

**TOWARDS A GREEN STRATEGY FOR LONDON:
Strategic Open Space and Green Chains**

**Report by Tom Turner
For the
London Planning Advisory Committee**

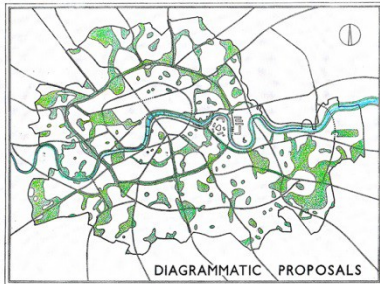
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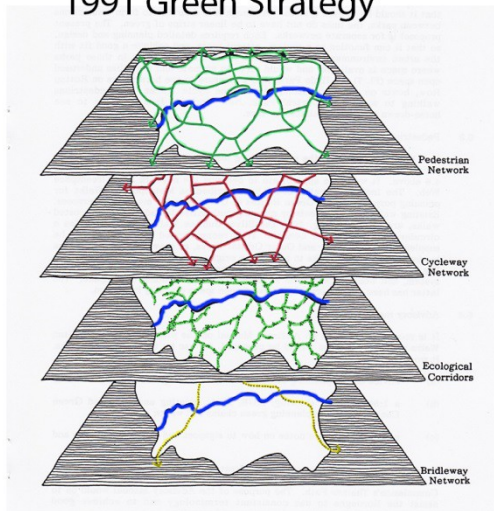


1991 Green Strategy

1943-4 Abercrombie Plan



1991 Green Strategy



In 1989 I was given a sabbatical by Thames Polytechnic and asked the London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) if I could help them with the development of what was described as a *Green Strategy for London*. I was full of admiration for Abercrombie's chapter on 'Open Spaces and Park System' in the *County of London Plan* (1943-4) and wanted to take the ideas forward.

My primary recommendation was that:

In place of the "Park System" which Abercrombie planned in 1944, London should now adopt a "Green Strategy".

This would enhance the various types of park which were proposed in the 1976 Greater London Development Plan, and would distribute their benefits through the urban area. London would have a "Greenspace Web" for pedestrians, and the Web would be integrated with separate but overlapping networks of cycle routes, long-distance bridleways and ecological corridors.'

Both the *Abercrombie Plan* and the *Green Strategy* stress the need to connect open spaces and form a 'system'. The difference is that Abercrombie planned a single-layer Park System and the Green Strategy recommends a set of overlapping networks, as shown in the diagrams.

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This study was carried out by Tom Turner, of Thames Landscape Group, between September 1988 and September 1990 for the London Planning Advisory Committee. It is published for information and discussion. Its views and recommendations are the consultant's and their publication does not necessarily indicate that they are accepted by LPAC.

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NOTE ON OPEN SPACE TERMINOLOGY

There is a need for distinct names for different categories of land within the metropolitan area which has not been built upon. The conventional terms and their meanings may be described as follows:

Open Space:	Land which is not covered by buildings or roads.
Public Open Space:	Open land to which the public has access. This term usually refers to vegetated space, especially public parks, and does not include rivers, water bodies, or roads, all of which may be open or public or both.
Private Open Space:	Privately owned outdoor space. This term may include sports fields, agricultural land, institutional grounds, burial grounds and private gardens.
Strategic Open Space:	Open space which is important from a London-wide point of view, because it affects the structure of the metropolitan area.
Recreational Open Space:	Public and private recreation grounds, including town parks, country parks, country clubs and company sports fields.
Vegetated, or Biological Space:	Land which is not hard surfaced or covered by buildings.
Ecological Space:	Wildlife habitats, subject to varying degrees of management, including both land and water.
Greenspace:	Publically accessible land which is environmentally pleasant from a human point of view, including parks, footpaths, urban squares, and pedestrian streets.

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TOWARDS A GREEN STRATEGY FOR LONDON : STRATEGIC OPEN SPACE AND GREEN CHAINS

SUMMARY

Research Findings

This study takes an overview of strategic open space planning in London. The research shows that small changes in the designated area of the Metropolitan Green Belt are taking place, that the area of Metropolitan Open Land is increasing, and that considerable energy is being invested in the planning of green chains and pedestrian links between open spaces. There are 132 miles (212 km) of existing long distance footpath and proposals for a further 207 miles (333 km).

Recommendations

A Green Strategy

It is recommended that in place of the "Park System" which Abercrombie planned in 1944, London should now adopt a "Green Strategy". This would enhance the various types of park which were proposed in the 1976 Greater London Development Plan, and would distribute their benefits through the urban area. London would have a "Greenspace Web" for pedestrians, and the Web would be integrated with separate but overlapping networks of cycle routes, long-distance bridleways and ecological corridors.

A Greenspace Web

An environmentally pleasant network of pedestrian routes should be established:

- to provide recreational routes for walkers and joggers,
- to increase the accessibility of existing public parks,
- to create links between pedestrian origins and destinations, for journeys to work, to schools, to the shops and to public transport interchanges.

The pedestrian zone should incorporate existing parks, riverside walks, canalside walks, civic walks, shopping malls, footpaths, pedestrianised streets, and public rights of way through the green belt. "Greenspace" is a different category to "public open space" which was used in previous London plans to mean "public parks".

Advisory Manual

An advisory manual should be prepared to co-ordinate the work of the London Boroughs in planning and signposting long distance routes, and in the preparation of footpath leaflets.

Further Research

There is a need for further research into: the planning of Green Chains; Green Belt planning; Open Space planning; Open Space Usage; planning for Nature Conservation; Cycle Routes; Equestrian Routes; a Database for Open Space Planning

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was initiated by the London Planning Advisory Committee and I would like to express my gratitude to the following LPAC staff for their help and guidance:

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Mr Giles Dolphin

I also thank the planning officers of the London Borough Councils, who supplied and corrected the survey information on which this report is based, fellow participants in the London Walking Forum, and the following individuals for advice and suggestions:

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Mr Simon Walsh, Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service
Mr Roger Warhurst, London Borough of Greenwich/Green Chain Working Party
Mr Peter Wright, London Docklands Development Corporation

I also wish to thank Thames Polytechnic, which enabled the School of Architecture and Landscape to release me to work on this study.

1.0 AIMS OF THE STUDY

1.1 It was agreed by LPAC and the Study Team that the aims of the study were to produce a plan of Strategic Open Space in London, showing existing and proposed:

- Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB)
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- Metropolitan Walks and Green Chains

[Note: The Strategic Open Space Plan will be published separately]

1.2 To review the opportunities for developing Green Chains as strategic links between London's public open spaces.

1.3 To make recommendations concerning strategic open space planning and to make a contribution to the development of a Green Strategy for London.

2.0 A BRIEF HISTORY OF STRATEGIC OPEN SPACE PLANNING IN LONDON

2.1 The idea of planning recreational links between a city's public open spaces is attributed to the American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. He was asked to recommend sites for new parks in Boston and came forward with the famous Emerald Necklace plan for linking Boston's main open spaces into a parkway or "green chain" [1]. The first parkway to appear on the ground in Britain was in Bournville. The idea became embodied in later garden city plans, and in Abercrombie's London plans of 1943-4.

2.2 The Abercrombie Plan (Fig. 1) proposed a network of recreational open space flowing out from the centre of the city so that "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" [2]. It was described as a "Park System." Abercrombie also proposed the figure of 1.62 ha (4 acres) of open space/1,000 people as a target for the County of London. The National Playing Fields Association first proposed an open space standard in 1925. By 1955, the Home Counties (Kent, Surrey, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex and Essex) had submitted Green Belt proposals modelled on the Abercrombie Plan [3]. The MHLG Circular 42/55 Green Belts defined the purposes of a green belt as being:

- 1) to check the further growth of a large built up area,
- 2) to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another,
- 3) to preserve the special character of a town.

By 1974, London had 3,031 sq km of approved Green Belt [4].

2.3 The Greater London Development Plan (Fig. 2) of 1976 did not support Abercrombie's proposal for interconnected open spaces, or the target of 1.62 ha (4 acres) of open space/1,000 people. Instead the GLDP open space plan was based on an open space hierarchy. The aim was to "give more attention to the size, nature, distribution and accessibility of open space". The GLDP also introduced the concept of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), as an open space classification which would "conserve and protect" open spaces within the metropolitan area in private ownership as well as in public ownership [5]. The MOL classification confers the same presumption against development as the MGB classification.

