

4 Walking and cycling access

4.1 The River Wensum corridor is an important piece of green infrastructure in the heart of the city and links to the strategic footpath and cycling network. The strategy presents an opportunity to improve the infrastructure for walking and cycling within the Wensum River corridor, both alongside the river itself ('the Riverside Walk') and links to and from the riverside path from the wider hinterland. This should help ensure greater connectivity between the city and surrounding countryside and support greater activity on the river itself, resulting in recreational and health benefits, whilst also enhancing the green infrastructure network which will help to support growth in Greater Norwich. Additional footfall and activity will also benefit local businesses and help to stimulate the local economy.

4.2 The Riverside Walk was originally envisaged by Norwich City Council over 40 years ago, with the objective of stretching from Hellesdon Mill to Carrow Bridge, and it has been delivered as opportunities have arisen through the planning system in accordance with local planning documents. The city council's aim is for a publicly accessible walkway on both sides of the river where practicable and feasible, and is also reflected in the Broads Local Plan⁴. Most of the Riverside Walk within the city centre is on both sides of the river but upstream of New Mills the walkway is generally on one side of the river at any one point.

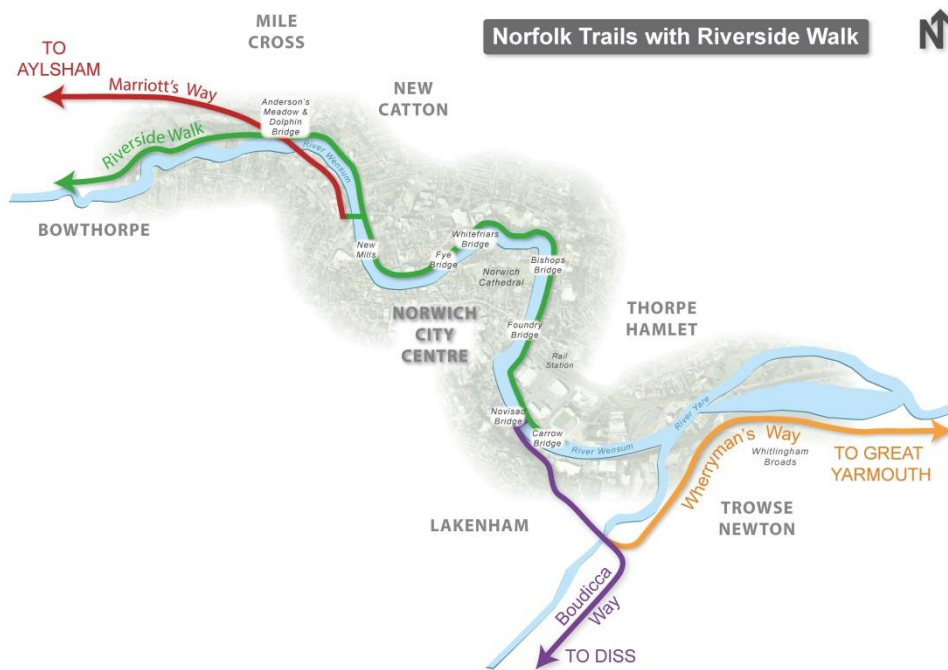
4.3 The Riverside Walk does not exist in isolation. It is a strategic access route, linking to the wider Norfolk Trails network including the Marriott's Way, Wherryman's Way and Boudicca Way. The Norfolk Trails network brings together over 1200 miles of walks, cycle and bridle routes throughout the county. The Riverside Walk also links with the Norwich cycle network (or [Pedalways](#)) at a number of key points including Dolphin Bridge, Barn Road, Fye Bridge, Foundry Bridge and Carrow Bridge. The Pedalways cycle network is a £14m investment in sustainable transport and accessibility in Norwich and it is im-



⁴ Policy DM28 in Norwich Development Management Policies Plan (2014) seeks to complete key missing stretches of the Riverside Walk through new development. The Broads Local Plan (2014) also requires riverside walk provision as part of the development of the Utilities site (policy NOR1).

portant that links between it and the Riverside Walk are maximised and enhanced where appropriate.

Map 3: The Riverside Walk and Norfolk Trails network



New connections: completing the Riverside Walk

Policy 2: Key missing sections of the Riverside Walk between New Mills and Trowse Swing Bridge will be completed during the strategy period (by 2027). Opportunities will also be taken to complete the missing section of Riverside Walk out to Whitlingham Country Park, and the missing section upstream of New Mills during the strategy period, where practicable and feasible.

