

PENDER PLAZA

A PROPOSAL BY THE ENDERBY GROUP

OVERVIEW

The Enderby Group was formed to secure the future of Enderby House and the cable loading equipment on the Alcatel-Lucent jetty as a permanent centre for telling the story of the sub-sea cable industry on this site, its key role in world-wide communications, and of the many other significant industries of the Greenwich peninsula.

The Group has devised a proposal for a unified approach to the future use of the House and the open area surrounding it: the plaza. We see this as potentially a social space for residents, users of the Thames Path (walkers or cyclists, local or long-distance) and cruise liner passengers, and as a place of presentation of the sub-sea cable and peninsula industry stories. We here give first an outline of the present situation and then the proposal which we hope will gain the support and collaboration of all agencies interested in the site.

Although cable manufacture and loading the ships which took the cable to the oceans and laid it on the ocean bed here ceased in the mid 1970s, the production of essential terminal equipment and sub-sea optical amplifiers continues on part of the original site behind the two housing projects. It is, without doubt, the longest surviving telecommunications manufacturing facility in the world.

Enderby House was built by Charles Enderby (1798-1870) towards the end of the Enderby Brothers' tenure of the land. Here Charles was host to the early meetings of the Geographical Society in the unique Octagon Room. The House was later taken over as offices for the cable manufacturers, a role which it fulfilled until manufacturing retreated to the back of the site and its sale to housing developers. In June 1973 it was given the protected status of Grade II listing. It has now been vacant for some years and is severely dilapidated. Restoration work appears to have commenced and Barratt have outline planning permission for a two-storey extension of unspecified function.

On the southernmost and largest of the jetties on the riverfront of Enderby Wharf (Enderby Jetty) cable loading equipment stands preserved. It is protected by secure fencing to the riverside path. The condition of the jetty is not known. The nearby jetty with sedum planting (the Coaling Jetty) is visibly in bad condition with rusted reinforcing steel hanging from the underside of the concrete deck. Both jetties date from 1951 and it is reasonable to assume that the cable loading equipment is of the same age. Between the jetties the reinstated steps and causeway, which once gave access to the small boats used to ferry crew out to the cable ships, appear to be in good condition.

The restored and extended Enderby House will stand in a roughly triangular open space, bounded to the west by the river, to the north by the Cruise Liner Terminal (CLT) podium block, to the east by the housing blocks of the Enderby Wharf development. The space tapers southward past the jetty with its loading equipment. Pedestrian access is by the Thames path, through the spaces of the housing development and from the end of Telcon Way, the road which also gives vehicle access to the CLT and the rear of Enderby House.

THE PENDER PLAZA CONCEPT

In detail our proposal is for a linked series of installations which add up to a coherent entity having a character both social and informative, together with dedicated spaces within Enderby House. The use of these spaces will not be the sole function of the House but is essential to the proposal. Appendices 1, 2 & 3 contain a plan of the proposed Pender Plaza, an Image of the Barratt model of the area viewed from the north west and a plan of the suggested space required within the Enderby House extension.

The House, as extended, has the potential for both a new entrance facing Telcon Way and a sheltered exterior space between the House and the extension, facing towards the cable-loading jetty. The space towards Telcon Way then acts as a space of arrival to the extended House and as a site for an artwork on a theme derived from the history of the sub-sea cable industry (such as a globe with cable paths illuminated). This acts as an announcement of the theme underlying the plaza and as a focus of pedestrian routes into the space of the plaza, an orientation point. From here a diagonal path strikes off parallel with the line of the flats towards the cable-loading jetty. To either side of the path digital terminals are housed in substantial blocks. The terminals are programmed to tell more than one story, perhaps unfolding as the viewer moves from terminal to terminal.

The sheltered space outside the House may function as a cafe terrace, extending from a bistro within the House. From the terrace one has sight of the cable-loading jetty on which a light-weight structure shelters a more informal cafe, independent or managed together with the bistro. The shape of this is critical: it should not obstruct the view of the gear from the House or from the central Greenwich river-front. The result is a triangular shelter. The bistro and the cafe together provide a much needed facility for walkers and cyclists on the Thames path between Greenwich and the O2.

