

WEST KENT

The West Kent sub-county area includes Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells and is bordered by East Sussex, Surrey and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley.

The economy of West Kent plays a vital role in promoting and sustaining the Kent economy as a whole. It has historically enjoyed strong job growth and is forecast to continue to do so, with good prospects for securing economic growth over the next 20 years. West Kent has the highest proportion of business start-ups in Kent, a stronger representation of higher-value, knowledge-based industries than anywhere else in Kent and boasts the strongest business survival rates. The area provides significant employment to those living elsewhere in Kent, including high-skilled, well-paid jobs.

The West Kent Partnership is an economic and strategic partnership that operates across the area, to promote West Kent, champion key economic issues and engage with industry and business to support the local economy. Its vision for West Kent is:

“To sustain a dynamic and well-connected local economy, to ensure that West Kent remains a key location for business success and growth, and that our local population has access to quality jobs and skills development.”

WEST KENT - DISTRICTS AND BOROUGHES

Sevenoaks District has one of the highest proportions of Metropolitan Green Belt in the country (93%) and contains parts of two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; the High Weald and the Kent Downs, both of which cover a total of 60% of the District.

Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) is at the beginning of produc-



**HOUSING GROWTH
(2011-2031):
31,400**



**POPULATION GROWTH
(2011-2031):
62,800**



**TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENT
£785,697,000**



**TOTAL FUNDING IDENTIFIED:
£603,713,000**



**INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING GAP:
£181,985,000**

ing a new Local Plan to cover the period 2015 to 2035. Headline figures include a housing need of 12,400 units, a need to identify up to 11.6 ha of employment land and up to 32,100 m² of retail floorspace. SDC completed its Local Plan Issues and Options in autumn 2017 and will be producing its draft Local Plan in spring 2018.

Due to its Green Belt constraints, the Local Plan will look to focus development within its existing town and village centres. This will

be achieved by increasing densities, prior to looking for brownfield development opportunities in the Green Belt and only then the release of other Green Belt in 'exceptional circumstances'. Schemes that enable regeneration benefits or provide key infrastructure to support the needs of communities will also be considered.

Tonbridge and Malling is mainly rural in character, with villages and small towns of varying size and character, many of which are of architectural or historic interest. The largest rural settlements are

AUTHORITY	DOCUMENT	STAGE	EXPECTED ADOPTION (AS OF NOV 2017)
	CORE STRATEGY (2015-2035)	ADOPTED 2011	
SEVENOAKS DC	LOCAL PLAN 2015-2035	ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION - SUMMER 2017	SUMMER 2019
	CIL	ADOPTED 2014	
TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BC	CORE STRATEGY (2021)	ADOPTED 2007	
	LOCAL PLAN (2031)	REG 19 CONSULTATION - EARLY 2018	SPRING 2019
TUNBRIDGE WELLS BC	CORE STRATEGY (2026)	ADOPTED 2010	
	NEW LOCAL PLAN (2033)	ISSUES AND OPTIONS (REGULATION 18 - JUNE 2017)	SPRING/ SUMMER 2019

West Malling, Borough Green, Hadlow, Hildenborough and East Peckham. An extensive area of the Borough lies on the floodplain of the River Medway, although the potential negative impact of this in Tonbridge is reduced to some extent by the Leigh Barrier to the west of the town.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council is looking to adopt a new local plan mid-2019, after public examination at the end of 2018. The Borough has an excellent strategic communications network, especially with London, and a high percentage of the workforce with NVQ4+. There is strong evidence of speculative commercial development being delivered and coming forward, such as Nepicar Park, Crickets Farm and London Road, showing confidence in the market.

Leybourne Grange, Holborough Quarry and Nepicar Park are all near completion or complete as substantial areas of growth in the district. Planning permissions have been approved and are being delivered for Kings Hill (Phase 3) and Peter's Village, with redevelopment of the Aylesford Newsprint site due in the near future.

Tunbridge Wells lies in the south-west of Kent bordering East Sussex. Royal Tunbridge Wells forms the majority of the main urban area and provides a large proportion of the social, cultural and economic opportunities available in the Borough. The quality of the built and natural environment is very high, with 70% of the Borough designated as part of the High Weald AONB and 22% of the Borough is also designated as Metropolitan Green Belt.

