

# Thomson Snell & Passmore

The Thames Gateway Regeneration Project –  
A business perspective



## Introduction

Between September 2005 and June 2006 partners at leading regional law firm Thomson Snell & Passmore (TS&P) undertook detailed face-to-face interviews with 51 companies in the North Kent area of the Thames Gateway region – representing a combined turnover of £3 billion and employing over 11,000 people.

All types of businesses were represented in the study, from sole traders to international corporations. Sectors covered included construction/real estate, manufacturing, education/training, hotels & leisure, transport & logistics, business services, Housing Associations, professions, consumer services, insurance, retail, health and mining.

The interviews covered topics as far reaching as awareness of the regeneration project and attitudes towards its likely impact, communication with the development agencies, views on infrastructure development, the local workforce and the commercial challenges specific to the participating companies and their sectors.

This report summarises the main findings of the research and provides valuable insight into how the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project is currently viewed by the indigenous business community and how it might develop in the future.

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## About The Thames Gateway

The Thames Gateway is the largest regeneration zone in Western Europe and has been identified by the Government as a national priority for regeneration and growth. It extends for 40 miles along the River Thames from London Docklands to Southend in Essex and Sheerness in Kent.

The Thames Gateway has 1.6 million residents, approximately 700,000 households and currently supports some 500,000 jobs. Its development potential lies in the 3,800 hectares of brownfield land, much of it being former docks, warehousing, industrial and quarries, as well as its location – it is next to the economic heart of London and directly en route to the accessible markets of North West Europe.



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## About The Thames Gateway Regeneration Project

The Government's vision is to transform the region by:

- building 120,000 homes by 2016
- creating up to 180,000 jobs
- creating sustainable communities with good local facilities, services and jobs and transport links to access services, jobs and training
- improving educational facilities to enhance the local skills base and enable people to move from declining industries into growing economic sectors
- bringing major improvement to the image and environment of the Gateway, including higher quality design and attractive open spaces, with improved access to the river.

The development is split into zones each with a different agency responsible for delivery:

### In London

- London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (includes Lower Lea Valley and London Riverside – Barking & Dagenham, Havering & Newham)
- Woolwich Regeneration Agency and Greenwich Partnership
- Bexley Regeneration Partnership.

There are nine zones of change in London:

- Isle of Dogs
- Greenwich, Deptford and Lewisham
- Stratford
- Lower Lea
- Royal Docks
- Barking Town Centre
- London Riverside
- Charlton to Crayford.

### For the East

- Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation
- Basildon Renaissance Partnership
- Renaissance Southend.

There are three zones in South Essex:

- Thurrock
- Basildon and Castle Point
- Southend and Rochford.

### For South East

- Kent Thameside Delivery Board (Dartford & Gravesham)
- Medway Renaissance Partnership
- Swale Forward.

There are four zones of change in North Kent:

- Kent Thameside
- Grain
- Medway
- Sittingbourne-Sheerness.



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## About Thomson Snell & Passmore in the Thames Gateway

TS&P attributes much of its success to having lawyers who really take the time to understand clients and their needs. So when the firm considered opening a new office in the Thames Gateway area its first priority was to learn about the issues facing businesses in the area and to understand their requirements for professional advice.

The partners in the Thames Gateway team representing the construction, property, dispute resolution, employment and commercial disciplines, devoted time to this research project to learn first hand and from the horse's mouth what the Thames Gateway business community thought and wanted. The firm opened its Thames Gateway office in May 2005.

Whilst providing the firm with valuable insight into how to serve the area better, the firm believes that the survey information will also be valuable to the local authorities, development agencies and other bodies who are tasked with developing the appropriate infrastructure and realising the area's potential. The broader community will also benefit from learning how their business colleagues view the present and future challenges for both enterprise and individuals and what can be done to ensure that the area continues to succeed and grow. Those interviewed almost exclusively come from the South East region of The Thames Gateway Regeneration Project (Appendix 1 provides an outline of the planned regeneration taking place in close proximity to them).

## About Thomson Snell & Passmore

TS&P is a leading regional law firm in the South East (with a Head Office based in Tunbridge Wells, Kent). The firm services requirements across the legal spectrum, has recognised expertise in all practice areas and a reputation based on a tradition of client care going back to 1570. With over 80 lawyers and employing a further 120 staff, the firm possesses a strength and depth of expertise which only a handful of firms can claim in the South East outside London. In addition, the firm boasts 11 lawyers who are recognised as leaders in their field (*Chambers Guide to the Legal Profession 2006/2007*).

## Acknowledgements

TS&P would like to thank the senior executives of the 51 organisations who participated in this research. The firm would also like to thank the many authorities, agencies and professionals who gave freely their time and expertise in supporting the firm's work to date in the Thames Gateway area.

