# 2025-26
# Kent Property Market Report

The annual guide to investment & development in Kent

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# Welcome

**Welcome to the 34th Edition of the Kent Property Market Report.** The report is produced by Kent County Council and Caxtons.

The **Caxtons' Property Market Analysis** reviews property deals and activity during 2024-25 and covers:

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

An update on **Inward Investment** shows property supply gradually expanding and consistent planning approvals, but leasing activity reflecting wider economic caution.

The report highlights the significant work undertaken by both the private and public sectors to **accelerate the delivery of commercial and residential sites** across the entire county, recognising the importance of this to the broader economic growth agenda, both regionally and nationally.

The **Infrastructure and Regeneration** section features current and planned developments across all districts and boroughs across Kent & Medway. Focusing on Kent's growth areas, the continuing regeneration of Kent's coastal communities, housing initiatives and significant hard infrastructure investments.

The Kent County Council section provides an overview of the strategic activity the council is undertaking in transport, property, estates management and through specific programmes such as **No Use Empty.**

The **Strategic Sites** map features a comprehensive list of Kent and Medway development locations by use class, together with how to find out more.

**Caxtons Property Consultants** offer market-leading advice to people in property, working alongside our clients to achieve efficient solutions that generate effective results. An independent, long-established firm providing expertise in property management, sales, lettings and acquisitions, valuation and lease advisory, and insurance, across all commercial and residential sectors in Kent, the South East and beyond.

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

The producers of the report thank the sponsors and contributors:

- **Clear Insurance Management**
- **DHA Planning**
- **Hollaway**
- **MHA Baker Tilley**
- **Thomson Snell & Passmore**
- **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors**

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

We hope you find the report useful and informative.

**Paul King**
Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration, Kent County Council

**Daniel Thackray**,
Chairman & Director, Head of Valuation & Lease Advisory, Caxtons

**Wellington Gate, Tunbridge Wells.**
HARGEAVES GROUP

# Caxtons' Property Market Outlook

**Last year's report asked whether the property market was heading towards calmer territory in 2025. To some degree that has been the case.** Although the economy has struggled to improve, it has been more stable, with less shocks than last year.

**Despite inflation being stubbornly high at 3.8% compared with last year's 1.7%, it is now relatively consistent, and the Bank of England (BoE) predictions are that it will reach the 2% target in Q2 2027.** The interest rate in October 2025 was 4% compared with 5% at the same time last year, and the BoE has indicated a potential reduction to roughly 3.5% by late 2026.

**The BoE's August baseline forecast for UK quarterly GDP growth in Q2 2025 was 0.1%, compared with 0.2% last year, but the UK's actual GDP grew 0.3% in Q2 2025 compared with 0.2% this time in 2024.**

**Against this background and alongside a lack of business confidence, due to a range of factors such as the rise in NI and concerns about property related measures in the budget on 26 November, the Kent property market in 2025 has been surprisingly resilient** and there has been a small degree of growth in some sectors and areas. Retail and office have performed relatively well and industrial and logistics continue to see good levels of demand and occupancy.

**Science and innovation hubs continue to attract new companies and enjoy expansions.** Kent Science Park has been recognised as the best life science research facility in the South East, and Discovery Park in Sandwich has doubled its scientific community, blending R&D with advanced manufacturing.

**Business parks continue to attract investment in refurbishment and maintain stable yields around 8%.** Praxis's acquisition of 500,000ft² (46,452m²) at Kings Hill signals long-term confidence, with plans for refurbishments and alternative uses. Serviced offices, particularly IWG schemes at Kings Hill and Crossways show low vacancies, while rents at Crossways have climbed to £30 per ft², reflecting demand for quality, flexible workspace.

**Hybrid working continues to shape demand, with 28% of UK adults working flexibly.** In Kent, demand is concentrated on Grade A, sustainable space, reflected in a record rent of mid £30s per ft² achieved at One Suffolk Way in Sevenoaks. Nonetheless, take-up is sporadic, with many firms consolidating or shifting to serviced offices or spaces within their industrial/logistics buildings.

**Despite this record rent, the office market has seen limited rental growth other than in Medway and Thanet, and some secondary stock is being repurposed for residential or mixed uses.** South East Investment yields have held steady between 7.25% and 8.25% for prime town assets, while weaker secondary towns remain above 11.5%.

**Industrial and logistics continue to perform well, underpinned by supply chain resilience, automation, sustainability and a shortage of supply in some areas.** Kent hosts some of the South East's largest 'big box' units, and major schemes continue to be built including at Panattoni Sittingbourne, TN2 Gateway, Tunbridge Wells, and Swanley Distribution Link. Panattoni showed its continued belief in Kent by purchasing their fourth site in Kent—70 acres (28ha) on the A20 at Lenham, in October. Demand remains strong and South East prime multi-let yields have moved in to 4.75%.

**Retail continues to adapt, with food stores and retail parks leading performance.** Retail sales rose by 0.5% in August 2025, building on July's 0.6% growth. Retail parks have undergone significant reshaping. Homebase sites have been reoccupied by The Range and B&M and at Ashford's Drovers Way retail park, long-awaited expansion is moving forward, bringing Home Bargains and a Costa Drive-Thru. Yields on retail parks have improved slightly to around 5.5—6%.

**High streets show mixed fortunes. Kent towns have seen closures, new occupiers and creative adaptations.** WH Smith branches have rebranded to TG Jones, while Poundland and Costa Coffee have shut units, and Wilkos' stores are gradually being re-occupied by a range of retailers.

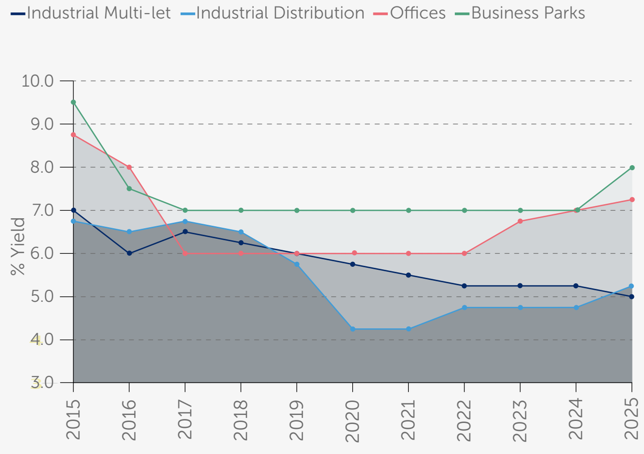
# 4.0%

**Interest rate in October 2025, 1% lower than October 2024.**
Bank of England

## UK Total Return IPF Consensus Forecasts, average over 2025/29 period


Source: Investment Property Forum Survey of Independent Forecasts for UK Commercial Property, September 2025. Forecasts derived from 23 leading fund/investment management houses and consultancies

## Kent prime yields




Source: Caxtons

PANATTONI

**Panattoni Park, Sittingbourne.**

Meanwhile, landlords are splitting units or embracing artisanal traders to sustain vibrancy. Despite pressures, towns like Canterbury and Ashford recorded rental growth of 17% and 23% respectively.

**Kent's prime retail destinations are strong with Bluewater continuing to outperform national benchmarks,** welcoming Sephora, Haribo, and expanded units for JD Sports and Superdrug. **Ashford Designer Outlet is celebrating 25 years, following a record-breaking 2024** with new stores such as Castore and Slim Chickens. Shopping centres present a patchwork of reinvention: Chatham's Pentagon Centre is pivoting to health and office use, while Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is committing £68m to redevelop Royal Victoria Place with the addition of leisure-led offers.

**The residential market reflects a cautious but stabilising outlook. Interest and mortgage rate reductions have boosted affordability, but cost-of-living pressures and rumours of taxes on higher-value homes temper sentiment.** House prices in Kent have fallen on average by 5%, outperforming the wider South East (-7%) and England and Wales (-10%). Demand is strongest near commuter stations, with grammar schools a persistent draw for London buyers. New build sales prices per ft$^2$ are largely down, except in Gravesham and Medway.

**Nutrient neutrality challenges continue to stall development in east Kent, though mitigation credit schemes are unlocking some projects.** Government reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, including 'grey belt' housing, are beginning to impact approvals, as seen in Hadlow. Large projects are progressing, such as Ebbsfleet Garden City, and Westwood Village near Thanet. Demand for later living remains buoyant, with schemes advancing in Tunbridge Wells, Whitstable and in most towns.

**The Investment Property Forum (IPF) consensus of independent forecasts shows a positive picture across all sectors except industrial and retail warehouse for the period 2025 to 2029 compared with 2024 to 2028.** The 'all property' returns show a predicted 7.9% increase compared with 7.5% last year with office showing a 6.6% increase compared with a 6% increase last year, and standard retail showing an increase of 7.5% compared with 7% this year. Industrial and retail warehouse both show small decreases. This mirrors Caxtons' findings this year, with industrial and retail warehousing's fortunes waning slightly for the first time in many years, and office and retail doing better than for some time. However, with demand still high for industrial and warehousing, and Kent's locational advantages for logistics, any dip in this sector's fortunes are likely to be small.

**In 2025, although some sectors have fared better than others, Kent's property market has shown its usual resilience and appears to be cautiously optimistic, underpinned by small improvements for offices, supermarkets, retail parks, and prime retail.** High streets and shopping centres remain pressured but adaptive, science parks and industrial schemes highlight innovation and growth, and the office market is being reshaped by hybrid working. Residential remains subdued but stable, with planning reforms offering hope and improvements in the medium to long-term. The regeneration section of the report in particular shows an astonishing number of projects underway in our towns and communities and this public and public/private development should encourage private investment.

**Predictions are even more difficult for 2026 than usual, with the budget planned for 26 November.** The Chancellor will need to raise money, that is sure, but despite the rumours and leaks, it is not clear how this will be done or how any changes might impact the property market. Nonetheless, the industry remains cautiously positive and Kent's resilience will hopefully shine through yet again.

# Science and Business Parks Performance

**UK Science Parks have welcomed the Government's ambition to make the UK the leading life science economy in Europe by 2030. The South East, excluding London, generates 30% of the UK's life science turnover, worth over £32 billion—more than any other region.** The trend for science parks to focus on integrating emerging technologies like AI, Internet of things (IOT) and blockchain alongside sustainability and green technologies remains prevalent for much of the UK. Science Parks generally accommodate larger, more established corporations, as well as being hubs for innovation and start-ups. Catering to both types of business contributes to their resilience, and Kent's science parks certainly reflect this.

**Kent Science Park near Sittingbourne is one of the region's most established science and technology parks with 47 buildings offering a mix of lab space, offices and co-working facilities.** Lab and office spaces ranging from 120 to 20,000ft² (11 to 1,858m²) are available, as well as a 16,000ft² (1,485m²) lab and office building. The park is home to a growing community of businesses working across life sciences, agritech, biotech and other related sectors.

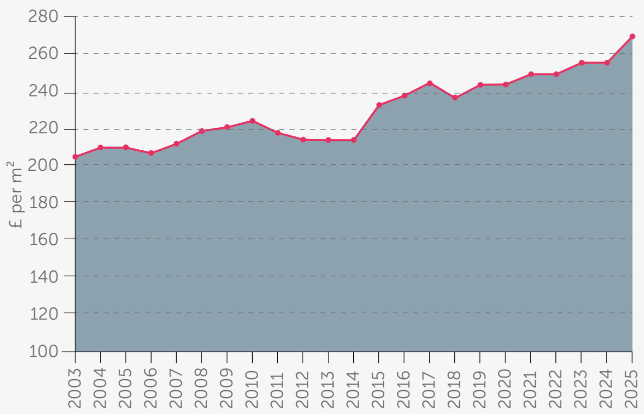
**The Venture Building is a newly refurbished space designed to support early-stage and scaling businesses. It offers flexible lab and office units ranging from 250 to 2,000ft² (21 to 186m²)—ideal for companies in diagnostics, medtech, food technology or agritech.** Occupiers benefit from shared equipment and on-site support; all aimed at helping science-led businesses grow. Shared lab equipment and services include glasswasher, DI water system and ULT -80 freezer.

**Beyond the Venture Building, the park is focusing on the future. Planning permission is already in place for more than 120,000ft² (11,148m²) of new development, offering opportunities for companies looking to expand**

£25ft²

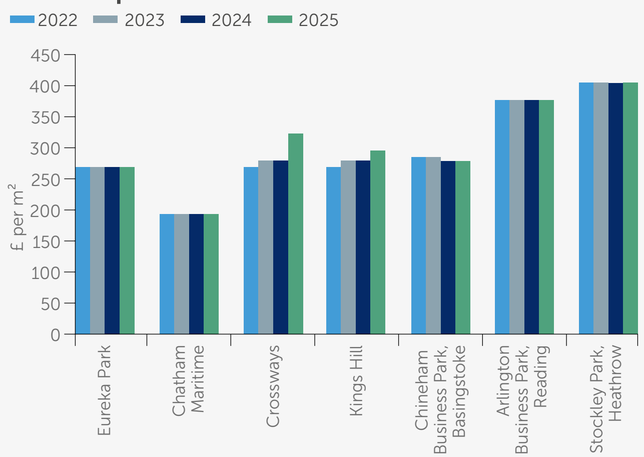
**Kent average prime business park rent.**
Caxtons

### Kent average prime business park rent




Source: Caxtons

### Business park rents




Source: Caxtons

500,000ft²

**Space acquired at Kings Hill by Praxis.**

**or relocate to a purpose-built facility in the South East.** With its strong links to academia and industry, and a supportive, collaborative environment, Kent Science Park continues to attract innovative companies at all stages of growth. Recently recognised by UKSPA as the Best Life Science Research Facility in the South East, the science park remains a vibrant base for discovery, development and big ideas.

KENT SCIENCE PARK

**The Venture Building at Kent Science Park.**

| LETTINGS | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Location** | **Landlord** | **Tenant** | **Floorspace ft²** | **Rent (pa)** | **Lease term** | **Agent/s** |
| Jan '25 | Part, 18 Kings Hill Ave, Kings Hill | Praxis | Cygnet Healthcare | 11,356 | £297,700 | 10 yrs | Ryan/Hanover Green |
| April '25 | 2nd floor, Riverbridge House, Crossways | PCP IV Gamma Limited | BDP International Limited | 5,904 | £174,168 | 6 yrs | Caxtons |

**Discovery Park continues to play a leading role in delivering the Government's ambition, set out in the Life Sciences Sector Plan, and has doubled its scientific community in recent years, attracting both homegrown innovators and significant overseas investment.** The park has seen strong growth from early-stage R&D companies, alongside rising interest in the Park's advanced manufacturing capabilities. Since establishing its first European manufacturing base at the park, Asymchem has rapidly expanded its flow chemistry capabilities, positioning the site as a leading hub for sustainable, continuous pharmaceutical manufacturing, and has clear plans to scale into a larger pilot and full commercial production.

**Startups such as Particology, Matheus Engineering and Biowaived, founded after the Pfizer redundancies, are set to rapidly expand their footprint on the site,** filling critical gaps in pharmaceutical R&D and manufacturing, creating new jobs and retaining specialist scientific talent in east Kent. The park is powered by the £160m Kent Renewable Energy biomass facility, aligning with national clean energy priorities.

**Kent's business parks continue to offer tenants best in class specification and logistically well-connected employment space. Praxis, the London-based real estate and property management company, has acquired 14 office buildings totalling nearly 500,000ft² (46,452m²) of office space at Kings Hill which is home to 35 companies.** It is thought to be the largest office property deal in Kent for more than a decade. Many of the office buildings are open plan and more than 25 years old so Praxis is planning a substantial refurbishment programme to produce buildings with high standards of environmental performance that will suit smaller companies and reinforce their ESG credentials. Other buildings may be repurposed for housing, retail or even a hotel, subject to permission.

Leading South East England partnerships housebuilder Chartway Partnerships Group has taken a lease on nearly 15,000ft² (1,395m²) of space in 4, Abbey Wood Road at Kings Hill, that will be home to 150 of its 400 employees. 4, Abbey Wood is now full.

The serviced office market continues to offer flexible solutions. **IWG continue to have limited voids at all their office schemes with Kings Hill and Crossways Business Park being the largest of their facilities.** As well as other facilities at Chatham Maritime, Dartford, Maidstone and Margate, IWG are planning a new facility in a repurposed building in Ashford, in partnership with MTH Flour Mills.

**Crossways Business Park has seen rents increase to £30 per ft² with a suite comprising 3,125ft² (290m²) at Cotton Lake let to Bupa Healthcare.** In addition, BDP International Limited acquired the second floor at Riverbridge House at £29.50 per ft². There are several suites available including Lakeview West 4,500 to 9,437ft² (418 to 877m²), the Flagship House, Victory Way 8,705ft² (809m²), ground floor, Lakeview, West Galleon Boulevard 9,437ft² (877m²), and a number of suites at Riverbridge House totaling 27,588ft² (2,563m²).

**The first and second floors are available at Pembroke Court, Chatham Maritime comprising suites from 17,037ft² to 34,088ft² (1,582 to 3,166m²).** Quoting rents are in the order of £22.50 per ft². The Gillingham Business Park continues to have a low vacancy level. There is only one large office available at 7 Amberly Green, comprising 8,131ft² (755m²) over the ground and first floor.

**Turkey Mill in Maidstone saw existing occupier STA expand, taking a further 3,200ft² (297m²). This makes STA the largest single occupier on the Business Park which includes more than 70 other businesses.** Ashford has a few voids including 1500 Eureka Park, 11,100 to 35,850ft² (1,031 to 3,330m²). The state-of-the-art HQ building, constructed in 2009 has three floors.

Net Initial Yields for South East business parks have remained stable at 8% for 15 year income over the last 12 months (Knight Frank Quarterly Survey May 2025). Big Motoring World are undertaking a sale and lease back at their headquarters on Bailey Drive on the Gillingham Business Park. The five storey building comprises 38,287ft² (3,557m²). The lease has an unexpired period of 13.6 years. Offers are invited for the long leasehold investment. In addition, the reversionary investment at Lakeview East, Crossways Business Park, comprising 17,085ft² (1,587m²) let to Kuehne and Nagel is currently under offer. Quoting terms are in the order of £3.5m (10.95%).

PRAXIS

**1 Tower View, Kings Hill.**

# Office Performance

# Mid 30s ft²

**New record office rent in Sevenoaks.**
Caxtons

# 1.8

**Average days a week of remote working in UK, compared to international average of 1.3.**
Global survey of working arrangements, May 2025

**Hybrid working is here to stay. According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), 28% of working adults in Great Britain were hybrid working in the autumn of 2024.** The figure sits at an average of a little over 25% and while down from the peak of just over 30% in the winter of 2023/4, there is little indication of a downward trend continuing. Nonetheless, in London, corporate mandates are leading to more employees returning to the office full time. UK employees now average 1.8 days a week of remote working, above the international average of 1.3 days, according to the Global Survey of Working Arrangements (G-SWA) in May 2025.

**Again, in 2025, the office market is seeing a shift towards flexible workspaces, driven by hybrid working. Strong demand for Grade A space continues the 'flight to quality'** where occupiers are prioritising well-located, sustainable and high-quality spaces. Overall, office availability is decreasing.

**South East office market transactions have fallen back, reaching a two year low with take up 25% below the 10 year quarterly average** (Colliers Q2 2025 South East Office Market Report Overview). Tech remains a key driver of demand alongside the wider serviced office sector, retail and healthcare.

Take-up within the county remains sporadic, not helped by some occupiers absorbing their office function within newly constructed warehouse accommodation, employers using serviced offices or simply working from home.

**The South East and Kent have both seen marginal rental growth over the last 12 months. There was a new record rent of mid £30s per ft² at One Suffolk Way in Sevenoaks and rent increases in Medway and Thanet.** Despite this, the Kent average office rent is kept down primarily by the oversupply of mainly poor-quality offices in some parts of the county.

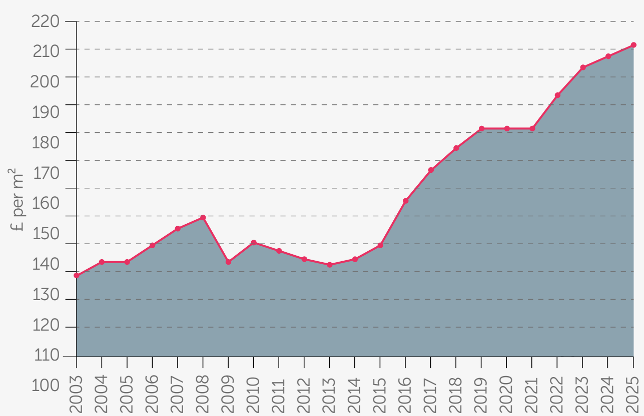
ALLSOPS

**One Suffolk Way, Sevenoaks.**

James Pilcher House in Gravesend, surrounded by residential uses, is one example of a recent sale with potential for redevelopment for residential once the existing leases have expired. Income is often a pre-requisite for a developer or investor while they seek planning permission.

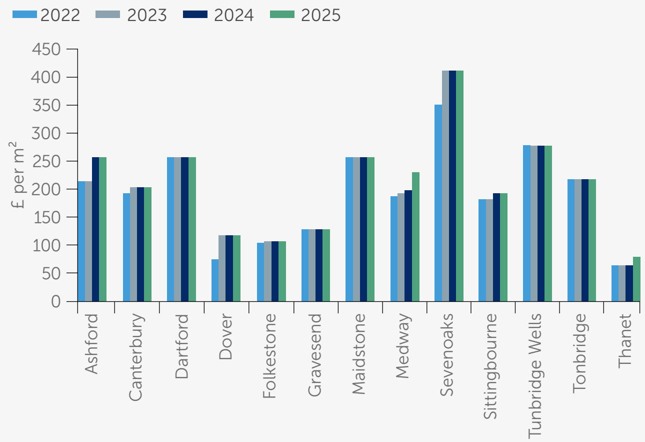
**There remains little or no appetite for speculative office development in the county,** quite the opposite in fact. Where there is an existing office planning consent, developers are inclined to apply for an alternative use by proving there is no office demand. At Kings Hill, the new owners of several office blocks are planning to refurbish some buildings and are considering the conversion of other buildings to residential or other uses. Nonetheless, some locations have seen development such as that at Salters Heath, Coldharbour Road, and most recently the speculative construction of 9 Pembroke Road comprising 9,594sq² (891m²) over 6 floors, both in Sevenoaks.

