

Improvements along the Wandle Trail

2013/14 bid for Transport for London Greenways: project proposal

January 2013

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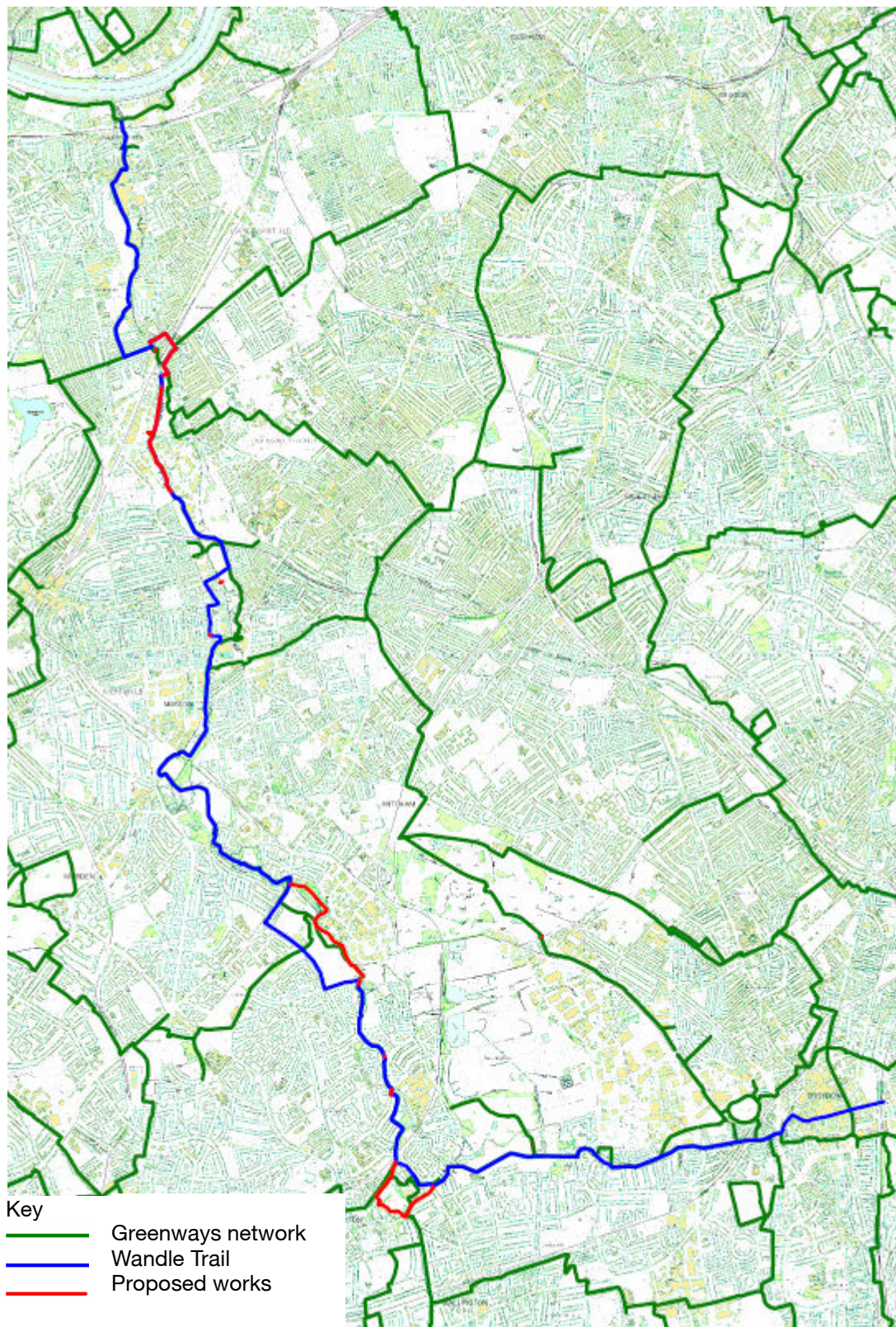
1.0 Greenways and the context of the Wandle Trail

Shortly following the 2005 announcement that London had been chosen to host the 2012 Olympics Games, Sustrans put together the GOAL proposal. GOAL (Greenways for the Olympics and London) was an umbrella term used for route development work within London. It comprised: the National Cycle Network (NCN) within London which consists of eight numbered routes; Connect2 schemes, which are part of Sustrans' nationwide Lottery supported programme; Olympic Walking & Cycling Routes (including a proposed bridge across the Thames connecting Rotherhithe to Canary Wharf), local routes and waterside networks. Now referred to as 'London Greenways', this collection of projects seek to create a network of attractive and functional routes for both walkers and cyclists, and aims to improve access to and through green space across the capital.

