

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS COMPETITION FOR GREAT BRITISH RAILWAYS

Expression of Interest

1. Context: Describe the location of your application and your proposed headquarters site

- Describe the geographical area covered by the application and why it should be considered for hosting the headquarters?
- Describe the proposed site(s) for the national headquarters

North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) believes that North Northamptonshire offers a fantastic opportunity to deliver a new and **iconic headquarters** for the new Great British Railways, which **blends rail heritage** with contemporary design on a **brownfield site**, forms an intrinsic element of a **new garden community** and supports UK Government's **Levelling Up agenda**.

NNC is a **new council** and ambitious. Created in April 2021, it is one of the largest unitary councils in the country. It recently adopted its first Corporate Plan which includes a key commitment to delivering 'Safe and thriving places' and it is committed to 'working with local businesses and partners to support the creation of high-quality, better-skilled jobs.' The council is business-focussed and, despite being less than a year old, is already developing a strong record of accomplishment of working in **collaboration** with a range of national and international organisations. Three of these are: the Crown Estates (through an Enterprise Unit to help local people into jobs and offer wider support during the recovery), Liberty Charge (which provides on-street charging points for residents without off-street parking, part of the wider Liberty Global Group, and their first venture outside of London), and Voi Technology (the largest micro-mobility operator in Europe) to deliver one of the largest and most successful e-scooter trials in the UK).

The council has identified Wellingborough as offering the ideal location. It is located at the **core of the national rail network**, only 45mins from Central London and with 40% of the country's' population within 2 hours travel by rail. This makes it **accessible**.

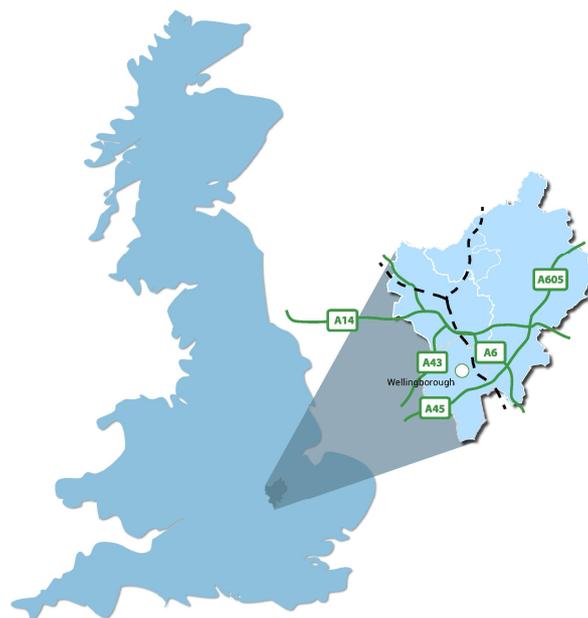


Figure 1: North Northamptonshire

North Northamptonshire – home of the Great British Railways HQ

Moreover, North Northamptonshire and specifically Wellingborough has been identified by Government as a **Priority Area** for the Levelling Up agenda.

NNC believes that the Station Island site in Wellingborough provides an unrivalled combination of **deliverability, value for money, strategic location and scale** coupled to proximity to a new and developing garden community (Stanton Cross) with strong environmental credentials and ambitions.



Figure 2: Station Island and wider Stanton Cross

The Station Island site is located immediately **adjacent to the Midland Mainline** and Station and is part of the wider Stanton Cross development. A strength of the site is that it offers a range of potential options for Government and the provision of a new headquarters (HQ) building for Great British Railways, including the opportunity to commission, design and build an iconic contemporary design and/or redevelop the **'Roundhouse,'** a Victorian brick-built **former goods shed**.

Station Island provides a design-led innovative development that unifies Stanton Cross and Wellingborough, providing a vibrant mix of uses and regionally significant transport interchange. Benefitting from excellent public transport links, and strong rail heritage, the HQ would be a strong addition to this new development.

Stanton Cross itself is a new 'garden community' comprising a flagship mixed use development promoted by Stanton Cross Developments LLP. Located on the eastern edge of Wellingborough, it will see more than **£1 billion invested in the town**. Once complete in 2032, along with **3,750 new homes**, it will also provide more than 1.5 million sq. ft of industrial, leisure, retail, service, and office space, delivering around **3,000 new jobs** along with new education and community facilities. This housing provides fantastic opportunities for employees at the new HQ to live locally. The major commercial, retail and leisure complex at Rushden

North Northamptonshire – home of the Great British Railways HQ

Lakes, a flagship development by the Crown Estates, is located within five minutes of the site. Development at Stanton Cross is already progressing at pace with more than 400 dwellings already completed and the first primary school under-construction and opening in **September 2022**.

The site is split into four areas – the Station District, Mill Lane Quarter, Northern Neighbourhood and Employment Village, with each having its own identity.

