

East Kent

Ashford

The last year has been a big year for the commercial property market in Ashford, with key developments put in place to support continued growth, despite the impact of COVID-19. Ashford has become an increasingly important commercial area and is in a strong position to weather the unprecedented times facing business and the property market.

Recent visitors to Ashford will have seen major projects taking shape, such as Connect 38 in the Commercial Quarter, the biggest office block built in Kent in 20 years. The development provides 7,432m² (80,000ft²) of high-specification office space. During 2020 came the arrival of PageSuite taking 557m² (6,000ft²), while three companies Tarkett, Hollis and Towergate took a further 1,022m² (11,000ft²) between them.

Elsewhere in the Quarter, the first tenants are in place at The Coachworks, a collaboration with Turner.Works architects that launched in December 2019. The development transformed disused industrial buildings into a mixed-use campus providing a 200 capacity co-working space, flexible event space and a food and drink destination.

Meanwhile, work is underway on site at Ashford International Film Studios on the 4.86 ha Newtown Works development. Quinn Estates, in partnership with The Creative District Improvement Company and Time+Space Studios, will create 6,968m² (75,000ft²) of television and film studio space. The scheme will include a media village, a 120-bed hotel, serviced apartments and residential properties. COVID-19 will have an impact on business activity as the economy undergoes recovery but innovative projects such as this show Ashford is a desirable location for growth.

Just across the road, late 2019 saw the launch of the £90m extension of the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet, providing 9,290m² (100,000ft²) comprising 50 retail units, parking, a food piazza, a Garden of Light installation and a children's play area, widening its appeal as a leisure and retail destination.

In July 2020, permission was granted for a 1,390m² (14,962ft²) Domaine Evremond production facility and visitor centre near Chilham. The winery represents the first time a Champagne House has planted a vineyard to produce English Sparkling Wine, something which will boost the tourism offer in the 'Wine Garden of England'.

Already the impact of Curious Brewery, which opened in spring 2019, is being felt in improved footfall, particularly around the station area. With an expected 50,000 annual visitors, the 'Cathedral of Brewing' is proving to be a focal point for the area.

Across the railway line, the Council has supported the delivery of Elwick Place. Following the opening of the first phase of the scheme in December 2018, with a Picturehouse cinema and Travelodge, Snap Fitness opened a 398m² (4,284 ft²) unit in January 2020 and the spring saw Macknade open in the 476m² (5,123ft²) Unit 1. Like any other retail centre Ashford will see the impact of retail restructuring and COVID-19, but the increasingly diverse local offer delivers a more sustainable model for the future.

Nearby, Investin is developing Victoria Point with retail units, 216 apartments and a 120-bed Hampton by Hilton hotel, as well as the New Quarter apartment building on Park Street.



The Coachworks Ashford by Turner Works Architects.

CREDIT: GG ARCHARD

Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

At Riverside Park, GRE Assets is completing 246 apartments and 26 townhouses. A further phase will bring the total for the masterplanned scheme up to 660 units.

In the town centre Milligan have been appointed to advise the Council on the redevelopment of Vicarage Lane car park. This will see a mixed-use scheme comprising 60 new homes, workspaces and studios, cultural space, food and drink outlets and a new public square.

Ashford Borough Council's development company, A Better Choice for Property Ltd, has purchased the 0.708ha (1.75acre) site at the junction of Beaver Road and Avenue Jacques Faucheux. A 16-storey apartment building with 206 flats and nine townhouses, as well as offices and a top floor bar and restaurant, are planned.

As part of the Tenterden Southern Extension, Taylor Wimpey and Dandara have completed the development of 250 homes with community facilities, public space and landscaping. Elsewhere, the first residents moved into Chilmington Green in June 2019, with the primary school due to move to its new onsite development this year. Clearly there will be residential market implications from COVID-19 disruption, however the relative value offered in Ashford area, compared to other towns in the south east, will help support the market.

