

**WHY WE SAY**

**NO**

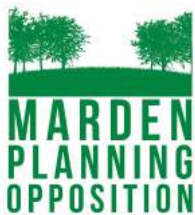
**TO 2000  
MORE HOUSES  
IN MARDEN**

Technical Report by residents of Marden, **May 2019**

# CONTENTS



|   |    |
|---|----|
| 00 Introduction.....  | 1  |
| 01 Planning Representations.....                            | 3  |
| 02 Current Use and Agricultural Land Classification.....    | 14 |
| 03 Planning History.....                                    | 18 |
| 04 Landscape and Visual.....                                | 24 |
| 05 Ecological Impacts.....                                  | 25 |
| 06 Heritage Impacts.....                                    | 31 |
| 07 Public Rights of Way.....                                | 34 |
| 08 Highways.....  | 36 |
| 09 Access to Services.....                                  | 44 |
| 10 Utilities Infrastructure.....                            | 50 |
| 11 Air Quality.....   | 52 |
| 12 Flood Risk.....  | 53 |
| 13 Development Deliverability.....                          | 55 |
| 14 Completed Site Assessment for Church Farm Site 2016..... | 56 |



# INTRODUCTION

This is a factual document compiled and written by Marden Planning Opposition Group (MPOG), a group of Marden Residents using their combined professional expertise. This report is a response from the residents of Marden to the Maidstone Borough Council's Call for Sites process. In this document we will offer evidence to state why the area north of the railway line that has been promoted as a potential site to build 2,000 houses is a poorly conceived and poorly planned concept.

The sections listed in the contents are titled to mirror the Maidstone Borough Council's Site Assessment and Suitability sections for ease of reading. The first section is our planning representations set out in material considerations.

Some of the contributors include: Dr Graham Streeter MB BS, MRCP, DCH, DRCOG, Claudine Russell BSc (Hons) MIQ, R A Morris MA MSc (Ornithology) and Felicity Martin-Daly MA (Hons), Heidi Scott BA (Oxon), Emma Russell BA (Hons) PGCE, Vicky Croxford MSc (Hons), Tristan Russell, Mark Walker and Duncan Shadbolt.

At the conclusion of the document we have extracted and included the completed site assessment/suitability document that was completed for the Church Farm site (one of the main areas of the new proposal) in 2016 by Maidstone Borough Council. In the 2016 site assessment/suitability document Church Farm site was concluded to be "unsuitable for development."





## Marden Planning Opposition Group Activity

A central committee has been set up and a very large cross section of the community have been involved in our actions on a voluntary basis. This includes people in the new developments as well as lifelong residents of Marden.

Very high numbers of villagers have placed over 100 banners - and even more posters - on their properties. We have shown in the village and in our Parish Council meetings that we are completely against the proposal and are not willing to engage with, or to be involved in the creation of a "garden community" in or around Marden.

We have a Facebook Group with over 1,100 members in it. The "March for Marden" held on the 18th May was televised with 1,903 people attending. We have a petition with over 2,500 signatures opposing the garden community proposal. The **[www.savemarden.com](http://www.savemarden.com)** website provides a professional account of the facts.

Statements of support have been received from our Borough Councillors and Helen Grant MP has been active for our campaign. We have had articles published in the Kent Messenger, the Downs Mail, The Daily Mail online and radio broadcasts with BBC Radio Kent, along with BBC Southeast News featuring our march.

One of the aims of a garden community is a "strong local vision and engagement" and the Maidstone Borough Council's Garden Community Prospectus states "local community engagement, involvement and support is also likely to be instrumental to delivering a successful proposal".

There has been extensive consultation and engagement with the community of Marden and the surrounding parishes on this issue. We are galvanised and united as a community in rejecting the selection of this site to be put forward into the Maidstone Borough Councils Local Plan.

For further information on anything within this report, please contact:  
 Claudine Russell, Chair, Marden Planning Opposition  
**[mardenplanningopposition@gmail.com](mailto:mardenplanningopposition@gmail.com)**



# PLANNING REPRESENTATIONS

These representations are made on behalf of Marden Planning Opposition Group (MPOG). MPOG was established in response to proposals being formulated by the owners of land to the north of Marden village and their current draft proposals to develop a significant amount of land, principally for up to 2,000 houses with some associated other uses.

MPOG represents the majority of residents in Marden and **strongly objects** to the principle of any proposal to develop more land to the north of the railway line for the following reasons, *inter alia*:

- A substantial portion of the current proposal site (Ref: HO-151) and (Ref: HO3-205) was repeatedly and unsuccessfully promoted previously. Both sites were comprehensively rejected as unsuitable, time and again, by qualified Officers of the Council. Neither site was included within the recently adopted Local Plan. Nothing has changed that would alter Officers' analysis of the land. A planning application on part of Ref: HO-151 was also comprehensively rejected by Officers who cited in their delegated report the complete unsuitability of the location, north of the railway;
- A significant proportion of the land is classified as "best most versatile" Grade 2 land, thereby comprising some of the best farmland in Marden (which is predominantly classified Grade 3). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 notes at para 170 that: "Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – **including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land**, and of trees and woodland."
- The site in question cannot be considered for a "Garden Community" as confirmed in MBC's own guidance on Garden Communities (New Garden Communities Prospectus – issued early 2019) as it is aimed at attracting "**new, freestanding settlements or a new neighbourhood created through a major extension to an existing urban area ...**"
  - The proposals for land north of the railway line cannot in any sense be described as a new, freestanding settlement.
  - The Government's Planning Portal glossary defines an 'Urban Extension' as "**...the planned expansion of a city or town...**" Marden is a comparatively small rural village, defined as a Rural Service Centre in the adopted Local Plan. "Urban" is a defined antonym for "Rural". **Marden is not a city or a town or in any sense an 'existing urban area'.**

- Notwithstanding the misguided approach to extending Marden contrary to MBC's published advice, the 'masterplan' developed by the promoters does not meet any of the tests set out by Government in their guidance on Garden Communities (August 2018 – para13 a-j), replicated in MBC's New Garden Communities Prospectus. The masterplanning (following land ownership and maximising returns to owners) does not provide any form of design principle or philosophy;
- The entire effort is an under-qualified attempt to have land allocated for housing in complete defiance of any established principles and best practice on Garden Communities published by the Town and Country Planning Association, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, or MBC. The proposals would utterly fail any objective analysis by Design South East in the context of this guidance or indeed any basic spatial planning principles;
- For these reasons and the points expanded upon below in each section, the proposals at these sites should ***again be rejected*** by qualified Officers of MBC acting consistently with their long-standing advice to Members that this land is entirely unsustainable (for multiple reasons) and therefore unsuitable for development.

## **1. Marden - The Current Context**

Along with many villages, Marden has witnessed extensive growth and expansion of largely private-sector housing particularly since the early 1990s. With the adoption of the Local Plan, a further five housing allocations were made, totalling some 600 dwellings. In reality, the provisions of the NPPF pre-empted the draft Local Plan and many of these houses are built, albeit with considerable construction ongoing. In general, these infill sites are sustainable; well-located and accessible to existing housing, services and the core of the village and have been well absorbed by the community.

## **2. The Developers' Proposals – Context and Sub-Text**

The promotion of a "Garden Community" on land north of the railway is a recently co-joined attempt by three principal landowners to increase their land value. Previous failed attempts at promotion have been made by individual landowners. The siting of the Marden Sports Club was the first cynical tactic by one of the landowners in a long-term strategy to develop farmland in an inherently unsustainable location. The subsequent refusal by the applicant to provide the essential footpath link from the village to the facility, owing to a simple MBC administrative error on the decision notice, is utterly deplorable, and has left children from the village with no safe way to independently access the facility.

## 2.1 Previous Site Promotions

The 2016 SHEDLAA confirms that various parcels of land north of the railway line were repeatedly promoted for housing in the period 2013 to 2015, all without success on the basis of harm.

### Land to the west of 'The Hollies', Maidstone Road (Ref: HO3-205)

This c. 2 ha site was evaluated by officers in 2014. The site had been promoted for 10-15 dwellings. The Officers' conclusions were as follows:

*"(the)...applicant has deliberately chosen a low-density development of between 10-15 units...**Concern that the site is located north of the railway line which forms a defensible boundary and logical extent to the village.** Hence, development would consolidate the existing sporadic development north of the railway in the countryside."*

(Our emphasis in bold and italic throughout this document.)

Site rejected.

### Land at Church Farm, Maidstone Road (Ref: HO-151)

This larger c. 30 ha site was originally evaluated by officers in 2013. The site had been promoted for 500 or more houses plus retail facilities.

The Council's landscape officer noted:

This is a substantial, level tract of cultivated land of exiting rural character. ***There are expansive, long distance views of the wider countryside, beyond the site boundaries, to the north, west and east from the footpaths which cross the site. The elevated land of the Greensand Ridge can be seen in the far distance in views north.***

***Reciprocal views of the site are seen from the north looking south from the same footpaths.***

Leaving Marden heading north along Maidstone Road there is a clear change in character on crossing the railway line to large residential properties set back from the road and again beyond the property The Old Vicarage as the views open out towards and across the site to the west and the wider countryside to the north. ***The site is not differentiated in character from the wider countryside it adjoins to the north and east.***

## Cont'd

The officer noted in respect of the proposed site's suitability that:

*"The development of this site would result **in a substantial expansion, out of scale with the existing village.***

*The railway line currently acts as a physical limit to the extent of the village to the north east. Beyond this point existing development is limited, being sparsely distributed along Maidstone Road. **Development of the site would introduce an intensive form of development in a location which is physically removed from the existing built up area of the village.***

*A development of this scale could **also adversely impact on the setting of nearby listed properties.** It would be subject to both short- and longer-range views from public footpaths.*

***Opportunities for the sustainable connections to the village, needed for a development of this scale, are also limited by the presence of the railway line. Connections could currently only be achieved along Maidstone Road, which does not have pavements north of Highfield House and via the footbridge at Marden railway station.***

*This site is **considered unsuitable for development.**"*

Officers' considered conclusions were as follows:

*"...development of this site would result in a substantial expansion of the settlement, **out of scale with the existing village.***

*The railway line currently acts as a physical limit to the extent of the village to the north east. Beyond this point existing development is limited, being sparsely distributed along Maidstone Road. **Development of the site would introduce an intensive form of development in a location which is physically removed from the existing built area of the village.***

*A development of this scale could also adversely impact on the setting of nearby listed properties. It would be subject to both short- and longer-range views from public footpaths.*

***Opportunities for the sustainable connections to the village, needed for a development of this scale, are also limited by the presence of the railway line. Connections could currently only be achieved along Maidstone Road, which does not have pavements north of Highfield House and via the footbridge at Marden railway station.***

*This site is **considered unsuitable for development.**"*

Site rejected.



The site was resubmitted for consideration in the 2014 'Call for Sites' exercise.

***Officers noted that there had been no change in circumstances from the previous submission to warrant a change in their view that the site is considered unsuitable for development.***

In October 2015, a smaller proportion of this site was also re-submitted for consideration as an Omission site. Despite the smaller area, Officers concluded that the site remains unsuitable for development.

The Church Farm site was comprehensively rejected, on multiple grounds, by professionally qualified Officers. Nothing about the site's characteristics has changed since it was last considered. **A larger allocation would only amplify the inherent unsuitability.**

Neither land west of "The Hollies", nor land at Church Farm (in any guise) was allocated for development in the adopted Local Plan.

## **2.2 Planning Application**

### **Land at Church Farm: 16/504584/OUT**

In 2016, a planning application was submitted for (inter alia) 150 houses. The application received considerable local objection as cited in the officer's delegated report.

Application refused.

In refusing, Officers noted that:

*"This site was included in a larger site as proposed in the SHEDLAA under ref: HO-151 with a proposed yield of 500+. A larger area to the north of the application site was also included in the proposed allocation. **The site was not taken forward by the Council as a draft allocation due to the visual harm on the landscape and unsustainable location.**"*

A subsequent appeal against the refusal was lodged and then abandoned by the applicant.

## **2.3 The Current Proposals**

Landowners have now joined forces in recognition of the failed Church Farm attempts and Firmins' long-term strategy of incrementally urbanising their landholdings north of the railway. The third landowner was required to deliver an access north to Underlyn Lane.

The amalgamation of elements of ownership are now being badged as a "Garden Community" (Countryside Press Release, March 2019) for expedient/opportunistic purposes only. The proposals bear no relation to other examples of Garden Communities or best practice and will fail the tests set out by Government, the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and the guidance "New Garden Communities Prospectus" published by MBC in early 2019.

### 3. Planning Guidance for Garden Communities

Garden Communities receive scant reference in the National Planning Policy Framework. Garden Communities are described in a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (August 2018) document. That document notes:

- They are not places which just use 'garden' as a convenient label;
- They will be holistically planned, self-sustaining and characterful;
- Government expects that they will embrace the key qualities set out at paragraphs 13a-j of their document (considered here in sections 3.1, 3.2 & 3.3)

It is important to note that Central Government will only consider Garden Communities eligible for funding where they are particularly strong in other respects, for example:

- Demonstrating exceptional quality or innovations;
- Development on predominantly brownfield sites;
- Being in an area of particularly high housing demand.

MBC has adopted elements of the MHCLG guidance in its "New Garden Communities Prospectus" issued Spring 2019. The introduction states:

"The council wishes to provide as much guidance as possible to those considering submissions for **urban extensions** and *new settlements*..."

MBC's advice defines New Garden Communities as being between 1500 and 10000 homes. The advice then states: "They can be **new, freestanding settlements** or **a new neighbourhood created through a major extension to an existing urban area**..."

The proposals for land north of the railway line cannot in any sense be described as a new, freestanding settlement.

The Planning Portal glossary defines an 'Urban Extension' as:

"...the planned expansion of a **city** or **town**..."

Marden is a comparatively small rural village, defined as a Rural Service Centre in the adopted Local Plan. **Marden is not a city or a town**. As such, and as drafted, MBC's "New Garden Communities Prospectus" **does not apply** to those seeking to bring forward a planned expansion in a village like Marden – because Marden is not an **"existing urban area"**.

Members/Officers should therefore find the unprecedented and overwhelming public opposition to these proposals unsurprising; a huge annexe is being proposed to a small rural village (effectively doubling it in size and creating a town). This scenario is specifically NOT envisaged by MBC in their interpretation of the MHCLG guidance on seeking proposals for a new Garden Community.