Station District which would contain the HQ will be a diverse development with a **rich mix of complementary uses** concentrated around Wellingborough Station and its new facilities and parking, whilst the Mill Lane Quarter will be an inspiring mixed-use area drawing upon the rich cultural heritage of Mill Lane and distinctive character of the Roundhouse building.



Figure 3: View south along Roundhouse Way to redeveloped Roundhouse Building

The Northern Neighbourhood will be a flourishing community of starter, family, and later living homes, with opportunities for serviced offices and co-working hubs, local commercial services, and leisure facilities to be integrated within the fabric of the development.

Meanwhile the Employment Village will be a thriving place to work, conveniently situated close to bus and rail links, within walking distance of Wellingborough and Stanton Cross, and benefitting from the Country Park on its doorstep.



Figure 4: View from the Town and Country Park through the eastern extents of Station Island South towards the new Station Building and Plaza.

- **Who else is involved in developing and supporting your application?**

The application for the HQ in Wellingborough has been developed **in partnership with the private sector** and NNC has worked closely with the developers of Stanton Cross – Stanton Cross LLP and the Vistry Group.

Chris Tompkins, Pre-Construction Director on behalf of **Stanton Cross Developments LLP**, said: “We are delighted to support North Northamptonshire Council in their expression of interest and promote the restored former railway siding as a potential home for the HQ for GBR. Located immediately adjacent to the listed Wellingborough Rail Station there is **fantastic potential** to build on the site’s rail heritage.”

The application has strong support from the local business community, including the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the North Northamptonshire Business Network, and the South-East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership.



Figure 5: South East Midland Local Industrial Strategy

- **What benefits do you expect your town/city will gain from accommodating the headquarters?**

Accommodating the headquarters in Wellingborough would deliver numerous benefits. Much of the recent commercial development in the area has been for warehousing. Whilst this brings employment and other benefits, there is a desire from the council to **broaden the commercial offer and economic base** by attracting new businesses. This includes more office-based jobs, knowledge-led and high skilled roles and is crucial to support the Levelling-Up agenda and **increase productivity and incomes**.

Creating the new HQ at Station Island would give a **massive boost** to the wider area in terms of employment opportunities and attractiveness as a site for commercial office development. It would also send a wider signal that it is not just major cities and regional centres that benefit from decentralisation of Government departments and agencies. This is important as the area is one of the few which has not benefitted to date from the decentralisation of any Government departments or agencies. It is understood that there is an intention from Government that **decentralisation should benefit all parts of the country**.

- **What do you think makes your town/city best suited as the location for Great British Railways’ national headquarters?**

North Northamptonshire has many natural competitive advantages, and these are articulated in the council's vision of its role in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and delivering growth in locations such as Stanton Cross and Wellingborough:

- *A **showpiece for modern green living** and well-managed sustainable development*
- *A strong network of settlements within an **enhanced green framework** of living, working countryside*
- ***Outward looking**, taking advantage of its excellent transport connectivity to be a national important growth area and focus for inward investment*

*More self-reliant investment in infrastructure and jobs will lead to less of a need to travel and will have shaped places in a way that meets the needs and **aspirations of local people**. It will be an **exemplar** for construction-based innovation and delivery of low carbon growth.*

*We want to work with our partners and central Government, lead in key areas where our strengths are such as renewable energy, to realise the ambition and momentum that has been created and drive forward **sustainable innovative growth** across the area.*

The application to host the HQ in Wellingborough resonates strongly with this vision. The town is located at the heart of the country and benefits from strong transport links, including direct access to the Midland Mainline, making it an ideal location for the national HQ. The Station Island site offers development land with immediate availability, able to accommodate HQ in terms of scalability, and strong local railway heritage. Options for the HQ include the conversion and reuse of the Roundhouse building or the Station Island south site which can accommodate a bespoke purpose-built facility.

Located only 45minutes from Central London, and 30 minutes from the Network Rail HQ in Milton Keynes, it is a **Priority Area** for Governments Levelling Up Agenda with **competitive land values** and commercial rates in comparison with other, more high-profile areas and larger cities.

2. Levelling Up: Describe how your application will align with and demonstrate Levelling Up

- **What is your vision for levelling up your local area? What is currently underway to deliver this?**
- **What levelling up opportunities do you believe could be created for your town/city that are linked to the headquarters?**

North Northamptonshire and Wellingborough has been identified as a **Priority Area** in the Governments **Levelling Up Agenda** including specifically for the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) and Levelling Up Fund. The council believes that this provides a fantastic opportunity to work with and support local community groups, businesses and wider communities and place, as well as supporting people into employment.

