

New electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Final Recommendations

March 2022

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A note on our mapping:

The maps shown in this report are for illustrative purposes only. Whilst best efforts have been made by our staff to ensure that the maps included in this report are representative of the boundaries described by the text, there may be slight variations between these maps and the large PDF map that accompanies this report, or the digital mapping supplied on our consultation portal. This is due to the way in which the final mapped products are produced. The reader should therefore refer to either the large PDF supplied with this report or the digital mapping for the true likeness of the boundaries intended. The boundaries as shown on either the large PDF map or the digital mapping should always appear identical.

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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament.¹ We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

2 The members of the Commission are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Susan Johnson OBE
- Peter Maddison QPM
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Jolyon Jackson CBE (Chief Executive)

What is an electoral review?

3 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed.
- How many wards or electoral divisions there should be, where their boundaries are and what they should be called.
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division.

4 When carrying out an electoral review the Commission has three main considerations:

- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
- Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

5 Our task is to strike the best balance between these three considerations when making our recommendations.

¹ Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

6 More detail regarding the powers that we have, as well as the further guidance and information about electoral reviews and review process in general, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why Tonbridge & Malling?

7 We are conducting a review of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council ('the Council') as some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. We describe this as 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

8 This electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

- The wards in Tonbridge & Malling are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the borough.

Our proposals for Tonbridge & Malling

9 Tonbridge & Malling should be represented by 44 councillors, 10 fewer than there are now.

10 Tonbridge & Malling should have 19 wards, five fewer than there are now.

11 The boundaries of all wards should change; none will stay the same.

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling.

How will the recommendations affect you?

13 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward, and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your ward name may also change.

14 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the borough or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Review timetable

15 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Tonbridge & Malling. We then held two periods of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the borough. The submissions received during consultation have informed our final recommendations.

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
20 April 2021	Number of councillors decided
11 May 2021	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
19 July 2021	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
5 October 2021	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
13 December 2021	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
1 March 2022	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and final recommendations

17 Legislation² states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors³ there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.

18 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create wards with exactly the same number of electors in each; we have to be flexible. However, we try to keep the number of electors represented by each councillor as close to the average for the council as possible.

19 We work out the average number of electors per councillor for each individual local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown on the table below.

	2021	2027
Electorate of Tonbridge & Malling	98,327	106,828
Number of councillors	44	44
Average number of electors per councillor	2,235	2,428

20 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All of our proposed wards for Tonbridge & Malling will have good electoral equality by 2027.

Submissions received

21 See Appendix C for details of the submissions received. All submissions may be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

22 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2027, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2022. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 9% by 2027. This increase is due to developments predominantly in the wards in the north-east of the borough.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

³ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

23 We considered the information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

Number of councillors

24 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council currently has 54 councillors. At an earlier stage of the review, we looked at evidence provided by the Council and concluded that decreasing this number by 11 would ensure the Council could carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

25 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 43 councillors during the first round of consultation, for example, 43 single-councillor wards or a mix of one-, two- and three-councillor wards.

26 The Commission, when proposing a council size, reserves the right to alter this number if it discovers that an alternative council size would provide a pattern of wards that better reflects its statutory criteria. During our analysis of the proposals for warding arrangements in the borough, we noted that 44 councillors would allow for a better balance of our statutory criteria in allowing for an urban-rural split for Tonbridge and the neighbouring parish of Hildenborough. Our draft recommendations therefore proposed 44 councillors across the borough.

27 We received one submission that referred to the number of councillors in response to our consultation on warding patterns. This submission stated that a reduction was not needed. This comment did not outline how the reductions would be achieved in terms of the decision-making responsibilities of the Council or make reference to our key criteria. We have therefore maintained 44 councillors for our final recommendations.

28 We have therefore based our final recommendations on a 44-councillor council.

Ward boundaries consultation

29 We received 87 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included four borough-wide proposals from the Council, the Conservative Group, the Green Party and a member of the public. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the borough.

30 The four borough-wide schemes proposed mixed patterns of one-, two- and three-councillor wards for Tonbridge & Malling. We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that all of the suggested patterns of wards

resulted in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the authority and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries.

31 Our draft recommendations also take into account local evidence that we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas we considered that the proposals did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries. Consequently, we have generally based our draft recommendations on the proposals from the Council, the Conservative Group, the Green Party and a member of the public, subject to modifications in some areas to provide clearer boundaries and reflect evidence of community identity received from other local interests.

32 Given the travel restrictions, and the social distancing, arising from the Covid-19 outbreak, there was a detailed virtual tour of Tonbridge & Malling. This helped to clarify issues raised in submissions and assisted in the construction of the proposed draft boundary recommendations.

33 Our draft recommendations were for seven three-councillor wards, 11 two-councillor wards and one single-councillor ward. We considered that our draft recommendations would provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

Draft recommendations consultation

34 We received 73 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. These included full borough comments from the Council, Conservative Group and Green Party. The majority of the other submissions focused on specific areas, particularly our proposals for Bourne ward and in Tonbridge.

35 Our final recommendations are based on the draft recommendations with a modification to the wards in Tonbridge based on the submissions received. We also made a minor modification to the boundaries of East and West Peckham, Mereworth & Wateringbury ward.

