

# Agenda Item 14.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
172048	Extension of time agreed to 29 <sup>th</sup> June 2018	Earley	Bulmershe and Whitegates;

<b>Applicant</b>	Reading Borough Council Highways and Transport Department
<b>Site Address</b>	Land between Thames Valley Business Park and Napier Road, Reading, to the south of the River Thames and north of the Great Western Main Line Railway
<b>Proposal</b>	Full application for proposed construction of a segregated fast-track public transport, pedestrian and cycle bridge and viaduct, comprising concrete bridge structure with a river span of 59.5m and a land span of 316m, supported by concrete columns, steel beams and reinforced soil embankment, together with new footpath links and existing footpath alterations, replacement supermarket car parking provision, junction improvements and landscaping.
<b>Type</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment Application
<b>PS Category</b>	006
<b>Officer</b>	Graham Vaughan
<b>Reason for determination by committee</b>	Major application

<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Planning Committee on Monday, 25 June 2018
<b>REPORT PREPARED BY</b>	Assistant Director – Place

<b>SUMMARY</b>
<p>The application is for a public transport link for use by buses, cyclists and pedestrians between the A3290, Wokingham and Napier Road, Reading. It is split between both Reading and Wokingham Boroughs and the element with Reading Borough was approved by their planning committee on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018. It has been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment and therefore has been submitted in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The scheme would comprise of a new road which would be elevated on a viaduct section in order to bridge across the River Kennet before returning to ground level. At the bridge section the width of the road would be reduced to a single carriageway width for buses. Lighting would be provided through columns or within the rail to the edge of the viaduct/bridge. The design of the scheme has been subject to significant discussion including review by the Design South East Panel. The design rationale was to create a relatively simple structure which acknowledged the particular characteristics of the site and this has been achieved by flared concrete columns, a steel beam running the length of the elevated section and a concrete deck.</p> <p>The site has been designated for this particular land use within the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan documents. It is acknowledged that it relies upon a neighbouring authority to bring the development forward but nonetheless the land has been safeguarded (by both Reading and Wokingham) to provide for a transport link. The purpose of the scheme is to respond to the forecast population and economic growth of Reading and Wokingham boroughs. Currently the A4 is the main route used to access Reading from the east and significant levels of traffic and high pollution levels are only forecast to worsen due to housing developments occurring in both boroughs. As such, it is envisaged that the scheme would have two major benefits in tackling this issue. Firstly,</p>

the scheme would allow bus services to enter/exit Reading on another route which would save journey time and allow for more reliable services. In particular, fast track services to areas beyond Reading and Wokingham Boroughs would benefit as would potential future services. Secondly, the resultant improved bus services would help towards a shift in transport modes from the private car to public transport. As a result, there could be an improvement in congestion and pollution levels within Reading however the main emphasis lies in ensuring forecast growth does not worsen these two aspects. Additionally, the increased access to employment opportunities and other businesses (including Thames Valley Business Park) as well as greater connectivity with other urban centres would help foster economic growth for the area.

The application does however have a significant impact on the landscape character of the area. Whilst the site does not have any landscape planning designation, either local or national, it is an important area of green space adjacent to the River Thames. It is also marks the confluence of the River Kennet with the River Thames which is culturally and historically significant for the development of Reading as a town and indeed the River Thames towpath crosses through the site. The riparian character is augmented with substantial tree growth either side of the river which is an important element of the character of the site despite firstly the proximity to Reading town and secondly the impact of Network Rail development on the adjacent railway line. As a result, a structure of this size would inevitably block views in the area and detrimentally impact the riparian character due to its urban form and design. In addition, the railway line crosses over a bridge designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel and its associated accommodation bridge (commonly known as the Horseshoe Bridge) is Grade II listed. Whilst no physical alteration would occur to the bridge, the proposal would have an impact on its setting as it would block views to and from the listed structure.

The site is within flood zones 2 and 3 however it is considered the impact of flood risk has been sufficiently mitigated primarily through the use of 'scoops' in the ground that would replace the flood storage capacity that would be lost through the scheme. Furthermore, through the use of bird and bat boxes, tree planting and additional landscaping within the River Thames, it is considered the ecological impact of the scheme would be mitigated. With regards to trees it is acknowledged there would be a significant impact. Clarification on the number of trees to be removed has been sought and within Wokingham Borough 18 tree features would be removed with 33 retained. An additional 37 trees are proposed to be planted along with other native species. In terms of air pollution and potential ground contamination, subject to conditions, no harmful impact is considered to occur.

The scheme complies with certain planning policies but also conflicts with others. In determining planning applications, it is the decision maker's role to balance these differing factors and apply suitable weight to each to come to a conclusion. The environmental impacts of the scheme are certainly substantial and the scheme would irrevocably change the area. However, the social benefits of the proposal in terms of journey time savings, greater use of public transport and increasing road capacity would have a benefit into the future. Additionally the economic benefits of greater connectivity between areas and easier access to Thames Valley Business Park would also have lasting impact. Added to this is the fact the site has been safeguarded for this purpose through the adoption of local planning policy. In conclusion therefore, it is recommended to the committee that, on balance, the scheme should be approved. This is because the environmental harm is mitigated to an acceptable degree and therefore the visual harm is considered to be outweighed by the need to address congestion in the area and the economic and social benefits that would arise.

For clarity, the following is attached to this report:

1. Figures 1 – 4.
2. 28791/2009/CIV/002 – Site location plan showing borough boundary
3. 28791/2003/SK310 – general arrangement showing plan and elevation of embankment in Reading, bridge over the River Kennet and viaduct in Wokingham
4. 28791/2003/SK321 – Elevation of viaduct in Wokingham with column design
5. 28791/2003/SK322 – Elevation of embankment in Reading
6. 28791/2003/SK323 – Elevation and section of bridge over the River Kennet
7. 28791/4001/013 – Mooring platforms and river planting in Wokingham
8. 28791/2009/CIV/004 – General arrangement plan across site showing phase 1
9. 28791/2009/CIV/005 – General arrangement plan across site showing phase 2
10. Landscape and Ecology Strategy – Middle section of site
11. Design and Access Statement Annexe – Photomontage and artists impressions

### **PLANNING STATUS**

- Countryside
- Safety Hazard Area – Major Accident Hazard Pipeline
- Safety Hazard Area – Hazardous Substance Consent
- Flood zone 2 and 3
- Groundwater Consultation Zone 3
- Natural England SSSI Impact Risk Zone
- Potentially Contaminated Lane Consultation Zone
- Public Open Space – Thames Valley Park
- Landscape Character Assessment – Thames River Valley with Open Water
- Strategic Transport Network Improvements – Site Allocation for Proposed Reading Link
- Strategic Transport Network Improvements – Safeguarding Direction for Potential Crossrail Project Extension
- Replacement Minerals Local Plan
- Overhead Electricity Cables
- Areas with the strongest presumption against allowing sharp sand and gravel extraction

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**In consideration of the Environmental Statement which has been received under The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:**

- A. Prior completion of a legal agreement pursuant to section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) with the following provisional heads of terms;**
  - a. Use of the structure/route as a segregated mass rapid transit (MRT) public transport, pedestrian and cycle route only, for use only by permitted authorised vehicles (buses, minibuses, public coaches and, in emergencies only, emergency vehicles);
  - b. Construction of the structure to an adoptable standard and confirmation to enter into an agreement for the structure to function as Public Highway under s.38 of the Highways Act 1980;
  - c. Agreement regarding maintenance costs under s.38/278 of the Highways Act 1980;

- d. Completion of compensatory flood storage works and repair of riverbank near to the Kennet mouth within Wokingham Borough and Reading Borough, as appropriate, no later than substantial completion of development;
- e. Provision of community/art facilities (relocation of mosaic model/sculpture and provision of strategy for benches and storyboards) prior to first use. Submission of strategy no later than commencement of development;
- f. Developer to undertake or otherwise fund a construction phase Employment and Skills Plan (ESP);
- g. Mooring controls for 3x short-stay visitor mooring platforms;
- h. Phasing controls: no first use of MRT route until all environmental mitigation works have been completed to the Local Planning Authority's satisfaction;
- i. Post occupation monitoring/management requirements (ecology management, marginal shelf, wetland);
- j. Construction of phase 1B of the scheme to be completed following relocation of gas apparatus; and,
- k. Agree a strategy for the translocation of reptiles, if required.

**B. Conditions and informatives:**

a. Timescale

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

*Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).*

b. Approved details

This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered '28791/2009/CIV/001 – Existing Site Layout', '28791/2009/CIV/002 A – Site Location Plan', '28791/2009/CIV/003 B – Proposed Site Block Plan Phase 1A', '28791/2009/CIV/004 B – General Arrangement Phase 1A', '28791/2009/CIV/005 B – General Arrangement Phase 1B', '28791/2009/CIV/006 A – Proposed Longitudinal Section and Typical Cross Section', '28791/2009/CIV/007 B – Proposed Carriageway Contours Phase 1A', '28791/2009/CIV/008 B – Proposed Surface Water Drainage Strategy Phase 1A', '28791/2009/CIV/009 B – Proposed Utility Diversions Phase 1A', '28791/2009/CIV/011 A – Proposed Street Lighting Layout Phase 1A', '28791/2009/CIV/012 A – Proposed Street Lighting Layout Phase 1B', '28791/2009/CIV/013 A – Proposed Cross Sections', '28791/2009/CIV/015 B – Proposed Site Context Including Proposed Park and Ride Development Phase 1A', '28791/2009/CIV/016 A – Proposed Site Block Plan Phase 1B', '28791/2009/CIV/017 A – Proposed Carriageway Contours Phase 1B', '28791/2009/CIV/018 A – Proposed Surface Water Drainage Strategy Phase 1B', '28791/2009/CIV/019 A – Proposed Utility Diversions Phase 1B', '28791/2009/CIV/020 A – Proposed Site Context Including Proposed Park and Ride Development Phase 1B', '28791/2009/CIV/021 – Proposed Site: Context Comparison Between Original Scheme and Revised Scheme', '28791/2009/CIV/022 – General Arrangement Phase 1B with originally submitted scheme overlaid', '28791/4001/013 P01 – Marginal Planting / Mooring Platforms', '28791/2003/SK310 P01 – Bridge and Viaduct Single Column Option General Arrangement', '28791/2003/SK321 P02 – Bridge and Viaduct Single Column Option East Approach', '28791/2003/SK322 P01 – Bridge and Viaduct Single Column Option East Approach', '28791/2003/SK323 P01 – Bridge and Viaduct Single Column Option Main Span', '28791/2003/SK324 P01 – Bridge and Viaduct Single Column Option:

Cross Section Comparison' received by the local planning authority on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017 and the revised plans on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

*Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.*

c. External materials

Before the development hereby permitted is commenced, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the viaduct/bridge shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the so-approved details.

*Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory.*

*Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3*

d. Project Community Liaison Group

No development shall take place until a scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which specifies the provisions and details to be made to establish a Project Community Liaison Group for the duration of the construction works. The scheme shall include details of dates of meetings and a name and telephone number for residents to contact should any issues arise during the construction period. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

*Reason: In order to minimise disturbance to residents during construction works.*

e. Construction Environmental Management Plan

No development shall take place until a method statement/construction environmental management plan that is in accordance with the approach outlined in the Planning/Environmental Statement, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This shall deal with the treatment of any environmentally sensitive areas, their aftercare and maintenance as well as a plan detailing the works to be carried out showing how the environment will be protected during the works. Such a scheme shall include details of the following:

- i) The measures to be used during the development in order to minimise environmental impact of the works (considering both potential disturbance and pollution);
- ii) The ecological enhancements as mitigation for the loss of habitat resulting from the development;
- iii) A map or plan showing habitat areas to be specifically protected (identified in the ecological report) during the works, including an agreed buffer zone to the River Thames and River Kennet;
- iv) Any necessary mitigation for protected species;
- v) Construction methods;
- vi) The timing of the works;
- vii) Any necessary pollution protection methods; and,
- viii) Information on the persons/bodies responsible for particular activities associated with the method statement that demonstrate they are qualified for the activity they are undertaking.

The works shall be carried out during construction and in accordance with the approved method statement and remain in place until construction ends.

*Reason: To ensure the protection of wildlife and supporting habitat and secure opportunities for the enhancement of the nature conservation value of the site in line with national planning policy.*

f. Construction Method Statement

No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:

- i) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors,
- ii) loading and unloading of plant and materials including turning areas,
- iii) details of proposed routes for heavy goods vehicles travelling to and from the site,
- iv) details of works that involve interference with the public highway (as well as public rights of way) including temporary carriageway/footpath closures, realignment and diversions,
- v) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development,
- vi) the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate,
- vii) wheel washing facilities,
- viii) baseline levels for noise, vibration and dust and details of any monitoring protocols that may be necessary during the works,
- ix) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction,
- x) a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works.

*Reason In the interests of highway safety & convenience and neighbour amenities.*

*Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.*

g. Highway Construction Details

Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the construction of roads, structures, cycle route and footways, including levels, widths, construction materials, depths of construction, surface water drainage, lighting and details of control measures to ensure bus only use (camera or physical barrier) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The roads and footways shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details to road base level before the development is occupied and the final wearing course will be provided within 3 months of occupation, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

*Reason: To ensure that roads and footpaths are constructed to a standard that would be suitable for adoption as publicly maintainable highway, in the interests of providing a functional, accessible and safe development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.*

h. Drainage Details

No development shall take place until full details of the drainage system for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include:

- i) Results of intrusive ground investigation demonstrating seasonal high groundwater levels for the site and infiltration rates in accordance with BRE365.
- ii) Demonstration that the base of SuDS features are at least 1m above seasonal groundwater level
- iii) Full calculations demonstrating that attenuation features can cope with runoff for the 1 in 100 year flood event with a 70% allowance for climate change and runoff controlled at 5l/s in accordance with the FRA.

- iv) Calculations demonstrating that there will be no flooding of pipes for events up to and including the 1 in 100 year flood event with a 70% allowance for climate change.
- v) A drainage strategy plan for the proposed development, including pipe details with invert levels as well as oil interceptor locations.
- vi) A maintenance management plan for the oil interceptors and SuDS features throughout the lifetime of the development, as well as who will be responsible for the maintenance.

*Reason: To prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10*

i. Compensatory storage mitigation

Prior to commencement of development, details to final alignment of the road and ground level changes for compensatory storage mitigation to be provided in line with the principles demonstrated in the flood risk assessment and addendum reports. In particular, any works affecting the flood plain and flood plain storage will need to be taken into account in an appropriate assessment.

*Reason: To prevent flooding elsewhere by ensuring that compensatory storage of flood water is provided in accordance with the provisions of the National Planning policy Framework (NPPF).*

j. Groundwater Protection

No development approved by this planning permission shall commence until a remediation strategy to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. This strategy will include the following components:

- i) A preliminary risk assessment which has identified:
  - a. all previous uses;
  - b. potential contaminants associated with those uses;
  - c. a conceptual model of the site indicating sources, pathways and receptors; and
  - d. potentially unacceptable risks arising from contamination at the site.
- ii) A site investigation scheme, based on (i) to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off site.
- iii) The results of the site investigation and the detailed risk assessment referred to in (ii) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.
- iv) A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in (iii) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.

*Reason: A large part of this site is underlain with Alluvium over Kempton Park Gravel Formation (both Secondary A Aquifers) over the Newhaven and Seaford Chalk Formations (Principal Aquifer - under the whole site). Groundwater from these aquifers provides base flow for the River Thames located on the boundary of the site. The EA need to protect these aquifers and the river from any contamination (which may be in the soils as a result of previously contaminative uses of the site or from pollutants within*

*the historic landfill) and which could be disturbed and hence mobilised during construction.*

k. Verification Report

Prior to any part of the permitted development being brought into use a verification report demonstrating the completion of works set out in the approved remediation strategy and the effectiveness of the remediation shall be submitted to, and approved in writing, by the local planning authority. The report shall include results of sampling and monitoring carried out in accordance with the approved verification plan to demonstrate that the site remediation criteria have been met.

*Reason: A large part of this site is underlain with Alluvium over Kempton Park Gravel Formation (both Secondary A Aquifers) over the Newhaven and Seaford Chalk Formations (Principal Aquifer - under the whole site). Groundwater from these aquifers provides base flow for the River Thames located on the boundary of the site. The EA need to protect these aquifers and the river from any potential contamination (which may be in the soils as a result of previously contaminative uses of the site or from pollutants within the historic landfill) and which could be disturbed and hence mobilised during construction.*

l. Piling

Piling using penetrative methods shall not be carried out other than with the written consent of the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: A large part of this site is underlain with Alluvium over Kempton Park Gravel Formation (both Secondary A Aquifers) over the Newhaven and Seaford Chalk Formations (Principal Aquifer - under the whole site). The EA need to protect these aquifers from any potential contamination (which may be in the soils as a result of previously contaminative uses of the site e.g. depot/ tanks or from pollutants within the historic landfill) and which could be mobilised by the use of piling. The EA therefore need to see the results of site investigations of the identified potentially contaminative parts of this site before we can comment on any proposed foundation design.*

m. Surface Water Drainage

No infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground at land used for the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Scheme is permitted other than with the written consent of the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: A large part of this site is underlain with Alluvium over Kempton Park Gravel Formation (both Secondary A Aquifers) over the Newhaven and Seaford Chalk Formations (Principal Aquifer - under the whole site). The EA need to protect these aquifers from any potential contamination (which may be in the soils as a result of previously contaminative uses of the site or from pollutants within the historic landfill) and which could be mobilised by the use of soakaways. The EA need to see the results of site investigations of the identified potentially contaminative parts of this site.*

n. Landscape and ecological management plan

No development shall take place until a landscape and ecological management plan, including long- term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscaped areas (except privately owned domestic gardens), shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved and any subsequent variations shall



be agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall include the following elements:

- i) detailed designs for the proposed marginal shelf/mooring areas on the River Thames
- ii) details of the extent and type of new planting (NB all planting to be locally native species of UK genetic provenance). This shall be based on the principles contained within the Landscape and Ecology Strategy Rev F (April 2018)
- iii) details of all maintenance regimes for all areas proposed to be created, enhanced and managed, both on site and in agreed off-site areas
- iv) details of any new habitat created on site
- v) details of treatment of site boundaries and/or buffers around water bodies
- vi) details of management responsibilities
- vii) details of funding to ensure on-going maintenance in perpetuity
- viii) details of habitat establishment monitoring and the means by which alternative measures will be taken to provide equivalent habitat enhancement within the borough should establishment fail.

*Reason: To ensure the protection of wildlife and supporting habitat and secure opportunities for the enhancement of the nature conservation value of the site in line with national planning policy.*

o. Reptile Mitigation Strategy

Prior to commencement of the development a detailed reptile mitigation strategy, to demonstrate that the favourable conservation status of species of principal importance will be maintained within Wokingham Borough, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The measures contained within the reptile mitigation strategy, including any translocation process, shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plans unless otherwise approved in writing by the local planning authority.

*Reason: Details are required prior to development because insufficient detail was submitted with the application, and to secure appropriate mitigation for protected species and a strategy to maintain biodiversity, as appropriate under Core Strategy CP7.*

p. External Lighting Strategy

Prior to commencement of the development details of an external lighting strategy to be used in the development hereby approved shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall include the location, height, baffling to reduce light spillage, levels of illumination and a "lighting design strategy for biodiversity" to include spectrum levels. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy.

*Reason: Details are required prior to development because insufficient detail was submitted with the application, and to secure appropriate mitigation for protected species and a strategy to maintain biodiversity, as appropriate under Core Strategy CP7.*

q. Archaeology Scheme of Investigation

No development shall take place within the application area until the applicant, their agents or successors in title have secured and implemented a programme of archaeological field evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local

Planning Authority. The results of the evaluation will inform the preparation of a subsequent mitigation strategy which will be submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development. The mitigation strategy will provide for:

- i) A programme of site investigation and recording, or alternative appropriate mitigation, within the area of archaeological interest. Development will not commence within the area of archaeological interest until the site investigation has been satisfactorily completed.
- ii) A programme of post investigation assessment, analysis, publication, dissemination and archiving. This part of the condition shall not be discharged until these elements of the programme have been fulfilled in accordance with the programme set out in the WSI or unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: To ensure that any archaeological remains within the site are adequately investigated and recorded or preserved in situ in the interest of protecting the archaeological heritage of the borough. Relevant Policy: MDD Policy TB25.*

r. Landscaping

Prior to the commencement of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include, as appropriate, contours, means of enclosure, hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and structure (e.g. furniture, lighting). Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

*Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21*

s. Protection of trees

a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until a scheme which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority (the Approved Scheme); the tree protection measures approved shall be implemented in complete accordance with the Approved Scheme for the duration of the development (including, unless otherwise provided by the Approved Scheme) demolition, all site preparation work, tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery.

b) No development (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the local planning authority has been provided (by way of a written notice) with a period of no

less than 7 working days to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the Approved Scheme on-site.

c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.

d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

*Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21*

t. Landscape management

Prior to the commencement of the development a landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved and maintained thereafter.

*Reason: In order to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21*

u. Earth mounding and contouring

Prior to the commencement of the development, details of earthworks shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include the proposed grading and mounding of land areas including the levels and contours to be formed, showing the relationship of proposed mounding to existing vegetation and surrounding landform. The Earthworks shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and permanently so-retained.

*Reason: In the interests of the amenity and landscape character of the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21*

v. Retention of trees and shrubs

No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

*Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity value to the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.*

*w. Working hours*

No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 8:00a.m. - 6:00p.m. Monday to Friday and 8:00 a.m. - 1.00p.m. Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays.

*Reason: In the interests of the amenities of residents. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3*

**Informatives**

1. Southern Gas Networks advise there is a high pressure pipeline in the vicinity of the site. Any works carried out should be in consultation with SGN.
2. Network Rail advise that any works should not compromise their ability to carry out work to the railway as per their email of 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017 which will be forwarded to the applicant.
3. The Public Rights of Way Officer has advised the Public Right of Way through the site should remain open as per their letter of 29<sup>th</sup> August 2017 which will be forwarded to the applicant.
4. The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.
5. Where this permission requires further details to be submitted for approval, the information must formally be submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.
6. This permission should be read in conjunction with the legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act dated **[INSERT]**, the obligations in which relate to this development.
7. Should any bats or evidence of bats be found prior to or during the development, all works must stop immediately and an ecological consultant or the Council's ecologist contacted for further advice before works can proceed. All contractors working on site should be made aware of the advice and provided with the contact details of a relevant ecological consultant.
8. This permission does not convey or imply any approval or consent required under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for protected species. The applicant is

advised to contact Natural England with regard to any protected species that may be found on the site.

9. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant in terms of a full pre-application process was undertaken by the applicant; planning issues relating to ecology, flooding, design and highways. The decision to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF is considered to be a positive outcome of these discussions.

### PLANNING HISTORY

162325 (application site)	Scoping Opinion application to determine the content of an Environmental Impact Assessment for the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Scheme replied on 23 <sup>rd</sup> December 2016
161596 (adjacent to application site)	Full application for the proposed development of a Park and Ride facility providing approximately 277 vehicular spaces, motorcycle parking's and associated vehicular access and landscaping conditionally approved on 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2016.

### CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Berkshire Archaeology	No objection subject to condition (17)
BBOWT	Objection
Crime Prevention Design Advisor	No objection
Environment Agency	No objection subject to conditions (5, 9 – 14)
Health and Safety Executive	No objection
Highways England	No objection
Historic England	No objection
National Grid	No comments received
Natural England	No comments received
Network Rail	No objection subject to informative (2)
Office for Nuclear Regulation	No objection
Ramblers Association	No objection
Reading Borough Council	No objection
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	No comments received
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings	No comments received
South East Water	No comments received
South Oxfordshire District Council	No comments received
South West Trains	No comments received
Southern Gas Networks	No objection subject to informatives (1)
SEE Power Distribution	No comments received
Thames Water Utilities	No comments received
Transco	No comments received
WBC Building Control	No comments received
WBC Biodiversity	No objection subject to conditions (14 – 16)
WBC Community Infrastructure	No comments received
WBC Conservation	Objection
WBC Drainage	No objection subject to conditions (8)

WBC Environmental Health	No objection subject to conditions (5, 10 – 11)
WBC Health and Wellbeing	No comments received
WBC Highways	No objection subject to conditions (6, 7)
WBC LUTT (Policy)	No comments received
WBC Parks, Open Space & Green Issue	Verbally confirmed no objection
WBC Public Rights of Way	No objection subject to informatives (3)
WBS Sports Development	No comments received
WBC Tree & Landscape	Objection
WBC Waste Services	No comments received

## REPRESENTATIONS

**Earley Town Council:** Objection on the basis of:

- Design of the bridge is unsightly with little thought given to the area beneath
- The environmental impact of the scheme on the National Thames Path and the wider area
- Loss of wildlife habitat
- Western embankment impedes the floodplain

From the second consultation, objection on the basis of:

- Design of the bridge is unsightly with little thought given to the area beneath
- The environmental impact of the scheme on the National Thames Path and the wider area due to extra vehicles diverted to the area
- Loss of wildlife habitat
- Western embankment impedes the floodplain and impacts ecology
- Viaduct on Wokingham side is too close to the river, is not screened and will be too prominent

**Ward Members:** No comments received

**Neighbours:** An initial consultation was carried out from 12<sup>th</sup> July – 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017. A second consultation on revised plans/information was carried out from 2<sup>nd</sup> May – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018. From these, 2 letters of comment (from 1<sup>st</sup> consultation) were received with regards to the following points:

- The scheme is good but only if cars can use it
- The scale of the problem of easing traffic is significant
- The single lane option would not be helpful as buses need to go in both directions
- Pedestrians next to a bus lane may not be that healthy but it would be better for the tow path if cyclists used the MRT

4 letters of support (2 from 1<sup>st</sup> consultation, 2 from 2<sup>nd</sup>) were received with regards to the following:

- There will be a reduction in travel time to and from Thames Valley Park and less wasted time in congestion which is a barrier to recruitment and retention of staff.
- The scheme would improve access for pedestrians and cyclists and make it safer for more sustainable journeys to be made to the town centre.
- The MRT will complement the proposed Park and Ride facility

- There will be a reduction in traffic and therefore congestion along the A4/Kings Road and at Cemetery Junction
- The MRT scheme is a key part of the infrastructure in both Reading and Wokingham to facilitate the proposed economic and residential growth. It is also a fundamental part of the wider transport strategy and will increase connectivity with other locations
- The MRT supports a modal shift towards sustainable transport modes.

