

National Headquarters Competition for Great British Railways
Expression of Interest from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
March 2022



Foreword

Tonbridge is a fantastic town with the railway at its heart.

Since the railway came to Tonbridge 180 years ago, it has fundamentally shaped the growth of the town and the lives of its residents to the point that it is impossible now to think of time when it didn't exist. Today, millions of journeys to and from Tonbridge take place every year, businesses operate in and around the town that supply and support the rail industry, and it has fostered community groups that are passionate about trains.

This expression of interest strongly recommends Tonbridge as a great location for the new Great British Railways headquarters - it is an ideal location, with a strong railway heritage, available sites in the heart of the town that have amazing potential to be a catalyst for regeneration, provides opportunities for local levelling up and our bid has wide community support.

We very much hope that this strong expression of interest is given the thorough consideration it deserves.



Cllr Matt Boughton

Leader of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

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1. Context

A short introduction to Tonbridge

Tonbridge is a town of 42,000 people in West Kent which straddles the River Medway and boasts an impressive heritage. The railway station is a regional hub and is the busiest in Kent, with 4,554,198 annual users prior to the pandemic. The station serves a number of surrounding communities and caters for a rapidly increasing catchment which dwarfs the population of the town.

It is an important junction between two commuter lines serving Ashford, Ramsgate, Dover, Hastings, and Tunbridge Wells, as well as offering direct links into Charing Cross, London Bridge and Waterloo East. There are also connections north of London (via Thameslink) and to Gatwick and the west (via Redhill). The station itself is centrally located in the heart of the town, and is a key gateway to a long, linear High Street that is gradually finding its feet again following the coronavirus pandemic.

In many ways it is a place that is defined and shaped by its railway:

- It directly changed the morphology of the town, with extensive development taking place at the southern end of the town in the second half of the nineteenth century.
- As the railway rose to prominence in the nineteenth century, the movement of trade and goods down the river to Maidstone gradually declined and was transferred to rail freight.
- It stimulated the commuter lifestyle still shared by thousands of residents in the town.

Why Tonbridge should be considered for hosting the headquarters

We strongly believe that Tonbridge should be considered for hosting the national headquarters for Great British Railways because:

- Tonbridge is a town with the railway at its heart.
- The town has sites in public ownership (owned by the local authority or other public bodies) that are available near to its railway network, offering easy access and good value for money.
- The development of these sites will help deliver regeneration benefits to the town and surrounding areas, and are identified in the Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan (TCAAP).
- The headquarters can offer localised levelling up opportunities and link in with the excellent education facilities in the town.
- This Expression of Interest had wide support from partner organisations and the local Member of Parliament.

Support for this Expression of Interest

This Expression of Interest is supported by a wide range of partner organisations as well as local residents and businesses, who are all excited about the prospect of Tonbridge reinforcing its railway heritage. These include:

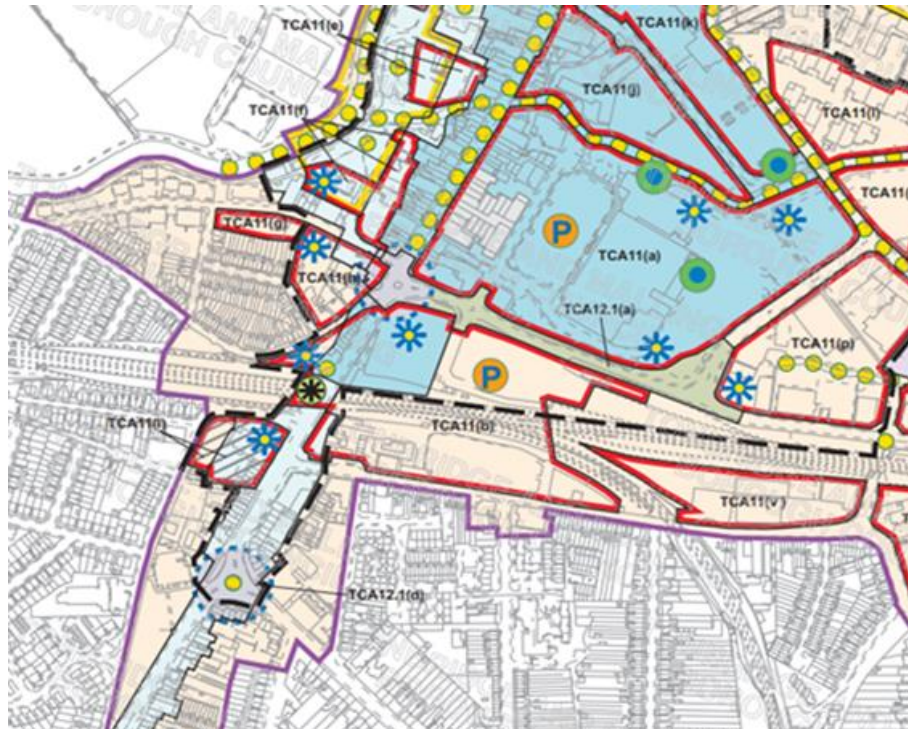
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- The local Member of Parliament - Tom Tugendhat MBE VR MP
- Tonbridge Line Commuters
- West Kent Partnership
- Tonbridge Town Team
- Local residents and businesses

Proposed sites for the National Headquarters

There are a couple of potential sites close to Tonbridge Railway Station that could easily lend themselves to accommodating the national headquarters. Both of these sites are identified in the TCAAP as key contributors to the regeneration of the town, and are both very accessible, located within a maximum 5-minute walk of Tonbridge station and close to a wide range of amenities provided by the town centre.

The two sites are highlighted in the extract shown opposite (Map 1), which highlights areas TCA11(a) and TCA11(b).

