

# Gateway to growth

Investing in Kent & Medway



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# Foreword

The current government came into office in July 2024 citing growth as its number one mission. A new industrial strategy, set for publication this summer, will play a key role in achieving that ambition.

Invest 2035<sup>1</sup>, the name of that strategy, intends to deliver the certainty and stability businesses need to invest and scale in high growth sectors. These are the sectors that will drive the nation's future economy; a pro-business approach focused on reducing barriers to investment in the UK.

Ideally located between London and Europe, the county of Kent offers flexible facilities, a rich talent pool, enviable quality of life and vital space to grow. It is also one of the best connected, not only in terms of transport, but digital infrastructure and business networks too.

The region is already home to established clusters of key industries that will deliver growth in the years ahead, creating high-quality, well-paid jobs. It is a place focused on keeping people and places connected, wherever they are in the world and however they want to do it.

These are, of course, challenging economic times as the way the world does business evolves from what we knew, but successful free trading nations like the UK, the sixth largest economy on the planet, are in a good position to be the calm in the storm. Kent and Medway will be leading the way.

We have the strategic location, diverse economy, talent pool and sector potential to support the Government's agenda – creating jobs, improving infrastructure, building resilience and enhancing the UK's economic competitiveness.

**Our unique region is very much open for business and our range of partners are there to help investors and businesses to seize opportunities to grow in Kent.**

This second edition of our Investment Prospectus details the latest on projects where Kent and Medway can be the engine of the future UK economy, from clean energy industries and advanced manufacturing to creative and digital, life sciences and defence.

We're already making a significant contribution to the UK's 1.5m housing target that the government set for this parliament. That's just the start, with opportunities to invest now in new sustainable garden towns progressing across the region unlocking homes for all, and the potential for thousands of jobs

This document, as before, sets out the bright prospects for future generations living and working across Kent and Medway if we progress the investment needed today. This is a well-connected, thriving, place of opportunity and we're ready to deliver.

**Nick Fenton**  
*CEO, Locate in Kent*



# Invest 2035

## Kent and Medway supporting the UK's growth driving sectors

The UK government listed the following sectors as the ones that will drive future growth in their Industrial Strategy Green Paper published last autumn.

This Investment Prospectus will show where Kent and Medway already has a stake in the industries of the future with the right locations, excellent connectivity, pipeline of talent, expertise and business support in place to deliver.

While the county is making, and will continue to make, a contribution to growing the UK's priority industry sectors, Kent and Medway has particular strengths in Life Sciences, Creative Industries and Advanced Manufacturing as well as agri-food.

### 1.1 Life sciences

The Kent and Medway region is making a significant contribution to this key sector with a thriving life science cluster that has grown 23.5% over the last five years with 2,170 life science enterprises as of 2024<sup>1</sup>. Our science parks are attracting investment and driving innovation in key fields like agri-food, pharmaceuticals and oncology. It's no surprise all our parks are looking to expand with opportunities to invest in new and existing commercial space.

### 1.2 Creative industries

The Screen Industries Road Map for Growth<sup>2</sup> highlights a booming sector along the Thames Estuary, home to film studios, animation companies, and a fast growing pool of digital and immersive tech innovators. Coastal Thanet in Kent, alone has seen a 50.14% increase in the number of creative businesses over the past five years<sup>3</sup>. Maidstone TV Studios<sup>4</sup>, the UK's largest high-definition TV broadcast facility has led the way for 40 years with more to come. Projects across the region like the film studio led regeneration of historic railway sheds in Ashford, creative skills centre and incubator plans for Dover Beacon<sup>5</sup> and the Docking Station at the Historic Dockyard, Chatham<sup>6</sup> are continuing the momentum.

### 1.3 Advanced manufacturing

There are 3,050 manufacturing businesses in Kent and Medway, supporting 38,500 jobs county-wide. East Kent Colleges Group and the university-backed Kent and Medway EDGE Hub are not only helping employers adapt to greater automation, but producing the next generation of talent for companies like Contracts Engineering that has invested in new robotics to achieve its ambitions to be one of the largest manufacturers in the UK by 2028.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.4 Clean energy industries

Production from renewable technologies in the UK increased 7% in 2024 to a record 144.7 TWH, and a record share of 50.8% of electricity generation. Projects including the NeuConnect<sup>8</sup> and SeaLink energy link<sup>9</sup> projects and the work of the Kemsley Industrial Cluster in Kent and Medway will increase the UK's energy resilience in the transition to Net Zero.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.5 Defence

The government has committed to increasing spending on defence to 2.5% of GDP from April 2027 with an ambition set to spend 3% of GDP in the next parliament as economic and fiscal conditions allow. There is a significant defence manufacturing and supply chain capability across Kent and Medway with companies like BAE Systems in Rochester<sup>11</sup> investing now in the region to deliver a safer future for the UK.

### 1.6 Digital and technologies

Advances in AI and other technologies are transforming the economy, disrupting existing sectors and markets. The UK is only the third country in the world (alongside the US and China) to have a tech ecosystem valued at over \$1 trillion. From data centres and renewable energy interconnectors to pioneering work at our universities, science parks and world leading specialist centres like Niab East Malling<sup>11</sup>, the Kent and Medway region is ready to deliver the next industrial revolution.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.7 Financial services

The UK's financial services sector is one of the country's greatest assets as an economy, providing growing businesses with the finance they need to expand, and driving capital into productive investment. Kent and Medway is ideally located to access London's financial markets. Kent and Medway is a region that actively supports business ambition, including access to 0% business loans of between £100,000 and £600,0000 to fund capital investment.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.8 Professional and Business Services

The UK's professional and business services sector is the nation's superpower and influence around the world with a global reputation for quality and innovation. In Kent and Medway, we have companies such as Azets, Planning Potential, Cripps and Kreston Reeves located in the region to help our thriving sectors to build their success, whether that's across the South East, UK or international markets.<sup>15</sup>

# 2 Tomorrow's world

Largely automated vertical farms where salads and other produce are grown in vertically stacked layers in a carefully controlled environment that doesn't depend on the weather – and uses a fraction of the water.

Acres of arable land harvested with the help of drones and robotic tractors providing a more sustainable, efficient method of land production. Strawberries that are grown all year around with advanced storage facilities that enable fruit growers to keep the supermarket shelves full. New crops honed for resilience that in a time of climate change and economic uncertainty give hope against global hunger.

Steaks made from plants, animal feed made from seaweed, autonomous vehicles letting technology take the strain. Medicines made from cannabis and drugs that will defeat the next pandemic; hydrogen fuel cell technology powering aircraft and systems that halve the amount of household water that goes down the drain.

This is a taste of tomorrow's world and it's already happening here in Kent and Medway, supported by world-leading research and clusters of innovators across science, engineering and technology more generally, who have chosen to build their success in the region.

In this chapter, we bring together the science-led innovation that is being developed here in Kent and Medway, highlighting the trends and markets where the foundations for future success are being laid. This is a region that is already leading the way in many areas key to the future economy with a pipeline of highly skilled jobs and the potential for so much more – given the right investment and support.

## 2.1 Health and life sciences


The latest available figures produced by Kent County Council (KCC – January 2025) indicate some 63,000 jobs are supported by the life science sector in the region, accounting for 9.7% of all jobs in the county. While these jobs are shared across the area the statistics show that parts of Kent (Dover, Sevenoaks and Swale) have a much higher proportion of life science jobs involved in research and experimental developments than the national average.<sup>1</sup>

Health and life sciences is a sector that continues to deliver for Kent and Medway with the number of jobs increasing by 23.5% over the last five years. This is a region that is not just knocking on the door of the traditional Golden Triangle of London, Oxford and Cambridge but is already on the inside: working and collaborating, exchanging and inspiring; a region making a significant contribution to UK science's global appeal.

Discovery Park in Dover district, Kent Science Park (KSP) in Swale and Kent Medical Campus in Maidstone are key focal points for this important ecosystem of innovation, plugged into a well-established local and global supply network.

“We are one of the UK's fastest growing communities of life science businesses, including Pfizer, Azychem, Viatrix and Concept Life Sciences with a focus on enabling life science start-ups to develop and scale on site.

“Our 220 acre campus has lab and manufacturing facilities ready to occupy, with land to expand coupled with a thriving scientific community and business support services.”

 **Mayer Schreiber**  
CEO, Discovery Park

“As part of Pioneer Group, our tenant companies are plugged into a wider ecosystem that fosters innovation, supports growth and facilitates expansion. KSP has a thriving community of agritech, biotech, R&D, virology, food tech, environmental technology and drug R&D companies.

Located in the South East of England - a globally renowned life science hub, KSP is able to offer space at a fraction of the cost of the Golden Triangle, yet within an hour of Central London.”

 **Jeroen Houtzager**  
Site Director, Pioneer Group.

2.1 Kent Invested ✓

Asymchem Laboratories (Tianjin) Co. Ltd.

