



Dover District  
**Economic  
Growth  
Strategy**

November 2021





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Live | Work | Visit | Invest

# Foreword from The Leader of Dover District Council



We want a national and international shift of focus. To take investment, growth, tourism and development in Dover District to a whole new level, to harness the huge advantage and potential this district has to grow our district's economy, and to drive physical, economic, social and cultural regeneration. We have an incredible opportunity to collaborate and grow, and in doing so to rebuild and rebalance our district sustainably. Creating more jobs, more training, more spend, and in turn, creating new opportunities for further investment and growth.

We are bringing a whole new approach to Investment, Growth, Tourism and Regeneration, removing barriers to growth, investing more and backing ourselves and partners all the way. But the key to making possibility into reality lies with each of us, and the local communities, businesses and organisations at our heart. We want to empower the district, be open for business, and allow it to develop and take responsibility for its own future. Let's collaborate and see what can be achieved by the Council, partners and stakeholders working together with shared aspirations, vision and goals.

Momentum is here and I am confident that we can, together, think differently, achieve more and grow.

This is our time, together let's make Dover District a great place to live, work, visit, learn and invest.

**Cllr Trevor Bartlett**

Leader of Dover District Council

and Portfolio Holder for Investment, Growth & Tourism

**The time is now!**

# A leading destination to invest, live, work, visit and study

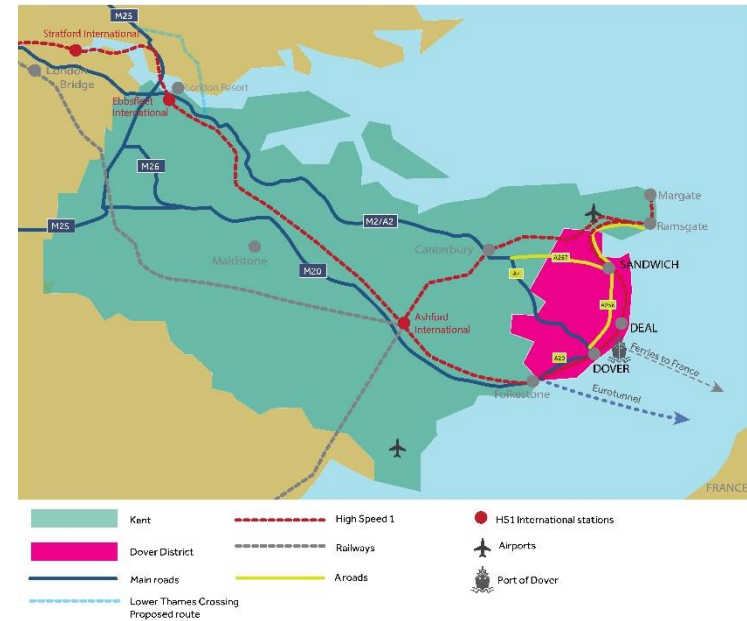
This Economic Growth Strategy sets out Dover District Council's vision and long-term plan to collaborate and unleash the distinctive strengths of Dover District to grow our local economy and create the conditions for our residents, businesses and local communities to prosper in a fast-changing world. Against the backdrop of the UK's departure from the European Union and the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic, this strategy has been prepared at a time of major change, but also new opportunities and increased momentum. We want to position the District for growth that secures economic prosperity and increased productivity for our residents and businesses.

Dover District in 2040 will be a place of aspiration, providing outstanding opportunities for sustainable living and a positive work-life balance. Through careful stewardship of our world-class landscapes and wealth of historic sites, we will be a destination of choice for all ages to make their home, for businesses to invest in and for visitors to explore and experience. Shared goals and a cooperative community spirit will be strong amongst our residents and businesses, with an increased sense of health, wellbeing and supporting local.

