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<b>West Malling; East Malling &amp; Larkfield</b> West Malling & Leybourne; East Malling	<b>568691 157432</b>	<b>17.06.2005</b>	<b>TM/05/01899/FL</b>
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Proposal:	Change of use of land to car park with access and associated earthworks
Location:	Land At Eden Farm West Of Ashton Way West Malling Kent
Applicant:	Liberty Property Trust UK Limited

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## 1. Description:

- 1.1 The proposal is for a car park to serve West Malling Train Station. Illustrative plans have been submitted showing 281 spaces of which 7 are shown as allocated for disabled persons and 6 are shown as short stay spaces.
- 1.2 The illustrative scheme also shows a pick up and drop off area (known as a “kiss and ride”).
- 1.3 Access is shown to be from a new traffic light controlled junction on the A228, Ashton Way.
- 1.4 The access arrangement shown is a minor modification of an access road and junction which is currently being constructed, having already been granted planning permission as part of the A228 dualling, albeit that access was permitted as a “bus link road”.
- 1.5 The construction works will involve changes in land levels so that the car park can be easily accessed from the access road at the level it is being constructed and to reduce its visibility on the wider landscape The maximum depth of excavation is in the order of 5m.
- 1.6 The scheme also includes areas of reformed land intended to visually screen the car park. In connection with the bus link road under construction, a large landscaped bund has been constructed on the entire outer (generally south-western edge) of the access road, generally being 3m higher than the proposed level of the access road. A smaller area of landscaped bank will be graded on the north-western side of the junction with the A228, at a height of approx. 2m above the level of the car park.
- 1.7 The application is accompanied by a supporting statement which includes traffic forecasts and highway implications. Main points submitted in support are summarised as follows:
  - *West Malling station is one of the fastest growing in the SE and its catchment includes major new housing and commercial developments which will continue the growth in passenger numbers.*

- *Existing car parks are at capacity*
- *A significant proportion of traffic accessing the station could potentially be transferred to the A228 with benefits to West Malling town centre, particularly Swan Street.*
- *Vehicles using the new car park and drop off facility will not be allowed to pass through the bus gate.*
- *The West Malling Station Planning Brief allows for demand forecasts of 215 long stay spaces by 2011.*
- *281 spaces in this scheme will allow for growth in the use of the car park until 2016.*
- *Inbound traffic growth from the extra spaces will be plus 12.3% at peak of 0700 to 0900 which would only have a very slight effect on the operation of the junction and no effect on through-traffic on A228.*
- *Outbound traffic growth from the extra spaces in the PM peak would experience a slight reduction in capacity and a marginal increase in queue lengths.*
- *The proposed bunding together with the structural and amenity planting would, after some tree growth, screen views of the car park for much of the year and allow filtered views in winter.*

## **2. The Site:**

- 2.1 The site measures 1.725 ha (4.26 acres) and is a triangular area, primarily of rough grassland with a small area of self-seeded sycamore trees. It is sited immediately to the west of the A228 West Malling By-Pass (Ashton Way). To the north is a privately run car park serving West Malling Station and the existing road to the station (Station Approach). To the south and west is agricultural land.
- 2.2 The land slopes down from east to west, that is, at its highest closest to the A228. The land drops approx. 7m over a distance of approx. 150m.

## **3. Planning History:**

- 3.1 TM/05/00754/CR3 Approved (KCC) 23.05.2005  
Various construction details submitted pursuant to conditions 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14 and 16 of planning permission ref. TM/01/02993/CR3 (A228 Leybourne and West Malling bypass, from M20 Junction 4 to Tower View roundabout, comprising a new dual two lane bypass of Leybourne, dualling of Ashton Way and a new bus link road to West Malling Railway Station) [KCC ref. TM/01/2993/R VAR].

- 3.2 TM/02/03660/FL Withdrawn 02.06.2004  
Change of use to car park.
- 3.3 TM/01/02993/CR3 Approved (KCC) 28.01.2003  
A228 Leybourne and West Malling bypass, from M20 Junction 4 to Tower View Roundabout, comprising a new dual two lane bypass of Leybourne, dualling of Ashton Way and a new bus link road to West Malling Railway Station (TM/01/TEMP/V).
- 3.4 TM/87/1407 Approved 05.10.1987  
Deposit of excess material from West Malling Bypass to raise farmland then return to original use.
- 3.5 Planning Brief For Parking At West Malling Station Adopted Feb 2005.

