

# Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Electoral review

April 2012

### **Translations and other formats**

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# Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Tonbridge & Malling to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in 2011.

This review is being conducted as follows:

<b>Stage starts</b>	<b>Description</b>
17 January 2012	Submission of proposals of ward patterns to the LGBCE
2 February 2012	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
17 April 2012	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
25 June 2012	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

## Analysis and draft recommendations

### Electorate figures

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a period six years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2012. This is prescribed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act'). These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 8.5% over this period.

A figure of 8.5% represents substantial growth over the period to 2018. This included significant growth in the Greater Tonbridge and North Eastern Tonbridge & Malling areas, focused on a few large-scale developments. We are content that the evidence regarding the completion and occupation of a majority of these developments is strong. However, in the case of the developments at Peter's Village and Preston Hall, we are minded to discount these developments at present.

Regarding Peter's Village, we were concerned that due to the lack of vehicular access and progress of development there is insufficient evidence to confirm that the projections for electoral growth will occur by 2018. Regarding Preston Hall, we considered that due to the lack of planning permission, and given that the site is still in use by the NHS and Royal British Legion, there is insufficient evidence to confirm that the projections for electoral growth will occur by 2018.

Therefore, we have discounted these developments, which in turn adjusts the electoral growth forecast to 6.9% by 2018. We are content that the forecasts for the remainder of the borough are the most accurate available at this time.

## Council size

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council proposed a council size of 53, the same as the existing number. In support of this number, the Council provided evidence relating to the representational role of councillors, detailing the work members do in the community. The Council also considered their strategic management functions in support of this council size. In light of evidence received we indicated that we were minded to recommend a council size of 53.

The Council subsequently proposed a warding pattern based on 54 members. The Council considered that a council size of 54 would be the only practical way to achieve electoral equality across the borough. We investigated this proposal and considered that a council size of 53 provided the best balance between our statutory criteria, particularly in light of our conclusions reached on electorate forecasts. We therefore have adopted a council size of 53 as part of our draft recommendations.

## General analysis

We have developed proposals across the borough broadly based on those of the Council. However, we have proposed modifications across the borough in order to better reflect our statutory criteria and on the basis of a council size of 53. Our proposals will provide good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and transport links in the borough.

## What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on the draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling contained in the report. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.** We will take into account all submissions received by **25 June 2012**. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We would particularly welcome local views backed up by demonstrable evidence. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations. Express your views by writing directly to us at:

**Review Officer**  
**Tonbridge & Malling Review**  
**The Local Government Boundary Commission for England**  
**Layden House**  
**76–86 Turnmill Street**  
**London EC1M 5LG**  
[reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)

The full report is available to download at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

# 1 Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council's electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We invited Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council to submit proposals first on council size and then on warding arrangements for the Council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed our draft recommendations.

3 We are now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish our final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council in late 2012.

## What is an electoral review?

4 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure 'electoral equality', which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

5 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation<sup>1</sup> and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

## Why are we conducting a review in Tonbridge & Malling?

6 We decided to conduct this review because based on the December 2010 electorate figures, 38% of the wards in the borough have 10% more or fewer electors per councillor than the borough average. One ward, Kings Hill, also has 46% more electors per councillor than the borough average.

## How will the recommendations affect you?

7 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 instances, which parish council wards you vote in. Your ward name may also change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. The names or boundaries of parishes will not change as a result of our recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

8 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on the draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with the draft recommendations or not. The draft recommendations are evidence based and we would therefore like to stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will be accepting comments and views until 25 June 2012. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations which we are due to publish in late 2012. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 17 and more information can be found on our website, [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

## What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

9 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)  
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)  
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL  
Sir Tony Redmond  
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE  
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill  
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall



## 2 Analysis and draft recommendations

10 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council we invite views on these draft recommendations. We welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries, ward names and parish or town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,<sup>2</sup> with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
  - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
  - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

12 Legislation also states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the date of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward at the end of the review.