## Executive summary

The main findings of the research were as follows:

### About the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project

- Whilst many of those interviewed appear to lack detailed information about the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project, the majority of the businesses regard the project positively and are cautiously optimistic about the benefits that it will bring.
- However, 78% of the respondents believe the new jobs and new businesses created by the project will present a real challenge for local businesses and nearly half of the sample feel that the needs of London are being given too much emphasis over the needs of North Kent.
- There are significant concerns about the transport infrastructure for the region and the increased future pressure on local services. Nearly all participants identified health provision as being a particular challenge. Concern also extends to the perceived conflicts between the planned increase in housing and the needs of local business and industry.
- One of the most worrying results was that 70% of those interviewed reported that they had not been consulted about their views on or needs of the regeneration project. Of those who had been consulted, it was largely as a result of their own initiative as they are in construction and property related organisations. Attitudinal responses indicate that two thirds of the sample had not been made to appreciate the significance of the developments. More positively, two thirds of the businesses interviewed were positive about the likelihood of being involved in future consultation projects.
- One explanation for the apparent lack of communication and involvement is that the regeneration project is being supported by so many different delivery bodies that the message has become fragmented. The Government and local development agencies therefore need to work more closely together and invest more in communicating with and involving local businesses – particularly the smaller enterprises – in the regeneration project and conveying the full range of initiatives planned and their likely impact.
- Another concern is that amongst those interviewed there is a huge diversity of opinion in terms of the critical success factors for successful regeneration which indicates that the development agencies are facing many and varied expectations.

### Issues facing Thames Gateway businesses

- The major issue of concern for those interviewed appears to be recruitment – particularly with regards to the availability of appropriately skilled staff at an affordable level. This is compounded by the fear that new businesses created or attracted by the regeneration project will increase competition for skilled workers. Businesses see the development of the local workforce as a top priority.
- Many of the businesses interviewed are experiencing management issues with strategy, planning, managing growth and marketing – which could be rapidly and relatively easily remedied by greater provision of business advice by either public or private sources. Yet over 50% of those questioned felt that they were effectively serviced by the local provision of professional financial, legal, property and business services.
- A significant number of the participating businesses indicated financial issues – whether this was in managing day-to-day cash flow or for investment in organic or acquisition growth. This would suggest that banks and private finance providers would need to look carefully at the particular needs of businesses in the area if the opportunities to grow created by regeneration are to be realised.
- Legislation, regulation and increased Government intervention are high on the agenda for many businesses within the Thames Gateway – as they are for all businesses within the UK. TS&P has already begun to address this need by its innovative programme of free seminars in 2006 which have helped nearly 300 businesses in the Thames Gateway learn more about the law and its impact on their business today and in the future. The next series of seminars will commence in March 2007.

There is a wealth of additional detailed information regarding the participants' detailed views of the regeneration project and its implications for transport, health, education, utilities and social amenities, which are not, for the sake of space, published in this document.

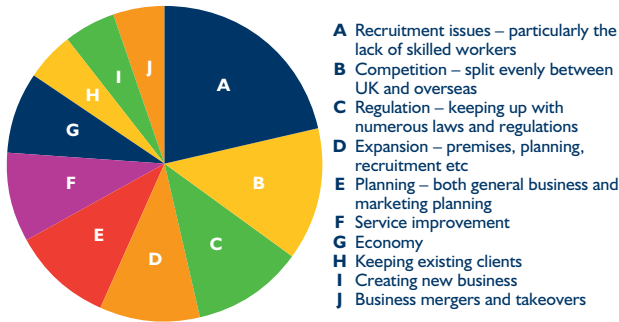


## Research results

### Business issues

#### Issues facing your organisation?

Whilst the range of responses to this question was understandably varied some key common issues emerged. In order of the most frequent responses the top ten issues are:



Whilst some of these might be seen as constraints, what they indicate is that with suitable action – such as workforce development at a regional level and business support to assist with managing planning, expansion and compliance – there is a will and significant potential for growth within the area. There is clearly a need for more business support advice provided by the public and private sectors.

*“The three main issues facing my business are 1) finding new business, 2) retaining existing business (it is very competitive), 3) bureaucracy – employment law and health & safety”*

#### Commercial services

There were many comments relating to the increased overhead from Government intervention and bureaucracy in areas as diverse as minimum wages, emission regulations, environmental controls and health & safety regulations. In terms of land and property, there was frequent mention of areas of outstanding beauty, green belt assignment and planning restrictions constraining development and expansion. This suggests that either special provisions need to be made within the regeneration area or that additional advice and support should be provided to help Thames Gateway businesses cope with these issues.

*“1) Planning – the length of time taken to process applications 2) Inland Revenue red tape and 3) the lack of qualified personnel”* **Construction/property development**

*“Labour costs, legislation (especially employment) and business rates”* **Manufacturing**

Several respondents mentioned a lack of public and private funding which suggests a greater demand for investment. This can either be encouraged by the development agencies or provided by local private equity providers. There were also several mentions of mergers and acquisitions leading to market consolidation and the impact that this will have on smaller businesses and customers. This would suggest that the local business support agencies and advisers tailor their services to the needs of the smaller organisations.

*“For our business, the issues are; acquisition of further suitable sites; climate controls and protecting our local climate; local factors such as unemployment, local economy etc”*

#### Leisure

*“TUPE issues. Staff recruitment. Information and the need to know what is likely to happen in the future”*

#### Property management

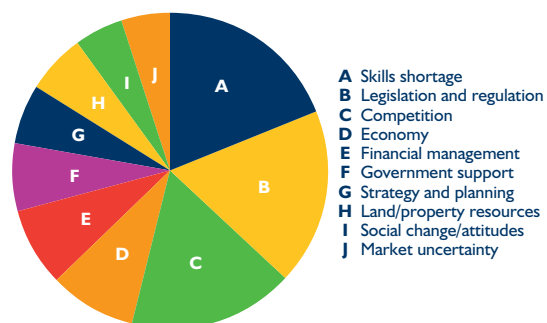
*“Demonstrating that we are providing a good service and improving performance/quality and efficiency (getting best value from our resources)”* **Housing**

*“Corporate takeover and market strategy. Operations in niche industries such as cars, fresh fruit and steel exports – stability of these sectors is crucial for us”* **Transport**

There were a few mentions of the changing nature of the area with concerns that further provision for housing and greater environmental controls combined with increased competition will lead to a further reduction in the little remaining manufacturing within the area.

