

Strategic Station Plan: Tonbridge



KENT

STRATEGIC PLANNING

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Figure 1 Tonbridge station in the early 20th century. Source: Google Images.

Glossary	
GTR	Govia Thameslink Railway
TfSE	Transport for the South East
BSIP	Bus Service Improvement Plan
KCRP	Kent Community Rail Partnership
TTWBUG	Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group
TMBC	Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
SSP	Strategic Station Plan
KCWIP	Kent Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plan
KCC	Kent County Council
GBRf	GB Railfreight



1 Executive summary

Tonbridge is a market town in Kent, twinned with towns in France (Le Puy-en-Velay) and Germany (Heusenstamm)¹. Tonbridge is home to a historic castle dating back to 1124, situated on the banks of the River Medway that runs east to west through the town centre. Tonbridge station opened in June 1839 as part of the line between London and Dover.

Tonbridge is a key point on the Southeastern network, where the Southeastern Main Line diverges with the Redhill to Tonbridge line, along with the line to Hastings via Tunbridge Wells. Southeastern operate most services at the station, with Southern also operating a shuttle service to Redhill that connects with other services in Sussex on the Brighton Main Line. There is a freight yard to the west of the town, used by both Network Rail Route services and by GBRF for their commercial freight services. Tonbridge is located on a strategic freight corridor providing access to the Channel Tunnel and is also used by domestic traffic to the gypsum terminal at Mountfield, near Battle on the Hastings line.

A recommendation from the [Medway Valley Line Strategic study](#) was to prepare a local strategic station plan for Tonbridge station. The previous study identified station capacity concerns, with significant footfall generated from local schools, putting pressure on operations in both the morning and evening peaks. This study sets out a vision for improving access to the station to ensure that it can effectively deal with any strategic aspirations. The purpose of this document is to bring the appropriate organisations into the development of the station and wider public-realm improvements, to ensure a better experience for passengers.

The study focusses on four key themes: passenger perspective today; land & property; first & last mile; and station capacity & performance. Stakeholder engagement has taken place to identify and consolidate recommendations for interventions for both Tonbridge station and the wider public realm. These recommendations are not costed or funded and would therefore need to be progressed by stakeholders outside of Network Rail. **A full list of recommendations can be found in Section 9.**

Key recommendations summary table		
Recommendation	Benefit	Next steps
Enhanced wayfinding	Improve the passenger experience when navigating within and between the station and town centre by signposting at accessible levels without obstruction. Encourage use of pedestrian and bus routes for shorter, sustainable journeys.	Work with the local authority, rail user groups and operators to review wayfinding provision to ensure that it meets requirements. Where possible, work with existing schemes and projects to influence wayfinding design and provision.
Cycle routes	Improving accessibility through cycle paths to the station, supporting safer sustainable journeys.	The Kent <i>Cycling Walking and Infrastructure</i> Plan (published in 2023) would support modal shift and accessibility to and from the station by bike. This is outside of the rail industry's control but would be supported by Southeastern and Network Rail. Railway engagement with the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Active Travel Strategy, which is currently in draft form, in order to support walking, wheeling and cycle travel to better link to rail journey opportunities.
Staggered start/end times for Tonbridge schools	Spreading the demand of school traffic at the start and end of the day would assist with crowd control and gate line issues that are currently experienced at the station.	Discussions with Southeastern and Kent County Council to explore opportunities to change school hours to stagger demand for safer and less congested operations in the AM and PM peak.
Local Plan engagement	Aligning outputs of this strategic station plan with the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan could leverage opportunities to improve the station, and to secure improvements to the wider area around the station.	Continue to collaborate with TMBC to review land uses around the station. Review how growth can be accommodated at the railway station as part of new Local Plan and railway requirements. An optimised car parking strategy (railway and non-railway) could be explored, noting the need to maintain capacity for railway.

¹ [Town twinning – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

2 Introduction

2.1 Strategic Station Plans: overall approach

Strategic Station Plans (SSP) are a strategic document to study a station identified for significant change through a separate strategy or policy document. This need can be from within Network Rail strategy workstreams, or the result of third-party proposals.

SSP provide an opportunity for the rail industry to work alongside local partners and stakeholders to encourage collaboration and the development of strategic station and surrounding area improvements. By focusing on upgrading facilities and optimising layouts, stations can successfully adapt and become more than just transportation hubs; they might also evolve into urban centres with a range of amenities and services. This transformation can attract business, generate employment opportunities, and drive economic growth in the surrounding area. The recommendations are therefore not exclusively for rail industry colleagues to own, and many would be more suitable for third parties or local authorities, with rail industry endorsement.

The plan provides recommendations for strategic and tactical improvements. These are not costed, nor do they have timescales applied at this stage. It is recommended that, should any proposed options be taken forward, sufficient development work is undertaken to fully understand operability, cost, and deliverability.

2.2 Opportunities for Tonbridge

In 2024, Network Rail Kent and Sussex Strategic Planning team undertook a line of route study looking at the [Medway Valley Line](#). One of the recommendations from that study was to look at a locally focused '*strategic station plan*' for the area, as a number of issues and opportunities were identified which could not be explored in detail within the Medway Valley Line study.

These were:

- Previous development work undertaken by Network Rail Station Capacity team noted that Tonbridge station is of concern with forecast capacity issues. These have a medium level of priority nationally. This is due to the impact of school traffic in the AM and PM peaks on operations and capacity at the station around the ticket barriers, on the footbridge and on the platforms.
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council is in the process of reviewing its land and property assets in the centre of Tonbridge. Network Rail also has significant amounts of land, primarily used for car parks. A joint approach for a wider car

parking strategy for Tonbridge could create efficiencies locally whilst providing enough capacity for rail passengers.

- Poor signage creates a disconnect between the railway station and town centre.
- An optimised car parking strategy for Tonbridge Town Centre could have positive impacts, for example reducing congestion, improving air quality, decreasing risk to road users, and increasing attractiveness of active travel modes.
- Road congestion across the railway line regularly causing congestion and impacts journey times.
- Cycling to the station is a challenge, as cyclists must share the same road space as other road vehicles; there are no dedicated cycleways. Due to a lack of space, it is difficult to plan segregated cycle lanes without substantial changes to the road layout in the local area.
- There are stakeholder aspirations to increase service levels and bring extra passenger demand at the station, as well as a need to operate additional services to meet future forecasted demand in existing markets.

2.3 Exclusions

Tonbridge station has significant operational constraints for passenger and freight operators in terms of the number of services and complex track routings necessitated by the signalling layout. A resolution to this is likely to be a major enhancement.

Major enhancements are not part of this study but could be considered in the future if a likely funding source was identified. Similarly, the study has not identified a credible scheme for increasing overall station capacity and is therefore constrained to more tactical changes.

3 Methodology

3.1 Study structure and governance

Following a baselining workstream, key stakeholders were identified to form a ‘Steering Group’. The **Steering Group** shaped the remit and were involved with workshops throughout the document production. The workshops were split into three themes: Capacity and Performance; Accessibility and Facilities; Property. Stakeholders were matched accordingly into **Working Groups**. Workshops on accessibility, facilities, and first last mile, for example, required the attendance of bus operators (including Arriva), the local authority and Kent County Council. The property working group session needed the expertise of the Network Rail Southern Region Town Planning, Tonbridge and Malling Council Planning, Arch Company (Arch Co) and Southeastern.

Individual meetings were also held with stakeholders including Nu Venture buses, Southeastern, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge Bicycle Users Group (TTWBUG) and Head of Licensing at Tonbridge and Malling Council to understand the taxi interface.

Finally, a site visit was held with Southeastern, Network Rail Station Capacity team and Kent County Council Active Travel team with the station manager to give a guided tour of the station.

This structure is summarised in Figure 2 below:

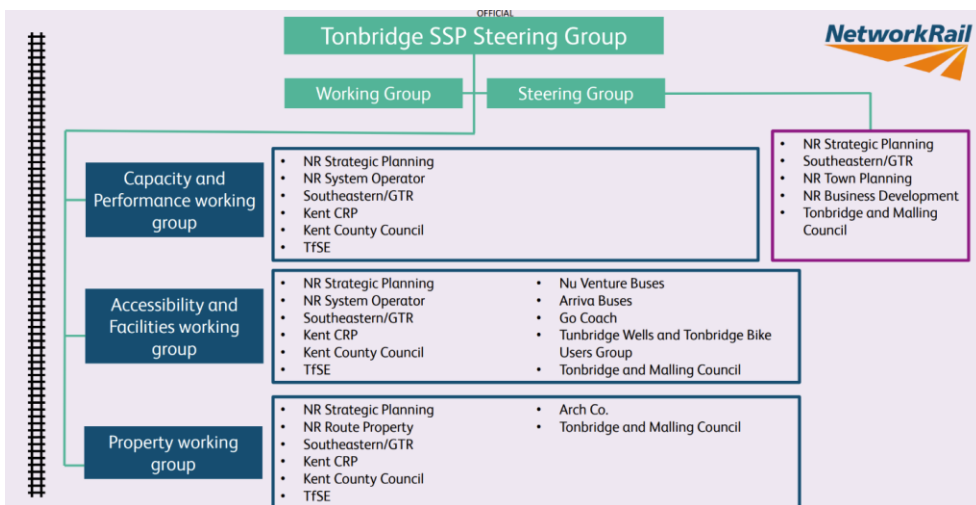


Figure 2 Governance for the Tonbridge Strategic Station Plan.

3.2 Scoping workshop

The study commenced with a kick off meeting held online in October 2024. Around 30 stakeholders attended the scoping workshop including members from the following organisations: Network Rail, Southeastern, GTR, Railfuture, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Transport for the South East, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Network Rail Group Property.

Network Rail have spoken to 60+ stakeholders as part of this study and feedback from interested parties has been valuable in shaping the analysis, findings and recommendations.

Stakeholders at the scoping workshop endorsed the following remit, including areas that would not be addressed in the study:

What is in scope	What is out of scope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passenger perspective. Train performance. Local road network. Accessibility data. Existing land in and around the station. Interface with school traffic. Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local plans outside the area. Timetabling, including passenger and freight services. Platform train interface. Track layouts/track renewals.

3.3 Role of the steering & working groups

The steering group has endorsed the outputs of each of the individual working groups, and the recommendations. The steering group was made up of members of Network Rail Kent & Sussex Strategic Planning, Network Rail Southern Region colleagues, Kent County Council, Tonbridge and Malling Council, Southeastern, Transport for the South East and Kent Community Rail Partnership.

With the study split into themes during the scoping workshop, separate working groups were identified to explore each theme in more detail. The information gathered from these working groups has influenced and shaped the findings of this study.

3.4 Strategic objectives

Three main objectives for the study emerged from a baselining exercise, which included discussing the study remit with rail industry and local authority stakeholders. These were:

1. **Improve connectivity** between the station and Tonbridge town centre.
2. Tonbridge station to become a focal point as part of the **wider redevelopment** of land surrounding the station.
3. An **optimised car parking strategy** to support local development plan aspirations, set by the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

3.5 Defining the Strategic Questions

The study sets out a series of exam questions to address, based on discussions at the scoping workshop and problem identification in the baseline analysis. The questions were endorsed by internal and external stakeholders. These have guided the study as well as the structure of the SSP and address the objectives identified in section 3.4.

The **four strategic questions** identified are as follows:

1. What is the current passenger perspective of Tonbridge Station?
2. What is the future land use strategy for Tonbridge and its interface with the railway station?
3. How do we improve first and last mile connectivity to and from Tonbridge station?
4. What station capacity improvements are required at Tonbridge station in the future?

3.6 Stakeholder insights

The key findings from a meeting with The Head of Licensing at **Tonbridge and Malling Council** at the station were:

Theme	Comment
Taxis	There are over 650 licensed Hackney Cabs in the Tonbridge and Malling area. Uber taxis are not allowed to use the taxi rank at Tonbridge station. This removes any unauthorised taxis using the dedicated taxi rank on Waterloo Road. The station taxi rank at Tonbridge sees its busiest times on Friday and Saturday evenings when the last trains from London arrive. This can create a queue outside the station and when there are poor weather conditions there is limited shelter provision.

	Taxi drivers reported that traffic congestion on a daily basis is the main concern with accessing the station from the wider area. This is supported by evidence from Kent County Council that the local road network will be at capacity by the end of the decade (page 26).
Signage	Better signage to the taxi rank from the station entrance would assist passengers. This is evidenced by stakeholder feedback and a station site visit with operational teams.

The key findings from the meeting with the **Kent County Council Active travel team, Network Rail and the Southeastern** station manager were:

Theme	Comment
Station facilities/waiting rooms	The waiting rooms on platforms 2 & 3 are heated. This provides warm waiting facilities for passengers. There is no quiet space option today, although it is suggested that these could be installed at the end of platforms. This would require consultation with accessibility experts (see page 30).
Access to ticket vending machines	There is one ticket vending machine provided by the gate line at the Barden Road entrance to the station. If another ticket vending machine could be provided here, it may assist with easing the overcrowding within the main station entrance, where there are already two ticket vending machines.
Cycle Hub	Cycle hub facilities are already great quality and affordable. Southeastern are reducing their storage charges and this may encourage more people to use this facility in the future.
Gate line capacity	There is an option to extend the gate line by relocating the ticket office into the FCB Coffee shop. There is a remaining question over whether the column in the gate line can be moved to provide space for additional gates. This would require a review from a structural engineer and further development.
Construction of a second entrance from Waterloo Road onto station footbridge	There is an option to install a cantilevered bridge over the railway line, located parallel with the existing road bridge over from the existing bridge (Page 35) by platform 1 & 2. The new bridge would span over platform 1 and land on Waterloo Road to provide a southern passenger entrance to the station from this side of town. This option would assist with solving gate line issues in the peaks with school traffic but would require extra staff. It would also not solve current access to the platforms from the footbridge. This has been considered previously by

Theme	Comment
	Network Rail, but further feasibility work would be needed to understand the complexities of the construction of a side entrance onto Waterloo Road.
Spiral staircase (removed)	The team noted that there was once a spiral staircase from the lower gate line on Barden Road from Quarry Hill Parade, but this was unsafe and was removed. There is limited space to reinstate a safe staircase.
Second footbridge at the London end of the station	There is a longer-term option for a new bridge aligned with the end of the waiting room on platform 3 that could land in the existing staff car park for Southeastern on Barden Road (see page 35/36). This would provide access to all platforms and relieve station capacity issues.

4 Tonbridge station: today's view

4.1 Station facilities

Facilities at Tonbridge station currently include the following:

- Ticket machines and staffed ticket office.
- Customer help points.
- Heated waiting room and waiting shelters.
- Customer toilets including an accessible toilet.
- Three customer car parks and one staff car park.
- Accessible parking (located by the side entrance to the station on Barden Road).
- Cycle Storage including a secure cycle hub and open bike storage on platforms. There is also moped storage by the single storey car park (A) on the north side of the station.
- Coffee shop (FCB Coffee within the main station building).

The station also has a Pumpkin coffee shop located on platform 2 (open). There is another coffee shop on platform 3. However, this retail unit is currently vacant.

Tonbridge station is classified by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) as being in Category A, meaning it has step free access to all platforms. Step free access at the station comprises two lift shafts with access all platforms via the footbridge from the main station entrance. The side entrance on Barden Road provides step free access to platforms 3 and 4, with access to platform 1 and 2 via the bridge.



Figure 3 Station overview of existing accessibility provision. Source: Network Rail.

The existing provision of facilities at Tonbridge based on the above station dashboard is **rated good**. However, based on the marking above the station does not have:

- **Sheltered Intermodal transition (IM):** This is the transition between one mode of transport and another. At Tonbridge this includes the transition between the station and the taxi rank and between the station and bus stops.
- **Quiet areas:** A location where it is quiet and calm away from busier parts of the station. There are no quiet spaces at Tonbridge station.
- **Consistent lighting:** There is generally good lighting. However, it is not consistent throughout the entire station and access routes.
- **Water Fountain:** There is no water fountain at the station. However, FCB Coffee offer free water refills (Page 29).

