



# Edenbridge Economic Study

A Final Report by Regeneris Consulting

July 2017

# Sevenoaks District Council

## Edenbridge Economic Study

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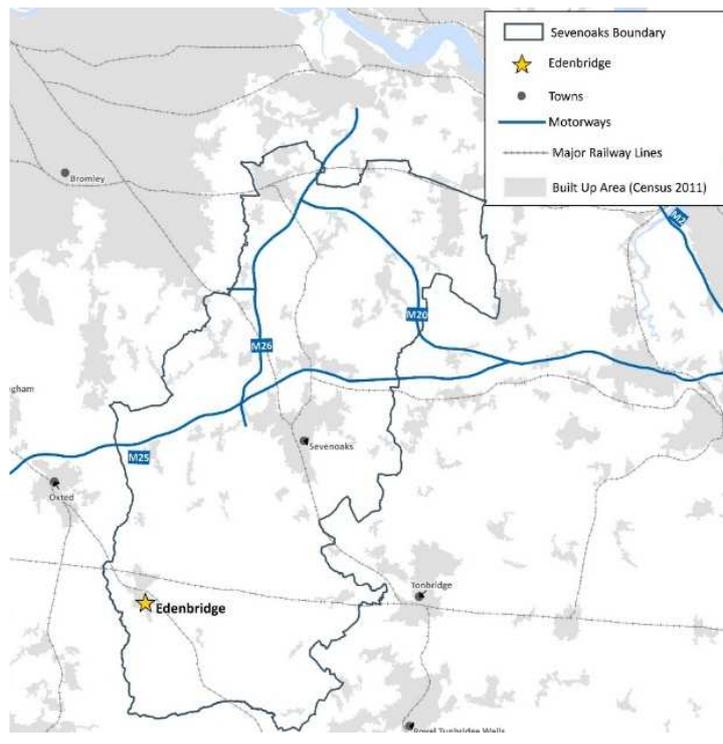


# 1. Introduction

1.1 Edenbridge is a historic town located within the district of Sevenoaks in west Kent.

1.2 The town's primary function is as a local service centre, serving the resident population and the surrounding rural catchment. In addition, the town is home to a number of industrial areas – most notably at Fircroft Way to the north of the town centre.

Figure 1.1 Edenbridge and Surrounds



1.3 The town is well connected: it is served by two rail train stations providing links to London to the north and to Uckfield and Tonbridge to the south and east.

1.4 The town is situated within the heart of the picturesque Eden Valley, and is located in proximity to a number of major visitor attractions including Hever Castle and Chiddingstone

## Report Purpose and Approach

1.5 Regeneris Consulting was commissioned by Sevenoaks District Council to undertake an economic review of Edenbridge, the purpose of which was to:

- Examine the current socio-economic characteristics and performance of Edenbridge
- Explore opportunities to enhance economic vitality in the town in the future.

1.6 The research draws on a review of socio-economic indicators and statistics. A partner workshop was held in Edenbridge in March 2017 during which the evidence was tested and aspirations for the future, including ideas for intervention were explored. The workshop was attended by officers and councillors from Sevenoaks District Council and



Edenbridge Town Council, as well as business, community representatives and residents. The discussions held and feedback received has directly informed the contents of this report.

## 2. Study Background

- 2.1 The research has also been informed by a detailed review of relevant policy and strategy; this provides both a platform on which to build, but also a framework when considering future strategy and potential for intervention.
- 2.2 A summary of the most important documents is provided below.

### The Local Context

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#### Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy (March 2011)

- 2.3 The Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy (February 2011) sets out the overarching vision and policies for future development in the District until 2026. It outlines how sustainable growth will be accommodated in Sevenoaks Districts' existing urban settlements and how the protection of the natural environment of the area will be a priority.
- 2.4 The strategy states that the Sevenoaks District will deliver up to 3,300 additional dwellings over the plan period 2006–2026.
- 2.5 The strategy aims to retain Edenbridge's role as a service centre serving its surrounding villages through its range of shops, services and employment. The strategy commits to achieve this through the retention of existing suitable employment sites with the opportunity for regeneration and redevelopment if this will better meet the needs of business.
- 2.6 The strategy states that demand for employment land can be largely met within existing employment locations (including those in Edenbridge) provided the great majority of these sites are retained in employment use.
- 2.7 Improving services for visitors to Edenbridge is also a commitment set out in the strategy, including the support of a new hotel should a proposal come forward on a suitable site.



- 2.8 In terms of transport, a focus is placed on maintaining and improving capacity on peak train services, increasing the number of destinations accessible via train services and improving facilities for walking and cycling in the area.

### **Sevenoaks District Emerging Local Plan (2015–2035)**

- 2.9 The Council is currently in the process of preparing a new Local Plan for the District, which will cover the period 2015 to 2035, this will detail the overarching principles that will shape the development of the District and will promote sustainable development that will meet the needs of current and future generations. The Council is currently preparing for an Issues and Options paper for consultation in Summer 2017 with the aim for the plan to be fully adopted by Summer 2019.
- 2.10 The new local plan will factor in a range of documents already produced for Sevenoaks District, several of these of relevance are detailed below:

### **Sevenoaks District Retail Study (November 2016)**

- 2.11 The Retail Study provides an up to date evidence base on the existing and future roles and performance of Sevenoaks Town, and Service Centres and assesses future demand for retail floorspace in the District over the period to 2035.
- 2.12 Edenbridge is defined by the study as a Rural Service Centre, reflecting its small traditional nature and central activity focused along the town centre. The study uses 2014 Venuescore rankings which classes Edenbridge as 'upper middle'; suggesting it has a high-quality retail offer.
- 2.13 The town's Waitrose is noted as providing an anchor store function, despite its disconnection from the high street, the town is also notably served by several other convenience goods retailers such as Tesco Express and Boots. The importance of these is further confirmed through a survey of town centre users which suggested that 44 percent of town centre users were visiting Waitrose and 41 percent were visiting Tesco.
- 2.14 Using Experian data from December 2013 the study details a vacancy rate of 14 percent, above the national average of 11 percent.
- 2.15 The study recommends that going forward the Council continue to classify Edenbridge as a Rural Service Centre, as the area is performing consistently with its role and function in the retail hierarchy.



- 2.16 Moreover, the study recommends that the Council should support its network of Service Villages as locations for meeting basic day-to-day shopping needs and to support in principle applications which seek to improve provision of day-to-day facilities. The role of farm shops should also be supported as they make an important contribution to the rural economy and applications for the enhancements/improvements of facilities should be supported in principle.

### **Sevenoaks Economic Needs Study (August 2016)**

- 2.17 The economic needs study is a joint study for Sevenoaks District and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and recognises Edenbridge as one of several locations for growth across Sevenoaks District.
- 2.18 The study finds that Sevenoaks District and Tunbridge Wells host a diverse business base which has supported employment and productivity growth over recent years. The report also suggests the districts are an attractive area for professional, scientific and technical businesses and a strong location for business start-ups and self-employment.
- 2.19 There are currently 27 sites allocated for employment use in Sevenoaks District, totalling 75.5 hectares. The study calculates losses of industrial land (B1c/B2) within the district between 2033 and 2035 which results in an objectively assessed need for 14ha of employment land over the same period.
- 2.20 Edenbridge has two sites allocated as employment land covering a total area of 20.4 hectares. The Station Road area in Edenbridge (which covers the Fircroft / Enterprise Way industrial areas) is identified as the largest of the sites across Sevenoaks District at 18.8 hectares, totalling around 24% of the District's total employment allocation area alone.
- 2.21 There are a series of challenges facing both occupiers and owners of employment land in the area, due to significant demand pressure for more valuable residential development and strong competition from other regional centres.
- 2.22 The lack of suitable land and premises is an issue frequently raised by stakeholders, alongside the poor availability and reliability of digital infrastructure in rural areas.

### **Sevenoaks Economic Impact of Tourism (November 2016)**

- 2.23 The report finds that in 2015 there was £180 million spent by tourists visiting Sevenoaks District on the back of 3.9 million trips undertaken to the area.



- 2.24 A review of staying visits within the county context suggests that in 2015 there were 231,000 staying trips to Sevenoaks District. Comparatively this sees Sevenoaks District receiving the third lowest number of overnight visitors across all of Kent's Districts. An increase in hotel provision in Edenbridge may offer a means to increase the appeal of Sevenoaks District as a tourist location and provide an opportunity to increase the levels of overnight visitors.

## **Edenbridge Neighbourhood Plan (Consultation Draft 2016)**

- 2.25 Edenbridge Neighbourhood Plan is currently under consultation. The plan indicates that opportunities for further housing beyond existing local plan commitments within the confines of the town are limited, due to the scale of recent developments in the area such as St John's way, which has permission for 300 dwellings on greenfield land. The draft offers support for the affordable housing policy put forward by the local plan.
- 2.26 Protecting Fircroft Way and Hever Road as key employment areas are listed as a priority in the draft plan with a recognition that they provide the only significant employment opportunities at present in the area.
- 2.27 There is also a commitment within the document to support employment opportunities on mixed use development sites providing that the use proposed would not have a detrimental effect on the environment or wellbeing of the people in neighbouring properties.
- 2.28 High street vitality should be maintained and enhanced through supporting development that improves the range and quality of shopping and related facilities in the town centre. This includes allocating the Leathermarket site for redevelopment which includes ground floor uses that will contribute to the town centre and improve the local environment.
- 2.29 The plan acknowledges the lack of overnight visitor accommodation in the town and the adverse impact this has on the areas tourist economy and as such sets out policies which will support development that increases the amount of available overnight accommodation in the plan area.

## **The Wider Context**

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- 2.30 Edenbridge is also influenced by the wider strategic context – particularly in terms of the aspirations and activities of Kent County Council and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.



## **Vision for Kent 2012–2022**

- 2.31 This paper sets the challenges facing Kent and the priorities for the County. The vision outlines three countywide ambitions to: grow the economy, tackle disadvantage and put citizens in control.
- 2.32 Central to the ambition to grow the economy is a commitment to invest in critical infrastructure and provide access to high speed broadband to all, encouraging economic growth in rural areas. Alongside this the vision prioritises offering an increased range of learning opportunities and internships to ensure that Kent residents have the skills to meet future business need.
- 2.33 The document recognises that whilst the quality of life across Kent is generally high, this often masks some areas in the county, including smaller pockets in otherwise better-off parts that are impacted by disadvantage. The plan commits to tackle this by reducing the number of Kent residents claiming out-of-work benefits and to ensure that residents have a choice of high quality services that tackle disadvantage, particularly within health, social care and housing.

