

# **Electoral Review of Tonbridge & Malling**

Response to warding arrangements consultation

June 2012



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## n Version Control

| Version | Date         | Author/s  | Brief description of changes                               |
|---------|--------------|-----------|--|
| 1.0     | 23 May 2012  | R Beesley | Version prepared for Electoral Review Working Group.       |
| 2.0     | 11 June 2012 | R Beesley | Following consideration by Electoral Review Working Group. |
|         |              |           |  |
|         |              |           |  |

## n Maps

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# Executive Summary

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1. This document is the formal response regarding the draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling set out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).
2. We acknowledge the need to adhere to the three statutory criteria, and recognise that the importance of setting boundaries that do not break local ties and the need to provide effective and convenient local government carry equal weight to the need to deliver electoral equality for voters.
3. We **do not agree** with the LGBCE's recommendation to disregard the major residential developments of Peters Village and Preston Hall from the electorate forecasts. These sites will be brought to development by 2018, as explained in our original electorate forecasts and subsequent conversations with the LGBCE. Disregarding them will result in an electoral scheme that is not fit for purpose, and which will require another full review within 5 years. We, along with Trenport, the NHS and RBLI, consider this unacceptable.
4. We **do not agree** with the LGBCE recommendation that Tonbridge & Malling should be served by 53 Councillors rather than 54. We consider that our proposed warding arrangement, based on 54 Councillors, provides better electoral equality and better community representation than the LGBCE recommendation.
5. We **do not agree** with the LGBCE's recommendation to split existing historic parishes for the sake of providing some level of electoral equality. To do so ignores existing communities and severs local ties. It also prevents effective and convenient local government, both from the perspective of the elector and of the councillors representing them.
6. The LGBCE have proposed 24 wards served by 53 Councillors. We propose 24 wards served by 54 Councillors. A summary of the LGBCE wards is set out overleaf.

**Table 1.** Summary of LGBCE wards and TMBC position thereon.

| Ward                        | Comparison to TMBC proposal  | Summary of TMBC position   |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Castle                      | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> move of properties from Castle to Judd.<br><b>Do not support</b> move of properties from Castle to Medway.   |
| Judd                        | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> move of properties from Castle to Judd.  |
| Medway                      | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> move of properties from Castle to Medway.<br>Whilst we prefer our original submission with regards the Cage Green / Medway boundary, we are <b>content</b> to accept the LGBCE change if they consider it is a better option.  |
| Cage Green                  | Change from TMBC submission. | Whilst we prefer our original submission with regards the Cage Green / Medway boundary, we are <b>content</b> to accept the LGBCE change if they consider it is a better option.   |
| Higham                      | Same as TMBC submission.     | <b>Support</b> the proposed ward.  |
| Trench                      | Same as TMBC submission.     | <b>Support</b> the proposed ward.  |
| Vauxhall                    | Same as TMBC submission.     | <b>Support</b> the proposed ward.  |
| Mereworth & Wateringbury    | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> this proposal because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Do not support the artificial joining of Wateringbury with neighbouring parishes.</li> <li>(ii) Do not support the splitting of Addington parish.</li> <li>(iii) Electoral variance is worse than under the TMBC proposals.</li> </ul> |
| Downs                       | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> this proposal because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Do not support the splitting of Addington parish.</li> <li>(ii) Do not support the splitting of Ryarsh parish.</li> <li>(iii) A single Councillor would be required to serve four parishes.</li> </ul>                                 |
| Hildenborough               | Same as TMBC submission.     | <b>Support</b> the proposed ward.  |
| Borough Green & Long Mill   | Same as TMBC submission.     | <b>Support</b> the proposed ward.  |
| Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted | Same as TMBC submission.     | <b>Support</b> the proposed ward.  |
| Hadlow & East Peckham       | Same as TMBC submission.     | <b>Support</b> the proposed ward.  |

| Ward  | Comparison to TMBC proposal  | Summary of TMBC position   |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Snodland West &amp; Holborough Lakes</b> | Change from TMBC submission. | We consider that the TMBC submission of January 2012 provides a better warding arrangement for Snodland with better electoral equality. However, we are <b>content</b> to accept the LGBCE change if they consider it is a better option in this case.   |
| <b>Snodland East &amp; Ham Hill</b>         | Change from TMBC submission. | We consider that the TMBC submission of January 2012 provides a better warding arrangement for Snodland with better electoral equality. However, we are <b>content</b> to accept the LGBCE change if they consider it is a better option in this case.   |
| <b>Burham, Eccles and Wouldham</b>          | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> this proposal because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Peters Village development has been disregarded.</li> <li>(ii) Electoral variance by 2018, once Peters Village is built, will be around 30%.</li> <li>(iii) Eccles has closer links to Aylesford than Burham and Wouldham.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Aylesford North &amp; Walderslade</b>    | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> this proposal because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) The geographic coverage without Eccles and a third Member is excessive.</li> <li>(ii) The choice of boundary with Aylesford South is an unnecessary change.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Aylesford South</b>                      | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> this proposal because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Do not support the splitting of Aylesford parish and removal of Robson Drive.</li> <li>(ii) The choice of boundary with Aylesford South is an unnecessary change.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Ditton</b>                               | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> this proposal because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Do not support the splitting of Aylesford parish and removal of Robson Drive.</li> <li>(ii) Do not support the splitting of Ditton parish and removal of Blackthorn Drive etc.</li> <li>(iii) Do not support the splitting of Ditton parish and the removal of the industrial area.</li> </ul> |