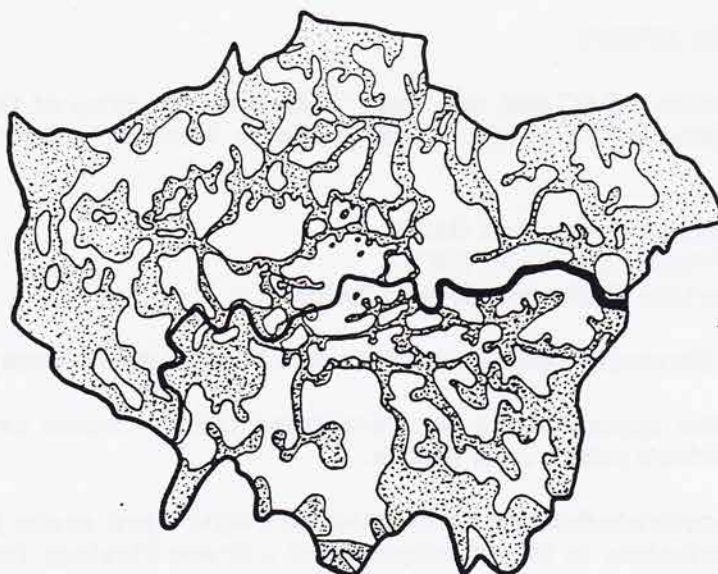


Fig. 1. The 1944 "Abercrombie Plan" for London proposed a web of open space, flowing from the city centre to the green belt. The web comprised parks, roadside land and agricultural land in what is now the green belt.

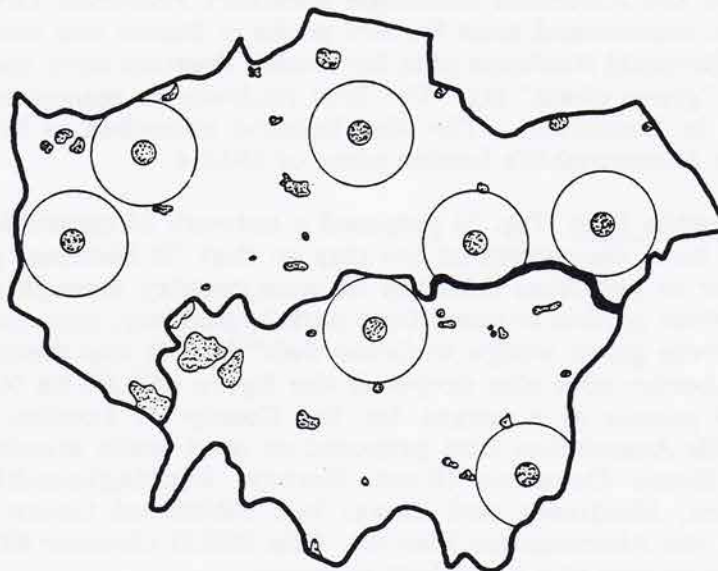


Fig. 2. In 1976 the GLDP proposed a hierarchy of parks of different sizes:

	Size	Distance from Home	
Metropolitan Parks	60 ha	3.2 km	(150 acres/2 miles)
District Parks	20 ha	1.2 km	(50 acres/.75 miles)
Local Parks	2 ha	0.4 km	(5 acres/.25 miles)
Small Local Parks	>2 ha	>0.4 km	(>5 acres/>.25 miles)

These figures were described as "a guide to the distribution, siting and kind of open spaces required". If applied to London, the resultant distribution of Metropolitan Parks would be as shown on the diagram. About 7 new metropolitan parks would have been required.

- 2.4 The GLC published a study report in 1983 which recommended A Pedestrian Network for Central London [6]. The report pointed out that: "compared to the centres of other large European cities, recent improvements in London have been relatively modest". Approximately 60% of commuters walk between their British Rail terminus and place of work. It was recommended that there should be links between pedestrian origins and destinations, and also between London's existing pedestrian enclaves (eg. Leicester Square, Covent Garden and Trafalgar Square). The GLC published its Draft alterations to the Greater London Development Plan in 1983, which, for the first time, introduced the idea of planning for nature conservation in London [7].
- 2.5 The DoE Strategic Planning Guidance of July 1989 endorsed LPAC's Strategic Planning Advice for London of October 1988 by supporting the MGB and MOL classifications. The DoE urged the Boroughs to "consider the valuable role of green chains". They can cross Borough boundaries and play a useful part in the urban environment by providing extended pathways for the public and wildlife corridors in natural surroundings" [8]. This was the most important official policy statement on open space planning in London to have been made since 1976 and has had a significant effect by encouraging the Boroughs to plan for green chains and wildlife corridors.

3.0 STRATEGIC OPEN SPACE IN 1990

- 3.1 The Strategic Open Space Plan (see 1.1, above) started from the information which was collected by the London Borough of Enfield, in 1987, for the LPAC Green Issues Working Party. Since the information came from a variety of plans at different scales, it was mapped at 1:50,000 and circulated to all the London Boroughs for checking, in December 1988 and April 1990. The Boroughs were also requested to supply information on Green Chains and long distance walks. The 1990 Strategic Open Space Plan gives an overall picture of London's MGB, MOL and Green Chains. The map scale of 1:50,000 does not enable precise calculations of areas to be made, but it has provided an accurate basis for the following general observations:

3.2 The Metropolitan Green Belt

The boundary of the Green Belt is in flux. Some areas of land are being withdrawn from the belt as development for roads, housing or industry takes place. Other areas are being added, as it becomes apparent that certain areas of open land are of strategic importance. It should, however, be noted that: "The general public believe the green belt is fixed, as do articulate local residents and pressure groups. This is reflected in virtually all national press coverage of the issue" [9].

3.3 Metropolitan Open Land

The total area of designated Metropolitan Open Land is increasing, as the strategic importance of various open spaces is recognised and additional land is designated. Changes are also being made to the boundaries of existing areas of MOL, as some land is lost to development and other land is brought within the MOL boundary.

3.4 Green Chains

The only area of open space which is named as a "Green Chain" is the eponymous Green Chain in South London. A number of Boroughs are, however, considering the idea. This is partly in response to the LPAC Strategic Planning Advice and DoE Strategic Planning Guidance. The three main elements of the South London Green Chain are:

- (1) a series of open spaces, forming a Green Chain, which have been designated as Metropolitan Open Land.
- (2) a linking walkway, known as the Green Chain Walk, which is signposted through the open spaces and also through the urban areas which "interrupt" the flow of open space.
- (3) areas of built development are included within the designated area of the chain because further development could create opportunities to enhance the green chain.

The South London Green Chain was planned as a contribution to the provision of recreational open space. The links are, therefore, between open spaces. The Chain is not linked, except incidentally, to shopping centres, to railway stations, to bus stops, or to other pedestrian origins and destinations.

3.5 Long distance walks

Considerable progress is being made with the development of open space links in London. The 1990 survey revealed that there are 132 miles (212 km) of existing footpath and proposals for a further 207 miles (333 km), of which 112 miles (180 km) will be riverside walks. They are shown on Fig. 10 and on the Strategic Open Space Plan (see 1.1 above), and will provide a total of 339 miles (545 km) of pathway. This exceeds some of the Countryside Commission's long distance footpaths. When the connections in the network are made, it will be possible to traverse London from east to west and from north to south without the need for a map and with minimal exposure to road traffic. Some of the footpaths shown as "proposed" on Fig 10, are in existence but not signposted (eg. the Ravensbourne Walk from Catford to Ladywell). Other footpaths are not in existence (eg. the Thames Path round the Greenwich Peninsular). Others exist but are not open to the public (eg. the New River Walk in North London).

3.6 Long distance linking footpaths may be considered in five broad groups:

(1) Green Chain Walks

The only named and signposted Green Chain is in South London (plates I and II), as described above, but there are other linking footpaths which join areas of MOL and MGB. The closest parallel in North London is the delightful Parkland Walk (Pl. 10) which runs from Alexandra Palace to Finsbury Park. It is expected that a proposed extension of the walk to Highbury Fields will be included in the Islington Unitary Development Plan.

3.6 Continued

(2) Riverside Walks

This is the most common type of long distance walk in London. Riverside walks account for 38% of existing long distance walks in London and 50% of the current proposals for new long distance walks (Pl. 2). The most significant current project is the Thames Path, which has been proposed by the Countryside Commission. It will be linked with the extensive West London Waterways Walk, which is under development, led by the London Borough of Ealing with support from the Countryside Commission. A proposal has been made to extend the Thames Path eastwards from the Thames Barrier, to the former GLC boundary or beyond.

(3) Canalside Walks

Most of the towpaths beside London's canals are now open to the public, though access continues to be controlled by the British Waterways Board. The two main long distance routes are beside the Grand Union Canal (Pl. 3) and the Lea Valley Navigation in North London.

(4) Civic Walks

The most important civic walk through an area of urban landscape interest is the Silver Jubilee Walk (Pls. 8 and 9). A leaflet was published by the Silver Jubilee Walkway Trust in 1977. The walk is waymarked by means of stainless steel plaques set into the pavement (Pl. 8). Pavement markers have been used to give continuity to the Grand Union Canal Walkway above the Islington canal tunnel. London also has many short urban walks which do not, as yet, form part of a network (Pl. 4).

(5) Countryside Walks

Many London Boroughs which include Green Belt land within their area have signposted walks through farmland and have published footpaths giving details of routes, car parks and public transport.

- 3.7 The above Walks, both existing and proposed, are shown on the Strategic Open Space Plan and on Fig. 10 as Waymarked Scenic Walks. The criteria for inclusion on the map were that they should:

- (a) be signposted
- (b) be long distance routes
- (c) run through attractive landscape or townscape

It is notable that, with the exception of the Green Chain itself, East London is deficient in Waymarked Scenic Walks.

