

Project:

Dunston Staiths Container Project

Title: **Design, Access, and Heritage Statement**

Client: **Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust**

Issued by: **MCha**

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Staiths | Introduction & Site Location

The purpose of this Design & Access Statement is to accompany a planning application for the temporary siting of converted shipping containers on two sites around the historically important Dunston Staiths.

The accommodation is split between two sites, identified opposite, and created by reusing 5no. 20ft shipping containers and one half sized 10ft container.

Four and a half of the containers will be stationed on an area of low-grade hardstanding, currently used as an informal car park and referred to subsequently as Site A, and the single converted shipping container will be located on the lower Staiths on Site B.

The proposed scheme has the aim of creating new, flexible spaces to serve as a visitor hub and staff base for the Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust, the provision of storage and toilet facilities, and the installation of a kiosk to serve as an information point directly at the main visitor gate and entrance.

The kiosk and office rental will provide essential income for the Staiths, allowing this important landmark and piece of history to be maintained and preserved for future generations and ensuring that it's long-term future remains viable.

The scheme has been carefully considered to give the rental space required to provide income, at the same time as minimising the impact on the current space and creating an affordable, inventive addition to the area.

The WCs at the car park site and the storage / events ticket office on the lower Staiths will allow events such as the food market and The Late Shows to be properly serviced - giving stall holders, volunteers and staff the facilities they need. This will allow the Staiths Friends and TWBPT to hold more events and open the Staiths to the public more regularly, without the need to hire expensive infrastructure.

The container units will be retrofitted and upgraded off-site, then installed in their proposed location, providing instant facilities to serve the organisation and the wider public, without the need for a lengthy construction period on site.



Aerial overview of site in relation to major urban areas



Site A from adjacent to Northumbrian Water domain on the A1114.



Site B from the upper level of Staiths.

Staiths | Planning History & Heritage

Site A has served solely as an informal parking area (that being with no painted markings, ticketing, or charges) for a number of years.

Previously it was used to store hire vans for an adjacent business on Staithes Road, but since that business moved on, the site has reverted to casual car parking only used by the general public and customers for the adjacent businesses.

Site B is on the lower Staiths. Dunston Staiths is believed to be the largest timber structure in Europe. It is a Scheduled Monument, Grade II listed and is owned by the applicant, the registered charity Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust (TWBPT).

Opened in 1893 by the North East Railway Company, it was built to allow large quantities of coal arriving by rail from the Durham Coalfields to be loaded directly onto waiting colliers (coal ships) ready for the onward journey to customers in London and abroad.

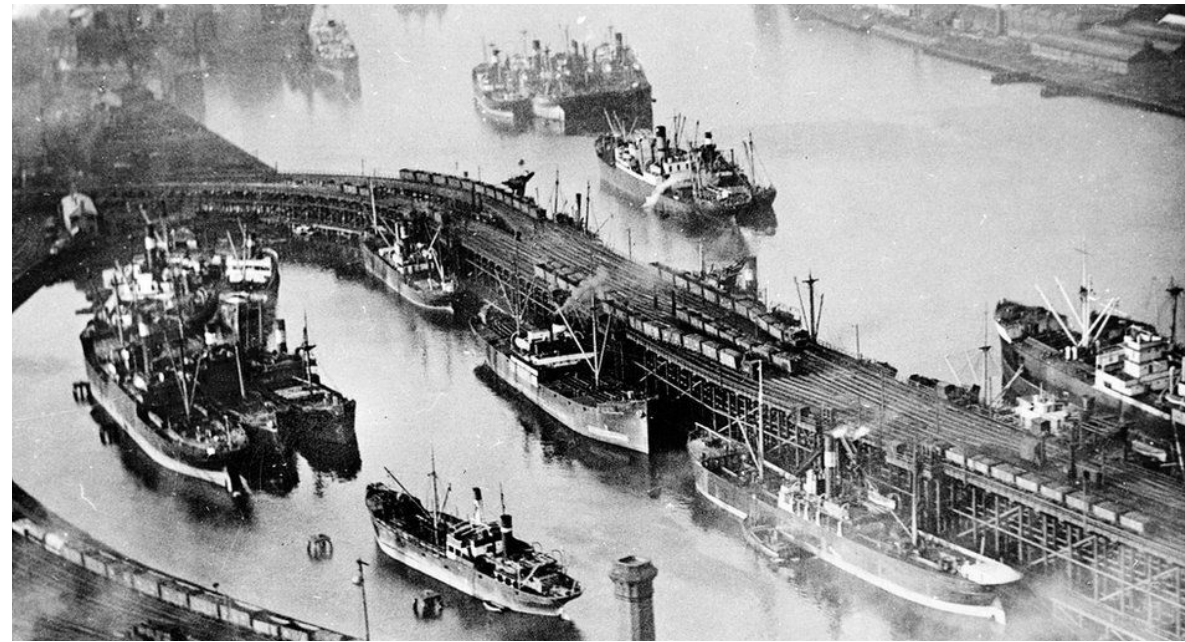
At the coal industry's peak around 5.5 million tons of coal was moved this way each year. As the coal industry declined during the latter part of last century, so too did Dunston Staiths, eventually falling into serious disrepair.

Some reprieve came from the National Garden Festival held in Gateshead in 1990, which saw extensive restoration work carried out, with the Staiths taking a leading role as a key installation with performance space and an art gallery.

A serious fire in 2003 inflicted extensive damage putting the Staiths on Historic England's 'At Risk Register'. Fortunately, TWBPT succeeded in raising the funds required to kick start the ongoing restoration which has seen it transformed into an exciting and sustainable visitor attraction.

More recently the structure has been found use not only as a visitor attraction to explore, but as a venue for public art and events.

There is a popular and well established food market held on the Staiths during summer, drawing many visitors along Keelman's Way to the site, and the Staiths have hosted exhibits as part of the successful regional art event The Late Shows, and have similarly ran artist in residence schemes using the structure.



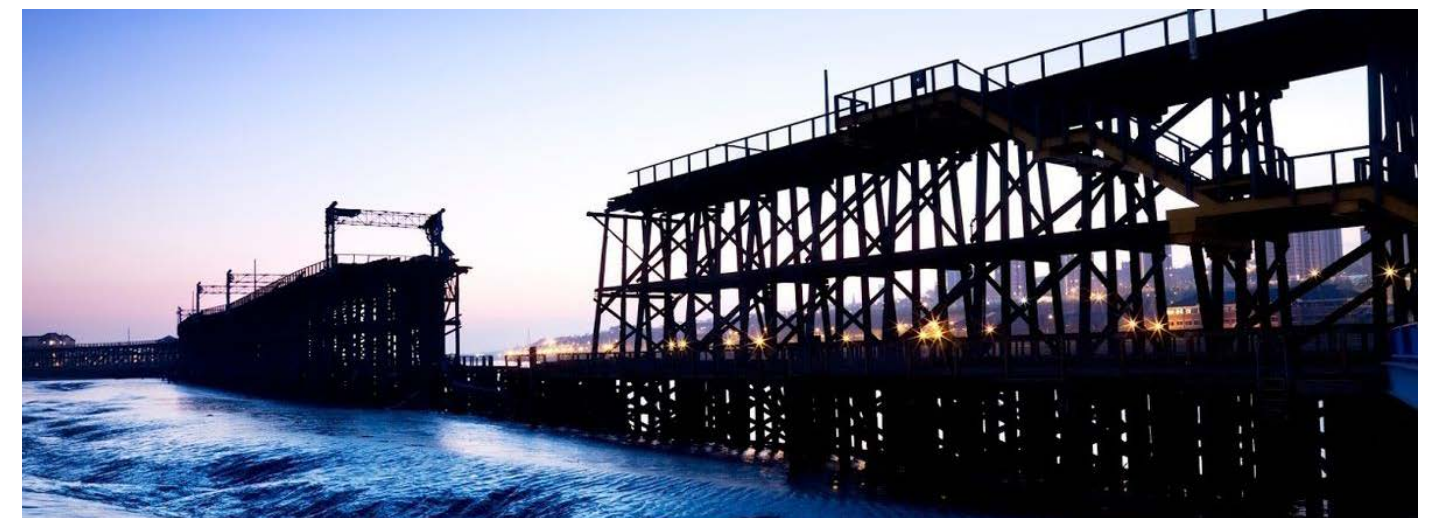
Archive image showing the huge amount of industry associated with the Staiths.



Dunston Staiths Lite Show in 2016



The devastating fire on the Staiths in 2003



The missing section of Staiths as a result of Fire damage.



The Staiths Food Market, with vendor pitches lining the lower deck.

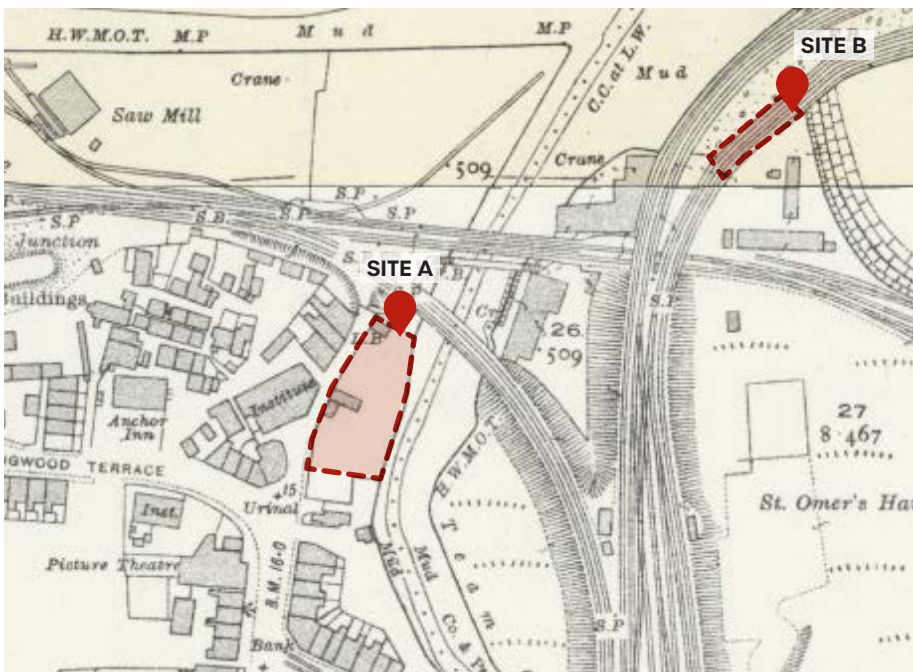


Aerial photo of the Staiths and shipping industry.

Staiths | Historic Maps & Photographs



Archive OS map for 1898 showing large buildings on Site A.