Irrespective of the inapplicability of the Guidance to Rural Service Centres such as Marden, the proposals as drafted cannot be regarded as a 'masterplan' in any professional sense and a review of the information the landowners' agent discussed with Members (Members Briefing – February 2019) do not meet the following MHCLG paragraph 13 tests, as transposed in the MBC guidance in early 2019:

### **3.1 Clear Identity**

The area put forward has no identity in its own right and nor does it seek to create one. It crudely and unsuccessfully seeks to borrow identity from the established core of a small rural village and simply colours 2000 houses onto the land with no thought as to containment or defensive boundaries.

The outline masterplan and associated briefing document constitutes an obvious and unsophisticated attempt to simply 'mirror' the existing built form of the village in order to maximise landowner opportunity. The overriding brief to the 'master planner' has been to maximise land value increases for three principal landowners, hence the unconstrained and sprawling nature of the plan. Professional Officers of the Council will be aware that masterplanning on this scale should be holistic and informed by key planning principles from the outset, and absolutely not undertaken on the basis of land ownership. Attempts to include Firmin land east of Maidstone Road are particularly unsophisticated, obvious and crude, and the odd-shaped incursion of housing into the Carpenter land to the west is a blatant attempt to ensure this third landowner receives a share of any land uplift values.

No defensible boundaries are identified or suggested, with development avariciously proposed beyond an established northern tree line. The potential for further future sprawl into the open countryside, towards Maidstone, was clearly the underlying brief given to the draughtsman.

The proposal offers no clear identity and fails the test set out by MHCLG and MBC.

### **3.2 Sustainable Scale**

Government guidance notes that any New Garden Community should be built at a scale that supports the necessary infrastructure to allow the community to function **self-sufficiently** on a day-to-day basis, with the capacity for future growth to meet the evolving housing and economic needs of the local area.

The Members Briefing supplied by the landowners' agent states that Marden is suitable for a New Garden Community **particularly because of** the existing employment, community and healthcare facilities. The proposal specifically seeks to take resource that exists and functions well currently for the existing village. That runs diametrically counter to the MHCLG guidance on self-sufficiency.

During construction, the Garden Community residents would be fully dependent on the existing village's facilities, which are at capacity. Once constructed, if the Garden Community were to be genuinely self-sustaining, it would compete directly with Marden's businesses and services.

The proposal is clearly not self-sufficient and fails the test set out by MHCLG and MBC.

### **3.3. Strong Local Vision and Engagement**

MHCLG requires New Garden Community proposals to be designed and executed with the engagement and involvement of the existing local community. Additionally, the MBC brochure states that the qualities of Garden Communities include "strong local vision and engagement" and that "local community engagement, involvement and support [from people who will be most closely impacted by the new garden community proposal] is also likely to be instrumental to delivering a successful proposal."

This proposal has generated substantial and overwhelming local opposition – unsurprising given the Garden Community proposals amount to an opportunistic and out of scale annexe to a small rural village, which was never the situation envisaged in the government nor MBC policy on the same.

The MPOG Facebook group currently has c.1,100 members. A petition (stating that the signees DO NOT share the vision of the landowners, DO NOT support the proposal, and WILL NOT engage or be involved in the creation of a Garden Community in or around Marden village) has to date been signed by c. 2,500 petitioners. Door-to-door activity is ongoing to ensure the petition is representative of the whole village; to date, fewer than 1% of households called on have declined to sign (mainly citing conflicts of interest with the landowners/their agents). A 'March for Marden' on 18 May was attended by c. 2,000 villagers, and Marden has been festooned in hundreds of opposition banners and window signs. The actions of this opposition has generated considerable local and national press, radio and television coverage.

A proposal cannot and will not carry a local vision in a village where the existing residents refuse to engage with the concept in any way, shape or form.

The proposal fails the test set out by MHCLG and MBC.

## **4. Transport**

### **4.1 Permeability and Accessibility**

The MHCLG guidance promotes "public transport, walking and cycling so that settlements are **easy to navigate and facilitate simple and sustainable access** to jobs, education and services".

An immutable and ineradicable constraint faced by any development north of the railway line is the railway line itself.



The Members Briefing document curiously (and meaninglessly) describes the railway line as “*a buffer and an opportunity*”. MBC Officers have consistently and rightly regarded it only as a constraint to development.

The railway line prevents any northern expansion of Marden from ever successfully integrating with the existing village, given all passage by foot/car/bus/haulage/cycle needs to cross the trainline to do so. The lack of permeability would inevitably and unavoidably lead to an ‘Old Marden/New Marden’ divide (especially given the huge local opposition to this proposal), which is contrary to any number of wider national policies on sustainability and quality place-making. For this reason (and many others) MBC Officers have consistently rejected any development north of the railway at plan-making and application stages. There would be **only two means (reducing to one) of accessing the existing village from the new community:**

- Via a narrow and non-standard railway bridge over Maidstone Road with no means of creating acceptable footways (or an acceptable width of carriageway) per the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges; and
- Via a new planned access to the ‘down’ platform at the railway station and then via a footbridge, with no consent from Network Rail for non-travelling passengers to be on this railway property and with the safety issues their presence and passage on this pedestrian short-cut would pose. (This route would be ultimately be extinguished, when Southeastern roll out ticket barriers at the station, thereby reducing the connection point with the existing village to one.)

To access the (limited range of) existing employment allocation on Pattenden Lane would be comparatively complicated, needlessly convoluted and objectively unsustainable. Access would have to be taken on foot via the footbridge and back under the railway bridge on Pattenden Lane or via Maidstone Road, through the village and back out again. There is no ‘simple and sustainable’ access to a range of jobs.

A proposal which seeks to create a settlement bisected by a railway with only one, single substandard, third-party-owned bridge to accommodate all movements – school children, other pedestrians, cars, bicycles, buses and large haulage vehicles, or a dangerous short-cut using a railway footbridge, platform and car park – ***is inherently irresponsible***.

## **4.2 Off-Site Implications**

A review of the masterplan identifies that there are no new roads to be provided into the village. As such the route into the current village of Marden will remain over the railway either via the most direct option of Maidstone Road or via Underlyn Lane then Pattenden Lane. The Maidstone Road route is constrained by the railway bridge which, if adequate pedestrian facilities are to be provided, will be subject to signal controlled one-way working.

The development proposes a new route north out of the development via a new access onto Underlyn Lane, intended to be facilitated by the Carpenter land. However, given the extra distance involved, this is unlikely to reassign the majority of development traffic who are heading south or south-west. This clearly presents a capacity issue both in terms of the routes over the railway line and within the existing village itself. (An additional 'relief road' linking Underlyn Lane and Maidstone Road offers no relief other than bypassing the principal residence of the Firmin landowner involved.)

A review of the refused 150-unit scheme (LPA Ref: 16/504584/OUT) identifies that it assigned traffic broadly 50/50 north and south. Applying the same distribution to the development of 2000 homes will see considerable traffic volumes heading along routes where priority-controlled traffic on Maidstone Road will need to apply. In terms of all vehicles generated by the development and likely to head to/from the south (i.e. through the existing village via the Maidstone Road railway bridge) this is likely to equate to more than 500 vehicles in the morning and evening peaks and in excess of 5000 vehicles per day.

Given the pinch points that exist entering and within the existing village (e.g. Maidstone Road/High Street junction, Howland Road), and which will be impossible to mitigate, these will present significant challenges to the network in terms of capacity and delay.

With regard to the previous 150-unit scheme, Marden Parish Council expressed concern regarding the difficulty of integrating the proposed development into the village in terms of both pedestrian/cycle and highway links. The proposed narrowing of Maidstone Road to provide adequate pedestrian facilities was, sensibly, described as 'counter-intuitive'.

#### **4.2.3 Impact on the A229 Corridor**

The response to the refused 150-unit scheme (LPA Ref: 16/504584/OUT) by the highway authority (KCC) identifies that:

*"It is evident that congestion on the A229 corridor is likely to be worsened, although KCC Highways are not able to conclude that it will result in conditions that could be described as a severe impact on congestion or safety. **However, your Members should be made aware that the residual impact of this development is likely to be characterised by additional local traffic generation and some consequent increase in congestion, which the applicant cannot fully mitigate.**"*

KCC's view was that c. 60 peak trips on the A229 corridor could not be fully mitigated.

The extra trips associated with 2000 houses will certainly not be mitigated, and as such would have a significant effect on congestion and safety.

## **5. Summary & Conclusions**

These representations demonstrate that the current proposals are nothing more than a fresh and very weak attempt by landowners to join forces and “green badge” the doubling in size of a rural village as a “Garden Community”, for expedient means, in a bid to have land allocated in an unpopular and unsustainable open countryside location. This is despite guidance from MBC that impliedly does not envisage rural villages as suitable locations for such development. All of this is contrary to national policy and guidance, and the authority's own analysis of a significant element of the proposal site, again endorsed by Officers as recently as 2016.

Nothing has changed on the ground since 2016 other than the scale of the promotion. This proposal fails multiple tests as outlined above. It cannot overcome the location-specific constraints which Officers have identified time and again. A larger proposal will only exacerbate and magnify the negative impacts which have been consistently identified as overriding and immutable constraints to development north of the railway, by MBC Officers, to date.

MPOG respectfully urges Officers and Members, in accordance with your own Garden Community guidance, to disqualify Marden as a location for a Garden Community, and to continue to reject development on land north of the railway on the basis of the sound technical and overrulingly negative assessments prepared in respect of this location in recent years.

# CURRENT USE AND AGRICULTURAL LAND QUALITY

The current and historical use of the 333.8 acres (135.09ha) in this proposal is agricultural farmland.

The land area included in this proposal is:

Grade 2 - Very good (Land with minor limitations which affect crop yield, cultivations or harvesting. A wide range of agricultural and horticultural crops can usually be grown).

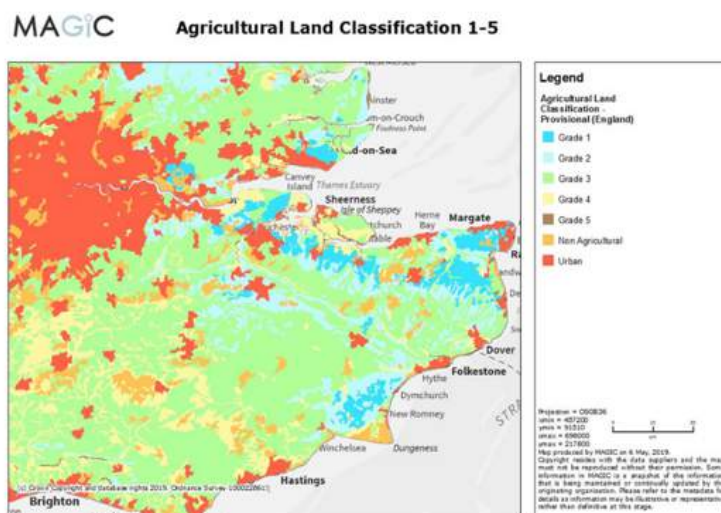
Or

Grade 3 - Good (Land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield).

The agricultural classification map (Source: Natural England) indicates that only a small proportion of land in the South East is of Grade 2 (very good) quality or better.

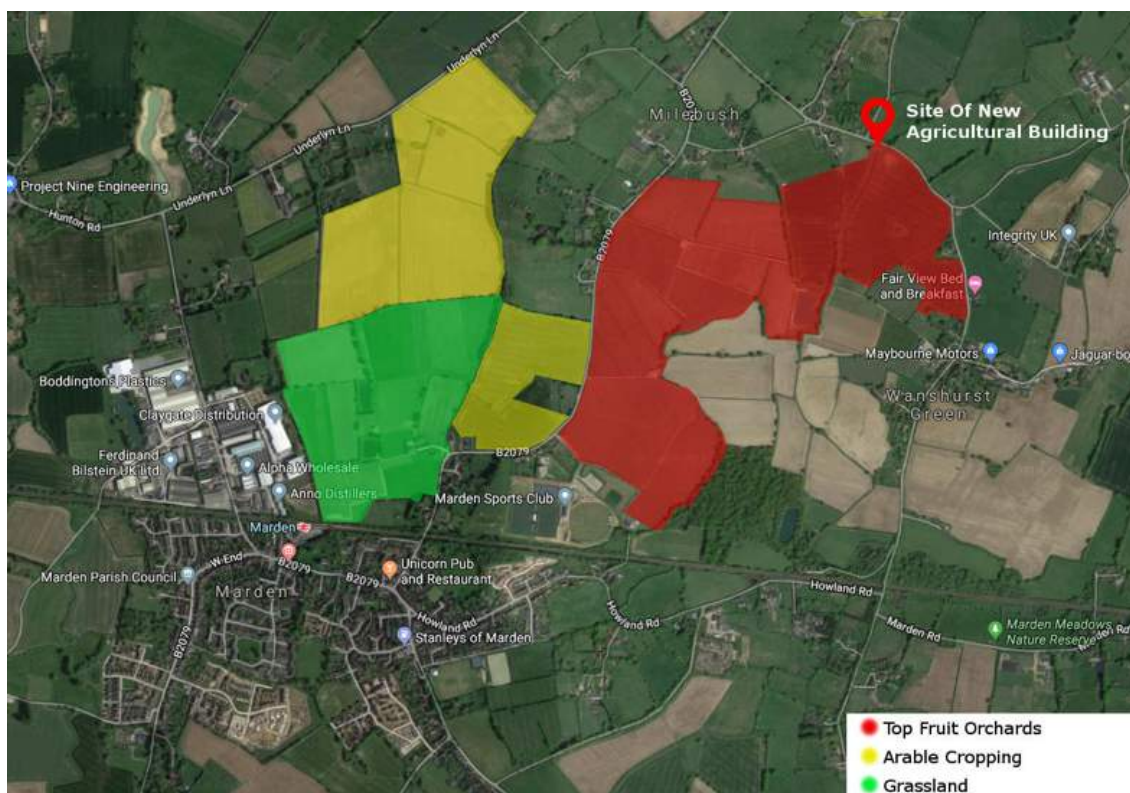
This particular area of land with its inert ability to grow top quality crops makes it an important resource not only to the village of Marden but also to Maidstone, the County of Kent and the South East of England.

Agricultural land of this quality and fertility is finite and an irreplaceable resource.



The quality and agricultural value of this land is demonstrated further by the fact that it is currently farmed by two leading local agricultural and horticultural businesses. The remainder of the land is used by the third landowner to produce grass turf.





