

MAYOR OF LONDON

London Strategic Parks Project Report

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GREATER**LONDON**AUTHORITY

London Strategic Parks Project Report

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Greater London Authority*

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Executive Summary

POLICY CONTEXT

It is necessary to consider Regional and Metropolitan Parks within the context of current strategic policy guidance and the emphasis on the creation of sustainable communities. The importance of open space is recognised in a range of government policy and policy guidance. Particular importance is placed on the range of benefits that can be attributed to open spaces within the vision for sustainable communities, particularly in creating improved living environments through the promotion of healthy living, improved accessibility and social inclusion.

Open space and parks in London have been planned and provided for many hundreds of years, and open space provision has been a key component of spatial planning in London since the early 19th century, with the ongoing evolution of approaches to open space provision.

The London Plan is the current strategic plan for London setting out an integrated social, economic and environmental framework for future development over the next 15 years. The Plan sets out a benchmark standard for the provision of a range of public open spaces across London from Regional to Local parks.

OPEN SPACE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

The value of open space may be measured in terms of cultural, educational, structural, amenity, health, sport and recreation, children's play, regeneration, the economy, the environment and biodiversity value (London Plan, GLA 2004). The report briefly summarises a number of the key roles and functions and these are reflected in the subsequent development of defining characteristics and assessment methodology. These include:

- Urban Renaissance
- Economic Value and Regeneration
- Health and Well-Being
- Social Inclusion, Community Development
- Education and Life-Long Learning
- Environment and Ecology
- Heritage and Culture

DEFINING REGIONAL AND METROPOLITAN PARKS

The existing definition of strategic open spaces categories is based on the concept of an open space hierarchy of scale and distribution. While this hierarchy provides a useful spatial planning tool, the need for a more flexible definition of Regional and Metropolitan Parks is identified.

Definition of Regional Parks elsewhere in the UK provides limited guidance for London as there is no generally accepted standard model for a Regional Park.

A number of key issues in developing the definition of strategic open space are identified, including:

- The importance of linkages and open space networks;
- Reconciling local and strategic open space needs; and
- Strategic open spaces as distinctive entities.
- Role of open space in regeneration

A range of defining characteristics is proposed:

- Size;
- Offer of Facilities and Features, including:
 - Recreation;
 - Heritage and culture;
 - Ecology;
 - Resource management; and
 - Landscape.
- Accessibility; and
- Quality.

The following definitions of Regional and Metropolitan Parks is proposed:

London's **Regional Parks** will be areas, corridors or networks of open space, the majority of which is publicly accessible, which provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, heritage, cultural or resource management benefits. Individual Regional Parks will offer a combination of facilities and features that is unique within Greater London. Regional Parks will be readily accessible by public transport and be managed to meet best practice quality standards.

London's **Metropolitan Parks** will be areas of publicly accessible open space which provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, heritage, cultural or resource management benefits. Individual Metropolitan Parks will offer a combination of facilities and features that is unique at a sub regional level. Metropolitan Parks will be readily accessible by public transport and be managed to meet best practice quality standards.

GOVERNANCE

The nature of the existing open space resource and how that resource is best developed to maximise its contribution to the strategic open space needs of the city lies at the heart of this project. A number of challenges relating to the delivery of strategic open space aspirations have been identified:

- Fragmented ownership/management of existing open space
- Coordination between adjacent authorities where open space is located within more than one administrative area
- Conflicting management priorities amongst open space owners/managers
- Lack of incentives to deliver strategic open space aspirations

- Resource demands for delivering strategic open space aspirations and concerns regarding diversion of resources away from local provision

A further key issue relates to the tension between the need for an organisation or entity that can facilitate the strategic open space aspirations, and the importance of retaining local control of open space management.

Potential Governance Approaches

Importantly, there is no single approach to governance of strategic open space opportunities that can be applied universally. The most appropriate approach will be determined in light of the specific situations relating to open space ownership and management and the nature of the open space aspirations.

There are a great many variations in approach to open space management, but these may be considered as lying on a continuum ranging from individual organisations working independently through to a statutory park authority responsible for managing all aspect of open space. This continuum can be considered in five broad groups:

- Individual organisations
- An informal Partnership of supportive organisations
- A semi-autonomous, formalised Partnership of supportive organisations
- Independent Trust or Company
- A new Park Authority or similar organisation

It is also important to recognise that the optimal organisational solution for the delivery of a significant new open space opportunity may not be a single structure, but may in fact change in response to the changing needs arising from setting up, delivering and subsequently managing a major project. Three stages can be considered:

- Transitional Stage
- Implementation Stage
- Management Stage

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Methodology Principles

A number of key principles have been identified that must underpin any assessment methodology undertaken:

- Potential advantages of a sub regional assessment approach to provide the open space framework for future specific open space opportunities;
- In the absence of a sub regional approach, ensuring the area of search for the assessment methodology is of sufficient scale and consideration of key open space resources extends beyond any defined study boundary;
- Coordination of multiple owners/managers and other stakeholders aspiration is fundamental to assessment methodology; and
- In recognition of the diverse roles and functions of strategic open space, the assessment methodology must draw together a diverse range of related strategies and initiatives.

Pilot study areas

The assessment methodology has been refined through the exploration of four pilot study examples of Strategic Park opportunities identified in the London Plan. The findings and recommendations arising from these pilot studies are set out in the Appendices of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Assessment Methodology

The report sets out an assessment methodology that can be applied to identified strategic open space opportunity areas. While this methodology will provide a consistent approach to the assessment of strategic open space opportunities, it should be viewed as a flexible framework which should be reviewed and modified as appropriate in response to the specific characteristics and circumstances relating to each opportunity area.

Further consideration should also be given to the advantages inherent in a sub regional based assessment of strategic open space needs and aspirations that would provide a framework for subsequent site specific assessments.

Review of London Plan

The findings of this project suggest that the current definitions of Regional and Metropolitan Parks should be expanded to allow consideration of other criteria relating to functions and features, accessibility and quality. This should also allow for the consideration of networks of open space to meet strategic open space requirements.

The study highlights the requirement to strengthen policies in respect of Regional and Metropolitan Parks with a greater emphasis on implementation through the promotion of cross boundary and partnership working. The proposed changes would strengthen existing policies in respect of:

- Encouraging the development of networks of open spaces to meet strategic open space requirements;
- Promoting cross-borough coordination in implementing proposals for new or improved Regional and Metropolitan Parks;
- Identifying Regional and Metropolitan Parks as a theme to be addressed through the preparation of Sub-Regional Development Frameworks and the promotion of cross-boundary links to provide the focus for implementation.

The GLA has a key strategic role in assisting in the implementation of proposals for new and improved Regional and Metropolitan Parks through working in partnership with other stakeholders, facilitating and assisting in cross-boundary coordination and the provision of technical and other appropriate support.

Governance and Implementation models

There is no single approach to governance that can be applied universally. The most appropriate approach will be determined in the light of the specific situations relating to open space ownership and management and the nature of the open space aspirations.

There are a great many variations in approach to open space management, but these may be considered as lying on a continuum ranging from individual organisations working independently through to a statutory park authority responsible for managing all aspect of open space. In defining the appropriate model it is important that all relevant parties are involved, and that the principles of local governance are taken fully into account.

Based on consultation undertaken during the study, concern has been expressed about the risk of loss of local accountability in open space management, and the potential resource implications for local communities in delivering and maintaining strategic open space resources.

Delivering Strategic Open Space – Moving Forward

Perhaps the key issues arising from the findings of this study relate to how both the strategic open space opportunities identified in the pilot studies and strategic open space aspirations more generally, can be delivered. At present, the implementation of these opportunities is being brought forward through a range of ad hoc and uncoordinated approaches. The extent of progress in individual cases is largely dependant on the commitment and resources of individual or partnership organisations, and it appears that in the majority of cases, the extent of progress is limited by the extent to which these organisations are able to dedicate resources to the delivery of strategic open spaces.

Whilst this report can act as a catalyst for the development of Regional and Metropolitan Parks in London, its aspirations can only be achieved with the support and cooperation of London Boroughs, GLA and other partners. A programme specifically aimed at assisting in the delivery of strategic open space aspirations requires the coordination of appropriate resources and expertise at the strategic level. Organisations like the London Parks and Green Spaces Forum could play a key part in this process by providing targeted assistance in the form of expertise, guidance, incentives and resources to establish appropriate local partnerships.

It is considered fundamental to the success of such a programme that the delivery of strategic open space opportunities must be considered in conjunction with other open space needs in the development of open space strategies. While opportunities should be coordinated and implemented through local or sub-regional partnerships, there will be a requirement for strategic level support in developing comprehensive strategies for the delivery of Regional and Metropolitan Parks.

1.0 Introduction

The Mayor's London Plan (February 2004) recognises the valuable contribution of access to a good quality network of open spaces makes to the quality of life for those who live, work and visit the capital. Policy 3D.10 of the London Plan states that the Mayor will assist in identifying the need for new or improved Regional and Metropolitan Parks.

EDAW was commissioned in June 2005 to undertake the London Strategic Parks Project on behalf of the Strategic Parks Steering Group. This Steering Group is made up of representatives from the following organisations:

- Greater London Authority;
- London Parks & Green Spaces Forum;
- Government Office for London;
- Association of London Government;
- English Nature;
- Countryside Agency; and
- Groundwork London.

The purpose of the project is to undertake further work on developing the Regional and Metropolitan Park opportunities identified in the Sub-Regional Development Frameworks (SRDFs). The outputs of the project will inform the development of policy as part of the first review of the London plan and advise on strategic implementation and management options. The SRDFs identify the need for 4 new regional parks and 10 new Metropolitan Parks in order to address the indicative strategic deficiency areas. The general locations for each strategic park opportunity are identified in the SDRFs. This project focuses on providing further detail on the two Regional parks Areas of Search and developing generic models on implementing the other defined strategic park opportunities with two Metropolitan worked example.

The principle aims of the project are:

- To develop an assessment methodology that will assist in facilitating the future development of Regional and Metropolitan Park opportunities across London as identified in the London Plan and Sub Regional Development Frameworks;
- To inform the review of the London Plan;
- To develop generic models for different situations that will offer guidance on issues relating to the governance, implementation, funding and long term management of Regional and Metropolitan Park opportunities;
- To identify opportunities and constraints and to produce an implementation framework for 2 new Regional Parks in the identified Areas of Search; and
- To identify opportunities and constraints and to produce an implementation framework for 2 new Metropolitan Park opportunities.

A number of additional aims are identified in the brief, including:

- Developing definitions for Regional and Metropolitan Parks and their contribution to meeting the strategic open space needs for London;
- Exploring the range of potential roles and functions towards which the park opportunities can contribute; and
- Considering issues of access and accessibility by different user types and from different transport modes.

The project has considered the following pilot study areas:

- South London Regional Park Opportunity- Wandle Valley
- North West London Regional Park Opportunity - Area of Search
- Metropolitan Park Opportunity- Lower Roding Valley
- Metropolitan Park Opportunity – Denham Country Park and environs

This report sets out the findings of the project including advice on the implementation and management of Regional and Metropolitan Park opportunities and the identification of generic models that can be applied to other opportunities in the future.

2.0 Open Space Planning Context

2.1 STRATEGIC POLICY

The government has set an agenda to improve the quality and attractiveness of urban living through an ‘urban renaissance’ and promotion of sustainable communities. The value of access to open space in contributing to the health and enjoyment of urban living has been evident throughout the evolution of our urban areas. However more recently, it has moved up the agenda. This section looks at the policy context for the project and the historical development of parks in London.

2.1.1 The Urban White Paper: Our Towns and Cities: The Future (DETR, 2000)¹

The White Paper recognises that well managed public open spaces improve the attractiveness of urban areas and help to promote healthier lifestyles. The Paper also highlights the need for improvements in the management and maintenance of open space. It identifies a requirement to improve the quality of parks.

2.1.2 Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003)²

The government has demonstrated its support for improving the value of access to quality public space by recognising it as a key component of sustainable communities. The Sustainable Communities Plan underlines the government’s commitment to the ‘liveability’ agenda, creating quality local environments and creating decent homes in decent places. The Plan identifies significant monies to improve the local environment through investment in parks and public spaces. New parks and public spaces have and will continue to be created.

More and better publicly accessible green space in and around communities is promoted to protect the countryside, contribute to the urban renaissance and improve the quality of the environment. New country parks and networks of green spaces within towns and cities will be created.

Applicable to the Metropolitan Park Area of Search in the River Roding is Creating Sustainable Communities: Greening the Gateway, A Green Space Strategy for Thames Gateway³; part of the Sustainable Communities Plan suite of documents the ODPM and DEFRA prepared. The document sets out a vision for the Thames Gateway and the positive contribution landscape can make to the quality of life for all those who live and work there. The principal aim of the document is to provide a framework for the

¹ *The Urban White Paper. Our Towns and Cities: The Future – Delivering an Urban Renaissance.* Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, November 2000

² *Sustainable Communities: Building for the future.* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003

³ *Creating Sustainable Communities: Greening the Gateway, A Green Space Strategy for Thames Gateway.* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003

integration of the extensive mosaic of green space into the regeneration process and provide a modern, functional and cohesive green infrastructure to enhance new development. The concept of the 'Green Grid' East London, South Essex and North Kent is introduced to physically link parcels of green space. The complementary proposal, the 'Green Arc' for the green belt of northeast London is also introduced.

2.1.3 PPG17: Open Space, Sport & Recreation (DETR, 2001)⁴

PPG17 sets out the Government's policies on open space, sport and recreation. The Government recognises the importance of open space, sports and recreational facilities in meeting objectives, including:

- Supporting an urban renaissance - local networks of high quality and well managed and maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe. Green spaces in urban areas perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity. By acting as 'green lungs' they can assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality;
- Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion - well planned and maintained open spaces and good quality sports and recreational facilities can play a major part in improving people's sense of well being in the place they live. As a focal point for community activities, they can bring together members of deprived communities and provide opportunities for people for social interaction;
- Health and well being - open spaces, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others; and
- Promoting more sustainable development - by ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities (particularly in urban areas) are easily accessible by walking and cycling and that more heavily used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned for locations well served by public transport.

A range of open space typologies are identified:

- Green spaces;
- Parks and gardens, including urban parks and formal gardens;
- Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces, including urban forestry, scrub, grasslands and open and running water;
- Green corridors, including river and canal banks, cycle-ways and rights of way;
- Outdoor sports facilities, including publicly and privately owned sports pitches, school or other institutional sports pitches, golf courses;
- Amenity green space, including informal recreation areas;
- Provision for children and young people, including play areas, skateboard parks, 'hanging out areas' and other informal areas;
- Allotments, including community gardens;
- Cemeteries and churchyards;
- Civic spaces;
- Civic squares; and
- Other hard surfaced areas that have been designed for pedestrians.

⁴ *Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002

2.2 OPEN SPACE PLANNING IN LONDON

2.2.1 A Brief History of Open Space Planning in London

Planning for the provision of publicly accessible open space and parks commenced in the 17th Century when British writers recognised the value of parks and open space in London. The principal defining plan for today's system of parks was Abercrombie's 1943 Greater London Plan. Following a decline in the importance attributed to open space planning, more recently a renewed emphasis has been witnessed attributed to the sustainability agenda and culture change to integrated spatial planning giving a renewed emphasis on the provision of open space. This section examines the history of planning for parks in London.

