UPDATE · 5 NOVEMBER 2026

The borough's Local Plan

What the Government's decision of 2 November means for Tonbridge and Malling's Local Plan, and for East Peckham

1 What has happened

The Government has directed Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) to press ahead with its Local Plan. On 11 September TMBC asked the Government to withdraw or change those directions. **On 2 November the Housing and Planning Minister said no.** The directions stay in force.

11 September
TMBC asks the Government to withdraw or change its directions.

2 November
The Minister refuses. The Local Plan must go ahead.

12 December
The date TMBC has programmed to submit the plan for examination.

After that
A public examination by an independent Planning Inspector.

TMBC must also report its progress to the Government every month.

2 What it means

The question no longer seems to be **whether** the Local Plan goes forward. It is whether an independent Planning Inspector finds it **sound**. Subject to any further professional advice TMBC may receive, the decision on the Local Plan now appears to rest with that Inspector.

3 The argument about water

What the Minister said

Concerns about water supply can only hold back development where there is solid evidence. A precaution is not enough.

What TMBC says

The evidence exists: in South East Water's Water Resources Management Plan, and in what South East Water put forward at Regulation 18 in December 2025. Separately, the Leader of TMBC has said the council is looking at options to take this further.

4 Where the Parish Council stands

The Parish Council's evidence is strong. It has already sent in **five separate responses** to the Regulation 19 consultation on the Local Plan:

- Settlement hierarchy
- Infrastructure
- Indicative housing requirement
- Site EP1
- Site EP2

The Parish Council continues to object in the strongest possible terms to the allocations at Sites EP1 and EP2.

5 Also on the horizon

Central government appears to have indicated that **local government reorganisation** (merging councils into larger ones) may be back on the national agenda. We need to wait for more information.

The Neighbourhood Plan is still our best protection

The position keeps changing. Whether the Local Plan is adopted or fails, a Neighbourhood Development Plan remains the Parish's best protection, provided it allocates sites for its identified housing requirement. It is how the village controls what development looks like, and its policies can set tight conditions on how development is delivered.

CLARIFICATION · 5 NOVEMBER 2026

The Neighbourhood Development Plan Launch Video and Wateringbury

A question has been raised about a planning application mentioned in the Neighbourhood Plan launch video

? The question

The video released when the Neighbourhood Development Plan was launched in May this year mentioned a **speculative planning application in Wateringbury**. We have been asked whether that reference was right.

The reference was entirely accurate, and not misleading.

In May the Wateringbury application had not been decided, and planning officers were recommending that it be approved, not refused.

→ What happened, in order

February	TMBC's **Area 2 Planning Committee voted to refuse** planning permission, against the advice of planning officers. The reasons for refusal were not thought strong enough to defend if the applicant appealed, so the committee **passed the decision on** to the new Planning Committee that was being set up.
May the launch video	The application was **still undecided**. The officers' recommendation was **still to approve** it. This is the position the video described.
23 July 2026	The new Planning Committee **decided to refuse** the application. This came after the video was released.

Why it matters. A speculative application is one for a site that no plan has allocated. A made Neighbourhood Plan is the village's strongest protection against them. See the Decision Tree and Housing Numbers sheets on display today.