Asymchem Laboratories (Tianjin) Co. Ltd. officially inaugurated its new European development and pilot manufacturing site at Discovery Park in Sandwich, Kent, U.K., in August 2024.

The former Pfizer small molecule facilities now employ 70 team members on-site in both the R&D labs and the API pilot plant, many of whom are legacy Pfizer employees.

Building on a foundation of utilising innovative technologies to enable smarter, greener, and cost-effective solutions to support manufacture, Asymchem will add additional capabilities on-site. Advanced equipment for the manufacture of peptides and oligonucleotides, as well as sustainability capabilities for continuous flow and biocatalysis, will be added in 2025.

“We are continuing a long legacy of manufacturing excellence at Discovery Park, with the location in Kent being ideal for reaching our target markets in Europe.”

 **Dr. Hao Hong**  
*Chairman, Founder, and CEO of Asymchem*

2.1 Kent Invested ✓

Michelson Diagnostics

Michelson Diagnostics are world leading imaging technology experts and creators of VivoSight, a powerful and versatile skin imaging tool used in hospitals and labs for skin cancer diagnosis and research into many other skin disease treatments and cosmetics.

“I am very pleased we have joined the vibrant community of medtech, healthcare and life sciences companies at Maidstone Innovation Centre. We are already benefiting from our move by working with some of them on new innovation, manufacturing and infrastructure projects that will support our growth.”

 **Jon Holmes**  
*CEO of Michelson Diagnostics*

2.1 Kent Invested ✓

AbBaltis

AbBaltis provides high-quality disease state plasma, serum, and residual clinical samples to the In Vitro Diagnostics industry and research community around the globe, supporting their customers from early R&D efforts through to manufacturing.

The company was founded in 2010 with just £600, no investors and a starter lab at KSP. After several years based elsewhere, the company has chosen to return to KSP, with the strong science community being the main draw.

The biotech company has grown into a global team of 30 staff. Last year, they saw a 38% increase in sales turnover, and with their recent expansion into protein purification services, they're on track for an impressive 50% growth this year.

“We're lucky to have a cluster of life science businesses in Kent, which helps to propel innovation and bring the best ideas to market.”

 **Giedre Brandao,**  
*founder AbBaltis*

2.2 Food and crop innovation

Growing Kent and Medway is a world-class research, innovation and enterprise cluster supporting growth in technology-driven horticulture, fresh produce packaging, and food and drink processing and its supply chain. It is helping to support and scale up business growth.

Investment has included a green tech hub for advanced horticulture at Niab in East Malling; a Medway Food Innovation Centre at the University of Greenwich campus in Chatham Maritime; and a biotechnology hub for sustainable food and drink at the University of Kent. An accelerator programme offering support for businesses at all stages of development who have invested in plant- based food and drink launched in 2022 with a remit that includes skills development.

**Kent and Medway are embracing the future of farming from the work of Evogro at Niab to a £100m (US\$127m) vertical farm facility at Discovery Park, operated by salad producer GrowUp Farms, where year-round growing operations began in Spring 2023.<sup>2</sup>**

Tunbridge Wells innovators Calyx Cotton meanwhile is spearheading how sustainable cotton should be grown as part of a drive for greener fashion, an industry that is estimated to account for 4% of annual global carbon emissions with 921,000 tonnes of used textiles disposed of in household waste each year.

Niab's East Malling site is a world-class centre of excellence for applied research and innovation in commercial horticulture. It is the UK's largest horticultural research and development organisation undertaking work primarily in perennial and clonally propagated crops, providing the expertise to improve yield, efficiency and resilience of crop production across the sector.

It is developing plans for a modern, energy efficient, horticultural science and innovation building to further increase research capacity. Located in the heart of the campus it will provide better and more secure access to the research glasshouses, research vineyard and controlled growing facilities.

Hadlow College, the UK's only land-based college, is part of North Kent College group. Their sustainable horticulture centre supports land-based employers to adapt to new sustainable farming methods, drone and harvesting technology. It's another example of how Kent's status as the Garden of England continues to evolve for the 21st century, a place that sees the opportunities, overcomes the hurdles and makes things happen.

2.2 Kent Invested ✓

Evogro

Evogro is based on the campus of Niab, one of the world's leading centres for agricultural research, in East Malling.

They make plant growing systems for hospitality operators and chefs, using the same technologies as industrial vertical farms, but scaled down to appliance size.

“We are proud to have as customers many leading professional chefs and bartenders working across the hospitality sector in restaurants, hotels, bars, clubs, contract caterers and colleges. Our customers demand the highest standards and we are delighted that they trust their Evogro Plant Growing Systems to deliver.”

 **Jason Hirst**  
*Managing Director, Evogro*

2.2 Kent Invested ✓

Nutri-san

Nutri-San, a bio-technology company based at Discovery Park in Sandwich, east Kent has created safe and sustainable food products for the animal feed and livestock farming industries using the properties of seaweed.

The supplements are produced at a facility in Vietnam, where the company first launched in 2017, but their UK base in Kent is an important part of the global research and product testing operation for this exciting start-up.

They are not the only company at Discovery Park involved with research in this area with biotech AlgaeCytes seeking to unlock the potential use for micro-algae in pharmaceuticals, personal and health care from its R&D facility.

✓ **Opportunity for Kent:** Vertical farming

Vertical farming, using LEDs and hydroponics, is part of a technological driven overhaul to the farming industry. As well as using less water and space this approach reduces the reliance on finding enough seasonal farmworkers to support at harvest time. Fewer staff are needed thanks to increased use of automation.

According to the University of London<sup>3</sup>, the market opportunity for vertical farming remains strong. Statistics by The Business Research Company analysts suggest the market for vertical farming globally could be £15.96bn (US\$21.12bn) by 2029. It stood at £5.85bn (US\$ 7.74bn) in 2014.<sup>4</sup>

Not every crop is likely to be cultivated this way, but vertical farming will be taking its place in the future of farming and Kent and Medway will be at the heart of it including supporting farmers and producers adapting to a changing world.<sup>5</sup>

**2.2.1**  
**Alternative protein development**

Plant-based meat and milk are now mainstream choices for British consumers. UK consumers bought an average of 9.1 million plant-based products per week from major supermarkets in the first part of 2024.<sup>6</sup>

In Kent, which already contributes some £2.6bn (US\$ 3.30bn) annually to the UK food and drink sector, a growing cluster is emerging to meet this appetite for healthier choices, plant-based products and more personalised nutrition.

Investment in new facilities including the Biotechnology Hub, Medway Food Innovation Centre and GreenTech for Advanced Horticulture have established Kent and Medway as the UK focus for innovation in plant and fungal-based alternative proteins.

**“At Growing Kent & Medway we are establishing ourselves as the lead coordinator to develop the UK innovation ecosystem for alternative protein. That is a real opportunity for Kent.”**

**“** **Dr Parag Acharya,**  
*Senior fellow in Food Innovation at the University of Greenwich, Kent*

**2.2.1 Kent Invested** ✓

**Born Maverick**

Born Maverick is a pioneering food innovation startup based in Canterbury. Biotech scientist Azhar Murtuza and his team have developed a series of products, ranging from seafood alternatives made from seaweed to plant-based milk. The company is one of a number of businesses supported by Growing Kent and Medway's Food Accelerator Programme. They are currently developing unique extraction techniques for seaweed proteins.

**“Born Maverick’s mission is to bring together taste, nutrition and sustainability,” Azhar Murtuza describes. “We aim to play a leading role in helping to shape the food industry of the future.”**

**2.3**  
**The low carbon economy**

According to current projections from researchers at Climate Action Tracker, all the existing emissions-cutting policies by governments around the world would result in the global average temperature increasing about 2.7 degrees C by 2100. A separate team at the United Nations reached an end of century estimate of 2.8 degrees C.<sup>7</sup>

The problem is clear. Existing weather patterns are visibly outrunning our combined efforts to stem global warming.

**“Climate change is not keeping pace. Shifting to green energy, whatever that costs, would pale in comparison to what these extreme weather events cost.”**

**“** **Ann Mettler**  
*Vice president for Europe at Breakthrough Energy, a consortium of non-profits and venture capital funds*

Policymakers still have 2050 as the year to achieve net zero. A target that will require changes to the way we use energy to heating systems that produce next to no greenhouse emissions, skills gaps to fill and new technologies to support and invest in.

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) is an independent, statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008. It has estimated that between 135,000 and 725,000 new jobs could be created by 2030 in low-carbon sectors, such as buildings retrofit, renewable energy generation and the manufacture of electric vehicles. Kent and Medway is well-placed to support the transition to a greener economy<sup>8</sup> because of the work already done and the investment made.

From the development of sustainable packaging solutions in support of the circular economy to the development of more resilient crops to feed the planet. From the investment in green skills to support future car production and house construction to the next generation of cobots increasing the efficiency of factories and warehouses.

From reducing the emissions of shipping across the Straits of Dover to new data centres and battery storage powering the AI revolution, it's all taking place across Kent and Medway with more investment to come.

