

MARDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DRAFT REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Background

The planning system is always changing. Legislation has been introduced which is designed to give people a greater say in local decision-making. The Localism Act, which came into effect in November 2011, was designed to give greater powers to local councils, parishes and neighbourhoods – to empower local people to help them shape the growth of their communities in a sustainable way. A further major change in planning legislation introduced by the Government in 2012 was the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This was intended to streamline the planning process and is now the key planning document in writing local plans and making planning decisions. The NPPF was most recently updated on 12th December 2024, 2018 and 2019.

We hear a lot about “sustainable development”. What ~~it this~~ means in practice, this plan is that a balance must be made between development that allows us to develop but without harming the social, economic and environmental impacts and benefits of development. aspects of the village and wider parish for the future.

Marden parish, being located in the South East of England, faces great pressures for development. We need houses, we need jobs and we need adequate infrastructure and services to support them (including schools, health provision and transport networks).

To inform the first draft of this Neighbourhood Plan in May 2011 public meetings were held as early as May 2011 to ask local people to get involved: to gather together the views of local residents and businesses to create a forward-looking plan. The first iteration of this plan was formally adopted in July 2020. Since then, a number of further public meetings have been held to gather residents’ view. This latest iteration of this plan has been achieved through the hard work of the Steering Group and all those who have become involved subsequently. The plan covers the whole of Marden Parish, which was designated a neighbourhood area on 14th January 2013 and now covers a period to 203831.

The plan has been created by the people of Marden and could not exist without the support of the Parish Council and all those who have contributed. This document will be vital in safeguarding Marden’s future as a thriving, sustainable community.

A Vision for Marden

This plan is designed to ensure that Marden will continue to be a thriving parish, to maintain its individual character, heritage and community spirit. The plan aims to balance the existing and future needs of residents and businesses to fulfil Marden’s function as a Rural Service Centre, by managing the expansion of housing provision, employment, education and recreation opportunities, whilst retaining and enhancing the natural beauty and biodiversity of the surrounding rural area.

All About Marden

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The rural village of Marden is in the middle of Kent, set in the heart of the Kentish Weald. It is likely that there has been a settlement here since the Bronze Age. However, not until the Romans left and the Jutes divided up the forest of the Weald of Kent did Marden get its name: 'Meredenne', a place where herdsmen from the North Kent coast brought their pigs in the autumn to fatten up on acorns and beech mast. By 1085 this clearing in the forest had a church (probably wooden) mentioned in the Domesday Monachorum. By the end of the 12th century the church was rebuilt in stone and in the 13th century the village was given to Queen Eleanor, with the right to hold a weekly market and annual fair.

Marden developed as a farming village, which led to many associated trades and businesses. For hundreds of years, timber, hops, corn and fruit were the mainstay of the village. Many of the buildings that were used for these activities survive and contribute to the character of the Marden we see today.

In 1842, a railway station was opened at Marden on the new South Eastern Railway Company line from London to Dover. This led to new markets for Marden's produce and the fruit and hop farms flourished. This period of prosperity is also associated with the annual influx of migrant hop and fruit pickers – so much part of the history of the village. The ~~2011~~ census showed a population in the parish of 5,071 an increase of 34% from the 2011 census. 3,724.

This rail link is still vital – it remains an important service for the village, with good access to London, Dover and continental Europe beyond. The railway has played, and still plays, a major part in the continuing growth of the village. The arrow straight line of the railway, running west to east, bisects Marden separating the majority of the housing to the south, and most of the industry to the north.

The parish of Marden is traversed by a network of narrow, unclassified lanes. For most residents the 'main road' is the B2079, from Goudhurst northwards towards Maidstone, to the east of the rivers Teise and Lesser Teise. This road keeps close to the 80ft (24m) contour along its route through the parish, apparently since it was first picked out by travellers on foot and then by horse and cart, to skirt the river floodplain. Through the village the B2079 is known as West End, Church Hill and then as the High Street. There are no other B roads but the A229 crosses the northern end of the parish for about one and a half miles, just south of the River Beult and its floodplain.

The parish is largely founded on low lying impermeable Wealden clay. The rivers Beult and Lesser Teise form the parish boundaries to the north and west. The water table is generally high and therefore water plays an important part in the landscape, with its many inter-linked ditches, ponds and streams. This functional drainage network is also essential in managing the risk of flooding to land and properties.

Although virtually all of the ancient Wealden forest has gone, trees still form an integral part of the Marden landscape. Remnant ancient woodland and replanted woodland are features of the southern area. Modern orchard farming has seen a change from the large, spreading fruit trees to the dwarf root stocks used today, but often still protected by tall windbreak

hedges. The remaining farmland is given over to arable crops and livestock, although the parish is now also home to less traditional crops such as vines.

As we all know, farming practices have changed, but many features remain in the landscape, such as tall boundary hedges and oast houses, and these contribute to Marden's distinctive Wealden character.

Community-based plans – what are they and what are they for?

Plans written by local people are nothing new. Successive governments have supported the idea of local people getting together and producing documents that show how they want their community to develop. Previous parish or community plans and village design statements showed how local communities saw themselves and how they wanted to develop.

Why does Marden need a Community-based plan?

~~Marden already has two important documents written by local people:~~

~~Marden Design Statement 2001~~

~~This document, a village design statement, went further than merely looking at design, and was written in order to influence Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) and anyone wishing to develop land in the parish. It was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance which meant it became a material planning consideration when determining planning applications in Marden. However, following changes in planning legislation, the design statement no longer carries the legal weight it once did.~~

~~Marden Community Plan 2007~~

~~The community plan was produced in 2007, and this identified the opportunities and weaknesses facing the parish. It concentrated on the actions that could be taken to improve community facilities. The plan achieved its initial goals, but a number of actions are still ongoing.~~

The concept of community-based plans such as the earlier Marden Design Statement 2001 and the Marden Community Plan 2007, evolved into neighbourhood plans which now have a formal place in the planning system as part of the government's 'localism agenda'. Neighbourhood Plans contain spatial policies which will help to shape the future of the Neighbourhood Plan area. In order for these plans to work it is essential they reflect the views of the wider community.

Why does Marden need a Neighbourhood Plan?

There is constant pressure for growth in the South East of England. This means there is a constant pressure on Marden – a high demand for new housing and other types of development. Decisions about 'what sort of development is allowed to go where' are made through the planning system, in accordance with MBC's development plan with the National

Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a material consideration.

~~MBC was in the process of producing a new local plan for many years to replace the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000, but unfortunately it was delayed many times. This Neighbourhood Plan has been developed in parallel with the MBC Local Plan to ensure conformity.~~ The MBC Local Plan was adopted on 25th October 2017 and an updated Local Plan Review 2021-2038 was adopted on 20th March 2024. The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan ~~2013-20 (2016-2024-2039 was adopted 13th March 2025),~~ which identifies minerals safeguarding areas, also forms part of the development plan covering Marden. The Marden Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2031 has been updated in parallel with the MBC Local Plan review to ensure conformity.

MBC has identified Marden as one of the ~~five-six~~ Rural Service Centres in the borough. This is because Marden has employment opportunities, good community facilities and frequent rail connections to London. Consequently, Marden has been identified as a village that would benefit from a limited increased ~~d of~~ housing and development likely to generate more employment opportunities.

What is the role of Marden Parish Council?

Marden Parish Council is the 'qualifying body' for producing the Marden Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council has the power to initiate the process and produce the final document.

What are the Objectives of Marden Neighbourhood Plan?

~~The~~ To supplement the NPPF and MBC Local Plan Review policies Marden Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure that all future development carried out in Marden parish is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and will not result in unacceptable harm to the form and function of the village and the wider parish.

The plan provides local policies on issues of specific importance to the community of Marden which have the objective of retaining, and wherever possible, enhancing the rural Wealden character and distinctiveness of the whole parish. A number of further actions are also identified together with the parties best placed to implement them.

It also contains background information and guidance to help developers and planners make good decisions that will benefit the community both now and in the future.

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The rural parish of Marden lies in the Low Weald of Kent at an average height of 18 metres (sixty feet) above sea level. The northern boundary follows the ~~sinuous-twisting~~ River Beult flowing from east to west to join the River Medway at Yalding. The western parish boundary follows the meanders of the Lesser Teise river, which drains north to join the Beult, west of the hamlet of Chainhurst.

The short southern boundary is contained by the rising land of the High Weald escarpment, the highest point being about 60 metres (190 feet). The remaining boundary is relatively ill-defined on the ground, running south west/north east through ancient re-planted deciduous woodland, over a low hill at Marden Thorn, and across arable and grass fields to the River Beult. The church and older core of Marden village lies centrally within the parish, adjacent to the railway, at the hub of the road network. The parish covers some 3100 hectares (7600 acres), extending 8 km (five miles) from south to north.

The NPPF requires the planning system to protect and enhance valued landscapes and minimise impact on biodiversity. It recognises that development should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, and areas of tranquillity that are prized for their recreational and amenity value. Marden Neighbourhood Plan has enthusiastically embraced the aims of the NPPF to conserve and enhance the natural environment by:

- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity value and soils;
- Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services;
- ~~Providing-Encouraging~~ net gains for biodiversity;
- Establishing coherent ecological networks;
- Helping to improve local environmental conditions;
- Safeguarding components of local wildlife-rich habitats;
- Promoting the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and species;
- Protecting irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees).

~~However, it~~ it is essential that specific issues of local importance are fully taken into account in the planning process, and these are addressed in this Plan.

The NPPF defines green infrastructure as a network of multi-functional green spaces, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wider range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities with blue infrastructure as a network of water features in the landscape. MBC has a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy which recognises the contribution that green space and the water environment can make. The importance of such areas are reflected where relevant in the policies within this Plan.

Surface Water Management

The Rivers Beult and Lesser Teise both have functional floodplains, the main expanse of flooding being between Marden village and Chainhurst to the east, an area notable for the network of drains. During extreme rainfall events Chainhurst can be surrounded as an island with flows in the ditches connecting the two floodplains. The west side of the village, including the industrial site to the north, also experiences fluvial (river) flooding from the Lesser Teise and its tributaries. There is also surface water flooding along the tributaries of the River Beult to the east of the village. The situation is aggravated by highway flooding, surface water flooding and sewerage system failures.

Commented [AH2]: Marden Farmers comment

"The main cause of past flood incidents (in Marden) has been heavy rainfall causing surface water flooding due to inadequate drainage systems. Any increases in surface water run-off in Marden, due to future developments or increase in rainfall due to climate change will have implications on flood risk downstream. The development of further properties (in Marden) should be used as an opportunity to assess and improve the current surface water drainage system. It is also essential that maintenance of existing and new drainage systems is carried out to ensure flooding caused by blockages is reduced; this falls under the responsibility of Southern Water and the owners of new developments." (MBC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2008).

Kent County Council's (KCC) Marden Surface Water Management Plan partnership has developed a robust understanding of local flood risks, including the up-dating of flood records with recent events and preparation of an integrated catchment model for Marden, designed to assist the understanding of flood mechanisms and pathways, determine areas at risk of flooding and identify potential mitigation options. An objective of the study was to identify opportunities to deliver flood risk management benefits through local planning documents, including the Marden Neighbourhood Plan.

"The risk of surface water flooding in new development areas can be greatly reduced by the consideration of drainage in the planning process, and particularly by the incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) into the design of new developments." (MBC Water Cycle Study 2010)

Successful drainage schemes for new developments will be based on the provision of on-surface SuDs, open-channel surface water drainage, mimicking nature and the existing local features, rather than using underground pipes and storage systems. Where new drainage networks are specifically required, they should incorporate and connect to existing ditches and streams as an integral part of the local environment.