13 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. As mentioned above, we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

14 Additionally, in circumstances where we propose to divide a parish between borough wards or county divisions, we are required to divide it into parish wards so that each parish ward is wholly contained within a single borough ward or county division. We cannot make amendments to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

15 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that the recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. The proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

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<sup>2</sup> Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

## Submissions received

16 Prior to, and during, the initial stage of the review, we visited Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and met with members, parish council representatives and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. Prior to the production of draft recommendations we received a submission from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

## Electorate figures

17 As part of this review, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council ('the Council') submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2018, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 8.5% over the six-year period from 2012–18.

18 This included significant growth in the Greater Tonbridge and North Eastern Tonbridge & Malling areas, focused on a few large-scale developments. We are content that the evidence regarding the completion and occupation of a majority of these developments is strong. However, in the case of those at Peter's Village and Preston Hall, we are minded to discount the developments at present.

19 We analysed the proposed development around Peter's Village, within Wouldham parish. This development is projected to add 1,126 electors by 2018. However, we have concerns about the likelihood of this development being built and occupied by 2018. When visiting the site, we noted that there was no access to the site for construction vehicles, as a proposed bridge over the River Medway from the A228 has yet to be built. Similarly, the land on which the development is planned to occur and on which the road and bridge connecting the development are to be built is currently empty, with no sign of development. We also found very little information relating to the proposed timescales of the development and of new homes in the area on the Council or developer's websites. Considering all these factors, we are concerned that the development will not be built, and as such have discounted 1,126 electors from the 2018 electorate forecasts for Wouldham parish. We note that planning permission has been granted and work on the development is considered by the Council to have begun. However, for the reasons mentioned above, based on current evidence we are minded to discount this development from the electorate forecasts.

20 We also analysed the proposed development in the Preston Hall site, within the existing Aylesford ward, currently jointly in use by the Royal British Legion and the NHS. This development is projected to add 338 electors by 2018. This proposed development has not yet been granted outline or full planning permission by the Council, and indeed no developer has yet been appointed. Due to both this and because the site appeared to be fully functioning when we visited the area, we have discounted the 338 electors from 2018 electoral figures.

21 Therefore, with these developments discounted, the projected electorate change for the six-year period from 2012–18 is an increase of 6.9%.

22 We recognise that compiling electorate forecasts is an inexact science. We have discounted the above developments on the basis of evidence received and our

understanding of the likelihood of these developments being built and occupied by 2018. We welcome comments from the Council and those involved with these developments on their progress and likelihood of them being built and occupied by 2018.

## Council size

23 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council currently has a council size of 53, elected from three single-member, 19 two-member and four three-member wards. During preliminary discussions on future council size, the Council proposed this size be retained.

24 In support of its proposal, the Council provided extensive evidence relating to the representational role of councillors, detailing the work members undertake in the community. The Council argued that the current size of committees is in line with the Council's inclusive approach, and that to reduce council size would compromise this approach and the way committees operate. We carefully considered the evidence received and were minded to agree a council size of 53. We invited the Council to submit warding proposals to us based on that council size.

25 The Council proposed a warding pattern based on 54 members. The Council considered that a council size of 54 would be the only practical way to achieve electoral equality across the borough. The Council considered that it was necessary to increase the council size by one in order to provide an extra councillor for the proposed Medway ward in Tonbridge.

26 We carefully considered the Council's argument for an increase in council size to 54. We noted that the Tonbridge area (which includes the Medway ward) is currently allocated 14 councillors under existing warding arrangements. The Council considered this should be increased to 15 members which should also result in the council size increasing by one to 54.

27 We undertook an allocation exercise of members to different parts of the borough to establish whether a council size of 54 would provide for better electoral equality across the borough. We noted that under council sizes of 53 and 54 the Tonbridge area would be allocated 15 members. Our investigations indicated that under a council size of 54 the additional councillor would actually be allocated to the north eastern area of the borough.

28 With this in mind, we are therefore not persuaded by the evidence received from the Council to support a council size of 54. We have therefore based our draft recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling on a council size of 53.

