



BIRCHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Response to Thanet District Council

New Thanet Local Plan - Scoping Consultation 2026

SD3 - Economic Development

October 2026

Abbreviations			
BPC	Birchington Parish Council	TDC	Thanet District Council
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework	BNP	Birchington Neighbourhood Plan
CAAMP	Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan	PDL	Previously Developed Land
BMV	Best and Most Versatile agricultural land	ALC	Agricultural Land Classification
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategy	BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
AMR	Annual Monitoring Report	LCA	Landscape Character Assessment

Superscript numerals refer to the source table in Appendix B.

1. Purpose and overall position

Birchington Parish Council welcomes the preparation of the new Thanet Local Plan and supports a positive strategy for economic growth, business investment, employment, tourism and appropriate diversification. The central issue is where that growth should occur so that it strengthens existing places, supports durable employment and preserves the qualities on which successful local economies depend.^{1,2}

The August 2026 NPPF is explicitly pro-growth. It requires plans to support business investment and employment and to provide sufficient land of the right types in the right places. It is equally clear, however, that the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development are interdependent, that development plans should direct growth to sustainable locations, and that local circumstances and character remain important to the choices made through plan-making.¹

For Birchington, that balance is particularly important. Station Road and The Square form the commercial heart, while the coast, countryside and heritage support the visitor economy. Rural and land-based businesses, high quality agricultural land and important landscape settings also contribute to the local economy and village identity. The made Birchington Neighbourhood Plan supports appropriate diversification where it remains proportionate and sensitive to local character.¹⁰

Economic development and indiscriminate commercialisation should therefore be distinguished. New enterprise and diversification are positive where they strengthen the economy and reinforce established places. Incremental commercial spread into the countryside or settlement edges can instead weaken centres, increase car dependence, consume productive land and create sprawl without delivering more resilient employment.

The new Local Plan should begin with a clear economic vision and current evidence of business needs. It should strengthen existing centres, reuse previously developed and underused land, support appropriate rural diversification and place strategic employment uses where their operational needs justify the location. The same strategy should protect the settlement form, natural assets and local character that support Thanet's long-term attractiveness.^{1,4,5,6}

This response forms part of BPC's integrated scoping submission and should be read with the Core and the companion Housing, Highways, Historic Environment and Public Services responses. Economic evidence should be tested against the same housing-quantum and spatial options used in the housing response, so that jobs, centres, infrastructure and land requirements are compared consistently rather than added after a housing strategy has been selected.^{25,26,27,24,28}

Section summary: Support ambitious economic growth and diversification through a clear spatial strategy that strengthens existing centres and businesses, protects local character and natural capital, and contains incremental urban sprawl.

Figure 1 condenses the economic case into five linked stages, from the baseline and place assets to Local Plan tools and monitoring.



Figure 1. Economic development and diversification: evidence-to-delivery framework

2. Spatial discipline

The new NPPF materially strengthens support for economic growth. Policy E1 requires a positive and realistic economic vision and strategy, informed by the Industrial Strategy, local business needs, market signals and the specific locational requirements of different sectors. Plans should allocate sites to meet identified needs and avoid being unnecessarily prescriptive about individual commercial uses where flexibility is justified.^{1,4}

That flexibility must operate within a clear spatial framework. Policy S2 requires the development plan to identify settlements and their boundaries, town centres and other policy areas, protected or enhanced land, and sites allocated for housing, business and infrastructure. Policy S5 continues to limit development outside settlements to defined categories and circumstances, including rural businesses and tourism where an outside-settlement location is necessary.¹

Policy E4 is especially important for Thanet's rural areas. It supports the sustainable growth and diversification of rural businesses, including conversion of existing buildings, well-designed new buildings, agricultural diversification, rural leisure and tourism, local shops and services, and development that maintains farm viability. But where business development needs to be outside a settlement, the NPPF also expects opportunities to use previously developed land and sites physically well-related to existing development to be taken where they exist, with siting and design appropriate to the character of the surroundings.¹

The same balanced approach applies to town centres and the environment. Policy TC1 places town centres at the heart of the strategy for main town centre uses and encourages reuse of vacant premises, diversification, intensification and public-realm improvement. Policies DP1 to DP3 require locally informed design and placemaking. Policy N1 requires plans to safeguard and enhance the natural environment, recognise natural capital and ecosystem services, and steer development towards land of lower environmental value where that is consistent with the Framework.¹

The practical implication is that TDC should translate national pro-growth policy into a coherent local geography of centres, employment areas, rural business locations, settlement boundaries, environmental networks and strategic infrastructure. That spatial framework should provide the certainty within which commercial growth and investment can proceed.

Section summary: The NPPF is strongly pro-business and explicitly plan-led and spatial. Economic flexibility should operate within a clear settlement, centre, employment and environmental strategy.

3. Economic delivery audit and evidence base

Before setting a new economic strategy, TDC should establish what the 2020 Local Plan has actually delivered. The adopted Plan sought at least 5,000 additional jobs, allocated employment land, prioritised town-centre regeneration, supported tourism and cultural diversification, and supported the rural economy subject to protecting rural settlements and the natural environment. Those objectives provide a useful baseline, but the new Plan should test their outcomes rather than simply carry them forward.^{11,13}

A concise Economic Delivery Audit should cover the period since adoption and distinguish what was planned, permitted, commenced, occupied and actually delivered. It should combine evidence on employment space and jobs with centre health, Westwood Cross, visitor activity, parking and access, rural diversification, wages and commuting. Where delivery has fallen short, the audit should identify the market, infrastructure or other constraint.^{13,17,20}

The audit should identify where allocations or permissions have failed to translate into occupied business space and why. The explanation may be market demand, land ownership, viability, infrastructure, power or water capacity, access, financing, site preparation, business relocation patterns or changes in the structure of the economy. Those causes matter because the appropriate response depends on the constraint: additional land addresses a land-supply

problem, while infrastructure, ownership, viability or market barriers require different interventions.

The NPPF requires evidence-led plan-making and a systematic assessment of land availability and development capacity. The current Call for Sites is useful evidence of landowner willingness and site availability, while the economic geography of the Plan should be determined by assessed business and sector needs and the spatial strategy. Broad locations should then be compared and individual sites selected because they best implement that strategy.^{1,3}

For Birchington, the evidence should include a specific local-centre health check for Station Road and The Square, an assessment of small-business and flexible workspace needs, and an appraisal of the economic role and development pressures affecting rural and visitor locations such as Quex Park and the edge-of-village commercial/leisure areas identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.¹⁰

Section summary: Audit economic delivery under the 2020 Plan and establish current business, property and centre needs before allocating more land. The Call for Sites should demonstrate availability; assessed need and the spatial strategy should determine location.