The land to the east of Maidstone Road is now planted with several orchards of variable age and variety which are at present producing top quality apples which are sold through major supermarket chains. This agricultural unit which covers 143.52 acres (58.08ha) is now known as Summerhill Farm. Summerhill Farm is owned by Alan Firmin Ltd and is currently under a tenancy agreement with Bardsley Farms (now rebranded as Bardsley England). This parcel of land includes a reservoir used for top fruit irrigation.

Bardsley England ([bardsley-england.com](http://bardsley-england.com)) is a fifth generation, family run business based at River Farm, Staplehurst. The business is internationally known and well respected having won multiple National Fruit Show Awards over several decades.

The quality and fertility of the soils in this part of Marden is evidenced by the fact that Bardsley England has selected this particular site to grow its world beating, top-quality, award winning fruit.

Confidence in the quality of this fertile land is further shown by the substantial financial investment made during winter 2018/19 in planting additional large areas of intensively grown apple tress of the Gala variety with more apple tree planting planned on site.

This progressive and innovative business, which plans to produce some 2800 tonnes of fruit from this site, has also created the need and justification in planning terms for a newly constructed purpose-built agricultural building under agricultural permitted development rights [Application reference 18/502762/Agric. Applicant Aland Firmin Ltd] on the site adjacent to Battle Lane.

The actual length of the Bardsley tenancy agreement is ambiguous as both 2017 and 2027 (with an option to extend for both) are stated as end dates in the planning supporting documentation. However, there can be no confusion over the importance and value of this fertile, highly prized, Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land considering the substantial investment it has merited.

The land to the east of Underlyn lane, known locally as Copthall, 74.67 acres (30.22ha) is currently used for arable crop production with a network of hedgerows and ditches.

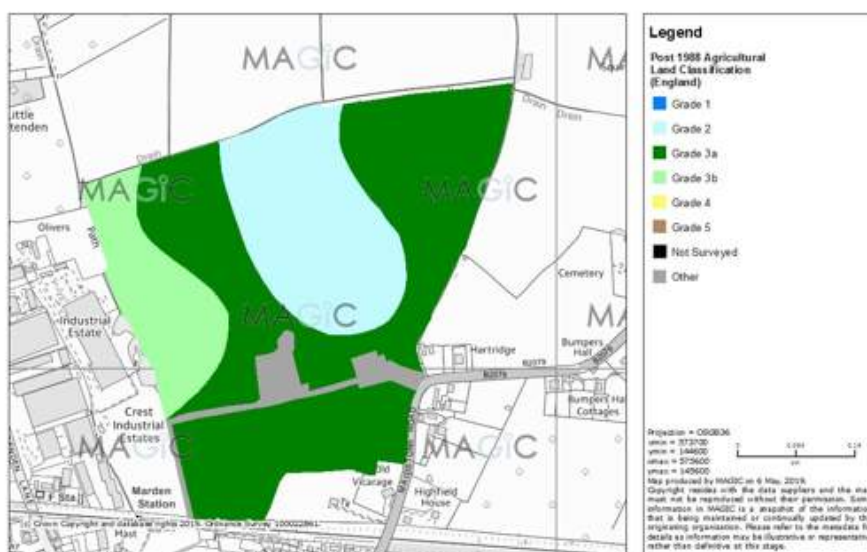
Although owned jointly by J.A. & RH Carpenter until 5th December 2018 the land is farmed by Cysters Farms who are well known in the agricultural industry for progressive innovation and for using highly efficient agricultural practices with the latest machinery to produce excellent arable crops. This land is classified as Good, Grade 3 classified agricultural land.

The 27.85 acres (11.27ha) of land around Marden Cemetery owned by Alan Firmin Ltd is also under arable crop rotation. Some of this land adjacent to Maidstone Road is classified as Grade 2 (very good) with the remainder classified as Grade 3 (good) agricultural land.

The land nearest to Marden village itself, known as Church Farm, is farmed by Marden Turf who grow grass turf for onward sale for gardens. The farm covers 75.4 acres (30.51ha). The land comprises small fields interconnected by a network of hedgerows, trees and ditches along with a small complex of agricultural buildings. Centrally located within the site are two reservoirs used to irrigate the turf. There are also at least three further small ponds within the Church Farm site.

As the farm name would suggest it is overlooked by the Grade 1 listed Marden Church. A more specific land classification assessment has been carried out for this site due to previous unsuccessful planning applications. This clearly shows the areas of very good grade 2 land and good, grade 3a/b agricultural land classification.

#### MAGiC Church Farm Agricultural Land Classification



To conclude, this proposed 333.8 acre (135.09ha) development site is comprised of historic agricultural and horticultural farmland of very good quality and highly fertile soils. The whole site itself exemplifies the unique farming landscape of this particular area of the 'Garden of England' where arable cropping land, orchards of fruit and areas of grassland are intersected by mature trees, hedgerows and ditches, together forming nature corridors that sustain and encourage an abundance of native plants and wildlife. This site is at present being utilised to efficiently produce the highest possible quality top fruit (apples), arable crops and grassland.

This important agricultural land will be removed from food production forever if this proposed development is allowed. No matter what mitigations or land offsets are put in place once this type of rich farmland habitat is removed due to this site being selected it can never be replaced.





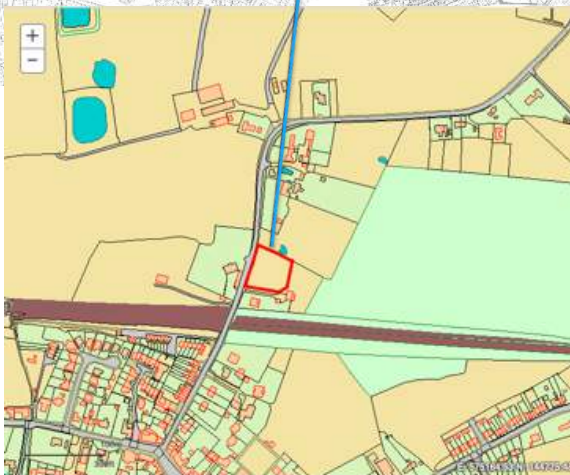
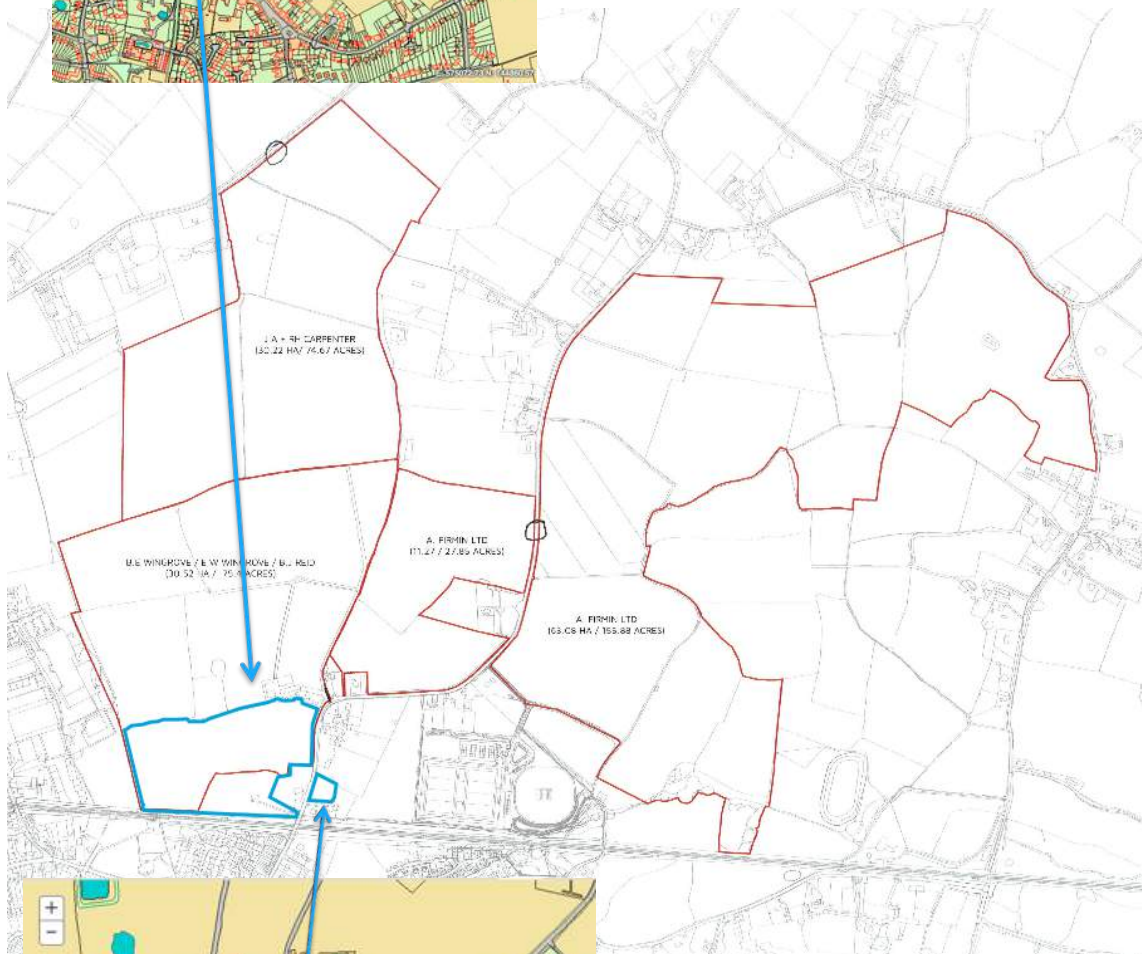
## Site Location Map



Partly included in proposed site:

LAND WEST OF MAIDSTONE ROAD,  
CHURCH FARM, MARDEN, KENT  
TN12 9AG

Summary: application refused, 2016



Close to proposed site:

**LAND ADJ. HIGHFIELD HOUSE,**  
MAIDSTONE RD, MARDEN, KENT TN12  
9AG

Summary: appeal allowed under NPPF  
(despite opposition by Maidstone Borough  
Council) as a rural exception site for  
affordable housing to meet local needs,  
2016

**PLANNING HISTORY: LAND WEST OF MAIDSTONE ROAD, CHURCH FARM, MARDEN, KENT TN12 9AG**

| Ref    | Date        | Action  | Decision | Decision date | Reasons/comments   |
|--------|-------------|---|----------|---------------|--|
| HO-151 | 2013        | Site submitted in response to MBC's Call For Sites        | Rejected |               | "Whilst the site is located adjacent to the settlement boundary, development would extend the settlement north of the railway line. Development would be out of scale and would significantly alter the form of the settlement."   |
|        | 2014        | Site resubmitted in Call For Sites                        | Rejected |               | "There had been no change in circumstances from the previous submission to warrant a change."  |
|        | 2015        | Part of site resubmitted as Omission site                 | Rejected |               | "Despite the smaller area the same considerations apply."  |
|        | 27 Apr 2016 | Pre-application advice given by Maidstone Borough Council |          |               | "This site was included in a larger site as proposed in the SHEDLAA under ref: HO-151, with a proposed yield of 500+. The site was not taken forward as a draft allocation site due to visual harm on the landscape and unsustainable location...The development of this site is likely to cause harm to this open and rural character of the countryside creating a substantial mass of development which would be highly visible in mid and short range views from Maidstone Road and in both short and longer range views from public footpaths near the site...The development of this site is unlikely to be supported due to the visual harm and erosion of the open countryside...Church Farm House and The Oast House are grade II listed buildings situated directly opposite this site. Other former farmyard buildings have also been converted to residential use and these should be considered as non-designated heritage assets as confirmed by the conservation officer. These buildings taken together form an attractive farmstead group whose significance is considerably enhanced by their rural setting. The setting of these buildings would clearly be impacted upon by development of this land...The Old Vicarage, also Grade II listed, shares its north and west boundary with the site. This building currently enjoys a largely rural setting which would be impaired by the development of the site...The development of this site would result in the expansion of the settlement, out of scale with the existing village which would have a harmful visual impact on the countryside. The railway line currently acts as a physical limit to the extent of the village to the north east. Beyond this point existing development is limited, being sparsely distributed along Maidstone Road. Development of the site would introduce an intensive form of development in a location which is physically removed from the existing built up area of the village." |

**PLANNING HISTORY: LAND WEST OF MAIDSTONE ROAD, CHURCH FARM, MARDEN,  
KENT TN12 9AG cont.**

| Ref  | Date              | Action   | Decision | Decision date  | Reasons/comments   |
|--|-------------------|--|----------|----------------|--|
| 16/5<br>045<br>84/<br>OUT                      | 26<br>May<br>2016 | Application<br>submitted by<br>Gladman<br>Developments<br>Limited for 150<br>residential<br>dwellings plus<br>50 train station<br>parking spaces | Refused  | 21 Oct<br>2016 | <p>"(1) The proposed development lies outside any defined settlement boundary and would consolidate sporadic development in the area, causing unacceptable visual harm to the character and appearance of the countryside hereabouts, when viewed from Maidstone Road and surrounding public footpaths. The development would therefore be contrary to the aims of saved policies ENV28 of the adopted Local Plan, policy, SP9, SP17 of the submitted version of the Local Plan and paragraphs 7, 17 and 64 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.</p> <p>(2) The proposed development including the location of the proposed vehicle access would result in significant harm to the setting of the grade II listed buildings known as Church Farm House and The Old Vicarage located adjacent to the site and any benefits arising from the development are not considered to outweigh the harm to these heritage assets. To permit the proposal would therefore be contrary to Central Government policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.</p> <p>(3) In the absence of an appropriate legal mechanism to secure 40% affordable housing and necessary contributions towards primary and secondary education, youth services, community learning and libraries within the local area, the impact of the development would be detrimental to existing social infrastructure and therefore contrary to policy CF1 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan (2000), Affordable Housing DPD (2006) and central government planning policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012."</p> |
| APP/<br>U22<br>35/<br>W/1<br>7/31<br>7404<br>2 | 19 Apr<br>2016    | Appeal lodged  |          |                |  |
|  | 14<br>Sep<br>2017 | Notice of Public<br>Inquiry given  |          |                |  |
|  | 26 Oct<br>2017    | Appeal<br>withdrawn<br>before Public<br>Inquiry took<br>place  |          |                |  |

