

Planning Committee

26 May 2023

Agenda item number 7.1

BA/023/0125/FUL Wroxham- Swans Harbour, Beech Road- replacement quayheading

Report by Planning Officer

Proposal

Replace 173m of timber quayheading with galvanised steel piling, and extension to existing composite/plastic grid type decking

Applicant

Mr Daniel Thwaites

Recommendation

Approval with conditions

Reason for referral to committee

Applicant is a member of Navigation Committee

Application target date

29 May 2023

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1. Description of site and proposals

- 1.1. The subject comprises a residential plot featuring a detached dwelling house on the northern side of Beech Road. This area is characterised by a number of properties with gardens which have inlets/pools and lakes of water, sometimes with structures such as boathouses and garden buildings and often with a natural and well treed character. To the north of the dwellinghouse is a fairly sizeable garden and dyke/lagoon area which is divided by various narrow dykes, with foot bridges providing access between the various parts of the garden. The northern boundary of the garden comprises the southern bank of the River Bure.
- 1.2. The garden configuration is slightly unusual in that it narrows noticeably at approximately the midpoint of the plot and for the remaining land to the north of that point, the result of which being that the applicant only has ownership over the eastern side of the dyke as it runs south from the river up to the approximate midpoint of the plot. Within this section of dyke is boathouse, almost opposite a slightly larger boathouse to the opposite side of the dyke.
- 1.3. The riverbank is currently protected with timber quayheading, this extends along the dyke edges up to the approximate midpoint of the plot. There is a further section of timber quayheading to the edge of that part of the garden immediately adjacent to the dwellinghouse. At the river end of the site, a decked walkway runs alongside the quayheading, this comprises composite/plastic grid type decking to the river front and for the initial 13 metres of the dyke, followed by a section of timber decking up as far as the boathouse.
- 1.4. The property is located within the Wroxham Conservation Area.
- 1.5. The proposal is to replace the areas of timber quayheading with steel piling featuring timber capping and a timber waling board. It is noted that the section fronting the River Bure would have a double timber waling board. In addition, the existing timber decking would be replaced with 'duragrate' which is a composite/plastic grid type decking in a cream/yellow colour which would match the decking at the river end of the site.

2. Site history

- 2.1. In 2019 planning permission was granted with conditions for a single storey rear extension, entrance canopy, and alterations to cladding and windows (BA/2019/0046/HOUSEH).
- 2.2. In 2015 planning permission was granted with conditions to demolish the existing porch to side of dwelling and erect a single storey extension plus cart shed to front of dwelling (BA/2015/0153/HOUSEH).

- 2.3. In 2004 planning permission was granted with conditions for the erection of a conservatory (revised proposal) (BA/2004/3871/HISTAP).
- 2.4. In 2004 planning permission was granted with conditions for two and single storey rear extensions (BA/2004/3882/HISTAP).

3. Consultations received

Parish Council

- 3.1. Wroxham Parish Council reviewed this application at the Full Council meeting of the 6th April and have no objection.

BA Ecologist

- 3.2. The development area is already quay headed, and does not contain the habitat required to support water voles. No objection.

BA Rivers Engineer

- 3.3. Works Licence has already been issued to start early April to avoid heavy boating traffic in this vicinity. Minimum encroachment of new piling in this location (300mm).

BA Heritage Team

- 3.4. Comments summarised as follows:

The natural character of the waterside gardens positively contributes to the character of the Conservation Area, especially when viewed from the river. There are a number of locally listed structures in the vicinity, the setting of which should be considered.

Timber quayheading is the predominant material for quayheading in the immediate area. Given this, the site's position within a sensitive part of the Wroxham Conservation Area which has a distinct natural character, its location close to a number of locally listed chalets, and the potential detrimental impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and setting of locally identified heritage assets, I would recommend the quay heading is replaced like-for-like in timber.

The concerns are compounded when considering the significant amount of quayheading proposed to be replaced with steel and the fact that it extends into the garden inlets which traditionally have a less formal and more natural character.

I am of the view that the proposed composite grid/ decking boardwalk would be stark and commercial in character and given the domestic nature of the plot and the natural and informal character of this part of the Wroxham Conservation Area, it is considered that a timber decking would be more appropriate here. Some high quality composite decking boards may also be appropriate, but samples should be submitted to be agreed. It is appreciated that this is a replacement of an existing similar decking, but given that it is unlikely that the existing decking was granted planning consent, and we are seeking to enhance the Conservation Area, it is not considered that this should be given much weight in this instance.

