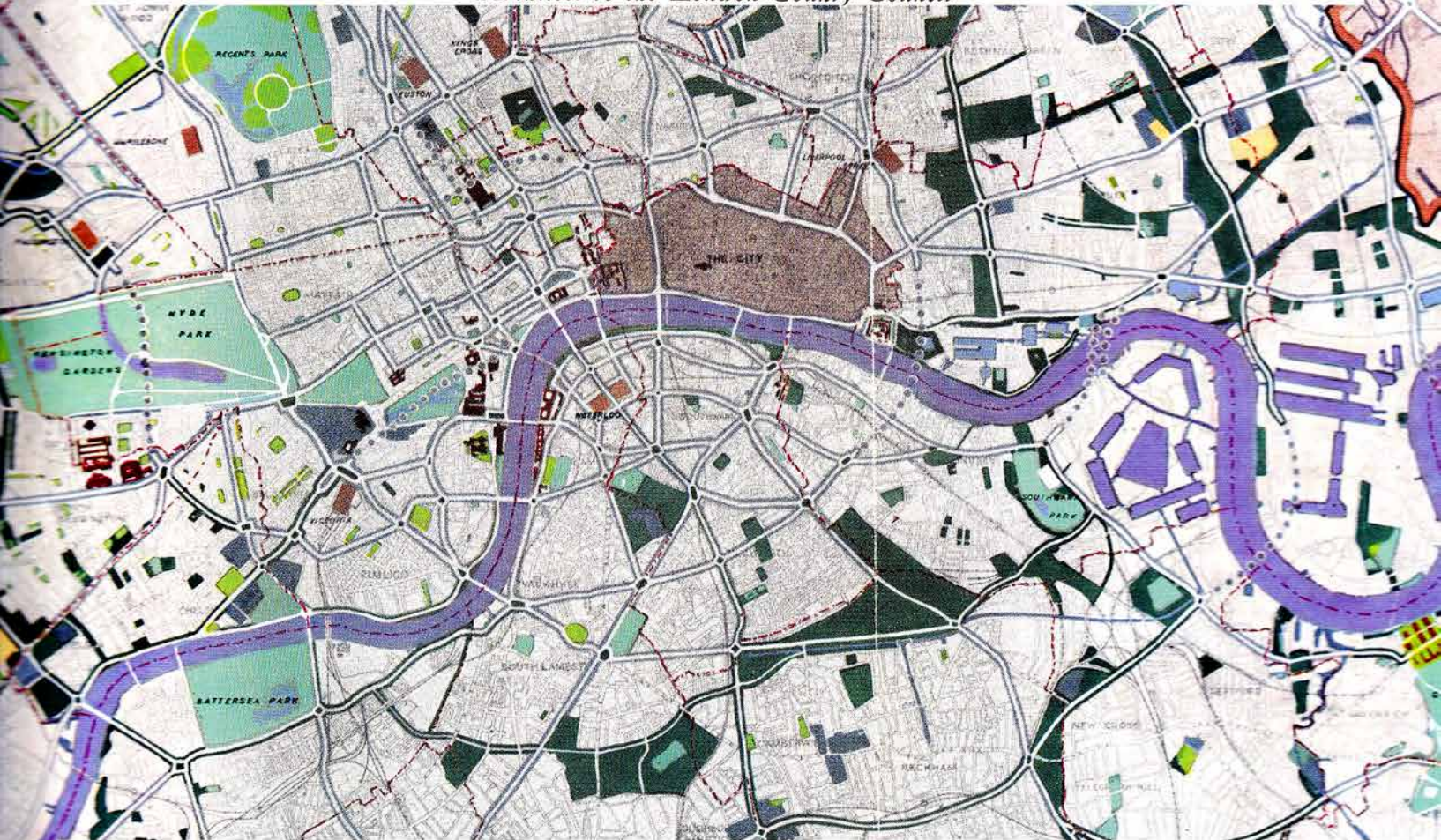


COUNTY OF LONDON PLAN

PREPARED FOR THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

PATRICK ABERCROMBIE, M.A., F.R.I.B.A., P.P.T.P.I.
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Chapter Three

OPEN SPACES AND PARK SYSTEM

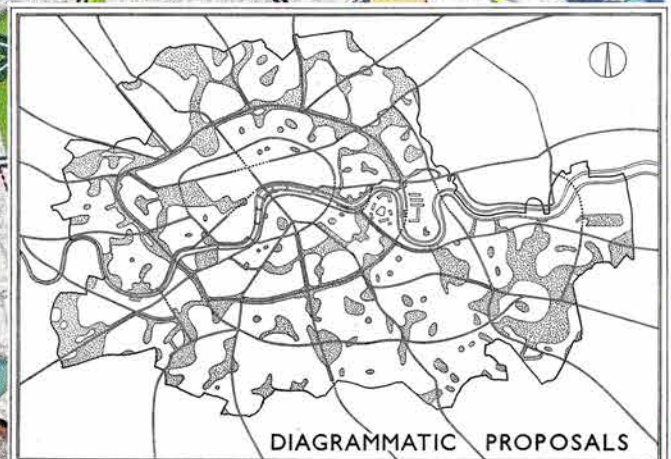
COUNTY OF LONDON PLAN OPEN SPACE PLAN

EXISTING PUBLIC OPEN SPACE	EXISTING PUBLIC BUILDINGS
PROPOSED PUBLIC OPEN SPACE	CEMETERIES
PRIVATE OPEN SPACE SUITABLE FOR PUBLIC	INSTITUTIONS WITH SUBSTANTIAL OPEN SPACE
ROAD PROPOSALS	BOROUGH BOUNDARIES

THE AREA OF OPEN SPACE SHOWN IS BASED ON A STANDARD OF 4 ACRES PER THOUSAND POPULATION OF WHICH AN ALLOWANCE OF $\frac{1}{4}$ ACRE PER THOUSAND POPULATION IN CERTAIN RESIDENTIAL AREAS AND 1 ACRE PER 10,000 DAYTIME POPULATION IN CENTRAL COMMERCIAL AREAS IS NOT SHOWN ON THIS PLAN.



SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
MILES
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
FEET



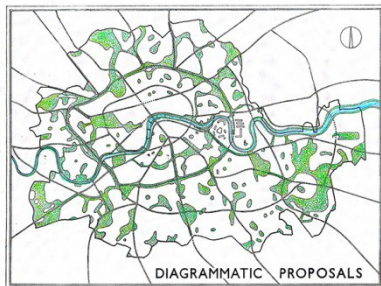
DIAGRAMMATIC PROPOSALS

1943-4 Abercrombie Plan

The *County of London Plan* was published in 1943-4. Brimming with optimism and confidence, it was a remarkable production in the darkest years of the Second World War. The authors were Sir Leslie Patrick Abercrombie (1879-1957) and John Henry Forshaw (1895-1973). The title page of the plan describes Abercrombie as a Professor of Town Planning and Forshaw as an architect. In fact, both men were architects – and both were on the council of the Institute of Landscape Architects (the ILA, which became the Landscape Institute). As Tony Aldous wrote, the plan ‘not only set the pattern for conurbation planning the world over, but was a pioneer in giving landscape a place of importance in town planning’.

The ideas behind the plan are believed to have come more from Abercrombie than from Forshaw – who provided the facts, figures and illustrations which gave them substance. It has therefore come to be known as ‘The Abercrombie Plan’. I can record a comment on Abercrombie’s character from another landscape architect, Peter Youngman, who worked with him. Youngman described Abercrombie as a bon viveur who could talk on any subject. When his office was in danger of being burned down during the War, Abercrombie dashed into the building. His staff expected him to rescue valuable papers. He ran out with a crate of claret.

1943-4 Abercrombie Plan



The Preface to the Abercrombie Plan states that:

There are four major defects for which a plan, if it is to be of any value, must propose fundamental remedies. They comprise traffic congestion, depressed housing, inadequacy and maldistribution of open spaces, and finally the jumble of houses and industry...