Policy TCA11 states that “The following sites, as defined on the Proposals Map, are allocated for a mix of town centre uses... including retail, business/commercial, community, cultural, leisure, hotel and residential use”



Map 1: Sites near to Tonbridge Station

The following overview provides further information on each site, including its location and existing uses:

Site 1: The Botany TCA11(a)

This area of the town, which lies to the east of the main High Street is dominated by extensive car park facilities, all of which are owned by the Borough Council. Part of the site is on a long-term lease to Sainsburys (which would be retained), although the remainder is subject to an upcoming asset review which incorporates all Council-owned sites within the central area. This review will no doubt highlight the potential for the intensification of uses in this part of town.



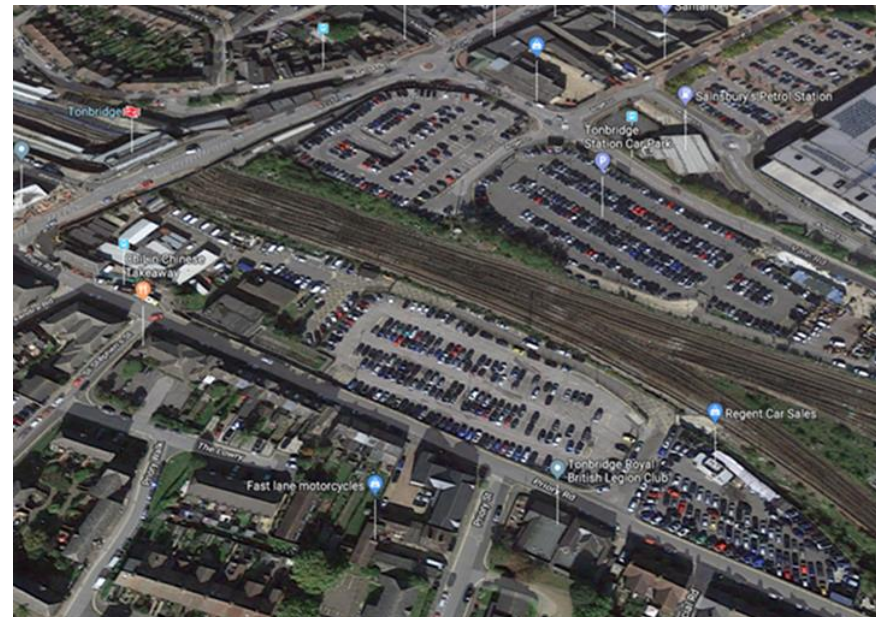
The areas within this site that would be suitable for potential redevelopment include:

- Sovereign Way North Car Park - <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/directory-record/40/sovereign-way-north-car-park-tonbridge>
- Sovereign Way Mid Car Park - <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/directory-record/47/sovereign-way-mid-car-park-tonbridge->
- Sovereign Way East Car Park - <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/directory-record/41/sovereign-way-east-car-park-tonbridge>

All of these have the potential to accommodate development, with replacement parking potentially being provided through the provision of two-level parking arrangements.

Site 2: Tonbridge Station Complex (TCA11(b)) - North and South of the Railway Line

As of March 2022, the site covered by Policy TCA11(b) in the TCAAP remains unattractive and underused. Whilst classified as one site in planning policy terms, it is useful to think of the site as having two component parts - to the south of the railway line, there are a mix of uses - comprising a goods yard, training centre and offices for railway staff (mostly modular buildings), surface car parking for commuters and a car sales business, which are all accessible directly from Priory Road. To the north of the railway line, there is surface car parking, with a single-decked car park on the westernmost section of the site, which was constructed in 2017.



2. Levelling Up

It is recognised that in the recently published White Paper, Tonbridge and Malling Borough does fare better than many parts of the United Kingdom. However, as also recognised in the document, Levelling Up is not simply about a North-South divide, and there are, indeed, significant variations in prosperity at the local level. Tonbridge & Malling is no exception in this respect, and the Borough Council and partners are already undertaking considerable work to help level up the local area.

Our Vision for Levelling Up

The vision set out in our Economic Recovery Strategy states that Borough Council is focussed on:

“Maximising the unique strengths of the local area to help create a resilient, dynamic and inclusive economy that fosters sustainable growth”

Our vision is to build upon the traditional strengths within the local economy, to help recover from the recent Covid-19 pandemic and to build resilience in order to put our businesses and all our communities in as strong a position as possible to grow and flourish.

This inclusive approach means that we look towards levelling up the Borough and addressing some of the long-term inequalities. There are four key neighbourhoods within Tonbridge and Malling that classically fall within the definition of our more deprived communities. These are:

- Trench in Tonbridge
- Snodland
- South Aylesford
- East Malling

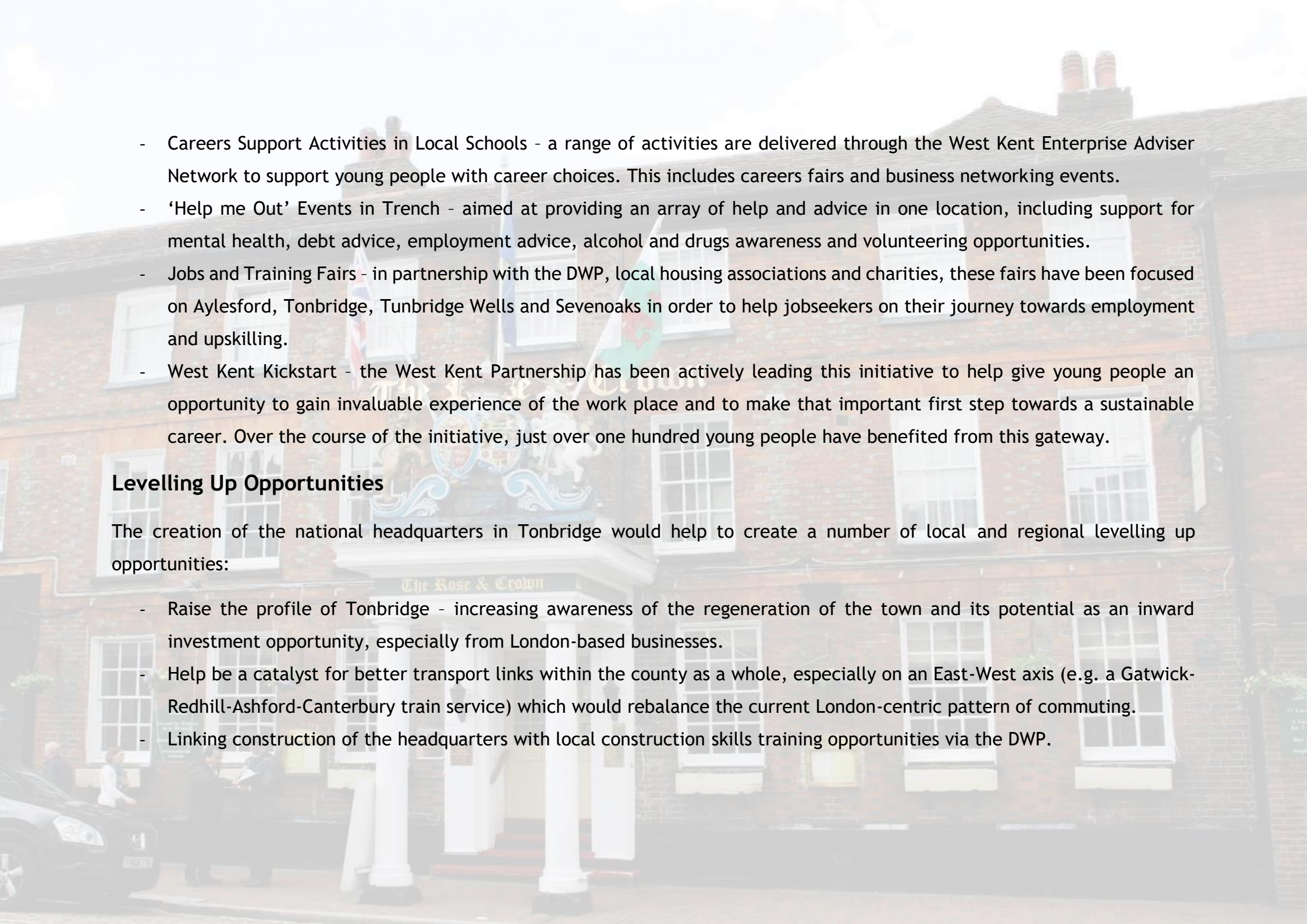
The Borough Council is already undertaking a number of activities with partners to deliver tangible benefits to our communities that are contributing towards our local Levelling Up agenda. In Trench, the Borough Council is an active member of the TN10 Community Partnership, which is a multi-agency partnership aimed at improving the socio-economic well-being of local residents and focusses much of its delivery through this group.

It should also be recognised that beyond the borough, there are also strong links with the other West Kent authorities - Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council - through the West Kent Partnership. Within West Kent (which is seen as a functional economic area), there are also areas of deprivation, especially in Swanley. Collaborative working across this geography is therefore a key component of addressing levelling up issues across the region.

Delivery

Local and regional Levelling Up initiatives are key to ensuring that we deliver an inclusive economy (as set out in our Economic Recovery Strategy). These initiatives include:

- Digital inclusion initiatives - through the TN10 Community Partnership, other local community groups across the Borough, and local housing associations, the council is enabling local residents to learn computer skills and build confidence in internet usage through 1-to-1 coaching and group sessions. This good work is being supplemented by work to offer free community wi-fi in areas of greatest need, using the existing Kent Public Support Network.

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- Careers Support Activities in Local Schools - a range of activities are delivered through the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network to support young people with career choices. This includes careers fairs and business networking events.
 - 'Help me Out' Events in Trench - aimed at providing an array of help and advice in one location, including support for mental health, debt advice, employment advice, alcohol and drugs awareness and volunteering opportunities.
 - Jobs and Training Fairs - in partnership with the DWP, local housing associations and charities, these fairs have been focused on Aylesford, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks in order to help jobseekers on their journey towards employment and upskilling.
 - West Kent Kickstart - the West Kent Partnership has been actively leading this initiative to help give young people an opportunity to gain invaluable experience of the work place and to make that important first step towards a sustainable career. Over the course of the initiative, just over one hundred young people have benefited from this gateway.

Levelling Up Opportunities

The creation of the national headquarters in Tonbridge would help to create a number of local and regional levelling up opportunities:

- Raise the profile of Tonbridge - increasing awareness of the regeneration of the town and its potential as an inward investment opportunity, especially from London-based businesses.
- Help be a catalyst for better transport links within the county as a whole, especially on an East-West axis (e.g. a Gatwick-Redhill-Ashford-Canterbury train service) which would rebalance the current London-centric pattern of commuting.
- Linking construction of the headquarters with local construction skills training opportunities via the DWP.

- Linking sector-based employment opportunities arising from the headquarters with our local deprived communities through partnership working with the local Job Centre.
- Creation of local skilled jobs that reduces reliance on commuting into London and supports Tonbridge to not get further overshadowed by the growth of the capital's economy.

