

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Policy and Oversight Board

Date: 25/11/2024

Subject: Greening the Grey Workshop

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SUMMARY

This report summarises the outcomes of the Greening the Grey workshop held on 5 September 2024. The workshop brought together Councillors, local residents, representatives of local community groups, national partners and Council officers to explore ideas on how 'grey' public spaces and green corridors could be improved in H&F to become greener, safer and more accessible for everyone.

A range of insightful ideas was generated at the workshop relating to how sustainable urban planning can tackle air pollution and climate-related flood risks, suggestions on how to improve the borough's infrastructure to support active travel and suggestions on how to involve communities in designing safer and more accessible public spaces and co-producing future changes.

The outputs from the workshop will be considered during ongoing work that is being undertaken by the Council, including policies and strategies currently in development, as well as the future work of the Policy and Oversight Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Policy and Oversight Board note the report and provide comments and feedback on H&F's Greening the Grey workshop.

Wards Affected: All

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Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Corporate Plan and the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	The workshop discussed how grey areas and the kerbside can be adapted to be accessible for all with considerations to how changes can aid businesses in delivering cargo.
Creating a compassionate council	Greening grey areas will make public spaces accessible for the most at-risk and vulnerable members of our community.
Doing things with residents, not to them	This workshop drew on local residents, experts, and residents' groups to discuss how changes to grey areas, the kerbside and roads could be impactful and beneficial for people living in the borough.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	This was not directly discussed as part of the workshop but financial considerations will form part of future work being undertaken by the Council, including policies and strategies currently in development.
Taking pride in H&F	Discussions within the workshop included how public areas and active travel infrastructure can be made more pleasant and accessible for all.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	The workshop discussed how the kerbside in the borough can be adapted, with a focus on 'greening' grey areas which would improve the biology of the borough.

Background Papers Used in Preparing this Report

None

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Background

1. Part of the role of Policy Oversight Board is to support policy development at H&F and make recommendations to Cabinet. Cllr Homan, Chair of the Policy Oversight Board, asked officers to arrange a first policy workshop to explore ideas regarding improving grey spaces and green corridors in the borough.
2. The workshop took place on 5 September 2024. This report provides background on the workshop, what was discussed and how the outcomes of workshop will be used to inform future work.

Purpose of the workshop

3. The workshop was arranged to explore ideas on how 'grey' public spaces, such as roads, footpaths and kerbsides, and green corridors could be improved in the

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borough. The purpose of the workshop was to hear from local interest groups, residents and experts and use the outcomes to inform the development of relevant policies and strategies in the Council, and future work of the Policy Oversight Board.

4. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of H&F households do not have access to a car or van, with walking being the dominant mode of travel within the borough. Centre for London research¹ outlines that Londoners want more trees and greenspaces prioritised over on-street residential parking. H&F is a busy traffic borough, with three million parking sessions annually and close to one billion transport trips per annum. National research points to kerbside spaces facing increasing pressures in future years, due to increases in congestion and last mile deliveries. In London, 43% of all cars are parked on-street, with cars parked 95% of the time.
5. H&F has the second-best proportion of greenspaces in London, totalling more than 225 hectares (about 14% of the borough). This includes 21 'Green Flag' accredited parks. The Council is expanding Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) which are eco-friendly techniques for managing surface water by mimicking natural water processes, allowing water to infiltrate, evaporate, or be stored.
6. The Council is committed to tackling the climate crisis and ecological emergency, and therefore aims to improve the viability and accessibility of active travel, such as cycling and walking. Reimagining grey spaces and linking green corridors provides opportunities to increase the quantity and quality of walkable space and cycling lanes in the borough and reduce short car journeys (and therefore pollution).

Attendance

7. The workshop was attended by 36 individuals. This included four H&F Councillors including Cllr Homan, Chair of the Policy Oversight Board; 18 external attendees, with a mixture of local residents and representatives from Residents' Associations, local voluntary and community sector organisations, and active travel groups; and H&F officers.
8. Council officers presented current H&F policies relating to grey spaces and green corridors and opportunities currently being explored to reimagine these spaces. These presentations set the local context for this work and provided discussion points for the workshop attendees to explore as part of group work and in plenary discussions.

Workshop outcomes

9. A summary of the outcomes of the workshop was produced and provided to attendees after the event – see Appendix A. Several themes emerged from the discussions.

¹ Centre for London (2020), 'Reclaim the Kerb: The Future of Parking and Kerbside Management', available at: [Centre for London Future of parking.pdf \(centreforlondon.org\)](https://www.centreforlondon.org/centreforlondon/future-of-parking)

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10. Firstly, several contributions centred on how more sustainable urban planning can tackle air pollution and climate-related flood risks. This included suggestions regarding a wider rollout of 20mph roads to include the Transport for London (TfL) network, better coordination around school streets to reduce congestion in peak times and expanding the borough's network of SuDS. It was also noted that the future role of electric vehicles needs to be considered critically, to ensure greater clarity around their efficacy and how much usage there is of the vehicles and the charging points in the borough.
11. Secondly, there were a series of suggestions to improve the borough's infrastructure to support active travel. This included addressing the increasing demand for cycle storage and pathways and the need to incorporate trees and greenery into walking and cycling areas to make them more attractive to users. The importance of promoting behavioural change to move people away from short car trips and towards greener alternatives was also noted, as well making streets less car dominant to put people first.
12. Thirdly, there were suggestions for how to involve communities in designing safer and more accessible public spaces. This included encouraging community involvement in maintaining public spaces, promoting art and culture and the Green Flag spaces and blue plaques in the borough, and improving lighting, accessibility and safety.
13. Attendees also noted that H&F will need to further engage and co-produce with residents and local stakeholders any changes to the kerbside and 'greening' public areas, to properly consider any resistance to change, as well as commercial pressures for local businesses, logistical challenges, and how to prioritise policing and safety concerns of our public realm.
14. The workshop also identified the importance of communication regarding key issues such as climate change. Attendees noted that drawing on expertise of public bodies (such as climate experts and public health bodies) lends credence to the importance of addressing issues such as pollution and its impacts on health, rather than simply being stated by the Council.

How workshop outcomes will be used going forward

15. The discussions at the workshop were insightful and valuable and will be considered during ongoing work that is being undertaken by the Council, including policies and strategies currently in development.
16. This includes the Council's updated Industrial Strategy, which is due to be launched at the end of November 2024. The Industrial Strategy will detail the Council's approach to encouraging economic growth, how residents will benefit from investment in the local economy, and the major regeneration projects that are and will occur throughout the borough. The workshop outcomes were very insightful as the Industrial Strategy is taking an approach which emphasises the importance of a first-class public realm to supporting the local economy. Connecting places is critical to ensuring an inclusive local economy which

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supports the most vulnerable in our community. Resultingly, the workshop's ideas to use green corridors to connect places and to improve pedestrian accessibility to economic hotspots will be reviewed and considered during the Industrial Strategy's development.

17. Furthermore, the workshop's inputs on biodiversity and natural flood defences are important to the Council's aims for tackling the climate and ecological crisis. H&F is the third most at-risk borough for flooding in London, so ideas around the Council's SuDS programme provides vital insight for natural flood defences. Moreover, the views on greening grey areas will be influential on improving the biodiversity of the borough to combat negative impacts of climate change.
18. The outcomes of the workshop will also be used to inform an emerging transport vision and its emphasis on placemaking. The workshop discussions on reducing car dominance, and fostering biodiversity, will provide direction to this work. The transport vision will include a focus on active travel and the infrastructure needed to achieve this (e.g. pleasant walking and quiet cycling routes through residential areas). Reallocating the public realm space effectively will transform roads from mere thoroughfares into vibrant places where people can live, work and play, and the workshop discussions highlight local support for this focus.