

**Some parts of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions.**

If you have discovered material in AURA which is unlawful e.g. breaches copyright, (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please read our [Takedown Policy](#) and [contact the service](#) immediately

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN NATURE CONSERVATION:

Case Studies of the Urban Wildlife Group 1980-85

ALISON MILLWARD  
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Aston in Birmingham

April 1987

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with the author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the author's prior, written consent.



The University of Aston in Birmingham

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN NATURE CONSERVATION:

Case Studies of the Urban Wildlife Group 1980-85

Alison Millward  
Doctor of Philosophy

SUMMARY

The effectiveness of the strategies employed by the Urban Wildlife Group (a voluntary conservation organisation) to provide and manage three urban nature parks has been evaluated, using a multiple methods methodology.

Where the level of community interest and commitment to a project is high, the utilisation of the community nature park strategy (to maximise benefits to UWG and the community) is warranted. Where the level of interest and commitment of the local community is low, a strategy designed to encourage limited involvement of the community is most effective and efficient. The campaign strategy, whereby the community and UWG take direct action to oppose a threat of undesirable development on a nature park, is assessed to be a sub-strategy, rather than a strategy in its own right.

Questionnaire surveys and observation studies have revealed that urban people appreciate and indeed demand access to nature parks in urban areas, which have similar amenity value to that provided by countryside recreation sites. Urban nature parks are valued for their natural character, natural features (trees, wild flowers) peace and quiet, wildlife and openness. People use these sites for a mixture of informal and mainly passive activities, such as walking and dog walking. They appear to be of particular value to children for physical and imaginative play.

The exact input of time and resources that UWG has committed to the projects has depended on the level of input of the local authority. The evidence indicates that the necessary technical expertise needed to produce and manage urban nature parks, using a user-oriented approach is not adequately provided by local authorities.

The methods used in this research are presented as an 'evaluation kit' that may be used by practitioners and researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of a wide range of different open spaces and the strategies employed to provide and manage them.

Key words: urban nature conservation, community involvement, evaluation, perception and behaviour.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to express my gratitude firstly to Peter Byfield who initiated the research and to the Barrow and Geraldine Cadbury Trust for the essential financial support. Secondly, a great debt is owed to all my supervisors for their encouragement and guidance throughout the project, but particularly to Mike Tricker who has borne the main responsibility. And thirdly, my thanks go to all those people from UWG, the local authorities and the community groups who gave so freely of their time to provide the information without which there would have been no research.

Finally, I should like to extend my special thanks to Andrew, Chris, Ellen, and Peter who have provided so much.

## CONTENTS

	Page
Title	1
Summary	2
Acknowledgements	3
Contents	4
Figures	7
Tables	7
Plates	10
 1	
Background to the Research	11
1.1. The Research Project and Urban Wildlife Group	11
1.2. Development of the Research Project	13
1.3. Anticipated Benefits for the Collaborating Organisation	16
1.4. Summary	18
 2	
Literature Review	19
2.1. Introduction	19
2.2. The Development of Urban Nature Conservation	20
2.3. Community Involvement and User-Oriented Approaches to the Provision of Services	28
2.4. Community Involvement in the Environment	32
2.5. Environmental Psychology and the Perception of Natural Landscapes	55
2.6. People's Behaviour in Natural Landscapes	59
2.7. The Views of the Providers	64
2.8. Conclusions	68
 3	
Tackling the Problem	69
3.1. Introduction	69
3.2. Methodology	69
3.3. Action Research	77
3.4. Research Design - Formal Evaluation Research	78
3.5. The Evaluation Research Process	80
3.6. Summary	84
3.7. Data Collection Methods	85



4	Strategies for Community Involvement in Urban Nature Conservation	101
4.1.	The Early Development of UWG's Approach to Community Involvement	101
4.2.	Defining the Concept of Community Nature Parks	102
4.3.	The Emergence of Alternative Strategies	104
4.4.	Defining the Community Involvement Strategies	106
4.5.	Definitions of the Four Community Involvement Strategies	110
4.6.	Community Involvement in Urban Nature Conservation	112
4.7.	Summary	114
5	Plants Brook – Community Nature Park Strategy	116
5.1.	The Project and its Context	116
5.2.	Operational Objectives for the Project	119
5.3.	Operational Objectives for Community Involvement	123
5.4.	Implementation – Monitoring the Delivery System	125
5.5.	Outcome Effects	143
5.6.	Conclusions	155
6	Leckie Rd – Limited Community Involvement Strategy	161
6.1.	The Project and its Context	161
6.2.	Operational Objectives for the Project	166
6.3.	Operational Objectives for Community Involvement	168
6.4.	Implementation – Monitoring the Delivery System	170
6.5.	Outcome Effects	189
6.6.	Conclusions	202
7	Woodgate Valley – Community Campaign Strategy	206
7.1.	The Project and its Context	206
7.2.	Operational Objectives for the Project	210
7.3.	Operational Objectives for Community Involvement	213
7.4.	Implementation – Monitoring the Delivery System	216

7.5.	Outcome Effects	238
7.6.	Conclusions	252
8	Discussion	257
8.1.	Introduction	257
8.2.	The Evaluation of the Public's Perception of Urban Nature Parks	258
8.3.	The Evaluation of People's Use of the Nature Parks	264
8.4.	The Effectiveness of the Community Involvement Strategies	267
8.5.	Defining the Roles of the Interested Parties and Identifying Appropriate Strategies	284
8.6.	Conclusions on the Effectiveness of the Different Strategies	297
8.7.	The Value of the Research Approach and Methodology	303
8.8.	Refinements to the Questionnaire Survey and Observation Study Method	314
9	Conclusions and Recommendations	317
9.1.	Principal Findings	319
9.2.	Remaining Questions	321
	Appendices	323
A	Memorandum and Articles of Association (UWG)	323
B	Semi-structured Interview Schedule	328
C	Questionnaire (1983)	330
D	Observation Method (1983)	340
E	Brief History of Plants Brook	343
F	Brief History of Leckie Rd	347
G	Brief History of Woodgate Valley	350
H	Refined Questionnaire (1986)	353
I	Refined Observation Method	358
J	UWG Policy (Landscape and Planning) 1987	363
K	The History and Development of UWG 1981-85	367
	List of References	382

## FIGURES

1	Aspects of the Ecological Approach to Landscape Design (after Ruff, 1979)	45
2	The Subjective-Objective Dimension (after Burrell and Morgan, 1979)	74
3	The Checkland Methodology (after Checkland and Smyth, 1976)	87
4	Plants Brook Community Nature Park, Walmley, Birmingham	117
5	The Microgeography of Use at Plants Brook Nature Park, Summer 1984	141
6	The Microgeography of Use at Plants Brook Nature Park, Summer 1985	142
7	Leckie Rd Community Green Space	162
8	The Microgeography of Use at Leckie Rd Aug '83 - July '84	186
9	The Microgeography of Use at Leckie Rd May, June, July 1985	187
10	Woodgate Valley Country Park	207
11	Location of Sites A and B, and the Country Park in Woodgate Valley	208
12	The Microgeography of Use at Woodgate Valley, May, June, July 1984	236
13	The Microgeography of Use at Woodgate Valley, May, June, July 1985	237
14	A Model Describing the Process of Community Involvement Projects in Urban Nature Conservation	285

## TABLES

1	The benefits derived from participation in urban wildlife projects (after Mostyn, 1980)	40
2	Summary of what people like and dislike about countryside recreation sites (after Elson, 1977)	60
3	Summary of the philosophical basis to the research	85
4	Summary of the chosen data collection methods	100
5	Criteria adopted by UWG for assessing the importance of site-based projects	109



## Plants Brook:

6	Reasons for not having visited the nature park by those who knew of it	132
7	The activities engaged in by visitors to Plants Brook Community Nature Park	133
8	What visitors particularly liked about the nature park	134
9	What visitors disliked about the nature park	135
10	The changes that could be made to make the nature park more attractive to visitors	136
11	The impact of publicity	136
12	The range, relative frequencies and the male/female differences of activities for all Sunday and weekday observations (1983-84)	138
13	A comparison of use in the peak periods (May - July) between 1984 and 1985	139
14	User group differences between 1984 and 1985	139
15	Changes noticed by visitors between 1982 and 1983	152
16	People's general preferences for open space	152
17	What visitors found attractive about their preferred open spaces	153

## Leckie Rd:

18	Reasons for not having visited Leckie Rd by those who knew of it	179
19	The activities engaged in by visitors to Leckie Rd	180
20	What visitors particularly liked about Leckie Rd	180
21	What visitors disliked about Leckie Rd	181
22	The changes that could be made to make the site more attractive to visitors	182
23	The range, relative frequencies and the male/female differences of activities for all Sunday and weekday observations at Leckie Rd (1983-84)	183
24	The range and relative frequencies of activities for May June and July in 1984 and 1985	184
25	User group differences for the peak periods of 1984 and 1985	185
26	Who should be responsible for looking after the site	198
27	Changes to the site noted by visitors between	199

	October 1982 and October 1983	
28	People's general preferences for open space	200
29	What people found attractive about their preferred open spaces	201
	Woodgate Valley:	
30	Reasons for not having visited the valley, by those who knew of it	227
31	The activities engaged in by visitors at Woodgate Valley	228
32	What visitors particularly liked about the valley	229
33	What visitors disliked about the valley	229
34	The changes that could be made to make the valley more attractive to visitors	230
35	The range, relative frequencies and male/female differences of activities in Woodgate Valley for all Sunday and weekday recordings between 1983 and 1984	232
36	The range and relative frequencies of activities for May, June and July in 1984 and 1985	233
37	User group differences for the peak periods in 1984 and 1985	234
38	Who should be responsible for looking after the valley	248
39	Changes in the valley between 1982 and 1983	249
40	People's general preferences for open space	249
41	What visitors found attractive about their preferred open spaces	251
	Discussion:	
42	A comparison of the rank ordering of what it is that people like about the 3 case study sites with the findings of Elson's research on countryside sites	258
43	A comparison of the rank order of what people liked about their preferred local open spaces	260
44	A comparison of visitors' dislikes about the case sites, other urban parks and countryside sites	261
45	A comparison of the improvements, by rank order, that would make the case sites more attractive to visitors	263



## PLATES

1	Plants Brook Community Nature Park - view westwards (1985)	118
2	Plants Brook Community Nature Park - view eastwards (1985)	118
3	Leckie Rd - view northwards to the railway line (1983)	163
4	Leckie Rd - view south towards the town centre (1985)	163
5	Tree planting at Leckie Rd (March 1982)	175
6	Woodgate Valley (1985)	209
7	Woodgate Valley - meadow (1985)	209
8	Woodgate Valley - view north from the Bourn Brook	215

## CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

## 1.1. The Research Project and Urban Wildlife Group

The objective of the Interdisciplinary Higher Degree Scheme is to provide research training experience, using Joint Research Council studentships. It organises projects in collaboration with outside organisations, for the student to research a problem identified by the organisation. I was placed with the Urban Wildlife Group (UWG), a voluntary organisation which had been established in 1980 to promote nature conservation in Birmingham and the Black Country.

Up until the late 1970s conservationists had concentrated their efforts on conserving nature reserves in the countryside (Sheail, 1975). This type of work was carried out by experts such as ecologists, naturalists and land managers, with limited assistance from the public. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), provided the main opportunity for members of the general public to learn the basic countryside management skills, such as coppicing, hedgelaying and woodland planting, and to put those skills into practice.

However, towards the end of the 1970s, conservationists began to recognise that there were large amounts of open space in towns and cities around the UK, that were also worthy of nature reserve status or could become so, given the right type of management (Teagle, 1978). New voluntary groups began to emerge in response to this opportunity, guided by the advice of Teagle (1978). He asserted that over-riding the contribution that could be made by protecting the primary site, by revising the management plans of the parks and recreation grounds, making more imaginative use of new derelict land and gaining a better understanding of recently developed wasteland communities, was the need to interest people in their wildlife heritage and through a wider understanding help them to develop a desire for its continued existence. He also commented that the ecologist should be

aware of the likely effects of this on Society: 'He is responsible to his own species as well as others' (page 51).

In July 1980, Friends of the Earth (Birmingham) Ltd set up the Greensite Project, with funding from the Manpower Services Commission's Community Enterprise Programme. In its first year, the project employed 20 people, four of whom made up the Survey Team (Team), who were seconded to the then newly formed, Urban Wildlife Group.

I was employed as an ecologist on that team from December 1980 to September 1981, together with another ecologist, a landscape architect and an administrator. We were located at Friends of the Earth's headquarters in Birmingham and were supervised by their urban ecologist, who also sat on UWG's executive committee. We worked on a variety of projects, including the production of the Group's newsletter, the community projects, exhibitions, media events and liaison with local authorities and other statutory and voluntary organisations.

By May 1981, an executive committee had been elected to run the affairs of the Group, and a detailed constitution had been drawn up. At that time the Group had some 200 members and partial responsibility for 4 full-time staff.

In 1982 the Group achieved charitable status and became a company limited by guarantee. Membership is open to any member of the general public and institutions. The executive has always been made up of volunteers, with professional backgrounds in related fields such as landscape design, ecology, planning and landscape management, and others who have a keen leisure time interest in conservation. All staff, but particularly senior staff, have an open invitation to attend and contribute to executive meetings.



The Group's aims (as published in its bi-monthly newsletter and Memorandum and Articles of Association, Appendix A) are to:

- 1 Increase public awareness of the need to foster natural history in the conurbation.
- 2 Campaign to protect existing sites of wildlife value and improve others.
- 3 Promote ideas and inspiration for combining natural history and recreation in urban open spaces.
- 4 Encourage and help other groups in their efforts to conserve and study wildlife.
- 5 Educate children to a wider understanding of the nature on their doorsteps, to enjoy and preserve it.
- 6 Tackle the practical problems of managing urban open spaces for both conservation and amenity.
- 7 Positively influence nature conservation policy and planning through local government, institutions and private land owners.

The aims reflect the approach UWG adopted of integrating social aspects into conservation, which is expressed in the Group's motto 'Helping nature, helping you'. The Group were keen to involve local people in the conservation and enjoyment of urban nature and had become involved in a number of projects initiated by local people.

Cole's report (1980) had revealed that local people had set up action groups elsewhere to save threatened wildlife sites in London, Cardiff, Nottingham and several other cities, and that specialist conservation groups had become involved in advising these local groups.

However, there had at that time been no evaluation of what was involved in running these types of projects, nor had there been any research to substantiate the philosophy of the new urban groups that urban people actually wanted nature in the cities.

## 1.2. Development of the Research Project

Having recognised the need for research, UWG set about drawing up a proposal for submission to the Interdisciplinary Higher Degree Scheme (IHD). The original proposals covered a

wide range of issues including the development of practical low maintenance techniques for use on urban sites and the transferability of modern measured day-work schedules to ecological landscape management. The overall aim of the research was identified as an assessment of the value of reserving small areas of urban open space for the public appreciation and enhancement of nature.

Throughout the first year these original ideas were refined, a process which was influenced in several ways. Firstly, there was an increasing number of journal articles and conferences on the subject of urban nature conservation. Although these tended to concentrate on the ecological and technical issues, they always included calls for more information on what have come to be known as the social aspects of urban conservation. Did the ordinary urban dweller want nature and more naturalistic landscapes in the city? How could local people be involved in the practical aspects of site conservation? Was this a way of overcoming the effects of massive cutbacks in local authority budgets for open space management, and the general lack of skilled labour? (eg Capability, 1977; J Thompson and G Barker (NCC) and R Greenwood speaking at the 'Habitat Creation from Scratch' conference, Birmingham Polytechnic, March 1982, unpublished; M Corder speaking at the 'Urban Wildlife Management' conference organised by Lanchester Polytechnic, May 1982, unpublished).

Secondly, throughout the first year of operation, UWG had come into contact with a wide range of community groups who had approached the Group for advice on how to protect or manage wildlife areas in their neighbourhoods. These people were generally speaking, not naturalists, nor were they members of the traditional county trusts for nature conservation or any other conservation group. So what motivated them? They were expressing a demand for nature in the city, but for what reasons? Would the answers to some of these questions enable UWG to prove to itself and others that there was a public demand for a different, more natural style of open space in urban areas and would that be justification for the changes it was advocating? Urban nature conservation did seem to be



aimed as much at people as wildlife, but whilst the benefits to nature were relatively easy to predict, the benefits to people were not.

The third major influence on the development of the research, was the fact that UWG was itself new and undergoing rapid change, as were its ideas about what urban nature conservation was and the strategies it needed to tackle the work. It was eighteen months (see Chapter 4) before I and the staff were able to identify the various community involvement strategies that were beginning to emerge, and so formally define the research problem.

Even though the research problem was a particularly dynamic one, it was anticipated that the various projects identified as potential case studies for the research would have developed to an appropriate stage by the time the need to collect the data arrived.

The project developed as a piece of action research for several reasons. Firstly I was to be based with the group for at least 4 out of every 5 days in the first two years of the project, attending and initiating meetings on all aspects of UWG's operations as well as the community projects with the staff and the executive committee. I also established close liaison with a number of similar groups elsewhere in the country who were adopting community involvement strategies in their work, but this tended to be solely at the staff level. As a result of these discussions I invited staff from a number of these organisations to attend a seminar to discuss certain issues relating to their community involvement work, the results of which are reported in Chapter 4 of this thesis, and more fully in Millward (1983).

As a consequence it was possible to develop the research design according to the perceived needs for specific information identified primarily by UWG's executive committee and staff, but also by the staff of other similar organisations.

Following discussion between the Group and the University, it was agreed that the research objectives would be:

- 1 To evaluate the strategies UWG were employing to involve local communities in the provision and management of urban nature parks.
- 2 To evaluate urban people's perception of urban nature parks.
- 3 To evaluate the use made of the sites by the local community.

### 1.3. Anticipated Benefits for the Collaborating Organisation

The anticipated benefits to UWG for investing in the research project included enhanced rates of progress, credibility, training opportunities and the fulfillment of the Group's commitment to research.

#### 1.3.1. Progress and Credibility

The changes UWG were advocating (that the public should have access to, and be involved in the management of, natural landscapes in urban areas) were viewed at the time, as being idealistic by local authority officers and councillors alike. They went against the normal practice of traditional conservationists who sought to restrict human interference to a minimum. UWG believed that the battle to save threatened habitats in the countryside would only be won if sufficient public pressure from the majority of the population ie the urban dwellers, could be mobilised in support of conservation measures. It therefore faced the double problem of winning the support of the traditional conservation lobby as well as the decision makers.

Information on the impact of people on natural landscapes in the city and people's attitudes towards nature in town and country, was badly needed in order to test the validity of UWG's arguments.



### 1.3.2. Time and Training

UWG felt it likely that it would need to rely on Manpower Services Commission funding to employ staff for several years, and so recognised the need to reduce the problems that an annual turn-over of staff would cause. Whilst public participation is taught to young planners and landscape architects, community involvement strategies (combining consultation and self-help) are not. Any information by way of case studies that could provide guidelines to help new staff pick up the techniques quickly was thought to be valuable.

As many of the young professionals employed by UWG subsequently move on into the public and private sector, it seemed necessary to get as quick an evaluation of the success of the community projects as possible, so that the successes could be built on and extended as quickly as possible.

### 1.3.3. Research

The Group are committed to initiating and supporting research, as expressed in their constitution. The IHD Scheme provided UWG with the opportunity to carry out research at low cost, and to enable someone to take an objective overview of the Group and its activities, which might, and did, lead onto the the creation of permanent employment for the researcher and another former member of staff.

### 1.3.4. Continuity

MSC funding only guarantees employment for 12 months. UWG recognised that this would cause inevitable problems and the opportunity to have someone on a 3 year contract was seen to be of great benefit. This proved to be the case for two reasons. Firstly, like any new organisation, the work and image of the Group evolved rapidly in the first three years of its existence. Because I had been involved from virtually the beginning, I was able to help new staff place their role and activity into a historical context. Secondly, in December



1983, MSC imposed a moratorium on all Community Programme renewals, for 3 months. Almost 80% of the staff lost their jobs, which placed a heavy responsibility on myself and the remaining staff to maintain UWG input into the ongoing projects, and then transfer responsibility over to the new staff who were subsequently taken on.

#### 1.4. Summary

UWG sponsored a research project in collaboration with the Interdisciplinary Higher Degree Scheme, to:

- 1 Evaluate the strategies employed by the Group, to involve local communities in the provision and management of urban nature parks.
- 2 Evaluate urban people's perception of urban nature parks.
- 3 Evaluate the use made of the sites by the local community.

## CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

The essential purpose of any literature review is to provide a critical appreciation of existing knowledge. The review provides the context for the research, highlights the gaps in knowledge and can be used to show how the findings of the research compare with, and add to the existing body of knowledge.

Interdisciplinary, client-oriented research generates complex problems that tend to arise out of the practical experience of organisations rather than previous academic research. The context of this research study was urban nature conservation, a recent innovation, and one in the process of rapid evolution. As such, the literature on this specific subject was found to be limited and especially so with respect to social issues. On the basis of visits made to several organisations, early on in the research, it seemed that the exponents of urban nature conservation were drawn from a variety of disciplines such as landscape design, planning, ecology and education which clearly identified the multi-disciplinary nature of the research problem.

This then imposed an additional problem, in that it seemed necessary to try to first integrate the different academic and vocational developments that had led up to the synthesis of the modern day urban nature conservation movement, before any critical assessment could be made.

The review thus traces these academic and vocational developments, and explores the basis to the underlying, and previously unsubstantiated social assumptions on which the movement appears to be based.

## 2.2 The Development Urban Nature Conservation

### 2.2.1. The Development of Nature Conservation in Britain

The voluntary urban nature conservation movement is relatively new, the first groups having been founded in the late 1970s. These groups were the Environmental Resource Centre (Edinburgh), the Rural Preservation Association (Liverpool, and now known as Landlife) and the Avon Wildlife Trust (Baines, 1984). This change occurred some 3 years after the publication of Sheail's comprehensive account of the history of nature conservation entitled 'Nature in Trust' (1975). Some key points from Sheail are reviewed below, in order to put the development of the urban movement into context.

The British conservation movement originated in the efforts of private individuals such as Charles Rothschild (sponsor of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, SPNR), Octavia Hill (founder of the National Trust), and organisations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

From 1912 onwards, the SPNR began to catalogue areas of land regarded as worthy of preservation, some of which the Society were able to buy. The expansion of urban settlements and the introduction of new mechanised agricultural techniques between 1918 and 1939, (events that have caused problems in recent times) led to the destruction of many of the catalogued sites. The efforts of these early pioneers were principally motivated by their interest in natural history rather than recreation.

In the late 1930s, the preservation of open air spaces for cycling and hiking gained much interest. By 1943 a network of national parks had been planned to protect extensive areas of beautiful and relatively wild country for their landscape, amenity, historical and scientific interest. Two years later, in 1945, the Wildlife Conservation Special Committee was set up by the government to consider what should be done to conserve (rather than merely preserve) our threatened natural heritage. It was this committee, led by several leading



ecologists, that produced Command Paper 7122 (Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1947). This contained various recommendations and set out the framework for the government's role in nature conservation.

The general problem of wildlife conservation required decisions to be made as to what was needed and who should take action to fulfill the need. The committee concluded that land had to be acquired for conservation, biological survey and research, experiment, education and amenity. Although they suggested that the fulfillment of any one purpose at any one site may be of national or local significance, they went on to clearly separate out the aesthetic and amenity function from the scientific and educational functions, within the categorisations they laid down for reserved areas which were:

- 1 National Nature Reserves (biological, geological, physiographical or purely experimental)
- 2 Conservation Areas (biological, physiographical, geological or landscape amenity)
- 3 National Parks
- 4 Geological Monuments
- 5 Local Nature Reserves
- 6 Local Educational Reserves

It was recommended that the national parks be entrusted to the National Parks Commission (which later became the Countryside Commission) which would also advise local authorities on issues pertaining to conservation areas.

Hence the main recommendations to government were that they should set up a separate Biological Service, whose functions would be:

- 1 To establish national nature reserves for educational and scientific purposes.
- 2 To grant local authorities the power to instigate local nature reserves.
- 3 To be responsible for the effective working of any protective legislation for wildlife.

The Biological Service was set up as the Nature Conservancy which was later split up into the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, in 1973. Whilst fulfilling its scientific and legislative function, the NCC also began to stimulate discussion about the purpose of conservation and the potential of urban conservation, in the late 1970s.

#### 2.2.2. The Purpose of Nature Conservation

Ratcliffe (1976) a former chief scientist at NCC, explored the functional and ethical issues of conservation in order to provide a rational basis for the views and actions of conservationists. This is a fundamental issue for urban nature conservationists, whose views and actions, continue to generate suspicion amongst many traditionalists. Ratcliffe (1981) identifies two sets of interests that he regards as the 'driving forces of conservation'; economics and culture. The economic interests arise out of the needs of agriculture, forestry, fisheries and use of water, in that wild species are used for cultivation and to provide sustainable sources of raw materials necessary for many types of production. The cultural interest arises from the needs of science, education, recreation and aesthetics. These two sets of interests tend to act against each other.

Furthermore, he suggests that in recent years there appears to have been a shift in emphasis as the interest in the scientific community has declined and interest in the aesthetic and recreational aspects has increased. This coincides with what Lowe (1983) has described as the popular/political period of conservation, which he believes began in the 1960s, and followed on from the natural history/humanitarian period (1830-90), the preservationist period (1870-1940) and the scientific period (1910-70).

Ratcliffe (1981) believes that the conservationist has to nurture a relationship with the general public (who now form a significant part of the lobby for conservation) and to educate them so that they may make informed decisions about



conservation issues. He believes that individuals have to develop a conservation ethic, if society is to be able to confront and successfully resolve the problem of limits to growth (Meadows et al 1974; IUCN et al, 1980).

Page and Warren (1982) in response to Ratcliffe's arguments, suggest that conservationists need to construct an agreed ethic which could then be promoted and be used to win moral arguments for conservation (where science alone could only provide methods) and ethical arguments relating to social behaviour (by ensuring that conservation considerations are integrated into the statutory planning process). They quote Leopold's assertion (1949):

'That land as a community is a basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is a basic extension of ethics'.

A Leopold (1949) A Sand County Almanac.

Page and Warren describe several facets of ethics that could be used to synthesise a conservation ethic; values of co-operation, truth, loyalty and responsibility; the biblical precedents of stewardship and dominion over nature; the connection between a love of nature and a sense of morality as discussed by Kant (1790); and finally the humanist view of the capacity and duty of man to improve his condition by his own efforts.

The most recent attempt to bring the issues of economics and culture together, was made in the development of the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, 1980 op cit), whose byword is 'conservation with development'. Conservation is defined here as a holistic concept expressing 'the integrated and sustainable use of all global renewable resources to achieve optimum satisfaction of the needs of mankind as a whole'. Rose points out (1983) that the exclusion of non-renewable resources was a weakness in the approach, but that the UK contributors compensated for this by making recommendations concerned with the conservation of non-renewable resources, in the UK programme.

### 2.2.3. The Aesthetics of Nature

The aesthetics of nature have been expressed within the literature by writers such as Thoreau (1906) and Leopold (1949 op cit). More recently, landscape researchers such as Appleton (1975), Tuan (1974), and Lowenthal and Binney (1981) have explored this subject in the context of landscape, rather than nature per se. The literature on man's perception of nature and landscape is reviewed in another section, but it is clear from Lowenthal's introduction in 'Landscape Meanings and Values' (Penning-Rowsell and Lowenthal, 1986) that virtually nothing is known about landscape as a totality, which not only reflects on the enormous scope of the subject matter but also on the paucity of landscape generalists:

'It would be difficult to imagine a topic of greater importance than our relations with the world around us, in all its natural, altered and man-made variety'.

D Lowenthal (1986) Landscape  
Meanings and Values: 1.

With respect to urban nature conservation, the aesthetic aspect was picked up by Richard Mabey in his book 'The Unofficial Countryside' (1973). This was a personal account of the delights that urban nature could offer to the urban dweller.

In the mid 1970s the NCC asked W G Teagle to research and publish a report about the wildlife of Birmingham and the Black Country. This report, 'The Endless Village' (Teagle, 1978) formed the first part of NCC's national project on nature conservation in urban areas the purpose of which is referred to in the foreword:

'The NCC hopes that this publication will stimulate a much wider awareness of the wildlife that is...in our towns and cities and indicate to planners and land managers ways in which plant and animal communities in cities can be encouraged. In this everyone has a role....but the overall effort cannot succeed without the broad support of people who live and work in our



cities. Local authorities and other public bodies bear the strategic responsibility, but schools, community groups and the individual householder can do much to develop interest and enhance their local neighbourhood'.

W Teagle (1978) *The Endless Village*: 1.

There would therefore appear to have been a gradual development towards the popularisation of nature conservation in recent times that has perhaps been most eloquently analysed by Mabey (1981). The essence of this popular phase is the relationship between man and the environment, and an environment that is everywhere about us and not just centred on the Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other nature reserves in the British countryside. Indeed Cole (1983) asserts the view that our fast dwindling natural heritage will only be retained through the generation of popular support for conservation, amongst the general public.

#### 2.2.4. The Development of Voluntary Nature Conservation Organisations

The first of the county naturalists trusts was formed in 1926, and following a major campaign in the 1950s to expand this trend, the SPNR took over the role as national co-ordinators for the new network of county trusts. The main objectives of these trusts were to acquire and manage nature reserves, and arouse local interest in nature conservation. However their efforts almost entirely focused on nature reserves in the countryside, and limited attention was given to the potential of urban areas.

The 1960s and '70s witnessed the emergence of several new, radical conservation organisations such as Friends of the Earth, as a direct response to concerns such as pollution. This contrasted with the rather limited and parochial approach of the county trust movement.

Lowe (1983 *op cit*) asserts that conservation has become a



matter of growing political contention in the face of continued technological threats to wildlife. He cites the main reason for this being agricultural intensification. However the evidence presented in the NCC's follow-up study to Teagle's report (Cole, 1980) indicates that specialist conservation groups (such as the RSPB, RPA and the Ecological Parks Trust, EPT), community groups and conservation corps (eg BTCV) were already active in urban areas, and dealing not with technological threats, but threats of development and pollution. Although Cole surveyed over 18 different projects, only superficial evaluations are made of how the various groups achieved their objectives; the main focus of the report being a description of what they did.

Baines (1984 op cit) charts the origins of the earliest urban conservation groups and suggests that their underlying philosophy was:

'To conserve the wildlife living in towns, to encourage town dwellers to enjoy a close and exciting contact with nature on their doorstep, and in the longer term, to persuade these new-formed enthusiasts to use their power to change official attitudes towards nature conservation in the countryside'.

C Baines (1984) Urban Wildlife: A  
Personal View. ECOS 5 (4): 2.

Concern had been growing in the late 1970s about the rapid increase in the destruction of wildlife habitat in the countryside, as more and more farmers switched to intensive farming methods. The debate reached its height following the introduction of the Wildlife and Countryside Bill, by the DOE, in 1981, and is well documented by Rose and Secrett (1982) and Melchett (1981). The argument for public pressure to be asserted is emphasised again by Cole (1983), and the debate also strengthened the belief that the conservation of urban habitats had a major contribution to make in compensating for the losses being experienced in the countryside.

Baines (1984 op cit) believes that the rapid success of the newly established urban wildlife groups, in all their various fields of activity (landscape, planning, ecology, education and publicity, Millward 1985) was partly due to the positive use most of these groups made of the temporary employment schemes run by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC). These enabled groups to employ staff to enhance the efforts of the volunteers.

At the time this study began there were 6 urban wildlife groups (Avon, London, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Glasgow and West Midlands). There is now a national association of urban wildlife groups, which also encourages the affiliation of conservationists in the public and private sector, with a combined membership of 80 different groups (Smyth, 1986).

In parallel with the rise in urban nature conservation, has been a rise in the general urban greening movement, of which conservation is a part.

#### 2.2.5. Urban Nature Conservation and the Greening Movement

Following a successful launch in the USA, the Dartington Institute launched a 'Think Green' campaign in the UK which culminated in the Green Towns and Cities Congress (Dartington Institute, 1984). Five of the twelve conclusions that came out of that congress are cited below because of their relevance to urban nature conservation and its development:

- 5 The sustained health of the urban green depends upon the affection, support and involvement of all the people.
- 7 Each urban area should have a strategy for greening, based upon systematic appraisal of land and other resources and fresh analysis of people's needs and attitudes.
- 8 Such strategies should embrace the protection and enhancement of natural beauty, the conservation and enrichment of wildlife habitats, protection and celebration of wild, natural and historic landscapes, conservation of cultural resources, provision for informal and organised recreation, climatic amelioration, soil and water conservation, and the production of food, timber, nursery stock and energy.



- 10 A vital need is for more innovative approaches amongst, and more effective teamwork between, the many professions and interests involved in financing, planning, designing, managing, marketing and animating the urban green. Such teamwork depends on the willingness of each profession and individual to accept the role which others play, and to recognise that the ultimate client is the people.
- 11 The high importance of the urban green, and the innovative approaches and skills needed to create and sustain it should be reflected in more widespread programmes of training and education, both for professionals and for the general public, based on the ethics of the World Conservation Strategy.

#### 2.2.6. Summary

Urban nature conservation can therefore be seen to have developed at a time when conservationists were becoming more aware of the amenity of urban habitats and the political potential of urban people. More recently, urban conservation has been debated in the context of the wider greening movement with particular reference to the different roles the statutory, private, voluntary and community sectors have to play in promoting the urban green.

### **2.3 Community Involvement and User-Oriented Approaches to the Provision of Services**

#### 2.3.1. Introduction

Community involvement in urban nature conservation, is a fundamental principle of the Urban Wildlife Group, that has been handed down to successive generations of staff and members. This principle was promoted chiefly by the landscape professionals who helped to establish the Group in 1980. Several papers were published throughout the 1960s, '70s and '80s describing community-based initiatives in the environment (Civic Trust, 1977; Booker, 1966; Tudor, 1977; Cole, 1980;

Stearn, 1981; Joseph & Lennard, 1981; Ruff, 1979).

### 2.3.2. Public Participation, the Forerunner of Community Involvement

Central government laid down a requirement in the 1968 Planning Act that made public participation a statutory requirement in the preparation of structure plans (Cullingworth, 1979). This was intended to relieve pressure on central government which was having to cope with increasing casework. By shifting the responsibility for approving local plans to local government, Cullingworth suggests that public participation became a necessity. This was because the public had to have confidence in local government, otherwise the new system would fail as surely as the old centralised system had, in meeting the needs of society.

However, the 1968 Act contained few suggestions on what might be the most appropriate mechanism to facilitate public participation. So it was that the government set up a committee under the chairmanship of Arthur Skeffington to 'consult and report on the best methods, including publicity, of securing the participation of the public in the making of development plans for their area'. According to Cullingworth (1979 op cit) the findings of the committee, published in 'Planning for the People' (Skeffington, 1969) were very general. This was considered not suprising given the lack of experience British local government had in public participation. The report recommended the setting up of community forums 'to provide local organisations with the opportunity to discuss collectively, planning and other issues of importance to the area'. It was also recommended that community development officers be appointed 'to secure the involvement of those people who do not join organisations'.

Cullingworth believed that the report concentrated too much on procedures, and not on the critical issue of the transfer of power to the public, which public participation implies, in terms of who decides local policies. He states that 'this will be a matter of intimate concern for local councillors - and



officials'. The tension between the interests of party politics and local policies is central to the role the councillors played in two of the case studies of this thesis at Plants Brook and Woodgate Valley.

The Skeffington Report had an impact beyond planning circles, particularly in the field of social services (Seebohm Report, 1968; Bailie, 1975; Booker, 1961 op cit), such that community development officers were often employed through social services departments, rather than planning departments. Darvill et al (1980) address the problem of how best a local authority can create interdependent relationships with voluntary bodies for their mutual benefit. These authors suggest that the appointment of senior officers to liaise with voluntary bodies should be regarded as a 'valuable investment'.

### 2.3.3. The Rise of the Self-Help Movement

In parallel with the rise in interest, and responsibility to promote public participation within local government, Butcher et al (1980) comment on the dramatic rise of the 'self-help' movement from the 1960s onwards:

'....regular reports of community groups in action (residents protesting against an urban motorway, parents organising to run a play group or an adventure playground etc), are to be found in local newspapers serving towns and villages up and down the country'.

Butcher et al (1980) Community Groups in Action: 3.

These authors also comment that few studies exist to reinforce this picture created by the media. Newtown (1974) in his study of politics in Birmingham, identified 4,264 formally organised voluntary associations.

The National Survey of Volunteering (Field and Hedges, 1984) showed that, in the preceding year, 44% of the 1808 members of the public who were questioned had done some voluntary work (which was defined as unpaid time spent doing something aimed at benefiting someone (either an individual or group) or something (eg environment, animals) other than, or in addition

to, the volunteer and his or her own immediate family. Of these, 5% had worked for a local neighbourhood or community group (such as a tenants association, local conservation or pressure group, self-help group) and 2% had done work for a specialist conservation group (such as the RSPCA, county trust for nature conservation, town conservation groups).

Involvement in activities related to children's education, sport, religion, youth, hobbies, health and social welfare, all rated higher levels of participation than the environment.

Field and Hedges, compare their results with other surveys that have been carried out such as the General Household Survey (1981) and the Wolfenden Committee's survey (1978). The definitions used by the GHS more closely reflect those used by Field and Hedges, whereas the Wolfenden Committee's were rather narrower, and were founded in a different kind of methodology. Figures obtained from the GHS are comparable to those of Field and Hedges.

#### 2.3.4. Definitions of the Voluntary and Community Sectors

So far in the review three different terms have been encountered that describe the same basic phenomenon which is that local people, in an unpaid capacity, seek to express their views and/or take practical action over issues that they have an interest in or that directly affect them. Public participation, I would suggest, is a form of community involvement for which the statutory sector is responsible, but which places emphasis on deriving people's views on an issue. Public participation has also been used as a term principally by planners.

Voluntary action is most widely interpreted to describe the action taken by individuals or groups that is aimed at benefiting someone or something other than, or in addition, to the volunteer. There is a distinction made between formally organised voluntary organisations and informal groups, and a further distinction between organisations that employ staff and those that do not. The evidence suggests that the number of organised voluntary groups that employ staff is increasing,



and particularly so in the environmental field.

The third concept that has been discussed is community involvement, a term that suggests that an agency external to the community is responsible for ensuring that the community are involved in an issue. A general appraisal of the literature suggests that this concept is an extension of public participation, in that it involves the community in taking action to translate its views into self-help.

There is however, no agreed standard for interpreting these various terms. In the context of this research which has involved individuals from statutory organisations, formally organised voluntary organisations (with and without paid staff) and community groups, I have chosen to make a distinction between the statutory sector, voluntary sector and community sector.

The essential character of the community sector that distinguishes it from the voluntary sector in this context is that, the former is focused on local issues, whereas the latter's interests range across more than one locality.

Dictionaries abound with definitions of 'community', the most relevant of which for this research is that of 'a body of people living in the same locality'. Given the focus of the research on specific sites, the community can be more accurately defined as a body of people living within easy access of a site (Spencer, 1973) and/or within 1 km of it (West Midlands County Council, 1984). This then leaves a final distinction to be made between the representatives of the local communities who were involved in the management committees and the wider communities some of whom had knowledge of their local sites and may have even visited them, and those who did not know of their local site.

## **2.4. Community Involvement in the Environment**

### **2.4.1. Introduction**

Community involvement in environmental issues and projects has been much discussed in the public administration, planning and landscape journals; mainly in relation to planning, landscape design and conservation projects.

Davies (1981), who was the UK rapporteur on community involvement for the European Campaign for Urban Renaissance, comments that:

'Mistrust of planners and professionals is now endemic....too much has been spent on inner city residents and not enough with them' [his emphasis].

R Davies (1981) Whose Town is it Anyway? The Planner 67 (6): 158.

He sets out the arguments for community involvement as a series of points as follows:

- 1 There is a legal right for people to have a say in planning proposals that affect them.
- 2 It is well recognised from the DOE's Inner Area Studies that there is a gulf between residents and local government (DOE, 1977).
- 3 Policies aimed at building up social contact, decreasing juvenile crime, tackling poverty and racial disadvantage all advocate that community involvement is a good thing.
- 4 Technically, community involvement can improve decisions by bringing in new ideas and information.
- 5 Participation can help win commitment to proposals - although this is often used to neutralise opposition or sell an already taken decision.
- 6 Residents are the permanent care-takers of their environment, whose observation, feelings and actions have a crucial bearing on whether the social fabric is maintained.
- 7 The community has its own resources to bring to bear on inner city problems and opportunities - but they usually need some kind of support to fulfill their aims.

He applauds the local authorities that de-centralised their services to neighbourhood level, to facilitate involvement, which include Leicester, Hackney, and Walsall (see Leckie Rd case study). De-centralisation is perceived as evidence of real commitment to community involvement, whereby local authority officers from different departments collaborate with each other, local residents groups, employers and other agencies. The role of the local councillor is seen as making the decision making representative.

According to Davies (1981 op cit) the arguments put up against community involvement (or active public participation as he refers to it) are that it slows down decision making; forces officers and councillors to give up power; presents communication problems relating to professional jargon; and can intimidate residents from contributing in formal meeting settings.



Implied in Davies' interpretation of community involvement is that it is most effective where there is combined input from the community, elected representatives and experts.

McAllister (1980) expresses the same view. From the viewpoint of someone who has been a community development officer, Bailie (1975 op cit) suggests that the community worker should aim to work with the local people, elected representatives, government officers and voluntary organisations. The evidence from the descriptions of community involvement projects suggests that that is how projects tend to operate (Tudor, 1977 op cit; Stearn, 1982 op cit; Bradley, 1986; Butcher et al, 1980 op cit) that is as collaborative projects.

Coleman (1966) explores the foundations for a theory of collective decisions, which would be diverse enough to encompass the great variety of types of social organisation and collective action that exist. He suggests that the typical constitutions that groups construct to allow collective action to proceed, represent an equivalent procedure for devising the theory. His approach is based on the premise that the acting individual is a purposive agent acting with some goals or purpose in mind. Coleman suggests that the power of the actor is linked to his/her voting rights (as would also be defined in a constitution). His supposition is that an actor will behave within the decision making system making full use of his power.

Whilst this theory may be helpful in providing an understanding of the motivation for individuals to come together to take action, in as much as they each have a set of goals in mind, it is less helpful, in that it assumes that these people will make these goals explicit and thus be able to set up a constitution, which defines the power base of the group members. The experience of community groups as reported above indicates that the reality of a situation is that collective action draws in individuals from external agencies which may already have their own constitution, and thus may assert a differential voting power over others in the group. If the group has been set up by the community, without a constitution before the others are brought in, then the power base of the community may be

manipulated and perhaps suppressed by the external agencies.

These issues are highlighted by the findings of Tudor (1977, op cit) which suggest that for a voluntary group to 'get things done' depends on:

- 1 Councillors attitudes towards voluntary organisations.
- 2 How planners see their role with respect to providing information and other aid.
- 3 The distribution of power within a local authority.
- 4 How well organised and informed the voluntary group is.
- 5 Relations with private bodies.

In other words it is the very relationships between the various interested parties, and the relative power they have over each other that are the critical factors.

This raises the issue of where power derives from. Gibson (1979) and McAllister (1980) equate power with knowledge, and this is often where local people are at a disadvantage because their knowledge on a subject may be limited. Gibson further suggests that power is enhanced by people's ability to work together.

From the specific investigations Tudor carried out in the Foleshill area of Coventry, she concluded that the role of an umbrella organisation can be crucial to the success of a community project. This organisation should provide the group with financial and technical advice, and should be composed of professionals chosen by the group. This implies that such advice should be obtainable from independent sources.

A slightly different issue that is not discussed in the literature on community involvement is the extent to which local authorities could ever provide such advice, given their responsibilities to protect the interests of society as a whole. There is a fundamental dilemma here which relates to the distinction between what is needed at the level of the local community, as opposed to what is needed by society as a



whole, which for practical purposes may be defined by political administration boundaries. Schumacher (1974) asserts that:

'The idea that 'government' can do everything, that 'government' can solve all the problems, that 'government' can look after the people, is a poverty stricken idea; the effectiveness of 'government' is precisely determined by the degree to which it helps or hinders people to look after themselves'

E F Schumacher (1974) People's Power.

This may be compared to a quote from the DOE's 'Policy for the Inner Cities' (1977 op cit):

'Some things are better done or made more satisfyingly done, if they are undertaken by voluntary groups and bodies. The improvement of the inner areas needs to harness the goodwill and energies of tenants and residents associations, local councils, of social services, settlements and charities and more informal groups such as pensioners clubs. Public policy should aim to stimulate voluntary effort and help voluntary bodies play a constructive role'.

DOE (1977) Policy for the Inner Cities.

The real issue of who is able to provide communities with the necessary knowledge about the procedural, practical and political issues relating to a given problem, are conveniently overlooked. The dilemma remains of how, when a community may be in direct opposition with a local authority's policy over a piece of land, that community is able to obtain the necessary knowledge that would enable it to press its case.

#### 2.4.2. Local Authority Involvement in Nature Conservation

A recent publication (Tyldesley, 1986) reports the findings of a national survey of the role and performance of local authorities in nature conservation:

'Nature conservation is about people and their environment, the very subject of local authorities...



it will continue to be of increasing importance as more people discover the enjoyment of the natural world and demand the opportunity to experience it at first hand'.

D Tyldesley (1986) Gaining Momentum: 8.

He reports that whilst many local authorities have not taken full advantage of the powers and duties they have had, they are nonetheless gaining momentum. The importance of creating working relationships between the voluntary sector (which in Tyldesley's definition, excludes community groups) is that it reduces to a minimum, the reactionary pressure that would otherwise be exerted on the local authority.

Beynon and Wetton (1978) comment that:

'Most if not all Trusts are conscious of their needs to establish priorities and to dissociate themselves from championing every small cause or ones which are peripheral to nature conservation which would lower their credibility in the eyes of local planning authorities. This essential attitude often results in uneasy relationships between Trusts and other local amenity pressure groups'.

N J Beynon & B W Wetton (1978)  
Nature Conservation in Planning.

Tyldesley found that the local authorities had tended to concentrate their efforts on site safeguard. He believes that they should develop their role as motivators, to bring interested parties together, to work in the public interest. This effort is most effective where it is used to convert commitment into action, which is a common theme identified by other authors (Wilmers, 1981; Cowan et al, 1981; Gibson, 1984).

#### 2.4.3. Community Involvement in Urban Nature Conservation

Only two references were found on this specific subject, both of which immediately pre-date the start of this research. Both these reports were commissioned by the NCC, as follow-ups to Teagle's report on the 'Endless Village' (1978), the justification for which is provided in the document 'Nature Conservation in Urban Areas: Challenge and Opportunity' (NCC, 1979) in which it is stated that:

'Through making nature an integral and immediate experience for many more people, by showing them on their doorsteps the inter-dependence of all living things, our society may come to understand better the need for man to exist in harmony with his environment and to conserve its limited natural resources. The adoption or rejection of such a conservation ethic may decide the kind of future today's children will enjoy in both town and country'.

NCC (1979) Nature Conservation  
in Urban Areas: 1.

In the study that represents the first attempt to review the national potential for urban nature conservation, Cole (1980) describes 18 different practical projects; projects in which local authorities and other groups had played an active part, sometimes separately, often in liaison and even occasionally in opposition.

She categorises the roles of the various voluntary organisations that had been involved in the projects accordingly:

- 1 Specialist Groups (eg county conservation trusts, RSPB), who may lease or buy land, or act as forums for discussion
- 2 Action Groups, who may be set up to save a threatened site more often for its amenity value than its conservation value
- 3 Conservation Corps (usually affiliated to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers), who carry out practical work for site owners or leasees.

I would suggest that the category of the specialist groups compares favourably with the umbrella organisations referred to by Tudor (1977 op cit), in respect of their roles as enablers. The action groups were set up by local people with an interest in one specific site, unlike the specialist groups whose interests were more regional and in some cases national. The action groups are thus more closely related to community groups, as defined within the conceptual framework adopted by the writer.



Cole concludes from her survey that many urban dwellers are showing a greater concern for wildlife within their own communities, and that the initiatives of local people need to be complemented by activity in the 'official' sphere of central and local government, and the professions.

It is asserted in the NCC's discussion paper (1979) that the mental well-being of urban man needs the stimulus and refreshment of contact with nature. Whilst this is unsubstantiated within the document, the second study commissioned by the NCC (Mostyn, 1980) focused on the benefits and satisfactions derived by people who had been involved in practical conservation projects.

Mostyn found that there were indeed many benefits and satisfactions derived, which applied equally to adults and children, males and females. Gratification was greatest amongst those who had been involved in the practical on-site work and who had therefore been more involved in the development of the sites. The benefits were categorised and rank ordered, and are presented in Table 1.

Urban wildlife sites were found to have universal appeal to all types of people regardless of age, sex, class, interests, ambitions and personality variables. The first visit to a site was always easily and vividly recalled by people, and most of the respondents had developed a strong sense of possessiveness towards the sites they visited.

Vandalism, rubbish tipping and litter were the most frequently mentioned frustrations which tended to depress and discourage participants. The lack of care and concern by the local authorities who fail to remove the rubbish or provide good access to sites, and also the fear that local authorities would allow the development or commercialisation of their sites, arising out of a lack of trust, also caused concern.



Table 1 The benefits derived from participation in urban wildlife projects (after Mostyn, 1980)



The limitation of Mostyn's study was that its main focus was on people who had been actively involved in the practical conservation work, rather than the casual users of the sites. The study also concentrated on the children who had been involved in the projects, and did not allow for a full investigation of the attitudes of adults who would have constituted a large proportion of the users of a given site.

What these two studies revealed was that there was good reason to suppose that urban wildlife sites were valued by urban people and that urban people were keen to be involved in campaigns to save such places, and initiatives to provide and manage such places.

So, by 1980 something was known about what was happening in urban areas, who was doing it, and the benefits children and teenagers derived from their involvement in the projects. What remained unclear was what the casual visitor thought of urban wildlife sites (or urban nature parks) and what use he/she made of them. Further information on people's perception and use of natural landscapes was sought and found in the literature on environmental psychology and landscape research, and this has been reviewed in sections 2.5 and 2.6 .

The exciting and daunting implication of these NCC reports was that it was hoped that many more such sites would be created or enhanced, and made accessible to people. As most of the existing sites had been the result of initiatives taken by the local community and voluntary organisations, this raised the issue of how the specialist groups in the voluntary and statutory sector would be able to respond to such a demand.

In the absence of any further research on community involvement in urban nature conservation, I organised a seminar targeted at professionals in the voluntary and statutory sectors, who had had experience of this type of project. The results of the seminar are reported in Chapter 4 of the thesis and also in Millward (1983). Various issues were discussed, but one in particular was that of the problem of who should be responsible for the long term maintenance and management of community sites.

The following section of the review is given over to the findings of a recent report on this subject.

#### 2.4.4. The 'After-Care' Dilemma

The maintenance or 'after-care' dilemma as it has come to be known, has been explored, most recently, by Bradley (1986). This study was designed to add information to that in this thesis which concentrates on the initial stages of the campaign, design and implementation of community-based projects. On the basis of discussions with 14 different voluntary and statutory groups, and 41 site visits, she concludes that the elements which seem to make up a recipe for

successful community involvement are:

- 1 Benefits from involvement that the community itself wants.
- 2 Responsibilities in return for which the rewards are clearly spelt out.
- 3 Co-ordination by an employed key person.
- 4 Management plan which includes social strategy as well as ecological strategy.

The key person is suggested as the best mechanism for co-ordinating the inputs of the various interested parties in a project. Bradley describes the ideal model as being that the local authority should continue the major responsibility for the after-care of the green including voluntary and community group sites. The local authority would provide 50% funding towards the cost of employing the key person, which could be matched by 50% from MSC sponsorship or grant aid from charitable trusts or the EEC. Bradley's key person is compared to the urban rangers as employed by Warrington New Town Corporation and park services in the USA. The key person allows for a flexible approach in that he/she can vary the local authority's input, reducing it where community involvement is high, increasing it where it is low. Like Baines (1982 op cit) she concludes that this would necessitate a change in the funding approach of local authorities, such that capital was released to be used on revenue expenditure.

The voluntary groups surveyed in Bradley's study were considered to be using community involvement as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself, in that their main objectives were conservation or environmental education, rather than community development. Many of these groups were found to rely heavily on MSC funding to employ the professional and technical staff needed to work with communities. The problems this caused in relation to a lack of continuity and inexperience, tended to undermine the confidence the community groups had in these enabling, voluntary groups.



The voluntary groups identified the following characteristics of community groups:

- 1 Each is different in terms of motivation and abilities, and there is no one formula for developing projects.
- 2 Different views may pertain within the community which makes it difficult to identify and get agreement on objectives for the project.
- 3 Only a small number of the community representatives are really active, and progress on a project can fluctuate according to how available these people are.
- 4 Community groups come to depend on the input of enabling groups to 'make things happen' which can be a burden to groups whose primary aim is not long term commitment to individual projects because of their own limitations of staff and money.

Bradley concludes that the long term solution to the after-care dilemma could be facilitated by the voluntary, community and statutory sectors adopting a partnership approach to the problem; that this could be co-ordinated through the key person; and that this would require local authorities to release capital funds for revenue expenditure.

Both Cole and Bradley identified instances where local authority officers were involved in community-based projects. My own review of UWG's projects also indicated that this was a common situation, and it is for these reasons that the next section of the review traces the development of a user-oriented approach to the provision of services by landscape architects and planners, and the integration of ecology into the two professions.

#### 2.4.5 Community Involvement in Landscape Design

A major thrust by designers and planners to encourage others to utilise nature and ecology in their work, came in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Mumford, 1968; McHarg, 1969; Fairbrother, 1970 and 1974; Manning, 1974; Nicholson, 1970 and Laurie, 1974).

As far back as 1971, Porteous advocated the need not only to design with nature but also with people [my emphasis], to

improve the quality of the urban environment. He called for research to concentrate on the belief systems of all the power yielding actors in the design process and the attitudes of the public, a suggestion that has been incorporated into this research.

He emphasises that public participation in the early 1970s had been restricted to the adjustment of public attitudes towards pre-formulated plans, and choices between a number of alternatives put forward by the designers, that often led to unsatisfactory compromise. By the end of the 1970s, Wandersman (1979) had been able to identify other types of participation that had evolved, namely that:

- 1 The user designs his own environment without the preconceived givens from others.
- 2 The user generates alternative designs from components already available and chooses the one he wants.
- 3 The user chooses between alternative plans that were developed by the planner.
- 4 The user gives information or feedback about the design to a planner describing actual and desired activities or feedback about a design, but does not have actual control.

From this study, he concluded that the users (who in this case were users of student dormitories) wanted to participate in the design and production stages, but, in conjunction with the experts. Similarly, Haworth (1979) and Stearn (1981) emphasise the benefits of using enabling organisations to encourage communities to articulate their needs and help them bring about change to meet those needs.

In his review of the philosophy and practice of the ecological approach to landscape design (as summarised by the author in Fig 1) as developed in Holland, Ruff (1979) describes how the public's demands of landscape have changed in the post-war period. The Dutch began a debate in the 1960s, which became known as the Silent Revolution, about the price that had to be paid for technological progress and increased material well-being. This centred on the rights of the individual and of the state, and on the identification of the values of



Fig 1 Aspects of the Ecological Approach (after Ruff 1979)



society that were under threat and those that had already been lost. In the context of urban landscape, attention was focused on the questions of who the landscape was for (the individual or the designer) and how the traditional, semi-natural habitats of Holland could be protected from destruction and made more accessible to urban people. This question of who the landscape is for, appears frequently in the literature (Bradley, 1986 op cit; Royffe and Taylor, 1987; Stamp, 1987). For those who advocate the user-oriented approach to landscape provision, the answer is primarily the user, but they do stress that this should not in any way reduce the level or quality of the input that the designer makes to a project. Indeed the input needed is perhaps more skillful because the designer may have to educate the users as to the options and then help them to make trade-offs where not everything they want can be accommodated (Stamp, 1987).

Louis le Roi popularised this debate and proposed a functional approach to the design of amenity landscape for the individual. He wanted allotments, gardens, footpaths and woodlands, to be linked to nature reserves beyond the edge of urban areas. Le Roi also emphasised the importance of the outdoor environment for children's play which consequently led to the provision of wild play spaces for adventure play. Horticulturists and designers took up the social aspects of Le Roi's ideas and began to develop techniques for the introduction and management of native species, grown in the associations that were typical of the traditional and semi-natural communities of Holland. News of this approach spread to Britain in the early 1970s and the Landscape Research Group organised a conference, in 1974, on the theme of 'Nature in Cities' (Laurie, 1979). The interest that this generated seems to have been mainly amongst students in the design schools, landscape architects working in the new town development corporations and nature conservationists.

Tregay (1982) explains how designers, whilst placing great emphasis on the social and ecological aspects, added design considerations involving spatial qualities, enclosure and visual character, all of which formed the basis of the

ecological approach as it was developing throughout Europe.

In Britain, this approach has been best exploited by the landscape designers in the new town corporations (Tregay and Gustavsson, 1983), urban wildlife groups (Bradley and Millward, 1986) and community technical aid centres (Stearn, 1981 op cit). A typical characteristic of these organisations is that landscape designers, planners, ecologists and conservationists are brought together in multi-disciplinary teams, and tend to have adopted a user-oriented approach (though not on every project).

Although the landscape literature on community involvement is much smaller than that in the planning literature, what there is is dominated by examples of projects on the reclamation of derelict and dormant land (Civic Trust, 1977; Stearn, 1981 op cit; and McCullough, 1978).

Hollick (1982) summarises the arguments for community involvement in the design and provision of landscape, in that local authorities on their own, cannot hope to provide the total solution because:

- 1 Local authorities have to place a low priority on landscape projects, because of government cut-backs.
- 2 The scale of dormant land is too great for local authority initiatives to make much of an impression.
- 3 Methods for calculating the time an officer may spend on survey and design result in standard solutions which do not satisfy the potential use of sites.
- 4 Standard solutions tend to destroy the sense of place that results from the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardised landscapes that results from an insensitivity to place. Thus the potential of landscape to provide identity and cohesion of a community is wasted.

The net result is that improvement of the environment proceeds at a minimal rate, with the additional problem that the schemes rarely reflect the requirements of the users, which in turn leads to a deepening of the 'them and us syndrome'. This leads to a loss of mutual respect between the local authority



and the public, and work carried out is often vandalised or abused by tipping. The costs of the ecological approach to landscape design and management are currently receiving attention and are reported in (Tregay and Gustavsson, 1983; Handley, 1987 forthcoming; and Bradshaw et al, 1986).

Any increased reliance on the community to contribute to landscape reclamation, necessitates the use of low-cost techniques; such as minimal ground preparation, mass planting of inexpensive whips and the use of native species. Hollick summarises this as using the economy of nature, a concept that is also used by Corder and Brooker (1980). To make this approach work, he advocates the need for community landscape architects to co-ordinate joint community and local authority projects on small-scale sites; a system that has been tested out by successive generations of landscape students at Leeds Polytechnic (Royffe and Taylor, 1987 op cit).

Stamp (1987 op cit) describes some of the rewards and frustrations of fulfilling that type of role. She found that a key role was to help the local residents make informed decisions. This often involved making trade-offs between a range of facilities, not all of which could be included on a site.

The main value of projects to the community, seem to be that a sense of responsibility for the site is engendered which leads to a continued interest, a criteria Bailie (1975 op cit) cites as an indication of the success of a project. On the negative side, many local residents find the whole process wearing, although that is usually off-set where they feel they have achieved what they wanted. Nonetheless, Stamp's experience still leads her to raise familiar questions (listed below), which remain unresolved and which indicate that the approach still needs refinement. In particular she asks:

What is the role of the landscape architect?

How much does community involvement cost?

How do we judge success; by the visual appearance of the site or level of use it receives?

Where does the traditional parks department fit in?



At Warrington New Town, community involvement in landscape has been encouraged in the post-design and post-establishment phases. The corporation had first to create a landscape in order to attract people to move into the area, and so involvement in the design stage could not be achieved. Conscious of the need to foster links between the new residents and their new landscape, the designers published a regular landscape newsletter and established a ranger service. The ranger service was intended to 'encourage community participation in the care of the new park systems' (Tregay, 1985). The work of the rangers includes the traditional roles of wardening, conservation and recreation management, interpretation and education. They also help community groups to organise a wide variety of events in the parks, and they run junior and volunteer warden schemes.

Tregay believes that the success of this 'after-care service' is that there is low vandalism, a respect for the landscape and an appreciation of it through the use that is made of it. Feedback from the community, enhances the creativity of the designer, and the rangers can be used to explain and market new designs.

The issue of how to judge whether or not a landscape is successful, has received much interest in the last ten years, as the crisis of non-use has developed (Gold, 1977; Jacobs, 1961; Walker and Duffield, 1983b). Bradley and Millward (1986) suggest that as all open space is designed specifically for use, those which are consistently observed not to be used, must be deemed to have failed.

'People confer use on parks and make them successes or else withhold use and doom parks to rejection or failure'.

Jane Jacobs (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*: 99.

The problem lies with identifying what level of use constitutes success. There are also other criteria which could be used to evaluate how successful or otherwise a

particular open space is eg scenic quality, value to wildlife, effect on the local economy vis a vis attraction of investment and the creation of jobs, and psychological benefits.

Kaplan, R (1980), in an evaluation of community involvement in the design of an inner city park in Michigan, discovered that conceptual satisfactions were important to users and non-users. These included 'having it there', knowing that the city had provided such a place, being able to witness the changing of the seasons even if only passing by, and knowing that the community had been involved in the design of the site. In Kaplan's opinion, being involved helps to develop a sense of 'ownership' which is confirmed by Mostyn's findings (1980).

Kaplan was originally engaged to involve the community in the design stage, which involved 180 people being asked to attach a preference rating to photos of different open space scenes. This revealed that people wanted a 'green' place, with flowers, grass and big trees, and they also wanted the park to be an amenity for workers and residents in the area. The scheme took 2 years to establish. The second phase of the evaluation then followed, which involved observation studies of who was using the park and for what purposes, and a questionnaire survey of users and non-users. She comments that the response rate for off-site users was only 32%, but that the act of being involved in such surveys, also helps to develop the sense of ownership.

Rutledge (1980) advocates a visual approach to park design, which relies on designers building up an understanding of how parks, and the specific landscape elements and built facilities within, them are used. Whilst this approach does not exactly involve the community in the design process, it does focus on being able to assess the needs of potential users. The observation study techniques are reviewed in the section on methods in Chapter 3.



#### 2.4.6. The Integration of Ecology and the Development of a User-Oriented Approach, in Planning

The three themes that will be discussed in this section of the review are:

- 1 The integration of ecological principles into planning.
- 2 The contribution of planning to urban nature conservation.
- 3 Community involvement and planners.

One of the earliest references to the integration of ecology in planning is made by McHarg (1969) whose early ideas for designing with nature, have since been translated into a theory of human ecological planning (1981). McHarg points out that planning is not rich in theory and that no previous statement on human ecological planning has been propounded. His theory is based on the premise that all social and natural systems aspire to success. Such a state can be described as 'syntropic - fitness—health'. Understanding the process of the interaction between the landscape and the people who inhabit it, provides a basis for assessing the opportunities and constraints afforded by the environment, and the needs and desires of the population which can be combined to present alternative futures. Such a model allows the examination of the impact of any plan upon the health of the inhabitants and the well-being of the social and natural systems. McHarg uses the term 'human ecology' to emphasise the fact that man is part of ecology. The theory draws on the theories of the physical, biological and social sciences; evolution, survival of the fittest, the fitness of environments and adaptation. Planning is directly connected to the evolutionary imperative of finding fit environments and adapting these for human health and well-being, with the minimum expenditure of energy.

Selman (1981) states in the foreword to his book 'Ecology and Planning' that:

'This book has been written in the belief that ecology has a major contribution to make to planning, but that planners generally have little knowledge of the subject and see only limited scope for its application'.



Whilst the pertinence of engineering, architecture, sociology and economics is easily recognised by the profession, ecology, which entails the acquisition of unfamiliar scientific concepts and skills, often seems incomprehensible and appropriate only to esoteric, technical and rarely encountered problems. Selman considers that an ecologically aware profession would be better able to fulfill the two responsibilities of the British system ie to ensure the wise use of resources (by exercising an influence over land use) and to maximise amenity (by ensuring that the general public interest is taken into account when potentially controversial developments are proposed).

The 1968 Planning Act provided planners with more opportunity to participate in, and co-ordinate, the activities of agencies more directly concerned with the natural environment, as part of the statutory requirement to produce structure and local plans. Selman (1981 op cit) believes that the synoptic nature of the profession places planners in an excellent position to help co-ordinate the strategies of the environmental agencies. There are now increasing numbers of examples where this has in fact happened. The planners at West Midlands County Council (1984) have produced a Nature Conservation Strategy for the county. This is now used as a framework for operations and decision making by the district councils and voluntary agencies. The GLC also produced a strategy and indeed set up an ecology unit within the Planning Department to promote it.

Planners with an ecological perspective are still rather rare within county and district councils (and urban wildlife groups for that matter). UWG is the only urban wildlife group that has a planning unit which contributes to the statutory planning and development control processes, in addition to the support work it carries out for community groups and other greening agencies. In 'Planning for Nature' (UWG, 1983) the authors, themselves qualified planners, state that:

'The role of the local authority planners must not be merely to respond to the expressed needs of the community, but should anticipate new needs and

opportunities....To realise the opportunity which nature, herself an opportunist, has given us requires a basic knowledge of wildlife and how to plan for it in different situations'.

UWG (1983) Planning with Nature: 4.

Mumford (1968), Johnson (1979), McHarg (1979 op cit), Tregay (1982) and Reeves (1984) all argue that there should be a network of different types of open space in urban areas, linking the inner cities to the countryside. Reeves challenges planners to re-think their approach, which has hitherto been based on standard measures of quantity (ie 6 acres per thousand head of population) rather than quality or the views of users. Her vision is of a diversity of landscapes; formal parks in the Victorian tradition; playing fields; extensive, informal parks; small pocket parks; public gardens; adventure playgrounds; shared pedestrian, play and vehicle spaces (eg Dutch woonerven); walkways and cycleways with events along the way; small greens; copses and thickets; meadows; rough wild areas suitable for untidy, noisy and dirty activities such as motorbike scrambling; all weather surfaces and so on. Many of these landscapes would be less costly than the typical close-mown grass swards with standard trees that make up much of our open space. Her argument for better quality has been proven in Holland whereby it has been found possible to build low-rise, high-density, housing estates which provide the feeling of spaciousness, through subtle design ploys, even though the overall quantity of space is low (eg Neuvaldeck, The Hague).

The emphasis on the human side of the equation is given no less importance in the contribution planners have made, and are making, to urban nature conservation. The key principle on which the West Midlands Nature Conservation Strategy is based is 'accessibility':

'If it is agreed that wildlife space is a valuable and necessary amenity, it is inevitable that sites for habitat creation will be an essential element of the plan, to ensure that all residents are not deprived of local opportunities (ie within 1 km of their homes) to experience semi-natural areas'.

WMCC (1983) The Nature Conservation Strategy for the West Midlands: 9.



The County Council's standard of 1 km, underlines the need for local authorities and others to address the needs of local people, and this relates back to the definition of what constitutes the local community, and the catchment area for any given open space. This standard lends support to the criterion that was adopted for this research, which is explained in Chapter 3.

The strategy also requests district councils to take account of the social, educational and recreational value of natural landscapes, as well as their wildlife value. The role of district councils is regarded as having potentially the greatest impact on the future of wildlife in urban areas. The responsibility of planners is clearly spelt out in the DOE's Circular 108/77:

'It should however, be emphasised that nature conservation interest is by no means confined to traditionally beautiful areas and occurs in towns as well as the countryside. The Secretaries look to local authorities to take full account of natural conservation factors both in formulating structure and local plans, and in the consideration of individual planning applications'.

DOE (1977) Circular 108/77.

In defining roles, WMCC considered that the voluntary sector should a) act as pressure groups to continue and increase conservation efforts and b) take part in conservation projects. Local authority officers should undertake the overall planning and co-ordinating role, supervising the financial management of projects and regular maintenance work such as grass cutting. The role of the community, is perceived to include volunteer wardening, planting and general site monitoring. There is no specific mention that the community should be involved in the decision-making process, nor of the need for a key person as suggested by Bradley (1986 op cit).