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Surface water features also create new habitat, encourage biodiversity and amenity use, in accordance with MBC Green and Blue Infrastructure aspirations. Edges or kerbs of impermeable materials such as paving should be flush with proposed soft landscape areas to allow water to drain directly, provided that there will be no risk of pollution from oil leaks etc., and that adequate arrangements are made for extreme rainfall events. This results in a more attractive setting especially for residential areas. All schemes will be expected to

adopt best current industry practice for the site-specific conditions, including effective management and maintenance to meet all design objectives.

Recent developments in Marden village have delivered mixed results with regards to the aesthetic and ecological value of attenuation ponds and surface water drainage features. Marden Parish Council aspires to seek that development contribute positively to environmental and ecological enhancements, maximising opportunity to habitat creation and enhancements, and building a network of habitats within both the countryside and settlement areas.

A written statement by the Secretary of State for the Department of Community and Local Government (Dec 2014) requires the planning system to be used to ensure that there are clear arrangements in place for ongoing maintenance of the sustainable drainage infrastructure for new developments.

Marden Parish Council also welcomes the government's announcement in January 2023 that it intends to implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to provide a framework for the approval and adoption of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), and SuDS Approving Bodies (SABs), and national standards on the design, construction, operation and maintenance of SuDS.

Reword the following as part of text and not policy

Mention: bio-diversity and safety in wet SuDS and ponds

In order to strengthen, enhance and reinforce the network of ponds and streams within the Parish area:

- (1) Developments should seek to retain and reinforce existing ponds.
- (2) The creation of new ponds will be supported, where it can be demonstrated that their provision is not of detriment to the nearby stream network.
- (3) Where development includes new surface water attenuation ponds, these should be designed to retain water during dry periods. Attenuation ponds associated with developments will be expected to contribute positively to local ecology and biodiversity, as well as their primary surface water management role.

POLICY NE1 – SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT

Support will be given to development proposals that include appropriate sustainable surface water control systems designed to deliver efficient, clean water handling as well as wildlife and amenity benefits. Schemes must be accompanied by a detailed management plan confirming operating responsibilities to ensure the permanent management and maintenance of all elements of the schemes to maximise local benefits.

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~~*In order to strengthen, enhance and reinforce the network of ponds and streams within the Parish area;*~~

~~*— Developments should seek to retain and reinforce existing ponds.*~~

~~*— The creation of new ponds will be supported, where it can be demonstrated that their provision is not of detriment to the nearby stream network.*~~

~~*— Where development includes new surface water attenuation ponds, these should be designed to retain water during dry periods. Attenuation ponds associated with developments will be expected to contribute positively to local ecology and biodiversity, as well as their primary surface water management role.*~~

Further action required

- All partners to take forward the recommendations of KCC's Marden Surface Water Management Plan 2017, and revisions.
- Environment Agency to confirm whether all or part of Marden should be designated a Critical Drainage Area.
- All land owners with riparian responsibilities to ensure existing ditches are fit for purpose and maintained as such.

Water Quality

The EU Water Framework Directive [2000 \(as transposed into UK Law\)](#) required all inland waters to have 'good' chemical and ecological status by 2015, or where necessary by later dates. The yearly status of the parish boundary rivers has been assessed by the Environment Agency and objectives set, based on current conditions and anticipated river basin activities. The ecological status of the Beult is currently moderate, having improved from poor in 2014 to meet the 2015 objective. The ecological status of the Lesser Teise is similarly moderate, with the objective of achieving good by 2027. The equivalent status for chemical quality is good for both rivers, meeting their 2015 objectives. Marden Parish Council is represented on the Catchment Improvement Groups for the Beult and for the Teise.

In the Kent Biodiversity Strategy (Kent Nature Partnership ~~2015~~[2020](#)) both rivers are included in the Biodiversity Opportunity Area of the Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands*. A potential relevant target is to "Pursue opportunities for creation of wider river floodplains with riparian corridors (riverbanks) around natural drainage channels" as part of the flood alleviation schemes and new development drainage initiatives.

**Maidstone Biodiversity Opportunity Areas are also incorporated into the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (Appendix D) 2012, as amended 2013*

It may also be possible to contribute to the target 'Pursue opportunities to create new species-rich neutral grassland, particularly close to the Marden Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest....' The whole parish is a target area in the Natural England Sensitive

Catchments programme for the rivers Beult, Teise and Lesser Teise, addressing sustainable agricultural practices to control diffuse pollution and soil erosion, amongst other issues.

Surface water in the parish generally drains either west to the Lesser Teise or north to the river Beult. For historic reasons, wastewater is pumped from north to south through the village to a treatment plant south of the parish in Horsmonden, from where the treated effluent is discharged to the Teise/ Lesser Teise drainage system, to flow north again. From the above summary of the complex water quality issues in Marden parish, it will be obvious how vulnerable the current status is to development on former agricultural land.

As noted in the preceding Surface Water Management section, the efficient operation of surface water drainage systems which keep water on the surface can be readily checked and easily maintained. These systems will help to meet the essential requirement to ensure there is no additional contamination load from new development in the parish. Maintenance of these drainage networks and the surrounding landscape will generate materials such as leaves and grit as well as grass cuttings and site layouts should incorporate appropriate spaces for their storage, treatment (composting) and subsequent re-use.

POLICY NE2 – WATER QUALITY

Development proposals that seek to protect the water quality in the Rivers Beult, Teise and Lesser Teise and their respective catchment areas by strict controls on the potential release of contaminants, both during construction and in subsequent use will be supported. Sustainable drainage networks should be designed for ease of long-term maintenance, as well as lifetime efficiency. Best sustainable on-site use should be made of materials arising from maintenance.

Further action required

- All partners to take forward the recommendations of the Beult and Teise Catchment Improvement Groups

A Sense of Place

Marden's countryside is important. The setting of the village in its traditional Low Weald farming landscape means more to residents than merely a nice view – it contributes to the overall wellbeing of the parish. The Marden Neighbourhood Plan recognises the need for development, but this cannot be at the expense of Marden's unique setting and sense of place. This view is strongly supported by local residents and repeated at all the Marden Neighbourhood Plan Open Days and workshops. As one resident stated, "We owe it to our future generations and our wildlife to protect the countryside that so many of us enjoy today".

In consultation MBC has confirmed that development should contribute positively to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. The three inter-woven strands of visual

integration, habitat conservation and biodiversity gain are addressed by policies designed to maximise integration and minimise any negative impact from additional development in this rural parish.

During preparation of this Plan, residents were asked to identify the characteristic features of the surrounding country and those features that they most valued. Historic elements of the landscape, orchards/hop gardens and older farm buildings, were considered the most characteristic features in 98% of the replies. They were also the most valued at 21% and 18% respectively. Physical elements of the landscape, including water, woodland, hedges and flat/gently undulating land, were considered characteristic in 88% to 93% of the replies.

In consultation Natural England has referred to the iconic hedgerow landscape of Marden. The parish is fortunate that many field boundary hedgerows dating from at least the 19th century still exist on the ground. There are also many special trees which are considered 'locally notable', using the terminology of the Woodland Trust. Most are veteran oaks in historic hedgerows, but there is also a fine yew in the churchyard. These all contribute to the sense of place enjoyed in the local residential environment or experienced when travelling around the parish on foot, by bicycle or on the roads. The benefits for wildlife may not be so obvious but are equally valuable and are addressed under the following Habitat Conservation heading.

The MBC's Landscape Character Assessment 2012, as amended 2013, describes the majority of the parish as Staplehurst Low Weald. *"This is an historic landscape of small gently undulating grazed hedged fields with distinctive frequent mature and ancient English oak standard trees creating a strong sense of enclosure. Gently winding roads with wide lushly vegetated verges and ditches, colourful with cow parsley ... reinforce an intimate atmosphere.... Intensive orchard production is found on the fertile and often better drained loamy soils north east of Marden but also on heavier and wetter soils around Marden Beech and Marden Thorn and other pockets scattered throughout the area."*

The Character Areas of the Beult Valley, Teise Valley and Sherenden Wooded Hills are self-explanatory, following the topography and soils. The Landscape Character Assessment recommends the conservation and enhancement of hedgerows in the Beult and Teise Valleys, the conservation and planting of new oak trees in the Sherenden Wooded Hills and the restoration of lost hedgerow boundaries in the Staplehurst Low Weald. There is therefore considerable opportunity for specific net gain for hedgerows impacted by development. ~~However a~~ All proposals should also address the implications of maintenance and management in a sustainable manner.

Independent landscape consultants have advised MBC (2000, 2012) that past peripheral expansion of the village has created the appearance of "undistinguished modern housing estates" and "a rather untidy aspect around its periphery". The Landscape Integration Policy has been designed to ensure that future developments 'fit in' and are in keeping with the character and personality of the village and its surroundings. It is important to consider both the appearance of the new development from 'outside' and the views from 'inside' to beyond the built environment. For example, design of any artificial lighting systems should

take account of their appearance when viewed from surrounding country and roads, both when illuminated and as features in their own right in daylight. Light overspill and adverse effects on wildlife should also be considered when determining the height, size and number of lighting columns.

On the basis of the foregoing evidence, it is considered essential to conserve and enhance the natural environment and the landscape of the parish. Careful treatment of the village periphery is required to maintain and improve the appearance of the edge of Marden village, by avoiding suburbanisation and sprawl, and minimising the visual impact on the surrounding fields and wider landscape. In an area with a wealth of established deciduous trees and shrubs it is not surprising that the public consultation response noted that screening with evergreens, walls or high, solid fences is not appropriate. Dense native species hedgerow planting is the preferred boundary treatment, as expanded in Policy NE5. These considerations of developments fitting in with their surroundings applies at all scales from large housing estates adjacent to the village to the conversion of individual rural buildings.

POLICY NE3 – LANDSCAPE INTEGRATION

All proposed developments should be designed to integrate into their surroundings in the landscape and contribute positively to the conservation and enhancement of that landscape. Dense hedgerow planting with native species is the preferred boundary treatment if the strengthening of existing hedgerows or restoration of lost hedgerow boundaries is not possible. Artificial lighting systems, if deemed necessary, require sensitive treatment to reduce visual intrusion and negative impacts on wildlife.

'Major' development should include a detailed Landscape Visual Impact Assessment and incorporate soft landscaping methods to reduce the visual impact of the proposal, particularly where this would soften the village edge when viewed from the wider landscape.

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Landscape Enjoyment and Public Rights of Way Network

Marden has a substantial and wide-reaching network of public rights of way which reach across all corners of the parish, through the local patchwork of orchards and fields, and to the surrounding villages and hamlets. The area also benefits from a number of 'permissive' routes.

The usage of the individual rights of way and routes varies greatly, with many being heavily utilised, particularly around Marden settlement boundary. Those with the greatest usage are suffering from some degradation. Similarly, some of the existing network suffers from under-utilisation, and is overgrown and inaccessible.

The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the strong public desire to explore the countryside around the parish, and the importance of maintaining safe and easy access to the countryside for all.

Also see policy In2 'Sustainable Travel'

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Habitat Conservation

The typical Marden networks of waterways, hedgerows and woodlands are essential to wildlife habitats, as well as contributing to the visual landscape. They are also valuable as wildlife corridors and stepping stones to facilitate the movement of animals, invertebrates and plants, encouraging diversity, and enabling response to external pressures such as development and climate change. Hedgerow replanting, restoration and new plantings can better connect the wider ecological network of natural areas and provide opportunity for a net gain consideration for lost habitat.