NNC secured £3m – one of the highest levels of success in the country, to deliver nine CRF projects including the **North Northamptonshire-2-Net Zero** programme of projects designed to provide feasibility studies into net zero and local energy projects and a framework to assess them, pilot an e-mobility hub, and deliver a showcase event.

Alongside this, the council is committed to understanding the **underlying factors** that have led to three areas in North Northamptonshire being identified as 'left behind'. One of these communities (Queensway) is in Wellingborough. In August 2021, the council's Scrutiny Commission agreed for a review into 'Levelling Up'

communities to focus on this agenda and set the council on its journey to developing an ambitious Levelling Up strategy. This work is now underway, and the commission has started to gather the evidence which will help to inform its conclusions and recommendations. The council anticipates the learning from the scrutiny review and strategy development will provide strong foundations not only to improve the three **'left behind communities' including Queensway** in Wellingborough, but also other areas that have **similar challenges** including Hemmingwell and Kingsway in the town. It is also intended that the work of the commission will help to inform and shape the **council's Investment Plan** for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and proposals which are submitted to Levelling Up Fund.

Locating the HQ in Wellingborough would give a massive boost for the 'Levelling Up' agenda locally and support one of the council's key commitments which is to provide **better, brighter futures**. This encompasses promoting better training, further education, and employment opportunities for young people.

The need to provide young people with high quality education and opportunities, and its importance, to help them flourish is also reflected in North Northamptonshire being designated as one of the **Education Investment Areas** identified in last month's Levelling Up White Paper. The council sees the new HQ as a fantastic opportunity to develop close linkages with local schools and help **raise aspirations for young people** in the area and the 'left behind communities' and others facing similar issues.

- **How would employees and visitors be able to access the National Headquarters, via rail routes and other sustainable modes?**

Proximity to Wellingborough station ensures **easy, immediate, and direct access by rail** for employees and visitors to the HQ.

Station Island is already **accessible by bus**, with four bus stops located less than six-minute walk from the rail station, providing direct access to other local towns, including Kettering. These buses also connect to the centre of Wellingborough which has further bus routes. Wellingborough has connections to: Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Kettering, Corby, Northampton, Rushden Lakes, and Bedford. All services are operated by Stagecoach and are wheelchair accessible buses. Stagecoach information is all available in alternative formats, including large print, Braille, and audio.

Clean growth is a high priority for the council. It is implementing various measures to support zero-carbon modes of transport. This includes leading the Northamptonshire e-scooter trial which is one of the largest and most popular in the UK. The trial is operating across seven towns including Wellingborough with over **300 hire e-scooters** provided by Voi Technology in the town and convenient parking close to the station. This has already saved thousands of car journeys in the town. NNC and Voi are working with Voi to explore ways in which the trial can continue to develop. This includes scope to introduce **shared e-bikes** and better plan for shared transport within new developments.

For those who travel by car, parking will also be available on site, this will incentivise the use of electric vehicles (EVs). The council is collaborating with a new Charge Point Operator (Liberty Charge) to introduce **on-street electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs)** in areas without off-street parking. Two sites involving eight EVCPs have already been installed in the town with more planned. These are the first to be installed by Liberty Charge (part of the Liberty Global Group) outside London and part of the Innovate UK sponsored Virgin Park and Charge (VPACH2) project.



Figure 6: On-street Electric Vehicle Charging Points

The town and Station Island site also offers direct access to the **Greenway network**. This is a 30-mile network providing off-road **cycle and walking routes** utilising former railway lines an ideal for commuters and leisure users. The council is actively developing plans to extend this network further. Moreover, as part of the wider Stanton Cross development, there are a multitude of attractive green links through a new country park to the new communities and neighbourhoods, supported by enhanced links to the rest of the town and beyond.

3. Connected and easy to get to: Describe how your location is well connected to the rest of Great Britain and how people will access your site

- **How connected is your location to and from other nations and regions of Great Britain?**

Wellingborough is located at the heart of the country, with 40% of the population within 2 hours travel by rail. Central London (St Pancras) can be accessed in 45 minutes on the Midland Mainline. This also provides direct access to the wider Southeast, the Midlands, and the north via Sheffield. Wellingborough is also close to both the West Coast Mainline (at Northampton) and the East Coast Mainline (at Peterborough) enabling excellent connectivity to the wider rail network other nations and regions.