4.2 Station location

Tonbridge is operated by Southeastern and is also served by Southern who operate an hourly shuttle service between Redhill and Tonbridge. Tonbridge is located approximately 29 miles from London Charing Cross, in the borough of Tonbridge and Malling. Three routes converge at Tonbridge Station at the London End and country end of the station:

1. The **Southeastern Main Line** from London terminals including Charing Cross and Cannon Street connecting London with destinations in wider Kent including Sevenoaks, Ashford, Margate, Ramsgate, and Dover Priory.
2. The **Hastings line** that includes services to Tunbridge Wells.
3. The **Redhill to Tonbridge** line, is a key east to west freight route from the Brighton Main Line along with providing an hourly passenger service connecting the Kent route with Sussex route.

The station is located south of the town centre, less than 10 minutes' walk away. The maps below and on the right depict both the relative and detailed location of Tonbridge station.

The station retains its Victorian architecture - mainly the two rectangular buildings on platforms 1&2 and 3&4 and a modular cladded station building on the B2260 road bridge, which connects the north and south sides of the town.



Figure 4 Tonbridge station in the 1980s. Source: Google Images.

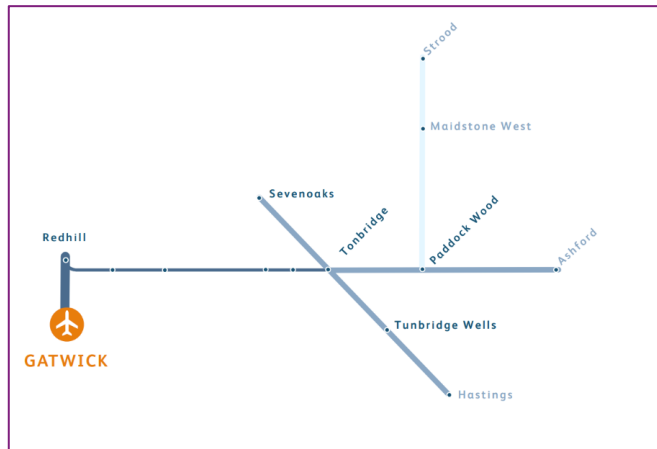


Figure 5 Schematic of Tonbridge in relation to the wider rail network. Source: Network Rail.

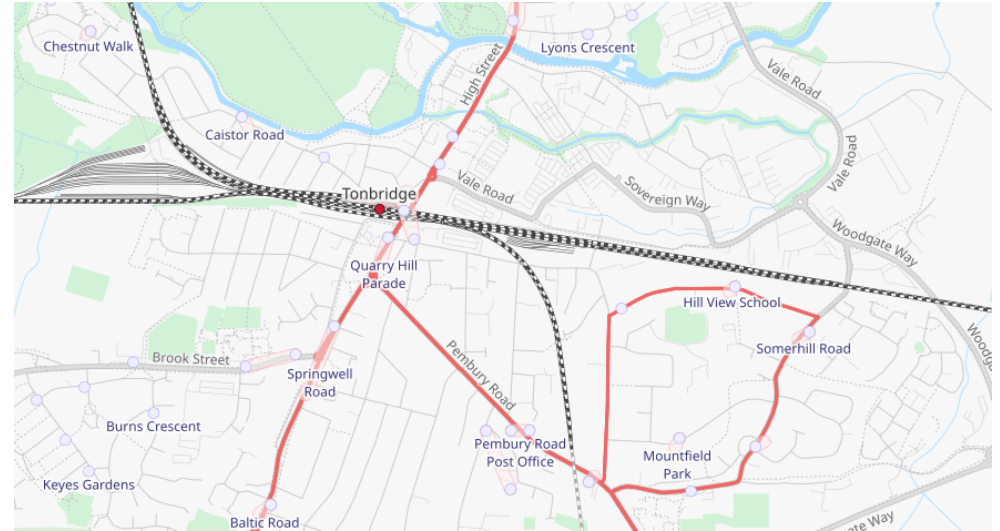


Figure 6 Tonbridge Station and surrounding area, the red lines show bus routes which converge on the main road past the station. Source: Open Street Map.

4.3 Tonbridge ORR Station Data 2004-2023

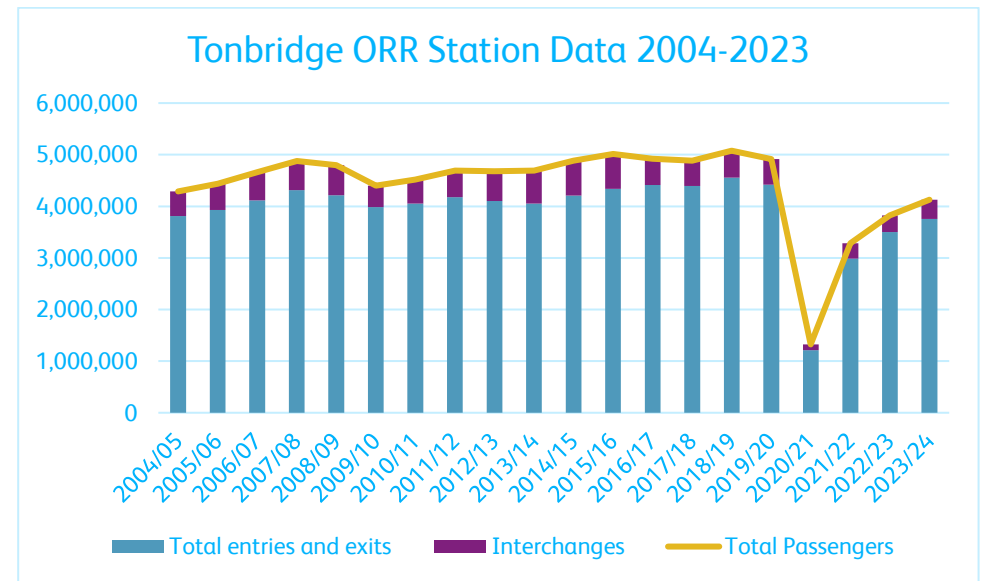


Figure 7 Entries and exits at Tonbridge over time. Source: ORR data.

In 2023-24, passenger use at Tonbridge was 78% of the number that used the station pre-COVID. Total passenger numbers were at 4,125,173 for the year spanning 2023/24 based on ORR station data.

In 2023/2024, Tonbridge was ranked 128th busiest station in the UK, with 1,866 scheduled services per week. **Tonbridge is the 6th busiest train station managed by Southeastern** in the Network Rail Kent Route (see below).

This number is influenced by the location of several local schools in the area. In the AM and PM peak there are around 400 school children² using the station to access education centres nearby.

No	Station name ³	Entries and exits: All Tickets (2023/24)
1	Lewisham	6,551,490
2	Bromley South	5,984,728
3	London Waterloo East	5,676,302
4	Orpington	4,585,832
5	Dartford	4,497,840
6	Tonbridge	3,757,714
7	Ashford International	3,510,838

5 What is the current passenger perspective of Tonbridge Station?

In order to understand the passenger perspective as part of the baselining for this study, Kent Community Rail Partnership ran a survey on behalf of Network Rail, which asked regular station users to share their thoughts about Tonbridge station.

From 19 November to 18 December 2024, [Kent Community Rail Partnership](#) promoted an online survey asking respondents *'What do you think of Tonbridge Station?'* The survey took the format of an anonymised comments box, with an option to contact a Community Rail Officer by email or telephone. Links to the survey were posted on the Kent Community Rail Partnership (CRP) Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram channels with emails to members of our Medway Valley Line group and Tonbridge Line Commuters Group.

Network Rail would like to thank Kent CRP for their assistance in reaching out to local station users to gain this feedback.

² Information supplied by Southeastern.



Figure 8 Screenshot of webpage where local station users were given the opportunity to give feedback on their thoughts of using the station.

Theme	Comments
Capacity and Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous and reliable trains to several destinations. • Tonbridge has a useful route for travelling between Kent and Redhill (without having to travel via London). • Comments relating to Tonbridge Station itself highlighted the congestion on the stairs up to the ticket office for the interchange between services in the mornings when there are many school children. • Improve customer service while waiting for the connection back to Redhill on the return journey, as the hourly service can result in long wait if you mistime the connection. • During busy periods (morning/evening peak) congestion at the gate line occurs so consideration should be given to widening this.
Accessibility, facilities, and first/last mile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The waiting room is welcoming, especially the one on Platform 3. There is heating and seating available in both, which is great especially in the winter. • Decent facilities overall: parking, retail outlets and toilets. • Cycle parking on the platform is good, but the number of spaces should be increased, and it should be better signposted.

³ Information from Network Rail.

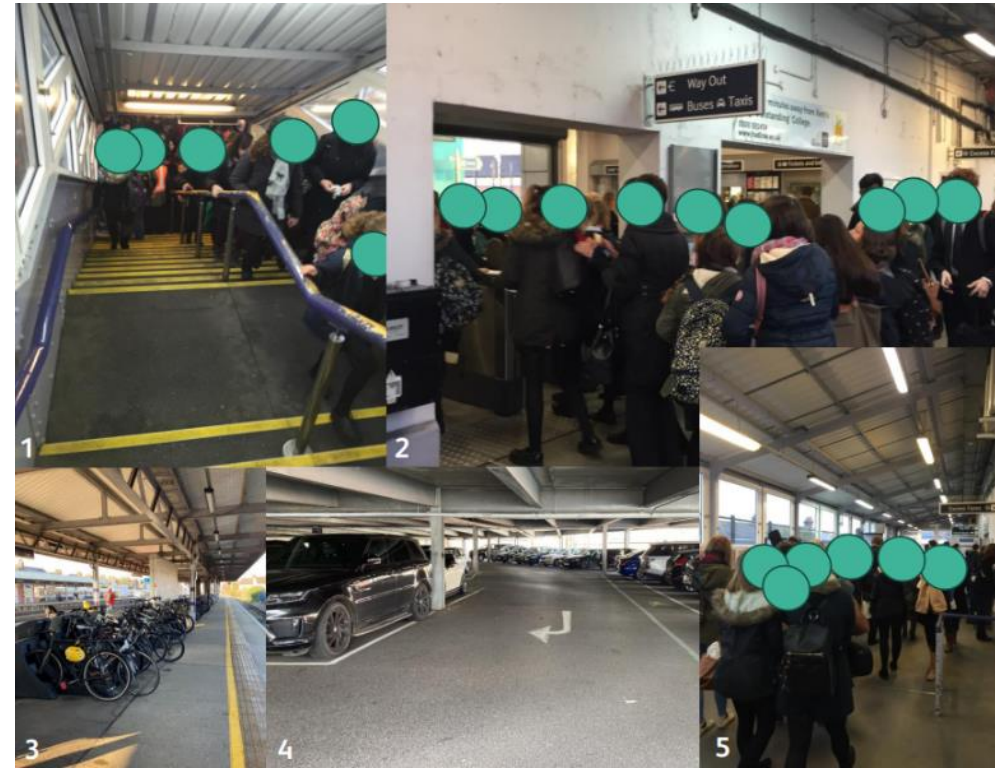
Theme	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tonbridge station already demonstrates viability as a multi-service hub, currently hosting, banking facilities (ATM) and a ticket office. There is also potential for better parcel services (Amazon lockers/Post Office drop-offs). • Given the ongoing withdrawal of high street banks, a compelling opportunity exists to reimagine the station as a comprehensive financial services hub. • Adding an additional structure across the railway to the east of the B2260 between Vale Road and Priory Road would allow delivery of a more efficient bus/rail interchange and increased space for active travel to the station.

One respondent proposed two ideas to improve passenger flow which have also been identified before by Network Rail for Tonbridge station:

1. Widening the main entrance at Quarry Hill Parade by removing the coffee shop and cash point. While this would increase capacity, it may create congestion issues by directing all foot traffic to Quarry Hill Parade, potentially impacting the drop-off area.
2. Create an additional entrance from adjacent to the taxi rank. This alternative could effectively distribute peak-hour foot traffic and benefit commuters accessing the taxi services. This is explored further on page 35.

The collage of photos on the right illustrates some of the experiences that users have feedback to NR through the passenger survey.

1. Photo illustrating the arrival of school children at the station in the AM Peak. **Southeastern implement crowd control measures** to allow other station users to access the platforms. In this view school children have alighted onto platforms 1&2.
2. The footbridge by the ticket barrier line in the AM Peak. **Southeastern open the ticket barriers** in order to clear this area of the station more quickly.
3. Generous **provision of cycle parking** at the station as shown here.
4. One of the **three station car parks** for passengers and the multi storey car park being well utilised (summer 2024).
5. School children on the **footbridge** making their way to the station gate line and ticket hall in the AM Peak.



Conclusion

The comments from those who use the station regularly reinforced the issues identified in the study by stakeholders. Southeastern and Network Rail have reviewed some of the options put forward previously and will continue to monitor for opportunities. Tonbridge is the gateway to the local area and improving access to the station is a key output discussed in this document.

6 What is the future land use strategy for Tonbridge and its interface with the railway station?

6.1 Context

This section of the document covers land and property use around the railway station, live projects and potential future proposals is split out into the following areas:

1. Car parking provision.
2. Live schemes around the south side of the station.
3. Aligning proposals with Local Plans.

6.2 Car parking provision

Tonbridge station is located on the southern edge of the town centre. The railway lies on an east to west axis with the main B2260/A26 running on a north to south axis; this is the main road for through traffic in the town centre. The convergence of main roads near the station can create road congestion that impacts access.

Figure 9 shows the different types of car parking available at Tonbridge station, all within a 5-minute walk of the main entrance on the Quarry Hill Parade or Barden Road entrance on the north side of the railway station.

With Tonbridge station being a key transport hub, land around the station is orientated around providing car parking spaces for commuters. The railway station has five car parks comprising three paid public car parks, disabled car parking on Barden Road and a small car park for Southeastern train crew staff nearby. These car parks are well utilised.

Whilst stakeholders have not commented on the public car parking provision for the station, any changes to land use around the station must retain the existing number of car parking spaces for station users and for staff members.

There is also disabled parking available on Barden Road outside the side entrance of the station that provides step free access into the station building on the platforms 3 & 4 side of the station. However, this entrance to the station can only be accessed on weekdays due to not being staffed at weekends.

Public car park reference	Number of spaces	Design	Distance from station
Car Park A Tonbridge Station (APCOA)	376 Spaces	Multi-storey	4-minute walk to the station via subway.
Car Park B Tonbridge Station (APCOA)	249 Spaces	Ground level	4-minute walk to the station via subway.
Car Park C Tonbridge Station (APCOA)	232 Spaces	Ground level	5-minute walk to the station.
Barden Road	5 disabled car parking spaces	Ground level	Adjacent to the Barden Road station entrance.
Total 862 public parking spaces			



Figure 9 The various car parks situated in Tonbridge. Source: Network Rail.

6.3 Live proposals at the station

Network Rail have a maintenance delivery depot at Tonbridge on the south side of the station. The facilities provided are for maintenance teams to undertake engineering works on the railway, as well as storing machinery or vehicles.

There is a live proposal to increase the footprint of the delivery unit by changing the configuration of the land to the south of the station, encompassing the Tonbridge Delivery Unit, Southeastern Recruitment centre, Station car park C and a private car



Figure 10 Existing proposals at Tonbridge Station. The photo above gives a close-up view of the area. Source: Network Rail/Google Maps .

dealership. It is likely that **this area of land is required for operational use and therefore would not be available for redevelopment.** Figure 10 shows the site today and functions of the buildings.

6.4 Aligning proposals with Local Plans

6.4.1 Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan

The Tonbridge and Malling Council local plan will serve as a blueprint for how the borough develops between now and 2040⁴. The council are considering sites including areas near the railway station. This includes areas north of the railway station near to the car parks A & B on Vale Road, along with the areas around the shopping areas in the town centre nearby. Redevelopment of any areas near the station may create more journey opportunities and increase footfall at the station. Network Rail have worked closely with Tonbridge and Malling Council to signpost stakeholder aspirations in this document.

