

# Lambeth Biodiversity Action Plan 2019 - 2024



**“It is written on the arched sky; it looks out from every star. It is the poetry of nature; it is that which uplifts the spirit within us.”**

**John Ruskin – Lambeth Resident, Poet, Philosopher and Nature Lover**



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## 1. Summary Statement

At first glance, packed with housing, busy streets, concrete or tarmac hardstanding, and well-manicured parks and open spaces, the casual observer might be tempted to think that there is no space or place for wildlife in the Borough of Lambeth. However, this is not the case. Lambeth is rich in wildlife, not just wildlife habitats like gardens, parks, ponds, trees, woodlands, community gardens, allotments and railway linesides, but also many different species of wild plants and animals that use these habitats for shelter, feeding or breeding.

In terms of the richness and abundance of wildlife – often termed ‘biological diversity’ or ‘biodiversity’, Lambeth is exceptionally lucky. However, we often don’t see our wildlife or don’t fully appreciate what we have, and the important contribution it makes to the biodiversity of London or the UK as a whole.

Lambeth is home to many wildlife habitats and species which are relatively common and abundant in London or even the UK, and which add variety and colour to the lives of people living in, working in or visiting the borough. Though not under any immediate threat, these habitats and species still need looking after and managed so they don’t get out of control or we end up putting their future wellbeing at risk by inappropriate management or neglect.



**Plate 1. Summer displays of wildflowers on Clapham Common and Lambeth Walk Doorstep Green, respectively, add colour and biodiversity to our borough and lives**

Lambeth also contains a number of wildlife habitats and species that are relatively uncommon in London or the UK, or are even declining in area, range or abundance due to changes in the way we manage the environment or other factors. Some of these rare or threatened habitats and species have important historical or social links with London and Lambeth, such as the house sparrow, or act as important ‘indicators’ of the health of our natural and physical environment, and so arresting or reversing their decline or loss could result in improvements to the quality of our own lives and that of future generations living or working in Lambeth.

It's all very well to say we must protect wildlife and improve biodiversity in Lambeth, but we often don't have information to hand to tell us where that wildlife value or interest is, what condition it's in, or what we can do to protect and improve Lambeth's wildlife and biodiversity. We also need something that can be used to promote the value and importance of Lambeth for wildlife and biodiversity, so that people become more aware of what they can do to look after and protect wildlife habitats and species in Lambeth, and help them avoid taking action that might conflict with the needs of wildlife.

The Lambeth Biodiversity Action Plan, or 'Lambeth BAP', is a document designed to help provide the information we all need to protect Lambeth's wildlife and biodiversity. It provides this information in a way which is accessible to all, regardless of background, previous knowledge or interest, so that novice and expert alike can understand what is required and what can be done to protect what we have and make it even better for future generations.

The Lambeth BAP will encourage all those living and working in Lambeth with a responsibility for, or an interest in, the protection of wildlife and biodiversity to work together to continue doing, or improving on, what's working well, and avoid taking action or making decisions that might harm or impact upon Lambeth's wildlife status or biodiversity value.



**Plate 2. Corporate volunteers planting a native wildlife hedge in Norwood Park, as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded 'Great North Woods' project in winter 2018**

## 2. Foreword

The Lambeth Biodiversity Action Plan is a major milestone for every member of our community in Lambeth that has a great love of the environment, myself included. Lambeth is among one of the most diverse places in London and Great Britain in terms of its people, languages, culture and religions, but our diversity is also reflected in the richness of all forms of life, not just people, but also plants and animals, and the places and habitats they live in.

Just a day spent walking around Lambeth will show even the casual visitor just how lucky we are in terms of wild plants, animals and many different types of wildlife habitat, some common and widespread, others rare or even endangered in London or the UK as a whole. A walk in Brockwell Park, Clapham Common, Norwood Park or Ruskin Park will provide ample evidence of how much wildlife we have in the borough.



**Plate 3. The Walled Garden in Brockwell Park, where providing horticultural excellence and promoting biodiversity go hand in hand**

All of these plants and animals contribute to and sustain the 'biological diversity' of Lambeth and the richness of nature seen, valued and enjoyed by all who live in, work in and visit it.

Everyone who lives in the London Borough of Lambeth has a central role to play in and a responsibility for protecting, enhancing and promoting our wildlife and biodiversity. Lambeth Council recognises and reflects this by making sure the protection and improvement of our biodiversity is at the heart of all of our community and corporate priorities.

However, to do this effectively we need information and advice as well the tools to know what we can do and should be doing in real and practical terms. The Lambeth Biodiversity Action Plan is designed to provide that guidance as well as practical advice so that our aspirations and good intentions are turned into practical actions to help and protect our biodiversity.

The plan shows what can be done, but also when this needs to be done, who needs to be doing it, and what the benefits will be to both local wildlife and us.



**Plate 4. Frontage of the 'Garden Museum' in Waterloo, one of Lambeth's flagship sites for promoting wildlife-friendly gardening to its residents but Londoners as a whole**

It shows how what we do for biodiversity links in to other important policies, obligations and initiatives, such as making and keeping Lambeth safe, clean and green, as well as preventing and curbing pollution, widening the use and enjoyment of natural resources by all of Lambeth's diverse communities, and improving the quality of our open spaces and heritage features.

Producing a Biodiversity Action Plan is not the end of a journey: in fact, we're just beginning on what will be a complex and often challenging experience but I, like many others, are pleased that this process has begun and look forward to its outcomes and successes.

The adoption, publication and application of the Lambeth Biodiversity Action Plan demonstrates Lambeth's commitment to its global, national and local environmental responsibilities, and its determination to make the borough a better place for all its residents, both human and wild.

My personal thanks must go to the staff of Lambeth Council, and to the many partners and stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of the Lambeth Biodiversity Plan, who together have made its design, adoption and application possible.

**Councillor Sonia Winifred, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture**

### 3. Introduction

Lambeth is an inner London borough strongly defined by its built and natural environment. Although few immediately realise it, Lambeth's biodiversity – its richness of life and its natural features – plays a significant role in defining and influencing this environment, and how it is managed, developed and improved. At first glance packed with private and social housing, busy streets and pavements, concrete and tarmac hardstanding, and well-manicured parks and open spaces, the casual observer might think there isn't any space in Lambeth for wildlife. However that's not the case.

Lambeth is rich in wildlife. It's not just rich in wildlife habitat - the places wildlife likes to live such as parks, gardens, allotments and railway linesides, it's also rich in a surprising diversity of wild plants and animals that use these habitats for shelter, feeding, breeding or travel.



**Plate 4. View of the pond in the Nature Conservation Area in Myatt's Fields Park**

Lambeth's wildlife includes species heavily protected by law from disturbance and harm such as bats and many different nesting birds including common swift, black redstart and sparrowhawks, as well as a number of rare invertebrates such as the greater stag beetle and white-letter hairstreak butterfly.

