

Planning Committee

16 August 2024

Agenda item number 9.2

BA/2023/0436/FUL- Three Rivers Camp Site, Station Road, Geldeston

Report by Planning Officer

Proposal

Erection of building including reception area, staff room, on-site shop, three ensuite holiday let rooms, workshop/machinery store. Erection of storage and showers building. Erection of log store and changing room building. Sauna building. Increase in camping pitches from 20 to 27. All retrospective

Applicant

Jodi Bromley

Recommendation

Approve with conditions subject to relevant GIRAMS payment

Reason for referral to committee

Major application

Application target date

28 February 2024

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1. Description of site and proposals

- 1.1. The application site is approximately 3.2 hectares in size forming a rough L-shape and is located to the southwest of Geldeston village. Along the northern boundary there is a dyke and former railway line, on the opposite side is a neighbouring boat yard, moorings and Certificated Location campsite at Rowen Craft. Along the eastern boundary is Geldeston Dyke, which runs from the village staithe to the River Waveney approximately 1km to the south of the site. This dyke allows access for boats and is used by a variety of motored and non-motorised craft. To the west is a small dyke which links Geldeston Dyke to the application site's boatshed and where the water sports users of the site set off and return to. To the south are grazing marshes which in 2020 were designated as a County Wildlife Site. On the southern tip of the application site there is a timber piled jetty and an informal slip way sloping into the eastern dyke at the point it joins with Geldeston Dyke.
- 1.2. Access to the site is via a private road which joins to Station Road to the northeast. Station Road links to the A143 at Ellingham to the west and eventually Gillingham and Beccles to the east either by the A143 or using other rural roads. Station Road is single carriage with no pathway provision on either side. There are dwellings sporadically located along both sides of the road with hedgerow and grazing meadows also present. Station Road is popular with cyclists and to a lesser degree with pedestrians as it links

to regional and national cycle networks and fairly expansive walking and footpath routes in the area.

- 1.3. The village of Geldeston is a popular tourist destination due to its connections to the wider Broads river network. It is also close to Beccles, where there are larger moorings, to Oulton Board and elsewhere on the River Waveney. In addition, as this area is on the quieter stretch of the upper River Waveney, the location is popular with visitors wishing to use paddle craft or hiring them from both the application site and the neighbouring site. The village itself has limited services, however there are two public houses: The Wherry to the east and Geldeston Locks to the south. There is no shop but there are services available in Beccles, which is approximately 7 miles to the east and Bungay, approximately 5 miles to the southwest.
- 1.4. The site has an established mixed use for camping and caravanning with water sports and activity use centred around a pre-existing boatshed building. There are a number of buildings on site, including: a timber clad service building with staff room, on-site shop and workshop with three ensuite holiday let rooms; boatshed with shower rooms, toilets and storage above; log store with two outside changing rooms and a separate sauna building. There is a container and other shed type buildings to the north of the main service building. Guests of the campsite and day visitors can hire paddleboards, canoes and kayaks from the boatshed. The camping ground has a formalised area of caravan pitches with electric hook up. This is directly to the south of the boatshed building. The existing camping ground, which provides 20 pitches, is characterised as a large area of mown and longer meadow grass as well as planting and mature trees along the western and partially along the eastern boundary. An additional seven camping pitches has been created further south from the existing pitches; these are much larger open mown spaces which can accommodate more than one tent/mobile camper per pitch.
- 1.5. The application is seeking retrospective planning permission for various works. Planning permission was granted in 2021 under application reference BA/2019/0412/FUL for the demolition of service sheds and a container and the erection of a new service building; shower room extension to boatshed; enlargement of basin and pontoon to provide mobility access and mooring/charging for electric day boats and visitor berth; play area; increase the number of caravan standings from 12 to 20; hard surface path to south end of site to provide mobility access and improvements to the slipway.
- 1.6. The development approved under planning permission BA/2019/0412/FUL was implemented, however, this was prior to first discharging several 'pre-commencement' conditions of the planning permission. These were, Conditions 3 (External Materials), 4 (Details of construction design and flood resilience construction), 5 (Details of washdown facilities) & 6 (Slipway Construction). In addition, the works that have been completed to extend the pre-existing boatshed and erection of a new service building have not been carried out in accordance with the approved plans and additional buildings have also been erected (log store/changing facilities and a sauna facility)

without formal planning permission. Furthermore, the number of camping pitches has been increased from 20 to 27 without planning permission.

2. Site history

- 2.1. BA/2019/0412/FUL - Demolition of service sheds and container; erection of new service building; shower room extension to boatshed; enlargement of basin and pontoon to provide mobility access and mooring/charging for electric day boats and visitor berth; play area; increase in number of caravan standings from 12 to 20; hard surface path to south end of site to provide mobility access; improved slipway – Approved
- 2.2. BA/2018/0198/FUL - Provision of 12 caravan pitches with electric hook up points and bin stores – Approved
- 2.3. BA/2017/0435/COND - Variation of condition 2: approved plans, and removal of condition 3: landscaping, of BA/2016/0152/FUL – Approved
- 2.4. BA/2016/0152/FUL - Boathouse for canoe and cycle storage, landing stage and retrospective permission for three service buildings – Approved
- 2.5. BA/2007/0317/FUL - Amended proposal: Erection of workshop and site facilities for cycle hire, day boats and electric launches, wc/showers and widening of dyke to provide moorings. – Refused

3. Consultations received

Parish Council

- 3.1. Geldeston Parish Council would like to recommend support of the application, but have a few reservations:

“The issues are that this is yet another retrospective planning application from them. The increase of 20 to 27 camping sites was considered too much. The concern is the 'Geldeston Dark Skies' the SSSI and Ramsar site.”

