

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All		
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Tree Maintenance and Tree Planting Update			
<b>REPORT OF</b> Director of Recreation			
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b> 11 <sup>th</sup> September 2023		
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>The London Borough of Camden is responsible for the management of approximately 29,000 trees. This is an increase of 1,000 trees since the tree maintenance policy was presented to the committee in 2019. Other notable changes have been the creation of the Council's Tree Planting Strategy that has seen an increase in the number of trees planted annually from 400 to 600 trees, with at least 250 trees in new locations. Camden's urban forest is valued by residents for the benefits it provides. This report outlines the Council's tree management and maintenance procedures and policy as it stands in 2023.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>The following documents have been used in the preparation of this report:</p> <p><a href="https://opendata.camden.gov.uk/stories/s/ad58-u6q7">https://opendata.camden.gov.uk/stories/s/ad58-u6q7</a>  <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/709464/FR_FC_TreeCanopyData_leaflet.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/709464/FR_FC_TreeCanopyData_leaflet.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2018/jun/uk-urban-forest-can-store-much-carbon-tropical-rainforests">https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2018/jun/uk-urban-forest-can-store-much-carbon-tropical-rainforests</a>  <a href="https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/urban-tree-manual/">Urban Tree Manualhttps://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/urban-tree-manual/</a>  <a href="https://www.ltoa.org.uk/documents-1/risk-limitation-strategy-for-tree-root-claims/126-the-risk-limitation-strategy-for-tree-root-claims/file">https://www.ltoa.org.uk/documents-1/risk-limitation-strategy-for-tree-root-claims/126-the-risk-limitation-strategy-for-tree-root-claims/file</a>  <a href="http://www.bre.co.uk/filelibrary/rpts/water/Controlling_water_use_of_trees_to_alleviate_subsidence_risk_final1.pdf">http://www.bre.co.uk/filelibrary/rpts/water/Controlling_water_use_of_trees_to_alleviate_subsidence_risk_final1.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="220 1780 794 2033">           Andrew Hinchley            Head of Green Spaces            Green Spaces            London Borough of Camden            5 Pancras Square            London            N1C 4AG         </td> <td data-bbox="863 1780 1278 2033">           David Houghton            Tree Manager            Green Spaces            London Borough of Camden            5 Pancras Square            London            N1C 4AG         </td> </tr> </table>		Andrew Hinchley Head of Green Spaces Green Spaces London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG	David Houghton Tree Manager Green Spaces London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG
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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee note and comment on the contents of this report

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Hinchley', written over a faint dotted line.

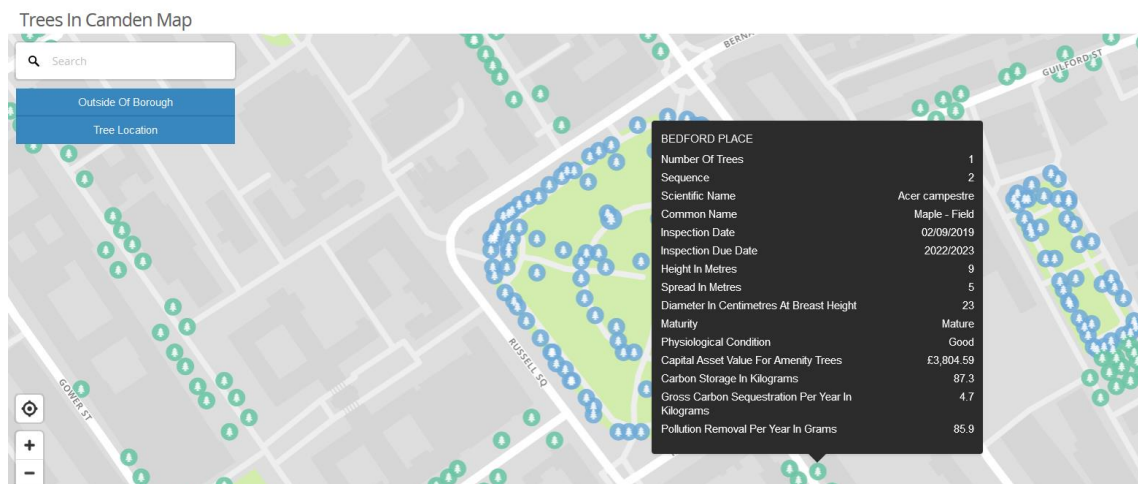
Date: 30/08/23

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide an update on the management of Council maintained trees. This was first presented to the committee in 2019 and this report seeks to provide an update to that paper (see minutes from Culture and Environment Scrutiny committee 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019).

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. Since the paper presented to the committee in 2019 on the management of Council maintained trees, there have been some developments in the way we maintain and expand Camden's Urban Forest. Most notable is the creating of the Council's Tree Planting Strategy (section 3) that has seen an increase in the number of trees planted annually from 400 to 600, with at least 250 trees in new locations. This has resulted in an increase in the number of trees Camden maintains from an estimated 28,000 to 29,000, with a further 10,000-15,000 in nature conservation areas.
- 2.2. The urban forest for Camden consists of all the trees in public and private ownership, estimated to cover 23% of the borough in 2016 (see [About Camden's Trees](#)). This is 3% above the suggested 20% canopy cover aspiration recommended by the Urban Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee Network ([England's Urban Forests](#)).
- 2.3. An tree eco inventory report in 2017 showed our trees provide a range of benefits for our residents and calculated the economic value of these benefits. The amount of benefits each tree provides is publically accessible on Camden's Opendata webpage (see Figure 1), and the headline figures are set out in table 1.



**Figure 1** Trees in Camden opendata map (<https://opendata.camden.gov.uk/Environment/Trees-In-Camden-Map/p5w8-cdre>)

Benefit	Amount	Value
Pollution Removal	5 tonnes per annum	£175,500.00 per annum
Carbon Storage	10,800 tonnes	£691,300.00
Carbon Sequestration	207 tonnes per annum	£48,483.00 per annum
Avoided Runoff	6,739 metres cubed per annum	£10,219.00 per annum

**Table 1** Headline figures from itree eco report

- 2.4. Management of the trees is undertaken by a team of 5 experienced and well qualified tree officers and a tree manager. There is currently 1 vacancy in the team, with recruitment underway.
- 2.5 Camden's approach to tree management has won wide recognition and praise. Outside institutions recognising Camden as innovative and holistic in its approach include the Forestry Commission (see 2.7), London Tree Officer Association (LTOA) and Greater London Authority. We have been involved in a number of academic studies, most recently with UCL on measuring carbon capture in trees (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2018/jun/uk-urban-forest-can-store-much-carbon-tropical-rainforests>) and we have a 6 year project with Forest Research measuring growth of novel tree species we have planted due to subsidence and climate change.
- 2.6 As a team we have presented our approach to tree management at the National Tree Officer Conference, Arboricultural Association Conference and LTOA seminars on a range of subjects from the management of trees and planting in subsidence areas to successfully defending a claim against a bus strike.
- 2.7 Some members of the team have roles on a wide variety of committees: London Tree Officer Association Executive Committee, Association of Tree Officers, the Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee for London and the National Urban Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee (latter two provide advice to the Forestry Commission on urban tree matters at a regional and national level).
- 2.8 The Council has a well established tree policy (see appendix 1) that sets out our approach to tree management to ensure they are safe and sustainable for the residents of Camden now and in the future. This policy has been recognised as best practice and referenced by the then National Tree Champion and now Forestry Commission Chair Sir William Worsley in Forestry Commissions guidance (see [Urban Tree Manual](#)).
- 2.9 In March 2023 we were informed the Council had achieved [Tree Cities of the World](#) status for 2022, which is the 4<sup>th</sup> year running we have achieved this. Tree Cities of the world is an initiative run by the Arbor Day Foundation and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation to recognise good and sustainable Urban Forest Management.

### 3. Planting

3.1 In 2020 Camden launched a [Tree Planting Strategy](#) (see appendix 2) that expanded on Policy 5 of the council's tree policy and addressed the ambition for more planting within the Climate Action Plan: 2020-2025 as part of our response to the Climate and Biodiversity emergencies . The strategy provides a vision for tree planting in the borough with objectives to achieve the following aims:

- Increase tree canopy cover by a minimum of 3.7% by 2045.
- Increase tree diversity in Camden to have a tree stock resilient to pests, disease and climate change.
- Maximise benefits.
- Better recording system of tree planting in the borough
- Improve tree planting process and aftercare.
- Minimise the potential of the new pest and diseases entering the borough.
- Promote tree planting on private land.
- Community involvement

3.2 The strategy has increased the number of trees we aim to plant per year from 400 to 600. Of the 600 at least 250 of those trees will be in new locations, with the aim of increasing the tree population the council maintains. Planting locations, planting numbers by year and information on tree watering can be found on our [web pages](#). In the tables below you can see how many trees we have planted since the start of the strategy (Table 1) and the numbers per ward for 2022/23 (Table 2).

Year	Replacement Trees	New Trees	Total
2020/21	362	217	579
2021/22	171	368	539
2022/23	209	391	600

Table 1 Tree planting figures per annum since 2020/21

2022/23 planting by ward	New tree	Replacement	Total
Belsize	1	5	6
Bloomsbury	40	8	48
Camden Square	4	13	17
Camden Town	4	7	11
Fortune Green	79	23	102
Frogna	7	7	14
Gospel Oak	44	4	48
Hampstead Town	1	16	17
Haverstock	35	1	36
Highgate	12	9	21

<b>Holborn and Covent Garden</b>	16	21	37
<b>Kentish Town North</b>	52	9	61
<b>Kentish Town South</b>	18	8	26
<b>Kilburn</b>	0	10	10
<b>King Cross</b>	0	12	12
<b>Primrose Hill</b>	8	1	9
<b>Regents Park</b>	24	19	43
<b>South Hampstead</b>	0	1	1
<b>St. Pancras and Somers Town</b>	46	14	60
<b>West Hampstead</b>	0	21	21
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>600</b>

**Table 2** Tree planting for 2022/2023 by ward

- 3.3 Generally, planting is carried out by two contractors. One specialises in the location and planting of new trees in the highway, which is tendered for annually. The rest is carried out by our arboricultural services term contractor which includes the replacement of trees that have to be removed (see section 6).
- 3.4 All the trees planted receive 3 years post planting maintenance. This consists of watering visits that change in frequency depending on how long the tree has been planted: Year 1 – 16, Year 2 – 12 and Year 3- 10. Young tree maintenance is also carried out once per year and that involves adjusting stakes, formative pruning and weeding of the tree pit. To assist with watering the trees in the summer or at times of drought, we place a sticker on the watering bags, encouraging citizens to assist with additional watering. There is also information on our webpages on how residents can use our watering bags.
- 3.5 The planting strategy is funded through capital budget currently secured until 2025, totalling £1.94 million over 4 years. In addition to this, we work closely with Transport Strategy to achieve tree planting in new highways schemes and have been successful in two funding bids to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund through the Greater London Authority (GLA). We have also secured funding for additional planting through business improvement districts and from social value contributions secured through procurement. Below is a table showing the sources of funding for the 2022/23 planting season (Table 3).

<b>Additional funding secured (from start of tree planting strategy)</b>	<b>Funding</b>
Urban Tree Challenge Fund	£45,827.92
<u>West End Project</u>	£20,862.00
Clear Channel funding	£29,316.75
Central District Alliance bid	£8,809.00
Highways projects – internal contribution	£18,982.00

**Table 3** Planting strategy funding for 2022/23

3.6 The tree planting officer is responsible for the delivery of the Tree Planting Strategy. They are responsible for our annual tree planting programme and providing advice on tree planting to other council departments and community tree planting groups. For example, we provided advice to [Communi-Tree](#) to help them plant 60 trees on council housing estates during the 2022/2023 planting season. These trees are then watered by young people on the estate who are called Camden Foresters.

