

**Planning Application with Navigation Implications:
Construction of a Walkway over the River Wensum
Linking St George's Street to Duke Street**
Report by Planning Officer

Summary: A planning application has been submitted in respect of the installation of a new walkway which would be partly sited in the River Wensum on a series of raised piles connected to a floating pontoon walkway. The piled sections of the walkway would be located up and downstream of Duke Street Bridge with the floating walkway running under the bridge, connecting the two piled sections.

The walkway would connect to the existing Wensum River Parkway riverside walk.

Anticipated navigation issues are set out in Section 4 and members views are sought on these and the conclusions in Section 5.

1 Background

- 1.1 Launched in 2007, the Wensum River Parkway was a vision set out by the Norwich Society and Norwich Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART), working with Norwich City Council and the Greater Norwich Development Partnership. The River Parkway envisages a continuous riverside pedestrian and cycle path running through the heart of the city, from New Mills all the way through to Whitlingham Broad.
- 1.2 To date the riverside walk extends from New Mills to the Carrow Road Bridge; however the route is not continuous, with a 'missing link' between Duke Street Bridge and St George's Bridge.

2 The Planning Application Process

- 2.1 A total of three planning applications have been submitted proposing developments to address this 'missing link'.
- 2.2 The first application has been made to Norwich City Council and proposes extensions to the Norwich Playhouse bar area, installation of viewing platforms on the river bank and the construction of a lightweight walkway link which would connect St George's Street to the rear of the Playhouse site.
- 2.3 The second and third applications are linked applications, with one submitted to the Broads Authority and the other to Norwich City Council. An application to both Norwich City Council and the Broads Authority is required as the

Broads Authority executive area is restricted to the area between the river banks, with the banks themselves and all other land beyond falling under the auspices of Norwich City Council. These applications seek consent for the construction of a walkway over the river and riverbank and would connect the proposed walkway on the Norwich Playhouse site to the wider riverside walk.

3 The Planning Application

- 3.1 Comments are now sought from the Navigation Committee on the planning application submitted to the Broads Authority. This application seeks to address the 'missing link' in the Riverside Parkway through provision of a series ramped walkways and interconnected floating pontoons situated on the River Wensum and a walkway on the adjacent bank.
- 3.2 The walkway proposed in this application would start upstream of Duke's Palace Bridge, being accessed via a lockable gate inserted into the existing railings in front of Mary Chapman Court. The walkway would then proceed via a ramped walkway sited on piles driven into the river bed down to a floating pontoon underneath the bridge. This pontoon and the connecting ramps would rise and fall with the tide, however the range of movement would be restricted to ensure that headroom beneath the bridge would never be less than 2m. Consequently, in the event of a very high tide or flooding the pontoon section of the walkway would be allowed to flood.
- 3.3 Downstream of the bridge the walkway would return to a ramped construction supported by piles and pass over the river bank and onto the land, where a seating area facing the river would be provided on the river bank. The walkway would then curve to rejoin the river and arc across the widest part of the river formed by the historic wherry dock on the north bank. The walkway would then rise to join with a new section of walkway situated within the grounds of the Playhouse Theatre.
- 3.4 The proposed walkway structure would measure 2.25m wide and would be accessed via ramps at Mary Chapman Court and the Playhouse Theatre with an additional set of steps leading down to the walkway and seating area from Duke Street Bridge. There would be a passing place/seating area on the riverbank immediately east of Duke Street Bridge and a second passing place/viewing platform opposite the historic wherry dock, to the rear of the Norwich Playhouse site.
- 3.5 The walkway would be finished with pre-weathered corten steel to the land side and have a lightweight balustrade with wire mesh beneath. This design has been specified to match that used on the new Peter's bridge situated downstream.
- 3.6 It is proposed to create an area of reed bed in the former wherry dock in the body of water situated between the walkway and the dock bank. It is further anticipated that, in response to comments made by the Environment Agency, debris deflectors would be installed at each end of the walkway to ensure

there would be no accumulation of debris and to prevent damage to the walkway in the event of flooding.

4 Navigation Issues

4.1 As the Navigation Authority, the Broads Authority requires that planning applications with navigation implications are subject to consultation with the Navigation Committee, and a number of possible issues have been identified which are outlined below.

- (i) **Restriction of river width** – Within the application site the river's narrowest point is beneath Duke Street Bridge, where it measures approximately 20m wide. The proposed walkway would be 2.3m wide, resulting in a reduction of river width to approximately 17.7m beneath the bridge.

In response to consultation the Rivers Engineer has indicated that a restriction in width to around 17.7m would not cause significant navigation issues, having regards to the low numbers of boats on this stretch of the river and the fact that the river narrows to under 12m at St Miles Bridge, which is less than 100m upstream.

It is, nonetheless, noted that there would be a reduction in river width beneath Duke Street Bridge and the applicant has indicated that suitable fendering/rubbing strips would be specified to protect the walkway structure from accidental damage. Additionally, it is proposed to attach a condition to any consent granted prohibiting any mooring alongside the walkway.

- (ii) **Impact on turning area** – In response to consultation the Rivers Engineer has raised a concern that, by cutting the corner across the former wherry dock, the proposed walkway would unnecessarily restrict the river width at a location used by larger boats to turn in the river.

In response to these comments the applicant has indicated that a proposal which follows the line of the existing bank, and so skirts around the edge of the former wherry dock rather than cutting across it, would raise the potential for members of the public to gain unauthorised access to the rear of the Playhouse site, presenting security issues.

