

**14A DCSE2007/1872/F - CONSERVATION, REPAIRS AND ALTERATIONS AT HUNTSHAM COURT FARMHOUSE, HUNTSHAM COURT, GOODRICH, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR9 6JN**

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**For: Mr RH Vaughan per Graham Frecknall Architects, 9 Agincourt Street, Monmouth, NP25 3DZ**

**Date Received: 14th June 2007    Ward: Kerne Bridge    Grid Ref: 56246, 17294**  
**Expiry Date: 9th August 2007**  
Local Member:    Councillor JG Jarvis

## **1. Site Description and Proposal**

- 1.1 Huntsham Court is a substantial farmhouse (Listed, Grade II\*) dating originally from the seventeenth century, although with later additions and twentieth century alterations. It is situated on the Huntsham Bridge - Symonds Yat East road. Although the house and main entrance fronts that road, it is well set back and there is only a pedestrian route leading to it via steps up from the boundary walls. At the north end a 3-storeyed (plus basement) gabled extension projects to the front, with 2 further lower, asymmetrical gables projecting from the rear. A 3-storey former barn extends forward and to the south of the main house, with a lower building linking the two. Attached to the north-east corner of the house is a ridge roofed former pig building with lean-to. The vehicular entrance to the property is about 300 m to the north with a narrow access drive defined by low stone walls.
- 1.2 The proposals involve alterations to the exterior and interior of the house. Externally the main changes would be the demolition of the pig buildings (formerly pigsties and a pig swill house) at the north-east corner of the house and erection of a two-storey porch on the north elevation. The porch would be modelled on example found on comparable farmhouses in the South Wales and Marches area. Together with the opening up of blocked windows and creation of a new third floor window to match that existing this would become the new main entrance to the house. Associated with this would be the formation of a new wider drive parallel to but about 20 m to the east of the existing drive and planting of an avenue of oak trees. The drive would then turn to pass under an arch through an imposing barn and farmyard to the east of the house.
- 1.3 Other elevations would have changes to fenestration primarily with architecturally more appropriate windows being fitted together with other minor alterations. Internally the basement of the main house and other disused rooms would be brought back into use and the south wing would be re-configured to provide a staff flat, offices, and a room

for business entertainment/sitting room. The new north porch would be accompanied by a new staircase and other changes to form an appropriate entrance.

## 2. Policies

### 2.1 Planning Policy Guidance

PPG15 - Planning and the Historic Environment

### 2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007

Policy H18	-	Alterations and Extensions
Policy HBA1	-	Alterations and Extensions to Listed Buildings
Policy HBA2	-	Demolition of Listed Buildings
Policy HBA3	-	Change of Use of Listed Buildings
Policy HBA4	-	Setting of Listed Buildings
Policy NC1	-	Biodiversity and Development
Policy NC5	-	European and Nationally Protected Species
Policy NC6	-	Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats and Species
Policy NC7	-	Compensation for Loss of Biodiversity
Policy NC8	-	Habitat Creation, Restoration and Enhancement
Policy NC9	-	Management of Features of the Landscape Important for Fauna and Flora
Policy LA1	-	Areas of outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy LA4	-	Protection of Historic Parks and Gardens
Policy S7	-	Natural and Historic Heritage

## 3. Planning History

There have not been any recent applications for planning permission or listed building consent other than the current applications.

## 4. Consultation Summary

### Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 English Heritage comment that "Huntsham Court is an interesting and quite complex gentry house, the overall history of which is that it declined in status to an ordinary farmhouse but has now risen again to something more like its original status. This gives the opportunity for a major overhaul of this rather battered building, and the rectifying of some mutilations that have happened in the last two centuries. This case highlights the philosophical issues of how far one respects the scars of history on the one hand, and how far one respects the taste and intentions of the architecture.

In the present context, it is reasonable for the owners to expect the building to function better in terms of access and hospitality. That does produce a circulation problem, as it would now be difficult to use the historic front door as the main entrance without greatly disrupting the setting of the building. We therefore accept the principle of a new main entrance on the north side of the building. The proposed two storey porch would potentially accord with the status of the building and give a visual harmony, but would need to be very carefully designed and detailed, and should carry clear evidence that it is a 21st century intervention - such as a date stone with the owners' initials. We live in an eclectic architectural era, and the use of historical imagery is valid today if it is done well.