## **South East LEP Strategic Economic Plan (2014)**

- 2.34 The South East LEP Strategic Economic Plan affirms that the central factor that London plays within the LEP's economy, with over 10% of the LEP's residents working in the capital and much higher concentrations within a number of individual districts such as Sevenoaks. The SEP highlights the strong representation of ports, transport and logistics firms and life science clusters within the South East LEP.
- 2.35 Taking into account the LEPs relationship with London and their economic performance, the SEP projects a 6.9% rise in the LEPs population between 2016 and 2021, resulting in both local natural growth and net in-migration from elsewhere in the UK, particularly London.
- 2.36 The plan identifies improving skills as a key means to achieve the LEPs growth ambitions, with many of the areas priority sectors struggling to recruit appropriately skilled adults and work ready young people. As such the plan details an ambition to increase apprenticeships across the LEP through incentivising employers to recruit apprentices and focusing on advanced internships and progression routes from traineeships.
- 2.37 Housing is recognised as a central challenge across the LEP area, where demand for housing is exceeding supply. Between 2011 and 2021 the LEP projects that there will be



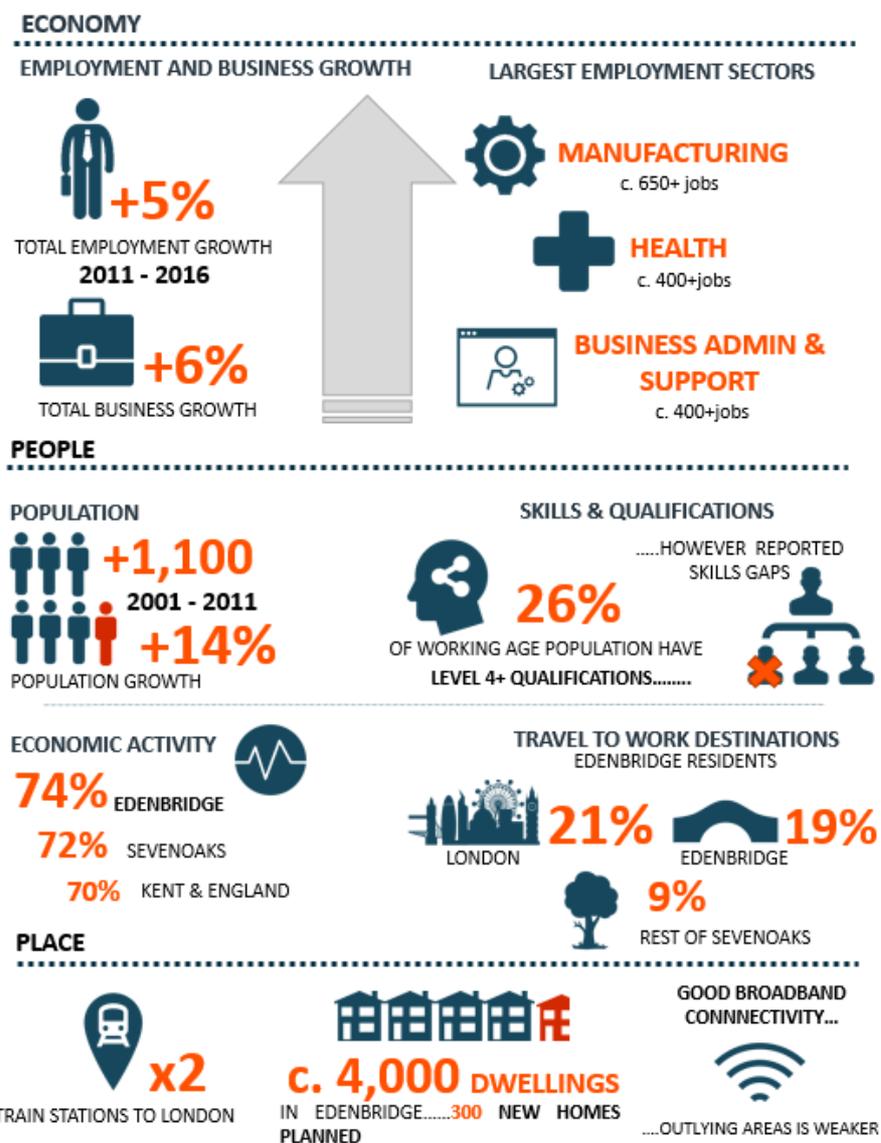
almost 200,000 more households within the LEP area, an average of 20,000 per annum. To ensure these targets are met the LEP is seeking to ensure that sufficient land is available for residential development and working closely with local authorities to work out how best to bring forward public land for residential development.



### 3. Edenbridge: Current Socio-Economic Context

- 3.1 This chapter provides an overview of the socio-economic characteristics and performance of Edenbridge, drawing on a range of official datasets and sources. Comparisons have been made between Sevenoaks District, Kent and England.
- 3.2 Headlines from the evidence are summarised in the infographic below.

Figure 1.2 Edenbridge: Summary of Socio-Economic Characteristics



Source: Regeneris Consulting



## The Economy

- 3.3 At the headline level, the Edenbridge economy has performed well in recent years, registering a small amount of growth. The town's economy is largely based around manufacturing and industry on the industrial estates, and services and amenities in the town centre.

### Economic Overview

- 3.4 Edenbridge contains around 3,500 jobs and 600 businesses. The economy has seen a small amount of growth in recent years: employment has increased by around 5% since 2010 (200 jobs in total), and the number of businesses has increased by around 6% (around 50 in total) since 2011.
- 3.5 As Table 1.1 shows, these growth levels are modest in the wider context. Between 2010 and 2015 Edenbridge was out performed by all of its broader geographical comparator areas, with markedly higher levels of growth seen across Sevenoaks District (20%). The same pattern is evident when reviewing business growth, where Edenbridge was outperformed by Sevenoaks District (14%), Kent (17%) and England (20%). However, this is to be expected based on the comparative size of Edenbridge.

Table 1.1 Economic Overview

Employment Change 2010–2015				
	Edenbridge	Sevenoaks District	Kent	England
Total Employment 2010	3,300	45,700	582,800	23,982,000
Total Employment 2015	3,500	51,500	622,500	25,698,800
Job Growth 2010 –2015	5%	20%	7%	7%
Business Change 2011–2016				
Total Businesses 2011	560	6,350	59,290	2,161,190
Total Businesses 2016	590	7,200	69,120	2,594,780
Business Growth 2011 –2016	6%	14%	17%	20%

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey 2016 & UK Business Count 2016

### Sector Profile of the Economy

- 3.6 Headline data showing the current sectoral profile of Edenbridge and its relative change between 2010 and 2015 is presented in detail in Figure 1.3.



3.7 The largest business sectors in Edenbridge are the professional, scientific and technical sector (100), construction sector (75), arts & entertainment sector (55) and business administration sector (55).

3.8 However, many of these sectors are less significant in employment terms: Edenbridge’s largest employment sectors are Manufacturing (670), Health (410), business administration (410) and retail (320). These employment strengths can be directly linked to a number of economic assets and functions in the town, namely the industrial estates, the hospital, and the town centre.

3.9 The performance of different sectors has been mixed in recent years:

- In employment terms, the town has seen strong growth in the business admin and support, health, retail and construction sectors, but contraction in manufacturing and wholesale activities
- In business terms, the town has seen growth in the professional services, business admin and support and arts and entertainment sectors. Again there has been contraction in the manufacturing and wholesale sectors, and also the retail sector.

3.10 Employment growth in the retail sector (offset against wider contraction in the business base) may reflect the arrival of Waitrose in the town, a significant employer.

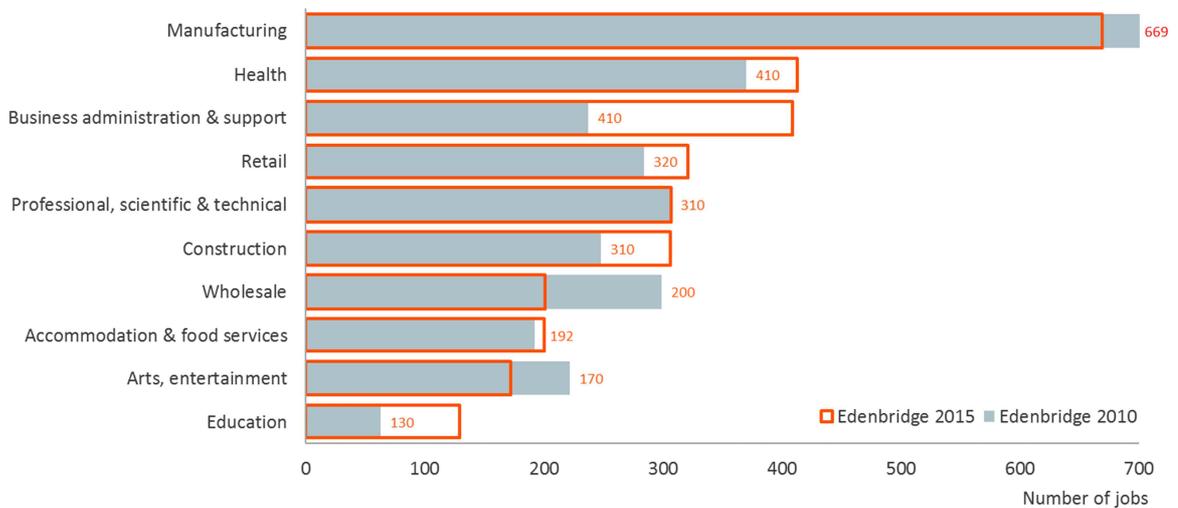
Figure 1.3 Edenbridge Businesses by Sector 2011–2016



Source: UK Business Count 2010 and 2015



Figure 1.4 Edenbridge Employment by Sector 2010 – 2015



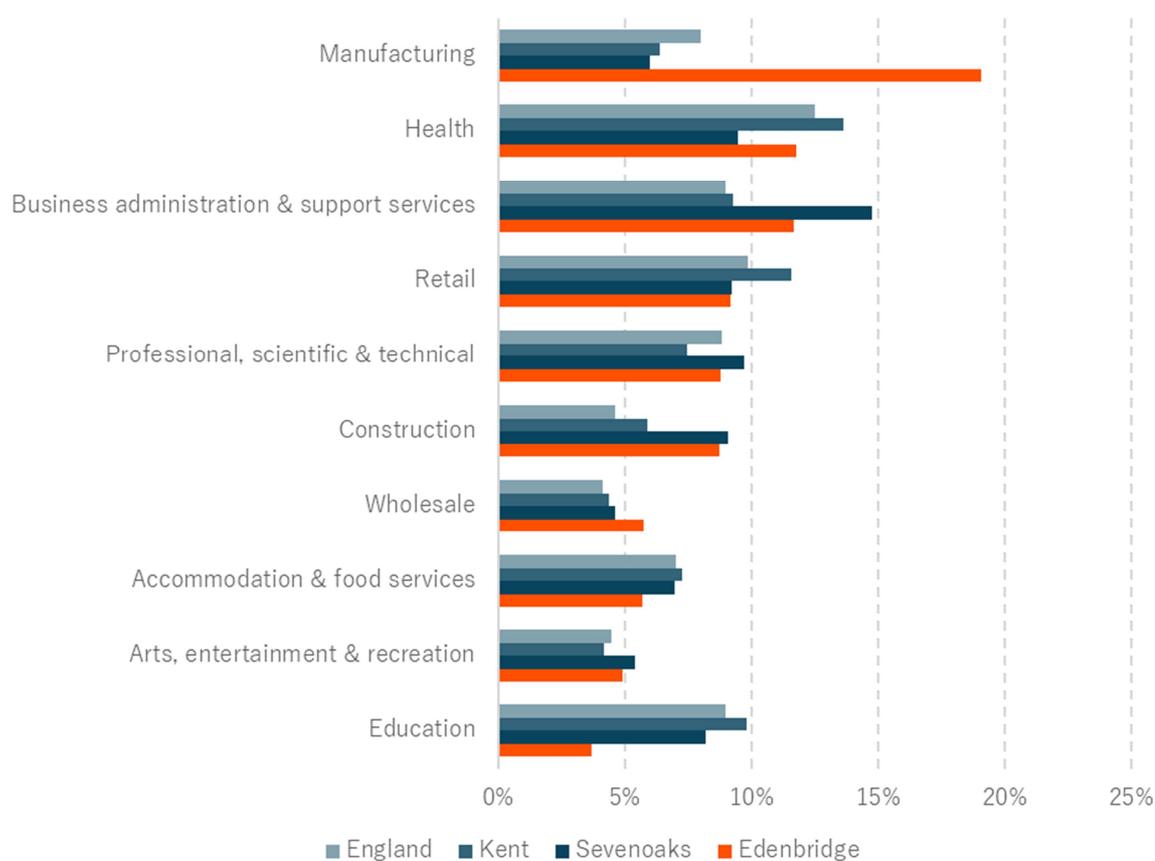
Source: Business Register and Employment Survey 2010 and 2015

3.11 A review of sector specialisms highlights the importance of the manufacturing sector. It accounts for around a fifth of Edenbridge's total employment base and is highly specialised locally: it has a location quotient (LQ)<sup>1</sup> of 2.4, meaning that jobs in the sector are more than twice as concentrated locally than the national average. Other sectors where Edenbridge shows notable specialisation is within the construction (LQ 1.9) and wholesale (LQ 1.4) sectors.

