

7. SUB-COUNTY OVERVIEWS

NORTH KENT

North Kent is made up of four districts: Dartford, Gravesham, Maidstone and Swale, and Medway as a unitary authority. It borders Thurrock and Essex to the north and the London Borough of Bexley to the west.

Growth ambitions are focused on the positioning of North Kent, developing its culture and creative economy sectors, transport, technology and regenerating its town centres.

The Thames Gateway Kent Partnership (TGKP)* is a partnership comprising the public and private sectors. It champions sustainable growth across North Kent and aspires to create the best conditions to attract investment and deliver sustainable economic growth in North Kent.

The Partnership's vision is for North Kent to be recognised as:

- An area of exciting towns and cities complemented by an outstanding natural environment, providing an exemplar of urban regeneration;
- A thriving business centre attracting leading investors and businesses through its diverse and skilled workforce, high-quality commercial sites and local services, and accessibility to transport links and strategic routes to UK and Continental markets;
- An area of strong, integrated communities with harmony between new and existing businesses and residents – where the benefits of development and investment are shared by the whole community; and
- A vibrant cultural hub with a thriving social scene and civic pride – attracting a growing student population, bringing youth and vigour to the community.



HOUSING GROWTH
(2011-2031):
78,600



TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENT
£2,498,810,000



INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING GAP:
£666,048,000



POPULATION GROWTH
(2011-2031):
186,800



TOTAL FUNDING IDENTIFIED:
£1,832,759,000

St Mary Magdelene Cobham, Gravesham

*Maidstone Borough Council not a member of TGKP at time of writing

NORTH KENT - DISTRICTS AND BOROUGHES

Dartford is the gateway into Kent and the South East, with the Dartford Crossing being a prominent feature of the Borough. It has a strategy in place already delivering new infrastructure and high levels of growth. There is an expected increase of 59% in the size of the Borough (households) up to 2031. This growth is largely being delivered through a number of large brownfield sites set out in the Dartford Core Strategy, supported by Dartford's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). In particular, this supports regeneration led by a large increase in population in and around Dartford town centre.

Dartford is a net importer of labour, as more people travel to work from outside than commute out of the Borough. The Borough delivered over 2,000 new homes in the last two years, doubling previous annual completion rates. The boom is reflected in Dartford seeing the one of the fastest rates of home sales in the country, and the highest house price growth on mainland UK in the year to April 2017.

At **Ebbsfleet Garden City**, major mixed use development is planned alongside Ebbsfleet International Station and the major leisure/tourism London Resort proposal will be primarily located at Swanscombe Peninsula. Sustainable forms of travel will require investment in train, bus, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure, with an enhancement of the FastTrack network and potential extension of the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail 1) to Ebbsfleet. Relief for the Dartford Crossing through provision of the Lower Thames Crossing east of Gravesend is very welcome; but with the M25 and A2 carrying strategic traffic through the Borough, continued investment in these routes will be required in order to enable growth and keep Dartford moving.

Gravesham's development strategy for the Borough is to retain and improve the existing stock of housing and suitable employment land, and to make provision for the Borough's objectively

assessed need for at least 6,170 new dwellings. The strategy prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development by:

- Promoting regeneration by prioritising the redevelopment and recycling of underused, derelict and previously developed land in the urban area;
- The continued development of a new sustainable mixed use community in the Ebbsfleet (Gravesham) Opportunity Area, which will include the provision of high-quality employment floor space;
- Revitalising the Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area as a focal point for retail, leisure, cultural and tourism facilities and small scale-office provision to serve the needs of the Borough;
- Bringing forward a range of suitable sites in other parts of the urban area for residential and employment development.

In the rural area, development will be supported within those rural settlements inset from the Green Belt.

Medway has the largest urban area in Kent and Medway, with over 278,000 people, concentrated between the A2 and M2 around the River Medway and its estuary. The Hoo Peninsula is characterised by strategic infrastructure installations and important natural habitats. Whilst there has been significant growth in recent years, this has placed pressures on services and infrastructure and housebuilding rates are still struggling to recover after the recession to meet demand.

