

Camden Tree Planting Strategy

2026-2030

Foreword

Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Camden

Introduction

Camden recognises the importance of a healthy and diverse urban forest in making urban areas liveable in a changing climate. Trees are critical infrastructure that provide us with benefits for our health and well-being and a connection to nature. This strategy builds on the success of Camden's first tree planting strategy 2020-2025 with the aim of moving us closer to our canopy target.

Review of the Tree Planting Strategy 2020-2025

The current tree planting strategy sets out the aims and goals to increase canopy cover from 22.9% to 26.6% by 2045. In total, there are 8 aims with 34 goals to provide a holistic approach to tree planting in the borough. Funding of £2.04 million was secured in 2020/2021 to plant trees and pay for a tree planting officer to achieve the aims and goals of the strategy.

[Put the information below into a Camden designed infographic something like this. Figures need correcting. This placeholder is AI generated to give an indication of what this could look like]



Camden's Urban Forest

The urban forest provides a wide range of ecosystem services, the level of which has been linked to the size and area covered by its canopy.

[INSERT AN INFORGRAPHIC USING AI – the information should also include the overall picture of Camden.]

Details of the major benefits council trees in Camden provide can be found in Table 1 below, comparing the two ecosystem services reports commissioned in 2017 and 2023. A second report commissioned in 2024 until 2025 carried out via a field survey of 200 sample plots, includes private trees that are outside the Council maintenance, but contribute substantially to the greening and benefits of trees in Camden (see Table 2).

Measurement	2017	2023
Number of Trees	25,890	28,461
Amenity Valuation (CAVAT)	Not measured	£1.2 billion
Total Carbon Storage	10,800 tonnes	13,600 tonnes
Annual Carbon sequestration	207 tonnes/yr	231 tonnes/yr
Annual Pollution Removal	5 tonnes/yr*	3.3 tonnes/yr ¹
Annual avoided run off	6,739 m3	13,747 m3

Table 1 Comparison of council managed tree ecosystem services between 2017 and 2023.

Measurement	2025
Number of Trees	110,000
Amenity Valuation (CAVAT)	£ 5.2 billion
Total Carbon Storage	58,300 tonnes

¹ The calculation in 2017 included a wider range of pollutants then it does in 2023, which is why there has been a reduction in the amount of pollution removed annually.

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Annual Carbon sequestration	1,270 tonnes/yr
Annual Pollution Removal	24.5 tonnes/yr
Annual avoided runoff	44,300 m3/yr

Table 2 Ecosystem services for Camden tree population

Camden is home to a substantial collection of *Platanus* (Plane) trees, famed for their ability to adapt to urban conditions. These trees provide the greatest single source of ecosystem services. However, in the 2024 study that included private and public land not managed by the council, Holly was the most common tree in the borough. Holly represents only a very small percentage of publicly owned trees while representing 11.1% of the whole tree population in Camden. The Council therefore owns and maintains only a small part of the urban forest, which shows the huge impact of gardens and private planting have on Camden's tree population.

Regardless of the ownership the *Platanus* trees represent, due to their large size. the most dominant species, providing most of the public benefits Camden. This impressive statistic also reveals the greatest vulnerability to the inventory as a whole - the pests and diseases that target this species. In the event of an outbreak of disease such as Plane Lace Bug or Plane Wilt in the UK, the impact on Camden's tree population could be severe, underscoring the importance of preserving a diverse and robust population within new planting, which is part of this strategy.

Future of Camden planting strategy

Equity at the Heart of the Plan

We believe everyone deserves the benefits that trees bring—no matter where they live or their background. That's why we're planting trees where they're needed most. Using data from a Treeconomics study and a Tree Equity Map, we've identified areas with the lowest canopy cover so that our efforts promote fairness and environmental justice.

The definition of Tree equity means ensuring that all communities have equal access to the benefits of trees, regardless of where they live, their income, or ethnicity.

Planting opportunity

We partnered with Treeconomics to provide a tree planting opportunity mapping study to help inform the next planting programme. They found 18,000 potential locations to plant trees. These locations were found by analysing footway widths,

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lamp post locations, and canopy cover against our tree planting specification (minimum size of tree pit, minimum footway widths, and distance between trees).

The locations were then prioritised by tree equity, based on canopy cover, air pollution, flood risk and indices of multiple deprivation. The results were then thematically mapped, with hot colours denoting sites with the highest priority and cool colours the sites with the lowest priority (see Figure 2).