**2.3.1**  
**Hydrogen power innovation**

HYRO Energy Limited is a joint venture between RES and Octopus Energy Generation. In August 2024, HYRO received consent for Northfleet Green Hydrogen Electrolyser production and storage facility on land at Kimberly-Clark's Northfleet manufacturing facility in Gravesend, Kent.

The manufacturing facility will use a new dual-fuelled boiler which will be able to run on hydrogen and natural gas as a backup. This will help to decarbonise the paper-making process for much-loved household brands like Andrex®.<sup>9</sup>

Hypoint, a company with its headquarters in Silicon Valley, California, completed a £11m (US\$13.97m) investment in Kent in 2022 at its UK base at Discovery Park to support the development of hydrogen fuelled engines for aircraft. By creating a turbo air-cooled hydrogen fuel cell system, it hopes to become a global leader in a technology, which could transform the impact of air travel on the environment. The company sees potential for existing fixed wing aeroplanes and drones but one day perhaps air taxis and eVTOL (electric vertical take-off and landing) vehicles too.

**“Our work is critical to unlocking further and faster decarbonisation of aviation and urban air mobility, whilst also creating economic activity and jobs across the country to support the sustainability of the UK’s aviation industry.**

**With its massive technical and academic talent pool, a globally-recognised ecosystem of hydrogen manufacturers, and strong transport decarbonisation targets, the UK is well positioned to become a global leader in the hydrogen economy.”**

**“** **Dr Alex Ivanenko**  
*HyPoint founder and Chief Executive*

2.3.2  
Wind power

100 wind turbines were constructed in the Thames Estuary by Swedish energy company Vattenfall back in 2010, it was the world's largest offshore wind farm. Today, Thanet Kentish Flats and Kentish Flats Extension supply around 400,000 homes with green energy.

Attention will turn over the next decade to what technology will replace them, when their estimated 20-25-year life expectancy expires and the prospect of high skilled jobs required to deliver the next generation of turbines offshore.

2.3.2 Kent Invested

**Alpha 311**

Alpha 311 is an ambitious Kent start-up which has developed a vertical axis wind turbine that harvests energy from passing vehicles. They believe every road, bridge, building or tower has the potential to become a wind farm.

The smaller size, lower weight and "unique shaftless designs" means the turbine can be installed almost anywhere, harvesting air flow and generating electricity even when the wind isn't blowing. A sophisticated sensor array collects localised atmospheric data.

The company's vision goes beyond the highway too from manufacturing sites to sustainable new homes, a product they believe could help more than 1.2bn people across the world who lack access to electricity, including an estimated five million UK households in fuel poverty.<sup>10</sup>

The company is close to completing the finished turbine design with interest from around the world including the island nations of the Pacific and the Caribbean, Africa and North America.

2.1 Kent Invested

**Coty**

Coty is one of the leading global manufacturers of fragrances, skincare, colour cosmetics and body care. They produce items for renowned brands like Rimmel and Max Factor, which are distributed worldwide. Notably, Ashford in Kent hosts the only purpose-built plant dedicated to the entire Coty portfolio.

The company announced in February 2025 that it had installed 2,184 solar panels that will generate around a fifth of the site's electricity needs. Sustainable goals contributing to increased generation of renewable energy and low carbon technologies in Kent.

2.3.3  
Modular nuclear power

More than 700 people currently work at the Dungeness nuclear power station site near Folkestone. The legacy power stations are being defuelled and decommissioned and the area is taking steps towards realising the ambition to have small modular reactors at onsite to make use of the previous investment in power connectivity.

Dungeness is being championed for SMR investment and deployment by local partners including Kent County Council and the local MP. Working closely with site owners EDF, the site's assets, including its grid connections, workforce and supportive local community, have been presented to a series of potential investors and developers. Interest in the site continues both from investors and those with large scale energy needs.

With a Government planning policy statement for nuclear energy generation soon expected to open up new opportunities for nuclear development alongside previously identified national sites, the case for Dungeness will strengthen significantly further.

2.3.4  
Power connectors

NueConnect, a new energy link between the UK and Germany builds on the legacy of power connections via the Channel Tunnel and the gas pipe at Grain that connects the UK to the European natural gas pipeline network.<sup>11</sup>

Led by global investors Meridiam, Allianz Capital Partners, Kansai Electric Power and TEPCO it will be one of the world's largest interconnectors with 725km of land and subsea cables forming an invisible energy highway to connect two of Europe's largest energy markets for the first time. It is expected to be operational by 2028.

National Grid, meanwhile, has submitted its application for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate in March 2025 for a 138 mile long 2 gigawatt (GW) high voltage direct current (HVDC) cable between Suffolk and Pegwell Bay in Kent. If approval is granted, construction is set to start by 2030.<sup>12</sup>

New onshore infrastructure includes converter stations, substations and new underground and overhead electricity lines, as well as upgrading overhead electricity lines. This ambitious project will connect homes, businesses and public services to new, cleaner and more affordable sources of energy, including offshore wind.

2.3.5  
Power from waste

Waste to power plants play a key part in sustainable management of waste and generating energy. There are two currently in Kent – at Allington near Maidstone and at Kemsley, Sittingbourne with planning consent for a third at the former Kingsnorth Power Station in Medway. This third waste to power plant forms part of the Medway One regeneration project set to transform this 10,846,440 sq. ft. (249 acre) site (including 6,621,120 sq. ft. (152 acres) of readily available brownfield land into a modern employment space. An energy hub is planned providing power, steam and heat for neighbouring businesses as well as a district heating scheme for proposed future housing development in the surrounding area.

Up to 263 million kilowatts can be generated every year at the Allington Integrated Waste management facility, The equivalent amount of fuel required to generate this power is 200,000 tonnes of coal or a supertanker of oil. £150m (US\$ 190.5m) has been invested in the facility since it opened in 2008. It can generate up to 43MW of power, 34MW goes into the local electricity supply network to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Any surplus power generated goes back into the system to assist in powering the facility. Kemsley is a combined heat and power facility that generates up to 74MW of electricity and processes up to 657,000 tonnes of residual waste. This produces enough energy to power more than 160,000 UK homes and businesses. The facility also provides steam to a nearby paper mill operated by global sustainable packaging solutions company, DS Smith to support their renewable energy requirements.

2.3.6  
Greener Construction

In 2024, the gross added value (GVA) of the construction industry in the UK amounted to almost £142bn (US \$ 187.91.7 bn). It is a sector under increasing pressure to become more sustainable – while also dealing with supply chain resilience and attracting enough people into the industry to deliver housing targets.<sup>13</sup>

The sector is driving the search for more efficient ways to build new homes, that not only speed up the process but are better for the environment too. With many developments coming on stream, including several schemes built to garden town principles, there is a real opportunity for innovation in Kent and Medway – including a major rethink in the way homes are delivered today.

The Green Skills Factory and Home Energy Centre at MidKent College is part of the solution to dealing with the skills gap providing building firms and trades with the training needed to ‘decarbonise’ and support new ways of working as older technologies – including gas boilers – are phased out and new regulations are brought in.<sup>14</sup>

Companies like Cascade Water Products in Dover are embracing the opportunities that more sustainable construction will deliver – and it is hoped projects like those run by MidKent College will encourage more companies to seize the opportunity presented by Net Zero transition. Cascade’s micro-grey water reuse technology could reduce domestic water consumption by up to 45%.



2.3.7  
Automation

East Kent Colleges (EKC) Group is producing a new generation of engineers with the skills to power the next industrial revolution, including the accelerating shift to automation in advanced manufacturing.

The UK currently lags behind global competitors in terms of its adoption of robotics and automation with calls for the industrial strategy to take action to close Britain's manufacturing robotics gap.<sup>15</sup> Kent and Medway are ready to contribute with a production line of talent.

The green engineering and mechatronic lab at EKC Group's Canterbury campus has been equipped with the latest robotic technology and learning tools under the guidance of sustainable manufacturing consultancy, HSSMI and with suppliers such as Kuka Robotics, one of the world's leading suppliers of intelligent robots.

These include training versions of production line robots that students can programme to pick up items as large as a car or as small as a lettuce; production rigs that can scan and track production; and a 3D virtual reality room that allows businesses to map and plan their factory floors. The aim is to provide a long-term pipeline of talent for businesses looking for people with the right skills and knowledge to compete as increased automation is adopted, but that's just half the story.

It is also providing businesses with a low-cost way to try out new technology, upskill existing staff and collaborate with the college to both solve production challenges they face and test new products and concepts.

According to Kuka, the future lies with a new generation of collaborative robots that will allow humans and machines to work safely side by side. An education twin version of these machines has already been installed at EKC Group's Canterbury campus giving manufacturing businesses in Kent and Medway an opportunity now to see their potential.

EKC Group is not alone in Kent in supporting the future of manufacturing and the investment that will be required. The EDGE Hub at Canterbury Christ Church University is also collaborating with industry to support the development of new skills in the region. This includes supporting businesses, emerging entrepreneurs and innovators in transforming ideas from concept to market.