Early Pioneers

Described as 'the most visionary landscape plan ever produced for a British city' John Claudius Loudon's 1829 plan for London proposed a series of concentric zones, from the centre of London outwards alternating between zones of open country half a mile broad with up to one and a half miles of built-up area. At its heart, public and government buildings were to be set in a circle of landscaped grounds. The proposals were a response to the growing city; zones of countryside providing safety for its inhabitants. The zones of open country were proposed for the "supply provisions, water and fresh air and remove filth of every description, maintenance of general cleanliness and dispatch of business." However, the problems of implementing the plans were recognised and the model was recognised as more appropriate for newly planned towns.

The legal basis for the acquisition and management of open space in London was provided by the Metropolitan Open Spaces Act 1877. The early parks system was a reaction to the rapid growth of urban areas during the Industrial Revolution. Philanthropists promoted the creation and protection of parks as space for the middle to lower classes to take exercise, improve health and for amusement.

Unwin and Pepler made recommendations to the Greater London Regional Planning Committee in 1929 on the merits of open space. Specifically, the provision of playing fields was seen as a means of combating juvenile delinquency. The National Playing Fields Association set its first standards for the provision of open space around the same time. Unwin recommended a 'green girdle' around London for sporting and recreational use to promote health and character.

The Abercrombie Plan

Yet it is Abercrombie's proposals for the County of London, drawn up during the latter war years that formed the basis for the parks and open spaces in London as seen today. The plans were contained within the Greater London Plan 1945; "The Abercrombie Plan". Again the merits of open space were promoted for recreational use and promotion of healthy lifestyles. The poor distribution and deficiency of open space provision across London led to Abercrombie setting open space standards at 4 acres per 1000 population and the development of a 'Parks System'. This was a connected set of spaces forming green wedges leading out to a 'Green Belt' around London. The Green Belt was formed from the countryside around London, safeguarded for weekend recreation and short breaks.

The concept of the Parks System was a holistic approach. Parks were closely linked by parkways along existing and new roads, connecting with the larger parks. Abercrombie proposed that the existing parks together with bombed and cleared sites following the war were safeguarded to provide new open space. Other sources of new space included opening up of private space, draining of land and securing shared use of existing space.

Abercrombie advocated the merits of all purpose, multi-function green areas to provide facilities for amenity and sports activities combined with landscaping. Parks were to be a focus for the community with housing to be set around the space. Special attractions were encouraged within parks to increase their value. These might include attractions with architectural, historical, amusement or cultural value.

The first Regional Park; the Lee Valley, was established in north east London as a green wedge providing a variety of recreational and leisure pastimes for the regional population. It was Abercrombie's most developed parkway. A special Act of Parliament (in 1968) gave powers for the creation of the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. The Authority was set up to develop disused and derelict areas along the River Lee for recreation and nature conservation.

Greater London Development Plan

The Greater London Council (established 1963) published the draft Greater London Development Plan in 1969 (adopted 1976). The Plan introduced Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) to protect designated open land within the urban area. It was applied to parks, woodlands, golf courses, nursery gardens, cemeteries and other open space. The plan highlighted how the use of open space standards to define deficiency was too simplistic to accurately provide for recreational demand.

Strategic Guidance for London

Following the subsequent dissolution of the GLC, regional planning guidance was provided by RPG9: Regional Planning Guidance for the South East which was first published in February 1989 and replaced by revised guidance in 1994. The original RPG9 emphasised three aspects: the need to foster economic growth; to revitalise older urban areas; and to accommodate new development while conserving the countryside. These continued to be important objectives in the replacement RPG9. RPG9 highlighted the importance of protecting recreational and amenity open space and its contribution to the quality of urban life. This guidance was supplemented by Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities (RPG3,1996) which was intended to provide a framework for the preparation of unitary development plans and to suggest ways the London Boroughs could contribute to promoting competitiveness and regeneration.

RPG3 highlights the importance of London's open spaces to the quality of the environment and the quality of life and the need for a positive approach if the quality and value of open spaces is to be enhanced, with particular reference to their amenity value, ecological contribution and public accessibility. The guidance recognises that increasing pressures for active leisure and recreational pursuits need to be considered against the value of the areas for passive enjoyment and nature conservation. The importance of green chains comprising a series of elongated undeveloped green spaces linking broader areas of open land is highlighted. RPG3 incorporated the standards for open space provision recommended by the London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC,1994) which comprised a typology of six categories of accessible open space, including Regional Parks and Metropolitan Parks. The definition for Regional and Metropolitan Parks developed by LPAC is set out in Table 1.

The guidance stated that planning for the provision of local open space is a matter for each Borough and the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) should contain proposals for such spaces. As made clear in PPG17, local planning authorities were expected to identify deficiencies in public open space and recreation provision and justify the amount and location of new provision against other competing pressures for the use of land. To do this, Boroughs were advised to draw up local standards for open space provision based on the standards recommended in the LPAC advice.

Through strategic advice, the benefits of green space for non-human recreation or health were increasingly recognised during the 1990s in terms of ecological value, promotion of biodiversity, value as wildlife corridors and other environmental aspects.

Table 1 Open Space Typology (LPAC 1994)

Type and Main Function	Approx size and distance from home	Characteristics
REGIONAL PARKS AND OPEN SPACES (Linked Metropolitan Open land and green Belt corridors) Weekend and occasional visits by car or public transport	400 hectares 3.2-8 km	Large areas and corridors of natural heathland, downland, commons, woodland and parkland also including areas not publicly accessible but which contribute to the overall environmental amenity. Primarily providing for informal recreation with some non-intensive active recreation uses. Car parking at key locations.
METROPOLITAN PARKS Weekend and occasional visits by car and public transport	60 hectares 3.2 km or more where the park is appreciably larger	Either i) natural heathland, downland, commons, woodland etc or ii) formal parks providing for both active and passive recreation. May contain playing fields but at least 40 hectares for other pursuits. Adequate car parking

Source: Advice on Strategic Planning Guidance for London, LPAC (1994)

Spatial Planning and Renewed Emphasis on the Open Space Planning

The Greater London Authority under Mayor Ken Livingstone, saw the re-establishment of a strategic body with planning function and a renewed emphasis on planning for open space. This has been supported through a holistic approach to spatial planning, the new planning act (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004), the continued awareness of environmental issues and emphasis on sustainable living.

2.3 THE LONDON PLAN (GLA, 2004)⁵

The London Plan is the strategic plan for London setting out an integrated social, economic and environmental framework for future development over the next 15 years. Open space is discussed in relation to enjoying London. Protecting and adding to London's wealth of open spaces will be especially important in realising Objective 6 – to make London a more attractive, well designed and green city.

Improvements in the quality and availability of open space with other service and amenity provision will be crucial in accommodating growth, contributing to London's prosperity and making the compact city an enjoyable place to live. The London Plan sets out a benchmark standard for the provision of a range of public open spaces across London from Regional to Local parks.

⁵ *The London Plan – Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London.* Greater London Authority February 2004

Opportunities for creating new public spaces where appropriate should be taken. These may be formed through gaining public access to privately owned spaces such as sports pitches and utilities land, and for sites that are no longer required for their original purpose. Improving access to existing and new spaces can ensure and widen the catchment of open space. Promoting public transport, cycling and walking is encouraged with improved access and facilities for disabled people. A proactive approach should be taken for the protection, promotion and management of biodiversity and nature conservation.

The London Plan states that London boroughs should prepare Open Space Strategies to understand the supply and demand for open spaces and identify ways of protecting, creating and enhancing them and improving their quality through better management.

Best Practice Guidance on the preparation of open space strategies was published in March 2004. It provides advice on assessing the quantity and quality of open spaces and in identifying the needs of local communities and other users of open space. It also suggests ways of promoting open space improvements, including funding, the use of planning obligations and how to effectively engage the local community and establish collaborative partnerships.

The preparation of open space strategies promotes a holistic view of open space provision, distribution and quality; identifies areas of open space deficiency; assists in the identification of priorities for improvements or the creation of new spaces and highlights areas where issues of quality, access and accessibility need to be addressed. Open Space Strategies are required to consider all open space identified in London's Public Open Space Hierarchy including Regional Parks (over 400 hectares and up to 8 kilometres from homes) and Metropolitan Parks (60-400 hectares and up to 3.2 kilometres from homes). The Best Practice Guidance highlights the wide variations in the character, role and significance of open spaces. Consideration should also be given to the quality of linkages between open spaces including the promotion of a network of open spaces. The Guidance reproduces the definition for Regional and Metropolitan Parks developed by the London Planning Advisory Committee (1994).

The London Plan highlights the strategic role of the sub-regions and the development of Sub-Regional Development Frameworks as a powerful implementation tool. The Mayor is committed to working in partnership with other stakeholders in each of the five sub-regions- Central, East, West, North and South London in bringing forward Sub-Regional Development Frameworks for implementing and developing policies set out in the London plan. The London Plan highlights the sub-regional importance of open space networks.

A number of other related strategies have been produced by the Mayor including five environmental strategies which set out his priorities and proposals for making London a cleaner, greener, more sustainable city- Air quality, Ambient Noise, Biodiversity, Climate Adaption, Energy and Municipal Waste. Other strategies which are directly related to open space provision include the Culture Strategy (London: Cultural Capital- realising the potential of a world-class city) and the Children and Young People's strategy- making London better for all children and young people and Older Persons Strategy.

2.4 THE NEW PLANNING SYSTEM

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduces major changes to the way the development plan system operates. It requires the eventual replacement of Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) with new Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The LDF will be a portfolio containing a number of local development documents (LDDs). Local development Frameworks are intended to streamline the local planning process and promote a proactive, positive, approach to managing development. The key aims of the new system are:

- Flexibility
- Strengthening community and stakeholder involvement
- Front loading with the aim to seek consensus on essential issues at an early stage
- Sustainability appraisal
- Programme management
- Soundness

The UDP will continue to be the statutory planning document for development control purposes but as the individual elements of the LDF are prepared and adopted, these will replace the saved UDP and the policies and proposals in the UDP that are replaced will be withdrawn.

Local planning authorities will be expected to adopt a spatial planning approach to ensure the most efficient use of land by balancing competing demands within the context of sustainable development. Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function. Local planning authorities will therefore be expected to take account of the principles and characteristics of other relevant strategies and programmes when preparing local development documents. Planning authorities should consult closely with the bodies responsible for those strategies to ensure effective integration whilst addressing short, medium and long term priorities.

The preparation of new LDFs and replacement of existing UDPs provides the opportunity for coordination of cross boundary issues such as strategic open space. Local planning authorities should take the opportunity of preparation of their Core Strategy and other relevant local development documents to coordinate with adjoining Boroughs in the preparation of policies and proposals relating to open space provision. The requirement for extensive consultation will also assist in the development of robust open space strategies.

3.0 Open Space Context

Successful places – where people are attracted to live, work, visit and invest – have successful green spaces' CABE Space⁶

This section provides a brief overview of the roles and functions of open space. An extensive body of literature has built up over recent years that explore these issues in considerable detail and this report does not seek to explore the generic issues in detail. These roles and functions will be further considered in the specific context of each park opportunity, and will form the basis for the development of a vision and proposals for these new parks.

Green spaces are an essential element of a thriving, sustainable neighbourhood and such spaces are defined by the variety of roles and functions they perform. The value of open space may be measured in terms of cultural, educational, structural, amenity, health, sport and recreation, children's play, regeneration, the economy, the environment and biodiversity value (London Plan, GLA 2004) and can be tangible in the physical, social or psychological sense. Public space is a barometer of the success of a community; a very visible indicator of the quality of the environment, the care people have in their local area and the resources available. Significantly a well-cared for and enjoyed space has a defining impact on the way the area is perceived by outsiders, leaving lasting impressions. People respond instinctively to places that are welcoming. Essentially parks and public spaces improve people's quality of life.

3.1 URBAN RENAISSANCE

The Urban Task Force under Lord Rogers reported on the 'urban renaissance' in 1999⁷. A leading document in the culture change to spatial rather than land use planning, the report looked at how Britain could accommodate the 4 million extra households predicted over the following 25 years. Fundamentally it depended on an urban renaissance; creating the quality of life and vitality that makes living in towns and cities desirable. Three drivers for change were recognised:

- Technical revolution;
- Ecological threat; and
- Social transformation.

The report states that to achieve the urban renaissance towns and cities should be well designed, be more compact and connected, support a range of diverse uses within a sustainable urban environment which is

⁶ *Start with the Park, Creating sustainable urban green spaces in areas of housing growth and renewal* Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE Space) 2005

⁷ *Green Spaces, Better Places – Final Report of the Urban Task Force*. Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002

well integrated with public transport and adaptable to change. It follows that urban open space has a role in fulfilling all of these objectives. However, little reference is made to urban space.

The Urban Green Spaces Task Force was established in 2001 to explore the role of green space and advise Government on how open space provision can be improved. The final report of the task force, *Green Spaces, Better Places* (2002) identifies the range of benefits open space can provide. The overarching message of the report is 'now is the time for a sustainable urban renaissance with parks and open spaces.'

Parks have a valuable role to play in the creation of new places and enhancing the function and character of existing neighbourhoods. They provide a place for recreation, socialising and relaxation; a connection between disparate neighbourhoods and a space to be proud of. They can help bind elements of non-cohesive communities. They provide relief from the built fabric, something people seek when moving away from cities. It therefore seems logical in attracting people to reside in urban areas; the countryside should be drawn into the built fabric through provision of good quality open space. Attractive places foster sense of belonging, well-being, attachment and care for the local environment. This includes tree lined streets and access to parks.

3.2 FUNCTIONS OF OPEN SPACE

In addition to traditional leisure and recreation roles, open spaces perform a variety of other functions relating to:

- Economic growth and regeneration
- Health and well being
- Social inclusion and community development
- Education and lifelong learning
- Environment, ecology and biodiversity
- Heritage and culture

3.2.1 Economic Value and Regeneration

Recent research by CABI Space has shown the economic of value parks⁸. Both residential and commercial property values have been shown to increase with proximity to a park. CABI Space found that being directly adjacent to a park added a 5-7% premium to house prices and that most properties within two blocks of the park were priced more highly than an equivalent property elsewhere. This is particularly important in neighbourhood renewal and regeneration. Parks can boost the economic potential of tourism, leisure and cultural activities.

Facilities within parks generate income. Sporting facilities, teams and clubs, cafes and museums located with the park are such examples and can help boost the local economy and contribute to local authorities' budgets. Facilities outside the parks are also likely to benefit, especially for parks with regional draw. Similarly attractive places encourage people to come and live in the neighbourhood and businesses to invest in an area. Good quality public realm; parks, gardens and squares provide good marketing and promotional tools, increasing footfall and supporting business.

⁸ *Does Money Grow on Trees?* Commission for the Built Environment (CABI Space) 2005

The holistic regeneration of large scale brownfield sites and the integration of new mixed-use communities with parks can help raise the profile of an area. Parks can improve the image of an area and secure investor confidence, sometimes strategically developed as the first component of a longer-term strategy. Parks and greening of the environment can help to camouflage the less visually appealing elements of brownfield sites and industry. They can also be used as a temporary interim use in advance of new uses or as a key component of a new area.

Parks can also provide the setting for sustainable industry. Tree harvesting for biomass and power and heat generation can offer productive use of land. Similarly allotments and city farms produce foods for community use or sale.