#### Issues facing your sector?

Considering the variety of sectors represented in the study, we were surprised to find a high degree of consistency in the issues mentioned. In order of the most frequent responses the top ten issues are:



*"We are growing and hungry for space but are limited due to planning limitations. A number of the local areas are strongly protected by the environmental lobby. Some land has been earmarked for housing but not enough for industry. You simply cannot have everybody commuting to work as fuel is a valuable and diminishing resource so you need local employment. Fruit packaging and distribution are both expanding"* **Transport**

Of these issues, only Government support and land/property resources would appear to be specific to the Thames Gateway region. Perhaps easiest to address would be an immediate increase in the funding for the local agencies to provide further much needed support for the local business community – whether this is for training and development, access to management advice or information on market changes and how to respond. More challenging perhaps, would be greater information about the available land and property bank and the likely future demand, and perhaps a relaxation of some of the restrictions to enable development in the short term.

*"Our industry is in a mess – there is over-capacity and a disorganised structure. There is also a lot of competitiveness"* **Manufacturing**

*"Changes in legislation. Social changes in what is acceptable and greater emphasis on home life. Need to raise the profile of childcare – it is seen as a soft industry but is actually very tough and therefore we need to attract the right type of people"* **Childcare/education**

The other issues are those commonly experienced throughout the UK business community. The prevalence of financial management, business strategy and costs and pricing issues would suggest gaps in the Thames Gateway market for which, hopefully, local agencies and professionals can provide assistance in the short term. New consultancy firms may assist in the longer term as the region develops.

*"Cash flow, planning structures and future workload"* **Professional services**

There was significant evidence of the impact of international issues on business in the Thames Gateway area, whether from overseas competition in Eastern Europe or the Far East, escalating fuel and raw material costs or fluctuating exchange and inflation rates. This would suggest the need for greater help for business in understanding (and anticipating) international trends and markets. Aligned to this issue was the frequently reported challenge of keeping abreast of all the information about present and future domestic market changes – on a general level as well as for particular sectors. This would suggest the need for a greater degree of collaboration between businesses in the Thames Gateway area – so that the burden of collecting market information and research can be shared. Such collaboration may also lead to a more cohesive voice for the local business community in lobbying for the resources and changes it needs. Perhaps one of the existing business membership organisations can step into this role. It would certainly seem that a greater degree of communication amongst the construction and property based organisations would lead to more focused action on the land and building issues.

*"Too much red tape, including legislation from Europe – pollution control, paperwork. A lack of joined up thinking and strategy. Poor infrastructure and a gridlocked road system"* **Aggregates**

*"Overseas competition. Smaller customers disappearing therefore playing with the bigger boys who are further driving down prices"* **Equipment sales**

*"Profit margin. Regulations. Competition from Europe – which has cheaper overheads"* **Distribution/logistics**

*"Falling retail prices. Transparency of internet pricing. Market stability"* **Importer/export**

*"Government change. Legislation. Keeping abreast of market wants and needs"* **Education/training**

There were several mentions of the role of the media in thwarting the success of the region – whether this was in negative or unbalanced reporting of the regeneration project, insufficient support given to local businesses or creating unrealistic expectations in terms of property and investment opportunities.

*"There is an upward trend but the press, publicity and local message is wrong"* **Wholesale/distribution**

### Local financial, professional and business advice services

Do you believe that business in this region is effectively catered for by the provision of?:

Service	Yes	No	Don't know
Banking services	55%	36%	9%
Accountancy services	59%	29%	12%
Legal services	59%	29%	12%
Property consultants	57%	25%	18%
Business interest groups	58%	42%	0%

Whilst these figures would indicate a pleasing level of satisfaction amongst those interviewed, it is clear that there is still room for improvement. A significant number of responses indicated that service was patchy and dependent on specific locations, and that there was a large number of smaller providers. In addition the needs of particularly large or medium sized businesses were not adequately being met and there were several indications of use of advisers outside the Thames Gateway area (although not necessarily London).

Business interest groups mentioned included Business Link, Chamber of Commerce (North Kent), Federation of Small Businesses, Institute of Directors and River Medway Business Users Association. Many respondents acknowledged that they did not get involved with their local business support groups and several commented that there was duplication and confusion in and about the services provided by different groups.

When asked what else would benefit them, the respondents requested more diversity at networking events and greater provision for those in tourism and retail sectors. There were several requests for more vehicles to exchange business information – led by local entrepreneurs rather than public agencies. Regular bulletins about progress and plans for the area and for news of businesses moving into the region were also requested.