The rural, predominantly agricultural, parish has a wide range of ecological habitats; many of which are also of historic interest. There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Marden Meadows, which is one of the best examples of unimproved neutral grassland remaining in the south east; and the River Beult, which is one of the few clay rivers in England which retains a characteristic flora and fauna. Wide areas of agricultural land are under agri-environment schemes, including the English Woodland Grant Scheme, Countryside Stewardship Agreements and Arable Assemblage Farmland Birds targets.

Commented [AH6]: Marden Farmers comments

The parish is home to several individual species of interest including great crested newts, turtle doves, yellowhammers, brown hare and dormice. Local wildlife sites are found adjacent to Marden Meadows and in deciduous woodland to the south of the parish. Any redevelopment of existing land under arable or top fruit production will displace a wide range of wildlife. Compensatory provision of places for shelter and hibernation together with food supplies to benefit invertebrates, birds and mammals will ~~be~~ need to be ensured.

The parish also has Priority Habitats as defined in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2015: Traditional Orchards, Ancient & Semi-natural Woodland, Ancient Replanted Woodland, Lowland Meadows, Coastal & Flood Plain Gazing Marsh and Deciduous Woodland. The Biodiversity Opportunity Area of the Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands includes the Teise and Beult valleys. In addition, a Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy is in preparation.

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During preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, residents were asked to comment on what they saw as the future challenges for the parish. Their main concerns covered voluntary initiatives on locally grown and sold food, nature conservation, building materials from local or sustainable sources and a reduction in water demand. However, nature conservation was deemed the most urgent issue. A directly comparable survey in 2006 ranked nature conservation sixth, showing the increasing interest and concern for this issue.

The retention or re-creation of historic field boundaries in the parish will contribute towards the retention and expansion of a local wildlife habitat network as well as retaining the

continuity of the historic setting of field boundaries. An agricultural survey of the parish dating from 1817/19 shows field boundaries, later updated for the Tithe Map of 1841. Where relevant, new hedge planting is encouraged along these historic field boundaries. The use of traditional and native species of local provenance will minimise the import of plant pests and diseases, maintain the natural vegetation in the surrounding area, and ensure new planting blends with the existing landscape.

*"The best time to plant a tree
is twenty years ago.*

The second best time is now".

Chinese Proverb

Local consultation responses drew attention to the timescale for integration of development once built. As one comment put it, "please don't cut down existing established trees.... Mature trees cannot be replaced in our lifetime by young saplings. They are not a 'quick fix' solution. We need green mature trees in the village for our wellbeing". There was particular support for native species of trees and shrubs.

It is therefore important for all existing shrubs and trees not on historic hedgerow alignments to be considered for retention and incorporation in the landscape plan and open space provision of the development. If established habitats and visual features are fully protected during construction, they can act as 'stepping stones' to maintain wildlife movements as well as act as reservoirs of plants and soil life. The Woodland Trust encourages the protection and retention of older and important trees and notes the benefits to the community, new residents and the developers' purse!

"Ancient and veteran trees are special because of their size, age or condition. Retaining these trees will enhance the value of any development. They will add a unique quality, giving it a sense of place or an 'air of respectable antiquity', creating character and distinction which will be appreciated by potential owners and their families Designing development around trees and woods with significant amenity, heritage and biodiversity value will foster good relationships with communities and local planning authorities. Time spent identifying and caring for all trees of importance will pay dividends in increasing the appeal and value of the site for clients and homeowners A development should take a holistic approach to the wildlife features on site, on adjacent ground and in the wider landscape". (Woodland Trust, 2011).*

It is vital to mitigate the loss of wildlife habitat, to reduce the adverse effects on wildlife in the surrounding area and contribute to enhancing the special interest of adjacent and downstream habitat and species. Accordingly, all ecological site designations such as Local Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodland and Sites of Special Scientific Interest are protected by planning legislation. However, all new development should actively support the aims and targets of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy⁴, and [MBC's Biodiversity Climate Change Action Plan \(updated April 2023\)](#), contribute to the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and protect

Priority Habitats. Developers are encouraged to consult the appropriate Catchment Improvement Group.

POLICY NE4 – BIODIVERSITY AND HABITATS

Owing to the unique setting of Marden in its surrounding landscape all new development is expected to actively support ~~actively~~ the aims of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, to protect Priority Habitats and, where possible, contribute to the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. ~~A biodiversity net gain philosophy should be implemented so that any habitat or species loss is replaced elsewhere on site, in excess of the amount originally lost. In addition to the NPPF Biodiversity Net Gain requirements all other developments should demonstrate an appropriate on-site biodiversity enhancement. Local off-site re-creation is viewed as a last resort. but the net gain principle would apply to ensure there is a positive impact from the new works.~~

Further actions required:

- Marden Parish Council will seek to undertake an assessment of the significant individual and groups of trees within the parish and will seek Tree Preservation Orders where these are considered an appropriate solution to protect village amenity and habitats.
- Marden Parish Council will consider, over the coming years, opportunities for the provision of a new community woodland within the Parish.
- Marden Parish Council will seek to enhance the local tree and hedgerow network within its own land where opportunities arise and will encourage residents and developers to identify opportunities for enhancements to the tree and hedgerow network.

**Ancient Tree Guide 3 - Trees and Development. ³In 2019 MBC is in the process of developing a new Biodiversity Strategy for the Borough
~~.This should also be consulted and appropriate action taken in due course.~~*

Landscape Planting

As noted above all new planting on boundaries should be traditional, native species of local provenance. It should be locally specific to link development to the surrounding rural landscape. Careful choice of species likely to thrive in the available soil is obviously important but consideration should also be given to the seasonal range of drainage conditions both current and future. Priority should be given to species which, in combination, will optimise the provision of nectar, pollen, fruit and seed throughout the year. The plant species chosen should also provide shelter and protection for wildlife. Unfortunately, the integrity of the landscape is vulnerable to a range of plant diseases and Marden is suffering the increasing effects of the untreatable ash dieback disease.

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Contemporary phyto-sanitary concerns ([eg plant health and freedom from dangerous pests and diseases](#)) should be addressed in species mix selection, planting and maintenance.

In planning and planting hedgerows adjacent to fields, sufficient space must be provided for dense hedges to grow to at least 2 metres wide, with a margin on each side for long grasses to grow at their base, as recommended by the Town & Country Planning Association and The Wildlife Trusts, 2012. All development proposals should include appropriate maintenance and management plans and adequate arrangements to ensure they are carried out.

All opportunities should be taken to reduce existing infestations of non-native invasive species, control pernicious weeds and prevent the spread or import of plant diseases.

POLICY NE5 – LANDSCAPE PLANTING

New landscape planting in Marden must be selected from native species of local provenance for landscape and visual effects and to maintain the natural rhythms of the vegetation in the surrounding area. Priority should be given to species that provide food and shelter to wildlife. Development proposals within the Plan area must ensure that appropriate and adequate space is available within the development site to allow landscape planting to reach maturity without any detriment to the amenities of the development itself and to neighbouring properties, for example by excessive shading of gardens or by the interruption of external views.

Soil Conservation

The parish soils are underlain by the Weald Clay Formation with superficial deposits of alluvium in the river valleys. The slightly higher land consists of River Terrace deposits with sand and gravel. The valley soils have naturally high groundwater. Loamy and clayey soils cover the majority of the parish, slowly permeable and seasonally wet. Freely draining loamy soils are found on the ridge running across Marden Beech to Wanshurst Green and Underling Green.

On-site soil remediation techniques such as soil stabilisation should be used, as necessary, to ensure the existing soils on site can be made suitable for purpose. Appropriate soil conservation measures should also address the handling and temporary storage of soils, as well as preventing erosion, both during construction and until stabilising vegetation is re-established. The objectives of the soil conservation policy are to retain the natural soil fauna and flora of the parish; to assist the establishment of new native planting; to reduce the spread of undesirable and potentially invasive plant material and soil-borne diseases, and to reduce off-site traffic movements associated with the import and export of soils and any other excavated materials.

POLICY NE6 – SOIL CONSERVATION

Development proposals should demonstrate sustainable on-site soil management and minimise the import of subsoil and topsoil and the export of any excavated ground materials.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Local Character

Marden is an ancient village with many historic buildings. Retention of these buildings has contributed to the character of the village. Some individual buildings are legally protected as listed buildings. There are 129 in Marden, 55 of which are in the village centre. The Church is Grade I, White Lyon House, Chainhurst Farmhouse and Great Cheveney are Grade II* and the remainder Grade II. The Marden Conservation Area covers much of the centre of the village.

There is a variety of architectural forms, styles and materials represented by buildings constructed and developed over hundreds of years. There are examples of pre-15th century timber-framed buildings together with tile hung façades and many different styles of brick-built properties constructed from the 18th century through to the present day.

The conservation area was designated in 1977. MBC has undertaken a Conservation Area Appraisal ~~of Marden in 2024 which did not alter the conservation area boundary. and Management Plans in some parts of the Borough, but this has not yet been done in Marden. The process is recommended by Historic England and a plan for Marden is now a matter of urgency.~~

Residents at ~~the previous~~ Open Days ~~have supported the need to carry out a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and the need to incorporate additional areas. A review of the conservation area was then undertaken as part of the Marden Neighbourhood Plan workshops that identified several areas and individual buildings which can still should~~ be considered for inclusion ~~on MBC's local list of heritage assets. Albion Cottages, the School and Memorial Hall, Railway Cottages and parts of the east side of Goudhurst Road.~~

A number of the most recent major housing developments included ~~large proposals for~~ three storey blocks of flats. The introduction of such buildings are inappropriate and would have a detrimental impact on the rural character of Marden. Strong opposition from the Parish Council led to ~~amendments to reduce the overall height and the~~ design of ~~the certain~~ structures ~~being improved which and this~~ was welcomed.

This Plan does not seek to prevent the development of three storey buildings – the use of roof spaces with small dormer windows is a typical feature of the Kentish landscape. The Plan would therefore seek to support development of a suitable scale and height that respects and enhances the Wealden character of Marden.

POLICY BE1 – LOCAL CHARACTER

Development proposals should be designed to protect the fabric and setting of any designated and non-designated heritage asset and respect and enhance the existing character of the village. New development must be both visually and functionally sympathetic to the existing styles and materials, which are illustrated at pages 21/22 in this Plan and also described in the Marden Design Statement (2001), in order to maintain and enhance Marden's sense of place.

Commented [AH9]: Amend when document finalised

Further action required

Marden Parish Council to work with the Marden History Group to develop proposals for adding entries to MBC's local list of heritage assets

- ~~Marden Parish Council to lobby MBC to undertake a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Marden.~~

Residential Amenity

There was a strong consensus from the open days for new housing development and residential extensions and alterations to blend with the existing vernacular style, to use good quality materials and incorporate features of interest. Adequate off-road parking and garden space were also considered to be essential elements of all new developments. There was opposition to any further gated communities as a principle, although it was acknowledged that other factors may need to be considered. For example, the need for pedestrian safety was an over-riding consideration in the provision of gates at Rookery Court. Further support to this approach was given by residents at the 'Village Boundaries' workshop on 21 September 2013.

The Marden Design Statement identified design features and materials that characterise the parish. It stated: *"It is clear that there is no single Marden building style. Each period has added to the variety of village and farm buildings. New development should not attempt to replicate exactly any one of the styles represented: design should be contemporary but sympathetic with its immediate surroundings – and, more broadly, with the Marden character as a whole"*. Its exemplars are re-stated within the plan.