## Electoral fairness

29 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations will provide for electoral fairness, reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

30 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The borough average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough (89,894 in 2011 and 96,075 by 2018) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 53 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 1,696 in 2011 and 1,813 by 2018.

31 Under our draft recommendations, all of our proposed 24 wards will have electoral variances of less than 10% from the average for the borough by 2018. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness for Tonbridge & Malling.

## General analysis

32 As discussed in paragraph 25, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council proposed a borough-wide scheme based on a council size of 54 members, one more than our proposed council size of 53. This comprised one single-member ward, 16 two-member wards and seven three-member wards.

33 The Council's scheme would provide reasonable electoral equality, with two wards having greater than 10% fewer electors than the borough average by 2018. Where parishes existed, the scheme used parishes and existing parish wards as the building blocks of the proposed warding patterns.

34 The Council provided some evidence of community identity and convenient and effective local government across the scheme, detailing each ward on an individual basis. The Council put their scheme out to consultation with members and interested local parties, and subsequently provided extra evidence relating to community identity in their proposed Medway ward.

35 Across the borough, we have broadly accepted the Council's schemes, subject to amendments to ensure that we provide the best balance between our statutory criteria. Our proposals also differ from those of the Council because as discussed in paragraphs 26–8, we have based our warding pattern on a council size of 53.

36 Our draft recommendations are for a pattern of one single-member ward, 17 two-member wards, and six three-member wards. We consider our draft recommendations to provide good electoral equality while providing an accurate reflection of community identities and interests where we have received such evidence.

37 A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table B1 (on pages 23–5) and Map 1.

38 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations. We also particularly welcome comments on the ward names we have proposed as part of the draft recommendations.

## Electoral arrangements

39 This section of the report details the proposals we have received, our consideration of them, and our draft recommendations for each area of Tonbridge & Malling. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Tonbridge (pages 9–10)
- Central Tonbridge & Malling (pages 10–11)
- North East Tonbridge & Malling (pages 12–14)

40 Details of the draft recommendations are set out in Table B1 on pages 23–5 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

### Tonbridge

41 Tonbridge comprises the unparished greater Tonbridge area in the south of the borough. It is largely urban, focused around the settlement of Tonbridge, with rural areas on its northern fringes. The electorate in this area is predicted to grow moderately, with the majority of the growth forecast occurring in the proposed Medway ward.

42 The existing wards for this area are the two-member wards of Cage Green, Castle, Judd, Medway, Trench and Vauxhall, and the three-member ward of Higham. These wards are projected to have 9% fewer, 4% more, equal to, 30% more, 18% fewer, 1% more and 14% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

43 The Council proposed a warding pattern for Tonbridge relatively similar to the current warding arrangements, with some amendments to provide for improved electoral equality. However, the Council's proposed Medway ward would still have 12% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

44 We noted that the Council's proposed warding pattern for Tonbridge crossed the railway lines in the area in several places. We initially investigated whether it was possible to configure a warding pattern for the Tonbridge area that used the railway lines as easily identifiable boundaries. We also visited the area to assess on the ground whether the railway lines presented barriers between communities. Our investigations indicated that it was not possible to use the railway lines in the area as ward boundaries as doing so would result in wards with unreasonable levels of electoral equality. In addition, from our visit to the area we considered that the railway lines did not present barriers between communities. We particularly noted the good crossing points across the railway lines in the area.

45 In light of the above we have broadly adopted the Council's warding arrangements for the Tonbridge area as part of our draft recommendations. However, we have proposed some modifications to address the issues surrounding internal ward access and electoral equality.

46 We have proposed modifications to the Council's proposed wards of Castle, Judd, Medway and Cage Green. We were concerned that the Council's proposed Judd ward did not have complete internal road access. We therefore propose transferring a small area west of Tonbridge High Street, centred on Danvers Road

and Avebury Avenue, from the proposed Castle ward to the proposed Judd ward. This maintains internal ward access within Judd ward, as the one-way system around Barden Road is such that otherwise it would not have been possible to travel from south of the railway line in Judd ward to the area in the ward north of the railway line. This would result in our Judd ward having 6% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

47 We also propose a further modification to the Council's proposed Castle ward. We were concerned that under the Council proposed warding pattern for Tonbridge it included a Medway ward which would have 12% fewer electors than the borough average by 2018. We were not persuaded that this level of electoral inequality could be justified nor did we consider we had received community identity evidence to support such a variance.

