

# Maylands Fields: *A Community Vision*

April 2005



## *Introduction*

The following is a 'Community Vision' for the future of Maylands Fields. We offer this to all stakeholders, and as a formal submission to Havering's LDF consultation, in order to outline the site's potential and the aspirations of this community.

The vision offered by local people is based on a unique understanding and appreciation of the area, and from a simple desire to see Maylands Fields returned, once again, to the heart of this community.

This paper is divided into three parts, and sets-out:

- The site's history and value
- The vehicles necessary to affect change
- Community proposals for Maylands Fields

We hope that it will inform, encourage wider debate and ultimately foster a working partnership capable of delivering a secure and prosperous future for this sensitive habitat.

Maylands Action Group  
April 2005

*"Only by working together will we make  
Havering a better place to live & work".*

Developing Havering's Future: Your Say  
Consultation document of 2004



## Part 1

### Maylands Fields: The Background

#### Location

Maylands Fields, Harold Park, is the last remaining area of open Green Belt land between the London Borough of Havering ( LBH ) and Brentwood. Lying directly on the borough boundary it separates Greater London from the County of Essex ( TQ 562 919 ). Maylands Fields runs almost to the M25, and is bordered on one side by the A12 dual carriageway and to the south by the River Ingrebourne and 'One Great Eastern' Railway line.

#### Size

Approximately 9 hectares ( 24 acres ).

#### Status

Metropolitan Green Belt. Locally recognised as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation ( SINC ) and regionally designated by the Greater London Authority ( GLA ) as a Site of Metropolitan Importance within the Ingrebourne Valley. ( See Part 2 and [Appendix 4](#): SMI Citation ).

This linear SMI extends along the length of the River Ingrebourne and is considered Havering's most important landscape and biodiversity feature. Maylands Fields is also covered by an area wide Tree Preservation Order.

#### Character

Maylands Fields is a high quality semi-natural habitat comprising species rich grassland, scrub, hedges, mature and naturally regenerating mixed woodland and a natural watercourse. Its diverse eco-system supports a number of protected species, most notably Pippistrelle and Noctule Bats, Water Voles, Kingfishers, Great Crested Newts, Slow Worms, Stag Beetles and a variety of Reptiles.

The GLA's ecological survey of October 2001 described Maylands Fields as '*A Valuable mosaic of habitats*' that '*would make a good nature reserve*'.

#### History

Maylands is also one of the oldest place names in the Harold region, with land known as 'Mellonde' in 1420 and 'Maylonds' in 1524. Land now comprising Maylands Golf Course was originally part of the manor of Dagenhams as early as the 13th century.

Documents filed with Land Registry have confirmed that a number of plots which now lie within the original boundary of Maylands Fields were sold subject to a deed of covenant, dated September 1924, in which Romford Rural District Council and the vendors agreed to "*...reserve in perpetuity as a private open space a strip of land about 10ft wide along the whole of the North bank of the River Ingrebourne*".

A list of restrictive covenants also required that "*No noisy, noisome, noxious or offensive trade or business shall be carried out upon any part of the said land ( Maylands Fields ) or in any building to be erected or placed there on*".

Following the Second World War Maylands Fields became fallow, encouraging a rich growth of trees and shrubs which, until recently, covered much of the land. Local people subsequently adopted the area as a public open space, playing sports and games, walking their dogs and bird watching along the riverbank. This unhindered access was enjoyed for more than 60 years, with many in this community, including the local MP, considering the area to be a formal public space. During that period a number of conservation groups tried to confirm the site's legal ownership but all efforts were unsuccessful.

In August 2002 the Ramblers Association wrote to LBH seeking confirmation of Rights of Way on the Fields. A formal Rights of Way application was subsequently submitted in January 2003.

### **Ownership & Development**

In November 2002 Maylands Fields was offered for sale by way of a roadside hoarding. Before any conservation groups were able to respond the site was sold and came under new ownership. In late December 2002, the new owner of Maylands Fields illegally felled mature woodland and other trees, and cleared huge swathes of vegetation prior to seeking authority.

Shortly after, the owner erected a metal fence around the site preventing public access and co-opting hedgerows planted by the Community Forest Project. Further unauthorised works on the riverbank resulted in the construction of a livestock compound and the importation and spreading of mixed hardcore / waste – significantly raising ground levels within the Ingrebourne floodplain.

Although public consultation demonstrated overwhelming opposition to any development of the site, a belated planning application, proposing an '*Agricultural Enterprise*', was eventually submitted and approved. The landowner also operates an unauthorised car wash facility on the eastern edge of the site.

### **Community Action**

Local residents formed the Maylands Action Group ( MAG ) in January 2003 in order to oppose the site's development and to highlight the need for conservation and enhancement. Since its formation MAG has maintained a continuous dialogue with other stakeholders, whilst providing a dedicated website and issuing a semi-regular newsletter in the locale. It has also undertaken petitions, organised public rallies and meetings and exhibited at the Planet Havering Show.

In March 2004 MAG successfully opposed Crossrail's attempts to locate a major train depot and rail sidings on a site bordering Maylands Fields.

### **Current status**

More recently the habitat at Maylands Fields has suffered further damage due to the unregulated introduction of Highland Cattle on to the site. Over-grazing has been so severe that many of the trees ( subject to a Tree Preservation Order ) have been damaged and debarked by cattle living off tree bark and twigs. Two pregnant cows have died, the second of which was inspected by a vet and diagnosed as undernourished.

MAG fears that high density grazing, even in rotation, will result in further loss of tree cover and in time, the gradual erosion of the site's semi-natural character. More importantly, given the landowner's prior conduct and failure to observe even the most basic of planning and environmental regulations, MAG doubts that effective conservation measures could ever be reconciled under his stewardship. The current use also presupposes the denial of public access.

Consequently, MAG does not consider the site's 'agricultural' development, and its continuing mismanagement, to represent a positive or sustainable model of conservation within the Ingrebourne Valley SMI or wider Green Belt – neither fulfilling the site's potential, community aspirations or many of the social and environmental objectives outlined in local, regional and national policy.

### **A way forward**

In presenting an alternative vision for Maylands Fields we highlight, in Part 2, a range of the policies, initiatives and commitments that are in place and potentially able to deliver a secure and more socially inclusive future for the site. In particular we focus on two persistent themes of LBH's environmental agenda:

- The development of a Borough wide strategic approach to Open Space & Green Corridors
- Increased community involvement in the environment

These themes are considered with reference to over-arching regional, national and, where relevant, international objectives.

## Part 2

### Maylands Fields: Vehicles for change

#### The Ingrebourne Valley

LBH has a long standing aim of implementing a 'Green Chain' from the north of the Borough, down the Ingrebourne Valley to the Thames – creating a non-vehicular greenway linking high value sites in the south ( RSPB Rainham Marshes and Ingrebourne Marshes SSSI / SMI ) with developing areas along the river corridor and across the Havering Ridge Area of Special Character to the north.

Local planning policy acknowledges the amenity, recreational and environmental benefits of Borough wide Green Corridors and sets out the following objectives towards their implementation:

- Protect and promote wildlife corridors
- Support proposals which enhance and manage natural green space, protect important species and promote public access to nature
- Provide new links where Green Chains break down
- Resist development that would have significant adverse impacts on protected species or Biodiversity Action Plan ( BAP ) priority species
- Maintain a continuous band of natural vegetation along Green Corridors to enhance biodiversity. This should be at least 10m wide ( ideally 30m ) and 15m on rivers and streams holding Water Voles

The current Development Plan also identifies the Ingrebourne Valley as one of seven 'wildlife corridors' in the borough. A priority enhancement programme, aiming to realise the enormous potential of the Valley, is now being led by the Havering Wildlife Partnership ( HWP ).

In addition, a number of sites within or adjoining the river corridor make up the Thames Chase Community Forest. 'The Thames Chase Plan' identifies the Ingrebourne Valley as a '*rich ecological corridor*', and part of the 'Forest Circle' – a strategic network of Greenways providing off-road routes for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and those with disabilities. The Thames Chase Partnership has objectives to manage existing woodlands, conserve and enhance the natural environment, create and improve access to the environment and to involve local people.

#### Regional Corridors

Wildlife and landscape do not respect administrative boundaries so it is important to establish a consistent regional approach to cross-borough Green Corridors. Havering, by virtue of its geographic location, has a critical role to play in bridging these networks. A number of green spaces, including Maylands Fields, the wider Ingrebourne Valley, the Community Forest and Dagnam Park, lie on or very near Havering's northeast boundary with Essex. These areas not only provide important ecological stepping stones into and out of the borough, but act as urban-rural gateways between Greater London and the East of England Region.

Supplementary guidance to the existing Development Plan acknowledges this potential, confirming that Havering's wildlife corridors should be used to "*Improve links to high value sites outside of the borough*". If this vision is fully embraced, both by LBH and other Local Planning Authorities ( LPAs ), a vast green infrastructure could be realised that stretches from the Thames Estuary, throughout large parts of East London, and far into neighbouring counties. As a consequence, the role of LBH's green networks, and in particular areas like Maylands Fields, should be considered in a broader context as they act in support of, and are central to, wider regional initiatives.

#### The Green Grid and Green Arc

One of the core principals of the Government's Thames Gateway Strategy is the development of a 'Green Grid' – a sustainable, multi-functional network of green links and open spaces. A complimentary proposal, the 'Green Arc', is also being developed with the aim of improving the environment and access to nature around northeast London and southern parts of Hertfordshire and Essex.

Both initiatives share, and address, a range of social and environmental policy objectives:

- Connect communities with new and existing green spaces
- Promote greater accessibility
- Protect and enhance greenways, corridors and open spaces for people and wildlife
- Conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Promote positive land use
- Create opportunities for recreation, tourism, education and healthy living
- Provide flood storage capacity and noise/pollution barriers

Specific reference is made to the Ingrebourne Valley and the Thames Chase Community Forest in the Government's 'Green Space Strategy for the Thames Gateway' ( "Greening The Gateway" ).

The Government recognises that the immediate impact and long term success of the 'Green Grid' will be determined, in large part, by the support and participation of local people. Government strategy makes it clear that the network should be shaped through local consultation and that local people should *"...play an active part in establishing and caring for their local element of the greenspace network"*. The strategy also promotes the declaration of statutory Local Nature Reserves ( LNRs ) within the Gateway and confirms that green spaces may be subject to compulsory purchase.

### **The Greater London Authority**

The Mayor has also resolved to protect and enhance London's Green Chains and Open Space network through the following inter-linked policies and proposals:

#### The London Plan

- Boroughs should identify, promote and protect Green Corridors and Green Chains and include appropriate designations and policies for the protection of local Open Spaces that are of value, or have the potential to be of value, to local communities. ( Policy 3D10)
- Boroughs should encourage functional and physical linkages within the network of Open Spaces and to the wider public realm, improve accessibility for all throughout the network and create new links based on local and strategic need. ( Policy 3D10 )

Other key policies for *'Improving London's Open Environment'* confirm that:

- The Mayor will work with strategic partners to protect and promote London's network of Open Spaces, to realise the current and potential value of Open Space to communities, and to protect the many benefits of Open Space, including those associated with health, sport and recreation, children's play, regeneration, the economy, culture, biodiversity and the environment. ( Policy 3D.7 )
- Boroughs should, in consultation with local communities, the Mayor and other partners, produce Open Space strategies to protect, create and enhance all types of Open Space in their area. Such strategies should include approaches for the positive management of Open Space where appropriate to prevent or remedy degradation or enhance the beneficial use of it for the community". ( Policy 3D.11 )
- The Mayor will work with strategic partners to improve access to the countryside and the quality of landscape in the urban fringe. The Mayor will and Boroughs should support sub-

regional and cross-borough boundary urban fringe management and, in particular, explore the potential for taking forward the concept of Community Forests within London. ( Policy 3D.13)

### The London Tree and Woodland Framework

- The Mayor will actively support the existing cross-boundary strategic and local initiatives to link London with its adjacent countryside ( eg: Colne Valley Regional Park, Lee Valley Regional Park and Green Arc ) and promote the role of trees and woodlands in creating strategic linkages between them across government boundaries ( eg: East London Green Grid, Green Gateway ).
- Prioritise resources for woodland protection and management where there are i) Ancient Woodlands, ii) Heavily used woodlands, iii) Accessible woodlands with important biodiversity interest, iv) Veteran trees.
- Foster community involvement by involving people in the care and use of trees and woodlands.

### The Biodiversity Strategy

- The Mayor will and boroughs should protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Blue Ribbon Network ( The Thames and its tributaries ) by:
  - Recognising the Network as contributing to London's Open Space network
  - Including land of importance for nature conservation in borough appraisals of their Thames Policy Area
  - Ensuring that rivers, brooks and streams are protected, improved and respected, taking measures to improve both public amenity and wildlife habitat
  - Improving access to the Blue Ribbon Network
- The Mayor expects boroughs, in consultation with English Nature, to declare suitable sites as LNRs, and to manage these sites to benefit biodiversity and people's access to nature
- The Mayor will work with voluntary organisations to support and develop the role of local volunteers in protecting and managing local nature sites
- The Mayor Will seek to establish a strategic programme of funding for site acquisition and long-term management, to conserve strategically important land for biodiversity and for the enjoyment of nature by people

All of these objectives are underpinned by the Mayor's core principals to protect Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and to resist developments that would adversely impact the population or conservation status of protected or priority species.

### **The East of England Region**

Reference should also be made to the Spatial Strategy for the East of England. This document, in support of the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan, sets out the following policies:

- Provide connected and substantial networks of accessible multi-functional green space, in urban, urban fringe and adjacent countryside areas
- Ensure the appropriate management and further expansion of wildlife corridors that are important for the migration and dispersal of wildlife

### **Countryside Agency**

The Countryside Agency has also stressed the need to improve access to green space, particularly at the urban-rural interface. It has set-out a clear vision for realising the enormous potential of the urban fringe ( which it describes as “...*a frequently overlooked resource*”). Its recent publication; ‘The Countryside in and around Towns’ notes the many benefits of linking existing open spaces, footpaths, bridleways and cycleways to form “...*continuous Green Corridors between town and country*”.

### **Planning Policy Guidance**

PPG9 states that: “*Statutory and non-statutory sites, together with countryside features which provide wildlife corridors, links or stepping stones from one habitat to another all help to form a network necessary to ensure the maintenance of the current range and diversity of our flora, fauna, geological and landform features and the survival of important species*”.

In addition, PPG17 and its companion guide: ‘Assessing Needs & Opportunities’ emphasise the benefits and broader Government objectives that might be realised by unlocking multi-functional open spaces such as Maylands Fields, ie:

- **Strategic functions:** Defining and separating urban areas; better linking of town and country; and providing for recreational needs over a wider area;
- **Urban quality:** Helping to support regeneration and improving quality of life for communities by providing visually attractive green spaces close to where people live;
- **Promoting health and well-being:** Providing opportunities for people of all ages for informal recreation, or to walk, cycle or ride within parks and open spaces or along paths, bridleways and canal banks;
- **Havens and habitats for flora and fauna:** Sites may also have the potential to be corridors or stepping stones from one habitat to another and may contribute towards achieving objectives set out in local biodiversity action plans; and
- **As a visual amenity & Community resource:** Providing a positive element in the landscape

### **Habitats Directive**

Article 10 of the EC Habitats Directive requires Member States to manage landscape features which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora, particularly with a view to improving the ecological coherence of the ‘Natura 2000’ site network. Features which are essential for the passage and dispersal of wild species in the countryside, such as river corridors, and features which act as ‘stepping stones’ between sites such as small woods and ponds, are highlighted as particularly valuable. The Habitats Directive supports PPG9 and was transposed into UK Law by the ‘Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994’.

### **The Environment Agency**

Extensive fluvial flood control engineering works are ongoing or being planned by the Environment Agency to counter the future effects of climate change on all local tributaries of the Thames. Options to reduce the effects of flooding include wetland enhancement /creation as a key means of increasing:

- Flood storage capacity
- Biodiversity
- Recreational opportunities

As an area liable to flooding, with established ‘wet’ woodland and meadowland, Maylands Fields’ natural floodplain is particularly important in allowing the Ingrebourne to adapt its course to changing flood conditions. NB: The Environment Agency has advised that the site is within an area where new development is to be strictly controlled. Continuing development and unauthorised trading within this part of the modelled 1 in 100 year Ingrebourne River floodplain has the potential to:

- Constrict / alter the movement of the natural river channel
- Reduce flood storage capacity
- Increase the risk of flooding residential and business premises downstream
- Prejudice future flood relief works at Maylands Fields

- Disturb or damage priority habitats within the Ingrebourne Valley / Green Corridor
- Impact river quality and the survival of river dependant species both on site and downstream

### **Countryside and Rights of Way Act ( 2000 )**

Section 74 of the CRoW Act, underlines the need for conserving important habitats and species. It sets-out a series of actions that will be taken by the Government and its strategic partners to make biodiversity a fundamental consideration when developing policy on urban greenspace.

### **Supporting initiatives**

At a local level wildlife corridors and greenspaces are further promoted through a range of long-standing and inter-linked policies. For example, Havering's Local Agenda 21 and Corporate Environmental Policy share a number of key objectives. Of particular relevance are:

#### Air, Water & Land Quality

- Improve quality and access to Havering's Countryside
- Clean-up Havering's rivers in partnership with the Environment Agency and local people

#### Wildlife & Biodiversity

- Conserve natural habitats, protect wildlife and enhance habitats to support biodiversity
- Improve the management of land for wildlife
- Encourage landowners to increase the extent and diversity of wildlife habitats
- Protect Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
- Implement a Nature Conservation Strategy
- Work with Essex Wildlife Trust ( EWT ) and London Wildlife Trust ( LWT ) on joint projects
- Encourage community support and involvement in the protection and improvement of natural resources and monitoring

Many of these objectives are also underpinned by LBH's Biodiversity Action Plan which seeks to protect and enhance habitats and species that are of local, regional and national importance. A number of priority habitats and species are present throughout the Ingrebourne Valley – including Maylands Fields.

LBH's 'Community Strategy: Putting People First 2002- 2007' also identifies "*A High Quality Environment*" as one of six priority themes, and sets out a series of key actions and commitments towards its delivery:

- Protect, maintain and improve the wide range of open spaces and habitats which are important for wildlife and people
- Improve Green Belt amenity and access through countryside management
- Enhancement of the Ingrebourne Valley and Thames Chase Community Forest

It is recognised that the successful delivery of this 'Priority Theme' will depend, in large part, on building and maintaining strong partnerships, particularly with local communities. MAG briefly considers the community frameworks that are in place for delivering the environmental objectives outlined above.

### **Community Engagement**

Central to realising the Strategy's overall vision of "*Improving the quality of life in Havering*" ( and also a priority theme itself ) is the need for "Increased Community Participation". This objective will be delivered through a range of actions, with an emphasis on:

- Engaging and empowering local people
- Improving support for community led actions
- Developing stronger partnerships with community groups and the voluntary sector
- Creating a Borough wide 'Community Chest' to assist in funding community projects
- Co-ordinating and implementing local action plans ( including resource allocation ) to address local needs

The Havering Strategic Partnership ( HSP ) acknowledges that the successful delivery of this central objective will have positive impacts on the environment, people's health, crime and its ability to attract inward investment – thus aiding the realisation of all 'Priority Themes'.

### **Statement of Community Involvement**

Although community participation in the planning system is already governed through an extensive legislative framework it is the Government's aim to further strengthen community involvement in planning. Reforms to the planning system now require all Local Planning Authorities to produce, as part of a Local Development Framework ( LDF ) a 'Statement of Community Involvement' ( SCI ). This process should ensure that local people and other interest groups are:

- Fully engaged in the planning process
- Empowered and able to play an active role in developing new proposals and options
- Confident that there is an effective process for considering their ideas

This objective is further underpinned by the **ODPM's** 'People, Places and Prosperity' and 'Why Neighbourhoods Matter'. Both documents propose greater community involvement in local government, the need for community lead action and the development of a 'Neighbourhood Charter', which would set-out key principles for community engagement.

The Government recognises that the successful realisation of these initiatives will lead to *"...outcomes that better reflect the views and aspirations and meet the needs of the wider community..."*. But it warns that *"...effective community involvement will happen only if all parties want the process to work"*.

## Part 3

### Maylands Fields: A Community Vision

#### **The Friends of Maylands Fields**

The various policies, plans and initiatives summarised in Part 2 are important because they not only place Maylands Fields in a broader context but offer the vehicles needed to bring about change. However, their practical realisation will depend on all stakeholders sharing a unity of vision and purpose. To engender this we propose the formation of a dedicated forum, comprising MAG and other stakeholders, but working collectively under the banner of 'The Friends of Maylands Fields'.

Creating, or 'tapping into' this joint pool of knowledge and skills, whilst embracing the energy and ideas of this community, would put in place a real driver for change – enabling all stakeholders to realise shared benefits as part of a single strategic vision. This 'vision' might be articulated in the form of a mission statement, ie:

***“Working in partnership to secure Maylands Fields as a fully protected wildlife haven that promotes access through recreation, education and links with other green spaces”.***

Although the partnership's final vision might be defined in any number of ways, it should ultimately retain a focus on nature conservation/enhancement and public use. Only by targeting these two priority areas can we hope to realise the site's enormous social and environmental benefits. To this end it is hoped that the partnership would initiate a full and independent site appraisal. This would confirm existing and potential assets and allow us to implement a tailored conservation programme – one designed to protect and enhance all priority habitats and species.

MAG has already secured an offer of an ecological site survey, and could, where necessary, draw upon the expertise and support of other specialist organisations and individuals. Clearly with a collective will to act Maylands Fields' diverse eco-system could be unlocked, delivering huge benefits for local people and wildlife.

#### **A catalyst for change**

Whilst conservation and enhancement remain a fundamental aim of our vision, equal priority must also be afforded to community participation. Indeed, local and national policy underlines the importance of this. The partnership we now propose would facilitate community engagement, empowering local people and allowing them a direct role in the site's future. It would also provide MAG with the platform needed to evolve its vision for a local volunteers group – a body of residents committed to the day to day maintenance and care of Maylands Fields.

However, we consider the restoration of full public access as one of the key catalysts to re-establishing a sense of local 'ownership' and pride in the site. To this end we propose the installation of easy to negotiate footpaths and information boards. These would attract and guide visitors whilst enabling year round access in a manner that is sympathetic with the site's conservation needs.

Enabling access would, once again, open up a rich mosaic of habitats and encourage woodland and riverside walks. In addition there exists the potential to 'tap into' and promote wider access through connectivity with neighbouring footpaths and rights of way. By acting as a 'bridge' between Dagnam Park and the Thames Chase Community Forest, Maylands Fields could play a strategic role in the formation of a vast non-vehicular greenway from the north of the borough to the south, linking a number of high value sites and fulfilling a key objective of the Development Plan.

Embracing Maylands Fields within this existing, but untapped, network would also provide a strategic northern gateway into the Ingrebourne Valley – offering a showcase for Havering’s green credentials at a prominent thoroughfare into and out of the borough.

Once realised this network could also provide the context for revising or extending the ‘London Outer Orbital Path’. At present the LOOP generally follows the river Ingrebourne through the south of the borough, but deviates from this preferred course onto roadside paths beyond Pages Wood ( part of the Community Forest ). The London Walking Forum estimates that increased riverside access in Section 22 of the LOOP ( Upminster Bridge to Harold Wood ) would raise “green & blue factors to 80%”. **Appendix 1** illustrates the LOOP’s current route and how it might be revised / extended to link the Open Space network in Harold Wood, Harold Park and Harold Hill.

Utilising the partnerships that we seek would enable various interest groups to lobby collectively, and more efficiently for the funding necessary to realign the LOOP. Once secured, funding would enable repairs and improvements to the existing right of way at Ivy Lodge Lane, easing access from Pages Wood and allowing the LOOP to continue through Harold Court Woods, onto Maylands Fields ( taking-in woodland and riverside paths ) and then through Duck Wood and Dagnam Park before rejoining the current LOOP across Harold Hill. **Appendix 2** demonstrates how the LOOP might ‘tap into’, and link, the existing path network.

This represents just one example of how co-ordinated actions, as part of a smaller ‘Green Neighbourhood’, might enable the partnership to realise joint benefits whilst fulfilling a much wider strategic vision.

### **Obstacles to change**

However, to bring about change the partnership must first address a number of obstacles, the most significant being the site’s private ownership, which has led to:

- Blocked access and fragmented land ownership within the local Open Space network
- A lack of cohesion / strategic planning within the network, resulting in;
- Prejudicial impacts on the Green Belt, nature conservation and amenity
- Disengagement from the local Community
- Uncertainty in the local planning process
- Uncertainty in LBH’s commitment to agreed environmental policy

To remedy this situation the partnership would have to overcome another potential barrier – its ability to secure the funding necessary to acquire and permanently manage the site. Only with this in place can we hope to reach a financial settlement with the landowner, enabling him to relocate to a non-sensitive agricultural unit ( of which there are many throughout Havering and neighbouring counties ).

Fortunately many of MAG’s prospective partners, as key stakeholders, already have an ‘investment’ in the conservation and enhancement of Maylands Fields. Although their agendas may differ according to their remits, it should be recognised that their objectives, and indeed those of this Community, are intrinsically linked and therefore mutually beneficial. As a consequence it might prove possible, and indeed more practical, to pool resources towards a shared strategic vision at Maylands Fields. Further efficiencies could be realised by directly plugging into a number of existing frameworks, ie:

- The enhancement programme for the Ingrebourne Valley
- The Thames Chase Community Forest
- Local Nature Reservation status ( NB: LBH has appointed a Wildspace Officer with the specific task of identifying and declaring three Nature Reserves in the Borough )

A collaborative effort across all of these schemes would not only focus resources and skills, but put in place a broad partnership able to sustain and improve Maylands Fields well into the future. It has already been demonstrated through successful models at Cranham Marshes and Thorndon County Park that partnerships comprising LPAs, Essex Wildlife Trust, Thames Chase and the Woodland Trust can co-exist, and indeed flourish.

It is therefore reasonable to propose a multifunctional greenspace where Maylands Fields is recognised as:

- **A Local Nature Reserve** – supported by LBH, English Nature, the GLA, Thames Gateway Partnership: 'Green Grid' and managed in partnership with the Wildlife Trusts
- **Part of the Community Forest** – in partnership with Thames Chase & the Woodland Trust
- **A strategic gateway** into the Ingrebourne Valley and wider open space network – in support of LBH, Thames Chase, the HWP and the Green 'Grid' / 'Arc' initiatives

These co-ordinated actions, and their resulting benefits, are demonstrated in **Appendix 3**.