Turning in to the House, a multi-purpose space is easily found. This is able to function as a gallery, as an education room or as a meeting room, whether for informal residents' meetings or small conferences. A store for chairs, AV equipment etc adjoins it. The first floor Octagon Room is returned to its original condition and, although primarily used in relation to the major function of the House is regularly and with announcement made available to public view as a significant relic of the Enderbys, the early history of the Geographical Society, and the cable industry.

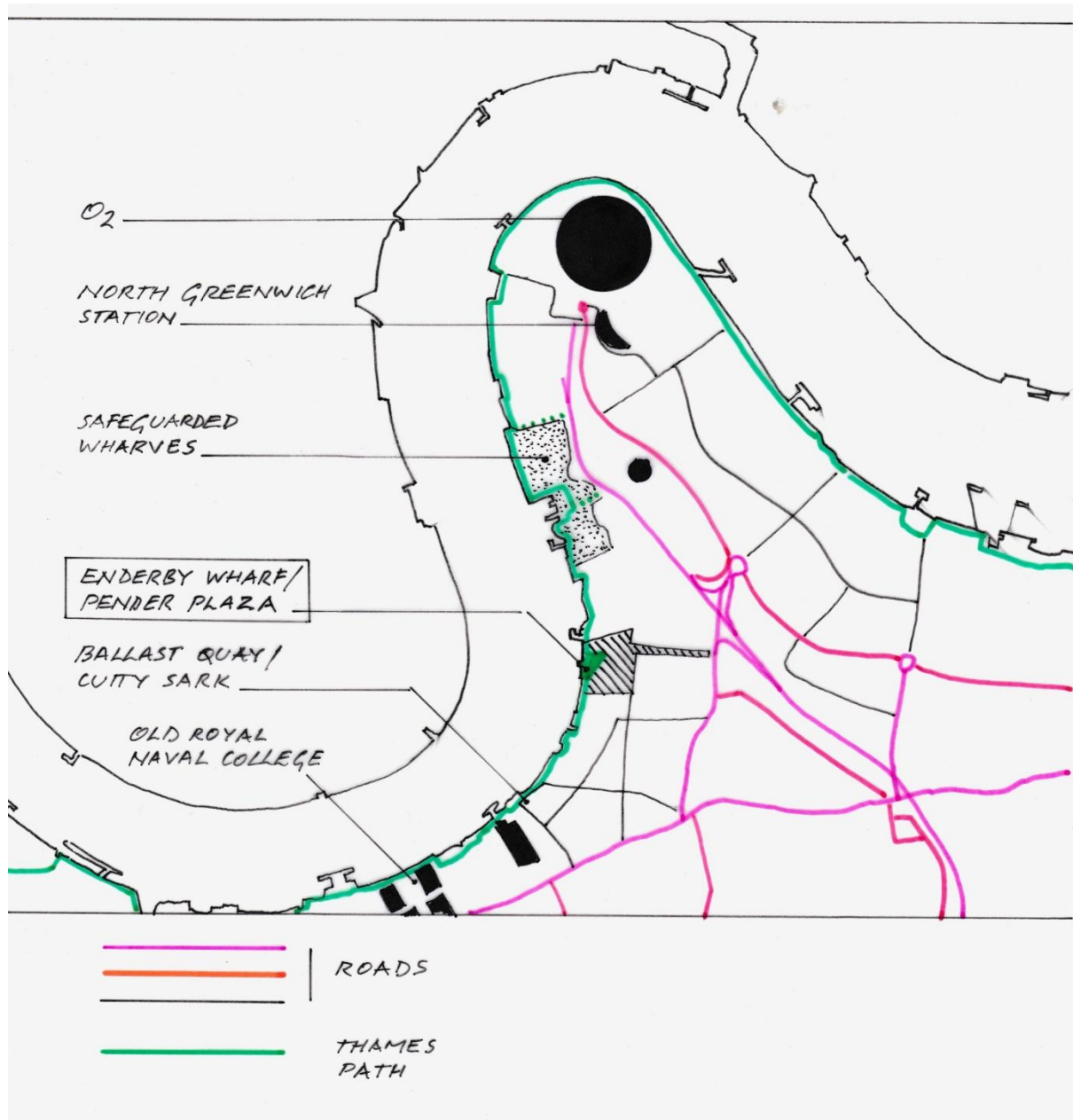
Returning to the orientation point where Telcon Way meets the House, there is a continuation of the Way towards the river, the House on the south side and the partially blank wall of the Cruise Liner Terminal podium on the north. It is proposed that the blank parts of the wall be used as a site for mural decoration or information whether in the form of permanent art works or a series of changing displays. The path may be spanned by a bridge connecting the planted terrace on the roof of the CLT podium to the roof of the Enderby House extension from which one may descend to the sheltered terrace.

In all these proposals the aim is to link the parts of the space around Enderby House both to the House and to each other in a way that is sociable and carries strongly the memory of the significant activities which have taken place on and around this site.

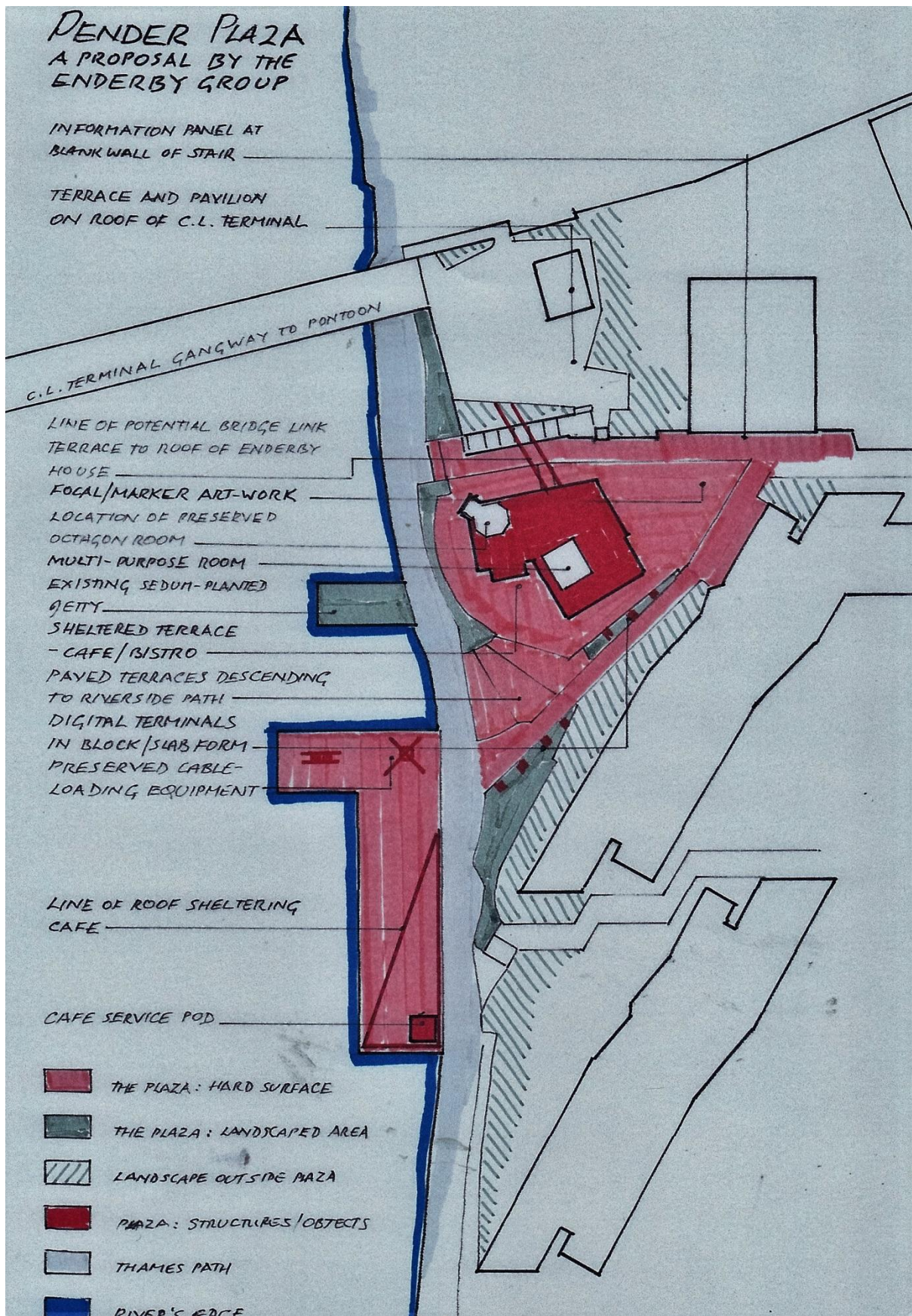
The last gesture we recommend is the naming of the space as Pender Plaza after Sir John Pender, the first chairman of Telcon from 1864 to 1868, years when his contribution was critical to the success of the first transatlantic telegraph cable. He then formed and steered the Eastern and Associated Telegraph companies which connected Asia and Australasia and in so doing made Telcon the world's leading supplier of undersea cable. For twenty-one years he lived at Foots Cray Place and died there in 1896.