Looking ahead, connectivity is at the heart of economic expansion. The Openreach Fibre First scheme is currently rolling out ultrafast broadband to Tenterden and St Michaels. Across the borough, the Council is pioneering facilitating Fibre-To-The-Premises with a dedicated policy in the Local Plan. Ashford has excellent transport infrastructure, with High Speed One already enabling 38 minute journey times

to London. Network Rail are redeveloping 2.3ha (5.68acres) of the 5.8ha (14.33acre) Chart Leacon site as a new train maintenance facility to support Thameslink services, employing up to 50 staff.

Meanwhile, delivery of M20 Junction 10a, which opened to traffic in 2019 and will be fully completed in summer 2020, provides substantial opportunity for increased property development including Waterbrook Park and the Finberry residential development.

The 52.6ha (130acre) mixed-use scheme at Waterbrook Park is due to see the completion this year of 4,645m² (50,000ft²) of space in units ranging from 186-1,022m² (2,067-10,908ft²). Reserved matters for a new 10,000m² (118,000ft²) last-mile distribution centre were submitted to the Council in July 2020.

Additionally, the International Truckstop opened in 2019, providing 600 HGV spaces which will support the

development of the distribution market in the area. The former 11ha (27acre) MOJO site, adjacent to Junction 10a, has been bought by government and is being developed into a customs area to ensure goods can be imported and exported easily after Brexit.

At Orbital Park, the 6,054m² (65,169ft²) Unit M is available following a comprehensive refurbishment. Meanwhile, the final plot on the Park, comprising 1.1ha (2.71acres), was sold to a private investor at the beginning of 2020.

Even in these unprecedented times, the progression of developments in Ashford such as Chilmington Green, Newtown Works and Waterbrook, provide optimism and opportunity for a positive economic recovery moving into 2021.

For more information:
ashfordfor.com



Proposal for the Kent Wool Growers site, Ashford.

CREDIT: HOLLAWAY STUDIO

Canterbury

While a highly challenging economic environment through 2020 has seen some development projects put on hold across Canterbury district many others are progressing with construction or have joined the development pipeline in recent months.

In the City of Canterbury work continues on the £115m Riverside scheme, which will regenerate the Kingsmead area. Commercial (e.g. cinema, restaurants) and student accommodation elements are due for completion in summer 2021. In addition the construction of 16 new homes on council owned land at the corner of Kingsmead Field is also now underway, with local contractor Coombs aiming for completion by summer 2021. The council's ambitious project to convert former student accommodation into 61 council homes is also progressing at pace, with 24 units now complete and the remaining 37 due to be completed by spring next year. Similarly the redevelopment of the former Slatters Hotel into a high quality 131-bed Hampton by Hilton hotel, new retail units and a roof-top destination restaurant continues towards a project completion of early 2021. Despite a difficult period for the tourism sector new hotel development enquiries have been received for sites in both Canterbury and Herne Bay underlining continuing interest in the area from the hotel sector.

Also in 2020, an expanding pipeline of exciting major new development projects, though not yet approved, are progressing well. This includes Newingate House, a vacant five-storey 1960s' office block which overlooks the ring-road in Canterbury, is set to be transformed into a mixed-use scheme comprising 10 residential apartments and refurbished office space. This also incorporates a rooftop restaurant with views across the city and based on the café design at the LondonTate Modern. A final planning decision is also anticipated for ambitious plans to redevelop the former 8,774m² (94,442ft²) Debenhams department store into 74 new flats and 12 new retail/café units.

This 'repurposing' of vacant commercial space emphasises how Canterbury city centre is very much 'open for business'. It also indicates a period of adaptation as an uncertain economic climate continues to hit the service sector, particularly fashion, accessories and homeware markets. New ideas and schemes are helping to accommodate



Proposal for Hewitt and St Mary Bredin student accommodation, Canterbury.

the changing needs of today's foodservice and hospitality businesses. Food and drink operators have been the most acquisitive throughout 2020 with the city receiving sustained interest from national chains/local operators. A number of vacant shop units are being courted by this sector in prime retail zones like the city's flagship shopping centre Whitefriars as well as in secondary areas. The food and drink sector will be critical in ensuring resilience across the city's economy. With other commercial uses also vital to maintaining the diversity and vibrancy of Canterbury, recent city council reinvestment into the previously vacant 715m² (7,685ft²) Graylaw House on Watling Street has led to improved office space quality with the whole building now fully let to new businesses/occupiers.

