



ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY

Ready for tomorrow, growing for a better future

Foreword



**Councillor David Leaf - Leader of the Council/
Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation**

I am delighted to present Bexley's Economic Growth Strategy. From the outset our ambition should be clear, we want Bexley to be the foremost Borough in London for inclusive Economic Growth. This is no idle aspiration, we have the focus, drive, ambition, locations, opportunities and resources to make this happen. Whether you are a business owner or employee, a student or returning to work after a break, if you want to develop and grow, you need look no further than our borough.

This strategy sets out how we will work together to achieve our shared ambitions. We see growth as an imperative but also as an opportunity for everyone to create a better life, irrespective of their background. This must be a joint endeavour, and our diversity of interests is our strength, establishing an environment where different ideas meet and creativity and innovation flourish. However, where barriers exist to prevent this happening spontaneously, the Council stands ready to use its resources and powers to bring people together, making connections, encouraging, supporting and persuading.

Our Vision as set out in the strategy is to be ready for tomorrow and grow for a better future. Growth does present challenges as well as exciting possibilities and we don't want to shy away from these. If benefit is to be shared widely, we need to make sure that everyone is equipped to take advantage of the opportunities when they arise through a framework of mutual support and guidance.

We also know we need to talk up our borough a lot more and raise its profile. Bexley has much to shout about but too often our enormous strengths are quietly or modestly assumed. We know Bexley is a great place to live and work and we all need to be effective brand ambassadors for the place if it is to continue to thrive.

Ultimately, we want this document to be a shop window into Bexley, to present our road map to greater success and what that will look like, including our short, medium and longer term priorities. It is therefore essential that we get it right, so I would invite and encourage you to read this draft strategy and respond to the consultation. Let's take this opportunity to secure a bright and prosperous future for Bexley.

**How to respond: Please respond before midnight on
Sunday 11 January 2026 by:**

- filling out the survey on line at <https://ask.bexley.gov.uk>
- emailing SP&Gteam@bexley.gov.uk
- post to - **Economic Development Strategy Consultation,
Strategic Planning Team, 2nd Floor East, Civic Offices,
2 Walling Street, Bexleyheath, DA6 7AT**



Introduction

Growth is a national priority, and Bexley stands ready to play its part in enabling the delivery of a more stable, prosperous and greener future. The borough is uniquely positioned to contribute, located within the strategically important Thames Estuary at the junction of key transport connections between London, the continent and the rest of the UK. This context offers direct access to the global city and strong links to growth centres across the southeast and beyond by road, river and rail.

Bexley is also a great place to live and work. It is one of the greenest, safest and most affordable boroughs in London, with 6,000 hectares of open space including over 100 parks, more than 450 hectares of industrial and employment land supporting 9,000 local businesses, and a diverse, economically active workforce, 30 percent of whom are in professional occupations. The borough offers a range of housing options in attractive neighbourhoods at reasonable prices, resulting in one of the highest home ownership levels in London. It consistently ranks among the top five safest London boroughs, with residents reporting high levels of perceived security.

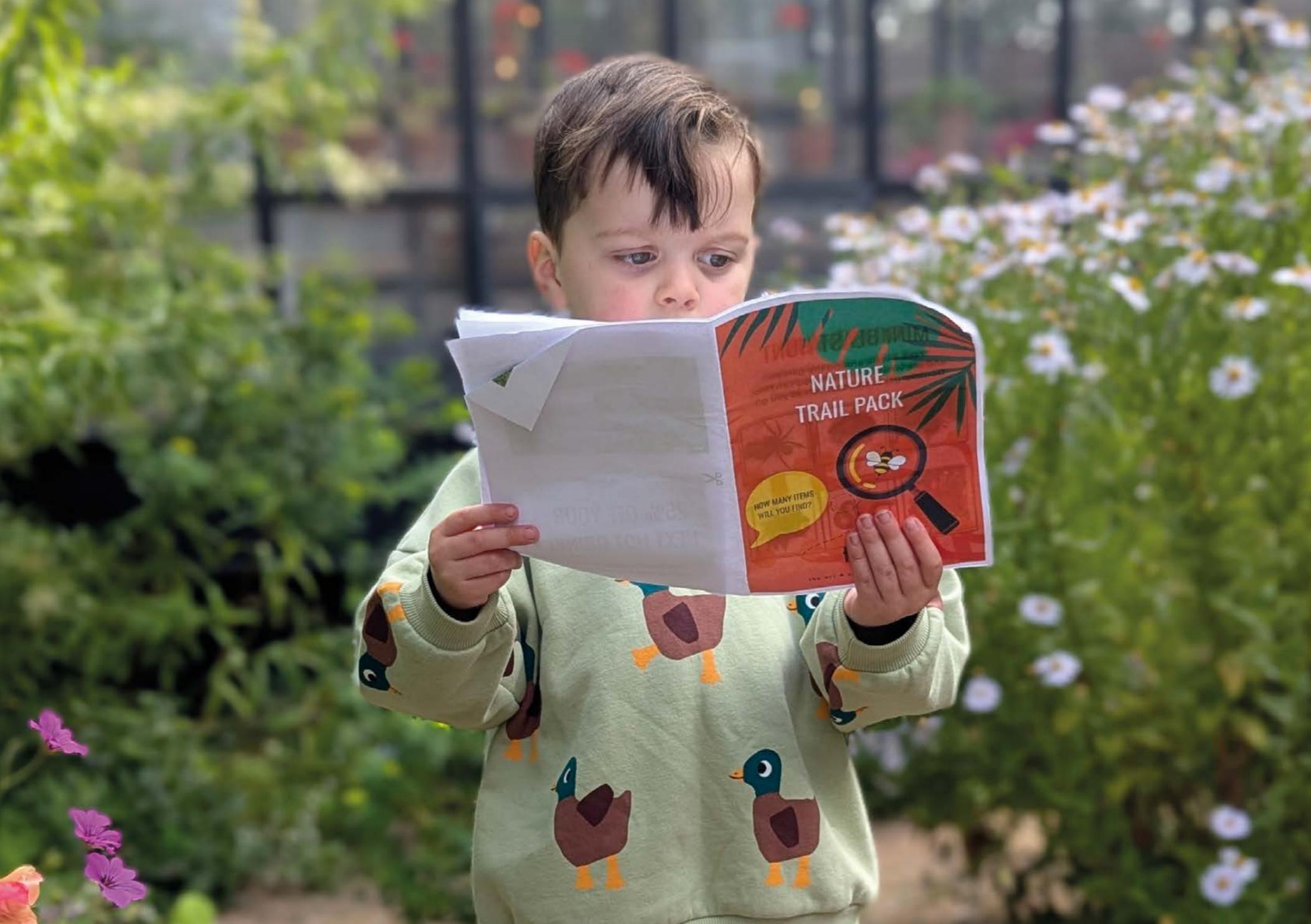
Our communities are thriving and engaged, supported by over 800 charities and community organisations and 16 community centres. Bexley also enjoys a rich and diverse cultural life, with theatres, museums, music venues and over 100 listed buildings, including nationally significant heritage sites such as Hall Place, Danson House, Red House and the Crossness Beam Engine. The borough is known for its educational excellence, with more than 80 schools, including four grammar schools, and several further education institutions, including the world-renowned Rose Bruford and Bird performing arts colleges.

With all of this to offer, Bexley has long been the focus of development opportunities. The Council laid the foundations for its growth approach over a decade ago. From 2014, it began engaging with residents and businesses to understand how the borough should respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. The message was clear: growth should be directed to the places where it is most needed, supported by infrastructure investment, particularly in transport, and should create lifetime neighbourhoods where people choose to live throughout their lives, supported by high-quality housing, well-designed spaces and diverse employment opportunities.

These principles were formalised in the Bexley Growth Strategy published in 2017 and embedded in the Local Plan adopted in 2023. Since then, significant progress has been made, including the development of the business case for the eastward extension of the Elizabeth Line following the hugely successful implementation of the current line to Abbey Wood, the approval of major development proposals in Belvedere and the advancement of the Greater Erith Regeneration Programme.

Now, Bexley is ready to take the next step in its growth journey. The focus must shift to enabling the delivery of priority projects by a range of local partners working separately or in unison as appropriate, but always in a coordinated way to make a tangible difference to people's lives within meaningful timescales. Growth must be inclusive, equitable and shaped by the borough's diverse communities. This updated Economic Growth Strategy sets out the vision, themes and principles that will guide our work and identifies the actions needed to secure the future Bexley deserves.





Our vision

Bexley: Ready for tomorrow, growing for a better future

Bexley is a borough built on opportunity shaped by its proud heritage, vibrant communities, and a shared ambition to create a better future for all. Our vision, "Ready for tomorrow, growing for a better future," captures our commitment to inclusive and sustainable growth that benefits everyone who lives, works, and invests here.

We are working towards a future where Bexley is more than just a great place to live it's a place where people and businesses can thrive. Growth in Bexley is guided by the voices of our residents, rooted in fairness, and driven by long-term resilience. Every decision we make is focused on creating lasting impacts, ensuring that our borough remains ready to meet tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.



Strategic themes

To deliver this vision, the strategy is shaped around five key themes. These are set out below.

A great place to be

A great place is more than just its buildings and spaces, it is the sum of its people, culture, environment, and opportunities. It is where lives unfold, communities thrive, and futures are shaped. While the physical environment plays a vital role, it is the interaction between people and place that truly defines its character and impact.

A great place should offer:

Welcoming and Inclusive Communities

Places where people feel safe, respected, and valued, regardless of background. A sense of belonging and social cohesion is nurtured through inclusive design, community engagement, and shared spaces that encourage interaction and mutual support.

Healthy and Sustainable Environments

Clean air, green spaces, and access to nature are essential for physical and mental wellbeing. Sustainable design and infrastructure help mitigate climate change, promote biodiversity, and ensure resilience for future generations.

Vibrant and Accessible Neighbourhoods

A mix of housing options, local services, and amenities that meet diverse needs. Neighbourhoods should be walkable, well-connected, and designed to support everyday life, from childcare and education to leisure and healthcare.

Dynamic Town Centres and Employment Hubs

Places that support innovation, entrepreneurship, and high-quality jobs. A thriving local economy is built on a foundation of diverse businesses, flexible workspaces, and opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development.

Culture, Heritage and Identity

A rich cultural and heritage offer that celebrates local stories, creativity, and traditions. These elements help people connect with their past, express themselves in the present, and imagine their future.

Connected and Smart Infrastructure

Efficient transport systems and digital connectivity enable people to move, communicate, and access services easily. Smart infrastructure supports economic growth, reduces inequalities, and enhances quality of life.

Engaged and Empowered Citizens

A great place fosters active citizenship, where people are involved in shaping their communities. Through participation, collaboration, and local leadership, residents build a shared sense of ownership, pride, and purpose.



Raising the profile and attracting investment

To thrive in a fast-changing world, Bexley must be bold, agile and ambitious. The pace of global development is accelerating, and standing still is not an option. By embracing change and unlocking our potential, we can shape growth on our own terms preserving what we value most while building a future that works for everyone.

Bexley is more than a quiet, leafy borough on London's edge. It is a place of untapped energy, creativity and enterprise. The north of the borough has 9 kilometres of riverside frontage, much of which is untapped and is home to some of the capital's largest industrial zones, offering space and scale for innovation and investment. Areas like Erith and Abbey Wood, in the north of the borough are evolving rapidly, with dynamic new communities bringing fresh ideas, vibrancy and opportunity.

In the south, our drama colleges are nurturing talent that feeds into a rich cultural scene, waiting to be fully realised and celebrated. Across the centre of the borough, in our suburban heartlands, thousands of small and home-based businesses are thriving, taking full advantage of flexible working and digital connectivity, with the potential to scale and diversify.

This is a borough of enormous potential. But to realise this, we must tell our story with confidence and clarity. We must showcase our strengths, champion our communities and invite investors to be part of our journey. At the same time, we must nurture the ambition of those already here, supporting local enterprise, unlocking creativity and creating the conditions for inclusive, sustainable growth.

Bexley is ready to step forward, not just as a place to live, but as a place to invest in, innovate and lead.



Health, wellbeing and fairness

A thriving community starts with people who feel healthy, supported and empowered to live well. In Bexley, we believe that wellbeing is the foundation of opportunity, and fairness is the key to unlocking it for everyone.

