



HARDISTY JONES ASSOCIATES
Economic Development Advisers ●●●●●●●●●●



The Case for West Kent

Final Report (Update)

Prepared on behalf of the West Kent Partnership

June 2022

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1 Introduction

- 1.0.1 HJA has been instructed by the West Kent Partnership (covering the local authority areas of Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge & Malling) to review how best to encourage and enable greater investment into the economic development and regeneration of West Kent.
- 1.0.2 This is, in part, an update of *The Case for West Kent (2015)*, prepared by Wessex Economics on behalf of the Partnership. The original report set out a detailed analysis of the key economic issues in West Kent; a detailed review of the resourcing of economic development activities within West Kent; and made recommendations on actions that could be taken to increase the resources available for economic development and regeneration in the area.
- 1.0.3 This majority of this current analysis has been prepared in summer and early autumn 2021, approximately seven years after the original document. Since the original *Case for West Kent* was published there have been significant changes in the economic context, the policy environment, and the funding landscape. The West Kent partner authorities therefore recognised the need to take a fresh look at the issues and opportunities.
- 1.0.4 This report is not intended to be a full economic development strategy for West Kent. The extent of analysis and consultation reflects the time and resources available for undertaking this update, in order to provide recommendations for the West Kent partner authorities to work together to position themselves to secure and encourage public, private and third sector investment into the area.
- 1.0.5 Many of the key themes identified in the 2015 report remain the same, and in some cases have been thrown into sharper relief as a result of changing circumstances. In fact, adapting to change is a recurring theme.
- 1.0.6 In preparing this analysis HJA has consulted with:
- Kent County Council;
 - Kent and Medway Economic Partnership;
 - Locate in Kent;
 - Visit Kent;
 - Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce;
 - Kent and Medway Business Advisory Board; and
 - West Kent Partnership.
- 1.0.7 An update to this report was completed in May 2022 to ensure coverage of the Levelling Up White Paper and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) prospectus.
- 1.0.8 The rest of this report is structured as follows:
- Chapter 2 sets out a high-level summary of the West Kent economy;
 - Chapter 3 looks forward, setting out challenges that West Kent will need to address in order to attract greater investment; and
 - Chapter 4 looks at the resourcing of economic development in the recent past and into the future.

2 The West Kent Economy

The West Kent economy:

- Performs very strongly when compared to other sub-areas of Kent & Medway;
- Is an employment hub for residents of Kent & Medway;
- Experiences low workplace-based earnings and very challenging housing affordability;
- Is not one of the best economically performing edge of London areas.

- 2.0.1 Comparative analysis, within the context of Kent, shows the area to be economically successful. West Kent accounts for 20% of the Kent & Medway population, 23% of jobs, 26% of enterprises and 28% of GVA (economic output). The area has experienced good performance in terms of both jobs and GVA growth in recent years. Labour productivity (GVA per job filled) is very high in comparison to the other Kent sub-areas. However, workplace-based earnings are below average, despite other strongly performing indicators.
- 2.0.2 West Kent is an important employment hub for residents of other parts of Kent. More than 30,000 workers employed within West Kent are residents of other parts of Kent and Medway. This compares to fewer than 19,000 West Kent residents working in other parts of the Kent and Medway area.
- 2.0.3 The West Kent economy has over representation in high value service sectors such as Information & Communication, Financial & Insurance, Real Estate, and Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities.
- 2.0.4 The labour market also performs well. Resident-based economic activity and employment rates are very high in comparison to other Kent sub-areas. There is a high level of self-employment, which boosts employment rates. A high proportion of working residents in West Kent work in higher order occupations. As a result, it is unsurprising that resident-based earnings are very high relative to comparator areas.
- 2.0.5 However, the discrepancy between resident and workplace-based earnings is significant. This results from residents out-commuting for higher paid work, highlighting the influence of London. 21%¹ of West Kent's working population commute to London². Stakeholder consultations have indicated that connections to London are a defining feature of West Kent, not only in terms of travel to work and migration, but also in terms of business links. The area has a particular concentration of financial services businesses, reportedly with close links back to London.
- 2.0.6 High resident-based earnings, coupled with being a very desirable place to live, including attractive towns set within a largely rural area, featuring large areas designated as AONB and Green Belt, have contributed to very high house prices and very poor housing affordability. This has resulted in high levels of in-commuting to fill jobs, with affordability indicators based on workplace earnings being particularly problematic. Overall, 38% of resident workers out-commute and 34% of workplace-based workers in-commute.

¹ 33% of Sevenoaks district working residents commute to London, 15-16% of Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells district working residents commute to the capital. All figures taken from 2011 Census of Population, ONS.

² It is noted that the commuting data is from 2011 and the Covid-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on short-term commuting patterns, with uncertainty regarding whether these will fully return to pre-pandemic levels. The earnings data is recent, although remains pre-pandemic. This illustrates the relationship between workplace and resident earnings.

- 2.0.7 The predominance of Green Belt, AONB and other designations creates a highly desirable place to live, but also places constraints on development for both residential and commercial/employment purposes. For example, commercial market data from Locate in Kent highlights the very low level of planning consents for new offices in West Kent relative to other areas. Appendix 1 sets out analysis of the West Kent economy relative to the other sub-areas of Kent.
- 2.0.8 Whilst West Kent performs very strongly in a Kent context, analysis suggests it is ranked 'mid table' when considered in the context of the ring of local authority areas equidistant from central London³. Whether considering labour productivity, jobs growth, workplace earnings or housing affordability the West Kent districts do not feature near the top of the rankings. Across a suite of indicators, the top five locations were identified as Runnymede, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Windsor & Maidenhead and East Hertfordshire. These areas have typically attracted blue chip companies. There are some differences in the existing economic asset bases of some of these places, such as the presence of Universities or close proximity to other large towns. However, the data suggests there is the potential for some greater economic success for the West Kent towns, particularly given its strong skills and occupational base within the resident workforce. Appendix 2 to this report sets out a discussion of this analysis.
- 2.0.9 The West Kent economy is also subject to the wider economic environment. Therefore the tight labour market (high levels of vacancies and low unemployment); cost of living crisis arising from rising energy prices, higher interest rates; and increased supply chain costs following the Covid-19 pandemic create economic risks for the area as well as the wider UK and global economy.

³ The three main towns within West Kent are located 20-30 miles from central London. The comparator locations are typically within the Metropolitan Green Belt and have strong road and rail accessibility. A wide variety of indicators were considered, and a range of weightings applied. The West Kent local authority areas were repeatedly ranked in the centre of the pool.

3 Looking Forward

West Kent needs to:

- Understand in detail the opportunities and challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic changing working and commuting patterns;
- Align to new and developing policy agendas;
- Avoid complacency, and focus on growing its own economy; and
- Tackle the challenges of housing affordability and a lack of development land.

3.0.1 The previous chapter highlights the strength of the West Kent economy in a Kent context, whilst identifying that there is potential for greater economic success based on a wider comparative analysis. Consultations with key stakeholders identified a number of key issues that need to be addressed in order that West Kent is able to realise this potential and adapt to changing circumstances.

The implications of Covid-19 on working patterns and the role of West Kent

3.0.2 West Kent was repeatedly characterised by stakeholders as a wonderful place to live, which is reflected in its high house prices and affluent population. There is a very strong relationship with London in terms of travel to work, migration into the area, and business links. The economic linkages are particularly associated with the financial and professional services sectors.

3.0.3 It was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has the potential to have a lasting impact on working patterns, particularly for office-based high-value services. Whilst it is too early to make definitive statements on the long-term changes to working practices or the nature of commuting, there is a widespread expectation that things will not return fully to the way they were before the pandemic.

3.0.4 Consultees expressed a need for West Kent to gain an understanding of what these changes could mean for an area that has been heavily reliant on high-value financial and professional services, whether for employment generation within the area, or generating incomes for those commuting. These changes could be either positive or negative. For example:

- The West Kent area offers the key advantages that many people are looking for post pandemic, green spaces and high quality of life as well as easy access to London. The core attributes of West Kent have become even more desirable. This is both an opportunity that could be used to strengthen the economy but also a challenge given the already difficult position in terms of housing affordability.
- With increased levels of flexible working, or a desire to be close to, but not within, London there could be increased business start-up and relocation opportunities. This could provide a demand for more flexible office and coworking spaces, to develop stronger business networks, deliver enhanced business support and training locally to meet the needs of employers, as has already been recognised with the aspiration to deliver business hubs in West Kent.
- If the need to be close to a London office base is less important, the distance workers are willing to commute may increase, allowing moves to areas with lower cost housing as well as equivalent quality of life assets.
- Those that have previously migrated from London and established businesses in West Kent may choose to locate further afield or may recruit across a much wider geography. This could reduce employment opportunity locally.

- The levels of expenditure in West Kent towns may change in either direction depending on which forces are greater. There could be opportunities for locations such as West Kent to capture new investment and increase town centre footfall and expenditure, with the area benefitting from the reduction in residents' time and cost of commuting to London. This could drive further growth in the personal services and leisure sectors. Alternatively spending levels could slowly diminish if there is a drift away.
- The acceleration of trends in retail are impacting town centres, but also creating demand for local and regional distribution and logistics facilities. This has implications for employment land if the levels of service demanded by residents are to be met.

3.0.5 This study does not have the remit to consider the implications in any depth, other than to highlight key issues for stakeholders to consider, in order to shape economic strategy and investment priorities.

Avoiding complacency

3.0.6 It was noted by consultees that the West Kent economy has already lost some of its professional services activities. The need to avoid complacency was frequently mentioned in discussions; not assuming that the affluence of the recent past will continue unchecked. This was also expressed in terms of the leisure, cultural and creative offer of West Kent.

3.0.7 In order to improve the West Kent economy there is a need to be proactive in enhancing strengths and assets. Key opportunities highlighted in discussions (and not intended to be exhaustive) included:

- Building on the success of NIAB EMR agricultural and horticultural research centre in East Malling, to develop the innovation and R&D capability in key sectors, particularly agriculture, horticulture and food & drink;
- Exploring the potential to grow the financial and professional services sector in the context of post pandemic changes;
- Ensuring continued investment into town centres, including employment, retail, leisure and cultural & creative sectors;
- Developing the tourism⁴ and leisure offer, including for the corporate market and improving overnight accommodation;
- Exploring opportunities to develop the healthcare sector; and
- Enhancing the FE and HE offer to ensure high quality skills to attract employers, including to support the financial and professional services sector.

3.0.8 In addition, it was highlighted that addressing those areas of deprivation that do exist should also be a focus. Whilst there are relatively few areas of significant deprivation in West Kent, there are places ranked in the top 20% most deprived in England.

Housing affordability and lack of development land

3.0.9 The challenge around housing affordability is not unique to West Kent, although it is particularly acute when considering the ratio of house prices to workplace earnings. Challenges around adopting Local Plans were cited by stakeholders as hampering the development of the area. The values associated with residential development were also cited as a major hindrance to bringing

⁴ The need for improved overnight accommodation/hotel provision was cited as a particular gap, as well as a range of marketing based activities to realise the potential of existing assets.

forward land for commercial and employment uses, which in turn creates challenges for securing inward investment.

