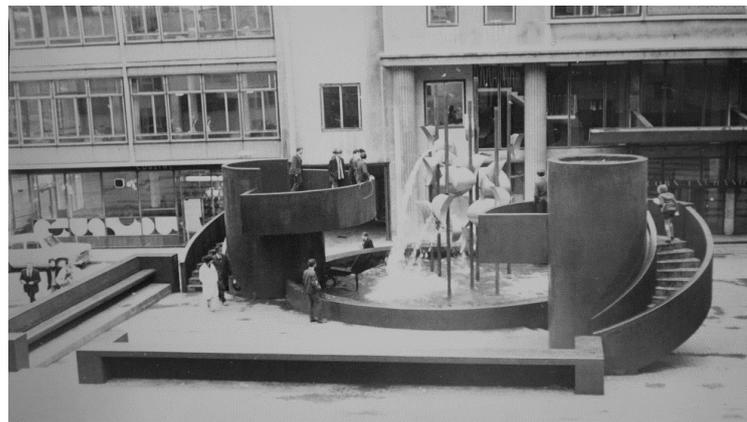
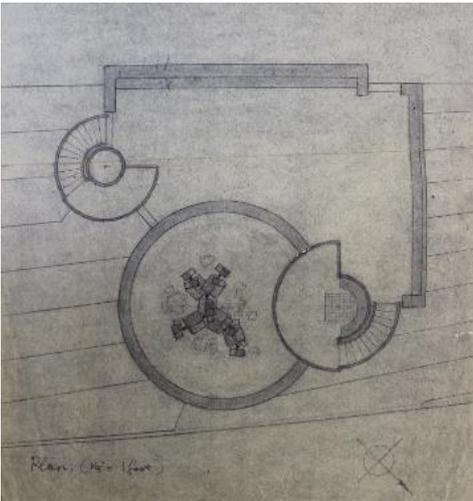


## APPENDIX B – PROPOSED NEW SEATING FOR THE GOREE PIAZZA

### B.1 Introduction

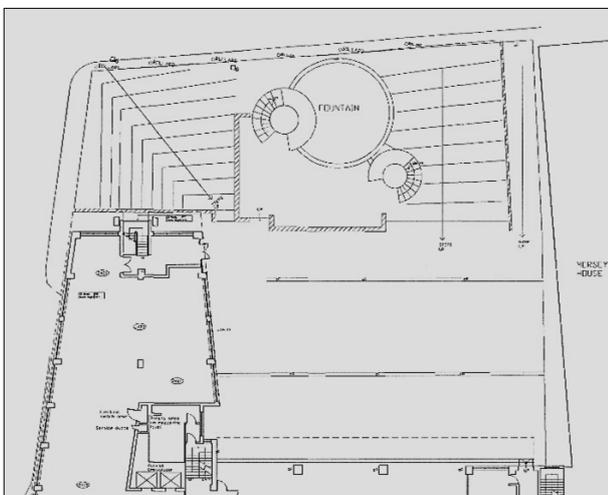
This appendix puts forward three options for reinstating the fixed seating in the Goree Piazza close to Richard Huws' fountain. The aim has been to suggest new seating proposals which would be appropriate to both the fountain and the surrounding piazza, in terms of their concept, design, scale, details and materials.<sup>1</sup> However, as with a previous paper suggesting ways of renovating the actual fountain, the exact detailing and dimensions of the suggested designs would need to be determined by a good qualified engineer or industrial designer.

When Richard Huws' designed his fountain complex in 1965, he provided two long 'seating walls' in the Goree Piazza for the office workers in Wilberforce and Mersey House to sit and eat their lunchtime sandwiches or simply relax while enjoying the sight and sounds of the fountain. Photographs of the fountain taken in 1967 soon after its completion show this seating to have been well used. The seating walls together with the walls of the receiving pool and two viewing platforms enclosed an open space which was two shallow steps lower than the main piazza.

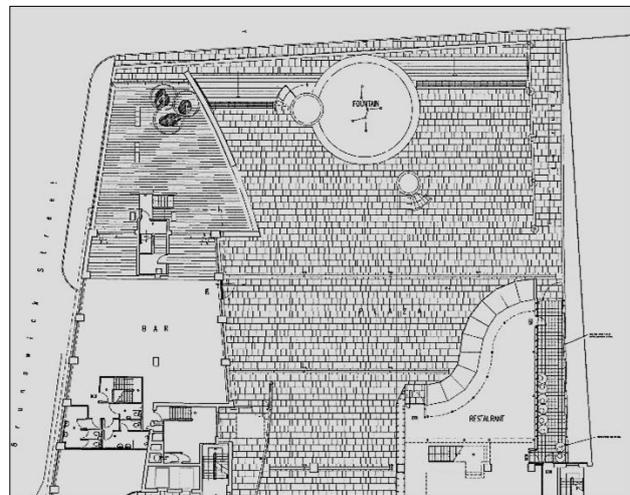


^ Richard Huws' original seating walls, 1967  
< Plan of fountain complex – RH 1965

In Brock Carmichael's and BCA Landscapes' award-winning conversion scheme of 1997-2000, however, a larger open terrace was created and the two original 'seating walls' were removed to extend the new terrace to the fountain pool and viewing platforms without interruption. To achieve this, the lower space originally enclosed by the seating walls, together with most of the areas above the original shallow access steps from Drury Lane, were built up to the level of the main piazza using lightweight void formers and steeper piazza steps constructed leading up from the narrow street.



Ground floor plan before re-landscaping



Ground floor plan after, with seating removed

Comparison between the steps to the larger viewing platform as shown in the 1967 photograph above and those shown in the screenshot from a 2017 YouTube video (below) indicate that the level of the space originally enclosed by the seating walls was raised in the 1997-2000 re-landscaping by slightly more than the height of the lowest step to the viewing platforms. As the original raised base to the seating was slightly higher than this lowest step, it appears that the removal of the seating also included this base, with the whole level in this lower

part of the piazza being taken back to the basic reinforced concrete slab above the underground carpark before being built up to the height of the main area with the void formers.



Platform steps in 1967



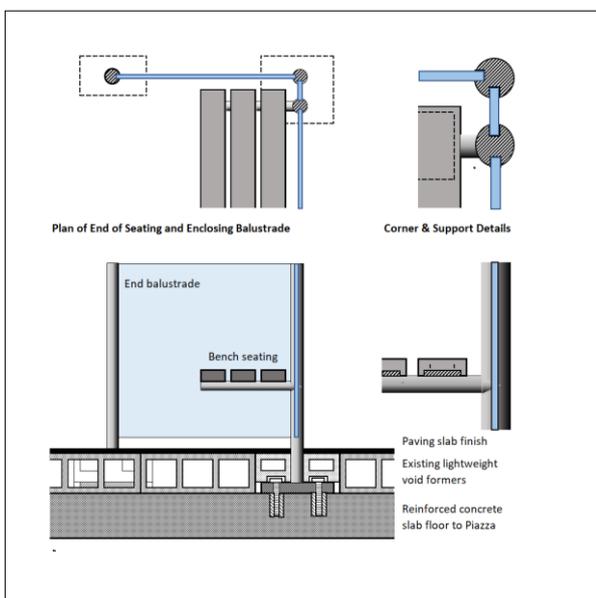
Foot of platform steps in 2017 after the re-landscaping

### B.2 Design of Seating – Option 1

For the benefit of the 3,500 HMRC office workers scheduled to occupy the nearby India Buildings later this year and other visitors, it is proposed that seating in the Goree Piazza be re-instated to again enable office workers and visitors to the fountain to sit and eat their lunch or to relax while enjoying its sights and sounds. While in the first option the seating is located in approximately the same place as in RH's original design and defines a similar separate space, to respect Brock Carmichael's wish for the terrace to extend to the fountain without interruption, it is proposed to design the seating such that visually it would still allow this to happen.

Instead of the solid concrete seating and dwarf walls of Richard Huws' original design, it is proposed to lessen the visual interruption by having two long low cantilevered benches each surrounded by a clear toughened glass balustrade. While apart from its general positioning and shape, the proposed style of seating would not replicate Richard Huws' original design it would nevertheless still respect the fountain complex. The bench seating would be supported, in the same manner as the fountain hoppers, on a horizontal bar welded to the main vertical supports and be both fabricated in stainless steel. The latter would also support the glass balustrades effectively forming the backrest to the seating, these in turn reflecting the nearby glass wall of the piazza restaurant.