4.0 OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING THE GREEN CHAINS

- 4.1 The original Green Chain in South London came into being when four Boroughs, with advice from the GLC, identified an opportunity to enhance their public open space provision by establishing and strengthening the links between public open spaces. It is apparent that co-operation between the Boroughs can assist the creation of a greener environment for London in other ways.

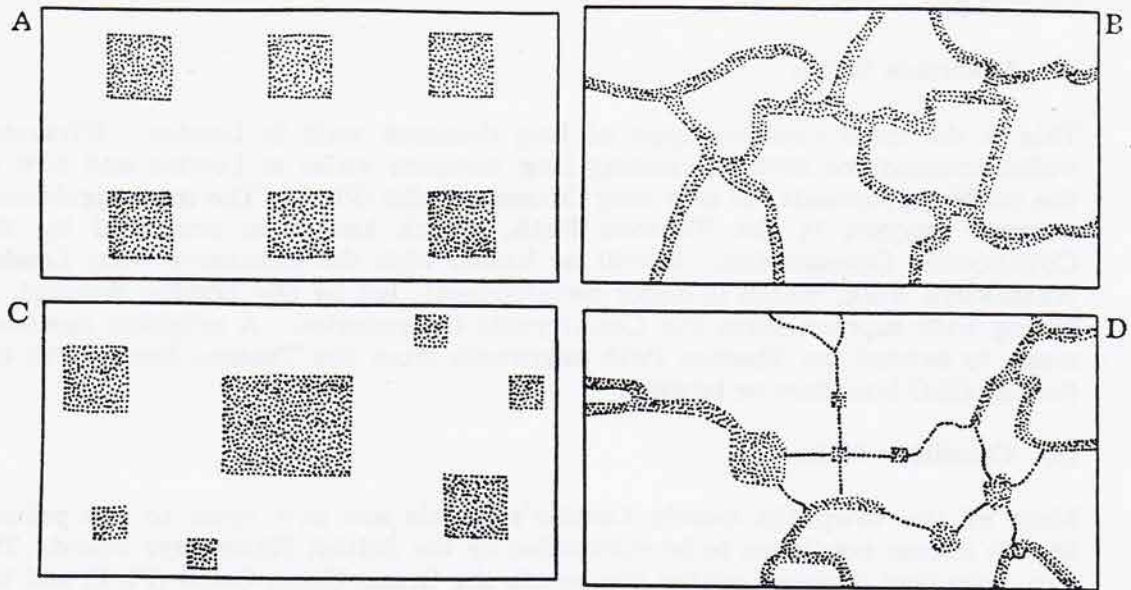


Fig. 3. The first planned open spaces in London were the residential squares, as represented by Diagram A. The 1944 Abercrombie plan recommended a park system (Diagram B). The Greater London Development Plan proposed a hierarchy of parks of different sizes (Diagram C). The present proposal is that urban squares, public parks and riverside walks should be interconnected to form a green web, by means of civic walks, green chain walks, pedestrian streets and countryside walks (Diagram D). (Diagrams reproduced from Turner, T., *Landscape Planning*, (1987) by courtesy of Hutchinson Education).

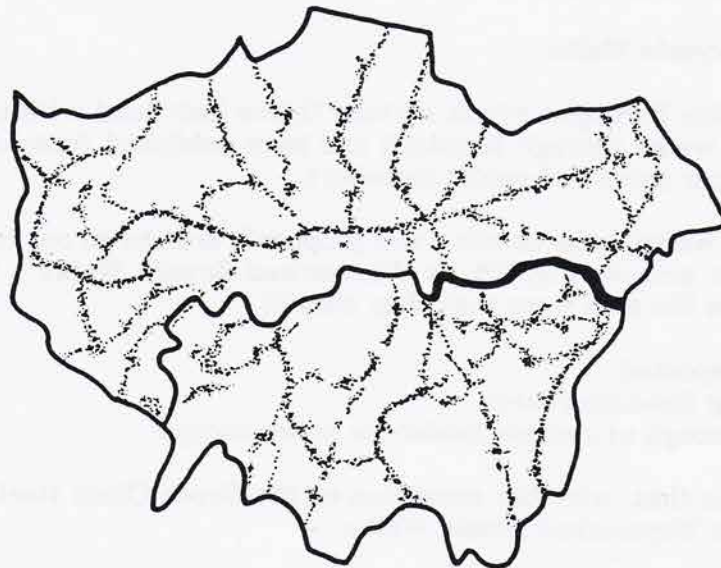


Fig. 4. London could have a network of Ecological Corridors. They would be based on parks, cemeteries, woods, hedgerows, the River Thames and its tributaries, canals, railways and other lines of opportunity, and would be accessible to the public only in part.

4.2 The creation of a Greenspace Web

The current development of long distance walks and Green Chains in London makes it possible to look forward to their combination into a web of interconnected pedestrian space (Fig. 3, diagram D). Webs of this type have been an important component of the Green Plans for other European cities. The links in the original network proposed by Abercrombie for London were made up of:

- (a) Riverside walks of the type which are now being developed in London.
- (b) "Parkways" which were often expansive roadside verges, rather than useful recreational parkland.
- (c) New park projects, like Burgess Park and Mile End Park, to form links in the network.

Projects of the (b) and (c) type are no longer considered appropriate, because:

- expansive "parkways" use valuable urban land without creating useful open space;
- the creation of new parks by compulsory purchase and land clearance was very expensive, and unpopular with the people whose property was compulsorily purchased.

4.3 However, it is evident from the Strategic Open Space Plan (see 1.1, above) that it will be possible to form a web of public greenspace in London by other means, using river valleys, canals, civic walks, existing parkland and other lines of opportunity. It would function as a pedestrian transport system, with a low energy input and serving the needs of the old, the young, the poor and those who would like to have more exercise in their daily lives.

4.4 Links between open spaces are an important means of increasing the accessibility of recreational open space. This has been one of the main goals of open space planning since 1944. If, for example, a 60 hectare metropolitan park is fed by four 1 km linear parkways, from each point of the compass, then the "area within 3.2 km of the park" is effectively doubled. The London Walking Forum, at a meeting in January 1991, agreed the following objective: "To establish a London-wide network of waymarked walks linking open spaces and green chains in order to increase facilities for outdoor leisure; to make best use of London's individual walks; and to increase public awareness of opportunities for walking."

4.5 A contribution to London's ecology

Green chain land, together with railway embankments (Pl. 5) and other land which is not open to the public, can be used to establish a London-wide network of ecological corridors (Fig. 4). There are few plant or animal species which are known to use corridors as their only, or major, means of dispersal, but narrow corridors which would not be usable as formal public open spaces can provide good habitat land with a very large zone of visual influence. The reports which have been published by the London Ecology Unit [10] survey

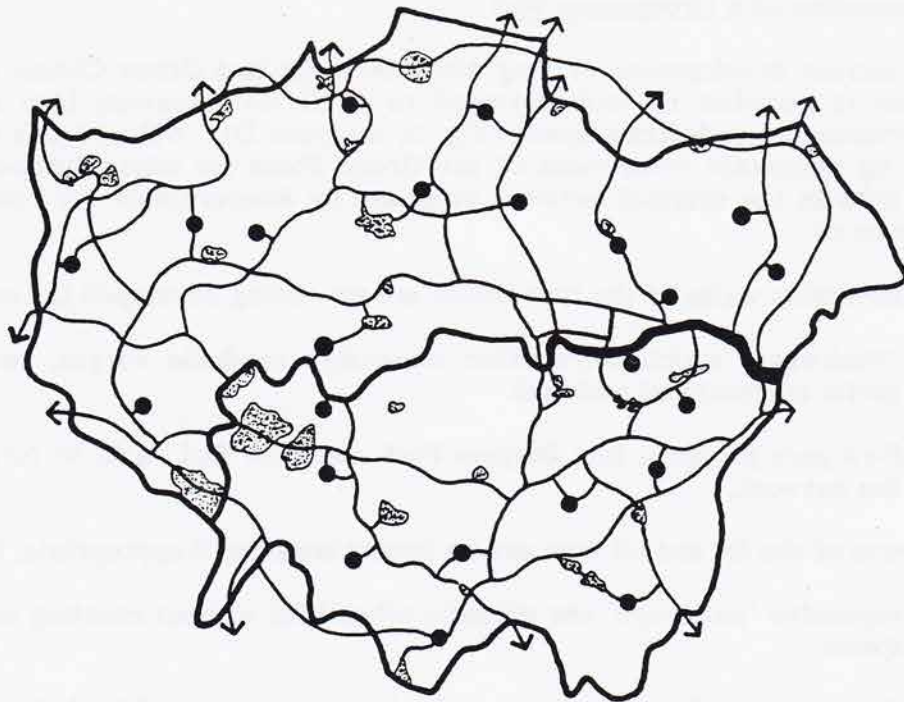


Fig. 5. The existing pattern of long-distance walkways could be extended to create a Greenspace Web for pedestrians. It would be a second public realm. Most of the routes follow lines of opportunity (eg. rivers and canals). Others run through urban areas, as waymarked civic walks. Feeder paths are proposed to link origins with destinations (eg. residential areas with stations, parks and schools).

