

# Conservation Strategy for the *Alexandra Basin* *Redevelopment Project*



# THE DESIGN FRAMEWORK

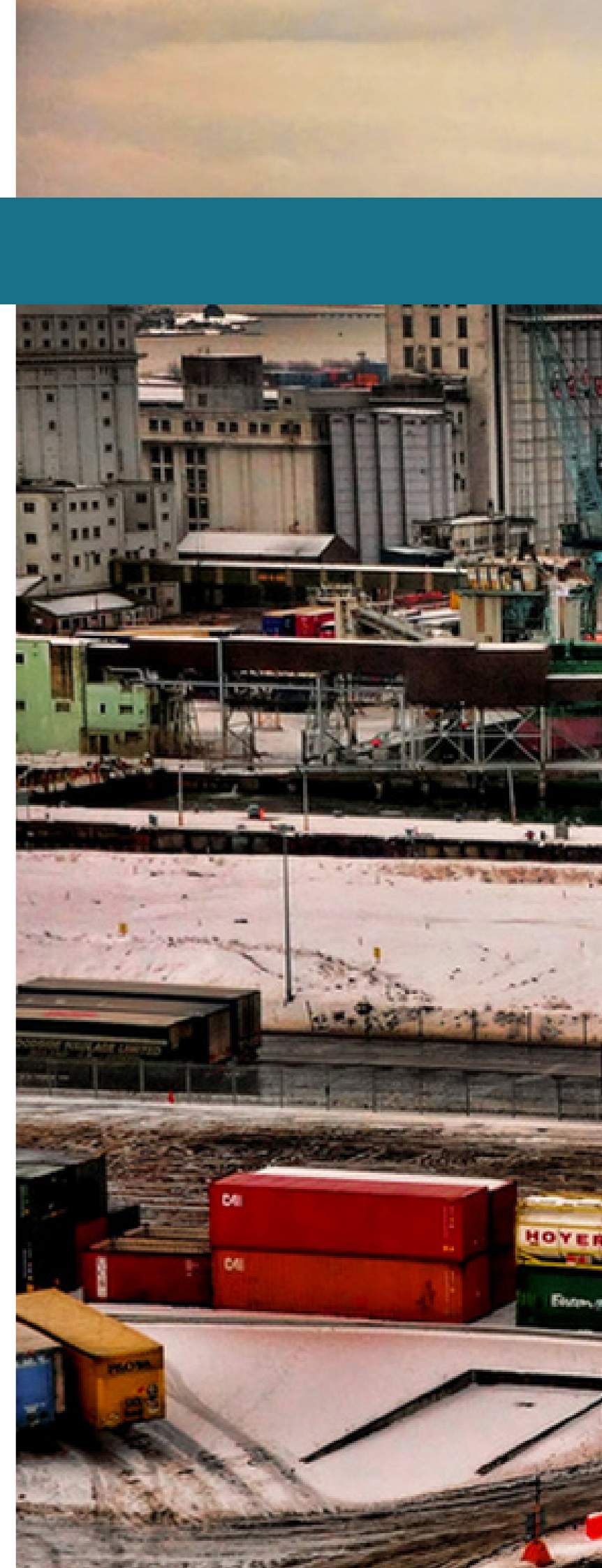
## PREFACE

MOLA Architecture are specifically tasked to articulate and give architectural, public realm, urban design and landscape architecture expression to the objectives, principles, and recommendations of the proposed conservation strategy prepared by Southgate Associates for the Alexandra Basin Redevelopment (ABR) Project. Integral to its remit is the generation of proposals for new interventions which amplify and support the Conservation policies, particularly as they pertain to interpreting and communicating the unique aspects of the Port's heritage.

This document is an appendix to the Conservation Strategy prepared by Southgate Associates.

Specific proposals emanating from an interactive process, which involved MOLA Architecture, RPS Ireland, Southgate Associates, MacCabe Durney Barnes and Dublin Port Company, are developed, in drawn and other illustrative media, and are in turn, cross referenced in relevant drawings prepared by RPS, in related reports, and in Southgate Associates Industrial Heritage Appraisal Conservation Strategy Report.

MOLA Architecture's design response, summarised in this document, has been informed by the word and spirit of all relevant statutory framework and national and international codes of practice referred to in Southgate Associates Report, notably in the realms of interpretation and legibility.





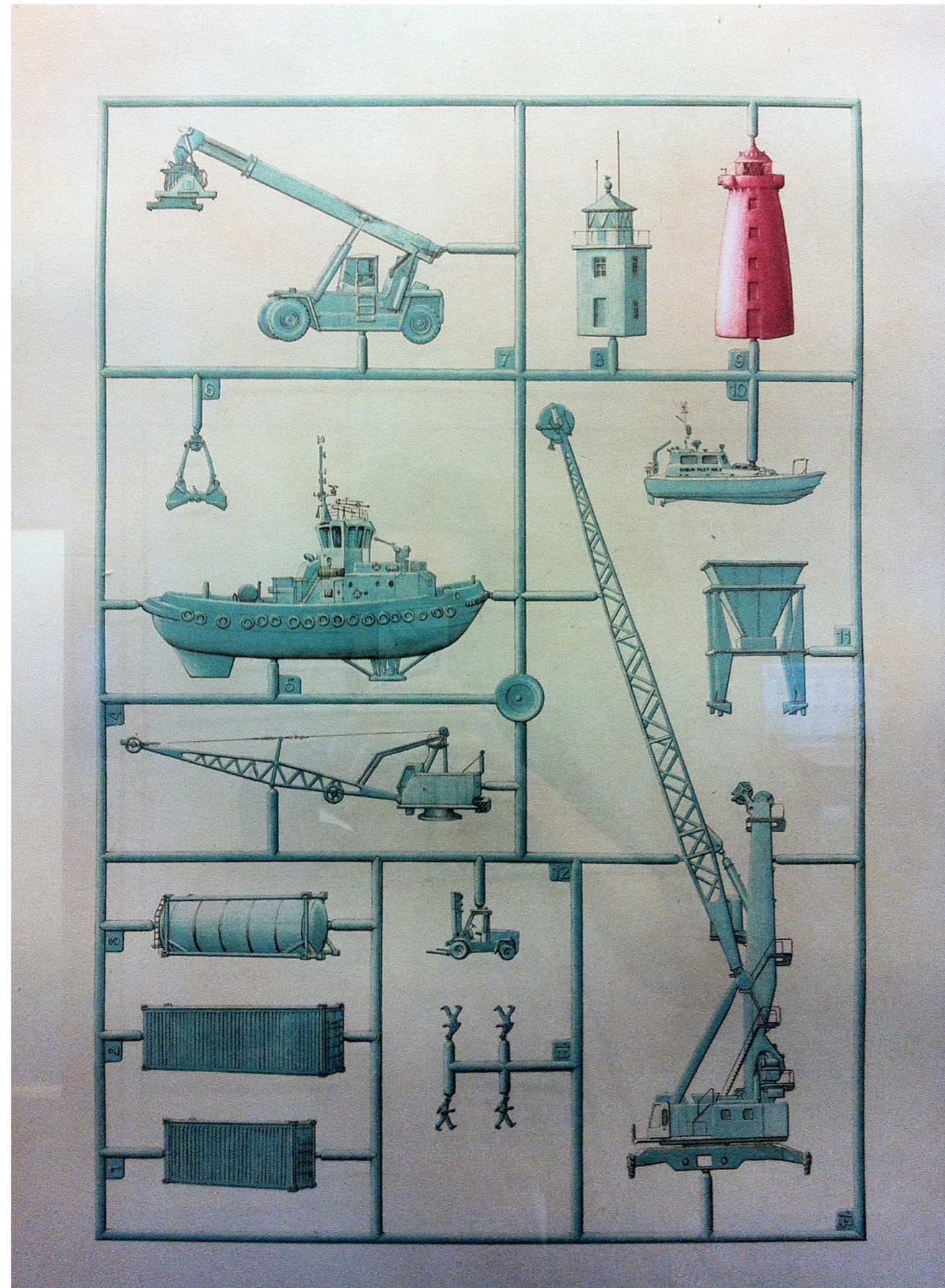


Illustration (Source: Dublin Port Company)

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# Context 01.

Port activity on the River Liffey westwards of the East Link Bridge is still a living memory. However, excepting for ceremonial and festive occasions, there is no presence of shipping of any commercial significance in this part of the river.

However, as the contemporary Dublin Port consolidates and regenerates in its present location, the vestiges of its historic urban footprint have, through the renewal of 526 Hectares of “Docklands” expanded the “mental map” and public realm of historic Dublin. In turn, new bridge crossings and public transport, notably “Luas”, have made the Port “Gateway” visible and legible. Further phases of Docklands regeneration will render the Alexandra Basin more visible in time from the South Bank of the Liffey and Poolbeg.



*Historical photographs of Dublin Port*



*View of the Docklands today*

Dublin Port is no exception to its counterparts globally. Recent decades have seen containerisation, automation, and logistical streamlining radically transform the operational dynamic of Ports – as have security, crime prevention and health and safety imperatives.

These factors combine to limit casual public access to the operational areas of Ports.

This submission, seeks to add to DPC's commitment to public engagement with its heritage and ambiance, with these realities and constraints, in the context of the ABR Project.

This report summarises DPC's "Soft Values Strategic Framework" centred on communicating the multi-faceted strands of the Ports history and heritage. It, in many ways, echoes the word and spirit of the joint ICOMOS-TICCH "Dublin Principles". "Principles for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage Site, Structures, Areas and Landscapes" cited in Southgate Associates Report.

This epoch of Dublin Port's regeneration, and this specific regeneration project, will trigger a structured and systematic regime of public engagement with the operational area of the Port. The nature of access to the public is elaborated elsewhere in this report.



*View of the North Wall Quay Extension lighthouse*



Alexandra Basin, Right (Source: Google Maps)

# "Soft Values" Strategic Framework

## 02.

"Soft Values" is a term attributed to Eric Van Hooydonk, an eminent Belgian Marine Lawyer, historian, and advocate of the often underappreciated attributes of ports and their heritage.

He has articulated his "Strategy for the Restoration of public support for Seaports; in a book entitled "Soft Values of Seaports" (Garant, Antwerp, 2007).

This work has informed the policy, of inter-alia, the European Sea Port Organisation, ESPO of which DPC is a member.

In October 2013 The Board of DPC, adopted a policy commitment to its "Soft Values Project Strategic Framework", which in supporting objectives in its Masterplan (2012 – 2040) offers guidance in respect of a suite of integrated initiatives, framed to reconnect and/or forge new relationships with Dublin City, and indeed the island of Ireland and beyond. The framework is accessible on DPC's website.

The Framework now informs the first generation of initiatives, one of which, the "Diving Bell Project" on Sir John Rogerson's Quay, is particularly pertinent to the approach to presenting Alexandra Basin's heritage to the public.

While the "Diving Bell" has been a visible feature of the campshires for over a decade, it would be DPC's aspiration and ambition, that in its reconfigured presentation to the City, it would, in a very real and meaningful way, inform visitors of its unique significance in the formation of Dublin Port, and specifically the Alexandra Basin.

Due for completion in Summer 2014, the Diving Bell Project will be the first major public manifestation of DPC's policy in respect of communicating and sharing its heritage with the city.



*The Diving Bell Project*

*A sampling of related initiatives is listed below:*

- **The Diving Bell Project**

Due for completion in summer 2014, a radically configured presentation of Blood Stoney's Diving Bell, will command an iconic presence on Sir John Rogerson's Quay, while communicating its history to the public. In the context of the ABR Project, this project can be seen as a companion to the proposed interpretive "set piece" on the North Wall Quay.