The West Midlands strategy was developed in consultation with the NCC and other conservation organisations. Leedy et al (1978) provide a thorough appraisal of similar issues for the



North American situation, and Barker (1984) provides an overview of a range of different approaches from elsewhere overseas.

Returning to the issue of planners and community involvement, there is good reason to suppose, from the literature, that planners generally avoid getting involved at the grass roots, in the literal sense, to play their co-ordinating role (Goring and Revill, 1987; Michael, 1984). Where they do, Gibson (1984) suggests that they find the experience rewarding because it makes them party to the ideas and experience of the community; there is a human relationship, not just a relationship with paper.

Gee (1986), concludes that the consensus view amongst planners at a recent seminar on planning and the voluntary sector, was that if planners were to fulfill their roles as environmental enablers they needed to embrace the voluntary sector as a resource and develop complementary roles for planners in the voluntary and statutory sectors.

The key issue seems to be whether it will be possible for planners and other landscape professionals to develop the necessary level of consultation and involvement with the community (Millward, 1987). More and more planners who wish adopt this approach find it necessary to set up independent community technical aid centres (ACTAC, 1985; TCPA, 1983), outside the statutory sector. It would therefore seem that there has not been as much progress as might have been expected, following the publication of 'Planning for People' (Skeffington, 1969 op cit).

## 2.5 Environmental Psychology and the Perception of Natural Landscapes

### 2.5.1 The Perception of Natural Landscapes

UWG had expressed a wish to understand how urban people perceived the nature and naturalness of the case study sites,

given their urban setting. This prompted the need to explore the literature on environmental psychology and landscape research.

Mercer (1975) defines environmental psychology as the study of perception and behaviour of man in the environment. The discipline aims to provide scientifically derived, reliable information about how the physical environment affects man and how he comprehends and may affect it. Allen (1974) believes that because the rate of cultural change is faster than the rate at which we are able to suitably adapt our physical environment in our modern day cities, man finds himself living in an urban environment with which he is dissatisfied. This author advocates the consideration of wildlife as part of the process that must be pursued to make our cities more livable.

Stainbrook (1968) views man as an information processor, and considers that because of the physical complexity of the urban environment, urban man is forced to select and reject more information than rural man. It may be that this contributes to the appearance of psychological illness over time, caused by feelings of rejection, isolation and low worth, which reflect back on an external environment seen as ugly, dilapidated, dirty, lacking in space and natural surroundings. He advocates the need for more space which he regards first and foremost as social space.

Appleton (1975) argues that aesthetic satisfaction experienced in the contemplation of landscape stems from perceiving whether or not the elements of the landscape indicate that the environmental conditions would be favourable to survival (irrespective of the real favourability). This he calls habitat theory, which it is suggested is perhaps most closely related to the ecological and evolutionary theories of landscape perception put forward by Smardon (1975) and Kaplan, R (1978) respectively.

From their review of 160 articles published between 1965 and 1980, Zube et al (1982) point out there is a diffuse collection of findings on landscape perception. They define



perception as a function of the interaction of humans and landscape (Dewey and Bentley, 1949; Ittelson and Cantril, 1954; Zube et al, 1975). The human component encompasses past experience, knowledge, expectations and the socio-cultural context of individuals and groups. The landscape component includes both individual elements and landscapes as entities. They identify four main paradigms that have been used, which are:

- 1 Expert evaluation by trained professionals from the fields of ecology, landscape design and the fine arts.
- 2 Psychophysical experiments on the reactions of non-experts to selected environmental stimuli.
- 3 Cognitive assessments described through mental maps, semantic differential statements and preference ratings of photographs.
- 4 Experiential evaluation as reported in non-fiction literature.

They also point out that the current lack of a well developed theory of landscape perception means that we lack a rational basis of fundamental principles against which we can identify a condition, or predict the consequences of an intervention. The justification for scenic beauty lies in understanding the nature of interactions between humans and landscapes, and the outcome of those experiences.

Landscape studies have tended to rely upon the use of photographs and slides to derive information on the attitudes and perceptions of subjects to natural and non-natural scenes (Kaplan, R. 1978). Pudalkewicz (1981) derived preference ratings for six variables; complexity, mystery, coherence, space, texture and edge, in an attempt to determine visual preference for wildlife habitat in a residential setting. This study was based on the work of Kaplan, S (1973) who, like Stainbrook (1968), views people as information processors who rely on visual perception of their environment to provide information necessary for survival. The quantity and organisation of that information are regarded as key factors of the landscape to which people respond. Thayer and Atwood (1978) draw attention to the largely intuitive and unsubstantiated theories propounded by landscape architects as



to the aesthetic and psychological benefits of plants in the landscape. In experiments designed to substantiate those theories they found that plants were perceived as highly complex and very pleasurable stimuli.

Ulrich (1981) has used physiological measures of heart beat and cerebral electrical activity rates to represent levels of cortical arousal, consciousness and alertness, to show that natural scenes, and especially those containing water, were more beneficial to the subjects psychological sense of well-being than urban scenes (totally devoid of vegetation).

All these studies would however, be regarded by Shafer (1969) as unrealistic, because he believes that people appreciate and perceive natural environments by moving through them and having an infinite number of views. He places emphasis on the recreational opportunities of natural environments, issues which he believes are of importance to recreation managers.

Shafer suggests that managers should explore theories of decision making (eg Coleman, 1966 op cit) in order to provide a basis for tackling these problems. The views of the providers of open space are reviewed in section 2.7.

#### 2.5.2. People's Perception of Wildlife

As regards people's perception of wildlife, there appears to be a limited amount of previous research, most of which has been carried out in America. Manski et al (1981) concentrated on the interaction of people and squirrels in a park in Washington DC. They found that the most important interactions involved people feeding the squirrels and watching them.

Dagg (1974) found that people liked and encouraged those species that did not present a physical danger to them or their homes and gardens. Yeoman and Barclay (1981) studied people's perceptions of an American Backyard Wildlife Program. They found that the presence of wildlife was personally beneficial because of derived feelings of satisfaction from

helping wildlife; the bird and mammal groups being the most preferred.

### 2.5.3. Conclusions

The conclusions that can be drawn from the literature on perception, are that people seem to prefer the more natural elements of the environment (particularly trees, lakes and streams) to those of the built environment. And, that this preference is enhanced if the landscape is complex such that it contains more than one element in view (Anderson and Schroeder, 1983; de Jonge, 1967).

In their attempt to draw together the essential elements of previous theories of landscape perception, Zube et al (1982 op cit) assert that the perception of landscapes prompts interaction with landscape, in other words that perception invokes action or behaviour. The next part of the literature review explores the links between people's perception of, and behaviour in natural landscapes.

## **2.6. People's Behaviour in Natural Landscapes**

### 2.6.1. The Links Between Town and Country

In Britain, our opinions of, and behaviour in, countryside recreation sites are relatively well known (Countryside Commission, 1979 and 1985; Tourism and Recreation Research Unit, 1980a and 1981; Harrison et al, 1986).

Elson (1977) in reviewing various recreation site studies, identified the day-trip as the basis of such behaviour, and that as a consequence of this, research has tended to concentrate on how far people are likely to travel to a site, how long they stay there and how they get there, rather than the activities they pursue when they get there. This information has been collected mostly in the form of on-site questionnaires.

We also know that the elderly, those on low incomes with no car, and those living more than 4 miles from the countryside in the poorest council estates or in multi-racial areas are the groups of people least likely to visit the countryside (Countryside Commission, 1985 op cit; Elson, 1977 op cit; OPCS, 1977).

Those who do visit, tend to engage in mostly passive activities such as walking, enjoying the scenery, picnicking and touring by car. A summary of what it is that people like and dislike about countryside recreation sites (after Elson, 1977) is given below in Table 2.

Table 2 A summary of what people like and dislike about countryside recreation sites (after Elson, 1977)



Few surveys of this type have been carried out for specific urban open spaces. (Tartaglia-Kershaw, 1980; TRRU 1980a and 1980b). Walker and Duffield (1983a) in their review of urban parks and open spaces, report that what research there is shows that:

- 1 Urban parks attract a wider spectrum of visitors from the urban community than any other outdoor activity.
- 2 60-70% of visitors to a park have come from within 2 km of the park.
- 3 Urban parks are used primarily for informal passive recreation activities.
- 4 By far the most popular features of parks to visitors are the natural features, peace and quiet, and a sense of freedom.



Whilst walking is the most important pursuit, its relative importance is affected by opportunities for sport and the availability of car parking facilities with an attractive view. Walker and Duffield (1983a op cit) report that 'user dissatisfaction with urban open space tends to be low, with most of the studies recording over half of the users with no complaints'. Dislikes include the poor quality of facilities, lack of upkeep, vandalism and litter, where they occur. Gold (1977) discusses how the poor upkeep of parks initiates a cycle of decline in use which leads to increased levels of crime and vandalism which then result in even less use.

Users tend to suggest improvements relating to children's facilities and active pursuits, despite the fact that the elements that give them the most pleasure are the natural features. Walker and Duffield suggest that this reflects on their conditioning and that their response would be different if they were made aware of all the possible options.

These authors point out several limitations of the data currently available arising from the fact that most of it is out of date, and call for further research into the patterns of use of individual open spaces.

#### 2.6.2. Behaviour in Landscapes

Examination of the literature shows that the majority of observation studies have been carried out in the USA, with a view to helping the designers of open spaces to provide landscapes that better provide for people's needs (Bradley and Millward, 1986). The majority of the American studies have also concentrated on formal open spaces, such as plazas and traditional parks (Brower, 1973; Taylor, 1978; Linday, 1978; Joardar and Neil, (1978), rather than the more informal landscapes that are the central concern of this thesis.

Rutledge (1981 op cit) provides the most comprehensive exploration of the theoretical basis and practice of behavioural observation studies. He draws on the theories of Maslow (1954), Ardrey (1966) and Leighton (1959) and argues

that design criteria can be used as hypotheses which should be derived from the needs of potential users. Gans (1968) describes needs as behavioural predispositions. Any system that enables designers to assess the needs of the potential users more accurately, should result in landscapes that are more successful in that they meet the real needs of people and are thus less likely to be abused, and thus cost less to maintain and police.

Rutledge draws on three concepts from behavioural research for the designer to incorporate into the design process. These are firstly, personal space; a concept that regulates the distance at which we carry out a range of social interactions: secondly, territoriality; a concept that is expressed in our habitual gravitation to favoured places: and thirdly, privacy; a concept that describes the exercise of personal control over who has access to us.

The concept of territoriality may be related to Kelman's model of the process of internalisation (1961). This states that in the first instance people imitate the behaviour of other people. So for example in the context of this research, people may first visit an urban nature park on the recommendation of another person. In so doing they take notice of the site's features and experience some of them, such as a woodland walk or a pond. Then, people repeat the behaviour which was initially pleasant or because of social pressures, and soon begin to identify with the experience and find that visits have an intrinsic value to them. Finally, people have so internalised their behaviour that they cannot break the habit and would feel that there was something lacking in their lives if for some reason they couldn't visit it. This is regarded as the point of psychological internalisation. So here again there is support for the idea that perception, invokes action. The limitations of Rutledge's approach and the Kelman model are that they do not take into account that people may not feel totally satisfied about a site that they nonetheless are drawn to. It seems to me that these issues are best addressed through group discussions or questionnaire surveys.



There is a relative paucity of environmental behaviour studies in Britain, although several researchers are known to be currently engaged in field work, the results of which should be published in the near future. The level of use, range of activities pursued, differences between user groups (ie males and females, and age groups) and the pattern or microgeography of use, can all be measured using observation studies.

Bradley (1983) found that walking was by far the most popular activity, accounting for some 65% of visitors to Endcliffe Park in Sheffield, followed by sitting, and sitting and reading. Cycling and jogging were the most popular active pursuits. The results of this study also showed that the ornamental and woodland-parkland mosaic landscapes within the park, were more heavily used than the woodland and parkland areas. Bradley found that adult females were the predominant users during the week, whereas children, adult females and adult males were found in more or less equal numbers on a Bank Holiday afternoon.

Bradley concludes that most people's visits to the park entail moving through it so that the pattern of use is strongly influenced by the layout of the path system. She suggests that observation studies and questionnaire surveys of users and non-users should be used in combination, to provide the detailed information needed for designers to meet people's needs. This view is supported by the findings of an American study which combined observations with questionnaire surveys and preference rating methods, to evaluate the psychological and recreational benefits derived by users and non-users of a residential park in Delaware, USA (Ulrich and Addoms, 1981). Interestingly, these authors conclude that the main benefit people derive from the park is the opportunity it provides for passive nature experiences. This calls into question the authority's view that the main function of local parks should be for active recreation, which in turn calls into question whether the cost of providing formal facilities is warranted when compared to the benefits derived from them.



The views of local authorities, who are the main providers of urban open space, are reviewed in the next section.

## 2.7. The Views of the Providers

In their comprehensive review of the development of urban open space Walker and Duffield (1983b) state that such spaces occupy 13.4% of the developed area of England and Wales, that local authorities devote an average of 34.5% of their income to this resource, and that visiting such places is one of the most popular recreation activities. They trace the early development of urban open space from the beliefs that open space would reduce the incidence of disease in cities caused by bad air, and that access to open spaces would enhance the moral welfare of society, through to the development of municipal pride and philanthropy. This was then followed in the post-war period by the influences of planning, the widening of the resource base for public open space, and the decline of open space at the expense of indoor sports facilities and open space in the countryside.

They argue that the provision of open space is still seen primarily as a problem of site management and maintenance, a view that is supported to some extent by the findings of Twight and Knopf (1984).

### Definitions of Open Space

It is important to address the issue of definitions relating to urban open space and the types of open space UWG is concerned with. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary (1973) defines open space as it is used in Britain as 'a certain stretch, extent or area of ground, surface, sky, a small portion of space'. Planning definitions (Morris, 1984) distinguish between public or urban open space (ie land to which the people have full or limited access for purposes of recreation including commons, parks, recreation grounds, public golf courses, bowling greens and certain privately owned gardens and estates) and private open space (ie land which is without free public access used for

tennis courts, football and cricket grounds etc). There are local open spaces (local playing fields, local parks, buffer strips, children's play areas, kickabout areas and adventure playgrounds (Sheffield City Council, 1976) and amenity open spaces defined as small open spaces and pocket parks. The planning definition of 'amenity' is used as an umbrella to cover everything that might be considered pleasant in the environment (Gresswell, 1971) or 'an abstract concept expressing those natural or man-made qualities of the environment from which man derives pleasure, enrichment or satisfaction' (Countryside Commission, 1970). Walker and Duffield (1983) distinguish between open spaces provided for recreational use (including the traditional urban park, formal gardens, playing fields, casual play spaces and urban common land) and open spaces which have primarily an amenity function although recognising that many open spaces combine both functions.

There are, as stated by Reeves (1984) and Morris (1984) a wide variety of open spaces of local, district, metropolitan and regional significance. However, 'nature park' (as opposed to nature centre) 'ecological', 'natural' or 'green space' do not appear as terms in Morris' glossary (op cit). 'People's Park' is used in the USA to denote pocket parks which would be equivalent to local or neighbourhood parks in Britain. Community open space is used as a term in Britain to refer to a small local park for those facilities required very close to home and which are often provided by the developer of a residential environment.

'Recreation' as defined in Morris (op cit) is a constructive activity for the individual and the community. Recreation activities may be grouped as:

- 1 Participating in active sports.
- 2 Watching sporting activities.
- 3 Informal outdoor pursuits: enjoyment of parks, countryside and coast.

So, if it considered that the sites UWG is concerned with are



deemed, by the Group, to be of ecological, recreational and educational value, what are they and are they different from familiar types of open space as described above?

### The Difference Between Traditional Open Spaces and 'Natural Landscapes'

In the human sense, the Group assumed that its sites were more closely related to countryside sites in terms of their aesthetic qualities and the activities people could pursue during visits. Walker and Duffield (1983) regard the function of open space in urban areas as having evolved in response to the industrialisation of cities in the 19th Century and the social and spatial organisation of the rapidly expanding communities within them. At this stage in history, Myerscough (1974) asserts that the urban park represented one early approach to bring countryside, or some token of it, into the town. It seems to me that the key word in the last sentence is 'token' because the park design did not reflect the semi-natural landscapes of the countryside, such as moorland, woodland, heath, bog, and rocky mountain top, but rather the landscape of parklands of private estates: 'a tamed and measured landscape' (Walker and Duffield, 1983 op cit, page 13) and defined in a House of Commons debate of 1859, by Joseph Paxton as:

'A number of beautiful trees and a green turf'.

House of Commons Parliamentary Debates, 1859, 18th July, column 1433.

No mention here of the spontaneity of nature, nor the flowery meadows, hedgerows, copses and scrub which characterised much of the countryside landscapes of lowland Britain at that time, quite apart from the wilder, semi-natural landscapes described above. Notable exceptions to the designed parks, were the heaths, such as Hampstead Heath (London), Sutton Park (Birmingham) and other common lands that open space preservationists such as Octavia Hill (who subsequently founded the National Trust) campaigned to save.



During the 19th Century the feeling grew that because the urban parks were for the use of the public they should be regarded as belonging to the people (Nuttgens, 1973). Some were even called the 'People's Park' as in the cases of Halifax and Hull. However, parks were also seen to be prestige symbols for those who provided the capital to create them and this created a tension.

These issues of design, purpose and ownership have been brought into sharp focus by those advocating the ecological approach to the design of urban open space (Ruff 1979 and 1982). The popular image of most urban open space is of a landscape of mown grass, a few scattered trees and a standard set of play equipment, all of which is assessed to be the product of designers who have failed to recognise the significance of open space to life in the city and have failed to develop more effective and cheaper techniques for its establishment and management at a time of stringent financial cutbacks.

The obvious alternatives to such planned open space in the 1970s were seen to be the many so-called 'natural' open spaces to be found in cities, often officially classed as vacant or derelict land and which included disused railway lines, marl pits, canals, river corridors, abandoned woods and quarries. A key characteristic of these open spaces was that they were virtually, if not totally unmanaged. Ruff (1982) defined them as 'uncommitted' open spaces to represent the fact that people could experiment with how they used them. Of importance to nature conservationists was the fact that that these landscapes that had been left to nature, were often found to be rich in wildlife and therefore presented visitors with the opportunity to observe the natural world close to their homes rather than in the countryside.

The proponents of the alternative 'ecological', 'natural' or 'naturalistic' open spaces (a common term has yet to emerge) adapted their designs and management regimes to retain and re-create the natural character of these opportunistic landscapes and enhance them, not just as nature conservation areas but also as informal recreation sites and even

environmental education sites. They have thus defined a new type of urban open space in terms of its natural and uncommitted character.

Walker and Duffield go on to suggest that providers need to find out more about the present day needs of users and potential users so that resources might be more wisely applied.

## 2.8. Conclusions

The review has drawn together findings from past research that provide clues as to the development of urban nature conservation, and the approaches used by urban wildlife groups and other agencies to provide and manage natural landscapes in towns, with the involvement of the local community. What the review has also shown is that there is a general lack of information about the effectiveness of alternative strategies for providing natural landscapes (and indeed open spaces in general) and a lack of information as to what it is that people derive benefit from, in being able to visit such places.

The implication of this situation is that practitioners and policy makers lack guidance as to what kind of approach is likely to work best in different situations. It is hoped that this research will go some way towards providing such guidance, and an assessment of whether or not the provision of urban nature parks is justified on the basis of the views and behaviour of the users and potential users.

### 3.1. Introduction

The following discussion describes how the research design was developed such that the methodology and methods were compatible and led to the production of the required information needed to fulfill the research objectives.

### 3.2. Methodology

Bailey (1978) describes methodology as the philosophical basis to research. Bell and Newby (1977) explore the recent rise of methodological pluralism and how it has centred upon an assault on positivism. These authors and Wright Mills (1959) describe how sociological research is done in practice. They suggest that there is no clear way of being able to choose between methods for accumulating data, and that most research has a political context in the sense that colleagues, institutions and government policy may all have an influence on a research project which is rarely accounted for in the resulting publications. Bulmer (1977) also suggests that sociological research, undertaken to increase understanding of social action, relationships and structure, cannot always be carried out using the traditional, scientific, experimental or positivist methodology, because of the moral and ethical considerations which impinge upon social issues.

The solution to this problem offered by Bulmer and Bailey is that the methodology and methods adopted by a researcher, should be derived from the problem and the existing theories which will be used to compare the data with. Campbell (1978) asserts that there is a link between the different methodological extremes, in that there is continuity between common sense knowing and scientific knowledge, such that quantitative and qualitative methods can be used in conjunction. He argues that common sense knowing is based upon presumptions built into the nervous and sensory systems and



into language, and that these presumptions have been sorted and confirmed through natural selection and social evolution. The symbols of science are thus presented in a bed of ordinary language, the meaning of which is often presumed by author and reader. This view is supported by Filstead (1979) who asserts that science and its knowledge is socially created by individuals and events which have shaped the questions scientists ask and the procedures they use to get the information needed to provide the answers.

Bailey (1978) describes a wide variety of methodologies based on the units of analysis, the methods of data collection and the analysis technique. He argues that one can elect to fit the research to a particular methodology, or choose a research problem that will be compatible with an already preferred methodology.

In searching for an appropriate methodology I was mindful of 5 factors:

- 1 IHD promotes action research which results in the researcher having a relatively high degree of interaction with the research subjects. This provides a unique opportunity to gain 'rich' data from daily contact with the staff and ease of access to documentary material, which an 'external' researcher would not normally have access to. It also requires diligence to retain a degree of detachment and objectivity.
- 2 IHD expects the student to develop skills in a new discipline and this can effectively broaden the scope of the research and the complexity of the identified problem.
- 3 The units of analysis (the nature parks, UWG staff and executive, local residents and representatives from the other interested parties) though various, were overall few in number.
- 4 A careful literature search and inquiries amongst researchers revealed no other studies on the

subject of community involvement in the management of urban open space with which comparisons could have been made with respect to methodology and methods.

- 5 It would be difficult, not to say wrong, to claim to take a value-free approach, given that I had previously been involved in the development of the community involvement strategies at UWG.

The writer's early involvement in UWG's community involvement projects (see Appendix K) provided valuable insights into the processes of the projects, the type of contribution each interested party was able to make and the types of problems that were encountered. In the beginning, UWG embarked upon the community projects with little more than faith that this approach to nature conservation would be successful. This faith was reinforced by the knowledge that similar projects had been carried out in the UK (Cole 1980) and elsewhere (Ruff 1979) including some led by Chris Baines (the first chair of UWG).

Such insights could not have been gained from the literature at that time because no accounts of the enabling role which voluntary organisations can play within environment projects had been published. The research thus provided a much needed opportunity for someone to step back from the projects and attempt an objective evaluation of what was happening, for one voluntary organisation in one city.

Nonetheless, despite the advantages of participating in the work of the Group to the extent that I did, it is clear that these circumstances, if not compensated for, could potentially have jeopardised the objectivity of the research and thus the credibility of the results. Several strategies were invoked to safeguard the objectivity of the research and thus the credibility of the results. These fall into three basic categories:

- The adoption of a certain role and role and position within the Group.
- A confrontation and explanation of personal assumptions.
- The choice of methods and methodology.



## 1 Definition of My Role and Position within the Group

From a personal perspective, I strongly believed that UWG should seek to justify its basic assertion that the public wanted natural landscapes in cities. Without this it seemed illogical for the Group to expend time and resources trying to enable communities to involve themselves in the provision of such landscapes, given the fact that the Group did not see community development (as defined within the social service sector) as an end in itself.

Fuelled by the writings and oratory of various champions, it appeared that many people, particularly within the landscape profession, saw the ecological approach and urban nature conservation as an exciting challenge and an activity that could be justified on social as well as ecological grounds. Conservationists are still struggling to define the sociological, ethical and moral questions surrounding their activities (2.2.2); a situation likely to persist until more are equipped with the training necessary to tackle such problems.

Meanwhile, natural landscapes were being brought under management and opened up to the the public, and new ones were being created from derelict land, all over the country. There was very little input into this activity from psychologists, sociologists, economists, geographers or recreation researchers. Yet these might have been the ideal people to determine whether the approach and end results were of value to society and the taxpayer (given the fact that so much of this work was funded through job creation schemes by central government).

I therefore adopted a role as catalyst, setting up and chairing meetings for staff and volunteers, sometimes separately and sometimes together, at which general social issues could be discussed, as well as issues relating to how the community projects fitted in with the overall development of the Group's aims and activities, and the general progress of projects.

I was regarded as a member of staff, but outside of the MSC



project, and was directly responsible to the executive committee and the industrial sponsor. This provided a certain degree of detachment, as I was perhaps neither one thing nor the other - but rather someone with a brief to observe the Group from the basis of an understanding of, and empathy with, it.

By creating opportunities to discuss progress and problems, by reporting back findings and insights and by suggesting ways in which the staff might overcome problems and enhance efficiency relating to the community projects, I followed the traditional cyclical procedures of action research, based on the active-reactive-adaptive approach, rather than a hypothetico-deductive approach (see sections 3.3 and 3.4 for further discussion).

## 2 An Exploration of Personal Assumptions

Burrell and Morgan (1979) argue that all social scientists approach their subject via explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the world and the way in which it may be investigated. The framework they provide to help the researcher analyse these assumptions is shown in Fig 2.

My natural instincts, as a trained scientist, would have been to set up an experimental design with a control and with myself occupying a position external to the research. It would have been easy to have adopted an intuitive hypothesis that the community projects were a 'good thing' for UWG to promote and be involved in, and so concentrate the study on testing such a hypothesis.

Given my natural science background and a certain sympathy with Popper's preference for tests designed to falsify hypotheses, the drive to uncover problems and criticisms of the Group was certainly strong. Yet this approach demands that key variables, relevant to the problem, can be identified so that hypotheses can be set up and tested and either proved or disproved. The reality of the subject of this research was that it was a relatively new phenomenon and one that was changing from day to day. Therefore there seemed to be the

need to first discover what was actually happening as a pre-requisite to being able to evaluate it, rather than to begin by testing something that had already been adequately described.

Fig'2 The Subjective-Objective Dimension (after Burrell and Morgan, 1979)





The question therefore arose as to the sources of data that might be accessed in order to make this discovery and perform the evaluation. The research could have been tackled without reference to any of the other interested parties, apart from UWG, and thus concentrated on an investigation of the Group's function through an analysis of organisational considerations. However, UWG was in effect selling two products. Firstly, it was advocating a community approach and secondly, the application of that approach to the conservation of 'natural' landscapes in urban areas. It therefore seemed to me that the consumers of these two products, the general public and the decision makers, might be just as able to evaluate the approach and the end result, as members of UWG. Thus it was considered that the inclusion of the consumers would enhance the objectivity of the research.

### 3 The Choice of Methods and Methodology

There is a tradition that the dilemma over the choice of methodology can be overcome by allowing the type of data required to dictate the method chosen to collect that data and therefore the adoption of a certain methodology (Bailey, 1978). Underlying this argument are considerations of validity and whether or not a particular chosen method will yield accurate and appropriate data. This approach proved attractive in as much as it countered against the adoption of any one method over another based on personal preference or training.

The fact that there appeared to be at least two if not three different categories of consumers focused attention on what type of data each could provide and therefore what method could be used to extract it. Those members of the public involved in the management committees would obviously have a greater depth of knowledge about the projects than the casual site visitor.

Collecting data using different methods to address a common research objective and enhance validity is known as triangulation methodology and is discussed in the next section.

### 3.2.1. Triangulation Methodology

Out of the controversy over methodology, has emerged a school of thought that promotes the use of methodologies that combine quantitative and qualitative methods, based on the premise as described by Denzin that:

'No single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors.... Because each method reveals different aspects of reality, multiple methods of observation must be employed. This is termed triangulation. I now offer as a final methodological rule the principle that multiple methods should be used in everything'.

N Denzin (1978) The Research Act: 28.

There is a distinct tradition in the literature on social science research methods that supports the use of triangulation in which qualitative and quantitative methods are viewed as complementary rather than exclusive (Jick, 1979).

Denzin (1978) identifies two forms of triangulation:

#### 1 Between methods form

Here two or more distinct methods are used to yield data relating to one hypothesis or research objective.

#### 2 Within method form

Multiple techniques (eg scaling and open ended questions) are used within a given method (eg a questionnaire) to obtain data on one topic. This is often used to check the reliability of the data.

It is however, a delicate exercise to decide whether or not results have converged and so the researcher must search out logical patterns in the results. All this depends on whether the problem's concepts have been accurately defined before data collection begins (Jick, 1979 op cit).

In the sense that triangulation improves the validity of the data where congruent data is obtained from more than one method, it also enables the researcher to uncover variance in



the data that may not have been discovered if a methodology employing only qualitative or quantitative methods had been used.

I intended to use both forms of triangulation within the research. Researchers such as McCall and Simmons (1969) and Sieber (1973) have used triangulation to integrate qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to contribute to greater confidence in the generalisation of results.

### 3.3. Action Research

The aim of action research is not just to discover facts, but to help alter certain conditions that the community find unsatisfactory (Curle, 1949). The collaborative nature of IHD research provides a dynamic and complex field setting for research, which enables the student to operate both inside and outside of the problem situation.

Action research has been applied to several projects involving organisations and as such has been used to diagnose existing conditions within organisations, and to help organisations see directions for adaptive change and growth in order to improve conditions (Jenks, 1970). The aim of the action researcher should be to release the necessary knowledge and in such a way as to enable the organisation to act upon it. In the context of this research, it was necessary to obtain information that would ultimately enable UWG to improve its methods for choosing an appropriate strategy for new community involvement projects, and assessing the role it and the other interested parties should play in those projects.

In as much as the process of action research involves making judgements (Curle, 1949 op cit) and is therefore based on the interpretation of the facts, Susman and Evered (1978) assert that it does not meet the criteria of the positivist methodology. It is suggested by these authors that action research has certain elements in common with existentialism (because human choices, values and actions are given



to the immediacy of subjective experience as the basis to knowledge).

Action researchers have also suggested that methodologies employing the use of multiple methods are most appropriate (Campbell, 1978 op cit; and Filstead, 1979 op cit).

Action research was originally developed by Curle (1949) and Lewin (1946) to solve problems in the fields of psychology and social psychiatry, but it has also formed the basis to the development of the active-reactive-adaptive form of evaluation research (Filstead, 1979 op cit; Patton, 1980) which has provided the most appropriate research design for this research.

#### 3.4. Research Design - Formal Evaluation Research

According to Rossi et al (1979) evaluation research is a robust area of activity which involves the collection, analysis and interpretation, of data on the need, implementation and impact of intervention efforts to better the lot of human kind and improve social conditions for community life. Some of the earliest evaluations were carried out in the 1900s and concerned health and education provision. In the 1930s precedents were set advocating the use of rigorous social science research methods for evaluations (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939).

From the 1960s onwards there has been a massive increase in the magnitude of social intervention programs, implemented by governments, which has led to a concurrent increase in evaluation research (Hyde and Shafritz, 1979).

In contrast to this Goldberg (1983) states that little of the past research has been directed towards voluntary organisations, and what little there has been does not relate to environmental issues; the main focus being the delivery of social services.

Evaluation researchers face similar problems to other social scientists when it comes to choosing a methodology and methods for their work, and once again there is a substantial body that rejects the thesis of competing paradigms and asserts that different approaches can be mixed according to the type of study being undertaken. Heilman (1980) states that the evaluation researchers have hitherto tended to favour the experimental or hypothetico-deductive approach (Suchman, 1967; Rossi et al, 1979 op cit). The hypothesis stated simply is that people subjected to a program will differ significantly from those who are not. If the researcher can show that the difference can be linked to program activities only, the inference is that the program is having the desired effect.

The problems with this approach, are that evaluation, because it involves judgement, has to be seen as a value-laden process, which may affect the credibility of results labelled 'scientific'. Furthermore, it has been argued that the subjects of evaluation (the people with the responsibility for implementing the intervention) are usually keen to maintain the status quo and may be selective in the information they provide. Any attempt by the researcher to objectify this information is likely to increase the distortion.

The alternative, active-reactive-adaptive approach as propounded by Patton (1980) is based on the Weberian concept of *verstehen*; the human capacity to know and understand through sympathetic introspection and reflection from detailed description and observation. Here the interaction between evaluator, client and programme user is seen as essential, in the belief that this will enhance the chances of the findings of the research being implemented.

Rossi and Wright (1977), Mitroff and Boruch (1974) and Patton (1980) argue that researchers are faced with a paradigm of choices, and should use a methodology and methods that offer the best way of identifying the net effects of an intervention and encourage the decision makers to implement the findings.

### 3.5. The Evaluation Research Process

It was then decided that a formal evaluation research design would help to structure the research, in particular the identification of operational objectives for the projects against which the need, implementation and impact of the strategies could be evaluated. The evaluation of people's perception and use of the urban nature parks may be considered to be a part of the overall evaluation, in as much as the users of the sites are part of the target audience of the projects, and as providing information of a more general nature.

A comprehensive or systematic evaluation, according to Rossi et al (1979 op cit) would normally involve 5 phases:

Evaluation Planning  
Monitoring the Delivery System  
Outcome Effect  
Cost/Effectiveness Analysis.  
Interpretation and Utilisation of Findings

This is the structure that has been used to formalise the research design which is explained in the following sections.

#### 3.5.1 Evaluation Planning

Evaluation research on an intervention may begin before, during or after the implementation of the intervention. In this study the research was begun during the implementation phase. The purpose of evaluation planning is to identify the following:

- 1 Objectives of the intervention
- 2 Operational objectives and their desired outcomes
- 3 Primary users of the evaluation information
- 4 Target population for the intervention
- 5 Intervention sponsors
- 6 Intervention implementers



Evaluation is commonly directed at the policy level of decision making, which in the case of UWG would be the executive and unit supervisors.

The aim of evaluation planning is to get as representative a view as possible of the different opinions that exist and to identify ambiguities and contradictions. An evaluator working within the organisation, such as I was, is ideally placed to gain greater access to individuals and documents, and is able to develop a deep understanding of the organisational climate and structure which can strengthen such an inductive approach.

### 3.5.2. Monitoring the Delivery System

The key issues to address in this phase of an evaluation are:

- 1 Who is being affected by the intervention.
- 2 Whether the delivery system is consistent with the intervention design specifications.

Data on the implementation or delivery of the intervention can be used to rule out the cause of failure being due to faulty implementation of the design specifications, for reasons of accountability or even as a basis to decide whether or not the intervention should continue.

Data may be collected from the intervention sponsors and implementers, and the target population. The whole issue of community involvement, or citizen participation, has been gaining increasing interest in recent years, particularly in the USA and Europe, not least in the fields of environmental improvements and the statutory planning process.

McAllister (1980) has criticised many of the traditional planning evaluation procedures (eg Environmental Impact Assessment) for being too abstract or statistical and for ignoring the basic fact that evaluation is a judgement and therefore involves values. Traditionally, the expert view has been regarded as the most appropriate for evaluations for

reasons of technical knowledge and ability to control value judgements. McAllister challenges this view by stating that it is the target population that is better able to evaluate interventions, particularly the impacts, rather than the experts.

He recognises the need for community representatives to be educated as to any necessary technical information that may be required to aid the evaluation and that this would extend the timescale of evaluations. However, because he views evaluation as a branch of ethics, he believes that the advantage of ensuring more accurate results is worth the extra time and effort required.

### 3.5.3. Outcome Effects

In this the third stage, the evaluator now has to estimate the impact (outcome or net effect) of the intervention and whether the magnitude of the effect is greater than would have occurred naturally ie without UWG involvement. Again, information could be used from the intervention sponsors and implementers, and the target population.

When the evaluation research design was adopted for this study, it was not possible to predict how far the sites and community involvement strategies would have developed and therefore how many of the objectives might have been achieved when it came to collecting the data towards the end of the second year of the project. An ideal way of estimating the net effects is to carry out follow-up studies, but the 3 year limit on the research timescale precluded this. These limitations were not thought to be too disadvantageous because the main research objectives were mainly concerned with the process of the strategies, the opinions of the local residents and the use of the site by the local community, for which it was felt that sufficient time would have elapsed for there to be a measurable effect.



#### 3.5.4. Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

An assessment of the cost-effectiveness of an intervention is often regarded as part of the evaluation of outcome effects, and is used to compare the efficiency of different types of intervention in meeting similar objectives (Rossi et al, 1979 op cit). However, the essence of evaluation is the understanding of the actual process of an intervention and the outcome, which is what has been focused on in this research.

The industrial supervisor felt that UWG had little to gain from an analysis of the costs incurred by the Group in the implementation of the strategies for several reasons:

- 1 Voluntary organisations generally have limited financial resources, so any work undertaken is usually based on low budgets which cannot be significantly reduced.
- 2 Staff are often paid for through grant aid or as in the case of UWG, through the Manpower Services Commission, at no real cost to the Group, and this is likely to continue to be the case in the foreseeable future. The Group was most interested to know about the staff's perceptions of the projects and the problems they faced in fulfilling their roles.

Even though it was agreed that a cost-effectiveness analysis should be excluded from the research it is an issue that ought to be addressed and could be tackled using a self-monitoring system to determine the time spent by the individuals at UWG and from the other interested parties in a project, in combination with an analysis of the resource costs incurred in such projects.

#### 3.5.5. Interpretation and Utilisation of Evaluation Findings

The assumption behind intervention is that the outcome is going to be better than if there had been no intervention. Assuming that there is a positive effect from the intervention, the interpretation will depend on the size of



the effect in relation to the pre-determined level of significance, the generalisability of the outcome, and its relevance to policy. If the effect is considered to be too small, it is unlikely to warrant major changes in policy.

According to Rutman (1977) findings are likely to be well received if the recipients understand the assumptions that were made and why a particular methodology was used. If the evaluator has attempted to cultivate a consensus amongst the interested parties from the beginning of the exercise, this too should enhance the chances of utilisation (Berk and Rossi, 1976). And finally, if the evaluator can suggest ways in which each interested party might use the findings, then again, there is a greater chance that they will be used.

Rossi (1977 op cit) comments that evaluators must accept that their data will only be regarded as an element of the resources available to the policy makers and that the former will be seen to fulfill the role of expert witness, with few if any voting rights in the final analysis.

It was intended that the insights gained from the research would be used in two ways by the Group. Firstly, in gaining a deeper understanding of the process of the community strategies and the roles played by the different interested parties, it was hoped that UWG would be better able to choose the most appropriate strategy for new projects and the specific role it should be prepared to play.

Secondly, the information collected on the case studies, would of itself be useful to feed into future plans for those sites.

### 3.6. Summary

Thus far, the philosophical basis to the research can be summarised in the form of a series of questions and answers as follows in Table 3.

Table 3 Summary of the Philosophical Basis to the Research

Questions about the research process	Solutions
What is being researched?	Experiences, perceptions and events
What constitutes knowledge?	Evaluation of the research objectives
How can this knowledge be secured?	Triangulation methodology
What are the units of analysis?	Individuals, community projects and the nature parks
What methods will be used?	A combination of qualitative and quantitative
What methods of analysis will be used?	Qualitative and quantitative

### 3.7. Data Collection Methods

As the research objectives and design became more firmly established, attention was given to the selection of methods.

Coming to the research from an ecology/conservation background, my previous experience of research methods had been limited to non-participative, laboratory techniques as applied to biological material rather than sociological material.

The choice of methods was based on the source of data and the type of data required. More than one method was selected for each phase of the evaluation procedure, consistent with the triangulation methodology that had been adopted for the study.

The main sources of data were identified as:

- 1 UWG staff and executive.
- 2 Representatives on the management committees of the site projects (drawn from local residents, officers and councillors)

from the local authority, natural history societies and other interested parties).

- 3 Local residents (ie site users and non-users).
- 4 Documents including policy statements from UWG and the working files for each of the site projects.

### 3.7.1. Evaluation Planning

The research objectives here were to :

- 1 Establish a representative view of UWG's objectives for the community involvement strategies.
- 2 Identify the operational objectives for each of the site projects.

The staff and executive who had been responsible for developing the community involvement strategies were identified as the obvious sources of information to fulfill the first part of this phase of the evaluation. Meetings were initiated with the executive to discuss the policy of the organisation in relation to the strategies and Checkland's (1976) Soft-Systems Methodology was used with the staff to obtain root definitions for the community nature park strategy.

### Soft-Systems Methodology and Root Definitions

The Soft-Systems Methodology is essentially an inquiry system and has been developed by Prof Peter Checkland over the last 10 years (see Fig 3). Each activity (represented by a balloon in Fig 3) is linked by logical connections, but in reality the researcher may be engaged in two or more activities at the same time. Activities 1 and 2 involve the selection of some key issues relating to the problem such as the 'actors' and documentary evidence. An analysis of these issues allows the researcher to set some boundaries to the problem and to compare the description of the problem as given, to the researcher's





Fig 3 The Checkland Methodology (Checkland and Smyth, 1976).

own perception of the problem. Activity 3 - root definitions - represents the first stage where systems thinking is involved and this is what was used to define the community nature park strategy.

Root definitions are meant to represent concise formal definitions of those systems thought to be relevant to the problem situation. Checkland uses the mnemonic CATWOE to represent the 6 essential elements of the root definition:

C	Customers	Who are the beneficiaries and the victims of this system? If it were to exist in the real world who would suffer from its actions?
A	Actors	Who would carry out the processes of this system?
T	Transformation	What is the fundamental input/output transformation carried out in and by this system?
W	Weltanschauung	What image of the world makes this system a meaningful one to contemplate?
O	Owners	Who owns this system, in the sense that they would have the power to create, alter or abolish it?
E	Environmental Constraints	What aspects would this system take as given, and hence as, in principle unalterable?

Anybody involved in the problem situation can be asked to write a root definition. Activity 4 involves the researcher attempting to construct a conceptual model of the systems named in the root definitions. A comparison can then be made between the conceptual model and the real problem situation in order to derive feasible and desirable changes that could be implemented to improve the problem situation.

A basic proforma (see below) was designed and given to 8 members of staff to complete (including myself) for the community nature park strategy. The results of this are discussed in Chapter 4.

Root Definition Proforma:

T/C	Community Nature parks are for/exist to.....
A	This process is implemented by.....
E	.....subject to the constraints of...
	.....
O	The process is controlled/sponsored by.....
	.....
W	This approach is a meaningful one because.....
	.....

Seminar

As discussed in the literature review, there appeared to have been no previous studies that had evaluated the community involvement strategies employed by other voluntary and statutory organisations engaged in the provision and management of urban open space. In order to place UWG's experience into context, I organised a seminar for a small number of people who were known to be employing a user-oriented approach from a range of voluntary and statutory organisations. The seminar took the form of a group discussion and was focused on a number of key issues. These were:

- 1 An organisation's objectives for encouraging community involvement.
- 2 A community's objectives for seeking involvement.
- 3 The characteristics of the members of the community that become involved.
- 4 The roles each of the interested parties play in a project.
- 5 The structure and function of the decision making body.
- 6 Factors that affect project progress.



The outcome of the seminar is discussed in Chapter 4 and more fully in Millward (1983).

With respect to the second part of this phase of the evaluation, information on the operational objectives for each of the case study projects was derived mainly from semi-structured interviews with the members of the management committees and document study.

#### Document Study

The working files and meeting minutes of UWG were continuously monitored throughout the first two years of the research, which provided a useful source of information against which facts given in the interviews could be monitored. A certain amount of non-participant observation was also undertaken in attending public meetings and site work days for some of the case projects to enhance my understanding of the implementation of the strategies.

#### Semi-Structured Interviews

The interested parties on the management committees of the various case sites presented the obvious source for identifying the operational objectives for each project, and an assessment of the community involvement aspects of the projects.

A semi-structured interview was chosen as the most appropriate method for obtaining the necessary information for several reasons. Firstly, it was considered that the interested parties would be able to provide detailed information which could not be fully accessed using a more structured approach such as a questionnaire. Secondly, because I wanted the interviewees to compare their own objectives with those of the other interested parties, which may or may not have involved a certain amount of criticism, it was felt that a group discussion would not be appropriate. Thirdly, because of the uncertainty over the likely rates of progress that would be achieved on UWG's community projects, it was decided that data should be collected on 6 case sites. This meant that some 70

people would need to be interviewed and this prohibited the possibility of using a totally unstructured technique which would have required at least two interviews per person (Patton, 1978). A semi-structured interview technique thus presented the optimum method for collecting the required data and provided sufficient flexibility for new issues to be pursued as they arose. The full interview schedule is given in Appendix B and guidance on the use of interviews and the design of schedules was derived from Patton (1980) and Gorden (1969). Full transcripts were made of each interview, which were then subjected to content analysis. The quotes presented are used as evidence to support general points, and to highlight differences in the perceptions of the interviewees.

### 3.7.2. Monitoring the Delivery System

In this part of the research the objectives were to determine:

- 1 Whether the delivery system was consistent with the intervention design specifications.
- 2 Who was being affected by the intervention.

It could be argued that UWG were hoping to achieve three main aims through their community involvement projects; the conservation of wildlife, the provision of educational and recreational facilities for local communities, and to influence decision makers on the basis of the credibility they gained from any resulting success of the site projects. So, the intervention was designed to have a positive effect on both wildlife and people. As it was my task to concentrate on the sociological aspects, I had to determine who was being affected and whether this was happening as a result of the actions taken to meet the objectives.

In an ideal world it would have been better to have had the time to monitor the delivery systems over several years, but that was not possible because of the time scale of the research. It was also very difficult to predict the rate of progress within each project, and also therefore, the timing of the approaches to the community and the members of the

management committees.

The members of the management committees seemed to be the obvious source of the information I needed to answer the following type of questions:

- 1 Who initiated the project?
- 2 What did you want to achieve?
- 3 What was done to achieve those aims?
- 4 What role have you played?
- 5 What role has UWG played?
- 6 How long did you think it would take to be able to identify some evidence of achievement?
- 7 What problems did you experience during your involvement?
- 8 What, if anything has given you satisfaction or a feeling of success?
- 9 What do you envisage happening to the site in the long term?

These questions were incorporated into the semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix B) which was also used to confirm the operational objectives of the evaluation planning phase and to identify any differences in those objectives between UWG and the other members of the project management committees.

To be consistent with the triangulation methodology, I elected to analyse relevant documents, including correspondence and minutes, to validate facts and provide explanations for events.

#### Questionnaire Survey and Observation Study

With respect to the second objective, UWG were particularly keen to find out some relatively basic information about what urban people thought of urban wildlife areas and what they used them for. This translated into questions such as:

- 1 How many people know about their local site?
- 2 How often do they visit it?
- 3 If they do not visit it, why not?



- 4 What did they use the sites for?
- 5 What did they like about the place?
- 6 What did they dislike?

People's views and use of the countryside have been well monitored, mostly by the Countryside Commission (1979) and the Tourism and Recreation Research Unit (TRRU, 1980a and 1981). Much less research has been carried out on urban open spaces, and very little of that has been concerned with the more natural type of green space eg woods, riversides, marshes, lakes, regenerating disused quarries and railway lines (Tartaglia-Kershaw 1980, TRRU 1980a and 1980b).

There was as a consequence little data on the answers people had given to the questions outlined above for sites elsewhere in the country, and few examples of the actual questionnaires that had been used to collect that information.

As there were so few natural landscapes in UK towns and cities that were being positively managed for their value to wildlife and people, (see Chapter 2) I assumed that the image of the city as a concrete jungle interspersed with formal open spaces would be the dominant image for urban people. The ideas of conservationists and landscape designers (particularly those who had seen what had been achieved in Holland and Scandinavia) that it was both desirable and technically possible to have natural landscapes in urban areas were being debated at conferences, in the professional journals and the newsletters of the voluntary environmental groups, but not in the mass media. So the concept of nature in the city would be new to someone not involved in an occupational sense, and possibly of little interest given the state of the country at that time, when issues of financial cut backs in public services, unemployment, law and order, and trade union reform were of major concern.

It was therefore agreed by myself and my associate supervisor (psychologist) that I should concentrate on eliciting opinions from the local community, rather than attempting to explore fundamental attitudes on the value of natural landscapes in

the urban area which might not have had time to develop.

It was decided that a questionnaire would be a good method for collecting the factual information on site use and the opinions we wanted. The sample was to be drawn from the adult population living within what was to be called the local community and which was to be defined, according to Spencer (1978) by housing estate boundaries, major roads, postal areas and topographical barriers relating to the site location. A further criteria was imposed in that the sample was divided equally between people living in streets immediately adjacent to the site (zone A) and those living outside that area (zone B) but within walking distance of the site (0.25-0.5 miles). This was done to test out the view that had been expressed by some of the interested parties that few people in the local area were aware that some of the sites even existed.

As we wanted to give people plenty of time to think about the issues, given our concern that they may never have considered them before, we piloted a self-administered questionnaire. However, the response rate was very low (only 28%), even though we had delivered the questionnaires by hand and explained the survey to the recipients.

A new questionnaire, designed to be administered by an interviewer, was then piloted and was found to provide the information we wanted (see Appendix C) and in a more time-efficient way. This method also enabled us to gain information from users who might have been uncertain as to what we were referring to. All of the sites had been unmanaged for several years, some were not identified as being open to the public on signs and were used in an informal way, such that some users may not have known whether or not they were trespassing.

At the time the survey was scheduled to be run, progress on one of the six sites had slowed to such an extent that it was excluded from further investigation. Staff resources at UWG were limited and had to be spread over the questionnaire survey and the observation study. It was eventually agreed that a



random sampling technique would be most appropriate, and that this would be applied using a sampling frame of every  $n$ th house. Some 20 staff were persuaded to volunteer to help with the questionnaire and a training session was organised for them by myself and the main academic supervisor. Each house to be sampled was identified using the electoral register and a leaflet explaining the purpose of the survey was delivered two weeks beforehand to each house and its immediate neighbours, to prepare the residents and provide an alternative address should the first choice prove unavailable.

As there were no precedents on which to base the survey, because what was required was considered to be basic information which would not require sophisticated analysis, and because of the limited availability of help, a relatively small sample size of 100 respondents per site was thought to be optimum.

It was anticipated that the results would be presented as frequency tables and cross-tabulations. Guidance on the design and analysis of questionnaires was derived from Bailey (1978), Hoinville and Jowell (1971), Moser and Kalton (1971), Scott (1961) and Davidson (1970).

The second method I chose to explore how the sites were used and by whom, was non-participant observation. Rutledge (1981) devotes a whole book to the argument that environmental designs must service the behavioural needs of their users before they can be considered good.

Observations of users, provided the opportunity to collect quantitative information on the age, sex and activities of users in relation to different times of the day and week, and the microgeography of the sites in terms of where use was concentrated.

This type of information can be recorded using a variety of methods including video cameras and time-lapse photography. As I was keen to test out methods that I felt UWG, other voluntary organisations and busy professionals could use to



evaluate similar projects, I chose a mapping technique (see Appendix D).

Observers were required to walk around the larger sites along a pre-determined route, or spend periods of time at specific viewpoints on the smaller sites, and record any person seen in a 360 degree panorama at 5 minute intervals.

Although a steady stream of references on observation techniques, as applied to landscapes, appear in the USA literature (Brower, 1973; Taylor, 1978; Joardar and Neil, 1978; and Lindsay, 1978), only one other researcher, Christine Bradley (1983), had used the technique in the UK. I used Bradley's technique as the basis for mine, with a view to being able to present a joint publication comparing results for her sites in Sheffield and mine in the West Midlands (Bradley and Millward 1986).

Elson (1977) as part of his review of questionnaire surveys carried out on countryside recreation sites, concludes that there is a significant variance in the ratio of winter to summer visits which could be in the region of 1:3, and that to maximise data collection a minimum sampling period of 4 weekend days and 2 week days should be used per site, during summer months. Use patterns on bank holidays have been shown to be different from ordinary weekends and so should be avoided, where the aim is to assess the more typical use pattern.

Given the lack of information on the use of natural landscapes in urban areas, it was agreed that I should carry out observations throughout the year to provide some comparisons between the level and pattern of use in the different seasons.

The sites were observed over a 12 month period from August 1983 to July 1984. Observations were made on Sunday mornings and afternoons during the autumn, winter and spring, and on Sunday and weekday mornings, afternoons and evenings during May, June and July. A second set of observations were completed for the three case study sites reported on in this thesis,

during May, June and July, 1985.

Mindful of the limited resources of the time and goodwill that I could draw on from UWG staff, (who were to help me to collect this data and that for the questionnaire survey), and the length of time one could remain on a site without arousing suspicion or suffering too much discomfort from the weather, I established the recording periods as:

morning	10 - 12 noon
afternoon	2 - 4 pm
evening	6 - 8 pm

These were assumed to be non-meal times for the majority of people and should therefore represent the times when the maximum level of use was likely to occur. Further details on the technique are given in Appendix D.

It was anticipated that children would constitute a relatively high percentage of the users, when compared to their incidence in the population as a whole, and it was felt that the observation method would be a much more appropriate method for investigating this aspect of usage than the questionnaire which it would have been difficult to adapt for use by the children.

It was anticipated that the results from the observations would be presented as frequency tables and diagrammatic maps.

The main expected benefits of using both a questionnaire survey and on-site observations were several. Firstly, it would be possible to compare the basic information concerning who claimed that they used the sites and for what purposes, with who was actually observed to use the sites and for what. Secondly, the questionnaires would enable us to gauge something of people's opinions about the sites, which could not be gained from using an observation technique alone. And thirdly, the observation technique would enable us to discover more about children's use of the sites than would have been possible if only the questionnaire had been used.



### 3.7.3. Outcome Effects

The assumption behind an intervention is that the outcome is going to be better than if there had been no intervention. Two further assumptions behind the notion of outcome effects are that a) there has been a change and b) that the magnitude of the change is greater than would have occurred naturally ie without UWG involvement.

Techniques for collecting data to address this aspect of the evaluation were written into the interview schedule and the questionnaire. Within the interview schedule the questions designed to assess the net effects of the strategies included:

- 1 Do you know who asked UWG to become involved in the project?
- 2 What role do you think UWG ought to have played?
- 3 What do you think they should do in the future?
- 4 How do you feel about the local residents getting involved in this kind of environmental issue?
- 5 What role have you played in the project?
- 6 Do you think someone else should have done your job?
- 7 What information did you require for your job?
- 8 What, if any problems have you experienced during your involvement?
- 9 What if anything has given you satisfaction or a feeling of success?
- 10 What do you perceive as the most serious difficulties facing the project as far as meeting the aims are concerned?
- 11 What would you consider to be acceptable evidence of the achievement of the aims?

Much of the data collected from the interviews formed the basis of the design of the questionnaire survey and is reflected in the latter by the following questions:

- 1 Are there any things you particularly like about the place?
- 2 Are there any things you particularly dislike about the the place?
- 3 Have you noticed any changes taking place over there in the last 12 months?



- 4 Are there any changes that could be made to the site that might make the place more attractive to you?
- 5 Who do you think should look after the site?
- 6 Can you recall how you got to know about the site?
- 7 Have you seen or heard any publicity about the place over the last 12 months?
- 8 Supposing you had an hour or so to spare and you felt like a breath of fresh air, where would you be most likely to go?

The main concern was to widen the assessment of the outcomes, beyond the UWG staff, whose assessments, whilst no less valuable than anybody else's, would be biased to some extent.

The main problem in completing this part of the evaluation was that the projects, even at the time of data collection were at most only 2-3 years old, at a very early stage in their development when very little impact had been made on the ground. However, as the main emphasis of the research had been placed on understanding the process of the community involvement strategies and local people's feelings about the sites, this was not considered to be a significant problem.

#### 3.7.5. Summary

The choice of methods and their relation to the different phases of the evaluation are summarised in Table 4 (overleaf).

The design reflects the influences of allowing the data needed to dictate the choice of methods, the adoption of triangulation methodology, and the predisposition of the researcher that the research demanded an active-reactive-adaptive approach.

Table 4 A Summary of the Chosen Data Collection Methods

Phase	Research Objectives	Method
Evaluation Planning	to identify the objectives of the community involvement strategies	Root definitions Policy discussions Seminar Interviews Document Study
	to identify the operational objectives for each of the projects	
Monitoring the Delivery System	to determine whether the delivery system was being implemented according to the specifications	Interviews Questionnaire Observations
	to determine who was being affected by the intervention	
Outcome Effects	to determine whether the net effect of the intervention was greater than would have occurred naturally	Questionnaire Interviews Document Study

## CHAPTER 4 STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN NATURE CONSERVATION

### 4.1. The Early Development of UWG's Approach to Community Involvement

The earliest reference to involving 'local people' in an UWG document is found in the concluding paper of the 'Nature in the City' Workshop by Baines (unpublished, but referred to in UWG, 1980); the event at which UWG was formally launched. Having previously commented on the need to compromise on traditional values in conservation and settle down to achieving a network of medium value wildlife sites, the need to initiate new techniques to create landscapes, and to encourage a positive use and attitude towards these landscapes, he then went on to say:

'The involvement of local people in the management of urban wildlife is the biggest single key to future success. This provides valuable local knowledge, substantial cost savings to the land owner, and most importantly, it provides immediate public protection when a site comes under pressure for development'.

C Baines (Quoted in UWG, 1980. The Way Ahead. Newsletter 1: 6).

Here the involvement of people is seen as a means to influence landowners and land use decision makers. Whilst there was no specific mention of involving local people in urban nature conservation in the draft constitution (adopted 12 Dec 1980), UWG requested information from the general public about areas of land of wildlife value within the conurbation, through a Public Service Announcement on Central TV. Several people responded to this, which gave the first employees a list of sites to visit, and contacts from within local communities.

The meetings of the executive as documented from 17 Dec 1980 onwards, up until the start of the research and beyond, contain no discussion about the community nature park concept; only details of work carried out on the projects by the staff. During this period the staff were being guided by the Friends



of the Earth Ecologist.

#### 4.2. Defining the Concept of Community Nature Parks

The first problem was, therefore, to get UWG to define the concept of community nature parks at a time when the Group was still trying to define urban nature conservation. Checklands Soft-Systems Methodology (as described in section 3.7.1) was used to elicit root definitions of the community nature park concept from 8 members of UWG staff.

As anticipated the root definitions did indeed reflect people's value systems, and the influence of their graduate training came out strongly. To illustrate this, root definitions constructed by a planner and an ecologist (with a background in psychology) are given below:

Planner:

'Community nature parks exist to provide an identifiable local resource over which the community can exercise day to day control and management to the benefit of the local people, without reference to the local authority. This process is implemented by the local people of all ages, interests and abilities with expert help from advisory bodies (eg UWG) subject to the constraints of the normal legal and planning controls exercised by the local authority in 'society's interests'. This approach is a meaningful one because it is all to do with making people happy'.

Ecologist/Psychologist:

'Community nature parks exist as part of the process of promoting the idea that nature and people should live together in harmony for the benefit of both. The process is implemented by voluntary groups throughout Britain subject to the constraints of local involvement and the initiative of the voluntary organisation concerned. This approach is a meaningful one because it results from the internalised beliefs of certain individuals rather than imposed systems. The latter do not have the adequate structure for community involvement and decision making'.

The root definition reflecting the most frequently mentioned elements from combining all 8 would read:

Community nature parks exist to bring people and nature together for their mutual benefit

(to provide green space in urban areas was also mentioned and whilst everybody mentioned people as customers, only 4 mentioned nature).

This process is implemented by local people and voluntary groups

(3 people mentioned planners and 1 person mentioned the landowner).

Subject to the constraints of the local authorities and the involvement and support of the local people

(3 people mentioned the landowner, 1 overuse, 1 physical features of the site and 1 a management agreement).

The process is controlled/sponsored by the local community  
(2 mentioned a warden, 2 anyone who could be persuaded or interested, 1 the land owner and 1 UWG).

This approach is a meaningful one because it is good to bring nature and people together for their mutual benefit

(other reasons mentioned included local control, religion and changing the face of urban areas through planning).

The root definitions revealed that although there seemed to be agreement about the Customer, Actor, Transformation and Weltanschauung elements of the community nature park concept, there was much more variety in the responses to the Owner and Environmental constraints elements; who takes controls of the nature parks and what environmental influences affect projects. It would therefore seem that disagreement over these issues may have an effect on the efficiency of the strategy in that an individual working with one community may realise that he or she is operating from a different set of objectives to another, which has implications for the Group as a whole in terms of defining what has been achieved.



A weakness of the Soft-Systems Methodology is that it does not provide for an analysis and interpretation of the underlying mechanism to the systems described by the root definitions.

At this point in the research two new issues arose which brought the idea of basing the research on the Soft-Systems Methodology into question.

#### 4.3 The Emergence of Alternative Strategies

Discussions with the staff had revealed that the community nature park strategy was not the only way in which the staff were involving local communities in the conservation of wildlife sites. UWG had also been invited to contribute to site projects by local authority departments and private owners, where the interest of the local community was either unknown or deemed to be relatively low. On other projects where the issue was one of saving the site from a proposed development that the community regarded as likely to result in the unnecessary loss of open space and damage to wildlife, the Group were helping local communities to build up cases to object to such proposals using the statutory planning process.

In the sense that the staff were developing these strategies intuitively as their response to what people were asking UWG to help them with, it was felt that there was a case for broadening the scope of the research to reflect this increasing diversity of strategies being employed by the staff. A series of meetings were initiated with the staff to discuss the detail of the different strategies with a view to helping them define operational objectives for each project.

The second issue related to the fact that the staff recognised that because the scope and the amount of work was increasing rapidly, it was becoming more and more important to prioritise the use of their time. However, there existed no policy guidelines (other than the stated aims of the Group) which might have at least offered them some basic criteria against which they could assess the relative value of individual



projects.

The executive had, on a number of occasions at executive meetings, recognised the value of involving the staff in the development of the Group's policy and objectives, by virtue of the insight staff gained from their experience at translating the aims of the Group into practical action. I therefore suggested that the staff draw up a draft policy document for discussion with the executive as a first step.

The draft policy was drawn up on the basis of the Group's aims as stated in the Memorandum and Articles of Association (Appendix A) and incorporated several statements (underlined) referring to the involvement of local people. These included:

#### **Policy 1      Practical Work**

To protect, conserve and manage sites within the West Midlands County which have potential for the enhancement of nature through site work with the involvement of the community.

#### **Policy 2      Education**

2.1 Make available information relating to the ecological and social principles adopted by UWG, based on the philosophy that practical involvement and enjoyment in a natural environment is conducive to a greater understanding of natural fauna and flora and its conservation needs.

#### **Policy 3      Liaison with Voluntary and Statutory Bodies**

5.4 Liaise with voluntary bodies such as scout associations, parent teacher associations and residents associations.

5.1/2/3.6 Co-ordinate community action, canvassing councillors and media coverage to protect natural areas.

This document was adopted by the executive in March 1983 and has been revised annually since then; the commitment to community involvement still forming an essential part of the

Group's policy, as at the time of writing (see Appendix J).

Meanwhile, through the meetings I had initiated with the staff, it was becoming clear that the objectives they were working to were those based on their intuitive understanding of UWG's aims. These were eventually interpreted by the staff and expressed as such in the policy document. The different strategies did not reflect different objectives, but rather different means (or mechanisms) that could be used to achieve the same ends (or objectives).

Given the weakness of the Soft-Systems Methodology to reveal an understanding of the mechanism of a system it seemed appropriate to develop the research from this point using evaluation research methods.

#### 4.4. Defining the Community Involvement Strategies

It was at the executive meeting on 21 July 1982, that I suggested that some discussion be given to what could be termed philosophical issues within the Group. Two years had elapsed since the Group had been established and most of the practical difficulties new voluntary organisations face (such as drawing up constitutions, allocating responsibilities and employing staff) had been resolved. The staff had similarly determined a set of working procedures and had been tackling a wide range of tasks including site-based work, publication of the newsletter, lectures, exhibitions, publicity and fund raising. By this time, the Group employed 2 landscape architects, a planner and an ecologist with whom I had initiated a series of meetings to discuss issues relating to the community involvement strategies as well as specific matters of progress on the related site projects.

At the first such meeting in July 1982, 8 sites were discussed (including Plants Brook and Leckie Rd, but excluding Woodgate Valley). In the general discussion the issue of the term 'community nature park' was raised. It was felt that the term



'park' tended to be misinterpreted by the community whose image was of a traditional Victorian-style park that was formal and intensively managed. UWG had chosen 'park', rather than 'reserve', because it was thought that 'reserve' would give the impression that people were not welcome, whereas the Group wished to emphasise that the urban sites were as much for people as wildlife. It was agreed that the full term should be seen as describing a concept that was useful to UWG and other organisations developing community involvement projects, but that UWG staff would encourage community groups to devise their own names for sites.

As a strategy that could be translated into action on-site with the local community, it was felt that community nature parks offered the maximum benefit to UWG in achieving its aims for conserving sites, increasing public awareness of nature and the recreational opportunities, educating children, involving local communities and influencing the decision makers.

By September 1982, the work load of the planner and landscape architects had significantly increased and the staff were holding discussions to prioritise their commitments. There were plans to expand the work of the planner into development control (analysing and commenting on local planning applications) whilst continuing the strategic planning work and advising community groups. The landscape architects were receiving increasing numbers of requests for design help but could not see how they could become as fully involved in all the projects as they had done in the first community nature parks. Some 25 different site projects were listed in the minutes. Each member of staff held the major responsibility for a proportion of these, but the projects were generally serviced by all staff.

There was some indication that the staff were becoming worried about the level of commitment and expertise being demanded of them on the nature park projects. Comments such as:



'I realise that they (ie the community representatives on the management committee) take in everything I say and I do not feel confident about the advice I am offering'

and

'If I'd left it in the community's hands, it would never have got done. They feel they don't have the time'

were typical.

Other comments revealed how much the staff were having to provide psychological support to the local residents on the management committees whose expectations of how long it would take to achieve progress were usually much less than was realistic. There was also a feeling that where the initiative had not come from within the community to tackle a site, it might be necessary for UWG to achieve a greater degree of progress on site, before people would wish to be involved.

Doubts were also beginning to be expressed as to whether UWG were making too great a demand on the community to take control of the projects and organise their own site management tasks, fund raising and publicity within a year of UWG becoming involved. A suggestion was made by one of the staff that in future it might be a sensible step to make an assessment of the community, as you would do of the ecological value of a site, before embarking on community projects. This might include an appraisal of their motivation to become involved and take on some of the responsibility for bringing about change, and their understanding and experience of conservation, fund raising, committee work and practical site management.

The staff were also conscious that if UWG were to capitalise on site-based work, this needed to be of a standard which gave the staff the confidence to use the projects to open up a debate with the decision makers, particularly the local authorities, as to the advantages of this type of open space management. In trying to establish a priority list of the types of sites the staff thought it important to concentrate their efforts on, they identified the following criteria as

given in Table 5 :

Table 5 Criteria Adopted by UWG for Assessing the Importance of Site-Based Projects

Criteria		Examples
1	location	inner city, suburban and urban fringe
2	site type	enhancement only and establishment from a derelict site
3	community involvement	range of community types eg in deprived areas and affluent areas
4	habitat types	the greater number of habitat types within a site, the better
5	community's relationship to the site	sincere demand from the community to want a site conserved for wildlife
6	ownership	private and public
7	status	designated public open space and non-designated

A final element to the discussions with staff revolved around their own level of commitment to the community projects and the demands placed on them. Several had experienced crises of confidence about the level of expertise the community groups demanded from them and what they felt confident to give. Even the fact that there was, by then, a diverse range of planning, landscape design and ecological expertise within the Group, was not recognised as a way to solve this problem. Indeed the landscape unit eventually employed a community liaison officer whose responsibility it was to organise management committee meetings and site work days for the projects. This person left after a few months and the post was not re-advertised. The other school of thought within the staff and the executive was that, although it was time consuming and difficult, it was desirable that all UWG's professionals should develop skills at working with the community who were,

as it were, both consumers of the sites as well as the clients that had requested UWG involvement.

Something of a crisis point was reached at the following meeting (31 Jan 1983). The total number of sites on file was 26 only 3 of which were categorised by the staff as community nature parks when assessed according to the criteria that had been developed over the preceeding two years. This presented me with a problem because UWG, though still pursuing the community nature park strategy, had also developed different strategies to involve the community on the other 23 sites all of which might also perfectly adequately enable UWG to achieve its broad objectives.

I took on the responsibility for defining these implicit strategies and making suggestions as to which strategy was being applied to each individual site project. I identified 4 strategies which were discussed and agreed to, by the staff in Feb 1983 and are presented in section 4.5.

#### 4.5. Definitions of the Four Community Involvement Strategies

##### 1 Community Nature Parks

It was re-affirmed that the summary root definition would still be an accurate definition for the community nature parks strategy, which was:

Community nature parks exist to bring people and nature together for their mutual benefit. This process is implemented by local people and voluntary groups, subject to the constraints of the local authorities and the involvement and support of the local people. The process is controlled by the local community. This approach is a meaningful one because it is good to bring nature and people together for their mutual benefit.

The staff felt that this strategy offered the community the opportunity for maximum involvement in site-based



conservation, to the extent that UWG would at sometime (often quoted as after 1-2 years) be able to hand over total responsibility for the management of the site to the community, and so reduce their own involvement to providing advice where necessary.

## 2 Limited Community Involvement

This strategy was being employed on sites where UWG had been called in by an agency, other than the community, or where the level of community motivation was assessed as being low.

The objective of this strategy was:

To conserve a site through the practical efforts of UWG staff and other voluntary or statutory labour forces, and to encourage the involvement of the community through approaches to institutions such as schools and residents associations. Efforts should be made to encourage people's use and enjoyment of the site by providing signs, guided tours and talks.

## 3 Community Campaigns

UWG had, largely through the efforts of their planner, been able to advise community groups on how best to campaign against development proposals that threatened wildlife areas. The objective (rather than definition) of this strategy was:

To mobilise the community to save a threatened wildlife area by helping them construct and defend their case to Public Enquiry level, if necessary.

This strategy was usually implemented by UWG's planners and was seen as meaningful in that it provided an opportunity to inform the local community about urban nature conservation and thus bring about changes in attitude and behaviour towards wildlife areas, as well as to achieve UWG's other main objective of conserving open space for nature.

#### 4 Consultative

This strategy was employed where UWG were invited to give advice to a private land owner or local authority who held the responsibility for establishing and/or managing an open space. UWG's objective was:

To conserve sites by advising and trying to influence local authorities and private land owners to manage open space for nature, and to do so by involving the local community wherever possible.

##### 4.6. Community Involvement in Urban Nature Conservation

During the first year of the research I had established links with, and also visited, several other voluntary and statutory organisations that were known to be employing user-oriented approaches to the provision and management of urban open space. The main purpose for this was to be able to obtain information that could be used to compare the perceptions and experience of UWG's staff with those of the staff from the other organisations.

On the basis of what I had observed on the visits to these organisations, and in the absence of any specific literature on the subject, I organised a seminar on community involvement in urban nature conservation. The seminar was run as a group discussion for the 11 invited participants. The findings are reported in Millward (1983) a summary of which is given below.

Some but not all the voluntary groups, represented at the seminar, stated their commitment to community involvement in their objectives. Most accepted the need to collaborate with the public in the interests of generating respect and care for the sites they worked on. All the groups received enquiries from individuals and community groups which they tried to respond to and three of the organisations had staff whose job titles included the word 'community'.



Every organisation was trying to influence attitudes and behaviour towards the urban landscape, and directed their efforts at the individual site user as well as the land use decision makers and managers. There was some debate as to whether it was necessary for people to get involved in the practical conservation of the site in order to influence their attitudes.

Although it was thought to be desirable to involve the community at the design stage of a project, problems did arise. People were not always aware of the alternatives, so the professional had to provide the role of educator to allow the people to make informed decisions. The Rural Preservation Association used an approach whereby they implemented a basic design on a site and then adapted it to meet the community's needs which were identified through feedback from visitors.

Management committees seemed to be the most popular vehicle for the exchange of ideas and decision making. It was generally agreed that the most important contributions the community made to a project were their ideas, interest in, possessiveness about, and care of the site.

The implementation phase of site-based projects was considered to present fewer difficulties. It was relatively easy to arrange site work days and to ensure that sufficient volunteers turned up to do the work and help with on-site decisions such as the exact location of signboards, paths, steps and the like.

Maintenance proved to be a much more contentious issue. Several people expressed deep concern as to whether it was reasonable to expect the community to commit themselves to the long term maintenance of a site, and the necessary fund raising effort that that would require. There were also cases where projects failed because the professional input and co-ordination had been withdrawn. This problem was exacerbated where the advice was provided by staff employed on MSC schemes, who, because of the temporary nature of the contracts, could not build up a long term relationship with a community group.



Motivation and commitment were considered to be essential attributes for anyone working with communities. An ability to counsel people and communicate without resorting to professional jargon was also useful. The work was considered to be time consuming and difficult because the community often expected the enablers to be experts in everything. The representatives at the seminar consciously upheld their professional status and found that the decision making fell to them until such time as the community gained in understanding and thus in confidence.

The need for there to be a partnership between provider and consumer was identified. It was also felt that someone, possibly a professional, needed to have a long term vision of how the site would develop and should be managed; someone who could work with the community and also bring influence to bear on the policy makers. Baines (1982, op cit) comments on how difficult it is for professionals within the public sector to fulfill this role because of the way current practice prohibits the allocation of sufficient time for consultation with the client.

#### 4.7. Summary

Discussions with UWG staff and executive, the application of Soft-Systems Methodology, and the seminar, generated information on community involvement in urban nature conservation and definitions of the four strategies UWG had developed to achieve that. This information provided a context for the research and helped to define the boundaries of the research problem.

An evaluation of projects in the community nature park, limited community involvement and campaign strategies seemed to offer the most useful information to UWG, as these strategies imposed a much greater demand in terms of staff time and financial resources, and greater benefit to the Group in the sense that the Group had a greater level of responsibility and power to influence others, than was the case with the consultative projects.

It could be argued that case studies are of only limited value in the sense that any attempt to generalise from the findings of just a few specific examples can be dangerous. It has been argued that the types of open space UWG and other conservation organisations are concerned with are different from traditional types of open space (see section 2.7) and that the ecological approach is novel at least within the 20th Century.

Surveys of community involvement in urban open space projects (Stearn, 1980 and Civic Trust, 1977) produced findings that described various projects around the country, who was involved in them, and the sources of financial support and advice that had been utilised. The detail of the process of such projects and the perceptions of the community and the interested parties outside the voluntary enabling organisations remained unclear.

Any attempt to understand a process implies the need to monitor activity over a period of time. Any attempt to understand people's roles and perspectives relating to that activity demands the use of methods that respect the depth of knowledge those people have developed through their involvement and comparisons of one person's perspective and experience with another.

Finally, the primary aim of IHD research is to meet the needs of the industrial sponsor and in this respect UWG was primarily interested in finding out more about their own activities rather than those of other organisations elsewhere.

For these reasons, the use of in-depth case studies, rather than a broad-based survey of community involvement in open space projects, was considered to be most appropriate.

The next three chapters are given over to the results of an evaluation of 3 projects, each having been classified by the staff, under one of the three main strategies:

Plants Brook  
Leckie Rd  
Woodgate Valley

Community Nature Park  
Limited Community Involvement  
Community Campaign.



## CHAPTER 5      PLANTS BROOK – COMMUNITY NATURE PARK STRATEGY

### 5.1. The Project and its Context

Plants Brook Community Nature Park is a 9 acre site, owned by Birmingham City Council. It is located in an area some 3 miles from the city centre, which is characterised by a mixture of inter-war and 1960s semi-detached housing estates, and industrial estates (see Fig 4).

The main feature of the site is a large reed-fringed pool surrounded by a mixture of wetland, woodland and grassland habitats (please see Plates 1 and 2). Ecological surveys have confirmed that the site is rich in plant and animal life. The site is bounded on three sides by housing and on the fourth by Plants Brook Reservoirs, a much larger site (27 acres) with a similar, though even more diverse, range of plant and animal life (Fig4 inset).

A summary of the recent history of the site is given in Appendix E, but the main aim for the project, as expressed in the UWG's Report of the Proposals (December 1980) was to develop the site as a community nature park to provide a valuable educational and recreational facility for use by local people and school parties. It was also proposed that enjoyment of the natural habitats would be promoted by the construction of a circular pathway and two observation platforms. Some tree and hedge planting would also make the southern area of the site (once covered by a factory) more attractive, and a notice board, information hut and small parking space for school vehicles only, would be provided by the gated park entrance.

The urban ecologist, from Friends of the Earth, had been invited to visit the site with local residents in the autumn of 1980 and offer some advice as to what could be done to fight a planning application to tip waste on the adjoining reservoir site.

The project was handed over to the UWG Team when they started



Fig 4 Plants Brook Community Nature Park, Walmley, Birmingham

11, Albert Street, Birmingham.

## URBAN WILDLIFE GROUP.

Site - Plants Brook.

Title - Landscape Proposals.

Scale - 1:1250. Drawn - April '83.

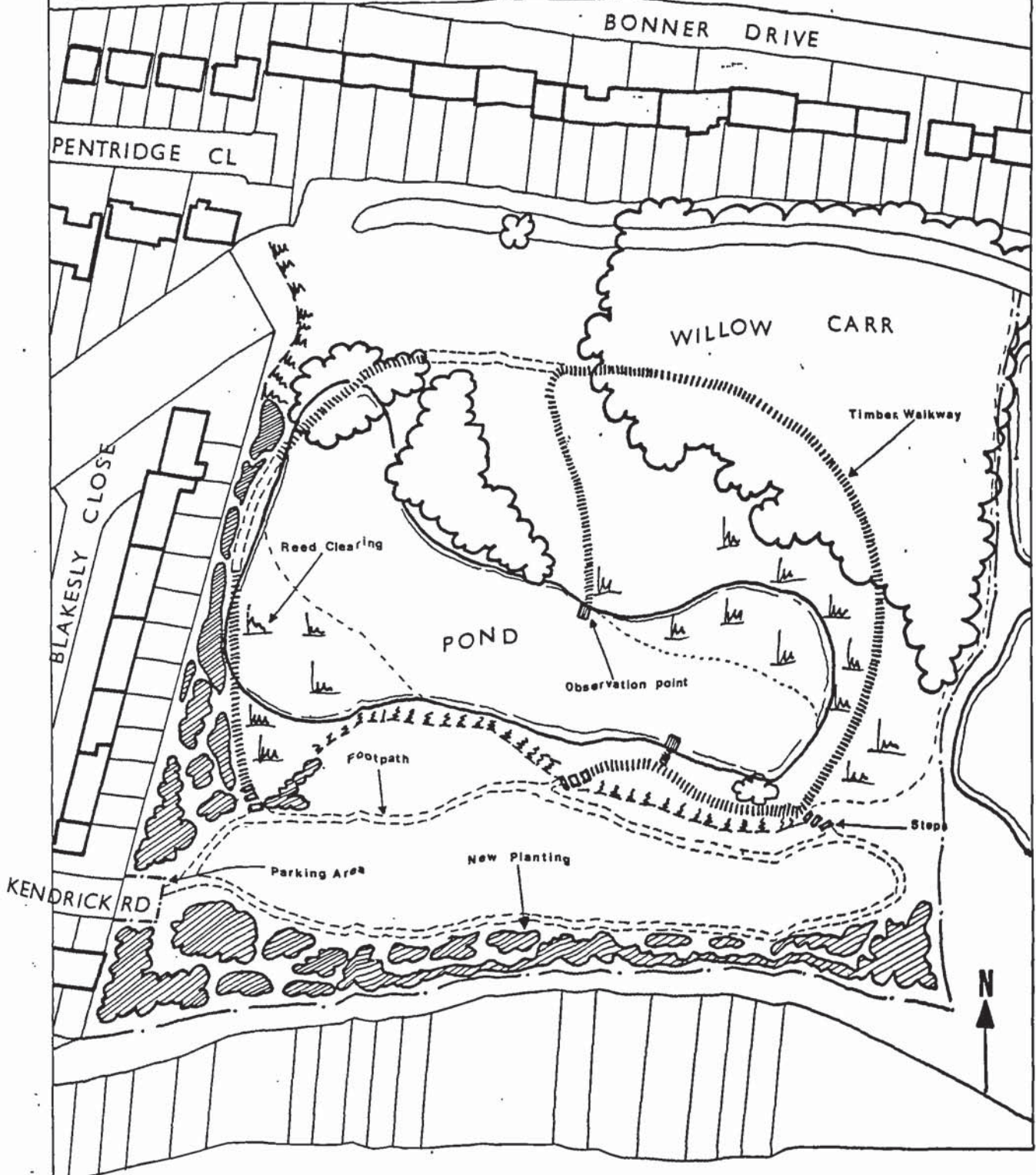
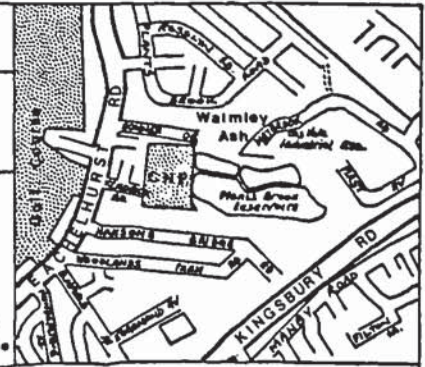




Plate 1 Plants Brook Community Nature Park - view westwards  
(1985)



Plate 2 Plants Brook Community Nature Park - view eastwards  
(1985)



work for UWG in the December of that same year, their first task being to draw up some proposals as to how the nature park site could be developed.

I recall there being several discussions as to what the site should be called. There was strong support for the idea that it should be referred to as a 'park' rather than a 'nature reserve' so as to encourage people to regard it as a public open space. And, in order to emphasise that it belonged to the community and that they had a role to play in its development and management, it was felt appropriate that the word 'community' should be included in the title. Plants Brook thus became known as 'Plants Brook Community Nature Park', a title that was put forward by UWG and agreed to by the local residents on the management committee.

## 5.2. Operational Objectives for the Project

As has been already stated UWG's definition of their community nature park strategy was that:

Community nature parks exist to bring people and nature together for their mutual benefit. This process is implemented by local people and voluntary groups, subject to the constraints of the local authorities and the involvement and support of the local people. The process is controlled by the local community. This approach is a meaningful one because it is good to bring nature and people together for their mutual benefit.

The root definition exercise had therefore identified the overall objectives for the nature park strategy. The next task was to identify how UWG translated these into operational objectives for this particular project and how these compared to the objectives of the other members of the management committee (the other interested parties). This information was gathered through the semi-structured interviews. Each member of the management committee was asked the following question: 'What do you think the aims of the project are?



The term 'aims' was used rather than 'operational objectives' as it was thought that the former would be more easily interpreted by the interviewees.

The response to this question was then followed by various supplementary questions (see Appendix B) which related to:

- 1 Differences between their aims and those of the others on the committee.
- 2 Ranking of the aims in order of importance.
- 3 Estimates of the time needed to achieve their aims.
- 4 Changes to the aims over time.

Some 13 people were interviewed; 5 local residents, 3 UWG staff, 1 local authority education advisor, 3 councillors and 1 member of a local natural history society. Each interview took, on average, an hour and a half to complete and was conducted at a place chosen by the interviewees. The content analysis of the objectives revealed the following results, the most often mentioned aim being given at the top of the list with the number of mentions in brackets:

To encourage people to use it and enjoy it	(7)
To encourage its use as an informal educational resource	(6)
To conserve the site's wildlife value	(6)
To carry out minor improvements to eg paths, observation points	(5)
To conserve the existing landscape character	(4)
To restrict public access for the sake of tranquility and disturbance to wildlife	(4)
To fight the tipping proposals on the reservoirs	(4)
To involve the community	(2)
To provide open access to the public	(2)
To improve awareness of the site so as to increase use	(2)
To lease the land	(1)
To employ a warden	(1)
To apply the concept of community nature parks	(1)

One interviewee felt that he had had no ideas about what could have been done, although he had known what he did not want to see done.

All the committee members felt that their own views broadly corresponded with those of the other members. The only

obvious conflict seemed to be that some of the residents favoured restricted access but the UWG representatives favoured open access. The representative from the natural history society presumed there would have to be some control on access of visiting school parties to ensure that the wildlife was not unduly disturbed nor destroyed by the sheer pressure of too many feet. For UWG, open public access seemed to be a matter of principle and an essential element of community involvement. These differences do however have to be placed in the context that the prime objectives, on which there was total agreement, were that people should be encouraged to use the site, learn more about it and enjoy it. The intentions of the residents regarding access might best be viewed as protective, which is reflected in the value they placed on the peace and quiet they and other residents enjoyed and the view from their houses. Several were interested in the wildlife, the birds and foxes being given specific mentions, although two of the residents also admitted that they did not know the names of any of the species of animals and plants they saw there.

With respect to the educational value of the site, UWG staff, the education advisor and the natural historian explicitly referred to adults as well as children, whereas the residents tended to emphasise the value of education to local children alone.

All the interviewees from all the projects found it difficult to rank order their aims. Those who did either divided the objectives into two groups, those they considered most important and least important, or else differentiated between those aims they felt would have to be met as a prerequisite to being able to tackle the rest.

The first approach is illustrated in the following quotation:

'If you wanted to preserve the site purely for its wildlife value, then ideally you wouldn't have anybody down there but since it is an urban area... people are going to want to use it and should be able to use it....I don't think you can separate the two



really....and they should tie up. It becomes more important because it is so close to people as a wildlife area, because it allows them to see what's going on in a natural bit of land. At the same time it would still be a nice one [wildlife area] if it was out in the country. I suppose I'd probably put the wildlife on top, but its very tricky' (UWG ecologist).

The second approach is illustrated by the following comment:

'The most important aim was, and still is to stop X tipping there....its got to be that way because.... if he does tip I couldn't see that existing as a nature reserve' (Local resident).

Estimates as to how long it might take to achieve the objectives for the nature park ranged from 3 months to 5 years. The estimates from the UWG representatives and the councillors tended to be more pessimistic than the local residents. The enthusiasm of the local people to want to provide practical help and the difficulty of raising the necessary funds (£3,500) to buy the materials needed to implement the proposals, were cited as key factors likely to affect progress.

No one felt that the aims had changed over time, as illustrated by the comments of this local resident:

'The original plans that were circulated amongst the residents, seem to have differed very little from what is now emerging. It seems to me that the first impressions were good impressions...'

At the time of the interviews (April 1983), following the rejection of X's appeal, news broke that the City Council were considering whether to purchase the adjacent reservoir site to develop it as originally intended for water based recreation. Draft plans had been leaked to the press, which had provided an opportunity for the management committee to demand further information. The committee were in general agreement with the proposals, despite one or two reservations. The consensus was that, the resevoir site was seen to be of even higher value to wildlife than the nature park site and that that should also be safeguarded from undue recreational pressure.



'No, all I can say is I hope that we'd be able to extend that [nature park] because in itself its too small to offer a great scope other than for what is proposed' (Community leader)

The main stumbling block seemed to be whether the council would be able to raise the necessary £70,000 to buy the reservoirs from X.

### 5.3. Operational Objectives for Community Involvement

Something of how the notion arose that UWG should try to involve local communities in urban nature conservation has already been discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, but I was interested to know more about how the residents felt about community involvement. From UWG's perspective the objective was to involve the community and enable them to take on the responsibility for sites. A very general question, 'How do you feel about the community getting involved in this sort of environmental issue?' was put to all the interviewees in the hope of eliciting some information on the contribution local people had to make to a project, in this respect.

On reflection I think that the way in which this question was phrased and the full and wide-ranging responses that it provoked are indicative of the fact that although everyone had strong views on the subject, no one (myself included) other than the councillors, had had much personal experience of community involvement eg:

'It could mean being involved in the management, perhaps sort of wardening...I wouldn't like to say that the thing has failed if we don't have people out there in wellington boots every Sunday or there isn't a rota for wardening' (UWG planner).

'I think it was a sound concept...a little over ambitious in that the actual scheme included... putting in paths and a lot of quite heavy work, which I suspect at the outset it was thought would largely be done by the community, but my experience suggests that that is asking an awful lot....I [also] think there are mechanisms for communities to have influence on the way a site

is managed... without having a piece of paper [ie a lease or licence] which has liabilities attached to it' (UWG ecologist).

'I'm all for it if its self-initiated, if there are people coming together and want to do something, if it's for the good of a lot more people...particularly in a case like this where there's not a lot of money involved....They'll take more personal interest in what's happening to the site...keeping it tidy, keeping vandalism away, destruction of property, trees, birds, flowers...'(Councillor).

'It's absolutely terrific....with the amount of unemployment there is, we've got to find ways of enjoying life that aren't going to cost a fortune, and what better way than a sort of community project like this. It's opened up a lot of new avenues to people that weren't aware it was there. The satisfaction you get...you can't put a price on it. I'm hoping that we will all turn up in force on that weekend [first site work day], and we'll be able to look back and say we've achieved something, young and old alike...I said to the older ones, come down, if all you do is keep an eye on the toddlers to see that they don't fall in the pool, while Mom and Dad are busy, you're welcome...and maybe they'll get a lease of life and see that it isn't just a place for young people' (Local resident).

'I think it's entirely appropriate and very right that people who live round the area, who enjoy the area and who are concerned about its future, should be the people who take action and make the decisions. I would put their rights above anything else. I think its a deeply political issue.... We've seen a growth of awareness....in every area of life so that ordinary people are just reduced to the status of clients...there's nothing wrong with having experts as long as those experts realise that the ultimate decision is theirs [ie the community's]' (Education Advisor).

'The good thing about all this is the interest of the local people....we've got to convince the general public that the preservation of nature is vital to our welfare.... and the answer is through education....'(Natural historian).

'Thank goodness that we'd got tenacious residents round here that would really have a go and not, when the planning application to the other patch was dismissed, let it all drop, but keep on hacking at it.... It's got to be good hasn't it, because you've got people looking at something, thinking hard about it, deciding what they want' (Councillor).



The committee's feelings about community involvement could therefore be summarised as:

- 1 It enables local people to have a say in what happens to the site.
- 2 It provides an opportunity for people to physically care for a site and through that learn more about it and to respect it.
- 3 It reduces the costs of such projects to the general public.

#### 5.4. Implementation - Monitoring the Delivery System

In this the second phase of the evaluation, the next task was to determine what actions had been taken to achieve the objectives and who was being affected by those actions. The history of the project (Appendix E) provides a summary of events. This information was gleaned from members of the management committee and validated with information from UWG's working files.

The management committee's views on what had happened in the course of the project are presented first. These are followed by the views of the local community as expressed in the findings of the survey which are compared with the findings of the observation studies.

##### 5.4.1. The Views of the Management Committee

All the residents on the management committee had taken some form of independent action over the reservoir site in the past. In the process of canvassing the support of their neighbours to object to the tipping application, they eventually met up with each other. Out of this emerged a leader who then took on the responsibility for gathering advice and support from organisations like Friends of the Earth, Dr David Bellamy (conservationist) and the local councillors.



The residents considered it to be inevitable that they should have been the ones to initiate the project:

'The problem is these bodies [nature conservation bodies] never know about these issues unless we as residents tell them about them'.

(AM - do you think that the elected representatives should have done something about it, or some sort of pressure group?)

'Yes, but you're living in cloud cuckoo land if you think they do' (Community leader).

The question 'What has been done to try and achieve the aims?' resulted in very little response. Most people interpreted the question as relating to action on the ground:

'Because of the dragging on of the lease over a couple of years...very little has been done. I don't think its because there wasn't the will there to do it, but until the site was actually formally leased to us [UWG]...we couldn't go in and start digging up paths and everything' (UWG ecologist).

'....we've got to get organised now....we've organised this litter pick on the 17th [May]....and we had a meeting a fortnight ago to let all the residents know [about the lease and the proposals] and give them an opportunity to re-pick the committee' (Local resident).

More information was derived from the questions 'What role have you played?' and 'What role have UWG played?'

Before UWG were involved, the residents had been taking some direct action to stop the pumping operations on the reservoirs and gather support from other residents to fight the tipping proposals through a petition. The residents had found out that the land had been zoned for recreation in the Sutton District Plan, and that any application for tipping would have to be considered by both the County Council and the City Council.

The role of UWG was diverse. They were originally called in to provide advice on what should be done to fight the tipping proposals and, as that included the development of a nature park on the council-owned site, to draw up proposals to

achieve that.

At the suggestion of the urban ecologist from Friends of the Earth, the residents organised a public meeting at the local library, which involved taking leaflets around to the residents. The leaflets gave details of the planning application and the proposal that the adjacent site should be developed as a nature park. The residents commented that they had encountered a lot of apathy from the residents when they had been canvassing support to get them to object to the tipping proposals, and so were pleasantly surprised when 48 people turned up for the public meeting, on what was a cold and wet evening. The community leader and another resident commented that they had discovered that several people who lived in the streets immediately adjacent to the site but in the houses that did not back onto the site, did not even know it was there; a factor which resulted in the boundary of the questionnaire sample being set at  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from all the sites.

The residents continued to collect information about X's plans to tip, the type of waste to be tipped and what sort of nuisance that would cause. One of the local residents had previously joined the committee of the Walmley Resident's Association (WRA) with a view to being able to enhance the credibility of the resident's cause, by using WRA's letter-head, contacts and funds.

UWG took the residents on the management committee around the nature park site to explain why it was so valuable for wildlife. The residents had obviously appreciated and enjoyed this, even though several admitted to not being able to remember the names of what they had seen. UWG produced a leaflet about the proposals, and this was distributed to every household in the streets surrounding the site.

The UWG representative who took over from the FoE urban ecologist perceived her role as:

'It was up to me to carry out work decided upon by the management committee' (UWG ecologist).



From this point on, the committee concentrated on getting the City Council to agree to the proposals and start the lease proceedings. The feeling was that the quicker they could achieve some positive action on the ground in the nature park, the stronger would be their case in opposing the tipping application. They also needed to raise funds to buy the necessary materials to implement the proposals and they wanted to stimulate interest in the site from the local residents and local schools.

The councillors were involved early in 1980, and one in particular, who at that time sat on the City Planning Committee, initiated meetings with X and the officers in the Planning Dept. The councillors appear to have been particularly interested to find out just how strong the community's feelings were over the tipping application and whether they would actually be able to take on the responsibility for the nature park:

'That's the whole point of being a councillor....to try to help people, point them in the right direction and get decisions that reflect the views of residents' (Councillor).

I feel the support from the councillors proved to be important in swaying opinion within the City Planning Department against the tipping application. Especially, because there is some evidence to suggest that there were other councillors with a vested interest in X's operations who supported the tipping application.

By July 1981 the Pumping Appeal had taken place although no decision had been made by the Inspector. In the September, the management committee agreed not to meet again until the lease came through. The UWG representative felt that although the committee had talked about holding barbecues, coffee mornings and door to door collections, they had lost their momentum because of the delays over the lease. As it was considered essential that the nature park be established as quickly as possible, these delays must have been a severe blow to morale.



Also in September, UWG appointed a planner who took over the responsibility of furthering the lease, and building up UWG's case to fight the appeal X had just lodged on the tipping application. The residents, through WRA, engaged a solicitor to draw up their own case, which cost them £4,000.

Why UWG and the residents should have chosen to fight the appeal separately can perhaps best be explained by the fact that morale over the nature park was so low, and the comments of the planner:

'.....I wasn't really known to them and they weren't really known to me, so we did things side by side and I'm sure it made the case much better, but maybe on a future site or with hindsight, it would have been better if we could have fought really feeling that we were a part of the community's case' (UWG planner).

The City Council agreed to the nature park proposals in Oct 1981 and UWG continued to negotiate the lease. Notification that planning permission would be required to erect the portakabin came through in February 1982.

The appeal against the decision to reject the tipping application was heard in February 1982, and the decision that the appeal had been rejected came through in July 1982. The Inspector's report clearly stated that he had been impressed by the evidence of the residents and UWG.

Meanwhile negotiations had continued with the lease and various delays had been experienced. UWG had not taken out a lease before and discovered that the city's standard lease mitigated against the proposals. Issues relating to the felling of trees, erection of fences, the portakabin and the rent and rates all had to be resolved. At one point according to one of the councillors, the residents had obviously asked him to look into why there was so much delay and he reported back that it was because UWG's solicitors were unhappy about certain aspects. UWG reported that the District Valuer had had to be convinced that the site should be zero-rated which had also caused delays. The lease eventually came through in February

1983 which then allowed the committee to begin work on site.

Also in February, a new UWG representative took over on the management committee and was able to devote his time (now that the threat of tipping had been removed and the lease had been approved) to turning the proposals into action.

At this point a further complication arose. Before the decision over the tipping appeal was known, X served a purchase notice on the City Council, on the basis that the reservoirs were incapable of beneficial development. Despite the fact that the DOE ruled the notice to be invalid, following the dismissal of the appeal, the City did commence negotiations to buy the reservoirs. It was established that UWG and the residents would be consulted about the plans.

In the meantime the lease had come through and UWG revised the proposals in view of the fact that it was anticipated that the reservoirs would be developed so as to provide one large site for informal recreation.

However, a newspaper article appeared giving details of the council's proposals which allowed for sailboarding and a club-type building. It was fortuitous that a meeting of the management committee (the first since Sept 1981) had already been arranged to discuss action on the nature park, as this allowed the residents to respond quickly to the council's plans. The residents agreed to follow the original proposals for site works on the nature park and to begin negotiations with the council over the plans for the reservoirs. It was agreed that as so much time had elapsed, because of delays over the lease, the local community ought to have the opportunity to review the proposals. UWG produced a revised leaflet which was distributed to all the houses explaining that work could now commence and that they were invited to put forward their views at a site meeting that had been arranged for 17th April. Over 50 attended this meeting and confirmed their support of the proposals. This meeting was also seen as an opportunity to encourage new people to join the management committee, whose composition had remained unaltered since its inception.



The UWG representative made various approaches to charitable trusts and local industries to raise funds for materials, the revised cost of which totalled £5,000.

It was at this point that the interviews with the management committee were carried out, towards the end of April, 1983.

The first site work day was organised for the weekend of 21 - 22 May. Some 80 people took part in clearing the rubbish and planting up the bank with trees and shrubs. It was deemed to have been a great success in the Community Newsletter that was distributed in the following August. Further workdays were organised for that month and the following November.

In the meantime, the Environmental Education Advisor arranged a site meeting for teachers from the local schools to discuss how the site might best be developed for school use, in line with the operational objectives.

In the September, a local MSC project had been put in contact with the management committee via one of the councillors, and negotiations began to get them, rather than UWG's site team, to carry out the heavy landscaping tasks.

#### 5.4.2. The Views of the Local Community

The interviews with the management committee had provided much useful information on what had been happening. UWG were keen to find out what the local residents living around the site, thought of urban wildlife areas and what they used them for.

The questionnaire survey (Appendix C) as with the other sites was carried out in the October of 1983. The first set of observations had been completed the previous month, and although there had been 2 community workdays, the site did not look particularly different from what it had done over the previous 10 years.

UWG wanted to know what proportion of the local community knew

about the site. We knew that it was being used for informal recreation activities and as a through route from the reservoirs to Pye Hayes Park. The only access to the site was via a broken down fence and a small sign had been recently erected, declaring the site to be 'Plants Brook Community Nature Park' and which asked people not to fish the pool.

Of the 91 people who completed questionnaires, 77 (85%) knew of the site, 36 (40%) of whom had also visited it. Of the 36 visitors 25 were males and 11 females. Males constituted 58% of those who knew the site but 69% of those who had also visited the site. Females constituted 42% of those who knew the site, compared to 30% who had also visited it. On the basis of the questionnaire we would therefore have expected to observe twice as many male adults as female adults in the observation study.

A much higher percentage of the people living in the near zone (A) had visited the site (98%) than people from the far zone (73%). Similarly those from the near zone tended to be more frequent visitors than those from the far zone (B). Some 67% of zone A residents visited the site once a month or more often, compared to 31% of zone B residents, even though those in zone B lived within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of the site.

The main reasons given by those who had not visited the site either, within the preceeding 12 months, or ever, are given in Table 6.

Table 6 Reasons for not having visited the nature park by those who knew of it

Reasons for not having visited	%
Thought the site was private	36
Not interested	12
No time	12
No access	12
No sign	12
Misc:	16
N = 50 responses from 41 respondents (4 N/A)	



Although the land was publicly-owned, the absence of a sign saying as much and any other information for that matter, would seem to have deterred several people from using the site, even though they must have seen others using it.

The 36 respondents who visited the nature park did so for the purposes detailed in Table 7.

Table 7 The activities engaged in by visitors to Plants Brook Community Nature Park

Activities	%
Walk	26
Enjoy the scenery	12
Walk the dog	9
Watch wildlife	9
Enjoy the peace and quiet	8
Take part in a sport	6
Sit	5
Feed the birds	5
Play	3
Monitor developments	3
Discover where children played	3
Through route	3
Misc:	8
Cycle	
Meet people	
Take children to play	
Relax	
Get some fresh air	
Pick litter	

N = 66 responses from 36 respondents who identified 18 different activities

The answers to this question show a predominantly passive use of the site for informal recreation, much of the pleasure of which derives from the natural features of the site, the scenery and wildlife.

Some 7% of the answers provide some indication that the site is used for play by children.

Table 8 What visitors particularly liked about the nature park

Likes	%
Peace and quiet	20
Naturalness/countryside feel	15
Vegetation (trees,bushes,flowers)	12
Wildlife	10
Nothing	10
Open space	7
Scenery	3
Good for play	3
Water	3
Misc:	19
Layout	
Good for children	
Good for walking	
Good for walking the dog	
Sense of freedom	
Convenient	
Good for teaching children	
Sport	
Available to public	

N = 59 responses from 36 respondents who identified 19 different reasons

The inference that the natural elements of the site are important to the passive use of the site is confirmed by the high value respondents placed on the wildlife, countryside feel of the site, the vegetation (all of which is natural) and the peace and quiet (Table 8). Furthermore there were several answers that reflected how good the site was in providing opportunities for certain activities (eg walking) and certain sections of the population (ie children), which reveal something of a positive attitude towards the site at a time when very little work had been completed on the ground.

In answer to the question about what visitors disliked about the site (Table 9) the majority of visitors disliked 'nothing' in particular. The litter and rubbish, which was piled up along the western slope where it had been thrown by the householders whose back gardens backed onto it, was obviously considered to be an eye-sore. And there is some evidence to suggest that some visitors considered the site too wild in appearance.



Table 9 What visitors disliked about the nature park

Dislikes	%
Nothing	44
Litter/rubbish	10
Pollution	8
Personal safety risk	8
Unkempt appearance	5
Motorbikers	5
Too small	5
Swampy	5
Misc:	10
Children causing a nuisance	
Can't remember	
No parking	
Adjacent owner (of reservoirs)	
N = 39 responses from 35 respondents (+ 1 N/A) who gave 12 different reasons	

The answers to the question 'Are there any changes that could be made to the site which might make it more attractive to you?' are given in Table 10.

The question on changes was used partly to validate the answers given to the question on visitors' dislikes and as such reveal that most of the 44% who answered that they had no particular dislikes, were genuinely satisfied with the site, and did not want to see it altered significantly. The variety of the suggested changes indicate support for a number of minor improvements in keeping with the proposals and the natural character of the site. At the time of the survey it was not possible to walk all around the site and there were no seats. The miscellaneous answers reflect suggestions made in the proposals, details of which had been circulated to the local residents in the preceding May.

Table 10 The changes that could be made to make the nature park more attractive to visitors

Changes	%
No	19
Better paths	17
No need for any changes	10
Clean up	8
Warden	4
Nature trail	4
Seats	4
Birdboxes	4
Signboard	4
Misc:	26
Children's play area	
More use by schools	
Improve pool	
More grass	
People employed to look after it	
More wildlife	
Fishing club	
Viewing platforms	
Sweet shop	
Parking	
Cut grass	

N = 48 responses from 35 respondents who gave 21 different suggestions.

Question 12 (see Appendix C for the full questionnaire) was used to test the effectiveness of the management committee's attempts to publicise the proposals for the site. The results, as presented in Table 11, show that over 62% of the visitors had seen some publicity within the 12 months before the survey.

Table 11 The impact of publicity

Type of publicity	%
No	46
Newspaper/magazine	29
Leaflet/poster	23
Development proposals	3

N = 35 responses from 35 respondents (+ 1 N/A)

#### 5.4.3. Observed Use of Plants Brook Nature Park by the Local Community

The basic aims of the observation study were to provide information on who was using the nature park and for what purposes. In addition to the fact that convergent data from the survey and the observations would help to strengthen the validity of the findings, it was hoped that the observation study would provide unique information on children's use of the site and on any negative behaviour.

Over the total period of 20 hours observation from August 1983 - July 1984, 120 people were observed on the 5 minute sampling points. Of these, 97 were recorded on the Sundays (12 hours) and 23 on the weekdays (8 hours). This gives an average through-put of 8 people per hour on Sundays and only 3 per hour on weekdays. As it is possible to see the majority of the site from any location within it, these figures are likely to be only 1-2 people per hour less than the real level of use.

Walking was by far the most popular activity. The through-routers included the men and boys who had been, or were going, fishing on the reservoirs. In fact many of the walkers and cyclists were merely passing through the nature park as the first part of their route which took them on around the reservoirs (there being no circular route around the nature park then).

The results shown in Table 12 confirm the survey findings, that the site is mainly used for passive activities. The relatively high proportion of people who were observed to be through-routing is partly accounted for by men and boys passing through the nature park on their way to fish in the reservoirs (coded as 'taking part in sport' in Table 7).

Twice as many males were observed as females, again as anticipated from the questionnaire results, but the only significant difference in the activity pattern was that all the cyclists were male.



Table 12 The range, relative frequencies and the male/female differences of activities for all Sunday and weekday observations (1983-84)

Activities	Total %	Males %	Females %
Walking	40	43	33
Through-routing	23	19	33
Dog walking	10	10	11
Cycling	8	11	
Informal play	7	7	6
Meeting people	3	2	6
Dumping	3	1	6
Harassing	2	2	
Running	2	1	3
Sitting	2	2	
Watching nature	2	1	2
N =	120	84	36

A second series of observations were run over a 12 hour period in May, June and July in 1985, as we anticipated that the use might increase as more work was completed on the site.

The analysis of the observations in 1984 and 1985 (Table 13) shows there to have been 16% more visitors during 1985. Interestingly, 4 out of the 6 sessions in 1985 were cool compared to only 1 in 1984, and rain occurred on 2 of the 1985 days whereas all the 1984 days were dry. The true increase in use might therefore be estimated as being higher than 16%.

The two most noticeable differences between 1984 and 1985, are that a greater proportion of visitors in 1985 were dog walkers and visitors who came armed with binoculars to look at the wildlife. The circular path that was completed in 1985 seems to have improved the site for the dog walkers. A combination of the site becoming better known as a 'nature park' and the facilities provided by the observation platforms and the timber walkways through the reed-beds, must have made it more attractive to the nature lovers.

Table 13 A comparison of use in the peak periods (May - July) between 1984 and 1985

Activities	Total 1984 %	Total 1985 %
Walking	39	30
Through-routing	26	24
Cycling	10	5
Dog walking	8	20
Informal play	7	3
Meeting people	4	
Sitting	2	7
Harrassing	2	
Running	1	2
Dumping	1	
Watching nature		10
N =	91	108

The user group differences in Table 14 show that the majority of users in 1984 were adolescents and children. But there was a shift in this pattern in 1985 as the site had attracted a greater proportion of adults and elderly people. Signs had been erected on the site and on the main road leading to the site, in the intervening 12 month period, and there had been a site crew there for over 6 months building paths, observation platforms and walkways. It is likely that adults and the elderly thus found it easier to get to the site, get around it and perhaps felt safer in the presence of the site crew. On the other hand, the increase in the number of adults may have deterred the adolescents from visiting as often.

Table 14 User group difference between 1984 and 1985

User group	1984			1985		
	Total %	Sun %	Weekdays %	Total %	Sun %	Weekdays %
Elderly	0	0	0	10	8	17
Adults	26	17	60	42	37	58
Adolescents	46	51	30	23	23	25
Children	28	32	10	25	32	0
Toddlers	0	0	0	0	0	0
N =	91	71	20	108	84	24

In 1984, Sunday visitors accounted for 77% of the total, and in 1985, the same group accounted for 78%, so there had been no difference in that pattern, despite the changes.

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the most popular times of the day, given so few observations, but in general terms the afternoons and evenings were equally popular, and 2-4 times as popular as mornings, for Sundays and weekdays.

The pattern or microgeography of use varied between the two years, as shown in Figs 5 and 6. The impact of the lack of a route around the nature park is evident from the 1984 map, such that the nature park tended to be used as a part of a longer route that led onto the reservoirs. In 1985, people were seen to be making use of the recently completed circular pathway. The 1984 map shows how children and adolescents tended to use the north east corner of the site; an area that was very wet, virtually impenetrable and thus offered adventure and privacy. The circular pathway must to some degree have spoilt that privacy as it is evident from the 1985 map that that area was no longer being used by the children and adolescents.



Fig 5 The Microgeography of Use at Plants Brook Nature Park, Summer 1984

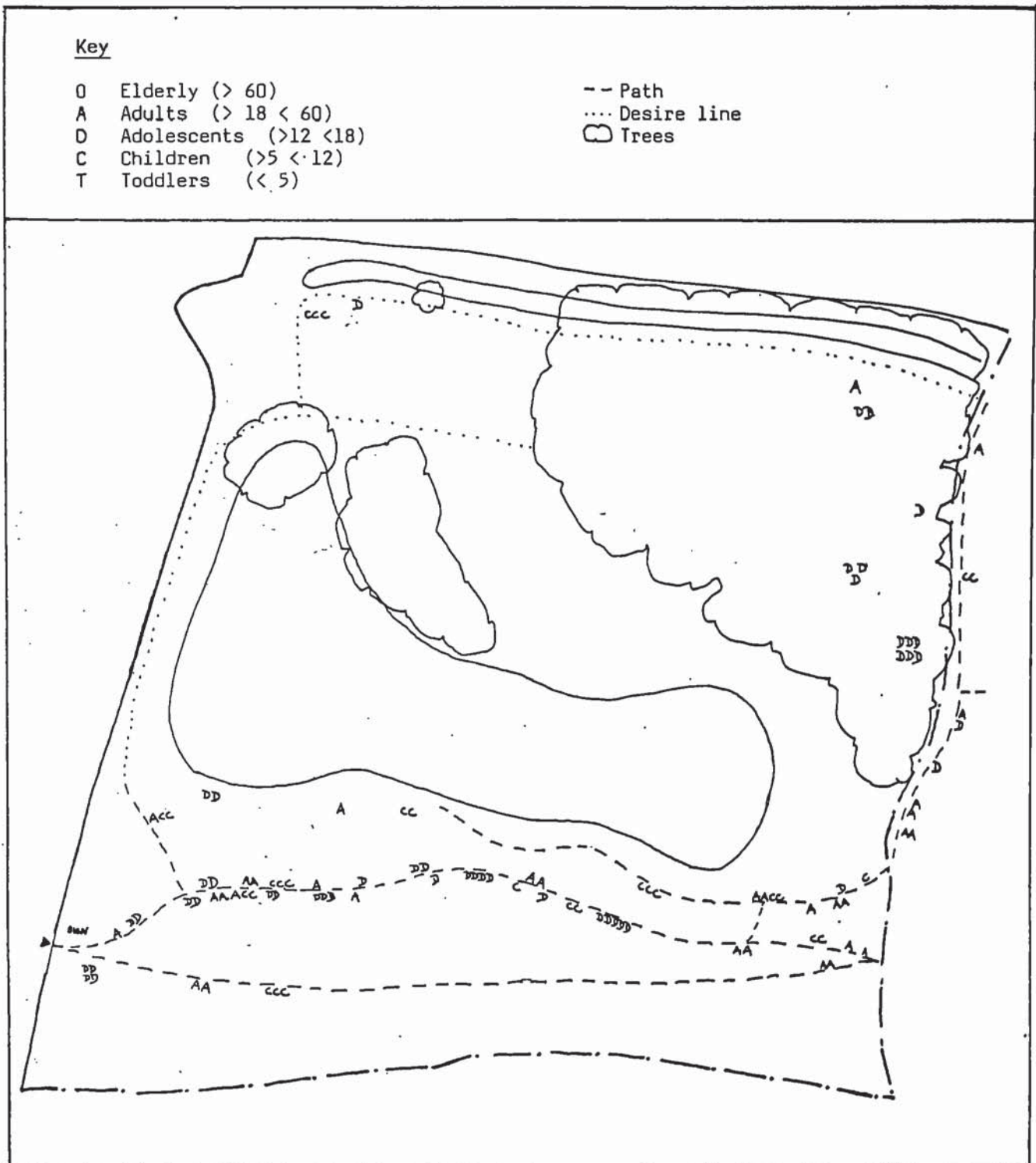


Fig 6 The Microgeography of Use at Plants Brook Nature Park, Summer 1985

## Key

O Elderly (> 60)  
 A Adults (> 18 < 60)  
 D Adolescents (> 12 < 18)  
 C Children (> 5 < 12)  
 T Toddlers (< 5)

-- Path  
 .... Desire line  
 ☉ Trees  
 ☆ Observation Point



### 5.5. Outcome Effects

So, had the project changed the situation for the better, and if so had UWG's involvement resulted in a change that was larger than would have occurred naturally?

#### 5.5.1. The Views of the Management Committee

In order to evaluate the magnitude of the changes, I felt I needed to know what the members of the management committee would have considered to be evidence that they had achieved their aims. Most answered this question giving examples of who they would like to see using the site and the various landscaping changes they felt would improve the site.

The answers to these questions varied quite considerably. The UWG representatives concentrated on the social effects. Firstly, they wanted to know how many local people knew about the site, secondly, that the local schools were making use of it, and thirdly, that local people were helping in the practical conservation of the site:

'To have some sort of official activities going on like the schools, the scouts....and for those kids to then talk to their parents, and for there to be in people's perceptions, a feeling of greater awareness and understanding, and a use of the site obviously, but not necessarily for practical conservation' (UWG planner).

An UWG ecologist also commented that she would like to see naturalists from 'far away' visiting the site and the Nature Conservancy Council formally acknowledging the wildlife value of the site.

The residents and the environmental education advisor also referred to the social effects:

'....the nature is already there. I'd like to see it become of value to people with not too great a knowledge....it's education potential, not just for schools, but you know people who just want to learn a bit about it.....if it has a bit of a walkway round it....some sort of noticeboard up



just saying what it is, I think we'll have achieved quite a lot, and in a way get the Planning Dept to recognise that it is an asset and as such should be continued in that form' (Community group leader).

'If I thought 3 schools were interested in regularly using that site, that would I think, be quite a success....I'd like to see less litter being thrown out of gardens, I'd like to see children who've been to this [site] less inclined to grab bunches of flowers or express revulsion at the sight of an earthworm or beetle...but [see them] as objects of interest.... it's a change in behaviour which is a result of a change in attitudes. And the only way attitudes will change of course is by being involved and in a sort of practical way in the area [site] (Environmental Education Advisor).

Other comments regarding the physical changes to the site included:

'I'd have expected to have seen the land well on its way with the pathways in and some planting done, I'm quite happy that its moving, I think we have got over a lot of hurdles' (Councillor).

'If we saw a good fence going round which would deter, a good gate, a good sign, I would be satisfied with that. I don't think we need a path really, but it would help to keep people on the straight and narrow....things have to be as natural as possible....rustic....otherwise you go backwards' [ie ascent to outside pressures from the Planning Dept to formalise the landscape - there had been a suggestion in the early days by the Planning Dept that a football pitch could be constructed on the site] (Local resident).

There were also some words of caution expressed by the residents. One answer to the question 'How would you see the site being used?' prompted the reply:

'As little as possible.....you see the horrible thing is as soon as we say its a park, and we encourage people to come in instead of stop out, we just hope we don't get the vandalism that's destroyed the [fox] earth, because if we lose what we're trying to keep, through letting people in, we've lost everything haven't we' (Local resident).

Another resident commented that:

'When everything's perfect...you're never absolutely sure are you....I don't think one can be complacent.... you can't expect it to stay that way indefinitely unless

you are prepared to be ready, should anything sort of slip' (Local resident).

In the response to the question 'What, if anything, has given you satisfaction or a feeling of success?', two of the three UWG representatives commented on the enjoyment of having been involved in such a lovely site:

'As a site, its exactly the sort of site we should be trying to save and encourage people to be involved with. Its a lovely site and its a wholly worthwhile cause' (UWG planner).

'Its a lovely place....I would still be involved and visiting the site, if not for the distance from home' (UWG ecologist).

They had obviously enjoyed playing out their own roles too:

'The whole sort of involvement is enjoyable. Its something I've got no experience of in the past, so the whole thing is new, and the whole process of meetings and trying to get things going is quite enjoyable' (UWG ecologist).

'One derives enjoyment from one's craft and fighting an appeal is probably the sort of pinnacle of being really able to contribute.....I suppose getting the lease was a success....but not satisfaction because it had been such an awful business to get it' (UWG planner).

For the majority of the residents, satisfaction came from the fact that they had won the tipping the appeal and had succeeded in getting the nature park established:

'I think the greatest satisfaction was....that I, amongst others, was able to give evidence [to the tipping appeal] and to put forward a very constructive picture as to what we thought was likely to happen, as against what they [the owners] thought, and that the government inspector decided in our favour....There's also the satisfaction that I've been given the opportunity to offer what little bit I can regarding suggestions over the proposed use of the nature park' (Local resident).

'The fact that we won [over the reservoirs] and that we got this [the nature park] and we achieved what we aimed for....if someone was to take that away, we'd move....when you see something slipping away it becomes more valuable....so every day is a bonus, everyday it's there' (Local resident).



'And like now, Spring, it's at its best now, you can't take that away, it's smashing and after all the effort we put in we did get a few people come up and say 'Well you did a good job, didn't we do well'....and it brought the community closer together, you meet a lot more people' (Local resident).

The leader of the community group on the management committee had perhaps the most heightened perception of what had happened during the project:

'[At the tipping appeal] a large part of the City Council's argument was the fact that it would affect the proposed nature park. Now that was suprising and very pleasing because it became apparent at that public enquiry how important it [ie the nature park] had become, in that the outcome ie the inspector's report was so much against X, it was amazing, it really was'.

'Getting the lease was good, and I suppose, touchwood, that things have gone according to plan albeit not quite to the timing that I'd expected....I'm happy that justice seems to have been done.....and I'm very, very pleased that the schools seem to be taking so much notice' (Community group leader).

For one of the councillors, a certain amount of personal satisfaction had come from:

'Having been able to put the project into the hands of a group ie UWG and local residents, and help it along its way, guide it through the appropriate committee, 'Hey what's happening here' and someone [ie an officer] finds out'.....'What do you mean by rent? We're not going to pay any rent unless its a peppercorn'....that sort of thing, but I think until ....the actual work has been done, hopefully by the residents, then it [sense of satisfaction] is probably hindsight at the moment' (Councillor).

From UWG's perspective, an important part of the evaluation was to find out how its staff and the other members of the management committee had regarded UWG's role in the project, which as discussed in the previous section could be summarised as:

- 1 Advice on fighting the tipping application.
- 2 Advice on the development of the nature park.
- 3 Instigation of wider community involvement through the public meeting, management committee, community newsletters.
- 4 Provision of specific proposals for the nature park.
- 5 Willingness to take on and negotiate the lease.



- 6 Liaison with various council officials during normal business hours (Planning, City Estates, City Solicitor).
- 7 Evidence to the Enforcement Notice and Tipping Appeals.
- 8 Servicing the management committee.
- 9 Efforts to raise the required funds to implement the proposals for the nature park.
- 10 Organisation and supervision of community work days.
- 11 Involvement of environmental education advisor and various nature conservation organisations eg RSPB, NCC to support the project.

It was also essential to know what the non-UWG members of the management committee had expected of UWG in relation to their evaluation of what had actually happened. Regarding the expectations of UWG, the comments included:

'I wasn't quite sure, I didn't expect anything....it sort of went from day to day....At the time I think this was their first project....there was the [ecological] survey and the proposals that came out of UWG, which you know, were really the plans that have been followed' (Local resident).

'....the meetings that I attended with a few residents involved a lot of chat, of question and answer amongst ourselves and UWG as to what could be done on the nature park site....[UWG] were certainly able in my opinion to show us the way things could be done in approaching the council over such matters' (Local resident).

'A guiding role basically, and put the residents on the right path'(Councillor).

The evaluation question prompted a detailed response, some of it conflicting, from both the UWG representatives and the other members of the management committee.

'Something I did notice was that after the original proposals came out and after it was generally agreed that the council would lease the land to us, things seemed to go very, very slowly....I think I've been in agreement with what UWG has said, I can see the logic behind it....most of the ideas have come from the UWG' (Local resident).

'I must admit I was a bit concerned in the first place when I heard UWG were involved, nothing against UWG, but I thought the community were not strong enough in their own ideas, if you like, to carry on without somebody, in this case UWG, but I'm sure its been a good thing. [AM - Had you had previous experience of UWG?]

No only in the do-gooders, Moseley Bog, that sort of thing' (Councillor).

'Looking back on it now, I suppose they could be a bit more positive in their approach. I didn't understand at one stage who they were paid by, and I always got the impression that, I don't mean to be rude, they didn't get a lot of money and half the job was voluntary and they didn't like to say too much....a bit more positive in what they are doing and give us guidance....perhaps they were trying to sit back....and let us do what we wanted....The first fellow with the long hair, he was a very good bloke, he knew his stuff and helped us out with a lot of questions but I felt he could have come in really positive and said 'You must do this if you want to save it' (Local resident).

'[At the tipping appeal] they weren't powerful....the impact came from the residents, not even the technical point of view....the thing that carried that argument was said by the investigator himself, the big turnout of residents showing the concern, the number of letters that went up to him, there were 400 letters of complaint....you probably know how we did that.... UWG helped us a lot on the technical side....we couldn't have got on without them....They [UWG] have got progressively better....more forceful' (Local resident).

'Advisory....if the city or UWG took it over, I think you'd lose the interest of the surrounding residents and they're the people who've got to look after it, they can see what's going on every minute of the day.... [UWG] supported the residents in various meetings with the City Council and I don't know whether they took any active part in the debates with the owner of the adjoining land' (Councillor).

'[For the tipping appeal] the work that was done by the wildlife group....and also the Walmley Residents Association's solicitor, was fantastic. I'll be quite honest, I was extremely surprised when I came to the public enquiry....UWG had prior to that, conjured up to me a group of people who were rather interested in looking at plantlife .... and the rest of the world went by....I was astounded by the amount of knowledge....a lot of expertise....I was rather delighted at the enquiry that X's botanist....a big gun from London....well he spoke on a one to one basis with the UWG representative and it was on a basis that people like myself didn't understand' (Local resident).

'I was more than pleased that they with their expertise were able to put something forward in a way which we wouldn't....to the council....I'd got no expertise in nature conservancy or wildlife' (Local resident).



These comments suggest that overall, the residents appreciated the the efforts of the urban ecologist and the team to guide them and formulate the proposals for the nature park, and that the confidence that had been lacking during the early years, had since been regained following the outcome of the appeal and recent efforts to get work underway on the nature park.

The views of the UWG representatives on their role help to put the preceeding comments into a context:

'We stimulated discussion about specific details, developing it as a nature park, and carried out the donkey work; the committee minutes and that sort of thing....co-ordinated, well infact did all the liaison with the City Council....the job of secretary shouldn't have fallen on UWG's shoulders and I think that's partly because other people were too lazy to do it....otherwise, everything else was much easier for UWG to do, things like surveys couldn't have been done by anyone else on the committee' (UWG ecologist).

'Perhaps what they should have done was pursue the sort of community involvement a little harder at the beginning, although that was obviously difficult when there was nothing people could do until the lease came through. It seems that people, although very enthusiastic about it over the 2 years it took to get the lease, have lost touch with what's happening apart from 3 or 4 people who are directly involved' (UWG ecologist).

'During 1982, everybody's attention was turned to the appeal and as regards the nature park, the lease was plodding along...It was difficult to push it partly because the City Council were a little bit uncertain about the reservoirs....so work on the nature park was held in abeyance pending the lease which in a sense was pending the outcome of the enquiry....if there's been a difficulty on this site it's been over continuity, in that the initial UWG people were probably closely involved with the management committee etc and therefore didn't appreciate what was happening next door....I was fully involved on this [reservoir] side and got involved in ecological terms with the natural history societies, NCC and the County Council....with hindsight it was clear from an early stage that the lease would go through, the difficulty was actually negotiating it, and following the success of the appeal we might have done more to encourage more work on the site....That's one of the fallibilities of UWG that you've got different people with no one holding the key element' (UWG planner).



The environmental education advisor, who was also a founder member of UWG, commented that:

'I'm sure the policy is to leave areas like that in the hands of the local people so that they don't constantly need this continual input of advice and help, and if you like, wean them off independence on outside experts as soon as possible' (Environmental Education Advisor).

Responses on what UWG's future role in the project might be, if anything, indicated that it was unrealistic for UWG to carry on hoping that they might be able to withdraw from playing a major role in the project:

'...to get the maximum potential for nature from the site....[requires] some knowledge....this talk of tree management....I don't know how they do it, I don't think anybody else on the management committee, other than UWG, know it....expertise not only on the habitat side but also on the educational side....[UWG should] sit on the management committee, because ideas could originate in the committee and gain some sort of momentum before the UWG were involved....there are interests that I don't think are best for the site on the management committee....I mean the ideal for the councillors would be to get as many people as possible to use it and appreciate it and therefore realise the value of councillors. The Education Department could find other uses for it that might be detrimental to it in an extreme. The residents if they had their own way would close the gates and not let anybody on it except their own kids. Its got to be a balance' (Community group leader).

'....hopefully Urban Wildlife will carry on for a good many years, give some long life to the place' (Councillor).

'Urban Wildlife are the people who hold the lease, so they are the governing body, for 5 years they are responsible, the residents happen to be on the committee now because the residents actually thought of it and were backed up by the wildlife group, the council had to give it [lease] to a recognised body' (Local resident).

'Well I've already got them involved, they're going to our local cubs and scouts to give them a little talk, generally, on the aims of urban wildlife' (Local resident).

'The development of the site as a nature park should go ahead involving local people and schools and I think all that can be done by UWG quite well. The management committee has to be made a bit more democratic, it consists of people who were interested and that's it. Ideally UWG have got to be involved through members that live nearby, because they'll have some permanent

interest in the site rather than people on a year's term providing the odd bit of expertise which you can get elsewhere....the major role is establishing the nature park. I remember the City Council at a meeting were talking about giving this new Urban Wildlife Group a chance, giving them a lease for 5 years and seeing what they could do....links have to be established and people have to work hard and push for people to go there.....it would be a tragedy if nothing happened' (UWG ecologist).

In fact the proposals had been fully implemented by 1986, and on the basis of a recent visit to the site on a warm, Sunday afternoon in April 1987, I would estimate that the level of use has at least trebled since 1985.

#### 5.5.2. The Views of the Local Community

A number of the questions in the survey were specifically designed to provide information on how successful the management committee's efforts to increase awareness about the site, had been.

The survey revealed that some 62% of the users had seen some publicity about the site within the last 12 months, which suggests that the management committee's attempts to publicise the site were successful.

However, almost half the visitors felt that the Council should take on the responsibility for looking after the site, whilst only 22% thought that the local community should take on the responsibility. Only 2 people thought conservationists should care for it.

Three-quarters of the visitors had noticed changes taking place on the site, as shown in Table 15.



Table 15 Changes noticed by visitors between 1982 and 1983

Changes	%
New hard landscaping (paths etc)	32
No (ie nothing)	21
People working on site	11
New soft landscaping (trees etc)	8
Signboard	6
Misc:	22
Less litter	
More litter	
Less vandalism	
Improved access	
Different birds	
Less fishing	
Fox shooting	
Designation as nature reserve	
Parking	

N = 42 responses from 34 respondents (+ 1 missing value) who gave 15 different changes)

In order to set the visitors views of Plants Brook in a wider context, we asked everyone (visitors and non-visitors) a very general question; 'Supposing you had an hour or so to spare and you felt like a breath of fresh air, where would you be most likely to go?' The purpose of this was to get some idea of the relative demand for informal, more natural open spaces as compared to the demand for more formal open spaces such as the traditional Victorian parks, recreation grounds etc, the results of which are presented in Table 16.

Table 16 People's general preferences for open space

Preferred open spaces	%	
Formal	49	(Pype Hayes Park, Drayton Manor Park)
Informal	39	(Sutton Park, Plants Brook)
Built facilities	5	
Garden	5	
Friends	2	

N = 130 responses from 91 respondents in 5 categories.



Pype Hayes Park was mentioned by 46% of the respondents. This formal park is situated within easy walking distance of all the houses sampled. A quarter of the respondents mentioned Sutton Park which is Birmingham's biggest park, and also happens to be a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is made up of a mixture of woodland, heathland, wetland and open water habitats, and receives over a million visitors per year (25,000 being the average number on summer days). It is situated approximately 2 miles from Plants Brook and is easily got to by bus). Just under 10% mentioned Plants Brook.

To help interpret these findings, which suggest that there is a substantial demand for informal landscapes, people were also asked about what it was that attracted them to the places (Table 17). Some of the interviewers did not complete this section for people who had given Plants Brook as their preferred place, as the issues had already been covered.

Table 17 What visitors found attractive about their preferred open spaces

Attractions	%
Open space	18
Convenient	11
Formal lawns and flower beds	9
Good for walking	7
Pleasant/nice	6
Water feature	5
Peace and quiet	5
Naturalness	4
Wildlife/nature	4
Fresh air	4
Watch sports	3
Facilities for children	3
Away from roads	2
Misc:	17

N = 236 responses from 85 respondents who gave 30 categories.

Some of the raw answers that were coded up as 'open space' included responses such as 'don't feel closed in' and 'plenty of room'. 'Good for walking' might also imply a need for space in that a relatively large space may be necessary if one

is to feel able to stretch the legs. The responses such as 'fresh air' and 'peace and quiet' imply a need for experiences that contrast with those of the built-up areas where the levels of noise and dust, and the density of buildings are high.

It is interesting to note that the 'naturalness', or 'countryside feel', 'natural beauty' and 'wildness' (as it was also referred to), of the local, informal landscapes within this part of the city were appreciated. A feature that is underlined by the frequent mention of 'wildlife' and 'nature'.

Convenience also seemed to be an important determinant in the preferences expressed, a fact that ought to be borne in mind by open space planners when considering local provision. This fact was confirmed in that 65% of the respondents travelled to their preferred open spaces on foot and 24% travelled by car.

#### 5.5.3. Changes in the Observed Use of the Nature Park

It has already been stated that, whilst still perhaps on the low side, use of Plants Brook from May to July, had increased by 16% after one year's work on the site. Since then all the proposals have been implemented and there is a full-time warden on the site who has been continuing to collect observation data using the same technique as developed for this research.

The relative proportions of the different age groups was found to have changed quite markedly, such that 52% of visitors in 1985 were adults (including the elderly) as compared to only 26% in 1984. The management committee had circulated several newsletters with information about the lease and workdays, and a road sign had also been erected. The relative proportions of children stayed the same, but there was a dramatic fall-off in adolescents. The presence of the site team during 1985, may account for the decrease during workdays, but probably not on Sundays.

The change in the pattern or microgeography of use is evident



from the 1985 map (Fig 6). People seemed to be making good use of the circular path, and many of the observers commented that people seemed to be using the nature park and the reservoirs as one continuous site, although the proportions of visitors coded as through-routers remained approximately equal.

The pattern of use on the two most southerly paths is more equal than in 1984, when use was concentrated on the northernmost path which affords the best view of the pond. Although it is difficult to draw firm conclusions because of the low numbers of users, the use of the woodland and rough grass areas at the most northerly end of the site, as shown on the 1984 map, by children and adolescents, is completely absent from the 1985 map. It may be that the circular pathway, which was completed in 1985, has destroyed the privacy that these groups sought in this area. This would account for a significant proportion of the fall-off in the total number of adolescents observed in 1985.

Only 6 people were observed at locations off the paths in 1985, compared to 22 in 1984. The path system would therefore seem to have been effective at pulling people away from the sensitive habitat areas. There was some concern that there might have been some increase in disturbance to the wildlife in the wet woodland in the north east part of the site, by bringing the walkway through that area. In fact the opposite is probably true, if the argument that the presence of people in this area has deterred the informal use of the area by children and adolescents is correct. From a social perspective, it may be worth considering that something of the site's value to these groups for relatively harmless activities (eg play, exploration etc) has also been lost.

## 5.6. Conclusions

UWG were the only conservation group, who were able, and willing to offer the community group more than ecological advice in as much as it provided technical support to develop the nature park, and thus fight the planning application to tip on the reservoirs.



This project was initiated by the local community, who established good working relationships with the local councillors and used their connections with the local residents associations. The councillors indicated that they had looked for evidence that the community group was 'strong enough' to pursue the project. There had been some suspicion of UWG, who were seen to be 'Do-gooders', but their involvement had helped to win the commitment of the councillors. It never became a party political issue; the ward councillors, who came from more than one party, worked together, to support the community's proposals for the nature park and their campaign against tipping.

The initial contribution from the Friends of the Earth urban ecologist, had been appreciated by the community. However, the UWG staff who took over the project did not inspire a similar level of confidence. This was, the first community involvement project that they, and most of the community representatives had been involved in. Nonetheless the main operational objectives were never made explicit and could not be used to provide the focus for action that would have helped to strengthen the links between the interested parties.

It appears to have been easier for UWG to progress the matter of establishing the nature park, as this was a simple task of getting the Planning Department to approve the proposals and a lease, whilst the community concentrated on taking action over the reservoir problem.

For the campaign, the leader of the community group, continued to research the planning background of the site, and the reputation of the company that had submitted the planning application. The main role for the Group, after it had supplied the original proposals for the development of the nature park, was to campaign alongside the community group, and negotiate a lease for the nature park site.

It proved impossible for one person from UWG to handle all the work. This project provided the first four employees with something of a training ground. After the first 6 months,

responsibility fell to one member of staff who continued until the summer of 1981. Thereafter, the newly appointed planner took over the negotiations on the lease, and the construction of the case to oppose the appeal to tip in the reservoirs.

The decision of the management committee, in September 1981, not to meet again until the lease came through, had the effect of depriving the planner of a mechanism to work with the community on the appeal. As a consequence the community employed their own solicitor to present their case; the case which would seem to have made the major impression on the Inspector, who subsequently dismissed the appeal. The argument that the nature park would be affected by the tipping operations, had also been influential, despite the fact that nothing had been achieved on the ground at the time of the enquiry.

Even after the appeal had been lost, the lease took another 6 months to finalise, at which point, a new UWG representative took over the responsibility for helping the community to raise the necessary funds, seek re-approval of the proposals from the community, and plan out and supervise the community work days. The new person had a particular interest in the practical aspects of the work which ensured that the first work days took place as soon as some money had been raised to buy materials.

The lack of communication between UWG and the community group throughout 1982 is perhaps part of the explanation for why there were such differing views on what the future role of UWG should be.

It was generally agreed, by the community representatives, that UWG would continue to provide technical advice on the development and management of the nature park. The community leader also felt that UWG involvement would be essential if the site was to be developed for the benefit of the public but without too much disturbance to wildlife. He was worried because he felt that the wishes of the councillors to exploit the nature park to its maximum recreational potential, and the



wishes of some of the residents to restrict public access to the site might hold sway without UWG's influence.

The breakdown in the relationship between the community and UWG presented additional problems with respect to the council's proposals for the reservoir site. The proposals were published before the council had actually concluded the purchase of the site, and they included provision for sail-boarding and a club house (the car park and access road for which would have cut through the nature park). The community's initial reaction had been to oppose the proposals. UWG wanted to encourage the council to finalise purchase and did not want to be seen to oppose the council at that stage. UWG felt that some of the proposals would not be workable and so the disturbance would not materialise.

UWG's concern was justified because the council did indeed withdraw its offer of purchase, for a mixture of political and financial reasons. Fortunately these were later resolved.

The content of the proposals had convinced some of the residents that they had cause to be concerned about the level of visitors that would be attracted to the site, and they would not countenance the suggestion that the management of the nature park might one day be handed over to the council to be included with the management of the reservoirs. Some of the community representatives took the view that UWG had to continue their involvement because they held the lease and were therefore the 'governing body'.