Tunbridge Wells has a strong residential market and the Borough is considered to be an attractive location for business investment given the close proximity to London and the access to a highly skilled workforce. However, limited land and premises are currently available. The Borough's Economic Needs Study identifies the

need for 11-15 hectares of employment land equating to approximately 10,000 new jobs over the Plan period and to increase the Borough's economic attractiveness to potential investors. In addition, investment in the next 5 years in Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre, will build on its role as a cultural centre for West Kent and Sussex.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Development Plan consists of the Adopted Local Plan 2006, the Core Strategy 2010 and the Site Allocations Local Plan 2016. The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan to cover the period to 2033, which

will replace the previous Plans for the Borough and will set out the scale of development required during this period and the key locations to meet this need.

The Borough faces significant challenges over the Plan period, in order to meet the development needs whilst maintaining the exceptional quality of the built, natural and historic environment and promote economic growth. The Council has recently undertaken an Issues and Options consultation for its new Local Plan and as part of this consultation five strategic options were set out to meet the required growth.

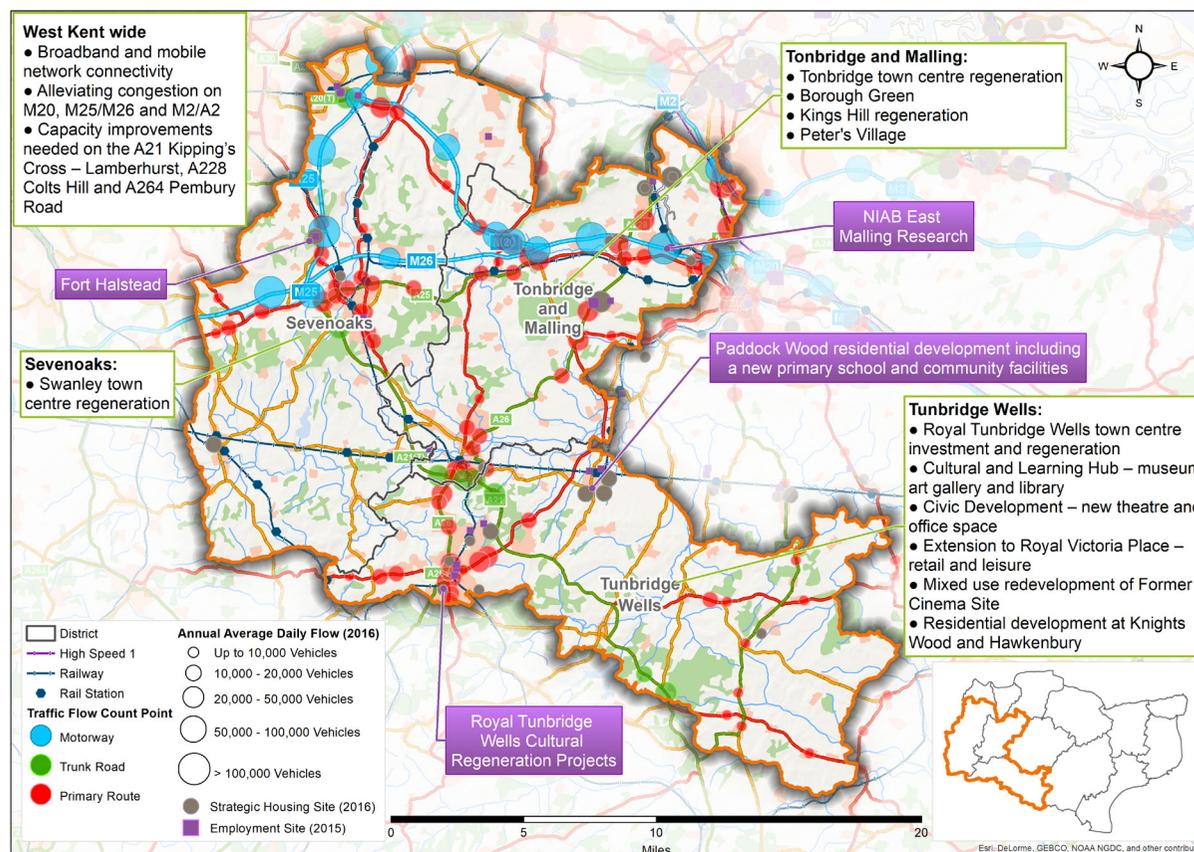


Figure 7.9: West Kent - example strategic projects for economic growth

WEST KENT OVERVIEW – GROWTH CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

West Kent is highly constrained by environmental and planning issues including Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and flooding. Despite the constraints, West Kent has a number of thriving towns and regeneration sites which are providing new homes and employment opportunities for the area.

