

Thames Estuary Path – Thurrock Overview

This overview plan shows the Thurrock Thames waterfront apart from the area around London Gateway, which has had to be grouped with Canvey Island for the purposes of these plans, although it is obviously an integral and important part of Thurrock.

Thurrock has a major role to play in both the development of the Thames Estuary Path and in the wider development of the Thames Gateway. Thurrock includes almost 19 miles of Thames waterfront and Thurrock is expected to deliver almost half of the new housing and new jobs planned for Thames Gateway South Essex. The waterfront within Thurrock is a complex mixture of industrial sites, housing and marshes, which brings great opportunities and challenges in terms of finding solutions that can be agreed with the numerous landowners and other bodies with an interest in the area.

Development and growth in Thurrock is being led by both Thurrock Council (Unitary Authority) and Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation (TTGDC). The corporation was set up to “promote and deliver the sustainable regeneration and growth of Thurrock, within the context of the national policy set out in the Sustainable Communities Plan, the plans for the wider Thames Gateway sub-region, and for the eastern region as a whole”.

Supporting policies and strategies

The Thurrock Greengrid Strategy²⁰ developed from the Thames Gateway South Essex Greengrid Strategy¹⁹ and expects to achieve amongst its aims:

- “Promote a network of footpaths, cyclepaths and green transport options that encourage healthier living”
- “Create an accessible and vibrant riverfront”.

TTGDC has produced a number of Masterplans that fit within the Thurrock Spatial Plan²⁶. The plan proposes “the enhancement of the riverside footpath and cycleway along the Thames from Aveley Marshes in the west to the Mucking Marshes in the east.”

A number of more detailed Masterplans can be seen at <http://www.thurrocktgdg.org.uk/ourbusiness/publications/> including references such as that within the Purfleet Masterplan²⁷ “To re-establish links from the centre to the waterfront and create opportunities for new housing and leisure activities associated with the River Thames.” Shaping Thurrock, the Community Strategy for Thurrock²⁸ says “We will build cycle paths to connect people to green spaces... will carry out large-scale enhancements of our environment and heritage sites...”.

Barriers to walking and cycling

Levels of cycling in Thurrock are currently growing, but from a very low base. There is significant potential for big increases in walking and cycling.

In terms of the Thames Estuary Path the two major ports in Thurrock are significant, with waterfront access being restricted at both the Port of Tilbury and at the new London Gateway development. Beyond these sites there is good potential for the Thames Estuary Path to follow the waterfront throughout the rest of Thurrock. There are a number of significant areas where solutions are dependent on development and other areas where there are physical barriers. Within the marshes creative solutions are needed so that the path can benefit both people and the important local ecology. Perhaps the greatest challenge within Thurrock is the need to secure access rights from the numerous landowners along the route and it is recommended that high priority is given to addressing this.

Development sites

Within this area there are numerous developments planned, but those with the greatest implications for the path are:

- Purfleet to Grays industrial and housing developments
- Grays Beach area and Little Thurrock Marshes
- Tilbury links with waterfront
- Tilbury Power Station and adjoining Mott land.
- Mucking Marshes landfill site restoration.

It is important that all these sites give full recognition to the importance of the Thames Estuary Path.

National Cycle Network

Completion of National Cycle Route 13 through Thurrock has been a slow process as sections have developed in a piecemeal manner. The three major strategic routes through Thurrock are the Mar Dyke Valley route, which forms part of the Thames Chase Forest Circle, the Spine route following major roads through the Borough and the Thames Estuary Path itself. Linkages between these routes offer great potential for circular routes. The Tilbury-Gravesend Ferry and the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge also offer important links with NCR1 and the Thames Estuary Path in Kent.