- **The Time Ball**

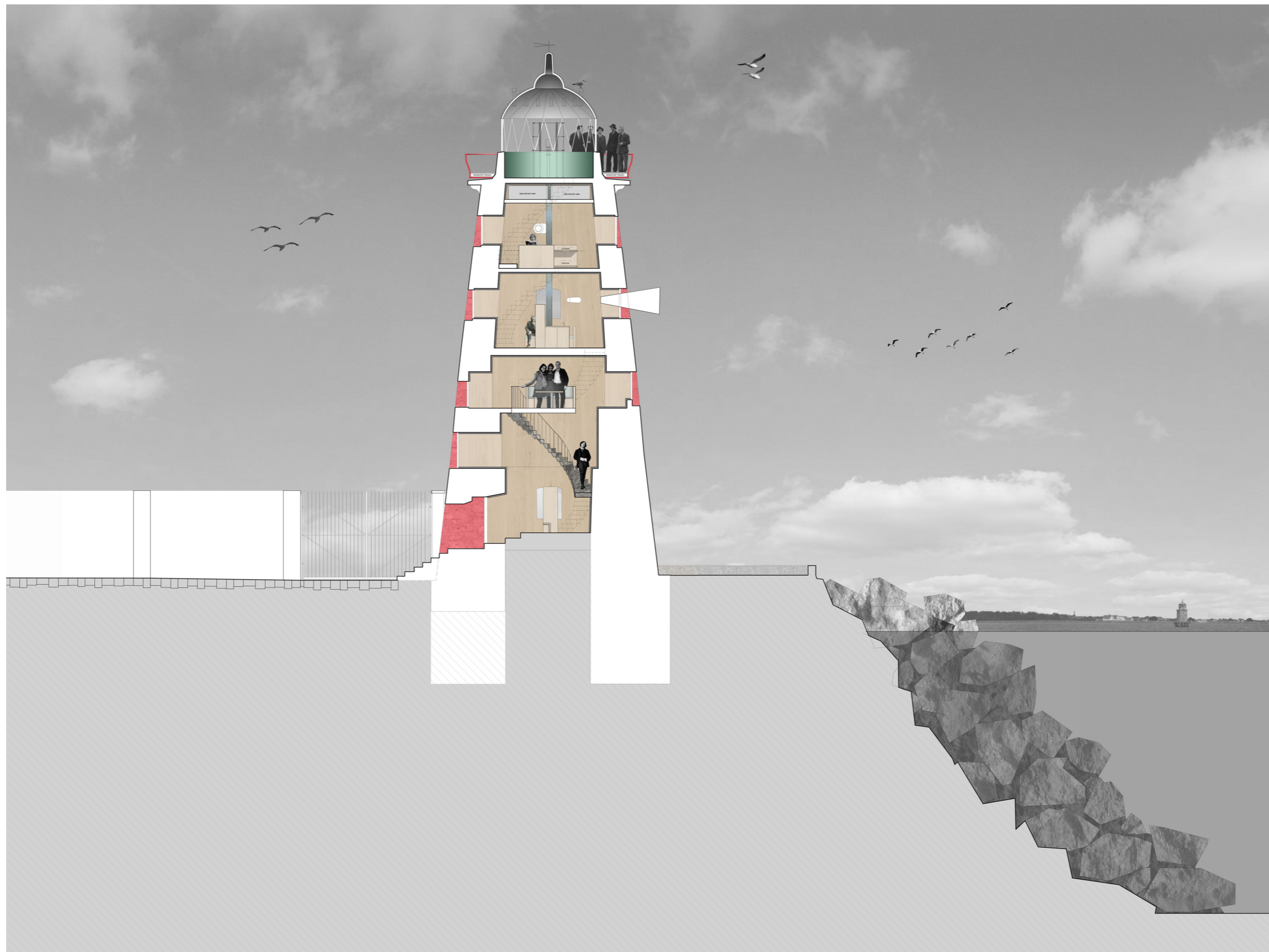
Due for publication during 2014, the book by Dr. Ian Elliot, funded by DPC, illuminates and expands on the history of the "Time Ball", installed in the Ballast Office in 1873, and which linked by telegraphy to Dunsink Observatory to bring accurate local time to the port.

- **Port Heritage Social Media Initiative**

Dublin Port is currently in dialogue with Dr. Mary Mulvihill of "Ingenious Ireland" to develop a framework, centred on established social media, such as "Story Map", to communicate the diverse strands of the Port's heritage to a national and international audience.

- **Social History Documentation**

DPC is supporting the award winning documentary maker, Moira Sweeney, in progressively documenting the social and personal history of former Docklands and Dublin Port employees, including some of the last operatives on the Diving Bell. This segment will link to the Port Heritage Social Media Initiative.



*The Lighthouse Project*



*Tall Ship Festival*

- **The Lighthouse Project**

At advanced feasibility stage, this proposal centres on adapting the Poolbeg Lighthouse as a temporary residence for writers. It also envisages the provision of related accommodation. Together the objective of the initiative is to celebrate the literary legacy of the Port, while providing a stimulus for new writing.

- **Tall Ships**

In 2012, over a million people visited "Dublin's Docklands", to experience the Tall Ships event. This event, supported and subvented by the DPC introduced many visitors to Dublin's port heritage, in the renewed Docklands for the first time.

- **Open House**

In 2013, Dublin Port Company's offices were opened to the public as part of the Irish Architectural Foundation's "Open House" event. DPC commissioned a handsome summary account of its office's architectural significance as a hand out.

DPC's offices were also featured in an ESPO publication celebrating the legacy of Port Authority Buildings to European Architecture.

# The Design Approach to the Conservation Strategy

## 03.

The ABR Projects proposed engineering design reflects contemporary and future requirements and will significantly alter the character and appearance of the Basin. At its core, the conservation strategy recognises the imperative for a contemporary engineering solution.

That reality however does not contradict DPC's aspiration and commitment to communicate and render accessible and legible the unique heritage of Alexandra Basin, albeit that some of its external expression, (notably the granite quay walls), will inevitably be substantially removed.

At the heart of the strategy is the concept and objective of legibility, which in design terms requires a response that informs by clearly counterpointing conserved historic fabric and heritage with what is self-evidently a contemporary intervention.

That being said, this transformative project invites innovative and enduring approaches to the challenge, not only of conserving elements of the past, but of exploring new ways of communicating the hidden history of the Basin, the construction of which, in its time, marked a milestone in the city of Dublin's history, and indeed in engineering history. It will be seen that that hidden history will now be revealed in a dramatic and enduring manner to the public.



*Granite wall on the North Wall Quays*

It is important that contemporary port engineering and its associated expression, architecturally and experientially, can be showed, recognised and celebrated aesthetically.

The renewed Alexandra Basin, will present a new face to visitors and operatives. Its ground plane and plan, will be expressed predominantly in materials such as tarmacadam, fit to purpose for a diversity of operations, as well as the safety to visitors, operatives and vehicular traffic.

The North Wall Quay Extension will present, on its south facing frontage, precast concrete, with out rigger fenders counterpointing conserved elements of the original wall.

However, the Conservation Strategy clearly directs that in the detailing of the North Wall Quay Extension, the line of the existing quay be legible on the ground plane and in elevation.

In this regard, it will be seen that the design approach involves recycled granite pavements to delineate the old quay wall, while revealing substantial portions of the quay wall in counterpoint to the precast concrete “combi-wall” with their out rigger fenders.

Its proposed design expression, while transformative, will present a dynamic “layered” expression, centred on rendering old and new legible and aesthetically pleasing.

Curvilinear wrought granite, from the existing quay end, will be used to commemorate and render legible this condition in providing a base for the relocated North Wall Lighthouse, and a “face” in the form of a curvilinear wall, to the new quay end.

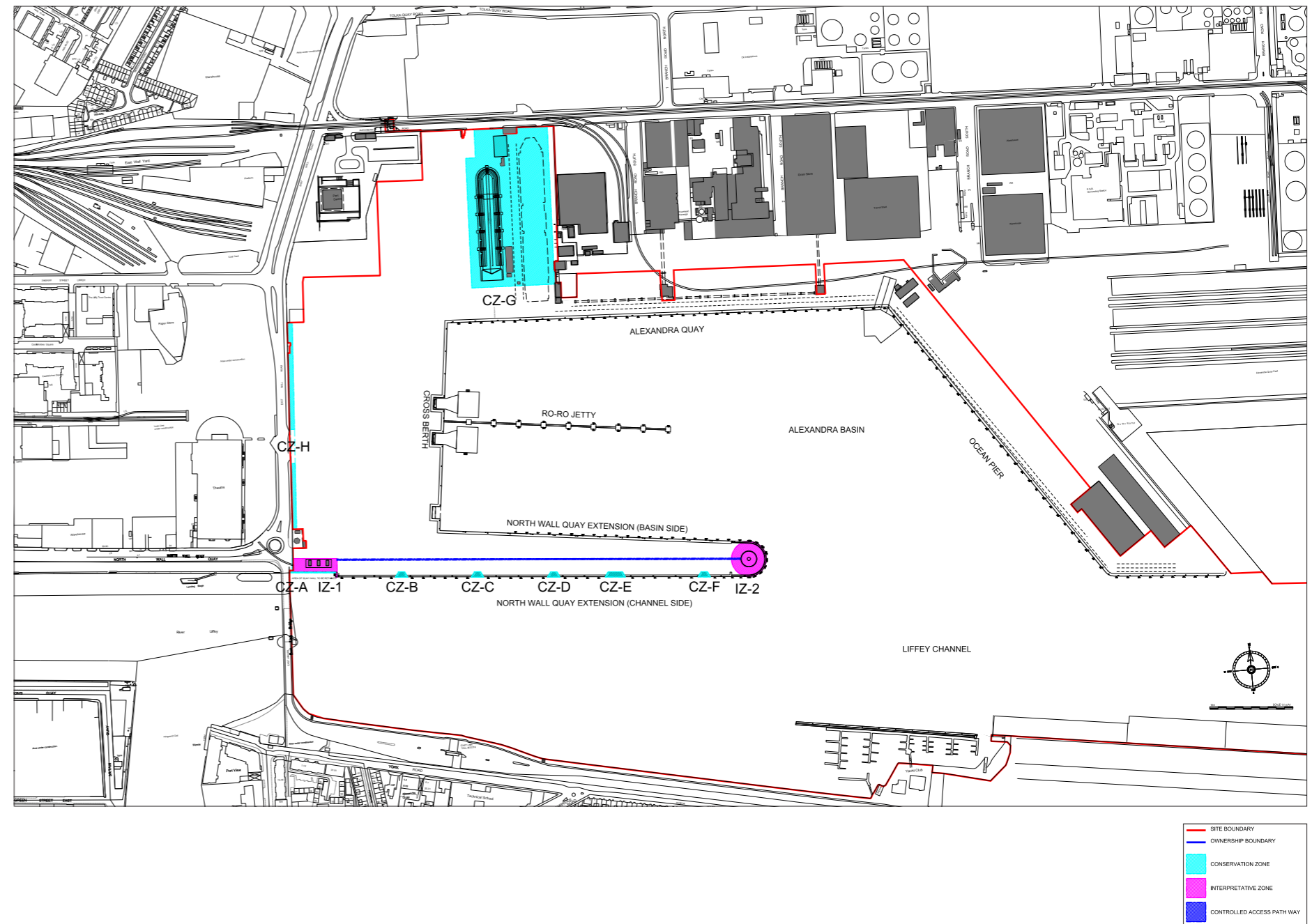
The conservation of artefacts and existing elements such as the Port Gates, again underpin the guiding principle of legibility of “new” and “old”.

While the Conservation Strategy addressed an approach to the re-use of salvaged materials, notably granite, it will be seen, that in elements of the proposed design, such as the proposed publicly accessible “Interpretive Zones” new paving is specified. This again is an expression of a design philosophy which reflects international best practice as cited in the Conservation Strategy.

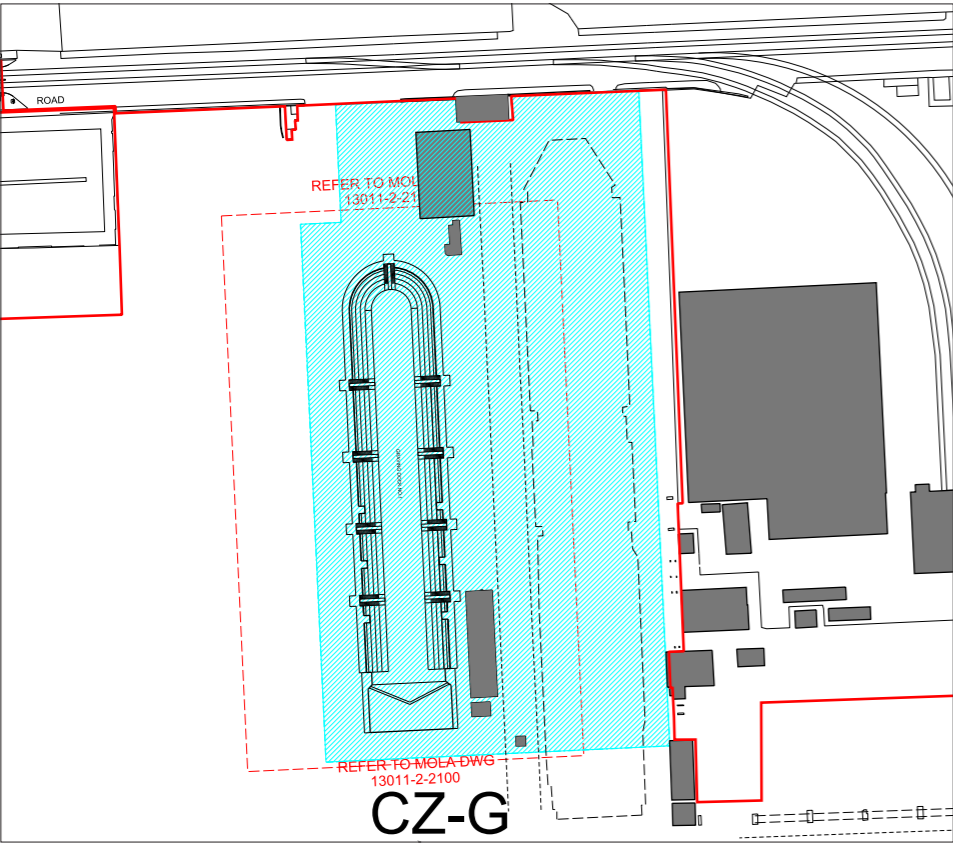
This Design Framework contextualises all the proposed actions and interventions for the subject area. It will be seen that in some instances, none (or little) intervention is proposed. Rather, some arms of “zones” are assigned “conservation” status because of their inherent heritage attributes (e.g. CZ-H).

