



CREDIT: ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Aerial photograph of housing development at Chilmington Green, Ashford.

Housing

Housing market

There were 22,767 property transactions in Kent (KCC area) during the calendar year 2019, and a further 3,829 in the Medway Unitary area. These figures are slightly lower than the previous year by -7.0% and -3.1% respectively. This pattern follows a general trend for slower sales during 2019. Transactions in England & Wales were down by -4.9% compared with 2018 and in the South East transactions were down by -4.4%.

Within Kent, Tunbridge Wells is the only area to have seen an increase in property transactions in 2019 compared to 2018 with 28 more sales which equates to a 1.6% increase.

Kent remains good value for house buyers. The overall average property price in Kent during 2019 was £342,070. This is 10.8% lower than the average property price in the South East, (£383,324) but 14% higher than the average for England & Wales (£300,054).

The average house price at a county level masks a significant range in prices across Kent, with an average of £510,555 in Sevenoaks to £268,614 in Thanet. The average price in the Medway Unitary area was £271,745.

Based on the number of Energy Performance Certificates issued on new dwellings, during 2019 there were 7,382 new dwellings built across Kent. This is a 5.4% decrease on the 2018 total of 7,382.

Sources:
HM Land Registry Open Data Standard Reports
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG): Live table NB1

Homes England

Homes England have recently provided their Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) 2021 to 2026

Affordable housing, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework, is housing for sale or rent for those whose needs are not met by the market. The provision of affordable housing is a key element of the Government's plan to end the housing crisis, tackle homelessness and provide aspiring homeowners with a step onto the housing ladder.

The Affordable Homes Programme provides grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing for rent or sale. As the Government's housing accelerator, Homes England will be making available £7.39b from April 2021 to deliver up to 130,000 affordable homes by March 2026 – outside of London.

Homes England is committed to working closely with a diverse range of partners – both existing and those not previously worked with – to maximise the impact of this funding. In return, partners are expected to share the ambitions set out in Homes England's strategic plan to create a more resilient and diverse housing market. Partners will also be expected to focus on promoting significant use of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), high-quality sustainable design and working closely with local SME housebuilders.

The Affordable Homes Programme 2021 to 2026 makes provision for new Strategic Partnerships. Homes England is working through the operational parameters of the fund and further details on the Strategic Partnership framework applicable to the fund will be provided follow once these have been agreed.

Source: Homes England website guidance 10 September 2020

For more information:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-england

Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

Housing Delivery Test (HDT)

In February 2019, the first annual HDT results for councils were published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Local Authorities are required to take specific action depending upon the result of their HDT calculation and until subsequent HDT results are published or new housing requirements are adopted:

- Below 95% = the authority should publish an action plan
- Below 85% = a 20% buffer on the local planning authority's 5 year land supply
- Below 45% for 2019 result or below 75% for 2020 result = application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The presumption in favour of sustainable development will be applied at the threshold of 75% from this year onwards, the transitional arrangement up until now is below:
 - November 2018 indicate that delivery was below 25% of housing required over the previous 3 years;
 - November 2019 indicate that delivery was below 45% of housing required over the previous 3 years;
 - November 2020 and in subsequent years indicate that delivery was below 75% of housing required over the previous 3 years.

These consequences apply concurrently, for example those who fall below 85% should produce an action plan as well as the 20% buffer.

The 2020 results will not be published in November this year.

Government's Planning White Paper

The 'Planning for the Future' White Paper proposes sweeping reforms to the planning system.

The Government believes that construction is an important part of stimulating the economy, with the Prime Minister



CREDIT: COOMBS/DUNCAN & GRAHAM PARTNERSHIP/TDC

Local housing in Clements Road, Thanet.

having pledged to 'build, build, build' as part of COVID-19 recovery. Within this context, the recent White Paper consultation sets out plans to undertake a fundamental reform of the planning system and intends to deliver a clearer, rules-based system. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, the Government will seek to bring forward legislation and policy changes to implement the reforms. Detail behind some of the proposals will need further development pending the outcome of this consultation.

