

Planning Committee

18 June 2021

Agenda item number 7.1

BA 2021 0067 FUL The Old Bridge Hotel Site, Bridge Road, Potter Heigham Redevelopment of site to create 12 holiday units, restaurant and parking

Report by Planning Officer

Proposal

Erection of 8 X 1 bedroom and 4 X 2 bedroom flats for holiday use, restaurant at ground floor level and associated car parking.

Applicant

Mr Nicholas Mackmin

Recommendation

Refusal

Reason for referral to committee

Major application

Application target date

25 May 2021. Extension of time agreed 25 June 2021

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1. Description of site and proposals

- 1.1. The application site lies on the south side of the River Thurne at the southern entrance to the settlement surrounding Potter Heigham Staithe. The site is adjacent to Bridge Road and is situated between a grassed area on the bank of the river to the north and a building (chip shop) to the south. Potter Heigham bridge is a scheduled monument and is listed as Grade II*.
- 1.2. The site was formerly the location of the Bridge Hotel, but in recent years been used as a car parking area. The Bridge Hotel was for many years a prominent landmark building of the Broads providing accommodation and refreshments to visitors. In 1991 the building burnt down and in 1993 consent was granted for a replacement building, although no works have occurred and the site remains undeveloped.
- 1.3. In 1999 consent was granted for use of part of the site for car parking for a temporary period. Following a period of unauthorised use after this initial temporary consent expired, further temporary permissions were granted in 2011, 2014 and most recently 2019. The current permission expires on 28 May 2022.
- 1.4. The application seeks permission for redevelopment of the site for the erection of 8 X 1 bedroom and 4 X 2 bedroom flats for holiday use, a restaurant at ground floor level and associated car parking.
- 1.5. The development consists of two blocks (A & B). Block A measures 32m by 10m in floor area. The roof is designed with two monopitch roofs and the maximum height is 8.6m. On the ground floor is a restaurant seating 52 covers and a parking area, including cycle parking and bin storage. On the first floor are 8 X 1 bed flats accessed via external staircases. Block B measures 22m by 11m in floor area. It is similar in design to Block A with a maximum height of 8.6m. On the ground floor are car parking garages and on the first floor, 4 X 2 bed flats again accessed via external stairs. Both units will have a roof void with retractable staircases in order to offer a place of refuge during a time of flood.
- 1.6. The proposed materials are a mixture of black, timber boarding and white render with light grey aluminium windows and either slate or colour coated steel for the roofs.
- 1.7. Outside there is additional parking and landscaping of the open space, although no specific landscape scheme has been submitted. There is a total of 26 car parking spaces.

2. Site history

- 2.1. BA/2019/0111/FUL Extend temporary permission for car park use. APCON
- 2.2. BA/2014/0226/FUL Extend temporary 3 year permission for car parking. APCON

- 2.3. BA/2011/0147/CU Extend temporary 3 year permission for car parking APCON
- 2.4. BA/1999/0555/HISTAP continued use of site as car park for temporary period (3 years) and erection of reed panel fence. APCON
- 2.5. BA/1998/0476/HISTAP Renewal of planning permission no. 06/93/0081/BF for reinstatement of fire damaged building. APCON
- 2.6. BA/1995/0350/HISTAP Temporary car park and boat storage. APCON
- 2.7. BA/1993/0165/HISTAP Reinstatement of fire damaged building and provision of additional dining facilities, site and demolition work. APCON
- 2.8. BA/1992/0139/HISTAP Reinstatement of fire damaged building. Refused.

3. Consultations received

Potter Heigham Parish Council

- 3.1. Not against the development but have several concerns. The Heritage Statement is insufficient. Parking concerns. The design is out of keeping. The proposal is contrary to policy.

Repps with Bastwick Parish Council

- 3.2. Not against the redevelopment but have concerns. Drainage concerns. Inconsistencies with the drawings. Would like to see a restriction on no conversion of garages.