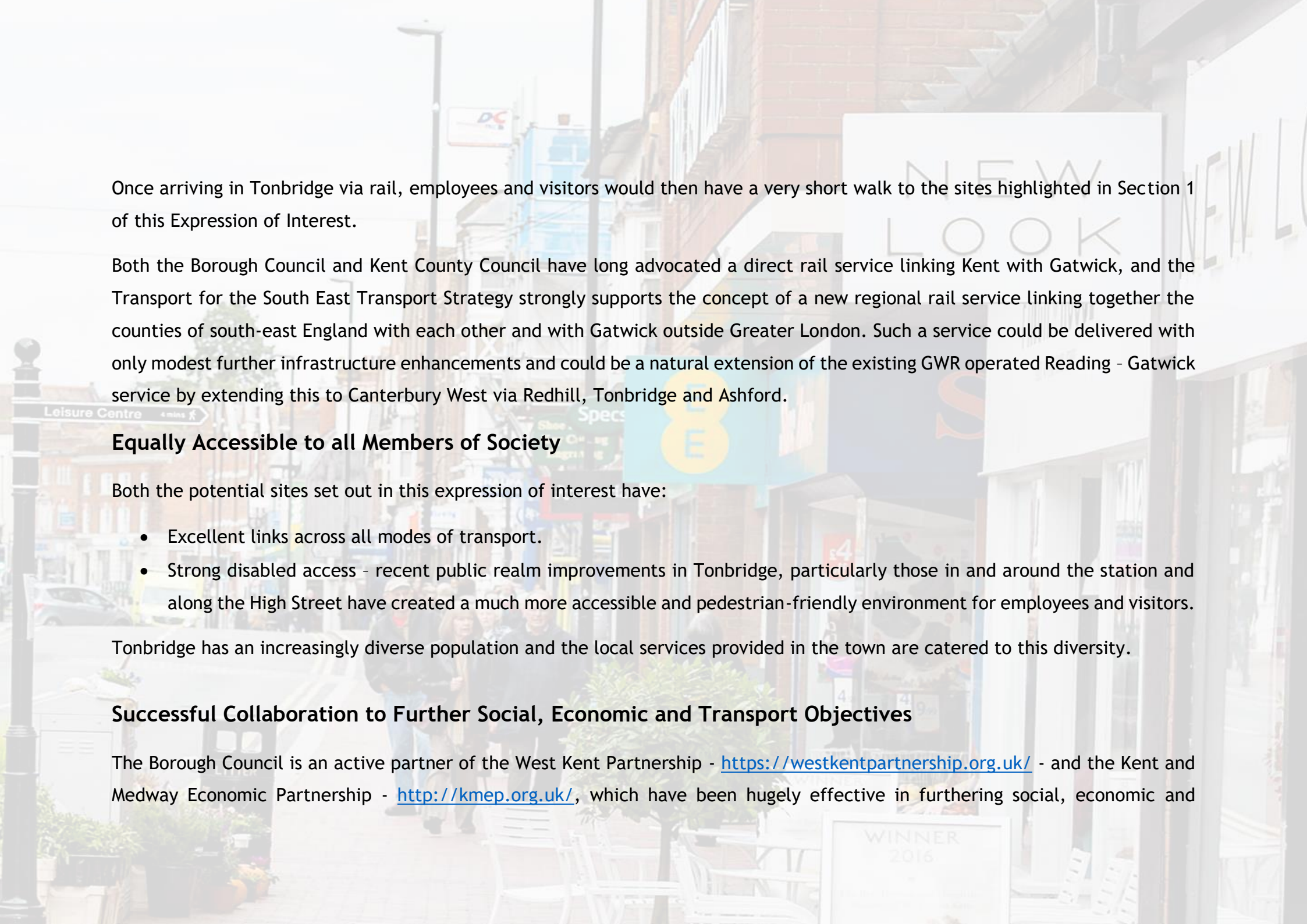
3. Connected and Easy to Get to

Access for Employees and Visitors and Connections to Other Nations and Regions of Great Britain

The following table illustrates the amount of time taken to reach Tonbridge from a number of cities across Great Britain. As illustrated, journeys to and from London are short, with cities in Wales and North England being accessible well within 4 hours. Glasgow and Edinburgh are accessible within approximately 6 hours.

Destination	Quickest Time*	Number of Changes
London (Charing Cross)	0 hours 43 minutes	0
Birmingham	2 hours 56 minutes	2
Cardiff	3 hours 17 minutes	2
Leeds	3 hours 38 minutes	2
Liverpool	3 hours 49 minutes	2
Edinburgh	5 hours 40 minutes	2
Glasgow	6 hours 20 minutes	3

*It is worth noting that some of the journey times listed will reduce significantly with HS2.



Once arriving in Tonbridge via rail, employees and visitors would then have a very short walk to the sites highlighted in Section 1 of this Expression of Interest.

Both the Borough Council and Kent County Council have long advocated a direct rail service linking Kent with Gatwick, and the Transport for the South East Transport Strategy strongly supports the concept of a new regional rail service linking together the counties of south-east England with each other and with Gatwick outside Greater London. Such a service could be delivered with only modest further infrastructure enhancements and could be a natural extension of the existing GWR operated Reading - Gatwick service by extending this to Canterbury West via Redhill, Tonbridge and Ashford.

Equally Accessible to all Members of Society

Both the potential sites set out in this expression of interest have:

- Excellent links across all modes of transport.
- Strong disabled access - recent public realm improvements in Tonbridge, particularly those in and around the station and along the High Street have created a much more accessible and pedestrian-friendly environment for employees and visitors.

Tonbridge has an increasingly diverse population and the local services provided in the town are catered to this diversity.

