

5.6a. District Dashboard Gravesham

Gravesham is one of the lowest districts in the county for both business and holiday bed-nights, as well as MICE capacity (bottom third) and group tour capacity (12/13 – just above Ashford). According to the Cambridge Model Impact Analysis for 2017, Gravesham has the lowest proportion of visitors staying in paid accommodation of all the districts of Kent (48%). The accommodation audit research found no 4* establishments in Gravesham, but Gravesham comes in the mid-third for the county in terms of 3*/budget accommodation. In line with the current low levels of demand for accommodation, Airbnb provision is lowest here out of the 13 Kent districts. It is similar to Medway and Dartford, with a higher proportion of ‘room only’ rentals, centered mostly around Gravesend. Given this profile, the rental demand metric is also lower than most other districts in Kent. The proposed London Resort development may provide a future stimulus to accommodation demand.

12/13 for **BUSINESS NIGHTS**: 99,000 bed-nights = 4% of total for Kent
13/13 for **HOLIDAY NIGHTS**: 198,000 bed-nights = 2.5% of total for Kent

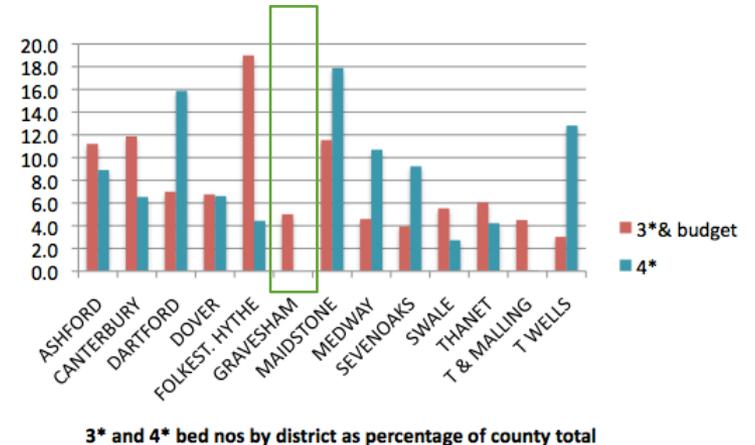
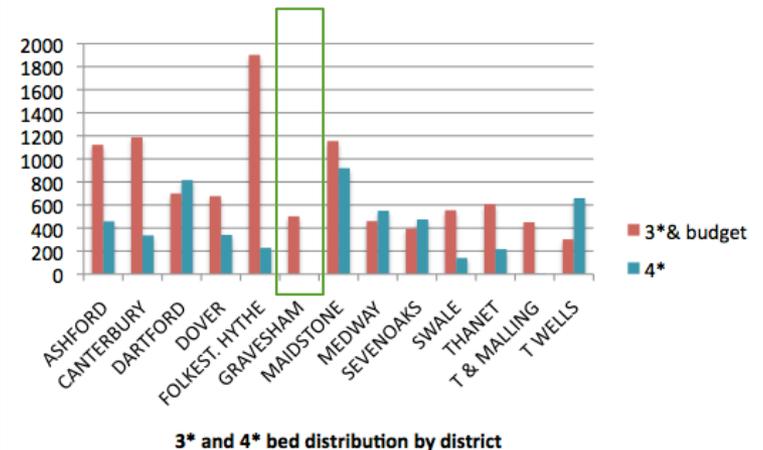
5 **MICE-ready** accommodation establishments = 5.6% of county total
Total **MICE capacity**: 870 = 5.4% of county capacity within accommodation establishments

Largest single MICE venue capacity: 350



Group tour-ready establishments: 2 = 2.2% of Kent total

Airbnb: 109 **ACTIVE RENTALS** with a **rental growth** of **419%** between 2016 (Q2) and 2019 (Q2). **Rental demand** 68 (11 /13)



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

5.6b. Gravesham (interview findings)

Visitor Offer

Whilst much of Gravesham's visitation is VFR related, the borough has significant tourism assets: heritage (National Trust, links with Dickens – including his country home, Gad's Hill Place – riverside heritage, and the Sikh Guru Nanak Darbar Gudwara, the largest in the country, which is attracting a growing visitor and wedding market), and countryside, including villages, Kent Downs AONB, country parks and Cyclopark. The Borough's commercial attractions have been enhanced by the opening in central Gravesend of *The Panic Room* - a multi award winning escape room experience believed to be the largest in the UK, which is attracting visitors from all over the world. In addition, the London International Cruise Terminal at Tilbury saw growth in the number of cruise ship arrivals in excess of 40 per year before the COVID crisis.

