

Planning Committee

06 December 2024

Agenda item number 7.2

BA/2024/0246/FUL- Salhouse Broad, Lower Street, Salhouse

Report by Assistant Planning Officer

Proposal

Installation of 3 no. electric cycle charging boxes

Applicant

Broads Authority

Recommendation

Approve Subject to Conditions

Reason for referral to committee

Broads Authority development

Application target date

13 December 2024

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1. Description of site and proposals

- 1.1. The application site is adjacent to Salhouse Broad which is privately owned and managed. Salhouse Broad contains reedbed, wetland, woodland and the Broad itself. This Broad is unique in that majority of the Broads were man made, dug for peat soils, however, Salhouse Broad was excavated for its gravel. As described in the Broads Authority Salhouse Conservation Character Statement (2013) “The eastern fringe especially, contains many mature trees surrounding the footpath to the Broad, which is both well used and maintained and is a delightful pathway to and from the water’s edge. This footpath through mature mixed woodland is significant as it is the main approach into the village for holiday makers mooring on Salhouse Broad.” It also notes that “Salhouse Broad is privately owned and from its southern bank, a lower area bordering the water itself, the ground rises up to heath-like land at higher level. There are seats and some information about the Broad and local wildlife on display and the whole provides a pleasant recreational area for visitors and residents.”
- 1.2. The application site is currently a vacant grass area, which sits west of the main footpath and immediately adjacent to the darker skies viewing platform which was granted consent in 2022. Behind the application site to the north is a wooded area.
- 1.3. The site is located within the Salhouse Conservation Area.

2. Site history

- 2.1. BA/1985/8031/HISTAP - Construction of quay heading – Approved
- 2.2. BA/1992/4750/HISTAP - Alder pole piling – Approved
- 2.3. BA/1995/4488/HISTAP - Construction of boardwalk and installation of bank protection – Approved
- 2.4. BA/2007/0284/FUL - Repair work and replacement of quay heading – Approved
- 2.5. BA/2011/0410/SCREEN - Screening opinion in relation to an environmental impact assessment for the project related works of Salhouse Spit Restoration, Phase 1 – EIA Not required.

- 2.6. BA/2012/0077/SCREEN - Screening opinion in relation to an Environmental Impact Assessment for the project related works of Salhouse Spit Restoration, Revised Proposal Phases 1 and 2 combined – EIA Not required.
- 2.7. BA/2012/0086/FUL - Restoration of spit using newly created reed bed – Approved
- 2.8. BA/2015/0366/FUL - Replacement of timber quay heading with 3-4m corrugated steel sheet quay heading. – Approved
- 2.9. BA/2020/0365/FUL - Erection of children's play equipment – Approved
- 2.10. BA/2021/0414/FUL - for Extension to car park & improvements to cycle parking – Approved
- 2.11. BA/2022/0323/FUL - Hard standing including viewing platform, 3 information boards, 1 information column, 1 map plinth, 1 bench & a telescope pier area – Approved

3. Consultations received

Parish Council

- 3.1. No response received.

BA Landscape Officer

- 3.2. Good consideration has been given to the location of the charge points in the corner of an existing car park and will provide improved access to the existing dark sky pod feature. They support a sustainable alternative to cars. Whilst the materials palette states 'natural wood/wood grain finish', it appears from the image that this may be a composite material rather than wood itself. An artificial material will not weather in the same way as the existing dark sky pod and therefore may not blend in as well as wood. Natural wood would be preferable. Sustainable, recycled materials would be a reasonable alternative. UPVC would not be a suitable material due to issues of sustainability and appearance. Otherwise, I have no objections from a landscape perspective.

BA Historic Environment Manager

- 3.3. On balance it is considered that the proposed location for the charging pod is acceptable. I initially had some concerns as this area is starting to look rather visually cluttered. However, it does provide useful facilities and is largely screened from the wider area due to the tree belts around it and so some of the potential harm is mitigated. In terms of the material, I agree with the Landscape Officer that a natural timber cladding to the pods would be preferable. However, I appreciate the points made by the applicant regarding security, given the use of the pods. I think it is also the case that as a non-traditional structure a composite would in principle be more acceptable. The proposed composite cladding is made from wood and recycled material, which is positive, but I do have some concerns regarding the visual appearance of the lighter sample which I understand is proposed for this location in order that there is some consistency in colour with the Dark Skies platform. Although I

would normally encourage uniformity, I think in this instance the ‘wood effect’ pattern on the lighter sample is unrealistic and as such I would suggest that the darker colour be used. Although it will not match the Dark Skies platform as closely, the darker colour should also mean it is more visually recessive, and it should match more closely picnic tables in the area.