Environment Agency

- 3.2. Additional documents satisfactorily address earlier concerns set out in the previous letter from the EA dated 22 February 2024. Subject to the conditions set out in the Flood Risk section of the letter dated 09 April 2024, the EA withdraws its objection.
- 3.3. Notwithstanding this, concerns are noted regarding the suitability of the Emergency Flood Plan and whether the buildings have been constructed with appropriate flood resilience and flood resistant mitigation measures.
- 3.4. The EA note these details are the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to determine together with the requirement to apply the Sequential Test and Exemption Test as set out in paragraphs 167 and 170 respectfully of the NPPF.

Norfolk County Council (NCC) Highways

- 3.5. Raised no objection.

Norfolk County Council Public Rights of Way

- 3.6. No objections on Public Rights of Way grounds as there are none in the vicinity.

BA Landscape (Summary)

- 3.7. The area falls within Landscape Character Area 2 Waveney – East of A143 Bungay/Ditchingham to Shipmeadow/Geldeston - an area of calm, tranquil and isolated pastoral character, representative of the unique and important characteristics identified within the LCA.
- 3.8. The site is potentially visible from PROWs BR11 to the west, and FP10 to the east, although the existing vegetation and recent planting is noted.
- 3.9. As a retrospective application, it is difficult to determine the baseline of the site character, noting that part of the proposal had permission but was not carried out fully in accordance with approved plans and the pre-commencement conditions adds complexity to reviewing what the impacts of the proposal.
- 3.10. Regarding the buildings, storage and parking to the north of the site - no landscape objections. Buildings are relatively well screened and close to the entrance route which minimises the impact in landscape terms.
- 3.11. Concerns regarding the 7 pitches to the south and the positioning of the sauna. Additional pitches are very large and could attract more than one tent/visitor group. Whilst all temporary in nature, this is problematic due to the level of activity and noise that multiple visitors create when in groups.
- 3.12. Confused by the planting that has been undertaken and overall landscape management approach - not reflective of the general landscape character of the area.
- 3.13. A naturalistic approach to establishing vegetation in the south would be preferred, and for this area to fit well into the wider landscape setting - woodland/trees would be appropriate. Alternatively, this area should be fairly open, and not accommodate the land use proposed.
- 3.14. Lack of information supporting and justifying this part of the proposal - inclined to object to the use of the southern area for the 7 pitches.
- 3.15. This area of land could accommodate some use as camping pitches but advise the landscape strategy is revisited and clarified.
- 3.16. The sauna would be more sensibly accommodated closer to the north end of the site - this should also be reviewed. Emphasis should be on maintaining a traditional pastoral landscape, which reflects the wider landscape character area.

Recommendations

- 3.17. Revised proposal for how the pitches is set out in the southern part of the site, and landscape led.
- 3.18. Central area to be maintained as more open and serve as an amenity space.
- 3.19. Any approval would need to be conditioned to restrict the number of tents/campers that could use each pitch.

Comments following revisions to the scheme

- 3.20. Previous concerns have been largely addressed by the revised proposals.
- 3.21. Revisions include retention of the sauna in the southern end of the site - confirm no further landscape objection.
- 3.22. Suggest a condition to maintain the use and appearance of the land within the southern end of the site as amenity and not pitches – to preserve the open and rural quality of the land and the tranquillity of the surrounding landscape and intactness of views towards the site.

BA Ecology

- 3.23. Applicant has provided information to show installation of enhancements, lighting scheme and planting schemes which have been undertaken. Enhancements and mitigations are considered appropriate and in accordance with initial requests.

Fire Investigation and Protection Officer

- 3.24. This proposal will need to meet all the functional requirements stated within B5: Access and facilities for the fire service of Approved Document B, 2019 edition incorporating 2020 and 2022 amendments – for use in England.
- 3.25. These sections deal with the following requirement from Part B of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010.
- 3.26. Access and facilities for the fire service B5 (1)
- 3.27. The building shall be designed and constructed so as to provide reasonable facilities to assist fire fighters in the protection of life. (2) Reasonable provision shall be made within the site of the building to enable fire appliances to gain access to the building.
- 3.28. Water supplies for firefighting should be in accordance with ADB Vol 2, Sec 16 and “National Guidance Document on the Provision for Fire Fighting” published by Local Government Association and Water UK.

4. Representations

4.1. South Norfolk Economic Development – summary

The success of the application will see an increase in much needed unique experiences for our visitors. It will lengthen the visitor season within your area and in turn see an increased audience for our wonderful Broads National Plan.

Your support to our work here at the District Council and with the Broads Authority designated DMO 'Visit the Broads' is crucial to the area and your fellow Visitor Economy counterparts.

