



# Dover District **Economic Growth Strategy**

Consultation Draft

January 2021



# Dover District: the leading destination to invest, live, work, visit and study

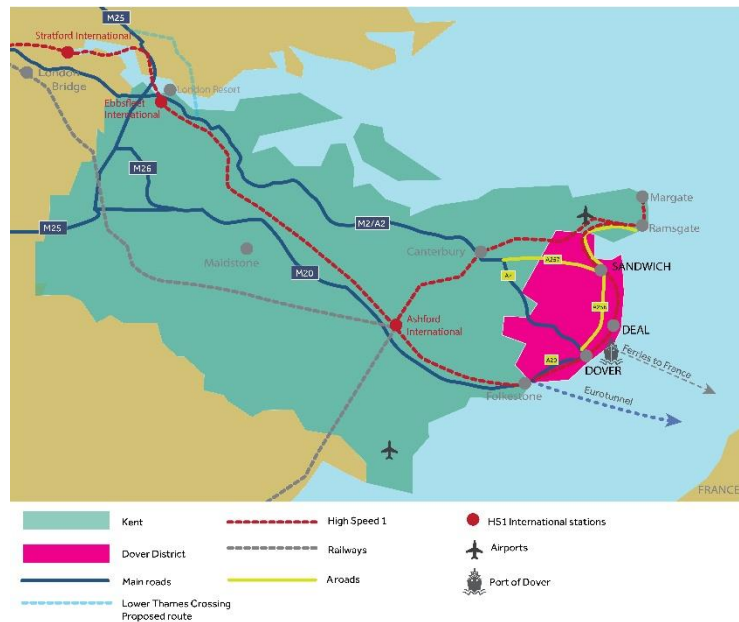
This Economic Growth Strategy sets out Dover District Council's vision and long-term plan to unleash the distinctive strengths of Dover District to grow our local economy and create the conditions for our local communities to prosper in a fast-changing world. Against the backdrop of the UK's departure from the European Union and the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, this strategy has been prepared at a time of major change, but also new opportunities. 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. 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. Community spirit will be strong amongst our residents, with an increased sense of health and wellbeing.

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



## Vision for Economic Growth:

Dover District in 2040 will have a diverse, resilient and highly productive economy that maximises our global gateway location. We will be the first choice location for 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, and the best facilities available for their work.

### Five key themes for realising the vision:



#### Creating economic value

We will drive innovation and investment to become a leading destination for high value sectors capitalising on our gateway location.



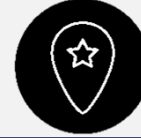
#### Delivering infrastructure for business

We will enable sites, infrastructure and expand our local talent to meet the business needs of the future.



#### Revitalising our town centres

We will support the evolution of town centres to vibrant, mixed-use destinations with a thriving daytime and evening economy.



#### Harnessing White Cliffs Country

We will promote growth, investment and development in our world-class attractions and unique visitor experiences.



#### A thriving rural economy

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



# Creating economic value

We will drive innovation and investment to become a leading destination for high value sectors capitalising on our gateway location

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 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 changing demands for workspace, for example the potential for a greater employment role within town centres and new patterns of home and remote-working (accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic).

The emerging proposals for a Freeport 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 advantages and high-speed connections to London and global gateways.
2. Position the District as 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 for start-ups, scale-ups and flexible working.

# Delivering on our potential

## Target activities:

1. Working with local partners, we will seek to **secure Freeport status for Dover District** linked to the Port of Dover and as part of a wider East Kent proposition to Government. This will 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 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. Drawing on the existing 'Invest in Dover' brand and website, and linked to the above, develop **an investment and marketing prospectus** to promote the District to a national and international investment audience.

### Global Trade and Innovation Zone



Ambitious and innovative plans are being developed to establish the UK's first Global Trade and Innovation Zone. This will connect the Port of Dover with key manufacturing hubs and investment sites in Dover District and across East Kent. This will create supply chain corridors designed to drive innovation, maximise job creation and secure new investment for the District.



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

# Delivering infrastructure for business

We will enable sites, infrastructure and expand our local talent to meet the business needs of the future

Delivering economic growth means ensuring that businesses have access to the infrastructure 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) 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 respond to changing workspace needs, for example the potential for a greater employment role within town centres and new patterns of home and remote-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 a portfolio of employment space 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 **development of TechFort at Western Heights** into a cutting edge and world-renowned innovation campus.
2. Work with Southeastern and Network Rail to secure an **"under-the-hour" service on High Speed 1 between Dover and London**, 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**.
4. Work with partners to bring forward **employment development at White Cliffs Business Park**, including Dover Fastrack (rapid bus transit system connecting Whitfield with Dover Town Centre and Dover Priory railway station).
5. Through the Dover District Local Plan, **bring forward new high-quality employment, housing and tourism sites** to secure investment and supporting infrastructure.
6. Work with local partners, including East Kent College Group, to **develop skills and training programmes** linked to new sectors and investments in Dover District.
7. Deliver 49 **new electric vehicle charging points** at 18 locations in Dover, Deal and Sandwich to support take up of electric vehicles and reduce carbon emissions.

TechFort, Western Heights



© David de Min

TechFort will transform the UK's most impressive fortress complex into a cutting-edge and world-renowned technology hub in the heart of Dover. The technology campus will 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 evolution of town centres to vibrant, mixed-use destinations with a thriving daytime and evening economy

The District's town centres are important destinations for social-interaction, retail, leisure, hospitality and employment. Now they must adapt to changing trends in the retail sector and a competitive market in which to attract new investment. The COVID-19 pandemic has created additional challenges as footfall and spending levels have reduced by both residents and visitors.

