



ROLAND HARMER

STATION LINK BRIDGE

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INTRODUCTION

Elkins Architects in partnership with Giraffe engineering and CMS Project Management and QS services have been appointed by WC to undertake a feasibility study comprising RIBA stage 0. looking at the possibility of creating a new link which better connects the town's station and its high street.

Chippenham has long suffered from the disparate nature of the station and the town, a huge number of affluent commuters and potential visitors pass through the town on a daily basis, unaware of the wider offering available just a short distance away. Many when talked to compare it to Didcot Parkway rather than the 'small Bath' it used to be considered.

Timing is fortuitous in that the privately-owned site to the top of the route is presently undergoing a round of development ideas which could facilitate the opening up of an off-road route to the town.

EXISTING SITE

The site as it stands can be broken down into 3 principle sections.

Area 1: The top industrial building and carpark presently forming a retail property and an area of informal green embankment down to the council offices which is inaccessible due to a high retaining wall and the existing buildings. The trees here are self-seeded and not of significant worth other than their inherent greening value. The top carpark is bounded by a row of listed cottages, the relationship of the new square, and pathway to these assets is a fundamental driver in the design process and one which must be negotiated early in the process to smooth planning timings.

Both landowners are fully engaged and supportive of the scheme.

Area 2: The existing council entrance area, this access needs to be maintained throughout the construction process as the council offices hold the police station, as such work in this area is proposed as minimum risk minor resurfacing operations.

Area 3: Monkton Park, although this could be split into two sections delineated by the river they are predominantly the same with large mature trees interspersed in open grass land and access paths.

To the north of this area the steps from the council entrance (Area 2) have long needed an additional flight of steps to connect them to the area of the parkland north of the river.

The site as proposed is bounded to the south by the existing fence to the vehicle access to Emery Gate carpark. Whilst future development would certainly look to remove this physical barrier as part of the new frontage to the shopping area the mature tree corridor to this boundary would likely limit additional hard landscaping to the areas already hard surfaced.



View from the town bridge looking north



View from the duck feeding spot looking north



View towards the bridge starting point



View from the existing footbridge



The existing duck feeding point



View towards the proposed bridge landing



View towards the proposed bridge landing

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Island Park's history is a much-lauded element within Chippenham's story. Originally an island formed by two weirs and a dock area it was a focal point within the town and an equal to Brunel's arches in terms of visual value for the town. However, it was prone to flooding due to the narrowed waterways and as such was significantly altered in the 1960's with the New Road shopping arcade and then the subsequent total replacement of the old bridge.

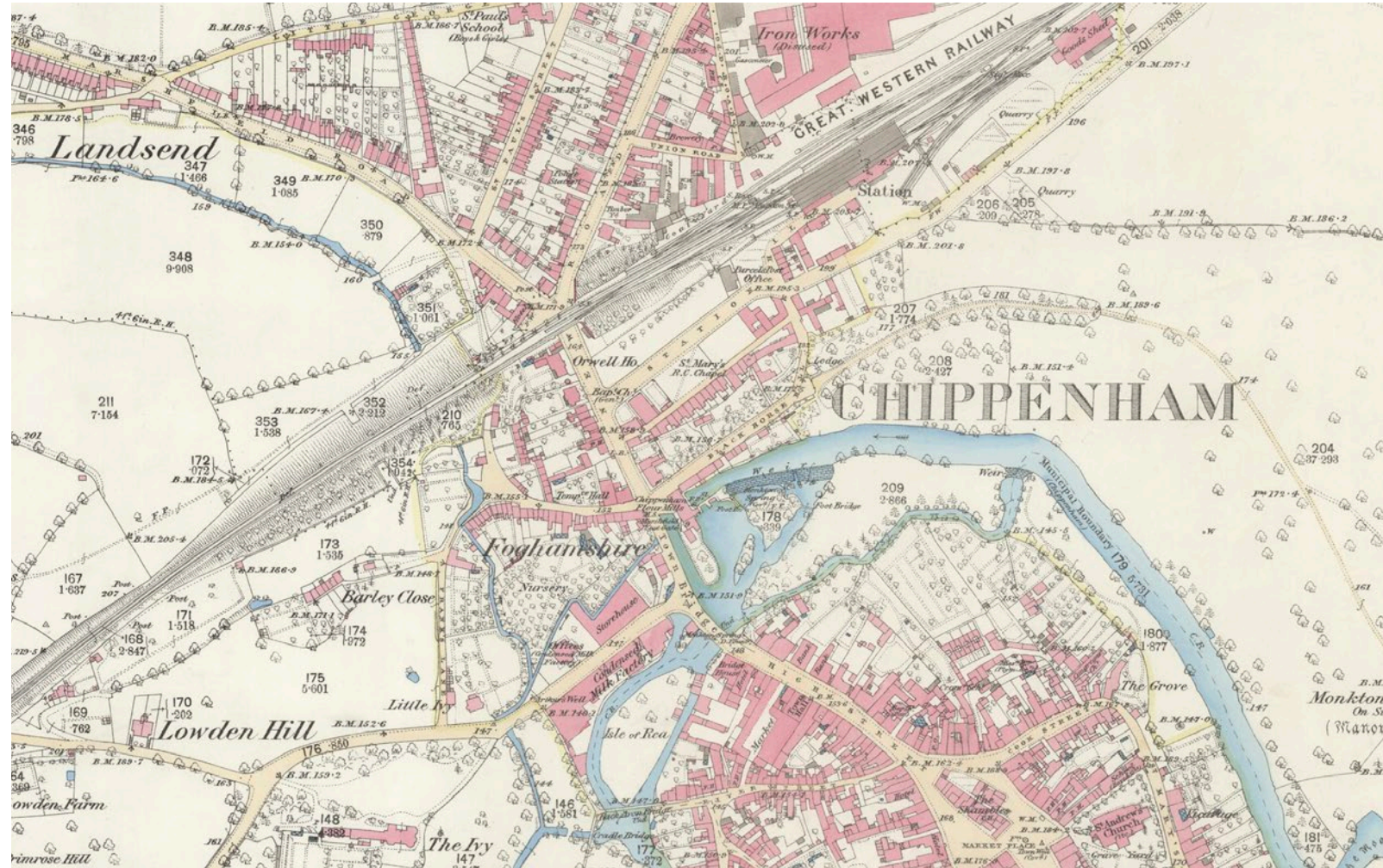
When Emery Gate was built it emulated the new shopping mall designs of America but failed to identify the significant impact it would have by turning its back on the river corridor. The entire elevation facing the park was completely devoid of activity and in doing so it led to it becoming a space more often misused which further exacerbated the issues bringing us to the present climate where it is little used by Chippenham's residents considering its lovely outlook on the river.



Elephants bathing in the River Avon in 1906



View towards the wier



1886 25 inch map - maps.NLS.uk

SITE ANALYSIS: IMPENETRABLE URBAN BLOCKS

Currently, the site could be seen as a row of walls or obstructions to passage between the station and the high street, each one making another visceral form of segregation between the two. That is less of an issue in towns or cities where the convoluted routes are active and benefitting from retail, social or leisure facilities that are semi private and thus are less exclusive than industrial and office operations.

A key driver in opening this route must not only be easing the passage of visitors but also enlivening the length of the route. The proposals for the station square developments all include elements which will enliven the section to the top of our proposed route. And land owners adjacent to this proposal have suggested, as featured later, that this proposal would facilitate a great quantity of further activity at both ends.



SITE ANALYSIS: WALKING ROUTES

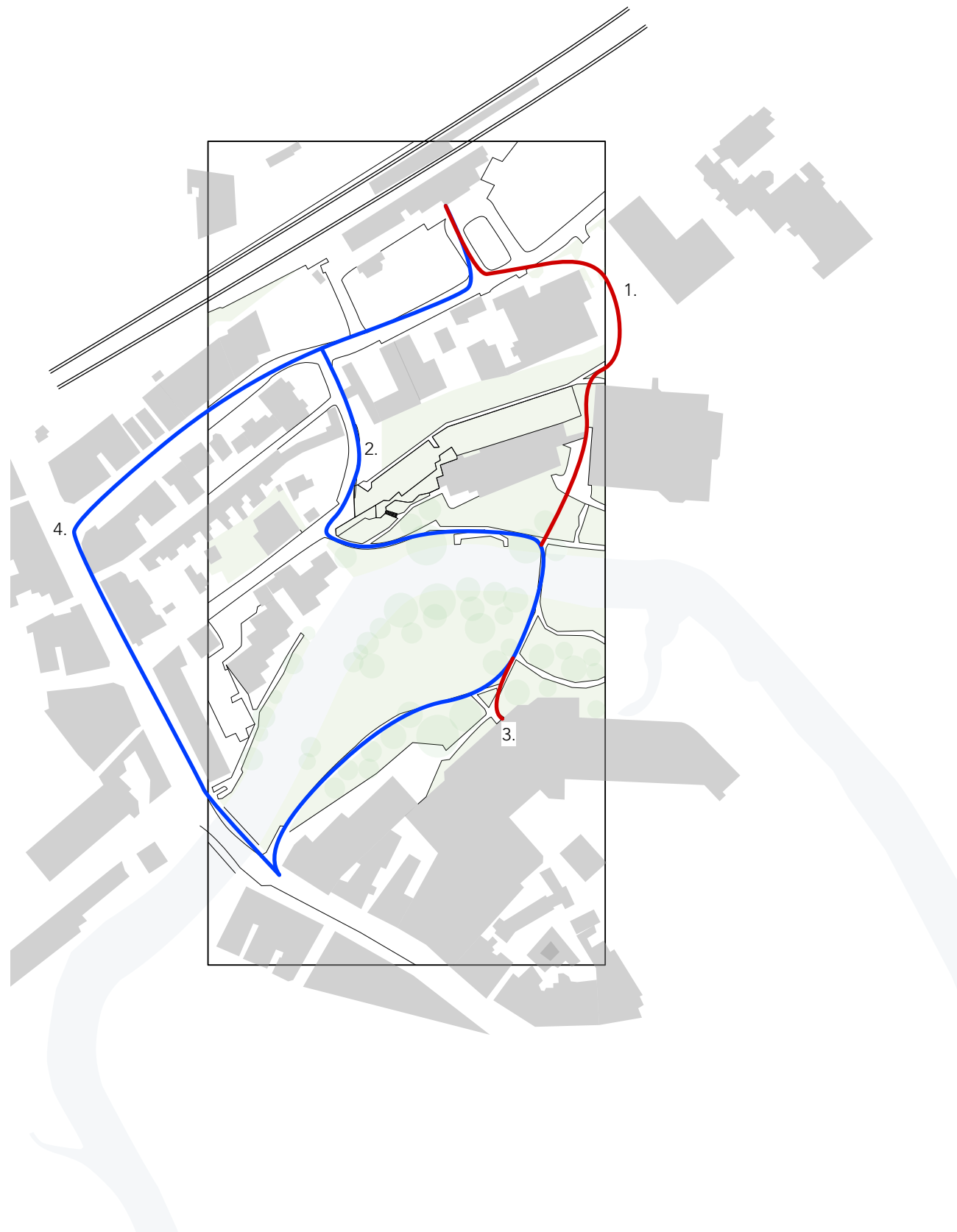
Currently, walking routes from the railway station into the high street are convoluted and not suitable for less ambulant people. They offer an unclear route for any visitor to Chippenham.