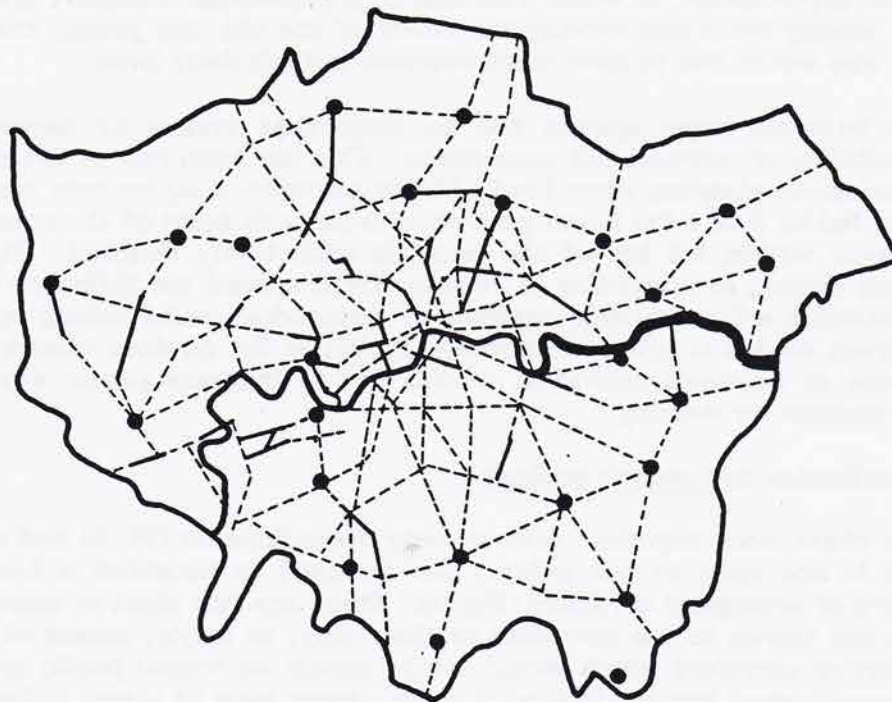


Fig. 6. The London Cycling Campaign has proposed a 1,000 mile Strategic Cycle Route Network for London. The routes indicated by solid lines are in existence.

4.5 Continued

existing ecological links and propose a nature conservation strategy for London. There is a need for both the public open space network (the Greenspace Web) and the ecological network to be co-ordinated, mapped and signposted on a London-wide basis. Local plans should contain proposals for the creation of new habitats, based on an assessment of ecological potential.

4.6 A contribution to London's transport system: a Greenspace Web

The pedestrian network of interconnected public open space described in 4.1 above is being planned to satisfy recreational objectives. A footpath network can also make a contribution to London's transport system, if the footpaths are planned to create a Greenspace Web providing reasonably direct links between origins and destinations (Fig. 5). This can be done by:

- (a) establishing a sub-network of feeder paths to increase access to the long-distance paths from pedestrian origins, in housing estates and car parks;
- (b) making footpath connections with destinations, including town centres, railway stations, shopping areas and schools;
- (c) ensuring that new pedestrian spaces (eg. in shopping streets and business parks) are linked into the Greenspace Web.

4.7 Use of the footpath network by commuters would improve the "visual policing", and thus the safety, of the footpaths. The network would provide for a mode of transport which has been neglected in official circles. The paths could be described as Green Routes, to complement the Department of Transport's use of the term "Red Routes" for vehicular traffic arteries. The Green Routes, in conjunction with London's open spaces, would establish a second public realm of environmentally pleasant open space. This would complement and support the existing public realm, of roads and roadside footpaths.

4.8 A contribution to tourism in London

Waymarked scenic routes are an attraction for tourists, who often do not have cars and find public transport confusing. Tourists do however need a good map in order to make use of long distance footpaths. A large number of footpath leaflets are already published by the London Boroughs, though in practice it would be a major task for a tourist to obtain copies. It would be helpful if one agency (eg. the Silver Jubilee Walkway Trust or the London Tourist Board) were to publish a map of long distance paths and heritage trails, and to provide a clearing house service for Borough footpath maps. The individual walk leaflets could carry a common "London Walking" logo and be distributed from carousels in libraries, and tourist information offices.

4.9 An overall Footpath Network map, on the lines of the recently published "Get On and Go" outdoor activities map, would show connections with London buses and trains, and with places of interest to tourists. This would include historic sites and also the major viewpoints which the GLC and the Silver Jubilee Walk Trust marked with viewing plaques. The walks could also be shown on large scale maps if the Ordnance Survey were to produce a Greater London map in its Outdoor Leisure Series.

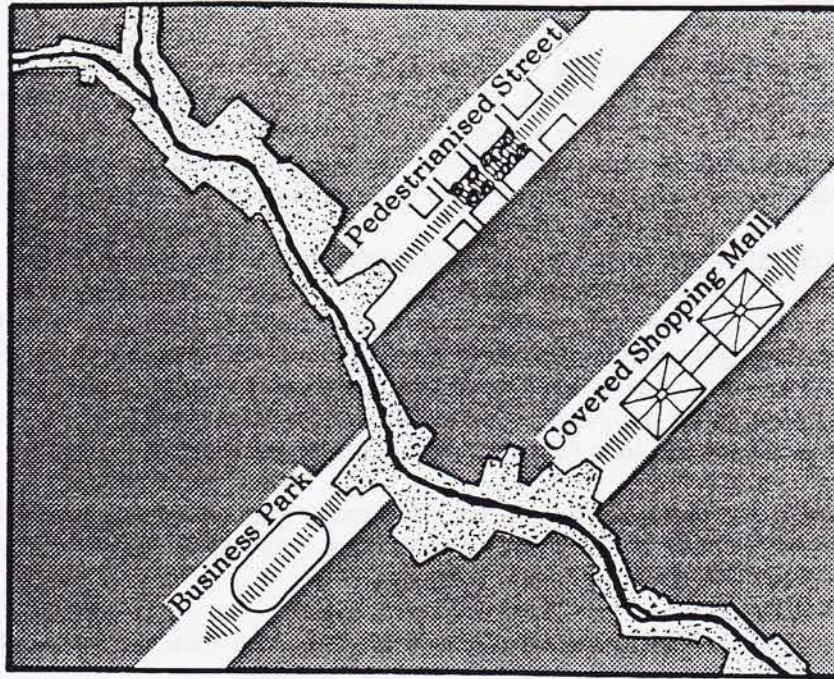


Fig. 7. The green chains can be linked to pedestrianised shopping streets, business malls and shopping malls, so that they become environmental improvement corridors and spread their influence throughout the city.