The local economy will be prosperous and diverse, harnessing the world-class potential of major economic assets such as the Port of Dover and Discovery Park, and building upon key sectors of logistics, training, life sciences, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing and engineering, as well as local entrepreneurial talent. The District will have attracted innovative new businesses of all scales, with unrivalled transport connections, 21<sup>st</sup> Century infrastructure and next-generation technologies.

We have defined a new vision statement that sits at the heart of this Growth Strategy, which is underpinned by five key themes that will provide a framework for future activities and investments. This document explores each of these themes in more detail, and identifies how the Council working with partners will bring forward targeted actions in support of these over the coming years. The growth and future success of our economy is dependent on everyone working together to achieve this common vision. The Growth Strategy will evolve and be updated on a periodic basis.

## Dover District's strategic connections, geographical advantage and globally-renowned name



## Vision for Economic Growth:

By 2040, Dover District will have a diverse, resilient and highly productive economy that maximises our location's strategic geographical advantage, connections, continental climate and globally-renowned name. We will be the first choice location for innovators and a variety of sectors at the forefront of innovation, enterprise and new technologies. Our residents will benefit from access to good quality jobs with long term prospects, increased skills and learning provision and the best facilities available for their work.

### Five key themes for realising the vision:



#### Creating economic value

We will attract and drive innovation and investment to become a leading destination for high value sectors capitalising on our location's geographical advantage.



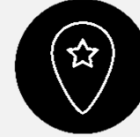
#### Delivering infrastructure for growth

We will promote and enable sites and infrastructure to support growth and the development of our local talent to meet current and future business needs.



#### Revitalising our town centres

We will support the growth and regeneration of our town centres to vibrant, mixed-use destinations with thriving daytime and evening economies, high-quality accommodation and dynamic social and cultural opportunities.



#### Harnessing tourism and the visitor economy

We will promote and encourage growth, investment and development in high-quality, popular, year-round attractions, accommodation, experiences and events to inspire increased visitor numbers, dwell time, spend and overnight stays.



#### A thriving rural economy

We will support diversification, sustainable development and growth of our rural economy by embracing innovation and opportunity.



# Creating economic value

We will attract and drive innovation and investment to become a leading destination for high value sectors capitalising on our location's geographical advantage.

The District has an opportunity to redefine its economic identity and build its strategy upon a growing business base and promoting the growth of new sectors and types of employment. Diversity is important because it can help make the local economy more resilient to external shocks and economic cycles, but also provide a greater range of jobs that can be accessed by local residents. Economic growth will support skills and training opportunities in new sectors and technologies that will be critical to the District's future prosperity.

Priority will be given to securing the delivery of Dover District's current and expanded portfolio of employment sites and the District also needs new high-quality, deliverable sites that can meet business growth needs and respond quickly to investment opportunities. It is also necessary to consider how the District can respond to the climate change agenda and the changing demands for workspace, for example the potential for a greater employment role within town centres and new patterns of home, remote and co-working (accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic).

The emerging Port of Dover 'Short Straits to Smart Straits' initiative and Manston Airport proposals have the potential to transform the economic potential of the District, subject to formal designation by Government. This could see Dover forming part of a wider East Kent initiative to grow global trade opportunities and strengthen the strategic gateway to and from Europe and beyond, linking a range of high value activities to new logistics corridors by sea, rail, air and road.

## Our objectives for this theme are:

1. To develop a broad-based economic identity for the District, capitalising on our economic and geographical advantages, globally renowned name and high-speed connections to London and international markets.
2. Position the District as 'Open for Business' - a highly desirable location to do business and for investment opportunities, including life sciences, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing and logistics.
3. A key business destination in Kent with first-class facilities and infrastructure for start-ups, scale-ups and flexible working.

