and the National Urban Forestry Unit. The Unit promotes the values of a strategic approach to woods and trees in urban areas. This approach takes account of existing woodlands, street trees, trees in parks and gardens and the opportunities to create new woodlands, the whole being 'the urban forest'. They also encourage developers and regeneration agencies to undertake structural planting as part of land reclamation. Boundary and screening trees, planted perhaps years before development takes place, add value to vacant land, improve the urban landscape and contribute to biodiversity.

Formal landscapes comprise parks, cemeteries, private gardens, institutional grounds, the gang-mown prairies around high-rise flats: anywhere in fact where high inputs of labour and materials are used to create an effect, ornamental or otherwise.

Encapsulated countryside includes river valleys, ancient and other woodlands, unimproved grasslands, heathland and wetlands. It is more common than is generally recognized, and often comes close to, or in the case of rivers, through city centres. (The River Thames in central London may not have much of a floodplain now, and its Strand is a busy street well away from its modern banks, but its aquatic ecosystem has been largely restored in the past twenty years.) Places like Hampstead Heath in London and Sutton Park in Birmingham are examples of substantial pieces of countryside which have survived urban encroachment. In general the land in Sutton Park has never been cultivated or enclosed. It is now a National Nature Reserve and the largest park of its type in Europe.

Urban commons, a neutral rather than pejorative term (Gilbert, 1989) to cover brownfield sites, vacant land, wasteland, backland, informal open spaces and derelict land, often perform valuable functions. In its final report, the Urban Task Force (1999) gave a new acronym to some brownfield land – SLOAP, or 'Space Left Over After Planning'. It was described as 'soulless, undefined places, poorly landscaped, with no relationship to surrounding buildings'. These leftover plots between roads, houses and factories, which no one appears to own, and often for which no one wants to take responsibility, can be death traps for children, valued community green spaces, relics of industry or designated wildlife sites. Sometimes they are a combination of these and other attributes.

The Government has now targeted such land for development, and want 60 per cent of all new houses to be built on it (or to be provided by the conversion of existing buildings) in order to 'save the countryside' (Urban White Paper, 2000). Whilst the desire to bring this land into productive use is meritorious, the narrow thinking which sees it only for building on is not. The various uses, functions and values of urban commons need to be understood, assessed and integrated into urban design and planning. According to the Urban White Paper the Government itself wants '. . . everyone to have access to well-maintained and safe parks, play areas and other open spaces close to where they live and work'. Building on all available brownfield sites will make this aspiration more difficult to achieve.

The Urban Greenspaces Task Force (DTLR, 2002b) provides a more sophisticated typology than the simple one given above (Box 5.1 shows an extract), although here the urban commons are reduced to 'wasteland'. This typology, based

Box 5.1 Urban Open Space and Green Space Typology

Urban Open Spaces	
Typology suitable for planning purposes and open space strategies	More detailed classification for open space audits and academic research
Green spaces	
Parks and gardens	Urban parks
	Country parks
	Formal gardens (including designed landscapes)
Amenity greenspace (most commonly, but not necessarily, in housing areas)	Informal recreation spaces
	Housing green spaces
	Domestic gardens
	Village greens
	Other incidental space
Allotments, community gardens and urban farms	Allotments
	Community gardens
	City (urban) farms
Natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces, including woodland or urban forestry	Woodland (coniferous, deciduous, mixed) and scrub
	Grassland (e.g. downland and meadow)
	Heath or moor
	Wetlands (e.g. marsh, fen)
	Open and running water
	Wastelands (including disturbed ground)
	Bare rock habitats (e.g. cliffs, quarries, pits)
Green corridors	River and canal banks
	Road and rail corridors
	Cycling routes within towns and cities
	Pedestrian paths within towns and cities
	Rights of way and permissive paths

on land use, is problematic because many open spaces have more than one use. For example, 'country parks' usually contain natural and semi-natural greenspaces such as woodland and grassland, provide cycle and pedestrian paths, often have outdoor sports facilities, and may also be part of green corridors. Although designed for use as a strategic planning tool, the typology has serious limitations because of its reductionist and compartmentalized thinking.

It is better to think of the open spaces of a town or city as a multi-faceted matrix, performing a variety of functions and having a variety of uses. We do, after all, think of networks of roads and complexes of buildings, so why not a matrix of open spaces?

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL GREENSPACE

Decrepit, unattractive urban open space conceals its values from all but the specialists, but some greenspaces display these values like peacocks. Hyde Park and Regent's Park in London, and Central Park in New York are good examples. Almost uniquely Central Park defines and characterizes Manhattan in equal measure to iconic buildings, such as the Chrysler and Empire State. New York's