

**Planning Application with Navigation Implications:  
Installation of a Pontoon and Wooden Ticket Office for a Punting Business on  
the River Wensum, Norwich**  
Report by Planning Assistant

**Summary:** A planning application has been submitted in respect of the installation of a new pontoon and ticket office which would be sited in the River Wensum. The pontoon is proposed to be situated on the northern bank of the Wensum by St George's Bridge and the Playhouse Bar and Theatre.

Anticipated navigation issues are set out in Section 4, members' views are sought on these and the conclusions are set out in Section 5.

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 Ashley Dalton and James Murray, the applicants, set up the Canterbury Punting Company which provides punting trips on the River Stour in the spring and summer. Following the success of the punting business in Canterbury they have decided to pursue Norwich as a possible location for a further punting operation.
- 1.2 In order to facilitate their business they require a pontoon and ticket office and have submitted a planning application to that effect.

## **2 The Planning Application Process**

- 2.1 The application is a result of pre-application discussions with Planning and Waterway Officers from the Broads Authority and Land Management and Planning Officers at Norwich City Council.

## **3 The Planning Application**

- 3.1 Comments are now sought from the Navigation Committee on the planning application submitted to the Broads Authority.
- 3.2 The site is situated on the north bank of the River Wensum within the centre of Norwich. 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 Duke'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.

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The pontoon is proposed to be accessed via steps on a dog-leg of the river which is located on the south side of the green outside the Playhouse Bar and Theatre. A timber boardwalk and an aluminium framed, timber clad, ramp are proposed to link the existing steps and pontoon.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 In their first year they 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, they do not envisage the use of over 8 punts at any one time. All four punts are to be chained to the south side of the pontoon overnight.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 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. Evening tours are proposed to be by appointment only and only small numbers are envisaged each week.
- 3.9 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.

#### **4 Navigation Issues**

- 4.1 As the Navigation Authority, the Broads Authority requires that planning applications with navigation implications are subject to consultation with the Navigation Committee, and a number of possible issues have been identified which are outlined below.
- (i) **Restriction of river width** – 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 river's width then reduces beyond the dog leg in the river 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.

- (ii) **Safety** – As the pontoon is at a low level and easily accessible from the water it will provide an adequate escape route in the event of someone falling in. It is therefore not considered that safety chains and ladders will be required.
- (iii) **Operation** – 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 except for the operation of the Norwich River Bus service, and it is therefore considered that the small increase will not significantly adversely impact on the existing or proposed users of the navigation.

## 5 Conclusions

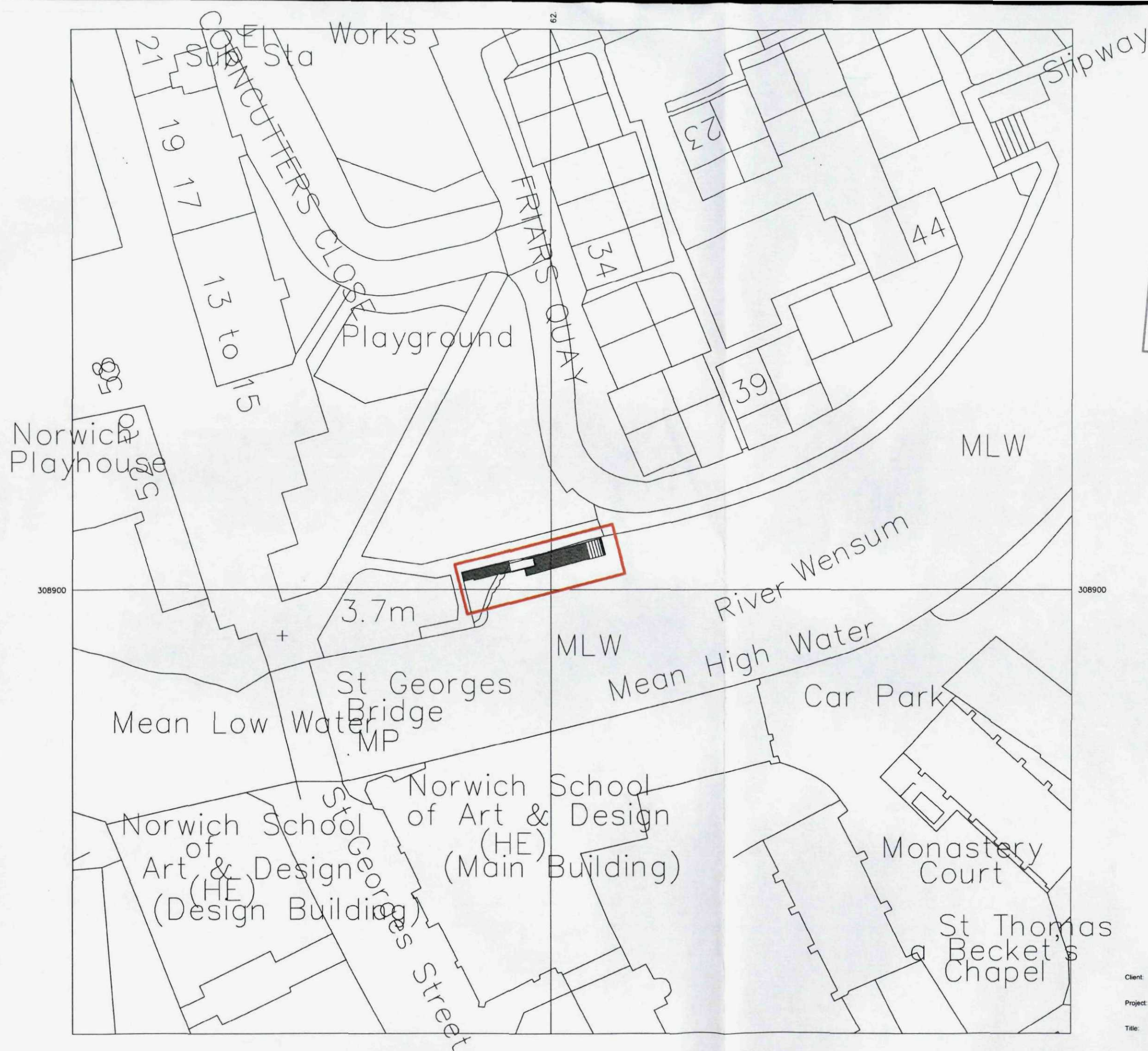
- 5.1 The application would result in a restriction in the width of the navigation and could potentially impact on the safety of existing and proposed boat users.

Member's views on these and any other matters of relevance to navigation are sought and will be considered as part of the planning process.

Background papers:	BA/2012/0103/FUL
Author:	Kayleigh Wood
Date of report:	26 March 2012
Broads Plan Objectives:	TR1.1
Appendices:	APPENDIX 1 – Site Location Plan

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Client: **ASHLEY DALTON**

Scale: 1:500 @ A3

Project: **NORWICH PONTOON**

Date: 09.03.1011

Title: **LOCATION PLAN**

Drawing No: **NOR 001**