4.4 Despite significant progress being made since the establishment of the Riverside Walk in the late 1960s, it is not yet complete, and there are sections where it is not possible to walk alongside the river. Most has been achieved to date in the stretch of walkway from New Mills to Carrow Bridge, where pedestrian access is possible on at least one side of the river with the exception of one key 'missing link' between Duke Street and St George's Bridge. More recently the Riverside Walk has been extended beyond Carrow Bridge, as a result of new development in the vicinity of Norwich City Football Club and planning consent is in place for the section of walkway up to Trowse Swing Bridge.

4.5 In recent times the vision for the Riverside Walk has expanded and it is the aim of the River Wensum Strategy Partnership, and that of the Greater Norwich Growth Board, to connect the walk out to Whitlingham Country Park. Although this is a strategically important link, its delivery timescale is less certain as it is dependent on major infrastructure investment. Norwich City Council is exploring funding and delivery options for this key link.

4.6 The Riverside Walk from the city centre out to east Norwich is the busiest part of the walkway within the city boundary. There is potential to provide greater benefit to residents and visitors in this area through linking to the Norfolk Trails network more effectively, which could in turn enhance the local green infrastructure network and support population growth. The completion of missing stretches of Riverside Walk from New Mills to Trowse Swing Bridge is therefore a key objective of the strategy reflected in policy 2, and is considered to be deliverable within the strategy period. Completion of another missing section of Riverside Walk upstream of New Mills, near Sweetbriar Road, is also highlighted below; this may be deliverable in the strategy period subject to feasibility. Given its strategic importance the policy also refers to the aspiration to facilitate the connection to Whitlingham Country Park.

Duke's Palace Bridge to St George's Bridge

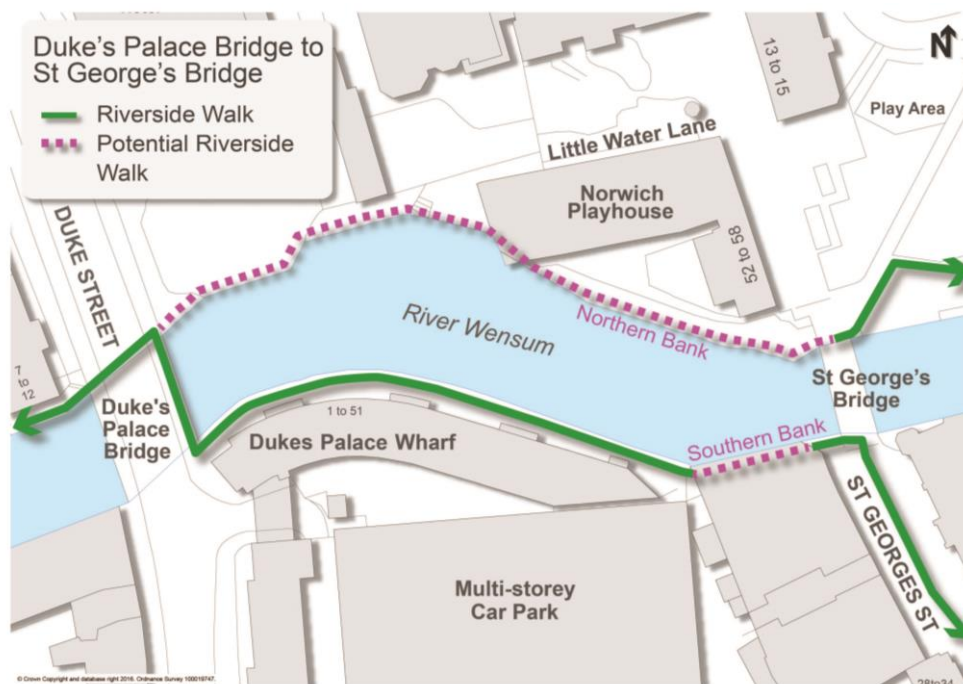
4.7 There is currently no direct access to the river on either bank between Duke's Palace Bridge and St George's Bridge, and a detour away from the river is necessary. Completion of this section of walkway is a priority for delivery given that it is the one 'missing link' of the Riverside Walk between New Mills and Carrow Bridge. This is a critical section in the heart of the historical centre of the city, the absence of which compromises the opportunities of the Riverside Walk to fully realise its potential benefits to visitors and residents, and its many opportunities for business and leisure. In 2010, Norwich Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART) commissioned a study by Hudson Architects to look at the issue on behalf of a range of partners⁵ including Norwich City Council, the Broads Authority and the Wensum River Parkway Partnership. For a number of reasons, including potential impacts on navigation, the project was not progressed any further. A recent review of options for this section of Riverside Walk has indicated that a new section of Riverside Walk may be deliverable on the southern bank of the river. The ideal scenario would be to complete the Riverside Walk on both sides of the river in this location in the longer term, however both options require detailed feasibility in order to determine their relative deliverability.