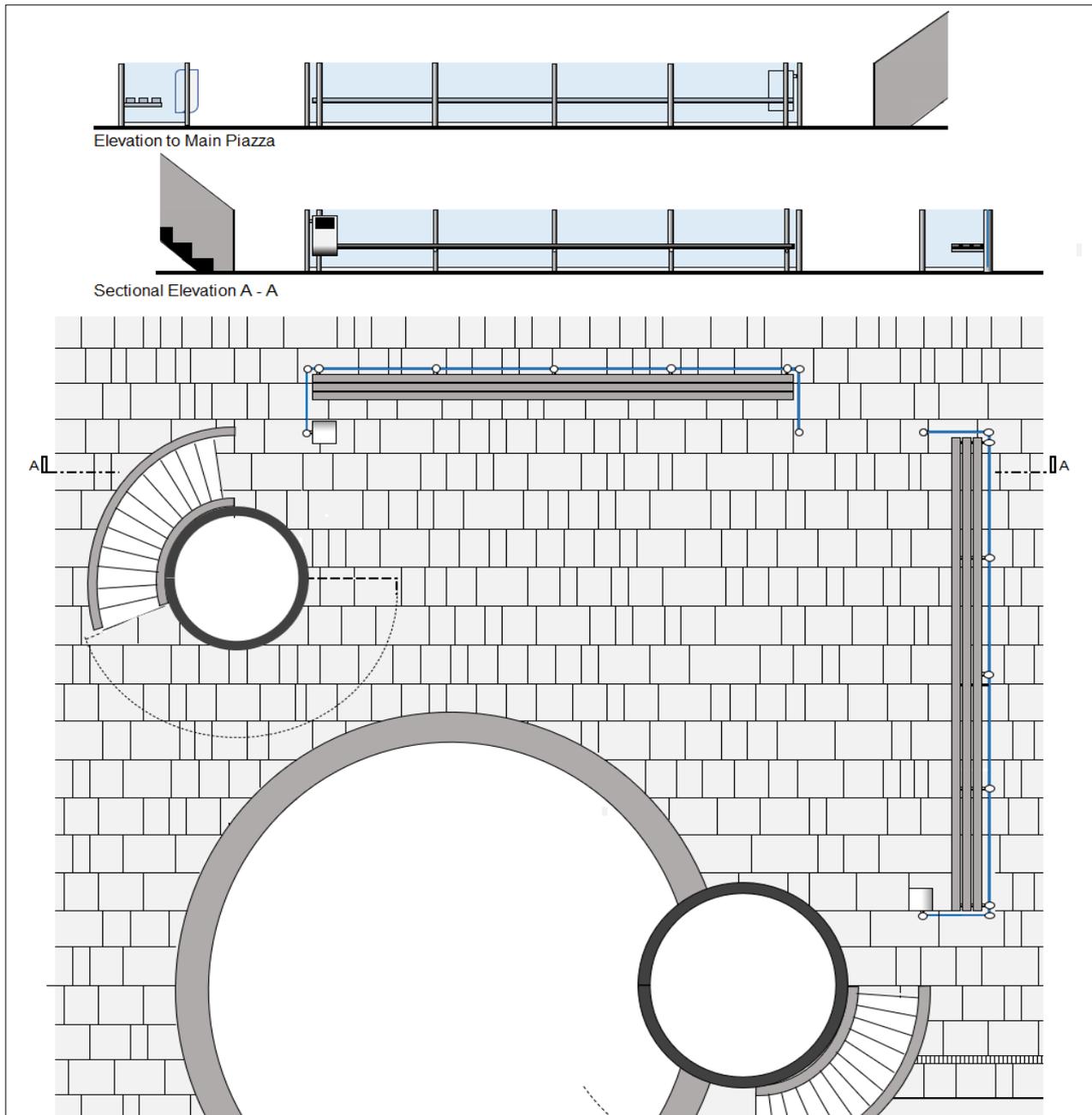
As shown diagrammatically in the figure below, the existing raised ground level over this part of the piazza would allow the fixing of the cantilevered seating and balustrade supports to be completely concealed. The horizontal fixing plates to each round vertical support would be bolted down to the reinforced concrete slab below the void formers which originally formed the floor of the piazza and ceiling of the underground carpark. The toughened glass panes of the balustrade would slide into gaskets fitted into slots in the sides of the vertical supports. The balustrade would be the same height as the bottom of the nearby stair wall/balustrade but would finish short of the existing paving slabs to avoid rubbish collecting under the seats and for ease of cleaning.



^ Suggested new piazza seating – option 1<sup>2</sup>

< Details of End Balustrade & Seating and Fixings

..As shown above in Richard Huws' original 1965 plan of the fountain complex and the 1967 photograph taken soon after its completion, each solid seating wall ended very close to the foot of one of the viewing platforms steps. This restricted access to the seating area to the passage between the smaller freestanding viewing platform and the receiving pool and to the gap between the two seating walls. However, the raising of the ground level above the lower enclosed area and above the original shallow steps leading up to this area has restricted the headroom below the smaller platform to little more than 6 feet<sup>3</sup>. Consequently, it is proposed that the two new seating benches should now end short of the foot of the platform steps. This would provide additional access to the seating area and viewing platforms at these two points and further lessen both the physical and visual interruption created by the new seating in the current piazza.