Even broader partnerships could be sought, attracting grants and/or practical assistance from the following sources:

- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers: 'Environment for All' scheme
- The Open Spaces Society: Town Green registration
- The Forestry Commission: 'Woodland Grant Scheme'
- The Lottery Fund: 'Awards for All'
- The Lottery Fund: 'Door Step Greens' in partnership with the Countryside Agency
- The Lottery Fund: 'Heritage Initiative' in partnership with the Countryside Agency
- The Lottery Fund: 'Wildspace!' in partnership with English Nature
- The Environment Agency, Thames Gateway Partnership, Trees for London, The National Urban Forestry Unit, Groundwork East London, THERAPI, Essex Field Club

### **A time to act**

Although we have outlined a potential framework for realising our vision, it is important to stress that positive change might be actuated through any number or combination of vehicles. Our vision is simply offered as a starting point, or catalyst, from which the proposed forum of stakeholders can agree a formal strategy for action.

Only with this in place might we begin to deliver, through practical actions on the ground, some of the key social and environmental commitments written into local, regional and national policy. Indeed, it is clear that the site's multi-functionality would offer the partnership a critical opportunity to deliver many, if not all of the priority objectives highlighted in Part 2 of this paper. Furthermore, as an exemplar of co-ordinated action it would provide a strategic model of good practice enabling the future 'roll-out' of similar initiatives across the region.

However, successful delivery is dependent on immediate action – while the site retains much of its original character and potential for natural regeneration. If this opportunity is lost the Maylands Fields that local people have known and enjoyed for more than 60 years will almost inevitably cease to be – all vestiges of its character and value slowly but surely eroded away.

As custodians of the environment we have a moral obligation to preserve assets such as Maylands Fields for future generations. There can surely be no excuse for inaction when the 'tools' to achieve this are so readily available - they simply require the resolve and will to implement them.

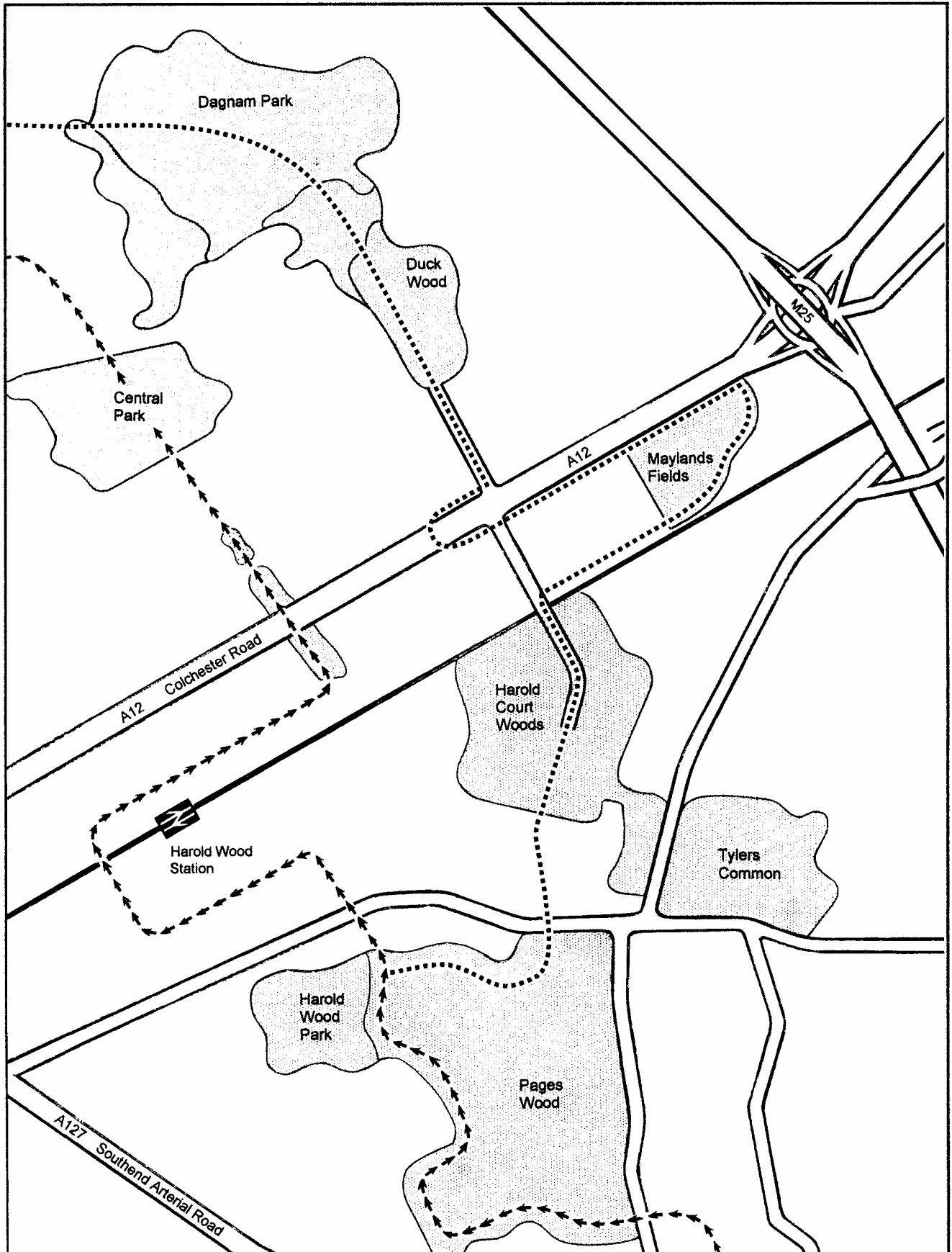
Failure to support community efforts would not only undermine the raft of policy commitments highlighted in Part 2, but condone prior abuses at Maylands Fields and serve to encourage similar damaging incursions into other ecologically sensitive sites. It is therefore imperative that those

charged with the conservation and enhancement of our environment seize this opportunity to make a difference, and send a very clear signal of intent.

