

ECONOMY

Page 2: Business and Employment – Amendments to text

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Section of Plan	Proposed Modification	Reason for Change
Business and Employment	<u>Amendments to text</u> 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 increase in home working. 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 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. 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 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 current storage and distribution businesses relocate due to the poor road transport links to the parish. 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 Local Plan also seeks to ensure that businesses in the existing Pattenden Lane industrial estate continue to provide employment opportunities. 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.	Thorough update required to reflect current background.

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Business and Employment (contd).	MBC's Economic Development Strategy 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. 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. 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) Marden is proud to be home to an artisan gin manufacturer who uses local produce, a local cider producer who uses only Kentish apples 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.	

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Retail	<u>Amendments to text</u> 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 which are central to village life and the role of Marden as a Rural Service Centre. Consequently, the loss of such established business premises 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.	Thorough update required to reflect current background.