

Planning Committee

10 April 2026

Agenda item number 7.1

BA/2025/0407/FUL Land adjacent to land and flood wall, Castle Marshes, North Cove

Report by Assistant Planning Officer

Proposal

Installation of 2m by 20m mooring pontoon and access ramp

Applicant

Broads Authority

Recommendation

Approve subject to conditions

Reason for referral to committee

Broads Authority application

Application target date

17 April 2026

Application documents

[BA/2025/0407/FUL - Associated Planning Documents](#)

Contents

1.	Description of site and proposals	2
2.	Site history	2
3.	Consultations received	2
	Environment Agency	2
	BA Ecologist	3
	BNG Consultant	3
	BA Landscape	3
4.	Representations	4
5.	Policies	4
	Planning Committee, 10 April 2026, agenda item number 7.1	1

6.	Assessment	5
	Principle of development	5
	Impact on the landscape	5
	Amenity of residential properties	6
	Design	7
	Ecology	7
	Other issues	8
7.	Conclusion	8
8.	Recommendation	9
9.	Reason for recommendation	9
	Appendix 1 – Location map	10

1. Description of site and proposals

- 1.1. The site is located to the north of the River Waveney, in between Castle Marshes, and Barnby Broad and Marshes, within an open rural marshland landscape. The site occupies a small area adjacent to the riverbank and is surrounded by grazing marsh, drainage ditches and wetland habitat. Behind the flood bank, is the Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) Castle Marshes Nature Reserve.
- 1.2. The wider area is rural and undeveloped in character, with the River Waveney forming the dominant landscape feature. The site lies entirely within flood zone 3. The site is also adjacent to the Barnby Broad and Marshes (SSSI), part of the Broads SAC and Broadland SPA and Ramsar.
- 1.3. The application seeks planning permission for the installation of a pontoon along the riverbank to provide additional mooring facilities. The proposed structure would measure 20 metres in length and 2m in width and would incorporate around seven mooring cleats. The pontoon would be of modular construction, and be accessed by a ramp, fixed to the bank.

2. Site history

- 2.1. No previous history available.

3. Consultations received

Environment Agency

- 3.1. No objection.

BA Ecologist

- 3.2. Barnby Broad and Marshes (SSSI), part of the Broads SAC and Broadland SPA and Ramsar is adjacent to the proposed development site. A HRA Screening has been submitted as part of the application. I have reviewed it and agree with its conclusions. The Ecological Assessment Record of the site provides sufficient information to conclude that no further habitat or species surveys are required. No objection to the application, provided the conditions are adhered to; *biosecurity, water vole mitigation, reptile mitigation, breeding bird mitigation.*

BNG Consultant

- 3.3. The application has been submitted for the de-minimis exemption for area habitat units and watercourse units. The rationale follows that: The pontoon will float on top of the water causing no change in river condition. Construction of the new concrete pad will affect less than 25m² of scrub which is a non-priority habitat. In accordance with statutory requirements the applicant has provided a statement setting out the reasons why they believe the application meets criteria for exemption. Supporting documents (Application for De Minimis Exemption 06-01-2026, Plan Drawing of Proposed Pontoon, Dec 2025) clearly show that there will be less than 25m² of non-priority habitat affected by the proposal. It is understood that potential for post-development in-channel encroachment is the most relevant factor for consideration. The applicant has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the risk of detrimental effect would be negligible. This review is satisfied that the sufficient information has been provided to justify use of the de-minimis exemption.

BA Landscape

- 3.4. The Landscape Architect advises that the proposed pontoon would have an adverse effect on the landscape, both visually and experientially, and would therefore conflict with Policies SP7, DM16 and DM20. Although the proposal may provide a limited green infrastructure benefit through improved access to a remote part of the Broads, this is not considered sufficient to outweigh the likely landscape harm. Concern is also raised that any illumination would harm the area's dark-sky qualities, contrary to Policy DM22.
- 3.5. It is considered that the pontoon would undermine the tranquillity, remoteness and natural character of this undeveloped stretch of river, including the character of Landscape Character Area 5: Worlingham Wall to Boundary Dyke, Barnby. The proposed 20-metre pontoon, with approximately seven mooring cleats, is expected to increase human activity in this sensitive location, and the modular design raises concern that future extensions could result in further incremental harm unless suitably restricted.
- 3.6. The Landscape Architect notes the support of Suffolk Wildlife Trust but maintains that the adverse effect on landscape character should be given significant weight. They recommend that the applicant submit a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, or at minimum representative views and photomontages from key viewpoints, to assist in assessing the visual impact of the proposal.