**Kent average prime office rent**




Source: Caxtons

**Office rents**




Source: Caxtons

| LETTINGS | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Location** | **Landlord** | **Tenant** | **Floorspace ft²** | **Rent (pa)** | **Lease term** | **Agent/s** |
| Nov '24 | 2nd & 3rd Floors, One Suffolk Way, Sevenoaks | RO Real Estate (At time of letting) | Birketts LLP | 2nd and 3rd floor, total 8,856 | Mid £30s psf | 10 years, break at 6th | Tenant: SHW |
| Oct '24 | Part 1st & 2nd floors, Connect 38, Dover Road, Ashford | Folkestone & Hythe District Council | Southeastern | 7,805 | £167,807 pa (exc) | 6 year FR&I lease | Sibley Pares/Ryan |
| May '25 | Suite 1 Aegel House, Quarrywood Ind. Est, Aylesford ME20 7NA | The Aylesford Property Unit Trust | Steam & Air Blowing Service Co. (SABSCO) Ltd | 1,632 | £31,250 | 10 years, break at 5th | Caxtons/ Bishop Whitehead |
| Feb '25 | 7 Sherwood House, Walderslade Road, Walderslade | Peach (Medway) Ltd | United Lift Services Ltd | 1,387 | £23,650 | 5 years, break at 3rd | Harrisons |

| SALES | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Location** | **Vendor** | **Purchaser** | **Floorspace ft²** | **Capital value** | **Agent/s** |
| Feb '25 | Orbital House, Orbital Park, Ashford | Private Client | IRATA | 12,000 | £2,400,000 | Stafford Perkins |
| Nov '25 | 3 Sittingbourne Road, Maidstone | Individual | Kent and Essex Properties Ltd | 4,268 | £1,100,000 | Sibley Pares |
| Oct '25 | The Quadrant, 5 Victoria Road, Sevenoaks | Joint Administrators | OOAK Ltd | 2,677 | £730,000 | Salisbury & Co |
| Mar '25 | 127 High Street, Hythe | Private | Private | 1,532 | £275,000 | Smith Woolley |

**There are a number of refurbished suites available.** Wellington Gate, 7-9 Church Road, Tunbridge Wells comprises offices up to 9,463ft² (879m²) and 2-5, Century Place, Lamberts Road, Tunbridge Wells offers suites of 1,820ft² (169m²) to 16,331ft² (1,517m²) at quoting terms in the order of £24.50 per ft². Hawley Mill, Dartford is now able to offer suites from 4,520ft² (419m²) to 24,381ft² (2,265m²). In Sevenoaks, Suffolk House, 154 High Street can offer between 1,218ft² (113m²) and 11,760ft² (1,092m²).

**This year's office lettings in the county include One Suffolk Way, Sevenoaks which was recently refurbished to boost its environmental credentials,** and now offers an EPC B. The final vacant second floor of 5,128ft² (476m²), was let to Birketts LLP within three months of becoming vacant, to set a new prime office rent for Sevenoaks of mid £30s per ft². Birketts already occupied the third floor, bringing the total space they occupy to 8,856ft² (823m²).

In addition, the 3rd floor of The Great Hall, Tunbridge Wells comprising 5,368ft² (499m²) was let to Outset Limited on behalf of private clients. Eagle House, Mills Road, Aylesford, part of a larger industrial terrace has seen suites 1 and 2 let following a comprehensive refurbishment.

**Occupiers looking to buy their own offices have a few options.** Reliance House, Sun Pier, Chatham, at 10,084ft² (963m²) is currently on the market for £1m (£100 per ft²) and unit 6 Station Road, Borough Green comprising 9,612ft² (893m²) is available, quoting £1.3m (£135 per ft²).

Channel House, in a flagship location overlooking the Port of Dover and English Channel, offers 111,493ft² (10,385m²) of offices and a 25,952ft² (2,411m²) warehouse on a 3.06 acre (1.5ha) site, and has just been sold to The Home Office for office use. The iconic building, constructed in 1982, was previously the administrative HQ of P &O Ferries.

**The fully occupied One Suffolk Way in Sevenoaks has been sold by The RO Group to an unnamed private investor for £6.1m.**

**Investment yields for South East towns with five or ten year income has remained flat over the last 12 months at 7.25 to 8.25% with secondary towns at over 11.5%,** according to Knight Frank's quarterly index. Mount Pleasant House, Lonsdale Gardens, Tunbridge Wells comprising 16,778ft². (1,558.8m²) remains on the market for the second year for £4.25m (9.63% NIY) with an average rent of £24.50 per ft².

HARGREAVES GROUP

**Wellington Gate, Tunbridge Wells.**

# Industrial and Distribution Performance

**The manufacturing and distribution sector is seeing significant growth in 2025, with key trends including automation, a focus on supply chain resilience and the adoption of sustainable practices.** The UK Government recently launched a new industrial strategy, aiming to boost economic growth, increase productivity, and foster investment across key sectors and regions. This 10-year plan focuses on making the UK a global leader in innovation, productivity, and sustainable growth by partnering with businesses and investing in priority sectors.

**The South East has seen limited rental growth in the last 12 months, mainly due to the aftermath of the autumn budget and global concerns.**

**Kent offers some of the South East's largest sheds including Bericote's Powerhouse Dartford with its speculative 302,790ft² (29,728m²) and Goodman's Crossways Business Park where only one unit of 240,840ft² (22,374m²) remains,** with a further phase to be developed. Clearbell's speculative 380,000ft² (35,316m²) business park, Loc8-Maidstone has pre-let the whole of Phase 1 and 75% of Phase 2, with Phase 3 still to be constructed.

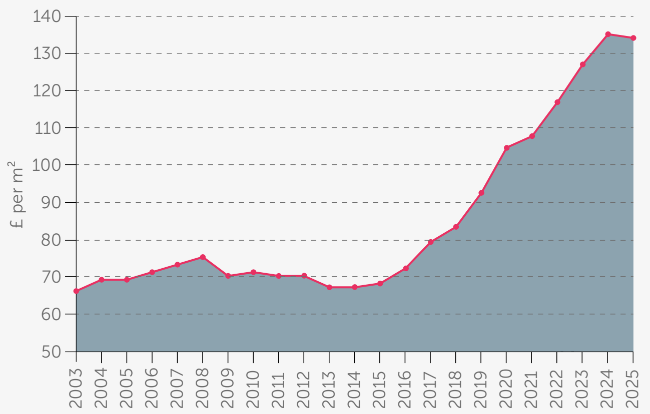
**As previously reported demand remains very strong particularly in Maidstone and Aylesford. This is illustrated by Panattoni's purchase of the 70-acre former Aliaxis site on the A20 between Lenham and Harrietsham** where they will bring forward plans for Panattoni Park Maidstone as a high-quality logistics and distribution development, before the end of 2025.

**Currently under construction is TN2 Gateway, Tunbridge Wells, where Scannell Properties and Royal London Asset Management Property will deliver more than 500,000ft² (46,452m²) of industrial/logistics space comprising nine units within six buildings of 50,000ft² (4,645m²) to**

## 70 acres

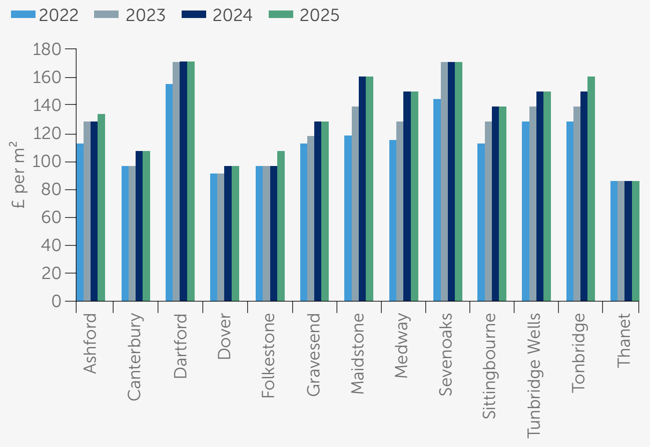
**New site near Lenham purchased by Panattoni in October 2025.**

## Kent average prime industrial and distribution rent




Source: Caxtons

## Industrial and distribution rents




Source: Caxtons

## 500,000ft²

**Under construction at T2, Tunbridge Wells for Scannell and RLAMP.**

GOODMAN

**Crossways 241, Dartford.**

**175,000ft² (16,258m²).** Swanley Distribution Link comprising up to 168,000ft² (15,607m²) now has full planning permission and will be constructed by Goya and funded by Hillwood. In Paddock Wood, Gallagher are constructing units from 3,000ft² (279m²) to 70,000ft² (6,503m²) at The Hop Exchange. Panattoni Sevenoaks are currently seeking planning for their multi-let scheme at Wrotham totalling 132,078ft² (12,394m²) within 6 units. Four units totalling 25,012ft² (2,323m²) are being constructed by Gallagher at Eclipse Park, Maidstone and will complete this year. Tavis House Business Centre in Tunbridge Wells comprises six industrial/warehouse units totalling 88,533ft² (8,225m²) and has seen its first unit let.

**Panattoni Park Sittingbourne's two speculatively developed units of 440,167ft² (40,893m²) and 205,788ft² (19,118m²) have been completed. Phase 2 offering 58,000ft² (5,388m²) is now occupied by DPD. Panattoni Park Aylesford is now fully let, delivering 1.1million ft² of high-quality logistics and distribution space providing 4,000+ jobs on the 90-acre site on the M20 at Aylesford.** Manston House is offering 124,161ft² (16,180.09m²) and Orbital East in Dartford comprising 121,029ft² (11,244m²) has now been refurbished. The former

| LETTINGS | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Location** | **Landlord** | **Tenant** | **Floorspace ft²** | **Rent (pa)** | **Lease term** | **Agent/s** |
| Feb '25 | Unit 2 Click Aylesford | Wrenbridge | Hectic Lifestyles Ltd | 105,152 | £1,472,128 | 15 years | Ryan/CBRE |
| Jul '25 | D4 Bonham Drive, Sittingbourne | Private | Bradley Pulveriser | 18,900 | £226,800 | 10 years | Harrisons |
| Nov '24 | Unit E2 Loc8, Ashford Road, Maidstone | Maidstone Property Holdings Ltd | Technical Fixings Solutions Ltd | 15,339 | £230,085 | 10 years | Caxtons/CBRE |
| May '25 | Unit 1, Learoyd Road, New Romney | Liberon | Wow Tools | 15,109 | £96,000 pa (exc) | 10 year FR&I lease | Sibley Pares |

| SALES | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Location** | **Vendor** | **Purchaser** | **Floorspace ft²** | **Capital value** | **Agent/s** |
| Dec '24 | Castle Road, Eurolink, Sittingbourne | Gallery Direct Ltd | SKF Logistics Services Ltd | 137,725 | £9.25m | Caxtons/CBRE |
| May '25 | 17/18 Decimus Park, Kingstanding Way, T. Wells | Percival Drake Ltd | Oren Properties Ltd | 13,902 | £2.1m | Durlings |

Berkeley Homes building at Crete Hall Road, Northfleet—164,935ft² (15,322m²) is also available.

Unit 5 Dolphin Park, Sittingbourne comprising 30,272ft² (2,812m²) is available to let or purchase and Unit 1 Invicta Riverside, Aylesford is currently being refurbished. Tun 200 comprising 197,276 ft² (18,326ft²) is new to the market this year.

**George Wilson Estates have a number of schemes in for planning permission which when built will result in 303,682ft² (28,213m²) of space becoming available** across three sites in East Kent including a large development of 190,597ft² (17,707m²) at Hawthorn Corner, Herne Bay as well as at Sparrow Way, Lakesview International Business Park, Canterbury, and John Wilson Business Park in Herne Bay.

**There have been a few significant lettings this year including Aviator, Ramsgate—180,021ft² (16,724m²) to Speciality Breads.** In Aylesford, Click, developed by Wrenbridge and Bridges Fund comprising four units totalling 302,844ft² (28,134m²) is now fully let. Aylesford 245 (245,783ft², 22,834m²) was let in October to Must Have Ideas. Tesco has moved from its Snodland distribution centre to Panattoni Park, Aylesford where it pre-let a 621,000ft² (57,693m²) warehouse facility. George Wilson Estates has seen eight lettings across their east Kent business parks including three, each of 5,000ft² (465m²) at John Wilson Business Park.

**Freehold sales include the M&S distribution warehouse at Colebrook Industrial Estate—197,276ft² (18,327m²) quoting £23.8m (£121 per ft²)** and the former GXO Logistics building at Aylesford—245,799ft² (22,835m²) which sold for £34.6m. Also Canterbury 240 at Bridge comprising 240,000ft² (22,515m²) was sold for £16.3m to ICG (Intermediate Capital Group) and immediately occupied.

**Sites offering design and build solutions include Goodman's London Medway Park, Rochester offering land to accommodate over 500,000ft² (46,452m²).** Further east, Phase 2 Waterbrook Park owned by GSE can offer space on their 17.5 acre (7.07ha) site. Yalding Enterprise Park can offer design and build plots up to 500,000ft² (46,452m²) on its 40 acre (16.18ha) site. District Park in Manston can accommodate up to 182,146ft² (16,922m²). There remain a number of Open Storage sites including Marchmont IM's UK fund's Surface Ashford comprising 4.7 acres (1.9ha), 4.14 acres (1.67ha) at Ridham Dock and the former Paramount development on the Swanscombe Peninsula is under offer comprising 372 acres (150ha). The former Recipharm site at Queenborough known as Konnex can offer up to 35 acres. (14.17ha).

There have been few large land sales this year although Buy Whole Foods purchased a site for their own occupation at Whitfield in Dover comprising 4.3 acres (1.74ha) for the construction of a single warehouse. JLL are selling the 5.2 acre (2.1ha) site of a KCC depot in Forstal Road Aylesford, suitable for 'best-in-class industrial accommodation in a prime South East location'.

**There were fewer investment sales this year in the South East, but Kent saw a good proportion of them.** One of the largest UK portfolio sales this year, the Gigha Portfolio, comprises the Deacon Trading Estate, Tonbridge purchased by Chancerygate following a purchase of the Spa Trade Park in Tunbridge Wells for £17.5m and the acquisition of Questor Industrial Estate in Dartford earlier in the year.

**Prime Multi-let Yields have moved in a point to 4.75% Net Initial Yield.** Kent has kept up with the yield shift with Wrenbridge and Bridges Fund Management's Click, Aylesford selling to DWS Group.


**Proposal for an extension to John Wilson Business Park.**

# Retail Performance

# 23%

**Increase in retail rents in Ashford 2024 to 2025.**
Cradicks

# 25 years

**Since Ashford Designer Outlet opened.**

**In 2025, the retail property market is showing signs of resilience and recovery,** with food stores and retail parks continuing to outperform other retail sectors and attracting renewed investment

**Retail sales rose by 0.5% in August 2025, following an increase of 0.6% in July 2025, though quarter on quarter sales were down slightly. Food sales increased 0.4% in August, the first increase since April 2025.**

**While there are challenges such as the possibility of rising business rates for larger retailers, the overall sentiment is positive** with increased investment and a return to rental growth in some sub-sectors. Canterbury and Ashford have seen rental growth of 17% and 23% respectively.

As the high street continues to move towards a new style of retail experience, **many Kent high streets have seen a lot of brand movement, both positive and negative,** as well as more artisanal businesses moving in. Some seaside towns have certainly suffered but there remains some optimism.

The sale of WH Smith has resulted in a re-branding to TG Jones but little change in the retailer's offer. Several high street branches of Costa Coffee have closed and Poundland closed branches in the St George's Centre, Gravesend and Rainham, two of the latest 12 stores to shut across the UK.

**A further threat to the high street could come from the entertainment sector.** For example at Lockmeadow Entertainment Centre in Maidstone, owned by Maidstone Borough Council, space has been let to Cycles UK, previously in the town centre, and Cece's Rainbow Kids Nursery.

**Former Wilko stores have seen a range of new users.** Folkestone's Wilko store closed in 2023, but a new Petticoat Lane Emporium recently opened in 17,000ft² (1,579m²) of the


BLUEWATER

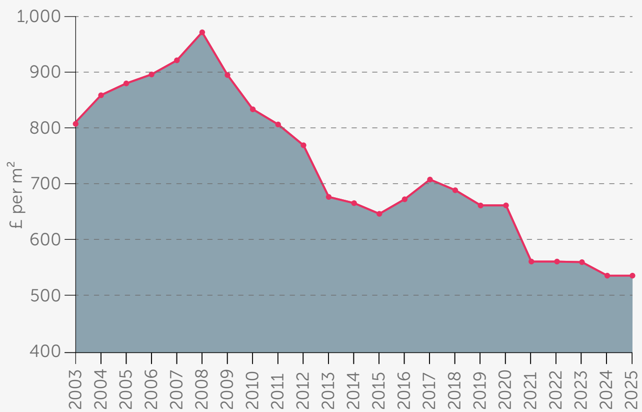
**The new Rituals store at Bluewater.**

ground floor, with 200 traders selling vintage and upcycled goods—along with a café. Mountain Warehouse moved into the former Wilko unit in Canterbury in late summer, and the Westwood Cross branch has been taken over by Superdrug.

**Supermarkets continue to buck the retail trend** with two new Aldi Stores in Ashford and Folkestone's first Aldi store on the old site of Silver Springs. Supermarkets continue their land grab with requirements for new stores throughout the county.

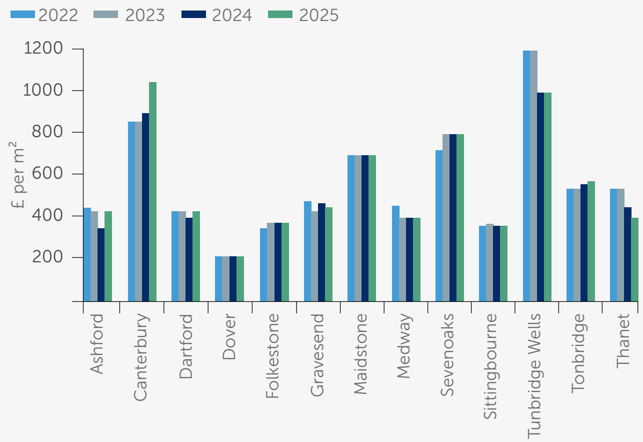
**Bluewater demonstrates strong leasing performance, with 20 plus new brands joining in the past year,** including Sephora, and HARIBO's first UK full-price store, alongside dining options like Pho. Sales and footfall remain strong, ahead of national benchmarks, and investment is robust, with enhancements to facilities and external areas. Brand partners are investing, with significant upsizes and relocations by Superdrug, JD Sports, OFFICE, and Rituals, reflecting sustained confidence in Bluewater's prime retail status.

### Kent average prime retail rent




Source: Cradick Retail

### High Street Zone A retail rents




Source: Cradick Retail

| LETTINGS | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | Location | Landlord | Tenant | Floorspace ft² | Rent (pa) | Lease term | Agent/s |
| May '25 | Unit 1 Rainham Shopping Centre, | DVS Property Limited | GJ Bargains Ltd | 8,161 | £60,000 | 10 years | Harrisons |
| April '25 | 33 High Street, Tunbridge Wells | Centrepoint Ltd | Neatsmith (S. London) LLP | 2,718 | £75,000 | 15 years | Durlings |
| April '25 | 34 Canterbury Road, Hawkinge | Private | Private | 1,480 | £17,500 | 3 years | Smith Woolley |

| SALES | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | Location | Vendor | Purchaser | Floorspace ft² | Capital value | Agent/s |
| Jan '25 | 124-128 High Street, Sittingbourne | Millennium Two General Partner Ltd | Net Church Dartford Limited | 38,872 | £1,450,000 | Harrisons |
| Mar '25 | 49a St Peters Street, Canterbury | Private Landlord | Sekkoya | 2,021 | £500,000 | Sibley Pares |
| Nov '24 | 63 High Street, Ashford | Peggy Tyley Ltd | Mumtaz and Rashid | 1,013 | £175,000 | Stafford Perkins |

**Ashford Designer Outlet celebrate their 25th anniversary in 2025, on the back of a record-breaking year in 2024.** New stores include Only, Slim Chickens, Castore and Christy's. Jack Wills will be closing and be replaced by a Cadburys shop, the only one in Kent.

**There has been a mixed picture for shopping centres which have seen repurposing in some towns.** As it marks its 50th anniversary, the Pentagon in Chatham which is owned by Medway Council, is being revitalised with its top floor being transformed into a state-of-the-art healthy living centre expected to open in late 2025. This follows the opening of new mixed co-working and private office space in 2024.

Canterbury's Whitefriars Shopping Centre has seen Space NK and ProCook replace HMV. Quiz has closed 23 stores across the country including the Maidstone branch in Fremlin Walk, but the latter is seeing a resurgence with Søstrene Grene, Home Store and Holland and Barrett taking units vacated by Laura Ashley, Zara and Quiz.

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is to spend up to £68m on a major redesign of the Royal Victoria Place shopping centre,** of which it has owned the leasehold since 2023. The centre has 388,000ft² (36,046m²) of lettable floor space across 147 units on three floors with a vacancy rate of around 18%. The plans include a boutique cinema and leisure-led uses on Ely Court, a repurposed Palm Court that will include enhanced retail space, and housing on Market Square.

**The Forum shopping centre in Sittingbourne was purchased by Vanguard Properties UK Ltd from former owner Praxis in December 2024 for £2.4m.** The project's main focus is boosting footfall by bringing in more food and beverage outlets. One new hot food store opened recently and a large national chain is interested in the former home to Somerfield, empty since 2022. The project is expected to cost £6 to £7m and take several years to complete.

