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<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P09/W0947</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE REGISTERED</b>	FULL 08.10.2009
<b>PARISH</b>	WALLINGFORD
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Marcus Harris Imran Lokhon
<b>APPLICANT</b>	South Oxfordshire District Council
<b>SITE PROPOSAL</b>	Riverside Park, Wallingford Construction of 136 metres of new riverbank for short-stay mooring at Riverside Park, Wallingford. Dredging of river bed to facilitate moorings. Installation of steel sheet piling: timber rails and caps: mooring posts and rings. Provision of pump out facility.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	As amended by revised flood risk assessment and drawing nos. 6492/01C, 02C and 03C received on 1 December 2009.
<b>GRID REFERENCE OFFICER</b>	461087/189534 Mrs S Crawford

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application has been referred to Planning Committee because the recommendation conflicts with the views of Crowmarsh Parish Council.
- 1.2 The Council owns the river side, leisure park comprising swimming pool, paddling pool and informal leisure uses. The existing riverbank along the whole site frontage is man made (concrete) and requires repair. There is public access across half of river frontage at present (65 metres of length); the remaining length is fenced off. The bank height above water level varies across the length of the site. There are a number of constraints on the site;
- Important trees close to existing bank.
  - Wallingford Bridge is a grade II\* listed building and a scheduled ancient monument.
  - Conservation area.
  - Area liable to flooding.
- 1.3 The site is identified on the Ordnance Survey Extract **attached** at Appendix 1.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The amended application seeks full planning permission for engineering works to provide temporary mooring facilities (24 hour stay) on the east side of the River Thames. Amended plans have been received that reduce the extension out into the river and provides a lower walkway to facilitate use by smaller craft. The engineering operations proposed are:
- Repairs and rebuilding of existing concrete river bank frontage along 136 metres of bank,
  - Extension of river bank out into river by 1 metre for a length of approximately 83 metres on southern length with infilling behind to create a new walkway at lower level,

- Extension of river bank out into river by 350mm on northern length (approximately 53 metres). The fill material will be provided mostly by dredged material from the river bed.
- Installation of sheet piling (corrugated metal) on new bank frontage with timber rails and caps
- Mooring posts and rings (1 metre high wooden bollards at 9 metre intervals and rings at 3 metre intervals)
- Dredging of river to allow river craft to approach new bank
- Provision of pump out facility (1m high coin operated bollard with connection to mains and drains to allow boat users to pump out foul waste)

2.2 Reduced copies of the amended plans accompanying the application are **attached** at Appendix 2. The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment and Planning Statement which are available on the Council's website.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS on original plans**

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|-----|---|--|
| 3.1 | Forestry Officer                          | No objection subject to a condition requiring the tree protection.   |
|     | Conservation Officer                      | No objection comments regarding materials  |
|     | Environment Agency                        | Support works of repair but some concerns about building out into river and dredging if there are no biological enhancements proposed.   |
|     | Countryside Officer                       | The new moorings will not result in significant impacts on terrestrial habitats or species. There is a potential for impacts on aquatic habitats, particularly local fish populations from shockwaves whilst installing the piling and sediments from dredging which reduce oxygen levels in the short term. The Environment Agency will advise on any necessary mitigation. |
|     | OCC (Archaeology)                         | There is considerable archaeological potential in this area. No objection to proposal subject to a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief.   |
|     | Wallingford Town Council                  | Approve – no comments.   |
|     | Crowmarsh Parish Council (original plans) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refuse – The materials are not suitable for the environment,</li> <li>• The height of the riverbank is excessive and dredging could be come a health and safety issue, and</li> <li>• Some of the length should be lower to allow access for smaller river craft and rowing boats.</li> </ul>                                       |
|     | Leisure and Economic Development          | <p>This proposal achieves a number of objectives; to support and create vibrant market towns and to enhance the use of the river (corporate priority EG1 and market towns action plan policy W4.1).</p> <p>This project is strongly supported</p>  |

- Neighbour Object (11)  
Including comments  
from the River Users  
Group
- Additional short stay facilities are welcomed but the design is not fit for purpose. Other options should be considered. Details of these options have been put forward.
  - Two thirds of the length of the quay will be suitable only for the largest vessels using the river which already have facilities on the opposite bank, smaller craft are not catered for adequately,
  - The proposed design will reduce the cross section area of the river at the “bankfull” level which may have an impact on flooding,
  - Extending the bank into the river and the sudden shallowing 20 metres from the bridge will direct more flow into the central arch, some thought should be given to maintaining or increasing the flow through the eastern span.
  - Safety issues. Whilst the current bank is open and pedestrians and pushchairs may fall over the edge, the river is shallow; dredging would increase the depth of the water and increase the danger should people fall into the water.