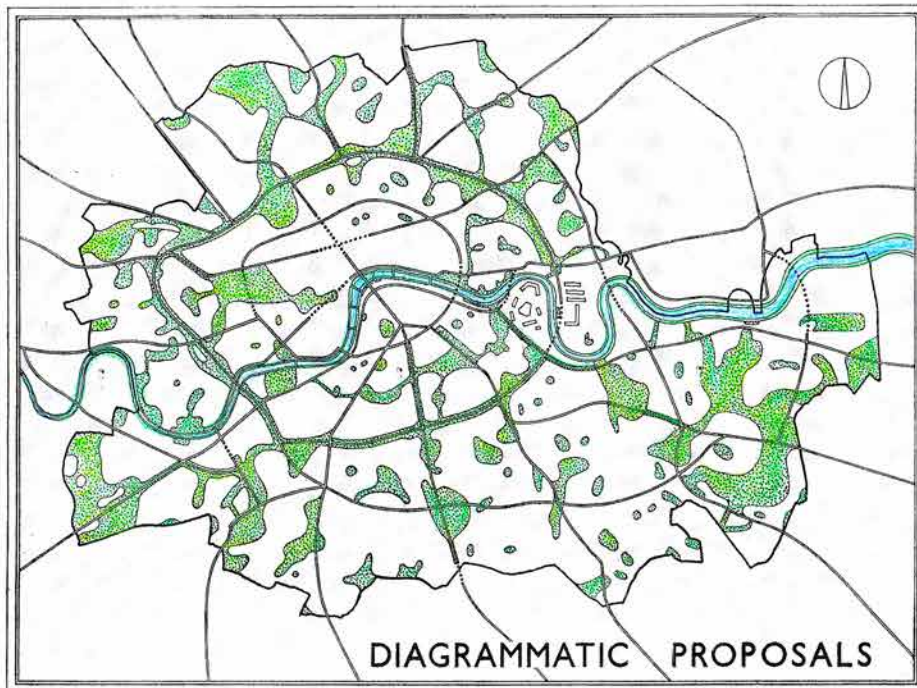
Abercrombie therefore wrote separate chapters on:

- Open Spaces and Park System - Chapter 3
- Communications (Roads, Railways etc) - Chapter 4
- Housing - Chapter 5
- Industrial Survey - Chapter 6

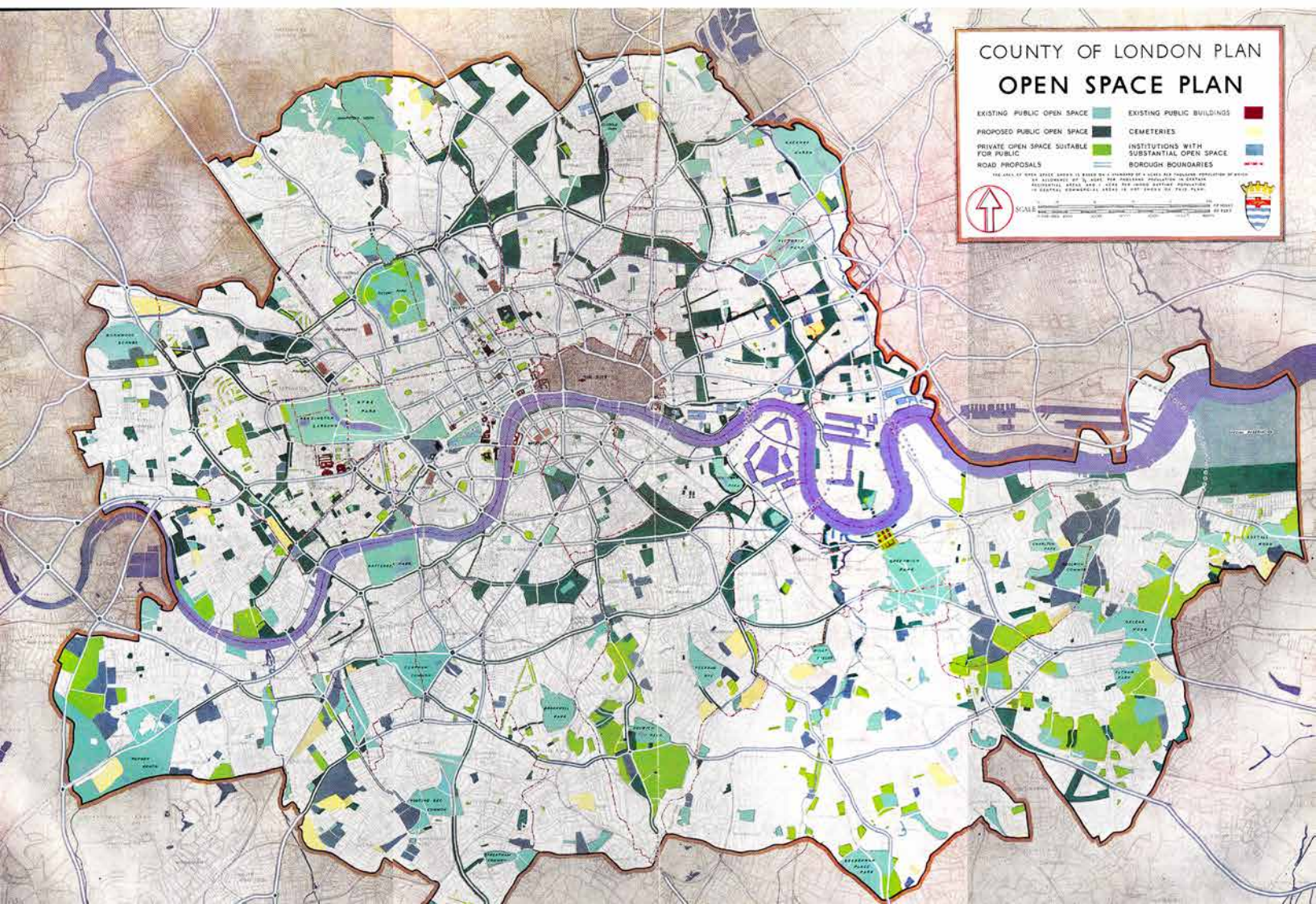
Chapter 3 is reproduced here. It is notable that Abercrombie gives ‘Open Spaces and Park System’ priority over his treatment of Roads, Housing and Industry. Instead of summarising the Chapter 3, I will let Abercrombie speak for himself.

OPEN SPACES AND PARK SYSTEM

Diagrammatic proposal for linking parks to form an open space system



Open Space Plan for the Country of London, following the diagram



COUNTY OF LONDON PLAN

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by

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

The Right Hon. LORD LATHAM

Leader of the London County Council

MACMILLAN AND CO. LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1943

Chapter Three

OPEN SPACES AND PARK SYSTEM

A DEQUATE open space for both recreation and rest is a vital factor in maintaining and improving the health of the people. It is considered a highly important aspect to be dealt with in the Plan. [135]

Following the last war there was a marked increase in the demand for all types of games, particularly field games. This gradually subsided, the Council's inability to meet the demand by the provision of new open spaces no doubt contributing indirectly to the decline. During immediate pre-war years facilities for games, due to acquisition of land, improved but by no means sufficiently to make matters satisfactory. In 1939 there were approximately 1,000 football clubs and 800 cricket clubs, whose requirements had to be met as best they could on the existing 436 football and 360 cricket pitches. The total games area available was approximately 2,000 acres, out of a total of 8,261 acres of public open space. The unequal distribution of pitches in many cases necessitated undue travel, and this deterred many who would otherwise have participated in games activities. In some parts of London only one-third of the clubs making application for fields could be satisfied. The 2,000 acres also had to serve the school-children, whose playing facilities adjacent to their schools are in the main restricted to small areas, as well as the casual players not organised in clubs. [136]

With the growth of leisure periods, the development of physical training and the requirements of the youth movement, it is anticipated that there will be a greatly increased demand for games facilities after the war. At present, extensive areas of the existing parks and playing fields are being used for war purposes or allotments, and one of the first measures must be their reinstatement for public use. If, however, the increased public demand is to be met, there must be a simultaneous programme of acquisition of substantial new open space. [137]

PRESENT MALDISTRIBUTION AND DEFICIENCIES

The present provision and distribution of public open space in relation to the density of population varies considerably throughout the County. Comparison of acreage of public open space per 1,000 population shows that the standard varies between 6 acres per 1,000 in Woolwich and 0.1 acres per 1,000 in Shoreditch. The south-west and south-east, and parts of the western residential areas, are reasonably well provided, but there are extensive districts, notably in the East End and in the South Bank Boroughs, where open space is practically non-existent. Deptford, Finsbury, Southwark, Stepney, Islington and Shoreditch all have less than half an acre of public open space for every 1,000 persons. It is in these areas that the people are crowded most thickly on the ground and where, therefore, for an equitable distribution, the amount of open space should be proportionately higher. [138]

