside with charming villages, and

the town straddles the banks of the River Medway.

There are rail connections from the town to London Bridge, Victoria and Charing Cross. Served by the M20 motorway with four junctions and easy access to London airports, international rail services from Ebbsfleet as well as Dover and Tilbury Ports and Eurotunnel services. Maidstone is well placed to provide a genuine alternative to London and other commercial centres in the UK and Europe.

Investors, businesses, young professionals and families are capitalising on these links and the area's competitive office and industrial rents, house prices, outstanding schools, cultural and leisure offer. Maidstone was recognised as the most popular town to move to in Kent. (ONS 2022)



Maidstone Innovation Centre.

### Maidstone Innovation Centre

Maidstone Borough Council's latest flagship investment is the opening of Maidstone Innovation Centre.

Based at the Kent Medical Campus located off Junction 7 of the M20, it is a £14.5m joint investment by Maidstone Borough Council and the European Regional Development Fund. The Innovation Centre offers 30,000ft<sup>2</sup> (2,787m<sup>2</sup>) of space dedicated to supporting the growth of the MedTech & life-science sector. The centre is expected to support over 270 jobs and create £120m of GVA over the first 10 years. Since opening in March 2022 the centre has continued its

performance ahead of projected occupancy levels. It attracted firms such as medical technology manufacturer, XT Biomed and Michelson Diagnostics, the company behind VivoSight, a ground-breaking skin imaging and skin cancer treatment scanner, who made Maidstone Innovation Centre their headquarters, in July 2023.

#### For further information:

[www.kentmedicalcampus.com](http://www.kentmedicalcampus.com)

[www.maidstoneinnovationcentre.co.uk](http://www.maidstoneinnovationcentre.co.uk)

### Maidstone Town Centre

The council is investing in a new Town Centre Strategy and Delivery Plan looking forward to 2050 and to be adopted in 2024. One of the aims of the strategy is to produce clear viable development briefs and planning guidance to inform and attract investment to the town's mixed-use opportunity sites. The purpose of the planning guidance documents are to give a steer to landowners (present and future), as well as their agents and advisors, as to what type of development proposals the council would favour.

### Former Royal Mail Sorting Office

A brownfield site located within Maidstone town centre, close to Maidstone East Station, the site is approximately 3.8 acres (1.53ha) and the borough council will act as developer to directly deliver a mixed tenure scheme with over 200 homes in 2026/27. In addition, the scheme will deliver 14,000ft<sup>2</sup> (1,300m<sup>2</sup>) of commercial space. The development will also deliver significant placemaking and regeneration benefits to the town centre, including new amenity space, and a commercial frontage between the town centre and Maidstone East Station.

### Springfield Library

The council acquired the former Springfield Library site, a brownfield site located on the edge of the town centre in January 2022. It has an indicative capacity to deliver 100+ homes with a mix of tenures. A planning application is expected to be submitted in late 2023.

### Len House

Classic Estates have started construction of a £30m transformation of the Grade 2 listed landmark building in Maidstone town centre designed by architect Guy Hollaway. The scheme will see the restoration of Len House with new build development situated on Mill Street, for a mix of commercial space and 159 new homes.



## LOC8

Clearbell Property Partners acquired the 33 acre (13.4ha) greenfield development site off Junction 8 of the M20 for £5m in 2019. The first phase is now completed and is receiving strong interest from the market. LOC8 is Maidstone's premier commercial park, providing logistics and industrial spaces from 4,004ft<sup>2</sup> (371m<sup>2</sup>) to 58,833ft<sup>2</sup> (5,466m<sup>2</sup>) and office spaces from 11,141ft<sup>2</sup> (1,035m<sup>2</sup>). Phase 2 is now underway.

### For further information:

<https://loc8maidstone.co.uk>

## Net Zero Skills Factory

Appointed as one of eight national skills trail blazers, Mid Kent and North Kent College secured £5.6m of government funding in 2021 to develop a new 'Net Zero Skills Factory' offering both practical and theoretical skills in green construction and technologies. Located at the College's Maidstone Campus, the factory opened in March 2023.

### For further information:

Chris Inwood, Economic Development Manager

Email: [chrisinwood@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:chrisinwood@maidstone.gov.uk)

[www.businessinmaidstone.co.uk](http://www.businessinmaidstone.co.uk)



MidKent and North Kent College new 'Net Zero Skills Factory', Maidstone Campus.

## MEDWAY

### Medway Council

The largest urban conurbation in the South East outside London, Medway offers a well-connected business location. There are excellent transport links including the M2, three universities plus further education and significant brownfield sites offering development opportunities for residential and commercial investment.

Next year marks 40 years since the closure of the Royal Naval Dockyard, which had a significant economic impact locally. Now experiencing a renaissance with its roots firmly based in its heritage, it is ensuring Medway offers a great place to live, learn and work.

Location and access to the Thames Estuary continue to sustain Medway's growth, whether at Medway City Estate (home to a range of businesses including the KM Group) or on the Hoo Peninsula once dominated by power generation and storage but now home to major employment sites available for investment.

Rochester Airport, the light plane aerodrome continues to operate. Situated next to the airport is Medway's flagship business park currently in development: Innovation Park Medway. It plays a major part in Medway Council's vision to sustain its science, engineering and technology economy.

### Innovation Park Medway (IPM)

IPM has the potential to provide more than 645,834ft<sup>2</sup> (60,000m<sup>2</sup>) of high quality, innovative commercial space in a prime location near Junction 3 of the M2. It's an inspirational new location that could create high quality, innovative commercial space for businesses working in areas such as green infrastructure, technology, manufacturing, and support services.

Over the last 12 months, the site's infrastructure works across both the southern and northern sites have seen key milestones reached. The main infrastructure work on the southern site is complete, including drainage, power and utilities. Infrastructure work is ongoing at the northern site, with the installation of power, lighting, utilities and roadways.

The council is committed to delivering this key site in the most sustainable and economically advantageous manner.



## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

### Chatham City Centre: Medway Development Company

Medway Council has ambitious plans to regenerate and revitalise its urban areas, with Chatham undergoing a major regeneration programme. Medway's city centre has been the focus of a multi-million-pound regeneration programme to further improve the area for visitors, locals, businesses and developers. The council's Medway Development Company Ltd. (MDC) is helping to deliver these programmes. The MDC projects have made significant progress in the last year, including:

### Chatham Waterfront

In the heart of Medway's city centre, this mixed-use scheme is key to revitalising Chatham, providing housing, co-working space, and places to eat, drink and shop. The phased development will provide 111 private sale apartments and 71 in a private rental scheme.

The one and two bed homes are set in landscaped open space overlooking the River Medway, with bus links from Chatham's Waterfront bus station and train station.

### Garrison Point

Set near the top of the historic Great Lines, the 115 apartment development is close to completion. More than 90% of apartments are now sold, with MDC expecting sales to continue throughout 2023. The development, close to Chatham High Street, bus and train stations, provides much needed new and affordable homes for residents.



CREDIT: MDC/MEDWAY COUNCIL

**Garrison Point development, Chatham, Medway.**

### Mountbatten House

The 1970s Brutalist style former office block that dominates Chatham's skyline will be transformed by colourful balconies and a sloping, rounded extension of flats facing a new plaza. A glass lift will serve a rooftop restaurant and events space. New lighting and banners around the former bus station will continue along the main road. 168 flats (108 of which are in the former office building) will be created as part of the transformation of the building along with a public plaza, pop-up shops and cafes.

The mechanical and electrical strip out works at Mountbatten House were completed in summer 2023 and detailed design work is at an advanced stage.

### Hoo Peninsula

Medway Council remains confident the Hoo Peninsula will play a greater role in the area's economic future, transforming it to employment sites for green tech and renewable energy.

German firm, Uniper, secured permission to create MedwayOne on a 583 acre (236ha) site, including the former Kingsnorth power station. The plant was decommissioned in 2012 and will be transformed into storage, data centre, lorry park, and manufacturing space, generating £44m a year for the area's economy. One of the key elements of the scheme is an energy-from-waste plant which will be used to power the development.



CREDIT: MEDWAY COUNCIL

**Proposal for Innovation Park Medway, southern site.**



Berkeley Homes submitted plans earlier this year to develop a factory on the Hoo Peninsula capable of turning out 1,000 modular homes a year. The proposals, if approved, would see the housebuilder create an estimated 250 jobs on a 35 acre (14ha) site on the Kingsnorth Industrial Estate on the outskirts of Hoo St Werburgh. Modular homes are seen by many as a way of increasing the pace of delivering new homes, while at the same time ensuring they are energy efficient, reducing carbon and built to the highest standards. Berkeley Homes successfully operates a similar factory at Northfleet, near Gravesend.

### Cultural and creative-led regeneration

The council and its partners are keen to capitalise on the area's heritage to support its regeneration and ensure it has a vibrant future as a place to live, study and work, with the creative industries key to its success. Medway Council was awarded £14.4m from the government's Levelling Up Fund to take forward a number of important projects, including The Docking Station and The Fitting Rigging House, to help build creative skills and growth.

The Docking Station, a Grade 2 listed former accommodation for police staff, will house the Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries at the University of Kent. The new facility will provide workspaces for artists and technologists, flexible space for teaching and graduates, plus performance areas.

MidKent College is opening an Art School and expanding its art courses to offer qualifications to university level, accredited through the University of Kent. This will replace the University for Creative Arts (UCA) which closed in 2023. Medway School of Art is working in partnership with the University of Kent's Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries (iCCI) and Medway Council.

### Projects under the Future High Streets Fund

Four projects were awarded funding from the government's Future High Streets Fund to inject investment to revitalise the high street and improve the visitor experience.

#### 1. The Paddock

The regeneration programme at The Paddock (the space between Chatham Waterfront Bus Station and the Pentagon Shopping Centre), will create a vibrant public space for residents and visitors to enjoy. The improvements are designed to celebrate the area's heritage as well as making

the area more accessible. Improvements include new seating areas, a central open space, planted areas to increase biodiversity, trees and enhanced lighting. This project is due to be completed by spring 2024.

#### 2. St John's Church

The Grade 2\* Listed church will be restored and The Diocese of Rochester are delivering the works in partnership with Medway Council. The new church will provide facilities for the local community for events and classes, flexible meeting spaces for businesses and café area as well as continuing as a place of worship. The Diocese of Rochester have gone out to tender for a contractor to carry out this restoration work with works expected to begin in winter 2023.

#### 3. The Brook Theatre

Medway's Grade 2 listed theatre closed for a major revamp in April. The works are being paid for by Future High Streets and Levelling Up Funds to modernise the workspace for performing arts groups and also improve the experience for theatregoers when it reopens in 2026. It includes improved public access, new staging, lighting and sound equipment, better office spaces, and upgraded rehearsal and dance studio spaces.

The Brook will be an inclusive and accessible city centre destination offering a public programme of performances and workshops inside and out, that brings together new residential riverside living, animated public space with markets, events and public art and exciting food and social experiences.

#### 4. Debenhams site

The council have bought the former retail store and plans are being reviewed on how the vacant building could be best used to help create jobs, increase footfall in the town centre and support residents' needs. The building (which formerly provided sales space over four floors) went out to market earlier this year. The council is currently working through the final applications with interested parties.

#### Rochester Riverside

Countryside Homes continues to lead Medway's flagship Rochester residential development, managed in partnership with Medway Council and Homes England. This includes investing substantial funds in site assembly, flood defences, remediation and engineering works to enable the redevelopment.

Over 460 units are completed and occupied within the whole scheme. The 500th home was completed this summer. Construction on the Rochester Riverside Primary School continued throughout 2023, enabling the school to open in September 2023.

### Local investment news

#### Hochiki

Global life safety solutions company Hochiki Europe purchased a 24,000ft<sup>2</sup> (2,230m<sup>2</sup>) facility on a 1.92 acre (0.77ha) site representing an investment of £5.5m in Chatham. The new facility supports the company's 180-strong workforce at its head office in Gillingham.



Hochiki Europe's new site at Apex House, Gillingham.

#### BAE Systems

The Company has announced plans to increase its Medway workforce by up to 500 over the next five years. Medway's biggest private employer has 1,500 staff, from among the firm's 8,200 employees in the South East delivering some of the world's most advanced defence technology, from satellites to electronic systems and cyber capabilities. BAE Systems has strong partnerships in place with MidKent College and the Universities at Medway (Geenwich, Kent and Canterbury Christ Church).

CREDIT: HOCHIKI EUROPE/MEDWAY COUNCIL

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

### SWALE

#### Industrial and Logistics

Across the district, Swale has seen significant interest and development, particularly around the industrial sectors.

Construction on the new Wallbrook Business Park – 38,000ft<sup>2</sup> (3,530m<sup>2</sup>) on the Isle of Sheppey is well advanced and this speculative development will provide flexible units and offices. Each unit will have the capacity to have first floor or mezzanine floors built in. Building work started in March and market interest has been strong with the first tenants expected to move in during autumn 2023.

A new logistics/manufacturing building called Saxon 53 is planned for close to the Trinity Trading Estate, Sittingbourne. The 52,743ft<sup>2</sup> (4,900m<sup>2</sup>) unit will include a 135ft (41m yard), 32ft (10m) eaves and a 5,382ft<sup>2</sup> (500m<sup>2</sup>) office space.

Construction has also started on Project Fortress (formerly Cleve Hill Solar Farm) which is a photovoltaic power station on the Graveney Marshes between Faversham and Whitstable. Once operational, it will be the largest solar farm in the UK, generating 373MW of electricity from 900 acres (360ha) of vertical solar panels and will also include 700MWh of battery storage.

#### Transport Projects

There has been continued progress in major transport projects due to complete over the next 12 months.

Highways England continued their improvement works this year to the M2 Junction 5 (Stockbury Interchange), which began in early 2022. The final works will include a new north-south flyover to provide the A249 with free-flowing movement, improved travel times and enhanced road safety. The contractors have completed the new link road

from Oad Street to Maidstone Road. To the south side of the Stockbury roundabout flyover, piling began in summer 2023 and a bridge abutment has been constructed to support the new bridge. The project is scheduled to be open for traffic in Winter 2024.

A funding package was secured in November 2019 of over £38m through the Housing Infrastructure Fund to make improvements to the Key Street and Grovehurst Junction. The Grovehurst Junction will ease the journey times for a substantial number of businesses located on the major business parks in Sittingbourne including Eurolink and Kemsley Fields. The scheme will increase capacity by replacing the existing 'dumbbell' junction with a two-bridge flyover; the project commenced in July 2023 with completion expected in September 2024. The Key Street roundabout project will improve capacity and safety on the existing gyratory and relocate access to the south bound slip road to the A249 along Chestnut Street.

#### Heritage Buildings

Bringing heritage buildings back into economic use has been a feature of this past year.