Elsewhere in Canterbury a series of developments are underway or approaching completion. The Motorline Group is adding a new 2,629m² (28,298ft²) Audi car

showroom facility to an expanding Canterbury portfolio on its Broad Oak/Vauxhall Road site. Similarly Barretts Group is redeveloping an existing Broad Oak Road site to accommodate a new 1,930m² (20,774ft²) Jaguar Land Rover showroom, offices and workshop facilities. In addition, new purpose-built student accommodation, which redevelops the former Dairy Crest site on Military Road in the city (194 rooms), nears completion with others in the pipeline. Developments on Canterbury based university campuses remain on schedule with Kent and Medway's new medical school due to open to students in Canterbury in September 2020, complete with a 2,500m² (26,910ft²) new building to house a 150-seat lecture theatre.

Just outside the city at Barton Business Park, a second block of four new build, self-contained industrial/distribution/warehousing units has recently been completed, each with mezzanine floors. Developed by the Fort Knight Group this

Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

forms part of a four block project totalling approximately 3,143m² (33,831ft²) in sizes from 210m² (2,260ft²) with one block previously completed/occupied and two more in the pipeline. Units are available to rent now and pre-lets could accommodate requirements up to 1,415m² (15,231ft²).

In Herne Bay, a new 2,125m² (22,873ft²) foodstore is being developed for supermarket chain Lidl on land at Roundabout Farm, creating up to 40 new jobs. On completion in late autumn 2020 this will be Lidl's 'greenest' store in the country with a grass roof, sustainable drainage and computerised Building Management System. Also in Herne Bay 20 jobs will be created when Ryse Hydrogen Ltd builds a 1,610m² (17,330ft²) hydrogen fuel plant on the edge of the town. The facility will be the UK's biggest electrolyser, capable of producing up to 10 tonnes of hydrogen a day (enough to power 500 buses) and positioning Herne Bay at the forefront of the country's green economy.

At Whitstable a planned expansion of the Joseph Wilson Industrial Estate was approved by the city council in late 2019. By bringing this allocated employment site forward 40 new industrial units (B1, B2 & B8 uses) comprising 7,736m² (83,270ft²) will be built by the developer George Wilson, delivering a huge boost to the area's industrial sector.

In demonstrating how Canterbury is bouncing back from this year's crisis, 2020 will also see major milestones reached on a number of city council Local Plan strategic development allocations. Alongside recent planning approvals of new schemes at Herne Bay (land south of Greenhill for 450 homes) and Whitstable (Grasmere Pasture for 300 homes and land north of Thanet Way for 400 homes), key decisions are also expected this year on Mountfield Park (4,000 homes), Hillborough (900 homes) and Sturry & Broad Oak (1,100 homes).

Dover

Dover is extending an open welcome with a whole range of major investments in the district and an exciting focus on the future.

