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East Peckham Neighbourhood Development Plan

Why is a Call for Sites being undertaken and why is the Neighbourhood Development Plan considering potential development sites?

The East Peckham Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared within a wider planning system that includes national planning policy and borough-wide planning requirements. The Neighbourhood Development Plan work is separate from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's work on their Local Plan.

While some residents have expressed concerns about further development and the impact it could have, the reality is that development pressure exists and is likely to continue in the future. This development pressure relates to two issues:

- pressure from central government to deliver additional housing
- local need evidenced by the Housing Needs Survey that was recently undertaken. The results of this are available for review.

The question facing East Peckham is not simply whether development should happen, but how the community can have the greatest possible influence over future decisions.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council has advised all Parishes in the Borough of an indicative housing number that should form part of a Neighbourhood Development Plan if they are undertaking this work. The indicative housing number for East Peckham is 48 houses. The call for sites is being undertaken in order to identify sites that may be suitable for this development.

What is a Call for Sites?
A Call for Sites is a standard part of the neighbourhood planning process.

It is an invitation for landowners, developers, organisations and local residents to put forward land that they believe may have potential for future development or other community uses.

Submitting a site does **not** mean that it will be allocated for development.
It simply allows potential options to be identified and assessed in a transparent and evidence-based way.

Why is This Important?
Without understanding what land may be available, it is difficult for the community to make informed decisions about the future of the parish.

A Call for Sites allows the Local Development Committee to:

- Understand the range of potential options available.
- Assess sites against agreed criteria.
- Consider impacts on landscape, environment and infrastructure.
- Compare alternatives openly and transparently.

- Identify sites that may be more suitable than others.

In short, it provides information that helps support better decision-making.

Having a Choice Rather Than Having Decisions Made for Us

One of the potential benefits of a Neighbourhood Development Plan is the ability to influence where future development might be directed and in a way that best supports local need.

If development is likely to be required in the future, a community-led approach can help ensure that any growth is considered in the context of local priorities, environmental constraints and village character.

By assessing sites through the Neighbourhood Plan process, East Peckham has the opportunity to consider which locations may be more appropriate and which locations should be protected.

Without this work, there is a greater risk that decisions are made through individual planning applications without the benefit of a comprehensive community-led framework.

A Transparent Process

Any sites submitted through the Call for Sites process will be assessed by the Local Development Committee using published criteria and supporting evidence.

Factors likely to be considered include:

- Impact on the rural character of the parish.
- Landscape sensitivity.
- Biodiversity and environmental considerations.
- Heritage assets and historic character.
- Flood risk.
- Access and transport implications.
- Availability of infrastructure and services.
- Community feedback.
- Infrastructure constraints
- Evidence of the East Peckham Housing Needs Survey
- Sustainability

The assessment process will be transparent, and opportunities will be provided for residents to understand and comment on the evidence as it develops.

The assessment criteria are available here:
Introduction to identifying, assessing and selecting sites - GOV.UK
How to assess and allocate sites for development - GOV.UK

No Decisions Have Been Made

It is important to emphasise that a Call for Sites is an information-gathering exercise.

No decisions are made simply because a site is submitted.

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The purpose is to ensure that, should development need to be considered, the community has the evidence necessary to make informed choices and to influence outcomes wherever possible.