

# Start with the park

Creating sustainable urban  
green spaces in areas of  
housing growth and renewal

cabe  
space

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# Why start with the park?

Sustainable communities are places that people like living in, and want to stay in, neighbourhoods with real character and sense of place. These successful places should have well-designed green spaces that people will want to use and respect. CABI Space has been contributing to a growing body of evidence that demonstrates how green spaces can offer lasting economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits. It links high-quality green spaces with increased house prices and demonstrates their role in tackling issues such as anti-social behaviour. This guide provides a clear route for successful place-making in areas of housing growth and renewal. By planning networks of green spaces, and thinking about their design and care, we will not repeat the mistakes of the past. The inspiring examples are from areas of housing growth and low demand – examples that have lessons for areas of both sorts. The guide provides a resource that can be referred to regularly, and is a gateway to other publications offering more detailed guidance. Above all, it shows that meeting the demands of housing growth and renewal is not just about units of housing, it is about transforming neighbourhoods.

## Who is this guide for?

This guide is for everyone involved in the processes of sustainable growth and renewal in England. It is particularly relevant to the creation and care of green spaces in housing growth areas and housing market renewal areas. It will inform and inspire strategic decision-makers working in local delivery and partnership bodies, local and regional authorities, government departments and other national agencies, private developers, housebuilders and registered social landlords and community and voluntary sector groups.

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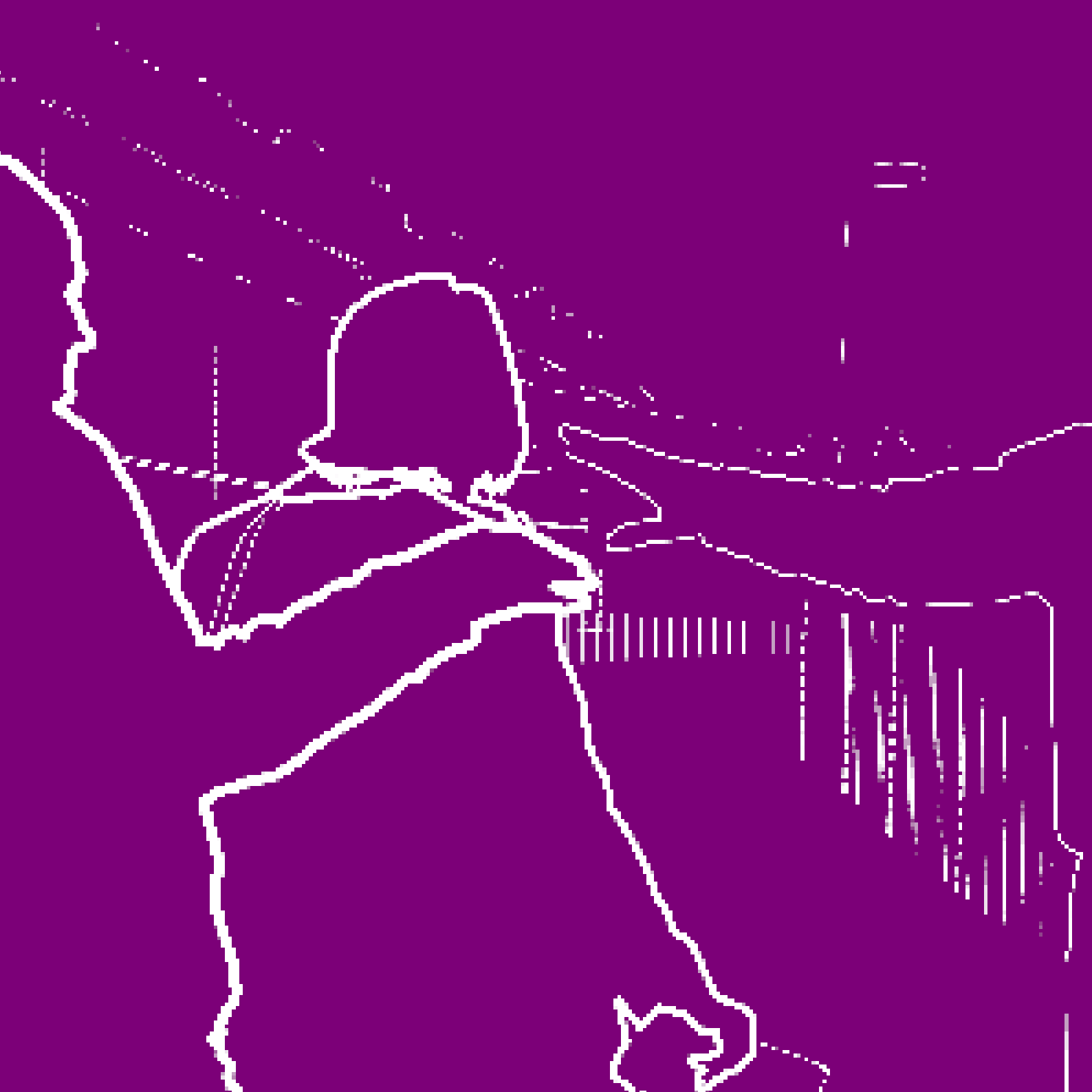
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# The need for quality green spaces



# Introduction

‘Parks are volatile places...[they] can and do add great attraction to neighbourhoods that people find attractive for a great variety of other uses. They further depress neighbourhoods that people find unattractive for a wide variety of other uses, for they exaggerate the dullness, the emptiness.’

Jane Jacobs, *The death and life of great American cities*, 1961



A successful park or green space can be the making of a place. An unsuccessful one can help ruin it. Major programmes of development and regeneration are now providing greater opportunities than ever to improve the spaces we already have and to create inspiring new ones. The pace of social and economic change makes it more important than ever to learn from the experience – at home and abroad – of what works best.

The government’s 2003 sustainable communities plan, launched by the deputy prime minister, provides the context for this. The plan sets out a long-term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. It aims to tackle housing supply problems in south-east England, low demand in other parts of the country, and the quality of public spaces. The plan makes clear that the new neighbourhoods must be of a higher quality and higher density and more sustainable than many recent housing developments.<sup>1</sup> The plan also tackles issues of affordable housing, homelessness, standards of social housing, liveability and countryside protection.

Between 2003 and 2008 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) will be spending £38 billion delivering the plan. Investment in housing on this scale is unprecedented since the 1960s. The achievements of that time were accompanied by some dramatic failures, where some housing layouts and urban planning approaches proved to be disastrously misconceived. Failures in the design and maintenance of green spaces were a major part of this. The experience underlines the need to learn from those mistakes and to understand what needs to be done to create green spaces that work. We must recognise that what counts is not the quantity of green space, but its quality.

Creating sustainable communities depends on taking equal account of the design of buildings, their location, and the quality of the outdoor space, at strategic, local and site scales. To ensure that green spaces in these areas are successful in the longer term, it is vital to plan for that success at the very outset of the regeneration process.

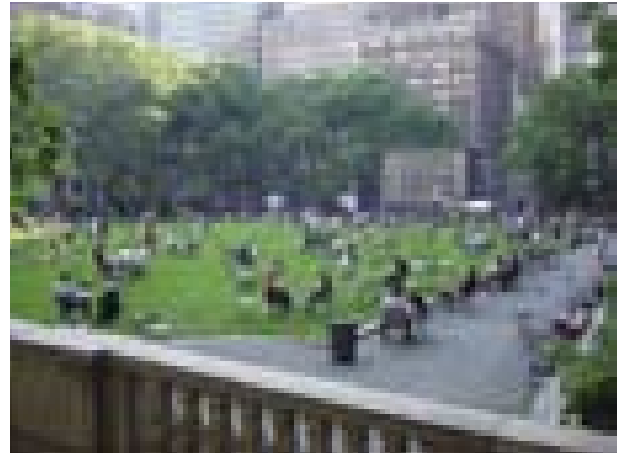


# What do good urban green spaces offer?

‘The measure of any great civilisation is in its cities, and a measure of a city’s greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and its squares.’

John Ruskin

The benefits of good urban green spaces are diverse and wide ranging. Since the improvements to Bryant Park, commercial rental values have increased by up to 220 per cent. *Does money grow on trees?* (CABE 2005)



Successful places – where people are attracted to live, work, visit and invest – have successful green spaces. Since 2003 CABE Space has been contributing to a growing body of evidence that demonstrates how green spaces can offer lasting economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits. This work confirms the link between high-quality green spaces and increased house prices; their benefits in improving the image of an area and attracting investment; their contribution to biodiversity; their contribution to promoting exercise and the benefits to health; and the role of public space design and management in tackling social issues such as risk and anti-social behaviour.

Ninety-one per cent of people say that parks and public spaces improve people’s quality of life.<sup>2</sup> Surveys indicate that the urban population of England makes 2.5 billion

visits a year to urban green spaces.<sup>3</sup> And there is compelling evidence of the value of urban green spaces for quality of life. The clear conclusion is that successful green spaces can have a major positive impact on local communities.

In 2005 CABE Space published *Does money grow on trees?*. It reported research that used property prices as an indication of the desirability of an area, and looked at whether improvements to parks and green spaces increased the economic activity in the area. It found that being directly adjacent to such parks added a 5 to 7 per cent premium to house prices, and that most properties within two blocks were priced more highly than equivalent properties that were in the same market area but further away.

**Minneapolis Park System, USA**  
2,630 hectares

**Construction period**  
1883 onwards

# Add real estate value

## Background

Minneapolis in the late nineteenth century was a rapidly expanding, bustling railroad town. The Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners was established in 1883 by popular referendum.

HWS Cleveland, a visionary landscape architect, drew up a masterplan for the entire park system. This was based on parks that lined the Mississippi and incorporated many of the existing bodies of water in the valley. He proposed a series of individual parks to be linked by a series of boulevards and ornamental avenues – now known as parkways. Cleveland's plan directed the acquisition of land that at the time was still well outside the built area of the city.

The Minneapolis Park System is now a great example of the long-term planning and design of a high-quality green space network that has added considerable real estate value.

## Planning and design

The system is now a connected network of public spaces that includes many miles of walking and cycling trails, parks, gardens, nature reserves, play areas, recreation areas, beaches, lakes and parkways, and a range of historic properties. The strategy has been to develop Cleveland's original vision and maintain very high levels of maintenance, which is funded directly by a distinct city tax.

Most recently this has involved the complete redevelopment of much of the Mississippi waterfront, which was becoming available thanks to changes in the city's industrial base. The waterfront masterplan includes a continuous series of riverside parks, walkways and picnic areas. This will provide a structure for the commercial and residential development along the river. Based on previous experience of this type of riverside development, the financial plan envisages that 5 dollars of private investment will be primed for every 1 dollar of public investment.

## Outcomes

The Minneapolis Park System is widely recognised as one of the city's best assets. Despite being in a city region of only one million people, the park system receives over 15 million visits each year. 5 per cent of the city's tax base is spent on parks and open spaces. City councillors, officers and citizens recognise that property values, economic vitality and tax receipts depend on a high-quality public space system.

A study completed by the parks and public works commission found that there was 'overwhelming evidence that well-designed and carefully integrated parks and public works projects maintain and enhance the long-term tax base of neighbourhoods while improving their quality of life'. It also found that those areas sustaining the highest property values tended to be adjacent to well-connected parks with a range of community resources. Areas that suffered from decline included only poorly connected parks (Hopkins 2001).

## Design

HWS Cleveland

## Partners and clients

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

The board was given wide-ranging powers to issue bonds, levy taxes and own or demolish property. It is still the main body that plans and manages the park system in the city, and its board members are still directly elected.



### Lessons learnt

- Areas that are experiencing growth should put in place green space strategies to ensure that green assets are protected as development occurs. This is especially important in urban areas that have significant waterfront areas
- A well-designed, high-quality, connected public realm system can raise property values, enhance economic vitality and increase the tax base. In areas that lack high-quality amenities, public investment in parks should be co-ordinated to protect property values and to prime private investment
- The network of linked spaces with different characters and functions gives Minneapolis's public space a much greater value than the individual components
- A focused management body with an independent secure source of income allows for the long-term creation of high-quality green space systems.

### References

[www.minneapolisparks.org](http://www.minneapolisparks.org)

Garvin, A (1995) *The American city: what works, what doesn't*

Hopkins, J (2001) *Urban space: form, funding and function*, London, LDA

Tate, A (2001) *Great city parks*, London, Spon Press



Parks, squares and gardens provide a fundamentally different sensory experience from harder spaces. Their role in connecting people with nature and providing space for relaxation and play is vital for healthy urban living

### The value of public space

In 2004, CABI Space published *The value of public space*, a collation of research that highlighted a wide range of benefits that parks and green spaces can offer:

- Access to nature promotes lower blood pressure, reduces stress and improves mental well-being
- Children develop balance and co-ordination faster when they have woodland rather than just playgrounds to play in
- Community gardens and city farms increase social inclusion
- A six-fold increase in high-quality public space in Copenhagen led to large increases in bicycle travel and in the use of public spaces
- A Merseyside study showed how the presence of trees and green spaces can make places pleasantly cooler in summer and reduce surface water run-off
- A study of urban gardens in Sheffield found almost as many plant species as the total number of species native to Britain
- Attractive green transport corridors reduce stress and encourage alternative means of transport.

Further information can be found in *The value of public space* (CABI Space 2004)

# What can we learn from past failures?

Five main reasons given by the public for not visiting urban parks:

- Lack of or poor condition of facilities
- Undesirable users
- Concerns about dogs and dog mess
- Safety and security
- Environmental problems such as litter and vandalism.

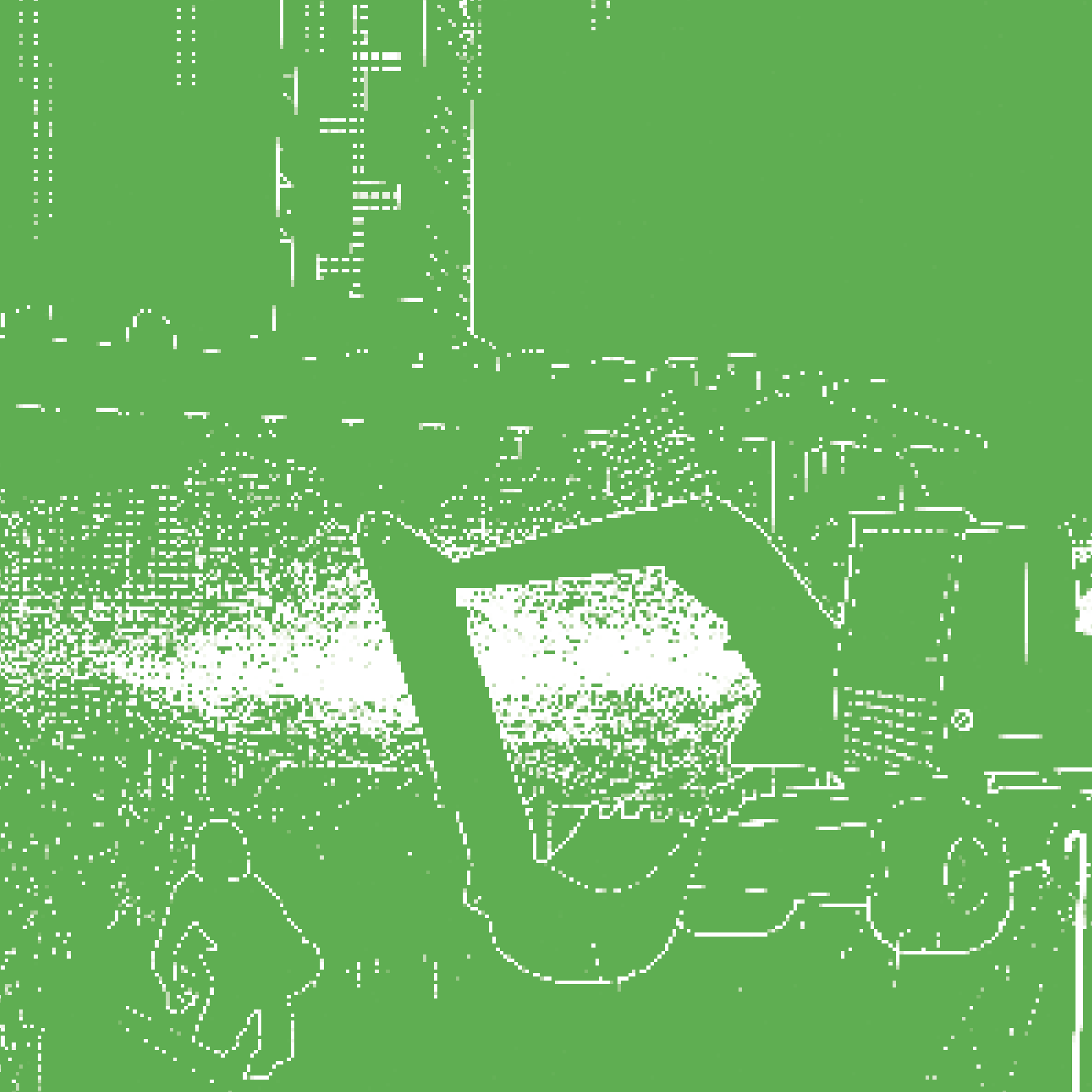
*Improving urban parks, play areas and green spaces* (DTLR 2002)



Many of the UK's 27,000 urban public parks suffered from a steady decline in quality during the last decades of the twentieth century. *The public parks assessment*<sup>4</sup> showed that falling local authority budgets were the principal culprit, representing an estimated cumulative under-investment of £1.3 billion between 1979/80 and 1999/2000. This led to the closure of facilities such as cafés and toilets, a reduction in policing and management (much of which used to be carried out by park keepers) and the creation of banal, low-maintenance landscapes. The assessment found that 39 per cent of the stock of local authority managed open space had declined in quality. Only 18 per cent of local authorities reported that their stock was in good condition.

The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce<sup>5</sup> reported that poor-quality parks and green spaces had left many communities with depressing, poorly used, inaccessible and often dangerous spaces that could drag a whole neighbourhood down.

Poor provision of facilities is one of the five main reasons the public doesn't visit parks



# Green spaces in areas undergoing major change



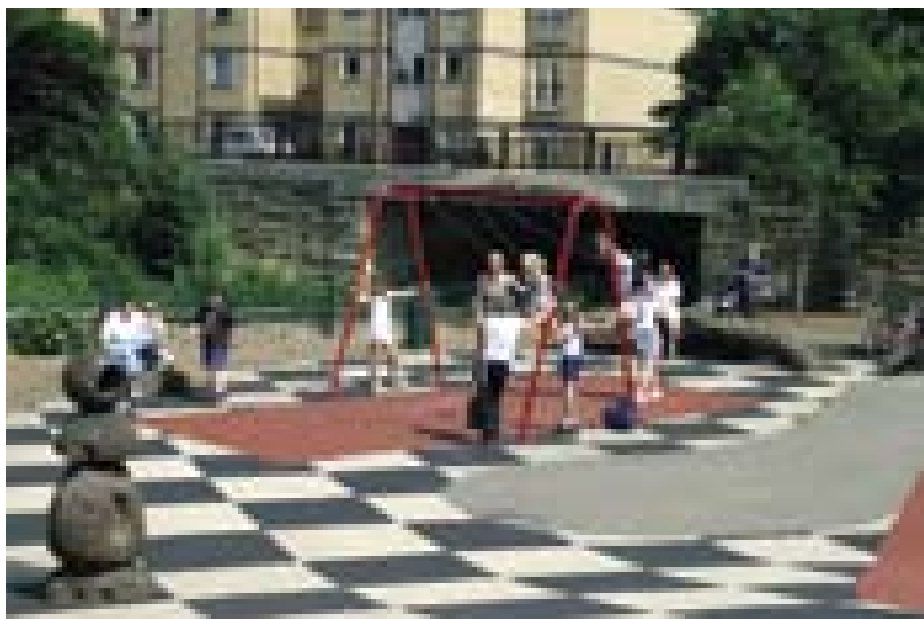
## Introduction

Many of the parks, domestic gardens, marshes, woodlands, tree-lined streets, cemeteries, squares, sports fields, allotments, green corridors, play areas and farms that will make up the green infrastructure are already around us. These will provide the basis for a multi-functional green mosaic with an amazing variety of characters, functions, scales and settings. In many places the need is not to create a great deal of new green space, but to make the most of what already exists. The emphasis should be on quality rather than quantity,

distinctiveness rather than uniformity, connection rather than isolation, function rather than uselessness, and conviviality rather than exclusiveness.

The time to start creating new and regenerated parks, squares and gardens is at the very beginning of the process of change, when good examples can stand as evidence of the best that can be achieved. That is likely to be an essential step in building community cohesion and improving an area's image.

The Green Flag Award, the national standard for parks and green spaces, has been awarded to Mowbray Park in the North East of England for five consecutive years. The park was created for the well-being and recreation of the residents and this is still the priority today





## The challenges of housing growth

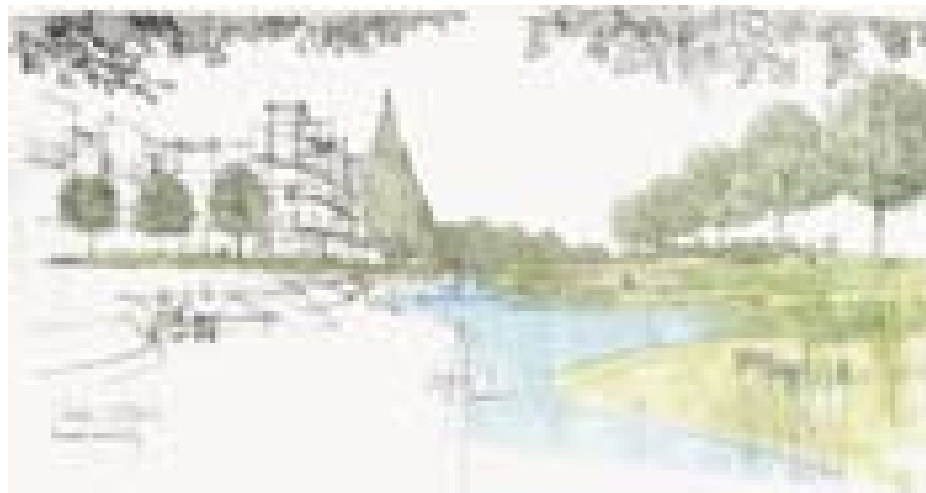


The growth areas and key growth locations (ODPM 2004)

The Barker Review<sup>6</sup> points to serious problems within the housing market. Housing demand is increasing relative to supply, and much of the new housing, including its private and public space, is not as good as the consumer should expect. This view was supported by a CABI *Housing audit*<sup>7</sup> of a 100 schemes completed by volume house builders between 2001 and 2003, which found that 83 of the schemes were average or poor.

This work prompted the publication of CABI's *The home buyer's guide*,<sup>8</sup> which also emphasised that the quality of the outdoor space around a home is as important as its location and internal design.

The government's sustainable communities plan accelerates growth in the four growth areas: Thames Gateway, London–Stansted–Cambridge–Peterborough corridor, Ashford,



Plans for the growth of Ashford include a high quality network of green and blue spaces

and Milton Keynes–South Midlands. Around one million new homes are planned to be built by 2016<sup>9</sup> in London and the South East alone. The areas of housing demand are subject to particularly acute social, economic and environmental pressures. Existing communities have to integrate with new neighbourhoods and cope with the additional pressure on public services, roads and infrastructure. A common fear is that new development may destroy much of what is valued. A poor image, poorly designed new buildings and contaminated land can undermine the chances that new development will be of a high standard. As buildings and roads are built, there may be a greater risk of flood, valuable habitats may come under threat and pollution may increase. The government is encouraging higher-density development in the growth areas

– which needs to be matched by an increase in the quality and range of green spaces available to new communities.

However, there exist unique challenges facing those responsible for delivering new and expanded communities. Firstly, there are those challenges relating to the provision and creation of good-quality green spaces in these areas, such as competing demands on land or lack of skilled professionals to design and care for green spaces. Secondly, there are challenges created by growth itself: higher housing density, flood control, etc. In these cases green spaces can help overcome challenges by providing a flexible resource that can provide recreational space and/or form flood plains. It is clear that green spaces must perform a range of functions in meeting the needs of local communities.

## Summary of key challenges and responses - housing growth areas

Key challenge	Response	Case study
Area suffers from poor image	Develop innovative and inspiring landscape and public realm projects to provide a unique selling point	Park Central p26
Area lacks green space	Create a hierarchy of spaces that achieve all of the design qualities	Parque de la Solidaridad p68
Severed communities	Use green spaces to link communities and bridge barriers	Parque de la Solidaridad p68
Creating new places that are distinctive	Make the most of heritage and landscape assets	Landschaftspark p40
Large areas of contaminated land	Use planting in cleaning and reusing land	Holyhead Copse p92
Lack of integration between different strategies	Develop a regional or sub-regional strategy with the role of green space at its heart	South Essex Green Grid Strategy p48
Lack of cultural vitality	Integrate cultural approaches to urban regeneration into green space design and management	Gunpowder Park p80
Lack of community trust in creating new development	Treat great new parks and gardens as the green dividend for existing communities	Greater Ashford Development Framework p44
Creating diversity and managing the need to develop	Use innovative planning techniques to create diverse, pleasant neighbourhoods	Greenwich Peninsula p20
Managing phased development	Develop the park as the first stage of development	Regent's Park p76
Creating long-term value	Create a hierarchy of spaces that achieve the design qualities	Minneapolis Park System p8
Lack of green space management skills	Use green space for training	St. Peter's Ward p28
Managing uncertainty in development	Make use of green spaces and buildings for temporary or interim uses	Westerpark District p64
Dealing with flooding and environmental impact	Integrate flood storage and sustainability principles into green space design	Quaggy River Catchment p60
Creating higher-density housing	Include a range of private, communal and public spaces	Malmö Bo01 p18

**Malmö Bo01, Sweden**  
30 hectares

**Construction period**  
Ended 2001

# Create a menu of green measures

## Background

Malmö is a regional capital of a quarter of a million inhabitants. A recession in shipbuilding in the 1970s hit the city hard, and left a ribbon of derelict and abandoned docks. Bo01 – The City of Tomorrow was the city's response to trigger regeneration in the area of Västra Hamnen as a model for sustainable development. Once completed, the entire district will contain over 1,000 homes and a mix of retail, commercial and community uses and be an exemplar of sustainable development.

## Planning and design

A quality programme was developed in consultation with developers to define common environmental standards for all developers and builders as well as achieving the city's high aspirations for the site. Like design codes in the UK, these covered general urban form and the character and qualities of public spaces, streets, building design and building services. However, they also included detailed coding on the courtyards and green spaces. Because of the density of the environment, most homes are flats with patios surrounding a communal courtyard. These form a network that complements a central park and a series of smaller play areas.

## Outcomes

All the homes have been sold or rented, proving that this type of development is attractive to a significant market. The challenge will be to transfer the high ecological standards to lower-cost homes or existing building stock. The integration of green space within the development is of the highest quality and offers a rich tapestry of different habitats and characters.

The spaces work socially too – with a clear distinction between public space, communal gardens and private patios. The developers paid for the trees and for their preparation. Their care had to be included in the service charges for the buildings, ensuring that extra care was taken to improve their chances of flourishing.

## Design coding

The green space codes are based on a system of points. Each architect and developer can choose from a menu of green measures in order to reach a minimum score. Greener measures such as planting a tree receive more points than planting a square metre of grass. This has encouraged many green measures to be adopted, but allowed for diversity and creativity. Examples of codes include:

- Each courtyard to have a distinct identity of its own with special biotopes and a range of plants
- At least one large tree per courtyard. Large trees were secured by developers as soon as planting started, to ensure they were well established when the buildings were completed. Rules on tree selection ensure a variety of ages and types
- The patios facing the courtyard should also be distinctly delimited. There should be various clearly distinguishable zones: public (street, lane, piazza), semi-public (communal courtyard space), semi-private (around the entrance) and private (patio).

## Design

Over 20 different architecture firms were involved in phase 1 (over 500 homes)

## Partners and clients

18 different property developers are working with Malmö city council and the Bo01 project team

### Lessons learnt

- Design codes can offer a way of ensuring that a high level of sustainability and quality green spaces are created in new development, while still allowing architects, planners and developers a measure of flexibility and creativity
- Courtyards need to be carefully designed to ensure that they provide significant environmental benefits but also are successful places
- The integration of a social and environmental approach within the courtyards means that vegetation provides both ecological benefits as well as screening private areas from more public areas
- An environmentally focused infrastructure can be successfully integrated into a market-led development process.



### References

Lewis, S (2005) *Front to back: a design agenda for urban housing*, London, Elsevier  
[www.ekostaden.com](http://www.ekostaden.com)

**Greenwich Peninsula, London**  
121 hectares

**Construction period**  
Ongoing

# Approach design ecologically

## Background

First recorded in 918 AD as an area of marshland, Greenwich Peninsula became an established industrial centre as a site for manufacturing, munitions and chemicals works. For nearly 100 years, the site acted as home for one of Europe's largest gasworks. As a result of industrial decline and site contamination, the area became predominantly derelict by the mid-1980s.

In 1996 British Gas commissioned Richard Rogers Partnership (RRP) to prepare a masterplan for the area, and in 1997, on the sale of the site to English Partnerships and through a competition, a consortium led by RRP was successful in securing the commission to redesign the area as a new model development for the millennium celebrations.

Greenwich Peninsula is now an exemplar of landscape design as urban structure for a new community and urban quarter. Over a sixth of the site has been dedicated to parkland and public open space. Central Park, Ecology Park and Southern Park provide an interconnected and balanced network of routes and green spaces within a high-density residentially led development.

## Planning and design

The landscape structure of the masterplan reflects the importance of the natural environment and conceives three interconnected parks of individual identity. Central Park, Southern Park and Ecology Park each have their own distinct form and function.

Central Park was inspired by its counterpart in New York and acts as a formal park spine at the heart of development and focus of the new community. In contrast, Southern Park's design is inspired by traditional park design and acts as the 'village green' for the Greenwich Millennium Village. Ecology Park acts as a counterpoint to both and builds on and recreates elements of the Peninsula's historic marshland.

Two connected lakes and seven different environments have been tailored to certain sets of wildlife.

Together these city parks create an integrated and sustainable environment. The layout of the streets and squares in the Millennium Village provides a series of green corridors that encourage biodiversity and connect in with the wider movement system.

## Outcomes

Although English Partnerships' work at Greenwich Peninsula is expected to continue for several years, the scheme has already delivered over 12 kilometres of pedestrian and cycle ways and more than 12,000 trees, and over 60,000 shrubs have been planted. Advanced nursery stock was used to create a strong impression from the outset and establish park maturity.

Early delivery of parks and green infrastructure prior to development further promoted Central, Southern and Ecology Parks beyond their function as green space to marketing and branding tools for investment.

## Design

Richard Rogers Partnership, W S Atkins,  
Desvigne + Dalnoky, Nicholas Pearson  
Associates, Battle McCarthy

## Partners and clients

English Partnerships

The loss of a major brownfield site that had been occupied by a rich ecosystem was mitigated by the creation of the park system and low-impact housing schemes.

Development at Greenwich Peninsula is a showcase of best practice for urban renewal and sustainable development. To this end, its parks do not fall short of the aspiration, and provide an integrated and connected network of complementary urban green spaces.

### Lessons learnt

- Parks and squares can help to connect areas into the wider urban fabric prior to completion, or even at the beginning of building work
- A range of complementary but different spaces will add to the range of experiences available to residents, workers and visitors
- An ecological approach to landscape design can be the basis for new development. This approach has a strong resonance with the public and can also be used for branding and promotion.



### References

[www.englishpartnerships.co.uk](http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk)  
[www.greenwich-village.co.uk](http://www.greenwich-village.co.uk)





## The challenges of low housing demand



Around one home in 20 in England is in an area of low demand.<sup>10</sup>

The government's sustainable communities plan focuses on the estimated one million homes in parts of the North and Midlands that are suffering from low demand and abandonment. These tend to be in peripheral housing estates, within the inner core of large metropolitan areas, or in the centres of old industrial towns. Nine market renewal pathfinders have been established to organise action programmes in the areas worst affected: Birmingham and Sandwell, East Lancashire, Hull and East Riding, Manchester and Salford, Merseyside, Newcastle and Gateshead, North Staffordshire, Oldham and Rochdale, and South Yorkshire.

In areas where there is low demand for housing, a lack of housing choice combines with social and economic deprivation. The result can be that people leave, houses are abandoned and areas become run-down. The people who remain may feel that regeneration will not take account of their needs. Polluted land, derelict buildings and empty plots all discourage transformation. A negative image and a lack of confidence put off investors.

Local authorities in market renewal pathfinders (ODPM 2003)

## Green spaces: assets or liabilities?

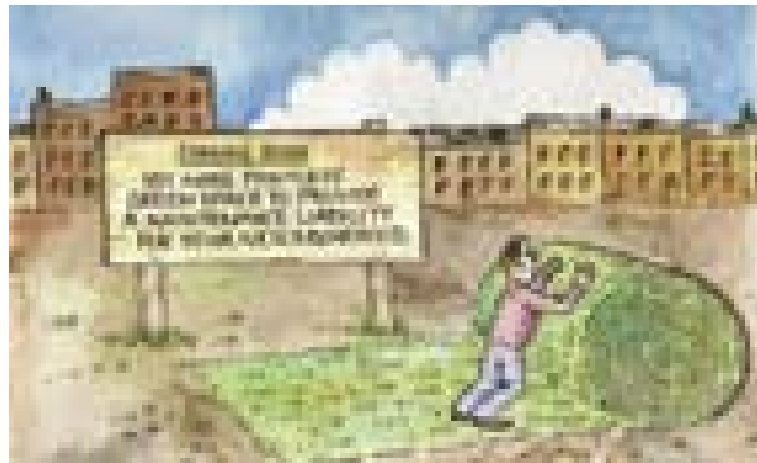
A patchwork of unsuccessful green spaces is often one symptom of the area's problems. New parks, gardens and other green spaces may have been created in the past merely because this seemed an easy way of making use of spare land. The cost of maintaining such spaces may create an intolerable financial burden, and they may become run-down and underused. This, in turn, can lead to vandalism, anti-social behaviour and more serious crime, and, coupled with a lack of social vitality, imposes a severe test of the robustness of the public realm.

The result can be a spiral of decline. Private investment, personal commitment and community pride

are increasingly eroded. In contrast, however, developing a high-quality public realm can be a powerful means of transforming the image of a depressed area and reducing deprivation. It is important, though, not to assume that simply creating a new park will solve the question of what to do with underused land. Unless the creation of the park is part of a wider green space strategy, and has a secure source of revenue funding, it is quite likely to become underused and run-down. Maintaining a new park or amenity green space will put a considerable financial burden on the local authority or other organisation responsible, which may simply not be able to afford it.



CABI has published guidance on early lessons from the work that the market renewal pathfinders have completed to date



## Summary of key challenges and responses - low demand areas

Key challenges	Response	Case study
Whole area suffers from poor image	Develop innovative and inspiring landscape and public realm projects to provide a unique selling point	Park Central p26
Housing areas lack green space	Create a hierarchy of high-quality spaces to form centres of each neighbourhood, aiming to achieve all the design qualities	St Peter's Ward p28
Large amounts of poorly designed and managed green space	Remodel green space to improve its design quality	Park Central p26
Vacant lots in a depopulated urban area	Create community-based productive interim uses	Detroit, Michigan p32
Pressure to undertake piecemeal demolition	Develop a clear vision of the quality of space that will be created through clearance	St Peter's Ward p28
Derelict industrial infrastructure	Make the most of heritage by retaining former industrial structures as centrepieces or venues in green spaces	Landschaftspark p40
Large areas of contaminated land	Employ low-cost remediation techniques such as planting	Holyhead Copse p92
Lack of integration between different strategies	Develop a regional or sub-regional strategy with the role of green space at its heart	Regional Park and the Panopticons project p72
Lack of cultural vitality	Integrate cultural approaches to urban regeneration into green space design and management	Gunpowder Park p80
Lack of community cohesion or trust in regeneration efforts	Use green space as a means of creating social vitality and community capital	Green Streets p56
Lack of community trust in regeneration efforts	Design and carry out an effective involvement process	Southey Owlerton p46
Low land values	Raise land values by investing in high-quality public realm early in the regeneration process	Minneapolis Park System p8
Lack of economic vitality	Make use of green spaces and vacant buildings for temporary uses	Detroit, Michigan p32
Low levels of design aspiration	Use design panels and provide design training	Southey Owlerton p46
Lack of green space management skills	Use green space in training programmes	St Peter's Ward p28

**Park Central, Attwood Green,  
Birmingham**  
21 hectares

**Construction period**  
2002–10

# Start with the park

## Background

A tight network of terraced housing, local shops and services dominated the area prior to the Second World War. Following extensive bomb damage, it was cleared and replaced by a series of modernist social housing blocks, isolated in large areas of formless public open space. Neither the buildings nor the open space did anything to make strong townscape. The steep slope that ran across the area included an under-used park. These areas were neither overlooked nor well enclosed, and they received minimal management.

Birmingham City Council transferred the housing stock to the Optima Community Association, which formed a partnership to redevelop the site with the developers and housebuilders Crest Nicholson.

The Park Central project shows how careful consideration of the relationship between the buildings and the green space of a run-down and deprived area can form the centrepiece for its regeneration. The design aims to create a place that meets Birmingham City Council's wider ambitions to attract a wide range of people back to live in the inner city.

## Planning and design

Gardner Stewart Architects won a competition to create a masterplan for the site. With Derek Lovejoy Partnership and the Landscape Practice Partnership at Birmingham City Council, they developed a mixed-use scheme that forges a union between the buildings and the green space to create strong townscape. The park now forms the core of the new masterplan.

The buildings surrounding the park include living spaces with large windows and balconies, helping to overlook all areas. This is reinforced by measures such as all ground-floor units surrounding the park having individual front doors on to the parkside.

The park is divided into a series of active and quiet areas that include a range of different planting zones.

At the centre of the park will be the community hub, containing a range of local services with residential accommodation above and enjoying views across the park. The remainder of the site will be a mixed-use development with a range of residential tenures and types. Each house or flat has access to a private green space – either a back garden or a large balcony or patio. In most of the higher-density housing units there is access to a communal green courtyard in the centre of each perimeter block, with access limited to surrounding residents.

Maintenance and management of the park will also be much improved. Birmingham City Council will continue to manage it and will provide a permanent on-site park warden.

## Design

Gardner Stewart Architects, Derek Lovejoy Partnership and the Landscape Practice Partnership, Couch Perry & Wilkes Services Consultants, Bullens Highway Consultants, Curtins Structural Engineers

## Partners

Birmingham City Council, Optima Housing Association, Crest Nicholson

### Lessons learnt

- The physical relationship between buildings and an urban park is critical to its success. Public spaces should be well overlooked by surrounding development
- Mixed-use developments can help to create different kinds of activity in the public realm throughout the day
- It is important to provide homes with access to high-quality private spaces as well as public spaces. In areas of high-density development, semi-private communal spaces should also be considered. Design plays a large part in whether a space feels private, communal or public
- It is important to provide many different activity zones within parks for both active and passive uses, in order to encourage use by as diverse a range of people as possible.



### References

[www.optima.org.uk](http://www.optima.org.uk)  
[www.crestnicholson.com](http://www.crestnicholson.com)  
[www.gardnerstewartarchitects.com](http://www.gardnerstewartarchitects.com)

**St Peter's Ward,  
Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside,**  
0.13 hectares

**Construction period**  
2003–04

# Be seen on the green

## Background

Ashton has a large number of small terraced properties, many in a poor structural condition and experiencing high turnover of residents and other characteristics of housing for which there is little demand. The Ashton Renewal Area was set up in 1996 to tackle social, economic and housing problems. The Doorstep Green was part of a project within the renewal area including the demolition of 252 terraced houses and replacement by 102 larger homes. These were designed to create a wider mix of housing sizes and tenures. As part of the consultation, the residents emphasised the need for a small green space in the heart of their community. This was provided for in the masterplan.

St Peter's, the most deprived ward in Tameside, is one of the 4 per cent most deprived nationally, with a poor environment and lack of green space. Joy-riding and speeding were common. The demolition of houses had caused additional problems, and some of the few long-standing members of the community had moved away.

## Planning and design

The local partnership recruited a consultancy to run a series of workshops with local businesses, community groups and residents who would live adjacent to the site to develop a vision and design brief.

Around the same time the site was transferred to St Peter's Partnership under a 999-year lease. The partnership also created a trading arm to maintain the

green and develop public realm management skills and employment opportunities.

The space has been designed so that existing and new homes and calmed HomeZone streets overlook it; the living rooms of the new housing are placed at the front, on the first floor. A corner shop looks out on to the green.

The green has been designed as a space where all local people feel welcome. The community wanted an attractive space that was easy to maintain, whose design would discourage anti-social behaviour. They wanted improved street lighting to reduce the fear of crime and they insisted that robust materials be used in the space.

The design creates a series of small areas linked by a path. Two of these support creative play, while two seating areas are laid out to encourage conversation. One area is slightly larger, to accommodate local events. Local people worked with artists to design the many distinctive pieces of artwork.

## Outcomes

The green has suffered minimal vandalism. The space has become the focal point of the community, and is well used, especially by adults with younger children.

The associated skills and employment project, Greenscape, has trained six local long-term unemployed

## Design

Triangle Architects and Eventus  
community engagement specialists

## Partners

St Peter's Partnership, Tameside Metropolitan Borough  
Council, the Countryside Agency, Groundwork  
Landscapes, West Pennine Housing Association

people in public space management, and has provided a year's employment as a bridge to longer-term job opportunities. Greenscape now has a number of other maintenance contracts and will use the profits from these to provide longer-term maintenance for the green.

The success of the green has raised the profile of the area and has demonstrated to local communities that the local regeneration organisations can make change happen.

## Lessons learnt

- The success of the space is due to the way it is overlooked and to the high degree of community involvement in the process of designing and building it. The community has a real sense of ownership of the green
- Creating and funding the space has depended on partnerships between the local authority, a housing association, government agencies and local residents
- The green has provided a means of binding together the old and new communities.



The seating area encourages conversation between residents of all ages

The green provides innovative play spaces for children and is well overlooked by surrounding homes

## References

[www.tameside.gov.uk](http://www.tameside.gov.uk)  
[www.triangle-architects.ltd.uk](http://www.triangle-architects.ltd.uk)  
[www.eventus.org.uk](http://www.eventus.org.uk)

# Raising development value through temporary uses

A common challenge facing decision-makers in areas of housing growth and low demand is rapidly changing social or market conditions, coupled with the need to produce plans that stretch many years ahead. Parks, woodlands and gardens can function effectively as an interim use for land that might be brought back into use in the future. In many areas trees can be planted well in advance of new development to create an attractive and distinctive environment for residents when they move in. For example, a well-

designed structure of trees in an area on the urban fringe could become the centrepiece of a new urban development 10, 20 or 50 years later. Productive uses, such as allotments, farms or providing crops for biomass energy generation, can provide an effective function for some derelict or unused sites. As land values rise or population pressure increases, land can be developed for housing, while retaining the main elements of the green infrastructure.



Biomass offers a productive use of land





### Green spaces in areas undergoing major change: Watch points

- Much of the green infrastructure is already around us
- The need is to make the most of what green space already exists
- Good quality green space improves the image of an area
- Higher-density development needs to be matched by an increase in the quality and range of green spaces
- A high-quality public realm is a powerful means of transforming the image of a depressed area
- Well-designed green space can become the centrepiece of future urban developments.

**Detroit, Michigan, USA**  
Various locations

**Construction period**  
Ongoing

# Use abandoned plots

## Background

In central districts of several North American cities, the decline of industry, dominance of the car, lack of planning controls and flight to the suburbs have left an urban landscape dominated by large areas of vacant lots and shells of buildings. No American city has experienced such an extreme downturn as Detroit. Once the booming centre of global car production, Detroit's population has fallen from nearly two million in the 1950s to less than one million today. The city now has 40,000 vacant lots, making up around a third of its area.

Visitors to inner Detroit are as likely to see vacant lots and empty houses as occupied buildings. The city has been ravaged by depopulation and economic deprivation. Having experienced the failure of wide-scale demolition and top-down, capital-intensive renewal programmes to reverse the decline, local communities have responded radically by reclaiming a series of lots for a range of interim uses, including urban farming.

## Planning and design

The city's planning department desperately wanted to stabilise the decline and revitalise the downtown area. Between 1970 and 2000, over 150,000 buildings were demolished, and only 3,000 were built. Large commercial developments were built, including the Renaissance Centre, two stadiums and a casino, but the decline continued. Suburban flight continued unabated, with 300,000 homes built outside the city centre between 1970 and 2000.

Community groups have used areas of the city for a range of small, community-based activities, including urban farming. So far they have converted seven hectares of unused land into more than 40 community gardens and microfarms. These yield over six tonnes of produce a year, including hay, alfalfa, honey, eggs, milk, beef, flowers, vegetables and herbs. Much of it is produced by volunteers and students, and sold on to other community organisations such as soup kitchens. Abandoned buildings have been converted into community centres, cafés, canneries and greenhouses.

## Outcomes

The urban farming movement in Detroit has inspired community activists in other North American cities to follow similar approaches. In Philadelphia and Chicago urban farms producing flowers and vegetables for restaurants and florists regularly produce a profit. Customers return organic waste to the farm to be composted.

Urban agriculture has inspired designers to create mobile modular storage/office/educational space specifically geared towards urban farms.

None of the farms in Detroit are yet profitable, but the aim of these projects is to build a sense of community and create productive use from vacant land.

**Design**

N/A

**Partners**

Community and student groups

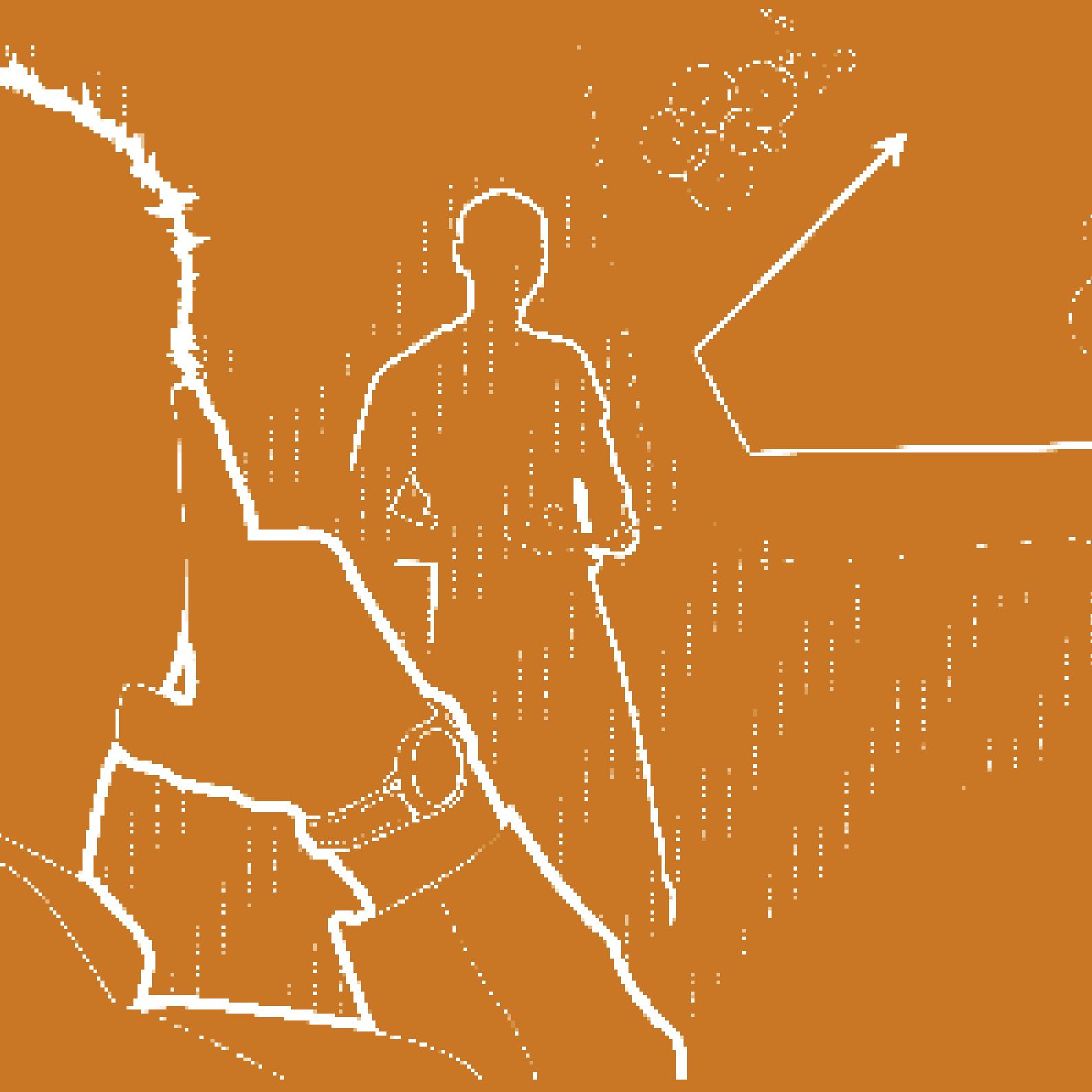
**Lessons learnt**

- Derelict land in urban areas can be used productively. This can create a focus for rebuilding deprived communities, provide low-cost, healthy food, and develop skills and education
- Urban agriculture can be a productive interim use for empty plots that might otherwise turn into dumping grounds. As neighbourhoods are regenerated, land values will increase and sites will be redeveloped.

Detroit's community gardens and microfarms provide a valuable alternative to derelict sites

**References**

[www.sustainabledetroit.org](http://www.sustainabledetroit.org)  
[www.greeningofdetroit.org](http://www.greeningofdetroit.org)  
[www.detroitgreenmap.org](http://www.detroitgreenmap.org)



# Planning green infrastructure

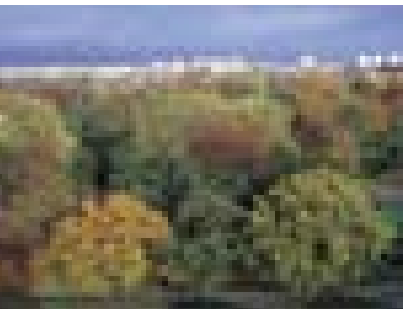


## Green infrastructure: from national to local



‘Green infrastructure is the sub-regional network of protected sites, nature reserves, green spaces and greenway linkages. Green infrastructure should provide for multi-functional use...it should also operate at all spatial scales from urban centres through to open countryside.’

*Biodiversity by design (TCPA 2004)*



‘Functional green infrastructure is needed to create a positive sense of place, provide environmental protection for local communities and enhance the quality of life of those who live and work there.’

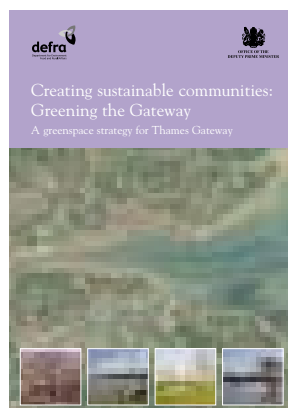
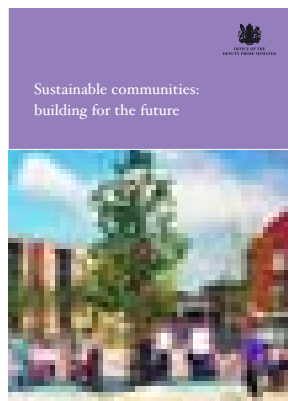
*Creating sustainable communities:  
greening the gateway (ODPM 2004)*

Green infrastructure – a linked network of multi-functional green spaces – provides the basis for delivering sustainable development and for any framework that is intended to guide and enable change. The green infrastructure is a key to healthier lifestyles, sustainable urban drainage and lifelong learning, providing space for relaxation, encouraging more sustainable transport and promoting economic development. Dynamic natural processes are a key to environmental protection and enhancement.

### Planning green infrastructure

Green infrastructure must be planned in partnership with stakeholders in the fields of health, education, environment, nature conservation, heritage, transport, the utilities, the private sector and the community, who depend on getting the natural and built environment right. Reforms to the statutory planning system mean that it is best placed to integrate these different policy areas and to provide a holistic regional, sub-regional, local and site-specific framework for delivery.

# Government policy



ODPM has published a range of documents focused on the delivery of prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities for the 21st century, places where people want to live, that promote opportunity and a better quality of life for all

The government's 2003 sustainable communities plan<sup>1</sup> identifies two key challenges: stabilising and reversing social and economic decline in communities that are experiencing low demand for housing; and creating successful and sustainable neighbourhoods in areas of high demand and population growth. The document sets out a long-term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities, including the aim of making neighbourhoods, towns and cities more liveable. It recognises the importance of the wide range of different types of green space.

In early 2005 ODPM published *Sustainable communities: people, places, prosperity* – a five-year plan focused on delivering sustainable communities. The plan reiterates the ambition to sustain the improvements in the quality of parks and green spaces. ODPM and Home Office funding streams will be streamlined into the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, worth £660 million. The plan includes a series of other actions, including new powers for local authorities to improve management and extend more powers to local people. ODPM's *Creating sustainable communities: greening the gateway* (2004)<sup>11</sup> describes the need for a network of green infrastructure as the basis of successful and sustainable development

in the Thames Gateway. Its non-statutory companion implementation plan<sup>12</sup> (2005) sets out the delivery framework, clarifying the roles of different partners and explaining where the funding will come from.

The primary planning policy relating to green space is planning policy guidance 17 (PPG17).<sup>13</sup> PPG17 aims to deliver networks of accessible, high-quality open spaces and sport and recreation facilities with an appropriate balance between providing new spaces and enhancing existing provision. The other main policy and guidance documents are noted in the appendix.

PPG17 encourages planners to consider a wide range of types of open space. These include:

- Parks and gardens
- Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces
- Green corridors
- Outdoor sports facilities (with natural or artificial surfaces)
- Amenity green space (mostly in housing areas)
- Productive urban green spaces
- Burial sites
- Green urban/rural fringe
- Civic space.

## Can you have too much green space?

Pressure on land in areas of housing growth is acute and new developments are being built to relatively high densities. Each green space must therefore justify its use of valuable land. The example of Georgian squares shows how much a well-designed, relatively small space can contribute in an urban setting.

Many of the high-rise developments of the 1960s provided for a large amount of amenity green space around densely built housing blocks. Many of these lacked any clear function and offered little value to local people. In some cases these areas have become characterised by high rates of vandalism, crime and fear.

In areas of low housing demand, there may also be more open space than can be effectively managed. Here the challenge is to find appropriate uses and management regimes, perhaps taking the opportunity to create semi-natural space or to make the land both functional and productive.

In areas of low demand it is vital to take a strategic approach to space and housing density. Simply demolishing housing and grassing over the gaps will result in non-functional green spaces that are expensive to maintain and may well attract anti-social behaviour.





## The regional dimension



Consultation events played an important part in the Greater Ashford Development Framework



Regional and sub-regional green space planning allows for cross-border integration and links with regional spatial strategies that will govern all elements of sustainable development over the next 15 to 20 years. All the growth areas and low demand areas are organised on a sub-regional basis. Strategic green space frameworks should influence the preparation of regional spatial strategies, local development frameworks and documents, and site-specific plans.

The overall Strategic Framework for the South Essex Green Grid identifies four types of strategic corridors. These are designed to link a range of high-quality parks and open spaces, landmarks, views and other important destinations

**Landschaftspark, Duisburg-Nord,  
Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany**  
230 hectares

**Construction period**  
1991–2002

# Celebrate industrial heritage

## Background

After 300 years of coal mining and steel production, the Ruhr Valley experienced substantial economic decline, low rates of economic development, relatively high unemployment, out-migration of skilled labour, and a declining tax base. Many large areas of the region are contaminated and costly to redevelop, despite low land values.

The Landschaftspark (Landscape Park) at Duisburg-Nord is an inspiring response to widespread industrial decline and related socio-economic problems. The Landschaftspark is the largest urban park to have been created in Western Europe since the Second World War.

## Planning and design

At over 70 kilometres long and covering over 300 square kilometres of brownfield land, the Emscher Regional Park was established in 1989 as a co-ordinated spatial strategy. The initiative has included over 120 social, economic and physical projects, of which the Landschaftspark was one of the most significant. Others included 2,500 new and refurbished homes, an innovation centre for self-build housing initiatives, and social initiatives including training.

The landscape design has combined a celebration of industrial heritage with a highly accessible, usable and beautiful urban park. The strategy allows natural processes of growth and decay to occur with minimal intervention.

Existing industrial structures have been retained for a range of uses, including employment, leisure and cultural events. This includes using the gasholder as a scuba-diving school, parts of the former ore-bunkers as climbing walls and the former central power station as a performance space. A city farm has also been created. Ruderal vegetation on industrial soils, including grasses, wildflowers, shrubs and trees, is allowed to grow over much of the site, with a low level of maintenance. Only the most contaminated areas of soil were removed or covered, the remainder being left as it was found and stabilised. This results in a challenging aesthetic for those used to the tradition of manicured and highly man-made urban parks. But it successfully creates a range of different and beautiful environments with very low maintenance costs.

The improvement of the Emscher River has allowed it to provide the park's water, and a wind turbine provides the energy to pump and oxygenate it.

A series of themed trails and cycleways allow visitors to explore and understand the site. Multi-level access is provided by way of bridges and walkways and through doorways cut into bunkers and other structures. Old railway tracks have become paths into and out of the site.

## Design

Latz + Partner, Latz-Riehl-Schulz, G Lipkowsky

## Partners

IBA (Internationale Bauausstellung), LEG NRW in trust for the Duisburg city council, EmscherGenossenschaft Essen, KVR Essen and a range of community groups including the IG Nordpark and the Society for industrial Culture

## Outcomes

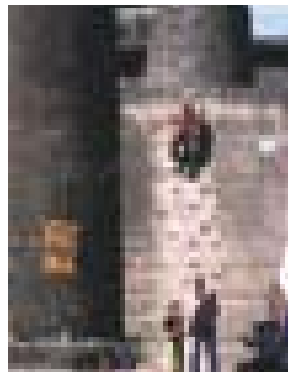
The park, which is public and open with free admission, has contributed positively to the area's image. It attracts tourists to an area that is not a traditional destination. The large number of popular events and cultural activities attract over 500,000 paying visitors annually, meeting around half the park's running costs.

The Landschaftspark's marketing is viewed as a success, although the park has yet to deliver the direct increases in property values and reductions in unemployment that were expected. Employment is provided within the park, but not at a comparable scale to previous industrial uses on the site – but this was never the original objective of the park.

At Landschaftspark, nature has been left to recolonise much of the site



Parts of the former ore-bunkers are used as climbing walls



## Lessons learnt

- The degraded industrial urban landscape required an integrated approach to tackle both the economic and the environmental challenges
- The retention and creative use of industrial heritage was made easier by the lack of development pressure. This enabled the design of the park to go beyond the usual museum, visitor centre and café approach to industrial heritage often found in the UK. Instead, an environment is presented where visitors have a real and thought-provoking interaction with industrial structures, green spaces and natural processes
- Incorporating natural vegetation and processes of growth and decay has reduced the need for large-scale soil treatment or expensive maintenance regimes.

## References

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[www.latzundpartner.de](http://www.latzundpartner.de)  
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[www.hochofenwerk.de/main/index.html](http://www.hochofenwerk.de/main/index.html)

## Understanding the local context

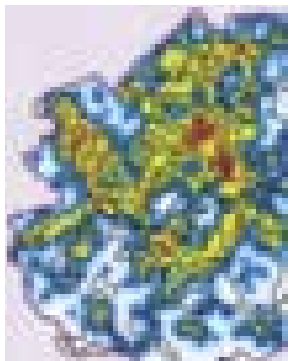
Under the new planning system, local planning authorities set out their planning and design policies relating to green space in a range of statutory documents. These include local development frameworks, area action plans, development plan documents, local development documents and supplementary planning documents. These are described in more detail in the glossary. Clients and planners should develop an understanding of the landscape of the area and involve landscape experts in the first stages of the planning and design process.

### Landscape character

The Countryside Agency published the first Landscape Character of England map in 1996, followed by a more detailed regional overview in 1999. This includes information on physical elements such as geology, hydrology and ecology, as well as historical factors such as culture, agriculture and industry. Each of these influences may have played an important role in shaping the sense of place and should be incorporated into designs.



# The importance of having a green space strategy



GIS and other mapping tools should be used to develop an understanding of existing conditions and how planned interventions might affect local areas

CABE Space's publication *Green space strategies: a good practice guide*<sup>14</sup> provides a comprehensive overview and a series of checklists explaining how local authorities can audit the current condition of the green assets in an area and identify what the community wants. It describes how a strategy can be formulated to achieve these aspirations. It is important to consider green spaces that are not managed by or in the control of the local authority, as these are a vital component of the network, especially for biodiversity.

The companion guide to PPG17, *Assessing needs and opportunities (ANO)*<sup>15</sup>, also offers guidance on how councils can establish the wishes of local communities and apply green space standards in a way that is equitable to both the communities and developers. It also provides a framework for determining the need for planning conditions or negotiating planning agreements.



Through a comprehensive information gathering, community involvement and data analysis process, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council laid the groundwork for its green space strategy. The enabling work of CABE Space raised the political strategy's profile clarifying both its links with national policy and its essential role in implementing the Community Strategy

The baseline information includes:

- Demographic profile of the population and future trends
- Assessment of needs
- National, regional and local policy
- Landscape/townscape/visual characteristics of the area
- Ecological resources, including designations and targets from local biodiversity action plans
- Heritage resources
- Spatial planning context such as regeneration initiatives
- Transport networks, including public transport links, pedestrian and cycle routes
- An assessment of the quality, quantity and accessibility of current green space supply relative to demand
- Existing levels of capital and revenue.

## Greater Ashford Development Framework, Ashford, Kent

1,100 hectares

Construction period  
Ongoing

# Enhance landscape character

### Background

The market town of Ashford in Kent has been designated as a growth area in the government's sustainable communities plan, primarily because of its location on the high-speed Channel Tunnel rail link between London, Paris and Brussels. The projected growth will double the town's population in the 30 years from 2001.

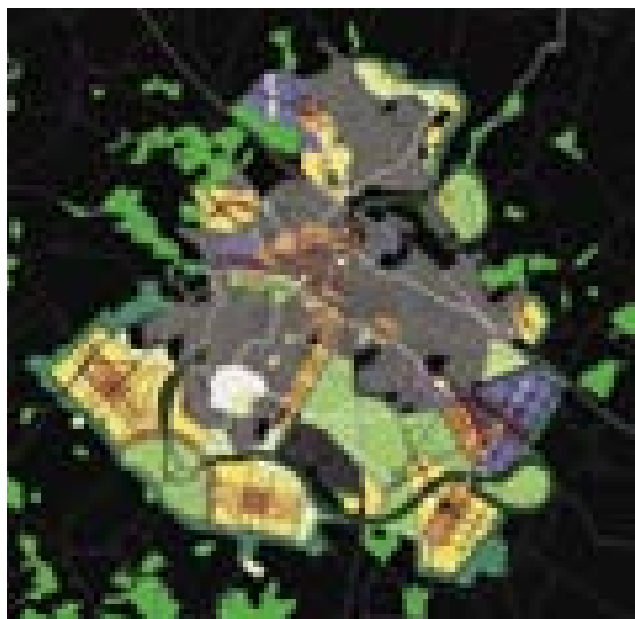
Ashford's Future was set up in 2002 to promote and co-ordinate the town's growth. The organisation appointed a team of consultants to conduct a year-long design process to develop a range of growth models. The process involved extensive consultation, including creating a town team that would reflect the views and needs of the local communities. The plans are likely to be adopted by Ashford Borough Council through the local development framework (LDF) process.

A significant proportion of the growth will occur on greenfield land. Not only will this have an impact on the environment, but it is not always popular with local residents. Ashford is at the confluence of five rivers and much of the land close to the town centre is within the undefended flood plain. Seven distinct landscape character types comprise the town's landscape, and there are 17 landscape character types within a three-kilometre radius.

New and improved parks, woodlands, wetlands and green corridors form a key structuring element for the development of Ashford

### Planning and design

The approach recognised that the development framework should create an interlocked and interdependent green and urban structure. The pursuit of a compact growth model released a substantial green dividend that helped attract support among local people for the planned expansion. The green space network is designed to act as a green matrix that provides a range of green services to make the town more sustainable, while reflecting the huge range of existing and valued landscape character areas.



## Design

Urban Initiatives and Studio Engleback

Design codes will be adopted to help to create distinct new developments that reflect underlying differences in landscape character. The codes cover:

### Green corridors

These normally follow rivers, national walking trails and other existing routes. They should be multi-functional spaces that incorporate transit and access to the countryside, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), diverse habitat types and activity zones.

### Primary parks/spaces

These large spaces relate to a regional and a town-wide scale. Their different main functions and characters reflect their surroundings and heritage. They are designed to provide recreational, educational and cultural opportunities, as well as having environmental functions such as providing flood defences and habitats. Being a large land bank relatively close to the town centre, they could be used for a special future project.

### Primary green edges

Green infrastructure accommodates the transition between buildings and the surrounding countryside. Green edges are designed as an interface to protect important natural conservation areas, provide movement corridors for pedestrians and cyclists, and provide environmental benefits. They will improve the micro-climate for nearby homes, produce energy crops and help treat grey water and sewage through the use of reed beds, living machines and other technologies.

## Partners and clients

Ashford's Future, Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council, South East England Development Agency, English Partnerships, and the Environment Agency

## Lessons learnt

- The masterplan's successful approach involved giving equal consideration to both the green structure and the urban structure. Creating a strong and compelling vision for high-quality green spaces can help to overcome negative perceptions of growth
- All green spaces should be viewed as multi-functional pieces of infrastructure, each of which provides ecological, social, economic and cultural benefits
- Green spaces can respond to, reinforce or enhance the character of the local landscape to enhance biodiversity and create a greater sense of place. Understanding the character of the landscape depends on thorough field surveys and analytical work
- Design codes can be used to direct the principles and qualities of green space development without being highly prescriptive
- Ashford is exploring the use of strategic tariffs and a development fund for the early provision of parks and open spaces. Green spaces will be designed and managed by the delivery agency and developed prior to the construction of houses. Costs will be retrieved from the housebuilders through a local land tax
- The role of parks and open spaces within the town and the managed urban/rural fringe will become a vital aspect of marketing housing development in the face of competition from elsewhere.

**Southey Owlerton,  
North Sheffield**  
Various locations

**Construction period**  
Ongoing

# Remodel green assets

## History

The largest council housing estate in Europe, Southey Owlerton occupies around a tenth of the area of Sheffield in the hills and valleys to the north of the city centre. The 30,000 homes, housing over 48,000 people, were built at very low densities as a garden city estate during the inter-war and post-war periods to house the expanding industrial workforce. The aim was to provide a modern lush and green environment for the inhabitants. Many of the houses had substantial gardens and many of the roads had grassed corners and verges.

The estate's planning and layout have caused significant problems and led to its rapid deterioration. Residents have to travel a long way to access services and jobs and public transport connections are poor. The estate lacks a major centre or even neighbourhood centres. The over-supply of very similar two-bedroom row housing and semi-detached properties has led to a lack of suitable accommodation for the varied needs of today. The huge amount of green space became poorly managed and lost its diversity and attractiveness to users.

The Southey Owlerton Area Regeneration (SOAR) has now developed a new approach to remodelling the public realm in areas of low demand in Sheffield. Green spaces are at its heart.

## Planning and design

Six neighbourhood groups have led a series of events including walkabouts and workshops, which have formed the basis of the planning and design work. This has been supported by a range of consultants and specialists, including a CABE-sponsored design panel. The strategy is based on five big ideas.

The estate will be remodelled to create a series of communities around the green web and new centres with a mix of uses, including community buildings. In some places housing densities around these centres will be raised.

## Lessons learnt

- The neighbourhood groups, consultative events and communications programme have helped to make the local community more committed to the regeneration process
- Improving the quality, rather than the quantity, of green space and linking it directly to new development will improve the area and its image
- Green space can provide the glue between existing and new neighbourhoods
- The CABE-sponsored design panel has helped people appreciate the importance of design.



## Design

Grant Associates, Eventus, Ian Smith Associates, School of Architecture University of Sheffield, Kinnear Landscape Architects, Gross Max, Landscape Projects

## Partners and clients

Sheffield City Council, six neighbourhood groups

The SOAR five big ideas:

### Park city

Developing a network of green spaces to link and enhance existing areas around new community centres and housing development as part of a strategy to raise land values.

### See and be seen

Using the form of the land to enhance views and create landmarks.

### Identity from landform

Reflecting the complex variety of topography and nature to help create distinct neighbourhoods.

### From city to country and back again

Joining footpaths across the neighbourhoods to create some longer routes, linking the most special and distinctive green spaces.

### Green arteries

Creating centres of activity and other new projects along a series of green routes and linear parks.



The Southey Owlerton Area Regeneration Board has set up one community group in each of the affected neighbourhoods. These are directly involved in determining the project's strategy. Each community group sends a democratically elected representative to the board and its seven theme groups

## South Essex Green Grid Strategy

Over 40,000 hectares

Construction period  
Ongoing

# Map environmental assets

### Background

South Essex has generally been perceived as a sprawling area of fragmented and characterless urban development that has ignored its environmental assets and the river. The extension of the original Thames Gateway to include South Essex was designed to provide regeneration for existing communities as well as a large area of growth. The government plans envision almost 45,000 new homes to be built, and 55,000 new jobs to be created by 2021. Much of this will be provided on previously developed land.

The Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid Strategy is a radical vision, which places landscape at the heart of the development process. A series of major projects is already underway to create a functional green infrastructure, which provides for sustainable energy, cleaner air and food and water and manages flood risk, protection against the impact of climate change, healthier lifestyles and a stronger economy.

### Planning and design

LDA Design has developed the concept of the Green Grid from a wide-ranging baseline analysis, which included a detailed understanding of geology; hydrology; topography; biodiversity; urban form; access and movement; archaeological, historic and cultural resources; current structure of public and private open space; and landscape character.

This informed the constraints and opportunities summarised in the Strategic Opportunities Plan and Strategic Framework.

The Strategic Framework covers the whole of Thames Gateway South Essex and identifies four types of strategic corridors. These are designed to link a range of high-quality parks and open spaces, landmarks, views and other important features:

- Parkways and urban green roadways
- Riverways
- Railways
- Greenways such as footpaths and cycle paths.

### Outcomes

The Green Grid is already feeding into a wide range of regional, local and site-specific planning policies. There are a number of projects underway which are supporting the development of the Green Grid.

## Design

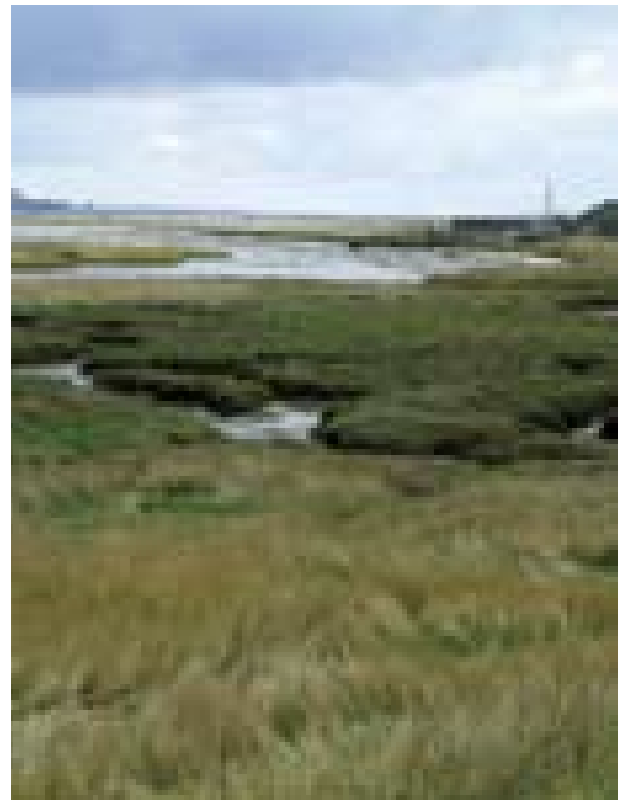
LDA Design

## Partners and clients

Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, Thames Chase Community Forest, the Forestry Commission, the Countryside Agency, Essex County Council, the Essex Wildlife Trust, RSPB, East of England Development Agency, Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock councils, the Environment Agency, Sustrans, Groundwork UK, English Nature, English Heritage, BTCV

### Lessons learnt

- The Green Grid concept offers a sub-regional strategy for creating multi-functional green infrastructure. This provides a framework for sustainable development, builds on the strengths of the area and provides a means of linking together different strategic sites and initiatives
- Effective plans depend on complete baseline research that draws on a wide range of environmental, social, economic and urban analysis. All open land should be included in the analysis – not just that controlled by public bodies
- Partnership working is critical to bring in a full range of expertise, land interests and funding to deliver projects
- Regional and sub-regional plans should cascade into local development frameworks and documents, regeneration frameworks, masterplans and other development proposals.



### References

[www.tgessex.co.uk](http://www.tgessex.co.uk)  
[www.greengrid.co.uk](http://www.greengrid.co.uk)  
[www.lda-design.co.uk](http://www.lda-design.co.uk)

## Green space standards

‘Any effort to improve children’s play opportunities must recognise... that most play does not take place on sites formally designated as play spaces.’

*Getting serious about play*  
(DCMS, 2004)



In the past, green space planning has been determined by a variety of quantitative green space standards. Many of these have been incorporated into local development plans as targets for the development of new green spaces.

The Active Recreation Standards, set out by the National Playing Fields Association, call for local authorities to provide a minimum level of space and facilities for sports for adults and youths, and play for children.<sup>16</sup>

The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt), developed by English Nature, relate to the accessibility (on foot) and size of areas that have been naturally colonised by plants and animals.<sup>17</sup>

Such quantitative national standards should be used with care. As PPG17 notes, while they remain a good starting point, standards are best set locally to meet local needs, demographic patterns and economic patterns. Policies should reflect an understanding of how green spaces are integrated with the built environment; of the wide variety of types of green space; and of the suitability of many of them for

multiple uses. Local policy and guidance should take account of the quality of green space, as well as the quantity. *From design policy to design quality*<sup>18</sup> offers a framework for developing a comprehensive range of design policies for local policy documents.

### Setting quality standards

The criteria of the Green Flag Award, the national standard for parks and green spaces, are used by 70 per cent of councils in England. An awarded site can be used as a local benchmark against which the quality of management and maintenance of a range of sites can be measured using the criteria. For green spaces in or around housing, Building for Life and CABI have developed a series of qualitative standards.



The eight criteria of the Green Flag Award scheme are:

- A welcoming place
- Healthy, safe and secure
- Clean and well maintained
- Conservation and heritage
- Community involvement
- Marketing
- Management
- Sustainability.

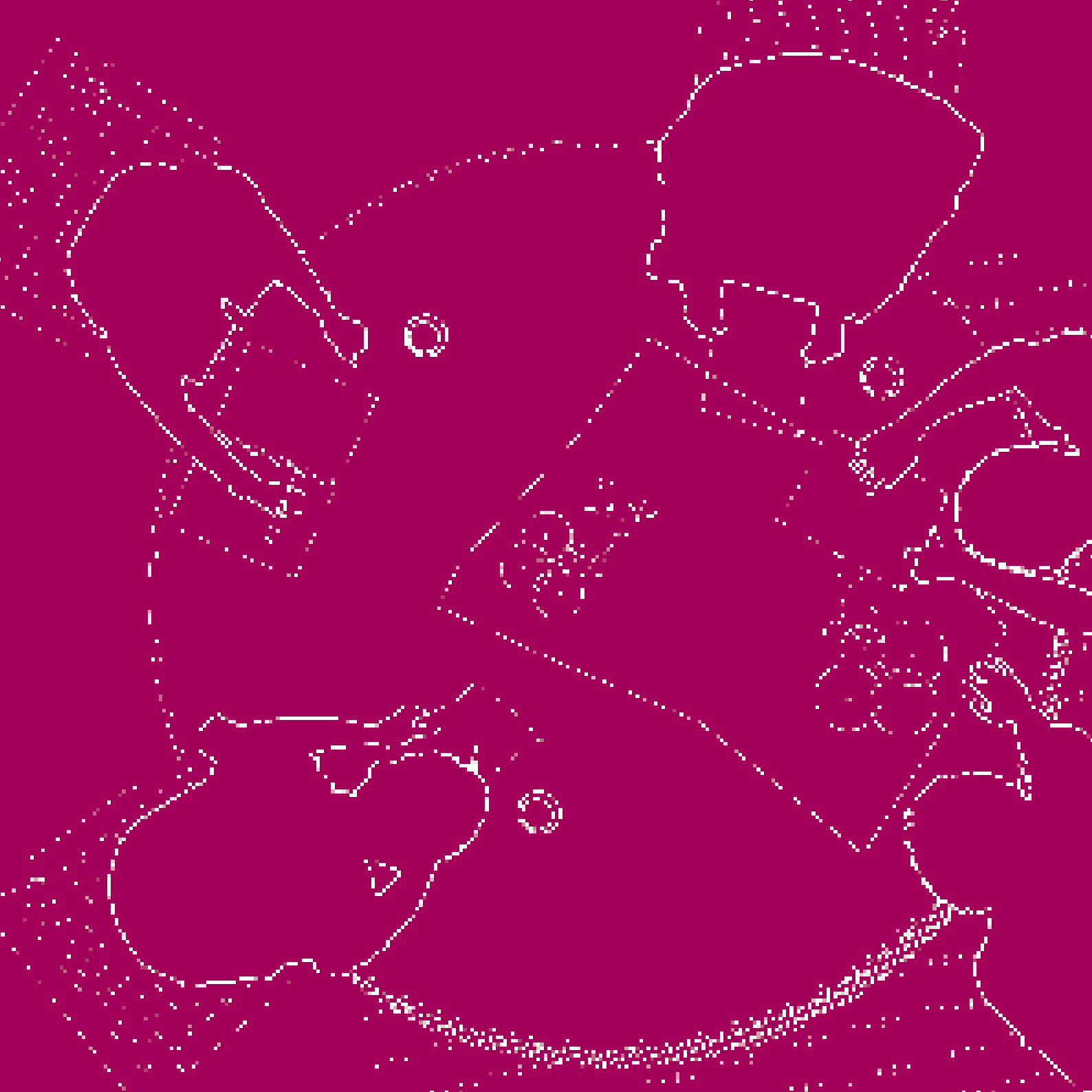


The Building for Life standards that relate to green spaces include:

- A place with character
- Incorporating local landscape and topography
- The quality of adjacent public space.

## Planning green infrastructure: Watch points

- **Use the planning system effectively**  
The new spatial planning system can be used to integrate green spaces with a range of different policy areas, such as health, education, environment and transport
- **Consider the opportunities at a regional scale**  
Regional and sub-regional green space planning allows for integration across the borders between local authorities and links with regional spatial strategies, local development frameworks and documents, and site-specific plans
- **Standards are best set locally**  
Use quantitative green space standards with care. Plans should respond to local circumstances and needs
- **Develop effective green space strategies**  
Drawing up a strategy can be an effective way of assessing existing green assets, creating a vision, building political commitment, involving the community and gaining funding.



# Thinking about design



# Introduction



A well-designed place does not result from simply transferring a plan from elsewhere. Designs need to respond in some way to local needs and character

‘It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.’

William H Whyte

‘87 per cent of adults agreed that better-quality buildings and public spaces improve people’s quality of life.’

MORI 2004

When it comes to green spaces, good design is the process – and the product – of shaping them in a way that makes the most of local opportunities. Good design can transform parks and squares that have become negative spaces for local communities and create great new places for communities that need them. It makes places that accommodate varied activities and future change, that express distinctive character, that make people feel safe and welcome, and that use resources wisely. A well-designed park or garden also creates spaces for plants and wildlife to flourish.



Proposed development in Glasgow focuses on a new city park of both local and citywide importance

The location of a park or garden is critical to its success. Different types of green space are appropriate in different settings, from urban core to rural fringe. A hierarchy of spaces will enable some green spaces to serve local catchments, while others serve citywide or regional catchments. Larger spaces or more special parks in central urban areas tend to serve both local and wider needs. A green space strategy provides the framework for deciding what type of space should go where.



## Green spaces and place-making

The best place-making is usually the result of determined civic leadership, combined with effective public involvement and a high level of professional skill. Such leadership is essential in resolving conflicts of interest into an achievable vision of what a place can become.

Effective public involvement in the design process is essential – not only to ensure that the spaces that are created reflect the values and patterns of life of the people who will use them, but also to create the sense of ownership on which the success of any public space depends. Of course many places that we value – the village green, wildflower meadows, back gardens – have evolved over long periods and have adapted to changing needs.



Effective community engagement led to inspiring and creative ideas for the Cookson Park masterplan by Kinnear Landscape Architects



A range of stakeholders should be involved in both the strategic and the local elements of the design of new and existing places

**Greater Manchester**  
Various locations

**Construction period**  
Ongoing

# Green the street

## Background

Red Rose Forest is one of the 12 Community Forests in the National Community Forest Partnership and promotes urban forestry. Set up in 1992, the organisation is currently involved in a wide range of projects. These include a new regional forest park that aims to recover several hundred hectares of derelict land; support local timber industries across the region; support biodiversity across green spaces; and make streets greener.

Red Rose Forest's Green Streets initiative enables people in urban areas to improve the environment of their streets.

## Planning and design

The Green Streets initiative aims to integrate trees and other greenery into some of the most challenging urban environments. These include very high-density, terraced neighbourhoods, where there is often little space for green areas and vandalism is rife. These areas are often deprived and unpopular.

The Green Streets team operates as an enabler throughout the planning, design and funding stages of a project. It tailors solutions to the needs of each street.

Each street-greening scheme starts with members of the community championing the idea to neighbours and other residents. The Green Streets team will develop the design and concept for the street by using computerised

### **Walter Street, Old Trafford: Creating a HomeZone**

The residents living in Walter Street complained of vandalism, crime and fear of crime. A new street design was worked up through community consultation. Thick bushes that reduced visibility were removed. Children from the local primary school helped residents, councillors and business owners to plant silver birch trees and hundreds of bulbs along the sides of the road, and they witnessed the installation of impressive standing stones – an environmental art work which was approved by the local community and helps to calm the traffic.

### **Goole Street: Creating a unique identity**

The Goole Street residents did not want traditional street trees, but opted instead for baskets and planters, which were designed in conjunction with local residents and helped develop a distinctive identity for the street. The planters also create a small but significant defensible space in the form of a small area between the street and the terraced houses. This is especially important for the Goole Street properties that open straight on to the street. Today, baskets and planters afford residents the opportunity to sit out in the street in the summer.

## Design

Green Streets Team and residents

## Partners and clients

Red Rose Forest, Manchester City Council, Salford City Council, Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, the Countryside Agency, Groundwork Manchester Salford and Trafford, Community Technical Aid Centre, Viridor Credits and United Utilities

imaging software, allowing local people to see the impact of the greening process on the street scene. Local people are also involved in planting and maintaining the trees and plants.

### Lessons learnt

- Even with very limited resources and in the densest terraced environment, greener streets can be viable and valuable
- A community-driven process can result in very high success rates and low vandalism rates for the trees planted
- Enthusiastic community engagement can increase the social life and cohesion of less popular areas
- People living on streets that have been greened have reported higher house prices than those in nearby streets that haven't been through the same process.

## References

[www.redroseforest.co.uk](http://www.redroseforest.co.uk)  
[www.communityforest.org.uk](http://www.communityforest.org.uk)  
[www.nufu.org.uk](http://www.nufu.org.uk)



Creating small defensible areas along the street helps define public and private space

# What is a well-designed green space?

Good design is rarely brought about by prescribing rigid quantitative standards, but rather by approaches that emphasise the qualities that make space work. It depends on understanding a wide range of considerations and finding creative resolutions to potential conflicts. Good design needs inspiration, innovation and experimentation. Minimising risk is important but needs to be balanced with the need to create stimulating environments that can be surprising and educational.<sup>19</sup>

The design of a successful green space depends on understanding the particular needs it will meet. Why is the space being created? Who will use it and how? In many places there are already too many pointless unused areas of grass or small patches of leftover green space adjacent to buildings, which offer little value but still impose a maintenance burden.

Successful green spaces come in a wide range of types and sizes, and have a variety of functions. What works best for a particular locality will depend on local circumstances. But there are a number of qualities that successful parks, squares and green spaces have in common. These are shown in the box and are explored in the following pages. These qualities can provide a useful framework

for designing new spaces or improving existing places. They are prompts for thinking, not rules. The qualities overlap and reinforce each other.

The qualities have been adapted from *By design: urban design in the planning system*<sup>20</sup> which, like this publication, focuses on the everyday experience of people in the urban environment. There is one other quality that many successful green spaces have: beauty. Like the other eight, beauty should also be one of the objectives, even though it may be difficult to define. In a place that has the other eight qualities, beauty may well be the natural product of the patterns of nature and human life and the skills of talented designers.

## The qualities of successful green spaces

1. Sustainability
2. Character and distinctiveness
3. Definition and enclosure
4. Connectivity and accessibility
5. Legibility
6. Adaptability and robustness
7. Inclusiveness
8. Biodiversity

# 1. Sustainability

Good sustainable practice can offer numerous environmental and cost benefits. The potential cooling and thermal insulation properties of green roofs can also have costs benefits for building owners.  
[www.livingroofs.org](http://www.livingroofs.org)



Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) are widely used to reduce the impact of urban runoff on the aquatic environment. A permanent lake forms the basis for flood storage for the Quaggy Flood Alleviation Scheme in Kidbrooke, Greenwich



Successful green spaces contribute towards making more attractive towns and cities; provide venues for cultural events and the arts; raise land values; and provide safe routes. Their ecological functions include providing flood protection and sustainable drainage; creating better microclimates; air filtration; shading; and enhancing biodiversity. A sports pitch, a nature

reserve or a residential communal garden should play a more complex role than its name suggests: all green spaces should promote a distinct sense of place and provide a range of environmental services, accommodate several uses and provide multiple benefits. Each of the eight qualities can contribute towards more sustainable communities.

## Quaggy River Catchment, Lewisham, London

The Quaggy is 14 kilometres long

### Construction period

1998–2004

# Reduce flood risk imaginatively

## Background

Urban development in the river valley and natural flood plain over the past 150 years has increased the risk of flooding in the River Ravensbourne catchment. The traditional approach to flood alleviation had been to increase the capacity of the river channel by culverting and channel widening to allow water to flow quickly away from built-up areas. Unfortunately this cannot prevent catastrophic floods such as occurred in the centre of Lewisham in 1968 – affecting hundreds of businesses and residents. A proposal to reduce flood risk and further widen the channels along the Quaggy caused the formation of a local community group – Quaggy Waterways Action Group – which successfully campaigned for an alternative approach to flood management that would allow the green spaces along the network to store water during peak flows and also facilitate a more natural and attractive meandering river. This approach was then taken forward by the Environment Agency.

New development needs to avoid increasing flood risk. The new approach taken with the Quaggy is important as it integrates green space design with water management. It reduces storm water run-off for Lewisham Town Centre as well as providing improved recreational parks for local communities and more variation in habitats that encourages greater biodiversity.

## Sutcliffe Park

Until the work started in 2003, Sutcliffe Park was a flat, featureless area of grassland containing football pitches and an athletics track. The space was little used other than for weekend football. The river ran in a concrete culvert. The design concept at Sutcliffe Park was to create a multi-functional open space that would improve flood management and the quality of the park. A community liaison officer was appointed from the area to include local people and particularly local schools and youth groups. The space now forms a shallow valley centred on the meandering Quaggy River and a wide boardwalk that allows visitors to walk above the water. During periods of extremely high water flow, the flood alleviation scheme will automatically operate, allowing water to fill the park slowly, taking 12 hours to reach a capacity of 35 Olympic swimming pools. After the high flow has passed, the water can slowly flow back into the river. The system does not require any mechanical controls.

## Chinbrook Meadows

Until 2002, Chinbrook Meadows was an under-used small park that was divided by a deep channel. High bushes and fences were put up to reduce the risk of visitors falling in and injuring themselves. This was replaced by a meandering naturalised channel with associated wetland, improving biodiversity within the park and reducing flood risk to adjacent properties. The park was redesigned and upgraded with new footpaths, tree and flower planting, gates, lighting, bridges, sports facilities, educational resources and art features.

## Design

The Environment Agency

## Partners

The Environment Agency, Quaggy Waterways Action Group (QWAG), London Borough of Greenwich, London Borough of Lewisham, Groundwork Thames Gateway London South, Halcrow, Glendale Grounds Management



## Planning and design

The case focuses on two of nine green spaces that are included within the Quaggy catchment – Sutcliffe Park and Chinbrook Meadows.

## Outcomes

The schemes have reduced the flood risk for property within the river catchment area and take into account future changes in climate.

The improved green spaces have meant that they serve a more diverse set of users. Chinbrook Meadows was awarded the Green Flag Award in 2004 and now has an active park users group. It is far better used, which has helped to reduce vandalism. The success of the schemes has led to consideration of a more natural treatment of the river in the project to regenerate Lewisham Town Centre.

## Lessons learnt

- In both cases it was strong, quantifiable support from local residents which ensured that the projects took place
- If appropriately designed, urban green spaces along rivers can form a critical flood alleviation mechanism at the same time as providing a high-quality amenity function that has been very popular with local communities
- Restoring rivers to a more natural state in urban green areas has numerous other benefits – a far lower cost than traditional schemes, a greater variety of habitats for plants and animals living along the river and a great place for children to play and learn
- This kind of approach to integrated flood management requires an effective and an enlightened approach to partnership and management with active engagement from the community, landowners and other agencies.

## References

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)  
[www.qwag.org.uk](http://www.qwag.org.uk)



A design for a community space within the Broadway Estate, Tilbury, Essex was combined with a parallel art-led research project. Muf looked into the history and contemporary presence of the horses in Tilbury and how the attendant culture of the traveller population has shaped the landscape

‘Green spaces  
are reservoirs  
of collective  
memory.’

Ken Worpole



The new landscape acknowledges and accommodates the diverse and contradictory demands made on its limited space. The design ensures both security and pleasure through an undulating landscape of shared and discrete spaces to accommodate horse riding, the under fives, robust play and sitting in the sun, whilst designing out misuse and anti-social behaviour. To mark the completion of the space a procession of children involved in the research phase walked from Tilbury Fort across the marshes and back to the site





## 2. Character and distinctiveness

Parks, squares and gardens form an important component of the identity of a place, reflecting the complexity of local landscape, culture and heritage. At their best, green spaces can become the proud symbols of an area.

Understanding the character and three-dimensional shape of the landscape is an essential step in designing successful green spaces. Natural features such as rivers, streams, woodlands, trees, hedges, wetlands, hills and valleys should be protected and integrated into designs. These can help to deliver a range of benefits, such as providing attractive routes along river or woodland corridors, or protecting homes from prevailing winds through planted shelter belts. They also help to create a distinctive sense of place.

A successful green space will usually promote and reflect the identity and culture of a local community. Involving local people in the design process will help to achieve this. Every element of the green space design contributes towards its identity. The choice of planting, materials, furniture, railings, paving and public art can all be important.

Public art should be integrated into the design of the space at the outset rather than being added on at the end of the design process. It should enhance people's appreciation of the landscape and public realm.

Public art on its own will not save a poorly designed space.

**'Fight for authenticity and integrity...Value the common place. Our cultural landscapes are our ordinary history and everyday nature intertwined...Let the character of the people and the place express itself... Don't fossilise places.'**

Sue Clifford, *Common Ground*

**'Local planning authorities should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes...it is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness particularly where this is supported by clear plan policies or supplementary planning documents on design.'**

PPS1 (ODPM 2005, para. 38)

**Westerpark District, Amsterdam**  
14 hectares

**Construction period**  
2001–05

# Find short-term cultural uses

## Background

A gas factory and other buildings were laid out at the western edge of Amsterdam at the end of the nineteenth century, rapidly becoming the main supplier of coal gas to the city. In the early 1960s the municipal energy company began switching to natural gas, eventually closing down the gas-making plants in 1967. The site was then used for storage and workshops. Following pressure from the local community, the land was designated as a green space for recreational use in 1981.

After a competition, the district council decided to convert the site into a national centre for modern music, despite resistance from some local people who wanted the site to benefit the neighbourhood more directly. But before the site could be made available, the council decided to give it to a project group who would promote short-term cultural uses. This soon turned out to be very successful in drawing in a wide range of cultural enterprises.

Over the past 15 years the major new urban park of Westerpark has been created from a derelict and highly contaminated industrial site. The experience shows how interim uses within and around industrial buildings can contribute to regenerating the wider area and promote the cultural economy. In an area of great development pressure, the park now forms one of Amsterdam's main cultural hubs.

The success of the interim uses and the difficulties in developing the site owing to soil contamination meant that for the next decade the gasholder and 14 other industrial buildings were used temporarily for a series of cultural uses and increasingly successful outdoor festivals.

## Planning and design

A development plan, adopted in 1996, envisioned a culture park in which the industrial buildings would be retained, restored and managed by a private company. The main aim was to ensure as much variety as possible by including both short- and long-term cultural enterprises, including theatre, music, fashion, film and visual art.

Because this was an unusual project, perceived as high-risk, many banks did not want to invest in redeveloping the buildings. Eventually the National Restoration Fund (a government agency) provided a low-cost loan. Once funding had been obtained, the key challenge was to deal with soil contamination. The project managed to maintain a closed soil balance, keeping all contaminated soil within the site.

The landscape architect Gustafson and Porter's competition-winning design created a 14 hectare park that changes from a free-flowing landscape in the west to a more formal urban layout in the east. The park's different zones vary in function and character. The industrial heritage remains visible and integral to the sense of place.

## Design

Gustafson and Porter

## Partners and clients

Westerpark district council, MAB (development company), Amsterdam city council and local residents groups

## Outcomes

A large area of contaminated and derelict land has been made available for use within an area of high development potential. A new park has been created in an area that lacked green space and space has been provided for cultural businesses. The improvements have attracted new residential developments by talented architects.

## References

Koekkebakker, N (2003) *Westergasfabriek culture park: transformation of a former industrial site in Amsterdam*, Nai, Amsterdam

[www.westerpark.nl](http://www.westerpark.nl)

[www.panoramsterdam.com/panos/westergasfabriek-1.htm](http://www.panoramsterdam.com/panos/westergasfabriek-1.htm)



## Lessons learnt

- This type of complex project requires a flexible planning approach. In this case it was based on a project team who focused both on the quality of process and the outcome. They had limited power themselves, and needed to influence and inspire those around them. It also meant starting work on the ground without a clear view of the end result and responding to changes in circumstances
- The relatively short-term interim uses provided immediately available and valuable amenities for Amsterdam at low cost. They served as a testing ground for new cultural enterprises and built momentum for the creation of the park and the renovation of the buildings
- Involving the community is vital to ensure that the design of green spaces reflects their needs. In this case the relationship with the local residents associations was not always comfortable and concerns about the impact of large-scale cultural events led to delays in the project.

A huge range of events take place on the site and in the park. Activities included outdoor festivals, opera, theatre, car launches, fashion shows, photography exhibitions, dance and club nights, craft manufacture, a music school, café, restaurant and a movie theatre

### 3. Definition and enclosure

In a well-defined park, square or garden, the clear distinction between public and private space (in terms of legal ownership or rights of use or access) indicates to people how they should use the space.

Private and semi-private spaces such as communal gardens should be defined by the form of the buildings, and should back on to other gardens, not side roads or service lanes

The distinction between public and private can be indicated by boundaries, such as fences and walls; planting, such as hedges or trees; water features; changes in surface treatment; planting; or the design and orientation of buildings.

Larger spaces play a different role and promote different activities. They may enable people to get away from the intensity of urban life to a space where the urban edge is not apparent, and where they can enjoy being immersed in nature.

At the edges of urban areas well-designed regional parks, woodland, grasslands and wetlands can help to structure development in a way that is never achieved by suburban sprawl.

The Countryside Agency is developing a body of research that explores the current state of the urban fringe and its potential for delivering wider benefits. It has produced a policy statement with Groundwork UK and others that is described in *The countryside in and*

*around towns: a vision for connecting town and country in the pursuit of sustainable development (2005).*<sup>21</sup>

**‘...Properties that directly overlook a park cluster at around 5 to 7 per cent above an identical property in the same market area, but outside the influence of the park.’**

*Does money grow on trees? (CABE Space 2005)*



People feel less safe when buildings are hidden behind high walls. Ideally the front of a building should face on to publicly accessible spaces

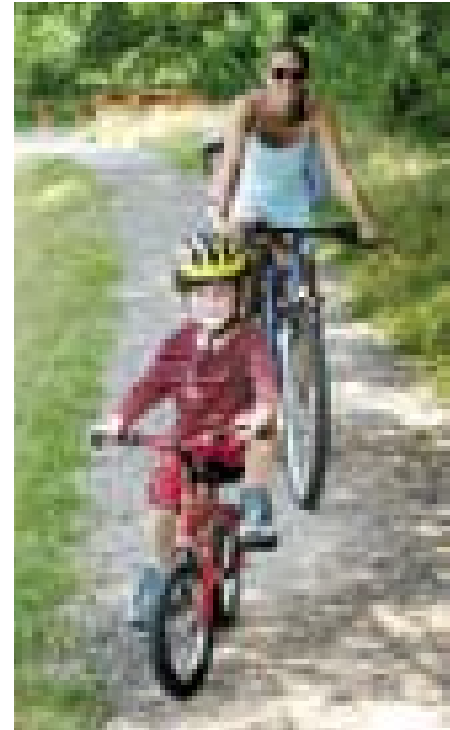
## 4. Connectivity and accessibility

‘74 per cent of adults agreed that being able to use a local park or public open space was important for their general health. 49 per cent of people live within five minutes’ walk of a park or public open space.’

MORI 2004

Parks, woodlands, river corridors and gardens should form a hierarchy of different types, sizes and scales of public spaces. The network of spaces should be integrated with the surrounding street pattern, and access points placed at major junctions. Integrated, safe and attractive routes should link with the network of green spaces and encourage people to travel to work and school or to access local services on foot or by bicycle. Sustrans is seeking to create a safe bicycle route to school for every child in the UK.<sup>22</sup> Connected spaces that are well used also help make the public realm feel safer.

Of course, plants and animals do not differentiate between public and private spaces. Networks of green space should incorporate both of these when planning for biodiversity.



Greenways and corridors such as rivers, canals and ridges can provide continuous routes through urban areas

**Parque de la Solidaridad,  
Barcelona, Spain**  
4 hectares

**Construction period**  
1996–97

# Link communities

## Background

In Barcelona, the two suburbs of Can Clota and Can Vidalet were built in the 1960s and 1970s at high density. They have remained relatively deprived and are under-served by parks and squares. In the mid-1990s an association of Barcelona's 27 local authorities decided to design and build a park to join the two communities.

Ring and trunk roads around Barcelona have divided communities in many outer urban areas. Many urban areas in the UK also suffer from severance caused by large-scale transport infrastructure. The Parque de la Solidaridad suggests a possible solution by bridging the motorway, thereby linking two residential areas and creating four hectares of public space. This case shows that in areas of high-density development with limited opportunities for green space, the space above roads, railways or even buildings can be used as an excellent piece of urban green infrastructure.

## Planning and design

Sergi Godia and Xavier Casas designed the park to span the valley formed by an old river course. The park's leisure facilities occupy a series of outdoor rooms on graded platforms.

The park is centred on a wide pedestrian way that links into the existing urban fabric on each side of the road. The design emphasises the panoramic views of the surrounding hills and the sea in the distance.

The central axis is flanked with planting and seating. The path is well lit to encourage its use throughout the night. The neon strip-lighting is designed to be seen from the motorway, serving as a gateway and a symbol of the integration of two previously divided communities.

## Outcomes

The park has become so well used by local people that the local authority has had to maintain it much more intensively than originally planned. The success of this demonstration project has led to similar projects in other areas of Barcelona.

## Lessons learnt

- Good parks and green spaces can provide a link between separate areas and reduce the severance effects of large-scale transport infrastructure
- Where there is no room for green spaces because of high density of other uses, parks can be created on top of buildings or other infrastructure.

## Design

Godia and Casas Architects,  
Static Engineering

## Partners and clients

MMAMB Espai Públic



The park links directly into the existing street systems of the communities on either side of the major highway

## 5. Legibility

‘Cities need hidden spaces and exposed spaces, rough spaces and smooth spaces, loud spaces and silent spaces – spaces where people remember, experience, contest, appropriate, get scared, make things, lose things, and generally become themselves.’

*What are we scared of?* (CABE Space 2005)

Different people interpret green spaces in different ways. Space should be designed to allow for choice, play and experimentation in how it is used and experienced. The design of the public realm should reflect a balance between the need to manage the risks associated with a more stimulating environment and the need to create different types of spaces that allow for different kinds of behaviour and demands.

A vista – a view past a series of landmarks – can help people orient themselves. Routes through a space can be designed to emphasise a series of views, providing a pleasant sense of variety to anyone moving through it. A good choice of planting can ensure that these views change throughout the year. Green Flag Awards recognise clear and appropriate signs and information inside and outside the site.



Legibility – ease of understanding – is particularly important where safety and ease of movement are paramount. Such spaces might incorporate pathways, landmarks and gateways to help people orient themselves



‘Most of us can remember that...as children... we needed places where we could run, explore, play with our friends or be on our own to look and wonder, think and daydream and make amazing discoveries.’

*What are we scared of?* (CABE Space 2005)



Visible routes and destinations, and a clear choice of routes, will contribute to making a place that feels safe and unthreatening

Focal points on busy routes create nodes where people can gather



Remote and quieter green spaces enable people to contemplate and relax, and require a degree of separation from other uses

## Regional Park and the Panopticons project, East Lancashire

1,210 square kilometres

**Construction period**  
Ongoing

# Transform regional image

### Background

East Lancashire combines wonderful landscapes with an important industrial heritage, which in some cases has left behind a scarred landscape and a poor image. The area contains many towns of individual character, most of which can offer residents direct access to the great outdoors within a few minutes' walk.

The Regional Park covers all of East Lancashire, an area that is home to over 500,000 people – the equivalent of a medium-sized European city. The programme is focused on creating a recognisable heart in a broad band of urban fringe land, which adjoins some of the most deprived wards in England. Like the city centre, which defines the unique character of each city, the Regional Park is intended to establish a unique character and positive identity for East Lancashire.

### Planning and design

The enhancement of the landscape through the Regional Park will combine with measures to invigorate local economic, housing and social conditions to take full advantage of the natural and built heritage of East Lancashire. It complements other regeneration schemes such as the ELEVATE housing market renewal programme and the Rapid Transit project. One of the key projects is the Panopticons scheme.

Panopticons is a four-year project to create six new landmarks for East Lancashire – one in each district. They will take the form of shelters, viewing platforms or beacons and will be built at high points on key access routes around the East Lancashire Regional Park, commanding stunning views.

The Panopticons will, by their location and their design, become icons for the area, showcasing the unique character and beauty of East Lancashire and attracting visitors. They will also be a symbol, carrying the message that East Lancashire is a place where new standards for design and presentation are being set.

A complementary education and creative arts programme, LAND, is developing a series of creative, educational arts projects inspired by the landscapes of East Lancashire. LAND is a cross-cutting initiative that offers an opportunity to involve local communities to add depth, value and distinctiveness to the Regional Park. Design teams have now been selected for each of the Panopticons. An international competition managed by the Royal Institute of British Architects for the first three sites received an overwhelming response. All winners were chosen following extensive public consultation; construction is expected to begin in spring 2005.

### Partners and clients

East Lancashire Partnership with Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding provided by the North West Development Agency. Panopticons and LAND are projects of the East Lancashire Environmental Arts Network (ELEAN), managed by Mid-Pennine Arts and

supported by the North West Development Agency, the East Lancashire Partnership Regional Park Programme, Arts Council England North West, Lancashire County Council and Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale councils.

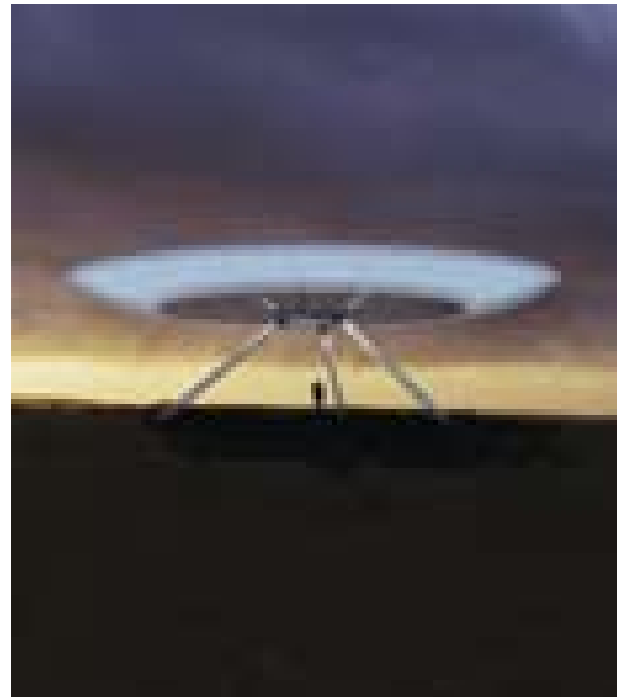
### Outcomes

The East Lancashire Regional Park has attracted funding of £5 million from the Single Regeneration Budget matched by a further £18 million from the public and private sector. This has resulted in a range of projects encompassing health, sport, biodiversity and art.

Panopticons has generated a lot of positive publicity and interest in the East Lancashire Regional Park, from the UK and abroad. It has also become a focus for a range of community projects – including building an arts trail with local children from Burnley town centre to a Panopticon site.

### Lessons learnt

- A regional park strategy can provide an effective structure for the regeneration planning of a wider area. It is anticipated that this will attract inward investment and provide a clear focus for health, education, housing, economic development and tourism
- The arts-based strategy has helped to kick-start the Regional Park initiative and provided exciting and inspiring projects for several communities in the region.



International competition has generated a wide range of striking landmarks

### References

[www.panopticons.uk.net](http://www.panopticons.uk.net)  
[www.land.uk.net](http://www.land.uk.net)  
[www.elp.org.uk](http://www.elp.org.uk)



## 6. Adaptability and robustness

Like other forms of development, green spaces need to adapt in the face of unpredictable social, economic and environmental change. Indeed, continuous change – with plants growing, changing and dying back over time – is the essence of green space. Patterns of use and appearance of plants and trees change from season to season, as well as over longer periods of time. Plants and trees can adapt naturally to changing circumstances and are often the first colonisers of derelict land.

Changing social or market conditions can mean that parks, woodlands and farms can function effectively as interim uses for land that might be brought back into use in the future. Many of the challenges facing areas of housing growth and low demand will take years to overcome. Planners and clients need to develop flexible approaches to green space planning that include temporary uses for green space and recognise the importance of temporary landscapes. Interim uses can help to raise confidence and create a virtuous circle of sustainable development.

Regent's Park was designed as a private garden for the surrounding residents. It now operates very successfully as one of the most popular London parks



Green areas can become useful and productive



## Regent's Park, central London

107 hectares

### Construction period

1816–26 (although further property development occurred in the next century)

# Plan well ahead

### Background

The area now occupied by the park was once a hunting ground of Henry VIII. John Nash was asked to draw up designs by his friend and patron, the Prince Regent. At the same time he had been instructed to develop plans for a new street connecting Portland Place and Charing Cross. Work on the park itself, including the Regent's Canal and the boating lake, started in 1816. Over the next 10 years, Nash developed the fine terraced properties that adjoin the park. The park has since changed significantly – from a semi-private, picturesque, semi-rural green park grazed by livestock to a public park that now includes more formal gardens, sports pitches and London Zoo.

The architect John Nash developed Regent's Park as the centrepiece of an ambitious property venture. He believed that 'landowners infinitely prefer living near open space...a park where there are opportunities for riding, driving, and walking is an irresistible magnet'. This park was successful both in raising the value of adjoining sites and in creating a magnificent, well-connected set-piece of urban development.

### Planning and design

Nash's scheme included terraces of housing that enclosed a roughly circular park, linking in with the major processional route to Westminster. The park is shaped by the Inner and Outer Circles and the Broad Walk. The design is intended to create serially revealed views of the boating lake and the terraces. The edge of the park is enclosed and overlooked by an almost continuous series of terraced houses.

There are areas within the park with a wide range of different characters, including the secluded and highly enclosed Inner Circle, the formal planting of the Avenue Gardens and larger open spaces.

### Outcomes

The park is a highly successful green space in the heart of London, serving a large number of local, metropolitan and international users. Today it accommodates a huge range of different uses including sports, theatre, worship, education, residential buildings and the zoo. The original Nash terraced housing surrounding the park remains highly desirable. Around a third of the park's expenditure is funded directly by income generated by commercial concessions, licences and rents.

### Lessons learnt

- A well-designed and well-managed park can form the centrepiece of a successful residential area
- Well-designed buildings of an appropriate scale can form a spectacular backdrop that enhances the experience of a park as a green space within a fine urban context
- The role and success of a park also rely on its connection to other green spaces and well-connected routes.

**Design**

John Nash

**Partners and clients**

Originally built for George IV, the park is now managed by the Royal Parks, an executive agency of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

**References**

Tate, A (2001) *Great city parks*, London, Spon Press  
Royal Parks (2004) Annual report

Adjacent terraced housing  
encloses and overlooks nearly  
all the park's edges

## 7. Inclusiveness

Parks and public gardens should provide a resource for a wide range of people of both sexes and different ages and backgrounds. Public open spaces should be socially inclusive and accommodate a variety of uses. Generally all individuals should feel comfortable and no single group should dominate. Different people have different ideas about what open space is and what it is for, but most people accept that a public open space is not just for a single group.

Social inclusiveness can be promoted by creating a series of spaces that look and feel different, allowing different interest groups to use them without reducing others' enjoyment. A space might include provision for play, seating, shelters, cafés, water features, places for contemplation, skate parks, cycle routes and sports facilities.

Parks can integrate a range of buildings that allow for various activities to take place at different times of day. This should be more than just toilets and play facilities, although these are important. There are many examples of parks that contain successful cafés, nurseries, health centres, community buildings, museums and galleries.

**'A hundred objective measurements didn't sum the worth of a garden; only the delight of its users did that. Only the use made it mean something.'**

Lois McMaster Bujold, *A civil campaign*, 1999





Diverse uses should be encouraged in public space

CABE Space's recent guide to involving young people in the design and care of urban spaces (2004) shows how they can take positive action and defy stereotypes



### The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

The DDA was passed in 1995 to end the discrimination that many disabled people face. From 2004 service providers need to have made reasonable adjustments to the physical features of parks and green space to remove physical barriers to access. The Code of Practice – *Rights of access, goods, facilities, services and premises* – is available from the Disability Rights Commission's website: [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

'People think we're causing trouble but really we're just going around lots of places – we're just hanging around.'

Marc (18), a skater in Edinburgh

**Gunpowder Park, Lee Valley  
Regional Park, London**  
103 hectares

**Construction period**  
1999–2004

# Base regeneration around arts

## Background

The site of Gunpowder Park was used for manufacturing and testing for the arms industry for almost 100 years. Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA) bought the site after large-scale remediation work had been completed. Rather than simply adding it to the rest of the adjacent country park, the LVRPA decided to create a distinct character area. This has been specifically designed as a site for experimentation and exploration of the links between the arts and the environment.

The park is now managed by a special partnership between the LVRPA and Landscape and Arts Network Services (LANS), a non-profit company that helps to manage a wide-ranging programme of events and activities. LANS's role is both to help with funding and to facilitate the work itself. The park has been funded mainly by the LVRPA, with contributions from English Nature and ODPM.

A wide recognition of the potential of arts and culture-led regeneration has led to a boom in investment in museums and arts centres across the UK. Gunpowder Park represents a unique approach to arts-based regeneration in a newly created, large green space. The 103-hectare park is not just a place for art installations but is also being used as a test-bed for artists and designers to try out new forms of land art and explore how people interact with the natural world. This research and development work is feeding into the plans for open space and how people interpret and respond to different

spaces. The park itself is on the axis of the Thames Gateway and the London–Stansted–Cambridge–Peterborough growth corridor. It forms part of the strategic Lee Valley Regional Park.

## Planning and design

LDA Design produced a dramatic new landscape inspired by and reflecting the site's heritage. There are four distinct bioregions, with almost 50,000 new trees, four kilometres of new hedgerows and seven kilometres of pathways, which link into local and national networks. Features include viewing points, an earthwork stage, wetlands, working arable farmland and wildflower meadows. The park includes a field station with a flexible indoor space for art creation and exhibitions.

## Outcomes

The site is now open and well used by local people as a local park. At the same time the park is the source material for a range of arts projects considering the physical and social aspects of open space and the forces of nature. For example, the Bright Sparks project explores the way in which existing and new open spaces can be designed in order to be more stimulating for users. This responds to the risk-averse culture in public space design and management highlighted by CABE Space in *What are we scared of? The value of risk in designing public space*. Another recent project enabled local young people to develop their aspirations for regeneration of the surrounding area if the Olympic

## Design

LDA Design, Randall Shaw Billingham

## Partners and clients

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA),  
Landscape and Arts Network Services (LANS),  
English Nature, ODPM

Games come to London. The activities in the park also include research, arts-led collaborations, education, publishing and events. These are being developed within a large landscape, purpose-built infrastructure and professional support.



Buildings and landscape have become one interconnected feature within the park

## Lessons learnt

- Green spaces can become part of an innovative, arts-based regeneration strategy. The park's industrial heritage has informed both its design and current use as a place for experimentation and testing
- Green space management authorities should engage in arts and cultural events
- The experience at Gunpowder Park shows that decision-makers and planners need to engage with the wide range of social and physical dimensions of open space. With appropriate support and infrastructure, green spaces can be used as a test bed to develop an understanding of what works.

## References

[www.gunpowderpark.org](http://www.gunpowderpark.org)  
[www.landartnet.org](http://www.landartnet.org)

# 8. Biodiversity

Schemes of all scales should be designed to work with nature to encourage biodiversity in green spaces of all types. The protection and management of existing areas of valuable biodiversity should always be the priority, and where appropriate, habitat creation on a strategic scale can be used to buffer and link them. Providing a hierarchy of green spaces should help to meet biodiversity conservation objectives, as each space will offer different habitats for species. Creating habitats has a number of benefits. It repairs damaged or contaminated areas; provides an attractive and stimulating, wildlife-rich environment for children and adults; and reverses long-term habitat loss.

Biodiversity is not just a feature of nature reserves; parks provide superb opportunities for meeting Biodiversity Action Plan targets and bringing people into closer contact with nature. With a full understanding of the site's ecological context, it will be possible to make reasonably accurate predictions about how habitats and species would develop - e.g. flourish or die – if the level of management and intervention was relaxed at some time in the future. Such knowledge helps designers to work with the grain of nature, and create a green space with the best possible chance of flourishing in a range of different circumstances.



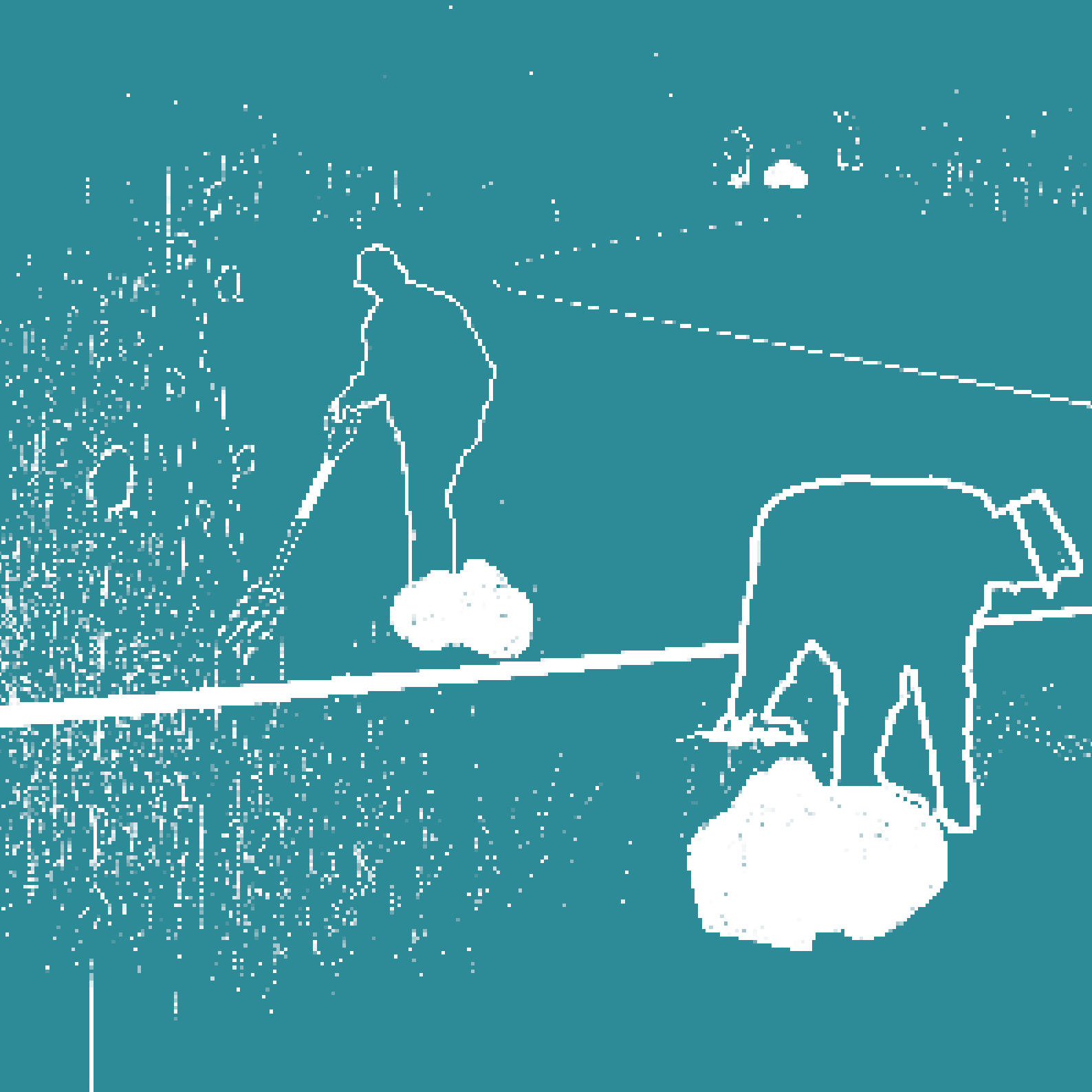
St George have commissioned a multi-disciplinary team to create a unique new habitat on the banks of the River Thames. The tidal and meadow planting scheme will increase the growth of a diverse range of flora and fauna, from mud dwelling invertebrates and butterflies to rare birds



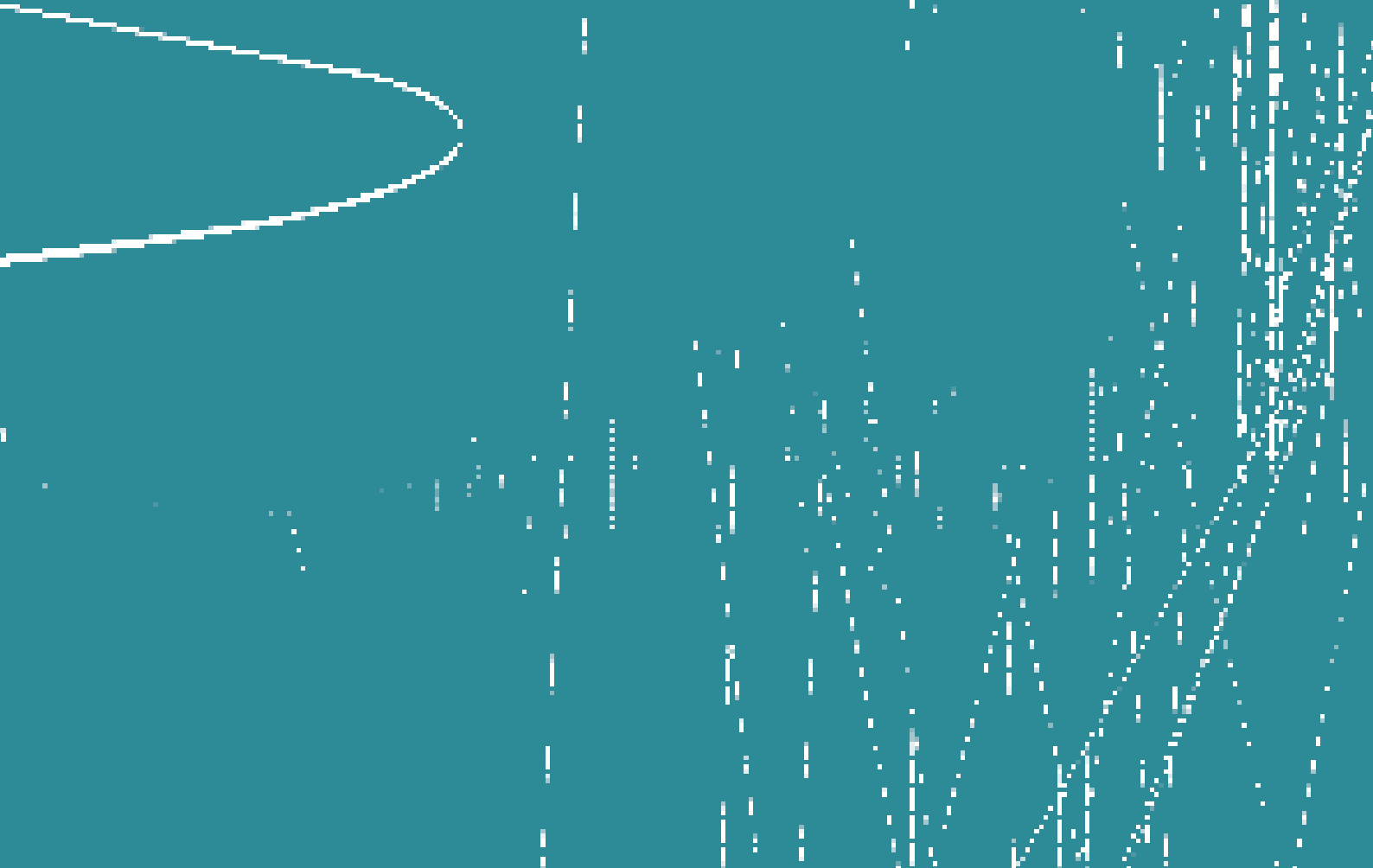
At Holyhead Copse in Sandwell a range of habitats has been created on previously contaminated land

## Thinking about design: Watch points

- **Be clear about function**  
Decision-makers should be sure about why they are creating or retaining a space, who will use it and how. They should carefully consider all the potential economic, social and environmental benefits
- **Reflect and enhance local identity**  
Parks, squares and gardens can contribute to the identity of a place, reflecting the complexity of local landscape, culture and heritage
- **Integrate green spaces with building design**  
Decision-makers need to consider carefully how buildings can help to make green spaces overlooked and well-defined. Housing areas should provide a range of good private and public spaces
- **Consider how each space relates to the public realm network**  
Parks, woodlands, river corridors and other green spaces should form part of an accessible hierarchy of linked green and civic spaces of different functions, scales and characters
- **Provide for choice**  
Green spaces should be designed to allow for choice and play, and for people to experiment with using and experiencing them in different ways
- **Build for longevity and flexibility**  
Consider how spaces might adapt to changing social, economic and environmental conditions
- **Consider all user groups**  
Public open spaces should not be dominated by any single group in such a way as to make others feel uncomfortable. This means catering for a range of needs and involving a range of users
- **Provide a range of habitats**  
Public and private green spaces of all scales should be designed to work with nature to enhance and develop local biodiversity.



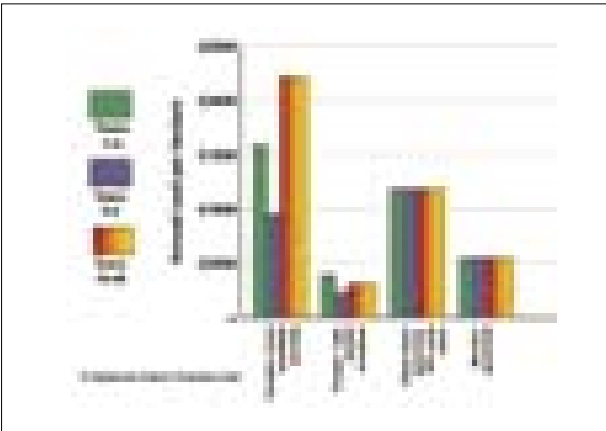
# Delivering better green spaces



# Introduction

The management of any green space must respond to the inevitable natural changes that it will undergo as it matures, and to changes in how people use it. A successful design will itself take account of these unpredictable factors, and will determine the levels of resources and skills needed to uphold its quality and value. Caring for a park or square means more than just managing the horticulture. In many cases this is often less demanding than managing how people use the space. A green space management plan is an important means of creating successful and inclusive places. CABE Space has published guidance on how to develop an effective plan.<sup>23</sup>

High quality does not necessarily mean high levels of maintenance or high cost. Maintaining wildflower meadows, for example, can be cheaper than gang-mowing large areas of grass – and a field of brightly coloured flowers may be far more appreciated by the local community than a dull patch of grass.



A green space management plan helps to create successful and inclusive places. CABE Space's guidance recommends a framework for creating and delivering the plan to maximise the benefits of a specific local green space

Research shows that traditional gang mowing of grass is often more expensive than caring for wildflower meadows or creating woodland (*Trees or turf? Best value in managing urban green space*, NUFU 1998)



## Partnerships and collaborations



Young people were involved in the masterplanning process for Swanswell



The Red Rose Forest's Green Streets programme in deprived areas of Greater Manchester depends on members of the community leading both the consultation with neighbours and the design of the final improvements. On several streets, community groups have subsequently been formed to tackle other local problems

Health and education authorities, utility companies, office parks and leisure organisations all hold significant stakes in vital areas of open land. It is important that all stakeholders in areas of both growth and low demand embrace the principle of green infrastructure. They should develop effective means of working in partnership, drawing in a range of expertise from different sectors; provide funding from a range of sources; enable effective community involvement; and develop long-term and productive working relationships. A brief description of some of the organisations involved in the planning, design, delivery and maintenance of green places can be found in the appendix.

### Community involvement

Successful design of green spaces combines creativity with an understanding of the local context. The people who live or work in the area can best contribute much of that understanding. The new or improved space will play a part in their lives; it will serve their needs; and it will reflect their concerns and values. Involving local people depends on carefully planning an inclusive design process and on making sure both that participants have the necessary support to be able to contribute successfully and that all

'I've had a go at the design and we've got what we wanted – skate park, zip line and a whole load of other stuff. It feels good as at the end of the year we'll get a good name for Kendray ... I'll be happy to bring up my kids here and hope they have a good life here like I have.'

Scott and Kieran, Kendray Play Project, Barnsley

stakeholders are committed to the process. CABE Space's publication *Green space strategies: a good practice guide*<sup>14</sup> describes how a local authority can develop a public consultation plan.

Real community involvement builds a sense of ownership that will lead to the space being cherished in the years to come. Community ownership increases levels of self-policing and can reduce levels of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. It is important that the involvement of local people – particularly young ones – continues beyond the initial design stage. Young people soon grow up, and each new generation of youth needs to be engaged.

## Higher aspirations

If you want to achieve great green spaces, you need high aspirations. Good examples can inspire and motivate.

In 1883, planners in Minneapolis were forward-thinking enough to establish a board...‘to secure the necessary land for such a grand system of parks and boulevards as the natural situation offers...which, when secure and located as they can now be at a comparatively small expense, will, in the near future, add many millions to the real estate value of our city.’

Lois McMaster Bujold, *A civil campaign*, 1999

### Learning from green space management in other countries

In 2004, CABI Space published *Is the grass greener? Learning from international innovations in urban green space management*. 11 cities with a good reputation for well-managed parks and gardens were examined. The research identified the key lessons for park managers in England:

- Strong and continued political leadership and commitment to green space quality
- A strategic view of green space management that is integrated with other public services and priorities
- An effective and well-developed process of community engagement and involvement in green space management
- Adequate and reliable resources, with long-term and secure funding from independent sources
- A general focus on quality rather than quantity
- Strong and effective lobbying by green space advocates to demonstrate the value of green space and ensure that resources are not diverted elsewhere
- Well-trained and committed staff who operate in a stable organisational environment
- Efficient management structures that devolve management responsibility to the appropriate levels
- Good collaborative partnerships with a range of public and private stakeholders
- Co-ordinated and integrated responsibility
- Dedicated management models that have some degree of political and financial independence
- Effective monitoring of outcomes that feeds back into decision-making.

## Examples of the work of CABLE Space and CABLE in raising aspirations

The Dutch study tour organised by CABLE and the Housing Corporation was joined by architect Gerard Maccreanor. Here he shows delegates the integration of social housing into mixed-use projects in Rotterdam



The Southey Owlerton Area Regeneration Board formed a partnership with CABLE and Transform South Yorkshire, which jointly sponsors a design panel of four CABLE enablers. The enablers' role is to help local groups and council officers to brief, appoint and manage designers, consultants and developers for the demonstration projects across the area. This has increased design knowledge and raised expectations



Through a comprehensive information-gathering, community involvement and data analysis process, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council laid the groundwork for its green space strategy. The enabling work of CABLE Space raised the political strategy's profile, clarifying both its links with national policy and its essential role in implementing the Community Strategy. The green space strategy has helped to gain funding and is feeding directly into the local development framework. Wakefield has now formed a strategic unit to carry out further research and analysis work on the district's green spaces

## Why it is vital to secure revenue funding

Local authorities do not have a statutory duty to provide or maintain parks and green spaces. Within local authorities, the revenue funding for maintaining parks and green spaces comes from the Environmental, Protective and Cultural Services (EPCS) block, which provides funding for all local authorities' non-statutory expenditure. In other words, parks and green spaces are competing for money with a wide range of other services including libraries, theatres and public transport support. And when money is short, it is often easiest for councillors to decide to trim a bit off the parks budget, rather than face the outcry that would happen if they had to close a swimming pool or library. This is because a reduced parks budget will rarely result in having to close a park – whereas a reduced swimming pool budget might well result in closure for lack of lifeguards or cleaners. However, if parks budgets are cut year after year, the cumulative lack of maintenance will result in a poor landscape lacking in the very facilities that visitors love – on-site staff, cafés, flowerbeds, good paths, well-drained

sports pitches and so on. It is therefore vital to find sources of funding that can be ring-fenced for parks maintenance, rather than being added to the central funding pot, where they may too easily be diverted to support other services.

In the last decade or so it has become easier to find capital funding for restoring parks and green spaces. The Heritage Lottery Fund has provided £320 million since 1995 for over 200 urban parks. ODPM, The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, Big Lottery Fund, the Countryside Agency, Sport England and the Environment Agency, among others, provide a range of funds to improve or create green spaces. Planning obligations, strategic tariffs and regeneration funds can also provide capital funding. However, it is often very difficult to secure revenue funding. All too often, parks and other spaces are restored to a very high standard, yet within a few years can decline again because they have not been maintained.

### Generating ring-fenced income for green spaces

It is therefore vital, when planning a green space, to look at ways of embedding within the plan sources of income generation that can be ring-fenced to provide money to pay for maintenance. These could include producing crops for biomass energy generation or earning rents from buildings in the park such as cafés, health centres or community buildings. These ideas need to be considered right at the outset – once the space has been designed and completed it is often too late to create revenue-generating elements within it. Although features such as cafés and community buildings can generate income, this is likely to be far more difficult in poorer areas where people have less to spend. In general, we need to find a range of different ways to bring ongoing funding to green spaces. CABI Space is helping to do this by researching alternative models of securing revenue funding for green spaces.

The Milton Keynes Parks Trust was founded in 1992 as an independent body to manage and create new parks and green spaces. It was set up with £18 million of assets, including a range of commercial buildings. These provide a secure income of around £3 million a year to fund the trust's work, including providing and maintaining over 1,800 hectares of wetlands, woodlands, parks and transport corridors

Mile End Park receives a considerable proportion of its maintenance funds from events held in its two pavilions and the rents from retail units beneath the green bridge. Further income will be generated by installing twin wind turbines, which will sell electricity to the National Grid, and selling water from an on-site borehole



**Sandwell, West Midlands**  
1.6 hectares

**Construction period**  
1991

# Find cost-effective solutions

## Background

One of the key challenges for many low-demand areas is how to manage large numbers of fragmented, contaminated and potentially dangerous sites. There are often insufficient funds to convert them into formal parks or to provide intense continuing maintenance. Many of these areas could be greatly improved by planting trees and woodland using cost-effective techniques.

The National Urban Forestry Unit (NUFU) has been developing appropriate ways of rapidly reclaiming this kind of derelict land. Holyhead Copse is one practical example. It is a 1.6-hectare site in Sandwell, West Midlands, surrounded by low-demand housing and industry. The site had been infilled with a mixture of inert materials following open cast coal extraction. The surface had been compacted and sealed in some areas with concrete. There had been some colonisation by rough grass and low-growing vegetation and there was also some fly-tipping.

## Planning and design

The site was ripped by machine in order to facilitate tree root penetration and, after consultation with local residents, it was planted with more than 4,000 saplings. Pioneer species such as alder and birch were the main tree species used. These grew quickly and made a rapid impact. Smaller groups of oak saplings were also included and existing desire line paths were retained through the planting.

## Outcomes

In the space of five years the site had been transformed from an indistinct area of rough open grassland and rubble into a visually attractive area of young woodland. Canopy closure was achieved over most of the area within four years. More than 95 per cent of the trees survived and vandalism rates were very low.

The copse cost £2,500 per hectare to create in 1991 (a fraction of the cost of more formal landscapes) and requires very little maintenance each year by the local council.

The site has been increasingly well used by local residents for dog walking, children's play and other informal activities and it also provides a wide range of habitats for wildlife.

## Design

Black Country Urban Forestry Unit,  
now the National Urban Forestry Unit (NUFU)

## Partners

Black Country Urban Forestry Unit, now the National Urban Forestry Unit (NUFU), the Forestry Commission, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

### Lessons learnt

- Where derelict land has little chance of being developed, woodland can provide a visually attractive and cost-effective long-term alternative. The resulting informal green space can begin to make a positive impact within a very short time and it is easy and inexpensive to maintain
- Urban forestry offers considerable biodiversity benefits. The Woodland Wildlife survey found that the Black Country Urban Forest (of which Holyhead is a part) 'supports an extraordinary range of plants and animals'.

### References

[www.nufu.org.uk](http://www.nufu.org.uk)

National Urban Forestry Unit (2001)

*Woodland wildlife: The biodiversity of the Black Country Urban Forest, Wolverhampton, National Urban Forestry Unit*

National Urban Forestry Unit (1998) Urban forestry in practice case study 1: *Cost-effective woodland planting on derelict land, Wolverhampton, National Urban Forestry Unit*



## Awards

Successful green spaces are a cause for celebration and congratulation. Don't take them for granted: use award schemes such as the Green Flag Award and Green Pennant Award to spread the word, give credit where it is due, and inspire others to emulate the example. A list of awards can be found in the appendix.

## Developing awareness and skills

Every stage of the process – from initiation to conception, design, realisation and maintenance – depends on people with the right skills, knowledge and attitudes. Awareness-raising and training needs to be planned in the light of an understanding of who requires training, what skills are required and what methods of training are appropriate. *Parks need people need parks*, published by CABE Space, highlights the acute skills shortages in park planning, management and maintenance.<sup>24</sup>

## The fourth dimension

A good plan takes time to develop. Public realm projects can provide early wins and provide a quality benchmark for all future developments.



‘The most important thing is to start’

Evert Verhagen, project manager of Westerpark in Amsterdam, sums up the key lesson of 15 years' work



## Delivering better green spaces: Watch points

- **Create higher aspirations**  
Champion the need for better green spaces. Examples in this guide can be used to show what is possible
- **Build creative partnerships**  
Involve stakeholders from a range of public and private bodies in green space planning to create successful partnerships
- **Involve the community at every stage**  
Local knowledge is essential in developing an effective design. Involvement can build a sense of ownership, and reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour
- **Celebrate successes**  
Use the numerous award schemes to highlight the best green spaces
- **Develop skills**  
Skills and knowledge in planning, design, maintenance and community involvement are essential for long-term success
- **Start now**  
Green spaces can provide quick wins and show that change is possible. Early investment in improving the public realm can create confidence for other investors.

# Appendix

## Other planning policy and guidance documents not mentioned in the main report

Unless otherwise stated the following can be downloaded from [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk):

ODPM (2005) Planning policy statement 1 (PPS1), delivering sustainable development, with its companion guide DETR and CABE (2000) *By design, urban design in the planning system: towards better practice*, Thomas Telford Ltd, London

ODPM (2000) Planning policy guidance 3 (PPG3), housing, with its companion guide, DTLR and CABE (2001) *Better places to live*, Thomas Telford Ltd, London

ODPM (2005) Planning policy statement 6 (PPS6), planning for town centres

ODPM (2005) Planning policy guidance 9 (PPG9), nature conservation

ODPM and Home Office (2004) *Safer places: the planning system and crime prevention*, Thomas Telford Ltd, London

The Bartlett School of Planning, UCL (2004) *Living places: caring for quality*, ODPM, London.

## Glossary

A full range of definitions is provided by *The dictionary of urbanism*  
[www.urbanwords.info](http://www.urbanwords.info)

### Area action plans

are development plan documents that provide a planning framework for an area of significant change or conservation.

**Biotope** is an area of relatively uniform environmental conditions, occupied by a particular plant community and its associated fauna.

**Design codes** set out and illustrate with some precision how design and planning principles should be applied to development and the structure of its public and green spaces in a particular place.

A design code may be included as part of an urban design framework, a development brief or a masterplan when a degree of prescription is appropriate.

### Development briefs

provide guidance on how a specific site of significant size or sensitivity should be developed in line with

the relevant planning and design policies, and in particular how green space can help to make the most of the specific site. The brief will usually contain some indicative, but flexible vision of future development form.

**Development plan documents** are spatial planning documents subject to independent examination.

### Green space strategies

are cross-cutting documents that set out the current condition of a local authority's stock of green spaces and its vision for the future. They identify the resources, responsibilities and timescales needed to make this vision a reality.

### Green space management plans

are documents that are produced for each park or green space. They identify the current condition, a vision, an action plan with funding and resources, and a monitoring process.

### Local biodiversity action plans (LBAPs)

are the mechanisms by which local areas will secure the targets set

out in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. They provide information on habitats and species, including those at risk. Guidance on LBAPs can be obtained from the UK Biodiversity Partnership.

**Local development documents** are statutory development plan documents or non-statutory supplementary planning documents contained in a local development framework.

**Local development frameworks** are portfolios of local development documents that together provide a framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for an area.

**Masterplans** chart the masterplanning process and explain how a site or a series of sites will be developed (although the term is often applied more generally to any form of design guidance). The masterplan will describe how the proposal and its green spaces will be implemented, and it will set out the costs, phasing and timing of development.

**Public realm strategies** provide guidance on all the public space – green, hard or street – in an area or district. They deal with matters under the control of a wide range of different organisations, with a multitude of different long-term objectives. Such a strategy may be the key to providing a framework in which green spaces can be integrated into their urban setting.

### Supplementary planning documents

are pieces of guidance supplementing the policies and proposals in development plan documents.

### Urban design frameworks

illustrate how planning and design policies and principles should be implemented in areas where there is a need to control, guide and promote change. This includes urban quarters, transport corridors, regeneration areas and town centres. An urban design framework will set out the basic structure of green and other open spaces, and may be used to co-ordinate more detailed development briefs and masterplans.

Organisations

National government

DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

DCMS aims to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, to support the pursuit of excellence and to champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries. It is responsible for the listing of over 500,000 historic buildings and the scheduling of ancient monuments. It sponsors CABE and the Royal Parks Agency, and is responsible for the National Lottery.

[www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)

DEPARTMENT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Defra has a series of national initiatives that will help to deliver sustainable development by conserving and enhancing ecology and landscapes, promoting the efficient use of natural resources and managing flood risk.

[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

ODPM is the department with responsibility for developing thriving, inclusive and sustainable communities in all regions. It has a major impact on the planning, design, funding and policy framework for urban green spaces. It funds green spaces through its Living Spaces Scheme and the Safer, Stronger Communities Fund. ODPM has a lead role in implementing major objectives of the cleaner, safer, greener programme and co-ordinating its delivery across government in order to take forward the Living Places agenda.

[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)  
[www.living-spaces.org.uk](http://www.living-spaces.org.uk)

National agencies, associations & trusts

BIG LOTTERY FUND

The Big Lottery Fund was created by merging the New Opportunities Fund and the Community Fund. The fund will continue to fund charities and the voluntary sector

and health, education and the environment, but it will also take on the Millennium Commission's ability to fund large regenerative projects.

[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

CIVIC TRUST

The Civic Trust inspires and promotes improvements in the quality of urban life for everyone throughout the UK. It is devoted to enhancing the quality of life in Britain's cities, towns and villages: the places where people live, work, shop and relax. It also sets high standards of design and sustainability, and recognises and rewards the best with its annual Civic Trust Awards.

ENGLISH HERITAGE

English Heritage's role is to make sure that the historic environment of England is properly maintained and cared for. It also aims to help people understand and appreciate why the historic buildings and landscapes around them matter. It provides a range of grants and advice and helps designate

special places.

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS

English Partnerships is the national regeneration agency, helping the government to support high-quality, sustainable growth in England. This occurs through the development of a portfolio of strategic sites and the redevelopment of brownfield and government-owned land.

[www.englishpartnerships.co.uk](http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk)

ENTRUST

ENTRUST regulates the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, which encourages and enables landfill operators to support a wide range of environmental projects by giving them a tax credit against their donations to environmental bodies. Around half of this is spent on parks, green spaces and the restoration of buildings.

[www.ltcs.org.uk](http://www.ltcs.org.uk)

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Environment Agency is the leading public

body for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales, ensuring that air, land and water are managed sustainably. It works in areas as diverse as flood defence, pollution control, town planning, farming and waste. It also funds improvements to green spaces.

#### GROUNDWORK UK

Groundwork UK is a leading environmental regeneration charity, aiming to make sustainable development a reality in the UK's poorest neighbourhoods. Every year sub-regional Groundwork Trusts deliver thousands of projects in neighbourhoods blighted by high unemployment and crime levels, poor public health, run-down housing and public spaces, waste ground and struggling businesses.

[www.groundwork.org.uk](http://www.groundwork.org.uk)

#### LAND RESTORATION TRUST

A partnership comprising

English Partnerships, Groundwork UK, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency, the Land Restoration Trust is a new venture aimed at tackling enduring dereliction across England. The Land Restoration Trust will provide environmentally informed, community-led, long-term regeneration solutions through local partnerships.

[www.landrestorationtrust.org.uk](http://www.landrestorationtrust.org.uk)

#### LANDSCAPE DESIGN TRUST

The Landscape Design Trust aims to disseminate information about landscape to the widest possible audience through publications and its website.

[www.landscape.co.uk](http://www.landscape.co.uk)

#### LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE

The Landscape Institute is the chartered institute for landscape architects in the UK. It promotes the highest standards in the practice of landscape architecture and management. Its main objective is to regulate the way its members operate through its mandatory code of

professional conduct.

#### NATIONAL TRUST

The National Trust holds many areas of natural beauty and special buildings in perpetuity for the nation. It is involved with a wide range of education and business initiatives.

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

#### NATURAL ENGLAND

Following publication of the draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill in February 2005, English Nature, the environment activities of the Rural Development Service and the Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation division are working together to protect and enhance our landscapes and wildlife, promote countryside access and recreation.

In 2007 the three organisations will be united in a single body with responsibility for enhancing biodiversity and our landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas; promoting access,

recreation and public well-being; and contributing to the way natural resources are managed – so they can be enjoyed now and for future generations.

[www.english-nature.org.uk/About/naturalengland.htm](http://www.english-nature.org.uk/About/naturalengland.htm)

#### Urban parks

GREENSPACE (formerly Urban Parks Forum)

GreenSpace is a charitable organisation set up to help those committed to the planning, design, management and use of public parks and open spaces. It is a membership organisation dedicated to promoting the importance of public spaces and increasing awareness of related issues.

#### HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

The Heritage Lottery Fund enables communities to look after, learn about and celebrate the UK's diverse heritage. Since establishing its Urban Parks Programme in 1995, it has committed

£320 million to regenerating over 200 parks.

[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

## **Outdoor sports and children's play**

### **CHILDREN'S PLAY COUNCIL**

The Children's Play Council is a campaigning and research organisation promoting children's policy development in England. The CPC is an alliance of national and regional voluntary organisations, local authorities and partnerships. It aims to raise awareness of the importance of play. It promotes consultation with children and young people of all abilities and facilitates networks between children's services.

### **FOOTBALL FOUNDATION**

The foundation aims to revitalise the grass-roots sport of football, investing in parks, schools and playing fields, and harnessing the power of the game within communities, to promote

education and social inclusion. Its mission is to improve facilities, create opportunities and build communities, with grants ranging from £100 to £1 million.

[www.footballfoundation.org.uk](http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk)

### **INSTITUTE OF LEISURE AND AMENITIES MANAGEMENT**

ILAM is the professional body for the leisure industry and represents the interests of leisure managers across the arts, children's play, libraries, museums, parks and open spaces. The institute helps those working in leisure to extend their skills, develop their careers and improve the lives of individuals and communities across the UK.

[www.ilam.co.uk](http://www.ilam.co.uk)

### **LEARNING THROUGH LANDSCAPES**

Learning through Landscapes is the national school grounds charity. It works with schools, early-years settings, organisations and individuals across the country to help them improve and develop their grounds.

[www.ltl.org.uk](http://www.ltl.org.uk)

### **NATIONAL PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION**

The NPFA is the only national organisation with specific responsibility for acquiring, protecting and improving playing fields, playgrounds and play space. It provides an advisory service and publications on design, layout and safety.

[www.npfa.co.uk](http://www.npfa.co.uk)

### **SPORT ENGLAND**

Sport England is committed to creating opportunities for people to start sport, stay in sport and succeed in sport. It encourages people to get involved with sport and physical activity, distributes funding and invests in a range of sporting projects. It seeks to influence decision-makers and public opinion.

[www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)

### **THE SENSORY TRUST**

The Sensory Trust raises awareness of good practice in green space design and management; makes green space more accessible; and offers consultancy and advice on inclusive design.

[www.sensorytrust.org.uk](http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk)

### **Trees, woodland and nature conservation**

#### **BTCV**

BTCV is the UK's largest practical conservation charity. It helps over 130,000 volunteers take hands-on action each year to improve the rural and urban environment. It has received funds from Defra and the National Lottery.

[www.btcv.org.uk](http://www.btcv.org.uk)

#### **FORESTRY COMMISSION**

The Forestry Commission is the government department responsible for forestry policy throughout Great Britain. It aims to protect and expand Britain's forests and woodlands, and increase their value to society and the environment.

[www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)

#### **NATIONAL COMMUNITY FORESTS PARTNERSHIP**

The partnership works with the 12 community forests in England to create high-quality environments for millions of people by diversifying land use, revitalising

derelict land, revitalising derelict landscapes, enhancing biodiversity and providing new opportunities for leisure, recreation, cultural activity, education, healthy living, and social and economic development.

[www.communityforest.org.uk](http://www.communityforest.org.uk)

### NATIONAL URBAN FORESTRY UNIT

NUFU is a charitable organisation that aims to raise awareness of the positive contribution that trees make to the quality of life in towns. It champions urban and community forestry to those tackling such issues as public health, leisure and recreation, land reclamation, built development, heritage and education.

[www.nufu.org.uk](http://www.nufu.org.uk)

### TREE COUNCIL

The Tree Council's aim is to improve the environment in town and country by promoting the planting and conservation of trees and woods throughout the UK. It disseminates knowledge and acts as a forum for organisations concerned with trees.

[www.treecouncil.org.uk](http://www.treecouncil.org.uk)

### TREES FOR CITIES

Trees for Cities is an independent charity supporting city-wide tree planting and greening initiatives in urban areas of greatest need. Its aim is to stimulate a greening renaissance in cities around the world.

[www.treesforcities.org](http://www.treesforcities.org)

### WILDLIFE TRUSTS

The Wildlife Trusts partnership is the UK's leading conservation charity exclusively dedicated to wildlife. Its network of 47 local wildlife trusts, alongside a junior branch, Wildlife Watch, work together to protect wildlife in towns and the countryside. The wildlife trusts care for over 2,560 nature reserves, from rugged coastline to urban wildlife havens. With more than 413,000 members, the wildlife trusts lobby for better protection of the UK's natural heritage.

[www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)

### Green routes

#### BRITISH WATERWAYS

British Waterways is responsible for maintaining 2,000 miles (3,220km) of the UK's inland waterway network so that people can use it for a wide range of leisure activities. It is also seeking to extend the network as part of the UK's tourism industry.

[www.britishwaterways.co.uk](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk)

#### NATIONAL TRAILS

National Trails provides over 2,500 miles (4,000km) of the nation's favourite rambles and rides, offering some of the best walking, riding and cycling experiences in the country.

#### SUSTRANS

Sustrans works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in order to reduce motor traffic. It is responsible for the National Cycle Network, a project that has delivered nearly 10,000 miles of routes in the UK.

[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

### Allotments and city farms

#### ENCAMS

ENCAMS is the charity that runs the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. Its aims are to convince its targeted groups to take effective action to enable others to improve, maintain and own their local environments; correctly dispose of material that could become litter; deter gum deposition; deter graffiti; reduce nuisance and abandoned vehicles; and reduce the nuisance of neighbourhood noise.

#### FEDERATION OF CITY FARMS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens is a charity that supports, promotes and represents city farms and community gardens throughout the UK. Its members range from organic orchards to pockets of urban space saved from development; from allotment associations to well-

established city farms. There are 59 city farms, over 1,000 community gardens, 75 school farms and many allotment groups.

[www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)

#### LANDSCAPE AND ARTS NETWORK SERVICES

LANS is an international network of visual and performing artists, craftspeople, academics, landscape architects, architects, journalists, ecologists and environmentalists, which aims to improve the landscape and surroundings through art, design and creative activity.

[www.landartnet.org](http://www.landartnet.org)

#### NATIONAL SOCIETY OF ALLOTMENT AND LEISURE GARDENERS

The society aims to help all enjoy the recreation of gardening by supporting the creation of gardening associations, promoting garden facilities and providing advice to gardeners.

[www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk)

#### ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

The RSPB is the UK charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and wildlife.

[www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)



## Awards

### BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF LANDSCAPE INDUSTRIES AWARDS

BALI awards are given to members who have demonstrated exceptionally high standards of landscape quality.  
[www.bali.co.uk](http://www.bali.co.uk)

### BRITISH URBAN REGENERATION ASSOCIATION AWARDS

BURA presents a range of awards including ones for community trusts and waterways.  
[www.bura.org.uk](http://www.bura.org.uk)

### BUILDING FOR LIFE STANDARD

The Building for Life Standard is awarded to new housing projects that demonstrate a commitment to high design standards and good place-making.  
[www.buildingforlife.org](http://www.buildingforlife.org)

### CIVIC TRUST AWARDS

The Civic Trust Awards credit excellence in design and community involvement in the

built environment.  
[www.civictrust.org.uk](http://www.civictrust.org.uk)

### GREEN FLAG AWARD SCHEME

The scheme is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. It recognises diversity and distinctiveness. It is about identifying the value of individual green spaces to people who use them.  
[www.greenflagaward.org.uk](http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk)

### GREEN HERITAGE SITE

Green Heritage Site status is awarded to those green spaces of high quality that are of local or national historic interest.  
[www.greenflagaward.org.uk](http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk)

### GREEN PENNANT AWARDS

Green Pennant Award status recognises high-quality green spaces that are managed by the voluntary and community sector.  
[www.greenflagaward.org.uk](http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk)

### GREENLEAF AWARDS

Greenleaf Awards recognise best practice in new housing

landscapes in the UK. They are open to schemes of any size that are more than three years old.  
[www.greenleafawards.co.uk](http://www.greenleafawards.co.uk)

### ILAM OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT AWARD

The Open Space Management Award seeks to promote the imaginative improvement of the open space environment by recognising the most innovative scheme undertaken to enhance the use of a single, publicly accessible park or open space.  
[www.ilam.co.uk](http://www.ilam.co.uk)

### LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE AWARDS

The Landscape Institute gives a range of awards including those for design and research into green spaces.

### ODPM AWARD FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The Sustainable Communities Award recognises projects and initiatives that contribute to making towns and

cities better places in which to live and work.  
[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

### THE ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE AWARDS

RTPI gives a range of awards including ones for planning sustainable communities and regional planning.  
[www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk)

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Case study sources

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## Further reading

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To download a copy visit [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

ODPM (2004) *Living places: caring for quality.*

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## The role of CABE

CABE has five areas of activity:

- CABE Space seeks to bring excellence to the design and management of public spaces. It helps local authorities to develop strategic approaches to the delivery of high-quality space. It demonstrates the economic, environmental and social value of urban space, and raises public and professional awareness of the importance of quality parks and spaces. And it improves skills within the professions responsible for the design, management and maintenance of public space.
- The design review programme, led by a design review panel, acts as a non-statutory consultee on significant planning applications.
- The enabling programme provides support and advice mainly to public organisations, through its staff team and panel of enablers. Enabling involvement is at the outset of the design and development process, often prior to the appointment of a design team, consultants or a developer, with the main focus on assisting people who are charged with delivering or procuring new facilities or buildings and those involved in setting the policy context for development.
- The learning and development programme seeks to increase levels of knowledge, skills and opportunity among both professionals and public. Its regional programmes encourage greater understanding and ownership of built environment issues by promoting built environment education through a national network of Architecture and Built Environment Centres. CABE co-ordinates a professional skills learning programme and promotes the built environment as a learning resource for young people.
- The policy, research and communications team works with academics and experts to demonstrate the social and economic value of design, and to expose the barriers to change.

Visit [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk) for further information



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