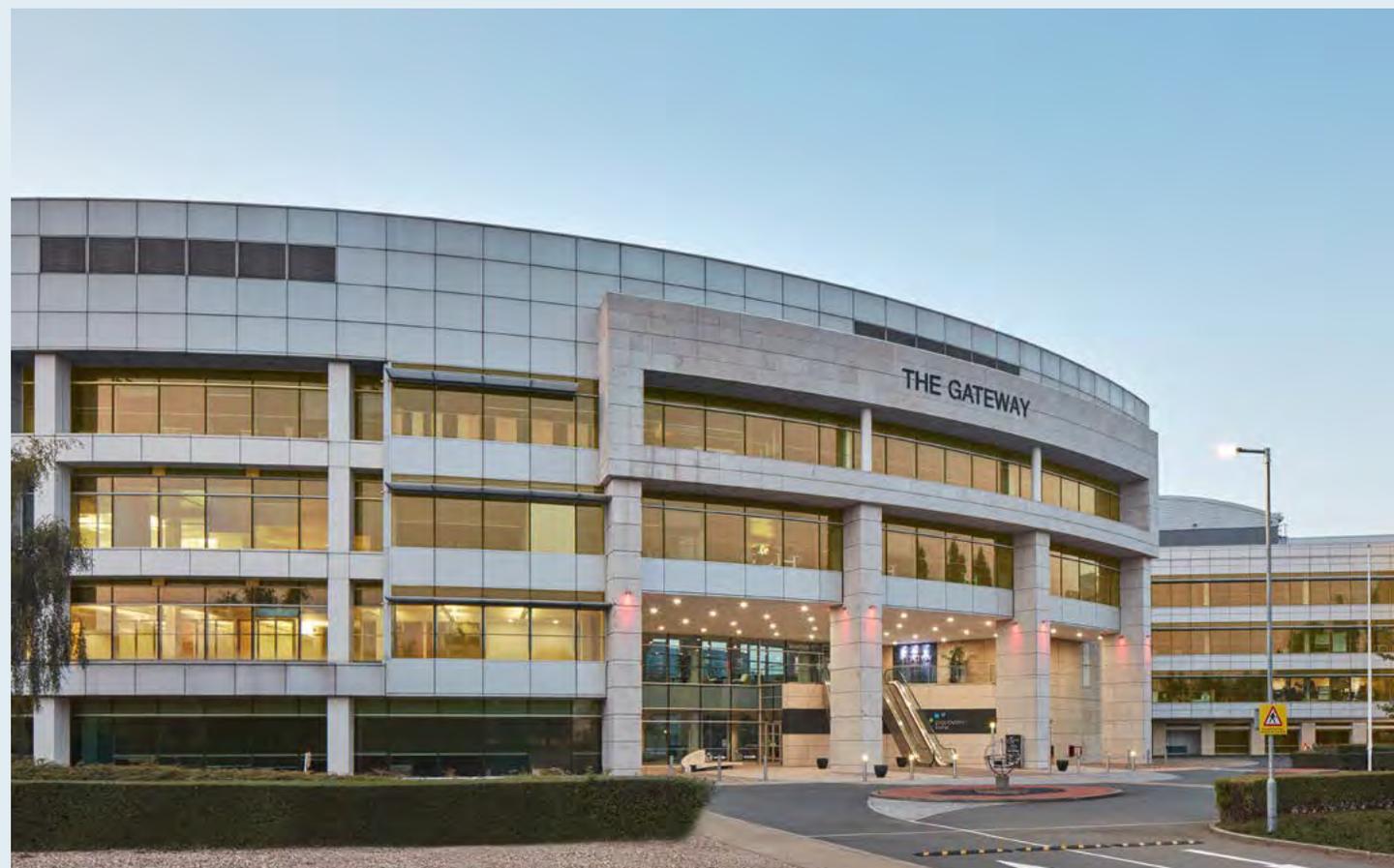
Dover District Council (DDC) has developed a dynamic new tourism strategy with the specific aim of stimulating market growth and new investment in our visitor economy. The message is that White Cliffs Country is not only a great place to visit, but also an outstanding location in which to invest in the tourism and hospitality sector.

The district is now getting ready for the eyes of the world to turn to the district for The Open golf championship to Sandwich in 2021. A range of partners, including Dover

District Council, Kent County Council, the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews and Royal St George's Golf Club are working together to prepare a warm welcome for the return of the championship, which had to be moved from 2020 due to COVID-19.

Dover is just 21 miles from Calais and is a vital international gateway. Combine this with excellent links to central London, just an hour from Dover by high-speed train, and nowhere is better connected for doing business.

Dover Western Docks Revival includes new cargo berths, a port-centric distribution centre and exciting waterfront commercial and residential development opportunities. New investment from ferry operators in the premier link



The Gateway, Discovery Park near Sandwich.

CREDIT: JOEL KNIGHT FOR DISCOVERY PARK/DAMONEDSIGNSTUDIO

to Europe includes news that DFDS has a new ferry starting service in 2021 and P&O has ordered two new ferries for 2023. There is also a major cruise terminal at Dover.

We are seeing a whole range of investments in the district's future.

Discovery Park in Sandwich continues to bring investment into the district, including news that a new 75-bedroom Travelodge is currently under construction. The site has grown to be a thriving part of the South East's life science community as a multi-business science park offering high quality laboratory, office and manufacturing facilities. Pfizer, which first built the site's reputation as a centre for drug discovery, retains a strong presence. There are development opportunities at the iconic Building 500 and Building 518.

