

## **Application for Determination**

<b>Parish</b>	Norwich City		
<b>Reference</b>	BA/2012/0103/FUL	<b>Target date</b>	17.05.2012
<b>Location</b>	River Wensum – Bank Adjacent to Friars Quay, Norwich		
<b>Proposal</b>	Installation of a floating pontoon and ticket office to facilitate a punting operation on the River Wensum		
<b>Applicant</b>	Mr Ashley Dalton		
<b>Recommendation</b>	Approve subject to conditions		
<b>Reason referred to Committee</b>	Third Party Objection		

### **1 Description of Site and Proposals**

- 1.1 The site is situated on the north bank of the River Wensum in the centre of Norwich, within Norwich City Centre Conservation Area. The site is accessed via steps which exist on a dog-leg of the River Wensum, to the east of St George's Bridge by the Playhouse Bar and Theatre on St George's Street. A public green and number of residential properties are situated to the north of the application site and the Norwich School of Art abuts the river to the south.
- 1.2 The proposal is for the installation of a floating pontoon to be 12m long by 2.3m wide, running parallel with the bank. The pontoon is proposed to be constructed by high density polythene (HDPE) 'Versadock' modules which are to be clad in timber. A timber boardwalk and an aluminium framed, timber clad, ramp are proposed to link the existing steps and pontoon, and the pontoon would be accessed from the steps.
- 1.3 A 2.3m long by 2.3m wide and 3m tall wooden clad ticket office is proposed to be installed on the eastern end of the pontoon.
- 1.4 The site would be operated by the Norwich Punting Company. In the first year it is intend to use four punts, two to be held behind the ticket office parallel to the bank, when not in use, and two alongside the pontoon. Subject to popularity, the applicant anticipates the use of up to eight punts at any one time. All punts are to be chained to the south side of the pontoon overnight in a stern on position. The ramp and pontoon are proposed to be secured by a locked gate out of hours of operation.

- 1.5 In terms of the operation, the punts are to be operated by trained staff only, there will be no self-drive option available. The tours are proposed to take place between New Mills Yard down to the Yacht Station. Punting is proposed to take place throughout the whole year.
- 1.6 The proposed hours of operation are between 10:00 and 17:00. Evening tours are also proposed and these will take place between 18:00 and 22:00. However these would be by appointment only and only small numbers are envisaged each week.

## **2 Site History**

None.

## **3 Consultation**

- 3.1 *Broads Society* - response awaited.  
*Parish Council* - response awaited.  
*District Member* - response awaited.  
*Highways Authority* - response awaited.  
*Environment Agency* - response awaited.  
Norwich City Council Planning- response awaited  
*The Norwich Society* - response awaited.  
*Yare User Group* - response awaited.  
*Norfolk Police Authority* - response awaited.  
*Broads Angling Strategy Group* - response awaited.
- 3.2 The application is due to be considered by the Navigation Committee on 19 April 2012.

## **4 Representation**

2 x support - Support the proposals subject to:

- appropriate night time security;
- limited security structures;
- no parking available within resident zone; and
- no outside amplified music.

## **5 Policies**

### **5.1 Core Strategy (Adopted 2007)**

[Core Strategy \(Adopted Sept 2007\).pdf](#)

CS1- Landscape protection and enhancement  
CS4- Creation of new resources  
CS5- Historic and cultural environments  
CS9- Sustainable tourism  
CS11- Appropriate locations of tourism development  
CS13- Water Space Management

CS17- Access to land and water.

## 5.2 **Development Management Policies DPD (Adopted 2011)**

[DMP DPD - Adoption version.pdf](#)

DP4- Design

DP5- Historic Environment

DP12- Access on the water

DP14- General Location of Sustainable Tourism and Recreation Development

DP27- Visitor and Community Facilities and Services

DP28- Amenity.

