



ECONOMIC MONITORING 2019/2020

Summary Economic Statistics

This section of the Authority Monitoring Report covers the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 and contains information on yearly employment completions and performance against economic policies/ indicators set out in the Local Plan 2030 Appendix 6.

Key statistics:

- **Net employment floorspace gain of 16,240 sqm.**
- **88% of net “A” class employment floorspace gain is in Ashford Town Centre and urban area.**
- **Net employment floorspace under construction: 30,076 sqm.**
- **Net employment floorspace not started: 324,035 sqm.**

Note: Changes to use classes set out in The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 came into force on 1 September 2020 through The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020. This AMR report covers the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, which precedes the changes to the Use Classes and the use classes referred to in this report are those in force at the end of the 2019/2020 monitoring year.

Employment Growth

The Ashford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 Policy SP3 (*Strategic Approach to Economic Development*) seeks to support sustainable economic development, job growth and prosperity with the stated intention to deliver 63 hectares of new employment land and a total of 11,100 jobs in the Borough between 2014 – 2030. This policy aim ensures that job creation would progress in tandem with population growth in the Borough.

Kent County Council (KCC) produce annual reports using the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), a series of data compiled by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) for job figures in particular locations. This data is gathered by surveying a small number of companies in an area and making assumptions about the Borough based on this data (excluding certain types of businesses, such as agriculture).

The latest report covers employment statistics in 2019, detailing the distribution of jobs across the Borough and the relative growth/decline of jobs in certain sectors.

Below are the results of the report specific to Ashford. This identifies the largest increase in the *construction* sector (+16.7%) compared with 2018. The largest decrease in sector growth is in the *finance and insurance activities* sector of -26.9%.

Ashford	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Change 2018 - 2019		Structure 2015	Structure 2019
						No.	%	%	%
Primary Industries (Agriculture/Mining/Utilities)	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,900	200	11.8%	3.1%	3.3%
Manufacturing	5,000	4,800	4,800	5,000	5,500	500	10.0%	9.2%	9.5%
Construction	2,300	2,400	3,300	3,000	3,500	500	16.7%	4.1%	6.0%
Wholesale and retail trade	11,500	12,000	11,500	12,000	12,500	500	4.2%	21.2%	21.5%
Transportation and storage	2,500	3,300	3,000	2,500	2,400	-100	-5.0%	4.6%	4.1%
Accommodation and food service activities	3,800	3,500	3,500	3,500	4,000	500	14.3%	6.9%	6.9%
Information and communication	1,500	1,500	1,400	1,300	1,400	100	10.0%	2.8%	2.4%
Financial and insurance activities	700	600	600	700	500	-200	-26.9%	1.3%	0.8%
Real estate activities	600	800	700	700	700	0	0.0%	1.1%	1.1%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	4,000	3,500	3,000	3,300	3,800	500	15.4%	7.4%	6.4%
Administrative and support service activities	3,800	5,000	5,000	4,500	4,500	0	0.0%	6.9%	7.7%
Public administration and defence	1,800	2,000	1,800	1,600	1,800	100	7.7%	3.2%	3.0%
Education	4,300	4,300	4,300	4,000	4,300	300	6.3%	7.8%	7.3%
Human health and social work activities	8,500	8,000	9,000	9,000	9,500	500	5.6%	15.6%	16.3%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1,100	1,000	1,300	1,100	900	-200	-20.0%	2.1%	1.5%
Other service activities	1,500	1,800	1,600	1,300	1,300	0	0.0%	2.8%	2.1%
Total	54,400	56,000	56,300	55,000	58,200	3,200	5.8%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/8180/Business-Register-and-Employment-Survey-BRES.pdf

Residents in Employment

Using the most up-to-date ONS Nomis official labour market statistics, we are able to record growth in the number of people employed in Ashford Borough.

These statistics indicate that, in April 2019 - March 2020, there were 71,000 people employed in the borough. This represents an employment percentage of 84.2% among those aged between 16 and 64. This is higher than the Great Britain national percentage of 79.1%, and higher than the regional South East percentage (82.3%).

Over a five-year period of comparison, these statistics indicate a decrease of 8,900 in the number of employed individuals from 62,100 in April 2014 – March 2015. This is an increase of 3.1% in the population aged 16-64 in employment within the borough.

Source:

https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157311/subreports/ea_time_series/report.aspx

Job Density

The most recent job density statistics for Ashford Borough, again using the ONS Nomis data, illustrate a positive improvement. The statistics indicate a job density of 0.97, with an average of 97 jobs per 100 residents aged 16-64, in 2018. This compares with job density 5 years ago in 2013 of 0.83.

The 2018 data is significantly higher than both the regional South East density of 0.88, and the national density in Great Britain of 0.86.

Source:

https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157311/subreports/jd_time_series/report.aspx

Business growth

Business demographic statistics released by KCC give a good indication of the business environment health in Ashford Borough, particularly looking at the business birth/death ratio.

The data specifies that in 2019 there were 825 new enterprise births, which is 50 more than the previous year (775 in 2018), equating to a birth rate of 12.4. Likewise, in 2019 there were 735 enterprise death, resulting in an enterprise death rate of 11.0. From this data, we can produce an enterprise birth to death ratio of 1.12. This is a decrease from the 2018 rate of 1.45.

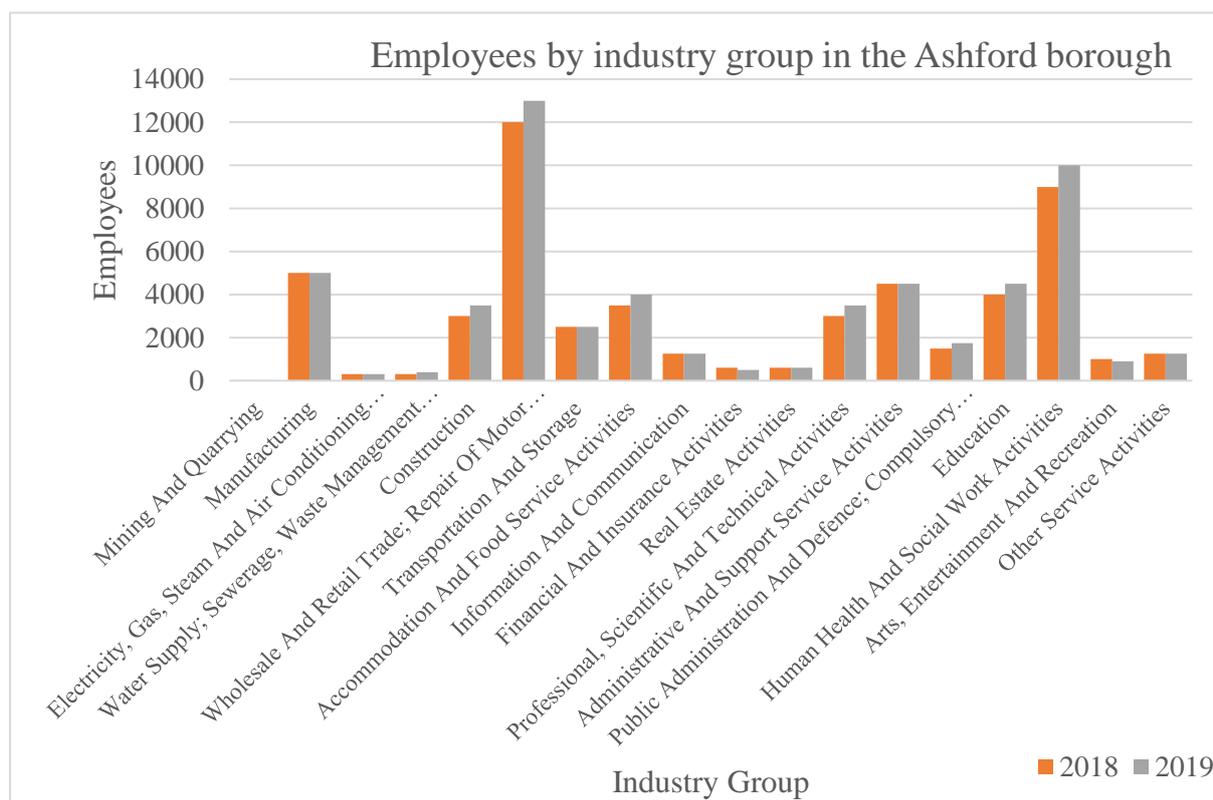
Source: https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/8179/Business-demography.pdf

