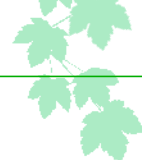


London Borough of Brent

Green Infrastructure Vision

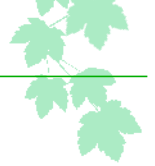




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Introduction

We are living in uncertain and constantly changing times. The air we breathe, the food we consume, the green spaces that we use to play and relax are all under incredible pressure and demand from conflicting priorities. Global pandemics are affecting the world at the same time as climate change and large-scale consumerism leading to the depletion of mineral and natural resources.

Yet at a local level, there is hope and much to be celebrated. There is the opportunity to develop seeds of good practice and innovation that will grow into much larger opportunities and benefits for those living in Brent and on a wider scale across London.

This vision aims to bring together a multitude of strands that provide an opportunity to develop a green infrastructure throughout Brent. It links to the objectives set out in the Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy, as well as the Borough Plan, our Local Plan and the draft Long Term Transport Strategy. It also draws on London wide initiatives such as the National Park City and the Mayor of London's Environment Plan.

Its aim is to demonstrate the links for the provision of greening and environmental enhancement that can be found in many seemingly unrelated areas, all with the objective of making Brent the greenest borough in London by 2030.

There is no question, that this is a demanding and challenging target. It will take the involvement of everyone in Brent to make this happen; residents, schools, businesses and visitors. If we all work together, one idea at a time, anything is possible. The Vision therefore includes commitments on Council-led activity and provides suggestions for actions that the community can take, individually and together.

As a community, we invite you to get involved and start to deliver the actions that are in this plan, but also seeking to strive for more, to make Brent a greener and cleaner borough in the years to come for the benefit of all who live or visit here. We have already incorporated some of your views and comments from the 'Let's Talk Climate' engagement process which took place from November 2021 to February 2022 and we aim to continue to work with you to implement these suggestions and develop others.

Every decision that we make has the potential to facilitate a change for the better, whether that choice relates to what we eat, where we buy our food from, whether we can grow some of our own food and whether we can provide food for butterflies or bees by sowing wildflowers in a small patch of ground.

All of us can have an impact on the future we choose to create, however small our actions may seem on an individual basis.

This vision encourages you to take those steps with us in creating a future for Brent that we can all be proud of.



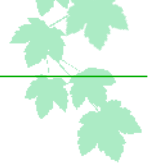
Cllr Krupa Sheth

Lead Member for Environment



Connecting with nature through engagement





Background

One of the major steps in the implementation of this roadmap is the development and progression towards a deeper understanding of the great wealth of nature that already exists in our local environment.

One of the recommendations to arise from the Brent Climate Assembly in 2019 was to increase biodiversity awareness in schools.

We have recently developed the Brent School Climate Champions Network, which has around 15 local schools represented. We expect to see that involvement grow year on year.

We will seek to develop greater involvement with the local community to allow us to develop a baseline position of our biodiversity across the borough, whether that be in a park, highways verge or garden. We will only know if the actions we are taking are having a positive effect, if we have a baseline position to monitor against.

This can be as simple as taking part in the RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch or Butterfly Conservation's many opportunities to record sightings of butterflies and moths. Both generally involve taking time to visit a green space for 15 minutes and recording observations.

We know already that our Bee Corridors have encouraged a butterfly, the Marbled White, to return to Brent after a 30 year absence. There is so much more to observe and understand and we welcome the involvement of residents in helping us monitor what is already in Brent.

Our aim is to create an environment, where anyone of any age can start to observe and record their observations of nature in Brent and share that information and enthusiasm with others.



The vision

The aim is to create an environment where people are excited to learn about nature and develop stronger connections to the natural world. We want those connections to be formed with schoolchildren and adults alike.

