

Application for Determination

Parish	Loddon Parish Council	
Reference:	BA/2014/0272/FUL	Target: 01/10/2014
Location:	The Staithe Car Park and Public Conveniences, Bridge Street, Loddon	
Proposal:	Change of use of part of public conveniences to B1 office. Replacement door and new security gate. External alterations to front wall for insertion of prefabricated WC and shower units. New timber bollards. Removal of one car parking space.	
Applicant:	South Norfolk District Council	
Reason for referral:	Director referral	
Recommendation:	Approve with conditions.	

1 Description of site and proposals

- 1.1 The application site is a toilet block situated in the public car park immediately south of Loddon Staithe.
- 1.2 The toilet block is situated at the rear (south-eastern) corner of the car park and is a modest, single storey, brick built structure, orientated on an east-west axis and with its principle elevation facing the staithe (to the north).
- 1.3 Although modest in scale (with a footprint of approximately 12m x 5m), and despite some rather unsympathetic alterations (particularly the introduction of upvc windows and barge boards), the building is considered to be of some significance as it was designed by the architects Taylor and Green, a locally active and nationally significant practice whose work is synonymous with South Norfolk generally and the Loddon area specifically.
- 1.4 At present the building provides separate Ladies and Gents facilities, incorporating 4 toilet cubicles for females and 2 cubicles and a urinal for males. Access to the facilities for males is via an entrance in the west-facing gable, whilst females access via an entrance in the front (north facing) elevation.

- 1.5 This application proposes the reconfiguration of the toilet block to provide one unisex disabled toilet cubical, one standard unisex toilet cubical and a single unisex shower cubicle. The remainder of the building, some 17 square metres (approximately two fifths of the total floorspace), would be used as B1(a) office space.
- 1.6 Each of the proposed new facilities would be housed within a pre-fabricated, self-contained unit which would be inserted into the existing building. This process would require two new openings in the front (north) facing elevation, whilst new windows set within slightly enlarged openings are proposed in the remainder of this elevation to provide additional light to the proposed office space. The units would be automated, self-cleaning units.
- 1.7 The new windows proposed would be anthracite coloured aluminium windows, whilst the doors to the individual units would be powder coated steel finish.
- 1.8 The site lies within the Loddon Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset.

2 Site History

None

3 Consultation

Broads Society – Object:

1. We query the proposal to reduce the facilities so that there is only one regular shared male/female toilet and one for the disabled. The existing toilets accommodate male and female separately in several cubicles. Bearing in mind that during the tourist season there can be up to 15 boats moored on the staithe overnight, each with an average crew of four, this provision seems inadequate. In addition there is a demand by people who use the adjacent public parking area. We therefore suggest that the proposed apparent reduction of facilities is ill-advised.
2. Why and what is the requirement for an office? Will there be commercial usage?
3. There is currently provision of storage for waste and recycling but the new proposal does not seem to include this essential facility.
4. The front elevation of the building appears to be far less attractive than the existing.

Finally, a number of Wherry Close properties immediately opposite will face directly into the cubicles and, from the perspective of residents, this is unacceptable. At present, there is at least an offset entrance to the Ladies.

Properties opposite to the planned development proposal are subject to very strict planning conditions in order to enhance the environment of the Broads. This application does not seem to be consistent with that objective.

District Member Mr Colin Gould – This application can be determined by Planning Services as a delegated decision. I welcome the improvements being proposed.

Parish Council - We consider the application should be approved.

4 Representations

- 4.1 One letter of objection from a local resident expressing concerns identical to those submitted by the Broads Society.

5 Policy

- 5.1 The following policies have been assessed for consistency with the NPPF and have found to be fully consistent with the direction of the NPPF.

Adopted Broads Development Management DPD (2011)

[DEVELOPMENTPLANDOCUMENT](#)

DP4 – Design

DP5 – Historic Environment

DP27 – Visitor and Community Facilities and Services

- 5.2 The following policies have been assessed for consistency with the NPPF and have found to be mostly consistent with the direction of the NPPF; any divergence from the NPPF is due to the detailed content of the policy rather than conflict with the policy direction set out in paragraph 17 of the NPPF, and it is considered that full weight can continue to be applied to the policy.

DP28 - Amenity

- 5.3 Material Considerations

[NPPF](#)

6 Assessment

- 6.1 This application seeks consent for the reconfiguration of an existing toilet block and for the change of use of part of that toilet block to B1(a) office use.
- 6.2 The key issues in the determination of this application are considered to be the principle of the development, the design of the proposed reconfigured block, the impact of the proposed works on the character of the building specifically and the Conservation Area generally, and the impact of the proposed development on the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers'.

