

Inspector's Report ABP – 307919 – 20

Development	Demolition of outbuildings and construction of a three-bedroom dormer bungalow on lands to the rear of the existing dwelling 'Matakana' the relocation of the existing vehicular entrance gate and the construction of a shared driveway and all associated works.
Location	Matakana, Grey's Lane, Howth, County Dublin.
Planning Authority	Fingal County Council.
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	F19A/0603.
Applicant(s)	Christina Dwyer and Karl Dillon.
Type of Application	Planning Permission.
Planning Authority Decision	Refused.
Type of Appeal	First Party.
Appellant(s)	Christina Dwyer and Karl Dillon.
Observer(s)	None.

Date of Site Inspection

Inspector

28th day of October, 2020.

Patricia-Marie Young.

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The irregular shaped appeal site has a stated 0.066ha and it is located on Grey's Lane, c0.1km to the south of this restricted in width cul-de-sac lane and c1km from the historic heart of Howth village in north County Dublin.
- 1.2. The site currently forms part of a larger residential plot of land that contains an existing period semi-detached pair that has been much extended and altered since its construction. This includes but is not limited to an attached garage on its western side. The existing dwelling is called 'Matakana' and has a stated floor area is not given in the documentation submitted with this application. This dwelling is served by an existing vehicular entrance that provides access onto the eastern side of Grey's Lane and its staggered front building line is setback c17m from its roadside boundaries.
- 1.3. The existing roadside boundaries consist of a period painted rendered piers and wall. The ground levels appear to rise to the principal façade of the existing dwelling and slopes from the rear elevation towards its rear boundaries. It is along the rear boundary of the site that there are two single storey outbuildings. There is no vehicular access to the rear of the existing dwelling and to the main area of the site due to the presence of an attached garage structure.
- 1.4. The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of architectural styles and built forms. It includes infill development and backland developments. It has a mature established residential character.

2.0 **Proposed Development**

- 2.1. Demolition of outbuildings and construction of a three-bedroom dormer bungalow on lands to the rear of the existing dwelling 'Matakana' the relocation of the existing vehicular entrance gate and the construction of a shared driveway and all associated works.
- 2.2. On the 14th day of May, 2020, the applicant submitted their additional information response. This response comprised of: 1) clarification that 23m sightlines can be achieved in both directions for the proposed vehicular entrance with no works required to adjoining 3rd Party lands; 2) a revised dwelling design that removed a first floor level balcony from the north-west elevation and clarification of the level of storage to be

provided internally within the proposed dwelling; 3) the repositioning of the dwelling house which resulted in a reduction of 600mm in its length and an increased distance from the site boundaries; and, 4) an Arboricultural Report and Tree Protection Plan were also submitted. The revisions to the proposed development were not deemed significant and as such no new public notices were sought.

2.3. On the 9th day of July, 2020, the applicant submitted clarification of additional information. This response comprised of: 1) reiteration that the ambient speed on Grey's Lane is below 20kmph and thus the sightlines proposed meet DMURS standard for 30 kmph speed limit zones.; and, 2) a revised design showing the length of bedroom no. 3 restored to its original length. The revisions to the proposed development were not deemed significant and as such no new public notices were sought.

3.0 **Planning Authority Decision**

3.1. Decision

- 3.1.1. The Planning Authority refused planning permission for the following stated reason:
 - "1. The applicant has failed to demonstrate that the required sightlines can be achieved for the proposed development. In the absence of this information and any necessary third party consents that may be required the development in its proposed form would endanger public safety by reason of traffic hazard."

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The final planning officer's report following the applicant's clarification of additional information concluded with a recommendation to refuse planning permission for the reason set out in Section 3.1.1 above.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

• **Transportation:** Their final report concludes that the clarification of additional information is partially acceptable to them as they accept the results of the speed survey and the proposed sightlines. Notwithstanding, these are shown in the

drawings provided. It is considered that the main issue is that works may be required to 3rd Party lands that have not been indicated in the drawings and no consent has been provided for such works. In the absence of this it is recommended that planning permission be refused.

The Transportation report addressing the applicant's additional information response is of note. It states: "the additional information provided is not acceptable to the Transportation Planning Section. The sightlines provided are for a 30km/hr speed limit as outlined in the report submitted. However, these sightlines are reliant on changes to the existing posted speed limit. The posted speed limit is 50km/hr. That said, the change is currently only a proposal". This report considered that reliance on a lesser sightline requirement than that required for a 50km/hr posted speed limit is premature and the report concludes with a recommendation for the applicant to be requested to demonstrate sightlines of 45m to the north of the proposed access in accordance with DMURS.