Final recommendations

36 Our final recommendations are for seven three-councillor wards, 11 two-councillor wards and one single-councillor ward. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

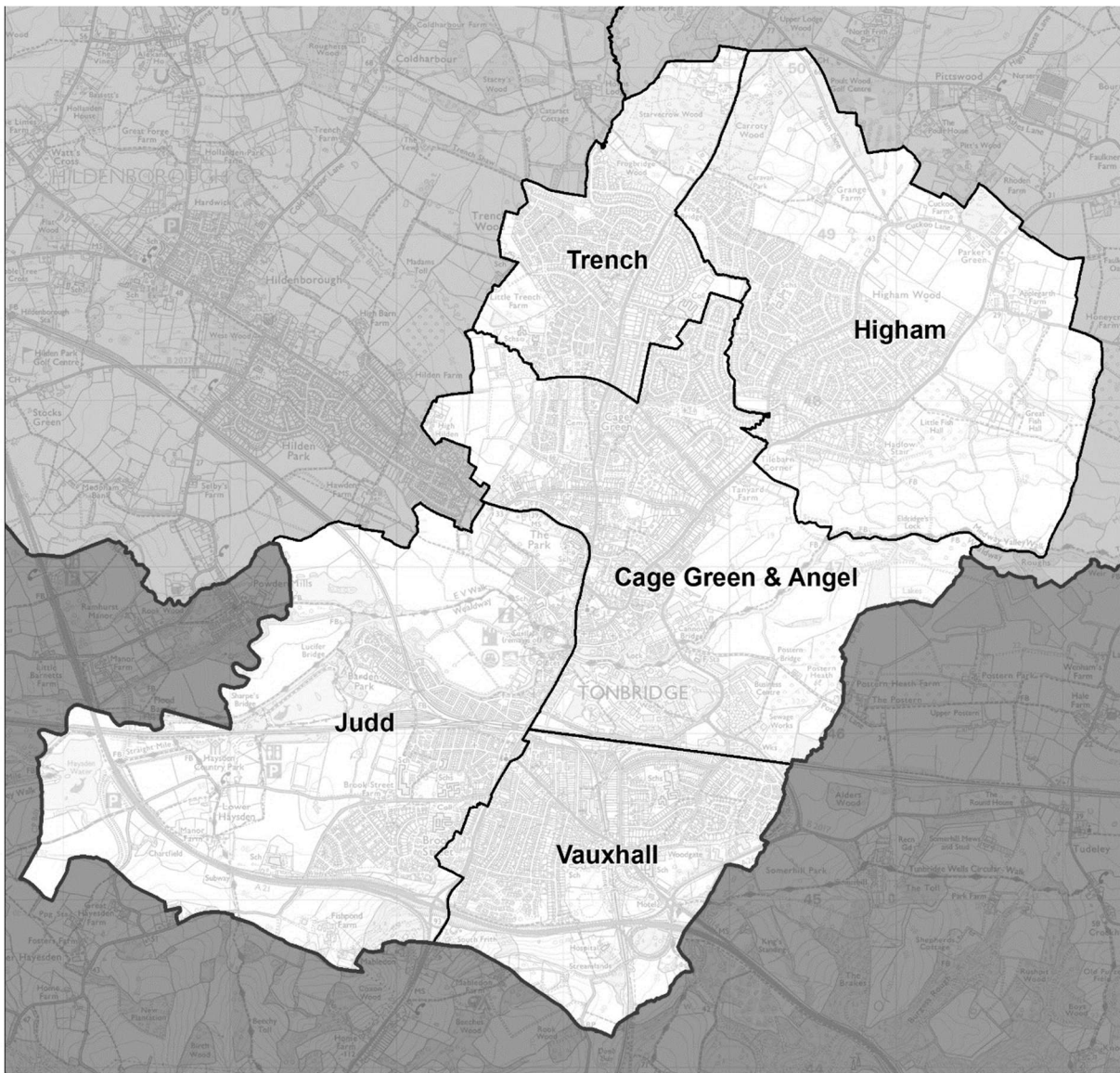
37 The tables and maps on pages 9–23 detail our final recommendations for each area of Tonbridge & Malling. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁴ criteria of:

- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

38 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 31 and on the large map accompanying this report.

⁴ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Tonbridge



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Cage Green & Angel	3	0%
Higham	2	5%
Judd	2	4%
Trench	2	-6%
Vauxhall	3	-7%

Cage Green & Angel and Judd

39 We received 18 submissions regarding these wards from the Council, Conservative Group, Liberal Democrats, Green Party, Tom Tugendhat MP, Councillor Botten, Councillor Boughton, Councillor Branson, Councillor Hood, Councillor Lark, Councillor Stepto, Tonbridge Town Team and six local residents. The Liberal Democrats, Green Party, Councillor Stepto and Councillor Hood

supported our draft recommendations. Councillor Hood further argued strongly against the changes proposed by the Council and Conservative Group.