The Anderson Group continued to deliver plans for the former gunpowder and aggregates site at Oare Gravel Works, Faversham. The 'Faversham Lakes' plans include proposals for 9,397ft<sup>2</sup> (873m<sup>2</sup>) of offices, workshop-studios and storage, as well as 7,685ft<sup>2</sup> (714m<sup>2</sup>) for community use, within a set of listed buildings associated with the site's history. These works are now well underway, creating a unique business environment, alongside a 50 acre (20.23ha) country park.

Masters House in Sheerness has undergone a £1.5m transformation following £300,000 from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and a further £1.5m from Swale Borough Council. The refurbishment included the installation of a new lift and a suite of new kitchens and toilets. The works have significantly reduced the building's carbon footprint by installing an air source heat pump and upgraded the windows and insulation throughout. Launch It, a group of UK youth enterprise charities, will be creating an enterprise centre at the building which will support local young people to set up and run their own businesses.

The Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust has also completed the repair and transformation of the Grade 2 listed

Dockyard Church, which stands at the entrance to the former Royal Dockyard on the Isle of Sheppey. The £7.98m project has been made possible through funding from The Heritage Lottery Fund and from some of the UK's leading philanthropic trusts, foundations and individuals. The stunning building is managed as a co-working space by Islandworks and provides a flexible and collaborative workspace for freelancers, remote workers, small business owners, and young entrepreneurs. In addition to meeting rooms and event space hire, there is also a coffee shop known as The Coffee Lounge. The church is also home to a historic model of John Rennie's redesign of the port in the early part of the nineteenth century.

In Sheerness Docks itself, an unaccompanied freight service, managed by DFDS, reached a new milestone in February 2023, having transported 50,000 trailers on vessels from Sheerness to Calais since its launch in April 2021. The freight service is managed by DFDS which has a gross tonnage of 11,530 tonnes. The achievement highlights the growing significance for the Port of Sheerness, managed by Peel Ports, as an important freight connection between the South East and Europe.

#### For further information:

[www.swalemeansbusiness.co.uk](http://www.swalemeansbusiness.co.uk)



**IslandWorks, a new co-working space at the restored dockyard church, Sheerness, Isle of Sheppey.**

CREDIT: FRUITBOWL MEDIA



## West Kent

### SEVENOAKS

Sevenoaks district is an amazing place to live, work, visit and invest with the council committed to supporting businesses, stimulating the economy and encouraging the commercial and residential sectors.

The collaborative and supportive nature of the district's business community comes across strongly, with the district providing an environment where business can flourish. The district's entrepreneurial spirit and a supportive council, make it a compelling place to relocate, especially for those considering cutting costs by moving away from London.

Sevenoaks district is one of the very best located and connected areas anywhere in Kent. With the M25 and M20 motorways and extensive rail lines, you can reach the capital in less than 30 minutes. Seaports and airports are also within easy reach.

The district is also renowned for its high quality of life with its abundance of green, open spaces and historic buildings. It is home to some of the best schools in the country and is fortunate to have a highly trained and educated local workforce.

To find out more about the Sevenoaks district, visit: [www.moresevenoaks.co.uk](http://www.moresevenoaks.co.uk)

### Update on Development Swanley

In the north of Sevenoaks district bordering Greater London, Swanley provides an opportunity to further invest in regeneration and development. It offers a prime location with a newly renovated train station within the London travel and Oyster Card zone. The capital is a short journey by rail with direct trains to London Bridge, London Victoria and London Blackfriars.

Swanley is located on Junction 3 of the M25, with junctions also to both M20 and A20.

With a newly built state-of-the-art White Oak leisure centre, a 60 acre (24.28ha) recreational town park with boating lake, splash park and miniature railway, Swanley offers something for everyone. Swanley is in the early stages of a regeneration



Meeting Point co-working centre, Swanley High Street.

journey with key sites available for future development and existing industrial, retail and housing.

In June 2023, Sevenoaks District Council opened Meeting Point; a new, purpose built co-working centre on Swanley High Street. Meeting Point provides private offices, meeting and event spaces based on flexible membership terms. On site business support is also available from the council's in-house team of experts.

Find out more about Meeting Point opportunities at: <https://meetingpoint.org.uk>

### Sevenoaks

The town centre offers a superb range of retail outlets with a high percentage of independent businesses with low vacancy rates and a growing independent retail and food/beverage sector, despite national retail trends. The council is preparing significant plans to regenerate the area to the east of the town centre.

Private investment in the town centre continues with work recently commencing on a development of over 100 homes,

9,688ft<sup>2</sup> (900m<sup>2</sup>) of retail space and public realm and open space improvements within the High Street. This £40m investment into a sustainable development will increase footfall within the town centre.

### Edenbridge

Sevenoaks District Council has two residential-led improvement schemes in Edenbridge, which are currently in development. Work at the Stangrove Estate is due to complete by early next year. This work will provide a much-needed and improved community shop, off-street parking and environmental improvements plus 13 new homes. The Farmstead Drive improvements, on the Spitals Cross Estate, will provide a new community hall and a community shop, improved landscaping and parking facilities with 23 new environmentally efficient homes. Work is proposed to start autumn /winter 2023.

For further information, details of business grants and how the council can support your business, contact the council's Economic Development and Property Team on:

Email: [business@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:business@sevenoaks.gov.uk)  
[www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/business](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/business)

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

### TONBRIDGE AND MALLING

In July 2023, the council adopted a new Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 which sets out four key priorities for the borough:

- efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- sustaining a borough which cares for the environment.
- improving housing options for local people whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance.
- investing in our local economy to help support residents and businesses and foster sustainable growth.

With investment in residential and commercial development, as well as supporting infrastructure fundamental to meeting these priorities, the council is working with a range of partners to progress a number of key sites.

### Developments

During 2023, the following progress has been made:

#### Phases 3 and 5 of Kings Hill

Once completed this will provide 635 new homes, a youth recreational facility, community hall extension, new public park along with community enhancements such as grass sports pitches and further land for allotments. Construction work is also underway across a number of phase 5 sites in Kings Hill, amounting to a total of 350 further new homes, of which 40% will be affordable.

#### Peters Village near Wouldham

Around 700 homes have now been completed, with permission secured by The Vistry Group in June 2022 to build 162 homes on a 10 acre (4.04ha) site in the village. This will form the final phase of the development, which will ultimately total just under 1,000 homes.



Centenary Village, Aylesford.

#### Panattoni Park Aylesford

With a number of key logistics companies now on site, work on bringing forward 'Aylesford 750' is underway and will be ready to occupy in early 2024. The building, which is the largest speculative development serving London and the South East, will be built to a minimum BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' and EPC A.

### Centenary Village

The Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) has now started the next phase in Aylesford – a £22m development that will enable the charity to support hundreds more military veterans and their families. This phase will comprise a new community centre with café, and IT learning suite and welfare base, a new shared home and more Move On apartments for homeless veterans. It will be completed in 2024.

### Tonbridge High Street

The borough council has commissioned MACE Group to undertake a review of assets directly to the east of the high street, looking at the feasibility of introducing various new town centre uses. Councillors will be considering this work over the coming months.

### The Birling Estate

Nestled along the south-facing slopes of the North Downs in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the Birling Estate. Comprising 1,800 acres (728ha) of arable, pasture and woodland, it is family owned with an enviable natural heritage. As part of its diversification, the estate has partnered with Westwell Wines to plant 40 acres (16ha) of vines over the next two years, helping to further enhance Kent's reputation as the home of English wine.

### Infrastructure:

#### Leigh Flood Storage Area (LFSA)

Site works are now well underway to increase capacity to approximately 7 million cubic metres of water. Embankment raising started in June 2023, with the installation of three gates at the LFSA control structure taking place during the summer months of 2024 and 2025 in order to allow the structure to continue to operate during the higher-risk winter period. At Hildenborough, the construction of a flood embankment and pumping station will commence in spring 2024. The entire scheme is scheduled to be completed by Autumn 2025, and will ultimately better protect over 1,400 homes from flooding.

#### Electric Vehicle Charging Points

Over the last twelve months, the borough council has been working with Kent County Council and Connected Kerb to install 30 points in Aylesford, Kings Hill and Tonbridge as part of its commitment to deliver on its Climate Change Strategy Action Plan. Plans for a second phase of installations are well underway and should be installed by April 2025.



## TUNBRIDGE WELLS

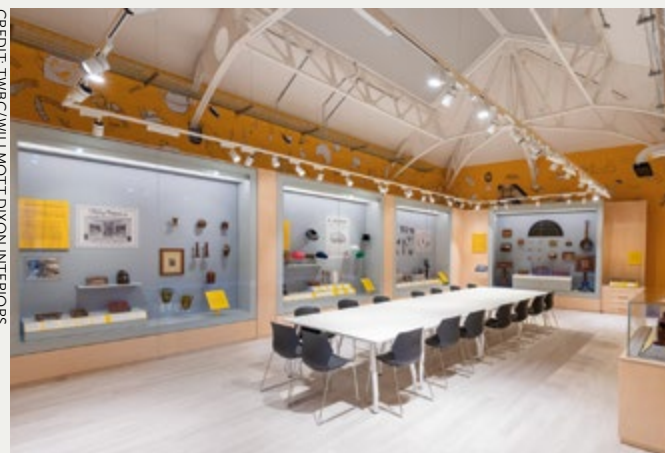
### Tunbridge Wells Local Plan

The Council's Submission Local Plan was published in 2021 with examination hearing sessions from March to July 2022. Initial findings of the Inspector were received in November 2022. The Plan sets out the council's proposed overall strategy and related site allocations for development in the borough up to 2038. The level of housing growth, which will meet the local housing need target for the borough, includes proposals for strategic growth at Paddock Wood (through urban expansion) and a new settlement at Tudeley in Capel parish. It also identifies additional capacity for housing in Royal Tunbridge Wells and other settlements within the borough. The council is conducting complex work to respond to the Inspector's initial findings and reviewing timescales for adoption of the Local Plan.

### Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan

Work has started to prepare a Town Centre Plan for Royal Tunbridge Wells. There has been a 'Call for Sites' relating to the town centre boundary by asking people to submit sites to the council for assessment of development potential. The council is assessing the sites submitted and preparing for the first public consultation on the plan. Sites can still be submitted for assessment by contacting the Planning Policy Team.

[Information on progress can be found at www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk](http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk).



**New Amelia Scott cultural and learning centre, Royal Tunbridge Wells.**



**Permission approved for retirement accommodation on the former cinema site, Royal Tunbridge Wells.**

### Developments update

#### The Amelia Scott

The refurbished Amelia Scott cultural centre welcomed 300,000 visitors in its first year to April 2023. The centre integrates the museum, art gallery, library, tourist information, council customer services, Adult Education Services and coffee shop.

#### Town Hall

At the heart of Royal Tunbridge Wells, 34,186ft<sup>2</sup> (3,176m<sup>2</sup>) floorspace in the Grade 2 listed Town Hall will be taken by Town Square Spaces Limited. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has adopted new working practices enabling a reduction in office requirements. This has released 75% of the Town Hall for a phased refurbishment by Town Square Spaces Ltd which will enable early occupiers in 'show space' from around November 2023, with a fully operational facility from September 2024. It will accommodate 42 co-workers at a time within an open plan co-working area from a total membership of 112 people for this space. The rest of the accommodation will be transformed into private studios (for over 300 people), meeting and project spaces (for over 100 individuals) and a dedicated conference and events space. The transformation of the Town Hall will re-establish the Grade 2 listed building as the social, civic, economic and cultural centre of the town.

### Former Cinema Site, Royal Tunbridge Wells

Planning permission has been granted for development including an extra care retirement community comprising: extra care accommodation together with café, restaurant and wellness facilities, new commercial floorspace, public realm improvements and realignment of public rights of way. The developer is Retirement Villages with work expected to start on site in early 2024.

### Kingstanding Way

Following outline permission for this employment site in 2020 for up to 796,529ft<sup>2</sup> (74,000m<sup>2</sup>) of business floorspace and nearly 4,000 direct and 2,000 indirect jobs, some amendments have been made to the original consent for Phase 1 and approved by the council. Discussions with the developer are continuing with a Reserved Matters application expected soon.

### Knights Wood and Hollyfields

The borough's largest housing scheme is now nearing completion and the Hollyfields development in Hawkenbury is also in its final delivery phase.

### Paddock Wood

Homes are being built across three major sites in Paddock Wood, to the north of the borough:

- Mascalls Farm, Berkeley Homes: Phase 1 is currently under construction, with 134 homes already completed as at summer 2023. Planning permission was granted in 2021 for 100 additional dwellings (Phase 2), bringing the total number of homes to be delivered onsite to 413.
- Mascalls Court Farm, Persimmon Homes: Phase 1 comprising 175 dwellings is now completed. Detailed planning permission was granted in 2021 for Phases 2 and 3 for 200 dwellings and 110 dwellings of this are now also completed.
- Church Farm, Countryside Properties: Detailed permission was granted in 2020 for Phase 1 comprising 300 dwellings and 47 units have been completed. Phase 2 comprising 60 dwellings has yet to commence.
- Brick Kiln Farm, Cranbrook: Following outline planning permission in 2020, work has now started on 180 dwellings including affordable housing as well as structural woodland planting, landscaping, community orchard, public open space and children's play area. Hill Residential is the developer, their first site in the borough.

CREDIT: RETIREMENT VILLAGES GROUP (RVS)/AXA IM REAL ASSETS

CREDIT: TWBC/WILLMOTT DIXON INTERIORS



## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

### East Kent

#### ASHFORD

##### Local Plan review

The borough council has begun the process for reviewing the current Local Plan adopted in 2019. The new Local Plan will need to take account of changes to the NPPF but will also seek to support further commercial and employment developments on allocated sites. As such, the council has issued a Call for Sites in September 2023, to identify areas which could be considered for residential and commercial development. The review is in its early stages with additional work taking place over the coming years with a view to submission to the Secretary of State in 2025-26.

##### Nutrient neutrality

The council continues to respond to the various issues that have arisen from the need for new housing and other developments to achieve nutrient neutrality, due to the deterioration of Stodmarsh Lakes. Since Natural England issued their advice in July 2020, planning applications for up to 10,000 new homes located within the River Stour catchment and/or which discharge foul water into the catchment have not been able to progress, unless they can achieve nutrient neutrality.

The council has been working on ways to unlock the situation and deliver long term solutions. In July, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Noel Ovenden, met with the Prime Minister's special advisers to discuss government support in finding a national solution. The council welcomes the government's aspiration to address the issue in relation to the planning implications for residential developments.



CREDIT: ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Site for proposed Ashford International Studios.



## Town Centre Reset

High streets up and down the country are facing many challenges with the after-effects of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, ongoing financial uncertainty and the growing competition of online shopping. The council understands the challenges that our town centre residents, businesses, users and community groups face. Town centres are facing considerable change influenced by wider economic, environment and social changes. It is vital that we continue to invest in carefully thought-through ideas and solutions for the benefit of all.