3.0.10 Locate in Kent analysis has identified that both office and industrial rental levels in West Kent are high, in part reflecting the constrained supply. There is particularly limited supply in the industrial sector relative to North Kent and East Kent and the number of planning consents for office development is lower in West Kent than all other sub-areas. The supply of land for employment uses was cited as the number one constraint on the West Kent economy by Locate in Kent. Further analysis is set out in Appendix 3.

3.0.11 Analysis by Locate in Kent highlights that employers **want** to locate where:

- There is access to London and international travel is easy
- Other employers have chosen to be
- They have a professional supply chain in place
- Good schools create a well skilled workforce
- Their staff want to live

3.0.12 And employers **need** to locate where:

- There is access to markets and capital
- There are good places to socialise
- Their staff want to be
- Their staff can afford to be
- There is appropriate workspace available

3.0.13 West Kent is able to put a tick in the box for many of the employers wants and needs. However, the final two (housing affordability and available workspace) have been identified as particularly challenging. There are a range of constraints on development across West Kent which are part of what makes the area so attractive to live within, but at the same time have the potential to hold it back economically. This has been exacerbated by the loss of employment space through permitted development and challenges in identifying new sites.

New and developing policy agendas

3.0.14 Separate to the stakeholder consultation, looking forward will require alignment to new and developing policy agendas. Of particular significance are the Levelling Up White Paper (discussed in the following chapter), Build Back Better: our plan for growth and the ten point plan for a green industrial revolution.

4 Resourcing Economic Development and Regeneration

It is important to recognise:

- West Kent has been successful in securing funds through competitive bidding, particularly given its relative affluence;
- The changing funding landscape will be more challenging. As a result West Kent should focus on:
 - Developing high quality projects with robust business cases and clear deliverability aligned to the Levelling Up missions;
 - Better coordination and support for bids across the West Kent partners;
 - Collaborating with a wide range of partners, particularly those in designated priority areas; and
 - Building links with local MPs and Central Government
- There are pockets of low take-up of business funding in West Kent which need to be better understood, alongside ensuring joined up marketing to raise awareness of available opportunities.

4.0.1 This chapter considers issues related to the process of securing additional resources for economic development and regeneration. This has focused on the competitive bid process for additional capital funds managed through SELEP⁵ and businesses accessing support funding. It also considers the changing funding landscape including the Levelling Up White Paper and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

4.1 Capital Funding Bids

Recent Historic Performance

4.1.1 In recent years the process for securing additional capital funds for economic development has typically been via the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The South East LEP (SELEP) operates a federated model, with KMEP acting as the relevant federated Board for Kent, including West Kent.

4.1.2 There was generally very positive feedback on recent bids from the West Kent area, with the caveat that those submissions which were turned down were typically because the project and business case was not sufficiently well developed⁶ (i.e. the underlying project concept may well have had merit).

4.1.3 West Kent bids for Local Growth Fund (LGF), Growing Places Fund (GPF) and Getting Building Fund (GBF) since 2016 are summarised in the tables set out Appendix 3. A total of 17 bids have been submitted from the West Kent area in this period, of which five were successful in securing funding (29%).

4.1.4 Across the West Kent Districts:

⁵ There have been other successful funding applications via other routes including the Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, Department of Transport and Strength in Places Fund.

⁶ Which can include a lack of confidence in delivery or long-term implementation.

- The Sevenoaks district area accounted for seven bids of which two secured funding. Two were submitted by the Hatchery Team, with the remainder submitted by Sevenoaks District Council.
- The Tonbridge & Malling area accounted for four bids of which three secured funding. Three were submitted by NIAB EMR and the remaining one by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council⁷.
- The Tunbridge Wells district area accounted for six bids, of which none secured immediate funding despite being ranked highly within Kent & Medway⁸. However, the Amelia Scott remained second in the GPF pipeline and has subsequently been funded. Funding has also been secured for projects from other sources during this period such as Heritage Lottery, Arts Council England and DfT. All were submitted by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

4.1.5 Commentary provided by the KMEP team indicates that:

- Five of the 17 submissions were successful in receiving funding.
- A further five submissions were put forward through local/LEP prioritisation processes but not selected by central government for funding.
- Six of the 17 submissions were not successful in KMEP/SELEP prioritisation processes. Prioritisation typically uses a project ranking exercise. The West Kent projects included a range of rankings, from those very close to being put forward to those with lower ranking. Three of the six were deemed as very close to being put forward.
- One was discounted due to the size of the funding requirement and deliverability challenges.

4.1.6 In terms of KMEP/SELEP level prioritisation, the cut-off point for being put forward has varied through different funding rounds. On two occasions approximately the top 20% of projects were put forward, in the most recent round the top third of projects were put forward. In the 2016 LGF round more than 50% of projects were put forward.

4.1.7 Across Kent and Medway, of 126 projects considered by KMEP, 41 (33%)⁹ were selected by SELEP for government consideration. Analysis of West Kent submissions indicates that 59%¹⁰ were put forward by SELEP. This shows a very high success rate compared to the overall average.

4.1.8 Key issues which emerge from this analysis include:

- Of the 17 project submissions 13 were either funded, put forward by SELEP for central government consideration, or very close to being put forward for further consideration. This suggests there is no fundamental shortcomings in project bidding across the board, particularly within a KMEP/SELEP context. In fact, a very high proportion of West Kent based projects succeeded in KMEP and SELEP prioritisation processes.
- Of the 10 projects put forward for central government consideration half secured funding. There can be a range of reasons for projects not receiving approval including availability of funds, geographic prioritisation, thematic prioritisation and bid appraisal. No detail on the reasons for projects falling at this hurdle have been available for review as part of this study.

⁷ Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is also a partner in the Innovation Park Medway project, led by Medway Council which has secured LGF.

⁸ Three of these projects were put forward by KMEP/SELEP but were not approved for funding as part of the Government settlement with the LEP.

⁹ Based on available information. Data on the total number of first round bids selected by KMEP was not confirmed. It is known that 22 of 92 bids in the final three rounds and at least 19 of 34 bids in the first round were selected. Therefore the working total is a minimum of 41/126 – 33%. Even if all 34 of the first round projects were put forward West Kent has a greater success rate.

¹⁰ 10 of 17

4.1.9 It should also be noted that at least two of the schemes that did not secure funding through this route have subsequently secured funding and other relevant permissions and are now either in development or completed and operational.

Community Renewal Fund

4.1.10 The results of applications to the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) were announced after the authors' engagement with KMEP. The CRF provided £220m across the UK to help places prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Whilst there was no restriction on the localities that could submit bids, as part of the prospectus for the CRF it was noted that projects would be prioritised in 100 places, with capacity funding provided to the lead authorities in those locations. None of the West Kent areas were identified as priority places. However, four areas in Kent were identified: Canterbury, Swale, Gravesham, and Thanet. The prospectus also set out the selection criteria for bids.

4.1.11 There were 34 submitted bids across Kent & Medway. 22 of these were partnership bids across at least two local authority areas. West Kent featured in five of the submitted bids, compared to 21 featuring East Kent areas and 19 featuring North Kent (incl. Medway) areas.

4.1.12 11 of the 34 bids were successful, including one that featured the West Kent area of Tonbridge & Malling¹¹. All the successful bids included areas that were highlighted within the top 100 priority places. Across England 37% of eligible bids were granted funding.

4.1.13 Overall the West Kent success rate in terms of both the number of bids and value of bids is below the Kent & Medway average. However, the unsuccessful bids including West Kent local authority areas did not feature any of the 100 priority places. This will have been a key feature in their lack of success and provides a clear action point for future funding activity where priority geographies are identified.

Table 4.1 Kent & Medway based Community Renewal Fund bids

Area	Total Bids	Number of Successful bids	Success rate	Total value of bids ¹²	Value of Successful bids	Success rate
West Kent	5	1	20%	£1,735,025	£174,461	10%
East Kent	21	8	38%	£10,979,039	£4,628,438	42%
North Kent	19	7	37%	£8,921,022	£2,662,938	30%
Kent & Medway	34	11	32%	£21,313,980	£7,465,837	35%

The total bids column is based on the number of bids featuring local authority areas in the relevant sub-area. Because many bids spanned multiple sub areas the total number of bids is fewer than the sum of the column.

Changing Funding Landscape

4.1.14 In the past, project submissions have been made to KMEP for review and prioritisation. Approved project lists have then been submitted to SELEP for further prioritisation. There is then usually a further process of Central Government review, negotiation, and sign-off.

¹¹ This project *Growing Green: A net-zero innovation pathway for micro and SME businesses* included a partnership with two areas listed as priority areas, Swale and Thanet.

¹² In cases where a bid spans multiple local authorities, the total value of the successful bid is divided equally by the number of authorities involved. For example, 'Growing Green: a net zero innovation pathway for micro and SME businesses' was a successful bid awarded to Tonbridge & Malling, Swale and Thanet, so the awarded value of £523,384 has been split into three equal amounts of £174,461.

- 4.1.15 Changes to the funding process are taking place, with the role of LEPs changing¹³ and a more direct relationship between local authorities and Central Government being developed. The new approach is also involving greater engagement from local MPs. Adapting to this changing landscape will be critical.
- 4.1.16 The Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP) sets out extensive discussion of the issues and approaches that the current Government is seeking to implement to tackle geographic inequality. It will be vital to ensure alignment of ambitions and projects to the twelve ‘missions’ of the LUWP. In summary these are:
- Boosting productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector:
 1. Living standards
 2. R&D
 3. Transport Infrastructure
 4. Digital connectivity
 - Spreading opportunities and improve public services:
 5. Education
 6. Skills
 7. Health
 8. Well-being
 - Restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging:
 9. Pride in place
 10. Housing
 11. Crime
 - Empowering local leaders and communities:
 12. Local leadership
- 4.1.17 Empowering local decision making is a theme of the LUWP which interlinks with the LEP Review. Themes which have been to the fore in recent years are retained including town centre regeneration. There is also further research to be published on rural proofing.
- 4.1.18 There is undoubtedly a much greater focus on “*places in need, for example ex industrial communities, coastal communities, rural areas and deprived towns and for people most in need of additional support*” within the current funding environment as part of the UK Government commitment to levelling up. The LUWP makes multiple references to ‘outside the South East’ in reference to addressing inequality despite the South East region hosting similar levels of inequality to any other region. This poses a significant challenge for West Kent. Whilst the prospectus for schemes such as the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) makes provision for the type of projects likely to be high priority for West Kent (e.g. tackling congestion, enabling site development for commercial or residential uses), the overarching prioritisation process will work strongly against areas such as West Kent, despite opportunities to enhance the area and deliver additional growth. The early evidence of this is already available with the results of the CRF bid approval process. Whilst one West Kent project, in partnership with other areas, was successful, such partnership projects may not be able to deliver the core project outcomes West Kent is seeking. The LUF categorises the

¹³ Following the LEP Review and Levelling Up White Paper it is proposed that LEPs are integrated into democratic institutions. Exactly how this happens will vary depending on the format and geography of devolution deals across England. Based on current information it is likely that the LEP functions will remain a focus at the Kent county level but the wider SELEP level may fall away at some point in the future. The timing of any such change is uncertain.

West Kent authorities as Category 3 (the lowest priority) which may create similar challenges to the CRF.

