

# Planning Committee

13 August 2021

Agenda item number 9.3

## BA/2021/0228/ADV at Norfolk Broads Direct

### Wroxham

Report by Planning Officer

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#### Proposal

New entrance sign at site pedestrian entrance off Norwich Road.

#### Applicant

Mr James Knight

#### Recommendation

Approval subject to conditions

#### Reason for referral to committee

The applicant is a member of the Broads Authority

#### Application target date

17 August 2021

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## Contents

1.	Description of site and proposals	2
2.	Site history	2
3.	Consultations received	3
4.	Representations	3
5.	Policies	3
6.	Assessment	4
7.	Conclusion	6
8.	Recommendation	6
9.	Reason for recommendation	6
	Appendix 1 – Location map	7

# 1. Description of site and proposals

- 1.1. The subject of this application comprises a pedestrian access to the Norfolk Broads Direct site, accessed directly off the public footpath immediately to the south of Wroxham Bridge.
- 1.2. Norfolk Broads Direct comprises a commercial boatyard on Norwich Road, Wroxham, occupying a large site along the southern side of Norwich Road, and is bordered by the River Bure to the east and a dyke to the south. The overall site comprises of a variety of commercial marine buildings, mooring basins, a car park and large areas of hard standing, and is home to the Broads Tours business.
- 1.3. The subject pedestrian access is the principal pedestrian access to the site. This provides direct access to the Broads Tours ticket office, Wherrymans Restaurant, and the riverside area. The access entrance is approximately 7 metres wide between two low rise brick walls with planting behind. The Norfolk Broads Direct land is demarcated by a change in surface from standard public footway to buff weave block paving.
- 1.4. The proposed sign would be sited part way across the 7 metre wide access. The sign itself would measure 4 metres in width and be supported by timber posts towards either end. The width between the timber posts would be 3.4 metres, and the height of the sign above footpath level would be 2.5 metres. The sign would sit parallel to the edge of the adjacent public footpath, separated from the edge by 1.2 metres.

# 2. Site history

- 2.1. BA/2021/0128/FUL - Replacement of 95m of dilapidated quayheading with new sheet steel piling and associated timber quayheading furniture (Retrospective). Approved with conditions.

BA/2012/0048/FUL - Demolition of both existing wet shed and small shed , re-alignment of quay heading and creation of small land area for re-location of existing shed. Approved with conditions.

BA/2011/0085/FUL - Demolition of existing wet boathouse, erection of replacement wet boathouse with cruiser hire reception and storage in roof space with replacement and new quay heading. Approved with conditions.

BA/2010/0175/FUL - Recladding of existing boatshed building (to remove asbestos) and associated works. Approved with conditions.

BA/2008/0395/FUL - Erection of canopy (proposed) and small shed for pumping equipment (retrospective). Approved with conditions.

BA/2005/3763/HISTAP - Demolitions of wet boatshed, toilets and engineering workshop. Extension of existing building for new toilets and under cover waiting area for charter boats. Approved with conditions.

BA/2001/4070/HISTAP - 1. Demolition of existing wet boatshed, 2. Erection of new boat house with sail loft over and associated facilities. Approved with conditions.

BA/1998/4337/HISTAP - Demolition of existing building and extension to existing car park. Approved with conditions.

BA/1995/4503/HISTAP - Change of use of existing restaurant on ground floor to bedroom extension and additional flat. Approved with conditions

### 3. Consultations received

#### Parish Council

- 3.1. Wroxham Parish Council reviewed this application at Full Council meeting on the 30th June and object to the application. Councillors, supported by comments from residents, thought the signage was obtrusive, restricted pedestrian access and created unnecessary street clutter.

### 4. Representations

- 4.1. Two responses were received raising the following:
- 4.2. The signage would be obtrusive, restrict pedestrian access and create unnecessary street clutter. It is also potentially distracting to traffic at a busy juncture for both vehicles and pedestrians.
- 4.3. The proposed sign is disproportionate in size and further impedes an already very busy foot way, especially considering the need for social distancing and regular access by mobility impaired visitors. Congestion of footways in the height of the summer season is not best served by further obstructions on a key access point onto the footbridge over the river Bure. The sign imparts no new information to visitors or local residents that cannot be ascertained by looking at the building immediately behind the proposed site. It adds further visual clutter to the village.

### 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:
  - DM16 - Development and Landscape
  - DM23 - Transport, highways and access
  - DM43 - Design
  - DM49 - Advertisements and Signs

## 6. Assessment

- 6.1. The proposal is for a sign to be sited partly above the pedestrian access to the site from the public footpath on the southern side of Norwich Road, a short distance from the crossing over the River Bure. The main issues in the determination of this application are the principle of development, appearance of the proposed sign and street scene, and the height and siting of the sign.

