

THE RECREATION LANDSCAPE

2.123 2012 Update: This section establishes the main reasons for visiting the Arcadian Thames and summarises the ways that visitors use, move about and understand the river corridor. It celebrates the network of opportunities for recreation and sets out ways to provide a welcoming, connected, legible and accessible landscape.

2.124 Strategic guidance is set out in:

- The London Plan
- The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)
- Mayor's Tourism Plan for South London
- The River Thames Alliance Thames Waterway Plan

The Arcadian Thames

2.125 2012 Update: The London Plan proposes a series of Strategic Cultural Areas for London. These are designated as those places that help to make London a unique and vibrant city. The Thames corridor between Hampton and Kew has been recognised as one of London's cultural areas and is referred to as 'London's Arcadia'.

A Connected Landscape

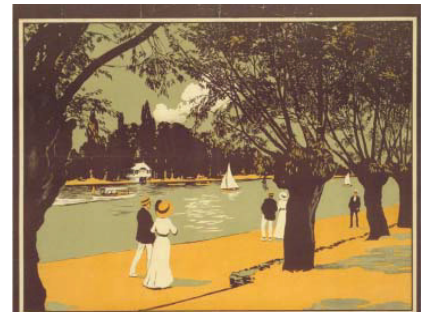
2.126 2012 Update: The Arcadian Thames was originally laid out for the private enjoyment of the court. It was the cradle of the English Landscape Movement and inspired generations of artists, writers, poets and thinkers. During the 19th century however, this privileged landscape was opened up for the public to enjoy, quickly earning a reputation as the playground for London.

Today, the River flows through a green corridor of parks, palaces, visitor attractions, wildlife sites and historic settlements un-equalled in any other European capital city. These spaces form the largest connected area of public open space in the metropolis offering the visitor an amazing combination of different leisure and learning experiences. In isolation, any one of these would be worthy of celebration but to have so many diverse destinations clustered along one short stretch of river is quite unique. There is continuous access along the river, in many cases on both banks at once, linked to the royal parks, botanic gardens and villa landscapes.

2.127 2012 Update: It is not simply the established honey-pot places such as Hampton Court, Richmond Riverside or Kew Gardens that make Arcadia so special - it is also the ordinary public open spaces and the connections between these main attractions that provide much of the interest. These spaces such as the towpaths, historic settlements and wildlife sites knit the landscape together, where each encounter is as important as the next, adding cumulatively to the whole experience. In this way it is not simply the destination that counts, it is the understanding and enjoyment one receives en route.



The 18th Century river landscape was designed for the pleasure of the court



**THE RIVER
THE PARKS
TEA-GARDENS
ANTIQUITIES
BY TRAM TO
KINGSTON BRIDGE**

During the 19th Century the Arcadian Thames was opened up for everyone to enjoy



Today the river is the playground for the whole of London

2.128 As well as offering the 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 Environment Agency is the navigation authority between Weybridge and Teddington and the Port of London Authority is the navigation authority between Teddington and Kew. Both organisations facilitate the use of the river for recreation.

RECREATION ON THE RIVER BANK

2.129 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

2.130 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 remote rural stretches are well-used, particularly by local residents.



Sitting and watching as the life of the river goes by

When the weather is good, the river banks become crowded with 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.

2012 Update: It is anticipated that spaces for Londoners to sit and relax will become even more important as the capital heats up during the coming century.

On the more remote reaches, benches provide a welcome place to sit and should be designed in a way that fits with the rural character.

Guidance 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.



Enjoying a stroll along a riverside meadow

Angling

2.131 Angling 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. The weirs, hard standings and stone steps make good fishing stations but there have been problems with anglers removing granite sets to gain foot holdings and indirectly causing bank erosion.

Boat Clubs:

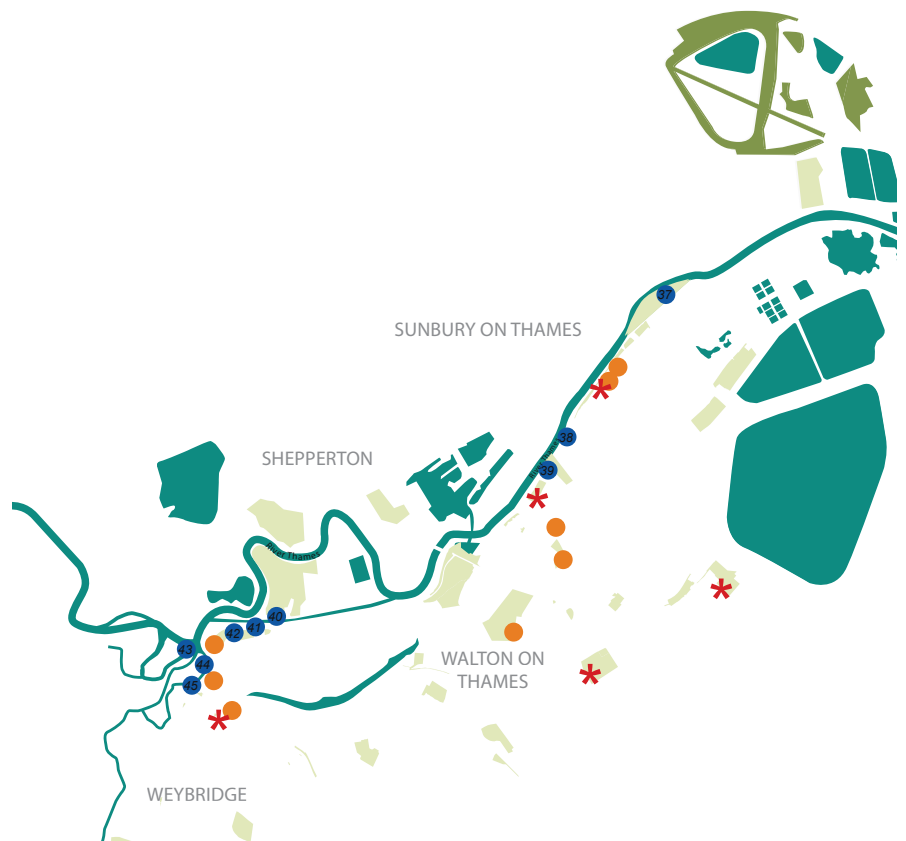
1. Hampton School Boat Club
2. Port Hampton Yacht Club
3. Hampton Hill Sea Scouts
4. Hampton Sailing Club
5. Westel Canoe Club
6. Hampton Sailing Club House
7. Thames Motor Yacht Club
8. Molesey Boat Club and Hard
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26. Walbroke Rowing Club
27. Kingston Royals Dragon Boat, Skiff Club, and Royal Canoe Club
28. Lensbury Motor Cruising Club
29. Thames Young Mariners
30. Twickenham Rowing Club
31. Twickenham Yacht Club
32. Richmond Canoe Club
33. Richmond Sea Cadets
34. 3rd Osterley Sea Scouts
35. Cathja Barge
36. Brentford Boating Arch
37. Middle Thames Yacht Club
38. Walton Rowing Club
39. Thames Valley Skiff Club
40. Elmbridge Canoe Club
41. Weybridge Sailing Club
42. Weybridge Ladies Rowing Club
43. Weybridge Mariners Boat Club
44. Wayfarers Rowing Club
45. Weybridge Rowing Club

Land based recreational facilities:

1. Hurst Park Basketball Court
2. Molesey Cricket Club
3. Hampton Court Horse Rangers
4. Albany Reach Sports Ground
5. Riverbank Road Park
6. Canbury Gardens Tennis Courts
7. Broom Road Rec Tennis Courts
8. Broom Road Rec Playbuilders
9. Teddington School and Sports Centre
10. Hawkers Centre YMCA
11. Lensbury Club
12. St Marys Sports Ground
13. Royal Park Gate Rec
14. Miniature Football Pitch (Gravel)
15. BMX Track
16. St Mary's Athletic Track
17. Strawberry Hill Bowling Green
18. Ham Street Rec
19. Harlequins Stadium "The Stoop"
20. Twickenham Stadium RFU
21. Ham Polo Club
22. Cambridge Gardens Tennis Courts
23. London Welsh RFU and Richmond CC
24. Royal Mid Surrey Golf Course
25. LA Fitness
26. Brentford Football Club
27. Legends Boxing Gym

Childrens Playgrounds:

1. Hurst Park Children's Playground
2. Summer Road Rec and Children's Playground
3. Canbury Gardens Children's Playground
4. Broom Road Rec Children's Playground
5. Royal Park Gate Children's Playground
6. Radnor Gardens Children's Playground
7. Twickenham Riverside Children's Playground
8. Orleans Gardens Children's Playground and Refreshments
9. Cambridge Gardens Children's Playground