**PLANNING HISTORY: LAND ADJ. HIGHFIELD HOUSE, MAIDSTONE ROAD, MARDEN, KENT TN12 9AG**

| Ref                     | Date | Action                               | Decision  | Decision date | Reasons/comments  |
|-------------------------|------|--------------------------------------|-----------|---------------|---|
| <b>85/1 842</b>         | 1974 | Application for new vehicular access | Approved  | 4 Apr 1986    |   |
| <b>00/1 881</b>         | 2000 | Application for 2 detached dwellings | Refused   | 18 Jan 2001   | "The proposed development represents development in the open countryside beyond the defined settlement boundaries of Marden...If approved, the proposed development would therefore cause harm by virtue of being an unjustified extension of built development into the countryside and would be likely to lead to pressure for further development in the area. The proposed new point of access would have inadequate visibility. The proposed development is therefore likely to be detrimental to highway safety."   |
| <b>05/1 746</b>         | 2005 | Application for 1 detached dwelling  | Refused   | 26 Oct 2005   | "The development would, if permitted, result in unjustified and unacceptable residential development in the open countryside for which an essential need has not been demonstrated. To permit the development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the countryside..."   |
|                         | 2006 | Appeal                               | Dismissed | 7 Aug 2006    |   |
| <b>12/2 100</b>         | 2012 | Application for 8 affordable houses  | Refused   | 9 Apr 2013    | "The proposed development, by way of its mass, design and layout, together with the extent of hardstanding, would fail to respect, respond and relate to the established pattern of built development in the immediate surroundings and the wider context of rural Marden, and would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the open countryside and natural environment."   |
|                         | 2013 | Appeal                               | Dismissed | 22 Nov 2013   | "The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would conflict with the development plan. There are no material considerations which outweigh these findings."  |
| <b>14/0 679</b>         | 2014 | Application for 6 affordable houses  | Refused   | 13 Nov 2014   | "The proposed development, by way of its mass, design and layout, would fail to respect, respond and relate to the established pattern of built development in the immediate surroundings and the wider context of Marden (breaching the northern boundary of the railway line), and would thus cause harm to the character and appearance of the open countryside and would fail to represent good design. To permit the proposal would therefore be contrary to Local Plan Policy ENV28 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 and Central Government Advice contained in The National Planning Policy Framework." |
| <b>15/5 0002 4/RE F</b> | 2015 | Appeal                               | Dismissed | 20 Jul 2015   |   |

**PLANNING HISTORY: LAND ADJ. HIGHFIELD HOUSE, MAIDSTONE ROAD, MARDEN, KENT TN12 9AG**

| Ref  | Date     | Action                              | Decision       | Decision date | Reasons/comments  |
|--|----------|-------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|---|
| <b>15/50</b><br><b>7908/</b><br><b>FULL</b>  | Sep 2015 | Application for 6 affordable houses | Not determined |               |   |
| <b>APP/</b><br><b>U223</b><br><b>5/W/</b><br><b>15/31</b><br><b>4067</b><br><b>9 -</b><br><b>16/50</b><br><b>0004/</b><br><b>NON</b><br><b>DET</b> | Jan 2016 | Appeal                              | Allowed        | 20 Jul 2016   | <p><i>The appeal was made on the grounds of non-determination but Maidstone Borough Council indicated that it would have refused permission for the following reason:</i>"The proposed development by virtue of its location (breaching the northern boundary of the village in this location marked by the railway line) would cause harm to the character and appearance of the open countryside contrary to Local Plan Policy ENV28 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 and Central Government advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework 2012."</p> <p><i>The appeal inspector reported:</i>"Marden is identified as a rural service centre because of the availability of a range of services and facilities, including public transport, within the village. Because of this and the fairly close proximity to the settlement boundary there is no reason to doubt the finding of the Inspector in the most recent appeal decision concerning this site (Ref APP/U2235/W/15/3004417) that it is situated within a sustainable location and is capable of constituting a <b>rural exception site</b> for the purposes of providing local needs housing."</p> <p><i>In its Appeal Statement, Maidstone Borough Council stated:</i>"The railway line to the south of the appeal site acts as a clear boundary to the built development that lies within Marden village; and the prevailing pattern of built development in the surrounding area to the north of the railway line is very much characterised by sporadic development largely consisting of detached and semi-detached properties. The appeal, with its 2 uniform terraces, would appear out of context and would further consolidate built form in the countryside, being at odds with the pattern and grain of development along Maidstone Road and the site's rural location. Furthermore, the proposed development would not be wholly screened, with public views of the site possible from the road, and it would appear out of place and incongruous in this sensitive location at the transition between countryside and village."</p> |

# LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

The site itself sits within the Staplehurst Low Weald Landscape Character Area - the guidelines for which state “**conserve**”; the visual sensitivity given as “**high**” [Ref: Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment - Jan 2015]. The harm caused to this protected Landscape Character Area would clearly be against policy ENV 28 and SP17.

*“Development proposals in the countryside will not be permitted unless they accord with other policies in this plan and they will not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.” - MBC Local Plan 2017, Policy SP17*

## **Greensand Ridge AONB Proposal**

The area immediately to the north of the proposed site, the Greensand Ridge, is subject to a pending (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) AONB application – which was **unanimously** recommended for approval by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Councillors recently and is awaiting a final decision. It is important to state that, even though a decision hasn’t yet been made, this must still be given significant weight. The views from the Greensand Ridge of the proposed site are unimpeded – and 2,000 dwellings will clearly create a more than significant level of harm to this visual sensitivity:

### *Visual Sensitivity: High*

There are extensive panoramic views across the Low Weald to the south from this elevated landscape along the Greensand Ridge. Views within the area are restricted at times by intervening vegetation, although there are some considerable views within the area across orchards with the backdrop of the Low Weald beyond. This is clearly a valued landscape for the purposes of paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Marden Neighbourhood Plan also states; “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 only remaining undeveloped entry point into the historic village. All other entry routes have been over-developed by encroachment and housing estates. Note the heritage assets to left.



# ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS

When identifying environmental concerns and potential impacts of a proposed development site it is prudent to undertake a Source, Pathway, Receptor model to identify and quantify “harm” that would result from such a development. A Source, Pathway, Receptor model is a commonly used tool when undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

**The source is clear,** 2,000 new houses sited on greenfield agricultural land, land that was previously free draining and unpaved and could intercept rainwater. Other sources would include the construction phase of the development along with the dust and noise that that would bring. Recent research into large-scale housing developments (Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, Nov 2016) found that the average annual build rate for a scheme of 2,000+ dwellings was 161 houses per year. This means that the construction phase of this proposal would last over 12 years. The sources would provide runoff in the form of contaminated surface water, along with construction dust and huge traffic impacts producing exhaust fumes and contaminated road run-off and due to the location of the proposed site, areas of stationary traffic. Not to mention the very obvious habitat removal of hedgerows and pond and ditch networks.

**The receptors are as follows;**

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) River Beult which is, “one of the few clay rivers in England which retains a characteristic flora and fauna” [Ref: Natural England Designated Sites – Site Citation]. This is located less than 2km from the site boundary. The current condition of the 7 segments of the Beult is low and improvement options have been identified to bring the SSSI up to a higher ecosystem service level by 2027 including catchment sensitive farming scheme work by Natural England in conjunction with local farmers and the Environment Agency.



**SSSI Marden Meadows.** The site lies less than 500m from the boundary of the proposal. This site is one of the best examples of unimproved neutral grassland remaining in Kent and is managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust. It has the following species present [Ref: Natural England Designated Sites – Site Citation]:

Adder's tongue – *Ophioglossum vulgatum*

Green winged orchid – *Orchis morio*

Meadow saxifrage – *Saxifraga granulata*

Grasses such as *fescues Festuca*, *bents Agrostis* and *foxtails Alopecurus* are abundant and the less common meadow brome *Bromus commutatus* also occurs. Oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, bulbous buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, bugle *Ajuga reptans*, and common sorrel *Rumex acetosa* are among the typical meadow plants found on the site.

This habitat type is increasingly rare owing to habitat destruction. The ponds and hedgerows are thought to be of ancient origin. The most abundant plants in the ponds are bulrush *Typha latifolia*, lesser bulrush *Typha angustifolia* and branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*. Two scarce plants, water violet *Hottonia palustris* and bladder-sedge *Carex vesicaria* are also found. The hedgerows are diverse with hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and hazel *Corylus avellana* being the most frequent species. The less common midland hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata* and wild service-tree *Sorbus torminalis* are also present.

English Nature have published their “Views about Management” of Marden Meadows and in this document state “For the damper meadows, regular and careful maintenance of surface drainage including ditches and drains can be necessary to prevent adverse changes in the plant species composition of the sward. Deepening of surface drainage should be avoided.



**Bridgehurst Woods.** This site lies to the south east of the proposal site. Although in private ownership, this site lies divided, half of it is within the proposal area and the other half is owned by a different landowner on the boundary of the proposed development site.

MAGIC maps indicate that the woodland is classified as an ancient and semi natural woodland and is mentioned in the priority habitat inventory. Veteran trees are an irreplaceable habitat according to the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework).



**Protected Farmland Bird Populations** – notably turtle doves - have been recorded at farms either side of, and on, the proposed development area and there is no doubt that they use the proposed development area in its current form as a food source and for breeding.

**There are various Pathways** for “harm” to occur;

- Air transportation of dust during the construction phase.
- Increased surface water flows owing to the removal of the vegetation infiltration layer over the 330 acre site. This will lead to increased run off with potential contaminants entering the extensive ditch network and being transported directly into the two SSSIs. This will also lead to a greater speed of water being transported to the River Beult in a significant rainfall event which will lead to greater flooding.





This map shows the topography of the proposal area and can be seen to show that Marden Meadows SSSI lies at a lower level to the proposal area. Indicative surface water flow would travel downhill towards this SSSI.

- Removal of existing habitat such as hedgerows and ploughed fields used for wild bird feed sources.
- Increased habitation near to all of the receptors if the houses are built, leading to increased footfall across Bridgehurst woods and increased potential polluted runoff into the field ditch network.
- Increased light pollution from the houses and roads if the houses are built, leading to interruption for bats and various bird species. The area in the proposal is located in a “Dark Sky” area and currently has minimal night-time lighting.
- Increased traffic movement from the houses and roads if the houses are built, leading to increased contaminated road run off entering the extensive ditch and drainage network and various air pollutants from increased exhaust fumes being transported by air to the land-based receptors.

The Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan states that;

New development should “Avoid damage to and inappropriate development considered likely to have significant or indirect adverse effects on:

- a. Internationally, nationally and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity;  
and
- b. Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats;”

## Farmland Birds

A report on Birds and Conservation at HE Hall Farms in Marden (the largest proportion of which is adjacent to the proposed development site) published in 2018 states that the farm continues to work closely with the RSPB in trialling early season supplementary feeding for turtle doves which are vulnerable to global extinction. The loss of once common farmland weeds has been a key driver of their decline. At Mill Farm “several pairs are present (seven adults were seen this year, plus a juvenile) and probably breeding on the farm **or in the vicinity.**”

## Bird Ringing

Bird ringing was carried out by ringers licensed by The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). In 2018, 1,136 birds, of 34 species, were trapped and ringed. Nearly half – 15 species – are listed as being of conservation concern. Ten of these are listed at the highest level, and three are Schedule 1 species specially protected under UK government legislation. (Note: these represent only a sample of the species present as not all, skylark and lapwing for example, can be ringed in this way. These particular species are also present on the proposed development site.)

Of particular interest were the very high numbers of two ‘red-listed’ species. Red is the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action.

“A brief survey was carried out in the summer to count the breeding pairs of one of these species in the 16km<sup>2</sup> area centred on Marden. The species has very particular requirements for its nesting habitat and was recorded on all ‘suitable’ habitat found on the farm and surrounding area. However, the data demonstrates that the numbers breeding in the 16km<sup>2</sup> area are insufficient to account for the numbers recorded on the farm in the winter. Thus, the conservation work is potentially having an impact over a **considerably wider area** than that of HE Hall and Sons farm alone.”

The above extract from the report show clearly that significant numbers of birds on the ‘red list of conservation concern’ are present in the vicinity and on the actual proposed development site.

Red is the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action.

Red list criteria includes:

- Species is globally threatened.
- Historical population decline in UK during 1800–1995.
- Severe (at least 50%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years, or longer-term period (the entire period used for assessments since the first BoCC review, starting in 1969).
- Severe (at least 50%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or the longer-term period.

If this proposed location was chosen for development, it can be clearly seen how the source, pathway and receptor model indicates that significant harm would occur to the population of farmland birds around Marden and notably to the turtle doves which according to the RSPB is "the bird most likely to become extinct in the UK."

### **Summary: Quantification of Harm**

The ecological team working for the applicant will aim to address areas of concern with mitigation measures. Mitigation measures such as SUDS (sustainable drainage systems) may prevent any further surface water from escaping the site boundary. However, it will not be able to avoid the increased polluted run-off from the extra traffic on the roads as this will be outside of the proposal SUDS catchment area. Any extra contamination from surface water run-off will make its way through the network of land drainage ditches to the River Beult.

The population of farmland birds, especially the many protected species noted – several of which are listed in annexes of the EU Birds Directive, will be irrevocably harmed, and this cannot be mitigated as the habitat and breeding grounds will be removed with no available means of replacing them.

The construction phase of the proposal cannot be mitigated and as mentioned previously is likely to continue for some 12 years, a period of time during which, the airborne dust cannot be mitigated and through the air pathway mentioned above is likely to cause harm to the Marden Meadows SSSI by dust deposition.

In conclusion, should the proposed area be selected to be included in the Maidstone Borough Council's approved development areas, it will represent a hugely detrimental environmental impact, which would be completely against the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan which states that;

"New development should avoid damage to and inappropriate development considered likely to have significant direct or indirect adverse effects on:

- a. Internationally, nationally and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity;  
and
- b. Local Biodiversity Action plan priority habitats;"

This site will result in a loss of wildlife habitat, when Kent as a whole has not met its 2010 Biodiversity targets. An extract from the draft Marden Neighbourhood Plan states that "Any redevelopment of existing land under arable or top fruit production will displace a wide range of wildlife".



# HERITAGE IMPACTS

Marden is an ancient village and has the highest number of listed buildings of all the parishes of Maidstone (Maidstone Borough Local Plan Heritage Topic Paper 2016). The Grade I listed church, St Michael & All Angels, is centrally placed on a ridge and therefore affords prominent views both to, and from, the proposed site.



