

Creating sustainable communities: Greening the Gateway

A greenspace strategy for Thames Gateway



Contents

Summary	3
1 Introduction	4
2 Policy context	7
3 Operational context	13
4 Functional green infrastructure	17
5 Core principles	31
6 Delivery	34

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all those from the public, private and voluntary sectors who have contributed ideas, time, expertise and illustrations. We would particularly like to thank the members of the Thames Gateway Environment Sub-group, and the National Urban Forestry Unit who seconded their Chief Executive, Nerys Jones, to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to advise on and co-ordinate the production of this strategy.

Photo credits

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Summary

Thames Gateway offers an exciting opportunity to integrate economic growth with environmental enhancement. A network of varied and well managed greenspace needs to provide the landscape setting for residential and commercial areas, and this is why we are publishing *Greening the Gateway* at an early stage in the regeneration process.

This growth area has an impressive natural and historic heritage. Much of it is of national or international importance and of course this must be safeguarded. In addition, the quality of the local environment should be enhanced through the regeneration process, and the Government expects to see extremely high standards achieved in the design and implementation of new developments.

At its heart *Greening the Gateway* calls for the landscape to be regarded as the **functional green infrastructure** which is needed to create a positive sense of place, provide environmental protection for local communities and enhance the quality of life of those who live and work here. All open space is important, and we look forward to the emergence of a continuous linked network of varied landscapes, both within and between built-up areas. This greenspace network will range from the formal parks and gardens of the inner city to the wild coastal marshes and it will incorporate both public open space and privately owned land. It needs to be attractive and accessible, to reflect local character and to deliver wide ranging environmental benefits such as shelter, pollution filtration and flood protection.

The project will take 25 – 30 years to come to fruition. Circumstances are bound to change in that time and the precise impact of climate change is particularly difficult to predict. Furthermore, Thames Gateway extends into three government regions and includes nearly twenty different local authority areas. It would be inappropriate, therefore, to produce a rigid blueprint for the design and management of the greenspace network. Nevertheless, the core principles outlined here need to inform the regional spatial strategies, local development frameworks and the practical action of the many agencies and organisations that combine to shape environmental quality in this growth area.

We recognise that accessible greenspace has a central role to play in securing successful and sustainable economic and social regeneration and we want to see Thames Gateway become a world class model of sustainable development, with the living landscape at its heart.

1 Introduction

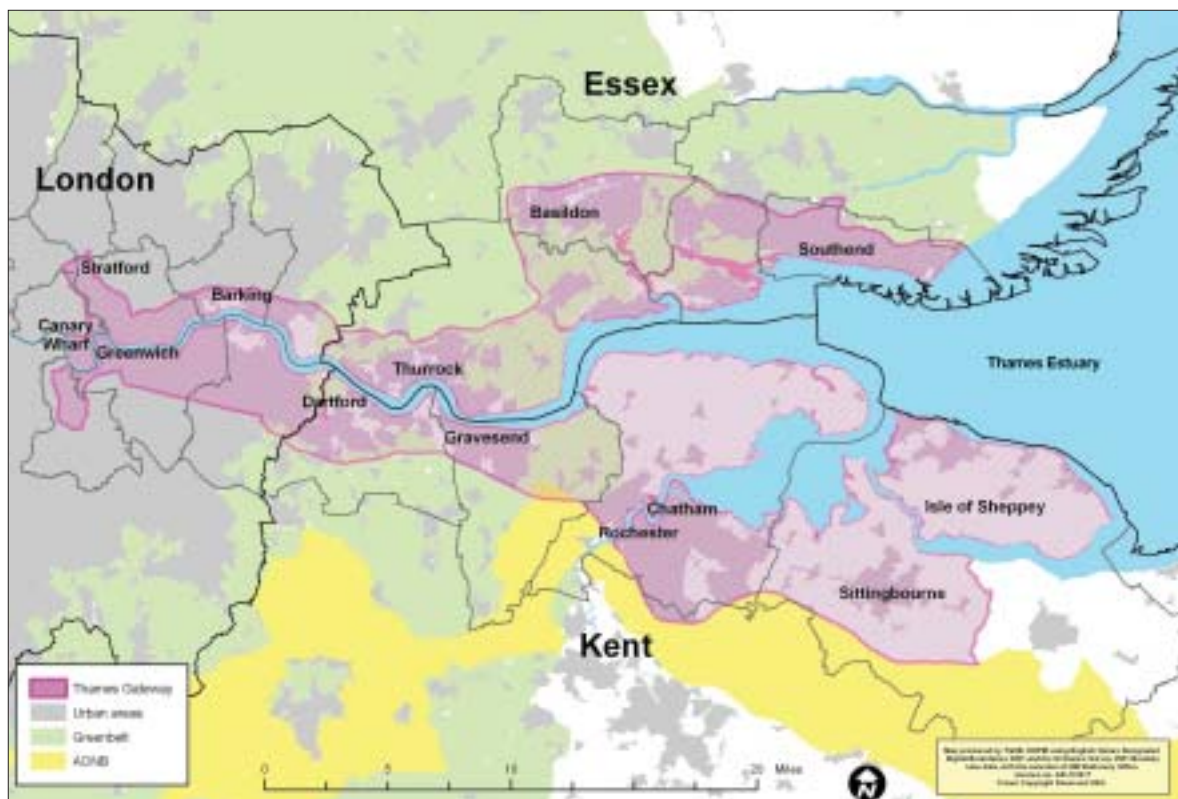
Purpose of strategy

1.1 This document sets out the Government's vision for the landscape of Thames Gateway and the positive contribution which the network of green open spaces should make to the quality of life for all those who live and work there.

1.2 It is a statement of intent which outlines our approach to the outdoor environment. The more detailed strategies and action plans of other organisations need to fit within it. It is not a spatial strategy and neither is it a prescription for land use on specific sites, but rather it is intended to be a clear indication of the way in which *Greening the Gateway* can help in delivering sustainable communities.

A diverse landscape

1.3 Thames Gateway extends from Canary Wharf in east London to Shoeburyness on the Essex coast and the Isle of Sheppey off the north Kent coast. It is a funnel-shaped area some 43 miles long and up to 20 miles wide and the dominant feature is the tidal estuary of the River Thames. The western end of the Gateway is heavily built up, whilst the outer estuary at the eastern margins contains some of



Thames Gateway

Graphic credit: ODPM

the most wild and remote landscape in England. A key aim of the strategy is to help ensure that this diversity and local distinctiveness is respected and reflected in the changes that take place.

Green spaces

1.4 The more rural areas of Thames Gateway are open and green but, even where it is at its most urban, there is still an extensive mosaic of different kinds of greenspace. This strategy aims to provide a framework for integrating the whole of this resource into the regeneration process. It applies to formal parks, the grounds of schools and hospitals, the landscapes around housing, the canal and rail corridors, woodlands, wetlands, inter-tidal areas and wilder landscapes such as the extensive tracts of re-vegetated post-industrial land and the wider rural countryside. Much of this greenspace is in public ownership, but the privately owned land on farms, business parks, development sites and domestic gardens also makes a vital contribution to the overall integrity of Thames Gateway's greenspace network.

1.5 Green spaces are very visible and this greatly affects the image of a place. They also have an enormous impact on the quality of life. Well designed and integrated greenspace improves environmental quality and provides opportunities for healthy exercise, sport and recreation. The Government recognises how important this will be to the success of the Thames Gateway growth area. We wish to encourage a holistic approach to the greenspace network in order to provide a modern, functional and cohesive **green infrastructure** which will enhance the new built development and moderate the immediate impact of the construction process on existing communities. We believe that this will help to make Thames Gateway a desirable and successful place for all of those who live and work there and a potential flagship of modern design. At the same time an attractive landscape will help to create a very favourable impression for the many people who pass through the region.

The built environment

1.6 The established built settlements reflect the long history of human habitation in the east Thames region. Archaeological remains confirm the occupation of the area for many thousands of years, and there are numerous historic buildings and structures as well as more modern landmarks such as the Thames Barrier.

1.7 The landscape of Thames Gateway has been widely exploited by industries such as mineral extraction, power generation, manufacturing and food processing. Much of the detritus of



The landscape of Thames Gateway is extremely diverse, ranging from the inner city to the wilder parts of the Thames estuary

development – waste tips, demolished buildings, abandoned mineral quarries, overhead power lines and pylons – detracts from the environment. This in turn tends to encourage fly-tipping and poor building maintenance. Degraded landscape quality often contributes to an overall impression of neglect and decline.

The natural heritage

1.8 The natural environment of Thames Gateway is remarkably rich. It is dominated by the tidal river itself and the inter-tidal mudflats are of international importance, particularly for overwintering birds. There are also a number of extensive grazing marshes, which are fragmented but still significant. Ancient woodland is an important feature in a few places, particularly on some of the higher ground and there are local pockets of heathland in some parts of the Gateway. Parks and gardens, street trees and naturally revegetated post-industrial land are especially important in some of the built-up areas and there is considerable scope for the various existing landscape elements to be retained, extended and enhanced within the context of substantial new built development.



ODPM

Safe and well-cared for footpaths through Thames Gateway's green spaces make it easy for people to enjoy the natural environment

2 Policy context

2.1 The Government recognises that quality of greenspace is fundamentally important, needs to be considered at a strategic level and must be thoroughly integrated into the regeneration process. This has been confirmed in a number of recent policy statements.

Sustainable communities

2.2 Our report, *Sustainable Communities; Building for the Future*, published in February 2003, recognised the challenge of ensuring that people in every community have a clean, safe, attractive environment in which they can take pride. In a recent survey, 85% of people acknowledged the relationship between the quality of the local environment and their quality of life.

2.3 Thames Gateway is the largest of four designated Government growth areas. The Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership, established in 2000, provides strategic direction. It is chaired by a Government minister and has representation from a number of Government departments. It also includes the three sub-regional partnerships of London, South Essex and North Kent, and these in turn include all of the local authorities. The Partnership has encouraged a strategic approach to environmental change in Thames Gateway and is strongly supportive of this greenspace strategy.

2.4 Our statement, *Creating Sustainable Communities: Making it Happen: Thames Gateway and the Growth Areas*, published in July 2003, indicated that this greenspace strategy would set the framework for our plans to promote liveability and a good quality of life within Thames Gateway.

Urban renaissance

2.5 Following the publication in 1999 of Lord Rogers of Riverside's Urban Task Force report *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, the Government's Urban White Paper in 2000 signalled a significant change in the approach to dealing with derelict urban land. The re-use of previously developed sites is now strongly encouraged, with a government target to see 60% of new homes built on this brownfield land. Furthermore, under Planning Policy Guidance Note 3, *Housing*, there is a commitment to increasing the density of new housing, as one way of relieving development pressure on greenfield land. This makes the quality of the public open spaces in any residential neighbourhood more important than ever.



Greenleaf Housing Awards

High quality housing landscapes are vital to the success of Thames Gateway. This is the greenspace closest to home

Liveability

2.6 The Urban Green Spaces Task Force, which reported to Government in 2001, emphasised the wide-ranging and multiple benefits of greenspace and the importance of taking a holistic approach to its management. In our report, *Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener*, published for the Urban Summit in 2002, we outlined our commitment to the creation of accessible networks of good quality parks and diverse green spaces in towns and cities. We have subsequently increased our funding to the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in order to establish a new unit. CABE Space is a national champion for public spaces, particularly emphasising the value of a strategic approach to urban green space.

2.7 Delivering the liveability agenda requires the integration of greenspace policy with other key areas of Government concern, such as neighbourhood renewal, crime prevention, urban renaissance, healthy living, life-long learning and social inclusion and we will promote the Gateway as a model of the ways in which greenspace can help to address these issues.

Recreation and access to greenspace

2.8 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*, published in 2002, emphasises the important contribution which public spaces make to people's quality of life and the role that they play in supporting broader Government objectives, such as urban renaissance, rural renewal, social inclusion, community cohesion, health and well-being and sustainable development.

2.9 Local authorities are required to undertake assessments of their existing and future open space needs and PPG 17 offers a typology for use in open space audits. Audits should consider both quantity and quality and they are a useful starting point for establishing effective greenspace strategies.

2.10 English Nature has set national targets for access to natural green space (ANGSt) for bringing wildlife closer to where people live and work. Ideally, no-one should live more than 300m from an area of natural greenspace. Biodiversity has an integral role to play in sustainable urban communities and this strategy calls for accessible natural areas which the public can enjoy.



ODPM

Thames Gateway has a surprising amount of existing high quality greenspace. This already plays a valuable role in the health and recreation of local people

2.11 The Countryside Agency has also stressed the need to improve access to greenspace, particularly at the rural/urban interface. Thames Gateway is important as an area for establishing models of good practice in this field and particularly for integrating greenspace into the regeneration and built development process.

Biodiversity

2.12 PPG9 Planning Policy Guidance Note 9, *Nature Conservation*, sets out the way in which the Government's policies for the conservation of our natural heritage should be reflected in land use planning. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development and to conserving the diversity of our wildlife.

2.13 "*Working with the Grain of Nature: a Biodiversity Strategy for England*", was launched in 2002 and seeks to ensure that biodiversity considerations become embedded in all main sectors of public policy. It sets out a five year programme to make the changes necessary to conserve and enhance biological diversity in England. Section 74 of the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000* commits us to furthering the conservation of the habitats and species considered to be of principal importance. It also sets out a series of actions that will be taken by the Government and its partners to make biodiversity a fundamental consideration when developing policy on sustainable communities, urban greenspace and the built environment.

2.14 The Regional Biodiversity Forums for London, the East of England and South-east England cover the Gateway area. They provide the advice and information needed for the co-ordination and implementation of large scale projects which use natural greenspace to provide economic, social and biodiversity benefits for local communities. The Forums work closely with the Gateway's network of biodiversity partnerships. These provide delivery mechanisms at the very local level for involving communities in the enhancement of urban green space.

2.15 The Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), of which there are almost 40 in the Thames Gateway, provide the underlying framework for nature conservation in the growth area. These sites are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981*, and all public bodies have a general duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the special features in a SSSI wherever they exercise their functions, from the formulation of plans to the carrying out of operations. The Act also sets out specific procedures to be followed where a public body intends to carry out operations, or grant permissions for operations, which may risk damaging the particular features of a SSSI.



Chris Baines

Wildlife is a vital feature of Thames Gateway – from inner city gardens to wild coastal nature reserves

2.16 There are two Special Protection Areas/Ramsar sites within the Thames Gateway area (designated under the *Birds Directive, 1979*). These designations overlay the national SSSI designations and enjoy the additional protection afforded by *The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations, 1994*. No plan or project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) which will have an adverse effect on the integrity of the site may proceed unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest and no alternative solutions can be found. In such exceptional circumstances, the overall coherence of the European site network must be maintained by securing compensatory measures.



RSPB

The Thames has a major influence on wildlife in the Gateway. For instance, millions of migratory birds depend on the tidal estuary and its surrounding landscapes

2.17 Many additional sites are designated for their wildlife value at a local level. These non-statutory local sites are afforded significant protection by local planning policies. Individually, they may have a status which is relatively lower than that of the nationally designated sites, but collectively, these sites play a vital role in conserving wildlife and geological features. They complement the national and international sites and help to maintain the overall integrity of the landscape.

2.18 Many of the most significant wildlife sites in Thames Gateway lie along the shores of the tidal estuary. Much of this habitat has been damaged in the past, but the Environment Agency and others have shown that the prospects for biodiversity can be enhanced where new waterside developments are handled imaginatively and when flood defences need to be upgraded. Every effort must be made to continue this exemplary work as the pressure for new development inevitably increases. The tidal Thames already serves as a model for sustainable estuary management and this will be encouraged as a positive contribution to national and international nature conservation and as a source of pride for communities in Thames Gateway.

Trees, woods and forestry

2.19 The Government's forestry strategy, *A New Focus for England's Woodlands*, recognises the multifunctional benefits which society derives from trees and woodland and outlines the contribution which forestry can make to economic regeneration, rural development, recreation and access, tourism, environment and conservation. This national strategy is being expressed through Regional Forestry Frameworks, and those being developed for the South-east and London as well as the recently completed Framework for East of England are complementary to this Thames Gateway greenspace strategy.

2.20 There is particular relevance to Thames Gateway in the Government's commitment to promoting the role of woodland in the restoration of former industrial land and in the encouragement of new urban forestry initiatives which can maximise benefits by working on a bold scale and delivering through partnership.

Sustainable water management

2.21 The Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG 9) and the Planning Policy Guidance Note 25, *Development and Flood Risk* make specific mention of sustainable drainage systems and their benefit in delivering "soft" drainage and storm water management solutions for development schemes. PPG 25 also makes it clear that local authorities and developers should work closely with the Environment Agency in order to develop practical surface water management solutions. Sustainable urban drainage relies heavily for its effectiveness on the potential absorbency and water storage capacity of the green spaces in and around built development.

2.22 The Government is committed to delivering the European Water Framework Directive by 2015. This calls for an integrated approach to whole river catchment management and a more ecological approach to such issues as water conservation and the treatment of dispersed pollution. The greenspace of the Thames Gateway has a role to play in addressing these requirements.

Regional planning context

2.23 The statutory Green Belt has helped to protect a substantial amount of undeveloped open space at the urban/rural fringe. However, this land is subject to ongoing pressure and improved management for conservation and for public access is an important priority for the Thames Gateway.

2.24 The Thames Gateway Planning Framework (RPG 9a), issued in 1995, emphasises the significance of the environment of Thames Gateway to its potential as a regeneration zone. It recognises the potential to make better use of existing assets and to create new landscape features which can deliver wide ranging public benefit.

2.25 The area is well endowed with designated nature conservation sites and all public bodies have a statutory duty to conserve and enhance these. RPG9a particularly mentions the opportunity to integrate habitat creation into new development and emphasises the way in which environmental flagship projects can benefit the wider profile of Thames Gateway. It also endorses the concept of local and regional greening initiatives, such as structural planting of transport



Absorbent greenspace has a very useful role to play in the management of rainwater run-off. With care, flood protection and pollution filtration can be delivered through landscapes that are popular and rich in wildlife

corridors and the *Green Grid*, which aims to connect communities to a comprehensive network of existing and new green spaces and to link these to the river frontage.

2.26 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9), published in 2001, emphasises the importance of increasing the quality of life by making urban areas more attractive. It recognises the contribution which trees, other planting and open space can make and the unique opportunities which the Thames Gateway growth area offers.

The London Plan

2.27 The London Plan has been produced by the Greater London Authority and is intended to be the spatial development strategy for Greater London. It provides an integrated social, economic and environmental framework for the future development of the city over the next 15 to 20 years and it helps to put other strategies, such as transport, energy, air quality and biodiversity into a wider and more cohesive context.

2.28 The London Plan emphasises the importance to Londoners of maintaining a network of accessible open spaces. It recognises the importance of Metropolitan Open Land and of the Green Belt and it calls for a strategic framework of greenspace of varying scale and character. There is a strong commitment to biodiversity, the protection of existing open space and the integration of greenspace with the *blue ribbon* network of improved river corridors.

2.29 The Thames Gateway growth area is central to the regeneration of east London. Most importantly, there is a clear intention that the scale and quality of economic, social and environmental regeneration achieved over the coming years in Thames Gateway will secure London's reputation as a model of sustainable development which can influence other major cities all around the world.

Local Development Frameworks

2.30 Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), proposed in the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill*, will be produced by all local councils. These will shape future land use policies and it is therefore important that they take full account of this greenspace strategy.

Footnote At time of going to press, the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill* was going through the House of Lords.



Phil Riley

A generous scale of greenspace provision is already recognised in the London Plan as critical to the quality of life

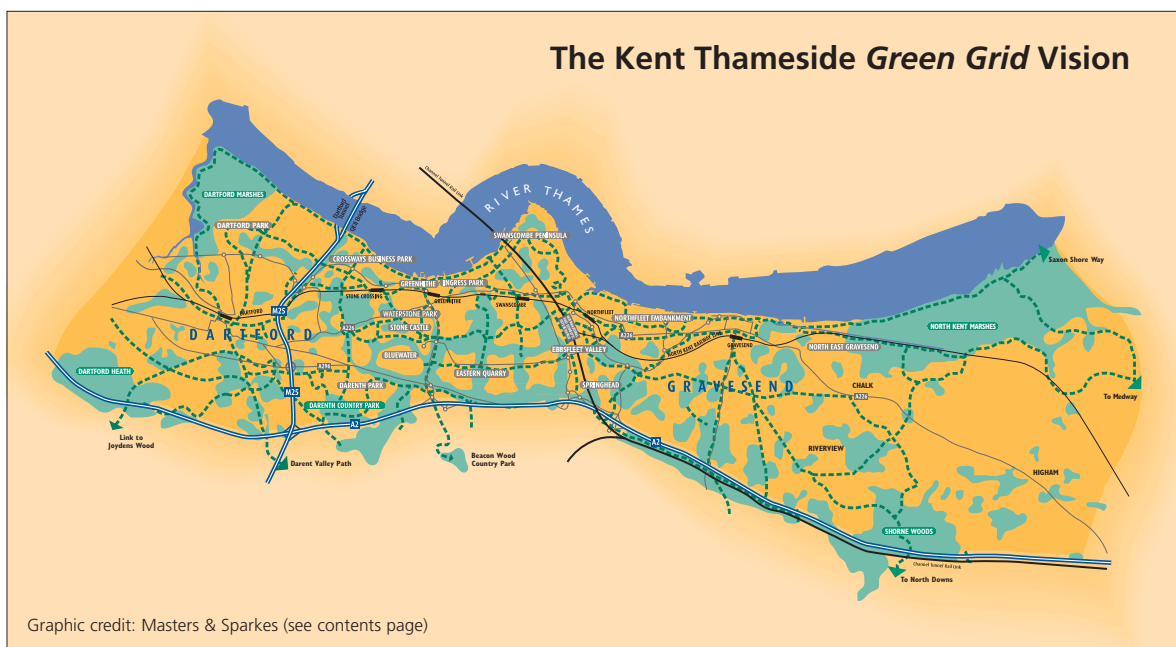
3 Operational context

Existing greening initiatives

3.1 A wide range of practical greening initiatives are already under way across Thames Gateway. Their common theme is the need to take an holistic approach to the green environment and to strengthen the overall integrity of the landscape by forging a more complete network of linked sites and by emphasising the strength and diversity of the existing natural and cultural heritage of the region. One function of the greenspace strategy for Thames Gateway is to provide an overarching context for the many existing initiatives and to provide a supportive framework for regional and local initiatives such as those described below.

3.2 In east London, south Essex and north Kent a collaborative approach to existing and potential greenspace has been developed by partnerships of local authorities and others, embracing the concept of *Green Grid*. The precise approach varies from place to place, but in each case *Green Grid* emphasises the importance of physically linking together parcels of greenspace. In addition, *Green Grid* pays particular attention to the practical environmental, economic and social benefits which both urban and rural greenspace can deliver, and it serves to champion the need for increased landscape integrity to all its supporting partners. A complementary proposal, *Green Arc*, is being developed for the green belt of north-east London. This is intended to link the *Green Grid* initiatives in Thames Gateway with the green infrastructure proposed for the London – Stansted – Cambridge growth area.

A continuous network of linked and accessible greenspace is already being developed through north Kent's *Green Grid* initiative. A similar approach is now being developed in south Essex and east London





Thames Chase

Thames Chase is one of several initiatives which are already enhancing the landscapes of Thames Gateway by involving the community in tree and woodland planting

3.3 The Thames Chase Community Forest is already well established across 40 square miles of south Essex and east London. It has been developing since 1990 and is increasing the proportion of woodland cover on the outskirts of urban areas, whilst at the same time involving large numbers of people in the process. Thames Chase is an initiative directly supported by both central and local government and was one of the first three Community Forests to be established in England by the Countryside Agency and the Forestry Commission.

3.4 The *Green Gateway* urban forestry initiative covers Thames Gateway London. It places strong emphasis on the contribution which trees, woods and urban greenspace can make to sustainable development in heavily populated areas. After preliminary development by the National Urban Forestry Unit and a range of other partners, Groundwork has now made *Green Gateway* a major theme of its delivery programme in east London.

3.5 The *Green Chain* was first established in south-east London in the late 1970s. It now has over 40 miles of signposted footpaths linking nearly 300 public open spaces in the south London boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich.

3.6 The Government's *Living Spaces* scheme, launched in 2003 and managed jointly by Groundwork and Green Space, now provides community groups with grants and project advice to help them transform their local spaces.

3.7 Groundwork has been given additional resources in order to expand its network of trusts and to develop its ability to link local activity into strategic programmes. The majority of Thames Gateway now enjoys the benefit of access to their community environmental expertise. Groundwork is one of the organisations which can provide professional support for community development and capacity building, environmental education, training and employment initiatives.

3.8 The Environment Agency study, *Planning for Flood Risk Management in the Thames Estuary*, examines the requirements for future flood protection throughout the estuary. It will explore the opportunities for restoring and creating significant areas of new estuarine habitat as a consequence of future investment in flood defence.

3.9 Urban parks and other communal green spaces across the whole of London are now achieving a higher profile, due to the establishment of a London Parks and Green Spaces Forum. Many of

them are enjoying an injection of new resources through the Heritage Lottery Fund's Urban Parks Programme and some, such as Thames Barrier Park in the London Borough of Newham, have won particular acclaim for their innovative design.

3.10 CABE Space has established an advisory service, funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, in order to assist local authorities to develop greenspace strategies. 30 such initiatives have been approved in the first year of operation, and six of these are within Thames Gateway (Greenwich, Barking & Dagenham, Medway, Southend, Thurrock and the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership).

3.11 There are also a large number of individual examples of good environmental practice already being carried out by organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts, the Woodland Trust, Forest Enterprise, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, BTCV and, of course, the Gateway's local authorities.

Greenwich Park is one of the finest in England. Urban parks such as this are a great asset to Thames Gateway, as are the mature gardens and tree lined streets that so often surround them



Cities Revealed® (see contents page)

The Olympic bid

3.12 London's bid for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games is focused on the Lower Lea Valley in the Thames Gateway and provides a catalyst for the regeneration of the Lower Lea and the wider growth area. The Lower Lea Valley masterplan builds on existing plans for the area to provide a vision and a physical strategy for its long-term regeneration, with or without the 2012 Games.

3.13 Regeneration of the Lower Lea, involving new homes, jobs and open spaces, is a central objective. Extending the Lea Valley Regional Park southwards to the Thames is a core element of the plan. The Park will be developed as a series of neighbourhood parks and activity hubs at key points running from north to south along the River Lea. The landscape strategy has been developed around the need to manage the local waterway systems of the River Lea and Bow Back Rivers, especially the risk of fluvial and tidal flooding, and to protect and enhance ecological and wildlife habitats.

4 Functional green infrastructure

4.1 The green spaces within and around built developments should be considered as an integral part of the design and development process and treated at a scale which is sufficiently bold to provide ecological continuity and physical shelter. We will encourage local authorities, developers and others to regard the landscape as **functional green infrastructure**, and to manage it as vital to sustainable development in the Thames Gateway. Green spaces fulfil a range of practical roles which can enhance the quality of urban living in a number of important ways.

Landscape character/heritage

4.2 Although the tidal estuary may be the dominant landscape feature of Thames Gateway, the whole region is remarkably diverse and this is partly reflected in the existing buildings. Concrete, clay and flint are just three of the distinctive building materials which echo the underlying geology and which helped to reinforce local distinctiveness in the existing settlements.

4.3 The landscape itself also varies a great deal and ranges from the municipal parks, tree-lined avenues and mature gardens of the historic towns and villages to the neglected and naturally revegetated quarries, mineral workings and other post-industrial derelict land; from the arable farmland of rural Kent and Essex to the grazing marshes of the coastal zone; and from the modern landscapes of shopping centres, hospitals and colleges to the ancient woodland, heathland and parkland which still survives on the sloping margins of the floodplain.

4.4 The landscape treatment within new developments needs to reflect and reinforce local variations in the character of Thames Gateway. This will help to maintain a human scale within each distinct part of the growth area and should apply to constructed elements of the landscape such as walls and paths, furnishing and fencing, as well as to the vegetation.

Setting for development

4.5 Whilst some parts of Thames Gateway have mature parks and well treed open spaces, others do not. Since it is important to provide all new residential and commercial communities with attractive surroundings, new planting should be designed to complement existing elements of significant greenspace. Wherever possible a green framework, including trees and woodland, should be



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As Thames Gateway undergoes economic regeneration, long established heritage sites must be respected and carefully integrated into the evolving landscapes

established well ahead of construction, in order to give new vegetation a head start. This will help to lessen the impact of new building on those who already live and work in the Gateway, it will reduce the visual impact of vacant open space and it will help to ensure that new communities move into relatively well established green surroundings.



English Partnerships

Greenwich Peninsula

This former brownfield site was acquired by English Partnerships in 1997 and the masterplan allocated around 15% (20 ha) of the Greenwich Peninsula for public open spaces. Three distinctive parks (Central, Southern and Ecology) now provide a natural backdrop to the residential development and footpaths and cycleways provide alternative means of access across the Peninsula and to the riverside walkways.

The Ecology Park, pictured here, contains open freshwater, marshland, meadow and woodland habitats. The park is very popular and in a recent survey, 54% of residents cited it as an influence in their decision to purchase a property at Greenwich Millennium Village. The park is now managed by the Trust for Urban Ecology (TRUE) on behalf of English Partnerships. TRUE also organises open days, volunteer workshops and activities for residents.

4.6 Much of the structural planting can be established using inexpensive techniques which will provide rapid impact and quickly begin to create a unifying landscape structure. This basic green framework can later be enriched with more elaborate landscape planting.

Water resource management

4.7 Thames Gateway lies in a low rainfall area, with a high and increasing level of water consumption. Much of the development zone lies in the floodplain of the Thames, where flood defences incorporate high embankments and the Thames Barrier. As this defence system is gradually renovated and refined there will be scope to accommodate more useful greenspace. Setting the flood defence walls and embankments back from the river's edge offers opportunities for more imaginative landscape treatment which can combine recreational access with improved nature conservation, whilst at the same time improving the effectiveness of the flood protection itself.

4.8 A sustainable approach to surface water management will be central to the success of Thames Gateway and the region's greenspace network can contribute in two key ways.

4.9 Firstly, new planting needs to be designed and managed with water conservation as a priority. This will mean employing an ecological approach to planting and also adopting water-efficient methods of establishment and maintenance, including the use of mulches in new planting and the recycling of waste water for irrigation.

4.10 Secondly, the Environment Agency and others will continue to promote *sustainable urban drainage schemes (SUDS)* wherever practicable. Despite the protection against flooding from the tidal Thames, there is still understandable concern about the risk from the streams and rivers which flow down to the estuary, and here the landscape itself has a positive role to play. The tree canopy can reduce the rate at which rain water reaches the ground. The sponginess of the soft green landscape is able to absorb and retain water. Reed beds and shallow ponds can act as temporary reservoirs following rainstorms and they can also help to filter dispersed pollutants and clean the water that drains off roads, roofs, car parks and agricultural land.

4.11 Numerous streams and rivers flow through the development zones, and many of them have already been identified within the *Blue Ribbon* initiative. These should also be acknowledged as key linear elements in the greenspace network. The land which lies alongside water courses should be adapted wherever possible to serve as either permanent or occasional functional wetlands within sustainable urban drainage schemes and *blue belt* flood protection zones. This is critically important to the overall effectiveness of the Gateway-wide flood defence strategy and these waterside open spaces should be integrated into the planning of new built developments, whilst at the same time being used to enhance the greenspace network.

4.12 Temporarily vacant land in urban areas frequently contributes by default to surface water management. Where such sites are compacted, they tend to become temporary shallow wetlands after rainstorms, whilst more porous areas serve as soak-aways.



Environment Agency

Effective flood defence relies in part on giving the river space to expand into the adjacent landscape. The Environment Agency has been working with others to establish a number of successful demonstrations of this approach beside the Thames estuary



Tilfen Land

Gallions Reach Urban Village

This innovative scheme which involves private and social housing combines the principles of environmentally sound construction and sustainable urban drainage with the protection and enhancement of habitats for wildlife and the provision of educational and recreational facilities.

The development of Gallions Reach Urban Village by Tilfen Land involved the reclamation of the western part of the former Woolwich Arsenal. This brownfield site was an important munitions factory until its closure in 1967 but, despite extensive contamination, the site had since developed considerable nature conservation interest. Much of this has been retained. Heavy contamination required innovative remediation techniques. Contaminated material has been retained on site, rather than being transported elsewhere and a series of wetland habitats are now used to filter polluted surface water run-off.

The new Gallions Canal has been constructed in several sections alongside the newly built homes and linked to the Arsenal's historic waterways. As an alternative to the usual concrete channel, more natural embankments have been constructed using geotextiles, rock gabions and recycled soils, in order to create artificial habitats, specifically for water voles.

4.13 In the event of flooding, it is preferable for surface water to be contained within discrete areas of the landscape. As the network of green routes and other ribbons of structural planting are established across Thames Gateway, it should be possible to deliver a double environmental benefit. If planting areas can be raised as ridges above the predicted floodwater level, then this web of raised and vegetated land can serve as a network of containment bunds and also act as dry access routes in the event of flooding, as recommended in PPG 25, *Development and Flood Risk*.



Mathew Frith

4.14 Another opportunity to promote sustainable water resource management arises through the landscaping of roofs on new development. Whilst the tradition of green roofs is well established overseas, they are relatively uncommon in Britain. In addition to their visual interest, they have the advantage of retaining up to 75% of rainwater run-off in the short term and even when the retained rainwater is slowly released, as much as 15-20% remains within the vegetation and soils of the green roof.

Green roofs are both attractive and functional. They help to insulate the building and slow down the rate of rainwater run-off whilst providing a green and pleasant outlook for neighbours

Recreation

4.15 A safe and well cared-for network of linked greenspace will help to make the outdoors accessible and more enjoyable for many more people. This should extend from the urban centres to the wider countryside, and include footpaths, cycleways and public transport connections. This provision is especially important for those who are unable to travel easily by car, and it should be a feature of both residential and working neighbourhoods. The existing Rights of Way network and, in particular, the paths alongside rivers and canals already provide a popular link between towns and the rural countryside. In all parts of the Gateway there should be ample opportunity to choose from a wide range of recreational activities.

Ingrebourne Valley, Thames Chase

In the early 1990s, Thames Chase Community Forest began work with the quarry products company, Tarmac, to restore the East London Quarry for recreational use. Footpath links were established to nearby Rainham and to Hornchurch Country Park – another land reclamation scheme developed by the London Borough of Havering on a former landfill site which had previously been RAF Hornchurch.

The woodland has now been linked by footpaths and cycleways to Upminster Bridge underground station, artists have worked with local people to design seats and signs, the Forestry Commission has added further extensive areas of woodland and the mosaic of 160ha of contrasting green spaces is proving increasingly popular with a wide cross section of the public.



ODPM

4.16 As the population increases, outdoor sports provision must keep pace, and some formal organisation and coaching provision will help to maximise the public's involvement in sport. Where this is delivered at grass roots level it can help to build social cohesion. However, more informal recreational space is equally important. This is where such popular activities as angling, bird-watching, community gardening and dog-walking can take place in safe and stimulating surroundings, providing healthy exercise for a far wider cross section of the population. Local authorities will also be encouraged to follow the Government's good practice guidance on developing accessible play spaces.

Health/fitness/well-being

4.17 Preventative health care is one of the strongest arguments of all for adopting a bold approach to greenspace planning and implementation throughout the Thames Gateway and for devoting appropriate resources to its long term management.



Chris Baines

Access to a safe and attractive green environment brings considerable health benefits. Just a few minutes of leafy relaxation helps to lower stress

4.18 Pulse rate and muscle tension are two clinical measures of stress and both have been shown to reduce significantly after as little as three minutes in natural green surroundings. Stress is a very major factor in the incidence of a wide range of diseases and it also contributes substantially to violent anti-social behaviour, family breakdown and time lost from work. Therefore we recognise that investment in accessible greenspace makes a critically important contribution to healthy living and represents surprisingly good economic value.

4.19 Practical involvement with the planting and care of the landscape is known to be very therapeutic and we will encourage specialist organisations such as Thrive, the Sensory Trust and local day-care centres to maximise the benefit which people with sensory and other disabilities are able to derive from the landscape.

4.20 Hospital grounds, school grounds and the gardens around retirement and sheltered housing all have a particularly important role to play in enriching lives and encouraging a sense of health and well-being. We encourage specialist organisations, government agencies and health trusts to focus their efforts in Thames Gateway in order to establish the region as a model of best practice in the integration of accessible greenspace and healthy urban living.



Chris Baines

Allotments and domestic gardens offer the healthy combination of fresh home-grown food, gentle exercise and landscape that changes dramatically through the seasons

4.21 Kent is known throughout the world as the Garden of England, but relatively little fresh food is currently grown within Thames Gateway. Allotments, community gardens, urban farms, school orchards, commercial smallholdings and market gardens can all contribute to the greenspace network and offer ways for local people to have more direct contact with a supply of healthy food. The promotion of farmers' and fishermen's markets and the identification of local produce on restaurant menus can also help to strengthen the links between the highly developed inner urban areas and the more rural outer fringes of Thames Gateway.

4.22 The value of the greenspace network is increasingly being promoted amongst health professionals. The pollution filtering role of vegetation has significant relevance for such health issues as asthma, whilst moderate exercise in green surroundings is now also recognised for the positive contribution that it makes to healthy living. Preventative health care is one of the strongest arguments of all for adopting a bold approach to greenspace planning and implementation throughout the Thames Gateway and for devoting appropriate resources to securing its long term management.

Walking the Way to Health

Walking the Way to Health (WHI) is an initiative which aims to get more people to walk in their local neighbourhoods. WHI offers information, support and encouragement to complete beginners, existing walkers and health and leisure professionals. The initiative is spearheaded by the Countryside Agency and the British Heart Foundation with support from the New Opportunities Fund and Kia Motors and regular health walks are already taking place in Barking & Dagenham.

Health experts describe walking as 'almost perfect exercise', since it requires no equipment or expense and is the ideal way for most people to become more active. Currently, only three out of every ten people in this country are physically active enough to benefit their health.

Harrogate District WHI scheme/Ackrilles Newspaper



Accessible wildlife

4.23 Many people have great enthusiasm for nature close to home, as support for such organisations as the RSPB, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, WWF UK and the Wildlife Trusts clearly shows. New built development and an expanding population will inevitably put extra pressure on the region's existing wildlife habitats, so full and proper account must be taken of the legal requirement to protect designated sites and protected species. In addition, the pressure can be countered by making nature conservation, habitat creation, environmental education and public enjoyment of wildlife key features of the greenspace strategy.

4.24 Thames Gateway has the potential to become a world class demonstration of success in integrating nature conservation into new built development. We will encourage the relevant government agencies and non-governmental organisations to make existing wild places in Thames Gateway accessible and enjoyable for the general public, whilst at the same time seeking to maximise ecological integrity.

4.25 With so much inevitable disruption to the landscape during development, it is important that the impact on wildlife is closely monitored. This offers an ideal opportunity for non-governmental organisations and government agencies to work in partnership with the general public to provide continual monitoring of wildlife, to minimise any negative effect, and to ensure that lessons learned are used to inform subsequent design and implementation.

4.26 Some wild species are particularly good indicators of environmental quality for humans which is why, for instance, the song thrush and the skylark have been identified as two of the Government's sustainability indicators. The status of such indicator species will be used as one measure of the growth area's success.



RSPB

London Riverside Conservation Park

An internationally significant conservation park is being developed at London Riverside in the heart of Thames Gateway. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is leading a partnership which involves London Borough of Havering, Thurrock Unitary Authority, Cleanaway Ltd, the Port of London Authority, English Nature and the Environment Agency.

Rainham and Aveley Marshes are grazed by cattle in summer. In the winter the grasslands flood and this provides winter feeding habitat for spectacular flocks of migratory wild birds – ducks, swans, geese and waders. The planned works, which include the restoration of an adjacent large landfill site, will create a flagship ecological and leisure resource within reach of millions of people. £2 million of government support has already been committed.

Increased biodiversity

4.27 The tidal Thames has been transformed in recent years and is now amongst the world's cleanest urban estuaries. It is vitally important to continue this success. Therefore land management practices which are employed in the greenspace of Thames Gateway should aim to further minimise any pollution run-off from the land into rivers and the sea.

4.28 At the eastern end of Thames Gateway, the grazing marshes and coastal landscapes of Kent and Essex are of great international significance for wildlife. Much of this landscape is already legally designated and is being well managed for nature conservation.

4.29 The western end of the Gateway is already built up, but the network of established greenspace in urban areas such as this is increasingly acknowledged to be of great significance to wildlife. The domestic gardens, parks and public open spaces and the unofficial countryside of railway land, canal and river corridors and other incidental space combine to form an ecosystem of considerable complexity.

4.30 Thames Gateway contains extensive areas of post-industrial brownfield land and much of this will be redeveloped over the next few years. It is important to acknowledge its existing ecological and social importance, to protect it prior to any eventual development, and to provide replacement habitat where possible as a part of new built development.

4.31 A comprehensive network of ecologically designed and managed green spaces will help to make Thames Gateway an even richer region for wildlife. We will encourage government agencies and others to promote the Thames Gateway as a model of best practice in the integration of wildlife and economic regeneration.

4.32 Even relatively uncommon species can be accommodated within regeneration areas. The nightingale can benefit from an increase in urban woodland in south-east England, the green woodpecker will make use of feeding opportunities on new species-rich grassland which is close to existing mature trees, peregrine falcons are already nesting on new buildings and water voles and great crested newts should benefit as urban streams and canals are revitalised through their integration into sustainable urban drainage.

Black redstart

The black redstart is a relative of the robin, and in the UK it is an even rarer breeding species than the golden eagle. Its favoured breeding habitat includes derelict urban sites and brownfield land, but in recent years, conservationists have succeeded in recreating suitable habitat on the roofs of new commercial and industrial buildings in east London. These so-called *brown roofs* are of benefit to black redstarts and other wild species, but in addition they increase the energy efficiency of the building and slow down the rate of rainwater run-off.



Derek Brown

Focus for social inclusion

4.33 People of all ages, abilities and skill levels can enjoy caring for greenspace close to home. Whilst we recognise that there are often different requirements within a community, something as simple as helping to grow and plant trees in the neighbourhood offers a great sense of achievement. The resulting increased sense of ownership and pride of place can do much to build community spirit. It can provide a powerful mechanism for building links within and between communities, whilst at the same time it almost always helps to ensure successful establishment and to protect investment in the landscape.

4.34 Organisations such as Groundwork, BTCV and Community Service Volunteers are effective facilitators of local community involvement. We will encourage them to provide opportunities for as many people as possible in the Gateway to enjoy and enhance the greenspace network where they live and work.



Green Gateway

Trees for Thamesmead

Trees for Thamesmead is a key project within the *Green Gateway* urban forestry initiative. The project has brought together the resources of Bexley and Greenwich Councils with those of the Greater London Authority, Gallions Housing Association, the National Urban Forestry Unit, Groundwork and the Greenwich Environment Forum. Together they have identified opportunities for site enhancement and raised significant funds from a variety of sources.

There has been strong community support for bringing land into more beneficial use and 18ha of trees and small woodlands have been planted over a two year period. More than 7000 people have been directly involved in completing 25 different projects in school grounds, public parks and housing neighbourhoods.

4.35 Special interest groups can play a valuable role in helping to bring the greenspace network to life. Local naturalists groups and bird clubs, allotment societies, youth organisations, play groups and many others can help to facilitate the link between greenspace and the community, and so make life in Thames Gateway more interesting and fulfilling. At the neighbourhood level, the skills, enthusiasm and the specialist knowledge of gardeners, naturalists, and youth leaders will also help to increase the scope for wider community involvement, and this can be one means by which different sectors of society can form closer links – the young and the old, the able-bodied and those with disabilities, long established residents and new arrivals.

4.36 There are sources of finance from charitable trusts, landfill and aggregate tax credits and the National Lottery which are more accessible to those in the voluntary and community sector, and which can be used to complement the resources of private businesses and of central and local government. Additionally, community groups can apply to the Government's *Living Spaces* scheme to improve their local green spaces.

Education and training

4.37 The local landscape has a valuable role to play in school education and we will encourage educational charities, local authorities, ranger services and others to promote even greater use of parks, nature reserves and other green spaces as outdoor class rooms, studios and laboratories.

4.38 There is also a growing recognition that people with practical skills are in increasingly short supply and that there is a considerable training need in the field of horticulture, landscape construction, play leadership, etc. We will encourage government agencies, NGOs and training and education institutions to focus their expertise and resources in Thames Gateway and to use the development process and the diverse resources within the greenspace network to establish models of best practice in skill-building.

4.39 In the spirit of life-long learning, it is important for the older generation to pass on their specialist knowledge in such fields as gardening and natural history to young people. We will encourage local authorities and NGOs to identify, promote and replicate good examples of inter-generational partnerships linked to greenspace management.

Trees for London training programme

The charity Trees for London offers courses in landscape management and arboriculture, which enable successful trainees to gain employment in grounds maintenance or tree surgery. This scheme is run in conjunction with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the London Development Agency and the Isle of Dogs Community Foundation.

Trainees in landscape gain experience and skills in ground preparation and planting, grass and machinery maintenance, paving and fencing and health and safety and may attain NVQ Level 1 or 2. Trainees in arboriculture learn about tree climbing and aerial rescue, operation and maintenance of chainsaws, health and safety and may attain the National Proficiency test in chain saw and climbing. Up to 30 people are trained each year, with many already going on to relevant employment within Thames Gateway.



Trees for London

Employment

4.40 Given the scale of greenspace creation and ongoing management which is envisaged in Thames Gateway, there will be a wide range of employment opportunities within local authorities and the government sector and also in the commercial nursery, landscape contracting and grounds maintenance industries and in garden products retailing.

4.41 Many of the tens of thousands of new homes which are to be built in Thames Gateway will have gardens. Their landscaping and long term care will again generate employment opportunities, through garden centres and DIY stores as well as landscape contracting companies.

4.42 There is potential for local employment in the fields of outdoor environmental education, play leadership, horticultural therapy, sport supervision and countryside interpretation. Some elements of the greenspace network may also produce commercial crops of timber, wood fuel and other wood products, whilst green waste recycling is making an increasingly important economic contribution to sustainable development.

Shelter

4.43 The Thames estuary is exposed to easterly winds from the English Channel and beyond, so shelter will be particularly welcome in Thames Gateway and green spaces have a critical role to play. Vegetation has the capacity to slow down wind speed and shelter is important if people are to enjoy being out of doors. If a neighbourhood is sheltered by trees and shrubs, then people are also more likely to walk or cycle instead of driving. In addition, it is estimated that a sheltering belt of urban woodland can reduce the energy used for winter heating and summer cooling in adjacent buildings by up to 10%. In particularly exposed areas, it will be important to conserve existing vegetation and to establish pioneer species of tough trees and shrubs as a first stage in any greening programme, since background shelter increases the scope for growing more ornamental plants in parks and domestic gardens.

Improved air quality

4.44 Vegetation can improve air quality by filtering out pollution and this is particularly relevant in the more urban parts of Thames Gateway, where traffic pollution is likely to be greatest. Leaves and twigs trap dust and sooty particles, but they are also able to absorb some of the health-threatening sulphurous and nitrous gases which result from the burning of fossil fuels. The shade from trees reduces



National Urban Forestry Unit

Urban greening helps to improve the environment for people. Trees can filter out air pollution and provide energy saving shelter

the level of ozone production by minimising the chemical reaction between transport-related emissions and sunlight. Air quality is also improved in hot summer weather where urban vegetation is present on a scale bold enough to cool local air temperature, increase humidity and reduce the heat-island effect. All these improvements to air quality are now increasingly acknowledged as beneficial to public health in general and a number of significant chronic diseases in particular.

Waste management

4.45 The greenspace network will have an impact on waste management in the sub-region. Vegetation has a tendency to trap wind-blown litter and it will be important for this aspect of maintenance to be adequately accounted for in the budgeting for new greenspace provision.

4.46 The waste which arises from the vegetation itself – autumn leaves, grass clippings and prunings – is potentially a valuable resource. We will encourage the establishment of chipping, composting and recycling facilities for the green waste from the public landscape and from domestic gardens and commercial premises across the region, as this will enable the resulting recycled compost to be used in new landscape planting.

4.47 It is possible to use locally-made artificial soils which combine composted green waste with such materials as quarry waste, demolition aggregates and shredded car tyres to create a suitable growing medium for urban forestry. We will particularly encourage demonstrations of this example of integrated waste management within the Gateway.

Green routes

4.48 The Thames Gateway is already criss-crossed by navigable waterways, roads and railway lines, and more transport routes will be added. Much of the incidental land associated with such linear routes tends to be green. It is relatively undisturbed and serves as an ecologically diverse linear “sanctuary” for wildlife. Roadside avenues contribute to the greenspace network in a more formal way.

4.49 Pedestrian routes and cycle ways are generally most popular where they follow green, attractive, sheltered and safe routes. The greenspace network should incorporate well signed and well maintained motor-free routes which link schools, shops and housing to areas of more substantial green open space. Where these green routes are well managed and served by school route supervision and



ODPM

Planning the greenspace network of Thames Gateway at a strategic scale will help to ensure that there are safe green routes linking home, work and play

rapid response waste removal, then they can make a valuable contribution to sustainability in Thames Gateway. The Thames-side long distance footpath developed by the Countryside Agency and others is one valuable example of the role that such elements can play in linking landscapes together.



Southend Borough Council

Walking Bus, Southend

The idea of the *Walking Bus* is to enable children to walk safely to school. Each bus includes at least two parent volunteers, acting as “driver” and “conductor” and the children pick up passengers at predetermined “bus stops” along the way.

Southend Borough Council introduced *Walking Buses* in 1999 and by the end of 2003 were 12 of them in operation within the town. The success of the initiative has also encouraged other local authorities to see the schemes in action and establish *Walking Buses* of their own.

The *Walking Bus* ensures regular daily exercise for those involved and also provides plenty of opportunity for social interaction among the children. The scheme is cutting car journeys to school, reducing congestion at the school entrance and improving road safety. It is also encouraging greater independence amongst the children.

5 Core principles

5.1 The landscape of Thames Gateway will undergo an unprecedented scale and pace of change as the growth area develops. The process will involve a very wide range of organisations and individuals, from strategic agencies such as the Environment Agency and Network Rail, through local councils, to individual landowners as varied as the Port of London Authority and urban fringe farmers. Such a variety of land ownership should be regarded as a strength, but it is also important to establish a set of overarching principles which can serve as a guide for all of them, and help to ensure that the whole landscape evolves successfully to become greater than the sum of its parts. We also recognise that domestic gardens make a very significant contribution to the overall mosaic of greenspace in urban and suburban areas.

Planning in advance

5.2 If the greenspace framework for the Gateway is to be used to complement other changes such as new built development and transport infrastructure, then it must be strongly promoted. Establishing the scale, extent and overall pattern of greenspace provision as a clear priority in the early stages of regeneration is likely to make the desired integration much more achievable. The management and maintenance requirements should also be given serious consideration from the outset.

Developing an environmental evidence base

5.3 The general principles in this strategy need to be applied in the context of current physical and social circumstances. It is therefore important that maximum use is made of the environmental evidence base. In some areas there may be a need for additional survey work in order to increase the understanding of existing land use and environmental pressures. The application of technologies such as GIS and satellite imagery will help in the process of data collection and interpretation. Local knowledge will also be invaluable, and full use should be made of contributions from the voluntary sector and from local people.

Encouraging inclusiveness and integration

5.4 All elements of greenspace have important contributions to make, whether in public or private ownership and no matter how large or small an individual parcel of land may be. Every effort should be made to respect and strengthen physical linkages in the landscape, and to take adjacent land uses into consideration as development progresses. This will help to enhance the overall



Dartford Borough Council

Greenspace must not be a mere afterthought in the development process. There is a need to plan it in advance of new built development

integrity of the Thames Gateway and increase the effectiveness and accessibility of its greenspace network. Local strategic partnerships are particularly well placed to help in balancing conflicts and to ensure that the landscapes provide vital links between environmental, social and economic issues.



National Urban Forestry Unit

Where a low cost ecological style of planting can be implemented ahead of construction, considerable impact can be achieved using relatively little land

5.5 Greenspace should also be fully integrated with built development. The success of commercial and residential developments very often depends on the relationship between the buildings and the greenspace within and immediately beyond the site boundary. Every effort should be made to establish Thames Gateway's framework of bold structural greenspace as far ahead of built development as is practicable. This "advance greening" will help to bring forward early delivery of broader environmental benefits such as increased shelter, pollution filtration and enhanced ecological integrity. It will also bring tangible early environmental benefits to those local communities who are already living and working in Thames Gateway.

Protecting local character and distinctiveness

5.6 The wide variety of underlying soils, the pattern of streams and rivers, and the varied buildings and vegetation all add to the inherent character of Thames Gateway. Sensitive landscape treatment is one of the most important ways in which the growth area can maintain its diversity and avoid the risk of blandness. Sustainable development calls for local distinctiveness to be reinforced as a consequence of the way in which the greenspace network is designed, built, planted and managed.

Protecting designated sites

5.7 Hundreds of individual sites within the Thames Gateway area are protected by law because of the importance of their archaeological or natural heritage. These include scheduled *Ancient Monuments*, listed buildings and *Conservation Areas*, *Sites of Special Scientific Interest*, *National Nature Reserves* and *Local Nature Reserves*, as well as sites with international status, such as those designated under the Ramsar convention and *Specially Protected Areas* under the EC *Birds Directive*. These important sites form one fundamental element for the greenspace network. Therefore it is imperative that they are protected from both direct damage and the cumulative effect of changes to adjacent land.



RSPB

It is particularly important for the specially designated sites to be given maximum protection

Habitat restoration and creation

5.8 The scale and the interconnectedness of habitats both have considerable influence over their value for wildlife and also for people's enjoyment. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan sets targets for increasing certain priority habitats and so the protection and conservation management of designated sites should be complemented where possible by habitat creation. New wetland habitat can be established particularly quickly and can make a significant contribution within a year or two. Woodland takes much longer to reach maturity, but fulfils important ecological functions at all stages of its development, whilst the grasslands in urban areas offer great scope for combining more cost-effective landscape maintenance with creative conservation. Government agencies and conservation charities in the UK have world class expertise in the field of habitat restoration, and we encourage them to focus their efforts in Thames Gateway.

A dynamic landscape

5.9 Greenspace is not static. The use and management of land in Thames Gateway needs to be responsive to changing circumstances. For example, temporarily vacant brownfield land may play an important role in providing scope for informal recreation and nature conservation. More formal recreation grounds may provide temporary storm water storage as a part of sustainable flood protection. Even sites which are undergoing built development may provide an opportunity for local environmental education, skills training or archaeological interpretation. It is important that the landscape of Thames Gateway does not become static and sterile.

Community involvement

5.10 The immediate impact and the continuing success of the Thames Gateway landscape will be determined in large part by the extent of support from local people. Participation is the key to community commitment and plans for the greenspace network should be shaped through local consultation. It will generally be helpful for local authorities to work in partnership with facilitating organisations in the voluntary sector. The aim should be to provide ample opportunity for people in Thames Gateway to play an active part in establishing and caring for their local element of the greenspace network.



ODPM

Wildlife habitat can be created as a part of economic regeneration. This successful new wetland has been created over a period of less than five years



Green Gateway

Practical involvement in greening can be fun

6 Delivery

Key players

6.1 Government can articulate a vision, provide encouragement and some of the funding, but delivery on the ground depends on a wide range of other organisations. It is important that the various key players share a common purpose and find ways of combining their various skills and other resources in order to maximise their impact.

6.2 Government agencies such as English Nature, the Environment Agency, Forest Enterprise and the Countryside Agency can provide advice, support and demonstrations of good practice, whilst the Regional Development Agencies, Urban Regeneration Companies, regional planning bodies and local authorities play a vital role in providing sympathetic planning and investment support. Major landowners such as the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships, the utility companies, the Urban Development Corporations, the Port of London Authority and major corporate enterprises can establish significant early demonstrations of strategic greening in practice.

6.3 The major players in the development industry can help enormously by making environmental quality a key platform of their marketing, whilst conservation charities, leisure managers and local community groups can contribute their local knowledge, energy and expertise in order to ensure the successful establishment and long term success of the emerging greenspace network.

Early action projects

6.4 Government has begun to demonstrate its commitment to the vision outlined in this strategy through its support for early action projects, many of which are in the 14 designated *zones of change*.

6.5 Government financial support for environmental projects within Thames Gateway, for the period 2003 – 2006 amounts to an established commitment of £15 million. Many of the projects are greenspace initiatives. They include consolidation of the *Green Grid* in north Kent, together with a new regional park, a package of new *Green Grid* projects in south Essex and a number of high profile individual projects in east London, such as the enhancement of Rainham Marshes.

Success at several levels

6.6 The landscape needs to be simultaneously successful at many different scales. Transport and pedestrian routing, flood defence and wildlife migration need to work Gateway-wide although most people

will judge the landscape's success at a much more detailed local scale. We aim to see the landscape of Thames Gateway respected and enhanced at every level.

