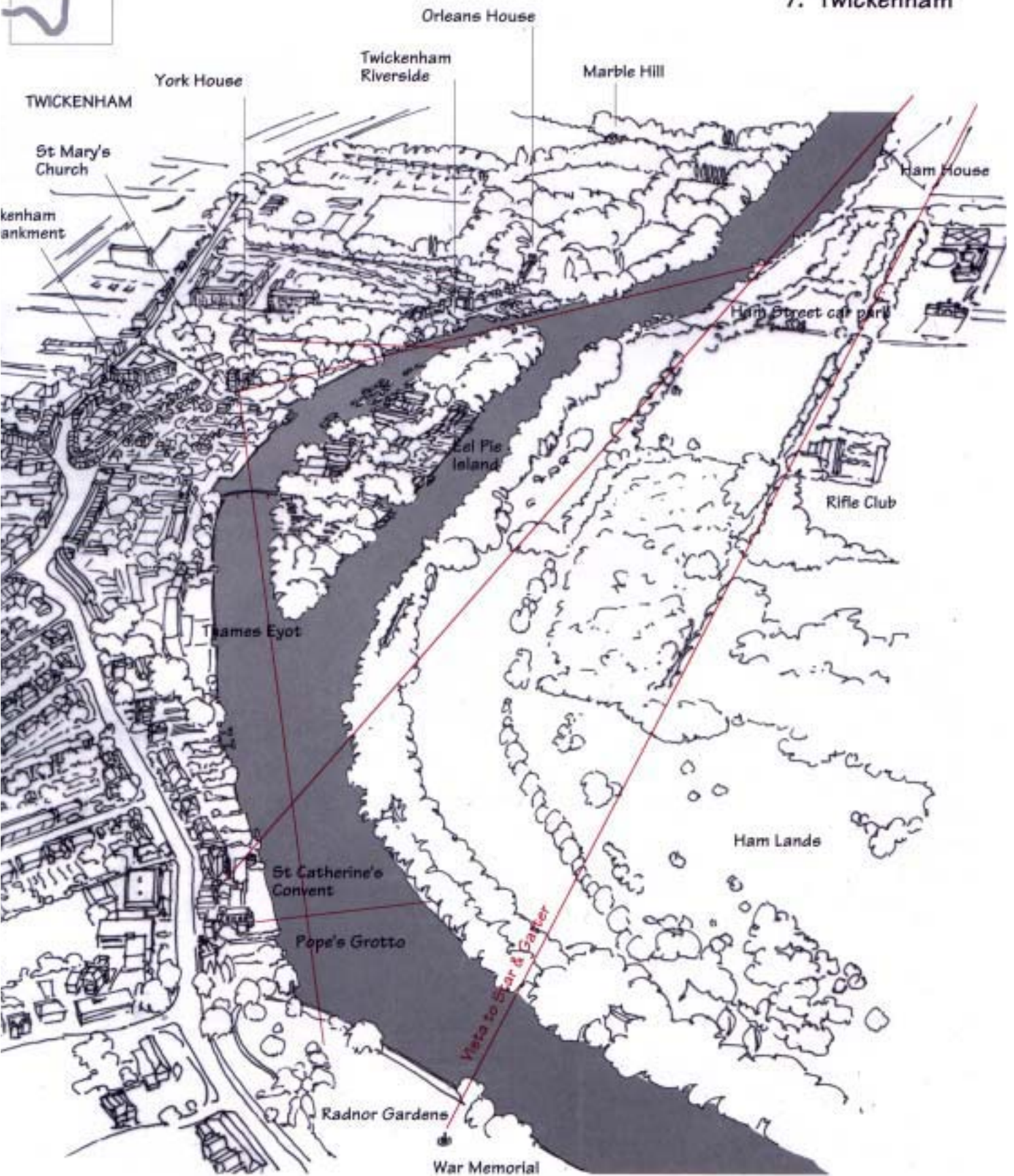


LANDSCAPE CHARACTER REACH

7. Twickenham



— Vieta lines



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



The roof of the Star and Garter Home on Richmond Hill (aligned with the Radnor Gardens War Memorial) can just be glimpsed through winter scrub along the line of the main Ham Avenue



