North Kent

Dartford

The Borough of Dartford is situated at the heart of the Thames Gateway regeneration area in northwest Kent. It stands at a pivotal point between Greater London and Kent and also Essex across the River Thames. It has excellent connections to central London, the rest of the south-east and UK, channel ports and the continent via the strategic road and rail network which crosses the Borough. The intersection of the A2 and M25 and the Dartford Crossing provide a unique locational advantage, helping attract investment interest and drive strong growth in the area. A positive investment climate is further assisted by an up-to-date Local Plan guiding development, a 5 year supply of housing land and a well-developed Infrastructure Plan. Funding mechanisms, including a Community Infrastructure Levy and s106 commitments and central government funding for transport improvements and new schools, are in place to bring forward the infrastructure required to support new development.

The pace of development has continued this year, with Dartford experiencing its fourth successive year of housing completions significantly in excess of local housing need. Dartford is one of the few Councils’ achieving this, as calculated using the government’s methodology. There were 1,031 completions in 2017/18, approximately double the long running average for Dartford. The high levels of demand and confidence in the area are evidenced by the rapid sale of new homes.

Crossrail 1 (Elizabeth Line) services are due to begin in late 2018 from Abbey Wood Station, just 12 minutes train travel from Dartford Railway Station. In working in partnership with Transport for London, Bexley Council and Kent authorities, Dartford Council is lobbying to build on this connectivity with the proposed ‘C2E’ rail project. Winning the recent support of the Thames Estuary Commission set up by government, this would extend Elizabeth Line services from Canary Wharf, the West End and Heathrow beyond Abbey Wood, through Dartford to connect with Ebbsfleet International’s High Speed One services to London St Pancras and continental Europe.

The Borough will also benefit from the announcement last year of the preferred route for a new Lower Thames Crossing. The new highway will cross the river east of Tilbury and Gravesend, linking the M25 near North Ockenden, Essex, with the A2 near Shorne. It is programmed to be complete by 2027. It will relieve the Dartford Crossing and increase the resilience of the surrounding road network. At the same time, the government announced £10m funding for short-term measures to provide relief at Junctions 1a and 2 of the A282/M25, Dartford Crossing Approach Road.

In August 2017, Government announced the preferred options for the A2 Bean and Ebbsfleet junction improvements. These options will now be taken forward to the design stage, with work on site expected to start by March 2020. The improvements will facilitate planned development, supporting jobs and housing growth in north Kent.

Particular progress has been made in taking forward private and public investment in Dartford town centre. The Dartford Town Centre Framework is due to be adopted in July 2018, following very positive consultation feedback from the public and businesses. The opportunity for around 5,000 new homes to be built in and around the town centre will significantly increase demand for retail and leisure provision locally. Private investment on key sites providing new leisure and retail facilities is to be complemented by £12m of public funding from the public and businesses. The opportunity for around 5,000 new homes to be built in and around the town centre will significantly increase demand for retail and leisure provision locally. Private investment on key sites providing new leisure and retail facilities is to be complemented by £12m of public funding from the public and businesses.

The Bridge mixed-use development adjacent to the Thames crossing, St Clements Lakes housing adjacent to Bluewater and the residential-led mixed-use development at Eastern Hill in Ebbsfleet was granted consent in September 2017 for up to 911m² (9,805ft²) of retail floorspace. The scheme will provide restaurant facilities (Class A3) and cinema/family orientated floorspace (Class D1), adding to Bluewater’s existing leisure offer.

There remains strong development interest in Dartford. In addition to major commercial consents and construction activity at Edissons Park, on the Crossways Business Park, reserved matters details have been approved for 8,250m² (88,802ft²) of B Class floorspace. Reserved matters consent has also been granted for a large 6,200m² (67,274ft²) car dealership at The Bridge.

For further information:
www.discoverdartford.co.uk
www.c2ecampaign.com
www.bluewaterregeneration.co.uk
www.dartford.gov.uk
Gravesham
Stretching from the banks of the River Thames, encompassing exceptional countryside along the North Downs yet located in the heart of the Thames Gateway priority area for regeneration, Gravesham’s riverside location is unique.

In conjunction with this setting and the areas connectivity, investors and developers are continuing to capitalise on the opportunities presented by direct High Speed One services to London. With the town centre just 22 minutes from Central London and 17 minutes from Stratford, Gravesend is the closest Kent town to London in terms of journey time, comparable with Underground Zones Three and Four.

These connections are further boosted with Crossrail’s extension to Abbey Wood from late 2018, new Thameslink services, easy access to Ebbsfleet International Station and traditional commuter rail routes into London Bridge, Charing Cross, Cannon Street and Victoria.

Cold Harbour Road South is located off the central junction of the A2 and the site continues to attract development interest with outline planning permitted for 5,200m² (55,972ft²) enterprise space in 2018. Enhancing the existing Toby Carvery Restaurant and planned enterprise space, a new 61 bed Travelodge Hotel was opened in the spring of 2018 – an investment of £5.5m.

The Gravesend Heritage Quarter
In June 2018 Gravesham Borough Council and the REEF Group signed a new deal on the multi-million pound mixed-use regeneration scheme for Gravesend town centre. The scheme incorporates two sites either side of the High Street, the Eastern and Western Quarters, including improvements to St Georges Shopping Centre.

The mixed-use redevelopment will see a new hotel, boutique cinema, homes, public realm, retail floor space, leisure and office space. A revised application will be submitted in 2018 with works progressing from 2019.

Gravesend Borough Market is right at the heart of the Gravesend Heritage Quarter development. The £1.8m refurbishment of Gravesend’s historic Market Hall was completed in 2016, transforming the market into a thriving retail centre for local businesses, creative and food businesses.

The former Gravesend and North Kent Hospital M Block was sold by NHS Property Services in April 2018 for £2.3m to investors Peker GYO. The town centre site comes with outline planning approval for up to 80 homes and community facilities.

In January 2018 Gravesend Transport Quarter saw the completion of a further phase of a multi-million pound scheme. Supported by £4.1m Local Growth Funding via the South East LEP, it has created a gateway and transport interchange that integrates the railway station with the town centre, local bus and Fastrack transport services. This phase improves access for cyclists and pedestrians, created a new route for vehicles, railway station drop-off, new public space and acts as a catalyst for additional jobs. The scheme complements previous phases, incorporating a new Civic Square and the £23m upgrade to Gravesend Railway Station in 2013 providing an extra platform, lifts, footbridge and step free access to enable 12-car High Speed One trains. A well-received trial of a Thames Clipper return commuter service to London from Gravesend which could lead to a permanent service.

Following the success of the Thames Estuary Festival 2016 LV21 a historic, 40 metre steel-hulled lightship transformed into a floating art space and performance facility is now moored on the town’s St Andrews quayside.

Work is continuing at pace in Ebbsfleet Garden City, led by the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation set up by Government to speed up the delivery of 15,000 homes
and ambitions to generate 30,000 jobs. Included within the boundary of Ebbsfleet Garden City, Swanscombe Peninsula is earmarked for the development of a world class entertainment resort, an exciting and nationally significant infrastructure project expected to create up to 27,000 jobs and attract an average 40,000 visitors per day. The company promoting the proposals, London Resort Company Holdings (LRCH), has announced it will be consulting publicly on revised proposals, prior to submission of its Development Consent Order. On this revised timetable, subject to approval by the Secretary of State, construction could begin in 2020 with the resort’s first phase ready for opening in 2023/24.

For further information contact: chris.inwood@gravesham.gov.uk or visit: www.gravesham.gov.uk/home/business/business-support/why-gravesham/overview

North Kent Enterprise Zone
Between London and Europe, with excellent connections to both, the North Kent Enterprise Zone (NKEZ) is one of the south-east region’s new business hubs for innovation and entrepreneurial growth. Launched in April 2017 the Enterprise Zone comprises multiple business sites, around Ebbsfleet, Medway and Maidstone, that will offer specialisms in key sectors such as medical and healthcare research, training and practice, advanced manufacturing, engineering and digital technologies. The three schemes will, when fully developed, provide around 282,000m² of high quality employment space supporting around 9,900 jobs. The Enterprise Zone provides Business Rate discounts for new occupiers of up to £55,000 per year for five years, for those that occupy premises by 31 March 2022. Further information can be found at www.northkenterprisezone.co.uk

- **Ebbsfleet Garden City** has three Enterprise Zone sites at Northfleet Embankment East and West and Northfleet Rise that will offer facilities for a range of business types and sectors close to Ebbsfleet International Railway Station. Earlier this year The Berkeley Group was granted approval to build a new 14,000m² (151,000ft²) manufacturing facility and a 1,500m² (16,145ft²) office building at Northfleet Embankment East northern site delivering 240 jobs. The facilities will produce finished housing modules complete with plumbing, electrics, and internal finishing, including flooring and fittings that can be configured to form new homes.

Homes England, Gravesham Borough Council and Ebbsfleet Development Corporation are progressing plans on the southern site with outline planning consent secured for the development of 5,583m² (60,100ft²) of mixed employment uses. This includes a new 2,658m² (28,610ft²) business centre, 1,889m² (20,333ft²) of industrial uses and a 1,063m² (11,442ft²) mixed unit. Homes England have gone out to market to seek a developer. Marketing of Northfleet Embankment West, with outline planning consent for mixed residential and commercial uses, has also commenced.