4.2. More than 50 representations supporting the application have been received. These include some from local residents and from visitors to the site from outside the county. The main reasons for supporting the application include the following:

- Supporting economy and tourism
- Supporting and enhancing local ecology
- Positive and sympathetic contribution to landscape and design
- Sustainable location
- Education
- Supporting local businesses
- Employing local people
- Promoting exercise and wellbeing
- Promotes peace, tranquillity and respect for the environment
- Community involvement
- Clean and well-kept site with high standards, friendly and helpful staff
- Accommodation for different needs

4.3. One letter of objection received from a local resident. The main areas of concern are:

- Noise
- Visual impact and light pollution
- Residential amenity
- Impact on ecology and landscape
- Retrospective application
- The proposal is contrary to policies SP6, DM13, DM22 and DM21 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.

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:
 - DM10 - Peat soils
 - DM5 - Development and Flood Risk
 - DM13 - Natural Environment
 - DM16 - Development and Landscape
 - DM20 - Settlement fringe landscape character
 - DM21 - Amenity
 - DM22 - Light pollution and dark skies
 - DM43 - Design
 - DM23 - Transport, highways and access
 - DM24 - Recreation Facilities Parking Areas
 - DM29 - Sustainable Tourism and Recreation Development
 - DM30 - Holiday Accommodation - New and Retention
 - DM31 - Access to the Water

6. Assessment

- 6.1. The main issues in the determination of this application are the principle of development, impact on the landscape (design/visual impact), highway safety, impact on ecology, neighbour amenity and flood risk.

Principle of development

- 6.2. The application site has an existing tourist use. In 2021, planning permission was granted under application reference BA/2019/0412/FUL for the 'Demolition of service sheds and container; erection of new service building; shower room extension to boatshed; enlargement of basin and pontoon to provide mobility access and mooring/charging for electric day boats and visitor berth; play area; increase in number of caravan standings from 12 to 20; hard surface path to south end of site to provide mobility access and improved slipway.' The scheme was seeking to expand on the facilities already being offered by an existing tourism site.
- 6.3. The current application has been submitted as the approved works under application reference BA/2019/0412/FUL have not been carried out in accordance with the previous permission. Firstly, several pre-commencement conditions attached to this

permission were not discharged. Secondly, the development has not been undertaken in accordance with the approved plans. Thirdly, additional camping pitches have been created without first gaining the appropriate planning permission and finally two further structures, a floating sauna and log store with outside changing facilities, have been constructed without planning permission.

- 6.4. The principle to expand the camp facilities by way of an extension to the existing boatshed, construction of a new service building (subject to removal of existing structures on the site) and extension to the number of camping pitches from 12 to 20 was granted under the previous planning permission and while conditions on this permission were not discharged correctly and the buildings have not been built in accordance with the approved plans, it is acknowledged that the Boards Authority in its capacity as the Local Planning Authority previously approved development to expand the existing site and associated tourism facilities.
- 6.5. The main considerations of the current application are whether the buildings, as constructed, are acceptable in principle and whether the introduction of three ensuite holiday let rooms within the service building together with the introduction of seven additional camping pitches can be considered an appropriate and acceptable expansion to the existing site use.
- 6.6. Regarding the extension to the existing boatshed, this element is in keeping with the built form of the boatshed and offers additional facilities that can be utilised by both day visitors to the site and those staying overnight. It is in keeping with the general Broads character and use of the site and is broadly in keeping with what had previously been approved as it is a small-scale extension to an existing building and the scale, form and materials used in its construction are similar to the approved plans referenced in the previous planning permission (ref: BA/2019/0412/FUL). As such this element of the development is considered to accord with Policy DM20 and DM16 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.
- 6.7. It is also noted that the first-floor area above the boatshed has been used for occasional occupation by the owner and her children. This is no longer the case, and this will revert to a storage area as shown on the drawings.
- 6.8. The construction of the main service building towards to the northern end of the site is a larger building than originally permitted under planning permission BA/2019/0412/FUL in terms of its height and footprint. In addition, some aspects of the proposed use of the building have also been altered during its construction.
- 6.9. Originally, the ground floor of the building was proposed for the storage of bicycles for the hire business that operated from the site together with additional canoes, paddleboards and kayaks. Following the Covid pandemic it resulted in a change of business direction as the cycle hire business did not prove to be successful. As constructed, this area is now occupied by an on-site shop facility with workshop behind. A reception area is located on the front northwest corner with a staff room and one

private en suite bedroom facility with its own access to the rear. The first floor has a further two en suite bedrooms which are accessed via a side door within the eastern elevation and internal staircase. The three en suite bedrooms did not form part of the planning permission granted under planning permission BA/2019/0412/FUL but have been introduced following the Covid pandemic to allow visitors to stay in more permanent and private accommodation.

