Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

HOGSMILL VALLEY WALK STRATEGY
VILLIERS ROAD TO A3

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE WALK

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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 and Bonesgate Stream. 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 that 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 focal point at which to start the Hogsmill river walk or do a linked walk along the Hogsmill and the newly completed Thames-side path.

Following its departure from Charter Quay it is possible to follow the river upstream to the Guildhall complex, immediately adjacent to Guildhall 2.

The river then runs underneath college roundabout, until it emerges at the Reevethorpe Garage site (Proposal Site 21 in the Unitary Development Plan). The current entrance to this section of the Hogsmill Walk is next to the garage site, meeting the river as it emerges at the back of a residential area. The walk then follows the river until it meets the end of Heron Court, where it is forced to leave the river to circumnavigate Agar House and its grounds. The walk diverts along Denmark Road and meets the river as it flows under Knight's Park Bridge. 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 Rd.

The walk continues along the east side of Villiers Road. There is currently a short footpath by the river that runs past the sorting office site. This path ends abruptly where it meets Kingston Cemetery. The strategy highlights the need to investigate the feasibility of putting a path through Kingston Cemetery, whilst maintaining the tranquillity of the Cemetery and ensuring that the stability of the bank is not compromised (see Map1).

Currently the walk does not deviate from Villiers Road until the junction with Lower Marsh Lane. The walker follows the length of Lower Marsh Lane until it emerges out into Chiltern Drive, by Berrylands Station. Historically, the walk has turned left and followed an alleyway behind Rose Walk onto open land. It has recently been found that this alleyway is in private ownership. If an agreement can be reached with the various landowners it may be possible to resume using this route. However, until such an arrangement is made, the walker should follow Chiltern Drive up the hill and turn left onto Surbiton Hill Park until again reaching an open space by the new Green Lane cycle bridge (see Map 2).

The Strategy highlights the need for a cycle link between Berrylands Station and the Green Lane cycle bridge, and this would allow cyclists to bypass the existing longer and hilly cycle route (LCN+Route 75) along Surbiton Hill Park and Chiltern Drive.

At this area of open space the walk continues by the river, passing the new cycle bridge at Green Lane. The walk then reaches Elmbridge Meadows, where wide grass paths are mown to direct the walker. Elmbridge Meadows is managed for nature conservation, and the informal path by the river is in keeping with this. During the winter some sections of the path can become very muddy, and in the future these sections could be improved to increase accessibility.

The walk then reaches the gate onto the slip road adjacent to the A3, where the walk deviates from the river and uses the subway to cross the A3. The walk then follows the A3 until it reaches the entrance to the next section of open land. The Strategy highlights the desire for a more convenient crossing, but suggests it is unlikely to be found. Improving the signage to the subway and the path the walker should take to rejoin the river will make the route clearer.

2) The existing problems on the Hogsmill Walk between Villiers Road and the A3

a. Signage along the footpath

The existing signage along the length of the Hogsmill Valley Walk is poor, and not easily identifiable. As this stretch deviates from the river it is particularly important to ensure that all signposting is clear.

b. Kingston Cemetery/Hogsmill Sewage Treatment Works /Kingsmeadow/California Rd

This section is one of the two significant stretches of the walk where the path deviates from the river, forcing the walker to use Lower Marsh Lane. It is important that every opportunity to complete the walk beside the river is fully explored and suitable information is available at the appropriate time. The Strategy highlights the importance of assessing the feasibility of putting a route through Kingston Cemetery and continuing negotiations with Thames Water to complete this section of the route. This area also suffers from Japanese knotweed, which needs to be repeatedly sprayed to prevent regrowth.

Above: The path that follows the Hogsmill until it reaches Kingston Cemetery

c. Lower Marsh Lane

Lower Marsh Lane forms part of LCN+ Route 75,which forms the part of the strategic cycle route linking Twickenham, Kingston Town Centre, Worcester Park and Sutton. It suffers from extensive parking on grass verges, litter, regular flytipping and graffiti on walls and on the road itself. The road turns from a residential area to a high fenced path just past the Hogsmill Sewage Works entrance. This area is particularly littered and unkempt, with some greenery on each side of the tarmac path. The high fences on each side make the area feel quite unsafe, although the street lighting is good, having been upgraded in 2003/4 with funding from the London Cycle Network Plus

Above: The top of Lower Marsh Lane

Above: The Dairy Crest car park area

d. Dairy Crest

The Dairy Crest site at the top of Lower March Lane suffers from frequent graffiti and littering. There is an area of rough grass by the car-park, which could be greatly improved.

e. Berrylands Station

The area around Berrylands Station is currently scruffy and unkempt. It is heavily used by cyclists, walkers and train passengers at peak times, which can cause problems due to the fenced and narrow path under the railway bridge. Improvements to this area are scheduled in May 2004, as part of London Cycle Network Plus capital allocation from Transport for London (TfL), with funding from the 2004/5 financial year. The improvements will remove the fencing and the majority of barriers, creating improved pedestrian access to Lower Marsh Lane and the Station with entry treatments, improved lighting and landscaping of the area. The pathway under the railway bridge will be opened up to joint rail passenger/pedestrian and cycle use with pedestrians and cyclists segregated to minimise conflict between them. The existing street and station lighting will be improved and the area of station approach from Chiltern Drive will be landscaped. The revamped station will provide a good start/finish point for those not following the whole length of the Hogsmill Walk, and would improve access to the station for residents in the west of New Malden

View of Berrylands Station from Lower Marsh Lane (left) and Chiltern Drive (right)

f. Rose Walk access road & the area behind Rose Walk

The access road to the area is potholed and very muddy after rain. It has a concrete bank to one side and garages to the other. The road leads onto an area thought to have been used for dumping of house rubble after the Second World War. This area is also heavily flytipped, and has been for some time as vegetation is now growing through and over the mounds of rubbish.