The Town Centre Reset, including the revitalisation of our High Street, is a 'Super 6' project and a key priority in our Corporate Plan 2022-24. It identifies a number of areas that require improvement and intervention, prioritised to focus available resources over the next few years. Projects within the Town Centre Reset Action Plan include the delivery of Ashford UnFramed, a street art trail which took shape in the town centre in the spring, with many blank walls and building surfaces being transformed into high quality mural paintings. Artists included the world renowned and local resident Mr. Doodle, the celebrated Alex Chinneck and Charley Peters as well as Ashford Snowdog artist Danielle Williamson and students from Ashford College.

In order to address the issue of vacant shops in the town centre, Ashford Borough Council launched a Town Centre Business Grant scheme in October 2023. The grants will provide up to £10,000 for successful businesses or landlords to fit out, or make improvements to, empty premises in the town centre which will lead to vacant units being filled and open for business.

## Development Update

### Ashford International Studios – Newtown Works

Plans are gathering pace to deliver an exciting film studios-led £250m investment and regeneration project on the former Newtown Railway Works site. This mixed-use development seeks to deliver TV and film studios with associated production spaces, dedicated film school, residential units, commercial space and a hotel. Much of the enabling work has been achieved over the last year since the successful bid by the council for £14.7m in Levelling Up Funding. The new studios at the derelict site will bring significant benefits to Ashford in terms of investment and job creation.



### Proposal for Brompton Bicycle factory, Ashford.

The UK film and TV sector is growing. The British Film Institute forecasts the requirement for 10,000 new employees in this sector over the next five years, and Lambert Smith Hampton have forecast the need for 2.3 million ft<sup>2</sup> (213,677m<sup>2</sup>) of new studio space over the next 15 years. Ashford International Development Company (AIDC) has been working to secure interest from the film and TV industry for an operator, and have engaged with a number of leading studio operators. They would work alongside the East Kent College Group's facilities to deliver the film school and develop a curriculum and training programmes. This would support the development of the local workforce, providing the talent required by the studio operator and the production companies renting the studio space.

### Brompton Factory

The application for a revolutionary new factory continues to proceed through the planning process. It is envisaged this would deliver a £100m investment for the area and potential for up to 4,000 jobs for the local economy. The UK's largest bicycle manufacturer announced last year that it had chosen Ashford as the company's global headquarters, following a national search with a pledge to work with universities and colleges to build local skills.

Details of how the factory will be constructed within a 100 acre (40.46ha) floodplain, will also provide an opportunity to restore the wetland and promote walking and cycling for the community in this unique, natural setting in the heart of Ashford. The innovative scheme would house a world class production facility and HQ, and by 2028, the company expects to employ over 1,500 staff. Once fully operational, the proposed development could result in further jobs being supported locally, including supply chain jobs, jobs supported by the spending of staff and the factory operation itself.

### Ashford College expansion

The extension of Ashford College is complete having started in 2022 following the takeover of the college by the EKC Group in 2020 and their successful bid for funding from the government's Post-16 Capacity Fund. Known as Phase 2, the new wing will house classrooms and laboratories for Business, Information Technology, and Engineering. These facilities create a renewed focus on such up-and-coming fields and allows 250 more students each year to access the high quality education offered at the College.

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

The scheme includes an Engineering Hub, which will highlight the role engineering can play in creating solutions to climate change and promoting decarbonisation. The extension will also be key in delivering the new T Level qualifications, which are equivalent to three A Levels and provide learners with work experience as part of their training. Requiring the latest equipment and technology, the courses will benefit from the new facilities offered by Phase 2's completion.

### Waterbrook Phase 2

The site is a 130 acre (52.6ha) mixed commercial/residential land holding close to Junction 10/10A of the M20 at Ashford.

With Phase 1 now completed and seeing the delivery of 16 new industrial units alongside the International Truck Stop and a new Jaguar Land Rover centre, Phase 2 is again on the market. The Phase 2 site totals 17.5 acres (7.08ha) and benefits from all mains services and is accessed via a new estate road. The site had received planning consent for the construction of an 120,000ft<sup>2</sup> (11,148m<sup>2</sup>) distribution unit which was not implemented. It is primed ready for development with outline planning consent for B1, B2, B8 development with options available to provide units from 35,000ft<sup>2</sup> (3,252m<sup>2</sup>) to 290,000ft<sup>2</sup> (26,942m<sup>2</sup>). Waterbrook Phase 2 is being marketed by Knight Frank and Sibley Pares.

### Entralon Gate

One of the last allocated sites for industrial development in the borough is being brought forward by Entralon Capital. The site is situated on Orbital Park with Junction 10 of the M20 less than a mile away and provides direct access to the M25 and national motorway network to the north east and the Channel Tunnel and Dover port to the south.

Entralon Gate is a 54,000ft<sup>2</sup> (5,012m<sup>2</sup>) development consisting of five employment units comprising a mix of B1, B2, B8 uses.

The units benefit from 3 Phase electricity, EPC B rating and minimum eaves of 27ft (8.2m). Additionally each unit has natural internal light, landscaping, cycle parking and EV charging points. Entralon Gate is being marketed by Sibley Pares.

### Kent Wool Growers

The former Kent Wool Growers site, between the town centre and the railway station, was bought by the council's Housing Development team. The 2.97 acre (1.2ha) site offers an opportunity to create a vibrant community at the gateway to the town. Work is underway to shape a proposal that is likely to include mixed-use homes, commercial space, a community hub and substantial areas of green space.

Bordered by the Great Stour river to the east, the site is part of the Commercial Quarter, which includes the Connect38 office building, International House and The Coachworks. Historically known as the Tanyard, it had been used as a tannery from the 17th Century. The site includes the remains of the Grade 2 listed Whist House dating back to 1707. The scheme could include a number of one, two and three bed apartments and four bed townhouses, parking bays concealed in undercrofts beneath gardens, a community and cultural hub and communal courtyards. Further design work is being carried out on the scheme before a public consultation in early 2024, ahead of an application later in the year.

### The Triangle

This is a striking development, comprising 143 apartments, overlooking the River Stour and neighbouring Victoria Park. Located directly opposite the leisure centre in Elwick Place, the development is only a 12 minute walk from Ashford International. A collection of one, two, and three bed apartments, all feature delightfully modern interiors, communal rooftops, landscaped courtyards, underground parking, bicycle storage and plug-in electric vehicle charging stations. This development, scheduled for completion by the end of 2023 is being developed by Kings Crescent Homes.

### Henwood

A proposed net zero-carbon, short-stay accommodation development. Like all local authorities, the council has a duty to house homeless people within the borough. The proposal features 23 units as temporary homes for those people who have found themselves homeless. These would be provided as a 'safety net' and 'stepping stone' until individuals or households are able to move on to more permanent accommodation.



Expansion of Ashford College.



## CANTERBURY

### Levelling Up Fund: Connected Canterbury

In January 2023 Canterbury City Council were awarded £19.9m for the Levelling Up fund bid, Connected Canterbury: Unlocking the Tales of England.

The total budget for the project work is £22,685,264. This includes the £19,905,911 awarded from the government and £2,779,353 that the council will match fund.

The project is designed to make the most of the city's history and heritage, revitalise its public spaces and build on the past to bring even more success in the future. It includes:

- bringing Canterbury Castle which dates from 1085 and its grounds back to life and open for the public to enjoy once more
- paying for vital repairs to The Marlowe Kit in the former Poor Priests' Hospital in Stour Street. This is part of The Marlowe Trust's capital project to preserve the building with its mediaeval Great Hall and chapel for future generations while turning it into a creative learning centre for young people and a free-to-enter heritage destination
- breathing new life into each end of the high street by creating an occasional events space in Westgate Square close to the Westgate Towers and revitalising the area around the Clock Tower in St George's Street
- transforming the bus station and St George's Lane to make it a green entry point into the city, more pedestrian friendly and a much nicer place for passengers and introducing more plants for pollinators
- investing in the car parks at Castle Row, St Radigunds and Longport to introduce electric vehicle charging, docked cycle hire, additional planting, better lighting and signs and solar panels
- the introduction of story gardens around the city that bring to life and tell of important aspects of the city's heritage and the nation's history
- the creation of heritage routes or trails around the city, better surfacing, accessibility improvements and planting where space permits, lighting and signs. The route along the city wall is one such example.

We are currently in the design and planning stages of the project. In August, the council contracted our lead consultant for the design and construction stages of the project.



Canterbury Castle to benefit from the successful Levelling Up Fund Bid.

All of the project work will take place over the next two years and should be finished by the summer of 2025.

For more information including our Business Improvement District, projects strands, work timelines, consultations and updates, visit:

[canterbury.gov.uk/luf](https://canterbury.gov.uk/luf)

### St George's Street

Following public consultation the proposed design for St George's Street was changed to retain the existing trees and large seats were placed around the trees to overcome the tree root problems. This change meant that aspirations for a fully flexible events space could not be realised. The construction was undertaken between January and July 2023 and the new paving and seating has transformed the area so that people now stay and enjoy the space rather than just using the street as a route to other parts of the city.

### The Riverside

2023 has seen the successful launch of the city's newest leisure destination. The £115m development at The Riverside overlooks the River Stour and is anchored by the five screen, iconic Curzon cinema. The vibrant leisure scheme is home to Kent's first Boom Battle Bar, a national competitive socialising operator, as well as a handful of national and independent restaurant and bar operators. Both Sekkoya and Korean Cowgirl are local operators, with The Riverside scheme being home to their second operation within the region. Both offer a high-end dining experience which is unique to the city and hugely complementary to the other operators at the centre. Alongside these two operators are Black Sheep Coffee,

Heavenly Desserts and Fireaway Pizza, are both renowned national businesses in their own right and new entrants to the local market. Riverside Social, SideQuest and Starry Mart will be opening later this year. This will add a much anticipated food hall style concept to the scheme, as well as a professional gaming hub and Asian food store. The scheme is now nearly fully occupied with only two units remaining and a thriving and popular new leisure destination for both Canterbury city centre and Kent.

CREDIT: CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL



Part of the new Canterbury  
Riverside hospitality offer.  
CREDIT: CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL





## DOVER

Served by both the M2 and M20 motorways, Dover is well connected to the M25 and London airports. It has a high-speed rail service to central London in an hour and is just 21 miles from mainland Europe with ferries departing every 30 minutes to Calais and Dunkirk. Dover is also one of the UK's leading ports for the importation of perishable goods, and the UK's second busiest cruise port.

### Funding

#### Levelling Up Fund – Dover Beacon

Dover District Council has been awarded £18.1m to deliver a new creative and digital college, a business startup centre and a riverside park in Bench Street. These key projects are designed to deliver against local strategic need, improve public realm and increase local access to jobs, skills and opportunities.

#### Levelling Up Fund – Dover Access Improvements Project

Kent County Council has been awarded £45m for the project to improve the flow of traffic from the UK to the EU. This includes more border control points and a new exit route to help the Port of Dover, Dover town and Kent operate more efficiently and reduce congestion on local roads in the town.

#### Future High Streets Fund – Underpass and Creative Centre

A £3.2m award from the Future High Streets Fund which, along with a £1.7m commitment from the district council will deliver two key projects designed to increase footfall and local spending in the town centre. A refurbished subway will encourage greater movement of people between the town and waterfront and a new Creative Centre will enhance the offer of the lower end of the town.

#### National Lottery Heritage Fund – Maison Dieu

A £10.5m restoration of the Grade 1 listed Maison Dieu in Dover is now underway, supported by a £4.27m grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project will bring redundant spaces back into commercial use, including restoring the Mayor's Parlour as a holiday let and a unique new café in the space once occupied by Victorian gaol cells.

#### Coastal Communities Fund – Market Square

Dover's Market Square has been refurbished following a £3.1m project, supported by £2.44m from the Coastal Communities Fund. The refurbished square includes a unique misting water



Dover's refurbished Market Square with water feature.

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

feature that acts as a wayfinder and has created a focus for children to play and families to congregate. Regular events are held in the Square which includes live music on Saturdays throughout the summer and a monthly Artisan Market.

### Housing Infrastructure Fund – Dover Fastrack

Work is underway on the development of Dover's Fastrack service, a new zero-emission electric bus route, which will connect Whitfield, Dover town centre and Dover Priory railway station. It is funded via Homes England (up to £22.9m), Department for Transport (£9.5m) and Dover District Council (£1.42m). Fastrack buses will have priority on the proposed express route which includes a new bus, cycle and pedestrian-only bridge across the A2 at Whitfield and dedicated new link road through to Guston.

### Port of Dover

The Port of Dover's regeneration programme is well underway featuring a new marina with pier plus a new Marina Curve and Clock Tower Square which has a number of new hospitality businesses. There is live music on the Curve every Sunday and both locals and visitors come here to relax and appreciate the area's beauty and culture. Planning permission has been granted for a 90-bed Electric Motel Company accommodation.

The Dover Cargo Terminal at the Western Docks is an eight-chamber temperature-controlled warehouse. Every stage of the operation including storage, container stripping and distribution can now be conducted at a set temperature. Dover is the UK's busiest passenger port and the busiest roll-on roll-off ferry port in Europe. It retains its dominance as the most efficient transport link for freight goods between the UK and Europe. Ferry crossings are on offer 24 hours a day, 364 days a year, with a departure on average every 30 minutes. There are now three ferry operators running ships from Dover – P&O Ferries, DFDS and Irish Ferries.



CREDIT: F&HDC/WE MADE THAT

Concept for improvements to Sandgate Road and the FOLCA building, Folkestone.

In addition, with two impressive state-of-the-art cruise terminals, Dover has the capacity to accommodate three cruise ships at once, with around 100 cruise ship visits for 2023.

### Other developments

#### GrowUp

A vertical farm that opened under a year ago is set to expand its site by 40%. GrowUp Farms' Pepperness site at Discovery Park, Sandwich is a vertical salad farming facility that uses renewable heating and cooling from the Kent Renewable Energy Biomass plant adjacent to the site. Their bagged salads are now available throughout the UK in Iceland stores.

#### For further information:

[www.investindover.co.uk](http://www.investindover.co.uk)

## FOLKESTONE & HYTHE

### Levelling Up Fund success

In January, Folkestone & Hythe District Council was successful in a bid to the government's Levelling Up Fund and £19.8m was awarded to deliver *Folkestone – A Brighter Future*.

The funding will enable a sustainable, attractive and welcoming gateway to be created for Folkestone town centre with a green park replacing the bus station in Bouverie Square. It will also enable the first phase of Folca (the former Debenhams store) to be progressed creating a watertight functional shell ready for phase two works.

The council is engaging with partners and going through the procurement process, as Levelling Up projects need to be completed by March 2025.



### Folca Building – Folkestone

In addition to the Levelling Up fund works, the council has commissioned an Architect to create a RIBA stage 2 concept for the former store, together with outline costs. The outcome of this work is due to be presented to councillors in January next year.

### Ship Street – Folkestone

The former gas works site of 3.8 acres (1.54ha) was acquired by the council in 2021 to bring a key regeneration site forward. The aim is to provide 135 energy efficient homes, with 22% affordable housing for rent and shared ownership. The scheme promotes safe walking and cycling between Folkestone Central train station and the town centre. Through working with Creative Folkestone it will also seek to enhance culture in the place making by integrating public art into the scheme design. The project will also include commercial space, public realm and a green link increasing connectivity to the existing neighbourhood and town centre. The council are currently undertaking additional surveys and due diligence to de-risk the site and prepare it for the market as well as seeking a development partner with the aim of starting on site by the second quarter of 2024.

