



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

**The Rt. Hon Grant Shapps MP**  
Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

18<sup>th</sup> November 2021

*Dear Grant,*

I am writing to you to make the case for Eastleigh to become the new headquarters of Great British Railways, the new public body to manage our railways.

### **Eastleigh as a Railway Town**

As you'll be aware, Eastleigh has a proud and impressive history as a railway town. Indeed, the town itself came into existence because of the railway which was built in 1838. The future growth of Eastleigh was intertwined with the growth of the carriage and locomotive works which were built in 1891 and 1909 respectively by London & South Western Railway (LSWR).

The development of the carriage works and the influx of LSWR workers transformed the tithing of 'Eastley', as recorded in the 1841 census, into a busy and bustling town. In 1892, a local board was formed to tackle the poor sanitation, unmade roads, absence of streetlights and non-existent rubbish collections which was chaired by the General Manager of the Carriage Works and in 1894, Eastleigh became a District Council so it could act as a proper municipal authority. This underlines Eastleigh's position as a true 'railway town' because it was the railway, and the carriage workers, that delivered major social improvements and lasting civic change.

The Eastleigh Works also played an important role in both World Wars but particularly World War II where it was heavily involved in the manufacture of munitions for war, parts for Blenheim Bombers and the production of Horsa Gliders for the D-Day airborne assault. This vital role is addressed by the author Bernard Darwin who said that:

*"I promised to say something of the enormous quantity of munition tasks which were added to the normal undertaking of these four Railway Works (Eastleigh, Brighton, Lancing and Ashford) ... here I think Eastleigh must have pride of place. Eastleigh which really and truly is a railway town, of which the whole life centres round the Works, where the Mayor and his Councillors are railwaymen."*

### **Levelling Up**

Like many historic railway towns, Eastleigh and particularly the town centre needs to be levelled up. Average earnings within Eastleigh are £629 lower than the England average and over £1,645 lower than the average for the South East. Locating Great British Railways HQ in Eastleigh would provide exciting new employment opportunities for local people as well as a major economic boost for the area.

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## A strategic location

Eastleigh has three mainline railway stations within the constituency. All three stations offer direct routes to London meanwhile Southampton Airport Parkway also has excellent connections to major cities in the Midlands and the North. Moreover, we also have Southampton Airport in close proximity and excellent motorway connections with the M3 and M27 if journeys cannot be made by rail.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that Eastleigh would serve to be the perfect home for Great British Railways. It combines both the strong historical association with the railway along with excellent transport links thereby making Eastleigh a very practical location for a head office. Furthermore, it is also in need of levelling up and locating the new headquarters here would serve as a powerful reminder that the Government is committed to levelling up all parts of the country.

Yours sincerely,

*Paul*

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Holmes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

**Paul Holmes MP**  
**Member of Parliament for Eastleigh**

All aboard at Eastleigh! 😊