“As the government sets out its vision for Britain's industrial future, the stakes for manufacturing could not be higher. The sector currently accounts for 10% of GDP - increasing this to 15% would add £142bn to the economy.

Achieving this transformation, however, requires modernising our manufacturing capabilities, particularly in robotics and automation where Britain lags dangerously behind global competitors.”

“ **Stewart Miller**  
CEO of The National Robotarium  
The Manufacturer, December 2024

A glimpse of the future can be seen at the £205m (US\$ 260.35m), 2.3m sq. ft (213,677 sqm) Amazon 'Mega Box' fulfilment centre in Dartford, which opened in 2021. Here automation has been vital – as it is across the logistics sector – in meeting customer demand, and where around 2,000 humans work in sync with robots every day powered by onsite green energy.

2.4  
Hands off the wheel

In 2018 pioneering work led by Highways England was showcased on the A2/M2 in Kent to an international audience from the automobile industry. It aimed to show how innovative technology could be used to transform journeys on some of the UK's busiest routes in future.<sup>16</sup>

A hi-tech 'corridor' was created with specially equipped vehicles able to interact with sensors installed in traffic infrastructure along the route, alerting them to traffic issues ahead. It tested how information about road conditions, road works and time left for traffic lights to change to green could be transmitted to test vehicles via a wireless network.

The project was supported by Kent County Council, Transport for London and the Department for Transport with the aim of delivering safer, more reliable journeys, speedier maintenance and reduced delays. With progress on major infrastructure projects in Kent and Medway, including planning approval in March 2025 for the Lower Thames Crossing, could this be the time to invest?

New technologies around connected and autonomous vehicles could be worth tens of billions of pounds to the UK economy by 2035. The development, manufacture and supply of battery technology will also be a key driver of growth.

# 3

## Today's pipeline Kent and Medway The region to invest

In the last section we looked at those areas of the economy where Kent and Medway are attracting investment and innovating for future generations. This section is a summary of projects already in the pipeline.

Momentum is building in this key location for UK growth. From projects that will transform the creative industries to logistics, advanced manufacturing and defence this is the time for Kent and Medway. Be part of the story.

### 3.1 Transport and Infrastructure

#### 3.1.1 The Lower Thames Crossing

The Lower Thames Crossing, located east of Gravesend and connecting Kent more readily with the Midlands and the rest of the UK via Thurrock in Essex, will be the biggest investment in the UK's road network for a generation. The project currently has an estimated cost of £9bn (US\$11.94bn).

The proposals include the country's longest road tunnel stretching 2.5 miles (4.5 km), including 14.5 miles (23 km) of new road connecting the M2/A2 in Kent and the A13/M25 in Essex with around 50 new bridges and viaducts. With the Development Consent Order approval in place, the focus is now on financing the project. The government is currently exploring private finance options. With investment secured, the work could begin in 2026 with 2032 the current target date for opening.

Managed by National Highways, the new crossing is predicted to double road capacity across the Thames east of London and ease congestion on the existing Dartford crossing. Turner and Townsend Limited has been awarded the Commercial Partner contract with Skanska Construction UK Limited named as the preferred bidder for the Kent roads contract.

The Tunnels and Approaches contract has been awarded to Bouygues Travaux Publics - Murphy Joint Venture. A wide range of local businesses will support the main contractors as part of a local, sustainable supply chain.

An estimated 22,000 people will work on the project during construction including a large proportion of skilled, local workers with the project team calculating an additional 400,000 jobs will be available within an hour's commute of local communities, once open.<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.1.2 Fasttrack all-electric bus service for Kent

Go-Ahead London took over Fasttrack services in North Kent with responsibility for creating Kent's first all-electric bus network, as part of a £110m (US\$139.7m) 15-year contract, creating 100 jobs. A purpose-built electric depot will link Dartford, Gravesend, Bluewater, Darent Valley Hospital and Ebbsfleet International with plans to extend across the county. Fasttrack Dover is set to launch its fleet of zero-emission electric buses this summer<sup>2</sup>, connecting strategic development in Whitfield with the town centre and Dover Priory railway station.

#### 3.1.3 KenEx Tram, Ebbsfleet and Northfleet, Kent and Grays, Essex

The £900m (US\$1.14bn) KenEx Tram, is a sustainable public transport proposal that will link residential developments on both sides of the river Thames in Kent and Essex. The route, if approved and successful in securing funding, would connect Dartford, Swanscombe, Gravesend, Ebbsfleet International in Kent with Grays in Essex. This would be a dedicated system that would cross under the river Thames, powered by green energy, connecting people and jobs on either side.

The proposal is in the heart of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor, identified as a key region of the UK for creative sector investment and growth, an area where 1 million new homes are predicted to be built by 2050 and 1.3 million new jobs. It would complement investment on the Essex side of the river increasing sustainable connectivity with the Thames Freeport cluster.

#### 3.1.4 A228 Strategic Transport Infrastructure, Hoo, Medway

This project will incorporate a bus rapid transit corridor to connect growth at Hoo St Werbergh with Strood town centre. It aligns with proposals for replacement jetties at the former Kingsnorth power station site to maximise the use of the river Medway, such as bringing in raw materials for the proposed waste to energy plant and the Lower Thames Crossing.

#### 3.1.5 M20 Junction 7 upgrade, Detling interchange

This proposal is to improve the capacity of this strategic junction with the A249 trunk road through improved signalling. The upgrade will support traffic management in the area mitigating the impact of new housing and commercial development in Maidstone including Kent Medical Campus and Newnham Court village.

3.1.6  
Sheerness Rail Freight Terminal, Swale

Planning has been approved to establish a rail freight terminal at the Port of Sheerness. Put forward by owners, Peel Land & Property, this is an opportunity to enhance supply chain efficiency, particularly for the construction and housing sectors.

By providing better transport connections, reducing costs, supporting sustainability goals, and creating jobs, this project will contribute to achieving the UK government's housing and infrastructure targets while also benefiting the local and regional economy.

3.1.7  
Port of Dover 2050 project

The Port of Dover, the UK's busiest international ferry port and second busiest cruise port, is working on plans to regenerate the Eastern Docks, Western Docks and waterfront areas at the port. Investment is being sought for the re-development which forms part of its long-term Port of Dover 2050 project.<sup>3</sup>

It is the closest British port to mainland Europe and handles more lorries than all other UK ports put together, allowing for 120 ferry movements and 10,000 trucks per day. The port facilitates up to 11m passengers, 2.1m cars and 2.4m trucks annually.

£144bn (US\$ 182.88bn) worth of UK trade and a third of all trade with the European Union is handled here.

The Port of Dover is part of the Green Corridor Short Straits consortium, a partnership that includes the French sister ports of Calais and Dunkirk. A dedicated environment and safety team is leading the Port's ambition to de-carbonise the world's busiest maritime corridor.

As well as establishing the UK's first high-volume green shipping corridor challenging targets have been set to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2030. The Port is already on track to be net-zero compliant by the end of 2025 for direct emissions and purchased energy and 2030 to achieve net-zero for indirect emissions caused by port activity.

The delivery of a Cargo Terminal, as part of a £250m investment to revive the Western Docks, meanwhile, is an example of a proven track record for delivering big infrastructure growth.

Opened in 2019, the terminal has further potential to provide supply chain and port-centric sites to support the food and drink sector, opportunities for warehousing and support services for the perishable sector, general cargo activities and an energy hub. The cargo facility is already a major hub for imported construction materials to meet the UK housing sector demand.

3.1.8  
Manston Airport, Thanet

Designated by the Government as a nationally significant transport infrastructure asset, owners RiverOak Strategic Partners have their sights on transforming Manston Airport into the UK's only dedicated multimodal freight distribution hub for time critical freight including medicines, food and flowers.

The £500m (US\$635m) proposals, includes 19 stands capable of handling widebody freighters as well as a 705,035 sq. ft. (65,500 sqm) cargo facility. Related investment projects recently completed in the area, including Thanet Parkway station which have already improved connections with surrounding employment sites, including Discovery Park science park and Manston Business Park. London St Pancras is now 70 minutes away via Ashford International.

Thanet District Council has approved the phase 1 plans for the 72ha development land adjacent to Manston Airport for a warehouse and distribution centre with 7,750,008 Sq. Ft (720,000 sqm). Work is underway on the detailed planning work necessary prior to the scheduled re-opening of the airport in 2028.

3.1.9  
Port of Ramsgate, Thanet

Long held ambitions to return cross-channel freight services to the Port of Ramsgate took a step forward with a successful bid by Thanet District Council for Level-Up funding to test the market.

With capital investment to refurbish and modernise facilities the Port of Ramsgate could become an alternative short sea route for the logistics sector once again, creating both capacity, and local jobs. It is the same distance to the M25 as Dover, and second only to Dover in its proximity to Europe.

