**PLANNING COMMITTEE – 20 JULY 2017**

**PART I - DELEGATED**

**6. 17/0793/FUL – Single storey side and rear extensions and increase in ridge height to create two storey dwelling at 120 OAKLANDS AVENUE, OXHEY HALL, WD19 4LW for Mr S Patel**

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| Parish: Watford Rural | Ward: Oxhey Hall and Hayling |
| Officer: Rob MorganExpiry Statutory Period: 7 July 2017 |
| Recommendation: That Planning Permission be granted |
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| Reason for consideration by the Committee: Called-in by three Members of the Committee. |

1 **Relevant Planning History**

1.1 There is no relevant planning history.

2. **Detailed Description of Application Site**

2.1 The application site is a rectangular plot which is at the junction of Oaklands Avenue and Hillcroft Crescent. The site contains a detached bungalow with its principal elevation fronting Oaklands Avenue. The dwelling is set back from both Oaklands Avenue and Hillcroft Crescent with a softly landscaped garden to the frontage. The east flank boundary of the site adjoins the highway of Hillcroft Crescent and is bounded by 2m high close boarded fencing. The rear garden is mostly laid to lawn. There is a small garage building to the far rear of the plot which is accessed from Hillcroft Crescent via an existing crossover and has an additional parking space to its frontage.

2.2 The neighbouring dwellings along Oaklands Avenue either side of the dwelling and to the south on Hillcroft Crescent are mostly two storey semi-detached dwellings of a traditional design and with uniform front building lines. The site is within the Oxhey Hall Conservation Area where there are good examples of 1930s ‘Metroland’ architecture and the character is determined by the houses being regularly spaced with access ways to gardens behind.

3. **Detailed Description of Proposed Development**

3.1 Full planning permission is sought for the erection of single storey side and rear extensions and an increase in ridge height to create a two storey dwelling.

3.2 In terms of extensions to the dwelling, a 2.3m wide and 6.3m deep extension would be constructed to the east facing flank of the dwelling which would be incorporated into the roof extensions described below. A 4.1m deep and 6.3m wide single storey flat roofed extension with a maximum height of 2.7m, plus a 0.3m high roof lantern, would also be constructed to the rear. As a result the dwelling would have a T-shaped footprint.

3.3 The proposed roof alterations would be over the existing dwelling and the side extension. There would be a 1.7m increase in ridge height and 2m increase in eaves height. The roof design would be hipped with a catslide to the east over the proposed extension.

3.4 During the course of the application amended plans have been submitted which alter the window design of the dwelling and add an additional parking space to the rear part of the site, adjacent to the existing garage.

4. **Consultation**

4.1 National Grid

4.1.1 No comments received.

4.2 Conservation Officer

4.2.1 Summary: No objection.

4.2.2 *‘The application dwelling is located within the Oxhey Hall Conservation Area. The Conservation Area includes good examples of 1930s “Metroland” architecture, with both Oaklands Avenue and Hillcroft Crescent almost uniformly complete with large “Metroland” style semi-detached houses. The existing bungalow is not typical of this style. There are a few other bungalows within the Conservation Area, however they are not a common feature of the Conservation Area. The bungalow is not considered to make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The scale of the extension will bring it more in line with the other properties on the street, adding to its uniformity.*

 *The Oxhey Hall Conservation Area Appraisal refers to the long rear gardens in the area providing an important part of the local environment contributing to the distinctive character of the area. This in conjunction with the outstanding topography and surrounding Green Belt and open spaces combine to provide the 'rural feel' of the area. The garden to the rear of 120 Oaklands Avenue is clearly visible from Hillcroft Road, and will continue to contribute to the character and “rural feel” of the Conservation Area.*

 *The proposal will “preserve and enhance” the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, meeting the criteria set out in Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies Local Development Document (2013).*

4.3 Watford Rural Parish Council

4.3.1 No comments received.

4.4 Landscape Officer

4.4.1 Summary: No objection.

4.4.2 *‘I can confirm that I have no concerns regarding the proposals at the above location as there are no trees worthy of Tree Preservation Orders as they are low grade.’*

4.5 Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust

4.5.1 No comments received.

5. **Neighbour Consultation**

5.1 Site/Press Notice:

* Site notice posted 1 June 2017 and expired 22 June 2017.
* Press notice published 26 May 2017 and expired 16 June 2017.