Employees by Industry Group

The largest proportion of people employed in Ashford up to 2019 work in the *wholesale and retail trade: repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles* industry. This industry has 13,000 jobs and represents 22.8% of the total jobs available in the Ashford borough. This is higher than both the regional South East (16.4%) and national percentage for Great Britain (15.0%).

The next largest industry in the borough is *human health and social work activities*. This industry has 10,000 jobs and represents 17.5% of the total. This is higher than both regional South East percentage of 12.9% and Great Britain national percentage of 13.1%.

Comparatively less well-represented industries in Ashford include: *professional, scientific and technical activities*, where the employment percentage of 6.1% falls below the national percentage of 8.8%; *financial and insurance activities*, with a percentage of 0.9% below the national average of 3.5%; and *information and communication* where the Ashford percentage of 2.2% is just over half the national percentage of 4.3%.



Source: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157311/report.aspx?#1s>

Employment Floorspace

The provision of new employment space is critical to the delivery of employment and jobs in the borough. Policy SP3 (*Strategic Approach to Economic Development*) sets out the measures that the borough will take to support job growth and economic prosperity.

Policies EMP1 (*New Employment Uses*), EMP2 (*Loss or Redevelopment of Employment Sites and Premises*) and EMP3 (*Extensions to Employment Premises in the Rural Area*) list the criteria for permitting development proposals which affect employment floorspace.

Ashford Borough Council (ABC) currently conducts an annual survey of employment land. Typically, employment/commercial sites with planning permission valid as of the 31st March of that monitoring year are visited. The site visits for this report were conducted in the last quarter of the monitoring period for 2019/2020. Following these visits, an assessment is made on the stage of each individual development: complete, under-construction, or not started, which are recorded in the annual Commercial Information Audit (CIA). Due to the Coronavirus pandemic and in accordance with social distancing procedures, the annual survey was completed through a combination of desk-based techniques and site visits.

Floorspace completed

During the 2018/2019 monitoring year, 85 applications were completed which had an element of change in employment floorspace. This development contributed to a gross approximate increase in floorspace of 26,638 sqm and a loss of 10,398 sqm, resulting in an overall net increase of 16,240 sqm.

The largest growth in employment floorspace is from A1 use, which provided approximately 11,364.4 net sqm of employment floorspace. The largest single contributor to this A1 employment floorspace completed is the recent expansion of the Ashford Designer Outlet Centre. This site completed construction in late Autumn 2019, providing 10,931 square metres of A1 use.

The second largest net floorspace growth in 2019/2020 was from A3 use classes (Restaurants and cafes). This provided a net gain of 2,229 square metres of A3 floorspace. Notable projects include the expansion to the Ashford Designer Outlet Centre and the re-development of the Coachworks in the Ashford town centre.

The largest employment floorspace losses were from the B1c category. This has a net loss of -2601 sqm. The loss of B1c is predominately from the change of use to C3 (dwellings) at Victoria Crescent (planning application 16/00986/AS), accounting for 1734 sqm.

Use Class	Gross gain (sqm)	Gross loss (sqm)	Net gain (sqm)
A1	11,983	618.6	+11,364.4
A2	0	560.2	-560.2
A3	2668.5	439.5	+2,229
A4	286	0	+286
A5	0	52	-52
B1a	937.2	1292	-354.8

Use Class	Gross gain (sqm)	Gross loss (sqm)	Net gain (sqm)
B1b	0	0	0
B1c	0	2601	-2601
B1 (unclassified)	1072	479.3	+592.7
B2	1003.1	710	+293.1
B8	94	140	-46
B1-B8	845.4	978	-132.6
C1	361.04	488	-126.96
D1	1438	393	+1,045
D2	2632.5	348	+2,284.5
Sui Generis	3317.2	1298.5	+2,018.7

Floorspace ‘under construction’

In the 2018/2019 monitoring year, monitoring identified a net employment floorspace of 30,076.48 sqm under construction. This is a decrease on the projected employment floorspace under construction during the period 2018/2019 and 2017/2018.

