PLANNING COMMITTEE – Thursday 22 October 2026

26/1263/RSP – Part retrospective: Conversion of garage into habitable accommodation; alterations to the fenestration and alterations to driveway at 17 Edson Close, Leavesden, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 7BX

Parish: Abbots Langley
Ward: Leavesden
Expiry of Statutory Period: 29 October 2026
Case Officer: Danielle Kavanagh

Development Type: Householder development

Recommendation: That part retrospective planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions.

Reason for consideration by the Committee: The application was called in by Abbots Langley Parish Council due to concerns regarding parking, character and amenity and intensification of use.

To view all documents forming part of this application, please go to the following website:

26/1263/RSP 17 Edson Close Leavesden Watford Hertfordshire WD25 7BX

1 Relevant Planning and Enforcement History

1.1 26/0063/COMP – Enforcement investigation: Unauthorised conversion of garage into habitable accommodation.

1.2 26/0448/CLPD - Certificate of Lawfulness Proposed Development: Conversion of garage into habitable accommodation - 22.04.2026, Application Withdrawn

1.3 05/0534/FUL - Erection of 33 dwellings comprising 2-bed flats, 3 and 4-bed houses with public open space and associated access, parking and landscaping - 15.06.2006, Application Permitted

2 Description of Application Site

2.1 The application site fronts onto Edson Close, a residential development of detached, semi-detached, terraced and flatted dwellings.

2.2 The application dwelling is a three-storey mid terraced dwelling within a row of four matching town houses. In their original form, each terrace benefitted from an integral garage; however, the garage at the host property has recently been converted to habitable accommodation (subject to this application). The dwelling is currently in use as a small House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) which falls within Use Class C4 and would benefit from deemed planning permission.

2.3 To the front of the host dwelling there is an existing area of hardstanding which can accommodate a single off-street parking space. There is a strip of soft landscaping adjacent to the parking space. There is no boundary treatment to the front of the site separating the properties.

2.4 Other dwellings in the vicinity of the site are of differing design but are finished in similar materials. Whilst many had integral garages, some have been converted (such as at No. 11 and No. 15 within the same terrace row as the host dwelling).

3 Description of Proposed Development

3.1 This application seeks part retrospective planning permission for the conversion of the garage into habitable accommodation along with alterations to fenestration and alterations to the driveway.

3.2 The pre-existing integral garage has been converted into a habitable space. The garage door was removed and replaced by a wall in the lower portion of the opening and a white-framed UPVC window to match the existing windows in the upper portion.

3.3 The existing driveway would be extended in width to enable the provision of two parking spaces. The existing soft landscaping (low-level shrubs) would be removed to facilitate the driveway extension.

4 Statutory Consultation

4.1 National Grid: [No Response]

4.2 Abbots Langley Parish Council: [Objection]

The Committee objects to this application on the following grounds:

- *Non-Compliance with Parking Standards: The application property operates as a 6-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). A large residential dwelling of this scale cannot sustainably be served by only two off-street parking spaces. The current provision of two spaces fails to meet the adopted local planning policy parking requirements for a 6-bedroom property.*

- *Impact on Local Character and Amenity: Edson Close is a residential road. The significant under-provision of on-site parking will inevitably lead to an increase in overspill parking on the public highway. This will detrimental to the character of the street scene and compromise local residential amenity.*

- *Risk of Further Intensification: While the Committee acknowledges the converted space is currently designated as a reception room—a facility otherwise supported within an HMO framework—its immediate proximity to existing utility services and drainage infrastructure raises material concerns. This layout creates a strong potential for the space to be converted into an additional habitable bedroom unit in the future, further exacerbating the existing parking and intensification pressures on the surrounding area.*

Recommendation:
The Committee strongly objects to this application as it stands. Should officers be minded to recommend approval, Members formally request that the application be called in to the Planning Committee for full determination.

