

**10 DCNW2007/2737/F - PROPOSED EXTENSION TO ROOF HEIGHT TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL LIVING ACCOMMODATION AT THE WHITE HOUSE, BIRCHER COMMON, LEOMINSTER, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR6 0BU**

**For: Mr & Mrs J Hargreaves, David Taylor Consultants,  
The Wheelwright's Shop, Pudleston, Leominster,  
Herefordshire, HR6 0RE**

**Date Received:**  
23rd August 2007

**Ward: Bircher**

**Grid Ref:**  
46518, 66226

**Expiry Date:**  
18th October 2007

Local Member: Councillor WLS Bowen

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

- 1.1 The application site is located on 'Bircher Common' an unenclosed commons landscape type, as defined by the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment, and a Special Wildlife site.
- 1.2 The site forms part of scattered cluster of dwellings on the Common, this dwelling is located in a prominent position and is a cottage style 4 bedroomed dwelling of external render construction under a slate roof.
- 1.3 The application proposes raising of the roofline to create a new pitched roof approx. 1.1metres higher, in order to incorporate the rear flat roof extension into the main body of the house, by means of a new roof and creation of a second floor, to provide an additional en-suite bedroom and sitting room.

## **2. Policies**

### **2.1 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan**

S1 – Sustainable Development  
S2 – Development Requirements  
DR1 – Design  
DR2 – Land Use and Activity  
DR3 – Movement  
DR4 – Environment  
H6 – Car Parking  
H18 – Alterations and Extensions  
LA2 – Landscape Character and Areas Least Resilient to Change  
NC1 – Biodiversity and Development  
NC5 – European and Nationally Protected Species  
NC6 – Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats and Species  
NC7 – Compensation for Loss of Biodiversity  
NC8 – Habitat Creation, Restoration and Enhancement  
NC9 – Management of Features of the Landscape Important for Fauna and Flora.

### 3. Planning History

- 3.1 NW05/1301/F - Raised pitched roof and extension to convert attic to domestic accommodation - Refused planning permission on 14th June 2005. Dismissed on appeal 7th February 2006.
- 3.2 NW04/1672/F - Raise pitched roof of original cottage and extension to convert attic to domestic accommodation - Refused planning permission 29th June 2004.
- 3.3 97/0671/N – Erection of UPVC conservatory to front of property. Apporeved 7<sup>th</sup> October 1997.

### 4. Consultation Summary

#### Internal Council Advice

- 4.1 The Landscape Manager has responded to the application stating:  
The application site lies within the Unenclosed Commons landscape type as defined by the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). This landscape is defined by very distinct elements that are particularly well represented at Bircher Common. Amongst these elements is the prevalent use of small, simple wayside cottages of traditional vernacular proportions and style.  
The site is located within a scattered cluster of dwellings on the southern edge of Bircher Common, just beyond the termination of the adopted highway leading up from the village of Bircher.  
The traditional form of settlement in this landscape has resulted in a particular spatial pattern, responding more typically to the harsher conditions encountered in these elevated settings. Settlement has not been dictated by road and field systems, but more typically uses the surrounding topography to either maximise any shelter afforded or passive solar gain (this is particularly notable in the southern orientation of properties around Bircher Common).  
The style and pattern of settlement is intrinsically linked to the historic pursuance of commoners rights, both to settle and manage the land. The current trend to 'aggrandise' dwellings within the Unenclosed Commons landscape type is a departure and negative impact on quality and character of the landscape.

The Herefordshire UDP, through the application of recommendations made within the LCA, aspires in Policy LA2 to encourage the conservation of distinctive elements of landscape. The LCA makes the following recommendation:

'Conserve the spatial pattern, scale and individual character of the wayside dwellings.'  
Whilst the existing building is not unaltered and the flat roof extension to the north presents a negative contribution to the building and the area, the core of the building represents a traditional structure of 'two up, two down' of typical proportions (4.2m span and ridge height of less than 7m). The proposal to nearly double the span of the building proportionally increases the mass of the building and particularly the roof to an unacceptable degree. The pretensions to neo-classicism in the form of a pediment and boss window are also unacceptable.

In conclusion the increase in mass and proposed detailing will result in an over-bearing structure of untraditional proportions, having a negative impact on the quality and character of the area. I would recommend the application be refused as contrary to Policies LA2 and DR1 of the Herefordshire UDP.