40 The Council and Conservative Group proposed alternative boundaries for these two wards. They both proposed to use the High Street as the boundary between Judd and Cage Green & Angel wards, extending Cage Green & Angel ward southwards to take in Cannon Lane Retail Park, Tonbridge Retail Park and much of the town centre up to the Tonbridge–Paddock Wood railway line. They argued that communities to the east of the High Street are different from those to the west, with different issues and interests. They further argued that the A26 is a central focus for their proposed Cage Green & Angel ward, with linear communities stretching along the A26 and A227. They stated that the High Street is an established boundary in the town and would be identifiable for local residents. Finally, they argued that their proposal would unite the churches of St Peter and St Paul's, St Philip's and St Saviour's in Cage Green & Angel ward.

41 Councillor Botten, Councillor Boughton, Councillor Branson, Councillor Lark and Tom Tugendhat MP opposed our proposed Judd ward and supported the Council's and Conservative Group's proposed amendment. Five local residents also argued against our proposed Judd ward, stating that Cage Green & Angel ward should be extended southwards to include Cannon Lane Retail Park as this is where local residents access facilities. Many respondents also highlighted how flooding is not a uniting factor across the town centre, instead affecting the area west and east of the High Street differently.

42 Following careful consideration of the evidence received, we have been persuaded to make changes to Judd and Cage Green & Angel wards. As part of our final recommendations, we are adopting the boundaries proposed by the Council and Conservative Group. Under these proposals, Cage Green & Angel will now be allocated three councillors, while Judd will be represented by two councillors. We consider that this arrangement provides for the best balance of our statutory criteria and note that distinct areas, facilities and schools which have been identified to us as belonging in Judd ward, such as the Slade, the Barden Road area, Sussex Road Community Primary School and Slade Primary School, would still be located together in Judd ward. We do note the objections raised by some respondents to this proposed change. However, on balance, we consider the proposal put forward by the Council and Conservative Group to be the best balance of our statutory criteria.

43 The Conservative Group proposed that this amended ward should be named Cage Green & Angel to reflect those residents living in the southern part of the ward. They stated that Angel is a recognisable name for local residents, with the Angel Centre, former Angel Ground and current ground of Tonbridge Angels FC located in this ward. Tom Tugendhat MP and two residents supported this proposal. We have

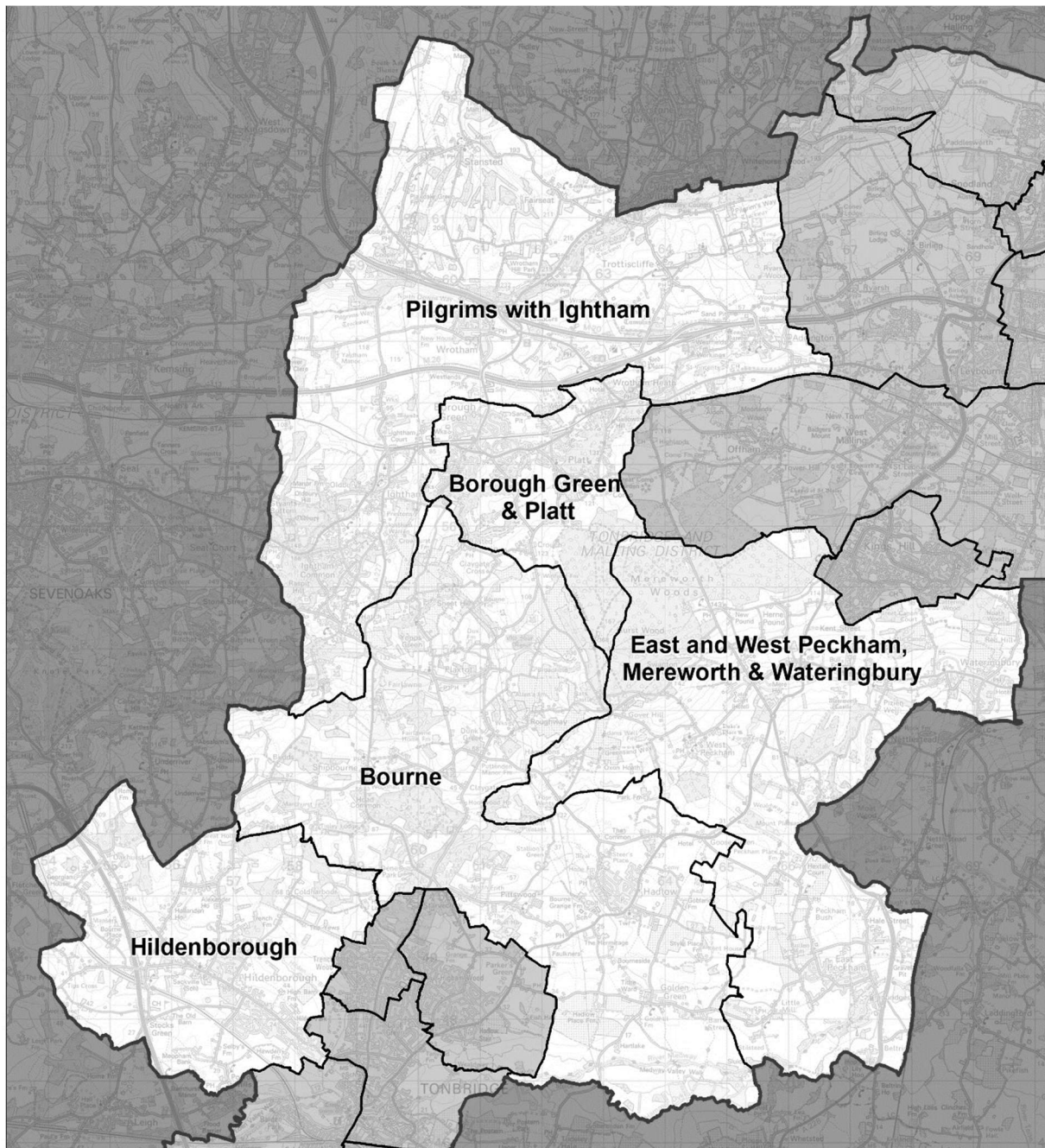
been persuaded to adopt this name change as we consider that this better reflects the communities present within this ward.