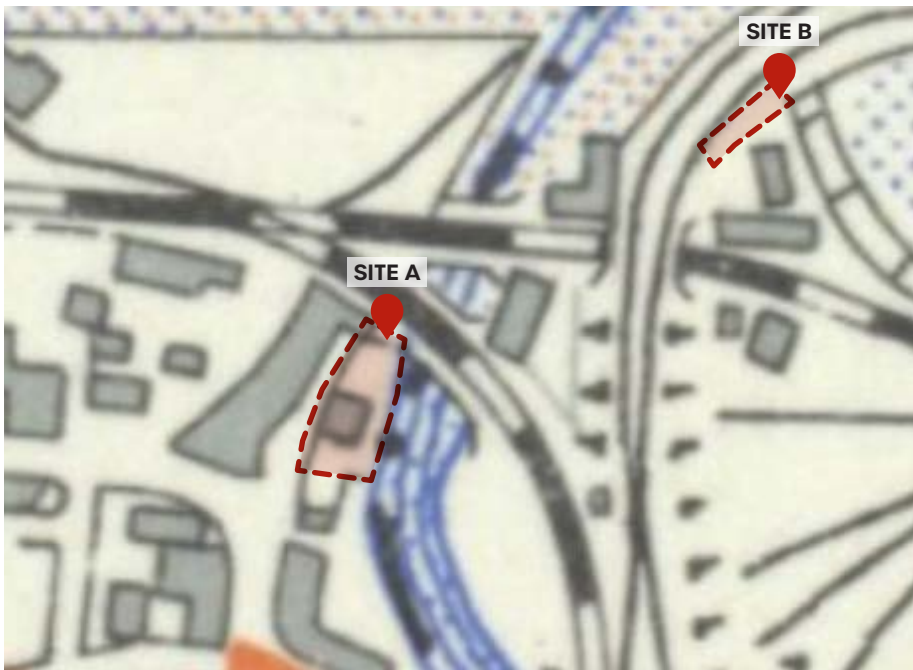
Archive map for the between 1892 and 1914 showing small buildings on Site A.



Archive aerial photograph of the sheds on Site A circa 1947.



Archive map for the 1900s showing small buildings on Site A.



Archive map for between 1937 and 1967 showing a large building on Site A.



Archive aerial photograph showing Site A and Site B circa 1947.

The above excerpts from historic maps found online illustrate that in the past century there have been a number of different configurations of built structures on Site A. The footprints of these buildings have changed size and shape over the years as the site was appropriated for different uses. Additional maps and photographs can be found within the Phase 1 Risk Assessment Desk Top Study also submitted as part of this application.

Staiths | Context

The application pertaining to this Design and Access Statement concerns two separate sites, owned by the same client, and to serve the same organisation, The Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust.

The existing Site A is an area of hardstanding currently serving as a public car park, though this is not ran or maintained by a private company or Gateshead Council officially.

The site has a pleasant riverside setting, which although near to the busy A114 feels quite quiet and secluded due to the amount of greenery on adjacent land. That being said, there is a high degree of wind across the site due to it's proximity to the river.

As the site runs north/south there is good daylighting beyond mid-morning once the sun has climbed above the height of mature trees to the east boundary.

There is informal parking for 25 cars, though with application of typical parking standards, including designated accessible spaces. It would be expected that this capacity would decrease considerably.

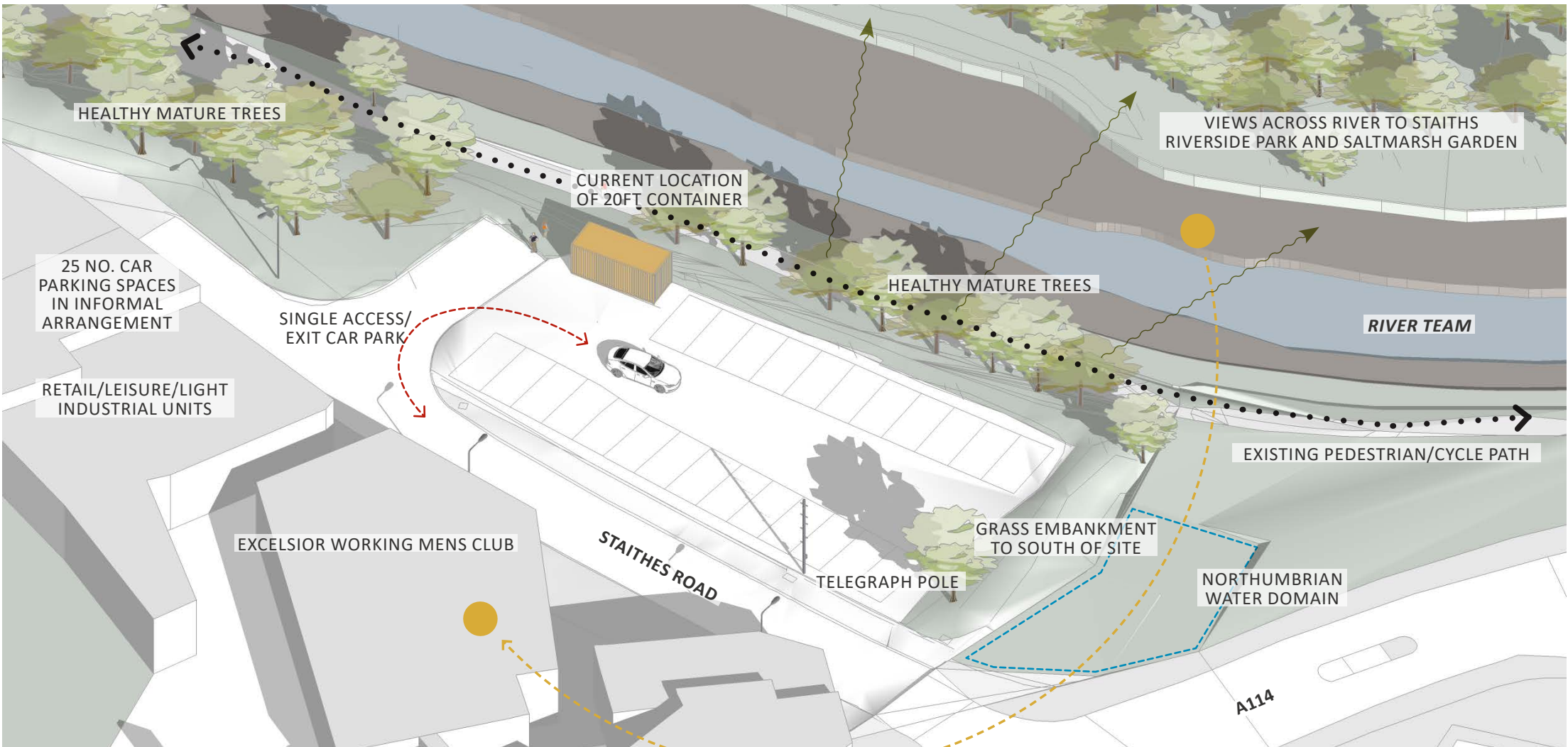
It is currently well used by local businesses and dog walkers/people visiting the Staiths and Saltmarsh Gardens.

The site does not fall within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is however located in the area designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV).

It is not within a conservation area, nor are there any listed buildings in the vicinity of the site.

Prior to application we have consulted with the local Designing Out Crime Officer (DOCO) for their thoughts on the scheme.

They had a number of recommendations including monitored CCTV and a good lighting scheme in order to mitigate the perceived anti-social behaviour in the area which may target the scheme.



Overview of site



View from South West corner of site



View from North East corner of site

Staiths | Design Development

The application pertaining to this Design & Access Statement follows a previously submitted application earlier this year.

There were a number of issues raised by Highways with regard to parking numbers and the net loss of spaces compared to those provided on the existing site, albeit informally.

Following the withdrawal of that application, the design team revisited the design to investigate and explore what layout amendments could be made in order to increase public parking on site and mitigate these objections.

The images to the right compare the previous application (top row) with the revised application (lower row) via a site plan and 3D visualisation.

Following numerous alternative iterations during design development, the layout shown on the bottom row was arrived at.

This arrangement increases the number of spaces by 8 in comparison to the earlier submission, without too much compromise on the architectural vision.

This was achieved via reducing the amount of the internal accommodation space, and removal of the large wraparound access-ramp. Unit alignment was adjusted to allow more parking bays along the western edge of the site.

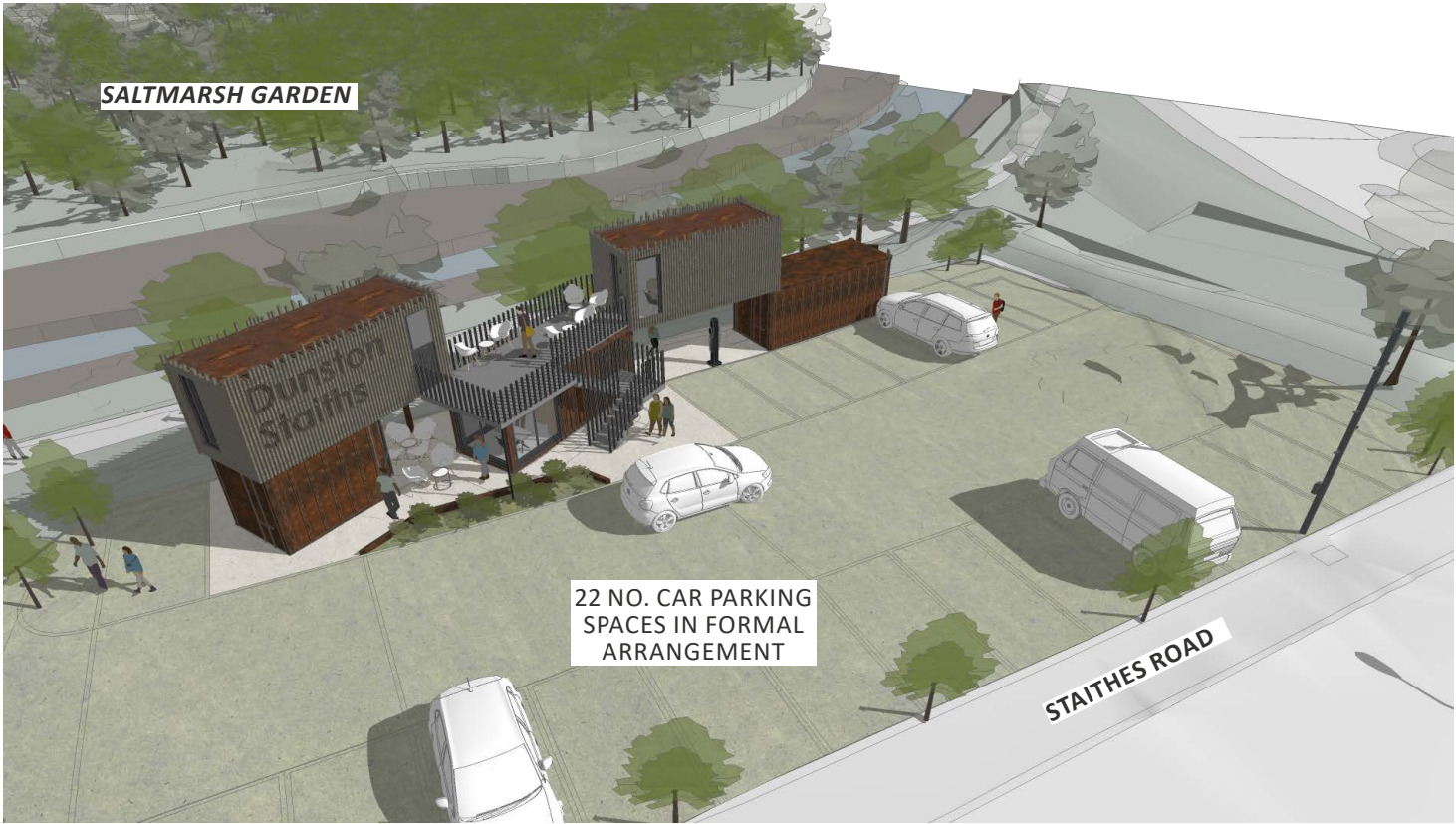
The proposed layout doubles the number of accessible spaces provided, compared to the previous application, and still includes the 2no. spaces designated for electric vehicles. (shown green on the site plan opposite).