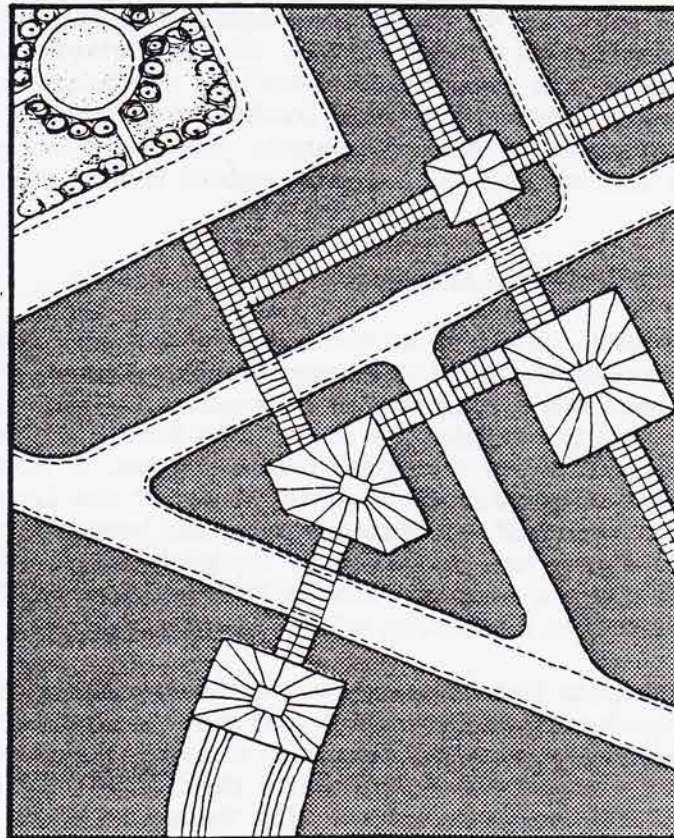


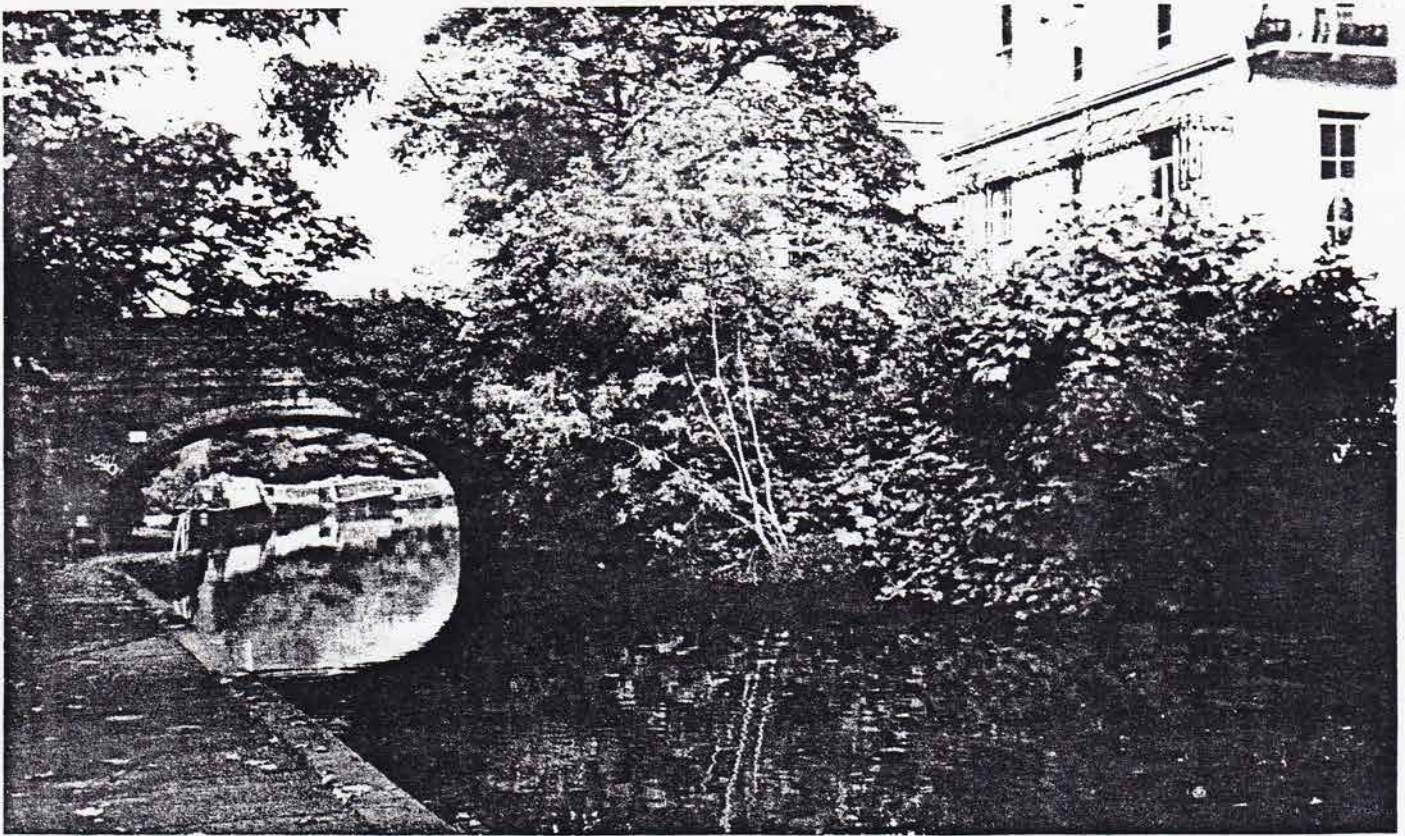
Fig. 8. London could have a network of roofed public open space, based on station forecourts, pedestrian bridges, internal atria, and shopping centres. It should be integrated with the network of outdoor greenspace.



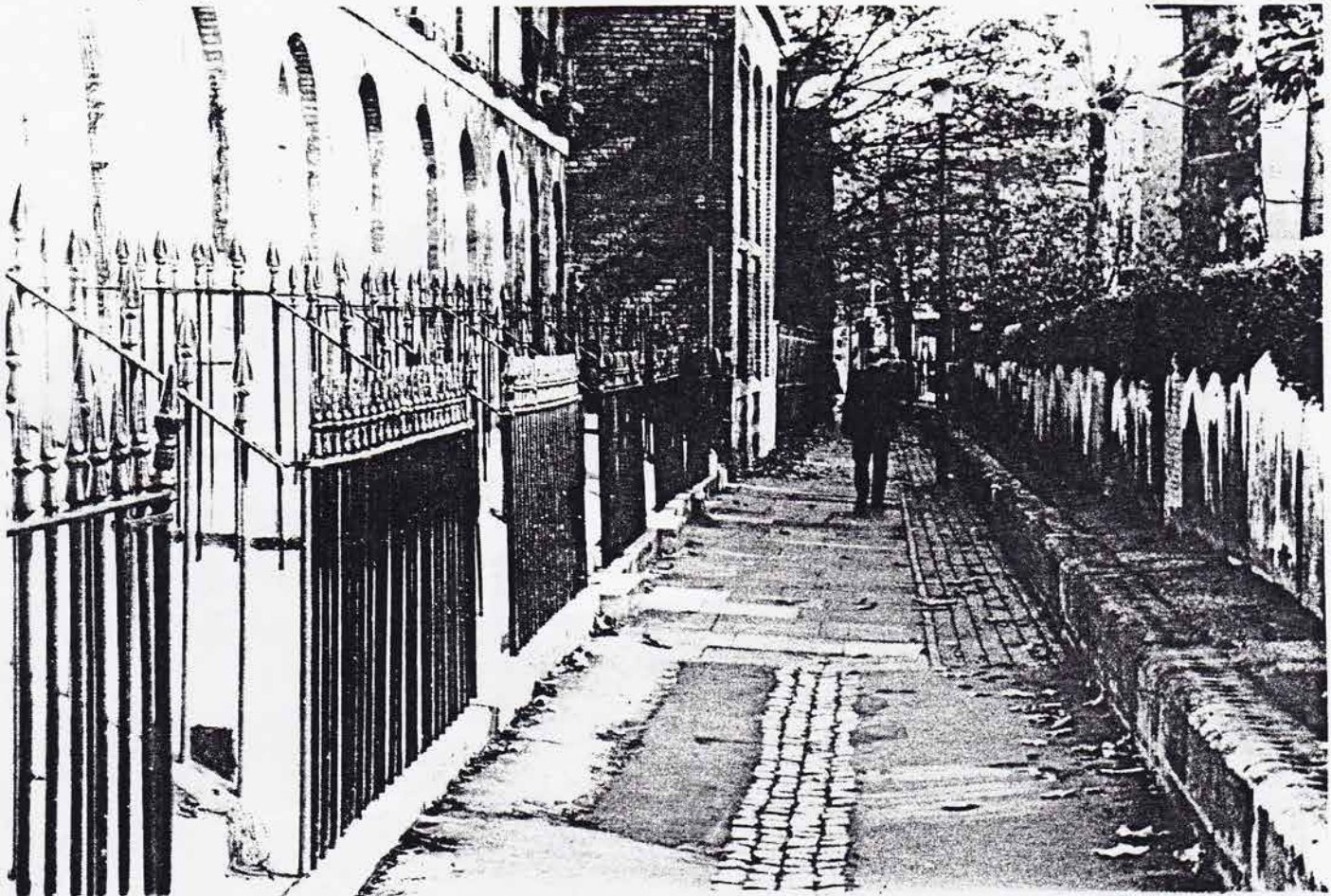
Pl. 1. The South London Green Chain Walk starts in Thamesmead, beside the River Thames.



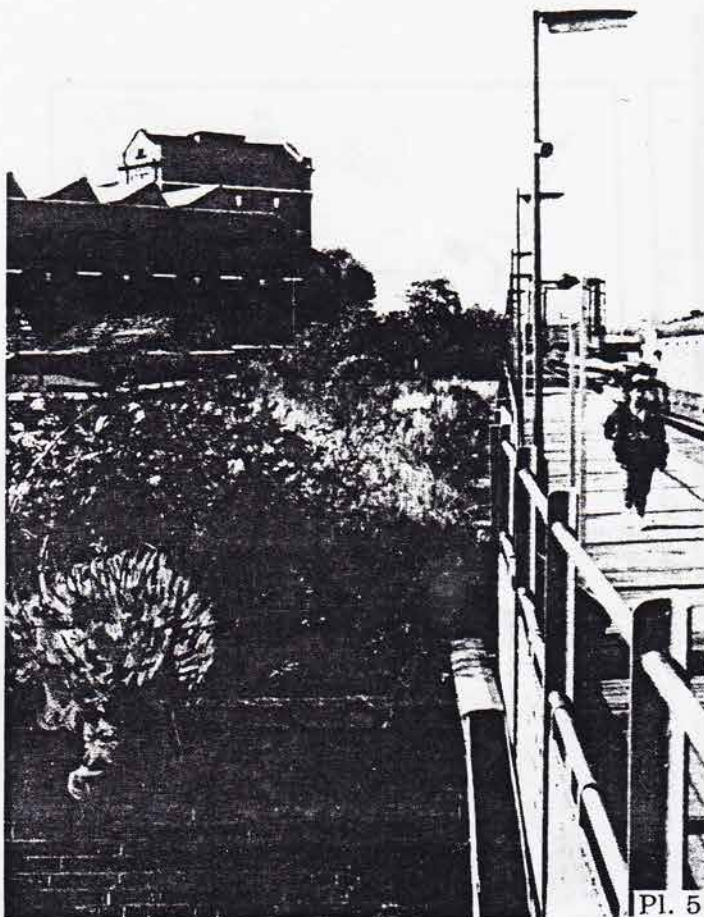
Pl. 2. The Thames Path, which was initiated by the Countryside Commission, will make use of many short lengths of existing riverside walks.



