

5.3a. District Dashboard Dartford

Dartford district is second only to Maidstone for 4* hotel provision with 816 beds (15.9% of county capacity) and in the mid-third for 3*/budget hotel bed capacity, but is in the bottom 25% of the county for both business and holiday nights. Airbnb provision is quite low, but has grown by 493% (2016-19), with a more balanced provision across entire home rentals and room only rentals. Most of the provision is centered around Dartford and Greenhithe, and the **rental demand** metric is the joint 3rd position across the districts.

11/13 for **BUSINESS NIGHTS**: 116,000 bed-nights = 4.6% of total for Kent
12/13 for **HOLIDAY NIGHTS**: 202,000 bed-nights = 2.5% of total for Kent

5 **MICE-ready** accommodation establishments = 5.7% of county total

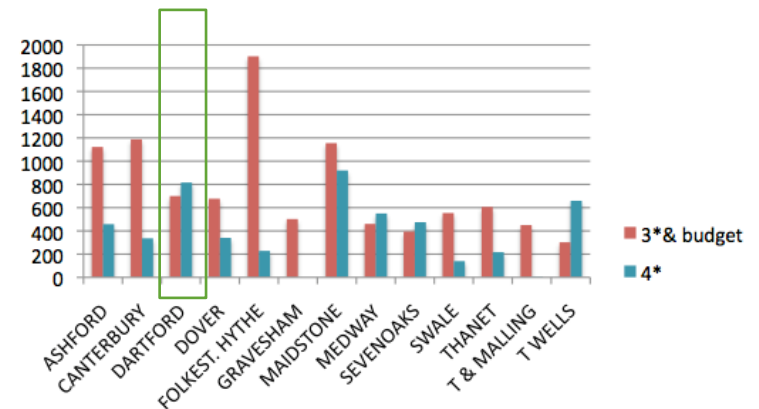
Total **MICE capacity**: 465 = 2.9% of county capacity within accommodation establishments

Largest single MICE venue capacity: 250

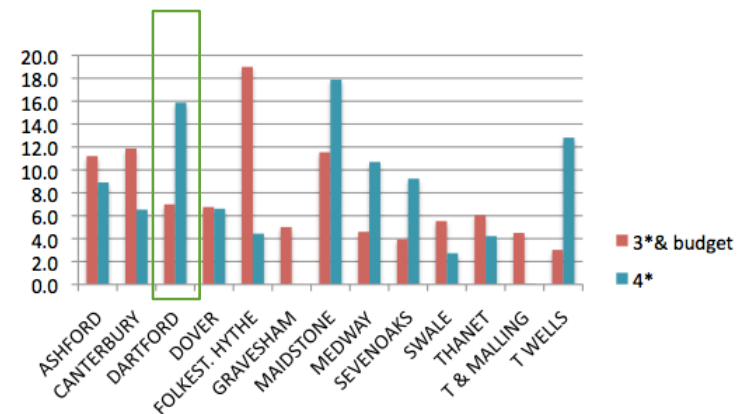


Group tour-ready establishments: 4 = 4.3% of Kent total

Airbnb: 160 **ACTIVE RENTALS** with a **rental growth** of **493%** between 2016 (Q2) and 2019 (Q2). **Rental demand** 87 (joint 3rd /13)



3* and 4* bed distribution by district



3* and 4* bed nos by district as percentage of county total

Sources of data for district dashboards: Extrapolated from Destination Research 2018, Visit Kent Business Barometers, CCCU Accommodation Database audit and Airdna webpages (subscription to district level data).

5.3b. Dartford (interview findings)

Visitor Offer

Dartford has some key pockets of attraction, such as Bluewater, the Orchard Theatre and Dartford Central Park, albeit the Borough is not a key tourist destination. Although Bluewater is predominantly a day visit attraction at present, further diversification into the leisure market signalled by upcoming developments such as *Hangloose Adventure London* (marketed as the 'biggest adventure centre in Europe') could extend their proposition towards an overnight market. The proposals for a cinema and hotel in Dartford town centre could also increase the attractiveness to overnight visitors.

Key Drivers for the Visitor Economy

The strategic priorities for the Borough are primarily centred on providing homes, jobs and supporting built and green infrastructure through regeneration opportunities. Whilst the Borough will seize opportunities to improve the visitor economy, this is not currently viewed as central to its strategic planning approach, despite the importance of Bluewater as a day-visit destination.

Over a medium to long term perspective the shape of the Borough, and the position of the visitor economy, could be impacted significantly by two key developments:

- **London Resort:** Forecasts within the *Scoping Report* outline the Resort is being designed to cater for 6.5 million visitors per year (*Gate 1 operational by 2024*) rising to up to 12.5 million visitors (*Gates 1 and 2 operational – by 2029*), with 12% visitors projected from overseas.
- **Ebbsfleet Central** (within Ebbsfleet Garden City) – primarily a mixed business and residential development, this Garden City development project builds on the location of Ebbsfleet as an international transport hub for the south-east and has the capacity to be a significant driver for development within the district. Such a transformative regeneration project has potential to bring increased leisure and business demand, with implications for the visitor economy in the future.

Drivers



Main:

Policy – Regeneration is at the core of Dartford's strategic growth plan.

Supplementary:

Visitor offer – England Coast Path: section between Grain and Woolwich; approved April 2020, work started to prepare the new stretch of coastal path for public use.

Potential/Emerging:

Visitor offer – London Resort, with potential to change the visitor economy profile of the Borough.
Infrastructure – possible impacts of nearby developments (Lower Thames Crossing, Ebbsfleet Garden City, Thames Estuary).

5.3b. Dartford (interview findings)

Gaps in Provision

As the Borough is not currently a key visitor destination and does not have any evidence linked to gaps in the hotel offer, the provision of new hotel development does not form a key part of the planning strategy in Dartford. The location of the Borough within the sphere of influence of London could offer potential for MICE, but it is possible that the accessibility of London and central Kent might offer more appealing locations for business and event venues.

Some developments, including a large-scale environmental improvement scheme, are taking place within Dartford town centre. The aim is to achieve a vibrant town centre with a mix of uses and attractive public realm, focusing on making it more desirable as a place to live, shop and spend leisure time. There is a current planning application for a major mixed-use scheme in Dartford town centre which includes an 85-bed hotel, cinema and mixed commercial uses, with the potential to transform this part of the town. Whilst these improvements may appeal to more local visitors, it is also hoped that they will enhance the wider visitor economy.

Links to Key Planning and Policy Documents

- New **Dartford Local Plan** [Timeframe for adoption 2021]. New Local Plan Preferred Options report <https://www.dartford.gov.uk/by-category/environment-and-planning2/new-planning-homepage/planning-policy/new-local-plan>
- Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (2017) **Ebbsfleet Implementation Framework** [‘positioned as a statement of ambition’ rather than a statutory plan, as formal plan-making responsibility still sits with Dartford and Gravesham Borough Councils and represents an integrated approach to development across the area spanning between Dartford and Gravesham] <https://ebbsfleetdc.org.uk/the-vision/>
- London Resort **Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report**, June 2020 [next phase of consultation open from 27th July – 21st Sept 2020] <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-east/the-london-resort/?ipcsection=docs>

Priority gaps

Whilst hotel development is not a key part of the planning strategy, the Local Plan preferred options do provide for inclusion of a hotel as part of the Dartford town centre development.

Support for inward investment



Enabling environment:

Council will provide planning support on case by case basis.



Assisted zone:

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation: Ebbsfleet Garden City development areas (Ebbsfleet Central, Eastern Quarry, Ebbsfleet Green, Swancombe Peninsula).