Step free routes are shown in blue whilst a stepped route is shown in red. At 1. this route will soon become inaccessible by the creation of a large office building and car park, which will reroute the walking path even further. This presently little used route between station and town is therefore likely to be utilised even less.

Currently, the walking route is steep and actually on the road at 2. The paved pathway is regularly misused by traffic at unsafe speeds and parents with young children avoid this route on this basis. It also suffers from poor drainage, being barely passable due to the significant quantity of water flowing down it during periods of heavy rain.

Whilst access to Emery Gate is possible from the park at 3. It is very much a back door and up a series of steep steps again making it difficult for parents and impossible for those unable to use steps. Step free access is only provided through the carpark which is a narrow dark doorway with a number of areas which are not viewable before entering therefor leaving a significant perception of risk to any user, it is also shared with car traffic which uses the route not only as carpark access but as a cut through to avoid the closed high street (significantly greater speeds are recorded by these users and hence safety further reduced). This access is as such not considered a viable step free access.

Route 4 is the best route at present it runs down the main Station Hill and onto New Road, both of which are lined with selection of retail and leisure frontage and should be considered a reasonable circulatory route within the town, however it is of sufficient distance to make it less appealing than the other routes if visitors want to head to the high street. Any proposal to link the station must visually signpost this route as circular to avoid negating the present usage/passing trade of the shopping streets.



PRECEDENTS AND CONCEPTS

The following pages look at very high-level ideas forming our initial site responses to each of the key landscaped areas along the length of the connection. From urban square and tree lined walkway to the more open parkland and formal landscaping of the proposed hardscaped area forming a riverside square.

PUBLIC SQUARE

The top square would be urban in nature with a mixed use offering and a café space, bike lockups, leisure in the form of pétanque and table tennis, and a water/moss feature to isolate the space from the noise road also cleaning air pollution. Simple elegant tones for the hard surfaces will keep the space light and airy while bright colours for the temporary features such as tables and chairs will enliven. The trees and planting will further bring the space alive with out visually isolating it which can cause areas for misuse.





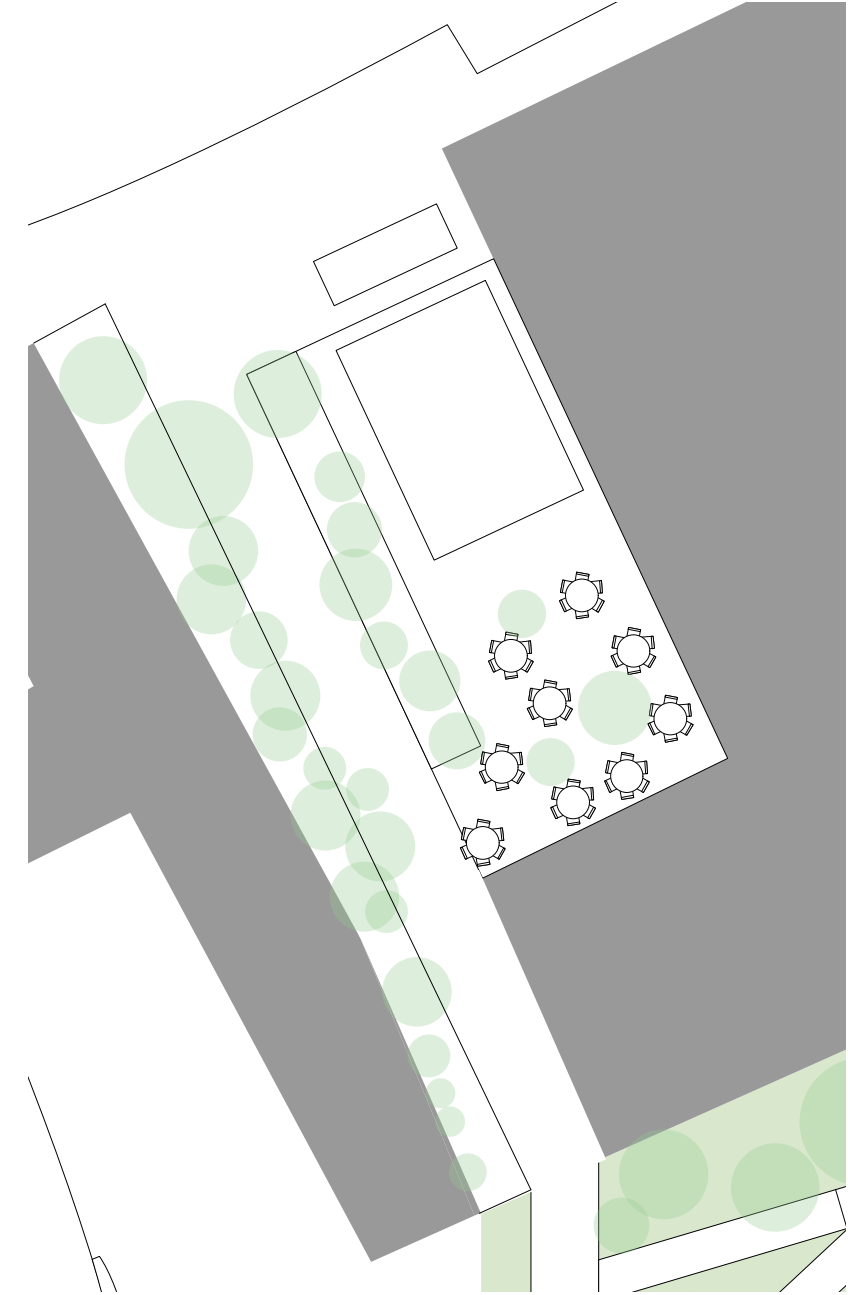
Kolumba Museum - Peter Zumthor



Parklet Bench - WMB Studio



Paley Park - Zion Breen Richardson Associates

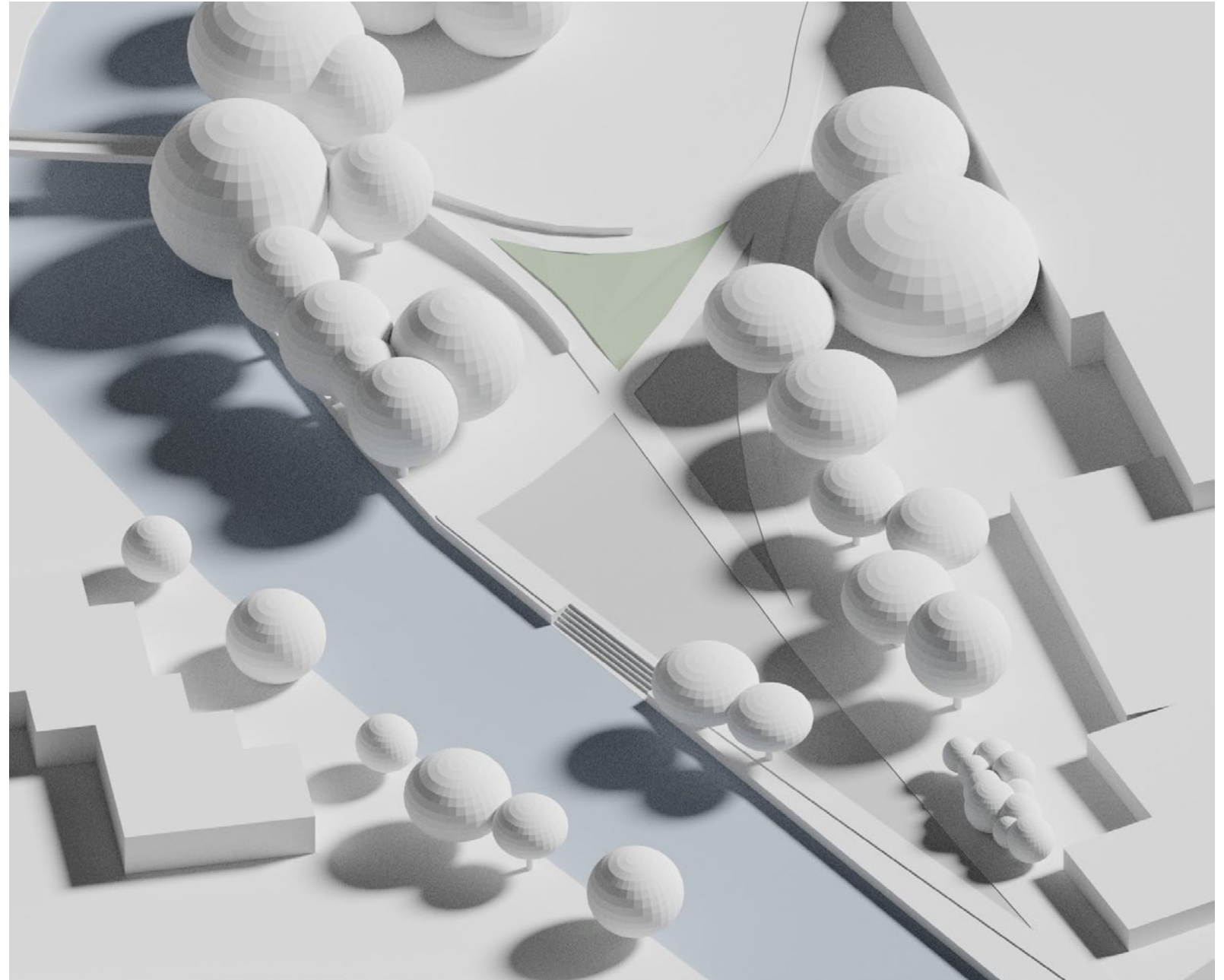


LANDSCAPE PARK

The existing duck feeding area has become a victim of its own success, people are crying out for a connection to the river and a safe access point for all ages. Boat hire and pleasure trips could provide leisure, tourism and income to the Canal trust or Canoe and Sailing club. A tiered seating section will allow spectators to watch the activity on the river, like the Cumberland basin in Bristol where people congregate to watch the sail boats, or maybe to hope they will see someone fall off of a stand up paddle board! A blend of smaller urban spaces and larger park landscape will allow a variety of usage whilst access and usability is maintained for the many successful events already using the space 3-4 weekends a year hopefully facilitating others to build on their success.