# Delivering on our potential

## Target activities:

1. Work with local, East Kent and Kent partners, including the Port of Dover, to **secure and enhance the District's role as a key global gateway for the UK**, and be linked to initiatives to maximise the economic value of this locally.
2. Work to assist and enable the **realisation of an Accelerated Medicines Design and Development (AMDD)** project at Discovery Park, Sandwich, that will focus on the potential of digital technology to speed up the 'development' phases of work on new medicines.
3. Develop an **'accelerator' initiative for key high value sector growth opportunities** locally. This should seek to harness key growth and innovation opportunities and use these to accelerate existing business clusters, development proposals and funding bids, particularly where these align with Government economic recovery funding initiatives following COVID-19.
4. Create and deliver a new **bold and creative District place portal, brand and identity** positioning the area as a vibrant, outward-looking and inspiring destination which is attractive to investors, residents and business.
5. Create and deliver a **new industry-focused 'Invest in Dover District' website, and linked to the above develop investment and marketing prospectus, campaigns and materials** to promote the District to a regional, national and international developer and investment audience.

Dover Waterfront



The Port of Dover's redevelopment of Dover's waterfront will continue to act as a catalyst for the regeneration of Dover. The waterfront and beach will become a desirable destination to live, visit, work and play, and a distinct quarter of Dover delivering strategically positioned mixed uses and quality public spaces for all to enjoy which are well connected to the town centre.



*High Speed 1 service  
linking Dover District to  
London St. Pancras*

## Delivering infrastructure for growth

We will promote and enable sites and infrastructure to support growth and the development of our local talent to meet current and future business needs.

Delivering economic growth means ensuring that businesses have access to the infrastructure and resources they need to operate and prosper. This requires an optimal mix of physical infrastructure (such as sites and premises), transportation infrastructure (such as multiple efficient modes of travel for commuting, visiting and logistics) digital infrastructure (including fast and efficient broadband), support services (networks, chambers and societies) and human capital (access to talent). These are critical ingredients that will be enhanced so that Dover District's economic potential can be realised.

Priority will be given to the delivery of Dover District's current portfolio of employment sites, alongside high-quality new sites to meet business growth needs and that can readily respond to investment opportunities. It is also necessary to consider how the District can level-up and respond to the climate change agenda and changing workspace needs, for example the potential for a greater employment role within town centres and new patterns of home, remote and and co-working (accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic).

Access to high quality digital infrastructure is increasingly vital to supporting economic growth. Enhancing digital connectivity is a priority across both the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and East Kent. We need to ensure that local businesses have access to the digital infrastructure they need to innovate, differentiate and add value. Moreover, digital infrastructure has proven to help reduce social isolation.

### **Our objectives for this theme are:**

1. Deliver the Local Plan and a portfolio of employment space and land of small, medium and large scale – above current need – to meet modern business needs, including development sites for growth, investment opportunities and new sectors.
2. Increase investment in skills and training to promote the District's human capital, helping to retain young people and increase opportunities for all of our communities.
3. Ensure all of the District's businesses and residents can benefit from fast and reliable connectivity through new investment in transport and digital infrastructure.



# Delivering on our potential

## Target activities:

1. Work to enable the **redevelopment of the Citadel on the Western Heights**. Ideas include the potential creation of a TechFort to deliver a cutting edge and world-renowned innovation campus.
2. Work with Southeastern and Network Rail to secure an **achievable "under-the-hour" service on High Speed 1 between Dover and London** – as has been proved possible – with potential for further enhancements through additional rolling stock and improved car parking provision at Dover Priory.
3. Continue to support and lobby for the **dualling of the A2** from Lydden to Dover Eastern Docks and improvements of **Brenley Corner** to support improved connectivity and growth without gridlock.
4. Work with partners to bring forward and develop **employment development land of small, medium and large scale across the District**, including the continued expansion of White Cliffs Business Park in Whitfield and delivery of Dover's Fastrack (rapid bus transit system connecting Whitfield with Dover Town Centre and Dover Priory Railway Station).
5. Through the Local Plan, recognising the inter-relationship of sites and climate change targets, **bring forward new high-quality employment, housing and tourism sites** across Dover District to secure investment, growth and supporting infrastructure.
6. Work with local partners, including Dover Technical College and the East Kent College Group, to **develop skills and training programmes** linked to new sectors and investments in Dover District.
7. Deliver **increased electric vehicle charging provision** across Dover District to support resident, visitor and business needs, as well as the take up of electric vehicles and reduce carbon emissions.