### Biggins Wood – Folkestone

The site at Caesars Way, Cheriton has permission for 77 residential units and 62,431ft<sup>2</sup> (5,800m<sup>2</sup>) of commercial development. The council has agreed the sale of the land for commercial/housing development and has now completed the de-risking and enabling infrastructure work to prepare the site for market. Several expressions of interest in the site are being reviewed as part of soft market testing with the aim of securing a development partner and being on site by March 2024.

### Coast Drive – Greatstone, Romney Marsh

This transformational project will create a major £1.28m beachside visitor destination and will boost tourism and the local economy. The proposals (currently at the planning stage although some procurement work is progressing) include an attractive and sustainable new visitor 'hub' housing a café concession, education /training space, accessible toilets and Changing Places facilities – which will be the first of its kind in the Romney Marsh area. The proposals also include 94 new beach chalets, a fully accessible boardwalk, space for two water sports businesses with shower /changing facilities provided in the 'hub' as well as refurbished car park

surfaces and new EV charging /disabled parking bays. The aims of the project are to:

- encourage tourism and business by creating a high-quality coastal destination;
- improve local infrastructure and public facilities;
- manage visitor 'footfall', particularly water sports activities;
- protect and enhance local ecology
- promote inclusive access and facilities.

The development will be funded by the council in partnership with the Magnox Socio-Economic Fund and the Changing Places Toilet Fund.

### Romney Marsh Business Hub – Mountfield Road, New Romney

The Romney Marsh Business Hub opened in December 2021, containing 14 offices for rent along with conference facilities and business support. A significant number of offices have now been filled by a diverse mix of businesses with some offices still available for rent. Adjacent to the hub, lies the Mountfield Road Extension – a 10.7 acre (4.33ha) site now ready for commercial development. The council received a £3.5m 'Getting Building Fund' grant to construct the infrastructure which included a new roadway, drainage and utilities. That work is complete with all 9 plots now under offer. The site is expected to create over 400 jobs over a 10-year period.

### Highview – Folkestone

The former Highview School site was purchased by the council as a site for affordable housing. Planning for a scheme of 25 homes for affordable rent and five homes for shared ownership, all designed to be net-zero carbon rated, was approved in August 2021. The council are carrying out additional work to de-risk the site and prepare it for market and are hoping to secure a development partner by January 2024.

### Otterpool Park Garden Town

Folkestone & Hythe District Council's Planning and Licensing Committee resolved to grant outline planning permission (subject to agreeing conditions and S106 obligations) for Otterpool Park this year, a new 8,500 home garden town near Folkestone. The transformative development is led by master developer Otterpool Park LLP on behalf of Folkestone & Hythe District Council, supported by numerous planning and development specialists. It will deliver a next generation garden town that will support sustainable living and a healthy economy; provide the best quality of life for existing and future residents and respond to local landscape character. The approved plans include:

- up to 8,500 homes of a range of types and tenures, including over 1,870 affordable homes and over 400 self-build homes.



Proposals for one of the local centres at Otterpool Park.

CREDIT: JTP

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

- new cycling, and walking routes as well as 50% green open space, 5 inter linking parks including heritage trails,
- up to seven primary schools and two secondary schools, community and healthcare facilities.
- the protection, preservation and integration of existing significant historic features including bronze age barrows, roman villa remains, Westenhanger Castle and its medieval barns, WW2 airfield remains and Folkestone Racecourse's parade circle.
- creation of an integrated active travel network to encourage healthy living, connect the new garden town and reduce car use, including a £20m investment in Westenhanger train station to enable High Speed Services to operate, reducing journey times to London to 48mins.
- electric vehicle charging points, solar power, no gas heating and planting over a million trees to help boost biodiversity by 20%.
- a new mixed-use town centre and 30 acre (12.14ha) Business Park.
- infrastructure and utilities improvements including a new Wastewater Treatment Works and 62 acres (25ha) of reed beds to overcome nutrient neutrality issues, and provision of a fibre-to-the premises broadband network.

The outline planning consent gives the go ahead to the principle of a development at Otterpool Park, including the Development Specification, Parameter Plans and the Strategic Design Principles that will guide detailed designs for each phase. It is the first stage of a three-tiered planning approach for delivering Otterpool Park and will be followed by frameworks for each development phase; incorporating a phased masterplan, design code and delivery plan (tier 2), and then reserved matters applications providing development detail (tier 3).

Otterpool Park LLP is wholly owned and funded by Folkestone and Hythe District Council. The Council has

recently announced that its intention is to identify a Joint Venture partner to deliver the project with the council.

For further information:  
[www.otterpoolpark.org](http://www.otterpoolpark.org)

## THANET

In recent years the local economy has continued to grow with further inward investment, an increase in visitor numbers as well as more people relocating to the area or working closer to home. House prices have risen, with some of this driven by purchasers exiting the London market. Thanet's improved connectivity is resulting in entrepreneurs setting up businesses for the local, national and international markets.

There has been positive news for coastal attractions and local accommodation providers, despite financial challenges and travel disruption with Kent residents and wider domestic visitors being the top two visitor markets. National research into domestic consumer sentiment shows that overnight domestic trip intentions are above the levels anticipated back in 2022, with 74% of UK adults planning on taking an overnight domestic trip in the next 12 months compared to 67% a year earlier.

### Local Plan

Thanet District Council Local Plan sets out the framework for future growth and development in the district to 2031 and identifies land for 18,000 new homes. New build housing experienced delays due to the pandemic but work has continued on key sites as well as a range of smaller sites, adding to the variety of housing on offer. The district is starting to see more consistent levels of completions year-on-year with some sites now proceeding after long delays.

### Thanet Parkway

Thanet Parkway, Kent's newest train station, opened to rail passengers on 31 July 2023 and is located on the Ashford International to Ramsgate line. The station, along with line speed improvements between Ashford and Ramsgate, increases rail connectivity to London and wider Kent with access to mainline and High Speed One services. The project increases employment opportunities and will improve investment appeal at business parks in the district.

## Manston Airport

A Development Consent Order for Manston Airport was approved by government in 2022. Site owners Riveroak Strategic Partners, propose to reopen and develop the airport as a dedicated air freight facility for at least 10,000 air cargo movements per year.

## Inner Circuit or North Kent Link

This major road improvement is proposed to ease pressure on the road network. Part of the route, the A28 Birchington, Acol and Westgate-on-Sea Relief Road, is included in the 'top ten' list of high-priority schemes for the South East and is part of a bid to government under the Main Road Network Fund. The next stage of the business case is being prepared for submission to the Department for Transport. It will help to link existing and planned housing to key employment and leisure destinations and the seafronts.

## Regeneration Funding

There are opportunities for investors and developers to play a part in exciting and diverse regeneration. Significant public sector investment is raising Thanet's profile. The council has developed a vision for the town centres and has received government funding:

- Future High Streets Fund: £2.7m secured for a highway and workspace scheme in Ramsgate.
- Town Deal Programme: £22.2m allocated for Margate.
- Levelling Up Fund: £19.8m for Ramsgate to develop the Commercial Port and buildings around the Royal Harbour
- Levelling Up Fund: £6.3m for a digital skills hub in Margate town centre.



Harbour Street, Ramsgate.

CREDIT: THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL



## Ramsgate

The regeneration focuses on three areas:

- creation of a Green Port and improved infrastructure,
- the refurbishment of key assets in the Royal Harbour and
- improved access to skills and training opportunities across the wider town.

Investment in the Port of Ramsgate will help unlock opportunities as an open, short sea crossing port and a significant number of maritime jobs. The council is currently identifying commercial operators for a substantial part of the port, which includes two roll-on/roll-off berths.

Port of Ramsgate hosts the maintenance fleet for four wind farms and a total of 320 turbines. The planned 'Green Port' investment will further support the renewable sector and create and enhance job and training opportunities linked to marine manufacturing, engineering and the blue economy. Engagement with further education colleges and universities, will support marine businesses at the port to grow and take advantage of the opportunities the location provides them, as well as the decarbonisation of the sector. This is a very exciting time for the maritime and renewables sector with opportunities for growth by engaging businesses and investors as part of the delivery of this public investment.

The Royal Harbour will see a new restaurant and refurbished maritime museum providing training and employment opportunities in hospitality and the heritage sector. Two new community spaces will be developed in the town centre/ Newington Ward, to help local people access training and career development.

'Future Ramsgate Investment Plan' has been developed to make the most of assets and deliver a shared vision across Ramsgate to transform and regenerate the town.

## Margate

The £22.2m Town Deal programme includes investment in a number of projects some of which will encourage further public and private investment to bring forward key developments and create jobs. Tourism and the creative industries continue to be important sectors and form part of the solution for regenerating town centres.

The first project was the set-up of the Margate Creative Land Trust with £6.7m to allow the Trust to acquire underused/



CREDIT: THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Margate's Theatre Royal will benefit from Town Deal funding.

empty properties to be offered as affordable commercial space for the creative industries. The Trust will provide wider benefits to the community by generating investment in Margate and creating jobs and training opportunities.

**For further information:**

[www.margatecreativelandtrust.org](http://www.margatecreativelandtrust.org)

The Town Deal funding includes projects to support three of the district's venues:

- Theatre Royal
- Margate Winter Gardens
- Dreamland.

Theatre Royal has £2.2m to deliver much-needed works to safeguard the building, explore the theatre's heritage and create a masterplan for sustainable future use, while engaging an operator. The goal is to unlock public and private match funding in order to develop a hub of performing arts.

Margate Winter Gardens is benefitting from an in-depth review of the building to develop an understanding of how the council can best help to reinvigorate this heritage asset, secure its future as a leisure operation and support footfall and income into the district. It is being marketed to potential investors with the experience and expertise to reimagine

the venue as central to Thanet's cultural and economic landscape.

Dreamland's £4m of Town Deal funding will create a year-round, state of the art entertainment and conferencing venue, events and content which will complement Dreamland Amusement Park. Significant private investment will unlock this key site and support further private investment around Margate.

A number of council assets have been transferred to private sector ownership to enable their redevelopment for the benefit of communities in Thanet. The Granville Theatre, Ramsgate has been transferred to new owners who have carried out extensive refurbishments. The theatre has reopened as a high quality production, dance and cinema space. The Westbrook Loggia building, on the beach front in Margate, was sold to Tracey Emin, celebrated artist and champion of Margate. It will be renovated with a focus on fostering community engagement and sustainable development. The public toilets and beach shower facilities will remain, to safeguard the beach's Blue Flag award.

### Creative Industries in Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate

Margate and Ramsgate are home to a huge variety of businesses, freelancers and creative practitioners. This is helping to drive the district's reputation as a location for filming and photoshoots. The combination of visual appeal, proximity, affordability and creative talent make it an excellent choice for creative agencies and principal broadcasters when contracting for shoots and programme making.

In the last 12 months, notable examples include Sam Mendes' 'Empire of Light', a critically-acclaimed feature film set in Margate, as well as episodes of the BBC's long running drama 'Eastenders' and 'Dreamland' for Sky TV.

The district has hosted photoshoots for diverse publications and top name brands including Vogue, BMW, Adidas, Jo Malone, De Beers, Fiorelli, Ted Baker, Primark and White Stuff. The Kent Film Office estimates that in 2022-2023, filming generated over £5.3m for the local economy, with 110 separate productions filming for a total of 289 days. Empire of Light production alone contributed £4.8m.

**For further information:**

[www.thanet.gov.uk](http://www.thanet.gov.uk)

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

## Kent County Council Property

### Basic Need Programme for Schools

Kent County Council produces a Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent (KCP) annually. The KCP sets out the principles to determine proposals and forecasts the need for future provision across Kent schools. It illustrates how the council discharges its statutory responsibility to secure places for early years, special educational need & disabilities, primary and secondary children.

KCC has delivered expansions to five schools for over 690 pupils, and two modernisation projects which include a new hall for a 1FE school and a replacement teaching modular building. For 2024, we are on course to deliver at least another five expansions and new schools resulting in an additional 650 places. This does not consider all pre-construction design work to facilitate new schemes for 2024-25 under the new Kent Partnership Contractor Framework.

KCC are pleased to announce planning approval has been granted for Dover Discovery Centre refurbishment which will allow KCC and DDC services to use the building in partnership. The contract is to be tendered in October 2023 with completion expected to be October 2024.

KCC have also completed new school expansions, as well as refurbishments and modernisation of other buildings which includes:

- Ursuline College – new 1FE Expansion to provide 150 pupil places through Basic Need Programme.
- Gravesend Grammar School – 150 additional pupil place expansion through Basic Need Programme.
- Whitstable & Seasalter Endowed School – Basic Need expansion scheme for additional 60 places to bring the

school up to 1FE.

- Lydden Primary School- Modernisation programme delivered a new school hall and link corridor to the main school.
- King Hill Solar Farm, KCC's first solar farm delivered by the capital team.
- Oakwood House, refurbishment, and conversion of a former hotel into a multi-functional building for KCC.

Three Special Resource Provisions (SRP) within Mainstream Schools:

- new SRP provision at Garlinge School – 16 SRP pupil places in a new refurbished building at Garlinge Primary School through High Needs Programme
- satellite for St Nicholas School Canterbury at Parkside Primary School in Canterbury, conversion of a old disused swimming pool into a double classroom
- modernisation of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and SRP provision at Herne Bay Infant School.

### Kent Estates Partnership

The Kent Estates Partnership (KEP) brings together Kent local authorities, NHS, Higher Education/Further Education, blue light services, and central government to identify and promote collaborative projects and opportunities. KEP enables engagement with the national One Public Estate Programme (OPE), providing the potential for bids for OPE, DLUHC and other funding opportunities.

OPE provides support and funding to deliver ambitious property-focused programmes in collaboration and taking a strategic approach to asset management. OPE funding is designed to help project initiation/development work for projects with a higher risk profile. The expanding of the programme to include DLUHC Land Release Fund (LRF) and Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF) has enabled partners to bid for funding towards projects further on in the process considered 'shovel ready'. It is aimed at land remediation and infrastructure works on Local Authority owned land where there are barriers to development. KEP has entered bids in four funding rounds and has been allocated £1.3m in OPE funding and £0.87m from two rounds of LRF plus £5.5m in BLRF.

