

5 Waterways access and leisure

5.1 The strategy aims to breathe new life into the river corridor, and to increase access to, and greater use of, the river. This section's key focus is on enhancing access to the river for recreational purposes, including encouraging greater activity on the river by a variety of small craft, but it also addresses wider opportunities for attracting visitors and tourists to the river corridor.

5.2 The development of a strategy has the potential to contribute significantly to the vitality of the city centre and the local economy than is presently the case. Increased activity will also bring a range of benefits including health and recreational benefits, will provide opportunities for small leisure businesses, and help to reconnect communities to the River Wensum.

5.3 The public and stakeholder consultation identified a number of issues including the need for provision of new or improved slipways and launch facilities for small craft, provision of new canoeing infrastructure and moorings, the opportunity to encourage new business development connected to the river, the need for more effective management and maintenance of the river, and the opportunity to develop the river as a location for events and trails.

Enhanced waterways infrastructure

Policy 6: New river infrastructure will be provided, and existing river infrastructure enhanced where appropriate, to encourage greater recreational use of the River Wensum.

5.4 The strategy aim of bringing new life to the river can be achieved by improving providing new, and enhancing existing, waterways infrastructure, including slipways, canoe launches, and moorings provision. A number of action plan projects are proposed below (summarised in section 8) which when delivered will significantly enhance existing provision. Funding opportunities are currently being explored for these projects.

Provision of launching points/slipways for small craft and River Taxi/Bus infrastructure

5.5 The lack of slipways and other launching facilities on the river limits the ability for people to launch small craft and consequently restricts business opportunities for boat hire in the City. With the canalised nature of the river corridor and the majority of the banks in the City being either concrete or steel sheet piled there are limited sites available for constructing new slipways. The availability of road access and car parking nearby is essential for slipway development as boat trailers have to be parked in close proximity to launch sites. There is an existing slipway at Friar's Quay

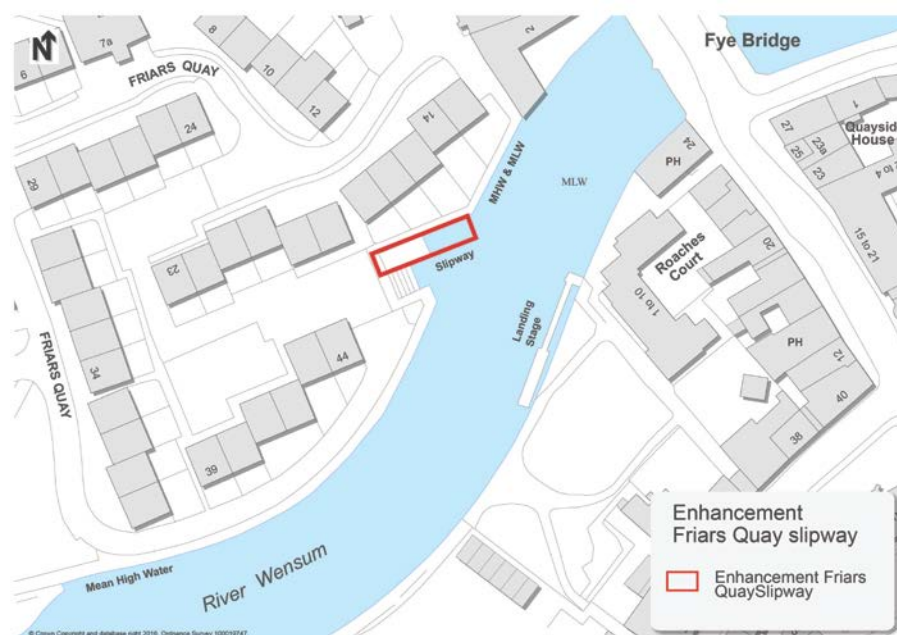
and several comments were received about this site suggesting that it should be adapted to improve its incline and safety. A project to improve the Friar's Quay slipway would also have the benefit of providing a launch facility for Broads Authority maintenance vessels and the emergency services.

5.6 There are a number of sites which have potential for the development of launching facilities such as at the Yacht Station. The removal of the timber jetty and public access at the upstream end of the Yacht Station presents an opportunity to redesign the frontage including the installation of pontoon mooring and launching facilities. This would also potentially provide a location to operate a small electric hire boat business. Equally there are sites in the project area where slipways could be constructed both in the Broads Authority's Executive area and upstream of New Mills but this would require feasibility work to be carried out and discussions with adjacent landowners.

5.7 Further opportunities for additional river access may arise as and when development comes forward, for example at the Utilities site and the Deal Ground.