The remaining section of the main Ham Avenue



Pope's Villa and Grotto in 1735. The Villa has been demolished, but the Grotto survives behind a disused science laboratory

Twickenham is one of the classic historic Thames waterfronts, with the church and historic buildings clustered around wharves and boatyards. The Twickenham reach runs along the Middlesex bank from Radnor Gardens through the Embankment to the Riverside. Eel Pie Island encloses the historic waterfront, separating Twickenham from the wild expanse of Ham Lands on the Surrey banks.

Radnor Gardens has become a popular local park, with an active residents' support group. Though Radnor House was hit by a bomb in 1940 and demolished, part of the foundations and one of the garden pavilions remain. Part of the garden originally lay on an island, but the river channel gradually became clogged with rubbish and was filled and grassed over in the 1970s. A well-used bowling green and a new pavilion have been added to the park and the Friends of Radnor Gardens are currently looking at ways of improving the park's layout, seating, safety, performance spaces, screening from the road and views to the river.

Radnor Gardens are set on a particularly significant spot. Not only does the park provide one of the only windows from the built-up Middlesex banks onto the river, it also acts as the focal point for the **Ham House Avenue**, visually linking Richmond Hill with Twickenham. The park's War Memorial was originally placed there to be seen at the end of the Avenue by the disabled soldiers and sailors in the Star and Garter Home on the Hill. Further significance comes from the park's location between Pope's Grotto and Strawberry Hill. The re-design of the park, co-inciding with the possible re-instatement of the main Ham Avenue and the settings of Strawberry Hill and Pope's Grotto, would have a dramatic impact on this part of the river, restoring connections across one of the most influential landscapes in the history of the English Landscape Movement.

In the 17th century the Dysarts planted a bold grid of lime avenues across **Ham Lands**. Most of these avenues have survived through 3 centuries to the present day. The main east-west avenue even largely weathered the period of 20th-century gravel extraction and it has only been in the last 20 years that the western end has disappeared under sycamore and elm scrub growth. A firing range intrudes into a short section of the avenue line. Scrub is gradually obscuring views and access across the public open space and invading the floristically rich grassland. A Countryside Commission Stewardship agreement with the London Borough of Richmond is tackling the control of scrub growth and the management of the grasslands. Glimpses from the towpath back into Ham Lands are being re-opened by a programme of coppicing.

One of the glimpses to be re-opened would be the vista from **Pope's Grotto** across the river into the landscape which inspired his writings. The Grotto is the only part of Pope's villa to survive, but its connection to the river has been blocked by a science laboratory built in 1934. The grotto and neighbouring tea merchant's house are now owned by St Catherine's Convent and the school which shared the buildings has recently moved across the road into new premises in Pope's old garden. The laboratory is vacant and, depending on the nuns' plans, it may eventually be possible to demolish the 1934 structure and restore the connection with the river. Should the convent buildings come up for sale in the future and adequate funding be secured, it may even be possible to convert the site into a study centre, at what was the heart of the 18th-century English Landscape Movement.

The **tower of St Catherine's** Convent, said to be designed in the shape of a caddy by the tea merchant builder, stands out as a landmark on the river from as far away as Petersham Meadow. The surrounding area has been intensively developed as private housing, but buildings are generally less than 3 storeys and the tower stands out above the trees of Ham Lands.

Downstream from the Convent, **private houses** line the Middlesex bank as far as the Twickenham Embankment. The gardens are between 20 and 40 metres deep and though some enhance the riverside with mature trees, a number of treeless gardens reveal intrusive white stucco houses. Even worse is the monolithic 1930s Thames Eyot block of flats, built on the site of the 18th-century Poulett Lodge. Although the balustrade, loggia and boathouse of the old mansion give the riverside a grandeur which matches the York House waterfront on the other side of Twickenham, the scale and design of the block of flats do not complement the setting. The effect has been exacerbated by a second modern block beside the Twickenham Embankment.

Twickenham Embankment retains a special character of brick and granite wharves backed by the attractive grouping of St Mary's church and the 18th-century waterfront of houses and pubs. The space is popular with fishermen, boat repairers, walkers and people just sitting enjoying the protected southern aspect and watching the swans, riverside activity and the view across to the boatyards on Eel Pie Island. Car parking, vandalised brick planters and graffiti-covered seats detract from the scene. The derelict swimming baths' building is out-of-scale with the rest of the waterfront and introduces a rather bleak dead end to the Embankment. The site offers a rare opportunity to make new connections back to the centre of Twickenham and a potential location for expanding the surrounding civic facilities, such as the day-care centre, with fine views and access to the waterfront. This could also be a good site for a relocation of the local library. If in the future, the adjacent Thames Eyot were ever re-developed and public access could be negotiated along the old balustraded waterfront, the Embankment could really bring a new life and identity to Twickenham.

At the downstream end of the Embankment, the balustraded gardens of **York House** provide an example of how trees and public access could enhance the Thames Eyot site at the upstream end. York House, the offices of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, and its eccentric gardens create a fine foil to the busy wharves of Twickenham and the ramshackle activity of the boatyards.

The boatyards across the narrow 40 metre channel on **Eel Pie Island** and the vessels on the river are an intrinsic part of the character of the area. It is rare to be able to watch a working waterfront at such close quarters without getting in the way. The enclosing trees at either end of the island and across the river in York House gardens complete the sense of containment. These wooded ends to the islands, as well as providing important wildlife habitats, hide buildings from up- and downstream, helping to keep communities distinct and give the impression of a rural landscape. Townhouse developments on the southern side of Eel Pie Island detract from the rural character and could be softened by tree planting. The old bungalows on the northern side are gradually changing in character. The modest low wooden houses, set back in leafy gardens, are being replaced by 2-storey brick structures with picture windows and concrete block garden walls.

A tiny road weaves from the Embankment, under a footbridge in York House gardens, to the **Twickenham Riverside**, a picturesque grouping of white 17th- and 18th-century terraced houses, surrounded by trees. The White Swan Inn sits in the centre of the group, above the old Twickenham ferry slipway. Viewed from Ham Street, across the water, this is one of the more charming scenes along the river. The distant bulk of the Regal House tower block, visible over the tree tops, is the only intrusion into the skyline.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Twickenham had a riverside settlement in neolithic times and achieved its identity as Tuiccanham in AD 704 when it appears in a Saxon charter. It is not mentioned in Domesday, since it formed part of the larger manor of Isleworth, but a church is said to have existed on the site of the present St Mary's by the end of the 11th century. By 1635 Glover's map shows the village clustering round the church, ringed with orchards and market gardens to supply the capital with fruit and vegetables. In addition to the Manor House



The tea merchant's house, built beside Pope's Villa, is now part of St Catherine's Convent



York House, the offices of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames



The white 17th- and 18th-century houses at Twickenham Riverside

Peter Tilleman's Prospect of the River Thames at Twickenham circa 1780, showing 'the abundance of Curious Seats' recorded by John Macky



opposite the church, new substantial houses were being built and York House can be seen in scaffolding on Glover's map with kilns working full tilt on site to supply bricks.

Nobility began to be attracted to the area in increasing numbers in the 17th century. Lord Cornbury, Clarendon's eldest son, lived at York House in 1661, Lord Bradford at Richmond House by the river and Lord Raby at Mount Lebanon. In 1720 John Macky could call Twickenham 'a Village remarkable for its abundance of Curious Seats'. In 1710 John James had built Secretary Johnston a new house which Macky thought was 'exactly after the model of the Country Seats in Lombardy'. A few years afterwards St Mary's employed the same architect to make a stylish new redbrick nave in startling contrast to the sturdy ragstone 14th century tower. Sir Godfrey Kneller, who was Churchwarden, organised the fund-raising. From the river St Mary's nave, with its pediment and portico, looks like another of Macky's 'curious seats' singled out for praise in fashionable Twickenham.

There were notable **gardeners** in Twickenham, who made their contribution to the area. Johnston, to whom John James dedicated his translation of Dezallier D'Argenville's work *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*, had, according to Macky, 'the best collection of fruit of all sorts of most gentlemen in England'. Batty Langley, who wrote in 1728 the highly influential book on *New Principles of Gardening*, was the son of a local gardener and worked at Twickenham Park. Although Whitton Park could not be seen from the Thames, the Duke of Argyll's mark was left along the banks of the river as he supplied his neighbours with many recently introduced trees from his large nursery. Walpole, who called him the 'treemonger' acknowledged that he 'contributed essentially to the richness of colouring so peculiar to our modern landscape'. In the Woollett engraving, His Grace is seen in his gardening apron showing visitors around the arboretum. After his death many of the foreign trees and shrubs were transplanted to Kew by Lord Bute for the Princess Augusta and are still there today.

The Swiss artist JH Muntz made a view of the villas and gardens upstream at Cross Deep, where in the 1720s, the Earl of Radnor had built a house by a backwater. When Walpole came to live at Strawberry Hill, he was scornful of his neighbour's eclectic garden buildings, which he called 'Mabland'. The Chinese temple has disappeared but a gazebo, part of a bathhouse, from Radnor House garden, and a Gothic summerhouse from a neighbouring garden of Cross Deep House have been restored in what are now **Radnor Gardens**. Neither of the houses survives.

Twickenham achieved a character all of its own as a **rural retreat** that attracted poets, painters, actors, architects and musicians as well as courtiers and city men. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who moved into the area in 1719, found she could pass her time 'in great indolence and sweetness' with more freedom for cultural pursuits and more reasonable hours than prevailed in London with its nightly assemblies, balls and card-playing. Alexander Pope, who also moved to Twickenham in 1719, was largely responsible for its epithet the 'classical village'. He called his own Cross Deep villa 'my Tusculum' in memory of Cicero's villa outside Rome and while translating Homer he made himself a garden following the classical principle of *simplex munditiis*, the correct balance between Art and Nature. Voltaire, who visited Pope in 1726 was much impressed and inspired by what he saw.

Pope's classical garden with its famous grotto was very influential on garden design and after his death inspired literary pilgrimages. Travellers looked eagerly for 'Twitnam bowers' and the weeping willows he had planted by the river. Catherine the Great is said to have requested slips from the trees for



The Duke of Argyll at Whitton Park



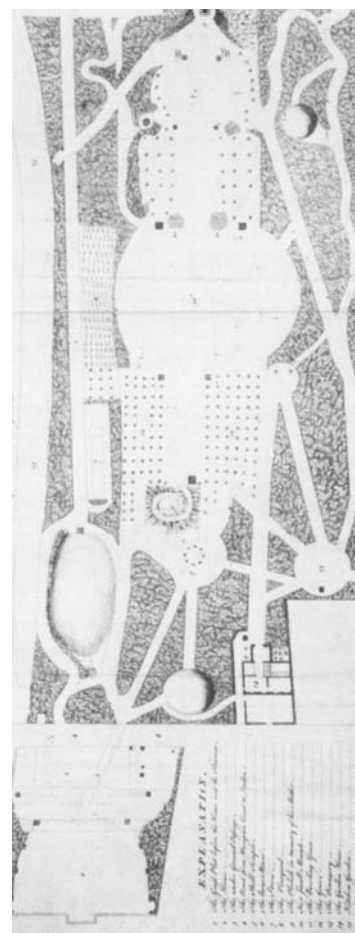
Muntz's view of the eclectic 'Mabland' buildings of Radnor Gardens in 1756, showing the stream channel, since filled in 1970s

St Petersburg. An American made an exact plan of the garden and on his return laid it out with the Philadelphia highway standing in for the Thames. Pope's villa was destroyed in 1807 by an occupant who was weary of such persistent visitors but the underground grotto, which led from the river front of the villa to his garden on the other side of the road, has miraculously survived though it is in urgent need of restoration.

In the early 19th century some of the large parks, notably Twickenham Park, began to be broken up and there was an in-filling of smaller **villas and cottages**. Admiral Crawford in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* found a 'cottage at Twickenham' which he could improve with a gravel walk, a shrubbery and rustic seats. In 1807 JMW Turner was able to design himself a Regency lodge in Sandycombe Road in sight of his beloved river. Charles Dickens occupied one of Aisla Park Villas for a time. Mount Lebanon was not broken up until the end of the century and some of the cedars which had given it its name can still be seen in the Lebanon Park estate. The land on which Whitton Park had stood was extensively developed in the 1930s and a few of the 'treemonger's' cedars are left scattered in Whitton today.

The advent of pleasure steamers brought a wave of day-trippers to stop at Twickenham ait which became known as **Eel Pie Island**, recalling the local eel industry recorded in Domesday. Miss Morleena Kenwigs in Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby* was taken there by steamer, to make merry upon a 'cold collation, bottled-beer, shrub, and shrimps', and to dance in the open air to the music of their travelling band. Dickens, who lived in Twickenham in 1838, had also tasted the delights on offer at the Eel Pie Island hotel, which more recently saw the early days of the Rolling Stones. The hotel has now been replaced by housing, an elegant pre-stressed concrete footbridge to the island having been constructed in 1957.

Twickenham's waterfront has retained its village appearance, although the selling of Richmond House and the building of swimming baths on the site, now unused, leaves the future of the historic waterfront to be resolved. Sir Ratan Tata's York House was bought by the Borough of Richmond in 1926 for use as Council Offices, after receiving its Charter of Incorporation. York House riverside garden with its remarkable statues, intended for Lea Park, Surrey, has been restored by the York House Society with support from the London Borough of Richmond and the Twickenham Society, adding to the varied interest of the delightful riverside walk to the old ferry and the White Swan Inn. The slipway below the church which, with the riverside road, is inundated at high tides, gives great character to the area. The working boatyards across the river on Eel Pie Island and the downstream view back to Walpole's 'seaport in miniature' from the footbridge, ignoring parked cars, has still the atmosphere of a Samuel Scott painting.



John Serle's Plan of Pope's Garden - 1745

NATURE CONSERVATION

Eel Pie Island is the largest island between Teddington and Richmond Locks. The wooded ends of the islands have been designated as nature conservation areas, covered by white willow and sycamore dominant above a ground flora of tall herbaceous plants. The secluded woodland supports a good range of birds, including a pair of tawny owls, which can be heard calling at night.

The **towpath** alongside Ham Lands has become rather enclosed as a result of the re-growth of elm suckers and other scrub. The management of this scrub growth by coppicing lengths will keep the elm healthy (by keeping elm under 20cm diameter at breast height, it is less vulnerable to Dutch elm disease), will link the habitat of the meadow with the river habitat, and will create sunny glades to add habitat diversity and encourage plants and invertebrates.

This reach includes an important section of **Ham Lands**, the nature conservation interest of which is described under Landscape Character Reach 6, and any proposals for the area should ensure that the ecological value is fully considered.



The original Eel Pie Island Hotel c1830

PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION

Public access on the Middlesex bank is restricted to Radnor Gardens, York House gardens and the Twickenham Embankment and Riverside. There is private pedestrian access via a footbridge to Eel Pie Island. Long-term proposals include negotiating access to Pope's Grotto and the Thames Eyot waterfront, should the properties ever come up for sale or re-development. There is continuous public access across Ham Lands and along the Surrey bank towpath, part of the Thames path. Twickenham has a British Rail station.

