

SAVE OUR MATURE TREES

'When we destroy nature, we undermine our very foundations.'
The England Trees Action Plan, UK Government 2021

"What we do over the next three to four years, I believe, is going to determine the future of humanity.' Sir David King, former chief Science Advisor to UK Government (Feb 2021)

OUR VISION 2022-25

Seeking mitigation and adaptation in policy, in the context of climate change, to better protect the mature trees we have.



Summary

We need to better protect existing trees! We would like to see the introduction of a programme of tree protection, using Stroud Green as the test case for a wider Haringey Tree Strategy policy. Mature street trees are falling between the cracks and no one is keeping a tally on how many are being lost to insurance claims.

Why? Because trees provide vital natural habitat for birds, insects and improve the mental and physical wellbeing of humans. They also provide a barrier to pollution and sequester carbon. Trees offer shade and are vital for combating the 'heat island effect', where urban areas are

significantly hotter and more storm-prone than rural areas due to human activity, and the excessive use of concrete and tarmac (see images below).

We are not adapting quickly enough!

With the seriousness of global warming ignored for so long, episodes of extreme heat in the UK have become the norm and are leading to unprecedented periods of drought. In the deepening climate emergency, these droughts will increase in length and intensity. Despite the mounting evidence showing the effects of drought on trees, management practices are not changing quickly enough, there is still a traditional business-as-usual approach being used, so trees are left unattended, unwatered, suffering from heat stress in small tarmacked soil pits.

In analysis of satellite data from cities in the UK and across Europe, trees are found to have a significant cooling effect in urban settings. This comes largely from shading and transpiration, when water vapour is released through their leaves. This process takes heat energy from the immediate environment for evaporation, lowering the surrounding temperature by around as much as 10 degrees.

At present mature trees are felled because they are said to be 'dead, diseased dying, or dangerous' - when we request information about trees we are just given these broad statements and no detail. These threats come primarily from insurance claims and development projects, but also councils. Trees are often felled with little notice being given to the community. Stumps are removed and tree pits are tarmacked over and then lost when utility providers use the vacated space. We know that in the last 14 years (since 2008) 2616+ street trees have been felled in Haringey alone. (See Appendix 1, p.17)

We know the tree department is stretched and underfunded, which has led to insufficient monitoring of felling, and trees have been consequently felled in error. We also know independent reports are not funded when a tree has high historic and natural value such as our mature London Plane trees.

'No one is counting how many trees are being lost to subsidence across the UK.'
(Russell Horsey)

Insurance claims on trees are increasing year on year - Haringey (on clay soil) has some of the highest numbers of claims in London, alongside Camden and Islington. Alarming, as Russell Horsey, arboriculturalist, has told us, 'No one is counting how many trees are being lost to subsidence across the UK.' Since the 1970s, insurance companies have moved in on trees, establishing a number of cases in tort law to allow them to blame trees for subsidence even if they are only a contributory factor. In a Guardian [news feature](#), Steve Fuller, chair of the London Tree Officers Association, says: *"Before the drought of 1976, we never had a claim against a tree. Now they are common."* He points out that many cases of subsidence have nothing to do with trees and are simply the result of periodic drought, global warming, the collapse of ageing sewers and the shallow foundations of most of Britain's Victorian and Edwardian homes."

Crucially, insurers are also not required to consider the climate impacts of demanding the removal of our street trees. Neither do they have to consider the ecological impacts of loss of habitat. Every tree sequesters carbon. Together our street trees form a carbon sink in the city. Every tree is also a habitat. And our street trees are our urban forest. The law is slanted in favour of the insurers. They can fell trees with impunity on carbon sinks lost.

When a tree is implicated in a subsidence claim there is a lack of transparency that leads to distrust. We need insurers to make open the evidence they find so that it can stand up to scrutiny that a tree is the main causation for the subsidence. All too often a tree is 'implicated' even if there is a single small root near foundations of a house.