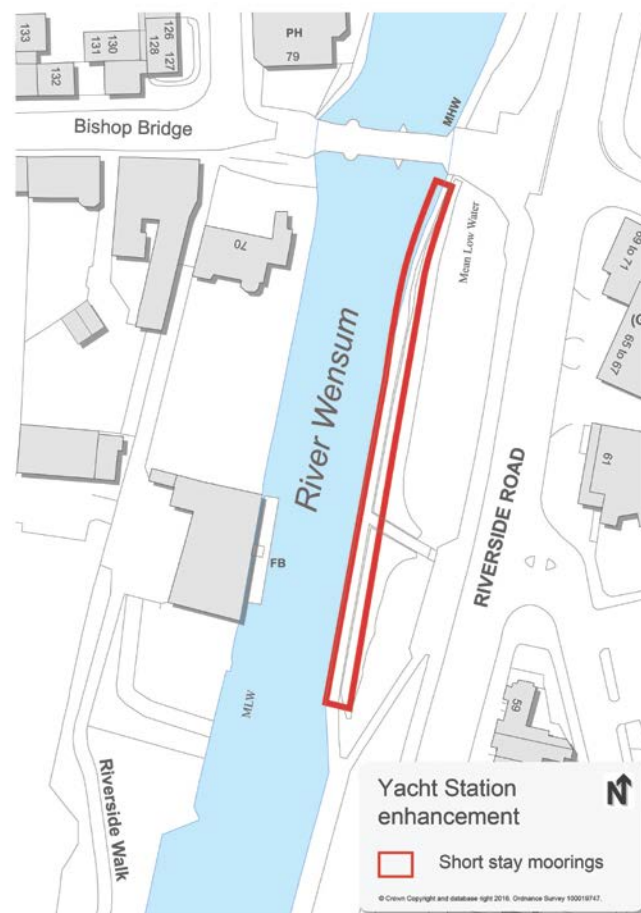
5.8 The strategy proposes an action plan project to upgrade the existing slipway at Friar's Quay to slacken its slope and make it suitable for the safe launching of small boats on trailers and canoes. This will involve installing new sheet piling to extend the length of the slipway and enable the concrete slope to be re-profiled. Signage will also be installed to give advice on considerate use of the slipway and where to park nearby. This proposal will help maximise the use of an existing piece of waterways infrastructure which is currently under-utilised.

Map 8: Friar's Quay Slipway upgrade (Action Plan project W1)



5.9 It has recently been necessary to remove a dilapidated timber jetty at the upstream end of the Norwich Yacht Station and this presents an opportunity to redesign the mooring facilities in this location. The action plan includes a project to install pontoons to replace the jetty which will increase opportunities for mooring and launching of small craft, and provide the scope for a small electric hire boat business to operate from the site. Again this proposal aims to enhance an existing facility to help extend its use.

Map 9: Yacht station enhancement (Action Plan project W2)



Canoeing infrastructure

Policy 7: Canoeing infrastructure will be enhanced in appropriate locations on the River Wensum.

5.10 By far the largest number of comments received during the consultation process about a specific waterways issue related to canoeing. These included comments about the need for the strategy to provide more canoe access points or improve existing ones, improve the information available about canoeing opportunities, encourage canoe hire at various sites and also to link the Broads navigation to the Wensum upstream of New Mills Yard.