*“Something centred around the issues of construction, who is doing what, where and when”* **Construction**

*“There is no forum for North Kent in terms of tourism services. The South East of England tourist board used to be quite active in this area but it is not clear what body has replaced it and how it works”* **Retail/wholesale**

*“More vehicles for the exchange of business information and opportunities”* **Commercial services**

*“Networking groups outside of the Chamber of Commerce and Institute of Directors to talk about business issues. A forum for business leaders to share ideas, information and to network in order to bring together people from different backgrounds”* **Housing**

*“I would like to see more facilitation for larger employers on issues such as recruitment, education etc”*

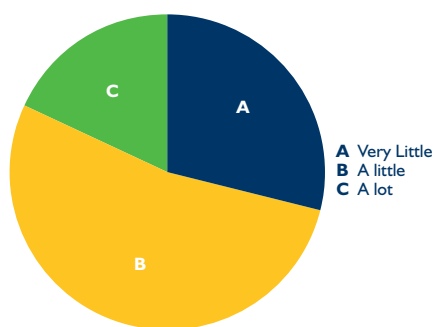
**Electronics manufacturing**



## Awareness of the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project

### What do you know about the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project?

The respondents were split into three groups: those that have a high degree of knowledge, those that have some knowledge and those that have little knowledge. The construction and property companies were the main members of the group with a high degree of knowledge. The individual responses indicate that where an initial incorrect impression had been formed, no further attention was paid to the potential impact and benefits to business. Many responses indicated that individuals may have picked up on just one element of the project such as the proposed housing development.



*"Familiar with sustainable communities agenda through the ODPM and Swale Forward who liaise with local and central agencies. We work with the ODPM and with SEEDA and so are fully conversant and familiar with the sustainable communities agenda. We have a slightly more limited engagement with the wider project"* **Housing**

*"Developing the whole of the Eastern corridor by bringing in new industries and housing"* **Education**

*"I know that they are building 180,000 new homes but no information otherwise"* **Transport and distribution**

*"General knowledge but you must realise that TG Essex and TG Kent are two different things"* **Office supplies**

*"The Thames Gateway is an expanding area. Regeneration sums up what is happening. From what I can see it is good and of high quality and that infrastructure is being provided"* **Professional services**

*"I don't know a great deal. There is meant to be a lot of housing but the figures vary. I imagine that local authorities require mixed use and therefore some commercial and residential development is planned. There is a lot of money coming into the area"* **Construction**

*"We are aware of it. We have been to several seminars through the Institute of Directors and local Chamber of Commerce. It has been talked about a fair amount"* **Human resources**

Overall, the results showed that despite good events by a number of bodies such as the Institute of Directors, local Chambers of Commerce, Common Purpose and SEEDA, the overall communications programme had been ineffective for the majority of the respondents and that the opportunity exists to involve local businesses and alert them to the support that might be available to them.

It was interesting to note that a significant number of respondents relied solely on information that was reported in the local press and as such had an incomplete or unbalanced view of the project (for example housing issues reported more fully than business issues, focus on major developments such as Ebbsfleet or port development). This reliance on local reporting – and its natural focus on issues relevant to residents and consumers – may have inadvertently reinforced the incorrect view that the project was of little significance to local businesses.

*"Remarkably little. Only what we see in the press – that a lot of houses are being built on a flood plain and in quarries"* **Electronics**

*"Only what I have read in the local paper"* **Construction**

## **What are your initial views about the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project?**

Despite the reported lack of detailed knowledge of the regeneration project, 50% of those interviewed felt positively about the project and could see the huge potential and opportunities it would bring. There was recognition that it was an ambitious long term project and that this would ensure improvements were sustainable. Some acknowledged that the area was desperately in need of development and drew parallels with the stunning results achieved at Canary Wharf. Some commented on the visible improvements that were already evident and the increased confidence amongst the public.

*"The Government must encourage businesses into the area. It is a sensible area to be improving in view of proximity to France and the continent"* **Insurance**

*"A project designed to pump considerable Government funding into the area to improve standards and facilities both socially and economically. The Thames needs to be brought back to life as does this region and the Government funding put in place is designed to ensure that happens"* **Childcare**

*"It comes out in the press in a haphazard way, e.g. 50,000 new homes along the river. I spent a lot of time working at Canary Wharf and if we could do something similar I think it will be successful. The area has a lot of wasted space and general depression after the dockyard. Providing all the infrastructure preparatory work is done then I am positive"* **Travel**

*"Disappointed that Manston is not the third airport as this would have been very good for Kent and very few houses would be affected. Otherwise the project is very good for Kent, for the economy and for the UK as a whole"* **Insurance**

*"It is a major project. Employment and housing will increase and create wealth. It has a positive spin and everybody is talking about it. People are talking about communities and not just bricks and mortar"* **Property development**

*"It would be great if in fact it actually happens"* **Automotive**

Others were concerned about the infrastructure deficiencies and the slow progress and some saw an inherent conflict between the needs of housing and industry or the impact on local people and local businesses. There was a minority who were cynical and sceptical and more than a few who felt that the project needed to be "more joined up" – particularly with regards to the interdependencies between increased housing and greater demand for local services and the impact on business.

