

How to respond to Regulation 19

What you can comment on, what carries weight, and how to submit

Ten minutes that will make your response count

This consultation is assessed differently from the one held last winter. A government-appointed Planning Inspector will read the responses, and there are only two questions the Inspector is allowed to consider: is the plan legally compliant, and is it sound?

That means a comment saying the village does not want the development will be counted and set aside. A comment that names a policy, says which test it fails, gives a reason, and asks for a specific change goes into the examination and can result in the plan being altered.

It is not a vote. The number of objections does not decide the outcome. Ten well-aimed responses are worth more than a thousand identical ones.

The consultation closes 11.59pm, Sunday 25 October 2026. Responses go to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

1. Where we are in the process

Stage	What it was for	Status
Regulation 18 (Nov 2025 – Jan 2026)	Views on options and draft sites. A wide-open consultation	Closed
Regulation 19 (11 Sept – 25 Oct 2026)	Whether the final draft is legally compliant and sound. The only stage that reaches the Inspector	Open now
Submission to the Secretary of State	The plan and all Regulation 19 responses go to the Planning Inspectorate	By 31 Dec 2026
Examination	Public hearings. Only people who responded at Regulation 19 can ask to speak	Expected 2027
Adoption	The plan becomes the basis for every planning decision in the area	After the Inspector reports

2. The two questions the Inspector can consider

Question one: is the plan legally compliant?

This is about whether the Council followed the rules in preparing the plan. You can raise a legal compliance point if you believe:

- The Council did not consult properly, or did not follow its own published Statement of Community Involvement.
- Something now in the plan was never consulted on at the earlier stage, or has changed so much that people could not have known what they were commenting on.
- The Sustainability Appraisal did not properly test reasonable alternatives, or assessed sites separately when their combined effect should have been assessed together.
- The Habitats Regulations Assessment did not properly consider effects on protected European wildlife sites.
- The Council did not work properly with neighbouring authorities on issues that cross boundaries — roads, schools, water, the railway.
- The plan is internally inconsistent in a way that makes it impossible to apply — for example, the same 602 homes being counted as Hildenborough in one table and Tonbridge in another.
- The Council did not properly consider the effect on groups protected by equality law, such as older or disabled residents.

Question two: is the plan sound?

"Sound" is a technical term with four parts. Your comment should say which one you think the plan fails, and why.

Test	In plain English	A comment under this test looks like
Positively prepared	Does the plan genuinely try to meet the area's needs, working properly with neighbouring councils?	"The plan relies on Tonbridge to provide services for homes built in Hildenborough parish, but there is no agreement with anyone about how those services will be expanded."
Justified	Is this the right strategy, given the realistic alternatives, and is it backed by proportionate evidence?	"The Council's own Green Belt Assessment concluded that releasing this land would merge Hildenborough with Tonbridge. The plan allocates it anyway and does not explain why the assessment was departed from."
Effective	Will it actually work? Can the sites really be delivered, in the way and at the time the plan assumes?	"The plan requires a walking and cycling route to the station that would have to cross ancient woodland. It has not been shown that this can be built, so the policy cannot be relied on."
Consistent with national policy	Does it follow the Government's National Planning Policy Framework?	"National policy requires affordable housing requirements to be set out clearly as a single figure. The site policies for these six sites do not mention affordable housing at all."

3. What carries weight, and what does not

Carries weight	Does not carry weight
"Policy HP1 requires vehicle access from Tonbridge Road. A 2004 planning appeal found adequate visibility cannot be achieved there. The policy is therefore not effective."	"The roads round here are already a nightmare."
"1,210 homes will generate a need for additional primary places. The Council's own evidence identified 5.8 forms of entry. No allocation in this parish secures a school and the plan does not say which school will expand."	"There aren't enough school places."
"I have lived on Stocks Green Road for 21 years. Between 8.10 and 8.40 on a weekday the queue extends past [X]. The transport evidence does not model this junction."	"The traffic is terrible."
"The plan's own flood risk assessment concluded safe access and escape is not possible at HI1. Requiring an applicant to prove otherwise at the application stage reverses the burden."	"They shouldn't build on a flood plain."
Facts about your own household that nobody else can supply — how long you wait for a GP appointment, which school your child could not get into, where the water pressure fails, where the flooding actually reaches	Personal comments about councillors, developers or landowners, and anything about who owns what or who stands to profit
A change you want made, stated precisely	A general objection with no change requested
Your own words, about your own experience	A copied paragraph identical to your neighbour's

