

The Broads Society

Minutes of the Northern Rivers Sub-Committee Meeting held on 11 April 2011 at 7.30 pm at the Hotel Wroxham

Present: Lesley Bonshor (Vice-Chairman) - in the Chair
Michael Brandon-Jones, David Edleston,
Robert Paul, John Scott, David Skinner and John Wheeley

In attendance: Carol Palfrey (Administrator/Committee Secretary)

By invitation: Cally Smith, Head of Regeneration and Development, Broads
Authority, Bryan Read

1 **Apologies** - Keith Bacon and John Pitchers

2 **Planning Application for development on the Deal Ground Site, Norwich.**

The Committee had accepted Cally Smith's offer to attend the meeting to explain this large and complex application to develop the Deal Ground Site in Norwich. Bryan Read, who had extensive knowledge of this site, had studied the planning documents on the Committee's behalf and had also been invited to attend

Cally explained that the site fell within the jurisdiction of three Planning Authorities: Norwich City Council, South Norfolk Council and the Broads Authority. Norwich City Council had the major interest in terms of land area. The Broads Authority would be dealing with the application as it affected the river, including the application for the bridge, but would also be commenting as a consultee on the areas of the application covered by Norwich City Council and South Norfolk Council.

The proposal comprised 682 houses (19 hectares), offices/commercial (1,000 sq m) with café/bar facilities (1,200 sq m) along the river front. Other facilities would be provided for residents. Although the proportion of affordable housing normally required by planning authorities in the Greater Norwich Development Partnership area was 33%, the developer had offered to provide only 18%. The buildings would be of varying height, ranging from 2 to 8 storeys.

The site presented a number of significant problems for developers in terms of their developing a scheme which was viable:

- A large area of fen, marsh and carr was a designated County Wildlife site and was not available for development.
- Access to the site was very restricted, the main road access being on to the road leading to the County Hall roundabout. Additional access would be provided to the north via a bridge, but this would not be suitable for vehicles other than those used in emergency.
- The site required extensive infrastructure for drainage. Underground tanks were proposed to store excess water.

The BA Navigation Committee had considered the application and stipulated that the bridge to the north (i.e. over the Wensum) must not be fixed. The Broads Authority required a soffit height of at least 14 ft but the developers had stated that this was not feasible. The Navigation Committee was prepared to consider the lower height of 10 ft proposed, as well as other aspects of the application, only if there were significant compensatory benefits for navigation. One of these benefits would be a marina with slipways, charging points, pump-out facilities etc. as well as riverside moorings. It was noted that a marina would also provide additional storage for rainwater.

The application also showed a bridge to link the May Gurney part of the site to the Deal Ground; this bridge was to be fixed and the BA Navigation Committee had agreed this in principle.

Cally was aware of Keith Bacon's suggestion, made at the Local Access Forum, that a second bridge be erected across the Yare to provide pedestrian/cycle access to Whitlingham Park. She explained that £900k of funding had been secured from the Lottery Sustainable Development Fund but this was conditional on all bridges to the site being completed by 2013.

Bryan Read drew attention to the main power lines which crossed the site and which seem to have been ignored in the application. Cally pointed out that, if planning permission were conditional on the undergrounding of power lines, this would markedly increase the developer's costs.

The Vice-Chairman thanked Cally for giving up her time and for her very helpful explanation. She then left the meeting.

The Committee discussed the application.

David Edleston drew attention to the fact that this was an Outline application and that the aspects to be considered at this stage were access, layout and scale. The design of the buildings and landscaping were reserved matters which would be considered when a full planning application was submitted.

The Society's concerns were:

- Visual impact of tall buildings along the riverside and the sudden transition from a rural landscape to an urban one without any intermediary stage.
- A large development in this location would be visible not only from Whitlingham Country Park but also from a distance in the low lying landscape.
- Riverside moorings were likely to be private in order to provide sufficient income to the developers.
- There would be a lost opportunity to provide an additional bridge for pedestrian/cycle access to Whitlingham Park.

Robert Paul suggested the Committee should arrange a boat trip to view the site from the river and undertook to contact Colin Dye. Once he had his agreement, and a proposed date/time, the Administrator would contact Committee members and Bryan Read.

Although it was anticipated that it would be several months before the application was considered, the Administrator would, nonetheless, write a holding letter to all three planning authorities to notify them formally that the Society would be submitting comments but would not be able to do so within the normal timescale stipulated in their invitation of 14 March.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 28 February 2011 were agreed and signed as a true record subject to the amendment of Minute 9.4 to read “David Edleston reported that the two-storey live aboard boat required planning permission but had not yet been removed”.

3 Appointment of New Member

David Skinner was formally appointed as a member of the Sub-Committee.

In view of the time spent on the Deal Ground Application it was agreed to defer all further business to the next meeting to be held on Monday 27 June.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Signed
Vice-Chairman

Date