

# Part 3

## Recommendations

6. Newham's green and water space priorities
7. Proposals and recommendations
8. Delivery toolkit

## 6. Newham's green and water space priorities

- 6.1. In this section we draw upon the evidence gathered and distill our findings into three key priorities which Newham needs to address in its G&W Strategy.
- 6.2. The priorities described in this section are then further expanded into 11 principles designed to inform future planning for the improvement, provision and management of Newham's green and water infrastructure.

### Priority 1: Improving health and wellbeing

- 6.3. Newham is one of the 20% most deprived districts/unitary authorities in England and there is a strong statistical correlation between measures of deprivation and health outcomes. Deprivation is evenly spread across the Borough and only four of the Borough's Lower Super Output Areas are in the cohort of 10% least deprived neighbourhoods in England. Newham Council has committed to addressing these issues by adopting the 50 Steps to a Healthier Borough Strategy (2020).
- 6.4. The G&W Strategy can respond to this challenge by adopting the following measures:

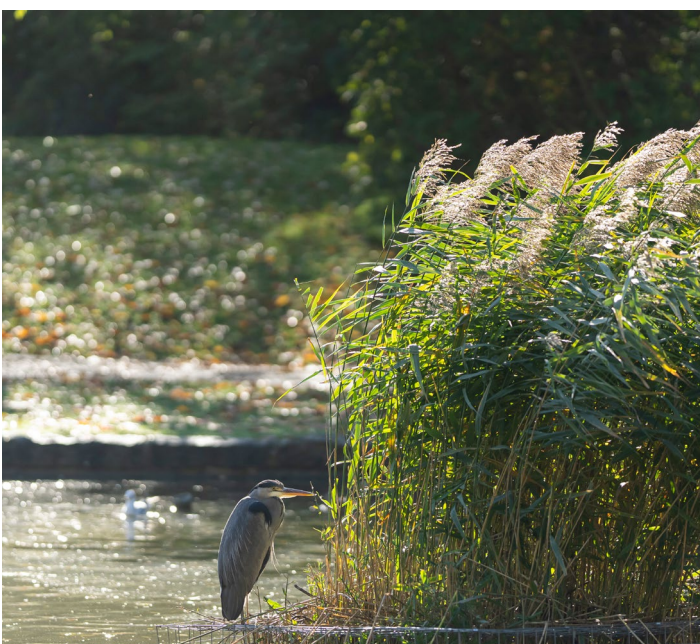
- Supporting the development of a green network across the Borough to encourage the adoption of active travel modes
  - Ensuring that quality assessments are acted on so that poor quality open spaces are brought up to standard
  - Ensuring the quality of the design of new spaces and/or uplifts in the quality of existing spaces
  - Considering functionality that might address issues around inactivity (e.g. provision of enhanced facilities for physical activity, sport and play) and addressing issues related to climate change (e.g. addressing urban warming by increasing tree canopy cover)
  - Supporting the development of meanwhile spaces that provide an opportunity for residents to volunteer, acquire new skills, address social isolation and engage with the natural environment
  - Supporting the development of cross-sector partnerships so that green infrastructure can deliver enhanced health outcomes (e.g. through social prescribing)
- Using Natural Capital Accounting metrics to determine the areas of the Borough where health inequalities are most pronounced in relation to disease groups known to be positively influenced by access to the natural environment (cardio-vascular disease; Type II diabetes; obesity and depression); focusing investment on green infrastructure enhancements in these areas of the Borough



Beckton Park

## Priority 2: Meeting the challenge of the climate emergency

- 6.5. Newham Council has adopted a Climate Emergency Action Plan that includes the following measures:
- Newham Climate Now: improving climate emergency information to empower the community to act
  - Sustainable transport schemes
  - Improving air quality measures
  - Waste reduction and re-cycling
  - The greening of the Borough's vehicle fleet
  - Greening the Borough (including a 10-year Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and investment plan)
  - Building a green economy
- 6.6. Climate change will impact significantly on life in the Borough but will be most significant in two areas:
- Flood risk
  - Urban warming
- 6.7. The green and water strategy can respond to these challenges by adopting the following measures:



North Beckton District Park

- Sustaining the capacity of green spaces to absorb precipitation. Green space can absorb up to 25% of precipitation directly into the soil and ground water, alleviating pressure on built drainage systems.
- Open spaces (and particularly trees) have a significant moderating effect on the urban heat island effect. Research suggests that a 10% increase in tree volume can reduce ambient temperature rises by 30-50% on hot summer days. Where green space occupies more than 50% of land surface area, temperatures are approximately 70 centigrade lower than elsewhere in a neighbourhood. This cooling effect can be experienced up to 100m from the park edge.
- Sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) limit the amount of precipitation entering sewer systems, storing and slowly releasing precipitation into the system or into the groundwater.

