

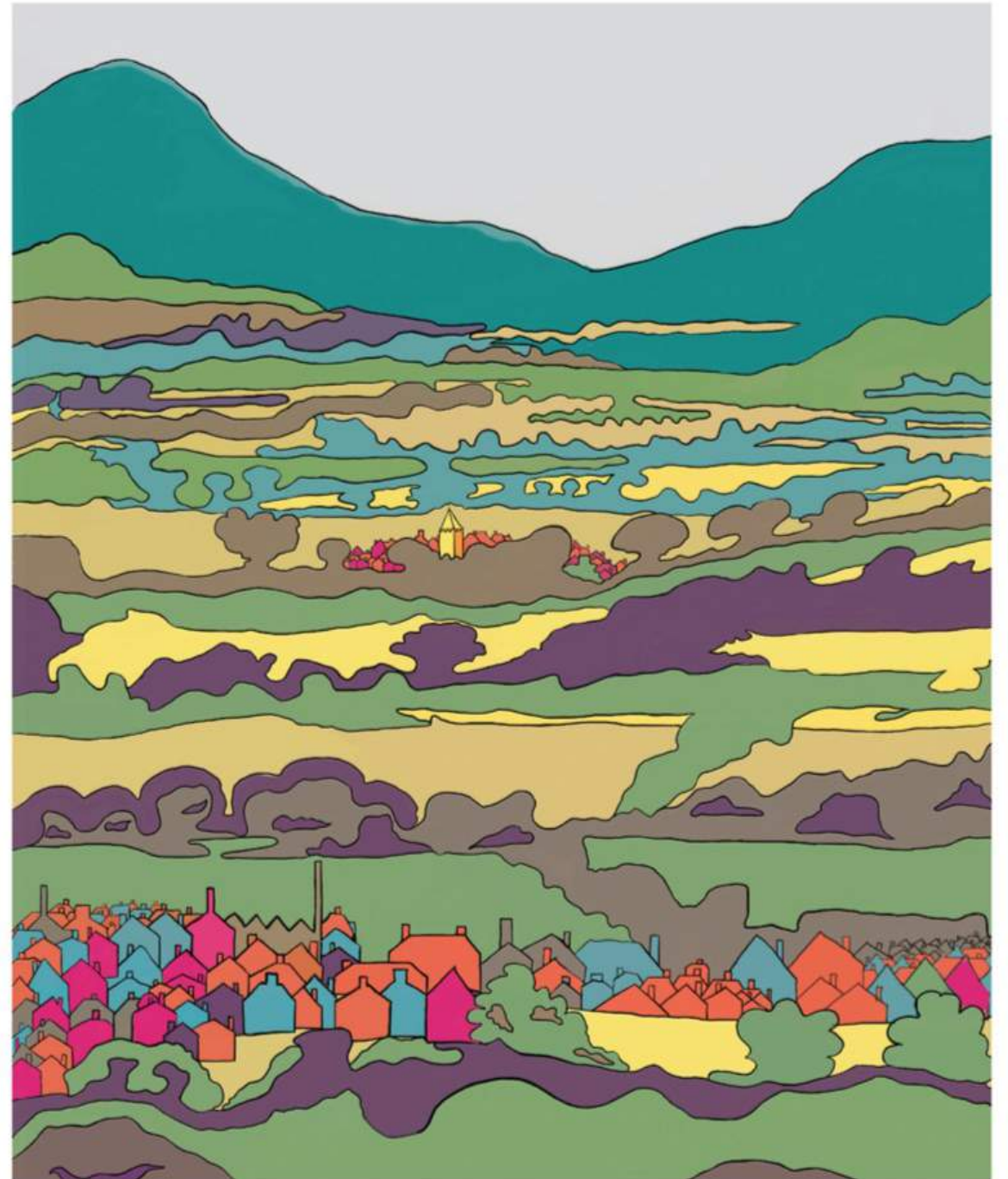
# Repurposing the Green Belt in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Professor Peter Bishop

University College London

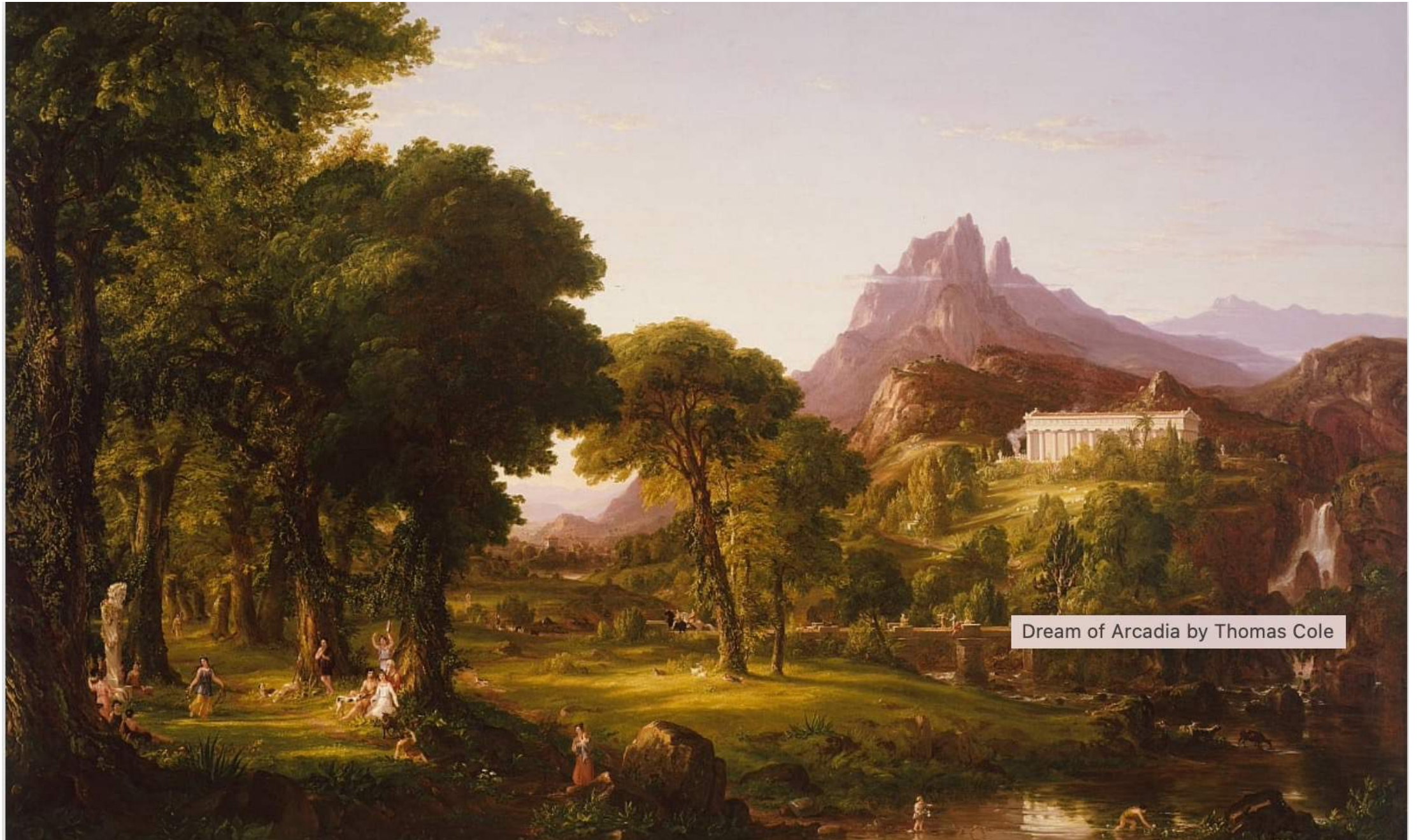
April 2023

Brunel University: Urban Fringe Conference







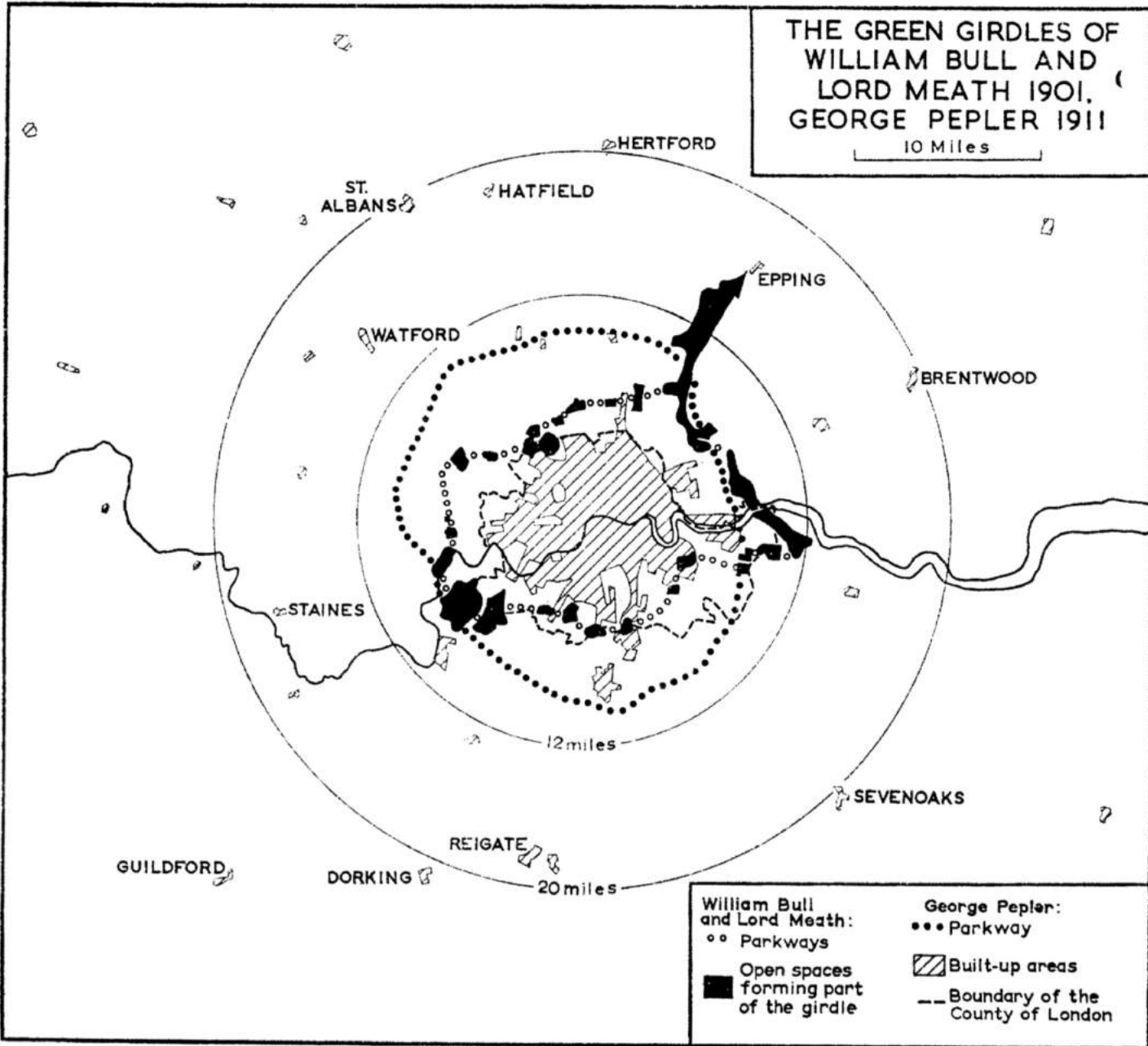


Dream of Arcadia by Thomas Cole



THE GREEN GIRDLES OF  
WILLIAM BULL AND  
LORD MEATH 1901.  
GEORGE PEPLER 1911

10 Miles



William Bull  
and Lord Meath:  
 ○○ Parkway  
 ■ Open spaces  
forming part  
of the girdle

George Pepler:  
 ●●● Parkway  
 ▨ Built-up areas  
 --- Boundary of the  
County of London

