

Application for Determination

Parish	Martham		
Reference	BA/2009/0021/FUL	Target date	1 April 2009
Location	Left bank of River Thurne, Martham		
Proposal	Installation of six recycled plastic angling platforms		
Applicant	Broads Authority (Mr Adrian Clarke)		
Recommendation	Subject to agreement on materials, approve subject to conditions		

1 Description of Site and Proposals

- 1.1 The application site is on the left bank of the River Thurne at Martham. The site extends for a length of approximately 300 metres along the bank from Martham Staithe.
- 1.2 The riverbank is unplied and covered with a natural reed bed. A public footpath runs along the bank at the rear of the reed bed. Martham Pits fishing lakes lie adjacent to part of the application site and on the opposite riverbank lies Heigham Holmes marshes. The area has a strongly rural character which increases with distance upstream from the staithe.
- 1.3 Sixteen angling platforms sit on this section of riverbank along a distance of 300 metres at fairly regular intervals, accessed from the unmade footpath. These are made of timber.
- 1.4 The proposal is for the installation of six recycled plastic angling platforms to replace six of the existing. Each platform would measure 1.8 metres by 1.8 metres and be supported by four posts driven into the bank. There would be a low level stop board along the river edge, and lower toe boards to each side. The top of the decking on the platforms would stand 30 to 60 centimetres above the mean water level and they would finish flush with the existing river margin, so as not to extend into the navigable waterway.
- 1.5 The proposed recycled plastic material is dark brown in colour with a rough surface texture. Negotiations are ongoing regarding the proposed material.
- 1.6 The proposal is put forward to meet one of the key objectives of the Broads Fisheries Action Plan to redress the perceived decline in bankside angling access in the Broads. The Broads Angling Strategy Group has identified that

the Upper Thurne in particular requires improved bankside access and the Environment Agency and Broads Authority are working in partnership, with the support of the Broads Angling Strategy Group, to provide additional angling platforms.

- 1.7 The application site is within Compartment 7 and there is a current planning application (BA/2008/0378/FUL) for the bank to be strengthened and, where necessary, reshaped. These works, if approved, would create a crest on the bank approximately two metres wide with a level surface, offering improved pedestrian access. There is potential to work with BESL to install these platforms during the flood defence works, if approved.

2 Site History

BA/2008/0378/FUL – Improvement works for 11.4km of floodbank on the River Thurne between Thurne and West Somerton and includes online strengthening, rollback and excavation of soke dykes (material sourcing) as well as a temporary sites compound and associated engineering works – pending consideration and the subject of a report elsewhere on this agenda.

3 Consultations – to be reported orally

Broads Society
Martham Parish Council
District Member
Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Natural England
The National Trust
Environment Agency – Letter attached at Appendix 2
Water Management Alliance

4 Policies

4.1 National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open space, Sport and Recreation

4.2 Broads Local Plan (Saved Policies)

Policy C 6 Development affecting the Upper Thurne and Trinity Broads
Development leading to increased boating use of any kind will not be permitted in the following areas shown on the Proposals Map:

- a) the Upper Thurne;
- b) the Trinity Broads

Policy C 7 Waterside development

Development on or close to the waterside will not be permitted outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map Insets except where it is in accordance with other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

Policy B 11 Design

Development will only be permitted if its scale, form, design, external materials and colour would be appropriate to its setting. New development in the built environment should respect the character and townscape of the area. New development in the countryside should be appropriately located so as to minimise its visual intrusion in the landscape.

Policy TR 19 Visitor facilities and entertainments

Small scale visitor facilities, particularly those related to environmental education and conservation, will be permitted provided all the following criteria are met:

- a) the development would not result in a scale and concentration of similar uses in the vicinity which would be likely to have a significant adverse effect on the ecological and landscape qualities of the area; and
- b) the siting, design, external materials and colour of any new buildings would be appropriate to the character and appearance of the Broads landscape, waterways or built environment; and
- c) any resulting visitor activity would not have a significant adverse effect on wildlife or wildlife habitats; and
- d) the development would not have a significant adverse effect on the residential amenities of any adjoining occupiers.

Amusement arcades, funfairs or other entertainment facilities likely to generate a level of traffic or visitor activity incompatible with the above criteria will not be permitted in the Broads area.

Policy TR 21 Local recreational facilities

New recreational facilities for local residents or visitors will be permitted provided the proposal complies with all the following criteria:

- a) if permitted, the development would not result in a scale and concentration of similar uses in the vicinity which would have a significant adverse effect on the ecological and landscape qualities of the area; and
- b) it would not have a significant adverse effect on open space of recreational or amenity value in accordance with Policy C12 of the Local Plan; and

- c) it would not have a significant adverse effect on the landscape, on wildlife habitats or on the residential amenities of adjacent occupiers.

