



Greenway planning in Britain: recent work and future plans

Tom Turner

University of Greenwich, School of Architecture and Construction, Bexley Road, Eltham SE9 2PQ, London

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Abstract

The author's preferred definition of a greenway, as proposed in 1995, remains: 'a route which is good from an environmental point of view' (Turner, 1995). This paper is concerned with the condition of British greenway planning in the first decade of the 21st century. The aim was to discover how the concept is understood and how it is being used. A questionnaire was circulated to all local authorities in the UK. An initial set of questions dealt with definition of the greenway concept. The most supported definition was 'A linear space containing elements planned, designed and managed for multiple purposes including ecological, recreational, cultural, aesthetic and other purposes compatible with the concept of sustainable land use'. A second set of questions dealt with the status of the greenway concept. It was found that the concept was used by 33% of authorities during the past decade but that 75% expected it to become significant during the next decade. A final set of questions dealt with a greenway project selected by the responding local authority. The typical planning period for these projects was 1997–2007 and the average length was 12.9 km. The author concludes that greenways are a landscape planning tool of considerable potential. Though comparatively neglected at the end of the 20th century, there are encouraging signs relating to the prospects for open space planning in 21st century Britain.

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1. Introduction

The aim of the research described in this paper was to relate the history and theory of greenway planning to the current situation in Britain. The author's previous work on the history and theory of greenways was published in three places. The first was an article on 'Greenways, blueways, skyways and other ways to a better London' which suggested a diversification of the greenway concept (Turner, 1995). The second was a related essay, published in *City as landscape*, which placed the discussion of greenways in the wider con-

text of Christopher Alexander's pattern language approach to urban and landscape planning (Turner, 1996, pp. 199–207). An essay in the same book, entitled 'A city is not a tree: it is a landscape' argued that Alexander patterns are of great value in landscape planning, concluding that 'Many patterns will be appreciated by the general population: others will be particular to special groups; others will be unique to individuals' (Turner, 1996, p. 36). Greenways are one of the special groups. They can have upward links to general patterns and downward links to specific patterns.

The author's third discussion of greenways was in *Landscape planning and environmental impact design* (Turner, 1998, Chapter 4). A section in this chapter,

E-mail address: t.turner@gre.ac.uk.

on ‘Greenway history and typology’ traced the history of greenways to the ceremonial avenues of the ancient world and used diagrams to illustrate historical manifestations of the concept. The historical diagrams are reproduced in the present article, as Fig. 1, together with a diagram drawn to support the chapter’s conclusion (Fig. 2) that ‘In the latter part of the 20th century, the most appealing approach to the integration of open space types within cities is by means of a green web. Public open spaces can be interlinked with footpaths, bridges, cycleways, bridlepaths, stream valleys, linear parks, waterfront reservations, covered arcades, elegant streets and greenways of every type’ (Turner, 1998, p. 152). The system could extend into the urban hinterland, as shown in the right-hand section of Fig. 2,

giving regions a ‘green infrastructure’ to complement the ‘red infrastructure’ of roads, railways and airports. An open space system is the most general ‘Alexander pattern’ relating to this type of planning.

The aim of the present research was to relate what might be achieved to what is being done in Britain at the start of the 21st century. This was done by means of questionnaire. It was framed with regard to the publications summarised above and then circulated to British local authorities at the end of 2001. The questions were intended to elicit: (1) how the term ‘greenway’ is currently used in Britain; (2) what greenway planning is taking place in Britain; (3) what plans local authorities in Britain have for the future of greenway planning.

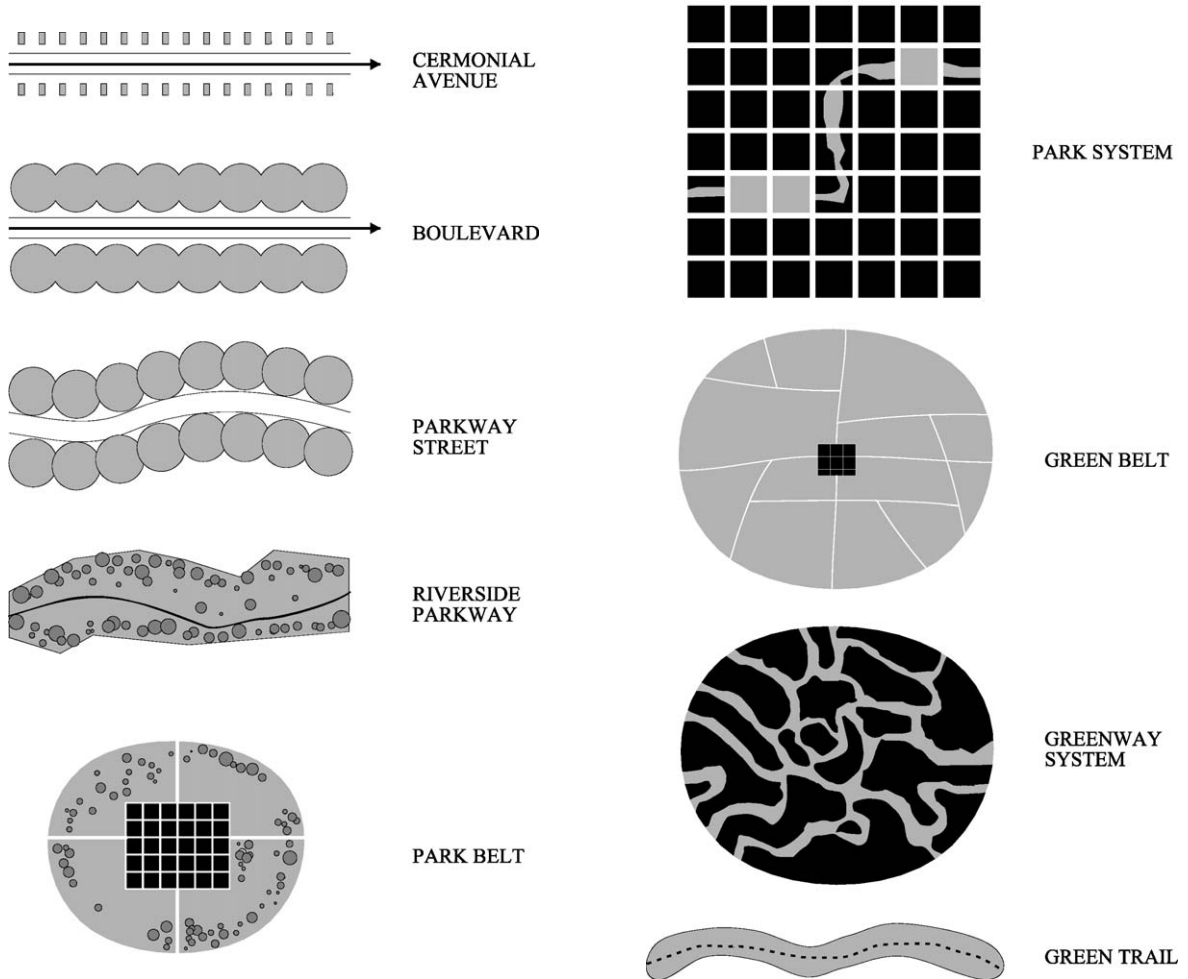


Fig. 1. Ancestors of the greenway concept, shown diagrammatically (Turner, 1998, p. 139 and p. 141).

Fig. 1. (Continued).



Fig. 2. Greenways can provide a transport network linking town and country (light grey indicates urban area and dark grey indicates vegetated corridor) (Turner, 1998, p. 153).

2. Literature review

2.1. Broad definitions

The President's Commission on Americans Outdoors recommended 'A Vision for the Future: A living Network of Greenways... to provide people with access to open spaces close to where they live, and to link together the rural and urban spaces in the American landscape... threading through cities and countrysides like a giant circulating system' (President's Commission, 1987). Jack Ahern proposed the following definition: 'Greenways are networks of land containing linear elements that are planned, designed and managed for multiple purposes including ecological, recreational, cultural, aesthetic, or other purposes compatible with the concept of sustainable land use' He then identified five key ideas within this definition: (1) a linear configuration, (2) linkage, (3) multi-functionality, (4) consistency with sustainability, (5) integration (Ahern, 1995).

The European Greenways Association was established in January 1998 and has published a *Good Practice Guide* (European Greenways Association, 2000). Part II of the Guide gives several definitions of the concept: (1) 'transport routes dedicated to light non-motorised traffic'; (2) 'a communication route which has been developed for recreational purposes and/or for undertaking necessary daily trips (getting to work, place of study, shopping etc.), which we will call utility trips, using infrastructure closed to motorised traffic'; (3) 'former transport routes in a specific location, partly or completely decommissioned, and

which once properly restored, are made available to users of non-motorised transport such as pedestrians, cyclists, people with limited mobility, roller skaters, cross-country skiers, horse riders, etc'. It is evident that all these definitions refer primarily to green transport routes. The two UK members of the European Greenways Association are British Waterways, which cares for canals, and Sustrans, which plans cycle routes.