| Ward                     | Comparison to TMBC proposal  | Summary of TMBC position   |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| East Malling             | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> this proposal because:<br>(i) Do not support the splitting of the historic and original village of Larkfield.  |
| Larkfield South          | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> this proposal because:<br>(i) Do not support the splitting of Ditton parish and removal of Blackthorn Drive etc.<br>(ii) Do not support the splitting of Ditton parish and the removal of the industrial area.<br>(iii) Do not support the splitting of the historic village of Larkfield. |
| Larkfield North          | Same as TMBC submission.     | <b>Support</b> the proposed ward.  |
| Kings Hill               | Same as TMBC submission.     | <b>Support</b> the proposed ward.  |
| West Malling & Leybourne | Change from TMBC submission. | <b>Do not support</b> this proposal because:<br>(i) Do not support the splitting of Ryarsh parish.   |

7. When taking into account the increased electorate created through the Peters Village and Preston Hall development, two wards proposed by the LGBCE have excessive (greater than 10%) variance – one with nearly 30%. The original TMBC proposals had two wards with variances greater than 10% and none greater than 13%. Taking the amendments agreed above into account, there would be just one ward with a variance greater than 10.5% (at 11%).

**Table 2.** Summary of electoral arrangements, comparing LGBCE and TMBC proposals.

| 2018 figures   | TMBC proposal (original) | LGBCE draft recommendations | Proposal taking this document into account |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Number of Councillors                                      | 54                       | 53                          | 54   |
| Number of electoral wards                                  | 24                       | 24                          | 24   |
| Total electorate   | 97,539                   | 96,075                      | 97,539                                     |
| Average number of electors per councillor                  | 1,840                    | 1,813                       | 1,806                                      |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from average | 2                        | 2                           | 2  |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from average | 0                        | 1                           | 0  |

8. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council therefore commend this response to the LGBCE for their consideration.

# Introduction

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## n **About this document**

1. This document is the formal response regarding the draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling set out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).
2. The submission has being prepared through the Electoral Review Working Group of the Council, with consultation with all elected Members.
3. A Special Meeting of the full Council was convened on 13 June 2012 to consider and approve this document. It has unanimous support of all Borough Councillors. Copies are being provided to the local constituency Members of Parliament for their information.

## n **Structure of this document**

4. This document is split into two main sections. The first considers some overarching issues with the draft recommendations prepared by the LGBCE. The second looks at specific issues with individual wards.
5. It is essential to consider the overarching issues identified in this document as these impact on every ward in the new scheme.

## n **Statutory criteria**

6. The warding arrangements must have due regard for the following statutory criteria:
  - a. **To deliver electoral equality for voters** (with a minimal variance).
  - b. **To provide boundaries that reflect natural communities** both in terms of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable, and fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties.
  - c. **To promote effective and convenient local government.**

# Overarching issues

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## n Electorate figures

7. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts on 16 August 2011, which the LGBCE reviewed in February 2012. These figures were based on the most up-to-date electorate figures and estimates of development for the forthcoming years. A supporting document, explaining our methodology, was submitted with the projections.
8. LGBCE raised some questions about two sites – Preston Hall and Peters Village – during their consideration in February 2012. This resulted in a series of email exchanges with the then Review Manager. These two sites are discussed below, highlighting the pertinent points from those emails. This information has been reviewed and updated for this submission.

- a. Peters Village

TMBC are continuing to work closely with the developer with this site. This site is allocated in the Council's adopted Local Development Framework and has the benefit of an implemented planning permission for 1000 homes. We are optimistic that agreement can be reached to enable the bridge and access road to serve the development to be built in the near future. Nevertheless, the Council has resolved to make a Compulsory Purchase Order and is now in a position to serve the Order. In the event that this process proves necessary the worst-case scenario as agreed with the site owners/developers is as follows:

- Compulsory Purchase Order served to acquire land for bridge and access road construction by June 2012.
- CPO enquiry runs until March 2013.
- Decision made July 2013.
- Transfer of land to the developer September 2013.
- Start of Bridge and access road construction in March 2014 to take best advantage of weather and ground conditions (on an 18 month contract) completed by September 2015. (completion of 150 homes can in any event take place before the completion of the road and bridge in accordance with the planning permission).
- Most likely start of development on this programme - September 2015.