The approach made by a local Community Programme scheme, to carry out the heavy landscaping work, that would not have been possible for the community group to have completed, was fortuitous. MSC regulations prohibited on-going, UWG involvement in the 'management' of landscape projects, and UWG had been advised by a neighbouring county trust to avoid taking on long term management responsibilities for sites. However, it had been anticipated that the community would be able to undertake all the necessary landscaping work, and so the decision to accept the local offer of help was approved



with some regret, but with full recognition of the necessity. The team began work in the spring of 1984.

UWG and the community continued to meet to discuss the development of the nature park and the reservoirs during 1983. After that, from the spring of 1984 - May 1985, UWG developed a close working relationship with the officers from Amenities and Recreation, who were responsible for drawing up the master plan for the reservoir site. The management committee did not meet during that period.

MSC regulations did allow UWG to employ a warden on the site in September 1985, who has been able to develop a voluntary wardening scheme and an environmental education service for visiting school parties. She has also been responsible for drawing up a management plan for the nature park and supervising the local MSC team that is now working on the larger reservoir site.

In all some 8 members of UWG's staff have been centrally involved with the community and the council, in almost as many years. There has been some overlap, when two people have been working on different aspects of the project at the same time. The activists from the community have remained the same, as have the councillors. The need for UWG involvement has, if anything, and despite all predictions, increased, whilst the role of the community has slightly decreased. This is because, from the time the MSC team started work on the nature park and the plans for the reservoirs were published, there has been a need for technical expertise which the community could not supply; on-site supervision of the MSC workers, negotiations over the conservation aspects of the reservoir proposals and negotiations over the provision of educational facilities (including an on-site classroom and the warden). The development of the nature park is still governed by the management committee.

All the members of the management committee sit on the Reservoir Steering Group (which includes council officers, councillors, UWG, RSPB, and the local residents). The

conflict between the residents, UWG and the council remains, over the appropriate level of use for both sites. The residents fear that city-wide publicity for the reservoirs will attract too many people, whereas UWG's assessment is that it could stand more than just local use but they are keen to support the views of the local people. The council continue to insist that it should provide more than a local facility, in order to justify the public money that has been spent on it (£70,000 purchase price plus materials).

The residents and UWG are still not convinced that the council will effect appropriate management of the reservoirs, in sympathy with its character as a conservation area.

## CHAPTER 6 LECKIE RD - LIMITED COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

### 6.1. The Project and its Context

Leckie Rd is a small open space (1 ha) situated within a small inter-war council housing estate a mile from Walsall's town centre (see Fig7 and Plates 3 and 4). UWG identified this as a limited community involvement project, the objective of which was:

To conserve a site through the practical efforts of UWG staff and other voluntary or statutory labour forces, and to encourage the involvement of the community through approaches to institutions such as schools and residents associations. Efforts should be made to encourage people's use and enjoyment of the site by providing signs, guided tours and talks.

Walsall Housing Dept carried out improvements to some of the houses on the estate during 1980 and the Engineers Department had discovered that there was subsidence in the area caused by a combination of settlement from past mining activity and movement of an underlying fault line. These two factors necessitated the demolition of the rest of the housing and precluded re-development of the site for building purposes. This presented the local authority with the problem of how to re-instate the derelict land as open space.

In the summer of 1981, a neighbourhood officer from the Housing Department attended a lecture by the landscape consultant (who also happened to be the chairman of UWG at that time), on landscaping around housing areas. Examples of his work on the DOE'S priority estates project were described; work which had emphasised involving the community in the care of their local environment.

Officers in the Housing and Planning Departments, with responsibility for environmental improvements, developed the idea of creating a 'different' type of open space, something of 'note' to compensate the residents who had had to put up



Fig 7 Leckie Rd Community Green Space

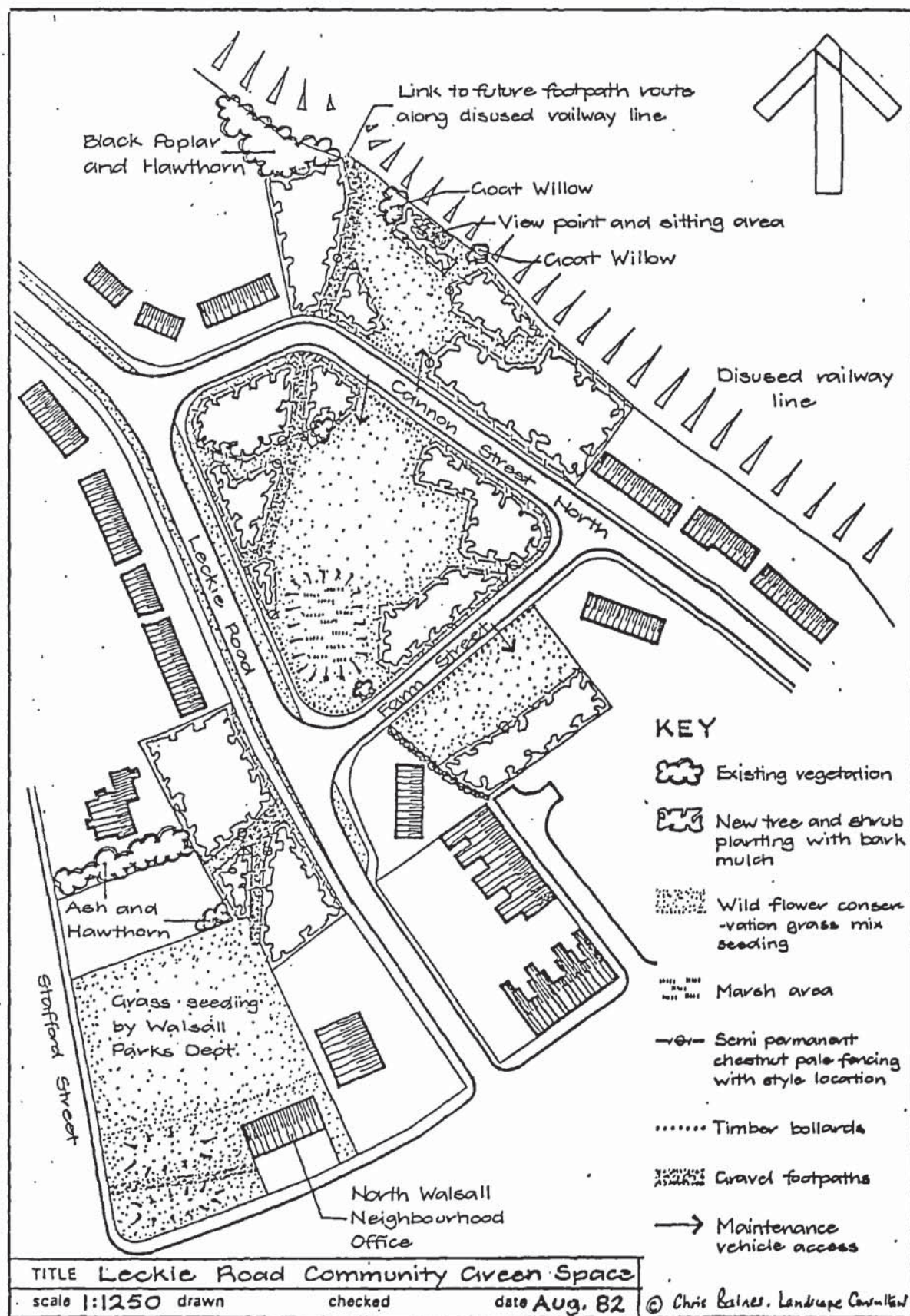


Plate 3 Leckie Rd - view northwards to the railway line beyond (1983)



Plate 4 Leckied Rd - view south towards the town centre (1985)





with a site that had been 'so bad for so long'.

'....we had a crisis on our hands before the land was actually cleared....during our first few months of opening in the neighbourhood office, people were coming in very, very angry about the state of the site, it was just like a bomb tip....the demolition contractors had not covered the drains and there was an infestation of rats, a lot of fly tipping was beginning to take place....so we had to do something.....it would have been tempting to say let's clear the whole lot, do a quick tidy-up job and grass it, put in a few isolated trees that would undoubtedly have got broken down. But while this crisis was going on, I became aware of the Urban Wildlife Group, because I had attended one or two courses that the chairman, had spoken on and saw the possibilities of doing a completely different scheme with community involvement as a high priority. Despite the sceptics within the existing local authority's Recreation and other Departments and because of the reputation of the area as far as vandalism is concerned, we went ahead and drew up plans....you know what attracted me primarily was the commitment to community involvement, and that's why I was convinced and determined that we attempted to do that here' (Neighbourhood Officer).

It was felt that there was support from the then labour controlled council, for the project. There was also some added pressure, in that underspend in the Housing Department had to be spent quickly, before the end of the financial year (1981/82), if they were not to receive a lower allocation for the following year. The only way to spend it was on relatively small scale projects, on land already owned by the Council, using the Chairman's book procedure to speed through the transactions. A block of the Housing Department's money had been given over to the Planning Department as they had demonstrated an expertise in completing similar projects quickly.



Contact was made with the chairman, as 'the spokesperson of UWG', and he helped the planners and the neighbourhood officer to put together a package which could be implemented within the short time-scale available (6 months). A brief summary of the recent history of the project is given in Appendix F.

In order to get the necessary expertise quickly, the authority had to find a consultant who would accept a fixed fee scale. This was accepted by the chair of UWG, but in his capacity as an independent consultant, and the two key officers negotiated the deal through with the chairman of the Housing Committee.

The landscape consultant commented that:

'It became obvious that we [UWG] didn't have particularly the professional resources, insurance and liability resources, to allow us to take on the £25,000 contract, and so I suggested that the best way of handling it would be on a division of labour, where I would take on the professional responsibility role for Walsall, who would commission me through the Housing budget, but the Urban Wildlife Group would simultaneously be involved in a practical way in doing some of the work and in involving the community, talking to people and getting the schools involved....which was good from my point of view because I didn't have the time to take on all that aspect but wanted it very much to be an integral part of the whole thing, and it also gave me a chance to feed in techniques which I was familiar with, but which the landscape architects and UWG were not' (Landscape consultant).

The project planner commented that:

'If there hadn't been a lot of money going spare, if it hadn't been that particular chairman, if there hadn't been a chairman's book procedure, it would never have taken place that quickly, because it relied on flexibility of one or two people in the departments like myself and the neighbourhood officer, at a relatively low management level, who haven't got anything like the ability to clinch deals, being able to say to a particular chairman, we believe this is a very good scheme, it will achieve certain objectives and he would take it on trust that that was the case' (Project planner).

## 6.2. Operational Objectives for the Project

A total of 12 key people who had been involved in the project were interviewed; the area planner, project planner and neighbourhood officer from Walsall Council, the landscape consultant, the ecologist and landscape architect from UWG, and two groups of teachers from the two local schools.

This group of people never met formally as a committee, an issue which is explored in the following sections of the case study. The officers from Walsall Council, the landscape consultant and the other representatives from UWG were the key decision makers, and the teachers were involved from a very early stage (more so than the local residents), and so I shall refer to these people as the 'management group'.

The content analysis of the operational objectives for the projects revealed the following results (the numbers of mentions are given in brackets):

- To create an informal, green space for the immediate population in a 'grim', 'grey' area. (5)
- To encourage adults and children to develop a sense of responsibility for nature and become involved in it. (5)
- To provide an educational asset. (3)
- To provide habitat for wildlife. (3)
- To experiment with unusual landscape features and new landscape techniques. (3)
- To provide a natural area for play. (2)
- To provide a pedestrian link to the disused railway line and the countryside beyond. (2)
- To provide a place of tranquility. (1)
- To show that collaboration between different work forces can be successful. (1)

Although there didn't seem to be any conflicts in the aims of the management group, two of the teachers mentioned that they thought the local residents would probably have preferred a grassy area outside their homes and that they, themselves, wouldn't have been pleased to have a stagnant, smelly pond with rubbish near their houses if they lived there.

As with Plants Brook, the interviewees found it difficult to order their objectives. Three people stressed the need to



create a site that was visually appealing. It was felt that there would be a definite improvement to the environment, in that the 'green' of the new landscape would contrast and 'soften' the 'grim', 'grey' of the existing buildings. Several people also commented that the new landscape had to be relatively neat and free of rubbish. This was seen to be essential to get the residents to accept it, and also to get the sceptics (the councillors and the Amentites and Recreation Department) to accept it as a successful approach that could therefore be justified elsewhere in Walsall.

The aim to provide an informal open space was seen as secondary by the project planner and the landscape consultant who both placed greater emphasis on the experimental aspects of the project, with a secondary aim in mind of encouraging the development of similar, informal landscapes elsewhere. Both of these interviewees commented that there were several other small open spaces in the area which catered for a range of interests; football pitches, parks, kickabout areas and the canal.

With regard to the time needed to achieve the aims, the responses fell into 3 categories. It was felt that a significant visual impact had already been achieved in turning the derelict, litter-strewn site into a young green landscape, at the time of the interviewees (April 1983). The second significant time point was expected to occur when the fences around the woodland planting would be removed in another 3-4 years time. The third category of responses related to the time when the landscape would have achieved some degree of maturity in 5-10 years time and so be better able to withstand play activity.

Given the fact that the schools had already begun to use the site for educational purposes, comments on this aim suggested that that use would become more regular, such that the norm would be weekly rather than seasonal visits, as the site matured.

The UWG landscape architect commented that although the new



habitat had already attracted a wide range of birds, butterflies and other insects to it, it might take another 20 years before it would be able to attract and support populations of small mammals.

The interviewees felt that they were all agreed about the objectives of the project and that these had not changed from the original ideas, except that the proposed kickabout area had not materialised.

However, there was a difference of opinion over whether the local residents' ideas and views of the project matched those of the management group.

'I think there probably are differences....that was indicated at the public meeting....the emphasis by the landscape consultant on creating a natural habitat for wildlife to return to the city didn't go down particularly well....I think because he showed slides of voles and shrews and mice, and at that time the place was riddled with rats, so I mean we had that problem, it didn't go down at all well' (Neighbourhood officer).

Although the last quote relates to a specific issue, it contrasts with the generally optimistic statement of the landscape consultant:

'...the judgment is being confirmed very much by people's response, nobody has come along, as far as I'm aware, to the Housing Department and said 'oh why haven't we got a play group on there' or 'why aren't there roses on there' (Landscape consultant).

### 6.3. Operational Objectives for Community Involvement

As has already been reported, both the neighbourhood officer and the landscape consultant were firmly committed to community involvement in this project. In describing the

reasons for this the neighbourhood officer said:

'...I don't think the people should be told what they're going to have...they're the people who pay our wages at the end of the day, they're the people who are going to live in an area and have to face it every day of their lives, its really for those very basic reasons and on a general level that I think they should have more and more say. The responsibility as far as we're [ie the management group] concerned is to make sure they've got all the information and possible choices at their disposal' (Neighbourhood officer).

The landscape consultant outlined three reasons:

'If you can build up a pride in, and a commitment to, this sort of scheme, simply by injecting your enthusiasm half the time, that has a spin-off in greater respect for it, greater care for it, and more immediate feedback if something goes wrong with it. That's a very tangible thing and it's worth money....and in itself it's worth the time spent on it. The other thing is that I do think that it forces you as a professional, if nothing else, to constantly review your view of success or failure of a scheme....just as a new weedkiller may become available which enables you to change the way you would manage the thing....there was a strong feeling that they [the community] didn't want this to become a kids' paradise, but society can change dramatically, and I think it's important that there is a feedback situation.... The other, much less tangible, thing is that if we are to change the general picture of landscape in towns, then we have to change people's perspectives....and aspirations, we have to educate them as to how one would enjoy.....a much less formal landscape, which I think can only be achieved by continuing communication of ideas, enthusing and showing people things and involving them in things' (Landscape consultant).

The general objectives for community involvement expressed here are identical to two of those expressed by the members of the Plants Brook management committee. These are:

- 1 To enable local people to have a say in what happens to their area.
- 2 To enthuse, educate and involve people on the site and thus encourage them to look after it.

A third objective to reduce the cost of such projects to the public, which was mentioned by the Plants Brook people was not mentioned here.



However the landscape consultant added two further objectives, which were:

- 3 To ensure that the site was managed in accordance with the community's changing needs, which would continue the success of the landscape.
- 4 To provide the mechanism through which urban people could be persuaded to accept and to enjoy much less formal landscapes.

#### 6.4. Implementation – Monitoring the Delivery System

##### 6.4.1. The Views of the Management Group

The implementation of this project can be considered in three parts: the establishment of the landscape, the involvement of the community, and the roles of the various members of the management group.

Following his appointment to the project, the landscape consultant asked the landscape architect at UWG (whose contract ended 5 months later and who was not interviewed) to draw up a basic design for the site (see Fig 7) which he then wrote up and illustrated in the proposal that was sent to the council.

The consultant made the original contact with the headteachers of the two local primary schools which was then followed up by the UWG ecologist, (who had a personal interest in environmental education).

In the February of 1982, a public meeting was arranged for local residents to comment on the proposals, following a presentation by the landscape consultant. This meeting was attended by the neighbourhood officer, the project planner, the landscape supervisor for the private contractors, three representatives from UWG and myself as non-participant observer. The number of residents at that meeting was very low (only 15).

The following aspects of the project were explained to the residents: tidy-up, the creation of a green environment, emphasis on the partnership between UWG, the local authority and local people, the need to spend the money quickly, and the value of site as 'countryside' and as an amenity for children.

The consultant sought involvement from the local residents by asking them to talk about the proposals with their neighbours, discuss where they thought the paths should go, tell people passing by the site (particularly those tipping rubbish there) that it was going to be a park and encourage others to become involved.

The idea of a pond for its value to wildlife was also introduced at this meeting. The landscape consultant challenged them to tell him where their children collected tadpoles from, and they responded with several answers. He pointed out that the pond would be abused if there was no support for it amongst the community.

The reaction of the residents to the proposals was sceptical as expressed by the following comments:

'....was once a nice area....council done nothing'.

'....[there will be] no trees left'.

'We've got to spend 24 hours looking after it'.

'Ain't no [tenants] groups in the area....you'll never get them here'.

(What would you use the site for?) '....nothing more than walking the dog....people with children haven't turned up'.

The landscape consultant invited them to come and talk to him and the landscape contractor on site.

The neighbourhood officer's memory of that meeting was quite clear when I interviewed him some fourteen months later:

'....I think we were at an advantage in that houses immediately around the site had just been modernised and there were further modernisation programmes starting nearby,



and we were able to talk about the regeneration of the area that the site was part of....the people were quite clearly encouraged because we had committed some money to their houses....so the old argument of neglect was put aside and people began to see, yes, something at last is happening....also because the neighbourhood officer was right bang on the site, we were talking about what was going to happen on the site, because the relationships we were building up [enabled us to] turn the conversations about rent, repairs or anything else, to the site' (Neighbourhood officer).

He closed the public meeting by saying to the residents:

'Go away and think about the proposal. This is just the start' (Neighbourhood officer).

According to the UWG ecologist, because there was such a low turn out to the public meeting, because there appeared to be no local community groups to establish a link with, and because the neighbourhood officer was already playing a link role with the local residents, it was decided that it would not be possible to involve the public directly in the decision making system that the management group had already begun to operate.

The decision making system on this project is noteworthy because it was obviously never clearly established, judging by the various comments of the interviewees.

There seemed to be agreement that UWG had guided the project from the beginning and had been responsible for initiating specific actions, which were then devolved to appropriate members of the management group:

'....a lot of the day to day decisions were taken by UWG....the only other consultation has been between us two [the planner and neighbourhood officer] or one of us having to make a quick decision, but usually with the initiative coming from UWG or from the landscape consultant, if they felt something needed doing they'd get onto us to do it or look into it' (Project planner).

This situation was further complicated in that the landscape consultant had clearly stated in the original proposals that the Parks, Education, Engineers and Public Health Departments

should be committed and involved in the project, as each had a role to play.

The neighbourhood officer and planner were wary of involving the Parks Department in particular:

'Ultimate responsibility for the land rests with the Housing Committee, but we were in a dilemma....we wanted to keep it in housing because of the Neighbourhood Office involvement and we didn't want it to go over to be designated public open space or as a park area because the Recreation and Amenities (Parks) would then take over responsibility and obviously their traditional approach was totally alien to what we were wanting to do, in terms of community involvement and so on' (Neighbourhood officer).

The landscape consultant's view on this was:

'....I wanted from the very beginning, this site to be taken over by the Parks Department. From the very beginning I was told by the Housing Department that on no account should we begin by talking to Parks and I objected to that strongly, but we had only 6 weeks and you don't get a long time to object, but we did eventually work round having the parks staff and various other people, school teachers altogether for a meeting' (Landscape consultant).

The teachers from both schools suggested that although they had been approached before the plans had been finalised, they had not contributed anything to the planning stage:

'We were simply told that there were some people from UWG who would like to talk to our children and they would like us to plant some trees....' (Teacher).

'We were told the land would be set aside for wildlife. We went down and had a look and weren't convinced. On the second visit the fences had been put up and we envisaged having our own area....we cleared the rubbish and the children got instruction from the UWG girls on planting and seeds. After that things died down again' (Teacher).

'We were left some oak trees in pots to look after and then we, I think 2 or 3 months later, planted those trees along with some others....we had the television people in didn't we, filming the children. And then we didn't really



hear anything until I was asked to go down to the Neighbourhood Office in October [1982] to discuss how far they'd got with the project, that they'd finished the planting, the fences were up and they wanted us to collect the litter, try and introduce a lot of worms which we haven't considered, start to study the trees....I came back to the school and told the children that perhaps by the time they were parents their children would enjoy this area, somewhere to sit down. I gave them the name of a tree and a label and we went down, chose a tree each, measured the height, looked at its condition, whether it'd got leaves and fruit seeds. That was just before Christmas, we wanted them to see them in a dormant state. They were very enthusiastic....We went down again in March (1983) and they were really pleased....beginning to dawn on them the seasonal changes because they said 'Ooh, they've all got leaves on'....I'm hoping we'll go every fortnight.... I've been asked to send some of their work to the Neighbourhood Office for a display this summer, and I'll contact them shortly to tell them I've got some stuff' (Teacher).

Returning to the establishment of the landscape, a private contractor was appointed to clear the site, complete the land modelling, install fencing and lay the pond lining.

A team from Walsall Council's MSC Taskforce was organised to lay the red shale paths through the site:

'....we didn't have a staggering budget to do the site, so we had to look at the cost of labour and the local Manpower Services Taskforce was obviously the choice.... I have personal reservations about that....but given the situation we were operating in, it was the best thing we could do....The lads who worked on that were very good and worked very hard....the local people were talking to them and I think by the end of it they themselves began to appreciate what was going on' (Neighbourhood officer).

UWG completed the tree planting with the help of local school children (see Plate 5, overleaf).

'I went with UWG to both the schools....and the kids really took to it....we had a number of sessions on a Saturday morning when the kids came along and that was interesting because it showed the spontaneous reaction that we could expect in the future....we started off one morning spreading bark mulch with half a dozen kids and the landscape consultant and one or two other people and within a matter of minutes there was a crowd of kids all helping out' (Neighbourhood officer).

Plate 5 Tree planting at Leckie Rd (March 1982)



The interviewees all concurred that the project had been initiated by the neighbourhood officer from Walsall's Housing Department. I omitted to ask all the interviewees whether they felt that was how it should have been, except the UWG ecologist whose reply was:

'The neighbourhood officer is the link pin in that area. He's well respected by the community and I think he has some power with the local councillors and other officers within the Planning Department and so forth. I don't think we would have had the same response that we did have, from the schools and the residents if it hadn't been for him' (UWG ecologist).

The role of UWG as perceived by the neighbourhood officer was:

'consultative.....the consultant was hired by the local authority....he drew up the plans and....offered the technical advice in terms of planting....and UWG in addition provided the labour....' (Neighbourhood officer).

The project planner also mentioned that:

'....there was a shortage of money on this....and the idea came to the fore that it might be cheaper to do it through



UWG. Secondly we wanted something different here.... we were aware that we hadn't necessarily got the right professional expertise to design what we wanted [infact the department had no fully qualified landscape architects].

Implicit in the relatively high cost of the scheme was that the design was going to be fairly detailed and virtually form a blueprint for us to use as a design to extend the scheme along the disused railway or to translate into appropriate other sites....we would get a detailed specification of footpaths, fencing, the planting technique into bad soil....At the same time we were getting a supervisory role on the site....of the construction. UWG would choose the appropriate subcontractors to do the fencing, footpaths and earth-moving. UWG would in effect be the general contractor, which would otherwise normally have been our Parks Department or a general landscaping contractor, to do the non-specialist stuff, the tree planting, spreading of mulch and sowing of seed' (Project planner).

The landscape consultant's view of his own role and others from UWG was:

'I would take on the professional responsibility for Walsall. UWG would be simultaneously involved, partly in a practical way doing some of the work, and partly in involving the community, in talking to people and getting schools involved....The UWG landscape architect did the site survey, talked to the housing officers and people, I then turned that into a contract document which inherently meant taking responsibility for £20,000 worth of spending....UWG had a labour force which we thought was rather more sensitive to our objectives than say a contractor or Parks Department would have been and it was a good opportunity for them to actually carry out the physical planting works....it gave us an opportunity to build up a relationship, as a voluntary organisation, with Walsall, in a way, slightly at a tangent to the core of the project, to develop the social and community skills, the natural history skills, rather than getting bogged down in the contract procedure, dealing with the district solicitor and all that sort of thing....It also gave me the chance to feed in techniques which I was familiar with but which the landscape architects and the Group were not' (Landscape consultant).

The UWG ecologist described the role of UWG as follows:

'We've been involved in two aspects, one the soft landscaping....On the community side, we've been involved with the two schools....initially we gave them a chat.

We took some oak seedlings into the classroom and asked them if they'd grow them on, then we had a tree planting day with them, and we've had one clean up day since.... we've asked the kids to take on responsibility for one of the planting areas and we've also had talks with the teachers about the future of the site' (UWG ecologist).

The role of the teachers, the school children and the community has already been described elsewhere. The area planner explained his role as:

'I'm involved in it on the principle of land use in this area and making sure that the things go through the committees' (Area planner).

The project planner (who was also a qualified architect with a specialism in landscape architecture) described his role as:

'....somebody who has been able to pull things together, like organising the finance in the first place, and persuading the council that it was worthwhile. Being able to place orders for the pond liner, things like that, something that comes in between the need and the achievement' (Project planner).

The neighbourhood officer commented that:

'....in terms of the job I was engaged by the authority to do, it was quite clearly a responsibility that I had to take on, it's on a council estate so I had to be involved in that....my commitment stemmed from the basis that I didn't want it to end up as a normal tidy up site.... having a basic appreciation of UWG and their ideas, I became convinced that it was the right thing to do, and I must admit that at times I've been very defensive because of the level of septicism that's been obvious. I suppose if anything all I can claim is the credit for keeping the thing going within the local authority and ensuring that the sceptics didn't roll the thing back' (Neighbourhood officer).

My impression is that the neighbourhood officer was regarded as the key contact by all the other members of the management group, although he did not appear to assume an obvious leadership role. In as much as he and the project planner had the control over the finances of the project, it is understandable that any decision involving expenditure had to be discussed with one or both of them.



#### 6.4.2. The Views of the Local Community

The questionnaire survey was carried out in late October 1983, only 20 months after the start of work on the site. A total of 81 people agreed to answer the questionnaire, of whom 66 people knew the site and 15 did not. Of the 66 who knew the site 39 (48% of all respondents, and 59% of those with knowledge of the site) had visited it.

The comments from the interviewers indicated that they had received by far the highest number of refusals, when compared to the rates for the other sites, and had encountered more aggressive and less articulate people than in the other areas. This is reflected in the greater proportion of missing values recorded for the responses where answers were either refused or confused. Some of the interviewers found it difficult to complete their quotas and extract full responses in the face of these difficulties.

Of those who had visited the site, 19 were male and 18 were female (with 2 missing values). Some 41% of the visitors lived within the near zone (zone A) and 59% in the far zone (zone B) and 97% of the respondents from zone A knew of the site, compared to only 52% of those from zone B. The vast majority of the zone A respondents lived in houses immediately adjacent to the site and passed along the pavements and paths every day. In as much as it is a small site and did not have any benches or other facilities at the time, it provided them with little more than a visual amenity which they could experience equally well from their houses or from the pavements, without actually having to move onto the landscape itself. The low percentage of visitors from zone A may therefore reflect a literal interpretation of the question, in as much as people living immediately adjacent to the site either found it ridiculous or else considered that they had never actually used the landscape as anything other than a short cut.

The reasons given by those who had not visited the site are presented in Table 18.

Table 18 Reasons for not having visited Leckie Rd by those who knew of it

Reasons for not visiting	%
Not interested	30
Not in an attractive state	19
Prefer's own garden	15
Not been open long	11
Too far away	7
Misc:	18
New resident	
No time	
Infirmary	
Unsafe	
Waste of money	

N = 27 responses from 20 respondents.

There is no suggestion in these answers that anyone thought that the land was private (as was the case at Plants Brook), nor were there any answers to suggest that it was a lack of facilities that was the cause of their not wanting to visit it. The main impression given is that, at the time of the survey, the site was regarded as being visually unattractive.

The reasons given by those who had not visited the site are confirmed by the activity pattern of those that had (Table 19) in that the majority of visitors proved to be through-routers on their way to destinations elsewhere. The site would appear to have had some attraction for children, for those interested in nature and in search of peace and quiet.

The responses to the question 'Are there any things you particularly like about the place?' are presented in Table 20. Although there was a high percentage of visitors who did not particularly like anything about the site, for those who expressed preferences, the natural elements of the landscape (trees, bushes, flowers, wildlife, water and scenery) seemed to be important.



Table 19 The activities engaged in by visitors to Leckie Rd

Activities	%
Through-route	25
Walk	18
Walk the dog	15
Play	6
Enjoy the scenery	7
Take children to play	5
Misc:	20
Think	
Visit friends	
Sit	
Cycle	
Nature watch	
Relax	
Litter pick	
Feed the birds	
Enjoy peace and quiet	

N = 60 responses from 38 respondents (+ 1 missing value), who identified 16 different activities

Table 20 What visitors particularly liked about Leckie Rd

Likes	%
No (nothing)	31
Vegetation (trees, bushes + flowers)	13
Wildlife	8
Water	6
Peace and quiet	4
Scenery	4
Open space	4
Good for children	4
Attractive	4
Can't remember	4
Misc:	18
Layout	
Naturalness	
Fresh air	
Good for play	
Available to the public	
Could be nice eventually	
New landscaping	
Fencing	

N = 48 responses from 35 respondents (+ 4 missing values) who identified 18 different likes.

Table 21 What visitors disliked about Leckie Rd

Dislikes	%
None	31
Litter/rubbish	11
Children causing a nuisance	9
Unkempt appearance	7
Condition of pond	7
Sense of personal insecurity	7
Vandalism	6
Dangerous	4
Waste of money	4
Fencing	4
Misc:	13
Poor condition of paths	
Pollution	
Rats	
Too cold	
Too many trees, bushes	
Weeds	

N = 54 responses given by 37 respondents (+ 2 missing values)  
who identified 17 dislikes

Comparing the likes and the dislikes, those who liked the new landscape are almost equally matched by the numbers who found it untidy, polluted and dangerous (Table 21). The respondents' suggestions for improving the site indicate that there is a desire for more trees and grass (something that has since happened naturally as the site matures), that the site be cleaned up, that formal facilities be provided for children and to make it more like a traditional park (Table 22). No one said that there was no need for any changes, although 6 people had no suggestions, which overall suggests a feeling of general dissatisfaction.

All the answers to the questions discussed so far tend to indicate that there would seem to be very few people in the area who had understood, and approved of, the new landscape. Indeed despite all the publicity that had been produced about the project (leaflets, displays and conversations in the



Neighbourhood Office) and the information parents would have received via the children who had been involved with the tree planting etc, only 12 of the 39 visitors had seen or heard any publicity in the 12 months prior to the survey (ie 31% compared to 62% of the visitors to Plants Brook).

Table 22 The changes that could be made to make the site more attractive to visitors

Changes	%
Children's play area	15
No	10
Improve pond	10
Clean up site	8
Seats	7
Formal facilities	7
More trees, shrubs, natural planting	7
More grass	7
More flower beds	7
More maintenance	3
Remove the fences	3
Build on it	3
Misc:	10
Toilets	
Thin trees to let in more light	
Improve access	
Telephone	
More attention from those responsible for maintenance	
More wildlife	
Police patrol	
Close off roads	
N = 42 responses from 37 respondents who gave 19 different changes	

#### 6.4.3 Observed Use of Leckie Rd by the Local Community

The questionnaire results suggested that we should have expected to see a significant percentage of the users through-routing, walking and walking the dog. Ten of the

survey respondents were children and adolescents which accounted for some of those who mentioned that they played at the site (the 4th most frequently mentioned activity). The only other people it seemed we might see would be people looking in the pond or feeding the birds.

Over the 20 hours of observation from August 1983 - July 1984, 341 people were observed on the 5 minute sampling points. Of these 231 were seen on Sundays (12 hours) and 110 were seen on weekdays (8 hours). This gives an average through-put of 19 people per hour on Sundays and 14 people per hour on weekdays. Observers were able to record 50% of the visitors on the 5 minute intervals so that the through-put figures when doubled give a more accurate estimate of the true level of use (ie 38 people per hour on Sundays and 28 people per hour on weekdays).

Table 23 The range, relative frequencies and the male/female differences of activities for all Sunday and weekday observations at Leckie Rd (1983-84)

Activities	Total %	Males %	Females %
Through-routing	53	50	60
Walking	19	19	18
Cycling	9	10	7
Informal play	6	6	5
Running	4	4	3
Dog walking	3	3	3
Meeting	2	1	3
Kite flying	2	3	-
Viewing	2	1	2
Nature watching	1	2	-
Vandalism	1	1	-
Sitting	-	1	-
N =	341	220	121

The observed use (as shown in Table 23) reflects the responses to the questionnaire but also includes significant numbers of cyclists (both children and adults). The adult cyclists tended to be through-routing, whereas the children tended to play around the site on their bikes.



Some 39% of the 38 visitors in the survey said they used the site as a through route, which compares to 53% observed. Just over a quarter of the visitors said they used it for walking, compared to only 19% observed and the numbers of dog walkers observed was much lower than the results of the questionnaire indicated it would be (24% of the visitors mentioned dog walking compared to only 3% observed).

Two thirds of the users were male (which compares to 70% at Plants Brook), but there appears to be no significant differences between the sexes in their activity patterns.

A second series of observations were carried out at Leckie Rd over May, June and July of 1985, as at Plants Brook and Woodgate Valley. The landscape was still only 3 years old but there had been a few minor changes: a couple of young wardens had been employed over the preceeding 12 months to maintain the site; the majority of the trees had reached a height of at least 6' with plenty of leafy growth giving the impression of young woodland; the meadow had improved though the sward was still bare in parts; litter bins had been placed on the site; Farm St, Cannon St North had been pedestrianised and Leckie Rd had been closed off. However, there were still no benches, nor a sign, on the site, and the fencing around the planting areas was still in place.

Table 24 The range and relative frequencies of activities for May, June and July in 1984 and 1985

Activities	Total 1984 %	Total 1985 %
Through-routing	57	66
Walking	20	6
Cycling	9	11
Running	4	-
Dog walking	3	4
Meeting	3	4
Viewing	2	1
Nature watching	2	1
Informal play	1	8
Air rifling		1
N =	226	231

Although use had remained at the same level, the pattern of activity had changed. The numbers of through-routers had increased, which may have been a result of the pedestrianisation, although one might have expected the number of walkers to have increased also (Table 24).

The only other difference is that compared to only 1% in 1984, 8% of the people observed in 1985 were engaged in informal play activities. This 1% seems rather low for the period of maximum use, although over the whole of 1984 the frequency was actually 6%.

Table 25 User group differences for the peak periods of 1984 and 1985

User group	1984			1985		
	Total %	Sun %	Weekdays %	Total %	Sun %	Weekdays %
Elderly	4	4	5	2	1	4
Adults	57	56	58	60	54	67
Adolescents	21	20	21	16	20	11
Children	16	26	11	20	23	17
Toddlers	2	-	5	2	2	1
N =	226	128	98	231	131	100

Table 25 shows that there appears to have been no significant differences in the user group distribution over the two years.

The pattern of use from the results of the 1983-1984 (20 hours) observations is shown in Fig 8. That people will stick to using paths and pavements, where they are provided, is clearly shown. Use of the actual landscape away from the paths is confined mainly to the area around the pond. Apart from throwing stones and rubbish into the pond, some of the visitors were observed to be pond dipping with home-made nets. Another group were seen paddling across the pond on blocks of polystyrene (some be-decked with seats that had been broken off bucket chairs).



Fig 8 The Microgeography of Use at Leckie Rd Aug '83 - July '84

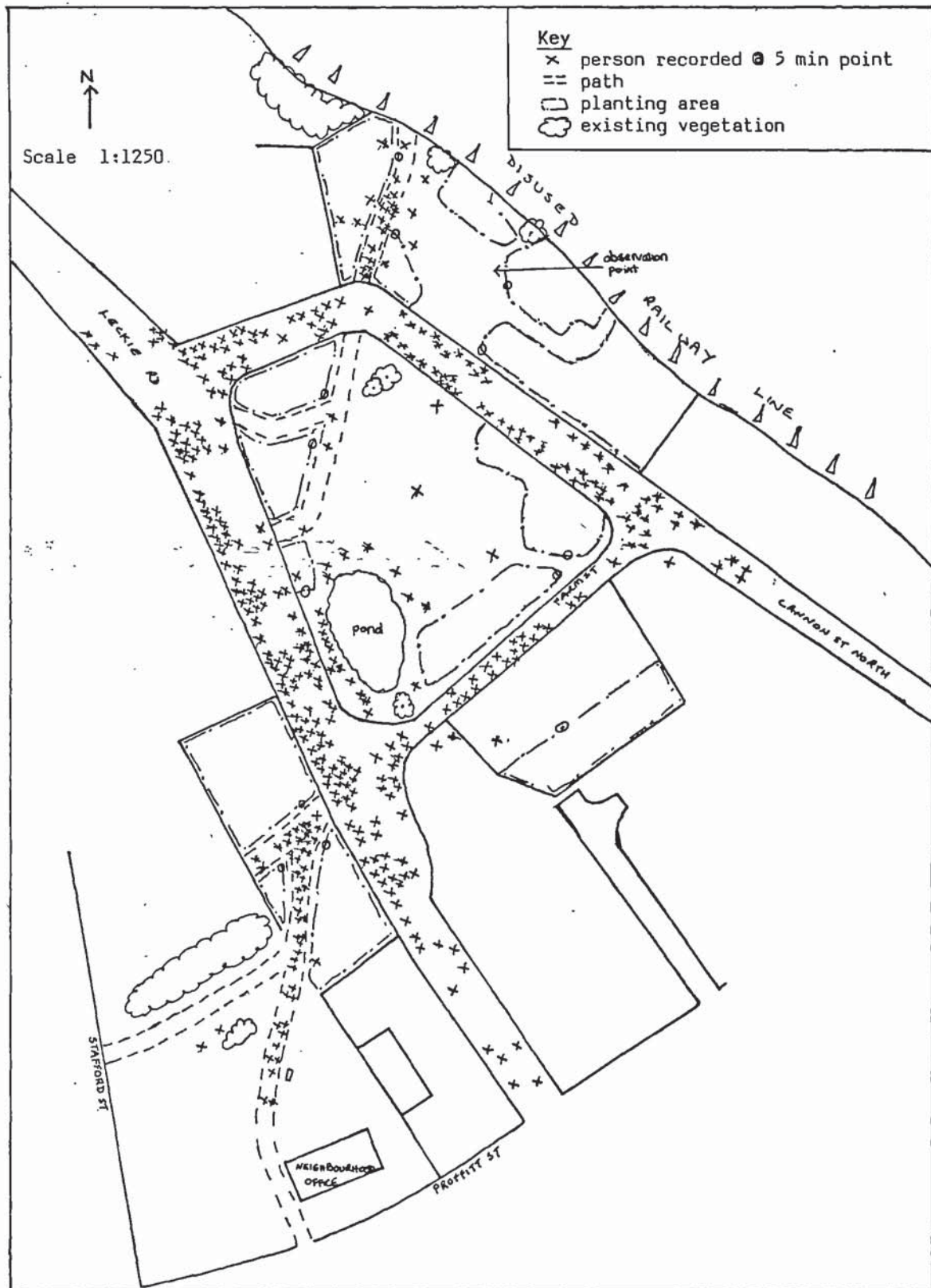
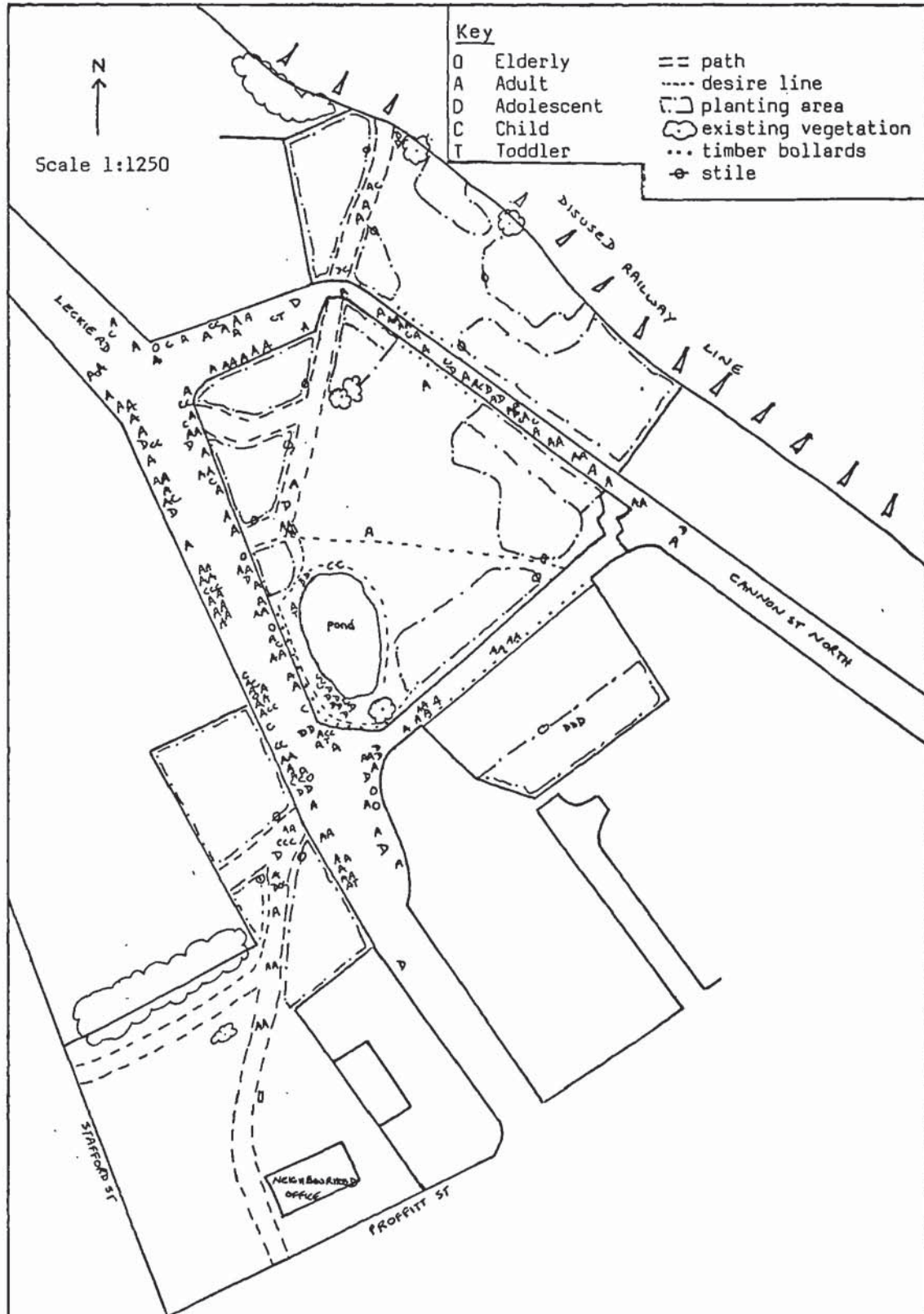


Fig 9 The Microgeography of Use at Leckie Rd, May, June, July 1985





The map of use over the summer of 1985 (12 hours) is differentiated into age groups (see Fig 9). This clearly shows the attraction of the pond to children and adolescents but not to adults. Adults would appear to make use of the disused railway line, mostly as a short cut to get to the housing area on the far side.

It is interesting to note that children were rarely seen cycling on the meadow; they tended to confine themselves to the road. In 1985, work on the utilities to the west of the Neighbourhood Office was carried out, and children constructed some obstacles from the wooden planks, gravel, rubble etc that this created. These obstacles were built on the close mown grass area between the Neighbourhood Office and Stafford St, and not on the meadow.

Apart from a small amount of graffiti found on the fencing, there was no vandalism of the planting or the hard landscaping. The locals had built a Guy Fawkes bonfire to the north of the pond, the debris from which had been removed after the event, leaving just the hearth. This was regarded as an acceptable use of the site by the consultant and proved to have caused little damage to the meadow.

The maps do suggest that although the path from Proffitt St to Leckie Rd and the path from Cannon St North to the railway line are well used, the linking path between them is not, although it forms the shortest route from one end to the other. This could be because people are wary of having to walk between the dense planting areas in that part of the site. Having said that, a desire line from Leckie Rd to Farm St, and Cannon St North beyond, had developed between 1984 and 1985, indicating that more people were beginning to enter into the site rather than merely pass through, or around, it.

The pavement on the eastern side of Leckie Rd was removed during 1984 and the land was seeded with a grass mix, but this did not appear to have deterred people from continuing to use it to walk along, beside the planting areas and the pond.

I would suggest that UWG should carry out another set of observations during the peak period in either 1987 or 1988, now that the fencing has been replaced with trip rails and the meadow has improved, to assess whether there is greater use of the central part of the site for activities such as sitting, picnics, walking the dog, informal play, as was intended.

## 6.5. Outcome Effects

### 6.5.1. The Views of the Management Group

For the council officers, the site would be deemed to have been a success if it looked more attractive than the traditional landscape solution for this type of site, if it had attracted the promised wildlife, and if people used it and liked it:

'Well something that looks very attractive....that people know that there will be trees growing, different colours....it will be a pleasant place to go and sit down, eat your sandwiches if you work in the area....it won't be bleak....you'll be able to feel that you are enclosed by trees and butterflies....and people will like it....there won't be any newspaper stories about kids drowning in the pond' (Project planner).

'In 2 years time to see the fences come down....because they make it appear an unnatural environment....to see the trees mature enough and left well alone, to see a variety of birds there....to see no tipping on the site [as an] indication that people appreciate what its all about' (Neighbourhood officer).

Additional evidence was sought by one of the UWG representatives:

[AM - What would prove to the Parks Dept that this type of landscape is worth having?] 'The people using the site, the reaction from the schools, the low maintenance [requirements], the economics of it, using whips and so on' (UWG representative).



The answers to questions 20 and 17 (see Appendix B for full details) revealed a great deal of agreement as to the success that had already been achieved. There was unanimous agreement that the local people had begun to appreciate the site for what it was and that the site had indeed become very valuable to wildlife:

'....one of the really good things about the site is that there hasn't been any vandalism. The fences are still intact. The only thing that has been vandalised is the park bench that was put in by the Parks Dept....its sort of negative evidence that the trees are surviving and growing, that the grass is established, to see the wildflowers, butterflies, caterpillars....you can't pull out single things, you've got to create a whole' (UWG ecologist).

'....being on site, people would always come out and ask you what you were doing....and the contractor, well for the first 3 nights he took his battery off [the JCB], but didn't bother after that because the place had been taken care of by the folk living around it' (Landscape consultant).

'....the rate of vandalism, and the success rate of the trees is very high compared to other sites, and the Parks Dept have now agreed with us that this is the best way of doing it and they are doing it, mainly on sites which we are co-ordinating....but they are happily adopting the methods....so that's definitely been successful' (Project planner).

The teachers from both schools were convinced that there had been an effect on their children:

'Change has occurred because they [school children] mention things they've noticed and observed when they're taken to the park to play rounders' (Teacher).

'....where we've taken our children to Sutton Park, they can recognise trees....and they can see the enjoyment of going into a natural habitat and I hope I've tried to get it across to them what the future may hold for them, if they look after it [ie Leckie Rd]' (Teacher).

The landscape consultant and the UWG representatives added further detail to the general points made above:

'....the new techniques, of planting smaller trees, mulching etc....have been picked up by the Parks Dept,

which is something we were aiming at, another was to show that we could combine different work forces successfully, we didn't have to have either exclusively volunteer projects or exclusively contracts or exclusively Parks.... the feedback from students of mine who work there is that it's the most significant thing that's happened to the landscape of Walsall for a long time and that they are all told to take that as an example and apply it elsewhere' (Landscape consultant).

From a more personal perspective, the comments on any sense of satisfaction, or feelings of success included the following:

'The most enjoyable parts were taking the kids out....that Saturday workday was one of the most enjoyable things because it was completely voluntary, you know lots of kids stayed there quite a few hours working dam hard, lugging bags of mulch....to think that so few trees have been vandalised gives you a sense of satisfaction, like you've actually achieved something....its the practical work that has been most fulfilling, giving chats to schools is OK but you don't get any feedback, like you do when you take people on site and let them get their hands dirty' (UWG ecologist).

'Seeing all the plants intact, the new leaves appearing and everything growing, and the support and involvement of the people in the area, is intrinsically satisfying' (Neighbourhood officer).

'I think the enjoyment is that someone like the neighbourhood officer is really keen and interested, to see it work, and enthusiastic. And the same with the schools, when I phoned them up they said 'Oh we're so glad you've got in touch, that something is going to start happening, we're sorry to see it look so awful [this was following the period when UWG lost its MSC team], we've got this project we want to use the site for', that makes it very worthwhile' (UWG landscape architect).

'Tremendous sense of satisfaction in that the Parks Dept are impressed with it, and that they want to do more of it, great satisfaction in things like the predicted low level of vandalism....where we've been able to work directly with officers at the lower level its worked well, I mean the task force worked brilliantly....the lads on the youth training scheme learnt quite a lot of skills, the supervisor was enthusiastic, the area supervisor was chuffed - reckoned it was the best job they'd done, and they all felt they were contributing something. All that was done with sketches on small bits of paper and me nipping up in my lunch hour, which suited them and me' (Landscape consultant).



The main technical problems associated with the project related to the pond and the meadow. The neighbourhood officer and the consultant both found it difficult to convince local people that a pond would be of great value to them and wildlife. The major concern was one of safety. A compromise was arrived at whereby the pond liner was laid in a very shallow trough and capped with soil so that a marsh rather than an area of open water would develop. However, in the event, the feature turned into a pond; with water present all year round. One of the teachers commented that the 'furore' over the pond seemed to have died down, which she thought was because nobody had drowned to date and because people were beginning to get used to it.

Comments on the meadow included the following:

'We've had the technical or natural problem of the grass not growing on the main area, and it was important because of the scepticism to get it at least looking reasonably green because of the visual effect....the sceptics have come along and said 'Hmm it looks a right mess, is this what you mean by all this urban wildlife stuff, it just looks muddy'.... well we're hoping to put that right....we've got £6,000 at our disposal to use' (Neighbourhood officer).

'The disappointment has been with the grass, partly through bad luck, in that we had 2 months of rainfall immediately after both lots of sowing, and partly because I think the sub-base is stonier than I expected it to be, which was also aggravated by the soil being washed off' (Landscape consultant).

Tipping was raised as an issues by the neighbourhood officer:

'[There has been some] incidental tipping and other more systematic tipping. We can't overcome the psychology of tipping. Its obviously [done] overnight, and its a British malaise anyway. We keep tidying it up and it seems that people in the area at least, are getting the message because we get less and less rubbish there' (Neighbourhood officer).

The problems experienced by the consultant and the other representatives of UWG were both external and internal. The

ecologist who dealt with the schools commented that:

'I was rather frustrated, because it did seem that they [the teachers] didn't really want that much from us, although they were extremely helpful....they were keen to use the site it was just that they'd been saturated with teachers packs and leaflets....I remember one woman saying that they'd got one of these teacher resource centres and they didn't want any more information. Perhaps more personal contact with the schools would be appreciated, taking groups out' (UWG ecologist).

The consultant experienced frustrations too:

'The problems over the grass were aggravated also because of Walsall and their administration. It's incredibly complicated to get them to approve purchase of additional materials, which there is no reason for other than that they are disorganised. We've gone through all the processes and sent them all the proformas and names of suppliers, which all worked very well the first time round, but re-ordering seed for instance, just took forever....I think it was a change in politics....after March [1982] there was a change of power and there wasn't the same political momentum, no deadline, so the urgency was removed, and things just got lost in the system....its a dilemma because had we been working with an orthodox system we would never have got the thing in the first place, but then having fitted into an unorthodox system you fall flat on your face if its put under any pressure, as happened when the neighbourhood office was under threat of closure in the critical 6 months after the project [which resulted in] very low morale, and the project progressed in fits and bursts....we tried to get a couple of MSC appointees through Walsall, but that failed because of political changes' (landscape consultant).

He cited another problem:

'It needs the Park Dept followed up and badgered to do what we want, and I'm quite sure they would do that, but the difficulty is the political one that I've not been asked to do that by Walsall, they've not responded to my suggestion, [but] you can't just make an appointment to discuss the management of housing land with the Parks Dept, on behalf of the Housing Dept, unless Housing ask you to....and that's despite the fact that they've had reports on what's needed....its down to the great confusion [that exists] between departments....and disorganisation....the fact that their system means that it takes 6 months for them to pay fee accounts tends to mean that you do not over enthusiastically commit yourself to something....like



providing them with all of the gear never to need to employ a consultant for this sort of work ever again....the Parks Dept are not developing it. Okay they may be able to repeat the performance so far, by carefully reading what I've written, but they haven't thought it through from first principles, therefore they won't know what to do with it next, when it gets 3 years old unless I've done it at Leckie Rd the year before them. It would be good to formalise the educational side....either with me....or UWG....to call back after 3 years or on one day a year to discuss their reactions to the project and its development....as has been done with a number of local authorities such as Lewisham where I've worked on similar projects' (Landscape consultant).

For the UWG staff involved in the project in the first year, there appeared to be no internal problems, but for the landscape architect who took over in the second year, there were:

'I'm in a very difficult position....I only want to do what the neighbourhood officer wants to have, because I think we have got that obligation, but on the other hand I can't say we'll get some top soil [re the solution to the grass problem] in the next week in case the consultant turns round and says 'Look I don't want this happening, why haven't I been consulted'. I don't know what the consultant's obligations were and what we've still got to fulfill....there are so many people with fingers in the pie....it's difficult getting hold of the consultant....I just wish either he would do all the decision making or turn it over completely to me to get on with' (UWG landscape architect).

Some of these issues were also picked up by other members of the management group in responses to the question 'What role do you think UWG ought to have played?':

'I think they've done what they set out to do, but it's continuing it that's going to be the problem, to keep the interest going, but I think they're doing very well' (Teacher).

'I'm pleasantly surprised with what they've done, because I think our immediate reaction when we heard about this, 'Oh it'll never work in this area, you know everything that's tried just gets pulled up or destroyed'. Well I mean somehow they've done it' (Teacher).

'I think, given the resources that they had at their disposal, they probably have done as much as they possibly could do, and in any event, I'm not sure whether we would want them to do that much or take it over completely, because that would obviously prevent the local people being involved. There was a period several months ago

when the site wasn't looking particularly good at all.... UWG probably hadn't appreciated the need to sustain the involvement....to keep the site tidy, because it was such a new approach, we had to be on the spot all the time because the sceptics were out to try to stop it anyway' (Neighbourhood officer).

'We got the community involvement, we got the on-site supervision role, we got the site work done....what we didn't get was as instant a result as we would have liked, although we recognised, unlike some people, that it wouldn't look pretty after 6 months, and in fact I'm personally fairly happy with it as it looks now, although the neighbourhood officer is disappointed because he's still got people on his back....the major thing we haven't got is the detailed specification, the blueprint we could use anywhere else. Now at the time we realised we would never get that before the scheme started, but we would have expected to have had it by now, bearing in mind that the cost of the design was quite expensive, indeed the cost of the whole project would have been expensive, if we hadn't used MSC staff from UWG and our own task force....whereas one of the arguments UWG make consistently, and I think with some merit is that this sort of landscaping is cheaper than conventional landscaping.....At the end of the day I think we'll have a better landscape out of it' (Project planner).

As had already been stated above, the consultant, whose responsibility it was to provide that blueprint, had experienced administration difficulties with the council, which he underlined by saying:

'....pay for one bill was 11 months [in arrears], that was 5 or 6 letters, none of which they said they could find, and you begin to think what's the point in producing the report anyway if its not going to get through to the target' (Landscape consultant).

He also added that:

'I wish we had managed to do more in the way of seminars and training sessions for professionals....that's a crucially important part of what UWG need to be doing, because the only other alternative is to build and build the size of UWG, which is a nonsense because the people who pay the rates should in my opinion, be benefiting from a comprehensive range of services'.

There seemed to be general agreement that UWG's future role in the project would be to continue to work with the schools and to provide ad hoc advice to the local authority on the management of the landscape:



'I think in terms of continuing involvement, we would see it as fairly low key, mainly advice, participation in the relationship with the schools, participating in the occasional work day on the site, and for that, we would probably expect to make them a grant of say £500 per year....although in the back of our minds we will always have the fact that they are paid by MSC anyway and that to some extent they should be able to do it without being paid by us, but a modest grant enables them to do a better job here or elsewhere' (Project planner).

'I think where their great strength is, is with the schools, tying in the work they are doing with them to the curriculum and making the site a living project, working with them closely. We're hoping to overcome the problem of the need for constant maintenance and supervision of the site....by hiring a full time warden and 2 part time workers on a community programme scheme....[to meet the need] which I don't think UWG can sustain because of a lack of manpower basically' (Neighbourhood officer).

The issue of management as opposed to maintenance, was taken up by the area planner:

'I don't think UWG should necessarily take on the responsibility for management, under the circumstances it has to be, simply because Recreation is still not geared up enough to actually do the details of the management on the ground that that really requires' (area planner).

The response from the consultant to my question 'Is there any deadline for the end of UWG involvement?' was:

'No, there never has been except that what we have been doing is building up, if you like, local sustenance by involving the schools and feeding back to the Housing Dept. The intention is that the site should become a site which sustains itself through local interest, it isn't an Urban Wildlife Group project. I've got a continuing interest in it, in that it's only just up the road....that's inevitable with this sort of pioneering. What you have to do is to make sure that the next project is done by someone who has been stimulated by seeing this....There is a need to constantly re-stimulate the schools' interest, so that it doesn't become 'Well we'll go and have another look at it'...Walsall's re-commissioning of UWG to do other sites is an indication that we've got them to think differently about the use of land, but the problem with all of these things and here, is the one of sustaining momentum and I think we've been very fortunate in having the neighbourhood officer' (Landscape consultant).

The comments of the neighbourhood officer verified this:

'Unless there is some sort of sustained commitment by the people such as ourselves, it won't last that long and it won't end up as what we want it to. That's why the schools involvement is important because that will be a permanent sort of feature and hopefully the teachers will be able to exert the pressure if, say the people in this office who are committed to the project go, to be able to organise themselves, with the help of the warden....its early days yet but we've got to take that risk' (Neighbourhood officer).

Although the neighbourhood officer was keen to employ wardens, UWG's views were rather different in that the representatives could not see that there would be enough work on the site to sustain 2 part-timers, unless they were also employed on other sites in the area. The need and value of getting the Parks Dept to ensure that the grass was cut once or twice a year was seen as an important educational objective. The only other job, given that the landscape had been designed to require low maintenance, was to allow one man day per year to spot-treat any noxious weeds. It was felt that the local community would warden it in the sense of keeping an eye on it.

#### 6.5.2. The Views of the Local Community

Unlike Plants Brook, this site is highly visible to the community. Apart from the people who live immediately around it, it can be seen from Stafford St, which is a main route into the town centre, and from Proffitt St which is also a bus route. Anybody visiting the neighbourhood office, on Proffitt St, to pay their rent etc would see the site, and before the road closure, Leckie Rd appeared from the observation studies to be a motorists' shortcut through the area just north east of the town centre. Although there were few newspaper articles about the project, the school children that had been involved in practical work on the site, ought to have told their parents about it. The neighbourhood officers promoted



discussion with their clients, leaflets were distributed and plans were put up explaining the scheme prior to the public meeting.

Despite all this, only 23% of the visitors had seen any publicity about the site in the 12 months before the survey (15% had seen a newspaper article, and 8% a leaflet or poster). Some 36% had come across the site by chance, 33% said that they had always known about it (this included people whose homes overlooked the site), 10% heard about it from the workmen on the site, and another 8% had heard about it from another person.

So, knowledge about the site, at least amongst the adult community, might be considered to have been rather lower than the management group might have expected.

Table 26 Who should be responsible for looking after the site

Body with responsibility	%
Council	56
Don't know	18
Local adult community	15
Unemployed youths	5
Missing values	5
N = 39 responses from 37 respondents (+ 2 missing values)	

The majority of respondents felt that the site should be cared for by the council (Table 26) and there was no indication that an outside agency such as a conservation group should take on the responsibility.

The vast majority of visitors (85%) had noticed changes taking place on the site within the previous 12 months (as shown in Table 27).

Table 27 Changes to the site noted by visitors between  
October 1982 and October 1983

Changes noted by visitors	%
New hard landscaping	21
General improvement	17
People working on site	14
New soft landscaping	12
More litter/dumping	7
More wildlife	7
Trees had grown	5
Misc:	17
Improved access	
Improvement to houses	
Different birds coming	
Pond getting bigger	
Longer weeds	
No work done recently	
General deterioration	

N = 42 responses from 37 respondents (+ 2 missing values)

Although 17% felt that there had been a general improvement and that the wildlife value of the site was developing, some obviously thought that the site was not being cared for enough. There is also some indication that one of the respondent's perception of the subject was the housing area rather than the open space (a confusion that is easily made if the name of a road or area is used in the name of a site).

The views expressed about Leckie Rd can be put into a context of the local community's general preferences for open space. Everybody answered Question 13 which was, 'If you had an hour or so to spare and felt like a breath of fresh air, where would you be most likely to go?' and the results are presented in Table 28. These figures suggest a heavy preference for formal open spaces, by far the most popular place being the Arboretum, followed by Reedswood Park. Very few other open spaces were mentioned in this category.

In contrast, the range of informal spaces mentioned was much wider. Those within walking distance included Leckie Rd, the disused railway line, the canal and the 'Tarze' (a rope swing



erected on a tree on the railway embankment). We also know from the teachers at both schools that the children frequently use a place they call the 'Yellow Mess', which is a sandy slope at the back of the local cemetery, again on an embankment by the railway. Places further afield but still within the urban and urban fringe area, included Cannock Chase, Barr Beacon, Park Lime Pits, Sandwell Valley and Sutton Park (all of which are managed for recreation).

Table 28 People's general preferences for open space

Preferred open space	%
Formal open spaces	52 (Arboretum 35% - $\frac{1}{2}$ m away)
Informal open spaces	24 (Leckie Rd 10%)
Built facilities	10 (Town centre 5%)
Nowhere	6
Friends/relatives	3
Garden	3
No open spaces to go to	1
Youth club	1

N = 122 responses from 81 respondents.

A total of 69 respondents gave reasons why they were attracted to the places they mentioned. Interviewers avoided asking those who mentioned Leckie Rd as a preferred place, which would account for a further 6 people, leaving 6 missing values. The responses are presented in Table 29.

I have included all the miscellaneous answers in here because I think they reveal some interesting differences with those from the other two case studies. The preference of formal open spaces is emphasised by the attraction of the formal facilities such as children's play grounds, sports pitches,

seating, formal landscape features such as flower beds, patrols, cleanliness and maintenance.

Interestingly enough, for a community of mainly low income families for whom mobility might be presumed to be much reduced (81% of the respondents travelled to their preferred places on foot), 'convenience' rated much lower as an

Table 29 What people found attractive about their preferred open spaces

Attractions	%
Formal facilities for children	12
Sports facilities	8
Water	7
Good for walking	7
Pleasant	6
Open space	5
Peace and quiet	4
Scenery	4
Formal lawns and flower beds	4
Wildlife/nature	3
Fresh air	3
Trees and vegetation	3
Watching sports	3
Shops	3
Misc:	28
Convenient	
Good for play	
Formal facilities	
Lots to do/see	
Good seating	
Naturalness/countryside feel	
Meeting place	
Well maintained	
Nothing in particular	
Relaxing	
Clean	
Uncrowded	
Good for picnics	
Not too many children	
Habit	
Size	
Well patrolled	
Can read there	
Gardening	

N = 189 responses from 69 respondents (+ 12 missing values)



attraction, than was the case for Plants Brook. However, the majority of the formal open spaces and indeed the shops in the town centre, were all within easy walking distance of the area. For those without transport, the choices would appear to be limited to just a few places, but the quality of these places in terms of the landscape and facilities they provide is appreciated. For those with their own transport, the choice is extended and the results would suggest that these people tend to favour rather more informal open spaces. There would seem to be a demand for informal landscapes, a demand which needs to be satisfied at the local level for those without mobility.

The observation data however (as shown in Table 24) reveals that, Leckie Rd was not fulfilling this demand for adults, even by the third summer after establishment. Indeed the percentage of people observed to be through-routing appears to have increased, and the percentage of people deemed to be out walking for its own sake actually decreased. The use by children for informal play had increased from 1984 to 1985, but only slightly (estimated as 2%). Further observations will be needed to assess whether or not, as the landscape becomes more mature, it attracts adults, in particular, to enjoy the scenery, the peace and quiet and the naturalness that will be on offer.

## 6.6. Conclusions

The objective of establishing a radical landscape at Leckie Rd had been achieved. The woodland planting had established well and had suffered negligible vandalism. The grass cover in the meadow which was still giving cause for concern at the time of the interviews, but has since closed sward and is now comfortable to sit on. The MSC workers from the community centre erected a picnic table, benches and a stone sign on the site, and have carried out regular litter picks. The tall fencing around the woodland blocks has been replaced with short bollards and the stiles remain as secondary benches.

However, despite the success of this aspect of the project, there is little evidence to suggest that Walsall Council, and the Parks Department in particular, have taken up the design approach on other sites elsewhere in the borough. This became apparent when the opportunity came for the Parks Department to show that they had accepted the ideas as part of the re-instatement of the land that was disturbed after the tarmac had been removed from Farm St and Cannon St North. The landscape architect used top soil, which UWG had proved to be an unnecessary expense, in which to plant the young trees. This encouraged the growth of vigorous weed species which as a consequence reduced the rate of growth of the trees. This occurred despite intervention from UWG.

As far as I am aware, the landscape consultant never produced the blue print for establishing this type of nature-like landscape, nor was he ever invited to give a presentation to the officers and councillors of the Parks Department about the approach. UWG now deal directly with the supervisor of the Community Programme scheme based at the local community centre, who in turn deals with the landscape supervisor from the Parks Department, who is responsible for ensuring that the meadow is cut on a regular basis. UWG undertook to train the pairs of community workers who have been responsible for the site's management, in skills such as coppicing, planting and the timing of meadow cuts. The Group has also given presentations to the local community forum on the development of the site and its value to wildlife.

The Community Programme scheme at the community centre will continue to provide part-time wardens for the site, and the present neighbourhood officer is hoping to set up a management group with interested members of the community to take on more of the responsibility. Leckie Rd is frequently discussed at the local forum meetings and she also hopes to promote the development of the railway line to the north of the site using the same design approach, if the planning appeal to tip waste into the line, is dismissed.

The onus therefore seems to remain with the Neighbourhood



Office to provide the necessary community involvement skills, and not with the officers of the Parks Department who are normally responsible for the development and management of open space within the borough. The present landscape manager at UWG recognises this as a failure, in that the Group has perhaps not promoted the success of the scheme to the Parks Department. It may be that, with the support of the Neighbourhood Office, this can be rectified if UWG can provide some input into the design of the scheme for the railway line. If, this is not done, or if, when it is done, there is still no apparent change, the only option for UWG would be to initiate more site projects like this, themselves, with interested community groups.

The schools continue to visit twice a term, and this has been the other most significant benefit of the project. Whilst it may have been difficult to change the attitudes of the adult population, there is no doubt that the children have been influenced. The level of vandalism is apparently still very low, when compared to the normal levels experienced on traditional landscape schemes. And, one school even raised money to get a plaque engraved for one of the benches.

The questionnaire survey revealed that there was a greater sense of apathy about this site than at the others and that the general feeling was that the site was not particularly attractive. This is confirmed by the observation studies which showed that few people, other than children, actually ventured into the new landscape. Having said that it should be remembered that several hundred school children have been involved in the creation of the site and are using it for environmental studies.

The few people who found the site to be attractive, liked it for the same reasons that people liked Plants Brook and Woodgate Valley (see next chapter) namely the natural features of the site; scenery, wildlife and the pond.

The respondents were able to make fairly specific suggestions

as to the type of changes they felt would make the site more attractive, and these focused on the problems to do with the pond.

Today in 1987, all the proposals have been fully implemented and the landscape has matured to the extent that it now looks as it was intended. Now would be an appropriate time to carry out a further set of observation studies and a questionnaire survey to gauge whether the views of the local people have changed and whether they are making more use of the central part of the site (around the pond and the picnic table).

The strategy, employed in this project, has allowed UWG to reduce its input to a minimum; the landscape manager makes 6 visits to the site per year to provide the community workers with advice. The schools are also able to use the site without the support of the Group. Community involvement in the decision making process is maintained through the initiative of the Neighbourhood Office, who organise the local forum meetings, out of which it is hoped that a formal management committee for the site will emerge.



### 7.1. The Project and its Context

Woodgate Valley is a 400 acre site, owned by Birmingham City Council. It is located to the wsw of the city (OS reference SP 0083), 3 miles from the centre. The Bourn Brook which rises to the west of the valley, flows eastwards towards the city centre, eventually merging with the River Rea. The valley thus forms part of a much longer green corridor which extends into the heart of the city. To the west of the valley lies open countryside. Please see Figs 10 and 11 for more detail.

North and south of the valley are estates of low and high rise dwellings built in the interwar period and the 1960s, serving an estimated population of some 9,000 people. The City Council's Housing Committee considered it essential to maintain the open space, to act as a buffer (between the housing estates and the Quinton Expressway and M5 beyond) and to provide recreational opportunities for the new population.

The valley is characterised by a number of different habitats; grassland, wetland, hedgerows, some young woodland, and the brook (see Plates 6 and 7).

In 1979, the Leisure Services Committee asked the landscape architects in the Architects Department, to draw up a scheme for a country park on land to the east of the valley. The landscape architects were advised that a local community group, EPAG (Environmental Preservation Action Group), had submitted proposals to establish a city farm on part of the valley, which would need following up.

As the largest remaining area of open land in Birmingham, the site had attracted the interest of Birmingham's Planning Department and Economic Development Committee, as a potential site for industrial development. When the County Council's structure plan was released for public consultation in 1980, two parts of the valley (see sites A and B on Fig 11) had been

Fig 10 Map of Woodgate Valley Park (Scale 1:5000)

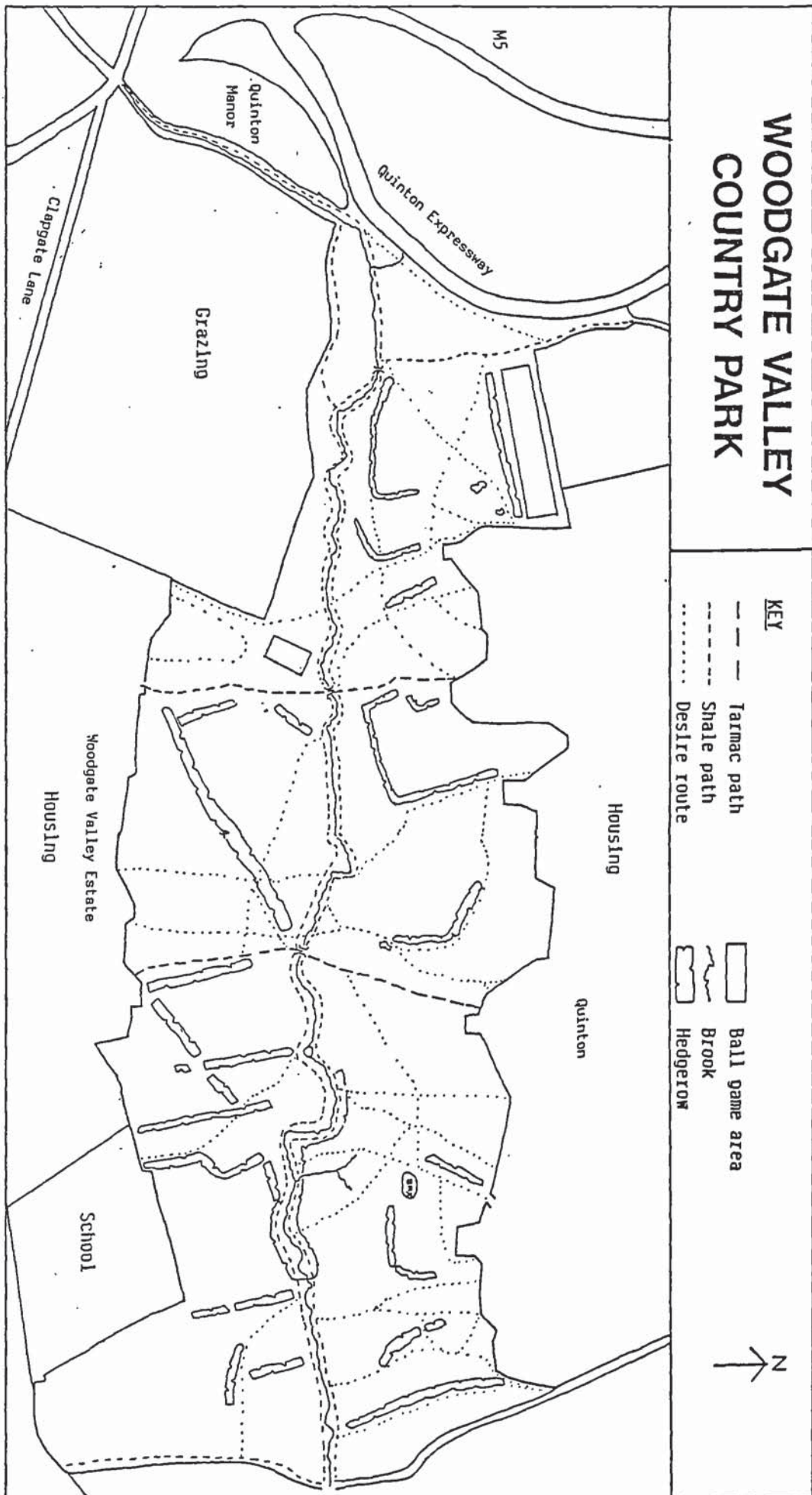






Illustration removed for copyright restrictions

Plate 6

Woodgate Valley  
(1985)



Plate 7 Woodgate Valley - meadow (1985)



zoned for this purpose.

Initial objections to the country park proposal (as drawn up by the City Architects Dept), that it would attract too many people and destroy the essential character of the valley through the destruction of wildlife habitat were overcome. However, concern amongst the community steadily increased about the effect of the specific proposals to develop sites A and B. Please refer to the brief site history (Appendix G) for further details.

UWG were called in to give advice in the October of 1982, when the community were faced with having to reverse the proposals of both the city council and the county council for the industrial development and the link road.

## 7.2. Operational Objectives for the Project

UWG's strategy for coping with this type of project was:

To mobilise the community to save a threatened wildlife area by helping them construct and defend their case to Public Enquiry level, if necessary.

This type of project generally fell to the planners at UWG, as the issues involved, related to conflicting demands on land use, and use and abuse of the statutory planning system.

Fifteen people were interviewed, the majority of whom sat on the 'Keep Woodgate Valley Green Action Group'; 9 members of community groups, 3 local councillors, 2 council landscape architects and UWG's planner. The objectives for the campaign can be looked at separately to the objectives for the country park (the number of people who mentioned each objective is given in brackets).

The objectives for the campaign were:

- To ensure that all the valley was made into a country park (4)
- To get the county council to re-zone sites A & B as open space (3)
- To preserve the valley in its natural state (3)
- To stop development of the link road (1)
- To get the county council to zone it as inalienable land (not just green belt) (1)
- To get the city council to commit itself to the development of the whole valley as a country park (1)
- To increase the awareness of the local people about the threat and encourage them to be involved in the campaign (1)
- To influence the politicians re UWG's aims (1)

The objectives for the country park as it would be developed were:

- To retain the natural character/habitats (8)
- To create sports pitches (6)
- To build a leisure centre (on the edge of the valley) (6)
- To employ a warden (6)
- To enhance the opportunities for walking with a good path system (5)
- To create picnic areas (4)
- To create a lake (for wildfowl) (3)
- To increase the numbers of trees and shrubs (3)
- To involve the community, especially the children, in the practical work and in learning about the valley (3)
- To establish a city farm (3)
- To overcome problems such as motorbiking and vandalism (3)
- To build an interpretation centre (2)
- To provide toilets (2)
- To provide a car park (2)
- To provide a guide book/information leaflets for visitors (2)
- To provide a scrambling area (1)
- To direct bridle paths away from main paths (1)
- To support horse riding (1)
- To encourage children to play there (1)
- To keep it just for local people (1)

Unlike the other two case studies, the interviewees from this project did identify differences between their own aims and the aims of the others. It was felt that UWG were solely interested in keeping the valley as natural as possible, whereas the community representatives wanted to see some development of formal recreational facilities, at least on the edges of the valley. There was general agreement that the area lacked recreational facilities.



UWG felt that the community did not appreciate the benefits that would accrue to them and other members of the community from being involved in such a campaign, vis a vis increasing awareness of environmental issues, and the potential for bringing influence to bear on the politicians, by using this campaign as a test case for the wider issues that UWG was concerned with.

The only difference identified by the community representatives, from people within their own constituency, was the type of formal facilities that should be allowed. Whilst most of them felt there was a genuine need for sports pitches and a leisure centre, some did not want to see ice cream carts, or too much disturbance being caused to those who wanted to enjoy the natural character of the main part of the park.

As far as rank ordering the objectives was concerned, there was unanimous agreement that it was essential to stop the proposed developments on sites A and B. Thereafter, for the development of the country park (which might or might not include sites A & B), most people felt that priority should be given to employing a warden (some people felt that it would need more than one warden).

The representatives from the community groups felt that the campaign to stop the development had taken longer than they had anticipated. In the event it had taken only 9 months from the appearance of the newspaper article to the decision of the County Council the following November, although approval from the Secretary of State was not expected until September 1983. With respect to the development of the country park (wardens, planting etc) estimates ranged from 2-5 years. Estimates on how long it would take to get the City Council to zone the sites in with the country park (and thus make it inalienable) varied, not least because it was felt that the city council would not start those negotiations before the decision of the Secretary of State had been received. The UWG planner estimated that this objective might take perhaps 2 years to achieve.

However, two of the community representatives commented that they didn't think they would ever be able to say that the objectives had been achieved:

'I don't honestly think I will ever rest to say we have won....because you see you get very sceptical....you get a letter one day and you think 'Oh great' and then a couple of days later you see something in the paper and it knocks you flat....we are really taking everything with a pinch of salt' (Local resident).

### 7.3. Operational Objectives for Community Involvement

UWG'S planner was quite clear on why the community should be involved in this campaign:

'....it's vital that the community are the mouthpiece.... we were simply a catalyst and something to heighten the impact....campaigning and planning are complex things and you can't expect the average person to make the right decisions on how a campaign should be proceeding, who they should tell, what the objections should be, so its vital that we [UWG] should [also] be there'.

From the perspective of one of the community representatives, who had a professional rather than lay role, there was a definite need for community involvement because:

'There was a gap....for someone who did not have a political axe to grind....to say look this has to be done, we need this, will you do it?....we felt it was important that local people understood what they had got in their midst [ie the valley] and that because it was a part of where they lived that they had a responsibility for it, they should be involved in its protection, use and government of it. By using that particular area as a sort of catalyst, you could educate them into seeing that they have responsibilities in other ways, so that you could say 'Well we don't want rubbish in the valley' and they say 'Oh no it would spoil the view from my window', you can then say 'Well why is it that you allow rubbish to be dumped down the shopping centre'.... in a sense it's an endeavour to bring the community together using one issue as a focal point'.



This view was supported by some of the local residents:

'....if I was going to work on a bus and say I saw a tree knocked down, having been involved in this, I'd have thought 'Not going to get away with that'....you'd phone up and say something, whereas before because I didn't know much I might just have thought 'What a shame'.

The landscape architects took a pragmatic view:

'Because it was so close to the housing areas....we knew everybody used it already and had had a free reign over it for a long time....so we always thought, professionally, that we would have to seek the opinions of all the people that lived around there. We also knew from the past that there are invariably odd petitions and requests for formal facilities like kickabouts and play areas and it would be sensible to identify pieces of land on the edge of the park that could absorb that element'.

One of the local residents took a pragmatic view based on economic reasons:

'If the council had brought in those people closest to the community's feelings, people from the representative bodies, to talk to them, in the initial stages....find out their feelings, and based on that, broadened it out, it would have been a good idea and saved lots of money'.

Money was also an important factor for one of the councillors:

'Now you can't afford to spend money on projects if the community are not going to take part in it, so I think you've got to make absolutely sure that the community are going to respect it and help, and this is where the Urban Wildlife Group come in by getting the community to put something in themselves'.

And finally, a retrospective comment of one of the local resident's emphasised a third objective:

'If've you've been involved, you realise how much you've left for other people to decide in the past'.

Taken together the objectives outlined by the people involved in this campaign exactly match those expressed by the people involved in Plants Brook. So to summarise, the objectives for community involvement were:

- 1 To enable local people to have a say in what happens to a site.
- 2 To provide an opportunity for people to physically care for a site and through that learn more about it and to respect it.
- 3 To reduce the costs of such projects to the general public (including the wastage of public money expended in the public meetings and the cost of vandalism).

It is also worth noting that the UWG planner (who was also involved in Plants Brook) and another professional based within the Woodgate community, expressed a further, more general objective to use the projects as a catalyst to bring communities together and raise the level of awareness amongst them about a whole range of community issues, not just environmental ones.



Plate 8 Woodgate Valley - view north from the Bourn Brook



## 7.4. Implementation - Monitoring the Delivery System

### 7.4.1. The Views of the Interested Parties

UWG were in fact one of the last organisations to get involved with the campaign to save sites A & B from development, and to contribute to the development of the country park. However, it is felt appropriate that aspects of the implementation of the project that occurred prior to October 1982 are included in this section, not least because the landscape architects were committed to community involvement and the community themselves had already played a significant role in events to that date.

The initiative to keep the valley for open space seems to have come from the City Council's Housing Committee, when the new council housing estates were being planned in the 1960s. Although I was unable to find copies of the original plans for developing the valley from that time, information from the landscape architects, one of the councillors and two of the local residents, was that the plans included a boating lake and a golf course. This suggests that the natural character of the valley would have been affected, and public access would have been limited to the part excluding the land taken up by the golf course.

The next event that occurred was that, in 1977, local residents from the private estate to the east of the valley, placed objections to proposals to build a borstal on land close to Bartley Green Girls School. These residents formed themselves into the Environmental Preservation Action Group and rather than just object to the proposals, they took a positive step in suggesting an alternative development for the land, as a city farm.

The proposal for a borstal was dropped. EPAG became the City Farm Trust (CFT) and began negotiations with the City Council's Amenities and Recreation Department to lease a portion of land in the valley for the farm. This was the point when the Leisure Services Committee handed over the farm

project to the landscape architects from the Architects Dept, to be followed up as part of a wider brief to draw up plans to develop the valley as a country park. Someone from within Amenities and Recreation had already corresponded with the Countryside Commission who had advised that the valley would be suitable for development as a country park. The Countryside Commission recommended that a warden be appointed, and that they would be prepared to help fund such a post.

CFT responded very positively to the country park proposals, and in effect represented the only channel of public consultation with the council at that stage.

The landscape architects, who had realised that the valley had some conservation value, contacted the Nature Conservancy in the May of 1980 to prepare an ecological survey of the habitats. This information was also needed to allow them to place any formal recreation facilities like play areas in the least valuable areas; least valuable to wildlife that is.

They were relying on being able to use people employed on the City Council's MSC teams. A master plan was submitted to Amenities and Recreation in the January of 1980, which included proposals to involve the local people in the subsequent phases of the project. Although the landscaping aspects were accepted, the community involvement proposals were rejected. However, the landscape architects continued to discuss the proposals for incorporating the city farm in the park and encouraging community involvement, anyway.

It is obvious from the comments of the landscape architects and some of the community representatives who were involved in the CFT, that the proposals to allocate part of the valley for industrial development were known at that time, in 1980. This would be at least 2 years before the newspaper article, that sparked-off the campaign, was published in April 1982:

'Well, unfortunately we knew a little bit about some industrial development that had got to be done....they mentioned 40 acres throughout, [which] didn't sound like a great deal....unfortunately the 40 acres increased....



We didn't object [to the original proposals], but we said we would like more details of the country park' (Local resident and former chair of one of the community groups).

By December 1980, the landscape architects had got an agreed scheme, which included the city farm. A work plan had been drawn up for implementation by the MSC team, and discussions had taken place with the Countryside Commission and the Forestry Commission as to what they would be willing to fund. A joint report of the City Architect and the Chief Officer from Amenities and Recreation was then drawn up to go for approval to the Leisure Services Committee. The report included the landscape architect's views of the impacts industrialisation would have on the country park.

'We were quite damning, actually' (Landscape architect).

Approval of the report was deferred until April 1981. Debate within Leisure Services Committee ensued in the interim. Councillors had visited the valley to assess the impact the proposals would have on the country park, and although several were prepared to vote against industrialisation, the decision was made to allow it to go ahead.

The way then seemed clear to go ahead with implementing the proposals for the country park. However, the unions would not approve the MSC scheme for the site and then the Planning Department determined that planning permission would be needed. The landscape architects did not receive proper advice but were requested to submit a formal planning application 'anyway'. Delays followed. They were advised to take out the proposal for the city farm, as that was thought to be controversial and would slow down approval for the rest of the plan. The other problem arose from the sheer size of the site and the number of people who would be affected by it. The cost of running the normal public participation exercise, to fulfill the statutory planning obligations was enormous. The Planning Department then resolved that it would be better to postpone a decision on the country park until the issue of the industrial development and the link road had been made

public. The suggestion was that one public meeting would be held to resolve both issues.

Further discussions took place between the Leisure Services Committee, officers of Amenities and Recreation, the landscape architects and the CFT, at which it became clear that the CFT were not primarily concerned to set up a farm, but rather to ensure that the valley was protected. Leisure Services subsequently decided that more of the local community groups should be called to the public meeting, so as to get a more representative sample of local views on the proposals.

This meeting was called at the Council House in July 1981, at which it was agreed that the CFT would act as the liason body for all the community groups in the area. Indeed the CFT expanded to take in representatives from other groups, particularly those to the south of the valley. They carried on negotiations with the landscape architects.

It would appear that the political argument within Leisure Services continued and that the union issue was not resolved.

The next significant event was the publication of a newspaper article the following April (1982) which sparked-off major concern amongst the residents of a relatively new estate, Quinton Manor, which was located directly adjacent to Site B. They formed a residents association in the August of 1982 and began to try to find out more information and make contact with other groups in the area.

The formal planning application for the link road, was submitted in the July, to which various of the community groups objected. The public meeting was then called to discuss proposals for both the country park and the link road.

'We set about getting a large turn out....we gave everybody detailed information about it and a great deal of publicity went into getting people at that public meeting...the city council reported an attendance of 450, in our count that we took it was closer to 600.... The way the public meeting title was worded was 'Country park/link road' (Community group leader).



The people approved the plans for the country park, but objected to the link road proposals, claiming not to have been given any information in previous negotiations with the City Council about the valley.

'It was made very clear from the off-set that everybody felt that the country park plan was satisfactory. As a consequence, very early in the meeting it was motioned that no further discussion should take place on the country park.... The meeting then progressed onto what was the industrial development/link road site and at every stage of the meeting the city officials tried to steer away from the industrial development, and just tie the link road in with the old Birmetals site. Well the meeting would just not allow that to happen, and time and time again opposition was motioned' (Community group leader).

The council agreed to postpone their decision on the link road.

'The feeling of the meeting was that the city officials and I stress the officials, not the councillors, were very badly informed in terms of the detail....they couldn't cost any of the projects, they couldn't give details of engineering structures, nor on the line of the road, basically there wasn't the material there available to make a decision' (Leader of a community group).

The Quinton Manor group then organised an informal meeting for all the groups that had been present at the October public meeting. UWG were contacted by 2 independent sources to attend this meeting. A letter from the Quinton Manor group to the Worcestershire Trust was passed onto UWG and a direct approach was made by a member of UWG who was also a member of the CFT. The landscape architects had previously invited UWG to visit the valley earlier in the summer of 1981, to assess the wildlife potential.

The UWG planner commented that:

'When we became involved, it seemed that there were 10 or 12 different groups, all saying their own thing, and so the first job I felt for UWG was to get everybody together, pool their ideas and their fears, and to form a single group which was the Keep Woodgate Valley Green Action Group [a name chosen by the local people]. it took several meetings to get that together and to decide

what campaign, what angle they were going to take, because there were quite a lot of people who were saying 'We don't want industry ,let's have a sports centre'.... and it was quite a careful argument to say to them 'Is this really what you want, if you're just going to be choosy between one type of development as against another, you are going to lose the battle. Surely what you should be saying, be bold, 'We want it green'. So there was quite a lot of time spent arguing with people before KWVGAG came together with the aim of keeping the valley green and getting it zoned as such in the structure plan, and made into a country park by the City Council'.

One of the community group leaders commented that:

'The city councillors who were at that meeting got very upset that we wanted to bypass the City Council [and concentrate on getting the County Council to change the structure plan], and as a result of that, almost immediately, we had a commitment from the City Council saying that they no longer needed the site for industry, and they published a newspaper article saying that KWVGAG had won and there was no need to continue the fight.... however, because of past history and the way we felt, we didn't quite think along the same lines....and with the help of UWG, who were now actively involved in the action group, we decided to take a number of courses of action. Firstly, to make people aware of the valley by getting together a publication which gave the history, geography and nature of the valley, and highlighted why the local community wanted it kept green, bearing in mind the commercial aspects. The second action was through the contacts UWG already had, make a direct approach to the leader of the County Council to invite him and others concerned in making the decision, to visit the valley. They accepted and suggested that they would like to hold another public meeting on the aspect of the industrial development and the link road' (Community group leader).

KWVGAG continued to meet on a very regular basis, once a fortnight, to pursue the campaign:

'The group followed through the campaign, based on our advice, advice from local councillors, thoughts from local people....they were a highly motivated committee, or elements within them were, and they were quite good on the publicity side, so they handled that. They handled informing local people about what was happening, but they left to us the task of actually formulating the argument and preparing the report that could show people's natural feeling....although the community did an awful lot to to get that information to us' (UWG planner).

'We agreed to the suggestion of another public meeting, and and set about once again trying to whip up the enthusiasm..



..we had quite a large publicity campaign, local radio and local papers, we tried television but the programme planning being as such, we were a little late.....we distributed 3,000 notices of the public meeting and we set about getting a petition outlining the opposition to the industrial development' (Community group leader).

Infact, representatives from the north side of the valley also distributed leaflets, which meant that, overall, 6,000 households received information.

Estimates vary, but the residents collected between 2,500 and 3,000 signatures for that petition. The public meeting was held in March, which I attended as a non-participant observer. There were between 450 and 500 people present, which was a surprise to the residents as they thought it would be difficult to motivate people to come to a second meeting, only 6 months after the first:

'The first thing we were shocked about was the common sense spoken by the county officials and the county councillors. The first thing they said was that it would be ridiculous to industrialise the valley with so much empty industrial land in Dudley, Oldbury and West Bromwich, and so many unused factory estates at Dudley and Frankley. They really opened up the meeting exactly the way the residents and the local community were feeling, so really it was a bit of an anti-climax. Having said that, what it degenerated into was a party political fight between the labour controlled County Council and the tory controlled City Council about who originally had put forward the idea for industrial development' (Community group leader).

At this point a local resident from the action group got up and said:

'This battle has been fought by the community, not the politicians. Lets bring this back to the community. I have not yet come across a politician who has not opposed industrialisation. Tonight should not be about recriminations, it should be about the future. We can save the valley for people in the future. I've worked with people from all political parties. Let's get the community involved in getting what we want. Have we come to hear about the valley, or to hear the councils mud slinging'.

A resolution was passed at the end of that meeting that the proposal to industrialise sites A & B and build the link road would be taken out of the structure plan, by a unanimous show of hands. The County Council agreed to take that resolution

to a meeting of the full council scheduled for 11th April. The County Council agreed with the resolution, and sent that to the Secretary of State for ratification.

In the meantime, the action group met with officials from the City Council:

'...we talked about the commitment to official wardening, the budget, the schedule of works, and to all these questions and a number more they had no answers. We found that the commitment as such was there by the people who had planned it, but there was no commitment in terms of money or personnel, so the fight then moved on to getting the country park completed' (Community worker).

This was the point that had been reached when I conducted the interviews.

This project involved tens of key people; city and county councillors (some of whom were sponsored by their local residents' association), the active members of several community groups, council officials, community workers, and UWG. The notion of a country park was initiated by the City Council, decisions on the plans had to be taken by the Leisure Services Committee, the proposals for industrialisation were written into the County Council's structure plan and the County Council were the authority responsible for highways; the whole project and campaign revolved around the actions of the councils. Councillors were involved, and had to be involved by the community, particularly through the campaign. What the community were not prepared for was the difficulty of gaining access to their councillors, and being able to respond to the countless changes in direction the City Council, in particular, appears to have taken from the late '70s to 1983.

Little wonder that the councillors believed that they had saved the valley for the community, and little wonder that the community felt that it had been saved more because of their own hard work. The UWG planner found himself planted well in the middle of this, and the landscape architects were only able to watch anxiously from the side lines, waiting for the campaign issues to be resolved.



There is no doubt that the labour councillors did not want to oppose the industrialisation, which is understandable at a time when unemployment had reached an all time high in the city, and any proposal to create jobs was considered to be a good thing:

'I contacted a couple of local labour councillors and it became apparent to me that they did not want to do a lot about it....I went along to the branch meeting and moved it [a resolution asking the branch to support the opposition of industrialisation' (Local resident, member of KWVGAG and labour party member).

However, a number of other labour councillors, and councillors from other parties did become involved with the community and indeed agreed to oppose the industrialisation proposals. The perception of the community was that:

'After the newspaper article appeared in April 1982, we did get a certain element of the council telling us minor detail about the proposals, which later proved to be wrong. At the time it was taken to be electioneering, because the local elections were coming up and also a by-election....Councillor X and Councillor Y are obviously very extreme opposites in political opinions, but I think in basic aims, they were very much alike, although they don't agree' (Community group leader).

'The councillors were a lot of help, but not in the initial stages. There were a lot of times we would ring one or two of them up and they would say 'Oh well I'll get back to you' and nothing happened for two or three weeks, and you'd have to ring again.... This doesn't sound very good, but there were one or two councillors who helped us, to show how good they were politically....as we got farther on, we were completely non-political, and it was a case of 'Now you don't want to listen to him, because he's not with you' and another one would say the same as if they were fighting each other. It wasn't until they really saw how motivated we were that they sort of jumped on the bandwagon, a lot of them, so many I can't remember half their names. Then once we'd really got the ball rolling they didn't like the way we were going, we were finding out things without telling them' (Local resident and member of resident's association).

The councillors commented that:

'It was not a political issue it was a community issue and as such this has been one of the things that impressed me so much that for the first time the community have felt

deeply enough about something to fight for it....I was involved with the local community because in effect I was fighting the council to preserve it....arguing against some of my colleagues on the Economic Development Committee....I think quite honestly that if the community had wanted factories I would still have opposed it, it isn't a case of I'm going with what the community want, it's thank God the community happen to think the same as I do' (City councillor).

'In 1977, as a local resident I wrote to the paper opposing the country park....what upset me was the fact that the politicians of the day did not tell the people that there were also going to be factories....[later] as an elected member I went back to the controlling group and said 'I will not have it'....I just carried on doing what I believed was right' (City councillor).

A labour city councillor who was a member of the Leisure Services Committee, and secretary to one of the local residents association, commented that, following the submission of the link road application, two of the Tories formed an alliance with other influential members on the committee to ensure that the vote came down against industrial development. In support of his community group, he had opposed the development proposals in 1980, yet in defiance of the policy of his own party's (who were the controlling group at the time).

A community group leader commented that:

'The problems came about because at certain times, I think the councillors had to abide by the wishes of their particular party'.

Much has already been said of the role of the community, with respect to informing the local residents through leaflets, petitions and media events, about the valley and the threat to it. A number of the people from the community groups I interviewed had also, independently of each other, in the early days, contacted the planning department to try to find out more details about the proposals and whether or not there were any local residents associations that they could get involved with. And for those with a political interest, much time was spent lobbying councillors. The other key role that the residents played was in putting across their views and the



views of the community they represented, at the public meetings. Certainly at the March '83 meeting, they handled this very efficiently, by preparing written statements beforehand, which were then delivered with great confidence at the meeting.

The chair, secretary and treasurer of the action group were all elected from within the community, so that UWG were able to:

'Contribute as a member of the action group....we were able to offer hope, enthusiasm and well informed advice' (UWG planner).

#### 7.4.2. The Views of the Local Community

The questionnaire survey was carried out, as for the other sites, in the October of 1983, some 18 months after the newspaper article appeared that sparked-off the whole campaign. The survey only covered issues relating to the site itself, rather than the campaign.

Some 73 people agreed to answer the questionnaire, of whom 70 (96%) knew the site. This is not suprising, given the size of the valley and the history of its use by local people; the Woodgate Valley report published by the action group includes several accounts of people who had visited the valley as children in the 1920s.

Of the 70 people who knew of the site, 59 (84%) had actually visited it. Of those, 44 had visited it on one or more occasions within the preceeding 12 months. The percentage of visitors is almost double those for Plants Brook and Leckie Rd. Furthermore, even though 30% of the visitors were over 60. There is a bias in the sample towards the older age groups, which is taken into account in the interpretation of the data.

Some 52% of all respondents were male, and 53% of all visitors were male, so we would have expected to have recorded approximately equal numbers of males and females in the observation study.

There was no difference in the numbers of people who knew the site, between those living in the near zone (A) and those living in the far zone (B), but whereas 97% of those living in zone A had also visited the site, only 65% of those in site B had visited it. Given that those in zone B still lived within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of the valley, the reduced percentage of visitors emphasises the essentially 'local' value of open spaces and calls into question the fact that local authority officers and councillors regard this as less of a priority than considerations relating to the 'wider community' or society as a whole.

The reasons given by those who had not visited the site are given below in Table 30.

Table 30 Reasons given for not having visited the valley, by those who knew of it

Reasons for not visiting	%
Infirmity	28
Not in an attractive state	17
No time	11
Not interested	11
Friends/relatives moved away	11
Preferred own garden	11
Misc:	11
Too far away	
Goes further afield	
Not got round to it	

N = 18 responses from 17 respondents, who identified 9 different reasons.

The high mention rate of infirmity corresponds to the high percentage of elderly people in the sample. The reason that friends/relatives had moved away could be interpreted as if someone had confused the mention of Woodgate Valley with the name of the council estate to the south of the valley, which



is also known as Woodgate. Alternatively, it may have referred to the fact that the valley is used as a through-route for people on foot, to get to the other estates.

The activities people used the valley for are given in Table 31.

Table 31 The activities engaged in by visitors at Woodgate Valley

Activities	%
Walk	38
Walk the dog	16
Through-route	14
Enjoy the scenery	11
Take the children to play	10
Misc:	11
Meet people	
Watch sport	
Enjoy peace and quiet	
Play	
Jog	
Nature watch	
Picnic	
N = 88 responses from 57 respondents (+ 2 missing values) who gave 12 different activities	

The emphasis in these answers indicates a preference for passive activities.

There was a large response to the question that asked people what they liked about the valley which is illustrated in Table 32.

These responses indicate that the natural elements of the valley are much appreciated. As shown in Table 33, the major things the visitors disliked about the valley were the rubbish, the motorbikers, the unkempt appearance and anti-social elements. The poor condition of the paths presented a practical problem, but a significant percentage did not dislike anything in particular.

Table 32 What visitors particularly liked about the valley

Likes	%
Naturalness/countryside feel	22
Open space	18
Trees, vegetation, flowers	14
Scenery	10
Wildlife/nature	7
Nothing	6
Layout	4
Good for children	4
Good for walking the dog	4
Misc:	11
Good for walking	
Through route	
Fresh air	
Meeting place	
Convenient	
Good for play	

N = 125 responses from 57 respondents (+ 2 missing values), who gave 16 different likes.

Table 33 What visitors disliked about the valley

Dislikes	%
Litter/rubbish	25
Nothing	22
Motorbikers	12
Unkempt appearance	9
Anti-social elements	7
Poor condition of paths	5
Vandalism	5
Misc:	15
Sense of personal insecurity	
Mown grass	
Road noise	
Poor accessibility	
Children causing a nuisance	
Poor layout	
Not much you could dislike	
Formal pathway	
No lighting	

N = 77 responses from 54 respondents (+5 missing values)



These results suggest that some people feel threatened by other users of the valley (the anti-social elements and the motorbikers) which is confirmed in the fact that the most popular change that could be made to make the place more attractive to them was a warden (see Table 34). Again, these results may be biased because of the large percentage of elderly people in the sample, but they are no less a user group whose needs should be considered, than adults or children.

Table 34 The changes that could be made to make the valley more attractive to visitors

Changes	%
Warden	20
No	13
Clean site up	13
Improve paths	10
Formal recreation facilities	10
No need for any changes	8
Children's play area	6
More trees & shrubs	3
Cut the grass	3
Control tipping	3
Misc:	11
Seats	
Toilets	
Organised events	
Build on it	
More flower beds, gardens	
Police patrol	
Get rid of motorbikers	
Picnic area	

N = 96 responses from 57 respondents (+ 2 missing values)

Some 48% of the visitors had seen a newspaper or magazine article about the valley in the preceeding 12 months, 15% had seen a leaflet or poster, 3% had heard a radio or television report, but only 32 % had neither heard nor seen some kind of publicity.

NOTE: The 2 missing values that are recorded on most of the tables relate to two people who should have answered the questions, but didn't because they did not feel able to as it was more than 5 years since their last visit.

#### 7.4.3. Observed Use of Woodgate Valley by the Local Community

The questionnaire results suggest that we should have expected to see significant numbers of walkers, dog walkers, children and motorbikers.

Over the 20 hours of observation from August 1983 - July 1984, 697 people were observed on the 5 minute sampling points. Of these 576 were observed on Sundays (12 hours) and 121 were observed on weekdays (8 hours). This gives an average through-put of 48 people per hour on Sundays and 15 people per hour on weekdays. It is difficult to estimate the true through-put, partly because the site is so large that it is never possible to see all of it from any point. Secondly, so as to allow comparisons with the results of the other sites, it was necessary to use the same basic technique of having one observer walk along a predetermined route, which in this case was along the main footpath system on both sides of the brook. The general impression was that most visitors stayed in the valley for periods of time longer than half an hour (except the through-routers), so the chances are that the observers would have been able to record perhaps 70% of visitors on the 5 minute intervals. This would mean that the true through-put might be nearer 62 people per hour on Sundays and 20 people per hour on weekdays.

It was possible to complete one circuit of the valley within the 2 hour recording periods. If the valley were divided in half and two observers completed two circuits of their respective halves, it might be possible to increase the accuracy of the estimate of the true through-puts.

Table 35 shows that the most popular activities were walking and dog walking, followed by football, cycling and informal play; a pattern which holds for an analysis of activities of males only. For females, horse riding, through-routing, informal play and sitting rate much higher. Motorbiking was the 7th most popular activity for males (out of a total of 19 activities) which would indicate that there was justification for the concern expressed by several respondents in the



questionnaire survey.

Table 35 The range, relative frequency and male/female split of activities in Woodgate Valley for all Sunday and weekday recordings between 1983 and 1984

Activities	Total %	Males %	Females %
Walking	25	21	30
Dog walking	23	20	29
Football	9	14	-
Cycling	8	12	1
Informal play	8	7	8
Through-routing	5	1	10
Horse riding	4	-	11
Paddling	4	5	2
Sitting	3	4	3
Motorbiking	3	5	1
Jogging	2	4	-
Meeting	3	3	1
Fishing	1	2	
Cricket	1	2	
Nature watching	1	1	2
Picnicking	-	-	1
Kiteflying	-	1	
Metal detecting	-	1	
Sun bathing	-		1
Viewing	-	-	-
Holly gathering	-		-
N =	697	434	263

NB '-' equals less than 1%

The observations showed that the numbers of walkers to dog walkers is virtually equal, whereas the questionnaire suggested that we might have expected to see twice as many walkers. This might be a reflection on the sense of personal insecurity, felt equally by males and females, in that a dog can add to one's confidence when visiting the site. It was rare to see a lone female in the valley without a dog.

Although females accounted for only 38% of all users, they engaged in more activities than might have been expected: 17 in total, compared to 19 by the males.

As with the other two sites, a second set of observation studies were completed over May, June and July 1985. The MSC teams had by this time almost completed re-surfacing the paths and the tree planting, a differential mowing regime had been implemented, the Ranger Service had been active in the area for 12 months and bridlepath posts and extra benches had been placed on both sides of the brook.

Table 36 The range and relative frequencies of activities for May, June and July in 1984 and 1985

Activities	Total 1984 %	Total 1985 %
Walking	28	22
Dog walking	22	21
Cycling	10	8
Informal play	8	11
Paddling	5	1
Sitting	5	6
Motorbiking	4	1
Football	5	7
Jogging	2	1
Horse riding	1	3
Through-routing	6	10
Meeting	1	1
Nature watching	1	4
Picnicking	1	
Sunbathing	-	
Metal detecting	-	
Fishing	-	
Viewing	-	
Cricket	1	2
Flying kite	1	1
Running		1
Practising golf		1
Vandalism		1
Firing air guns (at gravel)		1
Dumping		-
N =	492	600

The results from Table 36 indicate that there was an 18% increase in use from 1984 to 1985, which cannot be accounted for on the grounds of there having been better weather on the recording days in 1985; the weather for both years was similar



(mainly warm and dry).

The figures also reveal that the suggestion that the relative frequency of dog walkers might have decreased following the appointment of wardens, did not occur, but the numbers of motorbikers did from 20 in 1984 to only 3 in 1985 (one of whom was an adult taking a leisurely drive through the valley on a scooter). The numbers of nature watchers increased and what is not recorded in these figures is that a school party of 28 children and 2 adults were seen on the June weekday with one of the rangers. This is an encouraging sign that people were beginning to take more of an interest in the wildlife of the valley, although it is difficult to draw firm conclusions on the basis of only 2 years recordings.

Having said that, although the numbers of motorbikers had decreased, the increase (albeit small) in incidence of other problem activities such as dumping, air rifling and vandalism may be cause for concern.

The decrease in the number of paddlers may be interpreted in two ways. Firstly there were no really hot days during the 1985 session and secondly, the children may have been advised by the rangers to keep out of the brook. An increase in the frequency of visitors engaging in informal play activities and the relative proportion of children to other user groups, had increased (see Table 37).

Table 37 User group differences for the peak periods in 1984 and 1985

	1984			1985		
	Total %	Sun %	Weekdays %	Total %	Sun %	Weekdays %
Elderly	4	4	2	5	4	7
Adults	37	34	54	38	34	48
Adolescents	39	38	42	27	27	29
Children	20	24	2	27	33	12
Toddlers	-	1		3	2	4
N =	492	406	86	600	418	182

The major difference shown in Table 37 is that there was a marked decrease in the numbers of adolescents 192 in 1984, compared to 164 in 1985, which is primarily accounted for in the decrease in motorbikers. Although the rangers may have been successful in controlling the undesirable activities of this age group, these people have not changed their behaviour in the valley, they no longer visit the valley. This discussion should however be placed in the context that adolescents engaged in acceptable activities still account for a substantial proportion of the visitors.

Adults and the elderly account for only 40% of the visitors, which is less than their incidence in the population as a whole (73% - figure estimated from 1981 Census Data). The general incidence of children in the population is 12% and for adolescents, 10%.

In 1984, Sundays accounted for 83% of all visitors compared to 70% in 1985. The percentage of weekday users had doubled in 1985, which is largely due to increased usage by adults and elderly people (158 people in 1984 compared to 258 in 1985).

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the most popular times of the day, but afternoons and evenings would seem to be almost twice as popular as mornings for both Sundays and weekdays.

The main differences in the pattern of use can be seen by comparing Figs 12 and 13. These show that the adolescent motorbikers that tended to use, and congregate around, the BMX area (an exposed sandy outcrop) have disappeared in 1985, and the numbers of children and adolescents to be found in and around the pool (to the east of the eastern, north/south path) has also decreased. People found in, or beside, the brook are recorded in the space between the main east-west paths and the brook. Activity in or around the brook seems to be concentrated on the eastern part of the valley.

The maps also show that people are not pressurising the most sensitive and interesting wildlife habitats, which are the wet



Fig 12 The Microgeography of Use at Woodgate Valley, May, June, July 1984

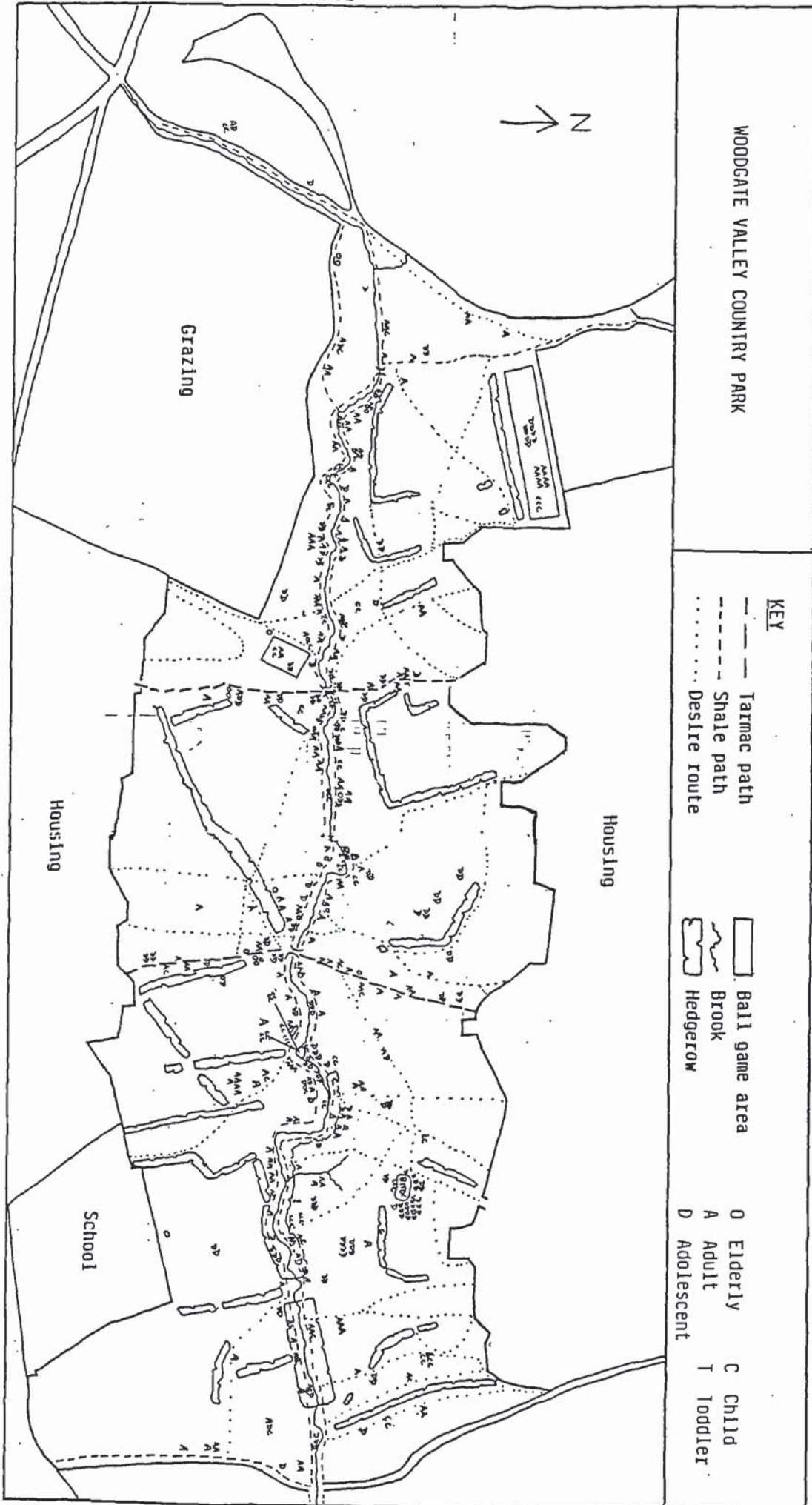
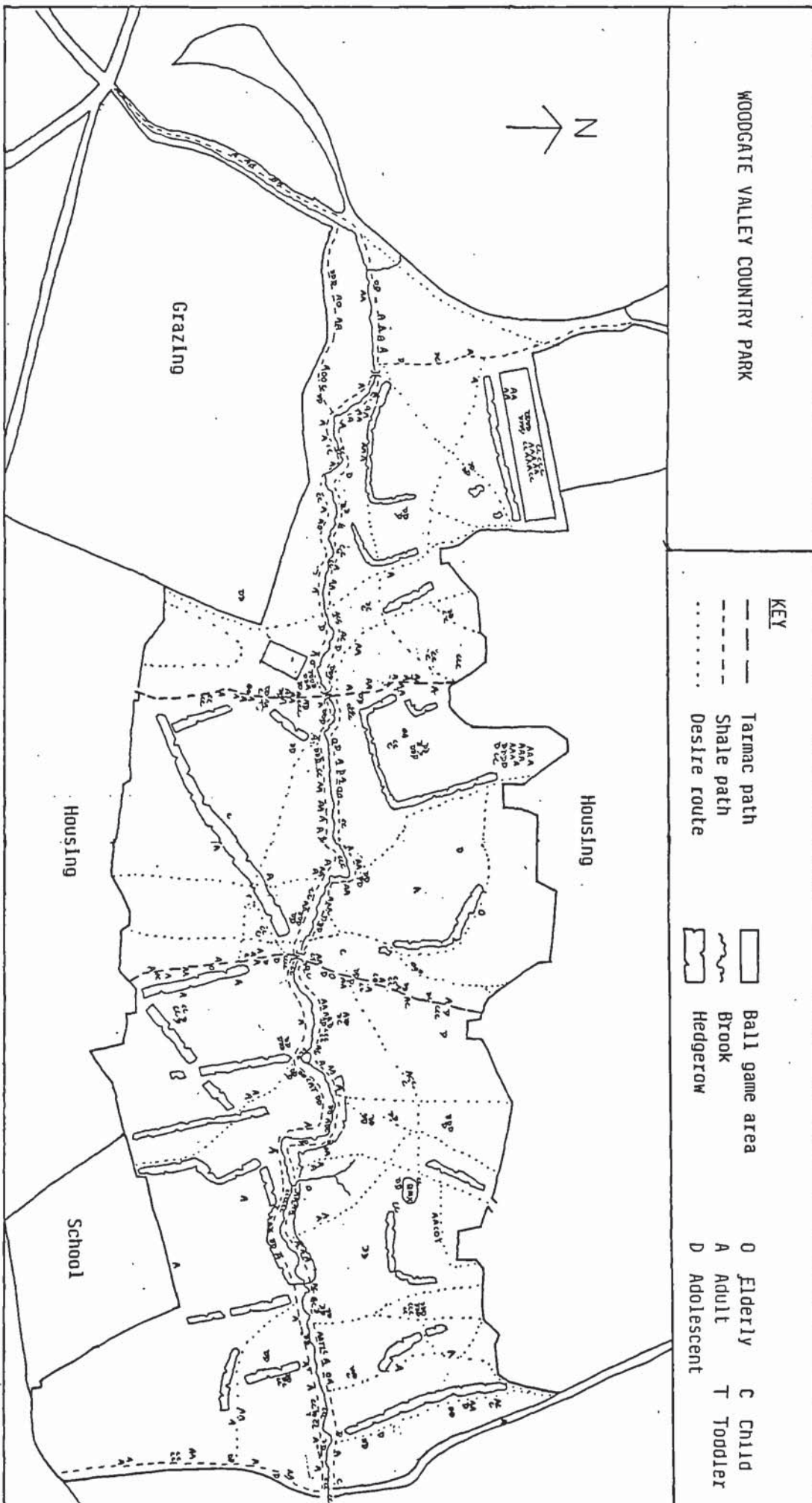


Fig 13 The Microgeography of Use at Woodgate Valley, May, June, July, 1985





meadow and young oak woodland at the western end of the valley (to the south and north of the brook, respectively). The wetness of the meadow is probably a sufficient deterrent, and the low level of use at the extreme western end helps protect the young woodland.

## 7.5. Outcome Effects

### 7.5.1. The Views of the Interested Parties

Most of the interviewees gave examples of the changes they hoped to see occur on the site, as evidence that the project had been a success:

'To walk round there and see green, paths and a nice clean area....so that I could start a walk at 2 o'clock, do a circle around the wood between here and Quinton.... and come back 3 hours later and say I've been out in the country...at the moment I can still see my house and theirs....I want to see trees and shrubs break it up, and I want pathways, and signposts....like in Norfolk, that say badger's holt, rabbit warren, hare's larder, something of interest that kids love to get to' (Community group leader).

'From a visual point of view, I would like to see the place clearly laid out, where people can enter it and leave it, be directed through it so that they know what to see and how to use it....that the rubbish that is still there, removed, so that there is evidence that the place is cared for.... a centre that could be a base for field study....and I would like to have in my hand, worksheets that would direct adults and children through on projects....and one or two recreational facilities built in....there should be a centre with personnel because without that you won't get community involvement because they won't know where to go or what to do....we've discovered that particularly in working class areas, people need focal points' (Community worker).

Several other members of the community emphasised the importance of seeing some hard landscaping such as car parks or a centre to make them feel that things were happening. It may be that they perceive built structures as having more of an impact, or at least a more immediate impact; things that are perhaps less easy to destroy or write-off financially. The impact that would be made by new tree and shrub plantings is perhaps perceived to be more subtle, and more expendable in terms of the financial costs incurred, if for whatever reason the planting had to be removed, or if the project was abandoned.

The landscape architects were looking for a change in behaviour:

'....if we saw the school children we had been working with over the last few weeks [tree planting], coming back to look at them, not damaging them and putting back the ones that had been pulled out....that the motorcycling stops or eases off considerably.... knowing that its set off people thinking about the history of the area and taking an interest in preserving it....the less tangible things are best'.

Two of the community representatives also mentioned the need for a mechanism to be set up to ensure that they were included in the the decision making:

'In the long term I'd like to see a joint management group, who together have understood that they believe in the same thing, that they are both serving the community, both from the official level and the voluntary level, and have no secrets from one another' (Community worker).

'None of the community representatives seem to be aware at all of what's happening [this related to a criticism of them about their lack of involvement in a tree planting day].... so I would like to see the voluntary groups and the major groups [like the Countryside Commission] who have offered to put money into the country park, officially informed by the City Council that the country park is a thing, so that we would be on the way to seeing something solid' (Community group leader).

The UWG planner answered this question quite differently, although the evidence he cited related directly to his aims:

'90% victory would be to get it zoned for open space by the



Secretary of State. 100% victory will be getting it a country park. [With respect to bringing influence to bear on politicians] the tangible evidence will be that they mention the project and UWG in discussions....and resolve to give UWG, and other projects like Woodgate Valley, more money....and that the County Council will stand up and say 'It was wonderful, we saved the Woodgate Valley' and because it's used as an example not just by politicians but also other groups....that you get a building up of a feeling that the environment is something worth keeping and doing something positive with. [With respect to increasing awareness of local people about the valley] I could be glib and say twice as many people walking in the valley....but I think one tangible thing would be that if people in 12 months time were still talking about the wildlife, as opposed to the vandals or the property value of their homes, and are still pushing for the country park, rather than a golf course....you have to ask individuals, but then I don't know what they felt before'.

The March '83 public meeting was regarded as a major achievement and had given the residents the greatest sense of satisfaction:

'.....it amounted to the sum total of everybody's efforts that had been involved in it....that was a feeling of success....The County Council were going to recommend that they delete the industrial zones.... that on April 11th it was confirmed, was [also] satisfying'.

'I think the first couple of days when we wandered down the valley after the last public meeting, knowing that it was done, there was talk of a party and us all having a drink when it all went through....everyone was happy'.

'I hope it proves to some people that you can fight and do something, I don't know what it is. In the end I didn't do very much, I went to a few meetings, said my piece, but I suppose if you can beat somebody down you do feel a bit of satisfaction no matter what'.

Two members of the community added notes of caution:

'Nothing, because I won't think we have been successful as a community until there is that which we require in the valley and that that cannot be touched....I still feel there is a possibility that whatever we've done can be destroyed' (Community group leader).

'In many ways we can say we've achieved a lot, we've got rid of the road and the industrial development, and it would appear that we've got sites A & B re-zoned into the country

park, that's fine. What we have yet to see is the country park itself, and that's a much more difficult one....I envisage seeing the country park, but it will never reach its full potential....I have very little confidence in local politicians....some are unaware, some are incapable and some are too concerned about their own political status and not willing to sacrifice themselves for example' (Community worker).

One of the councillors commented that:

'We are winning, we are getting somewhere....my greatest satisfaction has come from seeing the children at my school [governor] wanting to take part, and getting their parents enthusiastic about it. And that the community itself has taken part in it, shows that when you do want something badly enough, if the people work together, they can say to the authorities, whoever they are, 'No, this won't do' and I think that's important'.

For the landscape architects, the community involvement had also proved to be a source of satisfaction:

'I mean the satisfaction I've had is that we appear to have won the battle to be able to involve the community. We actually haven't reached the stage where they are physically doing as much as we want them to eventually'.

'It's the opportunity to actually make something happen for people that they want....and to hear them actually tell you, without mincing words, that they're not happy with something, but when they like something, they tell you as well....we've heard people say 'We think this is wonderful scheme, this is the answer to all our dreams, pinch me I think I'm dreaming'. It's a genuine response and the sort of appreciation you don't get from the City Architect or members of council, or rarely, it's a different response, they say 'oh yes thank you for getting that scheme done on time'.

Similarly for the UWG planner:

'It was rewarding because people actually really wanted your advice and your ideas. I was able to provide the skills and, with the others from UWG, get something physical out of it in terms of the report....you know you put a lot into UWG and it's nice to get something out. I'm fairly confident that we've won and that will be the ultimate reward. It's been personally successful in that it's vindicated the need for planning input into UWG, which has never been sort of factually stated....also personally, there have been a lot of challenges; big public meetings, some awkward small



meetings, deadlines to meet, challenges which have all been met'.

'Co-ordinating', 'advisory', 'consultants' and 'guidance' were the words used by the interviewees to explain the kind of role that they had expected UWG to play in the project:

'We wanted as many people who could to tell us the things we wanted to know' (Community group leader).

'To put us right if we were going in the wrong direction, because its so easy when you don't know the ropes, and of course UWG do, they're really with it....they've worked all round the area, Merry Hill, Dudley, was the latest one' (Community group leader).

'We were looking for guidance as to the procedures to go through....on a specific level it was what they could do to help us retain the land' (Community group leader).

The landscape architects felt that:

'I was hoping that they would play the sort of role that they did at Holly Hill, as I saw them as a better line of communication with the residents than we as officers of the council were. I didn't feel that people would identify so readily with us because we were local government officers.... I don't think that's proved to be the case though, from the meetings I've been to and with all the tree planting we've done, it doesn't seem to have mattered, maybe we're not typical local government officers, I think I try to be more straightforward and honest with people than a lot of officers do' (Landscape architect).

'Also because they had more time than we had, because we work within set fee limits on each job'. [These only allow for a limited amount of time to be spent on negotiations with the client and for on-site supervision and would have been exceeded by acknowledging the community groups as a sub-client of Amenities and Recreation, and the community as on-site workers] (Landscape architect).

The landscape architects and one of the community group leaders commented that they didn't think UWG had been keen to get involved to begin with, mainly because of pressure of work:

'I think the problem was that they had got heavy commitments elsewhere....and that if they got involved, would it be worth spending a lot of time on at the expense of other projects... when it became clear it was an issue which was really concerning a very large number of residents....they became more convinced that it was a worthwhile cause....they were impressed by the public support at the City Council public meeting in October 1982'(Community group leader).

One of the residents added that:

'I think that what they also found, which I think was a pre-requisite to them coming in on the fight, was the requirement to have a high portion of the activity taken by the local community....they were prepared to come in but not to run what was happening, not to be seen to be fighting the battle without the support of the local community'.

Throughout the summer of 1982, I had had long discussions with the staff over how to prioritise their workload which had grown to a size that was generating concern. However, I think it is perhaps more accurate to interpret this 'pre-requisite' by referring to a quote of the UWG planner:

'If you take Merry Hill [a campaign to save threatened farmland from development in Dudley], it gives me the willies simply because it's an UWG campaign. Admittedly we're doing just what the residents want us to, but its the UWG standing out there saying things, that's partly because there is no local individual prepared to stand on a platform, but also because C [an executive member of UWG] has got quite involved in the thing and stoked the boilers when every one else has died down. I'm very unhappy about Merry Hill Farm. I'm ecstatic about Woodgate Valley, because it's real people saying real things about their real love, and we were simply a catalyst'.

The general consensus was that UWG had done a good job:

'Ecologically, we didn't know, in a technical sense, the exact value of the different habitats....UWG were extremely useful in that they could come along and talk in those terms and if necessary blind other people with science....the other thing which they took upon themselves was to help publicise and lobby and I mean the preparation of that report was invaluable, you can't underestimate its significance because it impressed a lot of people. I'm still getting letters from people saying thank you....We were also able to distribute it to a large number of councillors. In a sense one resents the fact that we had to lobby, it may well prove to have been of great benefit, at the same time it's a fairly expensive exercise' [The receipts showed that UWG charged the action group £118] (Member of action group).

'They did a wordly thing by doing that [report]....when you put that in front of councillors, it answers a lot more questions than I or any one of us as individuals could all night, they put it down absolutely superb' (Community group leader).



'....an excellent document which was stated by most of the local councillors to be the most professional document that they had seen about a green area' (Community group leader).

The community worker had one criticism of the report:

'The brief the action group gave UWG for the report was perhaps too narrow, it should have taken on board other things....the historical element of the valley was poorly done....they didn't really take on board the political history of the valley how it had been battered back and forwards by the planners....and they perhaps didn't do enough on the emotive side of the population around here, there were various quotations in the report, but they never actually came and saw me....we are in fact doing a new edition which the CFT and the Action Group are sponsoring....overall I think they did a good job'.

Other aspects of UWG'S role that were appreciated are described in the next series of quotes:

'The fact that they're full-time, they're sort of professionals in that sense, meant that they could, at what were crucial moments, we were able to say can you do this or distribute that. The fact that they could even go and talk to people, whereas we were only volunteers and part-timers....and I haven't even mentioned the press, they were prepared to fill in gaps, to go on the radio, if a member of the action group couldn't because of work' (Member of action group).

'I thought it was marvellous when he went along the valley with us, you know that the interest was there, because I really didn't think there was anybody today who could actually do that, take the scheme on and look into it.... I don't think it's publicly known that these groups do so well, how much they all do help....They helped us with our aims, and said 'Well you can bring out the emotional side but not too much, you've got to remember not to take the selfish aspects, to make sure that the valley's been used by the whole community. Place it in the context of what the community would do without it, and that the people you are protesting to know its worth, not for your own sort of prices of your houses, but for the children for play and study', things like that, and it makes you look into it a lot deeper....We hadn't realised up until then, how small the estate was compared to the surrounding areas, and obviously to keep the valley green we had to involve everyone' (Member of community group).

'[The campaign aims] were written up in an appropriate language by UWG....we OK'd the final version, but that was something again that was a very nice service which accompanied the report' (Member of action group).

'I think the role they played was ideal, because if they'd done more it stops people in the area getting involved, and really that's the main thing, but you need somebody who's got the expertise to say well that's what we need to do, and in fairness they left us then to get on with it' (Local resident).

'I think it was excellent, I can't fault them on anything....the people that we talked to were to my mind rather more professional in terms of their knowledge of planning and requirements than the reputed professionals ....we were very pleased with what they'd done and what they're doing in fact' (Community group leader).

There was however one dissenting voice, that of the councillor who had campaigned independently of the action group:

'Have they played a role....I heard they had yes....I've only been invited to one of those meetings [of the action group] by the way....There was a fellow there from UWG, seemed like a nice chap with big boots on' (Councillor).

From the UWG planner's point of view:

'We could perhaps have got a bit more of the cuedos. A campaign is only worthwhile if we not only win that particular victory, but also that the general interests of the Group and of the movement are shown to have advanced. In terms of media publicity we didn't come off very well. In terms of goodwill and impressing people, councillors and others, I think we did incredibly well. And, I would rather fight that kind of campaign where it's the local community pushing it with us supporting it and providing the solid, sensible advice, rather than the hectic UWG campaign trying to pull the community with us'.

The 3 problems that the interviewees saw for the future were:

- 1 How to get the city council to commit themselves to providing the warden and getting on with the major work on the site.
- 2 How to ensure that the residents were fully informed about the city's activities and plans.
- 3 Where the finance was going to come from.



The residents accepted that they had to continue to be involved, not least because they felt the city council were deliberately withholding information and were not positively pursuing any of the proposals. They also wanted to ensure that all the residents knew what was happening which they felt might be best achieved through the publication of a newsletter, although the financial implications of this for the community groups mitigated against this becoming a reality.

Both of these problems were recognised by the landscape architects who saw it as part of the city's role to help co-ordinate the community involvement. The concern of the residents was directed towards the Amenities and Recreation Department:

'The councillors need to apply the pressure to their officers to get them to take the necessary action'  
(Local resident).

There was a general feeling amongst the members of the action group and the council that UWG should continue to be involved:

'The action group hasn't dissolved, although it was intended that we would....what we finally decided to do was join forces with the CFT which is itself an umbrella organisation and is concerned about the whole country park....[to carry on discussions] with the City Council....we [KWVGAG] still have our separate identity and could spring back to life....UWG are still involved and we intend to keep them involved because it's a very difficult situation because the city don't want us....to have access to the landscape architects....It means we can talk to UWG about strategy, about what they would regard as the best way of developing the park'  
(Member of action group and local residents).

'Well they are now playing an advisory role....they respond to the ideas we put forward about the use of the valley....and we'd like them to respond to the proposals that the council are continuing to put forward.... At the last meeting of [KWVGAG], it didn't show up in the minutes, we were talking about how slow the city were to put their weight behind it and there was a lot of discussion, particularly from the UWG chappie, about publicity campaigns, and of course you immediately get some who move away because they feel its an anti-local government thing....I did have one or two letters saying well we're not happy about the hard publicity campaign.... The city never put anything down on paper. Every time we put something down it tends to disappear

into the mire, and we have to say to them....you took this project on, will you please take the initiative' (Community worker).

The UWG planner commented that:

'We are now involved with the action group and the CFT.... trying to mediate between them and the city council....there is a fear, that has manifested itself once or twice that without a common cause to fight, you get back to the sectional interests and the personality conflicts that have been there all the time, but have been kept sidelined because of the issue....if they do arise we can say 'Hey this isn't helping'....I think we've had a role there still, to keep as many people involved as possible' (UWG planner).

This last point was also mentioned by the landscape architects:

'It's a bit awkward, there's certainly scope for them to advise the CFT, rather than us....they have things they want to do that are strictly beyond our brief, and things that you can't expect Amenities and Recreation to fund in terms of our fees....to go in and give technical advice'.

So apart from the need for UWG to continue to give advice, there is the suggestion that the Group would also be needed to play a mediating role in smoothing the negotiations between the community and the council, although I think the council regarded them as being more of an ally to the community than to themselves.

Although personality conflicts were not mentioned by any of the community representatives, it is understandable that there would be tension about who should take on the responsibility for liaising with the council. Historically, that had been the role of the City Farm Trust, as confirmed by the landscape architects. The campaign brought in new community groups, who were not represented on CFT. The members of these groups, one of which it was that brought all the interested parties together following the October '82 public meeting, clearly wanted to continue their involvement in the project, after the public meetings.



### 7.5.2. The Views of the Local Community

Although the questionnaire dealt with aspects of the site rather than the campaign, a high percentage of people had seen or heard some publicity about the valley within the preceeding 12 months (68%, as compared to 23% at Leckie Rd and 62% at Plants Brook). This, together with the high turn outs achieved at the last two public meetings indicates that the local people had been able to find out what was happening there.

As shown in Table 38, the majority of respondents felt that the Council should take on the responsibility for looking after the valley.

Table 38 Who should be responsible for looking after the valley

Body with responsibility	%
Council	63
Don't know	13
Local adult community	7
Warden	7
Misc:	10
Council and community	
Unemployed youths	
Whoever did it best	

N = 56 responses from 56 respondents (+ 3 missing values)

Over three-quarters of the respondents had noticed changes happening to the valley over the preceeding 12 months, 23% had not, as shown in Table 39.

These results suggest that whatever publicity there had been about the valley, had resulted in a negative impact on its use. Alternatively, the results might show that the publicity had merely heightened people's awareness of the problems.

Table 39 Changes in the valley between October 1982 to 1983

Changes	%
No	23
New soft landscaping	20
People working on site	18
New hard landscaping	16
More vandalism	11
More litter	3
Fewer visitors	3
More motorbikes	3
General deterioration	3

N = 80 responses from 57 respondents (+ 2 missing values)

Having said that, the results to the general question about where the respondents chose to go for a breath of fresh air, revealed that by far the most popular place was the valley (see Table 40 below):

Table 40 People's general preferences for open space

Preferred open spaces	%
Informal open spaces	63 (42% - Woodgate Valley)
Formal open spaces	17
Nowhere	10
Built-up areas	6
Countryside	4
Garden	1

N = 84 responses from 73 respondents (+ 10 missing values).

The number of missing values is accounted for in that many of the respondents were elderly people who no longer visited open spaces.

Woodgate Valley is clearly the favourite local place to visit, which we know from other questions is partly because it is considered to be so attractive. However, it should also be borne in mind that because the housing areas are as large as



they are, relatively new, and located on the very edge of the city, the choice of traditional, formal open spaces is limited to just 3 places; Sennely's Park, Queens Park and Weoley Castle.

Informal places around the south west edge of Birmingham were mentioned such as Frankley Beeches, Bartley Green Reservoir and Frankley Reservoir. Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston Reservoir and the Botanical Gardens were the favourite places within the city.

Some 62% of the places mentioned were got to on foot and 25% by car. Perhaps because there is countryside immediately beyond the housing areas, the people appeared to make good use of local beauty spots such as Kinver, Clent, Clevedon and Shropshire.

As happened with the Plants Brook survey, the interviewers found it uncomfortable to ask people who had cited Woodgate Valley as their natural choice, to go over the reasons why they found it attractive, hence the low response rate for the results shown in Table 41.

That 'scenery' comes out as top of the list, confirms the behaviour of these respondents who showed a preference for visiting beauty spots.

There is a demand for local informal spaces which Woodgate Valley has to meet for those without cars. The additional demand for those with cars is dissipated amongst a range of places within 5 miles of the valley, and further afield.

The bias towards informal landscapes has to be partly as a result of the limited choice of formal open spaces and facilities in the area, which is emphasised in the community's desire for such opportunities, as expressed in the interviews.

Table 41 What visitors found attractive about their preferred open spaces

Attractions	%
Scenery	16
Open space	9
Good for walking	9
Pleasant	9
Trees, shrubs	7
Naturalness/countryside feel	7
Water	7
Nothing in particular	5
Convenient	4
Peace and quiet	4
Misc:	23
Facilities	
Attractive	
Wildlife/nature	
Fresh air	
Taking part in sports	
Meeting place	
Watching sports	
Mystery/adventure	
Clean	
Formal lawns/flower beds	
Lots to do/see	
Shops	
Good seating	
Hilly	
Well known	

N = 92 responses from 48 respondents.

### 7.5.3. Observed Use of Woodgate Valley

Something of the changes in use that occurred between 1983 and 1985 in the valley have been presented in the implementation section (see section 7.4.3).. The numbers of users had increased by 18% even though many of the proposed changes had not yet been effected.

The most striking improvement, was that the numbers of motorbikers had dropped off, and that the wildlife value of



the valley was being appreciated more, as evidenced by the increased numbers of nature watchers, and the organised visits of school parties.

The percentage of male to female visitors remained the same, despite predictions that the percentage of women visitors would have risen. It would seem that having wardens on-site may not be enough to allay women's fears.

Further observations and questionnaire studies will be needed to assess the impact of the visitors centre which has just been opened (and any formal recreational facilities that may be provided at a later date) when compared to the level and pattern of use as it was in 1985.

#### 7.6. Conclusions

The campaigners had achieved two out of the four operational objectives; they had stopped the industrialisation of sites A and B and had prevented the link road being built. With regard to the other two aims, there had still been no news on whether the Secretary of State had approved the county council's recommendation to re-zone sites A & B as open space, by June 1985. Approval was needed before the city council could agree to include the two sites within the boundaries of the country park. Approval to zone sites A & B as green belt was ratified, with the publication of the county council's revised Structure Plan on Jan 24th 1986. Site B was subsequently re-zoned by the city council, but not site A. Some of Site A is owned by the city council's Economic Development Committee and some of it is privately owned. A proposal to develop site A by Marks and Spencers was put forward in 1985, which the Woodgate Valley Conservation Group (formerly KWVGAG) have opposed.

UWG was the only outside group that became involved in helping the community to plan the campaign directed at the county

council. The previous contact that UWG had had with the leader of the County Council (who also chaired the Strategic Planning Committee) proved to be invaluable. The Group had been involved in a campaign over an area of land within that councillor's neighbourhood. He had at first been sceptical about the strength of local people's feelings about the retention of open land in the county, but had become convinced that this was a genuine issue of concern. He now chairs the West Midlands Environment Network (an alliance of voluntary, public and private sector environmental agencies in Birmingham and the Black Country).

The second major contribution that UWG made to the campaign was to provide a focus for all the separate community groups; UWG helped them to identify common objectives and to plan out the campaign. UWG also clearly established what it was prepared to do, and what it expected the community to do. This is significant because the Group had not done this with the Plants Brook or Leckie Rd projects. The community representatives at Woodgate Valley had clear memories of how the job roles had been distinguished. UWG involvement in Woodgate Valley started at about the same time as that at Leckie Rd, a full 2 years after the start of Plants Brook.

I had initiated several meetings with the staff through-out 1982 to get them to discuss the community projects and assess the problems they were experiencing. The conclusions of these meetings were that the Group should not expect too much of the community, but nor should it be prepared to take over a project. The implications of this were that UWG had to amend its expectation of being able to pull out of a project after the first 12 months, and accept that it would have to continue a high level of staff input until such time as the landscape proposals were implemented and the arrangements for the after-care of the site had been finalised. Furthermore, experience over Woodgate Valley has shown that the group needs to play a watchdog role, even where the responsibility for safeguarding a site from development can be sustained by the community, as there continues to be a need for technical information and other support.



The role of UWG as a non-political group with its own specific interest in the valley, was important as it provided a 'safe-ground' for all the other interest groups to use to discuss what might have been considered as controversial, in 'mixed company'. The landscape architects could not side with the residents against their own employers, but in seeking technical information from UWG, they could also express their concern about what was happening within the council about the valley, knowing that the Group would be prepared to look into the matter.

Whilst some members of the community groups were prepared to work with all councillors, others were closely involved with one political party. Add to that the fact that the council elections were imminent at the time of the major push on the campaign, and the conclusion must be that it was almost inevitable that there should have been a second campaign fought within the council.

If the councillors had been able to deal with this matter as a community issue, perhaps in the way that all party committees operate in Parliament, some of the wasted energy and money that resulted could have been avoided. The community could not help but conclude, on the basis of their experience, that the objective of local government was to sacrifice the feelings of local people, for personal motives. The cynicism that developed within the community was to a certain extent ameliorated by the fact that they recognised that the key decisions that were needed to safeguard the valley, had to be made by the politicians.

Public pressure and a professional approach combined to make both councils reverse their original decisions which supported industrial development. However, the city council were not able to capitalise on the opportunity to promote community involvement in the subsequent development of the country park. The key department at this stage, was Amenities and Recreation who seem to have played the community along, at a time when the community felt that the department ought to have been ready to commit funds and staff time to implementing the

proposals, which had been worked out and approved by all concerned, some two years earlier.

This was not an equal partnership, the department did not have the skill to agree job roles between itself and the community groups, the situation was complicated because it had sub-contracted the design and implementation work to the Architects Department, and as a consequence, communications were inadequate and this increased community scepticism about the council's ability to see the project through.

UWG's role in this was to guide the community groups as to how they should maintain the pressure on the council to bring about some real progress, whilst continuing to support the initiatives that were coming from within the community itself. The Group had the conservation of the valley for wildlife and people as their prime concern, and the interests of the council as a secondary concern. Having professionals, who were aware of how the conflicts between competing needs for land are resolved, and who had some understanding of how an assessment is made of the benefits to a wider section of the public, than the people who may be most affected by a planning decision, enabled it to maintain a certain amount of objectivity.

The results of the questionnaire and the observation studies reveal that UWG and the community groups were justified in advocating the value of the natural character of the valley to local people at the public meetings and within the report. The landscape architects may also consider that they made a realistic assessment of the recreational potential of the valley as they found it in 1979. Whether the suggestions of the questionnaire respondents were genuine or whether they reflect the ideas that they had heard about in the press or at the public meetings, is perhaps debatable. What is clear though is that there is general support for the plans.

Whether the campaign would have been lost if the community had argued that, recreation facilities should have been built on sites A & B, rather than warehouses, which UWG argued strongly against,



is not clear. The need for formal recreational facilities was clearly expressed by the interviewees and the questionnaire respondents, and there does appear to be a lack of such facilities within easy access of the housing estates. This issue has not however featured in the joint meetings the community groups have held with the council.

The council eventually agreed to set up a Consultative Committee, which included the country park warden, officers of Amenities and Recreation, councillors from Leisure Services Committee, and representatives from the Conservation Group, CFT and UWG. The council, even through the warden, do not appear to be willing to develop a collaborative project, which would give the community some responsibility for decision making, nor does it seem to seek to involve the adult community in the physical caring of the valley, a task which has been adopted by the Conservation group, with help from UWG.

### 8.1 Introduction

The research reported in this thesis has addressed three objectives:

- 1 An evaluation of people's perception of urban nature parks
- 2 An evaluation of people's use of urban nature parks
- 3 An evaluation of three different strategies for involving the local community in the provision and management of urban nature parks.

The influences that led up to the development of a user-oriented approach to the provision and management of nature parks in urban areas, were critically assessed in the literature review. The advocacy and promotion of this approach by a range of voluntary and statutory organisations was also reviewed. It was found that there was a general lack of previous research that had addressed the issues of whether or not urban people either wanted nature in the cities, or appreciated what was already available.

The discussion of the findings of this research will focus on what insights have been gained with respect to the objectives of the research and whether or not these findings are confirmed by the findings and theories of past research.

The findings relating to the perception and use of nature parks by the public will be discussed first in order to determine whether or not the efforts of the UWG and the other interested parties in the case study projects to provide such amenities have been worthwhile. This will be followed by a discussion on the effectiveness of the different strategies employed to provide and manage nature parks, focusing on the roles played by the various interested parties.

The final section of the discussion will consider the appropriateness of the methodology employed in this research and its utility for future studies, together with suggestions



as to what questions future research might be directed towards answering.

## 8.2. The Evaluation of the Public's Perception of Urban Nature Parks

A comparison of the findings on what people liked and disliked about the three case sites, are consistent with, and lend weight to, the findings of previous research on what it is that people like and dislike about countryside recreation sites, as described by Elson (1977 op cit).

Table 42 A comparison of the rank ordering of what it is that people like about the 3 case study sites with the findings of Elson's research on countryside sites

Likes	Plants Brook	Leckie Road	Woodgate Valley	Rural Sites
Landscape/natural features	3	2	3	2
Space	5	7	2	3
Scenery	6	6	4	1
Unspoilt/naturalness	2	-	1	6
Peace and quiet	1	5	-	5
Wildlife	4	3	5	-
Good for children	7	8	8	9
Water	8	4	-	-
Fresh air	-	11	-	4
Uncommercialised	-	-	-	7
Good for walking	-	-	9	8
Layout	-	-	7	-

\* 1 = most popular feature.

\*\* The table provides only a general comparison, so not every response category is shown.

The comparisons in Table 42 suggest that the perception of urban nature parks is similar to that of countryside recreation sites. Comparisons with the findings of people's preferences for natural versus non-natural scenes, in the environmental psychology literature, lend added support to the reliability of the findings of the researcher. It is perhaps worth highlighting the value people place on the peace and quiet they enjoy as part of the experience of urban nature parks. This may

be related to Ulrich's findings that natural scenes are found to relax people (1981). Mostyn (1980 op cit) also found that participants in urban nature conservation projects valued the peace and quiet and the contrasting experience provided by the site which was expressed as the opportunity to escape from the city and its pressures.

The preference for natural features probably combines at least two different perspectives. Apart from Thayer and Atwood's (1978) findings that plants were perceived as highly complex and pleasurable stimuli, Mostyn (1980 op cit) and Ulrich and Addoms (1981) found that natural features were valued because of the opportunity they provided for visitors to 'identify', and even make physical contact, with nature. It is perhaps significant that the respondents to the questionnaire surveys in this research, specifically mentioned 'wildlife' (mainly birds and foxes) as one of the things they liked about the sites. The natural features also provided the setting for physical contact through social interaction and physical recreation; the fallen tree at Woodgate Valley was used as a meeting place for adolescents and as a piece of play equipment by the children. These findings compare favourably with those of Ulrich and Addoms (1981 op cit) Mostyn (1980 op cit) and Harrison et al (1986).

Similarly, although the intellectual benefits reported by Mostyn (1980 op cit) do not appear in the findings of the questionnaire survey, several residents on the management committees mentioned that they had very much enjoyed learning more about the wildlife value of their site, during the course of the projects.

The results in Table 42 can be contrasted with those of the likes respondents gave in answer to a general question about their preferred local open spaces, which included formal as well as informal places (see Table 43).

In the urban context, the only evidence to compare these findings to is that summarised by Walker and Duffield (1983 op cit) who found that the things people most liked about urban



open spaces were firstly the natural features, then scenery, space and finally the sense of freedom.

The low ranking of the natural features as compared to the findings of Walker and Duffield's summary may be accounted for by the fact that they seem to have drawn on just one of the few studies that have addressed this issue, which was carried out by TRRU (1980a) on parks in the urban fringe of Glasgow rather than on parks in the inner areas or suburbs of an urban area. This interpretation is strengthened in that the rank order for naturalness for the community around Woodgate Valley, which is the case site that most resembles those in the Glasgow study, is much higher than for the other two communities. Woodgate Valley was itself one of the most preferred places for the local people in the surrounding community.

Table 43 A comparison of the rank order of what people liked about their preferred local open spaces

Likes	Plants Brook	Leckie Road	Woodgate Valley
Space	1	6	2
Good for walking	4	4	3
Scenery	-	8	1
Convenient	2	-	9
Pleasant/nice	5	5	4
Water	6	3	7
Formal lawns & beds	3	9	-
Peace and quiet	7	7	10
Naturalness	8	-	6
Sports facilities	11	2	-
Facilities for children	12	1	-
Wildlife	9	10	-
Fresh air	10	11	-
Natural features	13	12	5
Nothing in particular	-	-	8

A comparison of the findings on what visitors dislike about the case sites with what visitors to other urban parks and countryside recreation sites dislike, reveals there to be a closer similarity between the nature parks and other urban parks, than with the countryside sites (see Table 44).

I would suggest that the things people dislike about the rural sites are related to the needs that arise after having travelled to a site as part of a day trip, which do not usually affect visitors to local open spaces to the same extent.

The findings compare favourably with those reported by Walker and Duffield (1983a) even to the extent that people's perception of vandalism may be greater than the reality actually warrants. Whilst a substantial proportion of visitors do not dislike anything about the case sites and

Table 44 A comparison of visitors dislikes about the case sites, other urban parks (Walker and Duffield, 1983a) and countryside sites (Elson, 1977)

Dislikes	Plants Brook	Leckie Road	Woodgate Valley	Urban Parks	Rural Sites
Nothing	1	1	2	1	-
Litter/rubbish	2	2	1	2	-
Unkempt appearance	5	3	4	-	-
Pollution	3	4	-	-	-
Vandalism	-	6	7	3	-
Anti-social elements	-	-	5	4	-
Personal insecurity	4	5	-	-	-
Motorbikes	6	-	3	-	-
Quality of infrastructure	-	-	6	5	-
Too small	7	-	-	-	-
Poor toilets	-	-	-	-	1
Lack of litter bins	-	-	-	-	2
Poor carparking	-	-	-	-	3
Lack of seats	-	-	-	-	4

urban parks in general, there is also a substantial number who find the appearance of the case sites to be unkempt. This suggests that even though the quality of the hard landscaping is quite high on all the sites, and attention has been paid to ensuring that long grass areas are edged with short mown grass, some people feel this is still not enough to make the natural landscapes acceptable in an urban setting. This



presents the management committees and groups advocating natural landscapes in urban areas, with two choices. Either they improve their marketing strategies to convince people that such landscapes are acceptable, or else they attempt to include more formal features in the design of sites. However, it should perhaps be re-emphasised here that it is the very 'naturalness' of the sites that is most valued by those who find the sites attractive.

Another element of the questionnaire survey that provided useful information for the management committees to consider, was the suggestions respondents made as to how the site could be made more attractive to them. This information also proved useful in validating the interpretation of what the visitors liked and disliked about the case sites.

Walker and Duffield (1983a op cit) found from their review that while it was the natural features of the parks that people liked best, it was facilities for children's play and active pursuits which they felt they would like to see improved or added to the parks. Table 45 indicates that these two factors were ranked relatively highly by visitors to the case sites.

These authors assert that people find it difficult to suggest improvements that are outside the sphere of their experience. Whilst this may indeed be the case, the results from this research indicate that respondents were able to make some fairly precise suggestions for improving the sites that would seem to be in keeping with their natural character. These include suggestions for more trees and shrubs at Leckie Rd and Woodgate Valley, wardens, nature trails and birdboxes. Some of the suggestions were already planned for the sites and have since been implemented. Overall, as confirmed by the relatively high ranking of the response that there was no need for any changes, which may also be reflected in some of the 'No' answers, there would appear to be a low level of dissatisfaction with the sites.

Table 45 A comparison of the improvements, by rank order, that would make the case sites more attractive to visitors

Suggested Improvements.	Plants Brook	Leckie Road	Woodgate Valley
No	1	2	2
Children's play facilities	-	1	7
Better paths	2	-	4
Warden	5	-	1
No need for any changes	3	-	6
Clean up	4	4	2
Formal facilities	-	5	4
Seats	6	5	-
More trees	-	5	8
Improve pond	-	2	-
More grass	-	5	-
More flower beds	-	5	-
Nature trail	6	-	-
Birdboxes	6	-	-
Signboard	6	-	-
Cut grass	-	-	8
Remove fences	-	9	-
Control tipping	-	-	10

Although cross-tabulations were performed on the questionnaire data, the low sample sizes make it difficult to draw firm conclusions. The results indicate however, that in the majority of cases, there were no significant differences between the responses of males and females.

At Woodgate Valley, more men wanted more recreation facilities and a warden, but were just as likely to dislike motorbikes, anti-social elements and vandalism, and just as likely to feel a personal sense of insecurity, as women. At Leckied Rd and Woodgate Valley, men were also just as likely as women to request play areas for children.

At Plants Brook, men alone requested more formal facilities. At Leckie Rd and Plants Brook, women were three times as likely to feel a sense of personal insecurity than men.

The generalisations made by Elson (1977 op cit) and Davidson (1970) in terms of the coding categorisations they made from their analyses of a range of different studies, do I believe diminish the potential richness of the data that can



be collected, as shown in this research. The categories for the questionnaire used here were based on information provided by the respondents questioned in the pilot study, in preference to categories suggested by past work. Previous research had focused on countryside recreation sites, or formal, rather than informal, urban open spaces. I allowed the spontaneous responses of the people questioned to indicate what the likely range of categories should be, and even then found that the 'other' category was used more than I had anticipated, in the revised format that was used for the main survey. The fact that the suggested improvements for each site differ, indicates that this type of information could be specific enough to be useful to designers and landscape managers, in helping them to provide for the real needs of the users and potential users of a given site.

Recent research undertaken by Mostyn and Millward (1987, forthcoming) provided an opportunity to test the categories derived and corroborate their suitability, on communities at three other urban nature parks, in Warrington New Town, Birmingham and Islington. The findings of that research indicate that peace and quiet is the most valued attribute, followed by the naturalness of the sites, openness (space), natural features (eg trees), convenience, wildlife and water. A refined questionnaire is offered in Appendix H which has been derived from the findings of this research and that of Mostyn and Millward, in the hope that this will be tested out by other researchers and evaluated as to its general usefulness.

### 8.3 The Evaluation of People's Use of the Nature Parks

In general, as was hoped, the observation studies provided information that corroborated the findings of the questionnaire survey. Extra information was also provided with respect to the activities of children, which it was not possible to investigate through the questionnaire, and also some indication of negative behaviour, such as dumping, that people would be unlikely to admit to in a questionnaire survey.

It is not possible to make direct comparisons between the frequencies of activities mentioned by people, in the questionnaire survey, with the frequencies of activities as they were recorded in the observation studies. This is because the percentages in the survey are diluted by non-physical activities such as 'enjoying the peace and quiet' (which cannot be observed) and do not take account of children's activities. On the other hand, in all cases a wider range of physical activities were recorded in the observation studies than were mentioned in the questionnaire survey. This, I would suggest, has implications for designers in accordance with Rutledge's (1981) assertion that it is only through observation studies that designers will be able to best meet the needs of users. The users' perception of the quality of the facilities provided, is however best addressed through questionnaire surveys.

Comparing the rank order of activities mentioned and observed, reveals findings that converge, but also a few inconsistencies. Walking was found to be the most popular activity, followed by dog walking and then the activities of children.

In general, children tend to account for the majority of users who were seen to be cycling, running (as opposed to jogging) and engaged in informal play. The few acts of vandalism that were observed mainly involved swinging on trees, which resulted in the breaking of branches. Depending on your point of view, some may not consider this to be vandalism, but the rather inevitable outcome of normal play behaviour.

Children constituted 20-30% of the users at each site, which is double their incidence in the population as a whole, thus highlighting the importance of these sites to children.

The relative proportions of people who said they used the sites as through-routes, compared well with what was observed to be the case at Woodgate Valley and Leckie Rd, but not at Plants Brook. Far more people were observed to be through-routing, which would suggest that people at Plants Brook tended to answer the questionnaire in terms of their use of the nature park and the reservoir site as one site. This is reasonable



enough given that the two sites were, at the time and still are, linked by open access and look virtually alike in character. There was also little to tempt visitors to stay in the smaller nature park for any length of time, given that there were no seats, nor a circular path to lead them around the site, as there was around the reservoirs (albeit unsurfaced).

Observation studies offer a useful method for measuring change in the use of sites over time, and yet none of the studies reported in the literature have involved repeat sessions on the same site. Although it greatly extended the length of time devoted to data collection, running a second set of observations during the early summer of 1985, did provide additional information against which the reliability of the method could be assessed.

The changes at Plants Brook and Woodgate Valley were thought to be of a type and magnitude that ought to have led to an increase in usage. These two sites had become more attractive to visitors, there were people working on the site which perhaps reduced previous feelings of insecurity and there had been a lot of publicity work in the neighbourhoods to encourage people to visit the sites. In contrast at Leckie Rd, the young wardens tended to concentrate on maintenance tasks rather than publicising the site, the grass cover had still not closed sward, and there were still no facilities such as seats or picnic tables that would have drawn people actually into the landscape. In other words these changes were not of a type or magnitude that would have led to an increase in use.

In as much as increases were measured at Woodgate Valley and Plants Brook, but not at Leckie Rd, it could be argued that the 12 hour sampling frame provides enough time to detect changes. Ulrich and Addoms (1981) used a 60 hour sampling frame, and Bradley (1983) used a 36 hour sampling frame, but as neither of these have been repeated, it is not possible to compare them. Rutledge (1981) does not provide any advice on the minimum time needed to reveal consistent results. Further research on this issue ought to adopt a pragmatic approach, in that if we want

to encourage practitioners with limited time, to engage in evaluating the success or otherwise, of their own landscapes, suggestions for sampling frames should be sensitive to this. If a designer wanted to discover the maximum level of use that is made of a site, then sampling could be restricted to a hot and sunny Bank Holiday. On the other hand if the designer wanted to discover how the pattern of use varied between seasons and times of the day, a much longer sampling frame would be needed. The most important point is to ensure that the same sampling frame is used in longitudinal studies, if comparisons made between years are to be considered to be valid.

#### 8.4 The Effectiveness of the Community Involvement Strategies

The research on people's perception and use of urban nature parks has shown that people appreciate these types of informal, natural landscape and can derive recreational, educational and psychological benefits from visiting them.

This part of the discussion will focus on the effectiveness of three different strategies, as illustrated by the case study projects, as action that has enhanced the sites' value to people and wildlife. Of critical interest to UWG is whether the outcome of the projects would have been the same, and have happened as quickly, without their input.

The three strategies were:

- 1 Community nature parks strategy  
- designed to maximise the involvement of the community.
- 2 Limited community involvement strategy  
- adopted where interest from the community was low and/or where a project was initiated and led by the local authority.
- 3 Community campaign strategy  
- designed to enable local communities to construct and defend their case against undesirable development plans.



The discussion of the effectiveness of the outcomes will focus on a comparison of what has been achieved as against the objectives for each project, and the performance of the various interested parties.

#### 8.4.1. The Community Nature Park Strategy

UWG saw this strategy as the one that would maximise the benefit to UWG in achieving its aims:

- 1 For conserving sites.
- 2 Increasing public awareness of nature and the recreational opportunities of such informal sites in urban areas.
- 3 Educating children about nature and conservation.
- 4 Involving local communities in caring for the environment.
- 5 Influencing decision makers in order to prove that there was public demand and appreciation of this type of open space, such that they should take steps to enhance and create such landscapes to meet the needs of wildlife and people.

The findings from the evaluation of the Plants Brook project, suggest that all these aims have been achieved and with the maximum of benefit. Not only has the nature park been secured and enhanced as a conservation area for people and wildlife, but the local authority have been persuaded to purchase and develop the reservoir site using the same approach. Hundreds of local residents have been involved in volunteer work days on the site, and the numbers of visitors continues to increase year by year. Organised school parties and the nature club members learn about nature and conservation from the warden and environmental education staff employed through UWG.

#### The Lessons Learnt from Plants Brook

At Plants Brook, the most important objective was to stop the owner of the reservoirs tipping waste into them. From the residents' point of view, tipping would have caused them serious problems in terms of the disturbance it would have

created, as well as the destruction of an open space that they had come to appreciate. This corresponds with Cole's findings (1980) that the prime motivation for action groups is the preservation of amenity rather than conservation.

Having said that, some of the residents were aware of the harmful effect tipping would have on wildlife, but it is doubtful that this was the major motivation for wanting to oppose tipping, although it did prompt them to try to find out more about the site's value for wildlife, which is why UWG became involved.

It seems that the urban ecologist took a very pragmatic view by suggesting to the residents that if they could establish the smaller, publicly-owned site as a community nature park, then this would provide a useful 'weapon' in fighting the threat to the reservoir site which ecological surveys had revealed to be of more value than the smaller site. In other words there was obvious value to UWG in getting involved as well as the local community. Both wanted to ensure that the reservoirs were conserved as open space, but for slightly different reasons.

Nonetheless, by the time I interviewed the members of the management committee, it was obvious that the residents had absorbed much of UWG's philosophy towards the development of the nature park, such that issues relating to the wildlife value of the site were ranked just as highly as those relating to the value of the site to the local community. What is also obvious from the interviews is that the community and the councillors (who were the other main interested party in this project) were mainly interested in the site rather than in the opportunity to influence the wider local community, which remained more the concern of UWG.

UWG appears to have provided essential expertise in establishing the ecological value of the site, and a quick and free design service to provide a set of proposals for the development of the site. What they didn't do at this stage was much to help construct a case for opposing the tipping proposals which remained the main task of the community



representatives, whose case was ultimately based on social arguments. By the time UWG were able to employ someone with the right expertise to present a case to a public enquiry, the links between the community and the Group had weakened, such that the community engaged its own barrister. Nonetheless, UWG's case was built on both social and ecological arguments, which also won the support of the local authorities.

Returning to the nature park, UWG's involvement in Plants Brook also appears to have afforded a certain amount of credibility to the project as a whole. The councillors' confidence in the community wasn't such that they felt the community would be able to take on the lease of the site on their own. As a formally constituted body, UWG provided the obvious group to hold the lease. This also meant that they had to take on the responsibility for negotiating the lease. Given that the standard lease put forward by the council contained various conditions that would have proved contradictory to the development of the site as a conservation area, and that UWG had never negotiated a lease before and could not afford to pay the normal fees associated with such an arrangement, it is not suprising that it took so long to negotiate.

However, everything hinged on getting the lease, as the practical work could not begin without it. In the meantime, attention was diverted to fighting the case against tipping.

As UWG fought the case in virtual isolation from the community, the opportunity to help and influence the community was not capitalised on. Furthermore, it would seem that the case might well have been won entirely on social considerations, without any recourse to the ecological implications. Having said that, the Group were justified in contributing their own case and in supporting the case put forward by the city and county councils, not least because they had a responsibility to try to conserve the site and it also provided an opportunity to influence the councils. They were also able to counteract and neutralise the opposition's evidence that the ecological value of the reservoirs was lower than had been claimed.

It should perhaps be emphasised here that although it had been felt that it would only be worthwhile developing the nature park if something could be achieved on the ground quickly enough to help persuade the authorities to reject the planning proposal, the battle was won, well before the first work day ever took place. The arguments put forward on the basis of the plans and what had been achieved at the time had at least not counted against the case for opposition.

After the proposals for tipping had finally been rejected, and the lease had been granted, the Group then played a crucial role in re-asserting the importance of getting the approval and involvement of the community as a whole, rather than just the management committee representatives, for the plans for the nature park. There was no one within the management committee with the necessary skills at organising volunteers or the practical countryside skills needed to implement the proposals. It was however, perhaps fortuitous that the person who took over the project as the UWG representative at this time had such skills. This undoubtedly enabled something practical to be achieved on the site much sooner than might otherwise have been the case.

However, the outcome of the volunteer work days was that it became obvious that the community did not have the necessary time or skills to raise the funds or carry out the more difficult proposals such as the construction of the timber boardwalk, the car park and the path system. This provided UWG with a dilemma, because it had originally hoped that the work could have been entirely undertaken by the community, and this was obviously not going to be possible. Skilled help was required. This was provided by a local MSC Community Programme scheme, although it could equally well have been provided by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, but in using the latter, the work would not have been completed as quickly.

Even then, the MSC scheme people had had no previous experience of producing the type of facilities required at Plants Brook, and the only people who could provide the necessary supervision were UWG.



So, having originally hoped that it might have been able to withdraw from community nature parks within 1-2 years, UWG's contribution to the project had, if anything, steadily increased and had become perhaps most crucial at the stage of translating the proposals into action. An important factor to bring out at this point is that throughout the project, the local councillors had always been in positive support of the committee's ideas and had done much to help the community and UWG to achieve the aims of the project. Similarly there had never been a time when UWG had felt themselves to be in direct opposition with the community, at least not on anything that would have prevented progress taking place. This was not the case on other community nature park projects.

#### The Lessons Learnt from Holly Wood Community Nature Park

The pattern of events in the development of a similar project at Holly Wood had been roughly similar, up until the point at which UWG sought to withdraw from further practical involvement in the project.

The community had called in UWG to advise them on how the woods adjacent to their estate could be enhanced for wildlife and people. UWG brought together representatives from the local authority, the local primary school and the community, at a public meeting, to discuss what might be done. A management committee was then formed by the most interested local residents and the other interested parties named above, and as no lease was needed because the land was already designated as public open space, work began straight away.

However, whilst the local residents on the management committee felt that they were able to make a rewarding contribution to deciding what should be done on the site and monitoring the site's use on a day by day basis, few were willing to take part in the practical work. Half of the committee were either too old or vulnerable to back injuries to be able to help on a regular basis, but two of the others were actually quite experienced in practical conservation work.

The committee were not prepared to allow outside groups to do the practical work, including the council (who weren't able to anyway because of a lack of resources), as they feared that others would not appreciate the wildlife value of the site and inadvertently destroy it. The questionnaire survey of the local community revealed that the majority of the community supported the idea that the community should take on the responsibility for looking after the site, mainly because they did not trust the local authority to treat it in a sympathetic manner.

The two members of the committee who regularly turned up to help on work days, eventually became disenchanted with the lack of support they were receiving from the rest of the committee and the community in general. The community was identified as the estate of some 600 homes immediately adjacent to the site, bounded on the other 3 sides by two major roads and a motorway. Workdays had been held at the wood on average 6 times a year for two years. The wood required (and still does) a significant number of man days to enhance its value for wildlife, involving the reduction of sycamore invasion, creating clearings to encourage light to reach the ground flora, and underplanting the trees with herbs.

The practical resources of the local community were so low that it became impractical to continue to hope that the site could be handed over to the community for management, as had been hoped. The community continued to refuse to allow outside help in, so that the situation became intractable and UWG eventually withdrew because they were unable to change the minds of the community group. When MSC relaxed their rules relating to ongoing maintenance, UWG's site crews went into the wood in 1984 to carry out some essential maintenance tasks on the paths, but the benefits to people and wildlife have not been maximised.

Returning now to Plants Brook, with regard to the practical implementation and management of the site, the community's trust



in the local authority had also been undermined at an early stage in the project. At a meeting to discuss the proposals with a city council planner, the latter had suggested that the area designated as wet meadow could be developed as a football pitch. Admittedly, the planner had a problem to cope with at the time as he had to find work for a large MSC scheme of over 100 people and obviously saw the project at Plants Brook as a possible solution to his problem. All this did was to persuade UWG and the community that any further involvement of the city council would prove detrimental to the site. This mistrust was fuelled again when the proposals for the development of the reservoir site came up, as the councillors involved demanded that the maximum social benefit be gained. This would have meant allowing formal sports to take place on the water and attracting people from much further afield, both of which the residents felt would have destroyed much of the very fabric and character of the site that they had fought so hard to save. These findings confirm those of Davies (1981) that local communities are most likely to mistrust local authorities, a problem that can be ameliorated by adopting a user-oriented approach as has been shown at Woodgate Valley.

As a consequence of the need for UWG's continuing input into the nature park project and then also in the negotiations with the city council about how the latter should develop the reservoir site, UWG has, as it were, developed strong ties to this site. It was the first community project it got involved in, and still represents the site that the Group is most proud of. A high quality of landscaping has been achieved, which has undoubtedly encouraged more people to visit the site and has also enhanced their enjoyment of what it has to offer. The objective to encourage schools to use the site has also been achieved, as the warden and education staff employed through UWG have been able to develop links with the local schools and provide the necessary on-site supervision and teaching facilities needed.

The lease is coming up for renewal, and the community have expressed the desire that UWG should seek to renew it, so that the council do not take it over. In as much as UWG are likely

to support the demands of the community rather than the local authority, and in as much as the council do not appear to have adopted the user-oriented approach to the provision and management of open spaces advocated by the Group, it seems unlikely that UWG could refuse.

The Group still has a vested interest in the nature park and the reservoirs for their value to wildlife, and as a demonstration of what can be achieved, with which to influence decision makers. Indeed the Group has encouraged so many people to visit the site from all over the country, that the local community complained that too much publicity was being given to the project such that too many people were visiting it and the value of the site to local people was being undermined. It seems unlikely that the Group would now want to withdraw from the project, as it is so useful for demonstration purposes and is regarded with great pride because of its success.

The community whilst being now fully fledged in the techniques of running the management committee and negotiating with the local authority, still mistrust the local authority and require continued support from UWG in the running of the nature park.

#### 8.4.2. The Limited Involvement Strategy

In as much as the nature park strategy was regarded as providing potential for the fullest possible involvement of the local community, the limited involvement strategy was pursued on sites where either UWG's help had been requested by the local authority and/or where the level of interest from the community was low.

#### Lessons Learnt from Leckie Rd

At Leckie Rd, as a result of some successful influencing by the then chairman of the Group, a local authority officer recognised the potential for achieving a radical solution to a derelict land reclamation problem. What was also obvious to



the local authority officer was that the council did not have people in-house, with the necessary skills to bring that solution about.

Having approached the chairman of the Group for help, it was then agreed that, given the short time-scale, the available resources of the chairman (who was to be employed as the landscape consultant for the project) and the limited availability of design and landscape management skills as UWG, that the project should be progressed as a collaborative venture between the neighbourhood office, UWG, sub-contractors and the local community.

In the light of comments made by the neighbourhood officer as to the needs of the local community, the response to the public meeting, and my own assessment of the local community (after Maslow, 1954; and Glampson et al, 1975), it seems reasonable that efforts to involve the community should have been limited to the school children from the neighbouring primary schools.

In as much as the community were hardly involved in the decisions regarding the design of the site, the project was dominated by the influences of UWG and the two key local authority officers (the neighbourhood officer, who had originally initiated UWG involvement, and the planning officer whose job it was to release the funds and oversee the landscape work). This situation emphasises the need for all professionals (housing officers, planners, landscape architects and conservationists) to be trained in the user-oriented approach. Goring and Revill (1987) suggest that planners have a unique contribution to make as co-ordinators, but this was not the case at Leckie Rd. The important co-ordination function, which is discussed again in section 8.6. was provided by the housing officer from the Neighbourhood Office.

This was very much an experimental project, as reflected in the operational objectives identified by the various interested parties. At the time the data was collected on this case

study, few of the objectives had been achieved to their full potential. The most significant achievement was that there was evidence that the local people, and particularly the children, had accepted the site, in as much as the level of vandalism had been negligible; in stark contrast to the experience reported by the local authority on traditional landscaping schemes carried out in inner city areas. In addition, apart from the difficulties involved in trying to establish a closed grass sward in the meadow areas, the techniques used to plant the trees and establish the pond had proved to be both successful in terms of the growth rates of the material, and the reductions in cost.

Another successful outcome of the project was that the various different sources of labour that were employed in getting the scheme designed, implemented and managed, worked well with very limited supervision from the landscape consultant and UWG. It had been shown that it was possible to involve sub-contractors, MSC Community Programme teams and volunteers to establish a landscape as quickly as by any other means; with the added benefit that it had involved the local people and thereby created a sense of responsibility in them, for the long term care of the landscape.

The site has now matured, and seats and picnic tables have been provided. Only another questionnaire survey and observation study, using the techniques developed in this research, will reveal whether or not the local residents feel the project has been a success in meeting their needs of a local open space.

With regard to whether or not the Group have been able to capitalise on the opportunity the project offered for influencing the local authority, there is some doubt. The landscape consultant had hoped to be able to use the project to influence the parks department of the council, which has the major responsibility for open space provision and management in the borough. Fears on the part of the neighbourhood officer and the planner as to the response of the parks department to the slower than anticipated maturation



of the landscape, and the frustration this caused in the consultant, prohibited the fullest possible achievement of this aim. UWG were unable to have any direct influence at the highest levels within the parks department, although they were able to influence the landscape architects and landscape managers to some degree. However, whilst the planner and the consultant believed that the parks department had adopted the methods employed at Leckie Rd, UWG staff presently involved in providing minimal supervision (bi-monthly visits to the wardens) and advice on the management of the site, feel that the Parks Department have not fully accepted the ideas, nor are they attempting to implement them elsewhere.

The lesson to be learnt from this is that, if much impact is to be made on satisfying the demand for this type of open space for the community and for wildlife, UWG must follow up successful projects, once established, with a concerted effort to influence local authority departments with responsibility for the provision and management of urban open space. Now that the site has matured and the Group is able to assess the management requirements in terms of manpower and resources, a new approach to the councillors and local authority officers might prove more successful.

#### 8.4.3. The Community Campaign Strategy

UWG's efforts to help the community construct and defend its case against industrialisation of sites A and B in the Woodgate Valley, have been successful. This was, as UWG had hoped, a community campaign, rather than an UWG campaign.

#### Lessons Learnt from Merry Hill

The experience of the campaign over Merry Hill Farm, was regarded by the staff as having been less than satisfactory. The fact that this campaign had been led by UWG, rather than the community, gave rise to a lack of confidence in the staff that the campaign would not be successful if the local authority felt that the community's views were not being accurately

represented. In defining the community campaign strategy, the staff emphasised that the role of UWG should be to help the community construct and defend its own case to conserve a site, rather than act on behalf of the community. Having said that, there is always something to be gained by UWG in fulfilling its objectives to influence decision makers by providing an independent input to campaigns, as ultimately proved to be the case at Plants Brook, Woodgate Valley and Merry Hill.

#### Lessons Learnt from Woodgate Valley

In evaluating the campaign for Woodgate Valley the key issue is whether the community would have been able to prevent industrialisation of sites A and B without UWG input, and whether the landscape architects from the council would have been able to achieve the level of community involvement in the development of the country park, that they had hoped for without the support from UWG.

By the time UWG were invited to become involved with the community groups fighting the campaign, the community had already won half the battle, in as much as they had let the council know that they were happy with the proposals for the country park, but unhappy with the proposals for industrialisation. Nonetheless, the community reported that UWG had explicitly stated that the group would not be prepared to run what was happening, nor be seen to be fighting the battle without the support of the local community.

In the course of seeking help from anyone who was willing to help them, two separate approaches were made to UWG. This is very similar to what happened at Plants Brook, and is typical of the advice given to community groups by organisations such as the Community Projects Foundation (1977) that groups usually need to seek outside help. This is mainly in the form of expert advice on the facts of the problem or in helping the group to organise their campaign; political support from councillors who may be able to use their influence to sway decisions in the way the group wants; and fund raising support



from people with either the status to persuade others to provide funds, or with the experience to advise groups how they might set about raising funds.

The community group were very much in control of the campaign and were hoping that UWG would inform them as to the procedures they needed to go through, in specific detail, to help them retain the land.

The experience reported in Millward (1983) and Baines (1982) as to the difficulty of local authority professionals being able to take a community involvement, or user-oriented, approach was confirmed by the experience of the landscape architects at Woodgate Valley. They had wanted UWG to act as a 'better line of communication' with the residents, and as additional help in negotiating directly with the community as to their needs and in supervising practical work on-site that involved the community. UWG supplied that input, and what is perhaps more significant, was able to support the community during the campaign, in which the landscape architects were powerless to help, as they would have had to have opposed their own employers. In this case the landscape architects had the skills to make an adequate assessment of the conservation value of the valley, the sensitivity to recognise its recreational potential as a country park, and the courage to advocate a user-oriented approach. And even though their involvement with the community (who they regarded as sub-clients of the Amenities and Recreation Department) had been restricted, they had still experienced a great deal of satisfaction from their involvement with the community in the project, which confirms the findings of Gibson (1984).

It is also interesting to note that the community held the local authority landscape architects in high regard, and seem to have felt that they could be relied on to give honest advice and information, and to listen to the residents' views. The efforts of the UWG staff were appreciated for similar reasons, because they were prepared to take an interest in the problem. Apart from the technical advice and the important planning advice UWG provided, the other valuable contribution

UWG made was to help the community produce the report that proved to be so influential amongst the county councillors in particular.

Woodgate Valley was an important milestone in the development of UWG's approach to community involvement projects, because it had been possible to draw on lessons already learnt from previous projects, in determining the exact role the Group played. The community did not understand the planning procedures that needed to be followed through in order to save the valley, and the local authority were not able to provide them with that information. The only help offered by the councillors seemed to be that the community need not get involved, because they would make sure the valley was saved. Given the fact that the various councils changed their positions over the valley, several times during the course of the campaign, it is suggested that the community were right to ignore that advice. The fact also remains that the politicians blatantly were not prepared to take a user-oriented approach to the problem.

In a campaign situation, there is usually a limited period of time for any one wishing to oppose a threat to make their case known. In the case of Woodgate Valley, where there were so many different community groups and other interested parties involved, the independent and specialist status of UWG was critical. UWG were able to pull the groups together by providing a plan of the action that was needed, which had the effect of focusing attention on the real problem, rather than the problem of coping with what the politicians were, or were not, doing.

The fact that the community were so well organised, knew what their objectives were, had the evidence to support their case in the form of the report, and lobbied well, must I feel have been the main factors that persuaded the county council to agree to alter the structure plan zonation, before the final public meeting. Another key factor has to have been the influence UWG had had on the leader of the county council, who had been involved in the Merry Hill campaign, and had seen



how the Group had been able to help the community articulate its own opposition, as well as providing convincing arguments in favour of retaining the open space there for people as well as wildlife.

However, even though the local authority eventually set up a joint consultative committee with the community, to guide the development of the country park at Woodgate Valley, there is still a degree of mistrust between the community and the council. UWG continue their involvement, not just to provide technical input into the management of the valley, but also to advocate the need to involve the community in the real decision making, which is not actively promoted by the local authority.

#### 8.4.4. Summary

In all three case studies, there has been a successful outcome, in that the overall aims of UWG, and the operational objectives of the interested parties have been achieved. The open spaces that have been provided and enhanced have been shown to be of value to people. Whether or not they have been enhanced for wildlife, needs to be investigated. Furthermore, UWG has played a critical role in ensuring that the objectives have been achieved.

Without UWG's influence at Plants Brook, the reservoirs may well have been saved, and the smaller site may have been unaffected, but it is doubtful whether or not the council or the community would have taken steps to take action that would have enhanced the site's value.

At Woodgate Valley, there is evidence to suggest that without UWG involvement, the zoning for industrialisation would have been retained, because the community might not have been able to construct their case in time. Furthermore that case may not have been sufficiently strong without the ecological arguments supplied by UWG, given the community's lack of appreciation about the importance of arguing for the retention of the land as open space, rather than its retention for a more acceptable

development such as a leisure centre. UWG were able to show the importance of site B for its conservation value and the effect industrialisation would have had on the corridor value of the valley.

At Plants Brook and Woodgate Valley, the conflicts that have arisen have been mainly with respect to differing views on who the sites are for. It seems that in both cases the local authorities and councillors placed the greatest emphasis on meeting the needs of society beyond the local community. At Woodgate Valley the issue was the creation of jobs and at Plants Brook the issue was value for money. The issue at Woodgate Valley was resolved in as much as it was eventually accepted that the creation of buildings did not necessarily lead to the creation of new jobs.

At Plants Brook the issue has taken longer to resolve, and UWG have found themselves to hold the middle ground. The Group fought strongly to ensure that there was open access to the nature park, and in that sense were supportive of the councillors views. On the other hand they upheld the community's view that the value of the site derived from its 'unspoilt' character and the peace and quiet that resulted from the fact that the visitors engaged in mainly passive pursuits. In as much as it appears that the majority of users of urban parks are local (living within 2 km of the park) (Walker and Duffield, 1983a) this suggests that these issues should be regarded primarily as local issues, in which the emphasis should be given to what the local community feel should happen.

At Leckie Rd, UWG were able to grasp an opportunity, provided by the local authority, to demonstrate the type of radical solution to land reclamation that could be achieved. This could not have been achieved by the local authority on its own, and the project demonstrated that benefits could be increased by the active involvement of the community, at least in the implementation phase of a project and through environmental education. It remains to be seen whether or not the community feel that the open space is of value to them as countryside in



the city, now that the proposals have been fully implemented and the landscape has matured.

Apart from being able to measure effectiveness by comparing objectives with outcomes, another aspect of this is to measure the effectiveness of how the objectives were achieved. As this relates to the implementation process, a discussion of the performance of each of the interested parties is discussed in the next section.

#### **8.5. Defining the Roles of the Interested Parties and Identifying Appropriate Strategies**

Following discussion of the relative performance of each of the interested parties in the case studies, a simple model is suggested for how UWG, and other organisations, may be able to improve the identification of the most appropriate strategy that should be employed for a given community project and the type of role that the Group is likely to play.

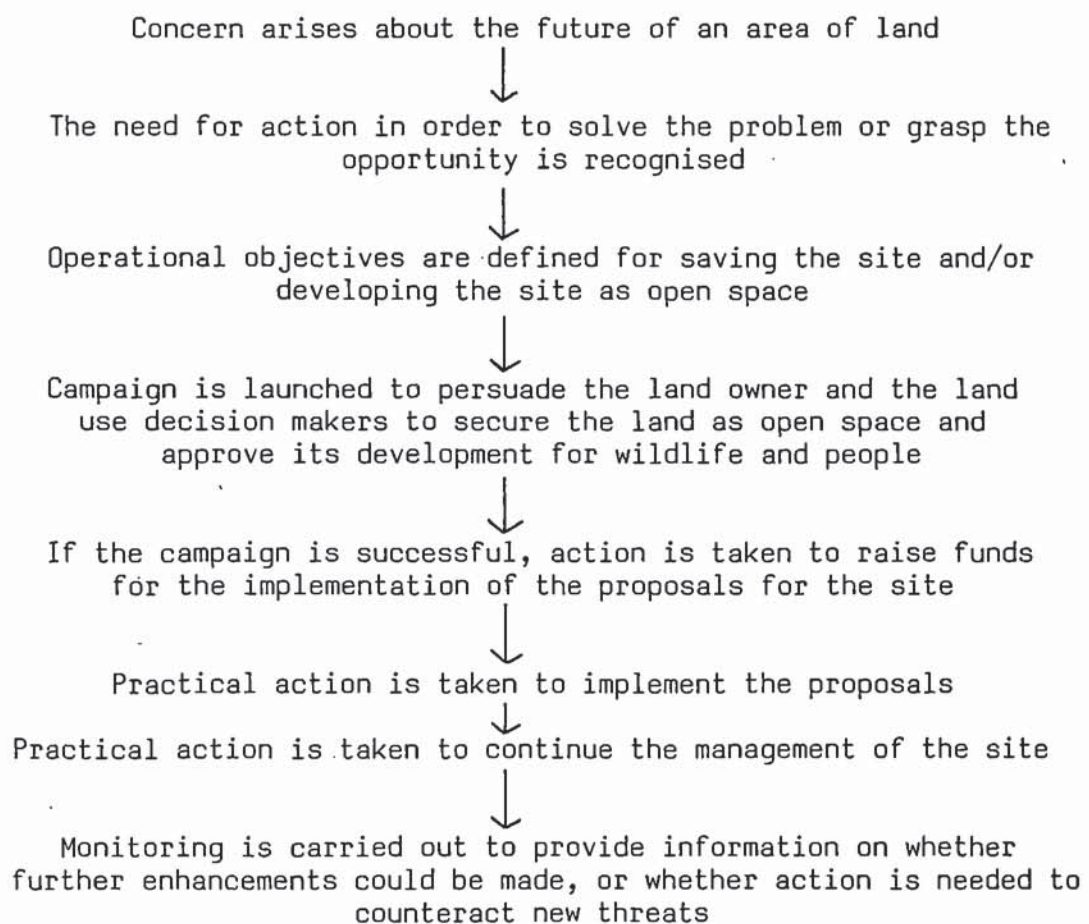
Each of the case studies has involved a different mix of interested parties. At Plants Brook, the local residents and UWG were the main interested parties, supported by local councillors. This was the pattern at the time the data was collected, but since then, local authority officers have played more of a role. At Leckie Rd, the project was dominated by local authority officers and UWG, with limited involvement from the schools which to all intents and purposes represents the main element of community involvement. At Woodgate Valley there was the most comprehensive and complicated network of interested parties. The campaign was dominated by the local residents, local councillors from both the city council and the county council, and UWG. The development of the country park was dominated by local authority officers, local residents and UWG.

Despite this variation the stages gone through in each project have been roughly similar, involving a mixture of influencing

and practical action to achieve common objectives. A simple model of the progress of community involvement projects is illustrated in Fig 14, which should provide the basis for a more structured approach towards the planning of action and the choice of strategy.

The definition of 'campaign' as used in the model in Fig 14 may involve simple negotiations with the land owner to seek approval for the proposals for developing a site, as happened at Leckie Rd. On the other hand it may also be seen to represent a strategy within a strategy, where a full-blown campaign is required to resolve conflict between the needs of

Fig 14 A model describing the process of community involvement projects in urban nature conservation



the community and the landowner, as occurred at Plants Brook, or to resolve conflict with the land use decision makers, as happened at Woodgate Valley.



The information collected from the interviews and documentary evidence, has enabled the roles of the various interested parties to be identified. The relative performance of each group will be discussed with reference to the case studies and other research on community action.

#### 8.5.1 The Role of Local Residents

The role of local residents may be summarised as:

- 1 The identification of a problem
- 2 An appraisal of the community's response to that problem
- 3 An understanding of the historical context to the problem
  - past land use
  - past threats
  - current status in planning terms
  - current use by local people
  - value to wildlife
- 4 Identification of local sources of help
  - councillors
  - organised community-based groups such as residents associations
  - funding
  - expert advice
- 5 Mobilising community support
- 6 Communicating with the community
  - face to face
  - leaflet distribution
- 7 Donation of funds
- 8 Practical involvement in the implementation of objectives
- 9 Day by day monitoring of local issues relating to the site
- 10 Responsibility for the welfare of the site
- 11 Contribution to decision making through representation of the community

In theory it would be feasible for a community to be able to take action without recourse to any external help. However, the evidence from past experience (Butcher et al, 1980) which is also confirmed by this research, is that groups are rarely self-sufficient, and they usually have to draw on external resources if they are to be effective.

In all cases those offering external help had provided similar services to other groups, and the majority of local residents had had limited, if any, previous experience in self-help initiatives, let alone any relating to environmental issues. It therefore has to be the case, that the external agents take on the responsibility for ensuring that an assessment is made of what the local residents will be realistically able to contribute. The local councillors did this to some extent at Plants Brook, the neighbourhood officer provided this information at Leckie Rd, and UWG established this at Woodgate Valley.

This is critical in determining what type of community involvement strategy would be most appropriate, against which each interested party may then be able to assess how much of a contribution they could and would be able to make. Whilst, this might be regarded as an essential role of a community development officer (Glampson et al 1975), no one in any of the case studies took on the responsibility, or possibly even had the skills to do this in a comprehensive manner. Furthermore, such information was not made sufficiently explicit, such that it could be identified in any documentary evidence or through the responses of the interviewees.

Unrealistic assessments were made of the contribution the communities would make to the Plants Brook and Holly Wood projects, with respect to the practical aspects of the implementation and management of the sites. I would suggest that UWG should, on the basis of lessons learnt from this research, take on the role of assessor where it is not provided by the community itself or another of the interested parties. This assessment can then be used to help the interested parties identify objectives and hence a realistic action plan.

An opportunity did present itself to test out this type of approach at Warwick Rd, which is discussed in the section on the role of UWG. The essence of the approach is that the external agents need to consider two particular issues: who is likely to be affected or interested in the problem, and what level of commitment and involvement the local community will be willing



and able to make to the project.

Depending on the philosophies and the motivations of the external agents for wanting to be involved in community projects, it is likely that they would want the community to do as much for themselves as possible, if for no other reason that that would reduce their own level of input. This is important for UWG because the demand for its services is greater than can be supplied.

The power of the local community should not be under-estimated, as this can have a crucial influence on the success or otherwise of a project. The experience at Holly Wood (8.4.1) showed that despite the desire to succeed, progress was severely hampered. This was because the community remained so protective that they did not want the local authority, school group or BTCV affiliated group to undertake the practical work, when UWG wished to withdraw for reasons as outlined in 8.4.1.

It is interesting to note that whilst most of the interviewees felt that the others on the management committees were in agreement over the general objectives for the projects, it was obvious that different interested parties also held their own unique objectives. UWG advocate community involvement as a method for improving people's understanding of the natural world, and as a strategy for achieving site conservation at a time when local authorities remain either unwilling or incapable of taking action themselves. Councillors seem to see community involvement principally as a way of achieving change but with reduced dependence on the statutory sector. The professionals providing expert advice from UWG and the local authorities, tend to see it as a pragmatic method for bringing about radical solutions to problems, and also as a more rewarding method of working.

These additional objectives do not appear to have been made explicit, perhaps for understandable reasons. On the other hand conflicts arose because of them as have been discussed. Bradley (1986) suggests that in the most successful community projects, that it has to be made obvious that the community

will benefit from the outcome, and that such rewards are clearly spelt out. This again implies that the external agents should be sympathetic to the needs of the community, first and foremost.

#### 8.5.2 The Role of UWG

The role of UWG may be summarised as:

- 1 Ecological survey and evaluation
- 2 Identification of the problem/opportunity in a social and ecological context
- 3 Identification of operational objectives
- 4 Assessment of resources internal and external to the community
- 5 Provision of technical aid; planning, landscape design, landscape management, interpretation, wardening
- 6 Influencing and educating
  - community
  - interested parties
- 7 Provision of organisational skills
- 8 Mediation between the land owner and land use decision makers, and the community
- 9 Monitoring
  - ecology of site
  - social aspects of site's use/abuse
  - land use policy

Even though the summary provides a simplified illustration of the type of input UWG have had to projects, it also indicates the wide range of expertise that the Group is both able and required to provide. In addition to the expertise provided by UWG staff, there are also substantial resources that the group can make available to community groups such as graphics facilities, media contacts, plant and landscaping materials, tools and transport.

It has been evident that over the time of a project, no one person could ever provide the entire range of advice and support that might be needed; an approach that was proven to be



inappropriate vis a vis the failure of the community liaison officer, to provide the direct contact with community groups. Following the demise of this initiative, the Group re-affirmed its policy that professional planners and landscape designers employed by the Group ought to develop community involvement skills which they would be able to draw on in their future careers. It was also agreed that there should be an individual member of staff responsible for co-ordinating the input of others for each site, and to act as the main UWG representative on the management committee.

The problems experienced by the staff at Plants Brook, Woodgate Valley and other community projects, in the early years, stemmed largely from a lack of direction by the executive and a lack of confidence about their role which is not surprising, given the absence of any precedents.

To some extent, the problems relating to direction have been overcome, through the development of firm policies for community involvement and site-based projects. The problems arising from a lack of experience still persist, especially for those who have not had the benefit of courses which explore the philosophy and practice of a community involvement or the user-oriented approach. This problem is further compounded by the lack of continuity and general uncertainty that is an inevitable by-product of the Group's reliance on MSC Community Programme to fund its staff.

New staff often complain that it is difficult to pick up the strands of projects they are asked to take over, because files have not been kept up to date and there has been no evaluation of progress on site-based projects to enable them to identify where they might best be able to make a contribution. This should be relatively easy to overcome by improving the efficiency of recording information, and by the Group taking on the responsibility for maintaining an overview of projects, whether or not it has the responsibility for co-ordination.

A more difficult problem is equipping staff with some understanding of how to handle community projects, which I

would suggest should be based on an understanding of the process of projects and the roles played by the various interested parties. This was one of the main reasons this research was undertaken and I would hope that the Group might use the information in this thesis as a basis for designing some training and evaluation programmes to help staff at UWG and elsewhere, become more efficient in this type of work. Whilst the literature on the experience of community groups is relatively well documented (Gibson, 1979; Community Projects Foundation 1977; Butcher et al, 1981; Shell Better Britain Campaign, 1986) there is much less to date on the experience of enablers from the voluntary and statutory sectors in environmental issues (Stearn, 1981; Bradley; 1986).

It should perhaps be the responsibility of the volunteer members of UWG's landscape and planning subcommittees, to ensure that regular reviews are made of progress on specific sites, such that the procedure for matching up new staff with ongoing projects is improved. Past experience shows that it is often the case that someone with the commitment to the community involvement approach can succeed where those with the appropriate skills but the wrong approach fail.

Another responsibility for the volunteers on the subcommittees must also be to ensure that the wider objectives of the Group are fulfilled. UWG will never, nor is it felt it should, become the main provider of informal landscapes in the West Midlands. The local authorities are the major land owners of open space in urban areas, and it is UWG's task to persuade them of the ecological and social arguments for them to change their approach. For staff immersed in the day by day running of community projects, this can seem an impossible task.

The Group does need to address itself to how local authorities might be able to adopt user-oriented approaches to the provision and management of open space. If, as seems likely this has to be viewed as a long term aim, then there is a need to get local authorities to address how they might develop and define their role in collaborative projects, and support the work of voluntary agencies who provide the elements local authorities cannot; a view recently expressed by Gee (1986) who



suggests that there is a need to develop 'complementary' roles.

It is essential that UWG reassess its strategy for influencing local authorities, because experience shows that the Group find it difficult to withdraw from community projects, which prevents sufficient time from being devoted to influencing. Progress has been made on persuading local authorities to draw up their own nature conservation strategies, and the planning unit are about to publish guidelines on how planning can make a contribution to meeting the needs of urban wildlife and urban people. However, the fact remains that local authorities need to find ways for acquiring the appropriate skills and defending the necessary re-allocation of resources if they are to be able to supply more of the demand for nature in cities that is being generated by community groups and pressure groups such as UWG.

The need for technical information as supplied by Bradshaw et al (1986), Handley (1987, forthcoming) and Brooker and Corder (1987) will continue to be essential, but there is a need for more debate on the value and feasibility of the user-oriented approach following on from Stamp (1987), Tregay (1985) and Royffe and Taylor (1987). The recent launch of a new magazine by the Association of Technical Aid Centres, 'Community Network', may also be able to make a useful contribution.

UWG can be confident, that it has been justified in advocating that urban people want nature in cities, and that local communities can do much to actually help conserve and enhance sites through their own efforts. As enablers, UWG will always have a unique contribution to make to community projects in urban nature conservation for several reasons. Firstly, it will continue to be the group in the county with the best understanding of the ecological value of urban land and its importance in a national and international context. Secondly, it is the only group in the county promoting nature conservation as a legitimate land use issue, which must compete alongside needs of housing, schools, industry and other land uses. Thirdly, communities will always need to seek independent expert advice from apolitical bodies. This

imposes a responsibility on UWG to facilitate co-operative action between opposing interests, without jeopardising its own interests. In other words, the Group should be aware of its potential as a mediator.

On this last point, it should be emphasised that enablers have been found to be more likely to side with the communities they are involved with, rather than their employers (Butcher et al, 1980 op cit). Given that UWG actively promotes community involvement and the local authorities do not, it is likely that UWG would, where necessary, tend to support the community's case in preference to the local authority's.

### 8.5.3. The Role of Local Authority Officers

The role of local authority officers as illustrated in the case studies may be summarised as:

- 1 Initiators of conservation projects
- 2 Providers of technical aid in the design of sites
- 3 The identification of relevant local government policies
- 4 The identification of statutory sources of help
  - personnel
  - funding
- 5 Overview and co-ordination of projects at the neighbourhood level
- 6 Community involvement
- 7 Internal influencing to promote the need for urban nature conservation, and the value of a user-oriented approach

The experience of the community at Plants Brook was such that early on in the project, they decided that it would be detrimental to try to involve local authority officers from the planning department, who appeared to be less than sympathetic to their own views on how the nature park should be developed. In contrast to this, the local authority officers with the most direct involvement with communities and UWG at Leckie Rd and Woodgate Valley, provided important and unorthodox contributions to those projects. They too however, suffered a



lack of support from their own colleagues in other departments. This resulted in a certain amount of frustration for the landscape architects at Woodgate Valley, because their involvement and influence became restricted, during the campaign phase. They also found the traditional workpractices, dictated by the Landscape Institute guidelines, to be too restrictive, hence their eagerness to get UWG to fulfill the extra liaison and supervision of the community that they were unable to do.

By virtue of the unusual circumstances that led to the release of funds for Leckie Rd, the planner and the neighbourhood officer had perhaps more control over the development of that project than might otherwise have been the case. However, the opportunity was to a certain extent counteracted by the criticism they encountered from colleagues over the viability of the project and the problems encountered over the establishment of the meadow.

If as was suggested, in the last section, UWG re-assess their influencing strategy, they should perhaps carry out some follow up interviews, or even group discussions with the local authority officers who were involved in Woodgate Valley and Leckie Rd, to review what impact their involvement had on their own approach to similar projects and to their departments.

There is very little to compare the experience of the local authority officers with in the literature (Gibson, 1984; Goring and Revill, 1987). All that can be said is that the officers seem to have found the direct contact with a demanding but appreciative client (ie the community) to be rewarding, which is supported by Gibson (1984).

The research suggests that the constraints outlined by Baines (1982 op cit) still pertain and the level of understanding of ecological design and management techniques is still rare, within local authority departments responsible for the provision of open space. This presents severe problems which must be resolved if local authorities are to be able to manage community landscapes in the way that Bradley (1986 op cit)

suggests, using the key person approach.

Whilst it is difficult to make generalisations on the basis of UWG's experience, the key persons provided by local authorities at present lack the necessary skills to play anything more than a limited role in maintaining community involvement in the decision making process. Where key persons are responsible to the local authority, it is difficult for them to provide the community with impartial advice where a conflict arises as happened at Woodgate Valley. And yet community groups are bound to need to seek independent advice.



#### 8.5.4. The Role of Local Councillors

Councillors were not involved to any great extent at Leckie Rd, so the following summary is based on findings from Plants Brook and Woodgate Valley only. The roles of the local councillors included:

- 1 An analysis of the project's worth to the wider community.
- 2 Pressure on committees and officers to approve project objectives and action plans.
- 3 Information gathering and presentation to the community and the council.
- 4 Manipulation of community initiatives for political ends.

Tudor (1977) states that:

'In theory, local councillors are responsible for policy and responsible to public opinion. However, not only do councillors see themselves in different roles, but there is also a communication gap between them and the public'.

C Tudor (1977). Voluntary Groups and their Potential for Putting to Use Waste open Spaces in the Urban Environment: 51.

She goes on to describe the alternative roles of councillors as trustees of public affairs or as delegates of the wishes of their constituents. Where the two roles are combined, the councillor is described as a politico. Tudor found that councillors were more likely to take on the role of politico or trustee in the way they related to voluntary groups. This led to councillors defending established policies and resisting opportunities for change and innovation. It is only by taking direct action that community groups can break through this bureaucratic inertia.

The experience at Plants Brook showed that the councillors acted initially as delegates in that they actively supported and contributed to the achievement of the project's aims. They also maintained a watchful eye, as trustees, on whether the group would be able to make good use of the opportunity and not

waste public resources. Where the conflict arose was that the councillors ultimately broadened their view such that the needs of the local community were sacrificed for the benefit of the wider community. It may be that this phenomenon would be reduced when local authorities accept the need for natural landscapes to be provided on a local, rather than borough or regional basis (as has been discussed in section 8.4.4).

At Woodgate Valley, the community had appreciated the contribution that the local councillors had made, whilst regarding it with a certain amount of cynicism. There were mitigating circumstances that affected the role of councillors in this project, namely the poor relationship between the county council and the city council, and the imminent on-set of local elections.

Under the present labour administration, Birmingham City Council has decentralised its services, and has created stronger links between local residents and local authority officers and councillors. What the council still does not have is a specific policy which would encourage community involvement and a user-oriented approach in the provision and management of urban open space. It would obviously be ideal if this could be achieved as it would surely have the effect of encouraging a user-oriented approach amongst local authority officers. UWG should perhaps consider, preparing a report on the success of the community projects, emphasising the value of such projects to the community.

## **8.6. Conclusions on the Effectiveness of the Different Strategies**

It is suggested that the choice of an appropriate strategy, which thus defines the input of UWG and the other interested parties, depends on the following factors:

- 1 The initiator of the project.
- 2 The level of interest and commitment of the local community.



- 3 The resources of the community.
- 4 The case load, degree of confidence and commitment to community involvement of UWG staff.
- 5 The motivation, support and flexibility of local authority officers.
- 6 The support of local councillors.

Where there is a high level of interest and commitment from the community, the adoption of the community nature park strategy should be invoked. In the absence of sympathetic support from the local authority, UWG would need to be prepared to commit substantial resources to a project. Where local authority support is available, UWG ought to be able to reduce their level of input accordingly.

Where the need for action has not arisen from local residents, the potential for maximising the benefits to the community are reduced in the short term. UWG should therefore adjust their own input to complement that which can be provided by the local authority, and be selective in the amount of time spent on influencing the community in the early stages of a project.

The overall aim should be to ensure that the assessment of the resources of the various interested parties is as accurate as possible, and that the operational objectives are worked out with care, such that the work load generated can be efficiently divided between the interested parties.

It is also suggested that there should be a clearly identified co-ordinator for each project, through whom all other interested parties report their action. In the case of a community led project, this role could be fulfilled by the chairperson of the management committee. In the case of a local authority led initiative, this role is best fulfilled by someone with the closest links with the community. The person who initiated the case projects reported in this research tended to evolve as the co-ordinator, although this was never made explicit within the management committees. Where the co-ordinator is not the UWG representative, UWG should also take on the responsibility to develop an overview of a

project, so as to ensure that that function of co-ordination is being fulfilled. Without it, time and effort are inevitably wasted. The justification for this is that UWG will more than likely have had the most experience of community involvement projects as compared to any local authority officer, and thus be better placed to give advice on what may be realistically achieved. The Group should therefore be prepared to make a positive intervention by helping all the interested parties to choose an appropriate strategy.

It is also suggested that the campaign strategy should best be regarded as a sub-strategy, and invoked only where there is a need for direct action, should negotiations with the opposition break down.

Support for this approach to deciding which strategy is most appropriate for a given situation, comes from the experience UWG gained from the Warwick Rd project.

In 1983, West Midlands County Council asked UWG to investigate the possibility of developing a number of community involvement projects on vacant sites in the county. I was able to feed in some of the preliminary findings of the research to help the Group decide firstly whether it would be possible to generate community involvement, and if so which of the two main strategies would be appropriate; the community nature park strategy or the limited involvement strategy. Some of the sites were immediately discounted, on the grounds that there was no community near enough to have developed any particular interest in, or use of, a site. This was based on the findings of the questionnaire survey and the confirmation that provided in support of Spencer's system (1973) for defining the geographical boundaries of a community.

At Warwick Rd, the Group identified the geographical identity of the community as being the small, rather run-down, council estate adjacent to the site. The site is a linear shape, and is sandwiched between the estate and a railway line. Observation studies revealed that it was used mainly by dog



walkers and through-routers.

The initiative had come from the county council, rather than the community, and there appeared to be no organised tenant's association in the area; although there were several youth groups and schools. This situation closely resembled that at Leckie Rd.

The county council had hoped to have established its own community involvement scheme using MSC Community Programme funding. However, the county council were unable to get union approval for their scheme, which resulted in them having bought several thousand trees to be used on the projects but no staff to implement the schemes. UWG were called in specifically to provide the community involvement element of the projects.

UWG recommended that a very limited approach be taken to involving the community in the project, such that the landscape design should be capable of implementation with token involvement of the community, and managed by the district council on completion. This was agreed to. UWG were to use their own MSC staff to prepare the ground for planting, to publicise and supervise the community work days, complete any outstanding planting and spread the bark mulch needed to protect the young trees from competition from weeds.

The Group agreed to leaflet the community, informing them of the landscaping proposals for the site and inviting them to send their comments to UWG. The leaflet also invited them to join in on the community tree planting day. Special efforts were made to involve the local schoolchildren over several days and press coverage was organised to make the events seem more of an occasion.

The design and implementation of the project were completed within 12 months from the first meetings and Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council fulfilled their obligation to cut the grass. Children from more than 10 schools were involved in the tree planting and the project was deemed to have been a great success.

However, following abolition, the input of the district council declined, so in 1986 UWG took steps to renew community involvement in the project. The lack of resources within the community, prompted the Group to seek the collaboration of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers who were able to provide the necessary tools and extra supervisors to help the children and adults who turned up to help on the work days that were organised earlier this year. The site is due to be officially opened by the mayor in April.

The aims to improve this open space for wildlife and people have been achieved, and maximised through the involvement of the local community, but at a cost to the interested parties that was more commensurate with the benefits to be gained in the short term. The long term future for community involvement in the project and the maintenance of the site remain unresolved.