5.11 Canoeing is becoming increasingly popular in the Broads with a 60% increase in the number of

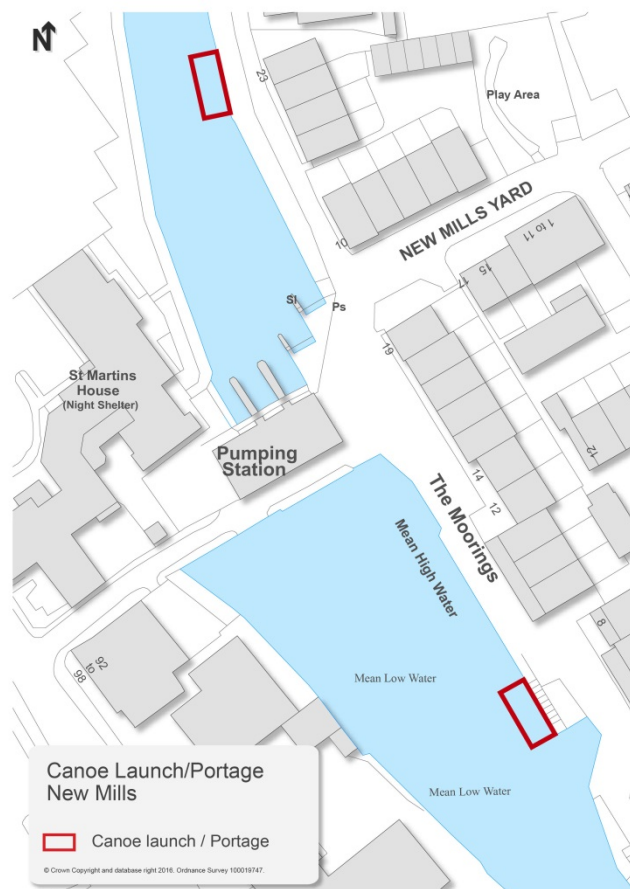


canoes using the Broads navigation area over the period 2010 to 2014¹¹. The Broads Authority has responded to this trend by working closely with British Canoeing¹² to promote the Broads as one of the UK's premier family friendly canoeing destinations and has recently published a range of canoe trails throughout the Broads including a trail for the City of Norwich.

5.12 A number of sites for new canoe launching facilities were suggested through the public consultation, and project partners have also identified a number of sites where new facilities could be installed or existing structures upgraded to provide improved access. Factors that need to be considered include the proximity of car parking facilities to the proposed launch site, existing bank structure and height above mean low water level and the potential for conflict with other river users. Particular consideration has been given to linking the Broads to the upper Wensum across New Mills, providing canoe access points at the upstream and downstream extent of the strategy area and the provision of city centre launch sites.

5.13 The action plan includes a project to install low freeboard pontoon canoe access points upstream and downstream of New Mills. This will enable canoeists to move between the upper and lower reaches of the River Wensum and will greatly increase the opportunities for recreational enjoyment of the river.

Map 10: New Mills Canoe portage (Action Plan project W3)



¹¹ Broads Authority: 2014 Boat Census

¹² British Canoeing is the national governing body for canoeing in the UK.

5.14 There may be other opportunities for canoe launches including adapting and extending the existing pontoons at Elm Hill Quay for canoe launching, and by enhancing provision upstream of New Mills, including at Wensum Park, Anderson's Meadow and near Hellesdon Mill. In order to promote and develop recreational paddling and provide business opportunities for canoe hire in Norwich, there is a need to increase the number of safe launching facilities available in the project area, and where possible to improve existing facilities. Such opportunities will be explored and may require feasibility work to enable them to be progressed.

Provision of moorings (marinas, short stay, permanent, de-masting and residential)

5.15 If there is to be a resurgence of boating activity on the Wensum there is a need for the provision of new mooring facilities in the strategy area. A number of factors have to be taken into account when considering developing new mooring facilities. These include the available river width and depth, the height of the existing banks, the current use of banks and how the bank opposite the proposed mooring site is being used. The design of new moorings facilities should address safety and management issues (including minimising the risk of associated anti-social behaviour, for example in various recognised problem locations such as at Cow Tower and Quayside).

5.16 On a number of sites mooring provision has already been assessed as being feasible, and several new moorings are proposed below. Further, there is scope for continued discussion with developers and landowners regarding the potential for marina development in east Norwich.

