

 HM Government

Thames Estuary Path Survey 2008



The findings in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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Thames Estuary Path

– A survey of the Thames Gateway waterfront

From the Thames Barrier to Southend-on-Sea on the North side
and the Isle of Sheppey on the South

This survey was commissioned by Communities and Local Government to help deliver the Thames Estuary Path. It provides information about the current state of the waterfront path, how much it would cost to develop into a continuous route for walkers and cyclists, suggestions for link paths, what blockages there might be to development and options for how these may be solved. It is designed to facilitate development of sections of the path, providing easy access to key information which might help organisations to take decisions about whether they can undertake development.

The vision is of a path that will enable short local journeys to work, to school, for shopping and leisure trips, long distance walking, opportunities for quiet relaxation and tranquillity, exercise for people and their dogs and recreational pursuits such as walking, cycling or horse riding.

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For the last 30 years Sustrans has been demonstrating the benefits of active travel to people's health and to the environment. Over that time we have developed a range of practical projects that have made a real difference to the travel choices available for everyday journeys. These include the 12,000 mile National Cycle Network, which last year carried over 350 million walking and cycling trips, Connect2, which focuses on overcoming the barriers to active travel in 79 communities and which won the public vote in the Big Lottery Fund's: The People's £50 Million contest in 2007, TravelSmart, Active Travel and Bikelt.

In London, Greenways for the Olympics And London (GOAL) is Sustrans' vision for a sustainable city. GOAL aims to improve the lives of all who live in or visit London by creating a safe and attractive environment for walking and cycling.

Roughly half of our daily journeys are less than three miles long, yet the current built environment makes walking, cycling or catching public transport a challenging, sometimes impossible option. But with a number of small changes accompanied by a big vision for a new approach to transport and the planning system, it's quite possible to make these active and public travel choices the easier, more pleasant and more direct way to get to our everyday destinations. Recent problems in the world economy, concerns over climate change and resource depletion and the obesity epidemic in the UK all show that the need to find new opportunities to change the way we travel are even more pressing than they were 30 years ago.

It is against this background that I welcome the Thames Estuary Path. This report will allow the targeting of resources to ensure that those living in the Thames Gateway get the maximum benefits from improvements to walking and cycling opportunities. This report is an exciting opportunity to shape the way people travel in and around London for generations to come.

by Malcolm Shepherd (Sustrans)

The Thames Estuary is in a time of very rapid and potentially significant change. With increasing development pressures throughout the Thames Gateway, the Thames Estuary Path provides a unique opportunity to secure and enhance long-term riverside access for millions of people who live, work and play throughout this area.

As President of TEP, I was pleased to launch the City to Sea vision for a coastal path extending eastwards in Summer 2005 and I am even more pleased to see this vision taken a step further in this Thames Estuary Path report. There is still a great deal of work to do – building a dream is never easy and dealing with the reality of mixed land ownership is even harder. The number of partners involved in this study are its strength and I am glad to see the Thames Estuary Partnership with its neutral status working with Sustrans to run the Stakeholder workshop and provide the policy context summary.

The Tidal Thames is waiting and we owe it to ourselves to take a closer look.

by Chris Baines (Thames Estuary Partnership)

Executive Summary

There is unprecedented interest in the Thames Estuary. Government wants to create 225,000 new jobs and provide 160,000 new homes in the Thames Gateway and the Thames Waterfront is one of five key ambitions for Thames Gateway Parklands¹. The Thames Estuary Path is one of three key themes in the “connected Parklands landscape” vision of the Parklands Spatial Framework². Thames Estuary 2100 is an Environment Agency project to develop a tidal flood risk management plan for the Thames Estuary through to the end of the century³. A coastal access audit of the entire English coast is being led by Natural England⁴. We must not forget that the river is still important for trade and the Port of London handled nearly 53 million tonnes of imports and exports in 2007⁵.

This report covers the Thames Estuary from the Thames Barrier to Shoeburyness on the north bank and to Shellness on the south bank. The Medway Estuary was outside the scope of this study and further work is needed to develop a continuous estuary path from Grain down to Rochester Bridge and across to the Isle of Sheppey. This has to be a high priority as Medway is the largest Thames riverside community outside London.

We have shown a single preferred route for the main path, as close as possible to the waterfront. There are a number of natural and manmade barriers and the line shown is an informed judgement of what could be achieved within a 10-year timeframe. This will not be easy and significant investment will be required by the public and private sectors to realise the ambition of a high quality path for walking, cycling and disabled access.

The path is divided into 70 separate sections. Each section has a detailed 1:10,000 scale map showing the proposed main path and links to nearby communities and public transport. Each map is accompanied by a detailed description of the current condition of the waterfront, barriers to development, links and access points and key recommendations. A “traffic light” system has been used to describe the route, where green = fully open with a good surface, orange = some infrastructure in place, but physical or legal work is required and red = major work required. A summary of the total lengths on each side is given below (in miles).

	North	South
Green	12.7	18.4
Orange	20.3	17.1
Red	23.9	37.5
Total	56.9	73.0

All the major barriers are listed, with proposals to overcome them or divert around them. Costings are provided, but further work is required to confirm these. Indeed, many of the recommendations are for feasibility work on individual sections of the path. The legal and technical issues are discussed, with recommendations for taking this project forward. The amount of work needed to plan and deliver a project of this scope should not be underestimated and we recommend that a full-time Thames Estuary Path Manager is appointed at the earliest opportunity.

Our recommended priorities for development are listed according to how quickly we think the different sections can be delivered. Link paths have not been analysed in detail, but they should not be forgotten in any calculation of total project costs.

Having surveyed the whole route during the summer of 2008, we firmly believe that with the necessary investment, the Thames can rival some of the great European riverside paths, such as the Danube and the Rhine. At Cliffe Marshes, on a sunny August day, I personally cycled for five miles beside this great river and did not meet another person – only ten miles from the London boundary as the crow flies! On the south bank, there is already an almost continuous path from the Thames Barrier to Weybridge in Surrey, a distance of 38 miles. This could truly become one of the world’s great journeys.

by Simon Pratt (Sustrans)

Thames Gateway Parklands

The aims for the Thames Gateway Parklands programme were set out by Communities and Local Government in the Thames Gateway Delivery Plan¹:

- To retain – and where necessary restore – the high quality natural environment of the Gateway's landscapes
- To secure a high quality built environment, particularly in public spaces
- To protect, promote and celebrate the historic environment and heritage of the area

Beneath these sit five more detailed ambitions for Parklands:

- **Thames Waterfront:** to develop a continuous Estuary Path that will ultimately run along both banks of the river, and to improve waterfront environments
- **Thames Gateway World Class Heritage:** to support heritage improvement in the Thames Gateway, as well as support the bid for a new World Heritage Site at Chatham Historic Dockyard
- **Thames Gateway Landscapes:** to identify and support delivery of landscapes of regional importance
- **Thames Gateway Corridors:** to support environmental improvements to strategic transport corridors
- **Thames Gateway Squares:** to work with partners to identify and start work on two or three large squares

Communities and Local Government launched the Thames Gateway Parklands Vision² on 9 October 2008, which develops these ambitions further. The Vision is designed to provide a framework which suggests ways in which public, private, third sector and local organisations can help shape the future of the Gateway through the development of its green infrastructure. It is intended to help in strategic decision making and provide a context for the implementation of projects at local level.

The first of the Parklands ambitions is to develop a continuous Thames Estuary Path, a link on the north and south banks of the Estuary from the Isle of Dogs out to the coastal path network. It links 'city to sea', and certain sections already exist. It passes a number of major landmarks including the O2 Arena, the Thames Barrier, the Estuary forts, and the 'minsters' (churches) among others. It crosses over bridges and passes under viaducts and through tunnels. It runs along busy urban waterfronts, promenades and beaches as well as through quiet rural areas. However, because of industry, port activity and areas of sensitive wildlife, there are some unavoidable obstructions in some locations along the water's edge.

Thames Estuary Path – Background

1. Introduction

Shortly after the end of the Second World War John Dower produced a report on how National Parks might be introduced to England and Wales. Legislation designating these parks was subsequently introduced in 1949 and also included provision for long-distance routes⁶, later termed National Trails, which were created by linking local footpaths, bridleways and minor roads while also filling in any gaps. The first of these trails, The Pennine Way, opened in 1965 and there are now fifteen in England and Wales providing more than 4000km of well-managed paths primarily for the use of walkers, although there are some sections which may be used by cyclists and horse riders⁷.



Figure 1. Map of the Thames Path National Trail from the Cotswolds to the Thames Barrier (Source: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/thamespath/text.asp?PageId=93>)

In 1947 the Special Committee on Footpaths and Access to the Countryside had recommended the creation of several long distance walking routes of which the Thames Towpath was one. However it was not until 1989 that the route of the Thames Path National Trail was approved by the then Secretary of State for the Environment, Nicholas Ridley. It was officially opened in 1996. The trail starts at the source of the Thames in the Cotswolds and runs for approximately 284km, 98km of which are in London, and ends at the Thames Barrier (figure 1). Although the Thames Path National Trail finishes here, there is a continuous path along the south bank of the Thames,

ending at the GLA/Kent boundary. The path is presently managed by seven people just two of whom are full-time and are also responsible for the Ridgeway National Trail. The combined annual budget for all National Trails is £3.5 million.

