

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
<p>REPORT TITLE Promoting Green Space and Biodiversity: Response to the Report of the Cabinet Adviser on Promoting Green Space and Biodiversity (CS/2023/08)</p>	
<p>REPORT OF Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden</p>	
<p>FOR SUBMISSION TO Cabinet</p>	<p>DATE 7th June 2023</p>
<p>STRATEGIC CONTEXT</p> <p>We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. It sets out our ambition for everyone in Camden to have a place they call home and key to this ambition is the Camden Mission, for Camden’s estates and their neighbourhoods to be healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity.</p> <p>In May 2022, the Leader appointed a Cabinet Adviser on Promoting Green Space and Biodiversity, to examine the work the Council is doing in this area and to look into how Camden can increase green space, green corridors and open up access to diverse communities. The objective of this research is to make a number of recommendations on what the Council can do to further this work to meet our We Make Camden ambition. This report examines the recommendations of the Cabinet Adviser, considering the delivery implications and how the Council can take forward these recommendations as part of our commitment to promoting green space and biodiversity.</p>	
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>The Leader and Cabinet of Camden Council have established Cabinet Adviser roles to provide evidence-based policy support and recommendations to the Council’s Cabinet. Councillor de Ayala Parker was appointed Cabinet Adviser on Promoting Green Space and Biodiversity in the 2022/23 municipal year, and her work has focused particularly on exploring how to increase green spaces in the borough and in particular establishing a community green deal. We welcome the research and recommendations of the Cabinet Adviser and alongside this formal response will continue to think about how we can reflect on the research gathered and incorporate into our policy and programmes.</p> <p>This report welcomes the recommendations made by the Cabinet Adviser on Promoting Green Space and Biodiversity. The report was endorsed by the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee where it was discussed in March 2023. This report provides an initial response and commentary on each recommendation in</p>	

turn, as well as detailing the work already ongoing to promote green space and biodiversity in Camden.

Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information

No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

- Consider the recommendations made by the Cabinet Adviser on Promoting Green Space and Biodiversity
- Consider the response of the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee set out at 1.10
- Note the response from the Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden to the recommendations made in section 2 and 3.
- Agree to endorse recommendations summarized in section 4.

Signed:



Gillian Marston

Executive Director of Supporting Communities

Date: 24th May 2023

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. This municipal year, the Leader has appointed Cabinet Advisers to support the Cabinet through developing policy recommendations across a range of Council work and programmes aligned with We Make Camden. In Camden's spirit of challenge and collaboration, these Councillors have been invited to bring their wide experience as community leaders and policymakers to examine the work of the Council, to speak with community groups and those impacted by our services, and to draw together advice on how we can take our work forward.
- 1.2. The Cabinet Advisers have supported the Cabinet with in-depth research in some entrenched areas of Council policy and we are grateful for their expertise, providing fresh insight and perspective which will help us to fast-track progress in these areas. Camden values community and elected member leadership and the role that our Councillors play in engaging our citizens, our communities, and new partners. In providing independent research, engagement, and recommendations, the Cabinet Advisers provide an important channel for new ideas and connections to support the work of Cabinet Members and the Council.
- 1.3. Whilst this report provides an initial response to the recommendations of the Cabinet Adviser for Promoting Green Space and Biodiversity, the Cabinet Adviser and Cabinet Member will continue to work closely together to progress work across these recommendations in the coming year.
- 1.4. In May 2022, Councillor Nina de Ayala Parker was appointed the Cabinet Adviser on Promoting Green Space and Biodiversity, to look at how Camden increases green space, green corridors and opens up access to diverse communities. Her full report is contained in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 1.5. In her report, the Cabinet Adviser applies her deep understanding of, and passion for, environmental law to research the borough's green space and biodiversity. Her recommendations identify pioneering ways of working to ensure our green and natural spaces are more inclusive and accessible.
- 1.6. The Cabinet Adviser's report conveys the Council's commitment to increasing green spaces and biodiversity and recognises the physical and mental health benefits of outdoor space in support of our community.
- 1.7. Green space and biodiversity are well evidenced to improve air quality and increase climate resilience, whilst also benefitting human mental and physical health. Addressing the health benefits of green space also allows us to acknowledge climate inequality, tackle social inequality and improve inclusivity in the local community.
- 1.8. The Cabinet Adviser's report aligns the benefits of green and nature space with resilience methods in response to the climate emergency. Nature and green space continue to be great resources for flood prevention, coolers and mediators of extreme temperatures, carbon storage and a source of resilient planting. They can also reduce carbon emissions by encouraging green travel, providing space

for local food production, and reducing use of high-carbon materials such as concrete and steel.