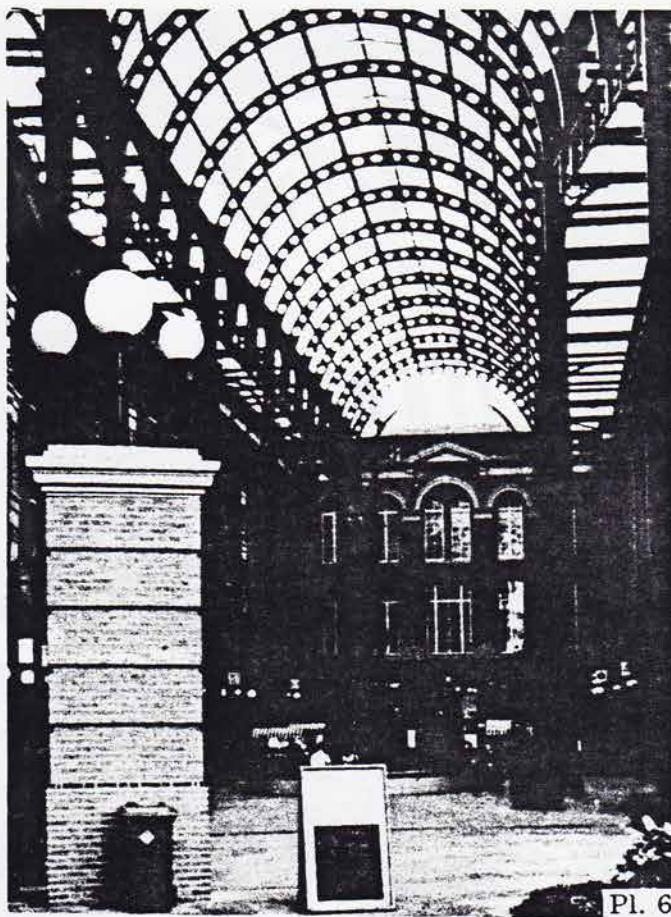
Pl. 3. The towpath beside the Grand Union Canal provides one of the longest waterside walks in London. It runs from the Thames in East London to the Colne Valley Regional Park in West London.



Pl. 4. London has many short urban walks which do not, as yet, form part of a pedestrian network.



Pl. 5



Pl. 6

Pl. 5. London has many railway embankments, with no public access, which could form part of a network of ecological corridors.

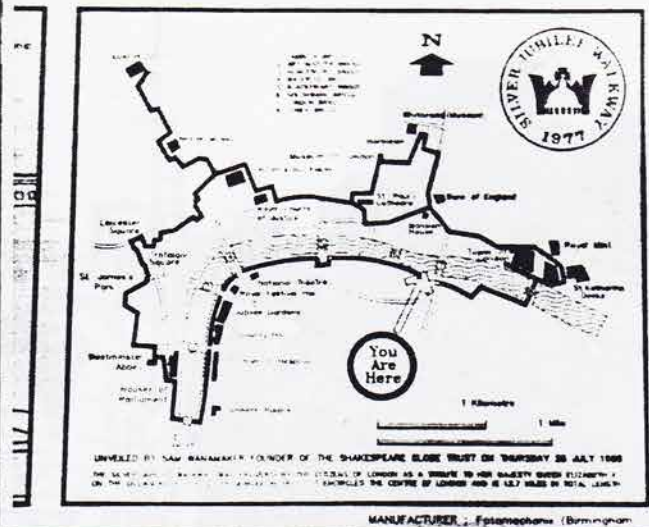
Pl. 6. Many covered open spaces are being made in London, such as Hays Galleria. They could be planned to form a network of indoor public open space which would be linked to the web of outdoor open space.



Pl. 7. There are many underused spaces in suburban parks, such as the carriage drives which were a characteristic feature of the Victorian Park. They would be enlivened by the presence of cyclists, horse-riders and long distance walkers.



Pl. 8



Pl. 9



Pl. 10



Pl. 11



Pl. 12

Pl. 9. The Silver Jubilee Walk is a signposted civic walk in Central London. It runs through an area of high quality urban landscape.

Plates. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. There are many different systems for naming, signposting and using public paths in London: Silver Jubilee Walk (Pls. 8 and 9); Parkland Walk (Pl. 10); Green Chain Walk (Pl. 11); Greenwich Riverside Walk (Pl. 12).

4.10 A contribution to active recreation in London

There have been important changes in recreational patterns since London's nineteenth century parks were planned. The changes are often characterised as a shift from passive recreation to active recreation. Manual workers once wished to spend recreational time relaxing in a public garden, looking at the flowers and listening to a brass band. There are now many more sedentary workers who have private gardens and wish to spend a proportion of their recreational time in active pursuits, including walking, jogging, boating, cycling, horse riding and fishing. They are also likely to have an interest in nature conservation. These activities could be catered for in a Greenspace Web which, in places, provides for highly specialised recreational activities.

4.11 Enhanced provision for cycling in London

The green webs in other north European cities are used by cyclists as well as pedestrians. In Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, it is normal for pathways to be shared by cyclists and pedestrians. This is common where wide paths run beside roads. In the UK, cycling is not permitted on footpaths which run alongside roads. This is because the 1888 Local Government Act defined the bicycle as a vehicle. Local authorities are, however, empowered to permit cycling on paths (eg in parks) which do not run beside roads. There are places where this would not be possible in London (eg. where a narrow, well-used footpath runs beside water, or where the surface is not appropriate), but there are other places where pedestrians and cyclists could share a route for non-motorised traffic. Cycle routes can also be defined on existing roads, as on Westminster Bridge. LPAC has adopted the London Cycling Forum's proposals for a 1000 mile (1609 km) Strategic Cycle Route Network for London (Fig. 6) [11].

4.12 The creation of civic links to public parks

There are opportunities to incorporate shopping arcades and pedestrianised streets into the Greenspace Web (Pl. 6). When this is done, the web becomes "green" in the sense used by politicians (ie "environmentally pleasant"), in addition to being partly "green" in the traditional sense of well-vegetated. There are many busy shopping centres and streets which can be environmentally improved by creating links with public open spaces, pathways and areas of ecological interest. The Green Chains can then become environmental improvement corridors, spreading their influence through the city (Fig. 7). The LB of Hammersmith and Fulham, for example, is planning to make a link from Wormwood Scrubs to Hammersmith Mall. There are also many opportunities to attract developers to waterside land, as in London Docklands and by the Regents Canal, and to incorporate pedestrian areas in business parks into the Greenspace Web. This is a way of funding the development of new public open space. At some point in the future it may be possible to form a network of covered public space in Central London (Fig. 8). It should be carefully integrated with the web of outdoor space, so that pedestrians maintain their orientation and the quality of the streets and parks is not diminished.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The area of the Metropolitan Green Belt is in flux. Although the Green Belt within London has not substantially changed in area, some parts are being lost, some are being added, and its overall quality is being eroded.
- 5.2 The area of Metropolitan Open Land is also in flux, but the trend is for the designated area to be extended through the Boroughs' new Unitary Development Plan process.
- 5.3 There is only one named Green Chain. It is in South London and is characterised by;
- (1) a series of open spaces which have been designated as Metropolitan Open Land;
 - (2) a linking walkway which is signposted through the open spaces and also through urban areas;
 - (3) areas of built development are included within the designated area of the chain. The original Green Chain was not planned primarily as a pedestrian transport network and is not linked, except incidentally, to the probable origins and destinations of pedestrian journeys.
- 5.4 There is a number of other "green chains" which fall within the LPAC Advice (Policy EN9) carried into the DoE Guidance's description, as "extended pathways for the public and wildlife corridors in natural surroundings", though they may not have all the characteristics of the South London Green Chain. The Boroughs have shown considerable interest in the idea of developing green chains of different types.
- 5.5 The finding of this research is that in July 1990 London has 132 miles (212 km) of Waymarked Scenic Walks, and that there are plans to create a further 207 miles (333 km).

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 A Green Strategy for London

The main recommendation is that London should have a Green Strategy, with particular regard to:

- (i) recreation, generally informal in character,
- (ii) nature conservation,
- (iii) non-mechanised (pedestrian and cycle) transport.

The strategy would indicate ways in which the London Boroughs can co-ordinate their efforts to improve the use, character and ecological diversity of open space in public ownership. It would not deal with matters which are "National" rather than "London-wide", like the ozone layer. Nor would it deal with matters which are particular to individual Boroughs. In Germany, plans to develop the ecological and recreational value of open land are required by the Federal Nature Conservation Act of 1976, and are described as Landscape Programmes and Plans [12].