3.4. Re-consultation on amended details; no objection.

4. Representations

4.1. Broads Society - Supports

4.2. Third party - I am very much against this application. Your photograph is taken at Salhouse Broad next to the Existing Dark Sky Platform. In a conservation area. The footpath to Salhouse Broad has always been a footpath only, bicycles are not allowed, there is currently a bicycle park at the entrance to the footpath. By allowing electric cycles to use the footpath you will be encouraging everyone to cycle down the footpath to Salhouse Broad. This will include adults and children, BMX & Mountain bikes who will feel that that they can then cycle through the woodland area and make it into a cycle track / BMX hill. If you wish to install cycle charging boxes then I suggest that you install them in the car park and not encourage any kind of cycling down to the broad.

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:

- DM11 – Heritage Assets
- DM15 – Renewable Energy
- DM16 – Development & Landscape
- DM21 – Amenity
- DM29 – Sustainable tourism and recreation development
- DM43 – Design

6. Assessment

6.1. In terms of the assessment of this application the main issues to be considered include the principle of the development and the impacts on neighbouring amenity, the landscape and the design of the proposed development. This report includes an assessment of the potential tourism and recreation improvements, along with the renewable energy benefits.

Principle of development

- 6.2. The installation of electric bike charging pods aligns with the Broads Authority's commitment to promoting sustainable transport options and reducing carbon emissions in the region. Given the increase in the use of electric cycles, particularly on rural routes within the Broads, the provision of these charging facilities supports an evolving industry that encourages environmentally friendly travel alternatives.
- 6.3. The Local Plan places an emphasis on enhancing sustainable infrastructure that minimises ecological impact while promoting tourism and accessibility within the area. The charging pods would enable cyclists to extend their journeys, thereby increasing accessibility to the Broads' natural and cultural attractions, without reliance on motor vehicles. This provision aligns with the Authority's sustainability objectives by reducing fossil fuel dependency and supporting eco-tourism initiatives.
- 6.4. Furthermore, the installation of electric bike charging pods is consistent with policies that encourage alternative modes of transportation, particularly those that are low in environmental impact. By enabling longer journeys, these facilities contribute to the region's sustainable tourism objectives and provide additional utility for both residents and visitors. The principle of this development is therefore considered acceptable.

Design and Heritage Assets

- 6.5. Policy DM43 states that all development will be expected to be of a high design quality and should integrate effectively with its surroundings, reinforce local distinctiveness, and landscape character and preserve or enhance cultural heritage. Policy SP5 states that the historic environment of the Broads will be protected and enhanced. Policy DM11 also states that all development will be expected to protect, preserve, or enhance the significance and setting of historic, cultural and architectural heritage assets and elements of the wider historic environment that give the Broads its distinctive character. The pods themselves are reasonably large in size; however, this is in order to allow an electric cycle inside and remain locked up and safe.
- 6.6. The materials have been reviewed in detail to ensure they are appropriate. Originally, it was requested that the cladding material be natural timber; to retain a soft, natural appearance. Following this request, a fire safety test was carried out and details of this were provided. There are numerous reports of electric cycles catching fire during charging, given the purpose of the pods, the structural components must be able to withstand a fire if this was to occur. The fire safety results demonstrated that the plastic mock timber cladding was able to contain fire significantly more than timber cladding. The timber cladding could catch fire and potentially cause the fire to spread. The plastic cladding is non-flammable, meaning that the fire would not spread beyond the unit. Whilst the plastic mock timber cladding does not retain the natural, soft appearance of genuine timber, the benefits of fire safety outweigh the harmful impacts caused by the plastic and the material is acceptable.

- 6.7. The roof of the pods is to be a slight curved solar panel, and this will provide additional power to the running of the pod. This will improve the environmental credentials of the pods and reduce the carbon footprint of the pod. This is a modern design element, however as the units are functional units, it is considered appropriate in this case. The pods will be placed on a type 1 surface and fixed into the ground. There will be a door using the same materials on the front that can be locked to keep the bike safe inside while charging.
- 6.8. The site lies within the Salhouse Conservation Area, and the Heritage Asset policy is relevant for any proposed development in this location. The proposed electric cycle charging pods are to be positioned adjacent to the dark skies platform, which was installed in 2022. This site is a grassed area bordered by dense woodland, and the land slopes steeply down towards the broad, with the woodland providing effective screening from the water. A footpath runs alongside the site, frequently used by walkers and cyclists, and is bordered by hedging facing the proposed location of the pods.
- 6.9. The pods are designed to be unobtrusive, and their placement will not negatively impact on the character or visual amenity of the conservation area. The thick woodland and existing hedging provide natural screening, and their low profile ensures that they will not disrupt the setting of the dark skies platform or the broader heritage context of the area. Given the careful siting and the fact that no significant heritage assets are impacted, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of Policy DM11 and will not detract from the historical or cultural value of Salhouse Broad or its surroundings.