The Thames Path in London is actively invested in by Transport for London (TfL) and the Boroughs through the Walk London project. Walk London receives annual funding of £1m+ from TfL through the City of London's LIP for all six routes that make up the Strategic Walk Network (SWN) of 350 miles. At present the status of the Thames Path is National Trail as far as Island Gardens on the North bank and the Thames Barrier on the South; beyond that it is referred to as the TP Extension and carries the Thames Barge symbol rather than the acorn of the National Trail. In places the TP is also covered by other parts of the SWN, notably the London LOOP at Havering and Erith.

A user survey of the Thames Path National Trail was undertaken in 1999⁸. Results indicated that 95 per cent of users were short-distance users, ie those spending no more than a day on the Trail at one time and that they spent an estimated 501,000 user days on the Trail. Longdistance users, ie those spending more than one day on the Trail, accounted for around 26,000 user days. The majority of both long and short-distance users were local residents. Walkers accounted for 85 per cent of users and cyclists the remaining 15 per cent. The economic benefit to the local economy, in 1999, was around £1.5 million (walkers) and £125,000 (cyclists). Interestingly 75 per cent of short distance users and 65 per cent of long distance users said that they thought the Thames Path should be extended.

In 2001 the Thames Estuary Partnership made recommendations to extend the Thames Path National Trail to the outer reaches of the Estuary. This need has also been identified by other organisations and local authorities and features in the Thames Gateway Delivery Plan¹. It goes on to state that Waterfront developments in receipt of public funding will be required to provide free access to the river where appropriate.

The development of an Estuary Path also features in the Thames Gateway Parklands Vision² which seeks to connect both existing and new communities in the region to the Thames, its tributaries and the Estuary landscape, and recognises the importance of a proposed Estuary Path as being a 'key connecting landscape'.

Improved access to the English coastline and the creation of public rights of way along the entire English coast is also recognised in part 9 of the draft Marine Bill⁹. Legislation will give Natural England the flexibility to propose the establishment of the route up estuaries to the first pedestrian crossing point (or an earlier ferry if considered more suitable). However some estuaries cannot be crossed until many miles up-river eg the Thames. In this situation Natural England can decide not to run the long-distance route and coastal margin up the estuary and down the other side resulting in a break in the continuity of the route in these cases.

The provision for estuaries in the draft Marine Bill have recently been criticised by the House of Commons Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee as being very vague and leaving excessive authority to Natural England. The Committee also states that the Bill should include clear specification about where the trail should cross estuaries¹⁰.

Natural England has worked closely with Defra on the content of the draft Marine Bill. In parallel the Coastal Access Outline Scheme has been published, which will guide decisions at the local level on improving and managing coastal access. It is available at: www.naturalengland.org.uk/leisure/access/coastal

Natural England intend to meet with all coastal local authorities, county councils and unitary authorities, to undertake a desk based audit of current satisfactory access on foot and get an initial indication of any provisional or indicative alignments that access authorities may wish to see in place in order to 'close the gaps' in current provision. The current plan is to complete the audit by the end of March 2009.

The purpose of this review is to establish the extent to which the Thames Path, or what might be considered to form part of a new Thames Path, features in relevant strategy documents pertaining to the Thames and the Thames Estuary. The review focuses on:

- Thames Path – City to Sea
- Thames Strategy East
- East London Green Grid
- Kent Thameside Green Grid
- Medway Green Grid
- Swale Green Grid
- South Essex Green Grid
- Thurrock Green Infrastructure Plan
- Rights of Way Improvement plans

The objective here is to establish just how the different strategy plans and other documents listed above intend to incorporate the proposed extension to the Thames Path. In some instances documents may provide specific information as to the location of any gaps in the Thames Path and just what might be done to link these gaps to existing sections of riverside path. In other Strategy Areas, identification and planning may not have reached such an advanced stage and there may simply be a stated desire to provide links to the Thames Path without providing specific information.

Thames Estuary Path – Background

2. Thames Path – City to Sea

2.1 Introduction

This report, commissioned by the Thames Estuary Partnership in 2005, forms an integral part of Green Grid Strategies in the region which all seek to provide an interconnected network of high quality footpaths and cycle routes linking the Thames, open spaces and urban areas¹¹. *Thames Path – City to Sea*, seeks to build on the success of the Thames Path National Trail. Although this ends at Woolwich a continuous path along the south bank of the Thames, ending at the GLA/Kent boundary, opened in 2001 and connects with the London Loop at Erith. The vision of the City to Sea initiative is to create one of the world's great journeys by providing:

“a continuous and attractive, shared access riverside route from the Thames Barrier to the outer Reaches on both sides of the Thames Estuary.”

The report steers away from identifying a specific route for the Thames Path (although it does suggest an indicative route, see below), but is concerned with highlighting the opportunities and possibilities that exist and to inspire and challenge potential stakeholders as to how they may contribute to planning and developing a project that would essentially create an extension to the existing Thames Path National Trail.

2.2 Indicative Route

Thames Path – City to Sea envisages a continuous route along both banks of the Thames Estuary from the Thames Barrier to Shoeburyness, Essex, on the north bank and to the Isle of Grain, Kent, on the south bank. Such a path would pass through a range of varied and dramatic landscapes, riverscapes and townscapes and would link existing and new communities at both strategic and local levels, thereby enhancing sustainable transport options and contribute to healthy lifestyles.

2.3 Accessibility

National Cycle Route (NCR) 1 and NCR13 (on the south and north banks respectively) are both located in the strategy area. NCR1 is extensive however NCR13 suffers from a high degree of fragmentation. There are some sections close to the river, however some riverside areas are inaccessible due to security fencing (eg Purfleet industrial areas) and restricted access (eg Ford Dagenham Works and Shellhaven Oil Refinery).

Berths on tributaries of the Thames (eg Creekmouth, Barking and Benfleet Creek) also form barriers to the potential route.

Although it is recognised that some areas will necessarily remain inaccessible, due to security issues, the ultimate goal of *Thames Path – City to Sea*, as far as access is concerned, is for shared use along the route where possible. The plan accepts that access to important nature and wildlife areas will need to be discussed with relevant organisations. It is also important that access controls exist in order to prevent unauthorised or unwanted motorised traffic.

2.4 Visitor Attractions and links

There is a wide range of possible visitor attractions in the form of both the natural (eg Rainham and Aveley Marshes, Cliffe Marshes) and built environment (eg Hadleigh Castle, Tilbury Fort, Southend-on-Sea) along both sides of the Thames Estuary and it is important that the Thames Path highlights the destinations that can be visited along or in the vicinity of its route. *Thames Path – City to Sea* also should promote links to other strategic routes of which there are a large number along the Thames and the wider region eg The Thames Path National Trail, South East London Green Chain Walk, London Loop, Capital Ring, the Saxon Shore Way and Darent Valley Path in Kent and Two Forts Walk in Essex. The links being promoted by the Green Grid Strategies will also have the opportunity to tie in with the Thames Path.

2.5 Design

Thames Path – City to Sea identifies three broad path types: i) Grey Routes which will pass through urban areas; ii) Light Green Routes passing through mixed residential, industrial, commercial, industrial and green space, and iii) Dark Green Routes which will pass through predominantly natural or semi-natural landscape.

2.5.1 Grey Routes

These paths run along riverside areas which are predominantly urban in nature (eg The Thames Barrier to the Woolwich Royal Arsenal). This is likely to lead to reduced path width in areas where use is likely to be high; therefore it is essential to solve conflicts between potential users.

Thames Estuary Path – Background



Thames Estuary Path – Background

2.5.2 Light Green Routes

Due to the more varied nature of the landscape within these routes (eg the riverfront along Canvey Island), path widths will necessarily vary, however it may well be possible to achieve the optimum width for segregated use within any new developments.

2.5.3 Dark Green Routes

These routes will cross protected nature areas, Country Parks and areas where there is a high degree of riverside vegetation and/or marshland (eg Cliffe Marshes, Rainham Marshes). It is suggested that path widths are restricted, as usage is likely to be lower than more urban sections, consequently there will be considerably less conflict between users.

2.6 Management and maintenance

TEP regards the management of the *Thames Path – City to Sea* as an ideal opportunity for training, employment and community involvement. In order to ensure that the path is used to its full potential it will need to be maintained to the highest possible standard however the construction of the path should be to such a high standard that maintenance costs are minimised. TEP suggests that development of a cross-borough partnership body to oversee the management and maintenance of the path.

3. Thames Strategy East (TSE)

TSE was published in 2008 by the Thames Estuary Partnership¹². The strategy area extends from Tower Bridge in the City of London eastwards to the Borough of Gravesham. The strategy provides strategic guidance on a range of themes including planning, in which it states that:

"Priority should be given to completing footpath and cycle paths and in particular the Thames Path foot/cycleway network along both banks of the river and connections to it from the hinterland in accordance with Green Grid Strategies..."

The strategy goes on to identify nine individual Reaches and provides an indication as to the state of the Thames Path in each and what improvements might be made. Maps have been developed for all Reaches and these include proposed footpath and cycle routes that could be included in any extension to the Thames Path, although short on specifics, the maps provide an indication as to possible routes that an extension of the Thames Path may follow.