The main casualty in the proposal would be the north-east extension, an outbuilding apparently of early 19th century date. Our view is that this is a sacrifice worth making in order to revitalise this outstanding historic building, subject to a full archival record being made and deposited in the County HER. However this is a finely balanced issue, and we can see the case for keeping it (perhaps slightly reduced?) in spite of its visual impact on the new north porch.

The other alterations all seem to us to be potentially uncontentious, indeed welcome in most cases, subject to stringent conditions on detail and the scope of the works.

#### Recommendation

Consent and permission may be granted for these works, subject to the considerations summarised above. However any consent should be conditional on your council's prior approval of the exact scope of the works (including repairs) and all architectural details, materials and finishes. A condition should also cover all landscape design and detail."

- 4.2 Ancient Monuments Society felt that the most controversial aspect of the application was the demolition of the 18th century addition to the northern face of the house (referred to as pig housing and swill making). The addition, although it appears to be constructed of different quality stone, and at a later date to the earliest part of the house, is clearly still of historic value. The Committee wondered if this might in fact be former stables. They felt strongly that the presumption should be in favour of retention and urged that the applicant be encouraged to make use of the existing fabric in any scheme for re-orientation.
- 4.3 The Georgian Group advises that "the proposals seek to undertake a range of repairs, reinstate a number of features, and demolish some attached ancillary buildings and construct a new entrance porch to the north elevation. Given the date of the building these works are strictly outside of our area of interest however we feel that it may be useful for you to receive our views on the proposals.

We have no strong concerns over the majority of the proposals however we would like to comment briefly on the demolition element and the new porch. We note that the applicant claims that the single storey buildings (pigsties and a pig swill house) that would be demolished under the proposals are of a late nineteenth century date but the list description for this building places them slightly older at eighteenth century in date. Whatever the exact date of these buildings it is clear that they are historic in character and are part of the development of the complex of buildings at Huntsham Court. Their removal should therefore be strongly justified and inline with guidance on demolition of listed buildings.

Moving onto the new entrance porch, whilst the proposals are clearly well informed and impressively designed they would bring about a significant change in the character of this building and would represent a substantial phase in its development. It is clearly the objective of the proposals to do this and alter the orientation and main external character of the building and in this light we regard the new porch as having a relatively benign impact that does not have a direct harmful impact upon the eighteenth century aspects of this building.

However, the porch would have to be 'enabled' by the demolition of the ancillary buildings to the side and on this point we would recommend that this application be determined in accordance with relevant national and local policy and you should be

entirely satisfied of the argument for demolition before considering consent for this scheme."

- 4.4 The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings comment that "we are encouraged to find that significant parts of the works involve reversing damaging modern interventions with the use of traditional materials and techniques proposed. As such, we would like to focus our comments to the areas of the application that relate to the proposed creation of a new entrance into the house on the north elevation.

Turning first to the proposed demolition of the single storey outbuilding on the north elevation. The outbuilding is attractively constructed and has value as part of the narrative of the historic development of the house. However, it is in itself of limited architectural or historic interest and has always been a somewhat ad hoc and incongruous addition to the house.

It is recognised that setting a precedent for demolition should be discouraged. However, in the context of this application, the demolition of the structure in question might be considered advantageous in restoring the character of the main house. The outbuilding whilst clumsily constructed against the existing house has not been keyed into the existing house and as such its removal would be possible with minimal damage to the main house.

Turning now to the proposed construction of a new entrance porch on the north elevation. Access from the north into the hallway (room 207) makes sense in terms of the internal planning of the house. An existing window opening in the north elevation could be adapted to form a new doorway giving access to the hallway and stair. Whilst the design draws on local C17 precedence and bears a strong resemblance to the projecting doorway at Treowen, it should be noted that the doorway at Treowen, as in the others cited, is on or just above ground level. Therefore it is important to appreciate that the proposed porch would take on a different architectural appearance on Huntsham Court.

The application suggests the re-use of the C18 stonework from the demolished outbuilding for the porch. There is a danger that constructing a new porch whose design is based upon C17 precedent using C18 stonework will confuse the reading of the building and its historical development.