44 Cage Green & Angel ward and Judd ward are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2027, with forecast variances of 0% and 4% respectively.

Higham, Trench and Vauxhall

45 We received four submissions regarding this area from the Council, Conservative Group, Liberal Democrats and Councillor Stepto. All of these submissions supported our draft recommendations, and we therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Higham, Trench and Vauxhall wards as final.

Western Parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Borough Green & Platt	2	-1%
Bourne	2	-7%
East and West Peckham, Mereworth & Wateringbury	2	10%
Hildenborough	2	-5%
Pilgrims with Ightham	2	0%

Borough Green & Platt and Bourne

46 We received 19 submissions regarding this area from the Council, Borough Green Parish Council, Hadlow Parish Council, Platt Parish Council, Plaxtol Parish Council, Shipbourne Parish Council, Councillor Taylor and 12 residents.

47 The Council, Hadlow Parish Council and a local resident supported our draft recommendations for this ward. Borough Green Parish Council, Platt Parish Council, Plaxtol Parish Council, Shipbourne Parish Council, Councillor Taylor and nine residents argued against our draft recommendations.

48 Shipbourne Parish Council proposed an alternative warding pattern in this area to reflect the community links between Plaxtol, Shipbourne, Borough Green and Platt parishes. They proposed to link together these four parishes with Offham parish, stating that Offham shares infrastructure and the rural outlook of the other parishes in this proposed ward. They argued that Shipbourne and Plaxtol parishes are not linked to Hadlow parish, and that these two areas use different facilities, public transport, and face different local issues. In order to accommodate this change, they further proposed two new wards. One ward would group together the parishes of West Malling, East Malling & Larkfield and Watlingbury, with an electoral variance of 11%, and the other proposed ward would group Mereworth, West Peckham, East Peckham and Hadlow parishes, with an electoral variance of -6%. This proposal was supported by Borough Green Parish Council, Platt Parish Council and Plaxtol Parish Council.

49 Councillor Taylor proposed a slightly different arrangement and argued that the current Borough Green & Long Mill ward, containing the parishes of Borough Green, Platt, Plaxtol and Shipbourne, should be retained, and that Ightham parish should be added into this ward to reflect community ties and improve electoral equality. They further proposed that Addington, Stansted, Trottiscliffe and Wrotham parishes could be joined together in a single-member ward. While a modified Borough Green & Long Mill ward would have an electoral variance of 7% with the addition of Ightham, the ward of Addington, Stansted, Trottiscliffe and Wrotham parishes would have a variance of 31%.

50 A local resident argued against the proposal put forward by Councillor Taylor, stating that Ightham parish should not join Borough Green & Long Mill ward due to the extensive knock-on changes, such as artificially joining Offham parish with Addington parish across the A20 in order to improve the electoral equality of a ward containing Addington, Stansted, Trottiscliffe and Wrotham parishes.

51 We looked carefully at the alternative proposals put forward to us. We considered that Councillor Taylor's proposal, while reflective of community evidence, would cause extensive knock-on changes across the borough and would not provide for good levels of electoral equality for a ward containing Addington, Stansted,

Trottiscliffe and Wrotham parishes. We were therefore not persuaded to adopt this proposal.

52 We considered the proposal from Shipbourne Parish Council to be well evidenced and note that it is supported by Borough Green, Platt and Plaxtol parish councils and local residents. However, when we considered this proposal within the wider context of the other eight parishes impacted by this scheme, we did not consider that the extensive knock-on changes would reflect community evidence we have received from other respondents. Offham Parish Council stated that they supported our draft recommendations, as did the parishes of East Malling & Larkfield and West Malling, with our proposals linking all three of these parishes together in a single ward. Additionally, residents of Wateringbury parish argued strongly against linking Wateringbury parish with East Malling & Larkfield, stating that these two areas face different local issues and that they are strongly connected to Mereworth parish. Due to the extensive support we received for both East Malling, West Malling & Offham and East Peckham, Mereworth & Wateringbury wards, we were not persuaded to reconfigure these two wards.

53 We looked at alternative options for Shipbourne and Plaxtol that would allow for minimal changes to other areas, including not splitting Mereworth and Wateringbury parishes. We considered splitting our proposed Bourne ward to separate Shipbourne and Plaxtol parishes from Hadlow parish. A single-councillor ward containing only Hadlow parish would have an electoral variance of 30%. Adding East Peckham parish to Hadlow parish would result in -19%, and Hadlow, East Peckham and West Peckham parishes would be -15%. We were not persuaded that we had received sufficiently compelling evidence to justify such high electoral variances and we are therefore not adopting any of these options. As previously discussed, placing together Shipbourne, Plaxtol, Borough Green and Platt parishes in a ward would result in high levels of electoral equality, with a variance of -16%, necessitating bringing another parish into this ward. The two options we received, adding in Ightham or Offham, would both achieve good electoral equality for this ward yet would split neighbouring wards which are supported and reflect our statutory criteria.