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
Highly constrained districts, Green Belt, AONBs and flood zones result in a limited supply of sustainable land options	An attractive location for business investment due to close proximity to London and access to a highly skilled workforce
There are pockets of significant deprivation amongst relatively affluent areas, contributing to a wide variation between wards	Some strong evidence of speculative commercial development being delivered and coming forward in some locations (such as Nepicar Park and Crickets Farm)
House prices affecting affordability in the sub-county area, as well as affecting recruitment	Broadband and mobile connectivity infrastructure improving
Pressure on commercial space, with permitted development rights exacerbating the loss of town centre office stock	High residential land values result in a strong residential market
Relative lack of choice of good-quality sites and premises for modern business operations	Continued regeneration/investment of sites such as Swanley Vision, Kings Hill, Peter's Village and Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre
Above-average business property and labour costs	Successfully delivering major highways schemes in the area will assist in unlocking development, reducing congestion and encourage economic growth
No major higher education institution	Investment in Royal Tunbridge Wells will build on its role as a cultural centre for West Kent and Sussex, and grow the visitor economy
Broadband speeds in some rural locations cause problems for businesses/home-working	Entrepreneurial population and SMEs with growth potential across a range of sectors
The proportion of the local population in the 65+ age group is higher than the national average and is expected to grow.	High proportion of businesses in the Knowledge Economy
New transport infrastructure is required in order to unlock further opportunities for growth (housing and economic)	

WEST KENT - INFRASTRUCTURE PICTURE

Key common strategic issues across West Kent are focused on roads, schools, health and regeneration.

Transport

- There is a need to improve the strategic/major road network including the M20, A21, A228 and also access to the M25/M26 which could increasingly impact on both West Kent and the coastal area to the south. Following completion of the dualling between Tonbridge and Pembury, the A21 now experiences significant congestion further south at Kipping's Cross.
- Congestion on radial routes into Royal Tunbridge Wells remains a significant issue at peak times. Options to increase vehicular capacity on the A264 Pembury Road and to increase opportunities for sustainable travel on the A26 are being explored.
- Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells are all heavily dependent on rail for commuting into London and there is a need to maintain and enhance services to satisfy growing demand.
- Enhancements to the public realm in Tonbridge and Royal Tunbridge Wells town centres are aimed at enhancing the environment (including addressing air quality) for pedestrians and cyclists, and improving access to bus and rail services.
- New infrastructure is needed to encourage walking and cycling for shorter journeys between residential areas and local facilities.

Education

- Currently, specialist secondary provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Kent is at opposite ends of the County. This leads to pupils having to travel long distances to the nearest suitable provision.

The scale of forecast demand for high-functioning secondary-aged ASD pupils would be better accommodated through the establishment of a new school.

- A new primary Free School, Bishop Chavasse, is anticipated to meet the demand for places in central Tonbridge when it opens in September 2017.
- There are two allocations for new primary schools in Tunbridge Wells Borough, a new primary Free School at Paddock Wood and in Royal Tunbridge Wells, a new school at Hawkenbury forming part of the expansion of St Peter's Primary School. These schools will seek to mitigate pressures from new housing developments within these areas.
- There is also an existing demand for a new secondary school in Royal Tunbridge Wells to increase the capacity in the area as well as new provision likely as part of the new Local Plan.

Health and Social Care

- The CCG's Local Care Plan (July 2017) sets out the framework for delivering out-of-hospital care at four different levels – general practice, clusters, local care hubs and West Kent-wide services. As part of the Local Care Plan, estate is recognised as a key enabler for the delivery of out-of-hospital care.
- Additional GP capacity will be required in key areas to ensure adequate provision for new residents. The CCG will work with GPs to develop sustainable premises solutions for the longer term; this will include identifying shared opportunities for co-locating with other services (health and non-health).

Flood Defences

- Leigh Flood Storage Area had LGF3 funding announced in January 2017, with a view to submitting in Autumn/ Winter 2017.

- Focus on immediate collaborative actions and long-term strategies to reduce the risk of flooding from non-tidal rivers and surface water in the Medway catchment through the Medway Flood Partnership.

