

Denton Radar Enhancement proposal
Planning Statement and Design And Access Statement
July 2024

Project background:

The Port of London Authority (PLA) has a facility at the following site that is used for the maintenance and repair of vessels and floating plant. The full site address is:

Port of London Authority
Marine House
Denton Wharf
Mark Lane
Gravesend, Kent
DA12 2PL

The PLA is a Statutory Harbour Authority for the Tidal Thames, acting as custodians for the river across 95 miles from Teddington in West London into the Thames Estuary. The PLA works to keep commercial and leisure users safe, protect and enhance the environment and promote the use of the river for trade and travel. The Port of London oversees 230 000 vessel movements handling over 53 m tonnes of cargo each year and is currently the largest Port in the UK.

Denton Wharf forms the marine base of operations for the PLA. It is a purpose-built facility used to undertake a wide range of critical marine and land-based operation and serves as the base for the PLA's Marine Services Team, who maintain more than 60 aids to navigation, including buoys, and inspect/maintain more than 230 PLA moorings along the river.

Marine house at Denton is a purpose-built operational support facility serves as the base for the PLA's Marine Services team and serves as the maintenance base for the PLA's fleet of nearly 40 vessels. The wharf also comprises a 70-tonne capacity boat lift which is available for hire along with other crantage for 3rd party operators and owners. The wharf is also used as the London base for the global towage operator Svitzer performing essential tug operations on the Tidal Thames.

Over the last 10 years the PLA has invested more than £10 million in Denton Wharf, including the jetty development, construction of Marine House and progressive strengthening of the quay to allow larger

boat lifts to be handled, as well as sustainability improvements including provision of solar panels on site and enhancements to the office facilities at Marine House.

The facility at Denton Wharf has been in efficient operation for many years and continues to act as the primary support site for PLA's operational activities on the Tidal Thames.