4. Representations

- 4.1. Norfolk and Suffolk Boating Association - Our committee has discussed this application by email and is happy to advise no objection from a navigation perspective. Whilst the pontoons will result in some reduction in river width, we welcome this new, additional mooring to improve the provision of moorings with land access at regular intervals around the river network. At this location, the tidal range is great enough to justify floating pontoons for safe river access. However, the reduction in river width should be minimised by positioning the pontoons as close to the bank as possible. We note the discrepancy between several of the submitted documents – the dimensioned river width aerial view does not accord with plan BA/CM/2025/EL/002. The cross section shows the pontoon too far out from the bank. Additionally, it dimensions the average rise and fall of the tide to be 2,500mm. This is incorrect. Is the bank and river bed profile based on a topographic survey and plotted sufficiently accurately to ensure that the ramp is feasible? Could plan BA/CM/2025/EL/002 be amended prior to any consent being granted? We believe that this project is highly appropriate to furthering the second purpose of the Broads Act which states “promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Broads by the public”.
- 4.2. One objection has been received from Mike Szpytma. The objection raises concerns that the proposed pontoon and access ramp would urbanise this undeveloped marshland location, harming its landscape character and tranquillity. Concern is also raised regarding potential impacts on protected wildlife and habitats, the absence of sufficient ecological assessment, possible implications for flood defence access and integrity, and the risk of increased activity harming local amenity. The representation also refers to the potential for unauthorised residential use of the mooring, associated environmental harm including fire risk, and the precedent the development could set for further similar infrastructure in this sensitive area.

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:
- SP7 – Landscape Character
 - SP14 – Mooring Provision
 - DM13 – Natural Environment
 - DM16 – Development and Landscape
 - DM21 – Amenity
 - DM22 – Light Pollution and dark skies
 - DM32 – Riverbank Stabilization
 - DM33 – Moorings, mooring basins and marinas
 - DM43 - Design

6. Assessment

- 6.1. The main issues in the determination of this application are the principle of development, the need for the development, the impact on the landscape, the amenity of the area, design, ecology, biodiversity net gain and the impact on navigation.

Principle of development

- 6.2. The proposal is for the installation of a 20m x 2m floating mooring pontoon with associated access ramp and fixing point. Policy SP14 of the Local Plan supports the provision of additional short-term visitor moorings where they contribute to the management of a safe and attractive waterway, and Policy DM33 states that new moorings will be permitted where they contribute to the network of facilities around the Broads system in terms of location and quality.
- 6.3. At present, the provision of public moorings in this area is below the threshold noted in the Integrated Access Strategy for the Broads (2024) point 7.8 which states ‘The Broads Authority will work to ensure wherever possible that the distribution of short stay moorings is a maximum of 30-minute cruising time apart (equal to 2 miles distance at 4mph)’ this proposal seeks to meet that aim.
- 6.4. In addition, the proposal contributes to furthering the second duty of the Broads Authority as set out in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 which states “promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Broads by the public”.
- 6.5. It is therefore considered that the principle of development is acceptable.