<sup>1</sup> A Location Quotient (LQ) is a measure of concentration of activity in one area, compared to another. In this case sector characteristics in Edenbridge have been compared to England where a LQ of higher than 1.0 indicates a higher degree of specialisation in the area.



Figure 1.5 Proportion of Total Employment 2015



Source: BRES, 2015

## Businesses and Enterprise

- 3.12 The spatial distribution of businesses largely reflects around the commercial function that they provide. Retail premises are primarily concentrated along Edenbridge High Street. Offices premises follow a similar pattern, however have a modest representation along Mill Hill to the south and Station Road and Fircroft Way Industrial Estate to the north. Industrial premises are largely concentrated to the north of the town centre around the Fircroft Way Industrial Estate and to the south of the town centre around Hever Road.

### Business Size

- 3.13 Edenbridge's business base is characterised by a large proportion of micro (87%) and small businesses (11%), which reflects the profile of the Sevenoaks District. The area has a larger proportion of micro businesses than the county (85%) and national (84%) levels.
- 3.14 Reflecting this, Edenbridge has a lower representation of medium and large sized business than is average across wider areas.



Table 1.2 Business Size

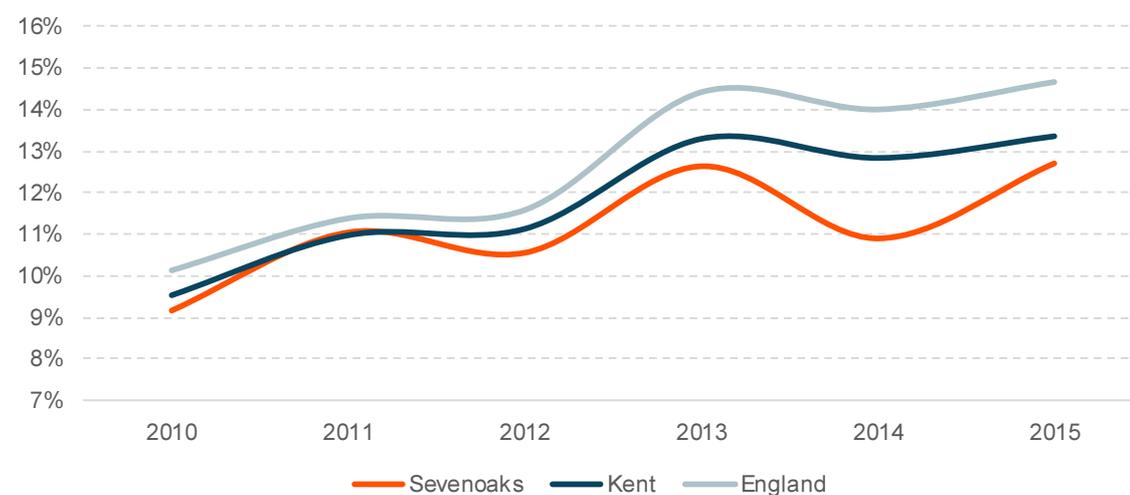
	Edenbridge	Sevenoaks District	Kent	England
Micro (0 to 9)	87%	88%	85%	84%
Small (10 to 49)	11%	10%	13%	13%
Medium-sized (50 to 249)	1.7%	1.6%	2.4%	2.6%
Large (250+)	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%

Source: UK Business Count 2016

### Business Starts

3.15 In 2015, there were 890 businesses starting up in Sevenoaks District, representing 13 percent of the area's total active enterprises. As Figure 1.6 shows this is a similar rate to that seen across Kent (13%) and slightly below the national level (15%). Sevenoaks District has experienced comparatively similar growth in business births between 2010 and 2015 to its broader comparator areas, with a 3.5 percent growth seen over the period in Sevenoaks District – a rate matched by Kent (3.8%) and marginally exceeded by England (4.5%).

Figure 1.6 Percentage of start-ups to active enterprises 2010–2015



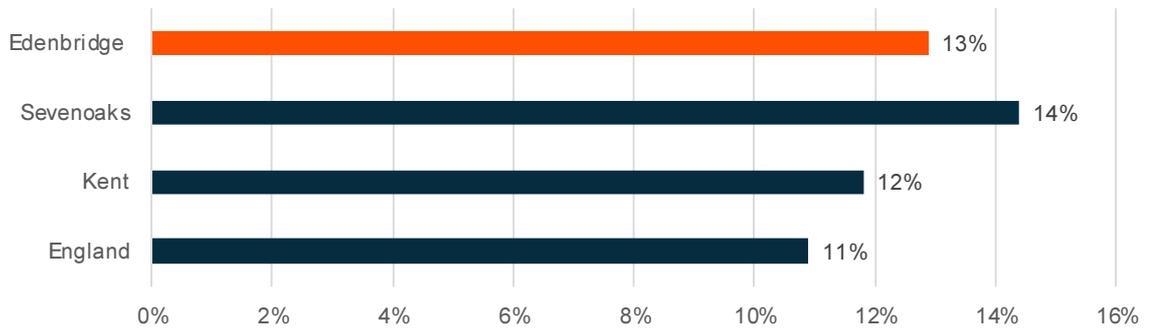
Source: Business Demography Dataset ONS, 2015

### Home Working

3.16 Edenbridge performs comparatively well in terms of levels of homeworking. At the time of the last census, 13 percent of Edenbridge's workforce stated that they primarily worked from home. Whilst this is a marginally lower level than that seen at the Sevenoaks District level (14%) this is higher than that of Kent (12%) and England (11%).



**Figure 1.7 Proportion of Employed Residents Working Primarily from Home**

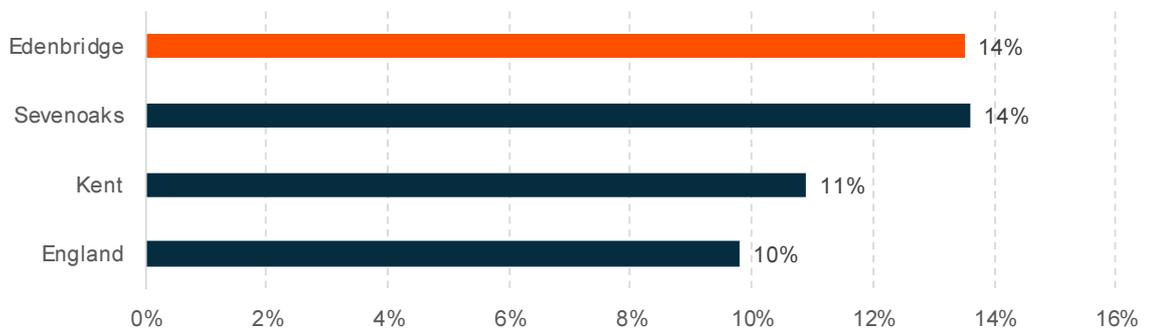


Source: Census 2011

### Self-Employment

3.17 The latest available data at the local level (Edenbridge) is from the Census 2011, which indicates 870 people were registered as self-employed; representing 14 percent of the workforce. This data suggests Edenbridge has a larger proportion of self-employment than that seen at the county (11%) and national level (10%), as shown in Figure 1.7.

**Figure 1.8 Self-Employment 2011**



Source: Census, 2011

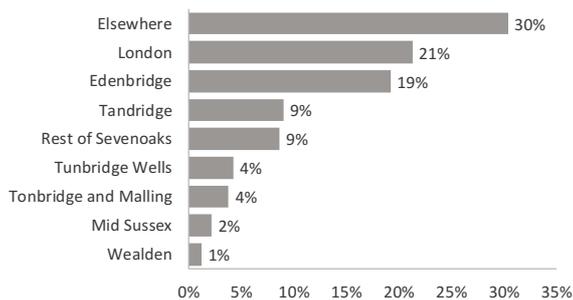
3.18 The Annual Population Survey 2016 provides more up-to-date statistics on self-employment however this is only available at the district level. Self-employment has risen to 19 percent of the workforce, which would suggest the number of people in self-employment is continuing to increase across the district.



## Travel to Work

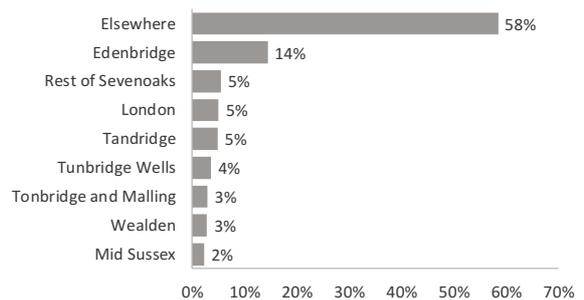
- 3.19 Census 2011 Travel to Work data shows that over 2,800 people commute into Edenbridge, compared to over 3,400 who commute out. This represents a net outflow of 600 people. There are around 830 Edenbridge employees who live within Edenbridge itself.
- 3.20 As Figure 3.19 shows, 28 percent of Edenbridge residents work in the Sevenoaks District area, with 19 percent of these residents working in Edenbridge. Over half of residents (51%) commute outside of Sevenoaks District and its neighbouring local authorities to work in London (21%) or elsewhere (30%). This distance of travel to work, again reinforces Edenbridge as a desirable place to live, but with limited work opportunities, which suggests that residents take advantage of the area's railway linkages and proximity to the M25.

**Figure 1.9 Employment Destination of Edenbridge Residents**



Source: Census (2011) Location of usual residence and place of work

**Figure 1.10 Home Location of Edenbridge Employees**



Source: Census (2011) Location of usual residence and place of work

### Economy: Feedback from Consultation

Feedback received via consultation was largely consistent with the statistical evidence presented. Feedback included:

- A growing presence of creative activities on outlying farms following the conversion of farm buildings to accommodate small businesses
- Despite some farm diversification resulting in the provision of start-up and small business space in outlying areas there is still currently a lack of this type of space.
- However, there are possible opportunities at a number of locations across Edenbridge for new workspaces and work hubs. Helping accommodate small



businesses and start-ups within the area and encouraging further diversification of the Edenbridge economy.

- Given the employment space available on the industrial estates and good transport links Edenbridge could be better marketed outside of the area as a place to do business.

