1. **Introduction & Context**

1.1. **Purpose**

1.1.1. The purpose of this Topic Paper is to explain the exceptional circumstances for the alterations to the boundaries of the Metropolitan Green Belt falling within Tonbridge and Malling borough.

1.1.2. This includes alterations that have resulted in land being taken out of the Green Belt as well as land being put in the Green Belt.

1.1.3. This Paper needs to be read in conjunction with the Spatial Strategy and Site Selection Topic Papers which explain the processes that were followed to determine the scale and distribution of the development strategy.

1.1.4. This Paper is divided into three chapters:

   - Chapter 1 (remainder) – This sets out the key influences on the exceptional circumstances case, the relevant legal judgement on exceptional circumstances and national policy
   - Chapter 2 – This sets out the site specific exceptional circumstances for all of the intrusions into the Green Belt that feature in the submitted Local Plan
   - Chapter 3 – This sets out the exceptional circumstances for the alterations to the outer boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt.

1.1.5. The Paper finishes with a conclusion on the matters set out in the preceding chapters.

1.2. **Key Influences on the Exceptional Circumstances Case**

1.2.1. The key influences on the exceptional circumstances case are:

   - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012), section 9
   - Planning Practice Guidance: Housing and economic land availability assessment (2014)
   - Housing Requirement for the Local Plan (also see the Housing Topic Paper)
• Housing Market Areas (please also see the Spatial Strategy Topic Paper)
• Council’s desire to deliver significant transformational infrastructure for the benefit of existing as well as new communities (please also see the Spatial Strategy and Site Selection Topic Papers)
• Call for Sites Assessment (September 2016)
• Green Belt Stage One Report (September 2016)
• Regulation 18 Consultation responses
• Housing Delivery Study (September 2017)
• Transport Assessment (June 2018 & Addendum, August 2018)
• Green Belt Stage Two Report (August 2018)

1.2.2. This Paper examines how these influences have shaped the decision on the exceptional circumstances for altering the boundaries of the Metropolitan Green Belt.

1.2.3. The Council is mindful of the High Court case Calverton Parish Council v Nottingham City Council, Case Number: CO/4846/2014, which sets out factors that ideally would be considered in identifying exceptional circumstances. The factors are (in order):

i. the acuteness/intensity of the objectively assessed need
ii. the inherent constraints on supply/availability of land prima facie suitable for sustainable development
iii. the consequent difficulties in achieving sustainable development without impinging on the Green Belt
iv. the nature and extent of the harm to this Green Belt
v. the extent to which the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt may be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent

1.2.4. This Paper responds to these points in the explanation of the exceptional circumstances case. In respect of points iv and v outlined above, the Paper treats these together under the heading ‘Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts’.

1.2.5. The Paper initially focusses on those pieces of land that have been removed from the Green Belt in the submitted Local Plan, starting with the most significant parcels. It then explains the alteration to the outer boundary to include more land in the Green Belt.
Key Influences - National Planning Policy Framework

1.2.6. The starting point for the exceptional circumstances case was the Government’s NPPF (March 2012). This starting point shaped the approach the Council adopted for making alterations to the boundaries of the Green Belt.

1.2.7. Para. 83 in the NPPF makes it clear that the review of the Local Plan is the only time Green Belt boundaries can be altered, and only in exceptional circumstances.

1.2.8. In addition, para.84 in the NPPF makes it clear that when reviewing the Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. This includes consequences for sustainable development of, for example, channelling development towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.

1.2.9. In respect of this last point it is important to be mindful of the split of the Housing Market Areas (HMAs) exerting an influence over the borough. This is explained in more detail in the Spatial Strategy Topic Paper, including Figure 1 which is set out below.

1.2.10. It should be noted that the part of the borough falling within the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA is wholly within the Metropolitan Green Belt, with the exceptions of those settlements not washed over by the designation.

1.2.11. The influence of these two HMAs on the borough gave rise to the following issues that the Council took account of when making the Local Plan and when taking decisions on the exceptional circumstances for making alterations to the Green Belt:

- Distribution of housing need within each HMA – (see ‘Housing Requirement’ section below);
- Capacity of each HMA to deliver homes to effectively address the need (see Housing Market Capacity (Market Absorption section of the Spatial Strategy Topic Paper); and
- Opportunities for supporting sustainable patterns of development, i.e. delivering homes to meet the needs where they are generated (see para.84 in the NPPF and the Green Belt Stage Two Report (August 2018))
Key Influences - Housing Requirement

1.2.12. The housing requirement for the borough was established in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (September 2016). This document is available from the Examination Library web page: www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary. For plan-making the housing requirement is 13,920 dwellings across the plan period (2011-2031) or 696 dwellings per annum (dpa).

1.2.13. The Housing Topic Paper (January 2019) highlights the current Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) taking account of the latest Household Projections
(2016-based) published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This resulted in an Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) of between 664 dpa and 690 dpa. Having regard to the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance, the conclusion was that this does not amount to a meaningful change to the housing requirement that informed plan-making of 696 dpa. This is explained in more detail in the Housing Topic Paper.

1.2.14. The SHMA also highlighted (Table 13) that the split of households in each HMA is roughly 50:50, (please see Table 1 below):

**Table 1: Proportion of Local Authorities in each HMA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Maidstone HMA</th>
<th>Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells HMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tonbridge &amp; Malling</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SHMA (September 2016)

1.2.15. This even split of households and the resultant housing need across the two HMAS was a key influence on the shaping of the development strategy across the borough. The Council was mindful that if a truly sustainable pattern of development is to be delivered through the Local Plan process then the development strategy needs to respond effectively to the distribution of need, taking account of constraints and other pieces of evidence on matters including transport and housing market capacity.

**Key Influences - Acuteness of Need**

1.2.16. An indication of the acuteness of the OAN and the pressing need to meet it in full through the Local Plan process is the housing affordability ratio for the borough. This is touched on in the Spatial Strategy Topic Paper and replicated here (see Table 2 below). This table highlights that the lower quartile affordability ratio, i.e. the ratio most relevant for those households accessing the housing market for the first time, is significant and worsening. This demonstrates that Tonbridge and Malling borough is an area experiencing high housing pressure.

**Table 2: Lower Quartile Housing Affordability Ratio**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Increase 2014-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashford</td>
<td>9.41</td>
<td>10.06</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>+1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidstone</td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>9.96</td>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>+2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonbridge and Malling</td>
<td>10.35</td>
<td>12.47</td>
<td>13.25</td>
<td>+2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>10.93</td>
<td>+2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>6.91</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>7.29</td>
<td>+0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office for National Statistics
Key Influences - Availability of Suitable and Deliverable Sites Outside of the Green Belt

1.2.17. The Regulation 18 Local Plan sets out the potential yield that could be achieved from ‘building block’ sites. These are suitable and deliverable sites identified through the Call for Sites exercise (see www.tmbc.gov.uk/callforsites) that fall within the following categories:

- brownfield land within the built-up confines;
- on land safeguarded in the adopted Development Plan to meet longer-term needs (including the area of opportunity at Bushey Wood); and
- on land within existing settlements at low or no risk of flooding.