Cycle and commuter routes through the space will be clearly delineated to minimise the risk of clashes with those enjoying the park.

Tiered seating could provide an informal area for shows to be put on or meetings to occur.

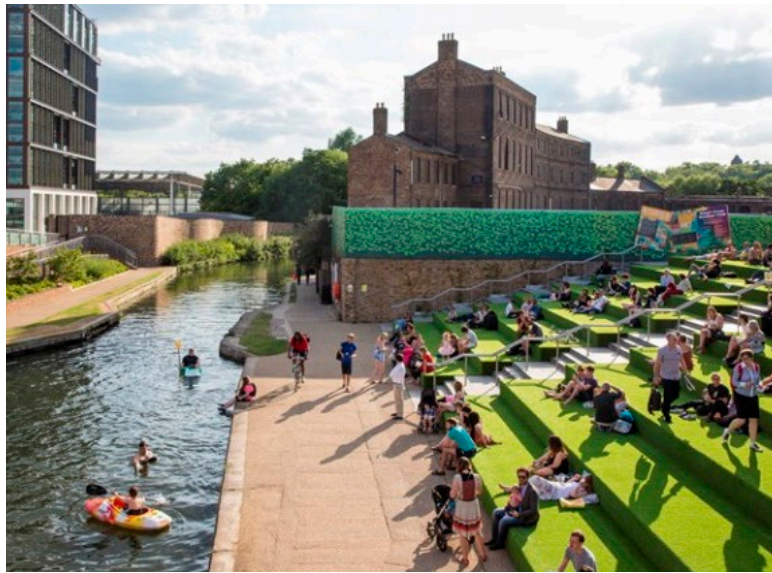




Paperhouse - Heatherwick Studio



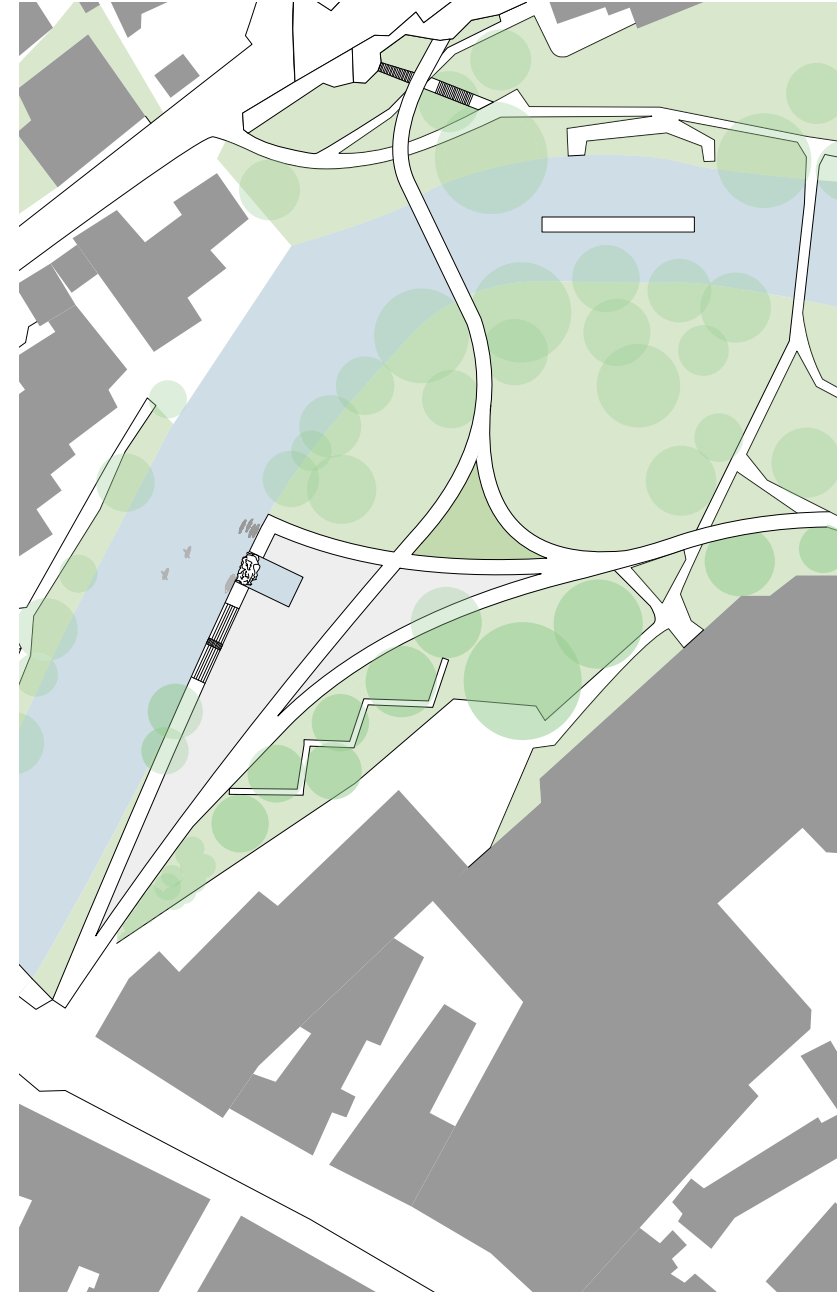
Here East - Hawkins Brown



Granary Square - Stanton Williams



Yokohama Ferry Terminal - FOA



THE PROPOSALS

Initially we widened the scope to look at a wide number of possible routes between the available pieces of land connecting station and town, however after a process of evaluation we have brought it down to just 2 highly viable solutions, each simplified to a level where we believe it is feasible to fully develop concepts, gain planning permission, detail and construct the entire link within the 18 month timeframe.

To do so, solutions had to be elegant in their route as well as their aesthetic, minimising potential for multiple party confusion/disagreement. Each stage of the routes has been clearly defined and potential actors including LA officers, Land Owners and Consultants have been listed to ensure early engagement and negotiated agreement to smooth the planning process as it goes in.

PROPOSED OPTION 1

In this option the bridge is purely across the river.

To the north of the route, a new landscaped plaza is provided, with outdoor seating, planting and a pétanque court (this is also proposed within option 2), as a small urban square it will be designed to allow short term visits drawing people away from the station and into the fabric of the town by foot. It will closely align to the office space within the adjacent built forms and be enlivened by their usage. A buffer could be provided to the adjacent residential properties allow privacy and acoustic separation, it is felt that some restrictive hours of usage would be needed to maintain residential amenity at night.

Beyond this, stone steps and a ramped path lead down to Wiltshire Council car park, crossed via a Zebra Crossing. Users can then walk down the existing improved steps, or walk via the existing ramped path down to the river. From there, the bridge is a straight span over the narrowest part of the Avon.

The bridge lands on a hard-landscaped area, with planting beds and stepped seating down to the river. A small pier will serve leisure boats and kayaks on the Avon, whilst a reed-bed filtered pool will allow for wild swimming. The existing planted area adjacent to Wilkinson's would be reinforced with new planting, and a children's woodland walk would be created within it.

By reducing the length of the bridge compared with option 2 it opens up the opportunity to further landscape and improve the island park and as such it is felt that budgets for the two could be similar. Full stage 0 budgets are considered later in this document.

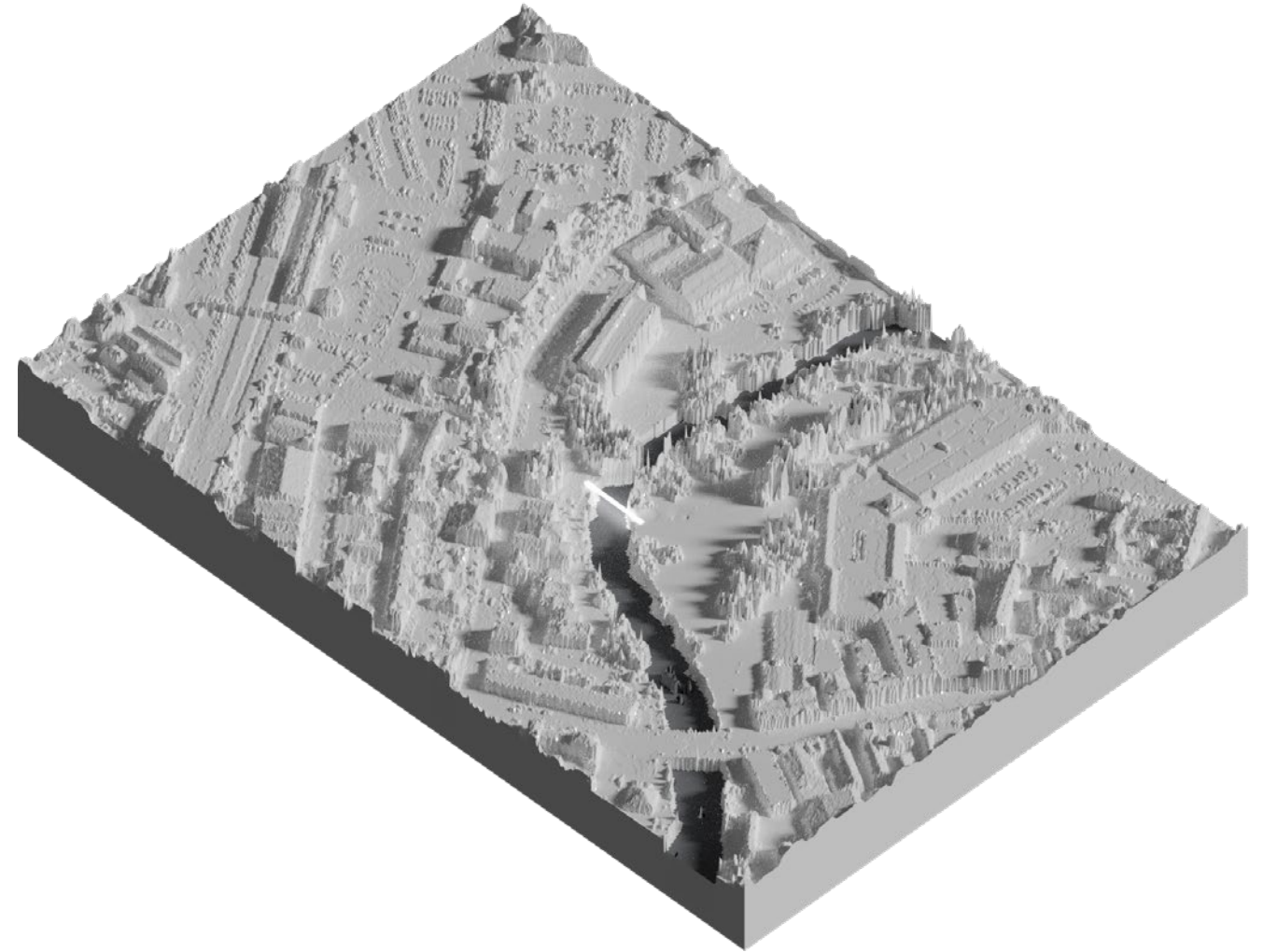




Punt da Saransuns
 Conzett, Bronzini, Gartmann
 40 metres
 1999
 £240,000 equivalent in 1999



Somers Town Bridge
 Moxon Architects
 38 metres
 2017



PROJECT COST SUMMARY - OPTION 1

	GFA m2	GFA sq ft	Rate £/sqft	Rate £/m2	£
Station Square (Area 4)					Excluded
Walking Route (Area 3)	268	2,885	73	788	211,280
Bridge (Area 2)	310	3,337	295	3,177	985,000
Southern Landscape (Area 1)	3048	32,808	20	221	672,400
Preliminaries and Overhead & Profit Allowance	20%				373,736
Building Works Cost Estimate	3,626	39,030	57	618	2,242,416

PROPOSED OPTION 2

In this option the bridge links Wiltshire Council's entrance area with the island park area.