- 4.1.19 The long awaited UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was launched in April 2022. This is a replacement for EU structural funds and sets out to support the missions set out in the LUWP, alongside the LUF. There is no competitive bidding process, with funding provided directly to local authorities which will determine how it is spent; with flexibility to work in partnership with other local authorities on larger strategic projects, and/or focus on projects within the authority area. There are three UKSPF investment priorities: communities and place; supporting local business; and people and skills. Every authority is required to prepare an investment plan, to be approved by UK government, setting out how it will utilise the funding reflecting local need and opportunity. This should include local partners and MPs.
- 4.1.20 Each of the West Kent authorities has been allocated £1m for the three year period 2022/23 – 2024/25. The allocations to all Kent authority areas fall within the range £1m - £1.2m¹⁴; a further £7.5m is allocated to Kent County Council to fund the Multiply¹⁵ skills programme over the same period. The UKSPF prospectus identifies the majority of the funding as revenue spend, however, there is flexibility for local areas to increase the share allocated to capital. Nevertheless, major capital projects will need to be funded through LUF or other routes.
- 4.1.21 Other funding routes that sit outside the emerging levelling up agenda might include: One Public Estate, DfT Local Pinch Point Funding, UK Infrastructure Bank and any potential Kent County Deal should it emerge. The UKSPF prospectus also notes ongoing discussions around how this is aligned with additional rural funding via the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Enhancing Funding

- 4.1.22 Stakeholder feedback repeatedly warned against a focus on how the pie has been divided, but to focus on developing high quality projects and business cases. It was highlighted that determining a 'fair' share of funding is itself an impossible exercise; and that West Kent will not win in a 'levelling-up beauty parade'. However, it was also noted that strong, deliverable projects with well-developed business cases will always have a strong chance of success if they can clearly articulate how they will unlock growth and deliver outcomes. Related to this it was stated that more Towns Fund money went to medium priority areas than high, evidencing the importance of high-quality project development.
- 4.1.23 It was noted that future funding rounds are expected to be 'really tight', with reduced levels of resources likely to be made available to all areas. The quality of projects and bids is therefore vital, and confidence in delivery is key. It was suggested that for West Kent, having really strong projects is more important than an impressive strategy. For an area such as West Kent there is no need for a grand vision, but to tackle individual issues.
- 4.1.24 In developing projects, stakeholders also stressed the benefits of collaboration. This included building on the strong track record of the three districts and boroughs working together within the West Kent Partnership, collaborating with a wider range of stakeholders within West Kent, and collaborating with appropriate partners outside West Kent. Effective engagement with local MPs will be a critical element of this approach under the emerging funding arrangements.

¹⁴ In England 70% of the allocation is on a per capita basis, with the remainder on a needs-based index.

¹⁵ Multiply will support adult numeracy, with upper tier authorities preparing investment plans for bespoke programmes in their areas based upon a national menu of interventions.

- 4.1.25 The example of partnering with areas identified as higher priority for the Community Renewal Fund was cited as a potential way to creatively address some of the challenges posed. Although some of the drawbacks of this have been noted above.
- 4.1.26 Prioritising projects to put forward at a West Kent level was also discussed alongside collaboration, potentially pooling resources locally to develop fewer but stronger projects. This may also provide a tool to develop projects at scale, which may be a package of smaller schemes.
- 4.1.27 It is important to recognise that success within KMEP level prioritisation is only part of the challenge. This is particularly relevant with the expectation of much greater Central Government involvement in future funding rounds. This will require establishing strong relationships with local MPs as well as the relevant Government departments and officials.

4.2 Business Level Funding

- 4.2.1 The following analysis and discussion is based on a consultation with and data provided by the KCC business growth funding team. This considers the take up of available funding by businesses in West Kent in recent years. This primarily includes:
- Escalate (£5.5m covering West Kent plus Maidstone); and
 - Kent & Medway Business Fund (KMBF).
- 4.2.2 One of the issues highlighted is the low take up rates of funding by businesses, particularly in Sevenoaks. It is uncertain why this is, and would be a valid area for further research to understand whether it is due to:
- Lack of awareness of funding opportunities;
 - Perceptions of (in)eligibility;
 - Not wanting or requiring funding support¹⁶; or
 - A mix of these or other factors.
- 4.2.3 It was noted that the marketing and awareness campaigns for the funding are very similar across all areas, so this should not be the dominant factor. However, it is recognised that awareness is not always at the level it should be. An example of a recent event (Summer/Autumn 2021) was given, where many still were not aware of the Growth Hub despite significant promotion online and via social media. It was highlighted that there will be benefits from ensuring marketing is joined up and consistent across all partners, including the districts and boroughs.
- 4.2.4 It is also noted that some businesses are clearly very savvy at negotiating the funding environment and repeatedly access available resources. There may be opportunities to increase the number of businesses that fall into this category through awareness raising and engagement.
- 4.2.5 In terms of future marketing it was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the number of businesses on the relevant databases, and this may help take up in the future. But it was noted that there must not be complacency in terms of expanding reach into the business community.

¹⁶ Escalate was looking for growth projects with 20% year on year growth aspirations.

Escalate and KMBF

- 4.2.6 The tables below set out the loan and grant funding into the West Kent districts and boroughs via KMBF and Escalate. This highlights the lower levels of take up within Sevenoaks. Despite having the largest business population of the three areas.
- 4.2.7 The consultation with KCC staff suggested that the approvals process is consistent, with very few applications rejected, so the low numbers of funded projects in Sevenoaks is not believed to be a product of application quality, but of quantity.

Table 4.2 Escalate and KMBF Funding in West Kent

District/Borough	Instances	Funding	Total Businesses
Tunbridge Wells	16	£2.0m	6,330
Tonbridge & Malling	12	£1.1m	6,055
Sevenoaks	7	£0.6m	6,710
West Kent Total	35	£3.7m	19,095

Source KCC Business Funding Team

Table 4.3 KMBF Recycled Funding in West Kent

District/Borough	Instances	Funding	Total Businesses
Tunbridge Wells	5	£0.8m	6,330
Tonbridge & Malling	5	£0.5m	6,055
Sevenoaks	1	£0.05m	6,710
West Kent Total	11	£1.36m	19,095

Source KCC Business Funding Team

- 4.2.8 There were two new loan products launched in 2020 in direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic: the KMBF capital loan and KMBF recovery. In the case of both products 16 loans were selected to go to panel, of these 11 were approved (69%). Across both products only 4 were rejected (13%) with the remainder deferred. A further Covid response fund had 154 initial applications/expressions of interest, with 25 from West Kent districts (16% of applications compared with 26% of businesses).
- 4.2.9 KCC maintain data on bad debts resulting from loan repayments. This identifies generally low levels of bad debts across Kent generally (8.8%) in comparison to many other schemes¹⁷, with particularly low rates in West Kent (7.1%).

Enhancing Funding

- 4.2.10 Two key areas of focus were highlighted in respect of increasing the volume of funding to businesses in West Kent in the future:
- Understanding in more detail issues of low take up in Sevenoaks; and
 - Ensuring coordinated and joined up marketing across all stakeholders to maximise awareness of available funding opportunities.

¹⁷ Examples of 10-15% for Regional Growth Fund and 30% for British Business Bank start up loans were quoted, although data to support these figures was not available.

5 Conclusions

5.0.1 The headline conclusions of this analysis are as follows:

- West Kent is, on most indicators, affluent, particularly in a Kent context. But when compared to other similarly located places there is evidence of room for economic growth. Particularly given its high quality workforce and existing strengths in financial and professional services.
- Its **strengths** include its:
 - Highly skilled workforce;
 - Attractive environment; and
 - Easy access to London.
- Its primary **weaknesses** are:
 - Housing affordability;
 - Lack of higher skill employment resulting in low workplace wages; and
 - Lack of housing and employment space development.
- **Opportunities** for the future include:
 - Key developments including The Amelia Scott (funded) and Kingstanding Way;
 - Diversifying town centres and potential for greater employment in and around the towns in response to post-Covid working patterns;
 - Making the area more self-contained benefiting from increased time and expenditure of residents within the area and increasing environmental sustainability;
 - Growth in financial & professional services, creative industries and green economy;
 - The potential to build on the globally renowned horticultural research;
 - Developing the cultural and creative offer both for residents and visitor economy; and
 - Increasing alignment between West Kent and Kent County Council priorities.
- **Threats** facing West Kent include:
 - The levelling up agenda (with focus on other priority areas) reducing funding availability and eligibility;
 - Accelerated challenges to town centres;
 - Further losses of employment sites;
 - Recruitment and retention challenges; and
 - Challenging economic environment with cost of living crisis, tight labour market and supply chain difficulties.
- Economic development efforts and funds should be directed at tackling the barriers that present these opportunities from being realised whilst addressing the weaknesses and threats wherever possible.
- The West Kent local authorities have a strong record of compiling bids for public funding, and strong evidence of success for such an affluent place.

- Future bids for support will need to be well worked up, to be able to respond to short timescale bidding competitions. This will mean investing in project and business case development ahead of time. Bids will need to demonstrate how they contribute to the twelve Levelling Up missions. Identifying partnerships with designated priority areas should also be a focus.
- Getting local MPs involved in formulating and submitting bids will ensure that they are considered fully by central Government.
- There are some pockets of low take up of available business support funding. This should be investigated further and efforts made to continually increase awareness.

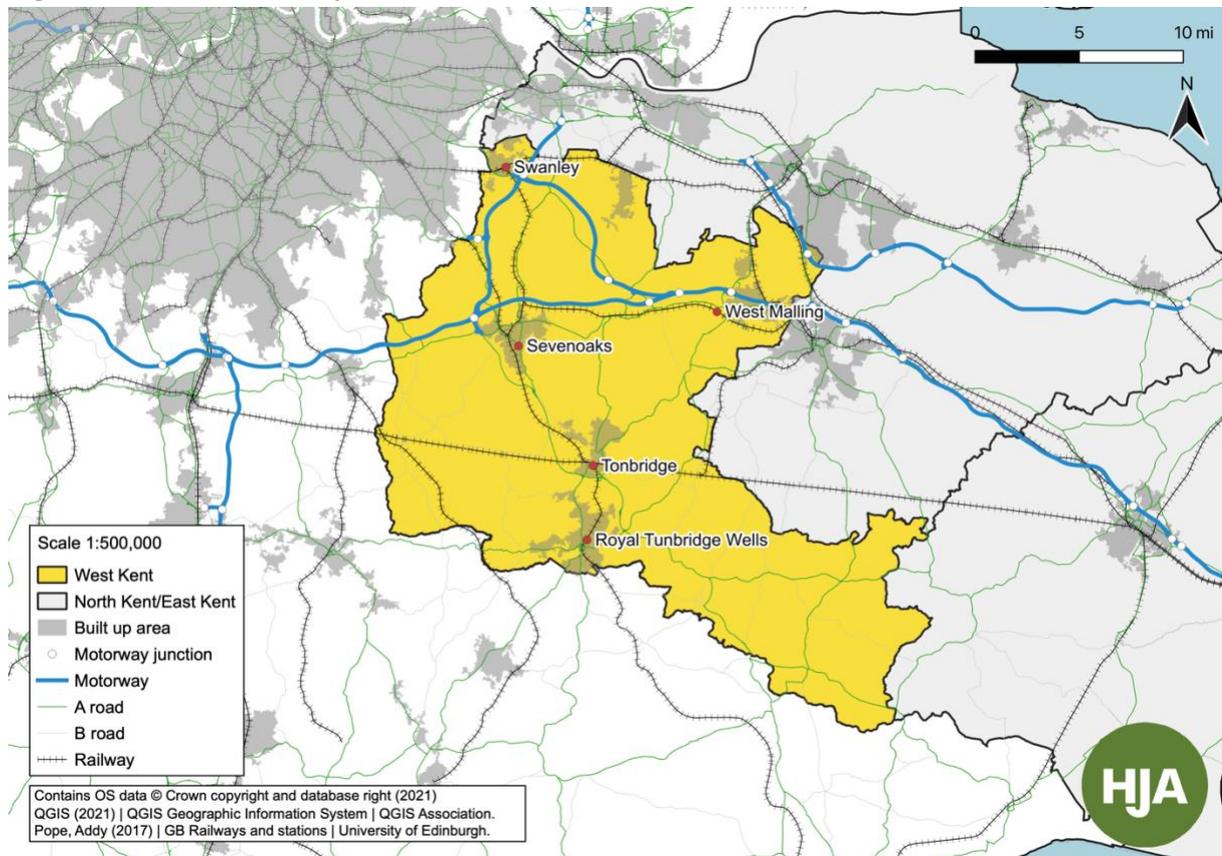
Appendix 1: The West Kent Economy

- i. This appendix sets out key economic indicators and commentary for West Kent.