Thames Estuary Routes

Main Route Links

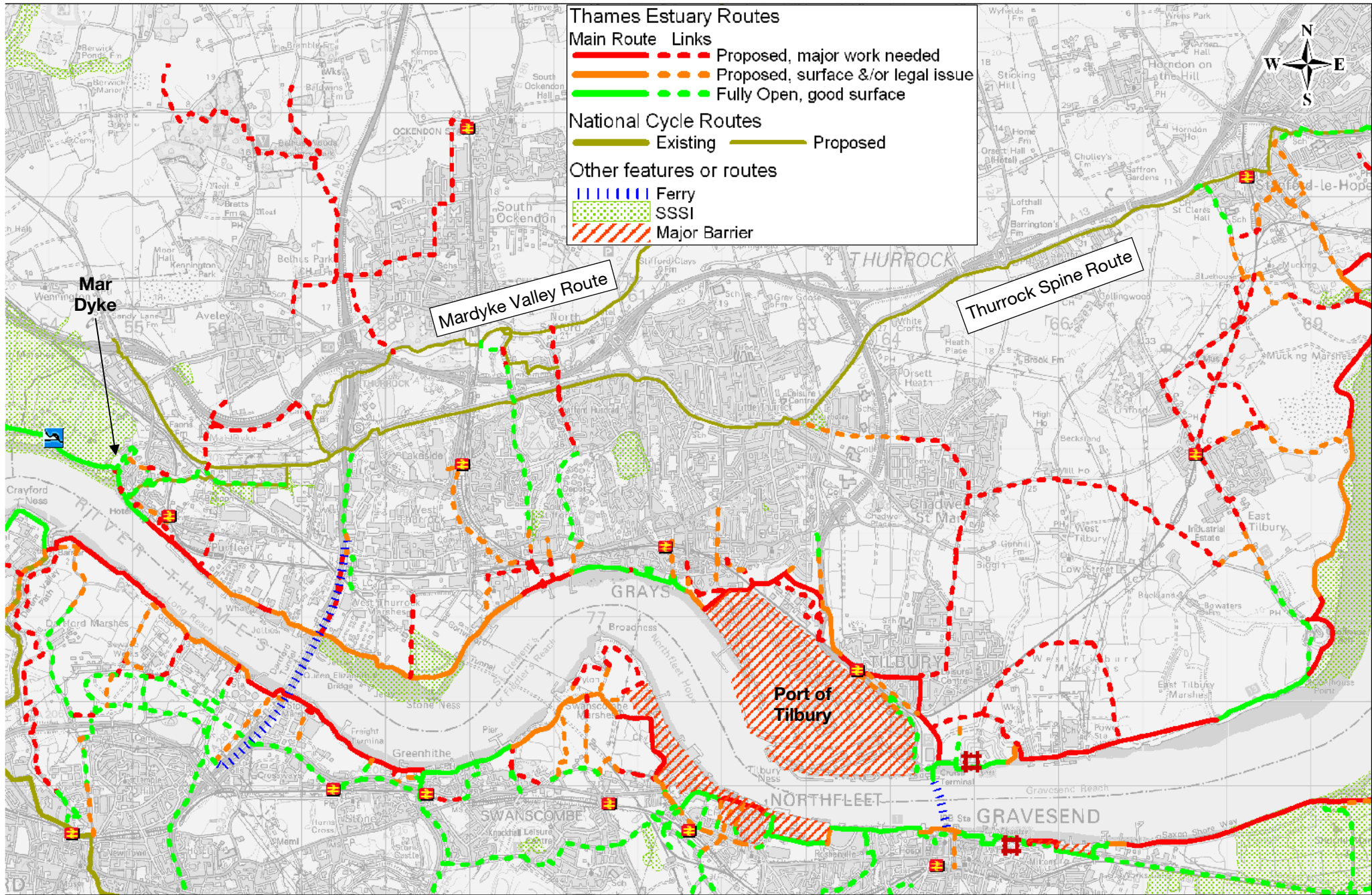
- - - Proposed, major work needed
- - - Proposed, surface &/or legal issue
- - - Fully Open, good surface

National Cycle Routes

- Existing
- - - Proposed

Other features or routes

- | | | | Ferry
- SSSI
- Major Barrier



Thames Estuary Path – Section 16 Aveley Marshes and Purfleet – South Essex

Condition of the waterfront

This includes a very good established section of route and sections of route that are likely to develop with new housing as part of the growth and development of Purfleet²⁷.

The route on Aveley Marshes (RSPB Rainham Marshes) is a good example of how other sections of the Thames Estuary Path can be. Work has been undertaken over recent years by RSPB and partners to transform the former MoD site into a popular greenspace with a visitor centre and attractive riverside paths. Further improvements are planned as part of Parklands work and RSPB has plans to expand the visitor and wildlife experience, which should make for a more popular and attractive site.

The path has potential to be a real catalyst for regeneration within Purfleet, but works are needed to realise this. The views of the Thames from the raised ground by the Royal Hotel are some of the best along the whole Estuary and with the route varying from Rainham Marshes through to heavy industry this promises to be a fascinating section.



Shared path across Aveley Marshes

Barriers to development

In order to improve links between Purfleet and the RSPB visitor centre a more direct and attractive alignment is needed with a new bridge, which needs to be agreed with the Environment Agency and others. Plans for this are well advanced with a feasibility study complete and funding well advanced.

Elsewhere significant improvements are planned for the waterfront, but these are subject to development and at present development work in the area is on hold or has not started.

Route description

A-B. Existing high quality shared path; legal status to be finalised.

B. A new bridge is needed over Mar Dyke. A feasibility study and initial design have been completed.

B-C. Existing waterfront route. Legal status unclear. This attractive route needs to include a new link to Purfleet Heritage Museum

C-D. Vopak site currently used for gas storage with no waterfront access. A riverside path is a priority if this site redevelops, but in the mean time the route can use London Road, with the addition of a flush dropped kerb for the link beside the Royal Hotel. This needs to link well with Purfleet Station.

E-F. George Wimpey developments site includes agreement for a cycleway/ footway along the waterfront, with links to Purfleet Station (Planning ref 07/00989). A new road following the waterfront is also being considered and this would need to be easy to cross for good waterfront linkages.



Artists impression of proposed bridge

Links and Access

L1 There is scope to greatly improve the area and this path, as part of the planned Garrison Estate redevelopment. The route is open now as an interim alternative to the new bridge.

L2 Potential route linking housing edge and Mardyke

L3 Existing Tank Lane and North Road link, surfaced to a good standard.

L4 Indicative alignment for potential new route across the Mar Dyke.

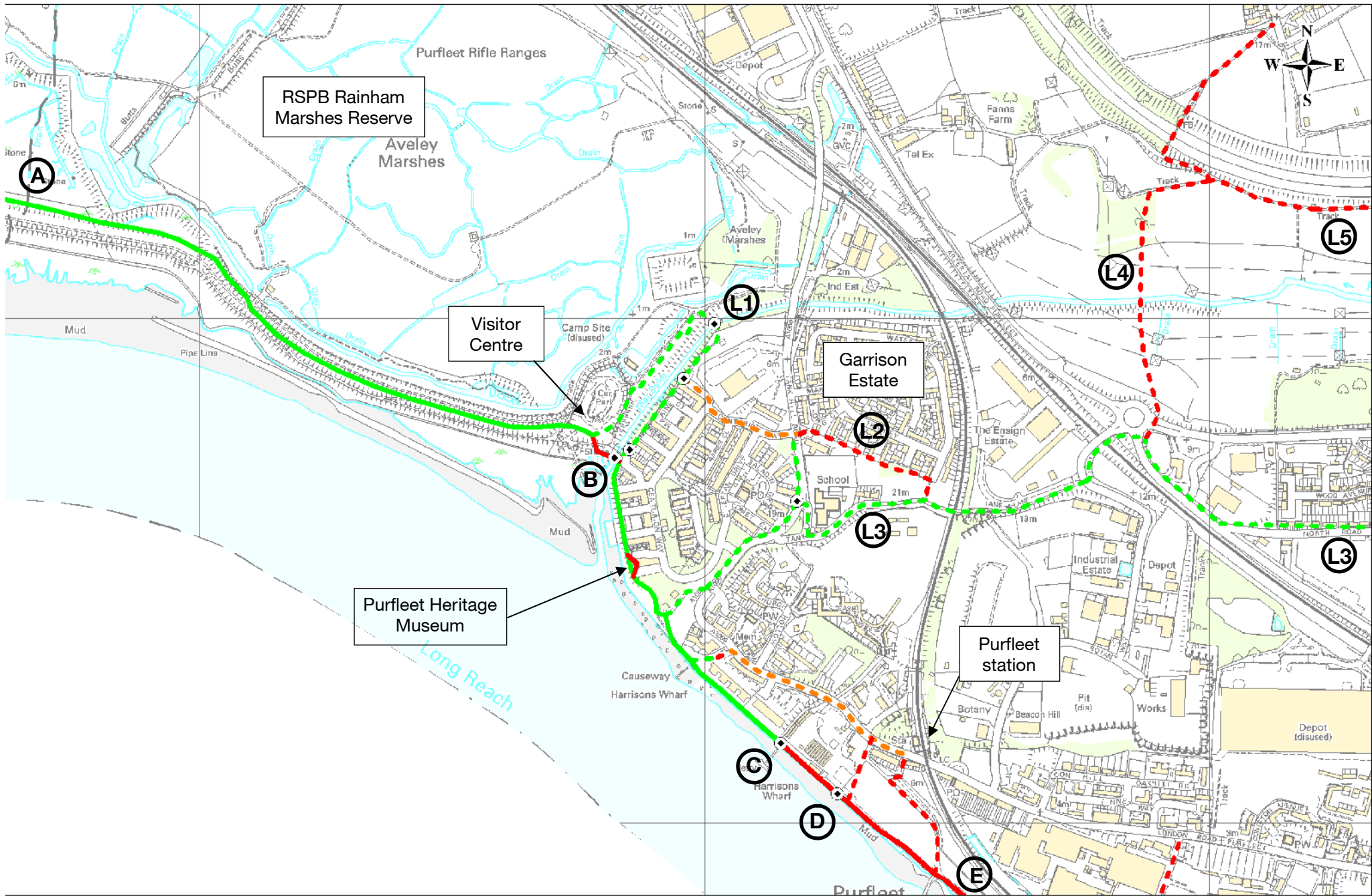
L5 Link to existing Mar Dyke Valley route and Davy Down Country Park.



George Wimpey site

Key Recommendations

1. New bridge over Mar Dyke by existing sluice.
2. New link to Purfleet Heritage Museum (100m with ramps).
3. Complete high quality route and links on George Wimpey site.



Thames Estuary Path – Section 17 Purfleet Industry – South Essex

Condition of the waterfront

This area is dominated by industry and the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge, but there is waterfront access along most of the route, using public footpath 141. The alignment of this footpath has been revised over the years to accommodate jetties and the industrial uses along the waterfront resulting in a complex route, but beyond bends and twists in the path lie dramatic views of the river and the busy industrial area.



View towards QEII Bridge (F)

The area is fairly isolated, but as the nature of some of the riverside changes residents of the new housing and visitors from further afield will be fascinated by the blend of isolation and activity. The path has potential as a route to work for many of the staff in the various industrial sites along the waterfront. The Purfleet Masterplan²⁷ gives greater emphasis to walking than cycling over the remoter sections, but the route has potential for both user

groups and is already cyclable over much of the length.



Steps at Foster Yeoman (E)

Barriers to development

At present there are a number of blockages to completion of a good quality path:

- There are significant legal challenges in reaching agreement with a large number of landowners.
 - Surfacing of the path is variable, although there are long sections where the concrete base is adequate. The whole route needs to be brought up to a good standard.
 - Landscaping. Within a limited space there is little scope for landscaping works, but new security fencing and appropriate landscaping would help to create an attractive space.
 - Steps at Purfleet Deep Wharf and Foster Yeoman.
- Path widths are narrow near the QEII Bridge, but there is little scope for widening.