4. East London Green Grid

The East London Green Grid¹³ is the agreed mechanism for Greening the Gateway in London, and includes among its partners; the City of London, the Boroughs of East London (Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Greenwich, Hackney, Havering, Lewisham, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest), the GLA, the LDA, the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Thames Gateway London Partnership. Its vision is:

"To create a network of interlinked, multi-purpose open spaces with good connections to the areas where people live and work, public transport, the Green Belt and the Thames. This will be a richly varied landscape that will include diverse uses to appeal to all."

One particular objective is the enhancement of linkages through the establishment of paths which may be used by both pedestrians and cyclists. The East London Green Grid Strategy Area already contains a number of actively promoted long-distance walking routes which are part of the TfL Strategic Walks programme: The London Loop, Thames Path, Jubilee Walk, Lee Valley Walk, Capital Ring and the South East London Green Chain, all of which provide access to the Thames, its tributaries and the surrounding countryside. NCR1 and NCR13 are also within the Strategy Area. NCR1 runs along the Lea Valley and passes to the south bank of the river via the Greenwich Foot Tunnel, continuing on to the Bexley/Kent border. NCR13 follows the north bank of the Thames as far as the Havering/Thurrock border.

In order to facilitate its delivery, The East London Green Grid is divided into six separate Green Grid Areas (figure 2) two of which: London Riverside, and Bexley, River Cray and Southern Marshes are of concern here.

4.1 London Riverside

This is located on the north side of the Thames and includes East Beckton and Barking Town Centre in the west, the industrial areas of Barking and Dagenham and Havering through to Rainham Village and the Rainham, Wennington and Avely Marshes to the east. The Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne Rivers all flow into the Thames in this area. The area also includes the London Riverside Link and the Goresbrook Link.

Two parks, Cross River Park to the East and the London Riverside Conservation Park to the west are central to the Green Grid vision for this area. Both parks will have a strong relationship to the Thames and will be linked by green spaces, the Green Spine, which will form part of a mixed-use zone developed within and around present and former industrial sites. The Green Spine will consist of green corridors, footpaths and cycleways.

Barking town centre is set back from the river and while it is planned to establish linkages to the Roding it is also anticipated that the present inaccessibility to the Thames will be addressed by the establishment of six new riverside areas complete with foot path and cycle connections to the existing urban areas. The implementation of proper policy will result in the creation of around 10km of pedestrian and cycle routes in an area which currently offers none.

- 1 Lea Valley
- 2a Epping Forest London
- 2b Roding Valley
- 3a Fairtop Plain
- 3b Thames Chase, Beam and Ingrebourne
- 4 London Riverside
- 5 Bexley, River Cray and Southern Marshes
- 6 SE London Green Chain Plus



Figure 2. The East London Green Grid and Green Grid Areas
<http://www.designforlondon.gov.uk/ELGG/ELGGarea4.pdf>

4.1.2 Phase 1 Early Delivery Project details

Of the projects identified in the Area Framework, some are considered to best deliver the strategic objectives and are plainly more feasible and deliverable than others, these are::

Cross River Park

The proposal investigates the idea of creating a new metropolitan park around the proposed Thames Gateway Bridge spanning East Beckton and Thamesmead on the south bank of the Thames.

The Three Crowns Riverside Park

Increased access to the Thames is planned through provision of an accessible river path and riverside café. It is also planned to upgrade the Thames river path to allow for use by cyclists and walkers.

Rainham Creek Environmental Improvements

This will include establishing linkages between Rainham Village and the River Thames frontage (Havering Riverside Path) along the southernmost section of the Ingrebourne valley.

Lower Goresbrook

A new foot and cyclepath connection to Barking Riverside Foreshore Park will seek to provide a wider wildlife corridor.

Beckton Alp

The project aims to transform the slag heap at Beckton (the Alp) into a new public park. This project will be a key component of the strategy to revitalise and open up the Greenway – a cycling and walking route through the heart of the East End of London, connecting the Olympic Park with the Thames.

Barking Riverside Power Park

Power Park contributes to the permeability of the new development at Barking Riverside by providing east/west pedestrian and cycle routes through the scheme, and at the same time create a mosaic of habitats and recreational uses, linked to the existing Ripple Road Nature Reserve. These routes connect to other proposed key pedestrian and cycle linkages, providing a 'Green Bracelet' around the development.

Thames Estuary Path – Background

4.2 Bexley, River Cray and Southern Marshes

The majority of this Green Grid Area is located in the Borough of Bexley, on the south bank of the Thames opposite the Riverside Area. It includes the urban areas of Belvedere, Bexley, Erith and the New Town of Thamesmead, and the Thames-side marshes of Erith, Crayford and Dartford, the latter separated by the River Darent.

NCR1 follows the Thames through much of this area and as a consequence there is plenty of access to the river. However one of the prime objectives of this Green Grid is to enhance its green infrastructure by strengthening the green links between Bexley's open spaces and to the South London Green Chain, Dartford and North Kent.

4.2.1 Phase 1 Early Delivery Project details

The Erith Pedestrian and Cycle Links

This seeks to establish a pedestrian/cycle route from the riverside through Erith town centre. The Manor Road and links to Erith route aims to develop and formalise walking and cycling routes to the Howbury Centre and adjacent sites, and provide a direct link to Manor Road which leads into Erith town centre.

Belvedere Wetlands

This involves the development of new linkages to connect Belvedere Industrial area, Veridion Park London, and housing with the marshes. There will also be an improved network of cycle routes, footpaths and better links to Belvedere Station and the Thames.

New Darent Bridge

Aims to link Crayford and Dartford marshes at the Darent Flood Defence Barrier in order to connect to the existing NCR1 which runs along the south embankment of the river Thames.

5. Kent Thameside Green Grid

The Kent Thameside Green Grid Strategy Framework Plan¹⁴ recognises that the opportunities to create and enhance open space in some of the existing communities in Kent Thameside are limited. However it does state that links can be established between these communities and existing and new open spaces within Dartford and Gravesham and with the countryside beyond.

Kent Thameside has around 13 miles of waterfront, much of which is in disrepair. The creation of a quality riverside path along the Thames including the Darent River crossing, with links to industrial and residential areas, joining up the existing sections and trails is seen as being an important Green Grid project for Kent Thameside.

In an effort to encourage and promote walking and cycling in the area a walking and cycling strategy has been developed¹⁵, although this has not yet progressed beyond the draft stage, it remains the most authoritative study regarding walking and cycling in the area (Laurence Tricker, personal communication, 15/08/08).

By 2011 the desired pedestrian and cycle network in the area would include the *Thames Path – City to Sea* and link Crayford Ness in the west to Gravesend in the east taking in both marshland and urban locations. It would also provide links to other long distance routes such as the Darent Valley Path, the London Loop, Saxon Shore Way and the Wealdway.

5.1 New Developments and Thames Path access

Key to this is exploiting the raft of new developments that are expected to feature on the waterfront in this area including: The Bridge at Dartford, Thames Europort, Ingress Park, Swanscombe Peninsula West, Swanscombe Peninsula East, Northfleet Embankment and Gravesend Canal Basin. All of which should provide the opportunity to allow physical connection with the Thames waterfront and the Thames Estuary Path.

6. Medway Green Grid

Medway's Green Grid Action Plan¹⁶ is still in the development stage. Its vision is to:

"forge connections between local communities and their local environment, encouraging a step change in the quality and quantity of accessible green space and demonstrating Medway's credentials as a dynamic, sustainable green city in the making".

The Medway Green Grid Action Plan identifies seven Green Grid strategic routes. While the development of continuous pedestrian and cycle routes along both sides of the Medway is considered an important aspect of the plan, just one route from Whitehall Creek to Cliffe and Grain, will provide access to the Thames.

It is also suggested that it will be possible to link long distance paths along the Thames flood defences when these are strengthened due to the TE2100 project.

7. Swale Green Grid

In terms of transport the Swale Green Grid¹⁷ aims to provide “a permeable and logical network of routes between key destinations and open spaces to encourage walking and cycling and by ensuring that public transport routes are incorporated into the wider network”.

The existing and proposed Green Grid Routes in the Swale area include the development of north-south routes, linking the North Downs to the Swale Estuary enabling access to NCR1 and the Saxon Shore Way. There are also proposals for a ‘Round Sheppey cycle route’. The Green Grid documentation does not provide exact routes; however those that are on the coast appear to comprise existing public rights of way.

On the Isle of Sheppey, an east-west off-road greenway is proposed, with access for all, linking towns and villages from Queenborough & Rushenden to Leysdown on Sea. The alignment is inspired by the former Sheppey Light Railway and broadly follows the ribbon of woodland planting along the lower slopes of the hills. The route is to the south of Lower Road and could be constructed in combination with a programme of road improvements (to improve traffic flow and remove accident blackspots).

8. Kent and Medway Green Grid Cluster Studies

8.1 Introduction

The Green Cluster studies for north Kent¹⁸ set out the region’s plans for the design of the Green Grid public realm and provide a subsequent action plan to facilitate its delivery. There are to date seven Green Cluster Studies with a further Cluster Study planned for the Isle of Sheppey. Each one focuses on areas of intensive regeneration and change where there are opportunities to create strategically sited new green spaces which it is hoped will raise expectations, add value to existing investment and create high quality green infrastructure for future development.

8.2 Darent Valley

http://www.gtgkm.org.uk/darent_valley_cluster_study.php

A new national cycle route linking destinations and green spaces along the entire Darent Valley is planned in order to connect the Thames Path with the North Downs Way. The establishment of a new pedestrian/cycle bridge over the flood defences at the mouth of the River Darent will improve access to the Thames Path.