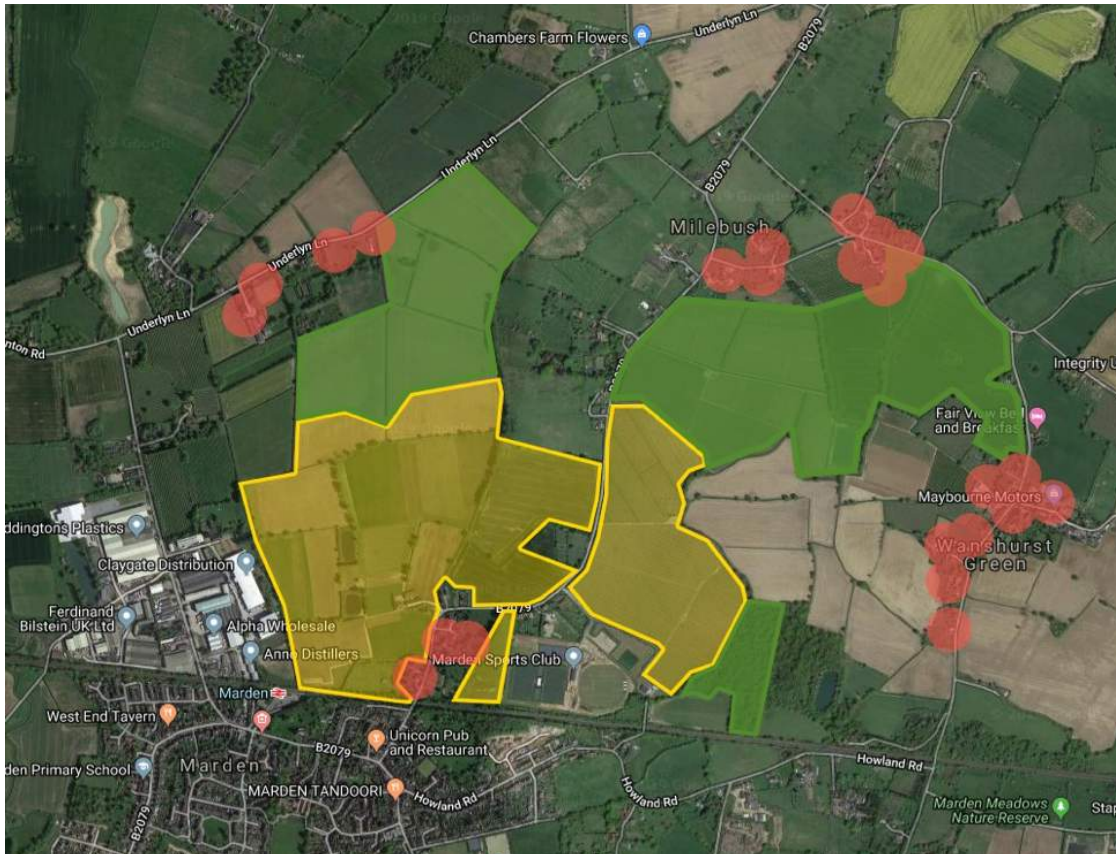
Figure 1 – Views of the Grade I listed church from proposed site, looking South

The setting of the Grade I listed church from the proposed site should not be taken lightly. In this setting (c.f. Figure 1) the views of the bell tower are significant, and any modification of this view will likely result in a 'more than minor alteration' to the nationally important heritage asset.

A proposal for c.150 dwellings (16/504584/OUT) on this site was rejected by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) partly because of the significant heritage impact – this Call for Sites proposal is more than 13 times the size and scale of that application.

There are also significant views **from** the Grade I listed historical asset down onto the proposed site - particularly from the popular Public Rights of Way (PROW) that dissect the proposed site.

There are multiple Grade II Listed buildings within the immediate vicinity - indeed more than have been highlighted by previous promoters of the Church Farm site. There are also several unlisted but nevertheless important heritage assets - such as Little Pattenden and Highfield House - within the immediate curtilage.



### Screening: Not Sufficient

Sustainable development policies dictate that native species must be used for screening - nearly all native hedgerow & tree species are deciduous, i.e. for 6 months of the year any leaf cover will be non-existent.

The historical assets immediately bordering the proposal will also be gravely affected – not only by significantly increased traffic movements, but the loss of the only remaining rural approach to the village. All other approaches into Marden have since been tarnished by development.



There are also serious heritage concerns regarding the proposed 'relief road' by Underlyn Farm, which is within the immediate setting of the Grade II Listed Underlyn Farm Cottages (see left) - a Wealden Hall house of significant historical merit.

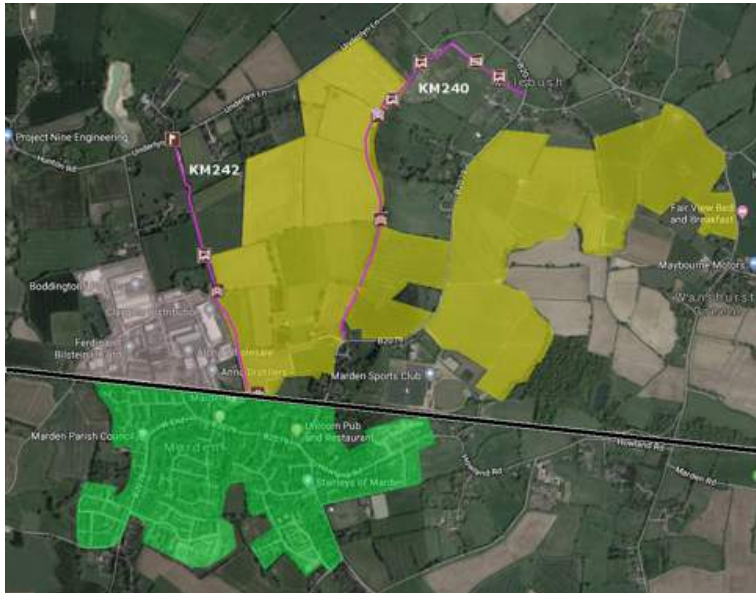
The implications of even proposing a new, high-volume relief road adjacent to a Listed building in this way perhaps suggest a callous disregard for heritage assets.

NB: This Listed building was also not highlighted on any of the DHA planning documents.



# PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The public rights of way within or near the site have been researched from the definitive map of public rights of way for the County of Kent, held at KCC Invicta House. This is the only definitive map of public rights of way showing the accurate record of where they lie and should be consulted and referred to in all planning submissions. There are no higher public rights of way other than footpaths across the site. There are four footpaths on the site; KM241, KM240, KM239 and KM242. The two footpaths of interest for site access and connectivity to Marden are seen in the diagram below. They are KM240 which runs across the proposed site and currently terminates by the Church Farm access gate on the corner of Maidstone Road. KM242 runs north to south across the proposed site and terminates to the north of the railway line.



The railway line is currently located to the North of the existing Marden settlement and would bisect the new settlement from East to West. The main crossing point over this railway line from the proposed site to the centre of Marden village in the public rights of way network is a metal footbridge that crosses the railway line at the southern end of KM242. The path ends [as a public right of way] in the churchyard of the Grade I listed St Michael and All Angels church and is noted as a 'path' across the churchyard.



This can never be recorded as a public right of way as it is across consecrated land and there is no possibility of this part of the network being upgraded to a cycle path. The historic bridge up and over the railway line (shown on the previous page) has sides that are an open grid mesh. It poses an obstacle to cyclists and certainly would not be able to accommodate either pushchair or wheelchair crossing.

KM240 ends at the entrance to Church Farm on the Maidstone Road, and even with an application to alter its route to the southern extent of the landowners ownership, would result in the footpath coming out onto the Maidstone Road by 'The Old Vicarage - a Grade II listed building'. Users would have to cross the busy road at the blind bend at the entrance to the village and walk 20m on the public highway before being able to access the pavement on the other side. The road frontage at this point on the road opposite is integral to the setting and character of the Grade II listed properties of 'Church Farm House' and the 'Oast House'.

One of the 10 'key Garden Community Qualities' as outlined in The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's White Paper on 'Garden Communities' is integrated transport and included in the Maidstone Borough Council 'New Garden Communities Prospectus';

*"This should include promotion of public transport, walking and cycling so that settlements are easy to navigate, and facilitate simple and sustainable access to jobs, education, and services"*

There will be no cycle paths in this proposal and the walking opportunities are limited. A large proportion of housing (nearly all of the current housing stock in the village) is located south of the railway line. This will mean that should the schools and the retail area be located in the areas displayed in the new proposal many of these short journeys will necessitate transport by car, precisely the activity which correct future proofed planning of a garden community seeks to avoid where possible.

A new Garden Community is, in accordance with Maidstone Borough Council's 'New Garden Communities Prospectus', to set an exceptional standard of building and urban design and offers:

*"integrated and accessible transport choices, **with a particular emphasis on active modes (walking and cycling)**"*

It has been shown above that the location of this site offers little to no transport choices for everyday activities and is located in a poor public rights of way network area. Furthermore, the NPPF states that applications for development should;

***"give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements"***

The location of this proposal has very limited opportunities to firstly provide a pedestrian network and no opportunity to upgrade this network to cycle paths. The limited PROW network demonstrates that this is a poor choice of location for a garden community.



# HIGHWAYS

The Maidstone Local Plan states that “New developments have the potential to generate a considerable number of vehicular [...] trips which in turn can have both direct and cumulative impacts on the transport network.”

This section will outline the ways in which a proposed development of 2,000 houses would impact the transport network in and around Marden.

Marden is a rural village – the closest major road being the A229 leading north to Maidstone or south to Staplehurst and Cranbrook. Otherwise, the village is surrounded by a network of B roads leading to other rural villages, including Collier Street, Yalding and Goudhurst, and further afield to towns including Paddock Wood, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.

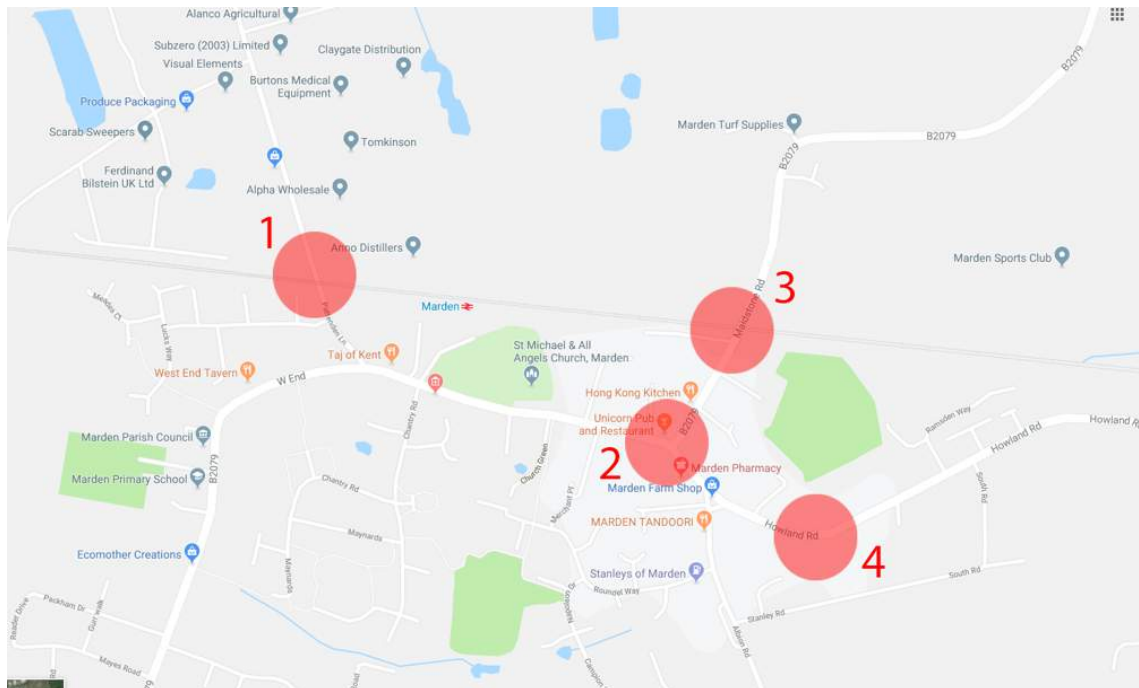
Not all amenities are available in Marden, and locals use the surrounding roads to access places of work, schools, supermarkets, hospitals, and other facilities.

The proposed site itself would be accessed via Maidstone Road (B2079). This road is a relatively narrow route, most often used by local traffic, but increasingly used by heavy goods vehicles.

This road would be inappropriate for the volume of construction traffic the site will generate in view of the width of the road, the road quality and several sharp bends which force large vehicles into the middle of the road.

Similarly, this country road would not be suitable for up to 5,000 additional car movements per day generated by the proposed 2,000 dwellings.

## Central Marden Village - Access issues highlighted below



### 1. Low Railway Bridge at the southern end of Pattenden Lane

This restricted height bridge carries the main line railway over the road and means that it is impassable for vehicles taller than 3.7 metres to negotiate. Pattenden Lane is the main employment and industrial area/estate in Marden. This restricted access route means that all large vehicles are forced to use other minor roads to negotiate Marden village if they are travelling through the village itself. To access the Goudhurst Road lorries have to travel down Marden High Street via Maidstone Road. This cannot be mitigated in this proposal.



HGV needing to turn around due to low bridge taken May 17th 2019

## 2. T Junction between Maidstone Road and Marden High Street B2079

This junction is the main route into Marden village centre from Maidstone Road. This junction often has poor visibility due to parked cars and is a junction which HGVs find too narrow to manage in one manoeuvre, causing a build-up of traffic in the centre of the village in all directions as cars wait for them to complete the manoeuvre. The physical dimensions of the road and the associated housing/buildings (including the Grade II listed “Cornerways” and “Smeeton”) surrounding this junction along with the requirement for pavements mean that this junction could not be altered.



Photo on left shows traffic issues with HGV at Maidstone Road T Junction taken May 9th 2019

## 3. Maidstone Road Railway Road Bridge

This is the main route into Marden for all traffic from the north (Maidstone). This road bridge consists of two pedestrian paths measuring 0.90 and 0.70 metres wide and a two way road which measures 5.80 metres. The width of this bridge is finite and there is no scope for altering this bridge without reducing the traffic to one lane which would have major traffic impacts in the village and along Maidstone Road.



#### 4. Howland Road

Howland Road is the road that links Marden to Staplehurst. Due to limited off-road parking, residents are forced to park on the road. Due to this, Howland Road is reduced down to a single lane road. A particular pinch point is on the sharp corner indicated by the (4) on the above diagram, where due to the proximity of housing to the road the pavement width is reduced to 0.30 metres. There is no pavement on the other side of the road at this point. This means that any pedestrian with a pushchair or wheelchair users need to go onto the road itself to pass this point. Howland Road is unsuitable for large volumes of traffic and particularly for HGV traffic.