Environment Agency

- 3.2. Following our previous response, we have reviewed the updated information and are upgrading our holding objection to an objection in principle. This is because the proposed development falls into a flood risk vulnerability category that is inappropriate to the flood zone in which the site is located. We therefore recommend that the application is refused planning permission on this basis.

BA Historic Environment Manager

- 3.3. Response to additional Heritage information:

As far as I can see, the minor discrepancies between the plans and elevations have been corrected but no other alterations have been proposed. As such, my previous comments dated 1st April 2021 still stand.

An amended Heritage Statement has been provided. This focuses largely on views, rather than the wider definition of 'setting' (as set out in Historic England guidance) and as such is not considered sufficient for such a highly graded and significant heritage asset.

Original Comments:

The two proposed blocks do reflect the predominant form of buildings in the vicinity, in terms of their positioning, form and massing. However, there are some issues that need to be addressed or require further clarification.

The staggered roof form is uncharacteristic and in order to ensure that the buildings more fully reflect the local character it is considered that a simpler pitched roof would be more appropriate. I would also suggest that rooflights should be kept to a minimum and would prefer them to be removed from the front (south-west) roofslope to block A. I appreciate that they form a means of egress but are there other ways in which this could be achieved?

A palette of materials should be provided, including information on items such as the ground floor columns, external staircases and balustrades. More thought should also be given to the north-west elevation of block B, where there is a row of ground floor roller-shuttered garage doors. Perhaps a partially glazed bi-fold timber garage door, that mirrored the tripartite form of the doors above would be more appropriate?

Historic England

3.4. Response to additional Heritage information:

Historic England objects to the current planning application due to there being insufficient information about the impact of the proposed development on the historic environment. We consider that due to the insufficient information, the application does not currently meet the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraphs 189, 193 and 194.

As noted in our original response, we do not object in principle to the redevelopment of former Bridge Hotel site. However, we reiterate that appropriately detailed assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the setting of Potter Heigham Bridge scheduled monument is required.

Norfolk County Council (NCC) Highways

3.5. No objection subject to conditions regarding the access and disabled parking layout.

Norfolk County Council Archaeology

3.6. No objections

Broads Society

3.7 Supports the principle of redevelopment. Heritage statement insufficient – does not satisfy the requirements of para 189 of NPPF. A simpler building is preferred. Inconsistency with plans. Flood concerns.

CPRE

3.8 Object. Heritage statement insufficient - does not satisfy the requirements of para 189 of NPPF. Does not comply with POT1 in terms of assessment of the impact on the listed bridge.

BA Landscape

- 3.9. Object: The site is in a highly visible and sensitive location with a significant level of public access, public moorings, boatyards, river boat users, adjacent highway and footpaths. I have concerns about the scale/massing and design of the proposed buildings which do not respond sufficiently in terms of local character and distinctiveness for such a prominent site. The proposed elevations facing the river and historic bridge are of particular concern with the use of roller shutter doors and external staircases. External spaces have not been fully considered and would create a suburban feel. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) is required along with a detailed landscape plan.

Broads Drainage Board

- 3.10. No objections- comments provided.

4. Representations

- 4.1. 5 representations have been made with the following comments:
- Drainage concerns- the pumping station will not cope.
 - Concerns about competition from the restaurant.
 - Support for the scheme in improving drainage.

5. Policies

- 5.1. The adopted development plan policies for the area are set out in the [Local Plan for the Broads](#) (adopted 2019).
- 5.2. The following policies were used in the determination of the application:
- DM5 – Development and flood risk
 - DM11- Heritage Assets
 - DM113 – Natural environment
 - DM16 – Development and Landscape
 - DM21 – Amenity
 - DM23 – Transport, highways and access
 - DM43 – Design
 - POT1 – Bridge Area

6. Assessment

- 6.1. The main considerations in the determination of this application are the principle of development, flood risk, the design of the new buildings and the impacts on the historic environment, trees, biodiversity, amenity and highways.