**Retail parks have seen a lot of change with Homebase going into liquidation.** The Range has taken over the premises at Sevenoaks Retail Park and B&M opened at the former store in Tunbridge Wells in May, as well as at Horsted Park, near Chatham. Some branches of Hobbycraft, including the one at Riverside Retail Park in Canterbury have closed, while other branches remain open.

**At Drovers Way retail park in Fougeres Way, Ashford, plans for the enlargement of the site have been approved,** and include a Costa Drive-Thru and six large shops, one of which will be Home Bargains. Plans were approved by Ashford Borough Council in 2018 but work has kick-started in recent months.

**Property investment trust Supermarket Income REIT has bought the Crooksfoot Tesco Extra in Willesborough, Ashford.** The deal, worth £54.1m, includes the 93,000ft² (8,640m²) store and the petrol station spread over 8.2 acres. The company already owns the Bybrook Sainsbury's store in Ashford. The deal is expected to net an annual yield of 7% and comes with an unexpired lease term of nine years.

**The Government has pledged to reform retail business rates to produce a system that is fairer to bricks-and-mortar retailers.** Instead, there are indications that the business rates on large retailers may increase, and that is adding to the angst of retailers already coping with other tax increases.

**High street Investment yields remain at 10 % for the second year running, while shopping centres have moved in slightly from 9.5% to 9% for regional schemes. Retail parks again fared slightly better than last year at 5.5 % to 6% with food stores similarly moving in from 4.75 % to 4.5%.**

**Your Space Sevenoaks Ltd have purchased 31-29 London Road, Sevenoaks for £3m, the mixed-use property comprised of 14,099ft² (1,311m²) NIA.**

CAXTONS

**Søstrene Grenes new store in Fremlin Walk, Maidstone.**

# Rural Performance

savills

### Arable land sales dominate supply of farmland

Arable land sales have dominated the supply of farmland marketed during the first half of the year. Meanwhile, land values have remained stable, with a small increase of 1.8% seen in the South East over the same period. Supply overall was 15% lower in Great Britain during the first half of 2025, than for the first half of last year, according to Savills analysis.

In the South East, 10,503 acres (4,250ha) were marketed in the first six months of 2025, the second largest amount marketed during the first half of the year for the previous eight years, surpassed only by the 12,265 acres (4,964ha) marketed during the same period in 2024.

During H1 2025, 49% of the acreage launched across Great Britain was farms that are predominantly arable enterprises compared to the 10-year average of 37%. In total, the arable farms marketed in H1 2025 cover 41,600 acres (16,835ha), which is the most since 2015; the average for the intervening nine years is 27,800 acres (11,250ha). Meanwhile, dairying land across Great Britain is consistently at 4-5% of the market, while livestock and mixed farms currently account for a smaller proportion of the land marketed.

Andrew Teanby, Director of Savills rural research comments, "The performance of 'corn' versus 'horn' appears to be influencing the types of property marketed and how these launches are received by potential buyers.

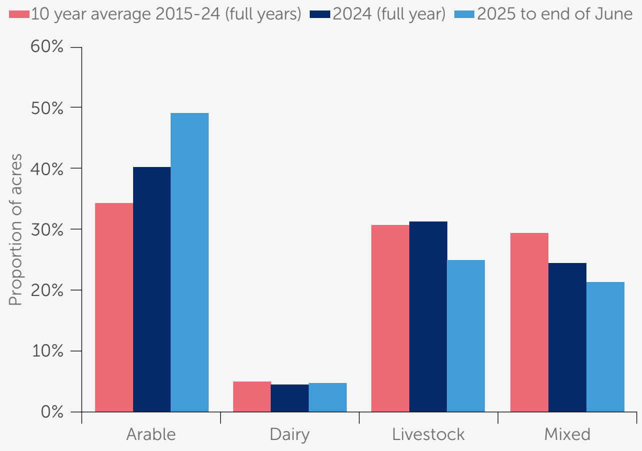
"Our analysis shows that currently arable land accounts for a much higher proportion of the market than usual. Beef and lamb prices are presently high, while cereal prices have fallen by 14% over the past 18 months, and margins for combinable crops are currently low. This, coupled with the sharp reductions in delinked payments for 2025 and 2026, could be prompting arable farmers to evaluate their options, potentially leading to some sales."

# 10,503 acres

**Farmland marketed in the South East during the first half of 2025.**

Savills Research

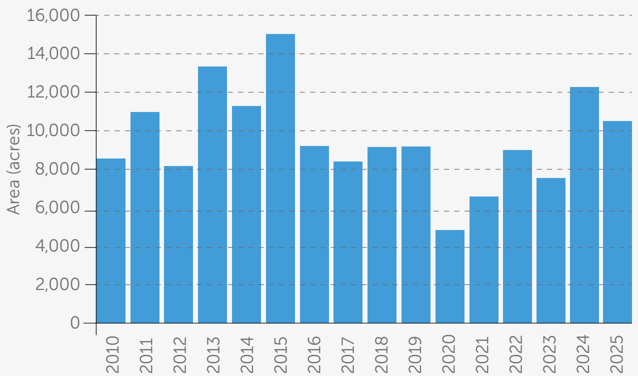
### Farmland type marketed across Great Britain




Source: Savills Research

### Publicly marketed farmland supply (to end H1, all years)

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex




Source: Savills Research

Chris Spofforth, Savills head of rural agency in the South East, says: "The dominance of arable land transactions in the south during the first half of 2025 highlights continued demand for productive farmland. Equally, we are still seeing demand for more modest parcels of farmland, whether arable or livestock. Notably, the volume of land marketed in the South East—though down from 2024—still surpasses levels seen in a number of years, and the number of successful sales so far this year indicates a sustained appetite for land across the region."

"Land values have remained largely stable, with a modest uplift in the South East, suggesting resilience in the market. Pricing has become more acutely driven by individual circumstances, principally quality of land, buildings and infrastructure, and location. The presence—or absence—of high-quality infrastructure is playing a more prominent role in determining the strength of buyer interest."

"There are some very well-funded buyers for 'the right thing', but they have often become increasingly discerning."

### The outlook

The dry weather led to an early harvest in 2025, and although yields have been affected, early reports suggested they are often exceeding expectations, so sentiment and demand for all types of arable land may well improve. There are numerous policy changes underway that affect farmers, including the inheritance tax reform legislation, all of which is bound to influence the farmland market.

**Chris Spofforth**
Savills head of rural agency in the South East

**Land at Wrotham, Kent—102 acres with a guide price of £925,000. It is currently under offer.**
SAVILLS

# Residential Performance

**Sentiments among housebuilders and house buyers during late 2024 and the first three quarters of 2025 could best be described as cautious.** The reduction in interest rates and consequential drop in mortgage interest rates, along with more flexible affordability assessments has been a positive, but the cost of living is still high and the prospect of new taxes for properties over £500,000 in the autumn budget has to some extent, countered this.

**The latest RICS Residential Market Survey for August shows that there has been a continued slowdown in house sales, and new buyer enquiries have fallen for a second month.** Zoopla reports that one in 10 homes listed had been reduced, above the five-year average of 6% of homes. This is reflected in Kent where demand is still good, but pricing needs to be realistic. Buyers are being cautious and pragmatic. Kent continues to benefit from buyers from London with grammar schools still a major draw, more so since VAT was added to private school fees. As more people return to working at the office, locations close to stations are especially desirable.

**In September, Halifax and Nationwide were at odds about changes to UK house prices. Nationwide data shows UK house prices increased by 0.5%, but Halifax showed them decreasing by 0.3% month on month.**

**Analysis of Land Registry figures shows that Kent house prices have decreased by an average of 5%,** compared with 7% in the South East and 10% in England and Wales. The decreases vary by district, from 1% to 9%, with only Folkestone and Hythe showing no change, and prices increasing by 1% in both Dartford and Gravesham.

**Residential new build sales prices per square foot have decreased across most areas of Kent and increased only slightly in Gravesham and Medway.** This mirrors the finding of Zoopla mentioned above, showing that keen pricing is key to a sale. It could also, in some cases, reflect more smaller properties being built.

5%

**Decrease in average house prices in Kent, Q2 2024 to Q2, 2025.**
Land Registry


EBBSFLEET DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

**The award winning Ashmere neighbourhood, Ebbsfleet Garden City.**

According to The Guardian, UK housing stock has increased 9% over the last decade to 2025. Looking further back though, Government figures show that **between 2004 and 2024, the number of new houses sold annually in Kent reduced from 3,723 to 1,138, a 70% decrease.** Bellway recently reported total housing completions of 8,749 homes for the financial year to July 31, 2025, a 14% increase from the previous year's 7,654 homes, though other housebuilders such as Barratt Redrow are predicting a fall from last year.

**Nutrient neutrality continues to challenge housebuilders and hold back construction of homes in east Kent,** despite Natural England reducing the size of the Stodmarsh catchment area. Until recently the main solution was to build a wastewater recycling centre on site, only viable for large developments. However, the principle of nutrient mitigation credit was established in 2024, and Stour Environmental Credits Ltd-a joint venture between Ashford and Canterbury councils has enabled these councils to use this scheme to bring forward previously stalled housing developments. Hopefully other schemes will soon enable more stalled developments to be progressed.

**Average residential new build sales value range**
by local authority area

| | New build average price achieved (£/ft²) Houses & Apartments | |
|---|---|---|
| **Location** | **July 2024** | **Sep 2025** |
| Ashford | £350—£475 | £332—£450 |
| Canterbury | £400—£650 | £380—£620 |
| Dartford | £400—£610 | £400—£580 |
| Dover | £325—£450 | £305—£415 |
| Folkestone and Hythe | £355—£750 | £355—£750 |
| Gravesham | £395—£550 | £400—£560 |
| Maidstone | £320—£575 | £330—£575 |
| Medway | £320—£475 | £335—£490 |
| Sevenoaks | £575—£850 | £565—£830 |
| Swale | £320—£475 | £315—£460 |
| Thanet | £350—£575 | £330—£555 |
| Tonbridge and Malling | £425—£675 | £420—£655 |
| Tunbridge Wells | £500—£825 | £480—£800 |

Source: RPC Land & New Homes

**The Government has pledged that 1.5 million new homes will be built over the next five years,** and to help facilitate this they are making changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), re-introducing mandatory housing targets and encouraging the use of land in the 'grey belt' for housing. The NPPF changes are positive but are not yet showing any difference in approval numbers and obtaining planning permission is slow.

**There are more and more greybelt decisions coming through in Kent which would not have done so without the NPPF changes.** Kent's first 'grey belt' planning success saw the Planning Inspectorate grant permission for Dandara to develop 57 new homes, a new children's nursery and pre-school on former horticultural and nursery land on the edge of Hadlow near Tonbridge. This key decision provides an interesting precedent for how the new Green Belt and Grey Belt rules will be interpreted.

**Despite various challenges, especially to gaining planning permission, schemes are still being approved, started and completed.** At Ebbsfleet Garden City, 648 homes have been completed in the last year, bringing the total to more than 5,000. The Housing Design award-winning Ashmere neighbourhood is being built out by Countryside Properties and is a high-spec sustainable development of flats and houses of different sizes and tenures.

Quinn Homes continue to be active in east Kent, with the first phase of Grove Park, Sellindge,—Kent's largest EPC 'A' rated development, sold out and a second phase commencing in late 2025. The company have also released the final phase of the award-winning Pottery Grove development in Deal and The Potter's Building, Deal—a medallist at the 2024 WhatHouse? Awards, has been completed.

Plans for 739 homes on adjacent sites on the edge of Whitfield near Dover—309 homes by Pentland and 430 homes by Danescroft have been approved. The first phase of a large 1,400-home village next to Westwood Cross shopping and entertainment complex has also been given the green light. The first stage is known as Westwood Village One and includes 900 homes and a primary school, alongside new community facilities and shops. The first 449 homes for The Riverside Housing Association can now go ahead, with 100% affordable homes—157 for social rent and 292 shared ownership. The development will benefit from renewable power generation, be energy efficient and low cost to run, and have bike storage and EV charging points.

Some proposed housing developments continue to be controversial. The Duchy of Cornwall hopes to erect 2,500 homes, to be known as South East Faversham, on land near Brenley Corner, between the M2 and A2, and 240a (97ha) of land north of the University of Kent's main campus is being promoted through the Canterbury local plan, and is for sale.

**Housebuilders are showing renewed interest in obtaining development land, especially smaller sites.**

**Demand for later living homes continue.** The long-awaited Paramount Place, the new Retirement Villages Group development on the site of the former ABC Cinema in Tunbridge Wells has topped out, with 167 apartments with community facilities expected by the end of summer 2026. This follows the opening of The Beckett on St Johns Road, a retirement complex of 89 apartments delivered by Elysian. Near Whitstable, consent has been granted for the delivery by Aspire of a 65 bedroom care home on land previously owned by Quinn Estates and George Wilson Holdings.

**Landlords and renters still face challenges.** According to Paragon Bank, a decline in landlord instructions noted by surveyors is evidence that supply is failing to meet the continuing demand for privately rented homes. Further rent increases are also anticipated, a primary symptom of the imbalance between supply and demand. The Renters Reform Bill is aimed at improving things for tenants, but the Bill may well have unintended consequences. Many landlords are selling up as a result of this and many other factors that are creating a difficult landscape for landlords.

**Looking ahead, according to the RICS, house sales are expected to remain broadly flat in the coming three months with a largely stagnant picture over the next year.** There is then predicted to be sustained growth through 2027/8, with residential building rebounding by about 7%.

**House price change in Kent, South East and England and Wales to end Q2, 2025**

| Location | Change Q2 2024 to Q2 2025 | Average price Q2 2024 | Average price Q2 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ashford | -7% | £402,443 | £372,421 |
| Canterbury | -9% | £393,271 | £356,772 |
| Dartford | 1% | £370,638 | £373,796 |
| Dover | -1% | £323,059 | £319,465 |
| Folkestone and Hythe | 0% | £319,110 | £318,936 |
| Gravesham | 1% | £370,570 | £375,207 |
| Maidstone | -7% | £391,215 | £365,744 |
| Medway | -2% | £329,433 | £322,495 |
| Sevenoaks | -7% | £584,862 | £545,627 |
| Swale | -9% | £334,015 | £305,586 |
| Thanet | -1% | £304,098 | £301,557 |
| Tonbridge and Malling | -3% | £452,618 | £437,379 |
| Tunbridge Wells | -7% | £523,997 | £487,542 |
| Kent | -5% | £394,445 | £374,931 |
| South East | -7% | £449,721 | £415,995 |
| England and Wales | -10% | £363,296 | £327,281 |

Source: Land Registry

QUINN ESTATES

Grove Park, Sellindge.

# Inward investment

## Accelerated growth: building resilience, driving investment

Kent has long been recognised as the South East's gateway to the UK, strategically positioned between London and Europe. In 2025, this advantage is sharper than ever. Against a backdrop of ongoing national economic uncertainty, Kent and Medway have demonstrated resilience, strong inward investment flows, and above-trend growth across logistics, manufacturing, and advanced industries.

**Property demand**

In August, Locate in Kent's Property Portal showed that there were almost 73,000 searches of individual properties and parcels of land between August 2024 and July 2025, reflecting sustained business interest in locating or expanding within the county. This demand was broad-based, covering office, industrial, commercial, co-working opportunities and land, with industrial space accounting for more than half of all searches.

**1,200**

**Number of industrial properties and sites available in 2024/25.**
Locate in Kent

**390**

**Planning consents for industrial uses, 2023/25.**
Locate in Kent

Between August 2024 and July 2025:

- Across all types of property, searches were strongest for 'All of Kent' (39,091), but with higher volumes in east Kent (13,311) and north Kent (10,976) than elsewhere. Having said that, there was occupier and investor interest across all areas of Kent.
- Industrial properties were the most popular, followed by land. This reflects a structural shift: businesses are not just looking for existing units, but for land where they can create tailored, future-proof facilities.
- There were 4,071 searches on co-working opportunities showing the importance of this style of work, as seen in the office section of this report.

The data highlights a **resilient industrial market across Kent and Medway.**

Between August 2023 and July 2025, **390 planning consents** were led by Maidstone, Swale and Ashford, confirming strong development pipelines. Notwithstanding the dominance of the districts listed above, there has been a clear increase in the number of industrial consents across the three east Kent districts.

**Industrial availability has edged up** slightly, to over 1,200 properties and sites, with the largest concentrations in Maidstone and Ashford which both have at least 50% more sites available than any other area of Kent. While **lettings fell from 216 in 2023/24 to 121 in 2024/25,** activity remained broad-based, with Medway, Tonbridge & Malling and Maidstone leading take-up.

Together, the figures show a market where supply is gradually expanding, supported by consistent planning approvals, but with leasing activity reflecting wider economic caution.

**Planning consents for industrial classes—year on year**
1 August 2023 to 31 July 2025

| District | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ashford | 23 | 20 | 43 |
| Canterbury | 8 | 17 | 25 |
| Dartford | 5 | 10 | 15 |
| Dover | 10 | 13 | 23 |
| Folkestone & Hythe | 13 | 16 | 29 |
| Gravesham | 8 | 13 | 21 |
| Maidstone | 29 | 25 | 54 |
| Medway | 15 | 7 | 22 |
| Sevenoaks | 10 | 12 | 22 |
| Swale | 29 | 19 | 48 |
| Thanet | 22 | 13 | 35 |
| Tonbridge & Malling | 11 | 13 | 24 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 17 | 12 | 29 |
| **Total** | **200** | **190** | **390** |

Source: Searchland

**Kent industrial availability—year on year by no. of sites**
1 August 2023 to 31 July 2025

| District | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
|---|---|---|
| Ashford | 125 | 145 |
| Canterbury | 119 | 98 |
| Dartford | 82 | 74 |
| Dover | 28 | 28 |
| Folkestone & Hythe | 58 | 83 |
| Gravesham | 41 | 32 |
| Maidstone | 180 | 149 |
| Medway | 112 | 109 |
| Sevenoaks | 52 | 57 |
| Swale | 101 | 112 |
| Thanet | 90 | 95 |
| Tonbridge & Malling | 106 | 119 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 86 | 107 |
| **Total** | **1,180** | **1,208** |

Source: Evolutive

**Kent industrial lettings by district—year on year**
1 August 2023 to 31 July 2025

| District | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ashford | 22 | 13 | 35 |
| Canterbury | 14 | 5 | 19 |
| Dartford | 23 | 5 | 28 |
| Dover | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Folkestone & Hythe | | 2 | 2 |
| Gravesham | 15 | 2 | 17 |
| Maidstone | 31 | 23 | 54 |
| Medway | 46 | 20 | 66 |
| Sevenoaks | 10 | 4 | 14 |
| Swale | 8 | 12 | 20 |
| Thanet | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Tonbridge & Malling | 32 | 26 | 58 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 11 | 4 | 15 |
| **Total** | **216** | **121** | **337** |

Source: Searchland

**Trends: what investors want**
While demand is strong, the expectations of investors and occupiers are evolving. Businesses are no longer seeking standard warehouse or factory units—they want facilities that are sustainable, efficient, and adaptable.

Green facilities
- EV charging infrastructure for both staff and delivery vehicles is increasingly a baseline expectation.
- Developers are building sustainable facilities and retrofitting existing stock with green amenities to meet corporate sustainability commitments.

Energy efficiency and power supply
- Partly due to high energy costs, energy-efficient buildings are no longer 'nice-to-have' but essential, especially in power-intensive manufacturing.
- Secure, scalable power supply is a critical consideration for investors, particularly as AI-driven automation increases energy needs.
- Energy efficacy is key, requiring landlords to have a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E (and aiming for C and B by 2027 and 2030, respectively) for non-domestic rented properties. This applies to both new and existing tenancies, and properties must have a valid EPC when they are built, sold, or rented.

Automation & robotics
- To stay competitive in a global market, manufacturing occupiers want sites that can support AI-driven robotics, advanced automation, and digital twin technologies.
- Ceiling heights, floor loading, and flexible layouts are becoming non-negotiable factors for logistics operators introducing automated picking and inventory systems.

Location flexibility
- Proximity to labour markets remains vital. Sites near Kent's towns and universities attract occupiers seeking both skilled and semi-skilled workers.
- Connectivity to London, the ports, and in the future, airfreight at Manston further increases location desirability.

These trends underline a more sophisticated demand profile: inward investors are seeking resilient, green, and technologically enabled assets rather than simply location and square footage.

**The rise of hybrid working**
Coworking searches on the Locate in Kent property portal reached 4,071 between August 2024 and July 2025—almost double the figure recorded the previous year. This surge underscores the continuing popularity of hybrid working, as businesses balance the need for professional office environments with flexible, employee-friendly arrangements.

Demand has been particularly strong from SMEs and larger corporates seeking satellite spaces outside London. The trend is reflected in new investment activity: providers such as IWG/Regus have expanded their footprint across Kent, opening new sites to meet rising demand. This growth in coworking and flexible office solutions highlights how Kent's property market is diversifying alongside its industrial and logistics strength, positioning the county to support a wide spectrum of occupiers.

**The future: growth into 2026 and beyond**
Looking forward, Kent and Medway are well-placed to deliver accelerated growth. Several transformational projects will underpin the county's ability to attract new investment in the years ahead.

Infrastructure catalysts
- **Lower Thames Crossing (LTC):** Once operational, LTC will dramatically enhance connectivity between Kent, Essex, and the rest of the UK, reducing congestion at Dartford and encouraging further logistics investment.
- **Manston Airport:** Manston is expected to attract logistics, perishables, and high-value manufacturing supply chains seeking direct access to European and global markets.
- **Ports & Freeports:** Continued investment in the Port of Dover and Thames Freeport will provide businesses with enhanced customs efficiencies and supply chain resilience.

Sectoral opportunities
- **Advanced manufacturing** in food innovation, life sciences, and pharmaceuticals will remain key growth areas, supported by Kent's research institutions and proximity to London's innovation ecosystem.
- **Logistics and distribution** will continue to expand, with demand spreading further east as supply constraints in mid and north Kent increase.
- **Green energy and sustainability:** Kent's offshore wind expertise and growing investment in renewable infrastructure will reinforce the county's reputation as a low-carbon investment destination.