48 In order to improve the electoral equality of the proposed Medway ward we propose including the area around Portman Park in our proposed Medway ward. This area was included by the Council in its proposed Castle ward. To further improve the electoral equality of our proposed Medway ward we have also decided to include the properties up to 147 Hadlow Road in our proposed Medway ward. The Council proposed these properties be included in the proposed Cage Green ward. These modifications result in our proposed wards of Medway, Castle and Cage Green having 8% fewer, 5% fewer and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively. We consider our proposed draft recommendations for these wards provide for good electoral equality and ensure internal ward access.

49 The Council proposed two-member wards for Trench and Higham. These wards would have 1% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively. We consider these wards provide for good electoral equality and reflect community identity. We have therefore decided to adopt these wards as part of our draft recommendations.

50 Our proposed draft recommendations for the Tonbridge area would create two-member Cage Green, Castle, Higham, Judd, Trench and Vauxhall wards, and a three-member Medway ward. These wards are projected to have 2% fewer, 5% fewer, 2% more, 6% more, 1% fewer, 1% more and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

## Central Tonbridge & Malling

51 The rural area in the centre of the borough comprises the parished area from Hildenborough in the south west to Birling in the north east. Although the area is rural there are some larger settlements in the area, such as Hildenborough, Hadlow, Borough Green and East Peckham. While electorate growth across this area is mostly static, there is some growth forecast as a result of developments in the Ryarsh and Borough Green parishes.

52 The existing wards in this area are the single-member wards of Ightham; Watringbury; and Wrotham; the two-member wards of Downs; East Peckham & Golden Green; Hadlow, Mereworth & West Peckham; and Hildenborough; and the three-member ward of Borough Green & Long Mill. These wards are projected to have 13% fewer, 11% fewer, 22% fewer, 2% fewer, 14% fewer, 5% fewer, 8% more and 6% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

53 The Council proposed a warding pattern for the rural area which was based on existing parish and parish ward boundaries. The Council also proposed wards which were similar to existing wards, albeit with some amendments in order to address electoral equality.

54 The Council proposed a single-member Wateringbury ward with 10% fewer electors than the borough average by 2018. The Council justified this variance on the basis of Wateringbury being a distinct community from those that surround it. The Council also proposed creating a Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted ward, a combined Hadlow & East Peckham ward, and a geographically large Downs & Mereworth ward in the centre of the borough. This ward would comprise the parishes of Addington, Birling, Mereworth, Offham, Ryarsh, Trottiscliffe and West Peckham. The remaining proposed wards in this area were the same as the existing borough wards.

55 We noted that, on the whole, the Council's proposed warding pattern for this area provided for good electoral equality and wards with good transport links. However, we were quite concerned that the level of electoral equality of the Council's proposed Wateringbury ward is worsening considerably during the 2011–18. Due to this and the geographic size of the proposed Downs & Mereworth ward, we have proposed modifications to these wards.

56 We are proposing a two-member Mereworth & Wateringbury ward as part of our draft recommendations. This proposal would incorporate the parishes of Mereworth, Offham, Wateringbury, West Peckham, and the Wrotham Heath settlement in the south west of Addington parish. This ward would have 8% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. We consider that this proposal provides for good electoral equality and provides for coherent transport links.

57 We are also proposing creating a single-member Downs ward including the remainder of Addington parish, along with Birling and Trottiscliffe parishes and a section of Ryarsh parish north of the M20. We noted from our visit to the area that the Leybourne development in Ryarsh parish straddles the parish boundary. We have therefore sought to not split this development and include it wholly within one ward. We have decided to include this development in our proposed West Malling & Leybourne ward. This requires the parish of Ryarsh to be divided between borough wards. We have divided Ryarsh parish using the M20 as we consider this boundary is easily identifiable. Our proposed Downs ward would have 6% fewer electors than the borough average by 2018.

