

Appendix B

Heritage Impact Assessment (Updated) May 13, 2024



ORIGINAL REPORT

Heritage Impact Assessment (Updated)

Blakeney Bridge
Mississippi Mills, ON

Prepared For

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Submitted By

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Executive Summary

Blakeney Bridge) is a one-lane bridge crossing the Mississippi (Map 1) near the village of Blakeney (Map 1, Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 33) in the amalgamated municipal of Mississippi Mills. The bridge was constructed in 1915 to replace an older bridge erected in the 1830s (Figure 44). The current bridge has a concrete substructure (piers and abutment walls), rigid frame steel and concrete superstructure, and plain steel barrier walls/railings. Following numerous studies concerning its condition and traffic limitations, Lanark County has plans to replace Blakeney Bridge with a two-lane modular steel bridge (Plan 1, Plan 2, Plan 3, Plan 4 and Plan 5).

The author¹ of this HIA, Julie Harris, CAHP, was originally engaged by Lanark County in fall 2022 to conduct a cultural heritage study for a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) for the project to rehabilitate or replace Blakeney Bridge. Based on the results of the *Screening for Built Heritage Resources and Cultural Heritage Landscapes, Heritage Bridge Evaluation for Municipal Class EA (MCEA) Process*, the need for a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) was identified. The CHER determined that the Blakeney Bridge is a Built Heritage Resource of cultural heritage value or interest, which indicated that a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was also needed to complete cultural heritage studies for the MCEA.

As discussed in the HIA, the replacement of Blakeney Bridge by a proposed modular two-lane bridge continues the use of this historic crossing over the Mississippi River with a pragmatic engineering solution without intruding on the picturesque qualities of its river setting. The HIA recommends the following mitigation measures to conserve the bridge's heritage value as an historic element in the community. The recommendations recognize that the crossing and its history, more than the bridge itself, is of heritage value. Specifically, the HIA recommends that:

- A full photographic record of the bridge prior to its dismantling should be undertaken for deposit with Archives Lanark.
- All work should be planned to allow full and safe use of Blakeney Park during as much of the construction phase (June to December 2024) as possible.
- Historic interpretation panels should be added to Blakeney Park to tell the story of the history of Blakeney Bridge.

As noted in the conclusion to this HIA report, because Lanark County has agreed to follow these recommendations, no further action is required to address cultural heritage requirements.

¹ The heritage consultant for the Blakeney Bridge project is Julie Harris, Senior Architectural Historian and Heritage Planner, Matrix Heritage. Ms. Harris is a Member of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals (CAHP). She has been the project lead and primary author of approximately 200 heritage assessments (for a total of approximately 1,000 structures) of historic buildings, engineering works and landscapes for federal, provincial, municipal and private clients.

Project Personnel**Heritage Study Personnel**

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Property Information

Municipality: Mississippi Mills

Address: 138 Blakeney Road (at crossing of the Mississippi River); Lot 26, Concession IX, Township of Ramsay, County of Lanark (just west of Blakeney, 8 km downstream from Almonte and 11 km upstream from Pakenham), 139 Blakeney Road, Mississippi Mills

Date of Construction: 1915 (replacing an 1830s bridge)

Date of Modifications: [various, to 2017]

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1.0 Introduction

Blakeney Bridge is a one-lane bridge crossing the Mississippi River near the village of Blakeney in the amalgamated municipal of Mississippi Mills (Map 1, Figure 1 and Figure 2). The bridge was constructed in 1915 to replace an older bridge originally erected in the 1830s (Figure 44). The current bridge features a concrete substructure (piers and abutment walls), a rigid-frame steel and concrete superstructure, and plain steel barrier walls/railings. In spring 2022, an enhanced inspection of the Blakeney Bridge determined that deterioration of the bridge was accelerating and that the bridge should be replaced as soon as possible.²

Lanark County plans to replace Blakeney Bridge with a new two-lane modular steel bridge (Plan 1). As part of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) for the Blakeney Bridge project, this Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was written following a heritage assessment of the bridge through a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) completed in 2022. The CHER determined that the bridge was of cultural heritage value.

The purpose of the HIA is to consider potential negative and positive impacts resulting from proposed work in 2024 to replace the Blakeney Bridge in the Municipality of Mississippi Mills, ON, and to consider mitigation to address negative effects. Areas of potential impact are outlined in *Ontario Heritage Tool Kit InfoSheet #5: Heritage Impact Assessments and Conservation Plans* (Ministry of Tourism and Culture 2006).

Because the option of replacing Blakeney Bridge with a two-lane modular bridge is the only option presented and no studies support retention of the existing bridge, the HIA addresses this option only.

2.0 Site Conditions

Blakeney Bridge consists of three separate structures spanning the Mississippi River via two islands (Figure 1). The superstructure is made up of twin steel girders with steel floor beams and stringers. The existing crossing uses the same configuration as the original 1830s timber crossing (Figure 44), which was integrated into the village of Blakeney and its water-powered mills.

The extant bridge, which has been modified several times to stabilize the structure and address traffic requirements, features a plain concrete substructure (piers, retaining walls and abutment walls), a rigid-frame steel and concrete superstructure, and steel barrier walls and railings (Figure 1). One single span and two two-span bridges make up the crossing with a single-lane-wide deck. The east bridge has a single span of 13.1 m. The west bridge has two spans totalling 26.8 m. The middle bridge has two spans totalling 26.5 m.