The borough is fortunate to contain 45 'Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation' (SINCs) as well as one designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) at Streatham Common, with another three proposed LNRs at Eardley Road Sidings, Palace Road Nature Garden and Unigate Wood. It cannot be said that Lambeth is deficient in wildlife interest nor in places where wildlife can find a home and be seen and experienced by the general public.

The Lambeth Biodiversity Action Plan (Lambeth BAP) replaces an older version adopted by the borough in 2007. Although this has proved its value in helping recognise and protect Lambeth's biodiversity, and in encouraging action to improve and promote it, it needs to be updated. This is in order to take account of changes in the way the borough is being managed and used, as well as recent or ongoing changes in local, regional and national policy relating to wildlife, land use and land development.

The Lambeth BAP has been produced by the London Borough of Lambeth in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including the many community groups that help look after its parks, allotments, housing estates, gardens and other green spaces, as well as voluntary and environmental sector organisations, businesses and local residents. All of these groups and individuals will be involved in implementation of the Lambeth BAP.

The Lambeth BAP:

- Provides guidance to landowners and developers of land on the various types of enhancements for biodiversity that will be expected of them on land they currently own or on any proposed new developments.
- Includes background information on how it fits in with other council policies and initiatives, and with national and London-wide policies and other biodiversity initiatives.
- Identifies a number of priority habitats for the borough and describes a set of realistic objectives and where appropriate, achievable targets for what will need to be done to ensure these habitats are conserved and improved over the BAP's lifetime. Each priority habitat also recognises any important species that benefit from such habitats and their protection and positive management.

This is done through both guidance and the implementation of a range of projects or activities, whether by council or partner organisations, which deliver the conservation and improvement of these priority habitats, and by inference the wildlife species that depend on them and biodiversity in general across the whole borough.

#### **4. What is Biodiversity?**

['Biodiversity'](#) is a term used to describe the variety of all life on Earth, and includes all of the plants and animals found on it, both wild and domesticated, as well as human life. However, it doesn't just apply to the entire Earth, as it can also apply to the richness of life in any part of the Earth, and at any particular time of its existence.

Biodiversity is also a measure of how many different forms of life are present in a given place, and how they contribute to the diversity of natural processes on the planet. The greater the number of different individual forms of life – or 'species' – in a given place, and the greater the contribution made by each life form to the functioning of the Earth or a particular place on it, then the more 'biodiverse' that place is.

Biodiversity also includes the concept of 'habitats', places where species live and interact together as a community. A site with many different habitats, each used by a different community of species, is a very biodiverse one, whereas a site with only one dominant habitat or one dominant species is less biodiverse. Compare a well-managed lowland organic farm with lots of wildlife features, with an intensively managed lowland farm which uses lots of chemicals and few wildlife features: the former is a much more biodiverse place.

Biodiversity also introduces the term 'ecosystem', which describes a complex network of living and non-living systems which all interact together. Ecosystems can be extremely diverse but also quite complex and difficult to manage or sometimes understand, but we still need to consider them when we are managing species and habitats.

Lambeth has plenty of species and different habitats (some common, some rare) and a diverse mixture of ecosystems. This means that what applies to the Earth as a whole also applies to Lambeth, although on a much smaller scale.



**Plate 5. View of the Flower Garden in Kennington Park, recently restored to provide features of importance of nature conservation including the small pond**

## **5. Biodiversity in Lambeth – Challenges and Opportunities**

Biodiversity can be local to where we live, work, play and study. This includes a borough like Lambeth, and we have proof that that the borough is a biodiverse one. That means we also need to be looking after Lambeth's biodiversity and everything that's part of it.

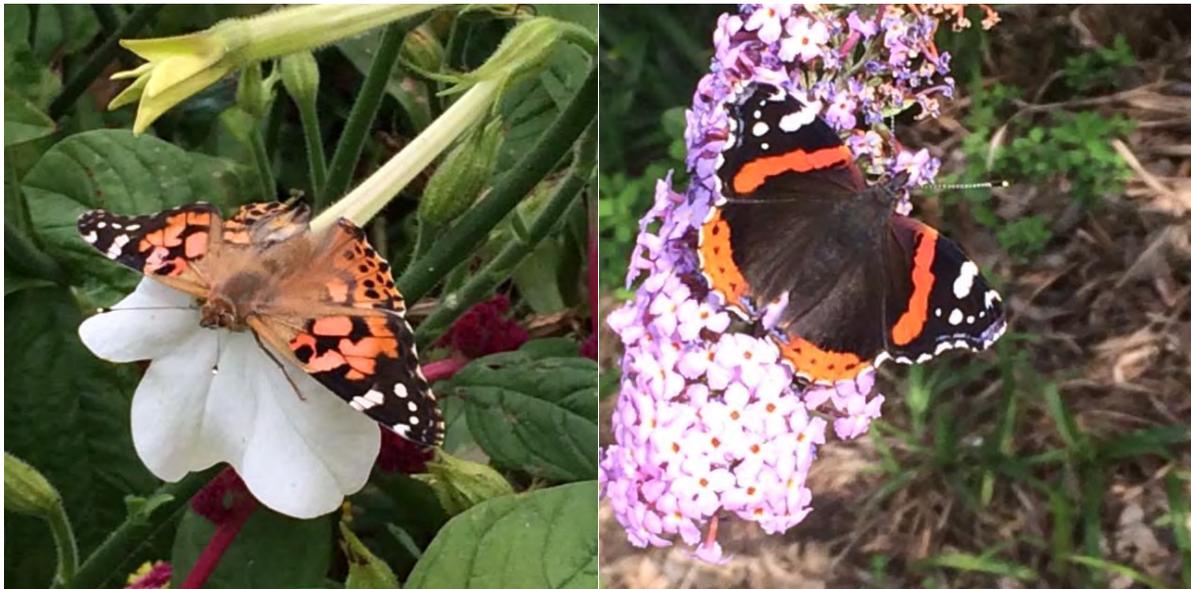
In 2007 the Mayor of London commissioned London Wildlife Trust and Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL, [www.gigl.org.uk](http://www.gigl.org.uk)), London's environmental records centre, to undertake a detailed field survey of all the wildlife habitats within the London Borough of Lambeth. This was originally part of the Mayor's rolling 'London Borough's Habitat Survey' programme, designed to ensure boroughs had access to current and relevant information on wildlife habitats within their area.

This ecological information would subsequently enable them to make informed decisions on what sites they wished to designate for wildlife conservation and protection, as well as what management actions were felt appropriate to retain and improve the ecological interest of their wildlife sites or other areas of ecological interest.