## Priority 3: Improving ecology and biodiversity

- 6.8. The most recent State of Nature report, published in 2019, suggests there has been a 13% decline in the average abundance of wildlife in the UK since the 1970s. Changes in land use and changes in the distribution of habitat types will have seen changes in biodiversity with an overall picture of ongoing species decline, although perhaps not at the rate seen in previous decades.
- 6.9. Newham is well-endowed with Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) but the most ecologically valuable parts of the Borough lie at its edges. Large areas of the centre of the Borough lack biodiversity.
- 6.10. The Biodiversity Net Gain and Urban Greening Factor planning mechanisms (see Sections 8.15 and 8.21) will support more ecological resilience either directly on development sites or (in the case of Biodiversity Net Gain) as 'offset contributions' elsewhere in the Borough. Given the Borough's lack of biodiversity,

the ‘every square metre counts’ principle can be achieved by installing green roofs, green walls, bird and bat boxes and invertebrate refuges.

- 6.11. At a local level connectivity can also be informed by ‘every square metre counts’ principles; new street trees can be installed, consideration can be given to the management of road verges and public parks, recreation areas, amenity spaces, community gardens and allotments and pedestrian and cycle routes made multi-functional by adopting specific management regimes to encourage biodiversity.
- 6.12. For that portion of the Borough’s green and water infrastructure that lies outside of council management, guidance can be given around how external space is managed for better biodiversity outcomes and incentives offered for avoiding harmful practices (e.g. paving over front gardens, use of pesticides and overly manicured mono-culture green spaces).

the Action Plan in Appendix 5. The 11 principles are as follows:

- 1: A fact-based approach: Data matters
- 2: Prioritise green and water spaces: Principal infrastructure
- 3: Invest in the future: Natural Capital and ecosystem services
- 4: Re-define ‘environment’: Every square metre counts
- 5: Think local: Context and Newham distinctiveness
- 6: Maximise potential: Make places multi-functional
- 7: Shape green links: Connectivity is key
- 8: Work together: Collaborative planning
- 9: Active management: Consistent and sustainable management models
- 10: Inclusive thinking: Benefits for everyone
- 11: Future generations: Committing for the long-term

## A resilient future: 11 principles that sow the seeds for a greener Newham

- 6.13. In the previous sections, the current and future need for green and water infrastructure has been defined and assessed. The relatively poor condition of green spaces and play spaces has been described; a low level of overall provision has been identified and the impact of population growth on levels of demand has been presented.
- 6.14. In this section we set out 11 principles that should be adopted to address these issues so that Newham can develop a clear plan for meeting the green and water space needs of people living and working in the Borough. These principles were developed in consultation with residents, stakeholders and council officers from across different departments and are carried forward into

### 1: A fact-based approach: Data matters

- 6.15. Policy for green and water infrastructure will be based on referencing up-to-date evidence and analysis. This will include maps and a database that records changes to the green and water space portfolio and to individual sites and regular assessments of condition. This will enable us to review and update the Strategy periodically.
- 6.16. Actions to achieve this objective:
- Review green and water infrastructure GIS data every five years
  - Quality of green space will be re-surveyed every five years
  - Improvements to green and water spaces will be planned and monitored using accurate data

## 2: Prioritise green and water spaces: Principal infrastructure

6.17. Healthy green and water infrastructure is essential to Newham and will be considered as the Borough's 'principal infrastructure'. Planning policy will ensure that the need for high quality green and water infrastructure is considered at the earliest stages of the planning process. By doing this, the flow of benefits will be maintained, even in the face of social and environmental changes and the pressure from new development.