4.2 The Planning Ecologist response to the application also recommends refusal stating that the application site is located within a special wildlife site near to extensive areas of woodland, to which there is potential for bats to be present, given the location of the property, and therefore the applicants will need to commission an ecological survey for bats and birds, to establish the potential impacts on protected species that may be present.

4.3 The Transportation Manager raises no objections to the proposed development.

4.4 The County Land Agent also raises no objection.

## 5. Representations

5.1 Croft and Yarpole Parish Council: No response received.

## 6. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 The key issues with regards to this application are:-

- Impact on the surrounding landscape
- Impact on biodiversity

6.2 The application is a re-submission of a previous application refused planning permission and later dismissed on appeal for a proposed increase in height of 1.1 metres, in order to create additional internal accommodation on a second floor. In support of the application the Design and Access statement states this is to provide additional living accommodation for the applicant's disabled son.

6.3 However, there is a slight difference between the dismissed application and the one subject to this application in that the previously dismissed application proposed four dormer windows, two in the rear elevation and two in the front. The current application proposes five roof lights and one frontal pediment containing a round window, this when viewed from either of the side elevations will give the effect of a 'dormer window' development. It must be emphasised the overall height of the proposed development is the same (1.1 metre) as that of the development dismissed on appeal.

6.4 The Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate considered that the overall design and scale of the proposal, particularly the inclusion of the dormer windows would overburden the appearance of the existing dwelling, causing harm to the existing dwelling's appearance and the surrounding area. (The Appeal decision is annexed to this report.)

6.5 The current application is for development of the same increase in overall height. The Landscape Manager has raised concerns about the proposal, stating that the proposed development will have a harmful effect on the traditional vernacular proportions and style of dwellings on the common. The dwelling is in a prominent position as you enter the Common from the public highway known as Welshman's Lane. Bircher Common is an area of landscape traditionally dominated by former rural workers cottages that, gives it a distinctive character.

6.6 The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), aspires in Policy LA2 of the UDP to encourage the conservation of distinctive elements of landscape. The LCA makes the following recommendation:-

*'Conserve the spatial pattern, scale and individual character of the wayside dwellings.'*

- 6.7 The dwelling subject to this application was formally a traditional 'two up, two down' with a 4.2m span and ridge height of less than 7m, to which an additional flat roofed extension has at some point been attached to its rear, doubling both the ground floor and first floor accommodation. However this increase in habitable accommodation although of no architectural merit did not increase the height of the dwelling and has a negligible impact on the dwellings front elevation or on the entrance to the Common.
- 6.8 The latest proposal will proportionally increase the mass of the building and particularly the roof to an unacceptable degree in a neo-classical form that is not typical of the Common, with the introduction of a frontal pediment and boss window that are also considered unacceptable. Policy H18: Alterations and Extensions in the UDP states that the original building, (as originally built) must remain the dominant feature.
- 6.9 Therefore the cumulative effect of the proposed subject to this application and that of the previous rear additional will mean total loss of the dwelling's original form and character.

#### Impact on Biodiversity

- 6.10 The Council's Planning Ecologist has recommended refusal to the application due to concerns of the harmful effect the proposed development could have on bats and birds in the area, which is a designated 'Special Wildlife Site,' in accordance with UDP Policies. The Ecologist recommends that an ecological survey for bats and birds is required to establish the potential impact on protected species that may be present.

#### 6.11 Conclusion

In consideration of the impact the proposed development will have on the existing dwelling and surrounding area, which is of a special quality in light of both its landscape and built character, and the Inspector's recent decision, this application cannot be supported by Officers. The personal circumstances put forward by the applicants, are not considered sufficient to outweigh the harm caused by the proposal, as indicated in the Inspector's decision to the previous application dismissed on appeal.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:-

- 1 The proposed height extension to the dwelling will by reason of its scale and design fail to respect the character and form of the cottage by creating an overwhelming effect on the original structure and character and therefore would be contrary to Policies DR1 and H18 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007.
- 2 The proposed development will have an overwhelming effect on the character and visual appearance of the surrounding area, Therefore the proposed development is contrary to Policy LA2 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.
- 3 The application site is within a Special Wildlife Site and potentially used by bats, (a protected species), to which no Ecological Survey accompanies the application to establish their use of the site. Therefore the application is contrary to Policies NC1, NC5, NC6, NC8 and NC9 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