85 letters of objection (52 from 1<sup>st</sup> consultation, 33 from 2<sup>nd</sup>) were received with regard to the following. These have been grouped into categories with a response from the planning officer.

Congestion	
Comments	Planning Officer Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congestion along London Road is not just due to commuting and aspects such as school runs would not be altered by the MRT.</li> <li>• Some major areas within the town have not been analysed in the transport statement.</li> <li>• The traffic congestion will not change significantly as shown by the transport statement.</li> <li>• Assumptions are made regarding the Transport Assessment and it does not follow recommendations set out in Department of Transport documents.</li> <li>• There will be increased traffic in Earley which does not have the infrastructure to cope.</li> <li>• With more people encourage to use park and ride there would be an increase in traffic.</li> <li>• Traffic would increase on London Road.</li> <li>• Traffic has been decreasing over time and latest figures have not been used.</li> </ul>	<p>One of the aims of the scheme is to reduce congestion by encouraging a greater use of public transport. It is acknowledged that there would be some areas within Reading where congestion could increase due to new traffic movements but on the whole the scheme would lower congestion. This is not disputed by highway officers. Moreover, another aim of the scheme is to account for the forecast increase in congestion as a result of development in the two Boroughs. Effectively, if nothing were to be done then congestion would increase further over time. See paragraphs 28 - 38.</p>
Policy	
Comments	Planning Officer Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local plan does not contain policies supporting the MRT and constructing the scheme would conflict with designated land uses in the plan.</li> </ul>	<p>The land has been safeguarded for a transport link purpose in adopted planning policy for both Reading and Wokingham Boroughs. See paragraphs 20 - 23.</p>
Biodiversity	
Comments	Planning Officer Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is not net gain in biodiversity contrary to planning policy and the applicant has not used the correct accounting method for the scheme.</li> <li>• The habitat loss cannot be mitigated by a like for like replacement due to the constraints for the site which is contrary to the NPPF.</li> </ul>	<p>Although the scheme would cause disruption to local wildlife, there are not nationally significant species within the site. Through the evolution of the scheme and particularly the introduction of the river planting and marsh</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No timelines are given for implementation of enhancements to biodiversity so it is not possible to confirm these will give net gains in the future.</li> <li>• The impact of shadowing that currently exists and could exist from the MRT has not been fully taken into account.</li> <li>• There would be a loss of wildlife across the site which is contrary to planning policy.</li> <li>• There would be a loss of bat habitats due to development of the site.</li> <li>• The proposal will sever connections along the riparian zone detrimentally impacting species with large territories.</li> <li>• There are a significant number of species in the area (including butterflies) which have not been taken into account. The surveys undertaken do not cover enough of the area and are incomplete.</li> <li>• Protected species surveys are out of date.</li> </ul>	<p>habitat, the applicant has now been able to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity. In relation to specific species, it is considered appropriate mitigation could be provided on or off site and controlled through conditions. See paragraphs 64 - 68.</p>
Alternative schemes	
Comments	Planning Officer Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MRT scheme is too expensive and alternatives need to be considered before choosing the MRT. One option is to use automatic number plate recognition to introduce a charging scheme to discourage car use along London Road.</li> <li>• Other schemes are more badly needed and this is the cheapest option. There is land available in Thames Valley Park for car parking</li> <li>• Alternative options such as changing existing lanes in the road network to bus lanes or giving priority to buses at traffic lights have not been considered.</li> <li>• Alternatives such as increased usage of Winnersh Park and Ride and existing bus services into Reading should be considered.</li> <li>• An alternative scheme of having a bus station at Suttons Business Park should be considered.</li> <li>• Alternative ideas such as greater use of railways and park and rides would be more appropriate</li> <li>• Alternative life styles as a result of changes in society such as more autonomous vehicles and homeworking will cause less congestion over time and this has not been considered. The impact of additional people over time has been assumed with no proper research conducted.</li> </ul>	<p>The Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations require an applicant to set out what alternatives have been considered and why they have not been taken forward; this was completed as part of the submitted Environmental Statement. Whilst some consideration is given to alternative schemes at paragraph (19), it should be noted that the planning balance must take into account the application as set out and not any alternative proposal. In any case, other schemes may be looked at in the future in conjunction with the current proposal.</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of the Digital Railway strategy would be better and have less impact.</li> <li>• The existing access road between the bridges should be used.</li> </ul>	
<b>Trees</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There would be a loss of trees across the site which would not be replaced fully.</li> <li>• Loss of trees and tree life expectancy is substantial.</li> <li>• Loss of trees would worsen flooding impact.</li> </ul>	<p>Whilst there would be tree loss across the site, within Wokingham Borough the number of replacement trees is greater than those lost. It is noted the site would be significantly altered through the removal of trees however this should be weighed against the transport benefits of the scheme. See paragraphs 73-75.</p>
<b>Visual Impact</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The visual impact of the scheme would be harmful to the area and the designated landscape character.</li> <li>• There appears to be little space between the Thames and the railway embankment to implement the scheme and the revised scheme does not make any real difference.</li> <li>• Design does not blend in and the bridge would be an eyesore.</li> <li>• The viaduct will cause overshadowing.</li> </ul>	<p>It is acknowledged the scheme would result in harm in visual terms across the site and this would be a substantial impact. However, this should be weighed against the fact the site is safeguarded for a transport scheme and against the transport benefits that would arise. In addition, the scheme has been reviewed by an independent design panel and been subject to discussion with planning officers through the course of the application. This has led to an improved design which acknowledges its surroundings. See paragraphs 50 - 56.</p>
<b>Usage</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it doubtful the scheme will make any noticeable difference to the traffic on London Road and Wokingham Road.</li> <li>• Cyclists wouldn't abandon the existing path so the MRT wouldn't be used especially as the dismounting of cyclists to cross the bridge is not a great inconvenience.</li> <li>• The route has restricted access and egress so will only be used for one purpose and does not serve other uses.</li> </ul>	<p>The scheme has always been designed as a fast track route between two points to encourage faster movement of people. It has never sought to prevent the use of the Thames towpath which is acknowledged has more of a leisurely use. Whilst the towpath can be used, it is unlit, subject to flooding and shared with pedestrians/cyclists. As a result, the scheme offers a better</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The road will overshadow the existing area and make it unpleasant and unattractive to use.</li> <li>• The reduction in stops along London Road (due to the routes being diverted to the MRT) will have a negative impact on local residents particularly those with disabilities such as sight impairment. The only way to prevent this would be to replace the services lost which would then not improve congestion or pollution.</li> <li>• The existing path is well surfaced and used by a range of people and would be harmfully impacted by the presence of a road which is overbearing.</li> <li>• If cyclists are forced to use the MRT then they would be sharing road space with motor vehicles at an increased risk to themselves.</li> <li>• The cycling and pedestrian part of the MRT is redundant.</li> <li>• The case that development of the MRT will result in reduced congestion is unproven and there is no compelling evidence that it will result in a shift from car to bus.</li> <li>• The scheme will only move congestion from one area of Reading to another.</li> <li>• The improvements to the bus service to Heathrow will be redundant once the Western Rail access comes into service in 2021.</li> <li>• Safeguards to prevent general traffic could be overturned.</li> <li>• Walking would not be improved by the scheme as claimed due to the presence of the road and its overbearing impact.</li> <li>• Usage of towpath would be ruined.</li> <li>• Proposal would only provide empty buses.</li> <li>• No guarantee the road would not be used by cars in the future.</li> <li>• People will still use their cars as it is convenient.</li> <li>• There are already bus lanes and park and rides in operation which are not at capacity.</li> </ul>	<p>alternative route. Highway officers have not raised any objection to the use of the scheme by buses, cyclists and pedestrians. Furthermore, the buses using the scheme would not fully remove services along London Road. See paragraphs 26 - 39.</p> <p>It is noted that other schemes are being put in place either on roads or railways but these should be considered as running in conjunction with the current proposal rather than replacing it.</p> <p>The use of the scheme by specific road users would be controlled through a legal agreement and enforced through the use of cameras on site. In order to change this, a new planning application (with resultant consultation) would be required to be assessed appropriately.</p>
<b>Consultation</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consultation process has not been very open, transparent or widely publicised.</li> </ul>	<p>With regards to consultation carried out for the planning application, the Council confirms this was done in accordance with the correct procedure. No comment can be made on</p>

	consultation carried out by any other party.
<b>Public Open Space</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scheme would result in the loss of public open space as well as green space overall.</li> <li>• The area should not be lost as it prevents the development of the town and is used for recreational purposes.</li> <li>• The use of the area is beneficial to both the health and wellbeing of local people especially due to the open green space that is available. The MRT won't improve walking opportunities as it can only be accessed from two places.</li> <li>• The value of the site is its open and green space which is far greater than any financial benefits that would arise.</li> <li>• The area is critical to the town as an open green space and should be preserved.</li> <li>• The site has not been appropriated by the Council.</li> <li>• Loss of the space would be detrimental to mental health and this impact has been proven through studies.</li> </ul>	<p>It is acknowledged that the scheme would alter the area and result in some loss of space albeit limited to the columns and embankment. However, it is accepted there is a perception of a loss of space as a result of the height and proximity to the towpath of the scheme. Notwithstanding this, the site is safeguarded for this use through adopted planning policy and therefore this loss of space was envisaged as part of the development plan. Moreover, this should be weighed against the benefits of the scheme. With regards to appropriation, this is a separate legal process that would occur outside of the planning system. See paragraphs 57 - 59.</p>
<b>Heritage</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There will be a harmful impact on the grade II listed bridge.</li> <li>• The area where the two rivers meet is culturally and historically significant for Reading and should not be destroyed by the scheme.</li> </ul>	<p>It is acknowledged that there would be harm to the setting of the historic asset adjacent to the site. Nonetheless, this should be weighed against the benefits of the scheme. See paragraphs 80 – 82.</p>
<b>Flooding</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The area is prone to flooding and designated by the EA as flood zone 3. The scheme will only make flooding worse in the area.</li> <li>• The EA still objects to the scheme.</li> <li>• Impact of flooding is significant, wide-reaching and financially high.</li> </ul>	<p>The applicant has worked closely with the EA to resolve flooding issues. Specifically the scheme has evolved to ensure that flood risk would not be increased as a result of the scheme. The EA have stated they do not object to the scheme and therefore it is not considered a reason for refusal could be substantiated. See paragraphs 60 – 63.</p>
<b>Construction</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The environmental impact of construction is huge and would also cause harm to local residents as a result of noise, dirt and dust</li> <li>• Construction of the scheme will result in sterilising the areas as wildlife won't return to a landscaped area of land.</li> </ul>	Although construction itself is not a material planning consideration, the potential impacts should be mitigated. It is considered appropriate conditions for construction management plans could provide this mitigation.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proximity of power cables to the MRT does not seem to have been taken into account.</li> </ul>	The applicant has worked closely with all stakeholders relating to the site and ensured the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on any cabling.
<b>Pollution</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The claims of decreased congestion and pollution will not be noticeable as it will be compensated for by more car usage as people perceive a drop in congestion.</li> <li>• The area by the river will become polluted and there will be increased noise.</li> <li>• Assumptions made regarding the pollution levels are incorrect and World Health Organisation levels should be applied.</li> <li>• Reduction in pollution outweighed by loss of green lung.</li> <li>• Light pollution would occur in an area where it currently does not.</li> <li>• The New Urban Agenda should be taken into account to tackle climate change/pollution from road transport.</li> </ul>	The claim that decreased congestion would be compensated for by increased road users is not proven. It is considered the scheme would help improve pollution levels within some areas in Reading and this is a benefit of the scheme. Within Wokingham, it is acknowledged traffic would be introduced in an area where it currently is not however the impact is not considered to be significant. The Environmental Health Officer has not objected to the scheme. See paragraph 76 – 79.
<b>Reading</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scheme will disadvantage New Town residents who will be surrounded by roads and in an area that will become more polluted.</li> <li>• The MRT scheme will destroy the Coal Local Wildlife Site which should be protected as per planning policy and the fact there are numerous species present on the site.</li> <li>• There is no policy basis within Reading Borough Council's core strategy, local transport plan and supporting document for which to base this idea on.</li> </ul>	These are specific impacts within Reading Borough and therefore have not been taken into account.
<b>Non-planning</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Planning Officer Response</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scheme benefits RBC Councillors, Tesco, Reading Buses and developers and harms local people.</li> <li>• The scheme will cost the taxpayer a significant amount of money with no benefits to local residents.</li> <li>• It appears both Councils have left the areas to fall into disrepair so there is an excuse to gain planning permission.</li> <li>• There are few 3D images of the scheme and what has been produced is of poor quality</li> <li>• The MRT will benefit Tescos as it will take away custom from local shops.</li> <li>• The '3<sup>rd</sup> Thames Crossing' would be less harmful.</li> <li>• Flooding and contamination from the park and ride would harm the area.</li> </ul>	<p>These are not considered to be material planning considerations and therefore have not been taken into account.</p>
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<b>APPLICANTS POINTS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose of the East Reading MRT scheme is to improve the attractiveness of travelling more sustainably. It would serve to ease congestion that is forecast in the area as a result of developments in both Reading and Wokingham areas.</li> <li>• The land is safeguarded for an MRT route by adopted local planning policy within the current development plan period. The application is bringing the site forward for development now but the project is part of a larger scheme between Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell to improve connectivity and sustainable transport between the three areas over the new few years.</li> <li>• The scheme would reduce pollution levels and other environmental impacts along the A4 corridor. It would provide an attractive, quick, alternative and sustainable link into Reading from the east and would encourage greater journeys to be made by modes other than the private car.</li> <li>• Material considerations such as flooding, ecology, heritage and trees have been taken into account and, where necessary, the impacts have been mitigated.</li> </ul>	

<b>PLANNING POLICY</b>		
National Policy	<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2010	<b>CP1</b>	Sustainable Development
	<b>CP3</b>	General Principles for Development
	<b>CP6</b>	Managing Travel Demand
	<b>CP7</b>	Biodiversity
	<b>CP9</b>	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	<b>CP10</b>	Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network
	<b>CP11</b>	Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)

Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	<b>CC01</b>	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	<b>CC02</b>	Development Limits
	<b>CC03</b>	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	<b>CC06</b>	Noise
	<b>CC08</b>	Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
	<b>CC09</b>	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	<b>CC10</b>	Sustainable Drainage
	<b>TB08</b>	Open Space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development
	<b>TB12</b>	Employment Skills Plan
	<b>TB21</b>	Landscape Character
	<b>TB23</b>	Biodiversity and Development
	<b>TB24</b>	Designated Heritage Assets
	<b>TB25</b>	Archaeology

## **PLANNING ISSUES**

### **Description of Development:**

1. The application is for a new public transport link specifically between Napier Road, Reading and A3290, Wokingham. The development comprises of:
  - a) Creation of a new route for public transport only, including cycle path and footway between Napier Road, Reading and the A3290, Wokingham at Thames Valley Park proposed Thames Valley Park and Ride;
  - b) The erection of a new bridge over the River Kennet (spanning across boundary between Reading and Wokingham Boroughs);
  - c) Formation of a new T-junction with Napier Road (within Reading Borough);
  - d) Connection to the proposed Thames Valley Park, Park & Ride (within Wokingham Borough);
  - e) Development of new and improved footpath links to Tesco and the towpath; and (within Reading Borough),
  - f) Associated infrastructure and landscaping (across both Reading and Wokingham Boroughs).
  
2. The development is known as a mass rapid transit (MRT) scheme due to the dedicated route between two points. As such, it is referred to as the East Reading MRT. It should be noted that the borough boundary between Reading and Wokingham is the River Kennet as shown on plan 28791/2009/CIV/002 and indicated in figure 1. As such any land west of the River Kennet is within Reading Borough and any land east is within Wokingham Borough.
  
3. The route of the scheme is approximately 0.9 km in length, running from Napier Road, Reading in the west to the Thames Valley Park Drive, Wokingham roundabout in the east. The western end of the proposed route connects at Napier Road with a new junction, where the existing highway bends north towards the main Tesco entrance. A right turn filter lane from Napier Road is proposed to

accommodate two buses turning right from Napier Road into the new route. A wide bell mouth with a central island has been accommodated at the Napier Road junction to allow pedestrians and cyclists to more safely cross the end of the East MRT route and join the surrounding highway network.

4. The western section of the proposed route (within Reading borough) comprises an 11.5m wide corridor route, running east-west adjacent between the Tesco car park and the Great Western main line railway. The route comprises a 6.5m two-way carriageway for buses (on the southern side closest to the railway), a separate 3m cycle lane and a separate 2m footway (on the northern side closest to the Tesco car park). Landscaping strips are proposed either side of the route along the western approach.
5. The route narrows at the approach to the bridge on both the western and eastern sides from an 11.5m wide carriageway to an 8.5m wide carriageway, as the bus route becomes a single one-way carriageway. Road markings are proposed at both approaches to the bridge approximately 190m apart to allow for buses to operate over the bridge one at a time. The segregated 3m cycle lane and 2m footway are retained across the bridge. The bridge would be aligned parallel to the adjacent listed bridge, at a slight angle across the mouth of the River Kennet.
6. To the east of the bridge (within Wokingham Borough), the route widens out to an 11.5m carriageway (as per the western approach) to accommodate a segregated two-way bus route, cycle route and footway. The route continues to run parallel between the Great Western main line railway and the River Thames along this section.
7. Owing to the presence of an SGN gas valve at the south-western edge of the TVP P&R, the East Reading MRT route along a short 100m section also accommodates two phases:
  - a) Phase 1A (to be implemented on commencement) – narrowing of the two-way bus route to a one-way route with road markings to one bus to cross the bridge, and narrowing of the segregated cycleway and footway to a combined cycleway/footway around to the north of the SGN gas valve, with landscaping proposed between the cycleway/footway and one-way bus route. The removal / relocation of the SGN gas valve is considered unviable on the intended project commencement date); and,
  - b) Phase 1B (to be implemented at a future date which would be secured through a section 106 legal agreement) – following removal / relocation of the SGN gas valve, continuation of the two-way bus route adjacent and narrowing of the segregated cycleway and footway to a combined cycleway/footway, adjacent to the south of the TVP P&R.
8. Beyond this 100m section, the East MRT route replicates that of the access road approved as part of the TVP P&R planning permission (i.e. the 7.3m wide two-way carriageway with a 3m shared foot/cycleway which was approved by planning application 161596) thereby also facilitating access into the south of the TVP P&R and including a new junction arrangement with the existing roundabout at the eastern end of the East MRT route. Notwithstanding that the East MRT route also incorporates the majority of the approved TVP P&R access road, the application site for the East MRT route includes this section and extends to the existing roundabout at TVP in order to provide certainty of deliverability.

9. The proposed bridge form comprises a single span of 59.5m along a slight camber across the mouth of the River Kennet. The bridge would be aligned parallel to the adjacent listed bridge, at a slight angle across the mouth of the river. The bridge comprises an in-situ concrete bridge deck with galvanised steel parapet, and would be supported by weathering steel bridge girders. The eastern bridge abutments comprise a row of columns, with the western abutments comprising a retaining concrete wall, supported by a soil embankment slope. The maximum height underneath the bridge would be 6.77m, matching that of the adjacent rail bridge so as to maintain views and river navigation.
10. A 204m viaduct is proposed on the eastern side of the route in order to accommodate flood flows beneath the structure and minimise flood impacts to the structure itself. The viaduct is raised up on concrete columns and rises at a gradient of 1:43 from ground level in the east, adjacent to the proposed TVP P&R, to the new bridge across the Kennet in the west. The viaduct, comprising an in-situ concrete deck and crossbeams, stretches across 8 equal spans of 25.5m supported by concrete columns.

**Other Information:**

11. The application site spans across two boroughs, Wokingham and Reading; and, in line with planning legislation, an application has been made to both Councils. The Reading Borough Council Planning Committee considered their application on 30<sup>th</sup> May and resolved to approve the proposal subject to conditions and the signing of a legal agreement. In considering this application, regard must be had to the proposal as a whole including its strategic impact upon the wider area of the two boroughs. Nonetheless, site specific elements which are wholly within the Reading area should not be considered in decision-making.
12. The determination of the application is subject to the signing of a legal agreement pursuant to section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and all other enabling powers. This is primarily to ensure that the impacts of the proposal would be mitigated appropriately e.g. flooding. It is also necessary to control aspects such as the use of the scheme. The provisional heads of terms are:
  - a) Use of the structure/route as a segregated mass rapid transit (MRT) public transport, pedestrian and cycle route only, for use only by permitted authorised vehicles (buses, minibuses, public coaches and, in emergencies only, emergency vehicles);
  - b) Construction of the structure to an adoptable standard and confirmation to enter into an agreement for the structure to function as Public Highway under s.38 of the Highways Act 1980;
  - c) Agreement regarding maintenance costs under s.38/278 of the Highways Act 1980;
  - d) Completion of compensatory flood storage works and repair of riverbank near to the Kennet mouth within Wokingham Borough and Reading Borough, as appropriate, no later than substantial completion of development;
  - e) Provision of community/art facilities (relocation of mosaic model/sculpture and provision of strategy for benches and storyboards) prior to first use. Submission of strategy no later than commencement of development;



- f) Developer to undertake or otherwise fund a construction phase Employment and Skills Plan (ESP);
- g) Mooring controls for 3x short-stay visitor mooring platforms;
- h) Phasing controls: no first use of MRT route until all environmental mitigation works have been completed to the Local Planning Authority's satisfaction;
- i) Post occupation monitoring/management requirements (ecology management, marginal shelf, wetland);
- j) Construction of phase 1B of the scheme to be completed following relocation of gas apparatus; and,
- k) Agree a strategy for the translocation of reptiles, if required.

13. In November 2016, an application for the development of a park and ride facility was conditionally approved by the Local Planning Authority (reference 161596). Preliminary work for this has started however the facility itself is not yet being constructed. It is noted that the park and ride has been seen as linked to the East Reading MRT proposal to the extent they should have come forward for development at the same time. For clarification, both schemes could operate independently of the other and, therefore, this application should be determined on its own merits. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that the park and ride facility would enhance the use of the East Reading MRT and therefore consideration of this has been taken forward in the submitted Environmental Statement.

14. Due to funding requirements and the complexity of the build it has been agreed with the applicant that the implementation period for the proposal should be increased from the typical 3 years to 5 years (condition 1).

15. For clarification, the applicant has been in discussion with stakeholders and third parties as well as the respective Councils throughout the lifetime of the application. Specifically this has led to the submission of revised information that occurred in April/May 2018. A second consultation period was held with regards to the following updated aspects:

- a) Viaduct to narrow by one metre in a localised area to the East of the Kennet mouth (i.e. at the narrowest point on the riverbank, within Wokingham Borough);
- b) Minor realignment of the route to the South of the Tesco superstore car park west of the Kennet mouth, reducing land-take on the car park and The Coal woodland (within Reading Borough);
- c) Removal of some originally-proposed replacement car parking within the Tesco superstore car park, reducing impact on The Coal woodland (within Reading Borough);
- d) Two-column supporting design of the viaduct now altered to single 'flared' column (within Wokingham Borough);
- e) Lighting columns along the viaduct in original proposal to be replaced with low-level parapet lighting (within Wokingham Borough);
- f) Provision of three new short-stay visitor mooring platforms on the River Thames (North Bank, East of the Kennet mouth), with associated riverbank planting (within Wokingham Borough);
- g) Landscaping amendments to include removal of 'fedging' and reclaimed boats in original proposal and provision of wetland/marsh area under viaduct, retention of Willow tree to East of Kennet mouth and other off-side mitigating environmental improvements (within both Reading and Wokingham Boroughs); and,

- h) Amended locations for compensatory flood storage (ground lowering) (within Reading Borough).

16. Further to this, the applicant submitted a revised plan in June 2018 which removed an area of fencing that was no longer required.

### **Environmental Impact Assessment:**

17. Due to the size and scale of the development and its potential impact upon the local environment, an Environmental Statement (ES) has been submitted. This documents the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the scheme which focuses on the following issues: socio-economics; transport and access; air quality; hydrology and the water environment; ground conditions; landscape and visual including lighting; ecology; and, archaeology and heritage (each with associated appendices). These topics were scoped through the submission of a scoping opinion in 2016 and in conjunction with officers from Reading and Wokingham Councils. The ES has been amended by the ES Addendum as part of the April 2018 revised submissions. Where topics have been scoped out of the addendum, this is clearly set out. This report refers to the ES where appropriate and this should be considered as referring to the latest information.

### **Alternative Schemes:**

18. It is noted that objections have been raised with regards to alternative schemes that potentially could be taken forward instead of the proposal. As per the EIA process, the applicant has considered the viability of alternative schemes but, as set out below, the options are not considered to either be implementable or sufficient to provide the benefits as a stand-alone project. It should also be noted that the role of the decision maker in determining planning applications is to consider the merits of a scheme itself against local and national planning policies.