Radnor Gardens is a popular local park with an active bowling club. The Twickenham Embankment and Riverside are well-used by walkers, shoppers, canoeists and people eating and drinking at the pubs. There are sports pitches and a firing range on Ham Lands.

Boatyards:	Eel Pie Island		
Water recreation:	Twickenham Rowing Club		
	Twickenham Yacht Club		
Land recreation:	Fishing from Twickenham waterfront		LBRuT
	Ham & Petersham Rifle and Pistol Club		Private
	Ham Lands walks bridleways		LBRuT
	Pope's Grotto		St Catherine's
	Radnor Gardens		LBRuT
	Strawberry Hill		Private
	Thames Path		
Refreshment:	Barmy Arms		
	Pope's Grotto		
	The White Swan		
Landmarks:	Eel Pie Island		
	York House	Grade II	LBRuT
	St Mary's Church	Grade II	Church Comm.
	St Catherine's Convent		
	Strawberry Hill	Grade I	Private
	Twickenham Riverside	Grade II	Private
	York House	Grade II*	LBRuT

LOCAL INTEREST GROUPS:

<i>Amenity and Local History:</i>	Twickenham Museum Trust
Aquarius Riverside	Twickenham Society
Borough of Twickenham Local History Society	Twickenham Town Committee
Friends of Radnor Gardens	York House Society
Friends of Twickenham Museum	
Richmond Local History Society	<i>Nature Conservation:</i>
River Thames Society (Upper Tidal)	London Wildlife Trust
Strawberry Hill Residents' Association	Richmond & Twickenham FoE
The Eel Pie Island Association	

PRINCIPAL LAND USES

The river at Twickenham is fronted by houses, pubs, the church, civic facilities, the Council offices, the theatre and the vacant swimming baths site. The waterfront is a popular public open space and used by boat repairers.

Upstream, the Middlesex river bank is lined by private houses and their gardens as far as Radnor Gardens public park. Downstream, the grounds of York House give way to the houses, slipway and pub of the old Twickenham Riverside. And opposite, on Eel Pie Island, land uses are split between boatyards, houses and woodland.

Continuous public open space stretches along the Surrey bank with some sports pitches, a firing range and allotments.

SIGNIFICANT SITES UNDER PRESSURE FOR RE-DEVELOPMENT:

<i>Sites</i>	<i>Main landscape factors for consideration</i>
Twickenham Swimming Baths	- historic and working character and intimate scale of the waterfront
	- connections to the town centre
	- public access and use of the waterfront
	- car parking to be kept back from the water's edge
	- possible incorporation of further civic facilities, such as a re-located Twickenham library

The following proposals have been identified as part of the survey and analysis of the Thames Landscape Strategy. The policy proposals amplify the issues raised in Chapter 2 to be included in Supplementary Planning Guidance. The project and management proposals are recommended for incorporation into national agency and local government work programmes, co-ordinated by a Project Officer and Officers' Steering Committee (see Chapter 5). All proposals would require full consultation before implementation:

Policy Proposals

	<i>Policy</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Pol 7.1	Conserve the intimate scale and working character of the Twickenham and Eel Pie Island waterfront.	LBRuT: RIV 8, T 1, 13.61 (8)
Pol 7.2	Protect the visual links between: Radnor Gardens, Ham Avenue and the Star and Garter Home Radnor Gardens and St Mary's Church, Twickenham Radnor Gardens and Strawberry Hill & across to Pope's Grotto Pope's Grotto and the river Petersham Meadow and St Catherine's Convent tower Twickenham and Eel Pie Island	LBRuT: RIV 1, ENV 2
Pol 7.3	Conserve and enhance the nature conservation interest of the river and its corridor, with particular attention to Ham Lands.	LBRuT: RIV 12 13.21 (11)
Pol 7.4	Restrict building heights around St Catherine's Convent tower to retain its prominence as a landmark from the river and Petersham meadow.	LBRuT: ENV 28 13.61 (9)
Pol 7.5	Conserve and re-instate the 17th-century network of avenues surviving around Ham House.	LBRuT: RIV 1, ENV 2, 12, 13.21 (2/15)
Pol 7.6	Conserve the tree-framed setting of Twickenham Riverside, reducing the height of any future redevelopment on the Regal House site to prevent intrusion into the riverside scene, when viewed from the Surrey bank.	LBRuT: RIV 2, T1
Pol 7.7	Prevent the re-development of low wooden bungalows on Eel Pie Island into 2-storey brick buildings.	LBRuT: ENV 28, RIV 1, 13.61 (9)
Pol 7.8	Secure possible connections between the centre of Twickenham and the swimming baths site.	
Pol 7.9	Encourage provision of passenger loading facilities in front of Twickenham Baths site.	LBRuT: RIV 7, T15

Project Proposals

	<i>Project</i>	<i>Initiative</i>
Proj 7.1	Work with the Friends of Radnor Gardens and LBRuT to improve the layout, seating, safety, performance spaces, screening from the road and views to the river and surrounding features of their park. Consider constructing a landing stage for river access.	LBRuT: 13.61 (8) Friends of Radnor Gdns
Proj 7.2	Conduct a detailed ecological audit and consult with local residents to decide whether it is appropriate to proceed with the re-instatement of the main east-west Ham Avenue, visually linking Richmond Hill with Radnor Gardens, and if so how this might best be achieved.	LBRuT: 13.21 (2), ENV 8, 12 Eng Nature LEU, Eng Heritage Countryside Comm Nat Trust, H&P A Private landowners EH, LBRuT: ENV 2 Private landowners
Proj 7.3	Explore the long-term possibilities of removing the 1934 structure which blocks Pope's Grotto from the river. Consider the long-term restoration of Pope's world-famous garden across the road.	
Proj 7.4	Cut windows in the riparian Ham Lands scrub to reveal glimpses of the wider open space, in line with the Countryside Commission Stewardship Scheme, particularly opposite Pope's Grotto.	LBRuT: ENV 2, RIV 1 Countryside Comm
Proj 7.5	Encourage tree-planting in the gardens which front onto the river between St Catherine's Convent and the Twickenham Embankment.	Private landowners LBRuT ENV 8
Proj 7.6	Encourage tree-planting in front of the town houses on the southern side of Eel Pie Island.	Private landowners LBRuT: ENV 8
Proj 7.7	Negotiate public access and riverside tree planting along the balustraded waterfront of Thames Eyot and encourage the repair of the balustrade, boathouse and other river structures.	LBRuT: ENV 8, RIV 3, 13.61 (20) Countryside Comm
Proj 7.8	Set car parking back from the edge of Twickenham Embankment and improve the layout and seating of the public spaces.	LBRuT ENV 5, T 1, 13.61 (8)
Proj 7.9	Replace intrusive, broken-down concrete fence posts on the edge of the main Ham Avenue.	LBRuT