The redesign also gave the opportunity to reduce the number of columns in the scheme and avoid their positioning adjacent to where vehicles would be.

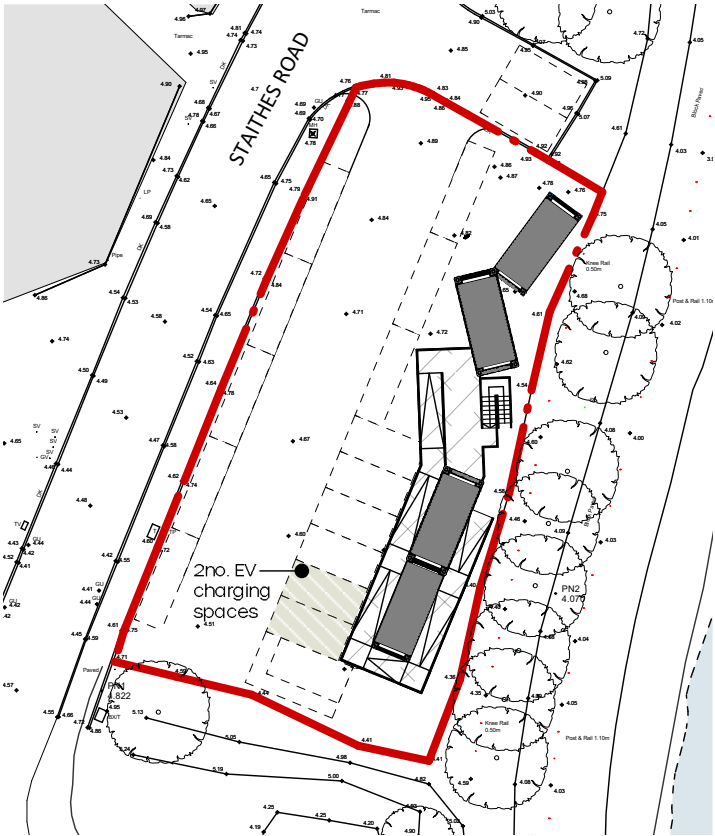
The resultant proposal is no less interesting or dynamic compared to the previous scheme, but it is believed that the number of spaces provided, and those spaces being in a formalised layout will help to address valid concerns raised by highways.



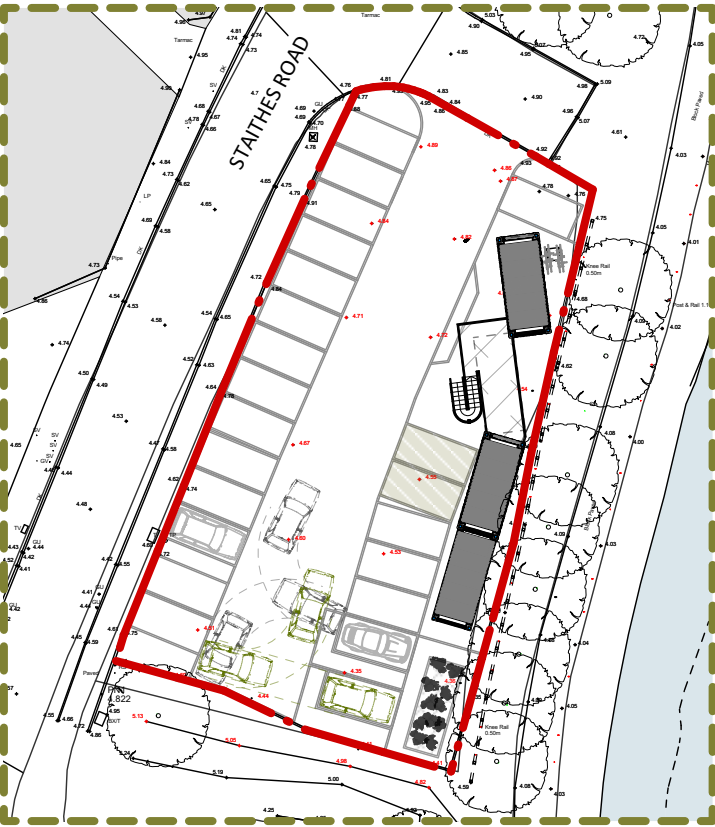
Previous planning application visualisation showing 14no spaces, columns within public areas, and wraparound ramp for access.



Updated planning application visualisation showing 22no spaces, column set within planter, and single stair access to upper level.



Previous planning application layout with 14 no. public car spaces.



Revised planning application layout with 22 no. public car spaces.

Staiths | Use

The proposed uses of the container are summarised below, with the two sites described as Site A (for 4.5 no. containers) and Site B (for a single container).

The accommodation on site A will comprise of:

- A 2-3 person office for TWBPT or rented out to a private company.
- A 4-5 person meeting room for business use and for Staiths Friends.
- General storage for TWBPT or kiosk.
- WCs for public use, comprising of 1no. unisex cubicle, 1no. Accessible WC.
- A flexible concession kiosk unit to be operated independently with scope to vary use/function over time.

The accommodation on site B will comprise of:

- An events / visitor reception for use by the Staiths Friends
- A store for miscellaneous items relating to the operation of events on the Staiths.

The scope of the proposed units capitalises on the existing use of the site.

It is already a functioning car park for visitors to the Staiths, and more widely a gateway to the whole of the south bank path Keelman's Way along the River Tyne eastward and westward.

With a permanent office and employment presence on site, and provision of a kiosk for refreshments or retail opportunities, the development will energise the site, creating an activity hub for visitors, rather than the car park just serving as somewhere to leave immediately.

Site A and Site B are linked by a well-established pedestrian and cycle route that form part of the typical Staiths visitor experience. The kiosk and WCs will be a welcome addition to this cycle route.

It is intended that the car parking provided will be done so on a free-to-use basis, retaining the existing arrangement on site with little loss of spaces.



Overview of site



View from South West corner of site



View from east of site (elevated)

Staiths | Amount

The total area of the existing site A is 740m². As the existing site photos show, this is an area of low-grade tarmac.

The footprint of the proposed development is 42m² comprising of 4no. shipping containers of 15m² each, and one half sized container.

There are two and a half containers at ground level and two at first floor level, supported with 2 columns and the corners of the lower level units.

In effect the total accommodation on site represents less than 10% of the site area. With more efficient car parking layout this allows most of the car parking spaces to be retained.

The application is for siting the containers for a period of three years.

In terms of wider site and Staiths activity, TWBPT has devised an activity plan which, supported by the very active Staiths Friends group, is reconnecting the Staiths and Saltmarsh Gardens, creating both a local landmark for the area and attracting visitors from further afield.

In particular the plan is developing awareness and understanding of its significance, giving the Staiths a long term future through interpretation, events, activities and learning programmes.

Phase One of the restoration 2014-15, has enabled the partial re opening of the Staiths West End during the summer months, giving people the chance to experience its unique pier like perspective of the river and urban surroundings.

Funders and supporters of the project include: Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic England (English Heritage), Gateshead Council, Durham Wildlife Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Taylor Wimpey, Sir James Knott Trust and LEAF.



Timber-clad housing by Containerwerk, Wertheim, Germany.



Shipping Container Village by Julius Taminiau, Amsterdam.



People's Architecture Office, 12 shipping containers for temporary pavilion, China.



Mobilbox container conversion by Inbox Projects



Shipping Container Village by Julius Taminiau, Amsterdam.

Staiths | Layout

With a brief to maintain as much of the existing informal car parking as possible, as well as locate 4 and a half shipping containers on site A, numerous layout options studies were undertaken. This involved different methods of stacking units, each of which had their own idiosyncrasies and advantages.

The revised proposal arranges the containers to one side of the existing site, and allows an efficient layout of car parking spaces in two rows down the full length of its eastern boundary edge.

The arrangement of the units avoids a large heavy mass, and the splayed, rotated, and elevated accommodation makes the proposal seem lighter and creates interest.

In elevating some units from the ground, additional routes through the structure are created, making the structure more permeable than a 'wall' of containers along the eastern boundary. They also create covered space for shelter and partial containment.

This helps to spread out the massing of the containers, large blocky elements, and avoid a concentration of accommodation in one large volume on a relatively narrow site.

The splayed arrangement of the units also allows openings within container walls themselves to be oriented at specific parts of the surrounding landscape.

This includes a meeting room overlooking the Saltmarsh Garden, and office accommodation with views between the canopy of adjacent trees to the Staiths themselves. There is an external terrace between the two, on the roof of the container serving as the kiosk.

The site is relatively flat, with the anticipation that the containers can be installed on site easily and quickly.

There will need to be 4no. columns installed in the ground to support the stairs and terrace and a couple of the first floor containers, but for the most part they will be self-supporting using standardised container connection pieces.