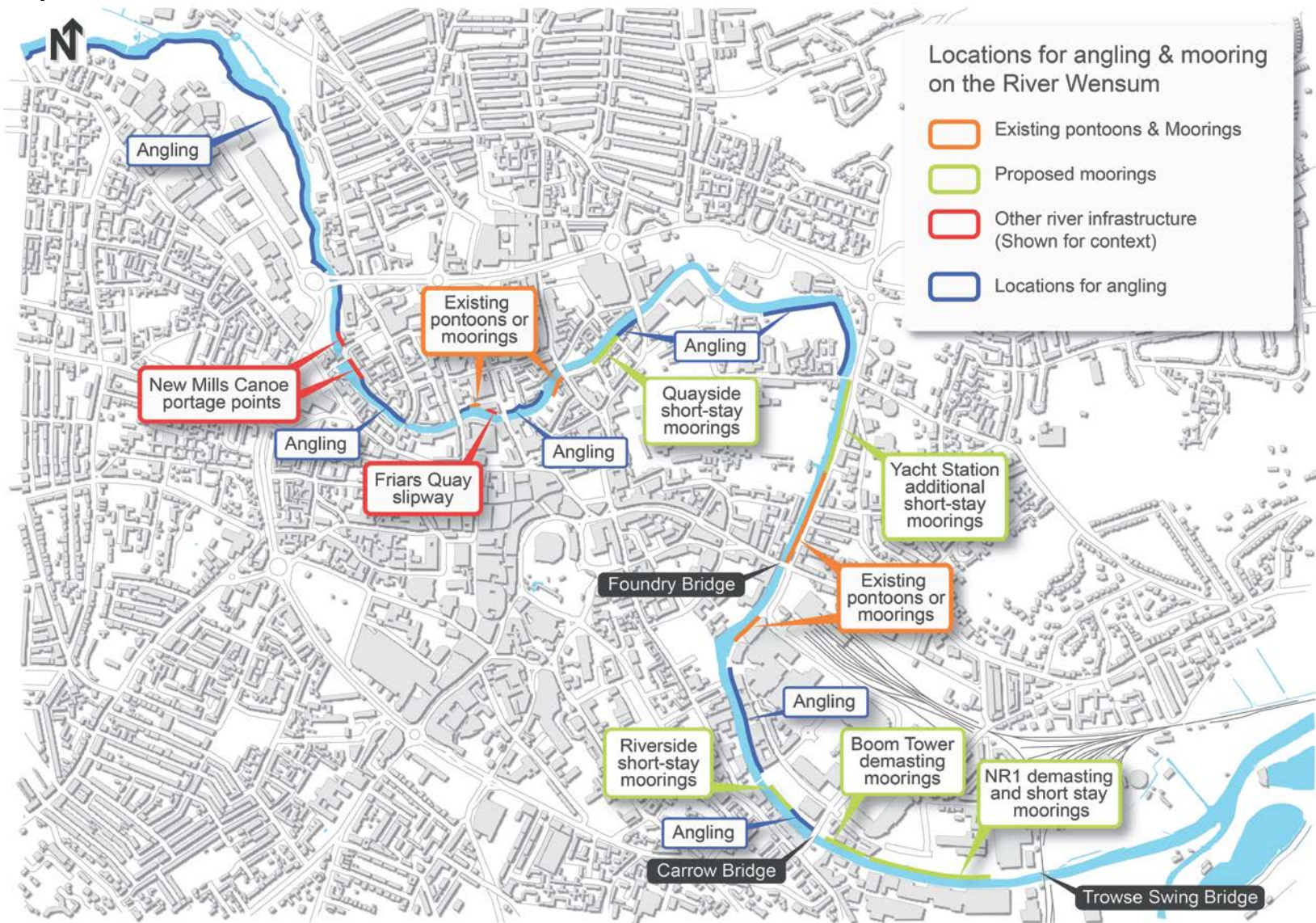
5.17 Provision of residential moorings (permanent moorings for houseboats) on the Wensum could deliver a range of benefits and thus represents an opportunity for the Strategy. Permanent houseboat sites with proper on-site facilities would bring life back to the riverbanks in the form of revenue-generating affordable housing in a pleasant environment, contribute to meeting housing need, and benefit the local economy. Houseboat communities will also have a personal and financial stake in keeping the river free from anti-social behaviour, both bankside and waterborne. The tidal Wensum lacks the marinas and basins that would make it relatively easy to set up residential moorings, and opportunities to encourage may be greatest on the edge of the city, in east Norwich, potentially through new development. The strategy seeks to encourage marinas and residential mooring where appropriate. The Broads Authority's current policy (DP25) seeks to locate residential moorings in marinas, basins and boatyards, which would preclude their location in appropriate locations within the city council area. The RWSP aims to influence the emerging Broads Local Plan to allow for residential moorings in other locations so long as they meet the basic criteria for such provision set out in existing policy DP25. Any proposals for residential moorings will require planning permission and will need to be

accompanied by a full Flood Risk Assessment and other supporting documentation (see Appendix 2: Relevant policies and guidance).

5.18 The Broads Authority has an ambition to see de-masting moorings provided at all four quadrants of bridges that span the navigation, which will encourage unpowered vessels to use the river. However the requirements for specific bridge sites vary, given their location on the river and the nature of their design. The RWSP priorities for provision of de-masting moorings are at Trowse Railway Bridge and Carrow Bridge and are shown on Map 11.

5.19 Map 11 also identifies existing moorings and proposed new moorings. One of the benefits of adopting the approach of formalising mooring activity at recognised sites is that it presents an opportunity for better management of the sites that are identified, and allows for enforcement of unauthorised mooring at those sites. This could have a positive effect on managing unauthorised overstaying by vessels and dealing with antisocial behaviour.

Map 11



5.20 Any mooring development (private or public) should adhere to accepted design standards and provide safety features in accordance with current best practice (see appendix 2). Additionally, shared use of sites should be encouraged in order to maximise public benefit from new developments.