To the north of the route; the new landscaped plaza, steps and ramps are maintained as per the shorter bridge option.

Island park could be more contained within this option whilst still retaining the successes of option 1 such as river connections and access, as well opening up of the front of Emery Gate and the Wilkinsons site. However, it is the preferred option from the design team for a number of reasons:

- It allows the entire route to be easily step-free and suitable for bicycles.
- It adds an element of 'event' to the bridge making it a tourist attraction as well as going some way to creating a visual identifier for this area of the town and signposting the changing responses to development within it.
- It simplifies the route making it three stage rather than five stage and in doing so it better psychologically connects town and station.
- Option 1 provides an improvement to an existing route but it has less of a fundamental impact on the wider development potential the Chippenham retail area.

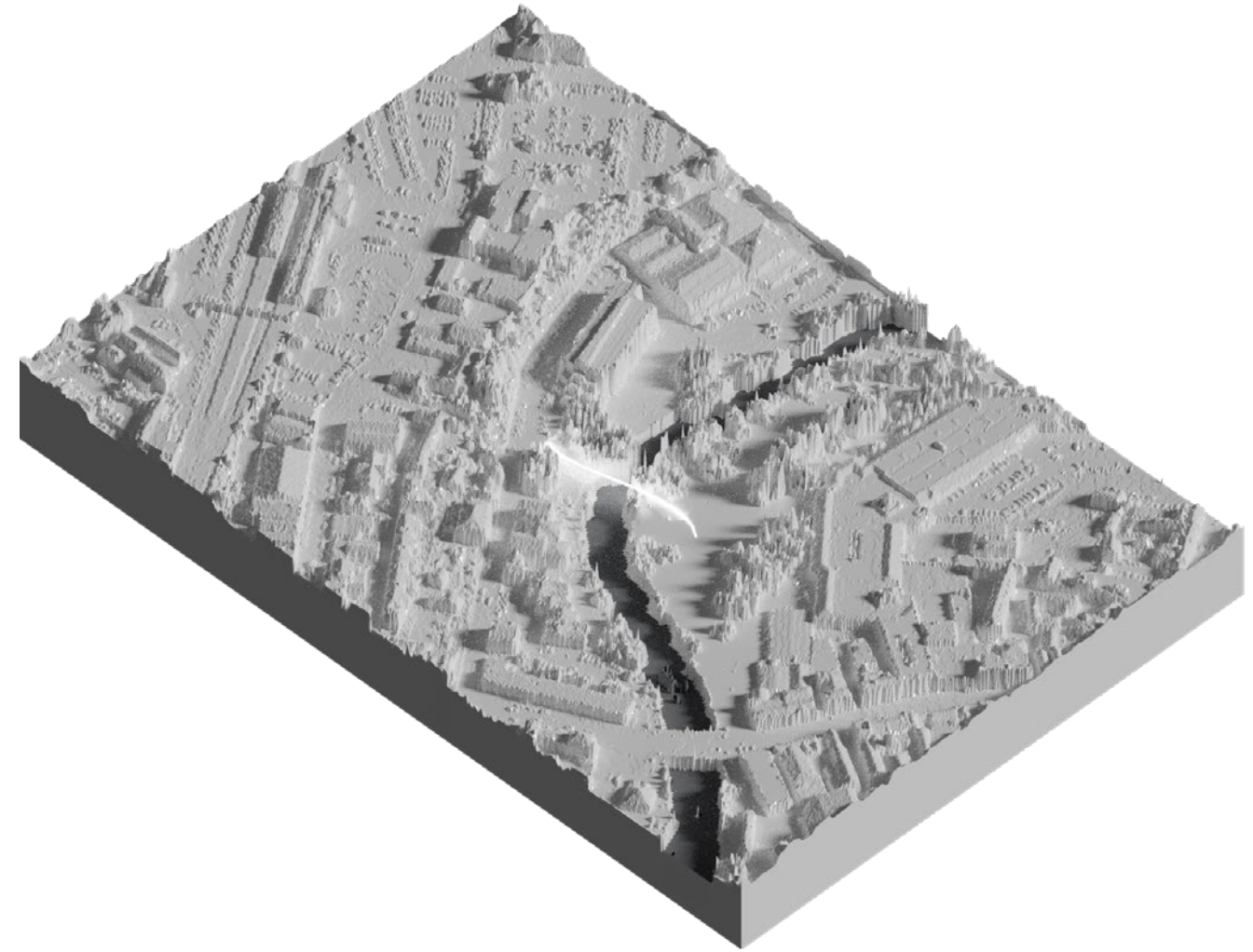




Westonbirt Tree Walk
 Glenn Howells Architects &
 Buro Happold Engineering
 284 metres
 2016
 £1.9 million
 £3500/m2 construction cost



Black Dog Bridge
 Mark Lovell Design Engineers
 50 metres
 1999
 £225,000 in 1999
 £2100/ m2 construction cost

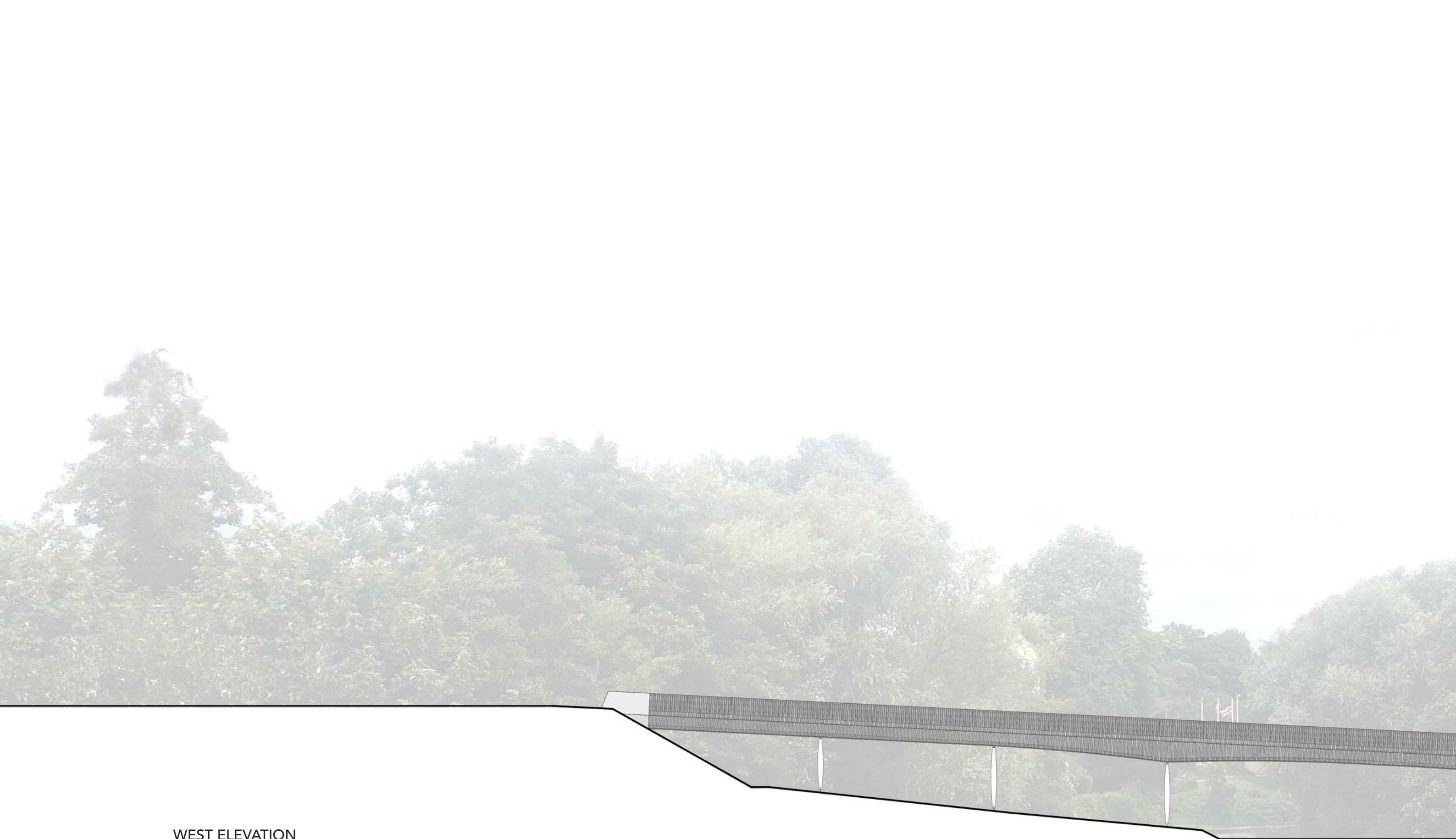


PROJECT COST SUMMARY - OPTION 2

	GFA m2	GFA sq ft	Rate £/sqft	Rate £/m2	£
Station Square (Area 4)					Excluded
Walking Route (Area 3)	268	2,885	73	788	211,280
Bridge (Area 2)	340	3,660	331	3,559	1,210,000
Southern Landscape (Area 1)	3048	32,808	20	221	672,400
Preliminaries and Overhead & Profit Allowance	20%				418,736
Building Works Cost Estimate	3,656	39,353	64	687	2,512,416