4. Representations

4.1. None received.

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
- DM13 - Natural Environment
- DM16 - Development and Landscape
- DM32 - Riverbank stabilisation
- DM43 - Design

5.3. Other material considerations

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Wroxham Conservation Area character statement
- Broads Local List of heritage assets

6. Assessment

6.1. The main considerations in the determination of this application are the principle of development, the design and appearance of the proposed piling and decking, the impacts on the Conservation Area, flood risk, navigation and ecology.

Principle of development

6.2. The principle of development is considered acceptable, insofar as the subject riverbank and the sides of the internal dyke have existing hard engineered banks, and there is existing decking in the areas where new decking is proposed. No new areas of piling or decking are proposed as the subject areas are already hard edged or hard surfaced. The proposal is for a change of materials which must be considered carefully.

Design, appearance, and heritage - steel piling

6.3. Throughout the Broads network the traditional material for quayheading is timber.

6.4. The local character in this location is traditionally timber quayheading, and this reinforces the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Increasingly, however, people are preferring steel because it is harder wearing and lasts longer and

the Broads Authority Mooring Design Guide notes that timber has a typical life of up to 10 years compared to steel which can last 40 years or more. Steel is considered appropriate in boatyards and areas of high wash/wear, of which this stretch of the River Bure in Wroxham is a good example. There are properties with steel piling in Wroxham, but these are predominantly at commercial sites and, in planning terms, the preference for residential properties is timber quayheading as it contributes positively to the character of the Conservation Area.

- 6.5. It is acknowledged, however, that steel piling has been approved at other locations in the area, usually where it is not visible from the river or where the particular site is vulnerable to high levels of use or wash. That this would not be the first example of steel in the area is a consideration, indicating that the circumstances which justify steel can be applicable in this area. In this case, whilst no arguments are being made about levels of use or high wash, it is the case that most of the proposed steel piling is in the dyke off the river, where it is not easily visible from public viewpoints, whilst on the river frontage the piling would be finished with a double waling board which would conceal the top 0.45m of the piling. These factors would significantly mitigate the visual impact of the use of steel.
- 6.6. It is noted that there are a number of locally listed chalets along this part of the river and planning policies seek to protect their setting, however they are 70m downstream and the impact on them is not significant.
- 6.7. Whilst in planning terms there remains a preference for timber quayheading here, in order to protect the Conservation Area, it is considered that, on balance, the use of steel here is not unacceptable due to its limited visibility and the mitigation proposed, particularly on the most prominent areas.

Design, appearance, and heritage - composite grid decking

- 6.8. There is existing decking running alongside the quayheading at the river frontage and along the dyke as far as the boathouse. The section along the river frontage and for the initial 13 metres of the dyke is comprised of composite/plastic grid type decking. This is well established and has clearly been in situ for some years and the use of the same material for the extended area would ensure visual continuity. The need to utilise high quality materials in conservation areas is noted, but on balance it is considered that the provision of two different types of decking would have a more detrimental impact on the appearance of the site than the continuation of an established material by virtue of the contrast in appearance.

Other issues

- 6.9. In terms of impact on navigation the BA Rivers Engineer has commented that a Works Licence has already been issued and there is minimum encroachment of new piling on the navigation channel (300mm).
- 6.10. In terms of flood risk, the proposed piling is a replacement of existing quayheading so would not result in an increase in flood risk at the site or surrounding area.

- 6.11. In terms of ecology the BA Ecologist has commented that the development area is already quay headed, and does not contain the habitat required to support water voles, therefore no objection has been raised.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The proposal is for the replacement of existing timber quayheading with steel piling including timber capping and waling in an area where timber quayheading is the predominant riverbank material, and provision of additional composite/plastic grid type decking in place of existing timber decking. The site is within the Wroxham Conservation Area. Concerns have been raised about the use of these material, citing the potential for the erosion of the character of the Conservation Area. However, taking into account the somewhat developed and urban setting of the site, located on a section of river which has hard engineered banks, and where there is already some steel piling, it is considered that the provision of steel piling with timber capping and waling at the subject site is on balance not unacceptable. The provision of additional composite/plastic grid type decking in place of existing timber decking is considered to be acceptable in light of the existence of composite/plastic grid type decking at the river end of the site and for the initial section of the dyke. The proposed development is therefore considered to be supportable with regard to Policies DM11, DM13, DM16, DM32, and DM43 of the Local.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:
- i. Time limit
 - ii. In accordance with approved plans
 - iii. Timber preservatives

9. Reason for recommendation

- 9.1. The development is considered to be in accordance with Policies DM13, DM16, and DM43 of the Local Plan for the Broads. Whilst the development is not fully compliant with Policy DM11 and is therefore a departure from the Local Plan, in this instance other material planning considerations on balance mean that this development is considered to be sustainable development and therefore considered acceptable.