POLICY BE2 – RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

Proposals for new residential development in the Plan area, including extensions and alterations to existing properties, should ensure that adequate amenities are safeguarded for residents including neighbouring residents, particularly in respect of privacy, daylight, car parking, external lighting and outlook. Development proposals should also provide or retain adequate private amenity space, and where appropriate make provision for new pedestrian routes, cycleways and bridleways within the development with linkages to the existing such routes in the vicinity of the site. ~~and where appropriate make provision for new pedestrian routes, cycleways and bridleways within the development with linkages to the existing such routes in the vicinity of the site. In this respect, applicants should take account of Kent County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).~~

Also see policy In2 'Sustainable Travel'.

Most people only come into contact with the planning system when they or their neighbour submits a planning application for a domestic extension. Although the impact of such extensions is by their very nature likely to be limited, aspects such as intrusive external lighting can have a great impact on the quality of life of those directly involved. It is very

Commented [AH10]: Reinstated following consideration of MBC, Cllr Russell and Msoc comments because not fully covered by In2

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important this is recognised by the Marden Neighbourhood Plan, with good neighbourliness being essential to the wider village community.

Traditional Materials and Designs

Sustainable Construction

~~The sustainability of all development~~ must underpin ~~all development~~ the basic design approach and be fundamental to all schemes. The population in the South East of England will grow and so the demand for natural resources to power and service our homes and businesses will become even greater. Planning has a key role in helping to shape the places in which we work and live and to mitigate the impact of climate change.

The NPPF supports the transition to a low carbon future. Therefore, energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings are to be encouraged and local design requirements for sustainability which aim for zero carbon building should be incorporated.

It is recognised that the effects of climate change will be central to development across the borough. The Climate Change Act 2008 sets two legally binding targets of 34% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 leading to 80% reductions by 2050. MBC has adopted the Kent Environment Strategy 2016 which supports a low carbon transition. There are likely to be further changes in legislation and guidance relating to measures of sustainability, and this is expected to continue so it is important to keep following best practice.

The Marden Neighbourhood Plan recognises and fully supports developments which show high levels of sustainability. Residents are only too aware of surface water management and quality issues in the parish – see policies NE1 and NE2. Similarly, the installation of small-scale renewable energy schemes at both domestic and commercial level is encouraged. There are an increasing number of local examples of good practice. New buildings can also incorporate simple measures to encourage wildlife habitats. The inclusion of bat and nest boxes and bee bricks for example.

The use of rainwater/greywater harvesting is recommended for all new residential, commercial and agricultural buildings. The use of solar thermal technology, ground and air source heat pumps and heat recovery systems are encouraged, with the ultimate aim of achieving minimal energy use through the use of passive house design “Passivhaus” principles.

POLICY BE3 – SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

All development must ~~be based upon the principles of sustainable construction and~~ accord with the most up-to-date guidance and best practice. Support will be given to development that provides or incorporates low or zero carbon technologies providing development conforms with other policies in the plan.

Rural Buildings

Marden is a rural parish and accordingly most of its land lies beyond the main village settlement. The parish has a multitude of rural buildings in the countryside, ~~mostly mainly~~ still associated with agricultural use. The changes to agricultural working practices means that many of these buildings are no longer needed for their original purpose. We are all familiar with the oast houses and barns that have been converted to residential use.

The conversion of agricultural buildings is, in principle, acceptable. The NPPF encourages the re-use of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings. It also stresses the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. This Plan requires extensions to existing rural buildings to be sympathetic and respect local building styles and materials. The MBC Local Plan allows for the conversion of rural buildings outside settlement boundaries, providing the buildings are structurally capable of conversion, respect the rural character and provide adequate residential amenity with off-road parking.

POLICY BE4 – CONVERSION OF RURAL BUILDINGS

Support will be given to schemes for the conversion and alterations of existing rural buildings which respect the character of the building and its wider rural setting in Marden. Proposals should be sympathetic to the original form of the building and be designed to retain and respect the character of the building. Proposals should also have no adverse impacts upon wildlife habitats in the vicinity of the site or upon the amenities of any neighbouring residential properties. Where buildings are identified as heritage assets or contribute to the significance of a wider heritage asset it will be necessary to demonstrate that conversion would contribute to the conservation of the asset's significance or, otherwise, that any harm resulting from conversion is unavoidable and is justified by the benefits of the proposal.

Over the years ~~Legislation introduced in 2015~~ has given-granted greater permitted development rights to convert former agricultural buildings to other uses. This means that agricultural buildings can be converted without the submission of a planning application, merely a prior notification.

Farm Buildings

Marden is an agricultural and horticultural parish, with the production of arable, top and soft fruit, sheep, hops and viticulture. It is recognised that the farming community has to keep abreast of new and emerging methods of production, storage and marketing facilities to maintain its viability. This may result in the introduction of new buildings into the countryside. Such developments, either temporary or permanent, will be expected to be sited and designed to be compatible with their surroundings. The inclusion of small-scale renewable energy systems, such as roofs with photovoltaic panels and use of raised “agrivoltaics” panels to avoid loss of productive farmland, is also encouraged.

The MBC Local Plan Review aims to limit new agricultural development to only those structures necessary for agricultural purposes and to minimise any adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents and the character of the countryside. Many agricultural buildings can be erected under permitted development, but for those buildings that require the submission of a planning application the following policy applies.

POLICY BE5 – NEW FARM BUILDINGS

Support will be given to new agricultural and horticultural buildings that have been designed and sited to minimise any adverse impact on residential amenity; the character of the wider countryside; be sympathetic to local surroundings; and respect the historic character of the site. Structures should use sustainable construction materials, methods and include small scale on-site renewable energy schemes.

Marden is an important fruit production area and, as such, large numbers of temporary workers are often required, particularly at harvesting time. ~~Historically workers have come from the travelling community, the student population, or in more recent times, from Eastern Europe.~~ Many farming units also have sophisticated storage and packhouse facilities which can operate for most of the year. In recent years, the provision of mobile home accommodation has proved to be the most practical form of workers’ accommodation and the need to house seasonal agricultural and horticultural workers for temporary periods in the countryside is understood.

POLICY BE6 – SEASONAL WORKER ACCOMMODATION

Support will be given to the provision of temporary accommodation for seasonal agricultural and horticultural workers which is sited and designed so as to minimise any visual impact on the wider countryside and be permitted on a temporary basis where there is a proven need.

In Marden, like many other rural settlements, small pieces of agricultural land have been sold to adjacent residential landowners. It is important that local residents are aware that such pieces of land will require planning permission for a change of use before they can be used as a domestic garden. Planning applications for such works must consider the loss of agricultural land and the impact of the change of use on the character of the countryside. A proliferation of such changes in use is likely to lead to an unacceptable suburbanisation of the countryside, if allowed to go unchecked.

AMENITIES

Community Facilities

Rural settlements rely heavily on community-focused services. Marden has a very active community life with many different groups and clubs. Residents value the village for its great 'community spirit'. The village has a wide variety of amenities: retail, social, leisure, sports and healthcare. The growth in housing ~~will~~ has increased ~~d~~ the demand for these facilities, so their retention and necessary expansion is vital.

The MBC Local Plan seeks to resist the loss of local shops and facilities in Rural Service Centres, whilst supporting the development of new shops and community benefits. This aim is supported by the Marden Neighbourhood Plan to help retain and promote a thriving, sporting, creative and cultural life for people of all ages so that everyone can lead a more active and independent life.

Marden has a number of publicly accessible buildings that require regular maintenance. The Marden Memorial Hall, together with the Vestry Hall and Congregational Chapel provides ~~a~~ a community venue s for many groups and societies as well as the Pre-School Playgroup. ~~The roof was replaced in 2015 to ensure the long term viability of the building.~~

The Unicorn Public House was added to Maidstone Borough Council's list of Assets of Community Value (ACV) in June 2021, and the West End Tavern was added in February 2024. There is the opportunity to consider other buildings in the future to also become ACVs which Marden Parish Council, along with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, will support, promote and help to protect.

~~During 2018 there has been a notable increase in anti-social behaviour among young people in the village. There is currently a limited~~ currently no youth service provided by KCC and no dedicated facility for young people other than Marden Scout Group. The continual expansion of the community means that a dedicated youth facility has become increasingly important. "Marden has 60%10% of young people between the ages of 108 and 19, which demonstrates that strong evidence of youth facilities are needed in Marden; and a youth club, and activities are-is vital for making young people feel supported within their community." ~~Youth Worker — Natalie Penfold 2018)~~

Marden is also fortunate in having a number of sporting and fitness facilities. The playing field, which incorporates an area which can be used as a junior football pitch, is owned and managed by the Parish Council. ~~Marden Minors have a pitch in Pattenden Lane. The Marden Hockey and Cricket Club (now known as Marden Sports Club and which includes the Tennis Club), Blue House Cricket Club, Tennis Club and Bowls Club are operated as private clubs but are, however, open to all residents of Marden and the surrounding area. These organisations are always looking for funding to improve their facilities.~~

The parish has three public houses and a village club which are all popular places to gather, drink, eat and be entertained and it is vital to ensure these are retained.

Marden Library and Heritage Centre has been identified at the Marden Neighbourhood Plan open days as a much-valued community amenity.

~~Discussions were held between KCC, the Parish Council and the Marden History Group regarding the organisation of the existing library service. This included ways to increase usage and reduce overheads.~~ The Heritage Centre is staffed by volunteers and greatly adds to the social cohesion of the village. Support for this facility is essential, locally and nationally, ~~it having been and was~~ awarded a National Archive recognition. Marden Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maximise the benefits from any developer contributions arising from new development in the parish to support the ongoing provision of the Heritage Centre and all other village amenities¹.

¹Please see the current Marden Parish Council Infrastructure Spend Plan.

POLICY A1 – COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Development proposals that help to sustain the existing community facilities and create new facilities either directly through developer contributions or indirectly by encouraging local spending will be supported provided development conforms with other policies in the plan. Any new development should prioritise both dedicated youth facilities and facilities for older and disabled residents.

Further action required

- KCC, Marden Parish Council and the Marden History Group to continue working together to secure the future of the Marden Library and Heritage Centre.
- ~~KCC and Marden Parish Council to continue working together to ensure youth facilities are provided within the parish.~~
- Marden Parish Council to work with stakeholders on providing facilities for older and disabled residents.

Open Space

Marden is fortunate to have a number of public open spaces as well as a variety of sport and recreational amenities. Open space, be it in the form of streets, parks, squares or open fields, is critical to the well-being of residents. The importance of these areas is expected to be recognised by any new development and new spaces to be carefully designed to complement those that already exist within the village. As one resident stated during an Open Day, “Our young people need space to grow as well as our village.”

Marden Parish Council owns and maintains the Marden Playing Field with its play equipment, outdoor gym, football pitch and changing rooms and the provision for a junior football pitch. The Parish Council owns and maintains Southons Field with its beautiful specimen trees and ~~trim-play~~ trail, swings and wildflower meadow. The Parish Council also owns and operates the Marden Cemetery that is a well-maintained and ~~attractive nature-~~ friendly area, together with the land to the rear, which has been planted with 2,000 indigenous trees in ~~order to safeguard the land for readiness for any~~ future expansion (eg woodland burial area).