The initial Transport report concluded that: "*in its current form, the proposed development would constitute a traffic hazard due to substandard sightlines and limited forward visibility*" and in order to address their concerns additional information was sought.

- Water Services: No objection, subject to safeguards.
- **Parks Division:** Required the completion of a tree survey with this including an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Tree Constraints Plan, Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

- 3.3.1. **Irish Water:** No objection, subject to safeguards.
- 3.4. Third Party Observations
- 3.4.1. None.

4.0 Planning History

4.1. No recent and/or relevant planning history for the site and its immediate setting.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. **Development Plan**

- 5.1.1. The Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 is the applicable development plan for the site and the immediate surrounding area. The site is zoned objective '*RS*' under the said plan which seeks "*to provide for residential development and protect and improve residential amenity*". Residential use is 'permitted in principle' under this zoning objective.
- 5.1.2. The following Development Plan objectives are relevant to development sought:
 - Objective PM41: This objective seeks to encourage increased densities at appropriate locations whilst ensuring that the quality of place, residential accommodation and amenities for existing and future residents are not compromised.
 - Objective PM44: This objective seeks to encourage the development of underutilised sites in existing residential areas subject to the protection of amenities, privacy, and character, while objective PM45 promotes contemporary and innovative design in such areas.
 - **Objective PM45:** This objective seeks to promote the use of contemporary and innovative design solutions subject to the design respecting the character and architectural heritage of the area.
- 5.1.3. The Development Management Standards for the type of development sought under this application are set out under Chapter 12 of the Development Plan. They include the following objectives which are relevant to the development sought under this application:
 - Objective DMS28: This objective requires a minimum separation distance of 22m between directly opposing rear first floor windows unless alternative provisions have been included in the design to ensure that privacy of adjoining properties are not compromised.
 - **Objective DMS39:** This objective specifically relates to new infill development and it indicates that such developments shall respect the height and massing of existing residential units. Infill development shall retain the physical character of the area

including features such as boundary walls, pillars, gates/gateways, trees, landscaping, and fencing or railings.

- **Objective DMS44:** This objective seeks to protect areas with a unique, identified residential character which provides a sense of place to an area through design, character, density and/or height and ensure any new development in such areas respects this distinctive character.
- 5.1.4. The site lies within a Coastal Landscape Character Type and on the prominent headland of Howth, which is also the subject of a Special Amenity Area Order (1999). The Coastal Landscape Character Type is considered to be highly sensitive to development (Table LC01) and the plan sets out principles to guide development in such areas and landscape character assessment policy objectives NH33-NH39. These objectives seek to preserve the uniqueness of landscape character type and ensure that development reflects and reinforces this character with Objective NH36 seeking that new development would not impinge in any significant way on highly sensitive areas or detract from the scenic value of the area.

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

- 5.2.1. There are several Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of this appeal site. The nearest are:
 - Special Area of Conservation: Howth Head SAC (Site Code: 000202) which is located c0.3km to the east of the site.
 - Special Area of Conservation: Baldoyle Bay SAC (Site Code: 000199) which is located c0.8 to the north west of the site.
 - Special Protection Areas: Howth Head Coast SPA (Site Code: 004113) which is located c1km to the east of the site.

5.3. Environmental Impact Assessment - Preliminary Examination

5.3.1. Notwithstanding the proximity of the proposed development to a significant number of Natura 2000 sites as set out in Section 5.2.1 above, given the modest nature and extent of the proposed development and the site's location within a fully serviced urban environment, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. Therefore, the need for environmental impact assessment can be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

- 6.1.1. The grounds of appeal can be summarised as follows
 - The existing dwelling consists of a two-storey detached dwelling served by a vehicular access from a short quiet cul-de-sac (Grey's Lane) with a given width of approx. 4.5m.
 - The two outbuildings located near the rear boundary and are in a poor condition.
 - This application seeks to provide a single detached dwelling to the rear of the existing dwelling in the rear portion of the site with the two outbuildings near the rear boundary to be demolished.
 - It is proposed to relocate the existing entrance and to provide a shared driveway with a right of way to serve the existing and proposed dwelling.
 - Protection of residential amenities of properties in the vicinity will be provided by way of strengthening existing landscaping along the northern, eastern, and southern boundaries of the site. In addition, a screen of landscaping is proposed along the dividing line to the rear of the existing dwelling between it and the semidetached pair it forms part of.
 - The application as submitted demonstrated that sightlines of 23m could be achieved in both directions. This is contended to be the sightlines that the Planning Authority deemed to be acceptable at this location if an ambient speed could be demonstrated to be 30kmph or less.
 - The Transportation Department in their report dated the 16th day of July, 2020, that it was satisfied that the applicant had demonstrated an ambient traffic speed of below 30kmph and as such the 23m under DMURS standard was deemed to be appropriate. This requirement was demonstrated in the documentation provided to the Planning Authority.

