

ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS OVERVIEW PANEL

7 FEBRUARY 2005

THAMES LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

REPORT BY THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

SUMMARY

This report introduces the work that is currently in progress and that which is planned in respect of the work of the Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS) in Kingston upon Thames. Following the introduction that sets out the background to RBK's involvement in the TLS and the policy context, the report identifies the overall approach, the work currently in progress and gives some detail on a selection of projects, before outlining the next steps and finally the financial implications for RBK.

ACTION BY THE PANEL

The Panel is recommended to:

- a. Register their support, in principle, for the TLS overall approach as set out in the report,
- b. Consider the approach to working up options as outlined in the report, and
- c. Comment on the type of interventions proposed as indicated by the examples included in the report.

INTRODUCTION

1. RBK was a founder member of the TLS at its launch in 1994. The TLS is a partnership organisation that seeks to promote and co-ordinate policies and projects to protect and enhance the Thames landscape and promote use of the river and the riverside.
2. The other TLS Partners for the Kew to Hampton stretch of the Thames include the Richmond and Hounslow Borough Councils, Elmbridge District Council, the Historic Royal Palaces and the Environment Agency. All Partners make an annual financial contribution to fund the work of the TLS, the current fee for each of the member Councils is £7,000pa. For a number of years the focus for TLS activity has been on Richmond, where the Arcadian project and Teddington Gateway in particular are the most recent projects designed to improve the Thames landscape and promote waterspace activity.
3. In contrast to Richmond there has been relatively little TLS activity on RBK's riverside in recent years. However, improvements have taken place, most notably Charter Quay, which is an important addition to Kingston, and the very high quality of the environment within that development now contrasts with the comparatively poor environmental quality in other areas of the Kingston riverside. The Council has also recently moved to strengthen policy support to sustain and enhance the riverside through the designation of the Riverside North and Riverside South Conservation Areas, which together with the river frontage included within the Old Town

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Conservation Area mean that virtually the whole of the riverfront in RBK is now located within a Conservation Area.

4. The Conservation Area designations complement the new Thames Policy Area (OL14) policy in the Unitary Development Plan, and it is also proposed to bring forward in the next eighteen months revised policies for the riverside in a Supplementary Planning Document, which will form part of the Local Development Framework. A further initiative that will bring benefits to the riverside is the emerging Area Action Plan (AAP) for the town centre (K+20 Strategy) which aims to provide visual and environmental improvements, new facilities and improve the physical links between the river and the town centre.
5. Whilst there has been a desire to achieve site specific initiatives along the riverside, such as environmental enhancements at the Thameside Car Park (under the railway bridge), to date little progress has been made on the ground. The appointment of the Strategic Planning Officer working in the Planning Policy Team in Autumn 2004 with responsibilities including river/riverside issues provided the opportunity to pursue a more co-ordinated approach to riverside improvements and to engage much more fully with the TLS.

OVERALL APPROACH

6. Whilst the River Thames and the riverside represents a magnificent asset for the Borough, which is enjoyed by residents and visitors to RBK alike, there are many areas/issues that have long been recognised as being appropriate for improvement. The TLS, through the co-ordinator (Jason Debney) and RBK's lead Councillor (Barry O'Mahony and lead Officer (Andrew Lynch) seeks to identify all the potential initiatives, and to ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to the consideration and implementation of improvement proposals, as well as the all-critical search for funding.
7. The overall approach we are taking is to :
 - I. Undertake a baseline audit of sites and ownership in the riverside area;
 - II. identify the areas/issues that would benefit from interventions, and consider priority and timescales for implementation;
 - III. seek Member support for the approach and type of projects proposed;
 - IV. consult a cross-section of stakeholder groups to identify aspirations;
 - V. work up options/costings;
 - VI. in parallel investigate potential funding sources;
 - VII. re-consult stakeholders on options;
 - VIII. present options/costings/funding sources to Members, probably in respect of individual sites/projects, but possibly groups of sites/projects in response to the potential to make funding bids for themed issues;
 - IX. work up preferred options/costings;
 - X. prepare funding bids on the basis of the preferred options. Some options could potentially be funded through planning obligations linked to future riverside development proposals. In such cases it would be helpful to have the preferred option scoped and costed in advance of schemes coming forward (this issue is expanded upon below); and
 - XI. seek Executive approval for the submission of funding bids for each project.

