

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Green Space Investment Programme 2026-2030 (SC/2025/48)	
REPORT OF Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Cabinet	DATE 10 th December 2025
STRATEGIC CONTEXT <p>We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. The Green Space Investment Programme helps to deliver ‘a green, clean, vibrant, accessible and sustainable place with everyone empowered to contribute to tackling the climate emergency’. This also aligns with the Camden Local Plan by protecting and investing in green space across the borough, harnessing the benefits of growth to upgrade and improve physical infrastructure.</p> <p>The Way We Work is the Council’s response to We Make Camden. The programme has a strong community focus with all projects being delivered in partnership with the communities that they serve, creating excellent green spaces to help people live healthy and happy lives.</p>	
SUMMARY OF REPORT <p>Camden Council has a Green Space Investment Programme to ensure capital investment in our parks and green spaces aligns with We Make Camden and the Camden Missions. A five-year Green Space Investment Programme (GSIP) has been drafted with a view to start in 2026. Projects are approved for commencement annually, authorised by the Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden.</p> <p>The report is coming to Cabinet as a strategic decision on green space investment within Camden.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p> <p>The following documents have been used in the preparation of this report:</p> <p>Green Space Survey Commonplace (April 2025) Play and Informal Sports Quality Assessment (August 2025) Equalities Impact Assessment (October 2025)</p> <p>Contact Officer:</p> <div> <div>Katy Knight Head of Leisure</div> <div>Joe Lewis Green Space Development Manager</div> </div>	

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet approves the continuation of the Green Space Investment Programme for the next 5 years and approves the project allocation of the green space project list for 2026/2027 as set out in section 3.5 of the report.

Signed: 

Oliver Jones
Director of Recreation and Public Safety

Date: 27th November 2025

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The current Green Space Investment Programme (GSIP) 2020-2025 allocates open space Section 106 developer contributions, capital receipts (from successful applications), and grant funding to specific projects, outlining their implementation over a five-year period. The programme is reviewed and approved annually to ensure it can adapt to changing needs, new insights, additional funding opportunities, or revised council priorities.
- 1.2. As more Section 106 contributions are received, they are allocated following the same principles and approved on an annual basis. 2025 marks the final year of this five-year cycle. Between 2020 and 2025 the GSIP programme has delivered £12,761,745 of capital investment into Camden green spaces.
- 1.3. The new GSIP (2026-2030) proposes to continue this approach, highlighting the need within Camden, then matching funding sources to deliver that demand, i.e. combining Section 106, Local Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), District Management Committee (DMC) funding, Council capital and other grant funding opportunities to get the most out of a project.
- 1.4. This GSIP outlines the process through which investment will be allocated to improve green spaces within Camden. The Cabinet is asked to approve the recommendations following review by the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee in September 2025. This approach demonstrates that a thorough and transparent approach has been taken when allocating public funds for green space investment within Camden.
- 1.5. The report explains the key considerations in forming the proposed investment programme, providing the context of the green space service as well as the need for an overarching programme to address areas with the greatest investment needs.

2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS

- 2.1. The GSIP proposes to allocate funding based on a needs assessment that prioritises green space sites and assets in greatest need of investment. The strategy uses a range of evidence including areas of Camden that are deficient in access to green space, assessments on site condition and quality, as well as areas with higher levels of deprivation. The green space project list is reviewed annually and approved by the Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden.
- 2.2. We know green space is critical infrastructure for our borough and that providing safe and accessible green open spaces can significantly benefit people's physical and mental well-being. Investment in parks and green space is a cost-effective way to promote health and wellbeing. Natural capital accounting puts the cost per visit to a park in Camden at £1.73, resulting in £20 of health benefits. Additionally, we know that access to green space in Camden is not equal, with 39% of residents not having access to a shared or

private garden, highlighting the importance and significance of high quality public green space within the borough.