The Citadel and Western Heights



© David G. M. M.

Bring forward the redevelopment of the Citadel on the Western Heights. One of the evolving ideas for the site is the creation of a TechFort. This could potentially transform the UK's most impressive fortress complex into a cutting-edge and world-renowned technology hub. The potential technology campus could also support an ecosystem of start-ups and early-stage technology firms and large corporates, providing a place for work, collaboration, networking, learning and growing new businesses.



*Maison Dieu,  
Dover Town Centre*

## Revitalising our town centres

We will support the growth and regeneration of our town centres to vibrant, mixed-use destinations with thriving daytime and evening economies, high-quality accommodation and dynamic social and cultural opportunities.

The District's town centres are purposeful and playful destinations for social-interaction, retail, leisure, hospitality and employment. Now they must adapt to changing trends in the retail and food & drink sectors and a competitive market in which to attract new investment. The challenge of footfall generation, dwell time and spending levels by both residents and visitors must also be understood.

Dover Town Centre is an important destination for retail, leisure, tourism and employment, and has secured recent new investment such as St James Retail & Leisure Park and Market Square. Moving forward it is recognised that the Town Centre apart from being a commercial destination will also become a neighbourhood in its own right, as a place where residents can live, work and access services with good public transport and infrastructure for cycling and walking. As the largest centre in the District, Dover Town Centre in particular needs to adapt to the current circumstances, diversifying its offer to include first-class events, markets and a greater range of leisure, hospitality, social, heritage, cultural and evening economy uses, as well as a clear focus upon placemaking for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors.

Simultaneously, there is a need to encourage new forms of commercial activity together with enhancing community uses to facilitate the District's growing population. There is also a strong link to the growth potential of the visitor economy in helping our town centres to be places that people want to visit, invest their time and spend money. This has relevance for the character towns of Deal, Dover, Sandwich and wider environs.

### **Our objectives for this theme are:**

1. Secure investment in the District's town centres to offer a diverse retail, leisure, culture and heritage offer, excellent public realm, high quality urban living and a thriving evening economy.
2. Develop a new role for town centres as hubs for start-up and scale-up enterprises through the provision of new, flexible workspace concepts and available, through application, town and small business grants.
3. Promote the role of our town centres as part of White Cliffs Country, as hubs for the visitor economy and with an expanded cultural and social offer for residents and visitors alike.

# Delivering on our potential

## Target activities:

1. Collaborate and work with local partners to achieve **transformational change in Dover Town Centre** through the delivery of a Place Plan and a range of new investments including:
  - a. Secure **restoration of the Grade I Listed Maison Dieu** project in Dover Town Centre by 2023 to deliver new commercial uses and help to create a new heritage quarter.
  - b. Bring forward plans for **the rejuvenation of Dover Market Square** to provide a new event space and water feature, highways improvements and new public realm to create a more attractive street scene and better pedestrian connections.
  - c. Deliver proposals through the Future High Street Fund to **deliver transformational integration in Dover Town Centre** and an enhanced creative and cultural offer. These include a new creative centre and improved connectivity to the waterfront and public realm.
  - d. Secure **new public and private sector funding, through the Levelling-Up Fund or private sector investment**, for further transformational measures to make better use of our heritage assets and develop a café culture.
  - e. Work with the Port of Dover to deliver new opportunities that benefit and **connect Dover Waterfront, the Wellington Dock and the Town Centre** for residents, visitors and business.
  - f. Work with The Roman Painted House and its Trustees to **deliver new visitor opportunities and developments at the Painted House and across the Roman Lawn**.
2. Collaborate and work with local partners to support the delivery of **transformational change in Sandwich Town Centre**, aligned with Sandwich Town Council's 'Vision for Sandwich', including the creation of a high-quality environment and multi-use event space at the Guildhall in Sandwich, fostering the café culture and other activities that bring footfall to the locality.
3. Collaborate and work with local partners to support the delivery of **transformational change in Deal Town Centre**, aligned with Deal Town Council's emerging 'Vision for Deal', including the encouragement of businesses to locate in the town and the continued development of resident and visitor assets such as the Pier and Timeball Tower.
4. Support investment in **quality hotel accommodation and the facilitation of new hospitality, restaurant and business conference & meeting space**, particularly 4\* or 5\* rated and accommodation over 80 bedrooms, to enhance and support the District's town centre, business and visitor offer.

