

Swale a great place

to visit | invest | work | earn | learn

A draft economic regeneration
framework for Swale
2018 – 2021



Foreword



Cllr. Mike Cosgrove
Cabinet Member for
Regeneration

Over the last five years Swale has seen a significant increase in commercial activity with considerable inward investment. Making Swale a great place to work, earn and learn new skills is at the centre of our ambition. Over the next three years we will see considerable change as we push through our bold ideas for regenerating Sittingbourne Town Centre, help further expand Eurolink and Kent Science Park, with much emphasis on new infrastructure and much improved connectivity to the M2 and beyond.

Across all of our borough, we will need to recalibrate our efforts to compete in a global society in which Swale's diverse and thriving business sector can continue to successfully play its part in innovation, life sciences, export, tourism and engineering.

The regeneration of the Borough is a far-reaching agenda and involves a broad range of activity with which the Council is involved. Economic regeneration has a vital role to play as part of this wider picture and this document provides a framework to which both the Council and others can refer in making their contribution. The Council's activity will seek to

- promote the borough
- lever in external funding and investment
- Support business
- improve local skills and choice
- offer help where needed
- work constructively with partners

With a further tightening of slim resources this is not without challenge as competition intensifies, but our aim is “to make a difference where it matters most”. This requires agility and grip. Whilst there is always more to achieve, across Swale you can see the improvement, and this is what we aim to continue.



Our Economy

We understand our local economy well – both its strengths and its weak points. Overall we have seen growth, reflecting both our existing strengths in distribution and manufacturing as well as emerging sectors such as technical and scientific activities. The data below reflects the scale of the investment and change that has been secured. However, this in itself brings with it new challenges. We recognise the need to:

- ensure that infrastructure keeps pace with, and continues to enable our growth ambitions
- address the lack of technical and vocational learning opportunities, in particular for young people, helping create a stronger, more adaptable workforce.
- expand the range of leisure and retail opportunities for the growing number of residents, workers and visitors.
- Stay in touch with our businesses to understand their needs and help them compete in an increasingly technology driven and global environment.



4,610

Businesses



An economy providing

49,000 jobs,

a growth of 6,000 in the past 5 years



89% of all businesses have less than **10** employees

Only **15** business employ more than **250**



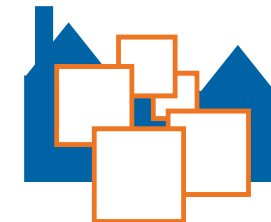
56%

Increase in new business starts in the five years to 2016 – with the best survival rates in Kent