The other important issue to address is with respect to level changes. The internal level at the proposed porch location is almost a storey higher than the external ground level requiring 14 steps to reach it. As such the design of the proposed new porch becomes three-storeys high, which is considerably taller than the existing single storey open-sided porch of the west elevation that sits atop a flight of 9 steps. In scale and design, the proposed porch has considerable impact and strongly asserts itself as the primary entrance to the house, which we believe will detract negatively from the historic westerly entrance. It is important that any intervention should respect the historic ordering of and orientation of the house. The design of the proposed porch would benefit from a reduced scale to reinforce the westerly entrance as the primary historic approach.

To conclude the Society must regretfully object to the application until the concerns raised in relation to the design of the new porch, outlined above, are addressed."

#### Internal Council Advice

- 4.5 The Conservation Manager advises that "the proposed works vary greatly in terms of their impact and the more minor elements such as the internal re-ordering and the refurbishment of the majority of the windows are broadly welcomed.

However the proposal to demolish an attached C18 barn to make way for a two storey tower porch is particularly contentious. The case for this seems to revolve around the fact that as the current vehicular access does not approach the historic 'front' of the building (ie the west elevation), the adjacent north elevation must be 'promoted' to compensate. Whilst such radical re-modelling was not uncommon even as late as the early C20, it is totally out-of-step with current conservation practice, which generally advocates that modern additions to listed buildings should not seek to distort the historical evolution of the building. Furthermore it should be noted that national and local policy resists the demolition of listed buildings as a matter of course without exceptional circumstances and in this case no overriding functional or structural arguments have been made for the demolition of the barn, which is a substantially intact, serviceable structure."

In addition it is pointed out that "the grounds of Huntsham Court, comprising the triangular shaped former orchard to the north of the Court, the formal garden to the west and an area of pasture to the south, have the status of an unregistered garden.

I regret that I would not support the proposed new driveway. The existing driveway, recorded on the map of Huntsham Court dated 1888, is simple, direct and relates to the northern elevation of Huntsham Court. In my view, creating a new, parallel driveway, only 20 metres to the east of the historic driveway, would appear illogical and would detract significantly from the historic driveway, which is an integral part of the unregistered garden. The pastoral field also forms part of the setting of Huntsham Court and building a new driveway through it would be harmful to its character.

I do not consider that avenue planting, which is rather grandiose in character, would be appropriate to this particular unregistered garden. One of the key characteristics of this site is its low-key, agricultural character. This is described in the section on Huntsham Court in 'A Survey of Historic Parks & Gardens in Herefordshire' by David Whitehead as a series of enclosures to productive gardening, as shown on the 1838 tythe map.

The orchards he describes have disappeared over time, with only a few fruit trees remaining, so the orchard character has already been eroded. I am very concerned that avenue planting, particularly if large-scale trees were used, would further erode the orchard character and replace it with a parkland character which is inappropriate to this site. I feel that avenue planting would also appear over-scaled in relation to the court, which is relatively modest in scale. Furthermore, the avenue of trees would appear illogical, in design terms, just as the proposed new driveway would do. Avenues of trees are normally aligned with the principal faade of a building. In this proposal, the avenue would be aligned with the barns, not the court.

I conclude that I could not support the proposed new driveway because I consider that this element would be contrary to Policy LA4: Protection of Historic Parks and Gardens."

- 4.6 The Traffic Manager would object to the proposal unless improvements to visibility of the access can be achieved.

## **5. Representations**

- 5.1 The applicant's agent has submitted a Justification Statement, which the applicant has summarised:

- Huntsham Court is the farm house for Huntsham Farm. It is, and has always been, at the heart of an active farming enterprise. The farm is small by modern standards (386 acres) and changes are now needed to the house to ensure that both the house and farm remain viable into the 21st century.
- Huntsham Farm came into the Courtfield Estate in the first half of the seventeenth century. Huntsham Court was constructed at about the same time. I have been farming at Huntsham for 39 years and arrangements are in place to ensure that the house and farm remain in the ownership of the Vaughan family not only in this, but also in future generations.
- The main interest in the house lies in the way in which it has been altered over the centuries to adapt it to the changing needs of the farming enterprise which it serves. There have been numerous additions to the building over the years and a large number of doors and windows which have been created and blocked up at different times. We now need to continue that process of change but are very anxious to do this in a way which does not damage the historic value of the building.
- The standard of maintenance during the early and middle part of the twentieth century was poor and, although I carried out an overhaul when I moved into the house 35 years ago, I was a young man and my funds were very limited.
- Despite the relatively small acreage of the farm, I have gradually been able to build up a thriving meat supply business on it, involving the rearing of rare breed pigs, cattle and sheep, which makes good use both of the ancient water meadows opposite the house and most of the historic farm buildings behind it. I supply the meat from these animals direct to restaurants and private individuals throughout the country and it is fundamental to my ability to market it that chefs and private customers can visit the farm on a regular basis to see how the animals are cared for. Many of the changes proposed to the house relate to the need to accommodate these visits and to ensure that the buildings present an appropriate 'face' to visitors.
- The farming business has now developed to the point that we can fund the programme of restoration and repair which the house has long needed. Much of the work proposed relates to the need to carry out repairs to stonework, windows etc and to the restoration and reinstatement of architectural features. I have been advised that the overwhelming majority of the work proposed is non-controversial from both a planning and listed building perspective but that there is one aspect, described below, which is potentially controversial.
- One of the changes which has been made to the house over the years is its re-orientation - we think at the end of the nineteenth century - so that the principal access, which had previously been via fine stone steps below the house to the west, became - and remains to this day - from the north. The construction of the nineteenth century north driveway presumably reflected the fact that it was not feasible to arrange vehicular access to the house from the west because of the wall and steps. That constraint was further reinforced when my grandfather gave the road through the farm which runs past the house and the associated bridge over the River Wye to the Council for public use; the road is now quite busy and a new access point would clearly be impractical. Although I propose a minor re-routing of

the drive, therefore, there is no intention of changing the point of access on the road to the north of the property.

- The house has, however, not been changed to reflect the nineteenth century access arrangements and there is no door in the north facade. I propose to construct a new front door and two-storey stone porch on this facade and re-open two stone mullioned windows which were blocked up in Georgian times. The new door will afford access into the heart of the house in the staircase hall. The porch, which has been carefully researched and modelled on examples in the vicinity, will be constructed to the highest standards, I believe this remodelling will greatly enhance the currently rather plain north facade and be an appropriate contribution by my generation of the family to the gradual process of change the house.
- Access to the north side of the house is obstructed, both physically and visually, by a small run of redundant farm buildings adjacent to, though not keyed into, the north east corner of the house. These buildings, which I do not consider to be of any particular architectural or practical merit, were one of the latest additions to the house and I believe were constructed in two phases in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to accommodate pig housing and swill making. At that time, Huntsham Farm, although in the ownership of the Vaughan family, was not occupied by a family member. The buildings appear to have been constructed, not to a very high standard, by the then tenant farmer, out of stone already on the farm.
- The re-use of stone is a feature of Huntsham Court and its associated farm buildings. In the great majority of cases, the buildings are attractive examples of practical vernacular architecture and, although some are over 250 years old, they are in continuing daily use. The buildings on the north east corner of the house are both too small to have much practical use and too close to it to be suitable as pig accommodation in the twenty first century.
- More importantly, these buildings detract significantly from the proposed remodelling of the north facade and mean that the new porch would be cramped next to buildings whose masonry is of a quality very much inferior to that on the rest of that side of the house. If they were allowed to remain, the architectural integrity of the new facade would be entirely lost and it would be obscured from all but the closest viewpoints.
- The stone which has been used in the construction of the redundant buildings is of varying quality but some of it is dressed to the same high standard as that used in the main house. I would want to continue the process of recycling building materials which has been so much a feature of the property and re-use all of the good quality stone in the construction of the new porch, thereby ensuring that it will blend with the existing stonework on the north facade from the outset.