- 1.9. Although the borough benefits from some large green spaces (including Hampstead Heath and Regents Park), the distribution of green space across the borough is uneven and there is significant access inequality in some parts of the borough. Most neighbourhood parks and spaces are of limited size, which puts intense pressure on their use in densely populated areas. To increase the amount of green infrastructure in the borough we are progressively exploring and delivering new forms of green space, for example rethinking the land used for roads and on housing estates.
- 1.10. The Cabinet Adviser's report was discussed at the 15th March 2023 Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting and received endorsement of the recommendations by the committee.
- 1.11. This report provides a response to the Cabinet Adviser's report from the Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden, discusses how the Council can deliver the recommendations, as well as detailing where work is under way.

2. **Consideration of recommendations**

- 2.1. The cabinet adviser's report, contained in Appendix 1, sets out recommendations to the Council on promoting green space and biodiversity. This section of the report focuses on the four "key recommendations" of the Cabinet Adviser's recommendations and considers an initial response to each.

Recommendation 1: A "Community Green Deal" for Camden

"Residents need to feel empowered to address the multiple climate-related crisis, as well as, encouraged by local government with accessible and locatable tools to take action"

- 2.2. The cabinet adviser puts forward an umbrella proposal to draw together knowledge and tools to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies declared in 2019.
- 2.3. We enthusiastically welcome this proposal to create a clear brand to align the climate and ecological emergency and our responses to galvanise our leading work in these areas. Building this single brand furthers the existing strong work on the individual themes to date.
- 2.4. The primary response will be to align these on the Council's website. The current [website](#) is undergoing a redesign with a vision of making its service easier, clearer, and more inclusive and accessible. Until the redesign is published, officers will ensure the climate (www.camden.gov.uk/climate-crisis) and ecological/biodiversity (www.camden.gov.uk/wildlife-areas) website areas have a shared reference to a new "Community Green Deal".

- 2.5. The cabinet adviser provides a clear proposal to ensure the enforcement and reporting routes (complaints) for environmental damage are aligned and available to discourage wanton damage to the Camden environment.
- 2.6. The Community Green Deal will set out the tools for our communities to make the difference by centralising information and reporting. We will ensure this is accompanied by a combined marketing plan across all Council mediums to ensure our residents are aware of the deal, spread the word, and encourage action (please see Recommendation 4).

Recommendation 2: Prevention and resilience in Land Infrastructure and usage

“To build and maintain effective land infrastructure, which prevents, and is resilient to such devastating climate-exacerbated shocks such as flooding and heatwaves”

- 2.7. Many councils have developed adaptation strategies to ensure they are able to adapt to how the climate is changing and reduce its impact. The cabinet adviser’s recommendation acknowledges where Camden goes that step further by delivering resilience plans so that we strengthen our ability to recover from the impact of climate change. Aligning climate resilience with expanding our green space and biodiversity is the next step to bring together their functions and benefits into our green space planning.
- 2.8. The Council recognises and shares this ambition and will produce a Climate Resilience Plan that considers how we can best ready the borough for the changing climate through programmes such as the Highway Greening work exemplified by the ‘Road to Park’ project of Alfred Place Gardens, which replaced 2 lanes of road with nearly three tennis courts’ size of park in central London.
- 2.9. The council was already, in 2019, first local authority in the country that undertook a climate assembly to create an action plan with our community. This recommendation is well aligned with the council’s ambitions to becoming net zero by 2030.
- 2.10. Camden council is committed to planting 600 standard (approx. 2.5 metre) trees, including at least 250 in new locations, through the Tree Planting Strategy agreed in 2020, whose aim is to increase the canopy cover of the borough by 3.7% pts.
- 2.11. We are continuing to trial and develop new ways of creating spaces that increase resilience. Our Highways Greening Accelerator is establishing best practice in the delivery of highway greening and rain gardens, while new temporary open space created in Euston (at Starcross Yard) has thought differently about how we source materials: it focused heavily on reused or recycled materials, which reduced cost and minimised carbon footprint. We

embed these learnings into our Green Space Investment Programme to inform future green space projects.