## People and Social Inclusion

- 3.21 At the overarching level, Edenbridge is home to a relatively prosperous community, which performs well against a number of labour market indicators. That said, these overarching findings mask more local variations, and consultation has highlighted localised challenges in terms of skills, barriers to work and pockets of deprivation.

### Population

- 3.22 Table 3.1 below summarises population and demographic data for Edenbridge and surrounding benchmark areas at varying geographical scales.
- 3.23 There are currently around 8,900 people living in Edenbridge. Between 2001 and 2011 the population of Edenbridge has grown markedly. Edenbridge has grown by 14%, a percentage increase markedly higher than that experienced across the wider Sevenoaks District (5%) Kent (10%) and England (8%) over the same period.

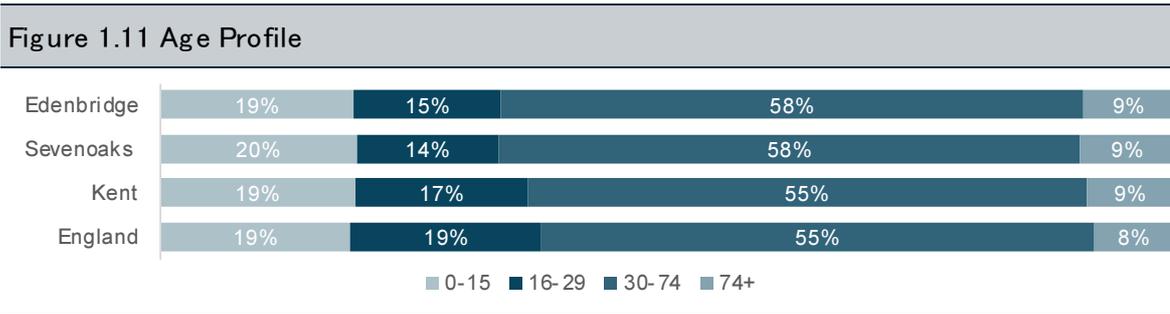
Table 3.1 Population

	<b>Edenbridge</b>	<b>Sevenoaks District</b>	<b>Kent</b>	<b>England</b>
<b>Overall Population</b>	8,900	114,900	1,463,700	53,012,500
<b>Percentage Change</b>	14%	5%	10%	8%

Source: 2011 Census & 2001 Census

- 3.24 The age profile of Edenbridge broadly reflects that of the wider population of Sevenoaks, Kent and England, where 73 percent of its residents are of working age (Figure 1.11).

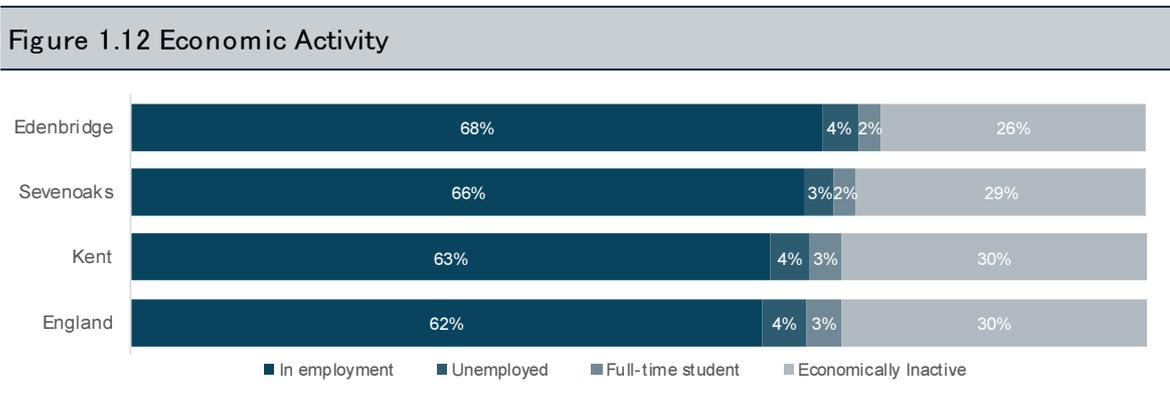




Source: 2011 Census

**Economic Activity and Employment**

- 3.25 Economic activity refers to an individual either who is in employment, education or is unemployed but seeking work and provides a good indication of relative economic performance.
- 3.26 In terms of economic activity rates Edenbridge performs strongly. According to data from the last census, 74 percent of Edenbridge residents are economically active, outperforming the district (72%), county and national levels (70%).
- 3.27 A breakdown of this economic activity is portrayed below in Figure 1.12, of the 74 percent of Edenbridge’s economically active residents, 4 percent are unemployed and seeking work and 2 percent are studying full time – proportions which broadly reflect the wider comparator geographies listed.



Source: Census 2011

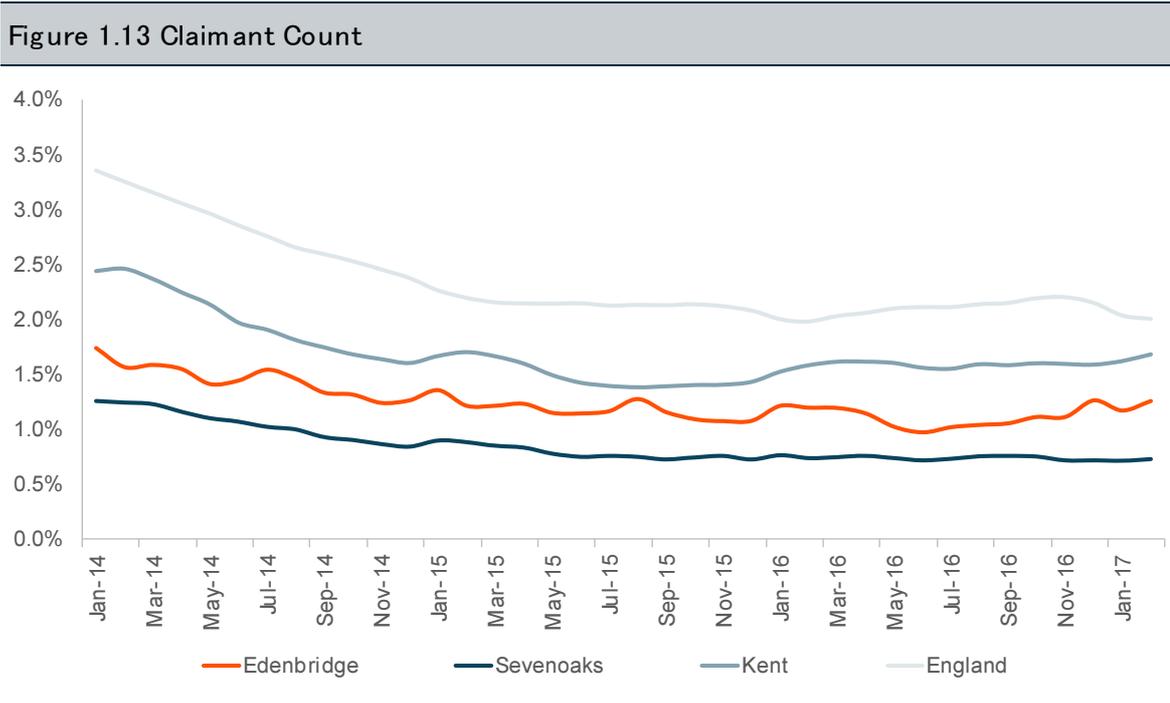
**Claimant Levels**

- 3.28 Whilst the Census 2011 gives us the most up to date picture in terms of economic activity, claimant data provides an up to date picture of worklessness at the local level.



3.29 At the last count in 2017, 1.3 percent of Edenbridge’s working age population were claiming out of work benefits. Whilst this is a higher rate than the rest of Sevenoaks District (0.7% ), it lies below the county (1.7% ) and national (2% ) levels.

3.30 Since 2014 the levels of claimants in Edenbridge have remained consistent between 1.7 percent and 1.1 percent, with an overall decline of 0.6 percent over the period. Over this period, the levels of claimants have consistently remained above Sevenoaks District and below Kent and England wide levels (Figure 1.13).



Source: ONS Claimant Count by sex and age, 2017

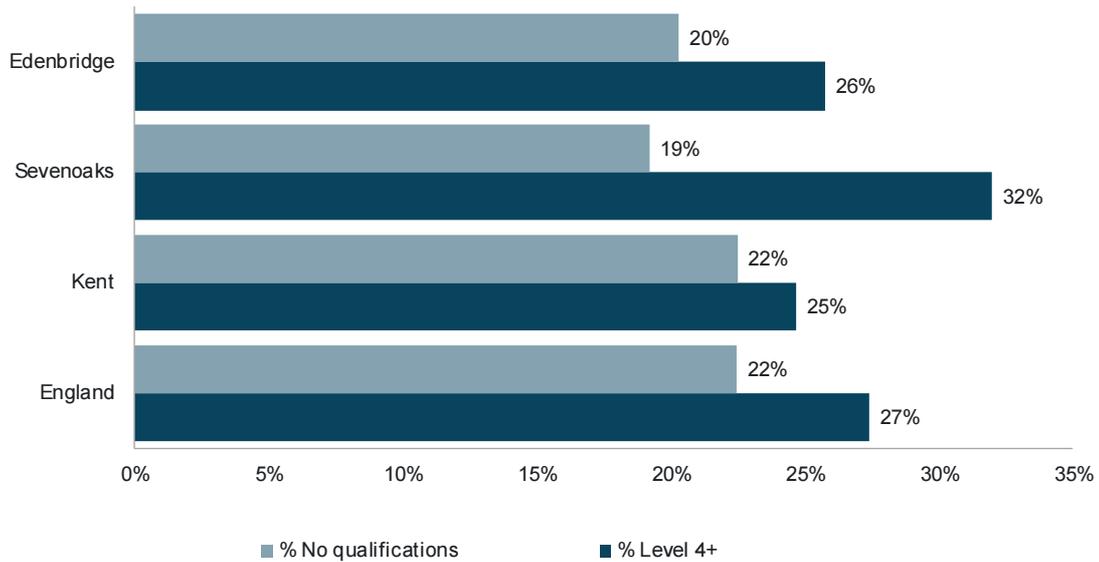
**Skills**

3.31 The skills base of Edenbridge broadly reflects that of its wider comparator geographies. At the time of the last census, over a quarter of Edenbridge’s working age population (26% ) held a Level 4 qualification<sup>2</sup> or higher. Conversely, 20% of the working age population in Edenbridge possessed no qualifications. Generally speaking, this performance is weaker than the Sevenoaks District average, but similar to wider comparators (Kent and England).

<sup>2</sup> Level 4+ qualifications such as certificate of higher education, higher apprenticeship, Level 4 NVQ, foundation degree, degree with honours, masters etc.



Figure 1.14 Qualifications



Source: 2011 Census

### Income

3.32 ONS Small Area Income Estimates 2014 within Edenbridge reveal that in 2014 average household income was around £880, below that of the Sevenoaks District average of around £969, yet above the county (£816) and national level (£767).

Figure 1.15 Average Weekly Household Income 2013–2014



Source: ONS Small Area income estimates 2014

3.33 Alternative data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earning (ASHE) provides up to date information on weekly resident income, however this is only available at the district level. This data allows a comparison to be made between workplace and resident median earnings. Sevenoaks District shows a stark contrast between the wages of local residents and those employed in the area.