Successful Collaboration to Further Social, Economic and Transport Objectives

The Borough Council is an active partner of the West Kent Partnership - <https://westkentpartnership.org.uk/> - and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership - <http://kmep.org.uk/>, which have been hugely effective in furthering social, economic and

transport objectives. One example of this has been the West Kent Sustainable Transport Programme, which has seen a positive investment in a range of measures aimed at encouraging greater use of public transport, cycling and walking. Through this programme, public realm work was undertaken at Tonbridge station in 2018 to improve accessibility by foot, and to build on the wider public realm improvements carried out on Tonbridge High Street which were delivered in 2015/16 and have created a more pedestrian friendly environment.

4. Opportunities for Great British Railways

Enabling GBR to Engage with Customers, the Private Sector and Wider Transport Industry

There are many factors that mean that Tonbridge offers a good opportunity for GBR to ensure a wide level of engagement:

- i) As mentioned previously, the town has a large customer base with over 4.5 million trips per annum before the covid-19 pandemic.
- ii) Whilst not directly on the HS1 line, it offers strong links to this service, as well as being well-connected to future HS2 services. It also links effectively to underground and overline hubs in London.
- iii) Although it is some time since Tonbridge saw Eurostar services pass through the town, there are strong links to cross channel services and customers, particularly via direct links to Ashford.
- iv) Tonbridge and Malling Borough has an excellent road network, with the M20, M26 and M2 all serving the Borough and creating strong links to the Channel Ports and the rest of the UK. In recent years, the upgrade to the A21 has also improved connectivity to Hastings and London.

- v) The transport and logistics sector is extremely strong in Tonbridge and Malling Borough - the current development of Panattoni Park Aylesford is but one clear example of this, with the £180m investment creating regional distribution hubs for a number of large multinational companies.

Opportunities for Working with the Rail Supply Chain, Manufacturing Hubs, and Institutes

The Borough has a strong manufacturing base, with an estimated 285 manufacturing enterprises in 2021, representing just under 5% of all enterprises in the Borough, and employing around 6% of the workforce. In addition, this sector grew by approximately 12% during the period 2015-2020, which is one of the strongest increases in Kent and far exceeds the 4.9% growth seen across England during this same period.

Of these 285 manufacturing enterprises, over half (145) are in advanced engineering, with the majority being SMEs. These advanced manufacturing companies employ roughly 40% of the manufacturing workforce.

Much of the manufacturing activity in Tonbridge takes place in the east of the town, in the region around Vale Rise and Sovereign Way. Within this area there are a number of estates - Cannon Bridge Industrial Estate, Sovereign Way, Orchard Business Centre and Munday Industrial Estate - comprising 60-70 individual units.

There are a number of rail supply companies operating in Tonbridge and the surrounding area that provide opportunities for joint working. Examples of locally based businesses include GB Railfreight, which is the third largest rail freight operator in the UK and is located at Tonbridge West Yard and Colas Rail who have a Tonbridge depot based near to the station, along with Network Rail who have an infrastructure maintenance depot.

In addition, there are a number of rail-related institutions based in London and the surrounding area that are only about an hour from Tonbridge. These include:

- University of East London - BEng in Railway Engineering: <https://www.uel.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/beng-hons-railway-engineering>
- The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London - courses in Railway Engineering - <https://www.conel.ac.uk/courses/railway-engineering/567/>
- Railway Training Network (based in Croydon) - <https://www.railwaytraining.network/>
- Institute of mechanical Engineers - <https://www.imeche.org/contact-us>
- Transport Focus - <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/>
- The National Skills Academy for Rail - <https://www.nsar.co.uk/>

Collaboration with Retail, Economic and Environmental Sectors

Tonbridge has an excellent independent retail offer that has enabled it to be relatively resilient during the economic downturn and then the covid-19 pandemic, with vacancy rates in the town centre only increasing marginally (from 8% in 2018 to 9% in 2021). However, in a recent survey 95% of traders stated that they had been impacted by recent events and 58% claimed to be confident of sustaining their business going forward.

Town centre businesses are highly active and entrepreneurial in the local area, with the Tonbridge Town Team providing marketing, promotion and events, and the TN Card helping to encourage people to shop locally. The Borough Council also supports

the sector through regular networking events that helps to raise awareness of local opportunities. These are all activities that the headquarters could get involved with locally.

This strong independent offer creates a strong sense of place that makes it a great place to live and work for any new headquarter employees. The wide variety of high-quality independent eating establishments also make it a fantastic place to network and meet people.

In addition, the environmental agenda is becoming much stronger in Tonbridge and Malling. The Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has produced a Climate Change Strategy which includes an aspiration to reach net zero across the Borough by 2030. Not only has this included investment in greater tree planting and the installation of EV charging points in car parks, but it has also included supporting the growth in the 'green economy' and encouraging greater sustainability amongst existing businesses across all sectors. One measure to achieve this has been the creation of a Green Business Grant Scheme which as seen business development support given to green start-up businesses such as Jade Consultancy - <https://jadeconsultancy.co.uk/> - and Retroelectrics - <https://www.retroelectrics.co.uk/>. There are plenty of opportunities here to not only use local sustainable construction businesses during the construction of the new headquarters (on a brownfield site), but also for networking with local green businesses to deliver services.

Site Opportunities to Develop as an Organisation

The sites themselves offer great opportunities for GBR to develop as an organisation. These opportunities include:

- Although they would require planning permission, the sites have existing planning policies that support their development.
- Both sites offer a blank canvas by which to create a bespoke building that meets the needs of the organisation.
- The sites are of sufficient size to allow the possibility of further expansion should this be required at a later date.