The two mistakes that waste a good response

1. Not saying what you want changed. Every representation should end with the modification you are asking for — "add a two-form entry primary school and land to Policy HP1(1)", "insert a Local Green Gap between Hildenborough and Tonbridge on the Policies Map". A vague objection invites a vague answer.
2. Copying someone else's wording. Identical responses are treated as one point made many times. The Parish Council is deliberately not publishing template wording. Use the structure, not a script.

4. The grounds available here

These are the issues the Parish Council has identified from the published plan and the Council's own evidence. They are a menu, not a script. Pick the ones you know about or care about, and write about them in your own words and from your own knowledge. The list below is only a flavour of the things you could comment upon.

Infrastructure — the strongest ground available *(test: effective)*

- 1,210 homes are allocated across five sites lying wholly in this parish, together with part of a sixth at Coblands, which straddles the parish boundary. Every allocation in the plan of 1,300 homes or more secures a primary school. Because the total here is split between separate sites, none of them triggers one, and the parish secures no school, no healthcare facility and no community building.

- The Council's own infrastructure evidence identified a need for 5.8 forms of entry of primary provision in this area. The phrase does not appear in the published plan.
- Stocks Green Primary is expandable; Hildenborough Church of England Primary is not. The plan does not say which school will take the children.
- If the answer is financial contributions rather than on-site provision, the plan should say how much, from which site, and which school will expand.
- GP capacity: the plan secures a healthcare facility only at the two largest allocations in the borough. Nothing in Hildenborough.

Green Belt and the gap to Tonbridge *(test: justified, consistent)*

- All six allocations are Green Belt release. One statutory purpose of Green Belt is to prevent neighbouring towns merging.
- The Council's own Green Belt Assessment found that releasing this land would lead to the physical merging of Hildenborough and Tonbridge, and did not recommend it. The plan allocates it anyway without explaining the departure.
- Once released, the land has no protection against coalescence at all — not Green Belt, and not the plan's "Local Green Gap" policy, which designates only one gap in the whole borough, elsewhere.
- A change to ask for: a defined Green Gap or strategic landscape buffer between Hildenborough, Hilden Park and Tonbridge, drawn on the Policies Map.

Highways and access *(test: effective)*

- A 2004 planning appeal found that an adequate visibility splay could not be achieved from Tonbridge Road at this location. Policy HP1(3) nonetheless requires vehicle access there.
- Hildenborough and Hilden Park are served essentially by one road, the B245. Traffic from the Coblands site and from the North Tonbridge allocations will use the same corridor.
- Only 27 junctions were modelled at the previous stage. Ask whether the B245, Stocks Green Road, Noble Tree Road and the relevant A21 junctions have been modelled at all.
- If you have direct experience of a junction, a school run, a bus service or a level crossing, say so specifically — times, dates, how long, how often. That is evidence.

Flood risk and water *(test: effective, consistent)*

- The Council's Level 1 flood risk assessment classed HI1 and part of HP1 as "least preferable" and concluded that safe access and egress is not possible. The plan responds by requiring an applicant to demonstrate at the application stage that it is.
- Ask whether the more detailed Level 2 assessment has been completed and what it concluded.
- The infrastructure evidence records limited foul sewer capacity requiring off-site upgrades. The main site policy contains no foul drainage clause at all.
- Water supply capacity was debated at the Borough Council's Full Council meeting on 3 September 2026. Whether the plan is deliverable given water and wastewater capacity is squarely a soundness question.