4.3 **Public/Neighbour Consultation**

4.4 Neighbours consulted: 2

4.5 Responses received: 6 [6 objections]

4.6 Site Notice: 29.09.2026, Expires: 19.10.2026

4.7 Press Notice: Not required

4.8 Summary of objection comments received:

- *A reduction in off-street parking increases pressure on already limited on-street parking, potentially affecting access and highway safety.*
- *Concerns of intensified residential use, with concerns about overdevelopment, noise, disturbance and residential amenity.*

- *Concerns that the garage is being used as a bedroom despite being described as a reception room, and concerns that six occupants are already living at the property while the HMO (licensing) application remains pending.*
- *The conversion has altered the property's appearance and fenestration, with some neighbours considering the changes harmful to the character of the street and causing overlooking/privacy concerns.*
- *The conversion was undertaken before the relevant planning/HMO processes were concluded, raising concerns that retrospective approval would set an undesirable precedent.*
- *Concerns were raised regarding wider implications for the character of the close, parking capacity, and amenity of the small cul-de-sac, including children's safety and refuse collection.*

Officer note*:* This application is concerned with the retrospective conversion of a garage, associated fenestrations changes and the proposed extension of the existing driveway to provide two parking spaces.

It is acknowledged that the host dwelling is being used as a small house of multiple occupation (HMO). From the evidence available to the Local Planning Authority , there are no more than 6 occupants, and the use would therefore benefit from deemed planning permission via the General Permitted Development Oder 2015 (as amended). A HMO licence is pending consideration with the council's Environmental Health department at the time of finalising this report. This application does not seek permission for the use, and therefore this report does not assess the suitability of the dwelling for use as an HMO.

5 Reason for Delay

5.1 N/A.

6 Relevant Planning Policy, Guidance and Legislation

6.1 Legislation

Planning applications are required to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise as set out within S38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and S70 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990).

The Localism Act received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011. The Growth and Infrastructure Act achieved Royal Assent on 25 April 2013.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Habitat Regulations 1994 may also be relevant.

The Environment Act 2021.

6.2 The Three Rivers Local Plan

The application has been considered against the policies of the Local Plan, including the Core Strategy (adopted October 2011), the Development Management Policies Local Development Document (adopted July 2013) and the Site Allocations Local Development Document (adopted November 2014) as well as government guidance. The policies of Three Rivers District Council reflect the content of the NPPF.

The Core Strategy was adopted on 17 October 2011 having been through a full public participation process and Examination in Public. Relevant policies include Policies CP1, CP9, CP10 and CP12.

The Development Management Policies Local Development Document (DMLDD) was adopted on 26 July 2013 after the Inspector concluded that it was sound following Examination in Public which took place in March 2013. Relevant policies include DM6, DM8, DM9, DM13 and Appendix 5.

Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan (Referendum Version Plan March 2026). Relevant policies include AL3 and AL4.

6.3 Other

In August 2026 the NPPF was updated.

The Three Rivers District Council Local Plan 2026-2042 (Parts I and II) was recently subject of a Regulation 19 consutlation. As such, weight can now be given to policies and sites contained within that Plan. The report has considered the proposal in relation to the following policies listed; however, as the new Local Plan is at consultation stage, they are not detailed in full within the analysis section of the report where the existing policies have been given more weight. Relevant Policies include SP2, BGL1, TC2 and Appendices 1 and 3.

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

7 Planning Analysis

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 Condition 5 of planning permission 05/0534/FUL for the 'erection of 33 dwellings comprising 2 bed flats, 3 and 4 bed houses with public open space and associated access, parking and landscaping' applies to the application dwelling and states:

'Notwithstanding the provisions of Schedule 2 Part 1 Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 the garages forming part of the dwellings hereby permitted shall be retained primarily for the garaging of private cars. No alterations shall be carried out to the garages such as to prevent its use for garaging private cars.'

7.1.2 Due to the above control express planning permission from the LPA is required for garage conversions. The imposition of this condition does not mean conversions are unacceptable in principle, but each requires an assessment which is set out below.