### Dover Town Centre



© image courtesy of Swesco UK Limited

Dover Town Centre is being transformed through new investments to create a prosperous modern-day – live, work, visit, enjoy – seaside destination that makes the most of its built heritage, port and world-class Waterfront. This will include new facilities, better connectivity for pedestrians, and creative public realm improvements.



The White Cliffs of Dover

# Harnessing tourism and the visitor economy

We will promote and encourage growth, investment and development in high-quality, popular, year-round attractions, accommodation, experiences and events to inspire increased visitor numbers, dwell time, spend and overnight stays.

The visitor economy plays a major role in Dover District, supporting 6,000 jobs or 17% of all employment in 2019. The District attracts 4.7 million day visitors annually, and offers historic towns and villages in magnificent countryside to rolling seascapes and iconic coastal landscapes. In 2021, Dover District welcomed the return of 'The Open' to Royal St George's Golf Club at Sandwich. Lydden Hill Race Circuit is the international 'Home of Rallycross' and venue for British and European-level racing events, and Dover Athletic Football Club hosts teams and supporters from across England and Wales. In 2022, Dover District (as a central part of 'Kent's Heritage Coast') will be recognised by the Lonely Planet Guide's 'Best in Travel', as one of the top 10 regions in the world to visit. The District will protect our current offer and capitalise on the growth potential of the visitor economy to support local jobs, skills and training opportunities. This includes promoting investment in new facilities and infrastructure, culture and heritage-led regeneration, and protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment. In this way, the District can respond to visitor demands for engaging experiences, outdoor pursuits, active mini-breaks and staycations.

The Council has already launched 'Destination White Cliffs Country – A Growth Strategy for Tourism and the Visitor Economy 2020 to 2030' which provides a framework for the development of tourism under the 'White Cliffs Country' brand over the next 10 years. It is fully aligned to the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan, the emerging Dover District Local Plan, and reflects the priorities and aims of the Government's Tourism Sector Deal.

- Our objectives for this theme are:**
1. Use the new 'White Cliffs Country' brand, website and destination marketing campaigns to raise the profile of Dover District for domestic and international visitors.
  2. Attract new providers and secure investment to enhance and diversify our visitor economy assets, ensuring the District is well-positioned for key markets.
  3. Collaborate with the District's tourism industry and businesses to develop linked offers that improve visitor experiences and encourage longer stays and higher spend.

# Delivering on our potential

## Target activities:

1. Support **investment destination-making tourism accommodation and hospitality, such as new hotels (particularly 4\* or 5\* rated and accommodation over 80 bedrooms), restaurants and attractions**, that enhance and support the District's visitor economy offer, including through the Dover District Local Plan.
2. Maximise the **global profiling value and economic impact of major events hosted within the district, such as The Open Championship**, and the associated opportunities that being on The Open rota brings to develop local business, community, training and volunteer-based opportunities.
3. Work with the Port of Dover to **develop a destination management and place marketing offer for the cruise and ferry sector, as well as Dover seafront**, to maximise opportunities for overnight stays and linked-visits to cruise stays and ferry crossings.
4. Roll-out the **'Destination White Cliffs Country' strategy, brand, sub-brands, website and associated campaigns** to support the growth and recovery of the visitor economy within domestic and international markets following COVID-19, to support climate change targets, and to position the District for long-term sustainability and success.
5. Build a **talent pipeline locally to support a high-quality visitor offer** by supporting routes to training and skills that secures the introduction and retention of a stable skilled workforce over the long-term.