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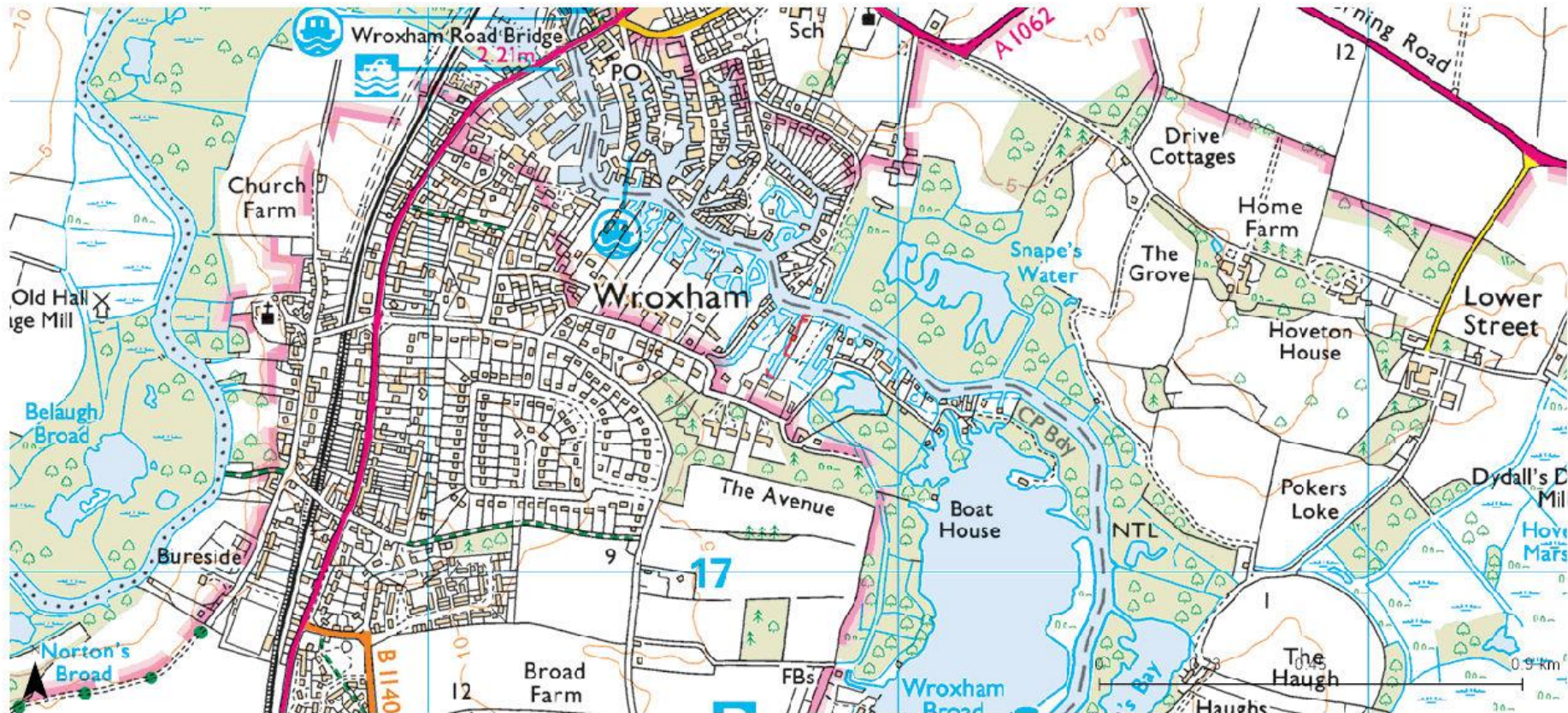
Date of report: 11 May 2023

Background papers: BA/2023/0125/FUL

Appendix 1 – Location map

Appendix 1 – Location map

BA/2023/0125/FUL - Swans Harbour Beech Road Wroxham



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