The applicants have also highlighted the very shallow depth of water in the former wherry dock with the Authority's hydrographic charts indicating depths of less than 1m. In light of this the applicants have questioned how much useable river space would actually be lost by siting the proposed walkway across the former wherry dock

In respect of the potential for the proposed walkway to impact on the navigation generally and turning of vessels specifically City Boats, the operator of the Norwich River Trips service, has been consulted. No response had been received at the time of writing and members will be

updated verbally at Committee regarding this and any other additional comments received.

- (iii) **Safety** – It has been recognised by the applicant that there is a need to provide safety ladders on the structure. The Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer has advised on the number and best location for the ladders and the applicants are revising their drawings to incorporate this safety provision into the scheme.

5 Conclusions

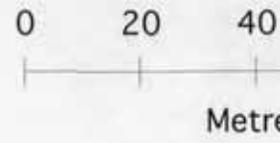
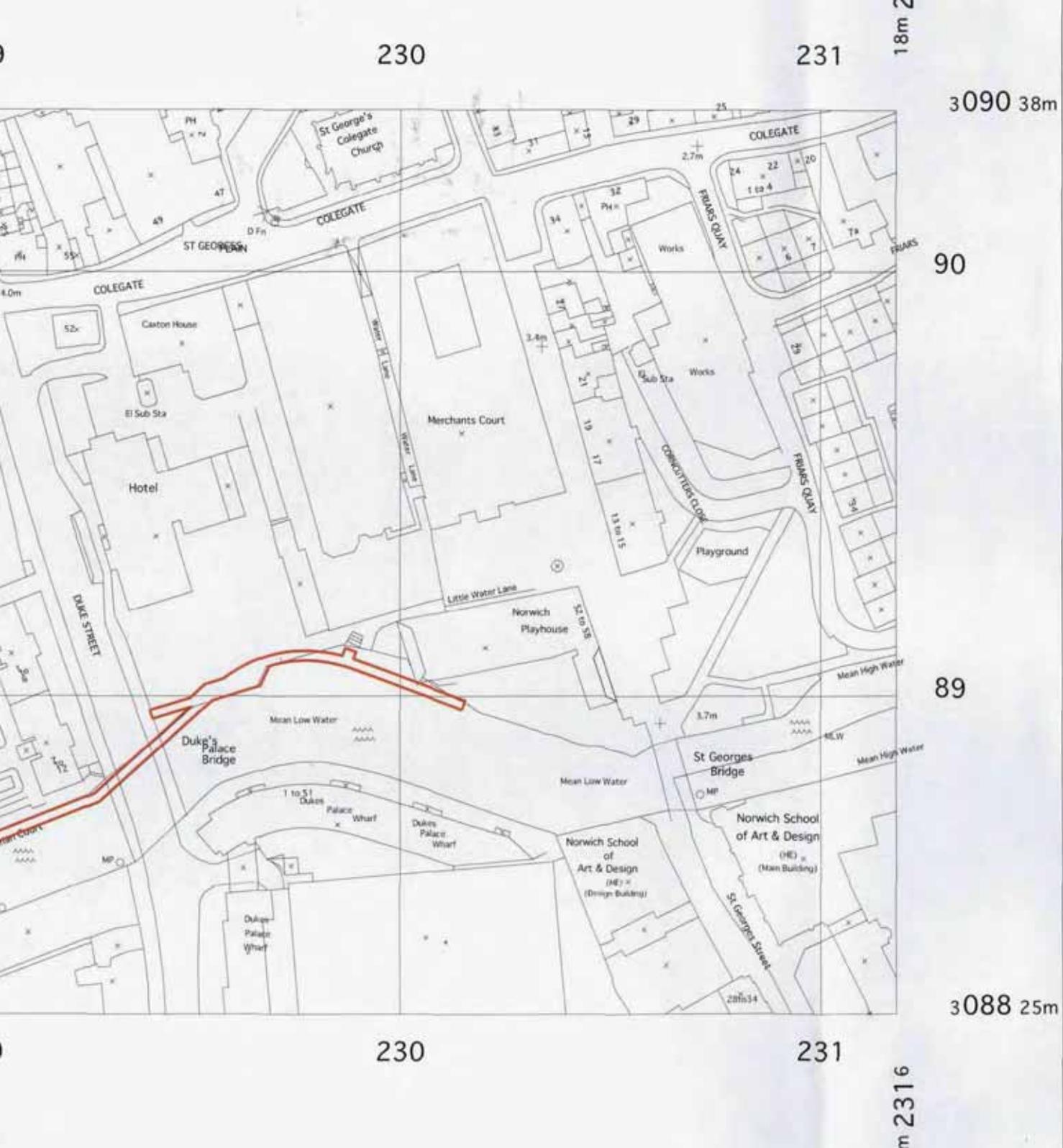
- 5.1 A planning application has been received by the Broads Authority which seeks consent for the installation of a new walkway in and adjacent to the River Wensum between Duke Street Bridge and the Norwich Playhouse site.
- 5.2 The application would result in a restriction in the width of the navigation, could potentially impact on a turning area used by larger boats. It is officer opinion that the design of the proposed walkway should also be adapted to incorporate safety ladders.
- 5.3 Member's views on these and any other matters of relevance to navigation are sought and will be considered as part of the planning process.