Principle of development

- 6.2. The site is considered to be a brownfield site and the current use of it as a car park does not enhance the appearance of the area or the setting of the adjacent heritage

asset of Potter Heigham Bridge. Policy POT1 identifies the area around the bridge to be further developed and enhanced as a location for river related leisure and tourism subject to the relevant policies of the Local Plan. The application site also has the proviso that particular care will be taken to achieve improvements to the appearance and public realm of the area, development which supports recreation and tourism will be supported and that new holiday accommodation will only be permitted as part of a comprehensive scheme which should include appropriate recreation and tourism provisions. The principle of redevelopment to recreation and tourism uses is therefore supported.

Flood Risk

- 6.3. The application is submitted with a Flood Risk Assessment which demonstrates that the site is within Flood Zone 3b, the functional floodplain, as delineated by the 1 in 20 annual probability event outline and within the Broads Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The Environment Agency have confirmed that residential accommodation and buildings used for restaurants are classed as 'more vulnerable' and 'less vulnerable' respectively and are not suitable land uses in Flood Zone 3b.
- 6.4. The agent argues that the site is 'allocated' for development of holiday accommodation, however Policy POT1 covers a larger area than just the application site and this whole policy area includes existing buildings (a take-away immediately behind the former hotel footprint, and some boat sheds) which could be converted or redeveloped into holiday accommodation. Existing buildings within Flood Zone 3b are treated as being within Flood Zone 3a because the presence of the building stops the land being able to function as floodplain, so development classed as appropriate in 3a could be acceptable. The application site, however, is not developed, so must be treated as floodplain in policy terms. The situation, therefore, is that the area covered by policy POT1 includes land which is within Flood Zone 3a and land in Flood Zone 3b. This explains why it is acceptable for POT1 to identify the site as suitable for holiday accommodation and is consistent with the conclusions of the sequential test which states that: *"Within the entire area, development could be located out of 3b"*
- 6.5. The only suitable development on this particular site would need to be 'Water Compatible' such as boat yards, water based recreation (excluding sleeping accommodation), amenity space, nature conservation, outdoor sports and recreation. As it stands, the proposal is contrary to both national and local plan policies (specifically DM5 of the Broads Local Plan) and cannot be supported.

Impact upon the historic environment

- 6.6. The proposed development site lies adjacent to Potter Heigham Bridge which is both a scheduled monument and a Grade II* listed building. Part of the application site lies within the boundary of the scheduled monument.
- 6.7. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines the setting of a heritage asset as "The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced". The proposed

development site lies within the immediate setting of the Potter Heigham Bridge scheduled monument. The relationship between Potter Heigham Bridge, the River Thurne, and the adjacent riverbanks directly contributes to the setting of the scheduled monument and to its significance. The proximity of the application site to Potter Heigham Bridge means that the proposed development would be visible in key views of the scheduled monument. In particular, in views south and southwest from the north bank of the river between Bridge Road and the A149, from the A149 road bridge and from on the river itself.

- 6.8. The amended heritage statement states that analysis of setting, “is only needed where changes to the setting of the Heritage asset would affect the significance of it or how that significance is appreciated”. Historic England disagrees with this statement. The level of change that a development proposal would have on the significance of a designated heritage asset cannot be established without analysis of the asset’s setting. Further information about the setting of the Potter Heigham Bridge scheduled monument, comprising four views and a brief discussion, has been included in the amended heritage statement. However, no reference is made to *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3. The Setting of Heritage Assets* and the submitted information appears to have been prepared without any reference to the guidance and the assessment processes that it advocates.
- 6.9. Of the four views submitted as part of the amended heritage statement, the last view looking southwards towards Potter Heigham Bridge from the north bank of the river is considered to be the most significant. The submitted view shows the northeast face of the bridge but includes only a small part of the application site. Crucially, the part of the application site that would include Blocks A and B of the proposed development, is not included within the submitted view. As already indicated, wider views of the whole of the application site alongside Potter Heigham Bridge would be possible from the north bank of the river. Consequently, the submitted view is insufficient to assess the relationship between the application site, the proposed development and the scheduled monument.
- 6.10. NPPF paragraph 189 states that, “local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected including any contribution made by their setting” at a level of detail proportionate to the assets’ importance and using appropriate expertise. NPPF Paragraph 194(b) establishes that scheduled monuments and grade II* listed buildings are designated heritage assets of the ‘highest significance’.
- 6.11. The level of information and assessment submitted in the amended heritage statement is considered to be insufficient to meet the requirements of NPPF paragraph 189. Inclusion and full assessment of the key views that include both the proposed development site and Potter Heigham Bridge are necessary for the impact of the proposals on the setting of the designated heritage asset, and any resulting harm to its significance, to be determined.