Policy TR 26 Angling facilities

The development of angling facilities, including anglers' staging, fishing ponds and associated car parking will only be permitted provided that:

- a) it would not have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the riverside environment and surrounding landscape or on areas of wildlife importance; and
- b) the development would provide a good standard of construction and design; and
- c) where appropriate, the proposal is supported by evidence that damage to bankside vegetation will be prevented; and
- d) there would be no significant adverse effect on the residential amenities of adjoining occupiers; and
- e) there would be no significant adverse effect on the use of the waterways.

Policy INF 12 Community facilities

The Authority will permit the development of new buildings, the extension of existing buildings or the use of land to meet a need for local community uses and facilities provided that the development would not have a significant adverse effect on the wildlife, landscape, waterways or built environment of the Broads.

4.3 Broads Core Strategy adopted September 2007

Policy CS 1 Development and changes in land use / management must ensure that all aspects of the environmental and cultural assets of the Broads distinctive landscape are protected, enhanced and restored.

Proposals should ensure opportunities for positive impacts on the following core assets have been addressed and adverse impacts avoided:

- (i) the defining and distinctive qualities of the varied landscape character areas formed by the built and natural environment
- (ii) tranquillity and wildness as part of the Broads experience
- (iii) the value and integrity of nature conservation interest and
- (iv) the character, appearance and integrity of the historic and cultural environment

Opportunities to mitigate the visual impact of currently intrusive features should be sought.

Policy CS11 Tourism and recreational development will be directed to appropriate locations which have the necessary infrastructure and facilities to support such development by:

- (i) identifying criteria for broad areas to ensure a network of facilities, to achieve a hierarchy from high-density comprehensive provision through to low key support facilities; and
- (ii) requiring adequate levels and types of infrastructure and facilities to support development taking into account factors such as accessibility, water quality, sewer capacity, seasonal impacts.

Policy CS17 Safe recreational access to both land and water and between the water's edge and the water will be protected and improved through:

- (i) developing the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network in line with the recommendations of the Norfolk and Suffolk Rights of Way Improvement Plans;
- (ii) developing access to designated open country;
- (iii) identifying and safeguarding potential crossing points of land and water;
- (iv) protecting and improving staithe and slipways;
- (v) creating new access to the waterside by boat (where there is good road access and provision for parking);
- (vi) improving the maintaining launching facilities for small craft;
- (vii) protecting and creating waterside spaces for informal recreation;
- (viii) incorporating appropriate measures for disabled people.

5 Assessment

- 5.1 This proposal is for the replacement of six existing angling platforms. The key issues to consider are design and scale, visual impact upon the landscape, impact upon waterways, effect on amenities, and impacts upon ecology, wildlife and wildlife habitats.
- 5.2 The six platforms which are proposed to be replaced are those most in need of replacement due to their current poor condition. The proposal is not for the replacement of all 16 platforms due to funding constraints. However , additional funding is being sought for the later replacement of the remainder.
- 5.3 In terms of the principle of the replacement platforms, the design and scale of the proposed platforms is similar to that of the existing, although the existing do not have the stop and toe boards that are proposed for the replacements. The decking surface of the platforms and gaps beneath the toe and stop boards would give the platforms an open, lightweight appearance whilst being of a functional design for their purpose. At 30 to 60 centimetres above the mean water level and at a total height of 33 centimetres from the decking to the top of the front stop board; the platforms would result in a low level feature within the reed bed in locations where similar platforms already exist. Therefore, the proposal is not considered to result in any significant additional

visual impact upon the rural character and appearance of the local landscape and is acceptable in principle.

- 5.4 Whilst the design of the platforms is acceptable in principle, there are concerns over the use of brown recycled plastic for construction. This material is more durable than natural timber; however it has an artificial appearance and does not 'weather' over time. It is considered that it is inappropriate in the Broads, and particularly in a strongly natural location such as here. The Authority has resisted the use of such material for other projects and its use here would set an undesirable precedent. Any approval should be conditioned on agreement of a more appropriate material.
- 5.5 The platforms shall finish flush with the river margin, not extending into the navigable waterway and thus not impeding navigation. The purpose of the platforms is to provide bankside angling access and shall therefore not attract any additional boating use to the Upper Thurne.
- 5.6 The existing platforms are utilised by anglers and, although the replacement of six of them would improve the facility, it is considered that it would not result in a significant increase in angling activity. By virtue of the quiet nature of the sport, it is considered that any increased use would not result in any significant adverse impact on the residential amenities of the occupiers of the riverside chalets downstream of the staithe, nor upon the recreational amenity value of the wider area.
- 5.7 Along this stretch of riverbank, the presence the species of the nationally scarce marsh-sow thistle (*Sonchus palustris*) and water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*) have been identified as being present. Although these species may be temporarily disturbed by the works, appropriate mitigation measures have been included and therefore the proposal is not considered to result in any significant adverse impacts on the ecological qualities of the area, wildlife or wildlife habitats.
- 5.8 Angling is a key recreational activity in the Broads that attracts locals and visitors to enjoy the natural assets of the Broads; and also contributes to the viability of the local economy. Therefore this proposal, which represents an opportunity to improve existing facilities and engage with an important stakeholder group, is welcomed.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 In principle, the proposal to replace six of the existing sixteen angling platforms along this stretch of the River Thurne is not considered to result in any significant additional visual impact upon the local, or wider, Broads landscape. The platforms shall not impede navigation or increase boat use on this sensitive stretch of river, and the proposal includes appropriate measures to mitigate against significant adverse impacts on ecology, wildlife and wildlife habitats. The replacement of six platforms will maintain the existing scale and concentration of facilities and is therefore not considered to result in any significant additional adverse impacts on residential or recreational amenities.