Finally, through promotion of more healthy activities and lifestyles, good quality attractive green spaces can help to support measures at reducing obesity, strengthening the heart and reducing stress. Every year, thousands of work days are lost through people taking time off for stress related disorders. Parks and other green space have a vital role in preventative health and exercise is often prescribed by doctors for those with serious illness.

3.2.2 Health and Well-Being

Parks can provide alternative routes for circulation including green routes for pedestrians and cyclists; therefore promoting more active and healthy lifestyles. Access to nature has shown to reduce blood pressure, reduce stress and improve mental well-being. A change of scene and impact on the visual sense of green colour (research suggests green regenerates and soothes) are beneficial aspects of urban green space. Research from Japan shows that good neighbourhood green spaces promote longer life expectancy for local people.

Child development in terms of both mental learning and physical development has shown to improve through play in a variety of stimulating environments, including woodlands, parks and wetland areas. Play is crucial for many aspects of children's development. Play can promote the acquisition of social skills, experimentation, confrontation and resolution of emotional crises, to moral understanding, cognitive skills such as language and comprehension. Play can also promote physical well-being. Hard spaces offer little opportunity for play and green spaces are preferable offering a diverse range of activities.

Parks also provide a place to take exercise; through either formal provision such as tennis courts and football pitches, outdoor swimming pools, running, cycling, yoga or meditation, to take the dog for a walk or gentle stroll.

3.2.3 Social Inclusion, Community Development

Parks present the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of cultural, social and community activities. Such activities promote social inclusion and community development by providing a forum for social interaction, play and learning. Enjoyment of public parks costs nothing and through appropriate design is accessible for the whole community including the less able, less affluent and elderly, and is not dependent on gender or ethnic background. A variety of different activity zones should be provided to meet a diverse range of preferences and needs.

Encouraging community participation in the design and management of green space can help tackle social issues such as risk and anti-social behaviour. Areas used for community gardens, allotments and city farms can promote social inclusion.

3.2.4 Education and Life-Long Learning

A variety of learning activities can take place in parks, including informal, semi-structured and organised. They provide opportunities for teachers to teach school children out of the classroom, undertake practical learning through site visits and for sports and play.

Parks can also provide learning opportunities for everyone out of school or work as a recreational and educational pastime.

3.2.5 Environment and Ecology

Parks and green spaces can provide the spaces in which fauna and flora can flourish within the urban environment and provide opportunities for people to enjoy contact with the living, natural world. Large scale open space has a particularly significant potential ecological role, as large areas of habitat are inherently able to support a greater diversity of species and are generally more ecologically robust in the face of the range of challenges arising from the urban environment (in comparison to a smaller sized area of similar habitat).

Parks and green spaces can moderate the extremes of climate, raising air quality and minimising air and noise pollution. Smaller parks can contribute to sustainable urban drainage systems to regulate storm water, minimise risk of flooding and replenish groundwater. Retention ponds in parkland provide sustainable urban drainage thus mitigating against flood and reducing water run-off.

Plants and trees help address the summertime climate of urban areas created by the plethora of urban surfaces which absorb and radiate heat. The movement of air between different heat zones (such as parks and hard urban space) helps create a gentle summertime breeze. Trees provide much needed shade, absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen. Vegetation cools the air and absorbs atmospheric pollution and dust particles, reducing smog. Vegetation can also provide noise buffering through structural planting and landscaping.

3.2.6 Heritage and Culture

Green spaces and open areas can provide a setting and backdrop for some of our most cherished history. Rivers as a historically important mode of transport saw the growth of wealthy merchants and traders. Many such buildings and warehouses are now being restored and new uses found. They provide a valuable and interesting setting for public space and waterside connections. Other historical events are reflected in the establishment and design of parks. They can commemorate and celebrate and form treasured aspects of British culture.

Parks and spaces can also reflect and accommodate new culture, communities and pastimes. They are flexible spaces that easily adapt to new fashions and values.

4.0 Developing the Definition

What Should London's Regional and Metropolitan Parks Be?

4.1 EXISTING DEFINITIONS – LONDON PLAN

The London Plan characterises London's open space provision as a network of spaces, made up of a diverse range of typologies, including:

"...green spaces, such as parks, allotments, commons, woodlands, natural habitats, recreation grounds, playing fields, agricultural land, burial grounds, amenity space, children's play areas, including hard surfaced playgrounds, and accessible countryside in the urban fringe. Civic spaces, such as squares, piazzas and market squares..."

The Plan draws a distinction between the strategic network of open space; whose basic structure is made up by Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land (including Green Chains), and the wider network of open spaces that includes open spaces of local importance.

The benchmark for the provision of public open space is based on an open space hierarchy, which categorises spaces according to their size and sets out a maximum desirable distance which Londoners should travel in order to access each size of open space. These standards provide the basis for assessing the broad distribution of open space provision across London and have been used to highlight areas where there is a shortfall.

The open space hierarchy is developed further in the Guide to preparing Open Space Strategies, Best Practice Guidance of the London Plan (March 2004)⁹. This document adds a broad definition of the characteristics of each category of open space. Table 1 below is drawn from the Best Practice Guidance.

⁹ *Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies: Best Practice Guidance*. Greater London Authority, 2004

Table 2 London's Public Open Space Hierarchy – Guide to preparing Open Space Strategies, Best Practice Guidance of the London Plan 2004

Open space categorisation	Size guideline	Distance from homes to open spaces	Distance refined to take into account barriers to access
Regional Parks	Over 400 hectares	3.2 - 8 kilometres	
Metropolitan Parks	60 - 400 hectares	3.2 kilometres or more where the park is appreciably larger	
District Parks	20 - 60 hectares	1.2 kilometres	
Local Parks	2 - 20 hectares	400 metres	280 metres
Small Local Parks	0.4 - 2 hectares	400 metres	280 metres
Pocket Parks	Less than 0.4 hectares	400 metres	280 metres
Linear Open Spaces	Variable	Where feasible	

Annex 3 of the Best Practice Guidance provides further characterisation and definition of what these park types should be (these definitions are derived from Advice on Strategic Planning Guidance for London, London Planning Advisory Committee (1994)). The characteristics of Regional and Metropolitan Parks are as follows;

- **Regional Parks and Open Spaces** – Weekend and occasional visits by car or public transport. Large areas and corridors of natural heathland, downland, commons, woodland and parkland. Also includes areas not publicly accessible but which contribute to the overall environmental amenity. Primarily providing for informal recreation with some non-intensive active recreational uses. Car parking at key locations.
- **Metropolitan Parks** – Weekend and occasional visits by car and public transport. Either i) natural heathland, downland, commons, woodland etc, or ii) formal parks providing for both active and passive recreation. May contain playing fields but at least 40 hectares for other pursuits. Adequate car parking. Park users can be expected to make bus journeys of up to 4.8 km (or 15 minutes) to Metropolitan Parks and within 400m of the bus corridors.

In this hierarchy, Regional Parks are primarily providing a mix of landscape, ecological and recreational benefits by ensuring the preservation of large areas of open space (>400ha). These areas would contain facilities and features that are sufficiently attractive for people to choose to visit them on occasion (e.g. weekends) and be prepared to travel some distance to do so. This would suggest that these features and facilities are of a nature that cannot be experienced in other open space areas (either smaller or closer to home), and that as a result of the scale of the park or the nature of the facilities and/or features, the park provides a 'regional' resource.

The distinction drawn between Regional and Metropolitan Parks is both one of scale and distribution, and of typology, in that Metropolitan Parks may include more traditional ‘formal’ parks and active recreation provision. Again, Metropolitan Parks would be sufficiently attractive, or contain facilities and features that are sufficiently attractive for people to choose to visit them on occasion (e.g. weekends) and be prepared to travel some distance to do so, and thus provide provides a ‘metropolitan’ resource.

4.2 OTHER DEFINITIONS OF STRATEGIC OPEN SPACE

4.2.1 Regional Parks

Regional Parks can be found through out the UK and an assessment of the characteristics of these open spaces has been undertaken to help inform the development of a definition for Regional Parks in the London context. A full summary of this research work is provided in Appendix 3. The following outline summary of the research highlights the key issues.

Previous Research findings

In 2003 a research report entitled Regional Park Resources was undertaken by Baker Associates, with Enderby Associates and Countrywise Consultants. This study provides a comprehensive assessment of the Regional Park concept, and the findings identify a number of issues relating to the diversity of existing and proposed Regional Parks in the UK.

Three key points where identified in the study:

- The report concludes that there is no ‘standard template’ which describes what a Regional Park should be, and the term has been used to describe a diverse range of projects with little consistency;
- There is a need for an overarching purpose for the development of a Regional Park; a strong image that provides a focal point for a range of agendas and objectives that can flow from the a regional park project; and
- The potential role of Regional Parks as a means of achieving integrated land management, recognizing that differing land uses and pressures arising from those may be best managed through a co-ordinated structure.

Case Study Findings

Case studies of a number of Regional Parks in the UK have been undertaken to further explore the Regional Park concept. These case studies highlight a fundamental shift in thinking in recent years, from Regional Parks that cover a large but clearly defined area of open space, with a primary purpose of preservation and enhancement of landscape, ecology and recreation towards Regional Parks that encompass a far greater area of mixed uses and which seek to provide an overarching project aimed at delivering a much wider range of benefits, particularly focusing on quality of life and attractiveness for future and ongoing investment and development.

4.2.2 Metropolitan Parks

The concept of a Metropolitan Park is less diverse than the Regional Park concept. Metropolitan Parks were originally conceived in the Greater London Development Plan (1976) at the top of the proposed hierarchy of open space provision, and the rationale behind the concept was that these open spaces would include all the large areas of open space within the city. However, a comprehensive definition of what a Metropolitan Park should be remains elusive, and the wide range of features and facilities that are evident in the existing

large scale open spaces in London suggests that a definition of Metropolitan Parks will inherently be broadly scoped.

4.3 DEVELOPING THE DEFINITIONS FOR LONDON

4.3.1 The importance of linkages and open space networks

The concept of open space provision as a network is clearly recognised in the London Plan with the principle of a strategic open space network made up of Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and Green Chains. It is important that this network principle is clearly accommodated in the definition of Regional and Metropolitan Parks.

The current size based categorisation implicitly focuses the definition of strategic open spaces on contiguous areas of open space, with the size guideline for Regional Parks in particular requiring large areas (400ha and over). While the large areas of Green Belt on the fringes of London may provide opportunities for the creation of new large scale open space areas, the opportunity for the creation of new open space within suburban and urban London is more limited. While local interventions may enable modest increases in the overall scale of open space provision – through opening up currently inaccessible areas of open space or through creating new open space within development areas – it is unlikely that strategic open space needs will be met by new large scale open space areas.

For this reason, the aspirations for future strategic open space provision in London (i.e. Regional and Metropolitan Parks), is in reality focused primarily on enhancing and linking existing large scale open space areas rather than creating significant areas of new open space. Thus the definition for these strategic open space areas needs to recognise that a network provision made up of smaller open spaces and links between them may be the way in which strategic open space needs are met.

In order to explicitly recognise this in the open space hierarchy, the definition of the category of Regional Park is expanded to include networks of open space that may not be contiguous, but are comprehensively linked and managed as a collective entity. Metropolitan Parks should continue to be defined as contiguous areas of open space. These Regional Park networks may include open space areas that can be considered Metropolitan Parks in their own right (and of course, open spaces within all categories of the open space hierarchy). The South East London Green Chain provides an example of such a network, and the aspirations for the East London Green Grid provide further opportunities to build these networks into a Regional Park resource.

This should be seen as an expansion of the definition of Regional Parks, so that the Regional Park category can include both contiguous areas of open space (e.g. London's existing Regional Parks in the Colne Valley and Lee Valley) as well as networks of open space that are meeting the strategic open space needs of Regional Parks.

4.3.2 Reconciling Local and Strategic Open Space needs

The London Plan draws a distinction between the strategic network of open space (consisting of Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land) and the wider network of open spaces that includes open spaces of local importance. This distinction between the two types of open space network (i.e. strategic and local) is valid in so far as it identifies that the strategic open space network should offer a range of open space values that are not or cannot be offered within the local open space network. However, the local importance of all open space, including those areas characterised as strategic open spaces must be recognised and the delivery of successful strategic open space opportunities must integrate fully with the local open space aspirations.

Indeed, a preferred way of conceptualising the relationship between strategic and local open space aspirations is to envisage a single open space network, which will be managed to meet the wide range of open space needs arising from the local communities that will surround the open space. Strategic open space aspirations, be they recreation, ecological, landscape, cultural or resource management can be delivered by intertwining these various strategic open space functions through the open space network, thus building the strategic network of Regional and Metropolitan Parks while at the same time ensuring that the local functions of those areas of open space is not lost (Refer Figure 4.1).

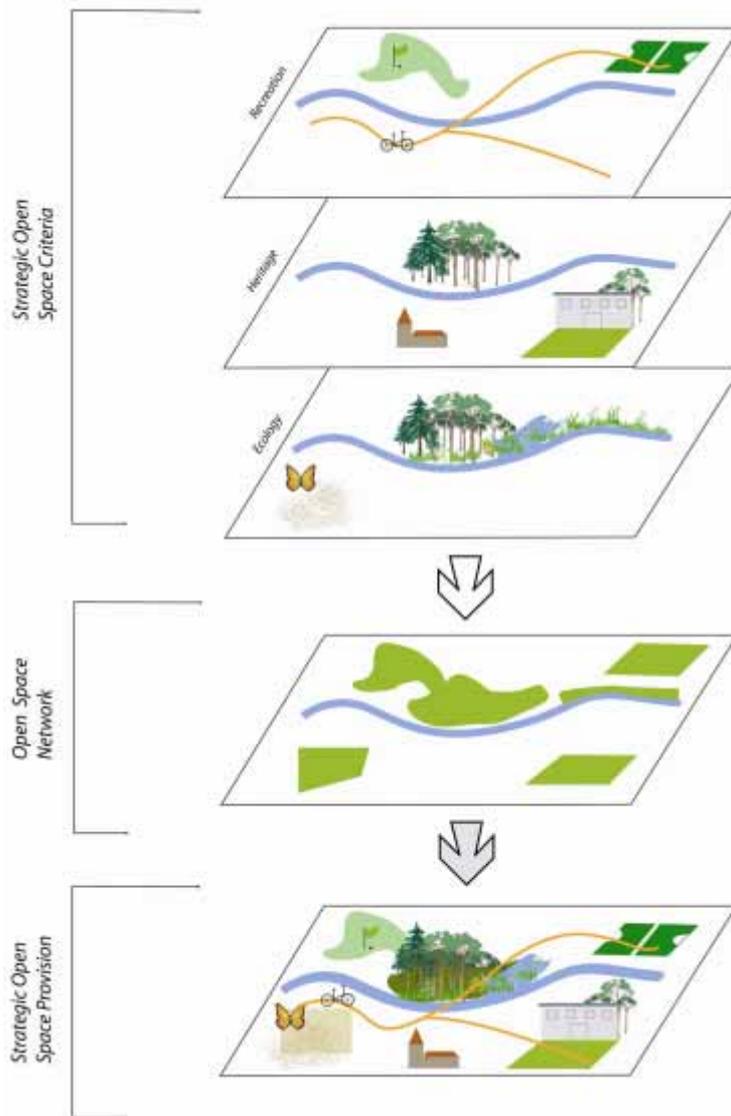


Figure 4.1 Building the Strategic Open Space Layers

4.3.3 Strategic open spaces as distinctive entities

One of the defining characteristics of successful Regional and Metropolitan Parks is that they are seen by the public as recognisably distinctive entities, with a clearly recognised identity, a sense of place, that is in some way special, or at least different from the wider open space provision. This is relatively easy to

achieve within a discrete open space area that has clearly defined boundaries and entrances. It may be less easy to define within an open space network, but by no means impossible and no less important.