4. Birchington's commercial centre

The made Birchington Neighbourhood Plan gives a clear local starting point. Its economic objective is to enable appropriate commercial and business development that is proportionate and contributes to the economy and wellbeing of the village. It identifies the character of the commercial area as a key part of Birchington's sense of place and seeks to support businesses there so that they continue to thrive.¹⁰

This aligns closely with the 2026 NPPF and the Government's Pride in Place Strategy. NPPF policy TC1 requires a strategy for centres which considers additional floorspace, diversification, reuse of vacant premises, intensification and public-realm improvements. Pride in Place similarly treats high streets as economic and social infrastructure, supporting adaptation and diversification while strengthening local identity, public realm and small business activity.^{1,6}

The first commercial priority for Birchington should be to improve the performance and attractiveness of Station Road, The Square and associated shopping areas. Priority should be given to reuse of vacant premises, appropriate upper-floor and flexible workspace, activity that adds footfall, and improvements to public realm, accessibility and connections with the station, surrounding neighbourhoods and new development.^{6,10}

Shopping habits and business models are changing, and both national and local policy support adaptation. The objective should be a resilient mixed centre in which retail, hospitality, personal and professional services, cultural uses, community activity and appropriate residential or workspace uses reinforce one another.

New retail, leisure and service development at the edge of the village should complement the established centre and follow the NPPF's centre-first and sequential approach. The cumulative

effect of new edge locations on footfall, vacancy, accessibility and the role of the village centre should be assessed across the commercial network rather than through isolated proposal-by-proposal consideration.¹

4.1 OL/TH/20/1755

Outline permission OL/TH/20/1755 has created a committed new economic geography for Birchington. The consent is for a mixed-use extension of up to 1,600 homes and includes a local centre of no more than 600 sqm gross internal floorspace in Classes E, F1 and F2. The committee evidence describes this as approximately two to four commercial units, potentially including retail, cafes, community uses and co-working space. Importantly, the scale was deliberately limited so that the new hub would complement rather than compete with Birchington's established district centre in Station Road.¹⁴

This changes the starting point for the new Local Plan. The additional population should increase local purchasing power and demand for services and can strengthen the existing centre if movement, public realm and commercial policy are aligned. At the same time, the consent creates a further day-to-day commercial node between Station Road and Minnis Road. Additional edge-of-village retail, leisure or service floorspace should therefore be assessed against this committed baseline. The cumulative question is whether Station Road, Minnis Road, the consented local centre and any further commercial proposals form a coherent and complementary network or progressively fragment trade, investment and movement between competing car-dependent destinations.^{10,14}

OL/TH/20/1755 should be treated as part of the committed economic baseline when preparing the next stage of the Plan. A Birchington centre-and-growth assessment should map committed and occupied commercial floorspace, vacancies, business mix and footfall; forecast the additional population and expenditure generated by the consented development; define the intended role and catchment of Station Road, Minnis Road and the new local centre; test walking, cycling and public transport links between them; and identify how the phasing of new homes and commercial space should support the established centre.^{10,14}

4.2 The Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan

The 2024 Birchington Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) reinforces the same place-based approach. It identifies Station Road as Birchington's historic commercial axis, values the surviving Victorian and Edwardian shopping parades and local businesses, and recommends extending conservation-area protection to capture important parts of that commercial streetscape. Its management recommendations also address traffic through the historic core, the quality of The Square and its approaches, public-realm clutter and the need for development to respect prevailing scale, massing, materials and historic patterns.¹⁵

These are economic as well as conservation matters. An attractive and walkable centre, coherent shopfronts and public realm, reduced traffic dominance, sensitive reuse of upper floors and a strong heritage identity can increase dwell time, support independent businesses, reinforce visitor spending and improve investor confidence. Conversely, allowing the historic centre to decline while new commercial activity disperses to the edge of the village would

undermine both the CAAMP's conservation objectives and the Local Plan's economic objectives.^{6,10,15}

The OL/TH/20/1755 committee report already recognised this relationship. It accepted that 1,600 additional homes would increase footfall in the village centre and recorded a £40,000 contribution towards Station Road/The Square public-realm improvement or a longer-term assessment. That contribution should be treated as one element of a wider programme. The new Local Plan and its infrastructure programme should align the CAAMP action agenda, the Birchington Commercial Centre Improvement work, developer contributions, Pride in Place investment and other funding into a coherent centre strategy with identified projects, costs, responsibilities and delivery triggers.^{6,14,15}

Section summary: Use consented housing growth to strengthen Station Road and The Square. Treat OL/TH/20/1755, its local centre and the CAAMP as one economic-place baseline: new neighbourhood facilities should complement the historic commercial centre, while committed growth helps justify and fund coordinated traffic, public-realm and centre investment.

5. Right employment in the right places

A strong economic strategy should reflect the distinct type and scale of employment appropriate to different settlements and sectors. NPPF policy E1 specifically requires plans to recognise the locational requirements of different sectors. Strategic freight and logistics, high-technology uses, large power users, tourism, agriculture, small professional services and local retail all have different needs and different impacts.¹

TDC should therefore establish a district-wide employment hierarchy. Large-scale or infrastructure-intensive uses should be directed to locations where access, grid capacity, water and wastewater, workforce catchments and neighbouring uses make them genuinely suitable. Smaller-scale workspace, services and local enterprise should be encouraged within and close to existing settlements, where they can support mixed communities and reduce unnecessary travel.^{1,7}

In Birchington, the evidence points to a predominantly small-business economy and a commercial centre with a diverse mix of independent shops and services, alongside tourism, leisure, agricultural and other rural businesses. The Local Plan should support the evolution of that economy rather than impose a generic employment-land model. Opportunities may include adaptable small units, shared or flexible workspace, reuse of suitable premises, digital connectivity, and business space associated with larger new neighbourhoods where it complements rather than competes with the village centre.¹⁰

Strategic commercial proposals should also be tested for the quality of the jobs and economic resilience they are expected to produce. Success should be measured through occupied premises, durable employment, business survival, productivity and accessibility to local residents, alongside conventional land-supply indicators, rather than through floorspace or site area alone.