WORK IN PROGRESS

8. The following work, in respect of items I to IV above, is currently underway :
- XII. a riverside land use survey – to establish existing activity and ownership;
 - XIII. collation of sites/issues – a full list is presented in the table at Annex 1;
 - XIV. Seeking support and direction from Members - presentation made in Dec 2004 to the Executive, and this report; and
 - XV. preparation of a stakeholder database – to assist with future consultation.

THE POTENTIAL PROJECTS

9. The list of sites/issues presented at Annex 1 (and illustrated on the map at Annex 2) includes over 50 individual items and ranges from large-scale projects which would involve major redevelopment to improvements to the maintenance of the riverbank vegetation along Lower Ham Road. Some of the projects are long term, but others could be implemented in the short term, at low cost with significant benefits. The matrix on Annex 1 indicates our initial sieving of timescales, benefits and cost, which will be developed and refined as the project moves forward.
10. Proposals for interventions which are considered to be both needed and realistic in four example locations are set out below. The issues, aspirations and potential options in each case will be illustrated at the Panel meeting.

HALF MILE TREE AND LOWER HAM RD

Issues

- No acknowledgement/ celebration/ information/ that this location marks the point where the more suburban Thames meets the pastoral areas around Ham.
- Obtrusive signage/bollards at Half Mile Tree.
- No acknowledgement of proximity to Kingston town centre and Teddington Lock.
- Poor quality surfacing.
- Potential for conflict between motorcars and pedestrians.
- Riverbank vegetation obscures views of river.
- Pedestrian route along the road is separated from the river and forces pedestrians to either cross the roadway at either end or, if the desire is to walk by the riverside, to walk in the carriageway.
- Poor quality lighting.

Aspirations

- Make Half Mile Tree's strategic location/importance clearer by making the signage/ bollards less obtrusive, and signalling the location as a gateway.
- Improvement quality and safety of pedestrian environment.
- Upgrade the environment to accord with Conservation Area status.

Potential Options (examples)

- Replace existing bollards with planting or low stone bollards, and signage with an interpretation board.
- Install raised pedestrian crossing points at either end of the road.
- Replace lighting with better quality, more sensitive lamps.

SOUTHERN ENTRANCE TO CANBURY GARDENS

Issues

- No 'celebration' of the entrance to the Gardens
- Poor surface treatment – a large area of concrete, an enduring reminder of the building once located on this site
- Obtrusive railings and emergency services gates/bollards
- Obtrusive information board
- Area is sandwiched between two potential development sites – the PS1 site and the Barge Dock site
- Footpaths/cycleways need rationalising
- Some S106 funding (£10,000), associated with the planning permission for an hotel on the PS1 site, potentially available for improvements to this area

Aspirations

- Provide an attractive gateway into the Gardens
- Reduce the amount of hard surface materials, and extend the soft landscaping in the direction of the Thameside Car Park
- Ensure that any future development on adjacent sites are screened by attractive landscaping
- Open up views to river by reducing lower level planting on riverbank
- Provide clear routes for pedestrians and cyclists

Potential Options

- Accentuate the perception of 'entrance' by a narrowing of the footpath/cycle track (but retaining this as a route for the emergency services), and some strategic landscaping to funnel the view.
- Relocate the information board to the right hand-side of the entrance
- Incorporate new landscaped area to make entrance to gardens

THAMESIDE CAR PARK

Issues

- Area of hard landscaping (granite setts) marking the point where the 'soft' environment of Canbury Gardens meets the built form in the town centre
- Valuable as a public car park, especially disabled spaces
- Valuable as access to moorings
- The wood panelling fence serves little obvious purpose
- Riverside treatment – are the existing bollards the best means of controlling where cars park?
- Is pedestrian access to the riverside desirable given the aspiration for 24 hour moorings?