- 6.3 Considering first the principle of the development, policy DP27 permits changes of use of existing community/tourist facilities where: 'a' there is an equivalent facility available in the locality; or 'b' it can be demonstrated through a viability assessment that the current use is economically unviable.
- 6.4 In this instance the development proposed would see a reduction and modernisation of the facilities and, as a by-product of this, the use of part of the existing building would be changed to office use.
- 6.5 Considering policy DP27, neither of the criteria set out in the policy deals directly with the situation proposed in this application; namely the reduction in number but improving in quality of a tourist and visitor facility.
- 6.6 With reference to criterion 'a', the reduction in number of toilets will not be compensated for by the provision of additional toilets elsewhere, however it is noted that there are alternative public toilets located at Church Plain some 300m south of the site. Having regards to this existing alternative provision and the improvement in quality and diversity of facilities which would be offered at the staithe facility (with the incorporation of a shower), it is considered that the impact of the development on visitor and community facilities would be neutral.
- 6.7 Accordingly, the proposal is considered to satisfy criterion 'a' of policy DP27 and it is considered that the development is acceptable in principle and that the application should be considered on its own merits and with reference to policies relating to appropriateness of the proposed new use, design, amenity and impact on the character of the Conservation Area.
- 6.8 Considering first the appropriateness of the proposed new use, the site lies within a town centre location and is well served by public transport. There are a number of shops and offices in the vicinity and, as such it is considered to be a sustainable location and one where new office accommodation is acceptable in principle. It is also recognised that the change of use of part of the building opens up the possibility of revenue generation from the property and that this has the potential to help in securing the long term future of this facility.
- 6.9 In accepting the change of use of part of the building to B1(a) use – i.e. office use – it must be recognised that certain permitted development rights apply to this new use, and that these rights would allow for a temporary period of two years a change of use from the proposed B1 use to A1 (shops), A2 (financial and professional services), A3 (food and drink). Permitted development rights would also enable a permanent change of use to C3 (dwelling house), subject to the submission of an application for prior approval.
- 6.10 Given this wide range of possible uses, not all of which would necessarily be compatible with the character of the Conservation Area or, indeed, the operation of a toilet and shower block next door, it is considered necessary to remove permitted development rights which permit the change of use from

the approved B1(a) use.

- 6.11 Turning to the matters of design and impact on the character of the Loddon Conservation Area, the proposed retention of the toilet block is welcomed and it is acknowledged that the applicant has gone to some lengths to balance the requirements of a modern, low maintenance facility against the desire to preserve what is considered to be a building of some architectural interest within the Loddon Conservation Area.
- 6.12 Inevitably, this balance does require a degree of change to the building, however the proposed changes are considered to be relatively modest and there are no objections to the detailed design of the proposal. Considering the materials proposed, only a limited palette of new materials is proposed and the new brick piers (to create new door openings) and new doors (subject to agreeing final colour) are considered acceptable. The proposal to remove the existing upvc windows and replace with aluminium units is welcomed and, on balance, the application is considered to satisfy the requirements of policy DP4.
- 6.13 Considering the impact on the character of the Conservation Area, the retention and works to secure a viable future use for the toilet block building are welcomed and in retaining the building it is considered that the proposal preserves the character of the Loddon Conservation Area. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal accords with policy DP5.
- 6.14 The final planning issue to address is the matter of the impact of the proposed works on neighbouring residential occupiers. This is an issue highlighted in the (identical) responses from both the Broads Society and a resident of a neighbouring property.
- 6.15 The nearest neighbouring dwellings are located across the staithe from the toilet block, a distance of over 70m. Given this distance, and mindful of the fact that the current use of the site is as a toilet block, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any unacceptable impacts on the amenity of any neighbouring occupier.
- 6.16 In response to the concerns raised by the Broads Society and the neighbour, the applicant has also confirmed that the proposed new doors to be inserted into the north facing elevation will have a weighted hinge and, as such, will close automatically.
- 6.17 In responding to the specific concerns raised, the applicant has also confirmed that the development proposed would not require any change to existing waste management facilities at Loddon Staithe.
- 6.18 Having regards to the above it is considered that the development accords with the requirements of policy DP28.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This application seeks consent for alterations to an existing toilet block at Loddon Staithe. The development proposed would improve the quality of the facilities, but reduce the number of facilities available to the public. The proposal would create a small amount of office (Use Class B1a) space.
- 7.2 The site lies at the centre of Loddon and is a valuable community facility as well as being important for river users who can moor up at Loddon Staithe. In this context the retention and improvement of facilities is welcomed. It is considered that the site, which is centrally located and well served by public transport, is an appropriate location for new office accommodation and that the principle of the development would preserve the character of the Loddon Conservation Area.
- 7.3 The proposed alterations to the existing building, which is a structure of some architectural interest due to its provenance, are considered to be sympathetic and, subject to the submission of some additional details regarding materials and method of works, there are no objections to the proposed development on design grounds.
- 7.4 Finally, the proposal is not considered to have any unacceptable impacts on any neighbouring occupier's amenity.
- 7.5 Given the above it is considered that the development is in accordance policies DP4, DP5, DP27 and DP28 of the Adopted Broads Development Management DPD (2011), and the recommendation is for approval subject to conditions as detailed below.

8 Recommendation

- 8.1 Approve subject to conditions:
1. Time limit
 2. In accordance with approved plans
 3. Remove permitted development rights for change of use of office space

8.2 Reason for Recommendation:

The development is considered to be in accordance with Policies DP4, DP5, DP27 and DP28 of the Adopted Broads Development Management DPD (2011)

Background Papers: Planning File BA/2014/0272/FUL

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Date: 23/09/2014

Appendices: APPENDIX 1 – Location Plan

APPENDIX 1

BA/2014/0272/FUL The Staithe Car Park and Public Conveniences, Bridge Street, Lodon