Background papers: Nil

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Appendices: APPENDIX 1 – Location Plans

File C



status	PLANNING
revision	- 29.09.2011 issued for planning approval
job	
address	

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DUKE STREET

ST GEORGES STREET

NORWICH PLAYHOUSE

RIVER WENSUM

DUKE'S PALACE BRIDGE

DUKE'S PALACE WHARF

PLANNING

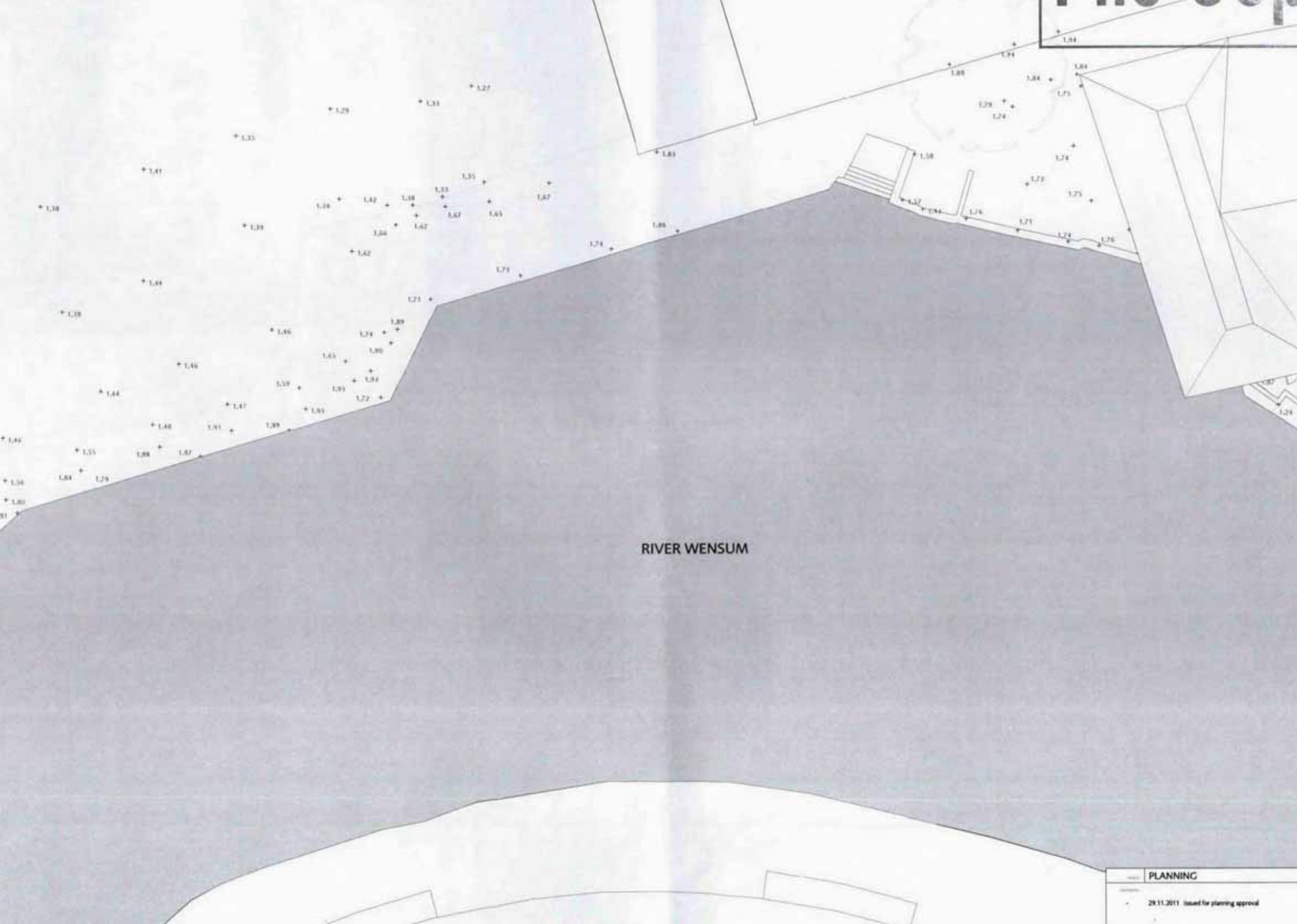
28.11.2011 Issued for planning approval

MARY CHAPMANS COURT

DUKE'S PALACE BRIDGE

RIVER WENSUM

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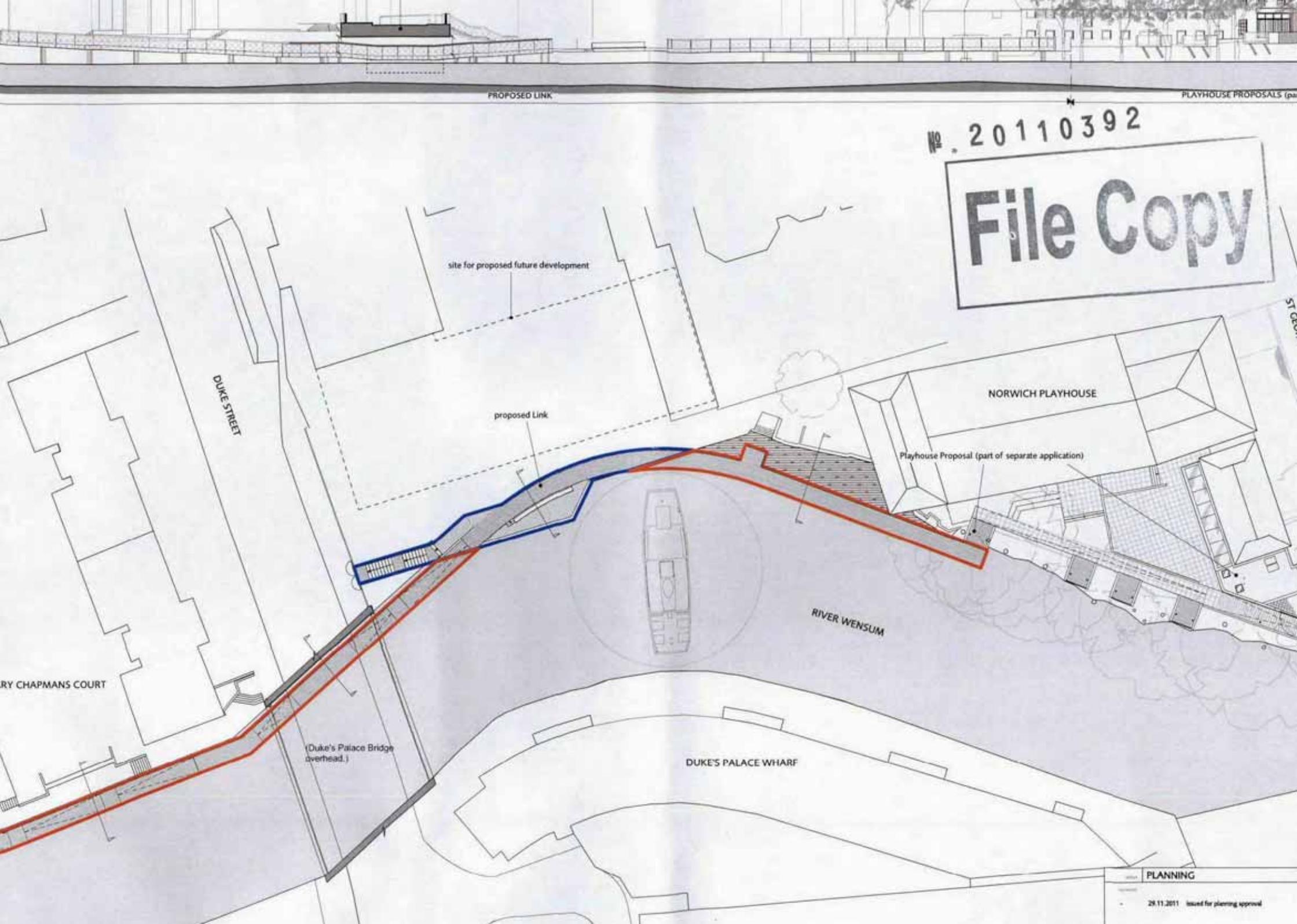
RIVER WENSUM

PROPOSED LINK

PLAYHOUSE PROPOSALS (part of separate application)

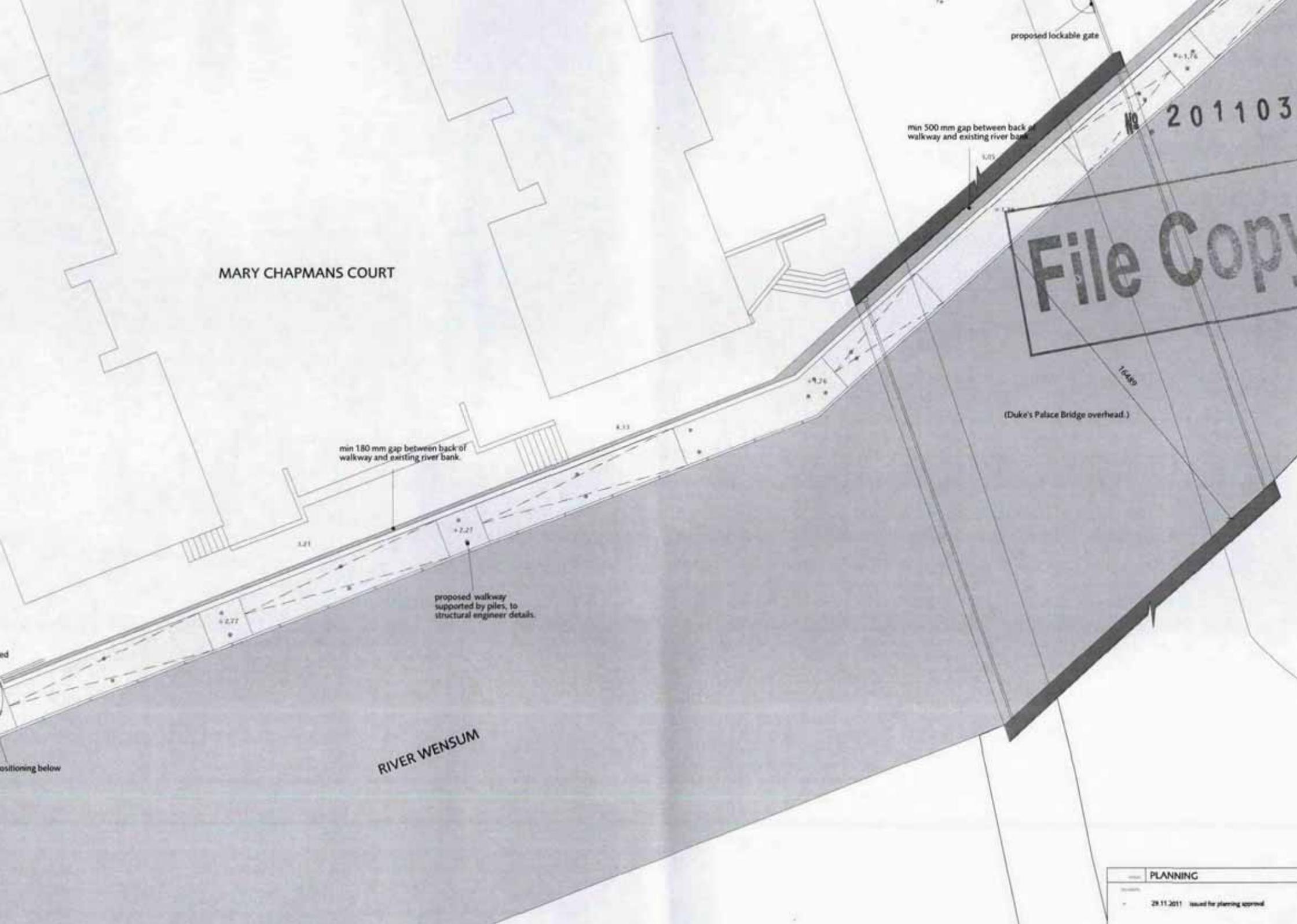
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PLANNING

