

	<b>Cabinet</b> 19 May 2025
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration</b>
	<b>Lead Member - Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement</b>
<b>Draft Brent Tree Strategy</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	One Appendix A: Draft Brent Tree Strategy
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
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## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for public consultation on the Draft Brent Tree Strategy document.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet approves consultation on the Draft Brent Tree Strategy document as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 Cabinet delegate consideration of the consultation responses, any necessary changes and the decision to adopt the final Brent Tree Strategy to the Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement.

## 3.0 Detail

### 3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

- 3.1.1 Brent's Draft Brent Tree Strategy sets out the way the council will continue to manage and enhance trees across the borough as part of our commitment to tackling the climate emergency and building a greener Brent. This report will support and supplement a number of strategies already in place to reduce our carbon footprint and work towards net zero targets, including the council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy (2021-2030), the Brent Local Plan (2019-2041), Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan, Green Infrastructure Vision, Equity Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2024-2028), Air Quality Action Plan (2023-2027) and Tree Management Policy (2017).
- 3.1.2 Brent has many parks, green spaces, and tree-lined streets – all of which offer not only aesthetic value, but countless environmental, health, economic, and social benefits as we integrate the natural world into our urban environment. Building on the Tree Management Policy (2017), the council will continue to recognise the important role trees, open spaces, and woodlands play in promoting recreation and public health, while balancing our legal responsibilities to maintain environmental stock in line with local and national policy frameworks.
- 3.1.3 As part of Brent's commitments to sustainable development and improving the environmental wellbeing of the borough, this report proposes to develop the council's current approach to tree management and tree planting, maximising the impact that urban trees have on the environment and the lives of people living and working in Brent. Given this widespread impact, the council will seek to undertake engagement and consultation with residents, community groups, volunteer groups, schools, and local businesses to co-produce a constructive and financially responsible action plan.
- 3.1.4 This refreshed approach will have a particular focus on increasing canopy cover, improving tree equity, and targeting those areas of highest priority need. This work will assist in delivering all the Borough Plan's priorities, but in particular those focused on 'A Cleaner, Greener Future' and a 'Healthier Brent'.

## **3.2 Background**

- 3.2.1 The Draft Brent Tree Strategy sets out its context in relation to all related documents and recognises the positive impact that urban trees have on communities. It goes on to explain how our approach can be developed to ensure where possible we protect the trees that we already have, and that we maximise any increase in tree canopy cover, particularly focussing on areas of existing low canopy cover and creating equal access to the benefits of trees across the borough.
- 3.2.2 It describes the importance of trees in Brent and how they relate to the situation in Greater London. It explores their importance in the context of environmental designations and the essential role that trees play in the urban landscape for improving air quality, reducing urban heat island effect and interception of rainfall.

- 3.2.3 It discusses detail of species in relation to Brent's street tree population and how we can build species resilience both with the management of our trees and new planting. Canopy cover is then explored, in a borough wide context and canopy cover targets identified in a national and London context and how this could translate to Brent.
- 3.2.4 It identifies trees owned by the council and advises of the key departments who are responsible for managing them. It identifies how trees are surveyed and managed and the sorts of issues that put pressure on the Council to undertake tree works, such as risk of subsidence damage.
- 3.2.5 It goes onto explore the idea of tree equity and how all communities should have equal access to the benefits of trees and the benefits they offer to public health and wellbeing. The LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas) where there is both the highest and high priority for tree planting as identified using <https://uk.treeequityscore.org/> and these are identified as priority areas for tree planting.
- 3.2.6 How trees contribute to biodiversity in urban areas is identified and how street tree planting can play a crucial role in improving wildlife links and connectivity between green spaces and along streets; and how this together with the promotion of active travel can also bring nature closer to the places where people live, work and learn.
- 3.2.7 It identifies trees of importance that may be privately owned and explains a little regarding the protection of trees with Tree Preservation Orders, and in the more historical context of designated Conservation Areas.
- 3.2.8 It relates also to development and how important it is that existing trees of significance are retained where possible on development sites which together with the planting of new trees increase canopy cover over time to improve the urban environment. Policies on tree protection are included within the Brent Local Plan (2019-2041). The recent Defra Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric now requires a 10% net gain of biodiversity on most development sites, and this includes tree habitats. Trees and Woodlands will also be a major consideration in the production of our Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).
- 3.2.9 It explores our approach to tree planting, maintaining tree cover and increasing tree cover wherever this is possible, both within council sites and on other land wherever this can be achieved. We hope to be able to not only continue to work with existing community groups but also to foster new opportunities for the council and local communities to work together.
- 3.2.10 When we work successfully with community groups it is likely that there will be greater opportunities to obtain external funding through various sources, including from NCIL and s.106 agreements.
- 3.2.11 The action plan towards the end of the document defines a series of aims, supported by specific and measurable actions the council aspires to deliver on, that can be monitored and evaluated over time.