4.8 The action plan at section 9 includes a proposal (**A1**) to deliver this significant element of infrastructure. Funding is likely to be sought primarily from the pooled

⁵Partners also included the Norwich Society, Norwich Theatre Royal, Norwich University College of the Arts (now Norwich University of the Arts), and the Greater Norwich Development Partnership.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), however if opportunities arise to seek developer contributions these will be explored. The completion of this stretch of Riverside Walk is a high priority for CIL funding by Greater Norwich Growth Board partners⁶ given its potential to benefit public access to green infrastructure (GI) from the city centre. If this bid is successful, and subject to further feasibility work, it is anticipated that this section of Riverside Walk could be completed in 2019/20. Completing the Riverside Walk in one of the busiest locations along the river will help support the current and expanding population of the city centre as well as help to fulfil the publicly accessible GI requirements of proposed growth in wider Norwich. This is a sensitive site in the heart of the historic city so the design of the proposed walkway must respect and enhance the character of this part of the city centre, and limit its impact on the historic townscape and riverscape.

Map 4: Duke's Palace Bridge to St George's Bridge missing link (Action plan project A1)



Fye Bridge to Whitefriars Bridge

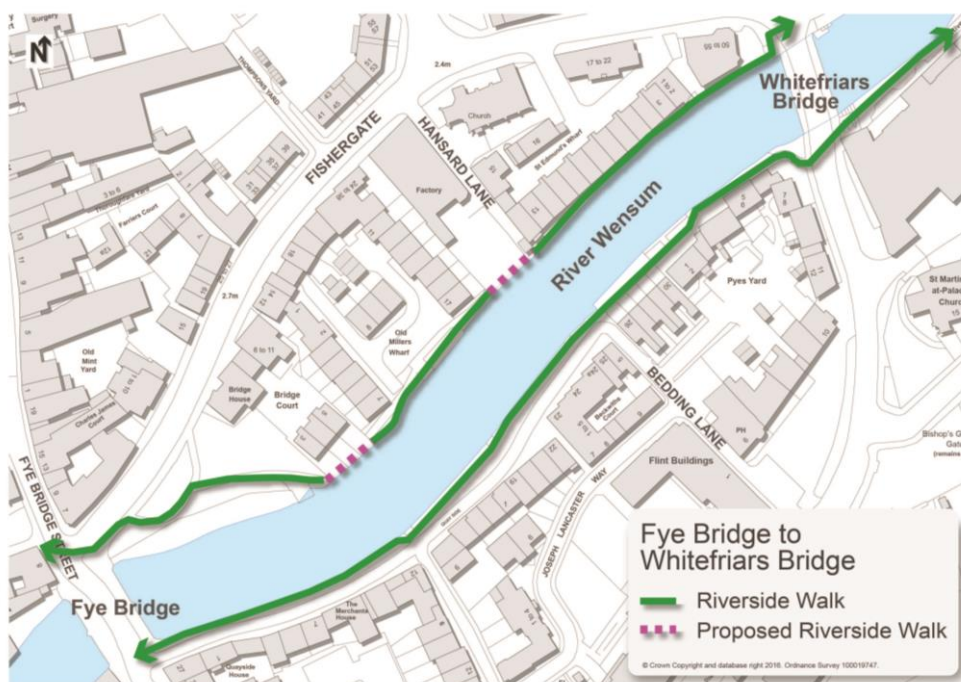
4.9 Within the city centre the ambition to create a continuous walk on the northern bank between Fye Bridge and Whitefriars Bridge, delivered through development, has yet to be fully realised. This would have connectivity benefits for local residents, businesses and visitors, providing an attractive route linking the busy shopping area of Magdalen Street with the businesses and organisations located in the vicinity of Whitefriars, including Dragonfly House and Kingfisher House. Some sections of this stretch of Riverside Walk have already been completed, namely sections through

⁶ GNGB partners are Norwich City Council, South Norfolk Council, Broadland District Council, Norfolk County Council, and New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership.

Old Miller’s Wharf and St Edmund’s Wharf developments. In addition, the permission for three properties within Bridges Court development carries a covenant that states a strip of land 12ft wide can be used by Norwich City Council to construct and maintain a section of the Riverside Walk. However, a gap remains in the route where access has yet to be secured, at Hansard Lane. Opportunities to complete this section of the Riverside Walk on the northern bank have therefore been explored through development of the strategy.