The riverbanks in the study area are heavily treed. The river itself is very picturesque due to rapids that form just downstream from the bridge. The bridge is nestled between the banks and sits on piers that are connected to an island and rock outcroppings in the river. The west end of the bridge abuts Blakeney Rapids Park (Figure 55). Mississippi Mills describes the park as follows:

² Memo to Lanark County, “Blakeney Bridge History,” [Fall 2022].

A pleasant network of trails and footbridges follows the course of the Mississippi as it rushes through a series of rapids and falls at Blakeney. In early spring it's a popular destination for whitewater kayakers, as it reaches Class IV in the degree of difficulty. Today the original beauty of the area is complimented with trails and small bridges contributed by volunteers of the Almonte Fish & Game Association. Visitors and locals enjoy swimming, fishing kayaking, walking and having picnics along the river while up on the hill residents appreciate the quiet atmosphere of the hamlet.³

The park is managed by the Almonte Fish and Game Association, a local volunteer organization that has dedicated time and funds to maintaining the park's trails, bridges, memorial benches, and picnic areas.⁴ The bridge, park and access to the river attract local and regional visitors throughout the paddling season.

3.0 Cultural Heritage Value

The heritage value of Blakeney Bridge and its landscape was assessed in 2022 by a qualified heritage consultant (Julie Harris, C.A.H.P.).⁵ It was determined through the application of the evaluation criteria from Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* (which is also the criteria set required for the MCEA) that the bridge is a Cultural Heritage Resource.

3.1 Statement of Cultural Heritage Value for the Blakeney Bridge

The following Statement of Cultural Heritage Value was prepared in 2022 and remains valid for the HIA in 2024. It was determined through the application of the Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act that Blakeney Bridge is of cultural heritage value for Historical/Associative and Contextual reasons.

Heritage Values

Blakeney Bridge was constructed in 1915 to cross the Mississippi River on the same site as a timber bridge built at Blakeney in the 1830s. The extant bridge has historical/associative and contextual values related to the history of Blakeney and its setting.

Blakeney Bridge is of historical and associative value because it is located on the same footprint as the first bridge dating from the 1830s. The one-lane bridge served to facilitate travel and communications for over 100 years, until larger and heavier local traffic became a concern. Its modest appearance is consistent with its history as a rural bridge that was primarily for local use.

³ Mississippi Mills, "Trails and Walks," online at www.mississippimills.ca/en/explore-and-play/trails-and-walks.aspx.

⁴ Heather Atkinson, "Blakeney Rapids Park After Dark," *The Millstone*, 7 July 2021, online at <https://millstonenews.com/blakeney-park-after-dark/>.

⁵ Julie Harris, Contentworks Inc. "Draft cultural Heritage Evaluation Report and Heritage Impact Assessment, Blakeney Bridge, Mississippi Mills, Ontario," submitted to Lanark County, 3 January 2023.

Its low profile and use of the natural formation of rock islands are key factors in creating a picturesque composition when approaching Blakeney Bridge from the road at either end or from the west shore of the Mississippi River.

Description of Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of Blakeney Bridge are:

- Its position on the Mississippi River on the site of the original 1830s bridge
- The lightness of its design, which provides a clear view of the Canadian Shield landscape and the rapids of the Mississippi River.

4.0 Blakeney Bridge Upgrading/Replacement Options

4.1 Background

Blakeney Bridge was the subject of substantial engineering studies in 1975, 1995, 2000 and 2017 to address deficiencies and increase its operational life. In 2000, a rehabilitation project was completed to keep the bridge in serviceable condition. In 2017, a report by Jewell Engineering found the bridge to require significant work. Alternatives examined in 2017 were:

1. Major rehabilitation of the bridge.
2. Complete superstructure replacements with substructure modifications.
3. Complete single lane bridge replacements.
4. Complete two-lane bridge replacements.
5. Superstructure and three abutment replacements.

Consistently, the preferred option by consultants and the County was replacement.

4.2 Public Comments on Options (2022)

Three options (single-lane, slightly wider single-lane, and two-lane) for a new modular bridge was presented at the Public Open House held in Almonte on 1 December 2022 that was well-attended by individuals from Blakeney, Pakenham and Almonte. The heritage consultant preparing this HIA and the 2022 CHER was present.

Some of the open house participants preferred an option that would retain and rehabilitate the existing bridge because they appreciated the cultural heritage value and historic appearance of the Blakeney Bridge. Most participants, however, preferred a replacement option that could accommodate larger vehicles and agricultural equipment, while also providing a safer crossing for active transportation users (pedestrians, and cyclists). One participant stated that the replacement option should take a similar approach to the 1915 bridge by representing a pragmatic design appropriate to a minor road and rural setting.

4.3 Selected Option

Since 2022, Lanark County has investigated options for replacing Blakeney Bridge. The preferred option is a two-lane, modular, steel bridge following a similar alignment as the current bridge across islands in the river (Plan 1, Plan 2, Plan 3, Plan 4 and Plan 5).⁶

The Blakeney Bridge will be longer than, but similar in design to, the Bolingbroke bridge shown in Figure 66. The configuration and alignment of the bridge will be adapted to allow for the widening of the bridge roadway from 4.9 m to 7.99 m and to reduce the sharpness of the curve along Blakeney Road at the west end of the bridge (Plan 3). Nonetheless, the new alignment remains very close to the alignment of the current and older versions of the Blakeney Bridge.

The proposed bridge will have two roadways and a 1.5-1.6 m path on the north (downstream) side of the bridge, separated by flexible bollards in the summertime only. From west to east, the crossing includes: a curved approach along Blakeney Road; a modular bridge 27.7 m in length; a short, slightly curved and elevated road section of ~15 m on the rock island; a second modular bridge of 27.7 m; a pier set on the small east island; and a connecting third bridge of 18.5 m.

The following elements will be visible in views of the new Blakeney Bridge. The three-tube steel railings fronted by the modular bridge steel trusses, the curved concrete retaining walls supporting the approach to the bridge and the road section on the island, and rip rap used on the upstream areas where required.

5.0 Assessing Impacts

5.1 Categories of Impacts

Areas of potential impact are outlined in *Ontario Heritage Tool Kit InfoSheet #5: Heritage Impact Assessments and Conservation Plans* (Ministry of Tourism and Culture 2006). Potential impacts include direct and indirect impacts. The potential impacts pertinent to the Blakeney Bridge project are listed below.

Direct impacts:

- Destruction of any, or part of any, significant heritage attributes or features
- Alteration that is not sympathetic, or is incompatible, with the historic fabric and appearance.

Indirect impacts:

- Shadows created that alter the appearance of a heritage attribute or change the viability of a natural feature or plantings
- Isolation of a heritage attribute from its surrounding environment, context or a significant relationship

⁶ Lanark County, "Blakeney Bridge Report #PW-26-2022," prepared for the Lanark County Public Works Committee, 26 October 2022.

- Direct or indirect obstruction of significant views or vistas within, from, or of built and natural features
- A change in land use such as rezoning a battlefield from open space to residential use, allowing new development or site alteration to fill in the formerly open spaces
- Land disturbances such as a change in grade that alters soils, and drainage patterns that adversely affect an archaeological resource.

The *InfoSheet* also provides direction on mitigation and avoidance. Methods of minimizing or avoiding a negative impact on a cultural heritage resource include, but are not limited to:

- Alternative development approaches
- Isolating development and site alteration from significant built and natural features and vistas
- Design guidelines that harmonize mass, setback, setting, and materials
- Limiting height and density
- Allowing only compatible infill and additions
- Reversible alterations
- Buffer zones, site plan control, and other planning mechanisms

5.2 Relevant Potential Impacts on Heritage Value and Attributes – Summary Table

<p>Direct Impacts from the removal and replacement of Blakeney Bridge</p>	<p>Type: Destruction of any, or part of any, significant heritage attributes or features; and alteration that is not sympathetic, or is incompatible, with the historic fabric and appearance.</p> <p>Comments: Blakeney Bridge will be replaced on the same site as the existing bridge, which is just upstream from Blakeney Rapids and Blakeney Park.</p> <p>Level of impact: Low. The bridge will occupy the same location, albeit with a wider footprint and a curve on the island portion, but the bridge will continue to cross the Mississippi River over the set of small islands with a light and low profile.</p> <p>Mitigation: A full photographic record of extant Blakeney Bridge prior to its dismantling should be undertaken. The files should be deposited with Archives Lanark in a format preferred by the archives. Historic interpretation panels could be added to Blakeney Park to tell the story of the history of Blakeney Bridge.</p>
<p>Pertinent Indirect Impacts</p>	<p>Type: Isolation of a heritage attribute from its surrounding environment, context or a significant relationship</p> <p>Comments: The replacement of a 107-year-old bridge with a contemporary bridge (age and design) will change the character and views of the setting, which consists of the bridge, the rapids and the park.</p> <p>Level of Impact: Medium. The direct historical connections between Blakeney Bridge and the rich history of the village of Blakeney will be obscured.</p> <p>Mitigation: 1) All work should be planned to allow full and safe use of Blakeney Park during as much of the construction phase as possible. 2) The existing interpretation panel at Blakeney Park should be supplemented with a panel about the history of the crossing, its bridges, and the village of Blakeney.</p>

Table 4: Heritage Impacts and Mitigations from the Replacement of the Blakeney Bridge

6.0 Recommendations

The replacement of Blakeney Bridge by a proposed modular two-lane bridge continues the use of this historic crossing over the Mississippi River with an engineering work that follows its predecessors in being a pragmatic solution for its location without intruding significantly on the picturesque qualities of its setting.

The HIA recommends the following mitigation measures to conserve the bridge's heritage value and honour the resilience of the community of Blakeney that has long shown how the bridge's history is connected to the history and identity of the community.

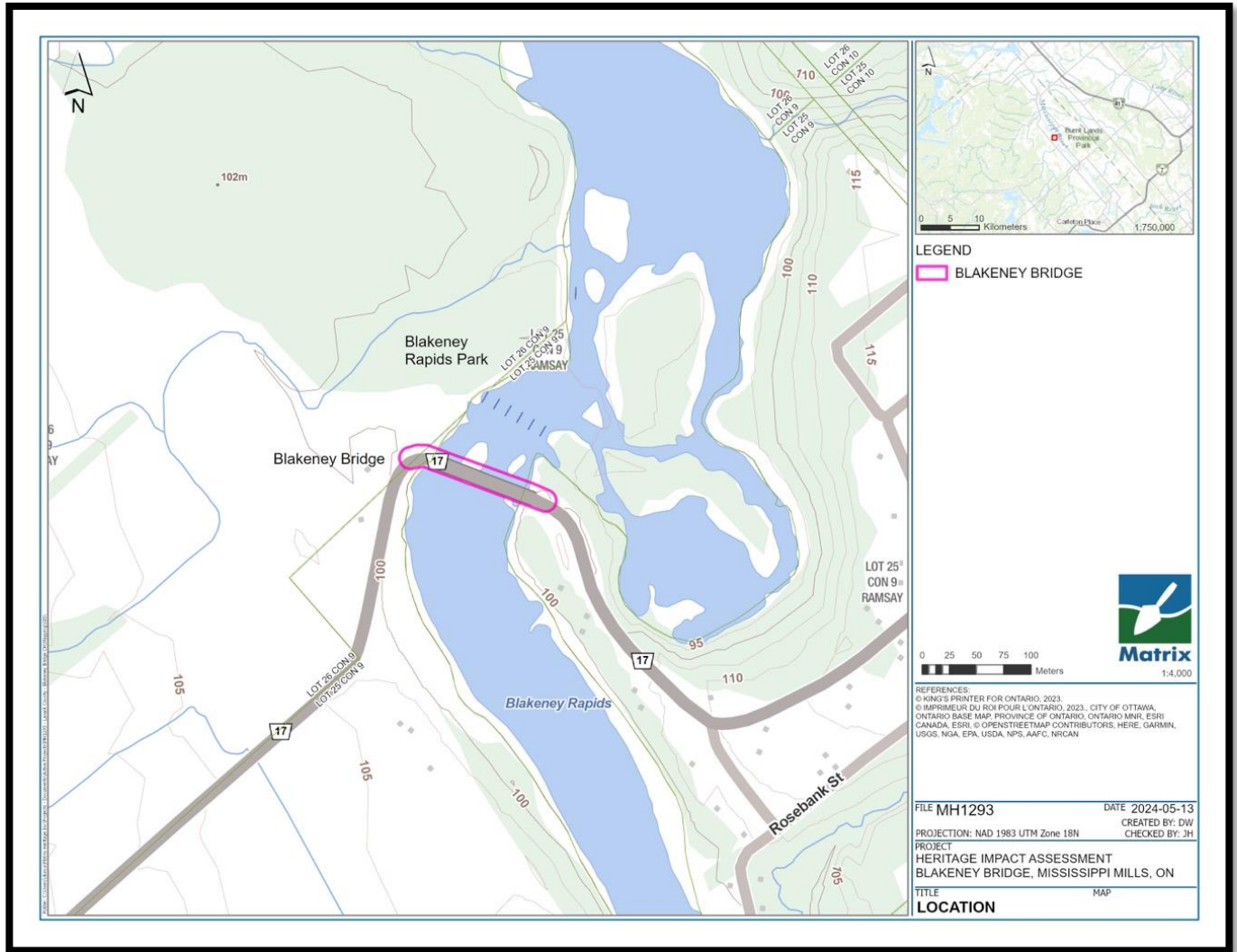
Specifically, the HIA recommends that:

- A full photographic record of the bridge prior to its dismantling should be undertaken for deposit with Archives Lanark.
- All work should be planned to allow full and safe use of Blakeney Park during as much of the construction phase (June to December 2024) as possible.
- Historic interpretation panels could be added to Blakeney Park to tell the story of the history of Blakeney Bridge.

7.0 Conclusion

Blakeney Bridge was assessed under the heritage evaluation criteria of 'Ontario Regulation 9/06' as being of heritage value for Historical/Associative and Contextual reasons. Since the bridge needs to be replaced, mitigation measures are focused on the value of the crossing historically and its surroundings (context.) Even with the replacement of the Blakeney Bridge, its history can be reflected and appreciated by means of interpretation and by the new bridge as an engineering work, which, like its predecessors, is pragmatic solution that is respectful of its setting. Because Lanark County has agreed to follow recommendations from the HIA listed here, no further action is required with respect to address cultural heritage requirements.

8.0 **Map**



Map 1: Blakeney Bridge Study Area. Credit: Matrix Heritage, 2024.

9.0 Figures



Figure 1: Looking northeast from the shore of the Mississippi River to Blakeney Bridge. Source: Contentworks, 1 November 2022.



Figure 2: View of the upstream (south) side of the Blakeney Bridge looking from the west side. Source: Matrix Heritage.



Figure 33: Aerial view of Blakeney Rapids Park and the islands of the Mississippi Rapids, looking south (upstream.) The west portion of Blakeney Bridge is marked by an arrow added to the image. Source: Mississippi Mills website, no date.



Figure 44: Timber bridge at Blakeney, [1900], looking towards the south (upstream) side of the bridge. Source: Ramsay Women's Institute, *Tweedsmuir History Book 7*, accessed online at http://images.ourontario.ca/Partners/FWIO/FWIO003203526_0040p.pdf.

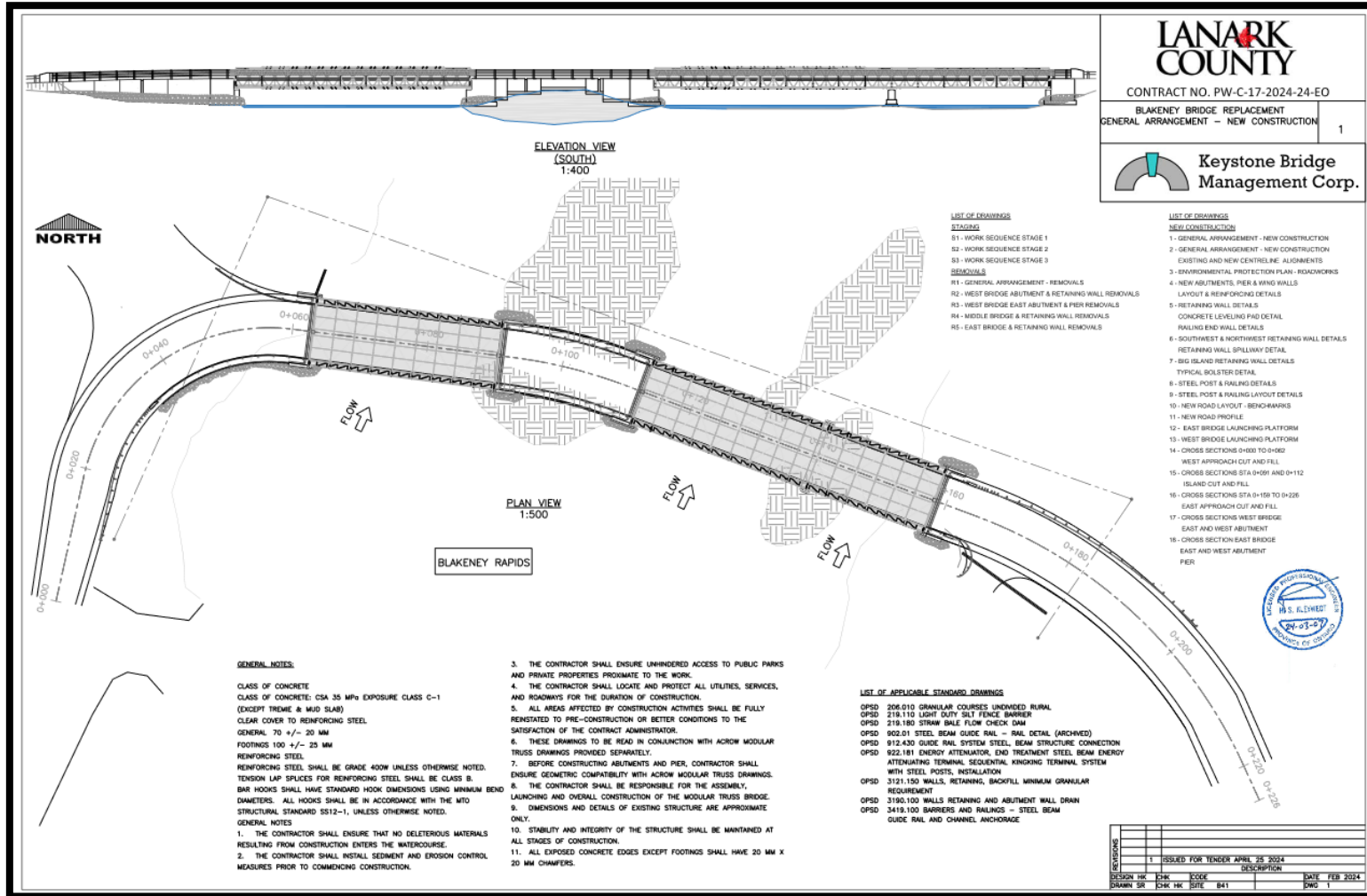


Figure 55: Blakeney Rapids Park, November 2022. Source: Matrix Heritage.