- 6.10. The service building, as built, has a total floor area of approximately 162 square metres, which is larger than the approved 119 square metres under planning permission BA/2019/0412/FU. However, the principle of a service building was previously granted planning permission in much the same position as the now constructed building. Therefore, in principle, the building is an acceptable form of development in terms of its overall use, including the small shop which provides additional on-site facilities for guests and visitors. In addition, the general form and use of materials are broadly in keeping with the approved building and therefore accords with Policy DM20 and DM16 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.
- 6.11. The main issue to be addressed is whether the principle of the three en suite bedrooms that have been created within the service building is acceptable. Policies DM29 and DM30 are relevant in this regard.
- 6.12. Policy DM30 requires new holiday accommodation to comply with the approach to locations for tourism as set out in Policy DM29, this being either within or adjacent to a defined settlement boundary or being closely associated with an existing visitor attraction/tourism site. The site is a well-established tourism site therefore the new en suite bedroom facilities comply with criteria (a)(ii) of Policy DM29 and criteria (a) of Policy DM30. The proposed use is for short stay occupation on a rented basis and the applicant has provided evidence that the use of the additional holiday accommodation has been successful and is likely to remain so. A register of bookings can be enforced by inclusion of an appropriate condition, should the application be approved, and monitored sufficiently through condition monitoring to ensure the accommodation is used appropriately. In this regard, the application complies with criteria b), c) and d) of Policy DM30.
- 6.13. In terms of the additional structures, these being the sauna building and log store with outside changing facilities, both are relatively small and constructed predominantly of timber. They provide additional facilities that are aligned with the overall use of the site and therefore the principle of development in this regard is acceptable and in accordance with Policies DM16 and DM20.
- 6.14. Finally, the additional 7 camping pitches which were introduced in response to demand for camping facilities, particularly touring pitches. Three Rivers Pitch and Paddle is one of a few such locations in the southern Broads which caters for camping and has direct access to the Broads for water-based activities.

- 6.15. In this instance, the additional pitches are associated with an existing visitor/tourist attraction therefore this element complies in principle with Policy DM29 and subsequently, criterion (a) of Policy DM30.
- 6.16. Notwithstanding this, the individual size of each new camping pitch has been of concern as it would appear from aerial images that more than one tent/camper van can utilise each plot, resulting in a greater number of visitors to the site than if each plot were smaller and restricted to one tent/camper per pitch. To ensure the seven additional camping pitches are not expanded to allow a greater number of visitors that would otherwise be permitted, an appropriate condition is recommended to restrict each pitch to one tent or campervan/motorhome at any one time. This will enable the Local Planning Authority to monitor the usage and take enforcement action should there be a breach of condition.

Impact on the landscape – design/visual impact

- 6.17. The site lies within Landscape Character Area 2 in the Authority's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and is in an area of drained peat or clay/peat mix adjacent to the river Waveney. This is an area generally of calm, tranquil and isolated pastoral character, and in this sense the site is representative of the unique and important characteristics identified within the LCA. The Settlement Fringe Policy DM20 is relevant here due to the location together with Policy DM16 – Development and Landscape.
- 6.18. In terms of impact on landscape, the main considerations are the extension to the boatshed, construction of the service building, outside sauna, log store with changing facilities and increased camping pitches.
- 6.19. The extension to the existing boatshed is in keeping with the built form of the boatshed offering additional facilities to both day visitors to the site and those staying overnight. It is a small extension that is in keeping with the general Broads character and use of the site and is broadly in keeping with what had previously been approved and the materials used in its construction. As such this element of the development is considered to accord with Policy DM20 and DM16 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.
- 6.20. The service building, as built, is larger than the approved plans under planning permission BA/2019/0412/FUL not only in floor area but also overall height, which is 9.77m while the approved building which had an overall height of 7.8m. The overall location, general form and use of materials as constructed, are broadly in keeping with the approved building under the previous application. Its location, to the back of the site, is relatively unobtrusive to the wider landscape with existing mature trees and shrubs providing a good degree of screening from the wider area. The colour and finish of the service building is also recessive resulting in a less than harmful impact on the landscape character of the area. As such this element of the development is considered to accord with Policy DM20 and DM16 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.
- 6.21. The sauna structure has been relocated from its original position within the dyke to the west of the site as this was not considered to be water compatible development in

Flood Zone 3b and raised a landscape impact concern. The revised position is on a grassed area at the southwestern end of the site. Given the structure is small and whilst will be visible, its scale and materials mean that the structure will become weathered and less obtrusive over time. The structure is considered acceptable and complies with Policies DM16 and DM20 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.

- 6.22. The log store with outside changing facilities is a small structure located along the southwestern boundary to the rear of the boatshed. It is screened by mature trees and shrubs along the southwestern boundary and as such is not significantly visible from outside of the site. It is a small steel framed structure with mono-pitched metal sheeting roof with timber cladding to the sides and rear and changing room doors. The structure provides additional facilities that are aligned with the overall use of the site and therefore the principle of development is considered acceptable and in accordance with Policies DM16 and DM20.
- 6.23. Concerns were raised regarding the seven additional camping pitches as they are very large and as such could attract more than one tent/visitor group creating significant levels of visual clutter into an area which is otherwise a tranquil and isolated pastoral character. Amendments have been provided. The size of each pitch has been significantly reduced and all seven pitches have been relocated towards the northern end of the site forming a better relationship with the existing camping pitches and cluster of operational buildings. In addition, further planting will be undertaken to create a more naturalistic approach to establishing vegetation in the south, which will fit well with the wider landscape setting. Proposed native copses will also be introduced in several areas, as shown on the Amended Proposed Additional Pitches layout plan, submitted 17 June 2024.
- 6.24. The Landscape Architect has confirmed that previous concerns have been largely addressed by the revised proposals and that the comments made have been taken on board. This revision includes retention of the sauna in the southern end of the site, which is acceptable resulting in no further concerns being noted.
- 6.25. It is recommended, by way of a condition, that the southern end of the site is retained as amenity land and not pitches to preserve the open and rural quality of the land which will help to retain the tranquillity of the surrounding landscape and the intactness of views towards the site.
- 6.26. On balance, following amendments the proposal is acceptable and complies with Policies DM16 and DM20 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.