### **3.3 Consultation**

- 3.3.1 It is essential that we engage with residents, community groups, volunteer groups, schools, and local businesses and seek their views and comments on the strategy before we adopt it. The document will be issued for consultation for at least 6 weeks. It will be promoted on our website. A copy of the Draft Brent Tree Strategy will be placed at each of our libraries. The ability to comment will be provided on the citizen engagement platform, as well as separately in writing.

### **3.4 Next Stages**

- 3.4.1 Following the consultation, officers will consider the responses and recommend any appropriate changes necessary to the final Brent Tree Strategy. To reduce Cabinet business, if no substantive issues are raised which require Cabinet consideration, it is recommended that Cabinet delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Environment to consider the responses, any necessary changes and the final adoption of the Brent Tree Strategy.

### **3.5 Options**

- 3.5.1 There are essentially two options open to the Council.:

- a) Take forward a Draft Brent Tree Strategy, or
- b) Do not take forward a Draft Brent Tree Strategy.

#### **Option a) Take forward a Draft Brent Tree Strategy**

- 3.5.2 In this scenario, it is considered that all matters relating to trees will be accessible within the same document and will provide clear information on trees, policies relating to trees, canopy cover and working towards tree equity.
- 3.5.3 Option a) is recommended, with the Draft Brent Tree Strategy issued for consultation. Ultimately if adopted, the strategy will provide information relating to trees in one place and will help to encourage different teams across the council to work together more effectively.

#### **Option b) Do not take forward a Draft Brent Tree Strategy**

- 3.5.4 In this scenario, the Council is likely to retain and potentially increase the divergence between the working of teams which have an impact on trees. While the existing 2017 Tree Policy will remain, there will be no document that holistically takes forward new approaches such as tree equity and recent legislative changes relating to BNG and brings them all into one document. As such, Option b) is not recommended.

### **4.0 Stakeholder and Ward Member Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1 All key internal stakeholders have been consulted in the development of the document over the past 18 months to ensure that the document aligns with both the work and the aims of all teams with an interest in trees, this has included Climate Emergency, Highways Management, Healthy Streets and Parking and Parks and Green Infrastructure. Individual briefings have occurred with the Leader, Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement and the Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power.

## **5.0 Financial Considerations**

- 5.1 There are no specific budgetary implications relating to this report, as it is anticipated that any actions arising from the strategy will involve spending of existing budgets and bidding for additional funds as they become available, including external grants, NCIL and s.106 funding. Trees are a form of green infrastructure and funding should normally incorporate maintenance costs essential for their long-term health.

## **6.0 Legal Considerations**

- 6.1 There are no specific legal considerations other than set out in the main body of the report.

## **7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

- 7.1 The Draft Brent Tree Strategy will assist the Council to develop a positive approach between related teams to promote good tree management and increase canopy cover across the borough, with a focus on those areas with the highest priority need as identified by Tree Equity Score UK. This will positively impact upon a range of protected characteristics, helping to level the playing field for Brent residents, improving equity across the borough, and quality of life generally.

## **8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

- 8.1 The Draft Brent Tree Strategy will play a key role in our commitment to do all reasonable in our gift to aim for carbon neutrality for the borough by 2030 (Brent Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy, 2021-2030).
- 8.2 In a borough such as Brent trees will make a much more significant contribution to climate adaptation and resilience than to climate change mitigation and will help our communities to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change through providing cool shelter and water attenuation and minimising the urban heat island effect.

## **9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)**

- 9.1 None.

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

- 10.1 Support will be sought from the Communications team to publicise the consultation through a press release and notifications on the Council's social media accounts. It will feature on our website and on the citizen engagement platform. Members will be informed of the consultation through the Members' Bulletin. Individual groups that have an interest in environmental matters that the Council is aware of through its existing networks will also be notified.

**Report sign off:**

**Alice Lester**

Corporate Director

Neighbourhoods and Regeneration