



Alice ~ Westfields Primary School, Barnes

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The River Thames lies at the heart of London and touches the lives of most people in the Capital - whether as a focus of economic activity; a place where people live, work or spend their leisure time; a transport artery; a natural environment and habitat for wildlife; a leisure and recreation resource, or simply as a source of inspiration and pride. The River has influenced the historic settlement pattern of London and still has a vital contribution to make to the City's future and its status as a World City.

However, despite the opportunity to open up parts of the Thames to public access for the first time, the River remains to a great extent an under-utilised and in some places, a neglected asset and is too often seen as a barrier rather than as a positive unifying element. A general consensus is emerging that recent redevelopment and change may not have realised the full potential to enhance the River and Riverside environment, and that insufficient consideration has been given to matters which go beyond normal planning policy, such as education, cultural issues and community involvement.

Objectives of the Strategy

Preparation of the Thames Strategy - Kew to Chelsea is a response to the lack of an overall vision and comprehensive guidance that recognises the distinct characteristics of individual stretches of the River Thames.



Aerial view of the study area looking east from above Brentford showing the wooded Tow Path on the southern bank

The objectives of the Strategy are to:

- promote the increased use of the River and Riverside;
- conserve and enhance historic buildings and landscape;
- improve the environment of the River and Riverside;
- re-establish vital links between the River, the Riverside communities and the rest of London;

- promote a high and appropriate quality of design in all Riverside development;
- rediscover the Thames as a valuable component of London.

The changing character of the River reflects its setting and history, rather than administrative boundaries and there is a clear need for a closer co-ordination of policies to embody a coherent strategy and common vision for the River as promoted in Strategic Planning Guidance for the River Thames (RPG3B/9B). This Strategy is a

direct response to the requirements and objectives set out in the Strategic Planning Guidance and is intended to provide the basis for managing long term change, and for enhancing the River and its environs.

A Shared Vision

The Thames Strategy - Kew to Chelsea endeavours for the first time to promote a shared vision for this rich and varied stretch of the River, and to provide the basis for a more holistic approach to the many complex and interrelated issues relating to the planning, management and use of the River - issues which will require the involvement and commitment of the public, private and voluntary sectors and local communities in active partnerships if they are to be effectively addressed.

The study was commissioned in 1999 by the Thames Strategy - Kew to Chelsea Steering Committee which comprises: the West London River Group, Greater London Authority (previously Government Office for London and London Planning Advisory Committee) Environment Agency, English Heritage, English Nature, Port of London Authority and the London Boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham, Hounslow and Richmond upon Thames. The following organisations are observers to the Steering Committee: London Rivers Association, the Countryside Agency, the Thames Landscape Strategy - Hampton to Kew, the London Borough of Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

A team of consultants led by WS Atkins Planning Consultants has been working with the Steering Committee in the preparation of this Strategy. Other members of the consultants' team comprise Civic Design Partnership, Comedia, The Centre for Leisure and Tourism at the University of North London and the Hammersmith and Fulham Urban Studies Centre.

The Strategy is the culmination of a period of intensive work which has involved discussions with

a large number of organisations with responsibilities and interests in the study area, and the active involvement of representatives of local groups and organisations and local schools. Community participation has been one of the key principles in the approach to strategy development. Issues and opportunities at both the strategic and local level were the subject of two public exhibitions and open days held in January 2001 and local groups and organisations have been involved in a series of focus groups and



Aerial view of Chelsea and Battersea - Character Reach 7

workshops. In addition, educational projects relating to the River have been piloted in primary schools in Hammersmith and Barnes. The Draft Strategy was the subject of further public consultation during the summer and autumn 2001.

The Study Area

The study area adjoins the area covered by the Thames Landscape Strategy: Hampton to Kew at Kew Bridge and reflects an even greater diversity of character ranging from the historic waterfront of Strand on the Green to the industrial riverside of Nine Elms. The study area extends from Kew Bridge to Chelsea Bridge on the north bank i.e. from Kew Bridge to the administrative boundary between the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the City of Westminster on the north bank and from Kew Bridge to the Borough boundary between Wandsworth and Lambeth on the south bank.

The study area and its relationship to the Thames Landscape Strategy: Hampton to Kew is shown on Figure 1.1 on page 1.8.

Structure of Document

The Strategy is divided into the following principal sections:

- Understanding the River;
- Planning Policy Framework;
- Strategic Context and Policy Recommendations;

- Character Reaches and Opportunities;
- Principles of Action Plan and Indicative Projects.

Topic Reports and Geographical Information Systems

An early stage of the study involved the preparation of a series of Topic Reports and Geographical Information Systems, which identified the key issues relating to functions of the River. These are listed below and are available for inspection at the offices of the five local authorities who took part in the Strategy. A selection of Appendices is also available.

- Topic Report 2A: Historic Buildings and Conservation
- Topic Report 2B: Archaeology
- Topic Report 2C: Development and Regeneration
- Topic Report 2D: Contaminated Land
- Topic Report 3A: Landscape/Public Space
- Topic Report 3B: Biodiversity
- Topic Report 3C: River Wall and Safety
- Topic Report 4A: Movement
- Topic Report 4B: Tourism, Recreation and Leisure
- Topic Report 5A: Community Infrastructure

- Topic Report 6A: Funding and Management
- Appendix 1: Understanding the River: Physical Influences and Historic Background
- Appendix 2: Unitary Development Plans
- Appendix 3: Summary of Strategic Policy Recommendations
- Appendix 4: Examples of Partnership Arrangements

Comprehensive plans mapping the information in the Topic Reports have been prepared using a Geographical Information System developed by WS Atkins. These are available from the local authorities. A digital version of the Strategy is also available on the Thames Strategy - Kew to Chelsea website at www.thamesstrategy-kewtochelsea.org.uk.

Acknowledgements

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