#### 4. **Inspection and maintenance**

4.1. The Council's trees are inspected and maintained on a 3 year cycle, except for schools and children centres, which are inspected more frequently every 2 years. Work carried out on the trees is decided on by the tree officer carrying out the inspection, in line with our tree policy. All the Council's tree officers are suitably qualified to inspect and manage trees. As a minimum they must have a level 3/4 qualification in Arboriculture, but some team members have post graduate qualifications in Arboriculture/Forestry.

4.2 Within our annual maintenance plan there are works carried out more intensively on regimes:

- Epicormic removal – annual removal of basal growth (see figure 2) around certain species of trees on Highways, Housing and Parks to stop growth blocking footways and/or sightlines when crossing the road.



**Figure 2** Epicormic growth

- Massaria inspection and removal works – a climbing inspection is carried out in our parks, housing and on highway sites to identify branches infected by this fungus and remove them (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3** Example of branch failure due to massaria infection. Taken from LTOA's Massaria disease of plane a practical guide

- Oak Processionary Moth inspection (OPM) – Inspection carried out on the 300 oak trees that Camden manage to check for OPM (see Figure 4). The pest is notifiable under the Plant Health Act 1967 and any nests found are reported to the Forestry Commission (FC) and then removed by us. The FC will then issue a plant health order under the Act, instructing us that they will spray the tree with an insecticide.



**Figure 4** Oak processionary moth. Taken from Forest Research website: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-processionea/>.

- Willow Crown Lift – Crown lift the weeping willows in the borough to maintain clear sightlines under the canopy.
- Biennial Reduction programme – The re-reduction of trees on a 2 year cycle mainly carried out in areas with a high risk of subsidence occurring (see section 5).

4.3 In addition to programme maintenance, we also receive on average 1,268 ad hoc requests from members of the public and internal departments for tree works (based on 2016-2023 figures). These are received by Contact Camden, who record them directly on to our asset maintenance database (Confirm Arboriculture). Cases are then assigned to area-based tree officers, within the



Green Space team, for inspection and response. All enquiries and works are prioritised by risk, with emergency and urgent works being dealt with first. Those with a lower risk may wait until we inspect the tree as part of the 3 year programme maintenance cycle.

- 4.4 To assist in explaining our policy to residents we have worked with IT to create a fix my street page for tree issues. This form allows residents to log enquiries through the fix my street application but will provide our policy position/information on some of the issue that can be raised. This means residents can find the information they need more rapidly than waiting for an officer to respond.

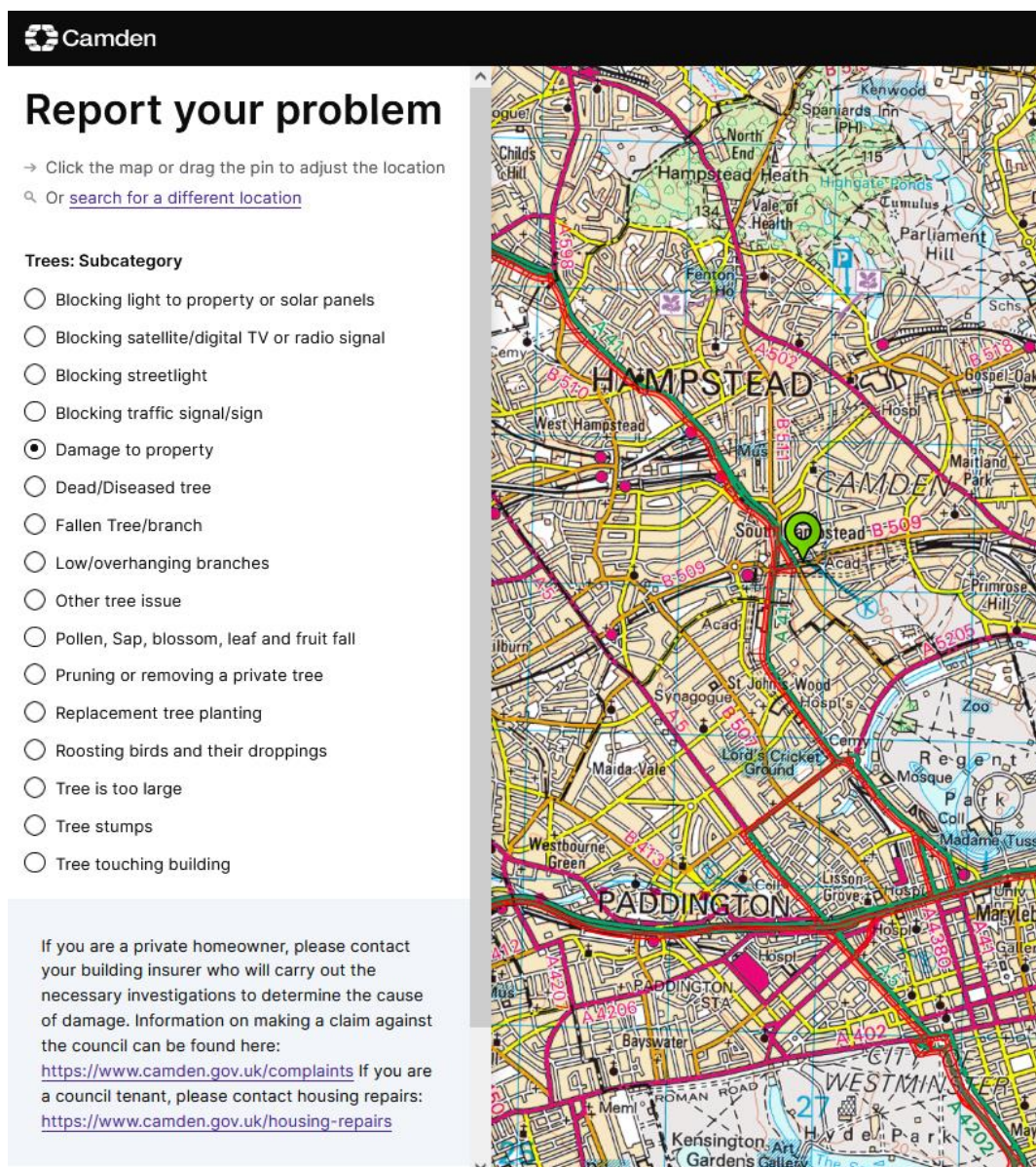


Figure 5: Example of Fix My Street reporting form displaying policy position/information.

- 4.5 The tree manager and 3 tree officers are on a rota to be on call 24 hours a day 365 days a year to attend tree emergencies, liaise with emergency

services and arrange for remedial works to be carried out by our term contractor. To report a tree emergency please call 020-7974-4444.