58 Across the rest of the central rural area of Tonbridge & Malling, we are adopting the Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations. We consider that these proposed wards provide for good electoral equality while maintaining community links.

59 Our draft recommendations for rural central Tonbridge & Malling would create a single-member Downs ward, two-member Hildenborough, Mereworth & Wateringbury, and Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted wards, and three-member Borough Green & Long Mill, and Hadlow & East Peckham wards. These wards are projected to have 6% fewer, 8% more, 8% fewer, 6% fewer, 6% more and 5% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

## North East Tonbridge & Malling

60 The north eastern area of the borough combines both urban and rural areas. The urban areas include the settlements of Snodland, Larkfield, Leybourne, Aylesford, Ditton, East Malling, West Malling and Kings Hill. It also includes a section of Walderslade, in the far north-east of the borough, although the majority of the Walderslade settlement lies outside Tonbridge & Malling borough. The entirety of this area is parished.

61 Electorate growth forecasts in this area are moderate although, as noted in paragraphs 17–22, we have accepted the Council's projections with amendments relating to the Peter's Village and Preston Hall developments. The majority of the remainder of development is split between the Leybourne and Snodland areas. We are content that the growth forecast in these areas represents the best estimate at this time.

62 The existing wards in this area are the two-member wards of Aylesford; Blue Bell Hill & Walderslade; Burham, Eccles & Wouldham; East Malling; Kings Hill; Larkfield North; Larkfield South; and Snodland East; and the three-member wards of Snodland West; and West Malling & Leybourne. These wards are projected to have 16% more, 10% fewer, equal to, 1% fewer, 60% more, 1% more, 13% fewer, 17% fewer, 1% more and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

63 The Council's proposals for this area sought to use whole parishes where possible but divided parishes where necessary in order to achieve good levels of electoral equality. We have adopted some of the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations. However, we have proposed a number of modifications in order to ensure good internal communication links within wards is maintained, and also to balance electoral equality in light of the issues regarding electorate projections.

64 We are proposing amendments to the Council's proposed wards of Snodland West & Holborough Lakes and Snodland East & Ham Hill in order to provide for good internal communication links. The Council's proposal in this area would cut off the development around Holborough Lakes from the rest of the Snodland West & Holborough Lakes ward. We therefore propose moving the ward boundary so that it runs down the A228. This ensures that our Snodland West & Holborough Lakes ward has good internal communication links. This modification results in our wards of Snodland West & Holborough Lakes and Snodland East & Ham Hill having 4% fewer and 10% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

65 We are also proposing a number of modifications to the Council's proposed wards of Burham & Wouldham and Aylesford & North Downs. The reason for these modifications is because, as discussed in paragraphs 17–22, we have reservations about the electorate forecasts for this area. We therefore propose that the parish ward of Eccles be included in the Council's proposed Burham & Wouldham ward. This ward would be represented by two members and have equal to the average number of electors per councillor by 2018. We visited this area as part of our tour of the borough. We noted from our tour that the character of the Burham and Eccles communities was similar and that they shared good communication links. We



consider our proposed Burham, Eccles & Wouldham ward provides for good electoral equality and reflects community identity. We have therefore decided to adopt this ward as part of our draft recommendations.