Principle considerations in developing this clear identity relate to a consistent approach to design, management and maintenance standards. Entrances are particularly important, as is signage, interpretation materials, visitors' centres and way marking within the open space.

4.3.4 Open space role in regeneration

The importance of open space provision to area regeneration is highlighted in Government guidance and evidenced in London and elsewhere in the UK. Open space assists in establishing the setting and quality of new developments and in promoting area regeneration. Regional and Metropolitan Parks will contribute to the achievement of regeneration benefits by providing an attractive setting for development and promoting social inclusion and community benefits.

4.5 IDENTIFYING DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

There is no single model which can be applied in the definition of Regional and Metropolitan Parks. Open spaces will be subject to significant variations depending on local/ sub-regional circumstances. They may represent a single area of open space but in the London situation, may also comprise a network of linked spaces. However, there are a number of common characteristics which should be reflected in the definition of regional and Metropolitan Parks which in addition to the key consideration of size, also relate to function and physical characteristics.

4.5.1 The importance of size

Size is the primary consideration in the current London Plan categorisation of open space. It provides a simple measure of the potential of an area of open space to meet a range of open space needs and provides a valuable spatial planning tool to assist in identifying areas of open space deficiencies and opportunities. However, the adoption of size as a defining characteristic of open space categories should be treated cautiously.

The size of an open space is clearly important in so far as it enables (or conversely constrains) the open space area to provide a range of open space values. For example, larger open spaces are more able to provide large areas of ecologically valuable habitat, to protect large areas of valuable natural landscape or provide the opportunity to experience spaces of relative tranquillity.

Consultation work undertaken in the course of this project has indicated that it is primarily the way in which open space areas are perceived in the public's mind - which leads directly to the nature of the usage of the open space and the catchment from which users are drawn - that defines what open spaces are of Regional and Metropolitan importance. Three key characteristics have been identified that affect how an open space is perceived and used by the public:

- The nature of the offer of facilities and features;
- The open spaces accessibility; and
- The quality of management of the open space.

This suggests that size should not be used as the only factor in determining whether any given open space area is of strategic importance, or at least any definition based on size should be treated flexibly. Thus the

London Plan open space hierarchy should act as a starting point in the assessment of strategic open space provision and that further criteria are used to refine the evaluation and definition of strategic open spaces. This approach also recognises that open spaces smaller than the size defined in the London Plan hierarchy may provide functions and roles of regional or metropolitan importance.

4.5.2 Offer of Facilities and Features

An assessment of the offer of facilities and features should be the primary criteria for defining characteristic of London's existing and future Regional and Metropolitan Parks. The following list of criteria seeks to identify a set of key criteria within five categories, and the strategic significance of any given open space area can be defined by the contribution of its facilities and features to the wider strategic open space provision. The five categories reflect a broad grouping of values offered by strategic open space provision, and include:

- Recreation;
- Heritage and Culture;
- Ecology;
- Resource management; and
- Landscape.

The strategic provision of each of these categories can be envisaged as a separate (while often closely linked) layer, each of which overlays the full open space network and each of the other strategic open space layers. Consideration of the existing and potential open space opportunities for any given area of open space should be made for each of the categories in the context of the strategic network of provision on a sub regional basis.

It is important to note that these criteria consider open space characteristics of strategic importance. It must be recognised that all open spaces will provide facilities and features that will meet local and district needs, and the characteristics identified do not include these local facilities and features. Rather, they seek to identify the strategic facilities and features that can be delivered alongside those local characteristics.

The criteria list does not imply that the offer in each of the identified criteria should be of equal significance for all open spaces, or that all areas should seek to provide the same offer. Rather, it is envisaged that individual open space areas within the strategic open space network would offer facilities and features within one or more of these criteria that meet the strategic needs of the regional or metropolitan area.

1 Recreation

Open spaces provide opportunities for a variety of formal and informal recreation that encompass active and passive activities, including organised sports, play, sitting, walking, running, exercising, informal games, relaxing, picnicking, etc. The benefits arising from open space recreation extend beyond simple enjoyment for users, and include benefits such as enhancing health and mental wellbeing, encouraging social interaction, learning and education.

Walking/cycling trails and routes

Strategic walking and cycling routes will form part of a wider network of routes that provides access both to and through the specific strategic open space opportunity. Ideally, such routes will be primarily through open space, although may utilise the street network where no alternative is feasible.

Active sports facilities

Strategic sports facilities will include outdoor facilities such as stadiums, tracks, pitches, venues etc that provide sports facilities that meet the needs of a sub regional user base. The provision of such facilities should be considered within the sub regional open space context, where the location of similar or equivalent facilities are distributed within the strategic open space network so as to best meet the distribution of need. Sport England is currently undertaking an audit of London's active sports provision.

Informal and passive recreation

Strategic provision of informal and passive recreation will include opportunities for quiet and relaxed enjoyment of open space that are sufficiently distinctive to be identified as of special character or unique within the sub regional open space network. This special character or uniqueness will arise primarily from the nature of the landscape (where landscape is considered in its widest experiential sense: how a place looks and feels and sounds and smells). It may relate to areas of special beauty, tranquillity, expansiveness, wildness etc.

Play

The provision of play opportunities is primarily a local facility and as such is arguably falls outside the scope of strategic open space defining characteristics. However, play provision does form an important component of open space provision and consideration of the nature, scale and distribution of play opportunities should be included in the detailed assessment of recreation resources.

2 Heritage and culture

Open spaces are frequently home to remnants from the past that have been swept aside in built areas. These historical features provide important links to the heritage of local communities and a valuable resource for wider communities.

Historic buildings, gardens, parks, activities

These characteristics include designated sites as well as locations and historic land uses and activities that provide a tangible connection with the heritage of an area and community.

Ancient monuments, archaeological areas

These are designated and protected sites that reflect specific archaeological features or potential features that should be protected, but which may also be subject to interpretation and add to the educational and recreational values of the open space.

Host large scale events, festivals etc

The value of open space as a venue for outdoor events and festivals must be recognised and provided for within the open space network.

Education centres, facilities and interpretation

The potential role of open space as an educational resource must be recognised. This role can range from specific education centres, classrooms and outdoor facilities, but can also include the more general utilisation of the open space resources to meet curriculum needs ranging from environmental, art, history, physical education, science etc.

3 Ecology

The ecological layer in the strategic open space network will seek to protect and enhance areas with existing or potential value with regard to either their habitat provision or importance for protected species. The importance of viable ecological corridors linking these individual sites should be stressed, to mitigate the biodiversity limitations and risks associated with insular habitats.

Designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

Procedures for identifying sites as being of importance for nature conservation are detailed in Connecting with London's Nature, The Mayors Biodiversity Strategy (2002). Sites are classified into Sites of Metropolitan, Borough and Local Importance for Nature Conservation.

Areas of Deficiency in Access to Nature

Areas of Deficiency are built-up areas more than one kilometre actual walking distance from an accessible designated Site of Metropolitan or Borough Importance for Nature Conservation. Areas of deficiency may be mitigated through enhancement of ecological value or accessibility within the strategic open space network.

Priority habitat and/or species identified in London's Biodiversity Action Plan

A range of Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans for London describe priorities for biodiversity action within London. The strategic open space network may provide opportunities for protection, enhancement or creation of new habitat to help meet these identified priorities.

Large scale areas or corridors of potential habitat and wildspace value

This criteria is intended to identify any large scale areas or corridors that are not identified in the criteria above that are or have the potential to provide valuable habitat areas or connections between areas.

4 Resource management

Resource management includes the range of potential functions that open space may provided in relation to providing or accommodating the resource needs of the large urban communities; needs such as food production, energy production, waste treatment, flood storage etc.

Urban agriculture

This characteristic deals with accommodation of 'local' food production, either as a dispersed provision of small, truly local production sites, or in larger scale community farms or gardens. Historically, and currently, the primary mechanism for food production is allotment gardens. Future urban agriculture could expand the allotment principle to incorporate larger scale communal gardens/farms. City farms also provide opportunity for food production, but provide additional opportunity for interaction with and education about food production. The strategic open space network needs to be able to accommodate future moves towards this form of local food production.

Energy Production

A range of small scale alternative and renewable energy production methods could be pursued within the strategic open space network and are considered to be compatible with other open space characteristics. These could include biomass production and wind powered generation.

Waste Treatment

Treatment and disposal of waste could be incorporated within the strategic open space network and has the potential to add additional benefits alongside those associated directly with the waste stream. Grey water

treatment has particular potential to integrate with wider open space uses, utilising wetland systems to provide treatment of the waste product.

Flood Management

The potential role of open space in providing both flood storage capacity and in reducing peak loading of flood water systems through capturing and storing runoff from surrounding urban areas is well recognised and can provide additional ecological benefits.

5 Landscape

Open space provides a structural role in shaping future development and contributing to the character and attractiveness of areas. Individual open spaces form part of a wider network of open spaces. Regional and Metropolitan Parks will have a significant structural role in the urban area and will be a major influence on the character of the surrounding area. They will also represent extensive landscapes within the urban area with a range of landscape types. They are also likely to contain distinctive landmarks and views/ vistas.

Structural Landscape

Existing open space designations of Metropolitan Open Land and Green Belt identify and protect open space areas that perform a key structural landscape role within the built form. Other open space areas may also contribute to the structure of the landscape.

Key landmarks and views

Throughout London there are views and landmarks that are the defining images of local communities and areas. Such views frequently incorporate or arise from the open space network.

4.5.3 Accessibility

Alongside the nature of the offer of the open space, the accessibility to the open space is of particular importance if the open space is to adequately cater for a regional or metropolitan user catchment. The London Plan proposes maximum distances for residential properties within London to a Regional Park of 8.0km and to Metropolitan Parks of 3.2km.

While the open space definitions within the Best Practice Guidance identify that car parking should be accommodated within Regional and Metropolitan Parks, accessibility by public transport is an essential characteristic of strategic open space. Long distance accessibility is primarily dependant on the rail system, both London Underground and Overland Network. High quality routes to and from stations to the strategic open spaces network are vital and developing those routes should be considered as an integral element of the management of the strategic open space aspirations.

Access to open space from a closer catchment can be achieved by both the bus network and pedestrian/cycle networks. Such local access can often be significantly enhanced through relatively small scale interventions that overcome existing barriers to access. This could include works such as opening up existing boundary fences, providing new road crossings, pedestrian and cycle bridges over rivers or rail, or establishment of new links and routes between separate land ownerships.

4.5.4 Quality

The importance of management quality of open space is a prerequisite to achieving regional or metropolitan significance in public perception and use. The importance of quality in open space

management is not limited to strategic open space, but should be a feature of all open space, be it of strategic or local importance, so arguably, high quality of management is not a defining feature of strategic open space. However, the proposition that strategic open space should by definition be managed and maintained to a high quality is fully supported.

Target management standards, such as the Green Flag award or the UK Woodland Assurance Standard, could be adopted as a standard target for all Regional and Metropolitan Parks.

4.6 PROPOSED DEFINITIONS – REGIONAL AND METROPOLITAN PARKS

In light of the issues identified in this section, the following new definitions are proposed for London's Regional and Metropolitan Parks.

4.6.1 Regional Parks

London's Regional Parks will be areas, corridors or networks of open space, the majority of which are publicly accessible and which will provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, heritage, cultural or resource management benefits. Individual Regional Parks will offer a combination of facilities and features that are unique within Greater London. Regional Parks will be readily accessible by public transport and be managed to meet best practice quality standards.

4.6.2 Metropolitan Parks

London's Metropolitan Parks will be areas of publicly accessible open space which provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, heritage, cultural or resource management benefits. Individual Metropolitan Parks will offer a combination of facilities and features that is unique at a sub regional level. Metropolitan Parks will be readily accessible by public transport and be managed to meet best practice quality standards.

5.0 Governance and Delivery

5.1 PRINCIPLES OF OPEN SPACE GOVERNANCE

The nature of the existing open space resource and how that resource is best developed to maximise its contribution to the strategic open space needs of the city lie at the heart of this project. The existing large scale open space provision across London covers a very wide range of typologies and characteristics, and will provide an equally wide range of contribution towards the strategic open space needs of the city. The requirement for local authorities to prepare Open Space Strategies will provide a comprehensive assessment of existing open space provision and need and set out a framework for future provision within the borough. Importantly, these strategies should also look beyond borough boundaries and work towards a wider strategic overview of open space. This requirement goes some way towards addressing the need to coordinate open space provision across local authority boundaries, but there remains considerable scope for improving this process.

5.1.1 Governance challenges for strategic open space

Fragmented ownership/management of open space

In many instances, existing large scale open space will already be managed as a metropolitan scale park and will be contributing to the strategic open space needs of the city to a greater or lesser extent. The strategic value of these large scale open spaces relates to the key characteristics identified previously: offer of features and facilities, accessibility and quality. With few exceptions, these large scale open spaces that are currently delivering strategic open space aspirations are owned or managed by a single organisation, be that a local authority, other park authority, trust etc. The challenge to enhancing the strategic values of these spaces is to ensure that the wider regional and sub-regional strategic open space aspirations are recognised by the existing management/development plans and that appropriate assistance is available to enable enhancements.

In other cases, existing open space resources are not being managed in a way that delivers strategic open space aspirations. This is frequently due to fragmentation of the open space resource, which may arise from physical barriers, breaks in land ownership or management responsibility (especially across local authority boundaries), changes in open space typology or simple historic precedent. In these instances, the management of any given open space area will reflect the priorities, resources and abilities of the respective owner/managing organisation.

It is unlikely that the collective management of such fragmented open space areas will be meeting strategic open space aspirations. The challenge to enhancing the strategic values is to develop a coordinated approach to management of the fragmented spaces. This can be facilitated through implementing an appropriate governance structure that will enable coordinated delivery of a shared vision for the open space.

In many instances, a primary challenge relating to fragmented ownership is simply securing information on ownership and management. This is a particular problem in areas where there are multiple private or corporate owners of land.

Conflicting management priorities

Arising from the challenges of multiple ownership/management is recognition that individual open space owners/managers may have different priorities with regard to the management and facilities offered by of the open space under their control. These different priorities may be quite legitimate reflections of the reality of local political priorities (in the case of local authorities), organisational aims and objectives (in the case of trusts) or corporate objectives and statutory requirements (in the case of private or utility owners). Resolving these conflicting priorities is likely to be the first hurdle in the coordinated delivery of strategic open space aspirations across a new open space opportunity area.

Lack of incentives to deliver strategic open space aspirations

Associated with the challenges of multiple ownership and the possible conflicting management priorities is the challenge of identifying incentives for open space owners/managers to dedicate management effort and resources to the delivery of strategic open space aspirations. In most instances, open space owners/managers are primarily focused on meeting the open space needs and aspirations of a local nature, particularly as almost invariably, funding for the delivery and maintenance of open space is drawn locally. This means that there is often little incentive for open space owners/managers to divert resources towards meeting strategic open space aspirations, particularly when those aspirations may not deliver any benefit to local users.

Resourcing strategic open space aspirations

Perhaps the primary challenge for open space owners/managers is in providing the necessary resources to fund the management, delivery and long term maintenance of strategic open space opportunities, particularly where these are new areas that are adding to their existing commitment. This is a particular problem within local authorities, where both capital and revenue funding for open space provision is routinely under pressure from competing calls on the finite financial resources of councils. As a result of these pressures, open space funding is generally set at a level which is deemed to be appropriate to meet local open space needs. There is rarely surplus or additional funding available over and above those levels that would enable strategic open space aspirations to be implemented.

5.1.2 Strategic vs. local governance

Potential for strategic role

Given the range of challenges in delivering strategic open space aspirations that are identified above, there are a number of potential advantages that could be derived from an organisation with some London wide role in the facilitation of strategic open space aspirations. Such an organisation could help to overcome the identified challenges through a range of key tasks, including;

- Facilitating coordination of strategic open space aspirations, especially across local authority boundaries and on a sub regional and regional basis;
- Encouraging and enabling the development of partnership arrangements between key stakeholders within specific areas of open space opportunity and on a sub regional and regional basis;

- Providing additional political support to strategic open space initiatives and champion the delivery of strategic open space initiatives across London;
- Providing targeted resources to overcome resource limitations from individual open space owner/managers. Such targeted resources might include:
 - Expertise and guidance to local authorities and local authority alliances/partnerships to assist in progressing strategic open space aspirations;
 - Funding for dedicated staff resources to lead the implementation of specific open space initiatives;
 - Funding to assist in the capital costs of delivery of strategic open space resources (likely to be in the form of match funding additional capital funding sources); and
 - Funding to assist in the revenue costs of managing and maintaining strategic open space resources (likely to be in the form of match funding).

A range of existing organisations currently have a strategic, pan London role, including the Greater London Authority (GLA), London Development Agency (LDA), Government Office for London (GOL), Association of London Government (ALG), London Parks and Green Spaces Forum (LPGSF). While the current roles of these organisations may not specifically extend to the facilitation of strategic open space aspirations, they offer a potential platform on which to build an open space facilitation role.

It should also be recognised that there are a range of potential risks in the creation of a centralised organisation with a role in facilitating strategic open space aspirations. These risks relate primarily to the way such an organisation is perceived by the local open space owners/managers and the local communities. Care must be taken to ensure strategic open space needs are not promoted to the detriment of local open space needs and aspirations, and that the control over open space is not wrested (or perceived to be wrested) from local owners/managers.

The importance of the principle of local governance of open space is stressed and it is important that the remit of any strategic open space organisation relates to the facilitation of open space enhancements through enabling and assisting existing open space managers or local partnerships to develop and implement strategic open space aspirations.

5.2 POTENTIAL GOVERNANCE APPROACHES

The range of approaches to governance of strategic open space can be conceptualized as lying on a continuum. At one end of the range lie individual owners and managers working independently to their own set of priorities and open space aspirations, while at the other end of the range lies a single management entity, independently funded, with full responsibility for all areas within the strategic open space. Between these two approaches lie a host of partnership approaches that address the various challenges of strategic open space management to varying degrees.

The following sections consider this continuum of approaches in five broad groups, identifying the potential advantages and disadvantages of each approach in relation to the challenges of strategic open space management. It must be recognised that there are no distinct lines between these approaches and there are many variations that blend from one into the next.

5.2.1 Approach 1: Individual organisations

This approach essentially allows open space owners/managers to manage their respective areas of open space without reference to or involvement of other open space owners/managers. This is frequently the default management approach that arises in areas where adjacent local authorities and/or other land

owners are managing the open space areas within their control in accordance with their organisations aspirations and resources.

Day to day management and maintenance operations would remain under the control of the respective open space owners/managers, with no coordination between open space areas.

Advantages:

- Simple for open space owners/managers to adopt, with no need to commit management effort of resources beyond immediate open space management aspiration or need.

Disadvantages:

- No mechanism for strategic open space objectives to be incorporated into open space management;
- Little incentive for open space owner/managers to consider strategic open space needs within management decisions; and
- Difficult to co-ordinate delivery of strategic open space aspirations across ownership/management boundaries.

Examples of this approach

As indicated above, this approach is frequently the default approach to open space management across local authority boundaries. Within the pilot study areas, the North West opportunity area falls within this general approach. Here, the three boroughs management of their respective open spaces is undertaken in response to the priorities and resource availability as determined by the individual Councils. There is little if any formal coordination of open space activities across local authority boundaries.

5.2.2 Approach 2: An informal Partnership of supportive organisations

This approach involves an informal but structured grouping of organisations who would agree to deliver strategic open space aspirations across open space boundaries. The operation of such partnerships can vary widely, from simple co-coordinated working between individuals within organisations to more structured partnerships with agreed decision making processes; resourcing and delivery mechanisms.

Local Authorities are likely to form the key lead organisations, but the partnership could and in many cases should include other organisations, particularly where they form significant land ownership or activities. Each partner organisation would voluntarily dedicate resources towards an agreed end - an overall Vision, masterplan and business plan. This grouping of organisations would agree on an appropriate structure of management and leadership and would report back to the respective councils/boards, etc. which would provide democratic control. Nevertheless, some freedom of decision-making would be necessary for progress to be made.

Day to day management and maintenance operations are likely to remain under the control of the respective open space owners/managers, but management and maintenance standards would be coordinated.

Advantages:

- Quick and low cost to establish;

- Little risk or longer-term commitment from any of the partners;
- Relatively low cost associated with governance structure; and
- Can capitalise on existing networks and Initiatives.

Disadvantages:

- Often dependant on individuals within organisations to develop, foster and maintain partnerships;
- The informal nature of a partnership is likely to result in a lack the longer-term commitment required from various partners and insufficiently strong executive function;
- Lack of a single focus at a political/senior officer level may limit effectiveness in delivering complex open space initiatives;
- Lack of independent profile needed for marketing purposes and entrepreneurial activity may be more difficult; and
- Lack of independence from the sponsoring authorities could mean slow decision-making and potential for conflict amongst competing departmental priorities and partners, leading to lack of action.

Examples of this approach

This approach is perhaps the most common method of partnership working across local authority boundaries, and can provide an excellent forum for collaborative and coordinated efforts in the delivery of strategic open space aspirations. An excellent example of this approach is the South East London Green Chain, which is managed as a 'Regional Park' resource in a partnership arrangement between the London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich and Lewisham. The Green Chain is managed by a Working Party comprised of council officers of the four boroughs. The actions of the Working Party are monitored by the Councilor level Joint Committee.

The Green Chain partnership has been successfully operating since the late 1970s. The ongoing implementation of the initiative is dependant on a successful partnership between the boroughs and the continued financial contributions made to the Joint Operational Fund. Partner boroughs agree to continue funding the project, with the current proportion paid calculated by the size of the population living within 3.2km of the Green Chain. Boroughs can (and have in the past) decide to reduce or fix their contribution to the fund.

Within the boroughs, officers working on the Working Party are the main link between Green Chain boroughs, liaising with elected councillors, other council staff and members of the public. A dedicated staff resource is funded from the Joint Fund, and that officer is responsible for delivery of the Green Chain projects, including sourcing additional funds when possible. The Green Chain public open spaces are managed by the partner boroughs while planning issues are the responsibility of individual boroughs.

An alternative example of this approach can be seen in the Colne Valley Regional Park. The Colne Valley Partnership is a voluntary association of local authorities that fosters the Park and provides planning and financial support. This partnership plays a key role in the development of projects and the technical and political contributions enable the Park to function.

The Partnership is advised by the Colne Valley Executive that comprises officers of the relevant local authorities and Groundwork. Project work involves a much wider partnership which includes Groundwork, government agencies, private companies and local groups. Project delivery and the coordination of funding bids is handled by Groundwork.

The capacity of the constituent authorities to directly fund projects varies considerably. Most are able to provide officer support for individual projects and some have specific budgets which can be used to fund

projects. These budgets are supplemented by applications to private sector, charitable and government Grant Funds, along with local negotiations and fundraising.

5.2.3 Approach 3: A semi-autonomous, formalised Partnership of supportive organisations

This approach is a progression from the previously described partnership approach, in which the partnership organisations make a commitment to the creation and support of a partnership organisation.

A formal partnership would have a number of key differences from the informal partnership approach:

- It would involve a dedicated Chief Executive and executive team;
- Substantially greater level of longer-term commitment and finance from the various partners;
- Formalised structures of reporting and support from various local authority committees and from the boards of other key partners;
- A dedicated budget;
- Greater freedom of action, subject to overall control of strategic and policy issues from the partner organisations;
- Political representation at the highest level; and
- A discrete identity for marketing purposes and communication with the public and formalised methods of operation, (but no discrete legal identity).

Liability and legal issues associated with decision-making, procurement and so on would need to be operated through one of the partner organisations, with their established systems and legal foundations. Similarly, an appropriate strategy of financial control, auditing and accountability would need to be operated through existing local authority structures. Member representation on a Management Board would provide democratic legitimacy.

Day to day management and maintenance operations may remain under the control of the respective open space owners/managers, but parts or indeed all responsibility could fall under the control of the partnership organisation. In either case, management and maintenance standards would be coordinated.

Advantages:

- Relatively quick and low cost to establish (in comparison with approaches described subsequently);
- Provides dedicated organisation for delivery and management of strategic open space aspirations;
- Allow existing open space owners/managers to retain full control over the development of the initiative; and
- Planning powers could be directed firmly in support of the strategic open space aspirations (assuming planning authorities are members of the partnership).

Disadvantages:

- The effectiveness and longer-term existence of the organisation would be entirely in the hands of the partner organisations, which could reduce financial and other support from Central Government and other funding streams; and
- Lack of a separate legal identity may limit ability to raise funds and the organisation may be perceived by the public and others as lacking independence.

Examples of this approach

The newly founded Mersey Waterfront Regional Park provides an excellent example of a formal partnership approach to delivery of a strategic park opportunity. The Mersey Waterfront Regional Park spans more than 135km of the Liverpool City region's coastline, taking in the River Mersey, its estuary and parts of the rivers Dee and Ribble. The Waterfront Regional Park concept encompasses major urban and industrial regeneration projects around the Estuary such as the Ports and Airport, Liverpool's city centre waterfront – a World Heritage Site, and Wirral Waterfront, as well as tourism hotspots like Southport, New Brighton and West Kirby. It also includes the open coastal areas of the inner Mersey estuary, the Sefton Coast and the Wirral Coast.

The Regional Park project is coordinated by the Mersey Waterfront Executive, which operates as part of The Mersey Partnership (the Tourism and Economic Development Agency for Merseyside). The Executive operates under a legal agreement with the 10 Local Authorities through which the park extends. Wirral Borough Council are the accountable body with regard to project funding and are required to ratify Executive Board decisions.

The Executive Board consists of 15 members drawn from both private sector, NGOs and Local Authorities. At present three theme based Advisory Panels report to the Board, with responsibility for Maritime and Port, Tourism, Sport and Leisure and Estuary Management. Each advisory Panel is chaired by a Board member. This structure is soon to be replaced with three task based panels; Projects Group (with delegated authority to approve projects and funding), Finance and Audit Panel and Research and Strategy Panel.

Project delivery is not undertaken by the Executive, but individual projects may be led by local authorities, NGOs, voluntary groups or the private sector. There are currently 40 live projects under the Mersey Waterfront programme. The Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) has provided a £8.7m grant towards the scheme. Additional European funding of £13m has recently been secured.

Day to day management and maintenance of land is currently undertaken by the relevant local authority or NGO, although a pilot programme has seen the creation of a Waterfront Estate Team in the Halton area of the Park, which is funded jointly by the local authority and the Mersey Waterfront. This team has significantly enhanced management and maintenance standards within its area – achieving a new Green Flag in its first year - and is viewed as a potential model for expanded management programmes.

5.2.4 Approach 4: Independent Trust or Company

This approach would involve a structure which would be independent of the existing local authorities, agencies and other partners, whilst being 'sponsored' by and working in partnership with them. The most likely option with this model would be an independent charitable trust, probably with an associated not for profit limited company as an operating arm of the trust. This form of governance would involve independent trustees and a management board, with wider structures enabling tie-in to the many partners who would be involved. As an independent legal entity, a trust would have the power to make decisions, within the normal confines of planning policy and law, thus maximizing opportunities for efficient decision-making and delivery. A trust would be seen by the public and potential funders to be a single focused organisation, independent of local authorities, thus maximising opportunities for funding and community support.

Day to day management and maintenance operations would be under the control of the trust/company.

Advantages:

- Single focus and independent;

- Separate legal identity maximises opportunities for marketing, efficient decision-making and fund-raising; and
- Charitable status may bring tax benefits.

Disadvantages:

- As an independent body, a trust would lack the security (particularly financial) offered by local authority partnerships;
- If unsuccessful, the trust or company could fail, leaving open space resources unfunded and unmanaged;
- No direct access to the financial support and powers of local authorities or Government, (unless otherwise agreed); and
- A new trust would take one to two years to establish the new legal framework and staff structure to become effective.

Examples of this approach

Wimbledon and Putney Commons is an example of a large scale open space managed by an independent management entity, in this case a Board of Conservators. The Commons comprise about 460 hectares of countryside split between Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common. The Commons consist of woodland, scrubland, heathland, and mown recreation areas, unfenced and fully open to the public. On an average weekend there can be some 10,000 visitors and users of the Commons.

The Commons are administered by a Board of eight Conservators. Three of the Conservators are Government appointed, one each appointed by the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Home Secretary; five are elected every three years by the levy payers. Elections are normally held in January or February and everyone on the Local Government Electoral Roll living within the 3/4 mile of the Commons boundary may stand as a candidate.

Since 1st April 1991, the Commons have been largely financed by means of a levy on the Boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston in a proportion relevant to the number of "D" Band properties in each Borough within 3/4 of a mile of the Commons or in the old Parish of Putney. The Boroughs pass on this levy by way of an addition to the Council Tax on properties in the area.

5.2.5 Approach 5: A new Park Authority or similar organisation

This approach would involve the establishment of a fully independent form of governance, acknowledged and supported at Government level. An organisation of this sort may or may not have independent planning powers, compulsory purchase powers, etc.

The creation of a new park authority may not be welcomed by local authorities or other existing open space owners/managers who would lose existing authority and democratic control to such a body as well (in all likelihood) be required to fund it.

Advantages:

- Presupposes Central Government support, powers established by Government with possible Government funding and underpinning;
- Would signify Government commitment and would carry considerable weight; and

- Even if planning, compulsory purchase and other powers were to remain with the local authorities, the organisation would have substantial power, independence and ability to delivery, subject to adequate funding and other arrangements.

Disadvantages:

- The establishment of any organisation which involved conceding planning and other powers to another organisation would almost certainly be resisted by local authorities and would involve substantial uncertainty, cost and delay; and
- The establishment of an organisation with similar powers and structure to the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority would require Government support, as primary legislation would be involved. A Regional Park Authority may lack democratic legitimacy.

Examples of this approach

The Lee Valley Regional Park (LVRP) is the relevant example of this approach in London. LVRP was created in the mid 1960's, through the Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966. The Act defined the boundary of the Regional Park and established the Park Authority, granting wide powers as a development agency for the provision of leisure, sports and recreation facilities and to be a guardian of the Valley's environment and wildlife.

