



Application by National Highways for the Lower Thames Crossing

Case reference: TR010032

Examining Authority's Note of an Unaccompanied Site Inspection (USI) undertaken on 6 and 7 December 2022 (USI-01)

Background to Site Inspections

USIs may be carried out by the Examining Authority (ExA) as required to inform it and without the provision or publication of advance notice. A note is made as a record of the inspection and published to inform the Applicant, Interested Parties (IPs) and other persons of actions taken by the ExA.

All USIs are undertaken from publicly accessible land including highways and public rights of way. No access is required to private land, so there is no need for advance permission and as such they can be undertaken on an unaccompanied basis.

This USI was held to assist the ExA obtain an initial understanding of the proposed development. Further site inspections will be required. A site inspection programme for this application will be developed, taking account of the ExA's information requirements and of requests submitted in the Examination, at a Deadline to be confirmed. The Applicant, IPs and other persons will at that point be provided with an opportunity to submit comments to the ExA on the approach that they suggest should be taken to site inspections and to nominate site inspection locations on an unaccompanied basis (USIs) and on accompanied basis – known as accompanied site inspections (ASIs).

It should be noted that the ExA may decide not to hold an ASI or ASIs if all relevant features can be observed and understood from publicly accessible locations or by using alternative measures, including the use of virtual site inspections (incorporating the use of plans, videos, photographs and written submissions or techniques such as the use of drones) or an Access Required Site Inspection (ARSI).

Before agreeing to site inspections at any particular location, the ExA will consider the degree to which it is necessary to visit a site that has been nominated for an inspection to inform them about the application. They may decide not to visit nominated locations where they consider that it is not necessary to see the features to be observed there.

Site inspection arrangements will be discussed at the Preliminary Meeting and final arrangements will be the subject of procedural decisions.

Particulars of the Inspection

The Examining Authority (ExA) undertook its first unaccompanied site inspection (USI-01) on 6 and 7 December 2022 to support examination of an application for development consent for the proposed Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) (the application).

The inspection was undertaken by three members of the ExA: Rynd Smith (Panel Lead), Ken Taylor and Dominic Young.

The purposes of the inspections were to enable the ExA to familiarise itself with the site and surrounds of the proposed development both north and south of the River Thames. The inspection was carried out over two days, with the first day, 6 December 2022 (**Day 1**), held in the local authority area of Thurrock; and the second day, 7 December 2022 (**Day 2**), held in the local authority areas of Thurrock Council, the London Borough of Havering, Brentwood Borough Council (Essex), Dartford Council and Gravesham Council.

Day 1

Day 1 inspections were undertaken by car, on bike and on foot, commencing at 9am and concluding at 4pm directly after sunset. The following routes were taken:

- Car route 1.1: M25 Junction 30, A13 to A1013 and Buckingham Hill Road (from 9-00am to 10-00am);
- Cycle route 1.2: Linford, East Tilbury, Coalhouse and West Tilbury (from 10-00am to 2-00pm);
- Car route 1.3: Buckingham Hill Road, A1013, A128 to Bulphan and Church Road/ Fen Lane to Bulphan Fen (from 2-00pm to 2-30pm); and
- Cycle route 1.4: Mardyke River¹ Bridleway to Stifford Clays (from 2-30pm to 4-00pm).

The weather was cool but mainly sunny and clear, with excellent long-range visibility throughout.

Day 2

Day 2 inspections were undertaken by car and on foot, commencing at 9am and concluding at 2-30pm. The following routes were taken:

- Car route 1.5: Stifford, South Ockenden and North Ockenden (from 9-00am to 10-00am);
- Foot routes 1.6: Thames Chase and North Ockenden (from 10-00am to 11-00am);
- Car route 1.7: M25 Junction 29 southbound, A282 QEII Bridge, A2 eastbound, M2 Junction 1, A289, A226 to Chalk (from 11-00am to 12-00pm);
- Walking route 1.8: Footpaths between Chalk, Thong and Riverview Park (from 12-00pm to 2-00pm); and
- Car route 1.9: Chalk to A2 westbound (from 2-00pm to 2-30pm).

¹ The Mardyke River is sometimes referred to as the Mar Dyke or Mardike, with or without the term River. The name Mardyke River is used in this note for consistency, but this does not express any preference about the name of this feature.

The weather was cool with high cloud cover in the morning/ north of the Thames, becoming mainly sunny and clear south of the Thames, with good long-range visibility throughout.

All routes are itemised in the following tables and maps can be found in [Annex A](#).

Day 1: 6 December 2022

Route 1.1 (M25 Junction 30, A13 to A1013 and Buckingham Hill Road) viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at A13 Stifford interchange ① on Map 1.1, Annex A	Proceeded eastbound, observing the A1012 intersection at North Stifford.
A13 Orsett ②	The A1089 intersection at Orsett and the location of the proposed A13-LTC intersection and LTC alignment.
A13 Southfields, A1013 ③	Exited eastbound A13 at Southfields, taking the A1013 to Buckingham Hill Road.
Buckingham Hill Road ④	Views to the LTC alignment south westwards from Buckingham Hill Road, Tarmac Linford and Linford village.
Parked at point ⑤	Commenced cycle route 1.2 from Linford Village

Route 1.2 (Linford, East Tilbury, Coalhouse and West Tilbury) viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Parked at point ① on Map 1.2, Annex A	Returned to Buckingham Hill Road and proceeded southbound through Linford village.
Muckingford Road ②	Proceeded south eastwards via Muckingford Road. Obtained views of existing transmission alignments and proposed LTC alignment and works areas to north and south, between Ashlea Farm and Mill house.
Coal Road (bridleway) ③	Proceeded south westwards via Coal Road bridleway from Mill House to Low Street Lane. Obtained views of existing transmission alignments and proposed LTC alignment and works areas to north and south from Coal Road/ Low Street Lane.

Route 1.3 (Buckingham Hill Road, A1013, A128 to Bulphan and Church Road/ Fen Lane to Bulphan Fen) viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Departed from point ① on Map 1.3 Annex A	Proceeded via Buckingham Hill Road, A1013, A128 to Bulphan and Church Road/ Fen Lane to Bulphan Fen.
Parked at point ②	Parked at Fen Lane, Bulphan Fen to cycle the Mar Dyke valley in route 1.4.

Route 1.4 viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Parked at point ①, Fen Lane, Bulphan Fen on Map 1.4 Annex A	Accessed the Mardyke Bridleway from Fen Lane.
Approximate location of LTC alignment crossing ②	Mardyke River. Obtained views to the north-west and the south-east along the proposed LTC alignment from Mardyke River crossing.
A13 Stifford interchange ③	Site inspection Day 1 ended.

Day 2: 7 December 2022

Route 1.5 viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Inspections commenced at A13 Stifford interchange ① on Map 1.5, Annex A	Accessed the B186 at Stifford Bridge ②. Proceeded northwards observing open land to the east (Mardyke Valley Golf Club).
B186 South Ockenden ③	Observed central area of South Ockenden, noting relationship with proposed LTC alignment to the east.
B186 North Road South Ockenden ④	Observed rural land to the north of South Ockenden, identifying the proposed LTC crossing of North Road.

B1421 North Ockenden ⑤	Observed village of North Ockenden then took B1421 westbound to the existing M25 overbridge to observe elements of the proposed LTC limited intersection with the M25.
Pike Lane to Thames Chase Forest Centre ⑥	Took Pike Lane north to the Thames Chase Forest centre and parked to inspect elements of the proposed LTC limited intersection with the M25 on foot.

Route 1.6 viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Parked at point ①, Thames Chase Forest Centre on Annex A Map 1.6.	Viewed modern visitor and interpretation facilities and historic farmhouse and barn group at Thames Chase Forest Centre.
Location(s)	Relevant Observations
M25 environs ②	Located northbound on-ramp (sliproad) for proposed LTC. Noted relationship with existing Forest Centre, open recreational and forested land.
Returned to point ①	Took car to Manor Farm on the junction between Pike Lane and B1421.
The Sidings ③	Viewed the proposed alignment of the northbound on-ramp for the LTC, noting its relationship with the existing rail and M25 alignments, nearby housing and a caravan park.
Returned to car	Commenced driven inspection of M25 Dartford Crossing (southbound) and A2 M2 route.

Route 1.7 viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
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Parked at point ① on Annex A Map 1.7	<p>The ExA drove a route from North Ockenden to Chalk near Gravesham intended to enable observation of the existing M25 southbound from Junction 29 to the commencement of the A282 Dartford Crossing. The route passed southwards over the Queen Elizabeth II bridge, exiting the A282 to the eastbound A2. The location of the proposed LTC intersection to the A2/M2 between Singlewell and Shorne was observed. The A289 was taken to the north-east to the Gadshill intersection. The A226 Gravesham Road and Church Lane, Chalk were taken to the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Chalk.</p> <p>As the majority of this route consists of motorway and dual carriageway roads, no stops were made, and no observation points are recorded. The ExA remained alive to issues and features of relevance to the examination of the LTC application throughout the journey.</p>
Parked at point ② on Annex A Map 1.7	Commenced inspections on foot of the proposed LTC southern route and portal from Chalk, near Gravesham.

Route 1.8 viewed the following:

Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Parked at point ① on Annex A Map 1.8.	<p>The inspections on foot commenced at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Chalk.</p> <p>A public right of way (PRoW) to the east of the church returned the ExA to the A226 Gravesham</p>
Location(s)	Relevant Observations
	Road. Crossing the road, agricultural land proposed as the works site for the LTC southern portal was inspected. The relationship between the works proposals and the surround landscape, use and development were noted.
PRoW – Chalk ②	A junction between several PRoWs identifies the general location of the proposed southern portal.
PRoW – Southern Valley Golf Course ③	The inspection continued south-westwards along the proposed LTC alignment towards Riverview Park, observing the Southern Valley Golf Course, the wooded ridge above Shorne to the south and residential areas and community facilities (leisure centre and schools) to the north.

Thong Lane southwards ④	The inspection turned to the south along Thong lane, crossing the proposed LTC alignment. Observations of the relationship between the proposed alignment and existing residential properties in Riverview Park and the hamlet of Thong were made.
Hamlet of Thong ⑤	The main street of Thong was inspected, to the southern extent of residential development. Views to the south towards the proposed LTC – A2/M2 intersection were obtained.
Thong Lane northwards ⑥	The inspection returned to Riverside Park view Thong Lane, and then descended the hill towards the A226 Gravesham Road. The relationship between existing residential areas and community facilities and the proposed LTC alignment and southern portal were noted.
PRoW – Chalk ⑦	A PRoW within the proposed LTC work site was taken, returning the inspection to the PRoW junction at point ②. Relationships between residential areas and community facilities and the proposed works site were again noted.
Returned to Church of St Mary the Virgin, Chalk ①	The inspection on foot returned to its start point and was concluded.

Route 1.9 viewed the following:

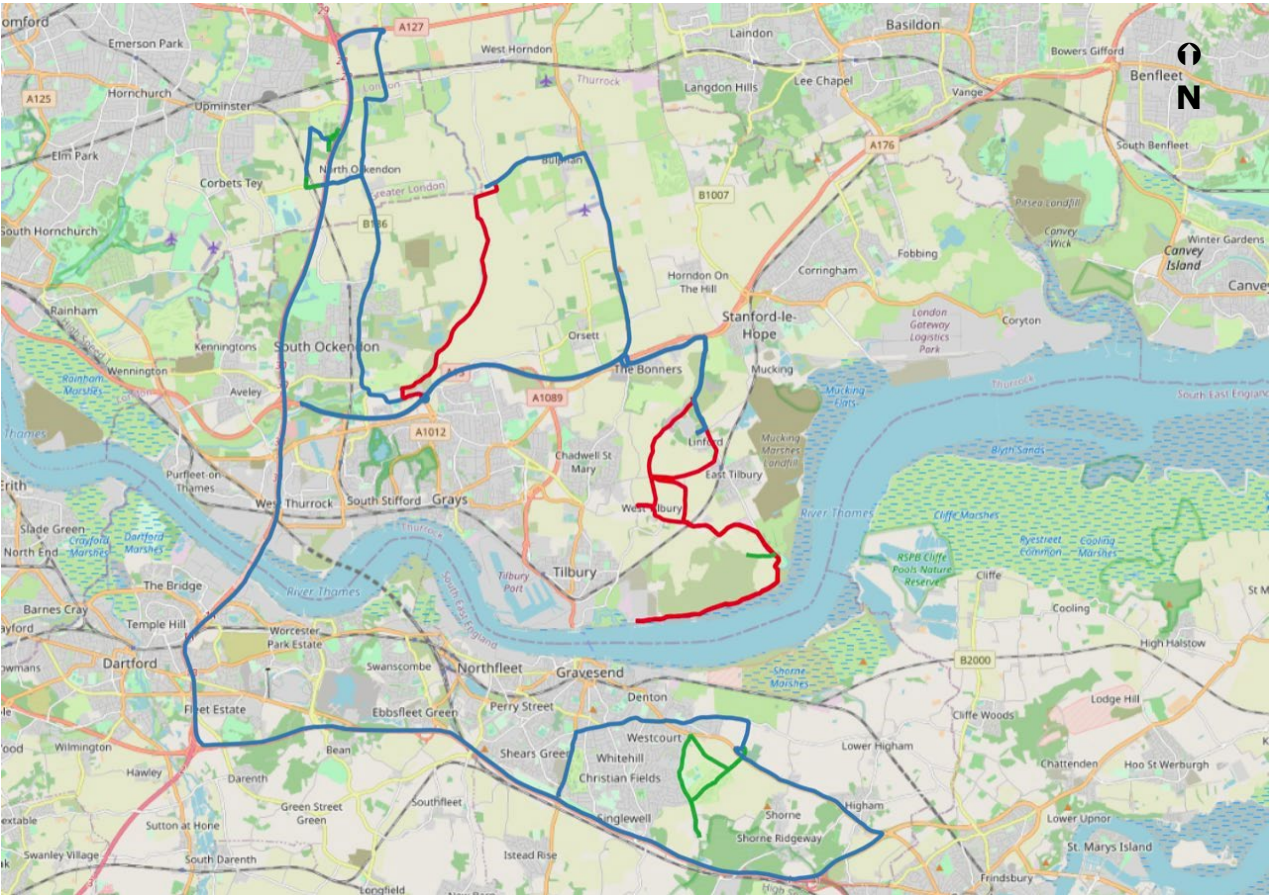
Location(s)	Relevant Observations
Returned to vehicles at point ① on Annex A Map 1.9.	St Mary the Virgin Church, Church Lane, Chalk.
Lower Higham Road ②	Open views towards Shorne Marshes, River Thames and Essex shoreline. Urban views of Chalk and outer Gravesend
Old Road East and West ③	Passage through outer Gravesend.
Wrotham Road A227 ④	Passage through outer Gravesend.
Location(s)	Relevant Observations
	Return to A2 westbound.
	Site inspections concluded.

Annex A

Key

- Car-based inspections
- Bike-based inspections
- Inspections on foot

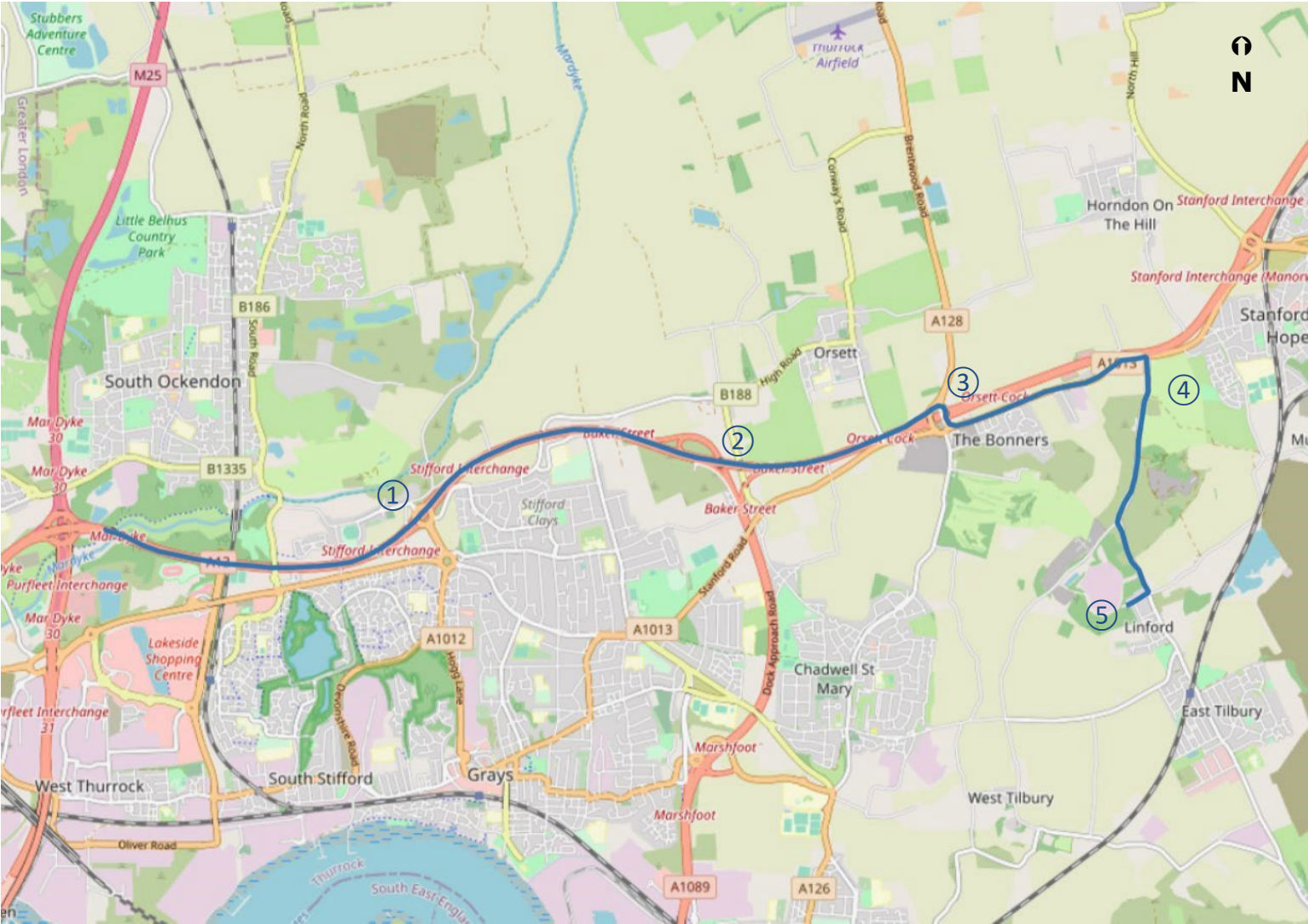
All Site Inspections: Key Plan



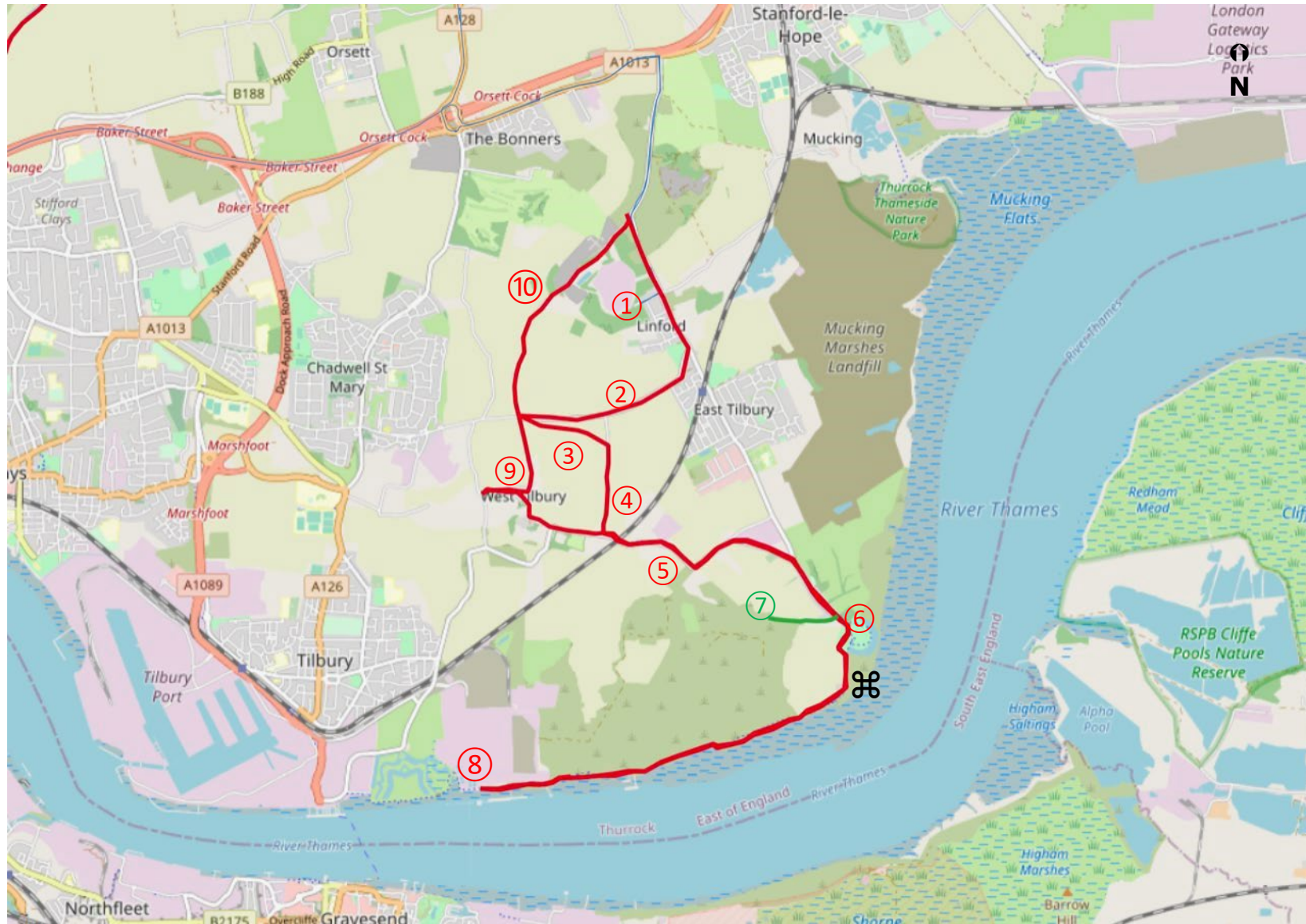
All maps - Base Map Source: © [Open Street Map](#) Contributors (EPSG: 3857 – WGS 84) via QGIS (October 2022) Do not scale.

Day 1

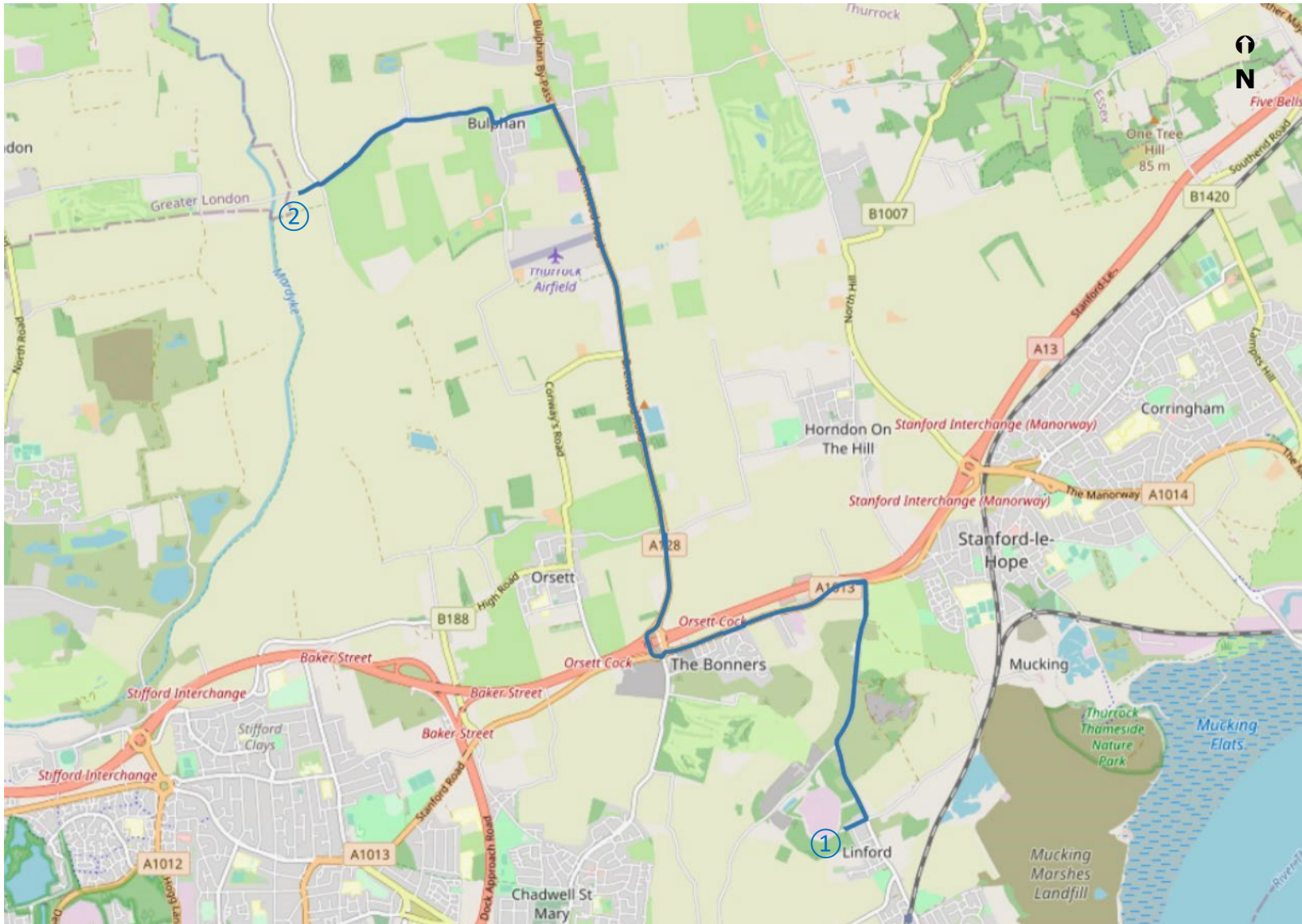
Route 1.1



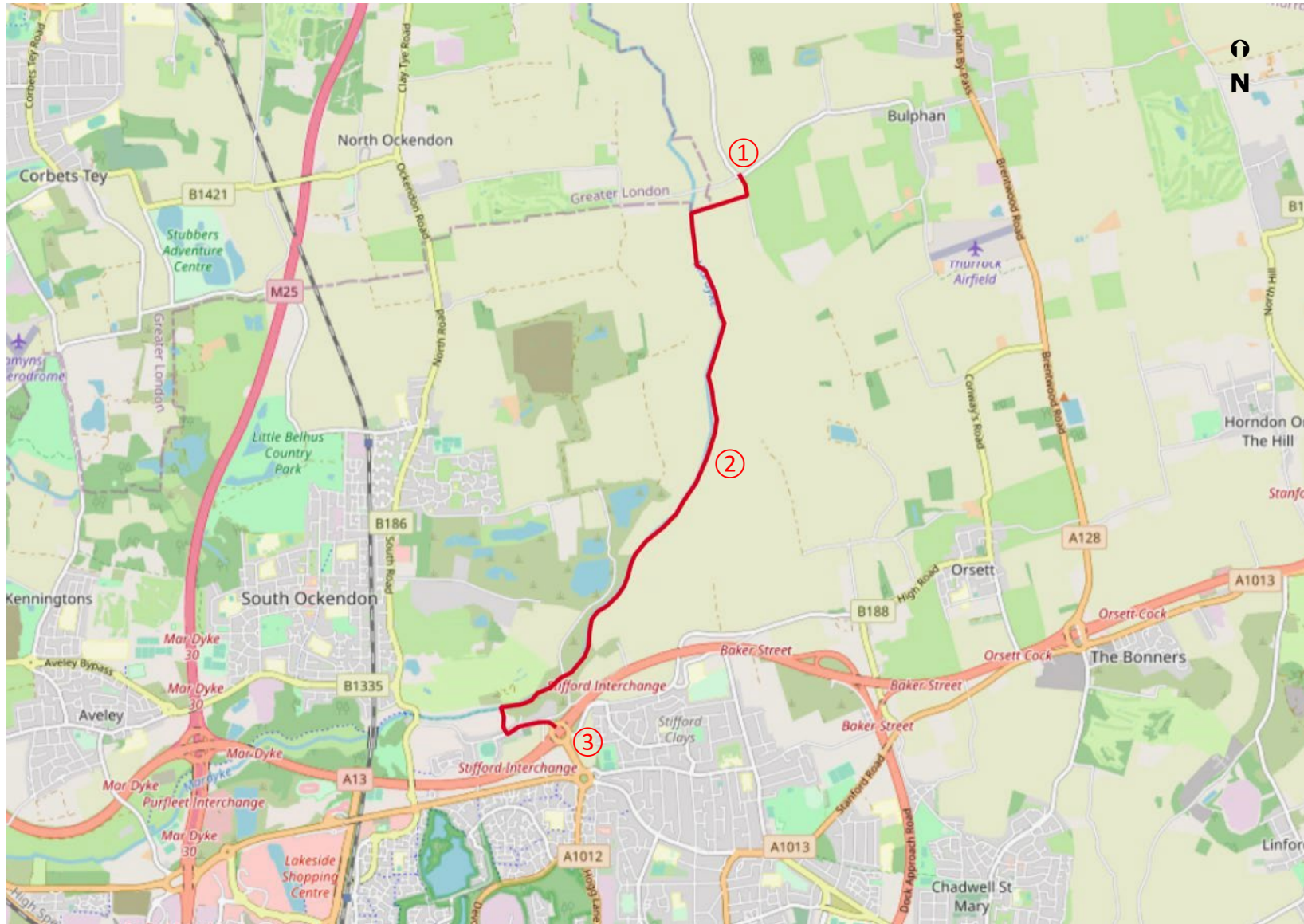
Route 1.2



Route 1.3

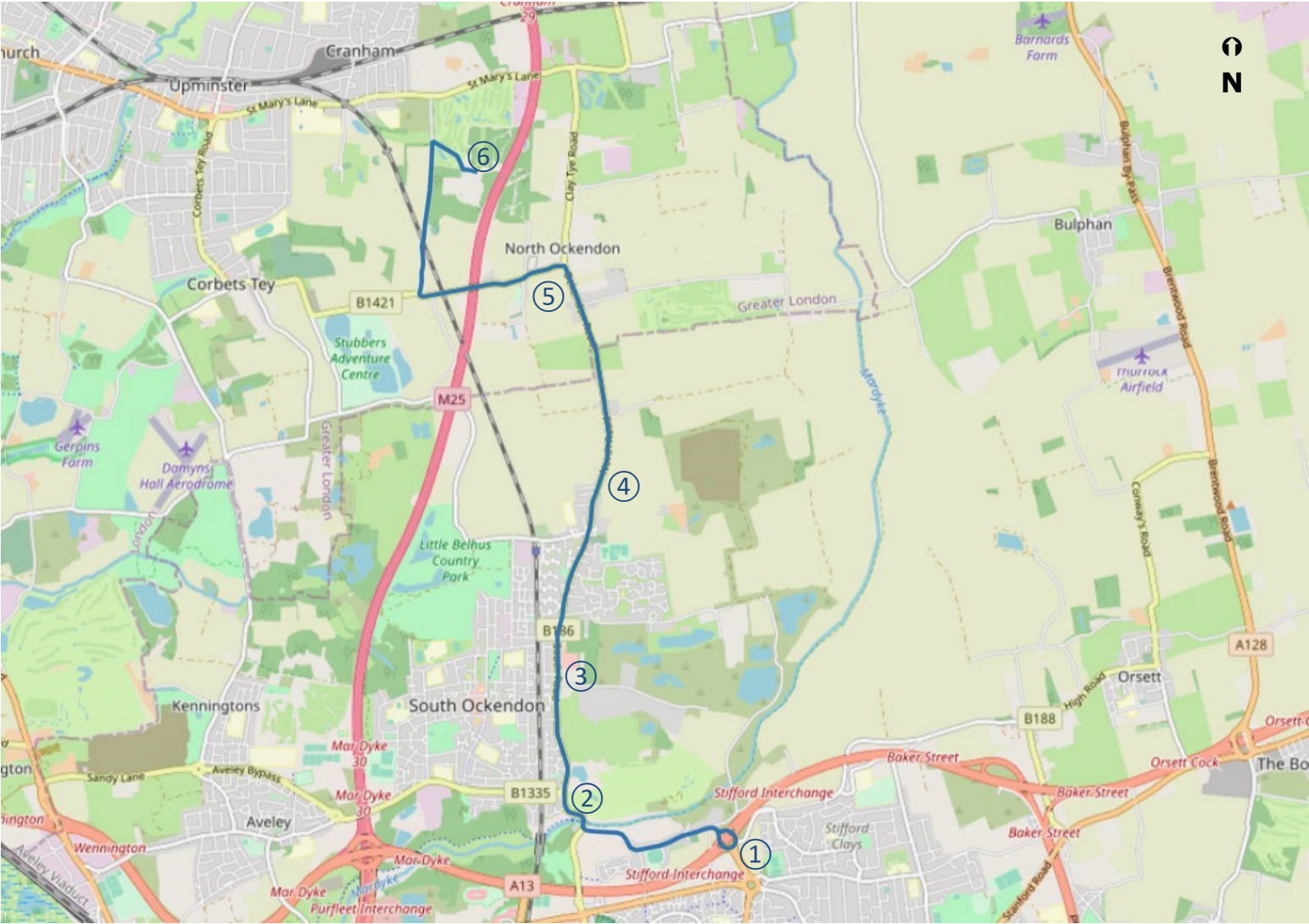


Route 1.4



Day 2

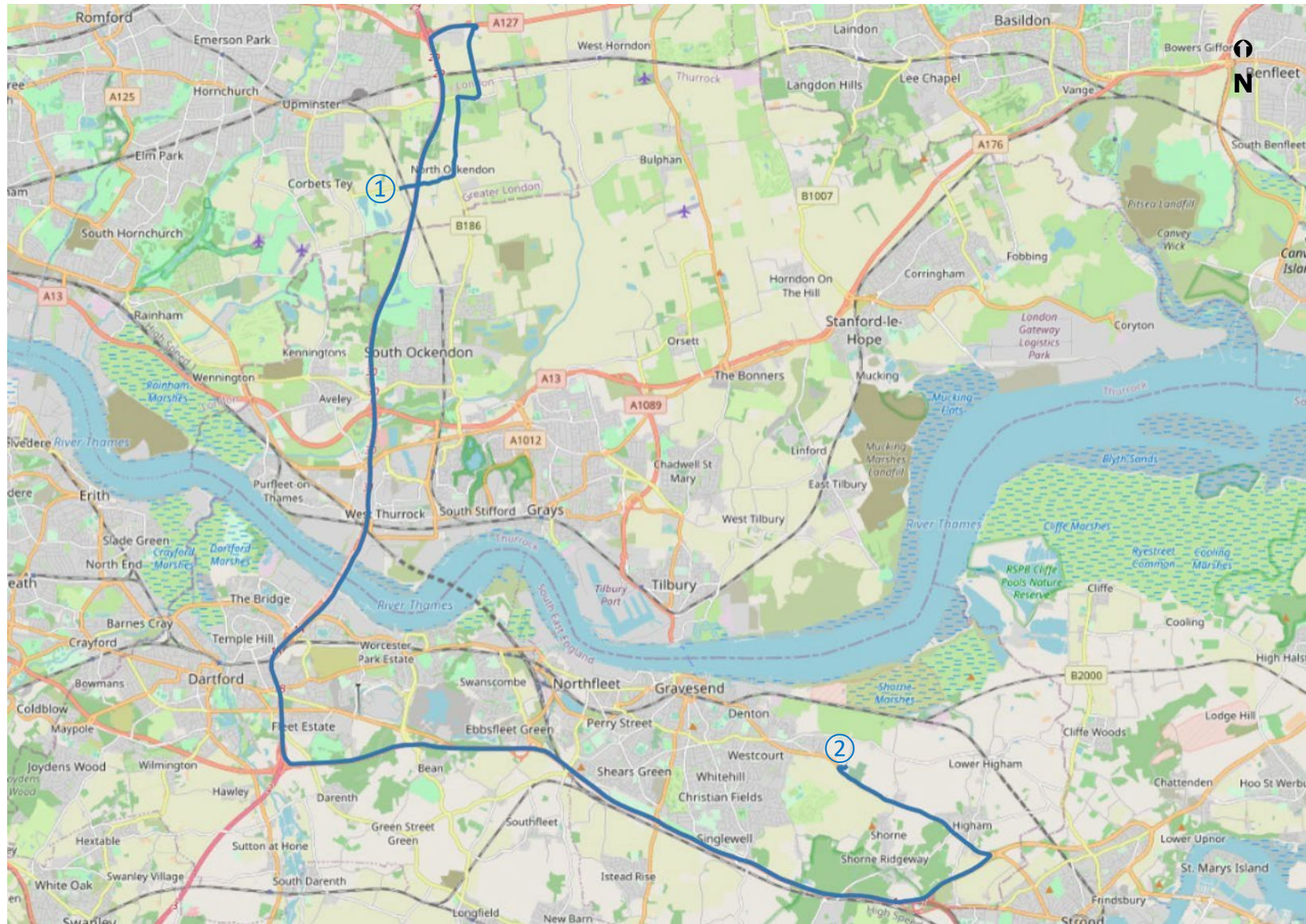
Route 1.5



Route 1.6



Route 1.7



Route 1.8



Route 1.9

