

Thames Estuary Path – East London Overview

The Thames Paths on either side of the river are at quite different stages in their development. On the south bank, though narrow in places and with the occasional barrier, the path is virtually continuous from the Thames Barrier to the London border, providing easy access to the waterfront. In contrast there remain large sections on the north side where no riverside route exists and the delivery of a high quality path faces formidable obstacles. For large sections local communities are denied access to the river.

Where a route has been achieved the Thames Path, more than any other Greenway in London, demonstrates the delicate balance between nature and industry. It presents Londoners and visitors with a very welcome break from the noise and confusion of the city, offering history, wildlife, wetlands and the breathtaking expanse of the river as it widens towards the sea at Rainham Marshes.

Supporting policies and strategies

A vast array of policies and strategies covering various aspects of the Thames waterfront in the study area are available. Many of these are relevant to the development of the Thames Path. It is not appropriate to list all these here, but helpful to highlight the following:

As a National Trail the Thames Path is one of six Strategic Walks, developed by Walk London, through Transport for London (TfL) funding. The path follows both banks of the river and is a hugely popular resource to the west of this study area. It is, however, at the proposal stage along the north bank, to the east of the Thames Barrier, but open on the south bank.

Design for London has led the development of the East London Green Grid¹³ (ELGG). The vision for this project is ‘to create a network of interlinked, multi purpose open spaces with good connections to areas where people live and work’. Several links to the Thames Path and solutions to barriers contained within this report are drawn from the ELGG.

TfL, working with the Olympic Delivery Authority and local boroughs, are developing cycling and walking routes around the Olympic Park in Stratford²³. This will encourage spectators at the 2012 Games to arrive by foot or on bike, and to deliver a sustainable transport network for the local community in legacy. Links will be made to the Thames Path in the Royal Docks area, creating a wider network.

Barriers to walking and cycling

At either end of the study area, two significant barriers exist along the Thames Path south. The Westminster Industrial Estate, directly to the east of the Thames Barrier, and Erith Town Centre both block river access. Fairly convenient diversions do exist yet the high quality Greenway experience is lost and the integrity of the route damaged.

The most significant barriers to cycling and walking are on the north bank and are primarily located in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Barking Creek, on the west edge of the borough, is a formidable obstacle. The Docklands Light Railway extension to Dagenham Dock will tunnel under the Creek. A parallel tunnel for pedestrians and cyclists would overcome this barrier but may not be delivered. A bridge crossing further north, but south of the A13, may be more likely and will offer a better experience.

Industrial land use in the south of the borough presents difficulties in establishing a riverside route. Creekmouth, the Ford Motor Company plant and Frog Island, with their active jetties, security concerns and heavy industrial activity, must be traversed. Land negotiation will be key here to maximise access to the various watercourses that could carry the route through this area.

