

# Brentford – A Waterway Town!

A way forward for the Thames Corridor in Brentford

Thames Landscape Strategy in Action



To build an accessible, well designed and connected riverside, that enhances Brentford's established character as a historic waterway town - a place to live, work and visit.

Draft Scoping Report for consultation and Consideration May 2009



## 1.0 Summary

Brentford is a bustling centre with many historic associations. – significantly it is one of the UK's most important canal junctions and one of the best remaining clusters of water-based activity in the capital. Between Kew Bridge and Syon Park, the Rivers Thames and Brent meander through a 'lost' landscape of wharves, disused docks, boatyards, creeks and islands where water-based industry has flourished for hundreds of years. What is more remarkable is that this gritty landscape is located immediately opposite the Kew Gardens World Heritage Site and directly between the major attractions of Strand on the Green and Syon House. The river corridor itself provides a remarkable place for a range of wildlife to flourish particularly on the riverbanks and islands

The post-war decline in water based transport and London's industry however, left many areas derelict and in need of considerable improvement. Over the past decade the town has seen much regeneration. Former industrial sites have been regenerated creating new riverside parks, towpaths and open spaces.

Unfortunately the regeneration process has been piecemeal with no clear plan for the riverside, the towpath or waterspace. This has left out many spaces that remain poor and in need of considerable enhancement whilst in other locations the Thames path deviates from the river forming an unwelcoming and illegible route.

With this in mind, the Thames Landscape Strategy worked closely with the London Borough Of Hounslow in the production of the Brentford Area Action plan that sets out a way forward for the town which makes specific reference of the TLS as the means by which many of the action plan's aspirations for the river will be addressed.

'Brentford a Waterway Town! is a new project initiated by the Thames Landscape Strategy to find ways of implementing the Brentford Area Action Plan to conserve, open up, restore, enhance and celebrate the remarkable watery landscape between Kew Bridge and Syon Park. It identifies a series of potential projects that are based on a sound understanding of the established character, anticipating future regeneration opportunities (particularly the land south of the High Street) proposing additional measures that would complement this exciting process to the parks, gardens, waterspace, and towpaths along Brentford's waterways.

The project makes considerable cross-river references – proposing new ways to connect the communities and heritage of Kew and Brentford. In this way the opportunities that Brentford's position (immediately opposite the Kew World Heritage site) can be extended to the town including joint promotion of attractions, enhanced transport links, a restored ferry or footbridge and access to funding for a range of projects.



*Waterway industry*



*Syon House*



*The River Brent*



*Waterman's Park*

The proposals set out in Brentford – a Waterway Town! have been designed to ensure that the water based industrial character of the canal junction is conserved and can be weaved into the urban grain of the town as an integral element – rather than an after thought. The project proposes ways to considerably improve the connections along and across the Thames Path and for the regeneration of small public open spaces to take place. Ways to improve wildlife habitats are outlined and many measures to realise the town’s potential as a visitor destination in its own right are established. Finally, the scheme sets out a way forward to engage with the community to find new ways of involving local people in the future of their riverside – so critical for the long-term success of any such project.

## 2.0 The Thames Landscape Strategy

The Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS) is one of three sub-regional partnerships for the River Thames in the Greater London area whose focus is the river corridor between Hampton and Kew. Launched in 1994, the Strategy is a 100-year blueprint for the Thames, whose vision is to conserve, enhance and promote for the future, one of the world’s great urban landscapes. To achieve its aims, the Strategy brings together a partnership of statutory and non-statutory organisations, local groups and individuals to inform strategic policy and to implement a broad range of projects and management proposals totalling (to date) £15m.

## 3.0 Background – the Established Character

Brentford is one of the UK’s most important waterway junctions and is one of only two gateways to the canal network in London that link the River Thames with the rest of the country via the Grand Union (which follows the course of the River Brent in its lower reaches).

Historically the town developed because of its position at the confluence between the Thames and the River Brent, the settlement becoming the administrative centre for the County of Middlesex in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Brentford’s fortune and character were intrinsically linked with the river firstly through market gardening on the fertile river gravels and later due to the important inland port that developed at the strategic river junction. The area quickly industrialised with a variety of river related industries clustered along the River Thames, the River Brent, the Grand Union Canal and the railhead (now forming the Brentford Dock estate). With the nationwide decline in heavy industry much of this activity has gone particularly along the Thames and is now either lying derelict or has been replaced by housing or municipal parkland.

At the junction of the Grand Union Canal however, water based industry and infrastructure has survived remarkably intact although its nature has evolved from freight transfer to boat construction and



*Different aspects of the River Brent at its junction with the Thames*

repair. As such, Brentford is one of the most complete surviving working canal junctions in London – a real cluster of water based employment, expertise and industry set within a landscape of moored boats of all kinds. This water based employment cluster has a gritty character – a series of small ‘cottage’ industries – a wonderful reminder of London’s industrial past.

Brentford is set within the context of the Arcadian Thames – a remarkable historic landscape un-equalled in any other capital city in Europe. The essence of Arcadia is the ‘countryside in the city’ a place where humans and nature can get close to each other – set within a wider designed landscape of parks, palaces and gardens. Although gritty and industrial, the human scale character of Brentford’s riverscape lends itself ideally to this landscape – a fascinating backworld of creeks, boatyards and industry.

Situated opposite the world famous Kew Gardens UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Brentford riverfront boasts splendid views across the Thames to Kew Palace. The Brentford Ferry once connected the gardens with the town although this amenity has now long gone. Upstream of Brentford is Syon House, the London home of the Duke of Northumberland. A Grade I listed building, the house contains one of the finest Robert Adams interiors in the UK and the Capability Brown landscape is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest being the only natural riverbank left along the Thames in Greater London. The wildlife that flourishes on the Syon flood meadows extends into the Brentford area - Lots Ait and the Brentford Ait both provide the habitat for an interesting range of wildlife including nesting birds, bats and the endangered German hairy snail. Willow, black poplars and alder line the riverbanks and even seals have been known to bask in the sunshine on the river gravels that form at the mouth of the Brent.

Downstream of the town is Strand on the Green arguably one of the most picturesque locations along the River Thames containing many fine buildings and waterside pubs. From here, the Thames Path follows the course of the river passing through Watermans Park – a peaceful haven on the banks of the Thames (constructed on the site of a former waterside gas and coke works). The Thames Path turns at the Ferry Point up the River Brent. From here the walker can continue on the Thames Path towards Syon Park and Richmond or deviate along the Grand Union Canal to Ealing and beyond. Despite the strategic importance and economic potential that these long distance footpaths could bring to Brentford, the path in many places has to deviate round former industrial locations and in other sites is un-welcoming, of a poor design and does not conform to access standards.

Brentford town centre has an interesting mix of shops, civic buildings and pubs. Of particular note is the Butts that date from the town’s

grandest years, when shops as fine as any in London lined the High Street. The Butts is a street and square of red brick houses developed from the 1680s, that was once the town's market place. Near-by at Brentford Lock, a redundant industrial site has been redeveloped along the Grand Union Canal to form an attractive riverside quarter of housing, hotels and offices. Along the Thames, the successful Ferry Quays re-development has transformed the area opening for the first time new stretches of Thames Path. There is however, still considerable scope for the regeneration of Brentford with many more sites due to be developed over the coming years including the Land South of the High Street, Somerfield's and the Scottish Widows site near to Kew Bridge.

#### 4.0 Brentford a Waterway Town! - Project Vision

*To build an accessible, well designed and connected riverside, that enhances Brentford's established character as a waterway town - a place to live, work and visit.*

#### 5.0 Aspirations of the project

The aims of 'Brentford a Waterside Town!' can be summarised as:

- **To conserve the working character of the canal junction to act as a building block for the wider regeneration of the area**

It is quite remarkable that modern Brentford still retains a robust working river clustered around the canal junction with the River Thames around Thames Lock and Lots Ait. All future development in this area should start from the position that Brentford is a working waterway town placing the working nature of the waterspace at the heart of any proposal. This would ensure that the river related industry, moorings and water-based leisure opportunities are retained - conserving the vibrancy, character and economic diversity such activity lends to the town as a place to live, work and visit.

- **To open up the riverside for the enjoyment of the public through enhanced accessibility and the establishment of new connections along the Thames Path**

The legacy of Brentford's industrial past has left long sections of the Thames Path un-connected which is confusing to walkers and an identified barrier to use. In many locations the trail meanders round former industrial

sites, deviating onto busy main roads or via a confusing and illegible network of streets and paths. In other locations the footpath has been put in place as redevelopment has taken place but the route is often inaccessible and of a poor standard of design.

The long-term plan would see the ‘missing links’ or ‘gaps’ in the Thames Path completed as new developments take place – designed in a way that is legible and welcoming. These new connections should not be gated, generous in proportion and include the creation of public open spaces.

- **To enhance existing routes and open spaces along the waterways, improve cross-river connections and to link the town centres and neighbouring housing estates with riverside open spaces**

To existing sections of the Thames Path new initiatives should improve these spaces making a legible, accessible and welcoming trail – including sections along the hollows and along the River Brent. Of particular note would be to enhance the connections between Brentford with Syon Park and the Hollows with Strand on the Green. Access routes between the hinterland, including the High Street, the Butts and the Green Dragon Estate to the river need to be improved and the possibility to reopen the Brentford Ferry (or even, in the long term a new footbridge) should be explored to improve cross river connections. This network of connections and open spaces should form safe, legible and accessible routes for local people, visitors and commuters building on wider strategic goals to promote sustainable transport and healthy living.

- **To develop a series of well designed, accessible and safe landscape enhancements that are in keeping with the historic and industrial character of the area including the provision of viewing points across the canal and river to the islands.**

Brentford’s position on the north bank of the Thames allows for fabulous south facing views across the river. These spaces should be enhanced – particularly at Waterman’s Park, Ferry Quay and along the River Brent. De-cluttering the streetscape of unnecessary and redundant street furniture and signage whilst retaining those elements that help to navigate the user through the areas multi-layered past – mental mapping is an important consideration. Ways to make these open spaces safer through enhanced lighting, diversity of use and design should be incorporated into the design. Improve and



*Connections under Kew Bridge should be enhanced*



*The Hollows forms part of the Thames Path. The area needs to be upgraded and the alternative land-side route legibly waymarked*



*Waterman’s Park from the river*



*Waterman’s Park entrance*

promote more widely the visual connections between the open spaces and key landmark buildings on both sides of the river. Particular emphasis should be given to those public open spaces that do not form part of the proposed regeneration areas – it is these places that are often overlooked.

- **To enhance the waterway corridors for biodiversity and as a place for wildlife to move in and flourish that is well managed and reduces the risk from flooding**

Habitats for river related wildlife should be enhanced to create new places for riparian species to flourish. This would greatly enhance the green corridor at the junction between the Thames and the Grand Union Canal to allow movement between the two waterways and also to act as a bridge for wildlife to move along the Thames between the Syon/Kew reach with wildlife areas downstream at the Barnes Wetlands Centre. Natural river banks could be created on the islands and in sections of the waterway not being used for recreation or industry. This would include the construction of vertical foreshore to lengths of sheets piling (linked to similar habitat creation to the opposite Kew riverbank). Where possible space should be made for water to accommodate flood risk. New management regimes will need to be put in place particularly those for litter picking.

- **To put in place a series of improvements and raise the profile of Brentford to improve the area as a major destination for boaters – both trip and visiting craft**

To put in place the British Waterways waterspace proposals for the River Brent and Soaphouse Creek. To work with the PLA and London Borough of Hounslow to move forward proposals for the waterspace alongside Watermans Park.

- **To enhance Brentford’s visitor offer as a destination in its own right capitalising on its unique waterway character and Thameside location – the connection point that links Kew Gardens and the cluster of attractions to the north bank of the river.**

Restoration of Brentford’s Waterspace, the Thames Path and riverside open spaces would make an attractive environment for local people to use, enjoy and be proud of, whilst adding considerably to the tourist potential that the town has to offer. Brentford has the potential to be a major destination point in its own right as well as a place



*Connections between Waterman’s Arts Centre and the Thames Path towards Ferry Quays need to be made legible and welcoming*



*Connections between Brentford and Kew Gardens could be considerably improved through the re-introduction of the Brentford Ferry*



*The Thames Path at Ferry Quays has been much improved and opened up in recent years*



*The Thames Path between Ferry Quays and Dock Road is in need of much improvement*



that at present most people walk through on their way to visit adjoining locations. Proposals include:

- A setting for new riverside pubs, restaurants and shops
  - The intersection between the Thames Path National Trail with the Grand Union Walk
  - The chance to see a working canal junction without getting in the way including the remnants of a lost gritty industrial past, boat repair yards, dry docks, islands, narrow boats and locks.
  - A safe, accessible and welcoming linear- link between the established destinations of Strand on the Green and Syon House; and as a cross river connection linking Kew Gardens and the Capability Brown landscape at Syon House, Osterley Park, Boston Manor and Gunnersbury Park (via a restored Brentford ferry and towpath) including the possibility of joint visits and ticketing
  - A place to discover and watch at close hand riverside wildlife – a countryside in the city
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- **To improve access, lifelong learning and understanding of the River Thames environment - both on and off-site to broaden the diversity of use enabling visitors to access, and navigate through the area in a way that encourages a range of informal sustainable, healthy lifestyles and recreational opportunities.**

The TLS has submitted an Access for Nature funding bid that makes specific reference to Brentford. Projects would link with established community groups to broaden access to and understanding of the river environment. In addition, new ways to interpret and sign the riverside walks would be developed.

- **To investigate the possibility of extending the Kew Gardens World Heritage Site buffer Zone to include the area south of the High Street in order to extend the benefit that this prestigious designation could bring in shaping the regeneration of Brentford.**

## 6.0 Proposed Projects

### 6.1 Kew Bridge

It is proposed to enhance the connection between Strand on the Green with Brentford through the creation of an accessible link under Kew Bridge. This will more than likely be achieved through the redevelopment of the Scottish Widows site by opening up one of the bridge arches. The existing walkway under Kew Bridge would then be redundant and could form part of a landscaping proposal that made space for wildlife and water.

The Kew Bridge draw dock could be greatly enhanced with greater provision for river recreation and landscaping could enhance the visual amenity and wildlife habitat of the location.

## 6.2 The Hollows

Accessibility along the Thames Path could be improved. It is envisaged that this would be a long term proposal however, due to the nature of the footpath and the many changes in level along the route that would need to be overcome. In the short term it is proposed to waymark a legible alternate route along the High Street between Kew Bridge and Waterman's Park with associated landscaping enhancements such as surface works, signage, streetscape improvements and tree planting. Links to the Kew Bridge Steam Museum to be enhanced and to any enhancements (TfL) to the connection with Kew Bridge Station.



*Potential route of the Thames Path through Syon Estate*

## 6.3 Waterman's Park

It is proposed to improve the entrances into the park and the connections between the riverside amenity and the Green Dragon Estate. Much good work has been carried out recently to improve the visual appearance of the south facing garden. This should be continued to include new benches and planting to encourage more families to use the open space and the riverside playgrounds.



*The glorious Grand Union Canal between Brentford Bridge and Thames Lock*

The catalyst to the regeneration of the park will be the restoration of the moorings between the park and Brentford Ait. Derelict boats need to be removed and a comprehensive new mixed mooring facility put in place. An events plan should be developed to encourage a greater diversity of use - opening the area to new audiences and families. The garden's relationship with the Waterman's Arts Centre should be strengthened both physically and through usage. Greater co-operation between Continental Landscape (the appointed contractor who manage the park) and Kew Gardens could be established.

## 6.4 Waterman's Art Centre to Ferry Quays

Although the Waterman's Art Centre footpath affords wonderful high level views across the Thames to Lots Ait access is extremely poor in this section and the potential of the art centre to make the most from its waterside location has not yet been fully realised. It is proposed to work with the Arts Centre to improve the connections between the facility and the river and to improve access between Waterman's Park and Ferry Quays through the provision of a level and welcoming access route.

The missing link of the Thames Path between the Waterman's Arts Centre and Ferry Quays should be created when the redundant building at 41 High Street is redeveloped. This should be legible and welcoming, designed as an integral part of the building. The new path should be wide and constructed on the riverbank itself rather

than jutting out over the mud flats and take into consideration its impact on nocturnal wildlife.

### **6.5 Brentford Creek - Towpath between Ferry Quay and Dock Road**

At Ferry Quay provision needs to be made for the reinstatement of the Brentford Ferry and measures should be put in place to bring the waterspace alive through new moorings particularly in Soap House Creek. This would greatly add to the visitor potential the area has to offer as a visitor attraction in its own right, as a link between Syon and Kew and as the gateway to the national canal network. In the long-term

Leaving Ferry Quay the towpath should be considerably improved particularly alongside the Heidelberg site at Brentford Creek. A new viewing platform and seating area could be created affording views down the canal to the river and across to the working boatyards. A sealed gravel surface should be used and trees planted to soften the impact of the adjoining buildings on the riverside scene. Moorings could be improved in this area.

Until such time as the Thames Path can be connected along the canal edge to Dock Road improvements should extend to the High Street. Greater connections between the High Street and rail stations with the Thames Path should be created.

Opportunities to enhance biodiversity should be explored particularly along the river corridor. A vertical foreshore could be established to the sheet piling along the Brentford Dock development.

### **6.6 Dock Road to Syon Park**

The Thames Path returns to the waterway from the High Street at Dock Road where the granite sets add considerably to the established character of the working canal. From Dock Road the Thames Path follows the route of the grand Union Canal. Access could be considerably improved along this stretch – taking into account long term objectives of regeneration on the opposite bank. Safety should be considered as the path runs alongside the busy Thames Lock. A little further along the canal, the path makes it way up a short flight of steps to a footbridge. Access could be improved at this point. The possibility of opening a new section of accessible path along St. Augustus Road should be explored through dialogue with the Brentford Dock management board. – linked to the proposal for a new entrance into Syon Park.

It is proposed to create a new section of Thames path from the Grand Union Canal footbridge across Augustus Close and into Syon Park (subject to agreement and full stakeholder consultation). A new accessible route should be created near the footbridge (linked to any improvements south of the high Street). On entering the park,

the new footpath would run between the waterway and the Snakes and Ladders complex before rejoining the existing footpath through the Syon Estate. This new route would considerably enhance the day-time visitor experience along the Thames Path, aid commuting and walking routes and would add to the potential for joint marketing of Syon and Kew Gardens.

### **6.7 The Regeneration of the Land South of the High Street**

The Brentford Area Action Plan proposes that the land to the south of the High Street should be enhanced through a comprehensive regeneration scheme. The plan makes reference of the importance of retaining the existing historic links between the High Street and the river that should be used to connect the town centre with the waterway. Retaining and celebrating the water based character would provide an additional cultural link between the town centre and its past set within a framework of considerable change. Cultural continuity is important whilst changing communities and would add greatly to the success of the regeneration of the town centre. New sections of towpath could be opened and exciting new riverside quarters created that organically merged with the established grain and open space.

The possibility of extending the Kew Gardens world heritage site buffer zone to embrace a much larger part of Brentford should be considered. This would add considerable kudos to any proposed scheme and should be regarded as an opportunity to guide regeneration rather than as a barrier to change.

Care should be taken to ensure that the traditional noise associated with boating industry is accounted for in the design of all regeneration schemes.

### **7.0 A Waterspace Employment Cluster**

It is proposed to promote the concept of a 'waterspace employment cluster' at Brentford centred at the junction between the River Thames and the Grand Union Canal. Small-scale water related industry such as boat building and repair yards would be encouraged as an integral part of the wider regeneration of the town centre and visitor experience.

The creation of sustainable and different types of employment is a key consideration in any regeneration plan. A waterspace employment cluster for Brentford at Lots Ait, Johnson Island and Dock Road Island would conserve a traditional local industry in an area that has seen many new employment types replace more traditional activity. This would help to retain cultural continuity based on the established character of the place – generating activity, increasing personal safety and supporting a range of both water related and other jobs.

The proposition for a waterspace employment cluster can be justified through the strategic planning framework and the character assessment of the area. Both the Mayor’s Plan for London and the Brentford Area Action Plan make reference to the strategic importance of Brentford’s boating industry. A waterspace employment cluster would help to achieve the goals of both plans in particular the Mayor’s Plan for London policy 4.114. At the local level, the TLS and the Brentford Area Action Plan make considerable reference to the area’s unique position as London’s gateway to the UK’s canal network from the Thames that has survived as a hub of water based industry. It is this industry that gives Brentford much of its character and distinctiveness that should be protected and enhanced. Much of Brentford falls within the area at risk from flooding and many of the boat repair yards are situated in places that are subject to the rise and fall of daily tidal fluctuations. Traditional boatyards are ideally suited to this environment utilising the tidal river as an intrinsic part of the day-to-day operation of their industry making them an ideal use for waterside locations that actively makes space for water.



*Brentford has the potential to form a major centre for small-scale water based industrial activity*

Designation of a ‘Brentford Waterspace Employment Cluster’ would therefore protect the character of London’s last surviving traditional working canal junction and the specialist industry associated with the area. The working riverfront set within the context of a wider regenerated town centre would retain an intrinsic link with the town’s past and sense of place. The working riverfront as the centre piece of a regenerated Brentford would form a leisure, tourist, recreational and entertainment resource in its own right particularly if the area’s position directly between Syon House and Kew Gardens is considered.

### 8.0 Education and Inclusion

A funding bid has been submitted to Natural England’s Access to Nature Fund that makes considerable reference to Brentford as a key priority for new TLS educational initiatives. It is proposed to work with existing groups and structures in order to build inclusion and ownership of the riverside by a number of key audiences. An important element of this plan is to link educational programmes with project work on the ground and volunteering opportunities.



*All TLS projects incorporate volunteering*

### 9.0 Enhancing the Visitor Experience

The potential to enhance the visitor experience along Brentford’s Waterspace is considerable –particularly linked to the regeneration of the land south of the High Street and to the working canal junction. Brentford’s position next to Syon House and within the buffer zone of the Kew World Heritage Site could be exploited through the provision of a footbridge or ferry to attract visitors to the area to experience a watery world that has almost been lost elsewhere in the capital. In addition, canal boats from across the UK could stop at new moorings to visit one of the nearby attractions adding to the



*Education and community involvement will be key to the project’s success*

local economy. Enhancements to open spaces and the Thames Path would open up wonderful new reaches of the Thames Path. Signage, way marking and interpretation could be enhanced linked to a sustainable travel plan for the area.

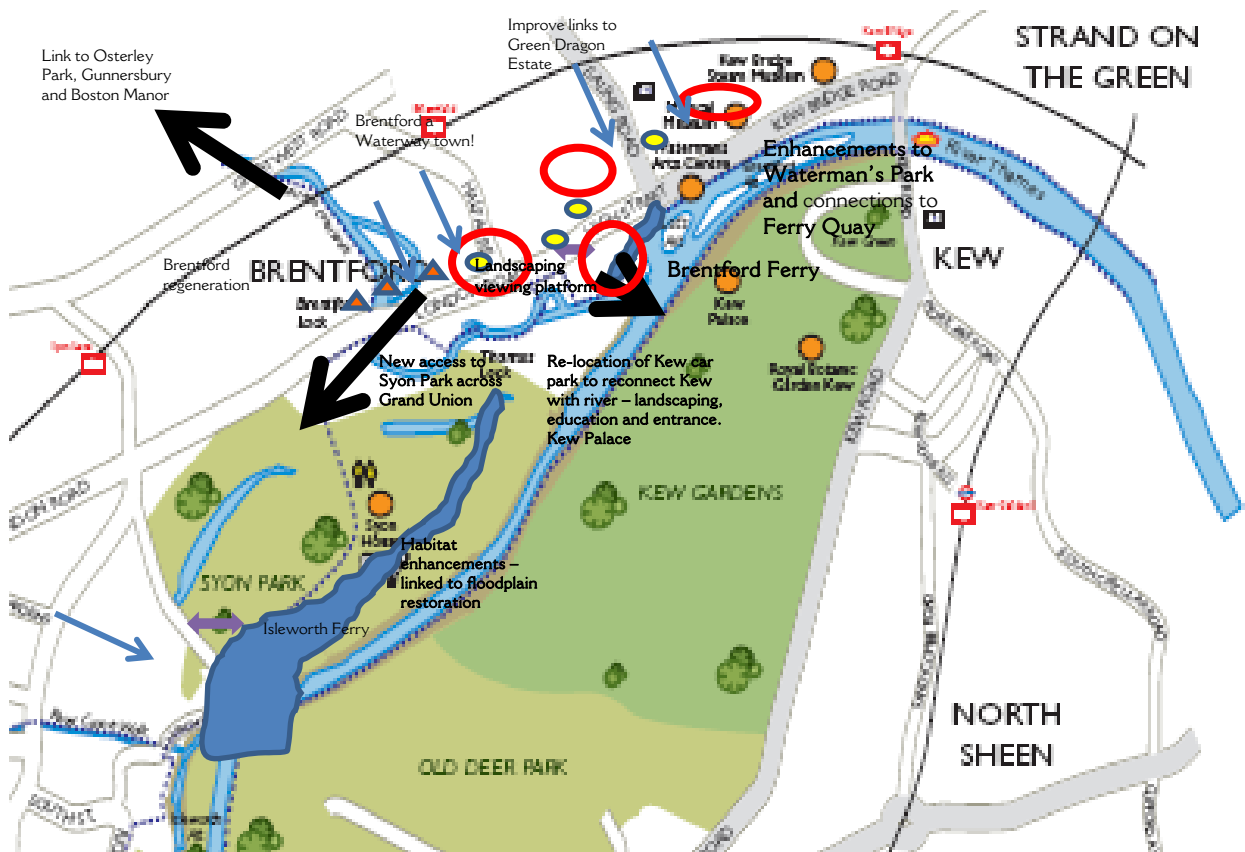
## 10.0 The Way Forward

The Thames Landscape Strategy Annual Action Plan 2009/10 (agreed by the TLS Management Board April 2009), established a framework under which the Brentford – A Waterway Town! could be taken forward. Funding has been secured from Walk London that will enable **this** scoping document to be progressed to the next stage – with the production of a masterplan document during the summer 2009. The TLS has appointed landscape practice GROOSS MAX to undertake this work.

On completion of the GROOSS MAX report a period of consultation will be required. It is anticipated that this plan could form the basis of future s106 and TfL monies as redevelopment opportunities arise. It has also been agreed by the TLS partnership that any proposals set out in the masterplan document can be presented to the London Borough of Hounslow in order to form the basis of revised guidance for the area as part of the TLS Review process.

It has also been agreed that a series of ‘early hits’ will be implemented. The first of these is planned for the area of Thames Path between Ferry Quays and Dock Road. Over the summer 2009, Butterwoth Design Services has been contracted (funded by Walk London), to draw up detailed designs for the area to include project costings.

The TLS is working with the London Borough of Hounslow to access a total of £50,000 from s106 monies identified for improvements to the riverside in Brentford (it has been provisionally agreed by the Brentford Area Committee that this money may be allocated to TLS project work) linked to TFL funds. Further funding bids will be submitted during 2009 completed by the London’s Arcadia Project Officer (funded by a management fee from the Walk London funding). An Access for Nature bid totalling £240,000 has been submitted to take forward the proposed education and community outreach programme. It is expected that if successful this funding would begin in September 2009. Links will need to be established with many partners for the proposals to be successful. Over the summer 2009, the TLS working alongside the appointed consultant will meet with these – including land owners, community groups and developers to discuss the proposals of this plan. Consultation will be carried out by the TLS.



## Stakeholder Consultation List

(please note that this list is not definitive and more groups will be added)

- Brentford Community Forum
- Brentford Chamber of Commerce
- Brentford High Street Group
- Green Dragon Residents Association
- Ballymore
- ISIS Group
- British Waterways
- Heidelberg UK
- Nigel More
- Local boatyards and businesses
- Brentford Extended Schools
- Brentford Dock
- Syon Estates
- Kew Gardens
- Clive Chapman (design for Snakes and Ladders at Syon)
- Brentford Waterside Forum
- London Borough of Hounslow
  - Ward councillors
  - Conservation and Urban Design
  - Sustainable Travel
  - Planning and Policy

Location	Project	Priority/Timescale	Notes
Strand on the Green	Enhancement of Draw Dock	Medium term	Landscaping, lighting (bat friendly), paving, access
Strand on the Green	Clean up of Draw Dock	High priority 2009	Volunteer work – weaved into the TLS Access to Nature Project
Kew Bridge	Access enhancements and landscaping to existing connection	High	Improve the access under bridge – to form part of the redevelopment of the Scottish Widows site. New accessible arch to be opened – existing to be landscaped.
Kew Bridge – The Hollows	Landscaping	Medium term	Pollarding/coppicing of willow trees – with Scottish Widows site. Lighting replacement, surface enhancements
The Hollows	Access and Landscaping	Medium	Landscaping, lighting, surfacing, access enhancements
Links to Green Dragon Estate	Improvement of access between Green Dragon Estate and Thames	High – medium 2009 - 10	To include an education programme – funded through Access to Nature bid.
Kew Bridge Road	Increasing legibility of the Thames Path	High	
Waterman's Park	Landscaping of downstream gateway	Medium to long term. TLS funding bid	To make the gateway more welcoming and accessible.
Waterman's Park	Picnic Benches	On-going	Replacement benches
Waterman's Park	Riverside railings	Long-term	Riverside railing replacement
Waterman's Park	Surfacing – sealed gravel	Long-term	
Waterman's Park	Planting – continue the good work carried out by LBH to replace and replant vegetation	On-going	Links with Kew Gardens
Waterman's Park	Interpretation	Medium term	Installation of new riverside



			interpretation panel
Waterman's Park	Integrated Moorings Business Plan	High priority	Production of an integrated moorings business plan for the waterspace.
Waterman's Park	Community activity	On-going	To enhance the diversity and use of the park by the local community – including the preparation of an events plan.
Waterman's Arts Centre	Link with Park	High Priority	To enhance the links between the park and arts centre – both through use and physical enhancements
Waterman's Arts Centre	Enhancement of raised riverside walkway	Medium	A wonderful viewing platform across to the Aits and Kew Gardens. The walkway needs to be made more welcoming and integrated into the arts centre
Waterman's Arts Centre	Access Improvements to riverside steps	Medium	The steps along the Thames Path linking the park with Pump Alley are in need of much work to enhance accessibility. Lights need to be replaced, the area landscaped and made more welcoming
41 Brentford High Street	To gap up the missing link to the Thames Path	High Priority	Subject to planning application
Lotts Ait	Regeneration	On-going	Subject to planning application
Ferry Quay	Soap House Creek		
	Re-instatement of Brentford Ferry		To investigate the potential for a new footbridge.
Ferry Quay to Dock Road	Landscaping of towpath	High – funding in place to proceed with detailed design and	

		funding bid	
Ferry Quay to Dock Road	Creation of viewing platform	High – funding in place to proceed with detailed design and funding bid	
Ferry Quay to Dock Road	Missing Link to Thames Path between Ferry Quay and Dock Road	High	Subject to planning application
Ferry Quay to Dock Road	Legible Enhancements to High Street	High	
Ferry Quay to Dock Road	Establishment of Waterspace Employment Cluster	High	Through Brentford Area Action Plan
Dock Road	Landscaping	Medium	Retention of herringbone granite setts, improved lighting, interpretation. Through s106.
Dock Road	Access to Grand Union Canal towpath	High – funding in place for feasibility study	Enhancements. Access.
Dock Road	Establishment of accessible route	Medium	An alternative accessible route needs to be established either through the redevelopment of the land south of the High Street or view St. Augustus Drive.
Syon Park/St. Augustus Road	New access to Syon Park	High Funding in place for feasibility study	Establishment of an accessible new route between St. Augustus Close, across the Syon wall to link with the Snakes and Ladders route. To include signage.
Access road to Snakes and Ladders Syon Park	Landscaping, lighting and signage	High – funding for feasibility in place	
River Brent, Brentford Dock	Vertical Foreshore		To work with Kew Gardens on the installation of vertical foreshore to the river

			edge between Thames Lock, rounding the headland to Syon Park. To connect with improvements to the concrete revetments alongside Kew Gardens.
On-going Management	To put in place a mechanism to implement the TLS Towpath Management Plan		To reduce litter and manage vegetation
Tourism and sustainable Travel	Arcadian Thames Travel Plan Network		To persuade partners to join the TLS Travel Plan network in order to find joint ways to implement new initiatives such as the foot ferry, joint ticketing and enhancements to walking and cycling routes. To include greater synergy between attractions in both off-site and on-site promotional and interpretational material.
Extension of the Kew Gardens UNESCO World Heritage Site Buffer Zone		To investigate extending the UNESCO World Heritage Site buffer zone	To bring the benefit that designation has to Brentford

## Historical Development

The delta of the River Brent, now built over, has traditionally been known as 'Little England' owing to its immemorial associations. Archaeological excavations have yielded much evidence of pre-Roman activity in the area including Stone Age hunting tools and a bronze sickle that would have been used on the fertile soil of the delta. Evidence suggests that the Celtic Catuvellauni tribe led by their chief, Cassivellaunus held ceremonial activity in the area suggesting that the area was an important centre for surrounding settlements.

Brentford is the probable location for Caesar's crossing of the Thames in 54BC making reference to the site in his *De Bello Gallico*, the first recorded piece of British history noting 'I led the army to the river Thames and the territory of Cassivellaunus. There is only one place where the river can be forded and even there with difficulty. When we reached it, I noticed large enemy forces drawn up on the opposite bank. The bank had been fortified with sharp stakes along it and as I discovered from prisoners and deserters, similar stakes had been driven into the riverbed and were concealed beneath the water'. Bede later noted the presence of lead encased stakes in the area and one can still be seen on show at Syon House.

The strategic importance of the ford continued to shape the history of the area demonstrated by the Battle of Brentford between Edmund Ironside and Canute in 1006. The settlement now given its Saxon name of Brentford after the river crossing became an important administrative centre for the county of Middlesex growing into a considerable medieval town centred on the river. The area was an important centre for the growing of fruit and vegetables transported to London by barges or processed locally. Brentford had a corn market and many light industries associated with this activity including jam making factories, breweries and soap works. This trading significance was boosted in 1805 with the construction of the Grand Junction Canal making Brentford a key inland port with much industrial activity including tanneries, warehouses, factories and the Gas and Coke Works. Such was the extent of industrialisation that the aits that separated Brentford with Kew (traditionally managed as osier beds) had to be considerably enlarged and planted with trees to obscure the increasingly industrial landscape from the polite Royal residences to the opposite bank.

In contrast to the Middlesex bank, the Surrey bank opposite has a totally different history associated with Royal patronage from the 18th onwards who created their magnificent palaces and landscaped gardens in the image of a classical Arcadia stretching along the Thames. Today the area survives as part of Kew Gardens although most of the earlier splendour is now lost replaced instead by

the main car park for the World Heritage Site and large flood defence walls cutting the gardens from their river.

In 1859 the Great Western & Brentford Railway's branch was opened linking Old England with the rail network. A huge trans-shipment yard was designed by Brunel where goods could be trans-shipped between railway and river, so providing a link between the GWR and the Port of London. This survived until 1964. The area once covered by railway sidings has now become the Brentford Dock Development.

Today, Brentford is an area of great diversity that has been subject to much change over the last decade following recognition in 1995 as a Government Regeneration Area. Inward investment has transformed many areas of the town. Particularly along the M4 corridor to the north of the town and at Ferry Quays to the riverside. This said, much development is still proposed set out in the Brentford Area Action Plan (2007) and many of the public open spaces along the waterways are in need of considerable investment.

## 7.0 Policy Context

The Brentford Area Action Plan sets out the elements of national policy that are relevant to the area. The London Plan provides a regional policy context for Brentford to achieve growth, equity and sustainability through measures to minimise factors that contribute to climate change and poor air quality. The Plan designates Brentford as a district centre suitable for mixed use development linked to improvements in the public transport network. It is anticipated that the population of the area is likely to grow by up to 45% over the next two decades. Specific mention is made to Brentford's position within the Kew Gardens World Heritage Site Buffer Zone and to the town's strategic location on the Blue Ribbon Network. The use and access along the waterways should be increased, facilities for boating activity protected and wildlife conserved.

The London Borough of Hounslow Community Plan (2007-2010) sets out the strategic direction for the Borough to celebrate diversity and build cohesion. Of particular reference to the river the Community Plan for Isleworth and Brentford supports appropriate access to the river and canal stating that they are key elements in environments of the area. Their contribution to the landscape, ecology and local amenities are of fundamental significance and protection of places to service and repair boats and areas to take boats on and off the waterway should be protected.

In addition the following documents have been accounted for in the preparation of this report:

- Local Area Agreement
- Children and Young People's Strategic Plan
- The Hounslow Plan 2006 – 2010
- Local Implementation Plan
- Hounslow Unitary Development Plan (in particular policy IMP.5 to promote a good quality natural and built environment specifically in relation to high quality building and urban design, and enhancing the riverside environments of the River Thames).

The Brentford Area Action Plan was published in July 2007 and provides a way forward for the regeneration of Brentford over the next decade or so. The TLS worked closely with the London Borough of Hounslow during its preparation and in particular in developing measures for the waterways.

Many of the projects in this report have been proposed to establish a framework for the implementation of the Brentford Area Action Plan.

The Brentford Area Action Plan Submission Version July 2007 makes specific reference to the Thames Landscape Strategy as a key partnership to act as the catalyst to promote and deliver change along the river corridor – providing a day-to-day link between the authorities, the local communities and the vision of the strategy.

The Brentford Action Plan sets out the following vision

*By 2018 Brentford will have become a sustainable suburb that maximises its rich heritage and unique waterside location, provides a high quality gateway to London, and provides for the needs of its growing community through a mix of uses and a vibrant town centre.*

Particular reference is made to reinforcing the established character of Brentford's waterside location, protecting waterside industries and support facilities and enhancing access to and from the waterway. In addition the following key objectives relate to the blue ribbon network:

- Objective 2 promotes the reuse of existing buildings which add to the character and local distinctiveness of the waterside areas.
- Objective 4 ensures that the design of new developments will protect and enhance Brentford's local distinctiveness that capitalise on the area historic, cultural and natural assets that where they adjoin the waterway design will start from the waterspace.
- Objective 5 supports Brentford's distinctive role for the provision of waterside industries and support facilities,

including the reconnection of the area with its unique waterside location including the river, canals and foreshore

- Objective 6 plans to regenerate Brentford Town Centre as a vibrant district centre that celebrates the town's heritage and waterside location.

Policy BAAP2 sets out a policy for urban design. Design (near to water) should start from the waterspace and make a positive contribution to Brentford's unique location at the confluence of the Grand Union and River Thames – including the setting of Kew palace. The contribution of boatyards and wharves to the architectural quality and appearance of the area should be preserved and enhanced. Policy BAAP3 recommended a series of enhancements to the town centre area including the enhancement of the land south of the High Street to be known as 'Brentford waterside' including retail, leisure and business uses.

Policy BAAP7 establishes the need for enhancements to sustainable access routes including the historic routes linking the High Street with the waterways and improvements under Kew Bridge, the link between Kew and Syon Park via Ferry Quays and ferry.

In addition to the goals and policy framework, the Area Action Plan provides detailed guidance for development sites including:

- M3 Kew Bridge
- Thames Water Site
- M7 Somerfield
- M8 Land South of the High Street
- PR1 Ferry Quay, Soap house Creek and Lots Ait

The Thames Landscape Strategy (1994) provides a way forward for the river corridor between Hampton and Kew. The report sets out a shared vision which under the Memorandum of Agreement four local authorities, including the London Borough of Hounslow and ten national agencies have signed up to.

# The Thames Landscape Strategy

## Hampton to Kew



Thames Landscape Strategy  
Holly lodge  
Richmond Park  
Richmond  
TW10 5HS