Place

- ii. West Kent comprises the three district areas of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, and Tunbridge Wells. The area borders London to the north west, Surrey and East Sussex to the west and south, and other Kent and Medway districts, boroughs and unitary authority areas to the north and east. The Kent towns of Dartford, Gravesend, Rochester, Chatham and Maidstone ring the north east edge of the West Kent area.
- iii. The three largest towns within the area are Royal Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks¹⁸. Key transport infrastructure includes the South Eastern Mainline, Chatham Mainline and Hastings Line rail routes. HS1 also stops at Snodland station. The M25, M26 and M20¹⁹ motorways run through the northern part of the area. Figure A1.1 provides an illustrative map of the West Kent area.

Figure A1.1 West Kent Key Towns and Transport Infrastructure



- iv. West Kent is a highly desirable place to live. The area is home to around 373,000 people. Approximately 40% of the resident population lives in the three main towns of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Royal Tunbridge Wells. There are also a number of smaller towns. However, the area is predominantly rural (85%), with 40% of the West Kent population living in these rural areas. The

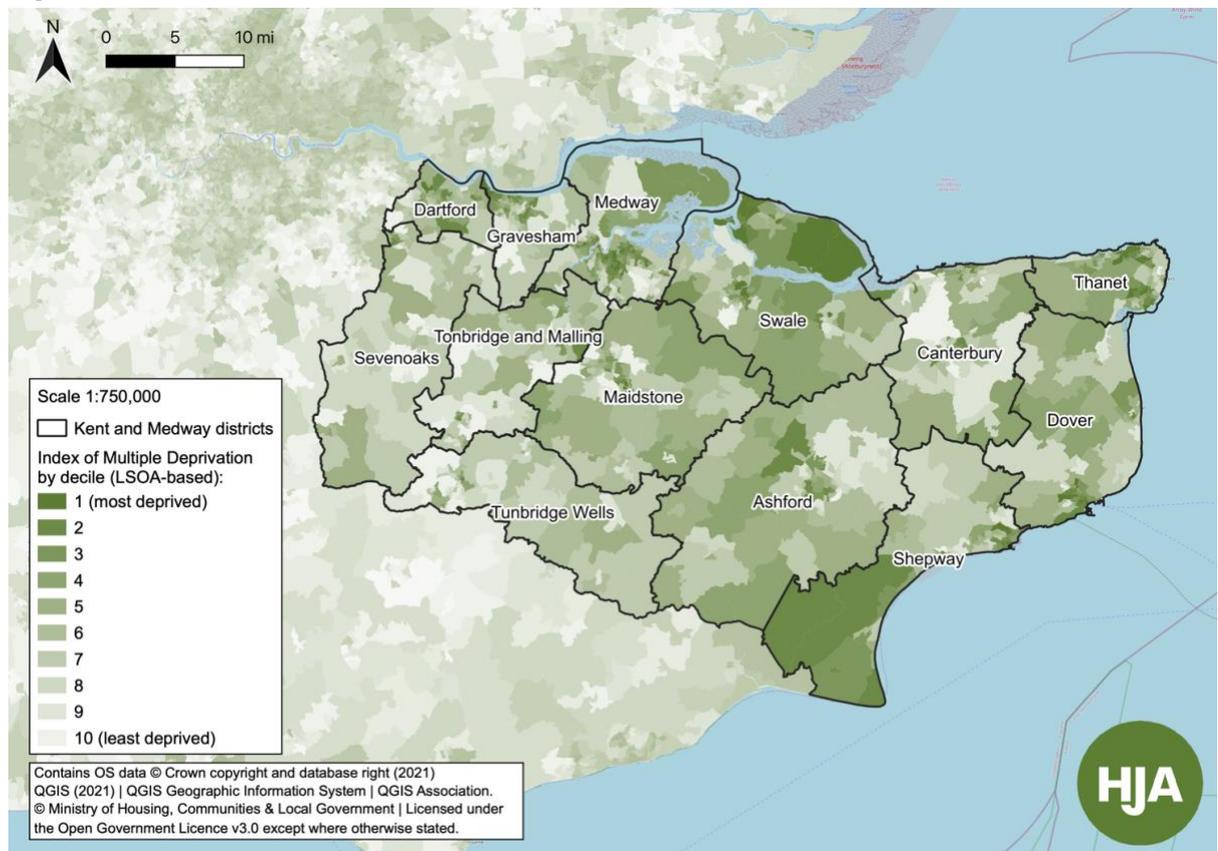
¹⁸ As well as a number of smaller towns and settlements including Swanley and Ditton.

¹⁹ The M2 also runs through the extreme north eastern edge of the West Kent area.

population of West Kent has grown more slowly than both East Kent and North Kent over the ten year period 2010-20.

- v. There are a range of environmental designations which recognise the natural beauty of the area but also create constraints for development.
 - Tonbridge & Malling is approximately 70% Green Belt. 27% of the borough is designated as AONB²⁰, many areas covered by other designations including Ancient Woodland, Special Areas of Conservation and SSSI²¹.
 - Tunbridge Wells AONB and Green Belt cover 75% of the borough as well as 10 SSSIs as well as a range of other designated areas.
 - Sevenoaks 93% Green Belt, 60% AONB as well as other areas designated
- vi. West Kent has relatively few areas classified as significantly deprived in comparison to North and East Kent. Figure A1.2 illustrates the English Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, with areas shaded darker green ranked as more deprived in comparison to those shaded lighter. Across West Kent 19% of the LSOAs²² are ranked in the 50% most deprived in England. There are six LSOAs ranked in the 20% most deprived in England. All though few in number, there are pockets of deprivation. These are located in Swanley, Tonbridge, Royal Tunbridge Wells and West Malling.

Figure A1.2 Map of Indices of Deprivation across Kent



Source: English Indices of Deprivation 2019

²⁰ Areas of Outstanding National Beauty

²¹ Sites of Special Scientific Interest

²² Lower Super Output Areas. These are small areas used for statistical analysis. There are 32,844 LSOAs in England. LSOAs have an average population of 1,500 people or 650 households.

London Influence

- vii. Proximity to London is a recognised as a defining feature of the West Kent economy. This is common to many parts of the South East and East regions of England with strong transport infrastructure links to the capital. Stakeholder consultations have made clear this is not only in terms of the travel to work relationships, with 21% of West Kent workers²³ commuting into London (2011 Census), but in terms of the links between businesses of all sizes in the area and those in London that are key clients. There are also significant migration flows with people moving out of London into West Kent.
- viii. There is a clear indication of resident earnings being greater than workplace earnings. This is particularly notable for Tunbridge Wells district. This sits alongside the commuting data to show a pattern of out-commuting for higher wage employment, often to London²⁴. As a result West Kent has a reputation for being affluent. As shown in Figure A1.3 residence based annual earnings in West Kent are well above the other areas of Kent and the GB average. However, workplace based earnings are lower than both North Kent and Medway as well as the GB average.

Figure A1.3 Residence and Workplace Earnings, Annual Full Time Median Pay, 2020

Area	Earnings by Residence Gross Annual	Earnings by Workplace Gross Annual
West Kent	£38,900	£31,300
North Kent	£33,000	£32,700
East Kent	£23,700	£28,200
Medway	£33,300	£33,000
Kent & Medway	£32,900	£31,300
Great Britain	£31,600	£31,600

Source: ASHE, ONS

Demographics and Labour Market

- ix. Over the last 10 years (2010-20) the population of West Kent has grown by 7%. This is similar to the GB average but below the 9-10% growth experienced in East Kent and North Kent. Across all areas the highest levels of population growth have been within the 50-64 and 65 years and above age groups. The age structure of the population is also very similar to the national and Kent averages. North Kent has a slightly younger age profile.
- x. The West Kent population exhibits a very high economic activity rate. This leads to a high employment rate, which is notably influenced by very high levels of self employment.
- xi. Aligned to the high levels of resident based earnings, the West Kent working age population has a high proportion working in higher order occupations and possessing high level NVQ4+ qualifications.
- xii. Figure A1.4 includes key labour market statistics. For West Kent all indicators have moved clearly in a positive direction since 2010.

²³ 33% of Sevenoaks district working residents commute to London, 15-16% of Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells district working residents commute to the capital.

²⁴ In addition to 21% of workers out commuting to London, 16% travel to other locations within the South East region. The majority of this is to neighbouring areas, with the largest flows to Maidstone, Dartford, Medway and Wealden.

Figure A1.4 Labour Market Indicators 2020 (16-64 resident population)

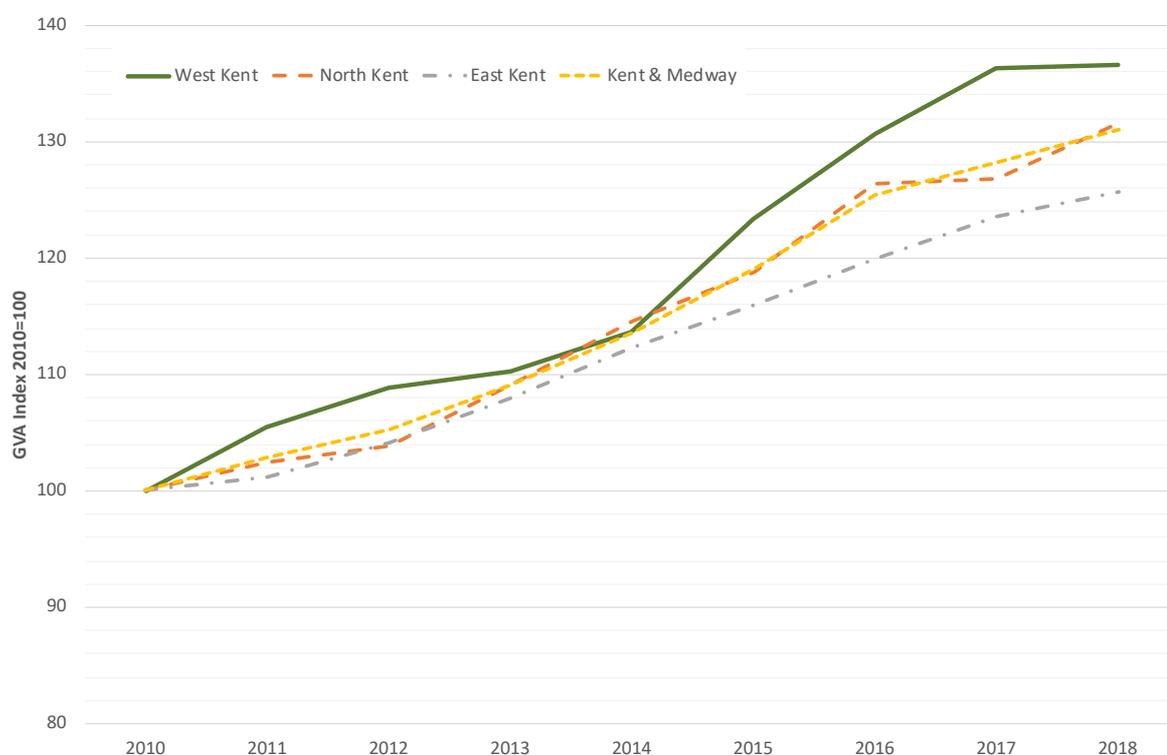
Area	Economic Activity Rate	Employment Rate	Self Employment	NVQ4+ Qualifications	Occupational Groups 1-3
West Kent	82.3	78.5	16.6	48.7	55.1
North Kent	81.6	78.4	10.1	37.9	45.6
East Kent	80.7	77.4	12.9	38.4	46.0
Kent & Medway	81.4	78.1	12.4	40.2	47.7
Great Britain	79.0	75.2	9.9	43.1	49.6