North Northamptonshire – home of the Great British Railways HQ

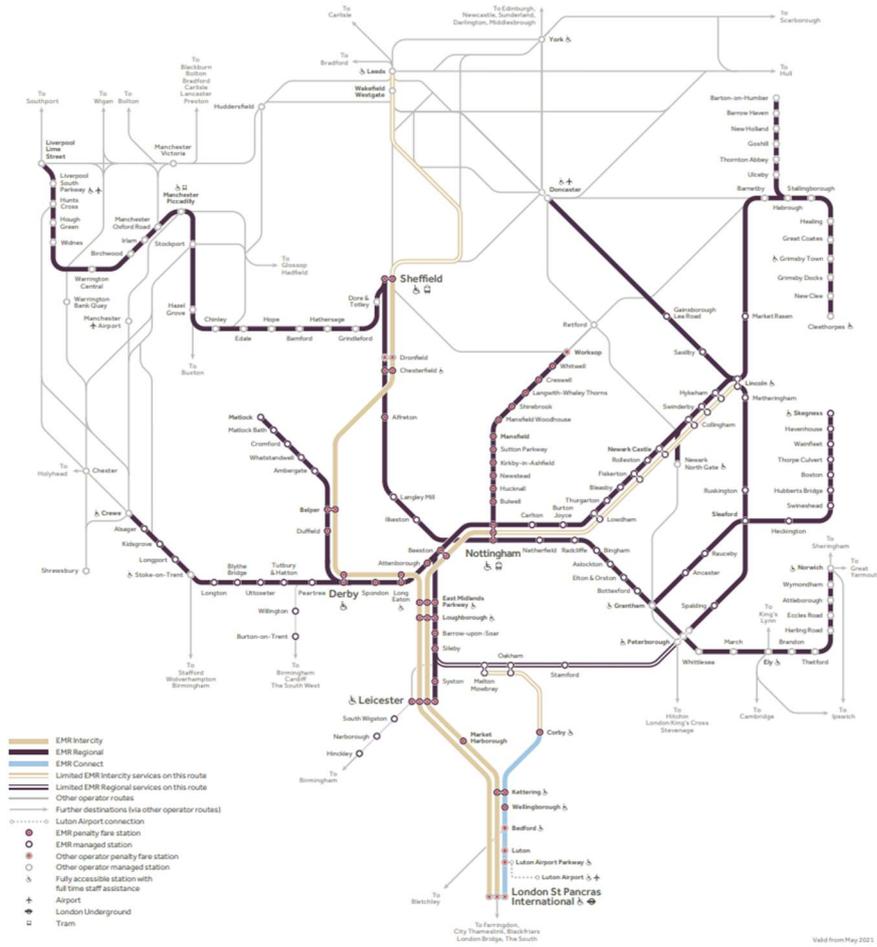


Figure 7: Strategic Rail Network

The area also benefits from strategic national road links including the A45, A14 and M1 motorways meaning both Birmingham International and London Luton airports are within a one-hour drive, with London Heathrow, Stansted and London City airports just 90 minutes away.

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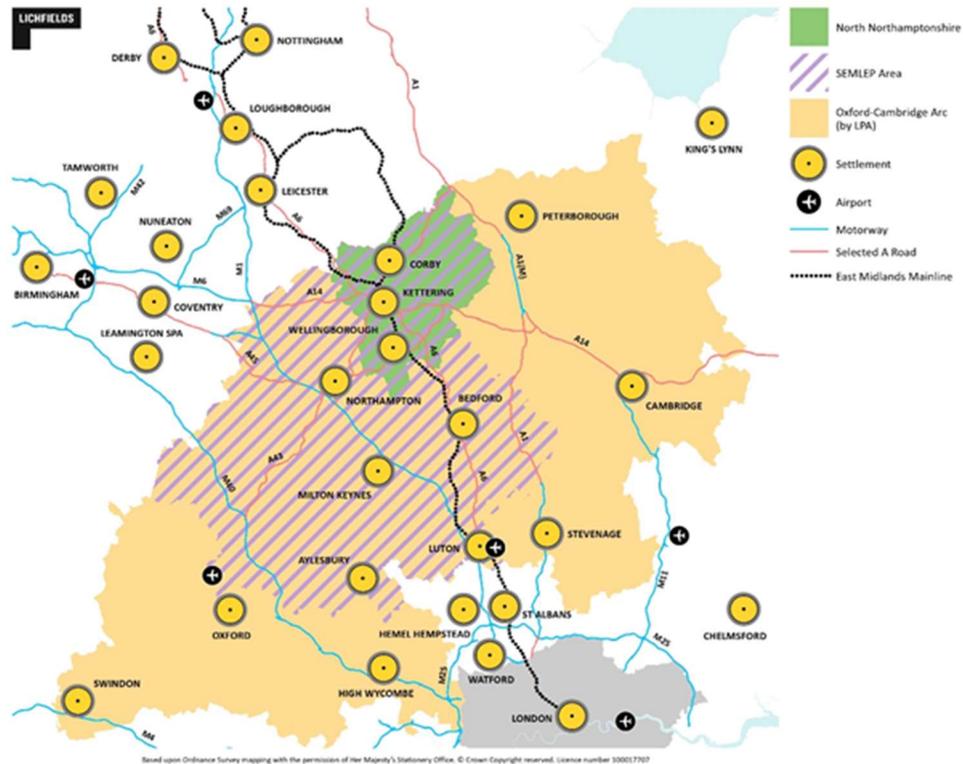


Figure 8: Strategic Transport Links

- **How will your suggested sites be equally accessible to all members of society, in line with Public Sector Equality Duties?**

In developing this proposal, the council has been mindful of all Protected Characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender Re-assignment, Marriage and Civil Partnerships, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation.