1.2.18. The building blocks are defined as key requirements of national planning policy, i.e. the starting point for a sustainable development strategy in a Local Plan. These are explained in more detail in the Regulation 18 Plan and in the Site Selection Topic Paper.

1.2.19. The outcome of this exercise was that these building block sites would deliver fewer than 2,500 new dwellings. This is highlighted in the Green Belt Stage Two Report. When this is read in light of the net need for the Local Plan of 5,862 dwellings¹ (please see Table 1 in the Housing Topic Paper), it is evident that if sustainable patterns of development are to be pursued through the Local Plan additional land beyond settlement confines within the Green Belt needs to be considered for development in order for the housing requirement to be met in full plus some flexibility to respond to rapid change.

Key Influences - Green Belt Stage One Report (September 2016)

1.2.20. One of the key factors was how various parcels of Green Belt performed against the purposes prescribed in para.80 of the NPPF. The purposes are:

1. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
4. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
5. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

1.2.21. The outcomes of this assessment feature in the Green Belt Study: Stage 1 Report (September 2016). This assessment explains that for Tonbridge & Malling the focus is on the first four purposes. The Study is available from the Examination Library web page: www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary. Table 3

¹ as at 31st March 2018
(below) sets out a summary of the results for certain settlements. The overall assessment has scored the performance of each parcel against each purpose as follows: Well (3 points); Moderately Well (2 points), Limited or No Contribution (1 point).

1.2.22. The table focuses on those settlements at or close to the top of the settlement hierarchy (see Figure 2 in the Spatial Strategy Topic Paper) surrounded by or adjacent to the Green Belt and where the Local Plan proposes development, i.e. those particular parts of the borough where exceptional cases need to be made. Offham features in the Table because a small allocation (15 dwellings) features in the Local Plan within the grounds of an existing property that lies within the existing confines on the main road frontage. The rationale for this particular allocation features in the site specific exceptional circumstances case in Chapter 2 of this Paper.

1.2.23. These outcomes have informed the decision-making on the exceptional circumstances for the alterations proposed in the submitted Local Plan.

Table 3: Green Belt Parcels – Performance against Purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parcel</th>
<th>Purpose 1</th>
<th>Purpose 2</th>
<th>Purpose 3</th>
<th>Purpose 4</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tonbridge - TO1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonbridge - TO2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonbridge - TO3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonbridge - TO4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonbridge - TO5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonbridge - TO6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Service Centre – Borough Green</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Service Centre - East Peckham (inc. Hale Street)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Service Centre - Hadlow</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Service Centre - Hildenborough</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Service Centre – West Malling</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Settlement – Offham</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.24. It is evident from Table 3 (above) that there is no single parcel of land that performs particularly poorly overall, against the four purposes. Tonbridge parcel TO4 (see Figure 3 for location) is the worst performing parcel, although against two of the purposes it performs moderately well. Therefore, whilst regard has been given to the functioning of the Green Belt proposed to be removed, in terms of exceptional circumstances, the Council took account of other factors to justify the case for alterations. These other factors are...
highlighted at the beginning of this Topic Paper (‘Key Influences’) and include:

- Acuteness of housing need
- Housing Market Areas
- Settlement Hierarchy
- Desire to promote sustainable patterns of development (para.84 in the NPPF 2012)
- Desire to support and sustain communities across the borough (Plan Objective 2 in the Regulation 18 Local Plan).

1.2.25. Given that the housing need is, in effect, evenly split across the two HMAs and the fact that the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA is wholly covered by the Green Belt (with the exception of defined settlements not washed over) as well as taking account of the high degree of housing pressure and the need to promote sustainable patterns of development across the borough, the Council is of the view that intrusions into the Green Belt defined in the adopted Development Plan are required.

1.2.26. Given this starting point, the rest of this Topic Paper identifies the decisions behind the site-specific intrusions followed by the justification for the alteration to the outer boundary. The exceptional circumstances at the strategic level are set out in the Green Belt Stage Two Report (August 2018) which is available from the Examination Library web page: [www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary). This Topic Paper elaborates and details the exceptional circumstances at a site level. For each intrusion, the relevant extract from the ‘Changes to the Proposals Map’ document (January 2019) is included. This document is available from the Examination Library web page: [www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary).
2. Site-Specific Exceptional Circumstances Cases

2.1. Explanation of Assessment

2.1.1. Each site-specific alteration to the Green Belt boundary is framed by the key influences outlined earlier in this Topic Paper and by the Calverton legal judgement summarised at paras. 1.2.3 and 1.2.4. Each assessment explains:

- The rationale for focussing on this particular location
- The availability of suitable and deliverable development sites (see Call for Sites exercise: www.tmbc.gov.uk/callforsites)
- A description of the site and its relationship with the adjacent settlement
- Other evidence that had a bearing on the scale of development, eg Transport Assessment
- Potential harm to the Green Belt and how these can be minimised.
- Exceptional Circumstances Conclusions

2.1.2. Please note: In terms of potential harm, it is not assumed that all of the purposes that the existing Green Belt parcel contributes to will be affected by the proposed removal of the specific site. A judgement is made at the site specific level, taking account of the size and relationship of the site with the adjacent settlement.

2.1.3. The chapter focusses initially on the largest intrusion into the Green Belt at Borough Green. For Borough Green, the case also highlights a unique set of circumstances. The chapter then proceeds to look at other intrusions within the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA followed by the site specific intrusions that fall within the Maidstone HMA.
2.2. Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA: Intrusions into the Green Belt - Borough Green

Figure 2: Proposed Alteration to the Green Belt Boundary at Borough Green

2.2.1. **Settlement Hierarchy** - Borough Green is a rural service centre located in the north-west part of the borough. As a rural service centre, it features high up the settlement hierarchy (see Policy LP5 in the submitted Local Plan). Of the rural service centres, Borough Green can demonstrate the strongest sustainable credentials because it includes a station on the mainline to London, schools (primary and secondary), community and healthcare provision and shops and recreational facilities. With this in mind it makes sense to consider intrusions into the Green Belt at this location within this particular HMA if sustainable patterns of development are to be pursued across the borough.

2.2.2. The submitted Local Plan includes the removal of 135 ha of land from the Green Belt north of Borough Green to accommodate the allocation of Borough Green Gardens development (1,720 units during the plan period up to 2031) plus the safeguarding of land to meet future needs beyond the plan period. The relevant policies in the submitted Local Plan are: LP25 (h); LP29 and LP32.
2.2.3. **Delivery Mechanism for Relief Road** - As highlighted in Policy LP29, an integral part of the development is the delivery of a relief road for Borough Green. The need for a relief road or bypass for Borough Green has been established for at least 40 years, featuring in various generations of Development Plans and Local Transport Plans (please see the para.116 Topic Paper for more details). One of the principal reasons why it has not been implemented is the lack of a delivery mechanism. The development of Borough Green Gardens will provide that mechanism. Without the development of housing the relief road will not be built.