14,000

New homes planned up to 2031

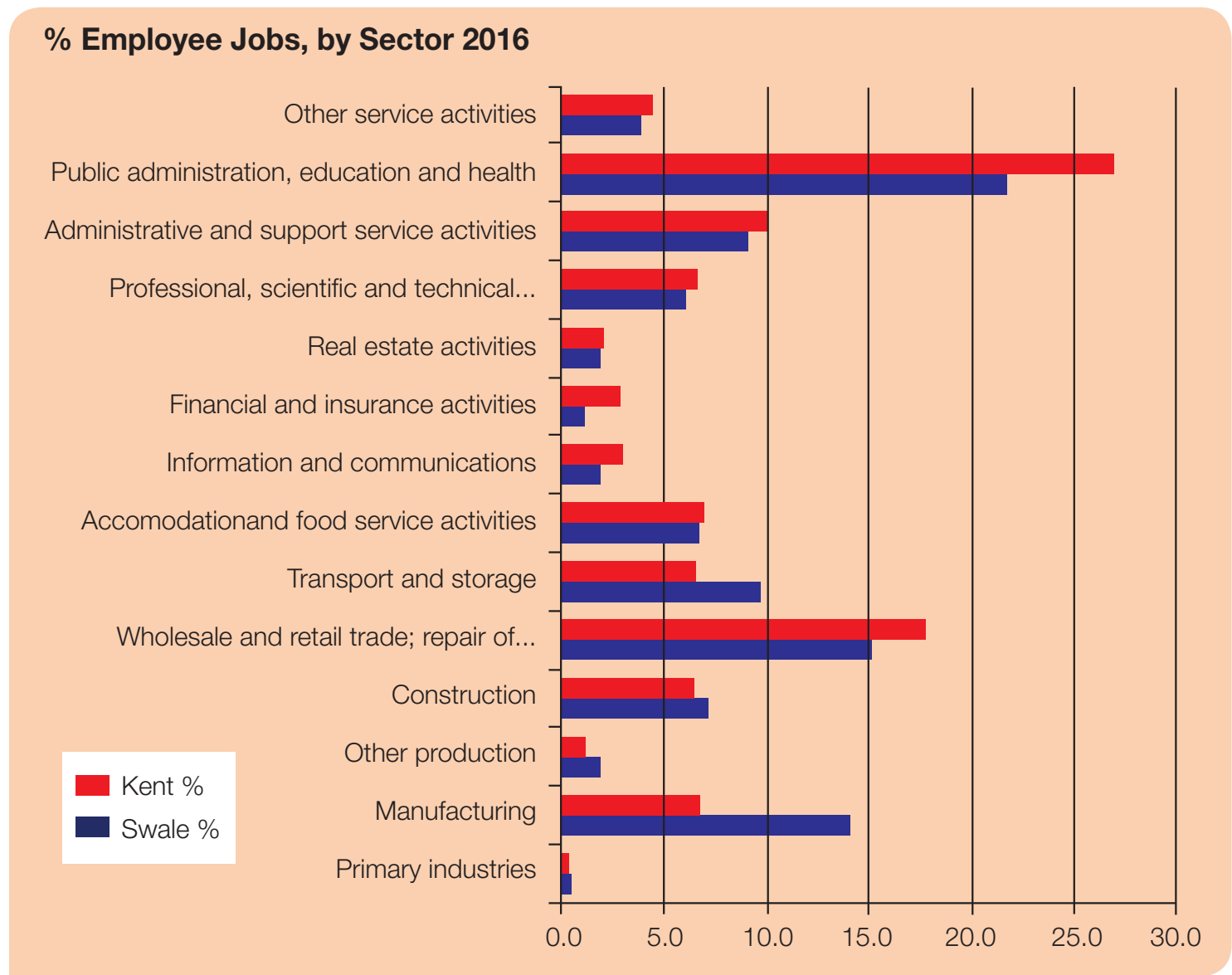


3 million square feet of commercial development, the highest level in Kent over the past decade

Sectors

Swale has particular concentrations in manufacturing and transport and storage, relative not only to Kent but also the rest of the country. Providing 7,000 and 5,000 jobs respectively, they are also the second and third largest sectors in absolute terms, with retail and wholesale the largest, providing 8,000 jobs.

90% of the employment growth in the last five years has been seen in 5 sectors; manufacturing; construction; transportation and storage; professional, scientific and technical activities and business administration.



data excludes farm based agricultural jobs

Growth highlights

Queenborough & Rushenden, is a Major regeneration project providing 1100 homes and new commercial space. Phase 1 housing started and 1,000 jobs have been supported to date



ALDI are investing in new £50m distribution centre at Queenborough to join two other major national distribution centres in Borough - Morrisons in Sittingbourne and GIST, serving Marks and Spencer, in Faversham.



Largest cluster of life sciences businesses in Kent, focused around **Kent Science Park**.

AbBaltis, supplies blood plasma to disease-testing firms, has grown rapidly since forming in 2010 and in 2015 received the Queens Award for export.



The Port of Sheerness, one of the UK's largest bulk handling Ports, handling 1.4m tonnes of goods. Peel Port's Masterplan is driving significant new investment and increasing land available for port use.

There is outstanding **maritime and naval heritage** associated with the Port. This is becoming part of a wider, diverse offer contributing to the Visitor Economy.