- **Innovation Park Medway (IPM)** was formally launched on 18th September in conjunction with public consultation on a new draft masterplan for the redevelopment of Rochester Airport. The IPM will offer up to 100,000m² of high quality, innovative commercial space in a prime location near Junction 3 of the M2, attracting high value, knowledge-intensive businesses looking to grow and benefit from access to world-class research and development and highly skilled talent through the cluster of Kent and Medway based universities.

The first occupant at IPM – the Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance – have developed a brand new headquarters using a state-of-the art modular build system. Medway Council and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council are also developing Local Development Orders which will offer streamlined planning for businesses that locate to the site. Innovation Park Medway was awarded £4.4m from the Local Growth Fund in 2016 for improvements to airport infrastructure. The second runway will then close releasing valuable commercial development land. A further application submitted to the Local Growth Fund to secure an additional allocation of £3.7m has also been successful.

- **Kent Medical Campus**, a 12ha (30 acre) site near Junction 7 of the M20, has enjoyed strong progress over the last 12 months. Cygnet Health Care opened its £18m, 65 bedroom mental health hospital in September. Construction work is under way for a £10m 75-bedroom centre to offer step-down care for patients well enough to leave hospital, but not return home. When operational, 100 staff will provide rehabilitation, respite and dementia care. Plans for a 2,787m² (30,000ft²) Innovation Centre have made significant progress, with designs for business space for the healthcare, medtech and life science sectors to be finalised by the end of 2018. A planning application is expected later this year and the centre could be open by April 2020. Maidstone Borough Council have secured £6.5m from the Government’s National Productivity Investment Fund, working with the Campus’s owners to upgrade the local road network to facilitate growth.

NKEZ partners welcome enquiries from growth-minded investors, developers and businesses. Interested companies can sign up to receive regular e-newsletters. For further information: www.northkenterprisezone.com
Maidstone
The town is undergoing a transformation with several regeneration and investment projects commencing this year.

At Junction 7 of the M20, the 12ha (30 acre) site of the Kent Medical Campus will be a fully integrated centre of excellence for health, education and medical science. Designed to promote collaboration, the campus will stimulate growth in the medical technology, life sciences and health care sectors across the south east.

Receiving Enterprise Zone Status in 2017, Kent Medical Campus offers business rate discounts to like-minded companies locating to the site within the next five years. A new Innovation Centre planned for the site will deliver flexible, serviced office accommodation and onsite business support for start-ups in the health care sector. Designs for the new facility are expected to be finalised by late 2018. Following this, an application will be submitted later this year and, if approved, the Innovation Centre could be completed by April 2020.

On site, work is under way for a £10m 75-bed centre to offer step-down care for patients well enough to leave hospital, but not return home. When operational, 100 staff will provide rehabilitation, respite and dementia care. Plans for the 2,787m² (30,000ft²) Innovation Centre have progressed, with designs for the business space for the healthcare, medtech and life science sectors to be finalised by the end of 2018. An application is expected later this year with the centre to open in 2020. Cygnet Health Care opened its £18m, 65-bed mental health hospital in September.

As part of the North Kent Enterprise Zone, £6.5m has been secured from the Government’s National Productivity Investment Fund, Maidstone Borough Council and the Campus’s owners to upgrade the local road network.

A major boost to the town is expected in December 2019 with Maidstone’s new Thameslink service. This new train service will operate from Maidstone East Gateway to London Bridge, with direct onward connections to Cambridge. This will be a significant improvement to rail services and journey times (around 52 minutes to London Bridge) and will make the town more attractive to commuters, residents and visitors, increasing station usage and footfall.

To complement the new Thameslink service, major improvements are being made to Maidstone East Gateway. Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council’s made a joint acquisition of the adjacent, former Royal Mail sorting office. The councils are collaborating to drive forward ambitious plans for the comprehensive re-development of Maidstone East Gateway, including the adjacent commuter car park and Cantium House. This seven-acre, multi-million pound regeneration scheme is key to transforming this gateway into the town. Plans include a mixed-use development with retail space, over 400 homes, offices, commuter parking and an improved interchange between buses and trains. The project will be complemented by the demolition of the Old Vic public house, and in its place will be a new ticket office, together with landscaped forecourt, new seating, lighting and public art installations.

Maidstone Borough Council is committed to boosting redevelopment in the town centre and has identified five key sites which demonstrate opportunities for residential and commercial potential. Known as the ‘High 5’ the sites identified are:

- Len House, Mill Street
- The Granada Cinema and Gala Bingo sites
- Maidstone West and The Broadway
- Baltic Wharf
- Mote Road

Maidstone Borough Council is accelerating the delivery of these sites by setting out clear planning information on what could be achieved to promote the ‘High 5’ to investors and developers looking to play a part in the towns exciting transformation.

Several new commercial parks will provide opportunities for business growth within the Borough. At Junction 8 of the M20, planning permission has been granted for a new, multi-million pound commercial business park, which will provide much-needed office, warehouse and light industrial space to serve the Borough’s growing economy. The project will deliver more than 47,500m² (505,903ft²) of employment space, and create up to 1,200 jobs. Meanwhile, a proposed development at Junction 6 will see the construction of five new industrial units. The scheme would provide significant economic benefits and high-quality employment opportunities to support the growth in housing across the town.

Proposed development of five new office units at Abbey Court off Junction 6 of the M20
Economic Development
Continued

The council’s business accelerator, The Business Terrace, is also going from strength to strength with the announcement of another extension – its third extension in three years. Due to popular demand and an extensive waiting list for space at the hub, £565,000 has been invested to deliver an additional 330m² (3,543ft²) of office space in the town centre. The project is due to be completed by November 2018 and The Mall’s owner, Capital & Regional, is working in partnership with the council to deliver the expansion.

This is an exciting time for Maidstone and the next 18 months will see key projects come to life to further highlight the County Town’s offer to businesses, residents and visitors alike. For more information:
www.businessinmaidstone.co.uk

Medway
Good quality commercial property continues to be in demand in Medway. London Medway Commercial Park at Kingsnorth is developing 45ha (112acres) with 186,000m² (2mft²) of B1, B2 and B8 space. The first new business to move onto the site was Wincanton in 2017, taking Angle 265, a new build distribution facility. This has been followed by further new builds for Amazon and Sicame UK (WT Henley) expanding to the site from Erith. Extensive investment has been made in the site infrastructure and planning has been progressed for the remaining plots.
For further details contact Goodmans:
www.londonmedwaycp.com

Medway Council has joined forces with Kent County Council to strengthen its inward investment focus for the region. A three year contract with Locate in Kent worth £3m from August 2016 will entice the best foreign direct investment opportunities and companies from other parts of the UK.

The re-development of Rochester Airport as Innovation Park Medway, continues to progress apace. Enterprise Zone status commenced from April 2017. Medway Council and Tonbridge & Malling District Council are also developing a Local Development Order which has the potential to offer significant simplification of planning for businesses that locate to the site. Innovation Park Medway was awarded £4.4m from the Local Growth Fund in 2016 for improvements to airport infrastructure. The second runway will then close releasing valuable commercial development land. A further application submitted to the Local Growth Fund to secure an additional allocation of £3.7m has been successful.

A further successful funding bid from round 3 of the Local Growth Fund secured £3.5m for the delivery of flood defence works at the former Civic Centre site in Strood, which is the most prestigious development site in Medway. The flood defence works, which include a new flood wall and raising the land by 2m, will enable the development of the site to build in excess of 500 homes. Further flood defence works are taking place in Strood on the other side of Rochester Bridge along Canal Road which will free up this land to enable a further 600 riverside homes. The flood defence works started in May this year and are due to be complete by May 2019. Marketing of both sites is likely to start in early 2019.

Benefiting from £4m of Local Growth Fund for the initial phase, the council continues work on the Chatham place-making scheme. This will focus on enhancing the connections through to the High Street and Waterfront from Chatham Rail Station.

At Rochester Riverside, Countryside Properties and Hyde Housing are working in partnership with Medway Council to turn ambitious regeneration plans into reality. The developer is set to transform the area over the next decade, building around 1,400 new homes with 25% being affordable housing. Countryside Properties will provide a school, nursery, hotel, restaurants, gym, office space and a number of retail units on site. As one of Medway’s most exciting regeneration hotspots it is anticipated final development value will exceed £400m. Newly designed housing is promised for the 32ha (79 acre) site, with bespoke styles of accommodation, 15 house types and apartments, working
secured a number of significant deals, meaning that available investment in onsite infrastructure, Eurolink East 5 has particularly in the industrial sector. With Trenport’s Demand for space from business continues to be strong, occupation of units at Princes Street retail park. Costa Drive-Through and Food Warehouse stores all taking of the retail element of the project, with Home Bargains, cinema and a hotel. The year has also seen completion road layout. This will enable a start on a new leisure quarter, new multi-storey car park and significant re-modelling of the become all the more tangible with the commencement of a improved retail and leisure to Sittingbourne town centre, has The Spirit of Sittingbourne regeneration project, bringing as an investment location.