KENT SCIENCE PARK

**Kent Science Park, near Sittingbourne.**

**Sustainability and innovation**
The county is seeing accelerated investment in grade-A, net-zero-aligned logistics and manufacturing facilities, with developers such as Panattoni, Scannell, Goodmans, Clearbell, Bericote and Wrenbridge delivering schemes designed to meet ESG commitments. This trend is supported by demand from logistics, manufacturing and agri-tech companies seeking future-proof, energy-efficient space.

Innovation hubs, including Discovery Park, Maidstone Innovation Centre, Innovation Park Medway and Kent Science Park continue to attract cutting-edge businesses in pharmaceuticals, advanced manufacturing and food-tech.

**Conclusion**
Kent's commercial property market shows no signs of slowing, with momentum underpinned by sustained demand for future-proof facilities, limited supply, and the county's growing role in national and international trade. Investors and developers continue to be attracted by excellent and improving connectivity, a skilled workforce, population growth, and sectoral innovation. By 2026 and beyond, the county is expected to outpace national averages in both property demand and economic growth.

**For further information contact:**
*steve.samson@kent.gov.uk*

# Infrastructure and Regeneration

## North Kent

### DARTFORD

**A town centre in transformation**

Dartford is a dynamic borough that is attracting significant business investment and many new residents and workers. It is in the heart of the Thames Estuary growth area, at a pivotal point between Greater London, Kent and Essex. Flourishing and vibrant, the Census confirmed that Dartford's population is the second fastest growing in England with a 20% increase 2011-2021, and that uniquely in the region, it's getting younger (average age 37.2 years).

Dartford town centre is cementing its place as one of Kent's most ambitious growth locations, with new housing, leisure, and public realm projects combining to reshape the town and attract fresh investment.

The story began with Weston Homes' Mill Pond scheme, which marked the first major step in bringing high-quality residential development into the heart of Dartford. This was followed by Bellway's landmark regeneration of Lowfield Street, where a once-vacant stretch of the High Street is being transformed into a thriving new neighbourhood, with planning permission for over 700 units, 371 of which have been occupied and work has recently commenced on the final phase. The development not only delivered hundreds of homes but also re-establishes direct links into Central Park, knitting the site back into the fabric of the town. Together, the Weston and Bellway schemes have drawn new residents into Dartford and created the critical mass needed to support local shops, cafés, and services.

Now the focus turns to the Westgate site, the next chapter in Dartford's regeneration story and one of the Council's most significant projects to date. Importantly, this is a Council-led scheme, with design work by Peter Barber Architects, ensuring that local priorities shape the outcome. The emerging masterplan promotes lower-rise, family-sized housing in a street-based layout, combined with flexible commercial, leisure, and cultural uses. This approach deliberately contrasts with past developer proposals that prioritised height and density over liveability.


**Bellway Development, Lowfield Street, Dartford.**

Dartford is also investing heavily in the spaces that connect people and places. Public realm improvements along the High Street and throughout the core town centre streets are enhancing the environment for businesses and visitors, while continued upgrades to Central Park are reinforcing its role as Dartford's much-loved green heart—a place where town-centre living and open space meet.

The Council has also funded the temporary theatre 'Orchard West' whilst the original Orchard Theatre undergoes repair works, in order to support the arts and the nighttime economy, both important economic drivers in the town. Just east of the town centre, the growth of Stone continues with nearly 800 new homes moving forward rapidly at Knights Reach. The development is supporting a major upgrade to the adjoining recreation ground, which is being transformed through adding 167 trees, meadows, and a range of new outdoor sports and leisure facilities.

Dartford's appeal is not limited to housing and new green spaces. The town is also attracting major economic development investment, with Amazon establishing a state-of-the-art distribution centre on the former Littlebrook Power Station site. At the same time, ambitious proposals are advancing next to Ebbsfleet International Station, where a large mixed-use scheme is set to deliver more than 2,000 new homes alongside up to 1,076,391ft$^2$ (100,000m$^2$) of business floorspace. Together, these projects are expected to create a high-quality urban hub, supported by significant new infrastructure and long-term investment in the area.

**For further information:**
www.dartford.gov.uk


**Weston Homes' Mill Pond scheme, Dartford.**

## EBBSFLEET GARDEN CITY

The number of homes delivered in Ebbsfleet Garden City has now surpassed 5,000, with 1,593 of them affordable, and 648 completed in 2024/25. In addition, 6,307 homes have detailed planning consent.

At the heart of every great place is a strong community, and in Weldon, one of Ebbsfleet's newest neighbourhoods, two unique buildings are taking shape, spaces designed not just to serve local residents, but to bring people together. Backed by over £13m of investment from Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, these facilities are a bold statement of intent—showing that while property drives regeneration, it's people who truly bring places to life.

Working closely with housebuilder Barratt Redrow, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) has provided additional funding to support enhancements to two community buildings in the Weldon neighbourhood, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to delivering high quality facilities, amenities and placemaking across Ebbsfleet.

Through various studies and public consultations, the Corporation, alongside Barratt Redrow, identified opportunities to enhance facilities required under the developer's section 106 Agreement to provide exemplary amenities in the heart of the neighbourhood. The strategic location of the two community buildings ensures that residents from surrounding neighbourhoods will be able to easily access and enjoy the premises' offerings.

The buildings are constructed using Cross Laminated Timber and designed to achieve BREEAM Outstanding, the highest level of sustainable building performance:

**Weldon Heart**—a 2,626ft$^2$ (244m$^2$) single storey building, set within a generous area of public landscape and adjacent to a new play space. This building will provide residents with flexible amenities to come together and meet, with the space designed to respond to different activities and needs of users. Meeting facilities, along with IT equipment and a village tool store, will be provided to enhance the experience and offering of the space.

EBBSFLEET DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

**Weldon Heart, Ebbsfleet Garden City.**


AFL ARCHITECTS

**Proposal for the Weldon Wellbeing Pavilion.**

**Weldon Wellbeing Pavilion**—a 10,904ft$^2$ (1,013m$^2$) two storey building providing an inviting venue with multi-use sports hall, changing and welfare amenities, a gym, managed reception, and café. A new FA standard 3G sports pitch, tennis courts, play space and parking will sit alongside the Pavilion and be available for use by residents and visitors to the area.

Upon completion, ownership of the new facilities will be transferred to Ebbsfleet Garden City Trust, a resident and stakeholder led independent charitable Trust established by EDC to provide a long-term stewardship arrangement within Ebbsfleet. The Trust will manage and maintain them in the long term and they have appointed Freedom Leisure to provide the day-to-day management and operation of the Wellbeing Pavilion.

With construction continuing at pace, the two buildings will be open to the public by winter 2025. As the community buildings continue to take shape, Weldon Heart and the Wellbeing Pavilion will give residents more than places to gather, they'll offer the chance to build connections, create memories, and shape the identity of their neighbourhood. By investing into local facilities, EDC has ensured that vital infrastructure is delivered alongside the community—not years after. With 5,000 homes now complete across the Ebbsfleet Garden City scheme, this investment is a proactive approach that puts people at the centre of regeneration, and a reminder that true development is about more than just delivering homes—it's about creating spaces where people genuinely want to live, thrive and belong.

**Infrastructure and Regeneration**
Continued

## GRAVESHAM

Gravesham is situated in the heart of the Thames Estuary—a gateway to London, the estuary and Kent. The borough is well-placed to benefit from major infrastructure and regeneration projects, in development and in the pipeline. It has 11km of Thames riverfront and excellent transport links to London and the South East—HS1 rail services (23 minutes to Central London and 17 minutes to Stratford International) and the prospect of rapid river transport via Uber Boats by Thames Clippers.

The Fastrack bus route between Northfleet Embankment and Gravesend Town Centre has received new investment to improve journey times and to add additional bus stops to service existing residents and those from new developments such as Clifton Slipways, The Charter and Northfleet Embankment.

A decision on financing for a Lower Thames Crossing is expected in 2026.

### New business space

In response to continuing changes on the High Street, the council has initiated a programme of improvements to the St George's Centre in Gravesend. A new Tech Hub and flexible workspace is set to open in 2026. 8,500ft$^2$ (790m$^2$) of high-spec flexible workspace, meeting and networking space will provide a focus for enterprise, remote working and the town's growing creative and digital sectors.

### New leisure centre

A pre-contract agreement was signed with Wilmott Dixon in September 2025, for the delivery of a £42.9m new Cascades Leisure Centre in Gravesend. Plans include a 25m swimming pool, a 17m learner pool, aqua play and water flume facilities, plus a dedicated spectator viewing area. The ground floor will also feature a six-court sports hall with tiered seating, a soft play zone, party and community rooms, and a café.

### Place making on Gravesham Riverside

Northfleet Harbourside has received outline planning permission for a 50 acre (20.2ha) new neighbourhood with Ebbsfleet United Football Club at its heart. The proposals include a new multi-purpose 8,000 capacity stadium with improved facilities and function space for Ebbsfleet United, 3,000 jobs, parklands and green public spaces, shops, food and beverage outlets, and 3,500 new homes.

The Charter is a pioneering partnership between Rosherville, the Council's wholly owned company, and developers Reef Group, of 242 new build-to-rent homes on Gravesend riverside. The scheme is now well progressed and due to complete in early 2026.

With the recent addition of trial Uber Boat by Thames Clippers services from Gravesend Pier, St Andrew's Gardens is poised to become a key gateway to the town. The revitalised gardens will provide a welcoming first impression for visitors arriving by river. Gravesham Borough Council is investing in a multi-phased landscape project using dedicated Section 106 funding.

Developing Gravesham's visitor economy is a key focus, by shifting the centre of gravity of the town back to the river and encouraging an independent retail offer on the historic High Street of small businesses, artisan makers, tap-rooms and restaurants.

The first scheme to be built by Gravesham Community Investment Partnership will be a scheme of 85 residential units at Milton Road in the town centre, within a local conservation area. 80% of the dwellings will be designated affordable housing

**For further information:**
*Economic.development@gravesham.gov.uk*

UNSTUDIO

**Proposal for Northfleet Harbourside, Gravesend Riverside.**

## MAIDSTONE

### Maidstone: a prime location for business and investment

Strategically positioned in the heart of Kent, Maidstone offers direct access to both London and mainland Europe. As the county town and second-largest economy in Kent, Maidstone is home to over 8,000 businesses, ranging from international corporations to high-growth SMEs and niche independents. Key sector strengths include engineering, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, professional services, and the creative industries.

The recently adopted Local Plan Review (2024) sets out the delivery of 13,200 new jobs and 20,000 homes by 2038, including three major Garden Communities at Invicta Barracks, Heathlands, and Lidsing. These developments offer significant opportunities in construction, infrastructure, and long-term commercial investment. The first to come forward, Lidsing, will deliver 35 acres (14ha) of commercial land and 5,000 homes, with outline planning expected to be submitted by the end of 2025.

### Commercial update

#### Kent Medical Campus

Located on Kent Medical Campus, Maidstone Innovation Centre (MIC) is a £14.5m investment by Maidstone Borough Council and the European Regional Development Fund. Located on the Kent Medical Campus off Junction 7 of the M20, the 30,000ft$^2$ (2,782m$^2$) facility drives growth in MedTech, life sciences and healthcare. MIC provides advanced technology, flexible office and lab space, high-spec meeting rooms and tailored business support. To improve access to the site Kent County Council started construction work on the A249 Bearsted Road improvement scheme on the 18 August 2025, following the award of the £10.8m contract to Breheny Civil Engineering Ltd.

#### LOC8

Clearbell Property Partners acquired the 33 acre LOC8 site off Junction 8 of the M20 in 2019, now Maidstone's premier commercial park. Offering logistics and industrial units from 4,004–58,833ft$^2$ (372 to 5,466m$^2$) and offices from 11,141ft$^2$ (1,035m$^2$) the first phase is fully let. Phase Two, completed in 2025 is 50% let.

**For further information:**
https://loc8maidstone.co.uk

#### Yalding Enterprise Park

Located on the former Syngenta agro-chemical works, in the south of the borough, opposite Yalding train station, this site is 0.5 miles from the A228 and seven miles from junctions 2 and 4 of the M20/M26.

Phase One completed in the spring of 2025, delivering a total of 93,750ft$^2$ (8,710m$^2$) of space. The site is already attracting occupiers with 30% of the units already let, sold or under offer with virtual leasehold and, as a unique selling point, freehold options. A further three phases of development are now planned and will extend the size of the park by a combined 666,250ft$^2$ (61,897m$^2$).

#### Eclipse Park

Available from quarter 4 2025, the latest phase of the Eclipse Park development by Gallagher close to junction 7 of the M20 provides a terrace of four brand-new high-quality units, ranging from 4,000 to 6,000ft$^2$ (372m$^2$ to 558m$^2$).

IWG/Regus has also invested in Eclipse Park with plans to open a new centre at Horizon House by the end of 2025.

### Accelerated development

Maidstone Borough Council continues to support residential regeneration with over £80m invested in the borough to bring forward affordable housing options. Five projects have started this year—with 94 affordable homes to be delivered.

HOLLAWAY

**Proposal for Len House.**

MID-KENT COLLEGE

**Solar carports at Mid-Kent College.**

The Council has been successful in securing Social Housing Grant (SHG) funding from Homes England to provide the subsidy for the schemes.

Works have begun on the Former Royal Mail Sorting Office for a £50m residential development. The site will include 180 apartments and 20,000ft$^2$ (1,858m$^2$) of commercial space.

Golding Homes' £60m investment in the regeneration of Shepway continues with phase 2 of 57 homes starting in the spring of 2025 with practical completion expected in 2027.

Classicus Estates are near to completion of a £30m transformation of the Grade 2 listed landmark building; Len House, in Maidstone town centre designed by architect Guy Hollaway. The scheme will see a mix of commercial space and 159 new homes.

### Net zero

The MidKent College Campus in Oakwood Park has seen one of the UK's largest solar carports built this year. As part of MKC's £10.6m 'Project Zero' investment, the car ports use photovoltaic thermal technology to generate electricity and heat to the campus. The College has also opened a retrofit centre to support sustainable construction and upskill workers to meet the UK's 2050 net-zero targets.

**For further information:**
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T: 01622 602465 or *chrisinwood@maidstone.gov.uk*
www.businessinmaidstone.co.uk

**Infrastructure and Regeneration**
Continued

## MEDWAY

### Medway's new Local Plan

The draft Medway Local Plan was published this summer and a six-week consultation held from Monday, 30 June to Monday, 11 August. The Plan outlines how Medway will grow over the next 15 years, including housing, businesses, transport, environment, health, education and much more. The draft Local Plan and consultation feedback has now been submitted to the Government for examination and consideration by the Planning Inspectorate. The council is working to get a new Local Plan adopted by the end of 2026.

**For further information:**
Medway.gov.uk/FutureMedway

### St John's Chatham

The church has undergone a major transformation to provide the local community with a multi-use space that can be used for years to come. Improvements include a new social space for classes and events, café, meeting rooms and facilities to host local music. The Diocese of Rochester are delivering the works in partnership with Medway Council and other partners. The church is due to reopen in autumn 2025.

**For further information:**
Medway.gov.uk/StJohnsChurch

### The Brook Theatre

Works started in summer 2025 and are estimated to take at least 18 months to complete, with the theatre expected to reopen in 2027. The Brook Theatre project is part of Chatham Creative Quarters, a new programme which will guide inward investment into boosting the town's heritage, arts and culture.

**For further information:**
Medway.gov.uk/BrookTheatre

MEDWAY COUNCIL

**St John's Church, Chatham.**

MEDWAY COUNCIL

**The Brook Theatre, Chatham.**

### Cozenton Park Sports Centre

Medway Council's latest sports centre in Rainham celebrated its first-year anniversary in July. In the first 12 months of opening, there have been over 165,000 visits. Ru Café opened in April within the main entrance of the centre.

**For further information:**
Medway.gov.uk/CozentonPark

### Improvements to Medway Sports Centres

A brand-new fitness studio is now open at Medway Park. Work is also continuing at Strood where a new reception is being built. This is ahead of a new fitness studio being created. A new sports hall at Strood, new changing rooms at Medway Park and new heating system at Hoo have also been delivered in 2025.

**For further information:**
Medway.gov.uk/SportsCentres

### Rochester Riverside
The latest phase of construction to create 154 new homes is progressing well. The first set of homes are now available to buy. The new homes will be the latest addition to the current development which is coming together at pace. Over 500 homes have been built so far. Rochester Riverside will eventually see 1,400 homes delivered by 2030.

For further information:
Medway.gov.uk/RochesterRiverside

### Limehouse Landing
Limehouse Landing is Rochester's newest river access point for boats and ships. It opened on Saturday, 3 May as part of this year's Sweeps Festival celebrations. The platform has been installed at Rochester Riverside. To mark its 50th year in service, The Paddle Steamer Waverley made its first-ever visit to Rochester Limehouse Landing on Friday, 26 September.

For further information:
Medway.gov.uk/LimehouseLanding

### An update on Innovation Park Medway (IPM)
Earlier this spring, Medway's Cabinet approved the recommendations for the future of both sites. For the northern site, an agreement was reached to lease the land to BAE Systems until the end of 2028 to support its multi-million-pound upgrade at its Rochester facilities. The land will be used by BAE systems to relocate their existing staff car park and create a temporary staff car park while work commences later this year on a new state-of-the-art factory.

The decision ensures the northern site will be used over the next few years while the council works to appoint a development partner and both the creation and submission of a planning application for a mix of industrial and mid-tech (office and research) commercial space for the northern site.

For the southern site, the council is looking to take forward plans to develop a care home and 16 retirement units.

For further information:
Medway.gov.uk/InnovationParkMedway

### Medway Development Company
MDC (Land and Projects) Ltd. celebrated its 5th anniversary in November 2025, marking five years since the company's inception. Following the recent launch of the MDC Business Plan 2025—2035, the council has ambitious plans to regenerate and revitalise Medway's urban areas, with Chatham undergoing a major regeneration programme.

### Chatham Waterfront
Spread over five stylish apartment blocks providing awe-inspiring views over the River Medway, the works on all 182 apartments were finished earlier this summer. Along with a landscaped river walk, the development will also see commercial units opening soon.


MEDWAY COUNCIL

**Chatham Waterfront.**

### Mountbatten House
This iconic building has dominated the Chatham skyline for nearly 50 years. The building is being totally transformed into a high-quality residential development, with 108 residential apartments. A new extension to Mountbatten House will deliver a further 56 apartments. The first apartments are expected to go on the market in 2026.

### The James Williams Healthy Living Centre
A £15m healthy living centre will be opening in Chatham in early 2026. The NHS-run centre is being built by Bauvill. Appointed architects LSI have delivered the design of the new health centre, which will transform the first floor of Pentagon Shopping Centre into modern, flexible spaces, which can host a variety of clinics, GP practices and community health services. The centre is named after our former Director of Public Health who sadly passed away last year after a short illness.

For further information:
Medway.gov.uk/HealthyLivingCentreChatham


MEDWAY COUNCIL

**Ascend Innovation Hub at the Pentagon Shopping Centre.**

### Ascend (Innovation Hub)
The brand-new office hub, situated on the first floor of Pentagon Shopping Centre, opened in January 2025. The modern offices provide exciting and professional office spaces to help small-to-medium size businesses to grow while also providing excellent workspace facilities for professionals needing to secure a day-to-day workspace.

For further information:
Ascendcoworking.com

### Garrison Point
A tranquil development of 115 one and two-bedroom apartments. All are now occupied. Gillingham Town Centre has also benefitted from MDC-led regeneration projects over the last 12 months with Truro Manor creating 44 apartments for affordable rent.

For further information:
Medwaydevelopmentcompany.co.uk

### Docking Station
Work began in February 2025 and construction is expected to take 18 months to complete. The new facility will house a suite of commercial digital production studios for industry use, a café, gallery and exhibition spaces, along with teaching areas and facilities to support digital and creative start-ups and local creative industries. It has been developed through a partnership between the University of Kent, Medway Council and Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust.

For further information:
Kent.ac.uk

**Infrastructure and Regeneration**
Continued

In Sittingbourne, Kent County Council continues works to improve the A249 Key Street and Grovehurst Roundabouts. The Government has funded improvements through a £38.1m award from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). The existing slip lane at Key Street will be relocated to the south to improve capacity, while the improvement at the Grovehurst junction will upgrade the existing 'dumbell' into a two-bridge flyover. Both projects will increase the network's capacity, reduce congestion, and improve safety.

## SWALE

### Industrial and Logistics

Progress on key infrastructure projects in the last year has led to the accelerated delivery of several projects in Swale. For example, in February 2025, Highways England completed their upgrade of the M2 Junction 5 which has improved travel times and access to the Isle of Sheppey and Sittingbourne.

On the Isle of Sheppey, Medichem Properties Ltd has completed phase 1 and 2 of its Walbrook Business Park close to the A249. The first phase of 50,000ft² (4,645m²) has been let to mostly trade occupiers. The second phase includes units of between 1,754 and 4,037ft². (163 to 375m²). The developer is seeking permission for further phases of development, and a local company MIT is planning a 22,000ft² (1,858m²) building to accommodate their growing business.

NATIONAL HGHWAYS

**Completed works at Junction 5, M2.**

In June 2025, Peel Ports finished construction of a £40m roll-on and roll off (RoRo) berth at their London Medway Port at Sheerness. The in-river vessel berth and floating pontoon will facilitate the creation of a freight route between Kent and Northern and Continental Europe. Vessels with a capacity for approximately 400 trailers will now be able to dock. The Port plans to re-open the rail connection to improve the movement of freight in and out of the site.

Construction has started on Swale Borough Council's £20m Sheerness Revival Programme, which is a major project funded by the UK Government. The council is starting to transform the empty garages at Masters House into dedicated business workshops. The new adventure golf attraction is also open at Beachfields. There is also building work at the nearby Healthy Living Centre, and EKC Sheppey College will offer new programmes to train staff for local businesses.