5.1 Westwood Cross

Westwood Cross must be treated explicitly in the new Local Plan's economic geography. The adopted Local Plan places Westwood at the top of Thanet's retail hierarchy and seeks its evolution as a mixed-use business and residential community while resisting loss of overall commercial floorspace. In practice it functions as a district-wide retail and leisure campus: Westwood Cross currently promotes more than 40 shops together with dining and entertainment, and its central position means that its economic influence extends well beyond Broadstairs. It is therefore also a major employment location, supporting retail, hospitality, leisure, service, security, property-management and related jobs.^{11,19}

That role should be measured rather than assumed. TDC should establish a current Westwood employment and economic baseline covering full-time and part-time jobs, occupational mix, wages and training, vacancies, local recruitment, commuting patterns, business turnover where available, visitor numbers and expenditure retention within Thanet. This would allow the Local Plan to distinguish the benefits of retaining higher-order expenditure in the district from the risk that further concentration at Westwood could weaken the vitality and investment case of Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs, Birchington and other local centres.^{11,13}

Accessibility and parking are material to that competitive relationship. Westwood Cross advertises about 1,500 free visitor parking spaces, while TDC-managed town and local-centre car parks are charged; in Birchington, the September 2026 tariff at Albion Road and Alpha Road is GBP 1.40 for one hour and up to GBP 7.00 for longer stays. The Local Plan and Parking Strategy should assess how those differences affect destination choice and linked spending, alongside the role of charging in turnover, congestion management and sustainable travel.^{18,19}

The new Plan should therefore define complementary roles across the retail network. Westwood can continue to perform a higher-order retail, leisure and employment role, while the coastal and local centres develop distinctive strengths in independent retail, convenience, services, heritage, culture, hospitality and visitor activity. Future retail and leisure growth at Westwood should be tested for site capacity, transport effects, public-transport accessibility, the health of other centres and its contribution to the wider network of destinations on which Thanet's economy depends.^{1,11,17,19}

Section summary: Use a district-wide employment and retail hierarchy based on real sector requirements. Treat Westwood Cross as a strategic retail, leisure and employment campus, quantify its economic role and manage its relationship with coastal and local centres so that higher-order retail strength supports vitality across the wider network.

6. Rural diversification

A viable rural economy should be strongly supported. Farm and land-based businesses need scope to modernise and diversify, and the 2026 NPPF now gives this objective unusually clear weight. Policy E2 directs that substantial weight should be given to demonstrated benefits for domestic food production arising from farm and agricultural modernisation, while Policy E4 supports development which maintains and enhances farm viability and sustainability and

supports domestic food production. Rural leisure, tourism, farm shops and other diversification can therefore be positive where they strengthen the underlying agricultural enterprise.¹

The issue is one of scale, location and cumulative effect. The made Neighbourhood Plan already recognises that edge-of-village locations such as Quex Park, Hawk Place, Plum Pudding and Minnis Bay provide different experiences from the main commercial area and supports their continued operation and appropriate diversification where the setting of historic assets and landscapes and important views and vistas are safeguarded.¹⁰

The new Local Plan should carry that principle forward in a robust rural-diversification policy. It should distinguish genuine diversification or modernisation of a rural business from development whose principal relationship with the countryside is the availability of land. The scale and intensity of retail, leisure, storage, parking or general commercial activity should remain compatible with rural character and avoid creating a suburban business-park form in an open landscape.

A proportionate policy test should therefore consider: the functional relationship with the rural or land-based enterprise; whether existing buildings or previously developed land can be reused; the scale and form of new buildings; landscape and heritage setting; views and vistas; traffic and sustainable access; lighting, noise and operating hours; effects on productive agricultural land and biodiversity; the operational consequences for the farm business actually using the land; and the cumulative effect of previous permissions and related activities.^{1,5,10,16}

Quex Park illustrates the need for a nuanced approach. It is simultaneously an agricultural estate, heritage landscape, visitor destination and local economic asset. Its ability to evolve should be supported through a viable long-term estate economy in which productive agriculture remains an integral function, diversification is compatible with the character and setting which make Quex distinctive, and the countryside gap and wider village setting remain coherent.^{1,5,10,16}

6.1 Farm viability and tenant farming

The economic value of agricultural land should be assessed through ownership, Agricultural Land Classification, the market value of land released for development and the ability of the remaining farm to continue as a coherent, investible and productive business. Development or diversification may remove land, buildings or access routes; fragment fields; interfere with rotations or grazing systems; displace storage or machinery; increase traffic conflict; reduce access to water or infrastructure; or leave fixed costs spread over an uneconomic area. Individually small changes can therefore have a disproportionate effect on the viability and food-producing capacity of the holding.^{1,5,16}

This is particularly important where the person farming the land is a tenant rather than the freeholder promoting development. The Land Use Framework expressly recognises that the tenanted sector manages about 32% of England's agricultural land and that tenant farmers can face barriers to business resilience, investment and participation in land-use change. The Farming Roadmap 2050 similarly seeks a vibrant tenanted sector in which farmers have the security and opportunity to invest, innovate and plan for the long term regardless of land ownership. The Local Plan should therefore distinguish between ownership of land and

operation of the agricultural business and assess the effect on the farm enterprise separately from any benefit accruing to the freehold estate.^{5,16}

Significant development, allocation or commercial diversification affecting an active agricultural holding should be informed by a proportionate farm-business impact assessment. It should identify the operational holding, the role of the affected land, buildings and access, and the consequences for production, machinery, labour, environmental agreements and future investment. Cumulative effects and practical mitigation should also be assessed. Where land is tenanted, evidence should be obtained from the agricultural occupier as well as the freeholder.^{1,5,16}

A farm-business impact assessment is a planning tool for ensuring that decisions about permanent land-use change reflect the real economic and food-production consequences. ALC grade remains important, while operational value also depends on the functional role of land and infrastructure within the wider holding: lower-grade land, a yard, a track, a water source or a strategically placed field may be critical to viability. The assessment should therefore consider both land quality and the functional integrity of the farm business.^{1,5,16}

6.2 Large estates estate-wide masterplan

At Quex, the principal risk is the cumulative effect of a succession of individually plausible applications considered without an agreed picture of what the estate is intended to become. Quex combines productive agriculture, historic buildings and landscape, visitor attractions, events and leisure activity, businesses, routes and views, and close relationships with nearby homes and the wider village. Over time, additional buildings, compounds, storage, parking, access points, signage, lighting, servicing and extended operating hours can materially alter the estate even where each individual change appears modest.^{10,12}

For a large, multifunctional estate under continuing development pressure, a masterplanned approach is necessary to provide place-making coherence. The new Local Plan should identify Quex Park, and any comparable large landholding where significant diversification is expected, as a masterplan area. Its purpose should be to establish an investible long-term framework within which diversification can proceed with greater certainty while safeguarding the qualities that create the estate's economic, heritage, landscape and amenity value.^{1,10,12}