Historically this path has been used as part of the Hogsmill Valley Walk. It has recently been discovered that this access road is in several private ownerships and should not be used by walkers. However, the possibility of acquiring from the private owners, rights both to use this path and the adjacent open space as part of the Walk, and to improve the condition of these areas, is currently being investigated. This would maintain the route closest to the river, and allow walkers to bypass Surbiton Hill Park and Chiltern Drive.

The proposed path between Berrylands Station and the Green Lane Cycle bridge should be designed and constructed to form a shared cycle and pedestrian path for daylight use. This would give cyclists a level traffic free route and allow them to bypass the existing longer and hilly route (LCN+Route 75) along Surbiton Hill Park and Chiltern Drive.

The alleyway leading to the land at the back of Rose Walk (left) and the flytipping on the open space (ight)

3) Potential improvements

i. *New Signage along the length of path*
From Villiers Road through to the A3 – will improve the visibility of the walk and ensure the clarity of the route where it deviates from the river.

ii. *Removal of graffiti*
Graffiti is particularly a problem along Lower Marsh Lane and on signs and lampposts along the route. This will be removed in partnership with the local community and owners of property affected.

iii. *Improvements to existing lighting*
As in the previous LASs, many of the lampposts and signs are fly posted or graffitied. Cleaning, and replacing where necessary, will improve the appearance of the walk.

iv. *Prevent spread of Japanese Knotweed*
Japanese knotweed is a non-native plant that spreads quickly, taking over areas of land and preventing native plants from flourishing. It is an injurious species and we have a duty to prevent it spreading. A programme of spraying will be implemented to contain, and eventually remove it, from the Hogsmill Valley Walk.

v. *Work with Dairy Crest to improve top end of Lower Marsh Lane*
This area is often littered, and the grass areas not kept mown or tidy. We will try to work in partnership with Dairy Crest to improve this area, and encourage them to keep it clean and attractive.

vi. *Commission feasibility study for Kingston Cemetery to Elmbridge Meadows route*
Completing the walk through Kingston Cemetery through to Elmbridge Meadows is a vital part of the Strategy. It is important to have all the necessary information available to complete the walk through this area if it becomes possible. A feasibility study would allow us to decide if the route through this area is possible. A bid for 2004/05 BSP funds will be made to carry out this study.

vii. *Continue negotiations with Thames Water to access land on the north side of the sewage works*
Negotiating an access agreement with Thames Water is a key element in completing the walk through this area. Opportunities to achieve this will be pursued.

viii. *Improvements to alley way and open land behind Rose Walk*
If the walk is able to use Lower Marsh Lane and the open space behind Rose Walk it is important to improve these areas. If appropriate rights were to be acquired to enable the land behind Rose Walk and the adjacent open land to be incorporated into the Walk, it is important that the condition of these areas is then improved if their full use as part of the Walk is to be achieved. A survey needs to be commissioned to find out the stability and content of the rubbish piles. A plan to design and implement the landscaping of the area could then be commissioned, with the emphasis on providing a shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists between Berrylands Station and the Green Lane Cycle Bridge and preventing subsequent flytipping

3) Proposed Timescales

No.	Proposed Improvements	Responsibility	Cost	Timescale
i.	New Signage along the length of path	Street Lighting	£1,500	Short Term
ii.	Removal of graffiti	Neighbourhood Services		Short Term
iii.	Improvements to existing lighting	Street Lighting	£10,000	Short Term
iv.	Programme of knotweed eradication	Structures	£5,000	Short Term
v.	Work with Dairy Crest – Lower Marsh Lane	Environmental Co-ordination	N/a	Short Term
vi.	Feasibility Study for route from Kingston Cemetery to Elmbridge Meadows	Environment and Sustainability	£35,000	Medium Term
vii.	Continue negotiations with Thames Water	Planning		Long Term
viii.	Improvements to alleyway and open land behind Rose Walk, with provision of shared use pedestrian and cycle path between Berrylands Station and the Green Lane Cycle Bridge	Environment and Sustainability	£35,000	Medium – Long Term

Short Term = 2004/05; Medium Term = 2005/06; Long Term = after 2006

4) Funding

All improvements, accept (vi.) feasibility study for Kingston Cemetery to Elmbridge Meadows path and (viii) improvements to alleyway and open space behind Rose Walk, will be undertaken with the BSP allocation for 2004/05. A bid for 2005/06 BSP funding for the feasibility study will be made. If access can be agreed for the area behind Rose Walk, a bid will be made to implement enhancements.

5) Influence upon the overall implementation of the Hogsmill Valley Walk Strategy

It is anticipated that through implementation of these proposals the Hogsmill Valley Walk will grow in its significance to the borough, through increased accessibility. The strategies aim to ultimately implement the walk closer to the river, improve the visual appearance of the walk, and provide for utility trips wherever possible.

6) Promotion

This scheme will promote the Hogsmill Valley Walk, and encourage people to begin to use it for their daily leisure activities. It should therefore raise the profile of the walk, and will assist in enhancing public awareness with regard to other schemes contained in the strategy. If access is permitted to the area behind Rose Walk, a community involvement day will be organised to improve the superficial look of the area and canvass opinion on how the Rose Walk area could be improved.