5.1.2 Neighbours consulted: 7

5.1.3 Number of responses: 11

5.1.4 Summary of responses:

* Existing bungalows are character features of the Conservation Area and the application dwelling is in a prominent position on the corner of Oaklands Avenue and Hillcroft Crescent; the conversion/extension would not be in keeping with the other houses and completely changes the appearance of the existing building.
* Overdevelopment of the site and the modern design of the extensions would not conform to the style of adjacent and surrounding properties.
* Modern looking building with glass panels, which are not allowed in the Conservation Area, and there is no car parking.
* Dwelling would have a larger footprint than the existing bungalow and would in effect be a demolition and rebuild; contrary to the principles of the Conservation Area.
* Front elevation would not be sympathetic to the location and would lose distinctive characteristics such as bay windows.
* Loss of smaller houses and bungalows such as this dwelling would adversely impact on the availability of suitable housing for elderly and young people.
* Granting planning permission would set a precedent for other similar developments in the area.
* Unclear if any works are proposed to the dwelling frontage but the original fencing and Cherry tree are important features in the Conservation Area.
* Side window would overlook toilet, bathroom and kitchen windows.
* Overlooking of nearby neighbouring properties.

6. **Reason for Delay**

6.1 Committee cycle.

7. **Relevant Local Planning Policies:**

7.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

7.1.1 On 27 March 2012, the framework of government guidance in the form of Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance Notes was replaced by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The adopted policies of Three Rivers District Council reflect the content of the NPPF.

7.2 The Three Rivers Local Plan Core Strategy:

7.2.1 The Core Strategy was adopted by the Council on 17 October 2011. Relevant Policies include: CP1, CP9, CP10 and CP12.

7.3 Development Management Policies LDD:

7.3.1 The Development Management Policies LDD was adopted on 26 July 2013 having been through a full public participation process and Examination in Public. Relevant policies include: DM1, DM3, DM6 and DM13 and Appendices 2 and 5.

7.5 Other

7.5.1 The following Acts and legislation are also relevant: The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 Habitat Regulations 1994, the Localism Act 2011 and the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013.

7.5.2 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (adopted February 2015).

7.5.3 The Oxhey Hall Conservation Area Appraisal (October 2007).

8. **Analysis**

8.1 Character / Street Scene / Conservation Area

8.1.1 Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy (adopted October 2011) relates to the Design of Development and states that the Council will expect all development proposals to have regard to the local context and conserve or enhance the character, amenities and quality of an area.

8.1.2 Policy DM1 and Appendix 2 of the Development Management Policies LDD (DMP LDD) (adopted July 2013) set out that development should not have a significant impact on the visual amenities of the area. Extensions should not be excessively prominent and should respect the existing character of the dwelling, particularly with regard to the roof form, positioning and style of windows and doors, and materials.

8.1.3 The application site is within the Oxhey Hall Conservation Area and Policy DM3 of the DMP LDD is therefore also relevant. Policy DM3 states that *‘applications will only be supported where they sustain, conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance, character and setting of the asset itself and the surrounding historic environment’* and development will only be permitted if the proposal is *‘of a design and scale that preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area.’*

8.1.4 The Oxhey Hall Conservation Area Appraisal (the Appraisal) (October 2007) describes the Conservation Area as containing good examples of 1930s “Metroland” architecture containing a mix of semi-detached and detached properties built using traditional materials. The majority of the original properties are also said to have long rear gardens which provide an important part of the local environment contributing to the distinctive character of the area and provide the “rural feel” of the area.