8.3 Ebbsfleet Valley and A2 Corridor

http://www.gtgkm.org.uk/ebbsfleet_and_a2_cluster_study.php

The development of new Green Grid links includes the identification of a link between the River Darent to Gravesend Town Centre that could be part of the Thames Path. Swanscombe Peninsula and Northfleet Embankment are also considered key sites for development and would include a riverside promenade along the Thames waterfront providing additional open space, footpaths and cycleways.

8.4 Thames and Medway Canal

http://www.gtgkm.org.uk/thames_and_medway_canal_cluster_study.php

The Saxon Shore Way runs along the Thames from Gravesham to Cliffe Pools on the Hoo Peninsula – however it is planned to establish a Greenway (incorporating NCR1) along the northern towpath of the Thames and Medway canal. This will be designed for cyclists, pedestrians and wheelchair users alike and extend from Gravesend to Higham where further links to Cliffe Fort and Cliffe Pools are planned.

8.5 Hoo Peninsula

http://www.gtgkm.org.uk/hoo_peninsula_cluster_study.php

The Hoo Peninsula provides access to both the Medway and the Thames. The large scale landscape makes the area particularly suitable for cyclists and includes Regional Cycle Route 18 (The Heron Trail), which links to NCR1. The vision for the Hoo Peninsula includes the creation of a network of off-road cycleways that can also be used by pedestrians and horse riders. Further cycleways will aim to link all villages in the peninsula allowing some access to the Thames Estuary (at Cliffe Pools RSPB Reserve and Allhallows-on-Sea).

Thames Estuary Path – Background

8.6 Milton Creek

http://www.gtgkm.org.uk/milton_creek_cluster_study.php

A planned new waterfront district will aim to re-connect Sittingbourne with the Swale Estuary and the Saxon Shore Way. A green corridor of water, reeds, open spaces and pathways will link Sittingbourne to the Swale Estuary Marshes.

8.7 Faversham Creek

http://www.gtgkm.org.uk/faversham_creek_cluster_study.php

This cluster area provides access to the Swale Estuary. NCR1 passes through Teynham and Oare Marshes before reaching Faversham where it continues to the surrounding countryside which due to the large-scale open landscape is deemed suitable for cyclists but not ideal for walkers; consequently the network of rights of way requires the development of smaller circular routes many including those that will pass alongside the Swale Estuary.

9. Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid Strategy

9.1 Introduction

The combination of industrial, rural and urban areas that characterise South Essex make for a very diverse landscape in the Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid Strategy Area¹⁹. The Strategy Area includes towns such as Grays and Thurrock, the new town of Basildon and the seaside resort of Southend-on-Sea. The strong industrial heritage is represented by Tilbury Docks, Tilbury Power Station and the Shellhaven and Coryton oil refineries. There are also extensive flat open areas and marshes such as Aveley and West Thurrock Marshes, Mucking and Tilbury Marshes, and Fobbing and Bowers Marshes.

The whole of the strategy area is covered by the Overall Strategic Framework. Three Strategic Area Frameworks are then based on landscape character and borough boundaries, these are: 1) Thurrock, 2) Basildon and Castlepoint, and 3) Southend and Rochford.

9.2. Greenways

The Overall Strategic Framework identifies four Strategic Corridor types, Greenways being the most relevant to this study. They are defined as: national, regional and sub-regional footpaths/cycle and bridle paths that are connected with towns and the rest of the Strategy Area.

Despite there being a comprehensive network of public footpaths in the Strategy Area the quality of provision in urban areas is deemed to be often poor. It is also accepted that there is a poor provision of bridleways and byways. Proposed National Cycle Routes are, however, expected to provide better links to and through urban areas. The Strategic Guidance states that commuter cycle and footpaths should be promoted and that these routes should link into a proposed Thames Path.

The plan is for the creation of 21 separate Greenways four of which will be part of the proposed *Thames Path – City to Sea*. The paths to be incorporated into the Thames Path will then contain links to other Greenways leading away from the Thames and the strategic destinations and landmarks associated with them.

9.2.1 Thurrock Strategic Area

Specific guidance for the Thurrock Strategic Area includes creating A13 Parkway Corridor between outer London, Thurrock and Basildon, and building distinctive pedestrian/cycle bridges to reconnect urban areas to the Mardyke Valley, Thames Chase Community Forest and the South Essex countryside.

9.2.2 Basildon and Castle Point Strategic Area

One of the main proposals in this area is to enhance the river frontage at Canvey Island (Greenway 14), and by establishing a path around the island create a 'Canvey Island Loop' complete with "*high quality and exciting destinations*".

9.2.3 Southend and Rochford

Specific guidance for this area highlights the establishment of north-south running Greenways between urban areas and i) the coastal zone and ii) the rural areas of Rayleigh and the Roach Valley.

10. Green Infrastructure Plan for Thurrock

This plan for Thurrock aims to address, in more detail, the plans set out for the area in the South Essex Green Grid Framework Plan and is an important part of Thurrock's own Green Grid Strategy²⁰. A key element of the plan is the promotion of the Thames Riverside as a focus for informal recreation.

Using the concept of Greenways outlined in the South Essex Green Grid the plan proposes the development of Strategic Green Links, many of which will lead to a proposed Sustrans cycle route following the course of the Thames. These will represent key routes along both existing and desired footpaths/bridleways which are seen as important at a borough or sub-regional level to link communities to greenspaces and other strategic assets. These routes are independent of roads, railways and rivers, and will be designed for informal recreation and sustainable transport use for walking, cycling and horse riding.

11. Rights of Way Improvement Plans

Under the countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), local highway authorities were required to develop a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) by November 2007. In drawing up these plans, authorities are required to assess:

- the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public;
- the opportunities provided by local rights of way (and in particular by footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways and restricted byways) for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of their area;
- the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems; and such other matters relating to local rights of way.

11.1 Essex

The Essex RoWIP is currently being prepared and will include the Thameside Borough of Castle Point but not those of Southend-on-Sea, which is also in preparation and that of Thurrock (see below) as these are separate unitary authorities.

11.2 Kent

Kent County Council has produced a Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2007-2017²¹ which sets out a ten year strategy for improving access to the countryside based on the requirements listed above. The Improvement Plan is short on specifics regarding the exact location of Thameside footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes however it does state that research undertaken indicated the need for the development of three specific new cycle routes in the region, including a route to link London and the Thames Path to the North Kent Coast along the Saxon Shore Way.

11.3 Medway

The current regeneration in Medway provides ideal opportunities to extend a riverside path along the Medway; this is recognised in masterplans for regeneration sites and gives attention to the importance in providing improved access for pedestrians and cyclists²². Surveys undertaken indicated that the Saxon Shore Way is the most popular PRoW in the Medway area.

11.4 Thurrock

Thurrock has 18 miles of Thames river frontage and the RoWIP states that since the upgrading of sections of NCR13 and the development of the Two Forts Way visits to the riverfront by locals has increased. As with the other RoWIPs outlined above specific details regarding gaps in the rights of way network in the borough are not provided. The identification of such gaps will feature when taking forward the proposed improvements (Thurrock Council, 2007).

11.5 RoWIPs in preparation

Further RoWIPs currently in preparation are: Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Havering, and Southend-on-Sea.

Thames Estuary 2100

The Environment Agency is developing a tidal flood risk management plan for the Thames Estuary through to the end of the century. The final plan is due in 2009 and will recommend the flood risk management measures that will be required in the estuary, and where and when they will be needed over the coming century. Work to date has identified a set of potential estuary-wide options including improving defences and flood storage, as well as managed realignment which would create intertidal habitat. These options are currently undergoing assessment and appraisal³.

Existing and proposed path routes in the Thames Estuary may be affected by future modification of defences. Any major works to flood defences beyond routine maintenance are not likely to be undertaken in the short to medium term (the next 50 years). However some of the proposals for intertidal habitat creation could occur within the next 10 to 20 years. Investment in the Thames Estuary Path needs to take account of these emerging proposals. The Environment Agency can provide guidance at an early stage of project development. Changes to defences can create opportunities for improved riverside access as well as other community and environmental benefits.

The following sections of the Thames Estuary Path could be impacted by future flood risk management or habitat creation measures:

Map 8. Aveley and Wennington Marshes have been identified as a potential flood storage area. In the medium to long-term, this would impact on the existing path along the Thames frontage.

Map 12. Erith Marshes has been identified as a potential flood storage area. In the medium to long-term, this would impact on the existing path near Crossness Sewage Works.

Maps 15 and 42. Crayford and Dartford Marshes have been identified as a potential flood storage area. In the medium to long-term, this could impact on the new Dartford Creek crossing proposal and the path along the Thames frontage.

Map 23. East Tilbury Marshes has been identified as a compensation site for intertidal habitat loss at the Gateway Port. Thames Estuary Path through here would need to be designed integral to managed realignment options.

Map 25. The land below Stanhope Industrial Park and Mucking Flats has been identified as a location for replacement intertidal habitat, in compensation for the Gateway Port development.

Map 31. West Canvey Marsh is a high priority proposal for managed realignment. Groundworks could commence within the next 10 years. The proposal may impact on the East Haven Creek crossing proposal.

Maps 48, 49 and 50. Shorne Marshes has been identified as a potential flood storage area and also a potential managed realignment site. This could impact in medium to long-term on the Thames Estuary Path.