Scheme from car park



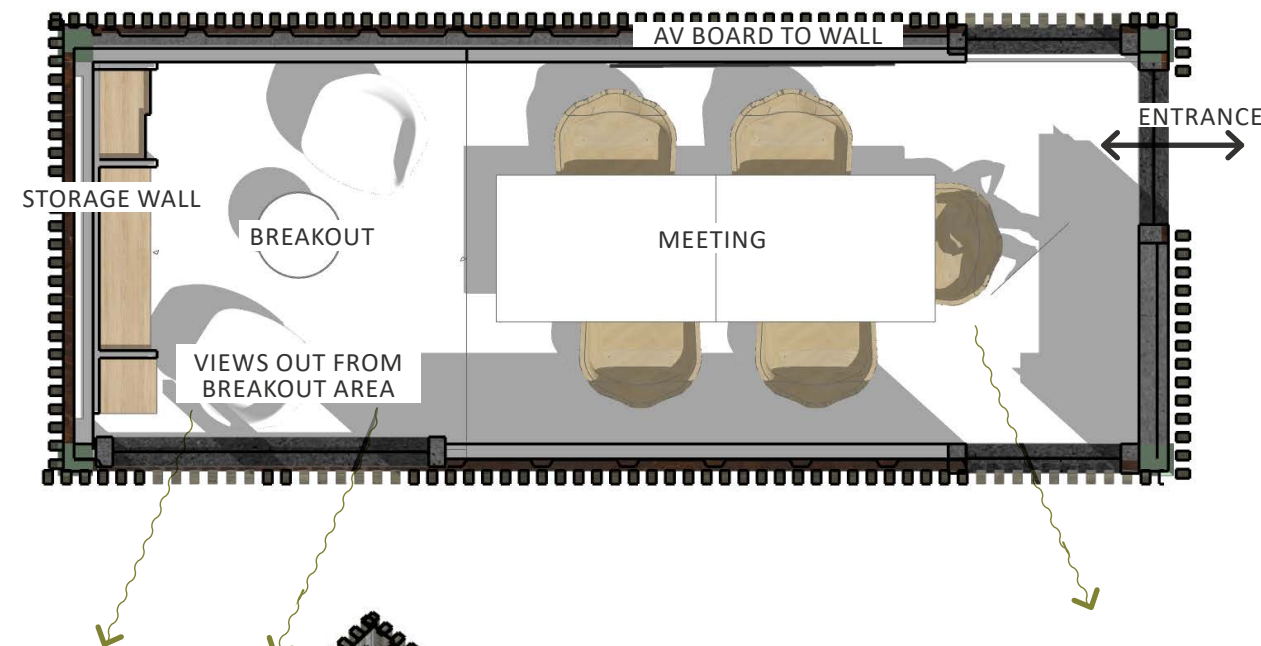
Proposed scheme from riverside



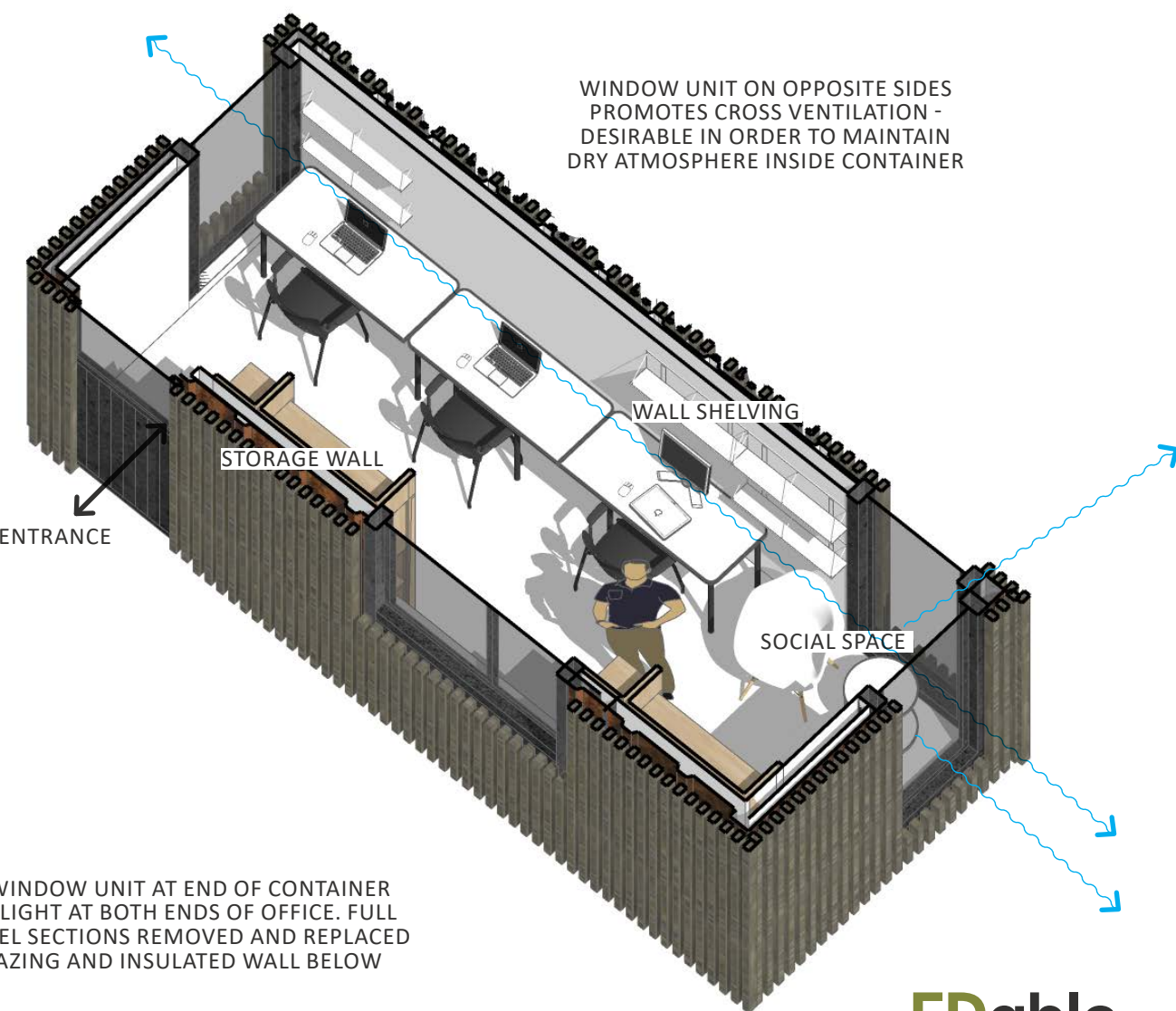
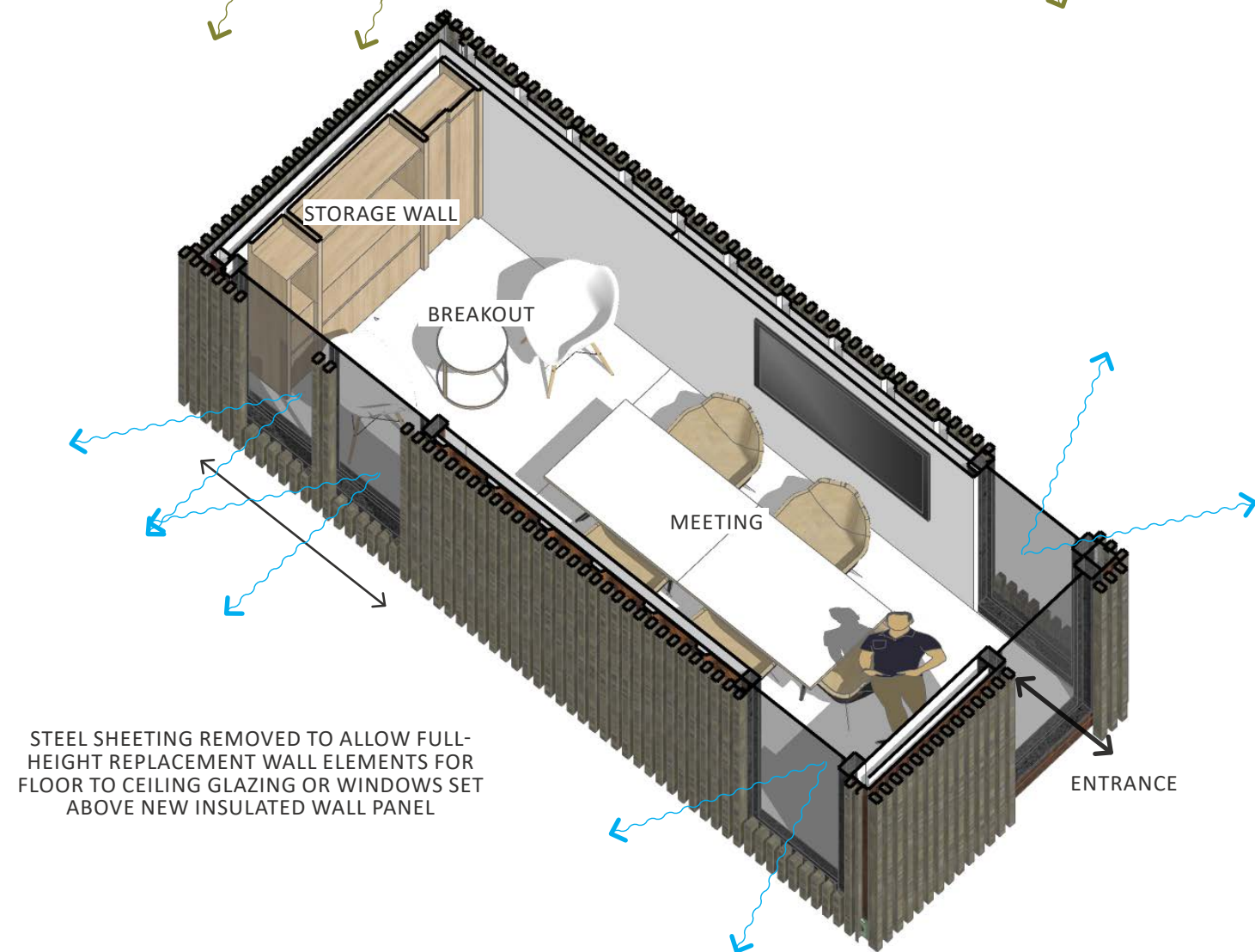
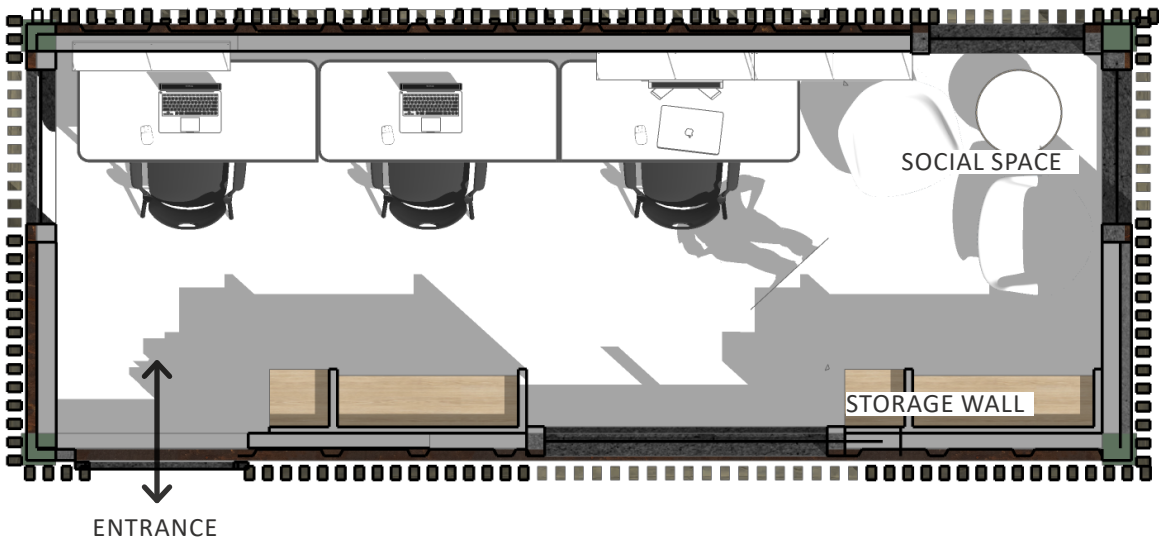
View from junction of A114 and Staiths Road