All the projects are targeted to ensure the efficient use of the public sector estate and support the release of surplus land for housing. In addition, projects deliver significant benefits to local communities, such as a new community

centre, improvements to town centres and the public realm, improved access to health services and a diagnostics centre. LRF and BLRF have delivered 94 homes with a further 250 forecast by 2024/25. The successful projects are:

### OPE

- Dartford Town Centre including Integrated Health & Social Care Campus
- Dover Discovery Centre
- Ebbsfleet Grove Road
- Ebbsfleet Integration of Healthy Living & Preventative Care Services
- KEP Shared Spaces Working Group
- Maidstone East Civic Quarter
- Paddock Wood Community Centre
- Repton Housing & Health Hub
- Sittingbourne Civic Quarter
- West Kent Blue Light Hub
- West Kent Partnership
- Whitfield Public Sector Office Hub
- OPE Opportunities Development Project

### For further information:

[KentEstatesPartnership@kent.gov.uk](mailto:KentEstatesPartnership@kent.gov.uk)

### Kent County Council Disposals

KCC's Infrastructure Team has a wide-ranging involvement in the county's property market. The council must ensure that the size and shape of its estate suits the organisation's current and future needs. This necessitates redevelopment projects, taking advantage of land value capture to defray capital costs wherever possible, to adapt and repurpose operational sites. It also involves disposal of assets surplus to the council's requirements.

Approximately £10.5m of land and property assets were released from the KCC estate in the 22/23 financial year, principally for new housing and employment uses. These receipts will be reinvested in the council's capital development programme which funds vital infrastructure projects.

The release of brownfield sites, often in urban locations, allows for the development of new sustainable properties including affordable homes and care facilities in the heart of local communities. In the 22/23 financial year, KCC's records indicate that around 130 new homes will be created or brought back into use because of disposal activity. Many



of Kent's surplus operational properties could be considered non-designated heritage assets. The release of these heritage assets allows for much needed private investment to secure the future of these properties and protect the contribution they make to the local area's character.

KCC encourages community groups to make use of powers introduced by the Localism Act to nominate properties Assets of Community Value. Where a listing as an Asset of Community Value has been successful, KCC will work with community groups to assist them in shaping their bid for surplus sites. Maximising their chances of success when bids are appraised against adopted policy after the property has been brought to the market.

The Disposals Team also work closely with public sector partners such as the NHS in bringing forward schemes that deliver public benefit as well as generating reinvestment capital for KCC to invest in its services. This has included the promotion and release of land to facilitate the creation of new medical hubs in strategic sustainable locations

### Other Projects Oakwood House

Delivery of a complex refurbishment scheme to provide accommodation for Libraries, Community Learning and Skills and Coroners services have been completed and occupied by each service. The accommodation provides new spaces refurbished to an exceptional standard for wedding ceremonies and registrations, with weddings having been taking place since March 2023.



**Refurbishment of Oakwood House, Maidstone for weddings and ceremonies.**



**Restored rooms for Registrar and Coroner Services, Oakwood House, Maidstone.**

Adult Education courses commenced delivery on site from April 2023, with specialist provision for courses such as dance, art, photography and jewellery making amongst other mainstream curriculum courses.

KCC Coroners Service has recently occupied Oakwood House from August 2023, with the commencement of Court Sessions due to take place from October 2023 onwards.

The accommodation, newly refurbished throughout includes specialist bespoke areas as follows:

#### Adult Education

- Dance Studio
- General Teaching provisions
- Specialist Teaching Provisions (Pottery, Jewellery workshop, IT Suite, Art Studio, Photography Studio)

- Registry
- Three new Registrar ceremony rooms (Small, Medium & Large)
- Supporting registration services

#### Coroner

- 5 Court Room Spaces
- Supporting Staff Accommodation & Senior Coroners Provision
- Court Meeting rooms & Jury provision

The refurbishment works at Oakwood House also included significant sustainability benefits with the provision of energy efficient LED lighting, new heat recovery units, along with new ventilation systems throughout. These works were funded as part of the Salix decarbonisation grant.

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

## Housing

### Housing market in Kent for calendar year 2022

#### House sales statistics:

- Number of sales in Kent area: 21,941, down by 24.5% since 2021 (7,103 fewer sales).
- Larger percentage decrease than South East (-21.7%) and England & Wales (-17.8%).
- Number of sales in Medway area: 3,576 (down by 1,0421 or 22.6% on 2021).

All Kent districts saw a decrease in house sales over the previous year:

- Maidstone saw the largest decrease (-917 sales, -26.5%).
- Second largest was in Thanet (-769 sales, -26.5%).
- Largest percentage decrease was in Folkestone & Hythe (-30.1% or -700 sales).
- Maidstone had the most sales in 2022 (2,539).
- Gravesham saw the fewest sales (1,199).

#### House price statistics:

- Average price paid in Kent £416,760 up 6.8% on 2021 (+£26,589).
- Average price paid Medway £320,652, up 5.4% (+£16,444).
- South East average price £460,999 up 5.7% (+£25,023).
- England & Wales average price £367,273, up 5.1% (+£17,915).

All Kent districts saw an increase in house prices over the previous year:

- Sevenoaks saw the highest average price (£630,559).
- Swale had the lowest average house prices at £333,490.
- Dartford saw the largest percentage increase in average house price at +9.4% (+£33,856).
- Canterbury saw the smallest increase in average house price (+£19,876 or +5.2%).

There were 8,660 Energy Performance Certificates issued in Kent in 2022 this was 1,047 more than in 2021 (+13.8%).

Sources:

HM Land Registry Open Data Standard Reports Ministry of Housing, DLUHC (Dept for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities): Live table NB1

#### Nutrient Neutrality

East Kent continues to be affected by nutrient neutrality requirements to ensure that new developments do not prevent the recovery of the Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve. The planning authorities, county council, Natural England and Southern Water are all working on this issue.

The approach in the catchment is that large sites, typically 300 homes or more, should deliver nutrient neutrality on-site, which is probably best achieved through the provision of on-site wastewater treatment works with the effluent from this passed through a wetland to further remove nutrients. This approach has been approved for Otterpool and Mountfield sites and is being developed for other large sites.

Further work is required to provide mitigation for smaller sites, where this approach is clearly not viable. The local authorities are developing a strategy to provide credits for nutrient neutrality for smaller sites. The strategy includes retrofitting of social housing stock to reduce water consumptions, which leads to nutrient reductions at the local wastewater treatment works, and the construction of wetlands in the catchment to remove nutrients. Wetlands will need to be large and require significant design and planning. Once approved they will likely take two years to construct and establish.

To support the delivery of these measures the government is offering some funding. Natural England have funding to deliver nature-based solutions to provide mitigation, they are currently leading on the development of a wetland near Canterbury. DLUHC have recently announced additional funding for further measures. In east Kent, Canterbury and Ashford councils have submitted an expression of interest to this fund. This is for financial support for wetlands near Wye and a contribution to the wetland Natural England is leading on at Canterbury.

Southern Water have assessed the contribution their wastewater treatment works are making to the condition of Stodmarsh through the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP). They are proposing upgrades at most of

the wastewater treatment works in the catchment, as part of their business planning process. If these are implemented, they will reduce the need for neutrality by new housing or overnight accommodation in the catchment, though not eliminate it, and they do not count as a neutrality measure in themselves. These proposals must be approved by Southern Water's regulators and will not be implemented for some years.

The Kent Housing and Development Group (KHDG) have also been working with the development industry to advocate on their behalf with local and national government to identify a workable solution to enable KHDG members to resume building in the affected area,

The government has now proposed amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill on nutrient neutrality.

#### Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill was published in May 2022 and is currently at the consideration of amendments stage (final stage) in the House of Lords. It is a Bill to make provision for the setting of levelling-up missions and reporting on progress in delivering them.

The Bill describes an intention to develop a plan for how government can be repositioned, and for the housing sector this means identifying better solutions for the delivery of quality, affordable housing and creating long-term sustainable communities. The government has set out its approach to improve and simplify the planning process to give "local communities control over what is built, where it is built, and what it looks like, and so create an incentive to welcome development provided it meets the standards which are set."

The Bill includes powers to support the governments' approach to achieving this, which is through reforms to:

- deliver high quality design and beautiful places, and protect our heritage
- enable the right infrastructure to come forward where it is needed through the Community Infrastructure and the possible future imposition of an Infrastructure Levy
- enhance local democracy and engagement
- foster better environmental outcomes
- allow neighbourhoods to shape their surroundings, as this is where the impact of planning is most immediately felt.

The Bill also signposts further changes to come forward



which will enhance the way that planning works, including full digitalisation of the system, improving processes and most recently a proposed solution to the planning inertia around nutrient neutrality.

### Housing Delivery Test (HDT)

In February 2019, the first annual HDT results for councils were published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Housing Delivery Test (%)	Total net homes delivered over three year period.
	Total number of homes required over three year period.

Councils have submitted Housing Delivery Test information to government for 2022 and normally would have expected the results to have been published in January 2023. However, the government has advised Local Planning Authorities that the 2022 results will not be published until the responses to the recent National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation have been considered.

So, the most recent HDT remains the 2021 outcomes.

### Building materials, labour shortages and cost price inflation

All these issues have been an enduring problem for the construction industry since the beginning of 2021.

Commentators have reported a perfect storm with issues associated with Brexit, the pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine, utility costs and general inflation all contributing to unprecedented materials and labour shortages with resulting pressures on productivity.

The construction sector has described an extremely challenging environment to do business, with SMEs being hardest hit in the supply chain.

The market is experiencing a period of price volatility and Kent Housing and Development Group (KHDG) are working collaboratively across business and the public sector to promote delivery. KHDG has been contributing to regular engagement with DLUHC and Homes England on market conditions, alongside other developer groups from the SELEP area.



The residents of the 3000th home at Ebbsfleet Garden City.

### Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2020-2025 'A Place People Want to Call Home'

The Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2020-25 'A place people want to call home' has been aligned to respond to the current challenges and opportunities at a strategic level, both nationally and locally. It links to, and references, documents such as the SELEP Economic Strategy Statement and the Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework. As additional strategy or policies, national or local, come forward Kent Housing Group (KHG) will reflect upon these for relevance to the strategy.

The Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2020-2025 aims to provide a platform for a shared approach and ambition to meet the county's housing challenge (including tenure, affordability, and supported housing) within Kent and Medway. It is a document that can be used by a range of partners to lobby at local and national levels, to ensure that Kent and Medway can meet identified growth ambitions and ensure that community's benefit from homes and places where they wish to live and work. The strategy is an all-encompassing document that is relevant to all providers of homes in Kent and Medway.

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

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The strategy provides clarity on the major strategic housing challenges facing Kent and Medway, identifying common areas of concern and proposing pragmatic solutions on issues where a Kent and Medway perspective could add value and contribute to delivery of local ambitions. It recognises that there is a great diversity of housing provision across Kent and Medway and that what is appropriate for one neighbourhood may not be right in another. This strategy sets out a menu of solutions to assist authorities in achieving their local aims, whilst supporting our collective objective to deliver an ambitious housing offer. The foreword is being refreshed to reflect the pandemic and the levelling up agenda.

### Homes England

In May 2023, Homes England launched the new Strategic Plan 2023-2028, which reflects the emphasis on regeneration and place-making in the Levelling Up Bill.

The Homes England mission is to drive regeneration and housing delivery to create high-quality homes and thriving places. This will support greater social justice, the levelling up of communities across England and the creation of places people are proud to call home. This mission is supported by five interconnected objectives, which focus on place, home and working with the housing sector. Running through these is a commitment to work with partners who share this ambition. Homes England performance will be measured over the course of the plan period and for the first time will include a measure of social value and not simply market efficiency. Social value includes all significant costs and benefits that impact on the wellbeing of the whole population.

### The Strategic Plan is available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1159274/Homes-England-strategic-plan-2023-to-2028.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1159274/Homes-England-strategic-plan-2023-to-2028.pdf)



CREDIT: CHARTWAY GROUP AND LATIMER DEVELOPMENTS/ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL.

**New residential development at Conningbrook Lakes, Ashford.**

In June 2023, Homes England announced new support for estate regeneration through the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) 2021-26. This funding can now be used to support the delivery of replacement homes, and help regenerate and improve existing housing estates, where such

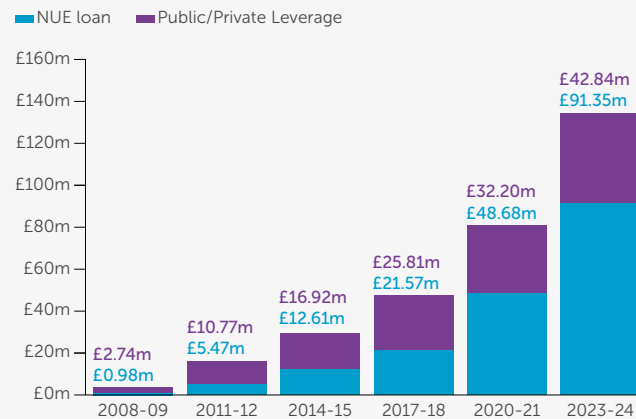
schemes would result in net additional new homes. This is a change that affordable housing partners have long called for and will help the Agency to better support them to replace affordable homes that are outdated and no longer fit-for-purpose with high-quality, energy efficient affordable homes.



## No Use Empty Total Investment £134.2m

Now in its 18th year, No Use Empty (NUE) continues to play an important role in supporting the Kent economy. Whilst the construction industry continues to face challenging times, demand for short term secured loans has not wavered with NUE exceeding the number of projects carried out in the previous financial year for the second year running. This was made possible by an injection of £12.5m being made available to NUE in financial year 2022-2023.

### Cumulative NUE Loans vs Private/ Public Sector Leverage



As the longest-running empty property initiative in the country, NUE retains the aim of reducing the number of empty dwellings that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over six months.

The combined value of all NUE loans (£91.4m) and private/public sector leverage (£42.8m) gives a total financial investment of £134.2m since being established in 2005.

Economic decline, recession, and some of the lowest property values in the South East have led to a historical lack of investment in pockets of our coastal areas, notably, Dover, Folkestone and Thanet. Wider regeneration initiatives continue

to attract high profile investors and funding. This has led to an increase in small and medium sized property developers looking to refurbish empty buildings and turn them into homes. However, in many cases severe dilapidation and an inability to access funding on the open market for renovation costs, left buildings empty.

Delivered by Kent County Council, in partnership with all twelve district councils, NUE is a model which can be replicated offering financial assistance, advice and guidance. The approach has also been adopted by Medway Council (2021) and Southend-on-Sea City Council (2022) who both access the services of the NUE team to provide back-office support for their respective loan schemes. NUE is now self-financing thanks to the interest-bearing loans and application fees charged. NUE remains committed to reducing the numbers of long-term empty properties and our district Empty Homes Officers have helped return more than 7,815 back into use since 2005 through a range of interventions:

- adjusting delivery models to reflect current market conditions;
- providing financial assistance to owners by offering short term secured loans with repayments recycled for new loans;
- continuity over a sustained period.

Bringing long-term empty properties back into use drives regeneration, provides homes, new sources of employment and a sense of community.

### NUE Residential Statistics

Data provided by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities shows that there are 248,149 long term empty dwellings in England, an increase of 10,819. Long-term means those dwellings that have been unoccupied and unfurnished for over six months.