STRUCTURE AND DETAIL

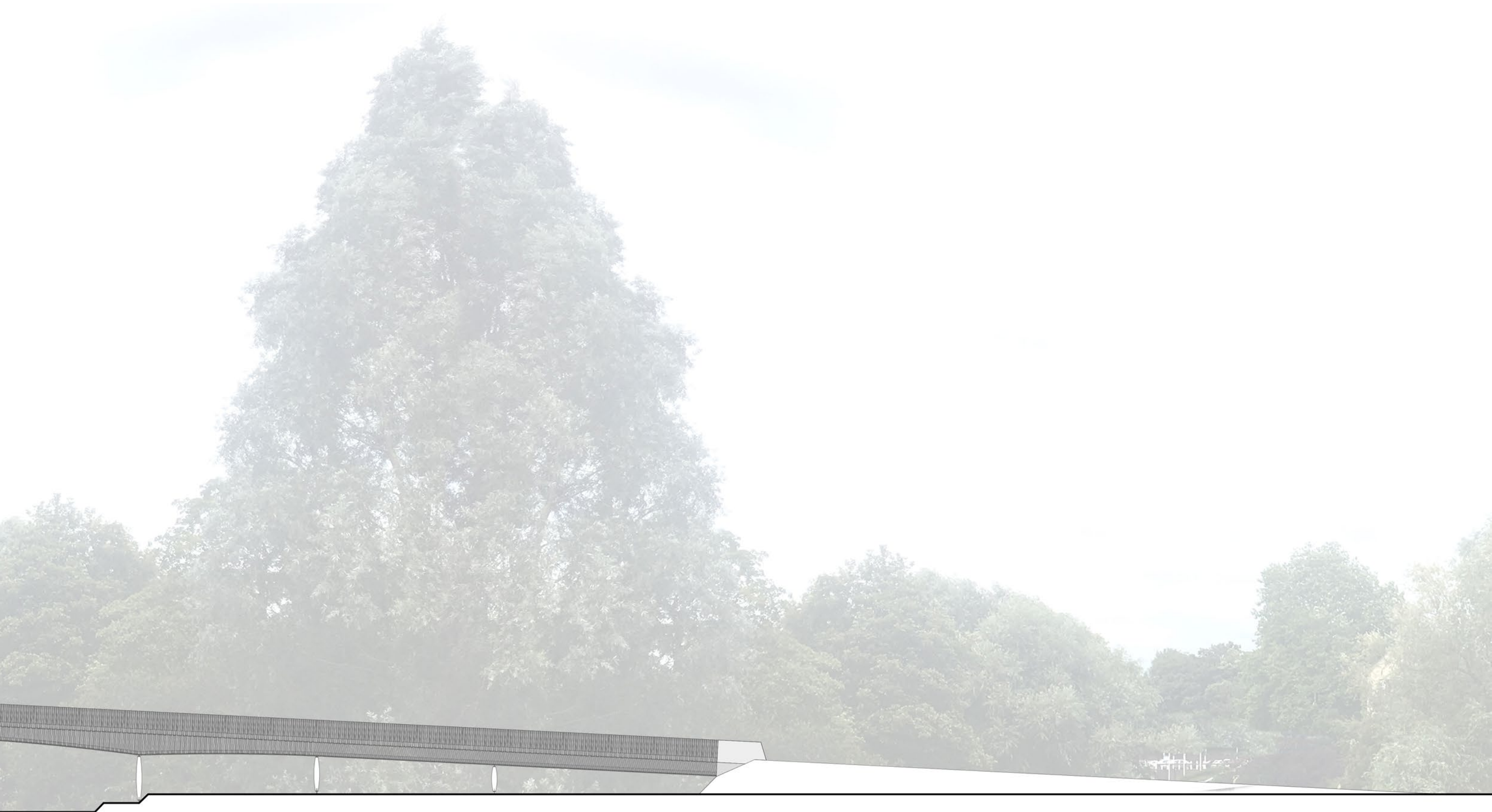
We produced an indicative structural and aesthetic solution for analysis by the PM, QS and SE in this document, this is unrefined but clearly shows our intentions in terms of minimising concrete and steel in the construction, while keeping the aesthetic elegant like the hugely successful walkway at Westonbirt Arboretum.

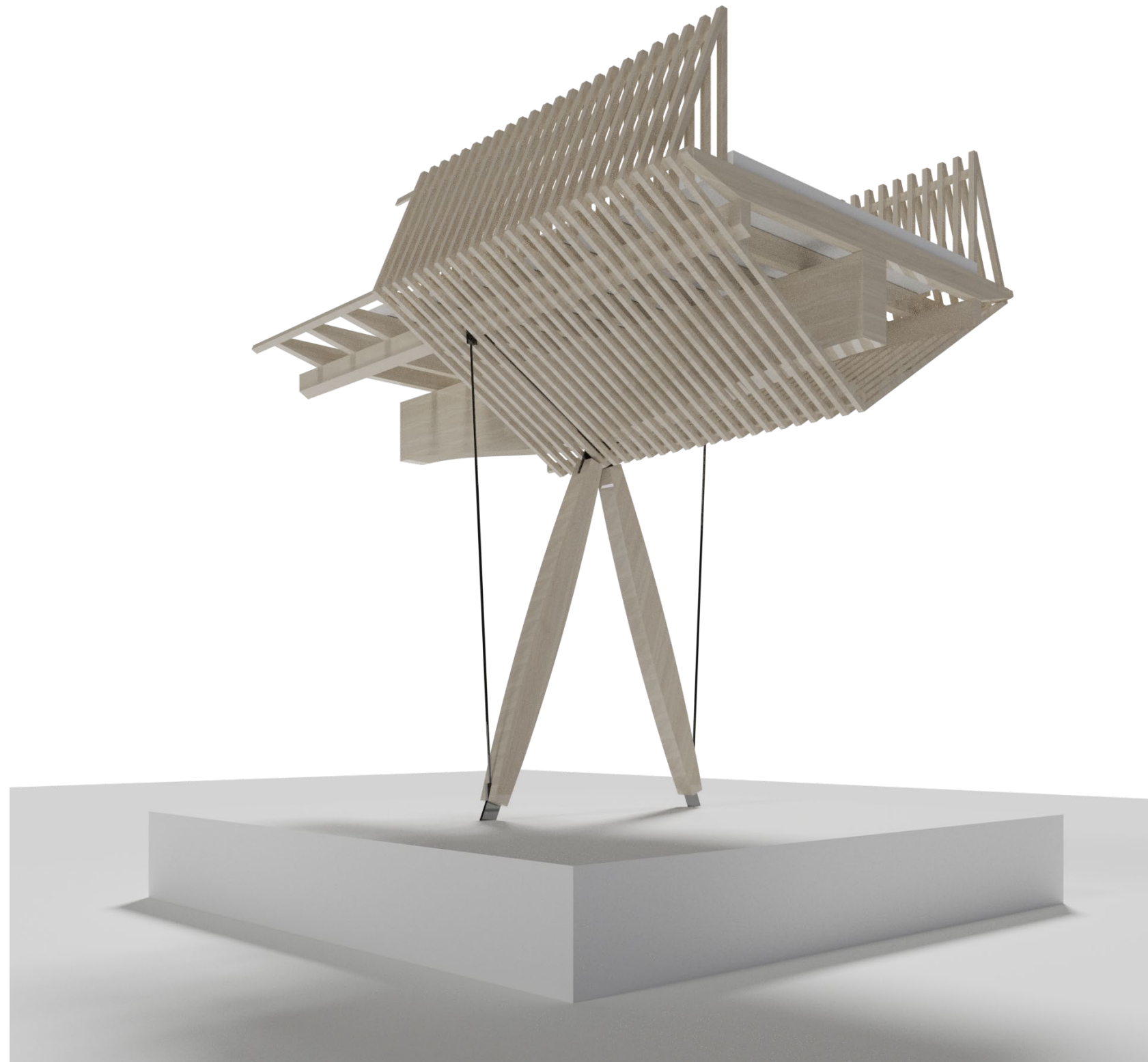


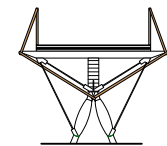
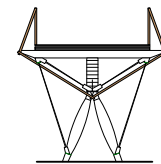
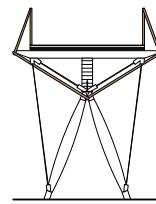
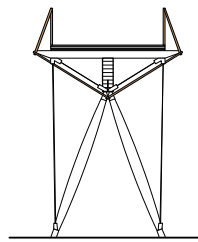
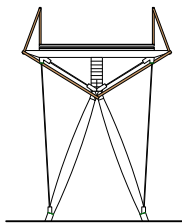
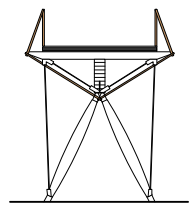
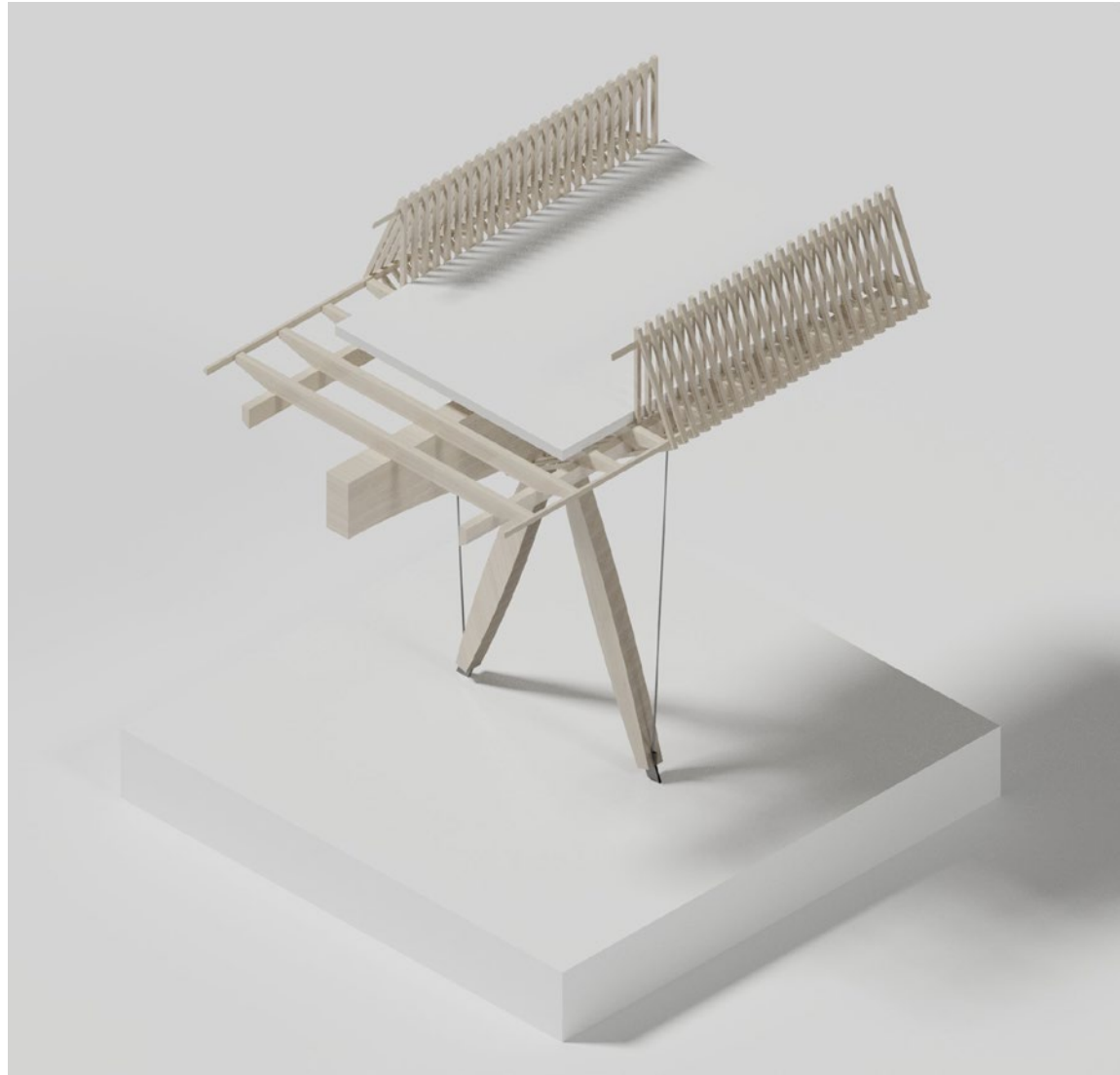
WEST ELEVATION