8.1.5 The proposed extensions would increase the footprint of the dwelling. However, the rear extension at 4.1m in depth would only slightly exceed the 4m depth generally considered acceptable for detached dwellings, as set out at Appendix 2 of the DMP LDD, while the side extension at 2.3m in width would not appear disproportionate to the existing dwelling. The rear garden would remain of a substantial depth of over 36m from the rear elevation of the proposed extension and the dwelling would remain off-set from the east boundary by a minimum of 2m. In terms of footprint increase and level of built form within the plot, the extensions are not considered to result in unduly prominent additions or a cramped form of development and would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

8.1.6 The increase in ridge height of the dwelling to create a two storey dwelling would have an impact on the overall scale, bulk and massing of the dwelling. Appendix 2 of the DMP LDD states that two storey development should be off-set from the flank boundary by a minimum of 1.2m at first floor level and above. The proposed dwelling would not be extended to the west flank and would retain a flank to boundary separation of 1.2m on this side. The east flank would be off-set from the adjacent boundary by a minimum of 2m and the catslide roof form over the side extension would serve to further reduce the bulk and massing of the dwelling on this side to retain the spacious feel at the junction of Oaklands Avenue and Hillcroft Crescent.

8.1.7 The proposed height of the dwelling would remain lower than no. 118 Oaklands Avenue to the west and the intervening highway would reduce the prominence of the increased height of the dwelling relative to no. 122. In any event, the proposed dwelling would have a similar design to the existing property at no. 122 on the opposite side of Hillcroft Crescent which is a two storey semi-detached property with a catslide roof to the side adjacent to the highway. The single storey rear extension to the dwelling would have a flat roof with a raised roof lantern above. While the flat roof form is noted, the extension would be set away from the site boundaries and would not be unduly prominent in the street scene such that it would result in harm to the character of the Conservation Area. The proposed dwelling would therefore not appear unduly prominent in the street scene or out of character with the Conservation Area.

8.1.8 The Conservation Officer has also advised that the scale of the extension would bring the dwelling more in line with the other properties in the street scene, adding to its uniformity. Furthermore, the scale of the development would not impact on the rear garden which would *‘continue to contribute to the character and “rural feel” of the Conservation Area.’*

8.1.9 The design of the proposed extensions and alterations would be in keeping with the prevailing character of dwellings in the area and the front windows have been altered during the course of the application to improve the visual appearance of the dwelling. The Appraisal specifically refers to the use of traditional materials including *‘brick, roof tiles and timber, with rendering to exterior walls’* as part of the character of the Conservation Area. The proposed external materials would be in keeping with these traditional materials and would include front rendering with timber panels, brick and plain roof tiles. However, given the location of the building at a prominent position at a junction within the Conservation Area a condition requiring the submission of materials is considered appropriate in this instance should planning permission be granted.

8.1.10 It is not considered that the level of works would constitute demolition of the existing bungalow with much of the ground floor of the building to be retained. However, it is accepted that the development would result in the loss of the existing bungalow. Policy DM3 of the DMP LDD and the Appraisal state that demolition or substantial demolition will only be granted in Conservation Areas if it can be demonstrated that the structure to be demolished makes no material contribution to the special character or appearance of the area. The Conservation Officer has advised that bungalows are not a common feature of the Conservation Area and as such, the existing bungalow does not make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. As such, the loss of the existing bungalow is not considered to be harmful to the Conservation Area to justify refusal of the application.

8.1.11 Amended plans have been provided which increase the level of parking to the rear of the site. The addition of a relatively small section of hardstanding would not have a detrimental impact on the rural feel of the Conservation Area and the siting of the additional parking space to the rear would enable the front garden to be retained; the Appraisal specifically states that the introduction of various types and styles of hardstanding within the front gardens of a significant number of properties has led to the loss of front garden walls and a reduction in the amount of vegetation on the frontage which has a detrimental effect on the visual continuity of the frontages.