The UK Countryside Agency maintains a website with the title 'Greenways and Quiet Roads' (<http://www.greenways.gov.uk/>). It explains them as 'initiatives which aim to give better mobility and access for people on foot, bike or horseback or for people with disabilities'. The following definitions are given:

- *Greenways* are designed for shared use and largely exclude motorised vehicles. They are in and around towns, cities and the countryside.
- *Quiet Roads* are minor rural roads, already lightly trafficked where extra traffic measures will improve their attractiveness for non-motorised users. Both initiatives are part of the Countryside Agency's transport work and will assist integrated transport policies.

The official definitions of greenways can be related to the history of the concept given in *Landscape planning and environmental impact design* (Turner, 1998, Chapter 4). The term itself derives from the older terms 'greenbelt' and 'parkway' and has venerable ancestors. Fig. 1 shows them in diagrammatic form. The parents are, in essence, a strip and a path. A 'strip' has two dimensions: length and breadth. A 'way' has only one

dimension: length. As shown in Fig. 1, the ancestors of the greenway concept include:

- the ceremonial avenue, as in Ancient Egypt;
- the boulevard, originally a walk on the bulwark of a fortified town but later a tree-lined street;
- the parkway, planned for recreational transport; a riverside parkway, for urban recreation;
- the park belt, on the perimeter of a settlement for the recreational needs of a whole town; a park system, planned to inter-connect urban parks;
- the green belt, planned to control urban sprawl;
- the greenway system a settlement for the recreational needs of the entire city;
- the green trail, planned as a recreational routeway in an urban or rural area.

2.2. *The British approach to greenways*

British greenways developed in the 20th century as an aspect of open space planning. The years 1900–1947 saw a vigorous discussion of these issues, which I summarised in 1982 (Turner, 1992). There was discussion in the professional press and far-sighted plans were commissioned for British towns. Leading planners, including Patrick Geddes and Thomas Mawson, were inspired by the work of Olmsted and his successors in the USA. Closer to home they were inspired by open space planning work in Germany. The most brilliant UK product of this period was the Forshaw and Abercrombie London plans of 1943–1944. Abercrombie saw open space as one of the four key aspects of London planning. His concept for London is represented by the Greenway System diagram in Fig. 1, though his terminology for the idea was that of the ‘park system’ and ‘parkway’. The following passage explains his concept.

All forms of open space need to be considered as a whole, and to be co-ordinated into a closely-linked park system, with parkways along existing and new roads forming the links between the larger parks. ...[so that] it becomes possible for the town dweller to get from doorstep to open country through an easy flow of open space from garden to park, from park to parkway, from parkway to green wedge and from green wedge to Green Belt. A great advantage of the linking parkway is that it extends the radius of influence of the larger

open spaces and brings the latter into more intimate relationship with the surrounding areas (Forshaw, 1943, p. 38)

The activism of 1900–50 also led to the incorporation of open space planning principles in two key pieces of legislation: the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) and the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (NPACA). This legislation resulted in open space planning at the local level and at the national level. The former was primarily concerned with towns and the latter exclusively with the countryside. Planning departments were established at the local level but, despite the name ‘Town and Country Planning Act’, which brought them into existence, local planning departments are almost entirely concerned with towns. There was no planning control over the countryside, except to slow the expansion of towns by making it more difficult to obtain permission for building on open land.

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act led to the establishment of a national agency, originally called the Countryside Commission and now the Countryside Agency (CA), which continues to perform the role defined by the Act which brought it into existence. During the 1980s and 1990s landscape planners called for an equivalent of the Countryside Agency to deal with open space in towns. The government refused but there has been some extension of the Countryside Agency’s work into towns (e.g. the planning of a Thames Path through Central London). The Countryside Agency is the prime government-funded agency specialising in open space planning but it has never had a statutory role, or expertise, in the planning of *urban* open space.

The well-intentioned Acts of 1947 therefore led a near-divorce between ‘town planning’ and ‘open space planning’, with the latter done effectively only outside towns. For the planners and the planned, urban open space planning, like sex in a stale marriage, became a no-go zone. Little happened; nothing of value was created. Comparing the open space sections of plans drawn up before and after 1947 illustrates the point. The 1943 open space plan for London was passionate and imaginative. The 1951 plan was like a frosty session with a marriage guidance counsellor. Town planners forgot about the quality and function of open space. They became obsessed with the quantity of open space

per 1,000 people. In retrospect, it would have been better if the open space planning role had been divorced from the remit of planning departments.

Central government advice on urban open space planning came in the form of Planning Policy Guidance on Sport and Recreation PPG17 (Department of the Environment, 1991). If I may express a personal opinion, this was a shameful document written by un-named bureaucrats without knowledge of, or enthusiasm for, open space or landscape planning. Fundamentally, they saw their task as encouraging local authorities to make provision for organised sport and recreation. This has nothing to do with the quality of open space in towns. It was rather as if a farmers union had drafted a guidance note on food safety without talking to politicians, experts on health or experts on nutrition. There have been extremely few landscape architects employed by UK central government. Nor do they make a significant contribution to the education of town planners in the UK. Nor is there any serious discussion of landscape planning principles in current UK textbooks on ‘town and country planning’.

In 2001 the government published a revised draft of PPG17 and launched a major review of open space planning in towns. It did not wait for the latter before publishing the former. This led to a sharp criticism from a group of MPs specialising in the urban environment. The chair of the House of Commons Urban Affairs Subcommittee, Andrew Bennett, described the revised draft, in 2002, as ‘seriously flawed’, adding that ‘the state of open space in our cities [remains] a serious blight, diminishing the quality of life for our citizens’ (Landlines, 2002). Yet even this draft recommended that ‘In planning for new open spaces, authorities should seek opportunities to improve the local open space network, for example by creating green chains and green links, including along river and canal banks. These can improve the ‘permeability’ of urban and suburban areas, and allow opportunities for walking and cycling as alternative transport modes. Authorities should seek opportunities to create public open space from vacant land and to incorporate open space within new development on previously-used land. Recreational open spaces can make use of land which is otherwise unsuitable for development because, for example, of risk of flooding’ (Department of Environment, 2001). The draft also called for assessment procedures to be applied to public open

space. In response to criticism from the Urban Affairs Subcommittee, publication of the revised PPG17 was delayed pending publication of the Urban Greenspaces Task Force report in 2002. As a member of this Task Force, I was disappointed by the final report. It appears to have been written by the civil servants who serviced the Task Force, not by its members.

The report of the Urban Greenspaces Task Force was one of the influences on the establishment of CABE Space. CABE is the government-appointed Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. CABE Space is concerned with the improvement and maintenance of parks and green spaces across England. It is not specifically concerned with greenways but it intends to develop strategic planning approaches to public space design, management and maintenance. The Commissioner responsible for this aspect of CABE’s work is a landscape architect and director of the EDAA, Inc. London office. This is a most encouraging appointment. CABE appears to be well-resourced and has recruited experts in parks and open spaces to act as facilitators who will stimulate local authority interest in this category of work. I did however take the fact that my application to be one of the facilitators was rejected as an indicator that CABE’s emphasis would be more on static parks than dynamic greenways.

2.3. *Conceptual analysis*

Despite the multiplicity of greenway planning ideas used in Britain and elsewhere, there are only two primary concepts, related to ownership: a public right of way over land belonging to someone else and a strip of land in public ownership.

The concept of a right of way is probably older than the concept of land ownership. One thinks of the Celtic tracks through pre-Roman Europe, the Great Silk Road from Europe to Asia and the Songlines which incorporate the history, geography and land use rights of the Australian Aborigines (Chatwin, 1987). England has a vast network of ‘rights of way’ through agricultural land. They are shown on government maps by dotted red lines and, typically, serve the needs of an agricultural peasantry in travelling to church, to the fields or to markets. Similar rights exist in Scotland but the routes are not shown on maps because Scots law is more permissive of walking on private land than English law.

Table 1
Permutations for use of the term ‘greenway’

| Type | Function | Character | Example |
|--------------|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Right of way | Leisure | Vegetated | Forest trail |
| | | Environmentally green | Urban trail |
| Strip | Business | Vegetated | Agricultural path to work |
| | | Environmentally green | Urban path to work with no vegetation |
| | Leisure | Vegetated | Riverside park |
| | | Environmentally green | Leisure cycle path |
| Business | Vegetated | Urban avenue | |
| | Environmentally green | Pedestrianised shopping street with no vegetation | |

A strip of land in public ownership has two dimensions, width as well as length. It may be paved, unpaved or partly paved. It may be used primarily for leisure or primarily for business. When unpaved, the strip is often described by local authorities as a Parkway or Green Corridor. The word ‘road’, as used for many strips of land in public ownership, derives from the verb ‘to ride’. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word ‘street’ comes from *strata*, meaning a paved way, describing the present condition of many such strips. The Romans were the first to provide Europe with a network of paved routes in public ownership. Parkways and Greenways tend to be routes which are planned and designed for recreation, rather than business. In addition to rights of way across farmland, Britain has some ancient ‘green roads’. They are unpaved and were made as drove roads for taking sheep and cattle to market.

Current usage is not, of course, governed by word derivation. Yet the foregoing conceptual analysis leads to several permutations for use of the term ‘greenway’ (see Table 1). ‘Environmentally green’ is used in the table to indicate a place which provides ‘good surroundings’ but not necessarily by means of vegetation (e.g. a piazza or path in a medieval town). Keeping this conceptual analysis in mind, a series of diagrams (see Table 2) was prepared to illustrate what were expected to be the range of UK views on use of the term greenway. The diagrams were incorporated into the first section of the questionnaire, dealing with definitions.

3. Research method

A questionnaire was drafted, circulated to interested parties, tested and then, at the end of 2001, distributed

to 433 planning authorities in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The response rate was 25.6% (111 returns) with 5 additional authorities writing to say they were too busy with other work to complete the questionnaires. Additionally, 6 County Councils wrote to say that open space planning was not part of their responsibility, though 10 County Council completed questionnaires with details of their greenway planning, suggesting a degree of conceptual confusion. The questionnaire returns were analysed both numerically and textually. In Tables 2–4, the questions are quoted and the responses are summarised.

4. Research results

The questionnaire was divided into four parts:

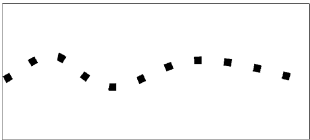
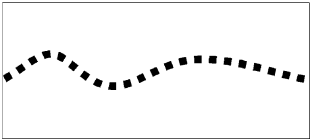
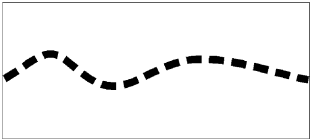
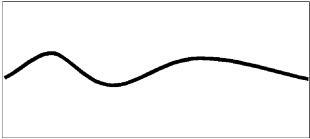
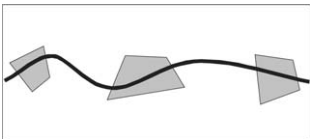
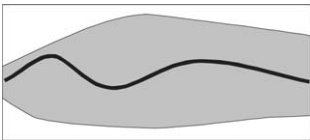
- A preamble, seeking details of the respondent;
- Part 1, using diagrams and dealing with greenway definitions;
- Part 2, dealing with current greenway planning;
- Part 3, requesting details of a significant greenway project.

4.1. Preamble to the questionnaire

The preamble requested information about the individual completing the form. With regard to job titles: 73.8% contained the word planner or planning, 7.2% contained the word country or countryside, 4.5% contained the word landscape, 1.8% contained the word transport and 1.8% contained the word environment.

There was only one respondent with the word ‘greenway’ and only one with the word ‘ecology’, in their job titles. The other 10.9% remaining of job titles

Table 2
Part 1 of the questionnaire

| | Definition | Diagram | Responses (%) |
|---|---|--|---------------|
| 1 | A footpath |  | 2.7 |
| 2 | A bicycle lane |  | 2.7 |
| 3 | A bus lane |  | 1.8 |
| 4 | A route designed for shared use, but excluding motorised vehicles, in and around towns, cities and the countryside. |  | 33.3 |
| 5 | A route to provide people with access to open spaces close to where they live and to link together rural and urban spaces like a great circulating system. |  | 38.7 |
| 6 | A linear space containing elements planned, design and managed for multiple purposes including ecological, recreational, cultural, aesthetic and other purposes compatible with the concept of sustainable land use. |  | 43.2 |
| 7 | Another definition: [This space was left blank for comment on the questionnaire]. Only 4.5% declined to check any of the boxes, because their authority did not use the word 'greenway' but 24% added their own definition or commented that they used the concepts of walkway, cycleway and green corridor but not 'greenway'. Note also that 28% of respondents checked more than one box: 14.4% checked 5 + 6, 8.1% 4 + 5 and 5.4% 4 + 5 + 6. No other respondents checked more than one box | | |

(e.g. 'Policy and Implementation Officer', 'Project Officer' and 'Regeneration Team Leader') are likely to be held by qualified members of the Royal Town Planning Institute. These results are unsurprising, given that the questionnaire was sent to planning authorities. But they also confirm that landscape architects have little involvement with local authority landscape planning in the UK. This, in turn, may be related to the fact that the UK Landscape Institute does not have a landscape planning division and only approved the first educational course in landscape planning in 1998.

It should however be noted that some of the landscape assessment and greenway planning work referred to the returns was done by consultant landscape architects working to briefs from planning authorities.

4.2. Part 1 (questions 1–7) greenway definitions

The first group of questions was concerned with the definition of greenways. Both text and images were used in the interests of clarity. The responses are summarised in the fourth column of Table 2.

Table 3
Part 2 of the questionnaire

| | Questions | Responses |
|----|--|---|
| | Awareness | |
| 8 | Are you aware of the Countryside Agency Greenways initiative? Yes/No | 75% were aware of the CA initiative |
| 9 | Have you used the Countryside Agency Greenways website? Yes/No http://www.greenways.gov.uk/site/gw_only/gwayinto.htm | 30% had used the CA website. |
| 10 | Are you aware of the European Greenways Association? Yes/No http://www.aevv-egwa.org/new/english/index2.html Questions re planning period 1992–2002 | 11% were aware of the EGA. |
| 11 | Did greenways play a significant role in your authority's green space planning in the past decade? Yes/No | 33% said yes |
| 12 | Did you use a spatial database (Geographical Information System/GIS) to assist with green space planning in the past decade? Yes/No If so, which software do you use? | 20% used a GIS (of which 40% used MapInfo and 50% used ArcView) |
| 13 | Do you have an assessment procedure for greenways and green open spaces? Yes/No | 30% said yes |
| 14 | What length of greenway was created in your local authority area during the past decade? (in km) Questions re planning period 2002–2012 | The average length was 12.9 km |
| 15 | Do you expect greenways to play a significant role in your authority's green space planning in the next decade? Yes/No | 75% said yes |
| 16 | Do you expect to use a spatial database (Geographical Information System/GIS) to assist with green space planning in the next decade? Yes/No | 68% expect to use a GIS |
| 17 | Do you plan to introduce an assessment procedure for greenways and green open spaces? Yes/No | 65% said yes |
| 18 | What length of greenway do you expect to establish in your local authority area during the next decade? (in km) | The total length is expected to be 633 km |
| 19 | Any additional comment(s) on greenway and greenspace planning in your local authority area: | |

It is significant that 81.9% of respondents used definitions 5 and 6. As the derivation from *greenbelt* and *parkway* suggests, they see greenways as routes through one or more vegetated open spaces. This type of greenway may *contribute* to green transport objectives but it is not primarily a green transport route of the type defined by the European Greenways Association.

Two local authorities use 'greenway' to mean 'bus way'. I have seen one of these, in Edinburgh. It is a bus lane marked on a blacktop road surface with green chippings. This usage satisfies all of Ahern's criteria: the bus lane is linear, it provides linkage, it is multi-functional (for use by busses, taxis, cycles and motor-cycles), it contributes to sustainability and it is integrated with other transport modes. But it has no relationship to the historic ideas of *greenbelt* or *parkway*.

4.3. Part 2 (questions 8–19) current greenway planning

Table 3 shows Part 2 of the questionnaire, including the responses. The Countryside Agency can be satisfied that 75% of respondents are familiar with the term 'greenway' yet it is puzzling that only 30% have visited the Countryside Agency greenways website. One respondent stated directly that 'I am not allowed to access the internet' and it is likely that other authorities discourage web use in case it distracts employees from what is seen as more productive work. The responses to the questions regarding greenway planning during the previous decade (nos. 11–13) may be disappointing to the Countryside Agency, though it is pleasing that the length of greenway planned for the next decade is double that of the preceding decade. The fact that 65% of respondents plan to introduce an assessment procedure

Table 4
Part 3 of the questionnaire

Please select a significant greenway project, which is underway in your local plan area, and answer the following questions. If possible, please send a copy of the greenway plan, or leaflet, with this questionnaire

| 20 | Name of greenway project | Responses |
|----|--|--|
| 21 | Web address for details of project | (Details of 53 named greenway projects were submitted) The following web addresses were given: http://www.greenchain.com/ http://www.greenways.gov.uk/ http://www.quantockhills.com/ http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/hilsea.htm http://www.crawleymillennium.org.uk/ http://www.elstowgardenvillages.co.uk/ |
| 22 | Length of the greenway | The average length was 12.9 km |
| 23 | Date of commencement | Between 1970 and 2002 (with 25% of start dates pre-1997) |
| 24 | Planned date of completion | 60% due for completion between 2002 and 2007 |
| 25 | What were the objectives of the greenway project? (e.g. historic preservation, recreation, tourism, green transport, habitat creation, river management) | The cited objectives were: recreation and leisure 74%, green transport 47%, nature conservation and habitat creation 37%, tourism 11.7%, flood defence and river management 9.8%, healthy living 9.8%, historic preservation 7.8%, regeneration 5.8%, open space protection 5.8%, education 5.8%, visitor management 3.9%, social inclusion 1.9% |
| 26 | Is the greenway primarily a path or is it a route through a larger greenspace? | Path 46%, route 42%, both 12% |
| 27 | Is this greenway part of a larger network? | 82% said yes |
| 28 | Does the greenway connect an origin to a destination? (e.g. a station to a shopping centre, or a town centre to a country park) | 78% said yes but many of the 'destinations' were another greenspace |
| 29 | What features are included in the greenway? (e.g. route signs, leaflet, rest areas, toilets, cafes, historic sites, parks) | The commonest features being signage, leaflets and rest areas. |
| 30 | What types of traffic are permitted (e.g. pedestrians, cyclists, horse-riders, motor vehicles) | 94% cited pedestrians, 90% cyclists, 41% horses, and 11% mentioned wheelchairs (which were thoughtlessly omitted from the question) |
| 31 | How was the greenway project funded? (e.g. local authority, Countryside Agency, urban regeneration budget, charitable funds, lottery funds) | The primary sources of funding for greenways were the local authority (79%) and the Countryside Agency (42%) and landfill tax (14%). |
| 32 | Who were the groups involved in planning this project? (e.g. local authority, national agency, Sustrans, community group) | The groups involved in planning greenway projects were broadly equivalent to those involved in their funding, with one difference: there was a much larger involvement of community groups as participants in the planning process than as participants in the funding or maintenance of greenways. |
| 33 | Which groups will be responsible for maintaining the greenway once it has been developed? | The commonest approach to maintaining the land was through direct expenditure by the local authority or county authority. This applies to over 90% of the greenways and the other 10% were 'Greenways Trusts' and similar bodies which are likely to receive local authority funding. But some additional labour is involved, though only 10% mentioned the involvement of community groups and volunteers. An interesting third source, mentioned in 7% of returns, is the willingness of highways to become involved in maintenance. Additional involvement came from Groundwork Trusts and a horse riding school ^a |