Cargo volumes at south-east ports are anticipated to grow steadily in the coming years. With the Port of Ostend openly encouraging the re-opening of trading routes and the potential of daily services with Calais and Zeebrugge, there is both demand and opportunity to introduce new services at the site.

3.1.10  
Improved rail connections, Kent wide

Kent's 2021 Rail Strategy, produced by Kent County Council, set out to influence decisions on the level of domestic and international services serving Kent's rail passenger network to 2031 and beyond to support economic growth, predicted increases in population and the climate change agenda.<sup>4</sup>

Proposed enhancements to rail services include the proposed Thameslink service from Maidstone to Cambridge via the City of London. It calls for a replacement for the Metro fleet and for an increase in the capacity of the High Speed 1 fleet for North and East Kent to meet demand, including an upgraded Westenhanger railway station to serve the new Otterpool Park garden town.

Connecting Abbey Wood in the London Borough of Bexley to Ebbsfleet Garden City has been focused on physically extending the Elizabeth Line. Other transport options aimed at improving connectivity for the area's future residents, now also include new Metro services, Fastrack bus services or connecting coach services. Any final proposal, based on best value for money, is not expected to be delivered until at least the mid-2030s.

Longer term options on the drawing board include Kent Sussex Connect; upgrading the Marshlink line and Lydd Rail Spur from Ashford International to Ore in East Sussex would allow HSI services to serve Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne. The plan is also intended to deliver better connectivity by developing a freight and passenger corridor along the South Coast connecting Manston to Crawley and Southampton.

FS Italiane Group, Italy's state-owned railway company and co-owner of Avanti West Coast services here in the UK, is the latest of four businesses to announce plans to launch new cross-channel passenger services from London St Pancras, in competition with the existing sole provider, Eurostar.

Other bids have come from Evolyn, Virgin Trains and start-up Gemini Trains. For international services to return to Ashford International and Ebbsfleet International for the first time since 2020, investment is required to bring both stations in line with the EU's new Entry/Exit system (EES) for border crossings.<sup>5</sup>

3.2 Strategic housing and commercial sites

3.2.1 Ebbsfleet Garden City, Dartford and Gravesham

Ebbsfleet Garden City in North Kent is the first garden city to be created in 100 years. Since its inception in 2015, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation has delivered at pace, with over 3,000 homes now built. Plans for the latest phase centred around Ebbsfleet International Train Station were approved last year.<sup>6</sup>

Ebbsfleet Central East will be the dynamic commercial centre for Ebbsfleet Garden City transforming up to 120 acres (49 Ha) of previously developed land. This is a rare investment opportunity, both in terms of scale and connectivity. Its proximity to London is already attracting international interest from developers.

The plan comprises over 2,000 new homes, up to 1.1m sq. ft. (100,000 sqm) of office floorspace, and up to 107,000 sq. ft. (10,000 sqm) of retail floor space to include supermarkets, bars, restaurants, and cafés.

Up to 15,000 new homes will ultimately be delivered, in this well-connected new community in North Kent, located just 20 minutes from central London and one of the fastest growing developments in the UK.

3.2.2 Chatham, Medway’s city centre

Chatham is Medway’s emerging city centre, with millions of pounds being invested to make it an amazing place for residents to live, work, learn and visit. An extensive regeneration programme has seen significant projects take place, from the opening of the new Healthy Living Centre to the redevelopment of Mountbatten House – the iconic building that dominates the Chatham skyline.

Chatham is the beating heart of Medway, as a place that aspires to be a leader in creation, innovation, arts, culture and heritage sites. Completed projects include the opening of the Ascend Hub on the first floor of the Pentagon Shopping Centre with a range of co-working spaces, private offices, meeting rooms and high-speed broadband for small businesses, entrepreneurs and freelancers.

All 182 riverside apartments at the nearby Chatham Waterfront development will be completed in Spring 2025, with construction due to start shortly on new commercial units. The five-block development will also include a stunning riverside walk, all situated in the heart of the town centre with excellent transport access to Chatham Waterfront Bus Station, and Chatham rail station.

3.2.3 Rochester Riverside, Medway

The latest phase of Medway’s 1,400 home flagship new homes and infrastructure development was given the go-ahead in April 2025. This will deliver phases four and five of the £419m regeneration scheme.<sup>7</sup>

So far, 502 new homes have been delivered as well as a two-entry Rochester primary school, a new plaza including a supermarket, coffee shop and hotel plus public spaces, including a 2.5km river walkway. A retirement living facility is due to welcome its first residents this year.

The latest phase of construction by Countryside Homes, part of the Vistry Group and Hyde Housing will create 154 new homes, with further construction on the next phase due to commence this summer. Seventy-nine of these will be provided as affordable homes, with the remaining tenure split to be finalised.

Rochester Riverside is a project managed in partnership by Medway Council and Homes England. Plans for the final phase are expected to be submitted for planning approval next year.

3.2.4 Innovation Park, Medway

Medway’s economy is a key growth area in the South East worth £5.2 bn (\$6.6 bn) and represents one of the biggest regeneration zones within the Thames Estuary.

Innovation Park, Medway located at Rochester Airport and adjacent to the A2, M2 and A229 is a key location for healthcare and commercial investment. A mix of industrial and mid-tech (office and research) is the preferred option for the larger northern site. Market testing is taking place for a care home and retirement units for the smaller southern site. However, mid-tech commercial space will also be considered for this area.

Completed infrastructure works at the northern site include the creation of access roads, bus stops, footpaths and cycleways, drainage, utilities, lighting, landscaping and street furniture, laying the foundations for the next stage of the development. The southern site has also seen the installation of lighting, utilities and landscaping, with power works set to be completed shortly



3.2.5  
Land East of High Street, Sevenoaks

This is a mixed-use scheme in a prime town centre area location that includes over 250 residential units (including affordable housing), a new energy efficient and sustainable leisure centre, public realm improvements and a refurbished building to house a market hall and cultural hub. A development partner is set to be announced this year.

3.2.6  
Highsted Park, Sittingbourne

If agreed, Highsted Park will be developed on land to the West of Teynham and to the south and east of Sittingbourne in Kent. It will deliver 8,400 EPC 'A' rated homes and 34 hectares of employment land over a 20 year period supporting growth sectors such as life sciences, logistics and biotech and providing the neighbouring Kent Science Park and Eurolink Business Park with direct access to the M2 via a new developer funded motorway junction and link roads.. These proposals are currently the subject of a call-in planning inquiry, with a decision expected later this year.

3.2.7  
South East Faversham, Duchy of Cornwall

The Duchy of Cornwall is proposing a new neighbourhood in Faversham, to the south east of the town. It includes 2,500 homes (875 affordable), infrastructure including improvements to J2 and J7 of the M2 and 70,000 sqm (753,473 sq. ft.) of dedicated employment space. If approved, this urban extension will be built over a 20-year period with an indicative start date for phase 1 in 2027.

3.2.8  
Lidsing Garden Village, Maidstone

Lidsing Garden settlement is set to deliver 2,000 new homes (40% affordable) and 2,000 jobs with 14 hectares of employment land.

The plan includes 44 hectares of open space, 20% biodiversity net gain, cycling and walking links, a new local centre of 16,145 sq. ft. 1,500sqm of retail, leisure and services, new primary school and new bus services. The first phase of 550 new homes is expected in 2028 and completion in 2042.

Designed around garden settlement and community place making values, Lidsing Garden Village is also well connected, located at a prime edge of urban location between Maidstone and Medway and close to junction 4 of the M2.

3.2.9  
Heathlands Garden settlement, Maidstone

Healthlands Garden Settlement will be located in the east of the borough of Maidstone and between the villages of Lenham and Charing. It will seek to deliver 5,000 new homes (40% affordable) and 5,000 jobs with associated facilities and infrastructure by 2054.

Allocated in Maidstone Borough Council's Local Plan and supported by Homes England,14 hectares of land will be dedicated to high-tech employment uses under the proposals, to include life sciences alongside a country park, a 6FE secondary school, primary school and railway station.

3.2.10  
Canterbury West Innovation District

Land around an upgraded Canterbury West station could be transformed into a new Innovation District at the heart of this historic Kent city. Linked to local universities, plans for this key regeneration and investment opportunity include high quality research, education, business incubator, office and co-working space.

The project intends to create a cluster of new economic activity with the High Speed 1 station at its core, attracting businesses and talent to the district with a focus on the high growth science and technology sector, B2B and professional services. There is also the potential to unlock land for residential, retail and hospitality and introduce new public realm, including green space.

3.2.11  
Otterpool Park, Folkestone & Hythe district

Otterpool Park is a new garden town being created near the coastal town of Hythe. Outline planning consent for 8,500 homes and up to 87,500 sqm of employment floor space, including commercial business hubs, a commercial business park, and a light industrial park for growing businesses was granted in April 2023. It is estimated that the 9,000 jobs supported by the garden town will provide £345m (US\$438.15m) in GVA.