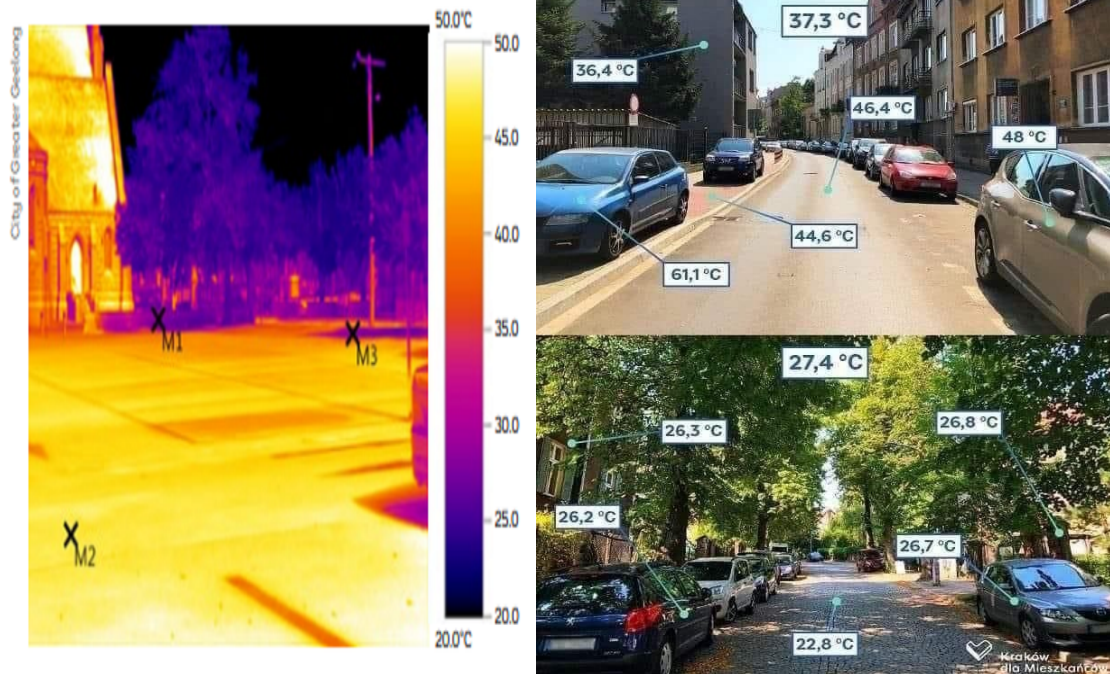
Politically, street trees are not sufficiently protected by either DEFRA or Natural England. Despite the recently published [England Tree Action Plan](#) (2021-24) we are still losing our street trees at an unacceptable and devastating level. [We need to tackle the climate and nature crises together.](#) Our statutes are currently inadequate - see the more recent Zero Hour Bill, the Environment Bill doesn't go far enough. We need proper central and local Government funding for street trees in order to preserve the trees we have.

A word on the local value of London Plane Trees

London Planes are a non-native species, and were introduced by the Victorians because of their huge canopy cover and their ability to mitigate air pollution. Each London Plane Tree sequesters on average one tonne of carbon during their lifespan. They can live for hundreds of years as opposed to many smaller or medium sized street trees that have an average life span of 8-10 years. The Victorians pruned London Plane Trees every year but cuts in funding and devaluing of our trees means we are no longer managing them in a positive way. This has led councils preferring now to plant smaller, slower growing trees. However, with atmospheric CO2 at 420ppm we are in a perilous situation. We need a moratorium on London Planes [whilst insurers and councils review their policies.](#) **

CAVAT

CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) is a system for evaluating the financial value of an amenity tree. This is useful for establishing the financial loss to the community in the felling of a tree and used in the Joint Mitigation Protocol. **Haringey Council have done a CAVAT valuation of the Oakfield Road tree and assessed it's CAVAT value as £ 64,000. If this figure is multiplied by the 33 trees that have insurance claims against them in the local vicinity, the total is £ 2,112, 000. If it is multiplied by 199, the number of trees that have claims against them across the whole of Haringey, that total is £ 12,736,000.**



Shade from street trees reduces surface temperatures by an average of 12°C and that concrete surfaces shaded permanently by a bank of trees are cooled by up to 20°C in the **summer**. (Jon Burke, Twitter Account.)