BPC's companion Historic Environment and Local Heritage Assets Submission now includes a candidate entry for specified non-designated historic designed-landscape and estate-service elements at Quex Park. That candidate is expressly subject to a designation, curtilage and Scheduled Monument audit. The proposed estate-wide masterplan should use the resulting mapped heritage evidence so that diversification is guided by the significance of the whole estate rather than by the red line of individual applications.²⁴

The masterplan should define: the estate-wide economic and visitor role; existing and committed uses; the agricultural operating structure, including active holdings and tenancies where relevant to land-use planning; areas suitable for different forms and intensities of activity; heritage significance and setting; landscape structure, important views and green-blue infrastructure; agricultural and BMV land; walking, cycling, public rights of way and vehicle movement; parking, servicing and logistics; relationships with Station Road, Minnis Road and

the OL/TH/20/1755 local centre; design, materials, signage and lighting; utilities and drainage; residential amenity and appropriate buffers; phasing; visitor management; and measurable cumulative-impact thresholds. It should also identify where reuse or intensification of existing buildings and developed areas should take precedence over further outward land take, and how diversification can reinforce the viability of farming on the estate.^{1,5,10,12,14,16}

The framework should be prepared collaboratively with the landowner, TDC and relevant heritage, landscape, highway and infrastructure bodies, with proportionate community engagement. It should be capable of periodic review as markets and estate activities evolve. Once agreed through the Local Plan, a supplementary planning document, design code or equivalent development framework, subsequent applications should demonstrate how they implement the whole-estate strategy, or clearly justify any departure from it.¹

OL/TH/20/1755 provides a useful local precedent for maintaining coherence across a large area and over a long delivery period. The consent uses parameter plans, phasing requirements, a whole-site open-space framework and a design code. The same planning principle is relevant to a large estate facing sustained commercial change, where cumulative consequences extend beyond the red line of any single application.¹⁴

The CAAMP's coordinated place-management principles are also relevant to Quex. Character, commercial vitality, traffic, public realm and amenity are interconnected and are better managed through a coordinated place strategy than through a series of isolated interventions. That principle should be applied at the scale of Quex Park in a form appropriate to the estate's particular functions and significance.¹⁵

Section summary: Support genuine farm and rural diversification but assess the operational viability of the farm business as well as the development opportunity, including where land is farmed by tenants. Treat domestic food production and productive agricultural capacity as strategic assets and require an estate-wide masterplan for Quex and comparable large estates before significant further commercial expansion.

7. Settlement form and separation

Containing urban sprawl supports a pro-growth spatial strategy. Clear settlement form provides certainty for investors and communities, protects the identity and attractiveness of individual places, reduces the risk of car-dependent ribbon development and helps direct infrastructure and public-realm investment to locations where it can achieve the greatest benefit.

The 2026 NPPF makes settlement boundaries central to the spatial strategy. It also permits policies or designations safeguarding gaps between settlements, but only where they are necessary to maintain the separate identities and physical separation of the settlements, are no larger than needed for that purpose, and are not Green Belt land. This is a tighter and more evidence-based test than a general desire to keep land open.¹

TDC should therefore review Thanet's existing Green Wedges and other locally important gaps against the new national test. Where a gap remains necessary, the evidence should identify precisely what settlement identities are being protected, how the land contributes to physical or perceptual separation, which views, landscape features or routes are important, and what minimum extent is required. Where the evidence supports protection, the designation should be carried forward clearly on the policies map.^{1,11,12}

For Birchington, the assessment should include the open land and landscape settings around the village, including the relationship with neighbouring settlements and rural hamlets, the setting of Quex, and the approaches to the village. It should assess cumulative change from housing, commercial and other forms of development. Commercial buildings, compounds, car parks, storage areas, signage and lighting can urbanise an edge just as effectively as residential development.^{10,12}

Where settlement-edge development is allocated, it should create a durable boundary rather than a new launching point for the next outward extension. Masterplans should use landscape structure, green infrastructure, walking and cycling links, drainage, trees and hedgerows to create a coherent edge that integrates with the existing settlement and the countryside beyond.¹

Section summary: Review settlement boundaries and gaps against the new NPPF test, protect only what can be objectively justified, and make those protections strong and precise. Urban sprawl should be assessed cumulatively across housing and commercial development.

8. Natural assets and productive land

Farmland, agriculture, landscape, biodiversity and the coast are productive and strategic assets and should inform site selection from the outset. Agriculture provides food, employment and rural enterprise; farmland also supports tourism, landscape character, biodiversity, climate resilience and the distinctive identity that makes Thanet and Birchington attractive places in which to live, visit and invest.^{1,5,16}

The NPPF reinforces this in several complementary ways. Policy N1 requires plan-makers to steer development towards land of least environmental value and to avoid higher quality agricultural land where poorer quality land is available. Policy N2 requires decision-makers to take agricultural land quality and grade into account. More unusually, Policy E2 directs substantial weight to demonstrated benefits for domestic food production from farm and agricultural modernisation, while E4 expressly supports development which maintains and enhances farm viability and sustainability and supports domestic food production. Agriculture is therefore part of the economic-growth framework as well as the environmental framework.¹

The wider Government policy direction is stronger still. The Land Use Framework makes a long-term commitment to maintain overall food production in England, safeguard the most productive farmland from permanent land-use change and make the food-security implications of strategic development decisions more visible to plan-makers. It expressly recognises farmers

as both owners and tenants and seeks to give tenant farmers the rights, data and certainty to invest with confidence. The June 2026 Farming Roadmap 2050 states that food production remains the primary purpose of farming, links domestic production and long-term productive capacity to national food security and economic resilience, and places farm profitability and investment at the centre of the transition to 2050.^{5,16}

This is especially relevant around Birchington, where the Neighbourhood Plan records extensive high quality agricultural land and places particular value on the farmland, trees, hedges, gardens, views and landscape setting associated with Quex and the wider village edge. The new Local Plan should use up-to-date Agricultural Land Classification evidence and assess cumulative loss of BMV land alongside the nature, landscape and heritage evidence, but it should also identify the active farm holdings affected and test whether the scale and configuration of remaining land would remain operationally viable.^{5,10,16}

Strategic food-producing capacity extends beyond hectares or ALC grade. The permanent loss of a field may have wider effects if it severs a holding, removes access to a yard or water source, prevents efficient machinery movements, disrupts crop rotation or grazing, undermines an environmental agreement or makes continued occupation uneconomic. Site selection and masterplanning should therefore assess agricultural holdings as functioning systems and consider cumulative loss and fragmentation as well as the classification of each individual parcel.^{5,16}

The Kent and Medway LNRS should also influence the comparison of economic growth locations at the outset. Nature recovery is more effective and less costly when it shapes site selection and green infrastructure from the beginning rather than being treated only as compensatory mitigation after a preferred commercial site has been selected.⁹

Section summary: Treat agriculture, domestic food production and viable farm holdings - including tenanted farms - as strategic economic and food-security assets. Use ALC, holding-level operational evidence and wider natural-capital evidence together when selecting sites and assessing cumulative development.