Medway has a long-standing regeneration agenda and has seen the successful transformation of many brownfield sites, most notably around Chatham Maritime, with the development of a learning quarter, leisure, commercial and residential areas. The Medway Local Plan 2003 focused growth in the urban area, especially through brownfield site regeneration. Important to this strategy were urban sites such as Rochester Riverside, Strood Civic Centre and Chatham Waters.

AUTHORITY	DOCUMENT	STAGE	EXPECTED ADOPTION (AS OF NOV 2017)
	DEVELOPMENT POLICIES PLAN	ADOPTED JULY 2017	
DARTFORD BC	LOCAL PLAN	REG 18 CONSULTATION	TBC
	CIL	ADOPTED 2014	
GRAVESHAM BC	LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY	ADOPTED 2014	
	SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DM POLICIES	REG 18 CONSULTATION	JULY 2021
MAIDSTONE BC	LOCAL PLAN	ADOPTED SEPT 2017	
	CIL	ADOPTED AUTUMN 2017	
MEDWAY COUNCIL	LOCAL PLAN	REG 18 CONSULTATION	2019
SWALE BC	LOCAL PLAN	ADOPTED JULY 2017	

Maidstone is expected to grow significantly in the coming years. The Local Plan provides for some 17,660 new homes and allocates strategic residential development areas to the North West and South East of Maidstone, with key regeneration sites within the town. Proportionate development is allocated at the Borough's Rural Service Centres of Lenham, Harrietsham, Staplehurst, Headcorn and Marden.

Maidstone Town Centre is the focus for regeneration and retail development, with several initiatives now underway. Strategic employment and commercial development sites are allocated at Junctions 7 and 8 of the M20 motorway.

To facilitate the sustainable delivery of planned development, the Local Plan identifies a number of strategic infrastructure schemes to support planned development, including junction improvements on the M20 (such as J5), new primary schools and new and expanded primary healthcare.

Swale is the point where North and East Kent meet and is named after the narrow channel of tidal water between mainland Kent and the Isle of Sheppey. It is a Borough of some 140,800 people who primarily live in its three main towns: Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness. London is accessible in a little under an hour by high-speed rail services. As a coastal Borough, the Port of Sheerness gives access, via its deep-water berths, to the largest ships in the world, its imports distributed to all corners of the UK.

Over the last 60 years, population growth has been amongst the most rapid in Kent. Now, Swale has the third largest district population in Kent and built development has similarly physically grown. Over the last 20 years, most of the villages and towns in Swale have experienced growth, with growth in the towns the most rapid. In the last 10 years, more employment floor space has been built than anywhere else in the County.