Highway safety

- 6.27. The Highway Authority (HA) has provided its comments and offers no objection to the retention of the buildings as constructed or the increase in camping pitches from 20 to 27. It acknowledges the increased pitches will/have increased vehicle movements to and from the site and they are minded of the nature of the local highway network. However, the NPPF expressly states that development should only be prevented or

refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. Having considered these points, the HA felt that it would be difficult to sustain an objection on either of these grounds. The scheme therefore complies with Policy DM23.

Impact on ecology

- 6.28. Initially, the BA Ecologist noted that all biodiversity mitigation measures, and biodiversity enhancements are still required for this development. Lighting conditions from the previous application still apply and biodiversity enhancements and planting scheme remains relevant.
- 6.29. Additional information provided as part of the current application enabled the BA Ecologist to confirm the installation of enhancements, lighting scheme and planting schemes which has been undertaken are considered appropriate and in accordance with initial requests. It is therefore concluded that scheme is in accordance with Policies DM13 and DM22 of the Local Plan for the Broads2019.

Neighbour amenity

- 6.30. A large number of representations have been submitted with the vast majority being supportive of the development, as built. However, it is recognised many of these are from visitors to the site that do not live in the local area.
- 6.31. One objection was received from a local resident citing noise, visual impact, light pollution, residential amenity and impact on ecology and landscape as reasons for the objection. They also note the application is retrospective and state it is contrary to policies SP6, DM13, DM22 and DM21 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.
- 6.32. While it is acknowledged the increase in accommodation on the site and the introduction of additional pitches will give rise to increased noise and visual clutter, amendments to the scheme, following concerns raised by the BA Landscape Architect, have resulted in the seven additional pitches being reduced significantly in size and relocated further north towards the existing twenty camping pitches.
- 6.33. Additional landscaping is also proposed as noted above. These amendments will help to ensure that the concentration of camping facilities is to the north of the site reducing visual impacts, and noise and light pollution on the wider area to the south. In addition, the seven additional pitches will be restricted to single pitches for one tent or camper van/motor home at any time. Furthermore, no further lighting will be allowed unless otherwise agreed in writing with the LPA following submission of an appropriate planning application.
- 6.34. In terms of ecology, the BA Ecologist has reviewed the information and following additional details provided as part of the application, has confirmed the installation of enhancements, a lighting scheme and planting that has been undertaken and considered appropriate and in accordance with initial requests required as part of

application reference BA/2019/0412/FUL. It is therefore concluded that the scheme is in accordance with Policies DM13 and DM22 of Local Plan for the Broads 2019.

- 6.35. On balance, taking into account that the site is an existing camping and caravan facility providing access to the water, with the additional planting, relocation and reduction in size to the seven additional pitches proposed, and given the site is screened along the northwest and western boundary and partially to the northeast, the increase in accommodation is not considered to have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of existing or potential neighbouring properties or their uses. The development, as built, is in accordance with Policy DM21 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.

Flood risk

- 6.36. The site lies within fluvial and tidal Flood Zone 3a and 3b, defined by the 'Planning Practice Guidance: Flood Risk and Coastal Change' as having a high probability of flooding. The proposal is classified, overall, as a 'more vulnerable' development, as defined in Annex 3: Flood Vulnerability classification of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). To comply with national policy the application is required to pass the Sequential and Exception Tests and be supported by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment.
- 6.37. Additional information regarding flood risk and ground level surveys together with relocation of the sauna building has enabled the Environment Agency (EA) to withdraw the initial objection to the development. Concerns remain regarding aspects of the Emergency Flood Plan (EFP), lack of detail regarding flood resilient and flood resistant construction in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment, dated November 2023, and the unknown construction method of the sauna.
- 6.38. Initially the EFP stated the Managing Director of Three Rivers Pitch and Paddle would make a decision on the actions to be taken on receipt of a Flood Warning. The EA strongly recommends this action is taken before a Flood Warning instead, on receipt of a Flood Alert given the access and egress routes to and from the site are likely to flood before the site itself.
- 6.39. The EFP has been updated. Details of a Flood Alert will be cascaded to all team members and guests booked with Three Rivers Pitch and Paddle during the period of the alert. Close monitoring of water levels will be carried out by team members. All guests on-site will be given the option to evacuate the site at the time of the alert. If they decide not to evacuate, they will be required to tether their touring unit to anchor points located on the site.
- 6.40. The site entrance is at risk of fluvial flooding to a depth of 0.54 metres in the 1 in 100 annual probability event with climate change. The flood hazard associated with this flood depth is classed as 'danger to most people.' The EA comments that if there is no prior evacuation of the site following a flood warning, the occupants are likely to be a risk of being cut-off from areas outside of the flood zone with limited facilities to

provide safe refuge. The EA recommended that Norfolk County Council Emergency Planners and the Emergency Services were consulted.

