

ITEM NO:	<u>Location:</u>	Baldock Services, Great North Road, Radwell, Baldock, SG7 5TR
	<u>Applicant:</u>	Extra MSA Baldock Limited
	<u>Proposal:</u>	Increase parking provisions and alterations to existing parking layout.
	<u>Ref. No:</u>	17/02337/ 1
	<u>Officer:</u>	Joanne Cousins

Date of expiry of statutory period: 13 November 2017

Reason for Delay

Not applicable.

Reason for Referral to Committee

As the site area is over 1.0ha this application needs to be determined by the Planning Control Committee under the Council's scheme of delegation.

1.0 Relevant History

- 1.1 Planning permission was granted for the motorway service area in 2000 and since that time there have been numerous applications for advertisement consent as well as applications for a car wash enclosure.
- 1.2 Planning permission granted in 2008 for a single storey extension to unit 7b to provide ancillary accommodation.
- 1.3 In 2014 permission granted for the retention of an electric vehicle parking point and the installation of an additional point within the car parking area.
- 1.4 Permission granted in August 2017 for a single storey side extension to unit 8a (Starbucks).

2.0 Policies

- 2.1 **North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations**
Policy 6 - Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt
Policy 55 - Car Parking Standards

Supplementary Planning Documents

Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development SPD

- 2.2 **National Planning Policy Framework**
Section 1 - Building a strong, competitive economy
Section 4 - Promoting sustainable transport

North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031 Proposed Submission

Policy SP1 'Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire'
Policy T2 'Parking '
Policy CGB1 - 'Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt'

3.0 Representations

- 3.1 **Hertfordshire County Council** - as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the imposition of one condition and highway informatives.

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site & Surroundings

- 4.1.1 The Motorway Service Area (MSA) occupies a large site which sits just east of the main A1 (M) carriageway. The MSA is reasonably well hidden in views from the open countryside to the east and is only really exposed to public view when approaching from the roundabout serving the facility.

The main amenity building comprises a number of shops, restaurants, cafes and a hotel serviced by an existing car park, lorry and coach parking area.

- 4.1.2 The application site comprises an area of 1.1 hectares encompassing the existing Lorry/Coach Park to the north east of the main amenity building and the grassed area to the south east of the existing car parking area.

4.2 Proposal

- 4.2.1 The application seeks planning permission for alterations to the existing car park layout in order to better accommodate overall parking amenity through the provision of extra spaces. The proposal includes a larger area to the north east for HGV parking and an extension to the south of the main parking area to accommodate more car parking spaces as part of a planned phased construction. This would provide parking provision for the increased patronage since opening the site with the existing access arrangements to remain as at present.

At present the site has a total of 203 parking spaces and 27 HGV parking spaces which would be increased to 291 car parking spaces and 49 HGV (45 full size and 4 "rigid" HGV spaces) parking spaces. The coach parking at 7 spaces would remain the same and there would be a reduction of two caravan parking spaces to 5 spaces to be accommodated within the car park area rather than the Lorry/coach park as at present.

The altered orientation of the HGV parking and expanded main car park have required slightly amended access points. These revised entry and exit points help the circulation of cars through the MSA (Motorway Service Area) utilising the internal layout more effectively.

- 4.2.2 The application has been accompanied by the following documents:-
Transport Statement
Ecological Report
External Lighting Planning Statement
Drainage Plan

4.3 Key Issues

- 4.3.1 The key issues in this case centre on the following:
- The principle of using land for car parking
 - The impact on the locality
 - Highway impact
 - Landscaping
 - Ecology and Environment

4.3.2 Principle of using land for car parking

The site is within the rural area and therefore both policy 6 of the current plan and policy CGB1 of the emerging plan will have due consideration. However the nature of the development and its location confined within the existing site boundaries would not result in any material adverse impact on the intrinsic beauty of the countryside or erode the policy here in my view.

4.3.3 Paragraph 19 of the NPPF states: ***Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.***

The site is currently a very well used Motorway Service Area (MSA) which meets an acknowledged safety and welfare need on the Motorway Network and thus economic growth.

4.3.4 Department of Transport Circular 02/13 sets out the Governments policy on the provision, standards and signing of roadside facilities on the Strategic Road Network. The Circular explains the important road safety function of MSAs providing opportunities for the travelling public to stop and take a break in the course of their journey. Government advice is that motorists should stop and take a break of at least 20 minutes every two hours. The Government's objective is to encourage greater choice in the provision of service facilities for all road users, thereby encouraging drivers to take breaks more frequently and so reducing the number of fatigue related accidents. In accordance with the Circular 02/13, allowing more people to stop at the MSA will encourage motorists to take more regular breaks contributing to the reduction in collisions caused by tiredness which is one of the vital roles of an MSA.

4.3.5 The level of demand and usage of the MSA is directly related to the level of traffic using the network it serves. The site currently caters for 4,500 vehicles per day of which nearly 500 are HGV movements. The reorganisation of the MSA to better accommodate more cars and HGVs within the same site footprint responds to the increase in traffic as part of the A1 (M).