2.2.4. **Unique Set of Circumstances** – The circumstances present at Borough Green are unique; they cannot be replicated elsewhere within the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA. The development of Borough Green Gardens will enable the delivery of a strategic piece of infrastructure for the benefit of the centre and local community. This full relief road will not be delivered without the development. Equally, the development of Borough Green Gardens cannot acceptably happen without the relief road being an integral part of the scheme. Without it, the existing infrastructure will not support that level of development, with potential significant harmful consequences for the local environment and economy.

2.2.5. **Transformational Benefits** – The development of Borough Green Gardens will provide transformational benefits for existing as well as new communities and the local environment.

2.2.6. The delivery of the relief road is forecast to significantly reduce flows of traffic at key junctions within the Air Quality Management Area. This is highlighted by the future 2031 traffic flows (without and with the Local Plan development) for junctions 28 and 29 in Figures 75, 76, 104 and 105 of the Transport Assessment (May 2018, Appendices B and C). The relevant extracts are set out in Appendix 1 to this Topic Paper. These are also highlighted in the para.116 Topic Paper. For example, east bound traffic on the A25 at the junction with Western Road is forecast to reduce during the PM Peak from 602 passenger carrying units (PCUs) (2031 baseline, without the Local Plan) to 66 PCUs (2031, with the Local Plan, including the relief road). In addition, north-bound traffic on the A227 Wrotham Road from the junction with Western Road and the High Street is forecast to reduce during the PM Peak from 471 PCUs (2031 baseline, without the Local Plan) to 189 PCUs (2031, with the Local Plan, including the relief road).

2.2.7. The reduced flows result in reduced queuing and better flowing traffic which in turn benefits the air quality in the local area. These benefits to the local air
quality will be enhanced by predicted background improvements to emissions from motorised vehicles.

2.2.8. As well as environmental improvements, the development of Borough Green Gardens will also deliver economic and social benefits. The construction of this strategic site will create a significant number of jobs whilst the new home owners will provide customers and potential workers to support local services, facilities and businesses. The development will boost the size of the local community which will help maintain schools and community groups and clubs.

2.2.9. **Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts** - In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt, the removal of this site could erode the moderate performance of the parcel of land around Borough Green in respect of the purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl, preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another, assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. This could result in quite significant harm. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that a significant proportion of the site is conterminous with the rural service centre of Borough Green to the south and a large section to the north is bounded by the M26 motorway. In terms of minimising wider impacts on the local environment, provisions within the Strategic Site Policy in the Local Plan (LP29) address potential impacts on the Kent Downs AONB and its setting. Furthermore, the masterplan required by Policy LP29 will need to take account of the openness of the adjacent Green Belt. Finally development would need to comply with the requirements of Policies LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ and LP5 ‘Settlement Hierarchy’ in the submitted Local Plan.

2.2.10. **Exceptional Circumstances Conclusion** - It is the view of the Council that the unique set of circumstance present at Borough Green, coupled with the transformational economic, social and environmental benefits associated with the development which will significantly address the assessed need for housing at a sustainable location within this HMA, are the exceptional circumstances for making an alteration to the Green Belt boundary at this location. These exceptional circumstances outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt and the local environment that can be minimised through master planning and compliance with development management policies in the submitted Local Plan.
Platt

2.2.11. In light of the factors outlined in para. 1.2.24 of this Topic Paper and the fact that the submitted Plan does not propose any housing development at this location, the Council has reconsidered the matter and concludes that there is no imperative to alter the Green Belt boundary at Platt (see site with blue circle on Figure 2). Therefore there are no exceptional circumstances to make any changes. As a consequence, the Council proposes the deletion of this alteration from the Changes to the Proposals Map document as a modification to the submitted Plan.

2.3. Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA: Other Intrusions into the Green Belt – Tonbridge & Hilden Park

2.3.1. Given the level of need across the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA and the limited availability of suitable and deliverable development sites within the settlement confines, the Council is of the view that additional intrusions into the Green Belt are needed if sustainable patterns of development are to be achieved, especially in light of the strong market values as identified by the Housing Delivery Study (September 2017). The starting point for the focus of this exercise was those settlements at or close to the top of the settlement hierarchy, i.e. urban areas and rural service centres. In the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA, these include:

- Tonbridge urban area, including Hilden Park
- Hadlow rural service centre
- East Peckham rural service centre.

2.3.2. As highlighted above, the unique set of circumstances presented at Borough Green are not replicated elsewhere within the HMA. With this in mind, the exceptional circumstances that apply for the removal of land from the Green Belt in the rest of the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA are focussed on other factors.

2.3.3. The parcels of Green Belt land around Tonbridge feature in Appendix A in the Green Belt Stage One Report. An extract from this illustrating the extent of the parcels is set out below.
Tonbridge (South-West)

2.3.4. Tonbridge is the principal town in the borough, lying at the top of the settlement hierarchy. For Tonbridge the starting point for the development strategy is the safeguarded land, i.e. white land between the outer boundary of the Green Belt and the settlement confines of the urban area, identified by Policy CP4 in the Council’s adopted Core Strategy (September 2007). For Tonbridge, this includes:

- North of Lower Haysden Land, Tonbridge
- North of Dry Hill Park Road, Tonbridge.

2.3.5. Given that these are safeguarded to meet longer-term needs beyond the time horizon of the adopted Development Plan (2021) it makes sense to start with these sites.

2.3.6. In terms of south-west Tonbridge (parcel TO3), the preparation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) highlighted the need for a new two form
entry primary school at this particular location. The IDP is available from the Examination Library web page: [www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary).

2.3.7. Through the process of plan-making, it was apparent that the size of the safeguarded land was insufficient to deliver homes and make land available for the development of a primary school. Given that there was no evidence of alternative opportunities to deliver this level of additional education provision at this broad location to support the growth of the local population, the Council took the view to remove land from the Green Belt surrounding the safeguarded land to secure the provision of new homes and a much needed new primary school (see Figure 4 below).

**Figure 4: Proposed Alteration to the Green Belt Boundary at South-West Tonbridge**

![Proposed Alteration to the Green Belt Boundary at South-West Tonbridge](image)

2.3.8. The Transport Assessment Addendum (August 2018) concluded that the closest junction to this site, Quarry Hill Road/Brook Street would, with some improvement, operate within capacity at 2031 with the level and type of development identified in the submitted Local Plan.

2.3.9. **Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts** - In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt, the removal of this site could erode the moderate performance of parcel TO3 in respect of the purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl, assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment and preserving the setting and special character of historic
towns. This could result in moderate harm to the Green Belt and its openness at this location. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that a significant proportion of the site is conterminous with the urban area of Tonbridge to the east and is bounded by the railway line to the north. In terms of minimising wider impacts on the local environment, Policy LP31 in the submitted Local Plan requires the development of the site to respect the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural (criterion 6). In addition, the masterplan required by Policy LP31 will need to take account of the openness of the adjacent Green Belt and make sure any impacts are minimised. Furthermore the development would need to comply with the requirements of Policy LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ in the submitted Plan.