In Faversham, investors have focused in recent years on bringing historic buildings back into use, reflecting the heritage of the town. The town centre is seeing investment, with a new Loungers café/bar/restaurant opening this year in a former bank, with another investor proposing to convert another unit into a new eatery.

The Anderson Group continues to deliver plans for the former gunpowder and aggregates site at Oare Gravel Works. The site is part of a wider residential development, and will include 9,397ft² (873m²) of offices, workshop-studios, and storage, as well as 7,685ft² (714m²) for community use, within a set of listed buildings associated with the site's history. These buildings will be alongside a 50-acre (20.23ha) country park, making for a highly attractive environment for potential occupiers.

Arax Properties has received permission for a speculative 9,537ft² (886m²) warehouse at the Trinity Trading Estate. Panattoni has also completed phase 1 of its plans in Sittingbourne, constructing two huge logistics units of 439,228 sq. ft. (40,806sqm) and 205,320ft² (19,075m²) It is Kent's largest speculative property development in more than a decade. There are also proposals for a 58,000ft² (5,388m²) unit, which has been pre-let to DPD.

**For further information:**
www.swale.gov.uk

# West Kent

Significant progress has been made with regenerating and developing new sites across West Kent in the past year. This includes the most ambitious programme of town centre regeneration in decades, the expansion of employment space and significant housing growth in the Paddock Wood area. This is supplemented by the delivery of small high quality residential sites around Edenbridge and Swanley and landmark sporting developments close to the M20 and M26 north of Tonbridge. This trend is continuing with a sizeable number of further projects in the pipeline that will create new places to live, work and socialise.

## Town centre regeneration

### Sevenoaks town centre

Sevenoaks District Council has identified the opportunity to regenerate a collection of land parcels to the east of the High Street in Sevenoaks. Combined, these parcels of land have a surface area of about 3.04 acres (1.23ha). The proposed regeneration area is a key bridge between the heart of Sevenoaks Town Centre and Knole Park.

The overarching aim of this regeneration project is to revitalise the town centre, drive economic growth and deliver a high-quality mixed-use development of appropriate form, scale, and density. Project objectives include a new, energy efficient leisure centre, new environmentally sustainable and energy efficient town centre homes, public realm improvements that enhance biodiversity and public enjoyment and for a creative hub development of 96, High Street.

The procurement process to appoint a development partner to help deliver the Council's vision and objectives for this scheme was launched in May 2025. The Council are now in dialogue with shortlisted tenderers as part of the second invitation to tender stage. Final tenders are due in November 2025 with the preferred tenderer being identified by the end of December 2025. Regeneration of these specific town centre sites will enhance Sevenoaks town as a whole and provide the opportunity for creating a legacy for the benefit of the local community for years to come.

### Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre

Plans for a multi-screen boutique cinema, leisure and dining offer, enhanced retail space and residential scheme at **Royal Victoria Place** are progressing. Following a feasibility study carried out by RivingtonHark, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) has taken the decision to progress with scheme design and submit a planning application to unlock potential development at the shopping centre. This decision builds on the programme of current improvements to the wider site, delivering a major refurbishment of the car park, the installation of solar PV, and the introduction of new tenants—with Primark opening in Winter 2025.

**Paramount Place,** the new Retirement Villages Group development on the site of the former ABC Cinema, has topped out, with completion of 167 apartments, restaurant, gym and 10 retail units expected by the end of summer 2026. This follows the opening of **The Beckett** on St Johns Road, a retirement complex comprising 89 one, two and three bed apartments across three new buildings delivered by Elysian.

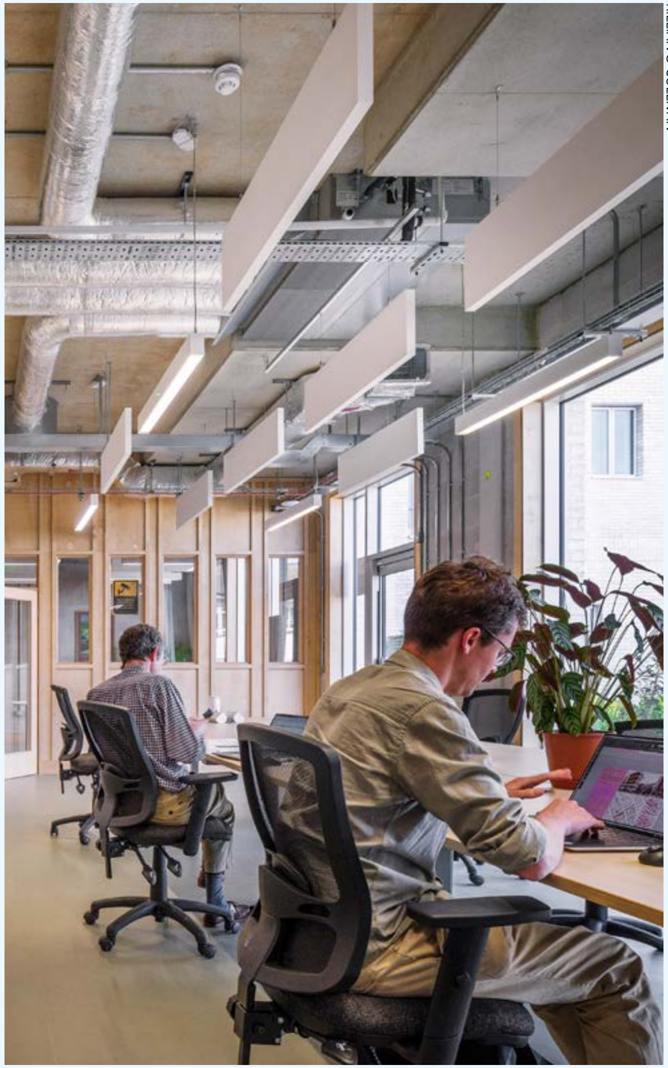
Future development in the town centre will be guided by a Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan. TWBC has recently commissioned Arup to carry out masterplanning work to form part of the evidence base for the Plan.

### Tonbridge

A new masterplan for the area to the east of Tonbridge High Street sets out a bold vision that will unlock the potential of the area. The proposals for council owned land, at present mainly used as car parks, have been drawn up by urban planning specialists and include:

- 122 new homes at Sovereign Way North car park featuring flood-resilient design;
- a new leisure centre at Sovereign Way Mid car park (this will replace the Angel Centre);
- a modern GP practice on the site of the Sovereign Way East car park;
- a hotel at Vale Road car park with potential to offer commercial space;
- a riverside park area to make more of the tributary which forms part of the site.

A consultation on these proposals took place in Summer 2025, with the plans subsequently being reviewed ahead of a decision on formally adopting the masterplan at the end of 2025.



KILLIAN O'SULLIVAN

**Meeting Point, Swanley High Street.**

### Swanley

Growth and opportunities at Meeting Point on Swanley High Street are continuing to progress two years on from the mixed-use development's opening. The showpiece commercial hub includes co-working space, shared office space, meeting/events space, dedicated office space and on-site business support.

**Infrastructure and Regeneration**
Continued

## Commercial developments

### North Farm Industrial Estate, Tunbridge Wells

Delivery of the 33a (13.4ha), £135m commercial development at Kingstanding Way next to the existing Kingstanding Business Park is picking up pace. Work commenced earlier this year, and the finished project will see 500,000ft² (46,452m²) of warehouse accommodation and ancillary office space delivered next to the A21 dual carriageway.

CORMACK ADVERTISING

**Tavis House Business Centre, Tunbridge Wells.**

Further to the Kingstanding Way expansion, a series of large commercial developments have been delivered on North Farm Industrial Estate in the past 12 months. This has included the erection of a new Class B8 Surestore Self Storage unit on the intersection of Chapman Way and North Farm Road; and the Tavis House Business Centre, with two new buildings including five units and a storage and distribution hub.

### Otford Road Business Park

This business park is being developed on an underutilised, brownfield site in the greenbelt for employment/commercial uses, comprising three light industrial units and a drive-thru.


GDM ARCHITECTS

**Proposal for Otford Road Business Park.**

Sustainability measures include over 10% biodiversity net gain, BREEAM Very Good & EPC A, solar panels, EV charging and low carbon heating. The project is out for tender with delivery programmed for 2026.

### RBLI Village, Aylesford

Exciting plans for a new factory at the **Royal British Legion Industries Village** in Aylesford were submitted to the planning department in March 2025. The proposed 68,000ft² (6,318m²) purpose-built facility would replace the current 1970s buildings and would help in recruiting a further 80 people, adding to the existing team of 158 that are already employed on site.

QUOD / HOLLAWAY

**Proposal for the RBLI Village, Aylesford.**

### Panattoni Park, Aylesford

Planning permission was secured in May 2025 for the development of a new electric HGV charging station at Panattoni Park Aylesford. The station will be operated by Milence—an Amsterdam-based joint venture between Daimler Truck, the Traton Group and Volvo. The development will be completed in early 2026.

## Residential developments

### Edenbridge

Farmstead Drive is an ambitious redevelopment under construction within the wider Spitals Cross Housing Estate in Edenbridge, built in the 1960s. The scheme includes 23 new homes (a mixture of houses and flats), a replacement convenience store and community hall, enhanced landscaping, car parking, and playground re-location. The project is set to complete in May 2026.

### Paddock Wood

Progress on housebuilding in Paddock Wood has gathered speed recently with approximately 1,000 dwellings completed or nearing completion at Mascalls Farm, Mascalls Court Road and Church Farm.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's submitted local plan allocates a number of large sites for the expansion of Paddock Wood, as part of a strategy to deliver housing over the next 15 years comprising over 2,450 homes (with 40% affordable housing), 10.5a (4.25ha) of employment space and associated infrastructure on garden settlement principles. The masterplan also provides opportunities for the regeneration of Paddock Wood town centre with mixed use development and the creation of new public squares, multi-storey parking and streetscene improvements.

The next phase of development includes a joint programme of 1,160 homes at various stages of planning, led by a collaboration between developers Redrow and Persimmon.

### Swanley

A new development at White Oak next to the Leisure Centre in Swanley, will provide 60 high-quality homes (15 three-bedroom town houses with gardens and 45 one and two-bedroom flats around a community garden) with solar panels, air source heat pumps and green roof. The project has received £840,000 from the Brownfield Land Release Fund. Planning approval and contractor award is expected soon followed by enabling works and construction to complete in October 2027. As well as providing new homes, the project will pay towards the cost of the £22m Leisure Centre that opened in 2022.

BOND BRYAN

**Proposal for White Oak residential, Swanley.**

QUOD / HOLLAWAY

**Proposal for London Golf Club (hotel view from the pond).**

## World class sporting venues

### Buckmore Park

In July 2025, planning permission was secured for 'The Paddock' at Buckmore Park—a proposed new 20,000ft$^2$ (1,858m$^2$) development that features a state-of-the-art simulator room, restaurant, sports bar and roof top terrace overlooking the UK's favourite karting circuit. Construction is planned to start in 2026.

### Cobdown Park

London City Lionesses acquired the 28-acre training ground site in June 2024 with plans to establish a Centre of Excellence for the development of Women and Girl's football. The plans include a range of on and off-site community benefits including managed community access to a new 3G pitch, outreach programmes and local partnerships to promote inclusivity in football.

### London Golf Club

Plans for a new 240-bedroom hotel featuring a spa, gym, restaurant, bar and conference facilities, along with a new sports pavilion, racket courts, swimming lake, retreat lodges and a new golf academy were approved by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council in April 2025.

## Nature and biodiversity net gain

### Darent Valley

A newly formed Darent Valley Nature Partnership will be undertaking an ambitious, long-term project that aims to create and enhance a mosaic of connected habitats to support nature's recovery in the wider river basin. The partnership will be led by Kent Wildlife Trust, working to create a company limited by shares with Sevenoaks District Council as one of 20 landowners with the purpose to ensure the land is collectively managed to optimise grant funding from DEFRA. The company will engage with capital markets to benefit from the trading of Biodiversity Net Gain units and possible carbon sequestration credits in the future. This is an exciting pilot project that ensures effective and viable land stewardship over a 30-to-50-year period, providing much needed income to assist with habitat restoration, protection of species and enhancing biodiversity, promoting carbon capture, support food security and facilitating sustainable rural development.

## Infrastructure and Regeneration
Continued

## ASHFORD

Ashford continues to deliver regeneration and commercial development projects, reinforcing its role as a strategic growth hub in Kent.

### Strategic developments
Ashford's growth is being propelled by two strategic developments: Brompton and Newtown Works. A significant milestone was reached with the Brompton scheme's resolution to permit outline planning earlier this year, paving the way for the international manufacturer's £100m investment. At Newtown Works, the difficulties of delivering regional film studios in today's market—especially without substantial public sector grants—have prompted a transition toward a residential-led regeneration of this historic brownfield site.

### Ashford Town Centre regeneration
As part of the Town Centre Reset strategy, Ashford Borough Council is undertaking the redevelopment of Park Mall into a site that will incorporate new housing and commercial premises. In addition, a formal call for proposals regarding further development plans will take place in due course. The Council is advancing plans to regenerate the former Odeon site on Lower High Street, aiming to transform it into a vibrant space featuring community and commercial uses.

### Environmental delivery in Ashford
The establishment of Stour Environmental Credits Ltd—a joint venture between Ashford and Canterbury councils in late 2024—marks a significant step in facilitating nutrient mitigation credit trading, which is crucial for unlocking housing developments hampered by neutrality constraints. The company is positioning itself as a key player in accelerating new housing projects while adapting to evolving national policy on wetlands and nutrient mitigation.


ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Proposal for Swanton House.**

The Council has delivered the ZED PODS scheme, delivering modular, low-carbon homes designed to boost local housing supply and champion sustainable living. This scheme recently won Small Project of the Year at the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists' Annual Awards. Progress continues on District Heat Network scoping, with feasibility studies underway to identify opportunities across Ashford.

### Waterbrook Park Phase 2
Waterbrook Park Phase 2's commercial plots will feature a David Lloyd club offering state-of-the-art fitness facilities. The site may also welcome a specialist recycling business. These additions demonstrate the high demand for expansion and growth space at Waterbrook and across Ashford.

### Housing sites coming forward
The Council is advancing the Kent Wool Growers (KWG) site and Swanton House for regeneration. The KWG site will offer social housing, commercial spaces and green areas, preserving the Grade II listed Whist House. The plans for the redevelopment of the former WWI hospital Swanton House are progressing, aiming to deliver 34 apartments and regenerating this dilapidated historic site.

Construction is progressing at Kings Crescent's £90m The Triangle residential site on Victoria Way, adding 400 new homes. These developments will accelerate the delivery of much needed housing locally.

### Commercial property delivery
- **Embassy Building, Tenterden:** The former cinema has been successfully repurposed. Loungers opened the Calvero Lounge in January 2025, creating 30 jobs and offering a community-focused hospitality venue. Above, Rockits Sensory relocated to a larger space following a successful crowdfunding campaign, enhancing inclusive play and sensory services for children.
- **Entralon Gate, Orbital Park:** This industrial development comprises five contemporary units, offering a total of 54,000ft$^2$ (5,017m$^2$) of space suitable for light industrial and logistics businesses.
- **Kent Business Centre at Kent House:** Chadwick Flexspace Solutions launched a new business hub in Ashford town centre, offering serviced offices, meeting rooms and collaborative spaces.

The Council is actively lobbying for the return of Eurostar and International Rail Services to strengthen local connectivity, while championing the rollout of upgraded digital infrastructure—particularly through Project Gigabit—to ensure both residents and businesses have access to cutting-edge digital infrastructure. By supporting skills development, such as the recent Green Skills programme funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Ashford is equipping its workforce for future opportunities.

These concerted efforts make Ashford an increasingly attractive destination to invest in, work, and call home.

## CANTERBURY

### Accelerated delivery in Canterbury: driving investment and growth

Canterbury continues to deliver at pace across a series of high-impact property and development projects that support sustainable growth and unlock long-term economic potential. With a proactive planning agenda, targeted investment promotion through the Choose Canterbury initiative, and a strong commitment to regeneration, the district is creating the conditions for businesses to thrive, homes to be built, and town centres to be reimagined.

### Key projects and initiatives

#### 1. Choose Canterbury initiative

Canterbury City Council's Choose Canterbury project which is being delivered with funding from UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), positions the district as a destination of choice for business, investment and development. Targeted activity is driving new investor interest into the area—particularly in the visitor economy, hospitality, flexible workspace, and high-growth sectors like the creative industries. The initiative is also supporting the identification of key commercial and hotel development sites, helping unlock investment into underused or strategic locations.

#### 2. New Local Plan and city/town centre strategies

The emerging Canterbury Local Plan 2040 is setting out a clear direction for the district's future growth, with a strong emphasis on place-making, infrastructure delivery, and sustainability. Complementing this, new city/town centre strategies for Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable are shaping a more vibrant, liveable, and economically resilient future for each centre. The strategies identify development opportunities, guide inward investment, and focus on reimagining the role of the high street.

#### 3. Hotel and visitor economy pipeline

To address an identified shortage of visitor accommodation, Canterbury is targeting a pipeline of new hotel projects. This is being supported by Choose Canterbury led investor engagement. These efforts are aligned with anticipated increases in demand linked to the district's cultural and leisure offer, international visitor growth, and significant public investment through the Levelling Up Fund. Visit www.canterbury.gov.uk to find out more about the excellent progress being made on delivering Canterbury's Levelling Up Fund projects.

#### 4. Coastal town regeneration—Herne Bay and Whitstable

Accelerated delivery is also taking place in the coastal towns. In Herne Bay, restoration of the town's historic central bandstand continues with a newly refurbished retail unit in the process of being let to local business Makcari's. Also, at the town's largest commercial site, Altira Business Park, 2025 saw the start of construction on a new David Lloyd health and leisure facility—a 48,007ft$^2$ (4,460m$^2$) development projected to deliver 80 to 100 permanent jobs. Meanwhile local developer George Wilson Ltd has submitted plans for a new 48,007ft$^2$ (17,000m$^2$) commercial and industrial business park at Hawthorn Corner on the A299 Thanet Way.

In Whitstable, development opportunities linked to underused sites will be actively explored through its new Town Centre Strategy.

#### 5. Flexible workspace and innovation hubs

Planned workspace developments—such as a new IWG/Regus co-working centre in Canterbury city centre will meet growing demand for flexible, modern business environments. These hubs support start-ups and SMEs, particularly in creative, digital and professional services, and are being used as case studies to attract similar models across the district.

#### For further information:

To explore investment opportunities, live projects, and the latest business insights from across Canterbury and its coastal towns, visit www.choosecanterbury.co.uk

IWG/REGUS

**Proposal for IWG/Regus co-working centre in Canterbury.**

**Infrastructure and Regeneration**
Continued

## DOVER

### The Bench

The Bench, part of the Dover Beacon Project development, will be a brand-new education, creative arts and business centre in Dover town centre. Funded by the UK Government and project managed by Dover District Council, (DDC) it's a milestone project and is being cited as one of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's case studies.

Local subcontractors are being employed where possible, and once open, it will give the community a much-needed opportunity to study and work locally. Affordable short-term leases will be available for new business start-ups, encouraging more people to start their own business with lower risk. The project is on course for completion on time and within budget and East Kent College Art students will come into the building in September 2026.

The Dover Beacon Project is funded by two key funding streams, combined to deliver creative solutions for the future of the town, and includes underpass improvements and upgraded public realm.

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Construction of The Bench, Dover.**

ANDY AITCHISON

**Dover's Maison Dieu.**

### The Maison Dieu (Dover Town Hall)

The magnificent Maison Dieu, Dover's Town Hall, is an 800-year-old masterpiece that has recently undergone a painstaking £11m restoration (including £4.7m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund).

This impressive building, reimagined to showcase its rich history, reopened its doors to the public in May 2025. With beautifully preserved stained-glass windows designed by Edward Poynter and Horatio Walter Lonsdale, and the restoration of its internationally significant decorative schemes by Victorian architect and designer, William Burges, the Maison Dieu is now a first-class events and heritage venue for Kent and the South East. From the magnificent Connaught Hall and the medieval Stone Hall to the Courtroom, Council Chamber and Victorian gaol cells, visitors can immerse themselves in the colourful past of this exceptional Grade-I listed building. It can be hired for events, conferences, meetings and weddings. The project was led by DDC, Dover Town Council and The Dover Society.

### Housing

Housing is a council priority with the goal to provide at least an average of 200 additional council homes—new build and acquisitions—each year (800 in total over the planned term). New affordable and shared ownership homes include 48 affordable properties at Wingfield Place in Deal and seven properties at Sholden Pastures.

Work has begun to transform council-owned land on Military Road in Dover into eight new affordable homes which will be let to local people at social rents. The block will consist of six one-bed flats, one two-bed flat and one two-bed, wheelchair-accessible flat. Homes England is contributing funding towards the project.

### Port of Dover

The Port of Dover connects trade, travel, visitors and communities locally and globally, collaborating with local and international partners to create a more seamless, sustainable and tech-enabled port. It is the UK's busiest international ferry port handling £144bn of trade per year, more lorries than all other UK ports, 33% of UK trade in goods with the EU and over 1.3 million tourist vehicles a year. It is also an award-winning cruise port, delivering world class travel and visitor experiences to over 20 different cruise lines with 120 cruise calls and hundreds of thousands of guests each year.

There is a growing and diversifying cargo business, plus a modern marina with hundreds of berth holders enjoying state-of-the-art facilities. The Port of Dover is committed to reducing its carbon emissions and has set challenging targets to achieve this.

### Discovery Park

Discovery Park, designated a Life Science Opportunity Zone by the Government, has doubled its thriving life science and innovation community in recent years with homegrown innovators and international companies choosing to build and scale at the park.

Eight promising cardiovascular and cardiometabolic health startups have recently been welcomed to its campus and are embarking on the 'Discovery Spark' business growth programme, championing and supporting early-stage business working on innovations in heart health.

***Logical Biological,*** biospecimen and critical material experts, has recently launched a sister company, *Logical Antigen,* which will focus on antigen and raw material development tailored to complex biological requirements. ***iLoF*** (Intelligent Lab on Fiber), a digital health company, and ***MilaK,*** a precision fermentation protein business, have moved into lab space at Discovery Park's CoLab, a collaborative co-working space run in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University.