66 As mentioned above, we are also proposing a number of modifications to the Council's proposed Aylesford & North Downs ward. We propose a two-member Aylesford North & Walderslade ward, which incorporates the communities of Walderslade, Blue Bell Hill, and the area of Aylesford north of the River Medway. We note that the areas of Walderslade and Blue Bell Hill are distant from Aylesford geographically but our investigations established that it would not be possible to place the communities of Walderslade and Blue Bell Hill in a ward alone while still achieving good levels of electoral equality. We propose that the southern boundary of this ward follow the River Medway. We noted that the Aylesford community is divided by the River Medway, M20 and a railway line. We considered that the River Medway provided the most easily identifiable boundary in this area. Our proposed Aylesford North & Walderslade ward would have 8% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. We have therefore decided to adopt this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

67 We are also proposing a number of modifications to the Council's proposed wards of Aylesford South, Ditton, Larkfield South and East Malling. These modifications are to ensure that all these wards have good internal communication links. We noted that under the Council's proposal a small section of Aylesford parish centred on Robson Drive would be included in the proposed Aylesford South ward. We were concerned that this road accesses entirely through Ditton ward and therefore the Council's proposal would not provide good internal communications links. We have therefore decided to include Robson Drive in our proposed Ditton ward. This would result in our Aylesford South ward having 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

68 We are also proposing further modifications to the Council's proposed Ditton ward. We were concerned that the Council's proposed Ditton ward included a section of Ditton parish north of the M20 which has no vehicular access through Ditton parish to the area to the south of the M20. We were also concerned that the western boundary of the proposed Ditton ward did not reflect communities in the area. We noted that a large development had been built which straddles the boundary between the parishes of Ditton and East Malling and Larkfield, which under the Council's proposed warding arrangements would be divided between wards.

69 To the north, we propose moving the section of Ditton parish north of the M20 and a section of the existing Larkfield North ward to the east of New Hythe Lane into our proposed Larkfield South ward. This modification ensures good internal communication links between the northern and southern parts of this ward. We also propose that the development which straddles the parish boundaries of Ditton and East Malling and Larkfield should not be split between wards. We toured the area around Blackthorn Drive, Bell Lane, Oak Drive and Fernleigh Rise and considered it should be included in our proposed Larkfield South ward. This ensures that this residential estate is not split between borough wards. This would result in our Ditton ward having 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

70 We also propose a minor modification between the wards of Larkfield South and East Malling. We consider that the boundary should run completely along London Road rather than departing to the southern side behind backs of properties as

proposed by the Council. We consider that London Road provides for an easily identifiable boundary. Our proposed Larkfield South and East Malling wards would have 4% more and 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

71 Our draft recommendations for north eastern Tonbridge & Malling would create two-member wards of: Aylesford North & Walderslade; Aylesford South; Burham, Eccles & Wouldham; Ditton; East Malling; Larkfield North; Larkfield South; and Snodland East & Ham Hill; and three-member wards of: Kings Hill; West Malling & Leybourne and Snodland West & Holborough Lakes. These wards are projected to have 8% more, 6% fewer, equal to, 6% fewer, 1% more, 4% fewer, 4% more, 10% fewer, 7% more, 9% more and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

## Conclusions

72 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2011 and 2018 electorate figures.

**Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements**

	Draft recommendations	
	2011	2018
Number of councillors	53	53
Number of electoral wards	24	24
Average number of electors per councillor	1,696	1,813
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	6	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

**Draft recommendation**  
 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council should comprise 53 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Table B1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

## Parish electoral arrangements

73 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.

74 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.

75 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Addington, Aylesford, Ditton, East Malling and Larkfield, Ryarsh and Snodland.

76 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Addington parish.

**Draft recommendation**

Addington Parish Council should return seven parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Addington East (returning four members) and Addington West (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2b.

77 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Aylesford parish.

**Draft recommendation**

Aylesford Parish Council should return 20 parish councillors, as at present, representing six wards: Aylesford North (returning two members), Aylesford Robson Drive (returning one member), Aylesford South (returning seven members), Blue Bell Hill (returning two members), Eccles (returning three members) and Walderslade (returning five members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2a.

78 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Ditton parish.

**Draft recommendation**

Ditton Parish Council should return 13 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Ditton North (returning two members) and Ditton South (returning 11 members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2a.

79 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for East Malling and Larkfield parish.

**Draft recommendation**

East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council should return 17 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: East Malling (returning six members), Larkfield North (returning five members), and Larkfield South (returning six members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2a.

80 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Ryarsh parish.