## **6 Assessment**

- 6.1 The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are the principle of development, impact on the character of the Conservation Area, impact on navigation, impact on amenity, impact on highways, and flood risk.
- 6.2 In terms of the principle of development, both national and development plan policy are supportive of appropriately located visitor facilities. It is considered that a punting operation on a stretch of the river within the city centre would provide such a facility. The development is therefore considered acceptable in principle.
- 6.3 The pontoon is to be situated within Norwich City Centre Conservation Area and so it is important that the design is of an appropriate standard. The pontoon is of a small scale and proposed to be clad in timber. Likewise, the ticket office is proposed to be of a fairly modern construction of a simple style and also clad in timber. Small waterside constructions like this are not uncommon of the area and it is considered that the high quality design proposed, and the interest as the consequence of the proposal, would help enhance the character of the Conservation Area. It is therefore considered that the design is acceptable.
- 6.4 In terms of impact on navigation, at the application site the river's widest point is to the east of the access steps, where it measures approximately 24.6m wide. The rivers width then reduces to 16.3m, to the immediate west of the application site. The proposed pontoon would be 2.3m wide, resulting in a reduction of river width to approximately 22.3m. The punts are 4.5m long, therefore, when the punts are moored at the pontoon this could further reduce the river width to 17.8m wide. Having regard to the low numbers of boats on this stretch of the river and given fact that the river is only 16.3m wide to the immediate west of the application site, a reduction to 17.8m at the application site is not considered to cause significant navigation issues.
- 6.5 Although small in number the proposal will increase the number of vessels on the navigation. The punts are small, slow moving and vulnerable to disturbances by other boat users. However, this section of the river is relatively quiet in terms of boat traffic, especially in terms of larger boats, and

given that the punts are to be operated by trained professionals only, it is considered that the small increase will not significantly adversely impact on the users of the navigation. The increased use of the river in Norwich is to be welcomed.

6.6 In terms of impact on amenity, the site is situated to the south of a number of residential flats which overlook it. However, the application site is situated within a fairly active area of the city. St George's Bridge is a popular pedestrian route into the city centre, the Playhouse Theatre and Bar means the area sees activity late into the night, and a playground to the immediate north of the site is also popular during the day. It is therefore considered that the small increase in use of the site resulting from the punting operation will not adversely impact on neighbouring amenity past the existing level of disturbances within the immediate area, particularly given the limited evening use.

6.7 In addition, as the site is within an area that is active and has a high level of natural surveillance, and as the pontoons are proposed to be chained off and access restricted at night, it is not considered that their existence would promote antisocial behaviour at an unacceptable level.

6.8 It is noted that the pontoon is proposed to be installed on a section of the riverbank which has been historically used by anglers. The piece of land which juts out into the river can hold approximately two anglers at a time. Ramped access is proposed to allow the piece of land to still be accessed by anglers. It is therefore not considered that the proposals unduly impact on this facility.

6.9 The site is situated within Norwich City Centre. Customers have access to many car parks within the immediate vicinity and the site is well serviced by public transport. It is also anticipated that many will access the site on foot it is therefore considered that the site has good transport links. It is therefore not considered that there would be an adverse impact on either resident parking or highway safety.

6.10 The pontoon and the connecting ramp would rise and fall with the tide. In the event of a very high tide or flooding the pontoon and ticket office would either be removed or allowed to flood. It is therefore not considered that there will be an adverse impact on flood risk.

## **7 Conclusion**

7.1 The proposal would provide a visitor facility which is welcomed. The built development required to facilitate the development has been appropriately designed and scaled to help enhance the character of the Conservation Area. It is not considered that there would be an adverse impact on navigational safety, amenity, highway safety or flood risk.

## 8 Recommendation

### 8.1 Approve subject to the following conditions:

- Standard time limit.
- In accordance with plans.
- Restricted hours of operation- 8:00am - 11:30pm.
- Operation by trained professionals employed by the 'Norwich Punting Company' only. No self-hire.
- All punts are to be securely locked out of hours of operation.

## 9 Reason for Recommendation

9.1 The development is considered in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and specifically Local policies CS1, CS4, CS5, CS9, CS11, CS13 and CS17 of the Core Strategy (2007) and policies DP4, DP5, DP12, DP14, DP27 and DP28 of the Development Management Policies DPD (2012).

Background papers: Application File BA/2012/0103/FUL

Author: Kayleigh Wood  
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List of Appendices: APPENDIX 1: Site Location Plan

## APPENDIX 1

