to an open network of roads (Lynch, 1981). The designation of some of the concentric rings as a rapid public transit link following the ideas of Soria y Mata converts the star into a form which may be useful in attempting to solve, in a more sustainable way, the movement of people in existing large urban areas.

## LANDSCAPE: THE DOMINANT STRUCTURING ELEMENT

A further model for urban structuring which is difficult to classify is based on the notion that landscape should be the chief consideration. It can be argued that, at one level, consideration of landscape form should influence all development. The location of Cumbernauld, for example, is determined to some extent by the topography, the town structure being used to strengthen and reinforce the form of the ridge on which the town centre sits. The star pattern for city development places as much importance on the landscape as it does on transportation; the green wedges which alternate with the corridors or fingers of development have equal priority in forming the shape of the city. This argument, however, misses the point that landscaping can be used as the factor which unifies the whole urban form: it then becomes the dominant element in the urban composition. The role of landscape as the unifying element in the siting of building groups has been discussed elsewhere (Moughtin, 2003). This notion can be developed further so that landscape is elevated to the position of the predominant factor in the generation of urban form.

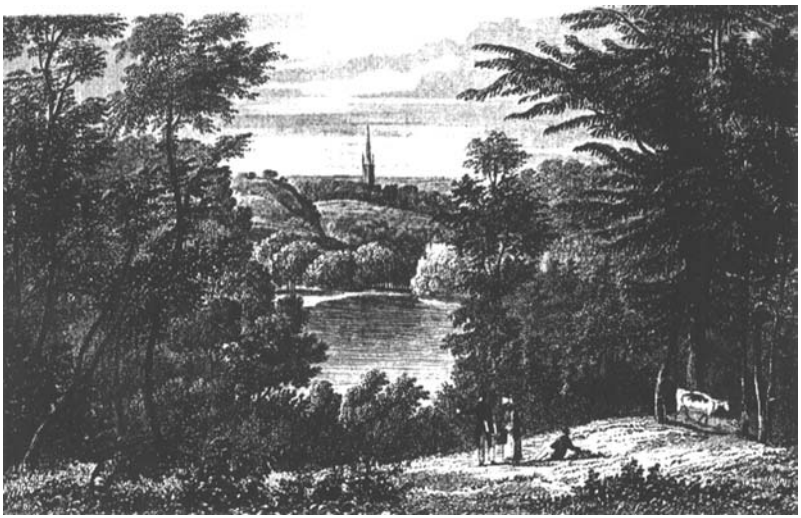

**Figure 7.61** Landscape by Capability Brown (Stroud, 1950)

Respect for the landscape is deep-rooted in the British psyche. Amongst this country's greatest achievements are the landscape gardens of the eighteenth century, the high point of this achievement being the work of Capability Brown (Stroud, 1950) (Figure 7.61). The development of Howard's garden city ideas at Letchworth and Welwyn introduced the idea of landscaping as a feature unifying large areas of a town. In other countries, the landscaping of suburbia has proved highly successful. This is particularly true of the USA, where the freshness and boldness of suburbs such as Olmstead's Riverside near Chicago and Roland Park, Baltimore set new standards for landscaped residential areas. It was, however, Unwin with his pamphlet 'Nothing to be Gained by Overcrowding' who first analysed the effects of housing density and related it to development costs (Unwin, 1967). It was this analysis which was the intellectual rationale for the garden suburb: 'Unwin . . . showed that by cutting down on the number of needless streets and devoting the areas so dedicated to internal gardens, he could provide almost the same number of houses, each with more usable garden land,

and with more gracious surroundings, at the same price' (Mumford, 1961). Unwin and Parker, with their designs for Hampstead Garden Suburb (Unwin, 1909), set the pattern for most public housing in Britain until the Second World War; it was this pattern which was probably the ideal for most suburban dwellers throughout the last century. It is probably true to say that most housing development in British cities owes more to Unwin and Parker than to Le Corbusier and the pioneers of modern design. The 'leafy suburb' with its avenues of detached and semi-detached homes set in their own private gardens, is still the type of environment to which most families in Britain aspire. Most of the existing suburbs that surround our cities will still form the bulk of urban Britain when environmental constraints begin to take effect on urban lifestyles. It is therefore the existing suburb in Britain that has to be made more sustainable and where most design skills should be concentrated.

Harlow, designed by Frederick Gibberd, is the British new town which resembles most closely an urban structure where landscape is the dominant factor in determining its form. The plan for Harlow was published in 1947, and construction began in 1949. The master plan was designed originally for 60 000 people, but this was later increased, first to 80 000 and then to 90 000. The town was planned to be self-contained and balanced (Gibberd, 1955). Its primary purpose was to take overspill population from north-east London. Harlow is located 30 miles from London, just south of the River Stort and west of the old village of Harlow. It is in a rural landscape and occupies over 6000 acres. The urban form of the settlement follows a strictly hierarchical structure; for example, shopping is arranged in a series starting from the lowest level of shopping, the corner shop, extending through the intermediate levels of shopping, the neighbourhood and the district shopping centres, to the highest level in the hierarchy, town centre shopping. Roads and housing follow similar hierarchical structures.

The dominance of landscape as a form determinant is best appreciated from Gibberd's own words: 'The main railway and river run in a valley along the north boundary, beyond which are the Hertfordshire hills. There is another valley running east–west across the site, and this flows out on the west side to link up with the main valley on the north.... The plan form has been evolved from the existing landscape pattern, and from the desire to obtain sharp contrast between urban and natural areas. ...The housing groups are on the high ground, clear of the main traffic connections, with natural features, such as woods and valleys, forming barriers between them.... The valleys and hills on the north of the river are left in their natural state, and a park is projected from them into the heart of the town. The agricultural land on the east of the town, and that on the west, are both projected into the area to bring rural life into immediate contact with the urban one. The two wedges are linked up by the central valley which is left in its natural state. Links to the countryside, on both north and south, are formed by green wedges designed to embrace natural features, such as valleys, woods and brooks' (Gibberd, 1955). It is clear from Gibberd's description of Harlow that his major preoccupation was to design a development in harmony with the existing landscape structure (Figures 7.62–7.64). The city centre may not be the most exciting place in the world, but the landscape scheme is expansive.