The 149<sup>th</sup> Open



© Royal St. George's Golf Club

This was the 18th occasion that The Open, one of the world's leading sporting events, had been held in Dover District. The 149th Open and its legacy is an incredible opportunity for residents, visitors, business and community groups. The 149th Open, pre-pandemic, was forecast to have an economic impact in the region of £100 million.



Fallow Fields Camping

# A thriving rural economy

We will support diversification, sustainable development and growth of our rural economy by embracing innovation and opportunity.

Dover District accommodates a successful rural economy that provides a vital source of employment for many of the District's residents and is home to a network of villages that are important commercial, cultural and community centres in their own right.

These areas are already home to a vibrant mix of industries including manufacturing, agriculture and tourism and an unrivalled portfolio of heritage and visitor assets. Whilst many rural businesses have successfully diversified their economic offer over recent years, others offer significant potential for further growth and development, in turn helping to diversify the District's economic base and boost local productivity. In the future, our rural communities will also become more important places to work, for example as people increasingly seek to work from home some or all of the time, and need access to local facilities, services and amenities. We want to provide for the needs of future working lifestyles in a high-quality environment.

We also know that some rural parts of the District face particular barriers to growth and prosperity, so our strategy also focuses on enhancing infrastructure provision and connectivity to unlock these opportunities and enable a thriving rural economy for all.

## Our objectives for this theme are:

1. Support opportunities across Dover District's rural area and villages to promote diversification, employment, sustainable development, biodiversity, economic growth and the achievement of climate change targets.
2. Promote the role of key sectors and employment sites within the rural economy, and the development of new infrastructure, workspace and co-working hubs to complement housing growth across the network of settlements.
3. Secure investment to ensure the rural area has access to good quality, resilient infrastructure that facilitates sustainable travel choices and promotes the green economy.

# Delivering on our potential

## Target activities:

1. Work with local partners to enable and explore all opportunities for the **redevelopment of the vacant Snowdown Colliery site**. Ideas include the potential delivery of Snowdown Park to create an environmentally-friendly hub for start-up businesses and artisan producers, as well as an international centre for research and development into the health and welfare of the honey bee.
2. Explore the feasibility of **piloting rural hubs** that provide high quality modern workspace for small and growing businesses, with access to business coaching and mentoring services, and potentially linked community facilities, and identify those locations that could deliver these opportunities especially village centres or other suitable rural locations that can easily be accessed by walking, cycling, rail or bus.
3. Work with partners to **accelerate the roll out of high-quality digital connectivity** across the District's rural communities to facilitate access to home-working, e-commerce and remote learning.
4. Through the Dover District Local Plan, **facilitate the development of appropriate housing, employment and tourism sites**, to support thriving local communities and meet housing and economic needs.
5. Collaborate with the local tourism industry and related businesses to **develop outdoor activities and experiences** linked to the themes of landscape & nature, history & heritage, local produce and walking & cycling. These will supplement the current visitor offer and help to distribute the economic benefits of tourism across the entire District.