## 5. Tree Related Subsidence

- 5.1 Due to the borough's soil types and the significant numbers of old buildings, the risk of tree related subsidence is an important part of tree management. The past planting of large species in close proximity to buildings is a problem, especially as a significant area of Camden is on shrinkable clay soil. Shrinkable clay soil shrinks when it dries and expands again when wet, and this happens throughout the year in response to rainfall and temperature fluctuations with the seasons and climate change. Most buildings on such a soil will move up and down through the year by many millimeters, unnoticed by the householder.
- 5.2 The presence of trees and other significant vegetation can exacerbate the drying of shrinkable soils, through the extraction of moisture by roots. The presence of roots beneath the foundations of a building can cause parts of it to move up and down by a greater degree than the rest. This differential movement is what causes the building to crack.
- 5.3 It is recognised that damage may result from the presence of our trees, so a cyclical pruning regime is in place to reduce the potential risk to the Council (see 5.4).
- 5.4 It is recognised that damage may result from the presence of our trees, so a biennial reduction regime was created to address the risk posed by the Council's trees to property in areas prone to subsidence. The programme has been based on industry best practice (such as the [LTOA risk limitation strategy](#)), academic research ([Horticultural link 212 project](#)) and recent court precedents. It is focused specifically on areas where we have received subsidence claims (see map in appendix 2) and since 2019 the number of trees part of this programme has reduced from 2066 to 2046 trees. This equates to 7% of the tree population. Only half of the trees on the programme are pruned each year, split between the East and West of the borough. The pruning carried out removes the canopy of the tree, which controls its water uptake and limits its influence on the surrounding properties. Research shows this must be carried out every 2 years to maintain the reduction in water uptake. However, tree management does not always prevent subsidence and in some cases removal is ultimately necessary (see section 7). This approach is no different from other London boroughs.
- 5.5 To refine our risk management we have looked at the species of trees that are involved in claims with the insurance team. This has allowed them to repudiate a claim that implicated a species not previously known to cause subsidence in the borough.

## **6. Contractor**

6.1 The Council contracts out all tree work, including out-of-hour emergencies and tree planting. Except for tree planting (see section 3) we have a single term contractor that carries out this work.

6.2 At short notice our term contractor, City Suburban Tree Surgeons Ltd, went into voluntary liquidation on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022. A new contractor was appointed on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 called Treehab Ltd. for an initial 3 month period which has now been extended until March 2024.

6.3 Treehab Ltd. are a Camden based firm, in the West of the borough and employ local people. They were subcontracting for City Suburban Tree Surgeons Ltd. before they went into liquidation and have a good knowledge of the borough. We have been working closely with them to ensure they transition smoothly into the contract and deliver for our residents.

## **7. Tree Removal**

7.1 Tree removal can naturally be an emotive issue with residents, and policy 4 of the Council's Tree Policy sets out a clear procedure for removals. The two main reasons for tree removal are:

- Trees that are dead, dying or dangerous. The cyclical inspection programme (see 4.1) identifies the majority of these trees. These trees are removed on the grounds of public safety.
- As a last resort in relation to a third party tree root claim, where regular tree reduction has failed to stabilise the shrinkable clay soil, (see section 5 above). Council trees are also removed where they have been found to be damaging Council owned property.

7.2 The tree section is fortunate that it has a range of decay detection equipment available to use that aids in the decision on if a tree needs to be removed or not. Not every tree will require this before removal, but those of significant value and importance or when the target value is high, will be tested. For example, the Hardy Tree in St. Pancras Gardens underwent extensive diagnostic testing that allowed us to retain and manage its decline until falling over into the area fenced off from the public.

7.3 In line with the tree policy and strategy, we replace every tree removed unless there are physical reasons to prevent this (see section 3 for more details).

## **8. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

- 8.1. As stated in paragraph 3.5, the Council's Tree Planting Strategy has a capital budget of £1.94m over the four years to March 2025 supplemented by additional funding from a number of sources. The service is on track to spend all this budget. Tree planting is considered a capital cost because trees are an asset which improve the local environment and contribute to the well-being of the local area.
- 8.2. The management and maintenance of trees is a revenue cost and has an annual expenditure budget of c.£1.2m across the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

## 9. **Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

Legal Services have reviewed the report and have no specific comments.

## 10. **Environmental Implications**

The proactive management of trees is integral to maintaining a healthy, productive and sustainable Urban Forest that can provide the full range of benefits for residents now and into the future. Our Tree Planting Strategy directly responds to the need to create a climate resilient borough, support biodiversity and reduce air pollution. There are no negative Environmental implications.

## 11. **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Camden Council Tree policy for Council Owned Trees  
Appendix 2: Camden Tree Planting Strategy 2020-2025

**REPORT ENDS**