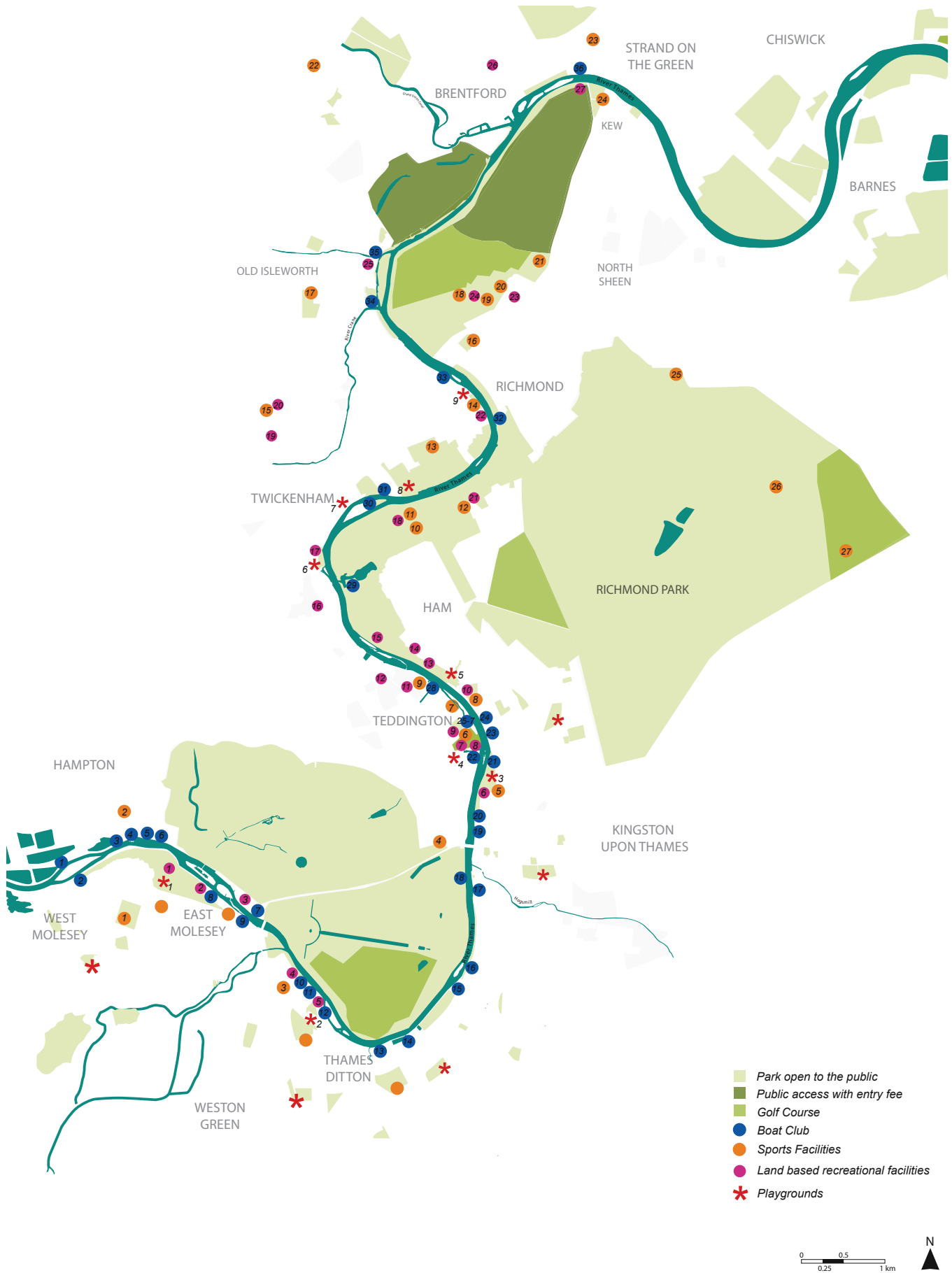


Figure 15 - Recreational Landscape

2012 Update: Angling on the river is free below Staines with an appropriate licence. The weirs are fished on the Environment Agency Lock and Weir permit (except Teddington).

2012 Update: Elmbridge Borough has banned fishing from parts of Hurst Park frontage where large numbers of swans, geese and ducks gather to be fed by visitors. In other reaches, the TLS Towpath Management Plan actively encourages angling by mowing small gaps through the riverbank vegetation to facilitate access to the river. This approach has reduced the damage caused to riverside plants. Opportunities to encourage accessible angling should be explored.

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

Walking

2.132 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.

2.133 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 and should not be sealed in any way. 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 (former) Countryside Commission opened the Thames Path as a national trail from the source of the Thames to the Thames Barrier in 1996. Links up the Rivers Crane and Hogsmill are being opened and enhanced.

2.134 *2012 Update: On the whole, the existing footpath network is of a high quality that is safe, easy and legible. The network encourages self discovery of the landscape (through informed choices) and is designed to fit into the established character of the reach. Measures to improve facilities along walking routes are proposed in the local reach sections.*

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. In some reaches new connections are needed.

2.135 *2012 Update: While continuous access along both sides of the river would be ideal, there are certain points, such as the Syon tide meadow, splendid private riverside gardens and working wharves where access would compromise nature conservation value, a special character or boatyard viability. Interesting short inland diversions are possible as long as they are clearly marked and designed in a legible way.*



Angling on the Thames



Hammerton's Boardwalk



Richmond Promenade

2.136 Linking across the river is less easy. In the past there was a whole series of ferries along this stretch. Currently ferry services operate between Shepperton and Weybridge, Hampton and Hurst Park, and between Ham and Marble Hill (Hammerton's Ferry).

2012 Update: There is an opportunity to re-establish the Church Ferry, Isleworth that would operate between Old Isleworth and the towpath on the Middlesex bank and in the longer term between Kew and Brentford.



Walking along one of the many riverside promenade routes

2.137 *2012 Update: Walking is increasingly seen as a way to improve people's health and encourage a healthy lifestyle – often initiated by GP surgeries. In all four TLS boroughs a series of led Healthy Walks are available that complement the diverse range of guided walks offered by groups such as the Hounslow Heritage Guides and the Kingston Heritage Guides.*

Guidance RL 3: Promote the network of strategic walks making new links to encourage local circular walks. Sign routes from town centres to the river. Encourage the re-instatement of old ferry connections, where interested operators can be found.

Running

2.138 The rural walk network and links to the royal parks work well as running routes.

Cycling

2.139 Tougher tyres and mountain bikes have made cycling along the towpath increasingly popular both for leisure and commuting. Although pedestrians take priority along the water edge on many of the narrower paths cyclists are increasingly coming into conflict with pedestrians.



Cycling along the river

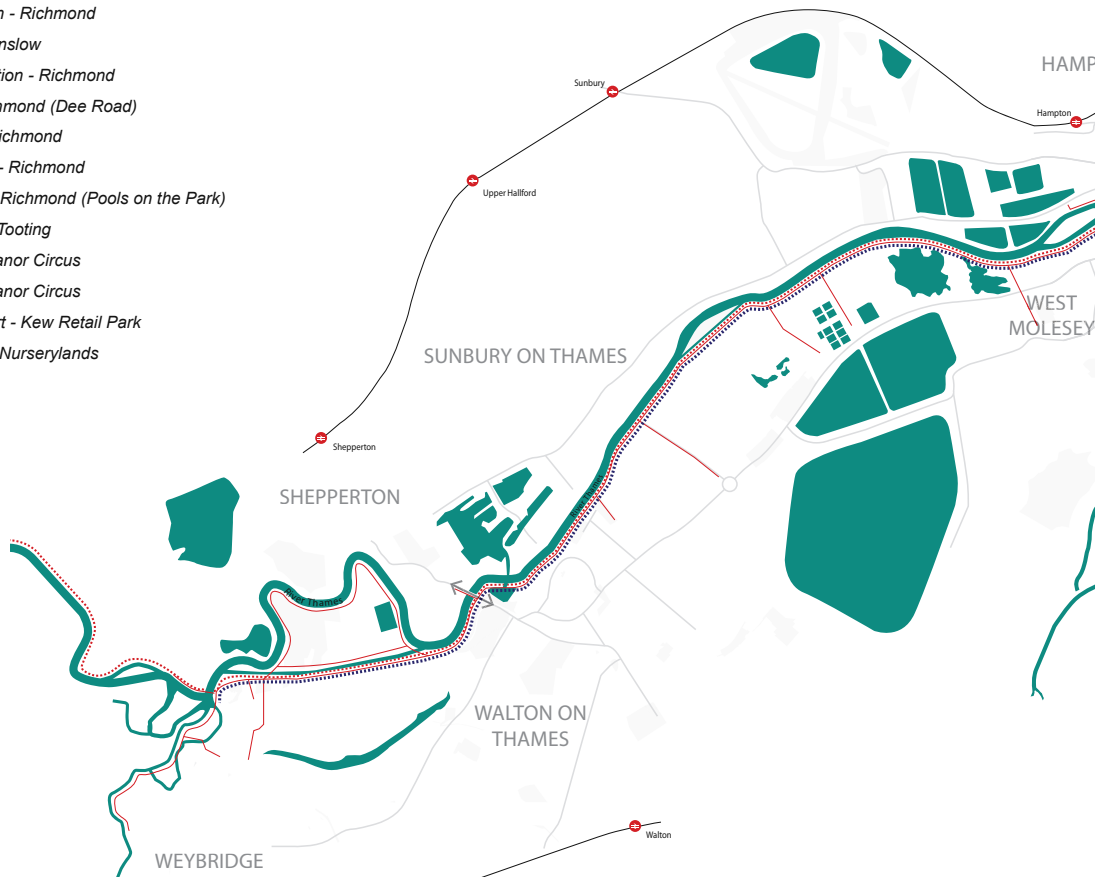
2.140 *2012 Update: In some areas, bicycles have been allocated special routes, such as in Richmond Park. In places such as the southern part of Ham Lands where there is more than one path on different terrace levels, cyclists are directed on a separate path to the upper levels, leaving the towpath to pedestrians. At other points, such as along the Home Park Barge Walk, the wide path accommodates both walkers and cyclists. Many long stretches of the towpath are currently not designated for cycling although surveys show that the routes are used anyway by high numbers of cyclists. Initiatives to formalize new sections of the towpath as designated cycling routes are being investigated by Sustrans and TfL. Whilst this may be possible in some locations, careful consideration must be given to the peaceful enjoyment of the riverside by pedestrians, including those with disabilities. Of key concern is urbanization of the pastoral paths that is often a requirement that comes with designation of a cycle route. Recommendations for different sections of the towpath are included in the reach guides.*



Cycling on the towpath can cause conflict between different user groups

Bus Routes:

- 33. Fulwell - Hammersmith*
- 65. Ealing Broadway - Kingston / Chessington*
- 190. West Brompton - Richmond*
- 281. Tolworth - Hounslow*
- 337. Clapham Junction - Richmond*
- 371. Kingston - Richmond (Dee Road)*
- 391. Sands End - Richmond*
- 419. Hammersmith - Richmond*
- 490. Heathrow T5 - Richmond (Pools on the Park)*
- 493. Manor Road - Tooting*
- H22. Hounslow - Manor Circus*
- H37. Hounslow - Manor Circus*
- R68. Hampton Court - Kew Retail Park*
- R70. Manor Road - Nurserylands*



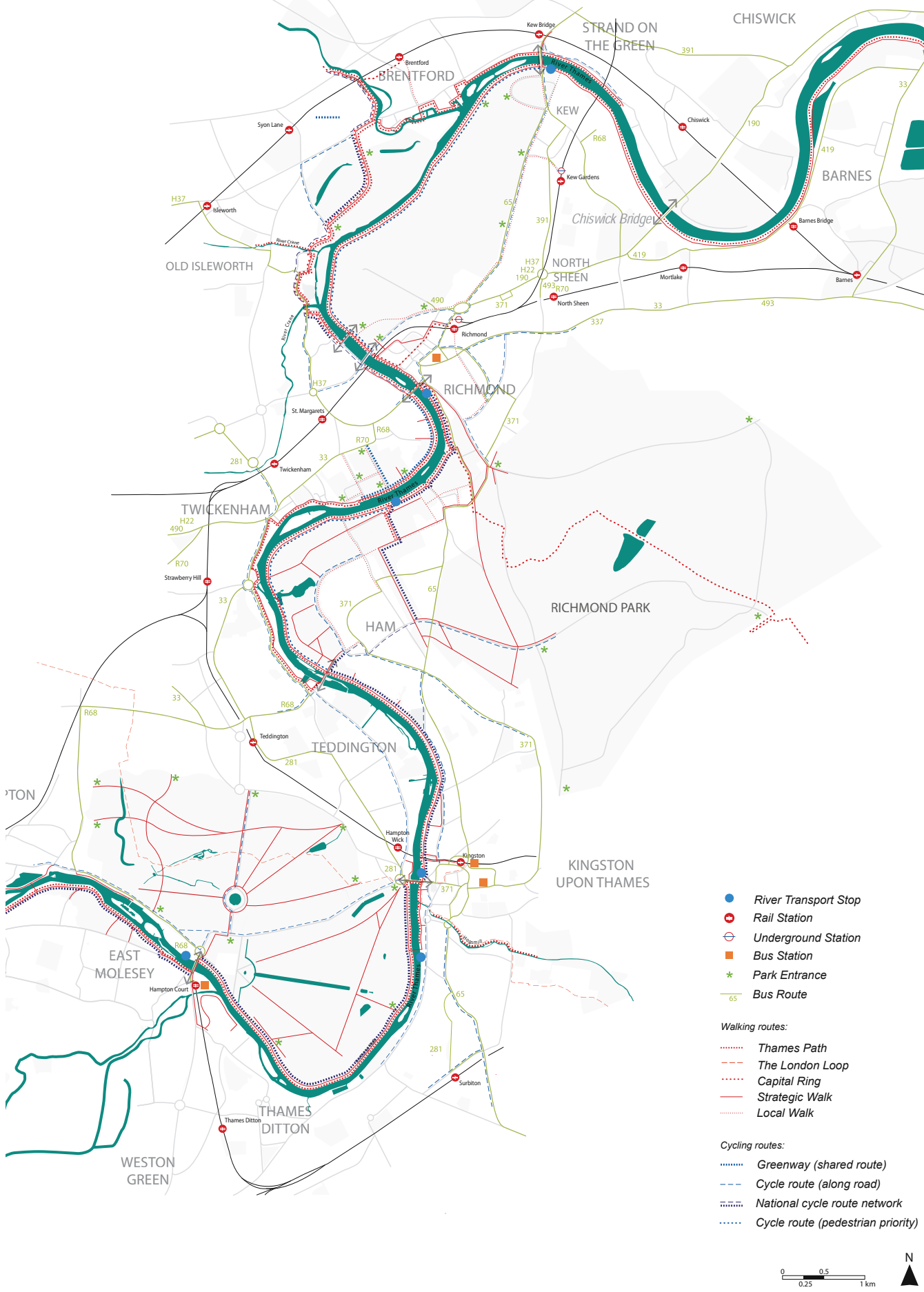


Figure 16 - Thames Connections

2.141 2012 Update: At key destination and gateway sites it is important that adequate cycle parking is provided.

Guidance RL 4: Where appropriate, promote a co-ordinated cycle network that respects local character.

Horse-riding

2.142 Horses' hooves churn up footpaths and it is preferable for riders to be kept separate from pedestrians although wooden barriers should be avoided. Horse-riding is not permitted on the towpath, but a series of bridleways exist inland.

1.143 2012 Update: There is an excellent network of bridleways through Ham Lands, Richmond, Hampton Court and Bushy Parks. In the Home Park the riverside meadows are grazed by horses associated with the Royal Paddocks located in Bushy Park. The Horse Rangers based in the Old Hampton Court Mews provide a wonderful facility for local children to use although it is unfortunate that their riding centre is cut off from Bushy Park by the busy main road. A Pegasus crossing would help considerably at this point. At Ham, horses add much colour to the landscape, either being exercised, ridden along one of the bridleways or galloping across the Ham Polo Field on a summer Saturday afternoon. Connections between Ham and Richmond Park could be improved.

Guidance RL 5: Work with local riding clubs to enhance and maintain the bridleway network.

Young People

2.144 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 itself, the boats, activity and wildlife.

2.145 Whilst river edge safety and water quality is a particular priority, the character of the waterfront should not be destroyed by excessive safety barriers.

2.146 2012 Update: It is important for young people to learn about and interact with their environment in an informal way – Arcadia lends itself perfectly to this and could provide a significant resource to re-connect young people with the natural world in an urban context. The types of activity associated with the riverside environment generate good health, increase self esteem and well being. Wherever appropriate, measures should be taken to include features that can help children learn about, access and appreciate their natural world both through formal educational activities and by informal measures. This could be through the re-creation of natural beaches, through the retention of hollow tree stumps or through a simple rope swing strung in a riverside willow.

2.147 2012 Update: The river is a sociable space and is used by many families on a day out. Young parents in particular appreciate the



Horseriding - Great South Avenue



The river is a sociable space for families to explore together



Whilst tidal inundation of the Thames Path can provide amusement it does severley restrict recreational activities in low lying areas

accessible buggy-friendly network of paths as places to meet and walk. The refurbished cafes along the river and in the near-by parks provide valuable places for people to stop and chat before resuming a walk.

Guidance RL 6: Promote a high quality of provision for children's use of the riverside, with an eye to informal play opportunities, education facilities and interpretation. Review safety provisions along the river's edge, while still conserving the existing character of waterfronts.

Dogs

2.148 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, cows and deer.

Guidance RL 7: 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

2.149 *2012 Update: 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 and can potentially harm nocturnal animals.*



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

Golf

2.150 Back from the river, part of the Home Park, 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.

Guidance RL8: Enhance the nature conservation habitats and, where compatible with play, re-instate the historic landscape structure on golf courses in historic parkland.

RECREATION ON THE WATER

2.151 The river itself provides a wonderfully versatile area for water recreation. The tidal Thames below Teddington is freely open to the public managed by the PLA, but boat registration from the Environment Agency is required to use the non-tidal Thames and from British Waterways to use the canal system. All three authorities have produced user safety guides and address recreation issues along the river. Two River User Groups operate in the TLS region. Opportunities for new river-related infrastructure were identified in the River Thames Alliance Thames Waterways Plan and are included in the Reach guides.

Rowing

2.152 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 and storage. The Royal Borough of Kingston has recently negotiated additional boat storage for Kingston Rowing Club. Molesey Boat Club is of international standard and boasts several Olympic champions.

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. Regattas are common throughout the summer months at Twickenham, Richmond, Kingston, Molesey and Sunbury. Competitor access to the water at these events is limited due to inadequate infrastructure - the joint use of a moveable pontoon and steps would greatly improve this situation.

2.153 *2012 Update: Issues such as overhanging branches are set out in the TLS Towpath Management Plan whilst boat wash can be addressed through the river user groups.*

Guidance proposals are included in Guidance RL 9 below.

Punting

2.154 In general the river is too deep for much punting, but members of Dittons Skiff and Punting Club race in the shallows between Thames Ditton and Hampton Court.

Guidance proposals are included in Guidance RL 9 below.

Canoeing

2.155 Canoeing is a sport which has been growing in popularity and there are clubs throughout the area – studies indicate that the Arcadian Thames could accommodate additional facilities including guided canoe sea kayak tours. 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



Rowing off Eel Pie Island



Regattas are an annual event at Richmond, Kingston and Molesey



The river at Kingston is full of all manner of water-based clubs

Union Canal. Several non-tidal Thames weirs are popular for canoe slalom events.

2.156 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.

Guidance proposals are included in Guidance RL 9 below.

Sailing

2.157 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.



Sailing off the Lower Ham Road - one of the busiest reaches of the river

2.158 *2012 Update: Issues regarding over-hanging vegetation are set out in the TLS Towpath Management Plan.*

Guidance RL 9: 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.

Traditional Thames Rowing Boats



The King Henry VIII's flotilla - 2009 re-enactment

2.159 *2012 Update: The Great River Race that either finishes or starts at Ham has re-invigorated the number and use of traditional rowing boats on this stretch of the River Thames – many made locally*

at Richmond Bridge Boathouses. An interpretation panel located on Richmond Waterfront describes the different types of traditional rowing boats found in the area. While some of the boats are in private ownership many can be used by young people through one of the local Sea Scout groups. HM The Queen's Royal Thames Barge the Jubilant is based at Richmond and provides a wonderful sight on a warm summer's evening

2.160 All manner of traditional rowing boats can be hired on the river between Hampton and Kew. In summer skiffs are very popular with tourists. Additional skiff hire could be introduced at Kingston. Camping skiffs can be hired at Richmond.

Guidance RL10: Promote the use of skiffs and other traditional rowing boats for visitors to enjoy the river in a peaceful way, explaining more effectively the protocol of river usage.

Speed boats

2.161 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. Boatwash is one of the main causes of bank erosion. Public slipways allow access for speed boats to both the tidal and freshwater Thames.

The tidal river is policed by the PLA, and there is an official speed limit of 8 miles per hour above Wandsworth Bridge. The Environment Agency applies a speed limit of 8 kilometers per hour (5 miles per hour) above Teddington Lock.

Narrowboats, Barges and Motor Cruisers

2.162 Experienced weekend and holiday boaters 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.

2.163 *2012 Update: Additional visitor moorings could be located at Richmond and those at Kingston and Brentford could be enhanced. Guidance is set out in Chapter 3 and detailed proposals in the individual reach chapters. The River Thames Alliance Thames Waterway Plan recommends that where possible base and residential moorings should be located off channel.*

Guidance RL 11: Control mooring location and density and encourage off-channel marinas, balanced with nature conservation interests. Investigate the possibility of improved moorings at Richmond and Kingston.



Camping skiff at Richmond Bridge boathouses



Narrowboat moored on the Barge Walk



Dutch Barge off Kew

Swimming

2.164 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.

2.165 *2012 Update: The annual Great River Swim between Hampton Court and Kingston allows users to access the water during controlled conditions.*

Guidance RL12: 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.

Enhancing the Sensory Experience

Through thoughtful and imaginative design it is possible to create a landscape that offers a wide range of sensory experiences to a range of people. All landscapes induce sensory responses, but it is the concentration of different experiences that gives sensory designs their identity – The Arcadian Thames lends itself perfectly to this. Planning for sensory interest at an early design stage can lead to the principle of enhancing the landscape rather than the options of restricting the experience to a sensory garden or sensory trail. Design approaches should encourage users to explore, touch and smell plants or walk across different path surfaces for example.

Sound, smell, sight and texture play an important part in the sense of place. Consideration should be given to sounds and smells that characterise a river such as birds singing, the smell of a freshly mown meadow, the dappled shade created by a willow tree over water, long evening shadows, wood shavings, autumn leaves, river mud or an elderberry in flower, leaves rustling, water trickling, waves, engine noises from boats and boatyards and the crunch of gravel under foot.

Aspects of path design such as width, change in direction, slopes and ability to see a destination or end point all influence speed of travel and sense of curiosity. Orientation skills can also be developed by providing things for people to stand on or climb up (walls, logs or other platforms), that test or develop balance and which act as markers in the landscape.

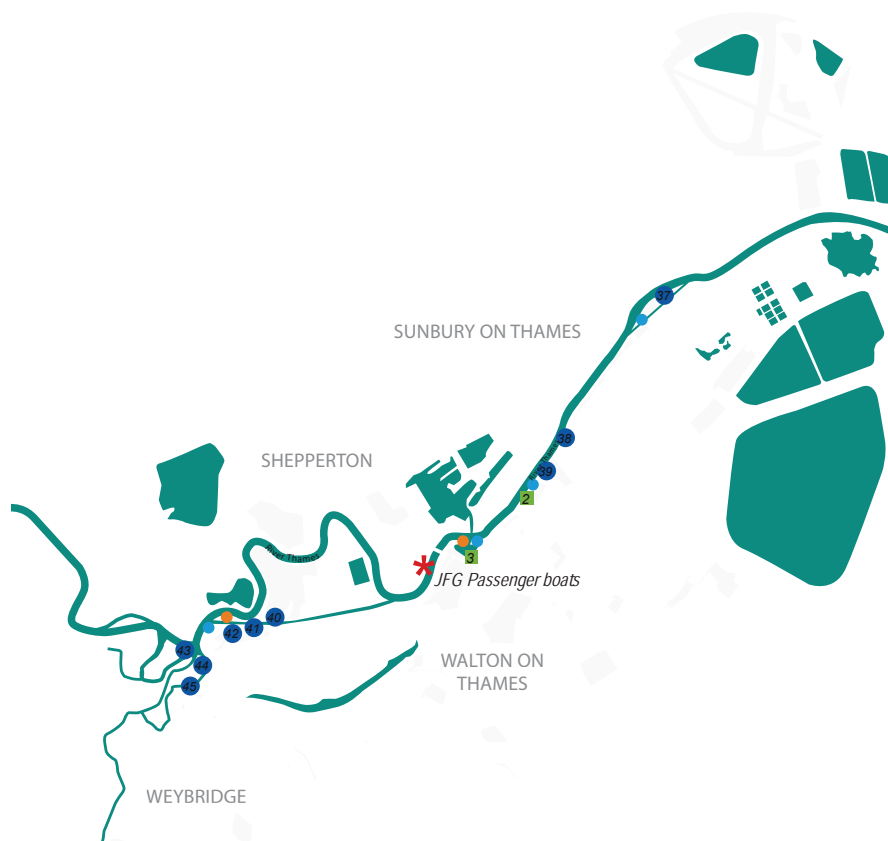
Some spaces should be designed to be quiet, contemplative and relaxing. Here the emphasis is on using the combination of sensory qualities to create a comfortable and calming environment. There is also potential to use light and shade, enclosure and sounds to explore other moods.

Water Related Clubs and Recreational Facilities:

1. Hampton School Boat Club
2. Port Hampton Yacht Club
3. Hampton Hill Sea Scouts
4. Hampton Sailing Club
5. Westel Canoe Club
6. Hampton Sailing Club House
7. Thames Motor Yacht Club
8. Molesey Boat Club and Hard
9. Molesey Lock Skiff Roller
10. Kingston Grammar School Rowing Club
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19. Steadfast Sea Cadets
20. Richmond Venturer Dock
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42. Weybridge Ladies Rowing Club
43. Weybridge Mariners Boat Club
44. Wayfarers Rowing Club
45. Weybridge Rowing Club

Boat Hire:

1. Martin's Boat Hire
2. George Wilson Marine
3. Walton Marina



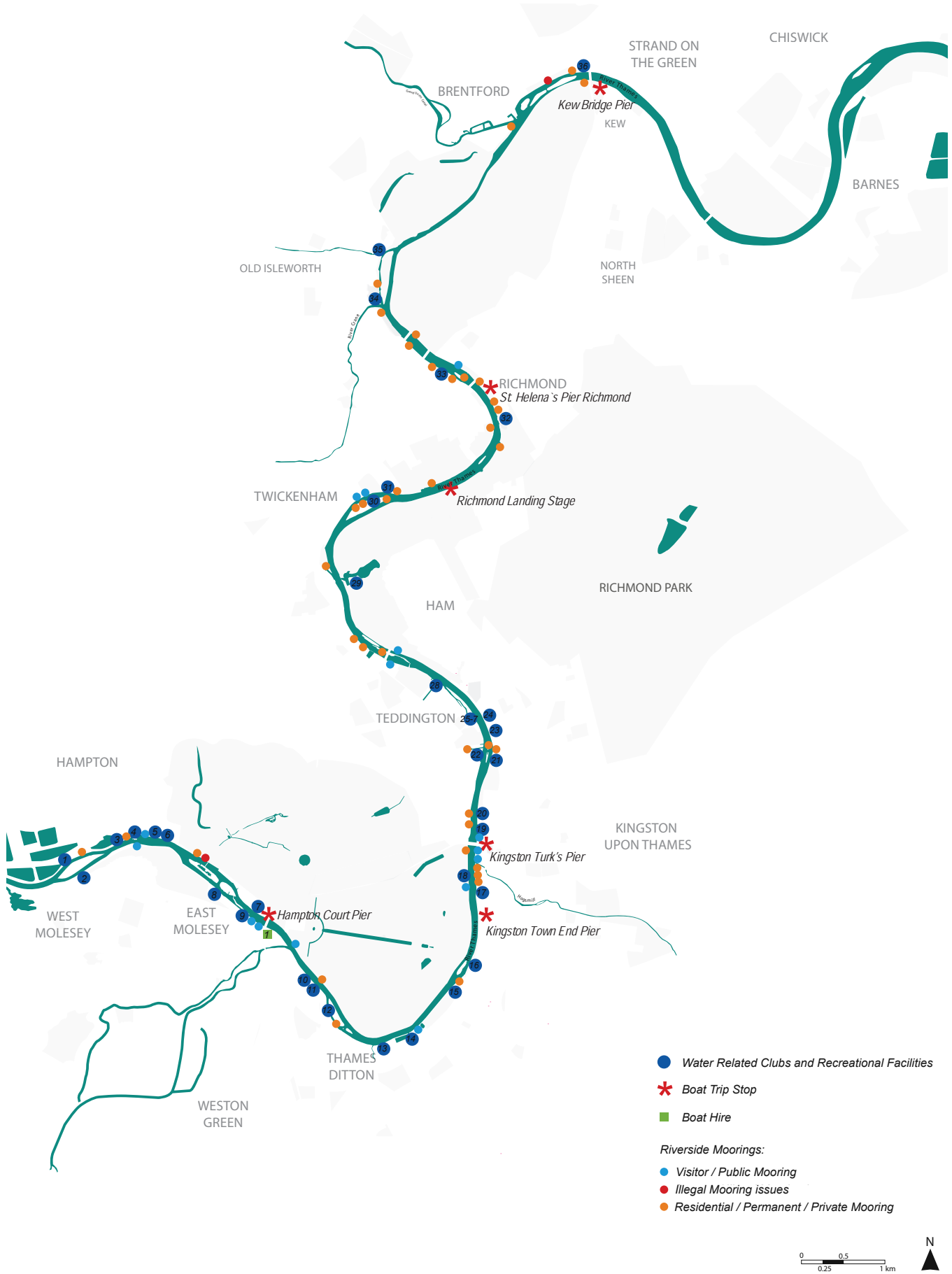


Figure 17 - Water Based Recreation

ACCESSIBLE THAMES

2.166 Ensuring good physical access across the riverside is vital to facilitate as wide a use of the landscape by a wide cross section of people as possible. It is also a requirement of the **Disability Discrimination Act**. All projects should aim to maximise physical access to and within the area in line with best practice and adoptive standards. It is important that views of local people with a range of disabilities are canvassed before any design work is undertaken in order to establish local needs.



Accessible Thames

LOCAL TRAVEL CONTEXT

Visitor Trends

2.167 2012 Update: The reasons for visiting, who visits and the experience gained during a trip to the Arcadian Thames were identified for the Thames Destination Travel Plan. The Mayor's Tourism Plan, with associated reports for South London, establishes the wider visitor trends for the region setting out the key strategic goals to manage and promote tourism.

2.168 2012 Update: The River itself, parks, gardens, historic palaces, heritage and nature sites are found to be key reasons for a visit - often linked to shopping and a meal either in one of the historic centres or at an attraction itself. Visitor satisfaction is high.



Launch of the ground-breaking TLS Access Guide in 2001

Travel Options

2.169 2012 Update: The TLS area is well connected by rail, bus, passenger boat services, car parks, cycle routes, footpaths, the river and canal network. These travel options provide a diverse way for people to move about and experience the river landscape both as a leisure pursuit and as a means of transport. These connections play an important role in shaping the visitor experience and should be conserved and enhanced where appropriate. Measures to improve travel choices are set out in Chapter 4.

Gateways and Routes to the River

2.170 2012 Update: The place of arrival is important and can be a station, a car park or a bus stop. Almost all of the mainline stations or bus termini are located within one of the historic centres or near to a major attraction. These places form gateways from which the visitor can enjoy the river so it is important that they are well designed, legible and have map-based interpretation to inform the visitor – both of the local and wider area. A second layer of informal gateways has been identified - places that are used to start a visit to the river but not necessarily located at a key transport hub such as local bus stops and public footpaths. These are often based on local knowledge.

2.171 2012 Update: The next stage in a journey is the route followed from the gateway site to the river. These connections are often diverse



The bus network allows good access to the river

Key Visitor Trends

The reasons for visiting and the experience gained during a visit to the Arcadian Thames were identified for the Thames Destination Travel Plan in 2012, finding:

- 70% of visitors to the Thames are non-local residents.
- One quarter of visitors visited any given attraction more than once a month, rising to nearly half for local residents.
- Just over half of visitors are over 55.
- The historic houses, natural open spaces, parks and gardens are indicated as one of the main reasons for visiting the area – often linked to shopping and a meal either in one of the historic centres or at an attraction itself.
- Visitor satisfaction is high.
- The area has two of the top ten visitor destinations in the UK – Hampton Court Palace and Kew Gardens, whilst near-by RHS Wisley is also a nationally important visitor location. Kingston is a regional shopping destination.

Many visitors remain in one of the key hub locations and do not venture far from their original destination for the following reasons:

- A perception of crime
- Poor design leading to illegible places
- Fear of being alone in rural reaches
- A misperception of an entry cost to public open spaces
- A fear of wildlife or flooding, tidal mud
- A lack of knowledge of what can be visited beyond the honey pot site

Where people had moved on, much of the joy of visiting a new area was in the self discovery of something new. A 'shopping trip to Richmond' for example, may morph to a visit to Richmond Park, a boat trip to Kingston or a country stroll to Ham House. A number of reasons for this were identified.

Travel Options

- The majority of key attractions have well used car parks located near to the attraction. 46% of visitors to a fee paying attraction arrive by private car.
- There are 15 mainline stations serving the area which are located in zones 3 to 6. Two of these (Richmond and Kew Gardens) are also Underground and Overground stations. The North London Line connects with the Stratford Olympic Site.
- There are 46 bus routes serving different sections of the Arcadian Thames. The three core transport hubs are located at Hounslow, Richmond and Kingston.
- There are three main river boat services.
- The National Cycle Network and London Cycle Network (National Cycle Route 4) passes through the area linked to a formal network of both off- and on-road cycle paths.
- The Thames Path National Trail, the Capital Ring and the London Loop pass through the area as well as numerous local footpaths. 50% of the Thames Path users in Richmond had arrived to the area by train or tube, 20% by bus, rising significantly for local people.

- a narrow alleyway, an avenue of trees or a public path across a village green for example. It is important that they are safe and accessible, utilising mental mapping techniques where possible. A number of key routes linking a gateway site with the river have been identified and could be used as a focus for regeneration activity and for use in walking leaflets and map-based interpretation.

Riverside Hubs of Activity

2.172 2012 Update: Visitors often arrive at the river at a known cluster of activity – often at a historic centre or as part of an attraction. The hubs form a first impression and should be well maintained, welcoming and legible. At these places a series of options can be made – a trip on a boat, a walk upstream or downstream, a picnic or a visit to a local attraction. These choices should be clearly understood either before arrival (through off-site interpretation such as guides and websites) or on arrival (through signage, design and interpretation). Studies indicate that many visitors remain in one of the hub locations and do not venture far from their original destination. Where people do move on, much of the joy of visiting Arcadia is in the self discovery of something new.

NEW Guidance RL13 Ensure that the main connections between the river and gateway sites are maintained to a high standard. Ensure that places of arrival at the river are legible and welcoming and that information – both off-site and on-site – is appropriate to its location and provides enough information for an informed visit.

Understanding the Landscape

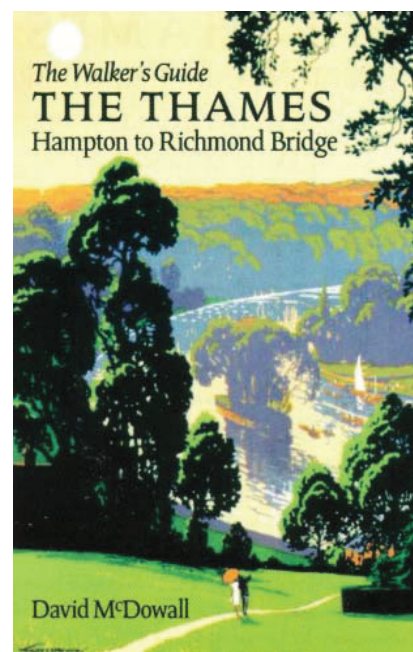
2.173 2012 Update: Legible London identified a range of different methods that visitors use to navigate from place to place including prior knowledge, signage, mental mapping, guide books and wayfinding landmarks.

2.174 2012 Update: The Arcadian Thames Destination Travel Plan established that a careful balance needs to be reached between the installation of signage and the conservation of the ‘rural’ character of the river. For this reason a range of subtle interpretation and design measures to connect and enhance the provision of information along (and to) the Thames should be adopted so that users can move about and enjoy the landscape without the need for excessive signage. This suite of measures includes both on- and off-site interpretation and should utilise new technologies.

2.175 2012 Update: Visitor Centres and local tourist information centres at Richmond and Kingston provide an important interpretation opportunity and should be supported. Visit Richmond has successfully incorporated a mobile information stand at Richmond Station – a key gateway location. Many of the local attractions include interactive and static displays. When installing these interpretive pieces, consideration should be given as to how the information can be displayed to place the particular attraction within the wider setting of the Arcadian Thames.



Ham Street Car Park restored in 2008 by the TLS - an important gateway to the river



Off-site interpretation such as walking leaflets and specialist guide books provide an excellent way to learn about the landscape

Wayfinding, Interpretation and Signage

Information along the Arcadian Thames needs to be multi-functional in order to give sufficient knowledge for those users who will stay at one of the key honey pot sites whilst providing enough information for those who may wish to move about and understand the wider landscape. The range of riparian owners and the diversity of different experiences that collectively characterize the Arcadian Thames mean a one size fits all approach to signage is not appropriate. Local identity and character needs to be reinforced set within a 'family' of collective measures. It is the provision of information, wider design considerations and consistency of standards that is important.



Interactive interpretation: Molesey

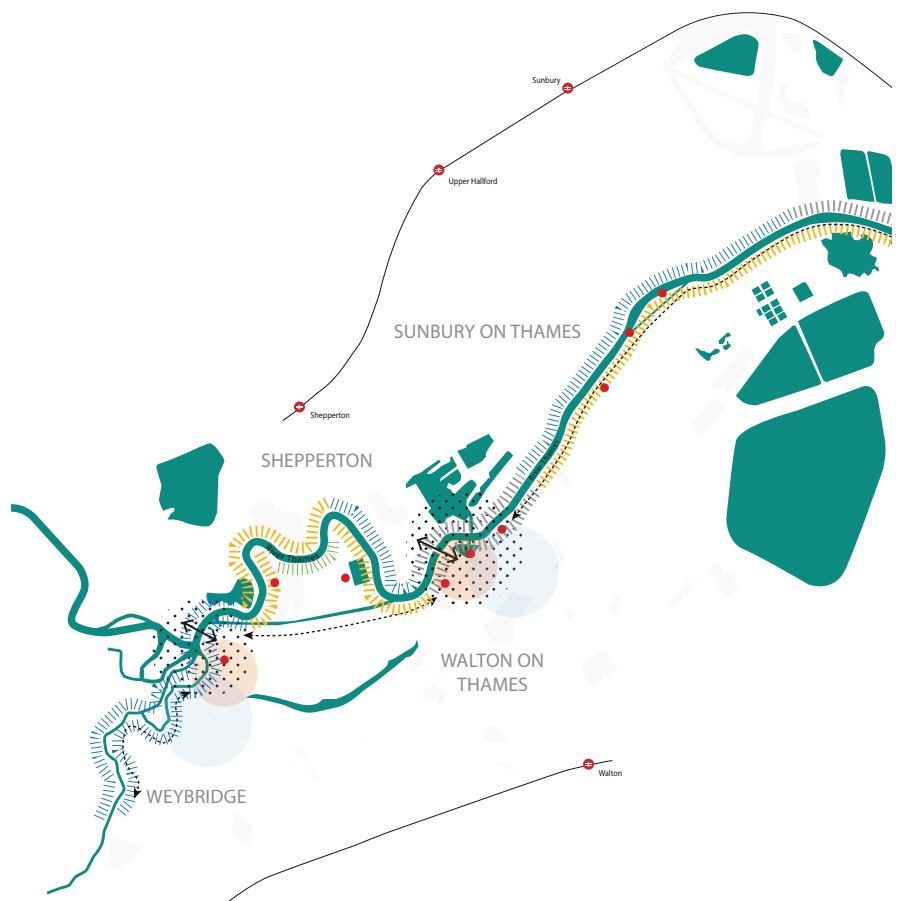
Many different types of signage are used along the river – both statutory and non-statutory. It has been demonstrated that this diverse range of signage can often be rationalised and incorporated onto a single post.

Many interpretive boards have been installed by local amenity societies providing a valuable connection between communities and their landscape. This approach should be encouraged although it is important that any sign should be positioned so as not to detract from river views and that the information provided relates to near-by panels both in terms of family style and content adding to the overall visitor experience. The TLS has introduced a numbering system for interpretation boards to facilitate cross reference in walking leaflets.

At gateway sites, decision points and clusters of activity, map-based orientation panels are appropriate to inform the visitor of different options. These have been successfully installed in Richmond and Twickenham town centres by the Legible London experiment and are planned for Kingston.

Off-site interpretation

A trip to the river and the recreational decisions made is often spontaneous but equally it can be well planned in advance through the use of off-site interpretive material such as guide books, web sites or walking leaflets. This type of information can provide all the information needed to inform the user before a visit is made and can be downloaded for use during a visit without the need for excessive amounts of signage. Many organisations, both professional and voluntary, produce a diverse selection of information, most of which is now available on the web. In addition, local groups carry out guided walks and produce a variety of walking leaflets and books covering almost every subject for the TLS area. The provision of interactive 'i-walks' should be explored both as downloadable applications and as 'bluetooth' guides located at key gateways and clusters of activity to interact with younger users who may not be fully engaged with the river. Kingston University leads the way in the development of this information.



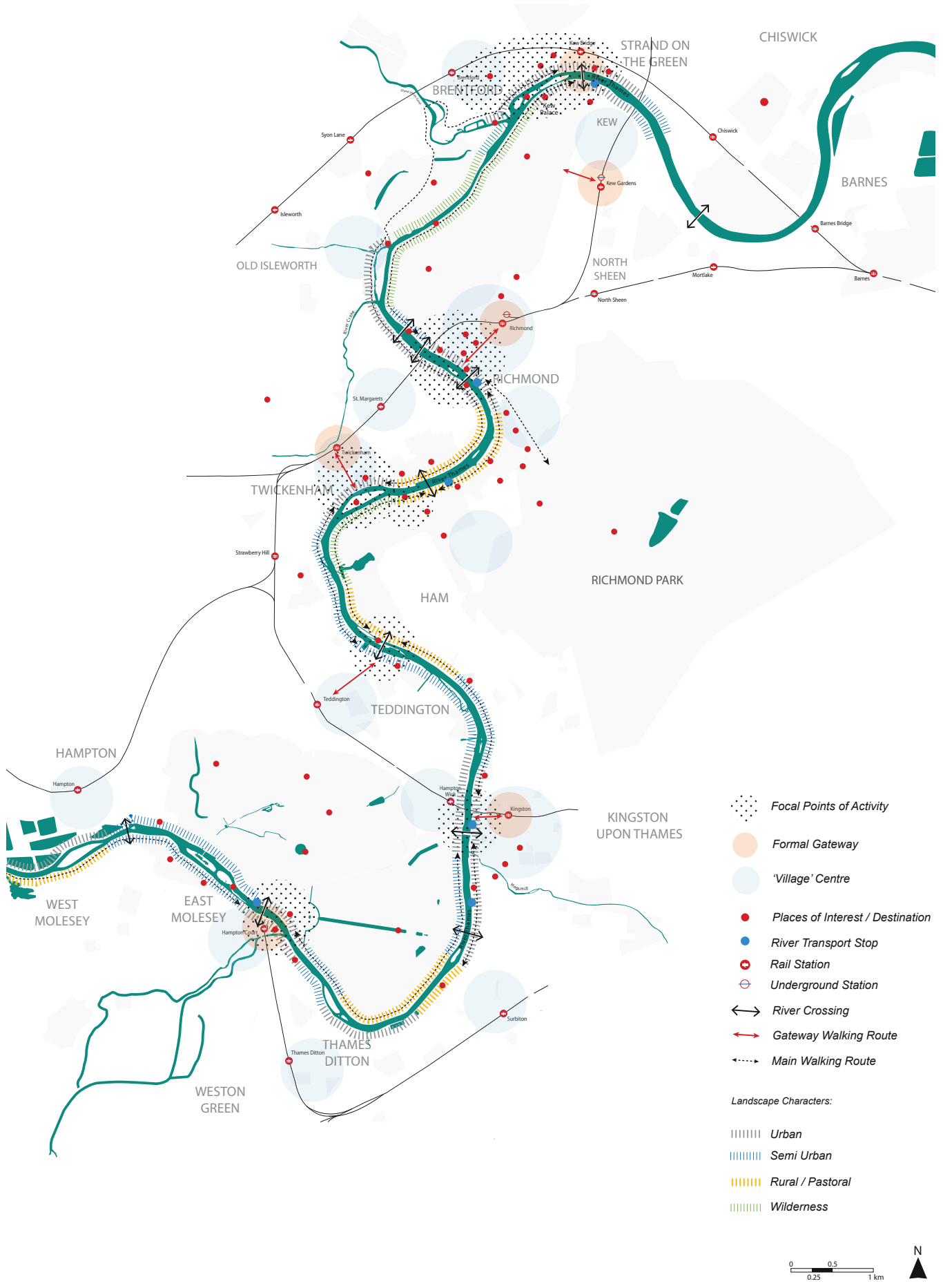


Figure 18 - The Connected Landscape

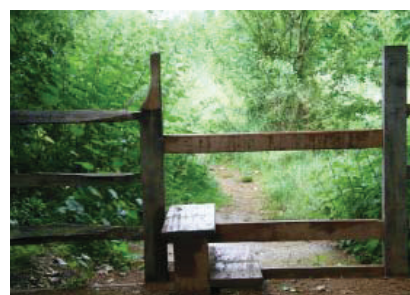
Streetscape design

2.176 2012 Update: Design can be used to enhance the ways that visitors move through and understand a place. This approach uses **mental mapping** techniques reducing the need for formal way marking, keeping costs and clutter down. Successful projects use the river landscape itself as a focus, rather than grand new interventions. Whilst the Thames Landscape Strategy does not produce a design guide for the riverside (this would be inappropriate for such a multi-functional landscape), it has adopted a small palette of materials that have been used in its project work. This approach celebrates local character and identity of any given space whilst linking different places along the river with each through the shared use of materials. It is important that boroughs, developers and riparian managers consult with the TLS before the design process begins to ensure that continuity is achieved along the river.



Dolphin bench on Richmond Riverside

2.178 2012 Update: Over the past decade, many of the lost view lines that provide the formal structure to the landscape have been re-opened. Once open, these views should be kept open to ensure that visual connections can be interpreted and used as a mental mapping tool. Additional clutter of any sort should be avoided at these points. Signage for example should be positioned on existing light columns or other existing posts where possible. The position of **benches** is particularly important. Locations should be chosen to maximise views of the river or to a distant feature but sited (wherever possible) in a position where there is an established gap in vegetation reducing the need to fell trees or remove scrub in order to gain the view.



This style in Ham helps to enhance the rural character

TOURISM

2.179 The Arcadian Thames can boast one of the best and most diverse clusters of visitor attractions in the UK and is without parallel in any other capital in Europe. It is also one of the least promoted and least appreciated national tourist resources. With its historic buildings and waterfronts; its Royal palaces, parks and open spaces, it is a cultural landscape of great significance (as the cradle of the English Landscape Movement and home to generations of artists, thinkers, poets, scientists and musicians), its towpaths, nature conservation interest and recreation potential of all kinds, it has the potential to be a world class destination.



Riverside Carnival: Orleans House

2.180 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. 'Arcadia', means rural paradise – a perfect place to relax and unwind, to wander from place to place, to discover new experiences on the way. 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 this report.



Riverside pub



The use of signage should be carefully considered

Streetscape Design

Ground features have played an important part in interpreting the Thames corridor. This method greatly reduces the visual impact and adds to the sense of self discovery of the landscape. Lines of granite sets for example, cross footpaths to draw attention to a vista or heritage feature and engraved plaques, quotes and names in the floorscape that relate to former residents, species or events have been used in the urban waterfronts. The simple use of a **sealed gravel surface** that provides a high quality finish can clearly define the main Thames walking and promenading routes. This approach is currently being rolled out including use on the key connections to the river from further afield.

The conservation, retention and reintroduction of traditional Thameside heritage features such as gates, stiles, riverside bollards, mooring rings, boardwalks and iron railing is encouraged.



State of the art 'bat friendly' lighting: Warren Footpath

Good lighting can be used as a mental mapping tool whilst having the advantage of reducing the impact that light pollution has on nocturnal animals. A key concern is not to light any place that is not already lit. In riverside areas that are already lit efforts should be made to enhance the lighting. New lights should fit into the landscape aesthetically (including long and short views) and be designed to waymark key routes through the use of common materials and through the use of a soft white light source. This will improve security, help overcome the fear of crime and encourage a greater number and diversity of people to use the riverside during the evenings and winter months. The TLS has led the way in developing new lighting that is suitable for waterway locations. Along the Warren Footpath in Twickenham, new lights were installed as part of the Arcadia project that minimized glare and light spill outside those areas that needed to be lit to below one lux. The type of light used has a minimal impact on nocturnal wildlife and can be controlled to reduce their impact further during peak bat feeding times. The floodlighting of tennis courts and all weather-pitches along the river corridor should be discouraged.



Traditional lighting near to Marble Hill House complements its historic surroundings

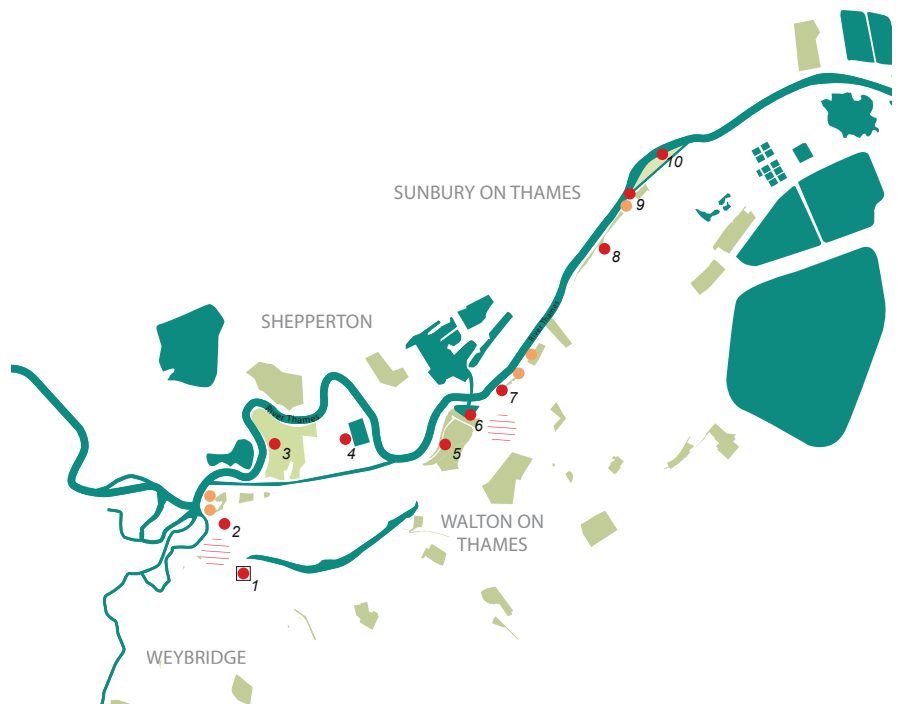
The use of **trees and plants** along the river can help to increase understanding and legibility whilst having a key role in shaping the character of the environment. The choice of and positioning of vegetation can be used to frame views, to mark trails and paths across the landscape and can reflect the context of a location accounting for different ages of garden design, taste and historic species introductions. In the pastoral reaches, natural planting managed in a traditional way is often the best approach.



Historic railings

Attraction / Thames Treasure:

1. Elmbridge Museum
2. Site of Outwoods Place
3. Desborough Island
4. Vandals Rugby Club
5. Cowey Sale
6. Walton Marina
7. Walton Wharf / River House Arts Centre
8. Elmbridge Leisure Centre
9. Weir Public House
10. Sunbury Lock
11. Garrick's Temple
12. Hurst Park
13. Molesey Cricket Club
14. Molesey Lock
15. Bushy House & Water Gardens
16. Chestnut Avenue
17. Bushy Park
18. Diana Fountain
19. Hampton Court Palace
20. Cigarette Island
21. Albany Reach
22. Home Park, Long Water
23. Seething Wells
24. Queens Promenade
25. King's Stone and Clattern Bridge
26. Kingston Market Place
27. Kingston Museum
28. Canbury Gardens
29. Hawker Centre
30. Teddington Film Studios
31. Teddington Lock
32. Strawberry Hill House
33. Eel Pie Island
34. Twickenham Rugby Football Union
35. York House
36. Orleans House
37. Marble Hill House
38. Hammerton's Ferry
39. Ham House
40. Ham Avenue
41. Ham Towpath
42. Petersham Meadows
43. Petersham Nursery
44. King Henry's Mound
45. Richmond Park
46. Petersham Hotel
47. Star & Garter House
48. Richmond Hill View
49. The Terrace Gardens
50. Richmond Bridge
51. Richmond Waterside
52. Argyle House
53. Richmond Museum
54. Richmond Theatre
55. Richmond Green
56. Richmond Lock
57. Richmond Athletics Ground / Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Course
58. London Welsh Rugby Club
59. Kew Observatory
60. Old Isleworth
61. Wet Woods
62. Syon House
63. West Middlesex Hospital
64. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
65. Canal Junction
66. Brentford Football Club
67. Thames Aits
68. Kew Palace
69. Kew Green
70. Musical Museum
71. Kew Bridge Steam Museum
72. Brentford Leisure Centre
73. Strand on the Green
74. Chiswick House
75. Boston Manor



2.181 *2012 Update: The TLS has championed a joined-up approach to promote and improve the visitor experience through shared initiatives, co-ordinated visits, joint ticketing, area-wide travel plans and funding bids although success to date has been limited. An Arcadian Thames Travel Plan Network has been established to bring together the wealth of attractions along the river to find ways to jointly improve the visitor experience.*

Guidance RL14: Promote and co-ordinate tourism in the remarkable river landscape, linked to public transport, river boat transport, walking and cycling networks and explaining the history and nature conservation.

Parks, Palaces and Open Spaces

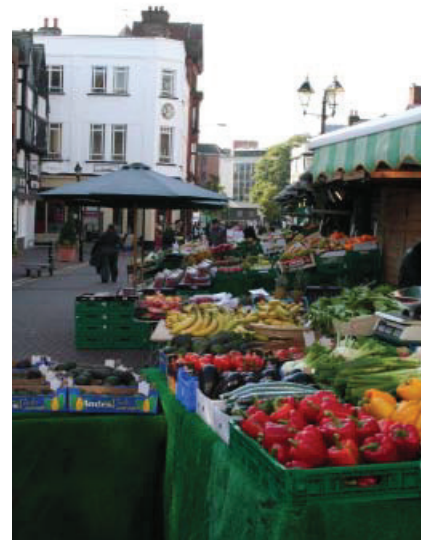
2.182 The great royal palaces, parks and villas of the attendant courtiers are connected by the river and largely open to the public (directly or by agreement) and add greatly to the experience of visiting the Arcadian Thames.

2.183 *2012 Update: In addition to the established honey-pot sites the wealth of ordinary public open spaces should be celebrated both as wonderful spaces in themselves and as the connecting tissue that knits the landscape of nationally important attractions. Connections to nearby destinations such as Osterley, Wimbledon, RHS Wisley and Boston Manor could be explored. The World Heritage Site at Kew is open to the public and is an important tourism asset both locally and regionally to the area. Improving the visitor experience to and from the site as well as connections with other attractions in the area will be mutually beneficial.*

NEW Guidance RL15: Celebrate and enhance the ordinary public open spaces along the River Thames.



The Palm House, Kew Gardens



Kingston Marketplace



The everyday public open spaces add much to the overall character of the Arcadian Thames

Wildlife Watching

2.184 *2012 Update: Many visitors to the River Thames are attracted by the diversity of wildlife found on and along its banks. The Arcadian Thames also provides that most special of experiences – the opportunity to get close to nature in an urban environment.*

Museums, Galleries and Theatres

2.185 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.

2012 Update: In addition to the more established museums in Kingston, Twickenham and Richmond, the public art galleries at Orleans House and the theatres in Brentford, Twickenham, Richmond and Hampton, the Rose Theatre in Kingston opened in 2009 to much acclaim.

Refreshment & Shopping

2.186 Existing pubs, cafes and restaurants are listed for each reach in Chapter 4. To eat by the waterside in a royal park, or at least to have views of the river, has great appeal for tourists. Facilities could be increased and upgraded on the built waterfronts. Many riverside hubs of activity are located at known shopping destinations – many with farmers markets and independent retailers.

Guidance RL16: Promote a programme of joint marketing between the main park, villa, palace attractions and world heritage sites along the river. Integrate the programme with riverside museums, galleries and theatres and with pubs, cafes and restaurants.

Events

2.187 Riverside events always prove popular and range from traditional regattas such as Kingston and Molesey to intimate community gatherings such as the annual Hurst Park Summer Party. Many events have been specifically planned to celebrate the river such as the Kingston Celebration of the River and the Teddington River Festival. Each September the Great River Race takes place between Ham and Greenwich to find the UK traditional boat champion attracting competitors from all over the world.



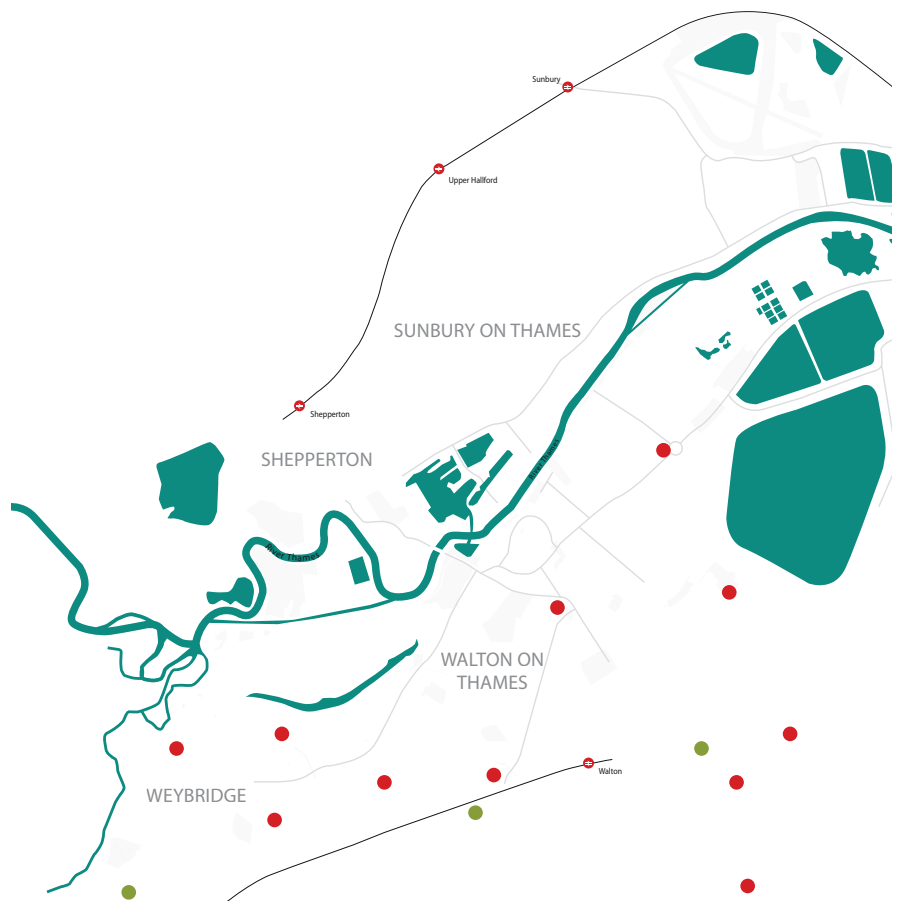
Kingston Celebration of the River



Celebrating the Centenary of the Richmond Hill indignation campaign



The Great River Race



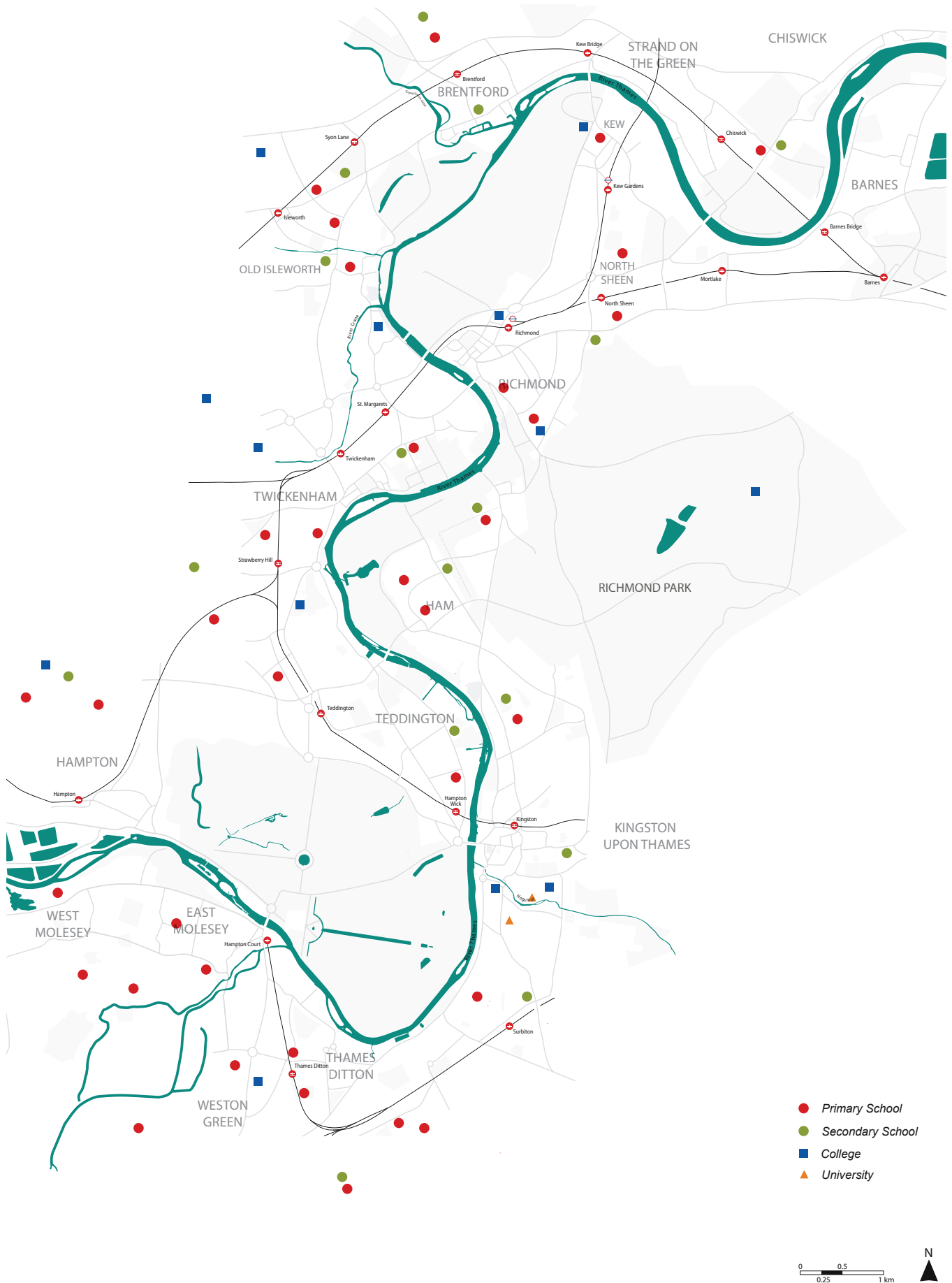


Figure 20 - Education Centres