2.3.10. **Exceptional Circumstances Conclusion** - Given the benefits of addressing the identified housing need at a sustainable location within this HMA and the delivery of additional primary school provision within Tonbridge, as well as taking account of the close relationship of the site with the built form of Tonbridge and the development management policies in the Local Plan designed to minimise impacts on the local environment, it is the view of the Council that exceptional circumstances exist for making an alteration to the Green Belt boundary at this location.

**Tonbridge (South-East)**

2.3.11. Table 3 (above) highlights that the worst performing parcel of Green Belt land against the four purposes was TO4. With this in mind and taking account of the acute need for housing and the desire to address this need where it arises in each HMA in order to promote sustainable patterns of development, the Council concluded that exceptional circumstances exist to justify looking at development opportunities at this location.
2.3.12. It should be noted that the majority of TO4 lies with the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Avoiding this high-level constraint restricts the scope and scale of development within this parcel. In terms of the availability of development sites, the Call for Sites exercise generated one housing site south of Vauxhall Gardens assessed as suitable and deliverable (see Figure 5). This abuts the built-up confines north of the A21. This site features in the submitted Local Plan (Policy LP25 (ad), 61 dwellings).

2.3.13. **Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts** - In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt, the removal of this site could erode the moderate performance of parcel TO4 in respect of the purposes of assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment. This would result in only limited harm to the Green Belt and its openness at this location. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that the northern boundary of the site is conterminous with the urban area of Tonbridge and the site bounded by highways to the east and south. In terms of minimising wider impacts on the local environment, any development taking place at this location would be required to meet the requirements of Policy LP12 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) regarding the setting of the High Weald AONB and Policy LP14 (Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design).
2.3.14. **Exceptional Circumstances Conclusion** - Given the benefit of addressing the identified housing need at a sustainable location within this HMA, as well as taking account of the close relationship of this relatively small site with the built form of Tonbridge and the development management policies in the Local Plan designed to minimise impacts on the local environment, it is the view of the Council that exceptional circumstances exist for making an alteration to the Green Belt boundary at this location.

**Tonbridge (East)**

2.3.15. In addition to helping to meet the assessed need for housing, the Council is mindful of the role Tonbridge can play in providing job opportunities for the growing community. The ‘Update of Employment Land Needs’ report (November 2017) identified a net need of 46.8 ha of employment land that the Local Plan needs to respond to. To help address this the Council has proposed the allocation of 10.8 ha of land at Little Postern, Postern Lane Tonbridge for employment development (B2 and B8 uses) (please see Figure 6 below). This site is located in parcel TO5 of Tonbridge.

*Figure 6: Proposed Alteration to the Green Belt Boundary East of Tonbridge*

2.3.16. This site will make a significant contribution to addressing the identified need - representing over 25% of the total land allocated in the Local Plan for employment land - at an urban area located at the top of the settlement.
hierarchy. The proposed allocation would complement adjacent employment uses.

2.3.17. **Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts** - In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt, the removal of this site could erode the performance of parcel TO5 in respect of the purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl and assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment. This could result in moderate harm to the Green Belt and its openness at this location. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that a significant proportion of the site is conterminous with the urban area of Tonbridge to the west. In terms of minimising wider impacts on the local environment, development would be required to comply with Policy LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ in the submitted Local Plan.

2.3.18. **Exceptional Circumstances Conclusion** - Given the benefit of making a significant contribution to addressing the identified employment land need at a sustainable location within this HMA as well as taking account of the close relationship of the site with the built form of Tonbridge and the development management policies in the Local Plan designed to minimise impacts on the local environment, it is the view of the Council that exceptional circumstances exist for making an alteration to the Green Belt boundary at this location.

**Tonbridge (West) – Hilden Park**

2.3.19. Given its close relationship with Tonbridge and the proximity of Hildenborough train station on the main line to London, the Council considers that Hilden Park in the western extent of the urban area represents a sustainable location to consider an intrusion into the Green Belt.
2.3.20. In terms of suitable and deliverable sites that could deliver a significant quantum of development to help address the assessed need for housing within this HMA, the Call for Sites identified a single site at this location with a main road frontage: land south of Stocks Green Road (see Figure 7). The conclusion was that this site could yield 105 units, which the Council considers to be proportionate to the scale of the adjoining Hilden Park as well as being realistically deliverable. The inclusion of this site within the Local Plan (Policy LP25 (x)) helps with the diversity of sites on offer which can help with delivery across the plan period as well as providing an opportunity for small to medium sized house builders to be actively involved within the local housing markets.

2.3.21. **Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts** - In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt and the local environment, the removal of this site could erode the performance of the parcel around Hilden Park and Hildenborough in respect of the purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl, assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. This could result in only limited harm to the Green Belt and its openness at this location. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that the site is conterminous with the urban area of Hilden Park to the east and north and is bounded by Stocks...
Green Road to the north and the railway line to the south. In terms of minimising wider impacts on the local environment, development would be required to meet the requirements of Policy LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ in the submitted Local Plan.

2.3.22. **Exceptional Circumstances Conclusion** - Given the benefit of addressing housing need at a sustainable location within this HMA in the form of a relatively small site, as well as taking account of the close relationship of the site with the built form of Hilden Park adjacent to Tonbridge and the development management policies in the Local Plan designed to minimise impacts on the local environment, it is the view of the Council that exceptional circumstances exist for making an alteration to the Green Belt boundary at this location.

**Tonbridge (North-West)**

2.3.23. In addition to the safeguarded site at Dry Hill Park, the Council is of the view that opportunities exist at this location to deliver development that will not only provide much needed new homes but will also facilitate the regeneration of local community and sports facilities. This includes opportunities to regenerate the Tonbridge Angels Football Club stadium and the adjoining Bowling Club - both of which occupy land owned by the Borough Council - through some enabling development.

**Figure 8: Proposed Alteration to the Green Belt Boundary North-West of Tonbridge**
2.3.24. This set of circumstances is unique to this part of Tonbridge; they are not replicated elsewhere. This site features in the submitted Local Plan (Policy LP25 (aa), 54 dwellings). To minimise impacts, the development would be required to comply with Policy LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ in the submitted Local Plan.

2.3.25. Given the commitment to address in full the housing requirement, plus some flexibility to adapt to change (please also see the Spatial Strategy Topic Paper, para. 3.6), and the fact that Tonbridge is the principal urban area in the borough at the top of the settlement hierarchy, the Council considered that in the interest of promoting sustainable patterns of development, exceptional circumstances exist to consider some additional development at this locality.