Table 4 (Continued)

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 34 | What strategies were used for implementation? (e.g. land acquisition, access agreements, planning gain) | Much of the land was already in local authority ownership. Additional land was acquired through purchase or lease agreements. In other cases Access Agreements were made involving the payment of public funds to private landowners in return for granting access to the public. Rights of access were also obtained through Section 106 Planning Agreements ^b |
| 35 | Any additional comments | |

^a Groundwork is ‘a leading environmental regeneration charity making sustainable development a reality in many of the UK’s poorest communities’. See <http://www.groundwork.org.uk/>.

^b Section 106 of Britain’s Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local Planning Authority (LPA) to enter into a legally binding agreement (planning obligation) with a land developer over a related issue. The obligation is usually termed a ‘Section 106 Agreement’.

is likely to be a direct response to the revised draft of Planning Policy and Guidance Note 17 (PPG17, see below).

4.4. Part 3 (questions 20–35) significant greenway project

Table 4 shows Part 3 of the questionnaire, including the responses. The typical planning period was 1997–2007 and the average length of the greenway projects described in the questionnaire returns was 12.9 km. Most UK greenways are initiated by local authorities, though community groups have some involvement as consultees and voluntary workers. Funding for the greenways came from many different sources, though most of the money has been raised by taxation and comes out of pots with different government labels. One may see it as disappointing that so little money is raised from registered charities, private sources and voluntary bodies.

5. Discussion

There are grounds for hoping that the greenway concept will revive open space planning in the UK. This could happen in several ways.

First, the objective of creating a coherent network provides a reason for creating new public open space. Many UK local authorities are planning networks, some are calling them greenway networks and some are using other names. An authority in North London reported that ‘We do not have, nor do we intend to create greenways. But we do have, and intend to create, other types of linear greenspace, and improve exist-



Fig. 3. Greenways can provide for movement while the historic public park is essentially a static concept (Turner, 1998, p.113).

ing paths within greenbelt and linkages to them.¹ In a major Scots city ‘The City Plan identifies a “green network” consisting of greenbelt and greenspace. A subset of this contains the various environmental designations including corridors of wildlife and landscape importance.’

Second, the objective of creating a green transport network confers a vital new use on public open space. A static ‘public park’ cannot provide for transport (Fig. 3).

A dynamic ‘greenway network’ can form a crucial part of a sustainable transport system. A town in the East Midlands responded that ‘We have developed greenways as a means of getting from A to B without the use of a car. Inevitably, with the pressure we experience to maximise the use of land, greenways are also expected to fulfil other (compatible) functions. Sustainable movement takes top priority however’. A county council north of London stated that ‘Greenways, non-motorised user routes, Rights of Way Improvement Plans and Access Strategy are all developing areas of involvement and are increasingly noted in the County’s Local Transport Plan’.

¹ This and other quotations come from the comment sections of the questionnaire returns. None of the local authorities have not been named in this paper, because of requests for confidentiality.

Third, greenways can contribute to the re-integration of planning for ‘town’ and ‘country’. A Thames Valley town has a greenway strategy for ‘linking people to green spaces and the countryside’. Another town in the region stated that ‘A “Greenway” is part of a network of shared use, quality routes for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders which involves travel through the town and countryside’. One local authority commented that it already has ‘980 km of existing ROW (footpath and bridleway)’. These are ancient ‘Rights Of Way’, mostly serving the needs of a vanished agricultural peasantry. New ‘greenways’ could serve the needs of a new urban population seeking active recreation in the countryside (Fig. 2).