**For further information:**
www.investindover.co.uk

## FOLKESTONE & HYTHE

### Folkestone

The *Folkestone—A Brighter Future* project (FABF) is set to regenerate Folkestone town centre using £19.8m in Government funding. The scheme will replace the bus station in Bouverie Square with a green park creating an attractive welcome for those arriving in the town. The design includes changes to the highway, pedestrian access and improvements to parts of the town centre. Jackson Civil Engineering (JCE) have been contracted to deliver the project and are making good progress.

### Folca

Part of the funding for the *Folkestone—A Brighter Future* project will be used to create a watertight shell in the Art-Deco part of the Folca building called Folca 2. The council is working towards a mixed-use scheme, which could be fully commercial or a combination of public sector, medical and commercial uses, to bring Folca 2 back into use.

The development will also benefit from a grant from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme designed to secure carbon reduction measures for the building. Further recommendations with the preferred occupation strategy will be presented to councillors in the autumn, with construction potentially starting in early 2026.

### Ship Street

The council acquired the Ship Street site in 2021 to bring this key regeneration site forward. The project received £2.5m from the Brownfield Land Release Fund to help remediate the 3.8 acre (1.54ha) former gas works site. Working with Arup and Fletcher Priest the council has drawn up proposals for the scheme which include 22% affordable housing and a 5% custom build element. An outline planning application has been submitted for 135 homes, and the council is actively seeking a development partner to bring the site forward.

AECOM

**FABF Project—former bus station proposal.**

### Highview

The former Highview school site was purchased by the council as a site for affordable housing in 2017. Planning for a scheme of 30 homes of affordable tenure all designed to be net zero carbon rated, was initially approved in August 2021. This was amended to a policy compliant scheme with 30% affordable housing in October 2023. The council have now secured a development partner and the site has been sold. Construction of the 30 new homes is expected to commence late 2025.

### Otterpool Park

Resolution to grant planning permission is in place for Otterpool Park, a major new 8,500 home garden town near Folkestone. Rooted firmly in garden town principles, it will support sustainable and healthy living, a vibrant economy and infrastructure provision through its design. Enabling the best quality of life for existing and future residents and responding to local landscape character are further elements that have been embedded in the vision for this transformative garden community.

The project is led by master developer Otterpool Park LLP on behalf of Folkestone & Hythe District Council through a collaboration agreement with Homes England. The process for securing investment for the delivery of the large-scale strategic project is underway.

For further information:
www.otterpoolpark.org

### Coast Drive—Romney Marsh

This transformational project will create a major beachside visitor destination which will boost tourism and the local economy. Work is progressing on a new visitor hub at Greatstone, with improved water sports facilities, 93 beach huts, a 121-space car park with disabled spaces and electric charging points and a changing places toilet that will boost accessibility of the site. The development is being funded by the council in partnership with the Magnox Socio-Economic Fund. Walker Construction has been appointed as the contractor to deliver the scheme.

**Infrastructure and Regeneration**
Continued

## THANET

### Accelerating delivery in the eastern corner of Kent

Thanet, located in the eastern corner of Kent, is a dynamic district characterised by its vibrant coastal towns, picturesque rural villages, and excellent transport links to London and wider Kent. The three main towns of Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate, each of which has a distinctive character, mixing classic seaside heritage with a modern appeal, have become a magnet for creatives and associated creative industries.

Tourism also continues to boost local employment, supporting 8,257 jobs across Thanet. It represents 19% of the total employment within the district. These figures underscore the industry's importance, not just as a driver of economic recovery but also as a cornerstone of local employment.

There is a strategic focus on significant developments across regeneration, housing and local infrastructure. Thanet District Council is also forging ahead with a number of ambitious projects, many of which have been allocated significant funding from central Government.

Since 2019, Thanet District Council has been successfully awarded capital funding from three key Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) programmes—Future High Street Fund, Town Deal and the Levelling Up Fund, totalling over £50millon.

**Future High Street Funds**—£2.7m to provide creative workspace and improve highways in Ramsgate.

**Margate Town Deal—**£22.2m to develop the creative productions and skills, enhance coastal wellbeing, make highway and public realm improvements, and to improve heritage assets. At Walpole Bay in Cliftonville, plans include restoring the Grade II Listed cliff lift, improving the steps and listed tidal pool, better provision for cyclists and walkers and new beach facilities.

**Levelling Up Programme, Margate**—£6.3m to deliver a digital campus in Margate High Street with East Kent Colleges Group.

**Levelling Up Programme, Ramsgate**—£19.8m focusing on projects to enhance the Port and Royal Harbour and provide places for local people to engage and develop skills to access the new job opportunities being created in these areas. The Green Campus development at the Port of Ramsgate will provide new facilities for green energy and maritime businesses, as well as training, office and work space.

Housing delivery remains a key priority for Thanet District Council, and overall this has increased substantially in the last few years, with annual housing completions doubling since 2020. The last two years have seen completions of over 800 per year. The council's proactive approach to addressing housing need is evidenced by its commitment to buy or build at least 400 new homes, for social or affordable rent by local people, before 2027. To date the council has secured 277 homes in partnership with local developers demonstrating its commitment to fulfilling its legal duties whilst building strong relationships within the development community. There are a further 49 homes being built on four of Thanet District Council's own brownfield sites: Dane Valley in Margate, Clements Road, Staner Court and Tomlin Drive in Ramsgate.


JAN KATTEIN ARCHITECTS

**Architects' visualisation of the planned new facilities at Walpole Bay, Margate.**

HAZLEMCCORMACKYOUNG LLP

**Proposal for the planned new build apartments block, at Dane Valley Arms Site, Margate.**

The developments reflect the council's ongoing efforts to ensure the provision of sufficient housing to meet objectively-assessed need, while considering affordability and supporting economic growth.

Thanet offers fast rail connection to London via HighSpeed 1 into St Pancras International. The addition of the Thanet Parkway station, a joint venture with Network Rail, Kent County Council and Thanet District Council which opened in July 2023, offers further connectivity bringing the capital to within an hour's commute. In July 2025, the Government confirmed the funding for the North Thanet Link (previously the A28 Birchington, Acol and Westgate-on-Sea relief road). This vital infrastructure project will provide an alternative route to the congested A28 corridor, including widening and improvements to the existing Shottendane Road, significantly enhancing connectivity and alleviating traffic within the district.

Thanet's forward-looking strategy combines targeted regeneration initiatives and proactive housing solutions supported by significant infrastructure developments. These efforts are poised to transform the district, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable future for its residents and contributing significantly to the wider development and prosperity of Kent.

## Thames Estuary Growth Board

Led by the Thames Estuary Envoy and Chair Kate Willard OBE, the Growth Board works to drive Fair Growth across the Thames Estuary, promoting investment, unlocking growth and supporting innovation. Now an independent business, the Growth Board was set up by the Government in 2020 to deliver Sir John Armitt's Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission's vision of £190bn increased productivity, 1.3m high value jobs, supported by 1m high-quality homes for local people.

With a clear focus on the local property and commercial markets, the Growth Board works with developers and investors, offering an expert and bespoke service: with Homes England, the Board has identified spatial growth opportunities across the Estuary; it has worked with Bericote and Uniper to release sites and development; with the Duchy of Cornwall in support of fair growth; and brings international investors to councils to showcase local growth and private sector investment opportunities. With Kent partners, it has supported the local solution for nutrient neutrality, bringing together national stakeholders, and through the Kent Housing Group, is supporting investment into older people's housing through the innovative Maintaining Independence through Housing (MITH) project.

Through a focussed and expert team, the Growth Board offers private and public sector partners the opportunity to:

- champion projects for investment, promoting opportunities internationally;
- remove obstacles to making things happen through its bespoke 'Delivery Accelerator' approach;
- act as an investment partner in early-stage projects as a catalyst for significant new private sector investment;
- convene local agencies and partners, working closely with both private and public sector colleagues to accelerate growth.

Having recently helped the Thames Freeport to secure a significant hydrogen investment, major workstreams currently include the establishment of a wider hydrogen ecosystem capable of attracting multi-billion pound investment across the Estuary, increasing use of the River Thames for light freight and digital development across the Region. The Thames Estuary's private sector Board includes senior leaders from IBM, Arcadis and Clifford Chance, with strong support from public sector partners.

Investuary.com is the Thames Estuary Growth Board's inward investment platform launched by the Investment Minister at the UK Real Estate, Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF), showcasing investable opportunities driving growth across the Thames Estuary, stretching from the City of London to the coastlines of Essex and Kent.

For further information:
*envoy@thamesestuary.org.uk*

SARAH KNIGHT

**Charter view from Riverside.**

## Kent County Council

**Visitor Economy/inward investment**
The visitor economy continues to play a vital role in Kent's economic landscape, supporting thousands of jobs and showcasing the county's rich heritage, coastlines, and cultural assets. Recognising its strategic importance, support for the sector is being brought in-house and integrated with inward investment activity under the 'Grow in Kent' umbrella. This approach will strengthen place promotion, attract new audiences and investors, and ensure Kent's unique offer is championed with clarity and impact.

**Kent and Medway Business Fund**
The Kent and Medway Business Fund (KMBF) continues to play a pivotal role in supporting business growth, innovation, and job creation across the region. Offering loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, the fund helps unlock investment in new products, services, and facilities—driving productivity and resilience in key sectors. With a strong track record of enabling business expansion and fostering entrepreneurship, KMBF remains a vital tool in the county's economic development strategy.

For further information:
www.kmbf.co.uk

**Kings Hill Development Partnership Scheme**
Kent County Council and Liberty/Prologis's long term development partnership at Kings Hill, is one of the UK's most successful (and longest) mixed use private and public sector joint ventures. Kings Hill has delivered all of its primary economic and regeneration objectives, with an exceptionally high-quality living and working environment of just under 4,000 homes contained within four major phases, 1 million $ft^2$ of business park, 3 primary schools and a thriving retail area of 25 shops and three supermarkets.

After 35 years of delivery the scheme is in its wind-down phase, with some limited development opportunities still underway and numerous social infrastructure projects, which require attention as part of the long-term legacy.

The process of final placing and conclusion of the wide range of infrastructure projects, including telecommunications, rapid car charging improvements, open space, play, leisure and sport facilities and community uses/areas across the

## Infrastructure and Regeneration
Continued

scheme are all underway. The management and governance of the various assets will heavily involve an array of local interests and the Kings Hill management companies, requiring legal and statutory processes to be resolved.

### Manston Business Park—East Kent Opportunities Limited Liability Partnership (EKO LLP)
East Kent Opportunities LLP ('EKO') is a Joint Venture company, formed in 2008, as a Limited Liability Partnership, between Kent County Council and Thanet District Council. EKO was formed to facilitate and enhance specific areas within its freehold control for economic regeneration delivery within Thanet.

The LLP, as an Economic and Regeneration company, has had its business strategy aligned to directly respond to the associated impacts and changes in market forces and needs over the years of delivery. Accordingly, an adapted approach was taken with sequential, and smaller incremental/micro phased form of development land release and subsequent development for Manston Business Park.

Manston Business Park is now a modern and well-planned flagship business park, ideally suited to Thanet's and the wider East Kent local businesses. The current development which has taken place over the past decade still has the frontage plots to be delivered over the next two years, but constitutes what is only the first of two major phases at the location.

EKO has worked closely with local developers and private sector end users to fully establish the location as Thanet's flagship Business Park. Providing the catalyst for further medium to long term development potential for adjacent third-party land (former CGI land), with approximately 75 acres (30ha), to the east and north of the existing MBP development and this equates to approximately 1million ft$^2$ of further commercial space.

### Programme for Schools Works
Kent County Council (KCC) delivers a significant capital investment programme to enhance the educational estate across the County including Special Educational Need & Disabilities, primary and secondary children. KCC seeks to ensure that wherever possible, any spend on its construction projects makes the biggest impact on the Kent economy in the delivery of its capital projects.

As part of these programmes, KCC have jointly delivered expansions with Academies and Department for Education (DfE) to three schools for 420 pupils. KCC have delivered several modernisation projects which include the replacement of dilapidated classrooms and internal reconfiguration to create new teaching spaces. For 2026, KCC are on course to deliver at least another three expansions and new schools resulting in an additional 570 places.

In addition, KCC has completed new expansions, refurbishments and modernisation using its frameworks which include the schemes set out below:
- Teynham CE Primary School—1FE expansion increasing the school from 1FE to 2FE. Included demolition of school and construction of new 2FE school;
- Willesborough Junior School—creation of three internal classrooms;
- The Beacon, Whitfield—demolition of 1950s teaching block with construction of a new teaching block providing an extra 160 pupil places for pupils with severe and complex needs.

### Dover Discovery Centre
The Dover Discovery Centre opened in October 2025, offering residents a newly refurbished space that brings together a range of services including the town's library and registration services, adult education, Dover Museum and children's social care all under one roof.

This transformation is part of a two-year Kent County Council-led project working with Dover District Council to create a community hub for the town's residents, supporting the regeneration of Dover Town Centre and making public services easier to access in one central location.

### Kent Communities Programme
As part of the Council's ongoing commitment to ensure its estate remains efficient and fit for purpose, a programme of rationalisation and investment is being undertaken alongside the introduction of a new 'Family Hub' model of service delivery.

The implementation of this programme involves significant investment into strategically located 'co-location' sites. These sites will deliver multiple KCC services, alongside hosting health partners as part of a comprehensive service offering. The first of these co-location sites was in Stanhope, Ashford, and involved the integration of the current library service alongside the new Family Hub offering. Further sites will be delivered across the county in Q4 2025 and Q1 2026.

### Kent Estates Partnership
The Kent Estates Partnership (KEP) brings together Kent local authorities, NHS, Higher Education/Further Education, blue light services, and central government to identify and promote collaborative projects and opportunities. The national One Public Estate Programme (OPE) provides support and funding to deliver ambitious property-focused programmes in collaboration and taking a strategic approach to asset management.

OPE funding is designed to help project initiation/ development work for projects with a higher risk profile. KEP has entered bids in four funding rounds and has been allocated £1.3m in OPE funding and £0.87m from two rounds of Land Release Funding (LRF) plus £16.5m in Brownfield Land Release Funding (BLRF).

All the projects are targeted to ensure the efficient use of the public sector estate and support the release of surplus land for housing. In addition, projects deliver significant benefits to local communities, such as a new Community Centre, improvements to town centres and the public realm, improved access to health services and a diagnostics centre.

### Kent County Council Disposals
Approximately £21.9m of land and property assets were released from the KCC estate in the 24-25 financial year, principally for new housing and employment uses. These receipts will be reinvested in the council's capital development programme which funds vital infrastructure projects.

## Housing

**The Kent & Medway Housing Strategy 2025–2030: Better Homes: Growth, Wellbeing and Choice,** sets out an ambitious and partnership-based approach to addressing the county's housing challenges. Developed by the Kent Housing Group (KHG) and underpinned by an evidence base from Aecom, the strategy focuses on five interlinked themes: accelerating delivery, infrastructure first, affordability and choice, safe and efficient homes, and health and wellbeing.

The strategy supports a simple but compelling **theory of change,** that the delivery of new homes, with infrastructure alongside, will improve housing outcomes in Kent and Medway. It demonstrates a commitment to accelerate housing delivery, improve affordability and ensure housing promotes health, resilience and economic opportunity.

Affordability continues to worsen and housing quality, particularly in the private rented sector, undermines health and wellbeing.

The strategy supports the Government's ambition to build 1.5 million new homes, but without the tools and investment to unlock delivery in areas like ours, this shared objective is at risk.

The theory is:
- provide more affordable housing, with supporting infrastructure;
- increase the supply of market and affordable homes that are in good condition;
- provide improved safety and security to residents;
- have a positive impact on people's health and wellbeing.

A central challenge is the chronic under-delivery of new homes. Over the past five years, Kent and Medway have averaged just 7,277 completions annually, **24% below** the Local Plans requirement of 9,528 and significantly lower than the Government's 2024 overall housing need figure for Kent and Medway of 13,306 homes per annum. In terms of much needed **affordable homes, only a third of assessed newbuild affordable housing need has been delivered.**

This persistent shortfall has widened affordability gaps, driven rents and prices ahead of local wages and led to rising

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**9 Fortis House, Ashford.**

homelessness and temporary accommodation use, with, at the time of the launch of the strategy, more than 3,300 children housed in Temporary Accommodation (TA).

The strategy makes clear that infrastructure must precede, or at least keep pace with, new development, covering transport, utilities, schools and open spaces. It also calls for a more diverse housing offer, across tenures, sizes and quality, including homes for older people, those with disabilities, and households with health needs. Alongside supply, improving condition and energy efficiency is a priority, particularly in the private rented sector where non-decent homes remain prevalent.

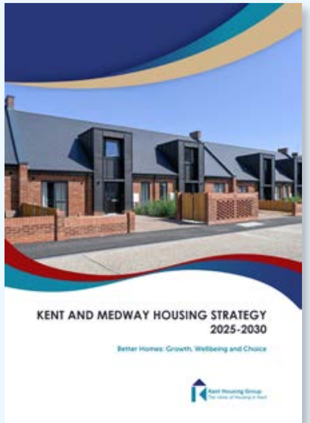
Delivery will depend on strong local partnerships between councils, Registered Providers, health and developers. The strategy also contains clear **'Asks of Government'**, including long-term funding commitments, greater planning resources, regulatory flexibility and forward-funded infrastructure. Work is now underway on a detailed Implementation Plan to turn these ambitions into coordinated action across Kent and Medway.

A further strand of the strategy recognises the scale of **'market failure'** in affordable housing delivery. While Section 106 obligations remain the main tool for securing affordable homes, viability constraints, rising build costs and competing infrastructure requirements often weaken outcomes. This has left a persistent gap between identified housing need and actual delivery, particularly in terms of genuinely affordable rent and social housing. The strategy argues that s106 alone is not enough to meet need and calls for new funding models, release of public land and stronger collaboration with Homes England to unlock stalled sites.

These priorities were reinforced in ***One Last Ask,*** a paper jointly developed with DHA Planning and the Kent and South East Housing and Development groups in response to the 2025 Spending Review. The paper welcomed the Chancellor's confirmation of renewed investment in the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) and the recognition of housing as essential infrastructure. It also called for a longer-term, 10-year settlement to give providers and investors confidence, while pressing for forward-funded infrastructure, more flexible grant mechanisms and greater resourcing for planning.

Taken together, the strategy and its supporting papers set a clear direction: only through coordinated partnerships, Government support and new delivery models can Kent and Medway bridge the housing gap and achieve growth, wellbeing and choice for all communities.

For further information scan the QR code:



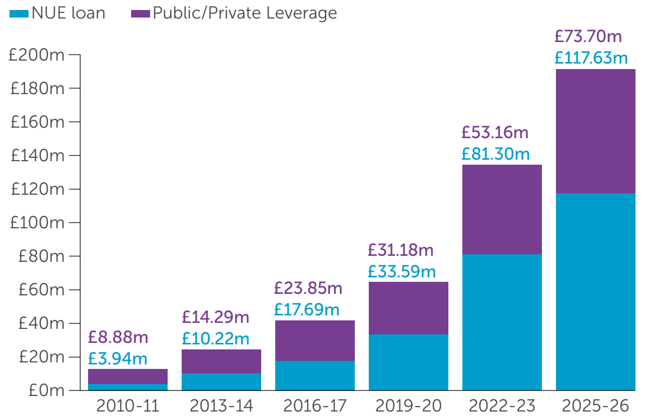
**Infrastructure and Regeneration**
Continued

## No Use Empty
Total Investment £191.3m

Now in its 20th year, No Use Empty (NUE) continues to play a significant role in supporting the recovery of the Kent economy. Despite ongoing challenges within the construction sector, demand for short-term secured loans remains strong. To date, the NUE team has processed over 620 successful loan applications.

As the longest-running empty property initiative in the UK, NUE remains focused on reducing the number of dwellings that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over six months. In recognition of its impact, the NUE team received a Special Recognition Award at the national Empty Homes Conference held in Birmingham in May 2025.

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




Since its launch in 2005, No Use Empty has enabled a total financial investment of £191.3m. This includes £117.6m in direct loans issued through the scheme, alongside £73.7m in additional funding leveraged from both public and private sector partners.

Economic decline, recession, and historically low property values have contributed to a lack of investment in several coastal areas of the South East—particularly Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, and Thanet. While broader regeneration initiatives are beginning to attract high-profile investors and funding, this has also sparked increased interest from small and medium-sized property developers seeking to refurbish empty buildings and convert them into homes.

However, many of these properties suffer from severe dilapidation, and developers often face barriers in accessing renovation finance through traditional market channels. As a result, numerous buildings have remained vacant, despite growing demand and development potential.

Delivered by Kent County Council (KCC) in partnership with all twelve district councils, No Use Empty offers a replicable model that combines financial assistance with expert advice and guidance. The Kent approach has already been adopted by Southend-on-Sea City Council (2022), which utilises the NUE team for back-office support in delivering its own loan scheme. NUE is now self-financing, sustained through interest-bearing loans and application fees.

NUE remains firmly committed to reducing the number of long-term empty properties—defined as dwellings unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over six months. Since 2005, district Empty Homes Officers have helped return more than 8,773 properties to use through a range of targeted interventions:
- adjusting delivery models to reflect current market conditions;
- providing financial assistance to owners by offering short term secured loans with repayments recycled for new loans;
- continuity over a sustained period.

Bringing long-term empty properties back into use is a powerful driver of regeneration—one that not only delivers much-needed housing but also creates employment opportunities and fosters a renewed sense of community. By revitalising neglected spaces, these projects breathe new life into local areas, supporting both economic recovery and social cohesion.

## NUE Residential

**Residential statistics**
According to data from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, the number of long-term empty dwellings in England rose by 1.35% to 265,061—an increase of 3,587 properties. This marks the third consecutive year of growth in long-term vacancy. These figures refer to dwellings that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than six months.