8.1.12 Overall, the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the street scene and Conservation Area and would be acceptable in accordance with Policies CP1 and CP12 of the Core Strategy, Policies DM1 and DM3 and Appendix 2 of the DMP LDD and the Oxhey Hall Conservation Area Appraisal.

8.2 Residential Amenity

8.2.1 Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy advises that development will be expected to protect residential amenity. Appendix 2 of the DMP LDD comments that all developments are expected to maintain acceptable standards of privacy for both new and existing residential buildings and development should not result in loss of light to the windows of neighbouring properties nor allow overlooking.

8.2.2 Appendix 2 of the DMP LDD sets out that two storey development at the rear of properties should not intrude into a 45 degree splay line across the rear garden from a point on the joint boundary, level with the rear wall of the adjacent property. This principle is dependent on the spacing and relative positions of properties and consideration will be given to the juxtaposition of properties, land levels and the position of windows and development on neighbouring properties.

8.2.3 The existing dwelling roughly aligns with the front and rear elevations of no. 118 Oaklands Avenue to the west and the new two storey part of the dwelling would not intrude a 45 degree splay line of this neighbour. While the increase in ridge height would result in additional height, bulk and massing, the impact would be limited to the flank windows of the neighbour and given the siting of the dwelling 1.2m from the boundary it is not considered that significant harm would occur through loss of light or outlook. There is also a single storey garage built up to the shared boundary which would further reduce the impact of the development on the habitable rooms of the neighbouring property.

8.2.4 The proposed single storey rear extension would project beyond the rear wall of no. 118 and at 4.1m would exceed the depth generally considered acceptable for such extensions by 0.1m. However, given the siting of the extension 1.2m from the shared boundary and its 2.7m height it is not considered that the additional 0.1m depth above the guidance depth would result in significant harm to the neighbour’s residential amenities. The main habitable part of the neighbouring dwelling is also set in from the shared boundary with the garage in-between; thus further reducing the impact of the single storey extension on the neighbour’s residential amenities.

8.2.5 The development would have limited impact in terms of light and outlook to the properties to the front, rear and east of the site due to the separation distances involved and no harm is identified in this respect.

8.2.6 In terms of privacy, Appendix 2 of the DMP LDD states that distances between buildings should be sufficient so as to prevent overlooking, particularly from upper floors. As an indicative figure, 28m should be achieved between the faces of single or two storey buildings backing onto each other or in other circumstances where privacy needs to be achieved; windows of habitable rooms at first floor level should not generally be located in flank elevations.

8.2.7 The rear garden of the application site would retain a depth of over 36m and the front to front distance between the application dwelling and those opposite would be approximately 33m. The angled first floor window serving the lobby would largely have outlook over the junction of Oaklands Avenue and Hillcroft Crescent and would not directly face any neighbouring property. Sufficient spacing would therefore be retained to protect the privacy of neighbours to the front and rear from the addition of first floor windows.

8.2.8 There are no habitable room windows proposed to the flanks of the dwelling with ground and first floor staircase windows proposed to the west flank which would be conditioned to be obscured glazed and top level opening only to protect the privacy of no. 118.

8.2.9 Two rooflights which would serve bedrooms are proposed in the east catslide roof slope. Due to the spacing to no. 122 with the highway in-between it is not considered that a loss of privacy would occur by virtue of the inclusion of these rooflights.

8.2.10 The development would therefore not result in significant harm to the residential amenities of neighbouring properties and the development would be acceptable in this regard in accordance with Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy and Policy DM1 and Appendix 2 of the DMP LDD.

8.3 Amenity Space

8.3.1 Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy states that development should take into account the need for adequate levels and disposition of privacy, prospect, amenity and garden space. Appendix 2 of the DMP LDD indicates that a four bedroom dwelling should be served by 105sq.m of amenity space.