STROUD GREEN - a test case for a wider Haringey Tree Strategy

Given the importance of this issue, we would like to see the introduction of a programme of tree protection, using Stroud Green as the test case for a wider Haringey tree strategy policy to challenge insurance claims. Stroud Green currently has an unusual amount of insurance claims (33) on just two streets. And there are 200 further claims across the borough.

We have looked at policy and active tree management processes employed by other councils in order to reduce tree loss. We have also researched what is happening in other countries to protect mature trees from drought. From this, we propose a number of methods to be investigated and trialed:

Proposed Mitigation and Adaptation Measures

In the past, Haringey Council have attempted to establish [Tree Wardens](#) as initiated by the Tree Council. However, this initiative has somewhat died on the vine and needs reinvigorating or a new initiative could be launched called: **Street Tree Champions**. To help the council and communities work together, neighbourhood meetings, led by Councillors, could be established as a call to action for residents. Given the context of austerity and the cuts, councils have had to absorb costs and the only way forward to protect nature in the way we urgently need is for councils to empower communities to get involved in care. This will involve a cultural shift for the council, to let go, and to work **in co-production** with communities to create effective volunteer programmes, but this could reap dividends in terms of community cohesion. When a neighbourhood is cared for there is less crime and healthier states of mind.



1/ STREET TREE COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

A small team of tree champions would look after trees in a ward. Promoting residents to care for trees ([watering fortnightly 50L](#), if there is a drought). Checking tree health and reporting it to the council. See the work of ecologist Russell Horsey. Also see '[Berlin: The Whole City looks after its Trees](#)'.

Water the Neighbourhood,

Giess Den Kiez is a project set up by CITILAB Berlin which consists of an open source map listing all street trees in Berlin. Each tree has information about its species and the amount of water it requires to remain healthy. Community members water trees in their area and upload details about how much they have watered a given tree, creating a live document of tree watering in Berlin, that is publicly accessible. As

an open source mapping system, the software can be used in other cities if local councils have records of their own tree data.

This would require funding allocation for the tree department to have a dedicated person to collaborate with Community Tree Champions.

(Fig1. A tree pit in the Borough of Islington)

2/ STREET TREE IRRIGATION

Wider Tree Pits

Tree Pits are essential for successful community care. When other plants are in the base it reminds residents to water the tree if there is a period of dry weather. Tended tree pits create an atmosphere of care. Tarmac up to the stem causes buckle in pavements sometimes leading to complaints and then felling of that tree.

When street paving is in need of repair Tree Street Champions would inform the Tree and Highways Departments. An initial audit of tree pits would need to be conducted with the help of citizens uploading images. See Appendix 2 - tree pits on Oakfield Road where tarmac has been laid right to the trunk of the tree.

Leave Tree Stumps in Situ

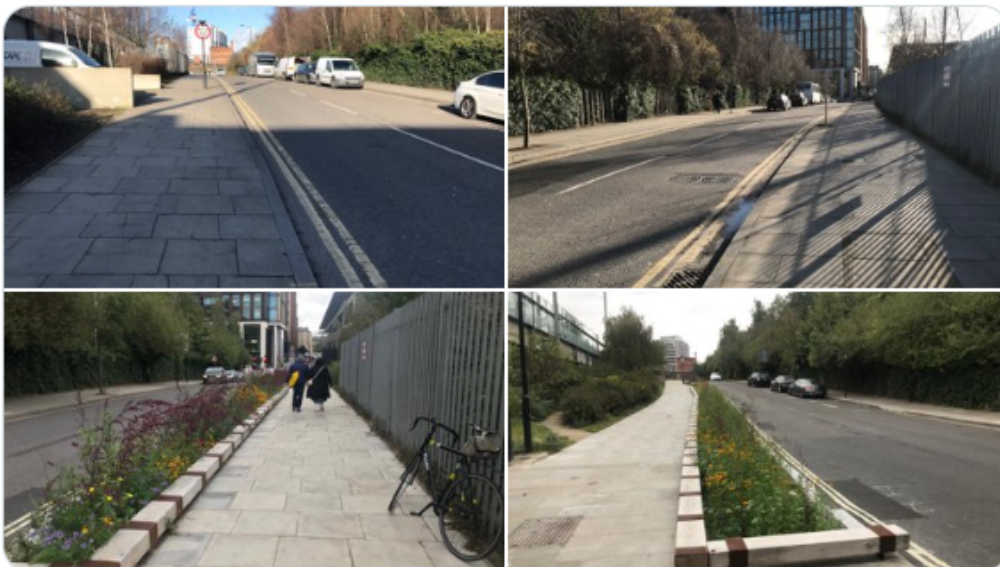
If a tree is removed, Bristol council leaves that stump in place until a new tree can be placed in that pit. If a stump is removed and the pit is tarmaced over the pit is then lost as often utility providers use the space. It is essential that pits are never lost. Paving over pits costs more money in the long run so it's better to leave the stumps in situ until a replacement tree is sourced.

SUDs

Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs) allow for more rain water to penetrate the ground and thereby reach a tree's roots. They could be implemented in Stroud Green if some parking spaces were removed and especially where new trees are planted (taking care to plant trees that can cope with pollutants). They could be experimented with to reduce flooding risk. We understand, SUDs close to mature trees would need to be carefully designed not to damage roots and would need to be uphill from a mature tree. Stroud Green did suffer flooding issues in

July/Aug 2021.

Camden Council have started experimenting with SUDs - see the image below



*Fig. 2 and 3
Before and After
pictures of
SUDs in Camley
Street*

Urban Orchards

In areas away from polluting busy roads, areas of fruit trees could be planted. The local community could be involved in the planting of these and they can be focus points for education. The fruit would be available for the public to pick, further engaging the public with the importance of trees and our dependence upon them. There are currently urban orchards in Lordship Recreation Area and on Avenue Road. Parklets are also a growing trend and option for planting and irrigation, where roads are being filtered to stop through traffic in neighbourhoods.

Urban Micro Gardens

There are many small unused places within the urban environment that could be planted. Lifeless tarmaced surfaces could be opened to create small growing spaces in a similar way to SUDs. These spaces can further develop engagement with the public about the importance of plants and also act as water sinks allowing water into the ground. At the moment, the majority of our urban spaces are impenetrable to water, and excess water runs into the drainage system.



This leaves the topsoil dehydrated in times of dry weather, so that trees and vegetation search further for water. It also means that in heavy rain, drainage systems can be overwhelmed and cause flooding. By increasing the amount of urban space that is open ground and planted, the hydration of the soil is potentially increased and the pressure of the drainage system reduced. Camden are experimenting with creating gulleys into tree pits.

Fig 4. Gulleys draining rain water from the streets to be directed into the tree pit, Kentish Town, Camden Council

Further afield, Rotterdam and Amsterdam recently took part in a competition to see who could create the most new green space by lifting paving tiles. [See this link to find out who won.](#)

Urban Irrigation Research

Research needs to be done about efficient ways of creating urban irrigation systems based on permaculture principles, so that waste kitchen water from homes can be used to water private gardens and street trees, and stabilise the ground saturation level during dry times bearing in mind that soapy water is not good for trees.

Permeable materials

Where tree pits cannot be dug due to pavement width there are new permeable materials that can be laid. Crucially, Highways Departments need to work together with the Tree Departments to work out which street trees are most vulnerable and where enlarged tree pits are not possible.

Government policy, [Permeable surfacing of front gardens: guidance \(2009\)](#), states that front gardens larger than 5 m squared should use permeable materials. Central and Local Government's could be doing more to encourage residents not to tarmac over front gardens especially to create carports.



Fig 4. Highgate, Swain's Lane, Permeable tarmac.

3/ STREET TREE POLLARDING and REPLANTING, NEW PLANTING

Gentler Pollarding

We accept pollarding has been used in London for some tree species, but times have changed, and we want a gentler more regular programme e.g. on a 2 year pollarding cycle, every year doing every other tree so that some leaf cover remains to provide shade and habitat for birds, and to provide natural barriers against polluting particulates. Although this seems outside budgetary constraints we could explore together applying for increased funding from central Government.

Replacement Trees

We would like a commitment going forward from the council that if a tree has to be removed that a replacement tree is always provided. This will ensure the quality of the street environment is not degraded. If it is a mature tree then three trees in replacement.

Adopt/Sponsor a Tree

Residents in Haringey can Sponsor a Tree for £200 or £250 depending on whether they are willing to water the tree. This scheme is welcomed. However, we would like to know what number of trees the council will plant each year and how they will decide where to place the ones that are paid for by the council.