New areas of public and residents' open space have been created on recent housing developments. ~~The new space created on The Parsonage development is recognised in the MBC Local Plan Policy OS1(8).~~

The parish also includes valuable areas of open space that are in private ownership such as Millennium Walk and Bridgehurst Woods (a designated Ancient Woodland). The loss of such areas to development is to be resisted, ~~unless equivalent or better open space areas are guaranteed.~~

It is essential that we continue to protect, maintain, improve and, enhance ~~and~~ existing areas of open space in the parish taking into consideration biodiversity. This is particularly important for those areas located close to concentrations of housing. ~~⊖The importance of~~ open space can also have a positive impact upon the quality of the built environment, be of ecological value and ~~engender encourage~~ physical and social interaction. Physical/mental and wellbeing ~~that~~ is vital for ~~community cohesion everyone and the link between nature and both physical and mental health has become more evident since the Covid-19 pandemic and is vital for community cohesion.~~

The importance of open space was identified in both the Marden Design Statement 2001, ~~and~~ the Marden Community Plan 2007 and. ~~More recently,~~ at the Marden Neighbourhood Plan open days, ~~R~~ residents again identified the importance of open space. Local people are best placed to help decide what is needed in their environment and should have greater community involvement in the management of green and blue facilities. The Marden Neighbourhood Plan, therefore, seeks to maintain and improve the existing and valued areas of open space and to encourage the provision of additional areas. This will ensure Marden is a greener, healthier, more attractive and welcoming village.

The NPPF requires planning policy to be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, and sports and recreational facilities. National policy also encourages the creation and enhancement of a network of open spaces and natural habitats and the protection of existing areas of open space and landscapes.

POLICY A2 – OPEN SPACE

All major development should provide open areas of amenity and, recreation, ~~woodland, ponds or other water features and these to be retained~~ for community use and to protect and enhance biodiversity. Links should be provided between areas of open space, community facilities and the public rights of way network. ~~Links should be provided between areas of open space, community facilities and the public rights of way network, with M~~ management plans confirming operating responsibilities should be put in place to safeguard the future retention of these areas.*

**"NPPF Definition – Major Development – For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015"*

Commented [AH11]: Reinstated following consideration of MBC and Msoc comments

[Also see policy In2 'Sustainable Travel'](#)

Education

Every community must have the facilities to provide its residents with a good standard of education. ~~Marden has an excellent primary school that has consistently achieved good reports with OFSTED. Marden Primary School is now part of the Leigh Academy Trust.~~ There is a wide range of secondary education within reach of Marden. KCC's secondary school transport arrangements ~~are, at present, denying~~ real choice for some of Marden's children who attend secondary schools where the only access from Marden by public transport is via train eg Paddock Wood, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells, and do not benefit from any subsidised travel arrangements. This is an issue for low income families who cannot afford the rail fare.

The NPPF states that "a sufficient choice of school places must be available to meet the needs of existing and new communities". It states that the local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. Great weight must be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools and work with school promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted. The MBC Local Plan lists education among the priorities for residential, business and retail development where infrastructure is delivered through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies / Section 106 agreements.

Marden Parish Council has always had a good relationship with its village primary school and is firmly of the opinion that village children should have the opportunity to attend their local school and be able to continue their secondary education within a reasonable distance from their home. ~~Until 1994, the village school coped with expanding numbers of entrants with mobile classrooms in the grounds. However, the school building was then extended so that all rooms were under one roof. At the time outline plans were laid down for further expansion, but the necessary funds were not available from KCC. As a result, the school once again had to resort to the use of mobile buildings.~~

~~KCC announced plans in 2016 for improved and extended facilities at the school, but the capacity issue must be kept under review in the light of the recent housing development in the village. KCC in 2023 recognised the increase in population in Marden which has resulted in an increased demand in primary school places and work is due to take place in 2025.~~ It maybe that in the future, as the population of the village grows, a new site for the school will be needed, which ~~could-should~~ incorporate a nursery for pre-school children.

As with many schools there is traffic congestion at arrival and departure times that will only be exacerbated by this further expansion. The congestion leads to safety issues that must be addressed. ~~Residents raised these issues at the open days and during a consultation undertaken in early 2017 and again at a parking consultation held in February 2018.~~ The Parish Council has been working with KCC Highways to identify solutions to alleviate the problems, but it is unlikely these will fully mitigate the safety issues unless the school is re located to a new site, off the main road, where there is capacity for safe off-road parking. ~~Marden has a Children's Centre which was under threat of closure in 2016 but the Parish Council and local residents were successful in preventing this from happening.~~

Marden also has a successful pre-school playgroup, which has served the community since

1967, with strong links to Marden Primary ~~School Academy and the Children's Centre~~. Pre School education is provided for children aged 2 -5 years during term time, ~~24-29.5~~ hours per week and 38 weeks per year. This is a non-profit making organisation and is currently housed in the Marden Memorial Hall, which has limited capacity and is used by many other village organisations ~~as it is the main community hall for the village~~. As the population of Marden ~~grows-has grown considerably~~, demand ~~is-has~~ now outstripped ~~ed~~ supply and the playgroup is unable to offer places to all those applying. Additionally, parents are looking for day care, both full time and outside term time. Marden Pre-School Playgroup is committed to finding suitable facilities to enable it to become a stand-alone nursery allowing them to open for longer hours and cater for more children.

POLICY A3 – PRIMARY EDUCATION

Developments which lead to a requirement for additional capacity and resources at Marden Primary ~~School Academy~~ will be supported where such development conforms with other policies in this Plan. Appropriate funding will be sought through planning obligations linked to the planning permissions in accordance with the policy requirements of Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council.

Further action required

- Marden Parish Council will continue to lobby KCC about subsidised travel arrangements to secondary schools attended by Marden children.
- KCC to ensure that existing S106/future CIL developer contributions are used proportionately to support the provision of secondary school education for Marden children.
- Marden Parish Council to ~~explore-encourage possible~~ provision for ~~full time~~ nursery care and education within the parish of Marden to provide good quality facilities for pre-school children.

Healthcare

In ~~2014~~~~2022~~, the Marden Medical Centre provided primary medical care services to ~~5734~~~~7,627~~ patients, ~~an increase of 26% since 2014~~. ~~The list has now grown to the 2018 level of 6435 (12% increase) and would be expected to reach some 7200 to 7400 in 2020/21, when the present phase of major residential development currently approved, should be complete. An expected increase in patient numbers of 25 to 30% in less than 7 years.~~

In ~~2019~~~~2021~~ the ~~existing~~ Marden Medical Centre ~~is-was already close to capacity and the building should ideally be extended to meet the 2020/21 patient numbers. At the MNP Open Days residents have repeatedly raised the lack of parking available at the Medical Centre, extended to incorporate a temporary portacabin (due to expire in 2028 unless.....).~~ However, this is not large enough for the current patient population let alone having to ~~accommodate further population growth over the next few years. Building an extension on the current site and extending the car parking may prove challenging. Therefore, land for alternative sites in, or close to the village centre, should be considered.~~ The Medical Centre is also under pressure to increase the range of services provided.

Commented [AH12]: Added in response to MMC comments (sentence needs finishing)

Marden ~~is expanding~~has expanded from a largely rural village into a Rural Service Centre with an increasingly diverse population. This has caused extra demand, not just in terms of the patient numbers but also from the higher incidence of health and social problems. The additional health related social and support services, such as midwives and health visitors, ~~and the Children's Centre~~ are already suffering the results of resource limitations. The services are becoming inadequate to support the increasing and changing population effectively. The Medical Centre is thus under pressure to increase the range of services provided.

~~In addition, the NHS Long Term Plan published in January 2019 and the developing Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Plan call for co-ordinated and holistic approach to health and social care delivered locally. If Marden is to meet this requirement, the Medical Centre will need to expand clinical, social and associated services and work with adjacent GP practices to provide a co-ordinated response, putting increased pressure on medical, administrative and support staff and facilities.~~

~~However, the Medical Centre operates from a building that will struggle to meet future demand due to its lack of space on a constricted site. The Neighbourhood Plan policy supports planning and possible development for new facilities on a separate site(s) and, in the short term, the extension of the existing facility to meet more immediate needs.~~

~~The Medical Centre has received funding in the form of \$106 contributions from the first new housing developments in the village.~~ Future development will also need to make appropriate contributions in order that the Marden medical services can meet the demand resulting from the associated increase in services and patient numbers.

Marden is also fortunate to have a busy Pharmacy and the Marden Dental Surgery which is a thriving practice. ~~with an excellent reputation.~~

Marden has now received status as a Dementia Friendly community.

POLICY A4 – HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

Developments which lead to a requirement for additional or enhanced primary health care services and facilities in Marden will be supported where such development conforms with other policies in this Plan. Appropriate funding will be sought through the planning obligations and contributions process linked to planning permissions in accordance with the policy requirements of Maidstone Borough Council and the relevant National Health Service providers.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Utilities

Utilities: Water Supply and Sewerage

The advice relating to the MBC Local Plan in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (2009) is equally applicable to the Marden Neighbourhood Plan. It notes that Maidstone is located in a waterscarce area, which will be exacerbated due to climate change and future growth and development. Advice relating to water resources includes the need to ensure that the distribution and location of new development takes the water supply and sewerage infrastructure into account.

The government's Water Strategy for England (2008) sets out the government's vision for the water sector by 2030. The Strategy requires planning authorities to work closely with water companies and the Environment Agency on the timing and numbers of new households in areas likely to see the greatest growth. It addresses a range of water-related issues, including managing water demand through increased water efficiency and reduced water wastage; enhancing future water supply through new infrastructure; and addressing water quality through tackling pollution.

Marden Parish Council ~~has been~~remains concerned that water supply and sewerage infrastructure failures are not always being rectified promptly and effectively. These include ~~and that essential new infrastructure may not be provided.~~

- Leakage and low water pressure
- Sewer flooding in the village centre
- Wastewater pumping station capacity and failures

The Parish Council does, however, welcome the ~~2018~~ongoing improvements that ~~were~~are being carried out by South East Water (water supply) under its Water Resources Management Plan 2020 to 2080 and being planned by Southern Water (sewerage) under its emerging Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan for the Medway catchment.

Whilst dealing with existing water supply and sewerage infrastructure problems lies outside the planning regime, developers, planners, South East Water and Southern Water are urged to take a holistic approach to avoid any further detriment to the existing sub-standard systems and, ~~preferably~~, work together to improve these before, or during, the construction of ~~new infrastructure associated with new developments~~ and associated infrastructure. ~~The Parish Council has been active in meeting with service undertakers to ensure improvements are carried out.~~

Following feedback at the 'Vision for Marden 2037' open day held in May 2022, water supply and sewerage were confirmed as still the biggest utility infrastructure concerns; therefore, the existing Marden Neighbourhood Plan policy In1 has been retained unamended.

POLICY In1 – WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE

The provision of new and improved water supply and sewerage infrastructure to serve the needs of existing and new developments in the Plan area will be supported, subject to other policies in the Plan.

Utilities: Other

Feedback from the 'Vision for Marden 2037' open day held in May 2022 also highlights two other main areas of concern about utility infrastructure.

Electricity Supply

The reliability and resilience of the electricity supply network has always been a concern in Marden (as in many surrounding communities) because of the vulnerability of overhead lines to storm damage and power outages caused by lightning strikes.

Many of the network vulnerabilities also extend well beyond the Plan area, so no new Marden Neighbourhood Plan policy has been added.

However, the reliability and resilience improvements that UK Power Networks has identified in its 'RIIO-ED2 Business Plan 2023-2028' are welcomed.

Communications

Marden businesses and residents have become ever-more reliant on high-quality communications infrastructure, especially with the ongoing move from traditional landlines to broadband, wireless and mobile technologies.

The problems and solutions are nearly all general in nature, being similar across the rural parts of the borough and wider nation, so no new Marden Neighbourhood Policy has been added.

However, there are local issues to be resolved, with certain parts of the parish being less well served in terms of communications infrastructure quality, so a new action has been added.