The results for Lambeth were staggering, with a total of 695 hectares of land initially identified as containing 'habitats of interest', which equates to over 25% of the total land area for the borough (2,727 hectares) – an impressive figure for a heavily urbanised inner part of London.

Many of these sites were subsequently visited and around 280 hectares, 45 sites in all, were then recommended as being of sufficient wildlife importance to be formally designated for their value for biodiversity in the borough. However, the other 415 hectares of sites, although they didn't contain the abundance and diversity of natural or wildlife features like the ones above, still contained habitats and species that had ecological value, and still mattered as open spaces that contributed to the lives and wellbeing of Lambeth's residents and communities.

The surveys showed that Lambeth contained an equally impressive list of wild plants and animals, most common, but with some rare or endangered species, across many parts of the borough. Many of the priority sites described above were identified based on the abundance and diversity of wildlife species they contained, such as Lambeth's woodlands, cemeteries and churchyards, allotments and large heritage parks or commons. Other priority sites were included where it was shown they provided valuable and sometimes irreplaceable places of refuge for unusual, uncommon, increasingly rare or endangered species, such as ancient or veteran trees, hedgehogs, house sparrows, stag beetles and bats.



**Plate 6. Painted Lady and Red Admiral butterflies in Myatt's Fields Park**

However, 280 hectares out of 2,727 – around 10% of the borough – identified as being of significant biodiversity value isn't as good as it first sounds when compared to Lambeth's neighbouring boroughs such as Southwark (12%), Wandsworth (17%), Westminster (18%) and Croydon (25%).

This shows, like previous surveys, that Lambeth is still deficient in terms of good quality natural open spaces, a situation complicated by the fact that some of these wildlife sites are not freely accessible to the public to experience nature, such as extensive railway linesides, school grounds and even the grounds of Lambeth Palace.

Further complicating matters is the fact that Lambeth, like many other London boroughs, is experiencing significant increases in its human population, conservatively estimated at around 320,000 (and probably an underestimation of the true figure).

As a result many open spaces in the borough are under constant pressure of being lost to development for private, social and mixed housing, and provision of essential infrastructure to support this growing population like new or expanded schools, hospitals and surgeries, wider roads and railway lines, and places to build offices, shops and business units.

One other challenge is how we perceive what is 'natural' or 'managed'. Many natural open spaces in Lambeth can be seen as 'unmanaged', 'underused' or 'undervalued', especially if they look – to the untrained eye – unkempt, untidy or dominated by trees, scrub and uncut grassland. People tend to view well-manicured and heavily landscaped public open spaces as of greater value, especially if they contain features they use or expect to be present in an open space like playgrounds, sports pitches or games courts, cafes and gardens. Rather than lose these sites to necessary development, some people can argue that wilder or more 'natural' sites can be sacrificed to build more houses, flats, schools and shops.

This is not the case nor is it justified. Many sites managed primarily for wildlife interest play a vital role in providing residents with free access to nature, or enabling informal play, exercise and relaxation close to where they live. Such sites also act as 'buffer land' between people's homes and more industrial or noise, dust and traffic-ridden areas, helping counter the effects of poor air quality and pollution. They provide vital 'sponges' to capture and store excess rain and surface flood water, protecting our streets and homes. Without these sites, Lambeth would be far more vulnerable to extremes of weather and climate change, and the harmful effects on our own health from air, noise and water pollution.

Previously-held perceptions of where we should find or have wildlife is also changing. Many public parks and formal open spaces contain areas managed in a more natural way such as wildflower-rich meadows or species rich grassland, plus ponds, streams and wetlands that provide important homes for numerous wildlife habitats and species. There is also a growing commitment by council and community to increase the area covered by naturalised areas within public open spaces, and create additional wildlife features integrated into formal ones.

Lambeth's wildlife is far more widespread and integrated into existing open spaces and other sites than at first imagined. The 2007 London Boroughs Habitat Survey and additional site based assessments indicated that, in Lambeth there are:

- Over 2,000 hectares of buildings and surfaces, whether vertical (e.g. walls) or horizontal (e.g. roofs, courtyards, school grounds and pavements) with the potential to be improved for their biodiversity interest, or where new biodiversity features like green walls and roofs, rain gardens or naturalised verges and planters, have been or are being installed;
- Over 312 hectares of parks, commons, recreation grounds, public open spaces, cemeteries and churchyards which are being actively managed or improved to protect and improve their biodiversity interest;
- Around 570 hectares of private gardens, allotments, community gardens and small areas on estates, in schools and community buildings, which are being actively managed to improve biodiversity, or with the potential to be managed and improved for biodiversity;
- Around 40 hectares of 'railway lineside' habitat (land on either side of fixed railway lines or associated operational railway land), which is primarily managed to conserve its wildlife importance for the borough;
- Over five hectares of ponds, lakes, wetlands, streams and rivers (excluding the River Thames or any 'hidden' rivers) being managed, or deliberately enhanced and created, for their biodiversity interest;

- Around 150 hectares of the River Thames – water (low tide), foreshore, river walls, quays, wharves and berths, which is protected and being managed to converse and improve its biodiversity for the borough and Greater London as a whole;
- Over 20 hectares of mixed woodland and over 70,000 individual trees in parks, on streets and housing estates, which are being protected and managed for their nature conservation importance, coupled with new tree plantings to help increase Lambeth’s woodland cover.

There is already plenty happening in Lambeth that is beneficial for wildlife and people’s access to it. But there is still potential for significant increases in the net area of the borough managed primarily for wildlife or as part of the overall management of an area, site or feature. However, we need some form of structure and systems to decide what we are going to do to protect what biodiversity we have in Lambeth, and what we can do to improve, extend or enrich it.

## 6. The Benefits of a Biodiverse Lambeth

Looking after Lambeth’s biodiversity isn’t just about protecting and promoting rare species or wildlife habitats; it also provides us with a wide variety of vital services and benefits. This is what is known as ‘ecosystem services’. For example, trees and plants help improve air quality, which is a major issue of concern to all of Lambeth’s residents, but they also absorb carbon dioxide, and help regulate ambient temperatures in streets and built up areas of the borough.

Areas of Lambeth that are rich in natural vegetation and habitats, because they are recognised and protected for their biodiversity value, also play a vital role in helping reduce the risk and damage caused by surface water run-off and flooding, which is a constant concern for all of the borough’s residents, visitors and businesses.



**Plate 7. A mixed sedum species green roof on top of the Ethelred Estate in Vauxhall, which provides local biodiversity, flood mitigation and urban heat cooling benefits**

Places managed for biodiversity, whether in gardens, parks or other open spaces, also provide a home and feeding grounds for numerous invertebrates or insects such as bees, butterflies and moths which in turn are important pollinators of our fruit, vegetables and flowers.

Finally, there are many social, cultural, educational, health and recreational benefits provided by biodiversity in Lambeth, and make people's experience of the whole borough a more enjoyable and rewarding one.