A clear picture of where the main deficiencies lie can be seen from the open space analysis map, which shows the districts that have no open spaces above 10 acres in extent within a walking distance of half a mile. The uncoloured areas around the open spaces represent the residential areas served. Where the size of the open space is insufficient to provide a standard of 4 acres per 1,000 population to all those living within half a mile walking distance, the

uncoloured area has been reduced to conform with this standard. A basis of the half mile walking distance alone would have implied that a very small open space caters for everyone living within this distance. The fallacy of this basis could be proved if everyone in this area tried to utilise the small park at the same time. For private open spaces, where there is no public access, only a narrow fringe of residential area around has been considered as being served. [139]

PROPOSED STANDARDS OF OPEN SPACE

Careful consideration has been given to the question as to what should be the appropriate standard of open space for highly developed areas. The conclusion arrived at is that 4 acres per 1,000 population is a reasonable figure to adopt. This is considerably below the 7 acres suggested by many competent authorities, both in this and other countries, but it is put forward in view of the already highly developed use of the land in these areas, and on the understanding that an extra 3 acres per 1,000 are provided outside the County area, either in the Green Belt or in the wedges of open space leading from the latter to the County boundary. [140]

The provision of the new open space necessary for the realisation of this standard will considerably reduce the gross housing density, as compared with prevailing densities or with those adopted by the Council in the past for the rebuilding of limited areas. We believe this to be inevitable. [141]

The areas of required new open space are based on the population figures, after decentralisation to a net density of 136 persons per acre, in those areas concerned, and elsewhere on an estimated 1945 population, allowing for a continuation of the decreases or increases in population which have taken place over the last twenty years. The 8,261 acres of existing public open space, including protected squares and disused burial grounds, do not all contribute to the 4-acre standard, for in some districts, particularly Woolwich and Greenwich, there is already a surplus above this standard; where, however, the proximity of this surplus open space is near enough to be used by neighbouring districts, an allowance has been made for part of the deficiencies there to be covered by it. [142]

After this allocation 373 acres remain as surplus in Woolwich and Greenwich, giving an effective acreage of 7,883 acres of public open space. The surplus in Woolwich can be considered as part of the Green Belt. [143]

The full standard is not shown on the open space plan, there being an allowance for amenity open space, comprising squares and children's playing fields, of one-third of an acre per 1,000 population, equivalent to 1,107 acres over the whole County. Except where sufficient already exists, this would be provided as and when redevelopment takes place. [144]

The 4 acres per 1,000 population includes all types of green open space, excepting space around and between buildings, which is included in the net density. The main types of open space are as follows:—

- i. Amenity parks and parkways (roads or pedestrian ways, with strips or areas of open space alongside).
- ii. General playing fields, for adults and school-children.
- iii. School playing fields, to conform with the latest educational requirements.
- iv. Recreation and sports centres.
- v. Small play centres, for children, near where they live.
- vi. Smaller amenity open spaces, in the form of formal squares or rest gardens within the residential area.
- vii. Riverside pleasaunces.

viii. Amenity open space and playing fields between adjacent communities and in business and industrial areas, in the latter also acting as a cut-off between industry and adjoining residential areas.

ix. Allotments.

With regard to parkways, only those sections of the adjacent open spaces which are accessible to the public are included in the 4 acres per 1,000 provision. The remainder are considered as being part of the road. [145]

It is not possible to lay down exact figures of acreage per 1,000 population for these various forms of open space, but as a general guide the following distribution is suggested:—

General playing fields, school playing fields, recreation and sports centres—two acres per 1,000 population.

Large amenity parks, parkways, riverside pleasaunces, open space in industrial areas, and allotments—one and two-thirds acres per 1,000 population.

Small amenity gardens and squares, and children's local play centres, to be provided as redevelopment takes place—one-third acre per 1,000 population. [146]

This gives an equal amount of open space for playing and amenity purposes—a much higher proportion of playing fields than exists at present, there being 2,000 acres out of a total of approximately 8,000 acres, *i.e.*, a relation of 3 acres of amenity open space to 1 acre of playing fields. This existing low proportion must be considered in conjunction with the considerable acreage—approximately 1,500—of existing private playing fields. [147]

CO-ORDINATION OF OPEN SPACES INTO A PARK SYSTEM

The provision of playing fields for adults and school-children might with advantage be considered as a single problem, for usually the school-children's games periods are arranged during school hours, when adults are at work, so that it is possible, subject to the maximum intensity of use to which pitches can be put, for the same playing fields to be used for both purposes. This does not apply so much to the younger children, for whom special smaller pitches are required, though even for these it is possible to find a double use. [148]

The aim, therefore, has been to combine school playing fields with the public playing fields and parks, locating only a small proportion of the total alongside the schools, and arranging wherever possible for school sites adjoining or near the public open spaces, so as to avoid travel or long walks by the children. The small proportion allocated to play space around the schools would, however, allow for a substantial improvement on the existing cramped conditions. Combined with general playing fields the aim has been to meet the anticipated educational requirements by providing for some 20 new 70-acre playing field sites. Such a programme would link up with the work already done in providing extensive school playing fields (with classrooms adjacent) outside the County. [149]

All forms of open space need to be considered as a whole, and to be co-ordinated into a closely-linked park system, with parkways along existing and new roads forming the links between the larger parks. The existing open spaces within the County and beyond are already loosely grouped in the form of wedges; on these it is proposed to base the park system. [150]

The Region is the only satisfactory basis for co-ordination; the Green Belt and surrounding countryside need bringing more into the centre through green wedges formed by the existing undeveloped and public land, the parkways along the ring roads giving access from one wedge to the other. At the other end of the scale the space around and between buildings needs planning in relation to the larger open spaces in the area, so that there is an inter-penetration of greenery from the parks into the residential areas, and it becomes possible for the town

dweller to get from doorstep to open country through an easy flow of open space from garden to park, from park to parkway, from parkway to green wedge and from green wedge to Green Belt. The motorist, too, would be able to enjoy the advantages of passing through a fairly continuous parkway, which would be landscaped with increasing informality as it proceeded from the centre to the countryside. A great advantage of the linking parkway is that it extends the radius of influence of the larger open spaces and brings the latter into more intimate relationship with the surrounding areas. [151]

An indication of the way in which the park system within the County might link up with the green wedges outside, which in their turn link up with the Green Belt, is shown on the regional open spaces plan. Though we are not called upon to submit plans for this out-County area, its general planning has been kept constantly in mind because the policy adopted for it will have a fundamental effect on the County. Particularly is this so in respect of open spaces, the Council having a considerable programme of expenditure on Green Belt acquisitions. [152]

What happens to the countryside around London is of great importance to the County, for it forms the main place of week-end recreation for walking, bicycling, picnics, etc., and for holidays of short duration. The farther London extends outwards the greater the obstacle to the inhabitant of inner London to get free of buildings and seek his recreation in the open countryside. Parks, however beautiful, cannot serve the purpose of the countryside in providing an effective antidote to town-dwelling. The Green Belt acquisitions of recent years are a great contribution towards preserving a belt of countryside around London. Unfortunately a belt infers the development with buildings of the land on either side. The ideal and necessary solution would be the preservation of a belt of generous dimensions around London, in which no further building other than that ancillary to farming was allowed. It would be necessary, of course, to allow a general rounding off of the existing villages and towns within it. [153]

We are opposed to a policy involving the development of the whole of the green wedges of undeveloped land which are still happily to be found between the radiating sprawl of outer London. Even though this filling-in were carried out on the most approved planning lines, with open spaces and playing fields, and even if it were an example of skilful tactics, it would be strategically disastrous. [154]

The London and Greater London Playing Fields Association state that at least 25,000 acres of new open space is required for Greater London's recreational needs and that less than 4,000 acres of at present undeveloped land within 10 miles of Charing Cross might be suitable for games. The pre-war yearly average of new houses built within this same radius was approximately 35,000, on an area of 3,500 acres of previously undeveloped land. Any necessary building development in future, whether consequent upon our proposals for decentralisation or otherwise, should be controlled so as to avoid infilling of the remaining wedges and indiscriminate expansion outwards on the periphery. The people of London need all the open space that remains, for both amenity and playing fields, and nothing should be done to increase their isolation from the surrounding countryside. [155]

Among the larger areas of open space, within and outside the County boundary, which call for co-ordination into green wedges leading towards the Green Belt, are the following:

- i. St. James's Park, Hyde Park, Holland Park, Ladbroke Grove, Wormwood Scrubs, Greenford.
- ii. Regent's Park, Primrose Hill, Hampstead Heath, Mill Hill.
- iii. Clissold Park, northwards.
- iv. Victoria Park, Hackney Marshes, Lee Valley.