The London Greenways Network across London was identified by Sustrans and key stakeholders through a process of consultation with Cycle Officers or equivalents across London Boroughs and other managing authorities. Sustrans proposed route alignments to a wide range of consultees and in collaboration with the boroughs came up with a network of routes and prioritised them for implementation.

The Wandle Trail is a key greenway – it is a shared walking and cycling route that follows NCN route 20 for much of its 12-mile length. The Trail begins at the Wandsworth Delta, just south of the Thames, and ends in Croydon at East Croydon (see map overleaf). It links several parks including King George's Park, Morden Hall Park, Ravensbury Park and Beddington Park, and provides a quiet route for those wishing to visit key areas such as Merton High Street and Wimbledon Stadium. The Trail is of particular importance as it links the series of parks that will form the Wandle Valley Regional Park, which is currently being established. The Wandle Trail was identified by Sustrans as requiring some work to solve ongoing issues, which led to the development of the Wandle Trail feasibility study.

The Wandle Trail



2.0 Feasibility work along the Trail

In 2012, Transport for London commissioned Sustrans to carry out a feasibility study along the Wandle Trail to identify the issues along the route and propose solutions as to how they may be addressed.

In order to determine the issues along the Trail, Sustrans held a stakeholder engagement session, where local organisations, Councillors and residents were given the opportunity to highlight issues along the length of the Trail. Sustrans investigated each of these and where possible have proposed solutions to the issues highlighted. These proposals have formed a three-year programme of works for improving the Wandle Trail, the first year of works is outlined in the following proposal.

Throughout the course of the study, Sustrans have met regularly with the Wandle Valley Regional Park Transport and Access group, which consists of the CEO of the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust (WVRPT) and borough officers from Wandsworth, Merton, Sutton and Croydon. These regular meetings have contributed to the structure of the three-year programme of works that are proposed for the Wandle Trail, and have fed into the proposals that Sustrans have recommended.

3.0 Proposed works for 2013/14

The series of improvements proposed along the Trail are detailed below.

3.1 Feasibility study for the Earlsfield ‘missing link’

Throughout the course of the stakeholder engagement carried out as a part of the feasibility work, several stakeholders mentioned the issue of the Earlsfield ‘missing link’, which due to its complexity was not part of the aforementioned feasibility study.

Earlsfield has been one of the major barriers on the Wandle Trail since its creation as a greenway. Cyclists must use Garratt Lane through the town centre adjacent to the station, which is particularly challenging when travelling southbound as it requires two right turns across continuous streams of traffic. An alternate alignment needs to be confirmed that can feasibly be delivered when private land and environmental constraints have been considered. In order to establish this, a feasibility study will need to be carried out to allow a principle design option to be established and agreed with necessary landowners. Detailed design and implementation would take place in future years as a result of the recommendations of the report.

The Earlsfield feasibility study has been included in this bid in order to ensure that all improvements for the Wandle Trail are within the same bid, and due to importance of addressing the issue of the ‘missing link’ amongst stakeholders.

3.2 Replace signage along sections of the trail

Although the Wandle Trail is fully signed using either the Wandle ‘waterwheel’ logo or the National Cycle Network 20 red logo, there are some locations where the signs

have been removed or damaged (see example photographs below). Consequently, a series of signing improvements are proposed to improve way finding for all users.



Vandalised signs south of Trewint Street Damaged signs at Culvers Avenue

This work will be overseen by Sustrans, who will compile a signing schedule, manufacture the signs and install them on site using either Sustrans appointed contractors or borough contractors. This structure is one that has been applied in the past to sign Avenue Verte, National Cycle Network 21 and National Cycle Network 13.

The proposed new signage is intended as a short-term solution until a design guide has been agreed and 'branding' determined for the Wandle Trail, when signage along the route will be reviewed and replaced with a new bespoke design.

3.3 Carry out an ecology survey along the section of path parallel to Weir Road, hold work days to cut back vegetation and resurface the path

The 1.1km-long section of path that runs parallel to Weir Road is narrow, muddy and overgrown (see photo). Prior to the route being resurfaced it would be beneficial to cut back the overgrown vegetation. However as the path runs through a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR), it will be necessary for an ecology survey to be conducted by a Sustrans Ecologist prior to any works taking place to ensure that no wildlife may be adversely affected. Following the outcome of this survey, Sustrans propose that 6 volunteer work days are held along the path to cut back the overgrown vegetation.