9. Tourism and the visitor economy

Tourism and leisure are important parts of Thanet's economy and are expressly recognised by NPPF policies E1 and E4. The latest economic-impact figures published by TDC report 4.6 million visitors to Thanet in 2023, £349 million of visitor-economy value and 8,257 supported jobs - around 19% of total employment in the district. Investment should extend the season, improve the quality and range of visitor experiences, strengthen local spending and support heritage, culture, food, coast and countryside-based activity.^{1,20}

For Birchington, the strongest opportunities are likely to be those which reinforce existing assets and routes: the village centre; Minnis Bay and the coast; Quex and local heritage; walking and cycling connections; local food and rural enterprises; and cultural or community events.

The Plan should encourage adaptive reuse and investment at existing visitor locations before assuming that new greenfield footprints are necessary.¹⁰

Visitor growth nevertheless has carrying-capacity consequences. Proposals and allocations should be tested against access and parking, public transport, water and wastewater, coastal and ecological sensitivity, landscape character, residential amenity, seasonal peaks and the effect of lighting or extended operating hours. The sustainability of tourism proposals depends on how these factors are addressed as well as on their ability to attract visitors.

The objective should be a higher-value, more resilient and more locally rooted visitor economy. That is compatible with protecting the very coast, countryside, heritage and village character on which much of the visitor offer depends.

9.1 Strategic visitor anchors

Thanet's visitor economy depends on a network of recognisable destinations and the connections between them. Major anchors include Dreamland, Turner Contemporary, the Winter Gardens, Theatre Royal, the Granville Theatre, Ramsgate Royal Harbour and the district's beaches and bays, supported by events and independent hospitality and creative businesses. Their performance affects accommodation, food and drink, retail, transport and employment across Thanet.²⁰

Dreamland remains a major family attraction and live-entertainment venue with an active 2026 programme. The retirement of the Grade II* Scenic Railway from operation as a ride in 2026 illustrates how the role and offer of strategic visitor anchors can change over time. The long-term role of the Dreamland site, its heritage assets, event function, access and relationship with Margate town centre should be treated as strategically important to the visitor economy and monitored accordingly.²³

The same applies to Margate's major publicly supported cultural assets. TDC's current programme for the Winter Gardens is based on an agreement with Westwood One Theatre and substantial public and private investment to restore it as a multi-use entertainment, leisure and education venue, with the principal halls expected to reopen in 2027. In July 2026 the Council also approved the restoration plans for Theatre Royal Margate and is working towards reopening for the 2027 pantomime season while selecting an operator. These heritage projects also have major economic functions as prospective generators of footfall, evening activity, skills, jobs and private spending, and their delivery, viability and connectivity should be embedded in the economic strategy.^{21,22}

The new Local Plan should therefore identify a district-wide network of strategic visitor anchors and assess their catchments, seasonality, event peaks, investment plans and dependencies on rail, bus, coach access, parking, public realm, accommodation and the evening economy. It should also consider the consequences if a major venue closes, is delayed or materially changes its offer. The objective should be resilience through a strong and complementary portfolio of destinations, rather than reliance on any single attraction or the assumption that visitor growth can be generated simply by allocating additional commercial land.^{1,20,21,22,23}

Section summary: Support a year-round, higher-value visitor economy by protecting and strengthening the district's strategic attraction network. Treat Dreamland, the Winter Gardens, Theatre Royal and other major cultural, coastal and leisure destinations as economic infrastructure whose viability, access and connectivity affect jobs, footfall and spending across Thanet.

10. Economic growth integration

Commercial land must be planned with the infrastructure required to make it usable. NPPF policy E1 specifically identifies inadequate infrastructure, services, housing and poor environmental quality as potential barriers to investment. The Government's 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy similarly calls for a joined-up view across economic, housing and social infrastructure.^{1,7}

For major employment locations, the evidence should therefore confirm transport access, sustainable travel, power and grid connections, water and wastewater capacity, digital connectivity and any strategic freight requirements before allocation. The Plan should distinguish infrastructure that already exists from upgrades that are merely assumed, and should identify who is expected to fund and deliver those upgrades and when.^{1,7}

At the local scale, economic development should also strengthen access between homes, jobs and services. In Birchington, new development should improve safe walking, wheeling and cycling links to the commercial centre and station rather than creating isolated roadside destinations accessible mainly by car. The relationship between the strategic housing growth, the existing village, the station, Quex and other employment or visitor destinations should be planned as a connected place.^{1,10}

The Green Book Review's move towards place-based business cases is relevant here. It encourages public investment to be considered as a package of complementary interventions rather than isolated schemes. Where TDC identifies a major growth or regeneration location, its Local Plan evidence should show how business space, housing, transport, skills, utilities and public realm work together as a credible investment proposition.⁸

10.1 Parking policy

TDC's Parking Strategy 2024-2044 provides the framework for parking management across the district and is intended to support wider Council objectives. That makes it directly relevant to the Local Plan. Parking supply, tariffs, duration, operating hours, enforcement, accessibility and wayfinding affect how easily residents and visitors can use town centres, beaches, cultural venues and employment destinations, and should therefore be planned alongside retail, tourism, regeneration and sustainable-transport policy rather than as a separate operational service.¹⁷

The contrast between charged public parking in the coastal and local centres and free parking at Westwood Cross is especially important. It would be too simplistic to conclude that lower charges are always economically preferable: well-designed tariffs can improve turnover,

manage congestion and support a shift to public transport, walking and cycling. Equally, charges which are poorly calibrated to the location, time of day or purpose of the trip can deter discretionary visits, shorten dwell time or redirect expenditure to competing destinations with easier or cheaper parking.^{17,18,19}

TDC should therefore subject significant changes in parking policy and tariffs to a destination and economic-impact test. Evidence should include occupancy and turnover, duration of stay, footfall and vacancy, trader and visitor surveys, event and evening demand, accessibility for disabled and older users, employee parking needs, public-transport alternatives, displacement into residential streets, comparative costs at competing destinations and, where practicable, changes in visitor spending. The test should establish the real behavioural and economic consequences of the chosen charging regime and inform a balanced approach to access and sustainable travel.^{17,18,20}

For the Local Plan, major centres and strategic visitor destinations should have integrated access plans covering rail and bus links, walking and cycling, coach provision, appropriate car parking, electric-vehicle charging, event-day management and clear wayfinding. Parking policy should support the intended economic role of each place and reinforce public investment in high streets, cultural venues and visitor attractions by maintaining competitive access while viable sustainable alternatives are developed.^{1,6,17,20}

Section summary: Only allocate major growth where enabling infrastructure and access are credible. Integrate the Local Plan with the Parking Strategy and test parking tariffs and management against sustainable-transport objectives and the economic viability of town centres, employment locations and strategic visitor destinations.