19. Comments on alternative schemes are set out below:

- a) **MRT route should cross Kennet mouth further south and run along the gasholders land, which is surplus to requirements.** The land is not known to be available for development and in any case Suttons Business Park is a designated core employment area within local planning policy where B use floor space would be encouraged. Additionally, connecting to the road network would require crossing over the railway embankment at some point along the route which makes the option unviable;
- b) **Construction of a dedicated bus lane along the A4 from Cemetery Junction to the A3920.** Reading's Highway Authority has advised that the road width is not suitable to accommodate this;
- c) **Construction of a tidal flow bus lane in the central or Southern lanes of the A4 between Cemetery Junction and the A3290.** Although tidal flow bus lanes would aid the flow in one direction buses would still be required to make return journeys within the congested traffic and as such would contribute very limited benefit in journey times and reliability. There is not a tidal flow of traffic along this section of the A4 London Road with queues occurring in both directions in the AM and PM peaks. Also there are safety and capacity concerns over vehicles turning right into and out of the Newtown area as they would be required to cross two lanes of traffic;

- d) **Improved parking facilities at Twyford and Maidenhead to allow park and rail travel in Reading from the catchment area to the East.** This requires third party authorisation but it is noted that such pressures may occur in future with the attractiveness of the MRT. However, bus and rail journeys serve different purposes;
- e) **Expansion of the Winnersh park and ride scheme.** Such pressures may occur in future with the attractiveness of the MRT however the P&R must connect to the MRT to produce a seamless modal shift;
- f) **A mass rapid transit scheme along the proposed route with underground tunnelling to mitigate impacts in the most sensitive locations.** This is not considered to be viable due to the cost. It would be unlikely to receive funding support from the Local Enterprise Partnership given the value for money constraints of this versus other transport infrastructure projects;
- g) **A workplace parking levy in Reading, with revenue diverted back into public transport provision.** This would not deliver the same level of benefits as the MRT scheme and would need to work alongside the proposal rather than instead of it;
- h) **A congestion charging zone in Reading, with CCTV and revenue diverted back into public transport provision.** This would not deliver the same level of benefits as the MRT scheme and would need to work alongside the proposal rather than instead of it; and,
- i) **A bus station should be placed at Suttons Business Park.** This would not deliver the same level of benefits as the MRT scheme and would need to work alongside the proposal rather than instead of it.

### **Planning Policy:**

20. The Core Strategy (CS) was adopted in 2010 and sets out the vision for the Borough in the current development plan period. Policies CP1 and CP3, amongst other things, seek to ensure that development proposals are appropriate to the character of the area and represent high quality design. Policy CP6 promotes sustainable transport by allowing choice of different modes. Policy CP7 protects biodiversity interests but acknowledges the need for a proposal may outweigh the need for safeguarding nature conservation. Policy CP9 sets out proposals within development locations will be acceptable in principle whilst policy CP11 set outs proposal outside development locations (i.e. countryside) will only be acceptable in certain circumstances. Specific to the application, policy CP10 sets out a list of improvements to the strategic transport network. Point 10 highlights “high quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors.

21. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) adds further details to the policies in the Core Strategy and was adopted in 2014. Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise which is in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development. Policy CC02 confirms the development limits that were set by the Core Strategy. Policy CC03 protects designated green routes and the overall provision of green infrastructure. Policy CC06 requires proposals to address noise impacts on noise sensitive receptors.

22. Policy CC08 confirms the improvements to the strategic transport network and gives further details in appendix 3 of the MDD. Appendix 3 highlights that such areas will be safeguarded as shown on the policies map and, in relation to the application, states “high quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors (CP10 (10))”. Policies CC09 and CC10 require proposals to have no adverse flooding or drainage impacts. Policy TB08 outlines open space provision for new schemes and refers to the NPPF for schemes that may result in a loss of open space. Policy TB12 requires proposals for major development to be accompanied by an Employment Skills Plan. Policy TB21 states proposal must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Landscape Character Assessment. Policy TB23 builds on the requirements from policy CP7 and policies TB24 and TB25 aim to protect heritage and archaeological aspects of the Borough.
23. In addition to the planning policy context for Wokingham, it is necessary to understand the policy context for Reading Borough Council. The policy aspiration for the scheme has been identified for a number of years, with the approximate route identified in previous adopted Structure Plans and Local Transport Plans within Reading. At policy CS20, the adopted Core Strategy sets out general principles for the implementation of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) whilst policy CS21 states that priority will be given to schemes which aim to deliver the projects in the LTP including mass rapid transit schemes. Within the LTP the aim for a cross boundary solution to traffic congestion within the East Reading area is proposed. Moreover, the Reading Central Area Action Plan, adopted in 2009, sets out three MRT routes including the proposal site. The Spatial and Design Strategy for the centre of Reading is shown in figure 2.
24. The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and outlines how these are expected to be applied to both plan-making and decision-making. The document should be considered as a whole and the golden thread of the presumption in favour of sustainable development underpins the planning process. Specifically relating to transport objectives, the NPPF highlights proposals should reduce greenhouse gas emissions; reduce congestion; facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport (which frequently means shifting the balance in favour of non-car modes); give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements; and, have access to high quality public transport facilities. The NPPF is also concerned for maintaining the vitality of town centres by diversification of the retail/leisure offer but also improving ease of access to the centre.
25. It should be noted however in respect of the environment, the NPPF highlights the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes; recognising the wider benefit of ecosystem services; minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains where possible; and, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Furthermore, in relation to historic assets the NPPF requires authorities to have a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment and they should avoid or minimise conflict between a heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of a proposal.

**Strategic Transport:**

26. **Policy:** The proposal needs to be viewed in the wider context of the strategic transport infrastructure across the borough and beyond. Although some aspects are covered by non-planning legislation/policy it is important to understand how the scheme would fit with improvements across Reading and Wokingham areas. The scheme itself is included in Reading's planning and transport plans and has been long established as an aim to improve transport infrastructure. It is also identified in Wokingham's planning and transport plans although acknowledged as requiring input from another local authority.
27. In both boroughs, significant residential expansion is forecast over the development plan period. The strategic plan for Wokingham is to augment these residential developments with high quality infrastructure including new transport links where appropriate; and, as set out in policy CP10 and CC08, the East Reading MRT is one of these links. One of the aims of the MRT is to help ease the forecast increase in traffic from new housing using the A4 corridor to enter Reading. This is to be achieved by improving the attractiveness of travelling more sustainably and causing a modal shift from private car to public facilities. The policy support for the scheme in both Reading and Wokingham Boroughs is given significant weight in the planning balance. Figure 3 shows the Reading Borough Council Public Transport Strategy to explain the wider context.
28. **Existing Conditions:** The submitted Transport Statement sets out the existing conditions for walking, cycling and private car from the A3290 roundabout to Reading Town Centre. In terms of walking the routes are via London Road and Kings Road; via the River Kennet towpath; and, via the River Thames and Napier Road towpaths. The statement notes that the first two options are well lit and have pedestrian crossing points when needed to cross roads. The third option, i.e. along the site itself, is unlit, shared with cyclists and at risk from flooding. A pedestrian survey of the site showed the peak number of movements on a weekday occurred during 17:30 – 19:30 (520 trips in either direction) whilst on a weekend this changed to 08:00 – 10:00 (280 trips in either direction). Furthermore, a survey of the open space between the Dreadnought building and the accommodation bridge showed that pedestrians use the footpath only and do not stay in the open space for any significant amount of time. It is acknowledged these are not extensive surveys but they nonetheless provide a representation of the amount of pedestrian movement.
29. The Transport Statement sets out the existing cycling routes as via the River Thames towpath; via the River Thames and River Kennet towpaths; and, via the River Kennet towpaths. There are other alternative routes as set out in the Reading cycle map but these are along heavily trafficked roads. The towpath routes are generally unlit, at risk from flooding and shared with slower moving pedestrians. Along the River Thames towpath, cyclists are required to dismount to move over the accommodation bridge across the River Kennet. Whilst it is acknowledged this is a relatively minor issue, the cycle routes currently available are all disrupted in some manner.
30. With regard to public transport it should be noted that bus use in Reading has increased since 2010 by 24% against a back drop of national decline (-2% across England and 6% in South East). In relation to the scheme, there are bus routes that operate along London Road and generally access Reading Station as the main point of connection with other transport modes. Specifically, the Winnersh

Park and Ride service, the Thames Valley Park service, the Heathrow Airport link service, local stopping routes to Woodley (12, 13, and 14), High Wycombe (850), and Wokingham (127, 128, and 129). The frequency of these buses differs between the services however the level of congestion in the area impacts all of them. Although there are bus lanes along Kings Road (allowing movement in and out of Reading) these stop at Cemetery Junction and buses are required to join the main traffic flow or join the counter flow bus lane along Kings Road. Given the congestion and particularly at peak periods, the Transport Statement indicates delays of 12 – 24 minutes can occur for these bus services.

31. In terms of general traffic, London Road is a main strategic link to Reading and therefore is heavily trafficked. A traffic counter shows that the two-way daily flow is in the region of 35,000 vehicles. The counter shows a slight downwards trend over the past 10 years having peaked at approximately 38,000 movements in 2007. At a daily level, the peak flow occurs at 07:30 (approx. 2,400 two way movements) and 17:30 (approx. 2,400 two way movements) for both inbound and outbound traffic although overall, the number of vehicles inbound to Reading are greater than outbound. The number of vehicle movements drops off between 22:00 – 05:00, however during the day traffic queues can reach 300 – 500 vehicles leaving Reading in the peak periods and between 60–200 vehicles entering Reading in the peak periods. As such, it is considered this section of London Road is operating at or over capacity. Journey times from the Suttons roundabout to the Royal Berkshire Hospital can range from 7 to 24 minutes and from the Prudential building to Suttons roundabout can range from 10 to 24 minutes as a result of the congestion.

32. **Future projects:** It is important to note the scheme increases urban connectivity and access to other transport networks. More specifically, Crossrail is due to be completed in the near future and the Western Rail Access to Heathrow is currently within a consultation period. HS2 is due within the next decade and will improve journey times to other destinations from London which is a significant commuter destination from Reading. Additionally, junctions 3 – 12 of the M4 are being developed to become a ‘smart’ motorway over the next few years. As such it is clear there are wider transport improvements both locally and nationally that would improve connectivity in the area. The current congestion issues in Reading are prohibitive to economic and social expansion and, as such, the East Reading MRT would be one section of the wider strategy to improve this. Indeed the scheme would have a positive impact on the economy as it would improve connectivity/journey times into Reading town, the area east of Reading and Thames Valley Business Park.

33. The East Reading MRT scheme is part of a wider network of MRT and park and ride projects. The existing park and ride facility at Mere oak is supplemented by the MRT route of the A33 whilst Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride takes advantage of the existing A329 route. There is potential for park and ride facilities at Coppid Beech, Theale and within the South Oxfordshire district which would benefit from specific MRT routes to enable public transport to access Reading centre more quickly. Indeed the Thames Valley Park Park and Ride scheme was granted planning permission in November 2016. It is important to note that Reading Borough Council have invested in public transport for a number of years improving customer service, introducing new technologies and environmentally friendly vehicles. As such it is important to take the wider transport strategy into account

when considering the scheme given that it is one element of improving the attractiveness of travelling via public transport.

34. At a more site specific level, it is envisaged that new bus routes could be introduced for local stopping services that would benefit from the scheme. A new service to Woodley could be introduced giving direct access to Reading and prompting a shift from private car trips to public transport. It is acknowledged that some of the existing services would need to remain operating on London Road however some services could switch to the East Reading MRT. Additionally this is reliant on private bus companies. The provision of future bus services is shown in figure 4.
35. **Business Case:** Although the funding for this project is not a planning matter, it is important to understand the framework in which the need for the East Reading MRT has been developed. The applicant has secured funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership following the presentation of a business case. In brief, this sets out that significant population growth of Reading and the wider area will cause a greater demand for public transport services. The operation of the scheme would substantially increase capacity and reduce congestion on the network. In turn this would enable additional journeys and reduce journey times to support economic growth. It should be noted the business case considers the 'do nothing' approach and advises that if this occurred then congestion would continue to increase. Moreover, no further growth could be accommodated including the planned growth for the local and wider area. As such, the scheme has sub-regional support.
36. **Stated benefits – walking:** The East Reading MRT would provide an alternative walking route in the area and this would be in addition to the River Thames towpath which would not be altered. It is acknowledged that the new route would not be at risk from flooding, have a better surface and would be lit providing a safer option; albeit in relative proximity to cyclist and bus movements. Notwithstanding this, it is considered the alternative route would not be of significant benefit to the average pedestrian given that there would be no actual time saving when compared to the existing route. Some consideration should however be given to those that may commute or run in the area and therefore would benefit from the scheme. On the whole there is a limited benefit arising from the scheme in terms of walking.
37. **Stated benefits – cycling:** In terms of cycling the alternative route provided by the scheme would again not be at risk from flooding, have a better surface and be lit. In this instance however there would be a journey time saving in part due to not having to dismount for the accommodation bridge but also as a result of achieving higher speeds along the route. Some consideration should be given to the fact cyclists would be in close proximity to buses, which the ES states is a reason existing routes in Reading aren't as attractive, however it is noted the route would be far less trafficked in comparison. On the whole there is some benefit arising from the scheme in terms of cycling.
38. **Stated benefits – traffic congestion:** The submitted Transport Statement argues that the scheme would improve the attractiveness of public transport by helping to alleviate forecast congestion and improve the journey times of bus services. Specifically it states that the scheme results in a traffic reduction of between 1% and 3% in peak hour traffic flow, relative to current traffic flows across some of the East Reading roads. The completed modelling for the application concludes that this would release traffic constrained in entering the network, ease forecast

congestion including that resulting from future significant growth and reduce rat-running. As a result, it is considered there would be improvements in the transport network capacity and greater connectivity between urban centres; particularly Reading and Wokingham. Some doubt is cast over the linking of multiple MRT/Park and Ride facilities given that the attractiveness of changing transport modes multiple times would be prohibitive. Nonetheless, there are clear benefits from buses being able to undertake journeys without being restrained by congestion and this is a positive impact of the scheme. Additionally, although admittedly difficult to quantify, the generation of future bus services would have a positive impact more generally and again make public transport a more attractive proposal. On the whole there is a significant benefit arising from the scheme in terms of traffic congestion.

39. **Stated benefits – economic growth:** The Transport Statement and indeed the business case state that the current constraint of congestion and inability to expand the road network further are limiting economic growth in the area. At a more local level it is noted that Thames Valley Business Park is a significant area for employment opportunities and greater access to this is of benefit to businesses. Furthermore, the accessibility of employment areas in the wider area, including Winnersh Triangle, is considered a positive impact. From a more regional level, the connectivity of employment opportunities to other areas is again beneficial and it is noted that other transport schemes like Crossrail would help with this. On the whole there is significant benefit arising from the scheme in terms of economic growth.

#### **Design:**

40. The design of the structure is vital in responding to the character of the area and much has been achieved in developing a scheme that responds as positively as it can to its context. Part of this involved the scheme being considered by an independent review panel - Design South East, who advised on matters such as the design of the viaduct in terms of underneath and the railings as well as the bridge itself. Discussions also took place regarding landscaping potential. On the whole, the Design Review Panel noted a number of elements that could be improved but considered the principle of the scheme a positive objective. The discussions formed the basis for the revised plans which were consulted on in May 2018.
41. **Viaduct:** The viaduct section of the scheme (i.e. within Wokingham Borough) has been designed to achieve an appropriate height for the bridge section. As a result, the scheme is elevated above the height of an average person for much of its route however this is so that a sensible gradient (i.e. not prohibitive to cyclists and pedestrians) can be achieved. In developing this section it was considered it should be viewed as one element that seamlessly transforms into the bridge. As a result, a defining deep brown/red steel beam is proposed the length of the viaduct section to give a horizontal emphasis and coherent design to the structure. Above this would be an in-situ concrete deck which would comprise the actual road. At either edge of the concrete deck would be a galvanised light grey parapet with mesh infill to prevent egress off the structure. The design rationale for these elements was to create a sinuous structure that was not convoluted in its appearance particularly at the junctions of different materials. Advice from officers was to create a structure which was not too urban or complex architecturally in its



form. In addition, to support the viaduct, a range of column options has been considered. The revised scheme now includes a single column structure with a flared design to limit the amount of built form at ground level. This also helps with the cantilever design of the structure and creates more space underneath the viaduct.

42. **Underneath the viaduct:** The resultant space beneath the viaduct has been subject to discussion with officers. An initial idea was to 'activate' this space in terms of bringing in different uses such as boat storage, market stalls or outdoor gym trails. Officers raised concern this would urbanise the area and be at odds with the principle of constructing a structure that would minimise its impact on the wider character. Another idea of 'fudging' (a fence created by a hedge) was proposed to discourage anti-social behaviour and encourage a more green approach. However, it was considered it would be difficult to establish and would close off the space. The revised scheme now employs a marsh approach where the land underneath the structure would be designed to encourage an element of water retention and appropriate plants. This is considered to achieve the right balance between maintaining an open sense of space and discourage anti-social behaviour. This has been reviewed by the Crime Prevention Design Officer who does not object to the scheme. It should be noted that although concerns were raised regarding overshadowing particularly underneath the structure, it has been demonstrated that any overshadowing would not have a substantial detrimental impact on the area in respect of design.
43. **Bridge:** The bridge aspect of the scheme was designed to continue the sinuous form of the structure but also to take into account the listed bridge it would sit in front of. The height of the bridge and the resultant increase in the size of the steel beam supporting it has been designed to enable views of the listed structure as well as ensuring the Kennet River remains navigable. A number of bridge designs were considered however the design rationale was to create a minimalistic design. As such, the design narrative has been continued from the viaduct section into the bridge with the same material and colour palette.
44. **Colours, materials and finishes:** The rationale between the colours chosen and the materials used is in part driven by sustainable principles and also the limitations of the construction technique being used. In terms of colours, the surrounding landscape tones are greens and browns with darker water tones however the surrounding built forms (rail gantries, electricity pylons, and gasometers) are grey-toned. For the scheme, a mainly neutral palette of greys and off-whites has been selected to create a calm and unified appearance. Contrasting this however, and relating to the historic dark red brick bridge structures, would be a deep brown/red steel beam connecting the structure throughout.
45. **Public realm:** For clarity, although the East Reading MRT would offer an alternative route through the site, the towpaths for the River Kennet and River Thames would remain. Similarly, connectivity within the Reading area in terms of the Coal Woodland would be maintained. In addition to this, part of the revised changes include the introduction of three mooring platforms at the river bank. This is designed to encourage river use and enable small craft to egress from the river if required and is considered to be a benefit of the scheme.

46. **Landscaping:** The landscaping design principle is *“to create a sense of place around the existing pedestrian and cycle path and acknowledge this existing linear corridor as an alternative, ‘slow’ leisure route”*. As such, the planting strategy comprises a combination of managing and supplementing existing areas of trees and vegetation, creating new areas of habitat, and providing structural, native planting. Within Reading, this primarily would be through different types of grassland and replacement tree planting where appropriate. Within Wokingham, the key areas are the riverside marginal planting, the wetland marshland planting underneath the structure and replacement trees. It should be noted maintenance and ecology strips are proposed where appropriate.

47. Within Wokingham Borough, some trees would be retained between the structure and the River Thames although some of the Hawthorns immediately adjacent to the towpath would need to be removed. Similarly, one of the two willow trees near the Kennet mouth would be removed. However, additional tree planting would occur in this area including ‘bird cherry’ and ‘white willow’. Also proposed underneath the structure are areas of marshland planting which include a variety of wet and dry species. It is proposed to encourage the growth of the Loddon Lily in this area which is a locally important plant species. Further to the east, where the viaduct section would start, an area of ‘silver birch’ and ‘wild cherry’ trees are proposed. In addition, seed mixes including ‘pond edge wildflower mix’ beneath the structure and ‘tussocky grassland’ elsewhere are proposed. The riverside marginal planting would also provide a range of locally native species designed to grow either on the river bank or within low levels of water. The Tree and Landscape Officer has advised that other than the marshland planting, no issues arise with the species chosen. With regards to marshland planting it is considered an alternative scheme could be conditioned if it were to fail (14).

48. **Lighting, signals and signage:** The lighting design for the structure has been influenced by the highway requirements in terms of users of the road against the ecological and landscape impacts. As a result, the original proposition of lighting columns across the entirety of the structure has been replaced with columns only at the ground level sections within Reading and Wokingham Boroughs. For the viaduct and bridge section an LED rail would be attached to the top rail of the bridge parapet. The light would be directed towards the road so as to minimise light intrusion to the surrounding area. Further details could be controlled by condition (16).

49. For clarity, no significant signage is proposed on the structure other than anything necessary from a highways perspective. It is noted a signal system would be required in terms of buses using the single lane section of the structure however this is necessary from an operational perspective.

#### **Landscape Character:**

50. **Existing character:** The site is adjacent to the River Thames where it meets the River Kennet and generally comprises of two areas; an open section of grassland with a few trees and a wooded area. To the north of the site and across the river is a dense tree line with limited visibility to anything beyond. To the south of the site is the Great Western Main Line which also crosses the River Kennet via a historically significant bridge designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Although not visible from the site, part of Suttons Business Park is located on the opposite side

of the railway line. Between this and the site however are the gantries installed by Network Rail over the railway line for electrification purposes. To the east of site, facilities for the Thames Valley Park Rowing Club and the Wokingham Waterside Centre are located as well as the Dreadnought building – a former pub but currently disused building. The River Kennet signifies the boundary between Reading and Wokingham Boroughs. Within Reading, the site is much less open with significant tree cover including the Coal Woodland – a local designed wildlife site. Further to the west, within Reading, is more tree cover and the edge of a supermarket car park as well as the railway line to the south. It is intended for the scheme to link to Napier Road which is an established road comprising of residential and commercial uses.

51. The area is characterised by the relationship between the openness provided by the river, the dense tree lines to the north and east and the railway embankment. There is a significant amount of vegetation across the site and only a small number of buildings resulting in a relatively green space. It is acknowledged this has in part been marred by the introduction of railway gantries but, nonetheless, the site represents a landscape buffer from the more urban areas of the business parks and the supermarket. The railway bridge is also a defining structure in the area and signifies the historic importance of the confluence of the two rivers. The bridge also helps to shield views to the adjacent residential area within Reading. It is acknowledged that the area is not a high quality landscape, and indeed is not subject to any specific landscape planning designation, but the riparian nature and the low amount of development mean it is sensitive to change. As a result, it is considered as countryside within the development plan as per policy CP11 of the Core Strategy.
52. The submitted ES includes a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which covers the site (i.e. the impact upon areas within Reading Borough as well) in terms of the scheme and the consented park and ride project. In brief, this concludes there would be significant adverse visual impact during construction and at completion due to tree loss and construction of the scheme. It notes that after 15 years the growth of vegetation would reduce this impact at the land north east of the supermarket car park. However, from the River Thames towpath there would be a major to severe level of impact from construction and completion and this would remain 15 years later. The LVIA does state the impact is upon a relatively small area of the River Thames towpath and that it is not of nationally significant importance. Furthermore, the existing level of infrastructure in place through the railway, overhead cables and gantries result in the proposal not being completely out of keeping with the area.
53. **Impact of scheme:** As noted above, the NPPF highlights the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. At a local level, policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy give general principles to achieve sustainable development as well as appropriate scale, design and materials to assimilate into the area. Additionally, policy CP11 defines the site as countryside where development is restricted. More specifically, policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan requires proposals to consider green infrastructure as well as protecting trees. Given these requirements it is clear there would be conflict with national and local planning policy.

54. The East Reading MRT would undoubtedly irrecoverably change the area. Whilst some weight can be placed on the existing railway works and the increased visibility of man-made structures, the site remains relatively resistant to this change and the riparian appearance is still the predominant character. Introducing the scheme in this area would result in a large and dominant structure being visible and this would substantially erode this character. It is acknowledged the site is contained in the sense it cannot be seen easily unless you are effectively travelling on the towpath; although it should be noted views from the railway line and from the river itself should be taken into account. However, this is not considered to lessen the impact of the scheme and indeed the lack of visibility of a site should not be used as a panacea for harmful development. Certainly the contained nature of the site through the dense tree lines adds to the particular characteristics of the site and the sense of place that is created. Additionally, tree planting is proposed to help introduce additional landscaping but this should take into account the loss of trees required to facilitate the construction of the scheme. As a result, whilst a positive addition, the tree planting in itself cannot mitigate the impact of the road.
55. The effect on the character of the area would be most keenly felt at the point where the road would be at its closest to the river. This has been a point of discussion with the applicant in trying to achieve the most suitable solution and it is noted that the revisions to the scheme have helped in this respect. The road has been reduced by a metre in width and the supporting columns changed to a singular flared design. One of the more significant changes which directly impacts this area is the introduction of mooring platforms and planting within the river channel (which has been agreed with the EA). As a result, where the road is closest to the river a greater sense of space has been achieved and those using the towpath would not have such an overbearing sense travelling next to the East Reading MRT. For clarity, the planting would not increase the size of the river bank itself. Specifically the changes mean that from the mid-point of the footpath it would be 3.2 metres to the structure and 6.0 metres to the columns. In the opposite direction it would be 2.4 metres to the river bank and 4.4 metres to the edge of the river planting. Nonetheless the structure would be, on average, 3.4 metres above ground level at this point and therefore would be dominant in views from the towpath and river.
56. Given the above it is clear the proposal would have a harmful impact on the character of the area and therefore would be in conflict with planning policy. There are some elements of mitigation including tree planting, the design of the scheme and the development of vegetation over time. Ultimately however, the proposal would damage the character of the area and this impact should not be understated. In this respect the scheme is not considered to comply with policy CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy and CC03 of the MDD Local Plan.

#### **Loss of Open Space:**

57. Some objections have been raised with regards to the loss of open space within the site and some references have been made to “appropriation” of open space pursuant to Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972. The appropriation procedure for open space is an executive function rather than a regulatory one. It is an entirely separate legislative stream and separate to planning considerations. It is considered the site does come under the NPPF’s definition of open space being “All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of

water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.”

58. The scheme would not lead to physical loss of open space other than the columns to the east of the Kennet mouth however it is acknowledged that the perceived loss of open space in terms of the height and physical presence of the structure would also have an impact. Policy TB08 refers to the paragraph 74 of the NPPF with regards to proposals that may result in a loss of open space. This states the space should not be lost unless the land is surplus to requirements; or it would be replaced; or it would be for sports provision. It should be noted however that the site is designated for this use within local planning policy in the development plan. As such, it was envisaged that this space would be used for a new transport link within the development plan period and therefore the space must be considered as surplus to requirements. In this aspect, the scheme complies with policy TB08 and the NPPF.