- v. Wanstead Flats, Epping Forest.
- vi. The Marshes between Becontree and the river.
- vii. Greenwich Park, Shooter's Hill, Abbey Woods, Plumstead Marshes.
- viii. Greenwich Park, Blackheath, Kidbrooke Aerodrome, Grove Park, Mottingham, Foots Cray, with branches to Avery Hill Park, Shooter's Hill, and to Sundridge Park, Chislehurst.
- ix. Peckham Rye, Ladywell Recreation Ground, Beckenham Place Park, Hayes Common.
- x. Ruskin Park, Dulwich Park, Crystal Palace, West Wickham.
- xi. Clapham Common, Wandsworth Common, Mitcham Common, Croydon Aerodrome.
- xii. Morden, Nonsuch, Chessington.
- xiii. Barnes Common, Putney Heath, Wimbledon Common, Richmond Park, Hampton Court, Bushey Park (these comprise the Thames-side recreational area).

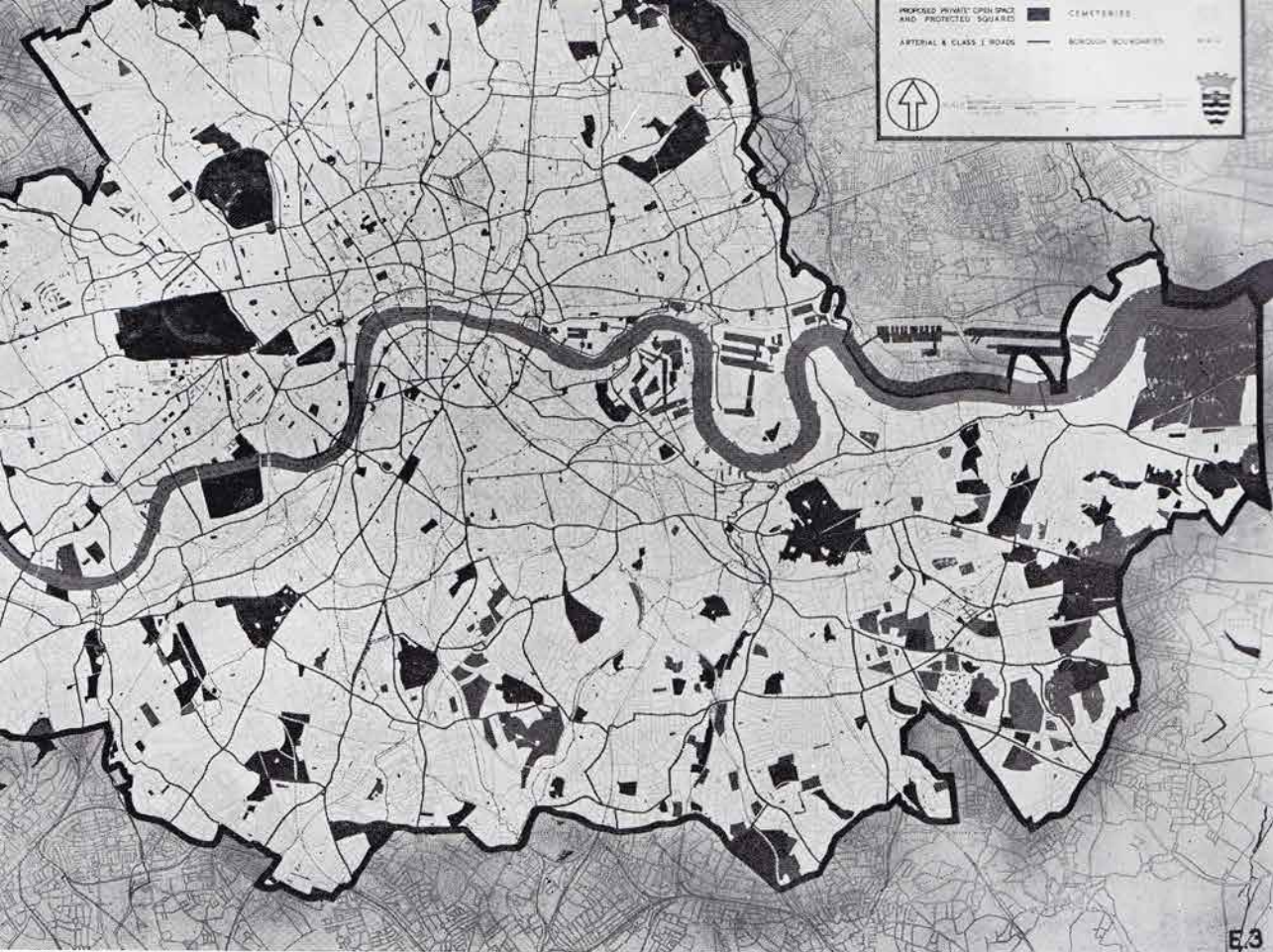
There are also several existing areas of existing open spaces in ring formation, *e.g.*, Kew Gardens, Osterley Park, Ruislip Common. [156]

In the County the chief concern is with the beginnings of these wedges. On the open space plan detailed proposals are shown for the co-ordination of existing parks and new open spaces on the lines already indicated. Typical examples of connecting parkways are the proposed links between Regent's Park and Hampstead Heath; between Parliament Hill Fields and the proposed new park north of King's Cross goods sidings; between Kensington Gardens and Holland Park; and, of a more restricted nature, the parkway from St. James's Park, Birdcage Walk to Chelsea Embankment, past the Royal Hospital, and extending to Fulham. [157]

The park system has been closely related to the road plan and the community structure. In many instances the new open spaces are disposed in the form of green strips between the communities, so as to encourage their independence by physical separation and to break up the continuous urban development. The main ring and radial-roads will form substantial barriers between residential areas on either side, and the larger new open spaces have been located alongside so as to combine the two forms of barrier. As far as possible the new parks are arranged on alternate sides of these roads, so that the residential areas on both sides are catered for and the children will not have to cross the main roads. There need be no access from the park to the main road. At the same time, by the provision of tree-planted ways between the parks, the motorist would be able to enjoy the continuity of a parkway, with views of the larger open spaces. One of the main objects of the open space plan has been to provide as much open space as possible adjacent to or near the "B" ring-road so that London has a much-needed inner Green Ring. [158]

METHODS OF OBTAINING ADDITIONAL OPEN SPACE

Careful thought has been given to methods of obtaining the new open space involved in the Plan. As a first principle, the existing open spaces must be jealously preserved and, until considerably more than the equivalent area is provided, no building should be allowed on any of them for purposes of decanting of population, although exceptions to this policy might be allowed in special locations where over-riding circumstances exist. There is a considerable area (2,612 acres) zoned as proposed private open space in the Council's Draft Scheme, as well as undeveloped land, which is eminently suitable for public use. It includes numerous private playing fields (school as well as general), tennis courts, etc., and well-treed areas suitable for amenity parks. It is suggested that to open some of these for public use would be



1. EXISTING OPEN SPACES

Plan showing the existing public and private open spaces included in the Council's draft Statutory Scheme prepared before the war. The public open spaces together with suitable private open spaces provide London with $2\frac{3}{4}$ acres of open space per 1,000 of the population.

The Plan proposes that this figure be increased to 4 acres of open space per 1,000 within the County.