Recommendation 3: Increasing green spaces and in turn biodiversity

“Increasing green spaces, preventing against the felling of trees, re-wilding, restoring and pushing for more green corridors, bringing back and protecting species vulnerable to extinction in Camden, must be a priority”

- 2.12. The cabinet adviser sets out an ambitious vision of tackling orthodoxy and challenging the borough to protecting existing green spaces to support vulnerable biodiversity in the borough.
- 2.13. Creating more quality green space in the borough is a priority for the Council. The strategic planning of green infrastructure and biodiversity is an imperative for the borough and this recommendation is well received and builds well on existing work that aligns with national and London guidance. We are currently awaiting further guidance from the GLA on their London-wide approach to Green Infrastructure planning, including a planned update to the All London Green Grid.
- 2.14. The borough’s current ecological response is set out in *Creating space for nature in Camden* working with our communities through developing:
- A biodiversity action plan
 - A Camden nature partnership
 - Camden nature recovery network – a spatial plan of a network of spaces
- 2.15. The council has also undertaken a number of area-based green infrastructure studies, which have identified opportunities for increasing greening in areas such as Swiss Cottage and Euston. These have helped us lever in capital funding to deliver a range of projects that support wider greening ambitions, working closely with local communities to ensure they meet local needs as well as shared environmental issues. Camden’s many Business Improvement Districts are also active in the space and play an important role in helping to convene and drive forward enhancements that support businesses and communities within their areas.
- 2.16. The development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy would identify opportunities for increasing green infrastructure where it will have the biggest impact and in turn support the Local Plan review.
- 2.17. The cabinet adviser recommends dedicated officer time to monitor biodiversity loss and a ‘nature engagement officer’ role to encourage citizen science and action. The Council will review how these functions can be taken

forward within the council resources and alongside our partnership with Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL).

- 2.18. We intend to work with Camden citizens using a citizen scientist model to better understand the ecosystem services provided by trees in Camden.
- 2.19. In addition to the work identified in the cabinet adviser's report, the Council has partnered with HogWatch, which operates from Zoological Society London monitoring the existence of hedgehogs across London. The Council has supported studies undertaken in Waterlow Park, Hampstead Cemetery, Adelaide Local Nature Reserve, Belsize Wood Local Nature Reserve and the Branch Hill Woods and Allotments. This research is part of larger aspirations to make the Borough more hedgehog-friendly and we will continue to support further studies.
- 2.20. The council is also working with Butterfly Conservation as part of their Big City Butterflies project, and will organise butterfly identification 'talk and walks' and a 'moth morning' for 2023.

Recommendation 4: Guardians of the land

“Through “Guardians of the Land” we can connect Camden to the land so that they are empowered to protect their land.... This is about changing people’s hearts and minds about nature and what it means to live on this planet.”

- 2.21. In connection to the “Community Green Deal”, this recommendation proposal sets out clear ambition to providing clear, persuasive, information for our communities so they can take action and support this cause.
- 2.22. It is important to create a clear offer to residents that sets out how they can individually, as a group, or through their work make a positive impact on the borough to looking after and promoting green spaces and biodiversity. This will be developed as part of the Community Green Deal (Recommendation 1) – the synergies between these two recommendations are very strong and complimentary.
- 2.23. Where possible we now incorporate educational messaging into our new or improved green spaces to help people understand their role in tackling the climate emergency. New sustainable drainage to reduce flooding at Fleet Valley Pocket Park is explained on informative boards, while the reuse and recycling of materials at Starcross Yard temporary open space is also illustrated on site. We will continue to identify ways to engage and educate through our work.

2.24. We currently provide opportunities for communities to get involved in improvements to green space, and help shape them, through our existing work – example of communications used are in Appendix 2. The Green Space Investment Programme regularly works with communities to inform and co-design improvements to specific green spaces. Recent examples include our work in Swiss Cottage to increase green infrastructure across this area of the borough, working in collaboration with North Camden Zone and engaging with local residents on improvements. The Greening Phoenix Road project in Somers Town has also been working with local communities to reimagine this street as a valued green space, and residents have been involved right from the outset to help establish local priorities.

2.25. The cabinet adviser considers that these are siloed and disparate across different functions, weakening our approach and the impact it has.

2.26. Following the Climate Emergency Citizen Assembly, Camden has sought to deliver a deliberative and representative approach to engagement. This work has continued through Camden's Climate Action Citizen Panel since the adoption of the Climate Action Plan in 2020. The Citizen Panel represent an existing and representative group already discussing many of the themes proposed by the 'Talking Circle' proposal. They met in April with four future meetings a year programmed in. We commit to using this engaged and representative group of Camden residents to discuss the connections between biodiversity, increasing green space and climate resilience.