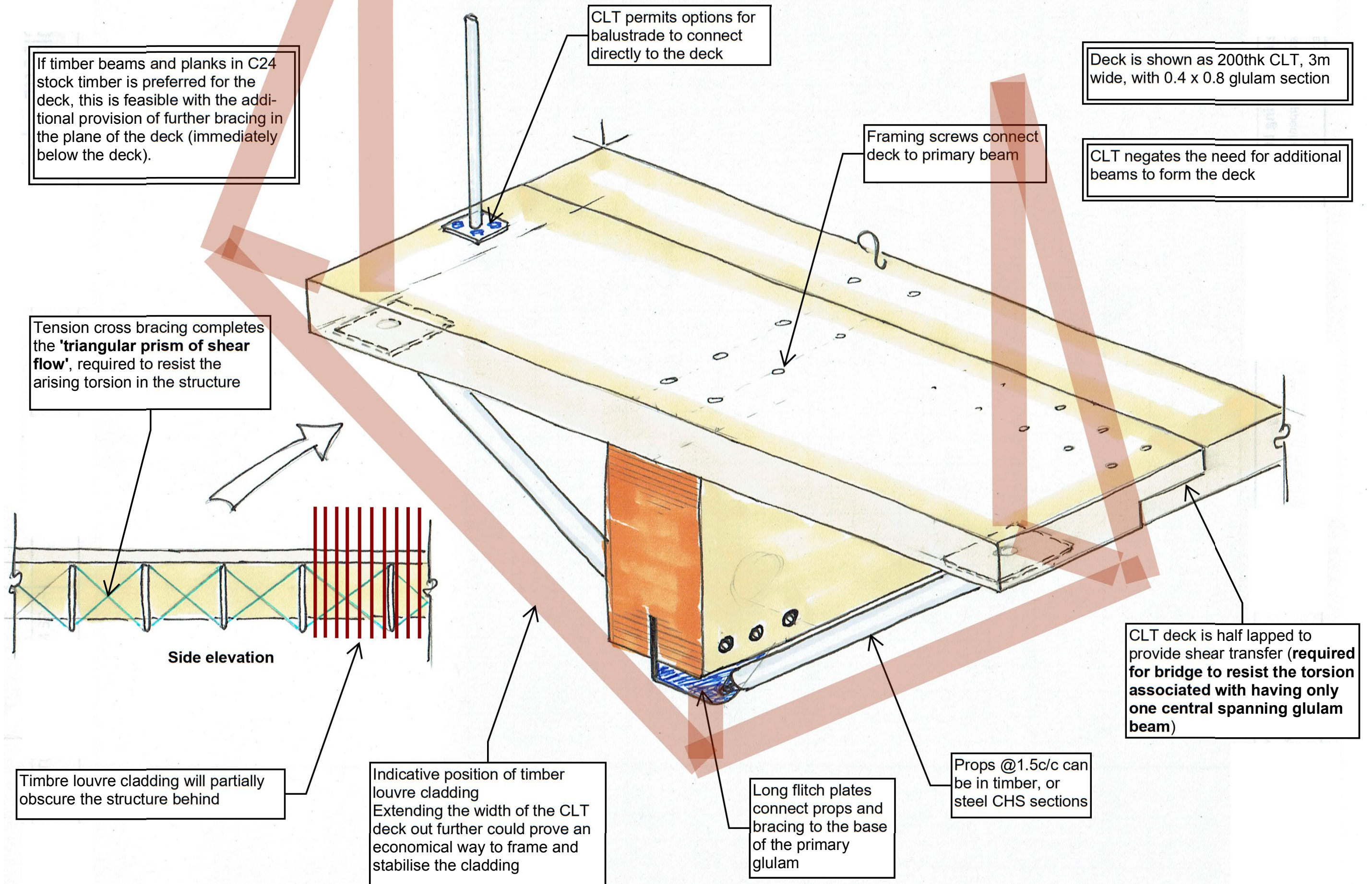
1:200

25









If timber beams and planks in C24 stock timber is preferred for the deck, this is feasible with the additional provision of further bracing in the plane of the deck (immediately below the deck).

CLT permits options for balustrade to connect directly to the deck

Deck is shown as 200thk CLT, 3m wide, with 0.4 x 0.8 glulam section

Framing screws connect deck to primary beam

CLT negates the need for additional beams to form the deck

Tension cross bracing completes the 'triangular prism of shear flow', required to resist the arising torsion in the structure

Side elevation

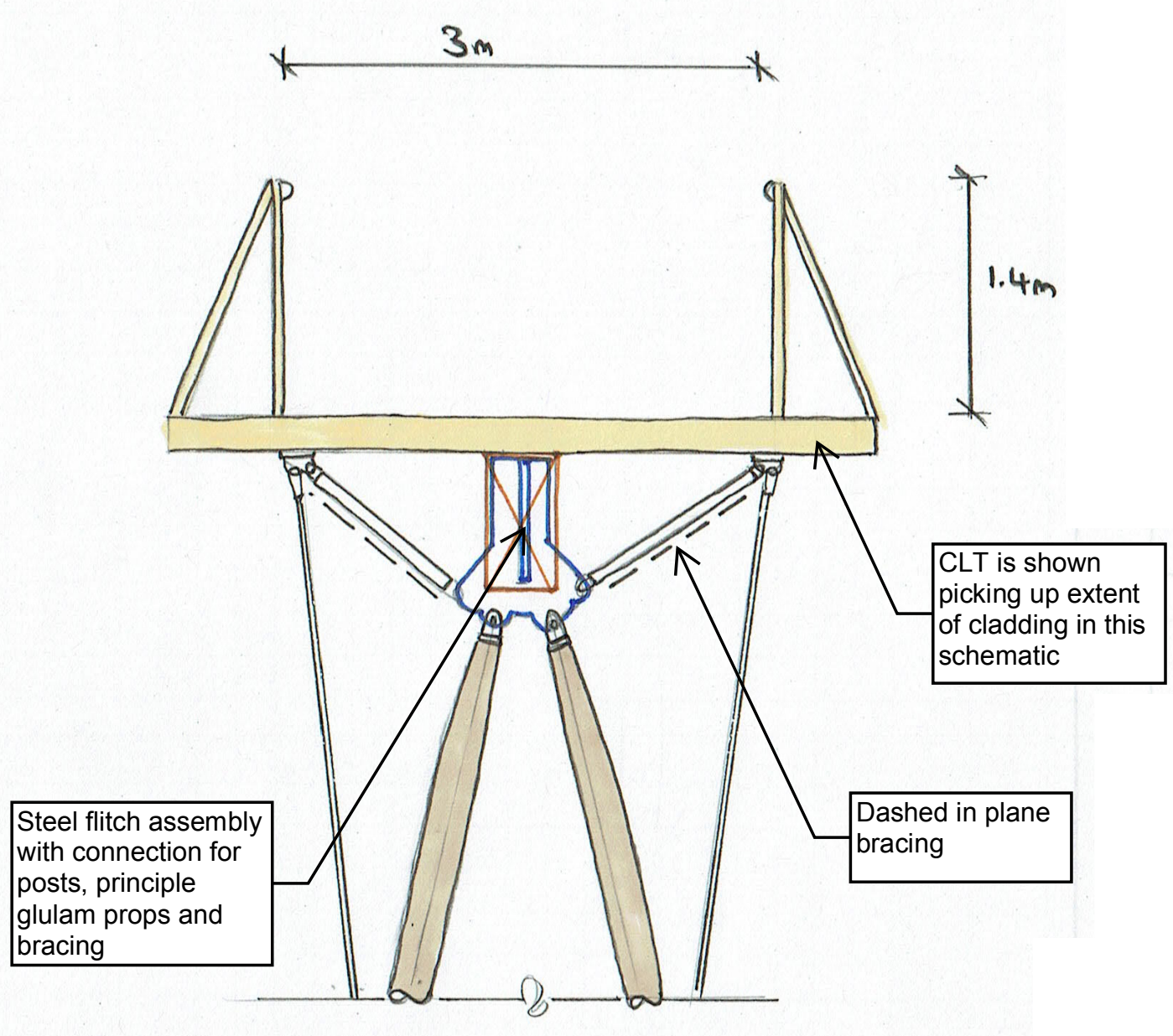
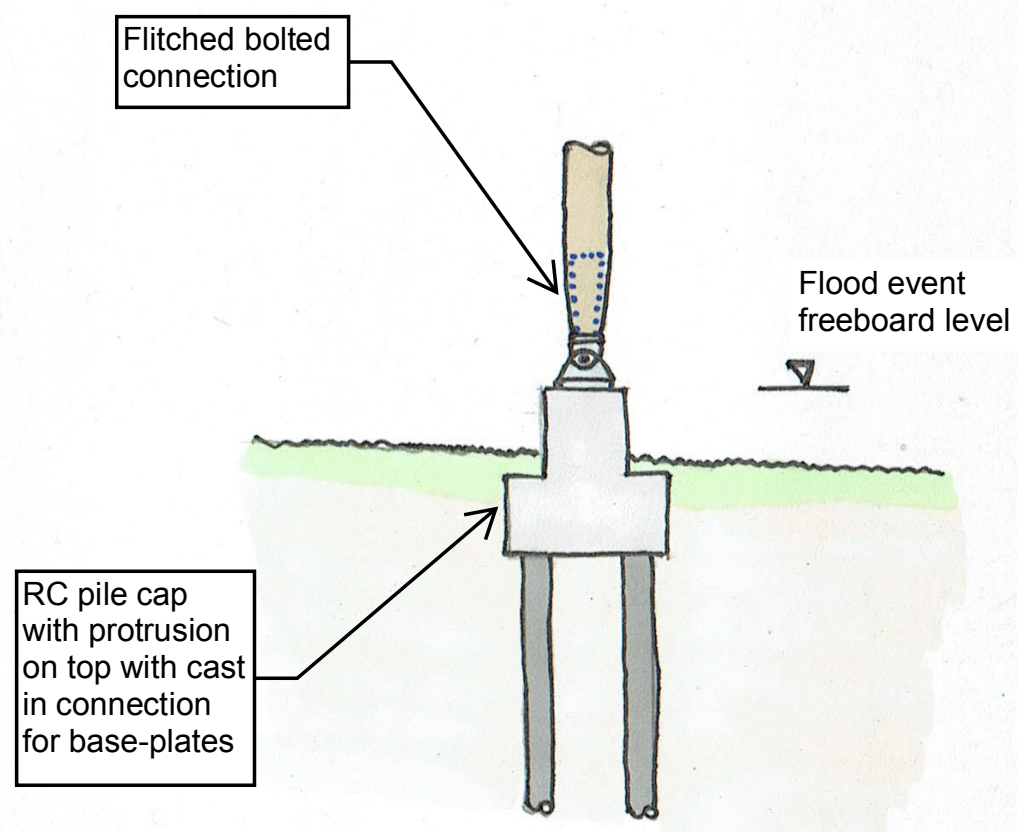
CLT deck is half lapped to provide shear transfer (required for bridge to resist the torsion associated with having only one central spanning glulam beam)