Any changes to land use in the area would **need to maintain existing car parking capacity for railway passengers** due to the high usage levels of the current car parks. Re-development may drive up demand, which could add to car-parking demand in the local area. The outputs of this document will influence later planning decisions which could be incorporated into the local plan once this is adopted and agreed.

The local plan is progressing to review growth/housing needs for the district. This SSP can inform and influence the development of the plan around Tonbridge station.

The Tonbridge and Malling Council Active Travel team have also noted considerations for park and ride and to increase the number and quality of cycle parking options to encourage sustainable travel to and from the station.

6.4.2 Tonbridge Town Centre Development Plan

The Tonbridge Town Centre Development project, led by Tonbridge and Malling Council⁵ aims to transform council-owned land and buildings nearby to the railway station, focussing on the areas east of the town's high street (opposite the two station car parks, Car Park A and Car Park B on Vale Road). This includes a wider area out of scope for the station plan. For example the Sainsbury's supermarket and car parks at the Angel leisure centre.

The outputs of this SSP may influence longer term decisions made around accessibility to and from the railway station in the town through their local plan and town centre development project being formalised by Tonbridge and Malling Council.

⁴ [Council to assess impact of planning changes announced by new government – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

⁵ [Tonbridge town centre development – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#)

6.5 Recommendations: land and property

Land and Property		
Recommendation	Benefit	Next Steps
Operational land south of the station	Retaining existing railway land to maintain business as usual activities.	This area is likely to be required for operational use and so would not be available for redevelopment.
Wider car parking strategy	Review of car parking in Tonbridge town centre.	Incorporating outputs of this study into the wider Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan once this has been agreed and ensuring that sufficient car parking capacity is provided for current and future rail passengers.
Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan	Aligning outputs of this strategic station plan with the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan.	Continue to collaborate with TMBC to review land uses around the station and how growth can be accommodated at the railway station as part of new Local Plan. Explore the opportunity for an optimised car parking strategy (railway and non-railway) noting the need to maintain capacity for railway users.

7 How do we improve accessibility, facilities and first and last mile connectivity to the station?

This section of the document covers accessibility, facilities, and first & last mile. This section is structured as follows:

Accessing the station:

- 7.1 Bus provision and improvements.
- 7.2 Walking, wheeling and cycling provision and improvements.
- 7.3 Taxi provision.
- 7.4 Signage & wayfinding.

Station facilities:

- 7.5 Station facilities: provision and improvements.
- 7.6 Ticket machines.

7.1 Buses

7.1.1 Current services

Most bus routes that serve Tonbridge pass over the railway via the B2260 meaning the station is geographically well placed at the nodal point of the two modes of public transport (bus and rail).

There are two bus stands for the north bound direction located around 75 metres from the station entrance, adjacent to Lidl – Quarry Hill Parade (see figure 11). The nearest southbound bus stop is opposite the north bound bus stop – Quarry Hill Parade - around 136 metres from the station entrance, by the row of local shops near the roundabout with the A26/A2014 and B2260. Some routes use Priory Road.

Tonbridge station is located at the southern end of the town with limited road access, which has always been a major challenge for bus operators⁶. The densest residential areas are to the north of town (along the congested High Street) whilst nearly all the secondary schools/colleges are within a mile (i.e. walking, wheeling and cycling distance) of the station; in general, this means students **rely on the bus network** to get to schools⁷.

One of the main issues is that the B2260 is the only road crossing that connects both sides of the railway line in the town centre. With two roundabouts at either end of Quarry Hill Parade, it means that **congestion on local roads is frequently a problem**.

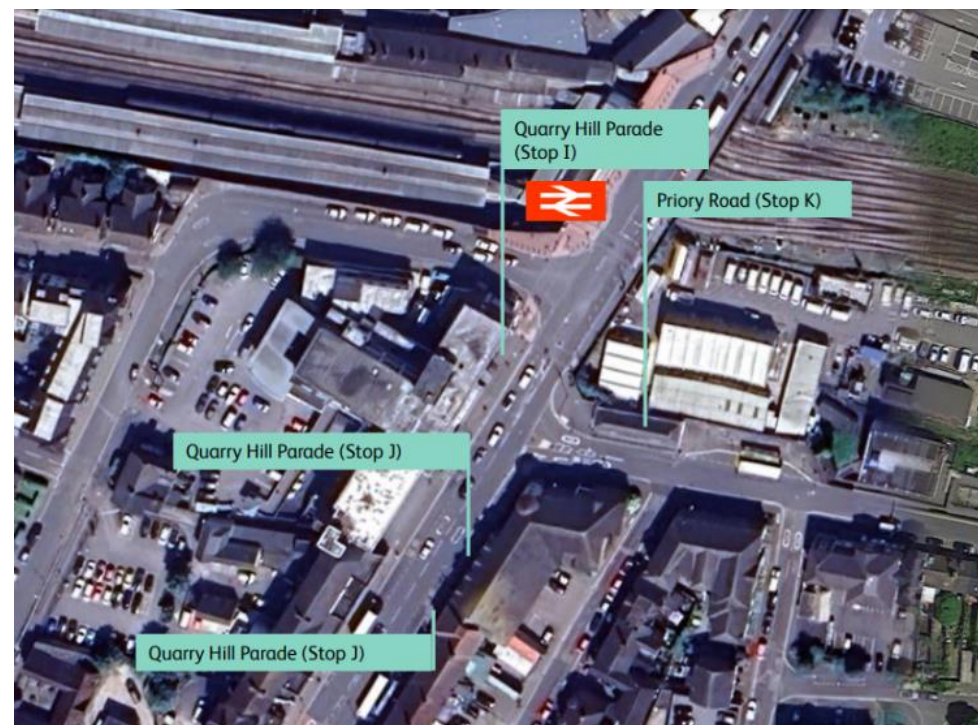


Figure 11 Aerial view of the bus stops near to Tonbridge railway station. Source: Network Rail.

An overview of the bus services passing by the station is provided below:

Bus	Operator	Route	Frequency
5	Go Coach Hire	Sevenoaks Bus Station-Tonbridge Bus Station	3 times a day.
7	Arriva Kent	Maidstone Bus Station-Tunbridge Wells	Every 30 minutes.
77	Nu-Venture	Tonbridge-Kings Hill-West Malling-Maidstone Hospital	Monday to Fridays only.
208	Go Coach Hire	Hemwood Green-East Peckham	Hourly.
210	Autocar Bus and Coach Services	Charcott-Leigh-Tonbridge	Daily.
211	Nu-Venture	Tonbridge-Brook Street-Deakin Leas	

⁶ Discussions with Arriva Buses.

⁷ Information from Arriva Buses.

Bus	Operator	Route	Frequency
212		Barden Road-Tonbridge-Cottage Hospital	Daytime only, Monday to Saturday.
218/219	Arriva Kent and Surrey	Tonbridge North-Tonbridge	Every 30 minutes.
222	Autocar Bus and Coach Services	Wrotham-Borough Green-Tonbridge	Two Hourly.
401	Go Coach Hire	Westernham Hartley Road-Tonbridge Quarry Hill Parade	Two Hourly.
402	Arriva Kent and Surrey	Sevenoaks Bus Station-Tunbridge Wells Railway Station	Every 30 minutes.
403	Hams Travel	Dunton Green-Tonbridge	School Service.

Routes 531/582/774/775/776 are school services which serve Tonbridge Station (Arriva buses).

Nu-Venture buses noted that the 211 local service has been recently remodelled due to increased daytime congestion in the station area.

7.1.2 Bus stops and their locations

There have been recent changes to the location of the northbound bus stops within the vicinity of the railway station. This section acknowledges the challenges bus users face and implications this has on accessing the station today, however it is not practically feasible to move the bus stops back nearer to the station to (where they use to be located) due to changes to the road layout in this area.

Figure 12 illustrates the location of the nearest bus stops to Tonbridge Station:

1. Heading towards the station from the high street, this is the bus stop in the southbound direction by the pavilion shopping centre.
2. Parade Road just off Quarry Hill Parade also has a bus stop.
3. Quarry Hill Parade bus stops facing northbound share the same road space with other road vehicles by the line of shops on the right.
4. The bus stop nearest the station heading south and away from the town centre is located adjacent to the bus stops shown in the third photo.

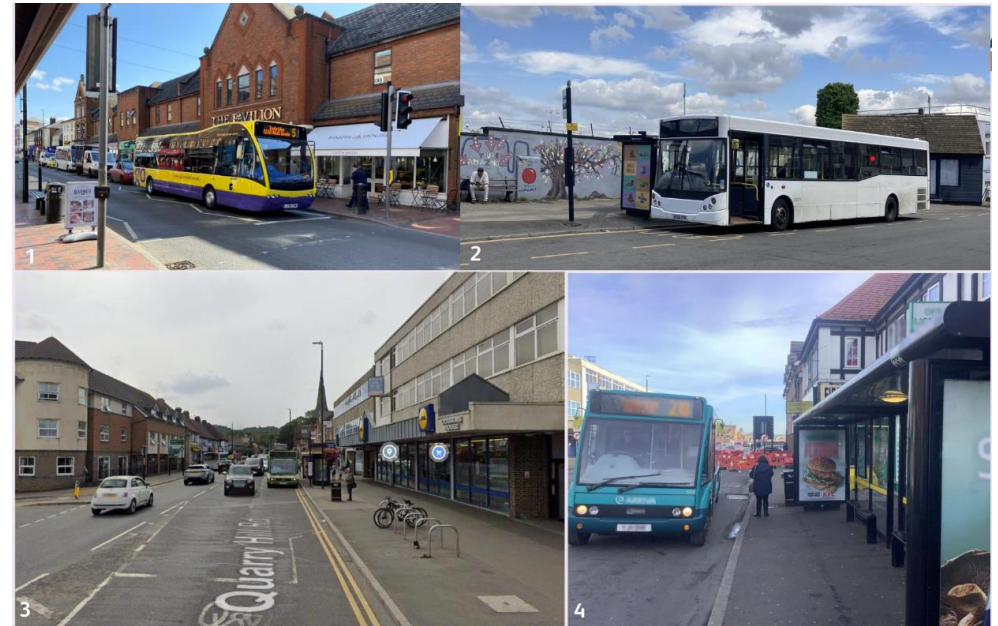


Figure 12 Location of the bus stops in Tonbridge. Source: Network Rail.

Why was the bus stop outside the station building moved?



Figure 13 The previous northbound bus stop located outside the station in 2018. Source: Network Rail.

The bus stop for north-bound services used to be located immediately opposite the station building (Figure 13).

When the pavement was widened outside the station, this bus stop was relocated 67m to outside Lidl by the parade of shops to the south of the station. This created a larger area for pedestrian flow as well as providing a drop off/pick up point for private vehicles.

Funding for the relocation of the bus stop outside the station was part of the West Kent Local Growth Fund to improve the Transport Interchange at Tonbridge station⁸.

⁸ Kent County Council: Tonbridge Station Interchange Improvements, 2017.

This investment comprised:

- Removing the bus stop from outside the station entrance and relocating it to outside Lidl. This allowed for a much larger pedestrian area in the front of the station. This has improved passenger circulation outside the station entrance, addressing a crowding issue within the station concourse.
- Three-way traffic light controls (Waterloo Road, B2260 North and South) to allow pedestrians' safe movement, particularly at peak times such as after school. Lights controlled to allow for optimal pedestrian and vehicle flow within the space.
- Existing bus layby outside Lidl removed and converted to a new pedestrian area. New bus stops for three buses created using some of the existing carriageway space.
- Extended the pre-existing bus stop located outside Quarry Hill Parade.

The car drop off and pick up area in front of the station remains a congestion bottleneck, particularly at peak times on Quarry Hill Parade which is the main north-south through Tonbridge. This causes significant delays to bus services and has necessitated additional running time to be added into timetables. The issues are caused by a combination of the delays due to cars entering and exiting the drop off/pick up area, and due to cars either double parking parallel to the drop off/pick up area or parking beyond the limits of the area further onto the bridge.

The relocation of the northbound stop further from the station was not positive from the perspective of integrated transport. The walk is now a reasonable distance, and requires crossing a road, whereas previously the bus stops were located very conveniently outside the station. Whilst potentially making using the bus less convenient, the relocation of the stops also makes the availability of the bus services less visible. The northbound bus stops as shown in Figure 12, use a shared road space with no dedicated layby for buses standing to allow passengers to alight and board here.

Improving signage, wayfinding, and the public realm (page 27) would assist with making it easier to find the nearest bus stop from the station for people unfamiliar with the local area and onward public transport connections. There is also the **option to relocate the car pick up/drop off** away from Quarry Hill Parade, such as towards a dedicated area on Barden Road. Reinstating bus stops closer to the station entrance/exit would have clear transport benefits, but the limited road space remains a constraint.

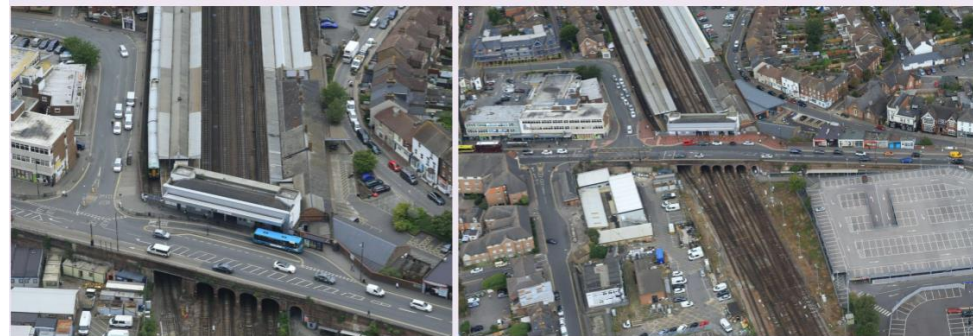


Figure 14 The previous northbound bus stop located outside the station (left) (back in 2018) and now in 2024 (right). Source: Network Rail.

Congestion and alternatives

Arriva Buses mentioned that there is congestion through Tonbridge including past the station and that consequently the journey times for their routes vary day to day. Road congestion is a particular problem before and after school times, as students need to travel. However, they did not view bus service frequency as an issue⁹.

When there is engineering work through Tonbridge, rail replacement buses provided by train operators also use the same bus stands as other bus operators. This also creates additional traffic in the area.

Stakeholders at the accessibility and facilities (first and last mile) workshop proposed the routing buses past the station side entrance on Barden Road, where the disabled parking is located. This would require the re-routing of buses via Holford Street onto Barden Road. This is one way only, so would extend bus journey times northbound and southbound considerably.

Barden Road is also narrow in parts. There are no driveways for residents of most houses on this road, meaning people must park on Barden Road. This would therefore restrict buses with a long wheelbase from travelling down side streets such as Barden Road. Furthermore, southbound buses would need to undertake a near 180 degree turn at the roundabout between Barden Road, Vale Road and the B2260 – around small roundabout. This would require safety and operational reviews.

There is potential to provide bus stops on this route - for example by relocating the taxi layby or disabled parking – but the impact of a diversion and potential inability to route buses this way is considered to be a more significant barrier.

⁹ Information from Arriva Buses.

Stakeholders identified that the nearest option for a new bus stop would likely be on the main high street to the north of the station. However, this would take northbound passengers beyond the station and force them to re-trace their steps, presenting no benefit over alighting at Quarry Hill Parade. Southbound passengers can already alight here.

As it is not practical to move the bus stops any closer to the station, or to re-route buses via Barden Road, it is likely that improvements in signage, wayfinding and the public realm would assist with improving the transition and passenger experience.

7.1.3 National Bus Strategy: Bus Service Improvement Plan

In 2024, the government announced their National Bus Strategy: *The Bus Service Improvement Plans* (BSIP)¹⁰. This follows on from the publication of the National Bus Strategy published in March 2021 entitled '*Bus Back Better*'¹¹.