7.2 Impact on the character and appearance of the host building

7.2.1 Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy (adopted October 2011) seeks to promote buildings of a high enduring design quality that respect local distinctiveness and Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy relates to design and states that in seeking a high standard of design, the Council will expect development proposals to have regard to the local context and conserve or enhance the character, amenities and quality of an area.

7.2.2 Policy DM1 and Appendix 2 of the Development Management Policies Local Development Document (adopted July 2013) set out that development should not lead to a gradual deterioration in the quality of the built environment, have a significant impact on the visual amenities of the area and that extensions should respect the existing character of the dwelling, particularly with regard to the roof form, positioning and style of windows and doors, and materials.

7.2.3 Policy AL3 of the Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan sets out that developments should reflect the architectural variety found locally and use materials that are in keeping with those found in existing buildings in the immediate locality.

7.2.4 Policy AL4 of the Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan sets out that development proposals should demonstrate a high quality of design, which responds and integrates well with its surroundings, and meets the changing needs of the population of the neighbourhood area.

7.2.5 The converted garage has included the replacement of the garage door with a 2-casement white UPVC window, with a painted rendered wall to match the existing exterior. This change is visible from the streetscene of Edson Close. It is noted that there are two other converted garages within the terrace of four dwellings of which the host dwelling is sited (at No. 11 and No. 15). Given that the new window is a match for the existing fenestrations in the front elevation and the exterior is in keeping with the dwelling and other examples of converted garages withing the immediate streetscene, it is not considered that the conversion results in an incongruous form of development from a character and streetscene perspective.

7.2.6 The existing driveway is proposed to be extended. This would result in an area of soft landscaping containing small-scale shrubbery being removed, and paved with hardstanding to provide 1 additional parking space within the dwelling's frontage. While the loss of the soft landscaping is regrettable, it is noted that the planting is of a small scale and its loss is not considered to result in an unacceptably harmful impact to the surrounding streetscene of Edson Close. Additionally, it is noted that similar driveway extensions have been completed at two of the neighbouring terraced dwellings.

7.2.7 In summary, the proposed development would not be of a scale or design that would result in any adverse harm to the character or appearance of the host dwelling or streetscene. The development would be acceptable in accordance with Policies CP1 and CP12 of the Core Strategy (2011), Policy DM1 and Appendix 2 of the Development Management Policies LDD (2013) and Policy AL3 and AL4 of the Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Plan.

7.3 <u>Impact on amenity of neighbours</u>

7.3.1 Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy states that development should ‘protect residential amenities by taking into account the need for adequate levels and disposition of privacy, prospect, amenity and garden space’. Policy DM1 and Appendix 2 of the Development Management Policies document set out that development should not result in loss of light to the windows of neighbouring properties nor allow overlooking and should not be excessively prominent in relation to adjacent properties.

7.3.2 The front window only overlooks the application's frontage and adjacent highway. It is not considered that the addition of a ground-floor level window in the dwelling’s front elevation has resulted in any unacceptable overlooking of any neighbouring dwellings or amenity areas.

7.3.3 The extension of the driveway is not considered to have any harmful impact on the residential amenity of any neighbouring dwellings.

7.3.4 The proposed development would therefore be acceptable in this regard in accordance with Policies CP1 and CP12 of the Core Strategy and Policies DM1, DM9 and Appendix 2 of the Development Management Policies LDD.

7.4 <u>Highways & Parking</u>

7.4.1 Core Policy DM13 of the Development Management Policies LDD requires development to make provision for parking in accordance with the parking standards set out at Appendix 5 of the Development Management Policies LDD.

7.4.2 The plans indicate that the dwelling has 5 units/bedrooms; this does not include the converted garage, which is shown to serve as a dining room. However, officers are aware that a HMO licence application for 6 occupants is pending consideration. Therefore, the parking requirement will be assessed on the basis of a potential 6 occupants.