- Given the prominent location of the brownfield sites (in the centre of the town and near to the station) there are opportunities to promote the sustainability agenda.
- Both sites would enable GBR to be located outside of London but retain the proximity to link in with key London hubs and partners.

5. Railway Heritage and Links to the Network

Tonbridge's Railway Heritage

The railway reached 'Tunbridge' in 1842 with the arrival of the South Eastern Railway's main line from Redhill to Folkestone, with competition from the London, Chatham and Dover Railway leading to the construction of a more direct route to London via Sevenoaks and Orpington opening in 1868. It was at this time that the station was moved to its present site.

Under the Southern Railway, the station was renamed 'Tonbridge' in July 1929. It was rebuilt in 1935, with the bay on the south side of the station converted to a through platform. This entailed the construction of a new section of bridge under the road outside the station.

By May 1958, the brick station building fronting the main road had been rebuilt with a tiled facade. The Sevenoaks to Dover line via Tonbridge was electrified in 1961 when the Southern Region improved train frequencies and faster journey times were introduced as part of the Kent Coast Electrification. The line south to Tunbridge Wells and Hastings was electrified in 1986 by British Rail, and finally the line to Redhill was electrified in 1993 also by British Rail as part of the Channel Tunnel route improvement works.

Eurostar trains ran through Tonbridge station until the first section of the High-Speed line was built through Kent, to cut down journey times from London to the Channel Tunnel. The transfer happened on 28 September 2003. The station was refurbished in 2011-12, with new facilities for cyclists (cycle hub) being constructed in 2020 that enable greater accessibility.

Goods Yards and Sidings

There are extensive yards and storage sidings (tracks) on both the east and west sides of the station. To the east of the station are Tonbridge East Sidings, four sidings and a two-track shed used by Network Rail for maintenance equipment storage and materials delivery. These occupy part of the site of the former engine shed. Further down the line towards Paddock Wood, there is the now disused Tonbridge Postal Siding. This was opened in 1995 with a new down "slow" line to handle mail and parcels traffic for the nearby Royal Mail sorting office. Its use was short-lived owing to the loss of most mail traffic to road haulage.

To the west, between the Redhill line and the West Yard, the four electrified 'Jubilee' sidings are used to stable trains. The adjacent West Yard, operated by GB Railfreight, has sixteen non-electrified tracks, and is now mainly used for stabling engineers' trains. The West Yard was built in 1941 as part of the improvements needed for freight train traffic during World War Two and is spanned by a long footbridge carrying a public footpath between Douglas Road and Clare Avenue.

Tonbridge also has a strong link to rail training facilities, with limited training offices located at the Tonbridge Station site, along with a further training centre based at Paddock Wood.

The fact that Tonbridge has such a strong railway heritage over the past 170 years offers opportunities for GBR to tap into a vibrant station with high levels of usage, both in terms of passengers and local industry, and local training facilities.

6. Value for Money

How will the Location Offer Financial Efficiency to GBR?

The location offers a number of very strong benefits:

- Sites in single public ownership - therefore avoiding any need for complicated acquisition.
- Excellent public transport links - being located in the centre of the town within a short walk of Tonbridge Station.
- Ultrafast broadband - Tonbridge was one of the first towns identified by Openreach for its 'Fibre First' strategy, supporting a 'digital first' approach for GBR that would help to reduce costs.
- Proximity to existing institutions and hubs, especially within the capital.
- The Borough benefits from a skilled workforce with wage demands that are much lower than the Greater London Area and lower than the average for Great Britain as a whole - in 2021 the median weekly full-time earnings (workplace based) were £579.2 in Tonbridge and Malling; this compares with a median of £612.80 for Great Britain as a whole.
- The Borough and surrounding areas have a strong construction sector to support the efficient redevelopment of the site through local supply chains, that ultimately reduce transportation costs. A recent example of this has been the redevelopment of a number of commercial sites by Gallaghers, a construction company located in the Borough.

Making Good Use of Public Money and Generating Public Value

There are a number of ways in which the GBR headquarters would add value. These include:

- The hub would immeasurably improve the public realm and built fabric in this part of the town, which is dominated by surface car parking and open storage. It would therefore offer up a cost-effective and sustainable way of regenerating a town.
- It would generate greater visitor numbers that support our burgeoning food and drink sector and help to raise the profile of the town's best-loved assets, such as the castle, river and high-quality green space, and to support their latent tourism potential.