11. Prevent cumulative drift

A sound economic strategy needs more than broad supportive wording. It should translate into a policies map, allocations and locally specific criteria that allow applicants, officers, communities and infrastructure providers to understand what type and scale of change is intended in each location.¹

All significant commercial and mixed-use allocations should be accompanied by a short location-specific delivery statement identifying the intended economic role, likely uses and flexibility, access and infrastructure requirements, landscape and design parameters, relationship to centres and settlements, phasing, key dependencies and measurable outcomes. This would provide flexibility within an agreed spatial framework while retaining clarity about the framework itself.

Where a major landholding supports multiple economic, heritage, landscape and community functions, sequential applications should operate within an agreed spatial framework. The Local Plan should require an estate-wide masterplan where cumulative change could materially alter the economic role, character or amenity of the wider holding or adjoining communities. The whole-site controls attached to OL/TH/20/1755 illustrate why a proportionate framework of

parameters, phasing, design and infrastructure is necessary when change is substantial and long term.^{1,14}

Monitoring should focus on outcomes rather than hectares allocated or permissions issued. The annual framework should track, as appropriate, occupied employment floorspace, jobs and job quality; Westwood Cross employment and retail performance; centre vacancy and footfall; parking occupancy, tariffs and evidence of destination displacement; use of vacant premises; visitor numbers, spending and seasonality; the delivery and operating status of strategic visitor anchors; commuting and sustainable-access performance; delivery of infrastructure; loss of BMV agricultural land; material fragmentation or loss of productive farm holdings; condition of important landscape or ecological assets; and any material erosion of settlement gaps.^{13,16,17,20}

Where a pattern of permissions begins to produce an outcome materially different from the Plan - for example incremental commercialisation of a rural edge, continuing centre vacancy despite new out-of-centre floorspace, fragmentation of a major estate through unrelated commercial permissions, or employment land remaining unoccupied - TDC should diagnose the cause and intervene through policy review, masterplanning, infrastructure investment, enforcement or other appropriate measures.

Section summary: Create location-specific economic allocations and monitor real outcomes. Monitoring should identify cumulative drift early and trigger corrective action before the character or economic function of a place changes materially.

12. Conclusion

Birchington Parish Council supports a new Local Plan which is ambitious for Thanet's economy. The district needs business investment, better jobs, resilient town and local centres, a strong and accessible Westwood Cross, a stronger visitor economy, viable rural enterprises and sufficient modern premises for sectors that can grow. It also needs to protect the performance of strategic cultural and visitor assets because their success generates footfall, employment and spending across the wider district. National policy strongly supports those objectives.^{1,4,11,20}

The same national policy also provides the tools needed to ensure that growth is well located. The NPPF requires a spatial strategy, settlement boundaries, a clear approach to town centres, evidence-led site allocations, appropriate rural diversification, good design and protection and enhancement of the natural environment. It also gives substantial weight to demonstrated domestic food-production benefits from agricultural modernisation and supports development which maintains farm viability. The Land Use Framework and Farming Roadmap add a wider strategic principle: finite productive land, food-production capacity and viable farm businesses should be treated as part of national resilience while development, nature and economic growth are planned together.^{1,5,16}

For Birchington, the central planning question is how economic growth can make the existing village and its rural setting function better. The approach should begin with Station Road and The Square, existing and underused premises, appropriate small-business and visitor-economy opportunities, genuine farm and rural diversification, and strategic employment sites located

where their operational requirements can be met. It should preserve the capacity of viable farms to continue producing food and investing for the future, strengthen the village centre and direct growth to locations that maintain a coherent and durable settlement edge.^{1,5,10,16}

That means planning explicitly around the committed OL/TH/20/1755 growth and its new local centre, using the CAAMP as part of the evidence for strengthening Station Road and The Square, treating Quex Park as a whole-place economic, agricultural, heritage, landscape and visitor asset, defining Westwood Cross's district-wide retail and employment role, aligning parking and access policy with the viability of centres, and safeguarding the network of major visitor destinations including Dreamland, the Winter Gardens and Theatre Royal. In each case the objective is coordination: growth and public investment should add value to the wider place rather than create a collection of individually justified but collectively conflicting interventions.^{10,14,15,17,19,20,21,22,23}

A Plan which follows that approach will be pro-growth and pro-place at the same time. It will offer businesses greater certainty, protect the natural and cultural assets on which local prosperity depends, and provide a stronger basis for attracting infrastructure and investment over the plan period.

Section summary: Economic growth should follow a clear place-based hierarchy: strengthen centres; reuse and intensify suitable existing land; support genuine rural diversification; allocate strategic business uses to genuinely suitable locations; and protect the settlement form and natural assets that underpin long-term prosperity.

13. Recommendations

1. Evidence and economic vision - Complete a policy-to-delivery audit of the 2020 Local Plan, then set a district economic vision grounded in sector needs, business evidence and realistic market signals. The audit should show where planned jobs, floorspace and investment have or have not materialised.^{1,4,11,13,17,20}

2. Centres, Westwood and destination access - Strengthen town and local centres first, define Westwood Cross's district-wide retail, leisure and employment role, and align destination access and parking with the Local Plan. For Birchington, treat the consented local centre and the CAAMP as part of the commercial baseline.^{1,6,10,11,14,15,17,18,19,20}

3. Employment hierarchy and enabling infrastructure - Define the roles of strategic employment areas, centres, local business areas, mixed-use growth and rural locations. Select significant economic allocations only where transport, sustainable access, utilities, digital capacity and other enabling infrastructure are deliverable.^{1,7,8,17}