A number of key developments in Swale have made significant progress in 2018, helping to continue the delivery of high levels of growth and develop its broader proposition as an investment location.

The Spirit of Sittingbourne regeneration project, bringing improved retail and leisure to Sittingbourne town centre, has become all the more tangible with the commencement of a new multi-storey car park and significant re-modelling of the road layout. This will enable a start on a new leisure quarter, Bourne Place, which will include restaurants, a seven screen cinema and a hotel. The year has also seen completion of the retail element of the project, with Home Bargains, Costa Drive-Through and Food Warehouse stores all taking occupation of units at Princes Street retail park.

Demand for space from business continues to be strong, particularly in the industrial sector. With Trenport’s investment in onsite infrastructure, Eurolink East 5 has secured a number of significant deals, meaning that available space is quickly diminishing on this latest phase of one of Kent’s premier business locations.

Nearby, at the Kernsley Fields Business Park, the skyline has welcomed the outline of the emerging Wheelabrator Generating Station, adjacent to the Kernsley Paper Mill. This combined heat and power facility will take waste-derived fuel to produce at least 49MW of electricity, with the company hoping to increase this to 75MW.

This year will also see the completion of Aldi’s new 61,316m² (660,000ft²) regional distribution facility in Queenborough, on the Isle of Sheppey, creating 400 new jobs. The wider Queenborough and Rushenden development, led by Homes England, is also seeing good progress, with housing on Phase 1 now well underway along with site preparation works for later phases.

At Sheerness, Peels Ports has continued its programme of investment, most recently in improved grain handling facilities, increasing its ability to export regionally grown product worldwide. Just outside the port entrance, among the extensive historic port estate, the Sheerness Dockyard Preservation Trust has continued to develop their proposals to restore the Dockyard Church in Sheerness, after successfully applying for a grant of £4.75m from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Trust has submitted an application for proposals including an enterprise centre which will bring together, in one place, the support young people seek when developing and sustaining a business.

At Faversham construction has begun on the Perry Court development which aims to provide 310 homes and new commercial space adjacent to Junction 6 of the M2, including proposals for a new supermarket, hotel and care home. Work has also commenced at other significant mixed-use and housing allocations around the town’s periphery, at Love Lane, Ham Road and Graveney Road. Developer appetite reflects the towns growing appeal, as both a residential and commercial location and at a key junction on the road and rail network in Kent.

During 2018 efforts to secure the transport infrastructure needed to facilitate planned development have been rewarded with the Borough Council, Kent County Council and the private sector working closely together.

The final phase of development on Chatham Maritime’s St Mary’s Island is underway. Known as Azure, it will deliver 339 properties including 62 within an extra care block for older residents, local amenities and recreational space. A good range of development schemes in Chatham are underway including the final phase of Countryside Properties’ Horsted Park.

Medway is also benefiting from over £22m of investment in highway improvements to accessibility in Strood including the new train station, connectivity to the Medway City Estate and also the A289 Four Elms Roundabout to the Medway Tunnel to ease congestion and increase capacity. For further information: www.medway.gov.uk

Swale

A number of key developments in Swale have made significant progress in 2018, helping to continue the delivery of high levels of growth and develop its broader proposition as an investment location.

For further information: www.swalemeansbusiness.co.uk
Economic Development
Continued

West Kent

Sevenoaks
Sevenoaks District is attractive to residents, employers and visitors, with excellent connectivity, whilst situated in picturesque countryside. Our ambition is to build on our strong economic performance whilst leaving a positive legacy from our future growth. We want to do this through encouraging a sustainable approach, whether through new technologies, careful use of natural resources or enabling local development to underpin the continuing vitality of our towns and smaller settlements.

As part of that approach the District Council is currently consulting on a new draft Local Plan for the period to 2035 and a new Economic Development Strategy for the period to 2021. The new Local Plan will create the framework for future development and the Economic Development Strategy will support our vision ‘to sustain and develop a fair, safe and thriving local economy’

In response to that vision the District Council developed, with partner Reef Estates an 83 bed Premier Inn opposite Sevenoaks Railway Station which opened in August. The construction of a multi- storey car park to provide additional long stay capacity for workers and visitors is well underway in Sevenoaks town centre, with completion due in April 2019. The Premier Inn forms part of the Council’s award winning and innovative property investment portfolio.

New retail development in Edenbridge has been approved which will see a Lidl store and Home Bargains store built on Fircroft Way. In Sevenoaks, a new Aldi store is being built on Otford Road and Goya Developments have commenced their 6,781m² (73,000ft²) business park on Moor Road. The latter will bring much needed modern warehousing and industrial stock to the town. Swanley continues to provide opportunities for residential and commercial development in and around the town centre.

At Fort Halstead, the owners, Merseyside Pension Fund, are continuing to progress their proposals for an employment led redevelopment of the site. This location, together with others that have come forward as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan, will provide future capacity for business and employment growth in the District.

For information about the services offered to businesses: www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/business or contact the Economic Development and Property Team on business@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Tonbridge & Malling
With economic regeneration as a key priority, the borough of Tonbridge and Malling continues to see impressive levels of growth taking place – over 900 new homes were completed and a number of impressive new commercial developments were constructed during 2017/18.

Although development at a range of strategic sites, such as Peter’s Village and Phase 3 of Kings Hill is progressing well and will provide a stream of new homes over the next 5-10 years, the Borough Council is pressing ahead with the allocation of new sites. The council is currently finalising a draft development strategy to meet the needs of the borough for the period up to 2031. This strategy will go out to consultation in late 2018 with a view to it being adopted at the end of 2019.

During 2017/18, there has been progress on a number of key investments, including:

Strategic Sites
At Kings Hill, Countryside Properties are currently on site creating a new development of 635 homes, a new primary school and parklands. Like the rest of Kings Hill, this new development will be of a high quality, having been designed through the application of a ‘landscape first’ strategy and extensive local consultation.

At the former Aylesford Newsprint site demolition work is currently underway, with a fresh planning application for commercial uses scheduled to be submitted to the Borough Council in early 2019.

With the acquisition of East Malling Research by NIAB Group, NIAB EMR now has the expertise and stability, with its commercial partners, to capitalise on the opportunity of a high value and globally significant industrial cluster. The proposed development of a bio-tech campus at the East Malling site is currently being master-planned by the East Malling Trust, and will increase and diversify the activity in food and drink, bio-tech and engineering on site. It will help to consolidate NIAB EMR’s position as a global research and development centre for fruit production and consumption.

Peters Village is a 35ha (87 acre) site near Wouldham with consent for a new settlement of 1,000 homes and a new bridge over the River Medway to access the development from the A228. Once completed, the new village will comprise 11ha (27 acres) of public open space, a new primary school, and a local centre comprising a range of uses, including a new supermarket and office accommodation. The site is now well advanced, with the road network and Peter’s Bridge now in place. The primary school is now open with the first two phases of residential development heading towards completion and work is due to start on the local centre soon.

With extensive local consultation.
Town Centres
Tonbridge town centre continues to see considerable public and private investment. Following on from extensive public realm improvements along the High Street, River Walk and Tonbridge Town Lock, work is soon to commence on public realm works around Tonbridge Station, along with the introduction of a new cycle hub.

Having identified a shortage of small office accommodation in the town centre, the Borough Council entered into a new partnership with DeskRenter to create new provision at Castle Lodge, which launched in May 2018. This flexible, co-working office space, handily located near Tonbridge High Street, provides for up to 20 small and start-up businesses.

For more information: www.castlelodgetonbridge.co.uk

On the edge of the town centre, new life has been breathed into Cannon Lane Retail Park with the transformation of the former B&Q building, which has been subdivided and is now fully occupied by tenants including, Carpet Right, Jollyes and Go Outdoors. Directly across the road, work is also well underway to bring new Aldi and B&M stores to the town.

Office Expansion
On 30 May 2018, Building 80 at Churchill Square, Kings Hill, was officially opened by Tonbridge and Malling MP Tom Tugendhat. This new office accommodation cost £3.6m to construct and now provides space for 30 companies of up to 10 people, as well as a suite of meeting rooms and new centralised reception facilities to complement the existing accommodation for 159 small and medium-sized enterprises.

Infrastructure
Further improving the local infrastructure, the work of the West Kent Partnership and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership have helped to secure Local Growth Fund investment towards increasing the capacity of the Leigh Flood Storage Area and Hildenborough Embankments Scheme. This gives greater protection to existing homes and commercial premises as well as offering up opportunities for sustainable growth.

Work is now also underway on the M20 corridor, between Junctions 3 and 5. This 6.5 mile stretch is being upgraded to an All-Lane Running (ALR) smart motorway. This £100m scheme is scheduled to be completed by March 2020.