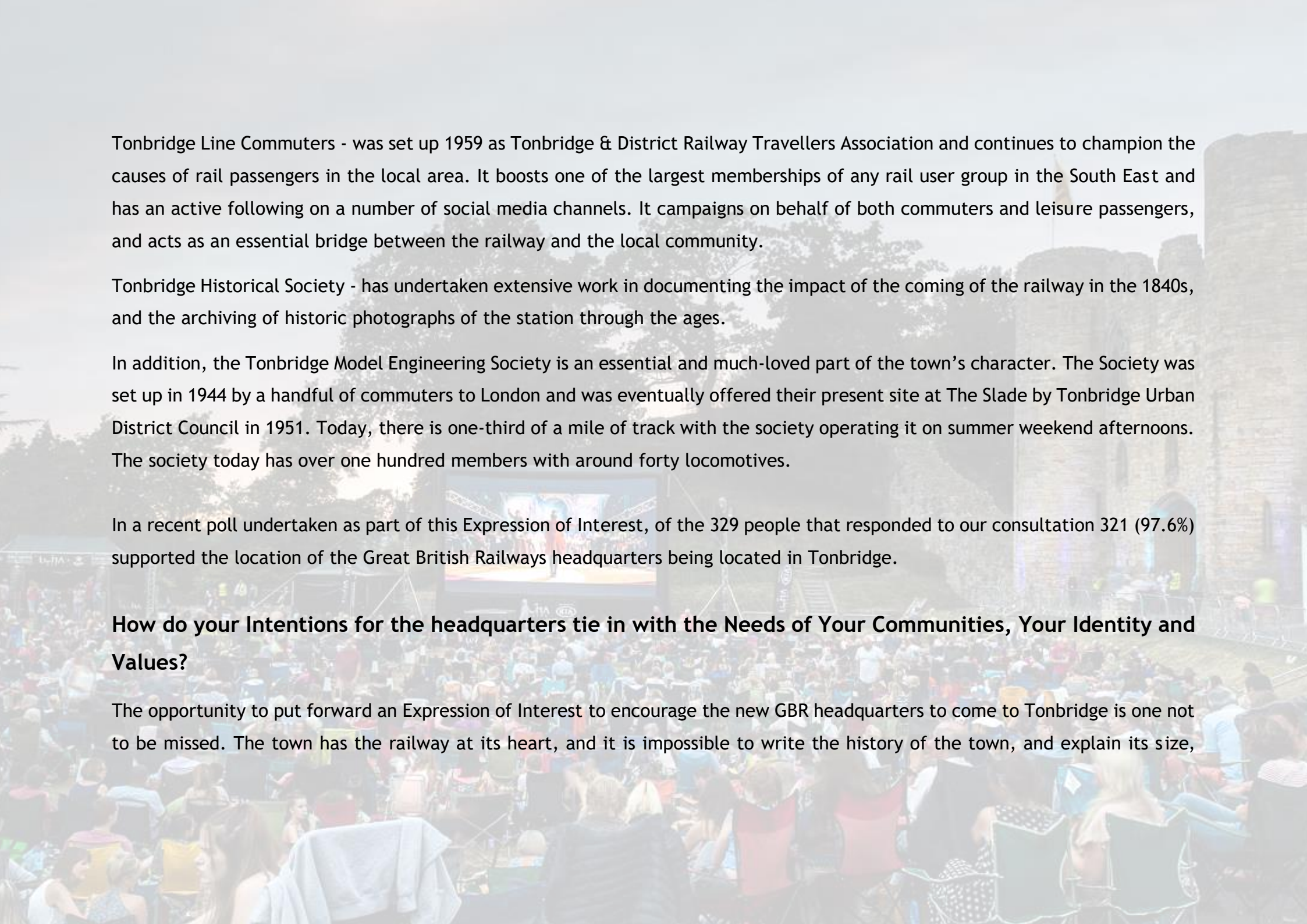
7. Public Support

Demonstrate the Importance of the Railways to the Local Community

The railways are an intrinsic part of the DNA of town and surrounding area. This can be seen not only in the day to day lives of thousands of commuters, but also in the establishment of a variety of groups and societies.

Tonbridge Station is extremely well used with pre-pandemic figures from 2018/19 revealing that there were 4,554,198 passengers using the station. Obviously, numbers have dropped over the past couple of years due to the impact of the coronavirus (down to around 1.5m), but this is picking back up again as we move out of the pandemic phase of the virus. This scale of usage clearly illustrates the importance of the railway to not only local residents, but all those within the surrounding area that come into Tonbridge to access the rail services.

Examples of local groups with an interest in the railways are:



Tonbridge Line Commuters - was set up 1959 as Tonbridge & District Railway Travellers Association and continues to champion the causes of rail passengers in the local area. It boasts one of the largest memberships of any rail user group in the South East and has an active following on a number of social media channels. It campaigns on behalf of both commuters and leisure passengers, and acts as an essential bridge between the railway and the local community.

Tonbridge Historical Society - has undertaken extensive work in documenting the impact of the coming of the railway in the 1840s, and the archiving of historic photographs of the station through the ages.

In addition, the Tonbridge Model Engineering Society is an essential and much-loved part of the town's character. The Society was set up in 1944 by a handful of commuters to London and was eventually offered their present site at The Slade by Tonbridge Urban District Council in 1951. Today, there is one-third of a mile of track with the society operating it on summer weekend afternoons. The society today has over one hundred members with around forty locomotives.

In a recent poll undertaken as part of this Expression of Interest, of the 329 people that responded to our consultation 321 (97.6%) supported the location of the Great British Railways headquarters being located in Tonbridge.

How do your Intentions for the headquarters tie in with the Needs of Your Communities, Your Identity and Values?

The opportunity to put forward an Expression of Interest to encourage the new GBR headquarters to come to Tonbridge is one not to be missed. The town has the railway at its heart, and it is impossible to write the history of the town, and explain its size,

morphology, economy and the everyday life of the town without mentioning the impact of the railway. Having the new headquarters in Tonbridge would be a seamless continuity to this narrative.

The town has the existing infrastructure, locational benefits, and political support to make the new headquarters a huge success, and one that would generate a range of wider benefits to the local area.

The headquarters would be a catalyst for the revival of sustainable public transport in the county and a stimulus for much needed regeneration in the town. It would create local employment opportunities and help create regional supply chain benefits that will bolster the economy.

As such, we are grateful for the opportunity to put Tonbridge forward as a strong potential location for the new GBR, and we hope that you give the town the consideration it deserves when looking at opportunities that exist across the country.

Appendix 1: Letters of Support

TOM TUGENDHAT MBE MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

10 March 2022

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Dear Grant,

There is no doubt that Tonbridge would be a worthy home for the HQ of the new Great British Railways. I know that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) are making a bid and I am fully supportive of this.