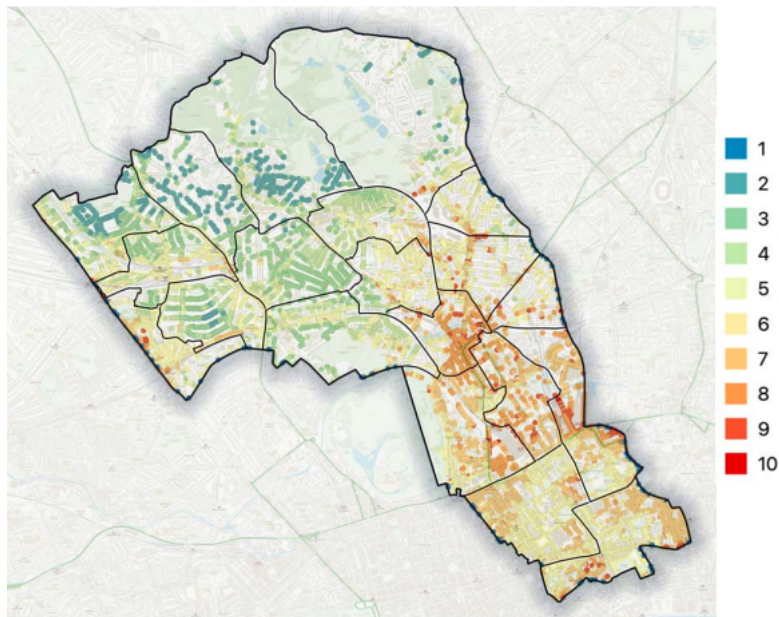


Figure 1: Potential planting locations along streets in Camden

Aim: Increasing Tree Canopy Cover

The Council aims to continue increasing its canopy cover by planting more trees and, crucially, maintaining the great tree population we already have. With the help of the tree equity map, we will prioritise our efforts to provide the benefits of trees across the borough.

Aim	Actions	Measure
Increase the canopy cover by a minimum of 3.7% by 2045 Planting 4250 trees over 5 Year aiming to 850 per	Prioritise tree planting in beneficial locations	Canopy cover survey carried to be carried out in 2030 and collecting planting figures annually
	Replace all trees removed through programme maintenance, unless a given location is unsuitable.	

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annum of which 500 new trees	'Highways greening" Liaise with Highways, the council's Community Investment Programme, and planning department on tree planting projects	
	Liaise with schools to avoid loss of trees and propose new tree planting.	

Planting standards

Following the previous Tree Planting Strategy, some of the objectives have now become standard practice and will now form part of our commitment to ensure a good tree planting standard across the Council.

Species Selection

- The Council commit to carry out species selection based upon "the right tree for the right site".
The selection will take into consideration any services (improve air quality, biodiversity and amenity and carbon storage) or disservices (excessive fruit fall, subsidence and lifting of pavements/walls and allergies) trees may cause. Playground areas can be a great opportunity to use suitable trees to provide shades for the children but great consideration will be used to avoid allergenic species.
- We will use a diverse selection of trees in species/genus/family across the borough and site specific to maintain diversity in order to have a more resilient tree stock against climate change pest and disease. This will be a balanced use of native and not native species and especially the use of future proof species.
- Maximising health benefits (highways greening/GI strategies)
The Council commit to maximise health benefits of trees, the use of pollution maps and subsidence maps is now integrated in our species selection.
- Biodiversity is a key goal across the borough. We will aim to prioritise tree planting in areas where such a measure has been identified as beneficial to Camden's Nature Recovery Network. In these areas we will prioritise trees for pollinator during or selection process.

Tree planting standards

- Tree planting by the Council is carried out in line with industry best practice. All trees planted by the Council are monitored to check they have been planted to the council's specification. Plastic has now been removed from the Council planting specification in favour of natural hessian ties.
- The size of trees the council prefers to plant are heavy or extra heavy standards up to 16-18cm in girth, which are approximately 3.5 to 4 metres tall. Because they have smaller root systems and are easier to accommodate into the pavement where space is limited by the various underground obstructions. They require less water than a larger tree would to establish and become independent in the landscape quicker. Selecting the right size of trees is crucial to obtain independent trees in the urban landscape.
- Single stem trees are favoured over multi-stem trees. Due to their structure, multi-stem trees are more prone to failure, of a stem or the whole tree and are more at risk of vandalism.
- The use of watering bags are now integrated into our watering regime as well as specific watering schedules for the first three years after planting.
- Communication with the public will be key to helping water the trees, and a watering campaign will be launched annually.
- Mortality analysis will be carried out annually to determine which species are best adapted to the urban environment and if specific care is needed for the tree establishment.

Biosecurity

- Climate change, international travel and trade have increased the frequency of new pests and diseases entering the UK. The current tree population may not be resilient to these new pests and diseases, as they would not normally meet under natural circumstances.
- The council will maintain the pest and disease management plan to help protect Camden's tree population. Prevention is better than cure, and appropriate species selection, purchase, planting and aftercare, and awareness are the best ways to protect Camden's trees.

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- The council commit to source trees from UK nurseries. Select species that are grown in the UK or imported species that have followed the most recent biosecurity procedure.

Community partnership

- Community partners are key to increasing the canopy cover and providing a platform where residents can engage with tree planting and be in contact with nature in an urban environment. Camden Forest has been the main partner during the 2020-2025 tree planting strategy, and we are committed to continuing this partnership to provide opportunities to Camden residents.
- Food growing is increasingly becoming a crucial way to introduce greening, especially on Housing estates, and increase resident involvement in nature. Projects will be led by our community partners in consultation with Leisure Services.

Development

- Internal development will be requested to adhere to the Council's new tree planting strategy and standards.
- When internal or external designers are involved in Council schemes, they must first consult with the Tree planting officer with regard to species selection, sizes and locations before proceeding to the final design.
- Information on tree species selection for private gardens will be periodically reviewed and updated.
- The aim is to provide a consistent approach to tree planting in the Borough, which will contribute towards our goal of increasing canopy cover in Camden.