Staiths | Sample Layout: Office & Meeting Room

TYPICAL MEETING ROOM FOR 5 WITH BREAKOUT SPACE

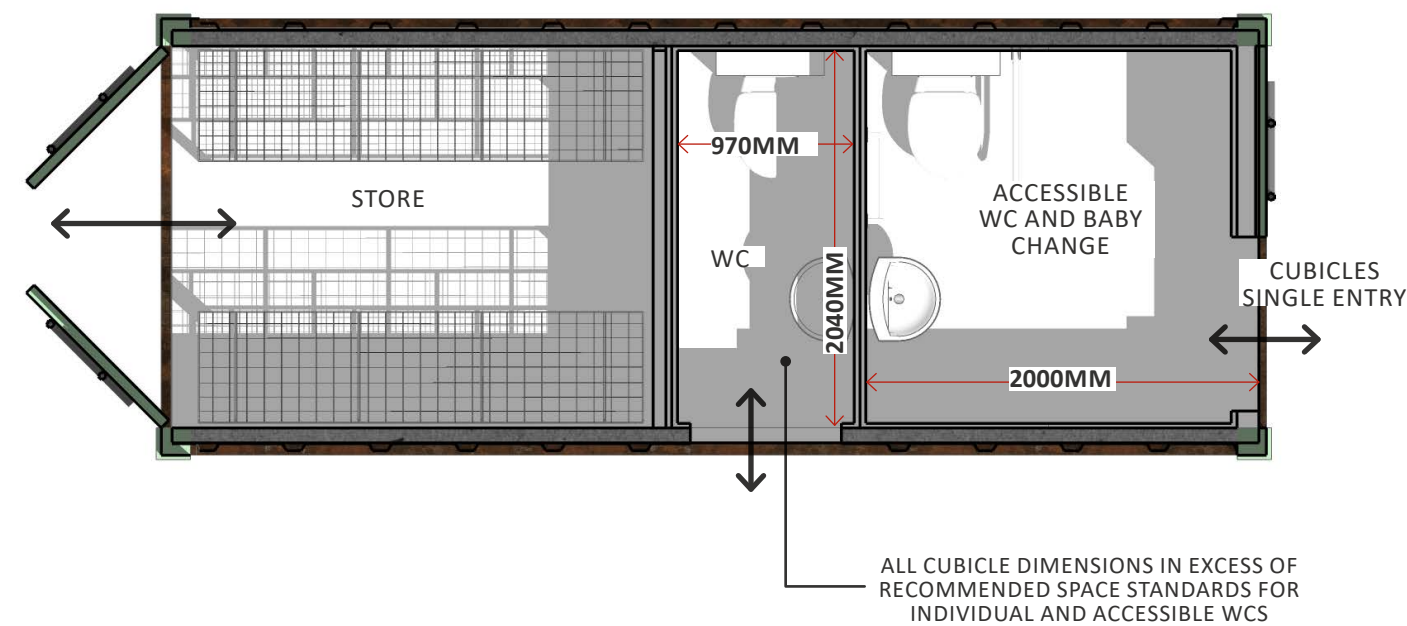


TYPICAL OFFICE LAYOUT WITH COMFORTABLE SITTING FOR 3 STAFF MEMBERS

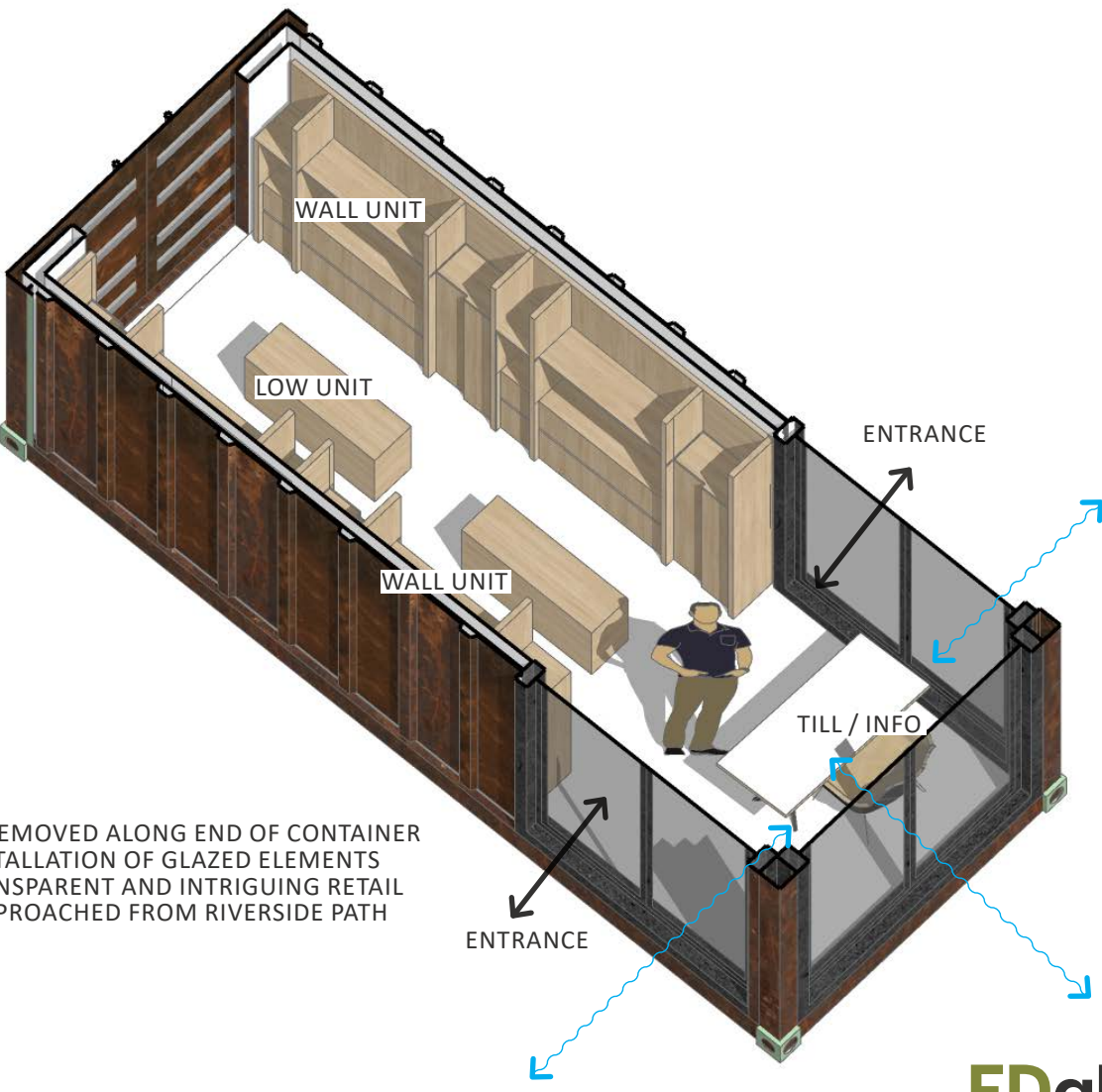
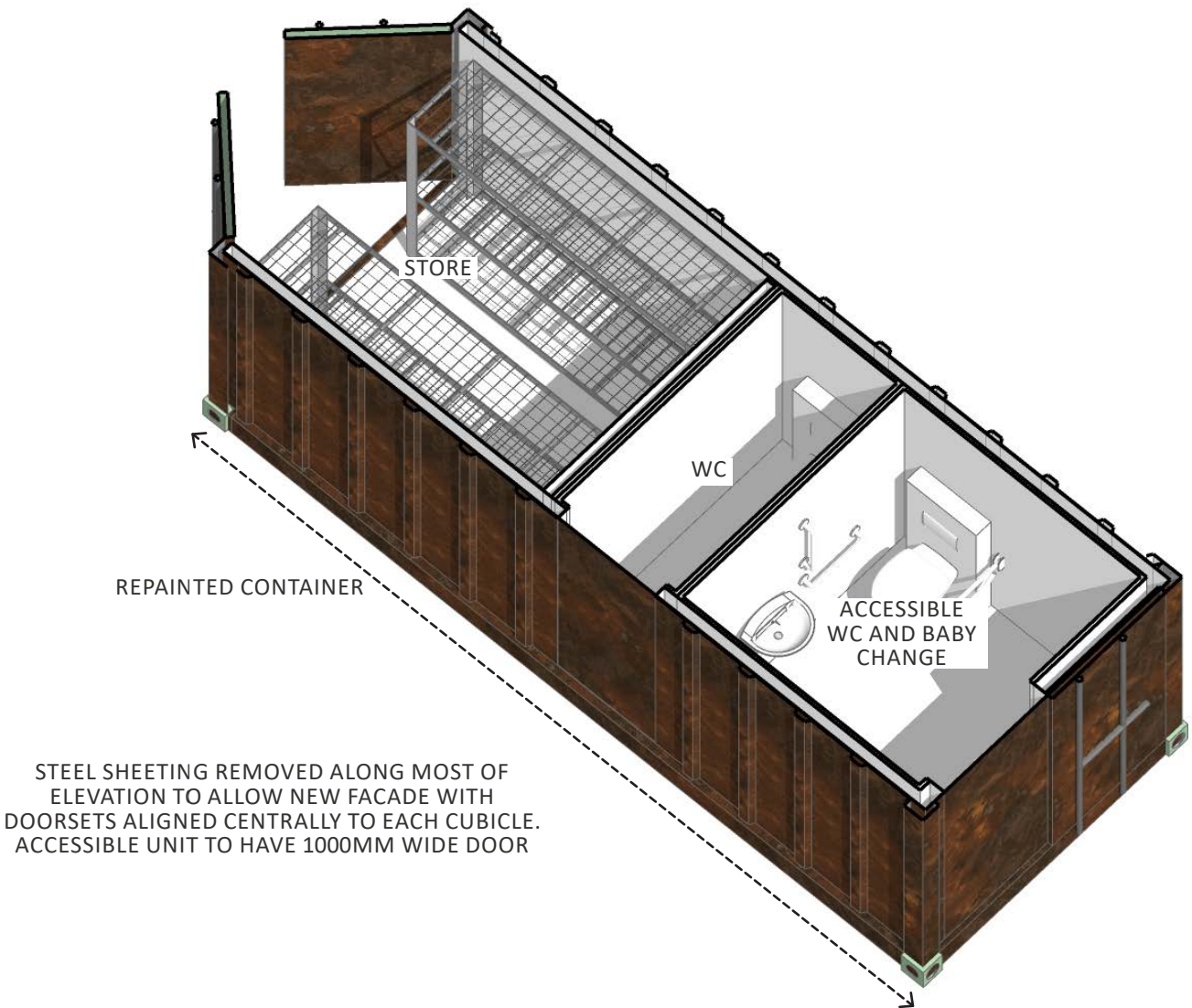
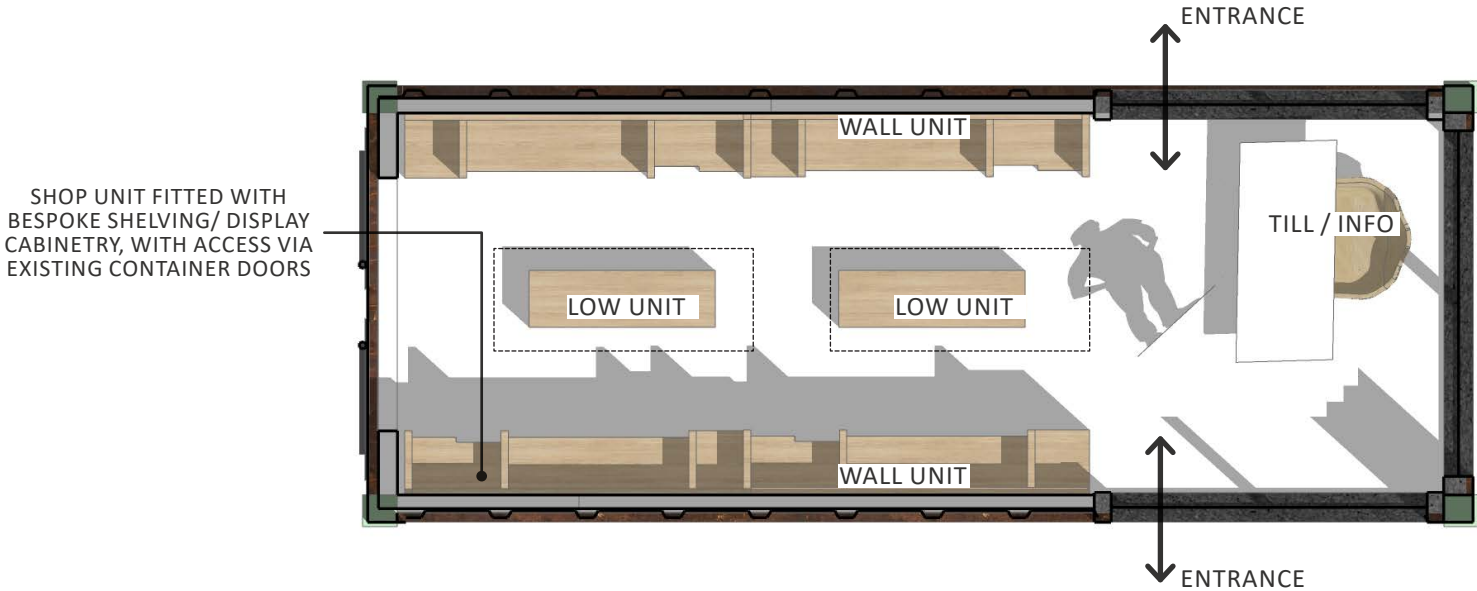


