

Hildenborough **555519 148727** **6 September 2013** **TM/13/02664/FL**
Hildenborough

Proposal: Construction of an extended car parking area to provide 120
 commuter parking bays
Location: Philpots Allotments And Parking Rings Hill Hildenborough
 Tonbridge Kent
Applicant: Mr Edward Simpson

1. Description:

- 1.1 Full planning permission is sought for the construction of 120 commuter car parking bays to serve the nearby Hildenborough Station. The site already has car parking space for 70-80 cars which are currently in use in connection with the allotments which are located to the north of the site. The proposal would increase the total amount of car parking available to 200 spaces.
- 1.2 The proposed surfacing materials would be compacted open stone with landscaped sections in central areas between the bays. The site currently has lighting poles installed which have been constructed from hop poles and sit 3 metres in height. There is no proposal to increase the number of poles. However, as the existing poles do not have permission the application also seeks to regularise this development by a retrospective submission.

2. Reason for reporting to Committee:

- 2.1 The application is being reported to the Planning Committee due to the extensive and complex history in relation to parking provision in this area.

3. The Site:

- 3.1 The site is an oblong generally flat field surrounded by four transport routes. To the south is the Tonbridge to London railway line, to the west is the A21 (Tonbridge bypass), to the north is Philpots Lane and to the east is Rings Hill. There is dense vegetation within the site along all four boundaries and the trees on the eastern boundary are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The northern part of the site is currently laid out in allotments with a barn located in the centre and the associated car parking area situated to the south. The site is in the Metropolitan Green Belt and is situated approximately 1km west of Hildenborough village.

4. Planning History:

TM/50/10127/OLD grant with conditions 8 December 1950

Site for house.

TM/99/02323/FL	Refuse Appeal Dismissed	13 June 2000 7 March 2001
----------------	----------------------------	------------------------------

provision of commuter parking area including erection of 16 no. 8 metre lamp columns with vehicular access onto Philpots Lane

TM/01/01079/FL	Refuse Appeal Dismissed	3 August 2001 14 October 2002
----------------	----------------------------	----------------------------------

Provision of a 40 car parking space commuter car park including improvements to access onto Philpots Lane, pedestrian access onto Rings Hill and provision of 4 no. 5m high lighting columns. Replacement field shelter

TM/03/01549/FL	Grant With Conditions	8 July 2003
----------------	-----------------------	-------------

Pole barn

TM/03/02629/FL	Application Withdrawn	3 December 2003
----------------	-----------------------	-----------------

Formation of 400 space car park

TM/07/00472/OA	Refuse	19 October 2007
----------------	--------	-----------------

Outline Application for community enterprise, performance and environment centre

5. Consultees:

5.1 Hildenborough PC: welcome the application but regret that the application is [in part] retrospective. They seek the following conditions to be imposed on any permission:

- Suitable lighting to minimise light pollution and should include lighting near the station bridge
- Safety measures being installed for pedestrians crossing Rings Hill
- Suitable surfacing materials being installed such as grasscrete

5.2 The Parish Council also request that the opportunity is taken to conduct a parking review in the local area and further on-road restrictions placed on car parking.

5.3 KCC Highways:

I write to confirm on behalf of the Highway Authority that I have no objection to this proposal. It is considered that the vehicular access is of a suitable standard to allow for the proposed increase in parking numbers and corresponding increase in

vehicle movements. It is also considered that the pedestrian access and crossing of Rings Hill is suitably located on a straight section of road with good forward visibility. I note that Rings Hill has a number of street lights and I can also confirm that there have been no injury crashes on Rings Hill in at least the last 5 years. It is further considered that parking within the plot proposed could reduce the amount of perhaps less than desirable walking on other country lanes in the area.

5.4 Private Reps (including responses to site and press notices): 11/0X/0R/ 8S. The responses raise the following points:

- The area provides welcome green space in conjunction with the hardstanding
- There is a shortage of parking spaces that are secure and close to the station and therefore Philpots allotments is fulfilling a need
- The car park is sustainable due to its illumination and surfacing materials in contrast to the station car park
- The development provides a valuable service to the local community by providing additional car parking serving the station
- The development alleviates the pressure on the unaffordable and overcrowded station car park as well as reducing roadside parking along busy roads
- The allotments and the existing landscaping on the site enhance the appearance of the area
- The development provides affordable car parking for people to use to get to work as station parking is cost prohibitive for many commuters

6. Determining Issues:

6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) along with policy CP1 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2007) and policy CC1 of the Managing Development and the Environment DPD (2010) place sustainability at the heart of decision making, ensuring that new development does not cause irrevocable harm to the environment and balancing this against the need to support a strong, competitive economy and protect the social welfare of existing and future residents. Policies CP1 and CP24 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy 2007 and Policy SQ1 of the Tonbridge and Malling MDEDPD 2010 require high quality design which reflects the local distinctiveness of the area and respect the site and its surroundings in terms of materials, siting, character and appearance.