59. In accordance with planning guidance the site has been considered for development management purposes as open space, and to the extent that this Council holds title, it will consider any further issues that may arise in respect of appropriation separately. Nonetheless, this is a separate legal process which may be carried out by the Council's Executive in due course. As such it is not considered to be a material to the planning considerations and would be carried out under different legislation to the Planning Acts.

#### **Flooding:**

60. Within the ES, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been incorporated. This states that other than the most eastern section of the site, the whole of the site is within flood zones 2 and 3b (i.e. functional floodplain). It is also noted that the WBC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and the EA historic flood maps show there have been flood events in the area historically. The NPPF states that inappropriate development should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk but, where it is needed, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Core Strategy Policy CP1 and MDD policy CC09 are consistent with this approach, requiring that new development should avoid increasing and where possible reduce flood risk.

61. The NPPF also sets out schemes should be considered against a sequential and exception test and this will be informed by the flood risk vulnerability classification. The Technical Guidance to the NPPF sets out this classification including 'Essential Infrastructure' which includes 'Essential transport infrastructure (including mass evacuation routes) which has to cross the area at risk'. The scheme is considered to come under this classification and therefore the flood zone compatibility (Table 3 within the Technical Guidance) states this type of development could be acceptable subject to an exception test. It should be noted that as the site has been allocated for this type of development then it has already been sequentially tested (i.e. this was carried out through the adoption of the Core Strategy and the MDD Local Plan). For proposals to pass the exception test, the NPPF requires demonstration that the development provides wider benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk; and, a site specific FRA can show the development will be safe for its lifetime and flood risk is not increased elsewhere. It is considered the wider transport benefits of the scheme satisfy the first part of

the exception test and the proposal specific flood risk mitigation methods (outlined below) satisfies the second part of the test. As such, it is considered the scheme is appropriate in flood vulnerability terms and in this respect accords with local and national planning policy.

62. The scheme includes embankments/abutments and columns which would lead to a loss of flood plain storage. Additionally surface water run-off from the scheme could increase the amount of water draining from the site. It is proposed to create 'scoops' within the ground that compensate for the loss of the flood plain storage. These would provide 'level for level' compensation where the inundation of ground levels occurs at the same depth as to what is being lost within the site. As well as this on-site mitigation, it is proposed to lower two earth embankments to the north east and north west of the superstore and cutting into another embankment at the point the scheme rises from the ground. Due to the mitigation occurring within both boroughs, it is considered necessary to control this via a section 106 legal agreement between the Councils. In addition, the scheme includes a SUDS scheme to mitigate the impact of surface water from the structure. Specifically this would collect in a kerb drainage system which would connect to a cellular storage system. This would then be discharged into a manhole with a flow control device at a rate of 5 litres per second. The Council's drainage officer does not object to this subject to a condition (8).
63. It is noted the EA originally objected to the scheme in part on flooding grounds. During the course of the application, the applicant has been in discussion with the EA including an on-site meeting and this had led to the detailed proposals for flood mitigation. The EA have now withdrawn their objection subject to conditions (5, 9 – 14) and therefore it is not considered a reason for refusal could be substantiated on flooding grounds.

### **Ecology:**

64. With regards to ecological matters, the submitted ES states "*The habitats within the East MRT Site and Combined Site are generally of low intrinsic ecological value; with broadleaved semi-natural woodland, running water and marginal vegetation (namely associated with the on-site LWS and adjacent water courses) the only habitat types of importance in the Local context or greater. With the exception of slow worm and grass snake populations, and roosting, foraging and commuting bats; protected or otherwise notable species recorded within and adjacent to the East MRT Site and / or Combined Site are not considered to be of importance within the 'Local' context or greater, and as such, have not been considered within the current assessment(s)*".
65. Policies CP7 of the Core Strategy and TB23 of the MDD Local Plan require schemes to not have a harmful impact on habitats or species which is reflected in the NPPF. It is noted that the proposal would lead to direct habitat loss through construction and would also lead to fragmentation of habitats given the introduction of the scheme through the site and the proximity to the river. However, the Council's Ecology Officer has stated that within Wokingham Borough there are no rare habitats in close proximity to the site and those that would be lost could be replaced elsewhere. It is proposed for the installation or improvement of native and species rich habitats to be created and for river planting, tree planting and species specific mitigation to occur.

66. Specifically however, the NPPF states the planning process should seek to provide biodiversity benefit and it is noted that objections have been received with regards to whether the scheme provides a net gain. Following additional information being submitted, including a biodiversity accounting calculator, it is noted that much of the ecological mitigation would come from off-site works, the river planting and the wetland habitat beneath the structure. The Ecology Officer has raised a concern that there should be a backup mechanism provided if the wetland habitat area were to fail however, on the whole, considers the scheme now demonstrates a net gain in biodiversity. As such the scheme is considered to be in accordance with the NPPF in this respect subject to a condition requiring a Landscape and Environmental Management Plan (LEMP) to be submitted which should include details for a backup option (14).

67. In relation to specific species that could be impacted the site has been surveyed for potential bat activity. The survey concludes there are potential bat habitats within the site and noted that bats do use the site as a corridor for migrating/commuting. The Ecology Officer had raised concern that potential fragmentation of the habitat could occur as a result of the scheme but notes the provision of bat boxes to mitigate this. Furthermore, the change to the lighting design in terms of reduced columns is considered positive and less likely to impact harmfully on bats. Nonetheless this is subject to a condition requiring a lighting strategy for light sensitive species to be agreed (16).

68. Additionally, the site has been surveyed for reptiles and this found evidence of reptiles and proposes to translocate them. The Ecology Officer has raised concern that translocation of reptiles to the proposed site would be within the flood plain and therefore not an acceptable location. Nonetheless, they consider that a strategy for reptile mitigation is possible subject to a condition (15).

#### **Technical Highway Matters:**

69. Whilst the higher level transport benefits have been discussed above, there are more site specific highway factors that should be considered. The scheme has been designed as an 11.5 metre corridor which comprises of a 6.5 metres two-way carriageway, a 3.0 metre cycle lane and a 2.0 metre footway. At the proposed bridge over the River Kennet, the vehicle carriageway would be reduced to one lane and a signal operation would control buses in this section. For clarity, the two signals would be powered through different electrical feeds and, as such, it is considered very unlikely the situation would arise where buses could not operate using the signals. The Council's Highway Officer has confirmed this is acceptable and also does not raise any objection to the requirement for buses to wait.

70. In terms of usage it is noted this would be set out in a legal agreement (partly through the planning process in terms of section 106 but also through the Highways Act). To ensure users of the scheme comply with this, it is proposed to install cameras to monitor the structure. If these did not deter people appropriately then it is possible that physical barriers would be required. In this event a maintenance strategy has been secured by condition (7) and as such the Highways Officer does not raise any objection.

71. The submitted plans indicate the gradient of the route complies with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and the Department for Transport document 'Inclusive Mobility'. The Highways Officer does not raise any objection to this. It should be noted that there are no bus stops planned on the route itself – i.e. the buses would be stopped at the beginning and end of the route. Again no objection is raised with regards to this particularly as it fits in with the ethos of mass rapid transit. Additionally, the lighting requirements in terms of columns and LED handrail lighting is considered acceptable in highway terms.
72. With regards to traffic impact, it is considered that no significant harm would arise within the Wokingham area given the existing level of traffic at the immediate road junction i.e. Broken Brow roundabout. It is noted that much of the ES covers the traffic impacts within the Reading area. Site specific impacts within Reading cannot be part of the consideration of an application within Wokingham Borough however the wider transport context can be. Whilst there is fluctuation in traffic levels within different areas of Reading, the context of the scheme is that overall, traffic levels would fall due to the switch from private car trips to public transport. As a result the scheme is considered to comply with policy CP6 of the Core Strategy.

#### **Technical Tree Matters:**

73. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment is included in the submitted ES which shows the results of a site survey of trees. The survey indicates that across the entire site 58 tree features would be removed comprising of 36 individual trees and 22 tree groups. Trees are grouped where their amenity value arises from their group setting rather than the individual tree itself. For clarification no category A trees are proposed to be removed. When considering group loss it should be noted that not all groups would be removed and, as such, 0.345 hectares of tree groups would be removed.
74. In considering the impact within Wokingham Borough, 18 tree features would be removed comprising of 2 groups and 16 individual trees. 13 groups and 20 individual trees would be retained. As noted above the replacement planting would augment the retained trees and this comprises of 37 individual trees, the marginal shelf planting in the river, the marshland and reseeded of the area with native grassland. As a result, it is clear the majority of tree removal occurs within Reading Borough. Although it is acknowledged tree removal is a negative impact, the site is reserved for this use and therefore some tree removal must have been envisaged at the point of adopting the policy documents. In any case, within Wokingham Borough, the replacement tree planting is considered appropriate in mitigating the tree loss.
75. With regards to tree protection, the Tree and Landscape Officer has advised the submitted material is generally acceptable but specific issues (e.g. T88 – willow tree) would need to be resolved through a condition (19). Additionally further landscaping details in terms of earthworks and specific landscaping details would also be required by condition (21, 18).

#### **Environmental Health:**

76. In the submitted ES are a range of reports and analysis with regards to environmental health concerns. Specifically, an Air Quality Assessment and Phase



1 and 2 Ground Condition Assessments have been carried out. It is acknowledged that much of the air quality elements relate to land within Reading Borough however consideration has been given to the site within Wokingham Borough. The Environmental Health Officer has considered the submitted information and does not object to the scheme subject to conditions and therefore it is considered compliant in this respect with policy CP1 of the Core Strategy.

**77. Noise and Vibration:** The Environmental Health Officer does not consider there are any receptors within Wokingham Borough that would be impacted harmfully by noise and vibration during construction or operation. This is subject to the provision of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) which can be secured through a condition (5).

**78. Air Quality:** With regards to Wokingham Borough the ES states there would not be a significant impact in terms of air quality. It is noted that there would be some degradation of air quality given that there are currently no vehicles moving through the site but this, although difficult to quantify, is not considered harmful to the extent a reason for refusal could be substantiated. In addition, it is considered that dust emissions caused by construction of the scheme could be mitigated by appropriate measures contained in the CEMP. It should be noted one of the aims of the scheme would be to improve air quality within the Reading area and specifically at Cemetery Junction. The Environmental Health Officer has not raised any objection to the submitted information and, on the whole, a modal shift from private car use to public transport would help towards lowering air pollution.

**79. Ground Conditions:** The submitted surveys indicate potential contaminants from historic uses of the site. Nonetheless, the Environmental Health Officer considers the impact of the scheme to be acceptable in this respect subject to a suitably worded condition (10) to secure further ground investigation where required. As such, no objection is raised.

#### **Heritage:**

80. The submitted Heritage Desk Based Assessment has assessed the site in terms of the impact upon heritage assets. In respect of the proposal the heritage asset is the Grade II listed 19<sup>th</sup> century brick Railway Bridge and attached iron/timber accommodation footbridge. The assessment concludes that there would be no harmful impact to the fabric of the listed bridge given that the scheme would not physically connect to it. Furthermore, that there would be no harm to its historic value as it would still be possible to interpret the role the listed bridge played in enabling the construction and use of the Great Western Mainline. However, it is acknowledged that the setting of the listed bridge would be altered due to views being blocked by the proposal to and from the listed bridge as well as the Thames towpath. The assessment considers that the design of the proposal reduces this impact particularly due to the openness beneath the structure and the visibility of the arches in the listed bridge which are a key element of its design.

81. The NPPF requires great weight to be attached to a designated heritage asset but does state the more important an asset is, the more weight should be given to it. In assessing impact upon heritage assets the NPPF highlights substantial harm to a Grade II asset should be exceptional. Where less than substantial harm is found then this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Historic

England do not raise any objection to the proposal. The Council's Conservation Officer is concerned regarding harm however agrees with the assessment in terms of the impact of the proposal on the listed bridge as a heritage asset and notes that the impact would not be considered 'substantial' in view of the NPPF. Nonetheless, the Conservation Officer notes that policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan requires proposals to conserve and, where possible, enhance heritage assets which the scheme would fail to achieve. As such, whilst not conflicting with the NPPF, it is acknowledged that overall there would be some harm to the setting of the heritage asset and this would conflict with local planning policy. However, this should be weighed against the wider benefits that have been identified in the planning balance.

82. Although a non-designated heritage asset, it is noted a 'mosaic' of the confluence of the Thames and Kennet is located near the Kennet mouth. The NPPF states that a balanced judgement should be made in terms of the scale of harm against the significance of the heritage asset. Whilst not of national significance, the mosaic is of local importance and acknowledges the role the Thames/Kennet Rivers had in the development of Reading. As such, it is considered that the mosaic should be preserved and replaced in a new location following construction of the scheme and details of this would be secured through the section 106 legal agreement.

#### **Archaeology:**

83. The potential for archaeological remains is also assessed in the Heritage Desk Based Assessment. It concludes that there is moderate potential for isolated prehistoric flint artefacts as well as limited Saxon remains in the eastern most extent of the site. It also notes that there is no recorded evidence of other remains within the remainder of the site. The assessment highlights that the scheme would result in the loss of any artefacts if below ground works took place but these would only be of local to regional significance and therefore a condition requiring investigation would be sufficient.
84. The Council's archaeological consultant, Berkshire Archaeology, notes that the lack of recorded evidence is due to very limited archaeological work in the area and as such it is possible further remains may be found. Nonetheless, they agree with the submitted assessment and the requirement for a condition. It is considered this is line with the NPPF and policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan, in terms of assessing the historic significance of the heritage asset. As such, a condition requiring site investigation and a post investigation assessment is recommended (17).

#### **Residential Amenity:**

85. There are no residential properties within the immediate vicinity of the site and as such no harmful impact is considered to occur as a result of the proposal in this respect. It is acknowledged there are some leisure uses along the river bank including Wokingham Waterside Centre but these would be located a sufficient distance that no overbearing or loss of light impact would occur. As such the scheme is considered to comply with policies CP1 and CP3 in relation to this aspect.

86. Whilst no residential properties are located nearby it is noted the Thames towpath is well used by residents from both Reading and Wokingham boroughs and objections have been raised regarding construction. In itself, the impact of construction of a scheme is not a material planning consideration and should not be given any weight in decision making. Nonetheless, where it may impact particular planning considerations then these should be accounted for. In respect of this scheme it is acknowledged it is not a 'typical' site with direct access to the highway. As such a construction management statement as well as details of storage of materials on site and location of site offices are required by condition (6).

#### **Employment Skills Plan:**

87. Policy TB12 of the MDD requires proposals within the major category for planning applications to provide an employment skills plan to encourage training and apprenticeship opportunities at the local level. It is considered this could be covered through the section 106 legal agreement.

#### **Planning Balance:**

88. The proposal for the East Reading MRT accords with some policies, in part or whole, but also conflicts with others. In terms of sustainable development, the three dimensions set out in the NPPF are economic, social and environmental. As such sustainable development is not simply about protecting the environment; it must also provide economic benefits and meet social needs. In determining planning applications, weight should be attributed to the different factors and it is up to the decision maker as to how much weight should be applied.

89. In considering the proposal, there is a clear, harmful impact on the local environment through the urbanisation of the site. The scheme would introduce a solid, permanent feature in the landscape and although some mitigation could be applied in terms of it being a localised impact and replacement planting, the site would be irrevocably altered. It is acknowledged that following the revised plans, a greater number of trees would be retained and there is a net gain regarding biodiversity however this does not fully outweigh the harm to the landscape character. Furthermore there would be harm caused to the setting of a listed structure. Added together, it is considered substantial weight should be applied to the negative environmental impacts of the scheme. Conversely however, the aims of the project including accounting for planned growth in the area and encouraging more sustainable transport modes would have a beneficial impact in terms of the environment through increased public transport use.

90. In terms of social impacts there would be benefits provided by the scheme. The provision of fast-track bus services in and out of Reading would create journey time savings and improve reliability of services. It also allows for expansion of future services including local stopping services from Woodley or Earley however it is noted this cannot be quantified at this point. Furthermore, the potential for reductions in congestion and air pollution levels would also provide benefits socially. Added to this is the fact the site has been safeguarded for this purpose and clearly consideration was given to the improved connectivity of Reading and Wokingham when strategically planning and preparing the adopted policy documents of both Boroughs. Moreover, the scheme is part of a wider MRT/Park

and Ride network that is envisaged will improve urban connectivity and take into account the planned growth for the area. Again, it is considered substantial weight should be applied to this factor particularly given the planning policy support for the scheme.

91. Economically there are also benefits with the improved access to employment opportunities in Reading and Wokingham Boroughs. Most obvious of these are the improved journey times to Thames Valley Business Park however the more reliable journey times and greater usage of public transport will help boost the local economy. Additionally the supporting material for the application notes that the area is at capacity and economic growth would be constrained if additional capacity is not provided on the current road network. As above it is considered the substantial weight should be applied to this aspect.

92. There are clearly competing factors in determining this application. Whilst the environmental concerns are valid and important, the transport benefits are far reaching and significant in terms of the Borough, its future growth and relationship with Reading as a town. Moreover, the East Reading MRT is considered to be an essential strategic piece of infrastructure which would help deliver a behavioural change in travel habits. On balance therefore, this is considered to outweigh the identified harm caused to the environment and, as such, the scheme is recommended for conditional approval.

## **CONCLUSION**

The scheme conflicts with some planning policies but also accords with others. Although mitigation is proposed, an environmental harm has been identified; however the social and economic benefits of the proposal are considered far ranging and strategically significant. Therefore the scheme is recommended for conditional approval.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Email</b>
Development Management and Regulatory Services	0118 974 6428 / 6429	development.control@wokingham.gov.uk