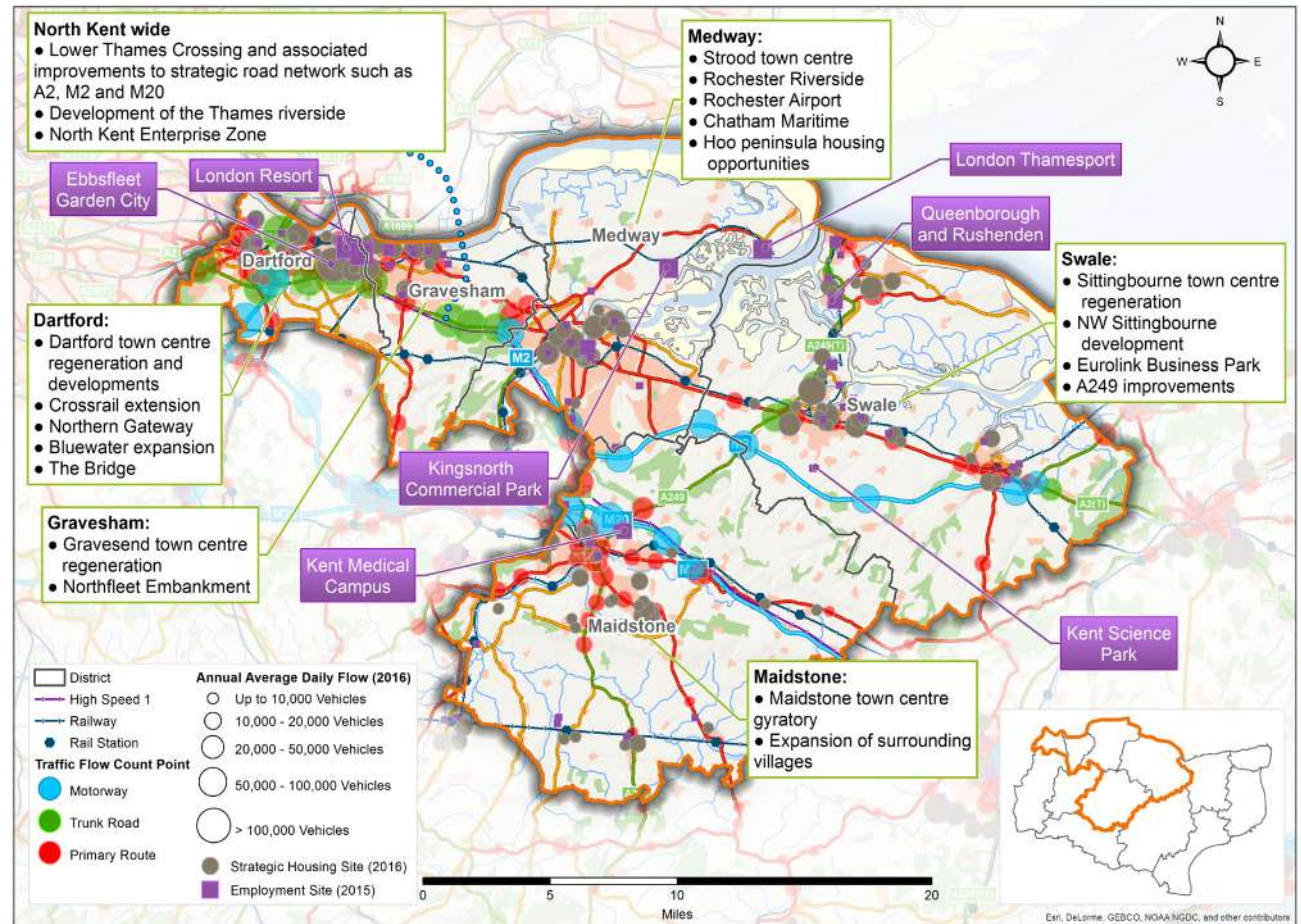


Figure 7.1: North Kent - example strategic projects for economic growth

NORTH KENT OVERVIEW – GROWTH CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Sustainable development of balanced communities will benefit those who currently live/work in Kent and support migration. Community facilities, commercial space and employment opportunities, alongside residential development, will provide for sustainable growth in North Kent.

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
Congestion on highway networks in town centres and arterial routes	Excellent high-speed rail and transport links to London
The capacity limitations of the M2, especially in the context of the Lower Thames Crossing	The Wider Thames Estuary is an opportunity for new housing and commercial growth
Rail capacity on the North Kent line is stretched and will shortly be overcapacity with current growth rates	A possible extension of Crossrail to Ebbsfleet (C2E)
An ethnically and socially diverse sub-region, with areas of prosperity and dynamic growth, but also some of the most deprived localities in the South East	Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) has the potential to relieve congestion from the Dartford Crossing
Unemployment remains above the regional average	Development of North Kent's strengths in advanced manufacturing, technology and logistics (both port and non-port related) and science-related activities
Significant annual net migration into the area from London and population growth is placing pressure on local services	Promoting good-value business accommodation and low-value housing accommodation compared to London
Growth has been in retail and hospitality-related sectors, rather than in knowledge industries, with their potential for high value added growth	Extensive tracts of brownfield land are readied for the market for development
Deficiencies have been identified in early years, primary and secondary education, especially in areas of growth (such as Ebbsfleet)	Rochester Riverside will offer mixed-use development served by the new Rochester railway station
There are currently only two Profound, Severe and Complex Needs (PSCN) schools and both are operating at maximum capacity	Ebbsfleet Garden City, developing up to 15,000 homes and 30,000 jobs
Healthcare provision is struggling to keep up with growth	Proactive marketing of North Kent locations as realistic growth hubs for commercial occupiers
New housing in Bexley is enabling pupils to enrol in schools in the west of Dartford	Considerable improvements to the public realm in Maidstone town centre, from Week St to Gabriel's Hill
Significant growth across the North Kent CCG areas, which the healthcare state has struggled to keep up with	
Delays to the Thameslink train service being launched from Maidstone East	