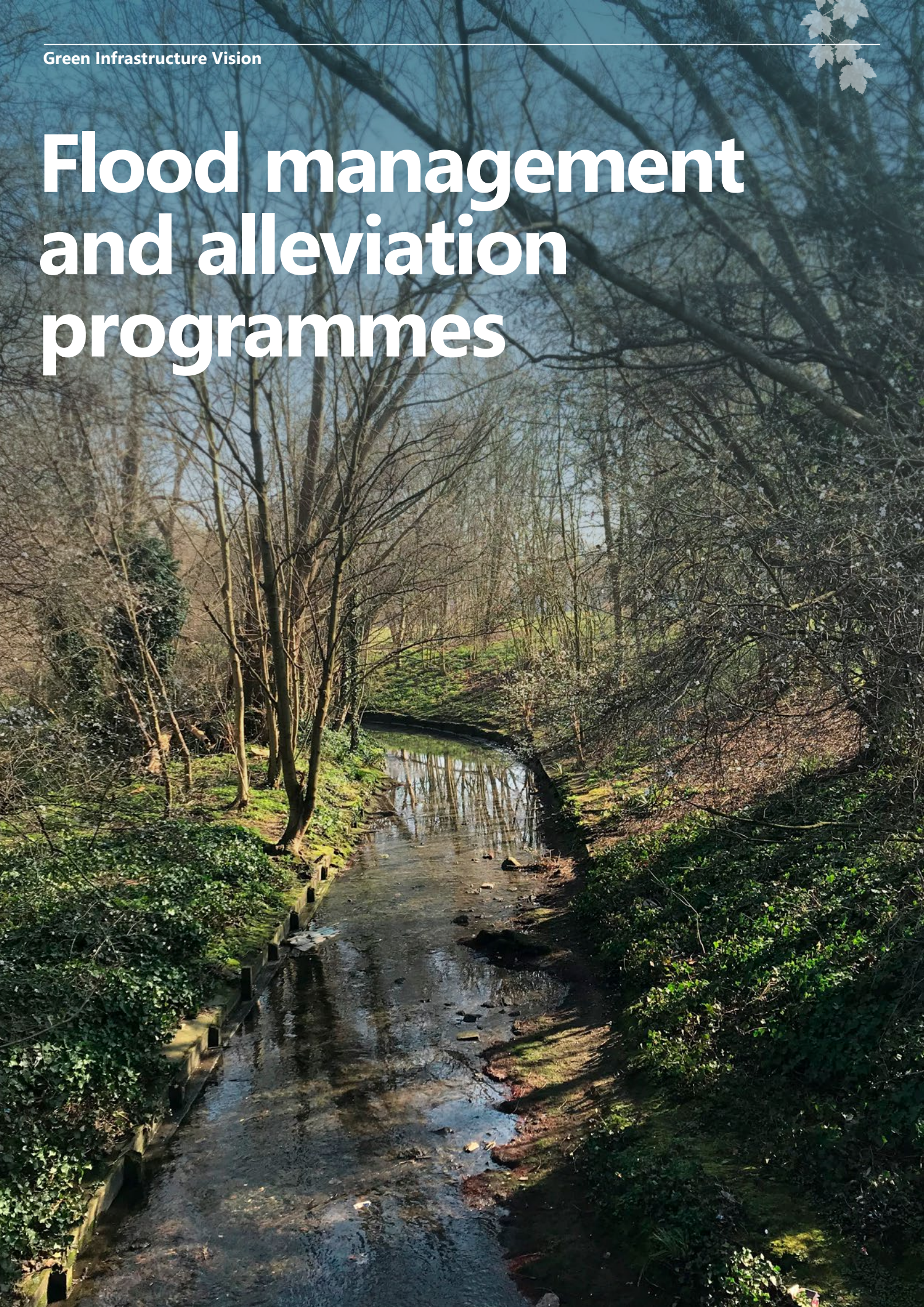
We will aim to develop a green passport, which encourages people to visit and discover other green spaces across the borough and identify butterflies, moths, insects, birds and mammals that

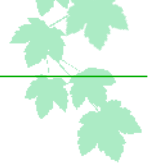
they see and help us to build our own catalogue of biodiversity within the borough.