The park covers an area of over 4000ha, of which approximately one third is owned by the Authority. The park extends along the course of the River Lee for over 40km from Ware in Hertfordshire to the East India Dock Basin, currently stopping just short of the Thames.

The Park Authority is an independent statutory authority that is financed through an annual levy on the council tax base of Hertfordshire, Essex and London boroughs. The authority comprises 28 elected members with two from each of three District/Borough Councils impinging on the Park, one from each of the six riparian London Boroughs, four from each of Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils and eight appointed through the Association of London Government to represent all of the remaining non-riparian London Boroughs.

The business of the Authority is conducted through a series of Committees and specialised Panels and Steering Groups. A senior Management Team of five chief officers, led by the Chief Executive, is responsible for the professional management of the Authority's business activities supported by a staff of about 150. The business is split into two principal operating divisions: Park Services and Sport and Leisure Management, supported by Directorates of Finance, and Communications plus Technical, Planning and Policy Services.

5.3 ORGANISATIONAL STAGES

As noted above, the optimal organisational structure for the delivery of a significant new open space opportunity may not be a single structure, but may in fact change in response to the changing needs arising from setting up, delivering and subsequently managing a major project. Three stages can be considered:

Transitional Stage

This is an initial stage required to guide the project over the interim period until longer term governance arrangements are made. Such a structure should as far as possible utilise existing arrangements or partnerships, but every effort should be made to ensure that the organisation has a clear brief, reasonable

freedom of action and appropriate resources (both funding and personnel). The transitional organisation would be tasked with developing the structure and authority of the future governance organisation, but would also move forward with developing the park Vision, spatial plans and steering any ongoing or current projects or developments.

Implementation Stage

This stage would involve the major implementation of the infrastructure of the park. The governance structure adopted in the implementation stage could be any of the approaches identified above, and the most appropriate approach will depend on the specific nature of the open space opportunity, in particular the range of the open space land owners/managers and their individual commitment, constraints and aspirations. What ever structure is put in place, it would be tasked with the delivery of the park in its widest sense, including fund raising, design, marketing, community engagement, etc.

Management Stage

This stage relates to the long term and ongoing management of the park, including funding, income generation, enhancement through maintenance, etc. The organisation at this stage is likely to be considerably smaller than during the implementation stage, although the same or similar organisational structure could continue.

6.0 Assessment Methodology

6.1 METHODOLOGY PRINCIPLES

6.1.1 Introduction

The assessment methodology described in this section seeks to provide a structured process which can be applied to the identified strategic open space opportunities to provide a consistent basis for exploring the open space opportunity. The methodology should be seen as a flexible framework that will provide a guide for the future exploration of open space opportunities. Importantly, the methodology will help to ensure that consideration is given to the full range of issues that are of importance in assessing strategic open space needs and developing future open space aspirations.

Key outputs for each park opportunity at the completion of this assessment will be:

- Identifying and engaging with all relevant stakeholders, including open space landowners/ managers, local interest groups and the wider local community, and other interested organisations;
- A clear understanding of the nature of the open space need, recognising the nature of the socioeconomic context, the existing and future land use context and the environmental context;
- A clear understanding of the nature of the existing open space resource, recognising the strengths and opportunities inherent in the existing open space provision;
- A vision for the what the park opportunity can be, that responds to the identified need and builds on the existing open space resources; and
- Identification of key projects and actions required to deliver the vision, with recommendation for how the opportunity may be delivered and managed in the long term.

6.1.2 Scope and scale area of search

One of the most important considerations in undertaking an assessment of strategic open space opportunities is in defining the boundaries of the area of search. By its very nature, the assessment of strategic open space opportunities needs to encompass a sufficient area to ensure a strategic overview.

For the identified opportunity areas, the approach set out in the assessment methodology is to define an area of search centred on a key opportunity feature, such as a watercourse or existing open space area, and to create a boundary for the area of search at a distance of 3.2km from that feature. This distance has been selected based on the proposed catchment area for Metropolitan Park opportunities provided in the London Plan open space hierarchy.

Using the 3.2km distance creates an area of search which remains focussed on the identified area of opportunity, but which will encompass, at least in part, existing strategic open space provision into which any new provision must integrate. The area falling within this boundary should be considered as the 'inner' area of search.

It is important that the assessment of strategic open space resources gives due consideration to as wide an area as possible, and this may well need to extend beyond the defined inner area of search for many of the characteristics identified and the methodology is sufficiently flexible to allow assessment to extend beyond any defined boundary as appropriate. Conceptually, it may be best to envisage the boundaries of the area of search as forming graduated levels of assessment detail, with the greatest level of detail being assessed within the inner area of search (i.e. within 3.2km of the focus of the open space opportunity) while the 'outer' area of search extends beyond the boundary, graduating away from that edge with decreasing levels of detail. This approach will ensure that significant open space resources lying beyond the boundary of the area of search are identified and taken into consideration.

It is noted that the proposed catchment distance for a Regional Park opportunity is 8.0km, which may be a more appropriate distance in the assessment of Regional Park opportunity. It must be recognised that an area of search based on an 8.0km distance will be large, at the very least over 200km² if centred on a single point. This scale of study area is approaching the sub regional scale, and there may well be a number of advantages to a sub regional approach to the assessment and development of strategic open space provision.

The recently completed East London Green Grid Consultants Report of Studies provides an example of a sub regional assessment of open space provision. By assessing strategic open space provision at a sub regional scale, the Green Grid has enabled the assessment of opportunities and development of a vision for future open space provision within which specific open space opportunities can be subsequently developed.

Arguably, the aspiration for a comprehensive approach to strategic open space planning in London should be one in which a Green Grid type framework is developed on a sub regional basis to cover all of London. These sub regional open space frameworks would interlink with each other and the emerging Green Arc frameworks surrounding London, thus providing a fully integrated, fully strategic open space framework within which specific open space opportunities can be developed and implemented.

6.1.3 Fostering Coordination

The primary characteristic of most Strategic Open Space opportunities identified in London is that they are large and complex collections of parcels of land that fall into the ownership or administrative jurisdiction of a number of bodies, be they local authorities, government departments, non-government organisations, trusts, utility companies, private companies or individuals. Each of these bodies will manage their respective parcel of land to meet their own needs or objectives and the degree of coordination in management between bodies may range from well established partnerships through to contrasting and possibly conflicting activity.

In addition, these open space areas often have a range of community groups and organisations that have a particular interest in the area. As with the land managers, these groups may work in close partnership with the managers and each other, or may have different or perhaps conflicting aspirations.

The assessment methodology therefore seeks to provide a framework for the coordinated development of a vision, objectives and action plans that will enable the delivery of a strategic open space. Importantly, the process of forming and fostering partnerships underlies all parts of the methodology.

6.1.4 Drawing together the threads

The Government's vision for achieving an urban renaissance recognises the many, varied and interconnected elements that contribute towards a high-quality urban environment and towards enhancing quality of life. National, regional and local policy supporting the urban renaissance vision call for the preparation of a range of strategies and other initiatives that address the diverse range of interconnected elements, and parks, sports facilities and open and informal green spaces form an integral part of much of this strategic planning.

It is within this wider context of strategic planning that the methodology for assessing strategic park opportunities within London has been developed. The inter relationship of this assessment methodology to other strategies is fundamental and both the background information and the recommendations of these other strategies will provide crucial information for the development of open space opportunities. Importantly, this methodology does not seek to replace or repeat work undertaken or required in the preparation of other strategic documents.

With regard to open space provision, Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002) provides a clear statement of the Government's intention to protect existing sport, open space and recreation facilities and create new ones, recognising their importance in meeting objectives of:

- Supporting an urban renaissance;
- Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion;
- Health and well being; and
- Promoting more sustainable development.

PPG17 requires local planning authorities to prepare development plan policies which seek to ensure that there is adequate provision of sport, open space and recreation facilities that are well designed, meet modern standards, and are safe. In preparing these policies, the planning authorities should adopt a methodology which assesses the wider recreational needs of the local community.

Within London, the strategic context for Open Space planning is further set out in the London Plan (2004). Policy 3D.11 of the London Plan requires London boroughs to prepare Open Space Strategies to understand the supply and demand of open spaces and identify ways of protecting, creating and enhancing them and improving the quality through better management.

The Guide to preparing Open Space Strategies (2004) provides comprehensive best practice guidance on the methodology and content of an Open Space Strategy within the London context.

6.1.5 Worked examples of the Assessment Methodology

The methodology has been refined through the exploration of four example areas of search. These areas have been selected by the project Steering Group from the range of Strategic Park opportunities identified in the London Plan. The findings and recommendations arising from these examples are set out in the Appendices of this report.

The assessment process has primarily been used to identify the range of issues, opportunities and constraints that are likely to arise as these and future strategic open space opportunities are brought forward. The extent to which each example area of search has been explored has been governed by the available time and funding resources of the project. This has placed limitations in the extent to which the example assessments are able to draw together detailed baseline information and to generate robust, comprehensive, and appropriately tested proposals. In particular, the level of consultation with key

stakeholders has been limited, and this in turn placed significant limitations on the subsequent recommendations made for each area. It is therefore important that the worked examples of this assessment methodology provided in the Appendices of this report are not viewed as comprehensive or detailed assessments of the open space opportunities. Similarly, the proposals in relation to both the vision for the future open space opportunity and governance structures that may be formed to deliver that vision are made in response to the initial assessment methodology and should not be viewed as comprehensive or detailed proposals.

6.2 METHODOLOGY PROCESS

The assessment methodology provides a simple staged process that will identify strategic need and opportunities for future provision of Regional and Metropolitan Parks.

The assessment methodology has six Stages

- Stage 1 – Scoping and management of process.
- Stage 2 – Establishing context of open space opportunity.
- Stage 3 – Exploring the nature of open space need.
- Stage 4 – Exploring existing open space resources and opportunities.
- Stage 5 – Developing the scope and nature of opportunity.
- Stage 6 – Identifying key actions.

Each of these Stages is described more fully below.

6.2.1 Stage 1 – Scoping and Management

Stage 1 of the methodology is an important preliminary stage that will provide an understanding of the scope of the project, how the project will be delivered and identify who will be involved in the work.

Key tasks include:

- Identify and engage key stakeholders;
- Agree project roles, responsibilities and management structure;
- Agree project objectives of assessment process; and
- Identify initial boundaries for area of search.

The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders is of paramount importance to the success of the assessment process and each of the stages of the assessment methodology includes some element of consultation. This initial identification of key stakeholders will include those organisations that are have, or are likely to have, a direct role in the ownership, management or delivery of existing or future open space. Key stakeholders are likely to include local authorities, other significant landowners, the GLA, strategic government agencies and established voluntary and community groups who are already actively engaged in the development or management of open space.

The first task among the key stakeholders will be to agree what the project will seek to achieve, who will do what, and how the work will be undertaken. The project objectives should be tailored to the circumstances relevant to the specific opportunity area being assessed; describing in broad terms what will be achieved by the project; what type of open space is envisaged, where it is envisaged, who needs to be involved in making it happen. These initial objectives will be subject to review throughout the assessment process and

may well change as a result of the subsequent analysis and visioning work, but a clear understanding of the initial objectives at the outset of the project will help to ensure that the assessment work is appropriately targeted and that the right people and groups are involved.

Key issues relating to the management of the project are likely to include such considerations as what resources are required, when they are needed, how progress is reported, who is to approve the outputs of the assessment methodology

An initial identification of areas of search for strategic open space opportunity areas have been identified through the London Plan and sub regional development frameworks, through an assessment of areas of deficiency based on the open space hierarchy. While these identified opportunity areas provide the broad focus for assessment, the initial area of search will be tailored to suit the specific circumstances of each opportunity area. In some instances, a clear boundary for the open space opportunity will be apparent, while for other opportunities, the determination of open space boundaries will form an important component of developing the vision for the opportunity.

In all cases, the initial assessment boundary must be sufficiently wide to ensure the assessment process addresses an area of sufficient scale to encompass the key elements of the methodology, particularly the surrounding land use context and open space resources.

6.2.2 Stage 2 – Establish context of open space opportunity

Stage 2 will provide a thorough understanding of the context of the identified park opportunity in relation to existing policy and to current open space initiatives and aspirations.

This stage will require desk top research and review of existing published information and the first stage in an ongoing consultation with the key stakeholders identified in Stage 1.

Key tasks include:

- Identify key policy context
- Identify extent of previous or ongoing open space initiatives
- Identify wider potential stakeholders
- Review of methodology

Policy Context

The extent of existing policy relating to open space issues can be daunting, and an assessment of the implications of existing policy on the future provision of strategic open space will require a systematic and methodical approach. Importantly, partnership working within the project team should seek to utilise the existing knowledge base of groups and individuals as far as possible, seeking the input into the project from those who are familiar with specific areas of policy rather than attempting to assimilate the full range of policy. The policy context review should extend from regional policy down to local areas.

Table 3 Examples of relevant strategies and initiatives

Regional	
Greater London Authority	www.london.gov.uk
The London Plan - Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London – February 2004	
Sub Regional Development Frameworks	
London: Cultural Capital - Realising the potential of a world class city – April 2004	
A Tree and Woodland Framework for London - March 2005	
Biodiversity Strategy - Connecting with London's nature – July 2002	
Transport Strategy – July 2001	
Air Quality Strategy – Cleaning London's Air -- September 2002	
Energy Strategy – Green light to clean power – February 2004	
Municipal Waste Management Strategy – Rethinking Rubbish in London – September 2003	
Draft Food Strategy for London – Better Food for London – September 2005	
Children and Young People's Strategy – Making London Better for All Children and Young People – January 2004	
Draft Older Peoples Strategy – November 2005	
Race Equality Scheme - May 2002	
London Development Agency: Economic Development Strategy	www.lda.gov.uk
London Biodiversity Action Plan	www.lbp.org.uk
Sub Regional	
Thames Gateway London Partnership	www.thames-gateway.org.uk
Lee Valley Regional Park	www.leevalleypark.org.uk
Colne Valley Regional Park	www.colnevalleypark.org.uk
Thames Chase Community Forest	www.thameschase.org.uk
Watling Chase Community Forest	
South East London Green Chain	www.greenchain.com
London's Green Grid and Green Arc initiatives	
Local	
Unitary Development Plans; Opportunity Area Planning Frameworks; Area Action Plans.	
Community Strategy; Best Value Performance Plan; Development Plan; Leisure Plan/Sports Strategy; Nature Conservation Strategy; Agenda 21 Strategy; Housing Strategy; Asset Management Plan; Regeneration Strategy; Heritage and Arts Strategy; Education Plan; Biodiversity Action Plan; Cultural Strategy; Walking Strategy; Rights of Way Improvement Plan; Play Strategy	

Existing Initiatives

It is likely that the open space potential of those areas currently identified as open space opportunity areas will have been recognised in the past, and that initial ideas, proposals and even active projects have been prepared or are currently being undertaken. Initiatives could arise from a range of sources, often led by the local authority or other landowning/ managing agency, but may also be generated by volunteer or community groups.

Identification of existing initiatives is likely to be best achieved through discussions with previously identified key stakeholders, with follow up as required. These existing initiatives provide an important starting point for the development of future proposals, providing both an understanding of the context of the area and an understanding of past or current aspirations for the open space. It should be noted that existing initiatives provide part of the context information in this assessment process. The process of assessment of need, existing resource and developing the vision and objectives is intended to provide a robust supporting framework for future open space provision. Existing initiatives may fit comfortably into the recommendations generated by the assessment process, but may also need to be altered or indeed discarded as a result.