6.2 The application site is located outside of the built confines of Hildenborough Village and therefore in the countryside for development plan purposes. Policy CP14 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy seeks to prevent the

incursion of built development within such areas in order to protect the character and appearance of the Countryside for its own sake. The site is also located within the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB). The purpose of the MGB is to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas, preventing the merging of neighbouring towns and villages and to safeguard the countryside from encroachment.

Paragraph 79 of the NPPF states that the essential characteristics of such areas are their openness and their permanence. Any inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. This is supported by policy CP3 of the Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

- 6.3 Paragraph 90 of the NPPF states that certain forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt providing they preserve its openness and do not conflict with purposes of including land in the Green Belt. Included within the definition of development which is not considered to be inappropriate is local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location.
- 6.4 The development would provide commuter car parking to serve Hildenborough train station. The station is located within the Green Belt, remote from Hildenborough village. This attracts the majority of commuters to the station by car due to the inaccessibility of the station by alternative means of transport. There is limited car parking provision at Hildenborough train station and at present a large amount of commuter car parking, other than that provide-for at Hildenborough Station itself, occurs on the rural roads surrounding the station. The demand for car parking has resulted in the need for the imposition of parking restrictions to prevent harm being caused to highway safety in certain inappropriate locations. This has pushed car parking further from the station over time onto more of the rural lanes which are more distant but within walking distance of the station.
- 6.5 The need for the provision of the car park within the MGB is brought about both by the location of the existing station within the Green Belt and the demand for car parking in the local area due to the remoteness of the station from the nearest village and the continuing expansion of demand for long-distance commuting, predominantly to London, from West Kent. Urban centres with stations such as Sevenoaks and Tonbridge cannot meet the demand for all day parking for commuters and indeed may not be able to support off-peak travellers as that market expands. Obviously steps are being taken to expand provision in Tonbridge with an additional 100+ spaces at the station car park in the next year or so. However, at present there is no other obvious option for a further increase in spaces to support the rurally residing commuters, living in the nearby area and needing to travel on this line. There is therefore a demonstrable requirement for the car park to be situated within the MGB, in this vicinity, and a significant need for additional car parking as shown by the level of on road car parking in the locality so as to support the role of longer distance commuting.

- 6.6 In order for the provision of the transport infrastructure to not be inappropriate development it should preserve the openness of the landscape. A previous decision by the Planning Inspectorate determined that the installation of external lighting would erode the openness and rural character of the site with lighting at night making the area more suburban and less rural resulting in an encroachment on the countryside. However, the Inspector stated that this would not be as harmful as a more three dimensional development.
- 6.7 The development would mean the loss of an area of the existing agricultural field by the installation of hardstanding areas for the parking and manoeuvring of vehicles. The surface material would be compacted open stone; however, this would be broken up by large areas of landscaping and trees. The total area of land given to parking has been kept to a minimum in order to ensure that the site retains its rural character as much as possible. The use of the open stone would be more appropriate for the rural landscape than tarmaced hard surfacing which has a more suburban/urban appearance. The site is significantly screened by a dense line of trees along all four boundaries. The overall visual intrusion of the development is therefore significantly lessened from public vantage points. In addition, due to the fact that the formation of the car park would only result in the laying of compacted stone and no other built development, it would retain the openness of the landscape.
- 6.8 The proposed external lighting has been provided by the installation of hop poles with 100w bulbs spread across the site. The total number of lights is very limited and the overall light incursion is small due to the low energy of the bulbs. The applicant has advised that the lights are set to a timer which means that they are not left on during the night. These factors would mean that the development would not result in a suburbanisation of the rural landscape or an erosion of the openness. Both aspects of illumination need to be controlled by condition.
- 6.9 In light of the above, the development would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not represent inappropriate development within the MGB. The installation of the car park and the lighting would cause some harm to the visual amenity of the locality through the incursion of hard development into an existing agricultural field; this impact would be mitigated by the use of extensive landscaping throughout the site, the specific details of the lighting and the fact that the site is well screened from public vantage points. Significant harm would therefore not be caused to the character and appearance of the locality.
- 6.10 Development plan policy along with the NPPF requires that all new development does not result in harm to the residential amenities of neighbouring properties in order to allow for an environmental and social sustainability. The closest neighbouring properties to the application site are Rings Hill Cottage situated 26 metres to the east of the site and Crossways Cottage situated 70 metres to the north. I am satisfied that subject to adequate conditional control these relationships are acceptable.