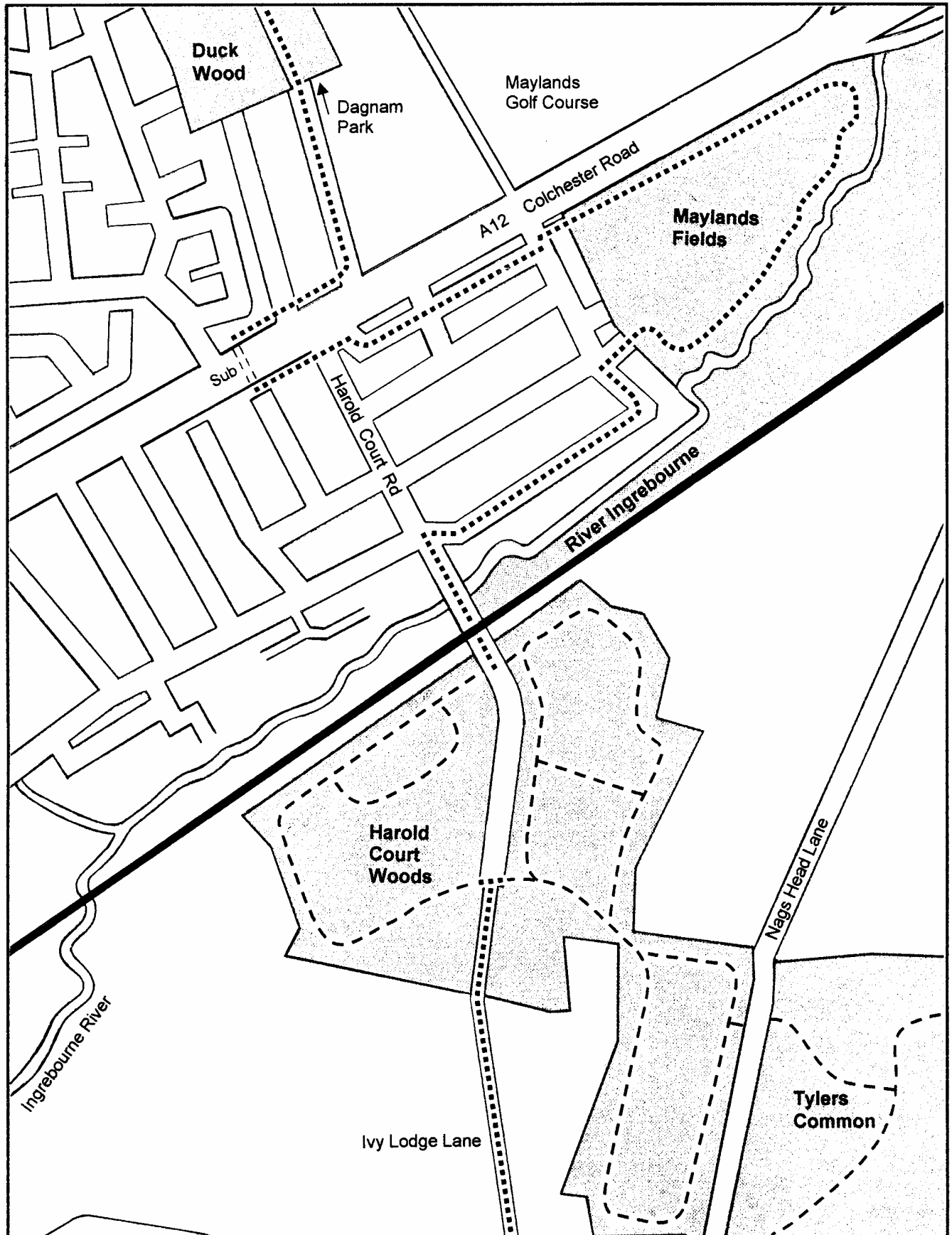
**Maylands Green Belt Action Group**

Email: [maylands2003@yahoo.com](mailto:maylands2003@yahoo.com)