Further action required

- Broadband, wireless and mobile operators to pursue opportunities to provide equal access to high-quality communications infrastructure to all parts of the parish.
- Southern Water to increase capacity and reliability of all waste water pumping stations in Marden.
- Southern Water to investigate main sources of surface water ingress into the sewer network and develop them/implement a plan to control overloading of the system during heavy rainfall events.

- Southern Water to investigate “pinch points” in the existing sewer network and development then implement a plan to provide sufficient capacity at each location.

Transport

Transport: Car Parking

We all need to travel; to work, to school, to shop, to visit friends and family, for recreation, and a host of other reasons. However, the consequences of car and lorry traffic, and the limited range of available alternatives, are frequently identified as amongst the biggest issues affecting people living in rural areas. Marden is no different.

The NPPF states “transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals.” It also requires that “appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be, or have been, taken up, given the type of development and its location” are ensured.” The MBC Local Plan states that MBC and its partners will manage and enhance the borough’s transport infrastructure, develop strategic transport links to and from Maidstone and connections to the Rural Service Centres, improve highway safety, promote sustainable travel, promote a high-quality pedestrian environment, manage the provision of car parking and ensure that the transport network provides inclusive access.

The preparation of the Marden Design Statement between 1998 and 2001 involved several rounds of public consultation, and resulted in a number of transport related recommendations. Marden held a traffic consultation in November 2002, with the main issues raised being traffic speed, heavy lorries and bad parking. Marden Parish Council held a further follow-up workshop in November 2003. This explored a village traffic calming scheme, improved signage and lorry restrictions, and changes to parking restrictions. The results were submitted to Kent Highways. Many of the proposals were taken forward by the Parish Council as the 2006 Marden Traffic Calming Scheme. This formed part of a package of traffic calming measures adopted by the South West Maidstone Traffic Management Partnership (TRAMP). This resulted in a traffic calming scheme that secured funding from KCC, but which was eventually cancelled.

Further work was undertaken as part of the 2007 Marden Community Plan. Three open days were held and residents identified traffic calming and other highways issues, improved rail and bus services and the encouragement of walking and cycling as priorities. In 2008, the Parish Council submitted the results of these ongoing consultations to the KCC’s 2008 Speed Limit Review Demonstration Area, but again, local recommendations went largely unheeded by the highway authority.

At the 2013 and 2014 Marden Neighbourhood Plan Open Days and Workshops residents identified the main transport issues as bus services, train services, the road network and public rights of way. Residents identified a wide range of potential improvements for delivery in connection with future development. There was support for the following:

- public bus services, possibly in partnership with large employers in Maidstone (e.g. KCC, MBC) with access to town-centre shops, amenities and Maidstone Hospital;
- a community bus operation;
- additional station car parking;
- improvements to village parking, particularly at the school;
- junction improvements, particularly at Church Green/Pattenden Lane and High Street/Maidstone Road;
- improved cycle safety measures, including the provision of additional off-road routes;

- ~~footway improvements particularly the need for resurfacing and additional dropped kerbs;~~
- ~~the designation of 'quiet lanes'.~~

~~In February 2018 a parking consultation with residents and businesses was carried out. The results indicated that parking restrictions needed to be increased and at the time of writing MBC has issued a Draft Traffic Regulation Order to add additional no parking areas and amend some existing no parking times.~~

~~The MBC Local Plan originally sought to provide a park and ride at Linton Crossroads. This was wholeheartedly welcomed by local residents who experience great levels of congestion when travelling to and from Maidstone. The Marden Neighbourhood Plan is disappointed that this site has now been rejected. Nevertheless, should an alternative site on the A229 be found then a bus service linking the town centre with the park and ride site could be extended to Marden station. This could be used by Marden residents travelling into and out of Maidstone and those residents of south Maidstone who currently travel to Marden by car to catch the weekday commuter trains. This could provide a solution to two problems.~~

As in all-most rural villages, not all dwellings in Marden have adequate off-road parking. This leads to residents parking on the highway which, when added to visitor and commuter parking, leads to congestion and other highway safety issues. This is a constant concern to residents.

The Parish Council is asked to comment on a variety of planning applications. A recurring subject is the conversion of garages, often integral, which results in the loss of potential on-site vehicle parking spaces. In reality, however, it is recognised that integral garages are seldom used for vehicle parking and the desire of residents to convert garages is understood as it is a relatively cheap and easy way of creating extra habitable space. Nevertheless, this can lead to increasing problems associated with on-street parking that must also be recognised, and this can prove of great concern to other residents. It is therefore important that a balance is found.

It is recognised that many modern developments incorporate shared driveways and private access roadways. The management of these arrangements is beyond the direct control of the planning system, and not being part of the adopted highway is beyond the control of the highway authority. This has the potential to lead to neighbour conflict. The Marden Neighbourhood Plan, therefore, urges housing providers to consider the ongoing management and maintenance issues this design feature can raise.

Parking / access for individual planning applications was confirmed as one of the highest transport infrastructure priorities at the 'Vision for Marden 2037' open day.

However, this topic is considered already covered by national and borough policies and KCC Parking Standards, as supplemented by existing Marden Neighbourhood Plan policies BEe2 (see Built Environment section) and In4, so no new policy has been added.

Transport: Sustainable Travel

The most important sustainable travel infrastructure issue identified at the 'Vision for Marden 2037' open day were walking and cycling routes, and this aligns very well with the

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existing Marden Neighbourhood Plan policy In2 so just limited changes are proposed for clarity.

However, respondents were then asked to be more specific about where improvements are required, with the top four active travel priorities being added under a new action:

The next most important sustainable travel infrastructure issue was provision of electric car / van charging points (see below), cycle parking (new action added) and improvements to bus stop locations / facilities (already an action).

POLICY In2 – SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Support will be given to developments designed to maximise travel on foot and by cycle and that provide direct links to village facilities and public transport services via off-road and lightly trafficked routes, or through improvements for non-motorised users on busier existing routes. Developments should not hinder existing walking and cycling routes unless a convenient alternative route is provided. Major sites should be designed to provide through routes for pedestrians and cyclists where this would help improve non-vehicular access from adjacent housing or business premises and to facilitate links with ~~any~~ nearby public rights of way or open space as well as the surrounding countryside. Marden Parish Council supports the protection and enhancement of the public rights of way network. In these respects, applicants should take account of Kent County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP).

Moved from BE2 – Residential Amenity

Further actions required

- KCC and other walking and cycling infrastructure stakeholders (including KCC, MBC, Marden Parish Council and landowners) to pursue opportunities to improve the following active travel priorities:
 - (1) Walking and cycling routes in the village centre away from the roads
 - (2) Walking and cycling routes along roads in the village centre
 - (3) Off-road walking and cycling route along the B2079 Maidstone Road north of the village centre
 - (4) Off-road walking and cycling route eastwards towards Staplehurst
- Cycling infrastructure stakeholders (including KCC, MBC, Marden Parish Council, businesses and amenity owner(s) to pursue opportunities for new or improved cycle parking facilities.
- Bus infrastructure stakeholders (including bus operating companies, KCC, MBC and Marden Parish Council) to pursue enhancement opportunities including additional bus services, new or replacement bus stop signage, road markings and bus shelters.

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- Public parking stakeholders (including KCC, MBC and Marden Parish Council) to pursue opportunities for on, and off road, electric vehicle charging points – also see Transport: Marden Station.

Transport: Traffic Generation

The routes most likely to require improvements to deal with traffic generation identified at the ‘Vision for Marden 2037’ open day were:

- Main roads through the village centre.
- Lorry route northwards from Pattenden Lane to B2079.
- Route eastwards towards Staplehurst

Other routes may also require improvement, depending on the nature, scale and location of individual planning applications.

However, since the existing Marden Neighbourhood Plan policy In3 already provides for the impacts of developments to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, it has been retained unamended.

Two other priorities associated with traffic generation were also identified at the ‘Vision for Marden 2037’ open day, and these have been added as new actions.

POLICY In3 – TRAFFIC GENERATION

Developments within the Plan area which lead to additional traffic generation will be required to ensure that safe vehicular access arrangements are incorporated within the design of the development and be provided before the use commences. Where appropriate, traffic impact studies will be required for proposed developments and any off-site traffic mitigation measures as deemed necessary by the highways authority will be secured by agreements linked to planning permissions.

Further actions required

- KCC to consider designation of country lanes within the parish as ‘quiet lanes’ in association with Marden Parish Council.
- KCC to consider extending the area covered by weight restrictions in association with Marden Parish Council.

Transport: Marden Station

In a rural area with relatively limited bus services, Marden’s main line station provides an essential sustainable travel service for many residents of the parish and a much wider catchment area, serving a wide range of work, education, shopping, leisure and other purposes. Destinations within easy reach include many of the main towns in Kent, together with London and Hastings. International connections are usually available via Gatwick and

other London Airports, and it is hoped that Eurostar train services will restart from Ashford International in 2026.

Feedback at the 'Vision for Marden 2037' open day confirmed that step-free access to the 'down' platform (either with or without a lift) is still the biggest priority; with car parking and improvements to the station facilities also remaining important.

These findings align very well with the existing Marden Neighbourhood Plan policy In4 and the existing action, so no changes are proposed.

POLICY In4 – MARDEN STATION

Support will be given to proposals to enhance facilities at Marden Station including any development required to meet increased demand providing the proposal accords with other policies in the Plan.

Further action required

- Station infrastructure stakeholders (including Network Rail, train operating company, Department for Transport, KCC and Marden Parish Council) to pursue enhancement opportunities including additional station parking for cars and cycles, electric vehicle charging points, and lifts (and/or step-free from Pattenden Lane) ~~access~~ to the 'down' platform.
- ~~Bus infrastructure stakeholders (including bus operating companies, KCC, MBC and Marden Parish Council) to pursue enhancement opportunities including additional bus services, new or replacement bus stop signage, road markings and bus shelters.~~

Housing

~~The Marden Design Statement 2001, which was formally adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by MBC, no longer forms part of the borough's Development Plan but is still used by the Parish Council and others as valuable guidance. The Marden Design Statement 2001 was the result of a parish wide analysis and produced specific guidance on a number of issues. This document stopped short of specific land allocation for housing development.~~

~~The intention was always to produce a second document to take the next step and identify sites which would be suitable for particular development types. This was originally envisaged as a parish plan, which then became a Neighbourhood Plan following the enabling legislation.~~

~~Unfortunately, there were numerous delays to the production of Maidstone's Core Strategy, now the MBC Local Plan, to replace the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000. This has, in turn, delayed progress on the Marden Neighbourhood Plan.~~

Marden residents have always been aware of the pressures for development in the village, particularly the pressure for housing development. This isn't always popular, but most people also acknowledge that MBC has to respond to government policy when deciding how, when and where to allocate land for housing development across the borough. Indeed, a well-considered plan for it was, therefore, one of the key aims of the Neighbourhood Plan to assess those sites which residents considered to be the most

suitable for housing. This was one of the features of the first Marden Neighbourhood Plan Open Day in 2013. This was timed to follow the MBC 'call for sites' in November 2012 — a previous exercise having been undertaken in 2009. This process invited landowners and developers to put forward to MBC sites that could be considered for housing development.

The Marden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group provided information on the location of the sites and asked local residents to consider the suitability of those sites for development. This process was repeated at the second Marden Neighbourhood Plan Open Day in 2014. The intention was to submit the results to MBC to use in the formulation of planning policy, and then through the adoption of the Marden Neighbourhood Plan, to be used for site specific development allocation.