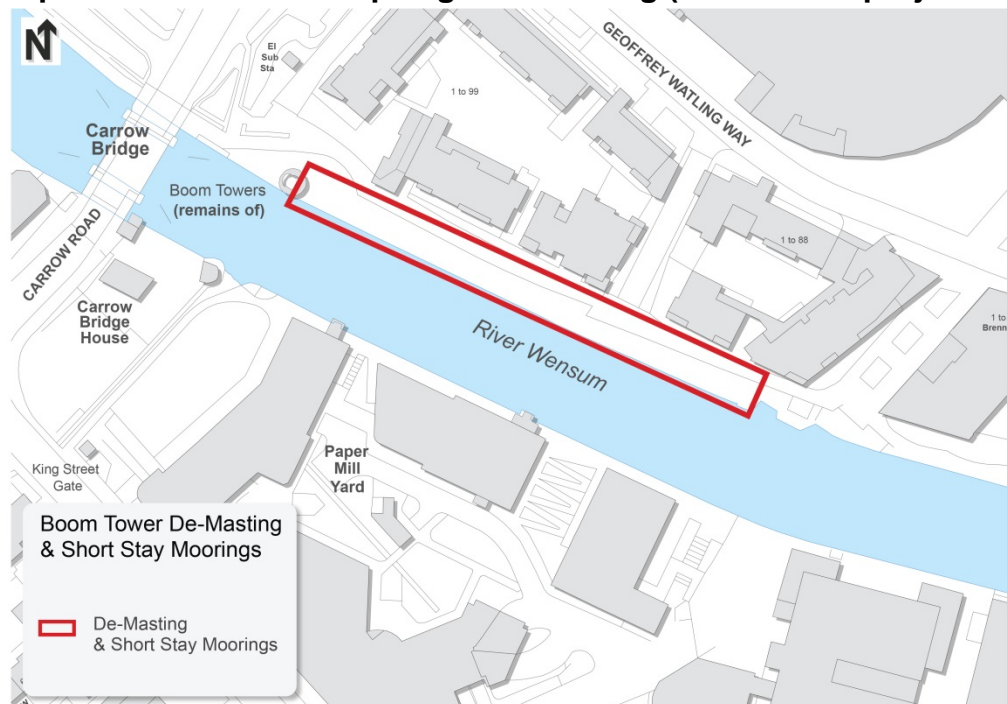
5.21 The action plan includes a project to develop a short stay visitor mooring at Quayside, managed by the Broads Authority, to encourage small craft to visit the city centre. This would involve the installation of pontoons along the frontage which would be accessed by ramps to the existing steps through the Quayside wall. Residents in this area have experienced anti-social behaviour in the past arising from boat users in the river and from unauthorised mooring. The fact that the proposed moorings will be managed will reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour, which should be beneficial to both local residents and visitors.



**Map12: Quayside short-stay moorings
(Action Plan project W4)**

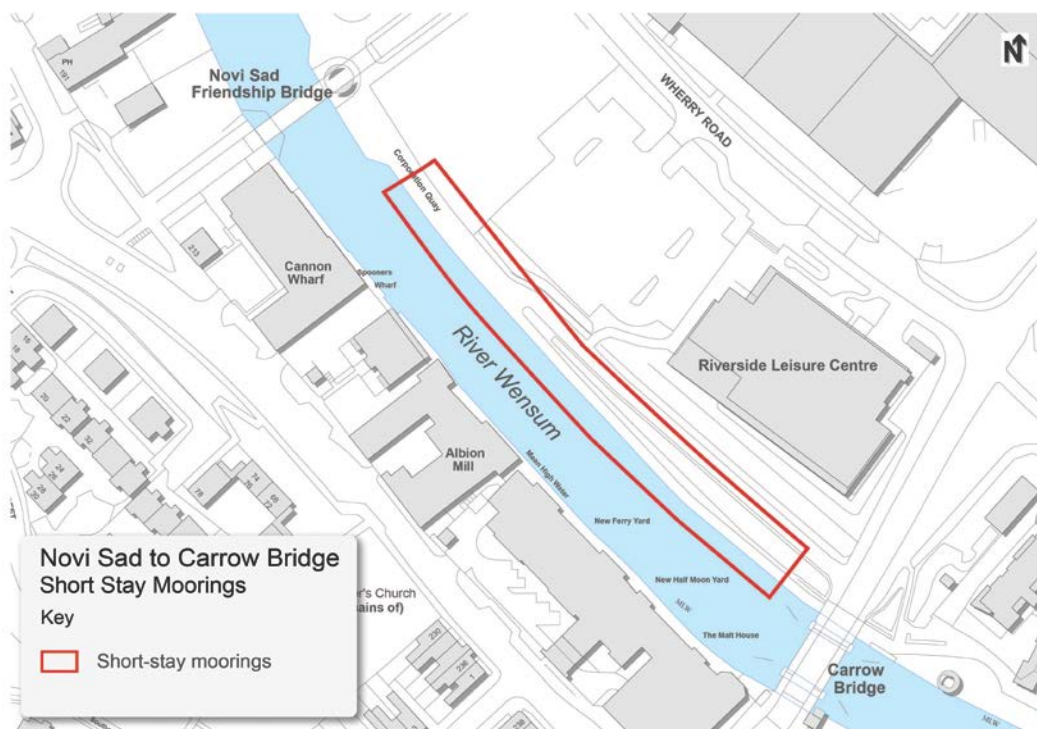
5.22 The action plan also includes a project to develop a short stay visitor mooring at the Boom Towers site immediately downstream of Carrow Bridge, and will also involve repiling of the riverbank in this location which is currently failing. This project will have a number of benefits including encouraging greater visitor activity in this historic gateway site, renewing river infrastructure that has become degraded, and complementing action plan project E4 (enhancement of the historic Boom Tower – see section 6). It also has the potential to link in the longer term to the opportunity to enhance the green infrastructure link between this part of the river to the city walls and Ber Street (see section 7).

