

Information in support of revised planning application by The Renewable Heritage Trust for extension of use of Howsham Mill addressing issues raised in the pre-planning application 15/01117/FUL

Access

The main concern raised in the pre-application advice was that of vehicle parking. The car park, which has a stone surface, and the area in front of the gate is capable of holding about 25 cars when parked carefully and to date there have been no complaints raised by either visitors or local residents over the parking. In response to an objection by the Highways Officer, a Travel Plan has been prepared and agreed with him.

Ecological considerations

The RHT would not have submitted this application if it thought the additional use of the building would threaten the ecological integrity of the island or the river. Our main concern is with the environment and its conservation. We do not intend to change anything about the mill and island to accommodate commercial users and this will limit its suitability for such users. The RHT has commissioned Jon Traill of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to consider the implications, if any, of extended use on protected species, namely otters and bats, which may use or visit the island. The building is used for occasional evening events when the external lighting would be switched on. This comprises discreet spotlights on each corner shining onto the statue on the apex of the roof and two downlights on each of three elevations. This provides subtle but adequate light for the immediate vicinity of the building. No further permanent external lighting is proposed as this would detract from the atmosphere of the location. Users are to be informed of the extent of the lighting and advised to bring torches to use on the footpath from the car park. The RHT accepts and will implement the recommendations of the report.

During spring and summer of 2015, a female otter and cub have been seen regularly around the island, and also a single mature otter. The bat event held on the island on 29 August 2015 confirmed the maternal roost of pipitrelles in the granary roof and notule bats were also heard.

There are three compost toilets that function effectively and will be adequate for the needs of anticipated visitor numbers. Their siting has been agreed in the past with Natural England, with solid waste composted on site and liquid waste going to soakaways that are sufficiently far from the watercourses to cause any risk of run-off. There is no risk of solids being lost even during flooding. There have been no problems caused to date by insufficient capacity.

Safety

Some schools have requested fencing off of the most easily accessible part of the river during visits by their pupils. This has been done with temporary fluorescent plastic net fencing. If requested for any event, this would be put up. No permanent fence along any stretch of watercourse is proposed. In the information supplied to users, a risk assessment will be provided. This assessment would also cover risk from flooding and the potential for cancellation of events due to flooding, which is beyond the control of the RHT. As explained in the flood evacuation plan, there is ample warning of flooding of the island and the first section of the footpath would be flooded long before the island itself preventing access to the mill. Therefore any event would have been cancelled before visitors even got on the island.

REVISED