NORTH KENT - INFRASTRUCTURE PICTURE

Key common strategic issues across North Kent:

- Delivering growth in key locations;
- Attracting and retaining investment;
- Focusing on quality;
- Supporting businesses: growth in key industry sectors;
- Supporting businesses: increasing innovation, enterprise and creativity; and
- Improving skills, qualifications and employability.

Essential to this will be ensuring an adequate supply of good-quality commercial space to attract businesses to North Kent and maintaining and growing an adequately skilled workforce meeting the demands of employers.

Transport

- The Lower Thames Crossing has the potential to reduce congestion on the Dartford Crossing, provide opportunities for investment and regeneration, offer safer and more reliable journeys and provide a brand-new transport corridor at a critical part of the road network. The impacts on the surrounding road networks will also need to be managed.
- Highways improvements to support the growth of key projects, including Ebbsfleet Garden City.
- Improvements to rail connections to boost opportunities for residential and commercial growth, whilst supporting current facilities.
- Long term, to reduce journeys and change patterns for modal shift.

Education

- Expansion of existing schools and development of new facilities - ensuring education capacity remains on course with residential development by the expansion of existing schools (e.g. Swales Skill Centre in Sittingbourne) or the

development of new schools (e.g. a lack of further education provision in Swale).

- In order to fulfil some of the deficiencies, Medway Council encouraged academy trusts to make bids for Free Schools to the Education Funding Authority in 2016. Four bids were successful, which secured approximately £60m worth of funding to provide new school places. At present Medway Council is working with partners to identify sites for these schools.
- Proposals are welcome for a secondary special free school to augment both existing special schools serving North Kent.

Health and Social Care

- Medway Model - the expansion of healthy living centres

from four to six, with new investment in Chatham and Strood. The CCG is working closely with Medway Council to enable these schemes to be developed utilising One Public Estate (OPE) and Estates and Technology Transformation Fund (ETTF) funding.

- Three integrated community hubs located in Dartford town centre, Ebbsfleet and Stone. The CCG is working closely with Dartford Borough Council to deliver a fully integrated town centre hub, utilising OPE and ETTF funding; Gravesham utilising Gravesham PFI Hospital; and a replacement facility in Swanley Town Centre. The hubs will provide wider support to GP practices within the neighbourhood, with provision of integrated services, diagnostics and IT, enabling patients to better access healthcare within the community.

