

Annex 1 – Officer Response to South Eastern Rail Franchise Consultation

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation, extended to 30th June 2017. Please accept these comments as officer level responses on behalf of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. These will be considered by Members of the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board on 25th July.

In broad terms the Government's priorities reflect those set out in the Tonbridge and Malling Rail Manifesto published in September 2014 (copy attached for information). One of the priorities has been achieved, that the HS1 service stops at Snodland Station. The remainder are pertinent to the current consultation and are as follows:

- A fairer deal for passengers when fare increases are set;
- The new franchise must include peak and inter-peak Thameslink services from Maidstone East through Blackfriars and stations beyond. In addition, we would wish to see the inclusion of a true peak service to Cannon Street;
- Whilst acknowledging that it may not be practical to operate a service from Ashford we would still urge the restoration of the direct rail connections between Tonbridge and Gatwick and two an hour service during off-peak times;
- Extension of the services to large population bases in Kent, and also to the Medway Towns along the Medway Valley Line;
- The Tonbridge to Redhill and Gatwick line reintegrated into the Kent Franchise;
- Monitoring and performance separated from the classic service from the HS1 service.

The consultation document at 6.14 uses the Ashford-Tonbridge-Redhill-Reading route, currently operated under various operators as an example of a new route that '...could form part of a fast and frequent London orbital service..'. If this could see the reinstatement of the Tonbridge to Gatwick service, with improved frequency as part of the new franchise, this would be welcomed.

The potential to improve Thameslink services and link into new routes, such as the Elizabeth Line in 2018 would also align well with the manifesto, subject to there being a reinstatement of services on this line to the City, to address problems associated with rail heading.

Proposed improvements to station facilities, particularly car and cycle parking, customer service and communication, simpler and fair ticketing would also be welcomed in line with the manifesto.

Proposals to increase capacity on existing services by removing first class seating and introducing fewer stops at smaller stations on some peak services could potentially improve some customer's experience, but to the detriment of others.

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me in the first instance. Please acknowledge receipt.

Yours Faithfully,

Ian Bailey

Planning Policy Manager
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council