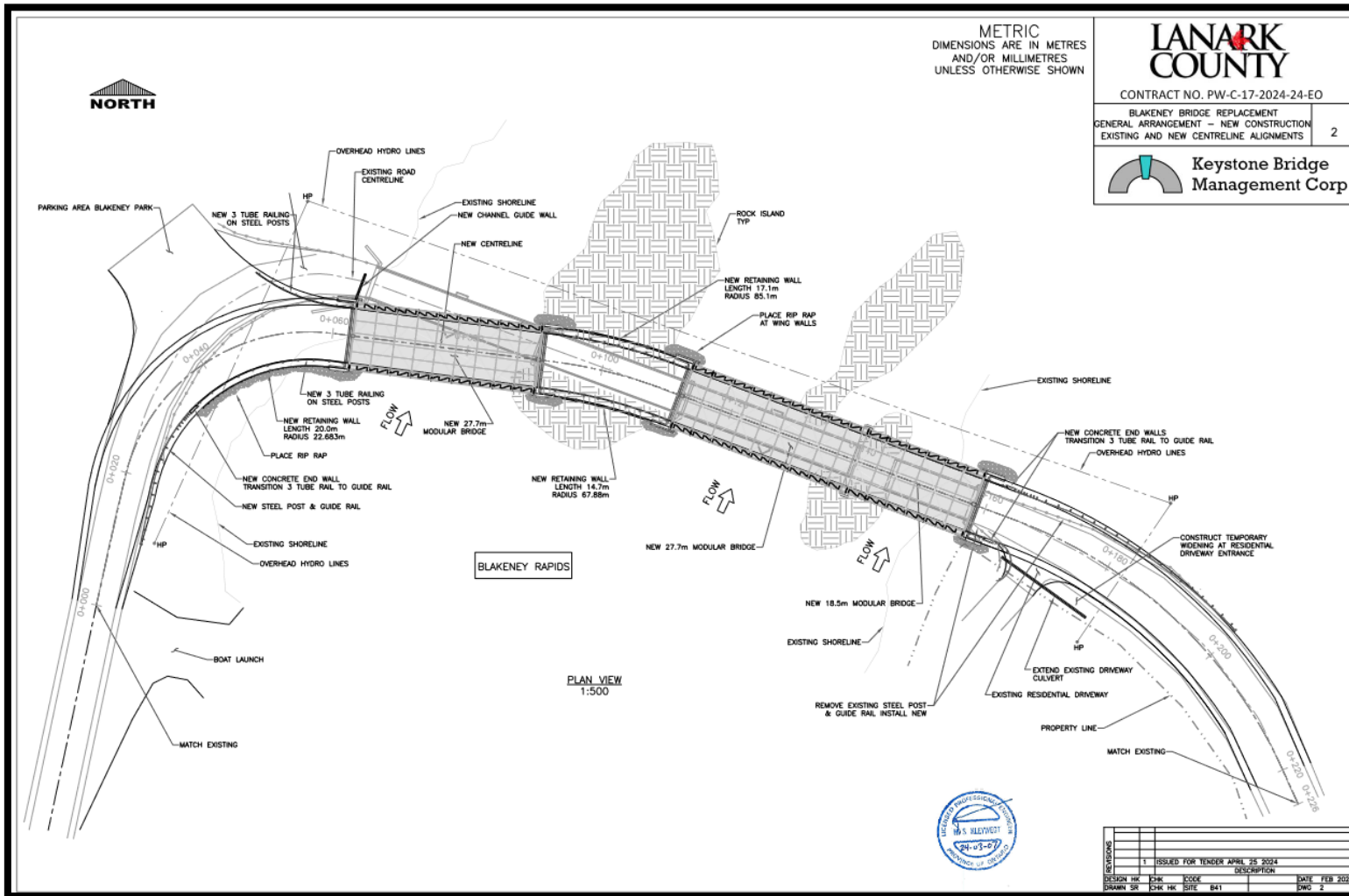


Figure 66: Bolingbroke Bridge, Tay Valley, completed in 2021. The bridge will have a very similar appearance to this bridge, but with three rails instead of two on the railings (arrow). Source: Lanark County, “Blakeney Bridge Report #PW-26-2022,” prepared for the Lanark County Public Works Committee, 26 October 2022.