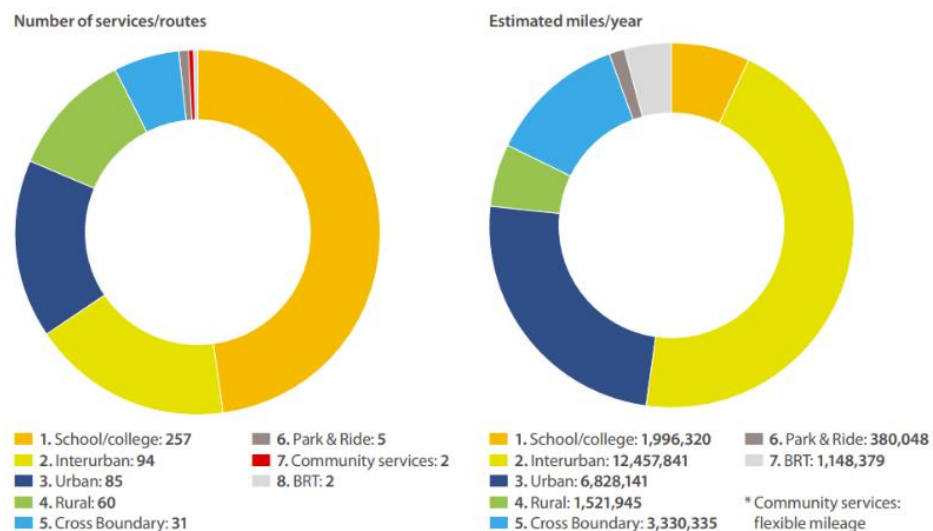


Figure 15 Number of bus routes, services, and bus mileage in Kent. Source: Kent County Council.

As part of BSIP and the *Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan*¹² the results for Ashford and Tonbridge and Malling show that around 60% of the population is within 30 minutes of their closest destination by bus, and a significant proportion of the population is not served by bus in the morning peak. The National Bus Strategy is also referenced by Kent County Council in their [Striking the balance - our local transport plan - Kent County](#)

[Council](#) document. Maidstone and Tonbridge districts show the highest absolute number without access to a morning peak bus service, closely followed by Ashford.

Kent bus mileage by service type (Figure 15) shows that student traffic accounts for most services, with 257 services running specifically for local schools and colleges. This again demonstrates that Tonbridge station is a key node for school children accessing their local education centres.

Any bus schemes that improve accessibility between different modes of public transport would also improve passenger experience and create better access to Tonbridge Station, without reliance on private cars. Any further investment in bus funding for Tonbridge should provide an opportunity provision for increased bus to rail demand.

7.1.4 Bus information and integration

Bus operator apps used in Tonbridge offer a wealth of information all in one place for users. Arriva for example have their [own app](#) where passengers can get real time information, purchase bus tickets and view bus timetables.

Due to the number of online tools, Kent County Council no longer provide county or town-wide bus route maps. Kent County Council provide a link to Traveline website available on their website. Other bus and coach operators in Kent do not have such travel apps yet but they recommend using [Traveline](#).

Promotion and visibility of the in-house apps could help to ensure passengers have access to the right information with advertising and instructions for use around the station being one solution. Another option would be **the addition of more real-time information at the station and an interactive totem screen**. Another method by which information at the station could be improved is through **onward travel maps**. These maps can include cycle routes (and bike hire information if applicable), bus services, and walking routes.

[PlusBus](#) is also available from Tonbridge. For a small addition to the rail fare, local bus fares can be covered, and this can include season tickets. Initiatives such as 'PlusBus' demonstrate the ability and benefit of closer integration between public transport modes with cheaper and convenient cross-ticketing encouraging the use of sustainable transport from door-to-door.

¹⁰ [bus-service-improvement-plans-guidance-to-local-authorities-and-bus-operators-2024.pdf](#)

¹¹ [Bus back better - GOV.UK](#)

¹² [Bus Service Improvement Plan - Kent County Council](#)

7.2 Cycling, wheeling and walking provision

7.2.1 Cycling catchment

Most of Tonbridge is within a reasonable cycle time to Tonbridge station, as well as surrounding towns such as Southborough. Cycling provision at Tonbridge station itself is extensive.

Given the station is the second busiest for entries and exits in Kent, the type and number of cycling spaces available is high to maximise the number of opportunities for passengers to cycle to the station. 77% of the stations located in Kent have bike storage, of which 12 stations are protected by CCTV coverage such as Tonbridge cycle hub.

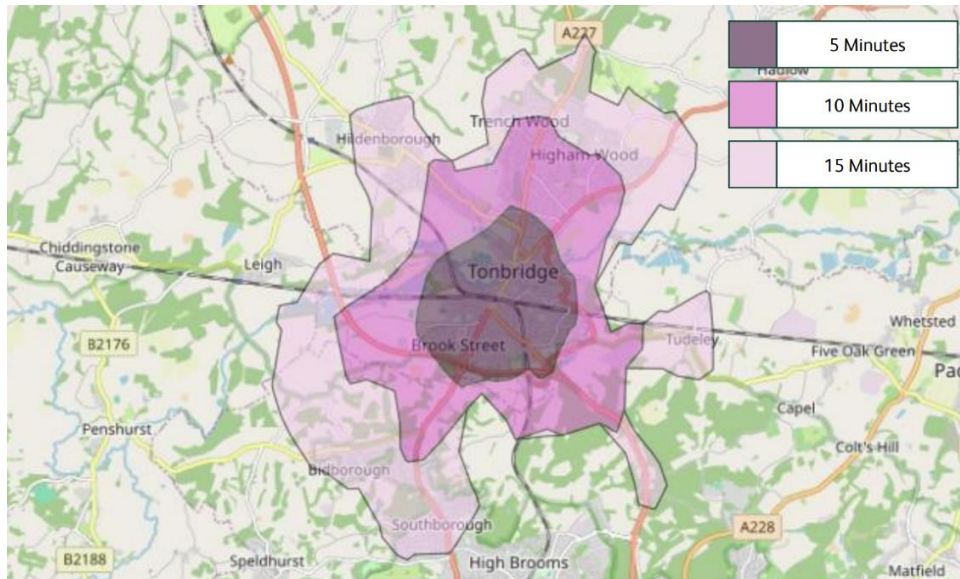


Figure 16 Cycling catchment for Tonbridge station. Source: Network Rail.

7.2.2 Station cycling provisions

7.2.2.1 Overview

Figure 17 shows the different cycling storage facilities at Tonbridge station.

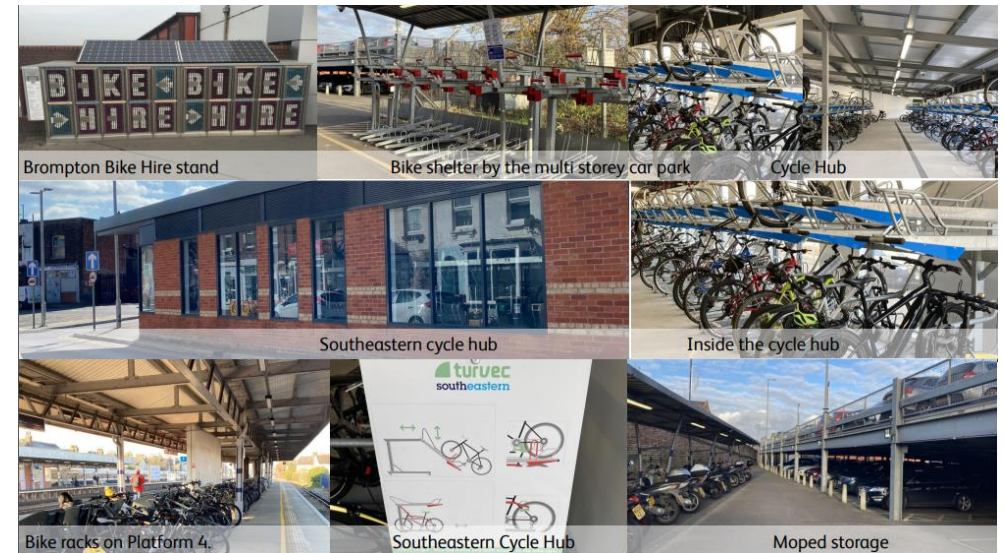


Figure 17 The various cycling facilities at Tonbridge station that are available to cyclists, either paid using the cycle hub or Brompton Bike hire or free for other users. Source: Network Rail.

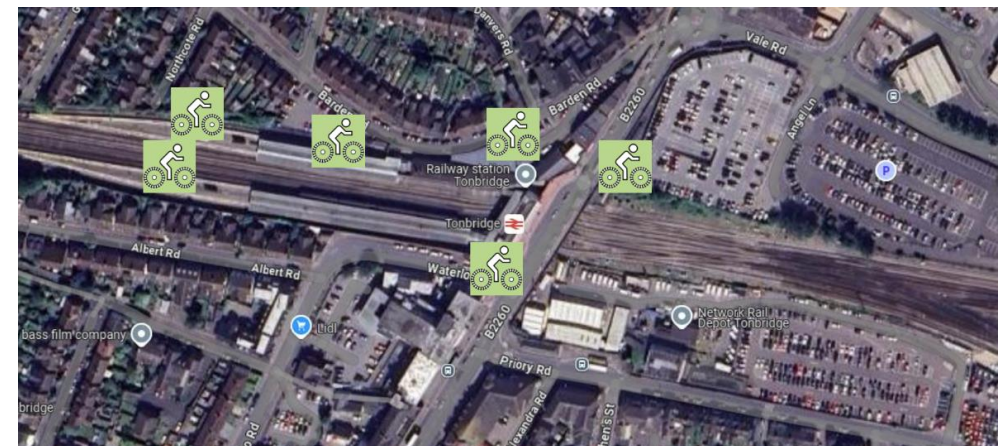


Figure 18 Aerial view of the cycling provision at Tonbridge Station. Source: Network Rail.

7.2.2.2 The Southeastern Cycle Hub

This cycling facility allows passengers to store their bikes undercover in a secure building that is accessible via Barden Road. This cycle hub sets best practice for other locations, being affordable and having tools available for basic repairs. The building can accommodate 220 cycles (58 spaces were occupied during the site visit, which was on a Tuesday in December 2024).

Cyclists must register at the ticket office and are then given a key fob to access the facilities here. Electric bikes can also be stored here in a safe and controlled environment.

Southeastern have 28 cycle hubs on their network including Tonbridge, which is one of the biggest indoor storage buildings. Southeastern are reviewing their fees at all their cycle hubs going forward, with the potential for a reduction in price for cyclists to encourage more uptake.

Consideration could also be given for enabling those with adapted bikes to secure their bikes at the station more easily. For all the cycle storage/moped facilities users must have their own padlock and key to safely secure their cycle.



Figure 19 External view of the cycle hub at Tonbridge on Barden Road. The cycle hub is an example of best practice for such facilities that train operators can provide to their passengers. Source: Network Rail.

7.2.2.3 Brompton bike hire

Brompton bike hire is located outside the station on the corner with Waterloo Road and allows people to hire [Brompton bikes](#). Southeastern station staff advised that this facility could be better utilised. This facility is privately owned by Brompton Bike Hire. The prices for hiring a Brompton bike vary depending on the type of use and frequency:

- Annual fee – frequent: £25.00/Daily hire charge: £3.50.
- Annual fee – leisure: £5.00 /Daily hire charge: £6.50.

7.2.2.4 Multi storey car park bike rack

This is located by the multi storey car park and is used for both cycles and mopeds for free.

7.2.2.5 Platform 4 bike rack

The bike rack faces away from platform 3, primarily not to interfere with passengers alighting and boarding trains. 57 stands were occupied during the site visit. Cyclists are expected to have their own padlocks to secure their bikes, but it is free to use.

7.2.3 Access to the railway station by bike

Whilst the cycling provision at Tonbridge station itself is extensive, access to the station can be challenging for regular users. The issues faced are set out in the *Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan*¹³:

- Tonbridge is poorly served by narrow pavements and heavy traffic (all sharing the same road space).
- The A26 is a major trunk road that passes through Tonbridge from London to Hastings. This is the only through road in Tonbridge which connects communities located either side of the railway line.
- Through traffic leads to safety and air quality concerns in Tonbridge Town centre. Traffic is filtered down to two lanes primarily through the town centre, which leads to congestion and makes can make cycling unattractive.

There are no dedicated cycle routes to the station. This means there is a disconnect between the station, the surrounding area and the national cycle network. The [Tudor Trail](#) provides a cycle route from Tonbridge to Penshurst Castle, a 5-mile cycle ride away but there are no formal cycleways through Tonbridge to connect to this route (Figure 21).

The B2260 outside the station does not have advisory or segregated cycle lanes, reflecting the narrow width available across the bridge. The trunk roads to the south and through the Tonbridge also do not have any dedicated cycle lines. The TTWBUG confirmed that there are no cycle routes within Tonbridge, with cyclists sharing the space with road vehicles.

During stakeholder engagement, regular users of the station suggested having an additional structure across the railway line to the east of the existing B2260. Spanning the railway line this structure could link Vale Road with Priory Road. This could provide a

¹³ [Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan | Let's talk Kent](#)

segregated cycle and pedestrian bridge away from the existing road bridge by the station but would be a major intervention may not help with access to the station itself.

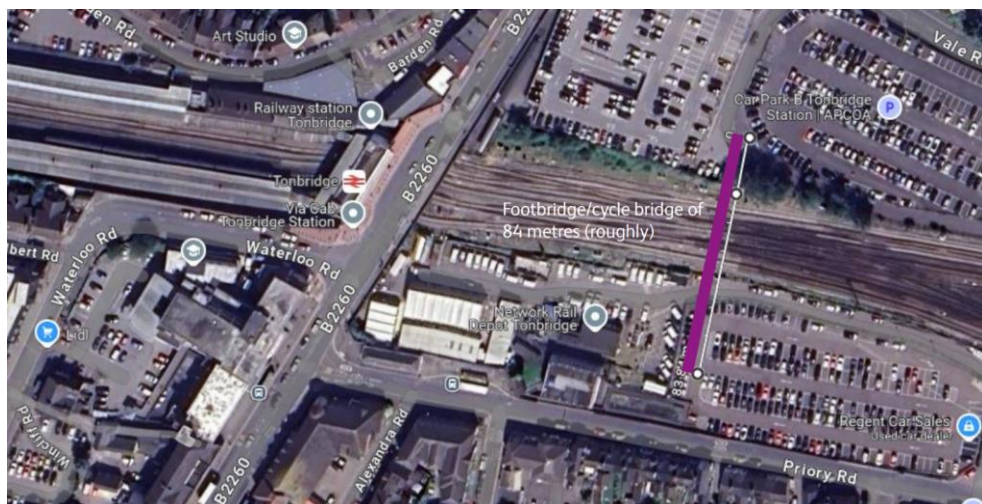


Figure 20 A dedicated pedestrian and cycle bridge would require dedicated facilities through the car park area to provide safe access. Source: Google Maps

A wider cycle network strategy should seek to remove the disconnect between the town centre, railway station and wider area and should supplement the existing Kent Cycle Walking Infrastructure Plan (page 24).