A growing Visitor Economy

see's £193m spent by visitors and supporting 4,561 jobs. There are diverse destinations

including beaches, towns, the North Kent Downs and Coastal Marshes.

Shepherd Neame, Britains oldest brewer, with a visitor centre that has become an important part of the local visitor economy.



Swale's Industrial Hub, the biggest concentration of manufacturing in Kent, with Eurolink being Kent's largest business zone, home to 300+ companies.

Cook Kitchen are a growing national brand, cooking and selling frozen ready meals that are made like you would at home. Based on Eurolink it has seen remarkable growth since starting in 1997.

Aims and priorities

Our aim is to continue to develop the right conditions to support and stimulate growth so that Swale is recognised as one of the most enterprising locations along the Thames Estuary - a great place to visit, invest, work, earn and learn. To deliver change over the next three years, our contribution is set out under four broad priorities

1. Promote Swale
2. Secure investment
3. Support Business
4. Relevant skills

To deliver the outcomes required, support and investment from our partners is vital. Given the scale of change we are seeking, this document is a call to action at the sub-regional and national levels, with KCC, Government and its agencies and the South East LEP, all required to play their part. Nor will we lose sight of the 'local'. We will work with local bodies, including our local business partnership, and look at cross-cutting issues for Swale, whilst also recognising how different parts of the Borough present different challenges and opportunities. This includes our outstanding rural areas, which make a substantial contribution to our visitor economy and are seeing a growth in a broad range of SME's including a strengthening local food and drink sector.

Whilst these priorities and our areas of focus under each will guide the Council's efforts we will also remain responsive to issues and opportunities as they arise. Again, these will be both local, as partner organisations, residents and businesses bring forward issues and ideas and on a broader stage, including working with the priorities that come forward from the Thames Estuary Commission.





Promote Swale

Promoting Swale's assets is critical to delivering our regeneration priorities. Appreciation of the Borough's facets and creating positive perceptions will enhance our ability to attract business investment and expand the visitor economy. Over time it will also boost development values, which in turn will help drive up quality and enable the private sector to contribute more substantively to the delivery of critical infrastructure.

Areas of Focus

- Take advantage of the unique attributes of each area of Swale to promote the Borough as great place to invest, work, visit and live.
- Continue to develop and enhance the Swale Means Business web presence, using social and other media to develop new audiences
- Work with partners to develop and push shared stories about Swale as a great place in which to invest and do business.
- Build the area's reputation through the work of key bodies on the national and international stage including the Department for Trade and Investment, the Thames Estuary Commission, Visit England and the South East LEP.
- Promote local 'success stories' to reinforce the Swale Means Business branding
- Work with partners to provide networking opportunities that help raise the profile of the Borough

Secure investment

In recent years Swale has successfully levered in substantial public and private sector investment, including £250m of government funding in local roads and the highest level of commercial development in Kent. Nonetheless, there is a need to ramp up our efforts and extend our ‘investment reach’ by creating the right conditions for growth.

Areas of Focus

- Continue the review of the Local Plan, adopting a balanced approach which can deliver the required infrastructure, jobs and homes.
- Secure improvements to the strategic road network, particularly at Junctions 5 and 7 of the M2 and at key junctions along the A249
- Push for a new A2-M2 link, addressing issues on the A2 and creating the capacity for future growth
- Lobby and work with public transport providers to optimise and integrate local services and enhance access to London
- Promote and support the delivery of improved broadband and mobile services where we can, in particular to support the rural economy
- Provide a ‘team around the investor’ approach, utilising the experience and knowledge from across the organisation to grasp investment opportunities
- Create town centre environments which can help meet the needs of communities and provide confidence to new businesses to expand and change the offer.



Support Business

Whether starting or growing, small businesses are a major source of new investment and employment for Swale. There is a demand for services that will support them and provide opportunities that allow local businesses to network and influence. We aim to continue to deliver these with partners and will develop the offer so that it remains relevant.