We will provide residents with information on how to use online tools and apps such as iRecord Butterflies and iNaturalist to help create a baseline of observations that we can build upon and help us all understand the positive impact of our individual actions.

We will develop a green map of Brent, which will identify all the green spaces in Brent and the green or environmentally friendly facilities that will help our resilience to climate change, enhance biodiversity and improve air quality. We will also create a blue map of Brent, which will show all the waterways, including streams, rivers and canals that can be found in the borough.

Flood management and alleviation programmes

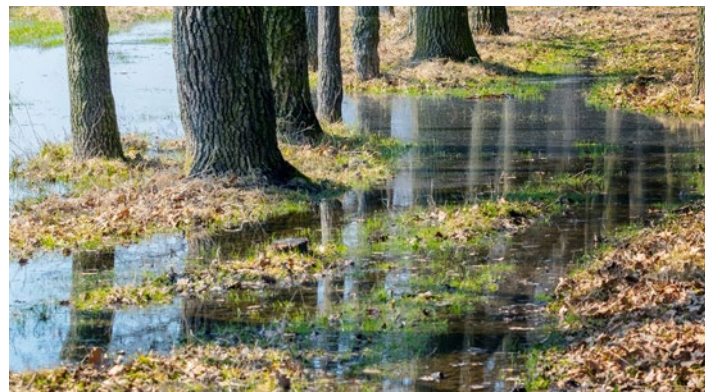




Background

Heavier and more sustained downpours because of climate change are already having an adverse effect on the infrastructure of Brent, leading to localised flooding on both roads and grassed areas.

An increase in new properties requires more underground pipes, which already struggle to cope with existing water flow. Leaks from these pipes and missed connections lead to many incidents of flooding across Brent's streets and parks. We are developing close working relationships with organisations such as Thames Water and Affinity Water to manage effective drainage as well as with groups such as Thames 21 and the Canal and River Trust to develop flood alleviation schemes in our parks where we have rivers and outlet pipes running through or into them.



Flooding can occur wherever the ground has become saturated with water

Effective flood management also requires schemes that can prevent or manage gully flooding. Projects are in place to integrate rain gardens and sustainable urban drainage systems or SUDS into new highway development proposals across the borough, in areas that are most heavily affected by flooding.

Designs are prepared for the implementation of rain gardens and SUDs in Kilburn and Kensal Corridor and work is already underway with their creation.



Rain gardens can offer a creative way to manage excess water from heavy downpours

The vision

We will widely promote schemes, such as the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) 'Greening Grey Britain'; where residents are encouraged to grow plants in pots even if their front drive or back garden is paved. Plants in pots still assist with the absorption of water in heavy downpours and correlate with feedback from the Let's Talk Climate resident engagement.

We will seek to create rain gardens as part of a programme of sustainable urban drainage systems or SUDS. The photo to the right shows such an example in place on a public highway.

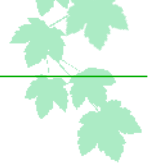
Another area of local flooding is in Silver Jubilee Park and we have recently created a rain garden which, over time, will provide a colourful

and environmentally friendly way to manage water run-off from the car park in heavy downpours. We will continue to identify other such opportunities in parks and open spaces, as creative ways to manage high volumes of water as a result of heavy downpours.



Active travel plan and the creation of Green Corridors





Background

The vision for a greener Brent includes strong links with Highways services, particularly in light of the creation of the draft Long Term Transport Strategy, which is currently being consulted upon.

An increase in sustainable travel methods is being encouraged, and this includes the promotion of clear and safe walking and cycling routes around the borough.

This vision also includes the recommendations included in the Transport Recovery Plan, which considers options for the integration of planters and seating areas, in Healthy (Low Traffic) Neighbourhoods. This concept, along with School Streets provides for a creative way to reclaim space from traffic, affecting the health of local residents as well as providing the opportunity for an enhanced green environment. Timber planters with low maintenance planting have been used for Healthy Neighbourhood trials in the borough. Permanent schemes provide the opportunity for greening, to create a safer and more pleasant environment for people to walk or cycle.