Photos indicate the pavement at Howland Road is very narrow and only available on one side of a blind corner.

#### Stilebridge Junction A229

At the other end, Maidstone Road joins the A229 at a forked junction at Stilebridge, requiring drivers to look over their shoulder while travelling at speed in order to join oncoming traffic from the A229 (see map below). Drivers joining Maidstone Road from the A229 in a southbound direction, have to cross fast oncoming traffic with very poor visibility due to a bend in the A229 at the junction. Accidents are frequent at Stilebridge on account of the dangers of this particular junction (see image below taken 25th March 2019). Crash data (<https://www.crashmap.co.uk>) shows 9 accidents at this junction in the past 5 years, one of which was fatal. Without significant changes to the layout of the junction, it simply would not be suitable for a significant increase in construction traffic or a significant increase in local users.



The impact on B roads surrounding Marden could also be severe. The main roads leading through Marden (Albion Road, Howland Road, High Street, Pattenden Lane and Goudhurst Road) have high volumes of parked traffic at all times. This is exacerbated by school pick-up and drop-off activity. The village also has large numbers of commuters accessing the railway station by vehicle during rush hour.

The Marden Planning Opposition Group undertook an online survey to establish road usage for commuting in the village. We asked people who commute by car to select which road they use to leave the village for work. This survey was conducted on Facebook and via our website. In total, 314 people responded to the survey. The table below shows that, as expected, a high proportion of commuters use the A229, mostly to travel north towards Maidstone. However, surprisingly high numbers use rural roads in the direction of Yalding, Goudhurst and Paddock Wood. These figures must be considered in the potential impact of development on Marden and the surrounding area.

| <b>Route</b>                        | <b>Number of Commuters</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| A229 (N) to Maidstone               | 73                         | 23%               |
| A229 (S) to Staplehurst & Cranbrook | 25                         | 8%                |
| Goudhurst Road (B2079) to Goudhurst | 52                         | 16%               |
| Collier Street & Yalding (B2162)    | 63                         | 20%               |
| Sheephurst Lane to Paddock Wood     | 49                         | 16%               |
| Hunton Hill                         | 18                         | 6%                |
| Marden Road to Staplehurst          | 21                         | 7%                |
| Thorn Road to Marden Thorn          | 13                         | 4%                |

The survey proves that residents of Marden do not all travel in one direction towards Maidstone. The commuting clearly radiates out from Marden along the rural network of roads to Yalding and Goudhurst as well.

### **Parking In Marden**

Marden Parish Council's draft Neighbourhood Plans states: "As in all 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 volume of parked cars poses a danger to cyclists, who encounter hazards manoeuvring around them, and likewise to pedestrians whose space on pavements is taken up. Marden Primary School no longer has a crossing attendant and incidences of vehicles causing dangerous situations near the school are frequent.

The lack of pedestrian or safe cycle access between the proposed site and the village would mean that potential residents would be forced to drive between their new homes and village amenities such as the school and railway station, thereby increasing short journeys which create air pollution and contribute to climate change.



Marden's only options for off-road parking are the car parks at the station and the library. The station car park, which is almost always at capacity, particularly during the week, is costly to use. The library car park is small and has restrictions during certain hours. This leaves on-street parking. Residents wanting to access the shops or post office, for example, might want to park on the High Street, close to the junction with Maidstone Road. This is one of the most congested points in the village, partly because of cars parked on the highway. Spaces along the road are limited and often unavailable.

Residents wanting to access the GP surgery on Church Green might want to park in the surgery's car park, but spaces are once again limited and people are left to park on the road in the area of the railway station and Pattenden Lane, the other most congested point in the village.

The proposal to build 2,000 more houses, whose residents would be forced to access village amenities by car in view of the lack of walking and cycling opportunities, would create even more congestion in the village given the lack of appropriate, off-road parking spaces.

The Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan states that "Parking provisions need improvement as it puts pressure on roadways, causing congestion and accidents/damage." The lack of mitigation for the potential parking needs generated by a development of this size, means that the development itself is wholly inappropriate for a village of Marden's size and rural nature.

### **Rail Services**

The alternatives to driving in the village are limited. Marden has a railway station with direct trains to London, Ashford and Canterbury. Many village residents use the railway station for access to places of work, and some children go to school by train. However, trains are not the most convenient form of transport. For example, in order to take the train to Maidstone (which requires changing trains at Paddock Wood), the journey would be approximately 54 minutes, while driving usually takes 20-30 minutes. Likewise, accessing the Medway towns takes much longer by train. A train journey to Chatham, for example, takes approximately 1 hour and 37 minutes by train, whereas by car it usually takes 40-50 minutes.

Although there are nearby towns which are easily accessed by train from Marden, such as Paddock Wood (7 minutes), Tonbridge (15 minutes) or Tunbridge Wells (34 minutes), residents often find themselves more inclined to drive to these locations in view of the high cost of train tickets. This means that, although rail services are available, residents of Marden continue to drive, thereby putting extra pressure on roads.

### **Bus Services**

Marden also has bus services, but these are relatively limited in frequency and choice of destination. Marden is served by four bus routes, two of which only operate during the early morning and late afternoon on school days.

These services give Marden residents bus access primarily to Maidstone, but also to the surrounding villages of Goudhurst, Collier Street, Laddingford and Yalding.

On the main service from Marden to Maidstone, which operates every day, there are only 4 bus times to access Maidstone (the last bus leaving at 13:40) and only 5 bus times to return from Maidstone to Marden (the last bus arriving in Marden at 18:30). Clearly, this limits opportunities for Marden residents to avoid driving to Maidstone, causing further traffic in a town which already suffers from severe congestion and air pollution.

Maidstone is not the only town in the area to suffer from traffic problems. Surrounding villages also experience heavy traffic in narrow lanes, with on-street parking causing further obstacles to vehicles on the road. Yalding in particular has had problems with traffic levels through the village and over its narrow bridges (note that both Yalding Bridge and Twyford Bridge are scheduled monuments). East Farleigh experiences similar problems at the bridge/level crossing due to high volumes of waiting traffic in both directions (note that East Farleigh Bridge is also a scheduled monument). In Yalding a weight restriction for HGVs had to be introduced, which has increased the flow of HGV traffic through Marden. Marden already experiences high levels of HGV traffic because of the industrial area on Pattenden Lane and neighbouring fruit pack houses.

### **Traffic Counting Survey**

Marden Planning Opposition Group conducted a traffic watch on two days across several locations in and around Marden (see table of results below). On each day that the traffic watch took place, there was an average of 255 HGVs (HGVs included anything larger than a commercial van) passing through various points in the village between 6am and 7pm. The highest numbers of lorries were seen by volunteers stationed at the West End (between Marden Primary School and the Pattenden Lane junction). A total of 370 HGVs were recorded passing through this area of the village on 1st April 2019, and even more on 4th April 2019, when 466 HGVs were counted. These high numbers of HGVs already create serious hazards and congestion in Marden. A significant increase in the number of HGVs from construction traffic over an extended period of time would put inordinate pressure on the roadways in and around Marden.

| <b>Location</b>         | <b>HGVs counted<br/>1st April 2019</b> | <b>HGVs counted<br/>4th April 2019</b> | <b>Average at location<br/>per day (6am-7pm)</b> |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| Underlyn Lane           | 223                                    | 259                                    | 241  |
| Maidstone Road B2079    | 213                                    | 195                                    | 204  |
| West End Goudhurst Road | 370                                    | 466                                    | 418  |
| Hunton Road             | 255                                    | 209                                    | 232  |
| Howland Road            | 190                                    | 151                                    | 171  |

Turning to the figures for cars (including commercial vans), the high numbers recorded on Hunton Road point to the fact that this is the preferred route for many local residents wanting to access the motorway network (via Yalding), due to the congested nature of the A229 through Maidstone town centre, particularly at peak times.

The highest traffic flows in Marden were recorded on Goudhurst Road; given that the school is located here, any additional traffic on this road will cause even more severe issues at school drop-off/pick-up times. Although the lowest recorded overall, the figures for Howland Road are still significant and are of particular concern, given the narrowness of this road just before it joins the High Street.

| <b>Location</b>         | <b>Cars counted<br/>1st April 2019</b> | <b>Cars counted<br/>4th April 2019</b> | <b>Average at location<br/>per day (6am-7pm)</b> |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| Underlyn Lane           | 2809                                   | 3152                                   | 2981   |
| Maidstone Road B2079    | 2521                                   | 2545                                   | 2533   |
| West End Goudhurst Road | 6579                                   | 6253                                   | 6416   |
| Hunton Road             | 4295                                   | 4677                                   | 4486   |
| Howland Road            | 2188                                   | 1994                                   | 2091   |

The National Planning Policy Framework states that “significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health.”

The residents of Marden believe that this proposal for 2,000 new houses cannot possibly be made sustainable given the range of transport issues outlined here.

# ACCESS TO SERVICES

In this section, access to existing services will be presented using:

‘Sustainability Appraisal Scoping for Maidstone Borough Local Review Plan; Appendix 1 Site Assessment Criteria (Draft)’ published January 2019.

The distances have been measured from appropriate centres of the proposed development site, using existing road networks. The main access to the village is along the B2079; where Maidstone Road meets Marden High Street.

The access to services is measured to existing services in Marden, as whilst it is realised that new facilities may be built, during the construction phase the residents of the new housing would be solely reliant upon the existing Marden services.

Access to services are normally assessed on the presumption that residents are able to walk from their place of residence but due to the distance of the site and lack of footpaths leading into Marden, journeys would need to be carried out by vehicle. A suggested ‘acceptable walking distance of 800m’ to most destinations, is not attainable in any of the cases. In addition the proposed ‘Retail Core’, may not be available to the residents of the proposed site for a long period of time which would make travel into Marden village by car more likely.

## GP Surgery

| Site Assessment Criteria                               | Residential Sites |           |             |           |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
|  | Very good         | Good      | Poor        | Very poor |
| Proximity to GP surgeries/ health centres and dentists | <= 400 m          | 401-800 m | 801-1,200 m | >1,200 m  |

Distance 1,400m = **Very Poor**



Source: draft proposal

## Primary School

| Site Assessment Criteria               | Residential Sites |           |             |           |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
|  | Very good         | Good      | Poor        | Very poor |
| Proximity to primary or middle schools | <= 400 m          | 401-800 m | 801-1,200 m | >1,200 m  |

Distance 1,800m = **Very Poor**



Source: draft proposal

## Medical and Emergency Services

There is currently one GP practice in Marden serving the residents of the village and surrounds. In 2014, Marden Medical Centre provided primary medical care services for 5,734 patients. The list has now grown to the 2019 level of 6,543 (14% increase) and would be expected to reach some 7,200 to 7,400 in 2020/21, when the present phase of major residential development currently approved, should be complete. This represents an expected increase in patient numbers of 25-30% in less than 7 years.

The partnership at Marden Medical Centre have little control over their workload. Any patient who can demonstrate that they live within the practice catchment area of the surgery may register if that is their wish. As patient registrations increase the surgery could at a future date apply for 'list closure' but this is not lightly undertaken and normally only granted for a maximum of 12 months due to the potential impact on other surgeries in the area. All patients are guaranteed a GP by the Clinical Commissioning Group who are responsible for GP surgeries.





The current location of the medical centre, in the centre of the village is within easy walking distance for all current and recent developments meaning that it will continue to function well for the village from its existing base. The Partnership have stated that there is no wish to re-locate the practice. However as the workload increases to cope with the currently approved building within the village the surgery will soon be operating at maximum capacity.

The partnership are currently considering an application to further extend the premises to ensure reasonable provision for the next 5-10 years at the current rate of growth. However the site would not be sufficient to cope with an additional 5,000 patients. Clearly a separate surgery would be required should the proposal for 2,000 houses go ahead.

The phasing of any house building from the 2,000 homes proposal may realistically mean that the new households would apply to register at the current surgery prior to any proposed new medical facilities being built on the proposed new site. Standards of care would inevitably be impacted whilst this was awaited.

It is worth noting that the large percentage of affordable housing already built in the village has brought a whole raft of new challenges to the existing practice with high care demands. If the same percentage of affordable housing were to be built within the proposed site, the workload impact would inevitably be significant.

There is the following statement on the Marden Medical Centre website:

'We strongly oppose any further housing developments in Marden on the grounds that the medical centre could not cope from a manpower, recruitment as well as an estates perspective. Large scale development would risk destabilising the care provided to our current patients.

We have sought further guidance from West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group and refer you to their statement below which will be our official policy until we receive further clarity.

*'The call for sites across the Maidstone Borough Council area is the start of the local plan development process that will provide a starting list of sites for consideration that will then need detailed analysis within the council - this will take a while. The CCG will be working closely with the council as part of the local (Maidstone wide) plan for development and we will, at the appropriate points in the process, be strategically assessing potential growth areas and what that may mean for healthcare infrastructure requirements'.*

## Hospital Provision

The proposed site in Marden is located some 30-40 minutes away from either Maidstone Hospital or Tunbridge Wells Hospital. It is set in a rural location with the main entry and exit points from the village being on rural lanes. Added to that, all of the routes from Marden to Pembury hospital are along rural, winding lanes.

Emergency ambulance crews transport patients from Marden to Pembury hospital which, along with Maidstone, in its most recent Care Quality Commission Report dated 9th March 2018 is deemed as "requiring improvement".

In the summary of the service section of the report the Care Quality Commission deem both hospitals as requiring improvement due to various items but notably:

- "Between October 2016 and September 2017 there was an upward trend in the monthly percentage of ambulance journeys with turnaround times over 30 minutes at Maidstone Hospital."
- "Over the period an average of 42% of ambulance journeys had a turnaround time over 30 minutes."
- "From August 2016 to July 2017 the trust reported that 364 "black breaches", with an upward trend over the period. A black breach occurs when a patient spends more than 60 minutes on an ambulance waiting to be seen in the emergency department."

Since the date of this report there has been substantial further housing delivered in the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells areas. These services are already under more pressure than they were on the inspection date.

A further 2,000 houses to be added in Marden and the people from these to be transported to either hospital would represent a far worse service and unsafe environment for patients as journey times from Marden would be increased significantly due to increased traffic congestion on a rural road network.