Aspirations

- Soften the effect of the parking and the bridge in particular, by tree planting/landscaping and extend the visual link to Canbury Gardens
- Introduce a public footway along the river side of Thameside
- Repairs to the granite setts
- Provide 24 hour public moorings

Potential Options

- Tree and landscape planting to both soften and define the parking area
- Reinstatement of the granite setts
- Introduce alternative measures, perhaps a curb, to control where vehicles park
- Removal of wooden boundary fence and introduction of footway to link to routes north and south

EAGLE WHARF

Issues

- An area of public open space overlooking the Thames, located between the High Street and the river
- An under-utilised asset, lacking a raison d'être
- Poor quality hard and soft landscaping, dating from circa mid-1980s
- No lighting or seating provided

Aspirations

- To create an attractive riverside park, incorporating public art which contributes to the enhancement of the Thames riverside
- To unlock unrealised potential
- Improve the area's attraction through improved hard and soft landscaping
- Provide an area of seating for quiet contemplation or viewing activity

Potential Options

- Proposals have been worked up to provide an amphitheatre with performance space, other seating areas, improved landscaping and public art features designed to encourage children's play.
- A creative lighting scheme could enhance the area in the evening.

THE NEXT STEPS

11. Subject to receiving Member endorsement for the overall approach the next steps will be to commence action on steps IV to XI outlined above. The most important step in developing potential options will be to hold a stakeholder session(s) so that we engage the interest groups and attempt to spread the ownership of options widely. Kingston Town and Surbiton Neighbourhood Committees will have a particular interest in the evolving work as it directly affects their areas. Final decision-making will rest with the Executive.
12. The steps following stakeholder engagement are outlined above with a critical step (step VI) being the identification of potential funding sources. This is an area where the TLS have particular experience and expertise that can be made available to RBK. The principal means of funding riverside improvements are likely to be :
 - the Environment Agency through the Waterways Plan (a plan currently at the pre-formal consultation stage that seeks to promote use of the river and riverside – we submitted some aspirations for RBK as part of the pre-formal consultation stage late last year);
 - Transport for London through National Trails and the Local Implementation Plan (LIP);

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- Planning obligations (Section 106 benefits/monies) contributed by the developers of riverside sites (e.g. Vicarage Road area); and
 - The RBK Capital Programme and Kingston Town and Surbiton Neighbourhoods.
13. We will need to identify the mechanisms for seeking funding from these sources and any critical dates in terms of funding bids, as well as search for additional sources.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14. As referred to above, as yet we do not have funding in place for any of the projects with the exception of some S106 monies available for reinstating the former power station riverside wharf site in Canbury Gardens, which Powergen have an obligation to contribute to. Further work is required on investigating funding options.

BACKGROUND PAPERS held by Andrew Lynch - tel: 0208 547 5376

email: andrew.lynch@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

- The Thames Landscape Strategy (Hampton to Kew) prepared by Kim Wilkie (1994)
- Thames Waterway Plan Consultation prepared by the Environment Agency (June 2004)

APPENDIX 1
RIVER/RIVERSIDE SITES AND ISSUES (work in progress)