Staiths | Sample Layout: WC & Concession

TYPICAL WC/ STORE LAYOUT - 1NO. WC CUBICLE, 1NO. ACCESSIBLE WC AND STORE



TYPICAL SMALL RETAIL UNIT LAYOUT



Staiths | Scale

Due to the arrangement of the units, when viewed from the north and south, the proposal will not appear very large.

This is due to accommodation being aligned mostly in this orientation with small splays along this axis.

When viewed from the west on Staiths Road, or from the east on the riverbank on the other side of the River Team, the building will appear like a ribbon of containers weaving along the eastern boundary of the site, but with many gaps where existing trees and the Saltmarsh will be visible through.

The proposal works within the limitations of the site such as important aspect to the east, a pinched north end with regard to vehicle circulation, and with the express desire to maximise retaining parking.

The staggered 'ribbon' of accommodation still provides much needed internal accommodation for TWBPT, adjacent to one of it's key site, also semi-sheltered outdoor areas for meetings or small gatherings.

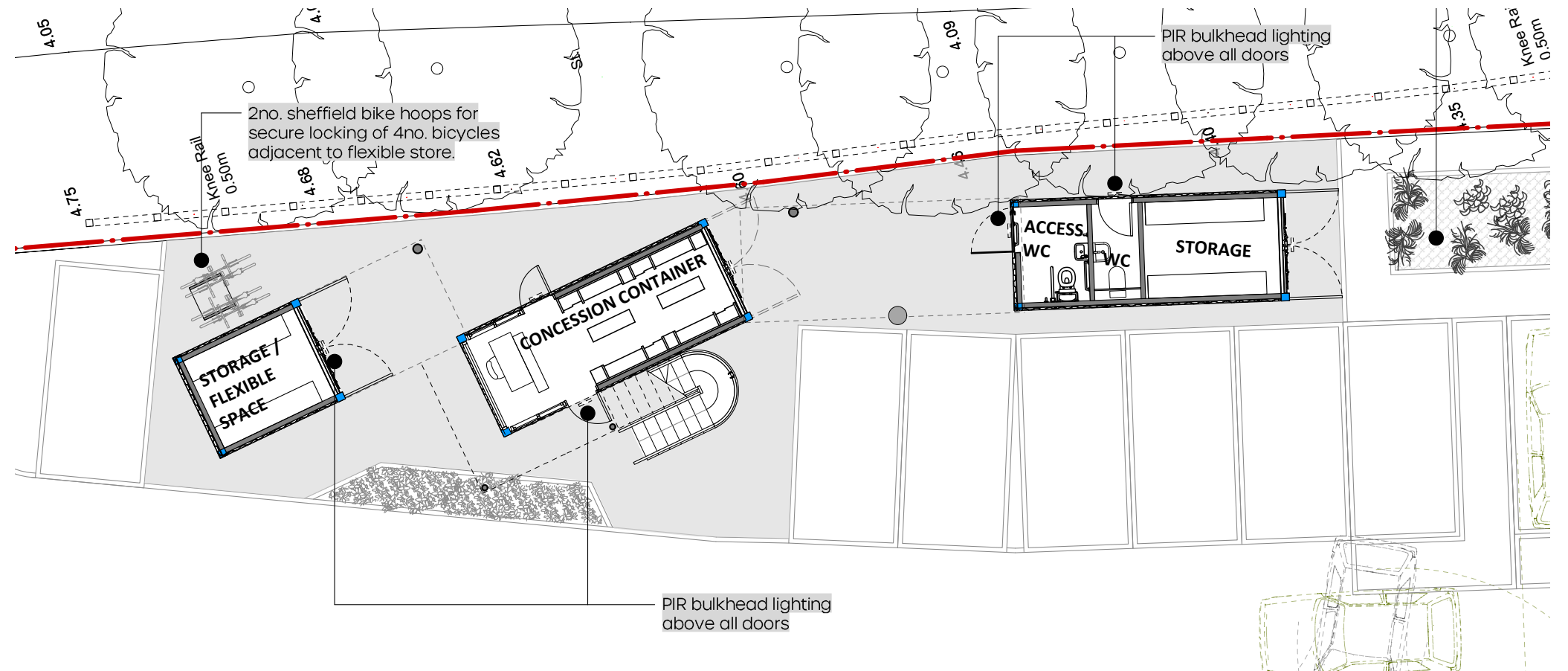
The A114 is a main bus route into Newcastle and Gateshead and the elevated meeting room and office cabins will come into view as traffic rounds the corner.

It is intended that the development will sit in the background visually, but given the massing of the units and the unusual stacking arrangement, a real sense of curiosity will be created.

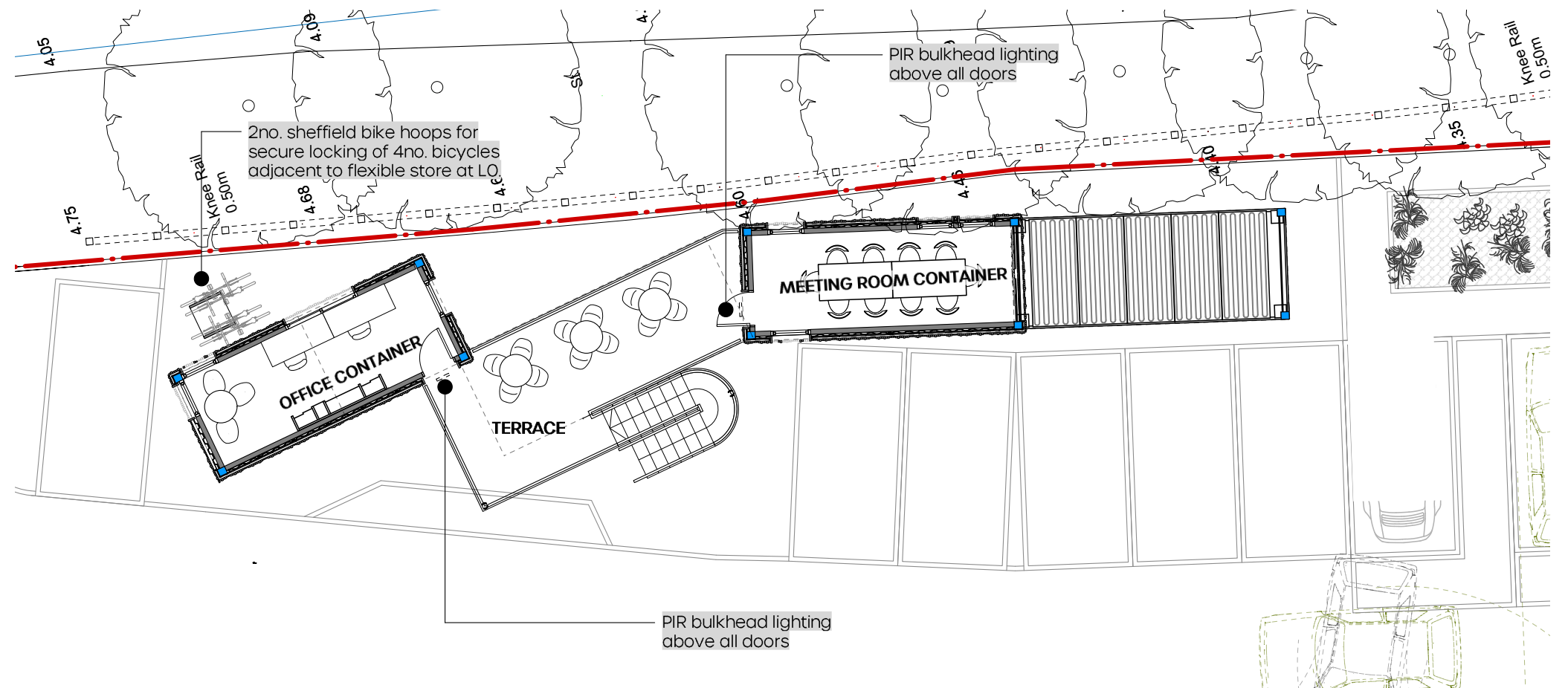
In addition to the containers installed on site, there is also a small 'Rain Garden' proposed for the south end of the site. This will be of a size the same as a footprint of the 20ft containers used in the scheme.

The 'rain garden' would help to filter and clean some of the surface water captured on site, and would be an element of SuDS (sustainable drainage systems) in the scheme.

It would be planted with native species and provide habitats for insects and pollinators, also softening the southern boundary of the site with attractive low-maintenance greenery.



Proposed ground floor plan showing concession unit, public WC and storage unit.



Proposed first floor plan showing office unit, terrace, and meeting room unit.

Staiths | Landscaping

The landscaping condition of the existing site is largely gravel and tarmac with patch repairs. The site boundary is formed with a low timber fence to both east and west, with a grassed berm to the south which separates the site from an area under the control of Northumbria Water.

Directly opposite Site A are the Saltmarsh Gardens and Riverside Park. The Saltmarsh is a rare example of tidal mud flat and is home to protected species and is a designated conservation area.

Ecologically, the Tyne is considered to be the third most important tidal area in the North East. When dredging stopped, the lagoon silted up rapidly to create mud flats providing an important feeding area for wintering and migrant wading birds.