- It is contended that the sightlines required can be provided within the applicant's property and that no works would be required on adjoining 3rd Party lands.
- DMURS provides that sightlines of 23m in both directions are based on the standards for 30kmph speed limit zones.
- The further information response provides shows that the traffic speeds are very low on Grey's Lane.
- The Planning Authority in their clarification of further information request then required sightlines of 45m to the north of the proposed access in accordance with DMURS. On foot of this request a speed survey was carried out which showed an average speed of below 20kmph and as such it is contended that the 30kmph speed limit zone sightline standards set out in DMURS should apply.
- Drawing No. 2019-045-AI-100 clearly shows relevant sightlines of 23m and that this can be provided without requiring consents from 3rd Party's.
- It is considered that the refusal in this case is based on an administration error.
- The Board is also requested to accept the design as submitted in response to the Planning Authority's request for additional information, that is Drawing No. 2019-045-Al-200, as it does not result in any undue residential amenity impacts.
- The Planning Authority has supported the principle of the proposed development and that the proposed development is consistent with the established pattern of development in rear gardens in this area.
- The private open space for the existing and proposed dwelling would be significantly in excess of the Development Plan standards.
- An Arboricultural report concludes that the repositioned house with its reduced length would not have a detrimental impact on the health and condition of trees to be retained on site. Tree protection measures contained in this report would be adhered to during construction.
- The proposed development would be connected to existing public water supply and wastewater systems.

 The Board is requested to overturn the Planning Authority's decision for the development sought under this application and as amended by drawing numbered 2019-045-AI-100 and 2019-045-AI-200.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

- 6.2.1. The Planning Authority's response can be summarised as follows:
 - The posted speed limit for Grey's Lane is 50kmph and therefore sightlines of 45m are required to comply with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets.
 - The proposed access constitutes a traffic hazard in the form proposed.
 - The revised design submitted in the Clarification of Additional Information would be the most appropriate design to facilitate infill development without undue impact to residential amenities of the adjacent dwelling and/or future development of the site.
 - It is requested that the Board uphold its decision.
 - Should the Board be minded to grant permission it is requested that a Section 48 contribution be imposed.

7.0 Assessment

7.1. Overview

- 7.1.1. I have read through the documentation, had regard to the relevant planning provisions and I have carried out an inspection of the site. In this case I concur with the Planning Authority's conclusions that as this appeal site is zoned '*RS*' under the Fingal County Development Plan, 2017 to 2023, which seeks: "*to provide for residential development and protect and improve residential amenity*" and also having regard to relevant planning provisions including and not limited to Objectives PM44 of the said Plan which I note essentially encourages the development of underutilised sites in existing residential areas subject to the protection of amenities, privacy and character that the principle of the proposed development is generally acceptable, subject to safeguards.
- 7.1.2. Moreover, I concur with the Planning Authority who raised no significant concerns with the architectural response proposed particularly subject to the omission of a first floor

balcony and the now revised position of the dwelling on site which provides improved lateral separation distances. Nor do I raise any particular concerns in relation to the structures for which demolition is sought as these are building layers that are of no architectural and/or other merit. Further, the existing dwelling 'Matakana' and the semidetached pair it forms part of are not afforded any specific protection.

- 7.1.3. In addition, the proposed development meets the required residential amenity standard for both the existing and proposed dwelling unit alongside the overall design of the dwelling is such that it would not give rise to any undue adverse residential amenity impacts on properties adjoining it as well as within its immediate vicinity.
- 7.1.4. A vicinity which I note is characterised by a varied pattern of residential development including an established precedent for backland and other types of infill residential development.
- 7.1.5. It would also not be highly visible in its setting by virtue of its setting to the rear of a substantial semi-detached property alongside the existing as well as proposed landscaping would result in additional visual buffering. As such the proposed dwelling's visual impact on Grey's Lane and the visual amenities of its setting would be minimal and localised.
- 7.1.6. I therefore concur with the Planning Authority in this case that the proposed development as revised gives rise to no residential and visual amenity impacts that would warrant or support a refusal of planning permission.
- 7.1.7. Taking the above into consideration, it is my view that the issues arising in this appeal can be summarised as follows:
 - 1) The Planning Authority's given reason for refusal.