4.10 It is anticipated that delivery of this link will be achieved through provision of a short stretch of new walkway as part of the redevelopment of a site at Hansard Lane, dependant on the nature of that scheme, and through CIL funding for the section of route exercising the covenant through gardens of the Bridges Court development. This project will unlock the remaining section between Fye Bridge and Whitefriars Bridge on the north bank, providing more options for pedestrian movement in this area and enhancing access to strategic GI in the city centre. It is important that the new Riverside Walk in this location is managed to reduce and not exacerbate any potential negative effects on residents who live along this section of the river.

Map 5: Fye Bridge to Whitefriars Bridge (Action plan project A2)



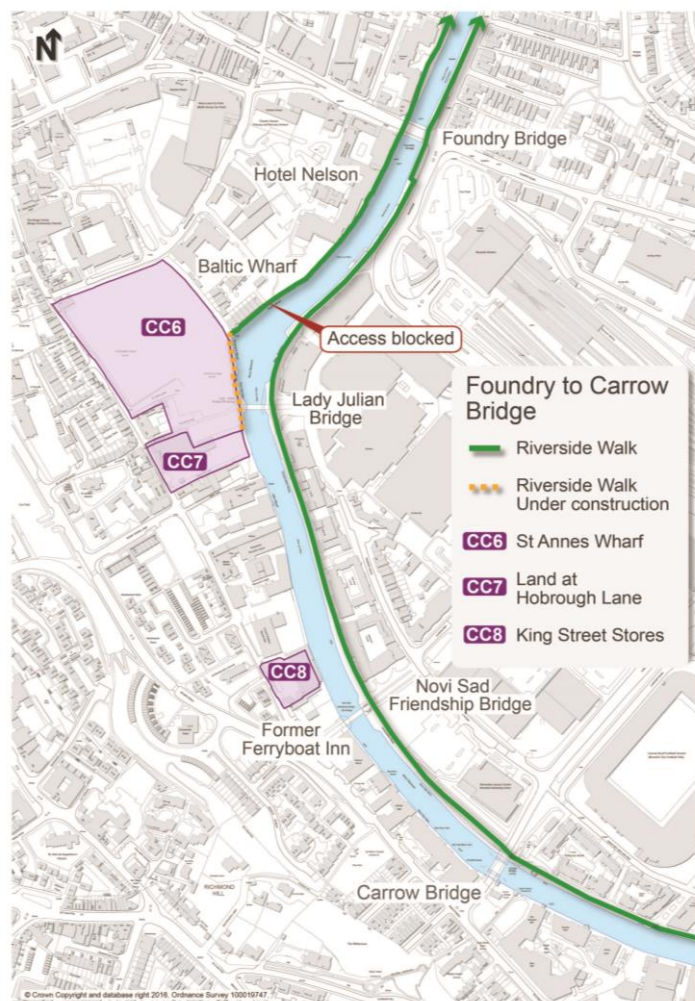
Foundry Bridge to Carrow Bridge

4.11 The section of path from Foundry Bridge (the Hotel Nelson, Prince of Wales Road) to St Anne’s Wharf/Lady Julian Swing Bridge (St Ann’s Lane) on the western side of the river will be completed as development comes forward. Sections of Riverside Walk are already in place alongside both the Hotel Nelson and Baltic Wharf, however access is currently blocked between these sections of walk. Opportunities

should be taken to link these sections and connect them with the new section of Riverside Walk currently under construction as part of the St Anne's Wharf development. In addition the Norwich local plan identifies a section of Riverside Walk as being required in site allocation CC7: Land at Hobrough Lane, King Street which will be delivered through new development as it comes forward. Feasibility work may be required to include impact on the navigation of the river at this point.

4.12 The Norwich local plan policies map does not identify proposed Riverside Walk beyond site allocation CC7, although it allocates a site further south on King Street (CC8: King Street Stores) which includes a requirement for Riverside Walk which will link with another new section to be provided in front of the Ferryboat Inn, anticipated to be delivered within the next couple of years. This section of waterfront between sites CC7 and CC8 has a special historic character with many listed and locally listed buildings adjacent to the river. Access to the river is via historic narrow lanes, and as a result there is little potential for provision of Riverside Walk that would be in keeping with its special character (as detailed in the City Centre Conservation Area Statement: King Street character area).