6.18. Actions to achieve this objective:

- Implement mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for all new developments
- Implement Urban Greening Factor (UGF) for all major developments (as defined in the London Plan 2021)
- Allocate green and water infrastructure spend from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 contributions
- Consider adding a green and water infrastructure component to the Borough's Annual Infrastructure reporting
- Invest in improvements to the quality of parks, playgrounds and growing spaces especially in areas of the Borough where low quality has been recorded
- Use Newham Carbon offsetting fund resources to enhance green infrastructure quality and provision

## 3: Invest in the future: Natural Capital and ecosystem services

6.19. Newham's green and water infrastructure delivers essential ecosystem services to the Borough. These benefit flows need to be sustained if Newham's ecology and the people living and working there are to thrive. By using a fact-based approach, the council will monitor the capacity of its green and water infrastructure to continue to deliver ecosystem services derived from

its Natural Capital. Biodiversity Net Gain provides a specific way of protecting the supply of ecosystem services by making sure that new development includes new elements of Natural Capital.

6.20. Actions to achieve this objective:

- Update Natural Capital Account every five years
- Target planning gain resources (Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 funds) at areas of the Borough that are under-provided with green and water infrastructure or where this infrastructure is in poor condition

## 4: Re-define 'environment': Every square metre counts

6.21. Green infrastructure provision and development pressure in Newham are such that the meaning of 'environment' in the Borough needs to be re-considered. The idea that the 'environment' and access to nature are provided only in specific places should be replaced with an approach that identifies opportunities for better provision right across the Borough. Developing 'well-connected neighbourhoods' can support local space for new play facilities, community growing opportunities and better pedestrian and cycling routes. A significant proportion of Newham's green and water infrastructure is in private management (e.g. front and rear gardens, railway corridors) and steps should be taken to ensure that these areas are also contributing to a better environment.

6.22. Actions to achieve this objective:

- Continue to support the development of meaningful green infrastructure projects funded through the People Powered Places programme. This could include production of relevant design guides
- Develop a green grid across the Borough by planting, installing rain gardens and other areas of planting in the Borough's streets

- Build on the success of the Greenway Pollinator Trail by diversifying other travel routes and corridors
- The provision of publicly accessible green space will not fall below 0.72 Ha per 1,000 Head of Population
- Discourage the use of astroturf and paving over front and rear gardens

## 5: Think local: Context and Newham distinctiveness

6.23. Newham has many different neighbourhoods and town centres. People living and working in the Borough identify more strongly with their own area rather than with Newham as a whole. Neighbourhoods have a local character that can define ideas for creating a better environment. Residents strongly identify with their Local Park or green space as integral to the character of their neighbourhood.

6.24. Actions to achieve this objective:

- Use the People Powered Places programme to reinforce the distinctiveness of local places
- Celebrate the distinctiveness of neighbourhoods through the design of new green and water spaces

## 6: Maximise potential: Make places multi-functional

6.25. Newham's green and water infrastructure is multi-functional and delivers a range of ecosystem services. This multi-functionality needs to be sustained for ecosystem service flows to continue. For existing infrastructure, a balance needs to be struck between different functions to ensure that it provides as much benefit as possible to as many people as possible. The same approach will be adopted for new developments so that they support better environmental outcomes as well as fulfilling their primary purpose.

6.26. Actions to achieve this objective:

- Enhance the multi-functionality of current green and water infrastructure
- Adopt multi-functionality as a design principle for any new or upgraded spaces
- Further develop the Greenway as both a biodiversity corridor and an active travel route
- Make streets greener to promote biodiversity and provide more options for active travel

## 7: Shape green links: Connectivity is key

6.27. Green and water infrastructure provision across Newham is poor relative to other London Boroughs. Development over the Local Plan period will have a significant impact on the amount of green space available. Intensive growth will be focussed on the western, southern and south-eastern areas of the Borough. Elsewhere, population levels will remain static or will fall. Newham is so densely developed that opportunities for creation of new green and water infrastructure will be limited. Steps will be taken to establish better connections between different green and water infrastructure assets to provide continuity. Connected sites will provide direct opportunities for play and food growing, can support local distinctiveness, link core habitats, provide wildlife corridors and encourage cycling and walking.