The new community will enjoy excellent transport links by road (junction 11 of the M20) and rail (London will be reachable by train within an hour by high-speed train). The creation of an integrated transport network centred around Westenhanger train station will further improve connectivity and reduce car use. A fibre-to-home broadband network will support digital connectivity.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council, meanwhile, has given its backing for SNRG to consult on smart technology and a solar park to support the pathway to net zero at Otterpool Park. A planning application for a Water Waste Treatment Works to support future housing development was also submitted in February 2025.

3.2.12  
Ship Street, Folkestone & Hythe district

Folkestone & Hythe District Council are developing plans for the former gasworks in Ship Street, Folkestone. £2.5m of government grant was received in October 2023 to further remediate the brown-field site and allow for the construction of up to 150 homes, including affordable. The site, located between Folkestone Central station and the town centre, has been allocated for housing development in the district's local plan.<sup>8</sup>

3.3 Industrial and leisure

3.3.1  
Bevan Place Hotel, Swanley

This project will deliver a new hotel and public realm improvements on Swanley High Street and in Swanley town centre. This well-located gateway site is circa 0.8 acres in close proximity to Swanley train station (20 minutes into central London) and 3min from the M25/M20 junction (J3). The hotel development is expected to have a development cost of circa £17m.

It is located close to Brands Hatch Racing circuit, a key tourism destination, the proposed London Golf Resort, new Wasps Rugby Stadium and planning approved training centre for Milwall Football Club.

3.3.2  
London Golf Club, Sevenoaks

This well-connected and prestigious 36-hole Jack Nicklaus designed championship course, a key stop on the European Tour, lies just 20 miles from the capital in 700 acres of Kent countryside. To strengthen the club's ability to attract large scale golf tournaments major expansion is planned that could create a GVA uplift of £11.7m a year and create over 300 additional jobs on site.

Planning approval is being secured for proposals that include a hotel with spa and conference facilities, accommodation lodges, a sports pavilion (with restaurant, gym and studios), racket courts, a swimming lake, a new relocated driving range and Elite Performance Centre. A sports turf academy and new equestrian facilities, including an arena and replacement stables plus the refurbishment and repurposing of the Grade II\*listed South Ash Manor to visitor accommodation will also be delivered.

3.3.3  
Otford Road Business Park, Sevenoaks

Proposals for four commercial/light industrial units and drive-though retail unit with public real realm and biodiversity net gain improvements on brown/ grey belt land. This scheme will meet demand for employment space in a district constrained by high land values, national landscape and greenbelt designation. The site is well-connected and accessible to major roads and rail.

3.3.4  
Brompton global manufacturing site, Ashford

Brompton, the globally successful British bicycle brand and manufacturer, received outline planning approval to relocate its global headquarters from West London to Kent in January 2025, subject to a S106 being agreed. Proposals include a new production facility for its e-bike models, supporting around 1,500 jobs initially and 4,000 jobs once fully operational. An estimated 100,000 new bikes will be produced each year.<sup>9</sup>

Kent's location between the cycling cities of London and Paris was a key factor in locating here and equates to a £100m (US\$127m) investment into the local economy, adding £270m (US\$ 342.9m) per annum of GVA to the Kent economy. It will seek to set the standard for sustainable production, including solar and ground source energy to reduce energy demands, as well as partnering with Kent's schools, colleges and universities to boost skills development in the region.

The project will also require major investment in a new highways junction, attenuation basins and compensatory flood storage area and mitigation, plus the creation of a wetland park, foot and cycle paths.

3.3.5  
Altira Park, Canterbury

Altira Park is located seven miles north of Canterbury in coastal Herne Bay. Strategically placed for the Channel Ports with excellent road and rail links to London and the rest of the UK. This key employment site lies at the heart of the district's drive for economic investment.

With a mix of industrial, office, retail, leisure and commercial spaces available, Altira Park offers flexibility for businesses of all sizes. Unit sizes range from 7,500 to 50,000 sq. ft.

3.4 Logistics and distribution

3.4.1  
Panattoni, Swale

Panattoni, the world's largest privately-owned industrial developer, completed phase 1 of Panattoni Park Sittingbourne in April 2025, with two units of 440,000 sq. ft. and 205,000 sq. ft. respectively - the largest speculative development in Kent for more than a decade.

When occupied, phase 1 of the £150m development will provide employment for more than 1,000 people in Swale. Following the granting of planning permission, construction is now under way on phase 2, delivering a 58,000 sq. ft. facility which is already let to DPD. The unit is expected to be constructed by the end of 2025 and will create hundreds more jobs in the region.

3.4.2  
LOC8, J8 M20 Maidstone

Phase 2 of this new business park is now complete and ready to occupy, offering brand new light industrial and logistics units of 25,811, 31,413 and 36,686 sq ft.

50% are already pre-let. All buildings offer a flexible and efficient operational environment, with BREEAM "Excellent" and EPC "A+" ratings.

3.4.4  
TN2 Gateway, Tunbridge Wells

Scannell and Royal London Asset Management Property received the final go-ahead in February 2025 for this 33-acre logistics scheme in Tunbridge Wells. It will deliver over 500,000 sq. ft. of warehousing with ancillary office space. Nine flexible units that can be configured for a range of sizes - 23,000 sq. ft. to 175,000 sq. ft. - are planned.

3.5 Science park expansion

3.5.1  
Discovery Park, Sandwich

Discovery Park in Sandwich is rapidly advancing its vision to become a world-class science and technology hub, attracting investment and driving innovation in key fields like pharmaceuticals and oncology. Home to over 180 tenants including global organisations, Pfizer, Viatris and Asymchem, the park is expanding its cutting-edge facilities, with plans to develop 500,000 sq. ft. (46,451 sqm) of science-related commercial space over the next five years. This ambitious growth strategy aims to double the number of jobs on-site from 3,500 to 7,000 by 2032.

In 2023, Discovery Park unveiled 50,000 sq. ft. (4,654 sqm) of state-of-the-art laboratory and office space, designed to support biotech, medtech, and digital health start-ups. With over 70% already occupied, opportunities remain for innovative companies looking to scale. By providing world-class infrastructure, investment opportunities, and a collaborative environment, Discovery Park is cementing its position as a leading centre for scientific discovery and business growth.

3.5.2  
Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne

At Kent Science Park, investment continues, having undergone £3m refurbishment in start-up and scale-up spaces. Responding to the high demand for GMP space in the South East, planning has been approved for the development of 175,345 sq. ft. across three plots, within the existing boundary. Available for pre-lease, the new GMP space is a fantastic addition to the 565,000 sq. ft. (42 buildings) already at the science park.

This year, the site celebrates its 80th year and continues to forge strong relationships with the likes of the University of Greenwich (Growing Kent and Medway), Canterbury Christ Church University and beyond.

3.5.3  
Kent Medical Campus, Maidstone

Kent Medical Campus, located off junction 7 of the M20 at Maidstone is adding further capacity to the region's health and science cluster with one million sq. ft. (92,903 sqm) of A1, B1, C2 and D1 flexible space for health, education and life science companies.

The campus intends to be the county's first academic, health and science centre focused environment, offering a range of flexible opportunities including headquarters buildings, specialist residential and rehabilitation care, innovation space as well as higher education training facilities for the medical and health care professions.

3.6 Green energy transition

3.6.1  
Medway One, Hoo Peninsula, Medway

Medway One is the redevelopment of the former Kingsnorth power station site, owned by leading international energy company, Uniper. Outline planning consent is in place for a new manufacturing hub and waste-to-power plant<sup>10</sup>

The development has the potential to include a mixture of commercial, manufacturing, industrial, distribution, data centre and energy uses. Medway One also links in with the UK’s ambitions for AI and machine learning infrastructure. Other elements of the scheme include a direct power connection to nuclear energy from France and a fibre connection to Belgium.

Just over half of the 279 acres (113 hectare) site is readily developable land with an approved reserved matters application for the main access to site, and the required utilities to enable development.

3.6.2  
Isle of Grain Powerstation, Medway

The nearby former Isle of Grain Power Station is 17,652,796 sq. ft. (164 hectares) of previously heavy industrial use in a high priority Levelling Up area. It has planning consent for over five million sq. ft. (465,000 sqm) of industrial buildings and is capable of accommodating some 6,000 new jobs. The site has direct power sources offering triple resilience. It is adjacent to London Thamesport, the dry bulk and container deep sea port with daily sailings to Rotterdam and routes to France and Spain for unaccompanied cargo.

Coming ashore adjacent to the Grain site is the NeuConnect Interconnector, mentioned in the previous chapter, a direct connection to green energy via undersea cable to Germany.

The £2.4bn (US \$3.04 bn) privately funded NeuConnect Interconnector creates the first power link between Germany and the UK, two of Europe's largest energy markets. Around 1,166 miles (725km) of land and sea cables will form an invisible energy highway linked to the National Grid. It will be one of the world's largest interconnectors, allowing up to 1.4GW of electricity to move in either direction. This is enough to power up to 1.5m homes over the life of the project, with a completion target date of 2028.<sup>15</sup>

The project will allow energy markets in both the UK and Germany to build resilience and allow greater flexibility for the changing demands of business, industry and consumers. It will promote the integration of renewable energy sources with a pledged net reduction in carbon emissions of 13 MT CO2 over 25 years.

