

Adem Mehmet  
Borough Councillor for Trench Ward  
Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Tonbridge Generation  
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council  
Gibson Building  
Gibson Drive  
Kings Hill  
West Malling  
Kent ME19 4LZ

3 February 2026

**Our ref: 260203 LS TMBC**

**Your ref:**

**Subject: Public Water Supply provision for planned housing growth in  
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council area**

Dear Adem,

Thank you for your letter of 15 January sent on behalf of the residents of Tonbridge and Malling.

Firstly I would like to apologise unreservedly for the disruption caused to those of your residents, organisations and businesses who were affected by the recent water supply outages.

Loss of supply incidents can be very disruptive and cause considerable concern in the community. I fully accept this and can assure you we are working extremely hard to prevent such events happening again in future.

I am aware that the Government's house building ambitions are putting pressure on many local planning authorities in areas where we supply water and in some cases we do not, in the short term, have sufficient spare capacity to support all the new housing growth that is anticipated. As you highlighted in your letter, our response to your Regulation 18 consultation correctly states that we cannot accommodate additional housing growth beyond what was assumed in our Water Resources Management Plan 2024 (WRMP24) in areas where we do not have a

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supply-demand surplus. The Tonbridge and Malling area is not unusual in the fact there is no surplus, a consequence of the pressures on our supply-demand balance and how regulatory guidance prevents us from incorporating additional headroom into our WRMP supply-demand balance.

I have set out below a response to the questions raised in your letter:

***1. Do you agree that you will be unable to provide sufficient water to cope with the significant increase in Government housing targets proposed for the Borough?***

Yes, from the assessments we have carried out recently (outside of the WRMP statutory process) we have identified that we would be unable to accommodate any growth exceeding the highest growth pathway of our WRMP24 forecast assumptions for the remainder of the planning period. This is because our WRMP24 was developed to balance supply and demand based solely on the growth forecasted and provided to us in the period of development of the WRMP24.

To assess the impact beyond our current WRMP24 forecast, we need to recalculate our demand forecast and rerun our decision-making process. This will help us identify additional interventions, such as new supplies, transfers, or increased demand reduction programs to address the supply-demand imbalance. This will be undertaken as part of the development work for our next plan, WRMP29.

***2. Do you agree that if these houses are built, there would be an increase in water shortages like those we have experienced over the last two months?***

An increase in the rate of housing growth that is above our WRMP24 assumptions will impact our supply-demand balance, reducing our available supply-demand headroom and level of service to customers. Any impact will be dependent on the weather and the impact of climate on future droughts and other events such as storms and freeze/thaw that pose a risk to the security of supply to customers.

Over the next five year period we are investing to improve our resilience to such events, for example by building new pipelines to give more flexibility in how we move water around the network, and by delivering an ambitious demand management programme that will reduce leakage levels, business water use and per capita consumption.

**3. Of the planned upgrades to water infrastructure you mention on page 3, where in the plan period will these be delivered, and do you have confidence that they will address the problems with existing water demand, and from planned growth? Has a source of funding for these works been identified?**

The infrastructure upgrades we set out in our letter are a mixture of schemes that will increase our available supplies of water, but also improve our resilience levels. These improvements will support in addressing the current water supply issues, but (as set out in Q1 above) will not be sufficient to meet the supply-demand balance needs of the Government housing targets. The schemes have either been funded through our past Business Plan or within our most recent plan. Please see below for further details of the schemes we mentioned in our December 2025 letter:

- **Completion of the Butler Water Treatment Works (WTW).** Due to be completed in 2026.
- **New pipelines to transfer water across north Kent.** These were partly funded by Ofwat in our Final Determination (FD). We have requested additional funding through the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) process so we can fully deliver them through the AMP8 (2025-2030) period.
- **Increase in water storage at the Halling drinking water storage tank.** Partly funded in our FD so we are requesting additional funding through the CMA process to enable us to fully deliver through AMP8.
- **New pumping station to transfer flows to Halling and surrounding areas.** A recent modelling review suggests the above Halling drinking water storage tank capacity increase is sufficient for improving resilience in the area and the transfer (booster) between Burham and Halling systems is therefore not required.
- **Upgrade of Tonbridge WTW to increase resilience levels.** Funded and in plan for delivery in the AMP8 period.
- **Upgrade of Pembury WTW.** Funded and in plan for delivery in AMP8.
- **Kemsing and Row Dow drinking water storage tanks.** Funded and in plan for delivery in the AMP8 period.
- **Riverhill and Kilnwood drinking water storage tanks.** Funded, with an alternative scope to install a reservoir bypass progressing for delivery in the AMP8 period.

- **A new pipeline from Tonbridge WTW to Bloodshots drinking water storage tank to facilitate the upgrade of Tonbridge WTW.** Funded and in plan for delivery in the AMP8 period.

In addition to the above schemes that were referenced in the letter, we are planning to deliver the following:

- Local network reinforcement schemes across AMP8 as developers apply for supply connections.
- Capital maintenance renewal schemes which include mains renewals and water treatment works maintenance and refurbishments.

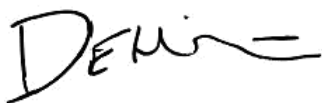
***4. In the alternative, if you concede that SEW will be unable to cope with the increased demand in TMBC and neighbouring authorities because of these housing targets, will you be writing to the Government to make that clear?***

We have been engaging with all local authorities to provide a clear and consistent message (as set out in Q1 above) and responding to draft Local Plan consultations as we did for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council in December 2025. It was anticipated that our representations in this regard would be used to inform a response back to the Government by the local authority as part of the Local Plan process. We can also make a direct representation to the Government in addition to this process as appropriate.

I trust that this response has provided the clarity that you were looking for, enabling you to update your residents and Councillors on this important matter.

I would be happy to facilitate a meeting between you and appropriate company representatives to discuss our response if you so wish.

Your sincerely



**David Hinton**  
CEO