

From the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

26 November 2020

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London

Dear Matt

We completely understand and appreciate the difficult decisions that you and colleagues in Government face in suppressing the Covid-19 pandemic and saving lives as well as people's livelihoods.

However, we are extremely disappointed at the decision to place the whole of Kent into the highest tier of restrictions that you announced today. As you know from our previous representations, Kent is a very large county with distinct areas within it, which is reflected in the vast differences in the incidence of Covid.

For example, in the boroughs of Tunbridge Wells and Ashford, the latest weekly case rate is 120 per 100,000 and falling – less than a quarter of the rate in Swale at 541 per 100,000 – and areas like Folkestone & Hythe are below the national average.

Moreover, the patterns of community contact are very distinct. In areas such as Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Ashford, for example, movement outside the local area tends to be either up and down towards London (tier 2) and across the border into East Sussex (also tier 2).

These restrictions, as well as dealing a big blow to the local businesses in our communities, risk undermining public support for measures if they are seen not to be justified by the incidence of Covid.

We think that a much better approach would be a more local one – such as at Borough or District level.

We are grateful for your agreement to meet us, as the MPs for the communities affected.

We would be grateful if you could, at or before that meeting,

- Provide a much more comprehensive evidence base for the decision to include the whole of Kent in a single tier 3
- Undertake to review this decision at the soonest available opportunity.

Yours sincerely

THE RT HON GREG CLARK MP, Member of Parliament for Tunbridge Wells
DAMIAN COLLINS MP, Member of Parliament for Folkstone and Hythe
TRACEY CROUCH MP, Member of Parliament for Chatham and Aylesford
NATALIE ELPHICKE MP, Member of Parliament for Dover and Deal
HELEN GRANT MP, Member of Parliament for Maidstone and the Weald
THE RT HON DAMIAN GREEN MP, Member of Parliament for Ashford
TOM TUGENDHAT MP, Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling