

RENNIE GARDEN

Landscape Report

TOWN526(08)2002
October 2012

T O W N S H E N D 
Landscape Architects



Rennie Garden existing view
from Blackfriars Bridge



Rennie Garden proposed view from Blackfriars Bridge

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Sampson House and Ludgate House Masterplan October 2012

01 INTRODUCTION

The Carlyle Group are proposing a major redevelopment of the Sampson House and Ludgate House site that includes the opportunity to improve the public space known as Rennie Garden.

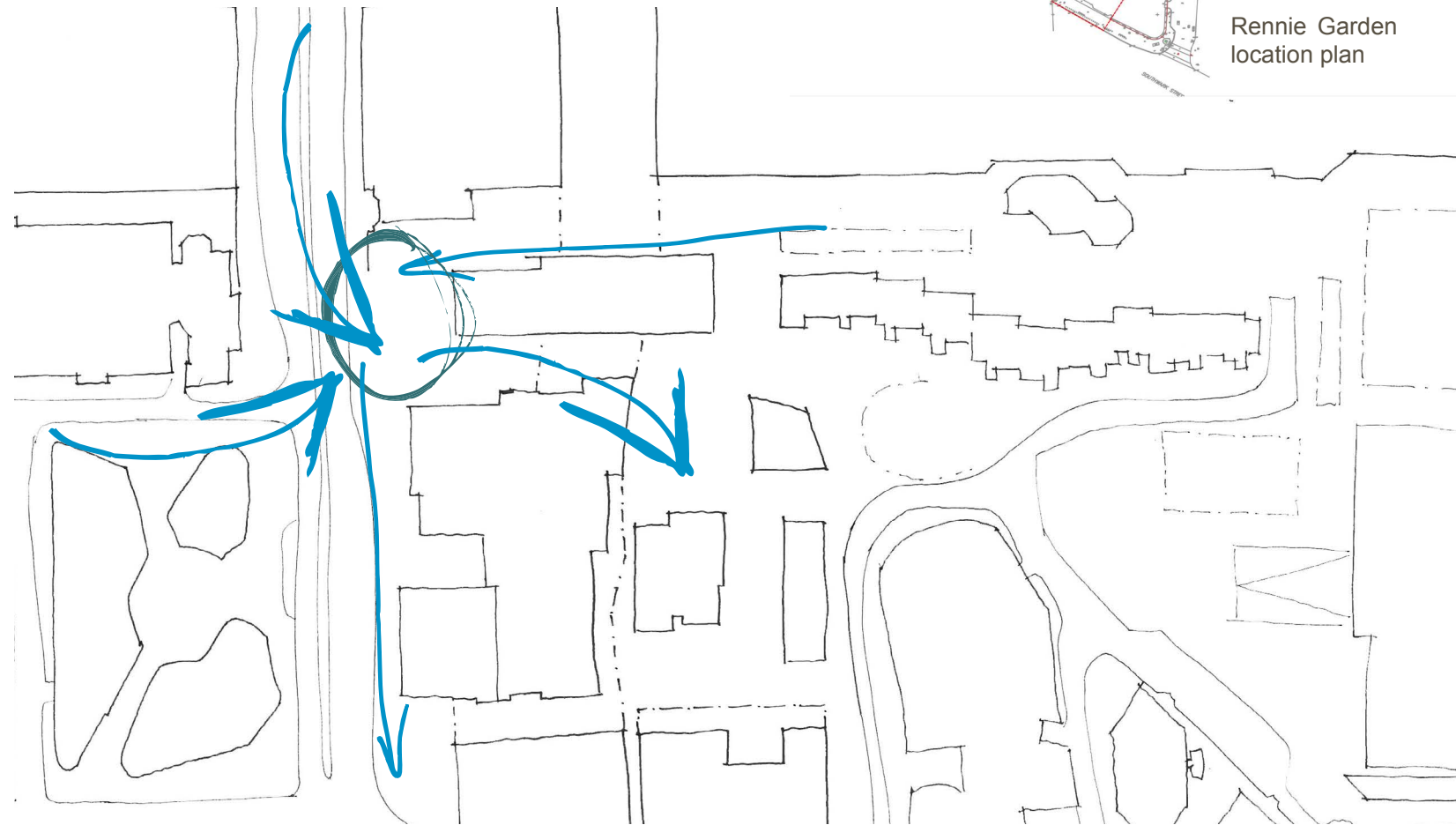
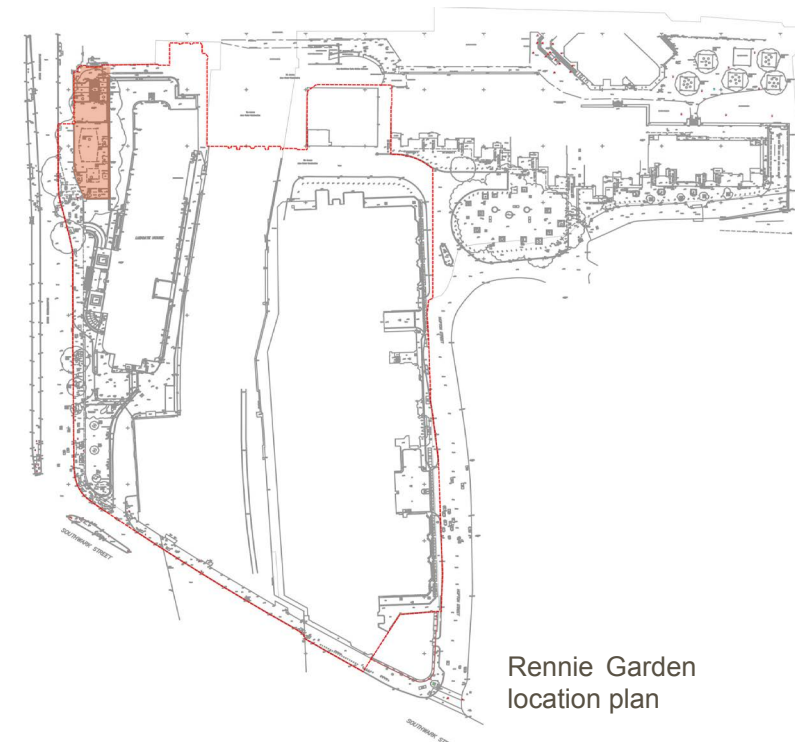
Sampson House and Ludgate House is a master plan proposed for the redevelopment of a prominent site on the southern side of the Thames in central London. While the site is located in the London Borough of Southwark, the area of Rennie Garden and the River Walk beside Blackfriars Bridge are within the City of London ownership (but not the CoL Borough Boundary).

This area of Southwark is undergoing a period of significant change, the proposed development of Sampson House and Ludgate House will create a link between the developments to the east, (Neo Bankside developments, the extension to the Tate Modern) and the proposed developments to the west at One Blackfriars, Kings Reach and Sea Containers House.

Along with the improved accessibility due to the new Blackfriars Station south entrance, the combined impact of these changes are expected to reinvigorate this area of London, bringing an increased population into the area including residents, visitors and workers.

The proposed master plan will create improved permeability through this prominent site, with new routes created between a number of new buildings. The buildings are proposed to contain a mixture of office, retail, restaurants, cafes, cultural uses and residential accommodation.

The master plan proposes a new building Ludgate A to the east of Rennie Garden which will include a cultural facility on the three lower levels and residential accommodation above. This building is set back approximately 10m from the eastern edge of the existing garden which will create an opportunity to increase the perceived scale of the garden. To the south of Rennie Garden, a second proposed building will have commercial use at the lower levels with residential accommodation above.



Rennie Garden: Key Gateway Space

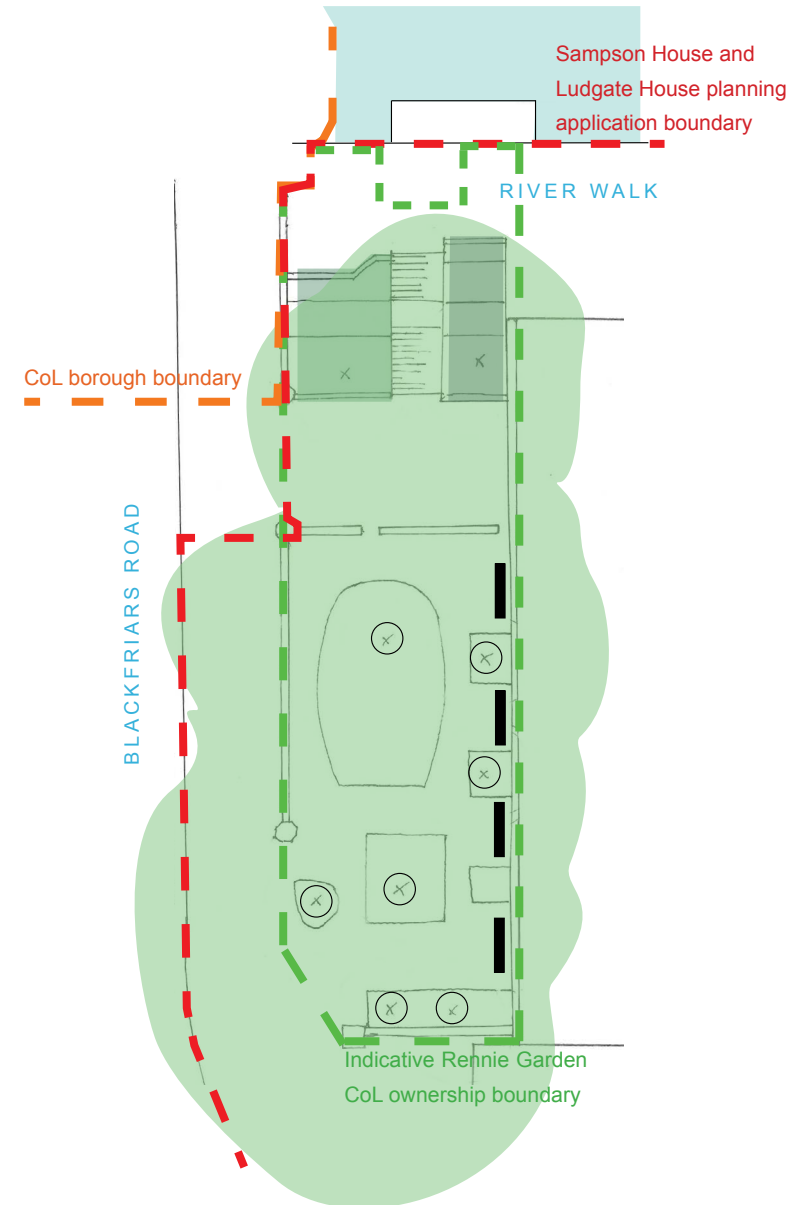
02 RENNIE GARDEN



Portrait of John Rennie



Albion Mill



Plan of existing design of Rennie Garden with indicative City of London ownership boundary

Rennie Garden is a public garden located on Blackfriars Road immediately to the south of Blackfriars Bridge.

In the late 18th century, the site now occupied by Rennie Garden was the Albion Mill, which ground corn to feed the growing city. The Garden is named after John Rennie, who designed the machinery for the mill. The mill used steam power and was the first building of its type in the world. John Rennie played a significant part in building and transforming London during the industrial revolution and the garden provides a memorial to him. John Rennie also designed and oversaw the construction of many bridges in London, such as Waterloo, Southwark and London bridge.

In 1862 the Corporation of London declared the area should be maintained as open space and Rennie Garden was created.

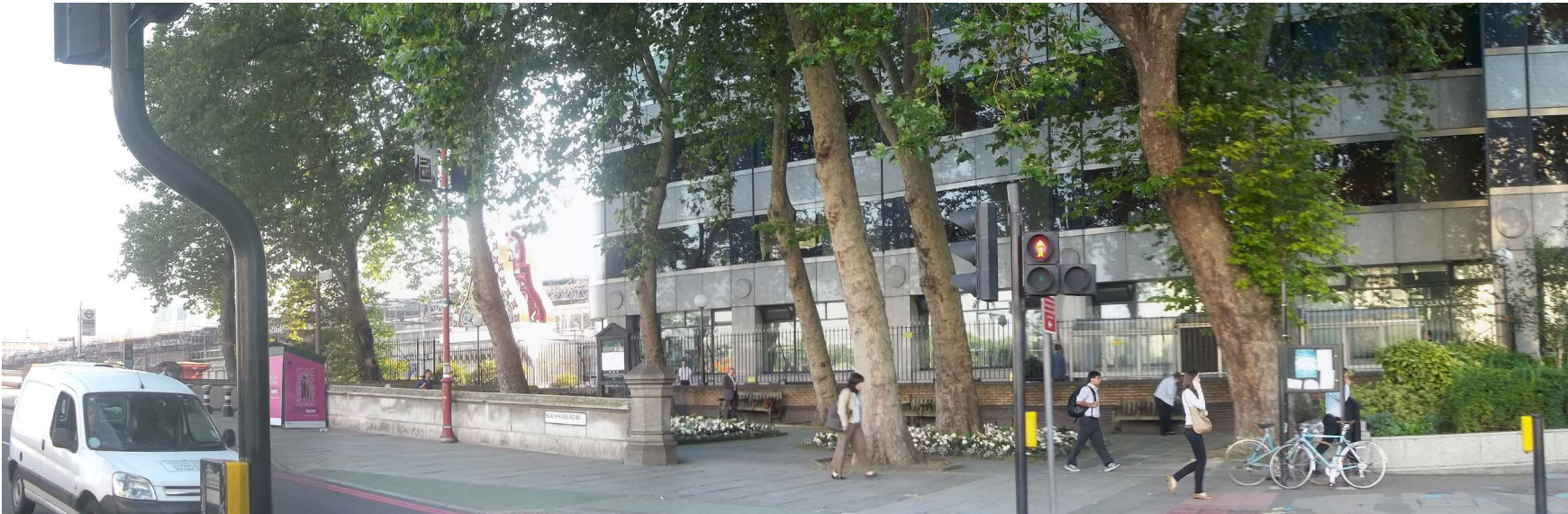
Today, there are two distinct areas within the garden, the steep planted terraces stepping down to the River Walk, with a central flight of steps; and the upper garden with low seasonal planting beds around seven existing mature Plane trees.

The upper garden area is a shady pocket space providing an urban respite from the surrounding city; four timber benches provide spaces for people to sit, set back from Blackfriars Road and away from the noise of the traffic. The trees form a cathedral like canopy over the space but show some sign of being too close together with some of them beginning to lean outwards in search of more space. Two planting beds around the most central trees are planted with herbaceous bedding plants providing seasonal colour.

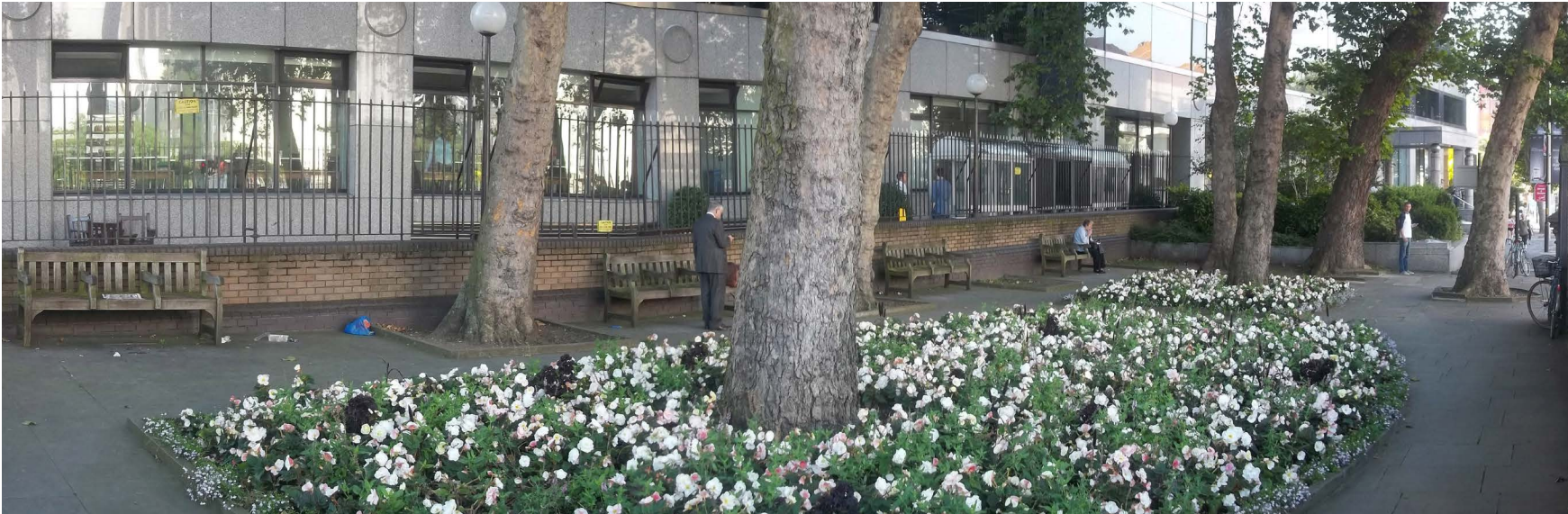
The terraced planting between the upper garden and the River Walk provides a steep connection for pedestrians. There are two mature trees towards the top of the terraces which are thought to be growing in a constrained root area, with the bridge to the west and the existing wall of Ludgate House to the east creating impenetrable edges.

The steps which run centrally through the terrace do not meet current accessibility guidance; the horizontal ‘goings’ are shorter than the recommended dimension meaning that the flight of steps is steep which increases the risk of accidents. This is exacerbated by the lack of nosings on the steps to define the treads, an inconsistent number of risers in each flight, and handrails which do not meet best design practice.

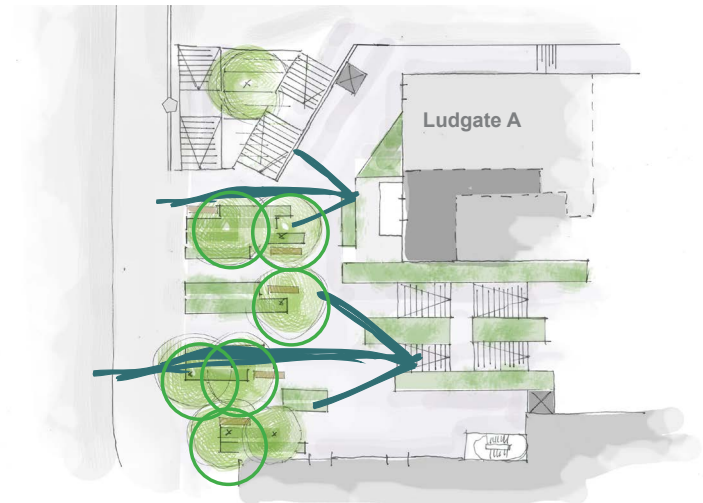
The master plan which is being brought forward has created an opportunity to improve Rennie Garden, removing the eastern boundary and extending the space eastwards, improving access to the River Walk and improving the garden area, while retaining the identity and use of the space as a public space.



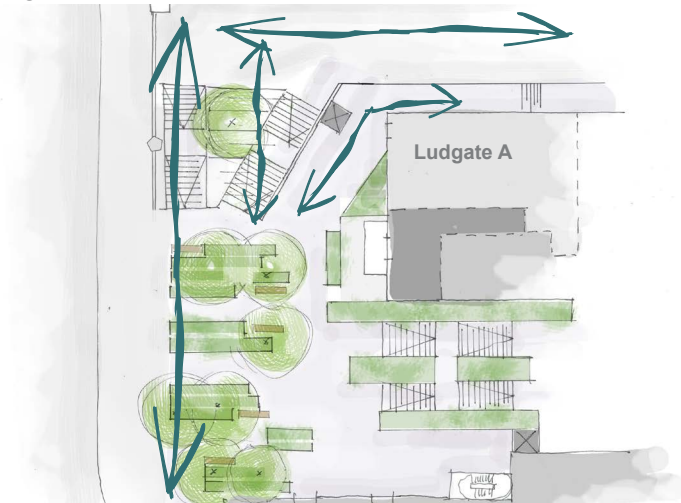
Existing View into Rennie Garden from Blackfriars Road



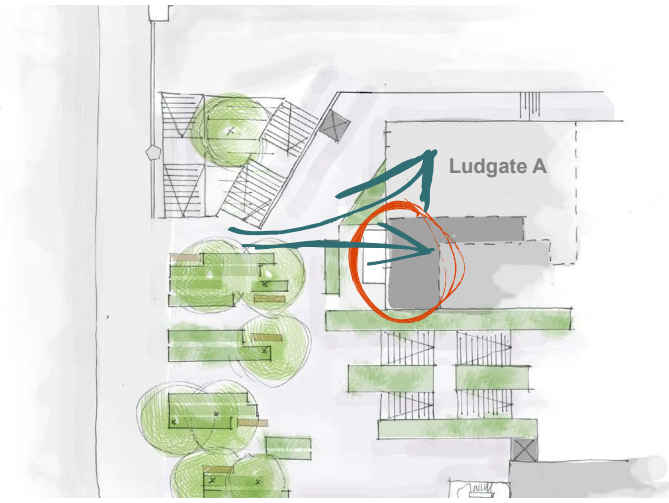
Existing View within Rennie Garden



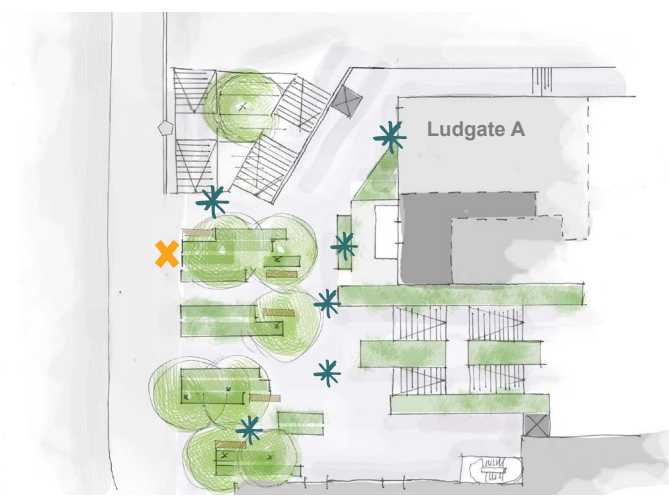
- * Improve east-west pedestrian connections, meeting the enhanced pedestrian crossing across Blackfriars Road.
- * Extend the garden eastwards to meet the new building frontages. While improving permeability of the space by removing walls but retaining trees.



- * Improve the pedestrian connection between the River Walk and Blackfriars Road and Rennie Garden.
- * Widen the River Walk.



- * Create a clear route to the ground floor entrance of the new cultural centre.
- * Provide an entrance to the new Residential reception.



- * Retain the use of Rennie Garden as an amenity space for the public to use and linger in.
- * Improve the quality of space.
- * More allocated seating elements than previous layout.
- * Garden signage located on the boundary of the garden (X)

The design of Rennie Garden has been developed to retain the existing identity and garden feel of the space, and to continue to provide a public space for people to enjoy, and stay within. The proposals will expand the garden space eastwards to meet the façade of the new building Ludgate A.

The proposed design of Rennie Garden will improve the permeability of the space, allowing for a pedestrian crossing across Blackfriars Road, and the new east-west route through the Sampson House and Ludgate House site and also to the River Walk to the north. The east-west movement will be further facilitated through the realignment of the areas of planting, which are designed laterally across the garden.

From the north east of the Garden, a ramp leads up to the new public cultural facility and balcony over the River Walk. The ramp is also home to a new lift which will provide inclusive access down to the River Walk. The lift is on Carlyle's land and will be maintained by Carlyle. At the base of Ludgate A a residential entrance will be located under a building canopy, with a change in paving underneath it to define an entrance area separated from the Garden.

Public seating will be located to the eastern side of the garden, away from Blackfriars Road and will include seating with backrests and arm rests (Refer to section 4 for illustrative seating information). The design will increase the amount of seating provided.

Land ownership boundaries in the space shall be physically demarcated through subtle studs incorporated into the new hard landscape. Additionally, signage with the name of the garden will be located along Blackfriars Road.

Terraces

The existing terraces down to the River Walk offer an open connection between the two levels. The design aspiration is to improve the pedestrian access between Blackfriars Road and the River Walk.

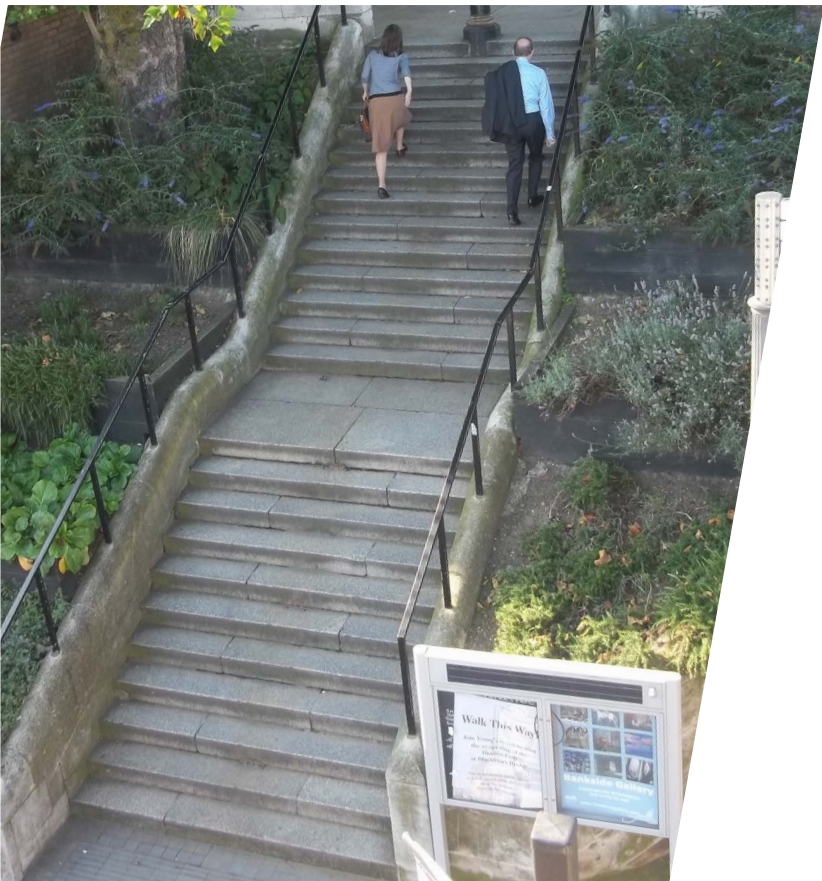
As described earlier in the document, the design of the existing steps does not currently meet accessibility design recommendations. To replace the existing steps with a new set that meet guidelines would mean that they would be at a more shallow angle. The construction of these would require excavation into the planter where it is thought a number of the critical roots of the two London Plane trees at the top of the steps are situated. Advice received by the design team from an arboriculturalist suggests that the impact of works in the sensitive upper zone could be detrimental to the future health of the two existing trees within the terraces. This is compounded because the roots are in a restricted area.

The design studies presented in the following pages therefore consider the following:

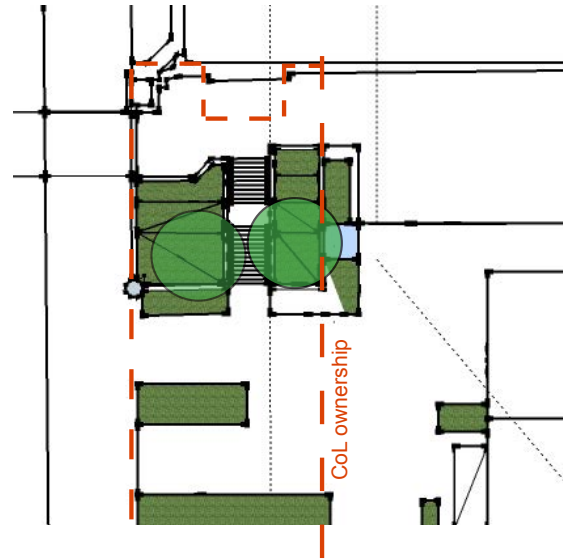
- Could a scheme be developed where access is improved and both of the existing trees in the terraces are retained?
- Does removing one tree create space to improve the quality of the steps?
- If the trees were removed, what could the proposal look like?



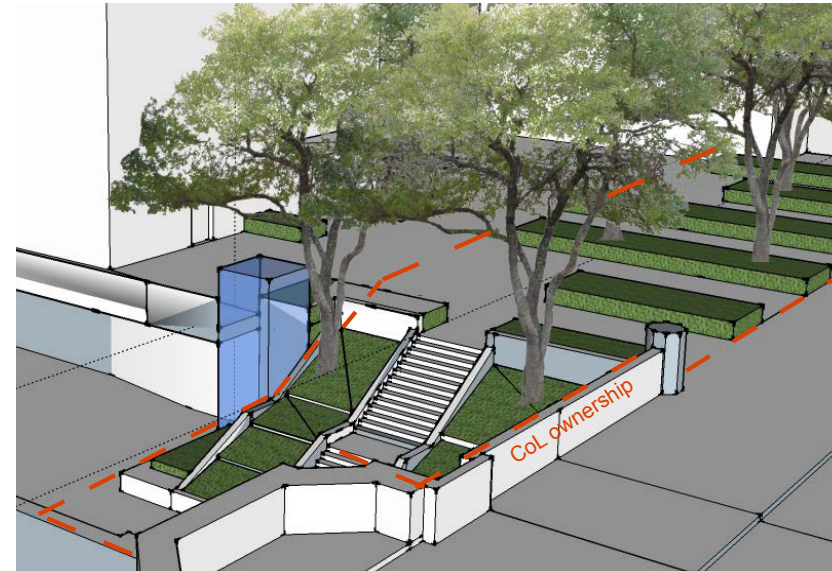
Section of Existing Access Steps



The existing steps are steep and do not comply with accessibility guidelines.



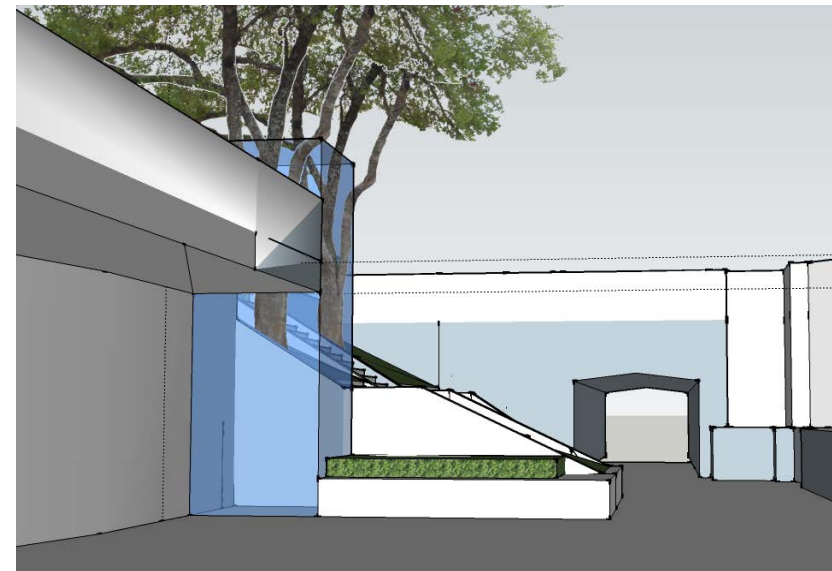
Plan



View 1



View 2



View 3

Retaining Two Trees

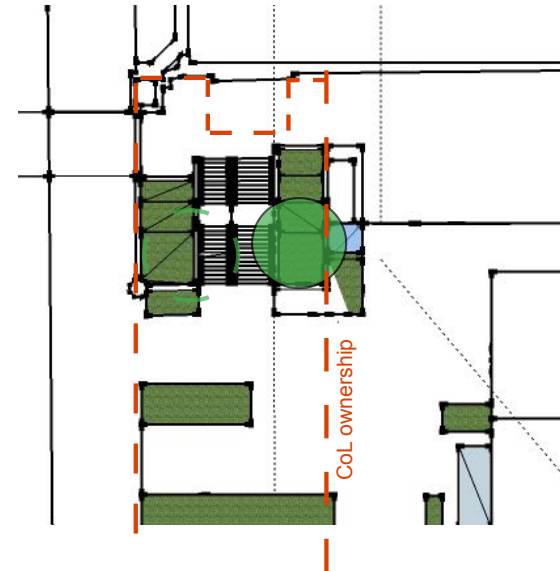
If the two trees are retained, it is not possible to improve the accessibility of the steps. There is not any space to widen the steps to increase their capacity. To replace the steps with a set that are less steep would have a negative impact on the health of the trees due to the depth and extent of foundations that would be required within the root protection areas.

- + Both existing trees in the terraces are retained
- + Improved access via a pedestrian lift
- Riverside walk is not widened at this point
- Stair treads remain shorter than the current guidance, which increases the likelihood of someone falling.
- An inconsistent number of risers will remain in each flight (11 and 14) which is potentially confusing for someone with a visual impairment.

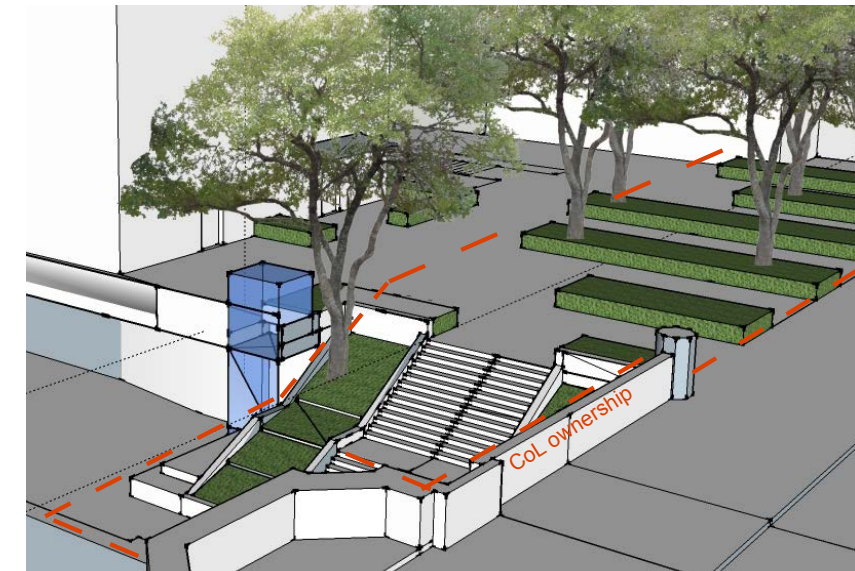
Removal of One Tree and Widening of Steps

The option to remove one tree has been explored. Here, the western tree has been removed to make room for widening the steps to increase their capacity. The new steps would match the gradient of the existing steps to avoid carrying out works to the existing steps. The arboriculturalist has advised that the work required to construct the extension to the steps could create a risk to the long term health of the remaining tree as the work would require construction within the root protection area of that remaining tree.

- ✚ Increased width of steps to increase the capacity.
- Single tree removed, significant risk to health of the remaining tree.
- Width of the riverside walk has not been increased
- Steps are still not compliant to current accessibility guidelines



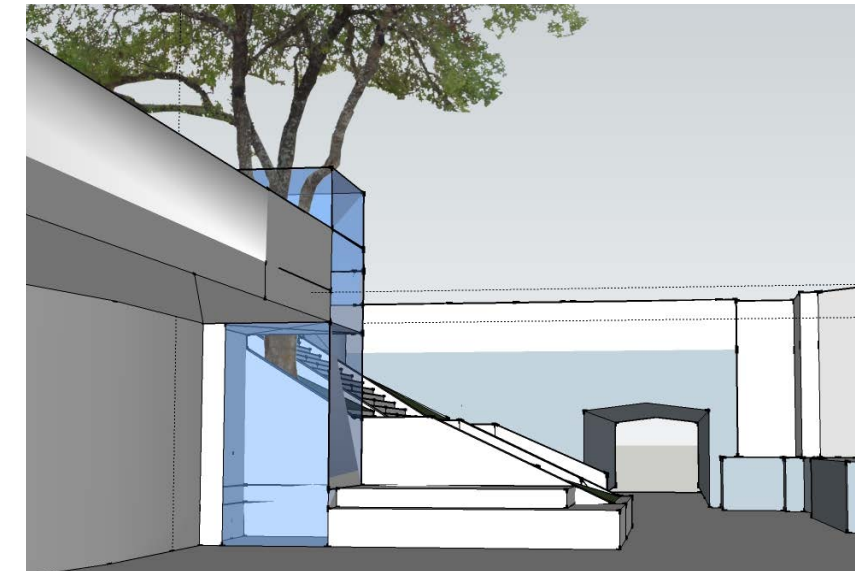
Plan



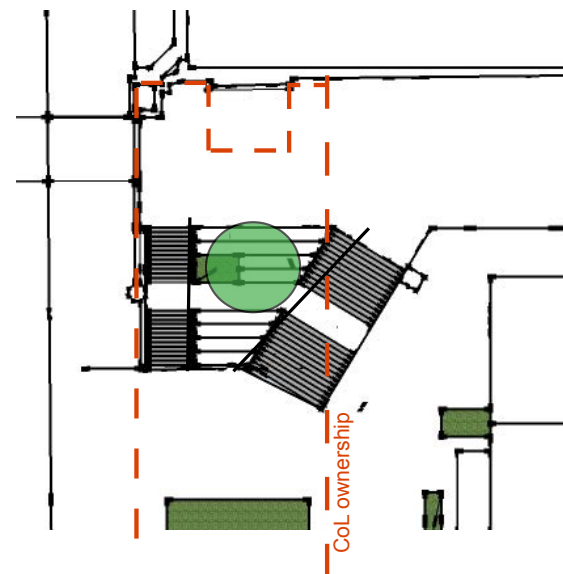
View 1



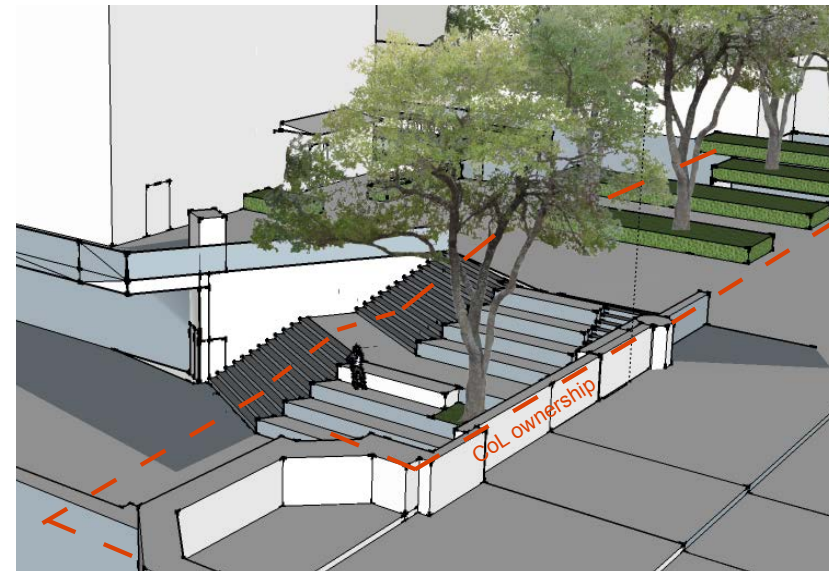
View 2



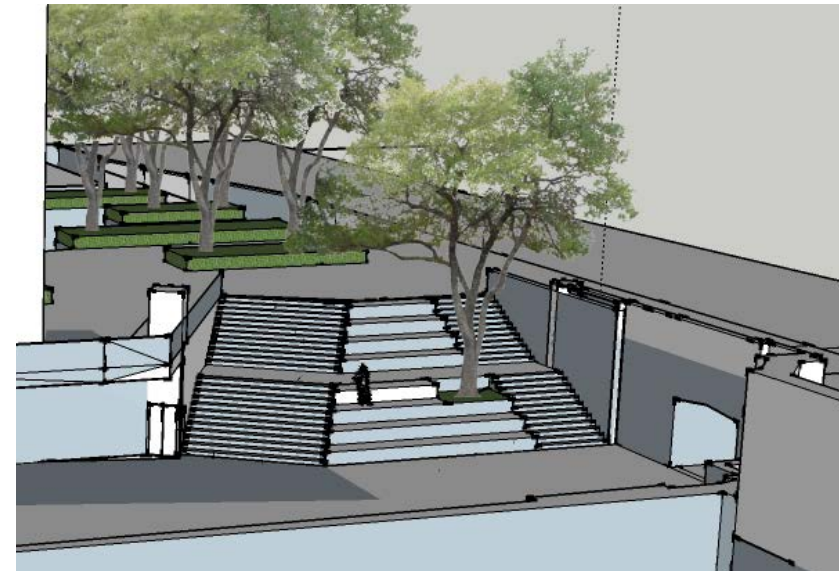
View 3



Plan



View 1



View 2



View 3

New Steps and Replacement of Trees

In order to significantly improve the accessibility of the River Walk, improvements to the steps are required so that they meet current design guidelines, they could then be the means of access by the majority of people moving from Rennie Garden and Blackfriars Bridge to the River Walk. These improvements will not be possible to make whilst avoiding a negative impact on the existing trees.

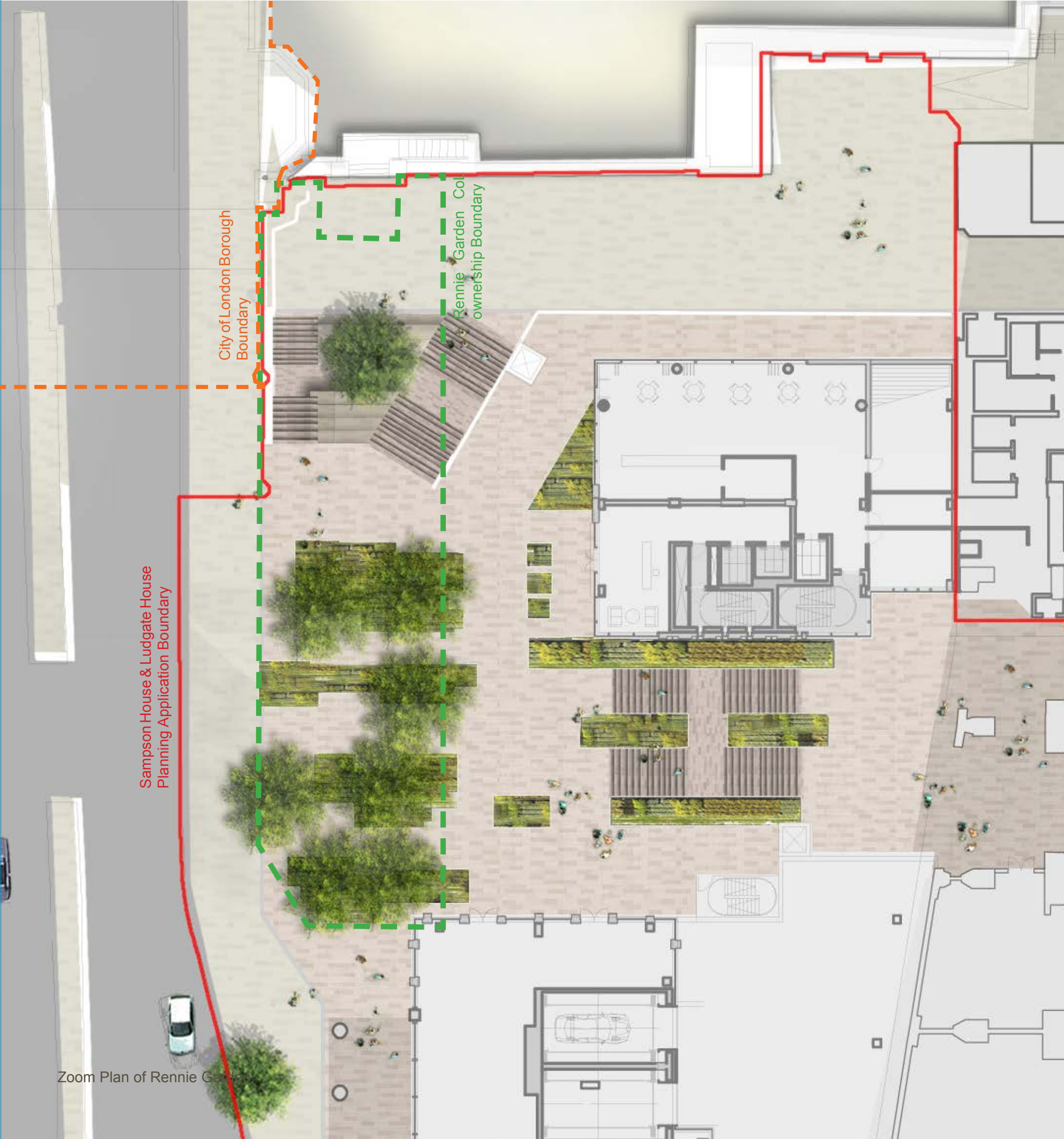
A design option has been developed which significantly widens the new steps and reduces the gradient to meet current design guidance. A new public lift is provided and two existing trees are replaced with one new tree.

Here, two sets of steps are proposed to increase capacity. The steps move southwards to increase space along the River Walk and their design would be in line with current guidance, including the use of handrails and tactile paving. The angled alignment of the eastern steps makes a comfortable connection with the river walk as people move along the east-west desire line.

A new tree is proposed between the steps. There is initially room for two smaller trees, but following consultation with the City of London, the proposal has taken into consideration room for future tree growth.

- + New steps would meet current design guidance, including step dimensions, use of handrails, armrests, backs on seating steps and tactile paving.
- + Inclusion of a public lift on Carlyle land
- + One new tree to replace lost trees as well as new herbaceous planting
- + Incorporation of raised public seating to allow views over the river
- Both trees removed

On balance, it is felt that the benefits to public access between Blackfriars Bridge and the River Walk should be pursued and that the option to remove the trees and replace the steps should be taken forward.



Zoom Plan of Rennie Garden

03 MASTER PLAN

The options have been considered by the design team and discussed with the City of London officers. In light of the advantages and disadvantages of each of the options for the terracing, formal approval from the City of London is now sought to pursue the proposal to create new steps and modify the upper garden. The proposals within this pack have been submitted as part of a planning application to London Borough of Southwark in October 2012.