It will ensure that these are positively addressed at all stages of the process.

- **Demonstrate how your location has supported successful collaboration between local authorities, business and other organisations across the UK to further social, economic and transport objectives.**

Stanton Cross is promoted by a Landowner Group consisting of North Northamptonshire Council, British Steel Pension Fund and Stanton Cross Developments (a joint venture between Vistry Group and Riverside Regeneration) representing a broad cross section of government and private organisations.

Despite the council being less than a year old, the application demonstrates successful collaboration with key strategic partners including the Crown Estates (development of Rushden Lakes and its benefits for the wider area, and support for the economic recovery), Voi Technology (leading UK e-scooter trial) and Liberty Charge (shortlisted in the LGC awards for Electric Vehicle Charging Point project) to deliver on key transport, economic, and environmental objectives. We also have strong links with a number of other major employers, including Weetabix, Kuhne & Nagel and Wetherbys.

- **How will your location enable Great British Railways to engage with customers, the private sector and wider transport industry?**

Stanton Cross will afford GBR an opportunity to build on the existing relationship that the people of Wellingborough have with the rail infrastructure. The historic station is already being improved as part of Stanton Cross; Station Island south offers the opportunity to expand these enhancements further. Existing historic rail buildings, such as the Roundhouse, could be regenerated into landmark commercial / community assets further enhancing the heritage and wider value.

NNC has a strong track record in engaging with customers, the private sector and the wider transport industry through numerous innovative projects, including those listed above with Crown Estates, Liberty Charge and Voi Technology.

4. Opportunities for Great British Railways: Showcase the opportunities your location offers Great British Railways

- **What opportunities does your location offer for working with the rail supply chain, manufacturing hubs and institutes?**
- **What opportunities exist for collaboration with the retail, economic and environmental sectors? How could Great British Railways benefit from these links?**
- **What opportunities does/do the site(s)/building(s) itself offer Great British Railways to develop as an organisation?**

Innovation is crucial to the continued success of the railways and to provide wider economic potential for UK plc to not only ensure that the rail network runs effectively but that the country once again becomes a leader in this sector. North Northamptonshire and Wellingborough can provide unique opportunities, supply chains, materials testing facilities, manufacturing hubs and institutes, looking outside of traditional centres of the rail industry. An example of this is the use of a former railway tunnel at Catesby in Northamptonshire to create a new aerodynamic testing facility with space for new businesses.



Figure 9: Catesby tunnel testing facility and business centre

The immediate geography is famous as the home of Formula 1 (F1) motorsport and a world-leading High-Performance Technology (HPT) sector. Eight of the 11 F1 teams are in Northamptonshire and the surrounding area. It also the base for more than 1,500 small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in this sector and employs over 20,000 people.

Local enterprise culture is reflected in the area regularly being at the top of the list for new ‘start-ups’. The council provides support for start-ups through innovation grants, business advice and information on intellectual property-related matters. Many of these businesses are involved in leading-edge innovation spanning not just vehicles, but also defence, renewable energy, and construction. Their expertise was also employed by the NHS to help respond to COVID-19 and the need to develop life-saving innovative technology and machines to help people in hospital with serious breathing difficulties. Two examples of local businesses in the HPT sector are Scott Bader at Wollaston close to Wellingborough which is a world-leader in materials innovation and production and a social enterprise champion, and the Chelveston Energy Park which is acting as a testbed for different sources of renewable energy including electricity from hydrogen.



Figure 10: Key local partners

Hosting the new HQ in Wellingborough provides the opportunity for Great British Railways to work with this world-leading sector, local SMEs and business champions to explore and harness this innovation and enterprise culture to drive change and new culture that is required in the rail sector looking towards 2050 and beyond.

Shifting freight to rail is crucially important and Northamptonshire already provides two rail freight facilities at DIRFT near Daventry and at Corby, with a further facility under-construction at Northampton. This establishes it as the undoubtedly centre for these operations and advanced rail-based logistics. Moreover, Corby is the base of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport.

The area also hosts several world-leading universities and colleges which can offer research partnerships, and training, to enable Great British Railways to tackle specific technical challenges as well as hire new technicians and graduates, and shape learning offers and courses.