54 Therefore, after considering all of the evidence we have received, we have not been persuaded to adopt the proposals put forward by Shipbourne Parish Council or Councillor Taylor. While we are sympathetic to these proposals and note the strong community links in this area, we consider that grouping together the four parishes of Borough Green, Platt, Plaxtol and Shipbourne at the expense of the other eight parishes located in the central area of the borough would not reflect community evidence in these other parishes and would also result in a ward with a high electoral variance.

55 As discussed in paragraph 60, West Peckham Parish Council, Mereworth Parish Council and a local resident proposed that West Peckham should be moved

from Bourne ward to East Peckham, Mereworth & Wateringbury ward. We have been persuaded to make this change. Bourne ward will now contain the parishes of Shipbourne, Plaxtol and Hadlow.

56 Subject to this change, we confirm our draft recommendations for Borough Green & Platt ward and Bourne ward as final.

East and West Peckham, Mereworth & Wateringbury

57 We received 20 submissions regarding this ward from the Council, East Peckham Parish Council, Mereworth Parish Council, Shipbourne Parish Council, Wateringbury Parish Council, West Peckham Parish Council and 14 residents.

58 The Council, Wateringbury Parish Council and 13 residents supported our draft recommendations for a ward containing East Peckham, Mereworth and Wateringbury parishes, stating that these parishes share schools and churches and have a strong community cohesion. Of these, six residents also stated that Wateringbury should not be linked to either East Malling or West Malling due to the urban-rural split between these areas and the lack of close community links. Respondents further elaborated on the strong church links between East Peckham, Mereworth and Wateringbury parishes.

59 As discussed in paragraph 48, Shipbourne Parish Council proposed grouping Wateringbury parish in a ward with East Malling & Larkfield and West Malling parishes. This would result in a variance of 11%. Due to the support received for linking together Mereworth and Wateringbury parishes in the same ward, as well as the arguments against grouping Wateringbury parish in a ward with East Malling & Larkfield or West Malling parishes, we have not been convinced to adopt this change. We consider that placing Wateringbury parish in a ward with Mereworth parish best reflects the community evidence we have received and is the best balance of our statutory criteria.

60 West Peckham Parish Council, Mereworth Parish Council and a local resident proposed that West Peckham parish be added into this ward. They stated that these parishes share facilities and community activities, as well as local issues. Additionally, the resident argued that East Peckham parish should be include in Bourne ward in order to allow West Peckham parish to be grouped in a ward with Mereworth and Wateringbury parishes. East Peckham Parish Council also stated that East Peckham parish should remain in a ward with Hadlow. Placing West Peckham parish in a ward with East Peckham, Mereworth and Wateringbury parishes would result in an electoral variance of 10%. Without East Peckham parish, this would improve to 8%. Following careful consideration of the evidence, we have been persuaded to include West Peckham parish in a ward with East Peckham, Mereworth and Wateringbury parishes. We have, however, not been persuaded to place East Peckham parish in Bourne ward due to the support for our draft

recommendations from local residents, who argued that residents share schools, churches and facilities across East Peckham, Mereworth and Wateringbury.

61 While the name proposed for this ward as part of our draft recommendations received support (East Peckham, Mereworth & Wateringbury), we consider that adding 'West Peckham' into this name would make this ward name too long. We are therefore naming this ward East and West Peckham, Mereworth & Wateringbury; we consider that this is clear for local residents while still reflecting the communities present within this ward.

62 Subject to these amendments, we therefore confirm East and West Peckham, Mereworth & Wateringbury ward as final. This ward is forecast to have a good level of electoral equality by 2027, with a variance of 10%.

Hildenborough

63 We received six submissions regarding this ward from the Council, Conservative Group, Green Party, Liberal Democrats, Hildenborough Parish Council and a local resident.

64 All of these respondents supported our draft recommendations. However, the Green Party proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Hildenborough ward and Judd ward, in order to ensure that all of Tonbridge School's sports facilities are placed within the same ward. We have adopted this change and the boundary will now not extend beyond the end of Watersfield Lane.

65 Subject to this minor amendment, we can confirm our draft recommendations for Hildenborough ward as final.

Pilgrims with Ightham

66 We received 10 submissions regarding this ward from the Council, Addington Parish Council, Ightham Parish Council, Stansted Parish Council, Trottiscliffe Parish Council, Wrotham Parish Council and four residents.

67 The Council, Addington Parish Council, Trottiscliffe Parish Council, Wrotham Parish Council and a local resident supported our draft recommendations.