Good growth is growth that lifts everyone. It is fair, inclusive and sustainable, built with people at its heart and shaped by the communities it serves. Everyone should have the opportunity to thrive, and progress must be shared. By working together, we can build a borough where wellbeing is a foundation, not a privilege.

This means creating the conditions where people feel supported, valued and empowered to shape their future. It means ensuring that investment enhances our environment, strengthens our communities and leaves a lasting legacy for generations to come.

We start with the belief that everyone has something to offer. When we recognise and nurture that potential, we unlock creativity, resilience and innovation. Early inclusion is key, bringing people into the conversation from the beginning, listening to diverse voices and acting on what we hear. By spotting challenges early and responding quickly, we can prevent problems from escalating and create more effective, lasting solutions.

Improving access to the right support, whether it's health services, education, employment or community networks, is central to this approach. When people have what they need to live well, they contribute more fully to their communities and help build a stronger, fairer Bexley.

This is our opportunity to lead with compassion, invest in wellbeing and create a borough where everyone can flourish.

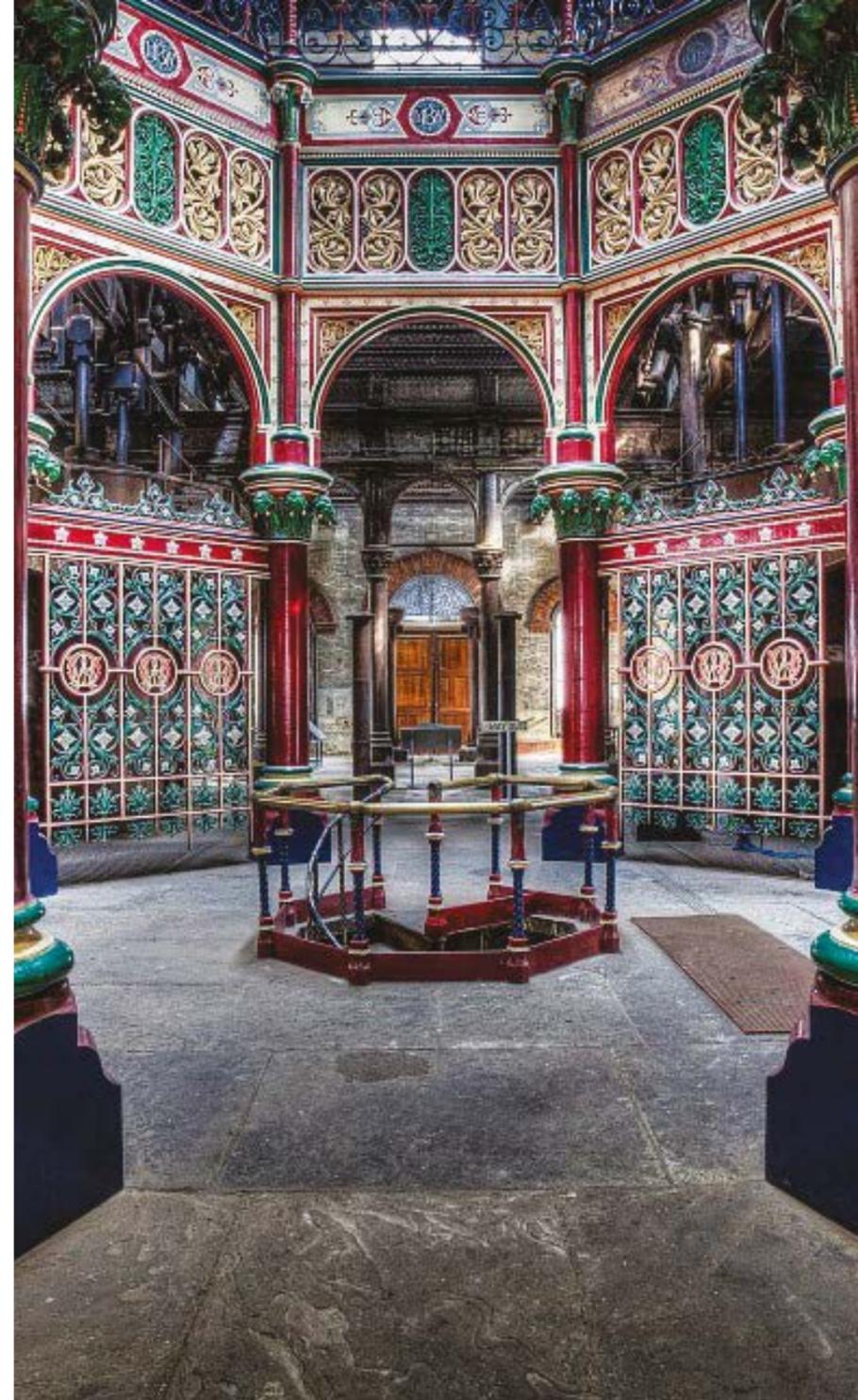


Green innovator and leader

The climate crisis is among the most significant challenges facing us. To address it effectively requires fundamental changes in the way we do things. Central to this is the need to reduce carbon emissions and our consumption of resources. Where growth is planned it, therefore, needs to be compatible with these principles in order to be sustainable.

Green innovation is seen as a critical component of ensuring good growth and Bexley is well placed to play its full part in this next industrial revolution. It has a long-established waste and recycling sector which is at the forefront of developing new green technologies including carbon capture and district heating systems in addition to the existing energy from waste facilities. Its many warehousing and distribution companies have the opportunity to develop sustainable freight approaches using the adjoining Thames and last mile delivery technologies whilst the local construction sector could lead the way on emerging building materials and techniques.

These initiatives will require new skills in the local workforce. Business will need to work proactively with local schools and colleges to ensure accessible pathways to learning. Developing a skilled pool of labour in the borough will then encourage further investment and innovation with benefits far beyond the sector.



Future skills and employment opportunities

Bexley's future depends on a strong, diverse and adaptable local economy, one that offers a wide range of employment opportunities for everyone and is resilient enough to thrive through change.

While green industries will play an important role, our ambition is broader. We aim to support growth across established sectors such as logistics, construction, business services, retail and leisure, while also creating space for emerging industries in technology, digital innovation and the creative economy.