For more information: jeremy.whittaker@tmbc.gov.uk

Tunbridge Wells
Work is underway on the new Local Plan for Tunbridge Wells which will allocate land for approximately 13,500 homes and 11-15ha (27-37 acres) of employment land across the Borough. Consultation on the Draft Preferred Plan will take place in March/April 2019 and the plan will be submitted at the end of 2019. The plan will guide development in the Borough until 2033 but there will already be significant investment over the next 5 years, both private and public sector led.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent County Council are working together to create a new Cultural and Learning Hub for Tunbridge Wells on the site of the current Museum, Library and Adult Education Centre and the project has been awarded Stage 2 grants from Arts Council England and Heritage Lottery Fund. Planning and Listed Building consent was given in February 2018 and the project is now set to progress into the build phase of the programme in early 2019. The hub will be known as the Amelia Scott.

The Borough Council is moving forward with the Calverley Square development comprising a new theatre and office building in the centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells, adjacent to Calverley Grounds. Consent was given in May 2018 and the council has now appointed MACE as the lead contractor. Construction work will start in Autumn 2019 and take approximately two and a half years to complete. The artist’s impression below is a view from Calverley Grounds.

Via the Local Growth Fund, further public realm improvements are planned for Mount Pleasant Road between its junctions with Monson Road and Church Road. These will include enhancements to Civic Way, the setting of the War Memorial and the introduction of vehicle movement.
Economic Development
Continued

restrictions as well as improved pedestrian and cycling facilities. The detailed design of the scheme is being finalised and construction work is due to start in early 2019 with a likely duration of 6-8 months. Kent County Council will be project managing the work on behalf of the Borough Council.

Following the granting of permission for the former cinema site in central Royal Tunbridge Wells, developers Altitude have undertaken ground investigations, obtained consents from Network Rail and public rights of way stopping up and diversion orders have been confirmed. Construction work is due to commence in summer 2019, with an estimated construction period of approximately two years.

A conversion of office space at Merevale House to a Premier Inn hotel is underway with contractors currently working on site. The scheduled completion date is May 2019.

The Royal Victoria Place shopping centre was recently purchased by British Land and work is underway to finalise redevelopment plans. Refurbishment of parts of the centre is already underway.

The demolition of Union House in the Pantiles has been completed and the site is being prepared for the construction of new residential accommodation and a community space. Completion is due in summer 2020. Also in the Pantiles, the Corn Exchange is set to become community space. Completion is due in summer 2020.

Paddock Wood Town Council has appointed architects for the Paddock Wood Hub project. The project team is seeking to submit an outline planning application in January 2019. Work is also progressing on a community hub for Cranbrook.

Major housing developments are also underway in Hawkenbury and Paddock Wood.

Following the completion of the A21 dualling scheme, a new cycle route alongside the road has been completed, with an additional link up to Tunbridge Wells Hospital. The County and Borough Councils are also working on projects to improve cycle infrastructure on the A26 between Tonbridge and Royal Tunbridge Wells and on the 21st Century Way route between Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre and the North Farm Estate, two key employment areas.

For information on investment opportunities and current initiatives in Tunbridge Wells please contact: business@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Connect 38 opened recently in the Commercial quarter. Constructed by Quinn Estates, alongside George Wilson Developments, the 7,452m² (80,000ft²) office block is already stimulating major investment opportunities. Once complete, the Commercial Quarter will create several thousand jobs, 54,800m² (590,000ft²) of office space and 150 homes.

Next to Connect 38 is The Coachworks. The council is working with Carl Turner Architects on adapting a collection of disused industrial buildings into a mixed-use campus providing co-working space aimed at start-up firms, flexible indoor/ outdoor event space and a food and drink destination. Subject to planning consent, The Coachworks is due to open in 2019.

Opposite Connect 38 is the £26m Ashford College Campus, which opened its doors to its first intake of 1,000 students in September 2017. The completed Phase 1 includes a teaching facility for general academic, vocational and creative departments and administrative facilities. Phase 1a will include a sustainable technologies block, with general and electrical engineering, motor vehicle and motor sport workshops, plumbing and electrical facilities, while Phase 2 will be a higher education facility.

A few minutes stroll from the College is a development described as a ‘game changer’ for Ashford – the Elwick Place cinema and leisure complex. Ashford Borough Council has funded the construction of this 9,290m² (100,000ft²) flagship scheme which is set to revitalise the town centre’s night-time economy when it opens in December. Built by Stanhope PLC, the project includes a new six-screen cinema, run by Cineworld’s Picturehouse boutique brand, a Travelodge hotel, eight restaurants and other retail spaces and a 282 space car park. Phase 2 will shortly see around 200 apartments built on the brownfield site.

Behind Elwick Place lies Victoria Way, where a host of developments are underway. One of the most eye-catching is a craft brewery and visitor centre for Curious Drinks Limited, the beer and cider subsidiary of Ashford’s Chapel Down winery near Tenterden. When it opens in 2019 it will enable Chapel Down to grow its domestic and international distribution and contribute to the borough’s increasingly strong and diverse tourism offer.

East Kent
Ashford
From a gleaming new town centre cinema and leisure complex to the provision of a third motorway junction to unlock further development opportunities in Kent’s number one business location, the pace of economic growth continues to accelerate in Ashford. Nearly £670m is being invested across the borough, of which £520m is helping to change the skyline of the town centre.

When Ashford Borough Council acquired International House and surrounding sites adjacent to the International Station in 2014, it was the first piece in the jigsaw for the new Commercial Quarter. This is destined to become an important business hub for the south east, located 38 minutes from London St Pancras and with direct connections to Europe’s major cities via Eurostar.
Also on Victoria Way a 1,718m² (18,500ft²) Aldi superstore opened in August 2018, while planning consent has been granted for Victoria Point, where an upmarket 120 bed hotel, 216 apartments and three retail units will be built.

To the east of Victoria Way, construction is underway to add 9,290m² (100,000ft²) of space at Ashford Designer Outlet. McArthurGlen, Europe’s leading owner, developer and manager of designer outlets, is adding 50 new stores including six restaurants and cafés, in a multi-million pound project expected to create 700 jobs. This complements the retail offer in Ashford’s thriving town centre, where vacancy rates are at an historic low. The Designer Outlet is expected to be completed by autumn 2019.

The driver for this unprecedented level of investment is Ashford Borough Council’s hands-on approach and bold ‘AshfordFor’ inward investment campaign. This has raised interest in the borough and helped attract investors from across Kent and beyond. The council’s expansion of its own corporate property portfolio is focused on boosting the availability of new commercial and industrial space. Recently, the authority signed a multi-million pound deal to buy a 28 unit business park in Carlton Road. Constructed by Gallagher Properties, the first tenants are expected to move in during autumn 2018.

These commercial and retail developments complement the many significant housing schemes which are providing high-quality new homes for Ashford’s fast-growing population.

Developer GRE Assets, in its first development in Ashford, is delivering 246 apartments and 26 townhouses at Riverside Park, a former Powergen brownfield site in Victoria Way. Work started in spring 2017 and is due to be completed by early 2019.

Crest Nicholson’s multi-award-winning Finberry scheme, with 1,100 homes as a new community on the south-eastern outskirts of Ashford, continues to be recognised as a quality development. A recently-opened primary school together with health centre and community facilities adds to the village feel of the development.

Work is well underway on the 5,750-home development at Chilmington, which will come forward over the next 20 years. Modelled on garden city principles, the scheme includes outline planning permission for four new primary schools, one secondary school, plus retail and commercial space in a leafy setting. Around 300 lakeside homes are also being constructed by the Clarion Housing Group at Conningbrook, alongside a family orientated country park and a watersports activity centre.

Rapid progress is being made on constructing the new £104m junction at J10a of the M20. The long-awaited junction is being built around 700 metres south east of the existing J10 and promises to be a catalyst for further economic and commercial development. Providing much-needed extra transport capacity, the new junction, the third to serve Ashford, is expected to be opened by autumn 2019.

A few hundred metres from J10a, a new, larger Ashford International Truckstop is taking shape. Owners GSE Group say the work will double the capacity of the existing truck stop to 600 HGV places when it opens in 2019 as the first stage of the development of the wider 57ha (140 acre) Waterbrook site. This will include 400 homes, shops, restaurants and parkland along with new commercial space creating nearly 1,000 jobs.

For more information on Ashford’s exciting transformation visit: www.ashfordfor.com

Canterbury

Canterbury’s economic aspirations remain firmly on track with Canterbury City Council’s formal adoption of its new Local Plan in July 2017. The new plan will see 16,000 new homes, 100,000 m² (1,076,391 ft²) of employment space together with other commercial property as well as new roads and other infrastructure built in the area over the next 15 years.
Economic Development

Continued

In Canterbury itself the City Council is continuing its work with partners LinkCity to regenerate the Kingsmead area of the city in order to deliver the Canterbury Riverside mixed-use scheme. The first phase of demolition has now taken place paving the way for the delivery of a new multi-screen cinema, restaurants and other retail units, residential properties and purpose-built student accommodation. At Station Road West the council has gained planning permission to create a new 380 space multi-storey car park replacing the existing one which offers just 129 spaces and is full most days. The scheme is aimed at ensuring that Canterbury’s connectivity with High Speed One is supported and which will further improve the city in order to deliver the Canterbury Riverside mixed-use scheme. The first phase of demolition has now taken place, demonstrating the strong demand for business space outside Canterbury itself. In Herne Bay the council has acquired land and buildings on Beach Street which will see a housing and retail scheme built which will also improve connectivity between the seafront and shops, cafés and other amenities in the town centre. Permission has also been granted for the regeneration of the former bus depot which will see 50 new residential properties and 622m² (6,695ft²) of commercial space being built in the heart of the town. Outside the town centre Altira Business Park has been given a strong vote of confidence with the recent announcement that Sainsbury’s will open a superstore there. This will help move Altira forward to Phase 2 with industrial and office development opportunities available. Current Altira occupiers include ICOM, Jaytee Biosciences, Sunstone IP Systems and Howdens.