Future High Streets Fund

The Future High Streets Fund was launched in December 2018 and is a key part of the Government's plan to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that drives economic growth and sustainably improves living standards. The funding, with a total value of £1bn, could be used to

improve transport and access into town centres, convert empty retail units into new homes and workplaces, and invest in vital infrastructure.

Local authorities were able to bid for a share of the funding and, in 2019, 100 towns were shortlisted by the Government to develop plans to reinvent their high streets and progress to the second stage. In Kent and Medway successful Expressions of Interest came from the local authorities for Dartford, Dover, Thanet (for Ramsgate) and Medway (for Chatham). These areas are each to receive up to £150,000 to support the development of detailed final project proposals that can then be submitted for capital funding. A final decision on which areas will receive funding is due on in the autumn.

Infrastructure Proposition

With new funding expected from Government through the Single Housing Infrastructure Fund, councils in Kent and Medway have been working together to explore an innovative, place-based "Infrastructure Proposition", a potential deal with Government to access new infrastructure funding. If pursued, in return for agreed levels of planned delivery, Government would commit to:

- provide infrastructure investment to release growth
- explore options and opportunities to offer new planning flexibilities and freedoms
- forge a new way of working with Kent & Medway across Government to support our local, high-quality growth and community ambitions.

Affordable Housing Select Committee

Kent County Council's Select Committee on Affordable Housing reported earlier this year with a series of recommendations around infrastructure, joint working, land and finance to support the delivery of affordable housing in the county. Most prominent of these was for the establishment of a Housing Growth Unit to work with the industry and districts, promoting collaboration and streamlined working, bidding for new funds and supporting research and best practice. The unit would provide a single point of access to functions relating to housing in KCC. A full response to the recommendations, including the creation of a Housing Growth Unit, is expected later this year.

Kent Design Guide

The revised guide is for all those involved in the design, planning and development process in Kent and Medway. It is a web resource, communicating key guidance on placemaking for the county. It aims to encourage development that is sustainable and of the highest quality, at every opportunity and by everyone involved in the built environment. The guide is being refreshed to provide up to date advice, with publication expected in Spring 2021.

It does repeat core principles of design, which can be found in any number of publications. The Kent Design Guide provides easily digestible, summarised editorial across the web site for those with a general interest in built environment design and, where required, clearly written full technical guidance in download format for professionals working in the development sector across Kent.

Kent County Council Property

Basic Need Programme for Schools

Kent County Council (KCC) is committed to ensuring that there are enough school places for every child who needs one. We produce a new Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent (KCP) annually. The KCP sets out the principles by which we determine proposals and also forecasts the need for future provision across Kent schools. It illustrates how Kent County Council discharges its statutory responsibility to secure sufficient places for early years, Special Educational Need & Disabilities, primary and secondary school children.

KCC have delivered expansions to 24 Primary, Secondary and Special Schools in the past year delivering quality school places for over 4,000 pupils. For 2021, we are on course to deliver at least another 19 expansions and new schools resulting in an additional 3,300 places.

In the case of the expansion and relocation of St Peters Primary School, KCC in partnership with Baxall Construction are delivering a quality modern Primary School for 210 pupils and through our supply chain using local contractors and suppliers injecting £1.7m into the Kent economy - within 60 miles of the project.

Kent Estates Partnership

The Kent Estates Partnership (KEP) is a group of Kent local authorities, NHS, Higher Education/Further Education, blue light services and central government brought together to identify and promote collaborative projects and opportunities, both through the One Public Estate Programme (OPE) and other funding opportunities.

OPE funding is designed to help project initiation and development work for projects which may have a higher risk profile. KEP has had bids in three funding rounds and has been allocated £843,000 in OPE funding as well as £658,000 in Land Release Funding (LRF) funding. All of the projects are targeted to ensure the efficient use of the public sector estate and support the release of surplus land across portfolios. The successful projects are:

OPE Projects

- Maidstone East Civic Quarter
- Dover Discovery Centre
- Ebbsfleet Grove Road
- West Kent Partnership Project
- Sittingbourne Civic Quarter
- Dartford Town Centre including Community Health and Wellness Campus
- Paddock Wood Community centre
- West Kent Blue Light Hub

LRF Projects

- Brunswick Street and Union Street, Maidstone

More details of the projects can be found at:
kentstatespartnership.com

Live Margate

This ongoing coastal regeneration project in Thanet supports the renaissance of Margate Central and Cliftonville wards, which were recorded as some of the most deprived areas in the UK. The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) supports the project through GPF loan funding working closely with its partner Thanet District Council. Kent County Council continues to deliver quality family homes into the market working alongside its successful countywide No Use Empty (NUE) initiative.