In the absence of appropriate public policy to promote a user-oriented approach in the development of public open space that is of benefit to people and wildlife, UWG and the public are faced with the continuing need to bring influence to bear.

It may seem that the distinctions that have been made between the different strategies are rather arbitrary. In reality input from each of the interested parties could range from almost zero to almost 100% of the total effort required to establish and run a project, and that the relative significance of each of the other 5 factors (outlined at the beginning of 8.6) could also be extremely variable. Furthermore, the names given to the strategies are rather unsatisfactory and need addressing.

However, in the sense that the strategies were intuitively developed by UWG staff in the course of their work and then defined by the researcher, fed back to staff and ratified, they have some merit. Ultimately, when all the faults are taken into account, it is the principle embodied within the concept of the strategies that remains important; that an assessment of the various factors should be made in order to determine the input UWG will be able to make to a project, which will vary



from project to project.

### Conclusions

It has been shown in this thesis that each of the various interested parties has a unique role to play in achieving common objectives. The future for urban nature conservation lies in nurturing such partnerships. The 'wisest use of resources' (IUCN et al, 1980) was the term coined by the World Conservation Strategy to describe how society can achieve conservation with development. I would suggest that it is just as appropriate to apply it to the use of human resources directed towards achieving conservation with development.

## 8.7 The Value of the Research Approach and Methodology

### 8.7.1. Action Research

The research problem presented a complex situation for several reasons.

Firstly, there had been no previous attempt to review the factors that had led to the development of the urban nature conservation movement, which would have provided the historical context to the establishment of UWG and its advocacy of involving local communities in the provision and management of urban nature parks. Secondly, UWG was a new and rapidly evolving organisation, with no firm policies on how its objectives should be implemented at the start of the research.

Thirdly, the projects involved a range of interested parties, but my main task was to evaluate the role and contribution of just one of those parties ie UWG. Fourthly, urban nature conservation itself, was a new field of activity. None of the other voluntary groups already in existence had published any kind of evaluation of their approach to community involvement, from which UWG could learn, or which I could have used as a framework for this research. Furthermore there was a general lack of previous research on the effectiveness of strategies involving the community, in the provision of services in the environmental field.

The general lack of any specific contextual information and the dynamic nature of the problem situation, therefore demanded a flexible and in-depth approach, focusing on the generation of knowledge, rather than the testing of existing knowledge. Action research provided a suitable approach.

In a rapidly changing situation, it is often difficult for those directly involved in the main stream of service provision to find the time to stand back and evaluate that service. The cyclical nature of action research, which allows the researcher to analyse information and feedback the results



to improve a situation proved particularly useful in the context of this study, which progressed in several stages. Firstly, before I could evaluate the community involvement projects, I had to establish how that aspect of the Group's work fitted in with its other activities. Secondly, the identification of the different community involvement strategies was a post-rationalisation exercise which demanded the identification of what the staff in particular perceived to be the purpose of involving the community, and how and to what extent they were able to promote that involvement. Only then did it become possible to gather and interpret data on the specific case studies in order to provide a basis for the evaluation of the different strategies.

#### 8.7.2. Evaluation Research

The formal evaluation research design provided a structure for exploring both the context and the mechanism of the problem situation; a structure which was both logical and straightforward. This makes it easy to adopt by anyone wishing to evaluate the community involvement projects or indeed any other area of the Group's activities in the future.

#### 8.7.3. The Importance of Triangulation

Once UWG had decided what it wanted to know, it was then possible to decide what methods would be appropriate to elicit the necessary information. Although a questionnaire presented itself as the most appropriate method for eliciting factual information on local residents perception of the site, there was no previous research to suggest what coding categories might be most useful.

This raised the problem of how to validate the information gathered. Another problem was that a questionnaire could not be designed to gather information from both adults and children, and so there was a risk that the views and activities of what was assumed to be a major user group of informal, more natural landscapes, would be ignored. Elson (1977 op cit) and many other authors had also emphasised the need for researchers

to address the need to verify what people said they did when visiting open spaces, with what they actually did when observed. On the other hand, an observation method used on its own would not have been able to determine the views people held about the sites.

Triangulation methodology provided a philosophical basis to the research which allowed for the use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to be used to strengthen the validity of the results; with the added benefit that each method used would also provide additional information to enhance the findings and aid interpretation.

The problem of evaluating the actual projects could have been addressed through either document study, or group discussions or in-depth interviews with individuals from the interested parties. Preliminary investigations indicated that the people involved would have much information to give, and different perspectives, on the project as a whole, and on UWG's contribution in particular. This I felt precluded the use of group discussions, as interviewees might have felt inhibited from openly criticising each other. It also appeared that a document study of the working files of the Group and the minutes of the community group meetings would not reveal the whole picture. On the other hand it would be necessary to corroborate the factual information derived from the individual interviewees so that at least it would be possible to decide whether or not what was said to have occurred, had occurred. So, once again there seemed to be a case for using two different methods to collect similar information.

The reliability of the various methods used, varied. The observation method is considered to have been quite reliable. Extending the research into a fourth year provided the opportunity to replicate the observaion study, at least for the three months of peak site use. The results showed a marked increase in the levels of use at Plants Brook and Woodgate Valley, but virtually no change at Leckie Rd. These differences were consistent with the pattern of changes that had occurred at the the sites between the first observation run



and the second.

At Plants Brook and Woodgate Valley, the paths had been surfaced, benches had been provided, signs had been erected and wardens/rangers were on hand and had produced much additional publicity for the sites. At Leckie Rd, the changes were less dramatic; two of the through roads had been closed off and litter bins had been provided, but the grass sward had still not closed over the bare soil and there were no benches to sit on.

It was possible to maintain reasonably consistent results through the use of standardised procedures, despite the fact that 25 different observers were involved over the two years. Even though most of these were graduates and had had some experience of research methods, everyone was provided with a worked example sheet and a set of detailed instructions to take into the field, which it is felt has reduced the potential for systematic error in the gathering of data.

The questionnaire survey is considered to have been less reliable, even though it was piloted. It was not possible to replicate the entire survey on different sample populations living near the sites, given the limited 3 year time period for the research and the dependence on UWG staff to volunteer their help with the fieldwork. However, replication of questions within the questionnaire relating to people's dislikes and the improvements they would make to the sites did produce consistent results.

A further problem with the questionnaire was that the sample size) a compromise between the ideal and that that could be resourced) proved too small to allow for any detailed analysis or cross-tabulation between variables. Suggestions for refining the questionnaire are presented in 8.8 and Appendix H.

The schedule for the in-depth interviews emphasised objectives, roles, satisfactions and problems as applied to each individual and a project as a whole. No attempt was made to explore the personality traits of the management committee members, although there has been some interesting work done on the

traits of the 'environmentally concerned person' (Buttle and Finn, 1978; Weigel, 1977; Borden and Frances, 1978 and Ray, 1980). Such an issue is rather more general than those addressed within this research. Nonetheless questions could have been included within the interview schedule and even within the questionnaire to explore its significance in relation to who gets involved in these projects and who uses and/or values the sites.

Similarly, no attempt was made to explore and interpret the process of the projects through the theories of organisations and group dynamics. If it had been possible to feed back the results of the research to each management committee as a whole (rather than to UWG alone) some useful insights may have been gained. Had there been time for regular non-participant observation at management committees throughout the research, it might even have been possible to re-assess the effectiveness of the management committees in relation to their objectives, self-management, ability to make decisions and solve problems, resolve internal conflict, process information, enable the development of individuals, and evaluate their achievements (Handy, 1981).

It has been argued in section 2.7 that the sites in this study are somehow fundamentally different to other types of urban open space, and that the perceptions and experience of them relate more to that of recreation sites in the countryside rather than urban sites. This raises two issues underlying the interpretation of the results; firstly whether this distinction is valid and if so, how representative the 3 case studies are of natural landscapes.

One way of testing this distinction would be to employ the same methods to other types of open spaces, as advocated by Walker and Duffield (1983b). This would show whether or not the perceptions of so-called natural landscapes varied significantly from the more traditional types of open space.



In order to explore the second issue, and because the evidence we have in support of a distinction is perhaps best regarded as circumstantial at this point in time (see 2.7) we must assume that there is a distinction. In physical terms the 3 case study sites represent a range of conditions; small inner city, derelict, residential (Leckie Rd); medium sized, suburban, neglected, industrial (Plants Brook); and large, urban fringe, abandoned farmland (Woodgate Valley). In social terms the local communities could be described as predominantly working class with some lower middle class (except at Leckie Rd).

My knowledge of sites elsewhere in the country and descriptions within the literature suggest that the case study sites were reasonably representative of sites and projects elsewhere (Stearn, 1980; Cole 1980 and Millward, 1983). Nonetheless, the only way to really test the representativeness of UWG's sites and therefore the generalisability of the results would be to replicate the study on a range of other natural landscapes and indeed open spaces of contrasting types.

The results of the research indicate that the suite of methods used have provided UWG with the information it requested, for what amounted to a comprehensive investigation of the effectiveness of the strategies employed to provide and manage urban nature parks, and the benefits users derive from those parks.

This approach to evaluation which involves the use of multiple methods, could have widespread applications. It could be used to evaluate the success of any open space, and the strategy used to provide and manage that space. The coding categories in the questionnaire would need to be adapted depending on what facilities were provided by the open space under investigation, but the interview schedule and observation method would need no such refinement.

### 8.7.2. A Suggested Model for Future Evaluations of Open Spaces

Although the involvement of the community and the need for a campaign may add to the complexity of the process (see Fig 14) the main stages in the development of any open space are:

- 1     Design
- 2     Implementation
- 3     Management

The data collection for this research had to be completed within a three year period. The projects had all developed at different rates and so the timing of my interventions were to a certain extent compromised. This caused particular problems at Leckie Rd because at the time of data collection, the landscape proposals had not been fully implemented nor had the landscape been able to mature. On the basis of the lessons learnt from this research it would seem that the length of time it takes to progress from the design stage (which may or may not involve a campaign) to full implementation of proposals and maturation of the landscape, is at least 4 years.

For organisations wishing to undertake evaluations in-house, it should be possible to spread the evaluation over time, such that the periods of data collection can be matched to the different stages of a project. A basic two-phase evaluation is suggested; the first phase would be undertaken towards the end of the design stage and the second phase would follow during the first year of management when the proposals had been fully implemented and the landscape had achieved a degree of maturity.



Phase 1

At the point in the design stage whereby the operational objectives and a set of draft proposals have been agreed by the interested parties, the most useful information that could be collected would include the following:

- 1 Observation studies
  - how is the site currently being used?
- 2 Questionnaire survey
  - what it is that users like?
  - what do users dislike?
  - suggested improvements?
  - general preferences for open spaces in the locality?
- 3 Interviews with interested parties
  - what are the overall aims of the project?
  - what are the operational objectives for the project?
  - have the roles of the various interested parties been defined, and if so what are they?

The basic methods as described in Apendices I, H and B could be used, without alteration for this first phase.

It is important to be able to interview the interested parties who were originally involved in the project, because it will be their ideas and philosophies that are passed on to newcomers. This was particularly important in this research because UWG staff changed so frequently.

It may not be appropriate to carry out observation studies or questionnaire surveys if the project involves creating a brand new landscape. However, useful information can be gathered on the views of local residents at on-site design meetings and public meetings.

Information collected as part of an evaluation at this stage can be fed back to the interested parties, so that it can be incorporated into the final design of the project.

Phase 2

Once into the management stage, a second set of data can be

collected. By this stage it should be possible to assess more accurately how many of the operational objectives have been achieved, and whether or not the effort of the interested parties has resulted in a product that the community are deriving benefit from.

A combination of observation studies, questionnaire surveys and follow-up interviews with the interested parties could be used.

The observation and questionnaire method could and should be repeated exactly as for phase 1. This would enable any changes in use or perceptions to be identified.

The interview procedure could be restricted to those questions which require the interviewees to compare the outcome of the project in relation to the objectives, and the roles of the various interested parties (including themselves). Information on unfulfilled objectives and problems affecting progress might usefully be fed back to the interested parties. This might precipitate the need for a new cycle of design, implementation and management to begin, or more likely a re-assessment of objectives and resource allocation.

In the situation where objectives have been met, the combined information from the phase 2 evaluation could then be fed back to the interested parties and other decision makers, to inform the development of the site's management plan, and thus ensure that the users' needs are being met.

The option then exists for further phase 2 evaluations to be made at perhaps 3-5 yearly intervals to re-assess the effectiveness of the projects.

### 8.7.3 Resource Implications

There is a need to compare the effectiveness of different strategies and their application to the provision and management of different type of open space on a national and international basis, and landscape researchers are perhaps best suited to undertake such work.



However, if the evaluation 'kit', described as a suite of methods in the previous section, is to be fully exploited by practitioners, keen to improve the quality and efficiency of their own services, then recourse to an independent researcher might not be as beneficial and could be more expensive. In as much as it may prove difficult for someone from one of the interested parties involved in a specific project, to carry out the whole evaluation, it should be possible for members of staff or volunteers from voluntary organisations and local authorities to evaluate projects that involve their colleagues.

The most important thing is to ensure that the research design is applied with consistency to different sites and by different organisations. The 'kit' provides the means of achieving such consistency.

From my knowledge of current projects being undertaken by UWG, I would suggest that an evaluation of three different projects might be worthy of consideration. A phase 2 evaluation could be carried out on Richmond Nature Garden which presents an interesting example of a the community nature park strategy. The community group has initiated a range of projects within the neighbourhood and maintains a large responsibility for looking after the site on a day by day basis, with further back up from the local authority task force.

Any one of the school projects which have involved the children in the design stage of the project as well as the more usual implementation and management phases would reveal interesting information. There are now thousands of school nature areas around the country, but few studies have been carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of these projects.

The third suggestion would be to evaluate a project that a local authority has spearheaded having adopted some of the principles advocated by UWG (eg the Parks Projects being run in collaboration with Birmingham City's Recreation and Community Services Department). A questionnaire survey has already been run on local people's response to the planned changes in two

Birmingham parks and a UWG evaluation will be made late in the year, although not a formal evaluation. Alternatively an evaluation could be made of the development of Eastwood Rd in Sandwell. Having put forward a set of detailed proposals for the development of this site, it might be helpful for UWG to instigate an evaluation of the project with the agreement of the sponsoring local authority and the voluntary greening agencies who have been employed to carry out the implementation and management of the site.

In addition there is also the opportunity to carry out phase 2 evaluations of one or more of the projects reported here, as all of them are still receiving UWG input. Bearing in mind that the key staff from UWG and in some cases the local authority and the community groups have changed, it may be appropriate to concentrate on collecting data on residents' opinions and use of the sites as they are today, and a limited follow up of how some of people originally interviewed would assess their achievements today.

#### Remaining questions

This thesis has shown that UWG has a vital role in providing community groups with technical and practical assistance, and in promoting a more user-oriented approach to the provision and management of nature parks in urban areas. This role has to be flexible such that it can, and should, be reduced where the role of enabler is sympathetically supplied by the local authority and there is a high level of interest and commitment from the local community. UWG should recognise its role as mediators and be prepared to fulfill that as and when the need arises.

The Group now needs to engage in debate with the local authorities it has worked with and other community technical aid centres, about the long term future of community involvement projects, the role of the voluntary sector as enablers and mediators and the potential for bringing about a more user-oriented approach within local authorities.



Particular emphasis should be placed on an economic evaluation of the costs incurred, in terms of staff time, to employ user-oriented approaches successfully. This might be carried out using a similar method to that employed by the civil service for measuring the establishment and time costs for given tasks.

#### **8.8. Refinements to the Questionnaire Survey and Observation Study Method**

Whilst there have been many suggestions that it is important to investigate the views of non-users as well as users (eg Walker and Duffield, 1983b), practice in this research and in more recent research (Mostyn and Millward, 1987 forthcoming) has shown that it is difficult for non-users to respond to questions relating to places that they have never visited or know only through hearsay. The most useful information on the less attractive features of a site can be derived from those who use the sites only occasionally, say less than once a month.

It is on this basis that I would suggest that the use of questionnaire surveys in the future could be restricted to users only, and thus be administered on site. A refined version of the questionnaire used in this research that would be suitable for administering on site is provided in Appendix H.

This still allows for general information on preferences for local open spaces to be collected, and is more forthright in its language so as to encourage thoughtful rather than antipathetic responses.

If the sponsors of a survey wanted to explore differences in the views and behaviour of the different sexes and age groups of respondents, the most time-effective method would be to use a quota sample. It would therefore be particularly important to elicit the demographic data so that a comparison could be made as to how representative the sample was of the true population, when matched with the small area statistics from

the Census.

To facilitate comparison between the survey and observation data, I would suggest that the age categories in the survey could be reduced to the 12-18, >18 <60 and 60+ groupings used in the observation method. If a sample of 30 is regarded as requiring special analysis procedures then, to avoid this, sample sizes should be a minimum of say 35 people per age grouping, giving a total sample of 105 per site. This should however be regarded as a minimum requirement. Elson (1977) suggests that such data should be collected over a minimum period of 4 weekend days and 2 weekdays, and over a 6 week period in the summer months. The questionnaires could be administered as people enter the site, rather than at the end when, if they have timed their visit so as to be able to leave at a fixed time, rapport may be impaired.

A further refinement which could be considered would be to ask respondents to differentiate between the physical activities they engage in at the site, from the non-physical activities which of course cannot be recorded in the observations.

Finally, whilst the data from the questionnaire surveys conducted in this research were analysed using SPSS9 on a main frame computer, recent advancements have made it possible to analyse such data on personal computers. However, if further research indicates that sample sizes of between 100-200 visitors per site are adequate, and that the suggested coding categories are adequate, it may be just as quick to analyse results by hand on a one-site basis.

The only refinements that have been made to the observation method, which again have been tested out in recent research by (Mostyn and Millward, 1987 forthcoming) have been to separate out recordings of the basic mode of activity from the key activity (after Rutledge, 1981 op cit), and to reduce the numbers of additional codes for props. These were found to be rarely used by observers. Similarly, comparisons of weather



and the degree of exposure did not reveal significant differences in the pattern of use, and so have been excluded.

An overall assessment of general weather during a recording session is however important, as it can provide useful information in deciding the significance of any increase or decrease in levels of use over time. The assertion that the increases in use at Woodgate Valley and Plants Brook are related to the changes that occurred on those sites is supported by the fact that the weather in 1985 was actually worse than in 1984 which if anything would have tended to decrease use, all other things being equal.

The refined coding system, analysis sheet and instructions for the observation method are presented in Appendix I.

This research was designed to meet the needs of the Urban Wildlife Group which, like several other voluntary and statutory organisations, advocates and promotes a user-oriented approach to the provision and management of nature parks in urban areas.

It was found that little was known about the perceptions urban people had of the informal, more natural landscapes that have been created and enhanced by such organisations, nor how these landscapes were used by urban people. A fundamental, though previously untested, assumption of the proponents was that these places would offer urban people a countryside-like experience, literally on their doorstep.

It has also been shown that this approach is the result of recent developments in planning, landscape design and nature conservation. The research has established the links between these developments and theories derived from environmental psychology, collective action and planning.

The objectives of this research were therefore to:

- 1 Evaluate people's perception of urban nature parks
- 2 Evaluate people's use of urban nature parks
- 3 Evaluate three community involvement strategies for the provision and management of urban nature parks

A suite of methods have been used to collect the data needed to fulfill these objectives, and these are presented as an 'evaluation kit' which may have potential for widespread application in the evaluation of any type of open space.

Triangulation methodology has provided a philosophical basis for the research and has strengthened the validity of the findings. Evaluation research design provided a logical



structure that enabled this complex problem to be tackled, and the action research setting of client-oriented research has enabled an in-depth, but no less objective, understanding of the client and its problem to have been achieved.

### 9.1. Principal Findings

The questionnaire surveys and observation studies have revealed that urban people may appreciate urban nature parks for the same reasons that they appreciate countryside recreation sites. The case study sites were valued for their naturalness, natural features, peace and quiet, wildlife and openness. The things people disliked about the nature parks were similar to the things people have been found to dislike about urban open spaces generally, namely litter, unkempt appearance, pollution, vandalism and the anti-social behaviour of others. Local people were able to make very specific suggestions for site improvements that were in keeping with maintaining the natural character that they clearly value.

The questionnaire surveys have provided new coding categories and propositions that could be tested by further research on the basic perceptions people have of nature in cities. The observation studies revealed that the nature parks were used for mainly passive activities such as walking and dog walking. These findings corroborated the findings of the questionnaire survey. The urban nature parks were also very popular with children who engaged in a wide range of informal play activities involving both physically demanding play and imaginative play, and there is some indication that this activity can be inhibited by extending access for adults into areas favoured by children, thus reducing their privacy.

Twice as many male users as female users were observed to make use of the urban nature parks, with some evidence to suggest that women feel a greater sense of insecurity when visiting these sites. However, this difference did not reduce even after wardens had been introduced to the sites, which it might be thought, would have helped to allay such fears. The efforts made to increase the level of usage seem to have been

successful. More adults and elderly people were attracted to Plants Brook and Woodgate Valley. However, the percentages of adolescents dropped by over 10%. Increased usage by adults and the presence of wardens may have combined to reduce the adolescents' privacy, and so forced away those engaged in anti-social behaviour and motorbiking.

Given the fact that children and adolescents constituted between 35% and 65% of all visitors to the case study sites, designers may need to find ways of consulting with these age groups, so that their needs can be purposefully met.

Two main strategies, involving the local community in the provision and management of urban nature parks have been evaluated. Where the level of community interest and commitment is high, the community nature park strategy, designed to maximise the achievement of UWG aims, is justified. Where the level of community interest is low, a more limited approach is most likely to be effective and efficient in the short term. It is suggested that the community campaign strategy be more properly regarded as a sub-strategy that may need to be invoked in the course of either of the other two strategies, if the community have to take direct action to oppose undesirable development plans for a site.

The results would seem to indicate that community projects may take at least 4 years to progress from the point at which concern arises to the on-set of a phase dominated by management (Fig 14). UWG staff whilst committed to the community involvement approach, experienced various difficulties in performing their role as enablers, which were exacerbated because of the Group's dependence on MSC funding (4.4). It was evident that no one professional from UWG could provide the full range of skills or advice required during the course of any given project and it has therefore been suggested that the Group should continue to identify a key contact from within the staff for each project who is then responsible for bringing in other staff when necessary. It has also been suggested that a key contact or co-ordinator



needs to be identified for each project, to whom all interested parties should report their actions. The findings of this research indicate that it may often be the person who initiates a project, be they a local resident or local authority officer who evolves into this role.

It is also suggested that one the interested parties should prepare an assessment of the capabilities and resources of each of the interested parties as a pre-requisite to the allocation of tasks, so as to ensure the efficient and effective progress of the project. Given UWG's experience of community projects, it may well be that its staff are best placed to do this and indeed should assume the responsibility for ensuring that it is done, whether by them or someone else.

Despite the problems experienced by staff, the research indicates that the Group should continue to respond to requests from community groups and local authorities, to enable community involvement in the provision and management of urban nature parks, for three reasons:

- 1 Few of the local authority staff interviewed felt they had sufficient knowledge of the ecological approach to tackle projects without additional help from UWG. Some officers had been openly criticised by peers from within their departments and had encountered a certain amount of mistrust from local communities they had been working with.
- 2 The application of a user-oriented approach by local authority officers is presently restricted by the guidelines for the running of contracts that do not allow for sufficient time to be spent with the ultimate clients ie the potential users of a landscape.
- 3 Where the decision makers disagreed with the community about the proposals for a site, local authority officers were compromised and could not provide the community with the necessary technical expertise and advice needed to construct their case.

The results thus indicate that by virtue of its commitment to community involvement and its independent status, UWG is able to help local communities faced with this type of problem, and also act as mediators between the local authority and the community, to facilitate communication.

The lessons learnt from this research have an important practical value. They should enable UWG to make a more accurate assessment of the likely commitment and contribution the other interested parties will be able to make to a project. This in turn should enable the Group to suggest firstly what strategy would be the most appropriate to adopt and secondly, and the type and level of input the Group itself should be prepared to make. Such a procedure may also prove useful to others involved in community projects in the environmental field.

The combination of questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews, document study and observation studies, provide an 'evaluation tool kit' that could be used to generate information of particular use to landscape designers and managers. The potential for application extends well beyond urban nature parks, and could be used to evaluate the social value of any open space (eg country parks, formal parks, walkways, children's play areas and school grounds) and the strategies used to provide and manage such places. The kit should, if taken up by researchers and practitioners alike, result in the provision of landscapes that more accurately meet the needs of the potential users. Such progress would be consistent with the increasing emphasis that is being given to the targeting and decentralisation of services in the public and voluntary sectors.

## 9.2. Remaining Questions

### Evaluation of the Management Phase

It has been argued that UWG appears to have been able to help community groups to conserve sites and have thus been able to achieve some success in relation to the Group's objectives for site conservation and community involvement (8.5.2).



However, the case study sites had only just progressed into the management phase when the research ended. Questions therefore arise as to how the roles of the interested parties have developed since then, and whether or not the perceptions of the sites have changed and indeed whether levels of use have continued to rise or have declined. Of particular interest is whether it is possible to sustain an active community interest in the management of a site after the challenge of campaigns have been successfully met, the grand openings have been held and the pace of change generally slows down.

#### Analysis of the Economic Costs of Community Involvement Projects

The very act of research inevitably leads to the uncovering of unanticipated data, out of which new questions arise. This is particularly so for this study, representing as it does the first in-depth investigation of the social aspects of urban nature conservation of its kind. Inevitably it has not been possible to explore every avenue.

It has not been possible to determine the economic cost of the strategies to the interested parties, and yet this needs to be tackled if local authorities are to make informed decisions as to the feasibility of adopting user-oriented approaches. Nor has it been possible to test the value of the evaluation tool kit as a self-monitoring system that could be incorporated into normal management procedures.

#### Balancing the Needs of People and the Needs of Wildlife

The final question is one that relates to the value of urban nature parks for nature. Conflicts did arise between the needs of people and the needs of wildlife. Apart from the fact that the observation studies revealed that people do tend to keep to the paths and that there was a negligible amount of damage caused to wildlife habitat, it was not possible to carry out an in-depth study of the effects of visitors on wildlife. This issue needs to be addressed and any such research should be aimed at offering suggestions as to how these conflicts may be resolved.

Page removed for copyright restrictions.



## APPENDIX B

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- 1 First of all can you tell me when you first became involved with (site name)?
- 2 Where did your interest in the site stem from? What were the reasons for you becoming involved?
- 3 Can you describe briefly, what you know of the history of the project?
- 4 Who initiated the project?  
- when did this happen?
- 5 Do you think it would have been better if someone else had initiated the project or not?

(We've been talking about the history of the project so far. Now I'd like us to talk specifically about how, and for what reasons, the Urban Wildlife Group became involved)

- 6 Do you know who asked UWG to become involved with the project?
- 7 What role have UWG played?
- 8 What role do you think they ought to have played?
- 9 And what do you think they should do in the future, if anything?

(OK. Now if we can go back to talking about the project as a whole and discuss the aims or purpose of the project, and what is being done and has been done to achieve those aims).

- 10 What do you think the aims of the project are?  
- how would you say your aims differ from those of other people involved in the project?)  
- could you rank your aims in order of importance?  
- how long will it take to achieve these aims?  
- is that an ideal or realistic estimate?  
- has there been any change in the aims over time?
- 11 What has been done to try to achieve the aims?  
- meetings, plans, finance, site work, division of labour for each task
- 12 How are the decisions made?
- 13 How do you feel about the community getting involved in this sort of environmental issue?

(We've been discussing the project at a general level. Could we now go on to talk in more detail about your own personal role, what you've been doing and how you feel about that?)

14 What role have you played in the project?

- what do you feel about being given that job?
- do you see this changing in the future?
- do you think someone else or some other group should have done your job?

15 What information did you require for your job?

- where did this come from?

Was there any other kind of technical or physical support you needed?

- did you get that or not?

16 What, if any, problems have you experienced during your involvement with the project?

17 What if anything has given you satisfaction or a feeling of success?

18 What do you perceive as the most serious difficulties facing the project as far as meeting the aims are concerned?

19 And what would you consider acceptable evidence of the achievement of the aims?

20 What do you envisage happening to the site in the long term?

- who do you think ought to have management responsibility for the site?

(So you think ..... will happen, is that what you would prefer to happen?).

(As I mentioned at the beginning, I'd like the research to be of use to everyone involved in the project)

21 Are there any particular issues or questions you would like me to tackle within the research?

(Thank you)

(Occupation)

(Feedback)

CLOSE



DOORSTEP SURVEY : INTERVIEW SCHEDULE, OCT. 1983		Office use only
<p><u>INTRODUCTION</u></p> <p>Hello, I'm from Aston University. You might have received a leaflet telling you about a survey we're carrying out, asking people what they think about open spaces in this neighbourhood?</p>		<p>Q <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> <sup>4</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>A <sup>5</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> <sup>6</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> <sup>7</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> <sup>8</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I <sup>10</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> <sup>11</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Could you spare 10 minutes to help us?</p> <p>Yes <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>      GO TO A</p> <p>No <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>      PROMPT - 'site name' as in A - few minutes</p>		<p><sup>12</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>1</b></p>
<p>IF PERSON REFUSES AFTER PROMPT:      2nd No <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> REASON _____</p> <p>Thank you anyway.</p> <p>ON LEAVING HOUSE NOTE:</p> <p>Sex      Age</p> <p>M <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>      Under 18 <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>F <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>      18-25 <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>                 26-35 <sup>3</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>                 36-45 <sup>4</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>                 46-55 <sup>5</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>                 56-65 <sup>6</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>                 66-75 <sup>7</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>                 + 75 <sup>8</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p>		<p><sup>13</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><sup>14</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><sup>15</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><sup>16</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>A</b> We're particularly interested to know what you think about this place, (site name).</p> <p>SHOW MAP &amp; PHOTOS</p>		
<p>Do you know of this place?</p> <p>IF KNOWN BY ANOTHER NAME, NOTE THEIR TERM &amp; USE IT THROUGHOUT</p>	<p>Yes <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>      GO TO Q 13</p>	<p><sup>17</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>2</b> Have you ever visited (site name)?</p>	<p>Yes <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>      GO TO Q4 &amp; then Q13</p>	<p><sup>18</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>3a</b> When was the last time you went there?</p>	<p>within week <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>within month <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1-6 months ago <sup>3</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>7-12 months ago <sup>4</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1-5 years ago <sup>5</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> ) GO TO</p> <p>over 5 years ago <sup>6</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> ) Q4</p>	<p><sup>19</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p>

3b	How often have you visited (site name) over the last 12 months?	once <input type="checkbox"/> 1 ) several times a year <input type="checkbox"/> 2 ) more than once a month <input type="checkbox"/> 3 ) GO TO Q5 once a week <input type="checkbox"/> 4 ) more than once a week <input type="checkbox"/> 5 ) never <input type="checkbox"/> 6 ) GO TO Q4	20 <input type="checkbox"/>
4	Is there any particular reason why you haven't visited the place /recently?	No <input type="checkbox"/> 2 NUMBER REASONS _____ _____ _____ IF NEVER VISITED, GO TO Q13	21 <input type="checkbox"/> 22 <input type="checkbox"/> 23 24 <input type="checkbox"/> 25 26 <input type="checkbox"/> 27
5	What are/were the main things you do/did when you go/went there?  PROMPT - anything else ?	NUMBER ORDER MENTIONED Informal play <input type="checkbox"/> 01 Walk <input type="checkbox"/> 02 Walk the dog <input type="checkbox"/> 03 Sit <input type="checkbox"/> 04 Jog <input type="checkbox"/> 05 Cycle <input type="checkbox"/> 06 Meet people <input type="checkbox"/> 07 Take children to play <input type="checkbox"/> 08 Nature Watch <input type="checkbox"/> 09 Picnic <input type="checkbox"/> 10 Photography <input type="checkbox"/> 11 Sun-bathe <input type="checkbox"/> 12 Fish <input type="checkbox"/> 13 Through route <input type="checkbox"/> 14 Bonfire <input type="checkbox"/> 15 Enjoy scenery <input type="checkbox"/> 16 Enjoy peace and quiet <input type="checkbox"/> 17 Other (SPECIFY) a) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> b) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> c) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	28 <input type="checkbox"/> 29 30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31 32 <input type="checkbox"/> 33
6	Are/were there any things you particularly like(d) about the place?  PROMPT - physical appearance of site - use by people - anything else?	NUMBER ORDER MENTIONED Layout <input type="checkbox"/> 01 Open space <input type="checkbox"/> 02 Scenery <input type="checkbox"/> 03 Countryside feel <input type="checkbox"/> 04 Naturalness <input type="checkbox"/> 05 Trees <input type="checkbox"/> 06 Bushes <input type="checkbox"/> 07 Flowers <input type="checkbox"/> 08 Wildlife <input type="checkbox"/> 09 Paths <input type="checkbox"/> 10 Through route <input type="checkbox"/> 11 Good for children to play <input type="checkbox"/> 12 Opportunity to walk <input type="checkbox"/> 13 Opportunity to walk dog <input type="checkbox"/> 14 Meeting place <input type="checkbox"/> 15 Fresh air <input type="checkbox"/> 16 Peace and quiet <input type="checkbox"/> 17 Escape <input type="checkbox"/> 18 No <input type="checkbox"/> 19 (SEE OVER FOR 'OTHER' SPACE)	34 <input type="checkbox"/> 35 36 <input type="checkbox"/> 37 38 <input type="checkbox"/> 39



		Other (SPECIFY) a) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> b) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> c) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	
7	Are/were there any things you particularly dislike(d) about (site name)?  PROMPT - physical appearance of site - use by people - anything else?	<div style="float: right;">NUMBER ORDER MENTIONED</div> Litter/dumping <input type="checkbox"/> 01 Air of neglect <input type="checkbox"/> 02 Poor condition of paths <input type="checkbox"/> 03 Pollution <input type="checkbox"/> 04 Personal safety risk <input type="checkbox"/> 05 Motorbikers <input type="checkbox"/> 06 No <input type="checkbox"/> 07 Other (SPECIFY) a) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> b) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> c) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41 42 <input type="checkbox"/> 43 44 <input type="checkbox"/> 45
8	Have you noticed any changes taking place there over the last 12 months?  PROMPT - anything else?	<div style="float: right;">NUMBER ORDER MENTIONED</div> People working on site <input type="checkbox"/> 01 New hard landscaping <input type="checkbox"/> 02 New soft landscaping <input type="checkbox"/> 03 Signboard(s) <input type="checkbox"/> 04 More litter/dumping <input type="checkbox"/> 05 Less litter/dumping <input type="checkbox"/> 06 More vandalism <input type="checkbox"/> 07 Less vandalism <input type="checkbox"/> 08 More visitors <input type="checkbox"/> 09 Fewer visitors <input type="checkbox"/> 10 No <input type="checkbox"/> 11 Other (SPECIFY) a) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> b) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> c) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	46 <input type="checkbox"/> 47 48 <input type="checkbox"/> 49 50 <input type="checkbox"/> 51
9	Are there any changes that could be made to (site name) which might make the place more attractive to you/ so that you might visit it?  PROMPT - anything else?	<div style="float: right;">NUMBER ORDER MENTIONED</div> Better/more paths <input type="checkbox"/> 01 Warden/park keeper <input type="checkbox"/> 02 Toilets <input type="checkbox"/> 03 Clean up <input type="checkbox"/> 04 Nature trail <input type="checkbox"/> 05 Seats <input type="checkbox"/> 06 Organised events <input type="checkbox"/> 07 Formal recreation facilities <input type="checkbox"/> 08 No <input type="checkbox"/> 09 No need for any changes <input type="checkbox"/> 10 Other (SPECIFY) a) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> b) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> c) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	52 <input type="checkbox"/> 53 54 <input type="checkbox"/> 55 56 <input type="checkbox"/> 57

10	Who do you think should look after (site name)?	Council <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Other (SPECIFY) _____ _____	58 <input type="checkbox"/>
11	Can you recall how you got to know about (site name)?  PROMPT - detail	Radio/Television 01 <input type="checkbox"/> Leaflet/Poster 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper/Magazine 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Signboard 04 <input type="checkbox"/> Map 05 <input type="checkbox"/> Chance visit 06 <input type="checkbox"/> Person 07 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (SPECIFY) _____	59 <input type="checkbox"/> 60 <input type="checkbox"/>
12	Have you seen or heard any publicity about this place over the last 12 months?	Radio/Television Leaflet/Poster Newspaper/Magazine Signboard Map No Other (SPECIFY) a) _____	NUMBER ORDER MENTIONED 01 <input type="checkbox"/> 02 <input type="checkbox"/> 03 <input type="checkbox"/> 04 <input type="checkbox"/> 05 <input type="checkbox"/> 06 <input type="checkbox"/> 61 <input type="checkbox"/> 62 <input type="checkbox"/> 63 <input type="checkbox"/> 64 <input type="checkbox"/>
B Thank you, that's very helpful.  There are just a few more questions and these are rather more general.			12 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
13a	Supposing you had an hour or so to spare and you felt like a breath of fresh air, where would you be most likely to go?	Place _____ Place _____ _____ Foot 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Car 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Motorbike/moped 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Public transport 5 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (SPECIFY) _____	13 <input type="checkbox"/> 14 <input type="checkbox"/> 15 <input type="checkbox"/> 16 <input type="checkbox"/>
b	How would you get there?	Foot 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Car 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Motorbike/moped 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Public transport 5 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (SPECIFY) _____	17 <input type="checkbox"/> 18 <input type="checkbox"/>
c	What is it that attracts you to (1st place name)?  PROMPT - physical appearance of site  - use by people PROMPT - anywhere else? REPEAT b-c FOR 2ND PLACE	a) _____ a) _____ b) _____ b) _____ c) _____ c) _____	19 <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 <input type="checkbox"/> 22 <input type="checkbox"/> 23 <input type="checkbox"/> 24 <input type="checkbox"/> 25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26 <input type="checkbox"/>
DO NOT ASK Q14 & 15 IF ANSWER OBVIOUS. JUST CHECK WITH RESPONDENT.			
14	Do you have a garden?	Yes 1 <input type="checkbox"/> No 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	31 <input type="checkbox"/>



15	Do you have a dog?	Yes <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> No <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>	32 <input type="checkbox"/>
C It would help us to know how you feel about your neighbourhood as a whole?			
16a	On balance would you say you like living here or dislike living here?	Like <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Dislike <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <sup>3</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> GO TO D	33 <input type="checkbox"/>
b	What is it that you like/dislike about the neighbourhood?	_____ _____ _____	
c	How long have you lived in this neighbourhood?	_____	34 <input type="checkbox"/>
We know that the amount of spare time people get when they might use places like (site name), very much depends on the type of work they do.			
17a	Could you tell me your occupation please? PROMPT - job title	Occupation _____	35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36 <input type="checkbox"/>
b	Could you briefly describe what that involves?	_____ _____	
c	Are you full-time or part-time (less than 30 hours per week)?	Full-time <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> ) Part-time <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> ) GO TO 17e Unemployed <sup>3</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> )	37 <input type="checkbox"/>
d	TICK IF APPROPRIATE * Did you have/What was your occupation before you became a housewife/retired etc? USE SPACE AT 17 a & b	Housewife/househusband <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> ) Retired <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> ) * Permanently sick <sup>3</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> ) Full-time education <sup>4</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> )	38 <input type="checkbox"/>
e	Are you/ Could you then give me the occupation of/the person providing the major income for your household?	Occupation _____	39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40 <input type="checkbox"/>
f	Could you briefly describe what that involves?	_____ _____	

E. That's it then.		
Thank you very much for your help. Is there anything you would like to add, or ask me?		
F 19	Fine. Thanks again. Oh, there wouldn't by any chance be anyone else in your household who might know of or visit (site name) would there?	
	Yes <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> No <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>	41 <input type="checkbox"/>
20	IF APPROPRIATE: Do you think he/she might be willing to tell me what he/she thinks about it if he/she's in?	
	Yes <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> No <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>	42 <input type="checkbox"/>
FINAL THANK YOU		
IMPORTANT BEFORE NEXT INTERVIEW:	Sex M <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> F <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>	Age Under 18 <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> 18-25 <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> 26-35 <sup>3</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> 36-45 <sup>4</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> 46-55 <sup>5</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> 56-65 <sup>6</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> 66-75 <sup>7</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> +75 <sup>8</sup> <input type="checkbox"/>
	A _____ _____	
		43 <input type="checkbox"/> 44 <input type="checkbox"/>



### DOORSTEP SURVEY: INFORMATION FOR INTERVIEWERS.

As part of the research on UWG's community projects, we are running a doorstep survey of households close to the sites we are interested in.

#### Aim of Survey

1. To measure the community's awareness of the sites.
2. To determine the level of use and the type of use (eg walking, jogging).
3. To assess people's opinions about the sites (eg likes, dislikes and suggestions for improvement).

#### Why a Doorstep Survey?

1. The mailed questionnaire tested on Yorks Wood was neither cost nor time effective.
2. A large number of people can be questioned in a relatively short time.
3. The necessary printed sheets are cheap and easy to produce for UWG to make use of on future projects.
4. The interviewer can judge whether the respondent has understood the concepts and questions related to them.
5. The response rate is higher because it is more difficult for the respondent to refuse in a face to face situation.
6. Extra information can be noted on the sheet in the spaces, to aid interpretation of the standardised, coded information.

#### What will it involve?

1. Date and time.  
You will be required to work for approx. 4 hours (excluding travelling time to the community) on the Saturday afternoon of either Oct.22nd or Oct.29th.
2. Appearance.  
Please dress casual but smart.
3. Equipment.
  - a) Clipboard (a double sided one is best, please let me know if you haven't one)
  - b) 2 blue biros.
  - c) Shoulder bag (no plastic carrier bags please) for carrying interview schedules).
  - d) 25 interview schedules.
  - e) 2 photos of site.
  - f) Sample checklist.
  - g) Address list.
  - h) Authorisation document.
  - i) A-Z ( for checking the places respondents mention).
4. Approach.
  - a) Smile and be polite.
  - b) Relax - if you appear to be on edge the respondent will be too, the result being that neither of you can think clearly.
  - c) Go into the home to do the interview if invited as this will help to relax the situation.
  - d) Have your authorisation document to hand just in case it is requested (even though is unusual).

### DOORSTEP SURVEY: INFORMATION FOR INTERVIEWERS.

As part of the research on UWG's community projects, we are running a doorstep survey of households close to the sites we are interested in.

#### Aim of Survey

1. To measure the community's awareness of the sites.
2. To determine the level of use and the type of use (eg walking, jogging).
3. To assess people's opinions about the sites(eg likes, dislikes and suggestions for improvement).

#### Why a Doorstep Survey?

1. The mailed questionnaire tested on Yorks Wood was neither cost nor time effective.
2. A large number of people can be questioned in a relatively short time.
3. The necessary printed sheets are cheap and easy to produce for UWG to make use of on future projects.
4. The interviewer can judge whether the respondent has understood the concepts and questions related to them.
5. The response rate is higher because it is more difficult for the respondent to refuse in a face to face situation.
6. Extra information can be noted on the sheet in the spaces, to aid interpretation of the standardised, coded information.

#### What will it involve?

1. Date and time.  
You will be required to work for approx. 4 hours (excluding travelling time to the community) on the Saturday afternoon of either Oct.22nd or Oct.29th.
2. Appearance.  
Please dress casual but smart.
3. Equipment.
  - a) Clipboard (a double sided one is best, please let me know if you haven't one)
  - b) 2 blue biros.
  - c) Shoulder bag (no plastic carrier bags please) for carrying interview schedules).
  - d) 25 interview schedules.
  - e) 2 photos of site.
  - f) Sample checklist.
  - g) Address list.
  - h) Authorisation document.
  - i) A-Z ( for checking the places respondents mention).
4. Approach.
  - a) Smile and be polite.
  - b) Relax - if you appear to be on edge the respondent will be too, the result being that neither of you can think clearly.
  - c) Go into the home to do the interview if invited as this will help to relax the situation.
  - d) Have your authorisation document to hand just in case it is requested (even though is unusual).



### Interview Procedure.

1. You will be given specific addresses to visit.
2. Ask the person who answers the door (if teenage or older) to help. It may be that the answerer is unable to help if eg they are just about to go out, but, they may suggest you talk to someone else in the house. If they do, accept their offer. If they don't ask for someone else.
3. If there is no reply, first try the house to the left, and if the same happens try the house to the right. If get no reply from all 3, give up, make a note of this on the address sheet and move on to the next address.

### Rules of Interviewing.

1. Take your time.
2. Employ a silence before a prompt.
3. Prompt only by rephrasing the question or elaborating the question.  
NEVER suggest examples of possible answers, otherwise the respondent may try to please you by repeating your examples as answers.  
A useful general prompt phrase is "could you give me a little more detail".
4. You may be given answers such as "Nice" or "Good". If this occurs you must find out more details, so, say eg "what is it about the place that makes it nice?"
5. If you are in any doubt about how to code an answer ALWAYS use the 'Other' space and specify/write in.
6. ALWAYS take down extra information that cannot be coded for, in the blank areas on the interview sheets.
7. On leaving the house, don't forget to complete the last section on age, sex and address (A), fill in the sample checklist and the address list.
8. Put completed questionnaire in bag for protection.
9. If you forget anything or make any mistakes, just make a note of it on a separate piece of paper.

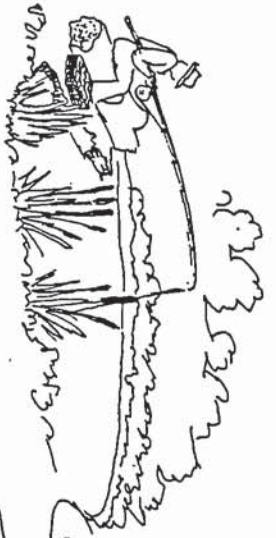
Extra information you may need to give the respondent if asked:

1. Q What is the survey for?  
A To provide local community groups, play associations and the council with information on what local people think of this sort of open space.
2. Q Who will see the results?  
A Only people from the university. The information is strictly confidential and cannot be personally identified with you.

To all in your household.

## Household Survey: Open Spaces

Sats. October 22nd & 29th



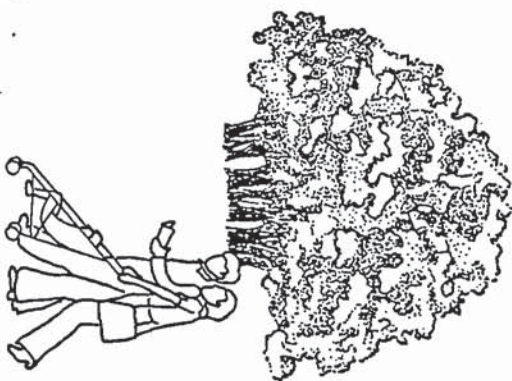
### What is it?

Aston University will be carrying out a household survey on the afternoons of Saturday October 22nd and 29th in your neighbourhood.

We would like to know what YOU think about your local open spaces. By open spaces we mean places like small parks, river walks, wastelands, old railway lines, delis and spinneys.

### Why?

Your opinions will help us advise community groups, play associations and councils about what kind of open space local people want in their neighbourhood.



### What will it involve?

The interviews will only take 10 minutes to complete, and we would like to talk to as many people as possible.

We do hope that you will be able to spare a little of your time to help us, and we look forward to meeting you.







339

# THE UNIVERSITY OF ASTON IN BIRMINGHAM

Gosta Green, Birmingham B4 7ET/Tel: 021 359 3611 Ex

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

This person has been authorised as an interviewer for the  
Household Survey: Open Spaces.

Signature:

Name of Interviewer: -----

Signature of Authoriser: Alison M. Millward

## APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION STUDY: MAP CODING SYSTEM

<u>A. PEOPLE</u>			<u>D. PLAY ACTIVITIES</u>		
Elderly	(>60)	⓪	Football		fb
Adult	(>18 <60)	Ⓐ	Cricket		ct
Adolescent	(>12 <18)	ⓓ	Climbing		cl
Child	(>5 <12)	Ⓢ	Play feature		pf
Toddler	(<5)	Ⓣ	Informal play		if
Disabled		Dis			
Relationships and groups		ⒸⒸ			
<u>B. SEX</u>			<u>E. PROPS</u>		
Male		M	a) introduced props:		
Female		F	Balls		Ba
			Bats		Bt
			Frisbee		Fr
			Binoculars		Bn
			Books		Bk
<u>C. ACTIVITIES</u>			Equipment		Eq
Cycling (+ direction)		CY	Vehicles		Ve
Dog walking		DW	Tools		To
Dumping		DU	Weapons for VA		We
Fishing		FI	b) existing props:		
Harassing		HA	Trees		Ts
Jogging		JO	Bushes		Bs
Meeting		ME	Slopes		Sl
Nature Watching		NW	Water		Wa
Photography		PH	Stones		St
Picnicking		PC	Wildflowers		Wf
Reading		RE	Soil		So
Sitting		SI	Branches		Bh
Sunbathing		SB			
Through-routing		TR			
Vandalising		VA	<u>F. LOCATION</u>		
Viewing		VI	Exposed		Ex
Walking		WK	Sheltered		Sh

Code arrangement on map:

BGF  
 Ⓐ Time  
 CDE

G. LOCAL CLIMATE

Sunny  
 Cloudy  
 Overcast

Any new code you create must be explained on the map sheet in the notes.



Instructions for Observation Mapping at Woodgate Valley

Recording Date.....

Recording Time..... (Try to complete 1 complete 'circuit' of Valley)

1. Walk along the path on one side of the stream taking a detour up and down the side paths as you come across them. Walk a little way along Watery Lane and back, and then follow the path and side paths down the opposite side of the stream (see plan).
2. At 5 minute intervals, rotate yourself through 360 degrees and record any person you see, using the coding system.
3. Also, record any person you see in between times if you feel they might pass out of the valley or out of your view before the next 5 minute recording.
4. Record each person once only. If the person remains on the site over a period of time or returns to it later on, make a note of this at the edge of the sheet, making sure that you have identified who the person is (e.g. Man 1 or Group 1 etc), so that the note and the original recording can be related.
5. Do please add extra details using the spaces at the edge of the sheet of e.g. informal play, evidence of fires or vandalism I would rather have more than less information.
6. Avoid conversation with visitors, but if asked about what you are doing, you are doing a bird survey (carrying binoculars is helpful in this respect, if you have some) and are from Aston University.
7. In case of emergency, ring me on.....

Alison Millward  
5.12.83

SITE BEHAVIOUR OBSERVATIONS: MAP RECORDING SHEET

SITE PLANTS Brook

RECORDER NIAL MARRIOTT

DATE 20/6/85

TIME 6.00 - 8.00PM

WEATHER Temp 18°C pptn DRY wind LIGHT

NOTES

Day before

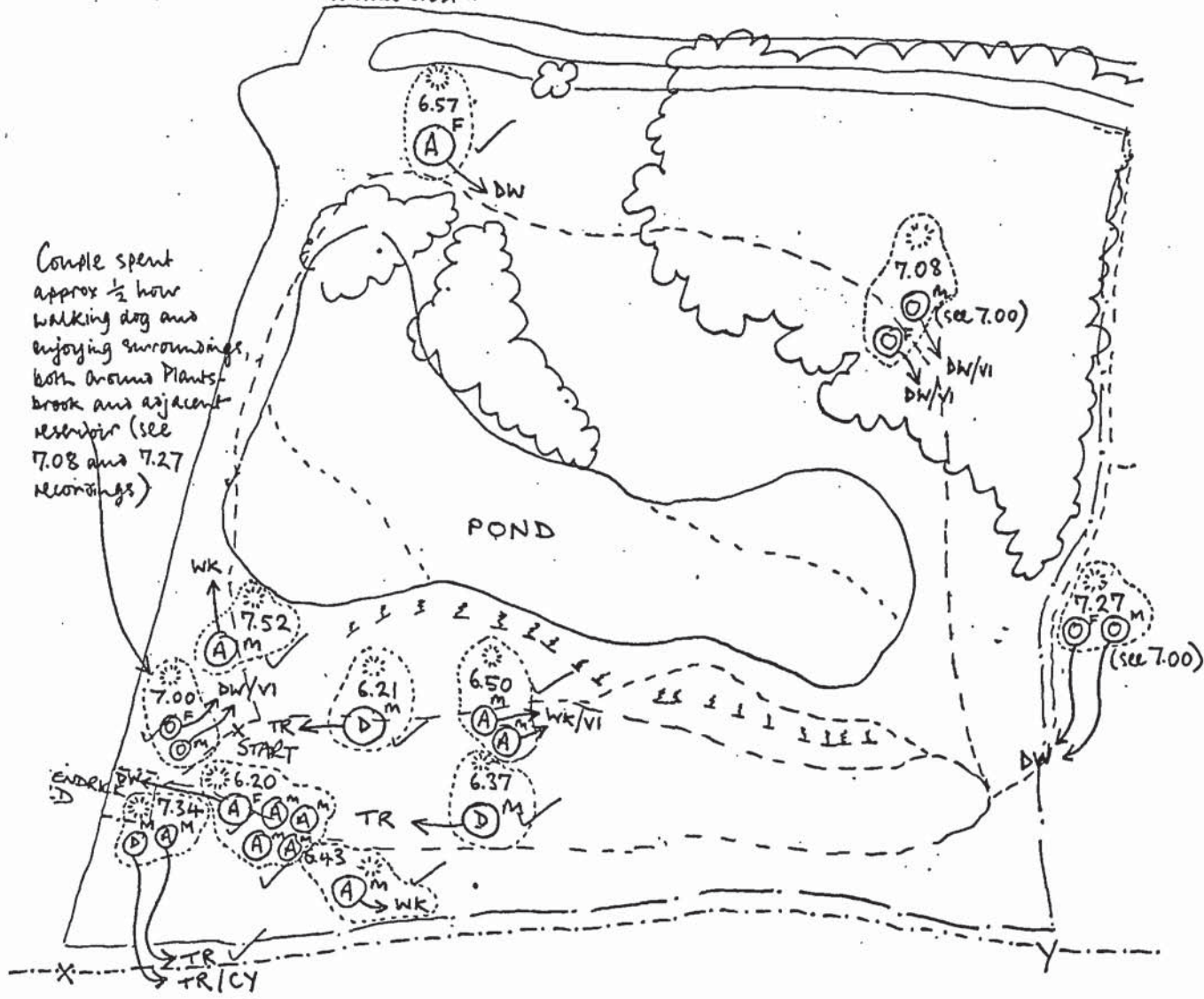
6.50

2 men appeared to be searching urgently for something, at easy access points, around water's edge (bottom shore) - exhibited similar behavior around adjacent reservoir at around 6.55pm

7.34

Kendrick Rd gate: appears to provide access to footpath running alongside bottom perimeter fence on the outside (see dash-dot line X-Y)

Couple spent approx  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour walking dog and enjoying surroundings, both around Plantsbrook and adjacent reservoir (see 7.08 and 7.27 recordings)





## APPENDIX E      BRIEF HISTORY OF PLANTS BROOK

- 1950s      Planning permission granted to build houses on derelict International Alloy site beside Kendrick Rd.
- late 60s      Brook culverted and pool formed on NP site.
- 1973      International Alloys submit planning application to build houses in a crescent from Kendrick Rd to Penkridge Close, but refused by council. IA serve purchase notice on City Council to buy NP site. High price of £200,000 paid for NP site because permission for housing previously granted.
- Residents objected to plans for housing.
- 1974      Designation of reservoirs and site on Coldfield District Plan for open water recreation.
- 1979      Minworth Leisure Services Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of X's business, buy reservoir site from International Alloys.
- Feb 1979      Residents form one group and discover that the nature park site is owned by the City Council.
- Dec 1979      Walmley Angling Club told by X that they were no longer entitled to fishing rights on the reservoirs.
- Feb 1980      Reports in press that X intended to dump toxic waste, then raw sewerage. Found out what had happened at Hundred Acre Estate. Residents contacted Angling Club who were apathetic because X had promised to re-stock the reservoirs after draining them to correct a biological problem with the mud, allowing part of the lakes to continue with fishing and water sports.
- City Council Planning Dept place Tree Preservation Order on reservoirs over which NCC had been consulted.
- Residents contacted Walmley Residents Association because 'they were the obvious people to contact' and the community group leader was elected to the committee in order to pursue the problem over the reservoirs.
- Contact was made with 2 local councillors.
- Wrote to Sutton News. Article appears in press.
- Without obtaining the necessary planning permission, X established pumps on site that only ran at nights and weekends to pump water from small lake into large lake. Residents take action to stop this and call in the help of the Environmental Health Department.

The night they got the Environmental Health Officer to visit to listen to the noise, the pumps were 'mysteriously' turned off. Residents then found out that X's solicitors were Bosworth, Bailey and Cox, Bosworth being leader of the (Tory) council. Residents therefore claimed it must have been inside knowledge. Bosworth phoned W R Assocn to threaten libel if he were implicated. News broke that the Walmley Incinerator was to be closed down.

Mar 1980 Residents wrote to Professor Skelding (Botanical Gardens) seeking support for the campaign to preserve the reservoirs.

Aug 1980 DOE rules that TPO must remain on all but a few trees.

X continued with his intermittent pumping operations over a year. Residents wrote letters to council, but he was obviously trying to wear them down to the point where they stopped complaining.

Residents organise petition.

Sep 1980 Residents made contact with urban ecologist from Friends of the Earth who suggested getting something established on council-owned portion and 'take it from there', in the hope that the council wouldn't allow X to extend tipping onto the nature park site. Residents discovered from engineering contact that it would cost a fortune to drain and tip the reservoirs and there were lots of industrial tip sites in Birmingham anyway.

Residents began to meet formally.

Residents wrote to Peter Scott and David Bellamy from whom received a 'fantastic' letter who suggested they contact other residents, conservation groups, Planning Dept, new site owners in order to arrive at a compromise. Residents felt compromise was out because knew X had rescinded on promises before.

Nov 1980 Enforcement notice served on Rawlins to cease drainage operations.

Planning Application to tip submitted. X drained the lakes by bringing in a very big pump and completed draining within 2 weeks 'which proved he'd just been messing around before' (resident).

At ecologist's suggestion residents got some leaflets printed inviting local people to public meeting. 48 people turned up (more than expected). Proposal to establish a community nature park on council site was mooted.



Residents spoke to councillor who arranged a meeting with the Planning Dept who supported the idea.

Two councillors visit X who explained his proposals to tip a 30 ft high rubbish mound but reinstate the land to include an equestrian centre for the disabled.

UWG start to work up proposals with a view to getting a lease.

Residents discovered that City Council would consider the tipping application first but it then had to go to County Council. Despite previous indications from the councillors that it would not be approved, councillor had evidence that the proposal would be approved which amazed residents and led to further suspicion that there was some internal manipulation going on.

Residents got lots of press coverage which it is believed forced X's supporters to back down.

Apr 1981 Tipping Application rejected by West Midlands County Council.

FoE ecologist brought in Education Department to explore potential for getting local schools interested in the nature park site.

Jun 1981 Pumping Appeal.

Jul 1981 Planning, Leisure Services and Economic Devpt Cttees gave approval in principle for nature park proposals and suggested that the Mgt Cttee meet again to formalise its structure and involve councillors from Planning and Economic Devpt and the Education Dept Environmental Inspector.

Aug Management Committee submits planning application for change of use to community nature park.

Sep 1981 Mgt Cttee agreed to not meet again until lease came through.

Sep 1981 UWG planner took over negotiations on lease from ecologist.

X lodges appeal against County Council decision.

Residents and UWG set about building a case to fight appeal.

Oct 1981 Economic Devpt Cttee agreed to UWG's proposals for the nature park and arranged for City estates to draw up a draft lease.

Feb 1982 Notification received that planning approval would be needed to erect a portakabin on the nature park site.

Feb 1982 Tipping Appeal.

May 1982 Appeal against enforcement upheld.

Jun 1982 Funding for project sought from the Queen's Silver Jubilee Trust.

X serves purchase notice on City Council on the basis that the reservoir site is incapable of beneficial development. DOE rules that purchase notice is invalid.

Jul 1982 Decision of tipping appeal came out heavily against X and it seemed from the Inspector's Report that the wildlife argument that had been used by the City Council and UWG, and the residents main arguments had been given over-riding consideration.

Aug 1982 Subsequent draft lease submitted by council. Flow of correspondence between UWG and City Estates, City Solicitors and Planning Dept over details in the lease.

Feb 1983 Lease approved.

Original site development proposals were reworked when UWG discovered that City Council intended to buy the reservoirs. Evening Mail prints story in advance of recommendation to buy being approved by Council Committees. UWG had not been consulted as promised, by the council about the plans.

Apr 1983 The management committee meet for the first time since 1981. They decide to implement the original proposals for the nature park site. It is agreed that UWG may oppose the sailboarding proposals. UWG support use for water-based amenity purposes and not water-based recreation purposes.

A new leaflet re NP was produced explaining the proposals and residents were invited to discuss the proposals on site in May. 50-60 people turned up and approved the proposals.

May 1983 First work day. 40 local residents helped to clear the western bank of litter and planted a range of shrubs and young trees.

St John's venture contacted councillors seeking projects for their CP Scheme.

Recommendation to buy the reservoirs agreed by all council committees.



- Jul Education Advisor hosts site visit by local teachers, to discuss educational potential of whole site.
- Aug Second work day.
- Sept UWG negotiate involvement of St John's Venture Community Programme Scheme to undertake major works on nature park.

## APPENDIX F      BRIEF HISTORY OF LECKIE RD

- Sep 1981 Neighbourhood Officer from Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC) contacted UWG.
- Nov Landscape consultant (also chair of UWG) appointed for the design of the area and for administering the contract.
- Feb 1982 Public meeting held and the local schools contacted.
- Mar Project approved with a budget of £25,000, to be spent by the end of the month.
- Contractor appointed for site clearance work, ground modelling, fencing and for digging and lining the pond.
- Apr School children from the 2 local primary schools helped UWG landscape team to plant 7,500 trees on the site, spread mulch and clear litter. This work was televised by Central TV.
- May UWG sowed wildflower meadow. Seed washed away by heavy rain.
- Sep Second sowing of meadow. Seed washed away by heavy rain.
- Dec The schools adopted specific planted areas and did a litter pick.
- Mar 1983 UWG replanted 70 trees that had died.
- Apr Walsall Housing Dept allocated a further £4,000 for the project.
- July The trees were weeded and pruned and the meadow was cut. The pond was cleared of rubbish and planted up.
- Oct Additional soil was spread by the UWG team on the meadow area and seeded for a third time.
- Plans for a french drain, proposed by landscape consultant to prevent flooding of the pond, approved by WMBC Engineers Dept and implemented.
- Dec MSC placed a temporary moratorium on the re-approval of all Community Programme projects. UWG lost their landscape team and so could not continue to maintain the landscape.
- June 1984 UWG support re-commenced.
- July On behalf of UWG, Creative Landscapes (a consultancy formed by former members of staff at UWG) produced a



management plan for the site.

It was proposed that the local community centre appoint 2 workers/wardens to manage the site and further its development.

Wardens used conversation record sheets to gauge community feedback on the site's development.

## APPENDIX G

## BRIEF HISTORY OF WOODGATE VALLEY

- 1960s      Housing Committee considered it essential to keep the valley green to act as a buffer to the expressway and to provide the people to the north and the south of the valley with an open space.
- 1979      Landscape Architects from Architect's Dept asked to draw up a scheme for a country park on land to the east of the valley. Countryside Commission advised that it could be used for informal recreation and that they were prepared to fund it.
- Dec 1980   Architects called to Leisure Services to discuss progress. Plans thought to be over ambitious for implementation by a Community Programme team. Chief officer not in support of proposals for a city farm, previously submitted by City Farm Trust (formerly EPAG), nor of Architect's proposals for community involvement which in their view was essential, given the past history of local people's concern about the valley (the notion of a city farm had arisen as a way of protecting part of the site from being developed as a borstal) and because local people had been using the valley for informal recreation from the time the estates were built.
- Comments were also made on the negative impact the development proposals would have on the country park, which led to Leisure Services Committee making visits to the valley. Some of the councillors agreed to oppose the development. However, Leisure Services infact agreed to the proposals and the scheme for the country park had to be amended.
- Apr 1981   City Council Plans were finalised for the country park although the local representatives from the City Farm Trust were aware of the proposals for industrialisation. Implementation was held up a) because the architects couldn't get union approval for the Community Programme team, and b) because the Planning Dept determined that planning permission would be needed. Delays ensued not least because the planners felt it would be better to wait until the decision about industrialisation had been finalised. Meanwhile the landscape architects attempted to resolve the issue of the city farm, only to discover that the CFT had realised that their plans were over ambitious, and had in any case, always been more concerned about the lack of council action over the care of the valley. This news led to the decision by the chair of Leisure Services that more representatives of the community should be consulted about the plans for the country park.
- July      A public meeting was held at the Council House to which



representatives from a range of other local organisations were invited, at which it was confirmed that there was general support for the Architect's proposals for the country park.

Problems over labour relations and the commitment of funds by Leisure Services continued. Tory members continued to argue against development.

- Apr 1982 Article appears in newspaper about the plans for industrialisation at the western end of the valley, which angered those people who had just moved into the Quinton Manor Estate, and who had been led to believe that the valley had been designated as green belt and was therefore protected from development (a factor that had influenced several to buy houses there in the first place). A residents association was formed to seek further information. They requested that copies of any planning applications pertaining to the valley to be sent to them.
- July Planning application submitted for the link road.
- Oct City Council called a public meeting, led by officials from the Planning Department. 600 local people attended this meeting, as a result of petitions and lobbying by the various residents' groups, CFT etc. An early resolution was passed establishing that there was general support for the country park proposals. The meeting progressed onto the issue of industrial development and the link road. Opposition from the floor was unanimous and the community representatives felt that the officials were badly informed about the costings and engineering constraints of such a project, which meant that no decision could be made then and the whole matter would be referred to a full council meeting.
- Quinton Manor organised an informal joint meeting of all the community groups that had been present at the October public meeting, to discuss the setting up of a joint campaign group. UWG were contacted by 2 independent sources to join this group. Decision taken to lobby the County Council to reverse the proposals in the structure plan, as this would ensure that the district council could not go ahead.
- Nov News received that the city council had decided to oppose the development.
- Dec Woodgate Valley Action Group formally established, to pursue 2 main objectives in order to win support for campaign. These were:
- 1 To make local people aware of the valley - through

the publication of a report.

- 2 To invite the leader of the county council and other councillors to visit the valley and consult with the action group.

County Councillors accepted the invitation and afterwards suggested that a public meeting be held to discuss the issues of the industrial development and the link road.

- Jan 1983 WVAG lobbied local people to attend public meeting; distributed 3,000 leaflets, collected 3,000 signatures to a petition, had a publicity campaign in the local press and radio.
- Mar 400 people attended the public meeting, at which the county councillors established that they were in favour of reversing the development proposals. These pleased the residents, but also left them with a feeling of anti-climax. The meeting then degenerated into a party political argument between the city councillors as to who had originally suggested that it should be zoned for industrial development in the first place.
- Apr County Council agreed to reverse zoning and send request for ratification of that decision by the Secretary of State for the Environment.
- Woodgate Valley Action Group (WVAG) met with city council officials to pursue plans for implementing the country park proposals.



## APPENDIX H

## UWG SITE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

(Revised 1986)

INTRODUCTIONQ  
I

Hello, I'm from the Urban Wildlife Group. We are conducting research into people's attitudes and feelings towards parks and other open spaces in their neighbourhoods.

Could I possibly have 10 minutes of your time to ask a few questions for our research project?

Interviewers: RING appropriate response(s) and FILL IN 'Other' category

1 How often would you say you visit \_ \_ \_ \_ ?

- |                      |     |                 |
|----------------------|-----|-----------------|
| Every day            | 1 ) |                 |
| Once a week          | 2 ) | Frequent user   |
| Once a month         | 3 ) |                 |
| Several times a year | 4 ) |                 |
| Once a year          | 5 ) | Occasional user |
| Less often           | 6 ) |                 |

GO TO Q6

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA TO BE OBTAINED AT THE END OF EVERY INTERVIEW

2 Lastly, we know that the amount of spare time people have to visit parks and open spaces depends on the type of work they do. Would you mind telling me what type of occupation you are in?  
(Record type of work and position held)

Job \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Position held \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

- |               |   |                                   |
|---------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Student       | 1 | (Occupation of head of household) |
| Housewife     | 2 | ( " " " " " )                     |
| Retired       | 3 | (Previous occupation)             |
| Sick/Disabled | 4 | ( " " )                           |

3 Sex: Male 1 Female 2

4 Age: 12-18 1  
18-60 2  
60 + 3

5 Address: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Is there anything you would like to ask me?  
Thank you for your help.