Purfleet Deep Wharf (D)

Route description

A-C. New public access along the waterfront and a link with London Road is developing at the Purfleet end of this section, as part of the George Wimpey (A to B) and Boardmills South (B to C) developments. (Planning refs 07/00989 and 07/00990)

C-F. Surface and landscaping improvements needed along the whole length.

D. Sustrans has worked with Royal Haskoning to look at technical solutions and believes that a new in-line subway under the jetty would provide a good solution. However because of the potential impact on the flood defences the cost of this

work would be very high, as much as £1.3m. A better option may be to seek a new improved off-line crossing under the jetty.

E. Remove existing steps at Foster Yeoman and replace with at grade crossing of redundant access to jetty.

F-G. Surface improvements currently underway with S106 contributions. Lafarge site planning ref 05/01372 and Vopak site planning ref 06/00013.

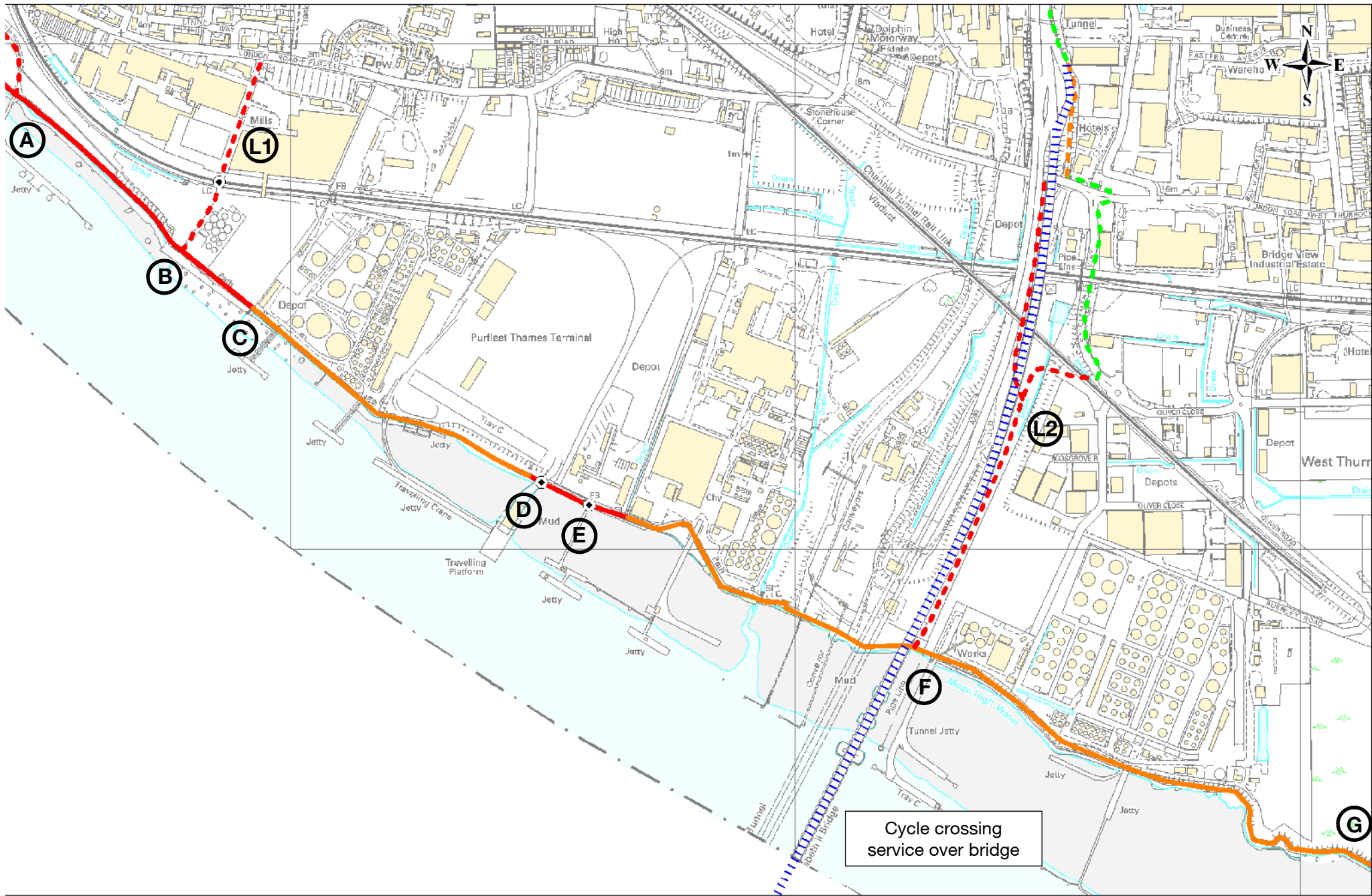
Links and Access

L1 New link needed to London Road with new bridge over railway as part of development proposals.

L2 There is potential for a link from G to London Road either using or closely following the existing access road used for tunnel maintenance. Security issues would have to be addressed.

Key Recommendations

1. Surfacing and landscaping of whole route and links.
2. New ramped crossing under Purfleet Deep Wharf to replace steps.
3. Remove existing steps at Foster Yeoman.



Thames Estuary Path – Section 18 West Thurrock Marshes and South Stifford – South Essex

Condition of the waterfront

This section of the path has been protected for public access thanks to the public footpath along the waterfront. The path links the remoter section near West Thurrock Marshes with the dense housing proposed along the Thames waterfront in Grays and falls into two clear sections west and east of Wouldham Road.

It is likely to be a popular and important part of the regeneration and growth of Grays, where there are also good opportunities to strengthen links with communities away from the river. A high quality route along the waterfront at Grays should help to make this one of the busier sections of the Thames Estuary Path.



View towards QEII Bridge



View towards Grays

Barriers to development