This begins with our people. Bexley is home to a talented and ambitious population, supported by a network of popular grammar schools and further education providers. Yet too often, our young people leave the borough to pursue careers elsewhere.

We must change that by strengthening local pathways into work, especially through vocational training, apprenticeships and partnerships with employers, to help retain and grow our home-grown talent.

We also recognise the potential of our existing workforce. Many residents are looking to reskill, start their own businesses or expand their current ventures. To support them, we need to offer high-quality advice, flexible learning opportunities and access to affordable, well-located workspaces. Strong digital and transport connectivity will be essential to ensure businesses can thrive and people can access opportunities wherever they are.

By investing in skills, supporting enterprise and creating the right conditions for innovation, Bexley can become a place where ambition is matched by opportunity and where people of all ages and backgrounds can build successful, fulfilling careers.



Guiding principles

The strategy is underpinned by six core principles that will guide how we plan, invest and collaborate. Together, these themes and principles will shape a growth agenda that is inclusive, sustainable and responsive to the needs and aspirations of Bexley's communities.

Direct Council investment and resources to support good growth

To realise Bexley's ambitions for sustainable and inclusive development, we will prioritise the Council's investment activity and strategically deploy resources to enable good growth across the borough.

This means positioning Bexley as a destination of choice for investors, developers and businesses, maintaining and preserving our unique assets, improving connectivity and our potential for transformation. We will direct our resources to work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors to unlock funding, stimulate innovation and bring forward high-quality development that benefits our communities.

We will focus our efforts on:

- Promoting Bexley's investment potential through targeted engagement, marketing and partnership development

- Leveraging Council resources including land, infrastructure and funding to unlock sites and support regeneration
- Better aligning Council investment with local priorities, ensuring that Council led growth delivers things that are important to Bexley residents and businesses such as affordable housing, employment opportunities, improved public realm and resilient infrastructure
- Championing good growth that is inclusive, environmentally responsible and community-led, ensuring development enhances quality of life and reflects the character of Bexley's places

This principle underpins our commitment to shaping a borough that grows not just in numbers, but in opportunity, equity and sustainability.

Foster a thriving and robust inward investment climate

Creating the conditions for a strong and resilient investment climate is central to Bexley's long-term growth ambitions. This principle focuses on building confidence among new and existing investors, developers and businesses by ensuring that Bexley is a place where appropriate investment is welcomed, supported and able to flourish.



