

Master Plan of Greater London (1944)

The *County of London Plan*, produced in 1943, was the first of two ambitious documents for the post-war improvement of the capital. It and the subsequent *Greater London Plan* (1944) have become known collectively as the *Abercrombie Plan*, due to the crucial influence of Patrick Abercrombie, Professor of Town Planning at the University of London.

During the Second World War, the bombing destroyed large urban areas throughout the entire county of London, but particularly the central core. Over 50,000 inner London homes were completely destroyed, while more than 2 million houses experienced some form of bomb damage. This presented the London County Council with a unique chance to plan and rebuild empty areas of the city on a scale not seen since the Great Fire of London (1666).

The plan was based around five main issues facing London at the time:

- **Population Growth:** rapid population growth, combined with the inevitable return of many evacuees during the war, saw London facing significant housing shortages and density problems. A series of four rings were outlined (Inner Urban, Suburban, Green belt and Outer Country) in order to control development and limit sprawl into regional areas.
- **Housing:** new housing developments were mostly concentrated within areas damaged by the air raids, the suburban ring and in new satellite towns. Specific architectural

styles were respected throughout all new developments in order to create aesthetically pleasing streetscapes.

- **Employment and industry:** manufacturing industries were relocated away from the dense inner city and into 'new towns' with access to a specialised labour force.
- **Recreation:** this was seen as an essential part of life. All open spaces were to be reserved, with particular significance given to the development of a 'green belt'. A variety of open spaces was established, from city squares and public gardens to more wild and picturesque parks.
- **Transport:** A series of main arterials and ring roads allowed road users to avoid the most congested sections of the network. Rail transit in London was separated into differing passenger and commercial networks. The River Thames was considered a focal point for the city and maximised as a trade and transport resource.

The economic climate in Britain during the post-war era simply did not allow for major infrastructure development on the scale that Abercrombie had suggested. Anyway, the Greater London Plan was extremely successful in creating an optimistic attitude for the people of London, providing hope for the return of a great civilisation from the horror of World War 2.

1 Answer the following questions.

1. What was the Abercrombie Plan?
2. Who was Patrick Abercrombie?
3. What happened to London during World War 2?
4. What did the plan suggest about population growth?
5. Where were the new housing developments concentrated?
6. Where were industries relocated?
7. Why were green areas an important factor in the Plan?
8. What kinds of roads and railways transport were created?
9. How was the Thames considered?
10. Was the Abercrombie Plan totally implemented?