Figure 1 – Application site

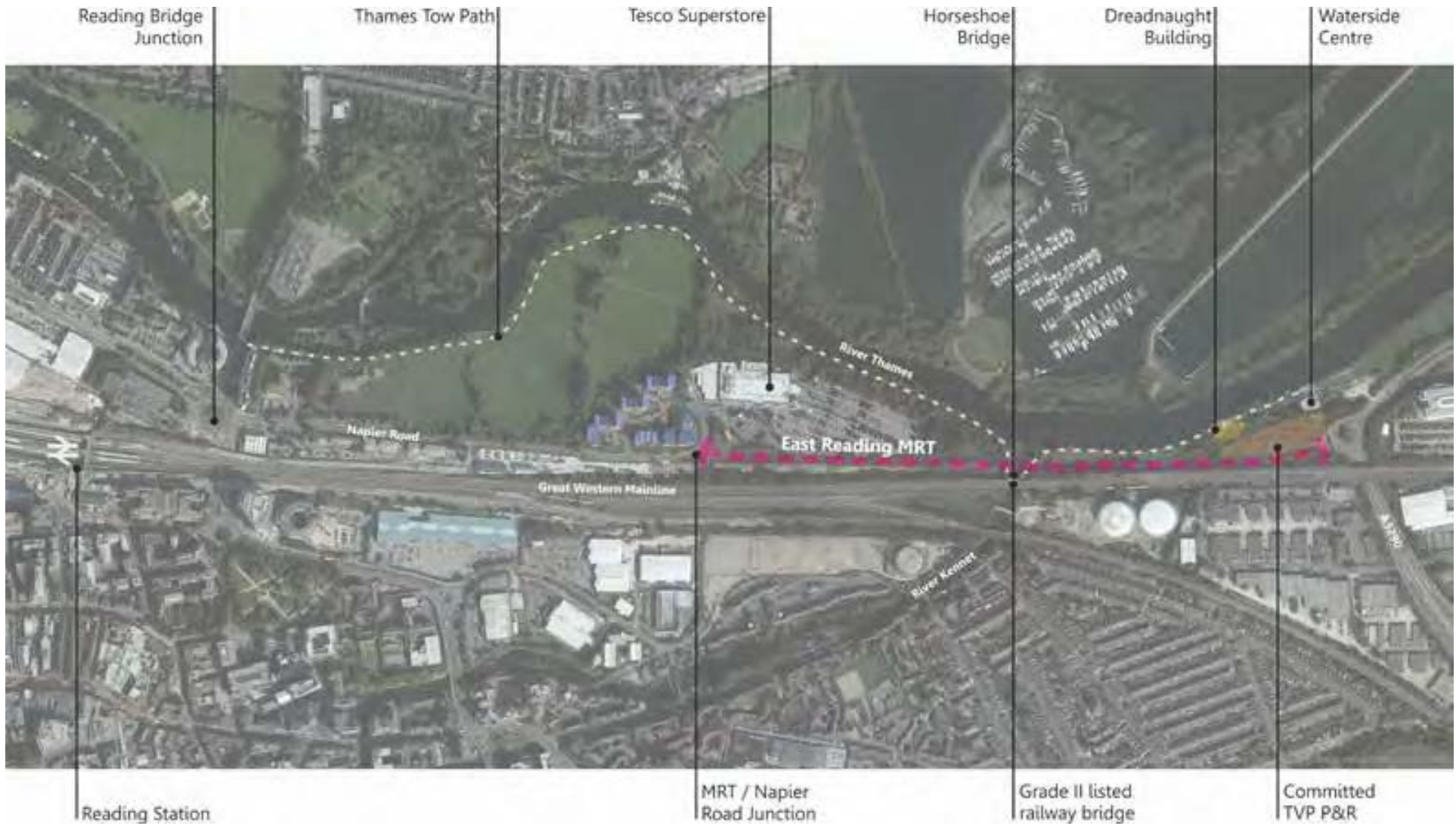


Figure 2 – Spatial and Design Strategy for the centre of Reading

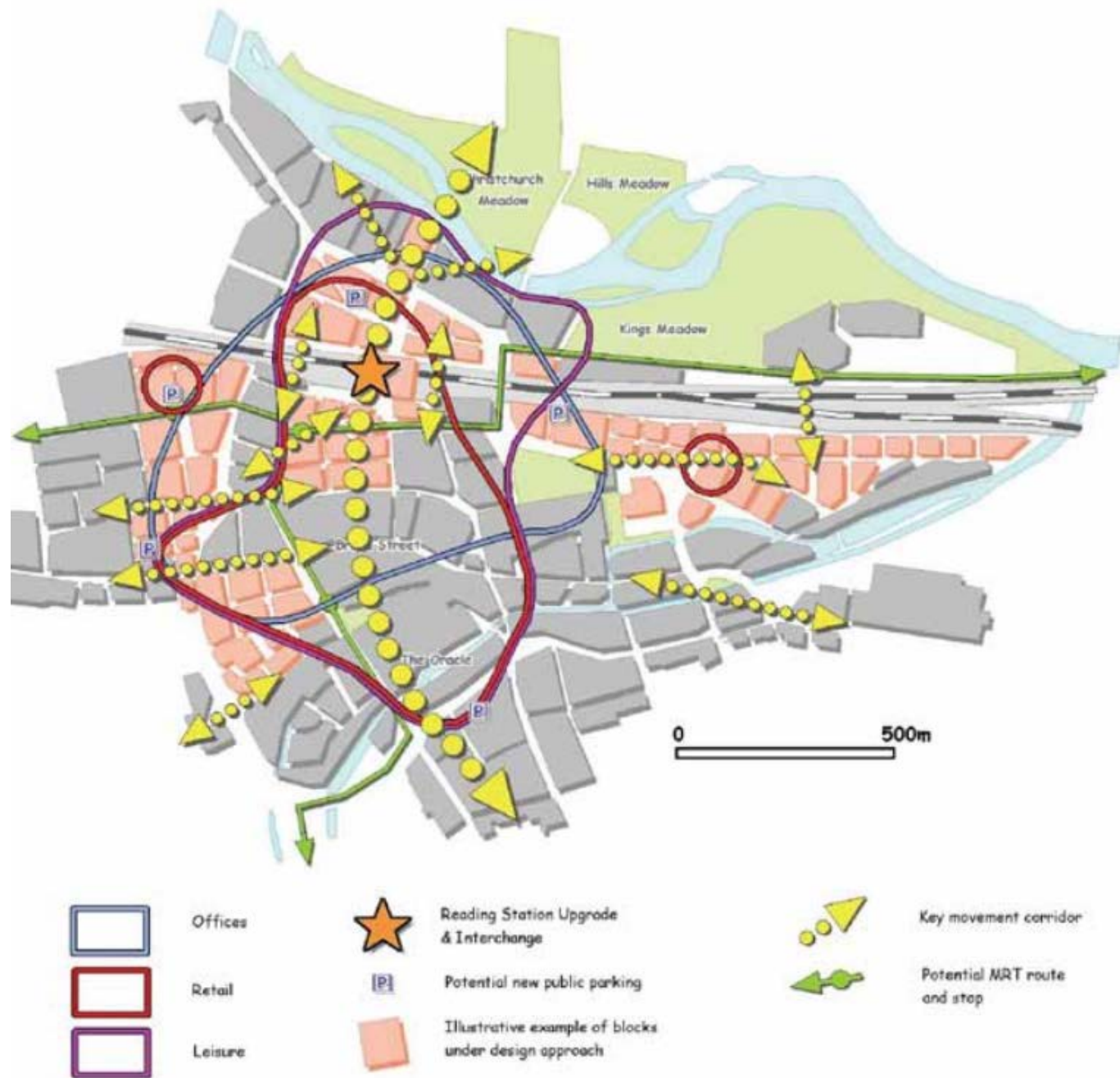


Figure 3 – Reading Borough Council Public Transport Strategy

51

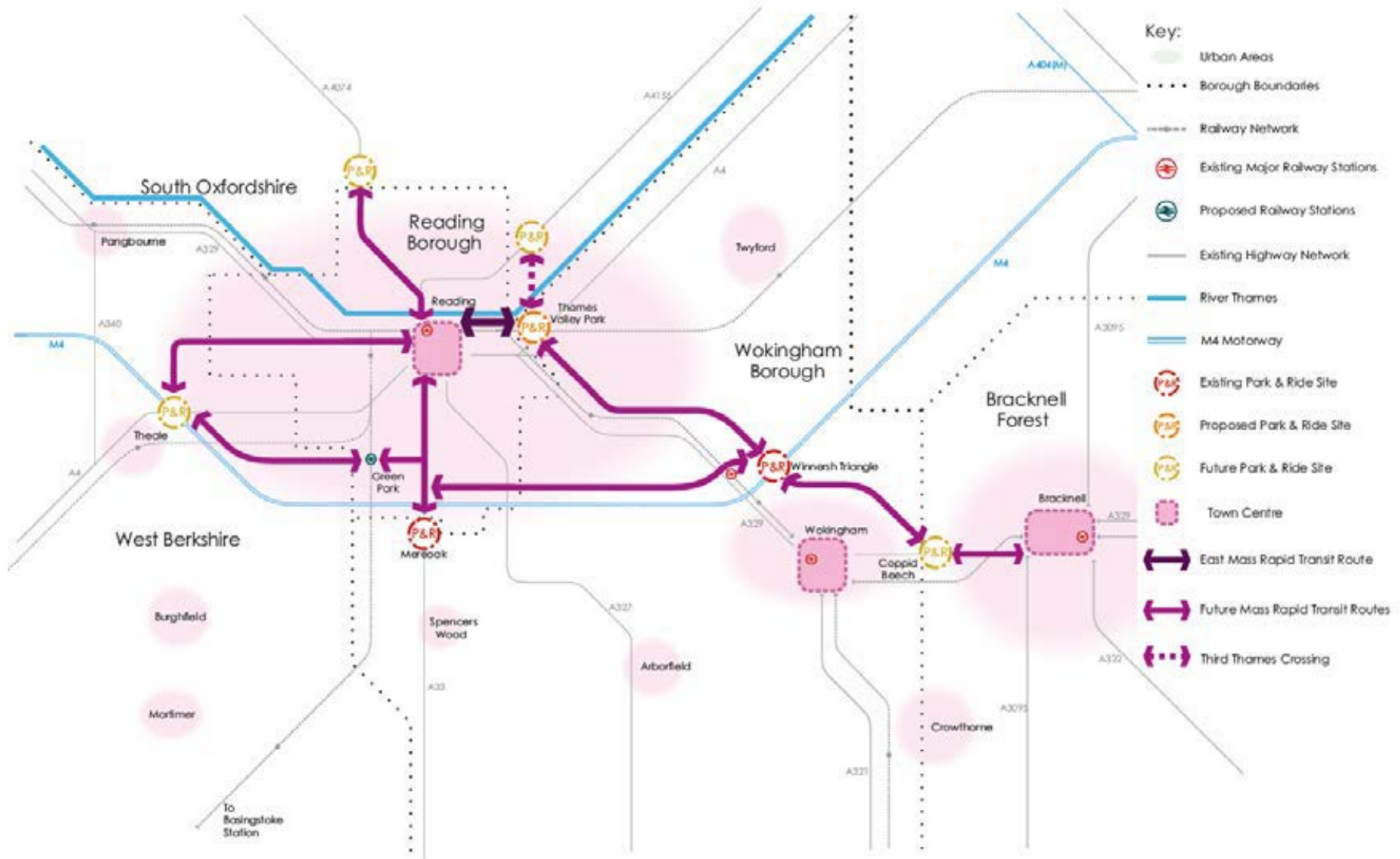
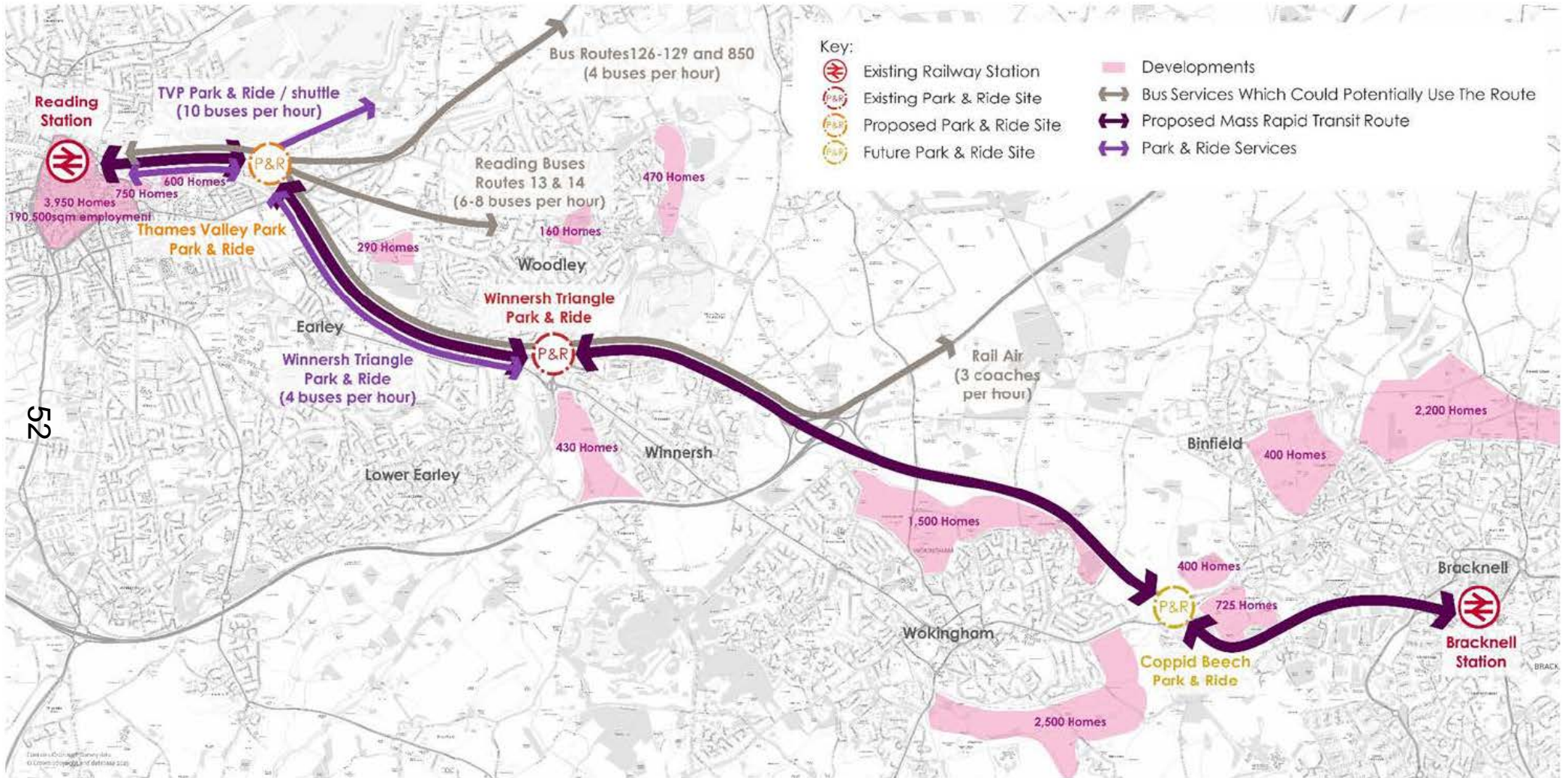
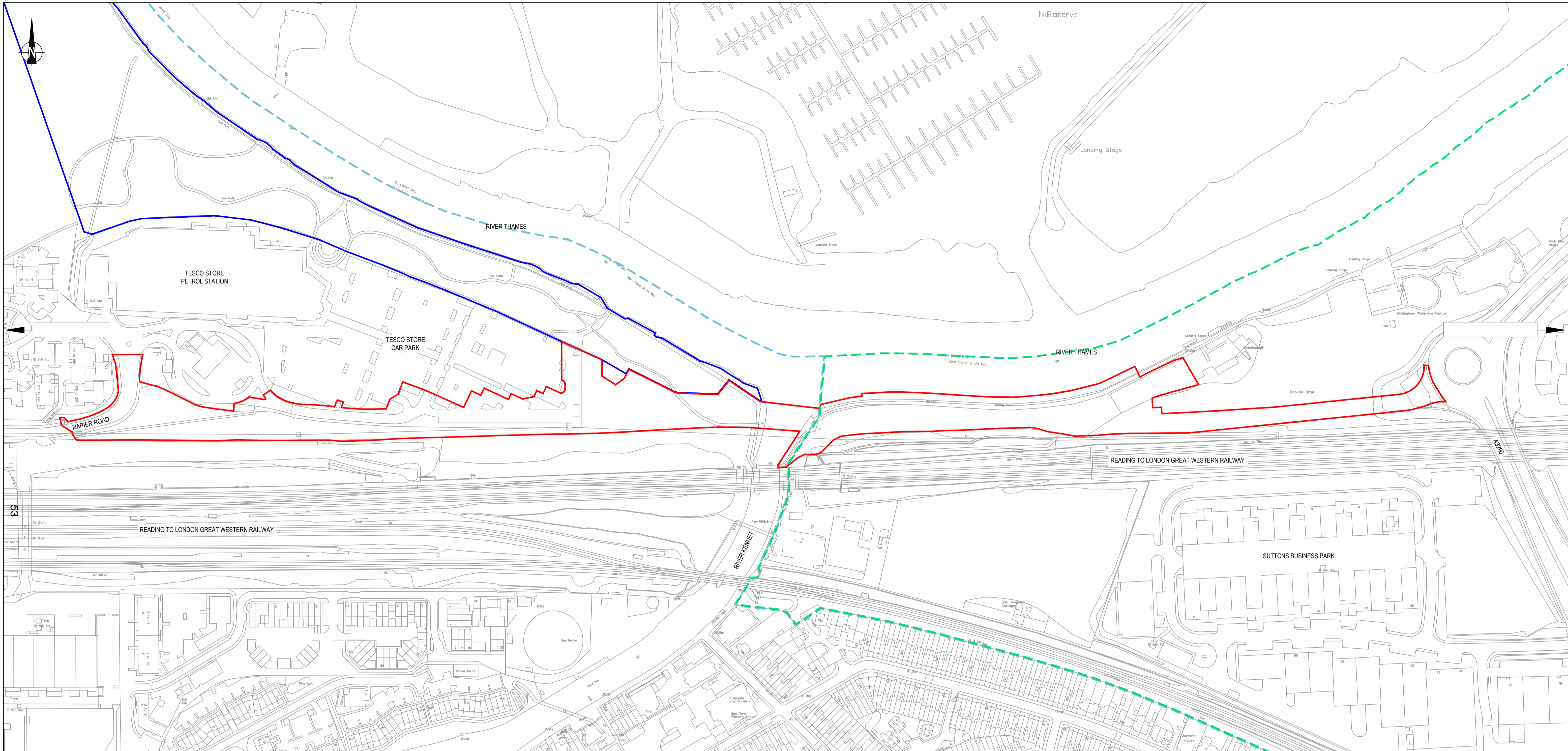


Figure 4 – Potential future bus services







**NOTES:**

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- ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN METRES UNLESS OTHERWISE SHOWN.

**KEY:**

- PLANNING APPLICATION RED LINE BOUNDARY
- OTHER LAND IN APPLICANTS CONTROL
- - - READING BOROUGH COUNCIL BOUNDARY
- - - WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL BOUNDARY

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Mark	Revision	Date	Drawn	Chkd	Appd
A	COUNCIL BOUNDARIES ADDED	30.06.17	SF	SE	SE


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Drawing Issue Status

**FOR PLANNING**

**EAST READING MASS RAPID TRANSIT**

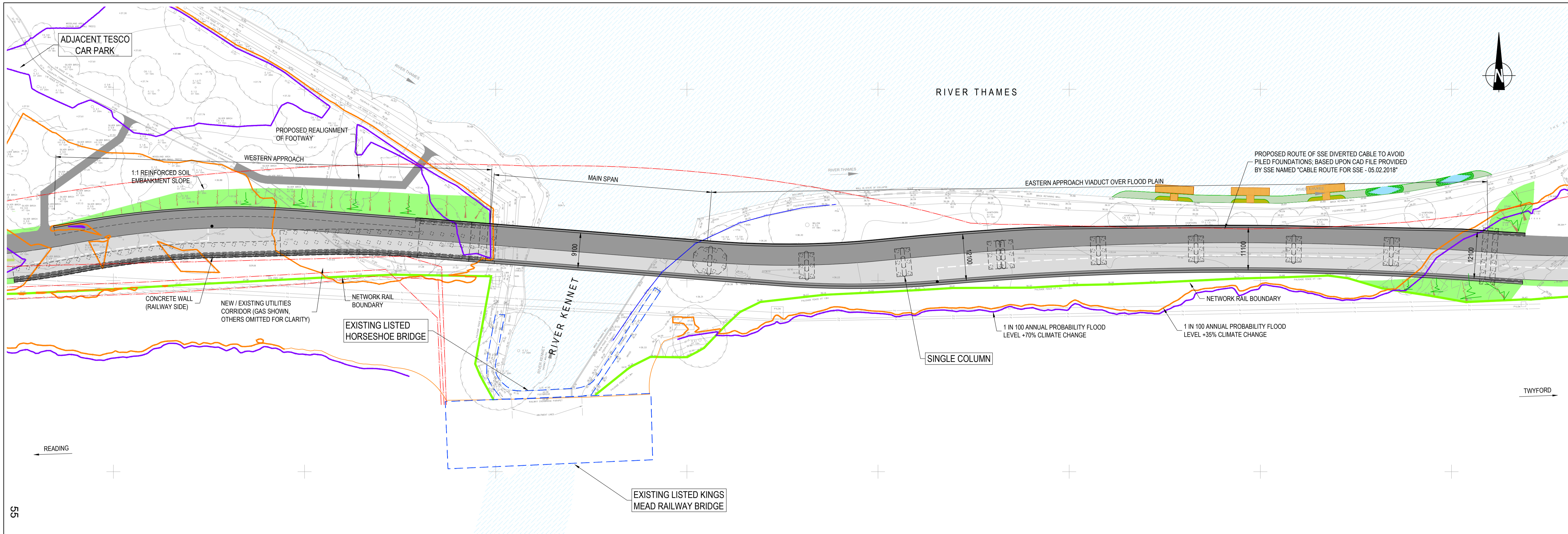
**SITE LOCATION PLAN**

Client		
		
Date of 1st Issue	Designed	Drawn
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A1 Scale	Checked	Approved
1:1500	SE	SM
Drawing Number	Revision	
28791/2009/CIV/002	A	

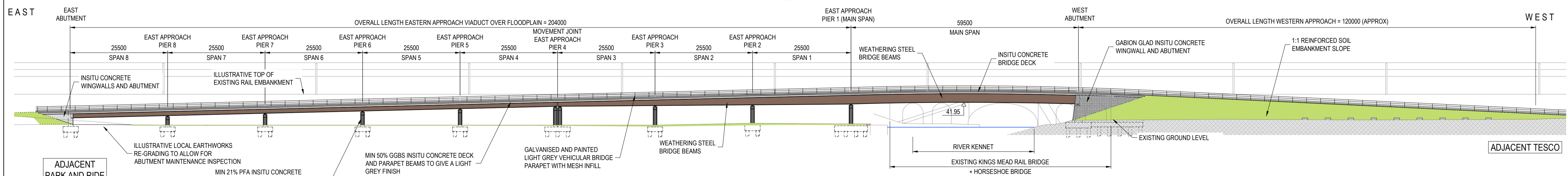


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**STRUCTURAL PLAN**  
1:500



**STRUCTURAL ELEVATION LOOKING SOUTH**  
1:500

- KEY**
- EXISTED LISTED STRUCTURE
  - NETWORK RAIL BOUNDARY
  - 1 IN 100 ANNUAL PROBABILITY FLOOD LEVEL +35% CLIMATE CHANGE
  - 1 IN 100 ANNUAL PROBABILITY FLOOD LEVEL + 70% CLIMATE CHANGE

P01	FIRST ISSUE	20.04.18	GCP	SCW	SM
Mark	Revision	Date	Drawn	Chkd	Appd

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Drawing Issue Status  
**FOR PLANNING**

**EAST READING - MASS RAPID TRANSIT  
 BRIDGE AND VIADUCT  
 SINGLE COLUMN OPTION  
 GENERAL ARRANGEMENT**

Client		
Date of 1st Issue 20.04.2018	Designed DMS	Drawn GCP
A1 Scale AS SHOWN	Checked SCW	Approved SM
Drawing Number 28791/2003/SK310	Revision P01	

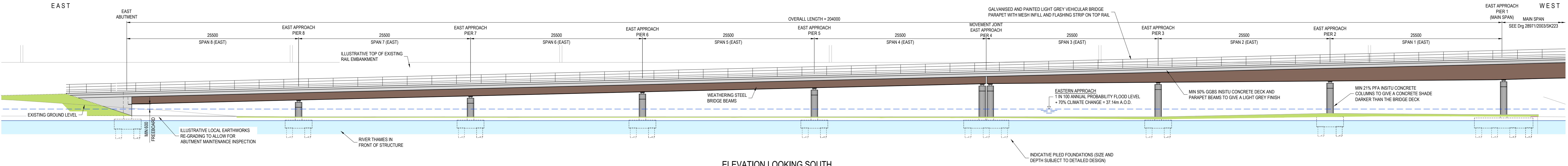
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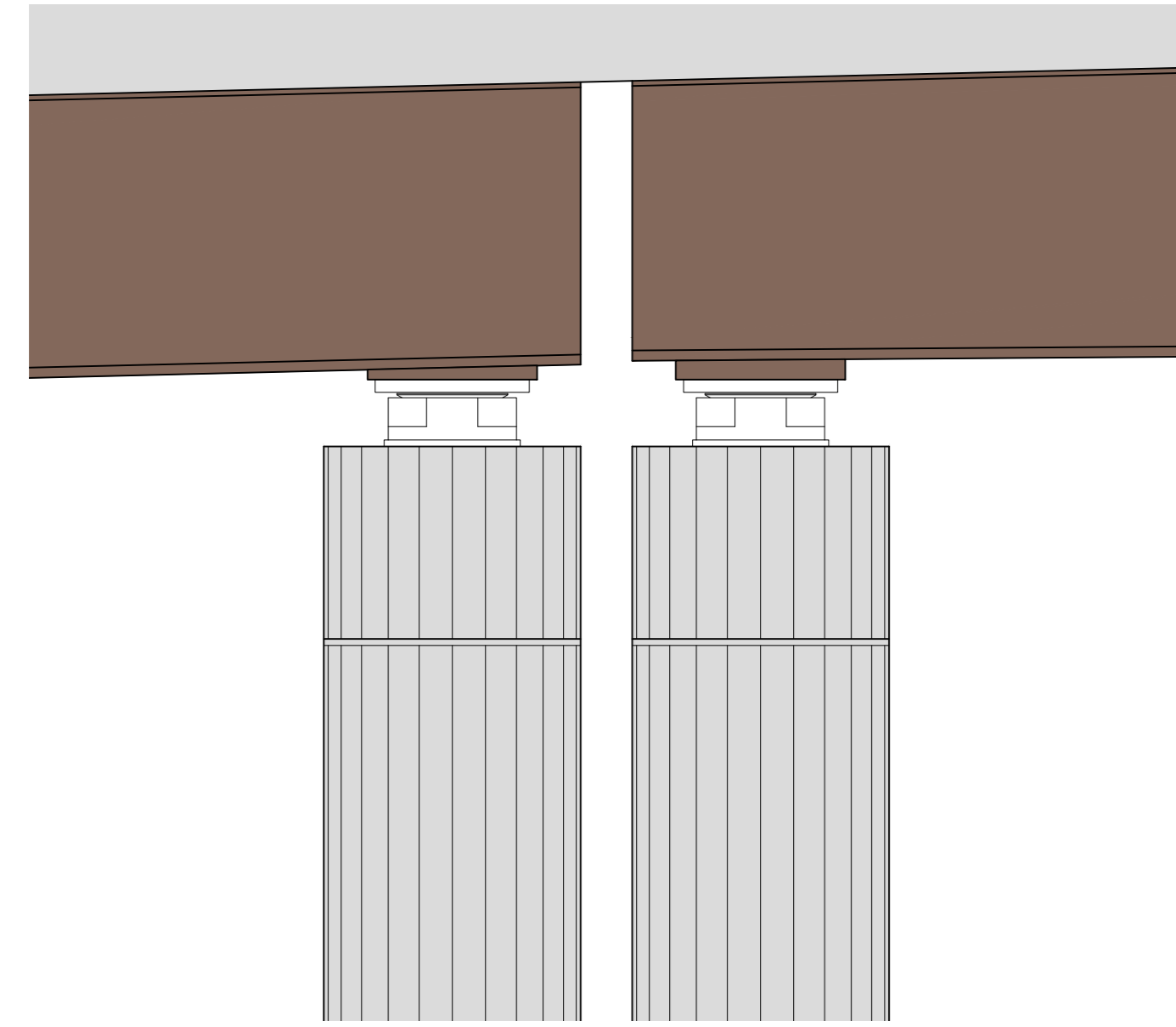
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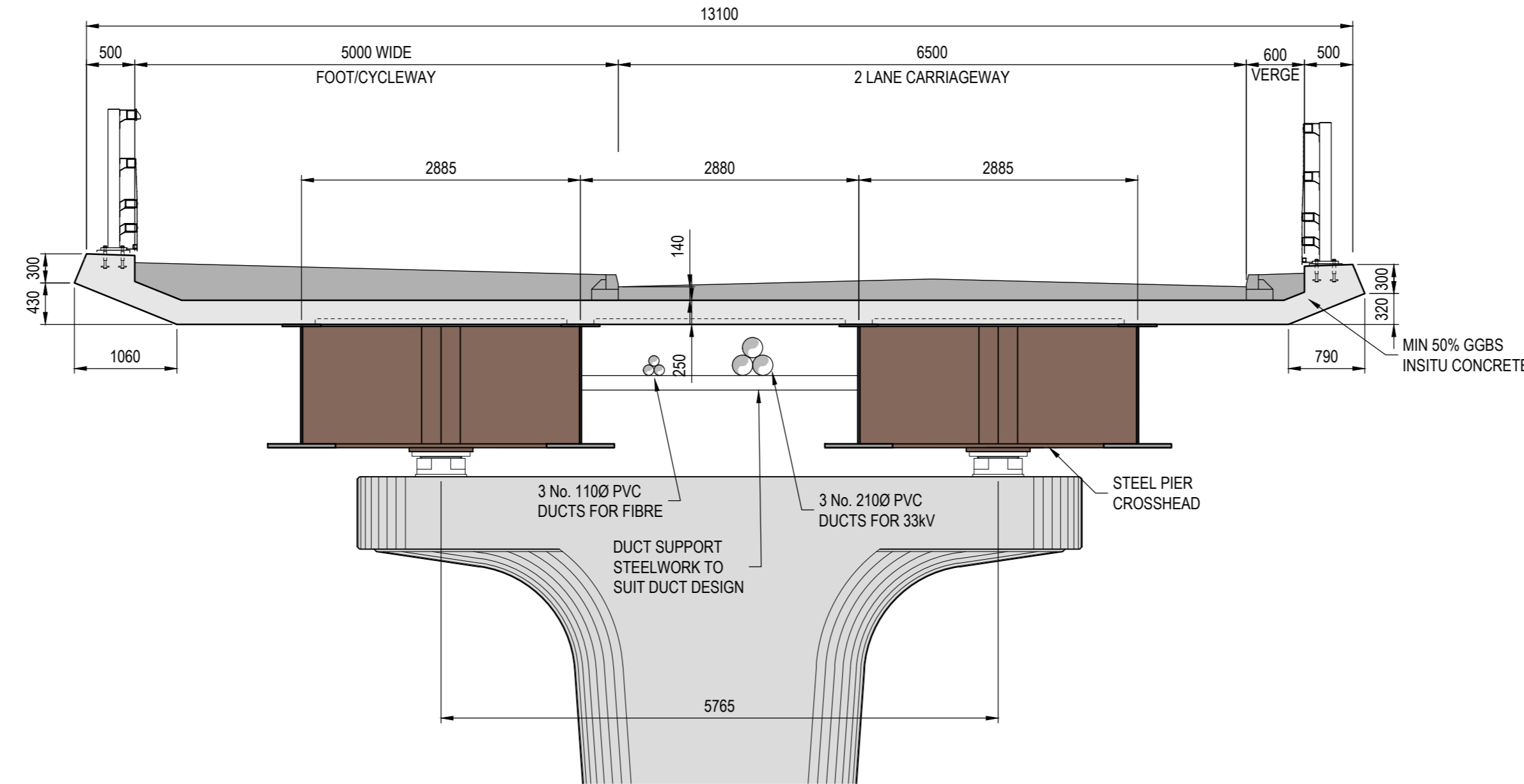
ELEVATION LOOKING SOUTH