Business networks led by the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and the locally led North Northants Business Network also provide support and access to a range of local businesses. The University of Northampton acts as a facilitator of employer-led sector groups, including freight and logistics, which GBR can access.

5. Railway heritage & links to the network: Demonstrate the location's railway heritage and current network links

- **Demonstrate your railway heritage and the benefits it offers to Great British Railways.**
- **What links are there with existing rail employment, innovation and sector bodies, such as regional or local offices?**
- **How could you use the headquarters to preserve and enhance your railway heritage?**

The town has a strong railway heritage. In 1845 the London & Birmingham Railway Company constructed a line along the Nene Valley. This linked at Blisworth with the London (Euston) to Birmingham Line. The new line ran along the Nene Valley followed the route of the river Nene. It linked the county town of

North Northamptonshire – home of the Great British Railways HQ

Northampton with the city of Peterborough. There were many stations along the line including the first railway station to be built at Wellingborough on the London Road. In 1846 the London & North-western Railway Company took over the line and added an additional track.



Figure 11: Wellingborough Station heritage

In 1853 plans were drawn up by the Midland Railway Company to build a line from Leicester to Bedford where it would join with a rival company line into the railway terminal at King's Cross. The original station and adjoining good shed were designed by the significant British Victorian architect Charles Henry Driver (1832-1900) which saw him pioneering the use of ornamental iron work for which he was a leading authority. Fine examples of his ironwork can still be seen at Wellingborough Railway Station today.

Wellingborough Station is 65 miles from St Pancras and it was an ideal site for a large locomotive depot, repairs workshop and sidings because it was a convenient day's travel for a goods steam locomotive. It was a stopping place for coal trains taking coal from Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire to London to provide fuel for the growing city of London. The first Roundhouse (or engine shed) was built in 1868 (known as No.1 shed), followed by a second roundhouse in 1872 (known as No.2 shed). Wellingborough also saw a huge provisions store built for the storing of hay, grain and horse feed. These materials were sent to London to provide food for the many railway horses that were in use taking goods from the station to businesses and homes.

Extensive private sidings were built around the station for local brickyard, coal companies, maltings and iron ore quarries. As Wellingborough also lies on the southernmost crop of ironstone, blast furnaces were constructed in 1868 by Thomas Butlin and Company Ltd who made the tunnel segments for many of the underground tube lines in London and some of the very first iconic red telephone boxes.

Wellingborough was also a growing boot and shoe town, and the line provided a way to get materials all around the country and the world from the station. During the First World War, Northamptonshire provided three-quarters of the boots for the armed forces with many of the boots leaving by goods trains from Wellingborough. Without the railways the growth of the industry, like many others, would not have been possible. The coming of the railway to Wellingborough also acted as a catalyst for the town to grow. From a population of 5,061 in 1851 by the turn of the 20th century in 1901 the population had grown to 18,400.

Map of Rail Connections to Wellingborough 1857-1966

Wellingborough Midland Road Railway Station and its connections (1857 - 1966)

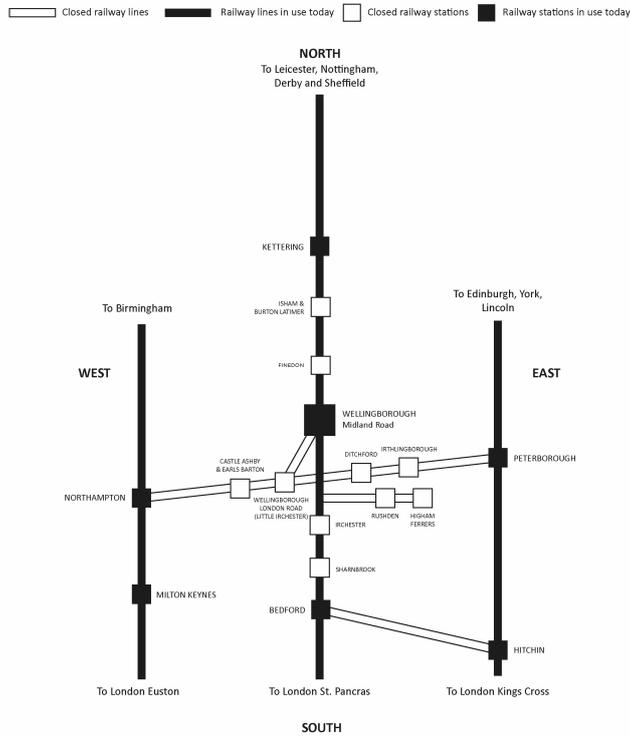


Figure 12: Wellingborough Historic Rail Connections

The council believes that the Roundhouse (see image below, when in operation, formerly Good Shed No.2) could provide the ideal location for the HQ building or an alternative complementary use.