What does this all mean? It means protecting and promoting Lambeth's biodiversity isn't just about its wild plants and animals and where they live: it's also about us protecting and promoting what we value and enjoy.

It's also about making sure we look after Lambeth's natural assets so that future generations of residents have the same access to and enjoyment of wildlife that we currently enjoy, and that they also gain benefit from the same, if not a better range of, ecosystem services that we also take a benefit from.

## **7. Why Does Lambeth Need a Biodiversity Action Plan?**

Having a Biodiversity Action Plan provides the strategic framework to deliver biodiversity in Lambeth. It also enables us to work in partnership in order to achieve more for nature and people with relatively limited resources. A Biodiversity Action Plan is also the main mechanism for organisations and individuals in Lambeth to deliver the legislative and policy requirements set for the consideration of biodiversity at the national, regional and local level.

One of the most significant legal requirements for delivering biodiversity in Lambeth is the 'Biodiversity Duty', which has been set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) in Section 40. This requires that *'every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'*.

Whilst also ensuring we can deliver this duty, a Biodiversity Action Plan also goes further by identifying those opportunities to maximise the many social and environmental benefits that biodiversity provides to Lambeth's residents and communities, taking the duty far beyond what is the minimum expected.

### **7.1 Delivering On Our Priorities and Policies**

There is a range of policy and legislation – global, European, national and regional – which influences how we protect and deliver biodiversity in Lambeth. It is not essential to provide excessive detail on them within the BAP, rather to summarise titles and provide web links to them. Whilst the Lambeth BAP doesn't directly affect implementation of much of the current national legislation or national and regional policy, it does have a considerable degree of influence on planning and other policy within Lambeth itself. Table 1 summarises the key legislation and policies which underpin the Lambeth BAP and its delivery.

### **7.2 Lambeth's Priorities and the Borough Plan**

One of the most important things the Lambeth BAP addresses during its lifetime is how it will enable the London Borough of Lambeth to deliver on its priorities for becoming a better place for everyone, including biodiversity. All boroughs must demonstrate this, and any policies or other documents they produce must stand up to scrutiny and challenge as to how they enable council, communities and stakeholders to achieve ambitious yet necessary objectives.

**Table 1: Policy context for the Lambeth Biodiversity Action Plan**

<b>National</b>	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006	Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services
	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	National Planning Policy Framework (2018) <i>Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment</i>
	Natural Environment White Paper (2011)	ODPM Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
	UK Biodiversity Action Plan	Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (2011)
<b>Regional</b>	London Plan policies: 2.18: Green infrastructure 5.3: Sustainable design and construction 5.9: Overheating and cooling 5.10: Urban greening 5.11: Green roofs and development site environs 5.12: Flood risk management 5.13: Sustainable drainage 7.5: Public realm 7.14: Improving air quality 7.17: Metropolitan Open Land 7.18: Protecting open space and addressing deficiency 7.19: Biodiversity and access to nature 7.21: Trees and woodlands 7.22: Land for food 7.23: Burial spaces 7.24: Blue Ribbon Network 7.28: Restoration of the Blue Ribbon Network 7.29: The River Thames 7.30: London's canals and other rivers and waterspaces	
	Connecting with London's nature: The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy 2002	Connecting Londoner's with trees and woodlands: A Tree and Woodland framework for London 2005
	London Biodiversity Action Plan	The All London Green Grid
<b>Local</b>	Lambeth Local Plan (2015) policies: EN1: Open space and biodiversity EN2: Local food growing and production EN4: Sustainable design and construction EN5: Flood risk EN6: Sustainable drainage systems and water management Q6: Public realm Q9: Landscaping Q10: Trees Q14: Developments in gardens and on backland sites Q21: Registered parks and gardens Q24: River Thames	
	Lambeth Green Infrastructure Strategy 2018	Lambeth Air Quality Action Plan 2017-2022
	Review of Lambeth's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation 2018	Lambeth Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

One of the most crucial documents for setting out Lambeth's shared priorities, which the Lambeth BAP must support, is the 'Borough Plan' for Lambeth. 'Future Lambeth: our borough plan' is the shared vision and priorities for the council and its partners up until 2021. It sets out three strategic priorities that everybody who signed up to the plan works towards in order to make Lambeth a stronger, fairer and more prosperous borough. The Borough Plan is about everybody working in partnership to ensure that Lambeth is a great place for everyone.

The Borough Plan sets out these three priorities:

- **Creating inclusive growth:** we want all of Lambeth to benefit from the investment in and regeneration of the borough;
- **Reducing inequality:** we want to take action to address inequalities across the borough including issues to do with health, job opportunities and quality of life;
- **Building strong and sustainable neighbourhoods:** we want to maintain safe, clean and cohesive communities across the borough.

The Lambeth BAP is designed to help deliver on these priorities. The most significant priority is undoubtedly the ability to help 'build strong and sustainable neighbourhoods' by protecting and improving places that local people and communities can safely use including for access to and enjoyment of nature where they live and work. Nature should be integral to every community and neighbourhood in the borough, and we want people to feel proud of and engaged with our local biodiversity.



**Plate 8. Field poppies growing through railings at Brockwell Park, adding some well-needed colour and wildlife diversity to a popular open space**

However, the Lambeth BAP also helps deliver the other two priorities, directly and indirectly. The BAP helps guide and support sustainable investment in and regeneration of the borough, and to design and deliver development that has biodiversity integrated into it which is accessible to residents and communities. Having and enjoying access to natural spaces and wildlife should be a right for everybody, irrespective of their background or circumstances.

### **7.3 National, Regional and Local Policies**

The way in which Lambeth protects and improves biodiversity, and people's access to it, is influenced by and delivers a whole raft of different legislation and policies at the national (UK or England), regional (Greater London) and local (Lambeth) level. Rather than describe all of these in detail, Table 1 summarises how the Lambeth BAP will ensure we can meet our statutory and community obligations.

[The London Plan](#), which is produced by the Mayor of London with the Greater London Authority, is probably the most important regional policy document which the Lambeth BAP must deliver. This is because all of London's boroughs are obligated to ensure that their own local policies and actions are compatible with the London Plan.

There are 19 different policies in the London Plan which apply directly or indirectly to the Lambeth BAP. Although Policy 7.19 "Biodiversity and access to nature" is the most obvious one, the other 18 still have relevance especially since BAPs are now seen as mechanisms to deliver on policies regarding air quality, flood management, countering the 'urban heat island' effect and providing places for growing and harvesting sustainable food.

[The New London Plan](#), which is designed to replace the current version and take account of both recent changes in national policy and legislation, and to accommodate ongoing changes in the way London is growing and being used, has just recently finished being consulted on.

