

Navigation Committee

03 September 2020

Agenda item number 8

River Wensum missing link project

Report by Waterways and Recreation Officer

Purpose

This report is about a potential new walkway to bridge the ‘missing link’ along the Norwich Riverside Walk on the River Wensum between Duke’s Palace Bridge and St George’s Bridge. Members’ views are invited on the preferred approach presented in the architect’s feasibility assessment.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Norfolk County Council (NCC), as members of the River Wensum Strategy Group, has been conducting feasibility studies into the potential provision of a key strategic stretch of riverside walk that is missing between Duke’s Palace Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge.
- 1.2. The riverside walk ends at the rear of St Andrew’s car park and the Norwich University of Arts (NUA) building, leaving a 20m gap with no access through to Blackfriars Bridge.
- 1.3. As part of the second phase of the study, NCC has commissioned Hudson’s Architects to produce concept designs of the preferred options, along with realistic budget costings.

2. Background

- 2.1. Norwich’s Riverside Walk is a well-used piece of green infrastructure that runs through the city, and has been delivered by Norwich City Council over the past 40 years through new development. Access to the riverside walk is particularly important for those living and working in the city centre, and will help support the green infrastructure requirements for anticipated new housing and employment growth identified in the city centre area and east Norwich in particular.
- 2.2. The River Wensum Strategy (2017) includes a project to complete a key stretch of the riverside walk in the city centre, between Duke’s Palace Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge, where there is no riverside walk on either side of the river. The stretch of riverside walk between these bridges is incomplete and has proven difficult to achieve to date, given the form of existing development here, with buildings abutting the river on both sides. Public consultation on the strategy in summer 2017 identified strong support for completing the riverside walk in the city.

- 2.3. The completion of this stretch of Riverside Walk has been identified as a priority by Greater Norwich Growth Board partners (Norwich City Council, South Norfolk Council, Broadland District Council, Broads Authority, and Norfolk County Council). The project is in the Greater Norwich Delivery Plan, identified for completion in 2021/22. The riverside walk is also a strategic priority of our own Integrated Access Strategy (IAS).
- 2.4. Funding for this section has been confirmed following a successful bid to the Sustrans Paths for Everyone programme through the Department for Transport.

3. The need

- 3.1. This is a critical section of riverbank in the heart of the historic city. The absence of this key stretch of walkway compromises the riverside walk's potential to fully realise its benefits for all, including those in key user groups (for example those with health problems and/or living in socially deprived areas). Benefits include access to green infrastructure in the built-up city centre area, with related health and wellbeing. The riverside walk links to the wider Norfolk Trails network, so completion of missing links will provide greater access for city residents to a range of leisure opportunities within and on the edge of the city.
- 3.2. This part of the city centre is a focus for leisure uses and is particularly well used by the area's increasing student population associated with NUA. Completion of this stretch of riverside walk would link NUA's St George's Street and Duke Street buildings, as well as making it a much more attractive and direct link for residents and the area's many leisure users and businesses.
- 3.3. Creation of this new link would address key objectives of the River Wensum Strategy Group, including increasing access to and use of the river by all, enhancing the natural environment and green infrastructure, and addressing social deprivation and inequalities.

4. Navigation considerations/constraints

- 4.1. The Broads Authority has carried out site inspections of the approaches to the bridge from the river. While this new walkway could be problematic in terms of navigation impacts, the Authority's Head Ranger and the Waterways and Recreation Officer have agreed that there is scope for a path to be constructed on the south bank; however, this would have to minimise any encroachment on river width and satisfy various navigation safety considerations. The bridge is arched, and boats will tend to navigate through the centre channel. Therefore, if any new path does not protrude beyond the section of the arch that boats will preferentially avoid at a height lower than the apex of the bridge, there would be scope for a section of path to be constructed towards the NUA building. Due to security concerns raised by both NUA and NCC Highways, the path cannot directly abut the face of the building.

- 4.2. There is a pinch point immediately upstream of the bridge (approximately 14.1m). The width of the river between the upstream side of the bridge and the start of the current path at St Andrew's car park ranges between approximately 14.1m and 25m.
- 4.3. Considerations are being made about the minimum distance the piles can be driven into the river bed from the wall. The closer the piles are driven into the wall, the less impact of encroachment this will have on the navigation (See Appendix 1).
- 4.4. Further considerations are being made as to how high any path structure built will be suspended above the river (height of path and maximum/minimum height of whole structure). There is a difference in height between the path at St Andrew's car park and the bridge abutment next to the NUA building, and it will be necessary for anything built to ramp up to the bridge. To keep the proposed walkway higher than the height of the apex of Blackfriars Bridge where the river is at its narrowest, the new pathway will need to ramp up along Duke's Palace Wharf. The optimal gradient for this ramped approach is 1:20, which would extend the total length of the new walkway.