With this comes the need to look at the quality of the journey itself and plans will be developed with local communities to create green corridors; a process of greening up alleyways and unused pathways including those along canals; as new ways to facilitate travel by cycle and on foot.

This will ensure a holistic bringing together of sustainable travel methods through parks, alleyways, canals and public highways, creating green travel corridors across the borough.

Recent discussions as part of workshops to inform the London Green Spaces Commission's report also led towards the consideration of a London wide network of green corridors, with consistent signage across London, enabling residents to cross boroughs seamlessly. Nature does not stop at a borough boundary and neither should our plans.



The vision

One of the three objectives of the Council's walking strategy is to 'Provide a better environment and improve the experience of walking within the borough, ensuring it is accessible and inclusive for all'.

This vision expands on this objective to consider the development of a green travel guide for the borough. This will provide the opportunity to review,

not only the development of new green walking and cycling routes, but also a mapping of these routes through areas with the most greenery, access to waterways and with the least air pollution as is recognised in the Cycling Facility Network Map.

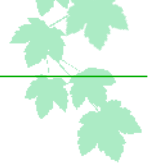
Green corridors will be created, which will facilitate sustainable travel methods, by foot or by cycle.

It will also allow for possible improvements to areas such as alleyways, canals and riverside pathways. We will work with local residents to identify these areas to allow for the utilisation of funding from Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) and other grant opportunities.



Re-wilding Brent





Background

Many of our parks and open spaces and green areas are in the North of the borough. A programme to re-wild Brent will focus on finding small pockets of unused land or alleyways and corners to create areas that can be 're-wilded'; by the sowing of wildflowers or planting of herbs for example, in grow boxes, in conjunction with local communities.

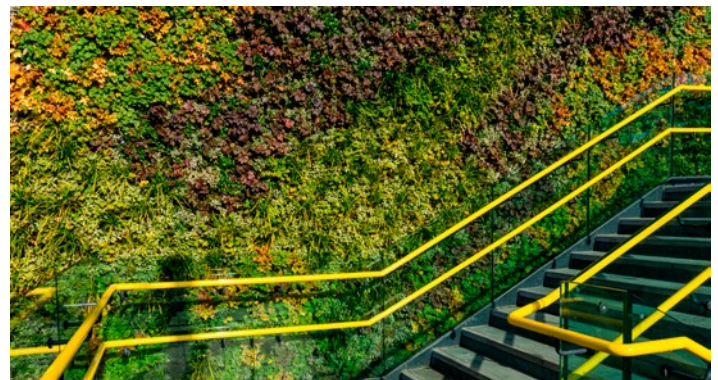
The aim is to bring nature back to areas that have been neglected or are run down and enable a closer connection to nature for the communities who can re-wild these areas. There is a potential benefit to reclaiming bits of land that are unused at the moment, as greening schemes will hopefully reduce the opportunity for flytipping and littering and have a positive impact by reducing anti-social behaviour in areas which are currently seen as grey, run down and uncared for.

Green living walls and roofs can be introduced in areas where ground space is limited.

The re-wilding of Brent will also consider locations for community beehives, run with the support and guidance of local community Bee Keeping Associations.

All our allotment sites are being assessed for suitability for bee hives and when complete, the information will be publicly available and form part of our revised allotment guidance.

Living walls offer an amazing opportunity to be creative, colourful, reduce pollution and encourage wildlife. They can even be edible!



The vision

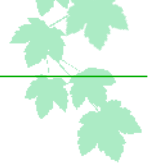
We will seek to create licences for the temporary use of public spaces by community groups, local residents and Friends of Parks Groups, allowing for creativity in managing and maintaining specific plant beds in parks and verges and other small pockets of green space.

We will offer workshops for residents to learn how to build bird and bat boxes and install them in places that will encourage nesting. Hedgehog boxes can be installed in areas that are selected to be undisturbed and bug hotels can be built by schools and community groups.

Re-wilding will offer the opportunity to widen the bee corridor and become the 'bee borough'.

Expansion of the Bee Corridor and reduction in pesticide use





Background

This approach seeks to expand our award winning Bee Corridor, which currently consists of 23 wildflower meadow areas across Brent.

We have also begun to expand outwards from our parks to include wildflower areas in a number of road verges and roundabouts as well.

Further expansion of this scheme will involve linking to the re-wilding scheme mentioned in the previous section, as well as seeking to develop more meadow and nature friendly areas in our parks.

We will seek to change the type of planting in our parks, leaning towards more drought resistant and hardy perennials and a reduction in the use of pesticides, moving more towards natural methods

of weed reduction and suppression, such as the use of mulch in plant beds.

We will start a discussion with residents about a review of the use of pesticides in street weed removal processes and discuss the pros and cons of the options of reducing street spraying processes and whether we can embrace the growth of wild plants in pavements as an alternative to spraying chemicals.

We will also seek to work with schools and housing associations to introduce wildflower meadows into their grounds.



The vision

Information boards will be introduced which advise people what they can expect to find in different wildflower areas.

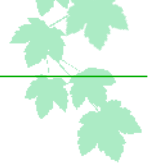
We will seek to create a biodiversity log, which will allow the community to share photos of plants, insects and wildlife that they have found in their gardens, balconies as well as in parks and open spaces and by canals and waterways.

We will constantly strive to reduce our use of pesticides in the borough; with the aim of using natural methods of weed suppression, such as mulch as an alternative. We will also seek to make our allotments pesticide free, meaning that only organic methods can be used by anyone growing food or flowers on a council allotment plot.

We will work with the community to create pesticide free areas across the borough. We have already carried out a trial area, which involved not spraying pesticides on pavements for a year. We will share the results of this pilot more widely to encourage the possibility in other areas.

Engagement in the planning process





Background

Green roofs and walls can feature much more strongly in the new build and regeneration of existing buildings. It is not sufficient for developers to plant a few trees around a new development. Schemes need to consider sustainable design and construction measures much earlier on in the planning process.

Planting should be drought resistant, incorporating understanding of local biodiversity and offer good flood run off integration systems and SUDS.

This Vision supports the policies of the Local Plan and place making guides to encourage forward thinking green and blue initiatives to come from developers, particularly where existing trees and habitat are being removed to make way for mixed-use developments, including housing.

One such example is the One Estate project in the hospital and university grounds at Northwick Park. We are working to ensure that biodiversity enhancements are carried out and areas such as the waterway, which flows through Northwick Park, are enhanced for the benefit of existing ecology.



The Local Plan states that new developments will seek to “retain existing blue and green infrastructure including water ways, open space, high amenity trees and landscape features and provide appropriate additions or enhancements where possible.”

The vision

The Local Plan puts much focus on ensuring there are strong links between newly built developments and flood alleviation schemes set out in the relevant section of this document.

Place making is featuring much more strongly as a focus of new mixed used developments.

The Local Plan also states that there will be support for the re-naturalisation of the River Brent and Wealdstone Brook and its setting with increased amenity access where possible.

In terms of biodiversity the Plan also offers to contribute to high quality, well-used open spaces and wildlife corridors, including

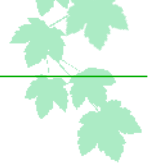
enhancement of Welsh Harp’s and River Brent’s recreational and ecological offer.

The Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is currently being drafted and this will set out examples of how biodiversity and ecology can be further enhanced in a practical way.



Developing community involvement and partnerships





Background

This Vision can only be truly effective if the actions suggested are brought to fruition by strong partnerships between the local community and the council.

Some 'Friends of Parks' groups exist in the borough and these groups provide varying levels of involvement, management and support in our parks and open spaces. There are also a number of residents associations who seek to improve their local area through various initiatives and by applying for NCIL and Love Where You Live grants. One such example of the community coming together to create change, is the Brent Environmental Network, which has over 2,500 members.

However, we also recognise that involvement may not always be through groups or organisations and we will actively work to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to get involved in greening the borough in a way that suits them.

With more demand than ever for our allotment plots, we aim to be more creative with the use of public spaces, using the Northwick Park Community Garden as a model.

We are also undertaking discussions to consider an evaluation of three areas of the borough for the possibility of developing community food growing schemes that utilise excess gas and heat from district heating schemes. The project is called 'District Eating' and the locations currently considered are Northwick Park, South Kilburn and the Civic Centre.

There are already so many examples of great community involvement and participation in improving Brent. These include those mentioned above as well as local groups in Sudbury obtaining, planting and maintaining community planters in the high street.

Partnership working also includes our partnerships with local businesses and organisations, ranging from Thames 21 to the Football Association (FA) and Wembley Stadium.



Staff from the FA on a volunteering day in King Edward VII Park, Wembley

The vision

Ideas for working with local residents includes the development of sponsored areas of planting in parks and on public highways, as has been carried out on the streets of Paris.

This planting offers the potential for community food growing schemes to be developed as well

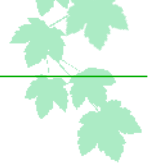
and we will develop guidance on how these can be developed in underutilised spaces.

Other ideas include working with local residents who have a wealth of information about the local area and its history to provide educational walks and talks for others.

Ultimately, community involvement is the thread that pulls together all the strands of this vision to make Brent the greenest borough in London by 2030.

Sustainable buildings in parks





Background

There are a number of pavilions in our parks, in most cases these are the only or most prominent building in the locality of that piece of green space.

They are mainly used by sports clubs for cricket and football, Gaelic Football and rugby, offering changing facilities for home and away clubs.

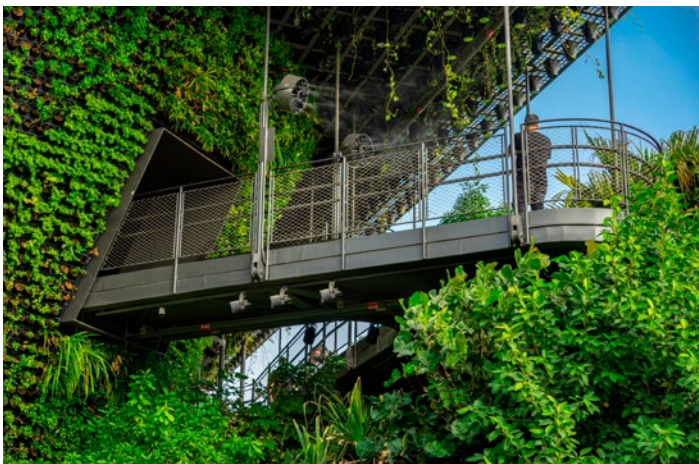
These buildings are outdated and run down and contain heating systems which are incompatible with current use and are not energy efficient. Many of them require constant repair works to keep them running effectively.

This part of the green vision, seeks to redevelop every pavilion within our parks to create sustainable, green, energy efficient buildings that can be upheld as a beacon for the green agenda.

We have already obtained funding and installed a ground heat pump at one of our pavilions and this is the start of our transformation process.

Whilst not increasing the ground footprint, the buildings can be redeveloped as centres of learning in our green spaces, continuing to provide spaces for sports clubs as well as becoming teaching and community areas for local residents on the green agenda, sustainability and climate change.

We have the potential to create and develop highly innovative and inspiring park buildings that become ecological community hubs.



The vision

Invest in the development of eco pavilions in our parks; whether that be through a complete redevelopment of a building or by more basic upgrades such as new heating systems and living walls and green roofs.

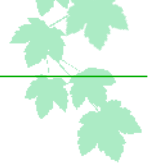
Each site will be reviewed for the possibility of options for improvement; seeking to develop a long-term environmental legacy for buildings in our parks.