### Principle of development

- 6.2. The principle of development is considered acceptable, this is a non-illuminated sign at the entrance to a well-established commercial site, sited off the public highway, and relates directly to the buildings sited immediately to the rear of the sign location.

### Appearance of the proposed sign and street scene

- 6.3. The proposed sign is considered to be of a reasonable size taking into account the width of the pedestrian entrance opening where it is sited, and the proximity and size of the buildings a short distance to the south of the proposed sign.
- 6.4. The sign has a simple appearance which continues the appearance of the Broads Tours element of the site and provides a single commercial identity thereby giving the sign context. The sign would be an aluminium composite panel supported by timber posts, this is considered to be appropriate and acceptable taking into account the appearance of the site and the nature of the proposal.
- 6.5. There are a number of signs in this location including at the restaurant to the opposite side of Norwich Road, at the subject commercial site just prior to the bridge, and upon buildings within the wider subject commercial site. In addition there are a handful of road signs and a Wroxham village sign. Whilst there are other examples of signs in this locale, it is considered that the proposed sign would not result in unacceptable visual clutter, or an area of excessive signage. The siting of the sign, parallel to the public highway, would ensure that it would not compete with any road signs or traffic lights, or be unnecessarily prominent when viewed from the public highway.
- 6.6. The proposed sign is therefore considered acceptable in terms of its appearance and the appearance of the street scene, with regard to Policies DM16, DM43, and DM49 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

### Height and siting of the sign

- 6.7. The proposed sign is sited within the Norfolk Broads Direct site, 1.2 metres from the edge of the public footpath and parallel to it. The width of the opening to the site is approximately 7 metres, the distance between the timber posts supporting the proposed sign is 3.4 metres, the posts are each 0.15 metres in width, therefore there is a distance of approximately 1.65 metres to either side of the posts before the low rise brick wall to either side of the sign.
- 6.8. This approach is a fairly unconventional one when considering the nature of the sign and the existing site entrance, it would be understandable to anticipate that a sign of

this type would span the entire opening with the supports abutting the brick walls. The chosen approach could arguably restrict pedestrian access in providing a deliberate obstruction to the existing opening. On a basic measure this could be considered as bad design.

- 6.9. It is important to consider the site specific circumstances. In this case the opening to the site is particularly wide, the public footpath is notably narrow in comparison. The access width between the posts is 3.4 metres which is considered to be sufficient to provide a good level of access to the site. In addition there are access widths of 1.65 metres to both sides of the posts which provide a reasonable level of access. The height of the sign above the footpath is 2.5 metres which is considered to provide an adequate height clearance. The sign is sited comfortably within the site and apart from the public footpath.
- 6.10. It could be argued that the posts do act as some form of footway obstruction and in some respects this is accurate. However, the same argument could be made about posts supporting some street signs, lampposts, or bollards between vehicle and pedestrian areas. The existence of some form of obstruction on a footpath does not in itself make it unacceptable, it would slightly interrupt the free flow of pedestrians rather than obstruct their progress. The narrowing of the entrance through additional low rise brick wall, or the provision of bollards would have the same impact and with appropriate siting and design would not be unacceptable. It would therefore be difficult to justify a refusal of planning permission on the basis of the siting of the timber supports. In addition, taking into account the narrowness of the public footpath in comparison to the width of the resulting opening, the proposed timber supports would not contribute to congestion on the public footpath.
- 6.11. The agent for the application has sought to justify the siting of the timber supports as a means to dissuade cyclists using the site as a cut through when coming off the bridge. This need to justify does acknowledge that the supports could be a form of obstruction. The pedestrian river crossing, running parallel to the main bridge on the southern side, is fairly narrow and features a near blind bend at the Norfolk Broads Direct end. Any cyclist who considers this a reasonable place to be unlawfully cycling would arguably not be put off by a slight narrowing of the entrance to the subject site, if anything it would likely be seen as part of the illicit challenge. It is therefore considered that this does not provide justification for the siting of the timber support posts and their proposed siting must be considered on its own merits.
- 6.12. It is accepted that the siting of the timber posts within the pedestrian entrance rather than to the sides is fairly unconventional, however, the site entrance still maintains adequate levels of unobstructed access to the site in terms of the width maintained between the posts and the clearance underneath the sign and, to some extent, the widths between the timber posts and the low rise brick walls to either side. Whilst the concerns of the Parish Council and local residents are noted, it would not be reasonable to refuse this application on the basis of the siting of the posts resulting in unacceptable