Map 53 and 54. This area has been identified as replacement intertidal habitat for the London Gateway Port. This will impact on the path along the Thames frontage.

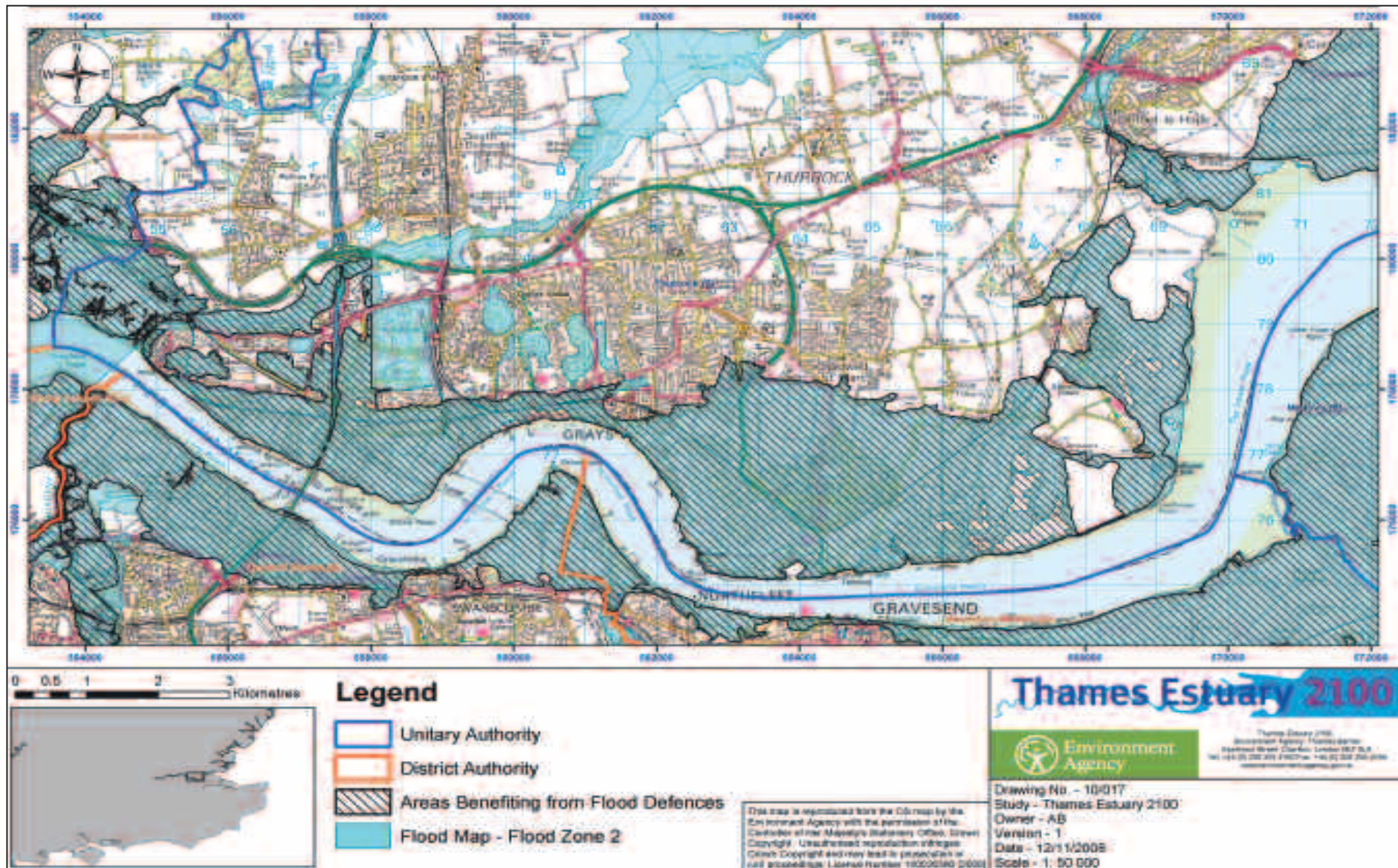
Map 55. St Mary's Marsh has been identified as a priority managed realignment proposal. The proposal would result in groundworks commencing within the next ten years. This would impact on the Thames Estuary Path.

Map 57 and 58. Grain Marshes, Isle of Grain, has been identified as a priority managed realignment proposal. The proposal would result in groundworks commencing within the next 20 years.

Map 57. All Hallows Marsh has been identified as a priority managed realignment proposal. The proposal would result in groundworks commencing within the next 30 years.

The flood map opposite indicates just how important existing flood defences are for riverside communities.

Thames Estuary 2100 – Flood Risk in Thurrock (West)



Thames Estuary Path – Introduction to Maps

Methodology

Routes were surveyed on foot or by bicycle during August and September 2008. Although measurements have been taken in places, this is not a detailed survey of every metre of the Thames Estuary Path. The intention is to give a general assessment of the condition of the route and to identify areas where further work is required.

We have not shown existing public Rights of Way as this information is available from Local Authority Definitive maps and will be covered by Natural England's coastal access audit.

We have used a "traffic light" system to describe the routes, where:

- green = fully open with a good surface
- orange = some infrastructure, but physical or legal work is required
- red = major work required

Green routes are typically existing tarmac or concrete paths which are suitable for shared use, although the legal status may not be clear in some places.

Orange routes are primarily existing rough stone paths which need some improvements to make them suitable for shared use. In a few cases, they are existing roads or paths that need legal work to allow public access.

Red routes are existing public footpaths with a rough natural surface, or proposed routes where no public access is currently available. In most cases, major works involving new construction are required.

The main Thames Estuary Path is shown with solid lines and all links are shown with dashed lines. Some of these links can also describe options for the main route if the preferred alignment is not available. In rural areas, the vast majority of existing and potential links to local communities and transport hubs are described. In urban areas, only the strategic links to the wider walking and cycling network are included.

Significant barriers on the main route are shown on the maps and these vary from major river crossings to a set of steps. Some barriers are also shown on the link routes, but these have not been surveyed and reported in detail. Major man-made and natural barriers to a continuous estuary path are listed towards the end of this report.

Although there is a focus on cycling in the report, all the proposed routes are intended to be for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists. We know from research over the last ten years on traffic free sections of the National Cycle Network, that around 50 per cent of the usage of these routes is by pedestrians.

Although we advocate shared use paths, there may be some places where different routes can be provided for cyclists and pedestrians. Where an existing path on the flood defences is narrow, it might be easier to accommodate cyclists on a new path below the embankment. There may also be a few places where a separate alignment for pedestrians and cyclists is desirable, such as Gravesend to Cliffe.

Circular routes

Some potential circular routes are described in the text and others can be seen on the seven overview maps. There are very few opportunities for developing high quality circular routes because the urban areas are so densely developed. Links have not generally been surveyed in the same detail as the waterfront path, so we do not have many specific recommendations for circular routes.

The local Green Grid strategies for East London, South Essex and North Kent give some useful general guidance for potential circular routes including the Thames waterfront.

Horse riding

As far as we are aware, the only section of the main route with public bridleway status is a 2,600 metre length on the north side of Canvey Island.

Subject to permission from landowners, other sections that could be opened up for equestrian use include:

- Cliffe Pools to Dagnam Saltings (maps 51 to 55)
- Coalhouse Fort to Mucking Tip (maps 22 to 24)
- Benfleet to Leigh and Hadleigh Country Park (maps 35 to 37)

There may also be opportunities as public access is developed across the Thames Gateway through the Green Grid strategies.

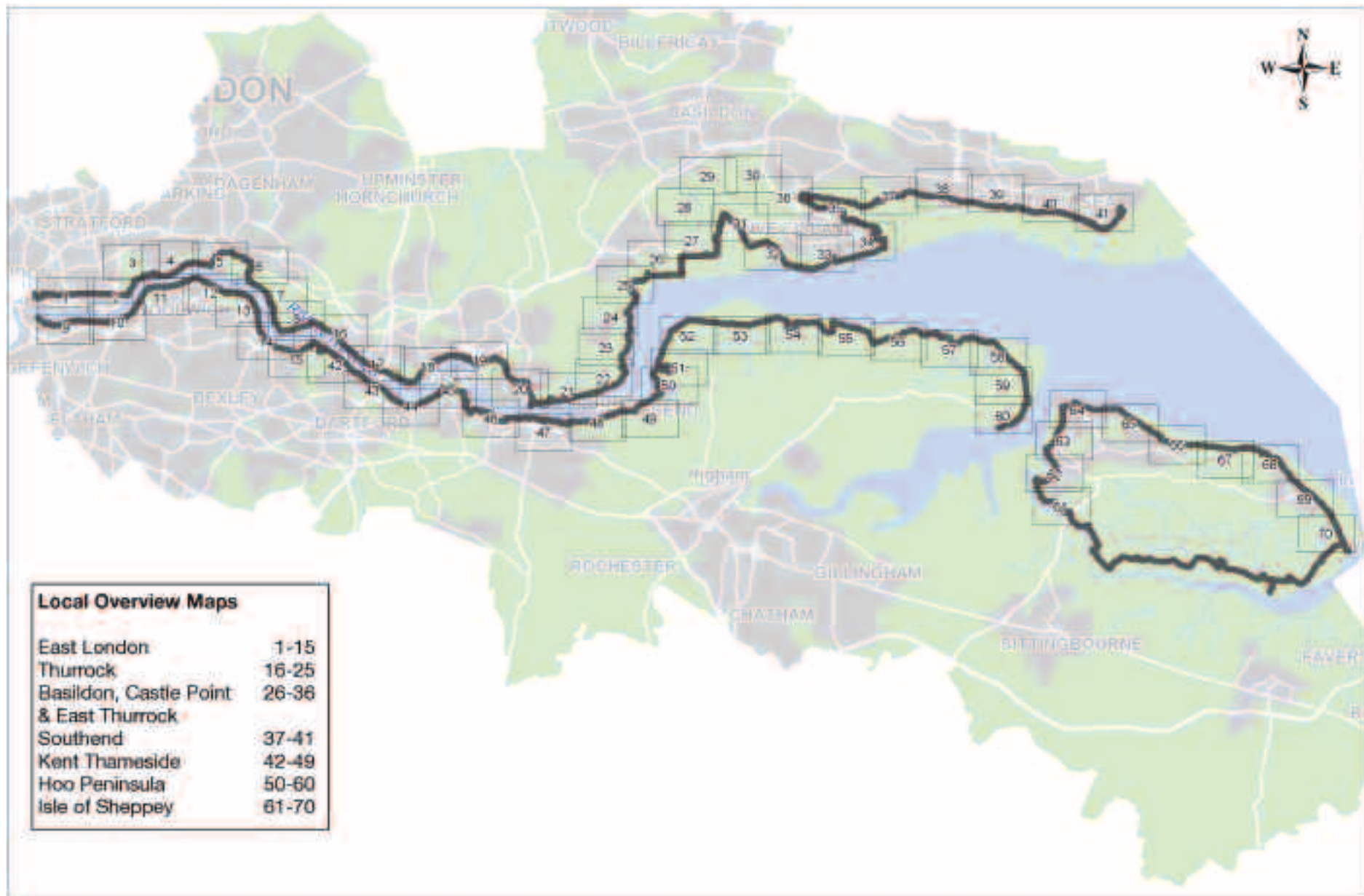
Thames Estuary Path – Introduction to Maps

Thames Gateway London	
1	Royal Docks
2	UEL and Gallions Reach
3	Barking Creek
4	Barking Riverside
5	Dagenham Dock
6	Beam River and the Ford Motor Company
7	Rainham Creek
8	Rainham Marshes
9	Thames Barrier
10	Woolwich
11	Thamesmead Central
12	Thamesmead East
13	Bexley Riverside
14	Erith
15	Crayford Marshes

Thames Gateway South Essex	
16	Aveley Marshes and Purfleet
17	Purfleet Industry
18	West Thurrock Marshes and South Stifford
19	Grays
20	Tilbury
21	Two Forts Way West
22	Two Forts Way East
23	East Tilbury Marshes
24	Thurrock Thameside Nature Park South
25	Thurrock Thameside Nature Park North
26	Stanford-le-Hope
27	Fobbing
28	Fobbing Marshes
29	Wat Tyler Country Park
30	Bowers Marshes
31	Fobbing Horse and Northwick
32	Canvey Island Hole Haven
33	Canvey Island Thorney Bay
34	Canvey Heights
35	Benfleet Creek
36	South Benfleet
37	Two Tree Island
38	Southend Seafront West
39	Southend Seafront Central
40	Southend Seafront East
41	Shoeburyness

Thames Gateway North Kent	
42	Dartford Marshes
43	Littlebrook and Crossways
44	Greenhithe
45	Swanscombe Peninsula
46	Northfleet
47	Gravesend
48	Eastcourt Marshes
49	Shorne Marshes
50	Higham Marshes
51	Cliffe Pools
52	Cliffe Marshes
53	Cooling Marshes
54	Egypt Bay
55	St Mary's Marshes
56	Allhallows-on-Sea
57	Yantlet Creek
58	Grain North
59	Grain South
60	Grain Power Station
61	Rushenden Marshes
62	Queenborough
63	Sheerness South
64	Sheerness North
65	Minster West
66	Minster East
67	Connetts Farm
68	Warden
69	Leysdown-on-Sea
70	Shellness

Thames Estuary Path – Overview



Thames Estuary Path – East London Overview

The Thames Paths on either side of the river are at quite different stages in their development. On the south bank, though narrow in places and with the occasional barrier, the path is virtually continuous from the Thames Barrier to the London border, providing easy access to the waterfront. In contrast there remain large sections on the north side where no riverside route exists and the delivery of a high quality path faces formidable obstacles. For large sections local communities are denied access to the river.

Where a route has been achieved the Thames Path, more than any other Greenway in London, demonstrates the delicate balance between nature and industry. It presents Londoners and visitors with a very welcome break from the noise and confusion of the city, offering history, wildlife, wetlands and the breathtaking expanse of the river as it widens towards the sea at Rainham Marshes.

Supporting policies and strategies

A vast array of policies and strategies covering various aspects of the Thames waterfront in the study area are available. Many of these are relevant to the development of the Thames Path. It is not appropriate to list all these here, but helpful to highlight the following:

As a National Trail the Thames Path is one of six Strategic Walks, developed by Walk London, through Transport for London (TfL) funding. The path follows both banks of the river and is a hugely popular resource to the west of this study area. It is, however, at the proposal stage along the north bank, to the east of the Thames Barrier, but open on the south bank.

Design for London has led the development of the East London Green Grid¹³ (ELGG). The vision for this project is ‘to create a network of interlinked, multi purpose open spaces with good connections to areas where people live and work’. Several links to the Thames Path and solutions to barriers contained within this report are drawn from the ELGG.

TfL, working with the Olympic Delivery Authority and local boroughs, are developing cycling and walking routes around the Olympic Park in Stratford²³. This will encourage spectators at the 2012 Games to arrive by foot or on bike, and to deliver a sustainable transport network for the local community in legacy. Links will be made to the Thames Path in the Royal Docks area, creating a wider network.

Barriers to walking and cycling

At either end of the study area, two significant barriers exist along the Thames Path south. The Westminster Industrial Estate, directly to the east of the Thames Barrier, and Erith Town Centre both block river access. Fairly convenient diversions do exist yet the high quality Greenway experience is lost and the integrity of the route damaged.

The most significant barriers to cycling and walking are on the north bank and are primarily located in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Barking Creek, on the west edge of the borough, is a formidable obstacle. The Docklands Light Railway extension to Dagenham Dock will tunnel under the Creek. A parallel tunnel for pedestrians and cyclists would overcome this barrier but may not be delivered. A bridge crossing further north, but south of the A13, may be more likely and will offer a better experience.

Industrial land use in the south of the borough presents difficulties in establishing a riverside route. Creekmouth, the Ford Motor Company plant and Frog Island, with their active jetties, security concerns and heavy industrial activity, must be traversed. Land negotiation will be key here to maximise access to the various watercourses that could carry the route through this area.

Development sites

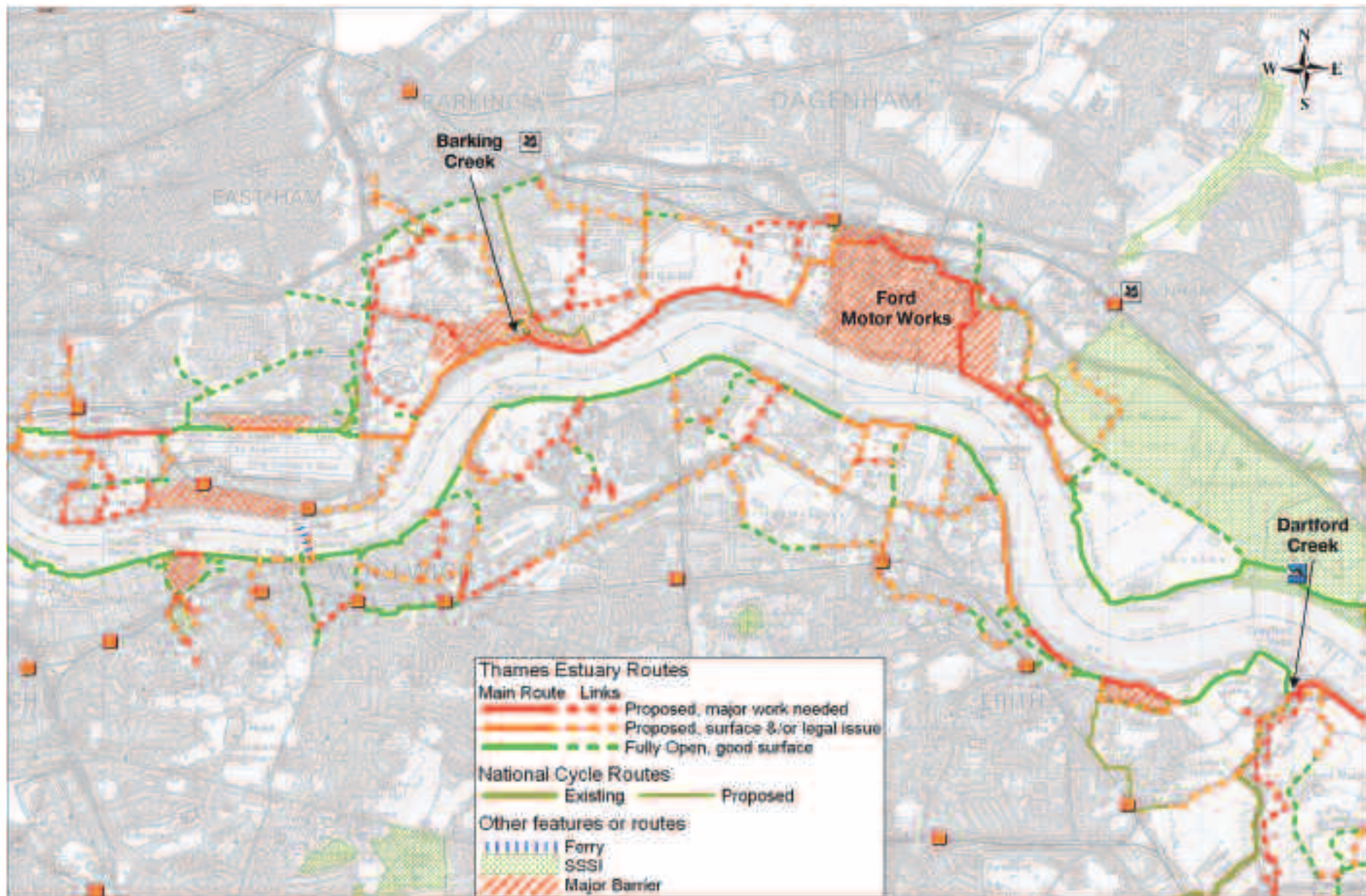
Barking Riverside, with proposals to build homes for 26,000 people, is the largest regeneration site in the Thames Gateway and incorporates proposals for riverside cycling and walking routes. This is an excellent opportunity to open waterfront access from Creekmouth to the Goresbrook.