Wider Stakeholders

Stage 1 identified key stakeholders. This stage identifies the far wider range of agencies, organizations, groups and individuals who may have an interest or could offer assistance in the development of the open space opportunity area. These stakeholders need not be limited to those currently involved in the area, but should extend to include anyone who could potentially have an interest.

Again, identification of wider stakeholders is likely to be best achieved through discussions with previously identified key stakeholders, with follow up as required. The wider stakeholder group would be actively engaged in subsequent stages of the assessment process, assisting in provision of information and importantly, in the generation of a vision and objectives for the open space and in the preparation of the Delivery Plan.

Table 4 Potential wider stakeholders

Wider Stakeholder could include:

National and Regional Agencies

- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Sport England
- English Heritage
- London Wildlife Trust
- London Parks and Green Spaces Forum

Local Groups

- Park user groups
- Citizens panels
- Community forums
- Resident groups

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's)

6.2.3 Stage 3 – Explore nature of need

Stage 3 involves an assessment of the nature of the open space need within the identified area of search in order to establish the context for the open space resource. The nature of the open space need is assessed through the evaluation of three criteria;

- Demographic and socio economic
- Land use
- Environmental

Demographic and socio economic

The assessment of the demographic and socio economic characteristics of the area of search will assist in understanding the nature of the population within the open space catchment area, which can be used to inform the development of the vision and objectives of the new open space. A relatively simple assessment of key characteristics is recommended, with particular attention paid to variations in the distribution of these characteristics, and to areas of concentration.

Assessment of this nature is most easily achieved utilising Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Data drawn from census results can be used to produce a relatively detailed picture of community characteristics over large areas. Data is also available from the Data Management and Analysis Group (DMAG), within Corporate Services of the GLA.

Key characteristics of existing populations within area of search should include:

- Population density
- Index of multiple deprivation
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Health
- Identify future growth areas and evaluate extent of change

Land Use

The distribution of existing and future land uses provides an important context within which future open space provision can be delivered. Different land uses will offer different challenges and opportunities in relation to future open space provision. The nature of potential use and therefore the appropriate features and facilities within the open space will vary across different land use types. In addition, the interface between the future open space areas and the built environment will be an important consideration and is likely to require different approaches in response to different land use types.

Environmental

The existing environmental conditions will provide important contextual information for the open space provision. Environmental considerations should include:

- Air quality – useful sources of air quality information include the Corporation of London (www.cityoflondon.gov.uk), London Air Quality Group, (www.londonair.org.uk) and the National Air Quality Information Archive (www.airquality.co.uk)

- Flood risk – useful sources of information relating to flood risk include the Environment Agency (www.environment-agency.gov.uk)
- Habitat and Species distribution – useful sources include the Greenspace Information for Greater London database currently in development (www.wildlondon.org.uk)

6.2.4 Stage 4 – Explore Existing Open Space Resource and Opportunities

Stage 4 will identify the nature and significance of existing open space resource within area of search. Assessment of the existing open space resource will be undertaken within the broad criteria of open space facilities and features identified in Section 4 of this report. The understanding of the open space resource gained through this stage of the assessment will enable the identification of existing open space strengths and weaknesses.

Information sources for this stage of assessment will be varied, and is likely to require the collation of existing information from a wide range of sources, as well specific site assessment and analysis. Local authority Unitary Development Plans will provide a valuable source of information, particularly relating to the range of land designations. Where they have been completed, the range of local strategies identified in Section 6.2.2 will provide further baseline information, particularly the Open Space Strategies.

Key tasks within this stage of the assessment include:

- Identify existing open space type
 - Open space designations (e.g. Metropolitan Open Land, Green Belt, Protected Open Space etc);
 - Access (e.g. Public open space, private open space); and
 - Categorisation (i.e. based on the open space hierarchy for public open space identified in the London Plan).
- Identify existing open space resources
 - Recreational (e.g. walking/cycling trails and routes, active sports facilities, informal and passive recreation opportunities, play etc);
 - Ecological (e.g. Designated sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Priority habitats and or species, large scale areas or corridors of potential habitat, wildspace);
 - Landscape (e.g. Key views and landmarks, structural landscape areas);
 - Culture/Heritage (e.g. Historic buildings, gardens, parks, activities, Ancient Monuments, provision for events and festivals, education centres, interpretation etc);
 - Resource management (e.g. urban agriculture, energy production, waste treatment, flood management); and
 - Access to public transport.

6.2.5 Stage 5 – Develop Scope and Nature of Opportunity

Stage 5 will identify the vision and objectives for park opportunity which will form the basis for a Park Opportunity Framework Plan. These must incorporate both strategic and local open space aspirations, and will be informed by the baseline assessment work completed in previous stages of the assessment methodology; open space context, existing and future need and the nature of the existing open space resource.

Strategic aims, objectives and outputs should initially be prepared for each of the defining criteria identified in Section 4 of this report and in the previous stages of the assessment methodology, namely:

- Facilities and features
 - Recreation;
 - Heritage and Culture;
 - Ecology;
 - Resource management; and
 - Landscape.
- Accessibility; and
- Quality

Once a clear understanding of the aspirations for each of these criteria is established, these can then be integrated into an overall set of aspirations for the park opportunity. This process of integration is likely to identify both synergies and potential conflicts between the various defining criteria. Resolution of potential conflicts will require the evaluation of relative priorities and a creative design and decision making process through which benefits for each of the criteria are optimised with a minimum impact on other criteria. The process will also ensure that the overall vision and objective of the park opportunity will reflect a balanced aspiration for the range of defining characteristics of strategic open space.

The vision and strategic objectives should form the basis of a Park Opportunity Framework Plan. This plan will provide a broad framework that will describe the future aspirations for the park opportunity and into which existing initiatives and future proposals can be integrated in a structured and coordinated manner. The Framework Plan will also provide a document which can be used for both wider consultation prior to the development of detailed project proposals, and as the basis for promotion, funding bids etc.

Consultation with stakeholders will have been ongoing throughout the assessment process. Wider consultation with local communities and the wider public and interest groups should be undertaken at this stage, utilising the Framework Plan as the basis for describing the open space aspirations. The consultation process must include a structured process for reviewing, evaluating and where appropriate amending proposals in light of the consultation response.

6.2.6 Stage 6 – Actions and Recommendations

The final stage is to identify the actions needed to deliver the vision and objectives identified in Stage 5 of the assessment methodology into tangible open space benefits. This stage will include determining the detail of **what** needs to happen (e.g. the design of projects, the raising of funds, the seeking of appropriate approvals, the procurement of contracts, the construction works and the management of spaces etc), and equally importantly, **how** those actions will happen (e.g. delivery mechanisms, governance/ management approach, project management, community involvement etc)

Specific tasks are likely to include:

- Refine projects
 - Identify and prioritise projects with regard to their contribution to the vision and objectives;
 - Develop project design;
 - Prepare cost estimates for identified projects;
 - Identify funding requirements and potential funding sources;
 - Identify key stakeholders in delivery; and
 - Identify approval and procurement requirements.
- Governance and management

- Identify existing key stakeholders and management structures; and
- Identify and assess generic governance models against existing reality and key issues and identify preferred governance structures.

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The report sets out an assessment methodology that can be applied to identified strategic open space opportunity areas. While this methodology will provide a consistent approach to the assessment of strategic open space opportunities, it should be viewed as a flexible framework which should be reviewed and modified as appropriate in response to the specific characteristics and circumstances relating to each opportunity area.

Further consideration should also be given to the advantages inherent in a sub regional based assessment of strategic open space needs and aspirations that would provide a framework for subsequent site specific assessments.

7.2 GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION MODELS

There is no single approach to governance that can be applied universally. The most appropriate approach will be determined in the light of the specific situations relating to open space ownership and management and the nature of the open space aspirations.

There are a great many variations in approach to open space management, but these may be considered as lying on a continuum ranging from individual organisations working independently through to a statutory park authority responsible for managing all aspect of open space. In defining the appropriate model it is important that all relevant parties are involved, and that the principles of local governance are taken fully into account.

Based on consultation undertaken during the study, concern has been expressed about the risk of loss of local accountability in open space management, and the potential resource implications for local communities in delivering and maintaining strategic open space resources.

7.3 DELIVERING STRATEGIC OPEN SPACE – MOVING FORWARD

Perhaps the key issues arising from the findings of this study relate to how both the strategic open space opportunities identified in the pilot studies and strategic open space aspirations more generally, can be delivered. At present, the implementation of these opportunities is being brought forward through a range of ad hoc and uncoordinated approaches. The extent of progress in individual cases is largely dependant on the commitment and resources of individual or partnership organisations, and it appears that in the majority of cases, the extent of progress is limited by the extent to which these organisations are able to dedicate resources to the delivery of strategic open spaces.

It is hoped that this report will provide a catalyst for the implementation of a programme specifically aimed at assisting in the delivery of strategic open space aspirations. Such a programme requires the coordination of appropriate resources and expertise at the strategic level. Importantly, it is concluded that the programme must seek to deliver the strategic open space aspirations by providing targeted assistance in the form of expertise, guidance, incentives and resources, to firstly establish appropriate local partnership vehicles to lead the delivery of the strategic open space aspirations (building where appropriate on existing structures such as the Sub-Regional Alliances and Partnerships), and secondly to deliver and manage the resources.

It is considered fundamental to the success of such a programme that the delivery of strategic open space opportunities must be considered in conjunction with other open space needs in the development of open space strategies. While opportunities should be coordinated and implemented through local or sub-regional partnerships, there will be a requirement for strategic level support in developing comprehensive strategies for the delivery of Regional and Metropolitan Parks.

7.4 REVIEW OF LONDON PLAN

The findings of this project suggest that the current definitions of Regional and Metropolitan Parks should be expanded to allow consideration of other criteria relating to functions and features, accessibility and quality. This should also allow for the consideration of networks of open space to meet strategic open space requirements. Suggestions for proposed modifications to the London Plan to strengthen the strategic policy context for the promotion of new and improved Regional and Metropolitan Parks are summarised in Table 6.1. The proposed changes would strengthen existing policies in respect of:

- Encouraging the development of networks of open spaces to meet strategic open space requirements;
- Promoting cross-borough coordination in implementing proposals for new or improved Regional and Metropolitan Parks;
- Providing a stronger definition of Regional and Metropolitan Parks as a theme to be addressed through the preparation of Sub-Regional Development Frameworks and the promotion of cross-boundary links to provide the focus for implementation.

It is also proposed that the definition of Regional and Metropolitan Parks set out in the Best Practice Guidance to preparing Open Space Strategies should be revised to reflect the wider range of functions and characteristics of strategic open space identified in this study. The existing definition is considered to be too limited and does not reflect variations in opportunities and sub-regional characteristics within London, particularly in respect of the identification and implementation of Regional Park opportunities which is likely to rely more extensively on effective linkages between existing open spaces. The proposed definitions are set out below:

Regional Parks

London's Regional Parks will be large areas, corridors or networks of open space, the majority of which will be publicly accessible and which will provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, heritage, cultural or resource management benefits. Individual Regional Parks will offer a combination of facilities and features that are unique within Greater London. Regional Parks will be readily accessible by public transport and be managed to meet best practice quality standards.

Metropolitan Parks

London's Metropolitan Parks will be large areas of publicly accessible open space which provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, heritage, cultural or resource management

benefits. Individual Metropolitan Parks will offer a combination of facilities and features that are unique at a sub regional level. Metropolitan Parks will be readily accessible by public transport and be managed to meet best practice quality standards.

Table 5 Suggested changes for consideration in review of London Plan

Policy	Suggested Changes
INTRODUCTION	
Objective 6: To make London a more attractive, well-designed and green city (p10-11)	
<p>The key policy directions for achieving this objective are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the spatial framework to achieve better use of resources and improvements to the environment • Promote a range of actions to achieve the wider environmental sustainability of a growing London • Address issues of climate change • Deal with flood risk and water resource issues at an early stage • Encourage and support the development of green industries • Make the fullest and most sustainable use of resources • Protect and enhance the quality of the townscape • Enhance world class heritage assets, including World Heritage Sites and Royal Parks • Achieve the highest quality of urban design • Re-use buildings and brownfield sites, rather than developing on green space Enhance the use and environment of the Thames and the Blue Ribbon Network • Protect, enhance and create green open spaces 	<p>Include specific reference to the provision of a network of high quality open spaces including new and improved Regional and Metropolitan Parks</p>
CHAPTER 3: 3D: ENJOYING LONDON	
Policy 3D.5 - Sports facilities (p138)	
<p>The Mayor will work with strategic partners to promote and develop London’s sporting facilities. This will include the promotion of London as the home of the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympics, focused on east London.</p> <p>In reviewing UDPs, boroughs should identify sites for a range of sports facilities to meet local, sub-regional and wider needs.</p> <p>In considering proposals for sports facilities, boroughs should ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a sequential approach is applied • sites have good access by public transport, cycling and walking, or improved access is planned • facilities are accessible to all sections of the community, including disabled people • new provision is focused on areas with existing deficiencies in facilities 	<p>Distinction to be made between indoor and outdoor facilities and opportunity for provision of facilities within new or improved Regional and Metropolitan Parks.</p>

Policy	Suggested Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the multiple use of facilities is encouraged, including those of schools and commercial organisations. 	
Policy 3D.7 - Realising the value of open space (p142)	
<p>The Mayor will work with strategic partners to protect and promote London's network of open spaces, to realise the current and potential value of open space to communities, and to protect the many benefits of open space, including those associated with health, sport and recreation, children's play, regeneration, the economy, culture, biodiversity and the environment.</p>	<p>Include other benefits of open space related to resource management, landscape and heritage</p>
Policy 3D.8 - Green Belt (p144)	
<p>The Mayor will and boroughs should maintain the protection of London's Green Belt and proposals for alterations to Green Belt boundaries should be considered through the UDP process in accordance with government guidance in PPG2. There is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and such development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.</p>	<p>Include reference to appropriate public access and potential role of Green belt in London's network of open spaces</p>
Policy 3D.9 - Metropolitan Open Land (p144)	
<p>The Mayor will and boroughs should maintain the protection of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) from inappropriate development. Any alterations to the boundary of MOL should be undertaken by boroughs through the UDP process, in consultation with the Mayor and adjoining authorities. Land designated as MOL should satisfy one or more of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> land that contributes to the physical structure of London by being clearly distinguishable from the built-up area land that includes open air facilities, especially for leisure, recreation, sport, arts and cultural activities and tourism which serve the whole or significant parts of London land that contains features or landscapes of historic, recreational, nature conservation or habitat interest, of value at a metropolitan or national level land that forms part of a Green Chain and meets one of the above criteria. <p>Policies should include a presumption against inappropriate development of MOL and give the same level of protection as the Green Belt. Essential facilities for appropriate uses will only be acceptable where they do not have an adverse impact on the openness of MOL.</p>	<p>Include reference to appropriate public access and role of MOL in London's network of open spaces</p>
Policy 3D.10 - Open space provision in UDPs (p145)	
<p>UDP policies should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify broad areas of public open space deficiency and priorities for addressing them on the basis of audits carried out as part of an open space strategy, and using the open space hierarchy set out in Table 3D.1 as a starting point: 	<p>Need to strengthen reference to implementation of proposals for new or improved Regional or Metropolitan Parks through</p>