- First phases of housing development completed during accounting year 2015/16 in accordance with the estimation included in our Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report (LDFAMR)
- The expected number of completions by 2018 as per our electorate forecasts and again reflecting our submitted (LDF AMR).

This is the project plan and is based on a worst-case scenario but importantly is informed by very significant levels of understanding about the practical and procedural aspects of the project. Based on current information and discussions between parties it is entirely possible that a CPO may not be required if agreement is reached on valuation of land. In that case, the completions will start earlier and more homes will be finished by 2018 than currently scheduled in our projections.

The Director of Trenport, the owners of the site, have set out their work programme in **Annex 1**. This confirms the above information that approximately 600 properties will be complete and occupied by 2018.

It is therefore essential that the electorate forecasts do include Peters Village. If they do not, the elector variance will be around 30% in that ward before 2018, requiring a new review to consider the implications.

b. Preston Hall:

The land owners of the site (Royal British Legion Industries [RBLI] and the NHS Strategic Health Authority [SHA] ) have already undertaken local exhibitions and public consultation about their plans. A legal agreement between the two parties has now been completed to enable the development to proceed.

A planning application is to be submitted imminently. The landowners will then appoint a developer and discharge the site to them for development. With the application expected very shortly, we expect a determination to be made by the end of this year. The site is a proposal of the Council's Local Development Framework and therefore there is a strong presumption in its favour.

There has been extensive pre-application consultation and continued active dialogue between the landowners and the TMBC planners. No overriding constraints to delay development are foreseen. On this timescale, we expect the entire site to be completed before 2018, and so it should be included in the electorate projections. Confirmation from the SHA and RBLI is included at **Annex 2** and **Annex 3** respectively.

9. If these two developments are not included in the electorate projections used for the warding arrangements, it is likely that the resulting scheme will not be fit for purpose and a new review will be required within a few years, as highlighted in the table below. The knock-on effect also extends to other areas, most notably Snodland East & Ham Hill.

**Table 3.** The effect of disregarding Peters Village and Preston Hall on elector variances.

| Ward (Number of Councillors)  | Electorate, 2018 | Electors per Councillor, 2018 | Variance      |
|---|------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Burham, Eccles &amp; Wouldham (2)</b><br><i>Assuming Peters Village is not developed (as per LGBCE draft recommendations)</i>  | 3,629            | 1,815                         | 0.1%          |
| <b>Burham, Eccles &amp; Wouldham (2)</b><br><i>With Peters Village developed to the extent expected (noting further development is expected in the following years)</i> | 4,755            | 2,378                         | <b>29.2%</b>  |
| <b>Snodland East &amp; Ham Hill (2)</b><br><i>If overall electorate is 96,075 (excluding Peters Village and Preston Hall)</i>   | 3,264            | 1,632                         | -10.0%        |
| <b>Snodland East &amp; Ham Hill (2)</b><br><i>If overall electorate is 97,539 as expected when including Peters Village and Preston Hall developments.</i>              | 3,264            | 1,632                         | <b>-11.3%</b> |

10. It is therefore essential that the expected developments at Peters Village and Preston Hall are included in the electorate projections.

## n Council size

11. We maintain that our proposed warding configuration of 54 Councillors is a better representational fit than the LGBCE draft recommendations based on 53 Councillors overall.
12. In its draft recommendations, the LGBCE state (paragraph 26) that Tonbridge ‘is currently allocated 14 councillors...the Council considered this should be increased to 15 members which should also result in the council size increasing by one to 54.’ However, this is not correct.
13. Tonbridge is currently served by 15 Borough Councillors. We wish this to remain the case. With our proposed warding arrangements, 15 Borough Councillors were retained within Tonbridge, although the three member ward was no longer the old Higham ward but the extended Medway ward. The need to increase to 54 Councillors overall is due to the extensive residential development elsewhere in the Borough – notably the central (Kings Hill) and north-eastern (Peters Village) areas.
14. We note that the LGBCE draft recommendations do retain 15 Councillors in Tonbridge.
15. The table below sets out the impact of reducing the number of Councillors in Tonbridge in terms of electoral representation.

**Table 4.** The effect of reducing Councillor numbers in Tonbridge.

| <b>Number of Councillors serving Tonbridge</b> | <b>Total electorate, 2018</b> | <b>Electors per Councillor, 2018</b> | <b>Variance from Borough average of 1,840</b> |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Retain 15 as at present</b>                 | 26,745                        | 1,783                                | -3.1%   |
| <b>Reduce to 14</b>                            | 26,745                        | 1,910                                | 3.8%  |

16. The greatest effect, however, is on representation of communities. To make a smaller number of Councillors ‘fit’ requires considerable redrawing of ward boundaries, cutting across existing communities. This is unnecessary and undesirable, hence the need to retain 15 Councillors to serve Tonbridge.