Canning Town, Silvertown Quays, Beam Reach and Thamesmead are all subject to major regeneration schemes that will offer opportunities to enhance the route.

National Cycle Network

NCR 13 follows the north bank and eventually terminates at Sheringham on the Norfolk Coast. The southern path forms NCR1 and crosses the Thames via the Greenwich Foot Tunnel to link into the Olympic Park at Stratford. These routes are intended to carry local utility trips as well as leisure rides and have been the subject of several reports, most recently ‘The Development of National Cycle Routes 1 & 13’, Sustrans for TfL, March 2008.

Thames Estuary Path – East London Overview



Thames Estuary Path – Section 1 Royal Docks – East London

Condition of the waterfront

The northern edge of the Royal Victoria Dock between the ExCel Centre and the Ramada Hotel will be closed for 30 months, from August 2008, to allow for ExCel's extension work. The London Borough of Newham (LBN) has negotiated a continuation of the high quality dockside path through the extension site, as a planning condition. This will also include an improved surface in front of the Ramada Hotel (LBN planning reference 06/02068/FUL).

On completion of this section the public will have access to a high quality waterside route from Tidal Basin roundabout to Royal Albert DLR station.

We support the development of a path along the Thames waterfront in the Silvertown area, which is currently occupied by industrial sites and wharves. Redevelopment proposals for Minoco Wharf, Silvertown Docks and Thames Barrier Park East include improved access to the river. The dockside route is closer to the dense residential communities of Canning Town, Custom House and Beckton, links directly to new residential developments and shops along the dockside and to the ExCel Centre, a major trip generator and Olympic venue.



Royal Victoria Dock path

Barriers to development

There are no barriers to the development of a high quality dock side path along this section. Transport for London's Olympic Cycling and Walking programme²³ includes proposals for improvements to the dockside path.

The key issue falls outside of this study area and concerns the continuation of the path to the west from the Tidal Basin roundabout. Currently it is proposed that the path passes under the Silvertown Viaduct and links through the LDA's Thames Wharf site, parallel to the DLR line. This alignment is not supported by all stakeholders. An improved option would pass through the landmark site and under Silvertown Way.

The DLR rail line is a formidable barrier to the north making it difficult to create sufficient links to the main residential areas.



Ramada Hotel

Links and access

- L1 A link is required across the DLR line at Custom House Station (perhaps in conjunction with Crossrail work at the station) and on towards Plaistow as well as redeveloped Canning Town.
- L2 In partnership with ExCel and LBN, Sustrans has developed a diversion route to be used during the closure of the dockside path. This has yet to be implemented but should remain as a permanent link for the communities to the south of the Dock and to the fantastic green space at Thames Barrier Park.
- L3 The Silvertown Quay development proposes a green link towards Thames Barrier Park.
- L4 Proposals for Minoco Wharf include a link to the river. Attention should then focus on linking Lyle Park and Thames Barrier Park via the waterfront.

- L5 A high quality green bridge takes path users over Royal Albert Way. This soon links to Beckton District Park where cyclists and walkers take separate routes through the park to eventually make a connection to the Elevated Greenway. Improvement to the continuity of the route at the A13 is required. Beckton DLR and the Elevated Greenway at Beckton Alps can also be reached by an existing shared use path towards Woolwich Manor Way.

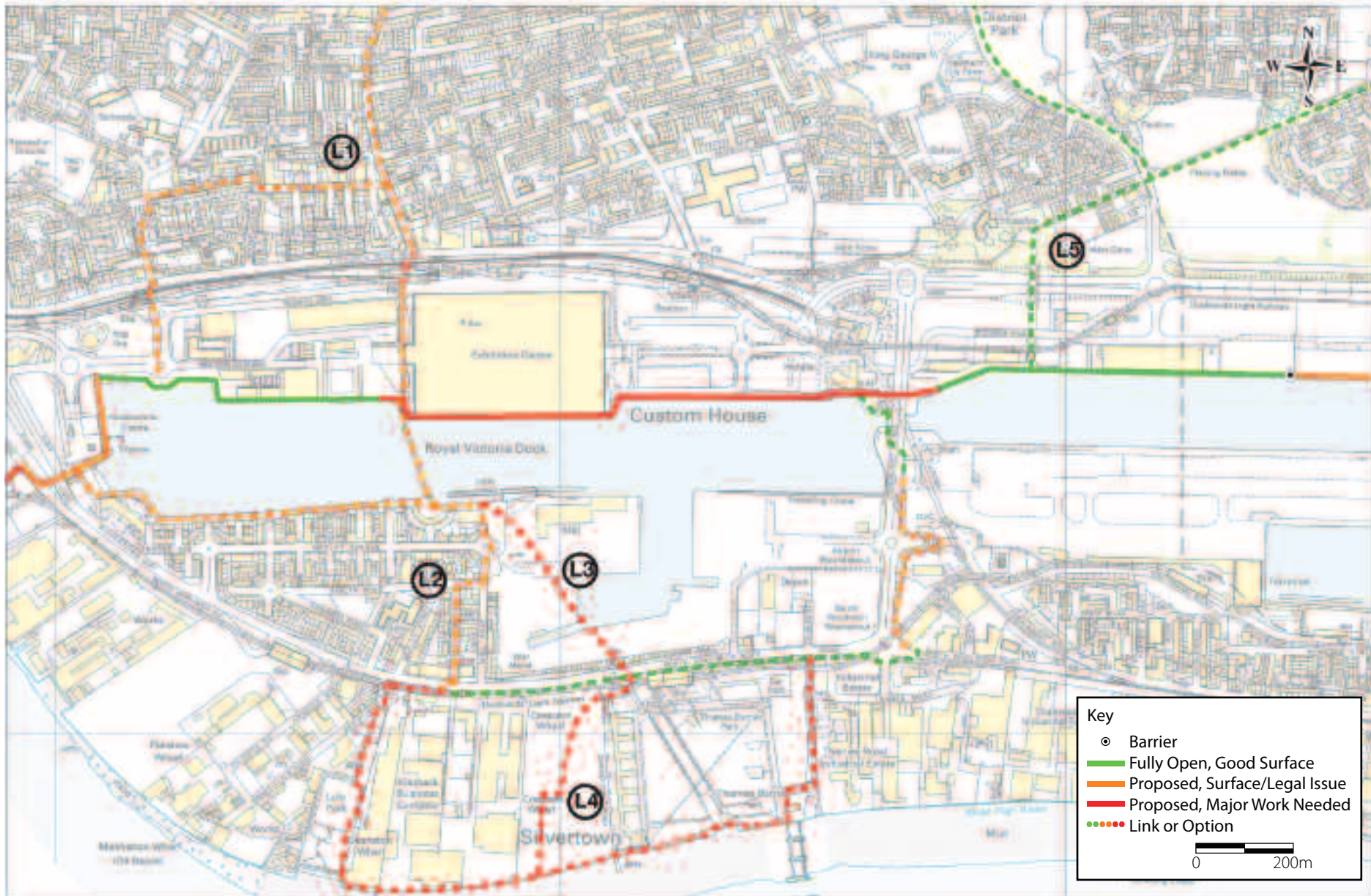


Beckton District Park

Key Recommendations

1. Deliver the ExCel diversion, to include an improved crossing of North Woolwich Road and an upgrade of the path adjacent to Connaught Bridge.
2. Develop links into Canning Town.

Thames Estuary Path – Map 01 Royal Docks



Thames Estuary Path – Section 2 UEL & Gallions Reach – East London

Condition of the waterfront

The high quality dockside path ends abruptly to the east of Building 1000. The land between here and the University of East London Docklands Campus, known as 'The Royals Business Park', is a brownfield site owned by the LDA and awaiting development. It stretches for approximately 900 metres, includes a broken dock side path and is securely fenced at either end.