#### **4. Consultees:**

- 4.1 EA: No objections subject to conditions to protect the water environment.
- 4.2 Ramblers Association: No response at the time of writing the report. Any response will be included in a supplementary report.
- 4.3 Network Rail: Objection because fails to address other issues associated with works to reconfigure the station forecourt, specifically the replacement of existing car parking spaces on Network Rail freehold land that will be lost from the forecourt alterations.
- 4.4 SE Trains: No response at the time of writing the report. Any response will be included in a supplementary report.
- 4.5 PC (East Malling & Larkfield): Siting is preferable to other options; needs landscaping, controlled lighting and signage; existing trees should be retained; why is there a gate to Eden Farm?; details of bus gate must be approved before the car park and access road is opened; is the new road to be adopted?
- 4.6 PC (West Malling): No response at the time of writing the report. Any response will be included in a supplementary report.
- 4.7 KCC (Highway): The principle of the proposal has been accepted. The agent has identified the benefits to the local environment in a number of ways: improved access to and from the station for public transport; introduction of a 'kiss and ride' facility that is likely to reduce traffic movements through West Malling, Swan Street and Lucks Hill. The development of an integrated transport hub accords with the Government aspirations to increase the use of public transport. Turning to the details there are some concerns with regard to the modelling of the traffic light controlled junction onto the A228 Primary Route and the additional peak hour impact of traffic movements associated with the proposed car park. However, the proposals are acceptable in principle subject to further details being submitted with

proposals for car park management and detailed capacity checks for the junction. At the present time rising bollards are the only form of “bus gate” approved for use on the public highway. Details of the proposed “bus gate” will need to be submitted for approval. The compact configuration of the car park access, the loop for the kiss and ride and the bus gates appears too complicated and likely to cause congestion at peak times. The applicant should therefore be asked to discuss these matters further and minor alterations are likely to be required. The Highway Authority has no objection in principle to the proposed development subject to the submission of full technical details for approval, to include a completed Safety Audit, details of lighting, CCTV security, rising bollards, car park, bus gate and traffic management (including detailed traffic signal capacity checks).

4.8 WKHMU: No response at the time of writing the report. Any response will be included in a supplementary report.

4.9 DHH: Would welcome opportunity to site recycling facilities in the car park.

## **5. Determining Issues:**

5.1 The site is outside the rural settlement and is in the Green Wedge and an ALLI. West Malling Station is a Grade II listed building.

5.2 The development is sited some 50m from the Station Building itself and does not harm the setting of the Listed Building in my opinion and therefore complies with Policy P4/1 of the TMBLP.

5.3 Policy RS1 of the KSP requires development in the open countryside to be well designed, acceptable in appearance and in highway and infrastructure terms and to enhance the character, amenity and functioning of the countryside. Policy RS5 of the KSP resists development outside villages and small rural towns unless it is the provision of a public use for which the rural location is justified. Similarly Policy ENV1 of the KSP protects the countryside for its own sake unless there is an overriding need which outweighs the requirement to protect the countryside. These policies are taken forward in Policies E1, QL1 and SS7 of the KMSP.

5.4 Policy 2/19 of the TMBLP states that development should not be permitted in the Green Wedge if it would significantly extend the built confines of rural settlements or affect the separation of built up areas. Any development, which might exceptionally be permitted, would need to be designed and landscaped so as not to compromise the function as an open buffer.

5.5 Policy P3/17 states that development which would materially harm the landscape character of an ALLI should not be permitted. Annex PA3/7 of the TMBLP describes the application site as an attractive area of orchards, oasts and parkland setting to West Malling.

5.6 The site does not lie within but does directly abut the area shown on the Proposals Map of the TMBLP for car parking to serve West Malling Station.

- 5.7 The relevant policy is P7/2c which identifies West Malling Station as a location where proposals for rationalising or extending the existing car parks will be permitted in association with improvements to bus interchange facilities, subject to satisfactory access and adequate landscape screening. The preamble to the policy makes reference to the fact that the Borough Council had requested the County Council to investigate the possibility of providing adequate access to West Malling Station from the bypass for private vehicles because of the difficulties of access via Swan Street and Lucks Hill.
- 5.8 Policy P7/1 of the TMBLP encourages the enhancement of passenger facilities at railway stations, including the provision of secure car and cycle parking in principle. In regard to West Malling station, this is taken forward as strategic policy in TP8 of the KMSP which encourages access, parking and interchange improvements.
- 5.9 PPG13 states that the provision of parking at suburban rail stations can increase the potential catchment population for rail services, but can at the same time exacerbate road congestion in the surrounding area. At main line stations it may also discourage travellers from using local bus or train services to connect to longer distance services. Local Authorities need therefore to consider the case for parking facilities at urban and suburban rail stations, and the treatment of on-street parking near to stations within the context of their local transport plan objectives. In doing so, they should take account of the views of train operators and the SRA, and the potential for railway stations to act as park and ride sites for destinations outside the immediate locality.
- 5.10 Members will be aware that in order to progress policies with regard to improving passenger car parking at West Malling Station, a planning brief was approved by the Planning and Engineering Advisory Board in February 2005 which was thereby adopted as a material consideration for development control. This provides the detailed context for the scheme that is subject of this planning application. The Brief has the following principles in relation to the application site:
- The upgrading of the link road and its traffic light controlled junction with the bypass so that it can operate as an all-purpose access.
  - The provision of a kiss-and ride facility directly accessed from the bypass.
  - The provision of a bus-gate to enable buses and taxis to access the station forecourt from the link road.
  - The provision of a pedestrian and cycle route alongside the link road connecting the Station with the proposed cycle route alongside the bypass via a Toucan crossing (as already proposed as part of the Bypass scheme).