Before we talk about \_\_\_\_\_, I'd like to ask you some general questions about the parks and other open spaces you might visit.

- 6 Could you tell me where you prefer to go when you want some fresh air or to get some exercise?

-----  
(If answer is our site DO NOT ask questions in boxes, just transfer data from Q1 to 8 and from Q9 to 13)

(If person gives more than 1 answer, note all, but follow through Q11- 15 for the first place mentioned)

- 7 How would you describe that/this place?

Park	1	Nature park/reserve	4
Recreation Ground	2	Wood	5
Sports Ground	3	Garden	6
		Other: _____	

- 8 Approximately how often would you say you visit that/this place?

Every day	1	Several times a year	4
Once a week	2	Once a year	5
Once a month	3	Less often	6

- 9 What do you tend to do when you go there/come here? (Prompt)

Walk	1	Picnic	9
Walk the dog	2	Pond dip	10
Through route	3	Play	11
Enjoy the scenery	4	Cycle	12
Enjoy the peace and quiet	5	Jog	13
Bring children to play	6	Play a sport	14
Enjoy the wildlife	7	Walk with a friend	15
Meet people	8	Other: _____	

- 10 Ideally, what sort of outdoor place would you like to go to if it was nearby?

Park	1	Nature park/reserve	5
Recreation ground	2	Wood	6
Sports ground	3	Don't know	7
Garden	4	Or another sort of place?	
		Other: _____	

- 11 What would you say prevents you from going out for fresh air or exercise more often?

No time	1	Money	5
No car	2	No one to go with	6
Too far away from anywhere	3	Not interested	7
Don't know area very well	4	Have other interests	8
		Other: _____	



I'd now like to ask you some questions about \_\_\_\_\_ ?

12 How did you get to know about this place?

Friend/relative	1	Saw a sign/poster	4
Children	2	Not sure	5
Read about it in paper/mag	3	Other: _____	

13 What do you tend to do when you come here? (Prompt)

Walk	1	Picnic	9
Walk the dog	2	Pond dip	10
Through route	3	Play	11
Enjoy the scenery	4	Cycle	12
Enjoy the peace and quiet	5	Jog	13
Bring children to play	6	Play a sport	14
Enjoy the wildlife	7	Walk with a friend	15
Meet people	8	Other: _____	

14 What do you like most about the place? (Prompt)

Openess/sense of space	1	Nature/wildlife	10
Naturalness/countryside feel	2	Good for children	11
Scenery	3	Good for walking	12
Peace and quiet	4	Good for walking the dog	13
Trees	5	Convenient	14
Flowers	6	Pond/brook/river	15
Relaxing	7	Nothing	16
Seats	8	Good for sports/games	17
Meeting people/having a chat	9	Other: _____	

15 What do you dislike about the place? (Prompt)

Litter/dumping	1	Children causing nuisance	10
Uncared for appearance	2	Vandalism	11
Poor condition of paths	3	Nothing	12
Don't know what/Nothing to do	4	Too many dogs	13
Feel insecure	5	Teenage gangs	14
Danger from pond/brook/river	6	Feel exposed	15
Nowhere to sit/too few seats	7	Not enough people	16
No one to explain things	8	Too many people	17
Uncertain future of site	9	Cycles/motorbikes	18
		Other: _____	

16 What changes could be made to make the place more appealing to you? (Prompt)

Clean up	1	Improve water	11
Better paths	2	More signs on site	12
More seats	3	More people	13
Play equipment	4	Make it like a trad. park	14
More trees	5	Someone to explain things	15
More flowers	6	No need for any changes	16
More short grass	7	Cafe	17
Fewer dogs	8	More street signs to it	18
More picnic tables	9	Have special events	19
More facilities (describe)	10	Other: _____	

- 17 How would you describe the feeling you get when you come here?  
(NB - use 'Other' if in doubt)

Relaxed	1	Unsafe	5
Happy	2	Disappointed	6
Free	3	Other: _____	
Lonely	4		

- 18 Why is it that more people don't make use of \_\_\_\_\_? (Prompt)

Litter/dumping	1	Children causing nuisance	10
Uncared for appearance	2	Vandalism	11
Poor condition of paths	3	Don't know	12
Don't know what/nothing to do	4	Too many dogs	13
Feel insecure	5	Teenage gangs	14
Danger from pond/brook/river	6	Feel exposed	15
Nowhere to sit/too few seats	7	Not enough people	16
No one to explain things	8	Too many people	17
Uncertain future	9	Cycles/ motorbikes	18
		Other: _____	

- 19 How would you describe the types of people who regularly use \_\_\_\_\_ according to their age group or interests? (Prompt)

Walkers	1
Joggers	2
Dog walkers	3
Cyclists/motorbikers	4
Rubbish tipplers	5
People with nothing to do	6
People with young children	7
Elderly or retired people	8
Teenagers	9
People with an interest in nature	10
Primary school teachers & children	11
Students doing biology/landscape	12
Teenage gangs	13
Anybody	14
Other: _____	

(For OCCASIONAL USERS ONLY)

- 20 Could you imagine any change in your own personal circumstances which would encourage you to visit \_\_\_\_\_ more often?

Got a dog	1
Had to look after someone else's dog	2
Told to get more exercise by doctor	3
Had to care for young children	4
Had visitors to show round	5
Had more free time	6
Decided to study biology/landscape	7
Took a course in conservation	8
Had a friend who was a keen walker	9
Not so housebound	10
No	11
Other: _____	

GO TO TOP SHEET AND FILL IN DEMOGRAPHIC DATA



## UWG: SITE SURVEY

CHECK LIST FOR INTERVIEWERS

## EQUIPMENT

- 1 Questionnaires
- 2 Clipboard
- 3 Biro
- 4 Shoulder bag to carry papers etc
- 5 Authorisation document

## APPEARANCE

Please dress casual but smart

## APPROACH

- 1 Smile and be polite.
- 2 Relax - if you appear to be on edge the respondent will be too, the result being that neither of you will be able to think clearly.
- 3 Remember that the person is not obliged to answer your questions.
- 4 Have your authorisation document ready just in case it is requested.

## PROCEDURE

- 1 Ask people who have just arrived at the site to help you as this will be less inconvenient for them than at the end of their visit when they might be wanting to get away at a specific time.
- 2 Ask any person who is 12 years old or older to help.
- 3 Be sure to keep a running total of the age and sex of the respondents so that you fill your quotas.

## RULES FOR INTERVIEWING

- 1 Take your time.
- 2 Employ a silence before a prompt.
- 3 Use general prompts eg "Anything else" and "Could you give me a little more detail". NEVER give examples of possible answers as the respondent will more than likely just repeat these in order to please you.
- 4 If the respondent answers "Nice" or "Good" to a question, try to find out what they mean by that, using a phrase such as "What is it about the place that makes it nice?"
- 5 If you are in any doubt as to what code to use, ALWAYS use the 'Other' category and write in the response in full.
- 6 Make sure you have noted the person's sex, age and address before moving onto the next interview.

## ENQUIRIES

- Q What is the survey for?
- A To provide planners and landscape architects with information on what people think about parks and open spaces.
- Q Who will look at what I've said?
- A Only people from the Group. It is strictly confidential.

## APPENDIX I

UWG: OBSERVATION STUDIES

Revised 1986

PROCEDURE FOR MAPPING SITE USERS**Purpose**

Mapping will enable us to build up a picture of the range, numbers, activities and favoured locations, of users at the three case study sites.

**Sample**

You are asked to map each individual user you see as you walk around the site along a predetermined route during the specified mapping times.

**Method**

- 1 Complete the details at the top of the map sheet for date, etc
- 2 Walk around the site along the predetermined route.
- 3 Map each individual you see only once on the first occasion you see them, using the code system. Each person is coded for their age, sex, basic mode of activity, key activity (if appropriate) and time of sighting.
- 4 Use the blank spaces around the edge of the map to add information about the type of play observed, whether people have any equipment or tools with them, what use they make of props on the site eg branches, water, pieces of dead wood, slopes etc.
- 5 Note signs of abuse eg fire hearths, dumping, people seen where they shouldn't be etc.
- 6 Write clearly and start a new sheet when you run out of room on the old one.

See the example sheet and the coding sheet for further information.



## OBSERVATIONS: MAP CODING SYSTEM

## A PEOPLE

OAP	(60+ yrs)	O
Adult	(18-60 yrs)	A
Adolescent	(12-18 yrs)	D
Child	(5-12 yrs)	C
Toddler	(under 5)	T
Disabled		Dis

## B SEX

Male	M
Female	F

Relationship or group

(C C)

## C ACTIVITIES

Basic mode		Key activity	
Walking (+ direction arrow)	WK	Viewing	v
Dog walking	DW	Nature watching	nw
Cycling	CY	Reading	r
Jogging	JO	Picnicking	p
Running	RU	Talking	t
Sitting	SI	Photographing	ph
Standing	ST	Meeting	m
Sunbathing	SB	Playing with child	pc
Through routing	TR		
Informal Play	IP	Please describe the type of play observed and what equipment, tools, weapons or natural props eg water, branches etc are being used, in the margins at the edge of the map.	
Vandalising	VA		
Harassing	HA		
Dumping	DU		
Fishing	FI		
Football	FB		
Cricket	CT	Also note signs of abuse eg fires, temporary features eg dens, and occasions where restriction to access is being ignored eg gates left open or dogs seen in no dog areas.	
Pond dipping	PD		
Paddling	PA		

NB if you need to create a new code, please give details in the Notes section on the map sheet.

## FORMAT

The codes and time of reading should be arranged as:

Time	B	eg:	10.00	M
A			D	
Cb	Ck		WK	ph





SITE B. Beckwood	RECORDER CH	DAY Friday DATE 8 Aug '60 TIME 1:30 - 2:30
SHEET NO. 161	WEATHER: temp cool pptn -	light bright wind -

[illegible]

		SITE	RECORDER	DAY	DATE	TIME
		SHEET NO.	WEATHER: temp	pptn	light	wind
<b>Basic Activity</b>		O	A	D	C	T
		st	st	st	st	Total
		T	T	T	T	T
WK	m f					
DW	m f					
CY	m f					
JO	m f					
RU	m f					
SI	m f					
ST	m f					
SB	m f					
TR	m f					
IP	m f					
VA	m f					
HA	m f					
DU	m f					
FI	m f					
FB	m f					
CT	m f					
PD	m f					
PA	m f					
	m f					
	m f					
	m f					
	m f					
Total	m f					
<b>Key Activity</b>		O	A	D	C	T
		st	st	st	st	Total
		T	T	T	T	T
v	m f					
nw	m f					
r	m f					
p	m f					
t	m f					
ph	m f					
m	m f					
pc	m f					
	m f					
	m f					
Total	m f					



## APPENDIX J

## UWG POLICY (LANDSCAPE &amp; PLANNING) '87

## LANDSCAPES

To help protect, conserve and manage rich and potentially rich, locally rare and threatened wildlife sites, with the involvement of the community and by influencing the landowner.

To advise and influence local authorities and landowners on how to design and manage open space for the benefit of wildlife and the community.

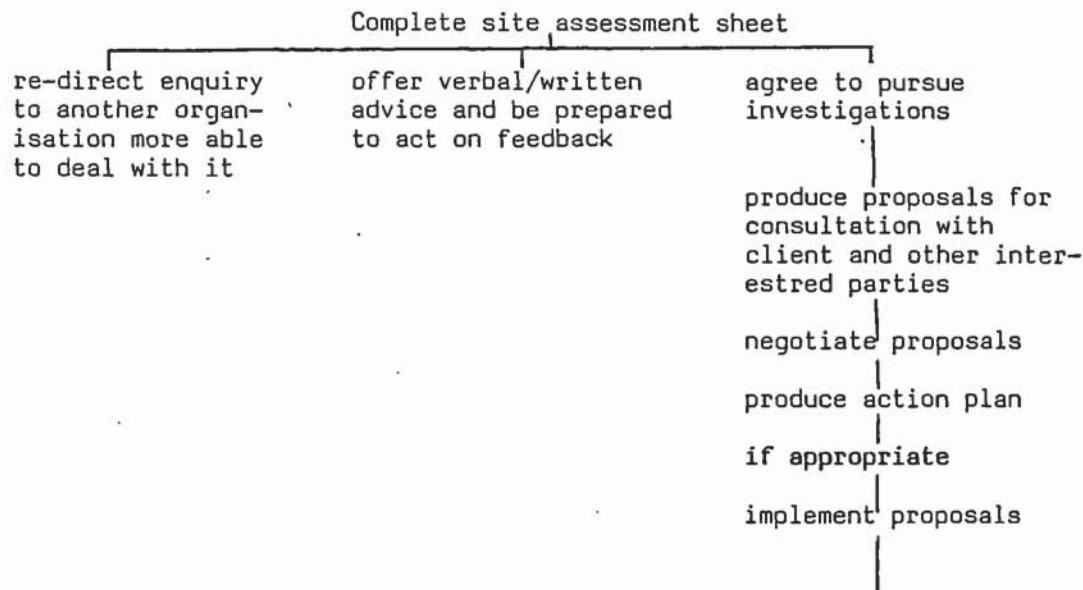
To develop designs for new urban open spaces which will create the opportunity for the local community to gain experience of nature, and for the group to demonstrate various approaches and techniques with respect to habitat creation and management, and community involvement.

Except on the few sites where UWG is prepared to take on legal responsibilities and financial commitment for innovative projects, site work shall be restricted to providing:

- 1 landscape design
- 2 implementation
- 3 guidance on management
- 4 regular site maintenance

Old sites may be revisited under present MSC regulations, for maintenance, but regular maintenance should not form the major part of the landscape team's work. The list of all the sites we have been involved with must be kept up to date, and regular visits should be made to monitor progress.

The formal procedure for deciding on our level of input to other site projects, which must be followed, is:



contd

|  
draw up management plan  
|  
negotiate maintenance  
|  
monitor site progress  
|  
take further action  
if necessary

In giving advice or undertaking projects particular attention should be given to the following:

Community involvement - the community should be involved at all stages of the project. UWG should be able to identify roles that members of the community are able to fulfil and enable them to be as independent as possible from outside help.

Budget - the budget for the project should be agreed with the client and any conditions laid down by the funder adhered to.

Implementation - full implementation need not always be done by UWG. Several local authorities have task forces which can be used for hard landscaping. Every opportunity to educate others in practical conservation skills should be taken.

Maintenance - UWG cannot be committed to the long term maintenance of any site, given the uncertainty of MSC funding.

Interpretation - the Group recognises the benefits to be had from providing wardens on sites who can interpret the landscape to visitors, undertake some limited habitat management and develop the site to maximise its value to wildlife and to local residents as a recreation and education resource.

Legal - in most circumstances the Group prefers to have minimal legal responsibilities for a site. Written agreements with the landowner are usually sufficient. Only in exceptional circumstances will UWG be prepared to take out a licence, or lease a site from the landowner, and then only for a peppercorn rent.

Consultancy - staff may undertake paid consultancy work under the following conditions:

- 1 priority (in terms of allocating staff time) is given to organisations who cannot pay
- 2 enquiries are passed over where appropriate, to local professionals in the private or public sectors (see list of recommended consultants)
- 3 work is undertaken, and paid for at the going rate, only if UWG can use the opportunity to achieve some or all of its objectives eg influencing landscape professionals, publicity or community involvement.

NB Staff should consult the relevant members of the Executive before undertaking any paid consultancy work.



## PLANNING

To improve the use of the urban land resource, in line with ecological principles and the greening ethos and for the benefit of the urban dweller.

The Town and Country Planning System is the mechanism by which the use of the urban land resource is controlled and UWG will maintain a consistently high level of professional input to that system.

### Strategic Planning

Full involvement will be maintained in the strategic planning process ie in the preparation of unitary plans. This will be achieved in full liaison with the planning authority concerned, through formal written representation at all stages and appearance at public inquiry where necessary.

UWG will ensure that the West Midlands County Council Nature Conservation Strategy will be promoted amongst the district authorities.

All opportunities will be taken to impress upon local authorities the urgent need for the preparation and implementation of district strategies or open space plans.

This work will be a priority within the unit in recognition of the far-reaching and long term implications of approved strategic plans.

### Development Control

All planning applications submitted within our area will as far as possible continue to be monitored and responded to where necessary in liaison with planning officers. Written representation in the form of constructive comments or outright objection, and representations to public inquiries will be provided as necessary.

To make our development control work more effective, we need to press for clear policies on 2 broad issues:

- 1 the retention of natural site features as part of residential and industrial developments to provide a more attractive environment for people and wildlife.
- 2 the development and creative enhancement of urban green space for nature conservation, recreation, education and amenity.

UWG intend to produce a leaflet aimed specifically at developers to increase their awareness of the natural value of land, how it may be conserved and how its value to people may be exploited. The principle of the World Conservation Strategy is 'Conservation with Development'.

## Planning Aid

Assistance and advice on planning matters will be given to individuals and organised community groups as and when requested. This will be achieved chiefly through representation on residents groups committees, but also:

- 1 Planning Unit information leaflets
- 2 Media coverage - to heighten public and professional awareness of the planner's role in nature conservation in urban areas through local press and planning journals
- 3 Liaison with other planning bodies, principally the TCPA (Town and Country Planning Association) and ACTAC (the Association of Community Technical Aid Centres).

New ways to encourage wider involvement of local people in the planning process will be explored.

## Planning Initiatives

The unit will seek to stimulate new initiatives in the form of policy documents, enhancement schemes and site-based development projects where a need or opportunity clearly exists.

## Liaison

Liaison with all statutory and non-statutory agencies involved in nature conservation in the West Midlands through representation on working parties, advisory/consultative committees, forums and informal contacts will be maintained.

## Dissemination of Information

All possible ways will be sought to impart the lessons and benefits of our experience of integrating nature conservation into the planning process including seminars, publications and the media.



## APPENDIX K THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF UWG 1980-86

### Introduction

The following account represents a summary of information extracted from a variety of annual reports, minutes, newsletters and leaflets that UWG have published between 1980 and 1986. Groups, like any individual, have a growth cycle; they are born, develop through to maturity and may ultimately die. Handy (1982) has identified 4 successive stages in this cycle; forming, storming, norming and performing. In the forming stage there are just a collection of individuals exploring the purpose of the group yet to be formed, its title, composition, leadership pattern and life span. In the storming stage there may be conflict when the original consensus on purpose etc are challenged and re-established. In the norming stage the group establishes norms and practices relating to how it should work, decision making, tolerance of behaviour, and what degree of openness, trust and confidence is appropriate. Only when the first three stages have been successfully completed can the group go on to be fully productive and performing well, allowing for the inevitable re-appearance of the fundamental issues outlined for the forming stage.

The account also describes how the role of the author developed within UWG, first as a member of staff (ecologist then researcher) and later as a volunteer.

### Forming 1980-81

The Urban Wildlife Group (UWG) was formed by a small group of voluntary enthusiasts in June 1980.

The Nature Conservancy Council's report on wildlife in Birmingham and the Black Country (Teagle, 1978), provided an analysis of wildlife habitats and species to be found in the conurbation, and presented a new philosophy which stated that caring for rare species was no longer enough and that nature conservation should be about people as well as wildlife. There was a need to change people's perception of the world around them and provide a more stimulating environment in which to play, learn and work.

The activity created by local ecologists and natural historians being involved in the survey and newspaper articles preceding the publication of the report helped to create a climate in which new ideas about urban conservation (or what the NCC preferred to call nature conservation in urban areas) began to take shape. A consortium of representatives from the three neighbouring nature conservation trusts, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire, was formed to provide a focus for discussion and to further the cause in Birmingham. At the same time, the Birmingham Natural History Society started a survey inside the city and the nature conservation

trusts began to establish local groups within the West Midlands County.

Frustration arose with the organisational situation as it was then, when the battle to save part of Queslett Quarry from infilling was lost. Examples of the kind of active campaign that could stir public awareness such as the Moseley Bog Campaign pointed to an alternative approach. The aforementioned enthusiasts held their first informal meeting in April 1980. This led to a Public Services Announcement on ATV requesting help from viewers to locate city sites of nature conservation potential and the organisation of a weekend workshop in June. The Nature in the City workshop attracted 150 delegates and demonstrated that there could be considerable interest in urban wildlife and that different organisations may be able to work together in a common cause. The majority of the 150 became the founder members of UWG and so the Group was launched.

An informal committee was formed of natural historians, landscape architects, planners, engineers, teachers and biologists, and a chair, secretary and treasurer. The Group began to hold open meetings at three weekly intervals and a draft constitution was presented to an extraordinary general meeting in November 1980. The aims were reworked over the following 12 months and eventually became enshrined in the Group's memorandum and articles of association when UWG was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in July 1982 and subsequently approved as a charity in April 1983. The popular version of these aims, which appears on the back of the newsletter is:

Increase public awareness of the need to foster natural history in the conurbation.

Campaign to protect existing sites of wildlife value and improve others.

Promote ideas and inspiration for combining natural history and recreation in urban open spaces.

Encourage and help other similar groups in their efforts to conserve and study wildlife.

Educate children to a wider understanding of the nature on their doorsteps, to enjoy and preserve it.

Tackle the practical problems of managing urban open spaces for both conservation and amenity.

\* Positively influence nature conservation policy and planning through local government, institutions and private landowners.

\*\* Pursue every opportunity to create long term job opportunities in nature conservation.

NB \* added 1986, \*\* added 1987.



Opinion as to what the new organisation should be called varied. Some felt that 'Trust', should be used in keeping with the convention used by the county trusts for nature conservation and because some felt it would help to attract funds. Others took the view that whilst they wanted to work in co-operation with the county trusts, they did not want to create the impression that UWG was a county trust because they felt the new organisation should be radically different. Interestingly, many in the county trusts were suspicious of the new organisation's stated objectives and proposed method of work. The neighbouring trusts drew members from Birmingham and the Black Country towns to support their work in the countryside and so were fearful that UWG might compete with them for this source of support. It is not therefore suprising that the trusts approved the idea that the Group should represent the interests of a federation of organisations, and not have its own membership. The Group eventually approved two categories of membership; individual and corporate.

The relationship with the neighbouring trusts was agreed at a joint meeting on 19 February 1981:

- Representation: Each trust shall be asked to nominate a representative to attend the executive committee meetings of UWG as a full, voting member. UWG shall amend their constitution accordingly.
- Membership: The county trusts and UWG shall actively promote membership of both organisations.
- Responsibility: UWG shall establish liaison with the West Midlands Metropolitan County and District Councils (except Coventry) over matters concerned with nature conservation and will then inform the appropriate person best equipped to deal with the matter.

Despite this, Solihull remained contentious and UWG finally agreed to play a role at county level, leaving WARNACT to liaise at district council level.

Meanwhile, in the July of 1980, the urban ecologist at Friends of the Earth (Birmingham) had set up the Greensite Project. Funding for this had been negotiated from the Manpower Services Commission under their Special Temporary Employment Programme (STEP) which was designed to provide temporary employment on 12 month contracts for unemployed people to carry out work of benefit to the community. The Greensite Project employed 20 people and it was agreed that 4 full time posts would be seconded to UWG to help with the development of the Group.

A landscape architect, 2 ecologists (including myself) and an administrator were subsequently appointed in December 1980,

with guaranteed employment until the end of the project ie July 1981, when MSC would review progress. The work of the team of 4 included responding to the people who had provided details of sites following the Public Service Announcement, producing the Group's newsletter, preparing exhibitions, preparing a register of local specialists, and progressing a site-based ecological survey begun by the 9 natural history societies in the county.

The team were employed before the Group had held its first AGM and at a time when the constitution was only 2 pages long and contained no reference to the employment and rights of staff. It may therefore have seemed natural to invite staff along to the ordinary general meetings and committee meetings in order that they might report their progress and contribute where appropriate. Whatever the original justification, this practice eventually became normal practice and has ensured a close relationship between the governing body of the Group (executive committee) and senior staff ever since.

#### The First AGM:

Up until the first AGM, the proto-executive had been headed by a local biology teacher, Roger Hammond. Chris Baines was formally elected as the Group's first chair on 29 April 1981, with Peter Shirley as vice-chair, Ian Bailey as treasurer and a committee of 5 others. In his view of the future, published in Newsletter 5, Chris Baines highlighted the need for members of the executive to take on specific responsibilities and to draw in new active members to help with the work at every level. He identified the areas of work for the year 1981-82 to be:

- Status           - Charitable and company; affiliation to RSNC or CoEnCo or continuing independence?
- Constitution and legal position over the leasing of land and public liability.
- Education       - Programme for schools, public lectures, adult education courses.
- Projects         - Management plans for sites, financial sponsorship, links with other societies, local initiatives.
- Accommodation- A public face or private office? Branches around the county?
- Finance          - 1000 members by Christmas '82? Local and central government sponsorship? Fund raising?
- Staffing         - A bigger survey team? Permanent secretariat? Schools officer?



Promotion - Brochures, exhibitions, badges. Family, child and society membership categories? More workshops and talks.

So within one year, the Group had been able to make good progress on various fundamental issues relating to the setting up of an organisation. Its own workshop and the 'Conservation for the People' conference, which it hosted for the British Association of Nature Conservationists, had attracted large audiences and successfully laid out the broad issues relating to urban conservation. The team had begun to tackle work on site based projects, surveys and promotion. The 2nd and 4th issues of the newsletter had been targeted at specific audiences namely teachers and local councillors indicating the Group's intention to spread the message to a much wider audience than its own membership. And finally, the Group had played a significant part in helping with the launch of the London Wildlife Trust.

The gathering of momentum was rapid, and so much so that the storming phase may well have been precipitated sooner than anticipated.

#### Storming 1981 - 1983

As early as mid-February 1981, the team had requested help from the proto-executive with setting priorities for their work, and speaking as one who was centrally involved in that I believe it fair to say that that was not forthcoming. The committee appeared to be nervous of excluding certain avenues at such an early stage in the development of the Group, but this problem grew as the potential became more obvious and the workload increased.

This uncertainty in the staff was exacerbated on two counts. Firstly the relationship of the urban ecologist with his colleagues at FOE and the staff became stretched. Friends of the Earth had not been in wholehearted agreement about using MSC funding for staff. Many felt that MSC represented a cynical attempt by central government to lower the unemployment figures and undermine the normal rights of workers through the insistence on temporary contracts and inevitable low pay for the majority of participants arising from the use of an average wage criteria. Furthermore, FOE was organised as a co-operative where each employee, no matter what their job, was paid the same as any other. It was argued that the staff employed on Greensite (labourers, drivers, nurserymen) would not be persuaded to join the co-operative and this created a differential within FOE.

The team were able to enjoy a greater level of integration within FOE than that of the rest of the project, and whilst still paid on MSC scales, took a full and active part in FOE. However, the office was burnt down in the May of 1981. This created opportunities for FOE to re-think its own priorities about what sorts of projects it should be sponsoring and for



UWG to consider taking over the sponsorship of the entire Greensite Project and re-locating it to its own premises.

Further uncertainty arose as the project approached the end of its first year with no guarantee from MSC that it would be renewed. Staff were thus faced with the very real prospect of unemployment in July. I had discussed the possibility of carrying on with the Group with the urban ecologist, and we began to negotiate a research proposal with the Interdisciplinary Higher Degree Scheme at Aston University. Grant aid was obtained from the Barrow & Geraldine Cadbury Trust and the research began in the October of 1981, to evaluate the Group's community involvement projects.

In the event, whilst the administrator left, extensions for the landscape architect and ecologist were obtained from MSC to run through to December 1981, and a new STEP Project (Greensite II) was approved which included a new team for Wolverhampton (29 people on the ground teams and 6 for UWG, including a planner). It was agreed in November 1981 between UWG and FOE that UWG would take over the sponsorship of the whole Greensite Project and seek its own accommodation. The only problem was that UWG had still not obtained charitable or company status which prevented sponsorship being transferred under MSC regulations. Furthermore the urban ecologist, who had been the named sponsor of Greensite under FOE, left. This effectively left the staff with no day to day guidance from an experienced and knowledgeable person.

Having begun the PhD with the Group, my role ought to have changed. However, this proved difficult because the staff were engaged in fairly fundamental discussions about how they should formalise their internal organisation and their relationship with FOE and UWG's executive. I had been asked to take over the nominal role of sponsor for the Group when the urban ecologist left, which wasn't necessary in the event, but had the effect of pointing up the need for UWG to appoint staff funded from sources other than MSC. Furthermore it was becoming obvious to me that the research could not be progressed if the community projects were not progressed because the staff were too absorbed in other issues. I was in a position where I had to relinquish my own involvement in various initiatives and take on a new role as action researcher; observing, feeding back information and helping staff to implement courses of action relating to the community projects.

Having become a researcher, and no longer an MSC employee, I reported to the urban ecologist as my supervisor. When he left, this function was passed over to the chair, Chris Baines, which in effect left me with no day to day manager, as Chris was employed elsewhere. By March 1982, I was the only member of the original team left and therefore the most experienced person within the existing team. This affected the degree to which I could remain outside a wider range of issues than just the community projects, although it did



mean that I was able to gain a deep understanding of how the community projects fitted in with the other work of the staff. I also found that this strengthened my own standing at executive meetings as I was able to bring up issues of concern to the staff on their behalf and particularly those relating to the lack of defined policy and guidance on priorities from the executive.

The first annual report of UWG was published in April 1982 and the chair focused on achievements at the regional and local level. The emphasis at regional level had been on influencing policy makers namely, local authorities who had been able to provide moral, technical and financial support. In return the Group had been able to supply survey information, input to the planning process and support for the local authorities at public enquiries. The Group had also made an input into an RSPB study on the wildlife value of the River Rea and had organised a major habitat survey of the conurbation in collaboration with the NCC and County Council and with the help of UWG members.

At the local level, the focus was on the rapid increase in the numbers of community nature park projects that were being set up not just in Birmingham but elsewhere in the country (on the basis of Baines' own work as a landscape consultant).

The priorities for the immediate future were to obtain charitable status, raise funds to support more ambitious projects including the employment of more permanent staff to overcome the problems relating to the lack of continuity for staff employed on the MSC Project, and to forge closer relations with other conservation organisations working in the West Midlands.

During the summer of 1982, I was forced to re-assess the original concept of the community nature park strategy as the only strategy that could be pursued to involve the community in urban nature conservation projects. As a consequence I initiated a series of project allocation meetings where staff reviewed progress on projects and identified priority projects. It was through these meetings that it became obvious that new strategies were being intuitively adopted by staff; partly as a response to the need to reduce their input into community projects and partly for other reasons as discussed in section 4.2.

Greensite II was scheduled to end on August 13th 1982 and negotiations over Greensite III were protracted because the issue of transferring sponsorship of the entire project to UWG was not resolved until a late stage. Consequently, the executive issued a letter to all staff stating that no matter how long people had been employed under Greensite II there was no guarantee that they would automatically be employed under Greensite III and that they should start looking for jobs elsewhere. MSC changed the name of STEP to CEP (Community Employment Programme) and UWG's application had to be

re-negotiated to conform to new regulations. MSC granted a 3 month extension of Greensite II and Greensite III was finally approved in November 1982. The structure of the new project (now sponsored by UWG) was:

Project Manager

Development Officer

Planning & Development Control Unit	- Supervisor - 2 Planning Assistants (FT) - 6 Development Control staff (PT)
Ecology & Biological Survey Unit	- Supervisor - 3 Field Naturalists/Ecologists (FT) - 3 Field Naturalists (PT)
Demonstration Landscape Project Unit	- Supervisor - Project Implementation Supervisor(FT) - Nursery Foreman (FT) - Landscape Foreman (FT) - 2 Landscape Architects (FT) - 10 Landscape & Nursery workers
Project Administrative Support Unit	- Supervisor - 1 Book Keeper (FT) - 4 Secretaries/Assistants (PT)

The Group negotiated the addition of an Education Unit, that was officially regarded as a second CEP Project, through the winter of 1982-83 and this was eventually approved in July 1983. This consisted of:

Schools and Education Unit	- Supervisor - Teacher Pack Assistant (FT) - Education Project Assistant (FT) - 6 School Visitors (PT)
----------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

#### Norming 1982 - 84

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1982 discontent grew amongst staff that the executive could not provide clear guidance on policy and therefore on priorities for action, whilst the workload continued to increase.

I raised the issue at an executive meeting and the staff were given the remit to prepare a draft policy document. This was done and presented to the executive in March 1983 and was based on the 5 aims as set out in the memorandum and articles of association; practical work, education, liaison with voluntary and statutory bodies, study and research, and co-operation with other conservation groups.

The second AGM was held in April 1983 for which the chair prepared a long paper referring to the two fundamental strategies the Group had adopted (community involvement and



influencing policy) and its achievements. In looking to the future he hoped the Group would attract more members and supporters who would become active in urban nature conservation and that the Group would try to document the lessons it had learnt on rapid survey techniques, preparing planning cases, the snags of MSC funding, sustaining community involvement and running a wildflower nursery. In addition he hoped the Group would strive to establish the type of work the staff did as 'legitimate' and so attract permanent funding and stimulate permanent job opportunities for former members of staff in other organisations.

Peter Shirley took over from Chris Baines as the new chair of UWG and thus began a period of consolidation, the establishment of a firmer financial base for the Group with a commitment to establish more permanent job opportunities within the organisation as well as outside.

The executive had been meeting regularly every 1-2 months over the first 3 years, but it was decided that the work of this committee would be divided. A finance and general purposes committee would be established to deal with general business and executive meetings would be reduced to 4 per year to deal with broader issues and policy. This change was facilitated by the appointment of a development officer at the beginning of 1983 who concentrated on developing a funding strategy for the Group.

The original policy document represented the beginning of a long process. I initiated a further meeting in September 1983 to provide the opportunity for members of the executive committee to review the work of the Group and progress policy decisions and priorities for action. The staff stated that landscape projects, ecological surveys, development control, and input to strategic planning documents represented the bulk of their work. The executive re-affirmed the original view that UWG's role was to influence policy makers and help local people save sites. The graphic artist (employed within the planning unit) identified the existence of two major target groups as a problem in designing promotional material. Other staff stated that they felt that there was a need to improve the quality of a few projects rather than take on yet more.

Staff balanced the breadth of experience they gained whilst with the Group against:

- 1 The fact that it took them nearly 12 months to gain an understanding of the Group.
- 2 That it was not always easy to provide professional advice on the basis of limited experience and especially so on the community projects.
- 3 The temporary nature of the job.
- 4 The anti-social hours.



There was general agreement that the Group should maintain its radicalism but also try to consolidate on its basic pattern of work. The executive also felt that it would have to rely on staff to articulate arguments in support of projects the latter would like the Group to pursue. Future initiatives were identified as a promotion campaign in 1984, the development of a strategy and action plan for work in the inner city, strengthening links with the district councils, exploiting and contributing to RSNC following affiliation, increasing impact on school children through the newly established education unit, developing staff structure and roles and major fund raising for permanent posts, unit requirements and exhibitions.

Planning for the next MSC Project began in the summer of 1983. The Group had been pressurised by MSC to increase the supervisor/staff ratio from 1:6 to 1:10 so that the average wage would fall to the level stipulated by MSC of £60 per week. The only ways to achieve this were to increase the numbers of part-time staff and/or ensure that the part-timers were recruited before the full-timers. However the general consensus amongst staff and executive was to resist any pressure to expand the number of staff. Indeed the supervisors of the ecology and landscape units wanted to reduce their staffing levels.

It was generally felt that there should be more emphasis on publicising and promoting the work that was being done by the Group and so provision was made to employ a part-time graphics artist and a full time information officer within the administrative unit. This provided for a total of 75 staff.

Meetings had taken place between staff and executive committee members to plan a strategy for acquiring a number of permanent staff. In 1982 and 1983 the Group had applied for funding for a conservation/project officer to the NCC and a charitable trust but this had not been granted. Subsequently in the summer of 1983, proposals were put forward to appoint a full-time landscape architect to concentrate on inner city projects, with funding from the Inner City Partnership Programme, and a community projects officer.

The job description of the community projects officer was drawn up by one of the unit supervisors and myself. All three unit supervisors had been members of Greensite II and so had accumulated 2 years of experience with community projects. Some of the problems they had experienced have been outlined in section 4.2. There was general agreement that no one person would be able to provide the range of expertise a community needed in order to fulfill the objectives of a given project, but that staff should be able to develop the necessary skills and confidence to contribute to such projects. The literature and evidence from this research suggested that enablers needed time to develop a rapport with community groups and an understanding of the community's skills, enthusiasm and limitations, so that roles could be



developed that were complementary to each other. The reality of MSC projects mitigated against this, given the rapid turnover of staff and the newly qualified, inexperienced graduates that such schemes attracted.

UWG were unlikely to be able to attract sufficient funds to employ a team of experienced professionals for community projects alone and therefore another way had to be found to alleviate some of the problems. It was therefore suggested that the Group seek funding to employ an experienced person who would:

- 1 Train staff in the techniques of enabling.
- 2 Liaise with management committees and lead site work days to support staff at a practical level.
- 3 Develop the concept of community work as it is applied by environmentalists through communication with other organisations, community workers and researchers.

It was envisaged that this person would hold a position at the equivalent level of a unit supervisor within the organisation and would work with staff from the ecology, landscape and planning units.

Permanent funding was not found for this post, but someone was employed within the MSC project to fulfill the job description. This failed because the person placed too much of an emphasis on part 2 and less on parts 1 and 3, but even without this, MSC regulations mitigated against it succeeding.

In the autumn of 1983, MSC brought in new regulations which stated that every project had to be managed through an agency. UWG was faced with various alternatives. It could establish itself as an agency, convert its units into separate projects, manage projects for other organisations and receive £100 per employee as a fee from MSC, to be spent howsoever the Group wished. Otherwise it could negotiate its future as a project managed by another agency, the most likely candidate for which was the County Council. The decision was taken to pursue both avenues but this was overtaken by events.

UWG had submitted its renewal application for the MSC project in the October. In the meantime MSC had decided that it would no longer support research or survey work and this forced the Group to re-consider the remit of the ecology unit and re-submit in the November. However before any decision was made, MSC discovered that it had approved too many projects and so effected an instant moratorium on all new and renewal applications, nationally. But for the fact that the education unit had been established as a separate project earlier that year, UWG would have lost all its staff on 6 Jan 1984, except me. As it was with agreement from MSC, it was possible to retain a skeleton staff of the 10 people, myself and the 5 staff in education.



The executive used this situation to encourage staff who had lost their jobs to consider setting up their own businesses. This resulted in three members of the landscape unit establishing a landscape contractors firm and myself and the former supervisor of the planning unit establishing a landscape research and planning consultancy in May 1984. I continued as a researcher with UWG until the October of 1984, which completed the normal 3 year period of post-graduate degrees. I then left the staff and became a voluntary member of UWG and was elected to the executive committee to continue my involvement and report progress on the research.

In order to make communications between the staff and executive members easier, a number of vice-chairs were elected to head up sub-committees to guide the work of the staff units. Thus a refinement was made to the structure of the organisation ensuring that volunteers with specific expertise were able to contribute to project work as well as to the general business of the organisation. This pattern persists today and seems unlikely to be altered. There is thus an integration of staff and volunteers at both sub-committee level and executive level within the organisation which provides a greater degree of openness than is the case in the majority of county trusts. The close involvement of staff in the decision making process has had the added benefit that many of them become active in the sub-committees and executive when they leave the staff.

A new MSC project was eventually approved in May 1984 at the same time as the Group was able to employ a landscape architect on a 4 year contract funded by ICPP. The new scheme provided the opportunity to reduce the number of staff from 70 to 56 who were eventually recruited in the July.

Setting up the business took at least 3 months of what should have been the final year of the research project. Progress on the research had been particularly slow over the first 18 months and the period of data collection for the observation studies had to be extended through to the summer of 1984. Furthermore it had been hoped that a part-time typist would have been made available to me from the new 1984 MSC scheme but the moratorium and subsequent pressure to reduce staff made this impossible. Little of the analysis had been completed by the end of the three year period and so it was inevitable the research would have to be completed under different circumstances where I was no longer based in the offices or able to attend as many internal meetings as I had in the past.

During my year as an ecologist, I had been involved with a number of community projects and could see the need for local people to be able to gain advice and support for their efforts to conserve wildlife. UWG's help had been sought by the local residents, rather than imposed upon them, although any opportunity to educate local residents as to the benefits of urban conservation was rarely passed up once the Group were



involved. As it became obvious that the staff, whilst being committed to the approach were also experiencing serious difficulties in trying to live up to the demands it created, and despite my own efforts to remain detached, there were times when I intervened to help someone overcome difficulties.

Having left the staff to form the consultancy and physically re-located to a home base, allowed a time to observe the progress of the community projects as more of a non-participant and thus gain a more accurate assessment of the degree to which new staff joining the Group felt committed to the community involvement approach and their ability to tackle the work. Now some 3 years later UWG still have an input into many of the community projects begun as long ago as 1980. The problems staff face are no less than those of the early years but it seems that new staff find it easy to adopt the approach and for the most part enjoy it.

#### Performing 1984-86

Once the 1984 scheme had started, the Group were able to revert to a pattern of activity similar to that before the moratorium and thoughts turned to a medium term strategy as a follow up to the first strategy meeting that had been held in the September of 1983.

Despite the moratorium, it was felt that UWG had continued to enjoy a high media profile and Wild West Midlands Week (a mixture of exhibition, demonstrations and events at the Bull Ring Shopping Centre) had attracted a great deal of interest from the public. The education unit had been involved with 200 schools and 2000 children in the first year of its operation. Funds had been obtained to support the ICPP landscape architect and a number of temporary part-time staff working on a gardening for wildlife campaign and a report for the NCC on UWG's approach to the management of urban wildlife sites.

The unit structure had not been changed and was functioning well, the staff supervisors were continuing to hold weekly representatives meetings (a system that had been set up in 1982), the combination of financial and general purposes meetings and executive meetings had been operating successfully for 12 months and the sub-committees had begun to meet.

Where progress had been slower was on the development of relationships with some of the borough councils and on attracting more major funding to support a permanent post for each unit and an overall director.

Nonetheless the Group began to address itself to various major issues looming ahead, such as the abolition of the county council and the possibility of a Groundwork Trust for the West Midlands. It also needed to resolve its intentions regarding the type of contribution it wanted to make to urban greening,



RSNC and the NCC.

Some members of the executive, particularly Chris Baines, had been making a valuable contribution to the development of the national urban conservation movement and its relationship to conservation in the countryside and other urban issues. However, 1984 was significant because the whole Group began to widen its perspectives, relatively confident in the knowledge that it knew what it wanted to do and how to do it at the local level.

My own experience of the work of other groups and my interdisciplinary training prompted me to take a wider view and thus play a role in encouraging the Group to look ahead and so be able to plan for funding and staff requirements. I continued to initiate regular reviews of the Group's strategy and its policy towards issues and I was subsequently elected to be honorary secretary at the 1985 AGM and also became UWG's first regular representative to RSNC.

This eventually led me to organise a conference in June 1985 for twenty new urban wildlife groups that were being set up around the country, many of whom had approached UWG and me in particular for guidance. This led to the forming of the Fairbrother Group (the national association of urban wildlife groups) whose major remit is to encourage RSNC to expand its interests in urban conservation and thus integrate the rural trusts with the urban groups and form a stronger national voice for the movement as a whole.

As regards the recent history of UWG, Peter Shirley guided the Group through a difficult year from 1985 into 1986 culminating in the abolition of the county council with whom the Group had enjoyed a fruitful partnership over various projects including the first systematic and comprehensive habitat survey of the conurbation, community projects, the setting up of a data bank and grant aid.

However, the chair expressed the view that UWG had reached a stage where it was beginning to benefit from the changed climate of opinion it had helped to create in that there was a greater degree of co-operation from local authorities to incorporate wildlife considerations in their activities, and it seemed likely that more funds would become available from the NCC and Countryside Commission to support urban conservation.

#### Concerning the Future

There is now a need for the Group to attract sufficient members to provide a substantial and reliable source of revenue and to encourage the more active to become fully involved in the work of the committees.

The development of the Group has been most strongly influenced by the radical and dynamic approach taken by its founder



members, the legacy of which persists today, and the availability of a large workforce provided by MSC funding. UWG is a voluntary organisation which enjoys different opportunities and freedoms to those of a statutory or commercial body. If it is to grow and meet new challenges it needs to give more priority to developing volunteer involvement and exploiting opportunities to bring in funds to sustain at least a core of permanent staff.

# LIST OF REFERENCES

- Allen, D.L. (1974). Philosophical Aspects of Urban Wildlife. In: J.H. Noyes and D.R. Progulske (eds) Wildlife In an Urbanizing Environment. Holdsworth Natural Resource Center Series No. 28. University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Anderson, L.M. and Schroeder, H.W. (1983). Application of Wildland Scenic Assessment Methods to the Urban Landscape. Landscape Planning 10 (3): 219-237.
- Appleton, J. (1975). The Experience of Landscape. Wiley, London.
- Ardrey, R. (1976). The Hunting Hypothesis. Atheneum, New York.
- Association of Community Technical Aid Centres (ACTAC) (1985). Directory of Community Technical Aid Centres. ACTAC, Liverpool.
- Bailie, S.H. (1975). Community Development as a Process of Emergence. In: R. Lees and G. Smith (eds.) 'Action Research in Community Development'. Routledge, London: 169-173.
- Bailey, K.D. (1978). Methods of Social Research. Collier Macmillan, London.
- Baines, J.C. (1982). Community Involvement in Landscape Projects. In: A.R. Ruff and R. Tregay (eds) An Ecological Approach to Urban Landscape Design. Occasional Paper No. 8, Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Manchester.
- Baines, J.C. (1984). Urban Wildlife: A Personal View. ECOS 5 (4): 2-4.
- Barker, G. (1984). Urban Nature Conservation Abroad. The Planner 70 (6): 21.
- Bell, C. and Newby, H. (1977). Doing Sociological Research. Allen and Unwin, London.
- Berk, R.A. and Rossi, P.H. (1976). Doing Good or Worse: Evaluation Research Politically Re-examined. Social Problems 23: 337-349.
- Beynon, N.J. and Wetton, B.W. (1978). Nature Conservation in Planning - The Participation of County Trusts for Nature Conservation. Trent Polytechnic Papers in Planning, Nottingham.
- Booker, I. (1966). Citizen Participation in Urban Development. In: G.M. Lomas (ed) 'Social Aspects of Urban Development'. National Council of Social Service, London.



Borden, R.J. and Frances, J.L. (1978). "Who Cares About Ecology?". Personality and Self Differences in Environmentally-Concerned. Journal of Personality 46 (1): 190.

Bradley, C. (1986). Community Involvement in Greening. Groundwork Foundation, Birmingham.

Bradley, C. (1983). Observation Studies - Open Space LA13. Dept Landscape Architecture, Sheffield University.

Bradley, C. and Millward, A.M. (1986). Successful Green Space - Do we know it when we see it? Landscape Research 11 (2): 2-8.

Bradshaw, A.D., Goode, D.A. and Thorp, E.H.P. (Eds) (1986). Ecology and Landscape Design. Blackwell, Oxford.

Brower, S. (1973). Streetfront and Sidewalk. Landscape Architecture July: 364-369.

Bulmer, M. (Ed) (1977). Sociological Research Methods.

Burrell, G. and Morgan, G. (1979). Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis. Heinemann, London.

Butcher, H., Collis, P., Glen, A. and Sills, P. (1980). Community Groups in Action: Case Studies and Analysis. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Buttel, F.H. and Finn, W.L. (1978). The Politics of Environmental Concern. Environment and Behaviour 10 (1): 17.

Capability (1977). Comment: Temporary Open Space Part 2. Landscape Design February.

Campbell, D.T. (1978). Qualitative Knowing in Action Research. In: M. Brenner, P. Marsh and M. Brenner (eds) The Social Contexts of Method.

Checkland, P.B. and Smyth, D.S. (1976). Using the Systems Approach: The Structure of Root Definitions. Journal of Applied Systems Analysis 5 (1): 75-83.

Civic Trust (1977). Urban Wasteland: A Report on Land Lying Dormant in Cities, Towns and Villages in Britain. Civic Trust, London.

Cole, L. (1983). Urban Nature Conservation. In: A Warren and F.B. Goldsmith (eds) Conservation in Perspective. Wiley, Chichester.

Cole, L. (1980). Wildlife in the City. Nature Conservancy Council, Shrewsbury.

Coleman, J.S. (1966). Foundations for a Theory of Collective Decisions. American Journal of Sociology 71 (6): 615-627.

Fairbrother, N. (1970). The Nature of Landscape Design: As an Artform, a Craft, a Social Necessity. Architectural Press.

Field, J. and Hedges, B. (1984). A National Survey of Volunteering. SCPR, London.

Filstead, W.J. (1979). Qualitative Methods: A Needed Perspective in Evaluation Research. In: T.D. Cook and C.S. Reichardt (eds) Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Evaluation Research. Sage, Beverley Hills: 33-48.

Gans, H. (1968). People and Plans: Essays on the Urban Problem and Solutions. Basic Books, New York.

Gee, M. (1986). Planning and the Voluntary Sector. The Planner Feb 1986: 43-44.

General Household Survey (1981). Report No. 11. OPCS, HMSO, London.

Gibson, A. (1984). Creating a New Neighbourhood. The Planner 70 (11): 14-16.

Gibson, A. (1979). People Power: Community and Work Groups in Action. Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Gold, S. (1977). Neighbourhood Parks: The Non-Use Phenomenon. Evaluation Quarterly 1 (2): 319-328.

Goldberg, E.M. (1983). Evaluation and Monitoring. In: E.M. Goldberg (ed) Monitoring Voluntary Action. ARVAC Occasional Paper No. 4.

Gorden, R.L. (1969). Interviewing: Strategy, Techniques and Tactics. Dorsey Press, Homewood, Illinois.

Goring, A. and Revill, G. (1987). Making Links - Planning with the Community. The Planner March 1987: 62-65.

Gresswell, P. (1971). Environment: An Alphabetical Handbook. John Murray, London.

Handley, J. (1987). Making the Most of Green Space. Groundwork Foundation, Birmingham (forthcoming).

Handy, C.B. (1981). Understanding Organizations. Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Harrison, C., Limb, M. and Burgess, J. (1986). Recreation 2000: Views of the Country from the City. Landscape Research 11 (2): 19-24.

Haworth, J.T. (Ed) (1979). Community Involvement in Leisure. Lepus, London.

Heilman, J.G. (1980). Paradigmatic Choices in Evaluation



Community Projects Foundation (1977). Community Groups Handbook. Community Projects Foundation, London.

Corder, M. and Brooker, R. (1980). Natural Economy. Kirklees Metropolitan Council, Huddersfield.

Countryside Commission (1970). Countryside recreation Glossary. Countryside Recreation Research Advisory Group, Cheltenham.

Countryside Commission (1979). Digest of Countryside Recreation. Countryside Commission, Cheltenham.

Countryside Commission (1985). National Countryside Recreation Survey 1984. CCP 201, Cheltenham.

Cowan, R., Dorfman, M. and Gillon, S. (1981). Create Your Own Environment. The Planner 67 (3): 70-71.

Cullingworth, J.B. (1979). Town and Country Planning in Britain. 7th Edn. George Allen and Unwin, London.

Curle, A. (1949). A Theoretical Approach to Action Research. Human Relations 2: 269-280.

Dagg, A.I. (1974). Reactions of People to Urban Wildlife. In: J.H.Noyes and D.R. Progulske (eds) Wildlife In an Urbanizing Environment. Holdsworth Natural Resource Center Series No. 28. University Massachusetts, Amherst.

Dartington Institute (1984). Green Towns and Cities UK/USA: Conclusions and Delegates List. Dartington Institute, Totnes.

Darvill, G. and Humble, S. (1980). Volunteers and Local Government. District Councils Review August: 170.

Davidson, J. (1970). Outdoor Recreation Information: Suggested Standard Classifications for Use in Questionnaire Surveys. Countryside Commission, London.

Davies, R. (1981). Whose Town is it Anyway? The Planner 67: 158-159.

Denzin, N.K. (1978). The Research Act. 2nd Edn. McGraw Hill, New York.

DOE (1977). Policy for Inner Cities. Command Paper 6845. HMSO.

Dewey, J. and Bentley, A.F. (1949). Knowing and the Known. Beacon, Boston MA.

Elson, M. (1977). A Review and Evaluation of Countryside Recreation Site Surveys. Countryside Commission, Cheltenham.

Fairbrother, N. (1974). New Lives, New Landscapes. Pelican, Harmondsworth.

Methodology. Evaluation Review 4 (5): 693-712.

Hoinville, G. and Jowell, R. (1971). Classification Manual for Household Interview Surveys in Great Britain. SCPR, London.

Hollick, T. (1982). Community Landscapes. In: A.R. Ruff and R. Tregay (eds) An Ecological Approach to Urban Landscape Design. Occasional Paper No. 8, Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Manchester.

Hyde, A.C. and Shafritz, J.M. (Eds) (1979). Program Evaluation in the Public Sector. Praeger, New York.

IUCN-UNEP-WWF (1980). World Conservation Strategy, Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development. WWF, Godalming.

Ittelson, W.H. and Cantril, H. (1954). Perception, a Transactional Approach. Doubleday, New York.

Jacobs, J. (1961). The Death and Life of Great American Cities. Random House, New York.

Jenks, R.S. (1970). An Action Research Approach to Organisational Change. Journal of Applied Behavioural Science 6 (2): 131-150.

Jick, T.D. (1979). Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action. Administrative Science Quarterly 24: 602-611.

Joardar, S.D. and Neill, J.W. (1978). The Subtle Differences in Configuration of Small Public Spaces. Landscape Architecture November: 487-491.

Johnson, R. (1979). The Green City. MacMillan, Australia.

Jonge, D. de (1967-68). Applied Hodology. Landscape 17 (2): 10-11.

Joseph, S. and Lennard, L. (1981). Waking Up Dormant Land: Community Uses of Vacant Land and Buildings. CoEnCo, London.

Kant, I. (1790). Critique of Aesthetic Judgement. Book II.

Kaplan, R. (1980). Citizen Participation in the Design and Evaluation of a Park. Environment and Behaviour 12 (4): 494-507.

Kaplan, R. (1978). The Green Experience. In: R. and S. Kaplan (eds) Humanscape. Wadsworth, Belmont: 186-193.

Kaplan, S. (1973). Cognitive Maps, Human Needs and the Designed Environment. In: W.F.E. Preiser (ed) Environmental Design Research. Dowden, Hutchinson, Ross, Stroudsburg PA.



Kelman, H.C. (1961). Process of Opinion Change. Public Opinion Quarterly 25: 57-58.

Laurie, I.C. (Ed) (1979). Nature in Cities. Wiley, Chichester.

Laurie, I. (1974). Nature in Cities: Report of Proceedings of a Symposium held at the University of Manchester, March 1974. Landscape Research Group.

Leedy, D.L., Maestro, R.M. and Franklin, T.M. (1978). Planning for Wildlife in Cities and Suburbs. Fish and Wildlife Service, US Department of the Interior.

Leopold, A. (1949). A Sand County Almanac. Reprinted 1966, Oxford University Press, London.

Lewin, K. (1946). Action Research and Minority Problems. Journal of Social Issues 2: 34-36.

Lindsay, N. (1978). It All Comes Down to a Comfortable Place to Sit. Landscape Architecture November.

Lowe, P.D. (1983). Values and Institutions in the History of British Nature Conservation. In: A. Warren and F.B. Goldsmith (eds) Conservation in Perspective. Wiley, Chichester.

Lowenthal, D. (1986). Introduction. In: E. Penning-Roswell and D. Lowenthal (eds) Landscape Meanings and Values. Allen and Unwin, London.

Lowenthal, D. and Binney, M. (Eds) (1981). Our Past Before Us: Why Do We Save It? Temple Smith, London.

Mabey, R. (1981). The Common Ground. Arrow, London.

Mabey, R. (1973). The Unofficial Countryside. Collins, London.

Manski, D.A., Vandruff, L.W. and Flyger, V. (1981). Activities of Gray Squirrels and People in a Downtown Washington D.C Park: Management Implications. In: Transactions of the 46th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference.

Maslow, A. (1954). Motivation and Personality. Harper and Row, New York.

McAllister, D.M. (1980). Evaluation in Environmental Planning: Assessing Environmental, Social, Economic and Political Trade-offs. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

McCall, G.J. and Simmons, J.L. (Eds) (1969). Issues in Participant Observation: A Text and Reader. Addison Wesley, Reading, M.A.

McCullough, J. (1978). Meanwhile Gardens. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, London.

McHarg, I. (1969). Design with Nature. Doubleday. New York.

McHarg, I. (1981). Human Ecological Planning at Pennsylvania. Landscape Planning 8 (2): 109-120.

Meadows, D.H., Meadows, D.L., Randers, J. and Behrens, W.W. (1974). The Limits to Growth. Pan, London.

Melchett, P. (1981). Bill Made Act? ECOS 2 (4): 1-2.

Mercer, C. (1975). Living in Cities - Psychology and the Urban Environment. Penguin, London.

Michael, R. (1984). Greening the Inner City - the pivotal role of the planner. The Planner 70 (7): 17-18.

Millward, A.M. (Ed) (1983). Community Involvement in Urban Nature Conservation. Urban Wildlife Group and the Interdisciplinary Higher Degree Scheme (Aston University), Birmingham.

Millward, A.M. (1987). Nature Landscape and the Community. Landscape Research 12 (1): 12.

Millward, A.M. (Ed) (1985). Urban Wildlife. What next?...And how? UWG, Birmingham.

Ministry of Town and Country Planning (1947). Conservation of Nature in England and Wales. Command Paper 7122. HMSO.

Morris, E.K.S. (1984). An Anglo-American Open Space Glossary. Sugarloaf Regional Trails Inc, Dickerson.

Moser, C.A. and Kalton, G. (1971). Survey Methods and Investigation. Heinemann, London.

Mostyn, B.J. (1980). Personal Benefits and Satisfaction Derived from Participation in Urban Wildlife Projects: A qualitative evaluation. NCC, Shrewsbury.

Mumford, L. (1968). The Urban Prospect. Secker and Warburg.

Myerscough, J. (1974). The Recent History of the Use of Leisure Time. In: I. Appleton (ed) Leisure Research and Policy. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh.

Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) (1979). Nature Conservation in Urban Areas: Challenge and Opportunity. NCC, Shrewsbury.

Newtown, K. (1974). Voluntary organisations in Community Politics: The Hidden 90% of the Iceberg. Social Science Research Council Newsletter No. 24, July, London.

Nicholas, J.M. (1979). Evaluation Research in Organisational Change Interventions: Considerations and Some Suggestions. Journal of Applied Behavioural Science 15 (1): 23-40.



Nicholson, S. (1970). The Theory of Loose Parts. Landscape Architecture Quarterly.

Nuttgens, P. (1973). The People and the Park. Parks and Sports Grounds 38 (2): 512-518.

Office of Population and Census Surveys (OPCS) (1979). General Household Survey No. 7, 1977. HMSO.

Oxford (1973). Shorter Oxford Dictionary. C.T. Onions (ed). Oxford University Press.

Page, H. and Warren, A. (1982). More About the Purpose of Nature Conservation. ECOS 3 (1): 27-29.

Patton, M.Q. (1980). Qualitative Evaluation Methods. Sage Publications, Beverly Hills.

Penning-Rowsell, E.C. and Lowenthal, D. (1986). Landscape Meanings and Values. Allen and Unwin, London.

Porteous, J.D. (1971). Design with People: The Quality of the Urban Environment. Environment and Behaviour 3 (2): 155-178.

Pudelkewicz, P.J. (1981). Visual Responses to Urban Wildlife Habitat. In: Transactions of the 46th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference: 381-389.

Ratcliffe, D.A. (1976). Thoughts Towards a Philosophy of Nature Conservation. Biological Conservation 9: 45-53.

Ratcliffe, D.A. (1981). The Purpose of Nature Conservation. ECOS 2 (3): 8-13.

Ray, J.J. (1980). The Psychology of Environmental Concern - Some Australian Data. Personality and Intellectual Differences 1:161.

Reeves, J. (1984). Public Open Space: Problem Exposed. Planning 560 16th March 1984.

Roethlisberger, F.J. and Dickson, W. (1979). Management and the Worker. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Rose, C. (1983). A Closer Look at the WCS: An Introduction. ECOS 4 (1): 2-7.

Rose, C. and Secrett, C. (1982). Cash or Crisis: the Imminent Failure of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. BANC and FOE, London.

Rossi, P.H., Freeman, H.E. and Wright, S.R. (1979). Evaluation: A Systematic Approach. Sage, Beverley Hills.

Rossi, P.H. and Wright, S.R. (1977). Evaluation Research: An Assessment of Theory, Practice and Politics. Evaluation Quarterly 1 (1): 5-51.

Royffe, C. and Taylor, A. (1987). Design with the Community. Landscape Design February: 20-23.

Ruff, A. (1982). An Ecological Approach to Landscape Design. In: A.R. Ruff and R. Tregay (eds) An Ecological Approach to Urban Landscape Design. Occasional Paper No 8. Dept of Town and Country Planning, University of Manchester: 4-12.

Ruff, A.R. (1979). Holland and the Ecological Landscapes: A Study of Recent Developments in the Approach to Urban Landscape. Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Manchester.

Rutledge, A.J. (1981). A Visual Approach to Park Design. Garland STPM Press, New York.

Rutman, L. (1977). Evaluation Research Methods: A Basic Guide. Sage, Beverley Hills.

Schumacher, E.F. (1974). People's Power. Address to the AGM of the National Council of Social Service. Bedford Square Press, London.

Scott, C. (1961). Research on Mail Surveys. Journal of the Royal Statistical Society CXXIV, Series A: 143-195.

Seeborn Report (1968). Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Services. Command 3703, HMSO.

Selman, P.H. (1981). Ecology and Planning: An Introductory Study. George Godwin, London.

Shafer, E.L. (1969). Perception of Natural Environments. Environment and Behaviour 1 (1): 71-82.

Sheail, J. (1975). Nature in Trust. Blackie, London.

Sheffield City Council (1976). Design Guide for the Provision of Local Open Space and Children's Play Areas. Sheffield

Sieber, S.D. (1973). The Integration of Fieldwork and Survey Methods. American Journal Sociology 78: 1335-1359.

Skeffington Report: Committee on Public Participation in Planning (1969). People and Planning. HMSO, London.

Smardon, R.C. (1975). Assessing Visual-Cultural Values of Inland Wetlands in Massachusetts. In: E.H. Zube, R.O. Brush and J.G. Fabos (eds) Landscape Assessment: Values, Perception and Resources. Dowden, Hutchinson and Ross, Stroudsburg, PA: 289-318.



Smyth, D.S. and Checkland, P.B. (1976). Using the Systems Approach: The Structure of Root Definitions. Journal of Applied Systems Analysis Vol 5(1).

Smyth, R. (1986). County Trusts, RSNC and the Urban Wildlife Groups. ECOS 7 (2): 32-36.

Spencer, D. (1973). An Evaluation of Cognitive Mapping in Neighbourhood Perception. Research Memorandum No. 23. Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Birmingham University.

Stainbrook, E. (1968). Human Needs and the Natural Environment. In: US Department of the Interior, Man and Nature in the City.

Stamp, D. (1987). Inner City Community Gardens. Landscape Research 12 (1): 5-8.

Stearn, J. (1981). Towards Community Uses of Wasteland. Wasteland Forum, London.

Suchman, E. (1967). Evaluative Research. Russell Sage, New York.

Susman, G.I. and Evered, R.D. (1978). An Assessment of the Scientific Merits of Action Research. Administrative Science Quarterly 23: 582-603.

Tartaglia-Kershaw, M. (1982). The Recreational and Aesthetic Significance of Urban Woodland. Landscape Research 7 (3): 22-25.  
Tartaglia-Kershaw, M. (1980). Urban Woodlands: Their role in daily life. M.A. Thesis, Dept Landscape Architecture, Sheffield University.

Taylor, B. (1978). Cruising, Porch-sitting, Cycling..... Torrence Park Designs Fit Neighbourhood Patterns. Landscape Architecture September: 399-404.

Teagle, W.G. (1978). The Endless Village. Nature Conservancy Council, Shrewsbury.

Thayer, R.L. and Atwood, B.G. (1978). Plants, Complexity and Pleasure in Urban and Suburban Environments. Environmental Psychology and Non-Verbal Behaviour 3 (2): 67-76.

Thoreau, H.D. (1906). The Writings of Henry David Thoreau. Walden Edition. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Tourism and Recreation Research Unit (1980a). A Study of Four Parks In and Around Glasgow: Report of Surveys Carried out in 1977 and 1978. Research Report No. 44. TRRU, Edinburgh.

Tourism and Recreation Research Unit (1981). A Research Study into Monitoring the Use of Informal Recreation Sites. Research Report No. 46. TRRU, Edinburgh.

**Tourism and Recreation Research Unit (1980b).** Pollock Park 1979: A Visitor Survey and Management Implications. Research Report No. 45. TRRU, Edinburgh.

**Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) (1983).** Tackling Inner City Problems. Technical advice for residents and voluntary organisations. TCPA, Manchester.

**Tregay, R. (1985).** Community Involvement - or marketing the product? Landscape Design 155 (6): 21-23.

**Tregay, R. (1982).** Nature and an Ecological Approach to Landscape Design. In: A.R. Ruff and R. Tregay (eds) *An Ecological Approach to Urban Landscape Design*. Occasional Paper No. 8, Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Manchester.

**Tregay, R. and Gustavsson, R. (1983).** Oakwood's New Landscape: Designing for nature in a residential environment. Stad och land/ Rapport nr 15, Alnarp and Warrington New Town Development Corporation.

**Tuan, Y-F. (1974).** *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

**Tudor, C. (1977).** Voluntary Groups and their Potential for Putting to Use Open Spaces in the Urban Environment; Suggested policies - with reference to Foleshill, Coventry. Unpublished Thesis for Dip. Local Planning, Lanchester Polytechnic.

**Twight, B. and Knopf, R. (1984).** Urban Greenspace Issues: What's Important to Managers? Landscape Research 9 (2):28-30.

**Tyldesley, D. (1986).** *Gaining Momentum*. BANC. Pisces, Oxford.

**Ulrich, R.S. (1981).** Natural versus Urban Scenes. Environment and Behaviour 13 (5): 523-556.

**Ulrich, R.S. and Addoms, D.L. (1981).** Psychological and Recreational Benefits of a Residential Park. Journal of Leisure Research 13 (1): 43-65.

**Urban Wildlife Group (1983).** *Planning for Nature*. UWG, Birmingham.

**Urban Wildlife Group (1980).** Report of Nature in the City Workshop. June 1980. Unpublished.

**Walker, S.E. and Duffield, B.S. (1983).** Urban Parks and Open Spaces - A review. Sports Council and Social Science Research Council, London.

**Walker, S.E. and Duffield, B.S. (1983b).** Urban Parks and Open Spaces - an overview. Landscape Research 8 (2): 2-12.



Wandersman, A. (1979). User Participation - A study of types of participation. Effects, mediators and individual differences. Environment and Behaviour 11 (2): 185-208.

Weigel, R.H. (1977). Ideological and Demographic Correlates of Pre-ecology Behaviour. Journal of Social Psychology 10 (1): 3.

West Midlands County Council (1984). The Nature Conservation Strategy for the County of West Midlands. WMCC, Birmingham.

Wilmers, P. (1981). Planning, Self-help and Mutual Aid. The Planner 67 (3): 58.

Wolfenden Committee (1978). The Future of Voluntary Organisations. Croom Helm, London.

Wright Mills, C. (1980). The Sociological Imagination. Pelican, Harmondsworth. (First published 1959).

Yeoman, J.A. and Barclay, J.S. (1981). Perceptions of Residential Wildlife Programs. In: Transactions of the 46th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference: 390-395.

Zube, E.H., Sell, J.L. and Taylor, J.G. (1982). Landscape Perception: Research, Application and Theory. Landscape Planning 9 (1): 1-34.

Zube, E.H., Pitt, D.G. and Anderson, T.W. (1975). Perception and Prediction of Scenic Values of the North East. In: E.H.Zube, R.O. Brush and J.G. Fabos (eds) Landscape Assessment - Values, Perceptions and Resources.