## n Community identity

17. In preparing our warding submission, TMBC set out to avoid splitting parishes and existing parish wards between Borough Wards as far as possible. This is because existing parishes have their own distinct and unique communities and it is not desirable to split these arbitrarily.
18. Indeed, two of the statutory criteria support this approach:
  - b. *To provide boundaries that reflect natural communities both in terms of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable, and fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties.*
  - c. *To promote effective and convenient local government.*
19. The existing parish boundaries highlight the local ties which should not be split. Where any parishes are split, there will be an electoral deficiency in that local government will be neither effective nor convenient. For example, a parish split between two Borough Wards will be represented in part by two different sets of Borough Councillors who will then be required to attend parish meetings and community events; it will be less clear for electors to know who represents their part of the parish and who to approach with any issues; and will result in contrived parish wards that bear no relation to the communities they encompass.
20. Many of the parishes in Tonbridge & Malling are historic with boundaries that can be identified going back for generations. Splitting parishes ignores the existing boundaries, the history and the context of these communities.
21. As one Borough Councillor states:

*“I cannot support the splitting of parishes in Borough ward Boundaries. This cannot possibly assist in the provision of good democratic representation and will leave voters and councillors crossing paths. We went to great effort to avoid this happening in the proposal submitted and I believe that the steps the Borough took to ensure the integrity of Parish Boundaries was correct. I would ask that the splitting of parishes in Wards be resisted with all diligence.”*

# Electoral arrangements

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## n Introduction

22. In this section of our response to the consultation, we discuss each proposed ward in turn. These are broadly in the order presented in the LGBCE draft recommendations for ease of reference. Electorate figures and variances stated are based on a 2018 electorate that includes the Peters Village and Preston Hall developments as previously stated.
23. TMBC are disappointed that, despite the LGBCE draft recommendations being based upon our submission, only 9 of the 24 wards remain as we originally proposed.

## Tonbridge

### n Castle

24. We note that the LGBCE draft recommendations seek to transfer part of the existing Castle ward to Judd, such that it 'maintains internal ward access'. It is worth noting, however, vehicular access within Judd has been limited by the placement of the existing boundary for a number of years, and this change does not 'maintain' access but rather returns it to its pre-2001 state.
25. TMBC do not agree that this change represents a logical amendment to the existing ward boundary, and therefore suggest that maintaining the current ward boundary is a better fit in terms of community identity. The transfer of this area from Judd to Castle was agreed at the last review in 2001, and we do not consider that there are sufficient justification for that agreement to be overturned.
26. Portman Park and Keswick Close are currently within Castle ward, and have a closer affiliation and similar needs to the communities of Dry Hill Road and Yardley Park Road (also within Castle) than they do with communities within Medway ward. We consider that they 'fit' better within Castle than they do in Medway, with the boundary line in this area remaining as it currently is.

### n Judd

27. For the reasons stated in paragraph 25, TMBC are not satisfied with the proposal for Judd ward as set out in the draft recommendations of the LGBCE.

#### **n Medway**

28. Please see paragraph 26, which states why TMBC consider Portman Park and Keswick Close should remain in Castle rather than Medway ward.
29. The proposal to increase Medway ward through to 147 Hadlow Road is unexpected. This creates a ward that is very large and very diverse. The community living along Hadlow Road is very different from that of other parts of Medway ward, for example, with different needs.
30. However, whilst we consider that the TMBC warding submission of January 2012 is a better representation of local community identity, we are content to accept this change between Cage Green and Medway wards if the LGBCE consider this amendment to be a better option.

#### **n Cage Green**

31. For the reasons stated in paragraph 30, TMBC are content to accept the change to this ward (compared to the TMBC original submission) if the LGBCE consider this amendment to be a better option. Apart from the amendment on Hadlow Road, the LGBCE proposal reflects our initial proposal.

#### **n Higham**

32. The draft recommendations for Higham are the same as our initial proposals, and TMBC therefore support this proposed ward.

#### **n Trench**

33. The draft recommendations for Trench are the same as our initial proposals, and TMBC therefore support this proposed ward.

#### **n Vauxhall**

34. The draft recommendations for Vauxhall are the same as our initial proposals, and TMBC therefore support this proposed ward.