One example is the 12a Dalby Square project, which is a cross sector collaboration between KCC, TDC, the Centre for Architecture and Sustainable Environment (CASE) at the University of Kent at Canterbury and the private sector. It aims to develop and retrofit a former HMO property acquired by KCC into an exemplar residence that simultaneously addresses the challenges of climate change and promotes opportunities for intergenerational living.

Jasmin Vardimon Centre

Contracts have been let for a new 'Creative Laboratory' for world renowned creative and dance organisation Jasmin Vardimon on the KCC site at Javelin Way, Ashford. It will include rehearsal and performance space and hub for creative communities in Ashford. Jasmin Vardimon Company was founded in London in 1998 and rapidly rose to become a significant element within the British dance theatre scene.

Proposal for Jasmin Vardimon Centre,
Henwood, Ashford.
CREDIT: Kent County Council



The new building will be a permanent base for the company and enable them to realise their company mission to produce exceptional creative work, nurture talent, promote health and well-being and to inspire cultural and social engagement across diverse participants. The project will see the development of the Javelin Way site for employment use, with a focus on Ashford's creative economy. The construction of the production space, with an area of 1,257m² (13,530ft²) to be leased from KCC by the Jasmin Vardimon Company will be used as education space for accredited courses.

The development includes 29 light industrial units with an area of 4,382m² (47,163ft²) for sale and/or lease suitable for additional creative businesses as well as the general SME market. The scheme will accommodate around 311 full-time employees, in addition to 21 freelance and contractor opportunities. The scheme is being supported by Arts Council England, Ashford Borough Council and South East Local Enterprise Partnership and will be completed by March 2022.

For more information:
communications@jasminvardimon.com

Disposals

KCC's property disposal programme is designed to generate capital receipts to fund essential capital projects across the county including our extensive schools programme. Over the last year KCC has released land for over 100 residential units. The ongoing release of surplus assets continues to deliver developable land which creates local jobs and housing across Kent.

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation

Like every part of the UK, Ebbsfleet Garden City did not escape COVID-19 which brought house building to a standstill. But it was only for a short period and all the housebuilders were able to start as soon as they introduced new social distancing measures. The housebuilders report that their production levels are around 85% of pre-COVID-19 levels, which is an excellent achievement given working practices on site have had to be radically re-thought.

As of September 2020 the number of completed homes in Ebbsfleet Garden City stands at 2,053 giving us close to

5,000 new residents. Sales of homes in Ebbsfleet Garden City did not stop during the pandemic with developers using new technology to guide people around their properties remotely. Housebuilders are reporting continued strong sales now that sales centres are back on stream. Of course, there are future uncertainties ahead including the economic impact of the pandemic and the end to demand stimuli such as the Stamp Duty holiday and Help to Buy.

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) was also busy completing vital infrastructure projects during the pandemic. Springhead Bridge was completed and is now fully open, providing a new link for the residents of Springhead Park directly to Ebbsfleet International which will reduce walking time to the station from 25 to seven minutes. Highways England was able to start the much needed A2 improvements and EDC has contributed £45m of repayable investment to this project.

Kent County Council has approved a tunnel that will provide a link for Garden City residents directly to Bluewater on the Fastrack bus network. Despite COVID-19 the Corporation and its delivery partners have made progress in developing the Garden City.

No Use Empty

With the UK experiencing challenging times and the impact facing the construction industry, initiatives such as No Use Empty (NUE) are becoming increasingly important in supporting the recovery of the Kent economy. Bringing long-term empty properties back into use is a key method of driving regeneration, one which not only provides new homes but also new sources of employment and support to communities.