Latest Council Tax records show a net reduction in Kent of 7.9%. There are 6,919 long term empty dwellings in Kent (5,764 are in the Kent area and 1,155 in the Medway Council area) representing 2.7% of the national total. This include all tenures (Local Authority, Housing Association and Private sector); although many empty properties are privately owned. NUE returned 418 long-term empty properties back into use in Kent in the last year. In the same period Medway recorded a reduction of 148 long-term empty properties.

In the last year:

- seven Kent districts saw a reduction in their long-term empty properties with the most being Ashford 295, Canterbury 95, Dover 74 and Swale 67
- the district with the highest number of long-term empty properties is Folkestone & Hythe with 709 and recorded the biggest increase at 59
- the lowest number for the second year running at 237 is Dartford.

### NUE Residential Loan Scheme

NUE provides short term secured loans to help property owners/developers meet the cost of repairs and improvements to bring their property back into use. If you are new to the loan scheme you can access an interest free loan of up to a maximum £175,000. If you return to the scheme for a further loan, this will be on interest bearing terms.

The loan scheme operates on a recyclable basis – as soon as the loan is repaid the fund is replenished and can be 'loaned' again. NUE have awarded £58.3m in secured loans to date, leveraging in £42.8m from the public/private sectors, which has supported 1,414 units across Kent since it launched.

The combination of NUE loans and top-up loans (administered by NUE on behalf of Dover, Folkestone and Hythe and Tunbridge Wells) help developers to bridge the gap between pre/post refurbishment values by providing a loan which takes account of cost of works, which banks and other lenders will not do. Without this approach these properties would have remained empty.

Average renovation cost to return a unit to occupation is £71,800, the average county council investment being £41,200. Over £35.9m (62%) of loans advanced have been repaid and recycled.

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

### CASE STUDY

#### NUE Residential 66 Preston Street, Faversham

NUE provided a loan to help Ratio Developments Ltd convert a two-storey end-of-terrace corner building, constructed in 1860 in the heart of Faversham town centre. It was arranged as a ground floor lock up commercial unit with offices on the ground and first floors with undercroft car parking. The property benefited from planning permission from Swale Borough Council to convert the ground and first floor offices to provide five self-contained flats and 1 flat under permitted

development. The commercial unit has also been retained. The property is currently being marketed for sale.

#### NUE Commercial Scheme

NUE's primary focus was empty residential properties. However, NUE secured two lots of funding from the Growing Places Fund (GPF) administered through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). The aim of this funding is to unlock economic growth, create jobs and 'kick-start' house building at stalled development sites. Operating as a recyclable loan scheme it complements NUE.

In 2018 NUE Commercial was awarded £1m to provide short term secured loans to return empty commercial properties (shops/redundant workspaces) to use for commercial or mixed uses, primarily in coastal locations. A total of 15 empty commercial properties were brought back into use (target was 8) and 28 residential homes created. NUE repaid the GPF in March 2023.

Having secured a further £2m funding for a second phase with a target to return 18 empty commercial units back into use and create 36 new homes, NUE have now exhausted the allocation. A total of 17 projects have been approved (as of June 2023) located in: Canterbury, Dover, Faversham, Folkestone, Herne Bay, Hythe, Margate, Minster, Ramsgate, Sheerness and Sittingbourne which will return 20 empty commercial units back into use and create 52 residential homes exceeding the target for both. Full repayment of the GPF is due March 2027.

### CASE STUDY

#### NUE Commercial: 57 High Street, Minster

The property known as Attwell's Newsagents had been in the same family ownership for 69 years but closed in 2019 and remained empty until July 2023. The property was acquired by a close family friend who granted a long-term lease to the new operators of the recently refurbished convenience store which also has a Post Office counter – a first for the village of Minster. Planning permission was granted in April 2023 to make extensive alterations and to convert the 1st floor into a 2-bed self-contained flat with rear extension. NUE provided a secured loan of £150,000 from its Growing Places Fund allocation.

#### NUE New Build Homes

In 2020 KCC made available £12m for NUE to provide funding for new builds on derelict or vacant land with required permissions in place. All loans are secured as a first charge and interest is collected on a quarterly basis with the capital loan being repaid on an agreed future date or if sold.

Demand was such that by March 2023, KCC had increased the funding available to £24m. To date NUE has approved loans to the value of £31.3m to fund 227 new homes across eight of the twelve Kent districts. Of these 103 homes have been completed, sold and the loans (£10.6m) repaid and recycled to the next scheme. The average new build loan per unit is £122,581. The table below shows all projects supported with Treasury Investment by District. One project in Canterbury is awaiting a planning decision to confirm number of residential units.

KCC have provisionally allocated up to £40m for NUE loans which will give greater flexibility in allowing those projects on our waiting list to start and not rely on earlier loans being recycled.



66 Preston Street, Faversham.

CREDIT: NO USE EMPTY



District	NUE Loan	Residential Units
Ashford	£300,000	2
Canterbury	£776,250	1
Dartford	£600,000	13
Dover	£10,048,000	64
Folkestone & Hythe	£4,923,000	58
Swale	£2,173,000	14
Thanet	£12,268,300	74
Tunbridge Wells	£260,000	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>£31,348,550</b>	<b>227</b>

### CASE STUDY

#### New build Homes Radnor Park Road, Folkestone

Homes for 14 families have been provided in Folkestone thanks to a collaboration between the district council and NUE. This was one of the first loans to be approved under



Radnor Park Road, Folkestone.

the NUE new-build scheme with the loan fully repaid. NUE supported the development of apartments, consisting of ten two-bed homes and four one-bed homes on the site of a redundant building in Radnor Park Road. Local developers, Livingston Homes, worked alongside Alliance Building to deliver the project at a total cost of £1.3m including an interest-bearing loan from KCC. Folkestone & Hythe District Council acquired the property to take into their housing stock to be made available at affordable rents.

### NUE Business Units

Our pilot project in the provision of business units with Tridax Limited, who have previously worked with NUE on residential projects, supported the construction of twenty-two business units at Honeywood Parkway, Whitfield, Dover. It is on track for completion in late 2023 and will be a flagship NUE project and make a positive contribution to the economic recovery locally.

All units are the same dimensions, although a couple have been constructed as 'multiple unit bespoke' finished. Typical floor area of each unit is 11.2m by 7.75m. Floor to ceiling at ground floor will be about 3m and at first floor level 2.7m. Each block of seven units has an overall external length of 56.58m and external depth of 12.0m. All units are:

- serviced by an electrical supply and ducted for fibre optics up to the boundary of each unit. They will be constructed to 'shell' arrangement which will be a watertight/sealed unit
- insulated – with panels to walls and ceilings
- a ready to use building with lockable windows/doors
- single power supplied or three phase
- fully installed with a first floor (not mezzanine) with unenclosed staircase
- have a toilet/kitchenette facility at ground floor level

Works commenced in April 2022. Phase 1 (units 16-22), Phase 2 (units 13-15) and Phase 3 (units 1-8) were completed by June 2023. The final phase (units 9-12) will complete in autumn 2023. Demand for the units was unprecedented with prospective purchasers outweighing the number of units available. All the units have been sold except for units 9-12 which are being retained by the developer.

The KCC loan is in the final stages of being repaid. Honeywood Parkway represents a model that could be replicated in other parts of the county.

### CASE STUDY

NUE Business Units Honeywood Parkway, Whitfield, Dover have now been completed.



Widem Logistics at Honeywood Parkway, Dover

### NUE Going Forward

By returning domestic and commercial properties to use NUE continues to increase Council Tax receipts for local authorities throughout Kent, has attracted New Homes Bonus (NHB) and is helping to generate new Business Rates. The initiative created or safeguarded over 1,830 jobs and provided homes to more than 3,100 local people.

Further bids are also to be submitted to the Growing Places Fund.

In addition, Kent's approach to tackling empty properties has been nationally recognised:

- KCC were the only non-housing authority finalist in the category of 'Council of the Year' at the UK Housing Awards 2020 and 2022.
- winning three national awards for Regeneration and Partnership Working.
- NUE participated in the national review of brownfield regeneration in Wales undertaken by Audit Wales having been identified as an interesting example of regeneration. (April 2023).
- winning the Rising Star award for an NUE team member at the national Empty Homes Conference (May 2023).
- NUE participated in the Westminster Empty Property Roundtable looking at methods of tackling empty properties (June 2023).

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

- NUE continue to provide administration and legal services support to Southend-on-Sea City Council for their NUE Commercial and Residential Loan Scheme which operates across six Essex districts.
- NUE continue to contribute to The Empty Homes Network/ Local Government Association (August 2023) best practice paper on empty homes, aimed at informing local authorities across the country of current statistics, best practice methods and potential steps to improve existing or new empty homes services.

For further information:

[www.nue.org.uk](http://www.nue.org.uk)

## THE THAMES ESTUARY GROWTH BOARD

Established by the government in 2020 and led By Thames Estuary Envoy and Chair Kate Willard OBE, the Thames Estuary Growth Board is responsible to the Secretary of State for driving economic growth, investment and innovation in the Thames Estuary – the UK's number one government-backed growth opportunity.

It is charged with delivering the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission's vision of increased productivity, high value jobs and high-quality homes for local people. The Board:

- champions projects for investment
- convenes local agencies and partners
- removes obstacles to making things happen
- acts as an investment partner in early-stage projects as a catalyst for significant new private sector investment.

Major workstreams at present include the establishment of a hydrogen ecosystem capable of attracting multi-billion pound investment, making better use of the river for light freight and championing the Estuary globally for investment.

Thames Estuary Growth Board members include the Leaders of Kent Count Council, Medway Council and Dartford Borough Council.

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### New investment platform launched

Investuary.com is the Thames Estuary Growth Board's new inward investment platform launched at UK Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) in May 2023 by the UK Investment Minister, Lord Johnson. The platform showcases investable opportunities driving growth in the Thames Estuary.

For further information:

[www.investuary.com](http://www.investuary.com)

## INNOVATION INVESTMENT INITIATIVE (I3)

This fund has supported small and medium sized businesses, with the potential for innovation, to develop new capacity to enable their business to grow. In line with Kent County Council's Kent and Medway Business Fund (KMBF) loan scheme, businesses applying for an i3 loan needed to demonstrate how the investment would create new local jobs and growth for the business.

The fund was managed by the county council and available for applications from eligible businesses located in, or looking to relocate to, the Kent and Medway area.

Since inception in 2017, the KMBF and i3 loan schemes have together provided more than 145 separate loans to businesses based in Kent and Medway to the value of almost £19.5m.



Matches Sports Bar and Grill, Canterbury.

CREDIT: MATCHESSPORTS BAR & GRILL (CANTERBURY) LTD



## CASE STUDY

### Matches Sports Bar and Grill, Canterbury

Matches Sports Bar & Grill (Canterbury) Ltd was formed in 2022. It offers a unique, family friendly and sports-themed premium bar and grill experience to customers. The £268,000 i3 investment will assist the business in expanding from its original site in Ashford, which will be retained, to a second site in Canterbury which previously had no dedicated sports bar in the city.

The work will regenerate a former high-profile derelict unit in the city's Longmarket development, adding a unique hospitality offering to the already bustling day and night-time economy of Canterbury. Located in Butchery Lane, Canterbury, the Sports Bar's 4,832ft<sup>2</sup> (450m<sup>2</sup>) will be arranged over 3 floors.

The funding will be used to renovate and fit out the new premises to expand into a new, local market. The layout and operation of the venue takes inspiration from the successful Ashford branch. Live HD Sports from around the world will be shown on numerous HD TV screens all day long. There will also be Canterbury's first self-pour tap wall, cashless pool tables, interactive darts, two karaoke rooms, beer pong, a shuffleboard table, retro arcade consoles. Also included is a dance floor and private hire space.

The required 50% match funding was secured in the form of a landlord capital contribution, of £268,000, to assist in bringing the unit back from derelict to a white-box, for Matches to then complete the fit-out. The aim is to replicate the same feeling and atmosphere as the Ashford branch and create turnkey processes and procedures in order to maximise efficiency and profitability. The opening of Canterbury, with the help of the i3 loan, will be a key component to achieving this plan.

As well as transforming a derelict unit, which stood empty for over four years, Matches Sports Bar and Grill (Canterbury) will support 24 new jobs when it opens in Autumn 2023.

Designed by architect/project manager Lee Pollock of Lifeforms Design it was constructed by Andrew Waters of Waters & Warren.



The website for the Cultural Planning Toolkit.

## LONDON RESORT

London Resort Company Holdings (LRCH) are the promoters of the Project known as 'London Resort', located on the Swanscombe Peninsula, north Kent. The proposed site is more than 465 hectares (1,150 acres). It was the first commercial project to be designated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. As such, a Development Consent Order application was submitted but was subsequently withdrawn in March 2022. London Resort is understood to be considering resubmitting the application, but further details of the revised scheme, including timing, are not currently known.

## CULTURAL PLANNING TOOLKIT

This new toolkit supports place making through considering what arts and cultural infrastructure can be secured through development, redevelopment and the land use planning process. This toolkit has been commissioned by Creative Estuary in partnership with Kent County Council. It has been created by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and Urban Roots Consulting as a resource for cultural planning in England.

It should be noted that while the toolkit sets out the importance of local plan policies and good governance structures that will better enable the creation and support of thriving places, local authorities and development corporations will still need to work hard with stakeholders and applicants to implement the policies and their strategies.

For further information:

[www.creativeestuary.com/culturalplanningtoolkit](http://www.creativeestuary.com/culturalplanningtoolkit)

## Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

## Transportation

### Government Funding Opportunities

The Local Growth Fund programme commenced in 2015 and provided £128.66m of investment to deliver 36 projects in Kent. KCC is responsible for the programme management of the fund, though some of the projects have been delivered by third party organisations. The programme, now closing, has a small number of projects which will continue up to 2024/25.

In 2020, The Getting Building Fund was launched with £37.43m to deliver a further 10 projects in Kent to stimulate economic growth after the pandemic. These were completed in March 2023.

The government launched the Levelling Up Fund, which has £4.8bn to tackle the economic differences between different parts of the UK and is open to every local area. There are three themes:

- Transport Investment
- Regeneration
- Town Centre and Cultural Investment.

In Round 1, three projects in Kent were successful, bringing about £40.9m of investment to deliver regeneration projects in Ashford, Margate and Ramsgate. Round 2 bids were submitted in August 2022, and the government announced in January 2023 that Kent would receive further funding, for projects within:

- Folkestone and Hythe for town centre improvements,
- Canterbury for the Connected Canterbury project
- Swale for the Sheerness Revival Project
- Dover (subject to final business case approval by government) for the Port of Dover Outbound controls project.



CREDIT: DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT

Illustration of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, looking north.

### Lower Thames Crossing

The Secretary of State for Transport announced the preferred route for the Lower Thames Crossing in 2017 to form a new strategic route from the M25 to the M2/A2. It will comprise twin bored tunnels under the River Thames east of Tilbury and Gravesend and will connect to the A2 in Kent. It will add more than 70% to road capacity between Essex/Kent, unlock investment and create thousands of jobs. When complete, at 2.64 miles, it will be the longest road tunnel in the UK. The 70mph, 14-mile route and crossing will be built to the highest safety standards incorporating the most up-to-date engineering and information technology.