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

Economic Performance

- xiii. Gross Value Added (GVA) measures the economic output of an area. Figure A1.5 shows West Kent has had strong GVA growth relative to the other Kent & Medway sub-areas since 2010.

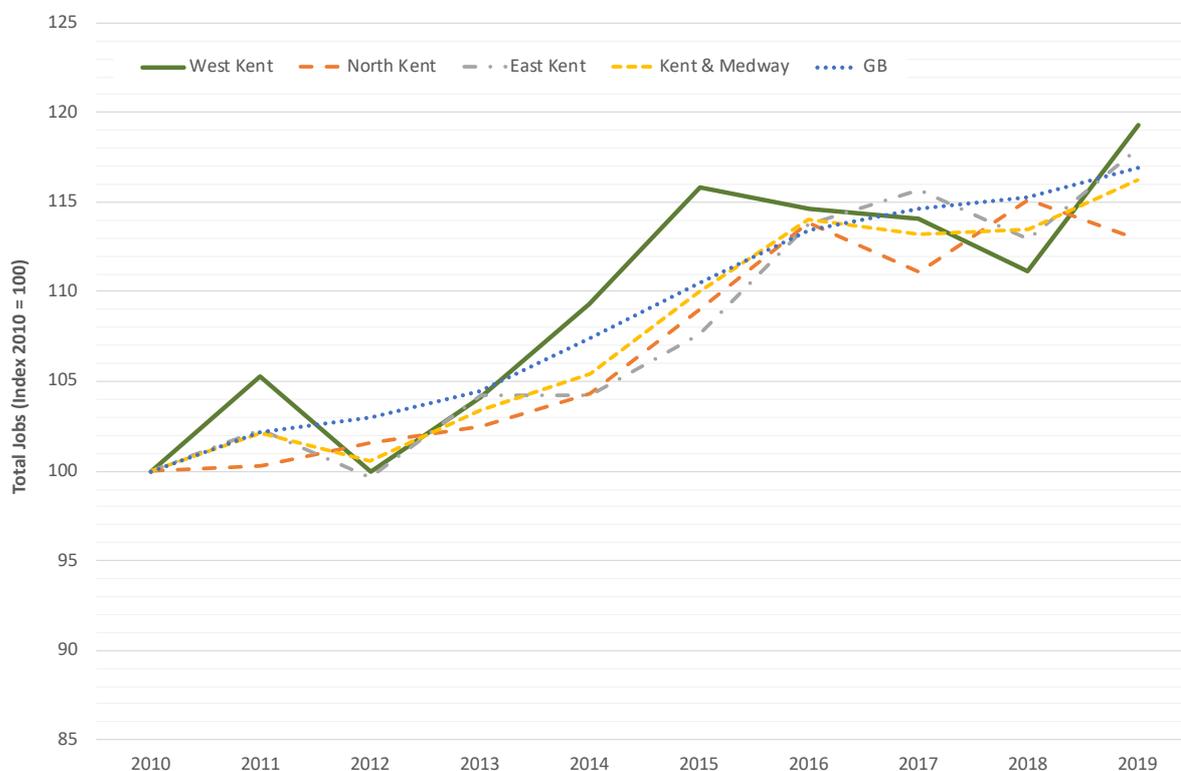
Figure A1.5 Change in GVA 2010-19 (Index 2010=100)



Source: ONS

- xiv. The Jobs Density total jobs measure indicates 204,000 jobs in West Kent at 2019. There was a significant growth in jobs 2018-19 of 14,000 jobs. As can be seen in Figure A1.6, this growth in the final year puts West Kent ahead of the benchmark areas, however, in 2018 the growth in jobs since 2010 had been the weakest of the comparators. Some of this variation may be explained by volatility in the data at a local D.

Figure A1.6 Change in Total Jobs 2010-19 (Index 2010=100)



Source: ONS Jobs Density

- xv. Headline GVA only tells part of the story. GVA per job filled is a measure of productivity of the local economy. This data is only available at a local authority area level. Two of the three West Kent areas have GVA per job filled above any of the other Kent & Medway areas. Tunbridge Wells is ranked 5th of 13. There are parts of North and East Kent with much lower levels of productivity. Figure A1.7 summarises this data.

Figure A1.7 GVA per job filled

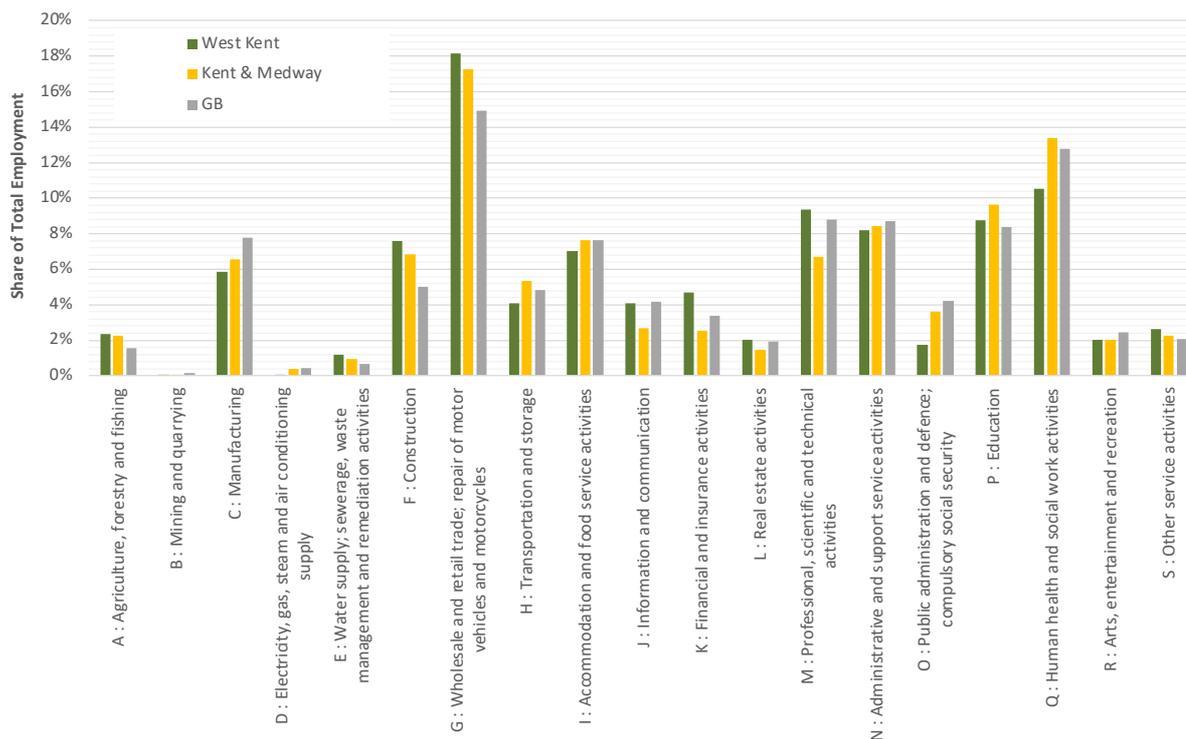
Area	GVA per job filled
North Kent	
Dartford	£62,000
Gravesham	£48,400
Maidstone	£49,900
Medway	£55,100
Swale	£49,100
East Kent	
Ashford	£44,300
Canterbury	£41,700
Dover	£62,500
Folkestone and Hythe	£53,500
Thanet	£41,000
West Kent	
Sevenoaks	£68,200
Tonbridge and Malling	£66,100
Tunbridge Wells	£59,300

Source: ONS

Sectors

- xvi. The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)²⁵ indicated 171,000 jobs in West Kent in 2019. Employment has remained fairly steady around this level over the last five years²⁶. Figure A1.8 shows the spread of employment across sectors, and compares to Kent & Medway and GB. The largest sector is Wholesale & Retail (31,000 jobs). Other important sectors in absolute terms include Human Health & Social Work (18,000), Professional, Scientific and Technical (16,000), Education (15,000) and Administrative & Support Services (14,000).

Figure A1.8 Sectoral Share of Employment 2019



Source: BRES, ONS

- xvii. Figure A1.9 sets out location quotients for sectors in West Kent. A location quotient measures the relative concentration of a sector in an area relative to a benchmark location. The table includes location quotients relative to GB and to Kent & Medway. An LQ is calculated by dividing the share of employment in West Kent by the share in the benchmark location. A figure greater than 1 indicates a relative concentration or strength in the sector. A figure below 1 shows an under representation. The table is colour coded, with green cells for concentrations and pink cells for under representations.
- xviii. When compared to Kent & Medway, West Kent has particularly strong concentrations in Information & Communication and Financial & Insurance, both above 1.5. There are also strong concentrations in Real Estate and Professional, Scientific and Technical. This shows the strength of the services sector. However, none of these sectors have experienced employment growth over the period 2015-19. The only sector that has shown signs of marked employment growth is

²⁵ BRES is not as comprehensive measure of total employment as the total jobs measure within the jobs density series released by ONS. However, it provides the best indication of sectoral breakdown.

²⁶ HJA has identified a statistical anomaly with the data for professional services employment in 2015. As a result a manual adjustment has been made. The issues related to this are set out in Annex A to this appendix.

Construction (+3,000 jobs, 30%), which shows a strong concentration relative to GB, and a modest concentration relative to Kent & Medway.