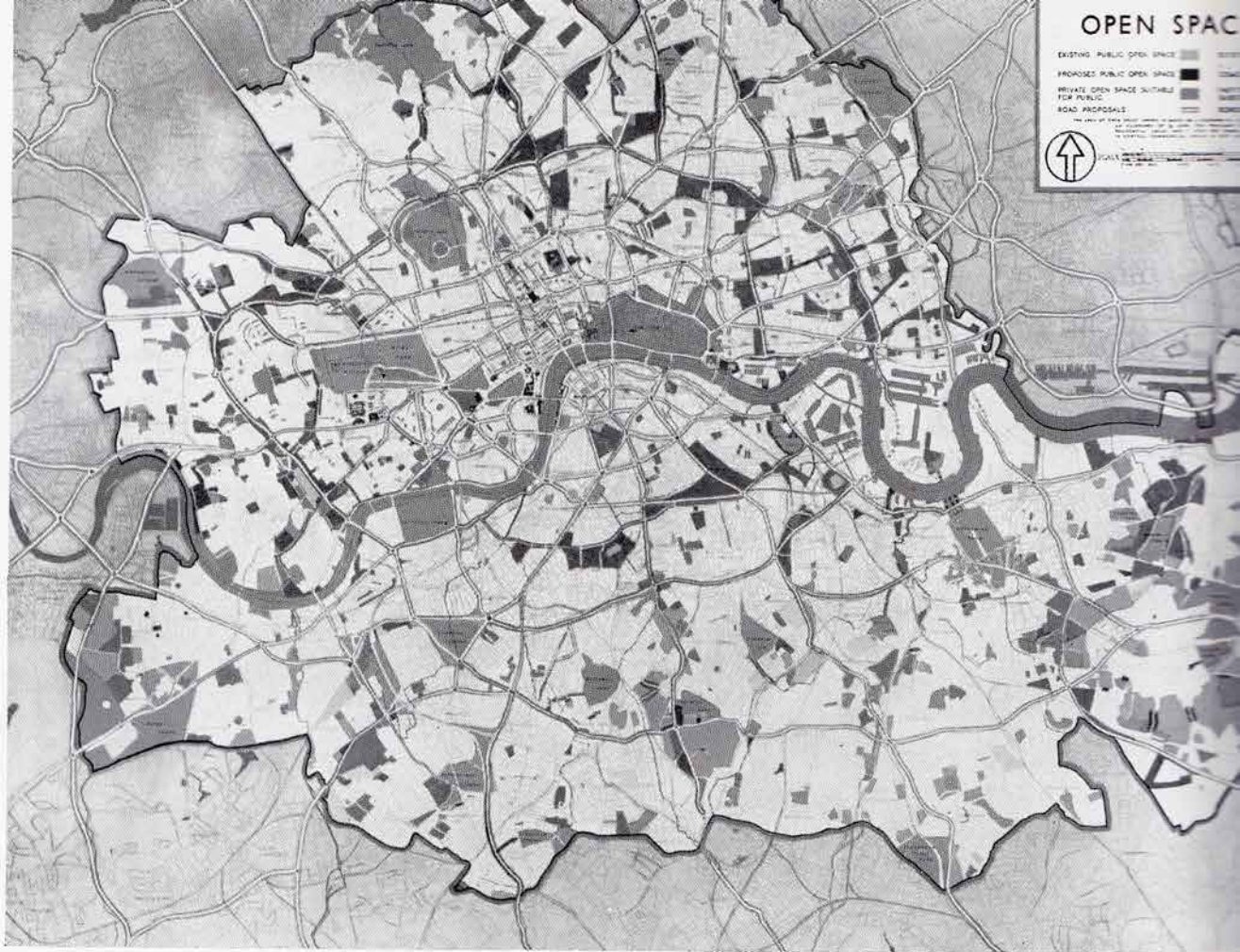
2. DEFICIENCY SURVEY

The dark areas inside the County boundary are deficient in open spaces on a basis of 4 acres per 1,000 population and a walking distance of half a mile. The areas thus served are shown white around the open spaces. The areas of greatest deficiency are indicated by the darker grey where the population is three-quarters of a mile or more from an open space. These areas — mainly the East End and South Bank boroughs — correspond approximately to those which have also the worst housing conditions.

3. OPEN SPACE PLAN FOR THE COUNTY

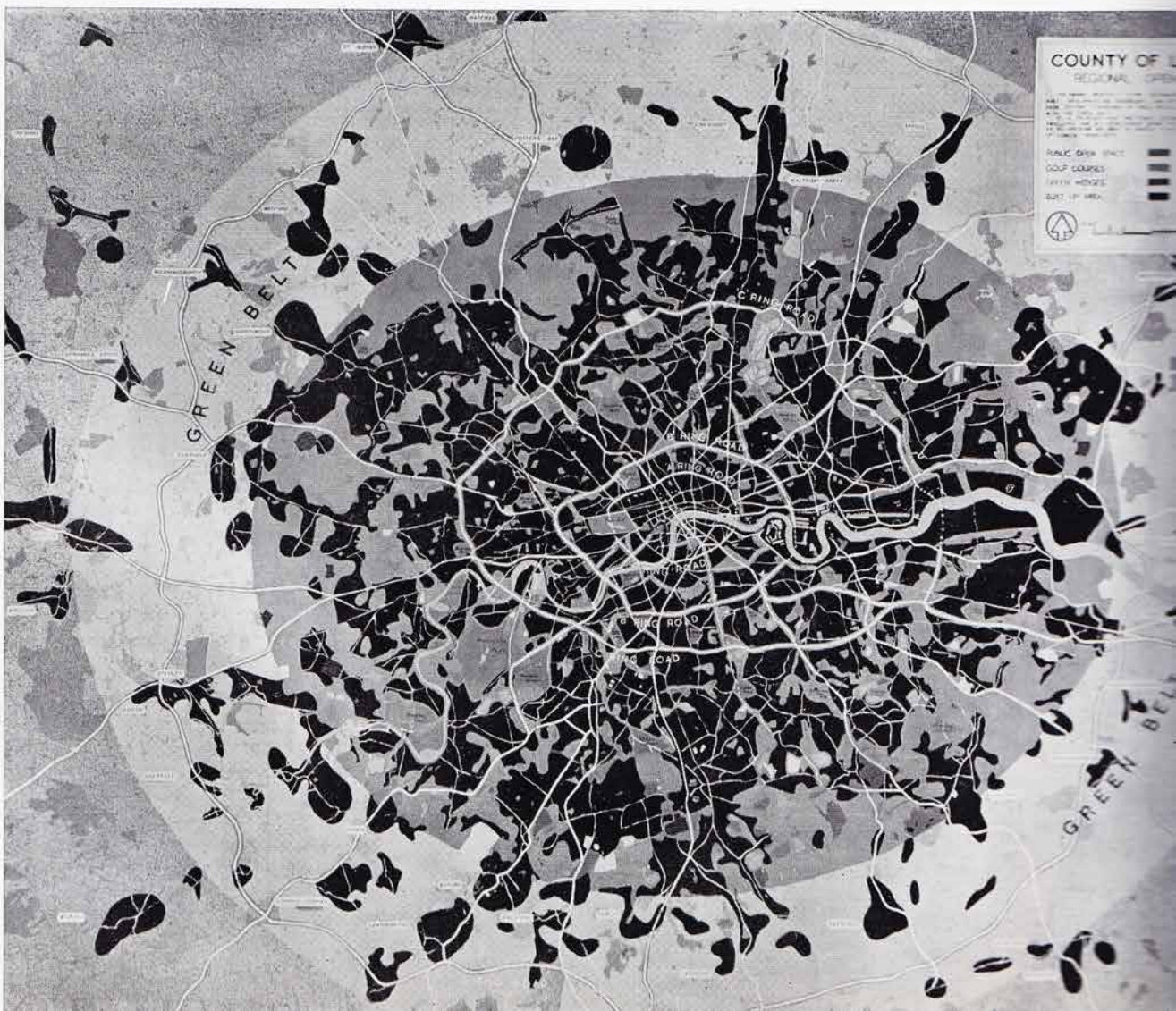
Showing proposed new open spaces linked with those existing to form a co-ordinated park system related to the new road plan. It is a practical application of the theory of green wedges.

The new open spaces help to define the residential communities. Small amenity open spaces within the residential and commercial areas are not shown on this plan.



4. REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM

Diagrammatic plan showing the suggested co-ordination of the proposed and existing open spaces within the County with the undeveloped land and public open space in the Region so as to form a continuous park system. This would consist of green wedges and parkways, linking the centre of London with the Green Belt, where the aim should be to preserve a broad area of unspoilt country with easy access for London's inhabitants. The plan shows the relation between the parkways and the proposed road system.



Drawings by H. F. Hoar, V. N. Prasad, Mary Webster and D. W. J. Monk

THE ROYAL PARKS OF THE CENTRAL AREA

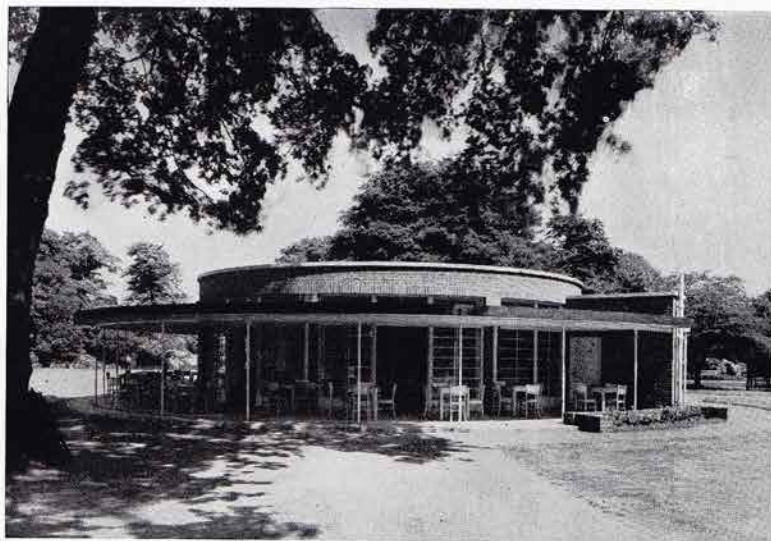
London has some magnificent open spaces, and amongst the finest are those in the central area. St. James's Park, Green Park, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. They cater for the nature lover, the care-free, the play-goer and most of all for the children, and together form a continuous green wedge over two and a half miles in length. The Plan proposes new open spaces to link up existing parks in other parts of London into green wedges of similar character. The large extent of public open space in the north-west and western areas would allow a slightly higher density of population in the surrounding residential districts. See Chapter Eight.