It will also be observed that a Conservation Zone CZ-G centred on Graving Dock no. 1, confines planned intervention to its restoration and fitness to be visited by the public on a regulated and supervised basis.

While the concept and objective of legibility is at the heart of articulating “new and old” in the reconfiguration of the Basin, a proposal to extend the public realm in the operational area of the port, is testament to a holistic and dynamic approach celebrating and communicating the unique heritage of Alexandra Basin and Dublin Port.



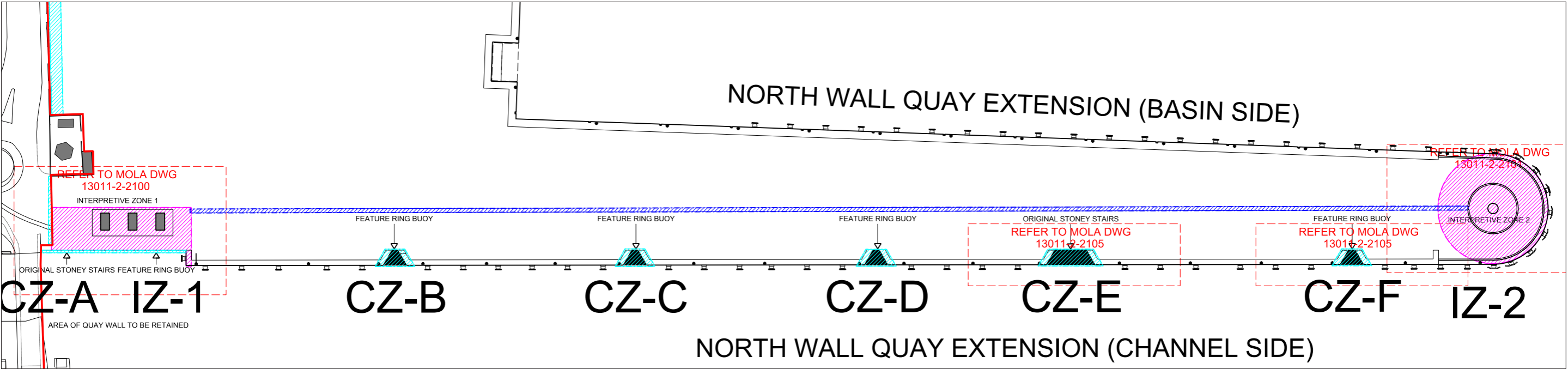
Plan Indicating Extent of Conservation Areas and Interpretive Zones



This proposition, illustrated in this report, will not only invite public entry, but will mark this epoch of change with an iconic contemporary architectural set-piece, inspired by the pioneering engineering legacy of Bindon Blood Stoney.

Legibility will be further enhanced by a lighting strategy, which will not only dramatically illuminate the proposed “set piece”, but will also dramatically convey the counterpointing of new and conserved fabric at night-time.

This, it is submitted, will magnify the project’s contribution to the image, iconography, and urban design of the Docklands.



Plan Indicating Extent of Conservation Areas and Interpretive Zones -Close Up

# The Design Framework for the Conservation Strategy

## 04.

Southgate Associates categorisation of conservation “zones” relating to North Wall Quay Extension, is summarised in the plan on page 17. Key actions proposed relating to specific zones are noted in the key to the drawing.

The reader is referred to the Conservation Strategy Report, for a commentary on best practice recording of buildings and artefacts policy etc., prior to the development proceeding.

A Note on Public Access

Interpretive Zone 1, is designated as being accessible to the public, and as such extends the public realm of the city, into a formerly operational area of Dublin Port.

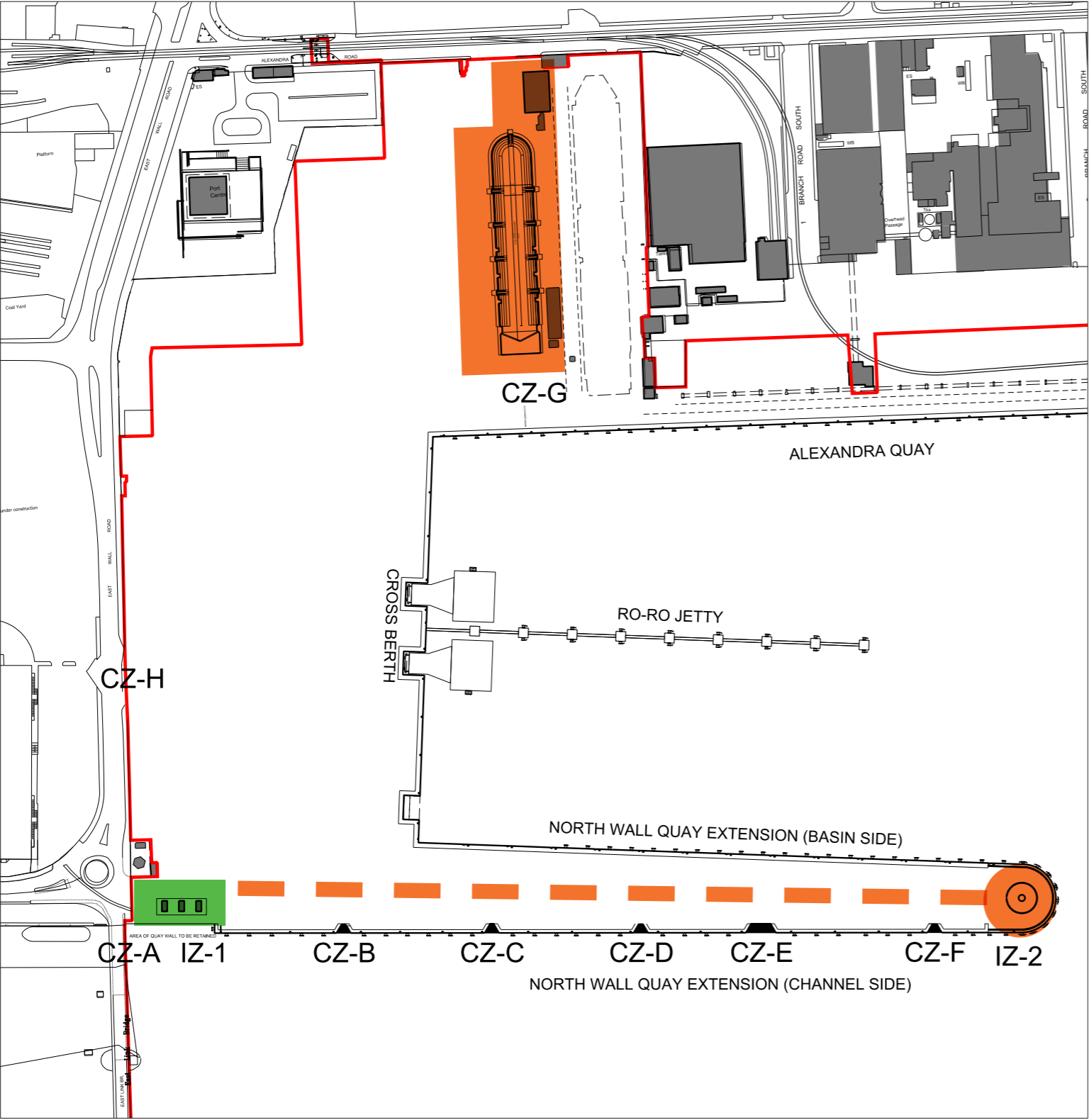
Its accessibility to the public, sets it apart from other elements of the Conservation Strategy, notably Interpretive Zone 2, which it is proposed be accessible to members of the public on a pre-arranged, managed and supervised basis.

The North Quay Extension “plate”, which obviously must be traversed to reach Imperative Zone 2 and other “conservation zones” including Conservation Zone G (Graving Dock No. 1), will be accessible to members of the public on a pre-arranged, managed and supervised basis.

With specific reference to the nature and extent of public access, the existing gates, designated for conservation in Interpretive Zone 1, will remain open during all times the area is designated to be publicly accessible.

Beyond recording DPC’s objective of public accessibility to Interpretive Zone 1, in this submission, it is presumed that the lands will remain in the charge of the DPC, who presumably reserve the right to regulate public access, and exercise rights which pertain to Health and Safety, public order, and security. Equally it is presumed that DPC will be charged with the maintenance of the “public realm” and the operational and management regime related to the proposed interpretive Bindon Blood Stoney set piece.

It is also noted here that the “median” pathway on (approx.) the centre-line of North Wall Quay Extension, is conceived as a “wayfinder”, to Interpretive Zone 2. While its attractive “recycled” quay wall granite paving will provide a pedestrian surface, it offers no pretence to bring either a dedicated “Part M” compliant “footpath” or indeed an exclusively pedestrian surface.



Access Map

- Public Access
- Controlled Access

# Summary of Design Proposals and Interventions in “Conservation Zones” and “Interpretive Zones”

## 05.

As a framing statement it is noted here that all “conservation zones” on North Wall Quay Extension will have a honeycomb steel grid appended for operation purposes.

### Conservation Zone A/Interpretive Zone 1 and 2

- Elements conserved in this zone are 55m (approx) of the existing quay wall, existing artefacts, and the existing gates and crane tracks.
- It is presumed that the conserved gates in their open position will announce entry to this extension of the public realm, into the historic operational area of the Port.

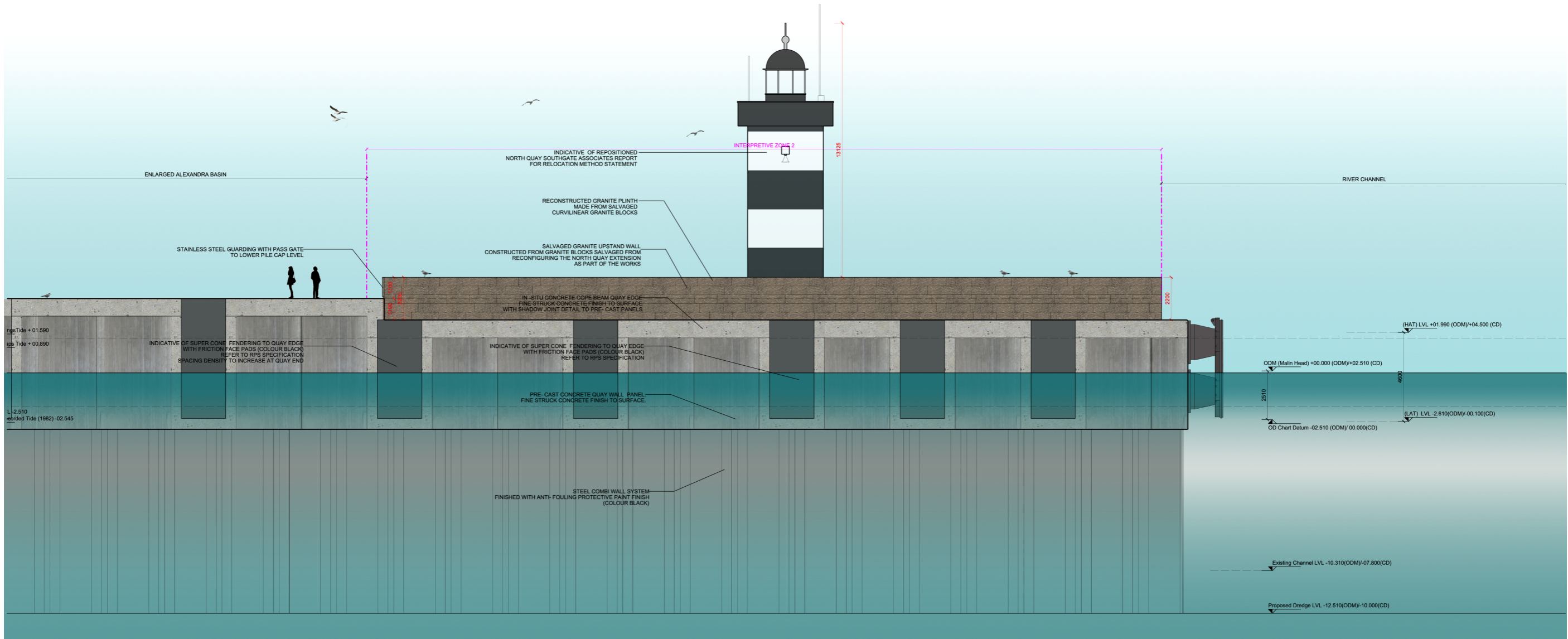
- The Interpretive Zone will be bounded by a galvanised perforated steel fencing on its North and East edges, to ensure that there is no unauthorised access to the operational area.