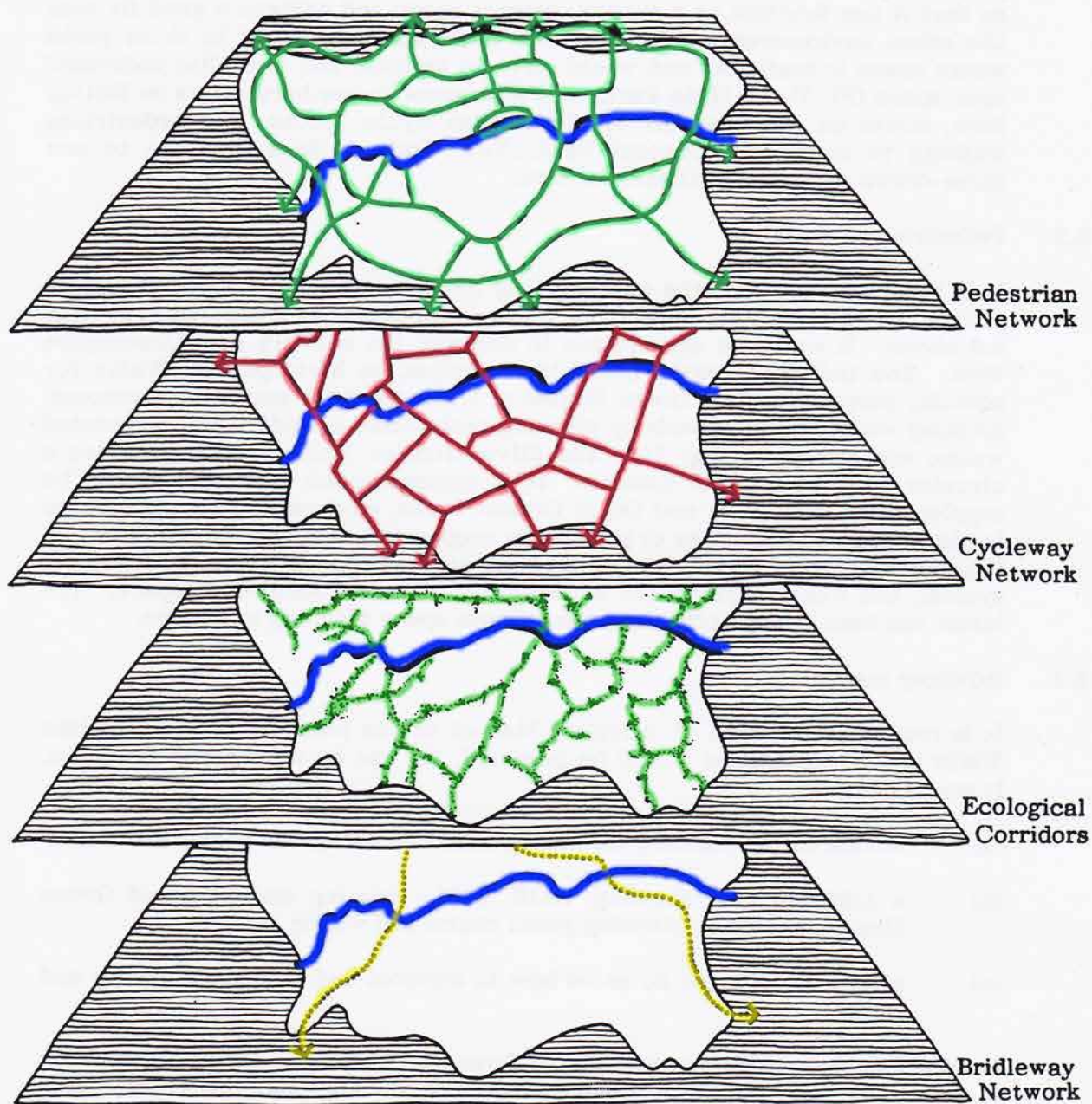


Fig. 9. A green strategy should be prepared for outdoor recreation, nature conservation and non-mechanised transport in London. It would include separate but overlapping networks: for pedestrians (the "Greenspace Web"), for cyclists, for equestrians and for wildlife.

- 6.2 It is recommended that London should have a series of overlapping networks: for pedestrians, for cyclists, for equestrians, and for flora and fauna (Fig. 9). There should also be a network of accessible waterspace, and plans for its development. Abercrombie believed that only one network was necessary and that it should be "a park system." Although it is desirable to form connections between parks, the links do not have to be linear strips of green. The present proposal is for separate networks. Each requires detailed planning and design, so that it can function as a system, attract users, and achieve a good fit with the urban environment. The networks could come together in those parks where space is available, and would serve to animate and revitalise underused open space (Pl. 7). In Hyde Park, it is a pleasure to see horseriders on Rotten Row, boats on the Serpentine, bicycles on cycle tracks, and pedestrians walking to work. In Central Park, New York, it is a pleasure to see horse-drawn carriages available for hire.

6.3 Pedestrian network

It is recommended that the existing long distance walks in London should be planned as an integrated pedestrian transport network, as described in section 4.6 above. It would be appropriate to describe the network as a Greenspace Web. The individual paths could be described as Metropolitan Walks for planning purposes and as Green Routes or Greenways for marketing purposes. Existing walks, and proposals by planning authorities for additional signposted walks, are shown on Fig. 10. The Silver Jubilee Walk already provides a circular walk in Central London. It is recommended that this should be supplemented with Inner and Outer Orbital Walks, as shown on Fig. 11. There is also a need to plan links to pedestrian origins and destinations, as shown on Fig. 5. This would form a people-friendly and environment-friendly transport system, and would improve the accessibility of recreational open space. The latter has been a long-term objective of open space planning in London.

6.4 Advisory manual

It is recommended that an Advisory Manual on the planning of Metropolitan Walks and Green Chains should be prepared, for use by the London Boroughs. It would contain:

- (a) advice on the planning of, and terminology for, green chains and walks;
- (b) a 1:50,000 plan showing: MGB, MOL, existing and proposed Green Chains, for use in planning green chains and walks;
- (c) practical guidance notes on how to signpost and map green chains and walks.

London has three growing networks of Strategic Walks: the Green Chain Walk in South London, the West London Waterways Walk, and the Countryside Commission's Thames Path. The purpose of the Advisory Manual would be to assist the Boroughs to use consistent terminology and to achieve good standards of planning, access, signposting and mapping.

