



**Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames**

**HOGSMILL VALLEY WALK STRATEGY  
KNIGHTS PARK BRIDGE TO VILLIERS ROAD  
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE WALK**

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**Devendra Saksena BSc Eng FIE MBA  
Director of Environmental Services  
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames  
Guildhall II  
Kingston Upon Thames  
Surrey KT1 1EU**



## 1) Introduction

The Royal Borough of Kingston adopted the Hogsmill Valley Walk Strategy in June 2002. The Hogsmill Valley provides a chain of open space from Kingston Town to the South of the Borough, following the course of the Hogsmill River. The Strategy aims to identify potential action points to establish the Hogsmill Valley Walk along the length of the river in order to promote both long and short distance walking in the borough through improving accessibility, as well as enhancing the borough's landscape and biodiversity.

The Hogsmill meets the River Thames in Kingston Town Centre, in an area which is now known as Charter Quay. This area has seen massive redevelopment over the last few years, and as a direct result the mouth of the river has been enhanced, and accessibility to it has been improved. This has enabled a greater degree of enjoyment of the river and provides a strong focus point at which to start the river walk or do a linked walk along the Hogsmill and the newly completed Thames-side path.

From Charter Quay the river flows between vertical concrete banks passing through the Guildhall complex. The river walk here is well maintained, with carefully managed landscaping, and fencing which complements the urban feel of the river in the town centre.

The river then runs underneath college roundabout, emerging at Reeve Thorpe Garage (Proposal Site 21 in the Unitary Development Plan), which is the subject of the first Site Specific Action in the Hogsmill Strategy. The first Local Area Strategy, Penrhyn Road to Heron Court, dealt with improvements to this stretch of the walk. The majority of these improvements have now been completed, and the various works have made a tremendous difference to the state of the walk along this stretch.

The walk diverts along Denmark Road and rejoins the river at Knights Park Bridge, a single span structure constructed in 1892. It then follows the course of the river, crossing to the northern side of the river via Middle Mill Island. It leaves the river again at the boundary of King Athelstan School and emerges onto Villiers Road.

Between these two sections the walk is in place, but the street furniture and the scenery have become run down and unattractive. Through careful maintenance of the area, management of vegetation, and improved street furniture this portion has the potential to draw more people further along the Hogsmill, thus meeting objectives of promoting walking through accessibility and safe design. This entire stretch is suitable for access by less able.

## 2) The existing problems on the Hogsmill Walk between Knights Park Bridge and Villiers Road

### a. Signage along the footpath

*The existing signage along the length of the Hogsmill Valley Walk is poor, and not easily identifiable. Although the path is fairly straightforward along this stretch, the signage does need to be improved, both in quality and quantity. In many places the signage only exists for the Thames Down Link and the London Loop.*



### b. Graffiti along the stretch

*Graffiti is a problem along this stretch of the Hogsmill. The Stanley Picker Gallery Building, and the Meeting House in particular have been targeted.*



c. Lamposts and Signs

*Existing lamposts and signs along the walk are in need of repair and repainting. They have been graffitied and flyposted.*



d. Knights Park Bridge

*Knights Park Bridge is used as a pedestrian bridge over the Hogsmill from Knights Park to Springfield Road. The bridge is inspected by the Council in terms of its structural integrity, but is in need of re-painting and removing graffiti.*



e. Path beside St John's School

*The path beside St John's School is not very accessible, particularly for less able pedestrians. The pathway is extremely narrow, and the vegetation on the riverbank is growing over the path in places. The new school fence has improved accessibility to this area for pedestrians, but there are still more improvements that can be made.*



f. Gate beside bridge to Middle Mill Island

*At the end of the path beside St John's School playground the route follows a pedestrian link from Bellevue Road to Middle Mill Island. Where these two paths meet there is a broken gate and the remains of a chain link fence. The gate and the fence are no longer used, and can therefore be removed.*



g. Swan Public House Meeting Hall

*The meeting hall linked to the Swan Public House is badly graffitied and vandalised, and does not provide an attractive border for this part of the walk. The hall is not currently used, which poses problems for its maintenance.*



- h. Chain link fence beside open land at Fairfield Place  
*The chain link fence which separates the pedestrian path of the Hogsmill Valley Walk from the public open space at Fairfield Place does not perform a useful function. It is not intended to stop people using the open space, as there is a gateway to the space at the end of the fence.*



- i. Residual Land at the end of the King Athelstan Playing field  
*This land was the subject of a section 106 agreement to clear it and provide public access. There is a problem with Japanese Knotweed on this site, and it has already been sprayed once. However, further sprays are needed, as well as rubbish collection and extensive works before it can be used as a public open space.*



j. Path beside King Athelstan School

*The path beside King Athelstan School is clear and wide enough for access, but there is some japanese knotweed growth along this path and extensive graffiti on the street furniture and the fence along the housing estate.*



### 3) Potential improvements

- i. New signage along the length of the path  
*As part of the Hogsmill Valley Walk Strategy new signage has been developed for the Hogsmill walk. It will be placed at strategic points along the length of the walk, including this stretch.*
- ii. Removal of graffiti  
*Graffiti is one of the major problems in this area. Removal of the tags on the walls of the buildings would need to be done in partnership with the various owners of property in the vicinity.*
- iii. Improvements to lampposts and signs  
*The lampposts and signs in the area are also graffitied and fly posted. They need to be cleaned and repainted.*
- iv. Re-painting of Knights Park Bridge  
*Knights Park Bridge is an important feature of this section of the Hogsmill Valley Walk. It would be ideal to repaint the bridge as the paint is currently cracking and is graffitied. There has been debate as to whether the bridge should remain blue (it is referred to by local residents as the “Blue Bridge”), or change to green to match other structures along the river and Kingston’s Council colour. A survey of local residents could be carried out to find their preference.*
- v. Path beside St John’s School  
*A key objective of the Hogsmill Valley Walk strategy is to make the route easily accessible to all residents. This section of the walk is not easily accessible, and so a new hoggin path would improve accessibility, alongside cutting back existing vegetation. This would make the path wheelchair accessible.*
- vi. Gate beside bridge to Middle Mill Island  
*The gate beside the bridge to Middle Mill Island is no longer in use. Both the gate and the fence could be removed, which will improve this point of the walk.*
- vii. Swan Public House Meeting Hall  
*The meeting hall adjacent to the Swan public house is badly graffitied and run down. It is not currently used, and would benefit from regular use in terms of maintenance. This strategy aims to improve the external appearance of the building and its environs to create a more pleasant place for pedestrians. This will need to be done in partnership with the owners of The Swan.*
- viii. Chain link fence beside open land at Fairfield Place  
*The chain link fence between Fairfield Place and the pedestrian route does not serve a purpose. Removing this would provide a more pleasant environment, and access to the river. The Council have removed the old concrete boundary wall between the river and the path, and replaced it with railings which allow easy views of the river in its deep concrete channel.*

- ix. Residual land at the end of the King Athelstan playing field  
*The land at the end of the King Athelstan playing field is heavily fly tipped and has japanese knotweed growing. The area needs to be cleared and the invasive knotweed removed before further work can be undertaken to landscape the area using money from s.106 agreements.*
- x. Path beside King Athelstan School  
*The path beside King Athelstan School is easily accessible, but there is some knotweed which will need to be carefully removed, and lighting needs to be improved in this area.*

#### 4) Proposed Timescales

No.	Proposed Improvements	Timescale
i	New signage along the length of the path	Short Term
ii	Removal of graffiti	Short Term
iii	Improvements to lamposts and signs	Medium Term
iv	Re-painting of Knights Park Bridge	Long Term
v	Path beside St John's School	Medium Term
vi	Gate beside bridge to Middle Mill Island	Short Term
vii	Swan public house meeting hall	Long Term
viii	Chain link fence beside open land at Fairfield Place	Short Term
ix	Residual land at the end of the King Athelstan playing field	Medium Term
x	Path beside King Athelstan School	Medium Term

#### 5) Funding

All money for these improvements will come from both the borough's spending budget for implementing the Hogsmill Walk, and money secured for improvements to the walk from section 106 planning agreements. It will therefore form part of the overall spend for the 2003/2004 budget year. £25,000 from this year's funding has been earmarked for these improvements.

#### 6) Influence upon the overall implementation of the Hogsmill Valley Walk Strategy

It is hoped that through implementation of these proposals the Hogsmill Valley Walk will grow in its significance to the borough, through increased accessibility. This should give more emphasis to the strategy, and encourage alternative funding sources from elsewhere to assist in implementing many of the other proposals contained in the adopted strategy, including Strategy 3 (Mill Place) and Strategy 4 (King Athelstan School). These strategies are fully associated with this section, and relate to the way the walk deviates from the river at both Mill Street and King Athelstan School. The strategies aim to ultimately implement the walk closer to the

river. Strategy 3 refers to the overgrown area of knotweed beside Mill Place which is included within this local area strategy. Strategy 4 relates to the deviation of the path from the river at King Athelstan School. This will be addressed through the main Hogsmill Valley Walk Strategy due to its complex nature.

## **7) Promotion**

Publicity for the improvements outlined in this local area strategy, and the involvement of the public will promote the Hogsmill Valley Walk, and encourage people to begin to use it for their daily journey's and leisure activities. It should therefore raise the profile of the walk, and will assist in enhancing public awareness with regards to other schemes contained in the strategy, and their imminent implementation.