8.3.2 The rear garden at approximately 450sq.m would be sufficient to serve the needs of existing and future occupiers and the overall level of development within the site would preserve the character of the Conservation Area.

8.4 Trees

8.4.1 Policy DM6 of the DMP LDD sets out that development proposals should seek to retain trees and other landscape and nature conservation features, and that proposals should demonstrate that trees will be safeguarded and managed during and after development in accordance with the relevant British Standards.

8.4.2 The location of the site within the Oxhey Hall Conservation Area protects all trees with a girth of >75mm; however, none of the trees within or adjacent to the site are protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

8.4.3 The Landscape Officer has advised that the trees within the site are of low grade and raises no objection to the development proposals. However, the development would result in significant works to the existing property and to protect the Cherry tree within the dwelling frontage it is considered that tree protection measures should be submitted prior to the commencement of any works approved under the application.

8.5 Highways, Parking & Access

8.5.1 Policy DM13 of the DMP LDD requires development to make provision for parking in accordance with the parking standards set out at Appendix 5 of the same document. A dwelling with four or more bedrooms should be served by three parking spaces.

8.5.2 During the course of the application one additional parking space has been proposed to the rear of the site adjacent to the existing garage and parking space resulting in a total of three spaces to serve the dwelling. Each of the spaces would measure a minimum width of 3.5m and depth of 5m. In this respect the proposed development would meet the parking requirements for the proposed dwelling.

8.5.3 However, it is acknowledged that the existing garage is relatively small for the parking of cars and therefore, to ensure sufficient space for three cars is provided, further detail with regard to the parking provision to serve the dwelling would be required prior to first occupation of the extensions should planning permission be granted.

8.6 Wildlife & Biodiversity

8.6.1 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires Local Planning Authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. This is further emphasised by regulation 3(4) of the Habitat Regulations 1994 which state that Councils must have regard to the strict protection for certain species required by the EC Habitats Directive. The Habitats Directive places a legal duty on all public bodies to have regard to the habitats directive when carrying out their functions.

8.6.2 The protection of biodiversity and protected species is a material planning consideration in the assessment of this application in accordance with Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy and Policy DM6 of the DMP LDD. National Planning Policy requires Local Authorities to ensure that a protected species survey is undertaken for applications where biodiversity may be affected prior to the determination of a planning application.

8.9.3 Given that the development would involve works to the existing roof, an informative would be attached to any permission advising of the measures to be taken to prevent harm to bats and should bats be discovered.

9. **Recommendation**

9.1 That PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTEDsubject to the following conditions: -

C1 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(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

C2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 8671 01 B and 8671 02 B.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt, in the proper interests of planning and to protect the character of the Conservation Area in accordance with Policies CP1, CP9, CP10 and CP12 of the Core Strategy (adopted October 2011), Policies DM1, DM3, DM6 and DM13 and Appendices 2 and 5 of the Development Management Policies LDD (adopted July 2013) and the Oxhey Hall Conservation Area Appraisal (October 2007).

C3 No operations (including tree felling, pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction, or any other operation involving the use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence on site in connection with the development hereby approved until the branch structure and trunks of all trees shown to be retained and all other trees not indicated as to be removed and their root systems have been protected from any damage during site works, in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The protective measures, including fencing, shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved scheme before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought on to the site for the purposes of development, and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed within any area fenced in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made. No fires shall be lit or liquids disposed of within 10.0m of an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the approved scheme.

Reason: This condition is a pre commencement condition to prevent damage to trees during construction and to meet the requirements of Policies CP1 and CP12 of the Core Strategy (adopted October 2011) and Policy DM6 of the Development Management Policies LDD (adopted July 2013).

C4 Before any building operations above ground level hereby permitted are commenced, samples and details of the proposed external materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and no external materials shall be used other than those approved.