Figure A1.9 Location quotient by sector, West Kent relative to GB and Kent & Medway

Sectors	GB	Kent & Medway
A. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1.5	1.0
B. Mining and Quarrying	0.3	1.1
C. Manufacturing	0.8	0.9
D. Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	0.1	0.1
E. Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	1.8	1.2
F. Construction	1.5	1.1
G. Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	1.2	1.0
H. Transportation and storage	0.8	0.8
I. Accommodation and food service activities	0.9	0.9
J. Information and communication	1.0	1.5
K. Financial and insurance activities	1.4	1.8
L. Real estate activities	1.1	1.4
M. Professional, scientific and technical activities	1.1	1.4
N. Administrative and support service activities	0.9	1.0
O. Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	0.4	0.5
P. Education	1.0	0.9
Q. Human health and social work activities	0.8	0.8
R. Arts, entertainment and recreation	0.8	1.0
S. Other service activities	1.3	1.2

Source: ONS, BRES Survey 2019

- xix. There have been some employment declines in the Professional and Administrative Services sectors. Looking in more detail at sub-sector data indicates a number of fluctuations.
- There has also been a decline in the scientific research and development sector (28%), albeit relatively small in absolute terms (350 jobs).
 - The head offices and management consultancy sector has experienced a decline of 500 jobs (10%).
- xx. There have been some growth areas in high value services sectors. In combination these have added 1,300 jobs offsetting the losses.
- Architectural and engineering,
 - Advertising and market research,
 - Other professional, scientific and technical activities, and
 - Veterinary activities.
- xxi. Within the Administrative & Support Service Activities sector much of the fall has been within the employment activities sector, which can be hard to define as it can include agency staff contributing to a wide range of activities. It is also not always location specific, if the employment agency is located within an area the agency staff may in fact be spread over a disparate geography.

Annex A: Employment in Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities in West Kent

- i. According to the Business Register and Employment Survey there were 21,250 people employed in Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities (SIC M) in 2015. By 2019 this figure was 16,200. This is a decline of 5,000 people.
- ii. SIC M comprises seven 2-digit SIC sectors. A decline in employment of 5,000 people over the period 2015-19 has been seen in Legal & Accounting Activities (SIC 69). There have been movements in the other six 2-digit SIC sectors but, none of more than 500 people so SIC 69 is an outlier.
- iii. Examining employment across the three local authority areas that make up the West Kent Partnership, Tunbridge Wells appears to have a very high employment figure in SIC 69 in 2015 (8,900) compared to the following years.
- iv. Whilst not exactly comparable (PAYE only units were included in 2015) data from 2009-14 shows that the 8,000 figure in 2015 is not in keeping with previous employment levels.
- v. Of these 8,900 jobs in SIC 69 in Tunbridge Wells in 2015, 8,000 are in SIC 69.20 Accounting, Bookkeeping & Auditing Activities; Tax Consultancy. Breaking this figure down across 5-digit SIC codes shows that 6,000 of these jobs are in Bookkeeping Activities (SIC 69.202).
- vi. Examining employment in this 5-digit sector shows that these 6,000 jobs are located in a single MSOA (Tunbridge Wells 012). Examining the five LSOAs that comprise this MSOA shows all these jobs are located in a single LSOA.
- vii. Looking at a map of this LSOA does not show any large buildings that could house this level of employment and, it is unlikely the local authority would be unaware of an employer of this scale in the area.
- viii. Googling bookkeeping in this area of Tunbridge Wells shows that there is a company called Maxipay Accounting that provides umbrella company services. Previous discussions with the ONS about these services has revealed that all people who use the service of an umbrella company will have the address of the umbrella company as their working address, regardless of where they actually live/work.
- ix. Examining data in this LSOA for 2-digit SIC across all years shows that these jobs have disappeared from the count, rather than being displaced into another SIC code.
- x. On this basis it is reasonable to assume the 2015 employment figure is erroneous.

Appendix 2: Outer M25 Comparative Assessment

- i. Comparative assessment of the West Kent area within a Kent context only tells a part of the story.
- ii. West Kent is characterised by its proximity to London. This is a feature it shares with some other parts of Kent, but also parts of West Sussex, Surrey, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Essex.
- iii. The three key towns within West Kent lie 20-30 miles from central London. Other towns within a similar catchment include Maidstone and Rochester (32 miles), Basildon and Southend (25-35 miles), Chelmsford (30 miles), Harlow (20 miles), Stevenage (27 miles), Maidenhead (26 miles), Bracknell (27 miles), Woking (23 miles), Guildford (27 miles), Crawley (27 miles) and Horsham (31 miles).
- iv. Set out in this appendix is comparative analysis of local authority areas around the M25 ring. All proximate local authorities were included in the analysis. Those that lie fully (or majority) within the M25 were excluded. In general the location of towns in the 20-30 mile catchment from central London was a key determining factor.
- v. Analysis has been undertaken at local authority level, partly because of data availability, and partly to allow a more consistent analysis. There are not always consistent or appropriate groupings of local authorities to provide sub-regional analysis alongside West Kent.
- vi. A series of indicators has been compiled to capture a range of socio-economic features including the relationship to the London economy, labour market, economic performance, deprivation and the housing market:
 - Percentage of total resident workforce commuting to London (2011 Census)
 - Workplace pay – annual gross median full time average 2019-21²⁷ (ASHE)
 - Resident pay – annual gross median full time average 2019-21²⁸ (ASHE)
 - UK Competitiveness Index (Cardiff University, 2019)
 - GVA 2018 (ONS, Regional Accounts)
 - Labour Productivity – GVA per job filled (ONS, 2019)
 - Percentage change in total jobs 2014-19 (ONS, Jobs Density).
 - Unemployment rate – ILO April 2020-March 2021 (APS)
 - Percentage of workforce with Level 4 Qualifications 2020 (APS)
 - Deprivation – percentage of LSOAs in 20% most deprived 2019 (IMD)
 - Housing affordability – median resident earnings and prices (ONS, 2020)
 - Housing affordability – lower quartile resident earnings and prices (ONS, 2020)
 - Housing affordability – median workplace earnings and prices (ONS, 2020)
 - Housing affordability – lower quartile workplace earnings and prices (ONS, 2020)
- vii. Wherever possible the latest available data is used. In the case of commuting this is reliant on the 2011 Census. Even before the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic this may have changed. Commuting rates have been used more for illustrative purposes than as a core determinant of any conclusions reached.

²⁷ A 3-year average is used because of some missing values and to smooth volatility due to small sample sizes.

²⁸ A 3-year average is used because of some missing values and to smooth volatility due to small sample sizes.

- viii. For each indicator the local authority areas have been ranked. This provides a helpful tool for understanding the position of the West Kent authority areas within the pool of 35 areas that make up the catchment.

Indicator	Comment
Commute to London	<p>This data is taken from 2011 and will therefore be subject to change. This will have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, considering this indicator is still illustrative of variations across the comparator areas.</p> <p>There is a wide range from 7% to 42% of resident workforces commuting into London. This suggests quite a variation in the reliance on London from a workforce/employment perspective.</p> <p>Sevenoaks has one of the highest percentage of London commuters, ranked 4th of 35. Other areas with very high percentages of commuters include Epping Forest District, Dartford, Brentwood and Broxbourne (all above 30%).</p> <p>Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells are ranked just below half way (17th and 19th respectively). In these two districts the levels of London commuting are less than half those ranked at the top of the table, yet are more than double those ranked lowest.</p> <p>Areas more similar to T&M and TW include Rochford, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Windsor & Maidenhead and Southend on Sea.</p>
Workplace earnings	<p>Sevenoaks is ranked in the lower half of the pool for workplace earnings. Tunbridge Wells is ranked 31st of 35 and Tonbridge & Malling 32nd, indicating very low workplace earnings relative to the comparator areas.</p> <p>Those areas with the highest workplace earnings include Runnymede, Bracknell Forest, Surrey Heath, Wokingham and Mole Valley. With the exception of Surrey Heath, these areas have much higher proportions of workplace employment in higher value services (SIC Sections J-M).</p> <p>Other areas with low workplace earnings include Swale, Castle Point, Southend-on-Sea, Harlow, Mid Sussex and Rochford.</p>
Resident earnings	<p>Tunbridge Wells is ranked 7th of 35 for resident earnings showing the impact of out commuting for higher wages. Resident earnings are 33% higher than workplace earnings. This ranks the district as having the second greatest discrepancy between resident and workplace pay. Other areas with high resident earnings include St Albans, Brentwood, Windsor and Maidenhead, Surrey Heath, Guildford and East Herts.</p> <p>Sevenoaks is ranked 10/35, with resident earnings 22% above workplace earnings. Tonbridge & Malling is ranked 14/35 with resident earnings 26% above workplace levels. This puts both Sevenoaks and T&M in the upper half of the pool for resident</p>

	<p>earnings and the top 20% for the gap between resident and workplace earnings.</p> <p>Areas with resident earnings well above workplace earnings include Brentwood, St Albans, Rochford, Castle Point and East Herts.</p> <p>Areas with very low resident earnings include Harlow, Stevenage, Crawley, Gravesham and Swale.</p>
Influence of London (Summary)	<p>Whilst it is not possible to draw exact conclusions on the influence of London other areas with high resident earnings such as Windsor & Maidenhead, Guildford, East Herts and Surrey Heath have not dissimilar levels of commuting into London. But there is not consistency in the relationship between workplace and resident earnings.</p> <p>For Sevenoaks, whilst there is a much higher proportion of workforce commuting to the capital, the relative difference between workplace and resident earnings is slightly more modest. This is a product of higher workplace earnings levels.</p> <p>Across the three indicators Sevenoaks has an average rank of 11.3 and Tunbridge Wells an average rank of 14.8 and Tonbridge & Malling 17 within the pool of 35 areas.</p>
UK Competitiveness Index	<p>The UK Competitiveness Index is compiled by Cardiff University and ranks all local authority areas based on a combination of indicators.</p> <p>All three West Kent local authorities are ranked in the lower half of the table. Tunbridge Wells in 18th, Sevenoaks 23rd and Tonbridge & Malling 25th. Within a UK context the three areas are ranked 80-120th of 379. Others with similar rankings in the comparator pool include Epping Forest, Mid Sussex, Horsham, Stevenage and Chelmsford.</p> <p>There is a significant gap between the top 10 which includes areas such as Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham, Runnymede, St Albans, East Herts, Bracknell Forest, Buckinghamshire, Guildford, Mole Valley, Surrey Heath and Slough. These are all ranked in the top 40 of the 379 local authority areas in the UK.</p> <p>The least competitive comparator areas include Castle Point, Swale, Rochford, Medway, Southend-on-Sea and Gravesham. All ranked above 200 in the UK rankings²⁹.</p>
GVA	<p>In terms of total GVA the three West Kent authorities are ranked in the middle third of the comparator pool. Tonbridge & Malling 15th, Sevenoaks 19th and Tunbridge Wells 24th.</p> <p>Those at the top of the rankings include Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham and Runnymede.</p>

²⁹ Castle Point is ranked 335 of 379 in the UK.