1. St. James's Park—the Abbey seen across the Lake.
2. Summer afternoon, open-air café, Kensington Gardens.
3. Open-air theatre, Regent's Park.
4. Peter Pan, Kensington Gardens, the subject of Sir James Barrie's enchanting children's story. (Sir George Frampton, sculptor.)

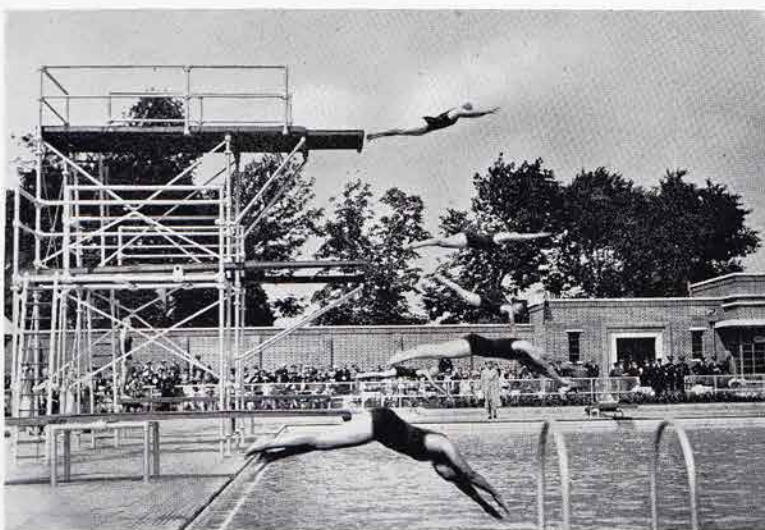




1



2



3

THE SUBURBAN PARKS, COMMONS AND HEATHS

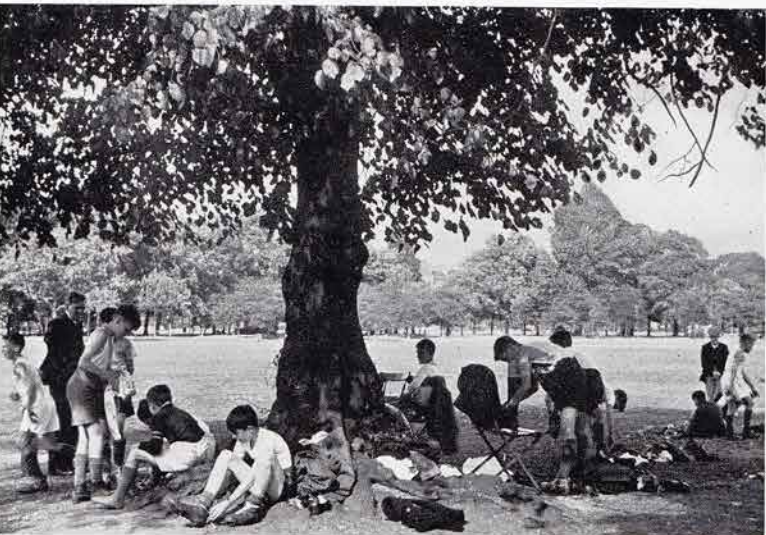
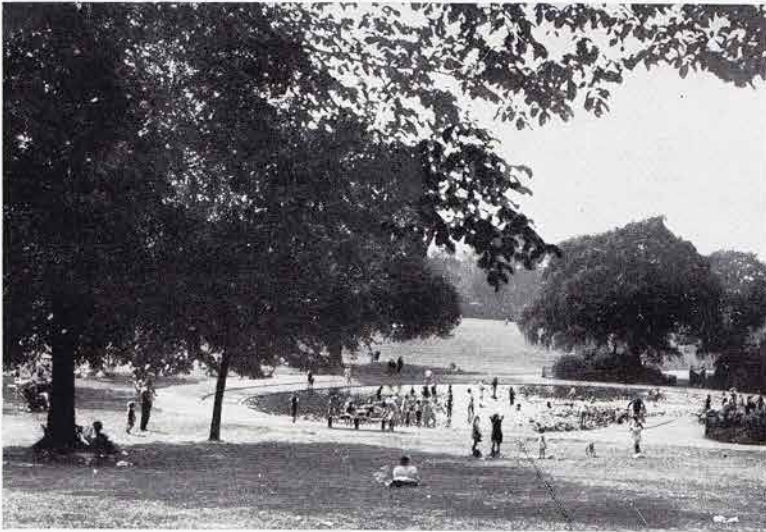
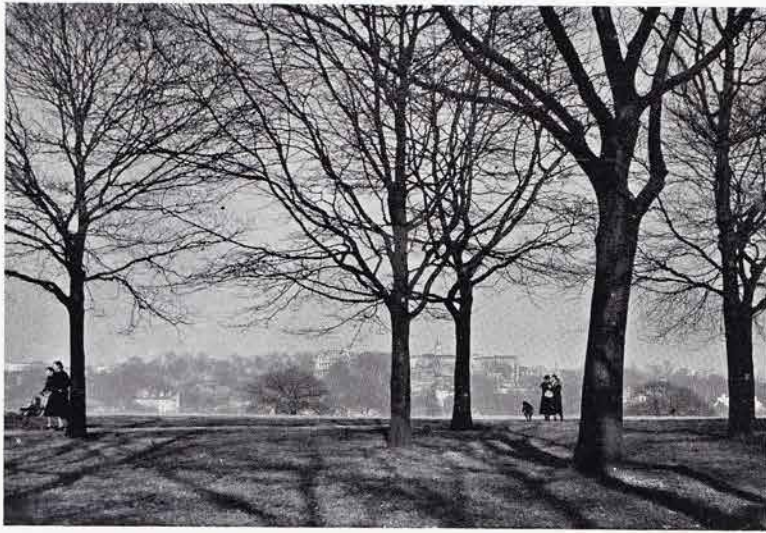
There are also many fine suburban parks, particularly in the south-east and south-west, but there are inadequate facilities for sports. Of the total area of existing public open space, 25 per cent only is devoted to physical recreation. It is proposed to give priority to the provision of playing grounds in achieving a total of 4 acres of open space per 1,000 people. The Plan assumes that 3 acres of open space per 1,000 will be provided outside the County boundary either in the wedges of undeveloped land or in the Green Belt; this would bring the total for London up to 7 acres per 1,000, a figure recognised as a minimum by many competent authorities.

A programme for new open spaces calls for an extension in the provision of cafés, swimming baths, open air theatres, paddling pools and boating lakes. The Council has done much in this direction already, and the illustrations give some examples of amenity open space and recreational facilities provided under the direction of Mr. A. R. Mawson, F.I.L.A., Chief Officer of Parks. The Plan advocates an extension and continuation of the programme of works already in hand.

1. "The Attack." Playing fields at Sydenham Wells Park.
2. Café in Battersea Park and (3) "The Divers," Brockwell Park Swimming Pool. H. A. Rowbotham A.R.I.B.A., Department of the Chief Officer of Parks.
4. "... messing about in boats" Boating Lake, Clapham Common.



4



CONTRAST

Most of the fine parks illustrated here are too distant from the East End and South Bank boroughs to be of use to their inhabitants. Maldistribution leaves large areas without open spaces of any kind, and the children have no alternative but to play in the streets. New open spaces must be provided in these areas first. The plan aims to give all areas a standard of 4 acres open space per 1000 people.