Once the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority have finished compiling and responding to comments and feedback from the consultation exercise, and it has passed scrutiny, a new version of the London Plan will be available. Any changes in policy or guidance in the new London Plan will be integrated into the Lambeth BAP as appropriate.

In terms of local policy – i.e. at the Lambeth level – the most important document affecting the Lambeth BAP is [The Lambeth Local Plan \(2015\)](#). This includes a series of policies and information which directs and controls development and the management or use of land in the borough. It is also supported by [The Lambeth Local Plan Policies Map](#), which identifies sites or areas of the borough where each policy applies or is relevant.

The most significant policy in the Lambeth Local Plan regarding biodiversity and the BAP is Policy EN1 "Open space and biodiversity", which is also the policy that delivers the London Plan's own one on biodiversity. However, there are at least 10 other policies with relevance to biodiversity, or which protecting and improving biodiversity can help deliver.

The Lambeth BAP is a key piece of evidence for the Lambeth Local Plan not just in how existing policies relating to protection of nature conservation and open spaces were developed and justified, but how this policy is then implemented and delivered. It also underpins a number of strategies used by Lambeth to protect and improve the borough's environment or the health and wellbeing of its residents, such as the Lambeth Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Lambeth Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and the Lambeth Air Quality Action Plan.

Just as the London Plan must be regularly reviewed and updated, so does the Lambeth Local Plan. [The Lambeth Local Plan Review 2018](#), which has recently completed its consultation phase, was undertaken in response to changes or revisions in national or regional planning policy. Although core policies on biodiversity and others relevant to biodiversity are retained, some of the text associated with them will change in order to either provide clarity in how they are applied, or to recognise and accommodate changes in how we use land and sites so that biodiversity is better protected or integrated.

## **8 The Benefits of a Biodiversity Action Plan**

The Lambeth BAP helps make the borough a better place for wildlife as well as for its residents and communities. Protecting and improving Lambeth's biodiversity contributes positively to people's quality of life by providing opportunities for learning, physical activity or quiet contemplation. It also plays a role in securing the future of the borough by cleaning our air, helping reduce the effects of flooding or excessive surface water flows, and to mitigate for the impacts of climate change. The principal ways that it does this are summarised below.



**Plate 9. Cornfield annual wildflowers in the grounds of St. Mark's CE Primary School**

### **8.1 Ecological – protection of important or protected sites, habitats and species**

Lambeth contains an impressive diversity of sites and spaces which provide a home for numerous wild plants and animals. Many of these species are relatively common, adaptable and abundant, but others are uncommon or rare, or declining in abundance and distribution not only in Lambeth but across London and the UK as a whole.

Protecting this ecological diversity requires active intervention and management by everybody in Lambeth in order to maintain distribution, quality, condition and resilience. Different habitats can also require different types and degrees of intervention.

The Lambeth BAP identifies the principal habitat types in the borough that we as a society want to protect and conserve, as well as the kinds of intervention or actions felt necessary to protect, improve and extend wildlife habitats, or improve their ecological quality and residence. By providing clear aims and objectives for conserving Lambeth's wildlife, the BAP also sets targets by when these outcomes will be achieved, by whom and with what resources.

## **8.2 Cultural – protecting Lambeth's natural, physical and human heritage**

Lambeth is full of heritage: places, features and items we judge to be an essential part of what makes the borough a special place to live and work. It adds richness and diversity to our environment, and offers residents and visitors something exciting and interesting to use, experience and enjoy. People often think that 'heritage' is just about historic buildings or landscapes that have been there for a long time. There is no question that Lambeth is full of such built heritage like the Tate Libraries at Brixton and Streatham, Carnegie Library, Lambeth Palace or the four 'Waterloo' churches of St. John's Waterloo, St. Mark's Kennington, St. Matthew's Brixton, St. Luke's West Norwood, or the Royal Festival Hall.

However, heritage is more than that. It also includes parks and open spaces as well as natural green spaces along with the River Thames, its walls and foreshore. Much of the borough's 'natural heritage' – its wild plants, animals, wildlife habitats and ecosystems – are integral parts of many of its public and private open spaces. This includes public spaces like Brockwell Park, Clapham Common, Streatham Common or West Norwood Cemetery, some freely accessible to the public, but also others that are private or with restricted access such as railway linesides, allotments and school grounds, of which there are numerous examples across the borough.

How these sites have been created, developed and managed over time, or what they contain (such as walls), often determines what biodiversity they contain. If it wasn't for the history and past management of these sites and how it has changed over time, they might be far less interesting ecologically; and Lambeth wouldn't be anywhere as biodiverse as it is today.

This means we have a duty to protect and manage heritage sites or features not just for their historical value to ourselves but also for the wildlife they contain. The Lambeth BAP delivers a series of actions that help ensure the borough's natural heritage is recognised, appreciated, protected and improved through appropriate interventions and actions, and is not lost to future generations for them to also experience and enjoy.

## **8.3 Economic – improved flood resilience, income generation and property values**

The Lambeth BAP, by making the borough's natural spaces better through intervention and positive management, also helps provide sustainable economic benefits to residents. This is done by making wildlife sites more accessible, safer, better used and managed, and less capable of causing nuisance and harm to neighbours.

Well-managed open spaces and natural sites exert a positive effect on land values of adjacent properties, particularly if they don't create problems that affect the financial viability of a property or place excessive costs on future maintenance. The Lambeth BAP ensures sites of nature conservation importance are appropriately managed and looked after. They won't become 'bad neighbours' and impact adversely on how buyers of properties and other assets put a value what they see, and what sellers need to make assets viable or attractive to others.

Managed natural sites can also provide resources that generate an income stream for land owners, land managers or residents, such as:

- timber from coppiced or pollarded woodlands that can be harvested and sold for a wide range of businesses, e.g. firewood, wooden furniture or utensils or sculpture;
- sale of fruit and vegetables, or prepared products (e.g. preserves, cakes or sauces), from allotments, community gardens and orchards, helped by an abundance of pollinator and natural pest control species like bees, butterflies, beetles and flies;
- safe and stimulating places to host 'paid for' environmental or educational events like forest schools, guided walks and team building corporate volunteering;
- external grants secured by the council or groups from the Lottery, charities or government to deliver funded activities in natural spaces, such as tree planting, hedgelaying, scrub clearance and creating or restoring paths and river courses, often with local volunteers who also acquire transferable employment skills as part of the experience.

Open spaces, whether managed for nature conservation or not, play a role in mitigating for the short- and long-term impacts of flooding caused by excessive rainfall or surface water flows. They can act, if appropriately managed, as 'flood storage systems' to capture, store and dissipate excess surface water flows, or divert water away from sensitive areas like housing, roads or key infrastructure services like railways.