- This Boundary Fence will sit on a granite faced concrete block/rc wall and will also incorporate a gate, facilitating access, as required to the North Wall Quay Extension.

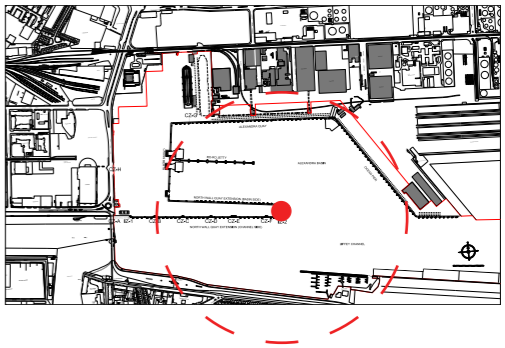
- The ground plane will be paved with granite paviors, counterpointing conserved fabric.

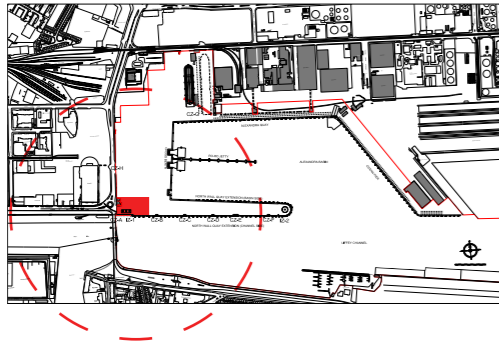
The “centre piece” of the Interpretive Zone is the proposed Bindon Blood Stoney interpretive set piece. The design approach to this key element of the Conservation Strategy is summarised under a separate heading.

