

Chapter 11: River Thames

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INTRODUCTION

- 11.1 The River Thames and its surroundings are important parts of Westminster and London. Section 4C of the London Plan (2004) 'The Blue Ribbon Network' provides the strategic framework for developing local land-use policies to improve the environment and the use of the River. The City Council will use the policies in this chapter to make better use of the Thames as:
- a) a river that unites rather than divides London
 - b) London's main area of open space
 - c) a high quality setting for buildings, bridges and other development
 - d) a means of transport
 - e) a river that contributes to the water supply and drainage of a region, where flooding is possible
 - f) an important place for wildlife
 - g) a place for recreation, leisure, tourism and special events, such as festivals
- 11.2 The River Thames and its surroundings have a different role and character from the rest of Westminster. They are of strategic London-wide and local importance.
- 11.3 In line with London Plan policy 4C.25, this chapter sets out a Thames Policy Area (TPA) within which the following policies will apply (see Map 11.1). Broadly, Westminster's TPA covers the river itself and the buildings and open spaces that line the riverbank. It also covers some areas further from the river, including areas that are linked to it visually, functionally or historically. The TPA boundary is based on the indicative boundary defined in Annex 5 of the London Plan, map BR.2; the main areas of difference is along the Strand and around Whitehall, where the boundary is based primarily on visual links. The chapter is divided into three sections: Section 1 includes policies that apply within the whole of the TPA; Section 2 includes policies for development on the river; and Section 3 includes policies for development on the riverside.
- 11.4 An appraisal of the TPA has been carried out, in accordance with London Plan policy 4C.26, and has been published as 'Thames Policy Area Supplementary Planning Guidance' (2001). The appraisal identifies those elements that contribute to the character of the TPA and identifies opportunities for enhancement. The City Council will protect and improve the character and appearance of the TPA; it will build on its existing strengths and characteristics, and take suitable opportunities for enhancement and new development and introduce appropriate new uses. Future reviews will take into account guidance set out in London Plan policy 4C.26.

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- 11.5 Strategic policies for the Thames are set out in Part 1 of the UDP, using London Plan policy 4C.26 as a framework. These provide the background for the detailed policies in this chapter. Policies STRA 30 and STRA 31 are particularly important. There are also important links to strategic policies on transport STRA 21 and design STRA 26, STRA 27, and STRA 28.

SECTION 1: THAMES POLICY AREA WIDE POLICIES

The design of development

Aim

- 11.6 To protect and improve the built environment.

POLICY RIV 1: THE DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals will be required to:

- (A) maintain or improve the appearance of the Thames Policy Area**
- (B) be sensitive to their Thames-side location, the setting of listed buildings and structures, and other prominent landmarks and where appropriate:**
- (C) improve the relationship between development adjacent to the Thames and the river itself**
- (D) improve public access to the riverfront**

Where developments will have a significant impact in terms of their size or appearance, the City Council will require design statements

Policy application

- 11.7 Development should improve the appearance of the TPA and be of the highest design quality. It should respect the riverside setting, architectural character and historic interest of the TPA, particularly taking into account the differing character along the Thames in Westminster.
- 11.8 The scale, mass, height, skyline and layout of proposals and the materials, landscaping, street furniture and lighting to be used must be carefully considered. New development should face the river, not turn its back on it, and should allow people to see and reach the river. The City

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Council's own proposed draft conservation area audits and supplementary planning guidance for the TPA will also provide a useful guidance on the character and function of the river stretches within the TPA. Design guidance set out in the Environment Agency's 'Tidal Thames: Landscape Assessment and Design Guidelines' (1996) and the Government Office for London's 'Thames Strategy' (1995) can be useful for these developments.