In the coastal towns there is also a lot of activity taking place, demonstrating the strong demand for business space outside Canterbury itself. In Herne Bay the council has acquired land and buildings on Beach Street which will see a housing and retail scheme built which will also improve connectivity between the seafront and shops, cafés and other amenities in the town centre. Permission has also been granted for the regeneration of the former bus depot which will see 50 new residential properties and 622m² (6,695ft²) of commercial space being built in the heart of the town. Outside the town centre Altira Business Park has been given a strong vote of confidence with the recent announcement that Sainsbury’s will open a superstore there. This will help move Altira forward to Phase 2 with industrial and office development opportunities available. Current Altira occupiers include ICOM, Jaytee Biosciences, Sunstone IP Systems and Howdens.

Most notable is the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church Universities’ partnership to create a new medical school for Kent and Medway that will help the area attract, train and retain, highly skilled medical professionals. The Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS) will initially deliver 100 places annually offering five-year undergraduate programmes. It is anticipated that much of this activity will take place at sites in Canterbury with both universities incorporating new KMMS facilities into their campus masterplans. A good example is the inclusion of a Simulation Suite and a potential Anatomy Laboratory at the Canterbury Christ Church Universities’ Canterbury Prison site which would open in 2020. Added to this is the University of Kent’s new £35m Institute for Biotechnology and Molecular Medicine (IBaMM) to be built at its Canterbury campus, due to open in 2021, which will help make the area an important bio-technology centre. This will complement Canterbury Christ Church University’s £21m Kent & Medway Engineering, Design, Growth & Enterprise (EDGE) Hub.

In Whitstable a number of schemes are proving the economic strength of the area, including a 203 suite care home scheme which is being developed. This year also saw the first anniversary of the opening of Clover House at the John Wilson Business Park which is providing much needed office space for small businesses and is now 90% occupied. The Whitstable area has also seen growing interest in the construction of industrial units. A speculative development of eight new industrial units totalling 744m² (8,008ft²) is being built at the Joseph Wilson Business Park while construction work has started on six light industrial units totalling 726m² (7,814ft²) adjacent to Chestfield train station. Both developments are in excellent locations with good access and will be provided with roller shutter doors and associated parking. This complements similar projects in the pipeline including a further 20 industrial/distribution units on two infill schemes at Lakesview Business Park totalling 2,242m² (24,132ft²) and 36 units redeveloped industrial/workshop units totalling 2,625m² (28,255ft²) at Goose Farm in Broad Oak.

Finally, Canterbury is well known as a centre of knowledge and education with its four universities and many other skills and training providers. This reputation will be expanded further with major new investment in the area planned by the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University over the next few years.

The council has also acquired the remaining interest in Whitefriars Shopping Centre. This prime piece of real estate has 47,000m² (505,900ft²) of retail space spread across 63 shops as well as a 530 space car park, five office tenants and 38 residential tenancies. Having already bought half of the interest in 2016, this investment will help influence and safeguard the long term future of retail in the city. Finally, at the former Slatters Hotel redevelopment, which aims to deliver a high quality Hampton by Hilton hotel and separate roof-top destination restaurant, contractors start the main construction work in the autumn. The whole regeneration project is due to be completed in early 2020.

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Dover
Legal & General’s £53m St James Development has opened in the heart of Dover town-centre, with 14,586m² (157,000ft²) of leisure and retail space. In a phased opening, Cineworld was first to open its doors in March 2018, with others following including M&S Foodhall, The Food Warehouse, Nando’s, Anytime Fitness, Costa Coffee, Travelodge, Next and more exciting stores on the way.

There are also exciting plans for Dover waterfront and opportunities to invest in residential, hotel, leisure, and retail against the stunning backdrop of the Port of Dover, the White Cliffs and Dover Castle.

Dover is just 21 miles from Calais. Dover Western Docks Revival is now underway with construction of a £120m cargo terminal and logistics facility due to open in December 2018. Dover is the UK’s second busiest cruise port and hosts many of the world’s top cruise lines.

Combine this with excellent links to central London – just an hour from Dover by high-speed train – and nowhere is better connected for doing business. This includes multi-million pound investments in town centre and waterfront regeneration, new commercial, retail and leisure space, and the biggest house building programme in a generation.

Doing business in Dover District makes financial sense too, with low business costs as well as incentives for new and growing businesses and Enterprise Zone status at Discovery Park, Sandwich. The park is one of Europe’s leading science and technology business parks with 139,354m² (1.5m ft²) of world-class research and development facilities, premium office space and bespoke warehousing. Alongside existing pilot plant manufacturing for scale-up and batch activity, Discovery Park is developing 6,503m² (70,000ft²) of new high-tech manufacturing space for tenants, and a £160m combined heat and power biomass plant, the first of its kind at a UK science park, is scheduled to open in September.

Complementing Discovery Park will be the £40m Betteshanger Sustainable Parks project, a UK first for investment in green and sustainable technologies, focussing predominantly on health and wellbeing, heritage, and sustainability. It provides a unique commercial, educational and visitor environment in which to demonstrate new technologies to address global challenges of renewable energy. The Hadlow Group will draw on the heritage of the 121ha (300 acre) site of the former Betteshanger Colliery, with Phase 1 including an £9.5m visitor centre, incorporating the Kent Mining Museum, Green Energy Centre, conferencing and events facilities, all due to open on 30 March 2019. A new low carbon business park will include 6,000m² (64,583ft²) of commercial research and development space and a business incubation hub for micro-businesses and start-ups.

Dover District Council continues to see housing growth for the future, with work underway on many of the sites identified in strategic housing allocations. The Local Plan is now being reviewed to continue to plan for future growth. Work is well underway on the Whitfield Urban Expansion, and continues to progress on the Aylesham Garden Village, alongside continued growth across the district.

Dover District Council has been awarded £15.8m from the Government’s Housing Infrastructure Fund to support the development of a Bus Rapid Transfer System between Whitfield, Dover Town Centre and Dover Priory railway station. The council has also been awarded Government funding to encourage the delivery of Community Housing, and the council held a Community Housing and Self-build Conference in June 2018 and has launched a Community Housing Grants Scheme.

Work is well underway on a new £26m Dover District Leisure Centre, which is due to open early in 2019.

Working with partners Kent County Council, the R&A Golf Club of St Andrews, Royal St George’s Golf Club and others, the Council is also preparing to welcome the Open Golf Championship back to Sandwich in 2020.

Dover District combines countryside, rural hamlets and villages with the world-famous coastline dominated by the White Cliffs of Dover. Along with Deal and Sandwich, the surrounding areas have an exceptional range of places to go and things to see, a wealth of history and a fantastic future ahead.

For more information, please see: www.investindover.co.uk or sign up for the latest update with DDC’s Keep Me Posted service at: www.dover.gov.uk/keepmeposted
Economic Development
Continued

Folkestone & Hythe
An enterprising District with exciting new developments completed and more coming forward. Excellent connectivity to London (52 minutes via High Speed One), motorway and direct links with continental Europe through the Channel Tunnel terminal as well as an attractive location create an offer that surpasses the expectations of many investors and businesses.

Shearway Business Park continues to achieve high occupancy levels in a mix of accommodation from corporate offices to start-up space. The most recent development from Glenmore Group to create a mix of small business units for rent or freehold sale has resulted in 21 units pre-sold and just 9 remaining. Nearby, Motis at Cheriton Parc, have also successfully let newly converted office space and are now proposing to build more business units. Local market research indicates that if good commercial space is built, businesses will come. This is supported by agents reporting a high level of unmet demand for modern business space from local and relocating businesses.

Folkestone’s regeneration arc from the seafront to the town centre continues to progress apace. The District Council is currently engaged with The Folkestone Harbour and Seafront Development Company on a detailed planning application for the Seafront Development.

The Creative Foundation is expanding its business property portfolio within the Creative Quarter to offer bespoke space for digital creative industries. This adds to the offer from The Workshop in Tontine Street which has seen use of shared workspace double over the previous 12 months in line with the trend towards flexible working, self-employment and freelancing. The new multi-storey urban sports centre funded by the Roger De Haan Charitable Trust opens in 2019. It will offer a unique range of sports, including skateboarding, boxing, climbing and bouldering, and will add a further dimension to the offer in this part of the town for local residents and visitors alike.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council partnered with Magnox Industries to commission a masterplan for land at Mountfield Road Industrial Estate, New Romney. The emerging proposals include a business hub and skills centre and the servicing of a further five hectares of land for growth space and inward investment. These proposals are being progressed with a target date of December 2020 for completion of the infrastructure. The response from local businesses has been positive and suggests there will be significant demand for the space created.