The wide, high quality surface continues at the UEL campus to the Sir Steven Redgrave Bridge. The right of access under the bridge has not been secured by LB Newham, although access is possible. The proposed path then passes through the new Royal Quay development.

Much of the remainder of the path through this section is aspirational and not currently accessible. However, a path exists along the dock entrance and heads north on the waterfront, to link into the newly constructed Atlantis Avenue and Magellan Boulevard. Access to the waterfront terminates at Beckton Sewage Treatment Works (BSTW) although the path continues.



Gallions Point Marina



Royal Albert Dock closed path



Gallions Reach Shopping Centre

Barriers to development

B1 The closed path between Building 1000 and UEL is a major barrier to cycling and walking in this section and denies access to the historic buildings at the heart of the site. This is particularly significant given the expansion in student numbers at UEL and the move into Building 1000 of London Borough of Newham staff. The LDA site is used as a training facility for the London Fire Brigade and a temporary runway was constructed on the land for the Red Bull Air Race event. A rough dockside path exists but access is denied.

B2 The Royal Quay residential development restricts access to the waterfront. The existing path to the east of this development is overgrown, underused and hard to find.

B3 BSTW blocks waterfront access from Magellan Boulevard to Barking Creek.

Links and access

L1 Given the complexities surrounding the riverside path at Barking Creek a long-term diversion is required. This will follow the existing segregated cycle track along Royal Docks Road and the A13. The Royal Docks Road cycle track links into the Elevated Greenway. Sections of this alignment overlap with the Capital Ring strategic walk.

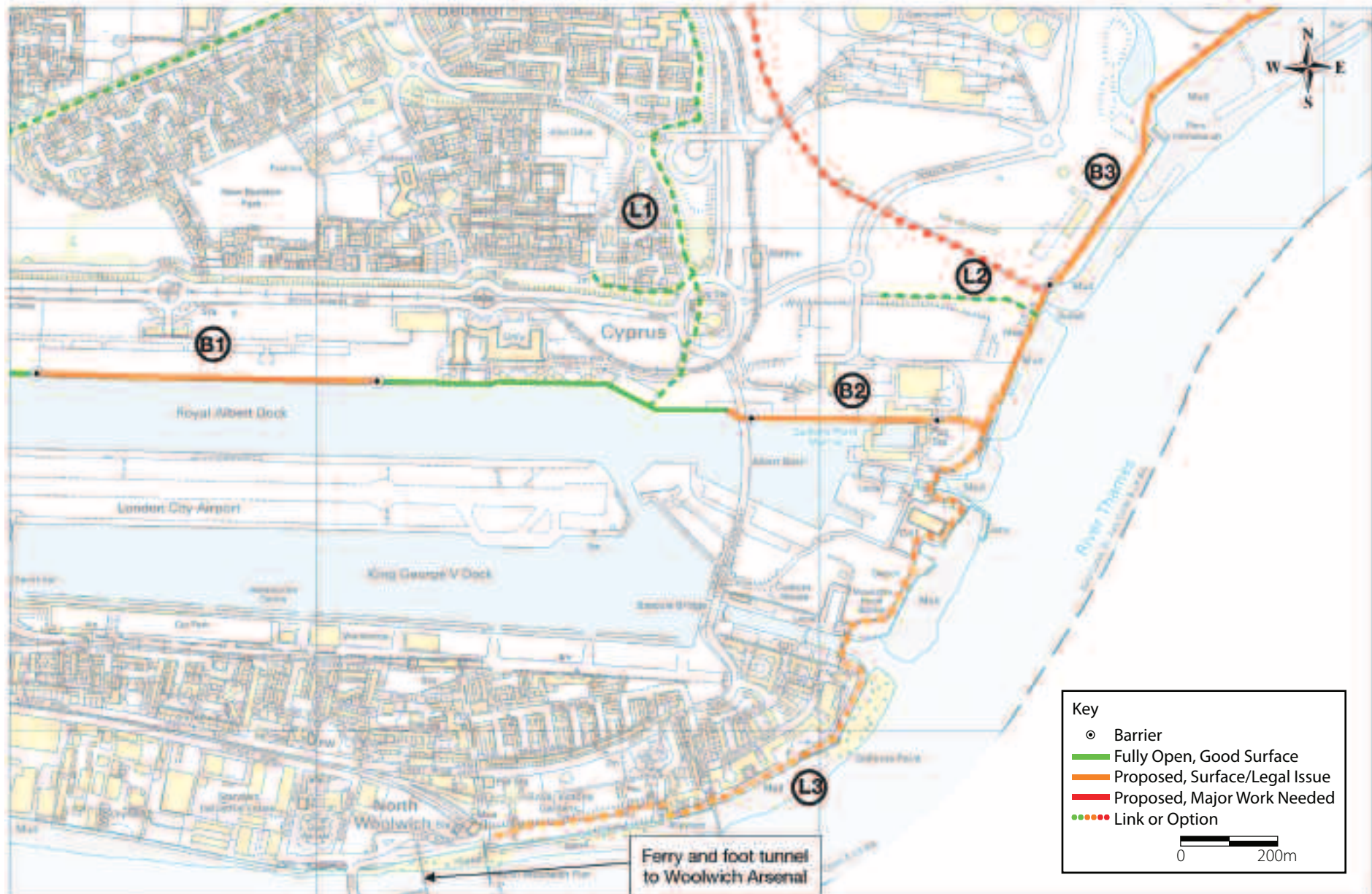
L2 New roads link into existing cycle facilities within the Gallions Reach shopping centre.

L3 Dock gates are difficult to negotiate but there is potential for a link along the waterfront to the Woolwich foot tunnel.

Key Recommendations

1. To open the dock side path between Building 1000 and UEL.
2. To negotiate an alignment through the Royal Quay development, ideally on the dock front to link in to the existing Thames Path. An alternative alignment could involve the Gallions Reach Shopping Centre.
3. Allow access to the existing riverside path to Barking Creek.
4. Improve the quality and function of the proposed diversion route, notably along Woolwich Manor Way as it approaches Gallions Roundabout and the road crossing at Beckton Triangle Retail Park.

Thames Estuary Path – Map 02 UEL and Gallions Reach



Thames Estuary Path – Section 3 Barking Creek – East London

Condition of the waterfront

The Thames waterfront in this section is dominated by Beckton Sewage Treatment Works. A path along the River Roding from the A13 to the Thames and along the Thames towards Gallions Reach was constructed by the London Borough of Newham approximately four years ago. This has never been opened and it has not, therefore, been possible to gain access to the waterfront.

The waterfront at Creekmouth is dominated by industrial units and active jetties. There is currently no public right of way in this area.



Barking Creek Flood Barrier

Barriers to development

B1 A bridge is required near the Barking Creek Flood Barrier. However, we note that the proposed extension of the DLR to Dagenham Dock will tunnel under the Creek. Proposals for a low bridge were opposed by the Port of

London Authority (PLA), who require a bridge height of at least 33 metres to allow continued use of the active wharves on the Roding. A tunnel for cyclists and pedestrians may be appropriate but is unlikely to provide the desired amenity. A swing or lifting bridge may be possible although the PLA suggest that the volume of shipping movements along the Roding would limit access to the bridge.

The East London Green Grid¹³ lists project 4.1.03 to cross the Creek with a bridge for cyclists and walkers south of the A13. This would be a useful interim measure, but no substitute for a bridge at the mouth of Barking Creek.

B2 The waterfront at Creekmouth is dominated by industrial units and active jetties. Creation of a greenway though this space is likely to be a long-term project. River Road is a poor alternative, dominated by HGV movements serving the numerous local industrial parks and with insufficient width to create a shared use path on the footway.

B3 The expansion of the sewage works and the delivery of the Tideway Tunnel project²⁴ have created access problems for the existing paths along the Roding and Thames. Thames Water has suggested to LBN officers that there will not be access to this path until 2015. With lack of use it is likely that the path will deteriorate.



The Roding Valley Way from the A13

Links and access

L1 The cycle track along Royal Docks Road is a good quality diversion route, before a crossing of Barking Creek is in place. This links into the Elevated Greenway and eventually in Stratford and the Olympic Park.

L2 The Roding Valley Way (RVW) links the Thames to Essex, following the River Roding. Although constructed, the RVW has not been opened in this section. Once access is granted it will provide a useful link to the crossing of the Roding at the A13 and on to Barking Town Centre.

L3 The segregated cycle track along the A13 makes a useful short term diversion. However, the noisy, industrial environment and proximity to a major trunk road create a poor experience. Some sections, such as at the junction with River Road, offer better segregation from the carriageway.

L4 Design for London proposes a Beckton Loop path as part of the Cross River Park. This would link into the proposed Thames Gateway Bridge.

L5 A continuation of the Elevated Greenway path to the river would provide a key link from the heart of Newham.

L6 Creekmouth Ecology Park currently links to River Road. The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham have, through a S106 agreement, secured a path around the Prologis building and intend to continue this to the south of the switching station to link into Barking Riverside. Connections can then be made to the river.

Key Recommendations

1. Provision of a new bridge at Barking Creek to link the RVW and Creekmouth Open Space. An alternative alignment to the north may need to be considered.
2. Gain access to the paths adjacent to BSTW.

Thames Estuary Path – Map 03 Barking Creek