3. **Other recommendations**

3.1. In addition to the four key recommendations, the Cabinet Adviser's report sets out several other recommendations which have been laid out below.

Recommendation 5: Camden to review pesticide use

3.2. The Council has a clear current position of minimal use of pesticides, only using them to tackle weeds of footways and highways by directly applying it to weeds only. The Council also uses herbicides to deal with invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed. The Council does not apply pesticides to grassed areas or shrub beds.

3.3. The proposal to review use of pesticides and undertake an open discussion is a timely one. The conclusions of European Food Standards Agency's peer review is expected to be made available to the European Commission, Member States and the Glyphosate Renewal Group in July 2023.

3.4. The Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 15th March commented they are minded to host a themed session where we will be

happy to discuss our position and the results we, and others, have had on alternative options.

Recommendation 5: Community growing

3.5. As a central London borough, access to private outdoor space is challenging with 39% of households in the borough without their own outdoor space. Whilst the borough has four council-managed allotments, the waiting list for a plot is one of the longest in the country.

3.6. To help promote community food growing, we will create a map of the community growing areas in the borough and share support on how to create new areas, linking to the Council's food mission work seeking that everyone eats well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food¹.

3.7. This map will highlight examples such as:

- A major investment in two allotments to improve soil quality to ensure safe food growing for plot holders.
- Kilburn Grange Park's new "Anyone can grow" community-led project where a series of planters have been installed to pilot growing in the park since 2022.
- The Greening Estates strand of the GLA-funded Somers Town Future Neighbourhoods 2030 programme is supporting community-led food growing. Working with Global Generation and Central Saint Martin's we have been creating new growing space and tools to support growing and working with residents to develop gardening skills.
- There are food growing projects in five of our parks, many of which are linked to local voluntary and community organisations. These include Waterlow Park, Elm Village and Mill Lane Open Space.
- A number of the council's VCS Strategic Partners (and other voluntary groups) manage spaces that include food growing, including Calthorpe Community Garden, Castlehaven Community Association, Kentish Town City Farm and Global Generation at the Story Garden.
- There are more than 25 food growing projects across Camden's housing estates, providing space to grow on people's doorsteps.

Recommendation 6: Health benefits of green space

3.8. Through our Parks for Health project, alongside London borough of Islington, we have explored the importance of green spaces in supporting a healthy community. The joint Parks for Health Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in March 2022 and sets out our learning from this project and an action plan to

¹ <https://www.wemakecamden.org.uk/about/food/>

delivering this vision. The Council continues to commit to delivering these actions.

- 3.9. Continuing to centre our green space work on supporting healthy communities set out by the cabinet adviser is also a priority of the Camden Health and Wellbeing Strategy through the community connectedness priority – which seeks to help connect people to activities to help them live fulfilling lives².
- 3.10. We continue to receive support and guidance from colleagues in Public Health Team and will use the Green Space Partnership Officers to further engage communities whose health will benefit most from our green spaces alongside delivering the action plan agreed with the strategy.

Recommendation 7: Social justice: prioritising and greening our housing estates

- 3.11. Camden, in common with many other London boroughs, has a dense population and extremely inequitable access to open space and nature. The borough suffers from inequality in accessibility (how far someone has to travel) and quantity (how much open space there is per capita).
- 3.12. Those in greatest need often do not have access to the high-quality green spaces that have been shown in our Parks for Health programme to help overcome disadvantage.
- 3.13. The Council will focus £250,000 of investment in green spaces to improve access and inclusion for our communities through the Green Space Investment Programme.
- 3.14. Over the last year the Council has invested over £3m into Green Spaces via the Green Space Investment Programme, which strategically allocates development gains (s106 and Local CIL) as well as external grants and capital funding. We prioritise investment that has greatest potential to support climate resilience, improve health, create inclusive spaces and tackle inequality of access to green spaces.
- 3.15. The Council earlier this year agreed a Diversity in the Public Realm Strategy which sets out our ambition to increase equality, diversity, and inclusion in public spaces in Camden including green spaces. A priority for this work is ensuring our green and open spaces are welcoming and inclusive. The strategy includes a set of actions to achieve this by focusing on information, accessibility and signage.

² <https://democracy.camden.gov.uk/documents/s103001/Appendix%20B%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

3.16. We will support opportunities for green space improvements within the Estate Plans that are being drawn up with communities as part of Camden’s Estates Mission, building on the good practice delivered to date.