*"A lot of talk. Moving away from the traditional manufacturing industries – square pegs in round holes"* **Manufacturing**

*"A little sceptical. From an industrial sense, it all appears to be about building a lot of houses and improving the quality of life but what are all these people going to do for work apart from building, plumbing etc? What is going to be manufactured here? Major industry appears to be leaving these shores anyway and so what will all these extra new people do other than possibly commute to London?"* **Manufacturing**

*"Not quite joined up the dots, good idea but too many quangos and consultants and not confident that they will promote local suppliers"* **Construction**

The major concern here is that half of the respondents had neutral or negative attitudes towards the project which again suggests that greater effort should be made to communicate the aims and progress of the project and to involve more of the business community (and the local people) in the project.

### Awareness of types of businesses growing or looking to locate in the area?

60% of the respondents said that they were not aware of the types of business growing within or those looking to locate into the area compared to 40% who felt they were aware.

*"In terms of relocation it is essentially the service industries such as call centres. In terms of those growing there are the distribution/logistics companies, call centres, finance houses and banks"* **Human resources**

*"Moving out of London for cheaper and better quality headquarters, smaller businesses are trying to grow – mostly warehousing, printing and manufacturing industries"*

### Building construction

### Are you aware of any of the proposed developments in Kent Thameside, Medway and Swale?

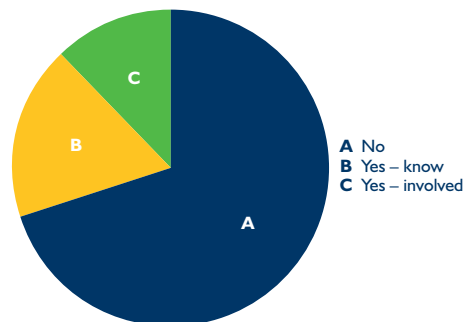
Over half of those interviewed were not aware of the specific developments. Whilst 15 said they were aware of developments in all three areas, eight mentioned Medway and a further six said they were aware of developments in Kent Thameside and Swale. This suggests that communication about the proposed developments has been on a local basis and that those within the region generally were not aware of how the various projects throughout the regeneration project were linked. The 'big picture' has not been communicated effectively.

### Has your organisation been approached by any local or regional government bodies or intermediaries to get your views on what North Kent needs?

A total of 70% said that they had not been consulted. Of those who responded positively – most of these were in the construction or property sectors. No recurring agency was mentioned but Kent County Council, Business Link, Common Purpose, Chamber of Commerce and SEEDA were mentioned once each. This supports the above views that with so many different authorities and delivery agencies involved, the message has not reached many businesses.

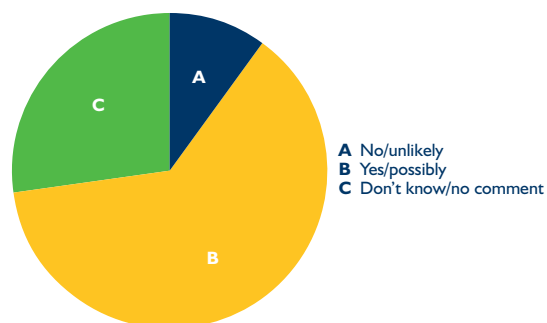
Interestingly, a large number of those questioned reported that this research project by Thomson Snell & Passmore was the first time that their views were elicited and it was therefore the first time that they had considered seriously what they hoped the regeneration would achieve for them.

### Is your organisation involved or aware of any projects or initiatives which are intended to give local communities the opportunity to contribute ideas to and benefit from the regeneration project?



Again, this result echoes the other findings. Three quarters of those interviewed felt there was little or no involvement for the communities in the regeneration project – a worrying indication of the perceived lack of involvement of those more likely to be affected by the project. The need for better communications is again underlined.

### If not, do you think this is something which your organisation would get involved with in the future?



The good news for the likely success of the project overall is that the vast majority of businesses surveyed would be keen to get involved in projects to help local communities contribute ideas to and benefit from the regeneration project. Such a wealth of potential support should be harnessed and directed by those responsible for the projects although it is unclear which agency might take on this task.

## Impact of the regeneration project on business

### How has your business been affected or how do you expect your business to be affected by the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project?

#### Positive

Over half of those who perceived the impact positively saw the key opportunities as being more business, better transport and infrastructure and better training/skills. A third saw more general benefits such as economic and environmental improvements and expansion.

Overall, those with a positive view saw the regeneration project attracting more (and larger) businesses, more people and more investment to the area, which in turn would lead to more wealth, more customers and increased demand for their products and services as well as increased property asset values and a more positive attitude by local people.

Some commented on the value of an improved profile and awareness of the area and its improved accessibility to London leading to a range of benefits including a better local labour market.

#### Negative

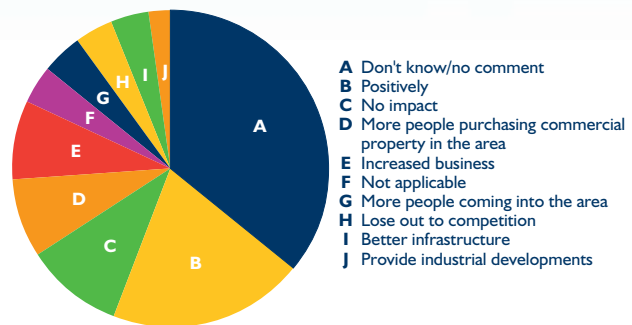
The majority of those viewing the impacts negatively saw the lack of infrastructure and the ensuing traffic congestion as a concern. There were various mentions of the wisdom of housing and major developments in flood plain areas and concerns that the project was focused too much on housing with insufficient attention paid to other regeneration such as industry.