Economic decline, recession and some of the lowest property values in the south east have led to a historical lack of investment in pockets of our coastal districts notably, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe and Thanet. Wider regeneration initiatives in these areas continue to attract high profile investors and funding which has led to an increase in small and medium sized property developers looking to refurbish empty buildings and turn them into homes. However, in many cases severe dilapidation and an inability to access funding on the open market for renovation costs, left buildings empty.

Delivered by Kent County Council (KCC) in partnership with all 12 district councils NUE is the longest running empty property initiative in the country, providing an exemplar model of recyclable loans. NUE remains committed to reducing the numbers of long-term empty properties, returning over 6,566 back into use since 2005 through a range of long-term interventions:

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

Now in its 15th year NUE announced it secured a substantial additional investment of £12m from KCC. A new loan product providing larger secured interest-bearing loans are available to developers who bring derelict land or derelict sites back to life in order to provide new build homes.

No Use Empty Residential

Data provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) shows that there are 225,785 long term empty dwellings (unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over six months) in England, a year on year rise of 9,599. Council Tax records show 6,768 long term empty dwellings in Kent (5,370 are in the Kent area and 1,398 in the Medway Council area) which represents 2.9% of the national total. Figures include all tenures (Local Authority, Housing Association and Private Sector) although many are privately owned.

In the last year a total of five Kent districts saw a reduction in their respective long-term vacant dwellings, the biggest of which was seen in Maidstone (52 fewer than the year before). Folkestone and Hythe saw the biggest five-year reduction in long-term vacant dwellings recording a fall of 25% (152 fewer after 5 years). Thanet has the highest number of long-term vacant dwellings at 976. Gravesham has the lowest number of long-term empty dwellings at 204.

NUE provides short term secured loans (awarding £35m to date) and levering in £32.2m from the public/private sectors, supporting 1,100 units across Kent since the launch of the initiative. Average renovation cost to return a unit to occupation is £61,500, with the average KCC investment

Infrastructure and Regeneration

Continued

being £29,800. Over £18.5m (53%) of funding advanced has already been repaid in order to be recycled.

The combination of NUE loans and top-up loans (administered by NUE on behalf of Dover, Folkestone and Hythe and Tunbridge Wells councils) are designed to help developers bridge the gap between pre/post refurbishment values by providing a loan. This takes account of cost of works which banks and other lenders will not do. Without this joined-up approach these properties would have remained empty. In addition to this, £2.6m was allocated with a specific focus on Margate to help meet the increased demand to tackle some of the larger buildings which can be converted to provide much needed family homes.



CREDIT: ASTRAL HOMES LIMITED/NO USE EMPTY

Oak Lodge, Botsom Lane, West Kingsdown.

NUE provided a loan of £25,000 to refurbish a two bedroom detached bungalow built in the 1980's which had been empty for 3 years. The original conservatory at Oak Lodge, Botsom Lane, West Kingsdown was demolished and replaced with a first floor front extension with balcony and single storey rear extension with roof lights. In addition five new homes have recently been built in Adelaide Road, Elvington near Dover.

No Use Empty Commercial

NUE's primary focus has been on empty residential properties. However, over recent years it has supported the conversion of vacant space above empty commercial units which have also been returned to use but not with loan support.

The Growing Places Fund (GPF) was established by MHCLG and administered through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). The aim of this funding is to unlock economic growth, create jobs and 'kick-start' house building at stalled development sites. Operating as a recyclable loan scheme it was the perfect match for NUE. In 2018 KCC secured an extra £1m for NUE to provide short-term secured loans to return to use long empty commercial properties (empty shops or small redundant workspace areas) for alternative commercial or mixed-use purposes, primarily in our coastal areas.

NUE Commercial made a commitment to return a minimum of 8 commercial units and provide a minimum of 28 residential units by March 2022 with short-term secured loan support. A total of 12 individual projects in the districts of Dover, Folkestone and Hythe and Thanet have been supported, of which 10 are so far complete. The remaining projects will be delivered ahead of schedule to provide a total of 15 commercial units and 28 residential units.

No Use Empty New Builds on Derelict Land

NUE had previously piloted short-term secured interest-bearing loans to take forward smaller developments on redundant or vacant sites. However, continuing to provide larger loans from the main NUE scheme would reduce the availability of funding to bring empty properties back into use.