2.3.26. With this in mind, the Council has removed the Coblands Nursery site from the Green Belt and allocated it for 319 dwellings in the submitted Local Plan (Policy LP25 (ae)). This abuts the Tonbridge Farm site which is located to the south. These two intrusions build upon the existing safeguarded land (Core Strategy, Policy CP4) north of Dryhill Park Road which has been brought forward and allocated in the submitted Plan for 44 dwellings (Policy LP25 (ab). The Transport Assessment Addendum (August 2018) results (Table 112) indicate that the local highway network can support this level of combined growth in northern Tonbridge. However, it is evident from Table 112 in the Assessment that junctions in northern Tonbridge would struggle to support any additional significant development above the levels planned for (see Figure 9 below).

**Figure 9: Transport Assessment Addendum Results**

2.3.27. As highlighted by Figure 9 (above), there are two junctions (15 and 16) which are forecast to operate beyond the desirable RFC capacity of 85% but
within the full capacity of 100% during both the AM and PM Peak times at the end of the plan period (2031). These results factor in mitigation measures at some of the junctions. These mitigation measures have been captured in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Any significant additional development, above that planned for in the submitted Local Plan, would inevitably put pressure on some of these junctions. Unlike Borough Green, no opportunities presented themselves through the plan-making process to deliver transformational pieces of infrastructure during the plan period for this part of the borough.

2.3.28. **Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts** - In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt, the removal of this site could erode the performance of parcel TO1 in respect of the purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl, and assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment. This could result in moderate harm to the Green Belt and its openness at this location. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that the site is conterminous with the urban area of Tonbridge to the east. In terms of minimising wider impacts on the local environment, development would be required to meet the requirements of Policy LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ in the submitted Local Plan.

2.3.29. **Exceptional Circumstances Conclusion** - Given the benefits of addressing housing need at a sustainable location within this HMA and the unique opportunity to regenerate community sports facilities, as well as taking account of the close relationship of the site with the built form of north-west Tonbridge and the development management policies in the Local Plan designed to minimise impacts on the local environment, it is the view of the Council that exceptional circumstances exist for making an alteration to the Green Belt boundary at this location.

2.3.30. Taking account of the Transport Assessment Addendum results and the responses to the Call for Sites exercise, the Council is of the view that no exceptional circumstances exist for any additional intrusions into the Green Belt around the northern part of Tonbridge.

2.4. **Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA: Intrusions into the Green Belt – Other Rural Service Centres**

2.4.1. As highlighted in Table 3 (above) the parcels of Green Belt land abutting the settlement confines of the rural service centres performed well/moderately well against the four purposes. With this in mind, the Council had to consider if other exceptional circumstances exist to justify additional intrusions into the Green Belt beyond Tonbridge.
2.4.2. Para. 1.2.24 in this Paper identifies those matters that the Councils considers, in combination, represent robust exceptional circumstances. These are restated below:

- Acuteness of housing need
- Housing Market Areas
- Settlement Hierarchy
- Desire to promote sustainable patterns of development (para.84 in the NPPF 2012)
- Desire to support and sustain communities across the borough (Plan Objective 2 in the Regulation 18 Local Plan).

2.4.3. Given the significant and worsening housing affordability, the even distribution of need across the two HMAs and a commitment to meet this in full (plus some flexibility to adapt to rapid change) in a sustainable pattern that provides a mixed portfolio of sites supporting communities and centres (large and small) across the borough, the Council considers that exceptional circumstances exist to remove land from the Green Belt and allocate for development adjacent to and in proximity of the rural service centres of Hadlow and East Peckham.

**Hadlow**

2.4.4. Hadlow is a rural service centre located on the A26 approximately four miles north-east of Tonbridge. It includes a primary school, nursery school, a college on the outskirts of the centre, a range of shops, a medical centre and a community centre and is frequently served by buses heading to Tonbridge and Maidstone. Given its sustainability credentials, the Council considers that Hadlow represents a reasonable location to look at opportunities for intrusions into the Green Belt to help meet in full the housing requirement, plus some flexibility to adapt to rapid change.

2.4.5. The starting point was the identification of potential suitable and deliverable sites abutting the confines of the centre. The Call for Sites exercise generated several (five) sites that fitted this category.

2.4.6. In reaching the decision on which sites should be included in the Local Plan, the Council was mindful of the size of the settlement and the capacity of local infrastructure to accommodate growth, in particular highway junctions. With this in mind, the Council concluded it would not be proportionate or sustainable to allocate all of the suitable and deliverable sites identified for the Call for Sites exercise.
2.4.7. In light of evidence including the Transport Assessment and Addendum, and taking account of feedback from Kent County Council Highways during the Call for Sites assessments, the Council concluded that the following sites should be removed from the Green Belt to deliver a proportionate amount of development that could generate social and economic benefits for the local community and centre in a way that can be supported by local infrastructure:

- Court Lane Nurseries - Policy LP25 (s), 66 dwellings
- North of the Paddock - Policy LP25 (w), 156 dwellings

**Figure 10: Proposed Alteration to the Green Belt Boundary at Court Lane, Hadlow**
2.4.8. These sites, in combination with the safeguarded site in the adopted Development Plan (Core Strategy, Policy CP4) at Carpenters Lane (Policy LP25 (u) (25 dwellings)) would deliver 247 homes across the plan period. It is the view of the Council that this level of development is proportionate and realistically deliverable at this rural service centre.

2.4.9. Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts – In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt, the removal of these sites could erode the performance of the Green Belt at Hadlow in respect of the purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl, assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. This could result in moderate harm to the Green Belt and its openness at these locations. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that both of these sites are conterminous with the built-up confines of Hadlow. In terms of minimising the wider impacts on the local environment, development would be required to comply with Policies LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ and LP5 ‘Settlement Hierarchy’ in the submitted Local Plan.

2.4.10. Exceptional Circumstances Conclusion - Given the benefits of addressing housing need at a sustainable location within this HMA, as well as taking
account of the close relationship of the sites with the built form of Hadlow and the development management policies in the Local Plan designed to minimise impacts on the local environment, it is the view of the Council that exceptional circumstances exist for making alterations to the Green Belt boundary at these locations.

**East Peckham (including Hale Street)**

2.4.11. East Peckham is a rural service centre located west of the A228 approximately six miles east of Tonbridge. It includes a primary school, a centre with a range of shops and businesses, a village hall and hourly bus services to Tonbridge. Immediately to the north of East Peckham is the rural settlement of Hale Street. This rural settlement relates closely to East Peckham, only being separated from the rural service centre by a short stretch of Hale Street. Given these broad sustainability credentials, the Council considers that East Peckham, including the settlement of Hale Street, represents a location to look at opportunities for intrusions into the Green Belt to help meet in full the housing requirement, plus some flexibility to adapt to rapid change.