Map 6: Foundry Bridge to Carrow Bridge



Carrow Bridge to Whitlingham

4.13 Connection of the Riverside Walk through the city downstream to Whitlingham Country Park is a strategic priority. Whitlingham Country Park is a popular attraction for informal recreation and watersport activities, delivered through former gravel extractions, with over 500,000 visitors per annum. Although very close to the city centre, pedestrian and cycling access is far from easy; currently pedestrian and cycling access (including National Cycle Route 1) to the Country Park from the city centre is along Bracondale towards Trowse and then along Whitlingham Lane. This is not a direct route and includes several difficult road crossings. In the future it is hoped that a more direct route will be possible via a number of development sites including the Deal Ground and Utilities sites in east Norwich and will enable the re-routing of National Cycle Route 1.

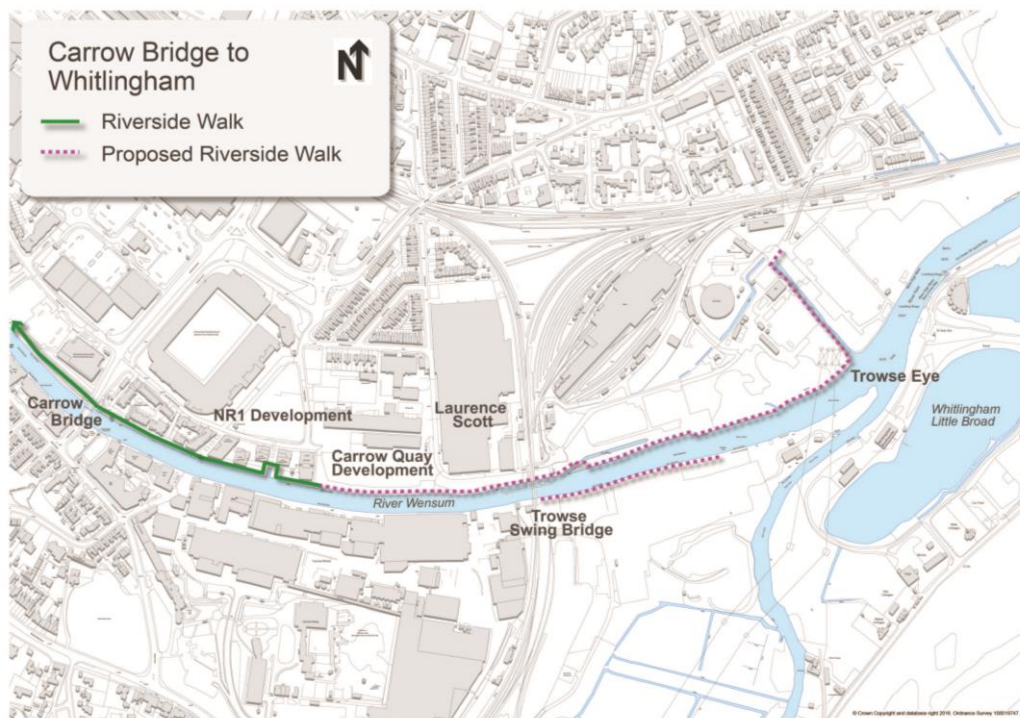
4.14 The continuation of the Riverside Walk from Carrow Bridge to Trowse (railway) Swing Bridge is being delivered through development south of the football ground with funding support from Sustrans and the Community Infrastructure Levy⁷.

4.15 The next sections of the route may be delivered through new development at the Utilities site and/or the Deal ground site as proposals come forward including a new bridge over the River Wensum between the Deal Ground and the Utilities site as required by the Norwich Local Plan policy for these sites (CC10 and CC11). However, even if this bridge is delivered, there will still be a need for a bridge link over the River Yare from the Deal Ground at the confluence of the Rivers Wensum and Yare, connecting to the Country Park at the back of the Little Broad at Whitlingham, which will require funding. This bridge continues to be a high priority for GI in Greater Norwich, having been originally identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy⁸. The bridge will form a crucial link between the city and major recreation area to the south, however its delivery is dependent on the development of the Utilities sites and Deal Ground. It therefore does not appear in the action plan for this strategy, but partners will continue to work with the Greater Norwich Growth Board to keep this as a high priority for CIL funding and to bring forward this key piece of infrastructure when appropriate.

⁷ The Riverside Walk adjacent to NR1 development is in place; the section at Carrow Quay will be delivered through new development; and the section in front of Laurence Scott is expected to be delivered by Norwich City Council using Sustrans/Community Infrastructure Levy funding already in place.