6. Conclusion

The greenway concept has become established in the UK. It was significant in the planning work of 33% of respondents during the past decade and 75% of respondents expect it to be significant during the next decade. The great majority (81.9%) use it to mean a route (‘way’) through a strip of publicly owned greenspace. This conception differs from that of the Countryside Agency and the European Greenways Association, which see greenways much more as routes than as linear strips of open space. The Countryside Agency/European Greenways Association interpretation is closer to my 1996 definition (‘a route which is good from an environmental point of view’) and retains my support, for the following reasons:

1. It makes excellent use of the term ‘greenway’ to characterise a fresh approach to public open space planning which concentrates more on the *use and character* of open space than on its *preservation and ownership*.
2. It allows for greenways to take the form of easements over land in either private or public ownership.
3. It gives a new and highly desirable function to public open space: that of making a contribution to sustainable transport objectives and other public goods.
4. It provides a facility which can be installed as infrastructure in peri-urban areas (rural districts near towns) before they become urbanised.

5. It allows for a *flexible* interpretation of ‘green’ to be combined with a *highly specific* interpretation of ‘way’:

- With ‘Green’ interpreted as in ‘green politics’, rather than as a synonym for ‘vegetated’, to mean ‘good from an environmental point of view’.
- With ‘Way’ interpreted in its ancient sense, to mean ‘a route’.

The above interpretation of the greenway concept can be represented (Fig. 4) by a dotted line passing through a series of overlapping zones. The line is dotted to indicate that, in essence, it is an easement rather than a strip of land in public ownership. The overlapping boundaries indicate zones of environmental quality. They are zones where public goods exist, in the

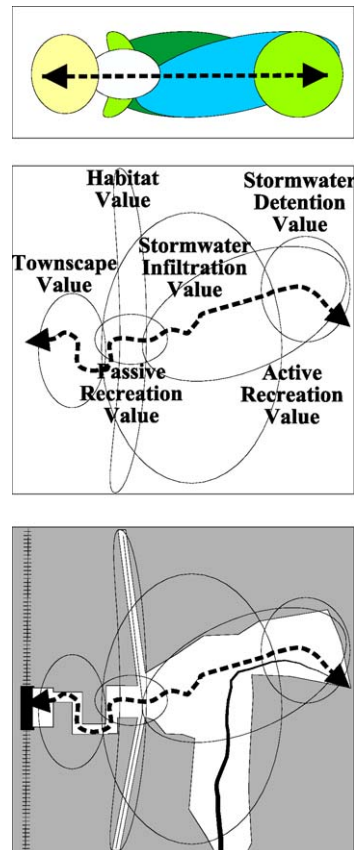


Fig. 4. Greenways can be planned as routes through overlapping zones of environmental quality, including areas of land used for urban agriculture, urban forestry and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS).

sense outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 of *Landscape planning and environmental impact design* (Turner, 1998). The bands might, for example, indicate zones of:

- Scenic value
- Ecological value
- Hydrological value
- Recreational value

Normally, these value zones will overlap. They are not likely to be co-incident and they are not likely to be confined to open space in public ownership. Yet each is in need of landscape planning in order to conserve and enhance the quality of the environment. A ‘greenway’, in this sense, would be a route from which people can enjoy the public goods provided by the outdoor landscape. As such, the greenway could a landscape planning tool of significant value.

The questionnaire research outlined in this paper indicates that British greenway planning lacks enthusiasm and direction. Most of the greenways being planned are linear public open spaces with a trail path. They are not multi-objective landscapes. It seems likely that this situation is a consequence of greenway planning being undertaken, predominantly, by staff with general planning qualifications rather than specialist landscape or open space planning qualifications. The need to train specialists was the subject of my first article for this journal (Turner, 1984). If the work is done by generalist planners, good results are unlikely to be achieved, even if, as in Britain, the country has a century-long history of greenway planning.

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Tom Turner received a MA in Social Science from the University of St. Andrews and a Diploma in Landscape Architecture from the University of Edinburgh. He is currently a principal lecturer in landscape planning at the University of Greenwich in London. He is the author of publications on *Landscape planning* (Hutchinson, 1988), *Urban parks* (Landscape Institute, 1992), *City as landscape* (Spon, 1996), *Landscape planning and environmental impact design* (1998), *Public Open Space: planning and management with GIS* (UCL, 1998). In 1991 he produced a report for the London Planning Advisory Committee on *Green Chains and Strategic Open Space in London*. In 2001–2002 he was a member of the *Urban green space task force*.