We will also seek to widen the usage of our pavilions from sports bookings to also being educational centres and sustainable venues for events.



Air quality





Background

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Borough Plan include objectives to improve air quality across the borough.

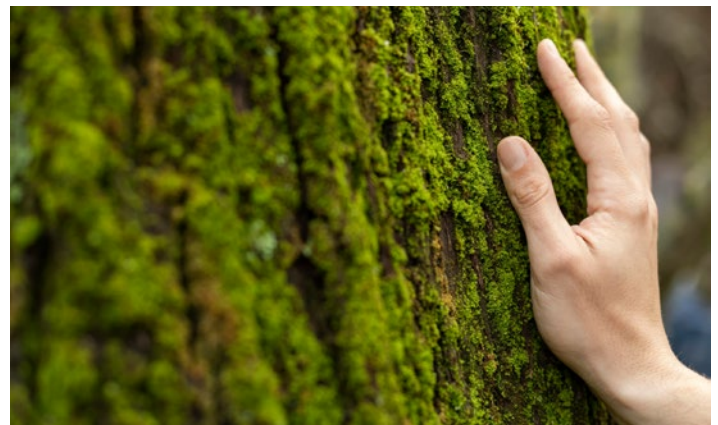
This Vision will also consider green innovations, such as planting green barriers at road edges and near to schools; close working with Transport for London (TfL) to consider greening up the North Circular road central reservation and bus stops and other initiatives that can have a positive benefit on air quality, with the use of improved transport management plans and complementary planting schemes.

We commissioned an iTree survey, which has assessed tree cover as a whole across the borough from all sources – in parks, on the highway, on Brent’s housing estates and those planted as part of the annual tree planting programme and equate it to eco-system benefits on a ward by ward basis. This evidence will help inform future bids and provide us with a much better understanding of those areas which need additional tree planting particularly in identified areas with high levels of poor air quality.

We recognise the importance of trees within the Brent ecosystem, however it is also important to understand that it is not just trees that affect air quality. Moss has an incredible ability to manage and filter air pollution, as do many hedgerows.

Green living screens and walls are integral to the filtering of particles which affect air quality, in addition to the development of cleaner and greener ways of travel. Two green screens have recently been installed near to schools in the borough that are on busy main roads and a number of school streets are also in development, allowing for traffic free zones outside of schools at certain times of the day.

Our Air Quality Action Plan is currently being updated and will be published during 2023.

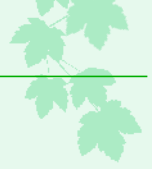


The vision

In 2030 Brent will be a place where we will have developed creative ways to manage and improve air quality on a local basis.

Our revised Air Quality Action Plan will detail a number of practical actions that can be taken to improve air quality in targeted areas of the borough.

We will continue to work with schools to identify whether further green screens can be installed at additional schools and understand the impact of those already in situ.



Timeline for implementing our vision

Many of the actions in this vision are already underway. The feedback from the Let's Talk Climate engagement activity in early 2022 has demonstrated that residents are seeking to be more involved in their local community and want to see a better, improved environment for the benefit of all who live in Brent.

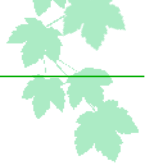
We are currently developing some tools to allow us to measure our progress over the next eight years and we very much recognise that this is a process that needs all of us to be involved.

The actions arising from this Vision will be incorporated into the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy Delivery Plans. As a council, we recognise that the production of this document is not the end in itself. It needs to be a document that

inspires us as a community to improve our local environment and achieve outcomes that can be replicated across the borough, London and nationally.

We recognise that people want to do more to improve their environment and we trust that the actions and aims set out in this document will encourage further discussion and action and will help us achieve our vision to be the greenest Borough by 2030.





Links to relevant Council Strategies and engagement exercises

[Borough Plan](#)

[Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy](#)

[Flood Management Strategy](#)

[Tree Policy](#)

[Air Quality Action Plan](#)

[Local Plan](#)

[Let's Talk Climate Engagement](#)



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