Interpretive Zone 2, South Elevation

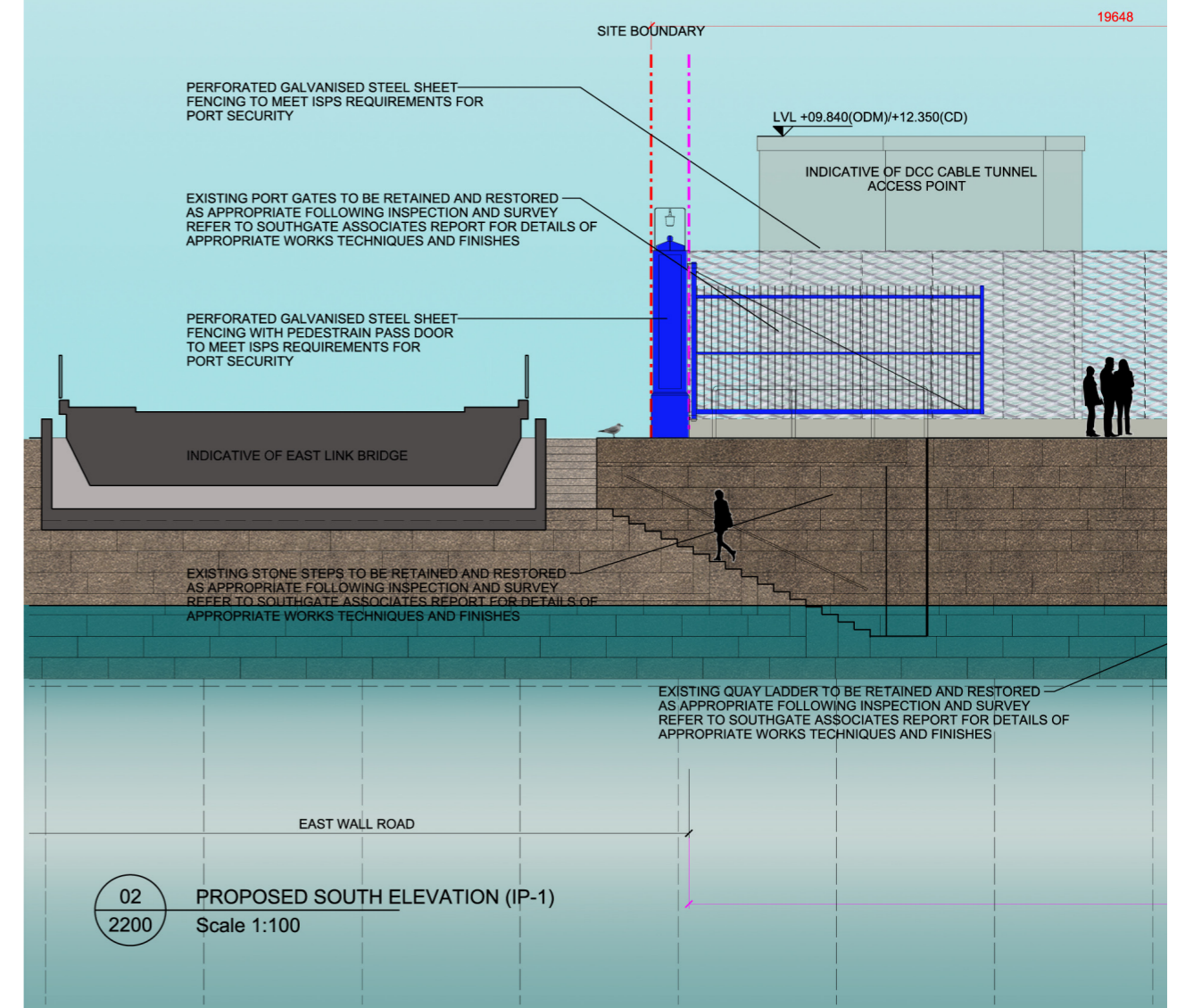


Location Plan

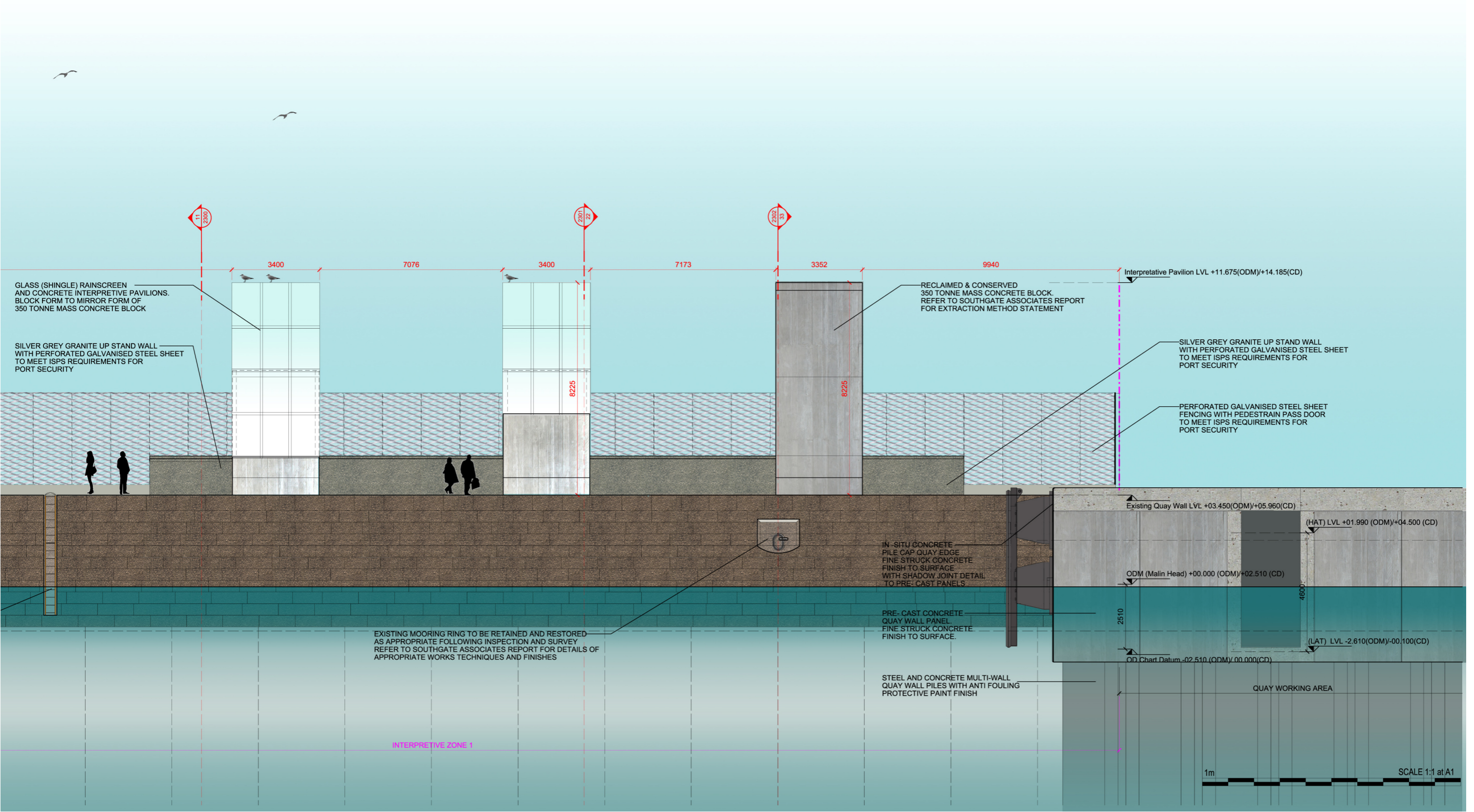




Location Plan



Interpretive Zone 1, South Elevation



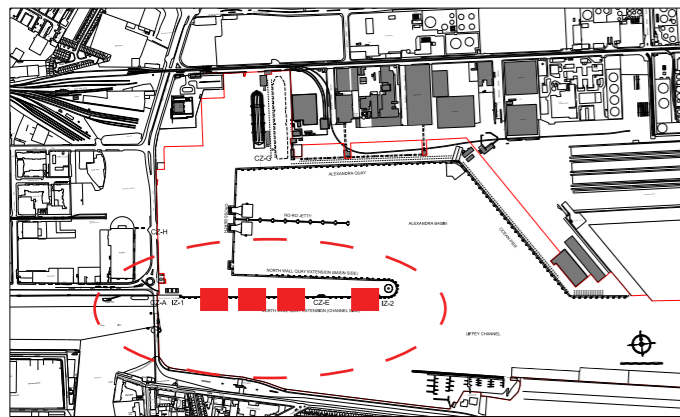
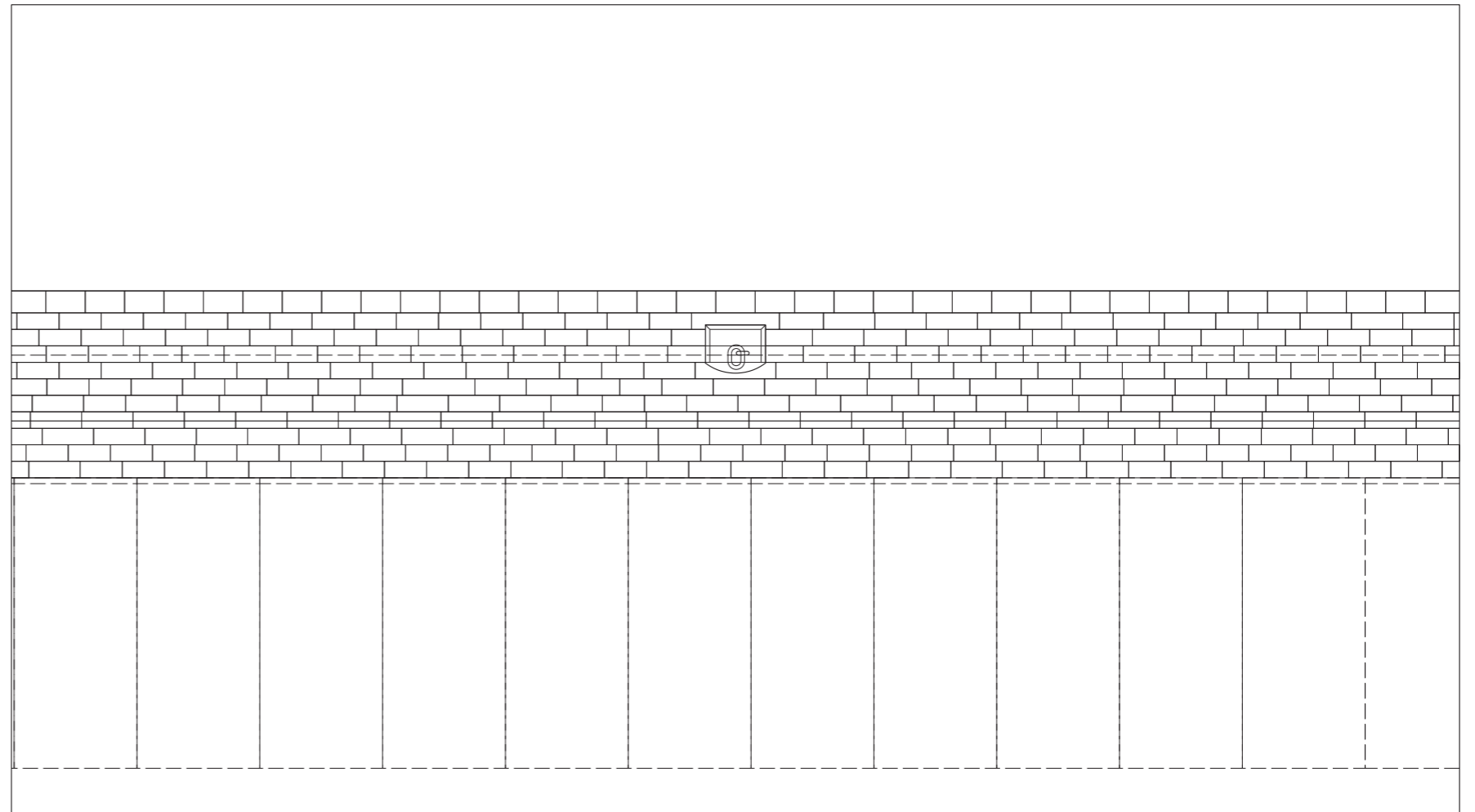
### Conservation Zones B, C, D, F

For the purposes of this report, it can be stated that these zones share:

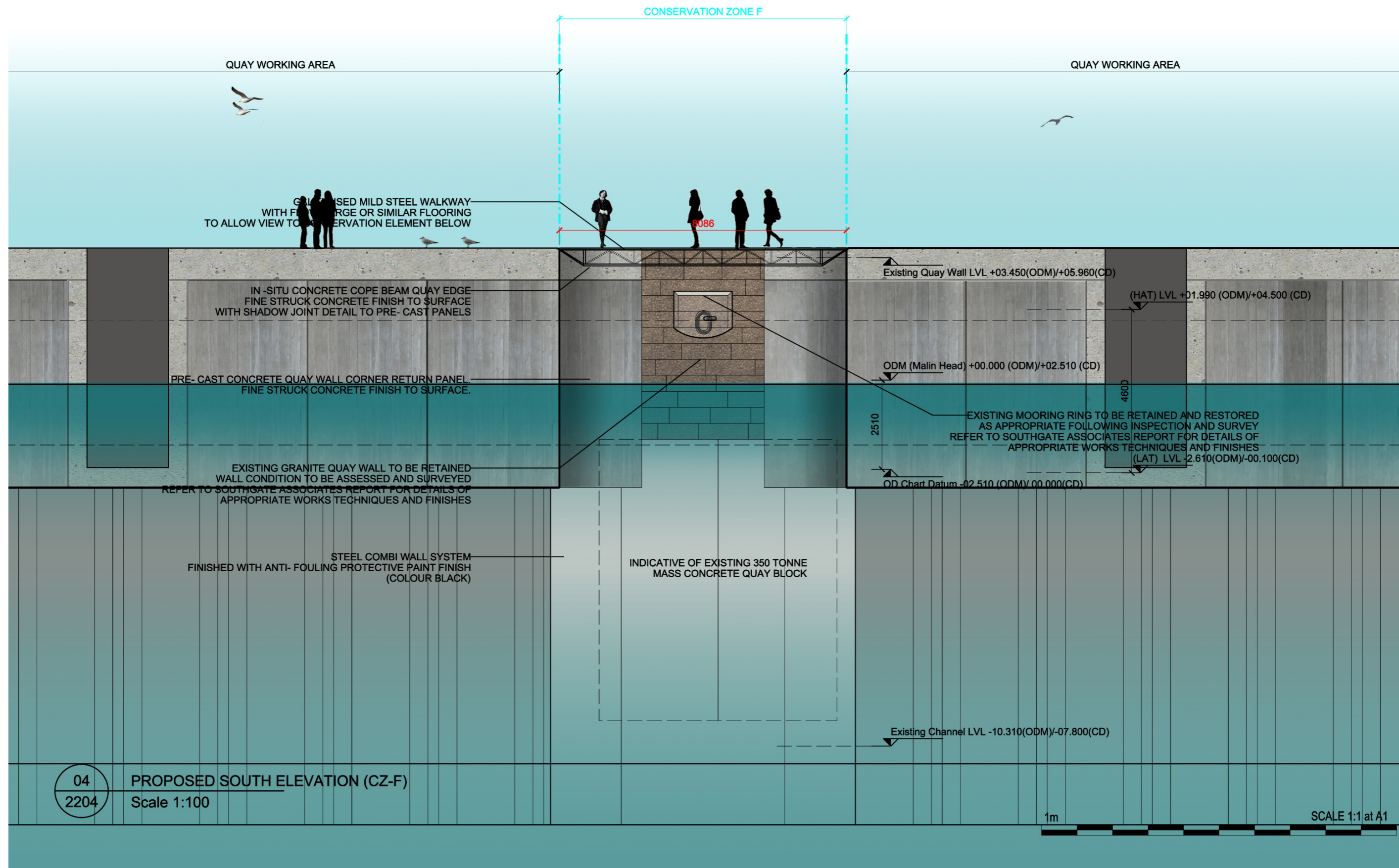
- a) A proposal to relay recycled “original” granite paviors in a manner that delineates the “old” and “new” Quay edge;
- b) The exposure of a significant area of conserved original quay wall, incorporating a conserved mooring ring.

This section drawing shows how the conserved wall is “framed” by being set back from the plane of the combi-wall of the fenders.

It will be observed that the “combi-wall” detail at the “frame” edge has been adapted to create a “shadow gap” and location for dusk and night time illumination.



Location Plan

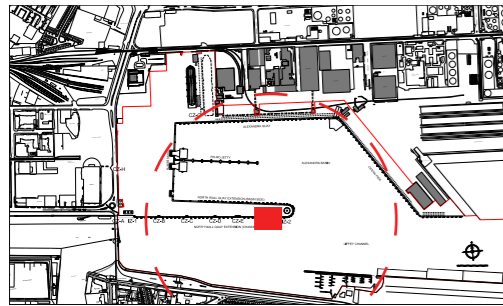
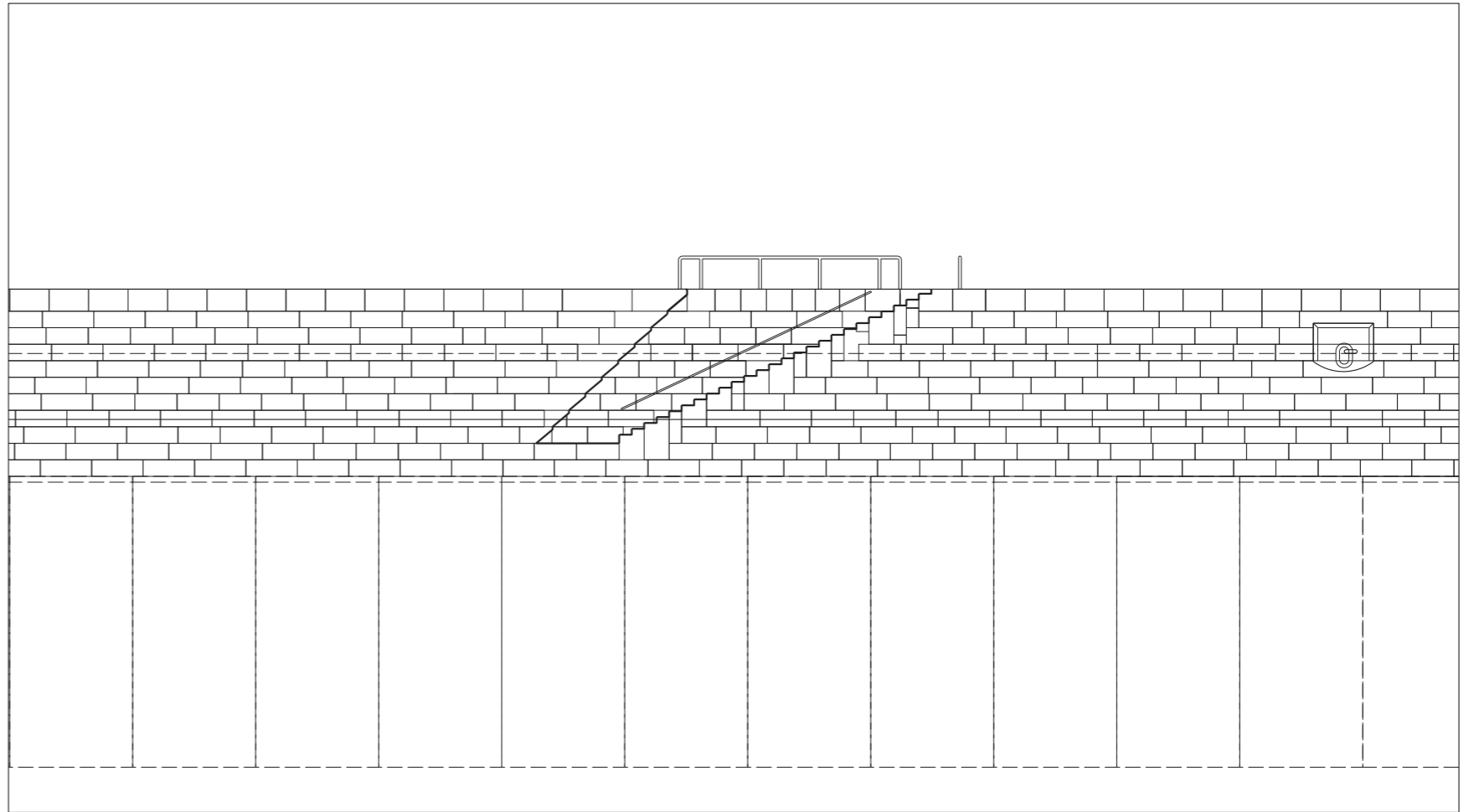