Peter Luck on behalf of the Enderby Group 14.11.2016
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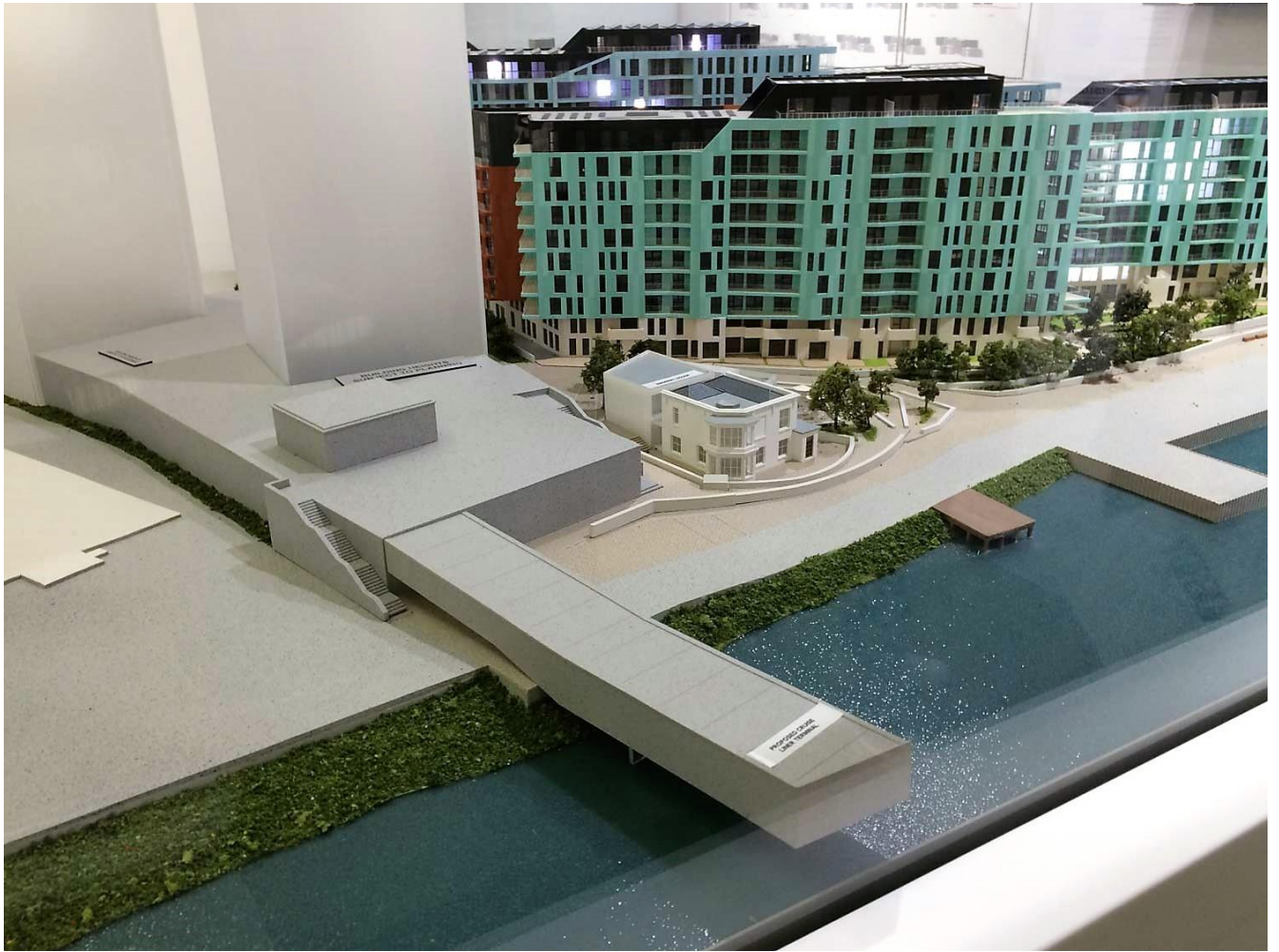
Appendix 1
Location Plan