Map 13: Boom Towers repiling and mooring (Action Plan project W5)



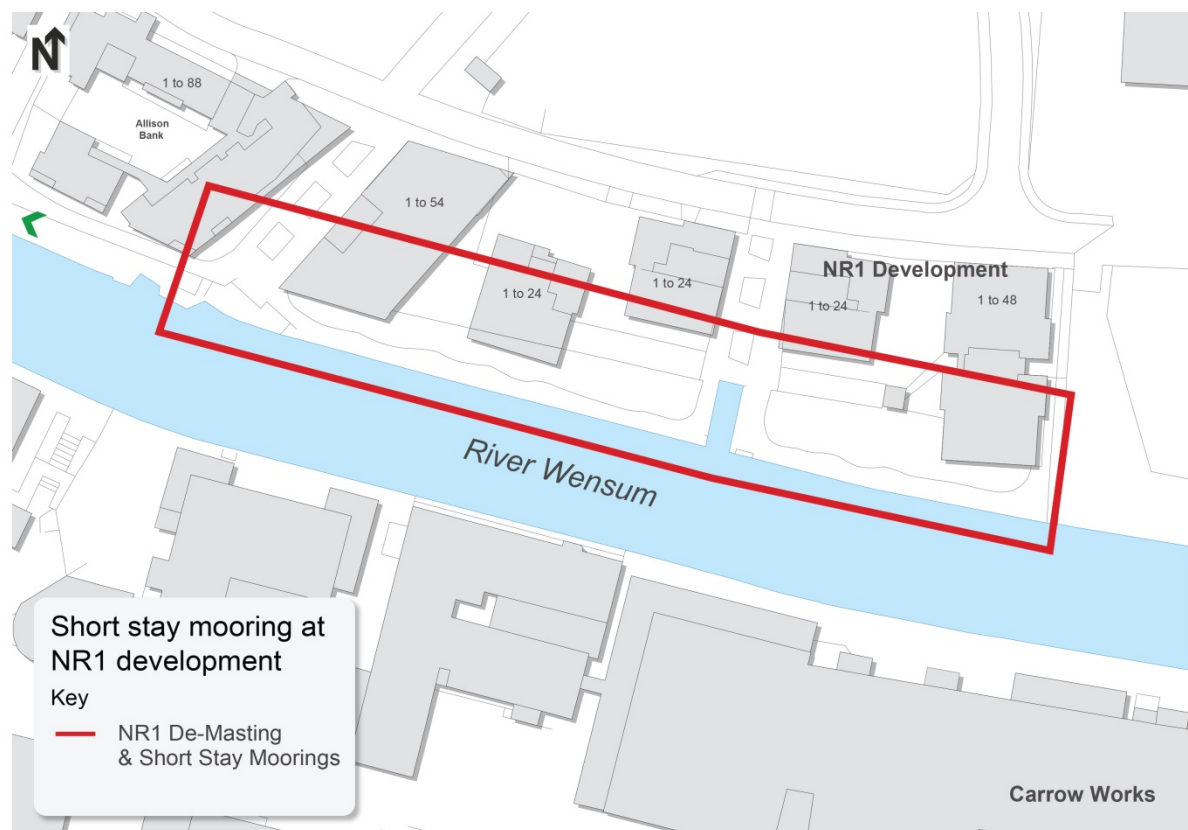
5.23 It is proposed to develop a formal visitor mooring between Carrow Bridge and Lady Julian Bridge on the east bank of the river (ie adjacent to the Bridge development) in order to provide access for boaters to the Riverside Retail Park. This will require minimal work and has been assessed taking into consideration requirements for angling in this part of the city.