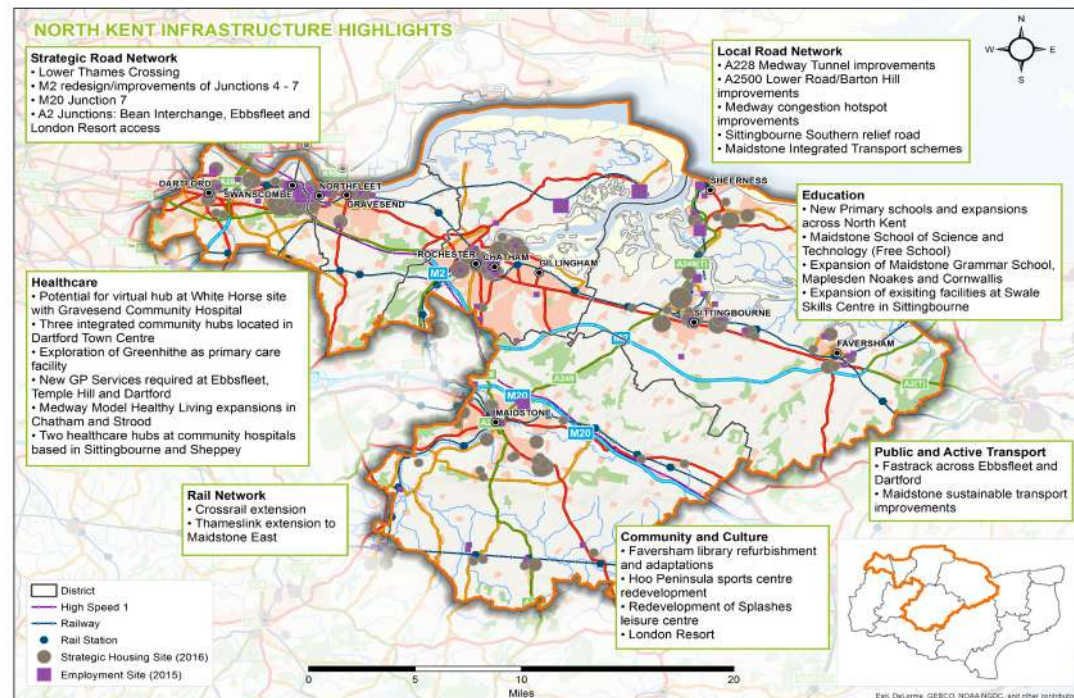


Figure 7.2: North Kent – key projects for each infrastructure sector

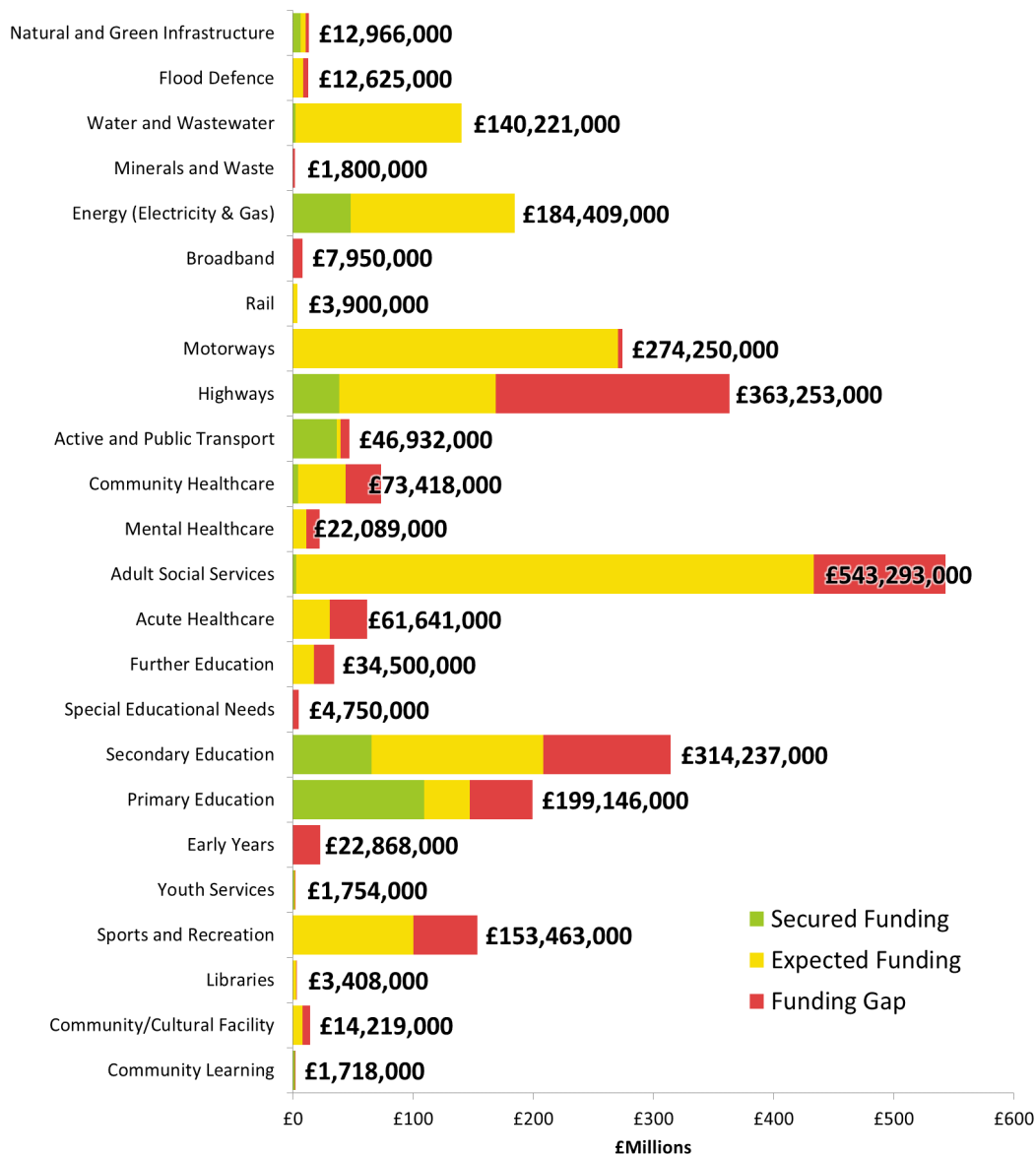