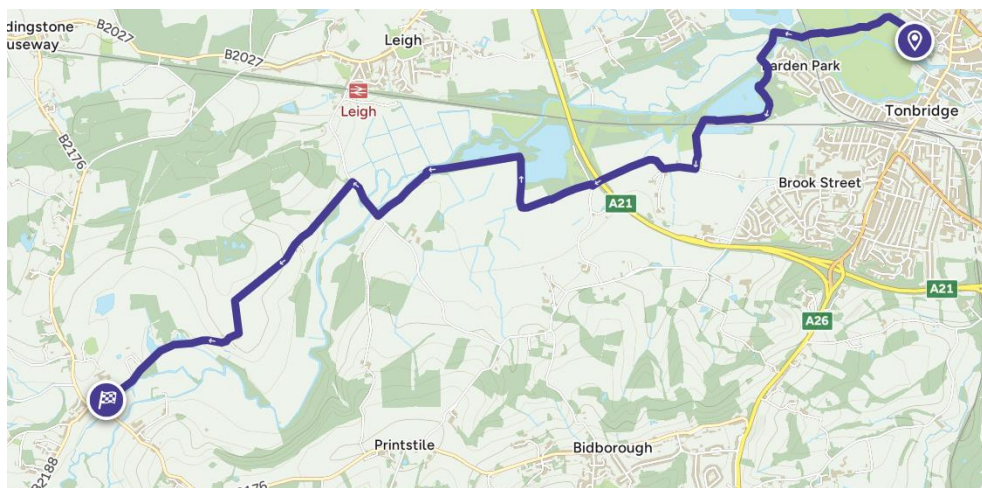


Figure 21 The National Cycle Network, Tudor Trail from Tonbridge to Penshurst Castle. Source: Sustrans.

A further identified issue was the access to the cycle hub for those travelling from the south side of the station. As Barden Road is one-way and contraflow cycling is not permitted, cyclists are required to travel via Avebury Road and Halford Street or complete the journey on foot.

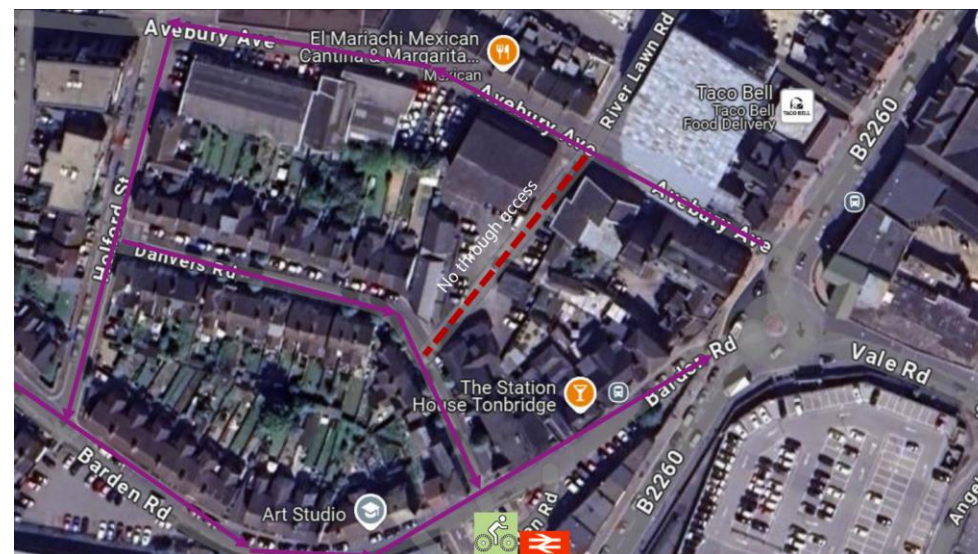


Figure 22 Roads on the north side of Tonbridge Station, these roads are one way and limited room for cycle lanes. Where on street parking is at a premium based on the number of terraced houses without driveways. Source: Google Maps.

With wide pavements on either side of the high street, laybys for delivery vehicles along with bus stops, there are already several obstacles that discourage people from cycling. Cyclists coming from the Barden Road area can cycle from that direction, but there are no dedicated cycle routes in this area to attract people.

It is therefore clear that **cycle routes can be improved to the station**, with a key interface being access to the existing cycle hub.

Linking in with National Cycle Network, Kent County Council in conjunction with Explore Kent have produced a free guide to walking and cycling [EK-TONBRIDGE.pdf](#)

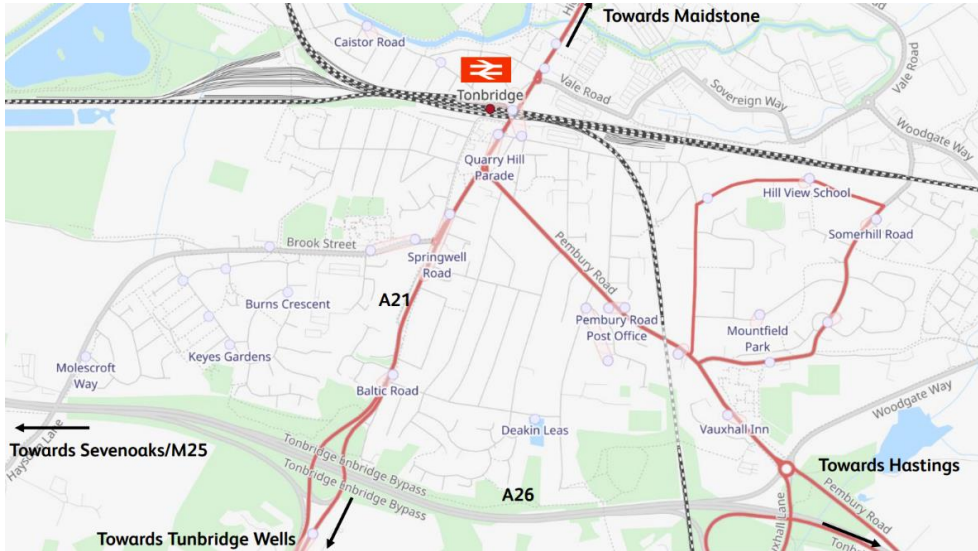


Figure 23 The roads south of Tonbridge station link the A21 Tonbridge bypass with the A26 that runs through the town centre. Source: Open Street Maps.

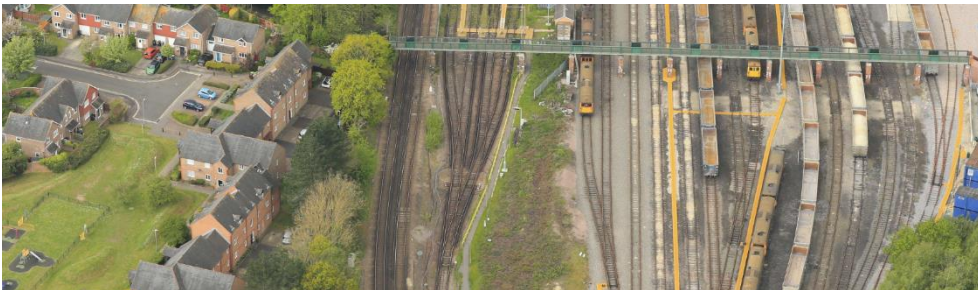


Figure 24 The alternative, albeit convoluted routing, for cyclists is via Douglas Way (west of Tonbridge station) and over a narrow footbridge which is not practical for people with cycles shared with pedestrians. Source: Network Rail.

7.2.4 Walking and pavements

Walking is part of the end-to-end rail passenger experience, at the start, middle or end of a journey. A positive passenger experience includes providing safe walking routes, with pavements being consistent in design and maintained to a good standard.

The station is accessible by foot from both the north and south sides of the town. From the **north side**, access to the town centre is a five-minute walk. Passengers can either access the town centre from the station via the main entrance or use the side entrance to the station on Barden Road. Most of the south of Tonbridge is within a 15-minute walk

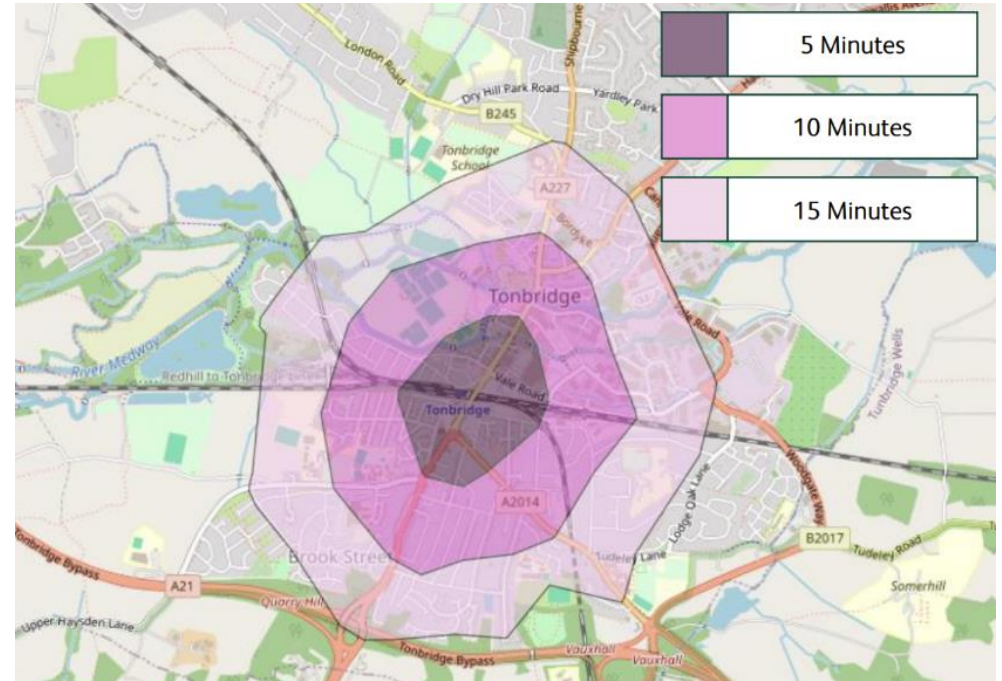


Figure 25 Walking catchment from Tonbridge Station. Source: Network Rail.

of the station. This SSP is not recommending any changes to the pavements around the station. However, having a consistent approach and design in place means that people can safely navigate their local surroundings. The wider Tonbridge area has some narrow pavements, that can make walking uncomfortable if they are crowded at busy times of the day. Implementing traffic calming measures where the pedestrian gets priority over the car could help promote modal shift from the private car and reduce road congestion.



Figure 26 Block paving is consistent throughout the local area as shown here on the junction with the B2260 and Barden Road by Tonbridge Station. Source: Network Rail.

7.2.5 KCWIP

KCWIP identified 15 walking zones across Kent, including in Tonbridge, where there is an identified need to increase the ease of walking and carrying bikes as well as improving safety for pedestrians.

A walking zone consists of a 400 metre (5-minute walk) Core Walking Zone (CWZ) has an additional 2km (1.2 miles) area around it. The locations for walking zones were identified to cover high number of trip destinations, in particular schools (there being at least 4 schools within a 20-minute walk of Tonbridge station), public transport stops and to complement walking zones covered by existing *Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan* (LCWIP).

This SSP supports any improvements to the wider urban realm that improve accessibility by active modes. The Kent Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan ¹⁴ is a **strategic initiative undertaken by Kent County Council to enhance the county's infrastructure for cycling, walking, and wheeling**¹⁵. This forms part of the wider government ambition for making these three modes of transport the natural choices for short and longer journeys, removing the reliance on the private car. The interventions are predominately related to pedestrian and footways rather than cycling, reflecting the significant challenges in the space available to provide dedicated cycle routes.

It is noted that there is an alternative crossing for pedestrians and cyclists via the footbridge to the west of the railway station (Figure 24). Locally, the two-way traffic lights on the corner of the B2260 and Waterloo Road have delayed timers, extended to allow school children to cross safely.

The key interventions proposed for Tonbridge are predominately related to pedestrians (as shown below)

- A) Declutter footways (pavement) on High Street.
- B) Improved pedestrian crossing on Vale Road roundabout (by the station car parks on the north side of the railway station).

C) Opportunities to pedestrianise all or part of the High Street.

D) Localised resurfacing and potential widening of footway on Vale Road to support pedestrian route from Tonbridge Railway Station to the industrial estate business park (at the far end of Priory Road).

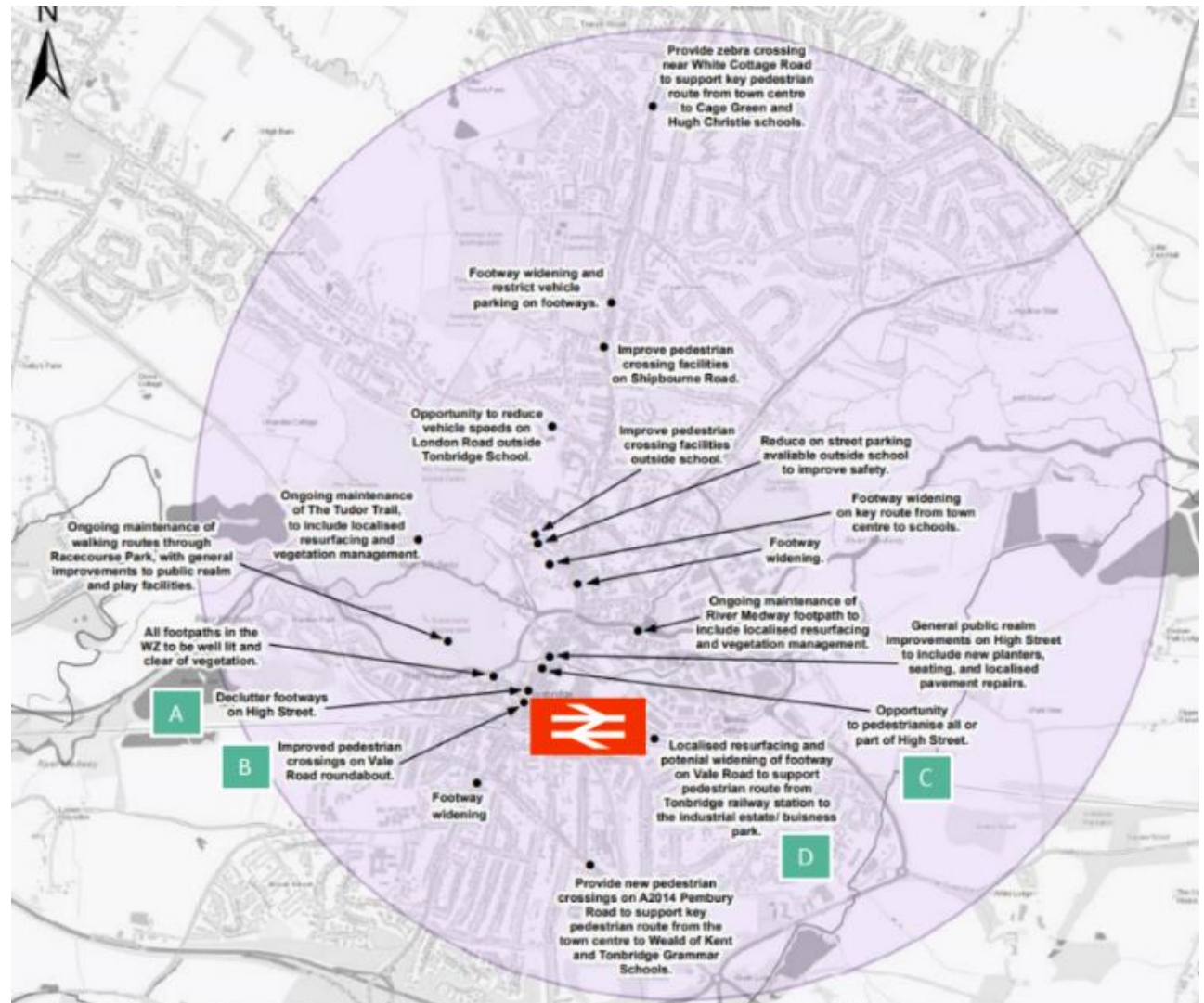


Figure 27 Kent LCWIP recommendations

¹⁴ Also referenced in [Striking the balance - our local transport plan - Kent County Council](#)

¹⁵ [Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan | Let's talk Kent](#)

7.3 Taxi provision and facilities

The main taxi rank for the railway station is located on Waterloo Road, around 60 metres from the station entrance to the top of the taxi rank. Access to the taxi rank is level and is as close as possible to the railway station.