Consultations have been undertaken as the scheme is being taken through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). The DCO was accepted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate in November 2022 and examination commenced in June 2023, expected to complete in December 2023.

If the DCO is granted, construction could start in 2026 and complete, at the earliest, in 2031. A commitment to deliver the scheme was announced with the second Road

Investment Strategy (RIS2) by the Department for Transport in March 2020 although the capital funding would now need to fall within the third Road Investment Strategy period which will run from 2025 to 2030.

### Overnight Lorry Parking

Kent County Council has been working with the private sector to promote a network of overnight lorry parks. Ashford International Truck Stop expanded from 390 to 660 spaces and other sites are being considered by the private sector. KCC is also working with the Department for Transport, District Councils and Kent Police on stronger enforcement action to address inappropriate lorry parking across Kent.

### Local Transport Plan

Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth Without Gridlock 2016 – 2031 (LTP4) was adopted by Kent County Council in July 2017. It aims to deliver transport priorities for Kent which will contribute to a safe and efficient transport system. Since the adoption of LTP4, there have been rapid changes in both local and national government policy around the environment, significant changes to how we work and travel due to the pandemic and advancement of technology for



electric vehicles and personal mobility. A new Emerging Local Transport Plan 5 is currently in development and available to view at:

[www.kent.gov.uk/Ltp5](http://www.kent.gov.uk/Ltp5)

### Transport for the South East (TfSE)

This body consists of Kent, Medway, East Sussex, West Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Brighton & Hove, Southampton, Portsmouth, Isle of Wight and the Berkshire local authorities, plus the five Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

In 2023 TfSE established its first Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) which sets out the scale of transport infrastructure changes that should be considered for the region over the next thirty years, in total costing in excess of £45bn. The SIP is underpinned by a credible, evidence based technical programme.

TfSE is already making the case to government for investment in rail and the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and submitted its priorities for the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS) which informed the government's announcement on RIS in March 2020. In Kent, RIS priorities that received commitment for development from government include:

- Lower Thames Crossing
- the development of pipeline schemes for improvements to the M2/A2 corridor at M2 Junction 7 (Brenley Corner)
- improved access to Dover via the A2.

KCC and TfSE are continuing to work with National Highways to ensure they are developed further in the third Road Investment Strategy.

Improvements to the connection between the M2 at Junction 3 with the M20 at Junction 6 via the A229 (Bluebell Hill) were not included in RIS but are being developed by Kent County Council for a bid through TfSE to the Department for Transport (DfT) for Large Local Major (LMM) scheme funding. This bid was part of the work that TfSE were asked to do by the DfT to prioritise schemes for the Major Road Network (MRN), a new category of road announced by government in December 2018 for the most important local authority A roads. A new relief road known as the North Thanet Link, to improve the corridor of the A28 around Birchington, Westgate and Acol to enable growth in the Thanet Local Plan has also been funded through the MRN fund for development work to proceed to Outline Business Case.

### Rail network improvements in Kent

Projects in progress to support economic growth through improvements to the rail service in Kent are:

#### Journey Time Improvement (JTI) Scheme

The JTI scheme is essential to support the entry into service of the new Thanet Parkway station. The total journey time saving in both directions between Ashford International and Ramsgate will be 2½ minutes, which will mitigate the time penalty of trains calling at the new station. The scheme completed in July 2023.

#### Thanet Parkway Station

Thanet Parkway, a new station near Cliffsend, also opened at the end of July 2023. This has significantly improved rail access to and from London for local communities, Discovery Park and Manston business parks with London just over an hour away.



The fully open Thanet Parkway Station.

#### Abbey Wood to Ebbsfleet: Future Provision of Public Transport

KCC and other local authorities, as part of a partnership known as 'C2E', are considering with Transport for London and the Greater London Authority, options for future provision of public transport between Abbey Wood and Ebbsfleet. One option could be an extension of the Elizabeth Line to Ebbsfleet. Public consultation took place in 2021 on options to support growth in the north Kent corridor between Abbey Wood and Gravesend. In late 2021, a new Strategic Outline Business Case was submitted to

government for funding the development of preferred options. A response from government is awaited.

**More information on those consultations is available at** [www.abbeywood2ebbsfleet.com](http://www.abbeywood2ebbsfleet.com)

#### Westenhanger Station: Otterpool Park Garden Town

Otterpool Park LLP, the master developer, is working with Network Rail and the rail operator, SE Trains Ltd, to secure station and service upgrades. Kent County Council, as the local transport authority, is inputting to the plans to help ensure transport impacts of the development are as sustainable as possible by improving the network. The proposal is to upgrade the station to enable High Speed One services to stop. The plans include lengthened platforms, new footbridge and lifts, a new station building and facilities and a dedicated car park. The service would likely only commence when an agreed level of dwelling occupations has been achieved.

#### High Speed One Service Enhancement

KCC has engaged in discussions with High Speed One and the East Kent Delivery Board (District Councils in East Kent, KCC and local businesses) about the need to enhance capacity and service levels. The working scenario has been a post-pandemic environment, where demand has returned to previous levels and outstrips supply due to the growth in housing and population across the county. There are three key elements essential to an enhanced level of service and capacity:

- to utilise remaining existing capacity on the Southeastern High-Speed network as the passenger market grows again;
- the need for an increase in High Speed One rolling-stock once current service capacities are full, which will have a lead-time of four years to allow procurement of stock; and
- the installation of a new connection between High Speed One and the Mainline west of Folkestone West at Dollands Moor, to enable faster journey times for some services.

This would deliver the capacity required to meet the growth in demand, further improve journey times from the coast and ensure that growth into the 2030s and beyond would be accommodated by the high-speed network.

Network Rail has also developed a business case setting out options to government for the potential electrification and extension of High-Speed services to Hastings and Eastbourne. A response is awaited from government.

CREDIT: THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Contributor



### The landscape, post Grenfell

#### Background

There is no doubt that the fateful events on the evening 14th June 2017 have had a profound impact on the property, development and construction sector. The fire in the tower block in North Kensington was widely covered in the media and there were some shocking and graphic images of the events as they unfolded.

The reported loss of life and the huge impact that the event had on the people and the surrounding area provided a distressing backdrop to subsequent developments.

A public enquiry made its initial report in October 2019 which was highly critical in a number of areas.

- Poor standard of construction
- Negligent material specification
- Breach of Building Regulations
- Fire safety standards overall
- Fire authority strategy and response plan

As we pass the sixth anniversary of this event, the enquiry continues.

#### Regulatory issues

There have been a few changes to the regulatory framework in the aftermath of Grenfell. Building Regulations amendments in 2018 banned the use of combustible materials in the external walls of buildings. Further updates in 2022 and 2023 amended Part B (Fire Safety) and imposed duties on those owners of 'high risk' buildings.

Fire Safety Act 2021 applies to multiple occupancy buildings over 11 metres in height in England. It sets out the definition of a responsible person and defines their area of responsibility for the structure (including flat entrance doors) external walls, cladding, (including insulation and fixings), and common parts. The Act also required that all Fire Risk Assessments be updated to reflect its provisions. These have subsequently been further refined in Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.

Building Safety Act 2022 introduced new wider powers to sue construction product manufacturers and suppliers, extending the limitation period under the Defective Premises Act 1972 retrospectively up to 30 years. It also introduced Building Liability orders to allow for recovery against developers who carry out works through shell companies or Special Purpose Vehicles. The Act applies to all those involved in design or construction and introduced wider protections for leaseholders, stating that Buildings must be 'fit for habitation'. There is no option to 'contract out' of liability.

The Register of 'High Risk' Buildings defines a 'High Risk' building as 'residential buildings with more than 2 units and over 18 metres or 7 storeys in height'. Under Building Regulations 2023 owners of all such buildings must provide details for a central register no later than October 2023, and there are estimated to be around 12,500 buildings in England to which this will apply.

#### Insurance issues

##### Professional Indemnity Insurance

It will come as no surprise to hear that the market for the Construction sector has been profoundly impacted by Grenfell, with the widespread application of 'fire safety and combustibility' exclusions, aggregation of policy indemnity limits, higher premium levels, and increased excesses are all being seen. Given the 'claims made' nature of the cover, the terms in place at the date of any claim apply, and not those that might have been much less onerous in previous years.

This effectively removes 'back catalogue' cover for prior works undertaken.

The Construction Leadership Council (CLC) have been very critical of the stance being taken by insurers. Many firms cannot secure cover against the indemnity provisions of a standard JCT Design & Build Contract (Clause 2.17) and all parties to contracts, sub-contracts, warranties or agreements need to be advised of the restricted nature of coverage.

The JCT Suite of Contracts are due to be amended in 2024 and it is hoped this might address some of the ongoing concerns.

#### Cladding

There was an almost immediate move on the part of Insurers to 'reverse' out of providing cover for potential liabilities arising out of defective or non-conforming cladding, with Insurance companies often drawing no distinction between the varying types of 'cladding' and little focus on overall fire safety characteristics.

#### Modern Methods of Construction

The insurance industry has shown a somewhat cautious even negative approach to the introduction of such new sustainable products, materials and construction methods. This has not been helped by several large fires involving buildings with 'timber frame' construction, and there is increasing evidence to show that modular construction methods do increase the scale of damage. As a result, insurance for such buildings during construction and post completion is difficult and cover for large construction projects might require several Insurers to achieve the necessary capacity. The use of such materials will not stop, but there are many insurance considerations to be aware of.

#### Summary

With a very difficult landscape this is one of a number of challenges the property, real estate and construction sector faces and will continue to impact the industry for some time to come.



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## Contributor



### DHA – Your Partner in Planning

Demand for expert planning advice and support is stronger than ever, which is why DHA has grown to become the South East's largest independent planning and highways consultancy, operating from its headquarters in Kent and with offices in Gatwick and London.

The sixty plus strong team provides planning, transport, urban design, environment, infrastructure and land consultancy advice for DHA's expanding roster of regional and national clients. The quality of DHA's advice and approach saw it crowned South East Planning Team of the Year by the industry's governing body, the Royal Town & Planning Institute.

The last twelve months has seen DHA secure planning permission for a wide range of local and national residential developers and commercial property projects, with strong growth in educational projects, especially SEND schools. DHA's added value for its clients comes through its comprehensive understanding of the region's political, economic and environmental landscape, which is essential in navigating the planning process.



**Proposal for 23 self-contained units in Ashford for homeless people or individuals and families needing respite prior to finding more permanent accommodation.**

#### Keeping up with the NPPF

Recent announcements from the government mean the planning regime continues to evolve. DHA's team keep themselves at the forefront of the changes and implications for their clients, especially in the areas of housing need, extended permitted development rights, water neutrality and biodiversity net gain.

#### Local Plan progress

The last twelve months have seen limited progress for Local Plans across Kent. The position has been exacerbated by proposed planning reforms and the May local elections, which saw many councils change their political colour completely or go to no overall control.

Traditionally, house developers and landowners have put their faith in securing an allocation through the Local Plan process. However, with plans stalling and councils facing strict housing delivery targets, and with housing need increasing and land supply worsening, many landowners are now looking at how best to bring forward potential schemes. To try and get ahead of the Local Plan, and to bring a degree of certainty in an uncertain planning world, many are considering lodging a planning application on unallocated sites.

#### Planning with transport in mind

DHA is called upon to underpin many applications with detailed transport assessments that support residential, education and commercial developments across the region. Post-pandemic work patterns have changed beyond recognition, with the flexibility of working from home now a day-to-day reality for a large proportion of our communities, transforming our overall travel patterns.

National Highways and Kent County Council are moving away from the traditional 'predict and provide' approach to transport planning to the government's preferred policy of 'decide and provide' – involving the promotion of modal shift. DHA has embraced this change in approach, with potentially significant benefits to their clients, local communities and the environment.

The other issue impacting many in Kent's property industry is the delays in major infrastructure projects, notably the Lower Thames Crossing, which is now not expected to put a spade in the ground until 2027 at the earliest. The knock-on effect of delays to this and other infrastructure projects is being felt by many proposed schemes going through planning along the M2 and M20 corridors, and nearby developments and communities.

Alex Hicken, Managing Director of DHA, said: "When it comes to determining the reasons behind DHA's success across Kent, we feel it is in large part down to our own DNA. It's that combination of local knowledge, professional acumen, pragmatism and truthfulness.

"Combine these traits with the fact many of the company are born and bred in Kent, means there's an inherent desire to leave a lasting legacy, and in our case that's in the county's built environment, which is why we're proud to once again support Kent Property Market Report."

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## Contributor

# Hollaway

### We find a way

Since 2016, and arguably before, the UK construction sector has been strapped unwillingly onto a rollercoaster. We have seen the fallout from Brexit, a pandemic, a war in Europe, a series of Prime Ministers and a steep interest rate rise to a level not seen for more than a decade. These huge events coupled against what has been called a 'broken Planning system' and ever-increasing legislation, planning and building restrictions and requirements, are indeed enough to get the heart racing faster than if you were riding a big dipper. It would be easy to sit back and grumble, blame others and hope things pick up, but that's not what happens in East Kent.

### We have an ability to find a way

Yes, the planning system has its issues. Resources, legislation and even communications all seem to conspire against even the most hardened of applicant. Despite this the consents are still coming; stunning dwellings, innovative workspaces and sector leading leisure offerings have all been able to weave their way through the maze with hard work, collaboration and people going above and beyond.

Similarly, the funding system is broken. Viability has always been on a knife edge, but when the cost of money becomes too much the wheels stop turning. The small sites are unaffordable to the smaller developers and the cost of the larger sites is too much for the rest.

But, we find a way. Sharing the risk and sharing the profits, being innovative with the way money is used and how it is shared, promotes collaboration and reduces the risk. We find a way and see projects like Boys Hall and The Leas Pavilion continuing to be built.

The post EU supply chain is broken. We don't have the supply of labour or materials that we once relied upon, both on the ground and within the professional services market. But we innovate and change. And with care for the relationships forged with non-EU counties post Brexit, we have developed new trading partners previously excluded from the markets. As the cost of materials sourcing from Europe increases, there has been a shift to sourcing from UK stock. Larch is now from Scotland, not Russia and slate is coming back out of Wales at a rate not seen for many years.

What is telling is the drive of the industry to work, to keep going and to innovate. Previous talk around collaboration and teamwork has been put into practice and become reality.

Fundamentally the system is still broken and it is hard. We need more planning officers, and we need to consider if the legislation is helping or hindering the change to carbon neutral. The National Planning Policy Framework is out of date and the Building Regulations are out of date. Finance decisions are often based on naive desktop valuations that only work within the parameters of an outdated system which is not conducive to supporting the innovation asked of the designers. If we can operate within such confines and still find a way, think what could be achieved if we had a system that worked together to realise the bigger picture.

There are targets to reach, be it sustainability, housing numbers, GDP or inflation. We can get there, but imagine if some of these hurdles were removed, how much faster we could reach the targets and even exceed them.