Open spaces managed for natural value often have a greater potential to provide flood mitigation and make areas resilient to flood damage. Landscape or wildlife features like wildflower and grassland meadows, mixed age woodland, streams, ponds and lakes with natural banks and marginal vegetation, and mounded swales or sunken scrapes, help arrest, divert and store water that could result in waterlogging, flash flooding or wall/bank erosion.



**Plate 10. Planting out a new wildlife-friendly 'rain garden' on Calidore Close, Herne Hill, as part of the 'Lost Effra' flood awareness and mitigation project in 2017**

The Lambeth BAP, by targeting selected sites in order to create, extend and improve the abundance and connectivity of these wildlife features, will contribute positively to helping prepare the borough for extremes of rainfall and surface water flows, providing additional resilience to help counter their damaging economic and social impacts.



**Plate 11. A mature wildlife-rich rain garden on the Southwell Estate in Herne Hill, funded through the 'Lost Effra' flood awareness and mitigation project in 2017**

#### **8.4 Health and Wellbeing – improved air quality, lifestyles and environment**

The health and wellbeing of Lambeth's residents is a priority for the borough. It underpins all three priorities in the Lambeth Borough Plan, and without improvements in people's health and wellbeing there is no sustainable growth, limited community resilience and reduced chances of overcoming inequality.

The Lambeth BAP supports the drive to improve public health and wellbeing by giving residents greater opportunities to get out, explore and enjoy the natural environment, and invest time and resources in volunteering, keeping fit and both physically and mentally active, and engendering greater social and community cohesion.

A major concern for Lambeth is the prevalence of childhood obesity in the borough, which is significantly higher than England as a whole. Moreover, adult obesity is also high at around 20% of the total borough population. Access to nature and natural spaces provides residents with opportunities for what is termed 'green exercise': informal outdoor recreation including walking, running and exploring with friends and families, and in a safe and welcoming setting that isn't too far from where they live, study and work.

It is known that people living within 500 metres of a park or green space are around 25% more likely to achieve recommended levels of regular physical activity. The net amount of green space in a particular neighbourhood radically increases a sense of personal and communal wellbeing among residents. Visitors and newcomers to a neighbourhood also gain a greater feeling of wellbeing if they have access to well-managed and accessible green spaces. The Lambeth BAP will ensure that access to and enjoyment of the borough's natural green spaces is secured and improved for health benefits.

Lambeth has a high incidence of recorded serious mental illness, in fact some of the highest rates per head of population in Greater London and England. Levels of depression, anxiety and other chronic mental health conditions are unacceptably high. Free and safe access to parks and green spaces has been shown to significantly reduce levels and severity of mental illness in local populations. This effect is markedly enhanced by increased access to nature and natural spaces, especially if well managed and promoted for their health benefits, which is what the Lambeth BAP will set out to achieve.



**Plate 12. A wildlife-friendly private garden in Stockwell**

Lambeth's current air quality isn't good, and addressing this is a priority through our Air Quality Action Plan. Air pollution and poor air quality is associated with a number of serious adverse impacts upon public health, especially children and the elderly, and is linked to at least 5,000 premature deaths each year in Greater London. Greening of the built environment, through actions in the Lambeth BAP, like planting more trees in parks and on streets, creating living roofs and walls on buildings, and creating new or extending existing green spaces, will improve air quality across Lambeth and contribute positively to better public health.

### **8.5 Community – volunteering, social cohesion, education and awareness**

It is widely recognised that the natural environment provides a means to engage with people, especially in an urban location. However, it is also accepted that levels of access to, and the ease of engagement with, this resource isn't equitable across the borough. This means a key aspect of the Lambeth BAP will be working in particular geographic areas and with groups under-represented in accessing and using natural spaces to help and address inequality.

Volunteering, both corporate and community, provides numerous benefits. As well as improving personal physical and mental health and wellbeing, it creates and reinforces a sense of pride and community ownership of the borough's green spaces. This is especially true for natural green spaces, as people enjoy 'getting their hands dirty' in working together to restore, manage and improve these for both biodiversity and their own benefits.

Providing people with well managed natural green spaces also improves community cohesion and helps reduce crime or antisocial behaviour. Sites that have regular volunteering events, or where people have a sense of ownership and regularly patrol or walk a site can deter flytipping, vandalism and its use for illegal activities. Active management and use of natural spaces by wildlife conservation and 'Friends' groups acts as a mechanism to engage with communities, find solutions to problems and improve community participation as a whole.

## **9. Responding to Environmental Change**

There is no general agreement that the earth is experiencing a change in global climate; some areas of the world are more affected than others, but the United Kingdom is not immune from this and its harmful effects. We need to understand and prepare for how climate change will affect Lambeth's biodiversity - and how quickly will we see the changes?

The 'London Climate Change Partnership' is predicting that climate change in London is likely to result in:

- Increasing ambient temperatures, with one third of London's summers exceeding 'heatwave' temperatures by the 2050s;
- More prevalent (longer, harsher and more unpredictable) periods of summer drought: this is especially worrying as London is already classed as an area of 'Serious Water Stress';
- Winter rainfall increases by as much as 15% - and London is already finding it increasingly difficult to cope with current levels of winter rainfall, not helped by increased 'paving over' of front drives and gardens or loss of existing brownfield sites and grassed playing fields;
- Increases in extreme weather events such as storms and heatwaves, both of which no longer occur in the height of summer, but at other times of the year often when the capacity of the city to cope with the impacts upon water and power supply, transport and the emergency services might already be close to or at breaking point.

As a result the climate in London and in Lambeth is changing and this will continue to have effects upon biodiversity. Some effects might be positive, so that we begin to see and experience non-harmful or beneficial plants and animals in our parks, gardens and open spaces, which add diversity – colour, shape and ecological – to our lives and environment.

However, effects may as likely be negative as new species which can tolerate living and surviving in London become more abundant and cause harm or damage to things that we value for their cultural or wildlife interest, or which we place an economic value on.

As an example, Britain's and Lambeth's trees are facing a series of unprecedented threats. Many of these are thought to be a direct or indirect result of climate change or other factors associated with this process. As London's ambient or average yearly temperatures rise, this makes the city more amenable to tree pest species that would normally not survive in more temperate or colder conditions.

London also suffers from the 'urban heat island effect' where hard surfaces on the ground or on buildings in urban places absorb solar and ambient radiation, and then gradually release it as heat which results in urban areas having temperatures up to 10°C higher than surrounding rural or suburban fringe areas. This phenomenon is thought to be exacerbating the effects of climate change in London, especially in inner boroughs like Lambeth where there is already an excess of hard surfacing on streets, pavements and on buildings, and people continue to pave over green areas like gardens or verges.

The Lambeth BAP can contribute positively towards mitigating for the effects of climate change and the urban heat island effect. It may not halt or reverse it on its own, but it can play a vital role alongside other activities to make their effects less severe or prolonged.