Impact on the landscape

- 6.6. The site lies within an open marshland and riverside setting, which is an undeveloped stretch of waterside landscape. Policies SP7 and DM16 require development to be appropriate to the character and appearance of the Broads, to conserve and enhance key landscape characteristics, and to avoid adverse impacts on the immediate or wider landscape and the special qualities of the Broads.
- 6.7. In terms of requiring an LVIA or photomontages, the proposal is small-scale and straightforward in form. The visual impact can be understood from the submitted site plan, dimensions and location context and a site visit has been carried out. In the circumstances of this application, it is considered that the absence of a formal LVIA does not prevent the Planning Authority from reaching a reasoned judgment on landscape impact.
- 6.8. The Landscape Officer raises concerns that the proposed pontoon would harm the visual and experiential qualities of this undeveloped stretch of river, conflicting with Policies SP7 and DM16, and erode the remoteness and tranquillity of the area. It is also suggested that the proposal could lead to increased activity, possible future expansion, and that a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment or photomontages should be provided.

- 6.9. The applicant has confirmed that the chosen location is the point where the flood bank is closest to open water, thereby enabling a shorter ramp and less disturbance to existing vegetation. The design places the pontoon just off and parallel to the riverbank specifically to avoid hard engineering and the loss of river-edge habitat. This is a material consideration in landscape terms, particularly as the Local Plan recognises that piled or heavily engineered river edges can create an urban feel in open rural locations and that less intrusive solutions are generally preferable where technically feasible.
- 6.10. In this case, the proposal is limited to a single lightweight floating pontoon measuring 20m by 2m running parallel to the bank together with a 10m access ramp and land fixing points. While clearly visible in the river scene, the structure is low in profile, functional in form, and limited in physical extent. It would not introduce substantial built mass, enclosure, or an extensive stretch of hard-engineered river edge. It is a type of low intensity development that is characteristic of the navigable Broads riverscape and would not appear incongruous.
- 6.11. It is acknowledged that the proposal would result in some increase in activity at this location and would have a degree of effect on the tranquillity of this stretch of river when compared with its existing condition. However, this land area is not inaccessible or private in character as it is already associated with a public right of way and can be experienced by members of the public irrespective of the proposed development. In addition, this stretch of river is already used by the boating community and visitors. The pontoon is unlikely to intensify the general use of the river and while it will introduce a mooring the use is likely to be relatively limited extent, and that increase must be considered in the context of the site's existing public accessibility and the role of the development in improving access to the Broads network.
- 6.12. Overall, while the proposal would introduce a modest engineered feature into an open rural river setting and would give rise to some increase in activity that will impact the tranquillity of the area, the development is limited in scale, low in profile, and has been designed and sited to minimise physical and visual intrusion and avoid more harmful engineering works. It is also material that the site is already accessible to the public by virtue of the public right of way, such that visitors are able to experience this location regardless of whether the pontoon is provided. When this level of impact is balanced against the clear public benefits of improving the visitor mooring network and access to the marshes and public right of way, the planning balance weighs in favour of the development in this case. The proposal is therefore considered to accord, on balance, with Policies SP7, DM16, SP14 and DM33 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

Amenity of residential properties

- 6.13. Policy DM21 states that development will not be permitted if it would have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of existing or potential neighbouring properties or uses, having regard to matters such as overlooking, overshadowing, overbearing impact, light pollution, noise and disturbance. Policy DM33 similarly requires that new moorings do not unacceptably impact the amenity of adjoining residents.

- 6.14. The site is within an open marshland setting and not close to any neighbouring dwellings. The proposal itself is also limited in scale and does not involve any enclosed building, raised accommodation, or intensive built form that would typically give rise to overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impacts. In those respects, the development will not result in harm to residential amenity.
- 6.15. The main amenity considerations instead relate to the activity associated with use of the mooring, including the arrival and departure of boats and the presence of users accessing land from the pontoon. However, the scheme is intended as part of the visitor mooring network, in a waterside location where boating activity is an expected characteristic of the area.
- 6.16. Marker lights for navigation safety are shown on the submitted plan, and these will need to remain limited to the minimum necessary to avoid unnecessary light intrusion in this rural location. Subject to an appropriate condition controlling the installation in accordance with the approved details, the proposal is considered to accord with Policies DM21 and DM33 in amenity terms.