We will foster an environment that is transparent, responsive and proactive, where planning and infrastructure decisions are aligned with economic opportunity. By strengthening our local offer and avoiding unnecessary barriers to investment, we will encourage a diverse range of partners to contribute to Bexley's regeneration and development.

Our approach will include:

- Strengthening investor confidence through clear leadership, consistent policy and a commitment to delivery
- Creating a supportive planning and regulatory environment that enables timely and high-quality development
- Ensuring everyone contributes to infrastructure and placemaking to enhance the attractiveness and functionality of key growth areas
- Building strong relationships with the private sector, neighbouring boroughs, regional bodies and government to identify opportunities, make connections, unlock funding and provide strategic support

This principle supports our ambition to make Bexley a borough where investment is not only possible, but actively enabled and sustained, driving long-term prosperity and resilience.

Work with our communities to deliver good growth

Bexley's growth must be shaped by the people who live, work and invest in the borough. This principle recognises that good growth is not just about physical development, but about creating places that reflect the aspirations, needs and identities of our communities.

We will work collaboratively with residents, businesses, voluntary organisations and cultural partners to ensure that growth is inclusive, locally informed and socially sustainable. By embedding community engagement into the planning, delivery, operation and maintenance of change, we will build trust, strengthen local ownership and ensure that development enhances quality of life.

Our approach will include:

- Engaging communities early and meaningfully in shaping plans, policies and projects
- Supporting local leadership and capacity to influence and participate in growth
- Ensuring that development reflects local character, heritage and cultural identity
- Creating opportunities for community-led regeneration, stewardship, social enterprise and creative placemaking
- Promoting inclusive access to all aspects of growth including housing, jobs, public spaces and cultural experiences

This principle reinforces our commitment to delivering growth that is not only well-designed and economically viable, but also rooted in the values, voices and vibrancy of Bexley's communities.

Strengthening partnerships to enhance alignment, build capacity and drive impact

Strong and effective partnerships are essential to delivering Bexley's growth ambitions. This principle focuses on building collaborative relationships across sectors to ensure that efforts are aligned, resources are maximised and outcomes are impactful.

We will work with public sector bodies, private investors, community organisations, cultural institutions and regional stakeholders to create a shared vision for growth. By fostering trust, clarity and mutual commitment, we will strengthen our collective ability to plan, deliver and sustain change.

Our approach will include:

- Developing strategic partnerships that align with Bexley's priorities and unlock shared investment
- Strengthening collaboration across local government, health, education, housing, infrastructure and culture
- Building capacity within the council and among partners to deliver complex and long-term projects

- Promoting joint working and co-design to ensure that growth is inclusive, place-based and responsive to local needs
- Working closely with our established Business Improvement Districts to ensure the views and opinions of the town centre business community are considered
- Leveraging regional and national networks to secure funding, policy support and innovation

This principle reflects our belief that meaningful and lasting impact is achieved through partnership. By working together, we will deliver growth that is coordinated, resilient and rooted in the strengths of Bexley's people, places and cultural identity.

Prevention and early intervention to drive prosperity

Prosperity in Bexley must be built on strong foundations. This principle focuses on identifying challenges early and taking proactive steps to prevent issues from escalating, ensuring that individuals, families and communities are supported to thrive.

We will embed prevention and early intervention across our approach to housing, health, education, employment and community wellbeing. By acting early, we can reduce inequalities, improve life chances and create the conditions for long-term economic and social prosperity.

Our approach will include:

- Investing in services and programmes that support people before they reach crisis
- Strengthening data, insight and local intelligence to identify emerging needs and target resources effectively
- Supporting inclusive access to health, education, training, employment and housing to reduce barriers to opportunity
- Promoting cultural participation and creative engagement as a means of improving wellbeing and community cohesion
- Working with partners to design integrated solutions that address root causes and build resilience

This principle reflects our commitment to building a fairer, healthier and more prosperous Bexley, where early action leads to better outcomes for all.

Connectivity to enable access and equity

Transport and digital connectivity is fundamental to enabling inclusive growth and ensuring that all residents and businesses in Bexley can access opportunities, services and cultural experiences. This principle focuses on improving physical, digital and social connections across the borough to support equity, mobility and cohesion.