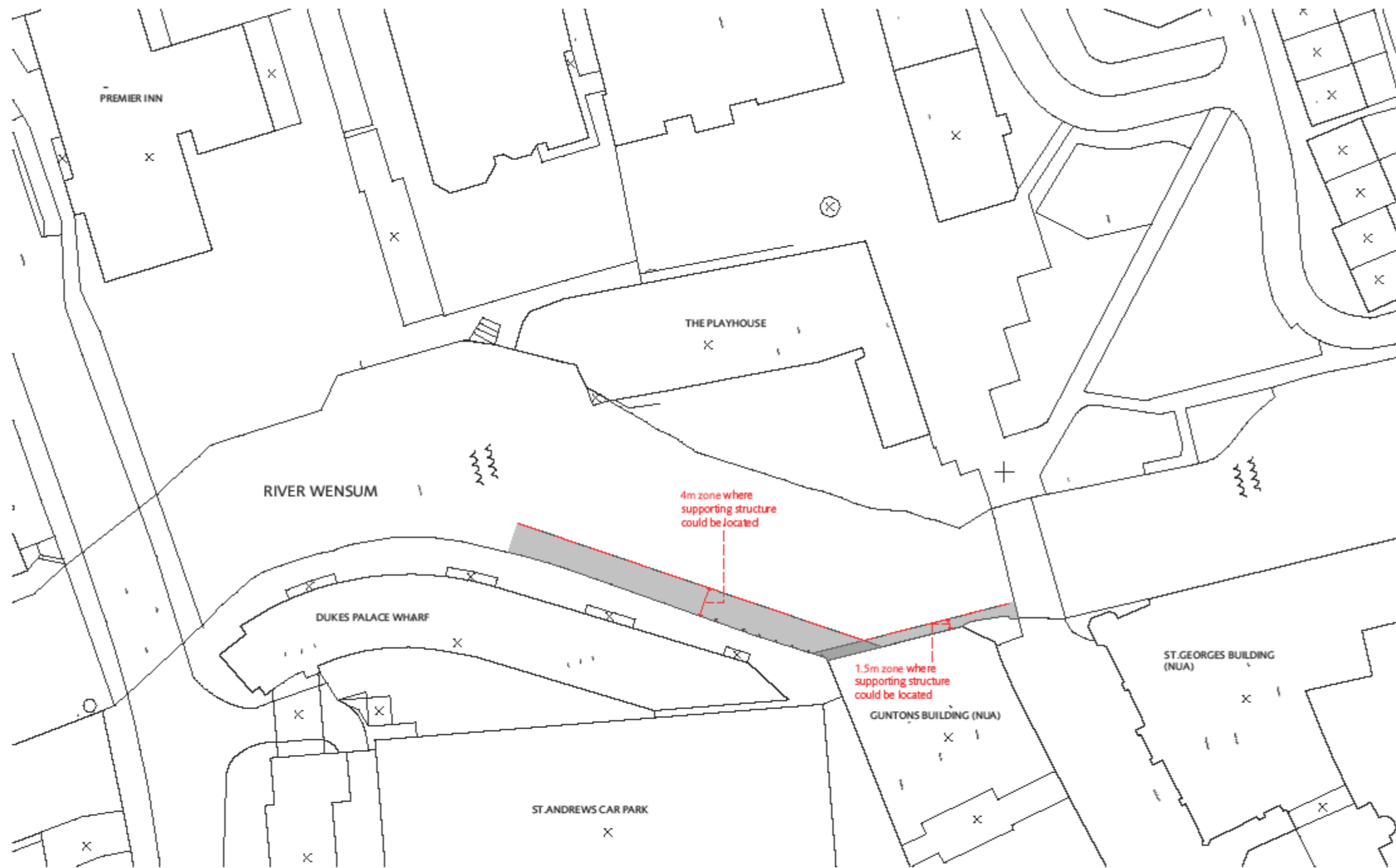
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Date of report: 14 August 2020

[Broads Plan](#) objectives: 4.1, 6.1

Appendix 1 – Existing site constraints plan

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GENERAL NOTES
 1. Drawings based on project specific additional HA constraints plan.
 2. Do not scale from these drawings.
THESE DRAWINGS ARE NOT ISSUED FOR CONSTRUCTION PURPOSES

(-) 17.08.20 For Information HUDSONArchitects <small>011 274017 40 220 www.hudsonarchitects.co.uk info@hudsonarchitects.co.uk</small>	Wensum Mining Link St Georges Street NR2	PL-001 RWW (-) INFORMATION <small>Do not scale off the drawing. It will show what you see and any changes are shown in red. If not shown in red, it is not to be done.</small>
	Existing Site Constraints Plan 1:500BA3	