Design

- 6.17. Policy DM43 requires all development to be of high design quality, to integrate effectively with its surroundings, reinforce local distinctiveness and landscape character, and to respond appropriately in terms of siting, layout, scale, form, massing, detailing and materials.
- 6.18. The pontoon would run parallel to the bank and be connected by a 10m ramp to a small concrete pad on the flood bank. The structure includes GRP decking boards, handrails to the rear of the pontoon, tubular piles and brackets, a safety ladder, mooring cleats and marker lights. In functional terms, this is a straightforward design response to the operational requirements of a short-stay visitor mooring in a tidal environment.
- 6.19. The structure is utilitarian in appearance, which is not inappropriate in this context. Mooring infrastructure is necessarily functional, and the proposed form appears proportionate to its intended use. The low-profile design, limited land take and floating construction reduce the prominence of the development when compared with more substantial or heavily engineered alternatives. Subject to the development being carried out in accordance with the submitted plans and materials/details, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of Policy DM43.

Ecology

- 6.20. Policy DM13 requires development to protect biodiversity value, minimise habitat fragmentation, and incorporate beneficial biodiversity features where appropriate. The chosen location and design are intended to reduce disturbance to existing vegetation and avoid loss of river-edge habitat by locating the pontoon off the bank rather than relying on more extensive hard engineering.

- 6.21. The Ecologist raises no objection to the application, subject to conditions relating to breeding birds, water vole, reptiles and adherence to the Broads Authority Environmental Standard Operating Procedures. The Ecologist also confirms that the submitted HRA Screening is agreed with and that no further habitat or species surveys are required. The duty as a Competent Authority is therefore satisfied.
- 6.22. In respect of Biodiversity Net Gain, the Planning Authority's consultant has confirmed that the proposal is acceptable under the de minimis exemption. The updated review concludes that sufficient information has been provided to justify the exemption, including confirmation that the land-based works would affect less than 25sqm of non-priority habitat and that the pontoon would result in no loss of watercourse unit value, no loss of natural watercourse function or processes, and no negative effects from riparian or in-channel encroachment.
- 6.23. The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of Policy DM13 – Natural Environment.

Other issues

- 6.24. The proposal raises navigation and river engineering considerations. Policy DM33 requires that new moorings do not adversely affect navigation, while Policy DM32 recognises that works associated with moorings and riverbank infrastructure must be designed with regard to safe navigation, biodiversity, the character of the location and the nature of the watercourse, and that softer or less intrusive approaches are to be preferred where appropriate. In this case, the proposal is specifically for a floating mooring structure intended to operate safely within the tidal environment, and the submitted plan includes safety features such as handrails, a ladder and marker lights. In principle, the proposals are acceptable, subject to any detailed navigation or works licence controls outside the planning system.
- 6.25. The application site is located within Dark Sky Zone 2, where external lighting is required to be strictly controlled. The proposed mooring light is considered essential for safety reasons and is acceptable as part of the development, it will be controlled by condition. No other external lighting is proposed, and a condition will be attached to prevent the installation of any additional lighting. Subject to that control, the proposal is considered compliant with Policy DM22.
- 6.26. An additional issue raised was that this would set a precedent for future expansion or new moorings. This is not an intention however, if any future extensions or alterations to the pontoon were proposed they would require separate planning permission. Should such an application be submitted, it would be assessed on its own merits, having regard to the relevant local plan policies and any other material considerations at that time.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The proposed development would provide a new short-stay visitor mooring within the Broads network and, subject to the recommended conditions, is considered acceptable.

While the proposal would introduce a modest engineered structure into an open riverside location, its scale, low-profile form and floating design mean that it would not result in unacceptable harm to the character of the area, the wider landscape, neighbouring amenity, design quality, navigation interests or biodiversity.