- 11.9 However, the City Council does not want to prevent good, modern design from being put forward for Thames-side developments. As the London Plan notes, the emphasis on context does not mean that a uniform blandness for the areas around water spaces is sought or that new forms of development are not appropriate. The London Plan, in policy 4C.20, recognises the opportunity to provide landmarks, whilst noting the need to fully consider the impact of new buildings on the river and waterside. Landmark buildings may be appropriate in certain cases. Policy DES 3 notes that proposals for high buildings will not normally be granted planning permission if they are considered to have an adverse visual impact on the setting of the River Thames.
- 11.10 Where appropriate, the City Council will draw up design briefs for sites where major development is expected. These will set out the quality of design the City Council will expect for those sites.
- 11.11 Design statements required for developments that will have a significant impact should give details of the appearance of the proposed development. Details on the issues that should be covered by design statements are in London Plan policy 4C.21. Developers may also be required to submit Environmental Effects Statement (see policy ENV 2) and Traffic Impact Statements (see policy TRANS 14).
- 11.12 The City Council in its public realm strategy will include an approach to lighting. The strategy will develop discrete lighting areas, and with its partners will consider appropriate treatments over or adjacent to the river..
- 11.13 Other relevant policies in the UDP that may be taken into account in considering proposals include policies DES 1 on standards of design including access for all, DES 3 on high buildings, DES 9 on Conservation Areas, DES 14 on strategic views, DES 15 on metropolitan and local views and vista, DES 16 on the World Heritage Site, ENV 8 on water pollution and ENV 15 on nature conservation and biodiversity. The City Council will notify the Mayor of applications for buildings over 25m high within the TPA, in line with the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000.

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Reasons

- 11.14 The River Thames passes many of Westminster's most famous and historic buildings and landmarks. This includes the Palace of Westminster, which is a World Heritage Site. Many of the buildings and structures (including bridges and part of the embankment wall) are listed, and most of the TPA lies within conservation areas.
- 11.15 The TPA is an important part of Westminster. Development along the riverside is particularly prominent because of the openness of the river. The City Council will therefore use planning policies to protect the built environment and encourage new developments that are of the highest quality and that improve the visual appearance of the area. Both the design of individual buildings and wider urban design issues will be considered. Urban design issues include the pattern of streets, walkways and open spaces and the positioning of buildings.

Views

Aim

- 11.16 To protect and improve views.

POLICY RIV 2: VIEWS

Developments that would have a significant adverse effect on views from, of, across or along the River Thames will be refused

Policy application

- 11.17 All developments in the TPA will be assessed in terms of their impact on local and metropolitan views. The City Council will protect the setting of historic buildings, spaces and areas of special character, in accordance with policies DES 9, DES 10, DES 12, DES 15 and DES 16. Proposals for development within strategic view corridors, identified on the Proposals Map, will also be assessed in terms of policy DES 14. Supplementary Planning Guidance for the TPA identifies key views and landmark buildings, and proposed draft conservation area audits identify local views. The London Plan (2004) defines a number of views for protection in Table 4B.2 'Views designated as part of the London View Protection Framework'. The Mayor will also be issuing further guidance on these views in supplementary planning guidance. The City Council will have regard to the London Plan and emerging supplementary guidance.

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- 11.18 The City Council considers the Thames and riverside to be particularly sensitive to the impact of advertisements. Proposals for signs and advertisements will be considered under policy DES 8.

Reasons

- 11.19 The TPA is almost completely covered by conservation areas and contains many listed buildings and several historic open spaces. It also contains the World Heritage Site. Views of, across, along and from the River Thames are very important. The Thames, the riverbank and bridges give views of some of the most famous parts of London and Westminster. Development along or on the open river is particularly prominent, and has a large impact on views. These views can be local - from bank to bank, from the river to the bank or along a particular stretch of the river - or more long distance metropolitan and 'strategic'. Because of the importance of these views, the City Council will use planning controls to make sure new development protects or improves views.

Environment, open space and wildlife

Aim

- 11.20 To protect and improve open spaces and wildlife habitats.