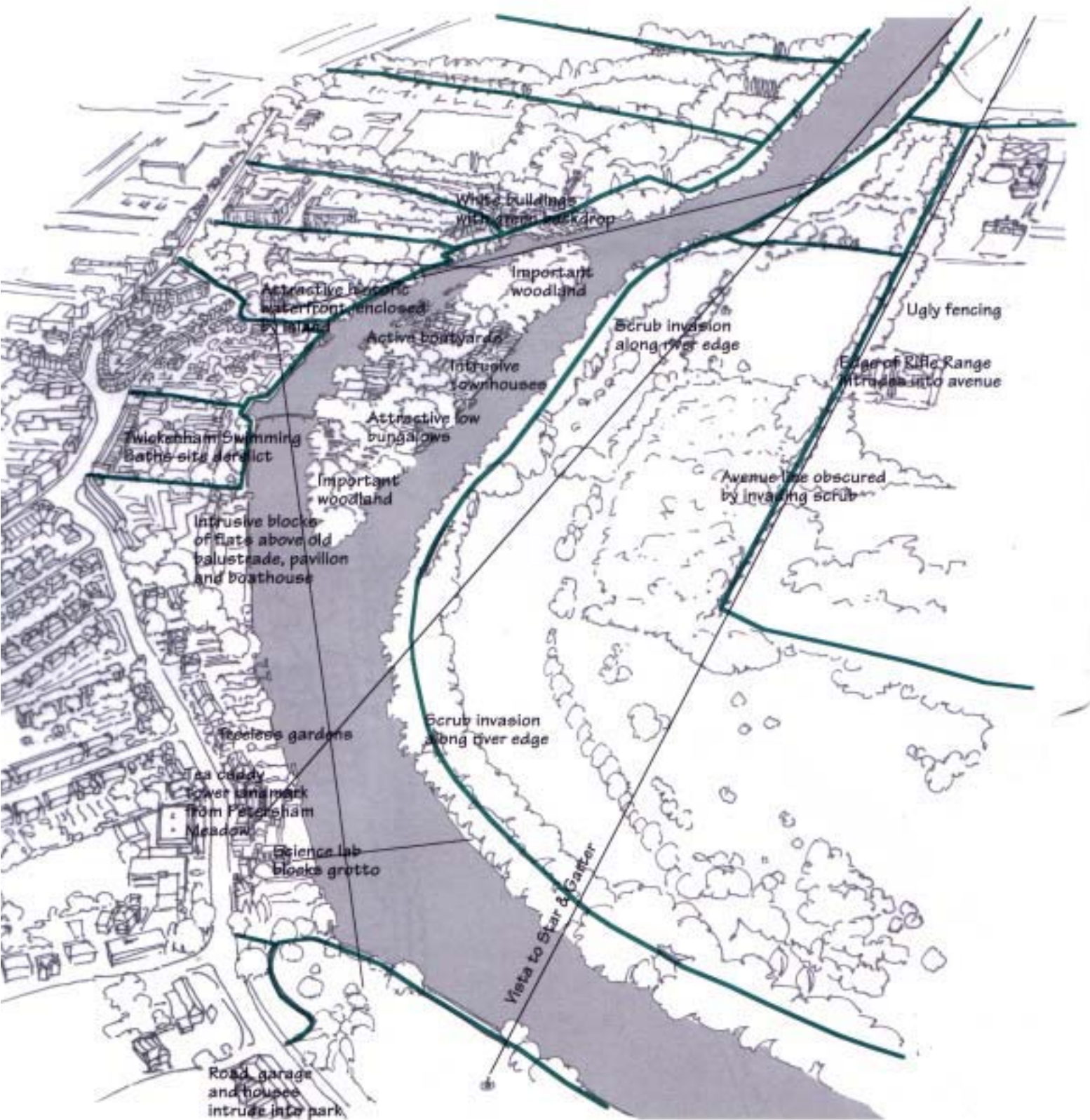
Management Proposals

	<i>Management</i>	<i>Initiative</i>
Mng 7.1	Maintain a diverse edge to Ham Lands by coppicing riverside scrub in panels.	LBRuT: RIV 12
Mng 7.2	Maintain open grassland on Ham Lands with annual late haycut in September.	LBRuT: RIV 12
Mng 7.3	Control scrub growth between the Ham Lands footpath and the river.	LBRuT: RIV 12
Mng 7.4	Maintain the nature conservation areas on Eel Pie Island.	LBRuT: RIV 12



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER REACH

7. Twickenham



— Vista lines
— Public paths

South Twickenham's window onto the river



ANALYSIS