7.4.3 Appendix 5 sets out that a HMO, which this dwelling is understood to operate as, should provide 0.5 spaces per tenancy, a total requirement of 3 spaces in this case, based on 6 possible tenancies. Other parking standards that are relevant include Appendix 5 guidance for 4 bedroom+ residential dwellings and the guidance contained in the emerging local plan, which are set out in the table below:

Planning Policy	**6 occupant HMO**	**6-bedroom residential dwelling**
Current Local Plan (2013) Appendix 5	3 parking spaces/0.5 per unit	3 parking spaces
Emerging Local Plan *(currently given limited weight)*	6 parking spaces/1 per unit	2.5 parking spaces

7.4.4 The potential parking shortfall of parking of 1 space in the case of an HMO or 1 space in the case of a residential dwelling is noted. In addition, the parking standards for HMOs set out in the emerging local plan would result in a shortfall of 4 spaces; this guidance, while considered, can only be given limited weight at this time.

7.4.5 The conversion of the pre-existing garage has resulted in the loss of 1 assigned parking space at the host dwelling. The proposed driveway extension would increase the number of assigned spaces to 2, reflecting the pre-existing parking situation at the dwelling. Therefore, there would be no net loss of assigned parking spaces serving the host dwelling. The objection comments of neighbours to the application with regard to parking are acknowledged, it was noted during a site visit that Edson Close appears to be experience parking pressure, with many cars parking on the footway on both sides of the road along the close.

7.4.6 The resulting parking provision would be equal to the pre-existing situation. It would reflect the same parking arrangement as two other dwellings within the same terrace, where the garage has been converted and two spaces provided on the front driveway. As there would be no material change to the amount of parking spaces at the host dwelling as a result of this proposal, and the similar neighbouring developments, it is not considered that a refusal of planning permission on parking would be justified. Therefore, the proposed parking provision is considered acceptable in this regard.

7.5 <u>Rear Garden Amenity Space</u>

7.5.1 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.

7.5.2 The proposed development would not encroach upon the rear amenity space of the host dwelling. 65 sqm of useable amenity space would remain. The host dwelling has 6 bedrooms; therefore, a rear amenity space of 147 sqm would be required as per the Appendix 2 guidance on amenity space. While this shortfall is noted, it reflects the existing situation at the application site and is therefore considered acceptable to serve the host dwelling.

7.6 <u>Trees & Landscape</u>

7.6.1 Policy DM6 of the Development Management Policies 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. The proposed development would not involve the removal of any trees or lie in close proximity to trees.

7.6.2 The proposed development would not require the removal of any trees nor is considered to result in any harm to others.

7.7 Biodiversity

7.7.1 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.

7.7.2 Biodiversity protection and protected species are a material planning consideration during the application process of this application. This is in accordance with Policy CP9 of the Core strategy in addition to Policy DM6 of the Development Management Policies Local Development Document. Local Authorities, in line with National Planning Policy, are required to ensure that a protected species survey is completed for applications whereby biodiversity may be affected prior to the determination of the application.

7.7.3 A biodiversity checklist was submitted with the application this stated that no protected species or biodiversity factors will be affected as a result of the application. The Local Planning Authority is not aware of any protected species within the immediate area that would require further assessment. Owing to the nature of the development with works to the roof a precautionary informative will be added.

7.8 Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain

7.8.1 Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 sets out that every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the 'biodiversity gain condition' requiring development to achieve a net gain of 10% of biodiversity value. This is subject to exemptions as set out in The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

7.8.2 In this case, the applicant has confirmed that if permission is granted for the development to which this application relates the biodiversity gain condition would not apply because the application relates to householder development.