Amenity

- 6.10. The proposed charging pods are intended to enhance sustainable transportation options at Salhouse Broad, providing a valuable amenity for cyclists and walkers. Located near the dark skies platform, the pods are positioned in an area that is frequently used for recreational purposes, ensuring that they serve the needs of local users without disrupting their experience.
- 6.11. The pods are designed with a minimalistic, unobtrusive aesthetic, ensuring that they blend into the environment without negatively affecting the enjoyment of the site. Their placement near the existing footpath ensures easy access, supporting the amenity of users without creating any additional barriers or inconvenience.
- 6.12. The proposed electric cycle charging pods at Salhouse Broad comply with Policy DM21, as they provide a valuable amenity for users without adversely affecting the amenity of any neighbouring properties or the natural surroundings. The design and location of the pods ensure that they blend into the environment, and they will enhance, rather than disrupt, the experience for visitors. Therefore, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of amenity impact.

Renewable Energy

- 6.13. The proposed cycle charging pods are minor in scale compared to traditional renewable energy developments like solar farms or wind turbines. Located within the car park, they align with the policy's preference for utilising previously developed sites. This location minimises the visual impact on the distinctive landscape and preserves the recreational experience of the Broads. The pods will not require extensive ancillary infrastructure like power lines or storage buildings, which the policy stipulates should be evaluated in proposals. Since these pods are compact and do not interfere with sensitive biodiversity areas or cultural heritage, they are unlikely to compromise the Broads' environmental or visual character. Given the pods' scale and location, they meet the intentions of DM15 by supporting renewable energy infrastructure without altering the landscape's distinctive qualities.

Sustainable Tourism and Recreation Development

- 6.14. Policy DM29 deals with sustainable tourism and recreation development, and consideration can be given to both the locational and design principles laid out in the policy. The proposed pods are sited within a grassed area, away from the broad itself, next to the darker skies platform which is an associated visitor attraction. This aligns with criterion (ii) of the policy, which supports development that is closely associated with existing visitor sites. Additionally, the pods offer sustainable access, being specifically intended to support cyclists, which aligns with the policy's requirement that developments be accessible by sustainable means of transport. The charging pods meet several key principles for sustainable development. Given the compact size of the pods and their siting within an established area, they will not create significant additional demand on the highway network.
- 6.15. The placement of the pods does not impact dark skies, as they do not include bright lighting, and they are carefully sited to avoid harm to the landscape character or local wildlife habitats. By supporting eco-friendly transportation, the pods also contribute positively to the area's environmental quality, aligning with criterion (viii).
- 6.16. The design and scale of the pods are appropriate to their setting, aligning with criterion (ix). They are small, non-intrusive structures that do not affect navigation or the open nature of the surrounding landscape, meeting the requirement for compatibility with local character.
- 6.17. The installation of the pods is compatible with the objectives and detailed requirements of Policy DM29. Their location within an existing tourist area and their support for sustainable tourism enhance accessibility for cyclists without detracting from the unique qualities of the Broads landscape.

Landscape

- 6.18. The placement of the pods will not significantly alter or disrupt the visual landscape. The existing woodland and hedging will effectively screen the pods from view from the

broad and the surrounding area, ensuring that the landscape's key characteristics are preserved. The pods are designed to be low-profile and unobtrusive, minimizing their visual impact on the broader landscape. The proposed development respects the natural features of the site, including the woodland and hedging, by utilising these existing elements to shield the pods from the broader landscape. This approach aligns with the policy's requirement to conserve and enhance the landscape's character. The proposals are in accordance with Policy DM16 – Development and Landscape.

Other issues

- 6.19. The installation of electric cycle charging pods represents a positive step forward in supporting sustainable transportation options within the Broads. As an evolving industry, electric cycle charging infrastructure is becoming increasingly important for promoting eco-friendly travel. Intelligen has outlined plans to expand this network, installing additional charging pods in sites across the Broads network and beyond, which would enhance accessibility for cyclists and encourage a shift toward greener forms of transport in the area. The installation of these pods in the current location is a sensible and forward-thinking measure that aligns with the Authority's sustainable tourism objectives and broader environmental goals. Given this context, the installation of these pods is considered acceptable.
- 6.20. An objection has been received from a local resident, raising concerns for the footpaths being used by electric cycles. While it is appreciated that an increase in traffic from cycles will occur, the paths are wide enough to accommodate this. The footpaths have been used for cycles before this proposal and have been allowed full access. This application does not change the existing arrangements.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. In conclusion, the proposed electric cycle charging pods have been assessed against policies DM15 (Renewable Energy), DM16 (Landscape), DM21 (Amenity), and DM43 (Design). The pods are strategically located in a grassed flat area, with mature hedges and a dense woodland providing natural screening. This siting minimises their impact on both the landscape and visual amenity, ensuring compatibility with the key landscape characteristics of the Broads as outlined in Policy DM16. The design is in keeping with the area's character, meeting the high-quality design expectations set out in Policy DM43 and ensuring the development respects the traditional features of the landscape.
- 7.2. The sustainable nature of the pods supports the broader environmental goals of the Broads Local Plan, contributing positively to tourism infrastructure while encouraging eco-friendly transport options. The application is therefore considered acceptable.