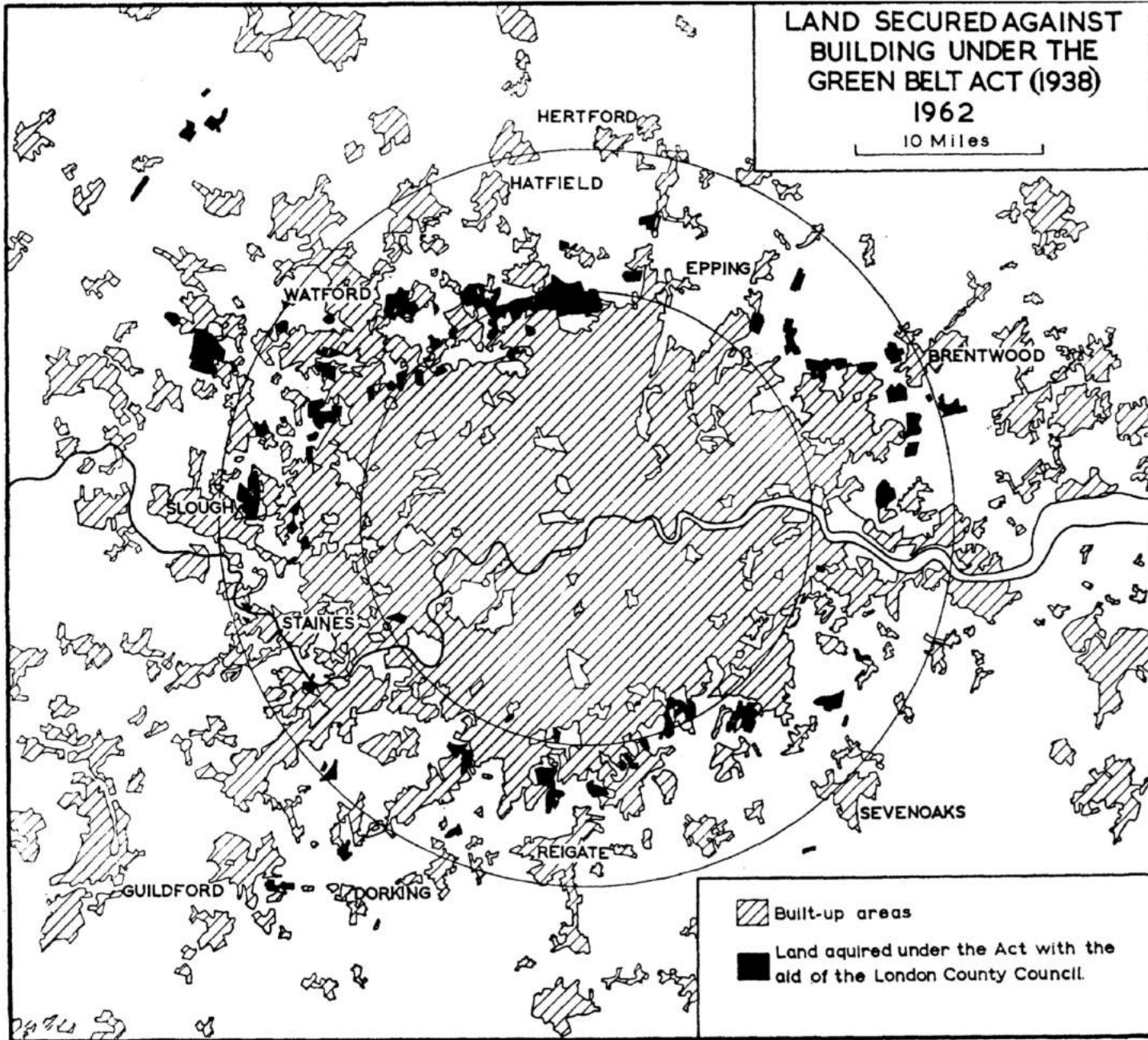
# Land acquisition programmes:

- Purchases
- Bequests
- Covenants

LAND SECURED AGAINST  
BUILDING UNDER THE  
GREEN BELT ACT (1938)