Visitors to the District are well provided for with natural attractions, a long shoreline and designated areas of outstanding natural beauty. In 2017, the International Folkestone Triennial Arts Festival took place to critical acclaim and encouraged a surge of visitors to the area. As a part of the festival, visitors were encouraged to follow an extensive tour of public art around the town. The restored harbour viaduct was re-opened to create a more direct pedestrian route to the Harbour Arm with its renovated buildings and eateries.

For visitors extending their stay, the District has an enviable range of accommodation including budget, boutique and 4-star hotels such as Hythe Imperial and Folkestone’s Burlington. The luxury visitor accommodation at Port Lympne Reserve has been extended further to include the Treehouse Hotel which is achieving high levels of demand. A proposal for a new 131 bedroom hotel by Ravensbourne Investments has received planning consent for construction at Park Farm in Folkestone.

The residential market also remains lively with major developers active including Taylor Wimpey, Pentland Homes and Barratts active in the area. The council is progressing plans for the development of 10,000 homes at Otterpool Garden Town and this includes 14 hectares for business use.

The ambitions of the District to add to and diversify its business base are being ably supported by partner organisations. Local businesses have indicated Folkestone College is providing good quality training for local people to enable them to access employment. The College has
developed specialisms in construction, hospitality, creative industries, health & beauty and business & financial services which fits well with the needs of many businesses in the area. The attributes of the area are increasingly becoming recognised – creative, connected and coastal.

For further information on Folkestone & Hythe District: www.folkestone.works

Thanet
Thanet’s popularity continues to grow with the price of houses rising by 50% in the five-year period 2012-2017. Anecdotal evidence suggests some of this is driven by the London housing market with people relocating and working closer to home. Thanet’s improved connectivity is also driving entrepreneurs to set up businesses in the district, not only for local market places but nationally and internationally.

In order to drive growth, Thanet District Council recognises the importance of regeneration and the benefits to all those who live, work and learn in the district. Inward investment enquiries are growing significantly with London based enquiries of particular note, both to relocate or for expansion. Some potential investors are returning to Thanet – having grown up in the area and see the benefits of Thanet’s proximity to the continent and London.

A thriving tourism and leisure sector is another integral part of Thanet’s growing economy. Trips to the popular and award-winning seaside resorts of Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate rose 16% between 2013 and 2015 despite visitors to England registering a 5% drop. Thanet’s 19 miles of spectacular coastline and its cultural offer attracted 3.9m trips to the area in 2017 as a major attraction. Following Thanet District Council’s decision in 2003 to secure the vacant Dreamland site, a new era is upon one of Britain’s oldest surviving amusement parks. As well as being a theme park, Dreamland is also a major music venue and hosted the Gorillaz ‘Demon Days’ Festival in June 2017 with the summer of 2018 having a real festival feeling after a year of events. The investors have announced their intention to open a 120 bedroom hotel adjacent to the site.

The Royal Harbour in Ramsgate is a popular tourist destination for visitors from across the UK and abroad. The only Royal Harbour in Britain is a busy destination containing 700 leisure berths, with four gold anchors awarded by the Yacht Harbour Association. It caters for visiting vessels, as well as those based there year-round and is home to a large fishing fleet. The popular waterfront hosts a diverse offering of boutique cafes and restaurants right on the quayside with views across the marina. Ramsgate is also recognised as one of only ten national Heritage Action Zones by Historic England acknowledging Ramsgate’s rich historic environment supporting economic growth.

Margate Old Town and Ramsgate Harbour and marina have also been transformed over this period. Thanet’s resorts long known appeal is being rediscovered and it goes far beyond the bygone perception of the traditional British seaside holiday. It is now much broader, attracting individuals and businesses looking to achieve the all-important work-life balance whilst remaining a great place to holiday. Those relocating to Thanet realise that they can benefit from a coastal location, within easy reach and travel time to London and supported by the excellent High Speed One service. Margate, currently being referred to as ‘Shoreditch-on-Sea’, thanks primarily to the 84% increase in creative businesses in Thanet from 2012 to 2016. Business confidence levels are high with 80% of creatives surveyed saying they feel confident about the future of their business (Source: Thanet’s New Wave – The creative force regeneration our towns 2016).

Regeneration continues apace – Margate’s Dreamland received significant private sector investment and re-opened in May 2017 as a major attraction. Following Thanet District Council’s decision in 2003 to secure the vacant Dreamland site, a new era is upon one of Britain’s oldest surviving amusement parks. As well as being a theme park, Dreamland is also a major music venue and hosted the Gorillaz ‘Demon Days’ Festival in June 2017 with the summer of 2018 having a real festival feeling after a year of events. The investors have announced their intention to open a 120 bedroom hotel adjacent to the site.

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The Dickensian town of Broadstairs, steeped in stories, continues to draw crowds with its famous ‘retro’ ice cream parlours and attractive cottages adding to its unique and timeless seaside charm. The packed annual calendar of events, including Broadstairs Folk Week and Food Festival, keep the town on any visitor itinerary. The Yarrow Hotel, which opened in 2016 in a renovated Jacobethan-style building within the East Kent College campus, is the first in the UK to be owned and run by a further education college. In 2017 it was honoured in the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) awards for the South East, winning the prize in the commercial category and in 2018 it was awarded four stars status as part of Visit England’s Quality Assurance scheme. It is staffed partly by apprentices from the College’s hospitality courses and features a restaurant, spa and salon.

Thanet’s strong appeal as a film location continues with local settings for fashion shoots to pop videos to full-length feature films. Sir Michael Caine was in Margate filming for the new release, Night at Hatton Garden, while Sky Arts spent five days in June filming Landscape Artist of the Year at Viking Bay. Popular musicians Shawn Mendes and Emeli Sande both used Botany Bay, one of Thanet’s most distinctive beaches, as the backdrop for their music videos. Filming also took place for the new Nick Hornby adaptation, Juliet Naked, featuring Ethan Hawke, Chris O’Dowd and Rose Byrne. A substantial percentage of BBC and Channel 4 programming budgets are required to be spent outside London. Thanet’s visual appeal, proximity, affordability and creative flair make it an excellent choice for the creative agencies’ principal broadcasters when contracting for programme making. There is an opportunity to attract a small cluster of such creative production companies to Thanet which is a realistic ambition for the area.

Opportunities for commercial development continue to be offered at Manston Business Park. Building of light industrial units is currently underway for freehold sale and for rent. There is keen demand for workspace on this site with over 100 new units developed and sold since August 2014. Wahl UK is expanding operations to a 9,011m² (97,000ft²) site at Manston which results from the company’s growth with the workforce expanding and the new building supporting continued expansion plans. East Kent Opportunities is a partnership between Kent County Council and Thanet District Council. Land is available that is ideal for existing businesses wishing to expand their current operations. It is well connected by dual carriageway to the motorway network.
Economic Development
Continued

For logistics companies and multi-nationals, the Port of Ramsgate is the second closest UK port to mainland Europe. A dedicated £30m tunnel and approach road bypasses the town and provides unimpeded access for customers and freight. The demand for road goods vehicles crossing the English Channel is expected to increase from 3.17m in 2015 to 4.6m by 2035. The excellent road links and short sea crossing times mean Ramsgate is ideally located to meet this rising demand for freight traffic and provides much needed resilience for the cross channel freight network.

Housing

Housing Market

There were 26,544 property transactions in Kent (KCC area) during the calendar year 2017, and a further 4,342 in the Medway Unitary area. These figures are slightly lower than the previous year by 5.8% and 5.2% respectively. This pattern follows a general trend for slower sales during 2017. Transactions in England & Wales were down by 5.1% compared with 2016 and in the South East transactions were down by 8.2%.

Within Kent, Maidstone and Folkestone & Hythe District area (formerly Shepway) are the only areas to have seen an increase in property transactions in 2017 compared to 2016 (+2.0% and +1.1% respectively)

Kent remains good value for house buyers. The overall average property price in Kent during the 2017 was £323,591. This is 14.8% lower than the average property price in the South East, (£371,404) but 9.7% higher than the average for England & Wales (£292,151).

The average house price at a County level masks a significant range in prices across Kent, with an average of £497,725 in Sevenoaks to £242,355 in Thanet. The average price in the Medway Unitary area was £257,292. Source: HM Land Registry Open Data Standard Reports

Based on the number of Energy Performance Certificates issued on new dwellings, during 2017 there were 7,180 new dwellings built across Kent. This a 7.2% increase on the 2016 total of 6,696. Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG): Live table NB1

Homes England

The Homes England 2016-2017 Affordable Housing Programme for Kent and Medway delivered 621 Affordable Rent starts and 597 completions and 414 Affordable Home Ownership starts and 300 Completions.

Homes England was launched in January 2018, following a major re-structure which took place in 2016/17 with the ambition is to be a much more active organization. It intends to create a better housing market by intervening in local places to get homes built now and investing in increasing the longer-term supply.

The Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) was announced in 2017 and was targeted at unlocking new private house building in the areas where housing need is greatest. The fund is a competitive grant programme for local authorities. There are two funding strands:

- Marginal Viability Funding (MVF) for Unitary and District Councils:
Aims to provide the final piece of infrastructure funding to unlock housing in one or more sites. This would allow the infrastructure to be started soon after the award of funding and for the homes to follow at an accelerated pace. Bids can be up to £10m, but exceptional schemes can be more. MVF HIF bids were received from several Kent authorities and those that were assessed as being deliverable within the terms of the programme, have moved through to further due diligence. Successful bidders will receive an offer letter by the year end.

- Forward Funding (FF) for Unitary and County Councils:
For a small number of strategic and high-impact infrastructure projects, government will typically (but not exclusively) be asked to put in the first tranche of funding, which then gives the market confidence to provide further investment and make more land available for development and future homes. Bids can be up to £250m. HIF FF bids are currently being assessed through a co-determination process. An announcement of successful bids is likely early next year.

Homes England – Site Disposals

To support the organisations ambitions and the delivery of homes in Kent, Homes England will be marketing the following sites within the last two quarters of 2018:

New Haine Road, Ramsgate – this site has secured a Phase 1 reserved matters consent for an initial 54 new homes with overall outline consent for up to 472 new homes. Homes England will be seeking a disposal to the open market under building lease marketed through Cushman & Wakefield.

Interface Land, Chatham – one of the last remaining development opportunities in the successful Chatham Maritime development, this site has recently secured the adoption of a development brief supporting residential-led, mixed-use development. Homes England will be seeking a disposal to the open market under building lease marketed also through Cushman & Wakefield.

In addition to HIF, the Homes England is still committed to existing programmes. There are numerous active local authorities and registered providers working with the Shared Ownership Affordable Homes Programme 2016-21 with schemes being delivered up to March 2022 covering a mix of tenures.

Homes England Strategic Partnerships

- Homes England has announced strategic partnerships with 8 housing associations to deliver more affordable homes across the country.
- Homes England will be seeking ambitious partners for wave 2 – clear, demonstrable and significant increases in delivery at scale as a well as strong delivery of existing programme commitments, including continuous market engagement and social rent.
Homes England – Social Rent

- In June 2018 the government confirmed a total additional budget for Homes England of £1.67bn to deliver Social Rent in areas of high need, as well as tenures currently available through SOAHP.

- An addendum to the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme prospectus (SOAHP) has been published and which provides a list of eligible areas.

- The Prospectus remains the key document for the SOAHP 2016 to 2021: its content stands unless explicitly amended (such as the January 2017 Addendum), and providers should ensure that they read the Prospectus alongside both Addendums and the Capital Funding Guide.

- Bidding is through Continuous Market Engagement.

Kent and Medway Housing Strategy

Housing remains high on the Government’s agenda with a new Green Paper and numerous policy announcements since the start of 2018. This includes, more recently, an updated Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme, Community Housing Funding of £163m, a new HRA Borrowing Prospectus and up to an additional £76m of funding through the Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund up to 2021.

There remains continued pressure from government for the whole country to accelerate housing growth. In response to the challenges from Government the Kent Housing Group remains committed to develop a refreshed Kent and Medway Housing Strategy. The aim of this new document will be to respond, at a strategic level, to the demands of government, whilst realising a number of key aspirations and needs of the communities across Kent and Medway.

Kent Planning Protocol

Kent’s Planning Officers Group and Kent Housing Group continued to work with the Kent Developers Group on the countywide Planning Protocol to share best practice and assist with the delivery of the housing, employment and growth aspirations. This was launched in 2017. It confirms the commitment to the growth agenda and to the delivery of the housing numbers, commercial targets and much needed infrastructure. It has wide support from Homes England, The Environment Agency, Natural England and many other stakeholders and examines the best ways to work together and remove barriers to growth.

The Kent and Medway Planning Protocol is an important document. It reflects best practice and improvements to the planning system. There has been a great deal of collaboration, working with East Sussex and Essex to share best practice and helping them to produce their own versions of the document. We are now about to engage with our stakeholders to refresh the Kent and Medway Planning Protocol and to establish the best delivery mechanism.

Alongside the Viability Protocol, the Planning Protocol is a nationally important initiative. The protocol is intended to champion further joint working on shared priorities by the local authorities and the Kent Developers Group. The Planning Protocol seeks to make the process more efficient by enabling greater collaboration in the pre-application and planning application stages of the process through better communication and consistency. The protocol is jointly monitored by Kent’s Planning Officers Group and Kent Housing Group along with Kent Developers Group.

The protocol has already been used to enable discussions between the districts and developers to address the growth agenda, maintain quality and community needs through open dialogue. As part of the protocol, the private/public sector is working together to address the skills that the industry needs to maintain an effective planning system and Kent colleges have responded to the need for more planners within the county.

No Use Empty

Firmly established as the longest running empty property initiative in the country, No Use Empty (NUE) remains committed to returning long term empty properties back into use. It is delivered by Kent County Council in partnership with all 12 district councils and provides an exemplar model which can be replicated.

NUE scooped the national award for ‘Outstanding Approach to Regeneration’ at the UK Housing Awards event in May 2018 run by the Chartered Institute of Housing.

Ingredients for this success include; planning, dedicating resources, monitoring outcomes, adjusting delivery models to reflect current market conditions, providing financial assistance to owners by offering secured short-term loans with repayments recycled for new loans and above all continuity over a sustained period.

Wider regeneration initiatives continue to attract high profile investors and funding. This has led to an increase in interest from small and medium sized property developers looking...
Economic Development
Continued

Economic decline, recession and some of the lowest property values in the south east have led to an historical lack of investment in pockets of our coastal areas, notably, Dover, Folkestone and Thanet. Bringing long-term empty homes back into use is a key method of driving regeneration, providing new homes, new sources of employment and a sense of community. To date, the cumulative total number of homes brought back into use is 5,583 through a range of interventions.

The combination of NUE loans and top-ups are designed to help developers to bridge the gap between pre/post refurbishment values by providing a loan which takes account of cost of works and which banks and other lenders will not do. Without this joined-up approach these properties would have remained empty.

Going forward NUE continues to seek new funding opportunities, being successful in securing £1m from the Growing Places Fund in 2018 to specifically focus on bringing empty commercial properties (empty shops or small redundant workspaces) back into use in our coastal towns. Under the NUE Commercial banner we have made a commitment to return a minimum of 8 commercial units and provide a minimum of 28 residential units by March 2022 with short term secured loan support. Four projects have been identified which, on completion, will contribute 60% of these targets.

In addition to this, £2m of funding was allocated with a specific focus on Margate to help meet the increased demand to tackle some of the larger buildings in the town which can be converted to provide much needed family homes.

A loan of £533,000 (including £165,000 from Folkestone & Hythe District Council) financed the transformation of the former Westbrook Preparatory School, Shorncliffe Road. Originally part of Dover College and empty for 5 years, it was a magnet for anti-social behaviour and was open to the elements. Following a sympathetic refurbishment by William Brown of Browns Realty Limited it now provides 11 new homes which have been made available for rent.

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 through the NUE Commercial project. The initiative has also created or safeguarded over 900 jobs, and provided homes to more than 2,000 local people.

Kent’s approach to tackling empty properties has been widely praised winning three national awards for Regeneration and Partnership Working over recent years. The Welsh Government has also based their scheme on the Kent initiative.

For further information: www.nue.org.uk

Before and after images of Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone.
Kent County Council

In 2017-18 the County Council completed 20 major development projects totalling £83.4m capital spend, the majority of which was for schools. Project values ranged from £200,000 to £21m.

The team also completed 35 smaller maintenance projects totalling £2.2m capital spend, working with a range of contractors including Kent-based national contractors as well as locally based SMEs. Project values ranged from £10,000 to £200,000.

Approximately £12m of land & property assets were realised from the KCC estate, principally for new housing development and employment generation. The receipts are then reinvested in the Council’s capital development programme.

There is a forward plan of 66 major development projects to start on site this year and beyond with a total budget value of more than £250m, with a rolling programme of 108 smaller maintenance projects totalling £8.6m capital spend.

School Projects:
This year we are working with organisations and stakeholders to deliver a further 88 school schemes that include 11 brand new primary schools, 3 new secondary schools, 27 primary school expansions and 43 secondary school expansions to support pupil place provision. This work means that the County Council continues to ensure that no child will miss a day of education due to lack of spaces, whilst making sure they have the appropriate setting in which to learn and, in the case of special needs, a school closer to home.

Other Projects:
Maidstone East Gateway – KCC is working in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council to develop a strategy to regenerate this important gateway into the county town.

Northfleet Embankment West, Ebbsfleet Garden City – KCC are working collaboratively with the Development Corporation and private landowners to support the delivery of up to 984 new homes close to the River Thames;

Southborough Hub – a joint project with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Southborough Town Council.

Tunbridge Wells Cultural Hub – working with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on the £12.3m proposed development in Royal Tunbridge Wells which will bring together the museum, art gallery, library and adult education centre in one inspiring, shared space.

Live Margate – an ambitious programme in which KCC supports Thanet District Council. Approximately £23m is being invested to purchase up to 300 derelict or long-term unoccupied properties in Margate to renovate as quality family homes. The scheme was named best Housing Initiative 2018 at the annual Local Government Chronicle Awards.

