All these recommendations seem sensible and desirable. However, it seems a fair bet that most parents would rate the first as the most desirable, and probably most of us would sacrifice some ergonomic efficiency for a pleasant view. However the third recommendation is the most easily measured from an architect's drawing, and only this last recommendation became a mandatory requirement (Fig. 5.5). Thus it became quite permissible to design a family maisonette or flat many storeys above ground level with no view of any outside play spaces from the kitchen, but it would have the very model of a kitchen work surface as may not be found even in some very expensive privately built housing. It is worth noting that this legislation was introduced during the early period of what has now been called first generation design methodology. Thankfully these Mandatory Minimum Standards were later withdrawn. In a way this was also a pity as they contained other, far more sensible, requirements!

Design legislation has now rightly come under close and critical scrutiny, and designers have begun to report the failings of legislation in practice. In 1973 the Essex County Council produced its now classic *Design Guide for Residential Areas*, which was an attempt to deal with both qualitative and quantitative aspects of housing design. Visual standards and such concepts as privacy were given as much emphasis as noise levels or efficient traffic circulation. Whilst the objectives of this and the many other design guides which followed were almost universally applauded, many designers have subsequently expressed concern at the results of such notes for guidance actually being used in practice as legislation. Building regulations have come under increasing criticism from architects who have shown how they often create undesirable results (Lawson 1975b) and proposals have been put forward to revise the whole system of building control (Savidge 1978).

In 1976 the Department of the Environment (DoE) published its research report no. 6 on the *Value of Standards for the External*

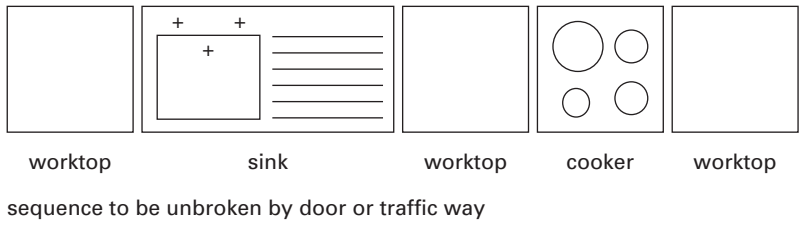

Figure 5.5
The Parker Morris recommended kitchen layout which became mandatory

Residential Environment which concluded that many currently accepted standards were either unworkable or even positively objectionable. The report firmly rejected the imposition of requirements for such matters as privacy, view, sunlight or daylight:

> The application of standards across the board defeats the aim of appropriately different provision in different situations.

This report seems to sound the final death knell for legislation based on the 1960s first-generation design methodology:

> The qualities of good design are not encapsulated in quantitative standards . . . It is right for development controllers to ask that adequate provision be made for, say, privacy or access or children's play or quiet. The imposition of specified quantities as requirements is a different matter, and is not justified by design results.
>
> (DoE 1976)

Sadly, since this time legislators have not learned the lessons from their mistakes with daylight and kitchens. Legislation continues to be drawn up in such a way as to suit those whose job it is to check rather than those whose job it is to design. The checker requires a simple test, preferably numerical, easily applied on evidence which is clear and unambiguous. The checker also greatly prefers not to have to consider more than one thing at a time. The designer of course, requires the exact opposite of this, and so it is that legislation often makes design more difficult. This is not because it imposes standards of performance which may be quite desirable, but because of the inflexibility and lack of value which it introduces into the value-laden multi-dimensional process which is design.

Measurement and design methods

Reference has already been made to Christopher Alexander's famous method of design, which perhaps exemplifies the first generation thinking about the design process. We no longer view the design process in this way and in order to see why we shall pause here to fill in some detail. Alexander's method involved first listing all the requirements of a particular design problem, and then looking for interactions between these requirements (Alexander 1964). For example in the design of a kettle some requirements for the choice of materials might be as follows.