Figure 13: Roundhouse in operation

The Rushden, Higham and Wellingborough railway was built by The Midland Railway in 1894 and became the only branch line in Northamptonshire. Primarily to serve local industry, the line ran from Wellingborough through Rushden to Higham Ferrers. Regular passenger trains ceased in 1959, with just Saturday trains running until 1965, however freight traffic continued until 1969.



Figure 14: Wellingborough Rail Heritage, Signalling box and Goods Shed

The Northampton and Peterborough Railway was closed in 1966 severing Wellingborough's link with these two towns and leaving just Midland Station. However, passion for the railways remains strong in the area. The now Heritage Railway presently has a half mile track on the Rushden, Higham and Wellingborough railway and operates passenger trains at events throughout the year. Steam and diesel locomotives are currently under restoration. Trains are available for private hire as is the former Goods Shed in Rushden which is extensively used to host local celebrations and events. There is also a local museum with numerous artifacts and displays which help to tell the history of railway in the Rushden and Wellingborough area.

North Northamptonshire – home of the Great British Railways HQ

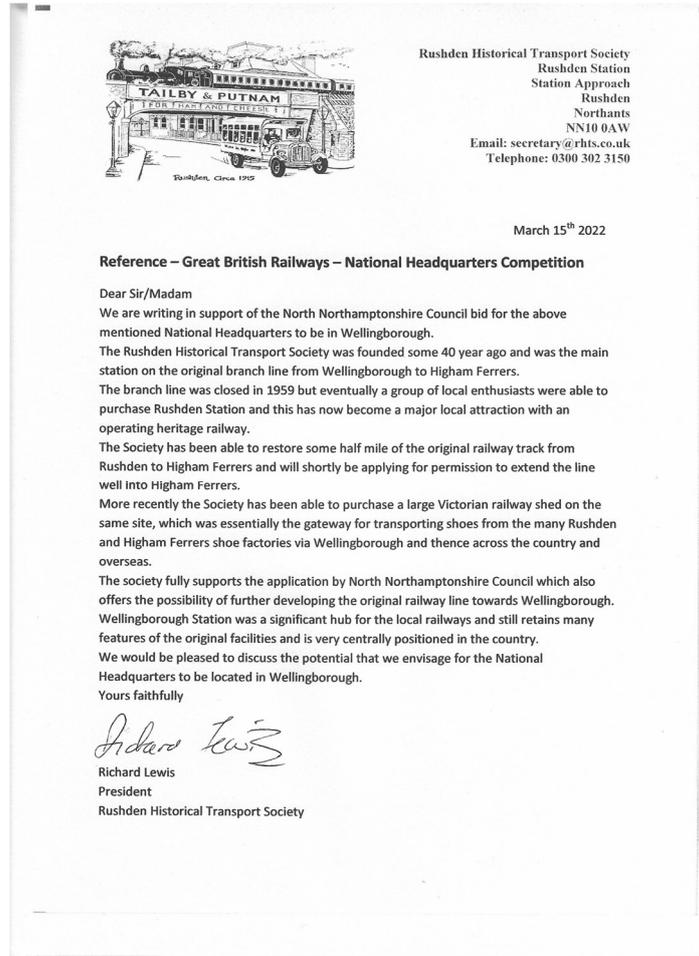


Figure 15: Support of Rushden Historical Transport Society

Former railway lines form many parts of the 'Greenway,' one of North Northamptonshire's largest walking and cycling routes, extending over 30 miles connecting local towns and villages in the heart of the Nene Valley. As users travel through the local countryside on the Greenway, they will see many of the old railway bridges and other structures and realise they are travelling along the former railway lines. This is also clear from the interpretation and way-finding signs along the Greenway.





Figure 16: Greenway

Wellingborough is located 30 minutes from the Network Rail HQ in Milton Keynes. The county also provides two rail freight facilities at DIRFT near Daventry and at Corby, with a further facility under-construction at Northampton. This establishes it as the undoubtedly national centre for these operations and advanced rail-based logistics. Corby is the base of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport.

6. Value for Money: Describe how your location will offer Great British Railways good value for money

- **How will your location offer financial efficiency to Great British Railways?**
- **How does the proposed site allow Great British Railways to make good use of public money and keep costs down?**
- **How does your location generate public value including economic, social and environmental impacts?**

Value for money is an important consideration for the UK Government and decisions on the location of the HQ.

Key factors which impact on value for money include land values and associated development costs, infrastructure and servicing of the site and the cost of time delays which can see prices escalating. There are also other wider issues related to employees such as the availability and cost of housing, proximity to local facilities and services which reduce costs and environmental impacts.

The council believe that Wellingborough and the Station Island site scores very highly on all these factors. It is unlikely that there are other areas which have been identified as a **Priority Place** by Government for the Levelling Up agenda that can offer a similar **fully serviced site** located adjacent to a station and a new garden community with **incredibly competitive costs** and rates for commercial offices compared to major centres.