- 6.41. The EFP and associated Flood Evacuation Plan (FEP) states that on receipt of a Flood Warning from the EA Floodline, the Flood Evacuation Manager will contact/gather all available staff and volunteers, allocate tasks and implement the FEP. All guests will be advised to leave the site.
- 6.42. The relevant Emergency Planner and the Emergency Services were consulted. No comments were received from the Emergency Planner. A response from the Fire Investigation and Protection Officer was received as detailed above in paragraph 3.8. The agent has confirmed the relevant Building Regulations application will be submitted to address the Fire and Access requirements raised in the Fire Officers response.
- 6.43. Having considered the concerns raised by the EA regarding flood risk and the flood emergency plans against the details within the amended EFP and FEP, the LPA is satisfied the concerns raised have been addressed satisfactorily. The plan sets out practical and reasonable measures to help respond should flood warnings or flood events occur and is considered adequate to ensure the safety of the occupants in line with Policy DM5 of the Local Plan for the Broads. Accordingly, a condition will be imposed to require it is implemented and maintained for the lifetime of development.
- 6.44. The FRA contains details of the existing buildings on the site which require retrospective planning permission. The EA notes that no flood resilience or resistance measures have been proposed in relation to the buildings, which is a requirement under para. 173(b) of the NPPF. The EA question whether the buildings have been structurally designed to withstand the water pressures during a flood event given some finished floor levels are lower than the fluvial 1% (1:100) annual probability flood level including climate change.
- 6.45. The finished floor levels of the existing buildings vary. Those of particular importance relate to habitable spaces used for overnight accommodation as this is considered 'more vulnerable' development, these include the holiday accommodation within the service building and caravan units. The EA propose that finished ground floor levels for 'more vulnerable' development are set no lower than 2.89 metres above Ordnance Datum (AOD). This is 300mm above the fluvial 1% (1 in 100) annual probability flood level including climate change of 2.582 metres AOD.
- 6.46. The finished ground floor level of the service building with holiday accommodation is proposed at 2.74 metres AOD. While lower than the recommended level by the EA, it is above the fluvial 1% (1 in 100) annual probability flood level including climate change of 2.582 metres AOD and therefore dry in this event. The finished first floor level of the service building is proposed at 5.37 metres AOD offering some safe refuge above the 0.1% (1:100) annual probability flood level of 3.20 metres AOD. These levels are considered acceptable.

- 6.47. Ground floor levels of the caravan units are proposed at 2.45m AOD. This is below the fluvial 1% (1 in 100) annual probability flood level including climate change of 2.582 m AOD and therefore at risk of flooding by 0.13 m depth in this event. However, caravan units are of a standard construction and therefore alterations to finished floor levels are not possible. It is therefore important the EFP and FEP are fully implemented and maintained throughout the duration of the development to ensure the safety of the occupants in line with Policy DM5 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.
- 6.48. The boatshed floor levels, both ground and first floor are above the fluvial 1% (1 in 100) annual probability flood level including climate change therefore offer some safe refuge during a flood event providing a fall-back position.
- 6.49. The EA recommends consideration is given to the use of flood resilience and resistance measures to be used for flood proofing to reduce the impact of flooding if it occurs. The previously approved application (BA/2019/0412/FUL) incorporated into the building design flood resilience/resistance measures to reduce the impact of and mitigate for a flood event, including safe refuge above the predicted flood levels. Given that refuge is identified as a fall-back mitigation measure, it is important buildings are structurally resilient to withstand the pressure and forces (hydrostatic and hydrodynamic pressures) associated with flood water.
- 6.50. A Flood Resilience Report submitted 1 August 2024 details the construction method of the service building stating that it has been constructed to be flood resistant and resilient. In addition, the building has been located on the site in an area where flood waters would not be flowing through the building, instead a gradual rise would occur and as such should avoid undue strain caused by rushing water. The timber frame and building materials have been treated to withstand water penetration where the materials used for the internal linings of the ground floor are Orientated Strand Board (OSB) agglomerated with resin to be water resistant. Other measures include foam insulation on the ground floor for high water resistance and drying speed in the event of a flood and all electrical fittings are raised higher than 3.00m AOD to ensure, in the event of a flood, they will not be affected. The details provided are satisfactory and address the requirement of paragraph 173(b) of the NPPF which states that development should only be allowed where appropriate flood resistant and resilient measures are in place. It therefore meets the requirements of Policy DM5.
- 6.51. Sequentially there are no areas within the application site or land owned by the applicant, which is at a lower risk of flooding, therefore the development could not be moved to a lower risk area within the application site.
- 6.52. The shower/WC extension to the boatshed, are functional uses tied to the existing use of the site, it is not reasonable to look further afield for areas of lower flood risk than in the immediate vicinity. Even on the opposite side of the road would mean significant distances for watercraft, machinery (tractor, mower etc.) or visitors to walk or to be moved. Therefore, sequentially there are no alternative options on site or elsewhere within a reasonable distance.