The detoxification of the two rivers has encouraged the establishment of increasingly interesting natural habitats around the Staiths, including an important Saltmarsh Garden, a rare resource in the urban environment and of significant conservation interest.

The Staiths structure currently provides an undisturbed roosting area for a range of bird species including grey heron, lapwing and redshank. Otters, an internationally protected species, also use the Staiths, Saltmarsh and adjoining areas of the Rivers Team and Tyne.

Dunston Staiths is included within two nature conservation designations, the River Tyne Tidal Mud Local Wildlife Site and the River Team Saltmarsh Local Wildlife Site.

From an ecological perspective, the site itself is thought to be of low ecological value, without any natural habitats on it, given it's broken tarmac condition.

The main site is not in a designated Wildlife Zone, however the single container serving as the Staiths entrance kiosks is. Both sites are within a designated wildlife corridor.

None of the existing trees adjacent to the site will be affected by the development, and similarly the Saltmarsh Garden and it's wildlife will be undisturbed by the works on the site across the River Team.

As mentioned in the above section, a small 'rain garden' will also be introduced, removed the need for paving in this area and creating new habitats.



1. Main car park (site A) looking east from Staithes Road.



2. Existing container on site at NE corner of site A, showing adjacent riverside footpath.

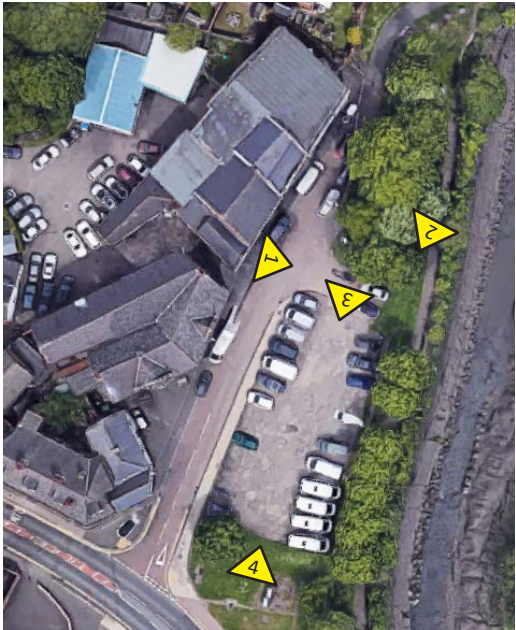


Photo Viewpoints



4. Site A in context of A114 to south and Saltmarsh Garden to East on north bank of River Team.



3. Extent of unmarked and unsurfaced car park during typical daytime hours.

Staiths | Appearance

From a material perspective, the scheme acknowledges the industrial heritage of both the Staiths themselves (with a history of metal and machinery) and a contemporary and honest approach to the aging and weathering of materials.

The lower level containers, having previously travelled thousands of miles on the sea as brightly coloured boxes, will have had their existing paint stripped and expose the raw steel beneath.

The units will be installed pre-weathered, with the orange/brown patina of the oxidised metal providing a colour and texture contrast with the surrounding trees and Saltmarsh.

The upper units are to be overlaid with timber battens, which gives a softer and more repetitive and geometric feel than the units below.

The timber will weather down and soften in tone over time, allowing the more natural, lighter units to sit on their heavier, metallic base.

The top line of these battens will be 'feathered' by varying their height to soften the structure where it sits in front of the canopy of adjacent trees.

Both upper and lower units will have modern anthracite-coloured frames to doorsets and windows, with metal shutters that can close overnight for security.

The container located adjacent to the Staiths, serving as a kiosk and information point will be similarly left in its raw and patinated corten state, with the Staiths structure sitting dramatically behind.

This unit will be able to be fully 'locked down' as due to its location there will be times when there is not a great deal of overwatch.



Timber battens

Shipping containers lend themselves to be overlaid with a variety of materials. With battens fixed to the steel sheets, timber cladding can be added with varying degrees of openness. This can soften the appearance of the steel containers, as the timber ages a far more natural appearance is created. This is an inexpensive way to 'disguise' the containers.

Grasscrete

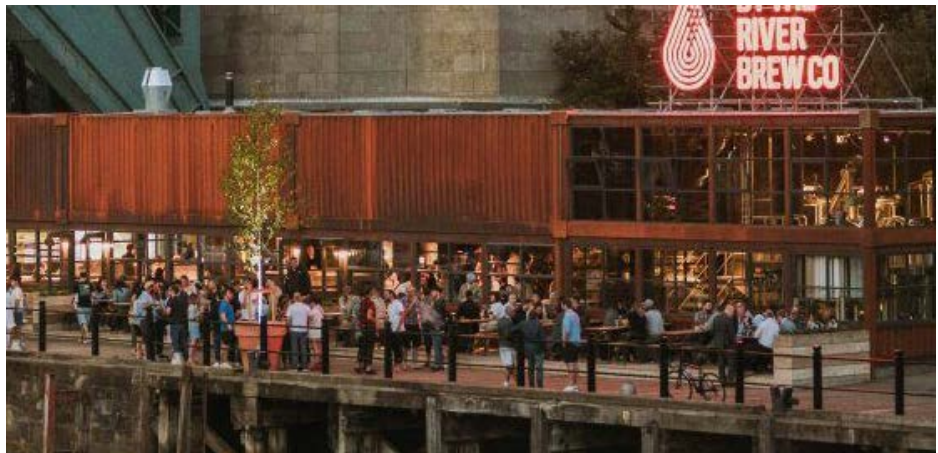
Car parking areas resurfaced with grasscrete in order to soften and break up the large area of the car park. This low-maintenance surface allows grass to grow through concrete setts and is permeable, allowing surface water to be absorbed into the ground more easily. The natural greens and yellows of the grassed surface will complement the rusted containers.

Oxidised Metal/Corten

This honest and industrial aesthetic is achieved by all weather/waterproof paint being removed from the containers, exposing the raw steel below. Over time the weather oxidises this steel to shades of brown and orange, providing a raw and varied patina to the exterior of the containers.

Permeable paving

The pedestrian areas around the containers are proposed to be finished in a resin bonded gravel paving. This is also permeable, allowing surface water to percolate through. It is an attractive surface finish in a buff colour and can be used around trees.



Staiths | Vehicular, Pedestrian, and Cycle Access

The two sites are linked by a pedestrian/cycle path that follows the west bank of the River Team, joining the Keelman's Way as it passes over a pedestrian bridge. This walk takes only a few minutes including a walk over the River Team bridge halfway there.

The Keelman's Way path subsequently leads all the way east along the south bank of the River Tyne towards Newcastle Upon Tyne and Gateshead, passing the Dunston Staiths and under the famous bridges up river as it does.

Though Staithes Road provides access to numerous buildings off the A114 such as some retail premises and a Working Mens Club. The road its itself a dead end, with only bicycles and pedestrians are able to continue north from the turning head, either turning east to the Staiths or west to follow Keelman's Way.

The closest bus stops to the site are found again only a few minutes walk away from the site, which connect to Newcastle, and the Metro Centre via the 6, 10B, 45, 46 and X66 services.

The nearest train station, Dunston, is around 10 mins walk from the site, but it is anticipated the majority of visitors will be via bus, private car, bicycle, or on foot.

As above the site is proximal to established and very well used cycle route (route 14), which supports a lot of commuters from areas to the west of Gateshead and Newcastle Upon Tyne. Newcastle/Gateshead Quayside is approximately 15mins bike ride at leisurely pace, along very well maintained pathways that are well lit and well overlooked.

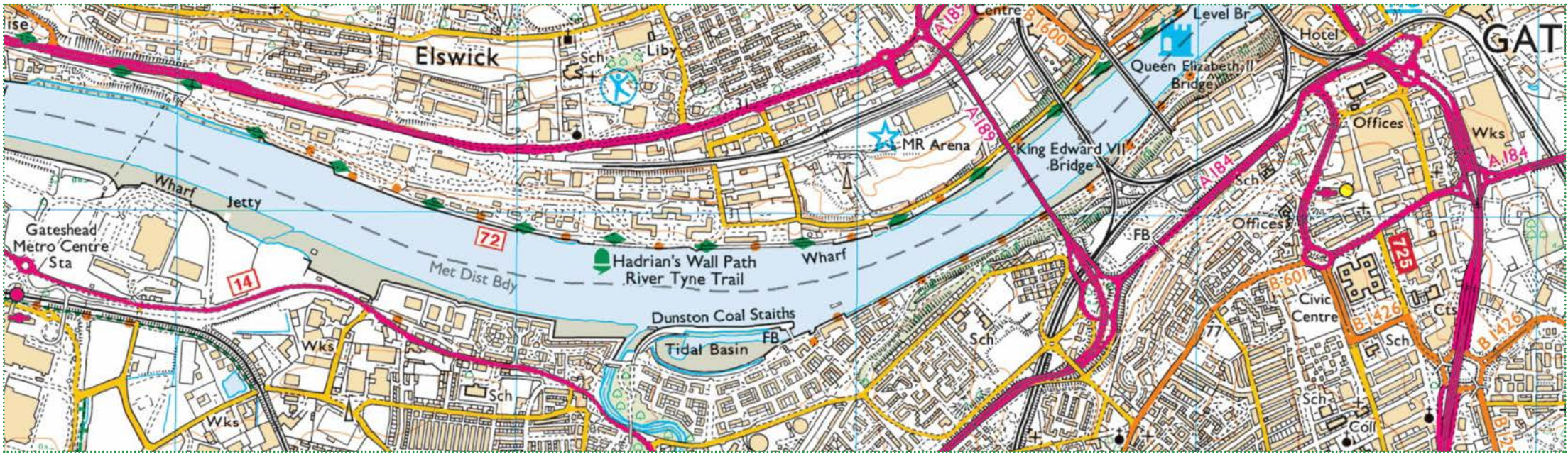
From pedestrian perspective, there are good designated road crossings in the area around site, and the time to walk from the site to the quayside would be approximately 40mins.

Though some parking would be provided, it is expected that the quality of Keelman's Way is such that it would encourage walking and bicycles as the main routes to visit the Staiths and the accommodation on site.

The original car park on site has room for approximately 25 car parking spaces, albeit unmarked. The proposal will reduce this to 22, and the layout will be formalised. 2 accessible spaces and EV points will be included as part of the scheme.



Aerial overview of site with key adjacent local features and routes



Ordnance Survey maps of road, rail, and footpath network around Dunston Staiths

Staiths | Inclusive Access

From an accessibility perspective, the public accommodation is on street level, with wheelchair accessible WC facilities. The office and meeting room are up a flight of stairs.

The main staircase from ground level to the external terrace has been designed to ambulant standards, providing a comfortable passage between levels, with handrails, nosings, gripstrips, and colour contrasts in accordance with current guidance.

The stairs will have lockable gates at their lowest point to prevent access to terrace when not in use or overnight.

The accommodation at first floor is for private use, by the office users and occasional use of the meeting room by the office staff, visitors and Staiths Friends.

The main adjacent Staithes Road allows for passage of emergency vehicles from the busy A114, with the parking area of the main site laid out in accordance with parking standards with respect to road widths and bay sizes.

In terms of future sustainability, 2no. EV charging points will be provided as part of the rationalised car park layout. These will be to spaces that are next to the containers to allow easy access to electricity.