28.11.2011 issued for planning approval



MARY CHAPMANS COURT

proposed lockable gate

min 500 mm gap between back of walkway and existing river bank

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min 180 mm gap between back of walkway and existing river bank

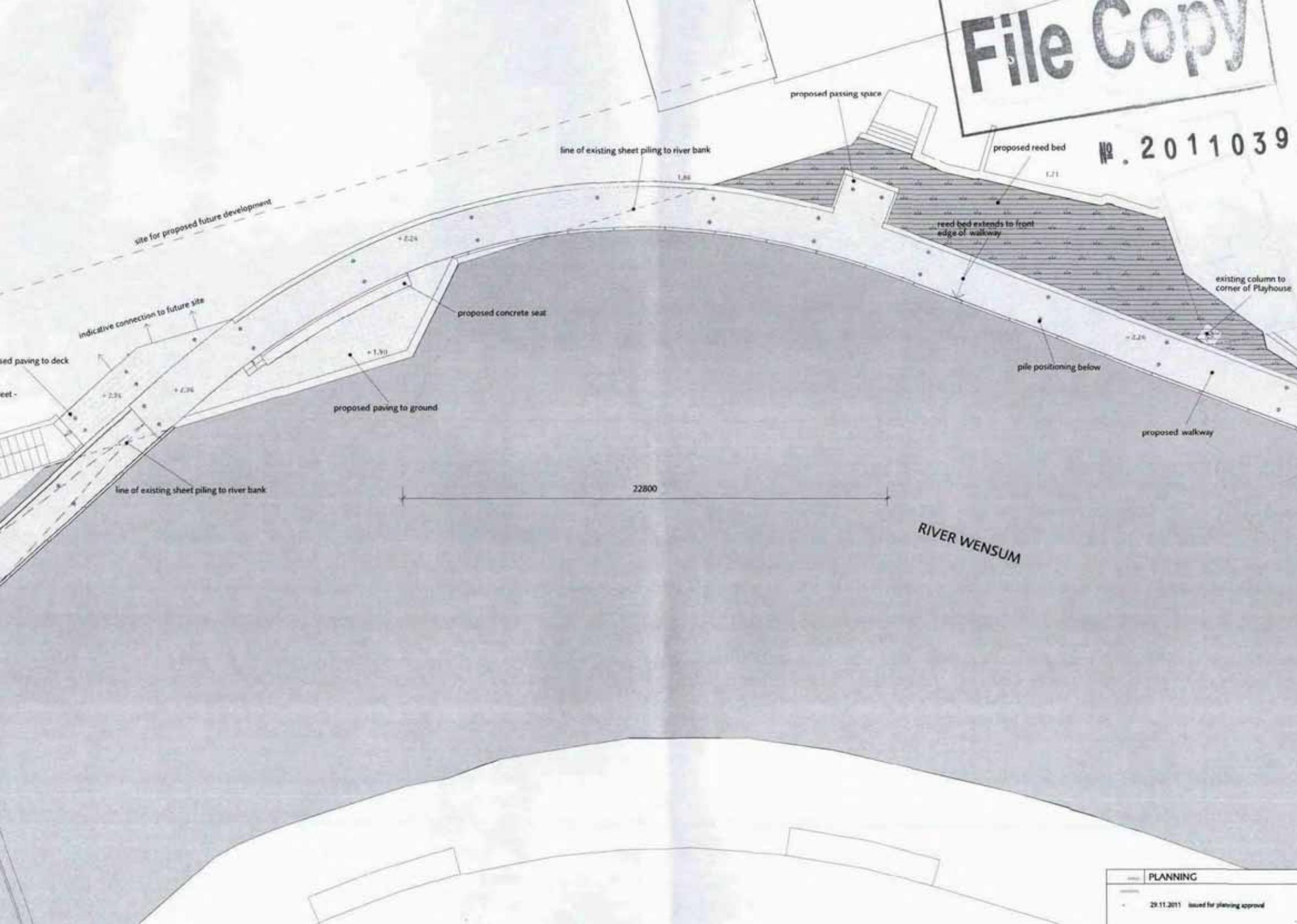
(Duke's Palace Bridge overhead.)