8 Recommendation

8.1 That Part Retrospective **PLANNING PERMISSION BE APPROVED** subject to condition:

C1 Within 4 months of the date of this permission hereby granted, the driveway shall be extended as shown on plan TRDC001 (PROPOSED LOCATION & BLOCK PLANS) in order that it can accommodate two vehicles. The driveway extension shall be undertaken in a permeable material or provision made to direct run off water to a permeable or porous area or surface within the site. The driveway shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure sufficient on-site parking is provided in accordance with Policies CP1, CP10 and CP12 of the Core Strategy (adopted October 2011) and Policies DM8, DM13 and Appendix 5 of the Development Management Policies LDD (adopted July 2013).

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 which includes a fee. There may be a requirement for the approved development to comply with the Building Regulations. Please contact Hertfordshire Building Control (HBC) on 01438 879990 or at buildingcontrol@hertfordshirebc.co.uk who will be happy to advise you on building control matters and will protect your interests throughout your build project by leading the compliance process. Further information is available at www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - Your development may be liable for CIL payments and you are advised to contact the CIL Officer for clarification with regard to this (cil@threerivers.gov.uk). If your development is CIL liable, even if you have been granted exemption from the levy, please be advised that before commencement of any works It is a requirement under Regulation 67 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (As Amended) that CIL form 6 (Commencement Notice) must be completed, returned and acknowledged by Three Rivers District Council before building works start. Failure to do so will mean you lose the right to payment by instalments (where applicable), and a surcharge will be imposed. However, please note that a Commencement Notice is not required for residential extensions IF relief has been granted.

Following the grant of planning permission by the Local Planning Authority it is accepted that new issues may arise post determination, which require modification of the approved plans. Please note that regardless of the reason for these changes, where these modifications are fundamental or substantial, a new planning application will need to be submitted. Where less substantial changes are proposed, the following options are available to applicants:

{\b (a)} Making a Non-Material Amendment
{\b (b)} Amending the conditions attached to the planning permission, including seeking to make minor material amendments (otherwise known as a section 73 application).

It is important that any modifications to a planning permission are formalised before works commence otherwise your planning permission may be unlawful and therefore could be subject to enforcement action. In addition, please be aware that changes to a development previously granted by the LPA may affect any previous Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) owed or exemption granted by the Council. If you are in any doubt whether the new/amended development is now liable for CIL you are advised to contact the Community Infrastructure Levy Officer (01923 776611) for clarification. Information regarding CIL can be found on the Three Rivers website (https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/planning/community-infrastructure-levy).

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. 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. Further information on how to incorporate changes to reduce your energy and water use is available at: https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/environment-climate-emergency/home-energy-efficiency-sustainable-living#Greening%20your%20home

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 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 and/or their agent submitted amendments which result in a form of development that maintains/improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the District.

I4 The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition") that development may not begin unless:

a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be Three Rivers District Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not apply.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because the following statutory exemption or transitional arrangement is considered to apply.

Development which is subject of a householder application within the meaning of article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. A "householder application" means an application for planning permission for development for an existing dwellinghouse, or development within the curtilage of such a dwellinghouse for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse which is not an application for change of use or an application to change the number of dwellings in a building.

Where the local planning authority considers that the permission falls within paragraph 19 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the permission which has been granted has the effect of requiring or permitting the development to proceed in phases. The modifications in respect of the biodiversity gain condition which are set out in Part 2 of the Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (Modifications and Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024 apply.

Biodiversity gain plans are required to be submitted to, and approved by, the planning authority before development may be begun, and, if subject to phased development, before each phase of development may be begun.

If the onsite habitat includes irreplaceable habitat (within the meaning of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) there are additional requirements for the content and approval of Biodiversity Gain Plans. The Biodiversity Gain Plan must include, in addition to information about steps taken or to be taken to minimise any adverse effect of the development on the habitat, information on arrangements for compensation for any impact the development has on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat.

The planning authority can only approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if satisfied that the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat is minimised and appropriate arrangements have been made for the purpose of compensating for any impact which do not include the use of biodiversity credits.

More information can be found in the Planning Practice Guidance online at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain.