



# WILDSPACE

FOR A WORLD CITY



London Riverside Conservation Park  
The flagship **GREEN SPACE** for Thames Gateway



# contents



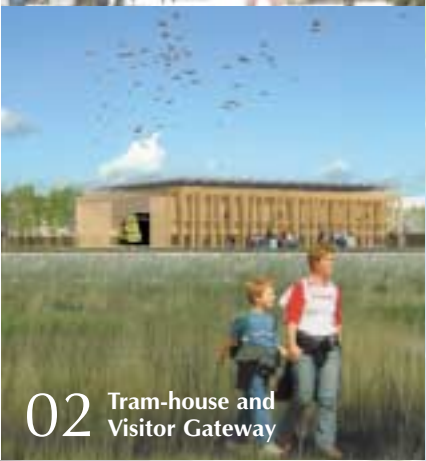
page	section
2	01 Background
5	02 The Purpose of the Riverside Conservation Park Development
6	03 The Vision: Wildspace for a World City
8	04 A Phased Development Approach
16	05 Engaging with Wildlife at the Riverside Conservation Park
16	06 Learning through Fun at the Riverside Conservation Park
16	07 The Virtual Riverside Conservation Park
18	08 Market Support for the Riverside Conservation Park
18	09 Viability of the Riverside Conservation Park
20	10 Benefits of the Riverside Conservation Park
20	11 Next Steps







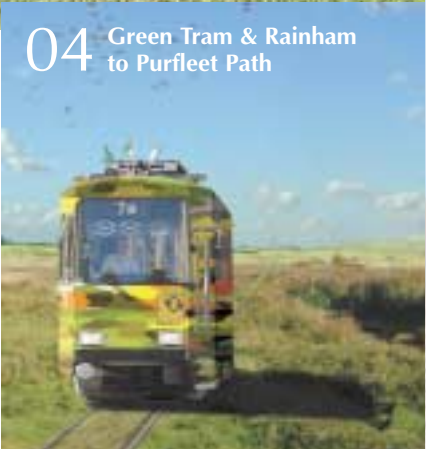
01 Land-bridge to Rainham Village



02 Tram-house and Visitor Gateway



03 Green links Westwards



04 Green Tram & Rainham to Purfleet Path



05 Three Crowns Café & Riverside Space



Peter Beard LANDROOM/Latz and Partners



15 Purfleet Environment and Education Centre



14 New foot and cycle-bridge and riverside space to Purfleet



13 RSPB Conservation Centre



12 Rainham Waterside



06 New Wetlands on Former Silt Lagoons



07 Open Farm



08 Wildspace World Adventure Play Park



09 Wildlife Studies Centre & Café



10 Café Jetty



11 Outdoor Event Areas





Background

The Purpose

The Vision

Phased Development

Engaging with Wildlife

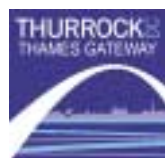
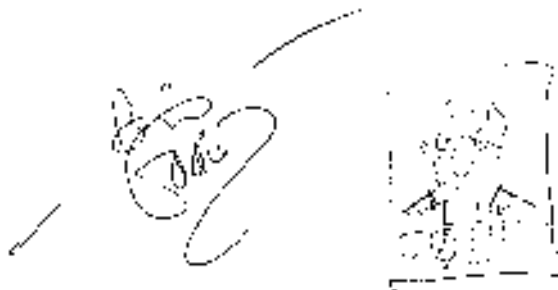


### Foreword by **BILL ODDIE**

I first saw Rainham Marshes 44 years ago; it was a paradise for the London based birder but possibly not so attractive to many others. Over the last five years it has been a delight to work with the RSPB and its partners and to see the transformation of the Marsh into an internationally important Nature Reserve.

The proposals here will take this exciting project forward to the next stage transforming the landfill and the remaining area of marshland into a truly special place for birds and people at the heart of the regeneration of the Thames Gateway.

When I first launched the RSPB's reserve, I predicted that this shared vision would make these Marshes world famous. This document actually sets out how all the partners will work together to deliver this exciting vision for the London Riverside, giving many more people the chance to enjoy its unique landscape, wildlife and a whole range of leisure opportunities.





# 1

## Background

*“Public space is our open-air living room,  
our outdoor leisure centre.”*

*Sir Stuart Lipton (2004). The Value of Public Spaces. CABE Space.*

Research in 2002 found that there are more than 2.5 billion visits to urban green spaces in the UK every year – by 33 million people, more than half the population.\* Eighty-five per cent of people surveyed said that the quality of public space had a direct impact on their lives and on the way they felt.\*\*

Rainham, Wennington and Aveley Marshes together form one of London’s largest green spaces. The 1500 acres of open, wild riverside space is the largest remaining expanse of wetland on the upper Thames Estuary. Located at the heart of the Thames Gateway growth area, it has the potential to become London’s next premier outdoor destination, London Riverside Conservation Park.

The key driver for the creation of the Park is the Government’s programme for the regeneration of the Thames Gateway: East London and Thurrock, North Kent and South Essex. The Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership, established in 2000, aims to support the creation of sustainable new communities by way of balanced growth of housing stock, job opportunities, social infrastructure, public transport connections and high quality green space. The ambition is to create in the order of 120,000 extra households and 200,000 new jobs in the Thames Gateway corridor by 2016.



\* Dunnett, N., Swanwick, C. and Woolley, H. (2002) *Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces*. London, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

\*\* CABE (2002) *Streets of Shame*. Summary of findings from ‘Public Attitudes to Architecture and the Built Environment’.



The Greenspace Strategy for the Thames Gateway calls for the landscape of the river and estuary to be regarded as the functional green infrastructure needed to create a positive sense of place, provide environmental protection and enhance the quality of life of those who live and work in the Thames Gateway. The London Riverside Conservation Park will be ideally placed to serve these objectives.

The Park was designated as a Thames Gateway Environment Flagship Project in 2003 and is an integral part of the Green Grid, a network of green space across the Thames Gateway. Linkages will be made with other important environmental projects in the Thames gateway including Mardyke that runs along the eastern boundary of the area and the Community Forest at Thames Chase.

In 2003, a detailed two-phase feasibility study was commissioned from a multidisciplinary team led by AEA Consulting. The final report of the feasibility study was delivered in October 2005, and it has provided the basis for this document.

The partners in the project are the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Mayor of London, London Development Agency, London Borough of Havering, Thurrock Council and Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation, in consultation with Cleanaway Ltd, Cleanaway Havering Riverside Trust, English Nature, the Environment Agency, the Port of London Authority and Transport for London.

Further information is available from the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation on +44 (0)20 7517 4730, or visit their website at [www.ltgdgc.org.uk](http://www.ltgdgc.org.uk).







Background

The Purpose

The Vision

Phased Development

Engaging with Wildlife



Learning  
through FunThe Virtual  
ParkMarket  
Support

Viability

Benefits

Next  
Steps

## 2 The Purpose of the Riverside Conservation Park Development

The primary objectives of the London Riverside Conservation Park development are to:

- create a regional destination of international significance and profile – with the aim of ultimately achieving a million visits per year;
- provide access, health, recreation and life-long learning opportunities for local communities;
- encourage the social and economic regeneration of the local area (including tourism);
- protect, enhance and interpret the cultural and natural heritage of the site.

Secondary objectives include encouraging the use of public transport to get to and from the Park, generating sufficient income to cover on-going costs, and to providing an integrated management solution for the whole destination.







Background

The Purpose

The Vision

Phased Development

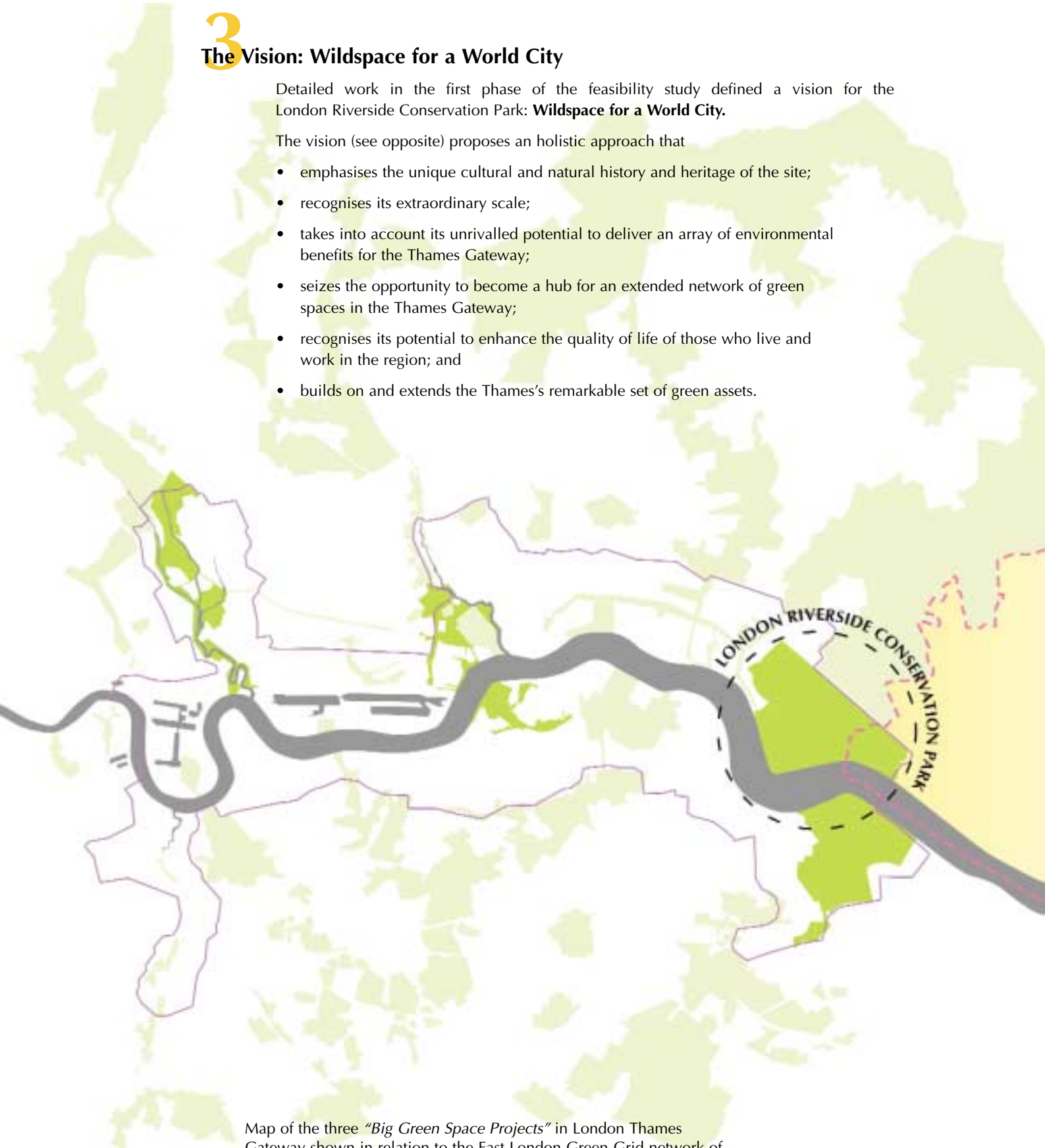
Engaging with Wildlife

### 3 The Vision: Wildspace for a World City

Detailed work in the first phase of the feasibility study defined a vision for the London Riverside Conservation Park: **Wildspace for a World City**.

The vision (see opposite) proposes an holistic approach that

- emphasises the unique cultural and natural history and heritage of the site;
- recognises its extraordinary scale;
- takes into account its unrivalled potential to deliver an array of environmental benefits for the Thames Gateway;
- seizes the opportunity to become a hub for an extended network of green spaces in the Thames Gateway;
- recognises its potential to enhance the quality of life of those who live and work in the region; and
- builds on and extends the Thames's remarkable set of green assets.



Map of the three “Big Green Space Projects” in London Thames Gateway shown in relation to the East London Green Grid network of smaller parks, greenspaces and the London/Thurrock border.

Courtesy of GLA Architecture and Urbanism Unit

Learning  
through FunThe Virtual  
ParkMarket  
Support

Viability

Benefits

Next  
Steps

## The Vision

For centuries, Rainham, Wennington and Aveley Marshes have been preserved as a vast expanse of wetland, grazed by cattle, supporting a wide range of rare plants and animal species. In winter, the grasslands flood and provide winter feeding habitats for spectacular flocks of migratory wild birds – ducks and swans, geese and waders.

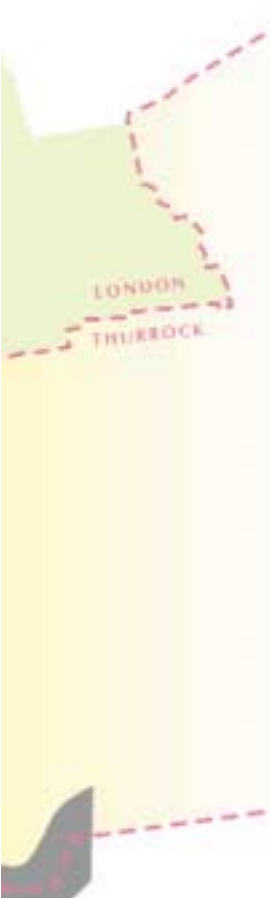
Thames Gateway offers an exciting opportunity to integrate this unique landscape with its surroundings, to open up access to the marshes, to restore the adjacent landfill site, to deliver a range of indoor and outdoor leisure activities, to enhance the quality of neighbouring communities, and to connect to the region.



The London Riverside Conservation Park will be the flagship green space for Thames Gateway. It will be an internationally celebrated conservation park and leisure destination, and a world class model of sustainable development and heritage conservation. It will deliver something for everyone: enjoyment and delight, knowledge and creativity, sanctuary and remembrance.

The Park will become a valued place at the heart of the community. As the centrepiece of a network of green spaces, it will contribute to the environmental enhancement and economic growth of the region.

It will unite all these elements into a distinctive sense of place, a unified landscape, and a recognisable brand – **Wildspace for a World City**.







## 4 A Phased Development Approach

The Park will be developed in three linked phases as follows. Projected visitor numbers are from the feasibility study:

**Phase One (2003-2008):** create a local destination attracting c. 120,000 visits per year, mainly from the surrounding communities of Havering and Thurrock;

**Phase Two (2009-2018):** create a sub-regional destination attracting c. 400,000 visits, from local communities and elsewhere in London and Essex;

**Phase Three (2019-2023):** create a regional destination drawing on London and the Thames Gateway counties of Essex and Kent and attracting c. 1 million visits.

### Interventions

Each phase comprises balanced development of visitor elements supported by infrastructure works to facilitate access. These are the building blocks of the Park development, helping to create critical mass while ensuring that the principal attractor – the natural heritage – is sustained for the benefit of all. They are listed in the table opposite and described in more detail on the pages that follow.



Learning through Fun	The Virtual Park	Market Support	Viability	Benefits	Next Steps
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**London Riverside Conservation Park - Visitor Elements and Infrastructure**

Visitor Elements	Infrastructure Works
<b>Phase One : creating a local destination (2003-2008) c. 120,000 visits p.a.</b>	
<p><b>RSPB Nature Reserve and Purfleet Environment and Education Centre</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment and Education Centre</li> <li>• Visitor facilities – pathways, viewing areas, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Rainham Marshes Local Nature Reserve and Gateway Zone</b></p> <p><b>Rainham to Purfleet path and cycle-way</b></p> <p><b>Virtual Gateways</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information points in Rainham and Purfleet</li> <li>• Conservation Park Website</li> </ul> <p><b>Three Crowns Café &amp; Riverside Space</b></p>	<p><b>Rainham Approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ferry Lane Area Development</li> <li>• Enhanced Gateway A13 roundabouts</li> <li>• New Rainham Village “greenway”;</li> <li>• Resurfaced riverside car park and access road</li> <li>• New Rainham Creek bridge</li> <li>• Improved bus access routes to Ferry Lane</li> </ul> <p><b>Purfleet linkage</b></p> <p><b>Riverfront linkage</b></p> <p><b>On-site transport and circulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realigned Cleanaway Ltd perimeter road</li> <li>• Resurfaced footpath 266</li> </ul>
<b>Phase Two : creating a sub-regional destination (2009-2018) c. 400,000 visits p.a.</b>	
<p><b>Green Tram in-park transport system</b></p> <p><b>RSPB Conservation Park Centre</b></p> <p><b>Wildspace World Adventure Play Park</b></p> <p><b>Wildspace Café</b></p> <p><b>City Farm</b></p> <p><b>Wildlife Studies Centre</b></p>	<p><b>Car park adjacent to Wildspace elements</b></p> <p><b>Extension of Green Tram to Purfleet</b></p> <p><b>Green links westwards</b></p>
<b>Phase Three : creating a regional destination (2019-2023) c. 1m visits p.a.</b>	
<p><b>Open Parkland</b></p> <p><b>Public Artwork</b></p> <p><b>Outdoor Arena</b></p> <p><b>Rainham Waterside</b></p>	<p><b>Audience and “backstage” parking for Outdoor Arena</b></p>







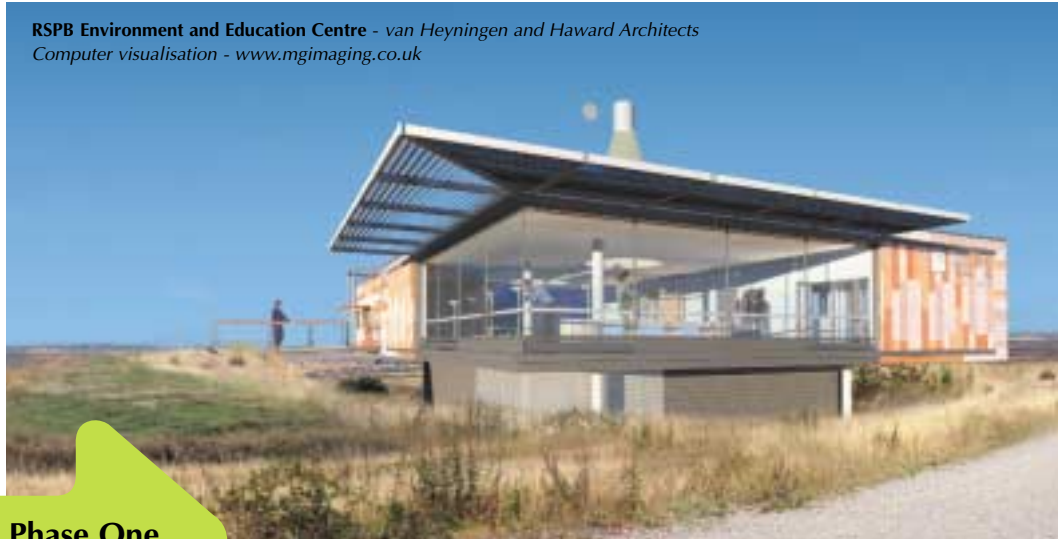
Background

The Purpose

The Vision

Phased Development

Engaging with Wildlife



RSPB Environment and Education Centre - van Heyningen and Haward Architects  
Computer visualisation - [www.mgimaging.co.uk](http://www.mgimaging.co.uk)

## Phase One

Phase One builds on a number of initiatives currently underway.

### **RSPB Nature Reserve and Purfleet Environment and Education Centre**

The RSPB is currently developing the first gateway to the Park at Purfleet. A new Environment and Education Centre will establish the reserve as a visitor attraction and deliver recreation and education programmes.

### **Rainham Marshes Local Nature Reserve and Gateway Zone**

A Local Nature Reserve will be developed at Rainham and will include a gateway to the reserve through the establishment of a public open space, a landmark structure to create a sense of place, and visitor facilities. It will link directly to the RSPB nature reserve, Rainham Village and to the new employment areas to the west to create a fantastic green space for wildlife and people.

### **Rainham to Purfleet path and cycle-way**

A 5.5 km pedestrian and cycle pathway will run through the Park and link Rainham and Purfleet.

### **Virtual Gateways**

Electronic information will be sited in Rainham and Purfleet and a website will be developed.

### **Three Crowns Café & Riverside Space**

A riverside café associated with improved open space & riverside walkway (on the site of the former Three Crowns Pub).



Learning through Fun	The Virtual Park	Market Support	Viability	Benefits	Next Steps
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Background

The Purpose

The Vision

Phased Development

Engaging with Wildlife

**Phase Two**

Phase Two will bring a step change in the overall development of the site.

**Green Tram**

The Green Tram is a key component of the Park. Its route, from Rainham to Purfleet, will link the intervening visitor attractions with each other and the outside world. The presence of the tram will also help to discourage uncontrolled access to the sensitive landscape in the SSSI, thus protecting the local ecology as well as reducing car usage. The Rainham and Purfleet termini are close to the respective railway stations, and will provide easy public transport access to the Park’s attractions. Car parks at the Green Tram termini will serve the Park at weekends and as park-and-ride locations for the C2C mainline rail service during the week, thus reducing traffic on the A13.



The Green Tram stations will become locations for refreshment and retail outlets, bicycle hire, horse-riding etc. As well as providing transport within the Park, the Green Tram will – like heritage tramways and railways everywhere – be a visitor attraction and focus of community volunteer activity in its own right. It will also be an important element in the branding of the Park and in creating the perception of the Park as a single entity. In-car audio-visual systems can be used to support this and interpret the landscape.

It is intended that the Green Tram will make full use of recycled materials and equipment. A full feasibility study\* shows that this is practical and that “heritage” tramcars are available from places such as the Isle of Man and Lisbon. As far as possible it will run on green energy (e.g. electricity generated from methane recovered from landfill). All stations will provide disabled access.



Rainham Marshes local nature reserve with visitor welcome/tramhouse building  
 – LANDROOM – Latz + Partner

\* Rainham Marsh Tramway Proposal for a Tramway on Rainham Marshes. Sinclair Knight Merz, March 2004.



### **RSPB Conservation Park Centre**

This facility is intended to become a focal point for visitors to the Park, complementing the existing operations at the Purfleet Environment and Education Centre (Phase One) as visitor numbers grow. It will provide reception/orientation facilities, exhibition space, catering and retail facilities and an observation tower with spectacular views across the marshes.

The Purfleet Environment and Education Centre will continue to provide the Eastern gateway to the Park from Purfleet and an education facility.

### **Wildspace World Adventure Play Park**

The Play Park has been conceived as a theme-based, interactive play facility for children aged four to twelve years. Wildspace World will fuse an exciting Playground with a Science Discovery Centre and draw on best practice adventure park design, such as the facilities at Alnwick, Folkestone and Belton House. The Play Park will have indoor facilities focusing on educational exhibits, a large outdoor adventure zone focusing on play/entertainment facilities, and intermediate indoor/outdoor, educational/entertainment zones to ensure a continuous experience for children.

The mesh between indoor and outdoor facilities will help to avoid the seasonality of a predominantly outdoor leisure facility.

### **Wildspace Café**

This will serve as a catering facility for the western end of the site; the other catering facility will be within the RSPB Conservation Park Centre. Ultimately there will also be up to five temporary catering facilities at tram stops and within the Open Parkland.

### **City Farm**

This will be a working farm designed to educate visitors about livestock and agriculture. Livestock from the farm will be grazed on the marshes. The facility will be developed in partnership with the RSPB and in consultation with the proposed Purfleet City Farm to ensure complementarity.

### **Wildlife Studies Centre**

The Wildlife Studies Centre will focus on the natural environment and be operated by a number of partners. It will incorporate learning facilities and perhaps residential accommodation for students.







Background

The Purpose

The Vision

Phased Development

Engaging with Wildlife

## Phase Three

Phase Three developments reflect consolidation of work to date, but with a number of significant new facilities helping to complete the Park.

### Open Parkland

This facility will cover the former landfill site and is conceived as a modern park of c. 440 acres, with a system of paths and plantings, and associated visitor amenities such as playground, toilets, exercise trails and refreshment facilities.

### Public Artwork

This will be a monumental public artwork located at the peak of the former landfill site, providing a highly visible icon and symbol of regeneration for the Conservation Park and serving as a focal point for the Thames Gateway project.

### Outdoor Arena

The Outdoor Arena will be created in the landscape profile of the former landfill site and be designed for pop and other concerts, festival events, light and firework displays, and bonfire nights and other calendar celebrations. Preliminary designs are based around formal seating provision for 3000, surrounded by a banked lawn providing picnicking and informal seating for a further 7000. Limited permanent parking will be provided for performers and equipment, with “green” temporary parking on pasture for audiences.

### Rainham Waterside

The land around Colharbour Point, on the southern tip of the Conservation Park, could have long term potential for extensive waterside development, introducing public access and other waterside and recreation activities, e.g. jetties and a waterside cafe. The Green Tram could reach the Waterside area via a spur line. The extent and timing of such development would depend on the future of the existing industrial and waste management uses which is being considered through the London Plan and Local Development Framework.



Overview of park looking west showing new open parkland (phase three)

Learning through Fun	The Virtual Park	Market Support	Viability	Benefits	Next Steps
----------------------	------------------	----------------	-----------	----------	------------



### Works to Facilitate Access

As the table on page 9 shows, each phase of development of the visitor elements will be accompanied by a substantial programme of interventions aiming to improve and clarify access to the London Riverside Conservation Park and linkage to the local communities, the Green Grid and the River Thames.

Key sites are at Purfleet and Rainham, the main entry points to the Park. Other works will develop the riverfront linkages and in-park transport and circulation. Of particular long-term importance will be the range of works intended to increase access to and recreational usage of the river itself.







## 5 Engaging with Wildlife at the Riverside Conservation Park

One of the London Riverside Conservation Park's principal objectives is to preserve, enhance and interpret the cultural and natural heritage of the site. Within this wider framework, the RSPB and other conservation organisations associated with the Park development have as one of their main objectives improving the conservation status of the Inner Thames Marshes SSSI.

All the proposals in the development strategy are predicated on the need to help people understand and appreciate the special nature of the site and its associated biodiversity, and to recognise their individual role and responsibility in protecting its ecology. Through a range of indoor and outdoor facilities and activities, visitors will be able to learn more about the site's special significance in terms of its natural history and heritage and its modern-day ecology.

Moreover, the Park is one element in a network of other protected wildlife areas on both sides of the Thames. The interpretation and education facilities within the Park will draw attention to these wider linkages and encourage residents and visitors to make best use of them.

## 6 Learning through Fun at the Riverside Conservation Park

The development proposals emphasise fun, enjoyment and entertainment in this regionally-significant leisure destination. But the Conservation Park will also provide both formal and informal learning opportunities for visitors of all ages.

The RSPB's new Purfleet Environment and Education Centre and, at a later stage, its Conservation Park Centre will provide an array of learning opportunities for visitors, while the proposed Field Studies Centre will provide a range of dedicated courses for students of different ages. The Wildspace World Adventure Play Park and the City Farms have strong underlying "learning through play" themes, while the Green Tram will be able to contribute to learning through its interpretative programmes.

The Park thus combines education and entertainment, which is of particular importance for family audiences with school age children, while ensuring that its balance of facilities – indoors and outdoors – enables year-round engagement. Opportunities for closer engagement through volunteering add to the mix of learning opportunities.

## 7 The Virtual Riverside Conservation Park

The virtual dimension of the Park has not been overlooked. On the one hand, the ICT-based information provision and the World-Wide Web will let potential visitors learn about the Park. On the other hand, it opens up new opportunities for closer engagement with the Park through, for example, interaction with dedicated learning materials and programmes of different types.

The Park's website will be an important parallel development to the physical facilities and infrastructure. It will enable much greater reach into the Thames Gateway communities and beyond, and encourage new forms of engagement and interaction with the Park.

Learning  
through Fun

The Virtual  
Park

Market  
Support

Viability

Benefits

Next  
Steps



Children in orchard garden of Wildspace Café – LANDROOM – Latz + Partner





## 8 Market Support for the Riverside Conservation Park

The visitor experience at the Park has been designed to appeal to a wide range of target market segments. The Park concept is based in the first instance on the conservation of its key assets, the marshes themselves and the way of life associated with them through time. However, it is also concerned to create "new" outdoor and accessible green and water space which can be enjoyed by all of the community and enhance their quality of life.

While the different parts of the overall site will attract different audiences, together the sum of those parts will attract significant numbers of visits throughout the year.

The Park will be developed at a time of renaissance for parks and green attractions. However, successful green attractions are a far more sophisticated resource than previously envisaged given the changing nature of the leisure marketplace.

The Park will need to go beyond a typical modern park and appeal to groups that are less well represented among park users: people over 65, people with disabilities, those from ethnic minority communities, women and 12-19 year olds, all groups identified by the London Parks and Green Spaces Forum.

Competitive success will be dependent on product differentiation and offering more than a traditional park space, reducing direct competition by creating links with other tourist attractions in the area, committing significant resources to marketing and audience development, ensuring effective external and internal transport linkages and working with appropriate promotional bodies in London.

## 9 Viability of the Riverside Conservation Park

### Capital expenditure

The work for the feasibility study includes a detailed cost plan prepared by Gardiner & Theobald.

