

Irwell & Mersey Packet Co Ltd (Manchester River Cruises)

River Irwell, South of Albert Bridge

Design and Access Statement for Pontoon Installation

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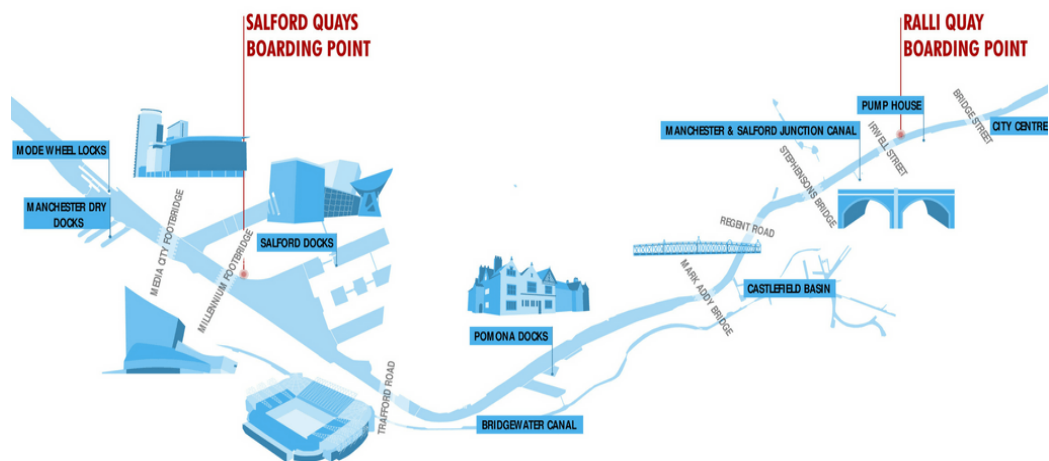
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1. Introduction

This document relates to the installation of a pontoon to provide a replacement landing/boarding location for Manchester River Cruises on the River Irwell. Manchester River Cruises operate a range of river tours and cruises on the Manchester Ship Canal. The proposed pontoon is to replace the existing access on the opposite side of the river (Ralli Quay site) which is being redeveloped so future use is not possible.

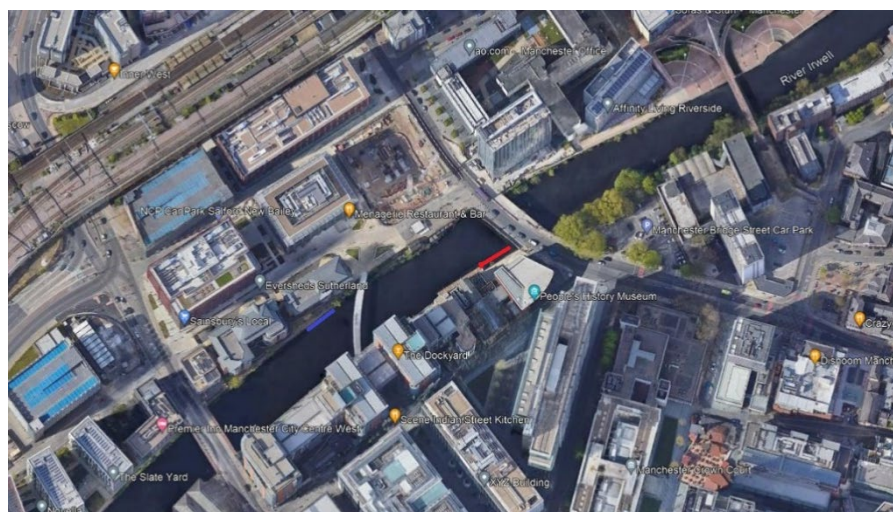
The image below shows the current boarding points:



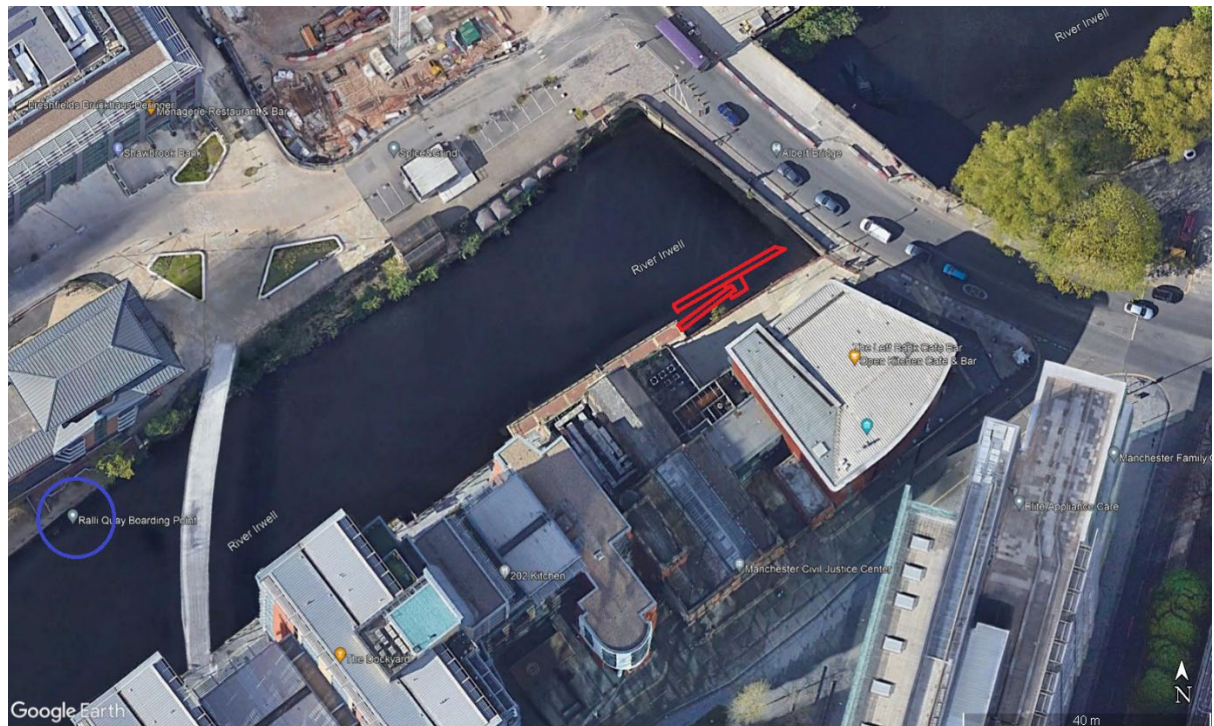
2. Site Location

The site is on the south bank of the River Irwell, just downstream of Albert Bridge.

The image below shows the proposed location in red. The existing Ralli Quay boarding location is further downstream on the opposite side and shown in blue.



The following image shows more detail. The Ralli Quay location is shown by a blue circle.



Drawing 10908/1 shows further detail.

3. Proposed works

The works involve the installation of 25m long, 2.4m wide pontoon, three tubular steel piles and an access brow (gangway).

The upstream end of the pontoon has been angled to deflect floating debris.

The pontoon will be used for passenger access to the existing cruise vessels operated by the applicant.

Drawing 10908/1 shows the proposed works.

Access to and from the vessel will be via a ramped walkway (the brow) as is standard practice in most marinas. The length of the brow is restricted by the available space.

In order to comply with recommendations for disabled access the maximum gradient should be no less than 1:12. This would have required a ramp longer than the available space, which is clearly impractical.

4. Design details

The pontoons consist of concrete cased floats supporting the metal framed walkways. The decking consists of a durable hardwood from a sustainable source. The finish is allowed to weather naturally.

The pontoons are held in place by tubular steel piles (typical diameter 408mm) driven into the seabed. The piles are painted with a marine friendly paint.

4.1 Amount of Development

The works consist of a new access and represent a small footprint. The works are fully compatible with the existing waterway.

4.2 Landscaping

The site is within an existing waterway and no landscaping is possible. No landscaping of the adjacent area is affected by the proposals.

4.3 Appearance

The works are of a standard design and will have minimal visual impact.

4.4 Access

The proposals do not affect the highway or access to the site. The traffic generated to the site is not changed by the proposals. (Public access is addressed later).

4.5 Lighting

It is considered unlikely that navigation lighting (two fixed greens) will be considered necessary, but that will be determined as part of the Marine Management Organisation application.

To assist the public the access brow will have LED downlights fitted on the side frames. Similar low intensity LED lighting will be installed on the pontoon. Such lighting is standard marine practice and has negligible impact (light pollution) on the surrounding areas. Street lighting already exists on the Albert Bridge.

5. Archaeology

There is no recorded information regarding wrecks at this location. Unless information is available it is accepted standard practice to condition the marine works such that if any artefact should be encountered then work stops until the County Archaeologist has inspected the find.

6. Method Statement

A spud-legged crane barge will be employed for the works. The barge will arrive with the piles and pontoons on board.