# Central Tonbridge & Malling

## n Mereworth & Wateringbury

35. The LGBCE draft recommendation suggests that our proposed single-member ward for Wateringbury has an unacceptably high electoral imbalance. By 2018, this variance will be –11%. Wateringbury is a distinct community, with no affiliation with its neighbouring parishes. There is no benefit to creating an artificial link with Mereworth and other parishes. We note that the LGBCE ward of Mereworth and Wateringbury still has an expected variance in 2018 of –9.8% (using our electorate forecasts as stated previously). We do not consider that reducing expected variance by 1.2 percentage points is sufficient reason to artificially join these parishes. We therefore maintain that Wateringbury would be best served by remaining a single-member ward, with a coterminous parish and borough ward boundary.
36. It is important to note that Wateringbury is a distinct community, with no relationship with Mereworth or other neighbouring parishes. It is a very different community to Mereworth. Further, Wateringbury has no relationship at all with Wrotham Heath or the rest of Addington parish, and the needs of these two communities are distinct and very different. There is no sense of community, no shared geography and no common interests between the two parishes of Wateringbury and Addington.
37. We do not support the proposal to split Wrotham Heath from the rest of Addington parish. Any decision to split an existing parish must have very clear and sufficient reasoning and we do not consider this to be the case. Splitting Addington parish will result in parish wards, and borough wards that are no longer coterminous with the underlying parishes. Addington as a whole is well served by its existing parish council, and residents of Wrotham Heath are as much part of the rest of Addington parish as those in Addington village centre. Retaining existing parish boundaries and using them as building-blocks to create wards ensures that boundaries do not break any local ties, and ensures effective and convenient local government may be delivered. The proposal to split Addington parish will result in breaking of local ties, and will not permit effective or convenient local government for the reasons outlined previously. We also do not consider that splitting Addington in this way can be justified given it creates a worse electoral variance (–9.8%) than our proposed Downs & Mereworth ward (9.6%).
38. We therefore do not support the proposed Mereworth & Wateringbury ward. Instead, we continue to support the TMBC proposal for a single-member Wateringbury ward, and a Downs & Mereworth ward.

## **n Downs**

39. The LGBCE draft recommendation for Downs ward includes the parishes of Trottiscliffe and Birling, and parts of Addington and Ryarsh. As stated previously, TMBC do not support the proposal to split Addington parish. Similarly, TMBC do not support the proposal to split Ryarsh parish. These artificial splits in existing historic parishes do not permit effective or convenient local government, and sever existing local ties. This proposed Downs ward will also be a single-member ward, requiring one Councillor to represent four different parishes. This will include attending parish council meetings and community events. Single-member wards in Tonbridge & Malling have traditionally been coterminous with a single parish. We do not consider it is realistic to have a single Councillor to represent such a large number of parishes. The TMBC proposal for Downs & Mereworth gives better regard for local communities, had 7 parishes in total (between two Councillors) and provides for more effective and convenient local government.
40. It is important to recognise that Ryarsh is an ancient place, and the existing parish extent in its entirety accurately represents the parish community. The church in Ryarsh is central to the parish and the community, and retaining the whole of the parochial church area within the same ward would better reflect the local community interests and needs.
41. In common with other parishes, there are significant disadvantages associated with splitting Ryarsh parish between Borough wards. One such disadvantage is it will result in an unnecessary duplication of effort, as Borough Councillors representing both wards would need to attend the parish council meeting. In addition, such a split would be confusing for electors as it would be difficult for them to know which Borough Councillor to contact. This does not reflect effective or convenient local government.
42. We therefore propose the ward set out by TMBC, of Downs & Mereworth, be adopted instead of the LGBCE draft recommendation.

## **n Hildenborough**

43. The draft recommendations for Hildenborough are the same as our initial proposals, and TMBC therefore support this proposed ward.

## **n Borough Green & Long Mill**

44. The draft recommendations for Borough Green & Long Mill are the same as our initial proposals, and TMBC therefore support this proposed ward.



n **Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted**

45. The draft recommendations for Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted are the same as our initial proposals, and TMBC therefore support this proposed ward.

n **Hadlow & East Peckham**

46. The draft recommendations for Hadlow & East Peckham are the same as our initial proposals, and TMBC therefore support this proposed ward.

## North East Tonbridge & Malling

n **Snodland West & Holborough Lakes**

47. We note the LGBCE draft recommendation to move the boundary between this ward and Snodland East & Ham Hill. We would like to point out the following electoral variances:

**Table 5.** Electorate variance created by amending the ward boundary in Snodland.

| Ward                             | Variance in 2018 based on TMBC proposal | Variance in 2018 based on LGBCE proposal |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Snodland West & Holborough Lakes | -8.0%                                   | -3.2%                                    |
| Snodland East & Ham Hill         | -2.8%                                   | -10.0%                                   |

48. A variance of -11.3% is quite significant, and is worse than that of the TMBC proposal. In addition, we consider that Snodland West & Holborough Lakes is likely to see more residential development beyond 2018 which will reduce the variance from -8.0% closer to zero.

49. Amending the rest of the warding scheme as discussed in this document, including ensuring 54 Councillors overall, gives variances for Snodland West & Holborough Lakes and for Snodland East & Ham Hill of -3.4% and -9.6% respectively.

