

6 DCNW2006/1310/F - CONVERSION TO RESIDENTIAL USE AT THE OLD STATION HOUSE, ALMELEY, HEREFORDSHIRE**For: Mr J Lewis per McCartneys, 7 Broad Street,
Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 8BT****Date Received:**

27th April 2006

Ward:

Castle

Grid Ref:

32903, 51615

Expiry Date:

22nd June 2006

Local Member: Councillor J Hope

INTRODUCTION

This application was deferred by Members from the Committee meeting of 12th July 2006 to allow members to make a visit to the site which took place on 25th July 2006. There are no further updates within regards to the application and therefore the report is as presented to the previous Northern Area Planning Sub-Committee meeting.

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The structure subject to this application is of stone construction under a slate roof and is located in open countryside surrounded by agricultural livestock grazing land.
- 1.2 The applicant's submission states that the structure formed part of the former Kington - Eardisley Railway Company and was used as the station for the nearby village of Almeley. This railway line closed permanently in 1940.
- 1.3 The structure although undoubtedly of some local historic significance is not a listed building.
- 1.4 The application proposes conversion of the structure to residential use, which entails conversion of the existing single storey structure into a living room and staircase to an underground new build consisting of a kitchen/dining room, bedroom and bathroom/storage. The only visible signs of this proposed new build underground development will be an entrance door to the underground kitchen/dining room by means of double glazed doors and surrounding brickwork. It is proposed that these doors lead out onto the former railway line (not in place) which is on lower ground to that of the former railway station.
- 1.5 The plans submitted for planning consideration indicate a large domestic curtilage with a site allocated to the side for garden sheds and greenhouses etc.

2. Policies**2.1 Leominster District Local Plan**

A1 – Managing the Districts Assets and Resources

A2 – Settlement Hierarchy

A6 – Sites of Local Importance to Nature Conservation

- A9 – Safeguarding the Rural Landscape
- A16 – Foul Drainage
- A21 – Development within Conservation Areas
- A23 – Creating Identity and an Attractive Built Environment
- A24 – Scale and Character of Development
- A60 – Conversion of Rural Buildings Outside Settlements to Residential Use
- A20 – Accommodating Traffic from Development

2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft)

- S1 – Sustainable Development
- S2 – Development Requirements
- DR1 – Design
- DR2 – Land Use and Activity
- DR3 – Movement
- DR4 – Environment
- DR7 – Floor Risk
- H7 – Housing in the Countryside Outside Settlements
- H13 – Sustainable Residential Design
- H14 – Re-Using Previous Development Land and Buildings
- H16 – Car Parking
- NC1 – Biodiversity and Development
- NC4 – Sites of Local Importance
- HBA6 – New Development within Conservation Areas
- HBA8 – Locally Important Buildings
- HBA12 – Re-Use of Rural Buildings
- HBA13 – Re-Use of Rural Buildings for residential purposes.

2.3 National Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

2.4 Herefordshire Supplementary Planning Guidance Re-Use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings.

3. Planning History

NW04/2370/F - Refurbishment for residential use - Withdrawn 25 August 2004

NW04/1542/F - Refurbishment and extension to the old railway station for residential use - Withdrawn 28 June 2004

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Traffic Manager - Has no objection to the grant of permission.
- 4.2 Conservation Manager - No objections subject to conditions with regards to construction materials.
- 4.3 Building Control Manager stated in his response: "I would not by any means go so far as to say that the proposals are not feasible, but a full assessment along with detailed structural proposals would be required from a suitably qualified specialist before we could be confident in the success of this scheme."

4.4 Environmental Health Manager raises concerns about potential land contamination in consideration of the former use of the site as a railway station and line.

5. Representations

5.1 Almeley Parish Council state: "No objections were raised to this interesting plan."

5.2 Two letters of objection have been received from:

P G Beresford, Corner House, Almeley and
Verlie Battenti, The Hazels, Almeley.

The objections can be summarised as follows:

- A dwelling at this location would be out of character with the surrounding area.
- Impact of proposal on adjoining public highway.
- Impact of proposed residential use on historic merits of the building as a former railway station.
- Impact on local bio-diversity.
- Concerns about an extension to the existing building being completely contrary to relevant planning policies.
- Impact of domestication at surrounding land proposed for garden cartilage.