- 7.2. The proposal would deliver wider public benefits through improved access to the navigation network, Castle Marshes Nature Reserve and the Angles Way. Those benefits have significant weight in the planning balance. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policies SP14, SP7, DM13, DM16, DM21, DM22, DM32, DM33 and DM43 of the Local Plan for the Broads and is recommended for approval.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. Approve subject to the following conditions:
1. Three-year timeframe for commencement
 2. In accordance with the approved plans and details
 3. No additional external lighting

9. Reason for recommendation

- 9.1. The proposal is considered to accord with Policies SP14, SP7, DM13, DM16, DM21, DM22, DM32, DM33 and DM43 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

Author: Callum Sculfor

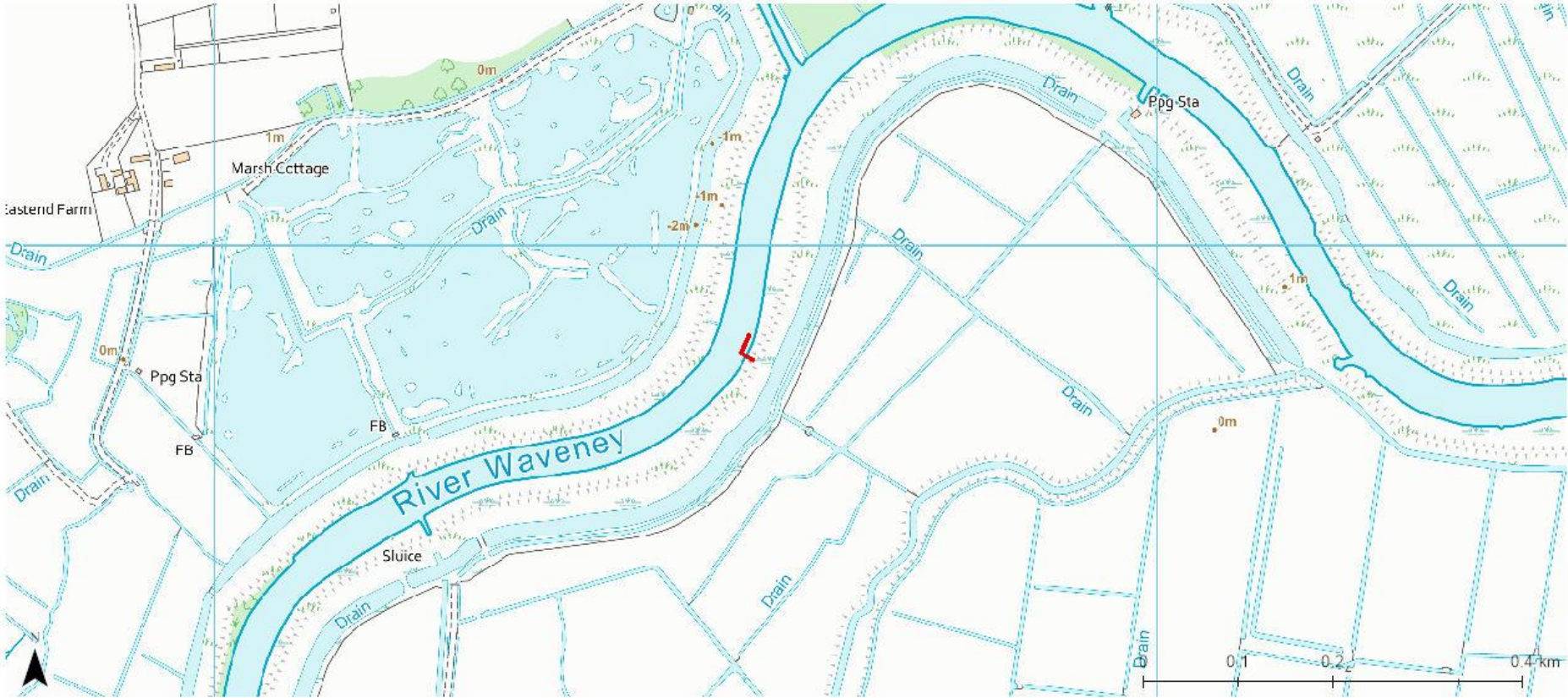
Background papers: [BA/2025/0407/FUL](#) and [associated documents](#)

Date of report: 16 March 2026

Appendix 1 – [Location map](#)

Appendix 1 – Location map

BA/2025/0407/FUL - Land Adjacent, Land And Flood Wall, Castle Marshes, North Cove



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