2) The applicants request that the Board grant planning permission subject to the revisions shown in Drawing No. 2019-045-AI-200 which was submitted as part of their additional information response as they contend that this does not result in any undue residential amenity impacts.

7.1.8. In addition, the matter of 'Appropriate Assessment' also requires examination.

7.2. The Planning Authority's Reason for Refusal

7.2.1. As set out in this report the Planning Authority refused planning permission for the development sought under this application for one sole reason. This reason reads:

"The applicant has failed to demonstrate that the required sightlines can be achieved for the proposed development. In the absence of this information and any necessary third party consents that may be required the development in its proposed form would endanger public safety by reason of traffic hazard."

- 7.2.2. The appellant in their grounds of appeal consider that this decision was erroneously made. As the applicant had been able to demonstrate in the documentation submitted that despite the fact that the access that currently serves the appeal site and the fact that the modified shared entrance that would serve both the existing dwelling known as 'Matakana' and the proposed detached dwelling sought under this application, opens onto Grey's Lane, a public road with a posted speed limit of 50kmph, that this cul-de-sac lane, due essentially to its substandard width and alignment, has an ambient speed of 20kmph. Thus, they content it would be appropriate to apply the DMURS standard for entrances onto roads with posted speed limits of 30kmph. By applying this standard, the applicant has demonstrated that they can meet the DMURS requirement of 23m in both directions.
- 7.2.3. Notwithstanding, the Planning Authority in their response to the grounds of appeal reiterate the concerns raised that the posted speed limit for Grey's Lane is 50kmph and therefore sightlines of 45m are required to comply with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets.
- 7.2.4. In addition, they reiterate that the works required to achieve the 23m sightlines indicated in the survey based on the ambient traffic speeds in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development would require works to lands outside of the applicants ownership and no consent has been provided for these works.
- 7.2.5. As part of the grounds of appeal the appellant has resubmitted a drawing titled "Proposed Vehicular Entrance & Sightlines" (Note: Drawing No. 2019-045-ABP-100). This drawing essentially reiterates that provided by the applicant in response to the Planning Authority's further information response.
- 7.2.6. This drawing shows that where the 23m sightline overlaps with the revised lower in height roadside boundaries that the overlap occurs within the bounds of the appeal site and where the new roadside boundaries have a reduced maximum height of 900mm.

- 7.2.7. It would also appear that it is in process with the Planning Authority to have the posted speed limit of Grey's Lane reduced from its current 50kmph which I consider is an inappropriate speed given its width, its horizontal alignment, vertical alignment alongside having regard to the fact that it has been residential developed along the entire length of its cul-de-sac road frontage.
- 7.2.8. I also observed a small number of vehicles using Grey's Lane during my inspection of the site and its setting. Those using the road at this time appeared to be familiar with the road and its deficiencies with the vehicles travelling at very low ambient speeds. Thus, despite the lack of pedestrian footpaths on either side as a pedestrian on this road I did not feel highly vulnerable as I had ample time to move out of the way of these vehicles.
- 7.2.9. In response to the Planning Authority's clarification of further information request the applicant submitted a document titled: "Speed Survey Report, Grey's Lane, Howth, Co. Dublin". Despite being carried out during a pandemic this was in my view a robust speed survey that was conducted on the 1st day and 2nd days of July, 2020, and from which an average speed of less than 20kmph was captured on both days.
- 7.2.10. Having regard to these findings, the demonstration of being able to provide 23m sightlines in both directions, the fact that the proposed development essentially results in a revised vehicle entrance with what would appear to be improved sightlines onto Grey's Lane, the limited volume of traffic the proposed dwelling would result in when taken together with that of the existing dwelling and cumulatively with the residential development that characterises this cul-de-sac lane, I consider that despite the formal adoption of a lower speed limit by Council for Grey's Lane from 50kmph to 30kmph, that the proposed development would not give rise to any additional road safety and traffic hazard for road users of this lane.
- 7.2.11. I also consider that the applicant is able to provide the required 23m sightlines in both directions without requiring the consent of adjoining landowners to undertake any works to their roadside boundaries.
- 7.2.12. Based on the above considerations I do not concur with the Planning Authority's reason for refusal in this situation and to require the provision of a 45m sightline in both directions would be onerous on a public road whose characteristics are such that

ambient speed of vehicles journeying along it are low for a shared entrance that would result in a modest increase in traffic access and egressing at this location.