Delivery of the HQ in this location will also generate wider aspects of public value, including:

- public satisfaction: support for location already demonstrated through **#BacktheNNbidGBRHQ**
- economic value; generating economic activity, supporting the development of the supply chain and employment opportunities by bringing **new jobs to Wellingborough**
- social and cultural value; social capital/cohesion and links to the left-behind wards, with the opportunity to support the development of a co-located railway heritage attraction and building on the wider **Greenway network**

- political value; democratic dialogue with **strong support** from the new council and support of the Governments wider Levelling Up Agenda
- ecological value: supporting the '**Garden Communities**' and the net-zero aspirations of the area by reducing pollution and the need to travel
- financial performance; revenues, expenditure value for money, efficiency – competitive land values and commercial rates near London **reducing travel, time, and commuting costs**

7. Public Support: Demonstrate how the national headquarters will be welcomed by the local public

- **Demonstrate the importance of the railways to the local community and your region.**
- **How do your intentions for the national headquarters tie in with the needs of your local communities, your identity and values?**

The application and campaign to locate the new HQ of Great British Railways in Wellingborough has staunch **support from all sections of the community**, including politicians, the business sector, educational establishments, transport operators, voluntary and community groups, local councils, and the wider public.

Letters of support have been received from Peter Bone MP, the Chamber of Commerce, Bedford College Group, Voi Technology, South East Midlands Economic Partnership, North Northamptonshire Business Network and from members of the public through our social media channels (all of these are available on request)

Some examples of this support are illustrated below:

Cllr Graham Lawman, the council's Executive member for Highways, Travel and Assets, said: "This is tremendously exciting for North Northamptonshire, and I am delighted to be supporting this bid to Government to become the HQ for Great British Railways. We have an excellent strategic position nationally and the Wellingborough sites would be the perfect fit for such an operation."

Cllr Jason Smithers, Leader of the Council, said: "Being host to the headquarters of this new organisation would be a tremendous boost to the area and I am committed to working as hard as possible to make this a reality. Not only would North Northants benefit from such a project but equally our area has a tremendous amount to offer GBR."



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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

16th March 2022

Dear Grant,

North Northamptonshire Council is today submitting a bid for Wellingborough to host the new Great British Railways (GBR) national headquarters. Wellingborough is a fantastic town with a rail heritage stretching back to the 1850's. This bid offers GBR deliverability and aligns with the Government's wider Levelling Up objectives.

The proposed site for the new headquarters at Station Island, part of the Stanton Cross Development, is a great example of how Wellingborough is already levelling up. The addition of GBR headquarters would be a huge boost, creating highly skilled jobs in an area where thousands of new homes are being built and complementing the existing plans for the new Employment Village at Station Island.

The Station District - where GBR headquarters would be based - is designed around Wellingborough Station, putting rail at the heart of the proposed site. Wellingborough's rail heritage is carried throughout the Station Island development including the historic Roundhouse building. This site delivers opportunities for scalability, with the developers already expressing great support for the bid.

The existing huge Network Rail site based at Milton Keynes, is only approximately 30 minutes from the proposed Station Island headquarters. With Network Rail and its employees being absorbed into the new GBR organisation, there are clear benefits to maintaining local connections to the current site. Wellingborough's bid would position the new headquarters in an ideal location to retain technical and industry expertise and provide effective oversight of the existing Network Rail site. This will be key to shaking-up the culture of Network Rail and integrating the existing people and infrastructure into the new GBR way of thinking.

The East Midlands is an area of rapid growth and development and yet it currently receives the lowest per person public expenditure of any region in the UK. It is essential for Levelling Up that the availability of jobs and the development of infrastructure keeps pace with housing development in the area. If Levelling Up means anything, it must mean more investment in the East Midlands. The new GBR headquarters would bring much-needed



investment to the region and would demonstrate the Government's commitment to the area.

Wellingborough is an accessible location with excellent public transport links and connectivity. The journey to Wellingborough takes under two hours from major cities such as Sheffield, Derby, Leicester, Northampton, and Birmingham by rail, and Wellingborough is less than an hour from London. The recent Midland Main Line upgrade would be on the GBR headquarters' doorstep, allowing visitors and commuters to benefit from the newly electrified line.

Wellingborough delivers on the key objectives of the new GBR headquarters project. Bringing the GBR headquarters to Wellingborough would be a huge boost not just for the local area but also the Government's Levelling Up agenda. I therefore give my full support to North Northamptonshire Council's bid.

Yours ever,

Peter Bone MP FCA
Wellingborough and Rushden

North Northamptonshire – home of the Great British Railways HQ

#BacktheNNbidGBRHQ