

20.12.11

Dear Pip

Proposed punt station outside The Bonded Warehouse, part of the River Bar Steakhouse and Grill /The Glassworks Spa and Varsity Hotel.

Further to our recent meeting and correspondence, I am writing to confirm that I would like to apply for a 6m x 1.5m pontoon to be placed outside The River Bar Steakhouse and Grill and The Glassworks Spa on the boardwalk. We rent this bonded warehouse property from Magdalene College and it is on a long lease. We have been here for 11 years. The Restaurant and the Spa are attached to The Varsity Hotel which was opened in July 2010 with 48 rooms.

There are a lot of hotel guests and other guests who visit the Restaurant and the Spa who wish to go punting when they are in Cambridge. At present we recommend that they go to Quayside and ask for a punt from there. The experience of these guests being confronted with the myriad of touts has not reflected well on us. Hence if we were able to have a fixed punt station ourselves we could send our guests to our own operation with the confidence that they would not need to run the gauntlet of touts. Guests would therefore have a better experience in Cambridge without the haggling between operators that can currently exist with the client stuck in the middle. We would also provide a professional service as we do in the Hotel, Restaurant and Spa and clear up the area outside these businesses that is currently a mess.

The proposed site for the pontoon is on a wide stretch of the river ranging from 18.08 to 18.29 metres (photograph P4) from the outer post of the boardwalk to the wall on the other side, so this section of the river is suitable for a punt station. During our busy period in the summer, the hotel would have a maximum of 100 guests staying per night, along with a further 100 visiting the restaurant and 25 visiting the Spa. Not all would use the punts, but most of our guests at this time are leisure, so we would estimate 2 small punts (1m wide x 6.4m long) and 3 large punts (1.4m wide x 6.4m long) would be suitable for this number. They can be stored lengthways or sideways by the punt station and would not protrude over the centre of the river.

I have contacted Steve Dighton (Bridge Manager) from Cambridgeshire County Council and he has come to see the site. He has suggested that the pontoon not be fixed to the Boardwalk, so the detailed sketches show the pontoon next to the boardwalk but fixed by two steel poles that are piled into the river bed. The pontoon will then float up and down with the small variances in water level that will occur and if the river is lowered for any reason the station will drop down with the river. Steps are built onto the pontoon directly and butt up against the boardwalk but are not structurally fixed to the boardwalk. The cross sectional sketch shows the guardrails that are in place at the rear of the pontoon and the sides of the steps for peoples' protection.

Expansion to the existing punt stations would be viable for the following reasons:

1. The new station would complement and enhance the waterside setting:

The punt station would be decked in teak, which would be visually pleasing. (An example of a pontoon made of similar materials is shown in photograph P5.) It would clear up the boats that are currently there. For 18 months now we have had to put up with punts outside the River Bar and Glassworks Spa that are often full of rubbish as their current owners seem to leave them for long periods of time. We have asked them to clean them out but they are not interested in keeping the view pleasant in this very visually sensitive part of Cambridge. We currently, therefore, clean their punts ourselves so guests do not have to view these from the Spa and Restaurant, where large windows look directly onto the river and where the windows of the Restaurant are open in the summer (photograph P8). It presents a health hazard with left over food, glass and other rubbish being dumped in the boats (photographs P6 and P7). Having our own punt station and punts here would tidy up the area outside the Restaurant and Spa considerably.

Our operation would provide a visually pleasing structure and our boats would be brand new, made of traditional materials by an individual called Steve Lowing who works out of Cross Haul Marine Ltd at St Neots. The boats would replace the dilapidated ones that currently exist. CCTV would be installed over the area from our existing building to deter any vandals and litter droppers and the punt station and punts would be kept in excellent condition. The punt station and punts would, after all, be a good advert for the Hotel, Restaurant and Spa, and Cambridge itself. We would provide our guests with a point to punt from without having to run the gauntlet of touts that is currently the case. Payment could be added to peoples' room bill or taken through the Restaurant and Spa till.

2. The new station would maintain or improve the public access to and along the waterside:

On meeting Steve Dighton, a cut in the existing railings, with a gate made in keeping with the existing materials on the boardwalk was acceptable to him. The gate would be 1 metre wide and locked when the punt station is not in use for health and safety implications. When it is open it would fix back onto existing railings making sure that the boardwalk is not obstructed in any way, maintaining public access to the waterside. (sketch P1 and P2)

3. The new station would maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the watercourses and other bodies of water and their margins:

Research has shown that fish use the air pockets in the pontoon as nurseries. The pontoon also floats in very little water so does not affect the flow of the river in any significant way, both maintaining biodiversity. The main body of the pontoon is made from rotationally moulded virgin polyethylene, so ultra violet rays or water will not break it down and leach into the river.

4. In this present case there would be recreational development: there is sufficient capacity to accommodate additional usage of the waterway arising from the development.

The Hotel and other guests who would use the proposed punt station, would normally use other punts on the river, so in reality the punt station would not create a great deal more extra usage of the waterway. The reason for doing this is to provide a better service for guests so they do not have to run the gauntlet of touts as is the current case. They often complain at the hotel of the numbers of persons who approach them when they are looking to punt, so if we can direct them to our own punt station and they get a better experience, they may well be in a better frame of mind to return to Cambridge.

I also enclose a copy of the standard form used when applying to the Environment Agency which I have sent off to Daniel Mcaulay. Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Davies', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Will Davies
(07970072162)

Site Plan:

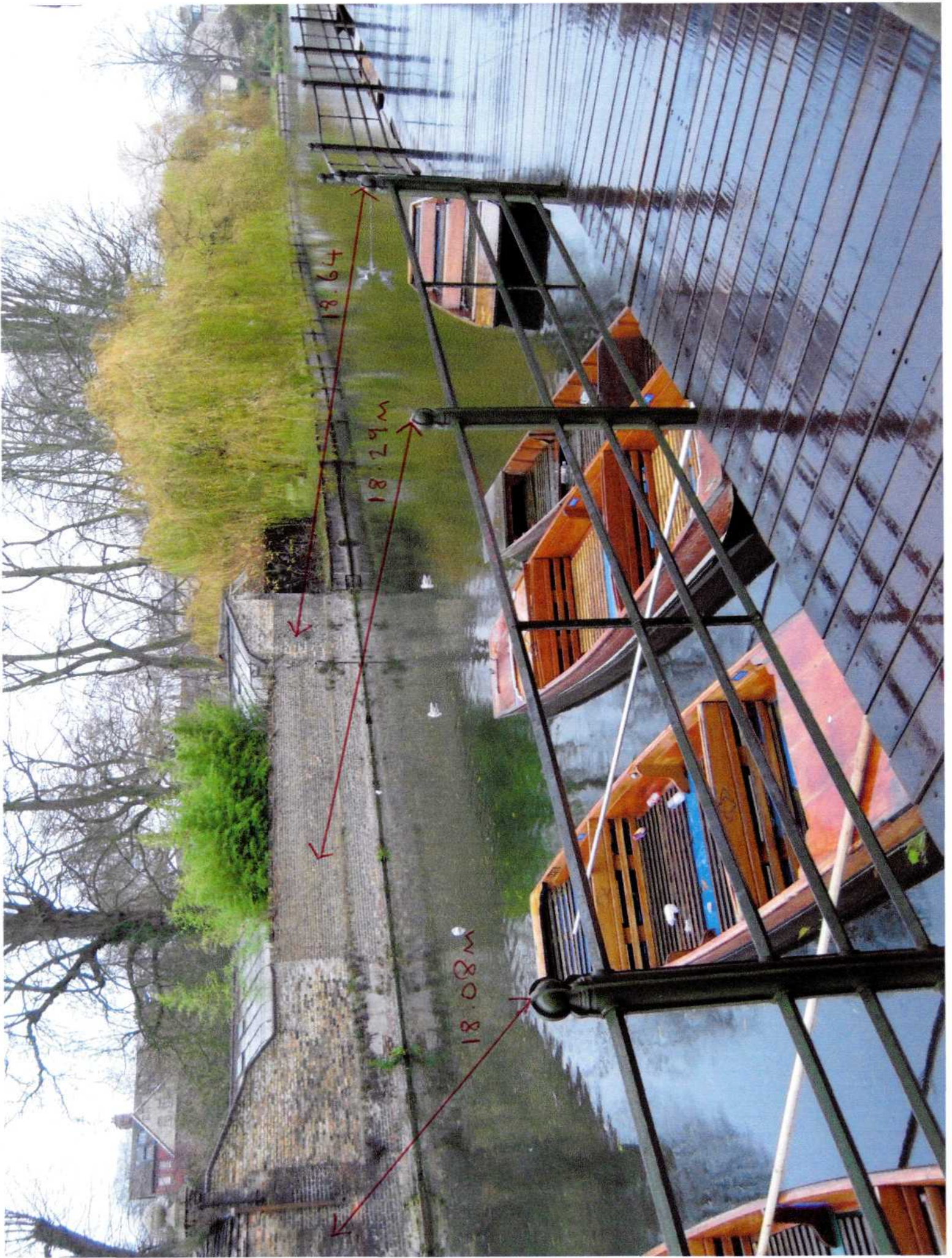
- location of portion
Ref. P3



Km 0.02 0.04 0.06 0.08 0.1 0.12



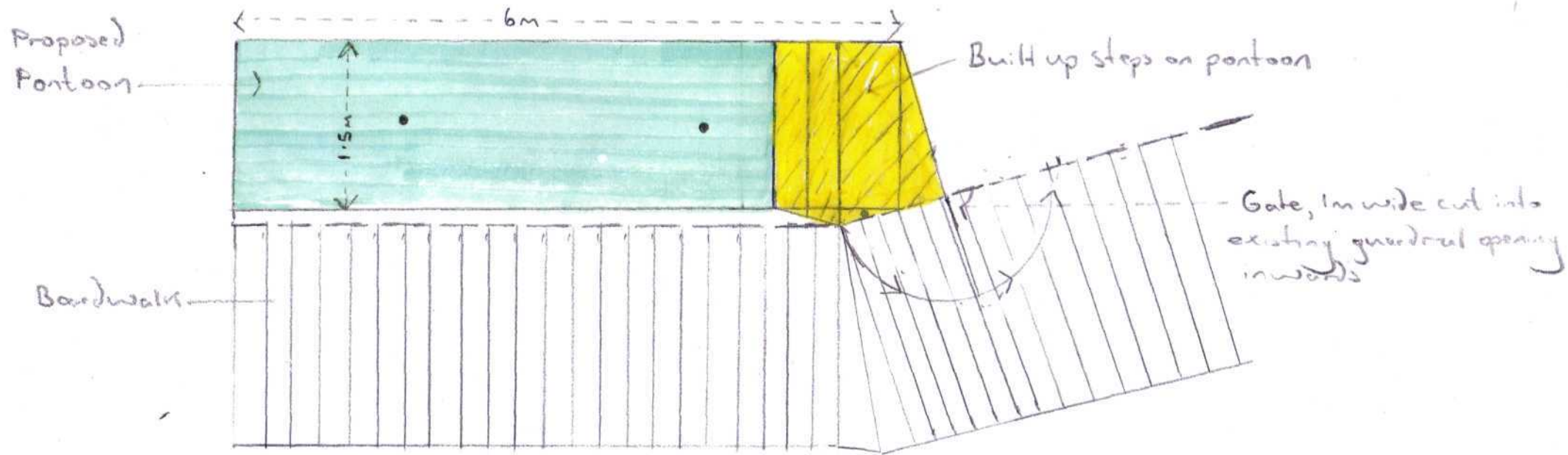
P4



Proposed Pontoon by River Bar & Glassworks

Materials used:

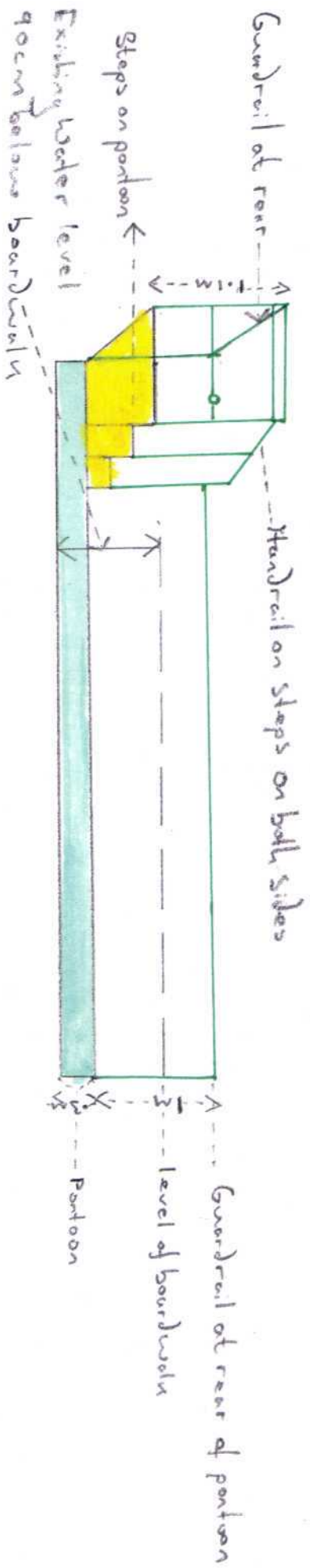
Rotationally moulded Virgin Polyethylene for main body of pontoon
Surface clad in teak decking
2 x 90mm piles positioning pontoon



Bonded Warehouse
Housing the River Bar + Glassworks

1m
Scale: 1:50
Ref. P1

Proposed Pontoon by River Bar & Glassworks



Cross section:

From River looking onto
Pontoon and boardwalk.

Scale 1:50

← 1m →

Rel. P2