2.4.12. The starting point was the identification of potential suitable and deliverable sites abutting the confines of East Peckham and Hale Street. In respect of housing, the Call for Sites exercise only generated one suitable and deliverable site but three suitable but undeliverable generated several (five) sites that fitted this category. It should be noted that the conclusion on deliverability was determined by the availability of the sites at the time the assessment was undertaken in 2016. Through the process of plan-making, including consultation on the Regulation 18 Local Plan, some evidence emerged which clarified availability, resulting in some sites changing from suitable but undeliverable to suitable and deliverable.
2.4.13. The outcome of this process, as plan-making advanced, was the identification of two suitable and deliverable sites adjacent to each other south of Church Lane, Hale Street. These sites relate closely to the built-up confines to the north and east. They have been allocated for 58 dwellings in total during the Plan period (see Policy LP25 (t) and (v) in the submitted Plan) which the Council considers to be proportionate and realistically deliverable during the plan period.

2.4.14. **Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts** – In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt, the removal of this site (including two housing allocations) could erode the performance of the Green Belt at East Peckham and Hale Street in respect of the purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl, preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another, assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. This could result in moderate harm to the Green Belt and its openness at this location. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that the whole site is conterminous with the built-up confines of Hale Street. In terms of minimising wider impacts on the local environment, the development would be required to comply with Policies LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ and LPS ‘Settlement Hierarchy’ in the submitted Local Plan.
2.4.15. **Exceptional Circumstances Conclusion** - Given the benefits of addressing housing need at a reasonably sustainable location within this HMA, as well as taking account of the close relationship of the site with the built form of Hale Street and the development management policies in the Local Plan designed to minimise impacts on the local environment, it is the view of the Council that exceptional circumstances exist for making an alteration to the Green Belt boundary at this location.

2.5. **Maidstone HMA: Intrusions into the Green Belt – West Malling**

2.5.1. Unlike the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA, the majority of the Maidstone HMA falls beyond the outer boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt. The high level constraint of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) does cover a large swathe in the northern section.

2.5.2. In determining the spatial distribution of the development strategy in the Local Plan, consideration was given to meeting all of the assessed need in the least constrained part of the borough, i.e. channelling growth within the Maidstone HMA beyond the outer boundary of the Green Belt and outside of the Kent Downs AONB. This option was appraised, the outcomes of which feature in the *Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report (September 2016)*. This is available from the Examination Library web page: [www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary). The conclusion for this specific option (option 4 in the SA) highlighted that this would not address the needs of both HMAs and could result in an unsustainable pattern of development. In addition the appraisal concluded that this option would provide limited support for Tonbridge and the wider rural community. This is elaborated on in the Green Belt Stage Two Report (August 2018) (see paras. 3.8 – 3.18).

2.5.3. Given the balanced distribution of need across the two HMAs (see Table 1 above), the expectation of the Government that sustainable patterns of development should be promoted when reviewing Green Belt boundaries (para. 84 in the NPPF), the conclusions of the Housing Delivery Study (September 2017) on the capacity of local markets to absorb growth, and a desire to support and sustain communities across the borough, the Council took the view that it would be unsound to pursue a strategy that met the acute housing need wholly beyond the outer boundary of the Green Belt.

2.5.4. With this in mind, in particular the desire to support and sustain local communities across the borough, big and small, the Council focussed on opportunities adjacent to the confines of the rural service centre of West Malling within the Maidstone HMA.
Figure 13: Proposed Alteration to the Green Belt Boundary south of London Road, West Malling

Figure 14: Proposed Alteration to the Green Belt Boundary east of Offham Road, West Malling

2.5.5. West Malling is a rural service centre that features high up the settlement hierarchy located south of the A20 approximately nine miles west of Maidstone and 10 miles north-east of Tonbridge. It includes primary school provision, a High Street with a range of shops and businesses, a village hall and playing fields and West Malling train station which is located on the main line to London. Given its sustainability credentials, the Council considers that West Malling represents a reasonable location to look at opportunities for
intrusions into the Green Belt to help meet in full the housing requirement, plus some flexibility to adapt to rapid change.

2.5.6. The starting point was the identification of potential suitable and deliverable sites abutting the confines of West Malling. This exercise generated several sites, some of which were initially assessed as suitable but undeliverable but were subsequently assessed as suitable and deliverable because of evidence on availability.

2.5.7. Through the plan-making process, including consideration of responses to the Regulation 18 Plan, engagement with Kent County Council (KCC) as the highways authority for the borough during the Call for Sites assessments and having regard to the housing requirement, the Council concluded that removing two sites from the Green Belt and allocating for housing development would represent a proportionate, realistically deliverable solution that could be supported by local infrastructure. These two sites are: east of Offham Road (Policy LP25 (ag), 12 dwellings); and rear of London Road and Town Hill (Policy LP25 (ah), 110 dwellings).

2.5.8. **East of Offham Road** – During the early stages of plan-making a larger site was promoted at this location. However, it was evident from the feedback from KCC Highways during the Call for Sites assessment and responses received on the Regulation 18 Plan that Offham Road and the junction with West Street plus the narrow junction of West Street with the High Street and on-street parking would not be able to support a significant increase in traffic levels. With this in mind the Council significantly rationalised the size of the site to the point where it will only allow road frontage development.

2.5.9. **East of Offham Road: Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts** – In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt, the removal of this site could erode the performance of the Green Belt at this particular location at West Malling in respect of the purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl, assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. This could result in only limited harm to the Green Belt and its openness at this location. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that the site is small and is conterminous with the built-up confines of West Malling. In terms of minimising wider impacts on the local environment, development would be required to comply with Policies LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ and LP5 ‘Settlement Hierarchy’ in the submitted Local Plan.

2.5.10. **East of Offham Road: Exceptional Circumstances Conclusion** - Given the benefits of addressing housing need at a sustainable location within this
HMA, as well as taking account of the close relationship of the site with the built form of West Malling and the development management policies in the Local Plan designed to minimise impacts on the local environment, it is the view of the Council that exceptional circumstances exist for making an alteration to the Green Belt boundary at this location.

2.5.11. **Rear of London Road and Town Hill** – This site has been allocated for 110 dwellings, accessed from the A20 road to the north. The principle of development being acceptable at this location, albeit for extra care (C2 use), was recently established by an Appeal decision (Appeal ref: APP/H2265/W/18/3202040, Inspector: Robert Mellor, Decision Date: 19 December 2018). This decision was made within the context of the land being within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The decision states (para. 13):

‘…It is likely that the development would be little visible from London Road or Town Hill and that the setback from the railway and partial screening by retained or reinforced planting would mitigate other visual impacts in public views…’

2.5.12. **Rear of London Road and Town Hill: Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts** – In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt, the removal of this site could erode the performance of the Green Belt at this particular location at West Malling in respect of the purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl, assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. This could result in only limited harm to the Green Belt and its openness at this location. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that the site is conterminous with the built-up confines of West Malling to the east and north, is bounded to the south by the railway line and enjoys a low profile relative to properties on Town Hill. In terms of minimising wider impacts on the local environment, development would be required to comply with Policies LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ and LP5 ‘Settlement Hierarchy’ in the submitted Local Plan.