2.3. The benefits of good quality green spaces are multifaceted and include:

- Physical and mental health and well-being
- Social interaction and development of community ties and cohesion
- Biodiversity and access to nature
- Play and learning opportunities
- Improving environmental conditions (e.g. air quality, flood risk, temperature)
- Supporting tourism and the local economy
- Creating a sense of place and local distinctiveness
- Increase in land values and attractiveness for investment

2.3 The Camden Leisure Service oversees 76 park sites covering a total area of 34.5 hectares. Most green spaces managed by Camden Council are relatively small, with an average size comparable to three tennis courts. The largest parks include Waterlow Park and Kilburn Grange. The borough's larger 'destination sites', such as Hampstead Heath and Regents Park, are not managed by Camden Council; they are overseen by the City of London and Royal Parks respectively. The Regent's Canal also runs through the borough and is a waterway of national significance for London. It is managed by the Canal and River Trust.

2.4 The development function of Leisure Services focuses on investing in and enhancing our green spaces to ensure that Camden residents benefit from high-quality environments and facilities. To carry out these improvements, we have established the Green Space Investment Programme.

3. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

3.1 Option a) Do nothing, e.g. do not approve new green space projects. The implication of this approach would be that open space section 106 developer contributions would not be spent, and the Council would not be meeting its obligation to off-set the impact of development. Over time green space assets would be removed and overall site quality would significantly reduce. Resident satisfaction in open space would decrease, and there would be extensive indirect negative consequences, including reduced physical activity and participation in open space activities, reduction in physical and mental well-being, as well as increased risk of injury to Camden residents. Doing nothing is not an option.

3.2 Option b) Approve the Green Space Investment Programme 2026 – 2030 and initiate the green space project list for 2026/2027. Green space investment projects will deliver improvements for the residents of Camden. The approach highlights the green space need within Camden, then matches appropriate funding sources to deliver that need, i.e. combining Section 106, Local Community Infrastructure Levy, District Management Committee (DMC) funding and other grant funding opportunities to get the most out of a project. There is also a legal requirement under the open space Section 106

agreements to spend the developer contributions on open space projects. Option b) will enable this legal duty to be met through an evidence based, strategic investment programme.

3.3 Option c) Design an alternative approach to allocating capital to green space investment projects. This option would require significant additional resource and officer time to deliver, with a clear justification of how the alternative approach would better meet the needs of Camden residents and legal obligations. The current approach (as proposed in option b) to green space investment has been developed over the last 10 years (2015-2025) and has proven successful in delivering £19 million worth of investment in the areas of greatest need.

3.4 Approving option b) would enable investment and officer resources to be directed towards the areas of the borough that most require green space investment. The five-year strategy, GSIP 2026-2030, outlines the methodology for prioritising green space investment within Camden. The GSIP will also endorse this year's green space project list for 2026/2027 which is outlined in the table below.

3.5

Project	Project cost (£) *Subject to detailed project scoping and budget review	Key priorities met			Funding source
		Encourage healthy lifestyles	Promote inclusivity and accessibility	Deliver climate resilience	
Russel Square Gardens	£250,000	x	x	x	S106, LCIL
Fortune Green	£235,000	x	x		S106, LCIL
Pond Square	£115,000	x	x	x	S106, LCIL
Spedan Close playground	£100,000	x	x	x	S106 Local, CIL
Swiss Cottage Open Space phase 3	£300,000	x	x		S106
Cantelowes Gardens	£315,000	x	x	x	S106, Council capital
Argyle Square Gardens	£315,000	x	x	x	S106, London Marathon Trust grant
Carol and Sanderson Close Estate playground	£100,000	x	x		Local CIL DMC
Hunter House landscape works	£50,000	x	x	x	Local CIL DMC
Taplow play area – Chalcots Estate	£100,000	x	x		Local CIL DMC

West Hampstead Library	£75,000	x	x	x	LCIL, S106, Council capital
Grafton Road greening	£100,000	x	x	x	LCIL, Capital
Brookes Market	£250,000	x	x	x	LCIL, S106, Council capital
Outdoor Gyms (Parks for Health)	£50,000	x	x	x	S106
Support for corporate volunteering programme	£50,000 p/a	x	x	x	S106

3.6 The below text summarises the funding source for these projects:

- ***S106** – Open Space Section 106 is a sum paid to the council when a developer cannot achieve sufficient open space within a new development. The contribution is an in-lieu payment to offset the impact of the development.
- ***LCIL** – Local Community Infrastructure Levy is funding derived from a planning charge that councillors can allocate to projects within their wards.
- ***DMC** – District Management Committee funding is allocated by an area based resident committee focusing specifically on Housing sites.
- ***Council capital** – Projects can be funded from the core council capital resources.