As we embrace the global economy, the focus for our support will be placed on developing export markets; supporting ideas and innovation, developing a more skilled and technical workforce and bettering our local business environment.

Areas of Focus

- Provide a support service and networking opportunities, for existing and start-up businesses that help them take forward ideas, develop their workforce, improve productivity and grow sustainably.
- Work with partners to provide information and workshops that will help businesses internationalise and export.
- Improve the supply of workshops, studios and office space for micro and start-up businesses.
- Support a pipeline of available commercial sites and premises across Swale, to serve expansion as well as new investment
- Encourage opportunities for small businesses to trade in our town centres, through the markets.
- Support the diversification and evolution of the tourism and leisure sector on Sheppey, with a particular focus upon local heritage, its coastal location and unique landscapes.
- Provide opportunities for local universities to assist business, with access to their facilities and expertise.



Provide relevant skills

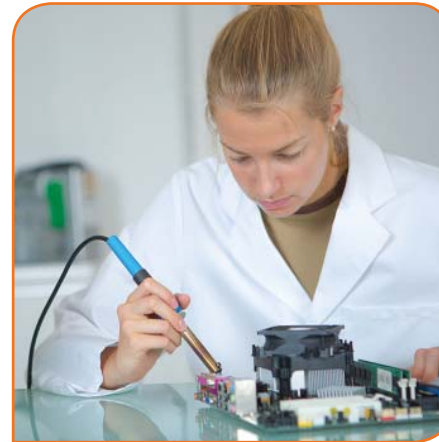
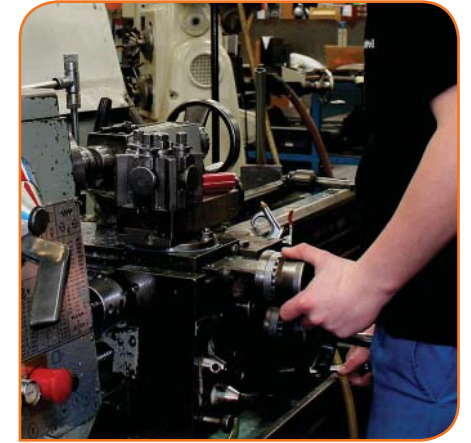
Improving access to a wider range of technical skills provision is fundamental to developing key sectors of our economy. At present 1,500 Swale students make lengthy journeys to pursue technical routes at Further Education Colleges but they are part of a much larger population of local young people for whom local opportunities are focused mostly around schools.

Alongside apprenticeships, a focused Further Education facility in Sittingbourne will help meet employer needs by creating more accessible opportunities for young people that are economically relevant, providing clear progression routes into local industry.

There also remains the need to address the deep-rooted basic skills issues, which are limiting opportunities for some residents. The Council will look to influence funders and providers so that those supported can secure progression to employment and training, rather than be trapped in a cycle of low attainment.

Areas of Focus

- Work with Canterbury and Mid-Kent College's to establish the business case and secure new, relevant FE provision in Sittingbourne
- Promote apprenticeships to both employers and local people.
- Where appropriate secure Local labour and apprenticeship outcomes from new developments in the Borough
- Encourage employers to become more involved with local schools, to build greater understanding of employer need and partnership working.
- Work with KCC and other key partners to identify how we can support efforts to provide more positive progression routes for local people facing skills challenges.