2.5.13. **Rear of London Road and Town Hill: Exceptional Circumstances**

**Conclusion** - Given the benefits of addressing housing need at a sustainable location within this HMA, as well as taking account of the close relationship of the site with the built form of West Malling and the development management policies in the Local Plan designed to minimise impacts on the local environment, it is the view of the Council that exceptional circumstances exist for making an alteration to the Green Belt boundary at this location.
2.6. Maidstone HMA: Intrusions into the Green Belt – Offham

2.6.1. Barfield House, Teston Road, Offham – Offham is a rural settlement located in proximity of the rural service centre of West Malling. In the interest of addressing the housing requirement in full (plus some flexibility to adapt to rapid change), supporting and sustaining communities across the borough, big and small, and ensuring a mixed portfolio of sites to provide opportunities for small and medium house builders to participate in the local housing markets, the Council considers a minor intrusion into the Green Belt is justified at this location. This intrusion would not involve the confines extending further west along Teston Road but instead would involve taking a small parcel of land out of the Green Belt within the grounds of Barfield House, a property which lies within the settlement confines. This site is allocated for 15 dwellings (Policy LP25 (q)).

Figure 15: Proposed Alteration to the Green Belt Boundary at Offham

2.6.2. The inclusion of this site within the Local Plan helps with the diversity of sites on offer which can help with delivery across the plan period as well as providing an opportunity for small to medium sized house builders to be actively involved within the local housing markets.

2.6.3. Barfield House, Teston Road, Offham: Potential Harm to the Green Belt and Minimising Impacts – In terms of potential harm to the Green Belt, the removal of this site could erode the performance of the Green Belt at this
particular location in respect of the purposes of assisting in safeguarding countryside from encroachment and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. This could result in only limited harm to the Green Belt and its openness at this location. However, this harm will be reduced by the fact that the site is small and is conterminous with the built-up confines of Offham. In terms of minimising wider impacts on the local environment, development would be required to comply with Policies LP14 ‘Achieving High Quality Sustainable Design’ and LP5 ‘Settlement Hierarchy’ in the submitted Local Plan.

2.6.4. **Barfield House, Teston Road, Offham: Exceptional Circumstances**

**Conclusion** - Given the benefits of addressing housing need at a reasonably sustainable location supporting a rural community within this HMA, as well as taking account of the close relationship of the site with the built form of Offham and the development management policies in the Local Plan designed to minimise impacts on the local environment, it is the view of the Council that exceptional circumstances exist for making an alteration to the Green Belt boundary at this location.
3. **Alterations to the Outer Boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt**

3.1. **Context**

3.1.1. Section 4 of the Green Belt Stage Two Report (August 2018) sets out the exceptional circumstances for the alterations to the outer boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt that features in the submitted Local Plan. This section of the Topic Paper elaborates on the justification, explaining the process the Council followed to reach the position set out in the submitted Local Plan.

3.1.2. As highlighted earlier in this Paper, an important consideration in the review of the boundaries are the purposes the Green Belt is meant to serve (see para.80 in the NPPF).

3.1.3. The Green Belt Stage One Report highlighted that in respect of Tonbridge and Malling the first four purposes are relevant, as restated below:

1. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and
4. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

3.1.4. Furthermore, the NPPF expects (para.85) that local authorities should, when defining boundaries:

- ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

3.1.5. With these purposes and policies in mind, the Council reviewed the outer boundary of the Green Belt at the beginning of the plan-making process. This review was also informed by factors that have justified the exceptional circumstances for the removal of land from the Green Belt:

- Acuteness of housing need
- Housing Market Areas
- Settlement Hierarchy
- Desire to promote sustainable patterns of development (para.84 in the NPPF 2012)
• Desire to support and sustain communities across the borough (Plan Objective 2 in the Regulation 18 Local Plan)

3.1.6. It should be noted that this review was not framed by para.82 in the NPPF (March 2012). Para.82 is focussed on the creation of new Green Belts. The review undertaken by the Council was focussed on the existing Metropolitan Green Belt and the scope for altering the outer boundary. It would therefore be inappropriate to apply the policy set out in para.82 to this review.

3.1.7. **Sustainability Appraisal of Alterations to the Outer Green Belt Boundary** – The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Addendum prepared by AECOM (April 2019) appraised the following options (see below). It should be made clear that the SA Addendum appraised the performance of each of these options against the framework of the SA objectives. The appraisal process did not assess the performance of each of the options against the purposes of the Green Belt as set out in para.80 of the NPPF (March 2012); this is the focus of the following section of the Topic Paper.

3.2. **Options for Altering the Outer Boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt**

**Regulation 18 Local Plan Proposal: Extend Outer Boundary to the A228 Ashton Way**

3.2.1. The Council was mindful that since the establishment of the current outer boundary at West Malling, the A228 Ashton Way has been built. Ashton Way is considered to be a clear physical feature that is readily recognisable and permanent.

3.2.2. Altering the outer boundary to the western edge of Ashton Way would strengthen purpose 4 (preserving the setting and special character of historic towns) as it applies to West Malling because the existing boundary does not envelope the eastern extent of the settlement which contains several listed buildings, an Ancient Monument and a large Conservation Area.

3.2.3. This alteration would also strengthen purpose 2 (preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another) as it applies to the relationship between West Malling and Kings Hill and, to a lesser extent, the relationship between West Malling and the Medway Gap urban area.

3.2.4. In addition, this alteration would not be prejudicial to the emerging development strategy in the Local Plan.

3.2.5. Given this rationale, the Council took the decision to consult, at the Regulation 18 stage of plan-making, on altering the outer boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt to the western edge of Ashton Way.
3.2.6. The principle of altering the outer boundary of the Green Belt received significant support, as highlighted in the Regulation 22 (1) (c) Consultation Statement (January 2019, see section 2.5). This document is available from the Local Plan Examination Library page: www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary.

3.2.7. However, the majority of the representations were of the view that the alteration should extend further east. Two additional options were presented in the consultation responses:

1. **Extend eastwards to Kiln Barn Road**
2. **Extend eastwards to Wateringbury Road**

3.2.8. In response, the Council assessed the merits and implications of these two alternatives, taking account of the purposes the Green Belt performs, the expectations of national policy and the factors highlighted above in para. 3.1.5.

3.2.9. These options and the option of altering the boundary to the A228 Ashton Way, are illustrated on the map in Appendix 2 to this Topic Paper.

1. **Extend Outer Boundary to Kiln Barn Road**

3.2.10. Whilst this option would, in theory, strengthen the four purposes as they apply to the defined settlements of West Malling, East Malling and the Medway Gap and Kings Hill urban areas, the option would be in conflict with the expectations of national policy in para.85 of the NPPF.

3.2.11. An extension this far to the east would be inconsistent with the current Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development. The Local Plan has identified allocations for housing and economic development on East Malling Research Station land (see policies LP25 (n), (o) and (p) and LP36 (e) and (f) in the submitted Plan). The option suggested through the Regulation 18 consultation would wash over these parcels of land.