The piles will be driven using vibro-piling methods. The pontoon sections will then be floated into position and the pile guides attached.

The access brow will then be craned into position. The brow is fixed to the existing quay wall using a purpose made connecting bracket (hinge) which will be installed first.

Timing of the works is dependent upon marine plant availability. It is anticipated that the works should be completed within 2 weeks, with daylight and weekday working only.

7. Protected Areas

The MAGIC Defra site shows no protected areas and there are no WFD areas. The Environment Agency Catchment Data Explorer confirms this.

8. Disabled access

The Equality Act 2010 protects any disabled person (whether visibly disabled or not) from discrimination or exclusion. The Act places a duty on providers of facilities (the access pontoon in this case) to make reasonable adjustments to avoid a disabled person being placed at a substantial disadvantage when compared to non-disabled persons.

For buildings the Building Regulations 2010 document M applies. As the proposed works are not a building, this does not apply.

For maritime transport the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) enforces the existing Maritime Passenger Rights. This is covered under Regulation (EU) 1177/2010 for passengers travelling by sea and inland waters. This regulation was incorporated into domestic UK law in 2018.

It is necessary to clarify some of the terms used in these regulations –

A ‘ferry’ is defined as a commercial passenger transport.

A ‘cruise’ is defined as an exclusive transport for pleasure or recreation, exceeding two nights on board.

In this case the ‘Manchester River Cruises’ are not a ‘cruise’ under the Act.

Under the Act the regulations do NOT apply on excursion and sightseeing tours other than cruises.

The vessel operator has confirmed that his vessels do not have wheelchair facilities. The existing facility at Ralli Quay does not have disabled access (nor does the Salford Quays site).

Whilst some similar maritime operations do offer assistance, many do not and do not allow their crew to assist (as not trained to do so).

One issue is that many still regard disability as 'obviously visible', and often with a wheelchair. In services such as that provided here, there is no restriction on access with a carer/helper, but the crew are not trained to assist. This places an additional burden on the carer/helper and may constitute an unacceptable risk.

The second issue is whether the access pontoon should be designed for safe wheelchair access (seen as the highest level in design here), when the vessels are not so designed.

9. Operation

The applicant currently operate their vessel in the same area, and the proposed installation makes no change to this. Both day and evening cruises are available. Operational times are between 1100 and 2030.

10. Water safety partnership

The operator is in communication with the partnership, but already has a complete set of vessel safety procedures in accordance with MCA requirements (which take precedence).

11. Water environment

We have twice requested clarification from the City Council as to the scope of this. Discussions with the ecologists we use for marine works questions what exactly the pontoon installation can impact.

As we have received no response from the Council, we are taking an overall view (largely based on Natural England's Designated Sites View – which this site is not) as to what the potential impacts could be and how these are addressed:

Period	Impact	Cause	Control	Satisfactory?
Construction	Fuel/oil spill	Refuelling leak	No onsite fuelling	Yes
Construction	Fuel/oil spill	Machinery leak	Oil spill kits carried	Yes, standard marine practice
Construction	Underwater noise	Machinery/piling	Mobile receptors can be sensitive to underwater noise.	Yes

			Variations in the underwater noise climate will potentially occur during marine piling works. Only 3 piles are being installed and the driving is very short term (typically 20mins)	
Construction	Underwater vibration	Piling	Use of vibro-piling will introduce vibration into the water column and the seabed. This will be temporary, localised, and non-continuous.	Yes
Construction	Substrate disturbance	Piling	Small diameter piles, low risk. Usually only considered for 1m diameter and above	Yes
Construction	Changes in suspended solids (water clarity)	Piling	Piling can raise suspended solids locally, but this is highly localised and temporary. The necessary slow start to the operation enables any receptor species to move away.	Yes
Operation	Fuel/oil spill	Machinery leak	Oil spill kits carried	Yes, standard marine practice
Operation	Grey water	Discharge	Fully contained on vessel	Yes
Operation	Water flow disturbance	Piles and pontoon	Location is immediately downstream of a bridge abutment and	Yes

			largely sheltered by this. Upstream end of pontoon is angled to assist flow, standard marine practice.	
Operation	Visual disturbance	Piles and Pontoon	Location is adjacent to an existing vertical wall and will have minimal visual impact	Yes

It is suggested that the installation of a landing/boarding pontoon in a location near the existing landing/boarding location can have no long-term effect on the water environment. The potential impacts during construction are well controlled and conform to standard practice.

In operation there is no impact from the installation.