In terms of futureproofing, the ground floor containers could easily be retrofitted in the future to provide for different uses. For example, if visitor numbers increased such that it was desirable to expand toilet provision, the storage could be converted.

Though bicycle racking will be provided for daytime use on the side of the containers, when the site will benefit from a decent amount of overwatch, it is not expected that bicycles will be stored on site overnight, and therefore no lockable bike boxes will be provided.

With regard to refuse, given the low occupancy of the units (2no. staff), no separate bin store will be provided, with a single waste and single recycling bin being stored in the designated storage unit.



Proposed North Elevation (NTS)



Proposed South Elevation (NTS)

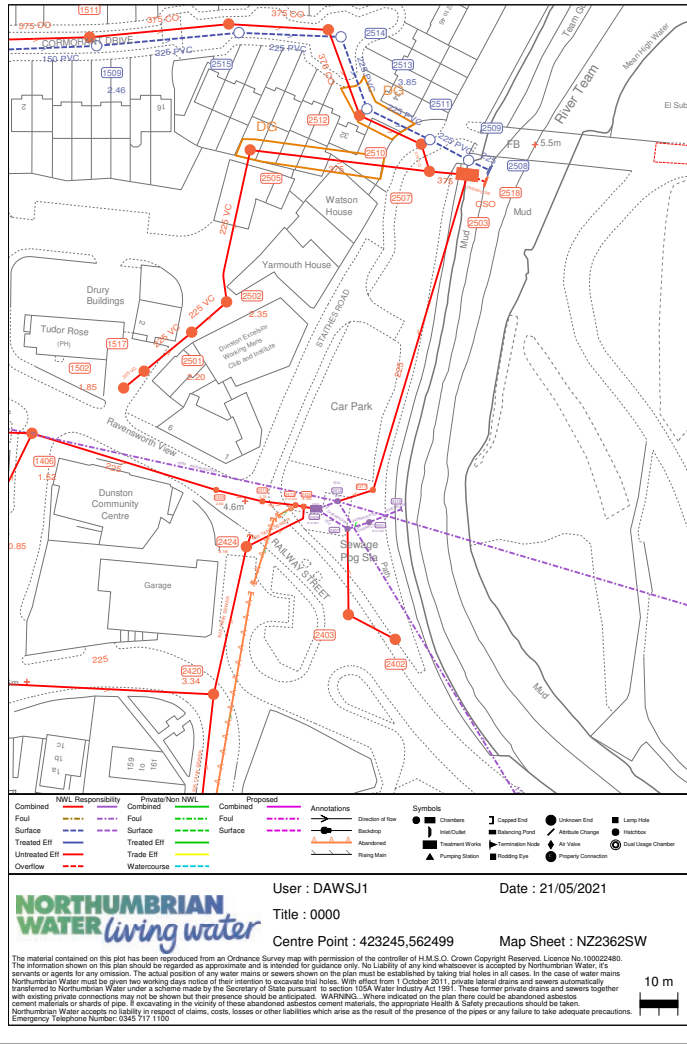
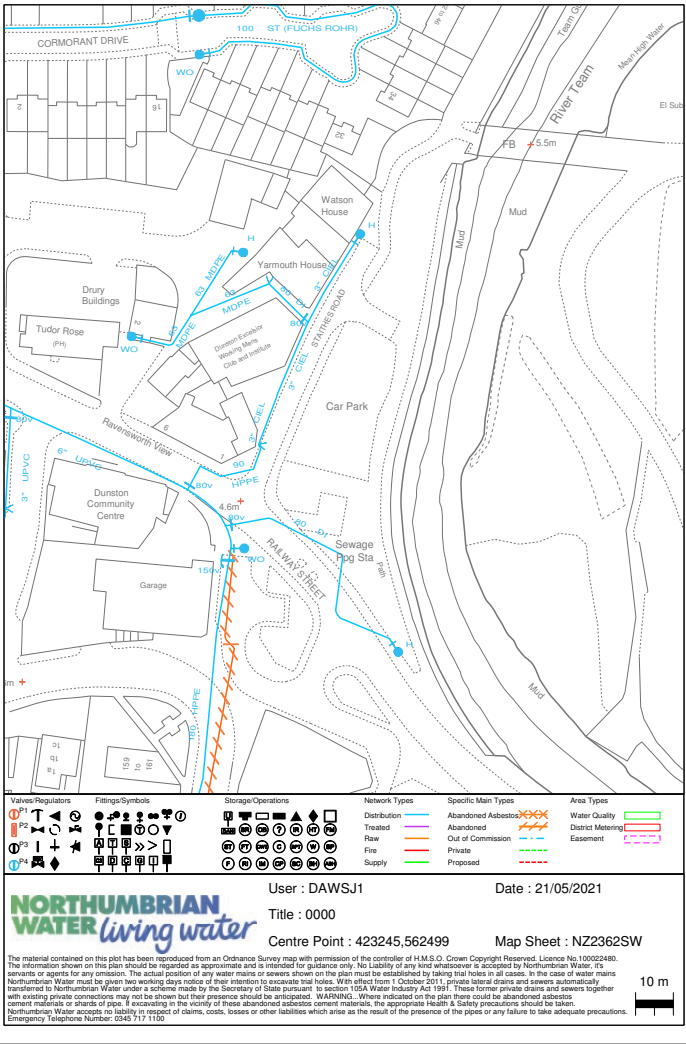
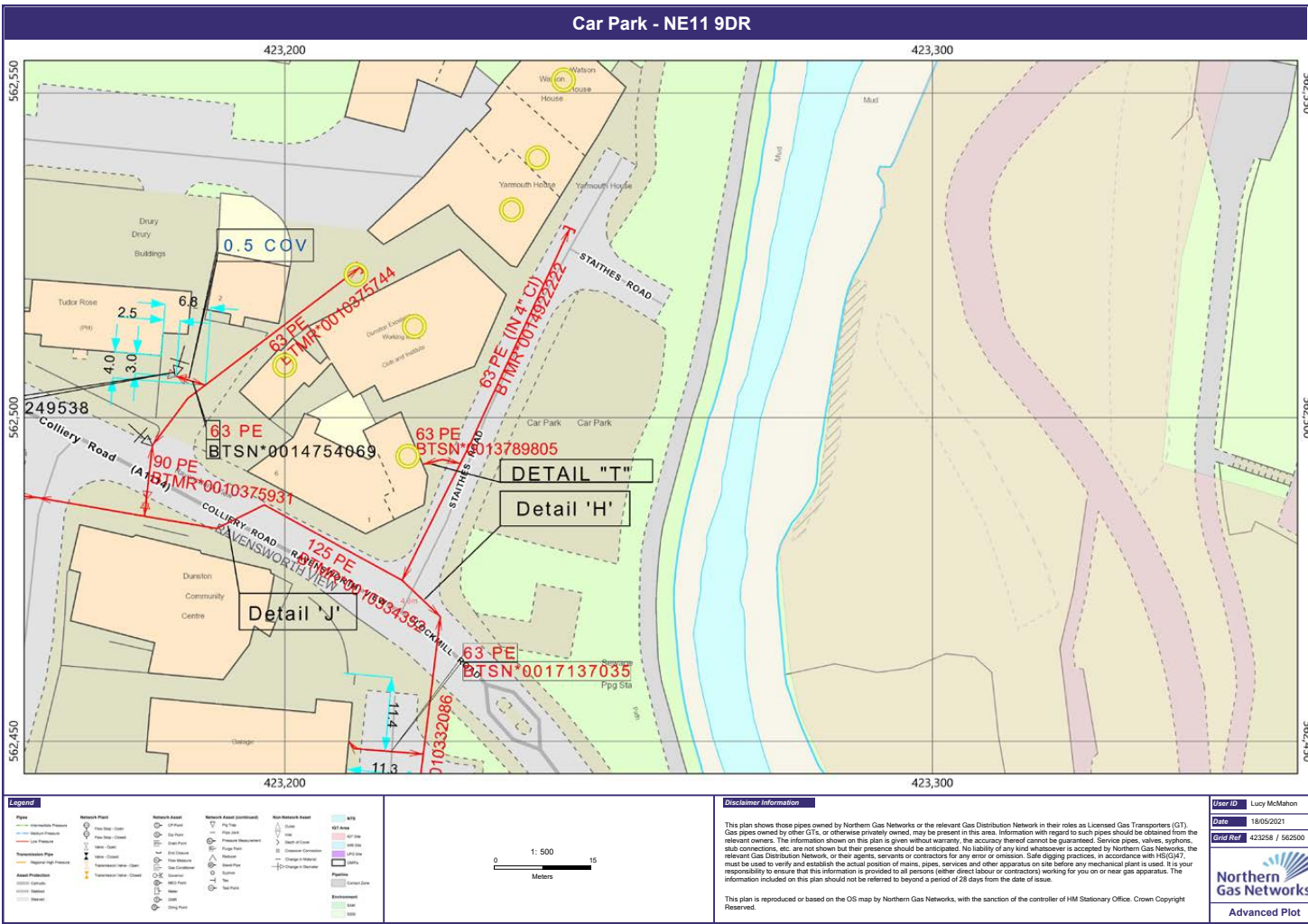


Proposed East Elevation (NTS)



Proposed West Elevation (NTS)

Staiths | Services



Though there are no existing services on site currently, it’s position on Staithes Road means that connection to existing runs nearby should be fairly straightforward.

The use of permeable surface materials such as grasscrete will help to mitigate the issue of surface water, which at present results in large puddles forming in substantial pot-holes in the surface of the existing car park.

The mains water distribution in the area as per information from Northumbrian Water information, runs along Staithes Road, as a branch off the network under the A1114.

The sewage pumping station to the south of the site picks up main interceptor routes, with existing combined drainage being present along the eastern site boundary.

There are no gas pipes on the site, but a gas route running along Staithes Road, as a branch of the main route along the A1114.

Using EA data, site A is mostly within flood risk zone 1 with a small portio of the site in flood zone 2, it is not anticipated that flooding will be an issue for the proposals. Site B is on the edge of flood zone 3. A Flood Risk Assessment is provided with this application.

There are telegraph poles and overhead cables on the western site boundary, and existing services belonging to Northumbrian Water to the south.



Staiths | Conclusion

The proposed scheme seeks to create a dynamic and intriguing gateway to the pedestrian and bicycle route linking areas rich in local history and natural significance.

With an eye on sustainability, the repurpose of material with high embodied energy (ie. the steel of shipping containers) seeks to minimise the amount of 'new' building elements needed.

Proportionally, it is a small development on it's site and retains an element of public car-parking that has been long-established in a non-official capacity for many years.

Architecturally, the scheme looks to illustrate a new non-linear way of looking at building with shipping containers, creating a building that is grounded in it's location, but with elements of playfulness and permeability.

The accommodation will allow the Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust to have a presence adjacent to one of its key sites, and encourage wider participation and exploration of the area as well as provide valuable and essential income to support the preservation of the Staiths.

Aside from the public service of car park provision, the opportunity for a retail kiosk and creation of an employment presence in this area of Dunston will increase activity and oversight in an area that is currently lacking in both.

The facilities proposed will help to sustain a series of events throughout the year in and around the Staiths and bring vibrancy and life to the local area.