obstruction to the site and clutter at the entrance. The height and siting of the proposed sign are therefore acceptable with regard to Policies DM23 and DM49 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1. The proposed new entrance sign at the pedestrian entrance off Norwich Road to the Norfolk Broads Direct site is of a reasonable size and acceptable design taking into its siting in relation to the public highway and the proximity to the buildings within the overall site, and would not have an adverse impact on the street scene. The proposed timber posts supporting the sign would not result in an unacceptable obstruction to the existing entrance, or contribute to congestion on the adjacent public footpath. The proposed sign is therefore considered acceptable with regard to Policies DM16, DM23, DM43, and DM49 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

## **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1. That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:
- i. Standard time limit
  - ii. In accordance with approved plans
  - iii. Advertisement maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site.

## **9. Reason for recommendation**

- 9.1. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies DM16, DM23, DM43 and DM49 of the Local Plan for the Broads, and the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) which is a material consideration in the determination of this application.

Author: Nigel Catherall

Date of report: 29 July 2021

Background papers: BA/2021/0228/ADV

Appendix 1 – Location maps

# Appendix 1 – Location maps

Fig 1

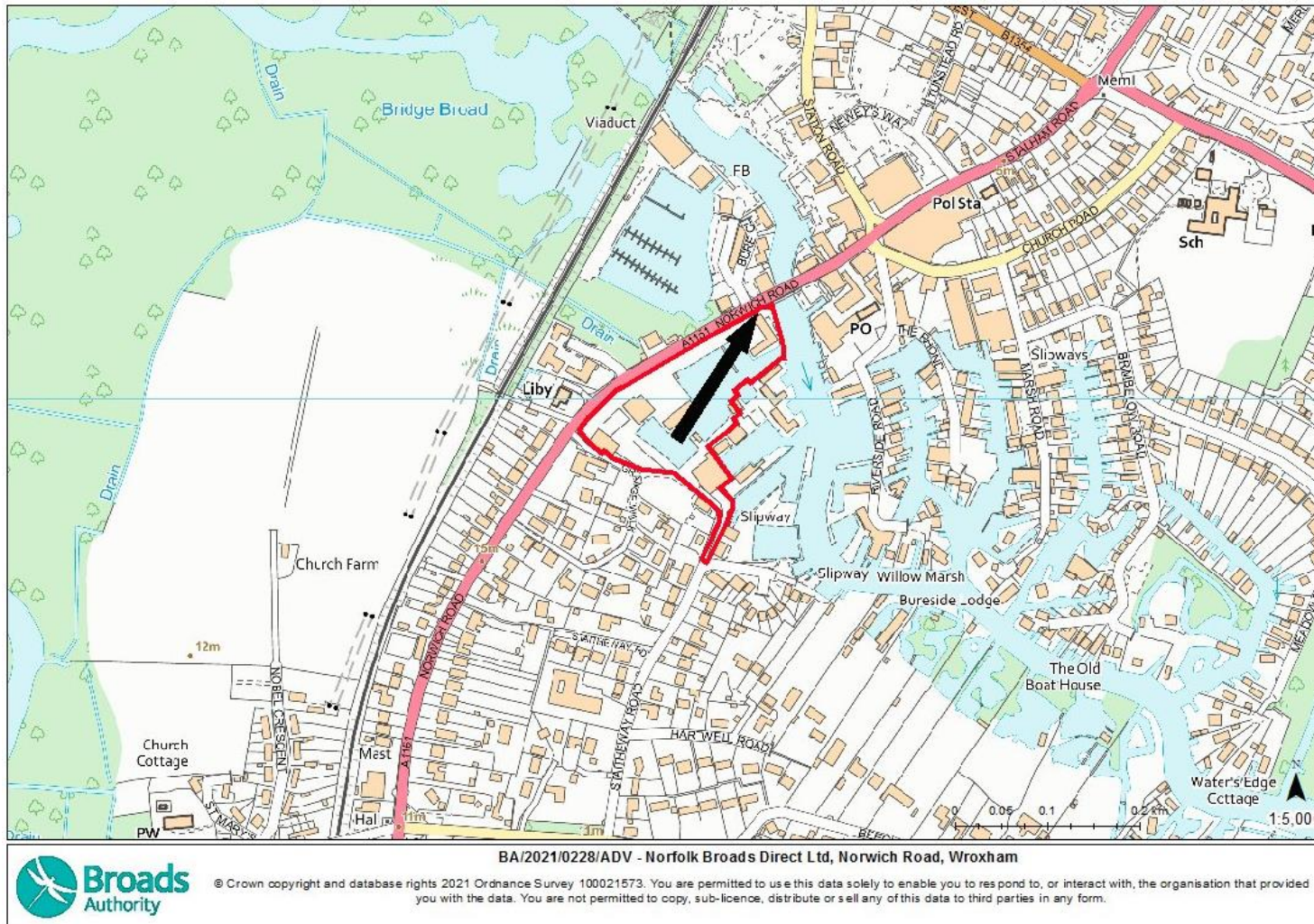
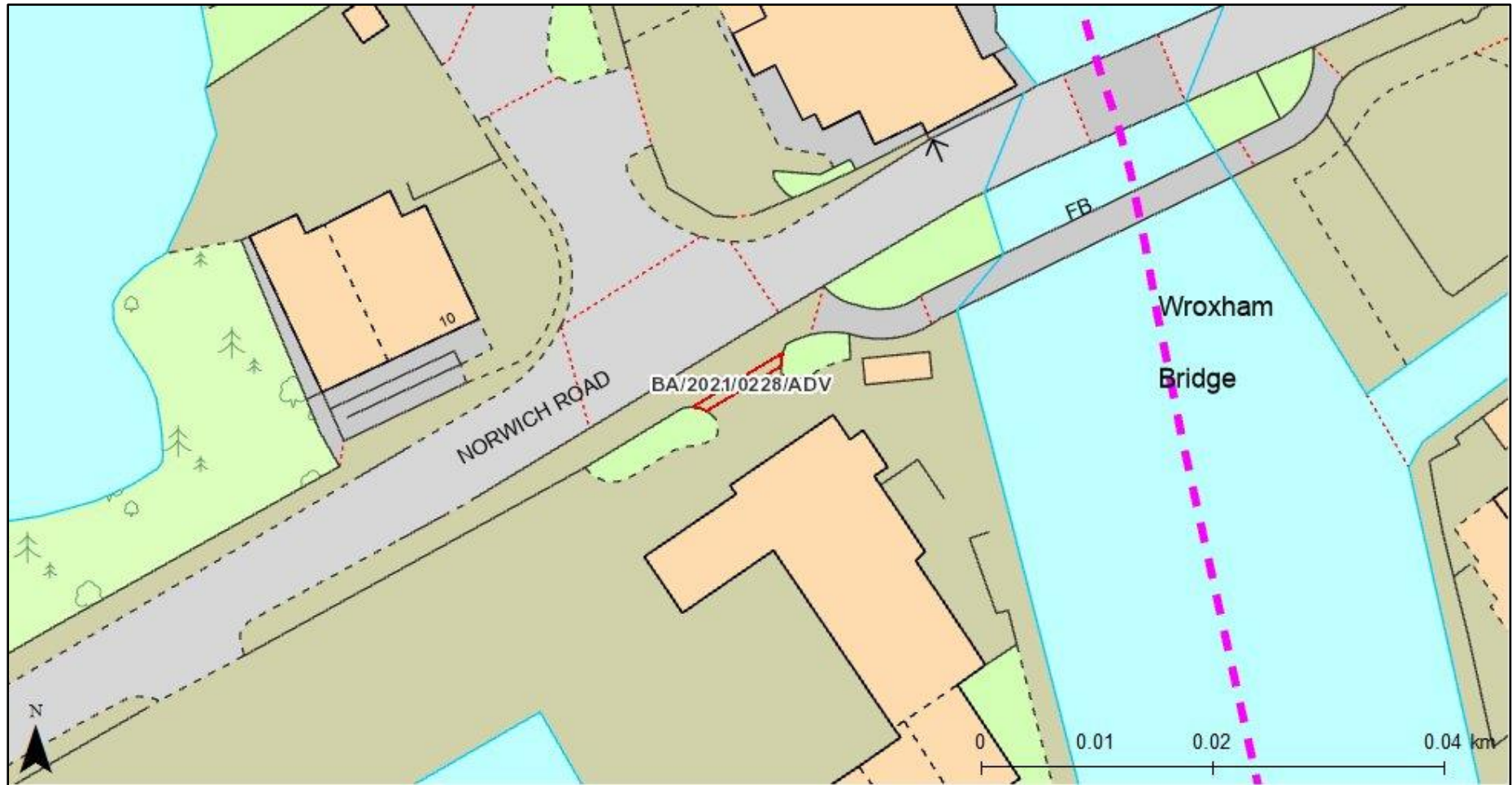




Fig 2



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