- 6.11 The eastern boundary to the site has a dense tree screen which is protected by a Tree Preservation Order. This largely obscures views of the site from the neighbouring dwelling. The new car parking area is located to the western side of the site, away from the neighbouring dwelling. There would be some noise impact caused from the increased number of vehicles accessing the site daily; however, this would be partially mitigated by the boundary tree screening and the fact that the property currently experiences road noise from vehicular traffic using the busy Rings Hill. Vehicles accessing the site would be unlikely to do so before 6am and after 11pm and is most likely to occur during the peak periods of the morning and evening which would not have an unreasonable impact upon the neighbouring dwelling through noise and disturbance.
- 6.12 There is a limited amount of lighting provided by lighting columns spread over the site and along the pedestrian access. These are small in scale with a height of 3 metres, illuminated with the equivalent of a 100w bulb and are set to a timer with hours of illumination being 0600-0800 and 1600-2230. These limited hours of use, level of illumination and existing tree screen will avoid the development causing significant light intrusion to the neighbouring dwelling
- 6.13 It is not possible to view the site from the neighbouring property to the north due to the tree screening both on the northern boundary of the application site and the southern boundary of Crossways Cottage. The development would therefore have no impact upon the residential amenity of the occupants of the neighbouring property to the north.
- 6.14 Policy SQ8 of the MDE DPD states that development will only be permitted where it would not significantly harm highway safety and where traffic generated by the development can be adequately served by the highway network.
- 6.15 KCC Highways has confirmed that the vehicular access is sufficient in order to serve the increased amount of vehicular traffic which would be using the site. They also advise that the pedestrian access onto Rings Hill has been positioned at an appropriate point on a straight section of the highway with good visibility in both directions. Rings Hill has some street lighting which would aid pedestrians walking between the site and the train station although there is no pavement on the western side of the road and the access is in an area with a national speed limit. A large number of commuters already park on the public highway and walk along the country roads (from a relatively long distance) to the station. Some of these roads are not well lit, are not straight, have no pavements and are subject to the national speed limit. This development would allow commuters to park off road and walk a significantly shorter distance along an arguably safer road to the station, therefore bringing about an overall improvement in pedestrian safety in the locality.
- 6.16 In addition to the above, at least in the short term, the development could remove some of the existing on-road car parking. This would reduce the pressure for parking on the public highway and improve highway safety in the locality.

6.17 In light of the above assessment, I conclude that the proposal is acceptable in light of the requirements of the NPPF, policies CP1, CP3, CP14 and CP24 of the TMBCS and policies SQ1 and SQ8 of the MDE DPD. As such, the following recommendation is put forward:

7. Recommendation:

7.1 **Grant Planning Permission** in accordance with the following submitted details: Parking Layout PA-SITE-101 dated 03.09.2013, Drawing PA-SITE-102 dated 03.09.2013, Existing Site Plan PA-SITE-103 dated 03.09.2013, Site Plan PA-SITE-104 dated 03.09.2013, Letter dated 06.11.2013, Photograph dated 06.11.2013, subject to the following:

Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 All materials used externally shall accord with the approved plans, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the existing building or visual amenity of the locality, in accordance with Policy CP24 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy 2007.

- 3 The external lighting shall be as shown on drawing number PA-SITE-104 and no additional lighting shall be installed on the site without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority. If any further external lighting is proposed then details must include a layout plan with beam orientation and a schedule of equipment including luminaire type, mounting height, aiming angles and luminaire profiles.

Reason: In the interests of the residential amenity of nearby dwellings in accordance with Policy CP24 of the Tonbridge and Malling Core Strategy 2007.

- 4 The lantern lights hereby permitted shall not be switched on outside the hours of 06:30-0800 hrs and 1600-22:30 hrs.

Reason: In the interests of visual and residential amenity.

- 5 No more than 200 cars may be parked on the site at any one time.

Reason: In order to prevent harm being caused to the residential amenity of the neighbouring residential properties through undue noise and disturbance.

- 6 The scheme of landscaping and boundary treatment shown on the approved plans shall be carried out in the first planting season following occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the earlier. Any trees or plants which within 10 years of planting are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the character of the existing building in accordance with Policies CP1 and CP24 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy, Policy SQ1 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document and paragraphs 57, 58 and 61 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).

Contact: Kathryn Holland