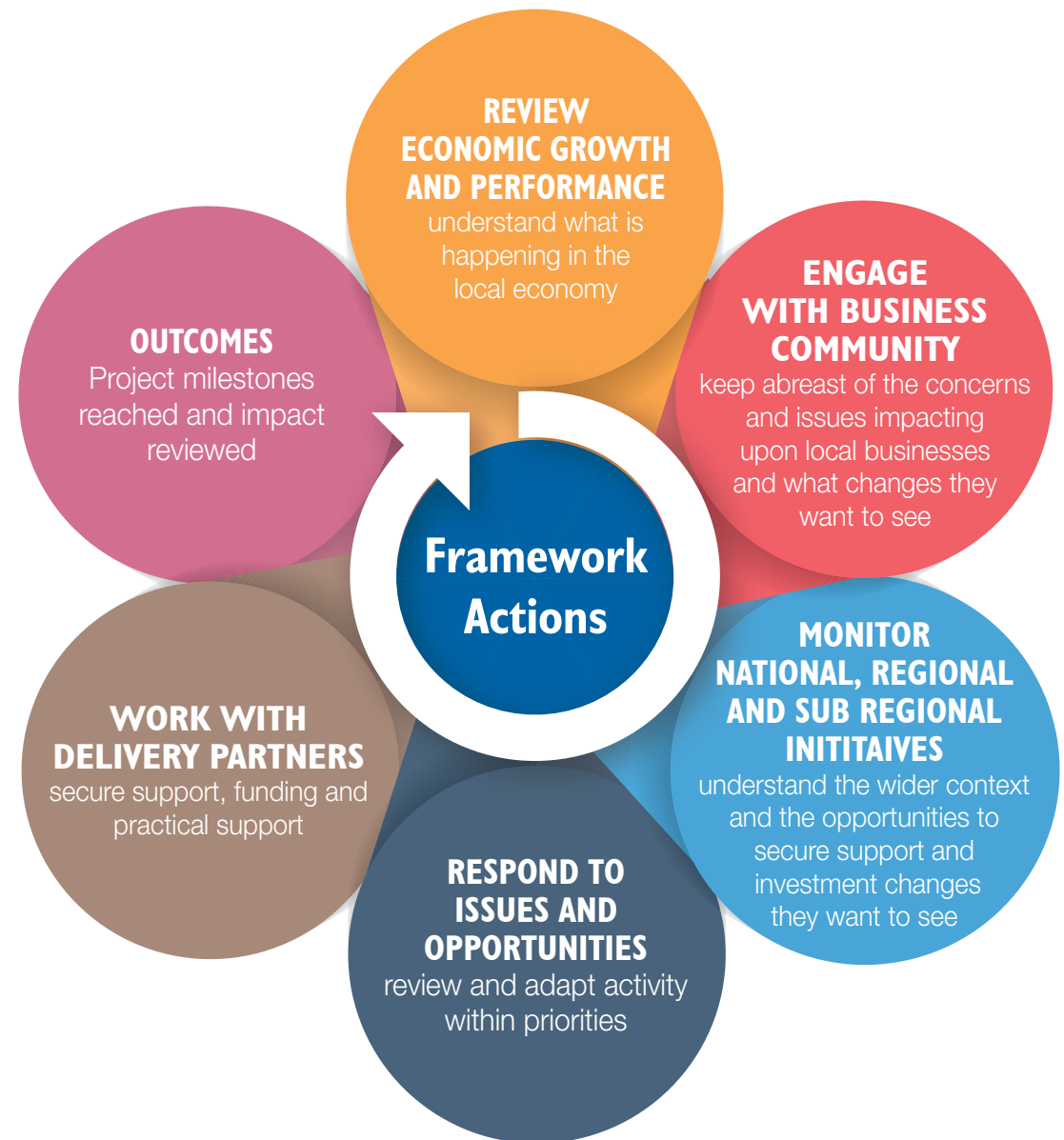
Outcomes

Outcomes will be measured through both practical change and through local economic and growth indicators, benchmarked against the rest of Kent, the south east and the UK as whole where possible.

These will reflect what is happening in the economy and in the workforce in particular and assist our understanding of the impact of interventions are making not only on the borough, but also for local people. We will also stay in touch with and be responsive to local business needs.

Indicators used will include

Total number of businesses
No of businesses directly supported
Business survival rates
No of Employee Jobs
No of Jobs supported
Commercial floor space completions
Housing completions
Unemployment (including age and duration)
Average wage by workplace
Average wage by residence
Qualifications levels 16-64



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If you would like alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request.

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