### London Riverside Conservation Park cost plan

Total capital expenditure over the next 20 years is estimated at £90 million to £130 million (at 2004 prices), although this figure does not include the development of Rainham Waterside. This is a substantial cost for a UK project, although it is considered good value for money, particularly for the creation of a new park on a contaminated ex-industrial site used for waste management. It is also considerably cheaper per unit area than the most comparable project in London, Greenwich Peninsula Central Park.

### Management strategy

The site is currently fragmented into a number of freehold and leasehold interests. It is proposed that the future map of land ownerships and responsibilities will be simplified as explored in the full feasibility study report.

While there are a number of options for development and management, it is proposed that a special development vehicle will take responsibility for delivery, subsequently transferring assets to a separate specialist management vehicle. Both the development and management vehicles will include the main stakeholders.

### Revenue expenditure

Detailed figures have been drawn up to demonstrate the operational costs of the Park.

The initial business plan predicts an operating expenditure of some £1.2 million per year upon completion of all component elements. Earned income will cover 16% of operating expenditure which compares very favourably with other large London parks. The revenue funding requirement is c. £1.0 million per year which will need to be secured from a mix of public, philanthropic and private sources. A capital and revenue fundraising strategy is to be developed.

Learning through Fun	The Virtual Park	Market Support	Viability	Benefits	Next Steps
----------------------	------------------	----------------	-----------	----------	------------



Lapwing - image courtesy of rspb-images.com, photographer Andy Hay



Learning  
through FunThe Virtual  
ParkMarket  
Support

Viability

Benefits

Next  
Steps

## 10 Benefits of the Riverside Conservation Park

There are a number of important benefits that the development of London Riverside Conservation Park brings with it. They include inter alia:

**Community benefits:** the development of an iconic "green heart" to the new Thames Gateway community.

**Conservation benefits:** the management and monitoring of the important wildlife assets on the site and improvement of the conservation status of its key marshland features.

**Educational benefits:** the delivery of an array of informal and formal learning opportunities associated with the Park's natural and cultural history and heritage.

**Tourism benefits:** the development of facilities that will be of wide appeal both to residents as well as tourist visitors.

**Economic benefits:** the establishment of a number of new jobs on the site itself as well as the economic benefit accruing from indirect and induced employment.

**Regeneration benefits:** the regeneration of a large brownfield area of the Thames Gateway and the reconnection of local communities to the River.

## 11 Next Steps

### Next steps proposed include:

The opening of the Purfleet Environment and Education Centre, the first new visitor element on the marshes and critical for building awareness and support for the Park;

Discussions between stakeholders on development and management vehicles for the Park and a core public funding agreement;

Design and delivery of outstanding Phase One elements.

Detailed feasibility, design and delivery planning for all major Phase Two and Three elements and strategic links to surrounding areas, in particular Rainham and Purfleet and the Green Grid.

**RSPB Environment and Education Centre** - van Heyningen and Haward Architects  
Computer visualisation - [www.mgimaging.co.uk](http://www.mgimaging.co.uk)



## LONDON RIVERSIDE CONSERVATION PARK

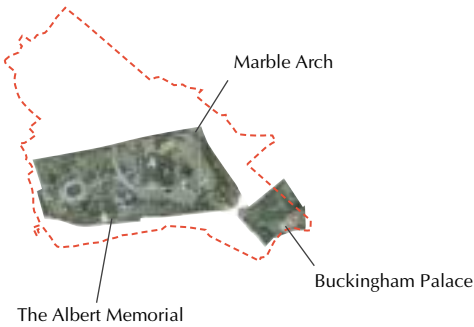
scale comparison with other London open spaces



### Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Barnes



### Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens and Green Park



### Hampstead Heath



## London Riverside Conservation Park Partners

London Thames Gateway Development Corporation  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
Mayor of London  
London Development Agency  
London Borough of Havering  
Thurrock Council  
Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation

with Cleanaway Ltd  
Cleanaway Havering Riverside Trust  
English Nature  
Environment Agency  
Port of London Authority  
Transport for London

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1

*An internationally celebrated ecological and leisure resource*



2

*Focused on the core asset of the natural environment but containing a cluster of further synergistic attractions*



*A world-class model of sustainable development and heritage conservation*



4

*A valued place at the heart of the community, integrated with its surroundings*



5

*A significant contributor to the environmental enhancement and economic growth of the region*



6

*Managed by national, regional and local partners*



7

*A phased programme of investment and development over the next 20 years*