The need for management

6.7 The management of the greenspace network is absolutely critical to its effectiveness in enhancing the regeneration process and it must be carefully considered and adequately resourced from the earliest stage in the development process. A well cared-for environment increases public enjoyment, reduces the risk of damage and helps to encourage other forms of investment. Conversely, neglected landscapes tend to attract abuse and hasten general decline.

6.8 Successful landscape management is more than simple day to day maintenance. Regular activities such as grass-cutting and litter-picking are vital, but the diverse nature of Thames Gateway demands a range of different landscape management styles, from the intensive horticulture of high street hanging baskets to the sensitive seasonal grazing regimes of salt marsh nature reserves.

6.9 The intensity of management will also fluctuate as landscapes develop. New woodland planting has a relatively high demand for weed control in the early years, but requires far less intervention once the tree canopy closes. Working wetlands may need intensive maintenance on a three to five year cycle, to cut reeds, dig out silt and restore open water. Mature street trees need constant monitoring and periodic attention in order to maintain their health and vigour and minimise risk to the public. Some grassland may need to be mown at weekly intervals throughout the summer, whilst for others, an annual hay crop may be more appropriate. Colourful town centre flower beds may need to be replanted several times each year, whilst in other public planting schemes a maintenance input every year or two may well suffice.

6.10 As a general rule, the more naturalistic landscape treatments need far less intensive care beyond the first few establishment years. The robustness of a bold and simple ecological – style approach to new planting is a good reason for its adoption across the great majority of the network of structural greenspace in Thames Gateway.

Current management

6.11 There is already a considerable landscape management resource at work within Thames Gateway. The park keepers and caretakers in the inner urban areas, the grass cutters and domestic gardeners in



ODPM

Landscapes need regular aftercare

suburbia and the farmers and nature reserve wardens within the rural/urban fringe all play an active part in managing the existing greenspace network.

6.12 Nevertheless, there are still significant areas of neglect. Whole stretches of post-industrial wasteland lie abandoned. This may benefit some species of wildlife, and provide opportunities for informal recreation. However, it also tends to favour fly-tipping and other forms of antisocial behaviour, which in turn can lower the quality of the environment more generally.

6.13 The landscape deserves to be as vigorously specified and supervised as any other aspect of a development project and we will encourage best practice in this regard. If Thames Gateway is to be a world-class demonstration of sustainable development in practice, then professional care for the greenspace is essential. This is a challenge for landscape architects, engineers, agricultural workers, foresters, landscape contractors, gardeners and all those who play a role in designing and managing Thames Gateway's green spaces.

Resourcing landscape management

6.14 One common problem with many urban landscapes is the lack of commitment to management over the long term. Acknowledging the functionality of greenspace in Thames Gateway will help to secure its continuing management as *green infrastructure*. For example, the maintenance of reed beds and shallow ponds is less likely to be neglected if they form a vital element in an area's flood defences and in the treatment of dispersed pollution. If the shelter belt surrounding a school or retirement home is recognised for the energy saving and air quality improvement it provides, then it is far more likely to be given the management that it needs. This need to manage greenspace as environmental infrastructure should help to secure new resources and we will explore the scope for landscape management support with a range of agencies, as a part of their contribution to sustainable development.

Training and employment

6.15 It is important to invest in the skills and other resources needed to provide the fullest possible range of appropriate landscape management. Site preparation, planting and early aftercare, regular large-scale management work and highly skilled maintenance are all set to become a significant source of employment across Thames Gateway. This implies an increased commitment to training and also to investment by both the public and commercial contracting sectors.



Groundwork Kent Thames-side

Where reedbeds such as this are designed as functioning biological water filters, they are much more likely to be well maintained

It is important that existing employers, training boards, skill councils and local educational institutions all begin to prepare for the increased training needs of a growing market.

Community participation

6.16 Local people have a vital role to play alongside professional landscape designers and managers. Active public participation in the planning, implementation and long term aftercare of a community's surroundings can be personally fulfilling and empowering. It is probably also the best means by which the general landscape can be given greater individuality. We encourage special interest groups to bring their expertise to bear on the landscape of Thames Gateway. Organisations such as Groundwork, BTCV, Trees for London, the Wildlife Trusts and CSV have particular experience of facilitating community involvement. They will have a pivotal role to play in building a strong public commitment to the emerging landscape. The schools, day care centres, city farms, community gardens, play groups, allotment societies and others also need to be given every opportunity to engage creatively and to play to their various strengths.

New mechanisms and structures

6.17 The greenspace network of Thames Gateway is so critical to the success of the growth area that the management of landscape change needs to be constantly monitored and reviewed. This will help in identifying resource needs ahead of time, in learning from success and failure as the landscape develops and in avoiding duplication of effort.

6.18 We are making a strong commitment to the greenspace network as a key contributor to sustainable development in Thames Gateway and we want the growth area to benefit from experience elsewhere. There is a need to publish appropriate standards, network best practice, anticipate and meet training needs and generally to underpin the work of all those with day to day responsibility for delivery on the ground. We will work with CABE Space and others to evaluate successful and innovative UK and overseas models of long term landscape management, such as the Milton Keynes Parks Trust, in order to secure sound sustainable planning, design, maintenance and management over the long term.



Trees for London

Managing the landscape requires a long term commitment: professional aftercare and staff on the ground are two important ingredients for sustained success

Key delivery organisations

The Thames Gateway greenspace strategy is intended to be focused and ambitious, but must be flexible in delivery. Success will depend on contributions from a great many organisations across all sectors. Some of these are listed below.

Local authorities

- ◆ Audit existing greenspace resources and other land use as early as possible and assess local needs in accordance with requirements of PPG17
- ◆ Develop borough-wide greenspace strategy, with particular attention to its relationship to other local authority strategies for air quality, health and recreation, sustainability, social inclusion, economic regeneration, biodiversity, etc
- ◆ Encourage inclusion of elements of the Thames Gateway greenspace strategy, such as SUDS and structural planting as part of new development, through development control
- ◆ Implement the greenspace strategy by working in partnership with government agencies, NGOs and neighbouring local authorities

Government agencies & sponsored bodies

- ◆ Acknowledge the functional role of greenspace as an opportunity to deliver responsibilities for such themes as biodiversity, waste minimisation, outdoor recreation, pollution control, sustainable agriculture, water supply and flood defence, regeneration, health, education and social cohesion
- ◆ Develop in-house expertise in those aspects of greenspace development and management which are of most direct relevance to their own particular responsibilities
- ◆ Use Thames Gateway as a point of focus for innovation and demonstration of sustainable good practice in greenspace creation and management

Landowners

- ◆ Invest in landscape infrastructure as early as possible
- ◆ Consider the contribution that individual sites can play in linking with neighbouring land to create continuous networks

Developers & regeneration companies

- ◆ Consider individual developments in the wider landscape and land use context

- ◆ Maximise the contribution which greenspace in and around development can make to the wider landscape
- ◆ Embrace elements of the Thames Gateway greenspace strategy such as SUDS, traffic-free routes and advance planting for environmental improvement wherever possible
- ◆ Acknowledge the role that land banks can play in the greenspace network, ahead of development
- ◆ Take account of need to set development back from water courses in order to allow for surface water flood defence and to make positive use of the waterside landscape for recreation and nature conservation

Non governmental organisations

- ◆ Contribute specialist skills and experience to the development and delivery of sustainable greenspace networks in Thames Gateway
- ◆ Help to raise standards by introducing experience from elsewhere in the UK and from overseas
- ◆ Broker additional resources to complement those of central and local government
- ◆ Encourage public participation in and support for an ambitious greenspace network

Consultants

- ◆ Have regard to the principles in this greenspace strategy when agreeing client briefs
- ◆ Incorporate the principles of community consultation and of integrating greenspace into the regeneration process, when executing specific project designs and delivery

Training institutions

- ◆ Anticipate the emerging local need for new skills and increased capacity, in order to implement, establish and manage a diverse landscape from the inner urban areas to the remote rural coast

Commercial suppliers

- ◆ Use Thames Gateway to test environmentally sound new products and to develop new markets
- ◆ Supply large quantities of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers, preferably of local provenance, for structural planting as well as native water plants for working wetlands
- ◆ Give greater consideration to locally sourced construction materials and recycled products



Thames Chase



Chris Baines



ODPM



Forestry Commission



Green Gateway



ODPM



Forestry Commission



Published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

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Printed in the UK January 2004 on paper comprising 75% post consumer waste and 25% ECF pulp

Product code 04UP01893