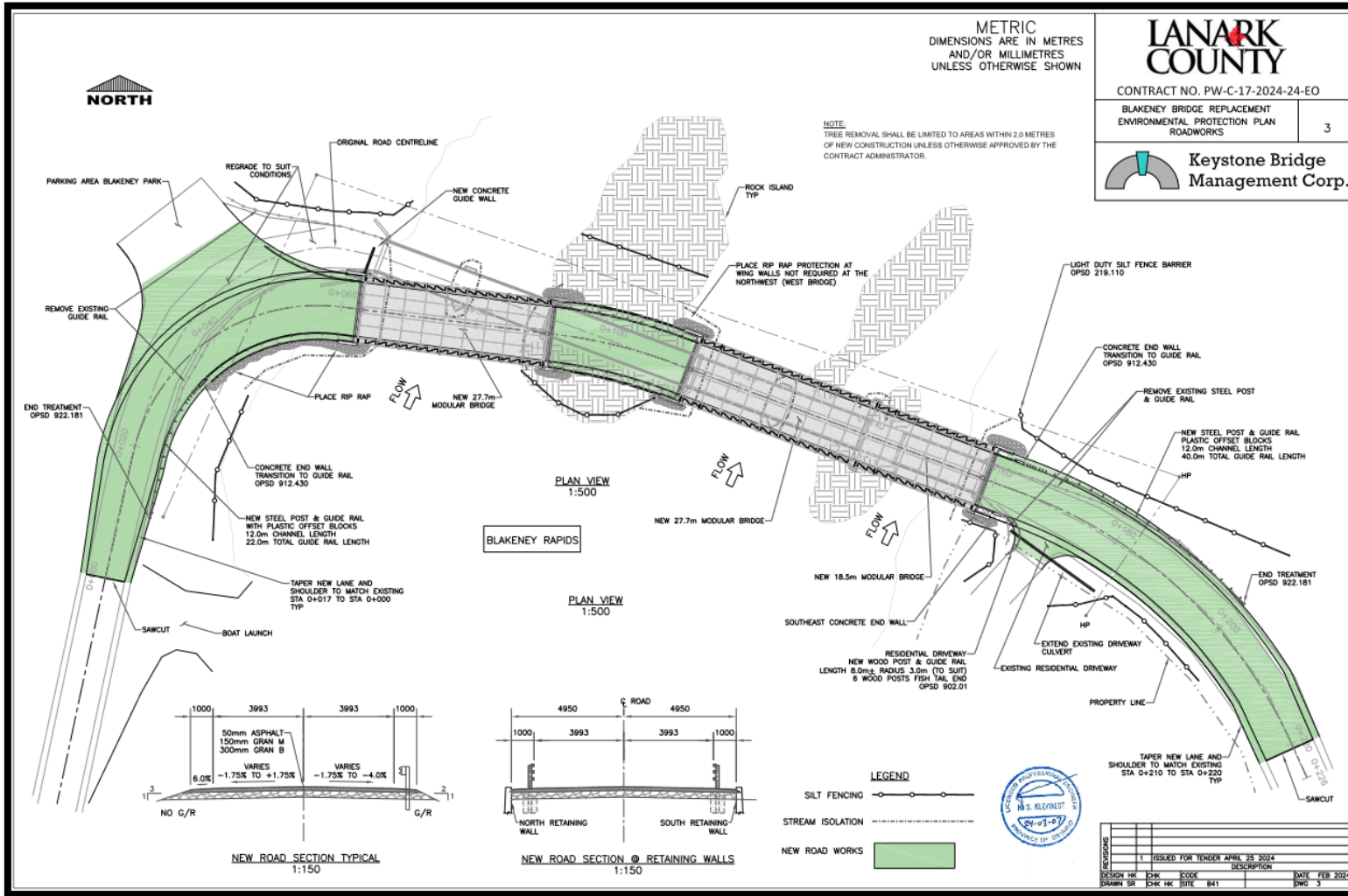
10.0 Plans



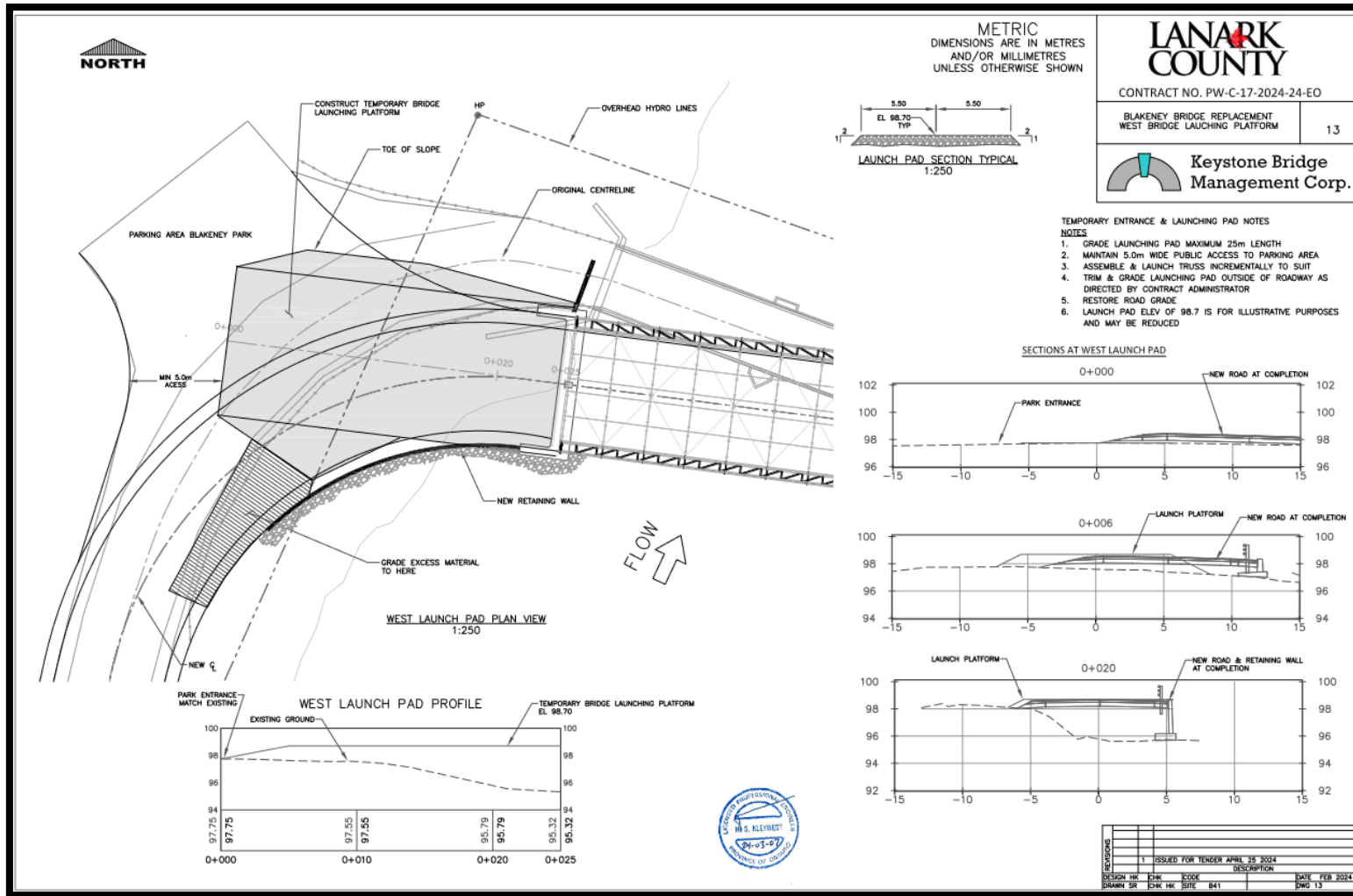
Plan 1: Blakeney Bridge Replacement, General Arrangement. Source: Keystone Bridge Management Corp. for Lanark County, 7 March 2024.