1. Highgate viewed from Parliament Hill.
2. Paddling pool, Brockwell Park.
3. "The open dressing room"—Playing fields on Clapham Common.
4. "Ripe for amendment." Play street sign.



the easiest, quickest and most realistic method of increasing the amount of public open space. The acute housing shortage that is already apparent, and will be intensified after the war, must inevitably have first call on the bombed areas. It may well be desirable, however, particularly in those districts where there is practically no open space, to give precedence to the provision of some public open space, by allocating land cleared of buildings as a result of enemy action. The bulk of the required new open space could later be obtained in those areas where the property is obsolescent or is damaged, or where houses with large gardens predominate. [159]

There are considerable numbers of private playing fields, owned or leased by clubs, which are not used to their full capacity. It would help to meet the demand for increased open space if the public bodies could arrive at an agreement for permanent use with the owners whereby the public bodies would maintain them and give priority to the clubs concerned, on condition that the fields were, subject to this priority, also at the disposal of the public bodies for letting to other clubs or organisations. [160]

During the last twenty years many private sports grounds have been absorbed by buildings. Most of these grounds are held on an annual tenancy or short lease, and the clubs are not able to compete with builders and developers in the land market. It is suggested that the public bodies should take on the responsibility of assisting the clubs to retain their grounds, where necessary acquiring the land outright. Where agreements have been made for a short term of years, these should be considerably extended. [161]

There are a number of private open spaces suitable for use as public amenity parks, either in part or in their entirety. Holland Park in Kensington, Hurlingham Grounds and the Bishop's Palace Grounds in Fulham represent three different categories. The first, one of the few survivals of the large town houses with extensive grounds, is suitable for taking over for public use in its entirety. The second has a special sports use for limited periods; at the same time it is in an area where the standard of existing open space is low. For this and other open spaces in the same category, it is suggested that the rights of the club or organisation should be maintained as far as the limited periods are required but that otherwise they should be open to the public. There is no reason why the public should not have a restricted entrance while polo and other games are being played. The third, the Bishop's Palace Grounds, is admirably situated for use as a public amenity park and, provided the requirements of the church authorities for certain functions are safeguarded, it seems reasonable to allow the public to make use of a considerable proportion of the total area. The everyday requirements of the residents of the Palace could be provided for by a secluded garden, of an adequate but reduced size, within the park. [162]

Of the 2,612 acres of private open space suitable for public use in the County, a considerable proportion is surplus to the standard of 4 acres per 1,000 inhabitants in the districts where it is located. As in the case of existing public open space, an allowance has been made to neighbouring boroughs where there is a deficiency, if the location of such open spaces is sufficiently near to the people who would be expected to use them. There still remains, however, a surplus of 1,341 acres in Lewisham, Woolwich and Greenwich which cannot be allocated in this way but which should not be released for building. This gives an effective area of private open space, suitable for public use, of 1,271 acres, in those districts which are deficient. [163]

ACREAGE OF OPEN SPACE REQUIRED

The population of the County, after allowing for the proposed decentralisation in certain districts, and for the natural decline or increase elsewhere up to 1945, would be 3,326,000 people, for whom, on the 4-acre basis, 13,316 acres of open space would be required. Subtracting the 7,888 acres of existing public open space, there remains a deficiency of 5,428 acres.

This can be met in part by securing the 1,271 acres of effective private open space, leaving 4,157 acres to be found, chiefly in built-up areas or on bombed sites—just over $1\frac{1}{4}$ acres per 1,000 population. [164]

A detailed analysis, borough by borough, of the existing public and private open spaces, together with new open space requirements and proposed population figures, is given in Appendix II. [165]

In the past the tendency has been to adopt a hand-to-mouth policy, acquiring additional open spaces as the opportunity arose. Inevitably the areas with the greatest deficiency and where the difficulties of acquisition were most numerous remained with little or no improvement. The Council's pre-war draft proposals for new public open space included 92 acres in Woolwich—already over-provided for on the 4-acre standard, taking the borough as a whole—while in Bermondsey, which has only one-third of its requirements on this standard, only 0.29 of an acre was proposed. The availability of cheap land was dictating policy, not the people's needs. For London, as a whole, only some 250 acres were proposed. The standard of 4 acres of open space per 1,000 population, entailing the acquisition of approximately 1,250 acres of existing private and 4,250 acres of new open space, appears a modest target in relation to the need. The difficulty of finding alternative housing accommodation for people displaced when open spaces are provided in built-up areas, has been partly removed through the destruction of many houses by bombing. Decentralisation will lessen the difficulty still more. [166]

DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

In the siting and layout of the new open spaces, there are a number of detailed considerations which have an important bearing on the efficiency and quality of the Plan. Substantial improvement of existing open spaces is proposed by the acquisition of adjoining strips of housing, the backs of which, with their nondescript fences, etc., often detract from the amenities of the open spaces. Some of the larger of these strips might be redeveloped in such a way, with houses or flats of an appropriate design and layout, that they will improve rather than damage the open space. In some cases, again, by purchase of small areas of land adjoining a park, advantage can be taken of magnificent views. Several proposals on these lines have been incorporated in the open space plan. [167]

It is the intention to provide amenity open space around the general and school playing fields. On their own, playing fields are normally bleak and unattractive to those who are not particularly interested in playing games; pleasant tree-planted walks and small gardens around the fields would provide for both players and general public, with the advantage to the public of the more spacious effect that the playing fields would give to the amenity areas, and to the players of the more attractive setting for their games. As an example, Hackney Marshes has little attraction for the public as an amenity open space. If it were landscaped by tree-planting and given some informal treatment, it could be made into an all-purpose open space. The feasibility of such a proposal has been proved by the fine Bosch Park in Amsterdam, which, at the beginning of the war, was being laid out on a site with similarly unfavourable conditions of low-lying land and absence of trees. [168]

The process of draining and raising the level of low-lying land, already accelerated by the formation of war debris dumps on Hackney Marshes and in Regent's Park, should be continued. Disused sand and gravel pits can also be made into pleasant amenity gardens; the need for open space is so great that no type of undeveloped land should be neglected. [169]

Many burial grounds have already been cleared of their tombstones and turned into children's play spaces or rest gardens; this process should be continued wherever possible,

and in the case of larger cemeteries of more recent formation, this policy should be borne in mind when considering their possible future extension. [170]

Crystal Palace site and recreational centres

An important proposal in the Plan concerns Crystal Palace and its site. This prominent land-mark of South London has for long enjoyed great popularity as a playground and centre for spectacular and other displays. The site, on geographical and topographical grounds, is admirably suited to this purpose and we suggest that its potentialities as an amusement, exhibition, recreation and sports centre, should be exploited to the full. The fire of a few years ago has given an opportunity for providing a group of buildings and a layout of outstanding architectural and planning interest. A number of railway and road proposals in the Plan, notably the parkway leading from Waterloo and the heart of London, would ensure quick and easy access from all parts of the capital. [171]

In addition to its use as a centre for London as a whole, and for national and international events, the Crystal Palace site might well be considered as being part of a recreation and sports area serving South London. This would include the Dulwich Common area to the north, and its provision would necessitate a restriction on further house building in that district. This south London centre might be regarded as one of a series of recreation centres, with sports stadiums, gymnasiums, etc., serving the various districts of London. The location of these would be a matter for joint consideration with the regional authorities. Tentatively the following sites might be suggested:—

- i. Richmond Park and its adjoining open space—Thames-side recreational boating and rowing centre.
- ii. Osterley Park or Greenford district.
- iii. Hampstead Heath or open spaces nearby.
- iv. Hackney Marshes or Wanstead Flats.
- v. Shooter's Hill—Bostall Woods district.
- vi. Dulwich Common—Crystal Palace. [172]

These centres would answer a long-felt need for running tracks and physical training facilities. [173]

Allotments

It is anticipated that the revival of allotments as a war necessity will be continued after the war, but that as the necessity becomes less urgent, there will be a decline in the demand, leaving eventually only the consistent enthusiasts. The demand that remains must be met in new areas and not, as now, in the public open spaces. A dispersed allocation of small or individual sites within the residential area is the best method of obtaining them. A concentration of allotments has negligible, if any, amenity value; mixed, in small areas, with the other types of open space within the housing area, they will serve their purpose, be nearer their owners and have a less disturbing effect. [174]

London squares

The domestic square is a peculiarly British invention, well suited to our temperament and way of living. Those of the 17th and 18th centuries are amongst the most pleasing features to be found in London, though some of them have been damaged by inappropriate architecture round them. The squares should be open to full public use. The removal of their railings, as a war-time measure, has brought them into the life of the community and destroyed their isolation. It is suggested that the tradition of the domestic square should be developed

in the areas of reconstruction. Such squares would form communal gardens for adults with play centres for the children and be part of the allocation of one-third acre for amenity open space per 1,000 population. In the central business areas they would take the form of rest gardens for lunch-hour use. [175]