## Railway Capacity

Highlights below are taken from the Network Rail South East Kent Route Study May 2018

| Page number & ref. no | Section of the study | Extracts from the Study  |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--|
| 4/2                   | Executive Summary    | The routes into London are particularly busy, with little capacity to operate any additional services.   |
| 5/9                   |                      | A number of bottlenecks would need to be relieved.   |
| 5/14                  |                      | There is a restriction on operating 12 car trains that do not have Selective Door Opening into platforms 4, 5 & 6 at Charing Cross.  |
| 5/18                  |                      | The projected growth on the main line services between Tonbridge and London Bridge cannot be accommodated by train lengthening alone. An additional peak hour path would be required, which will be challenging to timetable through the congested two track section of the route. |
| 5/19                  |                      | Terminal capacity is also a significant issue with Cannon Street and Charing Cross both being at capacity in peak times.   |
| 13 / 2.6.3            | Background           | Sevenoaks tunnel has very wet conditions with climate change this could worsen and cause problems.   |
| 21 / 3.2.15           | Baseline             | The third rail system is susceptible to power reductions when longer and more frequent trains are operated so the power supply has to be bolstered to cope with the new demand.  |
| 34 / table 4.1        | Accommodating demand | Anticipated growth by 2023 is 15% and by 2043 47%.   |
| 37 / 4.8.5            |                      | A key challenge: lack of available capacity at Charing Cross and Cannon Street for additional services.  |
| 44 / 4.12.2           |                      | On the route, via Tonbridge, the analysis indicates that train lengthening options alone will not be sufficient to meet the expected demand and an additional path would be required.  |
| 44/ fig 4.9           |                      | London Bridge Line over capacity in 2024.  |
| 45 / 4.12.6           |                      | Five additional paths required by 2044 – they cannot be accommodated in the timetable however due to conflicting moves from the various routes that converge at Tonbridge and 2 track route between Tonbridge and Orpington.   |
| - 4.12.9              |                      |  |

## Railway Capacity, cont.

Highlights below are taken from the Network Rail South East Kent Route Study May 2018

| Page number & ref. no | Section of the study | Extracts from the Study  |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--|
| 62 / 6.4.2            | Strategy and choices | The railway network into London from Kent does not have the capability to operate additional services due to major issues such as the terminal capacity at Charing Cross and Cannon Street, the number of flat junctions on the approaches to London and the mix of fast and slow stopping services on 2 track railways. Once the opportunities to lengthen existing services have been exhausted there are no obvious or clear infrastructure solutions to meet the capacity conditional outputs. |
| 71 / 6.11.2           |                      | London Charing Cross has just 6 12-car platforms and platforms 4, 5, 6 are very narrow, leading to operational restrictions. Class 465 units cannot operate as 12 cars into these platforms and SDO is used on class 375 units. A major rebuild of the station is required.  |
| 71 / 6.11.3           |                      | The relieving of terminal capacity constraints at Cannon Street and Charing Cross will then move the bottleneck to other locations on the route.   |

Network Rail require people to stand for a maximum of 20 minutes on services wherever possible. The proposed 2,000 houses in Marden will generate extra commuters during peak times which will bring the standing station forward and increase standing times into London.

There is a possibility to extend one train to a 12 car at peak times into Cannon Street but this appears to be the only option available in the medium term. Charing Cross is currently at full capacity and cannot accommodate longer trains. There are various problems with the route which will limit what can be done in the next Network Rail 5 year plan however there are some alternative routes (the new service from Maidstone East into London) which may mean some commuters currently using our lines, because they are faster, will divert back to their own commuter routes.

From Network Rail CP6 South East Route Strategy Document: 'The South East Route: Kent area Route Study' was published in draft for consultation in March 2017. In the Kent area, growth in passenger numbers up to 2024 can largely be met through extending existing services to their maximum length. There is little capacity for any additional services into London and when train lengthening options have been exhausted, there are no straightforward solutions.

# UTILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE

In this section, the availability of utilities infrastructure is considered.

## Electricity

The local distribution and network operator (DNO) is UK Power Networks. In this role as owner, provider and maintainer of the infrastructure by which electricity is supplied to the local area they produced a regional development plan for the South Eastern power networks (SPN) in 2014 (UK Power Networks Ninfield SPN Regional Development Plan, Version 2.5 March 2014). The five year old document reports that the Marden area's **"predicted firm capacity will be exceeded by 2016"**. Since 2016 an additional 400 homes have been added to those previously planned, compounding the issue of capacity resulting in potential supply and load issues for current local residents and businesses.

## Water

The Sustainability Appraisal of the Maidstone Local Plan (February 2016) states that "Maidstone is located in a waterscarce area, which will be exacerbated due to climate change and future growth and development."

The Marden Neighbourhood Draft Plan 2019 states that "Marden Parish Council has been concerned that water infrastructure failures are not being rectified and that essential new infrastructure may not be provided."

England could be just 25 years away from not having enough water to meet demand and is facing the "jaws of death", the chief executive of the Environment Agency has warned. Delivering his keynote speech at the annual Waterwise conference in London (19th March 2019) Sir James Bevan said water companies all identified climate change as "the biggest operating risk" in their business plans.

Responding to Sir James' speech, a spokesperson for the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) said: "England faces the very real prospect of drought over the next thirty years, so we welcome the Environment Agency's call for decisive action now to change our whole approach to water management".

This is important to highlight in the Maidstone and surrounding areas given the substantial increase in housebuilding in the area recently and the inevitable increase in demand for water.



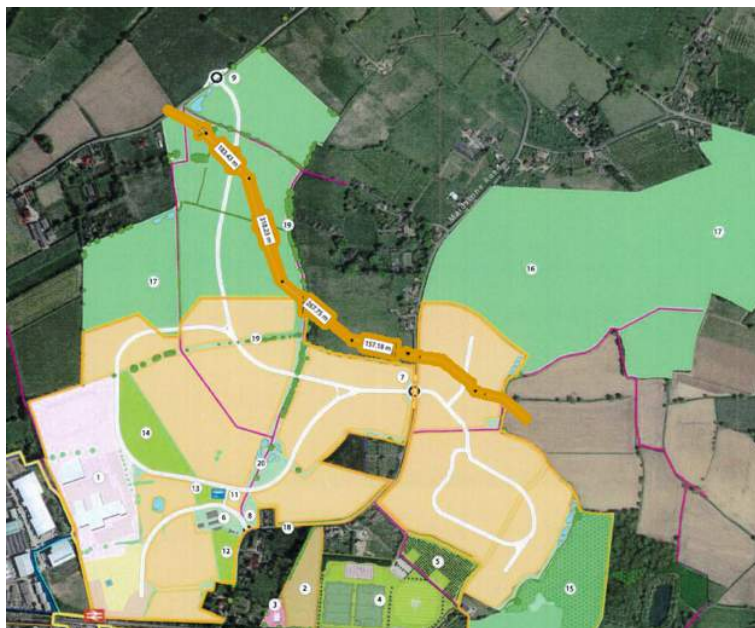
## Sewerage

The Marden Neighbourhood Draft Plan 2019 states that “Wastewater is pumped from north to south through the village to a treatment plant south of the parish, from where the treated effluent is discharged to the Teise/Lesser Teise drainage system, to flow north again. From the previous 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.”

The Kent County Council/JBA Consulting Marden Surface Water Management Plan 2017 states that “Foul only sewers should not respond to rainfall, however the flood history in Marden shows that they do.”

The Southern Water Planning Policy document of March 2014 states in the table that there is no adequate sewerage capacity in Marden.

## Gas Pipeline



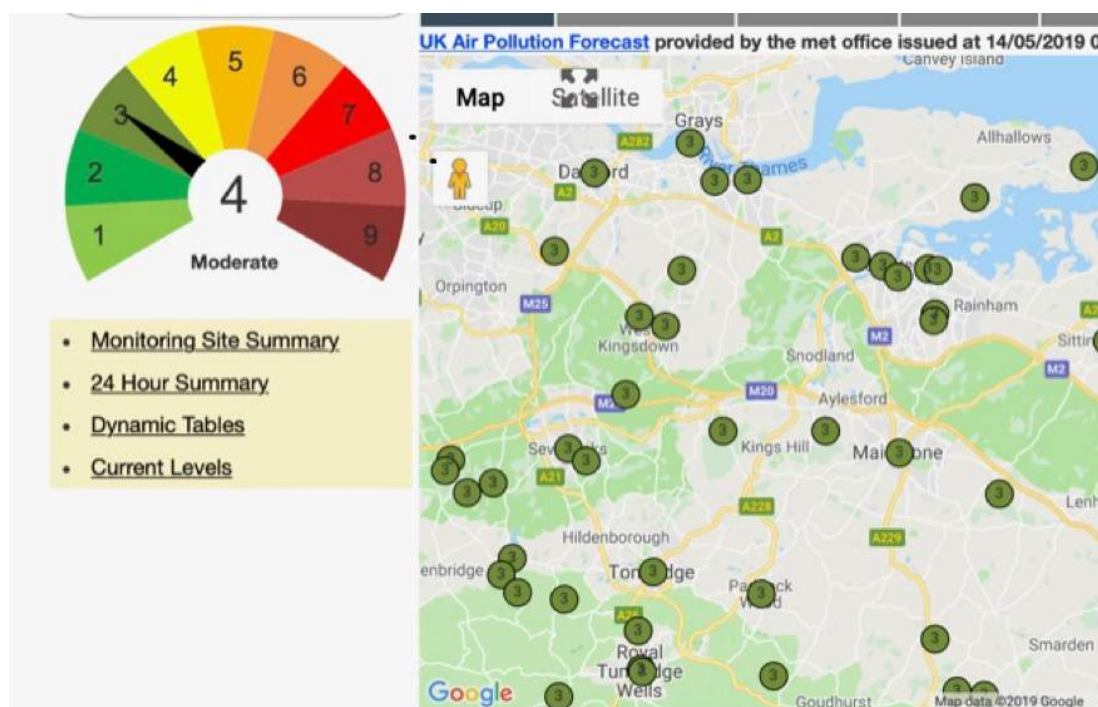
There is a gas pipeline that runs through the proposal site. It is a 48inch (1.2m) high pressure pipeline operating at 38 Bar (550 psi) that comes from Farningham and terminates at High Halden. The depths vary along the line but in agricultural land it's circa 1.3m deep and road, rail, river and ditch crossings will be deeper.

The diagram above indicates that the siting of the housing would be impacted by this pipeline in one area.

# AIR QUALITY

The Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan states that “Vehicle emissions are a major contributor to poor air quality at both the local level and on a wider global scale. Indeed the entire Maidstone Urban Area has been declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), primarily due to the level of traffic congestion at peak times.”

The map below is taken from the Kent Air website (<http://www.kentair.org.uk>) where pollution forecasts and hourly pollution updates can be found. Although pollution levels in Kent are generally in the low range (1-3), Upper Stone Street in Maidstone frequently dips into the ‘Moderate’ range (4-6), particularly at peak times, and has been found to be the fifth most polluted place in the UK outside of London. The map below shows the air pollution forecast on 14th May 2019. As is clearly shown, even rural areas are forecast a 3 for air pollution – the bottom of the Low range.



Source: Kent Air Website

While Marden lies some 8 miles from Upper Stone Street, developments in Marden and other villages around Maidstone are likely to affect pollution levels in Maidstone itself. Maidstone Borough Council’s Local Plan states that “a large housing development located outside of the AQMA may still have significant negative impacts on air quality within the AQMA.” It should be noted that the proposed development of 2,000 houses could translate to more than 4,000 vehicles and a potential 5,000 car journeys per day. Due to 30% of the commuters likely to travel in to the AQMA from the proposed development this site is likely to contribute to a progressive deterioration of air quality within the AQMA.

# FLOOD RISK

Marden has a documented history of flooding issues. These were of significant scale for Kent County Council to commission a surface water management plan specifically to focus on Marden [Kent County Council/JBA Consulting Marden Surface Water Management Plan - February 2017]. Issues include surface water flooding, highway and sewer flooding.

Particular hotspots for flooding include; The Cockpit, Howland Road, Goudhurst Road and the area located adjacent to the proposed scheme location of the Wheelbarrow Industrial Estate (north of the railway line). Highlighted within the report "the flood history suggests that the current system is too small to cope with heavy deluges of rain" and that with the impermeable geology and the urbanised, impervious area, "flooding within Marden may be as a result of the inability to discharge excess surface water during Main River flood events".

The current National Planning Policy Framework details "Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future)."

Surface water flooding is exacerbated by urbanisation when natural, permeable land uses are replaced with impermeable surfaces and although current guidance recommends the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) to help mitigate runoff and pollution, developers are not required to solve existing flooding problems off their site. With the close vicinity of the proposed development to the existing issues, the topography and geology of the site, all local areas including the Marden Meadows' Biological Site of Special Scientific Interest are particularly vulnerable.

The majority of the reported flood events are in the winter months and this therefore suggests that the Marden drain catchments may be more prone to longer duration frontal rainfall events. However, the Marden catchments are also sensitive to short intense rainfall events due to the underlying impermeable geology and urbanised impervious areas. The reported flood events within Marden are generally associated with elevated Main River levels and high flows in the Lesser Teise and the River Beult. Some of the flood events are as a direct result of sewer or surface water flooding and would therefore most likely be due to short intense rainfall events; therefore, these events may not always be observed in the Main Rivers.

However, it is highly likely that the catchments within Marden may be more sensitive to short intense rainfall events during periods when there are elevated Main River levels. This would exacerbate the surface water flooding as the excess surface water is unable to be cleared from the surface water drainage network. Therefore, flooding within Marden may be as a result of the inability to discharge excess surface water during main River flood events.

The Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan states that “Flooding is an issue in Marden and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment advises strict controls on the location of development”

As you can clearly see Marden has substantial issues with flooding in and around the proposed site which will not be helped in any way by more large-scale housing development. Large infrastructure improvements, on the site and in the surrounding area, would need to be undertaken to facilitate any further development in Marden.

# DEVELOPMENT DELIVERABILITY

Research by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners ('Start to Finish', November 2016) shows that the delivery of large-scale developments is slow, both in terms of the planning process and the construction phase.

This report found that, for large sites (delivering 500 or more homes), it took on average 3.9 years from the first promotion of a site – for example, in response to a Call for Sites – to submission of the first planning application. After that, the average period of planning approval for schemes of 2,000+ homes was 6.1 years. This means a total lead-in time of some 10 years before the largest scale sites start to deliver new homes. When it comes to construction, the research found that the average build rate for developments of 2,000+ homes was 161 dwellings/year. This means that the building phase of a 2,000-home Garden Community in Marden could take over 12 years to build.