5.2 Goodrich Parish Council has no objections to the proposed application.

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

## **6. Officer's Appraisal**

6.1 These proposals would make extensive repairs and changes to this historically and architecturally important house. Many of these works are not contentious and are

broadly welcomed by English Heritage and the national amenity societies that have responded. These include the internal alterations, bringing back into use parts of the house that have not been used for some time, and making the house more suitable for family use and to assist the farming enterprise. Similarly the external alterations, in particular re-using original window openings that have been blocked up and changing architecturally discordant windows with windows more appropriate to the age and style of the building (primarily stone mullioned with leaded lights) would enhance the house.

- 6.2 The requirement to form a new entrance in the north elevation can also be appreciated. As noted above the existing main entrance to the house is on the west (front) elevation but it is not readily accessed from the parking areas to the north and east (rear) of the house. It is understandable therefore that the north elevation has been selected for the new entrance and this would be facilitated by relatively minor internal changes, including the new staircase. The manner in which this would be carried out has raised concerns however, and the main issue is whether the re-modelling of the north elevation and associated works would harm the character and appearance of this listed farmhouse and harm its setting.
- 6.3 The re-modelling involves the erection of a porch and the demolition of the former pig buildings. The porch would be two-storeyed and the design based on entrance porches of buildings of similar age and style in the South Wales/Marches area. However as pointed out by SPAB internal floor levels require a flight of steps up to the front door (14 steps are shown on the submitted drawings) making the porch 3 storeys in height and markedly different from all the other examples of porches used to inform the design. The removal of the pig buildings although not strictly essential to the new entrance would, the applicant considers, detract from the new entrance and, having no practical use would deteriorate, are not ancient and of no particular architectural merit or historic interest. There is no consensus regarding the age of the buildings, although the listing suggests the eighteenth century rather than late nineteenth/early twentieth century asserted by the applicant's agent or English Heritage's early nineteenth century. It is accepted that these buildings are not in themselves of great interest nevertheless they do illustrate the evolution of the building and removal must be strongly justified as required by guidance in PPG15 (paragraph 3.19). Whilst English Heritage supports demolition as a "sacrifice worth making in order to revitalise this outstanding historic building" the advice points out that this is "a finely balanced issue and we can see the case for keeping it (perhaps slightly reduced?) in spite of its visual impact on the new north porch". In fact the need to demolish the pig buildings is significantly reduced if a more modest entrance is made in the north elevation, as recommended by the Conservation Manager (and reiterated by SPAB).
- 6.4 The result of these changes, together with the otherwise unexceptionable re-opening and insertion of new windows, is to make the north elevation the main façade of the house and detract therefore from the historic (and existing) west elevation. As SPAB points out this would not "respect the historic ordering of and orientation of the house". The Conservation Manager's view is that such "radical re-modelling.....is totally out of step with current conservation practice...that modern additions....should not seek to distort the historical evolution of the building". On weighing these arguments I consider that this last point is the key factor and that the proposals would therefore seriously harm the character and appearance of this Grade II\* listed building.
- 6.5 In addition the creation of a new access drive and avenue would be contrary to this historic garden. As noted above the structure of the garden survives (a series of productive enclosures) even if the planting (largely orchards) has disappeared. As a "home farm" Dr Whitehead points out that extended pleasure grounds or parkland

would not have been appropriate; they were over the hill at Courtfield (A Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Herefordshire). The setting of the listed building would therefore be harmed.

6.6 Other issues raised in the representations include the need to improve visibility at the access and the effect on the bats that are known to occupy parts of Huntsham Court. The former can be covered by planning condition; advice from Natural England is awaited on the latter.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**In respect of DCSE2007/1872/F**

**That planning permission be refused for the following reason:**

- 1 The re-modelling of the north elevation, including the new porch, and the new access drive, would harm the character and setting of this listed building and its historic garden and conflict therefore with policies H18, LA1, LA4, HBA1, HBA2 and HBA4.**

Decision: .....

Notes: .....