5.3 A letter of comment has also been received from Mrs Ellis-Jones of Campaign to Protect Rural England (Herefordshire). The letter comments on the application being rather over complicated in design.

5.4 A Structural Engineers letter submitted latterly on behalf of the applicant states the following:

'Thank you for the copy of the drawings. We have made a careful appraisal of the proposals on this building. Whilst being very complicated, we can see that by careful needling and underpinning of the gable wall and the returns from here, before undertaking any other works that this can be constructed safely. The remaining areas afterwards can be constructed with the ground battered away from the construction areas. This being necessary as retaining walls will, of necessity, be very slow to construct and without battering the residual faces of the earth would become unsable when dried out. I trust that this is sufficeint for your needs at the moment, but should you have any queries please contact me'.

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

6. Officers Appraisal

6.1 The key issues with regards to this proposal are:

- Impact of proposal on historical merit of existing building.
- Planning Policy in relationship to extension to structure of this calibre.
- Impact on the surrounding countryside.
- Sustainability issues.

6.2 Impact of proposal on historical merit of existing building

The existing building is a simple stone structure under a slate roof and represents a structure of local significance is that it was the former railway station for the nearby village of Almeley. The structure ceased use in 1940 when the railway line permanently closed. The line is no longer in place. Although undoubtedly the structure does attract local sympathy for its retention it is not a listed building and therefore of no significant architectural merit. The development subject to this application proposes to convert it to residential use with an underground addition, as the existing structure has a very small floor area. As part of the application it is proposed to create a domestic curtilage for use by the proposed dwelling. This is large in area and will have a significant impact on the setting of the building, for the proposed car parking, greenhouses, garden sheds and general domestication of the site.

The structural engineers letter advises that the proposed works can be carried out by careful needling and underpinning of the gable wall. As members can see the letter is minimal in content and lacks sufficient information on the required works to be carried out on site in order to satisfy officers that the works can be successfully completed without detrimental harm to the existing structure on site.

6.3 Planning Policy in relationship to extensions to structures of this calibre

Policy A60 on Conversion of rural buildings outside settlements to residential use states buildings should be capable of conversion without extensive alteration, major or complete reconstruction and the creation of any residential curtilage would not harm the character and appearance of the countryside.

Herefordshire Council Supplementary Planning Guidance on Re-Use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings state that: "buildings shall be large enough to be capable of conversion without the need for extensions and any scheme submitted shall be considered in principle as finite. Any scheme using the existing structure as a cornerstone to what will alternatively be a new building will not be supported."

Clearly the proposal subject to this application does not comply with the above-mentioned policies, (The Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan – Revised Deposit Draft also stating similar views).

The existing structure will only create approximately 25.84 square metres of living space to be used as a living room. It is proposed to create the rest of the residential accommodation underground and therefore although not all visible above-ground this is tantamount to the construction of a new dwelling in open countryside and therefore a dangerous precedent created here. It is noted the structure is not of any national significance as it is not a listed building.

6.4 Impact on the surrounding countryside

The plans indicate a large proposed domestic curtilage that will have a significant 'domestication' on the structure and therefore detrimental to the building's local significance. The site is particularly prominent when approached from the Almeley direction. Therefore the proposal also does not comply with Policies A9 and A24 of the Leominster District Local Plan and Policies DR1 and LA3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, Revised Deposit Draft.

6.5 Sustainability issues

This is an unsustainable location is consideration of services, and access to facilities representing development of a building which is unsuitable for residential use without substantial new build development.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

- 1. The proposal represents conversion of a building that is incapable of residential use without significant new build development. Therefore the proposal is contrary to Policies A60 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, Policies HBA12 and HBA13 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan - Revised Deposit Draft and Herefordshire Council Supplementary Planning Guidance on Re-Use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings.**
- 2. The proposed development by means of its surrounding domestication and paraphernalia will have a detrimental impact on the surrounding landscape or setting of the existing building. Therefore the proposal is contrary to Policy A9 of the Leominster District Local Plan and Policies DR1, LA2 and LA3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan - Revised Deposit Draft.**
- 3. The proposal represents development of a building structure that in an isolated rural location that is not connected to local services. Therefore the proposal is contrary to Policy A1 of the Leominster District Local Plan, Policies S1, DR2 and DR3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan - Revised Deposit Draft and National Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.**