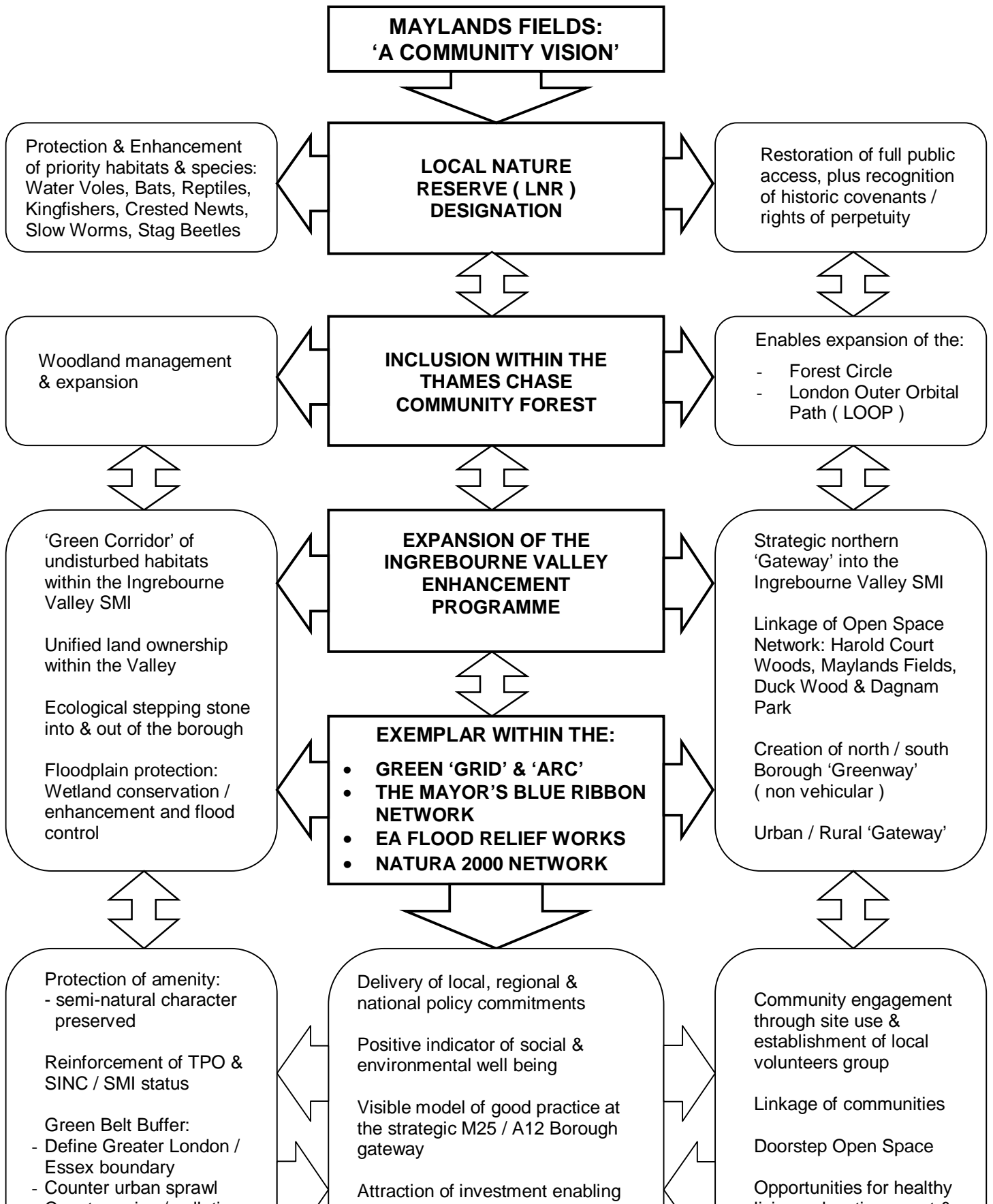
**Appendix 1:** How the revised LOOP might link the Open Space network in Harold Hill, Harold Park and Harold Wood.



**Appendix 2:** How the revised LOOP might 'plug into' the existing Open Space network



**Appendix 3: Actions & Benefits**



#### Appendix 4: Ingrebourne Valley SMI Citation

##### Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation

M108: Ingrebourne Valley

Grid ref: TQ 538 842

Area (ha): 260.7

Borough(s): Havering

Site first notified: 19/09/1988      Boundary last changed: 30/10/2002

First agreed by Mayor: 25/11/2002      Citation last edited: 30/10/2002

Habitat: River, ditches, reed bed, damp & dry neutral grassland, open water,  
fen & fen carr, ancient & secondary woodland, scrub, hedges

The River Ingrebourne flows through one of the most natural riparian corridors in London. At its lower end is an extensive and nationally important suite of naturally formed freshwater wetland habitats. The upper reaches are largely wooded and include several important alder-dominated (*Alnus glutinosa*) woodlands of ancient origin. Large areas of species-rich grassland are also included, as well as ox-bow ponds and small areas of species-rich emergent fen. In the south, Ingrebourne Marshes include extensive reedbeds, lakes, wet neutral grasslands and small areas of willow (*Salix* spp.) carr. These habitats support an exceptionally diverse wetland invertebrate and bird fauna. The reed-swamp communities are notable for their abundant reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) as well as common reed (*Phragmites australis*), and many local and nationally uncommon plants including small sweet-grass (*Glyceria declinata*), nodding bur-marigold (*Bidens cernua*), and water and golden docks (*Rumex hydrolapathum*, *R. maritimus*). A very diverse breeding avifauna includes redshank, lapwing, hobby, water rail, kingfisher, common snipe, reed bunting, cuckoo, long-eared owl, reed and sedge warblers, gadwall, teal and pochard. Irregular breeders have included the nationally rare marsh warbler as well as the scarce species Cetti's warbler and bearded tit (being London's only records for the latter two in recent history). Large numbers of teal and tufted duck occur on Berwick Ponds in winter, while a long list of species spend time here on passage in spring and autumn. The diverse invertebrate fauna includes the nationally rare, scarce emerald damselfly (*Lestes dryas*), and many other nationally scarce species from various groups. A strong population of specially-protected water voles is present throughout. Berwick Ponds are also important to foraging bats, with at least four species regularly present. Part SSSI; part of the site is a Local Nature Reserve. © Greater London Authority 2003