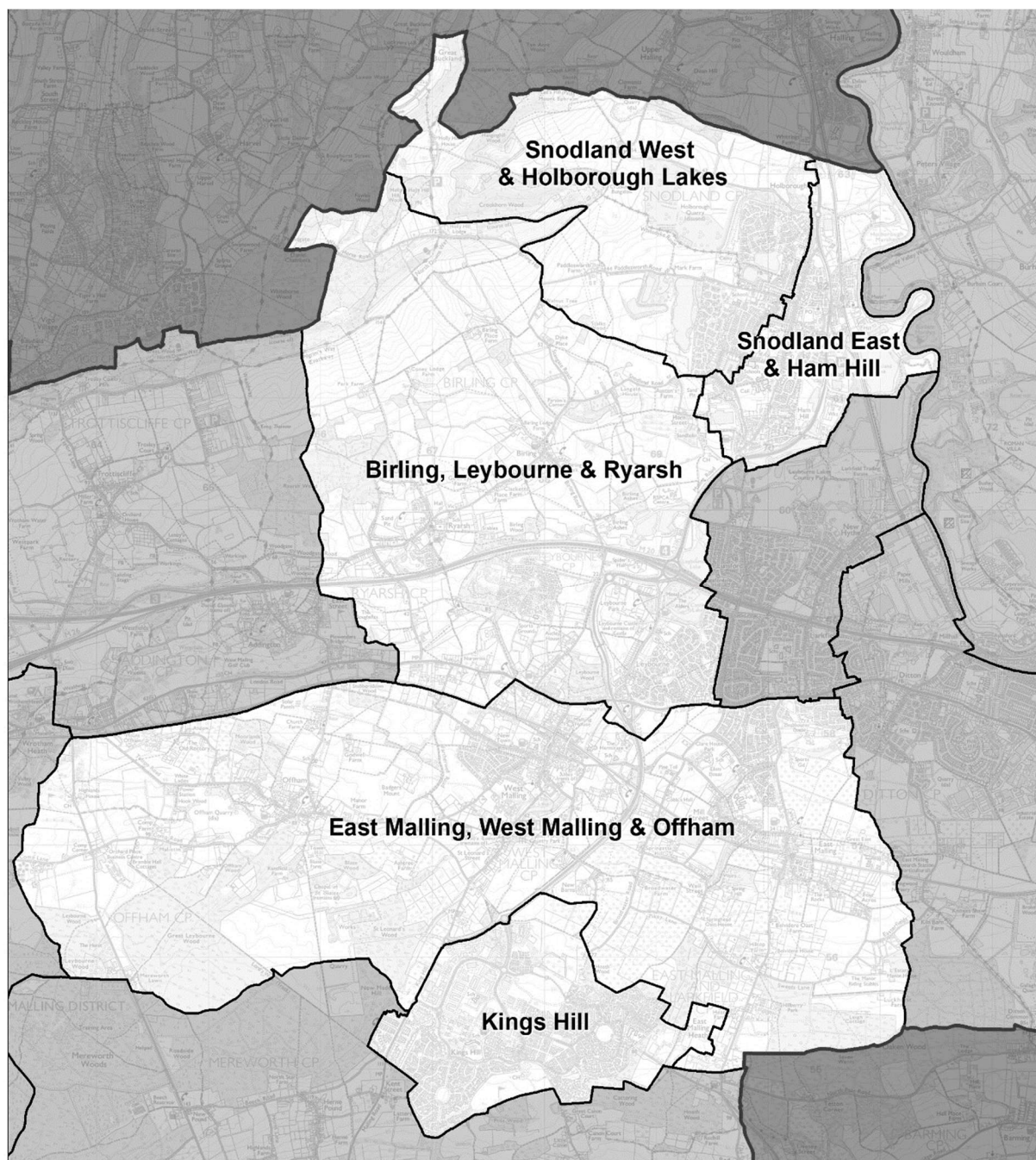
68 Two local residents stated that this proposed ward was too large and took in different communities. One of these residents also stated that Ightham parish is more closely linked to the area to the south. While we acknowledge that Pilgrims with Ightham ward is a large ward containing five different parishes, we consider that connectivity is good within this ward, with multiple crossings across both the M20 and M26, and that these five parishes share a similar outlook and local issues. Additionally, removing Ightham parish would result in an electoral variance of 31%

for this ward. We therefore consider that our draft recommendations offer the best balance of our statutory criteria.

69 Ightham Parish Council and Stansted Parish Council both made no comment on the proposed boundaries, but instead commented on the proposed name of Pilgrims with Ightham. Ightham Parish Council stated that Pilgrims with Ightham is not appropriate due to religious connotations and offered North Downs West as an alternative. We consider that the Pilgrims' Way is an identifiable landmark in the local area and as such provides an appropriate ward name. Stansted Parish Council argued that as the Pilgrims' Way does not pass through Stansted parish, Stansted should also be included in the ward name, making the ward name Pilgrims with Ightham & Stansted. Following careful consideration of the evidence received, we have not been persuaded to make changes to the name Pilgrims with Ightham. While we note that the Pilgrims' Way does not pass through Stansted parish, it also does not pass through Addington parish. Ightham parish is represented in the ward name as it is the largest centre of population within the ward.