- 6.53. The service building with holiday accommodation is largely in keeping with the approved structure under the previous application in terms of its location and overall use. However, the holiday accommodation has been introduced and therefore requires further consideration. As with the extension to the boatshed, the service building has a functional tie to the existing use of the site, as does the holiday accommodation. There are no areas within the application site or land owned by the applicant which is at a lower risk of flooding. Sequentially there are no alternative options on site or elsewhere within a reasonable distance that the service building could be located.
- 6.54. The expansion of camping pitches again cannot be accommodated within the site in an area of lower risk. Other neighbouring areas of this site outside of the ownership of the applicant are at a higher risk of flooding due to their lower level.
- 6.55. While there may be sites outside of the Broads Authority area in the vicinity of Geldeston which have a lower risk of flooding, none would be within a reasonable distance of the existing services on site to allow the business to operate with oversight from a single base. Therefore, in this instance, it is considered that there are no alternatives available to this business which would be available or deliverable which are at a lower risk of flooding. On this basis the proposal meets the Sequential Test.
- 6.56. The service building and boatshed expansion are not required to meet the Exceptions Test. The Exceptions Test is required for changes of use of land, where that change of use relates to caravans/camping. In August 2021, the LPA approved the previous application reference BA/2019/0412/FUL to be an appropriate scale of expansion at this established and successful Broads tourism site and to be in accordance with Sustainable Tourism Policies DM29 and DM30 of the Local Plan for the Broads. The application at that time included extensions to the existing boatshed and a new service building, expansion of caravan pitches and upgrades to the slipway.
- 6.57. The case has been made by the applicant for the current application that the established tourism business on this site contributes to both the local and wider Broads Tourism economy. The economic benefits to both the business and the expansion of employment opportunities created, along with the positive responses show that there have been substantial benefits to this development. Additionally, the intensification of an existing use, and improvement of facilities for the water sports use are beneficial in ensuring that the business is robust. On this basis, it is considered that the development has benefits to economic and social sustainability which supports this development in accordance with Policy DM5, meeting the Exceptions Test as set out in the NPPF.

Other issues - Norfolk Green Infrastructure Recreation Avoidance Mitigation Strategy

- 6.58. The provision of additional overnight accommodation in this area is liable to the Norfolk Green Infrastructure (GI) Recreation Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) which is a detailed programme of County-wide mitigation measures aimed at delivering the mitigation necessary to avoid adverse effects on integrity of the Habitats Sites from the 'in-combination' impacts of recreational impacts at Habitats Sites from residential development, including tourist accommodation, predicted across Norfolk.
- 6.59. There are two payments, one for the RAMS element and another for the GI element. These payments will need to be secured prior to determination as the application is retrospective.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The main considerations of the current application are whether the extension to the existing boatshed, construction of a service building with holiday accommodation, outside sauna, log store with changing facilities, as built, and the increase in the number of camping pitches from 20 to 27 are acceptable given the previously approved application which permitted a similar scheme to extend the boatshed, construct a service building, extend the caravan pitches from 12 to 20 and upgrade the slipway on an established tourism site.
- 7.2. Given the previous approved scheme, notwithstanding the fact that several pre-commencement conditions were not discharged, the principle of extending the boatshed and erecting a service building on the site, was acceptable and planning permission granted, it is therefore concluded that the current application is an appropriate scale of expansion to a successful business in accordance with Policies DM29 and DM30 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.
- 7.3. Amendments to the scheme will ensure that the development does not have an adverse impact on the landscape character, dark skies or neighbouring amenity (Policy DM16, DM21 and DM22).
- 7.4. Additional information has enabled the EA to remove its initial objection on flood risk grounds and amendments to the Emergency Flood Plan and Flood Evacuation Plan are considered acceptable subject to these plans being implemented and maintained in accordance with the details ensuring the development will be safe for the lifetime of the development and meets the Sequential Test. These will be conditioned accordingly.
- 7.5. Additional information has been provided to address the concerns noted by the EA regarding flood resistant and flood resilience construction which are considered acceptable. The development therefore meets the requirements of Para. 173(b) of the NPPF and Policy DM5 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

- 7.6. The benefits of supporting the development in accordance with Policies DM29 and DM30 of the Local Plan for the Broads, materially weighs in favour of this retrospective proposal in terms of the NPPF Exceptions Test for flood risk.
- 7.7. In terms of the scale and design of this development, while one local resident has objected to the retrospective application, following amendments to the scheme to address landscape concerns, on balance the development as built together with amendments to the layout of the seven additional camping pitches and further planting is acceptable and complies with Policies DM16, DM20 and DM43 of the Local Plan.
- 7.8. Information submitted with the current application show the installation of enhancements, lighting scheme and planting schemes which have been undertaken and that the enhancements and mitigations are considered appropriate and in accordance with initial requests in relation to application BA/2019/0412/FUL. It is therefore concluded that scheme is in accordance with Policies DM13 and DM22.
- 7.9. The Highway Authority acknowledges the increased pitches will/have increased vehicle movements to and from the site and is aware of the nature of the local highway network. However, the NPPF expressly acknowledges development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe, the HA advises it would be difficult to sustain an objection on either of these grounds. The scheme complies with Policy DM23 of the Local Plan for the Broads 2019.
- 7.10. It is recognised that the site is sensitive, and while the application is seeking retrospective planning permission for several planning breaches, the principle of some aspects of the current application has been established by the approval of application BA/2019/0412/FUL accepting the expansion of the site to provide an extension to the boatshed and a new service building. The additional holiday accommodation and camping pitches are not considered out of keeping with the established use of the site and are likely to result in further benefits to the local community and other tourist businesses in the area, as well as supporting the ongoing business of Three Rivers camp site and improving access to the water for more visitors (Policy DM31).
- 7.11. To ensure the development is retained and controlled in line with the submitted documents and amendments to the proposal conditions are recommended (see below).