#### 4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 P94/W0623/DC – Improvements to recreational facilities – Approved  
P91/W0363 – Change of use from park to small boat hire - Approved

#### 5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

- 5.1 Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policies  
G2 – Protection and enhancement of the Environment  
C3 – The River Thames and its valley  
C6 – biodiversity conservation  
C8 – species protection  
C9 – Landscape features (trees)  
CON5 – setting of listed buildings  
CON7 – development within conservation areas  
CON11 - archaeology  
CON13 – archaeological investigations  
EP5 – Flood risk  
R9 – River Thames recreation  
TSM1 – Tourist related development  
TSM2 – Tourist attractions and facilities

#### 6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The main issues in this case are:
- Principle.
  - Design and materials.
  - Impact on trees.
  - Impact on character of conservation area and setting of scheduled ancient monument and listed building
  - Flooding.
  - Ecology.
  - Safety issues.

6.2 **Principle.** The Council own the riverside park site and have riparian rights to the middle of the river. The river frontage to riverside park is man-made consisting of sections of concrete bags and blockwork with supporting sheet piling below the water. The existing bank is in a poor state of repair and requires restoration. The Council are required to repair the existing bank but have also considered the opportunities to improve the existing facilities on the site in line with the objectives of Policies TSM1 and TSM2 of the Local Plan which seek to encourage tourist related activities that are related to the inherent qualities of the area. Policy R9 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan allows for the provision of new temporary mooring facilities for visitors in suitable locations where no environmental damage is caused and where there is proper access and other facilities available. Given the location of the site in relation to Wallingford and the design of the moorings these criteria can be met. The proposal would also meet other objectives of the Council to support and create vibrant market towns and to enhance the use of the river (corporate priority EG1 and market towns action plan policy W4.1). In this case the principle of development is acceptable and the details of the scheme are discussed further below.

6.3 **Design and materials. a) design.** Repairs to the bank are essential to protect the existing bank from further erosion, especially at times of flooding. The design of the new moorings has been influenced by the constraints operating on the site. Namely: the trees, the character of the area, the setting of the listed building and ancient monument, the wide public use of the site and flooding issues. The application has also been amended to take into account the practical advice given by river users so that the moorings are fit for purpose from an operational point of view.

Where it is not possible to lower ground levels (see 6.4) the scheme proposes to build the river bank out by 1 metre (for approximately 83 metres of bank). A new bank would be provided at a lower level (up to 300mm lower than the existing bank) and would create a new walkway to allow access for use by smaller craft. Ramps up to existing bank levels to allow safe and convenient access would be provided at either end of the lower walkway. It is not possible to lower this section of the new bank further due to changes in levels being too extreme and problems with ramping.

On the northern length of the river frontage (approximately 53 metres of bank) the bank is already at a lower level. Here the bank would be built out some 350mm, the minimum width to allow sheet piles to be placed in front of the existing bank and facilitate repairs. A new walkway along the existing bank would be provided.

A minimum draft (underwater clearance for boats) of 1.2 metres is required and some dredging is inevitable if moorings are to be provided. The sections illustrate the extent of dredging, this would lower the river bed by the following amounts:

- Section 1 - approx 500mm.
- Section 2 – approx 700mm
- Section 3 – approx 600mm
- Section 4 – approx 700mm
- Section 5 – approx 400mm
- Section 6 – No dredging required (Salter's Steamers summer mooring)

**b) Materials.** The existing bank is constructed of concrete across the full length. This has degraded and requires repair; it is not particularly attractive but has weathered to a finish that fits in with the character of the area. Sheet piling is proposed for the new bank frontage; this is a robust material that can withstand the wear and tear of use by boats and erosion but can look very industrial. In an attempt to provide an acceptable

frontage finish, timber rails and caps will be applied to disguise and soften the impact of the piling. The proposed finish is the same as that provided on the opposite bank where there are existing moorings. However, the east bank is lower and less of the sheet piling and timber facing will be visible above the water line. Given the existing materials and character of the man made bank there is no objection to the new materials.