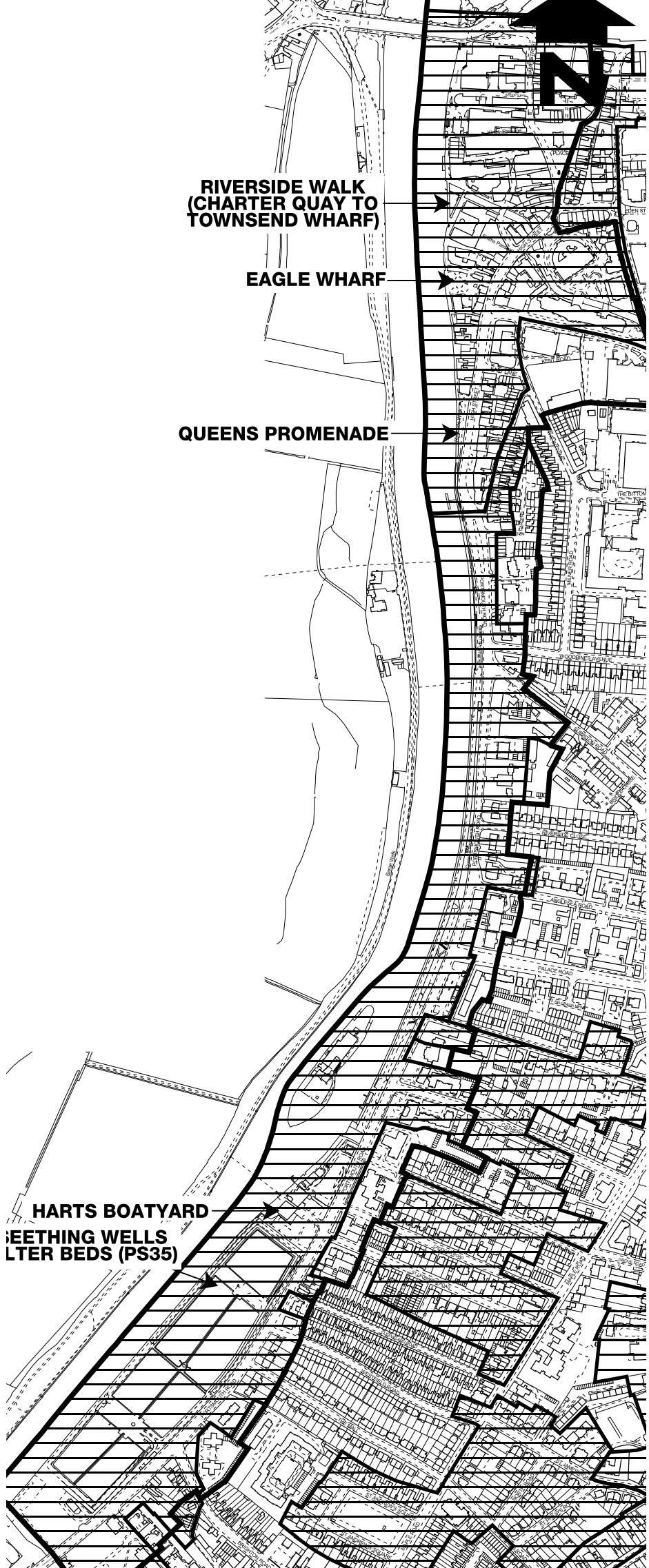
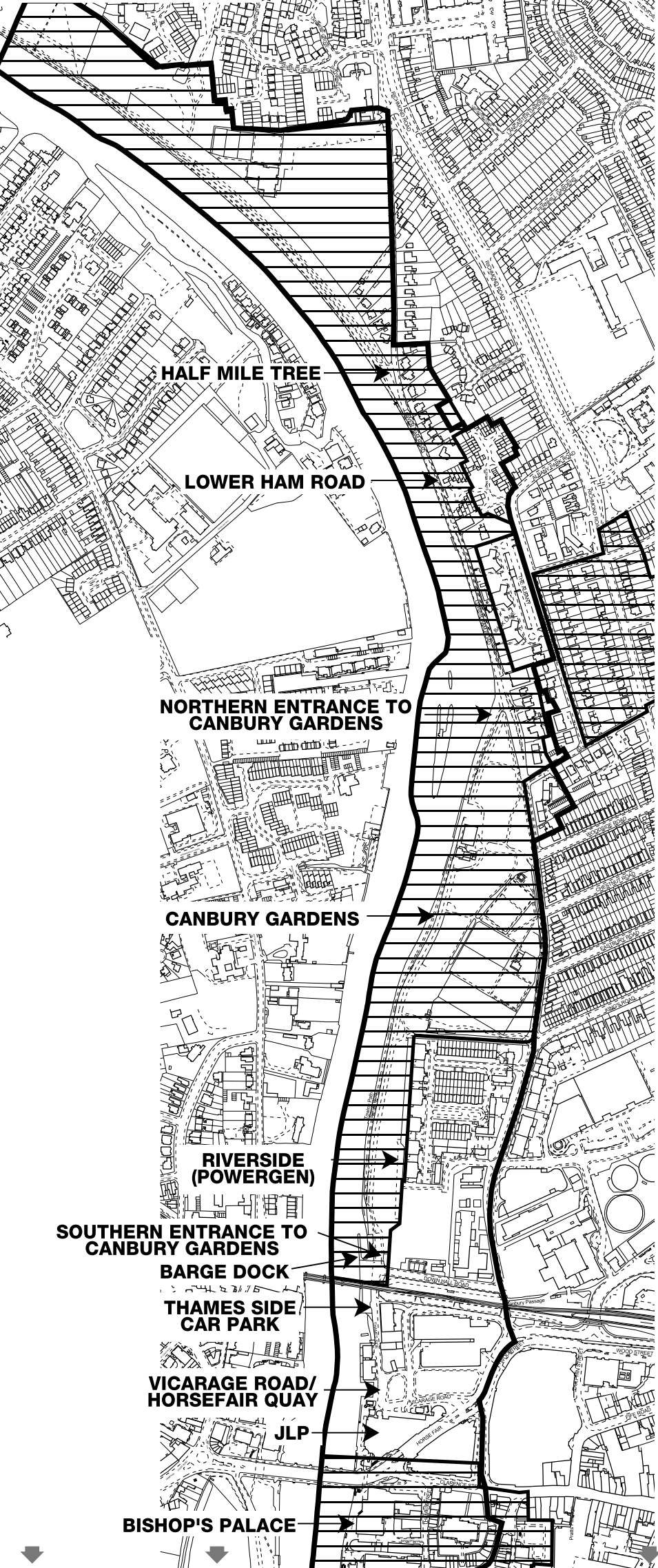
Ref	Location	Issue to be addressed	Aspirations	Potential Options	Main Ownerships	Benefit (high - med - low)	Cost (low - med - high)	Ease of Implementation (very - med - hard)	Funding
1	Half Mile Tree (land at junction of Lower Ham Road and Thames Tow Path)	No acknowledgement/ celebration/ information/ that this location marks the point where the more suburban Thames meets the pastoral areas around Ham.	Make Half Mile Tree's strategic location/importance clearer by making the signage/ bollards less obtrusive, and signalling the location as a gateway.	Replace existing bollards with planting or low stone bollards, and signage with an interpretation board.	RBK/ EA				
		Obtrusive signage/bollards at Half Mile Tree.	Improvement quality and safety of pedestrian environment.	Install raised pedestrian crossing point linking footpath to riverside.					
		No acknowledgement of proximity to Kingston town centre and Teddington Lock. Poor quality surfacing. Poor quality lighting.	Upgrade the environment to accord with Conservation Area status.	Replace lighting with better quality, more appropriate lamps. Improve surfacing by use of sealed gravel					
2	Lower Ham Road	Pedestrian route along the road is separated from the river and forces pedestrians to either cross the roadway at either end or, if the desire is to walk by the riverside, to walk in the carriageway.	Improvement quality and safety of pedestrian environment.	Install raised pedestrian crossing points at either end of the road.	Sea Scouts and Albany Pk Sailing Centre (RBK)				
		Potential for conflict between motorcars and pedestrians. Riverbank vegetation obscures views of river. Poor quality lighting.	Upgrade the environment to accord with Conservation Area status.	Replace lighting with better quality, more appropriate lamps. Improve surfacing by use of sealed gravel					
3	Northern Entrance to Canbury Gardens	Entrance in need of enhancement	Could be better celebrated by treating the whole area from the slipway (formerly associated with the Albany Boathouse) in an arc onto the path with sealed gravel.	Improve surfacing by use of sealed gravel	Kingston Rowing Club, Boaters PH & RBK				
		Landscaping maintenance required to the riverbank, both the retaining wall and vegetation							
4	Canbury Gardens	Seating	Currently there are several different styles of bench in the Gdns and indeed all along the riverside. Continuity of style would be appropriate.	Rebuild the level change retaining wall so that it provides seating facing the river in addition to functioning as a retaining wall. The wall could have subtle up lights embedded to illuminate seating/path.					
		Lighting	Path lighting would encourage use and improve safety/security and add the "wow" factor.						
		Pedestrians/ cycles	Provide for both peds and cyclists to use riverside path	Widen of the riverside path (resurface with sealed gravel) from the present two metre (approx) width, in addition to signs asking cyclists to respect slow speeds on this stretch, would provide potential for both to co-exist.					
		Moorings	??? Consideration of location for moorings	Potential for public moorings on the stretch of river bank formerly used by power station river traffic. This stretch has sufficient water depth and the bank is reinforced and well maintained.				£10K S106 PS1 site	
5	Riverside (Powergen site)	Reinstatement of former wharf area back into the public realm	Incorporate landscape improvements, seating and riverside path improvements Enhance the links between the southern end of Canbury Gardens and the riverside. Make a feature of industrial heritage artifacts						