4. Rural diversification and farm viability - Support genuine farm, rural and visitor-economy diversification while testing functional need, reuse of buildings and previously developed land, access, amenity and cumulative effects. Where active holdings are affected, assess operational viability, food-production capacity and the position of tenant farmers or other occupiers.^{1,5,10,16}

5. Settlement form, productive land and natural capital - Review settlement boundaries and gaps against current policy and retain only clearly justified protections. Treat productive agricultural land, viable farm holdings, domestic food production and natural-capital evidence as strategic considerations when comparing locations and cumulative land-use change.^{1,5,9,10,11,12,16}

6. Character, design and estate-wide masterplanning - Use the CAAMP, locally specific design policies and masterplans to shape commercial and mixed-use growth. For Quex Park and comparable large estates, use a whole-estate framework that coordinates economic role, heritage, landscape, agriculture, access, servicing, infrastructure, phasing and cumulative effects.^{1,5,10,12,14,15,16}

7. Visitor economy and strategic anchors - Promote a year-round, higher-value visitor economy and treat major attractions and cultural enterprises, including Dreamland, the Winter Gardens and Theatre Royal, as strategic economic anchors whose viability, access, investment and wider town-centre contribution should be monitored.^{1,11,20,21,22,23}

8. Brownfield priority and outcome monitoring - Bring forward suitable vacant, underused and previously developed land and premises before concluding that additional greenfield commercial land is needed. Publish a concise annual set of economic and place indicators and intervene where delivery, centre vitality, visitor performance, infrastructure or land-use outcomes materially diverge from the Plan.^{1,3,5,13,16,17,20}

Section summary: These eight grouped priorities should form the economic-development, diversification and place-management framework for the next stage of Local Plan preparation.

Appendix A - Recommendations, NPPF and Wider Government Policy Matrix

This matrix breaks the eight grouped recommendations into their principal policy components and shows how they relate to the August 2026 NPPF and wider Government and local policy. Superscript numbers refer to Appendix B.

Recommended Local Plan action	NPPF 2026 basis	Wider statutory / Government / local policy	Required evidence or action
Audit economic delivery	PM7, PM8, E1	Thanet Local Plan and AMR; Industrial Strategy; Parking Strategy; tourism economic-impact evidence ^{1,4,11,13,17,20}	Trace strategy, allocation and permission through to occupied space, jobs, Westwood and centre performance, parking/access, visitor anchors and actual business outcomes. ^{1,4,11,13,17,20}
Set the economic vision	PM2, S1, E1	Modern Industrial Strategy; TDC scoping work ^{1,2,4}	Define the sectors and business needs to be supported, the economic role of different places and the intended outcomes. ^{1,2,4}
Strengthen centres first	TC1-TC4, L1, DP1	Pride in Place Strategy; Birchington Neighbourhood Plan; Birchington CAAMP; OL/TH/20/1755 ^{1,6,10,14,15}	Treat committed OL/TH/20/1755 growth and local-centre floorspace as part of the baseline and coordinate Station Road/The Square public realm, traffic management and commercial strategy. ^{1,6,10,14,15}
Define Westwood Cross and the retail network	TC1-TC4, E1, TR1-TR3	Thanet Local Plan; Westwood Cross current centre and parking information ^{11,19}	Quantify Westwood jobs and economic role, define its complementary relationship with coastal/local centres and assess retail, transport and parking effects of further growth. ^{11,17,19}
Create an employment hierarchy	E1-E3, S2	Industrial Strategy; 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy ^{1,4,7}	Distinguish strategic employment, local centres, mixed-use areas and rural business locations and match allocations to sector requirements. ^{1,4,7}
Support rural diversification	E2, E4, S5	Land Use Framework; Farming Roadmap 2050; Birchington Neighbourhood Plan ^{5,10,16}	Use reuse-first, functional-relationship, scale, access, landscape, heritage, farm-viability and cumulative-impact tests. ^{1,5,10,16}

Protect farm viability and tenant farming	E2, E4, N1, N2	Land Use Framework; Farming Roadmap 2050 ^{5,16}	Assess the active holding as an operating business, including land fragmentation, access, buildings, infrastructure, food-production capacity and evidence from tenant/occupier where relevant. ^{1,5,16}
Protect settlement identity	S2, S5	Thanet LCA; Birchington Neighbourhood Plan ^{1,10,12}	Review settlement boundaries and gaps using evidence of separate identity and physical separation; protect no more land than necessary. ^{1,10,12}
Integrate agriculture and natural capital	E2, E4, N1, N2	Land Use Framework; Farming Roadmap 2050; Kent and Medway LNRS ^{5,9,16}	Use food-production capacity, farm viability, ALC/BMV, natural capital, ecological networks and landscape evidence together in comparative site selection. ^{1,5,9,16}
Design for local character	DP1-DP3	Birchington Neighbourhood Plan; Thanet LCA; Birchington CAAMP ^{1,10,12,15}	Use locally specific design expectations, the CAAMP, design codes and masterplans for centres, edges, major allocations and cumulative change. ^{1,10,12,15}
Masterplan large estates	DP1-DP3, E2, E4, S2	Birchington Neighbourhood Plan; Thanet LCA; Birchington CAAMP; OL/TH/20/1755 whole-site control framework; Farming Roadmap 2050 ^{10,12,14,15,16}	Require an estate-wide framework for Quex Park and comparable multi-functional landholdings, including agricultural operations/tenancies, food-production capacity, landscape and heritage structure, movement, access, design, amenity, infrastructure, phasing and cumulative thresholds. ^{1,5,10,12,14,15,16}
Secure visitor economy and strategic anchors	E1, E4, TC1	Thanet Local Plan; Pride in Place; tourism economic-impact evidence; Winter Gardens, Theatre Royal and Dreamland programmes ^{1,6,11,20,21,22,23}	Map strategic attractions, investment programmes, linked trips and dependencies; monitor viability and support year-round activity while assessing carrying capacity and local impacts. ^{1,6,11,20,21,22,23}
Plan parking as destination infrastructure	TC1, TR1-TR3, E1	TDC Parking Strategy 2024-2044; current TDC tariffs; Westwood Cross parking ^{17,18,19}	Test tariffs, supply and operating hours against turnover, footfall, visitor spend, accessibility, sustainable alternatives and competition between destinations. ^{1,17,18,19,20}
Use existing land efficiently	L1, L2, TC1	Land Use Framework; TDC Call for Sites ^{1,3,5}	Identify vacant, underused and PDL opportunities before concluding additional greenfield commercial land is needed. ^{1,3,5}

Plan infrastructure with growth	E1, TR1-TR3, W1	10-Year Infrastructure Strategy; Green Book Review; Parking Strategy ^{1,7,8,17}	Confirm transport, utilities, digital and other enabling capacity and integrate economic allocations, visitor destinations and access into place-based investment cases. ^{1,7,8,17}
Monitor and intervene	PM2, PM7, PM15	Thanet AMR framework; Farming Roadmap 2050; Parking Strategy; tourism impact evidence ^{13,16,17,20}	Track occupied space, jobs, Westwood and centre health, parking/access, visitor anchors, BMV loss, farm fragmentation, natural-asset loss and settlement-edge change; identify corrective action where outcomes diverge. ^{1,13,16,17,20}

Appendix B - Reference Table

The superscript references used in the main response and Appendix A correspond to the sources below. Official Government, local-authority and adopted development-plan sources are used wherever available.