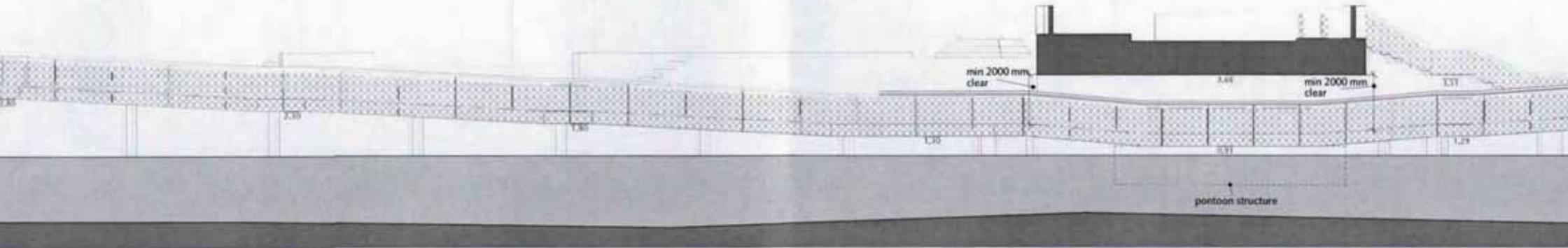
proposed walkway supported by piles, to structural engineer details.