At present the major physical barrier is in the vicinity of Procter and Gamble where there is no continuous waterfront access and the public footpath includes three sets of steps.

The greatest challenges are however in working up creative solutions for the West Thurrock Marshes area, where there is a need to avoid conflict between access and the local ecology, so that there are benefits for both wildlife and people.

This is discussed in further detail in the following pages.

Whilst there is a more obvious alignment for the route and links beyond West Thurrock Marshes, much of this is dependent on development and could take some time.

Route description

A-B. Vopak Site. Path currently being upgraded by Thurrock Council (Planning ref 06/00013).

B-D. Surface improvements needed (see following pages).

D-E. At the Procter and Gamble Site there is no continuous access along the waterfront and the public footpath follows a narrow route with steps. The only way to continue along the waterfront would be to construct a jetty along the river's edge or await future development. There is currently a planning application for development adjacent to Procter and Gamble (ref 08/00370/TTGOUT) and this may allow for this possibility. A route behind Procter and Gamble is also a good option, but is again dependent on development.

E-F. Existing path. Legal status needs to be clarified.

Links and Access

L1 There is potential for a new link between the waterfront and its hinterland as part of the restoration of the lagoons. Exact alignment and details need to be determined.

L2 New route needed utilising two tunnels under the two railway lines. Signalised crossing of London Road needed at The Chase.

L3 New route along rail corridor to link Chafford Hundred Station and Lakeside with the waterfront.

L4 New bridge needed over railway for this link, as part of development.

L5 Link to existing shared path beside Devonshire Road needs upgraded route along Wouldham Road and over bridge.



Tunnel under railway (L2)

Key Recommendations

1. Develop a creative solution for the route at West Thurrock Marshes in conjunction with all interested parties.
2. Ensure that high quality links are developed as part of the proposals including three new crossings of the railway.
3. Complete route in vicinity of Procter & Gamble site as part of development proposals.