Design

- 6.20 Policy DM43 of the Local Plan for the Broads requires all development to be of high design quality which should integrate effectively with its surroundings, reinforce local distinctiveness, landscape character and preserve or enhance cultural heritage. The two proposed blocks do reflect the predominant form of buildings in the vicinity, in terms of their positioning, form and massing. However, there are some finer issues that raise concern.
- 6.21 Firstly, the staggered roof form is uncharacteristic and in order to ensure that the buildings more fully reflect the local character, it is considered that a simpler pitched roof would be more appropriate. Ideally, rooflights should be kept to a minimum and it would be preferred if they were removed from the front (south-west) roofslope to Block A. The use of roller shutter garage doors to the north-west elevation of Block B is also not considered to be appropriate.
- 6.21 The application does not include exact details on the proposed materials, which are required, particularly given the historic importance of the site. The application as it stands is therefore contrary to Policy DM43 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

Impact on the landscape

- 6.12. The proposed development will introduce a built form into an area that although used for car parking and therefore not particularly attractive, is devoid of development. The site is in a highly visible and sensitive location with a significant level of public access, public moorings, boatyards, river boat users, adjacent highway and footpaths. Weavers Way runs immediately adjacent to the site and the opposite river bank has publicly accessible open space.
- 6.13. Policy POT1: Bridge Area of the Local Plan for the Broads encourages public realm and landscaping improvements, and proposals that avoid contributions to light pollution and address existing sources of light pollution. No landscape scheme or strategy appears to have been submitted and there is no indication of proposals for lighting. These have been requested from the agent but have not been forthcoming. Furthermore, there are trees along the boundary of the site and so an Arboricultural Impact Assessment has also been requested but again, this has not been submitted.
- 6.14. Due to the lack of information submitted, the proposal is considered to be contrary to the following policies:
- Policy POT1: Bridge Area – criterion (d) in that the application does not clearly demonstrate improvements to the appearance and public realm of the area;
- Policy DM16: Development and landscape - the application does not clearly demonstrate that development proposals are informed by criteria (i) The Broads Landscape Character Assessment (2017) and (ii) Appropriate site-based investigations
- Policy DM43: Design - particularly criterion (k) – the requirement for high quality landscaping.

Other issues

- 6.15. There is no objection from the Highways Authority subject to conditions and so the application is in compliance with Policy DM23 of the Local Plan for the Broads.
- 6.16. There are no immediate neighbouring residential properties and so no issues arising with regards to an adverse impact on amenity. Concerns about business competition are not a material planning consideration.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The application seeks permission for the erection of holiday accommodation in an area at a high level of flood risk, contrary to both national and local planning policies. Furthermore, the application fails to include sufficient information to be able to fully assess the impact on the historic environment, landscape and existing vegetation.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. Refuse for the following reasons:
- The application seeks permission for 'more vulnerable' development in an area demonstrated to be Flood Zone 3b (the functional floodplain) which is not considered to be in accordance with Policy DM5 of the Local Plan for the Broads or the NPPF and NPPG guidance.
 - Due to there being insufficient information about the impact of the proposed development on the historic environment, in particular on Potter Heigham Bridge, both a scheduled monument and a Grade II* listed building, the application does not meet the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraphs 189, 193 and 194 and is contrary to Policy DM11 of the Local Plan for the Broads.
 - The application fails to include an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Landscape Scheme contrary to Policies DM16, DM43 and POT1 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

Author: Cheryl Peel

Date of report: 08 June 2021

Appendix 1 – Location map

Appendix 1 – Location map

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