3.34 As Figure 1.16 shows there is around a 10 percent difference between the earnings of residents (£585 per week) and the earnings of those who work in Sevenoaks District (£526 per week). This is a disparity greater than that seen within Kent (6%). Sevenoaks District has a markedly higher disparity in comparison, suggesting that it's a desirable place to live, yet a place with lower paying work opportunities than surrounding areas. This disparity in income could be due to the proximity of Sevenoaks District to London, which results in large proportion of residents commuting out of the District to work.

Figure 1.16 Workplace and Resident Earnings 2016



Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2016

### People and Social Inclusion: Feedback from Consultation

Feedback received via consultation was largely consistent with the statistical evidence presented. However, a number of specific challenges were highlighted:

- localised challenges around barriers to work such as; time management, life skills and confidence to gain employment
- employers find it difficult to fill vacant posts from the local labour pool: this relates both to ability to fill lower skilled and often lower paid vacancies, but also ability to fill vacancies requiring higher skills levels
- lack of a secondary school means people travel away from Edenbridge for their education; this has an impact on where local people spend their time and money
- the Business Innovation Zone (BIZ) has been established to help bridge the gap between employers and the local labour pool.



## Place and Infrastructure

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- 3.35 As a place, Edenbridge benefits from its historic character, its location and its connectivity. However, the research has highlighted a number of place based challenges faced locally.

### Transport

- 3.36 Edenbridge is served by two railway stations. Edenbridge Town Station lies closest to the town centre and high street and provides a minimum hourly service into London Bridge via East Croydon daily, the station served around 20,000 users between 2015 and 2016<sup>3</sup>. Edenbridge Station is located on Albion Way towards the north of the town and similarly provides a minimum hourly service into London Bridge via Croydon and Redhill, the station served around 19,000 users between 2015 and 2016. There are three bus operators providing around nine different bus services<sup>4</sup> in the area. Edenbridge also lies a 15-minute drive from the nearby M25.
- 3.37 As Figure 1.17 and Figure 1.18 illustrate accessibility is greatly dependent on access to different forms of transport. Whilst public transport provides good levels of accessibility to several key employment hubs, such as Central London and Croydon much of rural areas of Edenbridge remain isolated and disconnected for those without access to a car.

<sup>3</sup> Office of Rail and Road, Estimates of Station Usage 2015 and 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Traveline South East & Anglia, 2017; Services include; 231, 232, 233, 234, 236, 238, 404, 540, 646



Figure 1.17 Travel time – 30-minute drive (left) and 1 hr public transport (right)



Source: [www.gettraveltim.com](http://www.gettraveltim.com). Note: Travel times taken from an 8am departure from Edenbridge Town Centre

### Broadband & Mobile Connectivity

3.38 Broadly speaking Edenbridge is well served by both broadband and mobile networks. As

shows, superfast broadband is available across the majority of Edenbridge’s urbanised areas, with some localised pockets of standard connectivity available. Notably, Edenbridge’s main employment areas along the High Street, Fircroft Way and Hever Road are all well served by superfast connectivity.

Edenbridge is not yet served by ultrafast

connectivity, which is still yet to gain traction nationally. However, the weaker connectivity seen in surrounding village and farms may impact on businesses and communities in these areas.

Figure 1.18 Edenbridge Broadband Availability



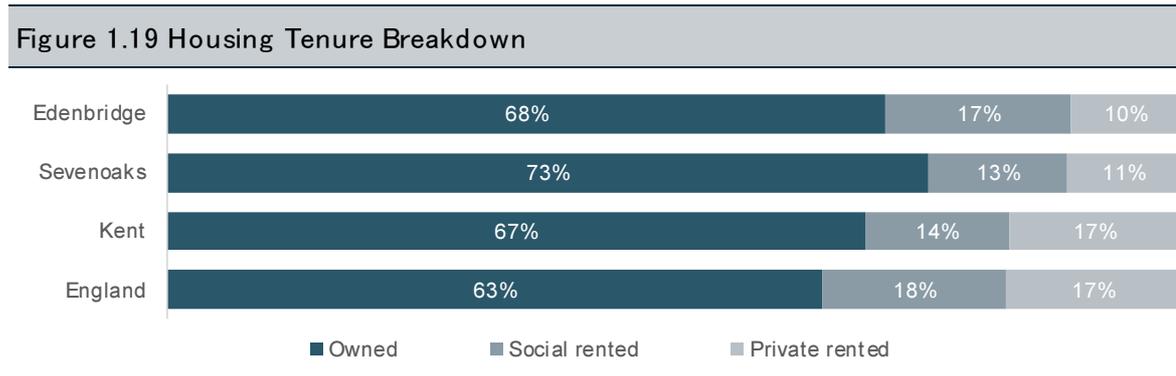
Source: Ofcom: Broadband Availability



## Housing

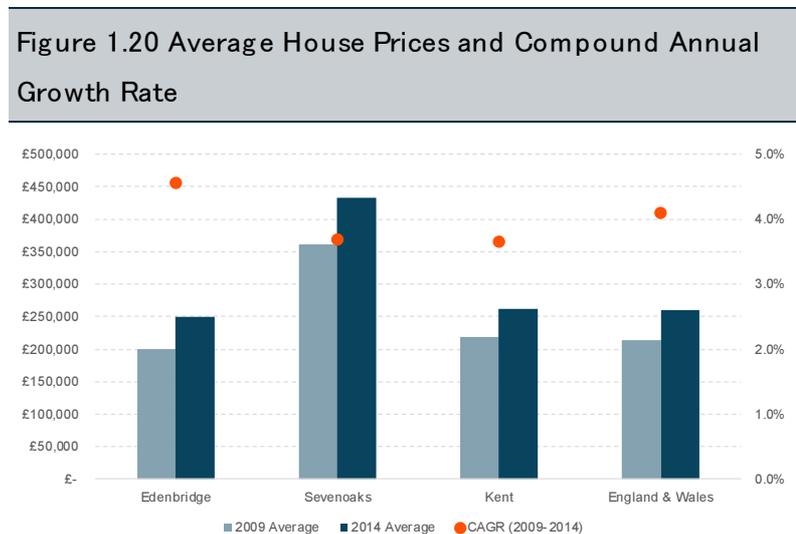
3.39 There are around 3,900 households in Edenbridge, over 50 percent of which are detached and semi-detached houses, and roughly a quarter are terraced and flats respectively.

3.40 As Figure 1.20 illustrates, the breakdown of tenure across Edenbridge differs slightly to that seen at local and regional geographies. Edenbridge has a proportion of socially rented households (17%) that exceeds both the local authority (13%) and county (14%) level.



Source: Census 2011

3.41 The latest available data from the ONS shows that in 2014 house prices in Edenbridge were on average around £250,000, with house prices rising year on year except for a slight decline in value in 2013, an increase representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.6% (Figure 1.20).



Source: Land Registry, 2017

3.42 Comparatively, property prices in 2014 within Edenbridge broadly reflect the county (£262,000) and national picture (£261,000) and yet are markedly below that seen across Sevenoaks District (£433,000). However, Edenbridge's compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in terms of house prices between 2009-2014 show that Edenbridge has experienced a higher level of growth (4.6%), than that of all of the broader comparator geographies (Figure 1.20).



### **Place and Infrastructure: Feedback from Consultation**

Feedback received via the consultation was largely consistent with the evidence presented above. Number of additional challenges were also highlighted:

- Proximity to River Eden poses flood risk threats – investment in flood defence is needed to reduce flood risk and potential damage to local infrastructure and the economy
- Perception of increased crime and community safety issues; specifically, anti-social behaviour in and around the town centre
- Lack of provision for secondary school children has an adverse impact for local people and also the economy



## 4. Edenbridge’s Economic Functions

4.1 This chapter focuses on Edenbridge’s three core economic functions and opportunities: the town centre, the industrial areas, and the visitor economy.

### Edenbridge Town Centre

4.2 Edenbridge High Street is a small, traditional town centre, characterised by a range of small independent retailers and several larger national chain stores. The built environment across the high street is generally of a high quality, with the well-kept dated buildings providing a traditional old village feel.

4.3 The high street is recognised as a Rural Service Centre for Sevenoaks District due to its localised catchment area, which typically serves local residents<sup>5</sup>.

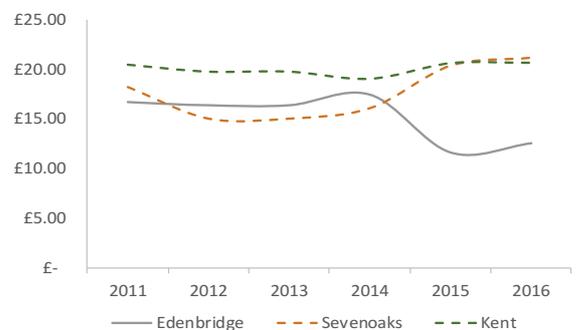
4.4 Venuescore ranks Edenbridge with a market position of ‘upper middle’ suggesting that the high street possesses a high-quality retail offer with a good range of services for the size of the settlement.

4.5 Goad survey data suggests that vacancy rates are around 14.6% which is higher than the national average (11.2%). However, it is thought vacancy rates have decreased due to a number of units becoming occupied recently.

Figure 1.21 Edenbridge High Street



Figure 1.22 Vacancy Rates



<sup>5</sup> Sevenoaks District Retail Study 2016



- 4.6 As highlighted by Figure 1.22, retail rents in Edenbridge currently lie around £13 per sq ft, a lower level than that seen across Sevenoaks District and Kent respectively (£21). Rents in Edenbridge have decreased by around 25% since 2011, with a marked decline notable between 2014 and 2015. Source: CoStar
- 4.7 The recent District Retail Study conducted in 2016 recognises the importance of supermarkets in attracting town centre users. A survey conducted as part of the study found that 44% of town centre users were primarily visiting Waitrose and 42% primarily coming to the high street to visit Tesco.
- 4.8 There is a long-standing market that takes place in Edenbridge every Thursday which sells a range of clothing, household items and food. Anecdotal evidence suggests that over recent years the market has decreased in size.
- 4.9 There are satisfactory levels of parking provision within the town centre. According, to retail study research, 79 percent of respondents could park in their preferred car park, a finding that is corroborated through anecdotal evidence and consultation responses. However, the point has been raised that a lack of regulation of car parking spaces is leading to over staying and a lack of turnover in convenient car park spaces. To help inform any future decisions regarding car parking further in-depth surveys and research are required to get an accurate picture of the demand and supply balance within the town centre.

### High Street Feedback from Consultation

Feedback received via the consultation was largely consistent with the findings presented above. A number of specific challenges were also outlined:

- weak footfall was an issue raised by several high street businesses, it was noted that many high street visitors remain within the confines of Waitrose and its associated car park facilities and are not enticed to visit the rest of the high street
- challenges engaging with a minority of traders was identified as an issue, with limited interest shown in the Council's business support programme
- weaknesses in appearance of some high street units, particularly in regard to dated shopfronts where some businesses are reluctant to invest
- weaknesses in the diversity of shops, bars and restaurants – there is a lack of diversity on the high street both during the day time and evening period



- signage and wayfinding in the town centre was recognised as a weakness and an area for improvement.