**Draft recommendation**

Ryarsh Parish Council should return seven parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Ryarsh North (returning four members) and Ryarsh South (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2b.

81 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Snodland parish.

**Draft recommendation**

Snodland Parish Council should return 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Snodland East & Ham Hill (returning six members) and Snodland West & Holborough Lakes (returning nine members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2a.

### 3 What happens next?

82 There will now be a consultation period of 10 weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 25 June 2012. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

83 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Tonbridge & Malling and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names and parish electoral arrangements. We would welcome alternative proposals backed up by demonstrable evidence during the consultation. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

84 Express your views by writing directly to:

**Review Officer  
Tonbridge & Malling Review  
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
Layden House  
76–86 Turnmill Street  
London EC1M 5LG**

[reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk) or by emailing [reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)

85 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all the representations received will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and at our offices in Layden House (London) and on our website at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk). A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

86 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

87 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

88 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft

Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the next elections for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council in 2015.

89 This report has been screened for impact on equalities; with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.

## 4 Mapping

### Draft recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling

90 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2a** illustrates the proposed wards in the north east of Tonbridge & Malling.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2b** illustrates the proposed wards in Addington and Ryarsh.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2c** illustrates the proposed wards in Kings Hill.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed wards in the south of Tonbridge & Malling.

# Appendix A

## Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
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 fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	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. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections



Local Government Boundary Commission for England or LGBCE	The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Commission for England in April 2010
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at <a href="http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk">www.nationalparks.gov.uk</a>
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 vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Commission for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision-making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at <a href="http://www.nalc.gov.uk">www.nalc.gov.uk</a>
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

## Appendix B

**Table B1: Draft recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2011)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2018)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1	Aylesford North & Walderslade	2	3,853	1,927	14%	3,901	1,951	8%
2	Aylesford South	2	3,066	1,533	-10%	3,411	1,706	-6%
3	Borough Green & Long Mill	3	5,317	1,772	4%	5,754	1,918	6%
4	Burham, Eccles & Wouldham	2	3,440	1,720	1%	3,629	1,815	0%
5	Cage Green	2	3,534	1,767	4%	3,546	1,773	-2%
6	Castle	2	3,312	1,656	-2%	3,442	1,721	-5%
7	Ditton	2	3,369	1,685	-1%	3,392	1,696	-6%
8	Downs	1	1,476	1,476	-13%	1,701	1,701	-6%
9	East Malling	2	3,561	1,781	5%	3,651	1,826	1%
10	Hadlow & East Peckham	3	5,694	1,898	12%	5,721	1,907	5%

**Table B1 (cont.): Draft recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council**

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11 Higham	2	3,683	1,842	9%	3,702	1,851	2%
12 Hildenborough	2	3,839	1,920	13%	3,907	1,954	8%
13 Judd	2	3,452	1,726	2%	3,832	1,916	6%
14 Kings Hill	3	4,940	1,647	-3%	5,815	1,938	7%
15 Larkfield North	2	3,488	1,744	3%	3,495	1,748	-4%
16 Larkfield South	2	3,729	1,865	10%	3,787	1,894	4%
17 Medway	3	4,073	1,358	-20%	4,990	1,663	-8%
18 Mereworth & Wateringbury	2	3,288	1,644	-3%	3,319	1,660	-8%
19 Snodland East & Ham Hill	2	3,178	1,589	-6%	3,264	1,632	-10%
20 Snodland West & Holborough Lakes	3	4,293	1,431	-16%	5,234	1,745	-4%
21 Trench	2	3,575	1,788	5%	3,579	1,790	-1%
22 Vauxhall	2	3,462	1,731	2%	3,654	1,827	1%

**Table B1 (cont.): Draft recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2011)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2018)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
23	West Malling & Leybourne	3	4,715	1,572	-7%	5,924	1,975	9%
24	Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted	2	3,343	1,672	-1%	3,425	1,713	-6%
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>89,894</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>96,075</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,696</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,813</b>	<b>-</b>

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 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.