The proposed materials, however, are unacceptable and in order for the proposal to be acceptable, agreement must be reached regarding their substitution with timber.

7 Recommendation

Subject to agreement on materials, approve subject to conditions:

- standard time limit;
- in accordance with submitted plans;
- wildlife mitigation measures; and
- materials such as shall be agreed

8 Reason for Recommendation

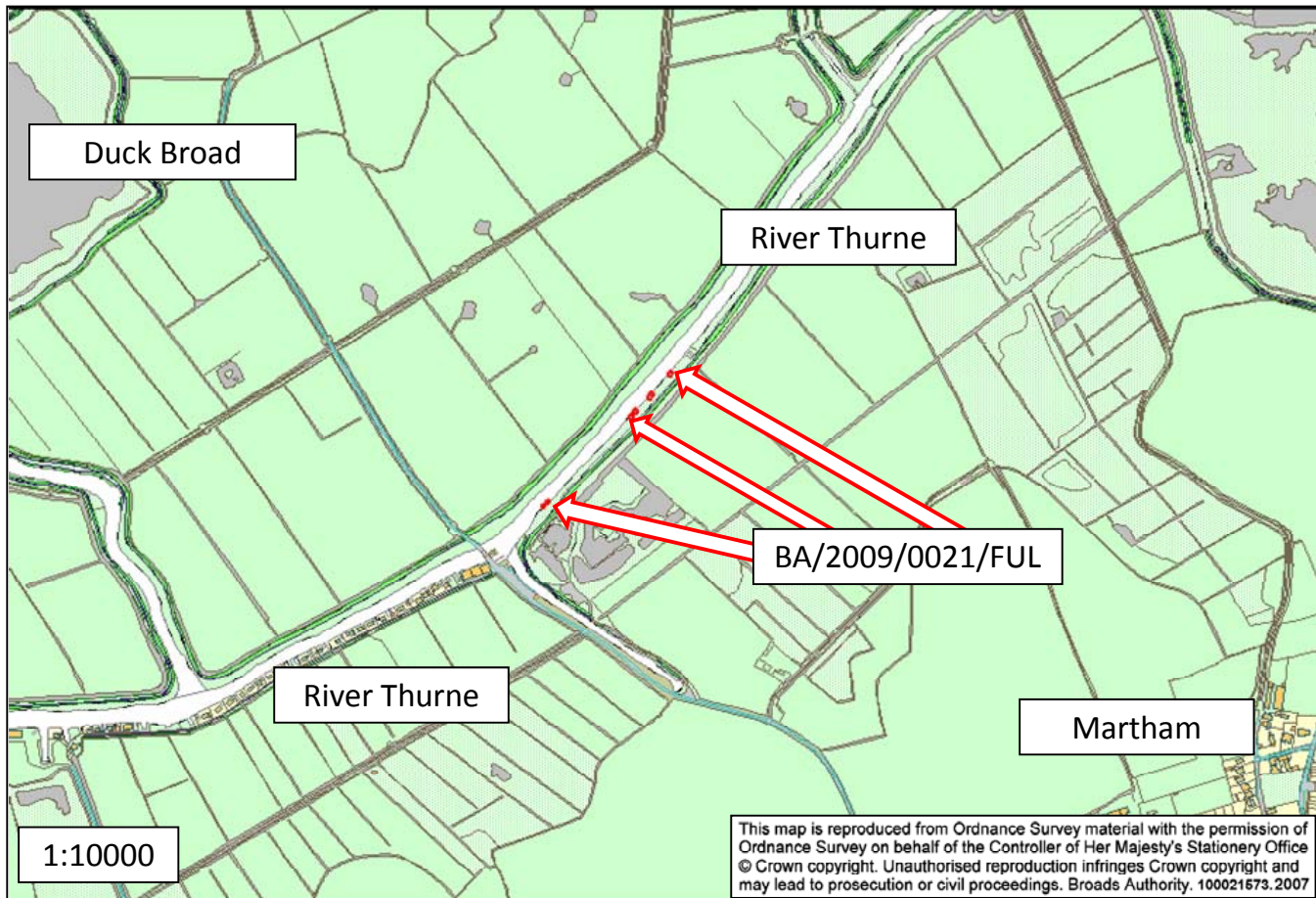
The proposal is considered to be in accordance with saved policies C6, C7, B11, TR19, TR21, TR26 and INF12 of the adopted Broads Local Plan and policies CS1, CS11 and CS17 of the adopted Core Strategy.