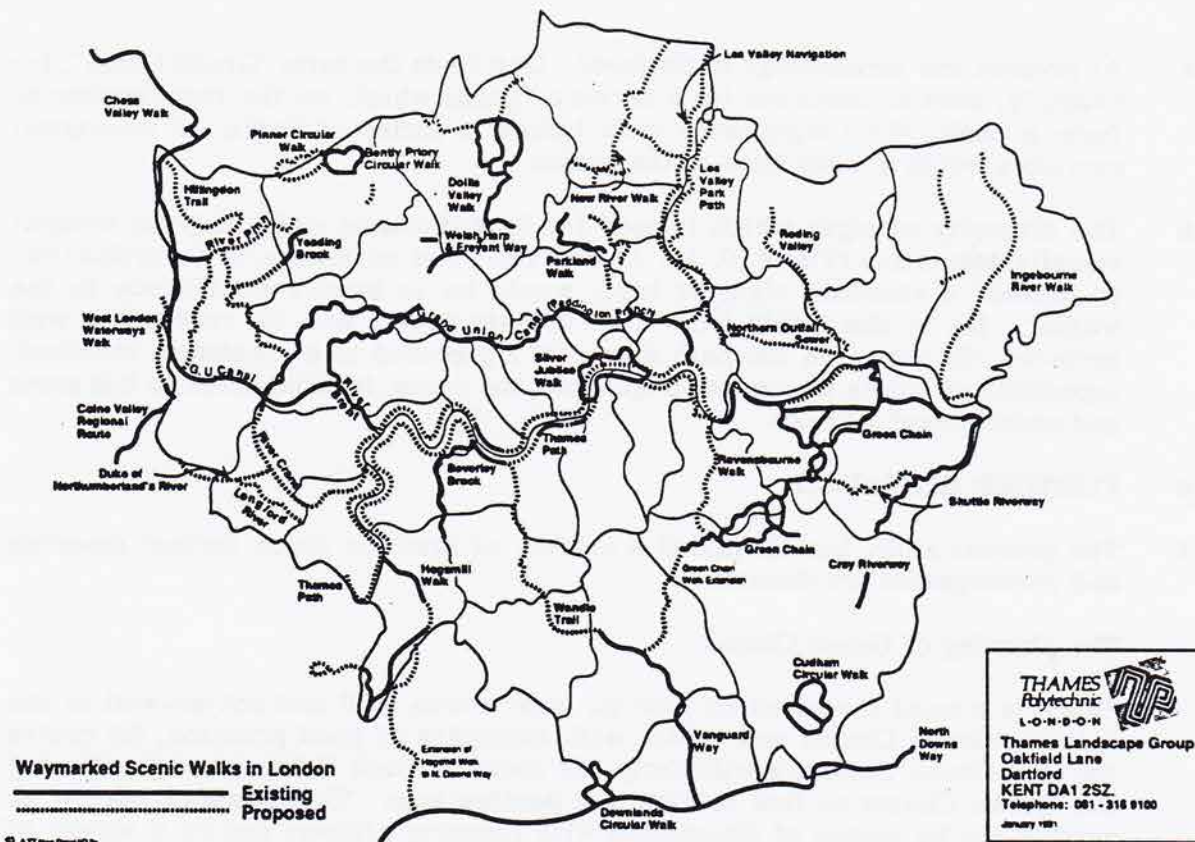


Fig. 10

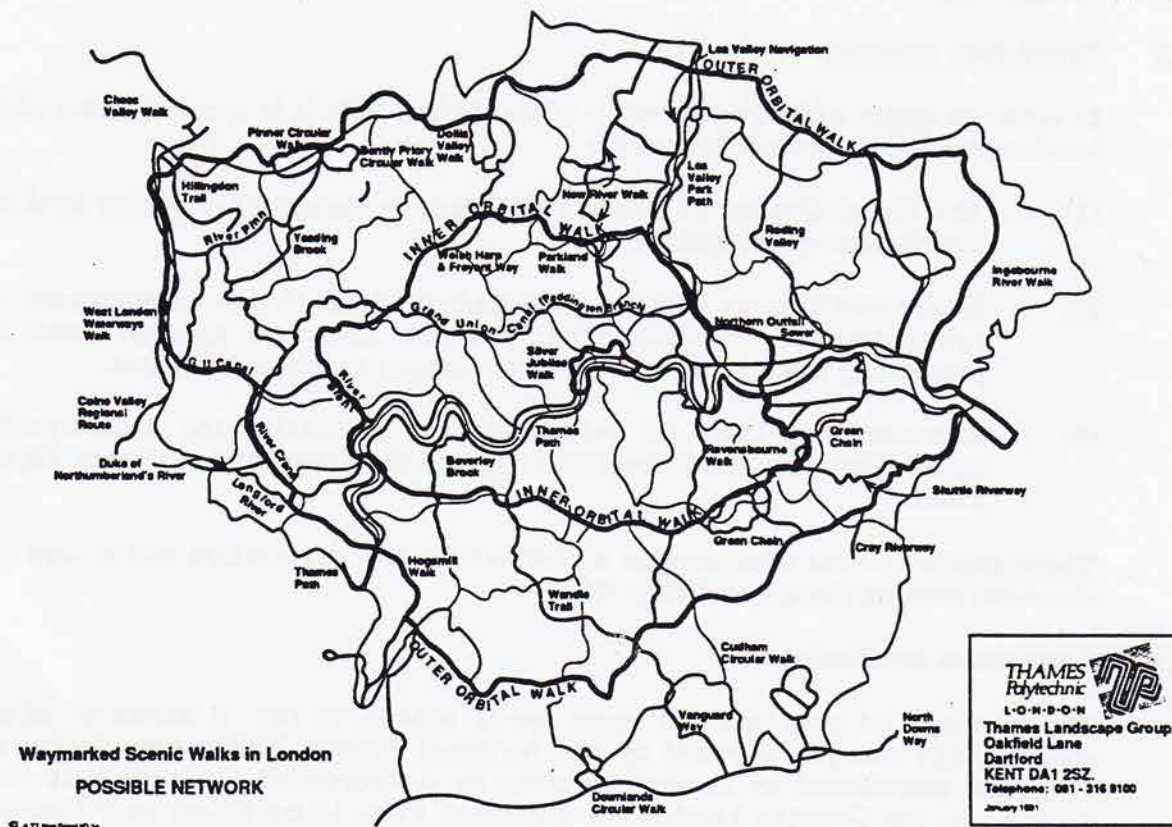


Fig. 11

Figs. 10 & 11. The above plan shows the existing and proposed "waymarked scenic walks" in London. In September 1990 there were 132 miles (212 km) of existing walk and proposals for a further 207 miles (333 km). The lower plan shows how this network could be completed and extended to form a network of circular and radial walks.

6.5 At present the terminology is confused. One finds the term "Green Chain", for example, used to describe: (a) a series of parks which, on the map, appear to form a chain, (b) a signposted walk linking a series of parks, (c) ecological corridors which are not open to the public.

6.6 The diversity of signs which is used for long distance walks may be thought visually attractive (Pls. 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12). The advantage of co-ordination, to include a standard sign, or logo, would be to inspire confidence in the walker. He or she would know that certain routes are: (a) reasonably well surfaced, (b) shown on footpath maps, (c) signposted to a consistent standard, especially at points where one might lose the route, (d) connected to bus stops and underground stations.

7.0 FURTHER RESEARCH

7.1 The present study has identified a number of areas in which further research and investigation are desirable:

The planning of Green Chains

There is a need for research into (a) what works well and not-so-well in the existing Green Chains and walks, with examples of good practice, (b) routes for new Green Chains, particularly for cross-Borough links, (c) ways of using the Green Chains to link origins and destinations. This research should be carried out by means of discussions with planning officers and by a survey of the existing Green Chains.

7.2 Green Belt planning

In order to assist effective planning of the Green Belt it is recommended that landscape studies are carried out of:

- (1) **The Visual Quality of Green Belt Land:** to assist in protecting land of the highest visual quality.
- (2) **Intervisibility:** to determine which land is of key importance in preventing settlements from merging into one another, and in preserving the special character of country towns and villages.
- (3) **Recreational Use:** to determine the potential for countryside recreation in the Metropolitan Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land.

These studies would also provide a context for the restoration and re-use of damaged land on the urban fringe [13].

7.3 Open space standards

The concept of recreational open space standards (eg. 6 acres of open space/1,000) was put forward by the National Playing Fields Association in 1925 and introduced to London planning by Abercrombie. Although it was dropped in the Greater London Development Plan, it continues to influence planning for sport and recreation. Some boroughs believe they have "a deficiency of open space" and some have been criticised for building on school playing fields.

7.3 Continued

It is possible that some school playing fields could be grouped to create modern well-managed sports centres for use by schools and community groups, supported by professional management and coaching. The old "open space standards" could become statistical measures for use in planning, instead of targets for sports and open space provision. The National Playing Fields Association continues to recommend a standard of 2.42 ha/1,000 population (6 acres/1,000) [14]. LPAC, at its meeting on 25th August 1990 (Report 87/90) agreed to a research project into strategic policy for the retention and enhancement of open space, and this is now being carried out by planning consultants Llewelyn Davies Planning, the first stage of which will be completed in Summer 1991.

7.4 Open space usage

There is a need for research into current usage patterns of recreational open space. It is often said that there has been a change from "passive recreation" to "active recreation", but little is known and it appears that some urban parks receive a low level of usage, while others are very intensively used. It is desirable to carry out research into: (1) the numbers of visitors to typical public parks and green chains, (2) the pattern of open space usage, (3) facilities for which supply and demand are not in balance.

7.5 Nature conservation

Ecological corridors are linking habitats which may assist in the distribution of some wildlife species. There is a need to define the concept, to carry out research into their effectiveness, and to produce a map of existing and potential ecological corridors in London. Some Boroughs use the term in the sense which has been given to "Green Chain" in this report. The London Ecology Unit holds information on wildlife habitats in all the London Boroughs but has not produced a London-wide map of ecological corridors. There is also a need for a manual on nature conservation with regard to planning applications. Open spaces could be managed to produce a wider range of habitat-types, and there are opportunities for habitat creation and diversification in association with development projects, road construction and riverworks. It is often a more appropriate and more economical policy than ornamental planting. In 1986 the London Ecology Unit characterised many public parks as "green deserts with lollipops" in a report on London's habitats [15]. There is a need to appraise the effectiveness of the habitat creation work which has taken place in London in the last 5 years: some projects have worked very well and others have failed.

7.6 Cycle routes

Some work has been done on a Strategic Cycle Route Network for London. Further research would enable this network to be planned in conjunction with the Green Chains. Cycle routes, like pedestrian routes, are partly for recreation and partly for journeys to school and work. Some Boroughs responded to the draft Strategic Open Space Plan by asking if they could have a similar map to show what cycle routes are being proposed by other Boroughs.

7.7 Equestrian routes

Long-distance horse-riding is growing in popularity and would benefit from a network of long-distance bridleways. As with cycle routes, they should be planned in conjunction with the Green Chains. There is a need for detailed research into routes, into the potential demand, and their compatability or otherwise with pedestrians and cyclists.

7.8 A Database for open space planning

The most satisfactory basis for open space planning in London would be a database held on a computer. The DoE already has a database of green-belt land, from which areas can be calculated. It is maintained for the Planning Inspectorate and can produce up-to-date maps of green belt land, at 1:10,000 or 1:50,000 or any other scale. Areas of Metropolitan Open Land, Public Open Space, Green Chains, Green Paths, and Wildlife Habitats could also be held on a database. This would greatly facilitate open space planning in London.

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