Wildlife and trees *(test: effective, consistent)*

- Great crested newts — a European protected species — were confirmed locally in summer 2025. The words "great crested newt" appear nowhere in the 550-page plan, and no site policy contains a protected species requirement.
- The plan accepts that the required walking and cycling route to Hildenborough Station would have to cross ancient woodland, which is irreplaceable habitat with the highest level of protection. A policy requiring something that may not be deliverable is not an effective policy.
- Tree Preservation Order belts, which the plan accepts will prevent vehicular access into part of the site.

How the plan is drafted *(test: effective, consistent)*

- Only one of the six sites has a full site policy. The other five — 1,002 homes — are governed by a handful of short criteria in an annex: no masterplan, no phasing, no access strategy, no infrastructure requirement, no affordable housing figure. TO3 has nothing on access at all.
- The 50% affordable housing requirement that applies to Green Belt release land is not mentioned in any of the six site policies. It depends on the reader cross-referring to another policy. National policy says affordable housing requirements should be set out clearly as a single figure.
- Timing of the new road and the station links is tied to a "monitor and manage" framework with no fixed trigger points. Another allocation in the same plan requires infrastructure to be provided in step with occupation. Ask for that wording here.

How the growth is counted *(test: legal compliance, effective)*

- 512 homes lying wholly in Hildenborough parish — HP2, HP3 and HP4 — are recorded in the plan against Tonbridge, and so is the whole of the Coblands site, which straddles the boundary. The parish appears in the plan's tables as receiving 698 homes. It is in fact receiving at least 1,210.
- The same 602 homes at HP1 are classified as Tonbridge in one part of the plan and Hildenborough in another.
- This matters for how growth is monitored, where developer contributions are directed, and which schools and surgeries are assessed as under pressure.
- A change to ask for: correct the parish attribution of HP1, HP2, HP3, HP4 and HI1 to Hildenborough throughout, and record two parishes for the Coblands site, which straddles the boundary, as the plan already does elsewhere.

Distribution *(test: justified)*

- A Tier 3 "Primary Village" is allocated nearly as many homes as Snodland, which sits a tier above it with more services, and far more than any other Tier 3 village — Hadlow, the next highest, takes 782.
- About 15% of the borough's entire Green Belt release falls on this one parish, before any part of the Coblands site is counted.
- Ask whether alternative distributions were tested to the same level of detail, and ask for the growth to be expressed as a proportion of existing settlement size — the plan nowhere does this.

5. How to write your response

Use this structure for each point you want to make. One point per box on the form. Several short, precise representations are better than one long one.

#	Element	What to write
1	Which part of the plan	The policy number, paragraph number, site reference or map. E.g. "Policy HP1, clause 3" or "Site HI1, Annex 16"
2	Legally compliant? Sound?	Tick or state which. If unsound, say which test: positively prepared / justified / effective / consistent with national policy
3	Why	Your reasons, as specifically as you can. Short sentences. One reason per paragraph
4	Your evidence	The Council's own documents, published reports, a planning appeal, or your own first-hand knowledge and observation
5	What change you want	The precise modification. "Add X to Policy Y." "Delete clause Z." "Draw a Green Gap on the Policies Map between A and B"
6	Do you want to be heard?	Tick the box if you might want to speak at the examination hearings. See section 7

A worked example

Part of the plan: Policy HP1, clause 1 (Land off Stocks Green Road, Tonbridge Road and Noble Tree Road, 602 dwellings).

Is it sound? No. Which test? Effective.

Why: Policy HP1 requires convenience retail, outdoor sport, play space and green infrastructure, but no primary school. Across the plan, every allocation of 1,300 dwellings or more secures a primary school on site. Hildenborough parish is allocated 1,210 dwellings across five sites lying wholly within it, together with part of a sixth at Coblands which straddles the parish boundary. None of them individually reaches that threshold. The result is that a parish at or above the level at which every other allocation in the plan secures a school secures none.