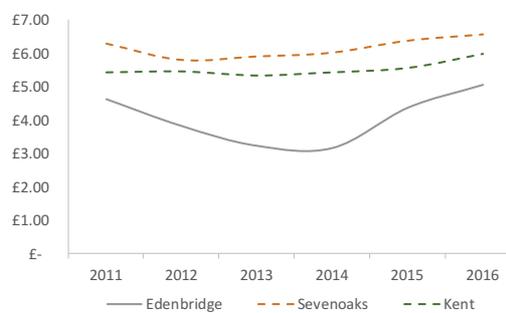


## Industrial Areas

- 4.10 There are two industrial estates in Edenbridge: Enterprise Way / Fircroft Way to the north of the town centre and Hever Way to the south. The estates host a range of businesses including manufacturers, wholesalers as well as IT and media companies.
- 4.11 Enterprise Way and Fircroft Way provide a total area of 20.4ha of designated employment land, representing Sevenoaks District's largest individual allocation. This industrial land is of strategic importance for Edenbridge as it plays a vital role in supporting its largest employment sector manufacturing, which comprises 20% of all employment across the area.

- 4.12 The recent economic needs study suggests that the estates offer a range of industrial spaces of mixed quality. Industrial rents in Edenbridge are around £5 per sq. ft, a lower value than that of industrial space within Sevenoaks District (£7) and Kent (£6). Rents have increased by 9 percent since 2011, despite a steady decline between 2011 and 2014. Comparatively, rents have risen similar to those seen across Kent (10%) and higher than those seen across Sevenoaks District (4%).

Figure 1.23 Industrial Rents per sq ft 11-16



Source: CoStar Data 2017

### Industrial Estates Feedback from Consultation

A number of specific challenges were outlined in the consultation:

- industrial space is typically low quality which is a barrier for attracting new investment
- significant employment site on Fircroft Way largely vacant and due to landowner/developer strategy it is difficult to occupy in the meantime
- accessing people with the right skills to take up employment opportunities in local businesses has led to reported skills gaps within a number of local businesses
- lack of space suitable for small businesses is hindering start-ups and enterprise and in turn further diversification of the economy.

## Visitor Economy



- 4.13 In 2015 there was £180 million spent by tourists visiting Sevenoaks District, with around 3.9 million trips undertaken to the area.
- 4.14 Edenbridge has a range of assets that mean it is well positioned to capture a portion of this market. The town sits at the gateway to the Eden Valley, an area that offers untouched countryside, traditional towns and villages and a wealth of historic properties and gardens. The town is also within close proximity of range of visitor attractions such as Hever Castle, Chartwell, Chiddingstone Castle and High Weald AONB.
- 4.15 As well as the picturesque natural environment, Edenbridge's built environment is also an important asset to the town. There are a range of listed buildings which should be promoted to attract visitors to the town.
- 4.16 For example, within the town itself, the Eden Valley Museum is located on the high street and is a strong local asset that preserves the history of Edenbridge; the museum is housed in Grade II listed building with Kentish vernacular architecture.
- 4.17 There are several events which take place in Edenbridge that provide a valuable community and economic function. Edenbridge Bonfire celebration is a well-established event that has been running for 80 years taking place every November attracting large numbers of visitors to the area. Additionally, the town centre hosts a range of events put on by local organisers and volunteers, including the Edenbridge Fun Day last hosted back in 2015.
- 4.18 There is a small amount of tourist accommodation within Edenbridge with the majority being B&B and Guest Houses, as well as Ye Old Crown Inn. The capacity for additional accommodation in the town is recognised in Sevenoaks District Core Strategy and within the draft Edenbridge Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Visitor Economy Feedback from Consultation**

A number of specific challenges were outlined in the consultation:

- better links with attractions around Eden Valley and the town of Edenbridge, which could encourage more visitors to visit, stay and spend in Edenbridge town centre
- weaknesses in the local accommodation offer means Edenbridge is missing out on the tourist opportunity in which the Eden Valley presents
- weaknesses in the local amenity and leisure offer (e.g. restaurants) impacting on the role of the town as a hub for visitors



- minimal marketing of Edenbridge as the gateway to the Eden Valley and therefore not recognised as a visitor destination
- not enough events throughout the year to attract visitors to Edenbridge...
- ...but an opportunity to build on the strength of existing events
- heavy reliance on a small number of groups and individuals means resource is limited and achievements restricted.



## 5. Growth and Regeneration

- 5.1 Looking ahead, there are a number of growth opportunities for Edenbridge, relating to future housing development and local regeneration sites. The potential implications of these are explored below.

### Current Growth Trajectory

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- 5.2 Sub National Population Projections (SNPP) provide an indication of the future size and age structure of the population in England, based on the continuation of recent demographic trends.
- 5.3 The projections for Sevenoaks suggest that the population within the District could increase by 20,000 by 2037, equating to a 17% increase (based on past trends).
- 5.4 It is estimated that close to 8% of the Sevenoaks District population live in Edenbridge. Based on this proportionate split, Edenbridge could experience an increase of almost 1,500 people by 2037. This increase in population (+17%) would be higher than previous levels of growth witnessed in Edenbridge between 2001 and 2011 (+14%).
- 5.5 However, in practice, the level of population growth in Edenbridge will depend on the level of development which takes place in the town in future years. This is considered below.

### Development and Regeneration

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#### Housing Development

- 5.6 The level of growth and change in Edenbridge will largely be defined by the level of housing which comes forward.
- 5.7 Edenbridge has seen considerable housing development in recent years and this twinned with planned growth will increase the size of the town by over 20%<sup>6</sup>. Part of this planned growth is 300 dwellings on land west of St. John's Way, which has been granted planning permission but has yet to be built out.

<sup>6</sup> Edenbridge Emerging Neighbourhood Plan



- 5.8 Housing growth is set to continue but is dependent on the number of potential housing sites that are allocated within the local plan. There is currently a ‘call for sites’ ongoing in Edenbridge which has seen 14 sites put forward (of which, not all are being progressed) for housing allocation, equating to overall capacity for around 1,800 homes<sup>7</sup>.
- 5.9 The potential effects of which have been assessed are detailed later in this section.

### Wider Development Opportunities

- 5.10 Aside from potential housing growth, there are a number of more immediate opportunities for regeneration. In particular, there are two strategically important development sites that have the potential to play a major role in securing regeneration and growth.

**Leather Market Site**



The site is located at the heart of the High Street and is largely vacant. Consultation suggests that the site is having a negative impact on both the aesthetics and performance of the High Street.

The redevelopment of the Leather Market could directly enhance the retail and leisure offer in town centre. The potential for a flagship mixed use development could also help to reinvigorate and re-animate the town centre more widely.

Redevelopment would also offer opportunities to enhance public realm and help to open sight lines and linkages between Waitrose and the High Street.

**Land at Station Road/Fircroft Way**



Land at Station Road/Fircroft Way has been vacant for some time, with planning permission granted for a large supermarket development.

However, due changing economic circumstances, the plans have not come to fruition. The site has recently been sold to a new investor whose plans / intentions are as yet unclear.

While consultation with local stakeholders suggest there is still an aspiration for a supermarket to be developed on this site, the site could theoretically accommodate a number of different uses.

<sup>7</sup> These are not permitted developments, only potential developments sites submitted as part of the recent call for sites.



5.11 In addition to these two sites, it is possible that other development sites will come forward in the future. It is important that there is overarching agreement on the aspirations for the town and its economy so that when opportunities emerge, the community is in a strong place to influence delivery.

## Implications of Growth

5.12 Development and regeneration will have a range of impacts in Edenbridge – particularly in terms of creating additional demand for local amenities, services and facilities.

5.13 If all the developments submitted as part of the call for sites were brought forward there could be a potential increase of c. 4,000 residents (c. + 50% ) within Edenbridge.

### Growth in Local Household Expenditure

5.14 New residents to the area will generate a range of benefits including increased local expenditure.

5.15 Based on the Regeneris Housing Model and ONS Family Spending data, it is estimated that 1,800 dwellings could generate gross expenditure in Edenbridge of up to **£6m** per annum and up to **£10m** per annum across the Sevenoaks District. This level of expenditure is enough to support over 50 jobs in services and amenities within Edenbridge, and over 100 jobs within the Sevenoaks District as a whole.

5.16 This represents a significant level of impact which could potentially boost demand for services and amenities within the town centre.

Figure 1.24 New Residential Development: Expenditure Benefits (Estimated)



Source Regeneris Consulting

### Growth in the Local Labour Market

Figure 1.25 New Residential Development: Labour Market Effects (Estimated)

5.17 New housing developments also have a range of labour market impacts. In the eventuality that all 1,800 dwellings were built-out, it is possible that between 2,000 and 2,400 residents will be economically active and around 800 to 1,000 would be in high value employment.



Source: Regeneris Consulting

5.18 This will further strengthen the local labour market which could help stimulate economic growth within Edenbridge.

**Increased Demand for Community Infrastructure**

5.19 An increase in housing and resident population will lead to evolving demand for shops and services helping to diversify the local economy further and strengthen the retail and commercial offer within Edenbridge. However, a growing population puts additional pressures on existing social and community infrastructure (SCI), such as schools, primary healthcare and leisure facilities.

5.20 As a result, housing development presents an opportunity for new social and community infrastructure to be provided. Therefore, it is vital the relevant developer contributions via s.106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy are sought to help offset the additional demand.

5.21 There is currently no secondary school in Edenbridge and Kent County Council have indicated that the current population is not large enough to a local authority sponsored secondary school. However, future population growth the town might create a level of demand which changes this situation.



## 6. Edenbridge: Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats

6.1 Building on the research undertaken, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Edenbridge are summarised below.



## 7. Framework for Future Action

- 7.1 Building on the desk based research and consultation we have devised an overarching framework to help Edenbridge build upon its current strengths, respond to its challenges, and make the most of future opportunities.

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### ***Overarching Aspiration***

*Edenbridge will enhance its role as a rural service and employment centre, while maximising opportunities for sustainable growth. The town will preserve and build upon the assets and character which make it unique, particularly its heritage, attractive environment, strong sense of community and location. In doing so, it will evolve to better serve its local and rural populations, whilst functioning as a well-known and established destination for tourists and visitors. New and enhanced community infrastructure will help to ensure the needs of current and future communities are accommodated in a sustainable and integrated way.*

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### **Spatial Considerations**

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- 7.2 Four spatial areas in and around Edenbridge have been identified which each have different characteristics and functions, and which will each contribute in different ways towards the vision. These are introduced overleaf.