## Conservation Zone E

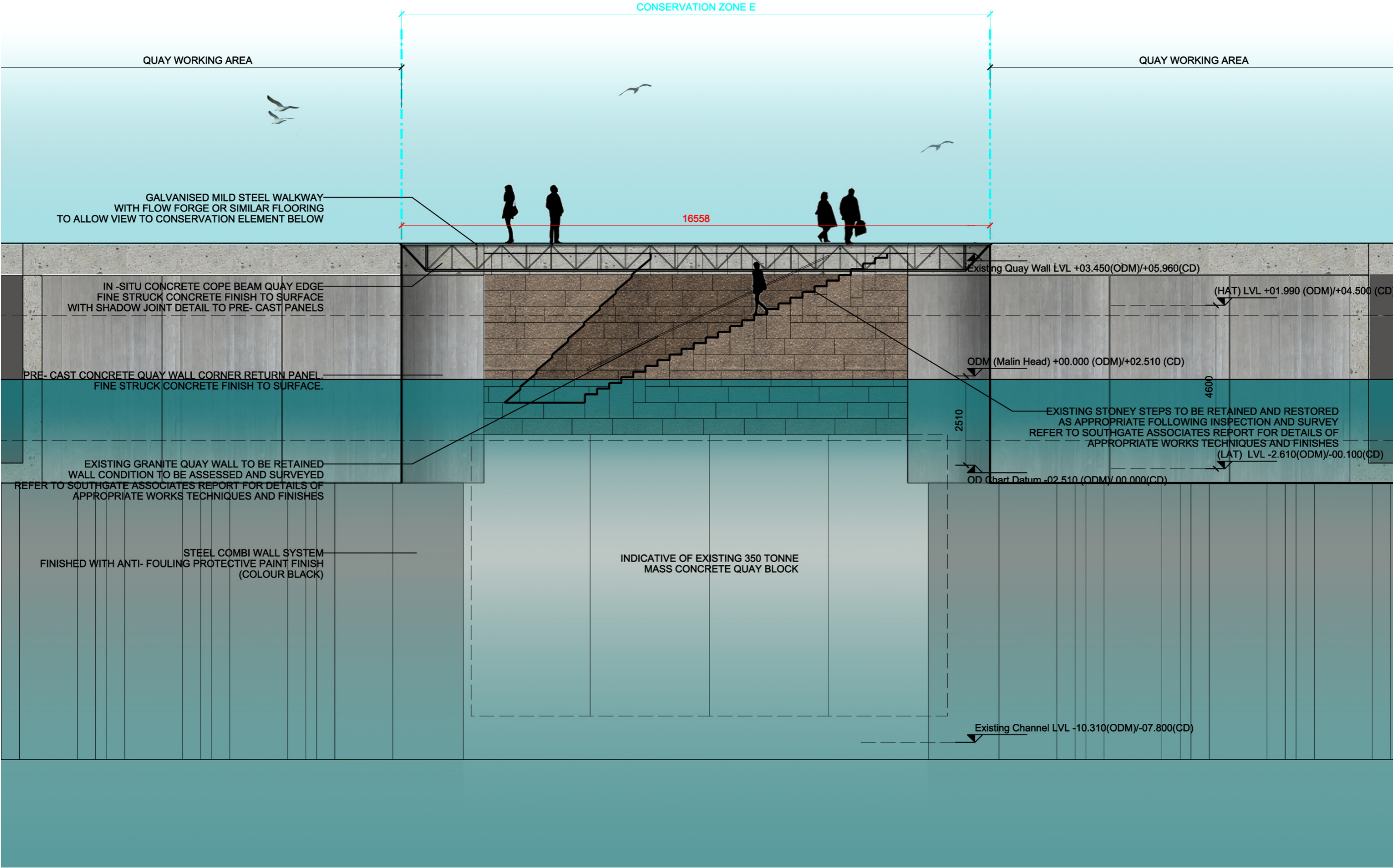
While sharing attributes of B, C, D, F, this zone is centre on stairs to a mooring point, designed by Blood Stoney.

A significant amount of original quay wall and the stairs will be conserved, and will also be the subject of a dusk and night-time illumination scheme.

It is further noted here that the “honeycomb” steel grid appended to the quay wall for operational purposes is strengthened in this condition to function as a bridge over the approx. 5m opening.



*Location Plan*



### Conservation Zone “G” Graving Dock No. 1

Conservation Zone G is spatially defined as the now in-filled Graving Dock No. 1, and its curtilage together with the attendant Pump House and related structures, and a portion of the area of Graving Dock number 2.

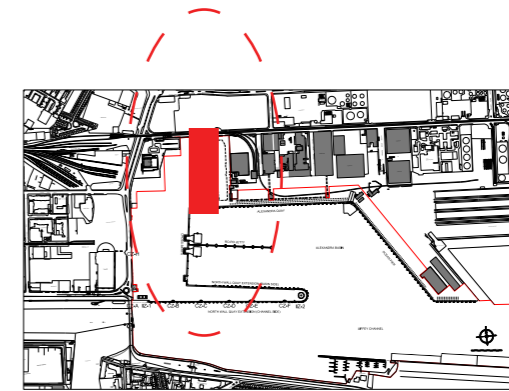
The proposed “visitable” area is shown in the plan (opposite) and includes the Pump House, a related building and related paving.

All the buildings in its curtilage excepting a toilet are scheduled to be recorded and demolished.

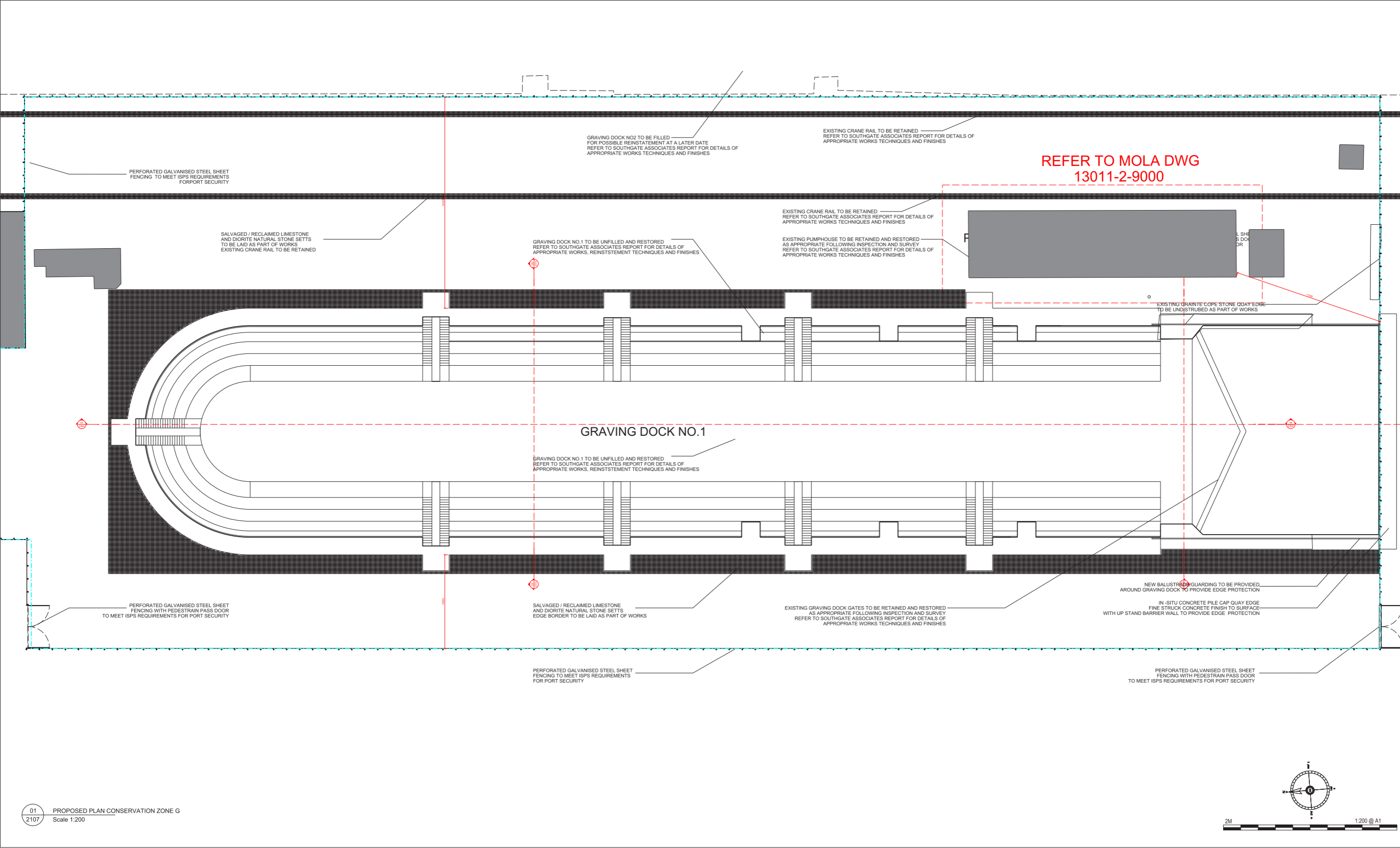
This area will be bounded by a galvanised perforated metal fence, with entrance from the existing gates to Alexandra Road.

The proposed surface treatment is dominantly tarmacadam. However, it is proposed to form a separating zone of granite setting and/or recycled calp cobbles, to enable legibility of the Basin’s edge.

The drawing used to communicate the now buried basin has been scaled and informed by MOLA Architecture from historic record and photographs.



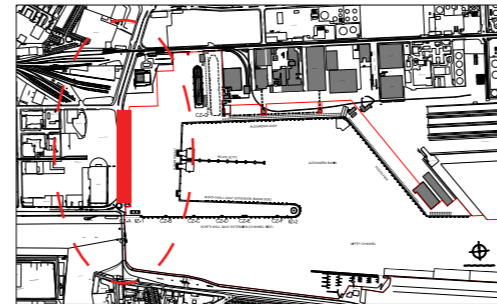
*Location Plan*



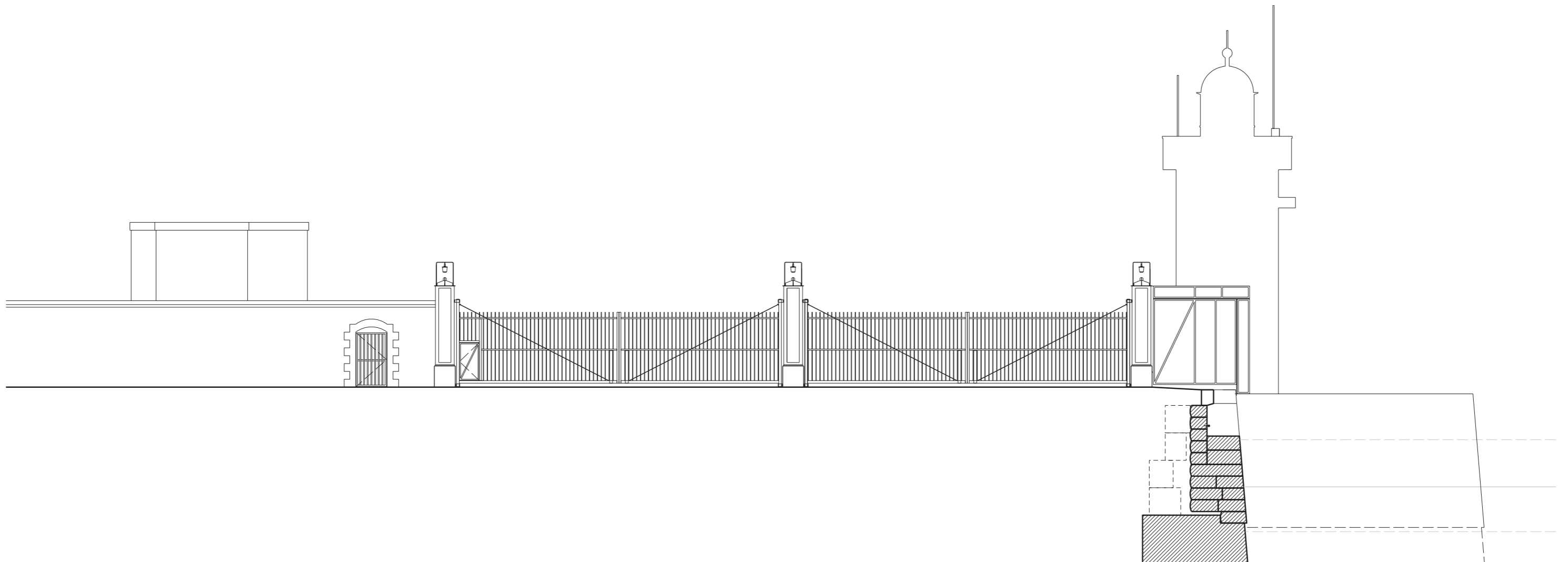
### Conservation Zone H (Western Wall)

This zone, on the western perimeter of the Port is designated to mark its historic significance, and as the location of the western boundary of a pre-existing basin, besides containing a number of buildings which have a linkage with earlier epochs of the Port's evolution, notably the Hexagonal Building and Tunnel.

No intervention or development is proposed in this zone at this time.