70 Therefore, we confirm our draft recommendations for Pilgrims with Ightham as final.

Central Parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Birling, Leybourne & Ryarsh	2	1%
East Malling, West Malling & Offham	3	-3%
Kings Hill	3	9%
Snodland East & Ham Hill	2	-6%
Snodland West & Holborough Lakes	2	-8%

Birling, Leybourne & Ryarsh

71 We received five submissions regarding this ward from the Council, Birling Parish Council, Ryarsh Parish Council and two local residents. The Council and both residents supported our draft recommendations, stating that this ward reflects the links between Birling parish and Ryarsh parish.

72 Birling Parish Council and Ryarsh Parish Council both argued against our draft recommendations, stating that while Birling and Ryarsh parishes are indeed closely linked, the inclusion of the more populated Leybourne parish would overwhelm these two smaller parishes. They instead suggested that Birling and Ryarsh parishes be placed in Pilgrims with Ightham ward, arguing that the rural parishes of Addington and Trottscliffe have similar issues to Birling and Ryarsh.

73 A warding arrangement which placed Birling parish and Ryarsh parish in Pilgrims with Ightham ward would result in an electoral variance of -12% for this ward. This would create a knock-on effect for Leybourne parish, which would either have to join East Malling, West Malling & Offham ward or become a single-member ward. Both of these options result in high levels of electoral inequality, with electoral variances of 49% and -22% respectively. We were not convinced that the evidence provided justifies such a high level of electoral inequality and are therefore not adopting this change as part of our final recommendations.

74 A local resident suggested naming this ward Leybourne, Birling & Ryarsh to reflect Leybourne as the largest centre of population in this ward. However, we were not convinced to make this change due to the support for the name proposed in our draft recommendations from the Council and another local resident.

75 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Birling, Leybourne & Ryarsh as final.

East Malling, West Malling & Offham

76 We received nine submissions regarding this ward from the Council, East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council, Offham Parish Council, Shipbourne Parish Council, West Malling Parish Council, Councillor Stapleton and three residents.

77 The Council, East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council, Offham Parish Council, West Malling Parish Council, Councillor Stapleton and two residents supported our draft recommendations to link together East Malling, West Malling and Offham parishes. They outlined the common interests, shared facilities and strong bus and road links between these parishes.

78 Shipbourne Parish Council proposed an alternative arrangement which would link East Malling with Watringbury and Offham with Borough Green, Platt, Shipbourne and Plaxtol. As discussed in paragraph 59 we were not persuaded to

place East Malling in a ward with Wateringbury and are therefore not adopting this change as part of our final recommendations.

79 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for East Malling, West Malling & Offham as final.

Kings Hill

80 We received six submissions regarding this ward from the Council, Councillor Stapleton and four local residents.

81 The Council, Councillor Stapleton and two local residents supported our draft recommendations. Another resident stated that Kings Hill sports park should be placed in Kings Hill ward. The current Kings Hill ward excludes this area; however, this area is included in Kings Hill ward as part of our draft recommendations. We are therefore not proposing any changes to this ward as part of our final recommendations.

82 We confirm our draft recommendations for Kings Hill as final.

Snodland East & Ham Hill and Snodland West & Holborough Lakes

83 We received three submissions regarding this area from the Council and two local residents. All three submissions supported our draft recommendations. We are therefore not proposing any changes to this ward as part of our final recommendations. We confirm our recommendations for Snodland East & Ham Hill and Snodland West & Holborough Lakes as final.

Eastern Parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Aylesford North & North Downs	3	8%
Aylesford South & Ditton	3	0%
Larkfield	3	2%
Walderslade	1	4%

Aylesford North & North Downs and Aylesford South & Ditton

84 We received four submissions regarding this area from the Council, Conservative Group and two local residents.

85 The Council and a local resident supported our draft recommendations for both of these wards; however, the Council did reiterate their preference for their original proposal.

86 The Council and Conservative Group proposed to rename this ward to North Downs, stating that the name Aylesford North with Burham, Eccles & Wouldham is too cumbersome. A local resident offered the name "Aylesford North, Burham and Wouldham, Eccles and Blue Bell Hill"; however, they also suggested the shorter names of Aylesford North and the North Downs and Aylesford and the Downs. Following consideration of the evidence received, we have been persuaded to name this ward Aylesford North & North Downs. While we agree with the Council and the Conservative Group that North Downs would be a suitable name, the ward of Aylesford South & Ditton utilises the cardinal directions within the ward name that would ideally need to be complemented by Aylesford North. We are therefore proposing to retain Aylesford North within the ward name and concur that this will be more identifiable for local electors. We are therefore naming this ward Aylesford North & North Downs.

87 Following this name change, we confirm our draft recommendations for Aylesford North & North Downs and Aylesford South & Ditton as final.

Larkfield

88 We received four submissions regarding this ward from the Council, East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council, Councillor Stapleton and a local resident.

89 The Council, East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council and Councillor Stapleton all supported our draft recommendations. A local resident stressed the importance of maintaining the current boundary between the current Larkfield South and East Malling wards, which our draft recommendations retained. We are therefore not proposing any changes to our draft recommendations.

90 We confirm our draft recommendations for Larkfield ward as final.

Walderslade

91 We received three submissions regarding this ward from the Council and two local residents. The Council and a local resident supported our draft recommendations for Walderslade ward.