POLICY RIV 3: ENVIRONMENT, OPEN SPACE AND WILDLIFE

- (A) Habitats and species of nature conservation value within the Thames Policy Area will be protected**
- (B) Provision of new habitats and open spaces or improvements to existing habitats and open spaces will be sought as part of new developments**
- (C) New developments will be encouraged to include links between the river and other open spaces and habitats**
-

Policy application

- 11.21 Where development proposals are acceptable in principle, they should include measures to mitigate their effects of development upon features of nature conservation value where development will risk impacting on the river's ecology, and conditions may be imposed to such ends. Developers may be required to submit an assessment of the likely effect of a proposed development on the river's ecology. Encroachment on the tidal foreshore should not reduce the storage volume of the river, lead to a loss

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of foreshore habitat, interrupt or alter the velocity of flow or release pollutants into the river.

- 11.22 The City Council will take opportunities to improve the number and quality of wildlife habitats and open spaces, including:
- a) writing planning briefs for development sites to seek new/improved habitats or open spaces
 - b) seeking new / improved habitats or open spaces as part of new developments
 - c) encouraging new developments to include links between the river and other open spaces
- 11.23 The City Council will consult the Environment Agency and the Greater London Authority on proposals that could affect the nature conservation value of the TPA. Particular regard will be given to priority habitats and species identified by the Westminster Biodiversity Partnership. See also policy ENV 15 regarding nature conservation and biodiversity, and Policy ENV 13 regarding open space.

Reasons

- 11.24 In the densely built-up urban area of Westminster, the River Thames provides valuable open spaces and wildlife habitats, adding to the City's biodiversity. The importance of protecting habitats like the river, its banks and foreshore is set out in the Environment Agency's 'Local Environment Agency Plan for the Thames Tideway: Consultation Draft' (1997) and 'Action Plan' (1999). The River Thames is also designated as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. It is important to protect the ecology of the River Thames from developments that could damage it, both directly and indirectly, for example, from lighting and disturbance as well as built structures. Due to previous encroachment, flow velocities in the Thames are approaching critical levels for fish. All juvenile fish would be affected by any increase in flow speeds. This would impact on estuarine species such as flounder, bass and smelt attempting to penetrate upstream, as well on any freshwater fish such as roach and dace, washed downstream. Extreme care is therefore required when considering developments which may further alter flows or velocities in this part of the Thames.

Promoting Activity

Aim

- 11.25 To promote the public's use and enjoyment of the riverside area.

POLICY RIV 4: PROMOTING ACTIVITY

- (A) The provision of water-dependent and waterfront-enhancing uses will be encouraged, provided that such uses do not harm the amenity or ecology of the surrounding area, including the effect of any traffic and parking generated by the proposal, and have adequate servicing arrangements**
- (B) The loss of water-dependent and waterfront-enhancing uses will be resisted**
-

Policy application

- 11.26 The City Council will encourage a mix of activities that either depend on a riverside location or help to draw people to the waterfront. Such uses will be particularly encouraged at ground floor level and on sites near public transport, and should be sympathetic and appropriate to the location. This will help to make the TPA a special, water-related area of Westminster that the public can use and enjoy. Appropriate activities in the TPA in Westminster include:
- a) Water-dependent uses. These need a riverside location to be able to work. Examples include boat rentals, boat moorings, boatyards, riverbus stops, piers and watersports centres
 - b) Waterfront-enhancing uses. These attract people to the riverside. Examples include restaurants, cafes and bars, museums, galleries, theatres, sporting facilities, play areas and parks
- 11.27 There will be parts of the TPA, particularly those areas lying outside the Central Activities Zone, where the potential for water-dependent and waterfront enhancing uses will be limited. Proposals for restaurants and bars will also be subject to policies TACE 8, 9 and 10 in Chapter 8: Tourism, Arts, Culture and Entertainment.
- 11.28 The built-up nature of the riverside in Westminster means that water-enhancing uses are likely to be more common. However, water-dependent uses may be appropriate on the following sites:
- a) Grosvenor Dock
 - b) locations that already allow public access to the river, such as steps, stairs and the purpose-built pier recesses along the Victoria Embankment.

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- 11.29 Development in the TPA must also meet the requirements for servicing set out in policy TRANS 20. Servicing new development on sites bordering the River Thames can be particularly difficult, as the riverside roads form part of the Greater London Road Network. For example, delivery vehicles parked along Victoria Embankment can cause traffic congestion. On such sites, the City Council will expect developers to explore the potential for servicing their developments by river. The Council will consider use of conditions to minimise the impacts of a proposal.
- 11.30 In order to maintain public access to, and use of, the river and waterfront, the loss of existing water-dependent and waterfront-enhancing uses will be resisted.

Reasons

- 11.31 The River Thames and its banks were once busy places, used for industry, commerce, transport, recreation, entertainment, and cultural and state events. The City Council wants the TPA to become a lively place again, one which is centred on the river and which the public can enjoy. To do this, the City Council wants to:
- a) secure public access to the river and riverside
 - b) encourage a mix of activities that need a riverside location or which draw people to the waterfront
- In addition, greater use of the river for transport broadens the choice of transport available for residents, workers and visitors, and can help ease congestion elsewhere.

SECTION 2: DEVELOPMENT ON THE RIVER

DEVELOPMENT BUILT INTO OR OVER THE THAMES

Aim

- 11.32 To protect the open aspect of the Thames, and its ecology and archaeology.

POLICY RIV 5: DEVELOPMENT BUILT INTO OR OVER THE RIVER

Development that builds into or over the river and its foreshore will normally be refused. Transport related structures may be acceptable

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Policy application

- 11.33 The City Council will not normally grant planning permission for developments that build into or over the river. Structures that improve access to, along or over the Thames and allow for increased use of the river for transport and recreation, such as jetties and piers, may be acceptable (See also policies RIV 6 and RIV 7) with suitable mitigation and compensation works to protect the flood defence integrity and environmental habitat of the river/foreshore.
- 11.34 The City Council will take into account the impact of proposals on wildlife, archaeology and navigation, and where development will risk impacting on the river's ecology, require developers to submit environmental, archaeological and hydrological assessments. The City Council will consult the Environment Agency and the Port of London Authority (PLA) on development proposals.

Reasons

- 11.35 The River Thames is an open space of strategic importance that should be protected. It is an important break from built-up central London and, as well as being a valuable space in its own right, helps to link up other open spaces. Its open aspect gives views along and across the River that are also worth protecting. The open aspect of the river will only be maintained by resisting development that builds into or over the river. Transport related structures may be acceptable, as greater use of the river for transport broadens the choice of transport available for residents, workers and visitors, and can help ease congestion elsewhere.
- 11.36 The River Thames is important to navigation and to wildlife. Developments built into the river can change the flow of water, resulting in the accumulation of silt or, conversely, scouring of the river bed and foreshore. This can have an adverse effect on the river's hydrology, navigability, wildlife and flood defence structures.
- 11.37 There is also great archaeological interest in the Thames. The river has shaped London's development, and important historical activities have developed along the waterfront. Archaeological remains in the Thames can be well preserved because they are waterlogged or deeply buried. The TPA is therefore a particularly important archaeological resource. See also Chapter 10: Urban Design and Conservation.

RIVER CROSSINGS

Aim

11.38 To make it easier for pedestrians to cross the Thames.

POLICY RIV 6: RIVER CROSSINGS

New or replacement river crossings will only be granted planning permission where they:

- (A) increase or improve pedestrian access, including people with disabilities, for which there is a recognised need**
 - (B) are designed to minimise obstruction to views across and to maintain the open aspect of the river**
 - (C) are of a bulk and height that are appropriate to the location**
 - (D) are designed to minimise the impact of the structure on the hydrology and ecology of the river**
 - (E) do not provide access for motor vehicles**
-

Policy application

11.39 Policy RIV 5 normally resists development into or over the river. While river crossings may be allowed in certain cases, these structures should be for access only and should not be regarded as sites that offer opportunities for development. Residential accommodation, offices, shops or other non water- dependent structures will not be allowed on any new river crossing.

11.40 The City Council will require design statements, which take into account strategic views and important buildings. All river crossings should be convenient for disabled people, and designed to avoid any safety problems that might be caused by conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. The City Council will have regard to impacts on wildlife habitats, archaeology and navigation, and will also require environmental, archaeological and hydrological assessments of proposed sites for river crossings. Proposals should seek to minimise impacts on the foreshore and wildlife and ensure the integrity of flood defence structures.

11.41 The City Council will consult neighbouring boroughs, English Heritage, the Port of London Authority, the Environment Agency, its partners in the Cross River Partnership and transport providers on proposals for new

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river crossings. The City Council will also notify the Mayor of applications for river crossings in line with the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000.

Reasons

- 11.42 It should be easy and pleasant to walk between the north and south banks of the river, in particular to get to and from leisure and tourist facilities on the South Bank. However, it is important to maintain the open aspect of the river as a strategic open space and to protect the views across and along the river. The river is also important for wildlife and as an archaeological resource and transport route. New river crossings will need to be sensitively designed and located, taking these factors into account.

PIERS AND RIVER TRANSPORT

Aim

- 11.43 To encourage the use of the river for transport.

POLICY RIV 7: PIERS

(A) Pier proposals will only be permitted if they:

- 1) improve public access to the Thames for water-dependent leisure, tourism or public transport**
- 2) do not harm local residential amenity**
- 3) are well linked to public transport, including pedestrian and cycle routes**

and, for proposals which are downstream of Westminster Bridge:

- 4) make use of existing purpose-designed pier recesses along the listed embankment wall and do not compromise the fabric or setting of the listed structure**

(B) Improvement to pier facilities will be encouraged as part of new development within the Thames Policy Area

Policy application

- 11.44 Policy RIV 5 normally resists development into or over the river. Structures that improve access such as piers may be acceptable. The

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City Council will consult the Port of London Authority, the Environment Agency, and its partners in the Cross River Partnership and transport providers on proposals for new or improved piers. The City Council will also notify the Mayor of applications for passenger piers in line with the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000.

- 11.45 When considering proposals for piers, the City Council will take into account the impact on wildlife, archaeology and navigation, and will require environmental, archaeological and hydrological assessments of proposed sites to identify and eliminate adverse impacts on the stability of flood defences and on the riverine ecology. The Council will consider use of conditions to minimise the impacts of a proposal. Proposals should seek to minimise impacts on the foreshore and wildlife. All pier proposals should be accompanied by details of associated structures such as ticket booths and signs, to ensure that street clutter is minimised. Consideration should also be given to providing access for all, and to policy RIV 4 with regard to servicing and other traffic issues. Piers should provide for access only and not opportunities for related development such as cafes.
- 11.46 Proposals downstream of Westminster Bridge are directed to existing purpose-designed pier recesses in order to avoid the use of 'up and over' type brows which are considered to have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the listed embankment wall.

Reasons

- 11.47 Historically, the Thames played a much bigger transport role than it does today. Greater use of the river for transport would benefit Westminster in several ways, by:
- a) encouraging tourism by providing trips to tourist attractions and pleasure cruises through Westminster
 - b) spreading visitor pressure from particular sites, helping to solve problems of congestion and coach parking
 - c) carrying commuters to and from work
 - d) moving freight and waste
 - e) benefiting the environment by reducing the need to use road transport
- 11.48 To provide river transport for passengers, there must be a sufficient number of piers and landing points to allow passengers to be picked up and dropped off at appropriate places in Westminster. There are existing piers at Temple (Savoy), Embankment, Westminster and Millbank. However, there is not enough pier capacity in some locations to cope with any increase in demand for transport. If passenger transport on the river is to be encouraged therefore, more piers will be needed. The Thames 2000 Millennium Piers Initiative, organised by the Cross River Partnership, London River Services and the New Millennium Experience

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Company successfully implemented a programme of pier development and refurbishment in central London including a new pier at Millbank and the refurbishment of the Westminster and Embankment piers.

Helicopter facilities

- 11.49 The City Council supports the principle of water-based transport (see policy TRANS 12), and recognises that it can bring environmental benefits at a broad, strategic level by reducing the need to use road transport. However, the River Thames is not considered suitable for the location of helicopter facilities including floating helipads, because of the noise and disturbance such facilities would generate. Increased use of helicopters in Westminster and central London will be resisted (see policy TRANS 13).

PERMANENTLY MOORED VESSELS

Aim

- 11.50 To ensure that permanently moored vessels add to the character and function of the TPA.

POLICY RIV 8: PERMANENTLY MOORED VESSELS

(A) Proposals for permanently moored vessels will only be permitted where they:

- 1) are open to the public and help the public to enjoy the river, including disabled people**
- 2) are of national importance, or have some special association with London or the Thames or some special maritime interest, and whose external appearance is retained as far as possible in its original condition**
- 3) have adequate servicing arrangements, including drainage, waste disposal and car / coach parking**
- 4) do not harm local residential amenity**
- 5) do not compromise views of the river and the setting of listed buildings and structures**
- 6) do not jeopardise the long term use of existing purpose-designed pier recesses for their original purpose**

(B) Proposals for houseboat moorings will not normally be approved except at Grosvenor Dock

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Policy application

- 11.51 As the City Council wishes to encourage more public use of the river, it will consider proposals for permanently moored vessels that are open to the public and thus allowing public enjoyment of the Thames. Examples include galleries, exhibition areas or recreation and education facilities. Proposals for restaurants and bars may also be acceptable, but will also be subject to policies TACE 8, 9 and 10 in Chapter 8: Tourism, Arts, Culture and Entertainment. Other entertainment uses will also be assessed against policies TACE 8, 9 and 10 in Chapter 8: Tourism, Arts, Culture and Entertainment. The Council will consider use of conditions to minimise the impacts of a proposal. Unacceptable uses include offices and other business uses.
- 11.52 To ensure the openness of the river is maintained, over-concentration of permanently moored vessels will be resisted. Inappropriate structures for access, and other ancillary structures such as ticket kiosks, will also be resisted particularly where this would adversely affect the character and appearance of the listed embankment wall. Given the prominence of Westminster's riverside, the City Council will impose conditions to ensure vessels are properly maintained. Relocation of permanently moored vessels from the purpose-designed pier recesses will be welcomed, as this will enable the pier recesses to be used for their original purpose.
- 11.53 Although a priority of the UDP is to increase the amount of housing in Westminster, the City Council will not give planning permission for proposals for mooring houseboats on the River Thames. This is because the City Council wants to use opportunities for moorings on the river to benefit the public in general. The exception to this is the Grosvenor Dock basin at Gatliff Road where, because of the enclosed nature of the dock basin, an opportunity exists to provide residential moorings in the TPA.
- 11.54 The City Council will refer to LPAC's 'Planning guidelines for permanently-moored vessels and structures on the river Thames in Greater London' (1990). The City Council will consult the Port of London Authority on navigation issues. The City Council will also have regard to the impact of proposals on wildlife, particularly with regard to overshadowing, and will consult the Environment Agency on proposals.

Reasons

- 11.55 Vessels that are permanently moored on the Thames can add to the character and function of the TPA by bringing activity to the waterfront and encouraging public use of the river. However, as the river front is a finite resource, the number of permanently moored vessels in the TPA must be limited, in order to:
- a) protect the character of the TPA

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- b) protect views (including those of the river itself) and the settings of listed buildings and structures
- c) ensure that river navigation is unaffected
- d) protect the river as a continuous wildlife corridor and not a fragmented unsustainable corridor

SECTION 3: DEVELOPMENT ON THE RIVERSIDE

THE THAMES PATH

Aim

- 11.56 To provide a Thames Path that will allow people to enjoy the Thames.
-

POLICY RIV 9: THE THAMES PATH

- (A) For sites immediately adjacent to the River, without an existing riverside path, proposed developments will be required to include a public riverside path**
 - (B) For sites next to the river with an existing riverside path:**
 - 1) planning permission for developments that would remove, narrow or adversely affect the riverside path will be refused**
 - 2) development proposals will be encouraged to include improvements to the riverside path, where they are needed**
 - (C) Developments that create any boardwalks or other solid or overhanging projections riverward of the existing flood defence structures in order to accommodate the Thames Path will not be permitted**
-

Policy application

- 11.57 On sites where the Thames Path route has not yet been built, a riverside public path must be provided as part of any development. This path must be of a standard acceptable to the City Council. It must follow the route specified by the Countryside Agency, and be safe, accessible to people with disabilities, convenient, well-lit and be of an adequate width. It should be built with appropriate materials and street furniture. The City Council will refer to the Countryside Agency's 'Thames Path Design Guide' (1991) to guide the design of new sections of the Path. Improvements to the public realm will also be welcomed. The City Council will seek planning

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obligations to secure the further development of and improvements to the Thames Path in association with development proposals, where appropriate, within the TPA. (See also policy STRA 6 and supplementary planning guidance for the TPA).

- 11.58 The Thames Cycle Route in Westminster is planned to run adjacent to the river along a section of Millbank and a section of Grosvenor Road near Chelsea Bridge. The route will be kept under review, in line with policy TRANS 10. The safety of pedestrians will need to be considered, particularly where proposed measures may bring the needs of cyclists into conflict with those of pedestrians.

Reasons

- 11.59 The City Council wants the public to enjoy the Thames and be able to reach the river easily. A pathway along the Thames can:
- a) improve public enjoyment of the river
 - b) help make a more lively riverside
 - c) allow access to facilities that use the water
 - d) be used for leisure walks
 - e) open up new views of the Thames to pedestrians
- 11.60 The City Council supports the completion of the Thames Path National Trail. The route of the Thames Path was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in 1989. The London Plan recognises that the Thames Path initiative is continuing to expand as gaps in the walking network are filled in, as part of redevelopment schemes. The London Plan also states at paragraph 4.111 that new walkways should link to the surrounding walking network, be dedicated for public use and include appropriate signage and interpretation material. The London Plan policy 4C.17 also advises that waterside access should be improved. The River Thames is a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation, and will be protected from cantilevered extensions to the Thames Path that could damage its ecology. The route within Westminster is nearly complete, except for stretches between Chelsea and Vauxhall Bridges.

ENCOURAGING ACCESS TO THE RIVER AND ITS FORESHORE

Aim

- 11.61 To protect and improve public access to the river and its foreshore.

POLICY RIV 10: ENCOURAGING ACCESS TO THE RIVER AND ITS FORESHORE

- (A) Developments that would restrict public access to riverside steps and stairs will be refused**
 - (B) Development within the Thames Policy Area will be encouraged to contribute to the improvement of steps and stairs, where necessary**
 - (C) Riverside developments will be encouraged to provide steps and stairs to the river, except where there are concerns over safety or the effect on wildlife habitats or archaeological sites**
-

Policy application

- 11.62 The Port of London Authority's (PLA) survey of access points to the river (1996) identifies the condition and status of riverside steps and stairs. The City Council will consult the PLA, relevant landowners and other appropriate bodies such as the Environment Agency with regard to proposals affecting access to the river and foreshore.
- 11.63 The City Council will seek planning obligations to secure the provision of, and improvements to, steps and stairs to the river in association with development proposals, where appropriate, within the TPA. (See also policy STRA 6 and supplementary planning guidance for the TPA). Any encroachment which might occur through the construction of new accesses should be limited through sensitive design and any losses to flood storage volume or foreshore habitat should be adequately compensated for.