3.7 Whilst the GSIP allocates funding, the green space projects' quality controls and internal design review processes ensure rational design decisions are made. Also, in order to implement Cabinet's decision, some further governance may be required to meet constitutional and legal requirements e.g. under Section 106. This design review / governance will help ensure legal compliance and consideration of maintenance implications and appropriate material selection, considered community engagement and due diligence as well as providing strategic oversight across the programme to ensure investment opportunities are maximised.

4. WHAT ARE THE KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 4.1. The key risk in project delivery within the programme is ensuring that projects adequately address the needs within an area, responding to resident priorities so that new or improved facilities are well utilised for years to come. This risk is mitigated through careful and considered engagement and participation, tailored to the specific needs of each project to meet the needs of residents and wider stakeholders.
- 4.2. The main resource implications involve officer time dedicated to projects for their delivery. Project officer fees are funded through capitalisation of the project budget to account for the time spent on the projects. This method of capitalisation has been used over the past five years of the GSIP, establishing a financially sustainable framework for delivering green space improvement works within Camden.

- 4.3. A key risk to Camden residents is that green space facilities do not meet the needs of the communities they are designed to serve and that physical activity and participation levels decrease, leading to reduced health outcomes. To address this risk the GSIP targets investment in areas of the borough where we know it will have the greatest impact, focusing on areas where deprivation is high or where facilities are coming to the end of their life.

5. CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. To ensure resident voices are heard and their green space needs are addressed, a review of the extensive Green Space Survey (2025) has been conducted. This provides a detailed borough-wide list of resident investment priorities and suggestions. This comprehensive public engagement exercise via the Commonplace platform has offered an additional opportunity for residents to propose green space improvement projects they would like to see implemented. The consultation has been promoted through various online channels. To engage diverse groups, targeted Facebook adverts have been used, alongside physical survey forms in libraries. Direct outreach to community and voluntary sector groups across the borough, like Fitzrovia Youth in Action (FYA) that represent young people were also used to broaden the engagement. We have received 426 survey responses, offering valuable user insights and numerous project ideas from across the borough. A summary of the feedback responses is included in Appendix 2. The table below summarises the groups engaged, and the methods used to date.

Group	Method of engagement
All Camden residents	Commonplace survey promoted for 6 weeks on Camden X and Facebook channels with targeted adverts at specific age groups (March – April 2025)
Camden Park users	Posters promoting the survey with a QR code that links to the Commonplace questions (March – April 2025)
Park Friends of Groups	Specific email asking for feedback and suggestions and to complete the Commonplace survey (March – April 2025)
Library users	Paper copies of survey provided at Camden libraries for manual completion and promotion of online survey (March – April 2025)
Leisure Centre Users	Digital campaign promoting the survey with a QR code that links to the Commonplace questions (March – April 2025)
VCS Groups	Email request to complete the Commonplace survey sent out via VCS colleagues to broaden reach and engagement (March – April 2025)

- 5.2. The final element of consultation is project-specific once the broad objectives of the projects are approved. This is to ensure that resident's needs are properly addressed in the design process and subsequent construction. A

stakeholder matrix will always be completed before a project begins, ensuring the key voices are included when the brief is being developed.