Map 14: New moorings between Carrow Bridge and Lady Julian Bridge (Action Plan project W6)



5.24 New short-stay visitor moorings and de-masting moorings are required through a Section 106 Agreement with Norwich City Football Club connected to the NR1 development. These are to be provided by the developer on the north bank of the river adjacent to the NR1 development, between Trowse Swing Bridge and Carrow Bridge.

Map 15: New short stay visitor and de-masting mooring at the NR1 Development (Action Plan project W7)



Angling

Policy 8: Angling access and fish habitat will be enhanced at appropriate locations along the River Wensum.

5.25 The River Wensum through Norwich forms part of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads, one of the most famous freshwater fisheries in the country. The small open sections of riverbank through the city reaches provide important opportunities for anglers to fish in an urban environment where there is easy access.

5.26 The city reaches also provide important habitat for fish. This is an important natural resource for both wildlife and people. The quality and diversity of fishing on offer in the Broads attracts anglers from far and wide and this in turn means angling plays a hugely significant part in the local economy, with anglers estimated to influence expenditure worth in excess of £100 million every year¹³. The importance of the Broads fishery, including the Wensum through Norwich, ensures a close working relationship between the Environment Agency, Broads Angling Strategy Group (BASG), Broads Authority and the Angling Trust in order to manage fish stocks and fishing.



5.27 The River Wensum Strategy recognises the importance of angling as a recreational activity in Norwich. The urban fishery provides leisure opportunities for residents and visitors alike and the strategy therefore seeks to ensure that angling activity can take place alongside boating and other leisure activity throughout the project area where appropriate (some areas may not be suitable for access, for health and safety and other reasons) as shown on Map 11. Much of the river downstream of New Mills is already accessible to anglers from the banks and in boats but there are significant opportunities for improving access for anglers upstream of New Mills where the river is quieter and more natural. The Strategy partnership will therefore work with the BASG, local angling clubs, landowners and community groups to identify opportunities for improving fish habitat and angling access in the strategy area.

Opportunities for business development

Policy 9: Greater commercial activity will be encouraged in the river corridor, including the establishment of new businesses where appropriate, and the commercial use of existing river infrastructure will be maximised where feasible.

5.28 The river supports many businesses, both directly and indirectly. The attractive riverside environment already benefits the tourism and leisure industry

¹³ Environment Agency: The Value of Angling in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk (May 2015)

(hotels, pubs, cafes, fishing, and pleasure craft for example), is home to a number of small digital and creative media companies (in St James's Mill and on St George's Street for example), and is the location for Norwich University of the Arts. An enhanced riverside area, with a high quality public realm, attractive open spaces and high quality heritage, provides great potential to further enhance the local economic benefits of the river corridor and to contribute to the city's regeneration. Digital and creative media companies in particular are attracted by a characterful, high quality environment with spaces to meet, rather than more conventional office accommodation, so the strategy provides an opportunity to stimulate this form of activity in the river corridor.

5.29 The strategy's policies and proposals to increase access to the river corridor, encourage greater use of the river itself, and enhance the riverside environment, will encourage increased use of the river corridor by commuters and leisure users, as well as help to create the conditions for local businesses to thrive through increased footfall and activity.

5.30 It will be important to work with partners, existing businesses and community organisations, on project development and delivery. For example, by working with pubs and restaurants that are close to launch sites or moorings it may be possible to negotiate access to car parks for users and at the same time provide additional custom for the businesses on the river. There may also be opportunities to work with the BID on river-based events, investigation of project sponsorship, and to develop a business partnership focused on the river.

5.31 Where appropriate the strategy will encourage greater commercial activity in the river corridor including floating restaurants, hotels and other suitable leisure uses.

5.32 Proposals to provide new and enhanced river infrastructure (moorings, slipways and canoe launches as mentioned above) will help to support rowing boat, punt or canoe hire businesses and could encourage guided river tours to operate both in the City and upstream of New Mills Yard.

5.33 The City Council owns several key pieces of river infrastructure, including the pontoons at Elm Hill Quay and Riverside, which have the potential to encourage greater activity on the river. Although these have experienced periods of vacancy in recent years, the strategy aims to ensure that they are fully utilised in the future so that they can contribute to a more active waterfront whilst also providing a commercial return to the council.

5.34 This will be assisted through closer working arrangements between Norwich City Council and Broads Authority and could involve pro-actively seeking out commercial opportunities to maximise the use of river infrastructure, as well as responding to proposals from the business community. Provision of additional

moorings and launch facilities will help to deliver the RWS objective to encourage greater activity on the river, by creating the right conditions to support and generate additional demand for the future use of these key pieces of infrastructure.