⁸ Greater Norwich Development Partnership: Green Infrastructure Strategy (Chris Blandford Associates, 2007)

Map 7: Carrow Bridge to Whitlingham Broad



Sweet Briar Road Bridge to Hellesdon Bridge

4.16 There is currently no access to the river's edge between the road bridge at Sweet Briar Road, and the public open space adjacent to The Gatehouse Public House on Hellesdon Road. Instead, users have to join the footway alongside Sweet Briar Road, cross the ring-road roundabout and follow the Dereham Road onto Hellesdon Road before being able to re-join the river. A new section of Riverside Walk is identified for this area in the Norwich Local plan (Policies Map North, 2014). There is currently no identified funding for this stretch of walkway therefore a project is not included in the Action plan, however opportunities will be sought to attract funding to deliver this missing link.

Accessibility improvements

4.17 This section of the strategy considers what **infrastructure improvements** are required to ensure that the Riverside Walk is accessible to all, the **signage improvements** needed to support and encourage greater accessibility, and the **connectivity improvements** required to ensure that the Riverside Walk links effectively to the wider walking and cycling network.

Infrastructure improvements

Policy 3: New sections of Riverside Walk will be accessible for people of all ages and abilities. The same standard will also apply to the enhancement of existing sections of the Riverside Walk, where practicable.

4.18 A number of issues and opportunities have been identified, through consultation and other work, relating to the physical infrastructure of the existing Riverside Walk for pedestrians and cyclists and for disabled access. Improvements are needed on several sections of the Riverside Walk, particularly to make the walk accessible by all, including those with mobility difficulties.

4.19 Some sections of the existing Riverside Walk are accessible for cyclists. Opportunities should be sought to enable cycle access on more of the route, including the removal of barriers to bike access (such as steps), enhanced surfacing, and segregated sections for pedestrians and cyclists. A particular opportunity concerns realigning the Red Pedalway – which is also National Cycle Route 1 (NCR1) – alongside the north bank of the river to Whitlingham, rather than its current route along busy trafficked sections of King Street and Bracondale. When a bridge link to Whitlingham is delivered, NCR1 would pass through Whitlingham Country Park and continue along the river to Norwich Railway Station.

4.20 An audit of the Riverside Walk from Hellesdon Road to Carrow Road was completed by Norfolk County Council in early 2016 as part of the work of the River Wensum Strategy Partnership⁹. This identifies the need for site specific improvements along the Riverside Walk to make it accessible for all. The audit identifies the need for path surface improvements in a number of locations, provision of dropped kerbs, and provision of steps and ramps.

4.21 An action plan project (reference A3) proposes to make improvements to accessibility of the Riverside Walk downstream of New Mills (ie between it and east Norwich). It also includes signage and branding proposals and is referred to in the Signage Improvements section, at paragraph 4.28 below.

4.22 Funding for accessibility improvements to the Riverside Walk upstream of New Mills will be sought in the future from CIL. Particular issues raised for that area in consultation and in the audit include: drainage issues on the Riverside Walk; signage improvements to/from Marriott's Way; to/from New Mills/Barns Road roundabout; improvements to lighting on Dolphin Path and the southern section of Marriott's Way; and the need for improvements to signage and maintenance of the Riverside Walk (see appendix 3: possible future action plan projects).

⁹ River Wensum Strategy Riverside Walk Audit (Foo T. 2016)

Signage Improvements

Policy 4: New signage provided in the vicinity of the river will conform to the River Wensum signage strategy once developed.

4.23 The Riverside Walk provides an easy, quiet and safe route through the city centre passing many cafes, shops and points of historical and natural interest. However, the presence of the Riverside Walk and the points from which it can be accessed from commercial and tourist areas are not clearly signed; and signage along the Riverside Walk also needs improvement in a number of locations. Improved and coherent signposting of the Riverside Walk from attractions, commercial and day-time leisure areas, and transport hubs is likely to help deliver economic as well as social and cultural benefits. Access to the natural environment has been found to bring health and well-being benefits, and the Public Health agenda requires actions to encourage greater activity, thus improving access to the river is also likely to contribute to a healthier society. There is also an opportunity to improve signage along the river to make clear where particular activities are authorised or deemed appropriate, for example mooring and angling, which will reinforce effective management of the river and riverbanks.