Snowdown Colliery



© SnowdownPark (snowdownpark.co.uk)

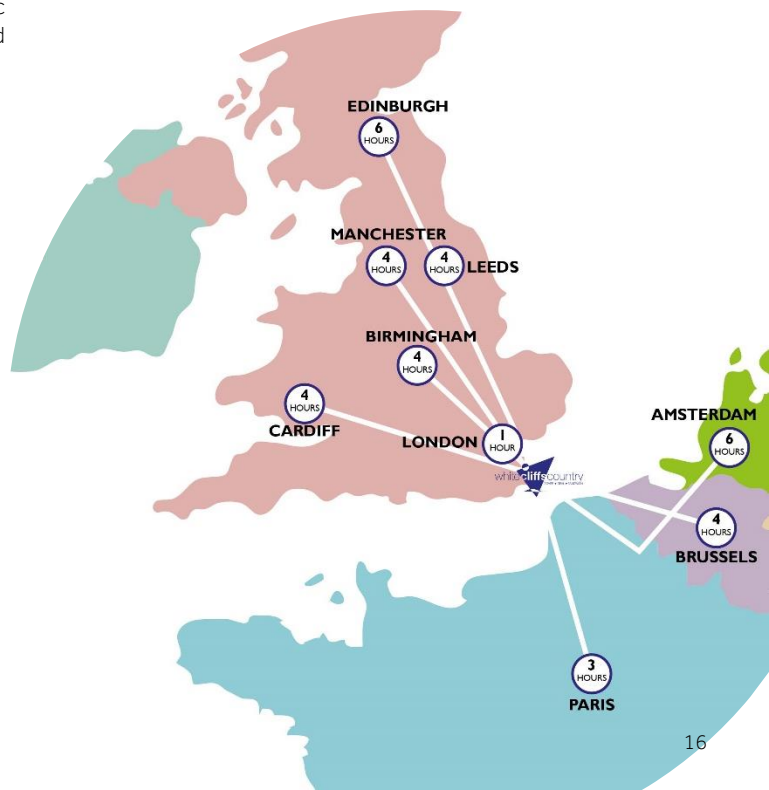
Bring forward the reuse of the former Snowdown Colliery site, a partially brownfield site one mile south of Aylesham. Any development needs to include a long-term, sustainable vision for investment in the reuse of the former colliery buildings, supporting local business growth and job creation. There is potential for mixed-uses which could also include leisure, limited retail and tourism.

# Dover District: '360 degrees of opportunity'

Dover District (White Cliffs Country) is a unique destination where coast meets countryside, ancient meets modern, relaxation meets adventure, and the United Kingdom meets Europe. Nationally and internationally significant, the enterprising and lifestyle-focused district covers 123 square miles and represents a great place to invest, live, work, visit and learn. It has a proud past and an exciting future. Dover District Council is ambitious for the district, as well as the character towns of Dover, Deal and Sandwich, and want to capitalise on the growth potential of targeted investment, development and tourism, as well as the area's strategic geographical advantage and globally renowned name. We recognise that investment and associated developments can help drive local growth, jobs, skills and prosperity.

## Building relationships and welcoming investment in:

- Enhanced tourism and visitor economy activity.
- Quality hotels and visitor accommodation, including executive glamping, high end boutique hotels, spa and conference facilities.
- First-class attractions, hospitality and unique experiences.
- Addressing climate change and green issues.
- High-quality mixed use commercial, residential and co-working developments.
- Exceeding expectations across the district's golf and sporting venues.
- State of the art provision that brings history and heritage to life through modern technology.
- New and existing retail, food and drink outlets.
- Rapid link infrastructure for residents, visitors, business and logistics.
- Walking and cycling improvements.
- Productive leisure and wellbeing facilities.
- Idyllic parks and open spaces.
- Creating capacity to build skills, training, education and sector-based employment and apprenticeships.
- Exciting town centre placemaking, renewal and development.
- Aspirational small, medium and large house building schemes.
- National-level festivals, activities and events.
- Leading innovation hubs.
- Enterprising local produce, craft and goods.
- Leading green and sustainable industry excellence.
- Innovative accessibility and connectivity-focused solutions, within and across our town centres.





## Contact Information

### Growth, Investment & Tourism

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Invest in Dover District  
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Visit White Cliffs Country  
[whitecliffscountry.org.uk](http://whitecliffscountry.org.uk)



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