This delay would be inconvenient for Maidstone Borough Council in terms of meeting its targets for the delivery of new homes. The 2018 revision of the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) clarified the definition of 'deliverable', meaning sites for housing should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years.

The information above, combined with the large infrastructural changes that would be required for this proposed site mean that the deliverability of this site may well fall outside of the 5 years that the NPPF state as a target for housing delivery.



# CHURCH FARM SITE ASSESSMENT 2016

The current and historical use of the 333.8 acres (135.09ha) in this proposal is agricultural farmland.

The land area included in this proposal is:

Grade 2 - Very good (Land with minor limitations which affect crop yield, cultivations or harvesting. A wide range of agricultural and horticultural crops can usually be grown).

*Or*

Grade 3 - Good (Land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield).

The agricultural classification map (Source: Natural England) indicates that only a small proportion of land in the South East is of Grade 2 (very good) quality or better.

This particular area of land with its inert ability to grow top quality crops makes it an important resource not only to the village of Marden but also to Maidstone, the County of Kent and the South East of England.

Agricultural land of this quality and fertility is finite and an irreplaceable resource.

# Housing Site Assessments 2016

## Appendix 1

Reference number: HO-151

Church Farm

**Additional Information Provided By MPOG:**

KM242 does not end at the platform of the Marden Railway station as it says in this assessment. It ends at a footbridge that crosses the railway line and ends up in the Marden Churchyard.

| <b>1. SITE INFORMATION</b>                                      |   |
|---|---|
| Reference number  | HO-151  |
| Site name/address   | Church Farm, Maidstone Road, Marden                                       |
| Landowner   | E W Wingrove & Son  |
| Agent   | B J Reid  |
| Greenfield/PDL  | Greenfield  |
| Site area (ha)  | 30.44   |
| Proposed yield  | 500+ houses plus retail   |
| Is the site urban, adjacent to urban, rural settlement or rural | Rural – Outside/adjacent Marden RSC village boundary in open countryside. |
| Site origin (e.g. Call for Sites)                               | Call for Sites  |

| <b>2. SITE ASSESSMENT/SUITABILITY</b>                             |  |
|---|--|
| Site description (including topography and surrounding land uses) | <p>The site comprises an extensive tract of agricultural land, divided into large fields, which is used for the cultivation of turf. The site is situated to the north of the railway line at Marden. The site is generally level. Access to the site is from the B2079 Maidstone Road. The access track into the site serves the property Orchard View and the small complex agricultural buildings at Church Farm.</p> <p>The boundaries to the site are demarked by hedgerows. Centrally located within the site are two reservoirs used for the irrigation of the turf. There are also at least a further 3 small ponds within the site and further ponds immediately beyond the western boundary.</p> <p>To the north and east the site adjoins further agricultural fields. The western boundary adjoins the substantial grounds of the property Olivers, which is accessed from Pattenden Lane, and further to the south the commercial unit occupied by Claygate and a field to the rear of the Crest Industrial Estate.</p> <p>The southern boundary of the site abuts the railway line, and gives access to the northern platform of Marden station. The site excludes and skirts to the north of the property The Old Vicarage, which fronts Maidstone Road, and the fields to the rear of this property.</p> |
| Current use   | Agriculture: turf growing business   |
| Adjacent uses   | Agricultural fields to the east and north; residential plus Pattenden Lane industrial uses to the west; railway line and station to the south and residential. There are a further number of residential properties facing the site to the east of Maidstone Road and a further residential property (Hartridge) to the east of the site on the northern side of Maidstone Road.   |
| Planning and other designations (AONB, greenbelt etc)             | Nil  |
| Planning history  | <p>98/0079 - Erection of a detached double garage with pitched roof was granted with conditions on 25/2/98.</p> <p>97/0075 - Prior notification of agricultural permitted development - irrigation reservoir . – APD Standard Approval Decision on 17/2/1997</p> <p>86/1314 - Erection of stock building for winter housing ewes was approved 21/10/1986.</p> <p>81/1157 - Details of siting, design, external appearance and</p>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>means of access of agricultural dwelling pursuant to 78/496 was granted 20/8/81.</p> <p>81/0808 - Details of agricultural dwelling – was refused on 15/6/81.</p> <p>78/0496 - Agricultural Dwelling was granted on 12/10/78</p>  |
| Has site previously been considered in Local Plan Inquiry, if so, record Inspectors recommendation  | No  |
| Landscape/townscape impact – including reference to Landscape Character Assessment 2012 (inc. long distance views); cumulative landscape impact; existing screening | <p>This is a substantial, level tract of cultivated land of exiting rural character. There are expansive, long distance views of the wider countryside, beyond the site boundaries, to the north, west and east from the footpaths which cross the site. The elevated land of the Greensand Ridge can be seen in the far distance in views north.</p> <p>Reciprocal views of the site are seen from the north looking south from the same footpaths.</p> <p>Leaving Marden heading north along Maidstone Road there is a clear change in character on crossing the railway line to large residential properties set back from the road and again beyond the property The Old Vicarage as the views open out towards and across the site to the west and the wider countryside to the north. The site is not differentiated in character from the wider countryside it adjoins to the north and east.</p> <p>The development of the site as proposed would cause significant harm to this open, rural character creating a substantial mass of development which is highly visible in mid range views from Maidstone Road and in both short and longer range views from the footpaths.</p> <p>The site is located within the Staplehurst Low Weald area of the Landscape Character Assessment 2012. Key characteristics of this area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low lying gently undulating clay landscape of the Low Weald</li> <li>• Small fields with orchards, pasture, ponds and watercourses</li> <li>• enclosed by thick native hedgerows creating an intimate atmosphere</li> <li>• Dominance of mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where hedgerows have been lost</li> <li>• Large scale open fields where hedgerows have been removed for intensive arable cultivation</li> <li>• Sparse scattered small woodlands</li> <li>• Winding roads with wide verges bounded by ditches and mixed native hedgerows</li> <li>• Historic buildings scattered through the landscape and in the historic cores of Staplehurst and Marden</li> </ul> <p>The condition assessment is <i>Goode</i> and the sensitivity assessment <i>High</i>.</p> <p>The Guidelines for this area are to Conserve.</p> |
| Ecological Impacts (inc. SSI & local wildlife sites within or adjacent to   | The site is composed of a mixture of arable and intensively managed grassland fields. There are a few mature trees on   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| site)  | <p>the boundary of the NE field. There are some buildings in the SE corner of the site and there are two water bodies within the centre of the site with some rough grassland adjoining the water bodies. There is an area of ancient woodland adjoining the western boundary. The buildings may have some suitability for roosting bats. The water bodies and the rough grassland area may contain suitable habitat for protected/notable species.</p> <p>Ecology Constraint Level 4 - minimal potential for ecological impacts - No obvious habitats or features on or near site with potential for protected/notable species.</p>   |
| Trees (inc. TPO, ancient woodland within and adjacent to site) | <p><b>Tree protection status:</b><br/>Whilst there are no TPOs covering the site there appear to be significant trees along the line of field boundaries.</p> <p><b>Ancient woodlands:</b><br/>There are no designated Ancient Woodlands.</p> <p><b>Hedgerow status:</b><br/>There are potentially 'important' hedgerows along field boundaries.</p>   |
| Agricultural land quality                                      | Mostly grade 3 agricultural, some grade 2 in the SE corner of the site.  |
| Heritage impacts (Listed building, conservation area)          | <p><b>Historic Buildings:</b> Church Farm House and The Oast House are Grade II listed buildings situated directly opposite this site. Other former farmyard buildings have also been converted to residential use and these should be considered as non-designated heritage assets. These buildings taken together form a highly attractive farmstead group whose significance is considerably enhanced by their rural setting. This setting would be destroyed by development of this land.</p> <p>The Old Vicarage, also Grade II listed, shares its northern boundary with the site. This building currently enjoys a largely rural setting which would be impaired by development of the site.</p> <p><b>Conservation Areas:</b> Marden Conservation Area lies to the south but impact on its setting would be minimised by the intervening feature of the railway line.</p> <p><b>Historic Parks and Gardens:</b> None affected.</p> <p>Archaeology: The route of the PLUTO pipeline laid during the Second World War to provide fuel for allied troops in the invasion of France may cross this site.</p> <p>There are strong <b>heritage</b> objections to the development of this site.</p> |
| Archaeology (SAM etc.)   | <p>The site lies adjacent to historic farm complex of Church Farm. It also lies immediately north of historic pipeline, PLUTO.</p> <p>Scale 4 – Low level archaeology anticipated which could be dealt with through suitable conditions on a planning approval.</p>  |
| PROW (within or near site)                                     | Footpath KM240 runs along the eastern boundary of the site. KM241 crosses the north east part of the site and eventually links to Underling Lane to the north.   |



|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | Footpath KM242 runs along the western boundary, linking Underling Lane and the northern platform of Marden station.   |
| Access (Highways) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site access</li> <li>• Impact on wider highway network</li> <li>• Access to strategic/main highway network</li> <li>• Availability of public transport/walking/cycling</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site accessed from the B2079 Maidstone Road.</li> <li>• The site is considered suitable for housing. It enjoys good access to the B2079 Maidstone Road, which has a good crash record. A continuous footway link to Marden village centre is provided on Maidstone Road to the south of the site, which would need to be extended to the site access.</li> <li>• The site is within walking and/or cycling distance of many of the village services within Marden, including the railway station, which is served by half-hourly train services to Ashford, Staplehurst, Paddock Wood, Tonbridge and London Charing Cross on weekdays.</li> <li>• The bus stops on Marden High Street are served by Bus Route 26, which provides a service to Maidstone, Yalding and Goudhurst every two hours on weekdays.</li> <li>• It is recommended that Network Rail be consulted on this site given the proximity of the Ashford-Tonbridge railway line.</li> </ul> |
| Access to services – distances from bus stop/rail station/shop/GP/school   | <p>The site is not on an existing bus route. Marden is served by the 26/27 bus service which operates between Maidstone and Goudhurst.</p> <p>The south western corner of the site is immediately adjacent to Marden Railway Station.</p> <p>From the only existing access point into the site from Maidstone Road, the site is approximately 0.5km walking distance to the centre of the village (the junction of Maidstone Road and High Street) and 1km to the primary school.</p>   |
| Impacts on existing residential amenity (including access to open space)   | The development would have an immediate amenity impact on the property Orchard View which is within the site area. The Old Vicarage lies to the south of the site   |
| Availability of utilities infrastructure – e.g. water/gas/electric   | No known limitations. The promoter states that services can be accessed from B2079.   |
| Air quality/noise  | Not in AQMA or hot spot   |
| Land contamination   | None known  |
| Flood Risk (zone/drainage)   | <p>Not in flood zone but flood zone 2 is only 0.15km away. No aquifers.</p> <p>Surface runoff from all sites should be managed using sustainable drainage techniques, with discharge restricted to no more than runoff from the existing site following the critical rainfall events for a range of return periods, up to an including the 100yr event. An allowance for climate change should also be included the drainage design.</p> <p>Marden Drainage Strategy: We recommend a local drainage strategy be developed into which all the sites should contribute to, rather than each site considering site drainage independently. A local drainage strategy will likely result in a more efficient local drainage infrastructure.</p>   |
| Suitability (assessment conclusion)  | The development of this site would result in a substantial expansion, out of scale with the existing village. The railway line currently acts as a physical limit to the extent of the village to the north east. Beyond this point existing development is limited, being sparsely distributed along Maidstone Road. Development of the site would introduce an intensive form of development in a location which is physically removed from the existing built up area of the village. A development of this scale could also adversely   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>impact on the setting of nearby listed properties. It would be subject to both short and longer range views from public footpaths. Opportunities for the sustainable connections to the village, needed for a development of this scale, are also limited by the presence of the railway line. Connections could currently only be achieved along Maidstone Road, which does not have pavements north of Highfield House and via the footbridge at Marden railway station.</p> <p>This site is considered unsuitable for development.</p> |
|--|--|

| <b>3. AVAILABILITY</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| Is the whole site available for the proposed use: e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing uses</li> <li>Willing landowner</li> <li>Willing developer</li> <li>Existing tenancy or lease agreement</li> </ul> | <p>Willing landowner</p> <p>No named developer</p>   |
| Availability conclusion  | Whilst there is no named developer, the landowner is promoting the land for development. The site is therefore considered to be potentially available. |

| <b>4. ACHIEVABILITY</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| Identification of any abnormal costs or other constraints to development which would prevent or delay this site being delivered | There do not appear be any abnormal constraints to prevent the site being developed. There are two irrigation reservoirs within the site. Existing farm buildings could be cleared and the site de-contaminated as required. |
| Achievability conclusion  | Development is potentially achievable  |

| <b>Timing</b> (following assessment - when could the site be delivered?) |   |
|--|---|
| now – 2016   | x |
| 2016 – 2021  | x |
| 2021 – 2026  |   |
| 2026 - 2031  |   |

| <b>5. CONCLUSIONS</b>   |
|---|
| <p>The indicated site capacity (500+ dwellings) would appear to be achievable on this 30.44ha site and there are no abnormal constraints applying to the site as far as can be ascertained and the landowner is willing to release the land although no developer has been identified.</p> <p>However, development of this site would result in a substantial expansion of the settlement, out of scale with the existing village.</p> <p>The railway line currently acts as a physical limit to the extent of the village to the north east. Beyond this point existing development is limited, being sparsely distributed along Maidstone Road.</p> <p>Development of the site would introduce an intensive form of development in a location which is physically removed from the existing built area of the village. A development of this scale could also adversely impact on the setting of nearby listed properties. It would be subject to both short and longer range views from public footpaths.</p> <p>Opportunities for the sustainable connections to the village, needed for a development of this scale, are also limited by the presence of the railway line. Connections could currently only be achieved along Maidstone Road, which does not have pavements north of Highfield House and via the footbridge at Marden railway station.</p> |

# THANK YOU TO THE MARDEN COMMUNITY

This report would not have been produced without the support and expertise of the co-authors and wider community. Our thanks go to those who have researched, written, proofread and designed this publication. We would also like to extend a heartfelt thanks to everyone in Marden and the surrounding areas for supporting the campaign.

Marden Planning Opposition Committee  
24th May 2019





**MARDEN  
PLANNING  
OPPOSITION**

**SaveMarden.com**

MardenPlanningOpposition@gmail.com