Evidence: The Council's Interim Infrastructure Delivery Plan identified a primary need of 5.8 forms of entry arising from development in this area. The phrase "forms of entry" does not appear in the published plan and no parish allocation carries an education requirement. Stocks Green Primary is capable of expansion; Hildenborough Church of England Primary is not. My own two children are at Stocks Green, which was full in each of the last three admission rounds. [Add whatever you know at first hand.]

Modification sought: Add to Policy HP1(1) a requirement for a two-form entry primary school and the land to accommodate it. In the alternative, state in the policy the education contribution expected from each of the six allocations in the parish, which school is to be expanded, and by how many forms of entry.

Do you wish to be heard? Yes.

This is an illustration of the structure, not wording to copy. Write your own version, about what you know.

6. How to submit

- **Online:** through the Borough Council's consultation portal — www.tmbc.gov.uk/local-plan. You will need to register an email address once. You can save and come back to it.
- **By email:** to the Council's planning policy team Use the official form if one is provided.
- **By post:** to the planning policy team at the Council's offices — Allow time for it to arrive.
- **In person with help:** come to our help-to-submit clinic on Tuesday 20 October, 6pm–8pm at the Village Hall, or to any drop-in session. We can provide a paper form, a laptop, or simply a second pair of eyes.

Deadline: 11.59pm on Sunday 25 October 2026. Late responses cannot normally be accepted and may not be passed to the Planning Inspector. If you are part way through on the final day, submit what you have — an imperfect response that arrives counts for far more than a perfect one that does not.

Responses are not anonymous. Your name and the substance of your comment will be published and passed to the Inspector; your contact details are not normally published. If that concerns you, ask the Council what it publishes before you submit.

7. Ask to be heard — tick the box

The response form asks whether you wish to take part in the examination hearings. Tick it, even if you are not sure you will attend. This right has to be reserved now and generally cannot be added later. You are not committing yourself to anything; the Inspector decides who is invited, and you can always decline.

Also ask to be notified when the plan is submitted, when the Inspector publishes the list of issues to be examined, and when the plan is adopted.

8. Questions people ask

Question	Answer
Is it already decided?	No. The plan has not been examined or adopted. An Inspector must be satisfied it is sound, and can recommend changes.
Will a petition help?	A petition is a political message to elected members, and that has its own value. But it is not a representation, and the Inspector gives it very little weight. If you want to reach the Inspector, submit your own response as well.
Does the number of objections matter?	Not to the Inspector. Volume matters politically, before members vote to submit the plan. Soundness is decided on argument and evidence, not arithmetic.
Can I just object to the whole plan?	You can, but it will achieve less than objecting to specific policies. The housing number comes from a government formula and 71% of the borough is Green Belt — arguing that no development should happen here is unlikely to succeed. Arguing about distribution, infrastructure and drafting is where change is won.
Can the Parish Council submit for me?	No. Every household must submit its own. We will help you do it.
I missed the last consultation — does that matter?	No. You can respond now regardless.
What if I am not good with computers?	Come to any session, or ring 07818 329029. Paper forms and help are available, and we will come to you if you cannot get to us.
Can my club or business respond?	Yes, and an organisational response is often more useful than an individual one. Say who you represent and how many people.
What if I support parts of the plan?	Say so. Representations of support are legitimate and are recorded. The 50% affordable housing requirement on these sites, for example, is a genuine benefit.

9. Help and contacts

- Parish Council information, maps and both handouts: **hildenboroughparishcouncil.gov.uk/tbmc-local-plan**
- Information from Hildenborough Village Preservation Association - **<https://hildenboroughvpa.wordpress.com/>**
- The Local Plan, the evidence base and the response form: **www.tbmc.gov.uk/local-plan**
- Help, paper forms: **07818 329029 / clerk@hildenboroughparishcouncil.gov.uk**
- Drop-in sessions and the help-to-submit clinic: see the companion handout or our website.

The Parish Council is preparing its own representation with professional planning advice, and will publish it in full once approved. Please read it if you wish — but do not copy it. Your own words, about your own experience of this village, are worth more.