4.24 The need for improved legibility has been identified through the public consultation and the Riverside Walk audit. This identifies a need for signage between the river and the commercial, day-time leisure and transport hubs including the Cathedral complex / Tombland, Riverside, the Lanes, the Forum, Norfolk Trails, Whitlingham Country Park, the railway station and bus station; and signposting of historical features in the vicinity of the river including the Cathedral, Boom Towers, Blackfriars Hall / Elm Hill, Cow Tower, New Mills, Pulls Ferry, the Great Hospital and St James' Mill. The consultation also identified the need for better signposting of the Riverside Walk itself in several locations where the route is not obvious including:

- Ribs of Beef / Fye Bridge Street where the path is not obvious from the bridge;
- At Whitefriars Bridge where access to the Riverside Walk on the north side of the river, by St James' Mill, is not obvious;
- From/to Tombland to Pulls Ferry through the Cathedral precinct;
- To/from the Marriott's Way at St Crispin's Road/Barns Road roundabout (see Action plan project A4 below).

4.25 Having evolved over many years, it is unsurprising that the Riverside Walk is considered by some to be lacking a clear identity, partly due to the range of signage

used. The Riverside Walk would therefore benefit from having its own identity with specific signage, including a logo and a coherent sign-posting system.

4.26 A signing strategy should be considered in combination with infrastructure improvements, as improved signage should direct people to a route that is easily accessible for all users, and therefore the delivery of both signage and infrastructure improvements ideally should occur in parallel. This is addressed below in Action Plan project A3.

4.27 New directional signage could tie in with existing wayfaring signage either through utilising existing infrastructure, or transference of existing design features into new signage. For example, Norwich City Council has an existing integrated sign system which comprises finger posts and monoliths designed to reflect the different areas of the city. The finger posts feature alternate finials; an ornate design, taken from the city's historic architecture which differentiates from the historic "Lanes" area where a simple design with a natural copper finish is used. It is recommended that a similar approach is taken with regards to directions to/from the Riverside Walk.

4.28 The action plan includes a project (A3) to address the key accessibility issues of physical infrastructure and signage improvements. The project will involve development of a branding and identity for the whole Riverside Walk, and implement a series of infrastructure improvements to the Riverside Walk in the city centre (downstream of New Mills), based on the audit referred to above. This project has been awarded CIL funding and will be delivered over a 2 year period (2017/18 - 2018/19). Delivery of the project will address the issues raised above. Through improved signage, branding, and by making key parts of the route more easily accessible, the potential wider social and economic benefits of the Riverside Walk can be realised.

Connectivity Improvements

Policy 5: Connectivity between the Riverside Walk and other Norfolk Trails will be enhanced, to encourage greater usage of all the trails / walks by leisure users and commuters of all ages and abilities.

4.29 The Riverside Walk links with the wider Norfolk Trails network as referred to above. The Marriott's Way is a 26 mile pedestrian and cycle path which starts immediately upstream of the Barn Road roundabout linking Norwich to Aylsham. The first section of the Marriott's Way runs parallel to the River Wensum, effectively a continuation of the Wensum Riverside Walk. The gateway to the Marriott's Way is not sign-posted from the Wensum Riverside Walk and the crossing of St Crispin's Road includes a traffic island which can be difficult for cyclists to use.

4.30 Downstream, two of the Norfolk Trails, the Wherryman's Way (Norwich to Great Yarmouth) and the Boudicca Way (Norwich to Diss) are concurrent with the

River Wensum Walk between Norwich Railway Station, the start point for both these routes, and Carrow Road Bridge. Opportunities for interpretation boards and additional signage would be desirable, and signage at Norwich Railway Station or other locations along the river should be further explored as part of Action Plan project A3.

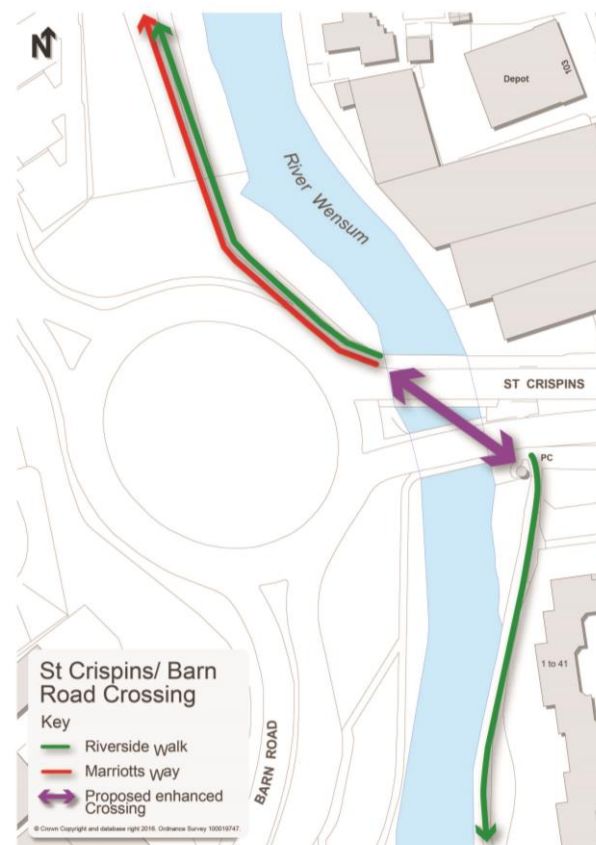
4.31 In combination, the Wherryman's Way and the Marriott's Way form part of the Cross-Norfolk Trail from Kings Lynn to Great Yarmouth of which the Wensum Riverside Walk through the city is an integral part. Overall, the connectivity to the Norfolk Trails network from the Riverside Walk is in need of improvement, both in terms of physical infrastructure and signage.