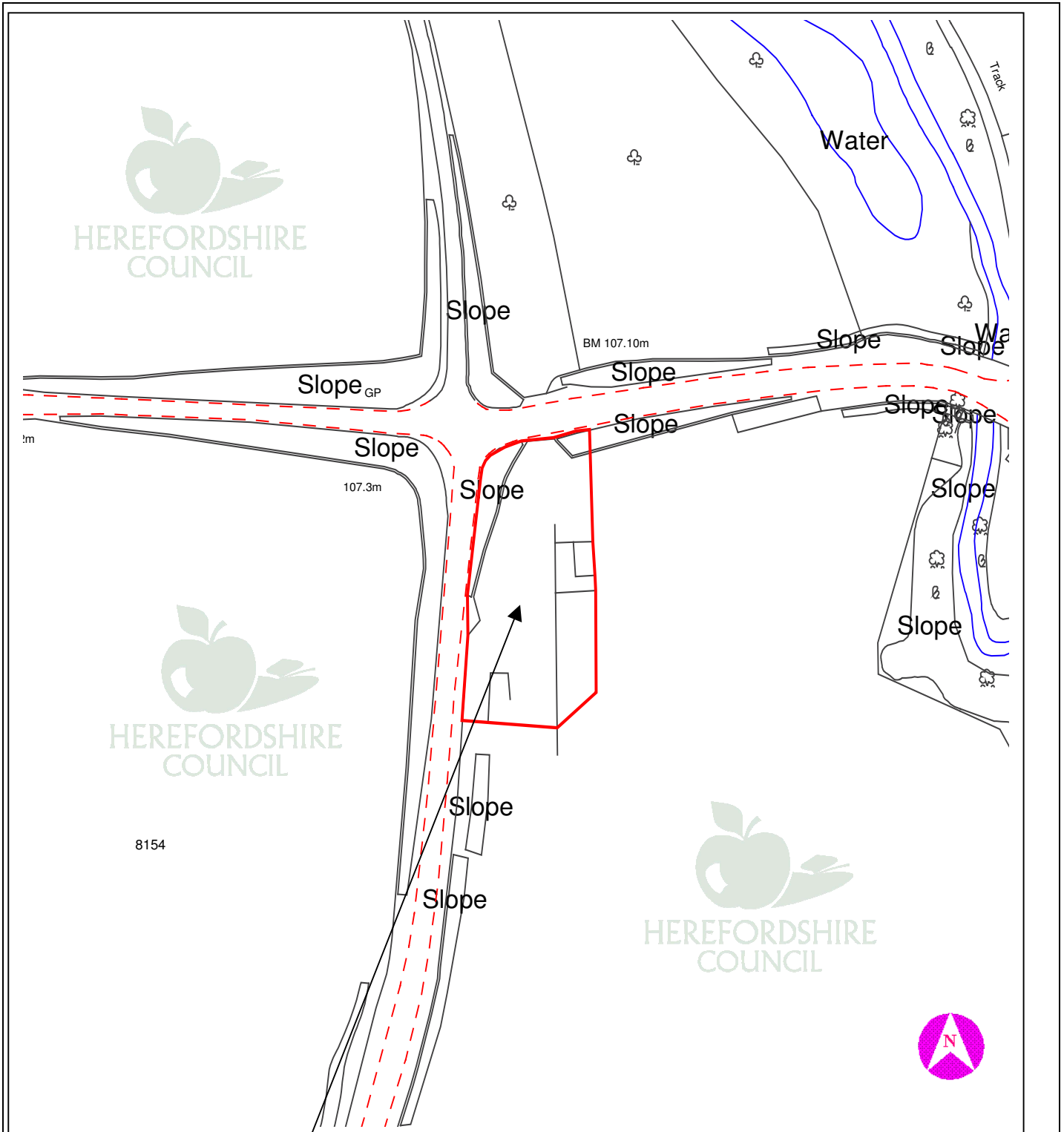
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCNW2006/1310/F

SCALE : 1 : 1250

SITE ADDRESS : The Old Station House, Almeley, Herefordshire

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