8. Recommendation

8.1. Approved subject to conditions:

1. Three Year timeframe for commencement
2. In accordance with the approved plans and material details
3. Prior to installation, all external materials to be confirmed

9. Reason for recommendation

- 9.1. The placement of three electric cycle charging pods adjacent to Salhouse Broad is in accordance with NPPF guidance and Policy DM11, DM15, DM16, DM21, DM29, DM43 of the Local Plan for the Broads and is considered acceptable.

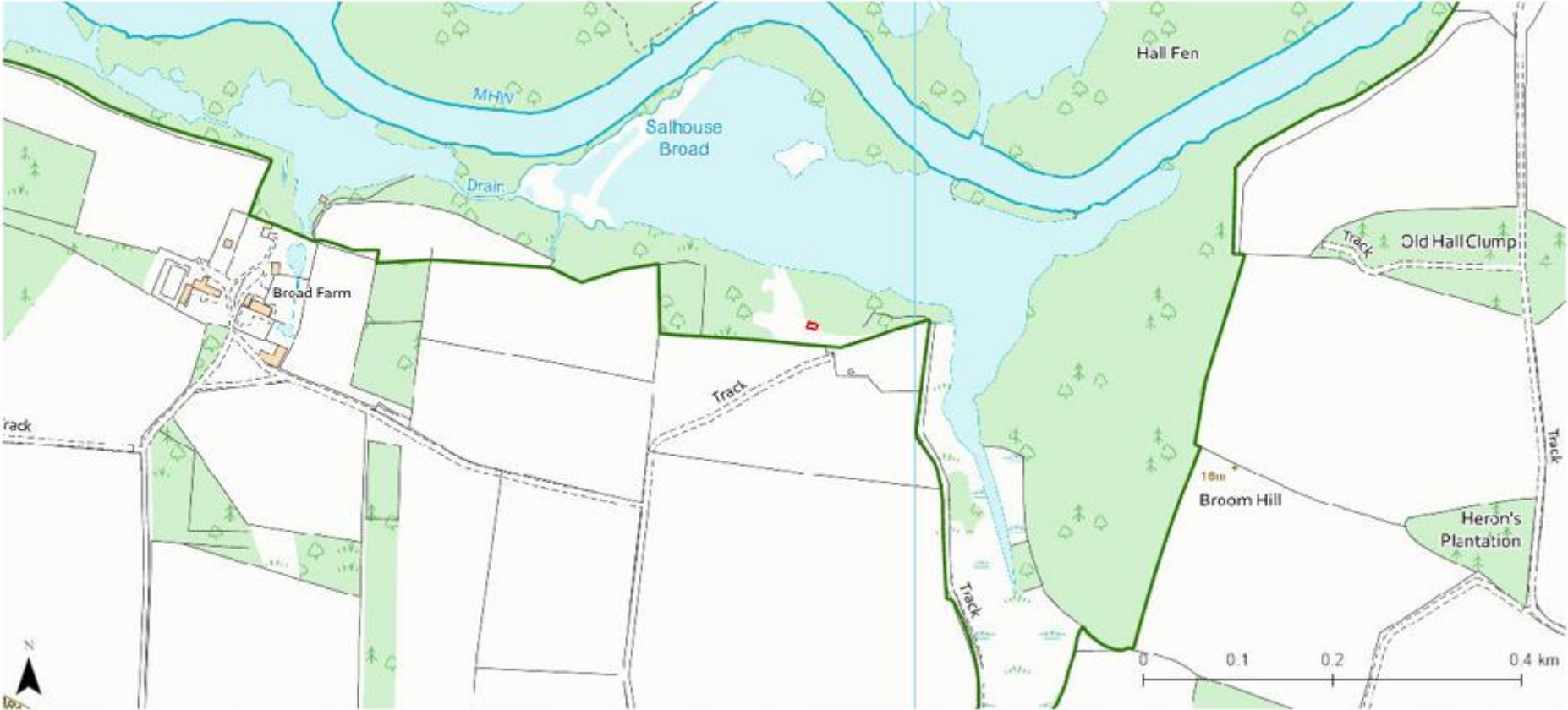
Author: Callum Sculfor

Date of report: 01 November 2024

Appendix 1 – [Location map](#)

Appendix 1 – Location map

BA/2024/0246/FUL - Salhouse Broad, Lower Street, Salhouse



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