The numerous delays in the production of the MBC Local Plan and its housing allocation, the inability of MBC to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing, together with the thrust of the NPPF to encourage sustainable development has resulted in is vastly preferable to developers submitting schemes for large housing developments on a speculative basis. in Marden in advance of the adoption of the MBC Local Plan and Marden Neighbourhood Plan. This is of deep regret to the Steering Group, the Parish Council and residents. At the time of writing a further 'call for sites' is being carried out.

Full planning permission has been granted for nearly 600 dwellings over six sites. The Marden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the Parish Council has worked hard to try and ensure during the steps leading to publication of the Maidstone Local Plan (Regulation 19 draft) to ensure that the housing land allocations in the parish were the most appropriate in the circumstances. These are:

- Completion of 2017 Local Plan site H1 (46)
- New site LPRSA295 – 113 dwellings

As such, it is not considered necessary or appropriate to supplement this with a new Marden Neighbourhood Plan policy.

However, with policy support from the Local and Neighbourhood Plans, the Parish Council will continue working to ensure that these developments are well designed and has fought to maximise the benefits to Marden, particularly targeting developer contributions and the provision of affordable housing.

- ~~List of Sites (see Planning Policies and Further Actions Map at Annex 1)~~
 - ~~Highwood Green — 110 dwellings~~
 - ~~The Parsonage (including Vicarage Field) — 209 dwellings~~
 - ~~Windsor Meadow — 86 dwellings~~
 - ~~Appledown Grange — 44 dwellings~~
 - ~~Old Marden Cricket and Hockey Club site — 124 dwellings~~

Further action required

- ~~For clarity, MBC to modify the map for Local Plan Policy SP9 (Marden Rural Service Centre) Policies Map at the next periodic review to encompass the major Highwood~~

~~Green housing development given planning permission in 2012 and completed in 2017 within the settlement boundary (refer to area FA1 on the 'Planning Policies & Further Actions' map.)~~

- ~~• Marden Parish Council and the Marden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to monitor progress and keep residents informed of the 2019 'call for sites' exercise.~~

Housing: Affordable Housing

Affordable housing provides housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the open market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers). ~~Affordable housing is defined in NPPF Annex 2: Glossary, includes affordable housing for rent — where the rent is set at least 20% below local market rent and usually where the landlord is a registered provider. Affordable housing as starter homes — aimed at those with a particular level of income. Affordable housing as discounted market sales housing — where housing is sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value and other affordable routes such as shared ownership.~~

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Marden's need for affordable housing has been proven through a series of Housing Needs Surveys ~~and has been consistently supported by residents (and others with Marden connections) at Neighbourhood Plan Open Days.~~, the most recent of which was carried out in the summer of 2022, and this shows a need for 26 affordable homes for a range of household types.

~~Feedback at the 'Vision for Marden 2037' open day also confirmed that there is strong support for the existing Marden Neighbourhood Plan policy In5.~~

~~The MBC Local Plan states that on housing or mixed use development sites of 11⁺ or more residential units or a combined floorspace of greater than 1000m², affordable housing will be sought at a target rate of 40% for Rural Service Centres to meet a borough-wide need. The NPPF requires the needs of different groups in the community to be assessed and reflected in planning policy, including those who require affordable housing. This is welcomed. The MBC Local Plan also provides for affordable local needs housing on rural exception sites. The policy, however, relates to development outside the Rural Service Centres.~~

~~The MNP suggests that it Experience suggests that it is unlikely that all the need for affordable housing can be met through the recent-MBC housing development sites, land allocations, particularly considering the length of the plan period, so the existing Marden Neighbourhood Plan policy In5 has been retained unamended. Therefore the following policy is required.~~

POLICY In5 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON RURAL EXCEPTION SITES

Support will be given to the development of rural exception sites for local needs housing where a proven need has been demonstrated, and the development is of a suitable scale, design and location.

Housing: Specialist Residential Accommodation for Older People

The Marden Neighbourhood Plan recognises the need to provide well-designed comfortable homes for all, and the necessity to meet the housing needs of older and disabled people.

The MBC Local Plan seeks to provide for future housing that meets the changing needs of the borough's population, including provision for an increasingly ageing population. This is supported by the NPPF.

The projected growth in the over-65 population means that a greater proportion of the housing stock will need to provide accommodation suitable for a range of mobility needs. This may require less conventional internal layouts and special consideration given to the siting of such homes.

~~The empirical research of Marden Neighbourhood Plan members has revealed the importance of siting is also considered particularly important~~ when developing housing for older and disabled people. The need to see the outside world passing by the window has been highlighted as a primary requirement. This is particularly relevant for sheltered housing schemes in order to provide the visual stimulus so valuable to residents with restricted mobility.

~~¹ NPPF 2018 uses a threshold of 10 or more.~~

~~Further context is given in MBC Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2021).~~

~~Marden's need for specialist residential accommodation has been proven through a series of Housing Needs Surveys, the most recent of which was carried out in the summer of 2022 and this shows that ten older owner-occupier households (five single people and five couples) want to downsize / move to more suitable housing for their needs. Eight of the households with a need for affordable housing (see above) were also older people.~~

~~Feedback at the 'Vision for Marden 2037' open day also confirmed that there is strong support for the existing Marden Neighbourhood Plan policy In6, but a minor change has been made to address comments that it should also cover disabled people of any age.~~

~~Consultation with residents has demonstrated overwhelming support for the provision of bungalows.~~

~~There are currently five developments designed for older residents in the village; three of which are owned by Golding Homes (a local housing association), and the other two are privately owned. The MBC Local Plan seeks to include a proportion of affordable housing to be for retirement housing and extra care homes. It also encourages the development of nursing and care homes in Rural Service Centres.~~

POLICY In6 – HOUSING FOR OLDER AND DISABLED PEOPLE

Support will be given to development which provides housing suitable for older and disabled residents. This may include smaller bungalow units sited where occupants are provided with a vibrant and interesting view and within easy reach of services, amenities and natural areas where development conforms with other policies in the Plan.

Housing for Gypsies and Travellers

The need to provide well-designed and appropriately-sited homes for all includes every section of our community. The Marden Neighbourhood Plan therefore recognises the need

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to provide well-sited accommodation for gypsies and travellers.

~~Gypsies and travellers are currently defined as persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin including such persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily but excludes members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such.~~

~~Marden has an established Romany population. The Romany culture is celebrated in the South East Romany Museum founded by the Brazil family. The museum has a fine collection of decorated caravans, traps and carts, all restored using traditional craftsmanship.~~

~~Marden and~~ has a socially rented gypsy and traveller site at Stilebridge. The site is owned ~~and managed~~ by MBC ~~and managed by KCC~~. The parish also has a number of privately owned sites in Tilden Lane, Summerhill Road and Park Road. The MBC Local Plan also allocates land at Oak Lodge.

The Maidstone Local Plan (Regulation 19 draft) includes one gypsy and traveller site allocation in the parish at Oak Lodge, Tilden Lane:

- New site LPRGT1 (6) – two permanent pitches

~~Marden Parish Council has links with the existing Stilebridge site and is trying to facilitate environmental improvements, particularly the creation of a grassed amenity area. The site, operating with 18 designated pitches, is near or at full capacity. Existing residents, the Parish Council and the Marden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will resist any proposal to expand this site when a more even distribution of new sites across the borough would be more appropriate.~~

~~There is a good relationship between the settled and travelling residents of Marden. The historic links between settled and travelling families has helped to create an integrated community. Accordingly, Marden Parish Council has favourably viewed planning applications for small gypsy sites.~~

~~Marden Parish Council has adopted specific guidance in assessing planning applications for gypsies and travellers.~~

~~Marden Parish Council appreciates the significance of the gypsy way of life in dealing with gypsy related planning issues. The Parish Council is aware of the need to balance the potential impact of a proposal against the needs and personal circumstances of the applicant.~~

~~When responding as a consultee to the Local Planning Authority, usually MBC, on gypsy related applications the Parish Council will consider the following:~~

~~The impact of a planning application in terms of its siting and potential effect upon the residential amenity, character, landscape, agriculture, conservation and highways of the area.~~

~~The gypsy status of the applicant and any relevant personal factors which may render the application exceptional.~~

~~Suggested conditions:~~

- ~~• 1 Only on a temporary basis (3 years)~~
- ~~• 2. Removal on cessation of use for residential~~
- ~~• 3. Limited permission to named persons only~~

A new Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document is in preparation by MBC.

POLICY In7 – HOUSING FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

Support will be given to the development of small-scale Gypsy and Traveller sites within the Plan area, which provide adequate amenities for occupants, and which do not result in unacceptable harm to the amenities of existing residents in the vicinity of the site, the character of the countryside or the biodiversity of the wider area.

Suggested conditions to be applied, as appropriate, alongside those listed in paragraph 28 of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2024):

(1) Only on a temporary basis (3 years)

(2) Removal on cessation of use for residential purposes

(3) Limited permission to named persons only

Further action required

- Marden Parish Council ~~and the Marden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group~~ to monitor the distribution of planning permissions for new gypsy and traveller sites across the borough.

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ECONOMY

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Business and Employment

Marden is fortunate in having a range of businesses offering employment opportunities. The village has retained some of its retail outlets and has offices, industrial and commercial operations. ~~Since the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a notable as well as an increase in home working. The former are predominantly located in Pattenden Lane is the designated economic development area in the Maidstone Local Plan and where the majority of businesses are located. Businesses are also located in and more recently converted agricultural holdings throughout the parish, there is also a large food packing company on a fruit farm to the south of the village centre off Goudhurst Road. There are also businesses located in private homes. There is a broad range of companies, and local businesses are represented by a business forum that is active in supporting this sector of the village community.~~ The economic health of the village is important and contributes to the overall wellbeing of its residents.

The Marden Neighbourhood Plan recognises the importance of sustaining a vibrant business economy and seeks to promote business interests where compatible with other policies in the plan. This accords with the aims of the NPPF that seeks to enable the sustainable growth and expansion of rural businesses, the development and diversification of agriculture and other rural businesses and enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure that respects the character of the countryside.

~~The MBC Local Plan has identified two areas of additional employment land to the east and west of the existing commercial/ industrial estate on Pattenden Lane — known as land south of Claygate and land west of Wheelbarrow Industrial Estate. The MBC Local Plan seeks to retain the existing industrial areas and prioritise the reuse of existing rural buildings for commercial rather than residential use.~~

~~Marden Neighbourhood Plan members have attended local business networking meetings to gauge the needs and aspirations of the existing business community. It is understood that businesses in Marden have a desire for commercial freehold and see the role of the Pattenden Lane Industrial Estate in providing smaller units as key in allowing space for 'start up' businesses.~~

The active business community makes Marden an attractive location, and Marden was described by one major employer as providing 'good value' in terms of rental costs. ~~There is a risk that The move away from the traditional current storage and distribution uses businesses relocate is inevitable considering due to the poor road transport links to the parish. Several manufacturing businesses have also sought to relocate away from the parish, with the need to be closer to major road links being cited as the motivator.~~ However, it is essential to the overall life of the village that new commercial operations which are less reliant on heavy goods vehicles are attracted to Marden.