There were contradictory views about the impact on the local workforce – some feared the enhanced train links would lead to an outflow of quality local workers whilst others saw the increased population facing a dearth of well paid local jobs.

One respondent commented on the need for regeneration to be considered at a regional level rather than a local level to avoid unanticipated problems being created in nearby areas of Kent. Others feared that resources and attention would be focused on new communities at the expense of established ones.

Other key concerns were increased competition – particularly if larger businesses won the lion's share of resources and benefits – and overcrowding. There were also fears about priority being given to larger companies, increased environmental protectionism and increased demand on local services and resources.

### How do you think the proposed developments in Kent Thameside, Medway and Swale might impact on your business?



*“Greater number of rental properties and more people looking to buy”* **Property investment**

*“Nothing would damage our ability to perform and we only see potential benefits”* **Electronics**

*“Positively – always opportunities. Stock transfers will be relevant”* **Housing**

*“Favourably provided that the zoned areas for industrial development remain as they have been discussed with us”* **Industrial processing**

*“Cynically the big boys will have all of it – if the £1 million to £2 million one-off jobs soak up all the labour”* **Construction**

*“It will worsen the road system and therefore congestion. Financially I do not believe it will make any difference”* **Printing**

Where there was awareness of the developments, the reaction was largely positive with an increase in business, better infrastructure and more people moving into and buying in the area anticipated. A concern is that half of those interviewed were unaware of the developments and therefore unable to comment on what the impact on their business might be. This lack of awareness could be a threat to indigenous North Kent businesses.

## Factors affecting the success of the regeneration project

### Do you understand what is meant by the phrase “building sustainable communities”? If so, what do you think are the key components?

The incredibly varied responses to this question would indicate the need for a clear and concise definition of the term and its implications and benefits. Infrastructure was frequently mentioned. Many offered their guesses and their own views. Many different components were mentioned although rarely all together: houses, jobs, roads, hospitals, play areas, schools and shops. Some neatly summed up the requirements as those addressing “living, working and leisure” to enable a community to “survive and flourish”. Some mentioned the need for safety, self-sufficiency and the relationship to business and industry.

### What three key elements would you say are vital to the success of the regeneration project?

The challenge for the development agencies is in meeting the incredibly diverse range of views expressed in response to this question. Not surprisingly, infrastructure (whether for transport, business, leisure or socialising) was the most frequently mentioned. But there was also strong support for careful planning (and control) of the overall project that pays sufficient attention to the local stakeholders – whether businesses, investors or the public. Public and private investment were seen as critical as were employment opportunities. There were frequent mentions of the need to get the right balance and integration of housing and business.

Yet there were also many other more specialist elements mentioned such as the need for specialist housing (single people, physically disadvantaged people), facilities for young people and the need to generate the right image of the area.

### Do you feel that the large landowners and developers are being sufficiently proactive in terms of developing business and residential sales?

A total of 32% felt that the landowners and developers were being proactive and 28% felt they were not. A further 18% felt that this varied depending on residential (yes) and business sales (no) and also on public authorities (yes) and private landowners (no).

Some landowners and developers were mentioned specifically as being proactive and these included Land Securities, the Ministry of Defence and SEEDA. There were comments that some appeared to be waiting for land/property values to increase before releasing them for development and the lack of any speculative commercial builds.

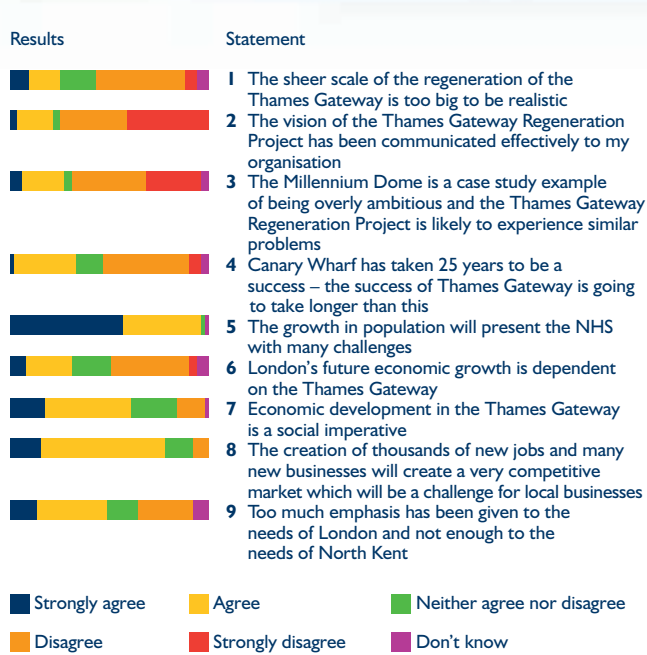
### If we could start with a clean slate, what are the facilities which you think would be most important to provide for businesses?

There's no surprise that transport infrastructure came top of the list. The need for good quality business space and business support services is perhaps more interesting as these are comparatively quicker and easier needs to address.

Demonstrating again the very different needs of businesses in the Thames Gateway area is the diversity of opinion on what the most critical issues are. Some of the more surprising responses included: more manufacturing businesses, good leisure facilities, High Streets, parking, sewerage and water facilities, tax breaks, industrial storage and warehousing.