Dover Town Centre is an important destination for retail, leisure and employment, and has secured recent new investment such as St James Retail and Leisure Park. 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 and a greater range of leisure, hospitality, social, 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 (e.g. workspace hubs, creative industries) 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 their money. This has relevance for Deal, Dover and Sandwich.

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

1. Secure investment in the District's town centres to offer a diverse retail and leisure 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.
3. Promote the role of our town centres as part of White Cliffs Country as hubs for the visitor economy, with an expanded cultural offer for residents and visitors alike.

# Delivering on our potential

## Target activities:

1. Work with local partners to achieve transformation change in Dover Town Centre through the delivery of a comprehensive 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 gallery space, a hub for start-up enterprises, and improved connectivity to the Waterfront and public realm.
  - d. Secure **funding through the Levelling Up Fund or private sector investment for further transformational measures** such as a cable car, to make better use of our heritage assets and develop a café culture.
  - e. Work with the Port of Dover to **deliver opportunities at Dover Waterfront and Wellington Dock**.
2. Working in partnership to create **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. Support investment in **quality hotel accommodation and the facilitation of new hospitality, restaurant and business conference & meeting space**, particularly 4\* or 5\* rated, to enhance and support the District's town centre, business and visitor offer.

Dover Town Centre



Dover Town Centre is being transformed through new investments to create a prosperous modern-day 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 White Cliffs Country

We will promote growth, investment and development in our world-class attractions and unique visitor experiences

The visitor economy plays a major role in Dover District's economy. In 2019, it supported 6,000 jobs in the District or 17% of all employment. The District attracts 4.7 million day visitors annually, and offers everything from historic towns and villages in magnificent countryside to rolling seascapes and iconic coastal landscapes. Millions of additional visitors travel through the District on cross-channel ferries and cruise ships each year. In 2021, Dover District will welcome the return of 'The Open' – one of the world's leading sporting events – 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.

The District will 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, 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 Industrial Strategy and the 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 in tourism accommodation and hospitality, such as new hotels (particularly 4\* or 5\* rated), 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 of The 149<sup>th</sup> Open at Royal St George's Golf Club, Sandwich**, 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 offer for the cruise and ferry sector** to maximise opportunities for linked-visits to cruise stays and ferry crossings.
4. Roll-out the **'White Cliffs Country' strategy, brand, sub-brands, website and associated campaigns** to support the recovery of the visitor economy within domestic and international markets following COVID-19, and to position the District for long-term growth.
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 will be the 18<sup>th</sup> occasion that The Open, one of the world's leading sporting events, has been held in Dover District. The 149<sup>th</sup> Open is forecast to have a local economic impact in the region of £100 million and represents an incredible opportunity for residents, visitors, business and community groups.



*Fallow Fields Camping*

# A thriving rural economy

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

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 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, sustainable development and economic growth.
2. Promote the role of key sectors and employment sites within the rural economy, and the development of new workspace 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 explore the opportunities for the **delivery of Snowdown Park** to create an environmentally-friendly hub for start-up businesses and artisan producers, and 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.
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 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 Park



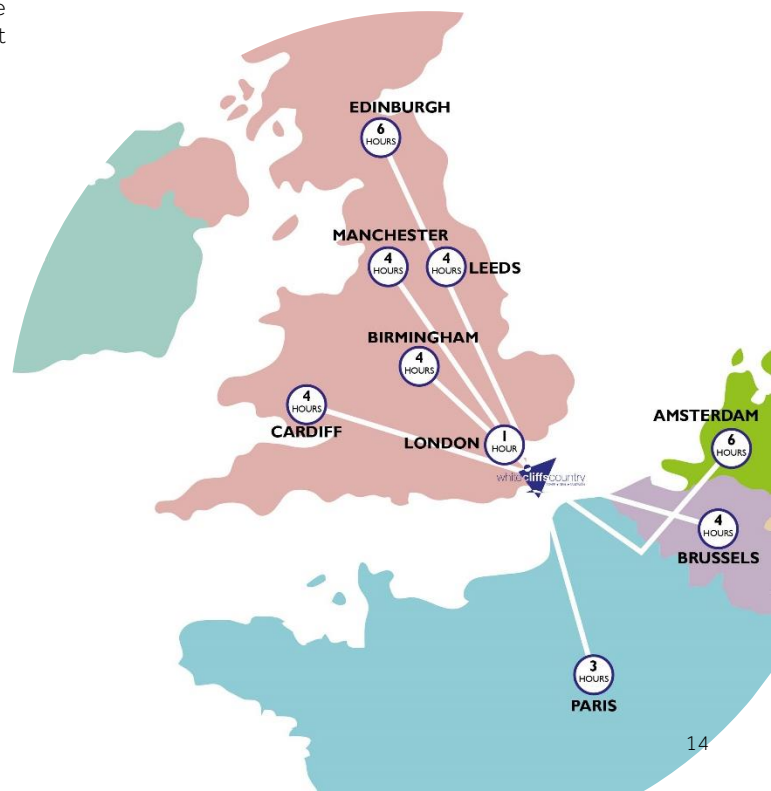
A long-term vision for investment in Snowdown, supporting business growth and the creation of 470 local jobs. The emerging proposals comprise establishing an internationally-unique destination, combining leisure, retail, hospitality and accommodation, subject to planning permission.

# Destination 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. We recognise that investment and associated developments can help drive local growth, jobs 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.
- 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

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