Hollaway, based in both London and Kent, have a commitment to the local. The work of the practice is embedded in regeneration projects which seek to understand a whole place through social economics, heritage and place making – for the past, the now, and for a future that matters.

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## Recent projects

### The Sea Hive

**Client:** Betteshanger Country Park

**Location:** Near Deal

**Expected completion:** 2025

Hollaway Studio has designed a pioneering inland surfing lagoon creating Kent's first surfing 'wave garden', alongside a 120-bed luxury spa hotel on land at former colliery. The 15 acre site will feature a Wave garden Cove technology surf lagoon at its centre, which would be the second of its kind in England. It will offer up to 1000 perfect waves per hour similar to those in the ocean. Accommodating for all ages and abilities with wave types ranging from 50 cm to 2m in height.

Overlooking the surfing lagoon is the 'Lagoon Surf Hub' with 15 accommodation lodges; a wellness centre with yoga and fitness zones, cold water therapy, meditation pavilions and a splash pool; a clubhouse with a surf academy as well as a restaurant and bar; conference facility; retail outlet; chill out spaces; dedicated work area; and immersive balcony. In addition to the hub, there is a separate design for the destination 120-bed hotel, spa and gym.

### Boys Hall

**Client:** Boys Hall

**Location:** Ashford

**Completed:** 2023

The 17th-century Jacobean Manor building, previously an unloved wedding venue and then converted into flats, has been remodelled as a design-led hotel steeped in history and nestled just minutes from Ashford International Station. Comprising seven ensuite bedrooms (with three more to follow later in 2023), two cosy reception rooms, private dining rooms, plus the 70-seat restaurant and its very own wood-clad pub, Boys Hall has been sensitively transformed into a destination venue that offers a unique and memorable experience for guests and the public alike. More is on the way with lodges, garden café and a series of ever-growing gardens.



---

## Leas Pavilion

**Client:** Leas Pavilion Development Limited

**Location:** Folkestone

**Expected completion:** 2025

Hollaway's design for the complete restoration and redevelopment of the Grade 2 listed Leas Pavilion in Folkestone is currently under construction. Working with Gustavia, the local Council and Historic England, the restoration of the currently dilapidated site allows us to collaboratively restore the disused and abandoned Pavilion to its former beauty. This high-quality residential proposal enables the restoration cost required to save the Leas Pavilion for the town. In addition to the restoration of the Leas Pavilion, the scheme also includes the construction of 91 residential units, associated parking, and residents and community space for special events.

---

## Bethany School

**Client:** Bethany School

**Location:** Goudhurst

**Expected completion:** 2025

A new performing arts building at Bethany Independent School. The improvements proposed to the performing arts facilities will create an abundance of opportunity for all pupils to develop their creative talents. The theatre itself will provide a variety of uses, creating spaces for single occupants through to a 214-person seated event alongside an orchestra. Audiences and visitors will be drawn in through the foyer which sits beneath the raked seating and technical booth. Double height workshops and storerooms will provide the perfect ancillary spaces for pre-production work undertaken by staff and students alike.

---

## Benenden Music Hall

**Client:** Benenden School

**Location:** Benenden

**Completed:** 2022

Hollaway Studio has created a building made to give life to music – and so to the cultural education of both Benenden's pupils and the local community beyond. Benenden Schools' new addition provides a national venue for performance and music whilst also hosting cultural events for the local community. Benenden Auditorium was created to function as a School Hall but designed as a Concert Hall with top class acoustics, its world class standard attracts acclaimed musicians, including the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

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## Doodle Studio

**Client:** Mr Doodle

**Location:** Tenterden

Hollaway Studio are working with Mr. Doodle to create his 'Doodle Studio' on the grounds of his home in Tenterden, Kent. The studio is a conduit for Mr Doodle's art to be used more functionally and everlastingly and is a clear example of the two separate forms of art and architecture converging and inspiring each other. An enticing cube, itself a conversation starter like his artworks, the studio will be covered in a metal sheet which wraps the exterior in laser cut doodle shapes created by Mr Doodle. This part of the design reflects how the studio represents both space of work and inspiration to the artist.



## Contributor



### Navigating the current property & construction landscape

There's no doubt that the UK's property and construction sector continues to face significant challenges, with insolvencies at their highest rate in over a decade. According to government statistics, there were 4,280 insolvencies in the twelve months to June 2023, 16.5% higher than the same period a year ago, and close to the peak of 4,537 insolvencies in 2012, in the aftermath of the financial crisis.

The sector has been particularly hard hit by increases in the cost of energy, materials and borrowing. This has been compounded by supply chain issues, skills shortages, a slowdown in housebuilding, government delays on major infrastructure projects, as well as unpaid bills and bad debt left by firms that have already failed.

#### The current landscape

In August 2023, both the Halifax and Nationwide House Price index reported year-on-year falls of 4.6% and 5.3% respectively. At the same time, the latest available UK Construction PMI showed a decline to 50.8 in August 2023 from 51.7 in July, indicating that the housing market is flat and confidence is extremely fragile.

The build to rent (BTR) sector has had a tough year, especially for mortgaged investors who have been particularly hard hit by higher interest rates.

It's also a concerning time for those in the commercial property sector, particularly landlords of older office space, facing difficult choices around investment to bring their stock up to new environmental standards to compete with newer office buildings that tick more of the green credentials.

In contrast, student accommodation is expected to see material growth this year with record applications for university places and limited supply. This has led to high levels of investment in purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). However, the rising cost of university attendance, a clamp down on 'low quality' degrees, and a tougher stance on international student visas may hit future demand.

Buy to let (BTL) landlords are also facing significant challenges with higher mortgage rates and legislative changes. While no official date has been confirmed, the Renters' Reform Bill is set to come into force in England next year, which will implement a ban on no-fault evictions and double the notice period required for rent increases. In Wales, the government recently implemented new measures to protect renters against eviction.

The capital gains tax (CGT) allowance for the 2023/24 tax year (from 6 April 2023) has decreased by more than 50% from £12,300 for 2022/23 to £6,000 and is expected to be lowered further to £3,000 next year, from 6 April 2024. This affects landlords selling a rental property, where any gain exceeding the allowance is taxed at the CGT rate depending on their total taxable income, potentially reducing the profitability of any sale.

There is some potentially good news for landlords with the government set to 'relax the pace' of EPC reforms. As it stands, landlords must bring their properties up to an EPC level of C by the end of 2025 for new tenancies, and by 2028 for existing tenancies. It now looks likely that the government will delay the proposals for landlords to upgrade the energy efficiency of the homes they let out in a bid to ease the pressure on the private rental sector.

BTL mortgage rates have shot up in 2023 as lenders have increased costs as the Bank of England continues to increase the base rate. However, the demand for rental properties remains high and market rents grew by an average of 9%.

In August 2023 the base rate, which plays a pivotal role in determining mortgage rates, stood at 5.25%, following 14 consecutive base rate increases.

Landlords and owner-occupiers alike will therefore be feeling the effects when they come to remortgage. Those with expiring fixed-rate deals secured when rates were much lower, could be in for a financial shock when refinancing to a new deal.

#### A resilient sector

The UK construction and property market remains a resilient and dynamic industry, but it needs strong leadership and stability. In February Rachel Maclean became the sixth housing minister within a year, and the fifteenth since 2010. Such a rapid turnover is not conducive to the development and execution of a co-ordinated strategy to address the multi-faceted issues the sector is facing; and capitalise on the sectors potential to drive growth in all areas of the economy and address the current housing crisis.

MHA understands the nature of the property and construction sector and the challenges faced by those who operate within it. With accounting and financial management at our core, we guide businesses from start-up all the way through to exit planning, advising on growth strategies and on how to survive a changing economy and an uncertain future.

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## Contributor



### Kent Construction Market Outlook

Enduring inflationary pressures and rising interest rates continue to weigh on both the broader UK economy as well as the construction industry more specifically.

#### **RICS UK Construction Monitor**

Feedback to the RICS UK Construction Monitor points to credit conditions across the sector deteriorating notably during the first half of the year, while contributors foresee a further tightening in the lending environment over the coming quarter.

By the same token, higher mortgage rates have taken their toll on activity across the UK residential market for the past year, with falling sales and retreating house prices filtering through to reduced development starts. This trend is visible at the national level and across Kent, where housing construction workloads fell in Q2 according to a net balance reading of -38% of survey participants.

With any potential loosening in monetary policy still likely some way off, the housing market is expected to remain subdued over the year ahead. In keeping with this, expectations for new housing construction work are firmly negative at the twelve-month time horizon in Kent.

Alongside financial constraints, a majority of respondents (56%) note that shortages of materials are hindering construction market activity across Kent at present. Even so, these shortages do appear to have eased somewhat over the past year, with the share of respondents citing such issues in the latest report much lower than the 82% found twelve months prior.

Planning and regulation remains the most widely cited factor thought to be hampering construction activity across the county, with two-thirds of local respondents highlighting this to be an impediment. Interestingly, the proportion of respondents taking this stance in Kent is significantly higher than the UK-wide figure of 51%.

At the same time, 47% of respondents across the county have experienced a shortfall in the availability of labour over the past quarter, albeit this is down from a share of 60% last year and is also slightly below the UK average of 61%.

Despite the headwinds currently being experienced, there are some pockets of resilience when it comes to the outlook.

For infrastructure in particular, respondents anticipate a solid pick-up in workloads at a more local level over the coming twelve months, with the energy and rail subsectors expected to lead the way. Meanwhile, respondents based within the county also expect a modest increase in workloads across the private non-residential sector over the same timeframe. On a similarly positive note, a net balance of +27% of respondents from Kent envisage employment levels rising across the construction industry over the year ahead (marginally stronger than the national average reading of +22%). Nevertheless, given intense material price inflation over the past couple of years, high input costs are still anticipated to squeeze profit margins going forward. Indeed, the latest net balance reading for profit margin expectations came in at -27%, signalling a further narrowing in industry profitability over the course of the next twelve months.



EVENT



# UK Commercial Property Conference 2023



**12 December 2023 | 08:30– 17:30 GMT**  
**Cavendish Conference Centres, London**

In March 2023, RICS released a report on the economic challenges facing the commercial property sector. The RICS UK Commercial Property Conference will take a deep dive into some of these challenges, while celebrating new innovations.

With interest rates expected to remain high and ESG remaining at the forefront of our minds, this conference will look into key trends and best practice case studies to support the commercial property sector as we move to 2024.

Featured speakers:

- Tasos Vezyridis  
Executive Director, Head of Thought Leadership, CBRE
- Simon Williams  
UK Acquisitions and Assets & Estate Director, Tesco PLC
- Simon Rubinsohn  
Chief Economist, RICS
- Prof Nick Hopkins  
Commissioner, Law Commission
- Tim Oldman  
Founder & CEO, Leesman

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## Contributor

# Thomson Snell & Passmore

### Don't be caught out by legal changes property investors and developers need to be aware of

**The world of property investment and development is ever changing, particularly at the moment. We explore below two areas of rapid legal change:**

#### Net Zero

On 20 September, PM Rishi Sunak, announced a relaxation of government's approach to Net Zero initiatives (the Announcement). This is a significant shake up of energy efficiency targets and exacerbates existing uncertainty. At this stage, it is unclear how far reaching the relaxation of the approach will be.

Developers are advised to have a rounded approach to emissions, considering the emissions impact incurred all the way from sourcing raw materials, their manufacture into building products and the resulting construction of units. Equally, investors should monitor portfolios and improve sustainability as Net Zero starts to bite, notwithstanding the Announcement. Some key areas for consideration are:

#### Future Homes Standard

The aim of the Future Homes Standard (FHS), which may become mandatory in 2025, is to ensure that new homes built, extended or renovated from 2025 will produce between 75-80% fewer carbon emissions than under current building regulations. Investors and developers should consider now how improvements to hot water systems, heating and reducing heat waste through quality building materials and glazing can be introduced to units to ensure compliance. At present, the Announcement does not appear to propose any changes to FHS.

#### Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) and Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)

Since 1 April 2020, residential properties used for lettings have been required to have an EPC rating of E or above and government consultation documents indicated this will increase to a rating of C in 2025 for new lettings and will apply to continuing tenancies by 2028.

Since 1 April 2023, commercial properties cannot be let or continue to be let if they have a rating of E or below and government consultation documents indicated this will increase to C by 1 April 2027 and B by 2030.

The Announcement has increased uncertainty for developers and investors as it is unclear whether proposals for increases in MEES targets in government consultations will be withdrawn for residential property, commercial property or both. Whilst current requirements for MEES remain in effect, it seems following the Announcement landlords may no longer be compelled to make energy performance upgrades especially in relation to residential property, but instead encouraged to do so.

#### Solar taskforce

A new solar taskforce has been created (by the UK Government's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero) to revolutionise UK solar power. The ambition is to increase solar capacity by nearly five-fold to reach 70GW by 2035. The taskforce has resolved to publish a solar roadmap in 2024 setting out a clear step-by-step deployment trajectory, including further permitted development rights and faster connections to the grid (which can presently take up to 15 years!). According to the taskforce, commercial buildings have significant untapped potential for the deployment of solar panels.

At present, we see no proposed changes to the solar taskforce's ambition following the Announcement.

#### Nutrient neutrality

Whilst nutrient neutrality and the resulting environmental benefits were needed, the burden of carrying out developments to achieve neutrality following the rules advised by Natural England was another consideration for developers. In August, Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, announced plans to ease water pollution rules for house builders.

On 13 September 2023, the amendment to implement the proposed relaxation of the rules was rejected by peers in the House of Lords. For the time being, nutrient neutrality is here to stay.

#### Building Safety Act

The Building Safety Act 2022 was enacted in part, in response to the failures in building safety resulting in the Grenfell disaster. However it is wide reaching. Whilst key fire safety provisions only apply to buildings at least 18 metres in height or with at least seven storeys, provisions limiting service charge recovery for defects has a lower threshold and impacts buildings of only 11 metres or five storeys. It should be noted that mixed use buildings can be impacted and even service charge recovery from a commercial tenant in such buildings can be affected.

Whilst the government's statement is well intended and legislation needed, the reality is that the legislation was rushed and places a heavy burden on landlords and developers. Government has already published amendments and further updates are likely. Investors and developers should seek specialist legal advice to ensure they are not inadvertently affected.

Given the fast pace of change in relation to the issues detailed in this article since the time of writing further updates may have been given in relation to the Announcement. Follow Thomson Snell & Passmore on LinkedIn for regular updates.

This article was written on 28 September 2023.





# When the only certainty is change

Uncertainty is part of life, but the property market has changed so rapidly that finding creative ways to keep pace is a huge challenge.

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**Proposal for The Sea Hive, Betteshanger.**  
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**Back cover:**  
**LOC8 Business Park, Junction 8, M20, Maidstone.**  
CREDIT: CLEARBELL



Riverside development, Canterbury.

CREDIT: CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL





## Strategic Sites map

Pull-out location map and overview of developments by use class across Kent and Medway.