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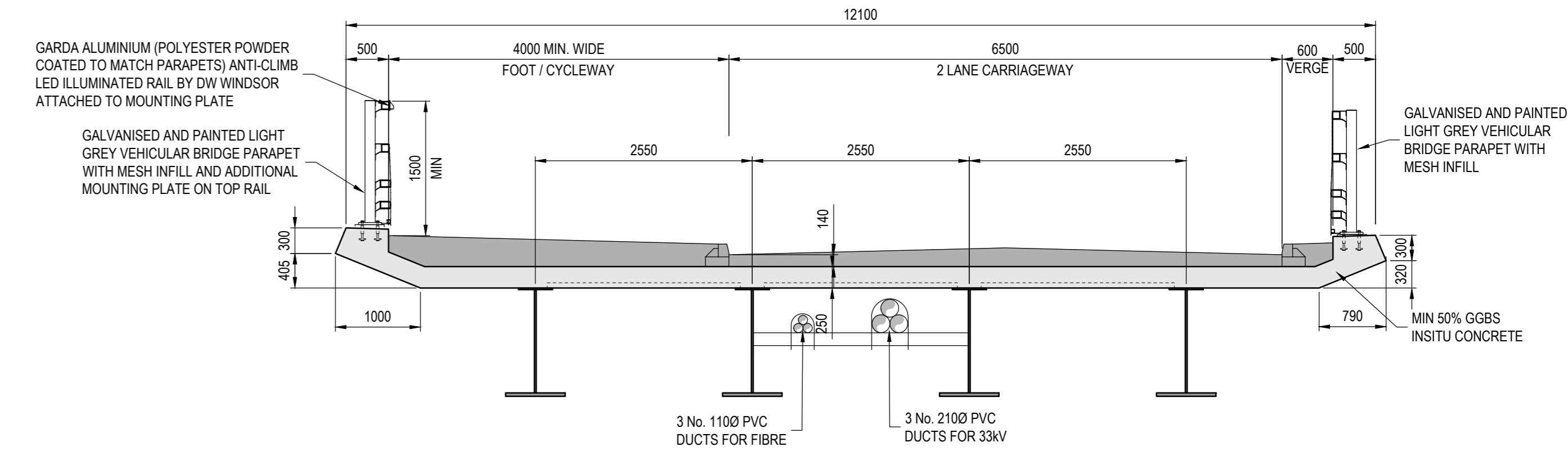
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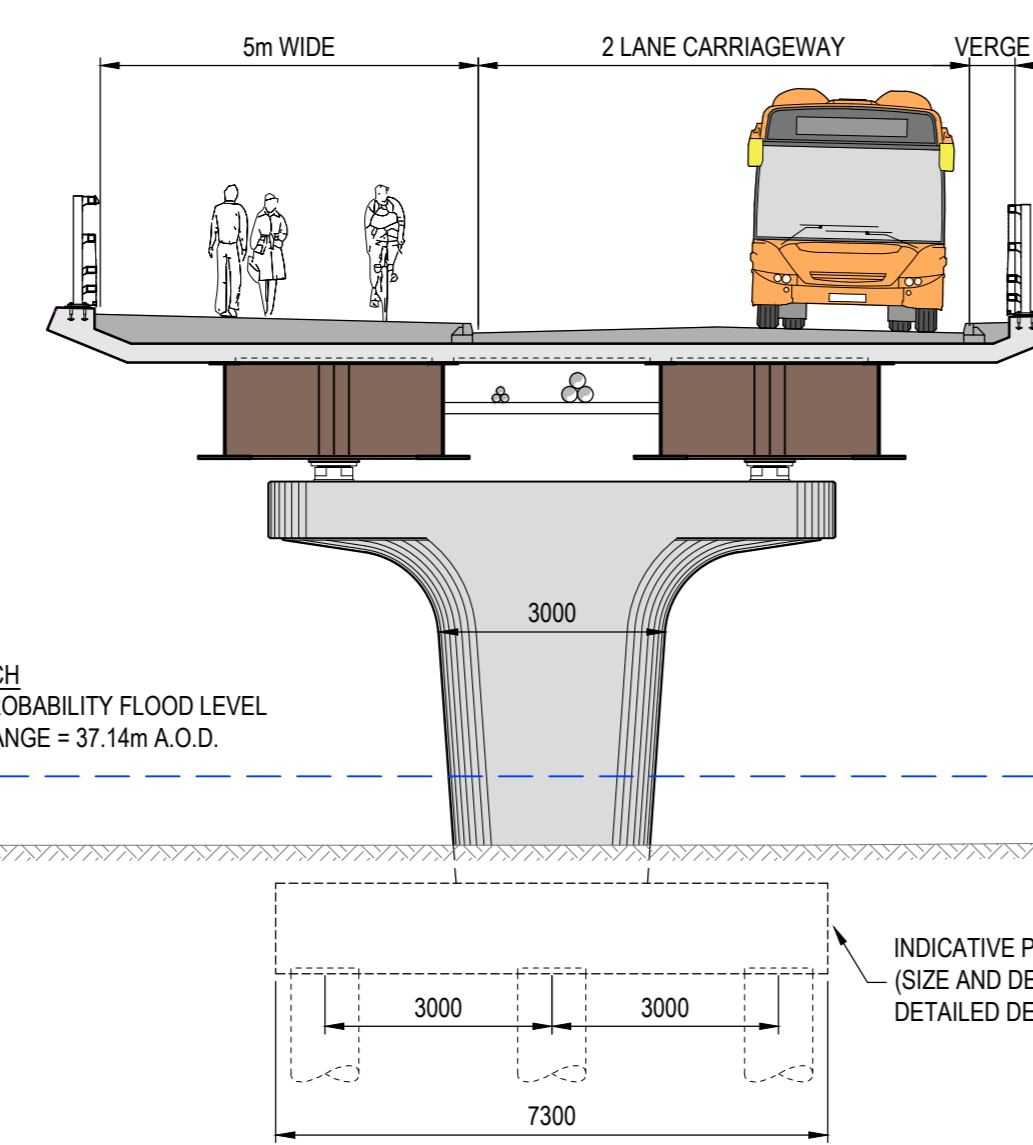
TYPICAL DECK CROSS SECTION AT PIER 4

1:50



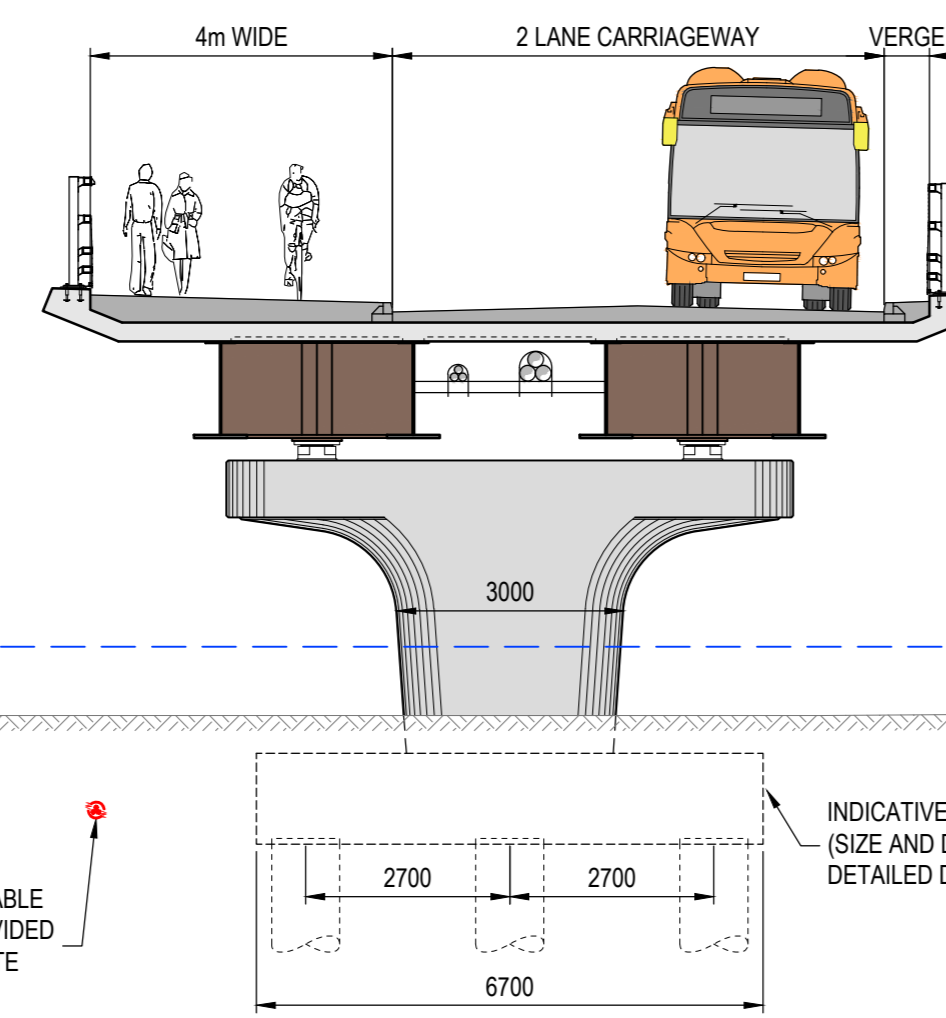
TYPICAL DECK CROSS SECTION BETWEEN PIERS 6 AND 7 (FORM AND FREQUENCY OF CROSS BRACING SUBJECT TO DETAILED STRUCTURAL DESIGN)

1:50



TYPICAL CROSS SECTION - PIER 4

1:100



TYPICAL CROSS SECTION - PIER 6

1:100

P02	MARGIN SHELF AND MOORING PLATFORMS ADDED	20.04.18	GCP	SCW	SM
P01	FIRST ISSUE	29.03.18	GCP	SCW	SM
Mark	Revision	Date	Drawn	Chkd	Appd

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**FOR PLANNING**

**EAST READING - MASS RAPID TRANSIT BRIDGE AND VIADUCT SINGLE COLUMN OPTION EAST APPROACH**

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Revision: P02

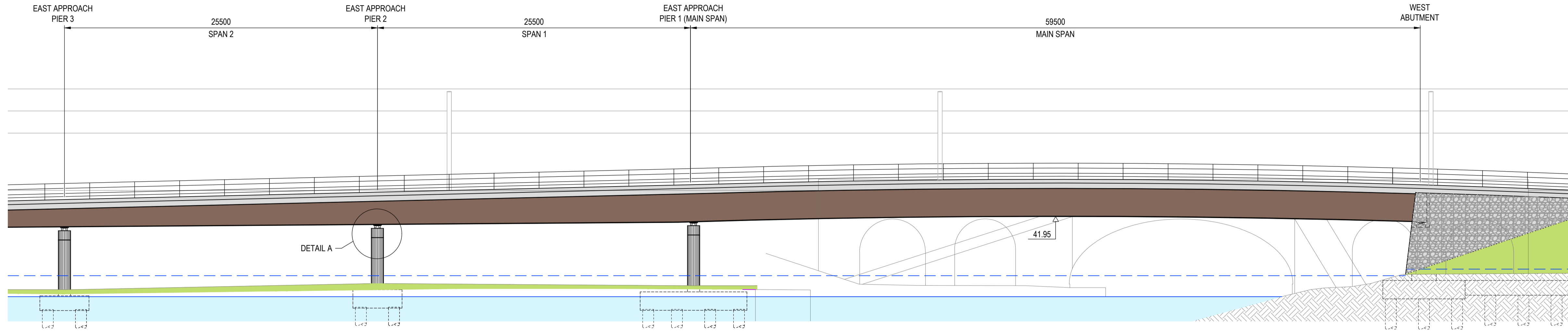
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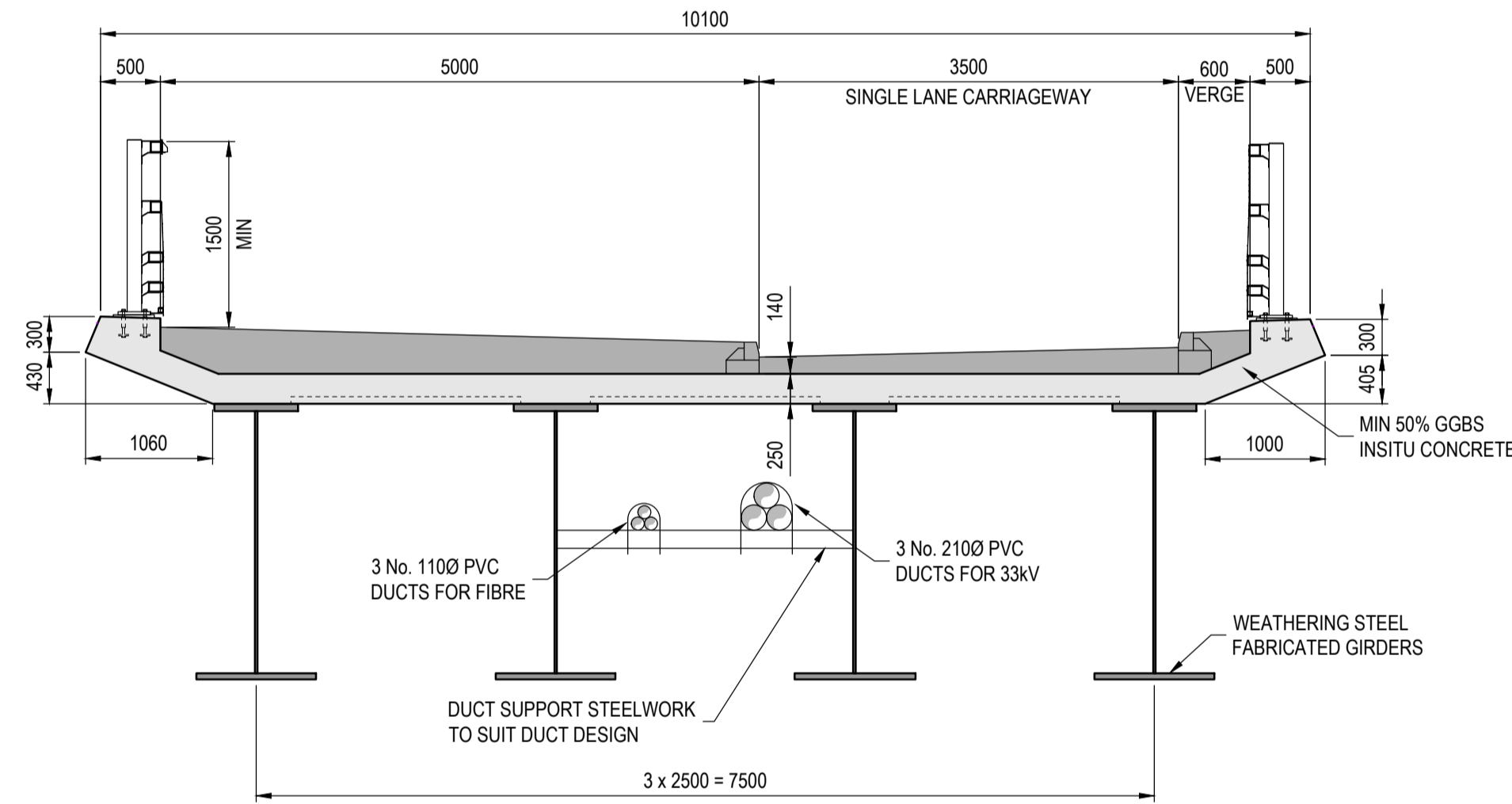
EAST

WEST



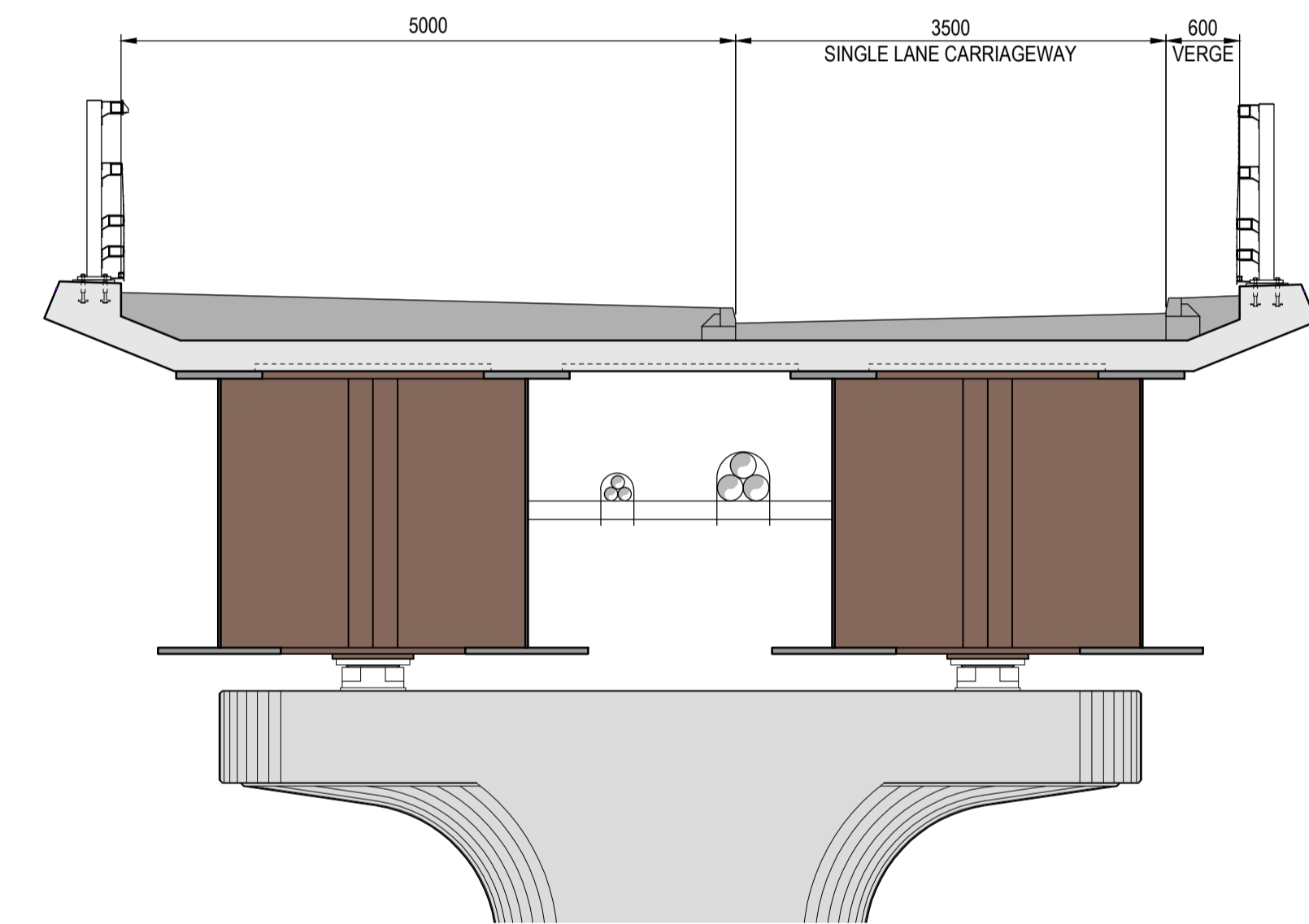
ALTERNATIVE MAIN SPAN ELEVATION

1:200



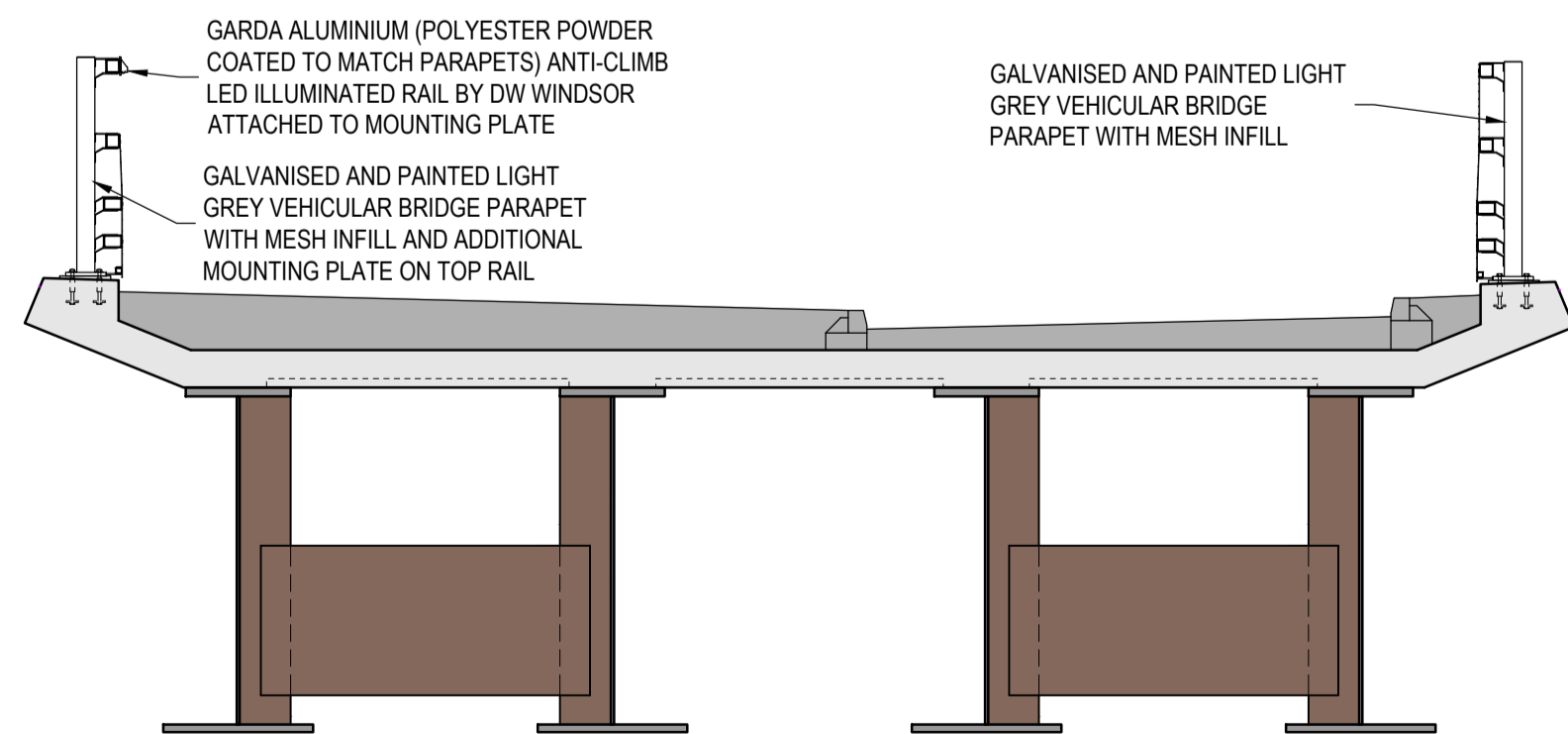
TYPICAL SECTION THROUGH WEATHERING STEEL GIRDERS

1:50



TYPICAL SECTION THROUGH WEATHERING STEEL GIRDERS AT PIER 1

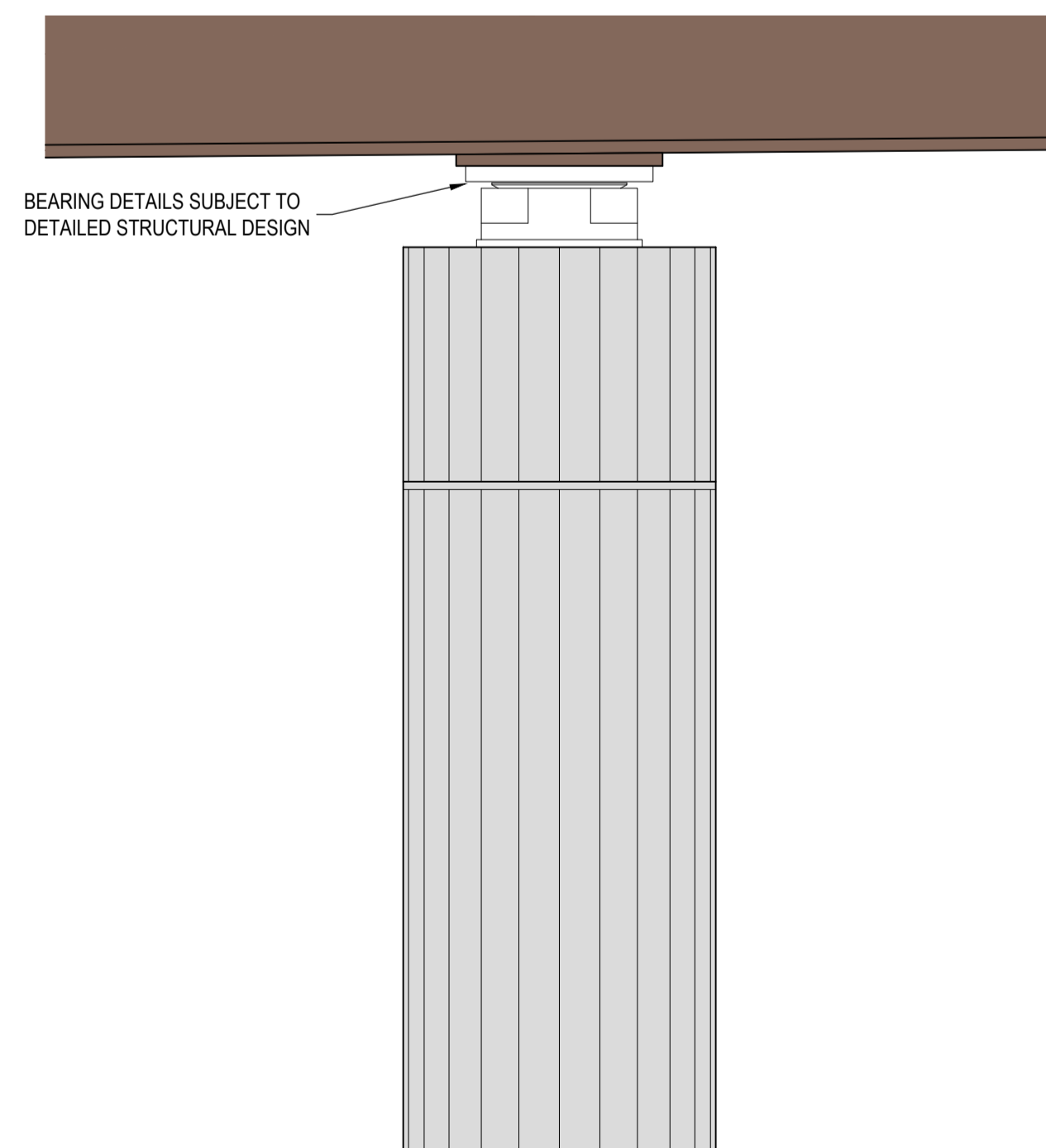
1:50



INDICATIVE SECTION THROUGH MAIN SPAN AT CROSS-BRACING LOCATIONS

(FORM AND FREQUENCY OF BRACING SUBJECT TO DETAILED STRUCTURAL DESIGN)

1:50



DETAIL A

1:10

Mark	Revision	Date	Drawn	Chkd	Appd
P01	FIRST ISSUE	20.04.18	GCP	SCW	SM

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**EAST READING - MASS RAPID TRANSIT  
 BRIDGE AND VIADUCT  
 SINGLE COLUMN OPTION  
 MAIN SPAN**

Client		
Date of 1st Issue	Designed	Drawn
20.04.2018	DMS	GCP
A1 Scale	Checked	Approved
AS SHOWN	SCW	SM
Drawing Number	Revision	
28791/2003/SK323	P01	