4.32 There are a number of opportunities to improve linkages between the Norfolk Trails network and the Riverside Walk (see Appendix 3 for some potential projects). Improvements through better and co-ordinated way-marking, improvements to some sections of Riverside Walk, and provision of formalised linking routes between the Riverside Walk and Norfolk Trails have been mentioned in this strategy already. Another means of improving these linkages is the celebration of gateways and the meetings of the Riverside Walk and Norfolk Trails.

4.33 Improvements are also proposed to the Marriott's Way link with the Riverside Walk at Barn Road. The crossing of St Crispin's Road presents some challenges, particularly for cyclists, and the fact that the Riverside Walk can be continued north or south of Barn Road is not obvious and inhibits its use. The planned improvements include enhancing the 'gateway' to Marriott's Way with signage, paving, removal of vegetation to improve visibility, and improving the crossing of the inner ring road linking Marriott's Way with the Riverside Walk in the city centre. This project has been developed by the Marriott's Way Green Infrastructure Group¹⁰ with input from the River Wensum Strategy Partnership. It will be delivered in phases with CIL and Heritage Lottery funding, with initial works to enhance the gateway anticipated to commence in 2017/18 followed by commencement of works to the inner ring road the following year. The project will not only improve connectivity between the Riverside Walk and Marriott's Way, with recreational, health and sustainable transport benefits, but will also enhance a key gateway site with heritage interest, and will complement / enhance the potential future project to enhance the existing circular walk at Train Wood referred to in Appendix 3.

¹⁰The Marriott's Way Green Infrastructure Group is part of the Greater Norwich Growth Board and consists of representatives from Norwich City Council, Norfolk County Council, Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council.

Map 8: Marriott's Way – Barn Road Gateway (Action Plan project A4)



4.34 The Marriott's Way Green Infrastructure Group has recently produced an updated Vision and Implementation Plan for the Marriott's Way (NCC, August 2015). Liaison with the Marriott's Way group will be necessary to ensure coordination of plans and projects in the River Wensum Strategy and there is potential for several of the proposals relating to the area upstream of New Mills to be delivered through or with the Marriott's Way Group.

Riverside Walk status

4.35 Norwich's Riverside Walk is not a dedicated Public Right of Way. Although much of the Riverside Walk through the main urban area is contained within designated Public Open Space and some is highway land, some sections have no formal public right or status. This lack of clarity about the Walk's status may have implications in some cases for providing certainty of public access in perpetuity. There may be benefits from formal dedication as a Public Right of Way (for example, footpath, bridleway, and shared use cycle and footway) in terms of promotion, including publication of routes on Ordnance Survey maps, and subsequently the internet and other publications, therefore making any route accessible to a wider audience.

4.36 Given the Riverside Walk's links to the strategic walking and cycling network, the RWSP is currently working with Norfolk County Council to explore whether the

Riverside Walk could be dedicated as part of the Norfolk Trails network, albeit it with its own unique identity and branding. This would significantly raise the Walk's profile through greater promotion, and provide a valuable publicised link between it and the existing Trails, helping to highlight access to the city's tourist and leisure attractions, encouraging sustainable transport and supporting healthy lifestyles for example. It could also enable greater coordination between the Riverside Walk and the other Norfolk Trails in terms of management, for example linking into the Norfolk Trails' established volunteer network for litter picks and for reporting maintenance issues.

4.37 The initial exploratory work will include identifying any existing status and landownership for the Riverside Walk, and to understand the implications of Norfolk Trails status, prior to any change on its status being formally proposed. If Norfolk Trails status is sought and achieved, this will have implications for Action Plan project A3, which includes signage proposals.