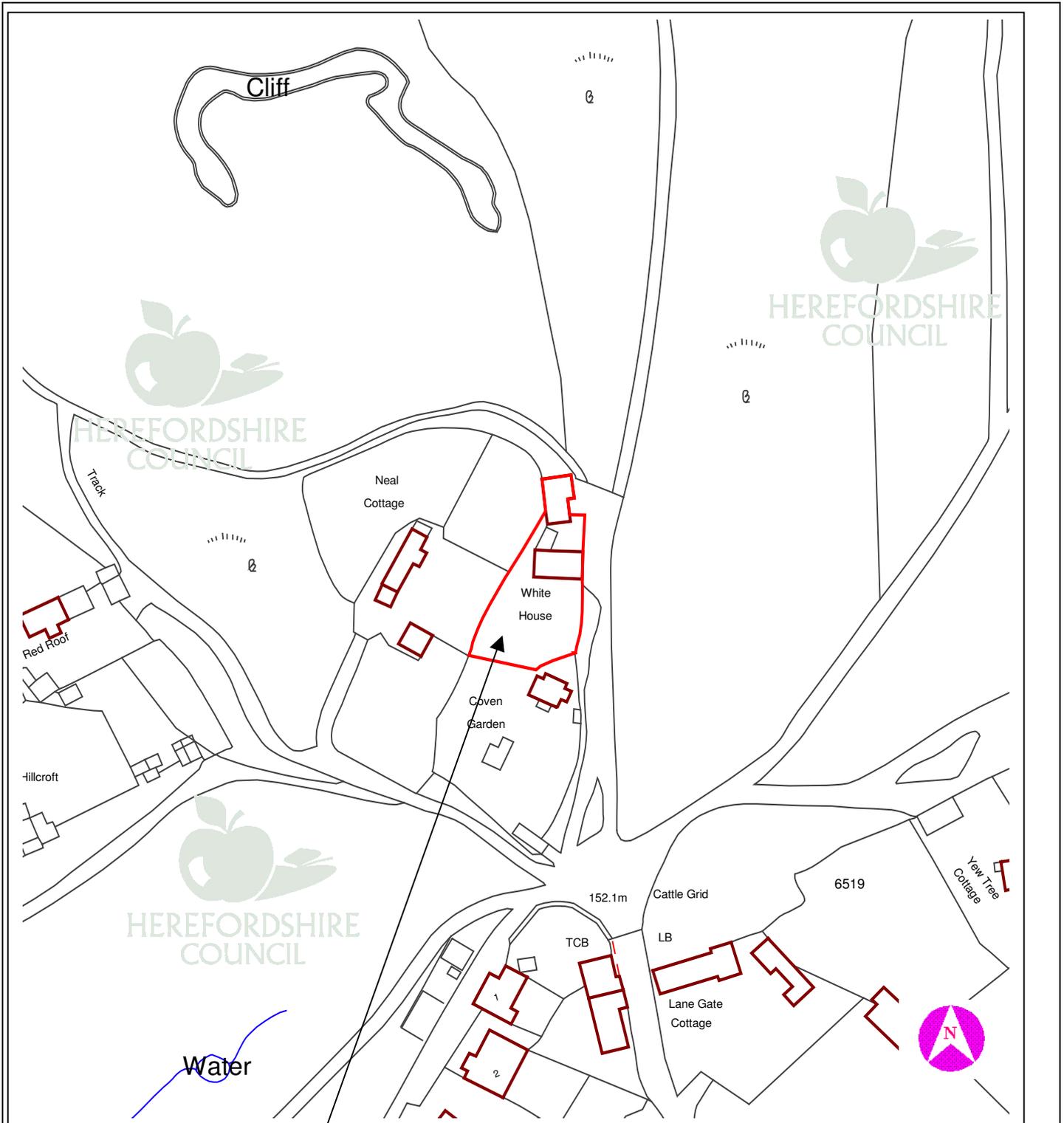
Decision: .....

Notes: .....

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**Background Papers**

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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**APPLICATION NO:** DCNW2007/2737/F

**SCALE :** 1 : 1250

**SITE ADDRESS :** The White House, Bircher Common, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0BU

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