



Assessment of Project Need

Project : Piles Moorings on the Hamble River
9476/Ass/jhb

Description :-

Mercury Gardens - Moorings G20 to G34, F1 to F4 and F5 to F7

This application relates to a Crown Estate proposal to remove an area of fore-and-aft and individual pile moorings and replace them with three lengths of continuous pile and pontoon moorings on the Hamble side of the River Hamble as shown in the attached plans FA E-G9476.00/4000, 4001 and 4002.

The area lies outside the main channel of the River and is currently the site of 5 fore-and-aft buoyed moorings which are fixed by ground chains, and 7 pile moorings. They have the capacity to accommodate up to 24 vessels. Depths in the area range from 2 to 2.8 metres at Chart Datum.

The existing mooring buoys are secured by chain risers - the effective length of the chain will vary over the tidal cycle which means that the location of the craft on these moorings will move in plan over the tidal cycle. The movement of the existing moorings has a knock on effect on the available width of the main channel, particularly when strong westerly winds coincide with low tides, and the buoys can be submerged at some states of the tide, making navigation hazardous.

The proposal is to extract the existing piles and lift the existing moorings and ground tackle and replace them with a pile and pontoon system split into three sections with 24 metre gaps between them to enhance access to and from the moorings, and for the passage of small craft. The proposal may allow for a slight increase in the total number of berths available, but this will depend entirely of the length of the boats involved. There is currently sufficient headroom within the Harbour Authority's limit on mooring numbers (3261) to allow for this very modest increase, if required.

The proposed project has a number of potential benefits for River users:

- Secure pontoon moorings for existing mooring holders.
- Enhanced navigational safety resulting from removal of buoys and associated pick-up lines, particularly when they are forced towards the main channel by strong westerly winds.

The proposed scheme involves removing eight (8) existing piles and driving fifteen (15) new piles, all using the vibro method. The opportunity will also be taken to replace seven (7) other piles (F1 – F7) in their present locations. The piles will be connected with pontoon structures to form the three separate mooring pontoons. If approved, the works will be carried out during the winter months (in line with accepted practice) to minimise the environmental impact of the piling works. The existing moorings will be removed before piling work commences.

The proposed scheme will require the approval of the various statutory regulators: the Marine Management Organisation, The River Hamble Harbour Authority and the Environment Agency.

The concept and layout has been developed to comply with the River Hamble Harbour Authority's Strategic Vision which was approved by the Harbour Board in January 2012. This Vision (para 4.3.3) states that 'Ensuring that there is sufficient space for recreational activity is

important but the Board also recognises the need to balance this against demand for an appropriate distribution of moorings and berths so that the full range of activities may take place safely’.

The attached figures show the site in relation to the Local restrictions on moorings and the local designations.

The area covered by this proposal lies within an area covered by Eastleigh Borough Council’s emerging Local Plan, the relevant sections of which are as follows:

Strategic Policy S9

Enable the provision of infrastructure related to recreational sailing within the built frontages of the river, subject to the Hamble River Harbour Authority Strategic Plan and Vision, whilst protecting more sensitive locations

Policy DM34, Recreational sailing on the River Hamble

On the River Hamble:

- i. new, moorings and replacement or relocation of existing moorings will only be permitted outside the mooring restriction areas shown on the policies map, and subject to the advice of the River Hamble Harbour Authority;*
- ii. new jetties, slipways, pontoons, landing stages, steps, walkways, bridges or catwalks, or extensions to such structures, will only be permitted in existing boatyards or within frontages of the river in the urban edge as defined on the policies map, provided that they do not:*
 - a. impede the movement of craft or otherwise compromise navigational safety on the river; or*
 - b. disrupt existing recreational uses or areas where there is existing or proposed public access; or*
 - c. adversely affect the nature conservation, landscape or heritage value of the River Hamble.*

This proposal does not seek to place any new moorings in Moorings Restricted Areas to contravene Policy DM34 (i). The proposal will enhance movement of craft, reduce the incidents of boats becoming entangled with moorings and pick-up lines and will have a positive impact on the environment by lifting the existing mooring tackle from the River bed.

The proposed mooring area lies within the Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and adjacent to the Solent & Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, and the Lee-on-Solent to Itchen Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Refer to attached Figure which indicates the adjacent designations and the site area.

The proposal will reduce the number of mooring chains laying along the river bed. It is not anticipated that this proposal will have any adverse impact on the features for which the conservation sites were designated.

Methodology

The works are to be carried out from a crane barge with all deliveries to come in by sea. The works are expected to take approximately eight to ten days. (The barge will be of similar size to that used over the past few years during the replacement of the trot piles along the river).

The proposed area lies outside the main river channel and will thus have very little impact on navigation within the River during the course of the works.

The barge movements will all be subject to approvals from the Harbour Authority and suitably lit at night. Working hours will be restricted to normal limitations. The use of Vibro techniques will ensure that noise will be kept to a minimum during the piling operation.

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