3.6.3  
Kemsley Industrial Cluster, Sittingbourne

The Kemsley Industrial Cluster (KIC) is home to a combination of energy producers covering a wide range of industrial processes, including power and heat generation, manufacturing, logistics, recycling and waste disposal.

MVV Environment Ridham, Knauf UK and Ireland, enfinium, DS Smith Paper, Heathcote Holdings, Mace and the University of Kent are the seven organisations which currently make up the Cluster with the potential to incorporate further local industrial operators.

The KIC is working together to explore opportunities to develop and deliver a joint carbon reduction strategy that could, with investment, include the future delivery of a green hydrogen production facility that would help open up a new industrial sector in the region as well as carbon capture and steam upgrades.

3.6.4  
Solar energy projects, Kent-wide

Cleve Hill Solar Park Ltd completed construction on a major solar and energy storage park near Graveney, Swale, in April 2025. The project,classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) was granted development consent in 2020.<sup>11</sup>

Owner Quinbrook is an ESG-focused global investment manager with a specialist focus on the low carbon and renewable energy supply and storage related sector. This £450m(US\$ 571.5m) Kent project, will have a capacity in excess of 50 megawatts with the potential to power over 91,000 homes. It will also generate over £1m (US\$1.27m) of income per year towards improving local services through business rates.

There are over 40 solar farms operational across the region. Latest projects include plans for a 235-acre solar farm with a battery energy storage system from Evolution Power at New Ash Green, Sevenoaks. If approved this would produce enough electricity to power around 17,200 homes and save 11,500 tonnes of CO2 per year.

The largest solar farm proposed so far for Kent and Medway was announced in November 2024. Energy firm Low Carbon is behind plans for a 500 megawatt (MW) facility on Romney Marsh, Folkestone and Hyte district. This could generate enough power for 140,000 homes<sup>12</sup>

3.6.5  
Battery energy storage and recycling, Northfleet

Gravesham Council is in negotiations with SpeedGreen Limited for a 37-year lease on a three acre site it owns in Thames Way, Northfleet, that could be used to build a battery energy storage system (BESS).<sup>13</sup>

The proposed development would be able to store and export MWh of energy, enough to power around 200,000 homes for one hour.

The area is already home to Britain's largest battery recycling plant, which opened in 2023.

Britannia Refined Metals, owned by global minerals firm Glencore, linked up with battery pioneer Britishvolt, the UK’s foremost investor in battery cell technologies and R&D for the project.

Already using the neighbouring port for shipping raw materials and finished products, they are helping to put Kent and Medway on the starting grid for the next generation Electric Vehicle supply chain.

3.7 Defence industries and manufacturing

3.7.1  
BAE Systems factory investment, Medway

BAE Systems is investing £220m(US\$279.4m) to upgrade its facilities at Rochester Airport in Medway. The site is home to the company’s UK-based Electronic Systems business specialising in advanced aerospace technologies such as heads-up displays, helmet mounted displays, flight control computers and active control sticks for civil and military aircraft worldwide.

A new, more efficient and sustainable 32,000 sqm factory will combine manufacturing, engineering and office space with preparation works starting in 2025. 1,600 people are currently employed on site, part of a 100,000 strong global workforce. The new facility is expected to create 300 jobs over the next five years.

The company is part of an established defence manufacturing and supply chain cluster in Kent and Medway supporting UK Government plans to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP from April 2027 and 3% in the next parliament.

3.8 Creative and digital industries

3.8.1  
Newtown Works, Ashford

This £190m (US\$ 241.3m) Newtown Works scheme is a 4.8 hectare mixed-use town centre regeneration project offering 200,000 sq. ft (18,580 sqm) of purpose-built world-class film studios, 302 apartments, 90,000 sq. ft. (8,361 sqm) of commercial space and a media village for supply chain and other media businesses at a former Victorian-era railway yard next to Ashford International railway station.<sup>14</sup>

It will provide additional UK film and TV space. Over 6,000 businesses connected to the TV and film sectors are within 90 minutes of Ashford including pre-production, production, post-production and distribution companies. A groundbreaking Creative Industries and Digital Industries skills and education centre is proposed.

The site is owned by Ashford International Development Company, a joint venture partnership between Ashford Borough Council and Quinn Estates with work underway on site supported by £14.7m of Levelling Up Funding. Further private and public investment is being sought to deliver the project.

Kent and Medway is already a key centre for the Creative Industries. The region has the largest concentration of Film and TV businesses outside of London, including special effects company ER Productions and model manufacturing specialists, Total Machining Solutions. Maidstone TV Studios, the UK’s largest high-definition TV broadcast facility, is 30-minutes by train from the Newtown Works site.

3.8.2  
Docking Station, Medway

Construction work began in January 2025 for this new creative production facility. The Docking Station, located at the Historic Dockyard, Medway aims to be a drive for the development of immersive technologies in the South-East and drive growth in the Creative Industries, one of the priority growth sectors for the UK economy.

Opening late 2026, the site will include a cafe, exhibition and workshop spaces, co-working and incubator spaces for University of Kent graduates and small creative businesses, as well as workspaces for staff, a teaching lab and a post-production/ editing studio.

A new studio building will feature a large soundstage, and multiple smaller spaces equipped for high tech creative technology and film making practices. This facility will be of particular interest for the film, advertising and gaming sectors.

Docking Station is a project of the Institute of Culture & Creative Industries at the University of Kent in collaboration with Medway Council and The Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust. It is due to launch in 2026.

3.8.3  
Chatham Creative Quarters

Chatham is the beating heart of Medway, and a place that aspires to be a leader in the creation, innovation, arts, culture and heritage. A beacon place at the centre of the Thames Estuary Creative Production Corridor (TEGB x GLA Partnership).

Chatham Creative Quarters<sup>15</sup> brings together significant partners across Chatham in a common ambition to build a place that enables strategic space allocation for the culture and creative industries, maximising partnerships between place regeneration and the creative economy and enabling developers, investors and the creative sector to either contribute to a Medway-led projects or propose their own.

In partnership with Arts Council England, Creative Estuary and FutureCity and already leveraging over £40million of investment, this place shaping programme majors of the strengths of Chatham's cultural, educational and commercial anchors to create a pipeline of cultural production expertise and skills to serve the wider Thames Estuary Creative Production Corridor.

3.8.4  
Dover Beacon project

Construction is underway for this transformational flagship re-development set to deliver more than £90m of economic benefits including creative sector jobs, skills and educational opportunities for Dover district.

This catalyst for future investment includes a further education campus focused on the creative and digital industries. The Bench building, set for completion in Spring 2026, will also house a business centre to support start-ups and SMEs. It will become a hub for contemporary film making, digital creative and immersive art.

3.9 Wine production

3.9.1  
Chapel Down, Canterbury

England's leading wine producer Chapel Down, one of 50 wine producers in the county, has secured planning consent for a £32m (US\$ 40.64m) new wine production and bottling facility for its award-winning range of sparkling and still wines at Canterbury Business Park. The outcome of a judicial review is expected this summer.

This vote of confidence in Kent's success as a wine region will see a 128,090 sq. ft. (11,900 sqm) regional wine hub built with the capacity to produce at least six million bottles by 2032. The company's existing winery in Tenterden currently has a limit of around 2.5m bottles. Defined Wine, the contract winemakers which already operates at the site, will also benefit from the use of one of two warehouse spaces being constructed.

3.9.2  
Silverhand Estate, Gravesham

MDCV UK, trading as Silverhand Estate, manages the largest single organic vineyard in the UK, covering an area of more than 900 acres, in Luddesdown Kent on the chalky slopes of the North Downs. It was the first in the UK to reach carbon-negative status. The company has a long history of producing award-winning Provence rosé and English Sparkling wine.

This Kent operation, established in 2023, has a temporary winery on site but is seeking a larger, more permanent location that would allow it to produce up to five million bottles of wine a year. Four potential sites across Kent have been identified.<sup>16</sup>

3.9.3  
Champagne Taittinger, Chilham

This prestigious new wine estate in Kent was officially opened in September 2024. Champagne Taittinger, along with its UK agency and partner Hatch Mansfield, bought the land in Chilham in 2015 and planted the first vines in 2017.

The 380-acre site, former apple and pear orchards, has been called Domaine Evremond, after Charles de Saint-Evremond, said to be the first ambassador of Champagne in England. It is the first time that a major Champagne house has invested in the UK. There are 150 acres of vines, benefitting from chalky soil similar to that found in the Champagne region of France.

It's also home to a state-of-the-art gravity fed winery and a naturally cool chalk cellar with the capacity to hold up to 1.5m bottles. The first wine launched this Spring with enough vines to produce 300,000 bottles of premium English sparkling wine per year.