Key Drivers for the Visitor Economy

Gravesham is part of the Thames Gateway and location, good transport connections, and infrastructure development are key drivers for its development and growth. With a 24 minute rail journey from Gravesend into central London, direct links to the continent from Ebbsfleet, and potential also for developing fast river services into London, connectivity will be further improved with the completion of the Lower Thames Crossing east of Gravesend between Kent and Essex, scheduled for 2027. Town centre regeneration in Gravesend will see nearly 1000 new town centre dwellings, whilst the Ebbsfleet Garden City will add a further 15,000 homes in and to the east of the borough.

Whilst Gravesham currently punches below its weight, the tourism strategy will play an increasingly important part in the Borough's economic development, with plans to reduce seasonality, increase the commercial attractions and visitor accommodation available, address the cruise market, strengthen the heritage offer, and attract walkers and cyclists to the rural areas. The tourism strategy should also allow the wider destination to capitalise on visitation to the planned London Resort by appealing to independent travellers.

Drivers



Main:

Connectivity – fast rail service to London and continent, potential for fast river service, gateway for Tilbury Cruise Terminal.

Infrastructure projects – Ebbsfleet Garden City, Lower Thames Crossing (due to open 2027).

Supplementary:

Visitor offer – heritage (riverside, literary), countryside and nature, escape room experience.

Policy – tourism strategy will play a key role in the Borough's economic and town centre regeneration plans.

Potential:

Visitor offer – London Resort.

5.6b. Gravesham (interview findings)

Gaps in Provision

Gravesham's current mix of accommodation reflects its VFR market and proximity to transit routes, with the A2 corridor in particular attracting 3*/budget accommodation. The MICE market is not yet significant, and the conferencing + accommodation package has not been developed, although this may change in the future. The Borough and Ebbsfleet Development Corporation want to attract inward investment into the accommodation sector, with hotels planned for Ebbsfleet Garden City, and in the regeneration plans for Gravesend town centre; whilst the London Resort plans include 3,500 rooms in the leisure core. With some current uncertainty about the future viability of the traditional hotel model, the Borough is keen to encourage a mix of accommodation, including provision in rural areas appropriate to the surroundings and the safeguarding of the AONB.

Links to key planning and policy documents

Gravesham **Local Plan Core Strategy** (updated 19/3/20) <https://www.gravesham.gov.uk/home/planning-and-building/local-plan/gravesham-local-plan-core-strategy>

New **Tourism Strategy** – advancing through Council Cabinet Committee, September 2020
Ebbsfleet Development Corporation Corporate Plan 2016-2021 <https://ebbsfleetdc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/PUBLIC-Corporate-Plan-V1.pdf>

Ebbsfleet Implementation Framework <https://ebbsfleetdc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Ebbsfleet-Implementation-Framework.pdf>

North Kent Enterprise Zone – incentives and support for 'commercial property developers and companies wishing to invest in new business premises as well as from start-up and existing companies looking to locate in the Kent Innovation Corridor' <https://www.gravesham.gov.uk/home/business/business-support/business-property/north-kent-enterprise-zone>

Priority gaps

Mix of hotel accommodation

Rural areas – location-appropriate accommodation

Support for inward investment:



Joint ventures:

The Council is working with the Reef Group to bring forward its town centre redevelopment schemes, which include proposals for an 88-bed hotel.



Assisted zone:

Possible support for accommodation investment from the North Kent Enterprise Zone.



Enabling environment:

Further support may be available, once impact of London Resort clear.