With pre-pandemic usage of nearly 4.6million passenger trips each year, Tonbridge is the busiest railway station in Kent and is consistently one of the busiest in the whole of the south east of England. This is because the town has retained a strong commuter presence, a number of employment sites nearby the station which encourage travel into the town by train, and also benefits from 5 Secondary Schools and a College within walking distance of the station. Given Kent's Grammar School system encourages children to attend Secondary School further away from where they live, this has promoted a reliance on rail as a necessary form of travel in the region for decades.

Consequently the town is one full of railway heritage, which has remained the case since the railway arrived in Tonbridge 180 years ago. The Southeastern Mainline acts as the main source of passenger movements but there is also great connections to Hastings via Tunbridge Wells, Ashford and Redhill. Journey times to London Charing Cross are around 43 minutes and it is possible to get to the north of England in under 4 hours.

There is no doubt that Tonbridge is an incredibly well connected railway hub, one of the best in the whole country, and has the economic base to sustain an organisation of the size Great British Railways will be. The presence of so many Secondary Schools and North Kent College (formerly West Kent College) means young people are used to travelling to the town and leave education with worthwhile skills. Secondary Schools, such as Hillview School for Girls, are also investing in their post-16 education to ensure that the workforce here has all the opportunities available to pursue potential careers.

Having Great British Railways located in the town would mean both easy access to the rest of the country, and also a strong, young, local workforce as the organisation grows and develops. It would greatly assist with levelling up this part of the town, and wider community, which consistently requires support. There is a dedicated Community Development Worker in Trench and, with the assistance of Tonbridge Baptist Church and other groups and organisations there is a great deal of support available to residents, in a

Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling

130 Vale Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1SP

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ward where 48% of households are socially rented, accordingly to the latest available figures. While there is opportunity for support the area struggles with job opportunities, and Great British Railways would assist in making sure that these are available for residents in Trench.

The bid put forward by TMBC is extremely strong and one I am very happy to support.

Best wishes,

Tom Tugendhat

TOM TUGENDHAT



West Kent Partnership
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
TN13 1HG

Tel: 07970 551598

Email: wendy.wood@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Web: www.westkentpartnership.org.uk

04 March 2022

Jeremy Whittaker
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Gibson Drive
Kings Hill
West Malling
ME19 4LZ

Dear Jeremy

Great British Railways HQ Expression of Interest

I am writing in support of your ambition to host the Great British Railways national headquarters in Tonbridge.

As a Member of the West Kent Partnership, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is active in supporting the West Kent economy and as a borough has been proactive in promoting the area as a great place to invest, due to the excellent transport connections and a proactive 'open for business' culture within the Council.

In addition, the Council plays a key role in our West Kent Infrastructure and Transport Sub-Group and chairs the Group. Members include county and district colleagues, Southeastern, Network Rail and other transport operators. This is a long-standing group of some 20 years providing a forum for discussion and collaboration and which advises the West Kent Partnership on transport issues.

The West Kent area has a strong affiliation with the railways with significant numbers of rail travellers every day commuting to work or school and this plays a key role in the vitality of our local communities. As we put together strategies and actions across West Kent to move towards net zero, the role of the railways will be a key component both for people and for freight.

With good rail connections to London and from there to the rest of the UK, Tonbridge & Malling is well placed for national conferences and meetings. Conference space is in short supply in West Kent and there would be an opportunity for any facilities established by Great British Railways to be made available to local community and business organisations if there was spare capacity.

Kind regards

Wendy Wood

West Kent Partnership Manager



TONBRIDGE LINE COMMUTERS
*THE WATCHDOG
FOR COMMUTERS
FROM TONBRIDGE,
PADDOCK WOOD
AND HILDENBOROUGH*
<http://www.tonbridgecommuters.org.uk>

Mr M Boughton
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

23 February 2022

Dear Mr Boughton

Supporting Tonbridge to be the new headquarters for Great British Railways

We are delighted that Tonbridge is bidding to be the headquarters for Great British Railways and are more than happy to offer our support.

As you know, Tonbridge has a rich rail history. The railway first came to Tonbridge in 1842 (having been originally proposed in 1825) linking Redhill to Folkestone. Today, Tonbridge has a fantastic range of connections with services to London, Hastings, Folkestone, Dover and Ashford International amongst others. Tonbridge does not just cater for passengers and is also part of the growing rail freight industry and so plays a key role in the future of the railway. Nearby Paddock Wood also hosts Network Rail training facilities and so Tonbridge really is the logical choice for the new headquarters of Great British Railways.

Tonbridge is in fact, one of Kent's busiest railway stations, ahead of Ashford International and Sevenoaks. Rail services in Tonbridge are well supported by the public, with our association, which has been operating since 1959, being one of the largest rail user groups in the country.

With a thriving local community, Tonbridge has a lot to offer the employees of Great British Railways through open green spaces, local independent shops, restaurants and pubs.

We wish you all the best for your pitch. Please let us know if we can help in anyway.

Yours sincerely

Rob Mansfield
Secretary
Tonbridge Line Commuters



Tonbridge Town Team
www.tonbridge-ourtown.org.uk

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for putting together the Expression of Interest for the Great British Railways HQ for Tonbridge. As you know, our High Street depends on the railway, the geography of the town has the Castle at one end of the Street and the station at the other. This makes the railway key to the economy of the town in the way it funnels people along the High Street. It brings in tourists and gives us great connections to London and the coast.

The town grew up around the railway, it's an integral part of our identity and has been for nearly 200 years.

Tonbridge would be an ideal location for a Headquarters, our location is close enough to London for convenience, but far enough away to be rural. The incoming investment could help to regenerate the empty shops along Railway Approach and further develop our public transport links. The jobs created will only benefit our independent stores, and feed into our lively community.

I wish every success to the endeavor

Yours Sincerely

Jenny Lewis

Chair of Tonbridge Town Team