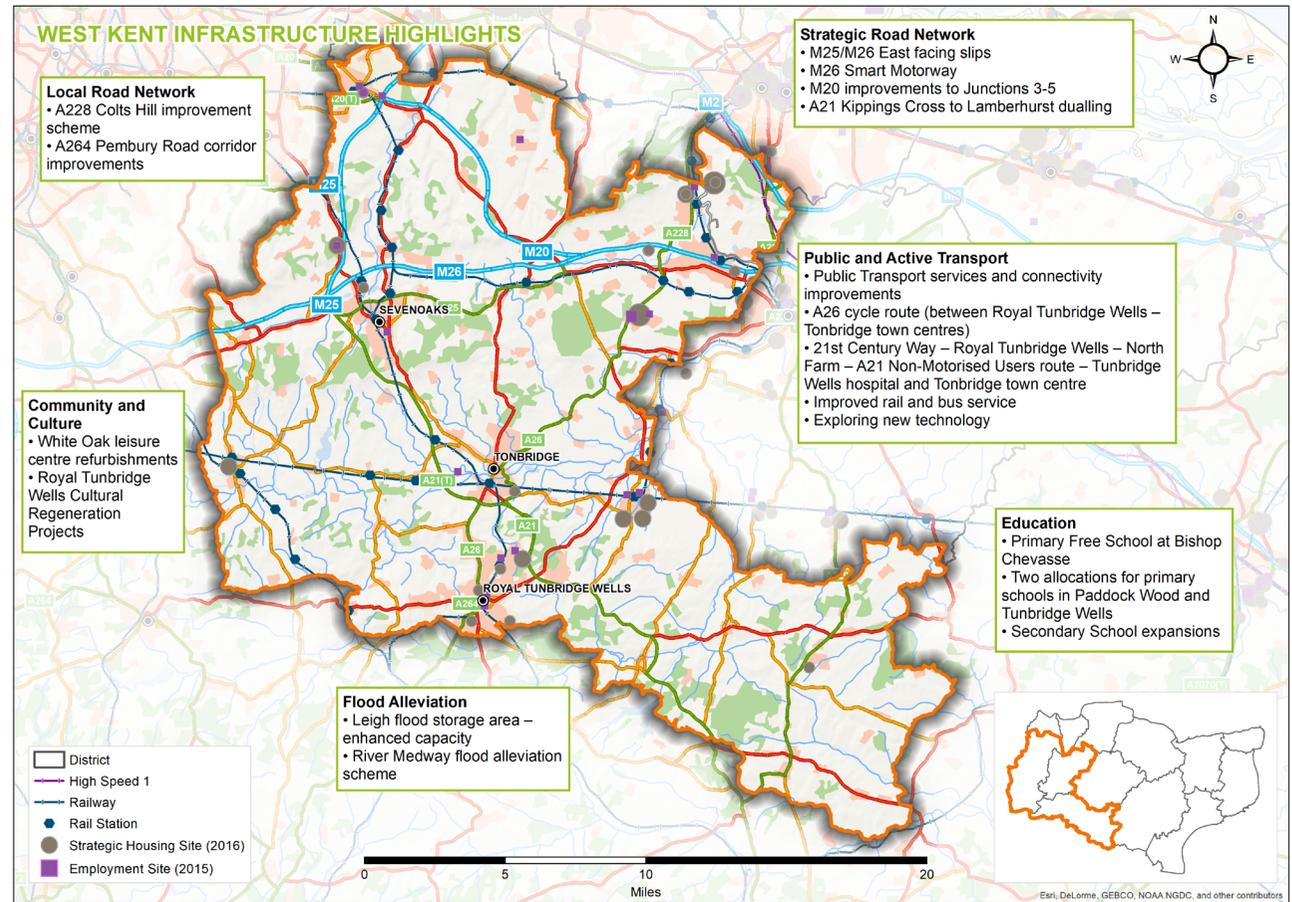


Figure 7.10: West Kent – key projects for each infrastructure sector

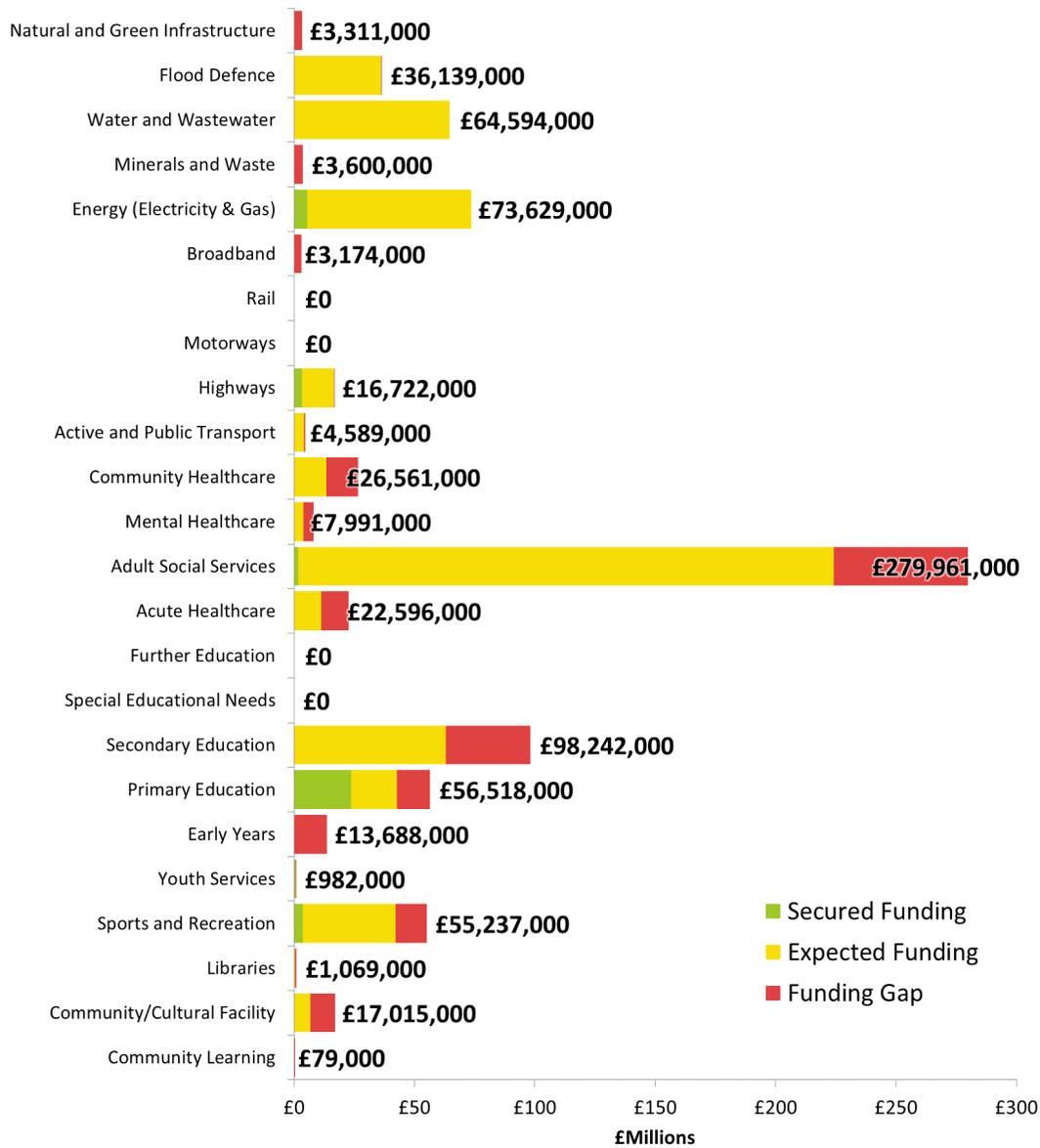