Ref	Source / document	Date / status	Relevance	Availability
1	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government National Planning Policy Framework	17 August 2026	Primary national planning policy for plan-making and development management.	Open source
2	Thanet District Council New Thanet Local Plan - Scoping Consultation: What is a Local Plan and what should be in it?	August 2026	Thanet scoping context, emerging objectives, economic growth, town centres, environmental protection and SDS relationship.	Open source
3	Thanet District Council New Thanet Local Plan - Call for Sites	August 2026	Current site-availability exercise and brownfield search for housing and employment needs.	Open source
4	Department for Business and Trade The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy	23 June 2025; updated 9 June 2026	Ten-year strategy to increase business investment in eight growth-driving sectors and provide long-term certainty.	Open source
5	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Land Use Framework for England	18 March 2026; updated 6 May 2026	National framework for right-use-right-place, multifunctional land use, food production, development, resilience and nature.	Open source
6	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Pride in Place Strategy	25 September 2025	Government policy on thriving places, high-street and town-centre revitalisation, public realm, local identity and diversification.	Open source
7	HM Treasury / National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy	19 June 2025	Long-term strategy for coordinated economic, housing and social infrastructure to support growth.	Open source
8	HM Treasury Green Book Review 2025: Findings and actions	11 June 2025	Introduces place-based business cases and stronger assessment of complementary investments such as housing, transport and skills.	Open source

9	Kent County Council / Medway Council Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy	Published 5 December 2025; post-publication update January 2026	Spatial priorities and opportunities for nature recovery across Kent and Medway.	Open source
10	Birchington Parish Council / Thanet District Council Birchington Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2031 - Made Version	7 December 2023	Local policies and evidence on economic development, commercial areas, rural diversification, agricultural land, local character and settlement setting.	Open source
11	Thanet District Council Thanet Local Plan - Adopted July 2020	9 July 2020	Existing development-plan strategy for economic growth, employment land, town centres, tourism, rural economy and environmental protection.	Open source
12	Thanet District Council Thanet Landscape Character Assessment - Supplementary Planning Document	Adopted 9 July 2020	Landscape character evidence and guidance supporting local distinctiveness and assessment of change.	Open source
13	Thanet District Council Annual Monitoring Report 2025 / Monitoring and Evidence	Monitoring year to 31 March 2025	Current monitoring framework for implementation and achievement of adopted Local Plan policies.	Open source
14	Thanet District Council OL/TH/20/1755 - Land North and East of Canterbury Road, Birchington: Planning Committee report, conditions and outline permission	Committee resolution November 2024; outline permission issued 23 December 2025	Committed mixed-use extension of up to 1,600 homes; 600 sqm local centre; relationship with Station Road; village-centre public-realm effects; parameter-plan, phasing and design-code framework.	Open source
15	Thanet District Council / Alan Baxter Ltd Birchington-on-Sea Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan	Finalised and published July 2024	Evidence and recommendations for Station Road historic commercial character, The Square traffic and public realm, sympathetic development management and future conservation-area management.	Open source
16	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Farming Roadmap 2050: Growing England's Future	24 June 2026	Long-term national policy for a profitable, productive and resilient farming sector; food production as farming's primary purpose; food security, productive capacity, investment and a vibrant tenanted sector.	Open source

17	Thanet District Council Parking Strategy 2024-2044	2024-2044 strategy; current TDC framework	District-wide framework for parking management and its relationship with wider Council objectives, access and sustainable movement.	Open source
18	Thanet District Council Car park charges	Current at September 2026	Current off-street parking charging hours and tariffs, including Birchington car parks.	Open source
19	Westwood Cross Shopping Centre Parking and current centre information	Current at September 2026	Evidence of the scale and accessibility of the retail/leisure campus, including approximately 1,500 free visitor parking spaces and more than 40 shops.	Open source
20	Thanet District Council Thanet tourism economic-impact update	Published 10 December 2024; reports 2023 data	Latest TDC-published visitor-economy impact evidence: 4.6m visitors, £349m value and 8,257 supported jobs (19% of district employment) in 2023.	Open source
21	Thanet District Council Margate Winter Gardens regeneration update	28 April 2026; wider programme targets 2027 reopening	Current partnership, grant and regeneration programme for the Winter Gardens as an entertainment, leisure, education and visitor-economy anchor.	Open source
22	Thanet District Council Historic Theatre Royal Margate set to reopen in 2027 after major plans approved	20 July 2026	Approved restoration and operator programme for a major cultural and visitor-economy asset, with reopening targeted for the 2027 pantomime season.	Open source
23	Dreamland Margate The Future of the Scenic Railway / current Dreamland programme	2026	Current evidence that Dreamland remains an active visitor and live-entertainment destination while a major heritage component, the Scenic Railway, is being reimagined following retirement as an operating ride.	Open source
24	Birchington Parish Council Historic Environment and Local Heritage Assets Submission	September 2026	Companion BPC submission containing the 60-candidate local heritage list, including bounded non-designated Quex Park landscape and estate-service features.	BPC companion submission
25	Birchington Parish Council Core New Thanet Local Plan Scoping Response	September 2026	Principal BPC submission on sustainable capacity, spatial choice, delivery and monitoring.	BPC companion submission

26	Birchington Parish Council Housing, Spatial Distribution and Delivery Response	September 2026	Companion BPC response on locally evidenced housing needs, housing quantum options, spatial distribution, sustainable capacity and delivery.	BPC companion submission
27	Birchington Parish Council Highways, Sustainable Transport and Movement Response	September 2026	Companion BPC response on accessibility, transport capacity, strategic dependencies and delivery.	BPC companion submission
28	Birchington Parish Council Public Services, Utilities and Community Infrastructure Response	September 2026	Companion BPC response on education, health, utilities, emergency services, operational capacity and delivery.	BPC companion submission