The submitted Transport Strategy shows that the existing car parking provision of 203 spaces falls below the current standards for a MSA. The HGV parking provision is consistent with the standards. However, Extra's experience both at Baldock and across their sites is that policy levels of HGV parking tend to under-estimate demand. Future growth on the A1 (M) is likely to increase by around 15% from 2017 to 2030 as a 15 year design. On that basis the Policy level requirement for parking would increase to 267 cars and 30 HGV parking spaces. The Transport Strategy goes on to present data from Baldock that confirms the usage of the site by HGVs for the last six months. The provision of 47 spaces as a minimum would allow for sufficient parking requirements, based on current traffic flows, and to allow for future growth on the network. Therefore, in addition to the assessed need, there is clearly a compelling practical need for more spaces on the site. The car parking data is less readily available as parking is free for two hours. Inbound car movements demonstrate an increase in demand and the new provision would improve access and circulation within the site particularly at peak periods.

I am satisfied that the proposals are necessary to accommodate existing and future demand to ensure that the MSA can function in its role as an integral part of the transport infrastructure.

4.3.6 Impact on the locality

In terms of the proposals impact on adjacent land uses I can see no sustainable grounds for objection. The site is purpose designed and sits close to the A1 (M) I therefore consider that the additional car parking would support this existing use. The application has been accompanied by a lighting plan which demonstrates that

light spillage would be minimal here. I would suggest that the use of the land as additional car parking would present few concerns.

4.3.7 Highway impact

There is no objection from the Highway Authority. The MSA benefits from an existing access road that is designated within a private site not maintained at public expense. The new scheme proposes an early segregation of the car park access and HGV traffic and the provision of a direct, separate route for them to leave the designated parking areas. The proposal does not affect the internal road layout in terms of vehicle and pedestrian visibility which is acceptable. Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority have therefore concluded that the proposal would not have an unreasonable impact on the safety and operation of the adjoining highway network subject to the inclusion of the recommended planning condition and highway informative.

4.3.8 Landscaping

A full landscape planting plan has been submitted in support of this application. This shows that trees and shrubs are in the proximity of the development and a number of which would be removed to complete the work. The documents confirm that 37 individual trees/large shrubs would be removed and replaced by 40 trees of a higher quality than the existing scrub like ones. The scheme also includes two screening hedges which are supported by a one metre high light chestnut fence. I am satisfied that subject to the imposition of conditions to safeguard the completion of this landscaping that the scheme would be acceptable here and not detrimental to the landscape surrounding the MSA.

The proposals would not affect the existing bunding areas that surround the site so wider views into the site would remain as existing. The childrens play area to the south-east of the Hotel would remain and existing outdoor seating in this area would be re arranged.

4.3.9 Ecology and Environment

As a precautionary measure an Ecological Assessment of the site was submitted with the application, with observations on flora and fauna along with location and extent of habitats noted. The site and its habitats were also assessed for their potential to support protected species. The assessment concluded that from a biodiversity/ecology perspective the development covers an area of negligible ecological value, comprising mainly very short mown amenity grassland, ornamental shrub plantings and hard standing. A small number of young trees, planted as part of the landscaping scheme for the original construction will be removed, however none of these are suitable for roosting bats or nesting birds. Consequently there will be no direct adverse environmental effects arising from the proposals. The single feature of potential value is a balancing pond which lies in proximity to the works but would not will be impacted by the development. An ecology search also confirmed there are no statutory nature conservation sites within 2km of the development area. As there is no likelihood of adverse effects to ecological receptors a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was not undertaken, however a Habitat Suitability Index assessment of the balancing pond was conducted, in order to investigate the likelihood of Great Crested Newt presence. This assessment confirmed the lack of suitability of the pond and surrounding habitat for Great Crested Newts, and no further surveys or mitigation are considered to be necessary.

4.3.10 In terms of mitigating other environmental harms I confirm that the MSA already benefits from Electric Vehicle recharging points which comply with the Environmental Protection measures to improve air quality.

4.3.11 The scheme has been supported by a drainage plan which satisfactorily demonstrates how surface water would be treated within the site in accordance with good practice.

4.4 Conclusion

- 4.4.1 Having regard to the above I do not consider there to be any material planning objections to be raised against the proposal which would support the transport infrastructure and have no detrimental impact on the vicinity of the site. I have framed a favourable recommendation accordingly.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. The landscaping details illustrated on Planting Plan SH12022/005 shall be carried out before the end of the first planting season following either the first use of any of the parking spaces or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced during the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority agrees in writing to vary or dispense with this requirement.

Reason: To safeguard and enhance the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality.

4. **Construction of the approved development shall not commence until a Construction Traffic Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with the highway authority. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan. The Construction Traffic Management Plan shall include construction vehicle numbers/routing of construction traffic and shall be carried out as approved.**

Reason: To facilitate the free and safe flow of other traffic on the highway and the safety and convenience of pedestrians and people with a disability.

Highway Informative

Prior to commencement of the development the applicant is advised to contact the Highway Authority on 0300 1234 047 to arrange a site visit to agree a condition survey of the approach of the highway leading to the development likely to be used for delivery vehicles to the development. Under the provisions of Section 59 of the Highways Act 1980 the developer may be liable for any damage caused to the public highway as a result of traffic associated with the development. Herts County Council may require an Officer presence during movements of larger loads, or videoing of the movements may be considered.

Ecology Informative

For reptiles and amphibians, caution should be taken when moving debris piles or building materials as any sheltering reptiles and amphibians could be impacted on. Clearance of existing vegetation should be undertaken progressively towards boundaries. Grass / vegetation should be kept as short as possible up to, and including, the time when the construction works take place, so that it remains/becomes unsuitable for amphibians to cross. Trenches should have escape ramps to provide an escape opportunity for any animals that may have become trapped.

Proactive Statement

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted proactively through early engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.