We are seeing a multi-million pound investment by Megger, one of the world's leading manufacturers of electrical test equipment, with a new manufacturing building and the redevelopment of the company's HQ buildings in Dover. There is also a range of new investment at White Cliffs Business Park including news that retailer Home Bargains is opening a new store at the Whitfield site.

DDC has been awarded significant funding from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund to support the development of a Bus Rapid Transfer System between Whitfield, Dover town centre and Dover Priory railway station.

Legal & General's £53m St James Development is up and running in the heart of Dover town centre with a range of top names in retail and leisure.

The new £26m Dover District Leisure Centre opened in 2019. The centre includes the first swimming pool in Kent to be purpose-built to Sport England specifications for a county standard competition swimming pool.

House prices are on the rise in Dover district as more and more people look to move to the coast. DDC is in the process of producing a new Local Plan which will include policies to guide development to 2038. Significant housing growth is planned for the future. Work is well underway on the Whitfield Urban Extension with progress on Aylesham Garden Village, alongside continued growth across the

district. DDC has an ambitious programme to build new affordable homes across the district.

DDC continues to work hard to support local businesses and has been providing a range of help and support following lockdown through our dedicated Back to Business Hub.

White Cliffs Country has a wealth of amazing heritage and natural assets, with iconic attractions and an exceptional range of great places to go and things to see, combined with a warm and open welcome.

For more information:
www.investindover.co.uk

Folkestone & Hythe

Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh provide an extraordinary place to live, work, visit and invest in. And it's not hard to see why, with its coastal location, creative and cultural scene and reputation for excellent food and drink.

With the high-speed rail service to London St Pancras in just 54 minutes, direct connections to Europe via Eurotunnel and access to the M20 and M2 motorways make it a highly accessible location.

Businesses come here to start up and grow in a supportive, collaborative business community – popular local workspaces include the affordable studios, small offices and retail property offered by Creative Folkestone in the Creative Quarter and co-working spaces like The Workshop and The Glassworks. Creative and digital industries thrive here, as do the many independent retailers that help make the district so distinctive and diverse. Folkestone & Hythe has proven its credentials as a location to grow a business and have an excellent quality of life. In a world changed by the COVID-19 pandemic the appeal of living and working here is growing daily.

The past year has seen Folkestone announced as the world's first Music Town and games maker Winning Moves launched a special Folkestone edition of the popular property trading board game. Damian Collins MP applauded the area as an example of successful seaside regeneration in Estates Gazette's Turning the Tide article this summer



F-51 Urban Sports Centre (photograph taken in July 2020).

and Folkestone received yet more mentions in the national media throughout the year.

Next year will see the return of the acclaimed Folkestone Triennial, one of the UK's most ambitious outdoor art exhibitions. A major new urban sports centre called F-51, funded by local philanthropist Sir Roger De Haan and designed by Hollaway studio, is scheduled to open in the town centre along with workspaces providing exciting additions to this extraordinary location. Other key developments include:

Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

16 Bouverie Place, Folkestone

This town centre scheme, led by East Kent Spatial Development Company and partly funded through a local EU funding programme, is currently underway to create 24 offices and hot desking space totalling 220m². Office sizes will range from 25 to 43m² and it is conveniently located adjacent to Folkestone bus station. The building will support business start-ups and SMEs and is expected to be completed early in 2021.

Former Debenhams building, Folkestone

Folkestone & Hythe District Council secured the future of this historic Edwardian and Art Deco building on Sandgate Road by purchasing it in May 2020. The iconic building, now renamed Folca, is expected to become a thriving centrepiece for the town centre's ongoing regeneration and a plan for its future use is currently being prepared.

Mountfield Road Industrial Estate, New Romney

The development of a new business centre will commence this autumn, the result of a joint venture between Folkestone & Hythe District Council and the East Kent Spatial Development Company, with support from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). The mix of units are intended for growing enterprises that have outgrown being home-based, as well as new businesses coming in to the area. Twelve units will each offer enough space for up to five people and two can accommodate up to ten people. The business centre is programmed to open in September 2021.

A funding package is also being sought to bring forward undeveloped sites on the rest of the industrial estate for businesses to build their own units for which there is a demand locally.

