

Hackney Housing Regeneration Trees and Biodiversity Statement

March 2023

Corporate context

Tackling Hackney's housing crisis and addressing the climate emergency are two of the Council's core priorities. These two priorities are aligned and complimentary. The building of new homes should provide a net gain to biodiversity, deliver an increase in the numbers of trees in the borough and deliver a contribution to Hackney's green infrastructure.

Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy statement is to set out the Council's approach and priorities to trees and biodiversity as part of its current and future housing regeneration projects.

It will ensure that the Council takes a consistent approach to trees and biodiversity and will be included in the Housing Regeneration programme handbook and will form part of the design brief for the design teams on new projects.

Policy background

Below are summaries of key national, regional and local tree and biodiversity policies (open links for further information):

The National Planning Policy Framework notes that trees make an important contribution to character, quality and climate. Opportunities should be taken to incorporate new trees and retain existing trees wherever possible¹.

Tree Protection Orders (TPO) protect specific trees; they can only be taken down or pruned with written consent from Hackney's Planning Authority. A TPO is used to preserve a tree with high amenity for the local area - it can be very old or unusual, it should add to the local area it is standing - the tree should also have long term potential in the location where it is standing - be able to grown to its natural shape and form (this is not always possible)².

The London Plan states that development proposals should ensure that existing trees of value are retained wherever possible, with veteran trees and ancient woodland protected. Where trees must be removed, they should be adequately replaced using an appropriate valuation system³.

The London Plan draft Urban Greening Factor is a tool to evaluate the quality and quantity of urban greening in development proposals. It gives surface treatments different scores that

¹ [National Planning Policy Framework](#) paragraphs: 131(pg 39), 174d (pg 50) and 180c (pg 52)

² [Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas - GOV.UK](#)

³ [London Plan 2021](#) policies: G7 B and C (pg 329)

are weighted based on their potential for rainwater infiltration. The tool encourages the retention of existing trees through a high scoring factor⁴. ([Urban Greening Factor](#) London Plan Guidance)

Hackney's adopted Local Plan - LP33 - states that developments in Hackney's major corridors and areas such as Shoreditch and Hoxton will have a focus on urban greening, maximising biodiversity benefits and enhancing green infrastructure. The removal of non-protected trees as part of development schemes will not be supported unless adequate replacement planting is proposed, or the removal is in the interests of good arboricultural practice⁵.

Although the borough is densely developed and populated, Hackney remains one of the greenest inner London boroughs.

Housing Regeneration projects are also aligned with [Hackney's Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) , to be adopted in 2023. Recognising that housing led regeneration projects provide an opportunity for additional targeted and coordinated delivery of green infrastructure that goes beyond the incremental 'site by site' greening that will be delivered as general development comes forward in the rest of the borough.

Creating green infrastructure will provide a major contribution to adapting to and managing the local impact of climate change whilst making a local contribution to reversing climate change.

The planting of more trees in the public realm will assist in providing shade and reducing the urban heat island effect. Trees are also recognised as one of a number of environmental elements that are most likely to deliver diverse and multifunctional green infrastructure and integrated into wider sustainable urban drainage systems.

The enhancement of Hackney's housing estates offers a substantial opportunity to improve the borough's green infrastructure and increase biodiversity in the borough. Estate based interventions may include:

- Improving habitat for wildlife in line with the recommendations in the Hackney Local Nature Recovery Plan;
- The transformation of underused areas of hard impermeable surfaces to create new communal green spaces;
- Planting trees and other vegetation to help create shade and reduce ambient temperatures in summer;
- Creating additional food-growing and outdoor socialising areas.

Housing Regenerations commitment on trees and biodiversity

⁴ [Urban Greening Factor Guidance](#): Calculating the UGF paragraph 3.1 and table 3.1 (pg 8)

⁵ [Hackney Local Plan 2033](#) policies:

PP5 Enhanced Corridors Vision paragraph 4.42 (pg 36)

PP8 Shoreditch and Hoxton Vision paragraph 4.75 (pg 49)

LP46 Protection and Enhancement of Green Infrastructure policy A (pg 153)

LP48 New Open Space policies A, B and D (pg 159/60)

LP49 Green Chains and Green Corridors policy A (pg 160)

Housing Regeneration are committed to:

- Ensuring that Housing Regeneration's development activities are aligned to the Hackney Green Infrastructure Strategy and make an overall net gain contribution to the green infrastructure of Hackney.
- Ensuring a net gain in biodiversity for each individual housing led regeneration project and across the Council's housebuilding programme - in line with the Council's latest planning rules which state that any new development in Hackney should leave biodiversity in a better state than before. This will be measured using [DEFRA's biodiversity metric](#).
- Requiring that all newly commissioned Housing regeneration schemes except the smallest sites where space may be limited will achieve an Urban Greening Factor (UGF) of at least 0.4, in line with the London Plan.
- Retention of existing trees on all new developments. Should this be not possible then transplanting will be explored as the first option, if this is not possible, a replacement tree will be planted for every tree that is removed - ensuring no net loss of trees.
- Transforming underused areas of hard landscape or green spaces on estates to make these outdoor areas more biodiverse, shaded and usable.
- As part of each project contract landscape architects and public realm designers will be required to deliver a bespoke landscaping and arboricultural strategy on each project and to include a medium to long term management plan.
- Consider the removal of barriers to movement and permeability, such as fences and walls within housing estates, to create more obvious desire routes for walking and cycling.
- Engaging with local residents on each project to identify what residents value most. This will help to ensure that improvements to biodiversity and communal spaces are informed by residents' priorities.
- Ensuring that the trees planted will be looked after once the schemes have been completed ensuring there is a 2 year defect liability period for all landscape plantings.
- Ensuring that Housing regeneration communicates with estates residents about all estate based tree and biodiversity proposals - including where trees need to be removed and replaced. Refer to the [Woodberry Down Tree Task and Finish Group recommendations](#) for how to better communicate and engage with residents.

What this policy statement doesn't mean is that no tree will ever need to be replaced or any grassed area affected.

Making the best use of the land the Council owns to tackle the housing crisis can require reconfiguring estates to accommodate new Council homes but it will always be seen alongside improvements to communal spaces to benefit both current and new residents.

In each case the Council will work alongside the community to design outdoor communal areas that work for residents, improve biodiversity and help tackle climate change.