Policy	Suggested Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that future open space needs are considered in planning policies for Opportunity Areas and other areas of growth and change in their area • encourage functional and physical linkages within the network of open spaces and to the wider public realm, improve accessibility for all throughout the network and create new links based on local and strategic need • identify, promote and protect Green Corridors and Green Chains and include appropriate designations and policies for the protection of local open spaces that are of value, or have the potential to be of value, to local communities. • The Mayor will assist in co-ordinating this process across borough boundaries, and in identifying the need for new or improved Regional or Metropolitan Parks. 	<p>cross borough cooperation and provision. Need to clarify mayor's role in coordinating this process and importance of partnership working (with appropriate cross-reference to Sub-Regional Development Frameworks).</p>
Policy 3D.11 - Open space strategies (p147)	
<p>Boroughs should, in consultation with local communities, the Mayor and other partners, produce open space strategies to protect, create and enhance all types of open space in their area. Such strategies should include approaches for the positive management of open space where appropriate to prevent or remedy degradation or enhance the beneficial use of it for the community.</p>	<p>Need to strengthen reference to cross-borough coordination in development of Open Space Strategies and importance of addressing Regional and Metropolitan Parks within context of overall strategy</p>
<p>To assist with such strategies the Mayor has produced a Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies. Boroughs should undertake audits of existing open space and assessments of need in their area, considering both the qualitative and the quantitative elements of open space, sports and recreational facilities, as part of an open space strategy and in accordance with the guidance given in PPG17. In doing so, they should have regard to the cross-borough nature and use of many open spaces in London.</p>	<p>Modify definition of Regional and Metropolitan Parks in Open Space Hierarchy to reflect broader roles and variations in sub-regional/ local opportunities and characteristics</p>
Policy 3D.12 - Biodiversity and nature conservation (p148)	
<p>The Mayor will work with partners to ensure a proactive approach to the protection, promotion and management of biodiversity in support of the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy. The planning of new development and regeneration should have regard to nature conservation and biodiversity, and opportunities should be taken to achieve positive gains for conservation through the form and design of development. Where appropriate, measures may include creating, enhancing and managing wildlife habitat and natural landscape.</p> <p>Priority for habitat creation should be given to sites which assist in achieving the targets in Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and sites within or near to areas deficient in accessible wildlife sites. Boroughs, in reviewing UDPs and</p>	<p>Include reference to need for coordination of Biodiversity and Open Space Strategies and implementation of proposals for new or improved Regional and Metropolitan Parks</p>

Policy	Suggested Changes
<p>in considering proposals for development should accord the highest protection to internationally designated and proposed sites (SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites), and to nationally designated sites (SSSIs) in accordance with government guidance and the Habitat Regulations, 1994.</p> <p>The Mayor will identify Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (SMIs), which, in addition to internationally and nationally designated sites, includes land of strategic importance for nature conservation and biodiversity across London. Boroughs should give strong protection to these sites in their UDPs. Boroughs should use the procedures adopted by the Mayor in his Biodiversity Strategy to identify sites of Borough or Local Importance for nature conservation and should accord them a level of protection commensurate with their borough or local significance.</p> <p>The Mayor will and boroughs should resist development that would have a significant adverse impact on the population or conservation status of protected species or priority species identified in the London Biodiversity Action Plan and borough BAPs. Appropriate policies for their protection and enhancement and to achieve the targets set out in BAPs, should be included in UDPs.</p> <p>Where development is proposed which would affect a site of importance for nature conservation, the approach should be to seek to avoid adverse impact on the nature conservation value of the site, and if that is not possible, to minimise such impact and seek mitigation of any residual impacts. Where, exceptionally, development is to be permitted because the reasons for it are judged to outweigh significant harm to nature conservation, appropriate compensation should be sought.</p>	
Policy 3D.13 London's countryside and the urban fringe (p151)	
<p>The Mayor will work with strategic partners to improve access to the countryside and the quality of landscape in the urban fringe. The Mayor will and boroughs should support sub-regional and cross-borough boundary urban fringe management and, in particular, explore the potential for taking forward the concept of Community Forests within London.</p>	<p>Emphasise importance of creating strategic open space network links from countryside into city and potential role in the creation of new or improved Regional and Metropolitan Parks</p>
Policy 3D.14 Agriculture in London (p152)	
<p>The Mayor will and boroughs should seek to encourage and support a thriving agricultural sector in London. Policies in UDPs should provide for the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land in accordance with national guidance, and allow for appropriate projects for farm diversification and other measures to meet the needs of farming and rural business development.</p> <p>Such policies should be consistent with the other policies of this plan, such as having regard to sustainable development and transport and the</p>	<p>Include cross-reference to preparation of Open Space Strategies</p>

Policy	Suggested Changes
presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt.	
Policy 3D.15 Burial space (p152)	
<p>UDP policies should ensure that provision is made for London’s burial needs, including the special needs of certain religious or cultural groups for whom burial is the only option. Provision should be based on the principle of proximity to local communities.</p> <p>The Mayor will promote the policies for sustainable cemeteries</p> <p>Published by London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) in 1976.</p>	<p>Include cross-reference to preparation of Open Space Strategies</p>
CHAPTER 4: THE CROSS CUTTING POLICIES	
Policy 4A.12 Water quality (p168)	
<p>The Mayor will and boroughs should seek to protect and improve water quality to ensure that the Blue Ribbon Network is healthy, attractive and offers a valuable series of habitats by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that adequate sewerage infrastructure capacity is available for major new development • refusing, or directing refusal of proposals that are likely to lead to a reduction in water quality • using sustainable urban drainage systems to reduce the amount and intensity of urban run-off and pollution (see also Policy 4C.8). 	<p>Include cross-reference to preparation of Open Space Strategies</p>
Policy 4B.15 London View Protection Framework (p185)	
<p>The Mayor designates the selected set of strategically important views listed in Table 4B.2 to be managed in accordance with Policies 4B.16 and 4B.17. These policies will become operational when Strategic View directions are withdrawn (see below).</p> <p>The Mayor will keep the list of designated views under review. Views will only be considered for designation where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the viewing place is open, publicly accessible and well used, a place in its own right allowing for pause and enjoyment of the view • significant parts of London, or significant buildings, would be visible • the view is highly valued and allows for the appreciation and understanding of London as a whole, or of major elements within it, and does not replicate existing managed views without added benefit • the view represents at least one of the following: a panorama across a substantial part of London, a broad prospect along the river or a view from an urban space, including urban parks, which may be a linear view to a defined object or group of objects, which offers a cohesive viewing experience. <p>Within designated views, the Mayor will identify strategically important landmarks where the landmark is easy to see and to recognise, provides a geographical or cultural orientation point, and is aesthetically attractive. Preference will be given to landmarks that are publicly accessible. The</p>	<p>Include cross-reference to preparation of Open Space Strategies</p>

Policy	Suggested Changes
landmark should be a natural focus within the view although it does not have to be the only one.	
Policy 4B.16 - View management plans (p187)	
<p>The Mayor will, in collaboration with strategic partners, prepare and review management plans for the views designated under Policy 4B.15. These plans should seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect the benefits of the view, helping to promote an appreciation of London at the strategic level and to identify landmark buildings and to recognise that it is not appropriate to protect every aspect of an existing view • seek to enhance the view and viewing place in terms of access and the ability to understand the view • prevent undue damage to the view either by blocking, or unacceptably imposing on, a landmark or by creating an intrusive element in the view's foreground or middle ground • clarify appropriate development height thresholds • protect backgrounds that give a context to landmarks. In some cases, the immediate background to landmarks will require safeguarding to ensure the structure can be appropriately appreciated • be based on an understanding of its foreground, middle ground and background, landmark elements and the relative importance of each to the view in its entirety. • Management plans for different types of view will also be based on the following principles: • River prospects. The management of these prospects should ensure that the juxtaposition between elements, including the river frontages and major landmarks, can be appreciated within their wider London context. • Townscape and linear views. These views should be managed so that the ability to see specific buildings, or groups of buildings, in conjunction with the surrounding environment, including distant buildings within views, should be enhanced. • Panoramas. Within these views, proposed developments, as seen from above or obliquely in the front and middle ground, should fit within the prevailing pattern of buildings and spaces and should not detract from the panorama as a whole. The management of landmarks should afford them an appropriate setting and prevent a canyon effect from new buildings crowding in too close to the landmark. 	<p>Include cross-reference to preparation of Open Space Strategies and creation of network of high quality open spaces</p>
Policy 4C.3 - The natural value of the Blue Ribbon Network (p197)	
<p>The Mayor will, and boroughs should, protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Blue Ribbon Network by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resisting development that results in a net loss of biodiversity • designing new waterside developments in ways that increase 	<p>Include cross-reference to preparation of Open Space Strategies and creation of network of high quality open spaces</p>

Policy	Suggested Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • habitat value • allowing development into the water space only where it serves • a water-dependent purpose or is a truly exceptional case which adds to London's world city status • taking opportunities to open culverts and naturalise river channels • protecting the value of the foreshore of the River Thames. 	
Policy 4C.4 - Natural landscape (p198)	
<p>The Mayor will, and boroughs should, recognise the Blue Ribbon Network as contributing to the open space network of London. Where appropriate natural landscapes should be protected and enhanced. As part of Open Space Strategies, boroughs should identify potential opportunities alongside waterways for the creation and enhancement of open spaces.</p>	No change
Policy 4C.6 - Flood plains (p199)	
<p>In reviewing their UDPs, boroughs should identify areas at risk from flooding (flood zones). Within these areas the assessment of development proposals should be carried out in line with PPG25. In particular, boroughs should avoid permitting built development in functional flood plains.</p>	Cross reference to environmental functions of open space
Policy 4C.16 - Increasing sport and leisure use on the Blue Ribbon Network (p206)	
<p>The Mayor will, and boroughs should, protect existing facilities for sport and leisure on the Blue Ribbon Network. Other than in locations where there would be conflict with nature conservation interests, new development and facilities that increase the use of the Blue Ribbon Network for sport and leisure use should be encouraged, especially in areas of deficiency. Proposals for Opportunity Areas and Areas for Intensification should provide these facilities and improve access to different sport and leisure activities.</p>	Include cross-reference to preparation of Open Space Strategies and creation of network of high quality open spaces
Policy 4C.17 - Increasing access alongside and to the Blue Ribbon Network (p207)	
<p>The Mayor will, and boroughs should, protect and improve existing access points to, alongside and over the Blue Ribbon Network. New sections to extend existing or create new walking and cycling routes alongside the Blue Ribbon Network as well as new access points should be provided as part of development proposals for Opportunity Areas and Areas for Intensification, especially in areas of deficiency.</p>	Include cross-reference to preparation of Open Space Strategies and creation of network of high quality open spaces
CHAPTER 5: THE SUB-REGIONS	
Policy 5A.1 - Sub-Regional Development Frameworks (p227)	
<p>The Mayor will work in partnership with other stakeholders in each of sub-regions to bring forward Sub-Regional Development frameworks for implementing and developing policies in London Plan.</p>	Identify strategic open space as one of themes to be addressed in preparation of Sub-Regional Development Frameworks given need to address issues of wider than borough significance

Policy	Suggested Changes
	and to promote coordination between stakeholders in implementing proposals.
Policy 5B.1 - The strategic priorities for Central London (p227)	
<p>The strategic priorities for the Central London sub-region will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote and protect the vital mix of culture, government, leisure and commerce together with its historic buildings, housing, open spaces and public realm that are central London’s unique attraction for residents, visitors and business • ensure that new development is sustainable, safe, secure and well designed, improves the environment, particularly air quality, and takes account of the sub-region’s outstanding heritage. The open space and Blue Ribbon Networks are key features, particularly the Royal Parks and the Thames. <p>The Mayor will work with sub-regional partnerships to develop a coherent Sub-Regional Development Framework for Central London in which these priorities will be further developed.</p>	<p>Include strategic open spaces on Map 5B.1</p> <p>Include explanatory text regarding promotion of improvements to strategic open spaces</p>
Policy 5C.1 - The strategic priorities for East London (p241)	
<p>The strategic priorities for the East London sub-region will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that new development is sustainable, safe, secure and well designed, secures much needed improvement to the sub-region’s environment and takes account of the sub-region’s heritage. The open space and Blue Ribbon Networks are key features, in particular the Thames and network of waterways in the Lower Lea/Stratford area. Special attention should be paid to long-term flood risk. 	<p>Include strategic open spaces on Map 5c.1</p> <p>Strengthen references to strategic open spaces and role of Regional/ Metropolitan Parks and future Green Grid Framework</p>
Policy 5D.1 - The strategic priorities for West London (p257)	
<p>The strategic priorities for the West London sub-region will be to: ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that new development is sustainable, safe, secure and well designed, improves the environment, and takes account of the subregion’s heritage. The open space and Blue Ribbon Networks are key features. 	<p>Include strategic open spaces on Map 5c.1</p> <p>Strengthen references to strategic open spaces and role of Regional/ Metropolitan Parks</p>
Policy 5E.1 - The strategic priorities for North London (p265)	
<p>The strategic priorities for the North London sub-region will be to: ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that new development is sustainable, safe and secure and well designed, improves the environment and takes account of the subregion’s heritage. The open space and Blue Ribbon Networks are key features, in particular the Lee Valley Park 	<p>Include strategic open spaces on Map 5c.1</p> <p>Strengthen references to strategic open spaces and implementation of Regional/ Metropolitan</p>

Policy	Suggested Changes
	Park opportunities
Policy 5F.1 - The strategic priorities for South London (p273)	
<p>The strategic priorities of the South London sub-region will be to: ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that new development is sustainable, safe and secure and well designed, improves the environment and takes account of the sub-region's heritage. The open space and Blue Ribbon Networks are key features, in particular the Wandle Valley and the Thames. 	<p>Include strategic open spaces on Map 5c.1</p> <p>Strengthen references to strategic open spaces and implementation of Regional Park opportunity in Wandle Valley</p>

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Chinese

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Vietnamese

Nếu bạn muốn có bản tài liệu này bằng ngôn ngữ của mình, hãy liên hệ theo số điện thoại hoặc địa chỉ dưới đây.

Greek

Αν θέλετε να αποκτήσετε αντίγραφο του παρόντος εγγράφου στη δική σας γλώσσα, παρακαλείστε να επικοινωνήσετε τηλεφωνικά στον αριθμό αυτό ή ταχυδρομικά στην παρακάτω διεύθυνση.

Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinizde hazırlanmış bir nüshasını edinmek için, lütfen aşağıdaki telefon numarasını arayınız veya adrese başvurunuz.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀ ਕਾਪੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਰਾਖਤਾ ਕਰੋ:

Hindi

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज की प्रति अपनी भाषा में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निम्नलिखित नंबर पर फोन करें अथवा नीचे दिये गये पते पर संपर्क करें

Bengali

আপনি যদি আপনার ভাষায় এই বলিলের প্রতিলিপি (কপি) চান, তা হলে नीचे के फोन नम्बरे বা ঠিকানায় অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Urdu

اگر آپ اس دستاویز کی نقل اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم نیچے دئے گئے نمبر پر فون کریں یا دیئے گئے پتے پر رابطہ کریں

Arabic

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أفناه

Gujarati

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજની નકલ તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી આપેલ નંબર ઉપર ફોન કરો અથવા નીચેના સરનામે સંપર્ક સાધો.

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