River management and maintenance

5.35 Some river management and maintenance issues have already been referred to in section 3 of the strategy. This section (supplemented by Appendix 1) addresses other specific management and maintenance issues including dredging, conflicting river uses, and navigation.

- Maintenance of banks is generally the responsibility of landowners. The BA has the power available to serve notice on landowners to require them to carry out repairs. Further advice is provided in Appendix 1.
- Dredging of the river is the responsibility of the BA; dredging operations are informed by the BA's Sediment Management Strategy (SMS) which contains a waterway specification for the river, defining the depth and bed profile required for recreational navigation. The Action Plan in section 8 includes a proposal (ref W8) for a hydrographic survey of the river to assess current dredging requirements and carry out a dredging operation to ensure compliance with the waterway specification set out in the SMS. This will be funded and undertaken by the Broads Authority, in 2017-18.
- The BA also has powers to serve notice on the owners of sunken or abandoned vessels and works with boat owners to ensure wrecks and hazards are removed. In Norwich the removal of sunken vessels can be complicated and expensive because of the need to move large plant and equipment by river into the city. As referred to in Section 3, the City Council and the BA have developed a joint protocol relating to matters of river management which includes a joint approach to the removal of sunken boats.

Removal of sunken boat in the River Wensum 2016



- The issue of conflict between river users is one that is best managed by ensuring appropriate provision is made for the various user groups, for example by allocating adequate bank space for angling when new mooring sites are developed. Angling access can also be improved by the provision of platforms and pads which may also give protection for natural banks particularly upstream of New Mills. In addition there is a need for good signage to make it clear where various activities are authorised or deemed to be appropriate; this should be addressed in the signage proposals as part of Action Plan project A3, referred to in section 4. Map 12 provides clarification about the location of particular uses along the river, including moorings and angling provision. This will help to address potential conflicts of interest and should therefore assist with management of the river corridor.
- There is a public right of navigation in the Broads navigation area which includes the River Wensum up to New Mills. The BA has a legal duty to maintain the navigation and to take such steps to improve and develop it as it thinks fit (see Appendix 1 for further detail). Any development adjacent to or within the navigation area must therefore be assessed as regards its potential impact on the navigation. As part of the development of the strategy, the BA has produced an Advice Note (see appendix 2) to summarise its approach to assessing proposals for development in or adjacent to the navigation area.

Events and trails

Policy 10: The River Wensum will be promoted as a venue for events and trails to maximise its potential for tourism and the local economy.

5.36 Although Norwich has a thriving tourist industry and is a popular short stay destination, there is great potential to maximise the tourism and leisure opportunities offered by the River Wensum. Given the wealth of historic properties and cultural venues in the city there is great potential for the city to increase its tourism economy with further investment and promotion, particularly as heritage tourism is one of the most significant draws for inbound visitors to the UK. There is also an opportunity to encourage visitors to the Broads to venture into Norwich.

5.37 Recognition of the river as an asset for tourism and leisure is an integral part of this strategy, and its promotion will complement the other policies and proposals in the strategy with benefits for the local economy, residents and visitors. It is important that the river's promotion addresses the needs of all residents of the city and the Greater Norwich area, for example by ensuring that any events and/or trails are accessible to those living in areas with high social deprivation, and those suffering from health inequalities.

5.38 A Norwich River Festival should be considered as a means of raising the profile of the Wensum. This would provide an excellent means of showing how the river could enhance the life, health and well-being of residents, visitors and the City itself. There is also the potential to develop trails linked to historic buildings /structures, and other features of interest in the vicinity of the river. The River Wensum Strategy Partnership will work with its partners in relevant tourism and heritage bodies to facilitate the development of such events and trails.

Olympic torch event, 2012



5.39 The action plan includes a proposal (W9) for a river festival in Norwich, and an initial funding bid has already been submitted by the RWSP to the Broad's Authority's Water Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership. In 2015 the Broads Authority successfully bid for Heritage Lottery Funding under the HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme for a total of £2.6m (with match funding this will rise to around £4.5m). The Water Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership Scheme aims to further conserve and enhance the built and natural heritage of the area between Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Acle and Loddon following the course of the rivers Yare, Bure and Waveney, also including the River Wensum within the city as a key gateway to the Broads landscape. The proposed river festival aims to reconnect the city to the river through a range of water based activities, encouraging local involvement through drama and art events. If the funding bid is successful it will result in a river festival being held within the next couple of years focused on the River Wensum in the city centre. This would be an important first step in promoting

the river as a leisure and tourism destination and will also raise the profile of the River Wensum Strategy.