KCC have made available £12m to be operated on a recyclable basis for NUE to specifically provide funding for new builds on derelict or vacant land with the required



CREDIT: HMV ARCHITECTS

Proposal for Southborough Hub and Medical Centre.

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/sale, whichever is the earlier.

NUE have awarded £5.8m during 2020/21 which will create 47 new homes in Kent (Dover, Folkestone, Ramsgate and Swanscombe). NUE supported the development of 10 three-bed houses on Tower Street, Dover. An interest-bearing loan of £480,000, which has been repaid, was provided to a local developer who has delivered the project to a high standard. All houses have a 10-year warranty, parking and UPVC Victorian style windows. The properties were marketed below the average local house price making an ideal first home with the help to buy scheme available.

No Use Empty Going Forward

NUE continues to increase Council Tax receipts for local authorities throughout Kent by reducing empty stock, has attracted New Homes Bonus (NHB) and is helping to generate new Business Rates through the NUE Commercial.

The initiative has also created or safeguarded over 1,169 jobs and provided homes to more than 2,332 local people.

Kent's approach to tackling empty properties has been widely praised with NUE winning three national awards for Regeneration and Partnership Working. KCC are the only non-housing authority finalist in the category of 'Council of the Year' at the UK Housing Awards 2020. Entrants were asked to demonstrate how they have used their strategic role to provide leadership, facilitate housing development, meeting local housing need, evidencing partnership working and joining up their housing offer with other services for the benefit of residents.

NUE have submitted further bids with a total value of £4.5m to the Growing Places Fund (GPF) to secure additional funding for both its commercial and residential schemes. It has long been an ambition to extend the NUE brand into the unitary authority of Medway.

NUE continues to innovate to bring empty homes back into use and support the recovery of the Kent economy, accelerate housing delivery albeit on a small scale and helping to regenerate local communities.

For more information:
www.nue.org.uk

Kent & Medway Resilience and Renewal Plan

In response to COVID-19, the Kent & Medway Renewal & Resilience Plan provides a framework for recovery and growth. The Plan aims to keep Kent & Medway open for business and support local firms, inward investment and employment and actions are already being delivered. These include the extension of the nationally-acclaimed Kent and Medway Growth Hub COVID-19 Business Support Helpline providing advice, guidance and support to local businesses, the release of a new £6m loan scheme through the Kent & Medway Business Fund and the establishment of an Employment Task Force, chaired by KCC Leader Roger Gough. The Task Force brings together local authorities, local MPs and representatives from business, education and the Department of Work & Pensions. It will address the growing employment challenge with the aim of creating opportunities for local employment, linking local businesses with local people who can provide the skills they need.

Creative Open Workspace Masterplan

A team has been appointed to tackle barriers to creative industry recovery and growth in the region. The South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN) announced the appointment of We Made That to deliver the South East Local Enterprise Partnership's Creative Open Workspace Masterplan.

SECEN is a network which invites creative businesses, freelancers, education and local authorities to work together to address barriers to growth in the Creative Industries. SECEN identified a lack of workspace for the creative sector as a barrier to growth. This will require tools to support:

- Revitalisation and reimagining the high street
- The shift towards working closer to home
- Re-appropriation of redundant buildings
- Inward investment from businesses and a workforce looking to leave cities for a better work/life balance
- Tracking of at-risk premises and converting these into opportunities.

We Made That, in collaboration with Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy and PRD will deliver, on behalf of SECEN:

- Production of a cultural infrastructure toolkit to help expedite development of creative workspace.
- Specialist support to bring forward at least three creative workspace sites
- A Creative Workspace Masterplan for the region
- Scoping the opportunities for introducing 'Creative Opportunity Zones' in the region.

To underpin these projects, the team will scope and deliver a Cultural Infrastructure Map for the SELEP region supporting development of the right work space in the right place. In the future, it will map all cultural infrastructure and help inform Planning Authorities and guide investment so that all our communities will be able to access culture.

This project is funded by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, Arts Council England, Creative Estuary, East Sussex County Council, Kent County Council and Essex County Council.

For more information:
sarah.wren@kent.gov.uk



New homes under construction at Adelaide Road near Dover via No Use Empty.

CREDIT: NO USE EMPTY