6.28. Actions to achieve this objective:

- Work with partners to develop unbroken routes and connected spaces along the River Roding and Lee Valley
- Complete the Thames Path to the west of Lyle Park and to the east of Thames Barrier Park and upgrade the path to a consistent standard
- Make streets greener to promote biodiversity and to provide more options for active travel

- Investment in ‘meanwhile’ spaces will continue through the ‘People Powered Places’ programme to provide more links in the green grid across Newham

## 8: Work together: Collaborative planning

6.29. Locally distinctive green and water infrastructure interventions will be developed by involving residents, community groups, developers and landowners in planning and decision-making. If proposals are locally adopted, there is much higher chance that they will address issues of importance to the area and they will be successfully maintained. This will sustain benefits over a longer period and for a lower cost. It will also seem much less likely that change is seen as coming ‘from above’.

6.30. Actions to achieve this objective:

- Consult local people where a change of purpose is proposed for a green or water infrastructure asset
- Continue to implement the ‘People Powered Places’ and successor programmes to give local people ownership over their neighbourhoods
- Co-design neighbourhood green and water infrastructure with residents and stakeholders
- Form GWIS project boards / groups / networks
- Form a nature recovery network that enables us to draw on experience of local volunteer groups and work collectively to bring in funding and specialist support to improve the quality and biodiversity of the Borough
- Upskilling volunteer groups to enable active management of community greening projects and the conservation of wild spaces in partnership with the council

## 9: Active management: Consistent and sustainable management models

6.31. For green spaces to be distributed throughout the Borough, allowing residents to be able to access range of spaces within 15 minutes of their home, we need to adopt new and consistent approaches to managing green space. This requires new thinking around the risk of community involvement in green space.

6.32. Actions to achieve this objective:

- Continue to support the development of meaningful green infrastructure projects funded through the People Powered Places programme.
- Give residents more support to enable them to manage spaces for themselves e.g. opportunities that offer upskilling and training for volunteers across the Borough
- Adopt the Strategy to sit across all services in order to ensure a consistent organisational approach that enables prioritisation of green and water spaces
- Establish internal and external stakeholder groups that monitor the implementation of the G&W Strategy
- Publication of clear advice, guidance and application processes for residents who wish to take ownership of managing improvements to green and water infrastructure in their areas. This could include webpages with accessible design codes and simple forms to complete. Eg. adopt a tree pit / start a community garden / rewild your garden

## 10: Inclusive thinking: Benefits for everyone

6.33. The ecosystem services provided by Newham’s green and water infrastructure provide direct and indirect benefits to people living and working in the Borough,

including the Borough’s capacity to respond to the climate change and biodiversity emergencies. These benefits are broad-scoping and but also take into account the specific needs and aspirations of different communities and neighbourhoods across Newham, including people with protected characteristics.

6.34. Actions to achieve this objective:

- Every open space will include good quality inclusive play
- Ambitious objective about play offer for LBN
- Expand programmes partnerships to deliver health benefits through green and water spaces e.g. social prescribing and promoting volunteering
- Improve access to green and water spaces by making them part of a green grid that includes streets, civic spaces and meanwhile spaces
- Address the specific needs of social cohorts – e.g. women and girls, different cultural heritages, families with SEND requirements – to provide a comprehensive offer

- Review Green and Water Charter every five years
- Establish a Green and Water Infrastructure Board from across the Borough to drive positive change.
- Implement Trees and Woodlands Action Plan
- Implement Parks Management Action Plan
- Implement Nature Recovery Action Plan

## Summary

6.37. This section identifies the three priorities related to ecosystem service flows that need to inform the Action Plan that is detailed in Appendix 5. These themes are reflected in 11 principles that will underpin the green and water infrastructure assets that will provide the ecosystem service flows that Newham needs to sustain (or increase).

## 11: Future generations: Committing for the long-term

6.35. Green and water infrastructure in Newham will be considered in the long term so that Natural Capital can continue to deliver ecosystem services for future generations. Detailed and ambitious planning in response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies is particularly important, as these are long-term issues that can be influenced by short-term decisions. Green and water infrastructure must be planned for in a way that is not limited by political and planning policy cycles.

6.36. Actions to achieve this objective:

- Develop and adopt a 50 Year Green and Water Charter and seek cross-party support for its permanent adoption.



Beckton District Park - Tree planting day