4/ STREET TREE COMMUNICATIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND PROTOCOLS

Website

We understand Haringey is currently mapping every tree in the borough (street and parks). Camden have created a **Tree Map** and a **Planned Trees Work** map to create transparency around tree work planned in the borough. Camden Councils' tree map includes the amounts of CO2 and pollution each listed tree absorbs yearly, as well as its CAVAT value. We want to know when this mapping work in Haringey will become public and what the community can do to help?

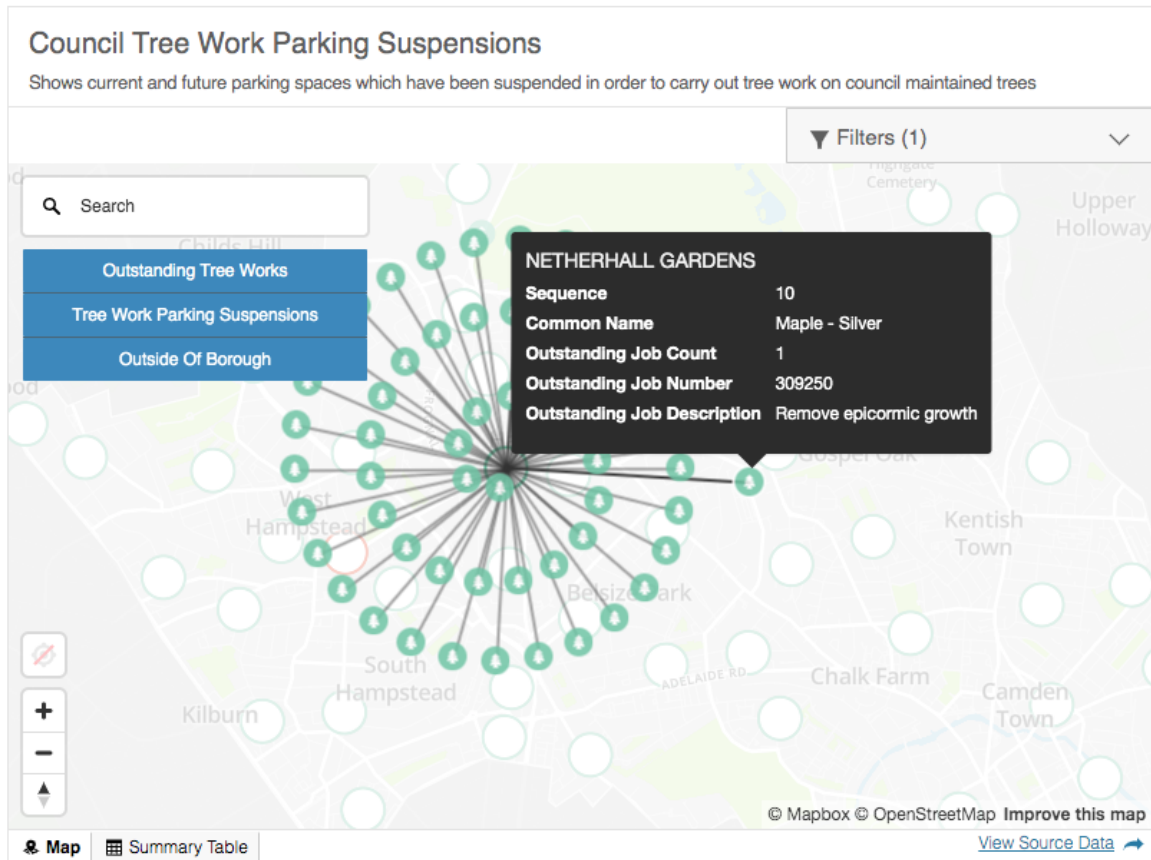


Fig. 5 Camden Council have mapped every street tree in the borough. Each tree has a notice of work attached.

Joint Mitigation Protocol

The JMP is a protocol designed to mitigate conflict between Tree Officers and the insurance industry. Under the protocol, a tree that is involved in an insurance subsidence claim is pruned back to the crown size prior to the start of the subsidence issue, in order to reduce the amount of water the tree takes up from the ground. The tree and soil is then independently monitored for a fixed period of time. In North London, Islington, Camden and Barnet are currently signed up to the JMP.