Kent County Council is also providing resources to lead on the estate element of the NHS’s Sustainability and Transformation Plan for Kent and Medway. This includes work on asset utilisation on the current NHS estate to meet current and future service demand in line with the One Public Estate principles. The intention is that through closer working between public sector partners opportunities will arise for employment and housing on land released through effective co-location, while the receipts and revenue savings are recycled to invest in modernisation of the remaining estate and new-builds as required.

One of the areas of focus for the council was ensuring that, for all sizes of projects, contractors had a local supply chain. Through its capital programmes the County Council has supported the local economy by delivering best value through its procurement frameworks and using local supply chains where possible.

Transport Infrastructure

Local Growth Fund

Update on new infrastructure for Kent

In 2014, the government announced planned investment of at least £12bn nationally to promote growth in local economies through a series of ‘Growth Deals’ to operate over six years from 2015/16. Known as Local Growth Funding (LGF) it would finance infrastructure and skills schemes that, in turn, would unlock housing growth and encourage job creation.

In Round One in 2014 and Round Two in 2015, the government allocated £482m from the Local Growth Fund to capital projects across the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) area.

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In March 2016, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced the release of Round Three of Local Growth Funding (LGF3), worth £1.8bn across England. The Government stipulated that the LGF3 funding would be allocated to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) through a competitive bidding process.

A prioritised list of schemes with accompanying outline business cases were prepared and agreed through the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership in 2016 and then approved at the South East LEP Strategic Board, so that a final submission could be sent to Government in July last year.

On 2nd February 2017 it was announced that SELEP would receive a further £102m of government funding to help create jobs, support businesses and create new growth opportunities. For Kent, this included £27m to deliver the following schemes:

- Dartford Town Centre Transformation
- Ashford International Rail Connectivity (Ashford Spurs) in addition to the £5m under LGF Round Two
- Fort Halstead, near Sevenoaks
- A2500 Lower Road Improvement, Isle of Sheppey
- Kent & Medway Engineering, Design, Growth and Enterprise Hub at Canterbury Christ Church University
- Leigh Flood Storage Area and East Peckham
- A2 Off-slip at Wincheap, Canterbury

Through the agreement with Essex County Council (as the Accountable Body for SELEP), Kent County Council is
Economic Development
Continued

responsible for the programme management of all Local Growth Fund projects in Kent. There are, however, specific projects where third-party organisations are responsible for delivery.

In total, through the three rounds, Local Growth Funding of £124m has been allocated towards the delivery of 26 highway and transportation projects in Kent. An additional £24m has been allocated through the Local Growth Fund to deliver 6 non-transport schemes in Kent, which together have the potential to unlock up to £420m in match funding.

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

Journey Time Improvement (JTI) scheme
Phase 1 of this scheme to improve the journey time between Ashford and Canterbury West is now completed. Following successful testing, the journey time benefits from this phase are now being enjoyed by passengers and are expected to be formally included in the Dec 2019 timetable. Design work is now underway for Phase 2 between Canterbury West and Ramsgate, with benefits due to be delivered by Dec 2021. This scheme will support economic growth in Thanet, and is linked to the development of the new station, Thanet Parkway, also due for completion by Dec 2021.

The Ashford Spurs Project
The main part of this project is now completed, with the delivery of the upgraded signalling system on the ‘Spurs’ which link Ashford International Station with High Speed One and officially opened by the Secretary of State for Transport in April 2018. The Local Growth Fund has been the primary source of funding through the South East LEP, and will fund the final tranche of work to deliver a resolution to the technical problems which have prevented the new Eurostar trains from serving Ashford International. This is expected to be completed during 2019. This project will ensure the continuation of international rail services at Ashford. Kent County Council continues to work in close partnership with Eurostar, seeking an enhancement to the level of the Ashford – Brussels service provided that it is commercially justified.

Kent Route Study
Kent County Council has responded to the consultation on the five yearly Kent Route Study undertaken by Network Rail. It sets out a range of options for funders for infrastructure enhancements required on Kent’s rail network between 2019 and 2024. This study also recognised the significant increase in demand at Ebbsfleet, given the development plans for housing growth in Ebbsfleet Garden City.

South Eastern New Franchise
Kent County Council has responded to the Department for Transport’s consultation on the new South Eastern franchise for Kent and Medway area, which has been further delayed and is now expected to commence during 2019. The County Council has included a wide-ranging list of proposed service enhancements for the new franchise specification. This submission also included responses from the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership to reflect the interests of all the county’s key stakeholders.

Thameslink
Two new services are scheduled to serve Kent and Medway. One commenced in May 2018 and has replaced the existing Southeastern service between Rainham/Gillingham and London. The other is scheduled to commence in December 2019 and will be an additional route linking Maidstone East Gateway, West Malling (for Kings Hill), Borough Green & Wrotham, Otford and Swanley with London Bridge and other City stations, then north to Cambridge.

Ebbsfleet Garden City
Discussions are beginning between Network Rail, Kent County Council and stakeholders on an enhanced rail service to be included in the Department for Transports specification for the new franchise. This would serve the planned Ebbsfleet Garden City. Infrastructure is in place with Ebbsfleet International station on High Speed One, but this will require an enhanced service to meet demand if the Garden City plans are to be realised.

Crossrail Extension
With Crossrail 1 (Elizabeth Line) now due to open to Abbey Wood in Autumn 2019, local authorities are jointly considering, with Transport for London and the Greater London Authority, the options for a possible future extension of Crossrail to Ebbsfleet. The Strategic Outline Business Case for this concept is currently being developed, and if there were government approval for a future
extension, Crossrail would play a key role in delivering the additional rail capacity required for Ebbsfleet Garden City and north-west Kent.

**Sandwich Station**
Kent County Council is the lead authority for the Sandwich Station capacity upgrade project, the funding for which has now been secured. Network Rail will deliver this project, which consists of two platform extensions, a new footbridge, access path and steps, to provide additional capacity for rail passenger access at The Open in July 2020, and for all future golf events at Sandwich.

**Thanet Parkway**
Kent County Council is seeking to deliver Thanet Parkway, a new railway station near Cliffsend, to significantly improve rail access to London for local communities and developments at Discovery Park and Manston business parks. This should see journey times to London of around one hour from Thanet Parkway.

**Lower Thames Crossing**
In April 2017 the Secretary of State for Transport announced the preferred route for the new Lower Thames Crossing to form a new strategic route from the Channel ports to the Midlands and North. It will be a bored tunnel under the River Thames east of Tilbury and Gravesend to connect to the A2.

The announcement of the preferred route followed a comprehensive review of options and extensive analysis of more than 47,000 responses to Highways England’s consultation in 2016. This new crossing will add more than 70% to road capacity between Essex/Kent, unlock investment and create thousands of new jobs. The preferred route was carefully selected to minimise community and environmental impacts as far as possible, whilst providing the transport and economic benefits of a modern, alternative crossing. It will help address existing congestion, deliver significant economic growth and provide resilience on the strategic road network. The 70mph, 13-mile route and crossing will be built to the highest safety standards incorporating the most up-to-date engineering and information technology. The scheme is being taken through the Development Consent Order (DCO) planning process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and, if funding is secured, be open by 2027.

Statutory consultation began on 10 October and ends on 20 December 2018. Consultation material including a proposed route plan can be found at: www.highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/ltc/consultation

**Operation Stack and Overnight Lorry Parking**
In the Autumn Statement 2015, the government announced the allocation of £250m for a solution to Operation Stack and to prevent the level of disruption Kent experienced in summer 2015. The Secretary of State announced a preferred site for a lorry area near Stanford but this was later withdrawn in 2017 as a result of a judicial review.

Highways England is now leading on an alternative solution, which could be on-road (such as an additional lorry queuing lane) or off-road (such as a lorry area) and may include facilities for overnight lorry parking. The permanent solution is expected to be in place by 2023. A temporary solution to Operation Stack will be in place by March 2019 which is a contraflow on the M20 Junctions 8 to 9 on the London-bound carriageway to enable 2-way flow while the coastbound carriageway is used to queue port-bound freight vehicles. This is part of project BROCK (Brexit Operations across Kent) contingency planning in the event that there are delays at the Channel Tunnel and the Port of Dover as a result of border and customs checks after the UK leaves the EU. It is part of a multi-agency plan that also includes the Dover Traffic Access Protocol (TAP) on the A20 and could also include the use of the runway at Manston Airport via diversions from M20 Junction 7 along the A249 to M2 Junction 5 and then along the M2 and A299 with release of freight traffic via the A256 to Dover.

The Department for Transport (DfT) is also looking at the potential of using the M26 to also queue cross-channel freight vehicles should the need arise. In addition, Kent County Council are exploring options for a network of overnight lorry parks and is also working with the Department for Transport, District Councils and Kent Police on stronger enforcement action for illegal lorry parking to address the problem of inappropriate lorry parking across Kent.

**Local Transport Plan 4**
Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth Without Gridlock 2016 – 2031 was adopted by Kent County Council in July 2017. This plan aims to deliver transport priorities for Kent which will contribute to a safe and efficient transport system.