The council noted the taxi rank can be busy on Friday and Saturday nights with people using taxis (see page 8) after arriving on the last trains from London. There is limited shelter meaning that once a large crowd arrives, there is little room undercover to accommodate people waiting for taxis. This is also noted in the Network Rail Station Capacity dashboard as being poor. **A more comprehensive waiting shelter could be provided along with benches.** The walk from the station is also not covered.

Discussions with cab drivers confirmed that their main issue is local road congestion in accessing the station, as well as noting that better waiting facilities would be beneficial.



Figure 28 The taxi rank on Waterloo Road, Tonbridge, in relation to the station entrance. The right-hand photo also shows the basic waiting shelter that exists for waiting passengers. Source: Google Maps and Network Rail.



Figure 29 An example of good practice for layout and overall design is the taxi rank at London Paddington station. Whilst this study does not suggest a substantial structure such as this at Tonbridge it does show the seamless transition between the station area and taxi rank. Source: Network Rail.

7.4 Driving and car parking

For residents living in the district of Tonbridge and Malling, the 2021 national census reported that 12.3% of the local population had no cars or vans in a household; 39.8% had one car or van. Therefore, many households in the borough have limited access to a car, particularly in the rural areas surrounding Tonbridge. Those that do not have access to a car either rely on getting a lift, catching the bus if there is a bus stop and service nearby, or walking, wheeling and cycling to travel, including to access the railway. All these transport modes share the same road to access the north and south sides of the railway line.

Based on evidence from Kent County Council, congestion in the South East is forecast to rise by between 8% and 17% in the next 20 years. Currently in the evening peak the section of Quarry Hill Parade from the station to the roundabout at Vale Road is running at over 92% capacity. Furthermore, some existing road arms are projected to be running at over 100% capacity by 2029 with no intervention. Traffic congestion in the town centre is a concern along with delays at junctions¹⁶. A report published by Kent County Council in 2017, raised concerns around traffic flow. The report particularly mentioned the bus stop on the High Street by the Costa Coffee shop, as this causes traffic to slow down and increases pollution from traffic heading towards the railway station.

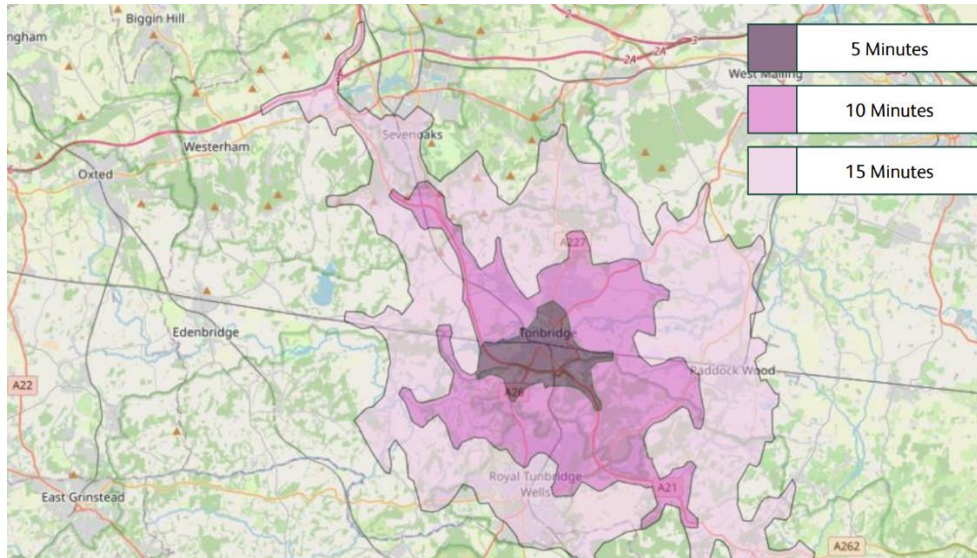


Figure 30 Driving catchment within a 15-minute radius of Tonbridge Station. Source: Network Rail.

As noted previously, there are three station car parks for passengers to use (along with a staff car park for Southeastern staff). These provide a vital role for residents who need to drive to access the station. Having car parks either side of the railway helps to manage congestion across the bridge over the station. There are several car parks owned by the council, with a total of approximately 970 spaces (see table below) near the station.



Figure 31 showing the number of roads which converge by the railway station and pinch points where congestion occurs due to there being one north to south road axis that passes the railway station. Source: Open Street Maps.

Car Park location ¹⁸	No of spaces
Angel East*	370
Angel West	197
Sovereign Way Mid	118
Sovereign Way North	182
Sovereign Way East	71
Vale Road	32
Total	970

*Angel East Car Park is owned by the council and is subject to a long lease (125 years from 1994) to Sainsbury's.

¹⁶ [Striking the balance - our local transport plan - Kent County Council](#)

¹⁷ Information from Kent County Council.

¹⁸ Information from Kent County Council

7.5 Signage and wayfinding

7.5.1 Review of signage provision and opportunities

The use of public transport is usually part of a wider journey that passengers are taking, and this may be with multiple transport modes. Signage is important in allowing passengers to orientate themselves around the station and to plan the onward leg of their journey. Signage is also a simple way of welcoming people to the local area. At transport hubs such as railway stations, integration between rail and other transport modes is vital for making the transition between one mode of public transport and another easier for the user.



Figure 32 Digital signage screen outside Gravesend Station showing real time rail and bus information. Source: Network Rail

Signage around the station and in the town is currently limited. There is a signpost that is not immediately in line of sight for people leaving the station. A further sign outside the station details the facilities which are in walking distance, although this also away from the sightline of arriving passengers exiting the station. Stakeholders also raised concerns with the legibility of signage between Tonbridge station and the town centre.

It was noted during the Station Capacity and Performance workshop that there is a map of Tonbridge within the waiting room on platform 3. However, passengers arriving at the station are unlikely to find this as they alight from their trains and depart the station.

During the accessibility workshop one stakeholder mentioned that there needs to be consistent signage between the high street and the station (and vice versa) to support wayfinding. Whilst a digital sign like the one positioned outside Gravesend station (Figure 32) would help, any digital signs should not create a barrier to accessing the station nor require further widening of the pavement to facilitate this type of structure.

The signage could be something of a similar nature to Figure 32, supplemented by a digital sign outside the railway station. Such a sign would be a relatively quick win and low-cost to supplement further signage outside the railway station. Another option may be to improve signage within the station and encourage people where possible to use the Barden Road exit to the station from platform 3 & 4. However, this would require this exit to be manned seven days a week rather than the existing five days week, as this entrance/exit is closed at weekends. However, this could also encourage more cyclists to use the cycle hub.

National Rail Enquiries provide forward travel posters on their website. However, these are only focused on the nearest public transport modes outside of the railway boundary. A combined map with local amenities and tourist attractions could create an integrated map for local areas around railway stations.

A **signage strategy** should review the existing wayfinding signage and look at improvement to the existing infrastructure.



Figure 33 National Rail Enquiries screenshot of Tonbridge Station and onward travel information. Source: National Rail Enquiries

7.5.2 Review of wayfinding provision and opportunities

Wayfinding refers to the process of navigating a physical space. It means using tools to determine one's location and the best route to a desired destination. Effective wayfinding systems are crucial in complex environments like airports, hospitals, large urban areas, and stations, where clear and intuitive guidance helps people move efficiently and reduces confusion and congestion.

Good wayfinding design considers the needs of diverse users, including those with disabilities, to ensure accessibility and ease of use for everyone. [GTR](#) offers a free smartphone app designed to enhance accessibility for blind and partially sighted people, to all 236 of its Great Northern, Southern and Thameslink stations. The app allows blind and partially sighted customers to place a video call with a trained advisor who looks through the customer's smartphone camera to guide them around the station on speakerphone, simplifying the journey¹⁹.

There is an opportunity to improve signage provision at Tonbridge and to provide a consistent approach to wayfinding between the railway, other modes and key attractions or destinations locally.

The SSP recommends transport organisations work with local councils and KCC to improve signage and wayfinding between different modes of transport and mapping of local facilities within a 15-minute catchment area, to support modal shift.

A specific opportunity relates to the signage and wayfinding to and from the side entrance to the station on Barden Road. Emphasising this entrance could reduce journey times for some passengers and reduce crowding at the main entrance. Should footfall increase, there could be the opportunity to extend opening hours to cover weekends.

7.6 Station facilities: provision and improvements

Tonbridge station has four platforms that are accessible via lifts from the main entrance. There is a further step-free side entrance from Barden Road with a car park for disabled badge holders.

The **main entrance** to the station includes a ticket gate line with three regular barriers and one wide barrier, for those with reduced mobility. There is also a **side entrance** to the station from Barden Road. This has one ticket vending machine and a gate line. The opening hours for the **entrance from Bardon Road** are as follows: Monday to Friday (only) 06:00-09:30 and 16:30-20:30. This entrance is not open at weekends. This means

that those using the cycle hub next to the entrance at weekends must walk round via Quarry Hill Parade. Those using an accessible parking space must also walk round to the main entrance when this side entrance is closed.

The appearance of this entrance could be improved for example with raised planters and better signage. A wider pavement which allows shared walking and cycling, reconfiguration of the parking and information regarding opening hours could assist with making this entrance more attractive to passengers. This may assist with relieving congestion at peak times at the main station.

Arch Co owns a number of buildings by this entrance that could be cleaned to promote a more inviting entrance to the station from this side of the town.



Figure 34 The ticket hall and gate line at Tonbridge Station. The wide gate in the middle of the photo is usually opened in the AM and PM peak to assist with the flow of school children using the station entrance.

The Barden Road entrance (below) is located next door to the cycle hub. There is an opportunity for a new business to use a vacant retail unit between both entrances. Ticket barriers are in operation at this entrance. Source: Network Rail.



¹⁹ [New app revolutionises accessibility for blind and partially sighted rail passengers on Gatwick Express, Great Northern, Southern and Thameslink | Govia Thameslink Railway](#)

7.6.1 Water refills

One of the issues raised by the accessibility, facilities and first and last mile working group was around facilities for free water refills. While there are coffee shops, there is no water fountain.

Some train operators such as LNER have water stations at some of their managed stations. Network Rail also provide free water stations at their managed stations such as at London Victoria.

The FCB Coffee shop advertise on their social media that they will re-fill water bottles for free. On the site visit to Tonbridge station the coffee shop staff provided water. However, there are no notices in the station or coffee shop window advertising this service, so station-users may not be aware. A quick win would be to advertise this at the station as it may bring in new custom to the café and improve the station's facilities offer.

7.6.2 Quiet Space and Changing Places



Figure 35 Changing Places at Leeds station. Source: Network Rail

The study has collated examples of new facilities at Network Rail managed stations as best practice to consider for Tonbridge station. A changing places facility has opened at Leeds station to help those with mobility limiting disabilities travel with confidence and making rail travel more accessible²⁰. *'The toilet, which has been registered by Changing*

Places Consortium, is different from a standard accessible toilet as it features an adult-sized, height-adjustable changing bench, an integrated hoist system and adequate space for a disabled person and up to two carers'.

There may be scope to utilise the existing vacant coffee shop on platform 3 at Tonbridge station for such a facility. However, further development would be required in order to understand whether this is viable and affordable.

Manchester Piccadilly has recently opened a quiet space (Figure 36). This includes calming lighting along with comfortable areas to rest. It is situated away from the main station platforms and concourse. This is the first of its kind and shows best practice for any new quiet spaces in stations across the UK rail network.

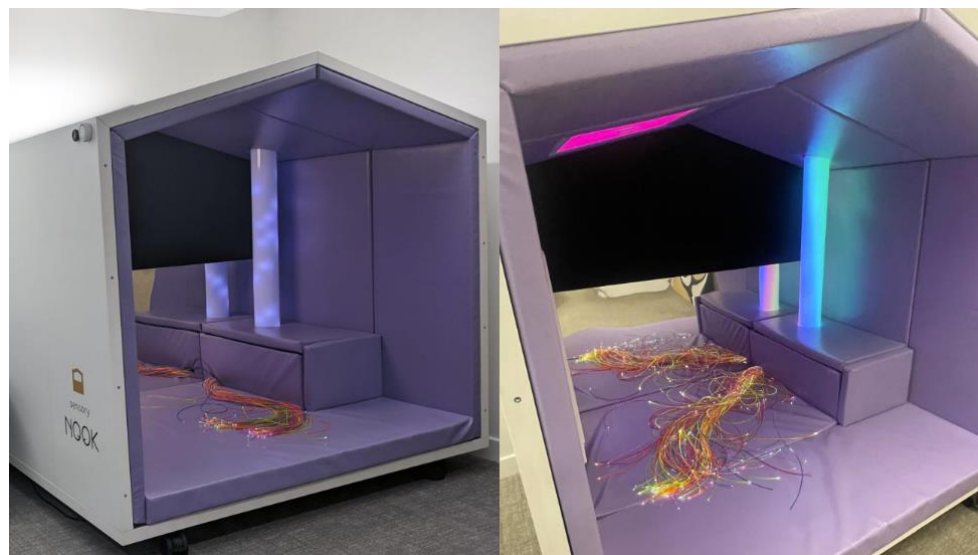


Figure 36 Quiet space at Manchester Piccadilly station. Source: Network Rail.

During the site visit it was noted that there is limited physical space available for a quiet space or Changing Places today as most areas are currently occupied staff facilities and retail units.

A potential alternative was identified at the far end of either sets of platforms (see figure 37), but this could raise safety concerns due to their distance from other facilities and further development work would be required. Further guidance would also be needed from accessibility experts. Initial discussions with Southeastern suggested that any quiet spaces should be located near a member of staff rather than at the end of the platform.

²⁰ [Network Rail open Changing Places facility in Leeds – the UK's leader in accessibility.](#)



Figure 37 Potential location of quiet spaces at Tonbridge station. Source: Network Rail.

London Waterloo station has recently been granted the autism friendly award by the National Autistic Society. Businesses must **meet standards and follow a framework to demonstrate to customers that their business offers an autism-friendly environment and service, and over 300 organisations are now accredited**²¹. There could be an opportunity to achieve this status at Tonbridge as one of the busiest stations outside central London in Kent.

At London Waterloo this includes a video guide to help people travel with confidence and designed to support with journey planning and giving customers a clearer picture of the station before they travel and reduce anxiety. Training has been given to front line staff from both Network Rail and South Western Railway. Autism awareness is now a mandatory part of a new member of staff's induction when joining the Southern Stations team at Network Rail.

7.6.3 Waiting rooms

Waiting rooms are essential services for passengers. The scale of provision may vary between station types, but most will include these facilities in some form. Waiting rooms are used by a wide range of passengers and are particularly important for passengers with reduced mobility. All waiting rooms should be easy to locate, comfortable and

welcoming to station users. They should also include customer information screens (CIS) as well as sufficient space to accommodate wheelchair users.

The main waiting room at Tonbridge Station is located on the island platform on the London side (platforms 1 & 2). It provides shelter, a café for passengers to purchase hot and cold drinks, and toilet facilities. There is also a small waiting room on platform 3 that provides shelter from the elements for passengers which is heated, this supplements the heated waiting room on platform 2.

7.6.4 Ticket vending machines

Ticket vending machines (TVMs) are available and allow passengers to purchase train tickets on the day of travel or collect tickets they have purchased in advance. The TVMs are located by both station entrances, but stakeholders highlighted that there is low quality access.

At the Barden Road entrance the TVM is located by the gate line and passageway from the car park, with no dedicated area for queuing. Based on the Network Rail Design manual [Station facilities and amenities](#) advises that **'consideration be given as to the direction in which passengers will queue'**. Queuing should not impact pedestrian flows or obstruct the concourse. Stakeholders have suggested adding defined painted lines for queuing to help alleviate crowding.