## Attitudes towards the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project



### Comments

- 1 Whilst a number of respondents feel the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project is too big, the majority disagree with the statement which indicates that the project has the support of the business community participating in this project.
- 2 Perhaps this is the most alarming result from this survey – nearly three quarters of the participants had not been made to appreciate the significance of the developments.

- 3 66% disagree with the statement suggesting that comparisons with the large scale Dome project are inappropriate, that the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project is not seen as being too ambitious and that it is more likely to provide a long term legacy.
- 4 Whilst a third expect the Thames Gateway Regeneration Project to take more than 25 years, nearly 50% disagree with the statement indicating that they expect the benefits of the project to be realised more quickly. This may indicate unrealistic expectations which the Government and development agencies would do well to heed and manage.
- 5 Overwhelming agreement with this statement shows that the health provision within the Thames Gateway is a major concern.
- 6 Opinion appears to be divided as to how important the Thames Gateway is to the future economic growth of London – with slightly more (nearly half) disagreeing with the statement.
- 7 60% agree with this statement which suggests support for the regeneration project.
- 8 This reflects the fear that the majority of the participants expressed – 78% felt that local businesses will suffer from the increased competition created by the new businesses and jobs created by the regeneration project.
- 9 Nearly half of the participants agreed with this statement which suggests the balance of the regeneration project should be reassessed to ensure that the North Kent area receives adequate attention and investment within the project overall.

## The Thames Gateway Team

### Kamal Aggarwal



Partner in the Commercial Unit which forms part of the Dispute Resolution Team. Kamal is head of our Thames Gateway office. Kamal acts mainly for commercial organisations ranging from Plcs, UK subsidiaries of overseas companies, large and small private companies, partnerships, LLPs and owner managed businesses. Particular specialisms include applying for or opposing urgent injunction applications, disputes involving directors, shareholders, partners and/or members, contract disputes involving either UK or overseas parties and/or subject matter, agency, competition, gaming, insolvency, intellectual property and passing-off disputes. Kamal is a member of the Common Purpose North Kent Advisory Group, Director and Company Secretary to North Kent Chamber of Commerce, sits on the Shadow Board of Thameside Housing Association and is a member of the Institute of Directors.

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*"All in all, the consensus appears to be 'so far so good' but that we must not deviate from ensuring that we deliver truly sustainable communities and a legacy based upon quality with community pride at its heart."*

### Joanne Gallagher



Joanne, Partner in Company Commercial, has acted for a variety of different sized commercial clients in a mixture of industry sectors. She is experienced in corporate finance and transactional work, including acquisitions and disposals of companies and businesses, management buy-outs, company restructurings and

reorganisations, joint ventures, bank lending and other debt and equity finance, partnership matters and limited liability partnerships structures. She also handles a broad range of commercial matters. She has acted for various transactions including US clients to assist with reverse takeover by UK Plc of privately owned US entertainment firm (value £190m), instructed by UK Plc in relation to the acquisition of a group of IFAs in same field of activity (value £6m) and has been instructed by a private limited company in relation to disposal of assets in car industry to another company in same industry sector (value £3m).

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### Nick Hobden



Nick, Partner and head of the Employment Team, advises on all employment matters. His experience includes advising multi-national employers on international assignment policies and procedures for placing UK and other employees in foreign jurisdictions, drafting and negotiating service agreements, policies including

disciplinary and grievance procedures, drafting and negotiating non-core documentation such as redundancy policies and best practice guidelines in cases of large scale redundancies and advising employers and former employees in respect of breach of fidelity, garden leave and restrictive covenants provisions, handling injunction proceedings in the High Court. He has presented seminars to regional Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, Masters Degree law students at London University as well as other employment law briefings and training programmes to organisations in the telecoms, facilities management and insurance sectors.

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*"The interviewees care deeply about the region and it really matters to them that the agencies responsible for regenerating the region engage with them and get it right."*

## Nick Horton



Nick, Partner in the Commercial Unit which forms part of the Dispute Resolution Team, handles complex commercial, property and professional negligence disputes and specialises in Town & Country planning matters, environmental litigation and health & safety prosecutions. He has also acted for Claimants and Defendants in many

disputes since 2001, covering corporate and commercial law, company restoration, insolvency, partnership and directors' disqualification, and undertakes some competition law work. In 2001 Nick obtained the prestigious Higher Rights of Audience qualification which entitles him to appear as an advocate in all civil Courts and tribunals in England and Wales. He also holds a Diploma in Litigation awarded jointly by Law South and Nottingham Law School.

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## Paul Viner



Paul, Partner in Commercial Property, deals with a wide range of commercial property transactions with an emphasis on work involving corporate clients' property portfolios, and property aspects of corporate deals. His experience includes freehold sales and purchases for owner occupier businesses, acquisition and disposal for

investors of pre-let retail and industrial property, and the granting and taking of leases of all types of office/retail/warehouse space for landlords and tenants.

