



**From:** clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk  
**Sent:** 11 March 2022 11:05  
**To:** reviews  
**Subject:** Marden Parish Council response (Maidstone Borough)  
**Attachments:** Boundary Review 240222.pdf



Please see attached Marden Parish Council's response to the boundary review consultation for Maidstone, Kent.

Kind regards

Ali

*Alison Hooker*

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## **Marden Parish Council submission to the Local Government Boundary Review for Maidstone**

### **1. Electoral Equality**

There has been extensive housing development in the parish of Marden since 2014. 573 new dwellings have been constructed across 5 major housing developments, increasing the number of dwellings by 37% in that period. The Draft Maidstone Local Plan also allocates a further 113 dwellings by 2037. In 2021 there were 3761 electors in the parish, projected to increase to 4153 by 2027.

Currently the Marden and Yalding Ward includes 4 parishes of Marden, Yalding, Collier Street and Nettlestead, Marden being the largest ward. Marden Parish Council proposes that due to the increase in population in the parish that Marden should now stand alone as a ward, with the smaller parishes of Collier Street and Hunton included in the Ward. Giving an electorate size of 5421 by 2027. Given that it would be ideal for each ward to have 2 Borough Councillors this would give a ratio of 2710 per councillor.

Marden Parish has an identity that is quite distinct from its nearest neighbours and the first preference of the Parish Council would be for it to be considered as a single-Member Ward on these grounds. However, we accept that this would not achieve the desired ratio of electors to Members and therefore propose a two-Member Ward, as set out above.

### **2. Community identity and interests**

There has been a settlement in Marden since the Bronze Age but in more recent times the Church is mentioned in the Domesday Book. Marden developed as a farming village, which led to many associated trades and businesses some of which remain today. In 1842 the railway came to Marden, which now provides direct links to the heart of London at Charing Cross and Cannon Street and direct links to Ashford, Folkestone, Dover, and continental Europe. The railway link is an essential part of Marden and has and continues to play a major part in the continuing growth of the village.

The majority of the residential settlement is to the south of the railway line. There are outlying small settlements in the parish, notably at Chainhurst and pockets of settlement at Marden Beech, around Battle Lane and Tilden Lane.

The industrial centre lies to the north of the railway line around Pattenden Lane providing employment not only to Marden residents but to a wide hinterland with employees travelling from Maidstone, the Medway Towns and other surrounding towns and villages.

Marden has many facilities and is designated as a Rural Service Centre in the Maidstone Local Plan. Notably in Marden itself there are 2 Churches, Primary School, Doctors surgery, dental surgery, 3 convenience stores, butcher, bakery, farm shop, pharmacy, 2 pubs in the village centre, a Village Club, 2 Indian restaurants, Chinese takeaway, coffee shop and 1 pub on the outskirts of the Parish on the A229. In addition to the strategically important employment area in Pattenden Lane there are many small businesses around the Parish.

The variety of facilities in Marden has helped to create a wealth of community organisations serving many local interests.

Geographically the Parish of Marden is large covering some 3100 hectares and extending 8km from south to north. Much of the land outside the village centre is arable with pockets of deciduous woodland.

The services and facilities available in Marden, including the railway station, are used by residents from smaller neighbouring parishes, that do not have those services and facilities available to them in their villages. Notably Collier Street and Hunton.

### **3. Effective and convenient Local Government**

On its southern boundary Marden borders the Parish of Goudhurst, within Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The ward and parish of Staplehurst lies on the eastern boundary, to the west is the Parish of Collier Street and to the north the parishes of Hunton and Linton.

The western boundary with Collier Street is defined by the River Teise. Collier Street did not become a parish until 1998, prior to that time the southern part of the parish was in Marden and the northern part was in Yalding.

The northern boundary is defined by the River Beult which separates the parish of Hunton from Marden.

There is only one A road in the Parish, the A229 Maidstone to Hawkhurst road, which does not pass through the village centre. The parish and neighbouring parishes are traversed by a network of narrow, unclassified lanes apart from B2079 which passes through the village centre south towards Goudhurst. Due to the rural nature of the area wherever the ward boundaries are placed there will never be straightforward connectivity between all parts of the ward.

As per the second part of our response, the wealth of facilities available in the Rural Service Centre of Marden are enjoyed primarily by residents of the Parish, but significantly also by residents of the neighbouring areas that are less well equipped – Collier Street and Hunton. As such, the proliferation of community organisations that are centred around these facilities create strong community ties between these three Parishes. These community ties are arguably not so strong with Yalding, which itself, we would suggest, has a unique identity, community and associated set of local issues.

Under current Local Government boundaries the three-Member Ward of Marden and Yalding is represented by three Councillors all with strong ties to Marden (and, by extension the community that includes Collier Street and Hunton), as this is the most populous part of the Ward. For the reasons outlined above, we feel that Local Government representation would be better achieved if the representatives for Marden, Collier Street and Hunton were distinct from their surrounding area.