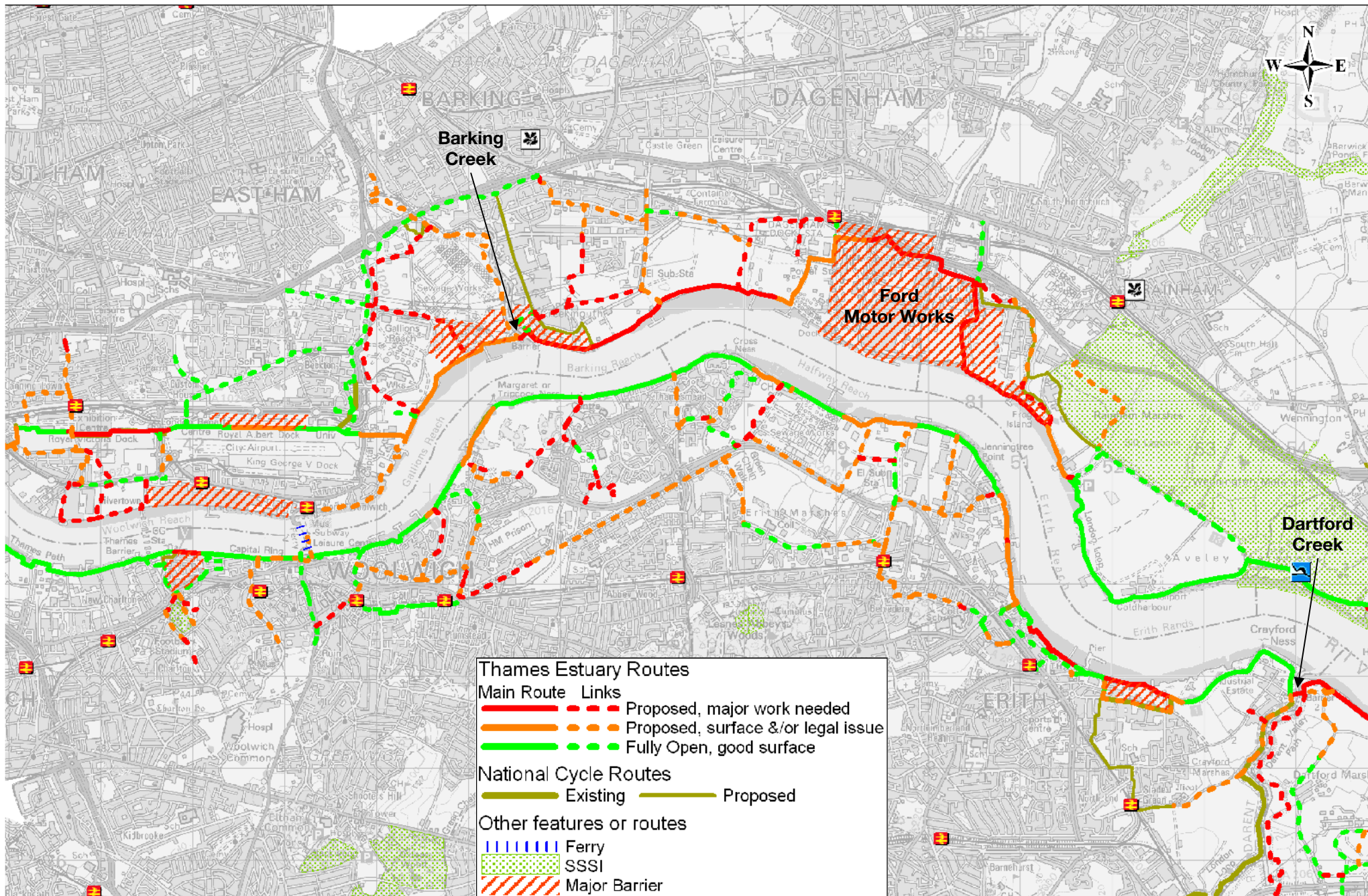
Development sites

Barking Riverside, with proposals to build homes for 26,000 people, is the largest regeneration site in the Thames Gateway and incorporates proposals for riverside cycling and walking routes. This is an excellent opportunity to open waterfront access from Creekmouth to the Goresbrook.

Canning Town, Silvertown Quays, Beam Reach and Thamesmead are all subject to major regeneration schemes that will offer opportunities to enhance the route.

National Cycle Network

NCR 13 follows the north bank and eventually terminates at Sheringham on the Norfolk Coast. The southern path forms NCR 1 and crosses the Thames via the Greenwich Foot Tunnel to link into the Olympic Park at Stratford. These routes are intended to carry local utility trips as well as leisure rides and have been the subject of several reports, most recently ‘The Development of National Cycle Routes 1 & 13’, Sustrans for TfL, March 2008.



Thames Estuary Path – Section 1 Royal Docks – East London

Condition of the waterfront

The northern edge of the Royal Victoria Dock between the ExCel Centre and the Ramada Hotel will be closed for 30 months, from August 2008, to allow for ExCel's extension work. The London Borough of Newham (LBN) has negotiated a continuation of the high quality dockside path through the extension site, as a planning condition. This will also include an improved surface in front of the Ramada Hotel (LBN planning reference 06/02068/FUL).

On completion of this section the public will have access to a high quality waterside route from Tidal Basin roundabout to Royal Albert DLR station.

We support the development of a path along the Thames waterfront in the Silvertown area, which is currently occupied by industrial sites and wharves. Redevelopment proposals for Minoco Wharf, Silvertown Docks and Thames Barrier Park East include improved access to the river. The dockside route is closer to the dense residential communities of Canning Town, Custom House and Beckton, links directly to new residential developments and shops along the dockside and to the ExCel Centre, a major trip generator and Olympic venue.



Royal Victoria Dock

Barriers to development

There are no barriers to the development of a high quality dockside path along this section. Transport for London's Olympic Cycling and Walking programme²³ includes proposals for improvements to the dockside path.

The key issue falls outside of this study area and concerns the continuation of the path to the west from the Tidal Basin roundabout. Currently it is proposed that the path passes under the Silvertown Viaduct and links through the LDA's Thames Wharf site, parallel to the DLR line. This alignment is not supported by all stakeholders. An improved option would pass through the landmark site and under Silvertown Way

The DLR rail line is a formidable barrier to the north making it difficult to create sufficient links to the main residential areas.



Ramada Hotel

Links and Access

L1 A link is required across the DLR line at Custom House Station (perhaps in conjunction with Crossrail work at the station) and on towards Plaistow as well as redeveloped Canning Town.

L2 In partnership with ExCel and LBN, Sustrans has developed a diversion route to be used during the closure of the dockside path. This has yet to be implemented but should remain as a permanent link for the communities to the south of the Dock and to the fantastic green space at Thames Barrier Park.

L3 The Silvertown Quay development proposes a green link towards Thames Barrier Park.

L4 Proposals for Minoco Wharf include a link to the river. Attention should then focus on linking Lyle Park and Thames Barrier Park via the waterfront.

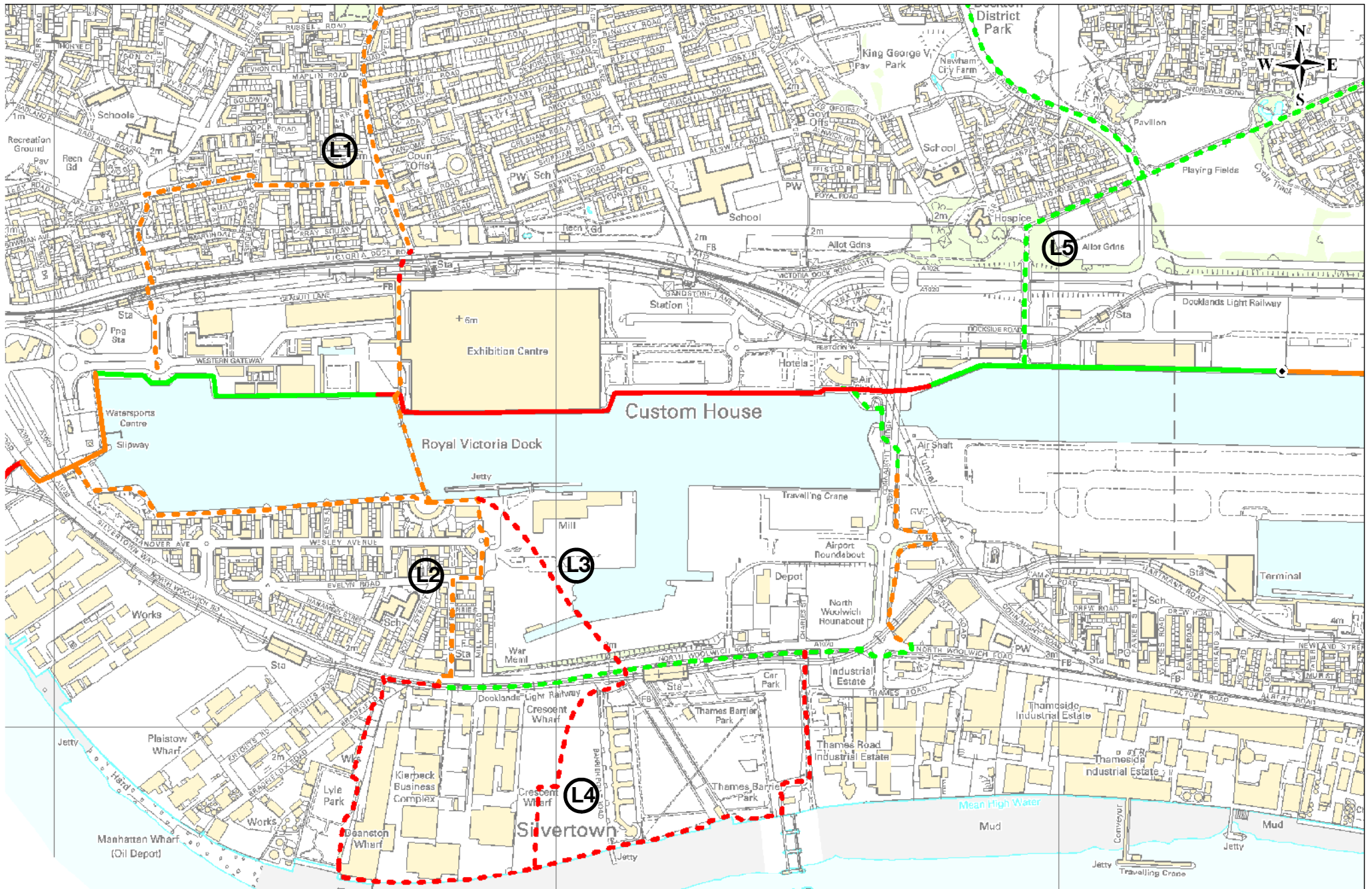
L5 A high quality green bridge takes path users over Royal Albert Way. This soon links to Beckton District Park where cyclists and walkers take separate routes through the park to eventually make a connection to the Elevated Greenway. Improvement to the continuity of the route at the A13 is required. Beckton DLR and the Elevated Greenway at Beckton Alps can also be reached by an existing shared use path towards Woolwich Manor Way.



Beckton District Park

Key Recommendations

1. Deliver the ExCel diversion, to include an improved crossing of North Woolwich Road and an upgrade of the path adjacent to Connaught Bridge.
2. Develop links into Canning Town.



Thames Estuary Path – Section 2 UEL and Gallions Reach – East London

Condition of the waterfront

The high quality dockside path ends abruptly to the east of Building 1000. The land between here and the University of East London Docklands Campus, known as 'The Royals Business Park', is a brownfield site owned by the LDA and awaiting development. It stretches for approximately 900 metres, includes a broken dock side path and is securely fenced at either end.



Gallions Point Marina

The wide, high quality surface continues at the UEL campus to the Sir Steven Redgrave Bridge. The right of access under the bridge has not been secured by LB Newham, although access is possible. The proposed path then passes through the new Royal Quay development.

Much of the remainder of the path through this section is aspirational and not currently accessible. However, a path exists along the dock entrance and heads north on the waterfront, to link into the newly constructed Atlantis Avenue and Magellan Boulevard. Access to the waterfront terminates at Beckton Sewage Treatment Works (BSTW) although the path continues.

Barriers to development

B1 The closed path between Building 1000 and UEL is a major barrier to cycling and walking in this section and denies access to the historic buildings at the heart of the site. This is particularly significant given the expansion in student numbers at UEL and the move into Building 1000 of London Borough of Newham staff. The LDA site is used as a training facility for the London Fire Brigade and a temporary runway was constructed on the land for the Red Bull Air Race event. A rough dockside path exists but access is denied.

B2 The Royal Quay residential development restricts access to the waterfront. The existing path to the east of this development is overgrown, underused and hard to find.

B3 BSTW blocks waterfront access from Magellan Boulevard to Barking Creek.



Royal Albert Dock closed path

Links and Access

L1 Given the complexities surrounding the riverside path at Barking Creek a long term diversion is required. This will follow the existing segregated cycle track along Royal Docks Road and the A13. The Royal Docks Road cycle track links into the Elevated Greenway. Sections of this alignment overlap with the Capital Ring strategic walk.

L2 New roads link into existing cycle facilities within the Gallions Reach shopping centre.

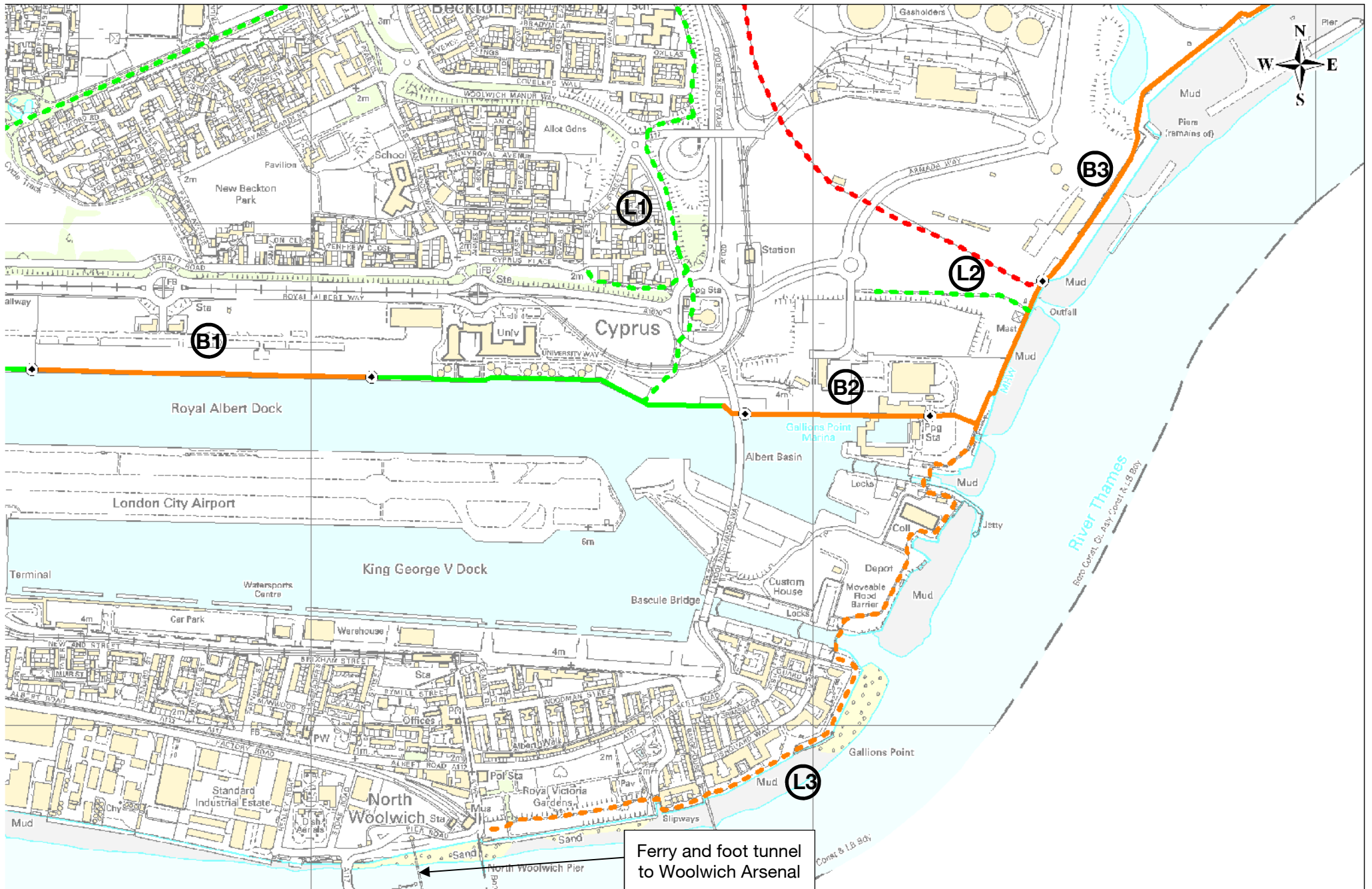
L3 Dock gates are difficult to negotiate but there is potential for a link along the waterfront to the Woolwich foot tunnel.



Gallions Reach Shopping Centre

Key Recommendations

1. To open the dock side path between Building 1000 and UEL.
2. To negotiate an alignment through the Royal Quay development, ideally on the dock front to link in to the existing Thames Path. An alternative alignment could involve the Gallions Reach Shopping Centre.
3. Allow access to the existing riverside path to Barking Creek.
4. Improve the quality and function of the proposed diversion route, notably along Woolwich Manor Way as it approaches Gallions Roundabout and the road crossing at Beckton Triangle Retail Park.



Thames Estuary Path – Section 3 Barking Creek - East London

Condition of the waterfront

The Thames waterfront in this section is dominated by Beckton Sewage Treatment Works. A path along the River Roding from the A13 to the Thames and along the Thames towards Gallions Reach was constructed by the London Borough of Newham approximately four years ago. This has never been opened and it has not, therefore, been possible to gain access to the waterfront.

The waterfront at Creekmouth is dominated by industrial units and active jetties. There is currently no public right of way in this area.



Barking Creek Flood Barrier

Barriers to development

B1 A bridge is required near the Barking Creek Flood Barrier. However, we note that the proposed extension of the DLR to Dagenham Dock will tunnel under the Creek. Proposals for a low bridge were

opposed by the Port of London Authority (PLA), who require a bridge height of at least 33 metres to allow continued use of the active wharves on the Roding. A tunnel for cyclists and pedestrians may be appropriate but is unlikely to provide the desired amenity. A swing or lifting bridge may be possible although the PLA suggest that the volume of shipping movements along the Roding would limit access to the bridge.

The East London Green Grid¹³ lists project 4.1.03 to cross the Creek with a bridge for cyclists and walkers south of the A13. This would be a useful interim measure, but no substitute for a bridge at the mouth of Barking Creek.

B2 The waterfront at Creekmouth is dominated by industrial units and active jetties. Creation of a greenway though this space is likely to be a long term project. River Road is a poor alternative, dominated by HGV movements serving the numerous local industrial parks and with insufficient width to create a shared use path on the footway

B3 The expansion of the sewage works and the delivery of the Tideway Tunnel project²⁴ have created access problems for the existing paths along the Roding and Thames. Thames Water has suggested to LBN officers that there will not be access to this path until 2015. With lack of use it is likely that the path will deteriorate.



The Roding Valley Way from the A13

Links and Access

L1 The cycle track along Royal Docks Road is a good quality diversion route, before a crossing of Barking Creek is in place. This links into the Elevated Greenway and eventually in Stratford and the Olympic Park.

L2 The Roding Valley Way (RVW) links the Thames to Essex, following the River Roding. Although constructed, the RVW has not been opened in this section. Once access is granted it will provide a useful link to the crossing of the Roding at the A13 and on to Barking Town Centre.

L3 The segregated cycle track along the A13 makes a useful short term diversion. However, the noisy, industrial environment and proximity to a major trunk road create a poor experience. Some sections, such as at the junction with River Road, offer better segregation from the carriageway.

L4 Design for London proposes a Beckton Loop path as part of the Cross River Park. This would link into the proposed Thames Gateway Bridge.

L5 A continuation of the Elevated Greenway path to the river would provide a key link from the heart of Newham.

L6 Creekmouth Ecology Park currently links to River Road. The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham have, through a S106 agreement, secured a path around the Prologis building and intend to continue this to the south of the switching station to link into Barking Riverside. Connections can then be made to the river.

Key Recommendations

1. Provision of a new bridge at Barking Creek to link the RVW and Creekmouth Open Space. An alternative alignment to the north may need to be considered.
2. Gain access to the paths adjacent to BSTW.