~~The MBC Local Plan seeks to retain the existing industrial areas and prioritise the reuse of existing rural buildings for commercial rather than residential use. The MBC Local Plan also seeks to ensure that businesses in the existing Pattenden Lane industrial estate continue to provide employment opportunities. This MBC policy promotes light industrial, general industrial, storage and warehousing uses. This is acknowledged; however, the policy also states that a change of use to any other non-industrial use, in total or in part, will only be~~

~~permitted if it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of an industrial use, or if an element of non-industrial use would more effectively meet the needs of modern business. The changes to permitted development rights and to use classes mean that there can be more diversification of the type of businesses in Pattenden Lane. Apart from the traditional transport, warehousing, and light industrial businesses amongst others there is now a gym, veterinary practice and a music school.~~

~~MBC's Economic Development Strategy 2015-2031 dated January 2022 recognises the importance of a thriving rural economy and notes that Marden has a sizeable employment base. It also recognises that diversification of types of business across the Borough is vital and that this must be supported by planning policies. manufacturing in the Borough, citing Marden as a focus for growth in manufacturing, and sees the importance of securing the future of existing businesses as the best way of achieving economic growth.~~

~~The Marden Neighbourhood Plan seeks to support existing businesses but understands the limits of the location in terms of road transport links and thus also seeks to support the increasing number of 'innovative' companies that have begun to locate in the parish. Environmental sustainability is becoming increasingly important and a move away from light industry, storage and distribution to other types of mixed use that may include an element of rural, leisure, hi-tech or shared workspace to cater for the increase in flexible working and expanding business or business start-up units. It may, therefore, become necessary to consider a move away from class B1 (light industrial), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution) by supporting other types of mixed use that may include an element of retail, leisure or hi-tech use. However, the suitability of such uses will need to be considered on a site-by-site basis.~~

~~The Pattenden Lane environment could be improved and made more welcoming by tree planting, improving the verges and street lighting. Access to Pattenden Lane for rail users could be improved by the addition of an access from the down platform at Marden Station directly to Pattenden Lane (see policy In4 – Marden Station).~~

~~As noted Marden is attracting a wider range of commercial uses whose contribution to the parish's economic health should not be under-estimated.~~

~~By way of example, Marden is proud to be home to an artisan gin manufacturer who uses local produce, a local cider producer who uses only Kentish apples ; a brewery making traditional real ales and a vineyard using grapes grown in the parish. As a consequence, the Marden Neighbourhood Plan seeks to encourage less conventional business users and thus encourages greater flexibility in terms of use.~~

~~The Marden Neighbourhood Plan seeks to support the business community through collaboration and to explore new opportunities for business in Marden. It is important to ensure that potential new businesses in Marden are not deterred by any uncertainty created by over-restrictive planning policies.~~

~~The Marden Business Forum has hosted events to showcase the existing businesses to the wider village. The Marden Neighbourhood Plan encourages such events which develop links designed to integrate the businesses community with the village, allowing residents to~~

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~~understand and be proud of its successful business community.~~

POLICY E1 – BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Support will be given to employment-generating businesses that maximise employment opportunities within the parish. Support will be given to development which provides opportunities for start-up ventures and contributes to the growing reputation of the parish as a location for innovative commercial uses and those with a local connection or using local produce. The development should have suitable road access to and from primary routes such as the A229 and should not result in any unacceptable impact on residential amenity or the character of the surrounding area and wider countryside. The development should be suitably landscaped to reflect Marden's rural setting.

~~It is noted that the westernmost part of the Pattenden Lane industrial/ commercial area is shown on the MBC Local Plan map for Policy SP9 (Marden Rural Service Centre) within the settlement boundary but not as part of the economic development area. However, this small triangular plot has been used for light industrial/vehicle repair purposes for many years and would not be suitable for residential development.~~

~~It is also noted that the majority of the large Claygate distribution warehouse site, granted planning permission in 2007, is shown as being located outside the economic development area. However, the reality is that it is now part of the wider Pattenden Lane commercial estate and is neither open countryside nor suitable for residential development.~~

~~Further action required~~

- ~~• For clarity, MBC to modify the map for Local Plan Policy SP9 (Marden Rural Service Centre) at the next periodic review to encompass the light industrial/vehicle repair site at the westernmost part of the Pattenden Lane industrial/commercial area within the economic development area — refer to area FA2 on the 'Planning Policies & Further Actions' map.~~

Retail

Marden, like many other villages, has a variety of shops, pubs and other services. At its peak, there were a selection of 22 retail premises but there has been a gradual diminution over the years. However, Marden is a designated Rural Service Centre, and it is therefore important that the widest range of shops and services are provided. This is essential as the population of the parish increases over the life of the plan to ensure development is truly sustainable and to promote the social interactions that contributes to Marden's cohesion. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the face of retail with many high street stores closing down but small independent businesses have survived. Marden is fortunate in having a number of such businesses. Cafes which can provide flexible workspaces, and more specialist shops are to be encouraged.

The MBC Local Plan highlights the High Street and junction with Maidstone Road as a district centre. However, Church Green also has an important retail function with a butcher's shop, convenience store, fish and chip shop, Indian restaurant, hairdressers, garage and dental surgery. This area has therefore been included in the Marden Neighbourhood Plan as a

district centre. It is recognised that Church Green could be made more attractive by improving the street furniture, road markings and by tidying up unsightly business frontages.

There are also other retailers and service providers located outside these local district centres ~~—Stanley's garage, West End Stores, West End Tavern public house, The Village Club, Marden Tandoori and the Stilebridge public house—~~ which are central to village life and the role of Marden as a Rural Service Centre. Consequently, the loss of such established businesses ~~premises would should~~ be strongly resisted.

The plan recognises that shopping habits are changing rapidly. Therefore, the retailers seeking to locate in Marden are likely to be service providers. This may also generate the need for shops and services to locate outside the recognised district centres. The plan seeks to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate future market trends.

POLICY E2 – RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

Support will be given to the development of new or extended retail premises within Marden where there are no adverse impacts upon the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider area, and subject to other policies in the Plan.

Further action required

- For clarity, MBC to modify the map for Local Plan Policy SP9 (Marden Rural Service Centre) at the next periodic review to designate an additional local district centre at Church Green (refer to area FA3 on the 'Planning Policies & Further Actions' map).
- MBC to modify the map for Local Plan Policy SP9 to extend to the south east and to include the Village Club, Stanleys Garage and Marden Tandoori. (Refer to area FA4 on the Planning Policies and Further Action Map.).

The ~~consultation process has identified the~~ following types of shops and other 'day-to-day' services that would be of benefit to the Parish include:

Cafe or Bistro	Florist
Optician	Funeral Directors
Clothing shop	Bank
Craft Shop	Small scale horticultural retailer
Ironmongers <u>DIY store</u>	Bakery
Pet shop	Cookshop

Business Signage

Many of Marden's shops and businesses are located within the Conservation Area meaning the design of their shop frontages and advertising signage can have a significant impact on the visual appearance of the village. It is to be regretted that many of the traditional shop fronts have been replaced with large modern glazed panels that have had a detrimental impact on the character of the building and the wider area. It is therefore important to retain those existing frontages that have remained, ~~for example, John's barbers and the~~

Green Door. It is also desirable to encourage the reinstatement of traditional shop frontages. Whilst the re-creation of a bygone age may be unachievable or even undesirable, it may be possible to reinstate the appropriate window proportions.

Poorly designed advertising signage can have an adverse impact on the character of the building and the wider area, particularly when sited within the Conservation Area, adjacent to listed buildings or in the countryside. The needs of the occupier to promote their goods and services are recognised, so a balance between economic need and visual amenity needs to be recognised.

POLICY E3 – BUSINESS SIGNAGE

The scale, position, materials and colour of business signs must be designed to minimise any detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the building and the surrounding area, including the Conservation Area. Where appropriate signs should be designed to reflect the original proportions and style of the building. illuminated signs will be supported if illumination is deemed to be essential to the operation of the business, the levels of illumination are kept to the necessary minimum and only operated during opening hours.

THE FUTURE?

Developer Contributions

Developer contributions, 'planning obligations' or 'planning gain' are the financial benefits that may be gained from a development proposal. Where required, a developer will make a financial contribution to compensate for the increased demand on the existing infrastructure as a result of the development. These contributions can be made through legal planning agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (often known as 'S106 contribution') and relate to a specific development. The contributions can also be sought through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is a financial contribution charged at a standard rate, and MBC operates a approved the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule effective from October 2018. As MNP has been formally adopted 25% of any monies generated will go directly to the Parish Council for the benefit of the community.

The NPPF recognises the importance of developer contributions and makes specific reference to financial contributions towards affordable housing provision. However, planning obligations can only be sought when they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly relate to the development and are fair and reasonable in scale.

The MBC Local Plan states that developers will be expected to provide or contribute towards the additional requirements generated by a development. The policy recognises that there will be many competing demands and has a set of common priorities that apply across the borough. All such developments should take full account of KCC's Developer Contributions Guide.

Commented [AH22]: Added in response to KCC comment on policy A1.

The Marden Neighbourhood Plan recognises the importance that these contributions can make to Marden, and it is thus essential to maximise any benefits from developments within the parish. To do this it is vital for developers, planners and MBC Planning Department to understand the needs of the parish in order to direct any monies that may be forthcoming to where they are really needed.

Marden Parish Council has produced a working policy documents relating to developer contributions. (Marden Parish Council Infrastructure Spend Plan and Highways Improvement Plan). This These documents identifyies areas-projects which the parish sees as local priorities. Residents were asked to comment on these areas at the 2013 and 2014 Marden Neighbourhood Plan Open Days and the policy is They are reviewed and updated regularly by the Parish Council. Each update is shared with MBC and KCC as appropriate, and the document isare available to all.

What does the future hold for Marden?

An unprecedented number of new homes have been permitted in Marden since 2013, all of which have been completed and occupied. The anticipated 573 new dwellings are either already completed or under construction.

The Marden Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to prevent development and recognises the

many advantages that development can bring to a community. However, given the size of the recent expansion, which represents a ~~37%~~ 34% increase in the number of dwellings since 2011, it is not surprising that residents have concerns about the cumulative impact of such large scale developments over such a short timescale. *[2011 Census of Population 1542 households in the Parish: 2021 Census of Population 2061 households in the Parish: source NOMIS]*

The ~~delays in the production of the~~ MBC Local Plan Review seeks to provide a borough-wide strategy for the delivery of housing and development over the coming plan period. This should secure a five year housing land supply as required under the NPPF. The MBC Local Plan provides for a housing site located in Albion Road/Copper Lane. led to a shortfall in the five year housing supply required under the NPPF. This borough wide shortfall allowed for new development over which local people had little control. This situation must not be allowed to reoccur. The intention is, therefore, to reassess the Marden Neighbourhood Plan on a regular basis as the village must be given time to assimilate the already permitted development and allocated development before any further development sites can realistically be considered.

What does the future hold for Marden Neighbourhood Plan?

The Neighbourhood Plan will need to be reviewed and updated at regular intervals together with a review of the allocation of land for development. Marden Parish Council and the Marden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will work with MBC during any further Local Plan review. ~~the planned MBC Local Plan review to be completed in 2021 and adopted by 2022.~~

~~Without pre-judging what may be decided at that time, some of the issues that have been raised by residents are:~~

- ~~• Future housing land allocations should consider whether developments should be permitted wholly or partially located north of the railway line or in outlying settlements such as Chainhurst. Due to the large scale development that has been built since 2013 it is the view of Marden Neighbourhood Plan that any future development permitted until 2031 should not increase the size of the village beyond 50% of the 2011 number of dwellings, ie an additional 198 dwellings.~~
- ~~• Economic development land allocations in order to ensure that local employment opportunities grow in parallel with residential development.~~
- ~~• Allocation of land for any facilities which may have outgrown their existing sites, or where the existing buildings may have reached the end of their useful life (in particular the school, memorial hall, medical centre, etc.).~~
- ~~• Allocation of land for new youth facilities.~~
- ~~• Allocation of land for additional station parking.~~
- ~~• Dedicated pre-school facilities~~