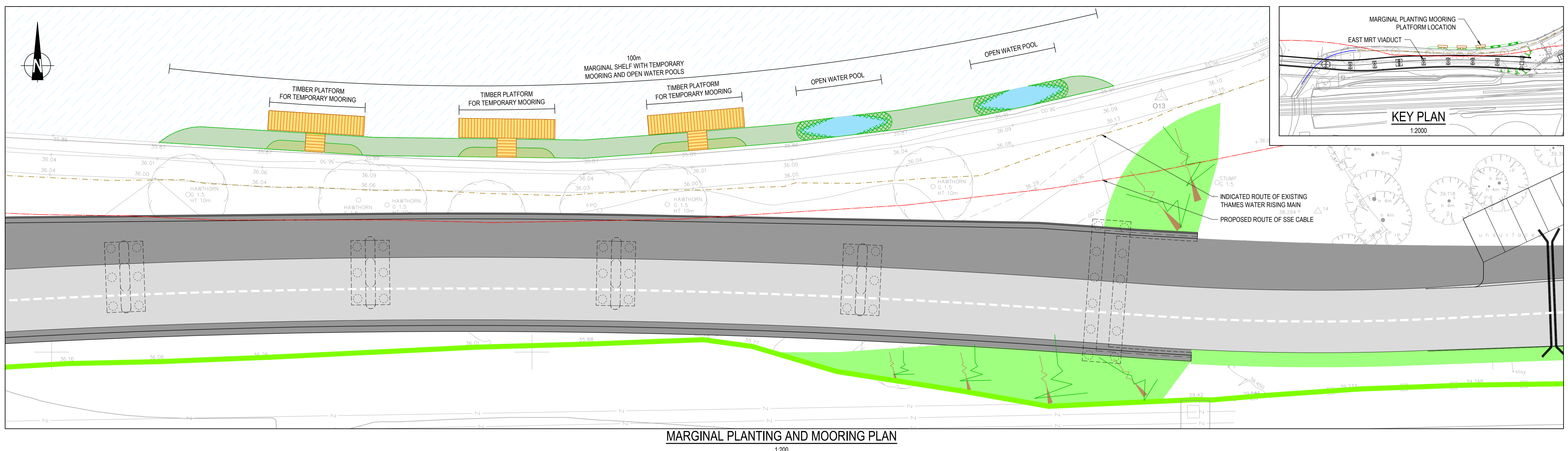
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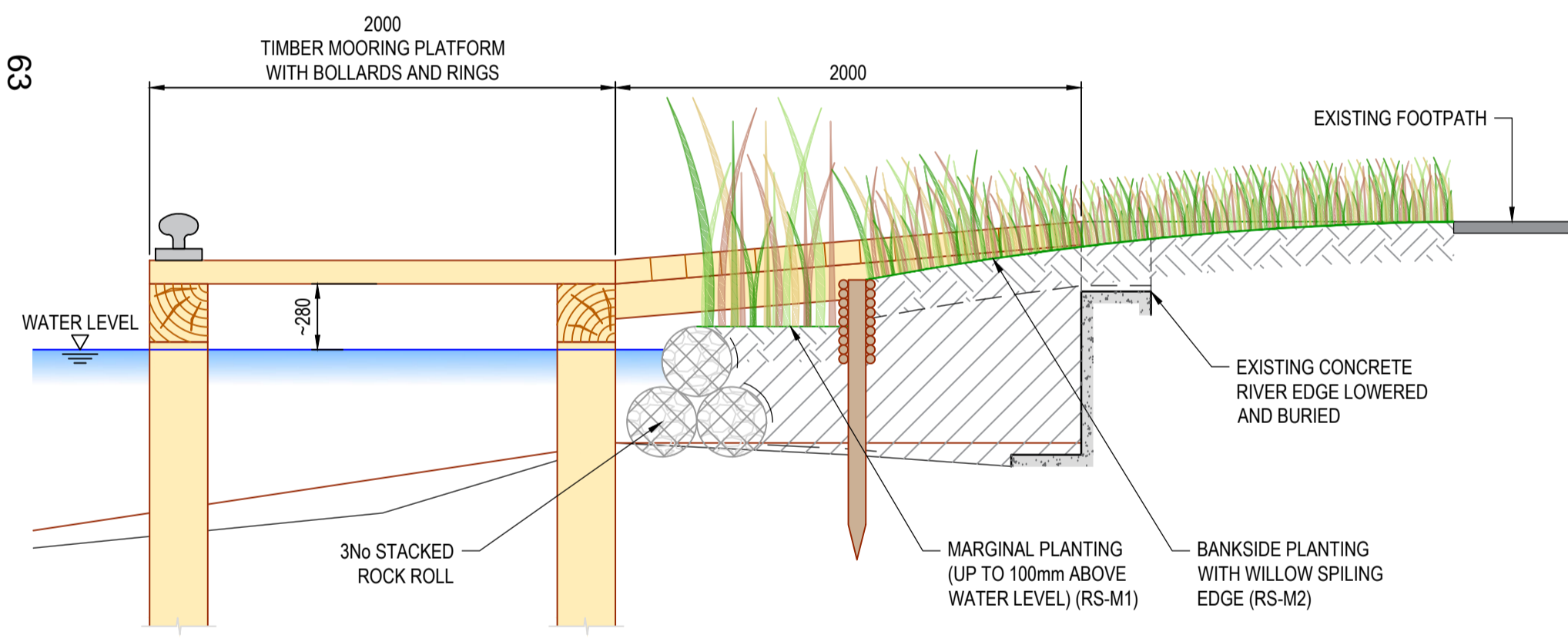
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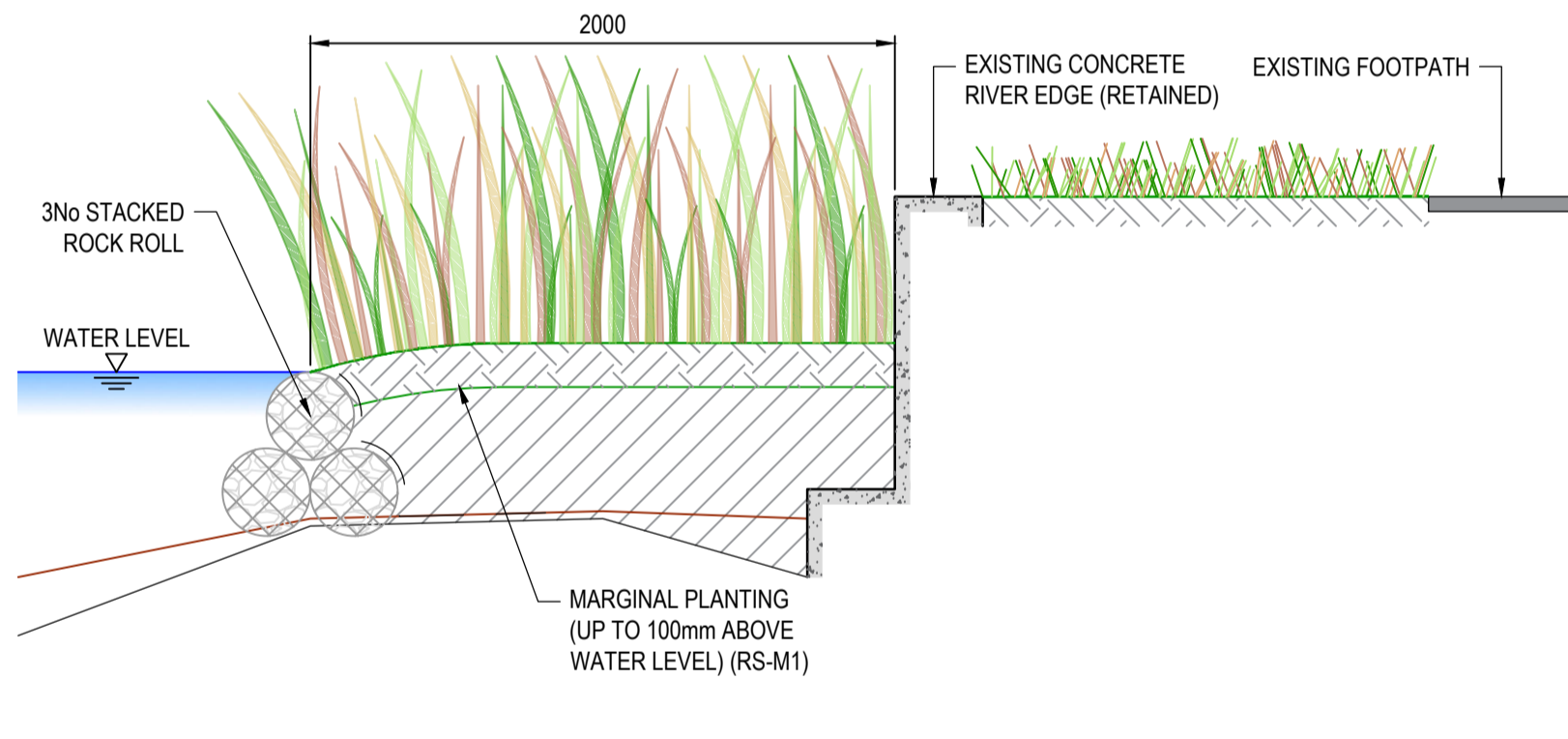




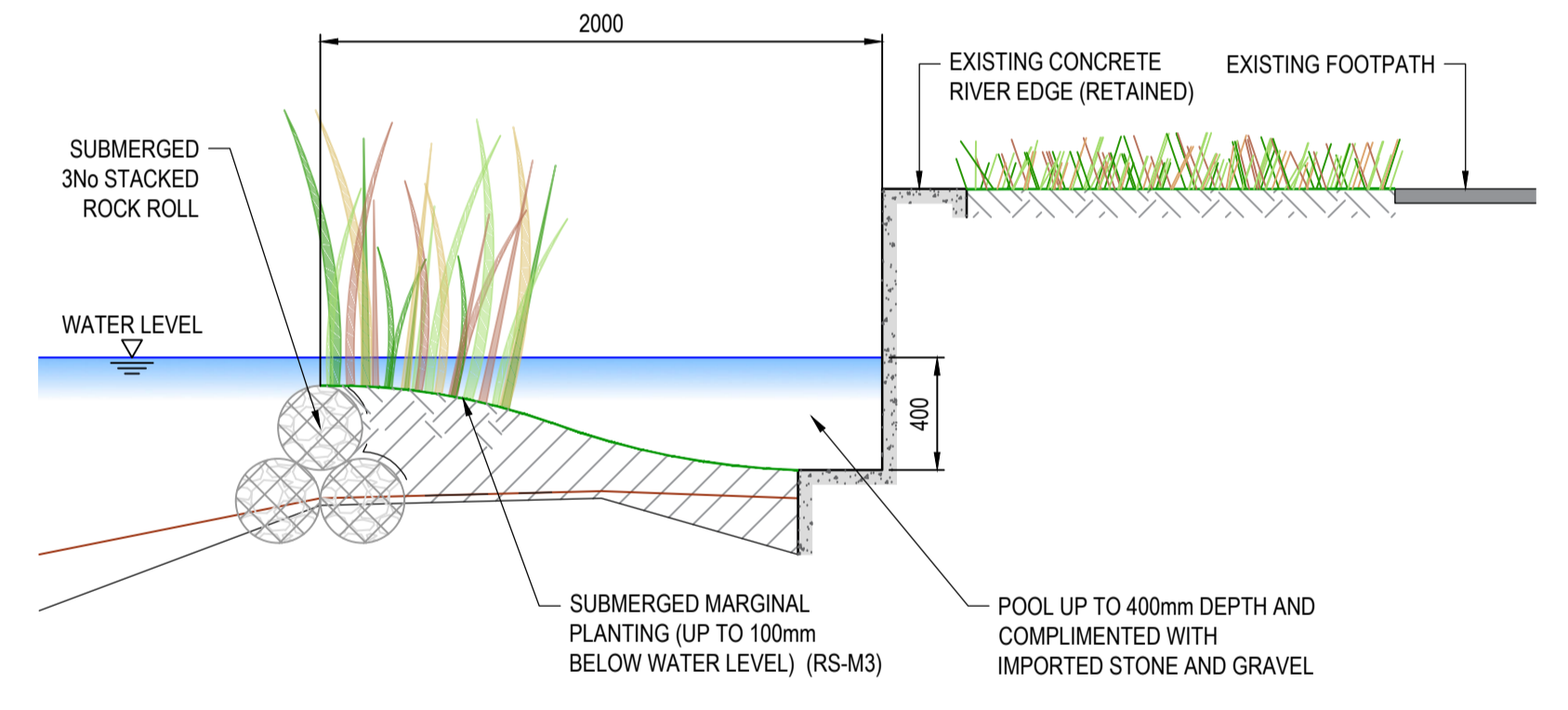
**MARGINAL PLANTING AND MOORING PLAN**  
1:200



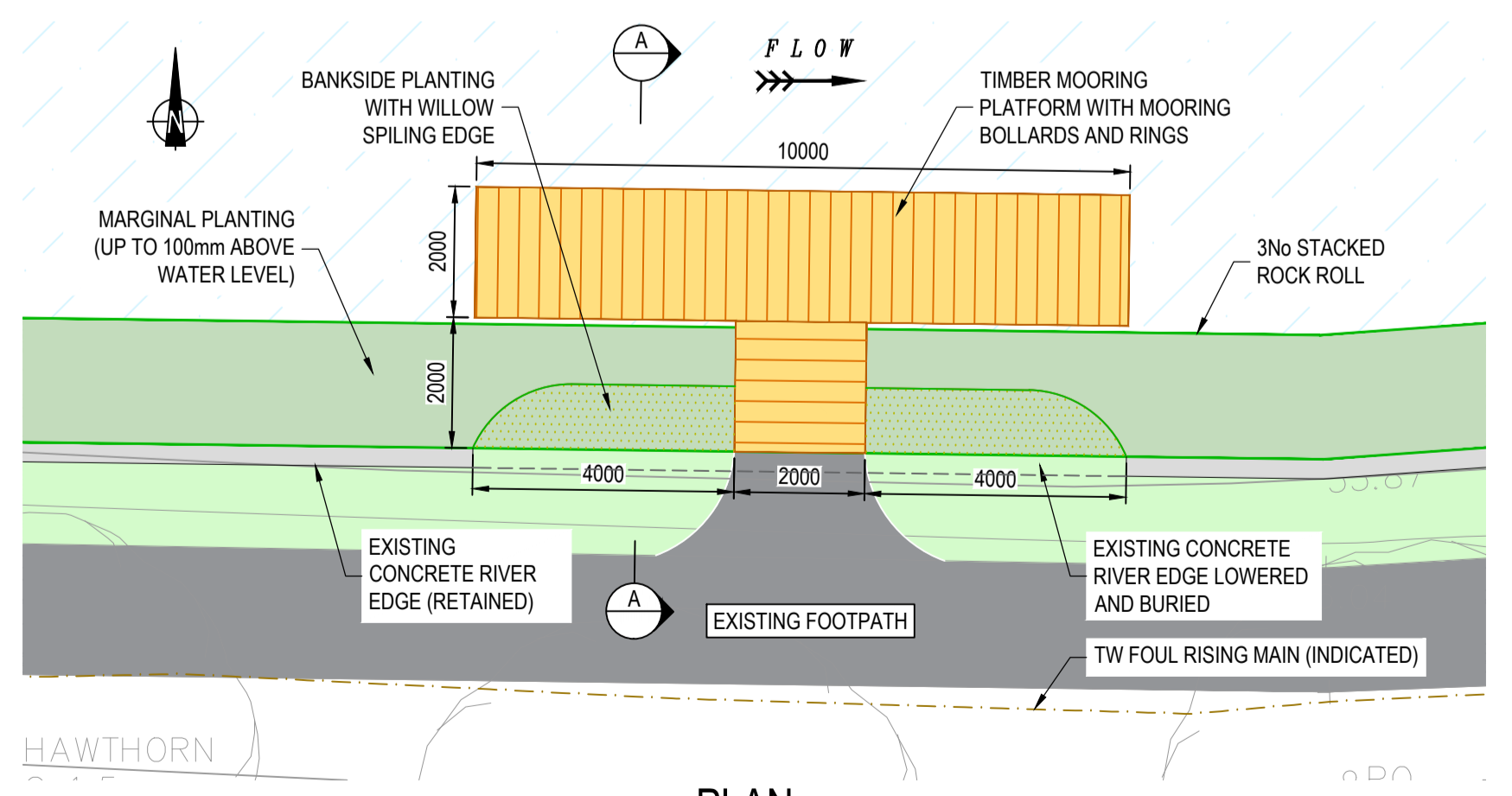
**SECTION A-A**  
TIMBER PLATFORM FOR TEMPORARY MOORING  
1:25



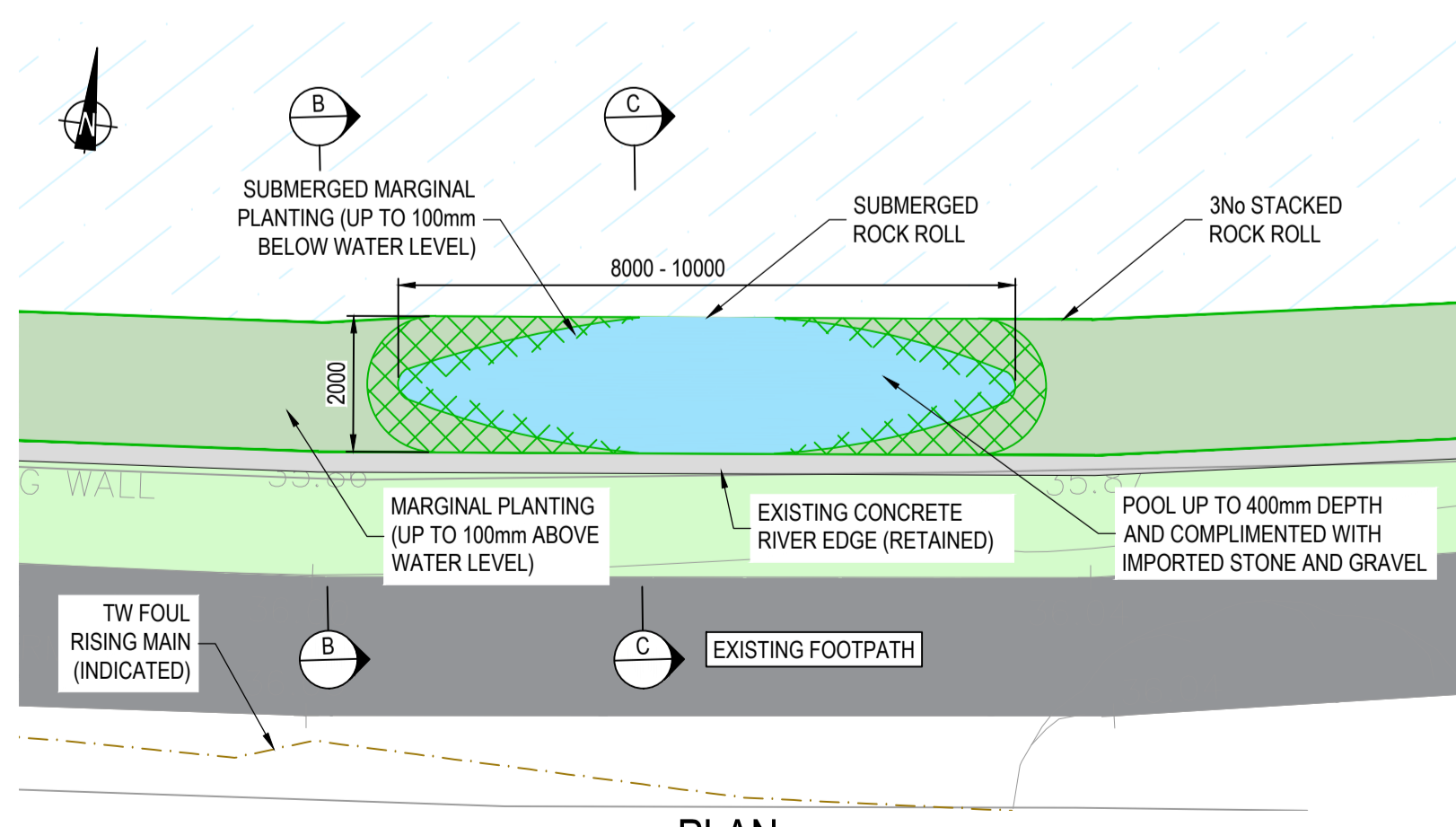
**SECTION B-B**  
MARGINAL PLANTING SHELF  
1:25



**SECTION C-C**  
OPEN WATER POOL  
1:25



**PLAN TYPICAL MOORING**  
1:100



**PLAN TYPICAL OPEN WATER POOL**  
1:100

P01	FIRST ISSUE	05.05.18	SAN	RF	
Mark	Revision	Date	Drawn	Chkd	Appd

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**EAST READING - MASS RAPID TRANSIT  
BRIDGE AND VIADUCT  
PROPOSED MOORING PLATFORMS  
MARGINAL PLANTING SHELF**

Client

Date of 1st Issue: 06.04.2018  
Designed: SAN  
Drawn: SAN

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Checked: RF  
Approved:

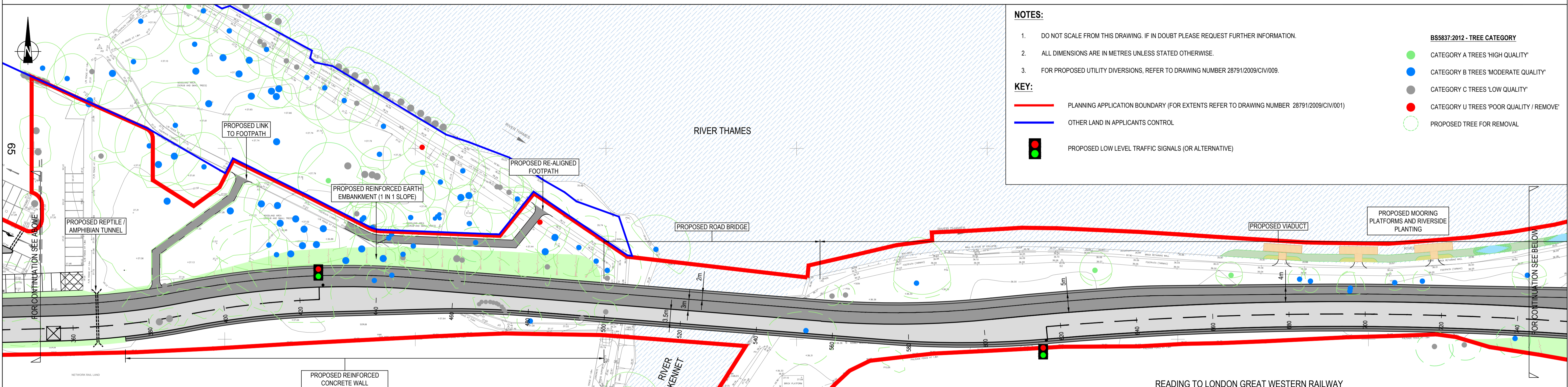
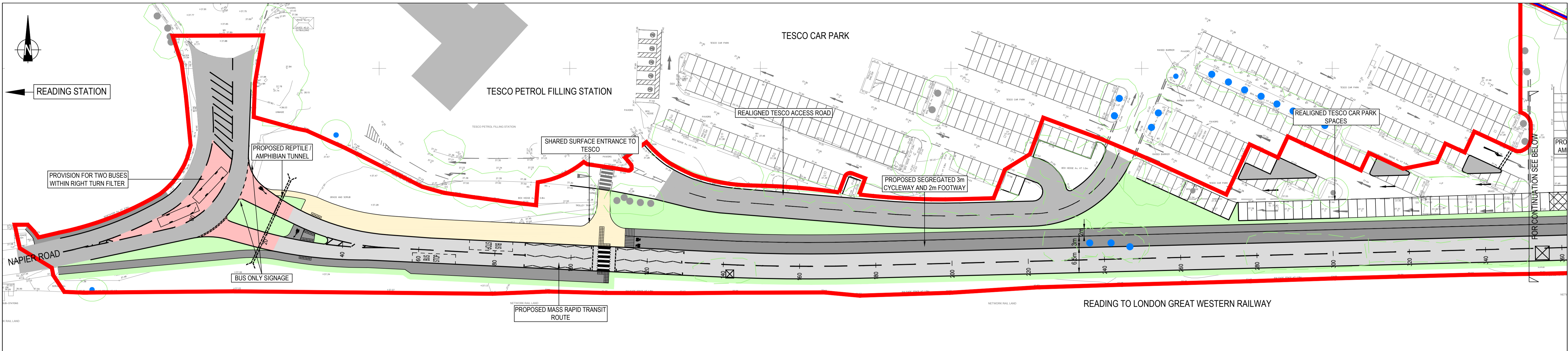
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  - FOR DETAILS OF THE PLANTING PLAN, SEE DRAWINGS 28791/3008/004 - 005.