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## Chris Whittington



Chris, Partner in Commercial Property, specialises exclusively in construction and has acted in both non-contentious and contentious matters, advising employers (including developers of both commercial and residential property, major retailers, education and healthcare bodies, leisure and fitness providers, chemical manufacturers),

contractors, sub-contractors and consultants. The main emphasis of his work over recent years has been on the non-contentious side: advising on procurement methods, and drafting, vetting, and negotiating building and engineering contracts, collateral warranties, bonds and guarantees and other similar associated documentation, as well as professional appointments for consultants. On the contentious side he has handled disputes both in litigation through the courts (mainly TCC) and arbitration, and also latterly adjudication. The nature of the disputes has included the interpretation of contracts, quantum meruit claims, defects, payment, determination, loss and expense, and delay.

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## Roy Willis



Roy, Partner in Commercial Property, deals with the negotiation and acquisition of land for development including conditional contracts and options and the negotiation of planning and infrastructure agreements. Roy also has extensive experience in acting for landlords and tenants on all aspects of non-contentious landlord and tenant

issues from the grant of leases to estate management of retail, office and warehouse premises. His past projects include assisting in the site assembly of a brownfield site for an institutional investor for mixed-use development with its sale on to a shopping centre investor, the acquisition of brownfield and greenfield sites for residential development, involvement in the scheme for the regeneration of Kings Cross, the refurbishment of a shopping centre in Surrey, due diligence in respect of portfolio acquisitions for investment purposes and lettings in a new mixed-use development for institutional investors including the grant of leases to anchor tenants.

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## Appendix I – Greater detail of the planned regeneration taking place in North Kent

The overarching body in North Kent is the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership (TGKP). This provides the strategic leadership, co-ordination of funding bids and joining up the key projects identified across Kent Thameside, Medway and Swale. The objective is to deliver high levels of job growth and quality of life improvements in order to maintain its share of the ongoing

funding programme provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) – formerly known as the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) which is set to be £850 million by 2008. TGKP works with the Kent Thameside Delivery Board, Medway Renaissance Partnership and Swale Forward implementing the regeneration programme.

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### Kent Thameside Delivery Board

There will be 22 square miles of regeneration, delivering 30,000 new homes and 50,000 new jobs. Ebbsfleet International Station will be 17 minutes from Central London and two hours from Paris via the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL).

The Kent Thameside Delivery Board is the delivery vehicle for this area which is focused on the urban areas of Dartford and Gravesham. It has put in place a regeneration framework, a project framework and a dedicated delivery team.

Through this it has been able to provide a clear vision of the area, set strategic objectives and identify major opportunities. This is followed through with constant progress reports all backed by a delivery team which supports all partners in the delivery of the projects, promotion of the area and co-ordination of future investment.

Advice and support to Kent Thameside Delivery Board is provided by The Kent Thameside Economic Development Board and the Dartford and Gravesham Local Strategic Partnership.

Regeneration activities:

- to develop economic and business competitiveness
- to promote integrated transport
- to deliver innovative mixed-use development
- to integrate communities and improve quality of life
- to raise standards of learning and skills
- to provide an enhanced built and natural environment.

These include:

#### **Ebbsfleet**

The new international and domestic high speed rail interchange on the CTRL

Will become a major new commercial and retail centre acting as a focus for growth in the South East

Will provide 4.8 million square feet of high quality offices

Create some 3,000 new homes commencing with the first phase imminent at Springhead to the south providing 600 new homes

Up to 1.8m square feet of leisure, retail and community facilities.

#### **The Bridge**

264 acre site next to QEII Bridge

1,500 new homes

1.5 million square feet of business space, including a Science & Technology Park and Innovation Centre

Creation of 7,500 new jobs.

#### **Eastern Quarry**

At 750 acres this is one of Europe's largest brownfield regeneration projects

Development phased over 20 years

7,250 new homes

Up to 1.6 million square feet of offices

Up to 1.2 million square feet of community, leisure and shopping facilities.

## Medway Renaissance Partnership

Entering its delivery phase having secured public investment of £100 million into its regeneration programme. This is forecast to deliver a minimum of £1 billion investment over the next 20 years.

Significant progress has been made with:

### Rochester Riverside

A 74 acre site promoted by Medway Council and SEEDA and one of the flagship regeneration sites of Thames Gateway. This 10 to 15 year development will include:

- between 1,700 and 2,000 new homes
- hotels and conference facilities
- start-up and grow space for small businesses
- pubs, restaurants, shops and cafés.

### Strood Riverside and Temple Waterfront

Housing and high quality open space

400 apartments.

### Chatham Centre & Waterfront

Up to 950,000 square feet expansion of the retail centre, new business space and waterfront housing.

### Gillingham Riverside

A 23 hectare site which is in its development period of 2005-2010 will encompass:

- approximately 800 to 1000 new dwellings
- approximately 200 new jobs
- marine activities and increased public access to the river.

## Swale Forward

A local partnership to help ensure that the area's priorities are delivered effectively. It is co-ordinating a programme of projects worth £26 million.

Major Site developments include Sittingbourne Town Centre, Kent Science Park, Queenborough Regeneration, Sittingbourne Relief Road.

Swale Forward is also supporting three projects which will have impacts across Swale:

- Education and Skills – improving learning and skills in local communities
- Sustainable Communities – new provision for voluntary and community activity
- Environment – enhancement of open spaces and routes, improved access to coastal and waterside areas and improvements in the quality of the urban environment.





**Disclaimer** *This research was undertaken and analysed by lawyers in the first year of establishing TS&P's office in the Thames Gateway. No liability is accepted for the accuracy of the information or for any loss or damage caused by use or reliance on the information.*

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