INSURANCE SUSTAINABILITY POLICIES

Insurers currently state that trees only need to be 'a contributory factor' for them to be felled. We would like to work with the council to determine a change in policy so that trees are only removed if they are the main factor and that irrigation methods have been attempted to alleviate water stress for the tree before it is felled. We want insurers to expand their alternative measures, for their sustainability policies to be updated so that the felling of trees is the last option.

Partnerships

The Sheffield Tree Plan is a partnership plan. Sheffield Council works in partnership with nature organisations and local community committees to devise a tree care strategy e.g. the Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trust, CPRE, Trees for Cities. We see this as essential to achieve the level of mitigations required.

Work with other Local Councils to protect trees

Camden and Haringey are both built on London clay soil causing increased levels of subsidence. To what extent are they working together to mitigate these problems and learn from one another? We want Haringey to be at the forefront of mature tree protection by working with other councils in their increasing knowledge of clay soils and how they impact on buildings. See the [excellent work of Peter Barry](#).

5/ EDUCATING RESIDENTS

Tree Education in Schools

As a society we need to value our trees more. In India they have recently passed a law that protects the rights of nature. In order to nurture care for trees the council could run a programme in schools whereby primary schools plant native trees, do tree walks, tree surveys and get involved in care programmes. Trees could be celebrated in schools with regular art competitions whereby children are encouraged to know their favourite trees. This mirrors the new Dept for Education Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy which has at its heart the development of the UK school estate as a National Education Nature Park increasing native biodiversity, and children's love and experience of the natural world.

Public Information Campaigns

The general public values trees so specific council public campaigns can be run, in a similar way to the council Covid information campaigns, to inform the public about the importance of watering street trees with their waste grey water. Similar campaigns can be run about the importance of collecting rainwater. In Australia, everyone is conscious of water use and ways of collecting and saving water. As our summers get hotter, we need to start being aware of this too, rather than taking water for granted.

Webinar/People's Assemblies

Ideally, we would like to see Neighbourhood Meetings, and then a wider People's Assembly to alert residents to a renewed effort to save our mature trees. People's Assemblies would feature expert speakers such as Russell Horsey or a spokesperson from CITILAB, Berlin to gather resident's views on the way forward so that we can decide together. This kind of event deepens democracy and will yield 'buy in' from residents and a better co-production outcome.

We are offering to help develop these meetings with the council officers and local councillors. Ward Councillors could lead these neighbourhood meetings.

Haringey Tree Protectors are a 100 + group of active campaigners with a great range of skills from marketing, communications, copywriting, tree expertise, ecology, etc...

WHAT NEXT?

Short term

We want the vulnerable streets in Stroud Green to be used as a test case for attempting new methods. We would like a meeting to establish which mitigations/adaptations can be trialed in Oakfield Road/Stapletonhall Roads. Also a People's Assembly to be organised in partnership between the Stroud Green Councillors and Haringey Tree Protectors involving expert speakers. **In the meantime we would like a moratorium on the felling of our street trees until a more protective policy is in place.**

Medium term

We want all of Stroud Green to have Tree Pits widened and SUDs installed subject to the outcome of the first trial. We would like to build and communicate a citizen led watering trial.

Long term

For Haringey Tree Policy to be co produced so that tree champions are used to create a process whereby communities can support the tree protection work undertaken by the council. This policy will also be developed in partnership with the Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trust etc and in the context of the Nature Recovery Plan mandated by the central Government. We want the council to work with us to mobilise for legislative change that requires insurance companies to take into consideration climate and nature impacts of their policies.

Conclusion

We are facing existential climate breakdown and droughts will only increase, alternating with storms and heavy precipitation as witnessed in Crouch End and Stroud Green in the Summer of 2020.

Our street trees are also facing environmental stress also from air pollution and delivery vans knocking into them and breaking off branches. Shade will be essential to residents in the coming years to combat the 'heat island effect'.

We want to work with the council to achieve better outcomes for trees. We empathise with the challenges the council face over resourcing and as volunteers will seek to support you on building community-led additional resourcing in the service of nature recovery.