**Elevation, Sectional Elevation and Plan of Suggested Piazza Seating – Option 1**

### **B.3 Design of Seating – Option 2**

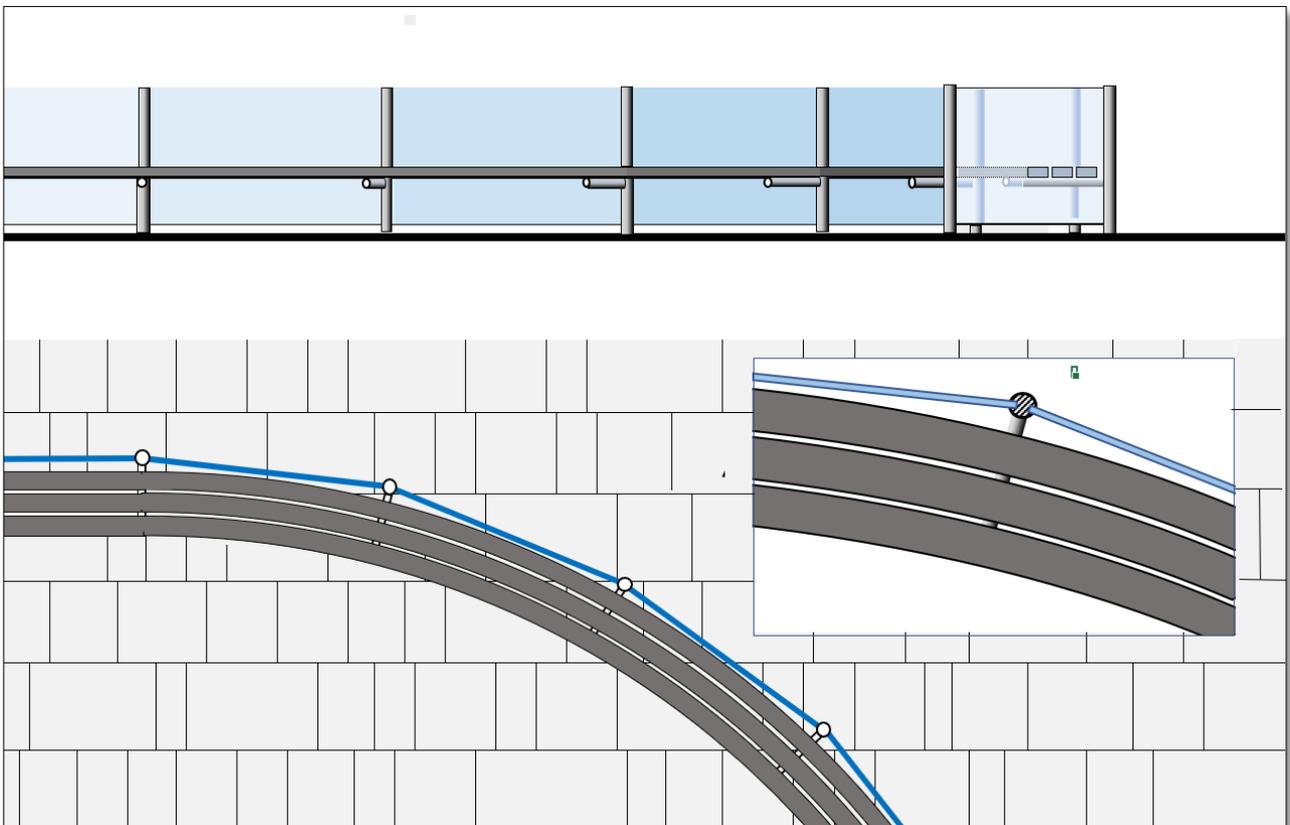
While using the same basic components as the first option, an alternative option would be to break away from Richard Huws' original rectilinear design for his two separate seating walls and have a single curved seating bench and faceted glass balustrade. This would arguably be more in keeping with the design of the current piazza as re-landscaped between 1997 and 2000. Particularly, the glass balustrade would more closely mirror the faceted glass of the curved restaurant wall in the opposite corner of the open space. This was designed by Brock-Carmichael as part of the 1997-2000 conversion scheme and is illustrated and mentioned, together with the fountain, in the definitive Pevsner Architectural Guide to Liverpool of 2004.



^ Facetted curved glass restaurant wall  
Suggested new seating in piazza – option 2 >

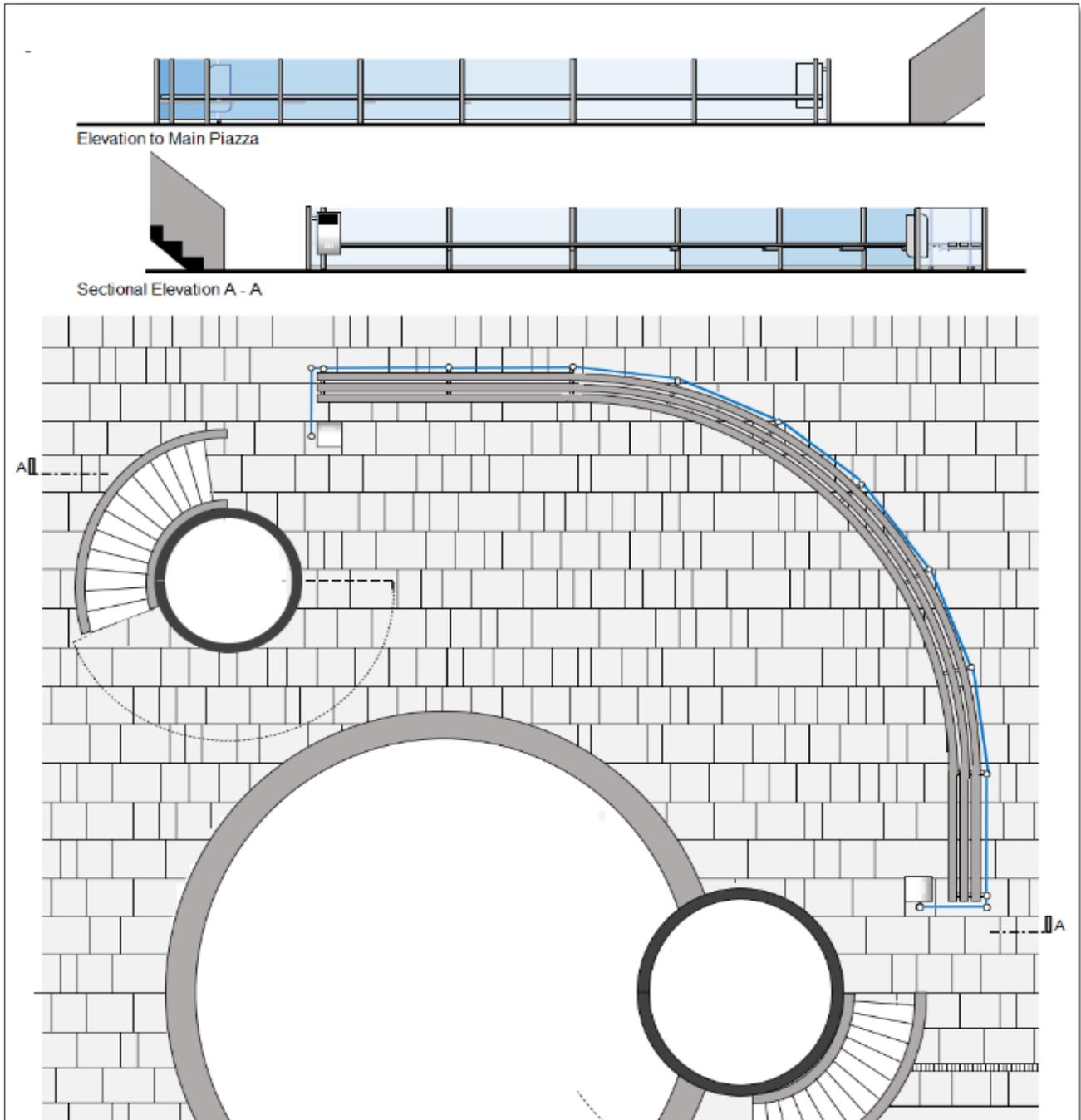


While this second option would present a greater physical barrier between the fountain and the main part of the piazza, it would not be any more visually obstructive than option 1. As with the latter, the long low bench would again effectively 'float' above the paved piazza, being cantilevered out from the generally widely spaced cylindrical vertical supports. The clear glass sheets spanning between these supports would again be unframed at the top and bottom to further lessen the visual interruption caused by the seating installation.



**Elevation and Plan of curved cantilevered bench and faceted clear glass 'balustrade'.**

Having a continuous bench reduces the number of access points to the seating area and the curved form of the seating also defines a smaller separate space than the first rectilinear option. However, as the seating is continuous, it still provides approximately the same total length of bench seating. Being generally closer to the receiving pool, the seating in Option 2 also provides a somewhat better and more direct view of the fountain than the first option.



### Elevation, Sectional Elevation and Plan of Suggested Piazza Seating – Option 2

The intention is to return the fountain complex to a darkish colour as originally specified by Richard Huws, and still favoured by its renovator, the Liverpool sculptor, Robin Riley<sup>4</sup>, specifically in order to again contrast with the cascading water. Consequently, for all options, it is proposed that the hardwood timber bench seating should be similarly stained an anthracite grey. To match the actual fountain, all of the horizontal seat and vertical supports would be fabricated in stainless steel or possibly bronze, while the panes forming the clear glazed balustrade would match the glazing of the wavy glass restaurant wall.

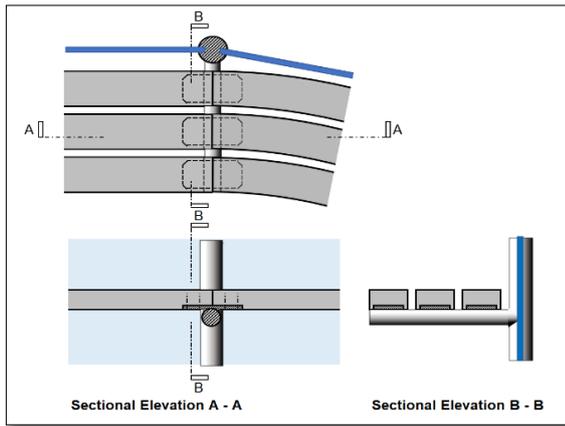
#### B.4 Design of Seating – Option 3

The third option for the design of the piazza seating is a modification of the second. In this option it is proposed that the curved bench seating and its back balustrade be split into two sections to provide, as with the first option, an access point to the seating area directly opposite the entrance to the piazza from the Strand. To maintain the overall curve of the seating, however, the glass returns at the central gap would be restricted to the width of the bench, or they could possibly be dispensed with altogether. It is not felt that having longer return balustrades here, with two further litter bins would be warranted.

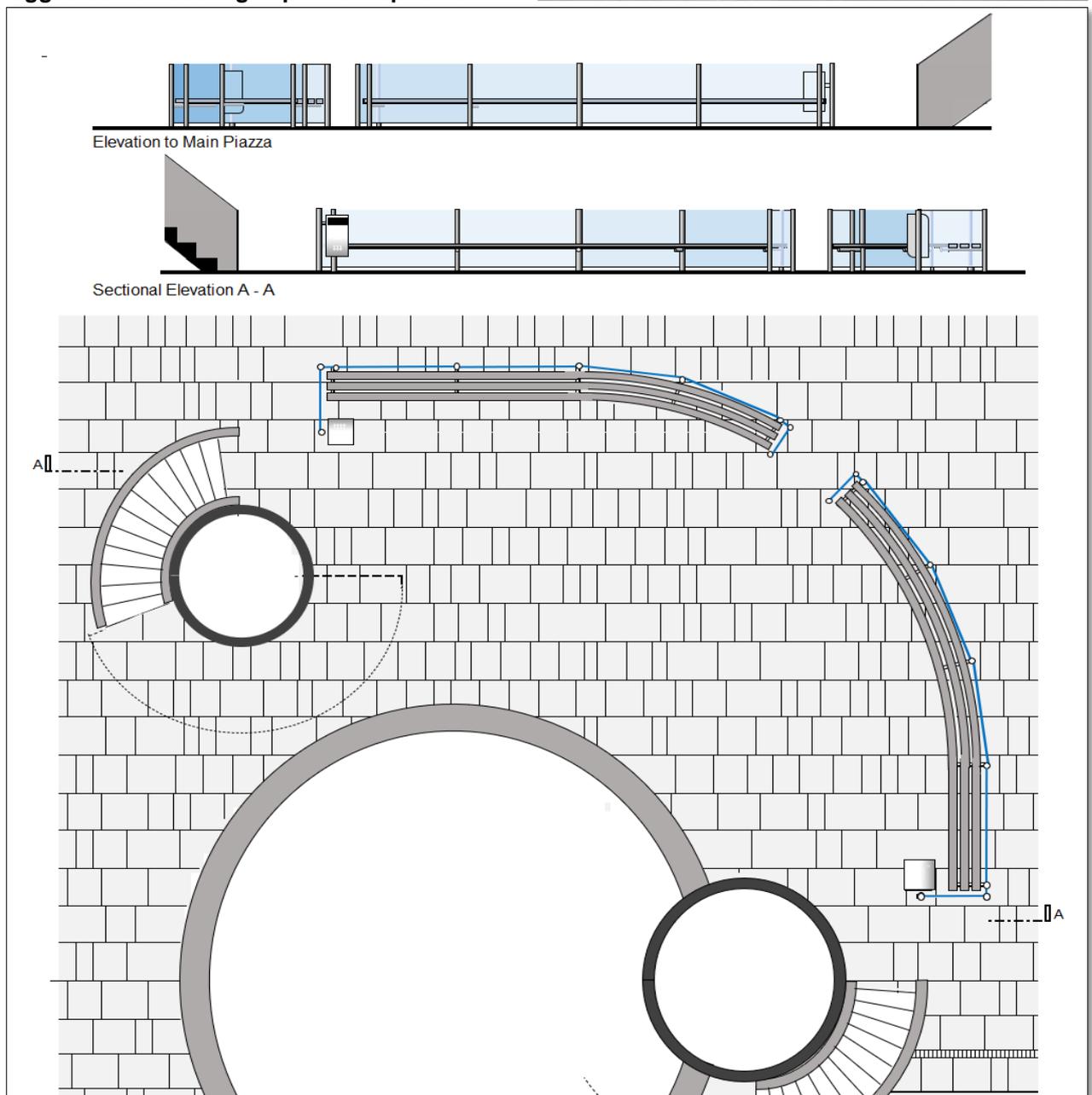
In all of the options, the seating slats/planks would be supported and joined together in the same way, regardless of whether they are straight or curved, by means of three rectangular metal plates welded to the top

of each horizontal supporting bar branching out from the main vertical support posts. These plates would be rebated into the underside of the planks to leave only the horizontal supports showing underneath the bench.

b



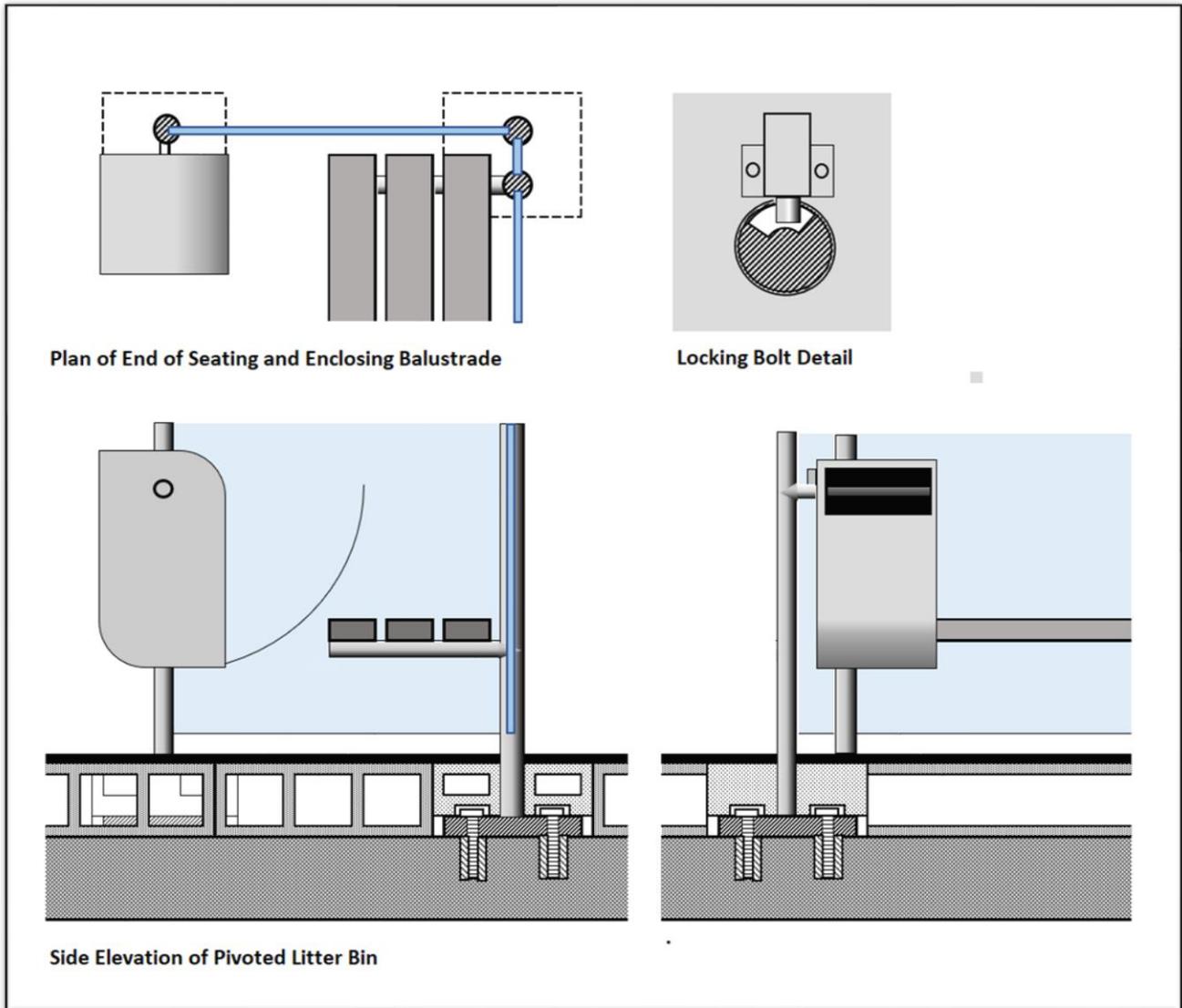
Plan & sectional elevation of seat fixings ^  
Suggested new seating in piazza – option 3 >



Elevation, Sectional Elevation and Plan of Suggested Piazza Seating – Option 3

## B.5 Litter Bins

All three of the design options could be enhanced both practically and possibly aesthetically by the provision of litter bins at the access/exit points to the seating area, fixed to the two vertical end supports closest to the steps of the viewing platforms. These would also be fabricated in stainless steel and reflect the design of the fountain hoppers, being pivoted for ease of both filling and emptying. As in the fountain, the horizontal supporting bar would support both sides of the bin and the whole assembly would be designed to be robust enough to withstand the occasional child swinging on the bin etc. The horizontal support would be positioned high enough in the bin so as not to interfere with the insertion of normal sized litter items or their fall to the bottom.



### Plan and Elevations of Suggested Pivoted Litter Bins

Each bin would include a small patio door type cylinder lock fixed to the inner side of the bin in which the retractable bolt fitted into a slot around the supporting axle. When locked, this would still allow the bin to tip slightly, particularly backwards to make the opening more accessible and shake down the litter. However, to tip forward to the extent needed to empty the bins, the lock restricting the amount of rotation would first need to be released thereby retracting the restraining bolt.

## B.6 Type and Number of Seating Components

Table 1 below compares the different types and number of components required by each seating design option. In the table, it is assumed that for ease of manufacture and installation that the stainless steel supporting posts would be screwed into or onto the steel fixing base plates, and in Option 2 and 3, that the seating could be designed such that all of the wider balustrade glazing sheets would be of equal length. It is further assumed that the timber slatted/planked seating would be manufactured in section no greater than two long balustrade sections in length.

Taking into consideration all of the design differences, it can be seen that Option 1 requires the least number of different types of components, at just ten and requires a total of 60 components of all types. In Option 2, having part of the seating curved and the balustrade faceted adds an additional 3 types of component, with two extra types of supporting post and one different type of seating plank being required. However, because this design has only two ends, corner posts and end balustrades, this Option requires the least number of total components of all types, at just 54.

Compared to Option 2 creating the gap in the centre of the curved seating for Option 3 requires a further 3 component types, that is end posts without litter bin supports, different width end glazing sheets and shorter curved timber plank sections. Consequently, this last option requires the most types of different component, at 16 and also has the greatest number of components of all types, at 63. However, were the narrow end balustrades dispensed with and an unfilled slot in the single verticals either side of the gap accepted, then the third option would require only one more component type than option 2 (1 balustrade long curved seating planks) and the same number of total components (54).

**Table 1: Type and Number of Seating and Balustrade Components**

<b>Seating and balustrade components</b>	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>
Single fixing base plates (for 1 support post)	10	10	10
Corner fixing base plates (for 2 support posts)	4	2	4
End posts (1 glazing slot) without litter bin support	2	0	2
End posts (1 glazing slot) with litter bin support	2	2	2
Corner posts (2 glazing slots at 90°)	4	2	4
Intermediate posts with branch (2 glazing slots at 180°)	10	3	3
Intermediate posts with branch (2 slots, one angled)	0	2	4
Intermediate posts with branch (2 slots, both angled)	0	5	3
Glazing sheets for end balustrades	4	2	2
Glazing sheets for end balustrades at central gap	0	0	2
Narrow glazing sheets at 'corner' posts	4	2	4
Wide glazing sheets between intermediate posts	8	9	8
Straight timber seating planks (2 balustrades long)	12	3	3
Straight timber seating planks (1 balustrade long)	0	3	3
Curved timber seating planks (2 balustrades long)	0	9	6
Curved timber seating planks (1 balustrade long)	0	0	3
<b>Number of different types of component needed</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Total number of components needed of all types</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>63</b>

## **B.7 Conclusions**

For the revitalisation of the piazza, there is a very strong case for re-instating the fixed seating close to Richard Huws' fountain complex to provide a place for office workers and visitors, particularly the elderly, to sit, eat and relax and contemplate the sights and sounds of the fountain at leisure. The seating could also be used at the occasional promotional events which are being planned for the piazza to commemorate notable anniversaries of both the fountain and its designer<sup>5</sup>.

Option 1 has the advantage of simplicity and, importantly, is likely to be the least expensive by a significant margin, having the least number of components types and only one straight actual seating component. Being straight, it is likely to be the simplest to install, generally requiring only a straight line of paving slabs to be taken up and modified. It fully respects Richard Huws' original design for the seating, being located approximately in the same position, taking a similar form, albeit constructed largely in the materials of the actual fountain rather than, as originally, of the pool and viewing platforms, and enclosing a very similar space in terms of its size and shape.

As in the original design, option 1 maintains a main access to the seating area and fountain directly opposite the entrance to the piazza from the Strand. This is likely to be the main route for tourists, visiting the fountain from the nearby Pier Head, Museum of Liverpool and Albert Docks, although most office workers using the piazza in their breaks will generally still be approaching the fountain via Drury Lane. However, arguably the original rectilinear design of the two separate straight seating walls is not particularly in keeping with the curved forms of the current piazza. The design would restrict the access to the main piazza and entrance to the Etsu Japanese restaurant and its garden from Drury Lane, via the steps to the right of the fountain complex, to probably little more than 1.5 metres wide at its narrowest point.

Option 2 would not respect Richard Huws' original seating layout, but would more closely mirror the faceted curved glass restaurant wall and complement the adjacent curved garden wall of the Japanese restaurant resulting from the conversion of Wilberforce House and re-landscaping of 1997-2000. The seating also generally provides a closer and more direct view of the fountain. However, despite having a smaller total number of components, it would almost certainly be more expensive than the first option having more component types and curved seating which would be more difficult to manufacture and install. Having fewer access points than option 1 and, particularly, as it defines a smaller separate space, this seating may also not be as suitable for use at the occasional events planned to take place at the fountain.

The latter disadvantage also applies to option 3, but this is generally more practical than the second option in having, like option 1, an access point to the fountain directly opposite the entrance to the piazza from the Strand. Like the second option, the curved forms is also likely to make the seating more interesting when viewed from the apartments above and the two shorter seating lengths enclosed on three sides by the glass balustrades, would as in the first option, probably make the seating more inviting to use than the one long continuous bench seat of option 2. In having two separate enclosed benches, this third option is also somewhat closer to Richard Huws original design than the second option.

With the curved seating being no longer continuous, however, arguably it does not mirror the glass wall of the restaurant or reflect the long curved forms of the current piazza to quite the same extent. Being curved and having both the largest number of different types of component and total number of components, it would also undoubtedly be the most expensive to manufacture and install of the three options. However, simply dispensing with the end balustrades either side of the central gap, the cost could be reduced to one very similar to that of the second option.

Overall, the choice appears to lie between the first and third options, both having clear advantages and disadvantages with respect to their historical or current context, practicality and cost.

Richard Moore

May 2020

---

<sup>1</sup>In formulating the three design proposals and writing this paper, I am indebted to the advice and very constructive comments of four of my contemporaries at the Liverpool School of Architecture, Peter and Sue Carmichael, Stewart Denham and Derek M Hudson.

<sup>2</sup> Acknowledgements are due to Tony Folan, a founding member of the Friends of the Piazza Fountain, for the high level photograph of the fountain on which each seating options has been superimposed by the author.

<sup>3</sup> Lane, Sheila (2019), *'Re Revised Historical Report'*, email from the other founding member of the Friends of the Piazza Fountain, 7 December 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Riley, Robin (2019), Telephone call, in response to a letter sent to the sculptor's Liverpool address; call received 23 November 2019. Without prompting, Robin Riley complained of the fountain's existing colour scheme and commented that to contrast with the cascading water it needed to be returned to a dark colour, although not necessarily black.

<sup>5</sup> The first such event was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020 to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the designer's, Richard Huws, death. See Proctor, Gerry (2020), *First Cultural Event at Fountain*, Engage Liverpool, 28 February 2020.