

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 13/01/2025

Subject: Tree Strategy adoption

Report of: Councillor Sharon Holder, Cabinet Member for Public Realm

Report author: Ian Hawthorn, Assistant Director Highways

Responsible Director: Bram Kainth, Executive Director of Place

SUMMARY

This report outlines the development of the first tree strategy for Hammersmith & Fulham, detailing the outcome of consultation and reasons for adoption.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To agree the formal adoption of the H&F Tree Strategy and associated action plan.
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Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Corporate Plan and the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	Promoting tree planting, community engagement and better urban forest management. All of which are evidenced to increase sustainability, improve aesthetics and to boost the economy and in-turn build prosperity within the borough and public realm.
Creating a compassionate and inclusive council	Developing active citizenship with residents and stakeholders, improving communication, and promoting an environmentally aware community that supports the council's ambition of being the greenest borough.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Outlining active and strategic engagement with our residents that improves their quality of life such as educational events, walks, tree planting days and annual residents' surveys to foster the relationship between council and the community.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	Identifying methods of acquiring external funding and cost saving strategies such as a consistent and effective funding application process, the development of our tree donation program, working with external partners to reduce the cost of planting and improving internal procedures to ensure less trees are lost, less money is

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Corporate Plan and the H&F Values
	spent on their replacement and more trees are planted through for the benefits of all
Taking pride in H&F	By increasing canopy cover and environmental awareness, the strategy provides the environment required for residents to be proud of their borough. We demonstrate high aspirations by outlining the means to increase our canopy cover to meet target for England proposed by the EIP, ahead of the timeline they have proposed. We provide the platform for residents to play active roles in achieving said targets, fostering pride and shared equity in their borough.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	The tree strategy, guided by emerging policy, internal strategies and several external partners outlines a shift towards ambitious, strategic and proactive tree management with the primary vision of becoming the greenest borough. These targets paired with internal policies, such as prioritising native tree planting and proactive tree planting, aligns with the Climate and Ecology Strategy and the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. This supports the credibility of our targets and ensures the most current policy is adhered to, to combat the climate and ecological emergency as effectively as possible.

Financial Impact

The proposed tree strategy sets out our plans to work with residents and partners to preserve, increase and improve our trees. The strategy is supported by an action plan to deliver these aims and includes 40 actions requiring an estimated additional investment of £1.027m over the next decade (approximately £0.600m of this investment will be required in the first 5 years with the remaining £0.427m being required over a longer period of time). This funding will be secured (by way of external grants, developer contributions and S106 funding) and will be included in the revenue and capital financial plans of the Council.

Kellie Gooch, Head of Finance (Place), 25 November 2024

Verified by James Newman, Assistant Director – Finance (Deputy s151), 25 November 2024

Legal Implications

The Council has duties under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in relation to trees which include the powers to require provisions for the preservation and planting of trees when granting planning permissions and the making of tree preservation orders. It also has duties under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain highways within its area which includes the duty to maintain trees within the boundaries of highways. The planting and maintenance of trees also plays a key role in enhancing and preserving the urban environment.

The tree strategy will assist and enable the Council in undertaking these functions.

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Background to the development of the tree strategy

1. The H&F tree strategy provides a roadmap for how the council can improve its tree management, increase canopy cover, and improve the service for residents, achieving shared targets and improving the quality of life of the constituent, which is supported by the annual 2024 report on health in cities by Professor Chris Whitty, which emphasises the important role of trees in cities.
2. The tree strategy development was led by highways, however it is a borough wide strategy that covers all council owned land and is being supported by the relevant Parks and Housing teams, along with the Climate Change Team and Planning Team and a range of external partners.
3. The strategy was developed using guidance from the newly published Tree and Woodland Strategy Toolkit (TAWS), developed by The Tree Council and commissioned by DEFRA. The Tree Council have helped to guide the strategy directly reviewing the strategy.
4. The tree strategy is from 2024 to 2030, which aligns with the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP), along with the councils Climate and Ecology Strategy. This period of six years will allow us to research our current tree stock, implement the action plan and achieve our targets. This will pave the way for new, greater targets that will be guided by the 2030 review of EIP, as well as the learnings through the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

Vision and objectives of the tree strategy

5. The vision for the tree strategy is to contribute to becoming the greenest borough.
6. To meet the vision there are three key objectives, to increase canopy cover from 14% to 16.5%, to preserve and improve current tree stock and to work closer with residents and businesses.
7. To determine how to meet these three objectives, the objectives are supported by twelve key areas for development, and its these twelve areas that form the action plan for the tree strategy. The areas are, opportunity mapping, legacy planting, funding, private land increasing biodiversity, developing policy, development opportunities, training, communication, community projects, education and community engagement.

Delivery of the tree strategy

8. The strategy is supported by an action plan, with 40 actions designed to deliver the three objectives to meet the vision.
9. The actions are set to a time frame, with a department lead, and are costed. We use an action plan framework already used effectively internally. By specifying these details, it ensures the targets are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely (SMART).
10. The tree strategy will be available in an accessible format when adopted. The tree strategy and action plan are currently being formatted into accessible versions and will be completed by December 2024.

Reasons for Decision

11. Recommendation that Hammersmith & Fulham adopt the tree strategy to ensure the council rises to its ambition of being the greenest borough but meets its duties regarding tree management and ensures that we work with communities and stakeholders to grow our tree cover.

Equality Implications

12. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out, in relation to the Tree Strategy, and it shows neutral impacts of the planning guidance on that share protected characteristics.
13. The EIA assists the Council in demonstrating compliance with its public sector equality duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

Yvonne Okiyo, Strategic Lead EDI, 2 December 2024

Risk Management Implications

14. There are no significant risks identified for this initiative.

Jules Binney, Risk and Assurance Manager, 22 November 2024

Climate and Ecological Emergency Implications

15. The council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019. Additionally, as a public body, the council must act to conserve and enhance biodiversity as part of the strengthened Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act 2021). The tree strategy will help the council to create a climate resilient borough by increasing canopy cover, sequestering carbon and improving air quality. Green corridors will be developed through street tree planting and wildlife will be supported through the planting of native tree species where appropriate.

Phoebe Shaw Stewart, Ecology Lead, 14 November 2024

Consultation

16. A public consultation was conducted between 7/5/24 to the 7/6/24 on H&F's 'have your say' engagement platform. Of the 228 responses, 202 (88.6%) supported the vision of the strategy and 186 (81.6%) supported the three main objectives.
17. From the consultation, when asked "Is there anything else you would like to see in the tree strategy that you think is missing?" 22 of 166 responses stated that there should be more tree planting and 6 stated that targets should be more ambitious. Through an internal review of tree planting capacity and consultation with key actors, it was agreed that the targets for tree planting were achievable. It is outlined that this tree strategy (2024-2030) is the precursor that builds the systems and processes for more ambitious targets relating to tree planting in the future.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Tree Strategy

Appendix 2 – Tree Strategy Action Plan

Appendix 3 - H&F Equality Impact Analysis Tool