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**RECOMMENDATION**

**In respect of DCSE2007/1874/L**

**That Listed Building Consent be refused for the following reason:**

- 1 The re-modelling of the north elevation, including the new porch and demolition of the former pig buildings, and the new access drive, would harm the character and setting of this listed building and its historic garden and conflict therefore with policies H18, LA1, LA4, HBA1, HBA2 and HBA4.**

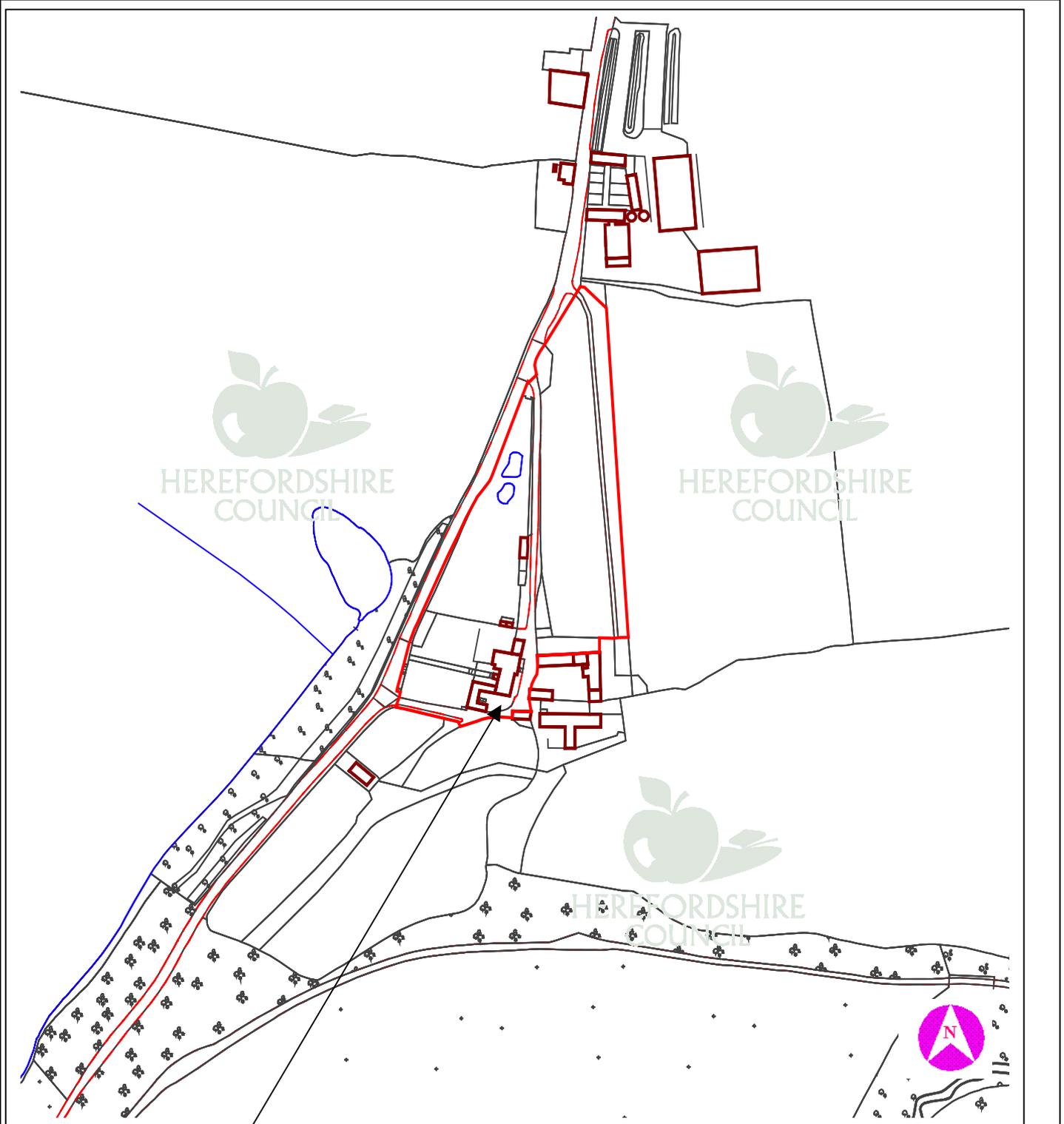
Decision: .....

Notes: .....

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**Background Papers**

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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**APPLICATION NO:** DCSE2007/1872/F

**SCALE :** 1 : 3113

**SITE ADDRESS :** Huntsham Court, -, Goodrich, Ross-On-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 6JN

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