Labour Productivity	<p>GVA per job filled provides a better comparator measure to capture the relative sizes of the local authority economies. On this measure the three West Kent authorities are all ranked in the top half. Sevenoaks is ranked 8th, Tonbridge & Malling 10th and Tunbridge Wells 16th.</p> <p>The top ranked areas include Runnymede, Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead and Brentwood. The average productivity levels of the top five ranked areas is some 25% above Sevenoaks, the highest ranked West Kent authority.</p>
Jobs Change	<p>The range of employment change across the pool of local authority areas is very wide, ranging from a 54% rise in Dacorum to an 11% decline in Broxbourne.</p> <p>Sevenoaks added 9,000 jobs over the period 2014-19. This 16% rise ranks the area 8th of the 35 in the pool and the most successful of the West Kent authorities. Tonbridge & Malling has experienced a 12% jobs growth, ranking it 17th of 35. Tunbridge Wells has experienced no change in total jobs, ranking the area 33rd of 35 however it is possible this is affected by a statistical anomaly with one of the contributing datasets in 2015, which may lead to jobs growth being underestimated by around 5,000 over the period. This would move TW up 10 places in the ranking.</p> <p>There is no clear patterns in terms of the levels of jobs growth experienced.</p>
Headline Economic Performance (Summary)	<p>Overall Sevenoaks has performed most strongly in West Kent, with Tonbridge & Malling second of the three areas. Sevenoaks has experienced strong jobs growth and has the highest labour productivity measure which is likely to underpin its better workplace wages. This may reflect its close proximity to London.</p> <p>Despite having the highest relative position in the UK Competitiveness Index in terms of GVA, labour productivity and jobs growth Tunbridge Wells has not performed as well as other areas. However, this could be adversely impacted by an identified statistical anomaly in the jobs data.</p> <p>Overall the West Kent authorities do not perform particularly highly on any of the headline economic indicators, across the four indicators Sevenoaks has an average rank of 14.5, Tonbridge & Malling 16.8 and Tunbridge Wells 26.</p>
Unemployment Rate	<p>Unemployment rates are very similar across the West Kent areas and place all three within the top 10 ranked areas within the pool. There are small margins separating many of the comparator areas.</p>
Higher Qualifications	<p>The proportion of the workforce with Level 4 (degree level and above) qualifications ranges from 67% in St Albans to 22% in Broxbourne. The West Kent authorities are spread widely across the range with Tunbridge Wells ranked 2nd, Sevenoaks 11th and Tonbridge & Malling 26th of the 35.</p>

Deprivation	<p>12 of the 35 areas have no LSOAs³⁰ within the 20% most deprived in England. The West Kent authorities are ranked in the middle of the pool at 16th, 20th and 24th position. The three West Kent areas feature alongside Harlow, Rochford, Guildford, Crawley, Dacorum and Stevenage in the middle of the pool. These are areas that may not immediately be viewed as similar.</p> <p>Tonbridge & Malling has 4% of its LSOAs within the 20% most deprived and is ranked 24th. Whilst there are relatively few areas of deprivation in West Kent, this should not gloss over the fact that there are some areas that experience relatively high deprivation.</p> <p>Within the pool of 35 local authority areas such as Southend-on-Sea, Basildon, Medway and Swale have more than 20% of their respective LSOAs ranked within the 20% most deprived, suggesting much more widespread issues in these areas.</p>
Labour Market and Deprivation (Summary)	<p>Unemployment is relatively low across all three areas. The qualifications profile is a mixed bag with the share of areas ranked within the 20% most deprived in the middle of the range.</p> <p>Across the three indicators Tunbridge Wells has an average rank of 7.7, Sevenoaks 13.3 and Tonbridge & Malling 19.7.</p>
Housing Affordability	<p>Housing affordability is a challenge across the whole pool of comparator areas. Using the four separate measures, the lowest affordability ratio is 7.5 times median resident earnings (Medway). The highest is 17.7 times lower quartile workplace earnings (St Albans).</p> <p>Using resident-based earning measures the West Kent authorities are spread across the distribution. Tunbridge Wells is ranked 8th when considering median earnings and prices which is largely a product of its very high resident earnings. It drops to 24th in the rankings for lower quartile affordability which shows the implications of high house prices. Tonbridge & Malling is ranked 12th and 7th, and Sevenoaks 32nd with a ratio of 11.8 using median earnings and prices, and 13.5 for lower quartile earnings and prices.</p> <p>Using workplace-based measures the West Kent authorities are all in the lower reaches of the rankings. Tonbridge & Malling is ranked 24th for both median and lower quartile measures. Sevenoaks is ranked 27th and 29th. Tunbridge Wells 31st and 28th.</p> <p>Across these measures the affordability ratios are in the range of 11.8 – 13.3 highlighting the challenges for those that work locally to access housing, particularly when competing with those out-commuting for higher salaries.</p> <p>Stakeholder consultations have also made clear the local housing market impact of those moving out of London with significant</p>

³⁰ Lower Super Output Areas. These are statistical building blocks accommodating approximately 1,500 persons or 650 households.

	<p>deposits as a result of even higher London prices which exacerbate the challenges for local workers to compete. However, this effect could also be felt in the comparator areas.</p> <p>Across the four indicators Tonbridge & Malling has an average rank of 16.8, Tunbridge Wells an average rank of 22.8 and Sevenoaks 30.</p>
Overall Summary	<p>There are a range of ways the average rankings could be weighted. In broad terms the three West Kent areas emerge as mid table within the pool of 35 areas. The significant housing affordability issues in Sevenoaks impact its overall rankings.</p> <p>The areas emerging with the best average ranking are Runnymede, Wokingham, Windsor & Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest.</p> <p>The areas with the lowest average ranking Harlow, Castle Point, Southend-on-Sea and Swale.</p> <p>Whilst this analysis is intended to be indicative, with the potential to choose different indicators and weighting mechanisms which might produce slightly different results. The overall conclusion is that the three West Kent areas do not perform in the upper reaches of the pool.</p> <p>Whilst Tunbridge Wells performs very well on residence-based indicators, its workplace economy is comfortably in the lower third of the pool. Sevenoaks is in some ways the reverse of this. Tonbridge & Malling sits in the middle of the other two, both geographically and in the data analysis.</p>

Appendix 3: Capital Funding Bids

- i. This appendix sets out analysis of submitted funding bids to KMEP over the period 2016-2020

Figure A3.1 Summary of bids by round

Year	No. of bids	Funds Sought	No. of Successful Bids	Funding Secured	Notes
2016 (LGF)	7	£63,085,439	2	£6,045,000	One bid of £45m made up a significant proportion of total funds sought ³¹ . Of the 5 unsuccessful bids, four were shortlisted within SELEP but not selected for funding by central government. One of the successful projects was subsequently cancelled by Sevenoaks District Council for reasons beyond its control.
2019 (LGF)	3	£7,224,000	1	£1,998,600	The two unsuccessful bids were not shortlisted in SELEP submissions to government. One had been subject to lobbying by KMEP for support.
2019 (GPF)	3	£3,090,000	1	£600,000	
2020 (GBF)	4	£7,334,000	1	£1,490,000	Of the three unsuccessful projects, one remains second reserve in the event that any funding is returned unspent.
Total	17	£80,733,439	5	£10,133,600	

Source: HJA based on KMEP

³¹ It is noted that there was subsequent engagement in a Levelling Up Fund bid in 2021.

Figure A3.2 Detailed review of bids

What the bid was for	District/Bidder	Project name	Project description	Amount of funding sought	Prioritisation locally	Comment
Bid for LGF in 2016	Sevenoaks – SDC	Fort Halsted	The Council has recently granted planning consent for the development of the site for employment, housing and a hotel subject to a legal agreement. The delivery of 1100 jobs in a new employment hub on ex Ministry of Defence land at Fort Halstead includes B1 and B2 uses with ancillary energetic material testing, 450 residential units, an 80 bed hotel and new village centre.	£1.5m towards £32.5m total cost.	Viewed as 3 rd most important project by KMEP (out of 34 projects across Kent). Awarded LGF by SELEP and government.	Project was cancelled by Sevenoaks (after the LGF award), because the MOD would not vacate the land before 2021 – which was when the LGF was required to have been spent.
Bid for LGF in 2016	Sevenoaks – SDC	Swanley Town Centre	Local Growth Funding is sought is to kick start three transformational projects. The District Council will fund + commission a development design which reflects the strategic importance + will undertake the required studies and other work up to and including full planning permission for all three sites providing a coherent approach to the improvement of the area. Funding is needed for the fit out of business incubator space and demolition and site preparation to bring forward residential development.	£1.9m towards £12.1m total cost	Viewed as 11 th most important project by KMEP (out of 34). Included on LGF submission to Government, but central government did not choose to fund the project.	Lower down the prioritisation list as the bid could have provided more detail on the scope of the scheme, the deliverables, the timeframe, the funding package, etc. The deliverability let this scheme down.

What the bid was for	District/Bidder	Project name	Project description	Amount of funding sought	Prioritisation locally	Comment
Bid for LGF in 2016	Tonbridge & Malling – TMBC	Leigh Flood Storage	Flood Management to enable new residential and commercial development to take place, and to protect existing livelihoods, properties and local residents.	£4,545,000 towards £24.6m total cost	Viewed as 8 th most important project by KMEP (out of 34). Awarded LGF by SELEP and Government.	Project scheduled to complete in 2023 after delays caused by Act of Parliament.
Bid for LGF in 2016	Tonbridge & Malling – NIAB EMR (private sector)	NIAB EMR Biotech	Over a number of years, the NIAB EMR facilities have become no longer fit for purpose and capital investment is needed to support the further development of the NIAB EMR biotech hub. The hub will support innovation, research and spin-out businesses.	£6,037,000 towards £12.434m total cost.	Viewed as 19 th most important project by KMEP (out of 34). Included on LGF submission to Government, but central government did not choose to fund the project.	The project reported lower value for money scores than other bids submitted, hence slightly further down priority list.

What the bid was for	District/Bidder	Project name	Project description	Amount of funding sought	Prioritisation locally	Comment
Bid for LGF in 2016	Tunbridge Wells – TWBC & KCC	Woodsgate Corner roundabout, Tunbridge Wells	Roundabout scheme to replace existing traffic signalised junction on key route into/out of Tunbridge Wells town centre.	£550,000 towards £800k cost	Viewed as 15 th most important project by KMEP (out of 34). Awarded LGF by SELEP. Included on LGF submission to Government, but central government did not choose to fund the project.	The lower amount of match funding meant it was slightly further down the priority list.
Bid for LGF in 2016	Tunbridge Wells – TWBC & KCC	Paddock Wood junction improvements	Highway improvements to unlock 3 housing developments delivering circa 1000 homes.	£3,000,000 towards £4,175,473 total cost	Viewed as 16 th most important project by KMEP (out of 34). Awarded LGF by SELEP. Included on LGF submission to Government, but central government did not choose to fund the project.	Lower match-funding moved this scheme down the priority list

What the bid was for	District/Bidder	Project name	Project description	Amount of funding sought	Prioritisation locally	Comment
Bid for LGF in 2016	Tunbridge Wells – TWBC & KCC	A228 Colts Hill Relief Scheme	The scheme involves the creation of a new relief road around Colts Hill, to the North of Pembury on the A228.	£45,553,439 requested. No match funding.	Viewed as 34 th most important project by KMEP (out of 34). Not included on LGF submission to SELEP/Government by KMEP.	It was by far the largest scheme (wanting £45m). The value for money scores were poor; there was no match funding, and the scheme could only be delivered in 2025 (beyond the 2021 growth deal deadline).
Bid for LGF 3b funds in 2019	Sevenoaks – Sevenoaks Town Council	Sevenoaks Business Hub	<p>Sevenoaks Town Council inherited the former Red Cross building that sits, disused and derelict, on the town council site in Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks. STC would like to renovate the building to make it, once again, valuable to the surrounding community and in particular local businesses.</p> <p>The proposed solution is to create a Business Hub which will create affordable office space for self-employed professionals and small businesses as well as offering incubator activities to contribute to economic development in the area by promoting business growth.</p>	£245,400 out of a £270,400 total project cost	Viewed as 9 th most important project by KMEP (out of 45). KMEP lobbied for this scheme to be funded, but at the SELEP level, it lost out to South Essex, and this project went onto the SELEP reserve list, and was not funded.	<p>This was a good bid, and it was unfortunate that it lost out in the SELEP negotiations.</p> <p>It has been noted that the project has subsequently secured funding and is now built and open.</p>