3.9.4  
Gusbourne winery, Appledore

Ranked 50th in the World's Best Vineyards list for 2024, Gusbourne has enjoyed sparkling success over the past 20 years. This award-winning estate had expanded significantly since 2004, including 60 hectares of vines in Appledore, Kent.

The premium English sparkling wine producer announced a new partnership in February with British Airways that will see its wine served to passengers in the First Class and Club World cabins for the next three summers. Gusbourne now exports to 37 countries around the world including the key Nordic, Japanese and USA markets.<sup>17</sup>

3.10 Keeping the UK's Gateway to Europe moving

3.10.1  
Operation Brock

The Operation Brock contraflow system is designed to keep traffic on the M20 and other roads in Kent moving when there is disruption to travel across the Channel. A quick moveable barrier system deployed on the M20 allows port bound traffic to be held on the coast bound carriageway, when necessary, with other traffic using a contraflow on the London bound carriageway.

The UK government is working to reduce the need to queue HGVs on Kent's strategic road network, using a combination of new digital technology and off-road sites for use at times of disruption.

3.10.2  
UK/EU Border controls

The Entry/Exit System (EES) involves new digital border checks for people travelling to and from Europe, replacing passport stamping and requiring visitors from outside the European Union to register fingerprints, a photo and passport details to enter the bloc. To ensure that the Channel ports continue to operate efficiently, the UK government announced £10.5m (US\$13.5m) in August 2024 to support preparations at the Port of Dover, Eurostar and Eurotunnel.

The Sevington Inland Border Facility near Ashford opened near Ashford in 2021 for customs and document checks on imported goods that enter the UK through the Port of Dover or Eurotunnel. Sevington Border Control Post is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It is the busiest in the UK.

Agencies operating from the facility include the Animal Plant and Health Agency who check imported plants and seeds for planting and live animals. HMRC, the UK Border Force, and Ashford Port Health Authority.

Ashford Port Health, managed by Ashford Borough Council, is responsible for checks on a range of commodities, including high-risk food and feed, products of animal origin, and high-risk food and feed of non-animal origin.

It began operating in April 2024, protecting public health and providing skills training and opportunities for specialist environmental health and veterinary roles.

3.10.3  
Enhancing Facilities at Entry / Exit Ports

Significant investment has recently been made at the Channel Tunnel terminal and Port of Dover to ensure that passenger and freight traffic flows freely, minimising check-in time and ensuring that the Channel ports remain the UK's quickest access points to mainland Europe for road traffic.



# 2025-2035

## A decade for opportunity

### Hydrogen Fuel Production

As the capital cost of vehicles using alternative fuels falls, demand for green power will grow exponentially. The UK does not currently have sufficient people or robust supply chains in place to produce hydrogen at scale.

### Food Production

The food and drink production industry is one of the UK's largest manufacturing sectors and features heavily in Kent's economy. Approximately 1 in 4.5 British apples come from commercial orchards in Medway, a sign of the continued success of this sector in Kent, the Garden of England. The largest agricultural sector in Kent is largely soft and top fruit, salad and grapes for wine given the county's favourable climate and geology. Kent is famous for apples, strawberries and proudly boasts producer brands such as A C Goatham & Son, Chambers, Berry Gardens, Hugh Lowe, Thanet Earth and Linton Park.

### Logistics

Logistics schemes in Kent tend to be let fully before practical completion. This is owing to the excellent motorway connectivity to mainland Europe, London and the rest of the UK, but also because they are built to the highest sustainability standards.

### Automation

There is a real opportunity for agile firms that can automate. Those who do will excel in this sector. In Kent we are already building that environment. With the green engineering centre launched by East Kent Colleges Group in 2023 and the Christ Church Canterbury University's world-class engineering school both building automation skills, Kent is developing the skills that employers will need and showing the way for the UK.

### Decarbonisation and energy resilience

With plans for decarbonising freight at the Port of Dover and other examples where Kent is championing the road to net zero, there is a growing opportunity now for decarbonising the logistics sector in the region - including harnessing new technology, fuel systems, including hydrogen, and methods of 'last mile' delivery.

### Onshoring manufacturing

Events over recent years have shown that the balance of risk has shifted against long and complex supply chains. Production in Kent is a lot more attractive than sourcing from Asia and even the EU, for time critical projects. As with logistics, shortage of qualified engineers is an issue for the UK as well as a robust supply chain to produce all components. There is an opportunity here in Kent for agile manufacturers that can increase automation with engineers that can adapt. Our cluster of defence manufacturing and supply businesses add another route to growth in support of increased UK defence spending.

### Free trading with the world

Kent has the largest concentration of ports in the Southeast. Complementing the Roll-on-Roll-off at Dover and the Channel Tunnel at Folkestone, international dry bulk docks are on the River Thames at Dartford and Northfleet. On the River Medway ports at Grain, Sheerness, Chatham and Sittingbourne offer dry and liquid bulk, break bulk and a deep water container terminal.

# 5

## Conclusions

**We have set out the opportunities for new investment in Kent and Medway with significance regionally but also for the wider UK economy.**

This is a part of England that has been contributing to the country's success for centuries thanks to high levels of productivity, innovation and a unique location between Europe and London. A global facing South East gateway on the doorstep of the world's greatest city.

This is where innovation is happening today for tomorrow's businesses across Kent and Medway with an unrivalled pipeline of projects coming through, bringing thousands of jobs and new opportunities to the region, plus the locations of the new homes our growing population will need. There is a clear pipeline of projects that will deliver prosperity for our residents and businesses while also delivering on the UK government's growth priorities.

New housing is also set to deliver much needed infrastructure from upgraded railway stations, leisure space and employment zones through to schools, health centres and other community facilities that will all add to our quality of life and boost the level of opportunities for all. New garden communities will deliver much needed homes, community facilities, sustainable transport and green open spaces.

- ▶ Kent has always been and continues to be strategically important to the nation's growth.
- ▶ This is a region that continues to be at the forefront of innovation on how we produce food, distribute and power our economy.

# 6

## About Locate in Kent

**Locate in Kent is the Kent and Medway region's official investment promotion agency established in 1997. Since April 2019, Locate in Kent have supported more than 332 business investment projects in the Kent and Medway region.**

Funded primarily by Kent County Council and Medway Council, Locate in Kent's mission has always been to create new jobs through supporting investment in economic growth, especially inward investment.

They have overseen some 9,427 jobs created. 4,139 jobs from 87 inward investment and major projects. 44% of those inward investment projects were Foreign Direct Investments (FDI).

Locate in Kent's consistent approach to delivering that mission is based on its extensive network of contacts, level of insight and pipeline, established and built in the region over decades.

### Network

Locate in Kent's power is held in its regional relationships. Locate in Kent can open doors and start honest dialogue to move deals forward. They invest in relationships with important people in the region's target industrial sectors, active developers and local politicians and their officers. They have superb connections with education and training providers, local authorities, sector-representative bodies and the full range of professional service organisations to provide a full package of support to investors.

### Insight

Locate in Kent's local knowledge is its currency. They are seen as a primary source of property demand and availability by the growing and largest firms who are investing in the region. They understand the barriers to growth and the sources for success. They share their knowledge with stakeholders regularly through conversations and published content.

### Pipeline

Locate in Kent actively maintains the region's pipeline of projects to ensure resilience and offset uncertainty on timescales. They take the lead through demonstrating the value of their network and relevance of their insight. They use a robust qualification process to ensure no lead is wasted. Locate in Kent ensures projects receive priority at appropriate stages in the decision making process.

### The Kent Developers Group

Locate in Kent convenes the Kent Developers Group (KDG). The KDG is the collective voice of the region's major developers of employment use real estate.

KDG unites public, private and the relevant regulatory bodies to stimulate economic activity in Kent and Medway. Members collaborate to maximise investment in infrastructure, commercial development and job creation.

The Group acts as an advisory panel for policy makers and infrastructure providers, both physical and digital. They are joined by global professional advisers, Government, Kent County Council and Medway Council. Members share the vision to create employment space through the acquisition, development, regeneration and construction of industrial buildings and offices.

### Kent Housing Development Group

High quality homes and commercial property play a huge role in attracting new businesses to the county. The Kent Housing and Development Group (KHDC) is a unique association that comprises land and property owners, developers of commercial spaces as well as residential and mixed-use schemes across the county.

Together they work alongside public sector partners, including planning authorities and agencies to discuss strategic issues affecting the region. Benefits of membership including being part of a partnership working to remove barriers to growth and deliver future economic prosperity for Kent.

Appendices

# Background information

**Numeric and size conversions**

In this document we have shown costs in both UK sterling and US dollars using the conversion rate of \$1 = £1.27.

All area sizes have been measured and listed in square feet (Sq. Ft) with square metres (sqm) given in brackets, unless indicated. We have used a conversion rate of 1 sqm = 10.7639 sq. ft.

Appendices

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