- 5.3. An Equalities Impact Assessment form has been completed and approved in advance of the production of this report. The process for allocating project resource is driven by overarching borough wide needs to identify communities where investment should be prioritised, particularly where access to green space is limited and where deprivation is higher.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Cabinet Members must take into account in coming to any decision the Councils equality duties. In summary these legal obligations require the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to 1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; 2 to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; 3. Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not (which involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding). Under the Duty the relevant protected characteristics are: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion, Sex, Sexual orientation. In respect of the first aim only i.e. reducing discrimination, etc the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership is also relevant. In this case Cabinet are asked to consider the findings of the EIA including in relation to whether there is potential for discrimination identified and whether appropriate opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations have been taken.
- 6.2 Cabinet also needs to carefully consider the results of consultation undertaken and take it into account within their overall consideration of the recommendations. In particular it is important that consultation has informed the formulating of recommendations and that consultation undertaken was a reasonable, proportionate and effective exercise which meets the basic requirements of good consultation being that it was clear, had enough time allowed to ensure adequate participation and that the results have and will be fully taken into account.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The report proposes investment in green space projects from 2026/27.
- 7.2. The proposed investments outlined in section 3.5 of the report will be subject to the Council's governance arrangements for the allocation of capital funding and will require detailed business cases to support the use of capital resources.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. One of the three key priorities in the Green Space Investment Programme is Delivery Climate and Ecological Resilience. Our projects will ensure all new

green space maximises the potential benefits for people and nature through high quality and targeted green space interventions.

- 8.2. Over the past century, human activity has rapidly increased the production of greenhouse gases leading to a 1°C rise in global temperatures. This change in temperature is already leading to more frequent and extreme weather events, such as the major flooding event which occurred in Camden 2021. The GSIP has the potential to mitigate these challenges, particularly through the creation of new green space in areas of the borough where heat risk and flood risk is experienced most acutely.
- 8.3. Green spaces and parks are central to London policy, with the Mayor of London pledging to ensure that 50% of London remains green as part of a broader initiative to establish a 'National Park City'. The Urban Greening Factor policy is also beginning to significantly impact planning applications within the borough, marking a notable increase in green space development by developers.
- 8.4. At the Camden level, green space investment projects align with We Make Camden by creating 'a green, clean, vibrant, accessible and sustainable place with everyone empowered to contribute to tackling the climate emergency'. This also aligns with the Camden Local Plan by protecting and investing in green space across the borough, harnessing the benefits of growth to upgrade and improve physical infrastructure. The GSIP also supports Camden's strategies for inclusive and sustainable growth. These include the Camden Transport Strategy (CTS) (Objective 2 and Objective 5), which sets out measures to support the Healthy Streets indicators, and the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS). The CTS complements several Camden sustainability strategies, including the Clean Air Action Plan and the Climate Action Plan.
- 8.5. Much of the programme does involve landscape construction works. Construction does have an environmental impact, and the individual design briefs and construction tenders specifically address this issue, specifying reusing materials, ensuring sustainably sourced materials and timber are used, and planting pollinator friendly climate resilient plant species. The individual projects undergo an internal review to ensure best practice is being applied and environmental impacts are reduced to an absolute minimum. As such, re-use of materials will always be prioritised through our internal review processes. This seeks to minimise waste, manage budgets more efficiently and reduce the impact of the works on the environment.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 9.1. The Green Space Investment Programme was taken to the Culture and Environment and Scrutiny Committee on 15th September 2025 to provide detailed review and oversight.
- 9.2. If approval is given by Cabinet, then the new programme will become a live strategy from January 2026 through to December 2030 and support the

methodology for the prioritisation of projects for future investment. It will also endorse the green space project list for 2026/2027.

- 9.3. Projects from the programme are approved for commencement annually, authorised by the Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden.
- 9.4. The below table highlights the key dates from when the Cabinet decision is made.

Date	Action
December 10 th 2025	Cabinet Decision approved
January 2026	2026/2027 Projects allocated to project officers to initiate/ take through due diligence and necessary governance
April 2026	Initial engagement with stakeholders begins
Winter 2026/2027	First phase of projects will be constructed
January – April 2027	New list of proposed projects issued to Cabinet Member for approval

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Green Space Investment Programme 2026 – 2030 (draft)
Appendix 2. Summary of Commonplace Consultation (April 2025)
Appendix 3. Play and Informal Sports Quality Assessment (August 2025)
Appendix 4. Equalities Impact Assessment (October 2025)

REPORT ENDS