1962

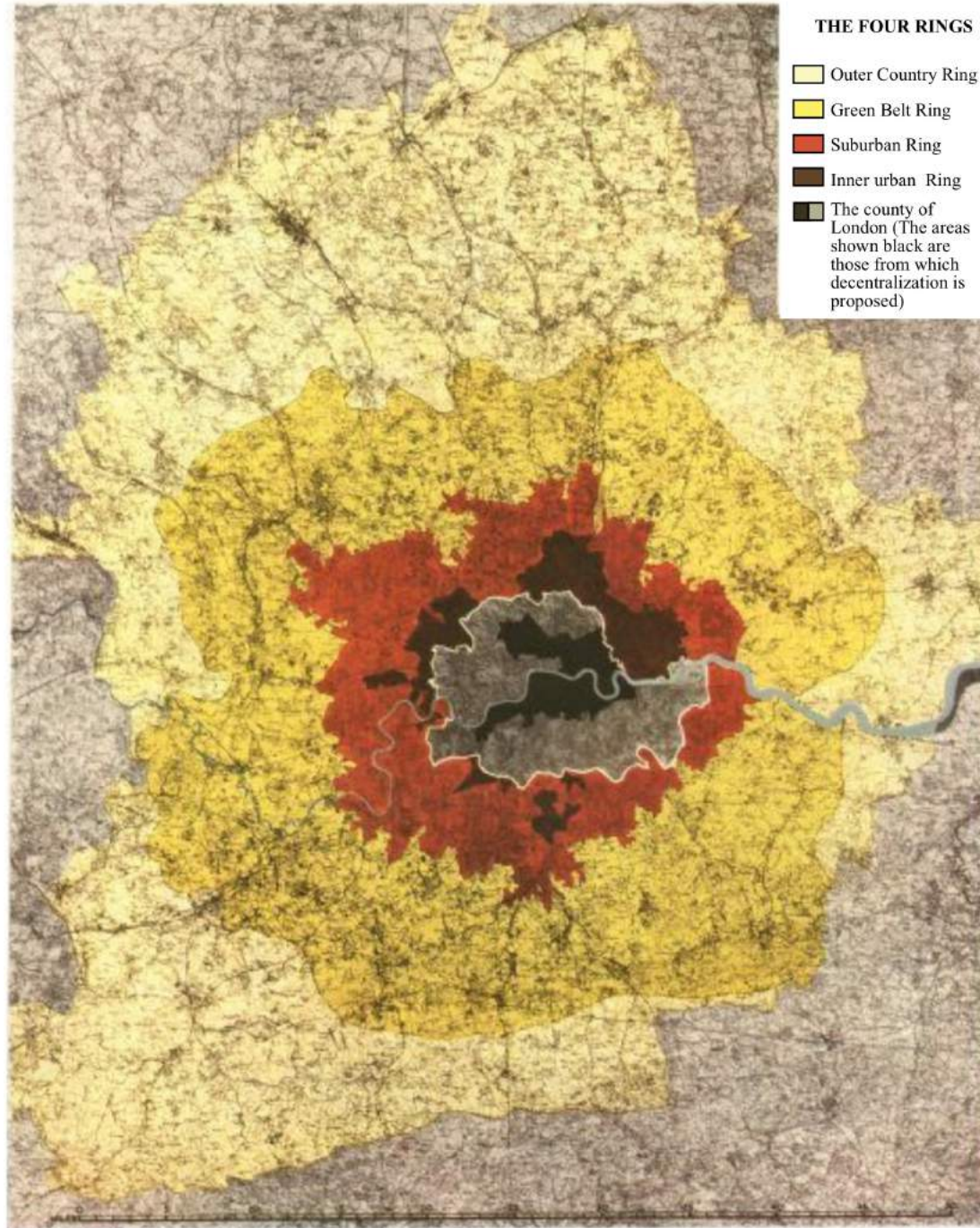
10 Miles





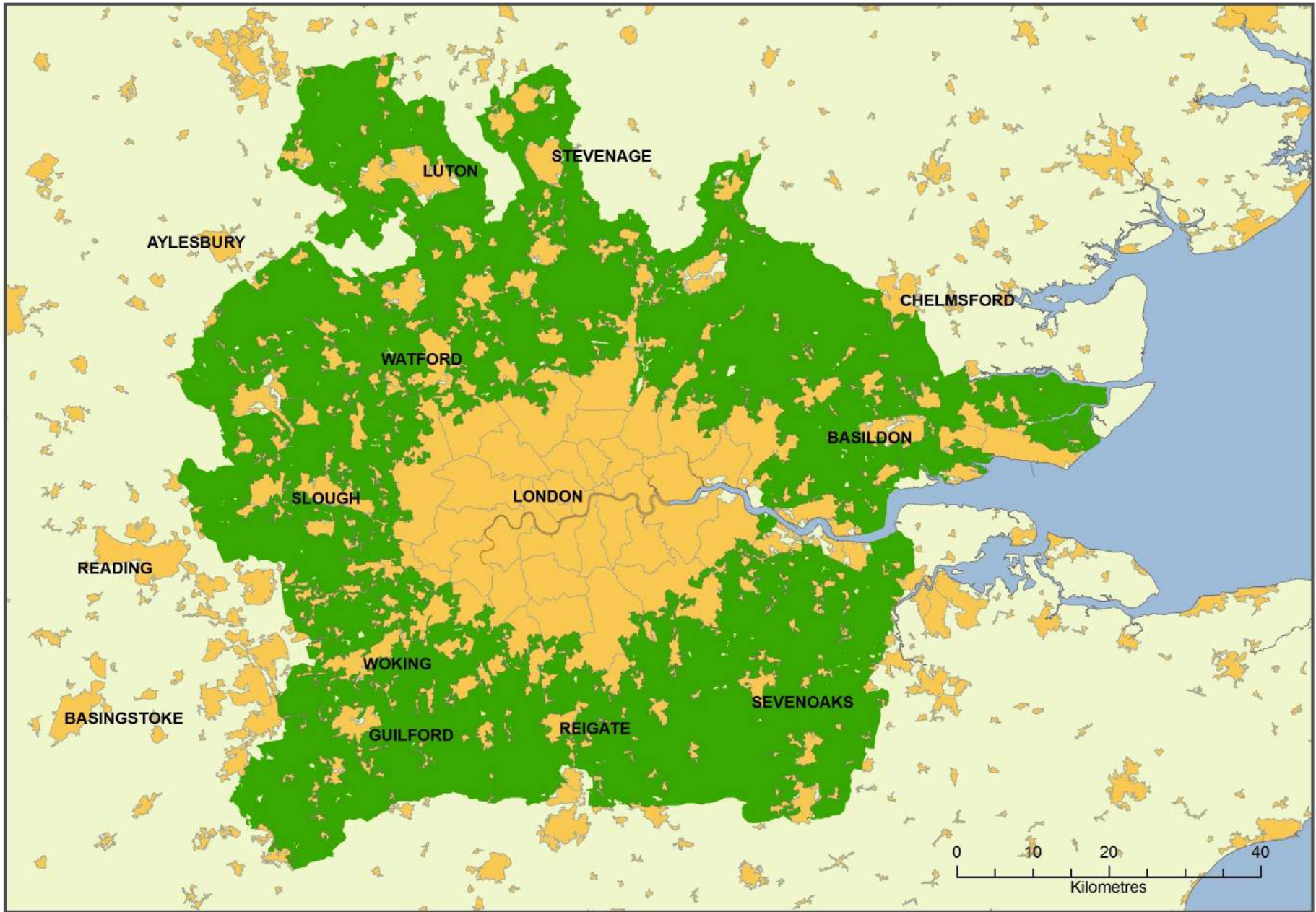
### THE FOUR RINGS

-  Outer Country Ring
-  Green Belt Ring
-  Suburban Ring
-  Inner urban Ring
-  The county of London (The areas shown black are those from which decentralization is proposed)





# The Curse of Planning









# The Curse of Lack of Planning



A man with a receding hairline, wearing a brown jacket over a pink shirt and khaki pants, stands in a vast, flat, brown field under a cloudy sky. He is smiling and holding a large white sign with green text. The sign reads: "NO TO HOUSING ON OUR OPEN SPACES AND FARMLAND".

**NO TO HOUSING  
ON OUR  
OPEN SPACES  
AND FARMLAND**



# Critical issues:

- Without a plan we are eroding the green belt
- There is no prioritization (nature/leisure/housing)
- The housing provided does not accord with need
- Value uplift accrues to the landowner
- Housing is invariably low density (car based)
- There is no investment in the countryside

Is there an answer?