- 6.4 **Impact on trees.** A line of mature lime and horse chestnut trees runs parallel to the river 6 metres in from the bank at the southern end of the site. These trees are a dominant and important feature and contribute considerably to the character of the conservation area and should be retained in accordance with Policy C9 of the Local Plan. The location of the trees prevents any lowering of the river bank along this length because lowering levels would damage a significant amount of tree roots and undermine the long term health of the trees. The Council are the custodian of these trees and should be seen to adopt a best practice approach to any construction works which may affect their own trees. In this case levels will not be changed within the root protection areas. The existing bank (which contains and restrains the tree roots will be kept and the new works will have no impact on the tree roots. Subject to tree protection measures during the course of construction the proposal would have an acceptable impact on the existing important trees.
- 6.5 **Character of the conservation area and setting of Listed building/ ancient monument.** Wallingford bridge is both a grade II\* listed building and a scheduled ancient monument, the site also lies within the Wallingford Conservation Area. As such any development must preserve or enhance the character of the area and the setting of the listed structure (Policies CON7, CON11 of SOLP). In this case the area has a riverside setting and moorings are a common feature in such a setting. The amended scheme reduces the area of bank to be built out into the river and reduces the height of the sheet piling above the water line. These are changes that improve the impact on the character of the area. Given the character and materials of the existing man made bank and those used on the bank opposite the proposal would not detract from the setting of the listed building or the area.
- 6.6 **Flooding.** The river bank is prone to regular flooding. Development within areas at risk of flooding will only be permitted where the proposals include effective works to mitigate the effects of the development (EP5 SOLP). A detailed flood risk assessment has been submitted with the application and this has been submitted to the Environment Agency for comment. The Environment Agency comments on the amended details will be reported verbally at the meeting.
- 6.7 **Ecology.** The Environment Agency support the repair of the river bank frontage and are not opposed to the encroachment into the river if it can be demonstrated that there is an overall benefit to biodiversity and conservation. The EA acknowledge that the existing banks offer very little ecological value but also comment that the proposed length of sheet piling offers no benefit/enhancement over the existing situation. However, the provision of the moorings and their use are not compatible with establishing wildlife habitats or a more natural river frontage and a compromise between the competing demands needs to be achieved. There is some scope to provide areas of ecological/biodiversity enhancements in the 20 metre section between the bridge and the moorings and in the areas immediately to the north of the moorings. The recommended condition 4 requires details of the enhancements to be submitted and approved.
- 6.8 **Safety issues.** Crowmarsh Parish Council and a Crowmarsh resident have expressed concern regarding the safety of visitors to the site. They acknowledge that the existing frontage is open and people may fall into the water but as the river is relatively shallow

at the bank it is easier to retrieve victims. The proposal involves dredging and the river bed would be lower at the bank making water levels deeper; there is a concern that victims who do fall in would be less likely to be rescued successfully. Whilst this concern is acknowledged it is a danger that exists along the whole of the river frontage and it is not practical to fence off the river to prevent the odd occurrence when somebody may fall into the river.

**7.0 CONCLUSION**

7.1 There principle of providing additional moorings is strongly supported because of the economic and recreational benefits that will result. The design of the new moorings has been influenced by a number of important constraints on the site and attempts to balance the needs of river users against the constraints; the proposal represents the best compromise that can be achieved in the circumstances. Your officers recommend that planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions.

**8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Commencement 3 yrs - Full Planning Permission**
2. **Provide and maintain tree protection**
3. **Archaeological watching brief**
4. **Scheme of ecological/biodiversity improvements for other parts of the bank to be submitted and approved**
5. **Detailed schedule of materials**
6. **Use as temporary moorings only**

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