6	Southern Entrance to Canbury Gardens	No 'celebration' of the entrance to the Gardens	Provide an attractive gateway into the Gardens	Accentuate the perception of 'entrance' by a narrowing of the footpath/cycle track (but retaining this as a route for the emergency services), and some strategic landscaping to funnel the view.					
		Poor surface treatment – a large area of concrete, an enduring reminder of the building once located on this site	Reduce the amount of hard surface materials, and extend the soft landscaping in the direction of the Thameside Car Park	Relocate the information board to the right hand-side of the entrance					
		Obtrusive railings and emergency services gates/bollards	Ensure that any future development on adjacent sites are screened by attractive landscaping	Incorporate new landscaped area to make entrance to gardens					
		Obtrusive information board	Open up views to river by reducing lower level planting on riverbank	Move information board to a less obtrusive position and ensure well maintained					
		Area is sandwiched between two potential development sites – the PS1 site and the Barge Dock site	Provide clear routes for pedestrians and cyclists						
		Footpaths/cycleways need rationalising	Improve provision of information about the location and surrounding area.						
7	Barge Dock (Richmond Venturer)	Redevelopment over the dock is a possibility	Ensure that any development enhances the appearance of the locality.	A high quality designed restaurant over the dock would be an added attraction to the locality.					
		Redevelopment would block river views							
8	Thameside Car Park (beneath railway bridge) cont over....	Area of hard landscaping (granite setts) marking the point where the 'soft' environment of Canbury Gardens meets the built form in the town centre	Retain but, soften the effect of the parking and the bridge in particular, by tree planting/landscaping and extend the visual link to Canbury Gardens	Tree and landscape planting to both soften and define the parking area	North – EA (leased to RBK), south RBK				