Reason: To prevent the building being constructed in inappropriate materials in accordance with Policies CP1 and CP12 of the Core Strategy (adopted October 2011) and Policies DM1 and DM3 and Appendix 2 of the Development Management Policies LDD (adopted July 2013).

C5 Notwithstanding the submitted details, prior to first occupation of the extensions hereby permitted full details of space to be laid out within the site for three cars to be parked shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The parking spaces shall be constructed in accordance with the approved plans prior to the first occupation of any part of the development hereby permitted and shall thereafter be kept permanently available for the use of residents and visitors to the site.

Reason: To minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to highway users in the interests of safety in accordance with Policies CP1, CP10 and CP12 of the Core Strategy (adopted October 2011) and Policy DM13 and Appendix 5 of the Development Management Policies LDD (adopted July 2013).

C6 Before the first occupation of the extensions hereby permitted the first floor window in the west flank elevation shall be fitted with purpose made obscured glazing and shall be top level opening only at 1.7m above the floor level of the room in which the window is installed. The window shall be permanently retained in that condition thereafter.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring residential properties in accordance with Policies CP1 and CP12 of the Core Strategy (adopted October 2011) and Policy DM1 and Appendix 2 of the Development Management Policies LDD (adopted July 2013).

9.2 Informatives

I1 With regard to implementing this permission, the applicant is advised as follows:

All relevant planning conditions must be discharged prior to the commencement of work. Requests to discharge conditions must be made by formal application. Fees are £97 per request (or £28 where the related permission is for extending or altering a dwellinghouse or other development in the curtilage of a dwellinghouse). Please note that requests made without the appropriate fee will be returned unanswered.

There may be a requirement for the approved development to comply with the Building Regulations. Information and application forms are available at www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk. Alternatively the Council's Building Control section can be contacted on telephone number 01923 727130 or email building.control@hertfordshirebc.gov.uk.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - If your development is liable for CIL payments, it is a requirement under Regulation 67 (1) of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (As Amended) that a Commencement Notice (Form 6) is submitted to Three Rivers District Council as the Collecting Authority no later than the day before the day on which the chargeable development is to be commenced. DO NOT start your development until the Council has acknowledged receipt of the Commencement Notice. Failure to do so will mean you will lose the right to payment by instalments (where applicable), lose any exemptions already granted, and a surcharge will be imposed.

Care should be taken during the building works hereby approved to ensure no damage occurs to the verge or footpaths during construction. Vehicles delivering materials to this development shall not override or cause damage to the public footway. Any damage will require to be made good to the satisfaction of the Council and at the applicant's expense.

Where possible, energy saving and water harvesting measures should be incorporated. Information on this is also available from the Council's Building Control section. Any external changes to the building which may be subsequently required should be discussed with the Council's Development Management Section prior to the commencement of work.

I2 The applicant is reminded that the Control of Pollution Act 1974 stipulates that construction activity (where work is audible at the site boundary) should be restricted to 0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday, 0900 to 1300 on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

I3 Bats are protected under domestic and European legislation where, in summary, it is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in a roost or deliberately disturb a bat in a way that would impair its ability to survive, breed or rear young, hibernate or migrate, or significantly affect its local distribution or abundance; damage or destroy a bat roost; possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat; and intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

If bats are found all works must stop immediately and advice sought as to how to proceed from either of the following organisations:

The UK Bat Helpline: 0845 1300 228

Natural England: 0300 060 3900

Herts & Middlesex Bat Group: www.hmbg.org.uk

or an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist.

(As an alternative to proceeding with caution, the applicant may wish to commission an ecological consultant before works start to determine whether or not bats are present. A list of bat consultants can be obtained from Hertfordshire Ecology on 01992 555220).

I4 The Local Planning Authority has been positive and proactive in its consideration of this planning application, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. The Local Planning Authority suggested modifications to the development during the course of the application and the applicant submitted amendments which result in a form of development that maintains/improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the District.