7.10.26

UPDATE AND OVERVIEW: EAST PECKHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

An update from East Peckham Parish Council, October 2026: Where we are, what it means for you, and what happens next

The East Peckham Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is being prepared within the wider planning system, which has two other layers: national planning policy set by the Government, and borough-wide planning policy set by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC). This note explains where each has got to, how they fit together, and what happens next.

TMBC's draft Local Plan (Regulation 19): the borough-wide picture

- TMBC's Local Plan has reached the stage called Regulation 19. In plain terms, this is the final public consultation on TMBC's draft plan before it is sent to the Government for independent examination by a planning inspector.
- In TMBC's earlier draft (December 2025) East Peckham was allocated 586 homes across five parcels of land. The Regulation 19 draft reduces this to 228 homes on two sites: EP1, land west of Hale Street and north of Church Lane (156 homes), and EP2, land south of Church Lane (72 homes). The three parcels with the worst flood risk are no longer allocated.
- The land next to the Coult Stream, behind Henham Gardens, which the Parish Council put forward as a Local Green Space, is included in the Regulation 19 draft as a designated Local Green Space (reference LGS51). That protection only takes effect if the Local Plan is adopted, so we will also seek to protect it through the NDP.
- On 3 September 2026 TMBC's Full Council voted to pause the Local Plan because of concerns about whether enough water supply and other infrastructure would be available to support the amount of housing growth required across the Borough.
- The Government then directed TMBC to go ahead with the Regulation 19 consultation, and the Council has done so. TMBC has written to the Government setting out its concerns.
- The Regulation 19 consultation opened on Friday 11 September and closes at 11.59pm on Sunday 25 October 2026. Anyone can respond, and responses made at this stage go directly to the independent examiner. Details of how to respond are on TMBC's website.
- The Parish Council held a residents' meeting on Sunday 27 September. At that meeting the Leader of TMBC explained the TMBC's concerns about water supply and encouraged residents to respond to the consultation on that point.

- The Parish Council will be submitting a response. We still have serious concerns about the two remaining sites: the number of homes, their location, flood risk, water supply, and the school places, roads and drainage needed to support them.
- It is not yet clear whether, or when, the Local Plan will be adopted. TMBC has said it will assess the implications for its timetable.

Why this matters: the 'tilted balance' in plain English

National planning policy says that where a council cannot show it has enough land lined up to meet the next five years of housing need, or has fallen well short of its housing delivery targets, planning applications for housing should normally be approved unless the harm they would cause substantially outweighs the benefits. Planners call this the 'tilted balance' or the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The Government published a new National Planning Policy Framework on 17 August 2026 and this is how it now works.

TMBC cannot currently show a five-year supply of housing land, and its housing delivery over the last three years has been below the Government's test, so the tilted balance applies in our area now. That is why speculative planning applications are a risk.

A made Neighbourhood Plan gives specific protection. Under the new national policy, where a housing proposal conflicts with a Neighbourhood Plan that (a) became part of the development plan within the last five years and (b) contains site allocations to meet its housing requirement, the benefits of approving it are 'likely to be substantially outweighed' by the harm. In other words, the tilted balance is largely switched off for proposals that go against the plan. That protection only arrives once the plan is made, and only if it allocates sites.

The East Peckham Neighbourhood Development Plan

Once made, an NDP becomes part of the statutory development plan for the parish. Planning applications must then be decided in line with it unless there are strong reasons not to. It lets us set local planning policies based on local evidence. The work is led by the Parish Council through its Local Development Committee. It is separate from TMBC's Local Plan, but it has to fit with the Local Plan's strategic policies and cannot plan for fewer homes than the Local Plan requires.

What have we done so far?

Evidence gathering and consultation
The most extensive review of the parish the Parish Council has ever undertaken is being carried out as part of this evidence gathering.

- Residents' and Business Surveys (9 May to 30 June 2026): 236 residents' responses and 17 business responses.
- Detailed Topic Papers across seven themes: Demographics and Socio-Economic; Natural Environment; Housing; Heritage and Conservation; Amenities and Services; Transport and Connections; Utilities and Infrastructure.
- Housing Needs Survey, carried out independently by RACE and delivered to every household in July 2026, with 281 returns.

These are available on the Parish Council website.

- Local Green Spaces and local key views have been out for consultation.

The outcome of these will shortly be made available on the Parish Council website.

- Character and Design work is under way. It looks at the character of each hamlet and of East Peckham as a whole, and at the design of buildings, so that the plan can set clear local design expectations.

Housing Numbers

TMBC has given each parish preparing an NDP a housing figure that the NDP is expected to plan for. For East Peckham the indicative figure is 48 homes over the plan period to 2042, which is about three a year. The 48 homes are separate from, and in addition to, the two draft site allocations in TMBC's Local Plan. They are specifically in relation to the NDP.

A call for sites is being run to find land that could meet this figure. Sites will be assessed against national planning policy and TMBC's site assessment approach, and against local evidence, including the Housing Needs Survey, which tells us what kind of homes local people actually need. Land in the Green Belt or at risk of flooding faces national tests that the NDP cannot set aside.

A made NDP is one that has gone through all the legal stages required and been adopted by the local planning authority which is TMBC. Even if the Local Plan is delayed or does not go ahead, a made NDP that allocates sites for its 48 homes gives East Peckham the protection described above against speculative housing applications that go against the plan. It does not stop all development: national rules on the Green Belt, flood risk and heritage apply to every application in any event, and the NDP cannot plan for fewer homes than the Local Plan requires. But it means that where development happens, and what it looks like, is decided by a plan the village has written and voted on.

What happens next

Residents' consultation meeting: Saturday 7 November, 11am to 1pm and 2pm to 4pm.

An opportunity to look at all the evidence gathered so far, including the survey results, and to ask questions.

In the meantime we will be:

1. **Writing the plan:** using the evidence gathered, the Local Development Committee of the Parish Council drafts the Neighbourhood Plan, setting out policies for development and land use across the parish, including where the 48 homes should go.
2. **Your say on the draft:** residents, businesses and local organisations get a formal six-week consultation on the draft plan (known as the Regulation 14 consultation) before it is submitted to TMBC. TMBC then publicises it again before the examination.
3. **Independent examination:** an independent examiner checks that the draft plan meets the legal requirements, fits with national policy and TMBC's strategic policies, and is supported by evidence.
4. **Local referendum:** everyone on the electoral roll for the parish gets a vote. If more than half of those who vote say yes, TMBC 'makes' the plan and it becomes part of the statutory development plan for East Peckham. From then on, planning applications in the parish must be decided in line with it unless there are strong reasons not to.

Consultation remains at the heart of the NDP work. We can arrange drop in sessions for anyone who has questions or would like to understand more. The meetings of the Local Development Committee are advertised in advance on the Parish Council website and are public meetings. We continue to update the relevant pages of the website to ensure it is up to date and accessible. There is lots of information available on the website and answers to many questions, but please do let us know directly if you have any queries or feedback. There is still lots of work to do, if you would like to get involved, please get in touch.

www.eastpeckham-pc.gov.uk