Floorspace ‘not started’

In the 2019/2020 monitoring year, employment monitoring identified a net employment floorspace of 324,035.21 sqm with planning permission but has not yet commenced development. This includes a number of large outline applications for employment floorspace such as Waterbrook, Chilmington Green and Finberry. The 2018/2019 not started floorspace given in the previous AMR did not include the floorspaces from Finberry or Chilmington Green, which is why there is a notable increase in the floorspace calculation. This high figure suggests a strong position in terms of future employment development.

The largest single contributor this employment floorspace not started value is the development proposed for the land on the north side of Highfield Lane in Sevington. This application, granted outline planning permission in 2017 and reserved matters applications for access arrangements have been approved in the 2019/2020 monitoring year. This application will contribute up to 157,616 sqm of employment floorspace¹.

¹ The Sevington site is now the site of the Sevington Inland Border Facility. This facility was implemented through a Special Development Order (SDO) which was approved in December 2020. This is not mentioned in the context of the report as the SDO was introduced after the end of the monitoring period. More information about this site is available at: <https://inlandborderfacilities.uk/>

Monitoring Indicator – Employment Floorspace

Annual increase of employment floorspace (m²) by use class

	Ashford Town Centre	Urban	Rural Settlement	Countryside	Tenterden
B1a	-503	158	127.2	-137	0
B1b	0	0	0	0	0
B1c	0	-2284	0	-252	-65
B1 (unclassified)	-425.9	-53.4	572	500	0
B2	0	-710	910.2	92.9	0
B8	0	-0	0	-46	0
B1 – B8	0	-0	131.4	-264	0

Total of all “B” Use Classes					
Total Gain	512	254	1740.8	1444.9	0
Total Loss	1440.9	-3143.4	0	1551	65
Net Total	-928.9	-2889.4	1740.8	-65	-65

Monitoring Indicator – Retail and Leisure Floorspace

Net annual change of Retail and Leisure floorspace (m²) by use class:

	Ashford Town Centre	Urban	Rural Settlement	Countryside	Tenterden
A1	-126	+11821	-57.4	0	-273.2
A2	-277.2	0	-283	0	0
A3	+394	+1621	0	+199	-15
A4	+188	0	0	0	+98
A5	0	-52	0	0	0
D2	-178	+902	+28.5	+1532	0
Sui Generis	-101.6	+1382.4	+389.2	+248.9	+99.8

In the monitoring year 2019/2020, a net gain of 84567 sqm of floorspace was granted permission in 149 applications. 50 of these 149 applications were completed in the monitoring year (net floorspace of 2041 sqm), leaving a net floorspace of 13109 sqm under construction and 69417 sqm not started.

Status of Local Plan allocations

The Local Plan policy SP3 (*Strategic Approach to Economic Development*) sets out the intention of the Local Plan to deliver 63 hectares of employment land between 2014 and 2030. This report details below the employment floorspace gain of the site allocations which have designated “B” use classes.

Site & Policy reference	Use classes and sizes proposed (sqm)	Development status	2019/2020 employment floorspace gain (sqm)	Extant permissions floorspace (sqm)
S1 – Commercial Quarter	55,000 sqm predominately B1a/B1b.	16/00554/AS 6,149 sqm Completed 2018/19	0	0
S6 – Newtown Works	Policy states ‘substantial commercial floorspace’. Estimated at 4,000 sqm.	Application submitted November 2019.	0	0
S15 – Finberry North West	8,500 sqm of B1 – B8 uses.	No current applications	0	0