Figure 7.11: West Kent Infrastructure Funding Requirements

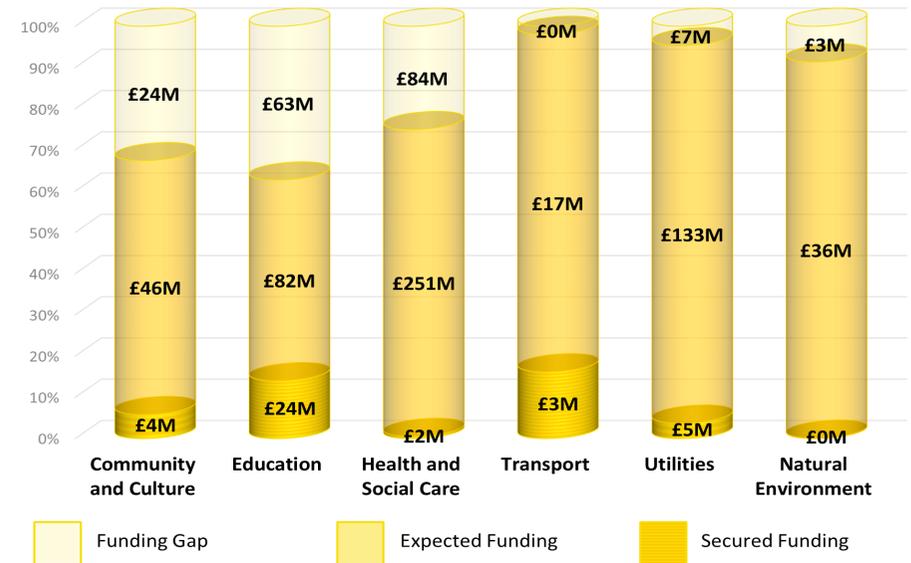


Figure 7.12: West Kent Service Sector Breakdown (Funding vs Gap)