7.2.13. In terms of permitting the proposed development subject to the revisions made to the design of the proposed dwelling as set out in Drawing No. 2019-045-AI-200 I raise no objection too as this design change when taken together with the removal of the first floor balcony would result in the proposal not giving rise to any serious injury to the established residential amenities of properties in its vicinity.

7.3. Appropriate Assessment

7.3.1. Despite the sites close proximity to a number of Natura 2000 sites including but not limited to Howth Head SAC and the presence of a drainage ditch on site that arguably results the presence of a hydrological pathway from the site itself to Howth Harbour, I consider that having regard to the modest nature and scale of proposed development proposed, the sites location in a serviced urban area with surplus capacity to accommodate the proposed development, taken together with the information on file which I consider is adequate to issue a screening determination, it is reasonable to conclude, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would not be likely to have a significant effect on the aforementioned site or indeed any other SAC or SPA within the immediate and wider area. I therefore consider that in this case a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, is not required.

8.0 **Recommendation**

8.1. I recommend that planning permission is **granted**.

9.0 **Reasons and Considerations**

9.1. Having regard to the location of the site in a mature residential area and the pattern of existing development in the area, it is considered that the proposed development, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, would not seriously injure the amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity. Moreover, it would not conflict with the objectives of the Fingal County Development Plan, 2017 to 2023. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

10.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application as amended by the additional information plans and particulars submitted on the 14th day of May, 2020, by the clarification of additional information plans and particulars submitted on the 9th day of July, 2017, and by the plans and particulars received by An Bord Pleanála on the 12th day of August, 2020, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. The proposed development shall be amended as follows:

(a) The proposed dwellings shall be in accordance with the first-floor plan submitted to An Bord Pleanála on the 12th day of August, 2020.

(b) Details of all boundary treatments shall be in accordance with the requirements of the planning authority.

Revised drawings showing compliance with these requirements shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development.

Reason: In the interests of visual and residential amenity.

3. Details of the materials, colours, and textures of all the external finishes to the proposed dwelling shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development.

Reason: In the interest of the visual amenity.

4. The windows indicated on Dwg. No. 2019-045-ABP-200 as being glazed with obscure and gradually obscured glass permanently.

Reason: To prevent overlooking of adjoining residential property.

5. Water supply and drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services.

Reason: In the interest of public health.

6. The vehicular entrance serving the proposed development, including works to improve visibility shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works.

Reason: In the interest of amenity and of traffic and pedestrian safety.

7. The site shall be landscaped in accordance with a comprehensive scheme of landscaping, details of which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This scheme shall include the recommendations set out in the 'Arboricultural Report' submitted with this application on the 14th day of May, 2020, and shall include the following:

(a) A plan to scale of not less than [1:500] showing -

- (i) The species, variety, number, size and locations of all proposed trees and shrubs [which shall comprise predominantly native species such as mountain ash, birch, willow, sycamore, pine, oak, hawthorn, holly, hazel, beech or alder] [which shall not include prunus species].
- (ii) Details of screen planting [which shall not include cupressocyparis x leylandii].
- (iii) Details of roadside/street planting [which shall not include prunus species].
- (iv) Hard landscaping works and finished levels.
- (b) Specifications for works associated with the landscape plan proposed.
- (c) A timescale for implementation.

All planting shall be adequately protected from damage until established. Any plants which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, within a period of [five] years from the completion of the development [or until the development is taken in charge by the local authority, whichever is the sooner], shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of residential and visual amenity.

8. Site development and building works shall be carried out only between the hours of 0800 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.

Reason: In order to safeguard the residential amenities of property in the vicinity.

9. Construction and demolition waste shall be managed in accordance with a construction waste and demolition management plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall be prepared in accordance with the "Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects", published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in July 2006. [The plan shall include details of waste to be generated during site clearance and construction phases, and details of the methods and locations to be employed for the prevention, minimisation, recovery and disposal of this material in accordance with the site is situated.].

Reason: In the interest of sustainable waste management.

10. The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, noise management measures and off-site disposal of construction/demolition waste.

Reason: In the interests of public safety and residential amenity.

11. The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority that is provided or intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. Details of the application of the terms of the developer or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme.

Reason: It is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that a condition requiring a contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Act be applied to the permission.

Advisory Note: Section 34(13) of the Planning & Development Act, 2000, as amended, states that: "a person shall not be entitled solely by reason of a permission under this section to carry out any development".

Patricia-Marie Young Planning Inspector

11th day of November, 2020.