92 A local resident agreed that Walderslade should have its own ward; however, they suggested that Blue Bell Hill village be added into Walderslade ward as they

share many of the same issues, such as lack of facilities and motorway access. Adding Blue Bell Hill into Walderslade ward would result in an electoral variance of 35%. We do not consider that the evidence provided justifies such a high level of electoral inequality and are therefore not proposing to adopt this change.

93 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Walderslade ward as final.

Conclusions

94 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality in Tonbridge & Malling, referencing the 2021 and 2027 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2021	2027
Number of councillors	44	44
Number of electoral wards	19	19
Average number of electors per councillor	2,235	2,428
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	1	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendations

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council should be made up of 44 councillors serving 19 wards representing one single-councillor ward, 11 two-councillor wards and seven three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

You can also view our final recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

95 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that

each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

96 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

97 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Aylesford and Snodland.

98 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Aylesford parish.

Final recommendations

Aylesford Parish Council should comprise 20 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Aylesford North	3
Aylesford South	7
Blue Bell Hill	2
Eccles	3
Walderslade	5

99 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Snodland parish.

Final recommendations

Snodland Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Snodland East & Ham Hill	8
Snodland West & Holborough Lakes	7

What happens next?

44 We have now completed our review of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. The recommendations must now be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2023.

Equalities

45 The Commission has looked at how it carries out reviews under the guidelines set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It has made best endeavours to ensure that people with protected characteristics can participate in the review process and is sufficiently satisfied that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.

Appendices

Appendix A

Final recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aylesford North & North Downs	3	6,406	2,135	-4%	7,889	2,630	8%
2	Aylesford South & Ditton	3	6,871	2,290	2%	7,254	2,418	0%
3	Birling, Leybourne & Ryarsh	2	4,633	2,317	4%	4,886	2,443	1%
4	Borough Green & Platt	2	4,514	2,257	1%	4,783	2,392	-1%
5	Bourne	2	4,203	2,102	-6%	4,498	2,249	-7%
6	Cage Green & Angel	3	6,844	2,281	2%	7,276	2,425	0%
7	East and West Peckham, Mereworth & Wateringbury	2	4,971	2,486	11%	5,349	2,675	10%
8	East Malling, West Malling & Offham	3	6,502	2,167	-3%	7,072	2,357	-3%
9	Higham	2	4,760	2,380	7%	5,097	2,549	5%

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
10	Hildenborough	2	4,321	2,161	-3%	4,612	2,306	-5%
11	Judd	2	4,752	2,376	6%	5,027	2,514	4%
12	Kings Hill	3	6,509	2,170	-3%	7,916	2,639	9%
13	Larkfield	3	6,966	2,322	4%	7,430	2,477	2%
14	Pilgrims with Ightham	2	4,563	2,282	2%	4,861	2,431	0%
15	Snodland East & Ham Hill	2	4,282	2,141	-4%	4,556	2,278	-6%
16	Snodland West & Holborough Lakes	2	4,296	2,148	-4%	4,490	2,245	-8%
17	Trench	2	4,246	2,123	-5%	4,559	2,280	-6%
18	Vauxhall	3	6,353	2,118	-5%	6,738	2,246	-7%
19	Walderslade	1	2,335	2,335	4%	2,535	2,535	4%
Totals		44	98,327	-	-	106,828	-	-
Averages		-	-	2,235	-	-	2,428	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Outline map



Number	Ward name
1	Aylesford North & North Downs
2	Aylesford South & Ditton
3	Birling, Leybourne & Ryarsh
4	Borough Green & Platt
5	Bourne
6	Cage Green & Angel
7	East and West Peckham, Mereworth & Wateringbury
8	East Malling, West Malling & Offham

9	Higham
10	Hildenborough
11	Judd
12	Kings Hill
13	Larkfield
14	Pilgrims with Ightham
15	Snodland East & Ham Hill
16	Snodland West & Holborough Lakes
17	Trench
18	Vauxhall
19	Walderslade

A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/tonbridge-and-malling

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:

www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/tonbridge-and-malling

Local Authority

- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Political Groups

- Tonbridge & Malling Conservative Group
- Tonbridge & Malling Green Party
- Tonbridge & Malling Liberal Democrats

Councillors

- Councillor J. Botten, Councillor M. Boughton & Councillor J. Lark (TMBC)
- Councillor V. Branson (TMBC)
- Councillor M. Hood (TMBC)
- Councillor N. Stapleton (TMBC)
- Councillor P. Stepto (Kent County Council)
- Councillor M. Taylor (two submissions) (TMBC)

Members of Parliament

- Tom Tugendhat MP (Tonbridge and Malling)

Local Organisations

- Tonbridge Town Team

Parish and Town Councils

- Addington Parish Council
- Birling Parish Council
- Borough Green Parish Council
- East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council
- East Peckham Parish Council
- Hadlow Parish Council
- Hildenborough Parish Council

- Ightham Parish Council
- Mereworth Parish Council
- Offham Parish Council
- Platt Parish Council
- Plaxtol Parish Council
- Ryarsh Parish Council
- Shipbourne Parish Council
- Stansted Parish Council
- Trottiscliffe Parish Council
- Wateringbury Parish Council
- West Malling Parish Council
- West Peckham Parish Council
- Wrotham Parish Council

Local Residents

- 40 local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority.
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. We only take account of electors registered specifically for local elections during our reviews.
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents

Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

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