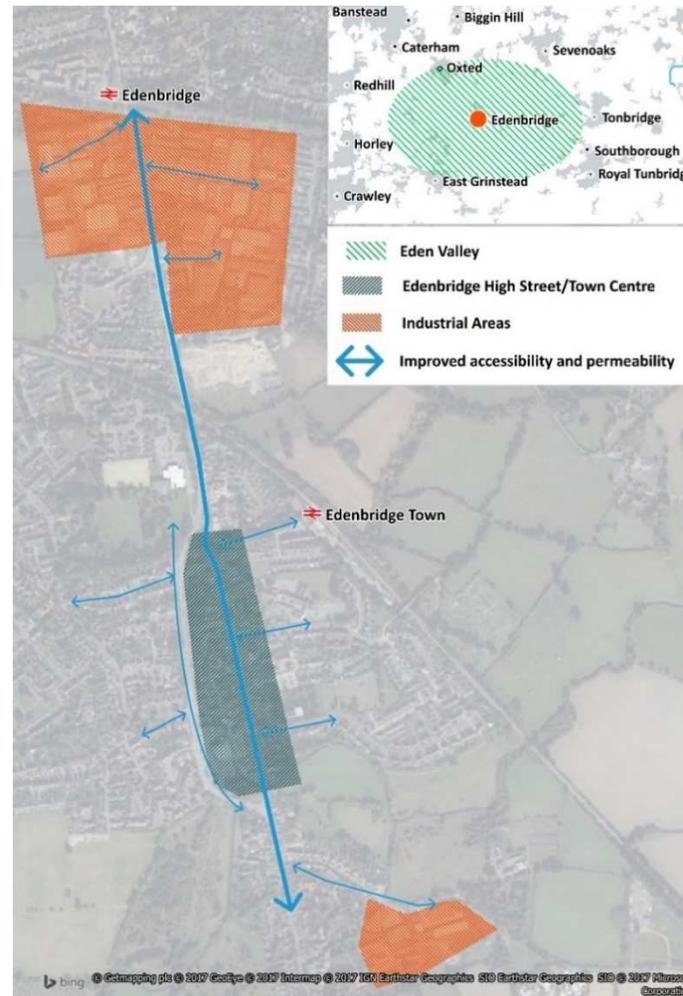
Figure 6.1: Spatial Considerations

### 1. High Street:

The High Street is the focal point for Edenbridge comprising the main retail and leisure area. It is an attractive parade made up of independent retailers, national anchor tenants, take-aways and a small number of restaurants and pubs. Enhancing the diversity and vitality of the high street will be instrumental in helping to maintain and improve Edenbridge's function as a rural service centre.

### 2. Fircroft/Enterprise Way & Hever Way

The industrial estates are the main employment spaces within Edenbridge. The sites are of mixed quality with pockets of vacancy across both sites. These sites are important contributors to the Edenbridge economy; safeguarding these sites for employment activities will be crucial in helping to support the town's economy in the future.



### 3. Residential Areas

While Edenbridge acts as a centre for surrounding rural areas, its main market is the local population. Enhancing economic linkages between the local population (old and new) and the town centre and industrial areas, and protecting and enhancing the current sense of community, will be integral to achieving against the vision.

### 4. The Eden Valley

Edenbridge is located at the heart of the Eden Valley and has the potential to play a stronger role in acting as the main hub for visitors in the area – both for local residents, but also day and overnight visitors. This means providing a more diverse range of services and facilities, enhancing the visitor accommodation offer, and improving overall identity perception.



## Priorities for Action

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7.3 Based on research and consultation with the stakeholders, four thematic areas have been identified which will be important in delivering the vision for Edenbridge. These identify important attributes and roles of Edenbridge and will help to structure future interventions to maintain a strategic approach:

- 1) **Place and Infrastructure** – ensuring that Edenbridge continues to be an attractive place to live and visit. Making sure that future placemaking and infrastructure is sufficient to support future growth and aspirations.
- 2) **High Street and Services** – ensuring the High Street remains the focal point for the town centre and has the diverse offer of retail and leisure to serve the local and wider communities.
- 3) **Business and Employment** – supporting the existing employment and industry while encouraging further economic growth and opportunities to diversify. Edenbridge will strengthen its role as a rural employment centre.
- 4) **Community** – preserving Edenbridge’s strong sense of community while accommodating and capitalising on the towns future growth prospect.

7.4 These thematic areas are considered in turn overleaf.



## Theme One – Place and Infrastructure

- 7.5 Edenbridge is already recognised as an attractive place to live, work and visit. The town’s rural location, proximity to Eden Valley and strong heritage are all unique assets that need to be preserved. Future growth presents exciting opportunities for the town, specifically in relation to new infrastructure. However, growth and development should not be to the detriment of the town, its needs to complement and enhance Edenbridge’s unique identity.
- 7.6 Research has highlighted the following factors as being the overall priorities:
- **Improved signage and gateways** – improved signposting and enhancement of gateways across the town centre to help increase footfall and permeability.
  - **Securing the redevelopment of the Fircroft and Leather Market sites** – working with landowners to secure the redevelopment of both these sites in a way which meets the aspirations of the community. The Leather Market site presents a particularly strong opportunity to revitalise the town centre, provide new open space and enhance permeability. In the meantime, potential to deliver meanwhile uses on the vacant sites should be explored, to ensure that efforts to revitalise the town are not hindered by the long term nature of development proposals.
  - **Improved internet access for outlying areas** – explore community broadband projects with the aim of supporting alternative workspace such as the conversion of farms into SME and start-up space. This would not be a Sevenoaks District Council initiative however could be a potential project through community broadband partnerships.



**Examples from Elsewhere**

**Case Study 1: Legible London**



**Case Study 2: Community Fibre Partnerships**



**Overview:** Legible London is an easy-to-use signage system that presents information in a range of ways, including maps and directional information, to help people find their way.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** Improved signposting linking the train stations, industrial estate and town centre will improve town centre permeability and join up pivotal locations across the town.

**Overview:** BT work with local groups such as the residents or a group of business owners in an area that isn't covered by fibre broadband and will look to find a solution to bring fibre to their area.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** With the increasing demand for home working and rural SME space, this intervention could be explored to address potential gaps in broadband provision in outlying areas.

**Case Study 3: Pop Brixton**



**Overview:** Pop Brixton is a community initiative that transformed a disused plot of land into a pioneering space that showcases the most exciting independent businesses from Brixton and Lambeth, providing a new destination that supports them to set up shop and share space, skills and ideas.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** With the need for start-up space, a community hub and a more extensive leisure offer, a similar project could offer a solution to a number of these needs.



## Theme Two – High Street and Amenities

1.2 The High Street is a focal point for the town and plays an important role at the heart of Edenbridge. Anecdotally, footfall and the vibrancy of the town centre has declined over recent years. The High Street has a quality retail offer however this needs to be built on and diversified to adapt to evolving demand and attract new markets. The High Street also has a role to play in strengthening the night-time economy and improving its leisure offer.

7.7 Research has highlighted the following factors as being the overall priorities:

- **Supporting the development of town centre traders group** – the recently formed High Street Traders Group provides a strong focal point around which to base efforts to enhance town centre vitality. Supporting this group to develop, and drawing in engagement from a wider group of businesses represents an important opportunity.
- **New regular events on the High Street** – creation of more regular events on the High Street to help animate the town centre and drive footfall and prolonged visits to the town centre. This might include a more diverse range of markets to bring new groups and demographics into the town centre.
- **Meanwhile use of vacant retail units** – exploring the potential for meanwhile use of vacant units along the High Street for potential pop-up retailers or flexible work space. This could also help animate the High Street and broaden the town centre offer.
- **Enhanced pedestrian access** – explore the possibility of making pedestrian improvements on certain segments of the High Street to improve user experience, provide a better space for markets and events, and to help encourage footfall and longer stays within the High Street.



**Examples from Elsewhere**

Case Study 1: Queens Parade, Willesden Green



Case Study 2: Ulverston Festival Town



**Overview:** The programme encouraged the occupation of vacant units for meanwhile uses. *Meanwhile Space* advertised for new businesses and ideas to fill the 8 vacant units. Two months after opening Queens Parade was voted by Time Out readers as one of nine best shopping locations in London

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** Potential meanwhile area every year. By introducing new events it will use for vacant units along Edenbridge High Street or Leathermarket, would help improve town centre vibrancy and animation.

**Overview:** Ulverston has a calendar of events throughout the year such as; Dickensian Festival, Beer Festival and Lantern Festival. This attracts people to the town on a regular basis, ensuring the high street is animated throughout the year.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** Edenbridge can build on the well-established and popular bonfire festival that attracts thousands of visitors to the town centre as well as visitors from further afield.

Case Study 3: Kitchenette, London



**Overview:** Food start-up incubator, focusing on street food and pop-up residencies as entry point for new food businesses. Kitchenette offers a year-long food entrepreneur support.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** Consultation has suggested that Edenbridge is currently lacking an evening economy with a limited choice of restaurants. This provides the opportunity for new food businesses to enter the market at a low risk.





## Theme Three – Business and Employment

- 7.8 For the size of the town, Edenbridge has a diverse business and employment base, which has shown signs of steady growth in the last few years.
- 7.9 The town has significant employment sites in the Fircroft Way/Enterprise Way and Hever Way industrial estates which need to be retained to ensure Edenbridge continues to play an important economic role. The town should diversify the type of employment space it has to offer, to encourage start-ups and innovation. This will help diversify the economy and help accommodate future change in demand.
- 7.10 The tourism sector also presents a strong growth opportunity, given Edenbridge's location at the heart of the Eden Valley. An improved visitor and amenity offer (e.g. accommodation and food & drink) would help to unlock potential.
- 7.11 Research and consultation has highlighted the following factors as being the overall priorities:
- **Safeguarding of important employment land** – working with Sevenoaks District Council and local landowners to secure the retention of important employment space at Fircroft Way/Enterprise Way and Hever Way.
  - **Provision of more flexible employment space** – provision of bespoke space for SMEs, to act as a hub for homeworkers, and encourage further enterprise. Potential workspace projects at vacant units on Fircroft Way is an interesting opportunity for further exploration.
  - **Marketing and promotion** – a reinvigorated approach to marketing and promotion – focusing both on the town's strengths as a business location, but also its potential as a visitor destination.
  - **Enhancing visitor accommodation** – to capitalise on the strong visitor market in Sevenoaks District and Kent; Edenbridge needs to expand its visitor accommodation offer, to attract more overnight guests and grow its visitor economy.



Case Study 1: Romney Resource Centre



**Overview:** Romney Resource Centre, located in New Romney provides flexible work space and support services for start-ups and micro-businesses.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** Edenbridge has a relatively high number of home workers and consultation suggests there is demand for SME space. This is supported by a number of farms being converted to shared workspace. A business hub would help meet demand and encourage enterprise within Edenbridge.

Case Study 2: Southend-on-Sea



**Overview:** Visit Southend was a branding and marketing campaign which aimed to promote the town's business, retail and visitor offer.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** To raise awareness of what Edenbridge has to offer a coherent and joined-up marketing and branding campaign can help show case the areas strategic assets such as the high street, industrial areas and nearby visitor attractions. Demonstrating that Edenbridge is a place to live, work and visit.

Case Study 3: Hackney Business Charter, Hackney



**Overview:** Businesses sign up to the charter as a commitment to ongoing investment Hackney's economy and community. Businesses must commit to 3 principles: community, employment and environment (with set conditions) and in return receive business support and promotion.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** A Business Charter would ensure that all businesses in Edenbridge are working together towards the same goal. Businesses would also share responsibility and take ownership for improvements to the high street.

Case Study 4: Building Bloqs, Enfield



**Overview:** Provides flexible pay-as-you-go space to access on a flexible basis, depending on the space requirements of start-ups and SMEs. This removes the fixed costs of rent and rates found with permanent workshop spaces, enabling small businesses to grow.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** With a shortage of workspace and



start-up space this could provide a low-risk solution for small businesses and new start-ups. A cost-effective facility like this could be set up in vacant unit on Fircroft Way, animating the site and improving occupancy rates.