But we do need greater funding for trees. We need a Parks and Trees Department that is fit for the 21st challenges with a renewed focus on trialling mitigations and adaptations if we are to meet our climate targets.

We need the council to work with us to fight for insurers to adapt their policies so that carbon and nature impacts are considered and insurers take corporate responsibility for reducing requests to fell trees. We need the council to work with us to fight for a strong departmental remit for Street Trees. This needs to be a national campaign and would also be pertinent to other councils.

OUR TEN ASKS

1. For the council to sign up to the LTOA's Joint Mitigation Protocol
2. We need a fully funded trees department comparable with those in neighbouring boroughs; Hackney has 11 tree specialists
3. Updating, publication and implementation of the *Haringey Tree Strategy* that seeks to protect every living tree with the partnership of citizens and organisations like the Woodland Trust (co-production key here)
4. The council to support citizen/community-led tree protection schemes to set up (watering and health reports) and to increase active management of mature trees to avoid fellings - Pits and SUDs, Parklets etc
5. For the council to communicate with residents through digital tree mapping - including all works scheduled - as in Camden Council.
6. The council to work with local residents' groups and national organisations to bring about legislative changes, requiring insurance companies to take into account the climatic and ecological impacts of their policies and practices
7. Councillors to work with us to organise neighbourhood meetings and a people's assembly, with expert speakers, in order to engage residents in a new campaign to save our mature trees
8. Leave Stumps in Situ so that pits never lost - all trees felled must be replaced by equivalent tree canopy (e.g. if mature Plane then 3-4 small trees)
9. Work actively with all departments within the borough to ensure that all, including Finance and Highways, are signed up to these values.
10. The tree outside No 63 to be a test case for how to address subsidence issues without felling.



*A mini tree pit garden, Hornsey, created by a **caring resident**.*

Related Policy Documents

CAMDEN

Camden Tree Planting Policy 2020-2025

<https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/5268201/Camden+Tree+Planting+Strategy.pdf>

Inspection and Maintenance

<https://www.camden.gov.uk/trees>

They have a Tree Map and an outstanding Tree Work Map detailing work currently planned

Tree Policy 2015

<https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/5268201/Camden+trees+policy.pdf/ac911622-85ff-1d4c-a622-53e7ae71bcc2>

They have signed up to the Joint Mitigation Protocol

<https://www.ltoa.org.uk/resources/joint-mitigation-protocol>

BRISTOL

Tree loss and subsidence is avoided through active tree management

Tree Management Policies

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/32823/Tree+management+policy+2016/049b3533-d4df-4161-a2f8-a63da223530e#:~:text=Policy%3A%20we%20do%20not%20prune,be%20too%20big%20or%20tall.&text=1.,doesn't%20make%20it%20dangerous.>

Leeds and Manchester are also pursuing active policies to protect mature trees.

London Urban Forest Plan

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/londonurbanforestplan_final.pdf

Valuing London's Urban Forest

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/valuing_londons_urban_forest_i-tree_report_final.pdf

Street Tree Heroes

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/protecting-trees-and-woods/street-trees/street-tree-heroes/>

CAVAT

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03071375.2018.1454077>

Berlin: Giess Den Kiez, 'Water the Neighbourhood'

<https://giessdenkiez.de>

Netherlands Tile Removing Competition

<https://www.optimistdaily.com/2021/02/rival-dutch-cities-create-tile-removing-competition-to-expand-green-space/>

Permeable Surfacing of Front Gardens legislation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/permeable-surfacing-of-front-gardens-guidance>

FloodRe needed... TreeRe

<https://www.floodre.co.uk/how-flood-re-works/>

Peter Barry on Clay Soils

<https://www.peterbarry.co.uk/blog/clay-soils-subsidence-heave-trees-roots-part-3/>

Advisors

Russell Horsey, Ecologist.

Appendices

1. Loss of trees Haringey Council since 2008 - released through FOI

F/Y	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total
Number of new street trees planted	768	665	273	368	308	404	480	165	73	50	116	79	278	4,027
Total number of street trees removed	234	169	187	259	272	225	135	122	113	170	267	322	137	2,616

See over page

2. State of TREE PITS - Oakfield Road, 2022