Figure 7.3: North Kent Infrastructure Funding Requirements

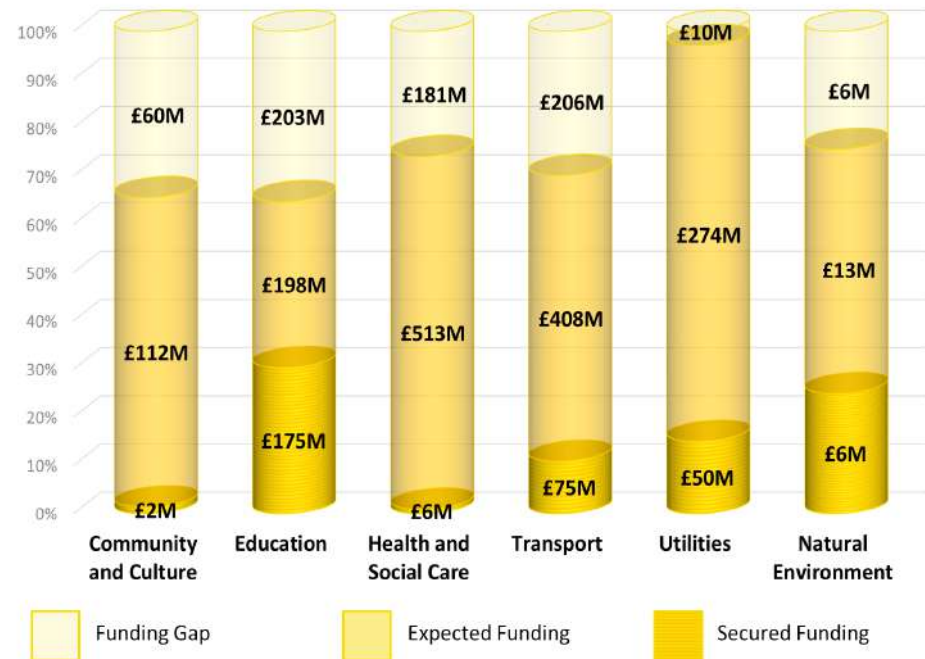


Figure 7.4: North Kent Service Sector Breakdown (Funding vs Gap)