Kent currently has 8,635 long-term empty dwellings, with 7,500 located within the Kent County Council area and 1,135 within the Medway Council area. This represents 3.2% of the national total—an increase of 0.2%. These figures include properties across all tenures, including those owned by local authorities, housing associations, and the private sector, although the majority are privately owned.

In the last year:
- five districts in Kent reported a reduction in long-term empty homes, with Tonbridge & Malling seeing the largest drop (76 properties), followed by Dover (44);
- the district with the highest number of long-term empty properties is Thanet (1,185) followed by Canterbury (953), then Folkestone and Hythe (943);
- Ashford recorded the highest increase in long-term empty properties, with a rise of 369;
- Dartford had the fewest long-term empty homes at 253, closely followed by Gravesham with 285.

**NUE compared to the rest of the South East of England**
There are 68 councils identified within the South East region. A comparison of 2024 rankings with those from 2023 reveals that 9 of Kent's 12 district councils have improved their position relative to other South East authorities. Despite Buckinghamshire being ranked first in 2024, it still has 1,732 long-term empty properties. Brighton and Hove recorded the highest number in the region, with 1,955 long-term empty properties whilst Crawley has the lowest number with 165 long term empty properties.

**NUE Residential Loan Scheme**
The NUE scheme provides short-term secured loans to help property owners and developers cover the cost of repairs and renovations needed to bring empty homes back into

use. New applicants can access interest-free loans of up to £175,000, while repeat applicants are offered loans on interest-bearing terms.

The loan scheme operates on a recyclable basis—once repaid, funds are reinvested into new projects. So far, NUE has issued £65.9m in secured loans, leveraging an additional £51.6m from both public and private sector partners. This combined investment has supported the creation of 1,602 housing units across Kent. Notably, 18% of all long-term empty properties brought back into use in the county are directly attributed to NUE loan interventions.

In addition to its core funding, the NUE scheme also manages top-up loans on behalf of Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, and Tunbridge Wells councils. These loans help developers bridge the financial gap between a property's value before and after refurbishment, covering renovation costs that are often excluded by traditional lenders. This collaborative approach has been key to bringing many otherwise unviable properties back into use, including the former Beacon Church, Dover.

The average cost to renovate a property and return it to use is £73,376, with Kent County Council contributing an average of £41,165 per unit. To date, over £47.4m—equivalent to 72% of all loans issued—has been successfully repaid and recycled into new projects.


NUE

**Beacon Church, London Road, Dover.**

**CASE STUDY**
**NUE Residential: Master William's Place (formerly Queens House), Folkestone**

Browns Realty Limited acquired the leasehold title for Queens House in August 2024. Since then, NUE has provided an interest-bearing loan to support what is now its most ambitious refurbishment project to date. Prominently located at the corner of Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street in the heart of the town centre, the building had become a long-standing eyesore, having remained boarded up for over a year.

Constructed in the 1960s, Queens House originally served as a retail and office building across five levels—basement, ground, and three upper floors. The ground floor retail unit, currently occupied by Bonmarché, is excluded from the scope of the NUE project. The upper floors had undergone partial residential conversion under previous ownership, but the development stalled prior to completion.

Planning permission was initially granted by Folkestone and Hythe District Council in 2022 for the conversion of office space into 27 residential apartments (12 one-bedroom and 15 two-bedroom units). In November 2024, a further application was approved for an additional five two-bedroom self-contained flats. NUE is supporting this expanded scheme with an interest-bearing loan.

Upon completion, Queens House will be transformed into 32 modern, affordable rental homes, revitalising a previously underutilised building and contributing positively to the local housing market. The total project cost is £6.2m, with the internal floor area of the flats totalling 24,102ft$^2$ (2,239m$^2$).

**Long-term empty property rankings in Kent**

| South East positions | Rank 2024 | Rank 2023 | Change in position | Long-term empty properties 2024 | Long-term empty properties 2023 | Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ashford | 59 | 9 | -50 | 328 | 697 | 369 |
| Canterbury | 10 | 62 | 52 | 953 | 967 | -14 |
| Dartford | 18 | 30 | 12 | 267 | 253 | -14 |
| Dover | 7 | 64 | 57 | 762 | 806 | -44 |
| Folkestone & Hythe | 55 | 56 | 1 | 827 | 943 | 116 |
| Gravesham | 39 | 8 | -31 | 224 | 285 | 61 |
| Maidstone | 30 | 50 | 20 | 614 | 624 | 10 |
| Sevenoaks | 21 | 49 | 28 | 371 | 363 | -8 |
| Swale | 33 | 47 | 14 | 484 | 501 | 17 |
| Thanet | 13 | 63 | 50 | 1,185 | 1,143 | 42 |
| Tonbridge and Malling | 6 | 55 | 49 | 413 | 489 | -72 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 29 | 38 | 9 | 489 | 413 | -76 |

BROWNS REALTY

**Master Williams's Place (formerly Queens House), corner of Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street, Folkestone.**

**Infrastructure and Regeneration**
Continued

## NUE Commercial

While NUE has traditionally focused on vacant residential properties, it successfully secured £3m from the Growing Places Fund (GPF), previously administered by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). This funding is designed to stimulate economic growth, generate employment, and accelerate housing development on stalled sites. Operating as a recyclable loan scheme, the GPF funding aligns well with NUE's broader objectives.

NUE Commercial provides short-term, secured loans aimed at bringing vacant commercial properties—such as shops and disused workspaces—back into productive use. These projects typically support commercial or mixed-use redevelopment, with a particular focus on coastal locations.

The target was to bring 33 empty commercial properties back into use and create 64 new homes by March 2026. NUE has successfully delivered 22 of the 23 commercial properties it was contracted to restore. Additionally, by repurposing space above commercial premises, a total of 80 new homes have been created—exceeding the original housing target.

**NUE Commercial–total investment £13.5m from £3m GPF allocation**

| Targets | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **33 commercial units** | **64 residential units** | | | | |
| **Contracted** | **Contracted** | **Location** | **GPF loan £** | **Leverage £** | **Total £** |
| 3 | 6 | Canterbury | 205,000 | 225,000 | 430,000 |
| 2 | 1 | Deal | 85,000 | 410,000 | 495,000 |
| 12 | 19 | Dover | 815,000 | 1,779,600 | 2,594,600 |
| 1 | 6 | Faversham | 100,000 | 550,000 | 650,000 |
| 5 | 17 | Folkestone | 775,000 | 3,178,572 | 3,953,572 |
| 1 | 6 | Herne Bay | 150,000 | 230,000 | 380,000 |
| 4 | 11 | Margate | 240,000 | 878,867 | 1,118,867 |
| 1 | 1 | Minster | 100,000 | 50,000 | 150,000 |
| 6 | 9 | Ramsgate | 225,000 | 1,866,500 | 2,091,500 |
| 1 | 0 | Sandwich | 100,000 | 400,000 | 500,000 |
| 1 | 3 | Sheerness | 125,000 | 492,000 | 617,000 |
| 1 | 1 | Sittingbourne | 80,000 | 424,918 | 504,918 |
| **38** | **80** | **Total investment** | **3,000,000** | **10,485,457** | **13,485,457** |

**CASE STUDY**
**NUE Commercial: Old Wine Warehouse, 1 Charlotte Court, Ramsgate**
Bringing the former Page & Sons wine warehouse in Ramsgate back into use has been a significant journey. The building, located in Charlotte Court, officially reopened on 26 June 2025. Originally constructed for wine storage by Page & Sons—established in 1804 and still trading in the town today—the warehouse stands as a testament to Ramsgate's rich commercial heritage.

Vacant since its closure in 2014, the property has now been transformed into a vibrant creative hub. The first-floor houses co-working offices operated by Ramsgate Works, while the basement has been converted into a bar and performance space managed by Ramsgate Arts Club. At street level, the space features a restaurant and extends into the courtyard opposite, which serves as an outdoor café, community garden, and entertainment venue. This area is leased to the Giant Gathering Collective Limited.

Heritage Lab Ramsgate acquired the Old Wine Warehouse in 2023, undertaking a redevelopment project with total costs amounting to £600,000. The initiative has been financed through a combination of loans and grants, primarily supported by Kent County Council. A loan of £430,000 was provided by NUE, with additional funding contributions from the Kent and Medway Business Loan Fund, Kent Community Foundation, The Architectural Heritage Fund, Ramsgate Town Council, and DLA Piper.

HERITAGE LAB CIC

**Old Wine Warehouse, 1 Charlotte Court.**

**CASE STUDY**
**NUE Commercial: Admiral Owen, High Street, Sandwich**
The property is a Grade II listed timber-framed building situated on a prominent corner plot in Sandwich. Originally known as the 'Pelican' and later the 'Three Mariners,' it has carried the name 'The Admiral Owen' since around 1832. The building itself dates to approximately 1546. According to its listing, it is a 15th-century timber-framed structure that was re-fronted in the 18th century, while retaining the distinctive overhanging first floor.

The pub, which closed in 2019, was acquired at auction by the Waite family in 2020. It is currently undergoing extensive refurbishment, with skilled local tradespeople being engaged to ensure the building's long-term preservation. To date, approximately £500,000 has been invested in the project, including a £100,000 NUE Commercial loan. Completion is anticipated in the new year, after which a high-end restaurant will be launched, creating new employment opportunities in the hospitality and food sectors for the local community.

## NUE New Build homes

In 2020 KCC made available £12m for NUE to provide funding for new builds on derelict or vacant land with required permissions in place. All loans are secured as a first charge and interest is collected on a quarterly basis with the capital loan being repaid on an agreed future date or if sold. Demand was such that by KCC increased the funding available in 2024 to £28m.

To date, the NUE New Build loan scheme has approved £51.7m in loans to support the development of 313 new homes across nine of Kent's twelve districts. Of these, 204 homes have been completed, sold, and the associated £23.5m in loans repaid and recycled into new projects. The average loan per new-build unit stands at £157,928.

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

**CASE STUDY**
**NUE New Build homes—West Bay Mews, Westgate-On-Sea**
NUE provided an interest-bearing loan to NSquared Developments, an SME contractor specialising in residential schemes ranging from 2 to 25 homes, primarily across Kent and parts of East Sussex.

At West Bay Mews, NUE has supported the development of four generously proportioned homes. Each property features three spacious double bedrooms—including a striking, light-filled loft room with aluminium roof lights—and three elegantly designed bathrooms. Thoughtfully created for modern family living, the homes incorporate smart storage solutions such as walk-in closets, ample eaves storage, utility rooms, and understairs cupboards. Each home also benefits from two allocated parking spaces.

Sustainability is a key feature of the development, with energy-efficient underfloor heating and Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) providing eco-friendly warmth. ASHPs can be up to four times more efficient than traditional gas boilers, helping to reduce energy costs. All homes are covered by a 10-year Global Building Warranty, offering peace of mind to future residents.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**West Bay Mews 2, Westgate-On-Sea.**

## NUE Business units

In the previous Kent Property Market Report, NUE highlighted its pilot project the Tridax Business Park on Honeywood Parkway, Whitfield, Dover. This regeneration scheme is playing a key role in Dover's economic recovery, delivering 24 new business units and serving as a flagship example of NUE's impact.

Building on this success, NUE is now working with the Kent and Medway Business Loan Fund to seek Kent County Council approval for up to £6m in funding. The aim is to replicate this model in other areas of the county, supporting job creation, economic growth, and increased business rate revenues.

## NUE Going forward

By returning vacant domestic and commercial properties to use, the No Use Empty initiative continues to deliver significant economic benefits across Kent. The programme has boosted Council Tax revenues, attracted New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding, and contributed to increased Business Rates. To date, NUE has created or safeguarded over 2,117 jobs and provided homes for more than 3,524 residents. Kent's proactive approach to tackling empty properties has received widespread recognition:

- winner of three national awards for excellence in regeneration and partnership working;
- finalist in the 'Council of the Year' category at the UK Housing Awards in both 2020 and 2022—KCC was the only non-housing authority to be shortlisted;
- contributed to the Local Government Association's guide *'A Practical Approach for Councils on Dealing with Empty Homes'* (November 2023), offering insights on national statistics, best practices, and strategies for improving empty homes services;
- featured on BBC's The One Show as the lead item (October 2024);
- showcased at the National Empty Homes Conference (May 2025);
- acknowledged in BBC's In-Depth feature *'Empty homes are on the rise. So why aren't they being used to solve the housing shortage?'* (August 2025).

NUE remains committed to exploring new funding opportunities and continues to engage with the Empty Homes Network and the national charity Action on Empty

**Infrastructure and Regeneration**
Continued

Homes, which advocates for policy reform and raises awareness of the environmental benefits of tackling empty properties.

Reusing empty buildings to create homes offers significant environmental advantages. It conserves materials compared to new construction, reduces land consumption, and prevents the loss of embedded carbon—contributing meaningfully to climate change mitigation. Moreover, retrofitting empty homes is both practical and cost-effective, as deep retrofit measures are most efficiently implemented while properties are unoccupied.

## NUE Lessons learned

A key takeaway from the NUE approach is the amplified impact achieved through collaborative working to address property vacancy, rather than isolated or fragmented efforts. The scheme is designed with enough flexibility to allow district councils to focus on their individual priorities, while maintaining a shared goal and a unified framework for delivery. NUE continues to innovate beyond simply returning empty homes to use. It plays a vital role in supporting Kent's economic recovery by accelerating housing delivery—albeit on a modest scale—and contributing to the regeneration of local communities.

For further information:
www.nue.org.uk

www.local.gov.uk/publications/practical-approach-councils-dealing-empty-homes

BBC News—*Empty home crisis: Why aren't they being used to solve shortages?* Scan the QR code to read the article.

# Transportation

### Lower Thames Crossing

The Secretary of State for Transport approved plans for the largest road tunnel in the UK in March 2025. Linking the A2/M2 in Kent with the A13 in Thurrock and on to the M25 at Junction 29, National Highways expects the new road will reduce traffic at the Dartford Crossing by 20% and open by 2032.

Whilst a decision is yet to be made on the funding model for this major project, the Government awarded it £590m in June 2025 for further design and survey work ahead of the construction phase starting in 2026. National Highways are aiming to make it 'Britain's greenest road,' including planting one million new trees and building seven green bridges to help wildlife move across the road corridor.

### Local Transport Plan

*'Local Transport Plan 5: Striking the Balance'* is the new statutory Local Transport Plan for Kent, and was adopted by Kent County Council in December 2024. The plan aims to strike a balance between the essential investment needed to maintain our local road network so it remains safe and available for users, whilst remaining ambitious with a range of large scale proposals to support Kent's economic growth and quality of life. The Local Transport Plan explains that delivery of the pipeline of proposals will require sustained and significant funding, regardless of the future structure of local government in the county. Throughout the plan, each transport proposal is clearly described, including what needs to happen next so that all stakeholders can clearly understand which proposals are likely to be delivered in the shorter term, and which have substantial planning and development still to take place before delivery.

### North Thanet Link

In 2025, the Government approved the Outline Business Case and committed funding for the North Thanet Link as part of its Major Road Network funding stream. This new road will be an alternative route between Birchington and Margate as well as relieving Acol by encouraging traffic away from the village centre. It will improve connectivity and resilience within the road network of Thanet by helping the local road network cope with future increases in traffic generated by growth and tourism activity. There will be new routes for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport services. Subject to the necessary consents, construction is expected to start in 2028.

You can read more about the project by scanning the QR code:

### Blue Bell Hill

The A229 Blue Bell Hill runs between Junction 6 of the M20 in Maidstone and Junction 3 of the M2 at Blue Bell Hill Village close to Medway. The strategic route that connects two motorway corridors has suffered from congestion and unreliable journey times, and traffic is expected to increase once the Lower Thames Crossing opens as well as with general growth across Kent and Medway. Kent County Council is in the early stages of design, modelling and assessment work to finalise a scheme to address these issues. A bid has been made to the Government's Large Local Major Schemes fund and if approval and necessary consents are granted, the scheme aims to begin construction in late 2028.

You can read more about the project by scanning the QR code:


**Blue Bell Hill, north end.**

## Folkestone Town Centre Regeneration

Folkestone and Hythe District Council secured £19.8m of Levelling Up Funding to deliver a regeneration scheme in Folkestone. The scheme includes transport and public realm improvements within the town centre to:

- increase the attractiveness of the town centre to promote increased dwell time;
- stimulate economic growth in the town;
- promote active travel opportunities.

Delivery commenced in April 2025, and it is due to complete in Summer 2026.

Further information on the scheme can be found by scanning the QR code:

## Rail network improvements in Kent

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

### Thanet Parkway Station

Thanet Parkway, a new station near Cliffsend, opened in July 2023. This has significantly improved rail access to and from London for local communities, Discovery Park and Manston business parks with London just over an hour away. Now, two years after opening, services frequencies to London have increased to two trains per hour throughout the day and even more in the peak hours. Passenger journeys in its second full year of opening increased by over 50%.

You can read more about the facilities at the new station by scanning the QR code:

### Westenhanger Station: Otterpool Park Garden Town

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

### Lenham Heathlands Station: Lenham Heathlands Garden Town

Maidstone District Council has proposed a new garden town to the west of Lenham within its new Local Plan. The new Garden Town could provide the passenger market and funding for a new railway station to serve the development, adding a new stop between the existing stations of Lenham and Charing. Plans are being developed with the input of the rail operator and Network Rail, as the infrastructure owner. The delivery date for the station will be dependent on the timescales for the design and consent of the new garden town and when funding for the station works become available.

## International rail services

International rail services formerly served Kent, providing connections from Ebbsfleet International and Ashford International to Paris and Brussels, as well as seasonal services to other destinations in France. However, since 2020, international rail services provided by Eurostar have not stopped at Kent stations. Eurostar International state that they have not ruled out returning services to Kent and will review their plans concerning the county in 2026. A partnership of the affected local councils, and trade organisations, including the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, are working together to make the case for a return of services. As part of this, the partnership approaches new potential operators to describe the market opportunities in Kent. The local government partnership hopes to convince either Eurostar or a new operator to return services to stopping at both stations in Kent as soon as possible.

# Contributor

clear
insurance management

## Navigating the Challenges: The UK Construction and Insurance Landscape in 2025

### Construction sector overview

The UK construction industry continues to grapple with inflationary pressures, particularly rising material costs. A very significant strain on profit margins stems from increased wage expenses following the Government's Autumn 2024 Budget. Changes to National Insurance Contributions and the National Living Wage, which came into effect in April, have placed additional financial burdens on construction firms—costs that are rarely recoverable on existing contracts, forcing companies to absorb them.

Compounding these financial pressures is a persistent skills shortage. The sector is seeing a steady outflow of experienced tradespeople, many retiring, while efforts to attract younger entrants remain largely ineffective. This generational gap poses long-term risks to productivity and project delivery.

The rate of insolvency within the sector remains alarmingly high. In the first half of 2025 alone, 150 construction firms entered administration. Notable recent cases include Cannock Building Services, Corbyn, The Clarison Group, and English Architectural Glazing—each leaving behind substantial debts to subcontractors and suppliers, further destabilising the supply chain. Reports indicate a growing number of firms are experiencing financial distress, underscoring the fragility of the sector.

In June 2024, the Government announced an ambitious target to build 1.5 million new homes over five years. While initially welcomed, this initiative has yet to translate into tangible project starts. Housing construction remains subdued, with developers citing prolonged delays in planning approvals. However, falling interest rates may offer a glimmer of hope, potentially stimulating the housing market by improving mortgage affordability.

### Summary

The insurance market continues to soften, especially in Professional Indemnity (PI) cover. 'Any one claim' policies, or policies offering unlimited reinstatements of the Limit of Indemnity, are becoming more accessible in the market, although underwriters remain cautious about specific risks. Whilst concerns persist around cladding and fire safety cover, the market has softened in this area so that it is now possible to obtain policies that do not include a total 'Fire Safety' exclusion. We are experiencing an ongoing reluctance to insure basement and sub-basement developments in London due to a history of high-value claims involving damage to neighbouring properties.

In the Contract Works and Liability insurance market, competition is intensifying. Insurers are keen to retain business, readily offering reduced rates to clients with strong claims histories. However, exclusions remain for high-risk activities such as basement work, piling, underpinning, and roofing. Modern methods of construction continue to pose underwriting challenges due to limited claims data, with timber frame structures being a notable exception due to past high-value losses.

Theft claims are generally declining, but construction plant theft remains a concern—particularly in Kent. The ease with which stolen equipment can be transported abroad, often to Eastern Europe, complicates recovery efforts. Police reports suggest limited international cooperation hampers asset retrieval.

The Management Liability, or 'Directors & Officers' Liability, market overall has softened with increased competition and capacity, but this is limited in the Construction sector due to the claims impact of both insolvencies and Employment related claims. Insurers continue to develop their legal assistance facilities, especially in the Employment Practices Liability arena, and encourage policyholders to use these to reduce the risk of a claim, or to mitigate the costs of a claim. Some Insurers will reduce the excess payable on a claim if this is used. With insolvencies continuing to be widespread, there is a need to ensure appropriate action is taken in respect of this policy cover if 'the worst' happens. 'Run-off' cover is readily available and is highly recommended, even if the Directors do need to pay the premium personally to ensure continued protection for actions taken prior to insolvency that may come 'home to roost' at some later date.

Cyber insurance remains a critical area of concern. High-profile breaches involving M&S, Co-op, and Harrods have highlighted vulnerabilities across supply chains. Despite these incidents, uptake of new cyber policies remains modest. However, existing policyholders are increasing their coverage limits, recognising the potentially catastrophic costs of cyberattacks. The 2025 Cyber Security Breaches Survey, commissioned by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and the Home Office, revealed that over 40% of businesses and 30% of charities experienced a cyber breach or attack in the past year. Insurers are responding by integrating risk management services into their offerings, shifting focus from reactive coverage to proactive protection at the same time as improving the policy coverage available to its customers. As an example, more and more cyber-Insurers are offering an 'Any One Claim' basis of cover as standard as opposed to the original 'Aggregate' Limit of Indemnity that has previously been available.

