

Former Waterside Rooms, Hoveton: Action for consideration
Report by Head of Planning

Summary: The former Waterside Rooms in Hoveton have fallen into disrepair and this report outlines the options for addressing this.

Recommendation: That North Norfolk District Council be advised of the support of the Broads Authority in instigating compulsory purchase.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The building known locally as the former Waterside Rooms is situated on the south side of Station Road in Hoveton. It is a two storey structure, broadly square in plan form and constructed of brick with a flat roof. It fronts Station Road to the north, from which it is separated by a 7m wide amenity strip, and to the south there is a hardstanding area (formerly a terrace) and an extensive grassed area which faces the River Bure. The Kings Head Public House is located to the immediate east, and the curtilage of both properties tends to merge, whilst the boundary to the west is marked by trees.
- 1.2 The property formerly operated as The Three Horseshoes PH, but has been closed since the 1990s with no intervening use. It has fallen into disrepair and has been boarded up for at least 20 years.
- 1.3 The property was formerly in the ownership of a holding company, and sub-leased locally, however it is understood that it has recently been sold.
- 1.4 Members may be aware that previously there were two other disused sites on Station Road – one was the Broads Hotel site directly opposite the subject site, the other was the former Broads Hotel Cottage which was located to the west. In 2013 and 2014 respectively North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) took action through the environmental protection legislation (specifically s79 of the Building Act 1984) to facilitate the demolition of both properties. This was completed and both sites are now both screened by hoarding pending redevelopment.

2.0 Current position

- 2.1 Complaints are regularly received by the Broads Authority about the appearance of the former Waterside Rooms building and the impact on the amenity of the area. The complaints also relate to the curtilage land, although the Parish Council has been proactive in seeking to manage the land to some degree.

- 2.2 The Broads Authority as LPA has had discussions with the representatives of the previous leaseholders and the landowners, and a potential scheme for redevelopment was put forward in 2015 and agreed in principle. Clearly, this scheme did not come to fruition and the site has subsequently been sold. Discussions with the representative of the new owner earlier this year indicated that they too were committed to bringing the scheme forward, but there has been no progress and no application has been submitted.
- 2.3 The condition of the building and the situation on the site is continuing to deteriorate and there has been no effective management of the site, nor is any looking to be forthcoming. Both the Broads Authority and NNDC are concerned that the new owners continue to leave the building empty and in generally poor condition, and this is significantly detracting from the appearance of the area, both from the street and the river frontage.

3.0 Options for action

- 3.1 Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 confers on a Local Planning Authority (LPA) the power to take action in respect of land (or buildings on land) which is adversely affecting the amenity of an area through the lack of proper maintenance. It states:

(1) If it appears to the local planning authority that the amenity of a part of their area, or of an adjoining area, is adversely affected by the condition of land in their area, they may serve on the owner and occupier of the land a notice under this section.

(2) The notice shall require such steps for remedying the condition of the land as may be specified in the notice to be taken within such period as may be so specified.

- 3.2 These so-called 'Untidy Land Notices' are often used by an LPA to require the repair (and subsequent reuse) of buildings which have fallen into disrepair or to tidy up land which has become derelict.
- 3.3 As a consequence of its condition, the former Waterfront Rooms building is having an adverse effect on the amenity of the area. This effect is manifested through a significantly detrimental impact on the appearance of the area, which is accorded the same status as a National Park, and is exacerbated by the prominence of the location in the centre of Hoveton. This is being experienced by river users, people using the riverside footpath and moorings and pedestrians and other users of Station Road.
- 3.4 The service of a s215 Notice would be effective in achieving a visual improvement to the building, however, the extent of the improvement would be limited by the character of the building itself and could not be used to prompt a beneficial reuse – at best it would tidy up the existing building. Both the Broads Authority and NNDC would wish to see a more comprehensive approach taken in this prominent location, which would see the site redeveloped and brought back into a beneficial use.

3.5 Officers at NNDC have advised that they are prepared to consider the use of the compulsory purchase legislation to achieve the removal of the building and the redevelopment of the site. The mechanism for this would be through the planning legislation and would need to be instigated by NNDC as the Broads Authority does not have these powers. The use of a Compulsory Purchase Order would enable a more comprehensive approach to be taken to the site and would increase the probability of redevelopment. This action would be taken by NNDC, who would bear the cost and then recover it through re-sale.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The Broads Authority has a statutory duty to protect the appearance of the area and, in this case, there are two options for pursuing an improvement here.

4.2 Whilst the powers under s215 of the 1990 Act can be used to require the remediation of land or buildings that are having an adverse effect on local amenity, the use by NNDC of the compulsory purchase powers offer a more comprehensive approach and would be likely to prompt a beneficial reuse of this prominent site.

4.3 It is recommended that NNDC be advised that the Broads Authority would support their taking such action.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 The cost of the compulsory purchase action would be met by NNDC and there would be no implications for the Broads Authority.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 It is recommended that Members agree the above approach.

Author: Cally Smith
Date of report: 13 April 2018