3.2.12. An extension this far to the east would be prejudicial to these elements of the development strategy in the Local Plan. It would include swathes of land which, considering the high housing pressure experienced in the borough as highlighted by the significant and worsening housing affordability ratio, is unnecessary to keep permanently open. Given the acute housing need the Council is not in a position to be satisfied that such an alteration to the boundary will not need to be reviewed and changed at the end of the Local Plan period (after 2031). Furthermore, Kiln Barn Road is not a physical feature that is as clear and readily recognisable as Wateringbury Road or the A228 Ashton Way.
3.2.13. **Extend Outer Boundary to Kiln Barn Road: Exceptional Circumstances**

**Conclusion** - In light of the acute housing need, the distribution of this need across the two HMAs, the desire to promote sustainable patterns of development now and in future plans and the expectations of para.85 in the NPPF, the Council considers that exceptional circumstances do not exist to justify altering the outer boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt to the western edge of Kiln Barn Road.

2. **Extend Outer Boundary to Wateringbury Road**

3.2.14. This extension is assessed in detail in the Green Belt Stage Two Report. This alteration does not conflict with the development strategy set out in the Local Plan.

3.2.15. Altering the boundary to the western edge of Wateringbury Road would strengthen the four purposes of the Green Belt that currently exist at this location without compromising the current and long-term development strategy in the Local Plan.

- **Purpose 1**: This alteration would help prevent the coalescence of the urban areas of the Medway Gap and Kings Hill, including the strategic site of Broadwater Farm.
- **Purpose 2**: This alteration would prevent West Malling, East Malling, Kings Hill and the Medway Gap from merging, thereby protecting their individual integrity.
- **Purpose 3**: This alteration would safeguard the countryside north and east of the strategic site of Broadwater Farm from encroachment.
- **Purpose 4**: This alteration would preserve the complete setting and special character of not only West Malling but also East Malling both of which are historic settlements including Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings.

3.2.16. **Extend Outer Boundary to Wateringbury Road: Exceptional Circumstances**

**Conclusion** - Given that this alteration to a clear physical feature would strengthen the purposes of the Green Belt without prejudice to the short, medium and long-term Local Plan development strategy, and would not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open in light of the acute housing need, the Council is of the view that exceptional circumstances exist for altering the outer boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt to the western edge of Wateringbury Road. This alteration is illustrated in the ‘Changes to the Proposals Map’ document that was submitted with the Local Plan. This document is available from the Examination Library web page: [www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary). From a strategic perspective, this
alteration would result in an outer boundary at this point in the borough that would align closely with the outer boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt in the borough of Maidstone to the south and with the alignment of the outer boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt to the north, west of the A228 near Snodland and further afield in the borough of Gravesham. This is highlighted in the Green Belt Stage Two Report (August 2018).

4. Conclusions

4.1.1. The purpose of this Topic Paper was to explain the exceptional circumstances for the alterations to the boundaries of the Metropolitan Green Belt falling within Tonbridge and Malling borough.

4.1.2. The Paper has highlighted that the commitment to meet in full the housing requirement, plus some flexibility to adapt to rapid change (please also see the Spatial Strategy Topic Paper), cannot be fulfilled in a sustainable way unless greenfield sites outside of the settlement confines within the Green Belt are allocated for development.

4.1.3. It is evident that in terms of the removal of land from the Green Belt, the performance of parcels of land against the prescribed purposes (see para. 80 in the NPPF) is not the determining factor because of similar positive assessment outcomes (Green Belt Stage One Report, September 2016).

4.1.4. In the case of Tonbridge and Malling, the exceptional circumstances for removing land from the Green Belt cannot be justified by a single factor but instead by a combination of factors, namely:

- the acuteness of housing need - as demonstrated by the significant and worsening housing affordability ratio;
- the even distribution of housing need across the two Housing Market Areas exerting an influence on the borough (Maidstone HMA and the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells HMA);
- the desire to promote sustainable patterns of development across the borough (see para. 84 in the NPPF), responding to the level and distribution of need (see above);
- the desire to deliver significant, transformational pieces of infrastructure that achieve economic, social and environmental benefits for new and existing communities;
- the desire to support and sustain communities across the borough (Plan Objective 2 in the Regulation 18 Local Plan); and
- the relationship of sites with the built form of adjacent settlements.
4.1.5. These factors, read alongside evidence on transport and housing market capacity as well as development management policies in the submitted Local Plan, represent the exceptional circumstances for the removal of land from the Metropolitan Green Belt.

4.1.6. In respect of altering the outer boundary of the Green Belt, the Paper has concluded that the western edge of Wateringbury Road, taking account of the strategic site of Broadwater Farm, represents a robust clear boundary that would strengthen the purposes of the Green Belt at this location without prejudice to the short, medium and long-term Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development.

4.1.7. In conclusion, this balanced approach to the review of the Metropolitan Green Belt enables the Council to deliver its commitment to meet in full the housing requirement, plus some flexibility to adapt to rapid change, as well as making a significant contribution to addressing employment land needs, without resulting in a net loss of Green Belt coverage across the borough.

4.1.8. The full extent of the intrusions and the alteration to the outer boundary are illustrated in Appendix 1 to the Green Belt Stage Two Report (August 2018). This is available from the Examination Library web page: www.tmbc.gov.uk/lpexamlibrary.
Appendix 1: Transport Assessment (May 2018) Extracts
Figure 75: Assessment Junction 28 Future 2031 Flows

Junction 28
AM Peak 0800-0900

A227 - Western Road
Arm C

A227 - Wrotham Road
Arm A

267
6
349
154

27
200

High Street
Arm B

Junction 28
PM Peak 1700-1800

A227 - Western Road
Arm C

A227 - Wrotham Road
Arm A

471
22
172
170

16
182

High Street
Arm B

Source: KCC Survey Data 2017 and TEMPro 2017
Figure 76: Assessment Junction 29 Future 2031 Flows

Source: KCC Survey Data 2017 and TEMPro 2017
Figure 104: Assessment Junction 28 Future 2031 + Development Flows

Junction 28
AM Peak 0800-0900

A227 - Western Road
Arm C

High Street
Arm B

A227 - Wrotham Road
Arm A

Source: KCC Survey Data 2017, TEMPro 2017 and Nomis 2017

Junction 28
PM Peak 1700-1800

A227 - Western Road
Arm C

High Street
Arm B

A227 - Wrotham Road
Arm A

Source: KCC Survey Data 2017, TEMPro 2017 and Nomis 2017
Figure 105: Assessment Junction 29 Future 2031 + Development Flows

Junction 29
AM Peak 0500-0900

A25 - Seven Oaks Road West
Arm 2

111
63

A227 - Western Road
Arm 3

151
20

A25 - Sevenoaks Road East
Arm 1

9
207

Junction 29
PM Peak 1700-1800

A25 - Borough Green Road
Arm 2

137
46

A227 - Western Road
Arm 3

R2
24

A25 - Sevenoaks Road
Arm 1

29
42

Source: KCC Survey Data 2017, TEMPro 2017 and Nomis 2017
Appendix 2: Outer Green Belt Boundary Alteration Options