*Location Plan*





### The Proposed Interpretive Facility in Interpretive Zone 1

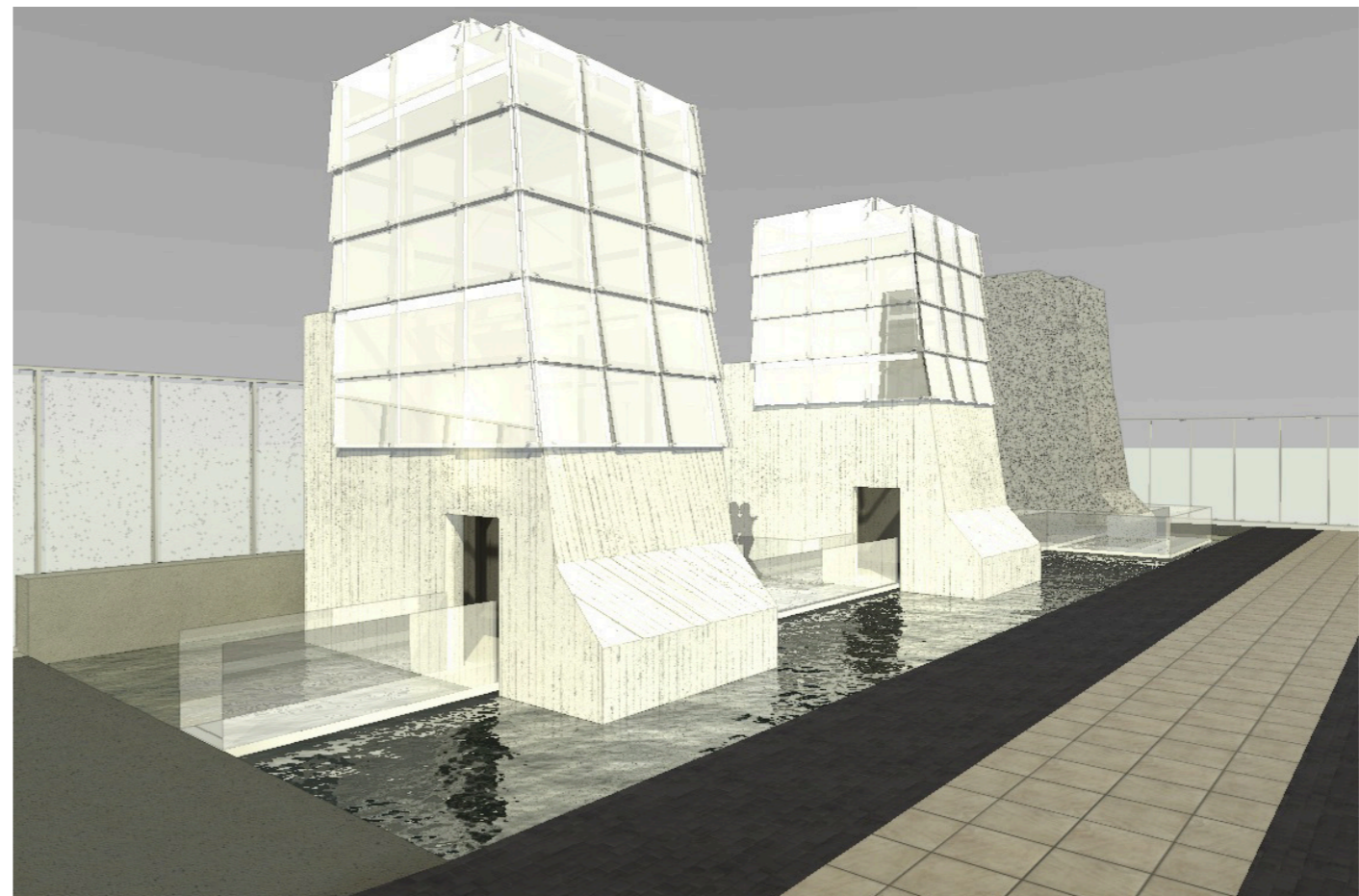
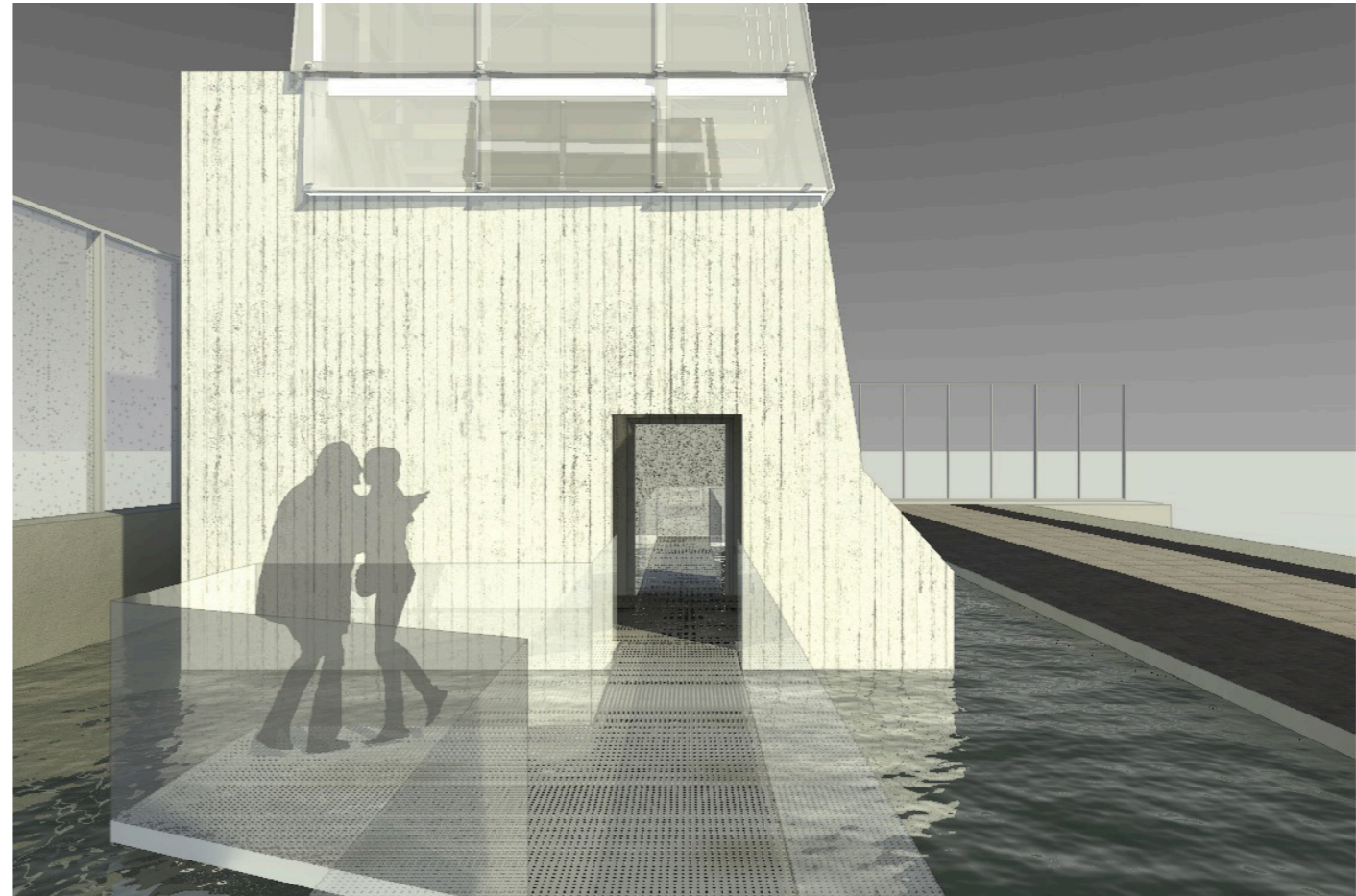
The top right hand image on the opposite page is a photograph of a model of one of the “blocks” formed with in-situ cast concrete, to construct the North Wall Quay Extension under the direction of Bindon Blood Stoney. The juxtaposition of a human figure will hopefully convey it’s cyclopean scale.

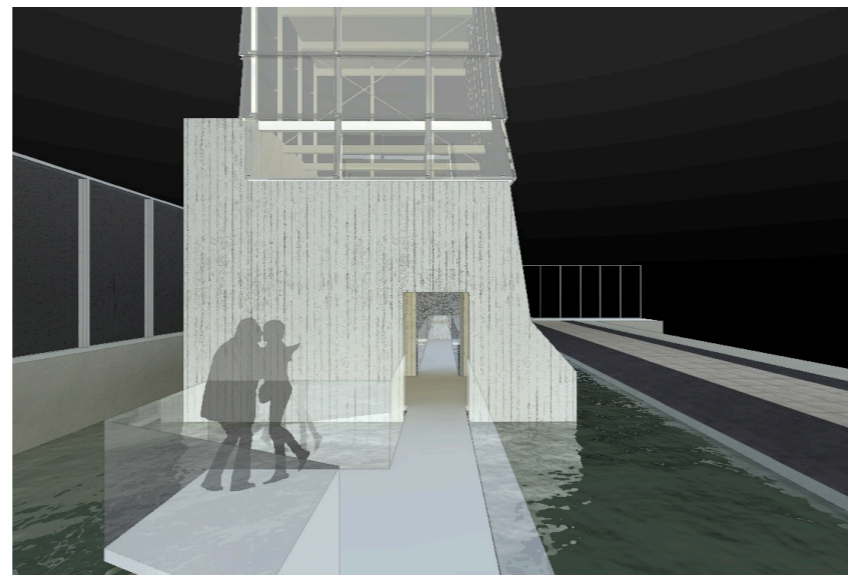
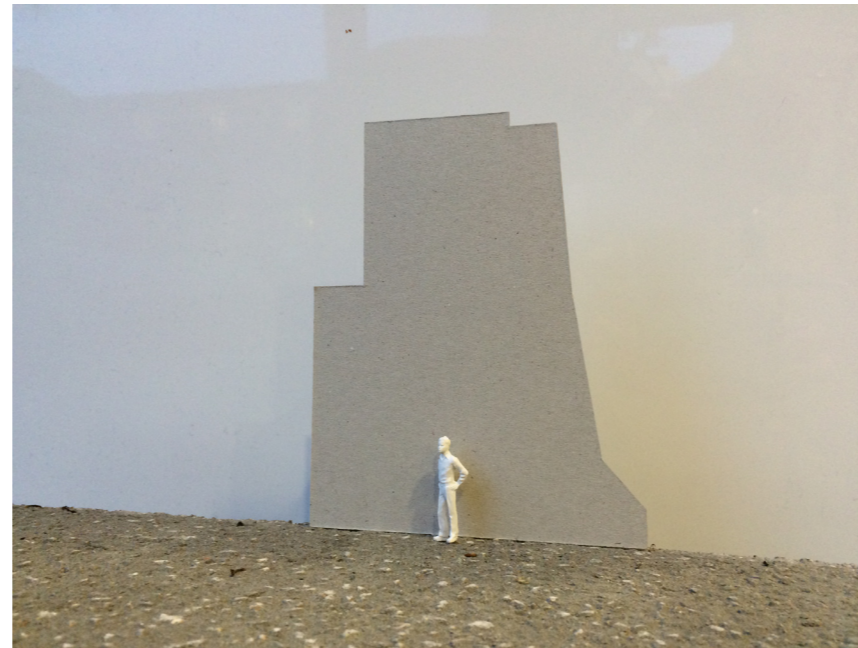
Southgate Associate’s Conservation Strategy Report, places Stoney’s and Dublin Port’s pioneering achievement in their historic context. Suffice to say here, that the removal of some of this unique heritage in this epoch of the port’s evolution suggests that conveying their significance in a meaningful manner, would amplify the spirit and intent of the Conservation Strategy.

A key conservation objective is the salvaging of one of these “blocks”. The Conservation Strategy, sets out a methodology for this challenging objective.

MOLA Architecture proposed and describe here, how the salvaged “block” could form a key element of an architectural “set piece” or ensemble, in Interpretive Zone 1, which would communicate the heritage of the Alexandra Basin and the Port to the public. Simply described the proposal envisages two “buildings” which echo the footprint, volume, bulk and profile of the Blood Stone “block”, counterpointed with the salvaged block. However, as can be seen in the figures opposite, the companion “buildings” are hollow and serve primarily as “containers” of interpretive material relating to the genesis of this unique engineering achievement. It is envisaged that the salvaged Block and their “carved out” contemporary companions will sit in a shallow bed of water.

Visitors will move through the contemporary buildings “serially” over a honey-combed metal decking, entry volumes that should experientially reinforce the sheer scale of Blood Stoney’s achievement, which facilitates the use of multi-media to elaborate the narrative.





As can be seen from the figures opposite, the contemporary “containers” are to be constructed in “in-situ” concrete, with translucent “shingled” rain screen defining the upper “body” of the form. Excepting electricity, no other services, such as heating, are envisaged.