Timbre louvre cladding will partially obscure the structure behind

Indicative position of timber louvre cladding
Extending the width of the CLT deck out further could prove an economical way to frame and stabilise the cladding

Long flitch plates connect props and bracing to the base of the primary glulam

Props @1.5c/c can be in timber, or steel CHS sections



PROGRAM AND CONSTRUCTION

The proposed programme is based on the scheme (either Option 1 or 2) being procured on a Traditional Procurement basis with a competitive tenders being sought from a Main Contractor with responsibility for the full construction phase.

We would suggest that the Bridge element is designed as a specialist Sub-contractor to the Main Contractor, to ensure all appropriate on site co-ordination and programme is held under a single point of responsibility.

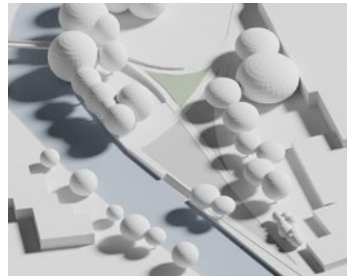
The programme is based on the project being progressed as 3 distinct areas of construction being undertaken simultaneously to minimise the programme on site. The Bridge will be constructed as an 'off site' item to be installed at the latter stage of the programme once all required groundworks and sub-structures are concluded.

Due to the proposed Traditional Procurement route, sufficient time will be allowed in the programme for a full design team to undertake the full and detailed design of the scheme, to ensure a robust scheme is tendered and undertaken on site.

To support the design process, a Site/Ground Investigation and Topographical survey are required, and will need to be instructed promptly within the proposed programme to provide technical information to the design team.

The programme notes that whilst the scheme is in for planning, no design work will be progressed pending a Planning Decision notice. However, given the programme critical nature of the scheme, it would be possible to advance the RIBA Stage 4 design during the Planning Process, although this investment would need to be considered 'At Risk' pending receipt of a positive planning decision.

CONSTRUCTION ZONING



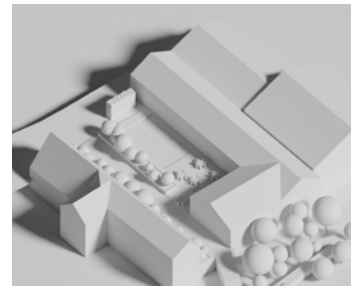
1.



3.



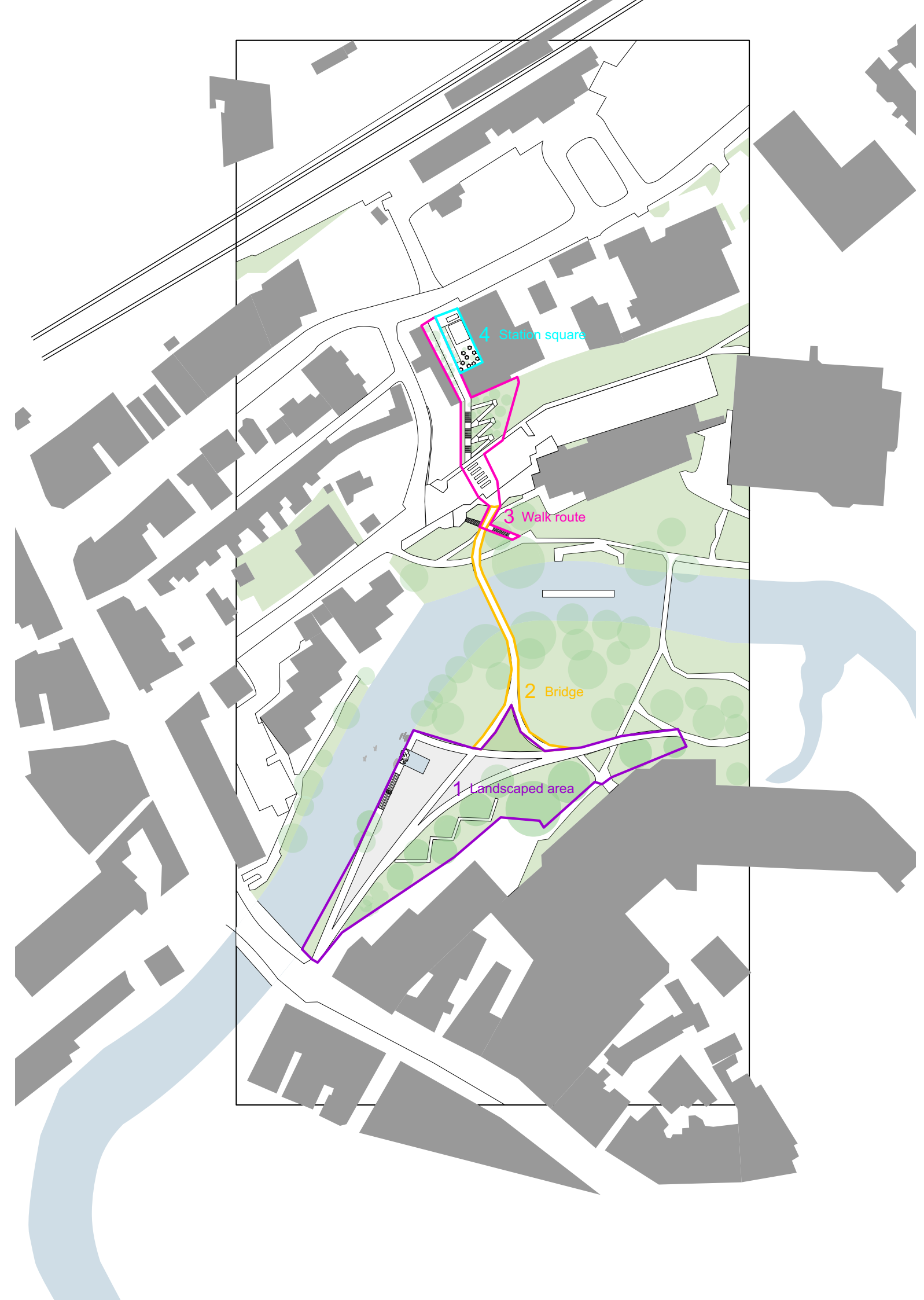
2.

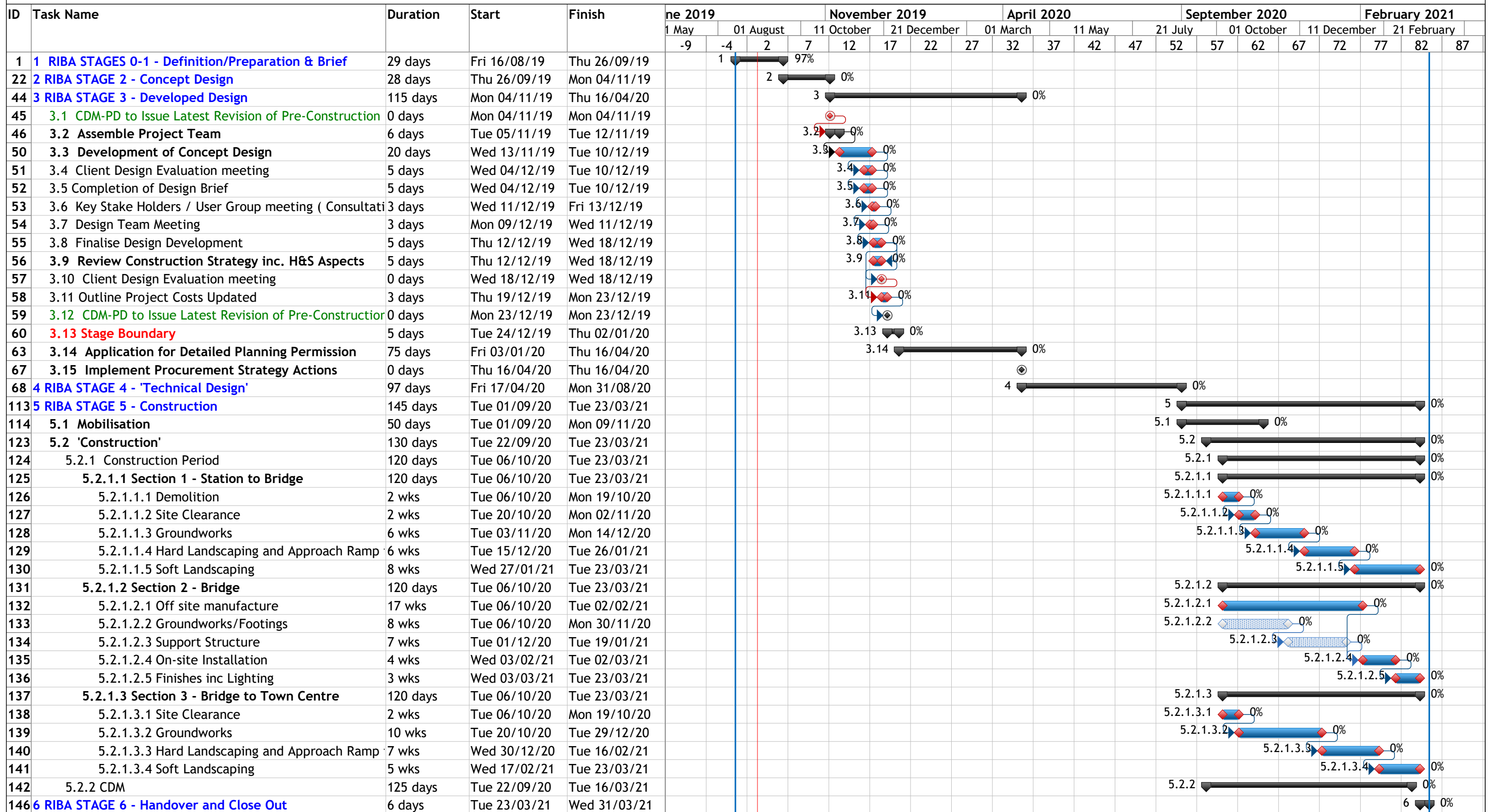


4.