What the bid was for	District/Bidder	Project name	Project description	Amount of funding sought	Prioritisation locally	Comment
Bid for LGF 3b funds in 2019	Tonbridge & Malling – NIAB EMR	State-of-art plant growing facility for modern horticulture	The LGF funding will be used to provide the new infrastructure that is required for the Advanced Technology Horticultural Zone (utility services, drainage, groundworks) and will see the construction of a new energy centre that meets the needs of the Zone.	£1,998,600 out of £5,358,300 total cost	Viewed as 5 th most important project by KMEP (out of 45). Awarded LGF by SELEP and Government	Project being built currently.
Bid for LGF 3b funds in 2019	Tunbridge Wells - TWBC	Calverley Square	The Calverley Square development involved the redevelopment of land to the rear of the Great Hall on Mount Pleasant, in the vicinity of the railway station. It will deliver, as part of an integrated development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new 1,200 seat regional theatre • new Grade A office accommodation • underground car parking • a new gateway to Calverley Grounds and associated public realm improvements – integrating the new theatre with high quality public open space. 	£5,000,000 out of £90,000,000 total cost	Viewed as 11 th most important project by KMEP (out of 45). SELEP only accepted the top 8 schemes from KMEP.	The £85m match funding was required from TWBC. The council had not yet voted to approve this spending when the bid was submitted, so it did mean that the project was slightly lower on the priority list. Also, the project had to be built within 2 years, and although it could be achievable, it would be ambitious. In the end, TWBC cancelled the project, and the independent audit report info is available here: https://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=30144

What the bid was for	District/Bidder	Project name	Project description	Amount of funding sought	Prioritisation locally	Comment
Bid for GPF loan funding in Nov 2019	Sevenoaks – Hatchery team (private sector)	Hatchery @ Preston Farm	This project converts a former farm near Sevenoaks into an innovative new work and community hub with the capacity of 250 workers, alongside spaces that will be available to the local community for education, recreation and social uses.	£1,000,000 out of £2.4m total project cost	Viewed as 10 th most important project by KMEP (out of 18). SELEP only accepted the top four schemes from KMEP.	The risk concerning this project was that planning was required, and it was located in the AONB and Green Belt – although the entire farm site was already designated for business purposes. It is noted that the project has subsequently secured funding (private) and planning approval and is now in development.
Bid for GPF loan funding in Nov 2019	Sevenoaks - SDC	Swanley Town Centre	This project provides gap funding to progress an already consented series of schemes and future proofing the delivery of infrastructure. This infrastructure investment will unlock delivery of up to 1255 residential units and 376 jobs.	£1,490,000 out of £44,773,000 total cost	Viewed as 5 th most important project by KMEP (out of 18). SELEP only accepted the top four schemes from KMEP.	Lower down the prioritisation list as the bid could have provided more detail on the scope of the scheme, the deliverables, the timeframe, the funding package, etc. The deliverability let this scheme down.

What the bid was for	District/Bidder	Project name	Project description	Amount of funding sought	Prioritisation locally	Comment
Bid for GPF loan funding in Nov 2019	Tonbridge & Malling – NIAB EMR (private sector)	Wine Innovation Centre @ NIAB EMR	The project promoter proposes to build a facility to host a Wine Innovation Centre at the East Malling Estate. The Centre will include a 1000 sqm building, hosting several fruit pressing technologies, fermentation tanks, molecular biology labs, sensory assessment equipment, space for knowledge-transfer meetings, and an open innovation workspace. The R&D will be shared across a consortium of businesses	£600,000 out of £1,550,000 total cost	Viewed as 1 st most important project by KMEP (out of 18). Funded by SELEP	Project being built
Bid for GBF in 2020	Sevenoaks - SDC	The Meeting Point, Swanley	The overall scheme is a programme for the creation of a business hub, a replacement leisure centre and direct housing delivery across 5 Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) owned sites in Swanley, which in turn will provide a catalyst for further private sector development.	£1.49m out of £34.159m	Viewed as 4th most important project by KMEP (out of 29). Funded by SELEP and Gov.	Project being built

What the bid was for	District/Bidder	Project name	Project description	Amount of funding sought	Prioritisation locally	Comment
Bid for GBF in 2020	Sevenoaks – Hatchery team (private sector)	Hatchery @ Preston Farm	This project converts a former farm near Sevenoaks into an innovative new work and community hub with the capacity of 250 workers, alongside spaces that will be available to the local community for education, recreation and social uses.	£1,000,000 out of £2.4m total project cost	Viewed as 17th most important project by KMEP (out of 29). SELEP funded the top 10 KMEP projects, and the project was too far down the priority list.	The risk concerning this project is that planning is required, and this is in the AONB and Green Belt – although the entire farm site is already designated for business purposes.
Bid for GBF in 2020	Tunbridge Wells - TWBC	The Amelia Scott	The project will see two dilapidated grade two buildings restored and extended to provide fit for purpose education spaces which will house services from multiple sites and which when combined, will help to grow the education potential and offer in the area.	£1.4m out of £16.172m total cost	Viewed as 11th most important project by KMEP (out of 29). SELEP funded the top 10 KMEP projects. This is the 2 nd scheme on the SELEP reserve list (behind an Essex) project, and we hope that if any GBF is returned, then this scheme could proceed.	This was just below the cut-off point.

What the bid was for	District/Bidder	Project name	Project description	Amount of funding sought	Prioritisation locally	Comment
Bid for GBF in 2020	Tunbridge Wells - TWBC	Paddock Wood Hub	Funding will go towards the delivery of the Paddock Wood Hub which once complete seeks to release the old community centre site so that it can be delivered for c50 residential units, as part of a wider residential re-development.	£3.444m total cost	Viewed as 25th most important project by KMEP (out of 29). SELEP funded the top 10 KMEP projects, and the project was too far down the priority list.	Other projects provided higher value for money.

Appendix 4: Locate in Kent Property Market Analysis

- i. This appendix sets out analysis of data from Locate in Kent on both the industrial and office markets.
- ii. The LiK summary indicates that
 - The vast majority of Kent businesses are small.
 - Whilst the economy has been badly hit by Covid-19, it is currently growing
 - Knowledge intensive businesses are proving more resilient.
 - Foreign investment has slowed, but it has not stopped.
- iii. Analysis by Locate in Kent highlights that employers **want** to locate where:
 - There is access to London and international travel is easy
 - Other employers have chosen to be
 - They have a professional supply chain in place
 - Good schools that create a well skilled workforce
 - Their staff want to live
- iv. And employers **need** to locate where:
 - There is access to markets and capital
 - There are good places to socialise
 - Their staff want to be
 - Their staff can afford to be
 - There is appropriate workspace available

Office

- v. Set out below are the key findings for the office market, with relevant data summarised in Figure A4.1
 - The number of searches for office property in Kent has reduced since the start of the pandemic. Latest data for Q1 2021 is well down on the same period for 2019 and 2020 and continues a pattern of declining search activity for four consecutive quarters.
 - The average number of views per property on the Locate in Kent database is higher in West Kent than either East Kent, North Kent, or the all Kent average.
 - Office availability has increased very substantially between Q2 2020 when there were 25 offices available in West Kent, and Q2 2021 with 233 on the market.
 - A broadly similar number of deals has been done across each of the Kent sub-areas. These are almost exclusively lettings. The average deal size for lettings in Kent is 424 sqft. The West Kent average is very similar, with slightly larger deal size in Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. Overall these indicate a high volume of small transactions.
 - Office rental levels in West Kent are above the Kent average. No data has been provided for North and East Kent sub areas.
 - There have been fewer planning consents for new office space in West Kent than either North or East Kent sub areas.

Figure A4.1 Office Market Data

	West Kent	North Kent	East Kent	Kent
Avg. no. views per property (Jan 2019–June 2021)	7.1	5.2	5.4	5.7
No. of offices available (Q2 2021)	233	231	180	644
Deals done (Jan 2019–June 2021)	128	115	127	370
Avg. rent per sq.ft.	£20.50	No data	No data	£16.25
Planning consents (Jan 2019 – June 2021)	54	85	69	208

Source: Locate in Kent/EGi

Industrial

vi. Set out below are the key findings for the industrial market, with relevant data summarised in Figure A4.2

- The number of views for industrial property has fluctuated on a quarterly basis. The first half of 2021 has seen fewer searches than both 2019 and 2020 which suggests some pandemic effect, particularly in Q1 2021. Latest data for Q2 2021 is ahead of the same period in 2019.
- The average number of views per property on the Locate in Kent database is higher in West Kent (3.2) than either East Kent (2.6), North Kent (2.1), or the all Kent average (2.6). Across the board the figures have risen from 2019 to 2021.
- In the period January 2019 to June 2021 a total of 100 industrial deals have been reported as complete. This includes 79 lettings and 21 sales. This compares to 279 deals in North Kent and 91 in East Kent. The average deal size is more similar to East Kent, with North Kent characterised by larger deals.
- Average industrial rents are higher in West Kent than both North and East Kent. This is a potential indicator of strong demand with limited supply which accords with the higher number of views per property and low availability of sites. Rents are particularly high in Tonbridge & Malling where there is no available development land.
- Freehold values are not so high in West Kent and are very low in Tonbridge & Malling (which may be a statistical anomaly affecting the overall average). Figures for Sevenoaks are aligned to the values achieved in the best performing parts of North Kent and Tunbridge Wells achieves values above the Kent average.
- Industrial availability has been falling across Kent. Across the three sub-areas West Kent has the fewest industrial sites available. Latest data for Q2 2021 indicated 23 sites available in West Kent, compared to 47 in East Kent and 63 in North Kent.
- In terms of land, there was nothing reported available in Tonbridge & Malling, average plot size in Tunbridge Wells was 0.4 acres, and in Sevenoaks 1.5 acres. The Kent wide average is 1.5 acres. There is a mixed picture across the local authority areas within Kent. Thanet, Dartford and Swale have larger sites available.
- The number of planning consents for industrial property is also lowest in West Kent over the period Jan 2019 – Jun 2021.
- The average size of available industrial buildings is lower in West Kent than the Kent average. North Kent has much larger average sized units available.

Figure A4.2 Industrial Market Data

	West Kent	North Kent	East Kent	Kent
Avg. no. views per property (2021)	3.2	2.1	2.6	2.6
No. of sites available (Q2 2021)	23	63	47	133
Deals done (Jan 2019–June 2021)	100	279	91	470
Avg. size of deals				
Lettings (sq.ft.)	8,200	17,200	7,900	13,500
Sales (sq.ft.)	14,000	28,000	13,100	22,000
Avg. rent per sq.ft.	£11.60	£10.20	£10.60	£10.40
Avg. freehold price per sq.ft.	£78.50	£109.80	£53.80	£115.00
Planning consents (Jan 2019 – June 2021)	108	117	151	376

Source: Locate in Kent/EGi