

## THE RECREATION LANDSCAPE

The parks and gardens of the river were originally laid out for the private enjoyment of the court. This private and privileged landscape has now become the largest area of public open space in the capital. There is continuous access along the river, in many cases on both banks at once, and links back to the royal parks, botanic gardens and villa landscapes.

The Thames between Hampton and Kew has become the playground for Londoners and visitors from further afield. As well as offering the historic landscape on the banks of the river, the narrowness of the channel and containment of the reaches makes this part of the Thames excellent for water recreation.

The National Rivers Authority, as part of its role to promote the use of waterways for recreation, is currently preparing a recreation strategy for the Thames from its source to the Thames Barrier. The NRA is working with the Sports Council to publish a report in 1995.

### RECREATION ON THE RIVER BANK

The banks of the river teem with visitors at weekends, and even during the week there is a regular flow of users. The river corridor is one of London's most popular spaces, a linear park linking communities and recreation facilities.

#### Sitting

One of the most popular activities is just sitting and watching the river, the boats, the wildfowl, and the other people. Near to the town centres, the waterfronts are filled by young and old alike throughout the day and evening. The Richmond Riverside development has proved very popular with its raised, south-facing seating terraces forming a kind of amphitheatre by the river. Even the remoter rural stretches are well-used, particularly by local residents.

When the weather is good, the river banks become crowded by picnickers and sunbathers. Buccleuch Gardens in Richmond for example, begins to look like a beach resort, covered by deck chairs and towels. For those without gardens or views, the riverside lawns help to make summer life in the capital bearable. Where riverside spaces combine with cafes, pubs and restaurants, for example along the Kingston waterfront, they are particularly popular.

***Policy RL 1: Conserve and enhance the riverside spaces for people to sit, watch and sunbathe. Encourage riverside cafes, pubs and restaurants in the built waterfronts.***

#### Fishing

Fishing is another popular pastime. On the non-tidal river, fishing rights normally lie with the riparian landowner, but in tidal waters there is a public right of fishery. Although angling clubs provide good contact with fishermen, wider publicity is necessary to reach non-members.

The weirs, hardstandings and stone steps make good fishing stations but there have been problems with fishermen removing granite sets to gain footholdings and indirectly causing bank erosion.

In the past there have also been problems with lead weights poisoning swans. The use of lead weights is now prohibited. Elmbridge Borough has banned fishing from the Hurst Park frontage where large numbers of swans, geese and ducks gather to be fed by visitors and the London Borough of Richmond is currently exploring a voluntary fishing ban at key waterfront feeding areas.

***Policy RL 2: Identify areas where fishing is not in conflict with nature conservation; attempt to educate fishermen about river edge management issues and involve local fishing clubs in the maintenance of the banks and steps.***



The 18th century river landscape was designed for the pleasure of the Court



Today the river is the playground for the whole of London



The Anglers at Teddington

## Walking

The extensive network of paths along and across the Thames provides one of the best and most popular ways of enjoying the river. People particularly like to stroll along the urban waterfronts, where the paving is generally smooth and disabled access good. Short circuits provide a break of fresh air en route to work, over lunch or during shopping.

Out into the more rural sections, the gravel paths become rutted and puddles form after high tides. These rougher walks contribute to the character of the rural stretches. Long circuits along the riverside, up through Richmond Park and even onto Wimbledon Common, provide walks as varied and wild as the countryside outside London. The Countryside Commission plans to open the Thames Path as a national trail from the source of the Thames to the Thames Barrier in 1996. The London Walking Forum and the West London Waterway Walks Project are promoting links and connections for longer routes. Plans for imaginative way-marking are being discussed with Common Ground and the Public Art Development Trust.

Local circuits can fit into these longer path systems. With a little planning and information, the walks can be connected to town centres, public transport and parking. The existing network, public transport and proposals for new links are shown on Plan 10.

While continuous access along both sides of the river would be ideal, there are certain points, such as the Syon tide meadow and working wharves where access would compromise nature conservation value or boatyard viability. Interesting short inland diversions may be possible.

Linking across the river is less easy. In the past there was a whole series of ferries along this stretch. Now only Hammerton's Ferry survives, running between Ham and Marble Hill. Ferries could be encouraged, by increased demand and publicity, to re-open a number of popular walking circuits.

***Policy RL 3: Way-mark and promote the walks identified by the London Walking Forum, the Thames Path and the West London Waterway Walks Project, making new links to encourage local circular walks in line with English Nature guidelines. Sign routes from town centres to the river. Encourage the re-instatement of old ferry connections, where interested operators can be found.***



The ferry from Marble Hill to Ham House

## Jogging

The rural walk network and links to the royal parks work well as jogging routes. Jogging on the gravel surfaces of the riverside walks avoids the jarring of asphalt, the fumes of cars and the jostle of the street.

Outdoor exercise stations could be incorporated into some of the public art and way-marks. Discreet distance markers on long, straight avenues would allow for speed timing.

***Policy RL 4: Integrate jogging routes into path circuits, where appropriate including discreet distance markers and exercise stations.***

## Cycling

Tougher tyres and mountain bikes have made cycling along the towpath increasingly popular. When narrow paths are busy, cyclists occasionally come into conflict with pedestrians. Pedestrians take priority along the water edge but cycling is also a good way to experience the river.

Mountain bikes have been allocated special routes in Richmond Park. In places such as the southern part of Ham Lands where there is more than one path on different terrace levels, cyclists should be restricted to upper levels, leaving the towpath to pedestrians. At other points, such as Thames Ditton, good cycling routes are marked inland. On the whole however, with co-operation, cyclists and pedestrians should be able to co-exist.

***Policy RL 5: Clarify and where possible separate cycling and pedestrian paths, and where appropriate, encourage considerate dual use, promoting a co-ordinated cycle network.***

### Horse-riding

Horses' hooves churn up footpaths and it is preferable for riders to be kept separate from pedestrians. Horse-riding is not permitted on the towpath, but a series of bridleways exist inland. There is an excellent network of bridleways through Ham Lands, Richmond, Hampton Court and Bushy Parks.

**Policy RL 6: Work with local riding clubs to mark and maintain the bridleway network.**

### Children

The riverside is particularly attractive to children. There are special playgrounds and dog-free enclosures in some parks. But the greatest attraction is the river and wildlife.

River edge safety<sup>26</sup> and water quality is a particular concern, though the character of the waterfront should not be destroyed by excessive safety barriers.

**Policy RL 7: Promote a high quality of provision for children's use of the riverside, with an eye to special play areas, education facilities and interpretation. Review safety provisions along the river's edge, while still conserving the existing character of waterfronts.**

### Dogs

The extent of open space along this part of the river is much-appreciated by dog-owners. Boroughs are taking steps to provide faeces bins and prevent fouling of parks and walks. Owners are also required to prevent their dogs from chasing wildfowl and deer.

**Policy RL 8: Encourage dog-owners to be considerate of other riverside users by providing appropriately located faeces bins away from the river's edge, making clear where leashes should be used and extending dog-free areas.**

### Tennis

A number of municipal parks have tennis courts on the river edge. The associated chain-link fencing, floodlighting and hard surfaces detract from the parkland river edge. Courts could be located further inland without spoiling the enjoyment of players.

**Policy RL 9: Keep new tennis courts back from the river's edge and where possible relocate existing riverside courts away from the water.**

### Golf

Back from the river, Sudbrook Park and part of the Old Deer Park have been leased to Richmond Golf Club and the Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club by the Crown Estate. The sport does not relate to the river, but the golf clubs manage the historic parkland, trees and open space. There is scope to enhance the land for nature conservation and to re-instate some of the historic landscape, while still contributing to the use and appearance of courses.

**Policy RL 10: Enhance the nature conservation habitats and, where compatible with play, re-instate the historic landscape structure on golf courses in historic parkland.**

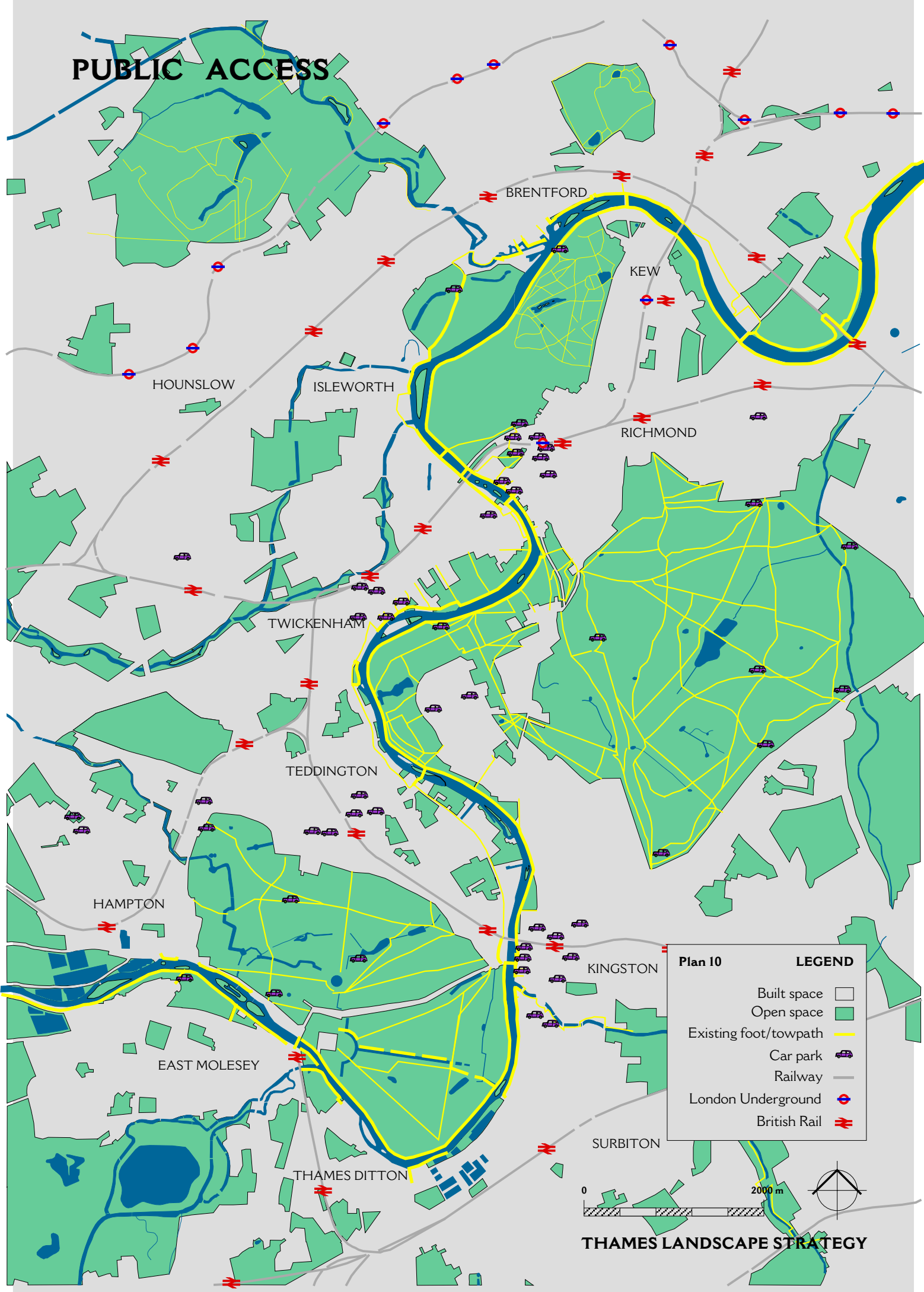


The Queen's Promenade, Kingston



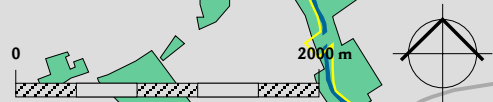
The Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Course in the Old Deer Park

# PUBLIC ACCESS



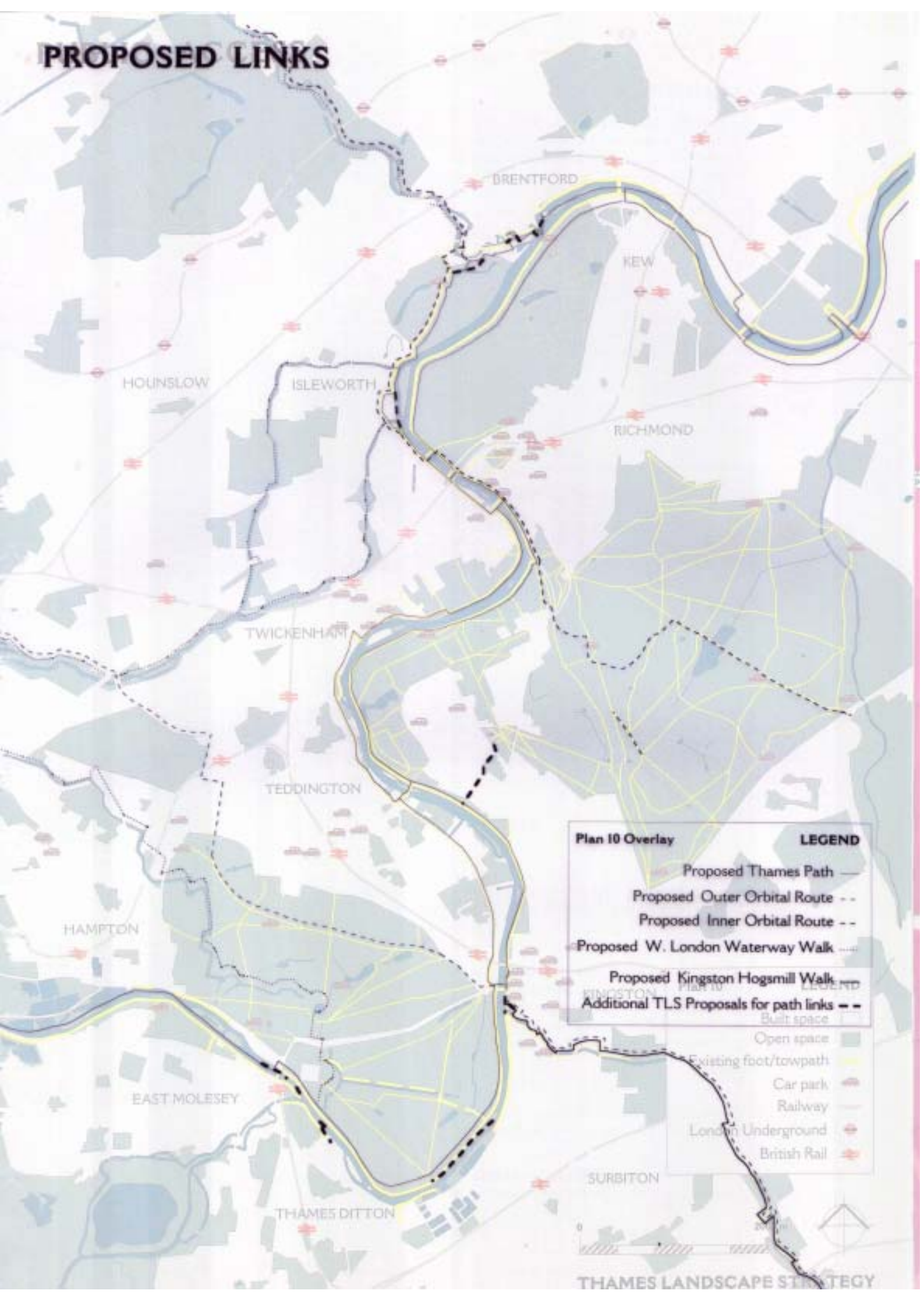
**Plan 10**

| LEGEND                |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Built space           | □ |
| Open space            | ■ |
| Existing foot/towpath | — |
| Car park              | 🚗 |
| Railway               | — |
| London Underground    | ⊖ |
| British Rail          | ≡ |





# PROPOSED LINKS



## Plan 10 Overlay

## LEGEND

- Proposed Thames Path —
- Proposed Outer Orbital Route - -
- Proposed Inner Orbital Route - -
- Proposed W. London Waterway Walk - - -
- Proposed Kingston Hogsmill Walk - - -
- Additional TLS Proposals for path links - - -

- Built space
- Open space
- Existing foot/towpath
- Car park
- Railway
- London Underground
- British Rail



## RECREATION ON THE WATER

The river itself provides a wonderfully versatile area for protected water recreation. The tidal Thames below Teddington is freely open to the public, but licences from the NRA are required to use the non-tidal Thames and from British Waterways to use the canal system. The PLA has produced *A Pleasure Users Guide*<sup>27</sup> to advise vessels on joint use of the river and the NRA and Sports Council are working closely with river user groups to identify and address recreation issues along the river.

### Rowing

Rowing and sculling are popular along the length of the study area, with clubs at regular intervals on both banks. Demand for boat storage greatly exceeds supply and water recreation would expand further with an increase in boat sheds. The relatively silent and unobtrusive sport co-exists happily with the wildfowl on the river and continues a long tradition of river recreation. The number and size of clubs adds to the variety and character of the river in the way that, say a regional rowing centre, would not.

Clubs can negotiate with the Sports Council and local authorities for grant aid and rate relief. And other issues, such as overhanging branches and boat wash, can be addressed through the river user groups.

Policy proposals are included in Policy RL 11 below.

### Punting

In general the river is too deep for much punting, but there are clubs in the shallows at Thames Ditton and Hampton.

Policy proposals are included in Policy RL 11 below.

### Canoeing

Canoeing is a sport which has been growing in popularity and there are clubs throughout the area. With favourable tides, it is possible to paddle from Richmond to Greenwich and back in the day. Canoeists can also paddle up the non-tidal Thames or into the canal system via the Grand Union Canal.

Access to the water is possible from club and public slipways, jetties and steps. Maintenance of steps and the provision of more public jetties and slipways would be welcomed by the sport.

Policy proposals are included in Policy RL 11 below.

### Sailing

Sailing conditions on the short reaches and tight bends of this part of the Thames are not ideal, particularly where dense trees line the water's edge. Nevertheless there are clubs from Hampton to Teddington and the old gravel workings in Ham Lands provide an open area of still water.

***Policy RL 11: Encourage rowers, scullers, punters, canoeists and sailing clubs to continue using the Thames, consulting and, where practical, involving clubs in river edge management programmes. Retain existing boat storage and repair facilities where possible and promote the provision of boat storage in re-developments along the river edge.***

### Skiffs

Skiffs can be hired on the river between Hampton and Kew. In summer skiffs are very popular with tourists, though they become something of a hazard to navigation in themselves.

***Policy RL 12: Promote the use of skiffs for visitors to enjoy the river in a peaceful way, explaining more effectively the protocol of river usage.***

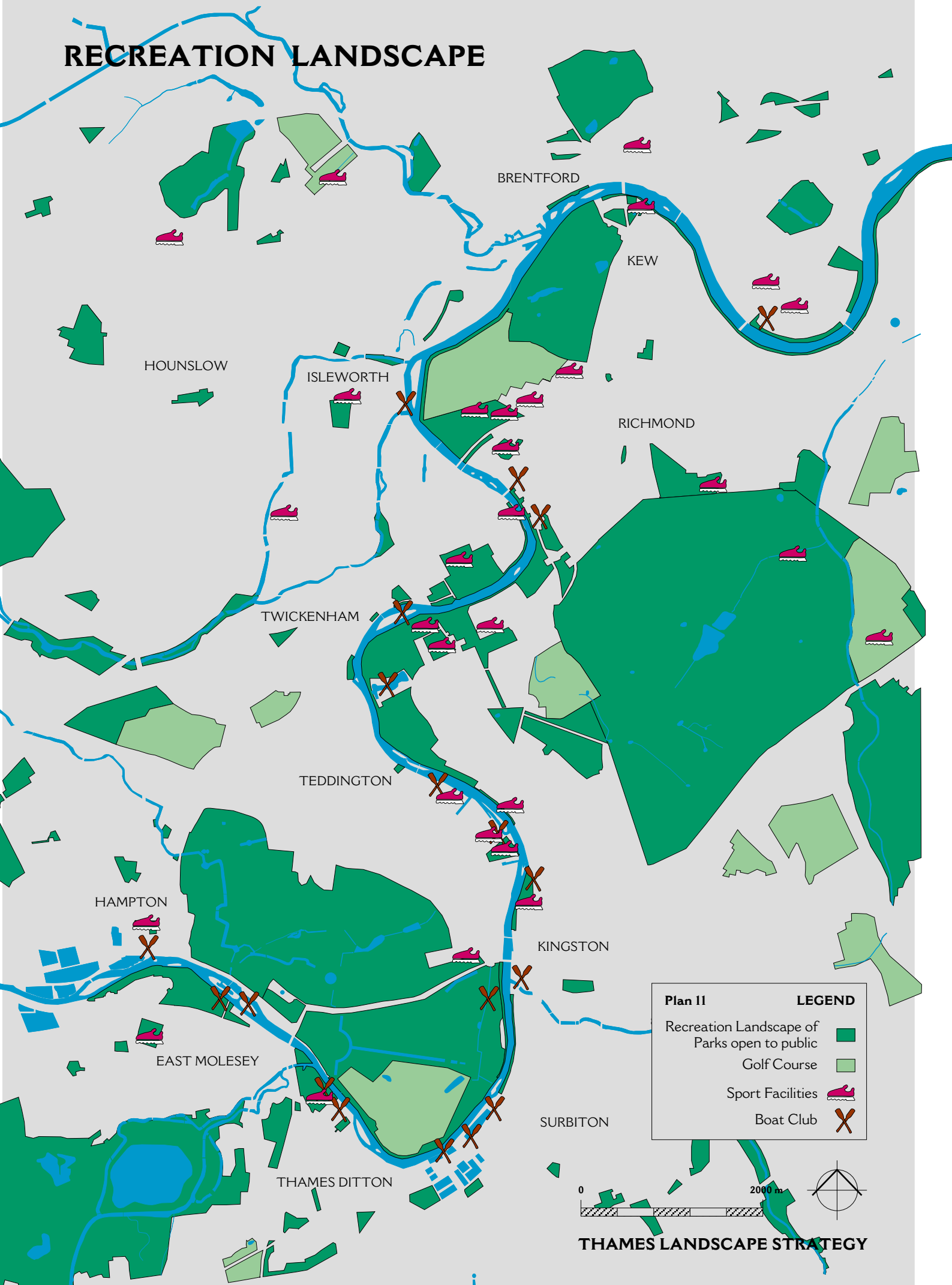


**Canoeists setting off from Twickenham Riverside**



**Sailing at Ham**

# RECREATION LANDSCAPE



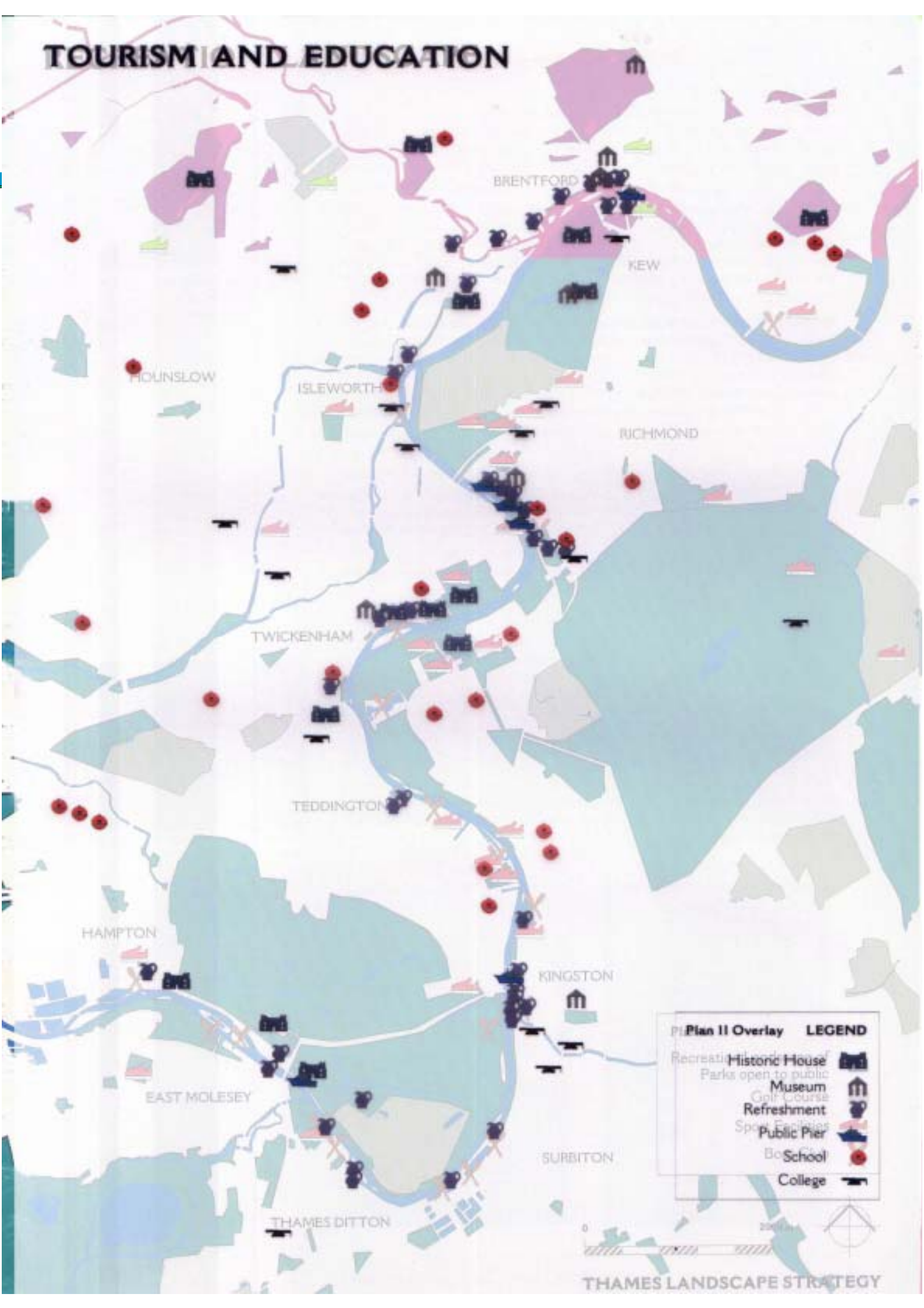
**Plan 11**

| LEGEND                                       |  |
|--|--|
| Recreation Landscape of Parks open to public |  |
| Golf Course                                  |  |
| Sport Facilities                             |  |
| Boat Club                                    |  |





# TOURISM AND EDUCATION





### Speed boats

Speed boats create controversy on the river. The noise, speed and danger alarm other river users and there have been some ugly accidents, particularly associated with alcohol. Boat-wash is one of the main causes of bank erosion. Public slipways allow access for speed boats to the tidal Thames without licence.

The tidal river is policed by the PLA, and there is an official speed limit of 8 miles per hour above Wandsworth Bridge. The NRA, which has navigational responsibility for the Thames upstream from Teddington, is applying for new bye-laws to introduce a limit of 8 kilometres per hour over the river-bed for powered boats, with some permitted exceptions. Until the bye-law is endorsed by the Minister, the NRA has no specific speed restriction.

***Policy RL 13: Control and police speed boat usage and speeds more strictly in the interests of other river users, nature conservation and bank erosion.***

### Barges and Motor Cruisers

Weekend and holiday powered boats tend to be more respectful of speeds, wash and other craft. Problems here arise with moorings, pollution and congestion.

Many of the private craft are moored on private jetties, in off-channel marinas or by boatyards. Moorings help to subsidise boatyards and the ferry, but off-channel facilities such as the Thames Marina at Seething Wells, balanced with nature conservation interests, are the ideal solution, keeping the river open and the banks uncluttered.

***Policy RL 14: Control mooring location and density and encourage off-channel marinas, balanced with nature conservation interests.***

### Swimming

Alarming notices about Weil's disease, water pollutants, tide, current and deep water dangers discourage swimming in the Thames. Although discouraged, the sport nevertheless remains popular and, with canoeists and sailors, often involuntary.

In areas which are particularly popular for swimming, safety ladders, life rings and warnings should be available and regular checks made on underwater hazards.

***Policy RL 15: Continue to warn swimmers about the hazards of the river, and continue to make strenuous efforts to ensure that the water quality of the Thames is improved.***



**Reducing boat speeds should help to ease erosion problems**

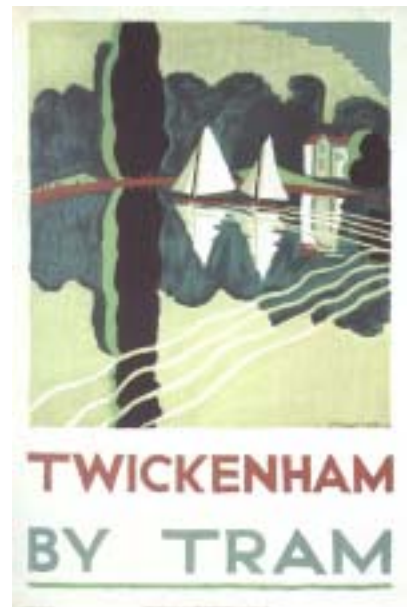
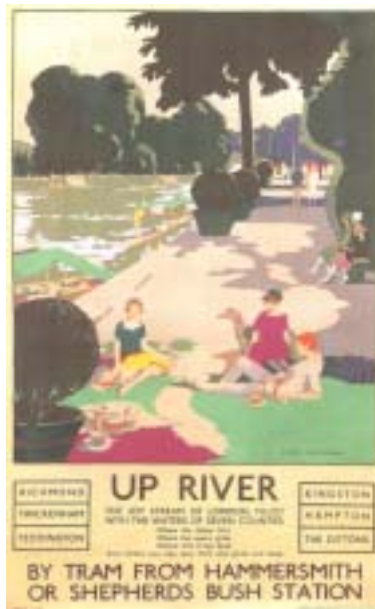


**The Port of London Authority barge collects litter and debris from the river**

## TOURISM

The Thames has tremendous potential for tourism. It is one of the least appreciated national resources. Between Hampton and Kew the river landscape, with its historic buildings and waterfronts and its parks and open spaces, is without parallel in any other capital in the world. It is a cultural landscape of great significance as the cradle of the English Landscape Movement and the home of people such as Pope and Walpole, Turner and Reynolds, George Eliot and Virginia Woolf, Sheridan and Garrick, Francis Bacon and Bertrand Russell, and Henry Purcell, Pete Townsend and Mick Jagger. And it is a linear park of great beauty, nature conservation interest and recreation potential.

Much of the charm and attraction of the river is its tranquillity. It would be self-defeating to congest the area with coach-loads of visitors and loud tourist paraphernalia. But there is an opportunity to improve and co-ordinate visits to the area, bringing interest and income both locally and to the capital as a whole. Tourism could help generate the revenue and investment to pay for many of the recommendations set out in Chapter 3 of this report.



## Parks and Palaces

The great royal palaces and parks and the villas of the attendant courtiers are connected by the river and largely open to the public (directly or by agreement) under the care of the following bodies:

### Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest:

|                            |           |                                   |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| Bushy Park                 | Grade I   | Royal Parks                       |
| Garrick's Lawn             | Grade II  | London Borough of Richmond        |
| Ham House Gardens          | Grade II* | National Trust                    |
| Hampton Court House Garden | Grade II  | London Borough of Richmond        |
| Hampton Court Park         | Grade I   | Historic Royal Palaces            |
| Old Deer Park              | Grade I   | Crown Commissioners               |
| Marble Hill Park           | Grade II* | London Borough of Richmond        |
| Pope's Grotto              | Grade II* | St Catherine's Convent            |
| Richmond Park              | Grade I   | Royal Parks                       |
| Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew | Grade I   | Trustees of Royal Botanic Gardens |
| Strawberry Hill Garden     | Grade II  | St Mary's College                 |
| Syon Park                  | Grade I   | Syon Park Ltd                     |

### Palaces and Villas:

|                               |           |                            |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| Banqueting House, Hampton Crt | Grade I   | Historic Royal Palaces     |
| Garrick's Temple              | Grade I   | London Borough of Richmond |
| Ham House                     | Grade I   | National Trust             |
| Hampton Court Palace          | Grade I   | Historic Royal Palaces     |
| King's Observatory, Kew       | Grade I   | Crown Commissioners        |
| Kew Palace                    | Grade I   | Historic Royal Palaces     |
| Marble Hill House             | Grade I   | English Heritage           |
| Orleans House Octagon         | Grade I   | London Borough of Richmond |
| Pembroke Lodge                | Grade II  | Crown Commissioners        |
| Strawberry Hill               | Grade I   | St Mary's College          |
| Sudbrook Park                 | Grade I   | Crown Commissioners        |
| Syon House                    | Grade I   | Duke of Northumberland     |
| White Lodge                   | Grade II  | Crown Commissioners        |
| York House                    | Grade II* | London Borough of Richmond |

There is great scope for joint marketing, ticketing and information between these bodies and the public transport network. An association of river tourist attractions are currently exploring the possibilities. Many visitors to London are unaware of the interconnection between these parks and buildings. If the links along the river were improved, the area could have enormous appeal as a day or weekend visit from the centre of London.

Policy proposals are included in Policy RL 16 below.

## Museums, galleries and theatres

In addition to the parks and palaces, the river is well-served by museums galleries and theatres. There are opportunities to link these facilities into the tourist river landscape, in particular as part of the Brentford Initiative and the connections to Syon and Osterley via the Grand Union Canal.

Policy proposals are included in Policy RL 16 below.

## Refreshment

Existing pubs, cafes and restaurants are listed for each reach in Chapter 3. To eat by the waterside, or at least to have views of the river, has great appeal for tourists. Facilities could be increased and upgraded on the built waterfronts. Public lavatories could be improved.

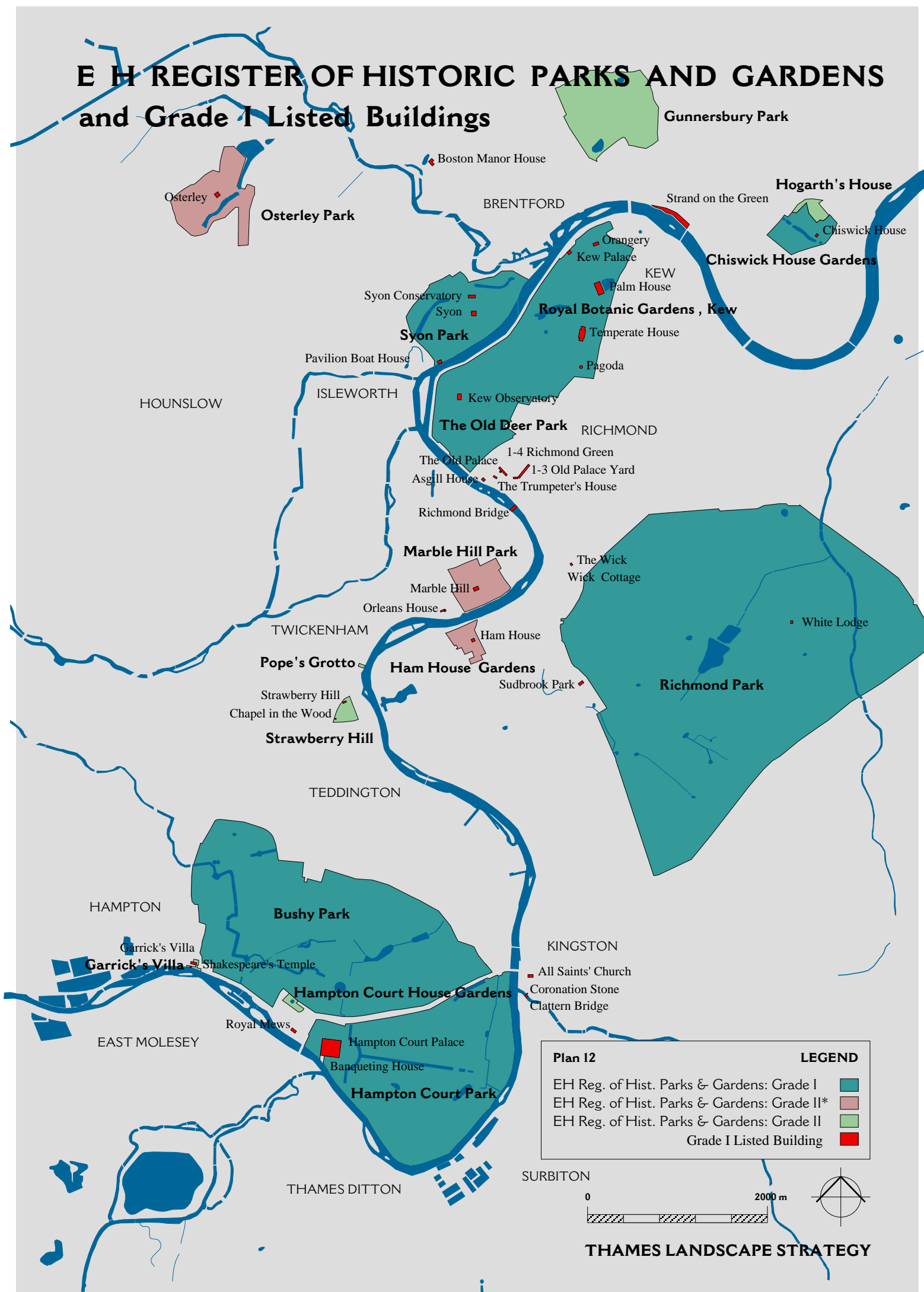
***Policy RL 16: Promote a programme of joint marketing between the main park, villa and palace tourist facilities along the river. Integrate the programme with riverside museums, galleries and theatres and with pubs, cafes and restaurants.***



The river has great potential as a resource for appropriate recreation and tourism

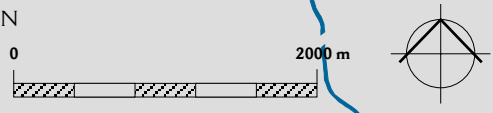


# EH REGISTER OF HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS and Grade I Listed Buildings



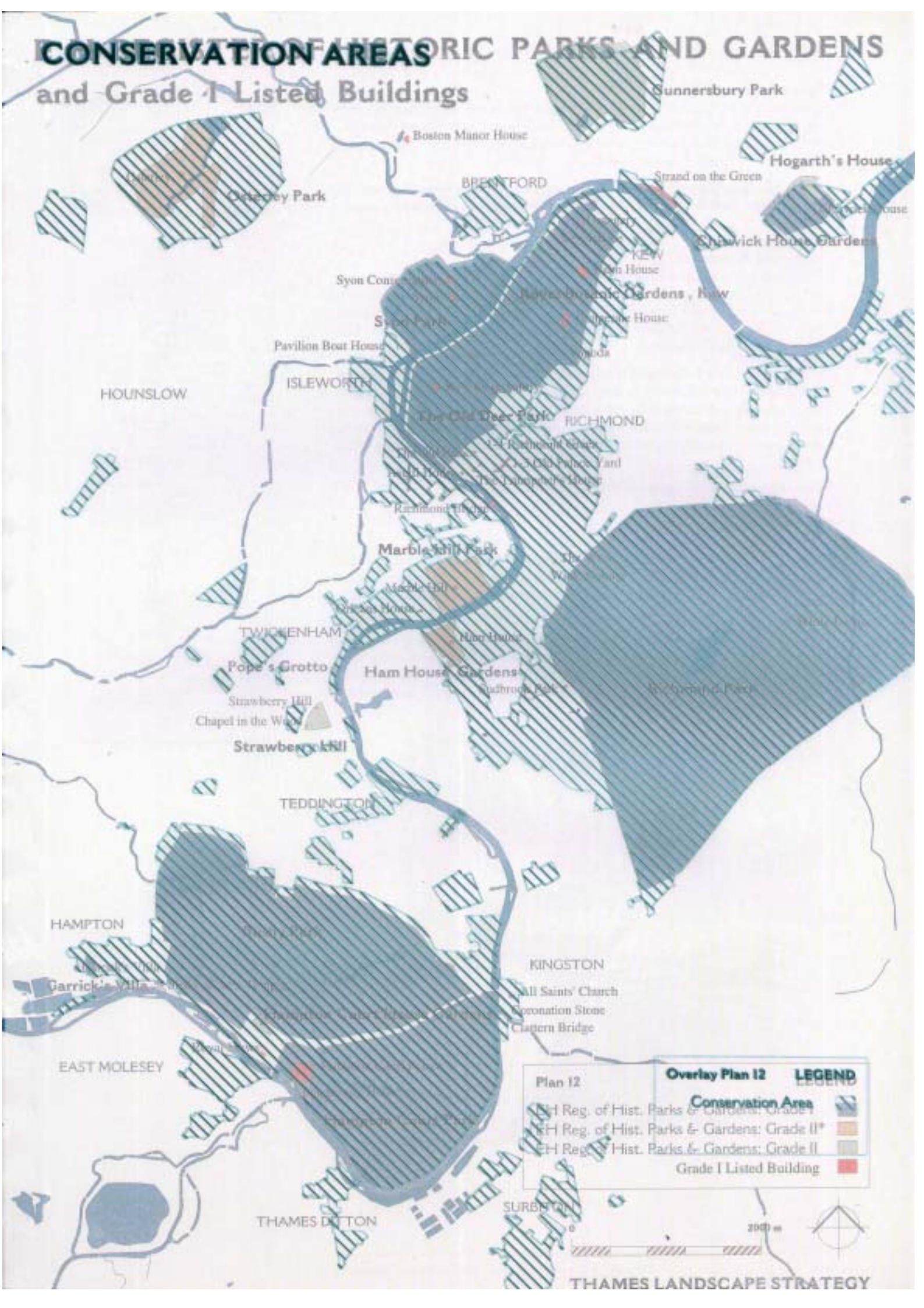
**Plan 12**

| LEGEND                                      |   |
|---|---|
| EH Reg. of Hist. Parks & Gardens: Grade I   | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:teal;"></span>       |
| EH Reg. of Hist. Parks & Gardens: Grade II* | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightcoral;"></span> |
| EH Reg. of Hist. Parks & Gardens: Grade II  | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen;"></span> |
| Grade I Listed Building                     | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:red;"></span>        |



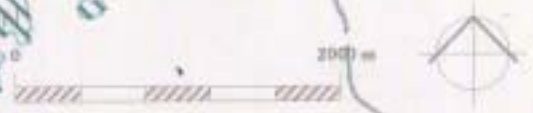
# CONSERVATION AREAS

## and Grade I Listed Buildings



**Plan 12**

| Overlay Plan 12   |  | LEGEND |
|---|--|--------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>                      I Reg. of Hist. Parks &amp; Gardens: Grade I                 </li> <li>                      II Reg. of Hist. Parks &amp; Gardens: Grade II*                 </li> <li>                      III Reg. of Hist. Parks &amp; Gardens: Grade II                 </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>                      Grade I Listed Building                 </li> </ul> |        |



**Entertainment**

The Thames Festival will be taking a series of initiatives to bring entertainment and activities to the river and water's edge. The historic waterfronts, municipal parks and wider landscape connections in this area could be used to great effect for encouraging special events.

**Policy RL 17: Promote special events and activities along the river, in consultation with the Thames Festival initiative and local interest groups.**

**Boats and Jetties**

The historic landscape was designed to be seen from the river. The houses, parks and historic waterfronts are oriented to the Thames and the connections between them are best experienced from the water. Boats from Westminster travel as far as the PLA pier at Kew and there are intermittent services between Kew and Hampton.

There is scope for increasing and publicising this service, improving the existing piers and re-instating jetties at places such as Ham and Horsefair Quay in Kingston. At the same time, tourist boat services need to respect the environment through which they travel. The wash, noise and litter from some tourist boats are having an increasing impact on the landscape they have come to enjoy.

Policy proposals are included in Policy RL 18 below.

**Public Transport**

The area is well-served by a network of buses, railways and the London Underground District Line, making the river available to visitors from central London and abroad. Signing and publicity of the transport system could be improved and parking arrangements co-ordinated.

**Policy RL 18: Promote river tourist transport services, improving publicity, where appropriate re-building piers and jetties to increase access, and linking services into the existing public transport and car parking network. Control tourist boat noise and wash levels to minimise the impact on river banks.**



18th- century Guide to River Inns