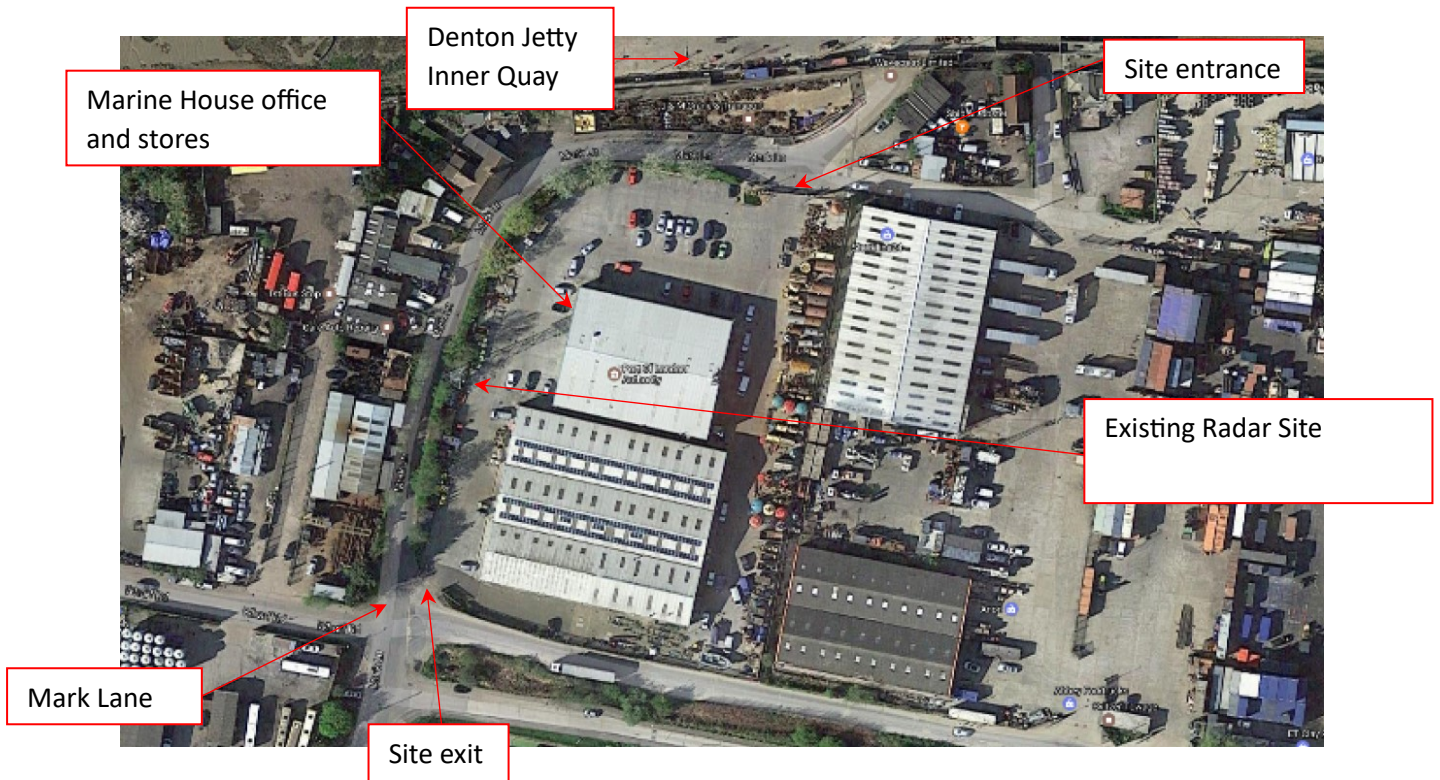


Figure 1 – Denton Wharf/Marine House - Site location plan (N.T.S.)

The Marine House complex itself contains the following PLA departments:

- Marine Services – undertaking operational activities both ashore (e.g. maintaining berth facilities both on site and on the River Thames, maintenance of the Marine House complex and facilities, and the loading and unloading vessels for both PLA and third party customers) and activities afloat (e.g. placing moorings in the River Thames, undertaking maintenance activities to navigation lights, maintenance of the Thames navigation and painting and repair of mooring buoys and markers, etc.)
- Marine Engineering – undertaking repair and maintenance to the PLA wider estate, repairs and maintenance to the PLA floating fleet both fixed and operational.

- Purchasing and Stores Department – providing both buying and storage capability to the departments described above as well as the wider PLA

Planning History (Last five years)

- 20240527: Construction of DNO kiosks, Low Voltage Cabinets and associated Cabling (Currently under consideration)
- 20190620: Erection of a smoking shelter at the Denton Wharf site. (permitted 16 August 2019)
- 20180954: Installation of canopy over existing oily waste facility. (Permitted 31 December 2018)

Proposed Development:

The PLA's Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) team are responsible for ensuring safety of life at sea, safe and efficient navigation, and protecting the marine (and adjacent) environment. Following the planned closure of the PLA's Thames Barrier Navigation Centre in the Royal Borough of Greenwich and the associated loss of primary backup location for VTS, Marine House Denton has been selected as an alternative site to ensure the ongoing resilience of VTS operations along the Tidal Thames. This is due to the fact that there is already an existing tower on site within an area of land owned by the PLA which serves as the PLAs principle operational base.



Figure 2: Existing tower at Denton Wharf

The existing tower at Marine House was originally designed for cellular communications and is not fully compatible with the strict requirements of equipment used by the PLA to communicate between PLA shore-based radar sites and between VTS and river users. In terms of existing infrastructure on the tower the PLA has one microwave dish and CCTV cameras which will be retained. However, for the existing tower to be utilised for effective communications for VTS operations, it requires an upgrade to provide the high availability of services necessary. This will allow the PLA to ensure continuing safe navigation on the Tidal Thames as part of its role as the Statutory Harbour Authority for the Tidal Thames.

The existing Denton Tower is an 18m steel lattice tower. It is constructed using tubular legs and angular bracings. The base width of the tower is 4.09m, tapering to 2.5m at a height of 12m, and then remaining parallel up to the top.

The tower is supported by a foundation cap measuring 5.40m x 5.16m with a thickness of 2m, which is situated over eight piles. This foundation system provides stability and support to the tower structure. Since its erection in 1990, there have been no indications of structural distress associated with the foundation. Recent observations made on site have shown no signs of tilting, earth movement, excessive settlement, or other visible evidence suggesting overloading of the foundation which suggests that the foundation has maintained its stability and performance.

As part of the proposed development, the existing headframe will be entirely removed, and equipment will be relocated to the tower body at the same heights. For extending the ladder, a minimum tower width of 1.75m at the top of the extension must be maintained. Additionally, a small platform will be installed 2m below the top of the tower to enhance functionality. This platform will serve as a strategic access point for the numerous equipment installations at the top the tower, ensuring convenient and safe servicing and maintenance procedures.