50. We therefore consider that the TMBC submission of January 2012 provides a better warding arrangement for Snodland. However, we are content to accept the LGBCE change if they consider it is a better option in this case.

#### **n Snodland East & Ham Hill**

51. As above, we are content to accept the LGBCE draft recommendation for this ward if they consider it a better option in this case, but note the worsening electoral variance compared to the TMBC proposal.

#### **n Burham, Eccles & Wouldham**

52. The LGBCE draft recommendation for Burham, Eccles and Wouldham is based on the disregard of the Peters Village development. A proportion of Peters Village is anticipated to be complete and occupied by 2018, as set out in our electorate projections. When this happens, the electoral variance in Burham, Eccles and Wouldham (if the LGBCE draft recommendation is accepted) will be 29.2%. This is unacceptable and would trigger another full Electoral Review.
53. At present, Aylesford parish is warded. It is served by three Borough Council wards. The TMBC proposal recommends a warding arrangement that will see Aylesford served by two wards. However, the LGBCE draft recommendation sees an increase to four Borough wards serving the one parish. This is undesirable.
54. Residents of Eccles associate more closely with the village and parish of Aylesford than they do with Burham or Wouldham. Maintaining a link between the three parishes is therefore not required, and a better solution would be for Eccles to rejoin other parts of Aylesford parish.
55. We therefore maintain that the TMBC proposal of Burham & Wouldham gives a better electoral fit and better represents the local residents of the communities.

#### **n Aylesford North & Walderslade**

56. The LGBCE draft recommendation for Aylesford North & Walderslade joins the communities of Blue Bell Hill and Walderslade with parts of Aylesford itself. As a two-member ward, we do not consider that suitable representation is possible. Councillors living in either end of the proposed ward would have a considerable journey to make to meet with residents at the other end of the ward. Although within the same parish, Aylesford village has little in common with Blue Bell Hill or Walderslade. This is less of a problem with the TMBC proposal, which included Eccles and made this a three-member ward, as the number of Councillors representing the residents of the ward would be sufficient to give adequate geographical coverage.
57. The existing Aylesford community is currently served by two polling districts, the boundary of which runs along the river until the wharf, and then along railway line. We consider that retaining this boundary as the ward boundary makes sense for

electors, who are already used to voting in different places depending which side of the railway they live.

#### **n Aylesford South**

58. The LGBCE draft recommendation for Aylesford South differs from the TMBC proposal in two regards. The first is the choice of boundary line between Aylesford North and Aylesford South (see above). The second is the splitting of Robson Drive from Aylesford South.
59. The LGBCE state (paragraph 67) that Robson Drive 'accesses entirely through Ditton ward'. This is not the case. The existing ward boundary runs along Station Road at that point, so vehicular access can be achieved from other parts of Aylesford parish along Station Road. In addition, pedestrian access is possible at the eastern end of Robson Drive into Teapot Lane and so into the rest of Aylesford parish.
60. Aylesford and Ditton are historic parishes, and we do not consider that splitting Robson Drive from the rest of Aylesford parish is in the best interests of the community or electorate. It will not provide for effective and convenient local government.
61. We therefore maintain that the TMBC proposed ward of Aylesford South be adopted instead.

#### **n Ditton**

62. The LGBCE draft recommendations for Ditton include three areas that TMBC disagree with. The first, outlined above, is the splitting of Aylesford parish to include Robson Drive within Ditton.
63. The second is the splitting of Blackthorn Drive and Oak Drive from Ditton parish to be placed into Larkfield South ward. For the reasons previously stated, we do not consider that splitting a parish between borough wards is in the best interests of the electorate, nor will it provide for effective or convenient local government. This proposed change will move Bell Lane into Larkfield South ward. Bell Lane is one of the oldest roads in Ditton and has very strong links to the village. It is part of the heritage for the whole of Ditton. It is therefore very important to maintain the community links and retain Bell Lane and the surrounding roads of Blackthorn Drive and Oak Drive in Ditton ward.
64. The third is the splitting of the industrial area in Ditton parish north of the motorway and placing it into Larkfield South ward. This area is part of the historic Ditton parish, and this link should be considered in the warding arrangements. In addition, there are no electors in this area. Historically this area provided a considerable level of employment for Ditton residents for many years. There remain historic links

from the residential area in the southern part of Ditton into the industrial areas in the north of the parish.

65. The electoral variance in 2018 is expected to be –7.8% by the LGBCE proposals, and 3.2% from the TMBC proposals. We therefore consider that our proposals provide a better fit overall.

**n East Malling**

66. The LGBCE draft recommendations for East Malling propose a change to the existing northern boundary, moving Walnut Tree Court and properties on the London Road from Larkfield into East Malling such that the boundary runs along the London Road. This represents a change from the existing parish ward boundaries, although East Malling and Larkfield are within the same parish. The change would split the historic and original village of Larkfield, which we consider unacceptable, with the result that part of the original historic village would end up in East Malling ward.