Background papers: BA/2008/0378/FUL

Author: Maria Hammond
Date of report: 19 February 2009

List of Appendices: APPENDIX 1 – Site Location Plan

BA/2009/0021/FUL - Left Bank Of River Thurne, Martham
Installation of six recycled plastic angling platforms



APPENDIX 2

**Broads Authority
Planning Committee
6 March 2009
Agenda Item 8(2) and 8(3)**

LETTER FROM ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Our ref Mar/PHigh/Planning/23/02/09

Date 26th February 2009

Dear Adrian,

BA/2009/0021/FUL and BA/2009/0022/FUL – Angling platforms on the River Thurne

Thank you for your email dated 16 February, regarding the current planning applications for the installation of recycled plastic angling platforms at Martham and Potter Heigham.

As you are aware we are hoping to be able to complete these projects before the start of the new coarse fishing season on 16th June 2009, which will form a significant contribution towards fulfilling our shared Broads Fisheries Action Plan objectives. The additional platforms at Potter Heigham will help to provide alternative facilities for anglers, which will help to take pressure off the Broads Authority 24hour moorings during the busy summer period.

We are therefore extremely surprised that visual amenity concerns were not raised with respect to the use of recycled plastic materials at a pre-application stage, given that the Broads Authority were made aware of our intention to use such materials for these projects as early as September 2007.

The use of timber for these projects has been considered, however we firmly believe that on balance the many advantages of using recycled plastic products for these applications outweigh any subjective visual amenity concerns in these locations. Indeed during extensive consultations as part of the on-going Broadland Flood Alleviation Project, we note that the Broads Society has encouraged the use of recycled plastic products as a more sustainable alternative to timber for a number of years. We are also aware that recycled plastic materials have already been utilised in the Thurne valley.

The proposed dark brown-coloured platforms are low in profile and will be situated flush to the edge of the river, set within the extensively reeded margins at these locations. As such we consider that they will be largely screened from view from most angles, either from the river or the floodbank footpaths. At Potter Heigham in particular, the visual appearance of the platforms should be set in the context of the varied frontages and architectural features of the Thurne Bungalows. The existing timber platforms are also screened by marginal vegetation and will be set far enough

apart from the new platforms not to be visible from most angles as a series of discrete features.

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Materials sourced from recycled plastic offer a number of performance and health and safety benefits over wood, as highlighted by the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP):

- **Durability** – Expected lifespan of at least four times that of timber, with little visible wear
- **Reduced maintenance costs**
- **Rot and algae proof** – little or no requirement for maintenance, painting or application of preservative compounds
- **Vandal resistant** – surface texture is more resistant to graffiti and resilient to other types of vandalism. Most recycled plastic products are more difficult to ignite than timber.
- **Insect resistant and crack proof** – recycled plastic products will not dry out or crack and are resistant to attack by insects
- **Non-slip** – Recycled plastic deck surfaces are moulded with a rough non-slip surface and are resistant to the growth of algae in damp conditions. Chicken wire or additional textured materials and subsequent on-going maintenance are not required.
- **Splinter-free** – Recycled plastic does not splinter during construction.

In accordance with our policies on sustainable development, environmental protection and the reduction of waste, we believe the use of recycled plastic materials also offers significant environmental benefits, including:

- Unlike timber, recycled plastic materials do not require treatments or preservatives that are potentially harmful to the environment, both in initial processing and on-going maintenance.
- Recycled plastic products do not leach any harmful chemical compounds into water courses or soil.
- The use of recycled plastic demonstrates a commitment to sustainable development by encouraging a market for such materials and diverting waste from going to landfill. It also encourages an awareness amongst the public of a positive outcome from household waste recycling initiatives.

Given the limited remaining design life of the existing timber platforms at both locations and the need to maintain the existing angling access as part of our shared commitments to the Broads Fisheries Action Plan, we would be happy to work with the Broads Authority to help provide appropriate replacements. We would also be happy to work with your colleagues in Planning and Landscape to identify suitable recycled materials that could be utilised for future schemes.

I trust this has answered the matters raised to your satisfaction. If I can be of further help with this, please do contact me.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN LANE

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