- Built-up area
- Woodland
- Dunes
- Water

- Motorway (tunnel)
- Main road (tunnel)
- Railway, station
- Airport

- Green Heart  
(Boundaries from *Nota Ruimte*, 2004)
- Buffer zone  
(Boundaries from *Nota Westen des Lands*, 1958)

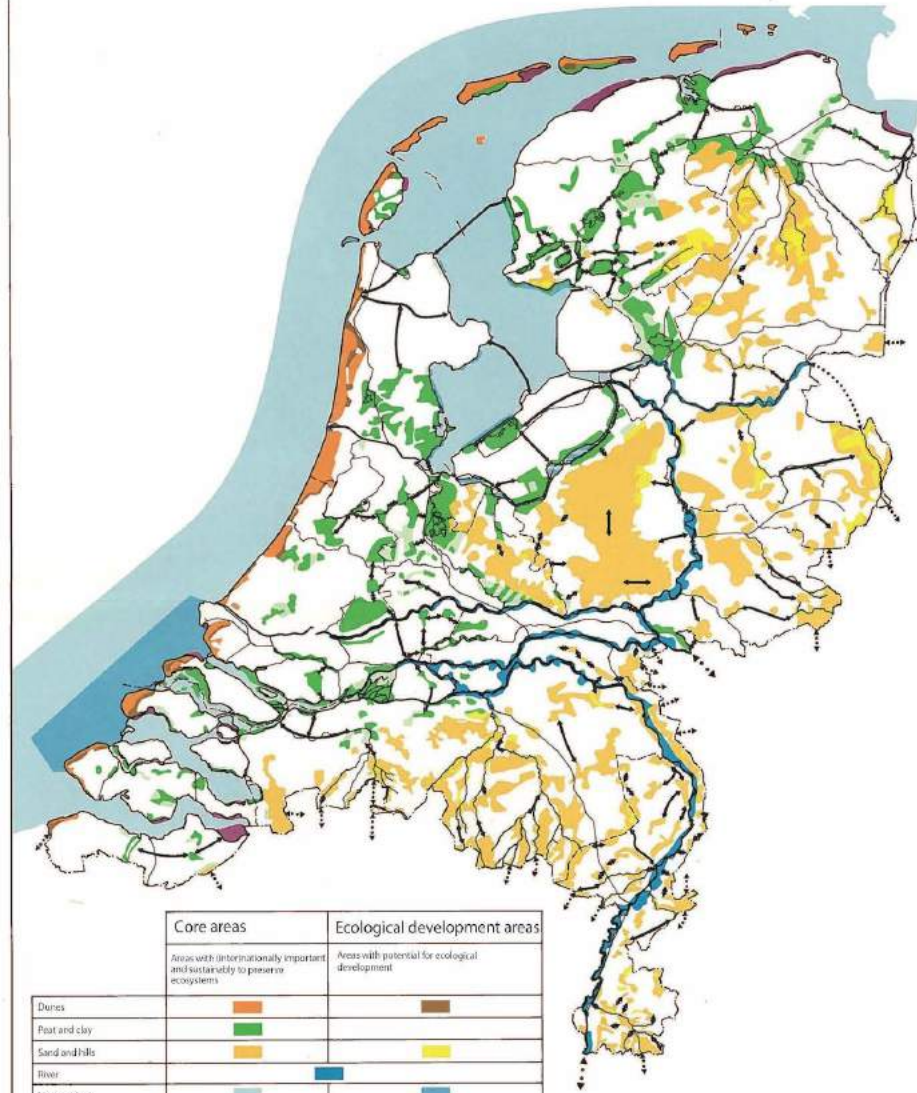
### Randstad and Green Heart

Geo data: TOPNL1000, PDOK, VU Geoplaza – CC-BY-4.0



# Ecological Main Structure of the Netherlands

A coherent network of (inter)nationally important and sustainably to preserve ecosystems



Core areas	Ecological development areas	
Areas with (internationally important and sustainably to preserve ecosystems	Areas with potential for ecological development	
Dunes		
Peat and clay		
Sand and hills		
River		
Large waters		
Kaolingergrond/marshland		