67. We therefore do not support this change.

**n Larkfield South**

68. For the reasons outlined in the comments about the proposed Ditton ward and East Malling ward, we do not agree with the changes proposed for Larkfield South. We maintain that the TMBC proposal for Larkfield South is a better fit than that recommended by the LGBCE.

**n Larkfield North**

69. The draft recommendations for Larkfield North are the same as our initial proposals, and TMBC therefore support this proposed ward.

**n Kings Hill**

70. The draft recommendations for Kings Hill are the same as our initial proposals, and TMBC therefore support this proposed ward.

**n West Malling & Leybourne**

71. The LGBCE draft recommendation for West Malling & Leybourne splits Ryarsh parish (as noted above; see *Downs* ward comments). We do not support the splitting of Ryarsh parish in this way as it will not provide for effective or convenient

local government. We therefore oppose this ward and maintain that the TMBC proposal for West Malling & Leybourne is a better option.

72. The TMBC proposal gives an electoral variance of  $-0.8\%$ , compared to  $7.3\%$  with the LGBCE arrangement.

# Summary of proposed warding arrangements

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## n Introduction

73. TMBC have reviewed the draft recommendations from the LGBCE in light of our original proposals, and have noted in the preceding section of this response where we agree with the draft recommendations and where we wish to see changes. The table below takes the changes into account, and is based on the TMBC electorate forecasts to 2018.

| Ward name                          | Number of Councillors | Electorate, 2018 | Number of electors per Councillor | Variance from average |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Burham & Wouldham                  | 2                     | 3,471            | 1,736                             | -3.9%                 |
| Aylesford South                    | 2                     | 3,730            | 1,865                             | 3.3%                  |
| Aylesford & North Downs            | 3                     | 5,369            | 1,790                             | -0.9%                 |
| Ditton                             | 2                     | 3,728            | 1,864                             | 3.2%                  |
| East Malling                       | 2                     | 3,604            | 1,802                             | -0.2%                 |
| West Malling and Leybourne         | 3                     | 5,376            | 1,792                             | -0.8%                 |
| Kings Hill                         | 3                     | 5,815            | 1,938                             | 7.3%                  |
| Wateringbury                       | 1                     | 1,607            | 1,607                             | -11.0%                |
| Hildenborough                      | 2                     | 3,907            | 1,954                             | 8.2%                  |
| Borough Green & Long Mill          | 3                     | 5,754            | 1,918                             | 6.2%                  |
| Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted        | 2                     | 3,425            | 1,713                             | -5.2%                 |
| Downs & Mereworth                  | 2                     | 3,960            | 1,980                             | 9.6%                  |
| Hadlow & East Peckham              | 3                     | 5,721            | 1,907                             | 5.6%                  |
| Larkfield North                    | 2                     | 3,495            | 1,748                             | -3.3%                 |
| Larkfield South                    | 2                     | 3,333            | 1,631                             | -7.7%                 |
| Snodland West & Holborough Lakes * | 3                     | 5,234            | 1,749                             | -3.2%                 |
| Snodland East & Ham Hill *         | 2                     | 3,264            | 1,626                             | -10.0%                |
| Trench                             | 2                     | 3,579            | 1,790                             | -0.9%                 |
| Cage Green *                       | 2                     | 3,554            | 1,777                             | -1.6%                 |
| Higham                             | 2                     | 3,702            | 1,851                             | 2.5%                  |
| Castle                             | 2                     | 3,773            | 1,887                             | 4.4%                  |
| Judd                               | 2                     | 3,626            | 1,813                             | 0.4%                  |
| Vauxhall                           | 2                     | 3,654            | 1,827                             | -1.1%                 |
| Medway *                           | 3                     | 4,857            | 1,619                             | -10.4%                |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>54</b>             | <b>97,538</b>    | <b>1,806</b>                      |                       |

\* Assuming the LGBCE adopt their revised proposals as noted in this document for these wards rather than the TMBC submission.

# Annex 1

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Letter from Trenport, the owners of the Peters Village development site, to the Chief Executive of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, dated 4 May 2012.



Trenport Investments Limited  
3rd Floor  
86 Jermy Street  
London SW1Y 6JD  
Tel: 020 7004 7080  
Fax: 020 7004 7099

|                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| CHIEF EXECUTIVE    |                        |
| PASS TO            | FOR INFO<br>FOR ACTION |
| 08 MAY 2012        |                        |
| COPY SENT TO       |                        |
| COPY TO BE SENT TO |                        |
| ACKNOWLEDGED       | YES NO                 |



Mr D Hughes  
Chief Executive  
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council  
Gibson Building, Gibson Drive  
Kings Hill  
West Malling  
Kent ME19 4LZ

4 May 2012  
F/General

Dear Mr Hughes

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION – DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL, APRIL 2012**

My attention has been drawn to the above report and in particular paragraphs eighteen and nineteen on page six concerning Peters Village.