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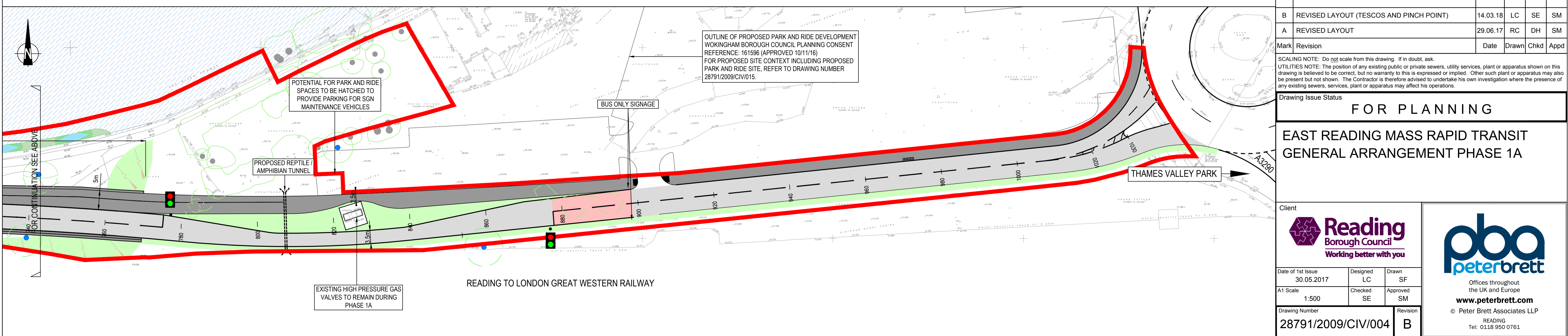
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- PLANNING APPLICATION BOUNDARY (FOR EXTENTS REFER TO DRAWING NUMBER 28791/2009/CIV/001)
- OTHER LAND IN APPLICANTS CONTROL
- PROPOSED LOW LEVEL TRAFFIC SIGNALS (OR ALTERNATIVE)

**BS5837:2012 - TREE CATEGORY**

- CATEGORY A TREES 'HIGH QUALITY'
- CATEGORY B TREES 'MODERATE QUALITY'
- CATEGORY C TREES 'LOW QUALITY'
- CATEGORY U TREES 'POOR QUALITY / REMOVE'
- PROPOSED TREE FOR REMOVAL



B	REVISED LAYOUT (TESCOS AND PINCH POINT)	14.03.18	LC	SE	SM
A	REVISED LAYOUT	29.06.17	RC	DH	SM
Mark	Revision	Date	Drawn	Chkd	Appd

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GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PHASE 1A**

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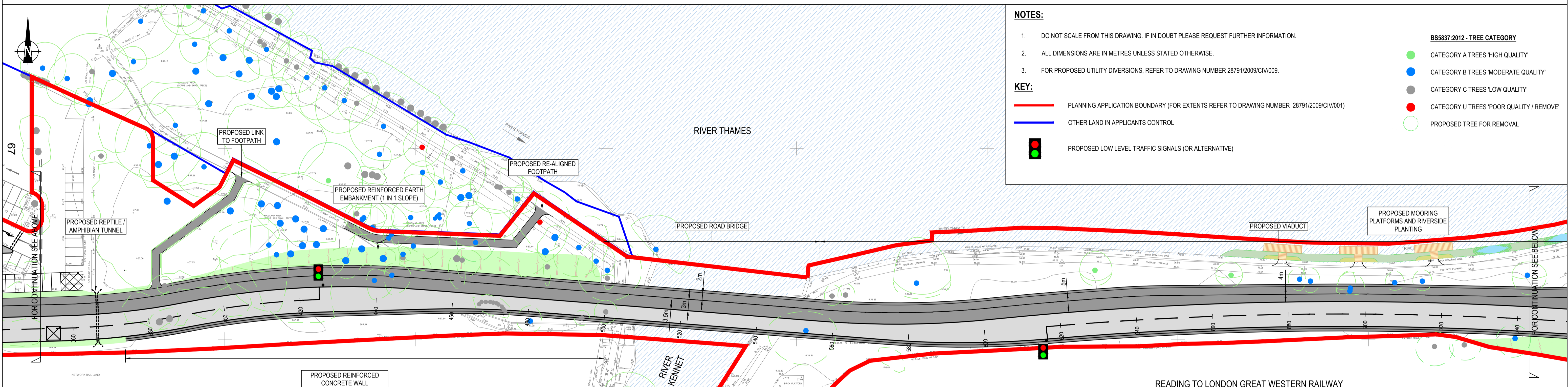
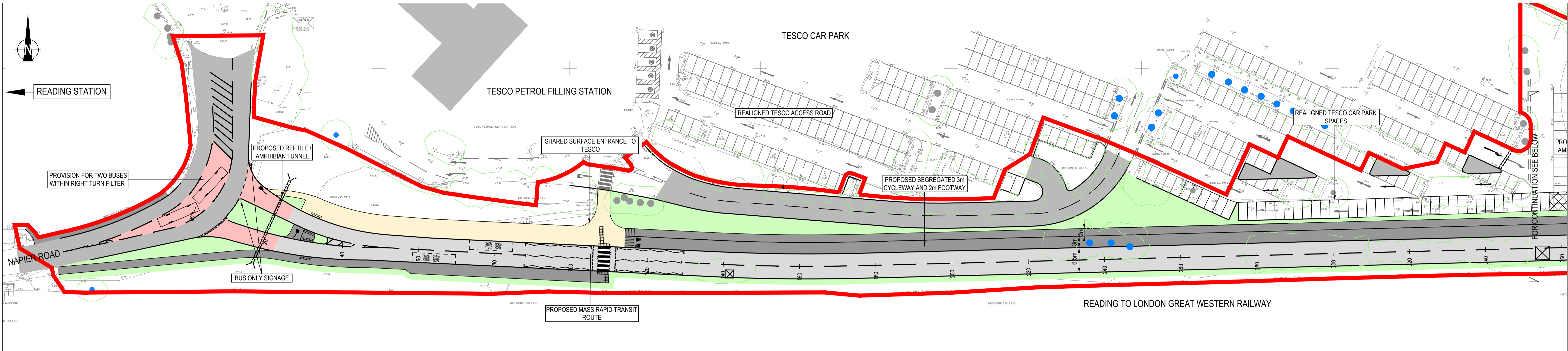
Date of 1st Issue: 30.05.2017  
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A1 Scale: 1:500  
 Checked: SE  
 Approved: SM

Drawing Number: 28791/2009/CIV/004  
 Revision: B

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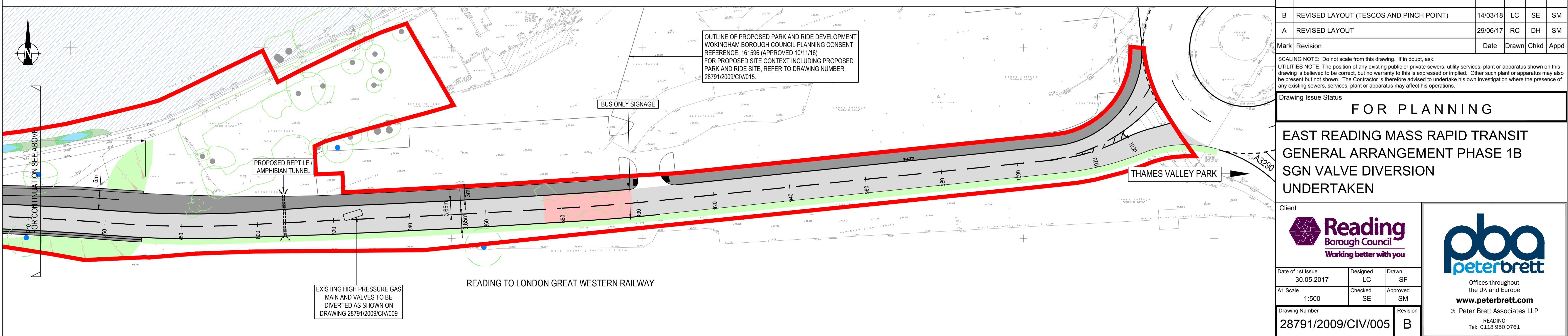
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- CATEGORY U TREES 'POOR QUALITY / REMOVE'
- PROPOSED TREE FOR REMOVAL



OUTLINE OF PROPOSED PARK AND RIDE DEVELOPMENT  
 WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL PLANNING CONSENT  
 REFERENCE: 161596 (APPROVED 10/11/16)  
 FOR PROPOSED SITE CONTEXT INCLUDING PROPOSED  
 PARK AND RIDE SITE, REFER TO DRAWING NUMBER  
 28791/2009/CIV/015.

B	REVISED LAYOUT (TESCOS AND PINCH POINT)	14/03/18	LC	SE	SM
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**EAST READING MASS RAPID TRANSIT  
 GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PHASE 1B  
 SGN VALVE DIVERSION  
 UNDERTAKEN**

Client



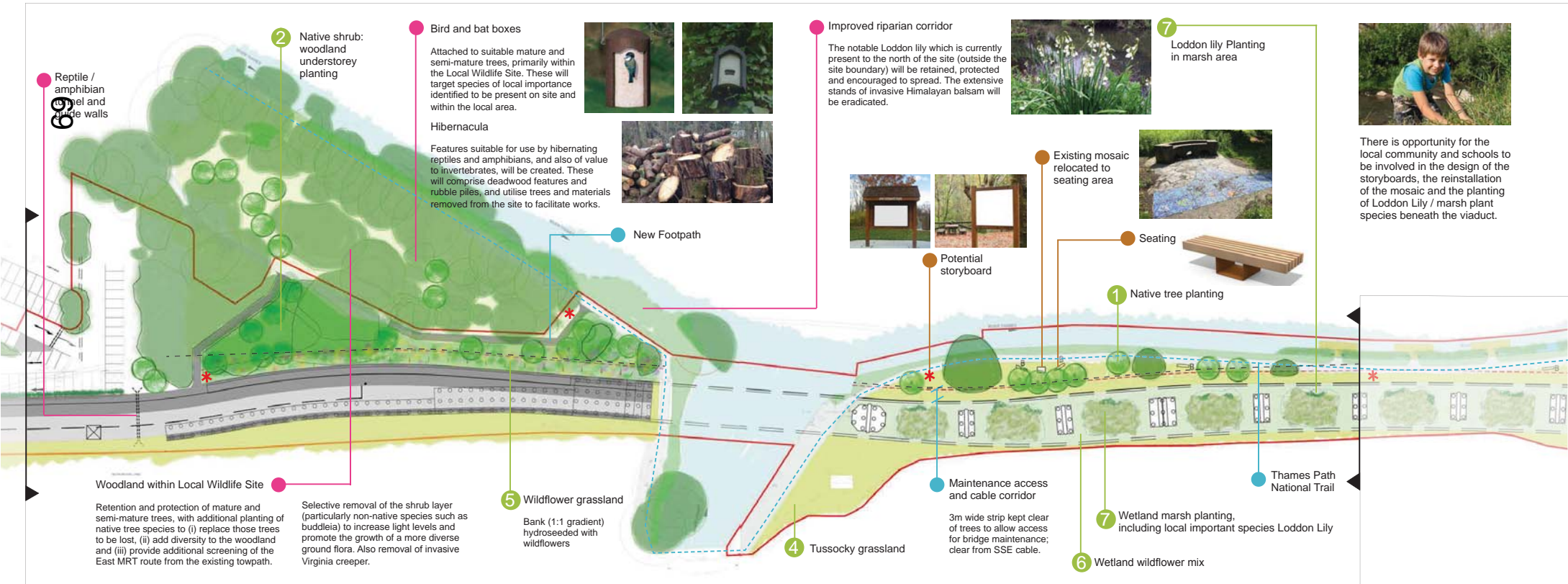
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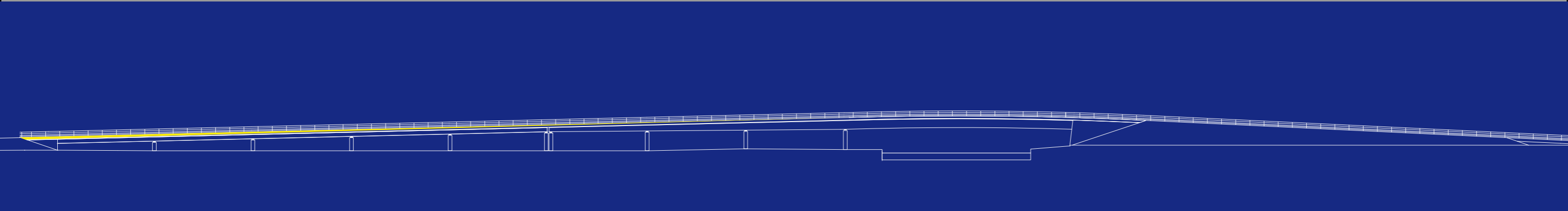


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Reading Borough Council, Transportation & Streetcare

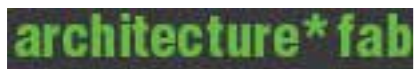
# East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Scheme Design and Access Statement Annex Photomontage and Artist's Impressions



April 2018



in association with



Project Ref: 132.1MRT

Rev: 03(MD)

Caversham Bridge House, Waterman Place, Reading, Berkshire RG1 8DN

T: +44 (0)118 950 0761 F: +44 (0)118 959 7498 E: [reading@peterbrett.com](mailto:reading@peterbrett.com)

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## East Reading Mass Rapid Transit

# Design and Access Statement

## Annexe: Photomontage and Artist's Impressions

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Figure 1. Existing view from the towpath looking east

Figure 2. Photomontage of the proposed view from the towpath looking east



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Figure 3. Existing view from the towpath looking west

Figure 4. Photomontage of the proposed view from the towpath looking west



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Figure 5. Artist's impression of the view from the River Thames towards the new bridge, looking south east





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Figure 6. Artist's impression of the view from the River Thames towards the new bridge, looking south west.



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Figure 7. Artist's impression of the view from the north east



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Figure 8. Artist's impression of the view from the north west



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
PLANNING COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 25 JUNE 2018 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.40 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Tim Holton (Chairman), Chris Bowring (Vice-Chairman), Carl Doran, John Jarvis, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Wayne Smith and Bill Soane

**Councillors Present and Speaking**

Councillors: Andy Croy and Shahid Younis

**Officers Present**

Chris Easton, Service Manager, Highways Development  
Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor  
Justin Turvey, Operational Development Management Lead Officer (Interim)  
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

**Case Officers Present**

Daniel Ray  
Alex Thwaites  
Graham Vaughan

**11. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

**MEMBERS' UPDATE**

There are a number of references to the Members' Update within these minutes. The Members' Update was circulated to all present prior to the meeting. It also contains details of properties to be visited prior to the next Planning Meeting. A copy is attached.

**12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Smith declared a personal interest in item 16 on the grounds that he had listed the application. He stated that he had an open mind and would not come to a decision until he had heard representations from Officers and Speakers.

**13. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS**

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

**14. APPLICATION NO 172048- LAND BETWEEN THAMES VALLEY BUSINESS PARK AND NAPIER ROAD ( BULMERSHE AND WHITEGATES)**

**Proposal:** Full application for proposed construction of a segregated fasttrack public transport, pedestrian and cycle bridge and viaduct, comprising concrete bridge structure with a river span of 59.5m and a land span of 316m, supported by concrete columns, steel beams and reinforced soil embankment, together with new footpath links and existing footpath alterations, replacement supermarket car parking provision, junction improvements and landscaping.

**Applicant:** Reading Borough Council Highways and Transport Department.

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 5 to 82.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- an update to the report regarding tree removal from other land users;
- clarification of alternative schemes, cables, accommodation bridge, marshland and journey time savings;
- an additional 16 objections.

Bill Luck, Earley Town Council, spoke in objection to the application. Bill stated that the design of the bridge was 'unsightly', and that it had not adhered to the required 'good design' as stated in the NPPF paragraph 17. He added that the proposed development would result in a loss to wildlife and that it would fail to protect the local biodiversity. Bill stated that flooding compensation would be provided but it would be located in woodland. Bill added that the viaduct would not be screened and at its closest point to the river it would only be 5 metres away from the bank. Bill stated that the proposed development would not retain the existing features and felt that it contravened paragraph 9 of the NPPF which stated that development should seek a positive improvement in the quality of the natural environment. Bill was of the opinion that there was no policy justification for the proposed development and asked that the Committee refuse the application on the grounds of severe impact on the setting, damage to the nearby grade II listed bridge and the flood risk that the development would propose.

Tamzin Morphy, Resident, spoke in objection to the application. She felt that the proposed development would ruin the visual amenity and green space provisions and would contravene local and national planning policy. Tamzin felt that the proposed development would negatively affect the most densely populated area of Reading and that less intrusive methods (of reducing traffic congestion and improving public transport services) had not been trialled. Tamzin stated that the development would cost £24 million and felt that it would devastate the local wildlife population and result in at least 766 trees being felled as a result of the development (with only 77 trees to be planted as replacements). Tamzin was of the opinion that the local grass snake and slow worm populations at the proposed development site had not been accounted for and that there would be a net loss in biodiversity as a result of the proposed development. Tamzin added that traffic levels had been falling on the London Road in recent years and felt that this application (if approved) would increase the overall traffic on the London Road as a result of more people using the MRT.

Scott Witchalls, Agent, spoke in favour of the application. He stated that the proposed development was in line with the Borough's long standing commitment to improving transport facilities, by reducing existing problems and encouraging more people to use public transport services. He stated that the land had been safeguarded for the purpose of developing an MRT scheme and that overhead power lines would be removed at the development site. Scott noted that this was a revised scheme which had taken on board comments from a range of sources. He added that the revised scheme would include a new marginal shelf (as requested by the Environment Agency), low level lighting at the road level and a managed wetland structure. Scott stated that there would be 3.5 hectares of scrubland replaced and that no grade A trees would be felled as a result of the proposed development. He added that there would be no loss in flood storage and that there would be an increase in biodiversity.

Shahid Younis, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. He stated that as a resident and local Councillor of the area he was concerned with the environmental impact

that the proposed development would cause. He added that the area of land proposed for development was a beautiful part of the borough which was used and enjoyed by many local residents. Shahid stated this if the Committee were minded to approve the application that they seek to mitigate any environmental damage that would be caused by the development.

Andy Croy, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. He felt that the 2010 Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC's) Core Strategy had no provision for a major road to be built in the area of the proposed development. He was of the opinion that the proposed development was not a MRT service and was simply another major road. He added that an MRT service was typically a light railway service and felt that the term MRT had been appropriated to fit the proposed development in to the WBC's core strategy.

Graham Vaughan, Case Officer, answered a number of Member queries. He stated that fragmentation of the habitat would occur should the proposed development go ahead, but added that a Council ecologist had assessed the site and had not objected on these grounds.

Graham stated that the site had been reserved for this use (an MRT) and it had therefore been deemed an accepted loss. He added that the development would result in 14 trees being felled in the Wokingham Borough with 37 trees being planted as replacements. Graham continued by stating that bat boxes would be installed at the site and there would be a landscape ecological mitigation plan in place. He added that the slowworms at the site would be translocated.

Graham stated that an independent design panel had assessed the plans and provided comments to aid the design of the scheme in reducing its impact on the area. He added that the Planning Officers had to weigh up the planning balance by weighing the harm that the proposed development would cause compared to the benefits that the proposed development would bring, which in this case the Officers had deemed the benefits to outweigh the harm.

In response to a Member query regarding suitable alternatives to the proposed scheme, Graham Vaughan stated that other alternatives were not sustainable. Regarding flooding, Graham confirmed that the Environment Agency no longer objected on the grounds of flooding risk.

Chris Easton, Highways and Development Manager, responded to a number of Member queries. He stated that WBC's core strategy secured provision for the proposed infrastructure in this area which would carry passengers. He clarified that the proposed scheme would fulfil that criteria and would assist in increasing the usage of public transport and reducing journey times of the buses that would use the route. Chris stated that the proposed scheme would assist with the Borough wide commitment to journey sustainability and sustainable travel.

Carl Doran queried the usage of the term MRT to describe the proposed scheme, stating that there were no proposals for light rail provisions. Chris Easton stated that the proposed scheme would deliver the feature of decreased journey time and a high quality express bus service, which was set out in WBC's core strategy and clarified that the term MRT did not solely include light rail provisions. He added that the buses would be of sustainable quality and would be fitted with modern appliances and conveniences including Wi-Fi and air conditioning, many of which would also run on alternative fuels.

Graham Vaughan responded to a query from Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey regarding the proposed marshland at the site. Graham clarified that the exact details of the marshland would be agreed upon in time but the provision of a marshland would be reserved by a condition.

Chris Easton responded to a query from John Jarvis regarding traffic relief on the A4. Chris clarified that the proposed scheme would provide general traffic relief on the surrounding roads and as a result this would aid reducing traffic congestion on the A4 corridor.

Wayne Smith commented on the proposed scheme. He felt that the proposed scheme would be unsightly and that it would come at a great financial cost to WBC and its residents. He added that at its peak height (whilst a bus was using the MRT) it would be 8 metres high from the river bank below. Justin Turvey, Operational Development Management Lead Officer (Interim), stated that the proposed development had been independently assessed and reviewed and had been found to be acceptable in terms of design and appearance.

Members raised concerns over the environmental impact that the proposed development would have on the area. Chris Bowring felt that the Committee had to carefully weigh up the harm caused (to the surrounding environment) by the proposed development against the positive benefits that it would create.

In response to Member queries regarding falling vehicle numbers on the roads, Chris Easton confirmed that although the number of vehicles on the road in question had slightly reduced between 2007 and 2010, the level had remained flat between 2010 and the current day. The identified delays at junctions within the vicinity indicated that the road was working at capacity which would cause redistribution of traffic and change in flows. The proposed scheme would provide the infrastructure for future growth and would allow for a sustainable transport improvement that would assist in encouraging further increased use of public transport.

The Committee voted on the recommendation of conditional approval subject to legal agreement and upon being put to the vote the motion to approve the application failed.

The Committee went on to discuss and review the possible reasons for refusal of the application, and upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That application 172048 be refused due to concern over harm to the character and appearance of the area and that the application would be contrary to CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Local Plan.

**15. APPLICATION NO 180846 - ARBORFIELD GARRISON AND ADJOINING LAND (BARKHAM; FINCHAMPSTEAD SOUTH; SWALLOWFIELD; ARBORFIELD)**

**Proposal:** Application for the approval of Reserved Matters, including layout, scale, appearance and landscaping in relation to the erection of a new primary school including nursery to be undertaken on a phased basis – Phase 1 (2FE Primary School) and Phase 2 (3FE Primary School), including the provision of hard court play area, all-weather pitch, ancillary club house block and associated access, parking and landscaping.

**Applicant:** Wokingham Borough Council.



The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 83 to 116.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included three additional conditions.

Piers Brunning, on behalf of the Applicant, spoke in favour of the application. He stated that the scheme would deliver key components of the Arborfield SDL and would be the first of two new primary schools to be built as part of the scheme. He added that the school would be developed in two phases, with the first phase offering 420 places for pupils. Piers continued by stating that phase two would be initiated if the demand increased, with this phase offering up to 630 places for pupils. Piers stated that the school would provide a good teaching environment with a good range of teaching spaces and age appropriate areas. He stated that an all-weather sports pitch would be built on the site which would be worth double the area of a grass pitch as it could be used far in excess of a grass pitch. Piers added that the all-weather sports pitch would be available for community use when appropriate at the weekends. It was noted that there would be a dedicated community and school drop off point to supplement the staff car park.

Members commented positively on the provision of a sprinkler system at the school. Alex Thwaites, Case Officer, stated that although sprinkler provision was not a planning consideration the planning department had worked closely with the developer to ensure that the school would be sprinkler protected.

Members queried the allocation of 11 parking spaces (excluding the 37 staff spaces provided) for Phase 1 and asked whether there was any scope to increase this number. Chris Easton, Highways Development Manager, stated that the proposed parking had provisions for more than one space per staff member and therefore exceeded the Council's policy in respect of parking. He added that a parking management strategy had been secured and would be enforced should the need arise.

**RESOLVED:** That application 180846 be approved subject to the conditions set out in agenda pages 84 to 89 and the additional 3 conditions as set out in the Members' Update.

#### **16. APPLICATION NO 180072 - LAND ADJACENT TO CARTEF FARM, ISLANDSTONE LANE (HURST)**

**Proposal:** Application to vary conditions 4 (approved plans) and 5 (number of caravans on site) of planning consent 153360 to increase the number of caravans on site from 2 caravans to 4 (no more than 2 being static caravans), thereby increasing the number of gypsy pitches from 1 to 2.

**Applicant:** Mr and Mrs Henry and Samantha Giles.

The Committee received and reviewed a report, set out on agenda pages 117-134.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- an update to the name of the applicant;
- a correction to paragraph 24;
- a representation from Hurst Parish Council.

Howard Larkin, Hurst Parish Council, spoke in objection to the application. He felt that the application would result in major intensification of the site and failed to address CP11. He added that the site was an unsustainable location, with the nearest shop and school being too far away for pedestrian access. He stated that the roads leading to the site were single track and that the area had experienced six instances of flooding since 1947. Howard stated the Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) had an 11.54 year traveller land supply. He asked that the Committee refuse the application for the reasons stated.

Lou Robinson, Spokesperson on behalf of the Hurst Village Society, spoke in objection to the application. She stated that WBC had an 11.54 year traveller pitch land supply and it was therefore not appropriate to intensify the existing site. She added that the existing dwelling on the site was very large and the Council should limit traveller sites being excessively far away from existing developments. Lou felt that the Council needed to do more to check that occupants of GRT sites indeed met the definition of a traveller and asked that the Committee refuse the application for the reasons stated.

Matthew Green, Agent, spoke in favour of the application. He stated that this application would not be for a new development and that the use of the land had already been permitted. He added that there would be intensification on the site but this would not constitute a material change of use. Matthew stated that Officers had agreed that the site was sustainable and that Landscape Officers had agreed that this application to vary conditions would result in the betterment of the local scene.

Daniel Ray, Case Officer, responded to a number of Member queries regarding intensification, land supply, flooding and change in character of the area. He stated that the site had no named consent and that the occupants would have to meet the criteria of the conditions. Regarding land supply, Daniel stated that the site was acceptable in all other matters. Daniel stated that at appeal (for the original planning application) the site was deemed an accessible location, which was a strong material consideration. Daniel stated that the inspector had deemed that there were other options available should the road become inaccessible due to flooding and had found the site acceptable on these grounds. Daniel stated that there would be betterment of the site compared to the current dwelling and this would help to negate the change in character of the area.

Members had concerns over the proposal of a new stable (in a different position on the site) which would be approximately twice the size of the existing stable. Daniel Ray stated that the new stable would be part of the variation of conditions and was not materially different in principal. He added that the previous planning permission allowed for the provision of a stable.

Wayne Smith proposed that the application be refused as it would result in intensification of the site through increased number of pitches and increased size of barn which would result in harm to the character and appearance of countryside and area. This was seconded by John Jarvis.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That application 180072 be refused as it would result in intensification of the site through increased number of pitches and increased size of barn which would result in harm to the character and appearance of countryside and area.