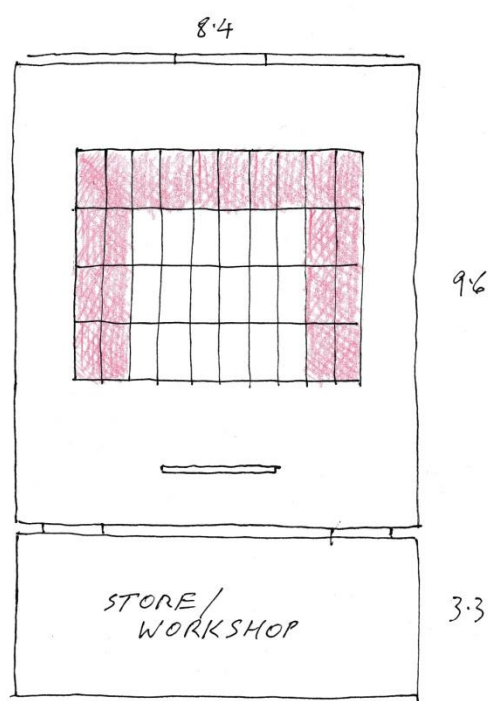
Appendix 2
Plan of Proposed Pender Plaza



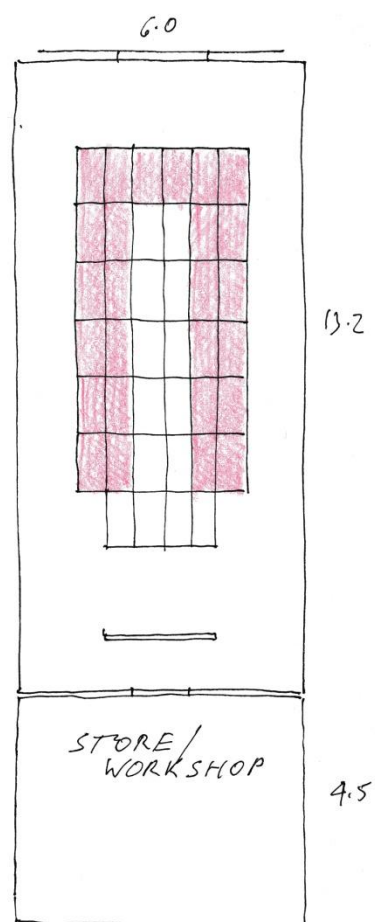
Appendix 3
Barratt Model of Enderby House



Appendix 4
Proposed Layout of Internal Space in Enderby House Extension
Two indicative options



OUTLINE SEATING LAYOUT
 & CONFERENCE TABLE LAYOUT.



Dimensions in metres