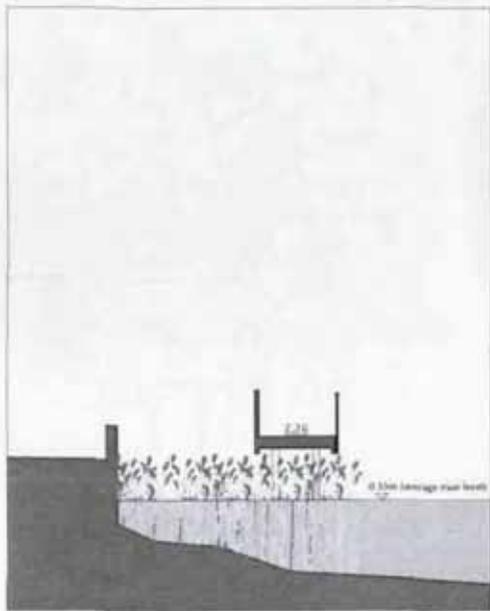
RIVER WENSUM

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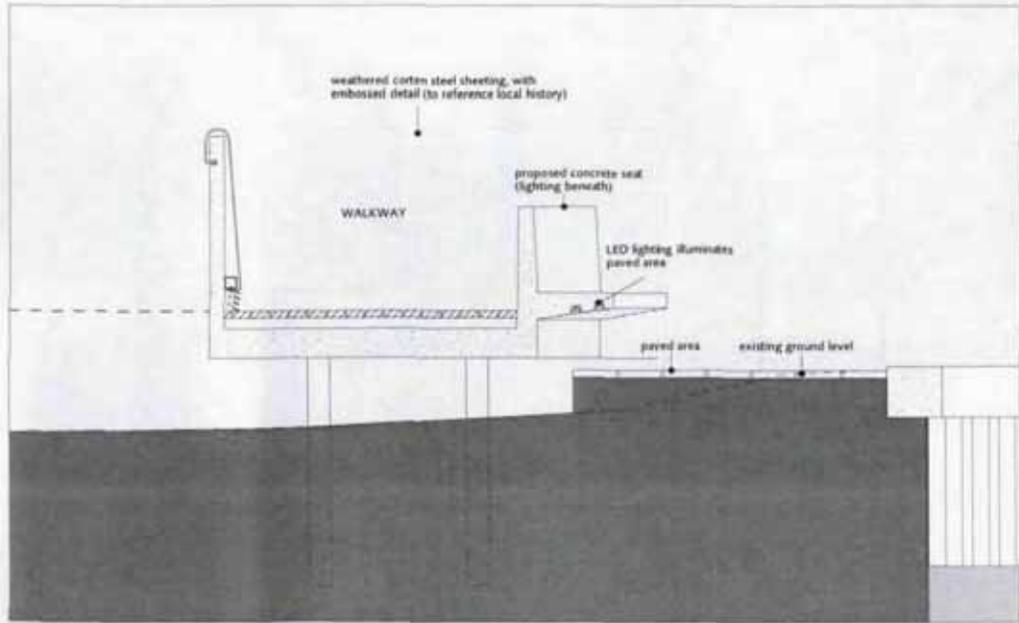
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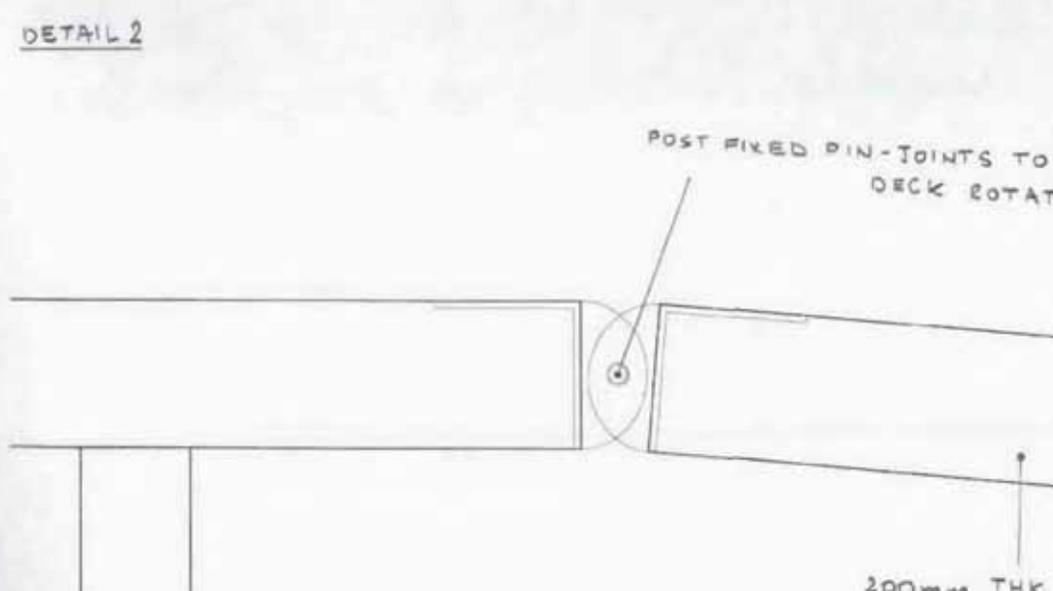
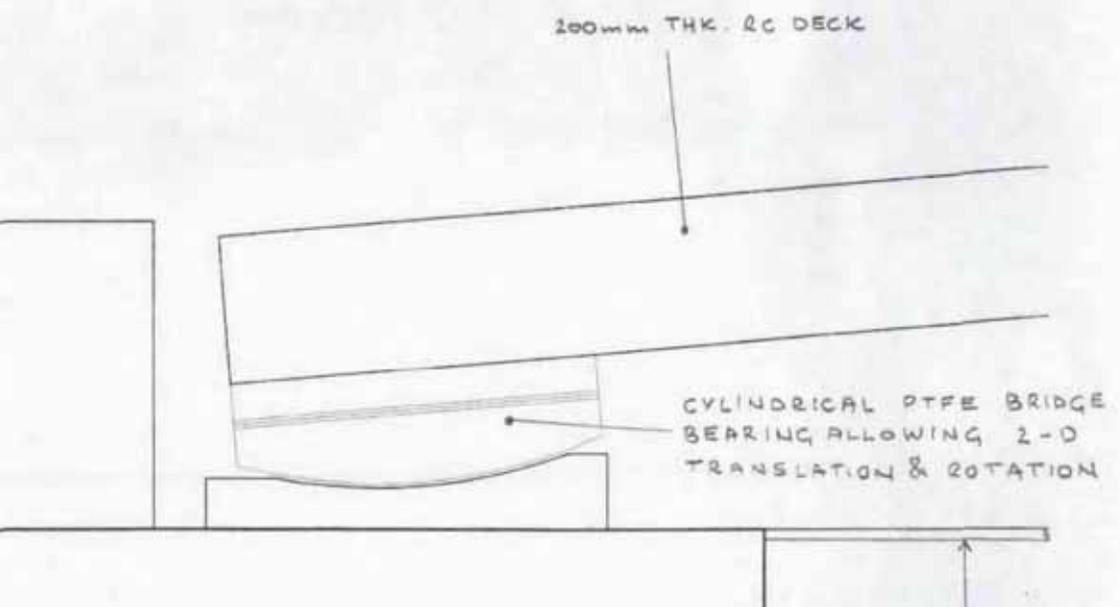
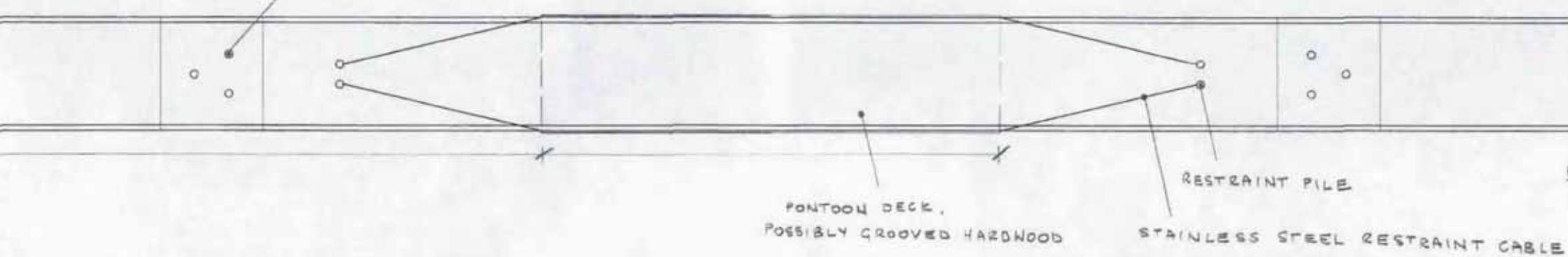
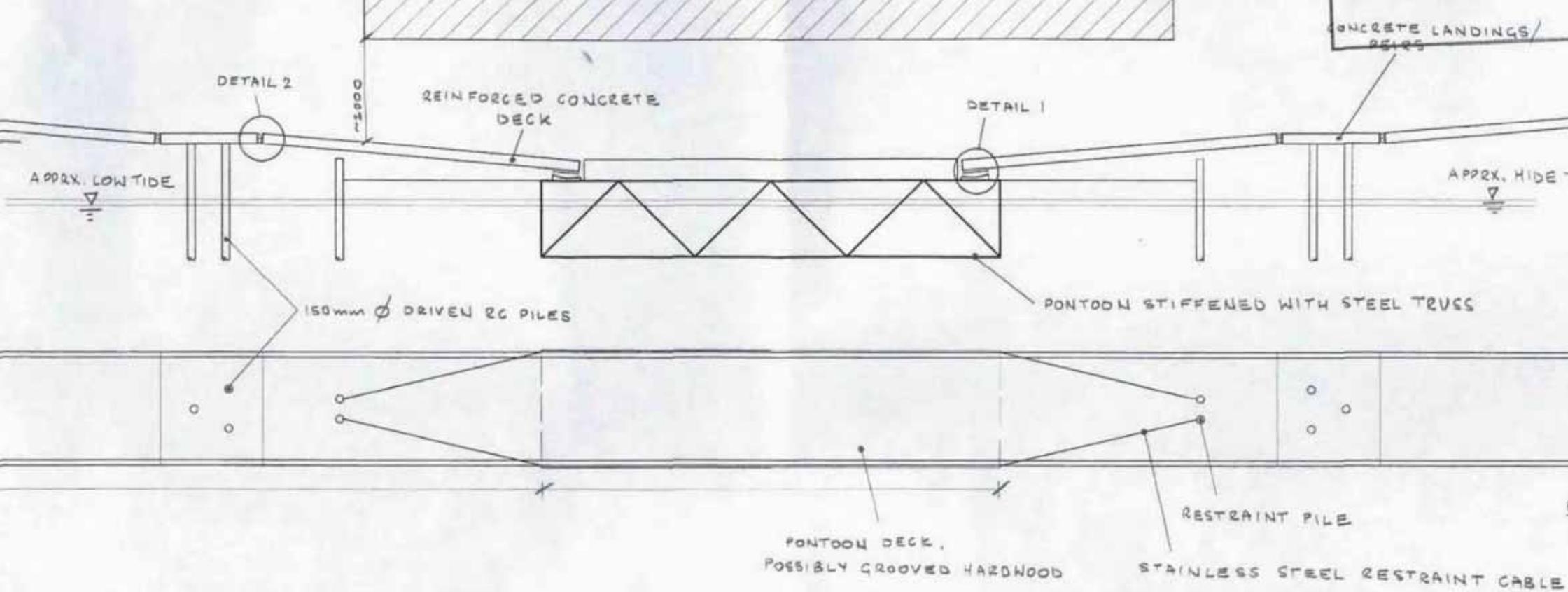