Well managed and maintained natural green spaces can store and then gradually release water, whether from vegetation, surface and ground water, which helps to reduce ambient air temperatures, which then reduces the urban heat island effect.



**Plate 13. Part of Van Gogh Walk in Stockwell; creating pedestrian-friendly public realm has also created a wildlife-friendly ecosystem accessible to the wider public**

As mentioned previously natural green spaces also help reduce and mitigate for the risk of flooding by significantly increasing the permeability of surfaces, which enables surface and rain waters to quickly drain away from high risk areas or features like roads or houses.

Biodiversity can also be easily and effectively incorporated into a wide range of buildings or landscapes in order to help mitigate for the effects of climate change or the heat island effect in Lambeth. The Lambeth BAP provides mechanisms and opportunities to help deliver one or all of the following positive solutions to climate change and urban heating:

- living ('green' or 'biodiverse') roofs and walls;
- wildlife-friendly or natural landscaping schemes, including in private and communal gardens;

- incorporation of wildlife habitats and features in flood, rainwater and sustainable urban drainage systems;
- tree planting on streets, on housing estates, in parks or in private, social or mixed housing or commercial developments;
- green infrastructure and urban greening – creating, extending or enhancing ‘green corridors’ or ‘ribbons’ between existing parks, green spaces and wildlife sites, especially within areas of the borough that are both deficient in accessible nature and at greatest risk of the adverse effects of climate change and the urban heat island effect.

## **10. Providing for Biodiversity in Lambeth – Our Current Assets**

Lambeth contains a wide range of sites designated or protected in recognition, whether directly or indirectly, of their role in providing somewhere for wildlife to live and prosper, contributing significantly to the borough’s biodiversity. All of these sites play a crucial role in delivering the Lambeth BAP, not just because they are the principal locations managed to protect our local biodiversity, but where we can work to improve their ecological value and enable the public to see and experience nature close to where they live.

The principal designations which have a direct role in benefiting nature conservation in Lambeth are as follows.

### **10.1 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)**

A [Local Nature Reserve](#) (LNRs) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by local authorities. LNRs are designated as places with wildlife or geological features of local special interest and offer people opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it where they live.

Lambeth currently contains one LNR, which is ‘Streatham Common’. It incorporates over 50% of Streatham Common and the Rookery, and is designated for its extensive woodland, acidic, meadow and wet grasslands and standing/fallen dead wood habitat.

Local Nature Reserves enable the public to have free and safe access to nature, especially close to where they live. Because an LNR is recognised at a national and regional level, not just in Lambeth, it becomes a ‘destination’ for people from across London and the UK, as well as those living in the borough or neighbouring ones.

The Lambeth BAP will ensure any LNRs in Lambeth, including the one at Streatham Common, benefit from appropriate intervention and management to protect their status, and that public access to nature is also maintained and improved.

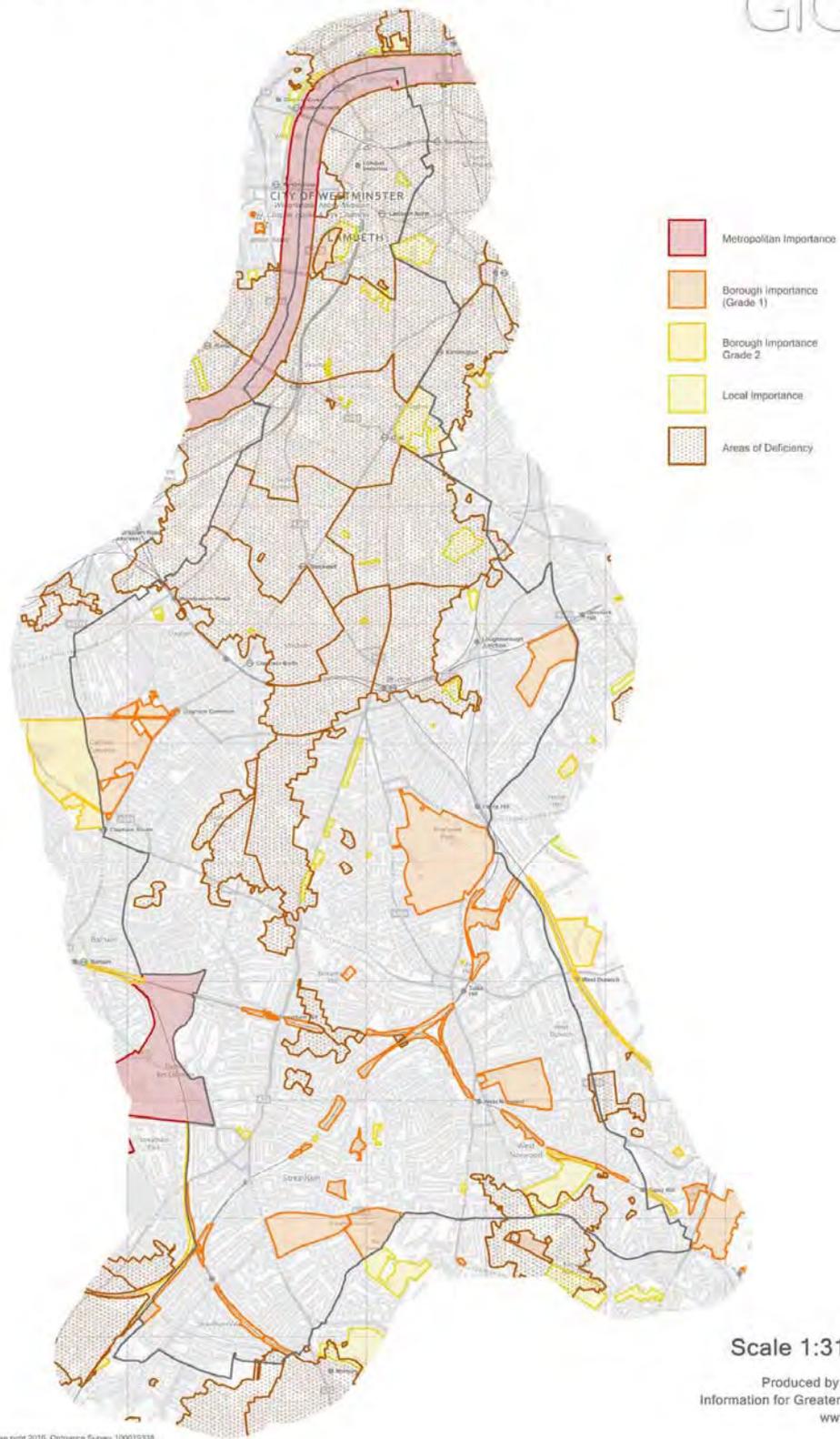
### **10.2 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)**

[Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation](#) (SINCs) are sites recognised for their importance in providing places for wildlife and improving people’s access to and enjoyment of nature on their doorstep. It is a non-statutory designation, although SINCs are still afforded a high level of protection within the planning system. All of Lambeth SINCs are designated as such in the Lambeth Local Plan, and shown on the Proposals Map associated with the Local Plan.