²¹ [London Waterloo Station awarded Autism Friendly Award](#)

7.7 Recommendations: accessibility and first & last mile

Station facilities, accessibility and first and last mile		
Recommendation	Benefit	Next steps
Enhanced wayfinding / digital signage	Improve passenger experience when navigating within and between stations through signposting at accessible levels without obstruction. Encourage use of pedestrian and bus routes for shorter journeys.	Work with local authority, rail user groups, and operators to review wayfinding provision to ensure that it meets requirements. Where possible, work with existing schemes and projects to influence wayfinding design and provision.
Encourage people to use Barden Road entrance/exit	Improved signage may encourage more passengers to use this side entrance of the station that provides step free access towards the town centre and high street. Raised planters may assist in encouraging more people to use this entrance and remove the reliance on the main entrance of the station being congested at peak times.	Would form part of a wider signage/enhanced wayfinding strategy that would incorporate all signage and interaction between different signage by or outside the station boundary. Engagement with Arch Co in relation to the buildings on this side of the station and improve the appearance of this area to make it more attractive to use this side entrance. Ultimately this would ease pressure on the front entrance of the station which experiences congestion at peak times.
FCB Coffee Shop – water refills	Advertising free water refills to allow passengers to top up their water bottles. May also bring in new customers who may not have used the station before.	Southeastern working with FCB to understand whether this can be advertised to address a current facilities gap.
Cycle route improvements	Improving accessibility to the station.	Kent Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plan would support modal shift and accessibility to and from the station by bike. Interventions to improve walking, wheeling and cycling accessibility to the railway would be supported by Southeastern and Network Rail noting the high quality cycle parking facilities provided at the station.
Improve accessible station facilities	Changing places/quiet space for passengers, providing a quiet space for anxious passengers	Further discussions with Southeastern. The vacant coffee shop on Platform 3 will soon have a new tenant so this space will become a new coffee outlet.
Taxi rank improvements	Better shelter for waiting passengers	Discussions between Tonbridge and Malling Council, Kent County Council and Southeastern to explore options for improving existing shelter provision for passengers.
Ticket Vending Machines	Additional ticket vending machine in the Barden Road entrance to help alleviate crowding in the peaks in the station ticket hall area	For Southeastern to look at whether it would be practical for an additional ticket vending machine to be located at the side entrance of the station. Queuing markings could also be provided to reduce impacts on pedestrian flows.

8 What station capacity improvements are required at Tonbridge station in the future?

8.1 Station crowding

An extract from Network Rail's station capacity planning dashboard is shown below. This sets out that crowding issues at the station are predominantly related to school travel, and ticket gate line congestion.

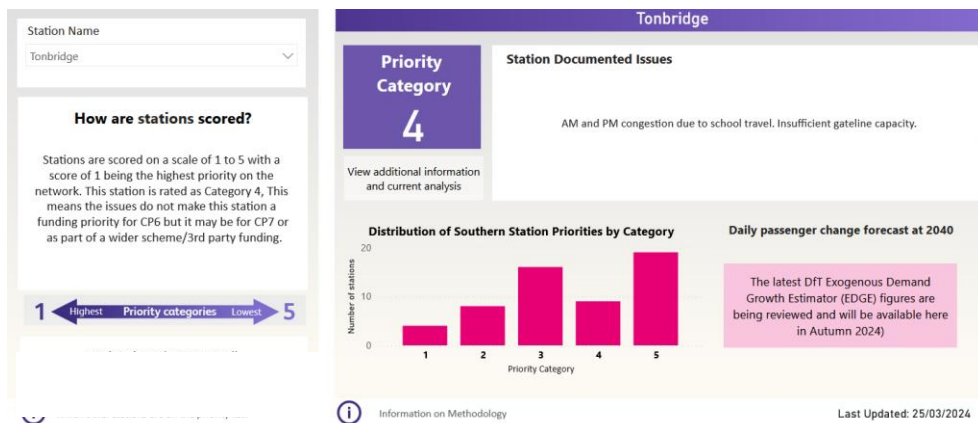


Figure 38 Station capacity dashboard outlining the main documented issue with Tonbridge station. Source: Network Rail.

The key themes around station safety for Tonbridge are:

1. AM and PM Peak congestion.
2. Insufficient gate line capacity.

These two factors contribute towards safety concerns at the station and result in Southeastern implementing crowd control measures. This includes opening the gate line barriers at peak times of the day when the school traffic arrives in the morning peak and departs in the evening peak.

There are four schools within a 20-minute walk of the station. School children come from the Redhill line, Medway Valley Line from Strood (predominately used by school children), the Hastings line, and from Orpington and Sevenoaks. Southeastern noted that around 400 school children use the station per day²². In the peak this means that station staff

must implement crowd control measures to continue to operate the station safely and efficiently.

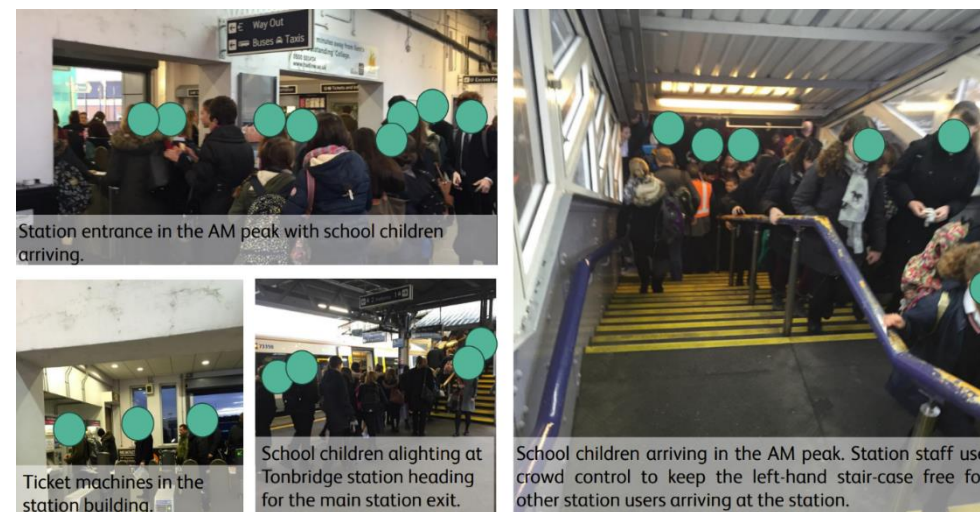


Figure 39 Multiple photos showing the school crowds at Tonbridge station. Source: Network Rail.

Stakeholders considered the option of adding more gates. This could assist with clearing the footbridge but would not clear the stairs from the platforms any quicker as it is a separate pinch point and is where the main crowding issues occur – particularly for the London bound platforms (see figure 39).

The staircases are narrow (1.15m handrail-handrail) and cannot be materially widened. Figure 39 illustrates the issues experienced with school traffic in the morning peak including keeping the station operational for other passengers at the busiest times of the day.

The congestion is likely contributing to safety incidents, with Network Rail's safety dashboard finding a relatively high level of accidents taking place at peak times.

²² Information from Southeastern.

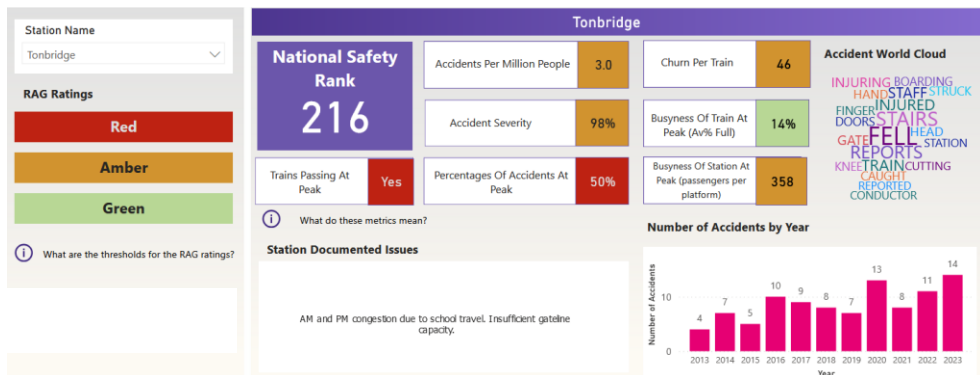


Figure 40 Station safety dashboard for Tonbridge. Source: Network Rail.

Information shared by Southeastern notes that the two main periods of school traffic are around 08:15 in the AM Peak and 15:45 in the PM peak; this information was gathered over two weeks in November 2024²³. The numbers below are sourced from gate line data and include all users. These two times are the main peaks for the station passenger numbers.

Date	Time (08:15)	Time (15:45)
Monday 11/11	Main entrance (335) Barden Road (90)	Main entrance (285) Barden Road (61)
Tuesday 12/11	Main entrance (524) Barden Road (10)	Main entrance (280) Barden Road (41)
Wednesday 13/11	Main entrance (540) Barden Road (116)	Main entrance (264) Barden Road (60)
Thursday 14/11	Main entrance (457) Barden Road (91)	Main entrance (402) Barden Road (60)
Friday 15/11	Main entrance (338) Barden Road (79)	Main entrance (275) Barden Road (48)
Monday 18/11	Main entrance (56) Barden Road (6)	Main entrance (346) Barden Road (89)
Tuesday 19/11	Main entrance (317) Barden Road (42)	Main entrance (464) Barden Road (30)
Wednesday 20/11	Main entrance (107) Barden Road (1)	Main entrance (364) Barden Road (36)
Thursday 21/11	Main entrance (488) Barden Road (48)	Main entrance (519) Barden Road (2)

²³ Information from Southeastern.

Friday 22/11	Main entrance (277) Barden Road (2)	Main entrance (295) Barden Road (0)
Total	3,924	3,921

The above table illustrates that the main station entrance is the gateway to the local area especially for the peak times of the day. The side entrance to the station from Barden Road is used less frequently during the week as evidenced in the table above but does provide some relief. This entrance/exit is not convenient for school traffic as the local schools are located south of the station.

Kent and Sussex Strategic Planning and Southeastern undertook a site visit in the PM peak in December 2024 to experience the level of school crowding. Most students entered the station through the main entrance with a few students using the Barden Road entrance; all in a short window.

To facilitate the large number of school children in the peaks, Southeastern platform staff implement a set of temporary barriers to keep all station users moving. The wide gate in the station concourse can be opened to keep people moving in this area. However, this means that there is a risk of revenue loss.

Southeastern and Kent County Council have worked closely together on pedestrian flows and changing crossing times at the sets of traffic lights on Waterloo Road and Quarry Hill Parade outside the station to help clear the pavements outside the station. Network Rail have also carried out station surveys to gain a better understanding of pedestrian flows within the station and interface between the concourse/gate line and area outside the station building. The survey data reinforced the peaks that the station faces on a daily basis as school traffic arrives and departs in a very short window.

It was observed on the site visit that **if the schools had staggered start and end times then could spread demand at the station** and assist crowd control management.

The graphs on the following pages show a sample day for the recent station survey undertaken at Tonbridge station by Network Rail. This was to gather data on passenger numbers using the station with temporary cameras being positioned in the ticket hall, Platform 1&2 staircase and Platform 3&4 staircase.

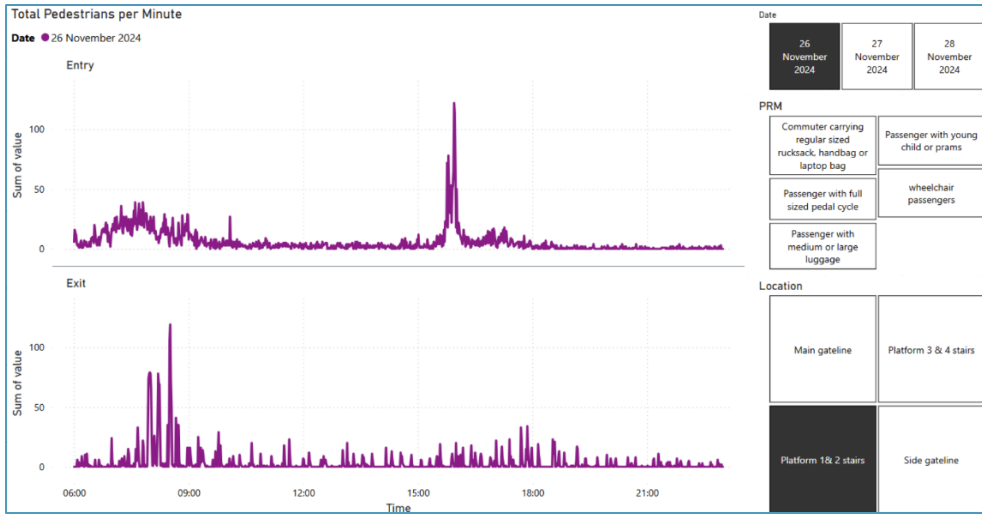


Figure 41 Total Pedestrians per minute, 26 November 2024 using platform 1&2 staircase.
Source: Network Rail.

In the AM peak the number of exits peaks at around **140 people per minute at around 0845** and in the PM peak the number of entries peaks at **170 people per minute at around 1550**.

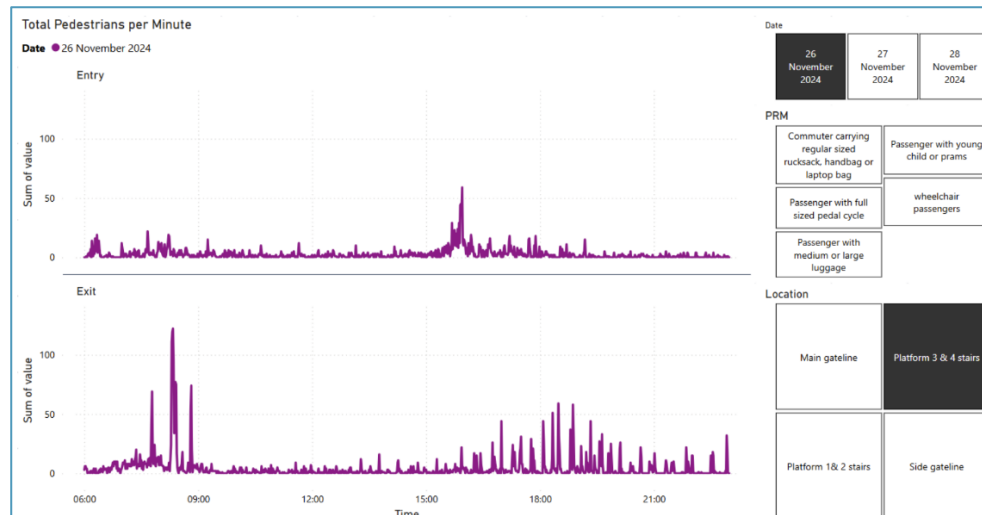


Figure 42 Total Pedestrians per minute, 26 November 2024 using platform 3&4 staircase.
Source: Network Rail.

The second set of graphs illustrates the total number of pedestrians per minute using the staircase to platforms 3&4. Along with inbound school traffic, the number of exits from this side of the station via the staircase equates to around **120 pedestrians per minute at around 0845**. In the opposite direction in the PM peak the maximum number of pedestrians per minute at around 1545 is **55 pedestrians per minute**.

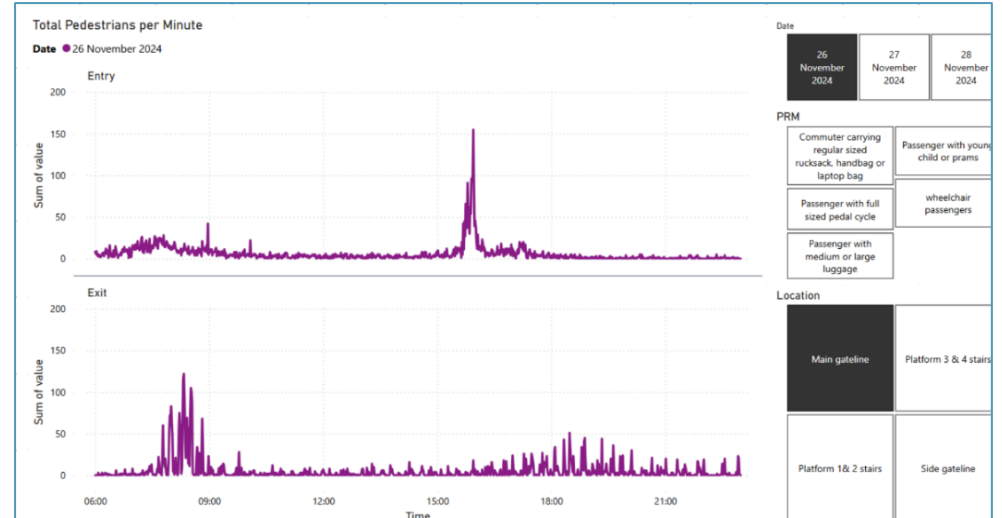


Figure 43 Total Pedestrians per minute, 26 November 2024 using the main gate line.
Source: Network Rail.