Recommendation 8: Approach with Camden’s Schools

3.17. The Council has held two full Council debates on the climate emergency which brought in speakers with global perspectives on the climate agenda, particularly around the theme of climate justice, alongside school children to help inform the Council’s response to the recommendations of the Citizens’ Assembly on the climate crisis and the Leader of the Council’s attendance at the COP26 climate negotiations in Glasgow. In the absence of a dedicated schools’ sustainability resource, one of the key outcomes of the full Council debates was agreement to develop a new Schools’ Climate Charter

3.18. www.camdenclimatealliance.org.uk/get-involved/camden-school-climate-charter/ to provide an enabling framework for schools to take climate action across ten environmental themes including “climate justice”. Under the climate justice theme schools are encouraged to:

- *“Educate students on the global impacts of climate change, empowering them to understand that local actions have global impacts*
- *Consider links between students and their families or relatives that may have links to other parts of the world that are affected by climate change*
- *Start a school twinning with one from an area directly affected by climate change*
- *Start a climate justice club, encouraging campaigning, discussions and actions*
- *Embed climate justice into other activities relating to climate change.”*

3.19. 24 Camden schools are signatories to the Schools’ Climate Charter. At the time of the last Climate Action Plan Annual Review in July 2022, five schools were actively working on climate justice as a chosen commitment, with other schools embedding discussions about the global impacts of climate change within the core curriculum.

3.20. The Council’s new Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion Sis keen to support connections with schools across the climate and ecological agendas, opportunities to support schools via Camden learning will be explored during 2023.

4. Summary of commitments

Paragraph	Commitment	When
2.3	Create a “Community Green Deal” for Camden – a new communication offer aligning the climate and ecological work of the Council.	Winter 2023
2.8	Develop a Climate Resilience Plan	Winter 2023

Paragraph	Commitment	When
2.16	Develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy to identify opportunities for increasing green infrastructure.	2024
2.17	The Council will review how the nature engagement functions can be taken forward within the council resources and alongside our partnership with Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL).	Summer 2023
2.18	We intend to work with Camden citizens using a citizen scientist model to better understand the ecosystem services provided by trees in Camden.	Summer 2024
2.19	Commit to further work with Hogwatch on further studies in the borough in an aspiration to make the borough more hedgehog friendly	Ongoing
2.20	Work with Butterfly Conservation deliver activities in 2023	2023
2.26	Using Camden's Climate Action Citizen Panel of Camden residents to discuss the connections with biodiversity and increasing the green space in the borough aligned to the Green Infrastructure Strategy development	Winter 2023
3.4	Support a Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee session on the EUs peer review of the use of Glyphosate	Autumn/ Winter 2023
3.6	Create a map of the community growing areas in the borough and support to how to create new areas	Summer 2023
3.10	We will use the Green Space Partnership Officers to further the development and offer to engage communities whose health will benefit most from our green spaces alongside delivering the action plan agreed with the strategy.	Ongoing
3.13	The Council will focus £250,000 of investment in green spaces to improve access and inclusion for our communities through the Green Space Investment Programme.	2022-25
3.16	We will support opportunities for green space improvements within the Estate Plans that are being drawn up with communities as part of Camden's Estates Mission, building on the good practice delivered to date.	2023
3.20	Review opportunities to support schools in the climate and ecological emergencies work.	Winter 2023

5. Glossary

- 5.1. Community Green Deal; an umbrella term for all of the recommendations proposed in this report and asks that the council continue to offer communities in Camden a way to engage with our green space and biodiversity work, whether with the council or independently.
- 5.2. Guardians of the Land; the support the council gives its residents an opportunity to develop a symbiotic relationship with the land with a mutual understanding that we cohabit this earth with our species.
- 5.3. Community growing; any growing done by a Camden resident in Camden.
- 5.4. Climate Community Toolkit is a set of accessible online resources for Camden residents to access such as website updates and application information.
- 5.5. Climate talking circles; bi-monthly online meetings with climate activists across Camden where a climate topic is discussed, residents share their feelings about the impact of climate change and officers are able to update residents on the work we have done/.is underway.

6. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

- 6.1. This report delegates decision making to officers to progress each individual recommendation and individual costings will be done at the point of each decision.

7. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

- 7.1. 'The individual recommendations in this report will be taken forward by officers and individual decisions will take into account Equality Impact Assessments.'

8. Environmental Implications

- 8.1. This report contains recommendations that intend to be environmentally beneficial for Camden.

9. Appendices

Appendix One: Cabinet Adviser Report

Appendix Two: Your Community & Camden's Green Spaces

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