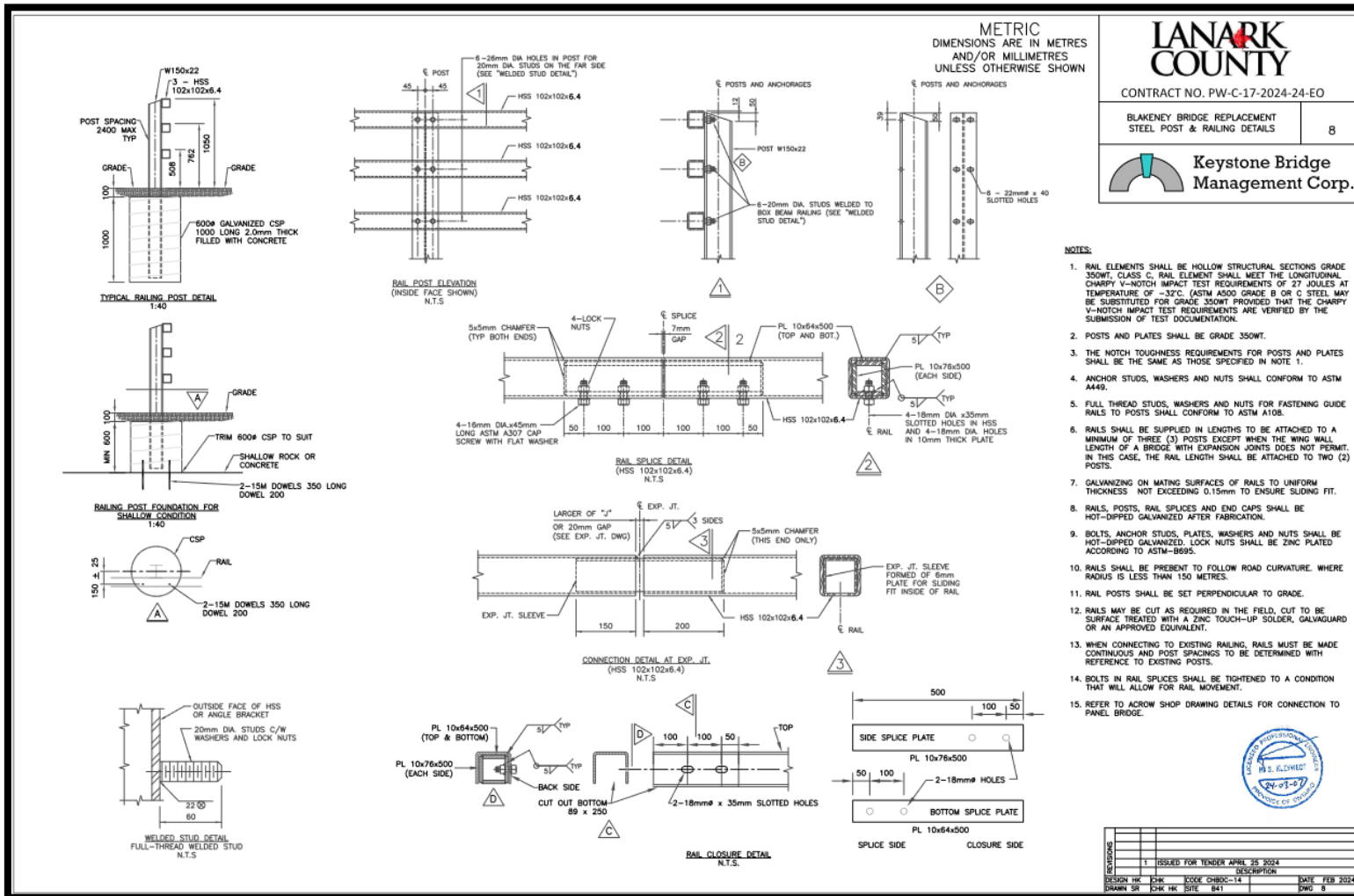
Plan 2: Blakeney Bridge Replacement, General Arrangement – New Construction – Existing and New Centreline Alignments. Source: Keystone Bridge Management Corp. for Lanark County, 7 March 2024.



Plan 3: Blakeney Bridge Replacement, Environmental Protection Plan and Roadworks [shaded in green]. Source: Keystone Bridge Management Corp. for Lanark County, 7 March 2024.



Plan 4: Blakeney Bridge Replacement, Temporary Entrance & Launching Pad Notes. Source: Keystone Bridge Management Corp. for Lanark County, 7 March 2024.



Plan 5: Blakeney Bridge Replacement, Steel Post and Railing Details. Source: Keystone Bridge Management Corp. for Lanark County, 7 March 2024.

11.0 Sources

11.1 Engineering Reports and Drawings

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11.2 Heritage Process Guidance

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11.4 History and Heritage

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