The final set of graphs shows pedestrians using the platform 1&2 staircase, mostly focused on exits. In the AM peak it equates to around **120 pedestrians per minute, showing students are mainly arriving from the east from services from the Hastings and Southeastern main line**. In the opposite direction in the PM peak there are around **140 pedestrians per minute at around 1530**.

Conclusions

This data represents how busy the station is at key times of the day. The key driver for this traffic is when the students arrive around the same time in the AM and PM peaks.

Spreading the loads of arrivals and departures at Tonbridge station could assist with crowd control and assisting with keeping the timetable performing reliably at these times of the day, when dwell times are extended causing primary and reactionary delays to other services on this and connecting corridors.

8.2 Options to increase station capacity

Station capacity may be increased in multiple ways. This section sets out some options that have been reviewed by Network Rail and could be developed further (subject to funding).

Option 1: Removing a section of wall from between the concourse and the bridge would allow additional gates to be fitted to the main gate line. This would depend on whether the existing column on the gate line could be safely removed.

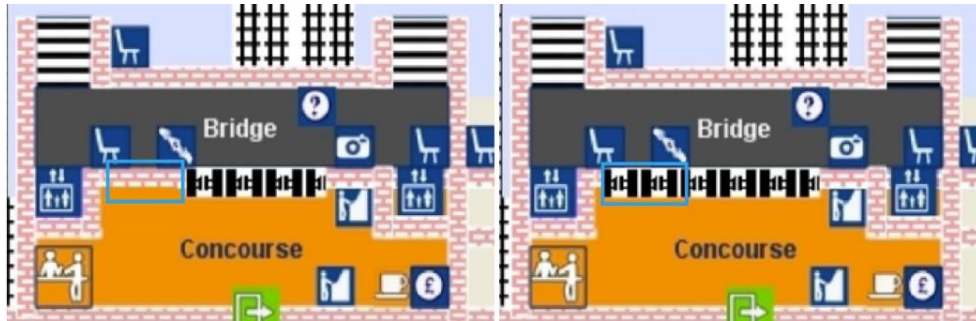


Figure 44 Introducing additional gates to the main gate line is one of the options looked at previously. Source Network Rail.

Option 2: Constructing a new southern entrance would increase gate line capacity. This would require a small bridge to be built between Waterloo Road and the south end of the footbridge. Southeastern platform staff at Tonbridge station also proposed this option. However, there is a height difference, and the landing of the potential side entrance would be directly onto the taxi rank on Waterloo Road (Figure 45/46). Further pedestrian modelling would be required to ensure congestion at the top of the staircases would not worsen.

This entrance could be used in the AM and PM peaks for school traffic times, reducing the pressure from the station entrance. A similar entrance exists at East Croydon station.

Option 3: Stakeholders also considered the idea of moving the ticket office into the space currently used by the FCB Coffee shop. This would open space for additional gate lines on the station concourse and could be explored in addition to Option 1.

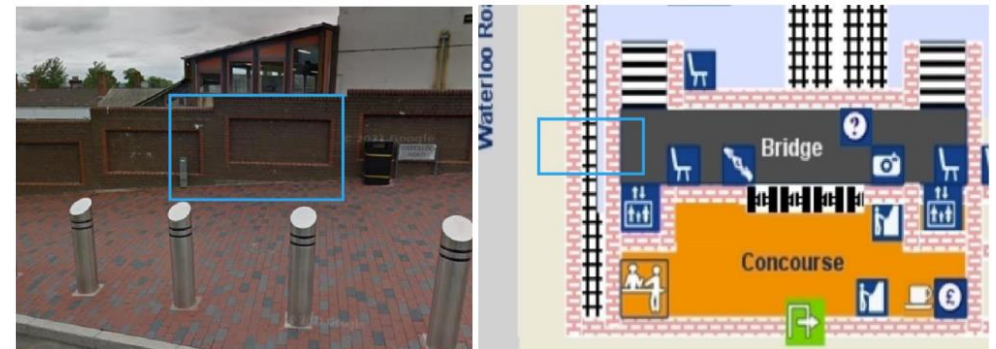


Figure 45 Option 2: Introducing an additional gate line at Tonbridge station and showing where this could potentially land on Waterloo Road by the taxi rank. Source: Google Maps/National Rail Enquiries.



Figure 46 Station map for East Croydon Station, showing the side entrance to the station, similar to the proposal at Tonbridge station. Source: National Rail Enquiries.

Option 4: A more strategic option was to consider a new footbridge that could land in the existing Barden Road car park (staff car park) to provide a direct north to south link from one side of the station to the other (Figure 47/48).

This would not necessarily solve all the issues experienced in the concourse but could provide another route to the platforms avoiding the stairs, when congested. The trade-off for this would be that the station staff car park on Barden Road would have a reduction in the number of spaces or would be removed. Therefore, another location would need to be sought to replace this car park. The landing of the staircase on the south side of the station would be on Waterloo Road where the taxi rank for the station is located.

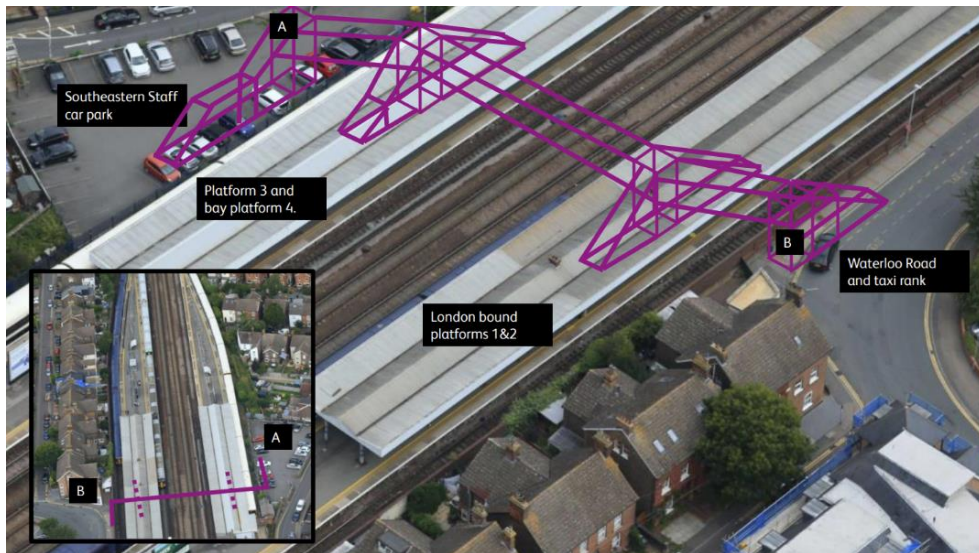


Figure 47 A 3D view of the potential locations of where lift shafts/staircases could be located for a footbridge linking the north and south sides of the railway station together. Source: Network Rail.

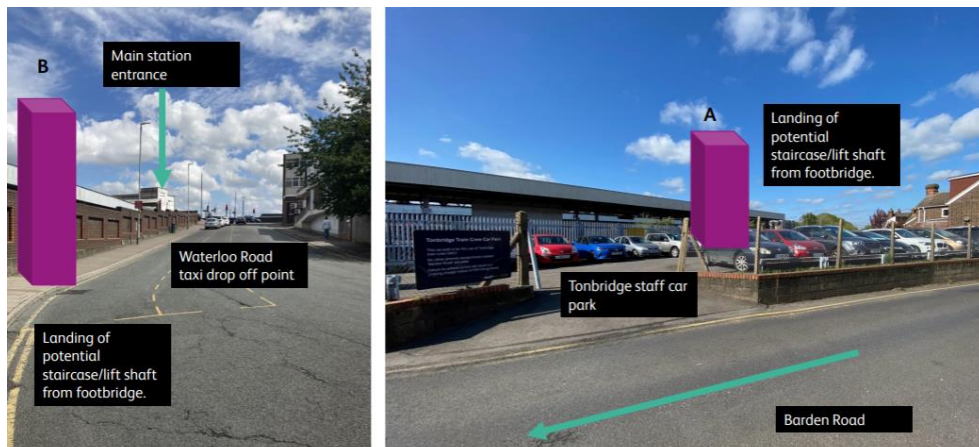


Figure 48 3D visualisation of what a footbridge from Barden Road to Waterloo Road could look like. This has been reviewed before by Network Rail. Source: Network Rail.

When these options were reviewed previously, it was suggested that they would be likely be unaffordable and generate insufficient benefits. As such, there were not developed further at the time. **Funding would be required to develop these options and they are unlikely to be affordable or generate enough benefits to have a business case.**

8.3 Station operations

Southeastern are replacing their rolling stock on the service from London Charing Cross to Tunbridge Wells, via Tonbridge; the Class 465 units (Networkers) are being replaced with class 375/377 units. The Class 465s have a maximum speed of 75mph, below the maximum line-speed of 90mph between Orpington and Tonbridge, which can cause the service to lose time on route and sometimes lose the timetable path (leading to longer dwell times). This can cause problems in the wider timetable as Tonbridge is a focal point for multiple routes.

The Class 375/377 units, (which are 90mph capable), should partially address the problem, but there are still likely to be reliability issues in the area due to the complexity of the service and volume of trains. An updated timetable plan for Tonbridge is being developed with Timetable Planning Rules (TPR) updates planned to be introduced for May 2025, and an upgrade of the Automatic Route Setting (ARS) signalling system is proposed for delivery in Control Period 7. These interventions will improve operations if funded, making the timetable more resilient for both passenger and freight operators on this corridor, noting the operational complexity here.

Future track and signalling renewals could open the opportunity to review the optimal infrastructure layout for the wider area, combined with a timetabling study to identify ways to increase reliability. Both options could identify ways to improve the wider performance of the railway. However, it is unlikely that this will result in any change to the availability, location, and design of the platforms themselves. In the longer term Southeastern is planning a wider rolling stock replacement programme that could have wider benefits for passengers and for wider network performance.

Most trains that serve Tonbridge station have a 1-1.5-minute dwell time. There are a few exceptions to this, with the Redhill shuttle having turnaround times between 4-4.5 minutes, and the AM & PM peak only services from the Medway Valley Line have approximately 6-8-minutes turnaround time.

Changes to the timetable planned in **May 2025**, will see more a more 'clockface' (regular) timetable. Changes to sectional running times on the South Eastern Main Line and Medway Valley Line will improve right time presentation and arrival times at each junction in the Tonbridge area going forward.

The planned rolling stock changes on services to Tunbridge Wells (**the replacement of the Networker fleet with Electrostar units**) should improve dwell times and make the timetable more resilient.

9 Recommendations & next steps

This document has explored areas for improvement around Tonbridge station. While these are framed in the context of strategic recommendations, they are considered separately to the level of service. Improvements, particularly around accessibility, signage, and car parking, have the potential to transform passengers' experience of the railway and open access to new people. In a restricted funding environment for major enhancements, improvements which have the potential to open the market should be pursued wherever possible.

This is not a task for the railway alone, and partners in local authority, government and the private sector have a valuable role to play in the development of strategic improvements. This SSP has shown that third party organisations play an important part in helping to ensure easier access to the railway. This document aims to build on such schemes to ensure a connected strategy across the rail industry and its partners to ensure that the railway offering to passengers is fit for purpose.

To develop the recommendations of this document further focus is required and, as such, recommendations set forward have been prioritised within the table below. These do not detract from the importance of other proposals put forward, rather these have the potential to further unlock passenger access to the railway and therefore help us to make the case for further improvements over time.

Recommendations summary table			
Strategic question alignment	Recommendation	Benefit	Next steps
What is the future land use strategy for Tonbridge and its interface with the railway station?	Operational land south of the station	Retaining existing railway land to maintain business as usual activities.	This area is likely to be required for operational use and so would not be available for redevelopment.
	Wider car parking strategy	Review of car parking in Tonbridge town centre.	Incorporating outputs of this study into the wider Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan once this has been agreed and ensuring that sufficient car parking capacity is provided for current and future rail passengers.
	Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan	Aligning outputs of this strategic station plan with the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan.	Continue to collaborate with TMBC to review land uses around the station and how growth can be accommodated at the railway station as part of new Local Plan. Explore the opportunity for an optimised car parking strategy (railway and non-railway) noting the need to maintain capacity for railway users.
How do we improve accessibility, facilities and first and last mile connectivity to the station?	Enhanced wayfinding / digital signage	Improve passenger experience when navigating within and between stations through signposting at accessible levels without obstruction. Encourage use of pedestrian and bus routes for shorter journeys.	Work with local authority, rail user groups, and operators to review wayfinding provision to ensure that it meets requirements. Where possible, work with existing schemes and projects to influence wayfinding design and provision.
	Encourage people to use Barden Road entrance/exit	Improved signage may encourage more passengers to use this side entrance of the station that provides step free access towards the town centre and high street. Raised planters may assist in encouraging more people to use this entrance and remove the reliance on the main entrance of the station being congested at peak times.	Would form part of a wider signage/enhanced wayfinding strategy that would incorporate all signage and interaction between different signage by or outside the station boundary. Engagement with Arch Co in relation to the buildings on this side of the station and improve the appearance of this area to make it more attractive to use this side entrance. Ultimately this would ease pressure on the front entrance of the station which experiences congestion at peak times.
	FCB Coffee Shop – water refills	Advertising free water refills to allow passengers to top up their water bottles. May also bring in new customers who may not have used the station before.	Southeastern working with FCB to understand whether this can be advertised to address a current facilities gap.

Recommendations summary table			
Strategic question alignment	Recommendation	Benefit	Next steps
	Cycle route improvements	Improving accessibility to the station.	Kent Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plan would support modal shift and accessibility to and from the station by bike. Interventions to improve walking, wheeling and cycling accessibility to the railway would be supported by Southeastern and Network Rail noting the high quality cycle parking facilities provided at the station.
	Improve accessible station facilities	Changing places/quiet space for passengers, providing a quiet space for anxious passengers	Further discussions with Southeastern. The vacant coffee shop on Platform 3 will soon have a new tenant so this space will become a new coffee outlet.
	Taxi rank improvements	Better shelter for waiting passengers	Discussions between Tonbridge and Malling Council, Kent County Council and Southeastern to explore options for improving existing shelter provision for passengers.
	Ticket Vending Machines	Additional ticket vending machine in the Barden Road entrance to help alleviate crowding in the peaks in the station ticket hall area	For Southeastern to look at whether it would be practical for an additional ticket vending machine to be located at the side entrance of the station. Queuing markings could also be provided to reduce impacts on pedestrian flows.
What station capacity improvements are required at Tonbridge station in the future?	Staggered start/end times for Tonbridge schools	Spreading the demand of school traffic at the start and end of the day would assist with crowd control and gate line issues that are currently at the station.	Discussions with Southeastern, KCC and Kent CRP to explore opportunities to change school hours to remove burden on station staff at Tonbridge in the AM and PM peak.
	Develop options to increase station capacity	If school flows cannot be managed and passenger growth continues then interventions to the station might be required to increase capacity for all users.	Development of options including gateline extension, new entrances and new footbridges would require funding to progress and subsequently deliver. These are likely to be a medium-longer term priority and the need for intervention will be reviewed in the future.

Strategic Station Plan: Tonbridge

April 2025

V5.0



KENT

STRATEGIC PLANNING