We will strengthen transport links, digital infrastructure and place-based networks to ensure that growth is accessible to all. By improving connectivity within Bexley and to the wider region, we will unlock potential, reduce isolation and support vibrant, well-connected communities.

Our approach will include:

- Enhancing public transport infrastructure to improve access to jobs, education, health, housing and leisure destinations
- Expanding digital connectivity to support innovation, inclusion and economic participation
- Promoting active travel and sustainable mobility to improve health and reduce environmental impact
- Strengthening local networks and community infrastructure to support social connection and resilience
- Ensuring that connectivity improvements are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all residents, including those facing barriers to access

This principle supports our vision for a borough where everyone can participate in and benefit from growth, and where connectivity drives opportunity, equity and cultural vitality.



Strategic outcomes

The focus of this strategy is real, meaningful change for our current and future residents and businesses. We must therefore be clear about what we are looking to achieve and the difference this will make to peoples' everyday lives. The following strategic outcomes make our ambitions explicit.

Outcome 1

We will have secured one of the largest increases in inward investment in the sub-region, targeting areas best placed for growth. By matching need with opportunity, we will have delivered high-quality development, brought vacant land back into use, reduced deprivation, boosted housing supply, and created 1000s of new jobs

Outcome 2

We will have successfully met our ambitious housing targets, securing a choice of affordable, high quality dwellings, to meet people's needs. This will have cut homelessness and waiting lists, improved housing affordability, and reduced poor conditions and under-occupation.

Outcome 3

We will have built one of the most resilient and diverse local economies in London with thriving businesses across sectors. This will have created 1000s of high-quality jobs, reduced unemployment, raised incomes, and boosted entrepreneurship and productivity.

Outcome 4

We will have secured a safe, reliable and affordable transport system with better connectivity, frequency and capacity. This will have improved access to jobs, boosted public transport use and reduced congestion.

Outcome 5

We will have delivered a fast, robust digital network that meets the needs of residents and businesses, enabling seamless access to data, content and connections. This will have increased mobile internet connections and broadband speeds as well as encouraged device ownership, knowledge and use.

Outcome 6

We will have safeguarded and strengthened Bexley's social and community infrastructure, ensuring well-planned provision of essential services through strong partnerships and funding strategies. This will have maintained or improved access to education, healthcare, leisure, cultural and community facilities reducing gaps, increasing participation, and enhancing wellbeing.

Outcome 7

Local people will be among the healthiest, most active and engaged in London, with the benefits of growth shared more fairly. Improved data will enable early interventions, while better engagement with underrepresented groups will remove barriers to participation. As a result, we will see lower mortality and morbidity, healthier lifestyles, improved wellbeing, and reduced disparities in education, skills, income and employment.

Outcome 8

Bexley will effectively use one of the highest concentrations of grammar schools in London and one of the best Council skills and employment services to maintain clear pathways from education to employment, strong career support for young people, and help for residents to stay in or return to work.

Affordable training options and new commercial investment will expand job opportunities, raise qualification levels, and better align skills with local employment leading to more residents in higher-skilled roles

Outcome 9

Bexley will have among the highest levels of civic participation in the sub region, with residents and workers actively shaping community projects. This will have boosted volunteering, strengthened integration, and fostered pride of place—reflected in better engagement, retention, and wellbeing.

Outcome 10

Bexley will maintain and grow its position as a leader in the green economy, building on its strengths to attract further investment in green technologies and processes. A skilled local workforce, supported by education and retraining, will drive sector growth, create new jobs, and expand pathways into green industries—from sustainable energy and transport to low-carbon construction.

We will assess performance against these outcomes through regular monitoring and report back mechanisms.

Credits

Page 5 - Erith Quarry Drone shot: Architects Egret West

Page 6 - Child with nature trail pack: The Exchange

Page 9 - People outside The Garden Room on terrace: "Ross Willsher Photography"

Page 10 - Erith Quarry Drone shot: Architects Egret West

Page 12 - Ceramics throwing workshop: The Exchange

Page 15 - Timber Workshop Makers: CM Photo Video

Page 17 - Erith Park / kids on bikes: Egret West



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BEXLEY