Space around buildings

Close consideration has been given to the question as to the best use of the open space around buildings, as seen from the point of view of the inhabitants. A proportion of this space should be given over to communal gardens. These have the advantage of giving a greater sense of openness as compared with strictly divided gardens with their encumbering fences. Some of them could be in the nature of private parks, similar to those on the Ladbroke Grove Estate. The requirements of individual families would be met by smaller secluded gardens and allotments, immediately to the rear of the houses or flats, with access from them to the communal gardens. In some cases, maintenance could well be the joint responsibility of the householders, with expert advice from the local authority's parks department. [176]

Nursery school provision might be made and young children's play centres laid out within these communal gardens. They would be near the children's homes, convenient for supervision by parents, and free of traffic dangers. Some of the sports facilities requiring smaller areas of open space, such as tennis courts, etc., could also be located in these areas, particularly between blocks of flats, where a more economical use of space between buildings is possible. [177]

The standard of 4 acres per 1,000 population which has been adopted for the Plan, does not include any allowance for open space around buildings; this is included in the density figures. In areas where flats are built, however, the more economical use of land for building, in other words, the smaller coverage, will give a greater proportion of space around buildings per inhabitant than would be the case with houses. In such areas it would be permissible to make a slight reduction—approximately 10 per cent—of the new public open space required. Alternatively, this open space might be used to provide more space round the houses, or to increase the number of houses in relation to flats. The reduction has been ignored in planning the open space system, owing to the difficulty of defining at this stage the exact areas to be devoted to flats. The reduction, however, will come out of the one-third of an acre per 1,000 population allowance for amenity open space; as this is not shown on the open space plan, the reduction will not affect the main allocation of open space shown thereon. [178]

In laying out the space about buildings, particularly in the case of flats, large expanses of asphalt should be avoided. The redevelopment of relatively large areas, and a more rational local road network, should free considerable areas of land for grass and trees. Damage to trees, and to planting generally, by the inhabitants, arises from the present shortage and too intensive exploitation of sites. It would be overcome by education and by practical experience of the advantages of a pleasant setting for their homes on the part of the residents. [179]

Segregation of housing from industry

An important aspect of the Plan is the provision of segregating strips of open space between industry and residential areas. Examination of the location of the main slum areas of London reveals that the majority of them are either immediately adjacent to, or contain a heavy scattering of, industries. To prevent similar deterioration in the future, it will be essential to provide segregation of housing from both types of industry. One of the difficulties that will be encountered will be the areas of new housing, chiefly flats, which have been built on sites immediately adjoining those industrial areas where deterioration has been most rapid. Here, ameliorative measures will have to be taken. Where reconstruction of industry takes

place, it is proposed that adequate green space should be left between the industry and the housing. This would have an additional use as amenity gardens for factory workers in lunch hours and as playing fields in their evenings or weekends. [180]

Amenity gardens and squares in commercial areas

For the daytime population in commercial areas, more amenity gardens and squares, where sandwiches can be eaten or a lunch hour stroll taken, are required. Before the war the small converted burial grounds, the gardens round St. Paul's, and the squares near the offices in the West End and City, were filled to overcrowding, and the need for further open spaces of the same character was clearly indicated. We propose that within the "A" ring where the building use is largely commercial, new open spaces should be provided for this purpose without interfering with the efficient and economic use of the sites. Some of these might well be provided in the form of courtyards or open spaces around the buildings, thus giving the office workers more light and air in their working as well as in their lunch hours. Buildings of this type would be following the latest trends in design. For these central commercial areas it is thought that a standard of about one acre of open space per 10,000 day-time population would be a reasonable one to adopt. [181]

Combining rest with culture

It has been proved by experience that the value of an open space is increased if special attractions of an architectural, historical, amusement or cultural nature are included, e.g., the botanical gardens and greenhouses at Kew; Ken Wood House; Greenwich Observatory and Museum; Open-air Theatre and Zoological Gardens at Regent's Park; Hampton Court, etc. Such attractions combine the advantages of open-air recreation with a stimulation of the mind in new channels quite different from those followed on working days. Parks, in particular the larger ones, should not all be regarded simply as places where one can rest or take part in physical activities in pleasant surroundings. Ideal sites can be found within them for libraries, museums, art and exhibition galleries, theatres, special children's facilities, etc. The Russians have adopted this principle of combining mental and physical recreation in what they call Parks of Rest and Culture. The largest one in Moscow is particularly noteworthy for its children's section, which includes a children's theatre, cinema, experimental workshops and a large-scale model village. [182]

The fun-fair is an institution which never fails to attract the crowd or provide it with healthy amusement. Unfortunately in London they are all at points considerably distant from the centre, e.g., Hampstead Heath, Kew, Crystal Palace, and on certain commons on bank holidays. Many of them have a long history and, given proper control, they should be maintained. Some of them might appropriately be extended. At the same time, the possibilities of providing a large one at or near the centre of London, on the lines of the highly successful Tivoli Gardens at the middle of Copenhagen, ought to be kept in mind. [183]

River front amenity

The River Thames is the largest single open space in the County and has a variety of attractions which are greatly enjoyed by the general public from its banks. These attractions in many ways compensate for the fact that the river area is not actually used for recreation except by limited numbers of rowing, boating and fishing enthusiasts. Access to the river front, even if only of narrow depth, enables full advantage to be taken of the river width and gives the general public the impression of a large, continuous open space, full of life and changing interest. An expanse of water with a contrasting setting of trees and buildings can be a great source of enjoyment; the Serpentine in Hyde Park and the artificial lake in St. James's Park contribute substantially to the popularity of these central open spaces. [184]

The Thames river front has been developed mainly for industrial purposes and, except for an occasional glimpse of the river between buildings or at river stairs, public access is only possible at a very limited number of points. Of the total length of river frontage within the County, of 39.3 miles, only 3.6 miles are used for open space purposes to which the public have access; this represents 9 per cent of the total river frontage. There are also 2.4 miles of private open space with no public access. In contrast, 28.9 miles are used for industry, wharves, warehouses and railways—73 per cent of the total. [185]

Of the fifteen boroughs with a Thames frontage, nine have varying lengths of open space on the river front but of these, three have stretches which total less than 200 yards each. Six boroughs, including those in the East End and on the south bank, have no provision at all. A detailed analysis of the river front use is given in Appendix IV. [186]

A much more extensive exploitation of the river front for public open space amenity is proposed. Bomb damage and the existence of obsolescent industrial property now makes this more feasible. Many of the industries and warehouses take up considerably more of the river frontage than is justified by the use they make of the river. Rational planning and more intensive use of the ground will enable considerable stretches of river front to be freed for open space purposes. [187]

It is proposed that every riverside community should have access to the river and the more important proposals include open spaces to the west of Fulham; possibly on the site of the Katherine Dock, Stepney; near the Regent's Canal entrance; in the Isle of Dogs, Woolwich, Greenwich (in front of the Naval College) and Deptford; in Bermondsey—an extension of Southwark Park to the river, with a narrow strip of open space along the river front—east and west; in Lambeth and Battersea (next to St. Mary's Church). On the south bank, a new embankment road with a strip of open space fronting the river is proposed. These proposals, with other river front considerations, are dealt with in more detail in Chapter Eleven. [188]

Where possible, the proposed riverside gardens are located at strategic points commanding the best views of the river and with convenient access for the people in the adjoining large residential areas. In many cases, the open space is in the form of a narrow strip, but its juxtaposition to the river gives a much greater amenity value than would an open space of similar size in a built-up area. In comparing the relative costs of acquisition of sites for open space, this greater return, in terms of public enjoyment from riverside areas of quite modest size, should be considered. [189]

In the open space plan, it is proposed that 11.7 miles, or 30 per cent of the total river frontage, shall be used for riverside open space amenity. This compares with 3.6 miles, or 9 per cent of the total at present existing. [190]

The same principle of rationalisation of industries, to give greater length of amenity open space, should be applied to the use of the canal-side sites. At present, the canal banks are almost entirely taken up by industry. Canals with tree-lined banks add to the amenity of adjoining residential areas, and it is proposed that a number of lengths of the canals should be treated in this way. [191]

New open space in the deficient areas first

To conclude; a main task in the immediate post-war years will be to provide new open spaces in those areas which at present have an amount totally inadequate for the needs of the inhabitants—the East End, Islington, Finsbury and the south bank boroughs. It will be necessary, however, in order to safeguard the realisation of the Plan as a whole, to take such measures meanwhile as will prevent major redevelopment on sites intended for eventual new open space. [192]