Site & Policy reference	Use classes and sizes proposed (sqm)	Development status	2019/2020 employment floorspace gain (sqm)	Extant permissions floorspace (sqm)
S16 – Waterbrook	17,000 sqm of B1, B2 & B8 uses.	18/00098/AS Application granted in 2019/20 26,208 sqm B1-B8 uses 18/00464/AS 189 sqm Sui Generis use Completed in 2018/19 16/00427/AS 4,601 sqm Sui Generis use Completed in 2018/19 11/01330/AS 4,300 sqm B1 – B8 uses Under construction in 2018/19	0	30,508
S20 – Eureka Park	197,000 sqm of predominately B1a & B1b	No current applications	0	0
S21 – Orbital Park	75,000 sqm of B1, B2, B8 & Sui generis	16/01667/AS 9,801 sqm Completed in 2017/18 18/01791/AS 4,165sqm of B1-B8 uses Granted permission in 2019/20	0	4165
S23 – Henwood Industrial Estate	11,000 sqm of B1, B2, B8 uses	16/01107/AS Change of use from B1/B8 to D2 Completed in 2018/19 18/01601/AS 4,303 sqm of B1-B8 uses Granted permission in 2019/20	211	4303
S25 – Pickhill, Tenterden	350,000 sqm of B1 – B8 uses.	16/01411/AS 822 sqm B1 use Completed in 2017/18	0	0

Fibre to the Premises

At a local level, the availability, reliability and speed of broadband provision is now a key consideration/ concern of the business sector. Policy EMP6 (*Promotion of Fibre to the Premise*) requires most new developments to implement broadband fibre. This policy aims to utilise and enhance the existing infrastructure to encourage sustainable development.

This indicator was introduced as part of the Local Plan, which was adopted in February 2019. To accompany the policy the Council produced a Fibre to the Premises Supplementary

Planning Document (SPD). The SPD provides guidance for applicants on the Fibre to the Premises policy. This SPD went out for an 8 week consultation in February 2020 and was adopted after the end of the 2019/20 monitoring year.

Monitoring Indicator – Fibre to the Premises (FTTP)

Percentage of new development enabling FTTP in both residential and employment development.

Target	All development in urban areas. All major development in rural areas.
2019/2020	7% of employment applications with qualifying development provided FTTP or had conditions to ensure FTTP was provided on the development schemes. 22% of housing application with qualifying development provided FTTP or had conditions to ensure FTTP was provided on the development schemes.

Shopping Frontages

Shopping frontages in the Ashford and Tenterden town centres provide a large proportion of retail units, use class “A”. The policies EMP7 (*Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontage in Ashford Town Centre*) and EMP8 (*Primary shopping frontage in Tenterden Town Centre*) set out the requirements to consider planning applications in these areas for these use classes.

Due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions we were unable to conduct a shop frontage survey in Tenterden in April 2020 for the 2019/20 monitoring year.

Monitoring Indicator – Shopping Frontages

Percentage of shop frontages in Ashford and Tenterden which are “A” use class (retail).

Target	Primary Shopping Frontages – 100%
2019/2020	Ashford: 90% Tenterden: Unknown

Note: the 90% value for Ashford includes both primary and secondary shopping frontages and includes vacant properties.

Local and Village Centres

Local centres in the towns and villages play an important role in providing for local shopping needs, especially for convenience goods, and other local services. Policies SP4 (*Delivery of Retail and Leisure*) and EMP10 (*Local and Village Centres*) set out the need to promote and retain shopping and service provision within local and village centres.

3 applications in 2019/2020 completed their development, which had a change in the provision of shops and services in local and village centres. These applications contributed to an overall net change of 378.4 sqm in local village centre shops and services (“A” use class).

Monitoring Indicator – Local and Village Centres

Gains and losses of shops and services within local and village centres.

Target	No loss of shops and services.
2019/2020	0 applications had a loss of employment to residential use Net “A” class floorspace: 0 sqm loss
	0 application had a gain of employment from residential use Net “A” class floorspace: 0 sqm gain
	3 applications had a loss of A class uses to non “A” class uses (19/01017/AS in Chilham; 19/01162/AS in Tenterden and 19/00831/AS in Wye) Net “A” class floorspace: 378.4 sqm loss
	0 applications had a gain of “A” class use from non “A” class use Net “A” class floorspace: 0 sqm gain