For more information:
www.folkestone.works



CREDIT: OTTERPOOL PARK

How neighbourhoods at Otterpool Park near Folkestone could look.

Otterpool Park update

In February 2020, Folkestone & Hythe District Council bought out its development partner, owners of the former Folkestone racecourse, enabling it to progress the proposed new garden town as master developer. In May approval was granted by the Council for the creation of a new company, Otterpool Park LLP, that will take the lead on driving forward proposals.

Work has continued at pace. Tibbalds, a planning and urban design consultancy, is preparing detailed plans for phase one – to incorporate the town centre, commercial area and Westenhanger train station. It also takes in Westenhanger Castle and a new public park, which together will be an attractive and prestigious selling point for the development.

A new design code for the whole garden town has been commissioned that will set design principles that all future

housing, commercial and public buildings must adhere to. This will put high quality design at the forefront of all future development proposals. Otterpool Park's long-term transport vision and Cultural Strategy are also underway.

Creating a sustainable development is a priority and the project aims to be exemplary in every respect and at every stage. This starts from the masterplan of the garden town, which incorporates 50% green space. This major new development, set within a 770ha (1,903acre) site surrounded by countryside, has plans for up to 10,000 homes, eight primary schools, two secondary schools, community facilities and employment space delivered in phases over 30 years.

For more information:
www.otterpoolpark.org

Thanet

Infrastructure and Regeneration

The local economy has continued to grow in recent years with the district seeing further inward investment, an increased number of visitors and more people relocating to the area and working closer to home. House prices have risen, with evidence suggesting some of this is driven by purchasers who are exiting the London housing market. Thanet's improved connectivity is also driving entrepreneurs to set up businesses in the district, not only for the local market but nationally and internationally.

The full impact of COVID-19 has yet to be assessed but it is recognised that the effects will be long lasting, on individuals, businesses and the local and national economy, potentially reshaping the local community. There has been some positive news for outdoor attractions and local accommodation providers benefitting from the rise in 2020 staycations from families who would have holidayed overseas. The focus now is on recovery and looking to the future by establishing a medium to long term plan.

The vehicle used to support long term planning is the Thanet District Council Local Plan. The plan was formally adopted in July 2020 and sets out the framework for future growth and development in the district to 2031.

New build housing has experienced some delays due to COVID-19 but work has continued on key sites in the district, adding to the variety of housing on offer. The recently adopted Thanet Local Plan identifies land for 18,000 new homes. To bring London closer, Thanet District and Kent County Council and partners are investing in the Parkway train station which will bring journey times to the capital down to approximately one hour from Thanet.

The owners of the land at Manston Airport received the Secretary of State decision in July 2020 which confirmed that development consent for the Manston Airport application has been granted. The application proposes to re-open and develop Manston Airport into a dedicated air freight facility able to handle at least 10,000 air cargo movements per year whilst also offering passenger, executive travel and aircraft engineering services.

Manston Business Park which is owned by East Kent Opportunities, a partnership between Kent County Council and Thanet District Council has seen significant business investment with the completion of light industrial units for sale or rent, creating jobs in the area. Manston is well connected by dual carriageway to the motorway network.

A proposed new dual carriageway in Thanet, the A28 Birchington, Acol and Westgate-on-Sea Relief Road, is included in the 'top ten' list of high-priority road improvement schemes. It would link existing and planned housing settlements to key employment and leisure destinations including Westwood Cross, Quex Park and the seafronts. It is part of a £3.5b, five-year investment programme which aims to cut congestion, speed up journeys and support economic growth across the South East. It was agreed and submitted to Government by Transport for the South East (TfSE), a new regional body which brings together local authorities, business groups and the transport industry to speak with one voice on the region's transport needs.

The council's use of its property portfolio also contributes to local economic growth. Following the success of two industrial estates, Anson Close and Millennium Way in

Broadstairs, leased units have recently been taken by businesses manufacturing timber frames and aluminum windows and bi-fold doors for commercial and domestic construction. The employment site still available at Tivoli Road, Margate is being reviewed with the intention to deliver a commercial development of 20 light industrial units.