It is proposed to split the construction into 4 different zones:

1. Southern landscaped area
2. Bridge
3. Walking route
4. Station Square





DCP Rev:
Re. Date: Tue 03/09/19

Baseline Task Split Task Progress Critical Milestone
 Baseline Milestone Critical Task Progress Milestone Summary



COST VS RETURN

There is huge, and growing, wealth passing through the Station on a daily basis, very little of which touches the town, asked what they think of Chippenham people more often comment on the carpark and retail park adjacent to the station than its historical importance or its river frontage. Most simply just don't know.

After many years of hiatus there is a renewed confidence within the business community that things are beginning to tip in favour of substantial investment and hence improvements of the town fabric. Various key stakeholders have been looking at the viability of investment and the LEP investments into the station infrastructure have certainly made them alert to the changes afoot. We went out to stakeholders around this proposal and asked them about investment with or without this proposal.

The following pages cover the concrete proposals from landowners around the link. But we received the following message from Kathryn Crowweller, Manager of Chippenham BID.

"Chippenham is a town with a huge amount of potential. We can already see the old meeting the new, and a rich tapestry of different styles of buildings around the town. Any new investment into Chippenham is a positive step, and anything which will draw people to the town because it is interesting, quirky or unique would be an asset to Chippenham's already varied offering. Like other town centres, Chippenham is seeing more vacant properties appearing and footfall is in decline. To have this exciting bridge built to create a new way to bring people into the town centre from the train station will not only give residents a reason to explore Chippenham again, but also give visitors an easy route to see what this lovely town has to offer. The significant investment in the town would also show that Chippenham is a town worth investing in, and it is my hope that this will be one of several additions to the town centre over the next few years."

STATION SQUARE OFFICES

Owen Inskip:

“My tenants, Oak Furniture Land, left the premises in 2015 and it was empty for 12 months while I tried in vain to attract a new occupier. Fortunately they returned with their “seconds” shop but have, once again served notice and leave in March 2020 for good. I had hoped that they would have stayed on for another two or three years giving time for the traffic, infrastructure and parking improvements proposed by Wiltshire Council, to take shape. However that is not to be and there is virtually no chance of re-letting the premises at an acceptable rent without substantial work, and that is what I now propose.

I have been taking an increasing interest in modern flexible workspaces where serviced offices have been taken to the next level in terms of atmosphere and convenience. The Office Group (TOG) and Weworks are good examples of such operations and both have many sites in London. The most local example I can think of is The Enterprise Network (TEN) in Swindon and there are others in Bristol and Bath. Individuals or small companies are able to take desks on a flexible basis by the month - these can be shared hot-desks or dedicated desks, and they can be in small private rooms or in open plan offices alongside others. Coffee and snacks are on tap as are all the daily office needs such as photocopiers, meeting rooms, showers etc. A highlight of the scheme will be the proposed first floor roof terrace, overlooking the woodland to the rear, with direct access from the first floors of all three main buildings.

The proposed space, assuming each of the main three interlinked buildings has two floors, should enable around 100 people to be working there at any one time. The users of such space are likely to be younger and greener in outlook than average and therefore we will aim to provide a large bike store (appropriate percentage still being researched) and only very limited car parking. Located right by the railway station will also help with both transport and parking.

In terms of design and feeling think in terms of The Glove Factory at Holt - semi industrial in mood in line with the existing

structures, most of which will be retained and converted/ refurbished with the addition of windows and new cladding throughout. I attach an artists impression to give an idea of the mood and an initial set of elevations although there is much more to be done yet to work this up into an acceptable scheme.

The current showroom building will need to be demolished and replaced however as it is very ugly and does not fit in well with the rest of the group. What is proposed in its place is two storey building with a gable end that matches the adjoining Chippenham 2020 offices. The stone plaque above the window shows WS 1923. William Stent ran a wholesale and retail fruit and fish business and it is understood that this building was a banana store. With the obvious exception of the showroom it therefore appears that this group of buildings has a history and provenance dating back nearly 100 years and this has led us to think that retaining the current structure, where possible, may be appropriate.

This proposal will greatly improve the look of the site, enhance this important arrival point in the town, and provide much needed, flexible modern serviced office space in exactly the right location in the heart of the town.

It had always been hoped that this redevelopment would allow a new pedestrian access through the site to create a direct link from the Station to the Town Centre. This was foreseen by the work of Chippenham Vision back in 2013 and, indeed, Chippenham Town Council's first reaction to my plans was to express regret that this route was not included within the proposed scheme. However without external funding it is not even a possibility. My architect, Rob Elkins, was determined to see whether such a link could be included and it is therefore very exciting that funding may now be forthcoming.

The redevelopment of this site into 12/15,000 sq ft of modern workspace will require investment exceeding £1.5 / £2m and provide desks for up to 100 people. The link direct to the High Street will give all these people easy access and encourage them to use the town and its facilities on a daily basis – ie - what has happened to me x 100 - this is an awe inspiring thought!”



ALFRED PLACE DEVELOPMENT

Owen Inskip:

“The redevelopment of this strategically exciting site has the potential to transform the town centre. Wilkos lease expired in June 2019 and this led me to look in some detail over the last year or two as to what would be possible. The two artists impression attached show two potential scenarios, one ambitious and the other less so. However timing is all and, until the infrastructure of the town is improved, this will not be a financially viable proposition. At present the town turns its back on the river and there is little or no attempt to connect the town centre’s three key assets, namely the Station, the High St and the River. Until this happens, and the traffic and parking issues in the town centre are resolved, the redevelopment of either Wilkos and/or Emery Gate, separately or together, will not happen.

As a consequence I was fortunate to agree new terms with Wilkos for a new 10 year lease, with a 5 year break clause which means the earliest date that redevelopment can now happen is 2024.

If the proposed new bridge and link to the Station is created, together with some form of riverside recreation space in Island Park, it is highly likely that viability of the redevelopment of Wilkos will be significantly advanced. Ideally the ground floor would remain commercial but with a number of smaller units facing the river whilst the upper floors would allow for office or residential. With a footplate of circa 20,000 sq ft over three to five floors there is the potential for 60/100,000 sq ft of mixed use development on this site, all of which would enhance the immediate surrounding area and draw in people and money. If carried out in collaboration with Eagle One at Emery Gate the potential impact would multiply and there is no doubt that the current proposal will advance this possibility significantly. ”

We would be looking at an investment of circa 10M to undertake this more complete scheme.





EMERY GATE

Eagle One:

“Eagle One are long-term investors within the retail and leisure sectors. As landlords of Chippenham’s largest shopping centre, Emery Gate, we consider that it is imperative that the Town Centre achieves the investment necessary in order to enhance and broaden its appeal to the public.

The exciting prospect of a new bridge link to the mainline railway station, particularly following the electrification of the line, is exactly the catalyst that is required in order to enable the creation of a riverside parkland area and High Street enhancement that will appeal to shoppers as part of the vital response to the shift towards shopping becoming a leisure activity for many people. An increase in the number of people enticed into the Town Centre, with increased dwell time by extending the appeal and offering for an evening trade, is crucial to achieving further inward investment.

In an exceptionally competitive retail market, this key infrastructure investment has direct and real benefits, as well as importantly providing a crucial message to retailers and funders that Chippenham Town Centre is set for a bright future as part of the town’s wider expansion plans. Not only is this vital for attracting new operators, but also in order to retain the town’s existing tenants, with no fewer than 18 national multiple retailers with stores in the Chippenham’s central shopping area having lease expiries or break clauses before the end of 2021. Without a positive message, many of these could decide to leave the Town.

If the bridge link can become a reality, there is a short-term opportunity to greatly enhance the riverside park and within three years of this being achieved Eagle One would directly expect to invest at least £3-5 million into the Emery Gate Shopping Centre. As part of this investment, there is the potential to open the scheme towards the river park, with enhanced access, a glazed atrium and restaurant seating areas.

In addition there is an opportunity to add residential and leisure activities as part of a phased redevelopment to create a sustainable vitality in the area.

Conversely, without such investment, it will prove extremely difficult to realise the town’s potential or indeed maintain its current level of activity and appeal. The Town Centre has done well to hold its position over recent years, but it is now at a tipping point. The linkage to a mainline railway station is ever increasingly important in achieving footfall in a town such as Chippenham, and to provide all relevant decision makers at both local and national businesses with the encouragement to invest for the long-term success of the town.”



CONCLUSION

Initial cost analysis by CMS suggests that scope may need to be limited in terms of the wider site works included within this package, the bridge and link are the fundamental drivers for this project and they are the ones which will create the biggest impact. Riverside square could be reduced in area or scope to moderate the budget as could the top link section. It is also hoped that the bridge can be simplified further to reduce its cost, for instance lowering the number of the lattice cladding elements given the elegance of the structure itself. Elkins are confident we can reduce the total project costs back circa 2-2.5M if needed but welcome a confirmation of a definite budget should the scheme progress.

CMS's outline development control programme suggests that there is sufficient time and we hope to have initial meeting with the planning department in the coming days to start outline discussions ensuring the process is smoothed through the regulatory process. Splitting the applications for the top section and the bridge/riverside park should allow further scope for discussion in the application for the top section regarding the conservation assets and the EHO's thoughts on proximity to residential properties, this application would likely be passed under delegated authority whereas the larger bridge would likely have to go to committee therefore leading to resultant permissions of a similar timeframe.

Finally Cost vs Return, in discussion with each of the developers the larger bridge option has been heralded as more likely to lead to the larger investment totals they were discussing, realistically that could amount to circa 20M directly, but as suggested by the BID within the central chippenham area there is huge scope for further investment following a figurehead project that option 2 would embody.