Following these works it is proposed that the path be resurfaced with a clear vegetable-based binder on top of tarmac and a natural-coloured aggregate to make the path more durable and prevent further erosion of the path. This work will be project managed by Sustrans, with the specific designs developed by Sustrans engineers. The construction work will be undertaken by Sustrans appointed contractors. LB Merton will be involved at all stages to ensure that they are happy with the proposed width and design of the path, given that it is within an LNR and to avoid excessive loss of natural habitat. This approach has support from LB Merton's Greenspaces manager.

This will tie in with Gateway improvements that the WVRPT are proposing as part of the Living Wandle project just south of the Trewint Street bridge entry point, and will help provide a consistent, even path surface for users from Trewint Street right through to Plough Lane.

3.4 Complete “Bridge to nowhere”



When a new housing development was built on Bewley Street, the developers were obliged to build a bridge east of the development across the Wandle River, linking the Wandle Valley Nature Park to the new development as part of a Section 106 agreement (a condition of the development being granted planning permission). The bridge was partly built, as seen in the above photo. However, it has not been completed as a result of objections raised

by the Environment Agency due to concerns that it could form an obstruction to the flow of the river in flood conditions. Therefore, a 2 metre drop at the east end was required to ensure it was no lower than the North Road bridge which runs parallel, meaning that the original plans for a sloping bridge were no longer viable. This resulted in the developers installing a flat bridge that ended just short of the Park. An agreement was made in 2006 between the developer and the council that the developer would not pay for the necessary ramp from the bridge to the Park, resulting in the bridge being blocked off and residents of Bewley Street unable to access the Park directly.

In 2010, LB Merton engineers worked on a number of options for a ramp leading from the bridge to the Park. However, there are considerable constraints on site as the EA specified that the approach is needed for flood storage of the river, so any ramp will need to be a fabricated, open structure rather than a solid embankment, limiting the options considerably. Consequently a design for a wooden ramp was developed by LB Merton, which received approval for construction from the EA and Council Members in 2010. However subsequent to this agreement the funding was no longer available, so the ramp has never been constructed.

The cost for fabricating and installing the ramp has been given as £200,000 by LB Merton contractors, due to access issues on site and the need for a longer ramp in order to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (2004).

As the incomplete bridge has been in place for five years, there is considerable support from local Councillors, Council officers and residents to complete the bridge. Access to the Wandle is limited in this area, so completing this bridge would help to connect communities either side of the river, and would provide a traffic-free alternative to North Road for cyclists and pedestrians.

Furthermore, opening up this access point would tie in with improvement works that the WVRPT are proposing throughout Wandle Meadow Nature Park as part of the aforementioned Wandle Gateways project, which would help to encourage users to walk from Collier’s Wood underground station through the park to Haydon’s Road.

As the designs have already been agreed by all parties and designed by LB Merton, it is proposed that the construction work be carried out by borough contractors, and the project managed by Sustrans, who will work closely with LB Merton officers to ensure that the work undertaken meets their standards and designs. It is estimated that the project will take four months from finalising the designs to building the foundations, fabricating the ramp and finally installing the ramp and carrying out all necessary checks.

3.5 Access improvements at Goat Road

The dropped kerb that leads cyclists into Watercress Nature reserve is regularly blocked by vehicles (see photo), making access to the path difficult, particularly for those heading north as there is no other dropped kerb.



Therefore it is proposed that 'keep clear' or alternate appropriate lines be painted on the carriageway in front of the dropped kerb to remind motorists that they should not park there.

This has been effective in the past and does not require a new Traffic Management Order, unlike double yellow lines, which would make implementation low cost and simple. This work will be carried out by LB Sutton contractors as it is on highway.

3.6 Design and feasibility work to determine Poulter Park route alignment



Currently the Wandle Trail splits south of Ravensbury Park, with cyclists heading uphill alongside the busy Bishopsford Road and onto Peterborough Road before rejoining pedestrians at Watercress Park. There is considerable support among local groups to re-route the Trail through Poulter Park, where pedestrians are permitted to walk along the Wandle River.

Several alignments through the park have been proposed by LB Sutton but the project has not been taken forward in the past as initially there were plans to re-introduce water voles, a protected species, into this stretch of the river. However, recent investigation has found that the environment along this stretch of the Wandle is 'poor' for water vole habitation, so it is unlikely that they will be introduced. Despite this, the path alignment will be designed to ensure that it will be suitable to allow for the re-introduction of water voles in future years.

Given these constraints, it is necessary for extensive feasibility work to be carried out throughout Poulter Park to see if it is viable for the route to run through it. Therefore it is proposed that in 2013/14 LB Sutton and Sustrans work together to agree an alignment with local stakeholders, including the EA, and Sustrans will carry out the design work for the new path that is planned to improve the Trail through this section. This feasibility work will fit in with a wider scheme of works within the Poulter Park / Watermeads area that the WVRPT are compiling for a bid to the Big Green Fund. Regardless of whether the BGF funding is obtained this feasibility work is essential to determine the potential route through the park.

This initial work is essential in ensuring that the Trail can run through Poulter Park. As it is likely that careful negotiation and design will be necessary to ensure that the new alignment is suitable for the local wildlife, it is necessary to allow for considerable time for this feasibility and design work to take place.

3.7 Convert Hackbridge Road pavement to shared use and widen at eastern end



Hackbridge Road is a busy road and the right turn from the path on the northern side can be intimidating due to the traffic. Therefore it is proposed that the footway along the southern side of the road is widened by 1 metre and made shared use to take cyclists off the road and into a safer environment. The western end of the footway is already shared use and is 3.8metres wide, so this extension will build on the existing infrastructure. Widening the footway along its length and squaring up the footway at the corner of Restmor Way and Hackbridge Road, which is currently only 1.5 metres wide will assist pedestrians and cyclists when crossing the road. Previous proposals to install a crossing at this location failed the road safety audit due to poor sight lines, so a formal crossing point is not proposed within these works.

As the works will be on the highway, the work will be project managed by LB Sutton officers and will be delivered by LB Sutton contractors on site.

3.8 Feasibility study to designate a route through The Grove

The current alignment of the Trail runs along Butter Hill, a busy road that is often used as a rat-run and is intimidating for cyclists. An alternative route is feasible through The Grove, a park located just south of Butter Hill. Cycling is currently not permitted through this park however, so it will be necessary to establish a designated cycle route. This will involve extensive consultation and design work, so a feasibility study will be necessary to determine the best route and ensure that all stakeholders are engaged in the process as cycling may not be welcomed by some users.



Feasibility and design work will be carried out by Sustrans, and consultation will be undertaken by Sustrans and LB Sutton working in partnership. The outcome of this work should result in detailed designs for a designated cycle route with small-scale interventions to improve the quality of the route and enable access to it, as well as signage denoting the change in the alignment of the Wandle Trail.

4.0 Costs for work

| Proposed works | Cost (£) | Borough | Section |
|--|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Replace signage along sections of the trail | 5,920 | All | Various |
| Feasibility study for Earlsfield missing link | 7,050 | Wandsworth | n/a |
| Carry out ecology survey, hold work days and resurface Weir Road section of the path | 141,080 | Merton | 5.6.1 |
| Complete "Bridge to nowhere" | 239,760 | Merton | 5.7.3 |
| Design and feasibility work to determine Poulter Park route alignment | 12,110 | Merton & Sutton | 5.11.2 |
| 'Keep clear' painted south of Goat Road | 1,000 | Sutton | 5.12.2 |
| Convert Hackbridge Road pavement to shared use and widen at eastern end | 25,000 | Sutton | 5.13.2 |
| Feasibility work, including consultation, to determine a route through The Grove | 12,730 | Sutton | 5.14.1 |
| Subtotal | £444,650 | | |
| Allowance for project management (10%) | £44,465 | | |
| Contingency | Applied against each project individually | | |
| Total cost: | £489,115 | | |

5.0 Priority of works

In anticipation of some elements of these improvements not receiving funding, each has been placed in order of priority by the Wandle Transport and Access Group.

| Priority | Proposal |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Feasibility study for the Earlsfield 'missing link' |
| 2 | Complete "Bridge to nowhere" |
| 3 | Carry out an ecology survey along the section of path parallel to Weir Road, hold work days to cut back vegetation and resurface the path |
| 4 | Design and feasibility work to determine Poulter Park route alignment |
| 5 | Replace signage along sections of the trail |
| 6 | Access improvements at Goat Road |
| 7 | Convert Hackbridge Road pavement to shared use and widen at eastern end |
| 8 | Feasibility study to designate a route through The Grove |