Reasons

- 11.64 Steps and stairs along the River Thames used to be an important part of travelling in London, allowing people to board boats to travel on the river. Now, access to the river's foreshore can also be useful for education, leisure, ecology and archaeology. The public has a right of access to the river for navigation, fishing and other customary purposes. As an important part of Westminster, the river should be easy for the public to reach and use.
- 11.65 The City Council wants to allow public access to the foreshore where it is suitable for public use and will therefore maintain existing opportunities for access to the Thames. However, the City Council is concerned about

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safety, wildlife habitats and archaeology. Safety problems could, for example, occur due to poorly maintained steps or tidal conditions. Maintenance of steps and safety equipment is of great importance, as is the responsibility of individuals to ensure their own safety when enjoying access to the river and foreshore. Access to the foreshore will not be encouraged where people's safety could be at risk or where wildlife habitats or the archaeological importance of the foreshore could be affected.

SAFETY ISSUES

Aim

- 11.66 To make the Thames and its banks a safe place.
-

POLICY RIV 11: SAFETY ISSUES

All proposals for development along the Thames will be required to include appropriate safety features

Policy application

- 11.67 The City Council will require all riverside developments to include safety features, where appropriate. These include:
- a) buoyancy aids, particularly near activities like water sports or public uses like pubs, open spaces, leisure or tourist facilities;
 - b) grab chains;
 - c) information signage.
- 11.68 The City Council will consult the emergency services and the Port of London Authority about whether any safety features will be needed for any particular site or type of development. The City Council will seek planning obligations to secure the provision and maintenance of safety features in association with development proposals, where appropriate, within the TPA. (See also policy STRA 6 and supplementary planning guidance for the TPA).

Reasons

- 11.69 The City Council wants to make the Thames and the riverside easier for the public to reach and use. This will mean more activity on and beside the Thames. This increase in activity increases the need for safety facilities.

FLOOD DEFENCES

Aim

- 11.70 To protect Westminster from flooding.
-

POLICY RIV 12: FLOOD DEFENCES

- (A) Development which would adversely affect the stability and integrity of the Thames flood defences will be refused**
- (B) Improvements to flood defences will be sought where necessary, and the removal of those no longer required will be encouraged**
-

Policy application

- 11.71 The City Council will consult the Environment Agency on all proposals affecting flood defences. The City Council will make sure that new developments protect the Thames flood defences. Access to the defences for maintenance and emergency purposes will be protected. If necessary, improvement to the flood defences will be sought as a condition or required as a planning obligation related to a development proposal. The life of new flood defences should be at least as long as the new development. Any new flood defences should be designed so as to be capable of being raised and strengthened at a future date if required as a result of climate change.
- 11.72 If intermediate flood defences are not needed, the City Council will consider approving development proposals which involve taking them down. The City Council will only encourage the removal of these defences in consultation with the Port of London Authority and Environment Agency. However, given that climate change is expected to increase the risk of flooding, the need for interim flood defences will need to be monitored closely, through consultation with the Environment Agency.
- 11.73 When considering proposals for works to flood defences, the City Council will take into account the impact on wildlife, archaeology and navigation.

Reasons

- 11.74 Section 4C of the London Plan 'The Blue Ribbon Network' (paragraph 4.87) notes that there is a risk of flooding around the Thames despite the protection of the Thames Barrier. PPG 25: Development and Flood Risk (July 2001) states that development plans should take account of flood defences (this is to be updated by PPS 25). Map 11.2 shows the

Chapter 11: River Thames

indicative flood plain in Westminster, as identified by the Environment Agency, which could be affected should there be breaching of the flood defence structures. While the City Council wants to make sure that the Thames flood defences are maintained to protect Westminster from risk of flooding, there are intermediate flood defences that may no longer be required.