: Ecological connections to be developed or strengthened

: Connections with transboundary nature areas

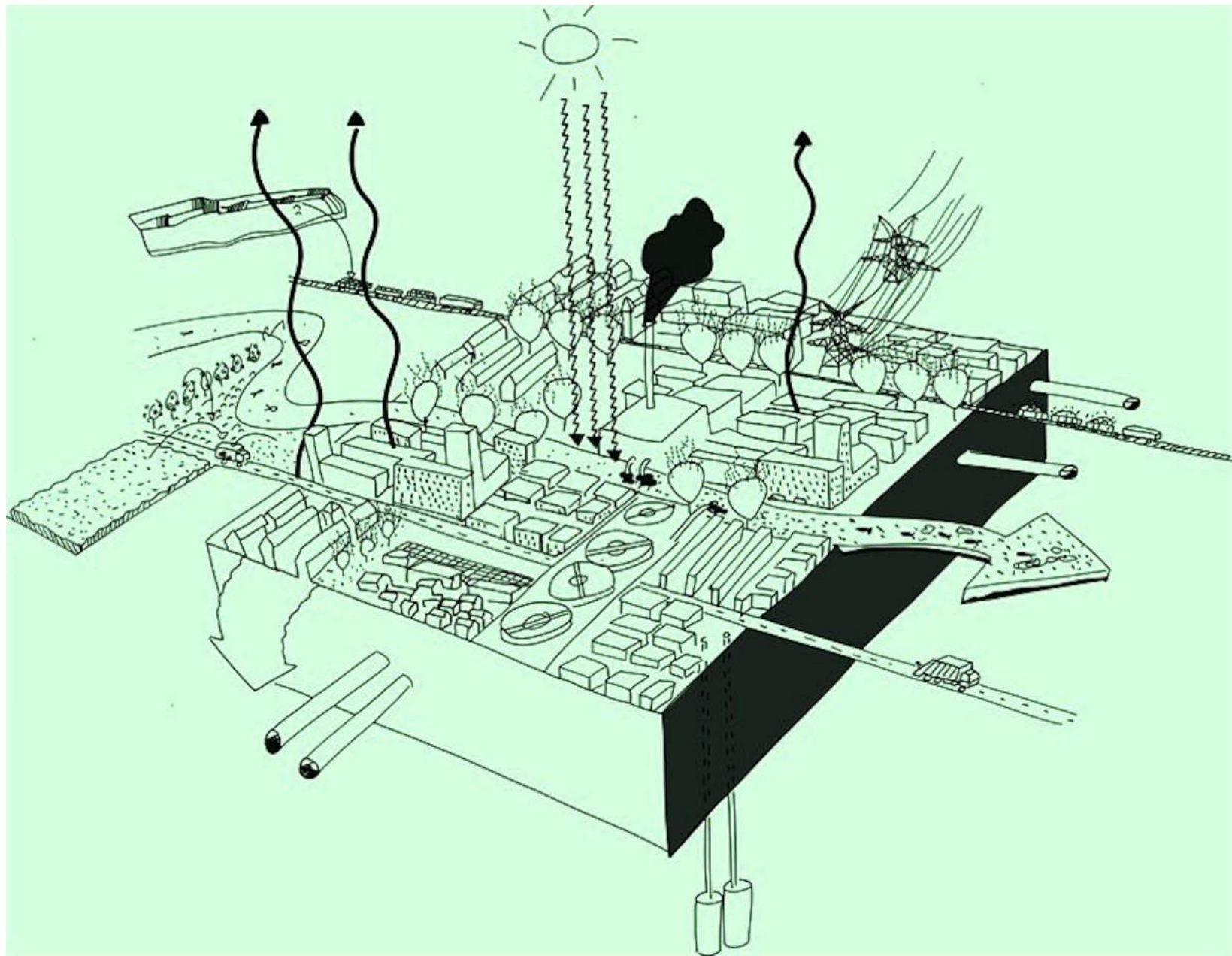


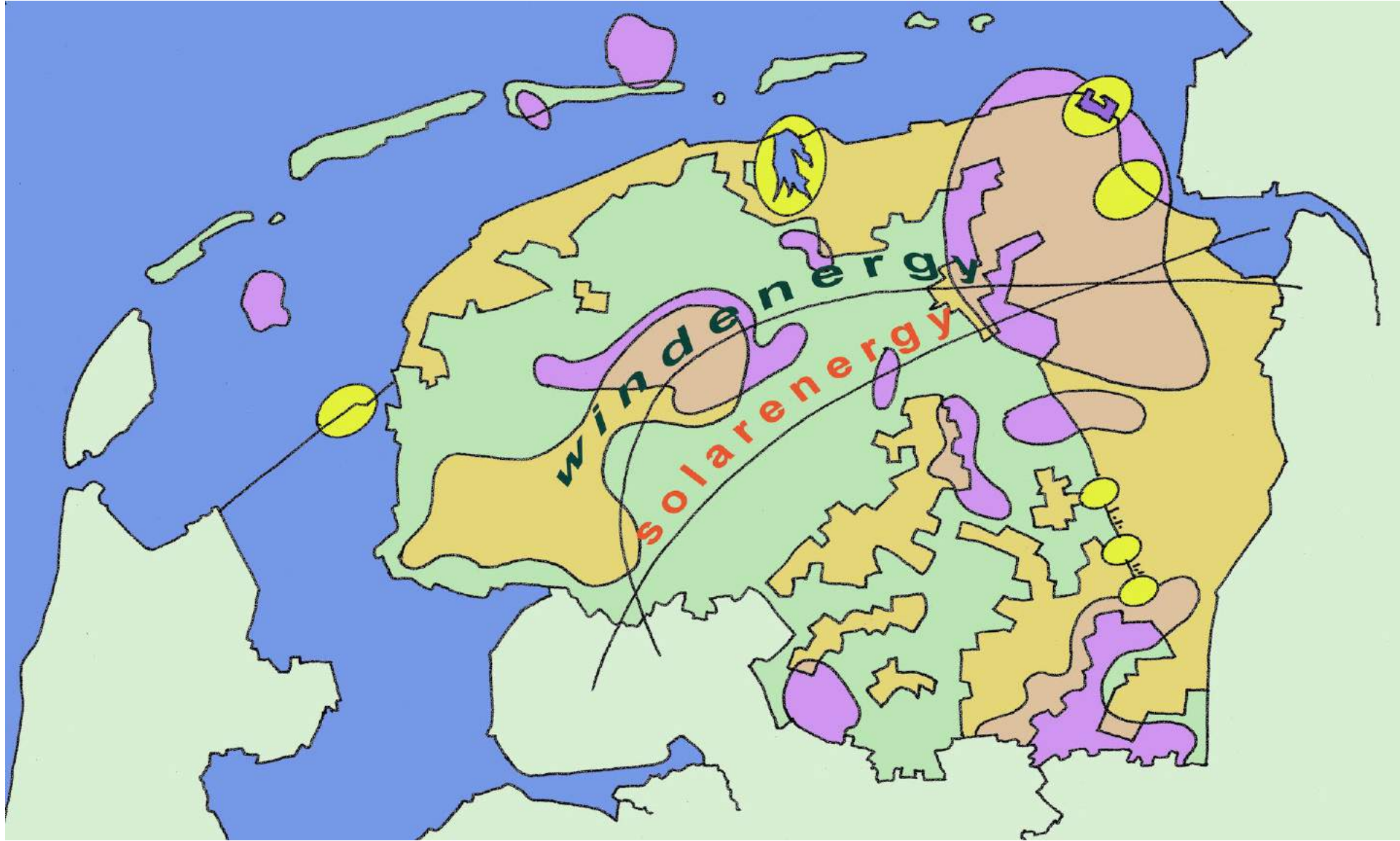


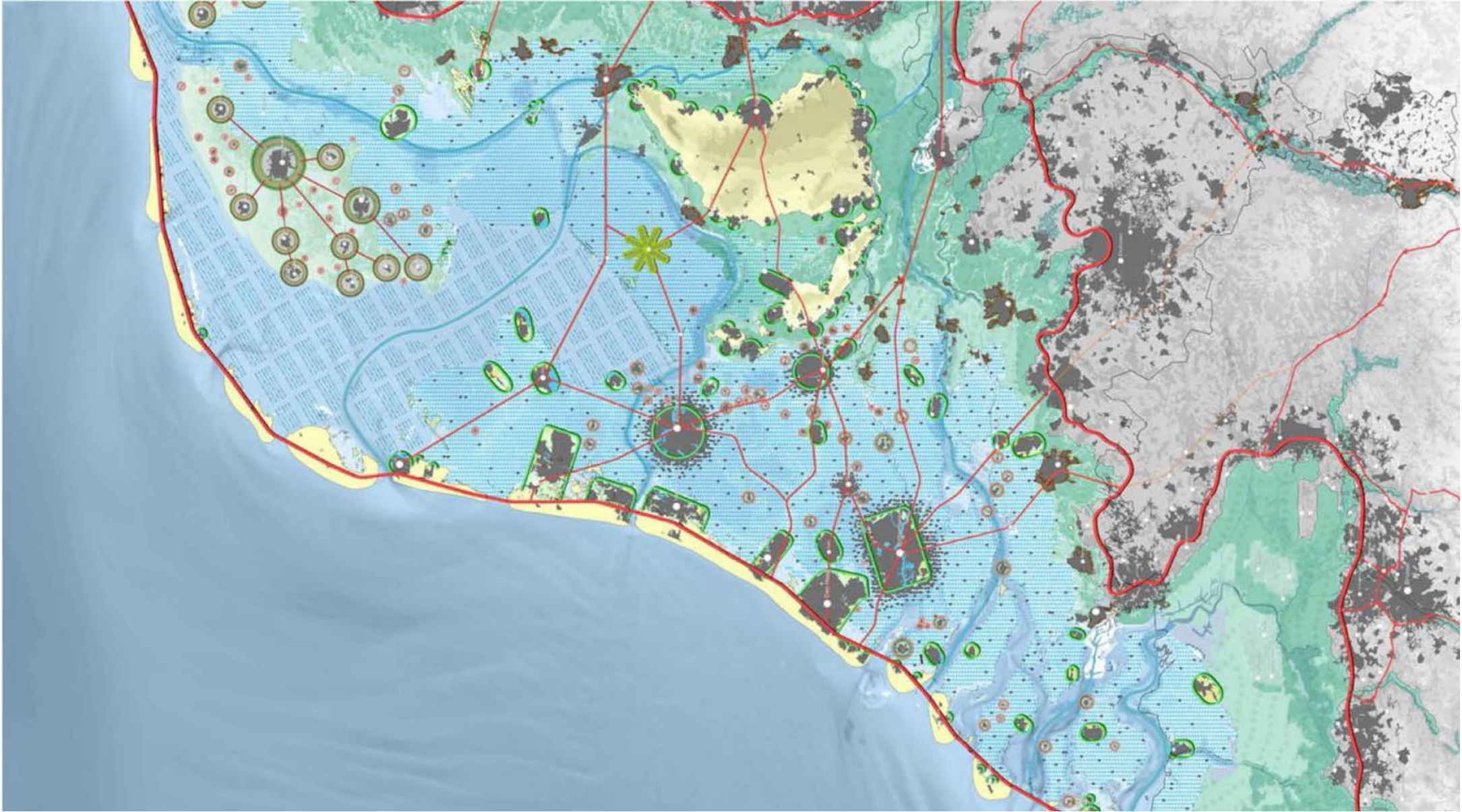






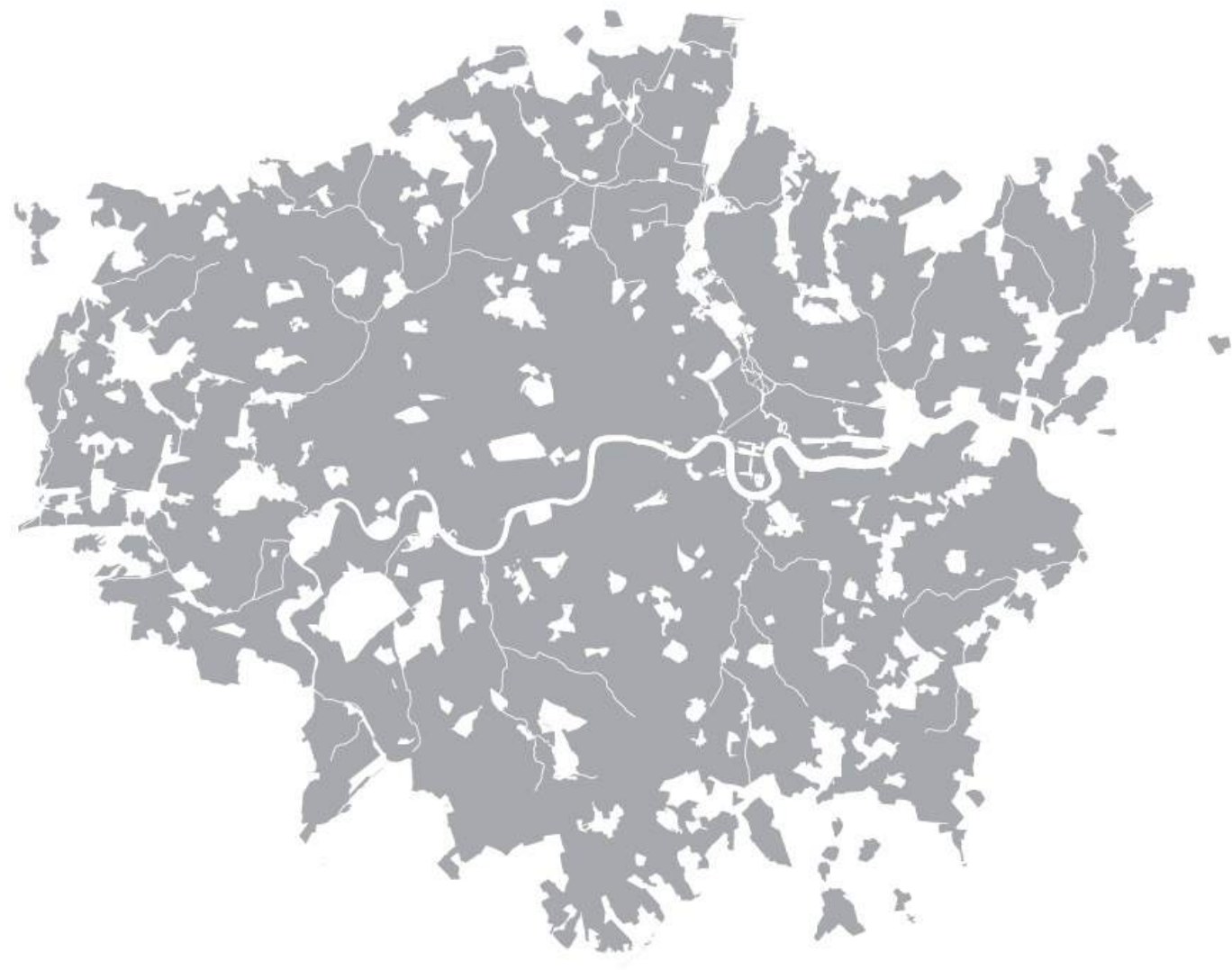




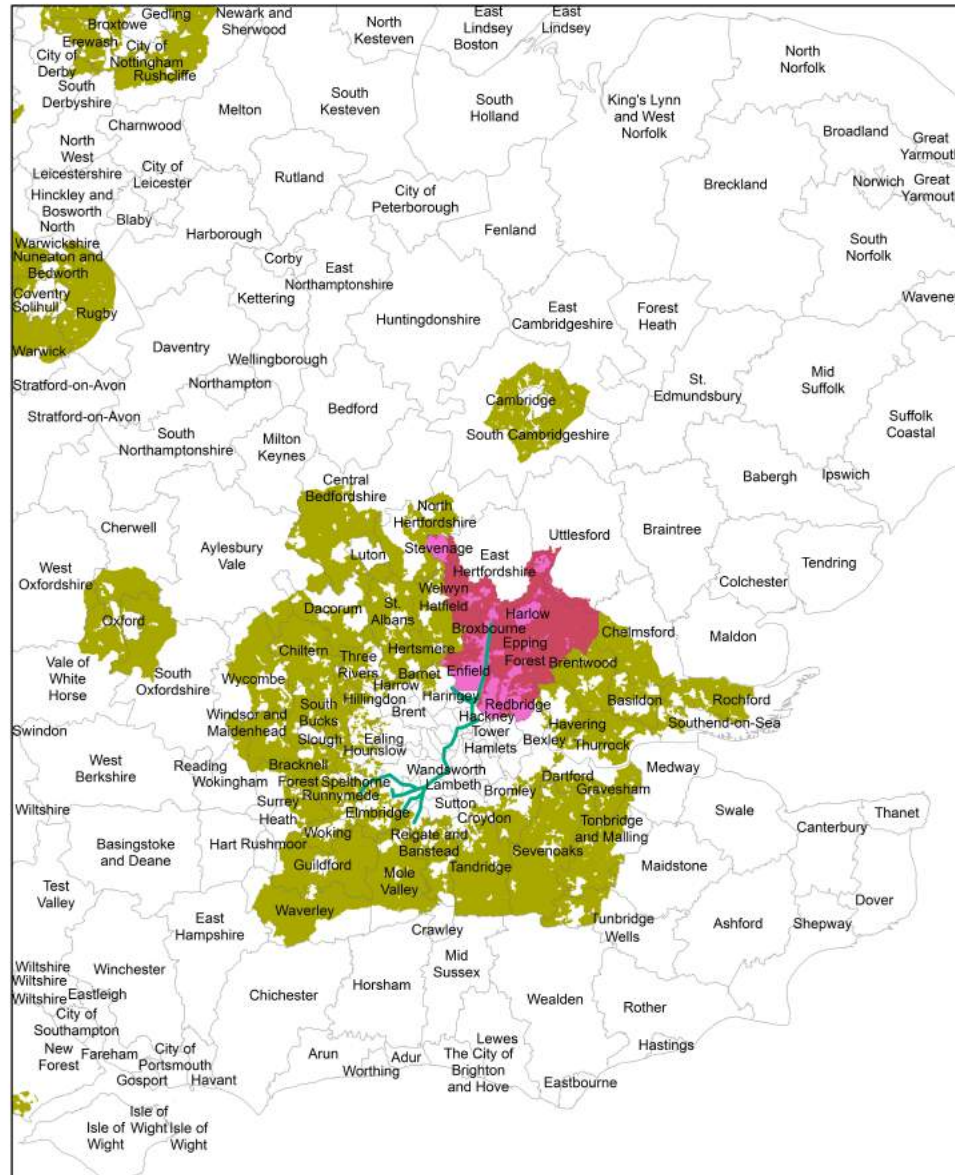


# Greater London ?

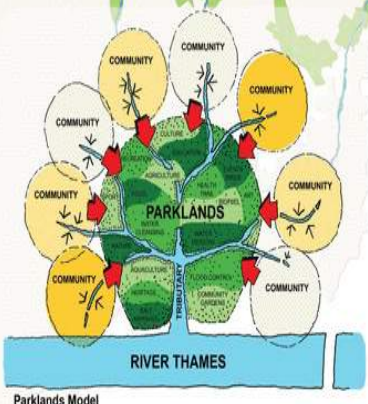




# Potential London Stansted Cambridge Corridor



# Community Parklands





# Conclusions 1

The green belt is a precious resource of which we are stewards

The green belt is not sacrosanct – it is a landscape that may be enhanced, adapted, extended and *in the right circumstances* could provide a spatial framework for some new development

# Conclusions 2

The city and its hinterland should be *planned* as a single entity

There is sufficient brownfield land *if* we are creative enough to unlock it

Development in the green belt needs to be on strategically selected sites, be at sustainable densities and return significantly more land to nature

Development value should be captured and reinvested for the greater public good

Additional land should be acquired/safeguarded for public access, ecology, sustainable environmental purposes (water management, food, energy)

# Conclusions 3

But if we can not rise to the challenge then we should leave the green belt for a generation more responsible and capable than us