The council is developing a vision for its main high streets and working on proposals to access funding from Government via the Future High Streets Fund (Ramsgate) and the Towns Fund (Margate). A Town Deal could see Margate receive up to £25m in investment to drive further economic growth and productivity. The Town Investment Plan that will be submitted to government will include further public and private investment to bring forward development and delivery across the town, to create new jobs and deal with some of the impacts of the pandemic. Tourism and the creative industries continue to be important sectors for the district and will form part of the solution for regenerating the town centres.

In the face of significant changes in the national retail picture, Thanet's high streets were beginning to buck the trend with growth in the independent retail and food and beverage sectors. Short term support, in the form of grants for small



Kingsgate Bay, Thanet.

CREDIT: REBECCA DOUGLAS PHOTOGRAPHY

Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

businesses has helped to maintain this. There has also been work to support the safe re-opening of high streets following the closures brought about by the pandemic.

The appeal of Thanet's coastal resorts is being rediscovered, moving beyond the bygone perception of the traditional British seaside holiday. With their pull now much broader, they attract businesses and individuals looking to achieve the all important, work-life balance, whilst remaining a great place to holiday. People relocating to Thanet realise that they can benefit from a coastal location, within easy reach/travel time to London, supported by the excellent High Speed One service. Margate is often referred to as 'Shoreditch-on-Sea', thanks primarily to the 84% increase in creative businesses in Thanet (2012-16). (Source: Thanet's New Wave).

Margate and Ramsgate have a huge variety of businesses, freelancers and creative practitioners living and working in the towns. Thanet's strong appeal to the creative industries, coupled with its attractive, coastal environment are helping to drive the district's reputation as a location for filming and photoshoots. The combination of visual appeal, proximity, affordability and creative flair make it an excellent choice for creative agencies and principal broadcasters when contracting for shoots and programme making. There is an opportunity to attract a small cluster of such creative production companies to Thanet. In the last 12 months, leading publications, household names and high-end brands have used Thanet's beaches, bays and towns as a backdrop for their photoshoots, including Anthropologie, Browns, Esquire, GQ and BooHoo's Nasty Gal.

The tourism and leisure sectors are an integral part of Thanet's economy. Trips to the popular and award-winning seaside resorts of Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate rose 8.6% in 2017 (from 2015). There is a growing demand for out of season, short break, coastal tourism and smaller, alternative business events with an experiential element.

The Local Plan makes provision for the development of small scale accommodation such as a seaside glamping or camping sites which could cater to these markets.

Thanet's 19 miles of spectacular coastline and its cultural offer attracted 4.2m trips to the area in 2017 which resulted in a 9.2% increase in value of the sector to the district (2015-2017). The sector accounts for 19% of the total employment across the district. Margate's cultural resurgence has helped regenerate the Old Town with an array of independent shops, galleries and eateries as well as the renowned Turner Contemporary which in 2019 hosted the internationally recognised Turner Prize. The attention now is on developing a year-round economy, driven by a focus on experiential tourism.

Regeneration continues in Margate. Dreamland, the historic amusement park, received significant private sector investment and in May 2017 it re-opened as a major attraction. As well as being a theme park, Dreamland is also a major music venue, and events space. Planning permission has been granted for a 120-bedroom hotel adjacent to the site. This reflects the ambition to further extend its out of season offer to encompass business, meetings, incentive, conference and events travel.

The Dickensian town of Broadstairs, steeped in stories, continues to draw crowds with its famous 'retro' ice cream parlours and attractive cottages adding to its unique and timeless seaside charm.

Ramsgate, the only Royal Harbour in Britain, is a busy destination containing 700 leisure berths. It caters for visiting vessels, as well as those based there year-round and is home to a large fishing fleet. Ramsgate is also recognised as one of only ten national Heritage Action Zones by Historic England and one of only two in the South East, acknowledging Ramsgate's rich historic environment that can support economic growth. Thanet is at the forefront of the Green Economy with the Port of Ramsgate hosting the maintenance fleet for one of the world's largest wind farms.

For more information:
www.thanet.gov.uk



Hartsdown Academy, Margate.

CREDIT: CARLOS DOMINGUEZ PHOTOGRAPHY/KIER CONSTRUCTION