## Theme Four – People and Community

- 7.12 Edenbridge has a close-knit and well-established community.
- 7.13 The population has grown in recent years and with plans to expand further the town needs to ensure that this close-knit community and civic pride is preserved. Encouraging community engagement and the holding of regular events in the town will help maintain this strong sense of community.
- 7.14 New development in the town will create more demand for community facilities and infrastructure; provision of this will be vital in ensuring that the town evolves in a sustainable and integrated way.
- 7.15 Research has highlighted the following factors as being the overall priorities:
- **Community engagement and events** – as the population increases, activities to ensure that new housing developments and their residents are integrated into the town and the existing community.
  - **Exploring the potential for secondary education provision** – in the medium to long term, population growth will create additional demand for a secondary school in the town; this will need to be monitored closely.
  - **Employment and skills support** – while the town has a relatively strongly performing labour market, challenges do exist at the local level. Building on the strong platform provided by BIZ to explore the potential to deliver new training and employment projects for young people – such as work experience, mentoring and brokerage projects with local businesses.



**Examples from Elsewhere**

<p>Case Study 1: Teenage Markets</p>	<p>Case Study 2: Echo (Economy of Hours)</p>
	

**Overview:** The Teenage Market is a fast-growing national initiative that's transforming town and city centres with the creativity of young people.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** Help to animate the town centre, whilst encouraging young people to become involved in community engagement whilst fostering entrepreneurial skills.

**Overview:** Drawing on the methodology of time banking, Echo began as a project in Haggerston, East London; a local network where people could trade using time instead of money. Echo aims to get more out of the community, from childcare and help around the home, to training opportunities

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** An initiative like this would encourage community cohesion within the town, whilst providing employment and training opportunities for local residents.

Case Study 3: Matthew's Yard, Croydon



**Overview:** Arts, cultural and community hub with a café, workspace and gallery showcasing the work of local artists. Networking events and workshops are run for companies, allowing them to network. Community events are also put on in order to encourage people to visit, therefore increasing the awareness of the firms based there.

**Relevance to Edenbridge:** A multi-functional community hub could improve community cohesiveness and get more people in the local community involved in town centre projects. Depending on its location, the hub could help animate an area and encourage visitors and footfall.



## Priority Projects

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- 7.16 A range of areas for intervention have been identified which respond to the goals and objectives set out in the previous chapter.
- 7.17 These projects have been selected with realism in mind, in the context of public sector funding constraints, and the level of capacity locally to deliver significant new interventions. To help categorise these and to ensure the projects are timely, we have identified the following timeframes.

**Quick Wins:** Low cost and easily achievable projects that can be undertaken within **less than one year**.

**Short-term goals:** goals or actions that could be achieved or partially achieved within **two years** of the strategy being adopted.

**Medium and longer-term goals:** goals or actions that are larger or more complex and hence will take longer than two years to achieve.



## Quick Wins (Less than one year)

7.18 A number of quick wins have been identified, which could be implemented immediately with little resource. The initial quick wins identified include;

- 

**Revitalisation of the Edenbridge Partnership;** ensuring all cross-sections of the Edenbridge community are represented to help drive the strategy forward.
- 

**Public consultation event** to raise awareness, achieve buy-in within the local community and gain a better understanding of local priorities.
- 

**A monthly food market and a programme of new events** on the High St. to improve animation and encourage more footfall at different times of day.
- 

Working with the Chamber and town centre traders group, launch an **Edenbridge Business Charter**, aiming to secure the commitment of local traders to work together towards shared goals and objectives to enhance
- 

**Promotion of support organisations** such as BIZ to raise awareness amongst local residents and businesses. Helping address unemployment levels and skills gaps locally.
- 

**Engagement with Visit Kent and tourism partners;** initial discussions to develop a strategy to promote Edenbridge as a destination and drive tourism.

## Areas for Intervention

7.19 To build on the quick wins, a range of short, medium and long-term interventions have been identified. The list which is not exhaustive will evolve and includes the following;



## Short-Term Interventions (within two years)



Deliver **improved wayfinding and signage throughout the town centre** to enhance routing and permeability, with the aim of improving accessibility and footfall. Focus on better linking the town centre to the industrial estates and both train stations.



Delivery of a **meanwhile retail enterprise project on the Leather Market site**, accommodating pop-ups or start-ups in vacant units. The focus should be on providing space for retail start-ups, and generating an escalator where they grow on to take on permanent space on the high street.



Drawing inspiration from projects such as Pop Brixton, Box Park and BuildingBloqs, explore potential for an innovative **meanwhile project on the Fircroft Way development site** to test demand for new leisure and entertainment uses and different types of commercial activity.



Deliver a **'shared kitchen'** and **'restaurant residencies'** project within a vacant premises on the high street. The would act as a community hub, and a stimulus to invigorate the food and drink offer in the town. Restaurant residencies would offer food and drink business opportunities to test demand before taking on permanent space on the high street.



**Engagement with landowners, developers and investors** focused on bringing forward permanent redevelopment of the Leather Market and Fircroft Way developments in line with the aspirations of the community. Engage with **hotel operators** to explore potential to secure a major new hotel in the town to underpin efforts attract more visitors.



**The creation of a new brand for Edenbridge**, which the town can unite around and which focuses on promoting its location at the heart of the Eden Valley, and which reflects the towns heritage and emerging creative and enterprise spirit.



Aligned with the new brand and identity, a **new website and social media presence** for the town, which promotes the towns assets and businesses, and provides a single and up to date point of reference for both the community and visitors.



**Create a volunteer network**; to maintain the strong sense of community and encourage community engagement, create a volunteer network within Edenbridge to help instil civic pride.



## Medium-Term to Longer Term (two years plus)



**Work Hub/Start-Up Space;** delivery of permanent flexible workspace to accommodate SMEs and start-ups within the town centre.



Securing the delivery of a new **hotel** in the town to supplement the towns existing B&B offer.



Permanent regeneration of the **Fircroft Way** site, based on the wishes / needs of the community. While current aspirations are for a supermarket, options could be explored to provide new employment space, new leisure space, or a hotel.



**Trial pedestrianisation of part of the high street** to make it more appealing to visitors and enable use of the road for markets and events.



Securing the **delivery of a new secondary school** to accommodate new resident population and help retain local footfall and spend.



**Mixed use redevelopment of vacant Leathermarket** site; providing high quality retail and leisure space, providing new public space, and providing better connections between the High St. and Waitrose.



**Diversification of farmsteads;** providing high quality work space for start-ups and small businesses to meet local demand and stimulate the rural economy.



## 8. Moving Forward

- 8.1 The strong level of engagement in this research from across the Edenbridge community provides an excellent platform on which to build for future delivery.
- 8.2 Looking ahead, a collaborative approach to delivery, which builds on existing community strengths and capacity, will be instrumental in helping to further develop the aspirations outlined in this report, along with the design and delivery of specific projects and interventions.

### A Partnership Approach

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- 8.3 Edenbridge already benefits from a strong community, within a number of active local stakeholders and organisations representing the needs of the community. This provides a strong platform on which to build: looking ahead, strong partnerships will be crucial to successful delivery in the context of ongoing public sector resource constraints.
- 8.4 The Edenbridge Partnership was established in 2006 and over its first decade has successfully supported the delivery of a number of enhancements to Edenbridge, including improvements to the High Street and train station, new events, and support for businesses.
- 8.5 The Partnership brings together a range of different local and community stakeholders and provides a strong mechanism to take ownership of this report and to take forward responsibility for developing its ideas further.



#### Partnership Membership

- 8.6 To ensure momentum is kept, it is important that the partnership has strong representation and buy-in from a range of business and community representatives.
- 8.7 As a minimum, this should include: the District and Town Councils, the Chamber, the emerging High Street Traders Group, local community organisations, major employers (eg the Hospital, Alexis Packaging and Waitrose), visitor economy representatives, and the local Safer Neighbourhoods Team.
- 8.8 Other local partners should also be engaged on a more ad hoc basis (e.g. Southern Rail).



## **Roles**

- 8.9 The overarching role of the Partnership is to take ownership of the report and further develop the ideas and actions identified.
- 8.10 More specifically, the role of the Partnership is likely to include:
- Engagement and facilitation (e.g. discussions with developers and landowners)
  - Lobbying (e.g. on planning policy or community infrastructure)
  - Delivery – e.g. organisation, planning and delivery of new events and markets.
  - Partnership working – where there is potential for infrastructure enhancements (e.g. public realm improvement, wayfinding etc), the Partnership will have an important role to play in working with the delivery organisations (likely to be the Town or District Council) to work up and implement the schemes.

## **Community Organisations**

- 8.11 There are a number of proactive and well-established organisations within Edenbridge which will be pivotal in supporting this strategy:
- Edenbridge Town Council
  - Eden Valley Chamber of Commerce
  - Neighbourhood Plan Team.

## **Community Engagement**

- 8.12 To ensure ongoing buy-in, the Partnership should encourage wider resident and community engagement in all projects where possible and feasible. It is anticipated that a number of the projects listed will involve further public consultation with residents, local businesses and partner organisations. It will also be important to keep the community and partner organisations informed of progress, challenges and new projects as they arise.
- 8.13 One option might be a regular programme of meeting (i.e. monthly, quarterly), with supporting public meetings to ensure that the local community are kept aware of progress and have the opportunity to participate and input into the delivery of the plan.



## Funding

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- 8.14 As noted above, given the diverse range of areas for intervention, a mixed approach to delivery will be required: in many cases the role of the partnership may be around engagement, facilitation and lobbying as opposed to direct intervention.
- 8.15 Where funding is required to deliver projects and actions, this is likely to pose the biggest challenge given the severe and ongoing constraints in levels of public sector spending, especially in relation to local economic development.
- 8.16 Despite this, there are a number of funding streams which could potentially be capitalised on, providing the interventions are strong and delivery mechanisms are robust. A summary of these is provided in the table overleaf.



Table 8.1 Summary of Funding Sources

Source	Value	Time Period	Focus
<b>Kent and LEP Funding</b>			
ERDF	£82.5m	2015–2020	Enterprise, innovation, trade, CLLD
Kent & Medway (business loan fund)	£50,000 to £500,000	Up to 2018	Enterprise
Kent LEADER	Total pot of £1.5m: grants up to £100,000	Until March 2019	Bottom up, community led approach to rural development.
Kent County Council Combined Members Grant	Up to £20,000	Ongoing	Local Events, promotional materials, sports projects, mentoring support for community organisations
Kent County Council Capital Grants for Sport	Unspecified	Ongoing	All applicants must prove how their project will increase participation in sporting activities.
Kent Sport Small Grants for Organisations	£500	2017	Aims to encourage and increase participation in sport and physical activity by residents
Kent Community Foundation	Unspecified	Ongoing	Community Groups, Social Enterprise
Kent Big Society	Up to £100,000	Ongoing	Culture and Social Enterprise
ESF	£82.5m	2015–2020	Vocational skills, up–skilling, social inclusion
EAFRD	£14.5m	2015–2020	Rural enterprise and skills
<b>National and Other Funding</b>			
Charitable Funds	No set value	Ongoing	Wide Ranging
Heritage Lottery Funding	No Value Set	Ongoing	Heritage Grants, Heritage Enterprise, Townscape Heritage, Landscape Partnerships
Big Lottery	No Value Set	Ongoing	Wider ranging
Sport England	No Value Set	Ongoing	Sports and leisure in the community
Arts Council	No Value Set	Ongoing	Arts and culture
GREAT UK Challenge Fund	Unspecified	Ongoing	Aims to encourage food and drink exports, create jobs and boost local tourism
Private Sector (e.g local businesses, developers)	No set value	Ongoing	Wide ranging





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