In short, the visitors exposure to materiality and scale is as significant a part of the “vision experience” as the narrative and story telling.

These raw interiors are therefore readily amendable to receive print, light and sound, in different combinations to magnify and render the visit memorable.

The “climax” will be the salvaged “block” itself, viewed through the lens of insight and knowledge garnered in the passage through the two “containers” companion building.

The proposal described here, is seeking permission for a development of the bulk, volume and height and function described in this submission.

DPC endorses the proposal as submitted as communicating its intention in schematic architectural terms. As such, it is recognised that any variations or refinements of this proposal would be bound by the scalar, volumetric, and functional content of this proposal.

# Lighting Strategy

# 06.

## Lighting Strategy

The Conservation Strategy recommends that a specific lighting strategy be developed to give expression to its legible substance, particularly on North Wall Quay Extension, which is visible from local vantage points.

The lighting strategy will focus on:

**A. Conserved portions of Existing North Wall Quay Extension**

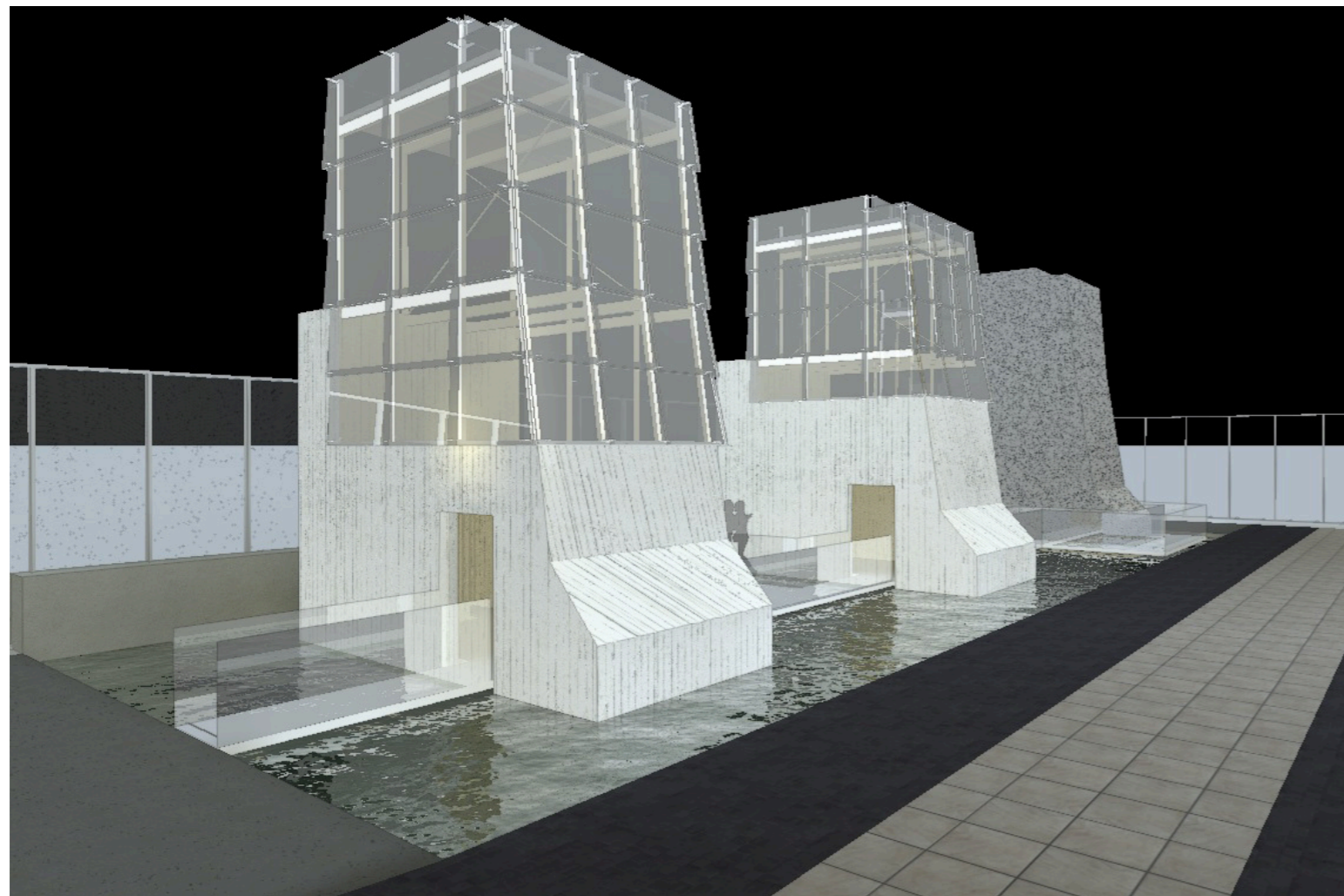
**B. The Blood Stoney “Set Piece” in Interpretative Zone 1**

By day the structural frame is obscured by the glazing. By night the structure will be highlighted with a single high output linear illumination. The colour temperature of this white light will be 6,000 Kelvin. The visibility of this application will be seen on approach from all directions giving the structures a light house effect while identifying the scale of the sections. The concrete sections will be washed with a white colour temperature of 4,000 Kelvin. Complementing this will be a light projecting through the water, washing the lower sections of the concrete structures, allowing for movement as wind blows over the water.

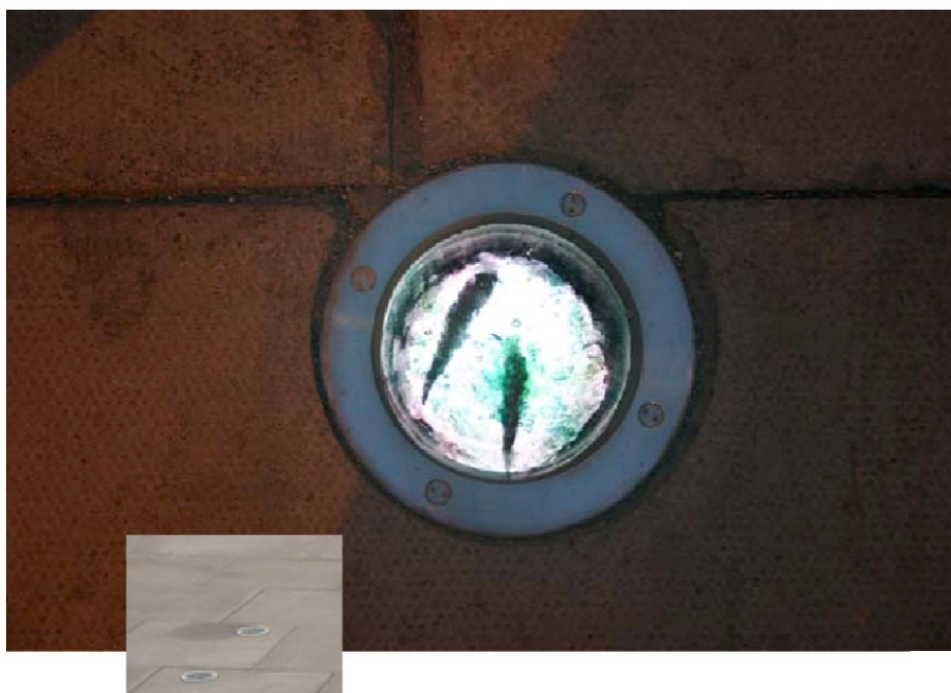
**C. Way finding:** it is envisioned that recessed feature fittings will be located in the paved median path leading to Interpretative Zone 2, similar to that lighting which is already in use on the campshires.

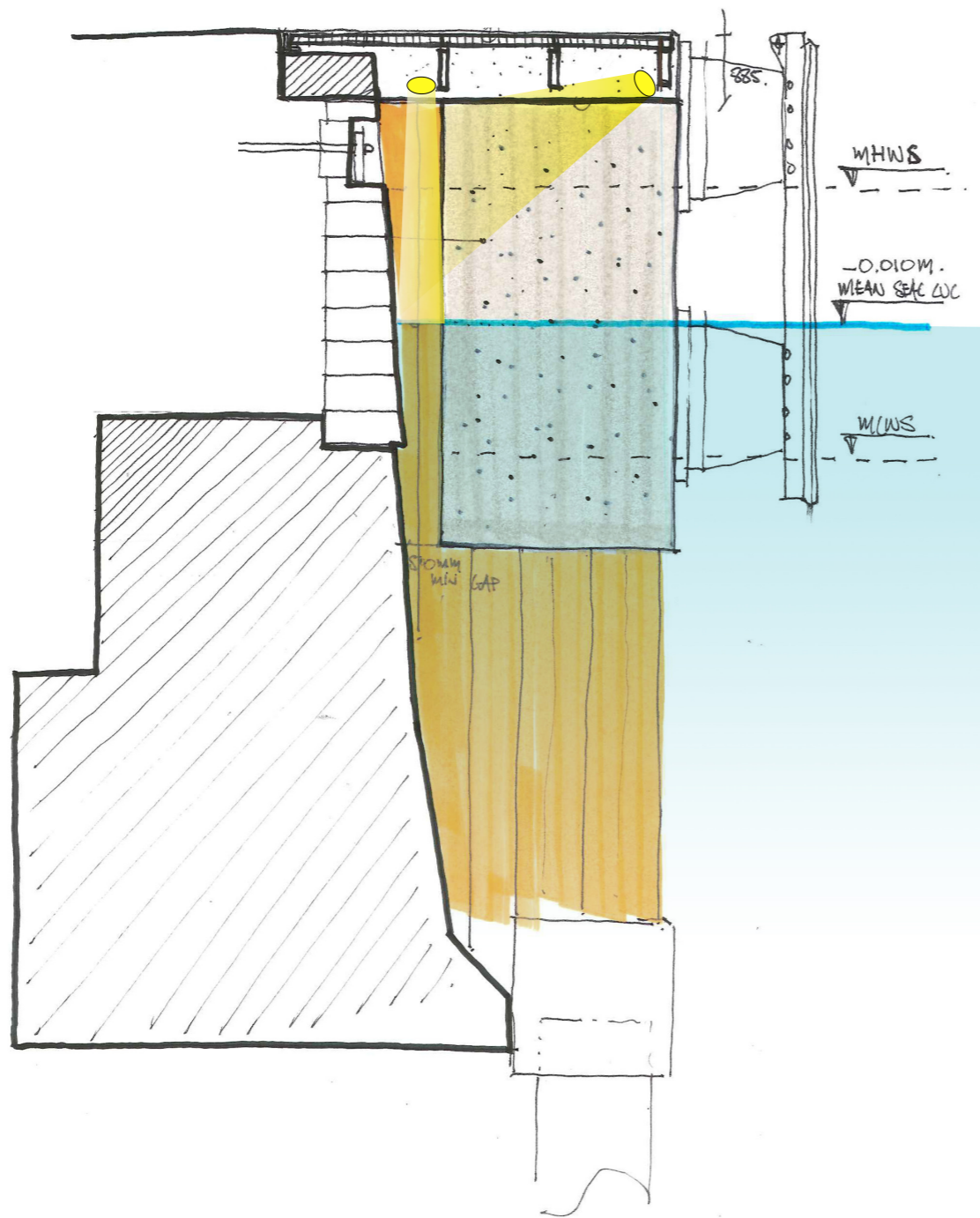
**D. Reception lighting on the ground plane of North Wall Quay Extension.**

This proposal will be reserved for ceremonial purposes and is seen both as a means of illuminating the new North Wall Quay Extension and rendering berthing memorable for visitors.



*Lighting of Interpretative Zone 1*

**Way-finding :****Reception ;**



Sketch section of the wall

A specific lighting scheme is proposed to highlight the conserved parts of wall in conservation zones A-F on North Wall Quay Extension.

The figure opposite is a generic section representative of this condition/context. It is envisioned that two light sources will be used. One will wash the “old” granite wall elements with programmable colour.

The second is to emphasise and highlight the shadow gap between old and new and to emphasise the depth of the new structure and frame the recess.

Clearly this proposal recognises the diurnal cycle of Port operations and equally recognises other imperatives which include running costs. However, the Conservation Strategy recommends that a specific lighting strategy be developed to give expression to it at night time.

The lighting “concepts” outlined here, are predicated on the assumption that there can be a systematic linking between the proposed “operational” lighting regime, and any proposed lighting concepts developed to articulate the conservation strategy.

Such a systematic linkage would ensure that any proposed conservation related lighting, would not be overwhelmed or dominated by the “operational” lighting scheme.