Peters Village has formed part of your Council's Development Plan for many years and the necessary planning permissions have been issued and have already been lawfully implemented.

The Commission is mistaken in its belief that construction traffic depends entirely upon the completion of the new bridge across the Medway although I acknowledge that our own website is not perhaps as up to date as it might be.

As you know, our discussions with third parties concerning construction of the bridge have been difficult but in recent weeks we have made some useful progress. Notwithstanding this your Council is, I believe, very close to serving the Compulsory Purchase Orders which will ultimately enable the development to proceed beyond our initial start, in the event our negotiations cannot be concluded.

Trenport remain totally committed to the Peters Village development and the Commission is wrong to discount it.

Our current programme is based upon construction of the Medway Bridge and east bank highway works starting in Spring 2014 as two separate contracts. A Spring start is most advantageous because of the drier weather and ground conditions one might normally expect at this time of year as the initial work will be on soft ground and also involve a 'cut and fill' exercise using chalk from the old quarry.

Bridge construction will take between 18 – 24 months. The east bank highways works will take no more than 12 months and, once completed, will mean construction of the 150 houses which are permitted to be occupied prior to the bridge being opened can commence.

The construction and sale of houses on large sites such as Peters Village inevitably take time to build up however I remain confident that at least 80 units would be sold and occupied during the financial year 2015/16 and that by 2018, the end date of the forecast, we will have achieved approximately 600.

I would be grateful if you could bring my concerns to the attention of the Commission.

Yours sincerely



**C D HALL**  
**Director**

Copy to :- Mr S Humphrey, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

# Annex 2

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Letter from NHS South of England, joint owners of the Preston Hall development site, to the Director of Planning, Transportation & Leisure of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, dated 23 May 2012.

23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012

Steve Humphrey  
Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure  
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Dear Steve,

### **Proposed development of the Preston Hall site**

Further to the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> March at which we discussed our pending plans for submitting a planning application for development of this site, I am writing to update you on progress with our preparations.

We have made excellent progress through our joint work with Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) in developing a joint site development masterplan and underpinning legal agreement in order to enable the development to proceed. At the current time the Department of Health is reviewing the proposals, and we hope to receive a decision from them within the next few days. As you will be aware, as land owners of the site, the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) and RBLI have already undertaken local exhibitions and public consultation about our plans. This means that once we have Department of Health approval, we will be in a position to complete the legal agreement with RBLI.

All being well we expect this all to be concluded within the next few weeks, following which we expect to submit our planning application in short order.

With submission of our application expected relatively shortly, we obviously hope very much that a determination will be made before the end of this year. Subject to planning, we intend market the site, appoint a developer and discharge the site to them for development. It is important to us that we achieve this as soon as possible, so that the site development plans can proceed without delay. This is important not only to us, but also to the RBLI and the rest of the local community. The development plans have been developed in sympathy with the longer term plans for the RBLI owned parts of the site, and as you know it is also a proposal within the Council's Local Development Framework for this area.

Please let me know if you have any questions at this time. In the meantime we will continue to make preparations for the planning application submission, which we expect to make very shortly now.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Gregory  
Head of Capital Investment Planning & Projects  
NHS South of England (East)

# Annex 3

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Letter from RBLI, joint owners of the Preston Hall development site, to the Director of Planning, Transportation & Leisure of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, dated 23 May 2012.



RBLI  
Hall Road  
Aylesford  
Kent ME20 7NL

Tel: 01622 795900  
Fax: 01622 795987  
Website: [www.rbli.co.uk](http://www.rbli.co.uk)

Patron HRH The Duchess of Kent

Steve Humphrey  
Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure  
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council  
Gibson Building, Gibson Drive,  
Kings Hill, West Malling,  
Kent ME19 4LZ

23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012

Dear Steve

### **Proposed Development of Preston Hall Site and The Royal British Legion Village**

I write following our meeting in April held to discuss proposals for the future development of the Royal British Legion Village, in order to provide you with an update on this matter.

RBLI is very pleased to report that positive progress has been made with the NHS South of England in designing a joint masterplan which we consider will secure sound principles of development for the site and sensitively enhance this community for many years to come. It is envisaged that our plans for the site will be formally submitted very shortly and these will be underpinned with an appropriate legal agreement between the NHS and RBLI.

There are of course, as you would expect, key stages of approval from within both the NHS and RBLI which are in motion now. On the basis that these proceed smoothly we would hope to cement the principles of development within the joint masterplan through the standard planning process as soon as is practicable.

If you have any query regarding this matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

David Jessop  
**Director of Operational Delivery**