- The identification of a site for approximately 220 car parking spaces on land within the line of the proposed link road. The capacity of this car park could be increased if the alignment of the link road was to be amended slightly and this option should be considered in order to maximise the number of parking spaces accessed from the bypass.

- 5.11 The principle of this development has therefore already been accepted by the Borough Council through the adoption of a planning brief along the lines outlined above. The bus link to the Station already has planning permission and is under construction.
- 5.12 The scheme within this planning application largely accords with the relevant elements of the Master Plan although the area covered by the works is marginally larger and the illustrative layout of the car park and drop off facility has altered which has resulted in some concerns from a highway safety point of view. However, I consider that the detailed layout of the car park and drop off facility can be the subject of a condition to ensure satisfactory Highway safety and compatibility with the A228 improvements
- 5.13 This scheme accords with national policy guidance in PPG13 in that there will be sustainability benefits in facilitating and encouraging increased use of the Station as residential and commercial developments in the locality progress. The negative impacts of increasing car parking at main line stations mentioned in PPG13 do not apply in this particular case because the car park will only be accessed from a dual carriageway and not residential roads. It is envisaged that car congestion in the residential areas of West Malling town centre will be reduced as a natural consequence of this scheme especially by the inclusion of a pick-up and drop-off facility which will divert much of this type of traffic from using Swan Street onto the more appropriate A228.
- 5.14 There is a planning issue over management of the car park in terms of the impact this will have on traffic flows. For example, it may be desirable for the new car park to be for season ticket holders only in order to reduce the number of people visiting a full car park at this site and then having a convoluted journey to find spaces at the existing car parks. A sign on the A228 to state when the new car park is full would also be beneficial.
- 5.15 In the light of the wider benefits of the scheme, I am satisfied that the impact of the development on the open countryside, the Green Wedge and an ALLI is justified. Moreover, Members will note that the extensive associated land regrading is expressly intended to help to screen the development as far as practicable. Together with a high quality landscaping scheme which can also replace trees to be lost as a result of these works, the visual impact of the development on the landscape will be satisfactorily mitigated in my view.

- 5.16 The proposal is a departure from the development plan. However, in the light of the adopted Planning Brief and Policy P7/1 of the TMBLP and Policy TP8 of the KMSP, I advise Members that the proposal would not prejudice the development plan to an extent that would require this scheme to be referred to GOSE.
- 5.17 Members will note that the objection of Network Rail is not directed at the scheme as submitted but refers to concerns they have over other aspects of the Planning Brief for works to the Station forecourt. Members are advised that the scheme subject of this planning application is not on Network Rail land and has been submitted for decision independently of any forecourt changes to Network Rail land.

**6. Recommendation:**

- 6.1 **Grant Planning Permission** as detailed by letter dated 17.06.2005; supporting report date stamped 17.06.2005; drawings DHA/4157/01; 16586/001/SK01B (illustrative); 16586/001SK02A ; email dated 15.07.2005 and subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission. (Z001)

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

- 2 The use of the car park and drop-off facility hereby approved shall not take place until the dualling of the A228 has been completed in accordance with planning permission reference TM/01/02993/CR3.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and the free flow of traffic.

- 3 The use of the car park and drop-off facility hereby approved shall not take place until details of CCTV security and lighting have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and carried out in strict accordance with the approved details. (D008\*)

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the setting of the listed building or visual amenity of the locality.

- 4 The use of the car park and drop-off facility hereby approved shall not take place until details of the following have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and carried out in strict accordance with the approved details.

a) Detailed layout of car park, drop-off facility and associated access road from the A228 and pedestrian link up to West Malling station forecourt.

b) Traffic management facilities on the access road, car park and drop off area.

- c) Rising bollards.
- d) Bus gate.
- e) Management Regime for car park including associated signage on A228.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and the free flow of traffic.

- 5 The use of the car park and drop-off facility hereby approved shall not take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatment. The approved boundary treatment and all planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved scheme of landscaping shall be implemented during the first planting season following occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the earlier. The approved boundary treatment shall be retained as approved. Any trees or shrubs removed, dying, being seriously damaged or diseased within 10 years of planting shall be replaced in the next planting season with trees or shrubs of similar size and species, unless the Authority gives written consent to any variation. (L003\*)

Reason: Pursuant to Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality.

- 6 The bunding and changes in levels hereby approved shall be carried out in strict compliance with the approved plans before the first use of the car park and drop-off facility hereby approved, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity of the locality.

Informative:

- 1 Prior to being discharged to any watercourse, surface water sewer or soakaway system, all surface water drainage from parking areas and hardstandings shall be passed through an oil separator designed and constructed to have a capacity compatible with the site being drained and trapped gullies to BS5911:1982 with an overall capacity compatible with the site being drained.

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