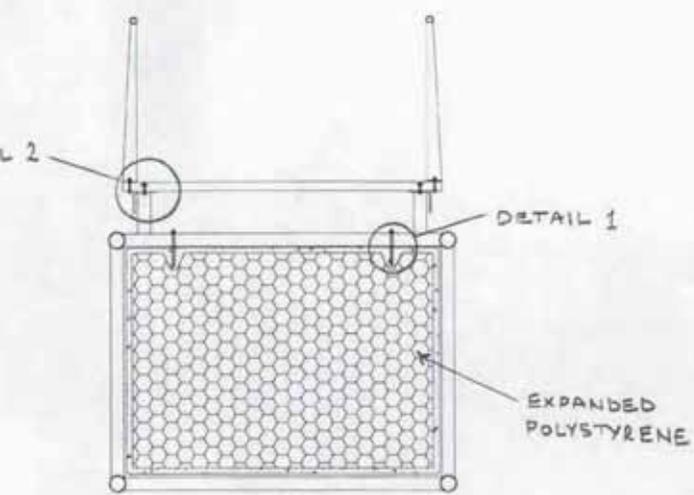
Section D-D



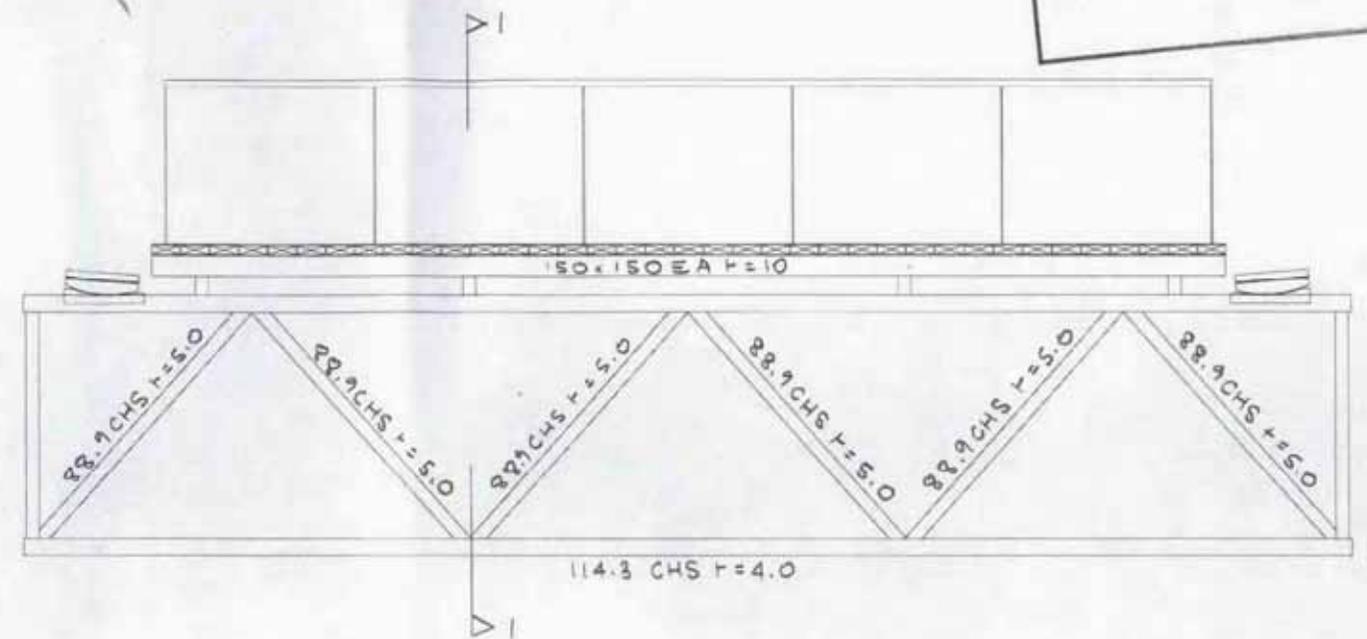
Detail section through walkway/seating area
1:25







SECTION 1-1



ELEVATION

SCALE 1:50

