

••• Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

The town of Tonbridge, set in the heart of West Kent, already has a lot going for it. There is the attractive conservation area to the north of the High Street crowned by the imposing 12 century Tonbridge Castle.



Just below the Castle, the River Medway meanders through the town providing a focus for recreation and riverside activities. Along the river frontage, new developments are springing up, changing a once down-at-heel area to one with smart flats, offices and a shiny new conference centre. In addition, a recent survey found that Tonbridge has more surface car parking than other similar towns making it an easy location for visits and tourism.

With all this happening, it might be surprising that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council is keen on securing even further investment in the town centre. But the need to ensure the retail sector remains competitive in the face of stiff competition from nearby Tunbridge Wells and the need to upgrade local community facilities and improve the local environmental quality of the town and its High Street, are pressures which the Borough Council knows cannot be ignored.

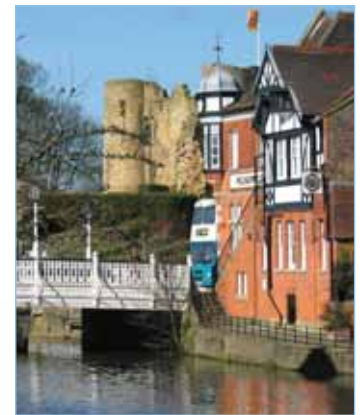
Significant progress has been made towards realising new development in the Angel area of the town. A master plan for the whole town centre was first drawn up with the assistance of lead consultants, David Lock Associates. Following extensive consultation within the local community, the master plan was adopted and the next step was the development of an area action plan for the town centre, drawn up as part of the Council's Local Development Framework.

A recent major step forward towards the realisation of the Council's plans for the town is the appointment of Sainsbury's as a development partner to the Council. Sainsbury's operates a major anchor store in the area but is keen to expand and develop its operations in the heart of Tonbridge with a brand new and larger store within a comprehensive mixed use development project.

More detailed plans are now being drawn up to provide for the needs of Sainsbury's, provide additional retail space to compliment the traditional High Street, new community and leisure facilities, residential accommodation and replacement car parking. One of the principles of the development is to take advantage of the waterside location and the opportunities to create some new and exciting public spaces.

Bringing forward such a major scheme in a relatively small market town like Tonbridge will bring significant rewards. The major bonus will be the significant uplift, both for the local environmental quality and its overall sense of place, and add a new dimension of retail activity to improve the economic vitality of this attractive town centre.

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River Medway in Tonbridge