APPENDIX 1
RIVER/RIVERSIDE SITES AND ISSUES (work in progress)

Ref	Location	Issue to be addressed	Aspirations	Potential Options	Main Ownerships	Benefit (high - med - low)	Cost (low - med - high)	Ease of Implementation (very - med - hard)	Funding	
 Cont Thameside Car Park (beneath railway bridge)	Valuable as a public car park, especially disabled spaces	Introduce a public footway along the river side of Thameside	Reinstatement of the granite setts						
		Valuable as access to moorings	Repairs to the granite setts	Introduce alternative measures, perhaps a curb, to control where vehicles park						
		The wood panelling fence serves little obvious purpose	Provide 24 hour public moorings	Removal of wooden boundary fence and introduction of footway to link to routes north and south						
		Riverside treatment – are the existing bollards the best means of controlling where cars park? Is pedestrian access to the riverside desirable given the aspiration for 24 hour moorings?								
		Moorings	An opportunity to improve links, especially along Down Hall Rd and Canbury Passage to railway station.	A potential location for 24 hour public moorings, as the site is close to the town centre with all its attractions/services.						
	Railway Bridge	Blend it in a little better	Improvements to colour to make structure less obtrusive.							
9	Vicarage Road/ Horsefair Quay	There is opportunity to provide an area of public open space	Potential for opening up of the river frontage, to provide new public open space.	May require realignment of Thameside used to access JLP.	RBK – Highways					
		Good location for increasing waterspace activity - close to town and amenities	Encourage waterspace activity	yaught basin/moorings incorporating Horsefair Quay and the site of the Slug and Lettuce PH.	Horsefair quay – JLP Osiers Court - resi					
10	John Lewis Partnership River Frontage	The Riverside restaurant and Undercroft	Enlivening the River frontage	Providing a floating pontoon (similar to that used at Charter Quay and elsewhere) along the high retaining wall to provide extra moorings. River activity may encourage ground floor activity at JLP that could spill out onto the pavement in the same way restaurants do south of the road bridge.	RBK – JLP have a long lease (999 years)					
		Moorings		Potential location for public 24 hour moorings, close to town.						
		Landscaping		Improved planting to soften the unattractive JLP building would be of benefit. Improved public access to the undercroft and additional educational/historical information provided.						
11	Bishop's Palace	Rumoured interest of redevelopement	Provide active frontages to Bishop's Hall - potentially an extension to the town's shopping frontages							
		Bishop's Palace impedes access to the river	Opportunity to improve visual/physical links between the town centre and the riverside							
		A number of dead frontages Poor quality landscaping on the riverside	Introduce active frontages to Bishop's Palace. Enhance landscaping without overly cluttering riverside							
12	Riverside Walk – Charter Quay to Townsend Wharf	Surface Treatment	Sealed gravel		Townsend Wharf – RBK					
		Lighting	Potential to introduce illumination through uprights in either the walkway or in the river wall							
13	Eagle Wharf	An area of public open space overlooking the Thames, located between the High Street and the river	To create an attractive riverside park, incorporating public art which contributes to the enhancement of the Thames riverside	Proposals have been worked up to provide an amphitheatre with performance space, other seating areas, improved landscaping and public art features designed to encourage children's play.						
		An under-utilised asset, lacking a raison d'etre Poor quality hard and soft landscaping, dating from circa mid-1980s	To unlock unrealised potential Improve the area's attraction through improved hard and soft landscaping	A creative lighting scheme could enhance the area in the evening.						
		No lighting or seating provided	Provide an area of seating for quiet contemplation or viewing activity							
14	Queens Promenade	Surface Treatment	Sealed gravel		RBK					
		Moorings	Possible location for public moorings							
		Lighting	Potential to introduce illumination through uprights in either the walkway or in the river wall							
		Enhance Views	Opportunity at interpretation board site to clear the view to the Long Water and Hampton Court Palace.							
15	Hart's Boat Yard	Surface Treatment	Sealed gravel		Raven's Ait – RBK					
		Thames-side Path	Introduce path along river, rather than along Portsmouth Road to continue the riverside walk.		Harts – Private					
16	Seething Wells Filter Beds (PS35)	Footbridge	Support suitably high quality designed bridge crossing to improve riverside access.		Kennet Properties (Thames Water)					
		Nature Conservation	Support nature conservation management on site and the introduction of public access on site and along the river side.							

RIVERSIDE NORTH

RIVERSIDE SOUTH



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**THAMES LANDSCAPE STRATEGY :
ASPIRATION SITES IN RBK.**

Directorate of Environmental Services,
Guildhall 2, Kingston upon Thames,
Surrey KT1 1EU.

THAMES POLICY AREA

CONSERVATION AREAS

Date: **JAN. 2005**

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Scale: **1/7,000**

Dwg No: **05/009/A**