8. Recommendation

8.1. That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- i. In accordance with approved plans
- ii. Sauna building relocation
- iii. Flood Emergency Plan
- iv. Securing caravans
- v. Holiday restriction
- vi. Landscaping
- vii. Landscape – retain amenity use
- viii. Lighting
- ix. Noise
- x. Additional camping pitches
- xi. Slipway launch

9. Reason for recommendation

9.1. On balance the retrospective application with amendments is considered to accord with relevant planning policy including Policy DM29, DM30, DM5, DM13, DM16, DM20, DM21, DM22, DM23 and DM43 and subject to conditions.

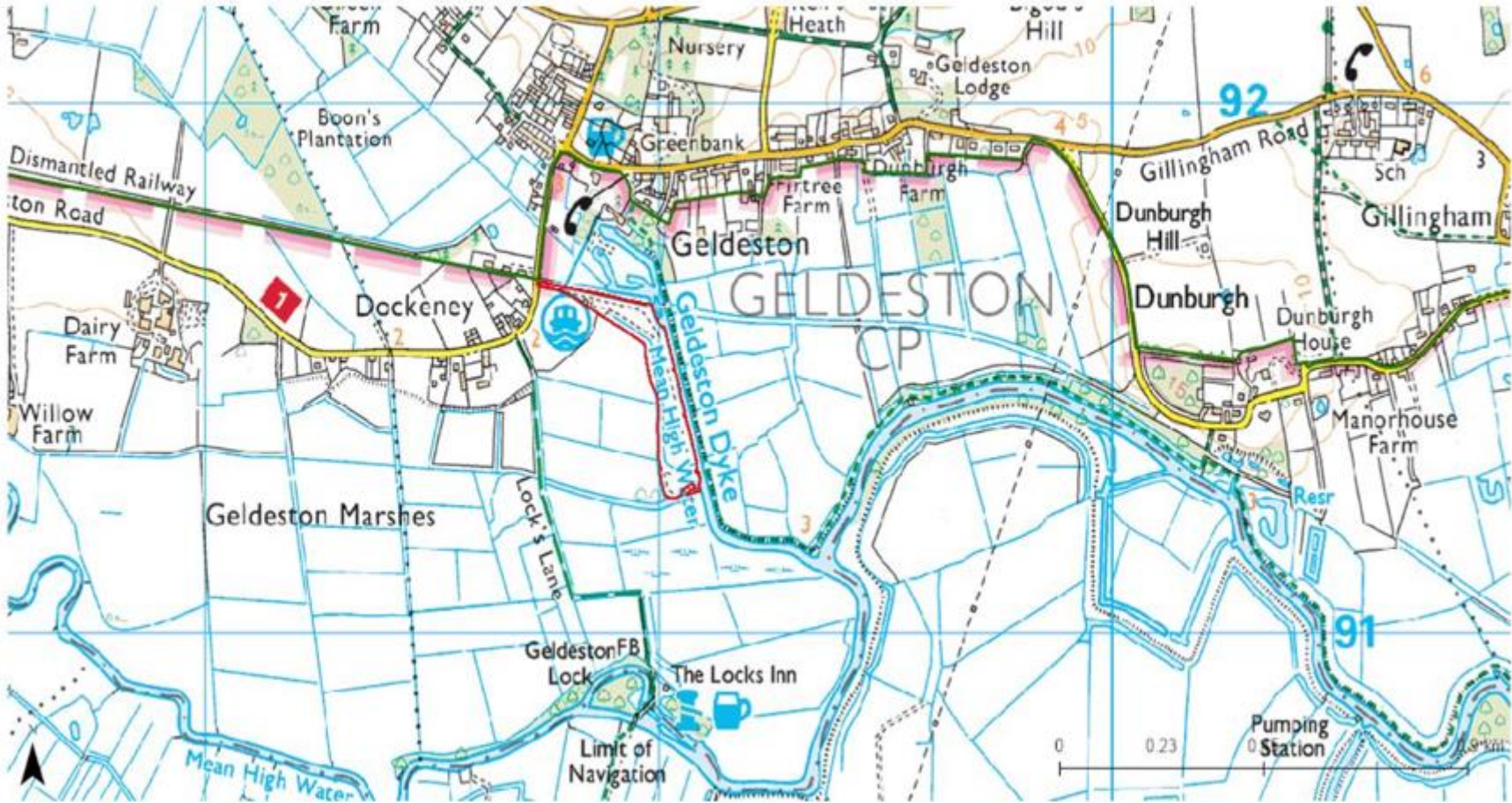
Author: Jane Fox

Date of report: 30 July 2024

Appendix 1 – Location map

Appendix 1 – Location map

BA/2023/0436/FUL - Three Rivers Campsite, Station Road, Geldeston



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