The proposed tower extension will connect to existing tower flanges and starts with width of 2.5m and is tapering over 4m to 1.75m width. It is then parallel to the top. The construction of the extension is of tubular sections with leg flange connections and single bolted shear connections for bracing. The new tower section will be fabricated off site and transported to site in short sections via truck. These sections will be assembled into a single section in the car park of Marine House and will then be lifted in a single section onto the existing tower and bolted in place. It is expected that the site work will take 3-4 days to complete.

The total height of the extended tower is 31m, an increase of 13 metres. No works are required to the base of the tower as part of the proposed development.

Planning Policy:

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through decision taking. Within the NPPF good design is identified as a key aspect of sustainable development as well as emphasising that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses.

Gravesham Local Plan Strategy (Adopted) 2014

Strategic Objective 10 seeks to safeguard and where possible improve existing employment sites and in this regard, it is considered that the proposed development accords with this Policy objective.

Strategic Objective 18 states that as a minimum the capacity of commercial wharves and other sites needed to support the River Thames as a working waterway will be safeguarded.

Denton Wharf is located within the Riverside Industrial Area which is located within the Gravesend Riverside East and North East Gravesend Opportunity Area. Denton Wharf is identified as an existing use which demands a waterside location because of the types of activity undertaken at the site. It is also identified as a strategically important facility as a safeguarded wharf on the borough policies map.

Policy CS04 states at 4.5.37 that proposals that have the potential to prejudice the operation of Denton Wharf, through the introduction of uses that are sensitive to the activities on these sites, will not be accepted unless it can be shown that any adverse impact can be fully mitigated. In addition, paragraph 4.5.36 states that the Council will support proposals that retain and increase marine related activity making active use of the River Thames. This will include support for the expansion of marine related employment uses between Denton Wharf and Denton Slipways. It is considered that the essential need for this project is to enable the PLA to continue to ensure safe navigation on the Tidal Thames as part of its role as the Statutory Harbour Authority.

Policy CS07 (Economy, Employment and Skills) states in paragraph 5.1.35 that development proposals facilitating the expansion of river-related employment will be supported, particularly where these involve the use of the river for transport and/or provide specialist training or other facilities intended to support the continued use of the River Thames as a major commercial waterway.

Policy CS19 relates to development and design principles, stating that new development will be visually attractive and fit for purpose. It will be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity of users and neighbours, avoid adverse environmental impacts. The proposed development will be in keeping with the surrounding industrial nature of the area, to the same style/standard as the existing infrastructure.

Appraisal of proposed development against planning policy:

The proposed development is situated within an industrial area, and the immediate surroundings of the tower are characterized by industrial activities. Mark Lane, serving as the access road to the Wharf, runs directly west of the tower, facilitating transportation and logistics operations within the vicinity.

The proposed development is making use of existing infrastructure, within an area of land at Denton Wharf which forms the critical marine base of operations for the PLA as a purpose-built facility used to undertake a wide range of critical marine and land-based operation. The proposed tower extension is required to ensure that the PLA can continue to ensure safe navigation on the Tidal Thames as part of its role as the statutory harbour authority and in therefore in this instance, the proposal is considered to accord with the provisions set out under Strategic Objective 10 and policies CS04 and CS07 of the Gravesham Local Plan.

Whilst the application site is located within a long-established industrial area, careful consideration has been given to the design of the tower extension. The enhancement will form a modest extension to the existing tower, including no increase in size in terms of footprint, and it is considered that the proposed tower extension will not negatively affect the character and appearance of the wider area, in line with the provisions set out under Policy CS19.

EA Flood Zone 3

Denton Wharf is within a Flood Risk Zone 3 area (Flood Risk Zone 3 Plan submitted), but also within an area that benefits from existing flood defences. The proposed tower extension is minor and will not increase the amount of hardstanding or floor space found at the site with no change to the tower at ground level. Nor will it increase the risk of flooding at the site, or surrounding area. It is therefore considered that proposed tower extension will not impact on the wellbeing and safety of users within the Denton Wharf site.

Conclusions

In summary it can be seen from the submitted documents and drawings that the impact of the proposed installation of this essential infrastructure to ensure continuing safe navigation on the Tidal Thames would be minimal and have a neutral effect on visual amenity.