Finally, the Motor Fleet insurance market remains under pressure. Rising repair costs, driven by increased parts and labour expenses, are prompting insurers to be more selective in offering competitive terms. Extended repair times, particularly in respect of some makes of Electric Vehicles, also contribute to higher claims costs, particularly when insurers must cover the cost of hire vehicles during downtime.

### Conclusion

The UK construction and insurance sectors are navigating a complex and evolving landscape. While there are signs of resilience and adaptation, particularly in insurance offerings and mortgage trends, structural challenges—ranging from financial pressures to workforce shortages—require strategic responses. Stakeholders across both industries must remain agile, informed, and collaborative to weather the current climate and seize emerging opportunities.

# Contributor

## National Planning Policy Framework: The good, the bad and the Green Belt

**DHA has grown to be one of the largest independent multi-disciplinary planning consultancies in the region, offering planning, transport, urban design, environment, infrastructure and land consultancy advice.**

The firm's 80-strong team of planners, surveyors and engineers provide their clients with expert insight of the planning system, helping them to navigate their proposed developments through to permission.

The Government's changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are having significant implications for the development community—whether it's commercial or residential developers, or landowners seeking to get land through the Local Plan process.

### New housing targets

The Government's new approach to setting housing targets has seen bigger increases than anticipated for most Kent authorities. In West Kent (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells) the increases were the most significant due to the constrained nature of these districts and boroughs and their historic under delivery. Elsewhere, there were generally more modest increases of up to 10%, and Ashford, Dartford and Medway saw modestly reduced targets based on their historic roles as growth areas.

The impact of the increase has been mixed. For those Councils historically struggling to meet their housing supply requirements, the increased targets emphasised the need for the development management process to intervene and to approve suitable planning applications now. This has given developers the confidence to commit to the process.

From a less positive perspective, the need to plan for much higher housing targets has inevitably resulted in further delays to the plan making process as authorities contemplate how the additional homes should be accommodated in both a practical and political sense.

### Green Belt reforms

NPPF changes to Green Belt policy have also removed longstanding barriers to make efficient use of 'previously developed land', and introduced a more permissive test that allows more flexibility and a higher quantum of development. The reforms mean the threshold for harm has been increased so that greater levels of development can be accommodated if no 'substantial harm' is caused. As a result, there's more scope to maximise and deliver a better quality of development on previously developed Green Belt sites.

The headlining Green Belt reform remains a new 'Grey Belt' concept, defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that does not strongly contribute to any of the purposes of checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas, preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

Critically, a subsequent update to Planning Practice Guidance has further clarified that the role of the Green Belt is to stop towns merging and that the protection does not apply in equal measures to villages, hamlets or any other type of rural settlement.

These changes have created a never-seen-before ability to bring forward greenfield sites that can now be acceptable under national Green Belt policy. The first group of Grey Belt appeals have begun to flow through the system with Inspectors determining sites can be of a substantial scale and not restricted to small scale 'infill' as initially expected.

These reforms are of huge significance and have seen a major uplift in landowners and developers seeking to make the most of these changes.

### The 'golden rules' and viability

Whilst NPPF has made it easier to develop in the Green Belt, the permissive policies are caveated that where 'major' development is proposed, a higher percentage of affordable housing is required, plus improvements to local infrastructure and accessible open space. National policy and associated guidance also limit the ability to use financial viability arguments to reduce or remove affordable housing requirements.

The requirement for increased affordable housing appears to have done little to put off greenfield developers. Indeed, many local planning authorities were often already seeking 40% (or higher provision) on large scale schemes and this is generally of limited consequences on undeveloped land that is otherwise of limited value.

However, the removal of viability reviews is having a negative impact on repurposing previously developed land that attracts higher build and remediation costs, as well as higher existing use values. With the Government's emphasis on prioritising the use of previously developed land, this issue will need to be reviewed.

### Summary

The new NPPF reforms are seeking to accelerate the delivery of housing, particularly in areas where delivery has been historically constrained. However, to fully accelerate delivery it is essential further measures are introduced to speed up the system in non-Green Belt areas. Local planning authorities must also be properly resourced to facilitate the uplift in applications.


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# Contributor

# Hollaway

**Architects / Master Planners / Interior Designers**

## Beyond architecture

For many, the word *architect* conjures an image of someone in a studio, sketching elegant drawings of ambitious buildings—leaving behind not only beautiful designs, but also a sense of public good, perhaps punctuated by the occasional charitable donation.

While that picture may once have been true, life at Hollaway tells a different story. For us, architecture is not just about designing buildings—it's about navigating across generations and social tiers, solving problems, and shaping communities in meaningful ways.

### Supporting culture and creativity

The Folkestone Triennial is a cornerstone in our calendar. Every three years, this internationally renowned arts festival brings over a quarter of a million visitors to the town. As close neighbours, we are proud to support it not only financially, but by championing the artists, both emerging and established, who transform our public spaces. Studio tours during the festival remind us of the importance of engaging with the cultural and artistic communities where our work so often takes root.

### Investing in community spaces

In Canterbury, the Marlowe Theatre is nothing short of a powerhouse—contributing more than £40m to the local economy while enriching the city's cultural life. Its trustees, including Guy Hollaway, who has been on the board for eight years & on the Capital and Estates committee, help steer its future. Guy is currently involved in the transformation of the historic Poor Priests' Hospital into a centre for young people, where the performing arts can inspire the next generation. The recent production Party Girls is written, produced and performed by the Marlowe and now touring is just one example of how such investment changes lives. Here, the architect's role extends beyond money, it is about applying expertise to create long-lasting community value.

### Designing for lasting impact

Our gold medal-winning pavilion for the Glass House charity at the Chelsea Flower Show showed another side of architecture's power. Created on a no-fee basis, the project maximised the benefit to the charity, which supports women leaving prison. This pavilion was not just an exhibition piece, it was designed with a legacy, offering hope, healing, and reintegration through thoughtful design. Supporting a charity with a record 0% reoffending rate helps all of us through the communities through building trust and value on people who need it.

### Growing the next generation

Our graduate programme, now in its fifteenth year, is another way we build community from within. Each year, we welcome graduates from local universities, embedding them into our studios and walking alongside them as they grow into architects. Many of our current architects, associates, and even partners began their journey through this programme. Though it may not be the simplest way to run a business, it embodies our belief in opportunity, continuity, and the value of long-term relationships. This grows a culture, investment into the practice, and helps to build communities.

### Beyond bricks and mortar

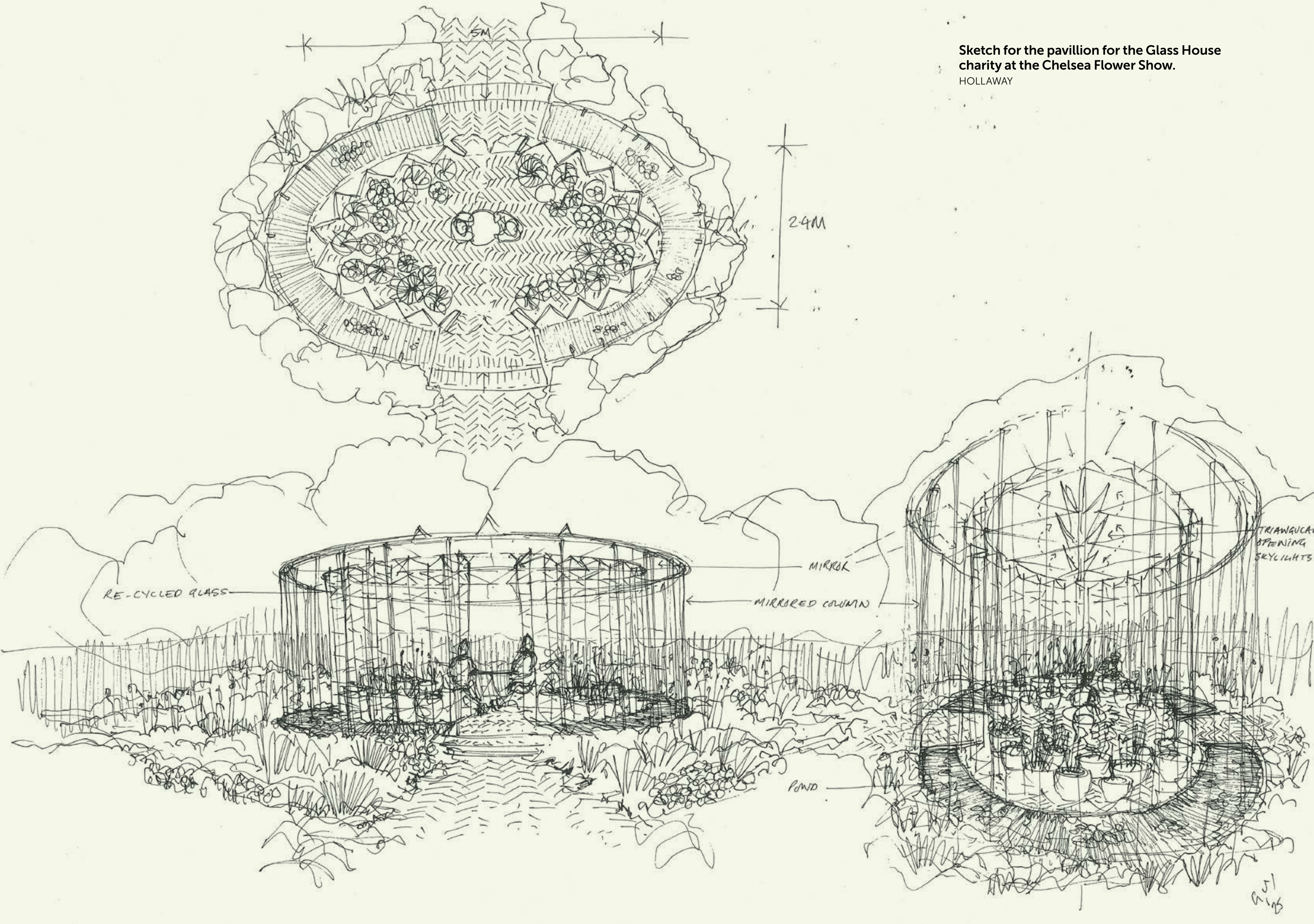
At Hollaway, we believe the role of an architect is about far more than buildings or donations. It is about creating value, fostering respect, and building trust within communities. It is about using design and expertise to drive change, nurture relationships, and shape environments that enrich lives.

The true joy of architecture lies not just in what we create, but in how people experience it and in how it continues to give back, long after the last brick is laid.

**Alex Richards** BArch (Hons) MArch RIAS RIBA
Managing Partner, Hollaway Studio

HOLLAWAY

**Our gold medal-winning pavilion for the Glass House charity at the Chelsea Flower Show.**




**Sketch for the pavillion for the Glass House charity at the Chelsea Flower Show.**
HOLLAWAY

# Contributor

## Insights from the Kent Property Market Report 2025

As contributor sponsors of the Kent Property Market Report 2025-26, MHA Baker Tilly is delighted to support this important platform for sharing knowledge and foresight across the region's property sector. Each year, this report provides valuable insight into the trends, challenges, and opportunities that shape Kent's market.

The timing of the 2025 edition is particularly significant. The county finds itself navigating both economic headwinds and new avenues for growth, with developers, investors, and occupiers all working to adapt strategies in an environment that is anything but static.

### Sector performance

Kent's property sector has continued to demonstrate resilience in the face of wider national and global uncertainty. While higher interest rates and inflationary pressures have tested affordability and investor appetite, activity in both residential and commercial markets has remained steady.

Residential demand is strong, driven by Kent's dual role as a commuter hub for London and an attractive place to live in its own right. Infrastructure improvements, combined with population growth, are underpinning long-term confidence in the region.

On the commercial side, Kent's strategic location continues to attract significant interest in logistics and distribution. With strong motorway and port access, the county remains a key link in national and international supply chains. The industrial sector, in particular, has benefitted from the growth of e-commerce and ongoing supply chain diversification.

### Real estate sector trends

Several trends are shaping the outlook for Kent's real estate market:

- **Housing supply pressures remain acute.** Developers face rising build costs while local authorities are under pressure to deliver against housing targets. Affordability challenges, especially for first-time buyers, persist.
- **Commercial evolution** continues, with demand for flexible and high-quality office space replacing traditional large-scale models. Hybrid working patterns are redefining both occupier and investor priorities.
- **Sustainability and ESG** are firmly embedded. From energy-efficient residential schemes to low-carbon logistics facilities, green credentials are now a pre-condition for attracting both capital and tenants.
- **Investor sentiment** is cautious but opportunistic. While international capital may take a wait-and-see approach, local and regional players are pressing ahead, particularly in regeneration and mixed-use developments.

These dynamics show how Kent is both responding to national trends and leveraging its unique regional strengths.

### The upcoming November 2025 budget

Attention is now turning to the forthcoming Budget in November 2025, which is expected to have a significant bearing on the property sector. Market participants are watching closely for potential measures on:

- **business rates reform,** particularly for commercial occupiers and investors;
- **housing delivery incentives,** including support for first-time buyers and funding for affordable housing;
- **taxation policy,** where changes to capital gains or stamp duty could directly influence investment activity;
- **green investment initiatives,** with further backing for sustainable construction and retrofitting of existing stock.

For Kent, the stakes are high. With its fast-growing population, ambitious regeneration schemes, and strategic importance to the UK economy, the county is particularly sensitive to fiscal changes that could either accelerate or delay planned developments. Stakeholders across the sector are preparing to adapt their strategies once the details of the Budget are announced.

### Conclusion

The outlook for Kent's property market in 2025 is one of **cautious optimism.** While challenges remain—from affordability to inflationary costs—the county's location, infrastructure, and economic diversity provide strong fundamentals for sustainable growth.

The upcoming Budget will play a critical role in shaping confidence and unlocking further opportunity. Those who remain agile, anticipate policy shifts, and embrace innovation will be best placed to succeed in the months ahead.

At MHA Baker Tilly, we are proud to work alongside investors, developers, and occupiers to help them navigate change, unlock opportunity, and shape the future of Kent's property market.

**If you would like to discuss how the November Budget and emerging trends could impact your property strategy, please get in touch with myself:**

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# Contributor

Thomson Snell & Passmore

## Changing times for the Kent property sector

2025 has seen an unprecedented amount of legislative change for the property sector and there is more in the pipeline. This will continue to have a profound impact on developers, house builders and investors in the region as they attempt to keep ahead of the pace of change.

As we head towards the end of the year, what do those operating in the Kent property sector need to keep in mind?

### Building safety remains high on the agenda

The Building Safety Act (BSA) continues to bite. It particularly looms over the investment in new High Risk Buildings (HRBs) or the refurbishment or redevelopment of existing HRBs or conversions to HRBs given the massive Gateway delays. In addition, the Building Safety Levy could impact all residential development. The Levy has to be paid up front and this may impact the build to rent sector in particular as it can take time to get a return on investment.

And then of course Residential Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (Residential PEEPs) have now been introduced to improve the fire safety of disabled and vulnerable people in high rise and higher risk residential buildings.

### Unlocking planning key to house building targets

While the Government has a robust target in place for home building, unlocking planning issues is key. The Government has taken steps to try and do this, with the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. The Bill is still making its way through the Parliamentary process, however the reforms included in it signal a shift towards more localised fee-setting combined with a more standardised decision-making process from LPAs.

On 25 May 2025, the Government launched both a consultation on implementing measures to improve build out transparency and a working paper on planning reform to speed up building out rates for residential developments. It has stated that "too many developments secure planning permission then are either stalled or not built out quickly to the frustration of Local Planning Authorities and their communities".

The Government is looking to penalise those who do not conform to the new rules, by passing legislation to introduce possible financial penalties and implementing further provisions introduced in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA).

### Climate change action

While there has been backlash against net zero from some quarters, in others it is still high on the agenda. Some argue that the Planning & Infrastructure Bill is watering down Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to enable faster development at the expense of the environment. Yet on the other hand, the Government is currently consulting on the future of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and in February 2025 it also launched a consultation on the future of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for domestic properties.

This will be an interesting space to watch, as responsibility is increasingly pushed on to developers and house builders.

### What will the Budget bring?

The Budget on 26 November may well bring further change. There have recently been rumours circulating that changes to Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) could be introduced and this may have a profound impact if it happens. We may see a surge in completions before any changes come into force as has been the case in recent years.

Many of those working in the Kent property sector will be hoping for further announcements that may help unlock planning and drive growth for the industry. After all, change brings risk, but also opportunity.

### Community remains at the heart of the region

While there may be more change on the horizon, some things remain the same. The Kent property market has proved time and again to be resilient and dynamic. Many of those operating in the area have been doing so for generations and are key members of the local area, who are committed to creating better communities for those in Kent and the wider South East region. This has certainly been our experience from involvement in initiatives such as the Royal Tunbridge Wells Together BID team and 'amplifi' a Tunbridge Wells based group uniting businesses around climate and community.

We remain committed to our charity partners. We're currently supporting The Children's Respite Trust in a two-year partnership. This small, local charity provides respite at its centre in Uckfield and through its Community Support Workers across Sussex and Kent. We've raised much needed funds for The Children's Respite Trust through a number of fundraising initiatives as well volunteering our time at various events the charity has held. We're also proud to support Nourish, a local charity which provides food to those in need, and a local branch of The Hygiene Bank, which works to end hygiene poverty.

# When the only certainty is change

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

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DHA is a creative team of professional Town Planners, Highways, Infrastructure, Design, Environmental and Land Consultants working from offices in Kent, Gatwick, London and Leeds.
We provide a comprehensive and integrated service to some of the UK's largest landowners and developers in both the private and public sector throughout the UK.

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## Hollaway

Hollaway Studio is an RIBA award winning practice of architects, master-planners and interior designers working from studios based both in Kent and London. Hollaway Studio has highly motivated creative architects and designers working in a variety of sectors, from large scale mixed-use regeneration proposals through to smaller bespoke residential projects.

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QUINN ESTATES

**Dwell – a sculptural birdhide by artist Tim Norris. Located at Conningbrook Lakes, Ashford.**
TIM NORRIS. COMMISSIONED BY ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL, PUBLIC ART CONSULTANTS: FRANCISKNIGHT

**Opposite:**
**1500 Eureka Park, Ashford.**
MARTINE WAGHORN


SAGA

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PANATTONI


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DHA/MORTONSCARR ARCHITECTS

**Proposal for Buckmore Park, Chatham.**

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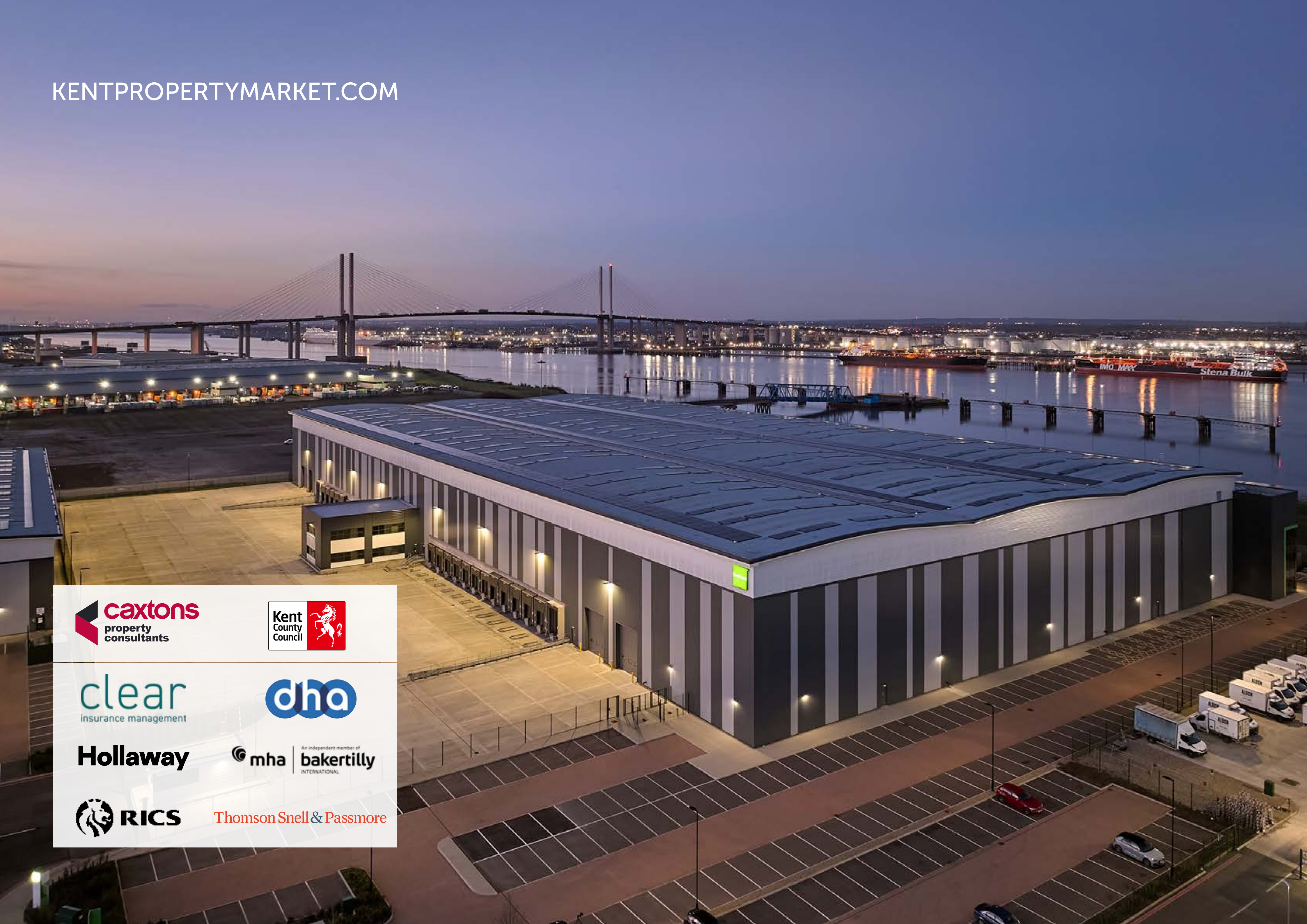

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