Developments that negatively impact upon any Lambeth SINC will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and only where suitable mitigation or compensation can be secured from the beginning to offset or compensate for potential harm to the site or its wildlife value. In London there is a hierarchy of SINC designations.

# Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

GIGL



**Figure 1. A Map of Lambeth's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Areas of Deficiency for Access to Nature (AoDs). Reproduced by permission of Greenspace Information for Greater London.**

**Metropolitan SINC**s are designated by the Mayor of London on the basis of their London-wide biodiversity importance and for the benefit they provide for all people living and working in Greater London.

**Borough SINC**s are selected for their contribution to biodiversity for a particular London borough, and for enabling local communities to have access to a diversity of wildlife habitats and species in their local area.

**Local SINC**s are the lowest tier of sites, though still of considerable importance in their own right, and normally selected to redress any remaining local deficiencies in access to nature.

Whilst the designation of Metropolitan SINC is the responsibility of the Mayor of London, with advice and assistance from each borough where they are located, the selection, designation of and changes to sites of Borough or Local importance is the sole responsibility of the borough where these sites are located.

Lambeth currently contains 45 SINC of varying origins, functions, sizes and locations. It contains one large Metropolitan SINC, which is the River Thames and its foreshore ('Tidal Thames') where it occurs within the borough's legal boundary.

Lambeth contains 20 Borough SINC which include places like Brockwell Park, Clapham Common, Streatham Common, Ruskin Park and West Norwood Cemetery, but also a number of sites that aren't normally accessible to the general public but still designated for their biodiversity importance, including over 50 hectares of railway lineside land. Lambeth contains 24 Local SINC which include local parks, allotments, churchyards and school grounds.

Not every part of Lambeth is adjacent or close to a site with recognised nature conservation interest, nor is every site freely accessible; some can be private or have restricted access, often for good reasons, e.g. railway lineside habitat. This means that not every resident has immediate and free access to experience and enjoy nature close to where they live.

**Areas of Deficiency for Access to Nature**, or AoDs, mean just that: parts of a borough where access to good quality natural space is deficient or restricted. The London Borough of Lambeth contains a number of these AoDs.

Lambeth's AoDs exist in places where the best wildlife sites are just a bit too far away from where people live, are closed due to safety or privacy issues or there are physical barriers in the way, e.g. railway lines, busy roads or locked gates and high fencing. AoDs are exacerbated for residents who rely on public transport or have mobility issues, or are deterred from making the journey to wildlife sites by financial, physical and social barriers.

Lambeth is committed, through its Local Plan, to not only increasing the number of SINC in the borough, but also improving the ecological quality of its current ones. The Lambeth BAP provides an important mechanism by which we can improve the ecological quality of our SINC, through a series of actions and activities on each site, and help to improve other locations which in turn could become designated as new SINC in the future.

As well as improving the biodiversity value and effect of our SINC, this approach helps reduce the proportion of Lambeth within an existing AoD for access to nature. The more SINC we have across the borough, and the better they are managed for nature and people, this gradually or radically reduces the area covered by an AoD around existing SINC, or even 'punches holes' in them, resulting in residents having better access to natural greenspace close to where they live. Again, the Lambeth BAP will help target interventions and actions that will gradually erode and reduce these AoDs.

AoDs can also be addressed by overcoming some the physical and psychological barriers that prevent the public accessing sites, whether SINC's or not. The Lambeth BAP enables landowners/managers and community groups to work to identify short- and long-term actions that can break through or lower these barriers. This includes improving access, signage and interpretation to help people find and travel to nature sites, bring residents in different streets, estates and schools together so they interact and share use of their sites, and overcome negative perceptions or support those who struggle to travel to or through them.

The number, area and designation of Lambeth's SINC's is currently being reviewed as part of the revision of the Lambeth Local Plan to take into account any changes in content and quality. The Local Plan revision isn't due to be completed until mid-2019, which may change the total number of SINC's for the borough, as well as individual areas and classification. This may impact upon the borough's existing AoDs for access to nature, hopefully in a positive way. The Lambeth BAP will then help identify resources and activities to improve the management and use of new SINC's, and how resulting AoDs are reduced through appropriate interventions.



**Plate 14. Part of the gardens of 'Roots and Shoots' in Vauxhall, one of Lambeth's current and longest-serving Borough Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation**

There are other types of designated sites in Lambeth, which although not directly designated for nature conservation, still contain habitats or features of biodiversity importance due to their origins, past or present management and geographical location.

### 10.3 Conservation Areas

[Conservation Areas](#) are areas of the borough which are designated to manage and protect its special architectural and historic interest. Every local authority in England has at least one conservation area and there are 62 in Lambeth. Each conservation area has extra planning controls and considerations in place in order to protect the historic and architectural elements which make each area special.

Many of Lambeth's conservation areas contain sites and features of considerable importance for biodiversity such as mature or veteran trees, extensive gardens, ponds, allotments or monuments. All of these provide valuable wildlife habitat, and many buildings in a conservation area contain features offering protected species like bats, birds and certain invertebrates places to roost, nest or feed.



**Plate 15. The gardens at Bonnington Square in Vauxhall, an important wildlife site which is also within one of Lambeth's newest 'Conservation Areas'**

### 10.4 Registered Parks and Gardens

[Registered Parks and Gardens](#) are sites on Historic England's 'Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England' which identifies over 1,600 sites assessed to be of particular significance. The Register includes gardens, grounds and other planned open spaces, such as town squares, and the majority of sites are, or started life as, the grounds of private houses, but public parks and cemeteries form important categories too.

Though the Register's emphasis is on 'designed' landscapes rather than on planting or botanical importance, many sites also contain features and habitats of ecological importance. Lambeth currently contains eight sites on the Register, and all of them are recognised for the role they play in protecting and conserving biodiversity. All feature heavily in the Lambeth BAP. Seven of these sites are also SINCs for Lambeth: Brockwell Park, Kennington Park, Lambeth Palace, Myatt's Fields Park, Ruskin Park, Streatham Rookery and West Norwood Cemetery.

## **10.5 Metropolitan Open Land**

Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) is a designation for certain areas of open land within Greater London. MOL is protected as an 'area of landscape, recreation, nature conservation or scientific interest', and it can contain features or landscape of historic, recreational, nature conservation or wildlife habitat interest.

Lambeth contains five areas of MOL: Brockwell Park, Clapham Common, Jubilee Gardens Waterloo, Streatham Common and the Rookery, and Tooting Bec Common (Woodfield Recreation Ground & Abbotswood Playing Fields). Three of these are SINCs for Lambeth, all contain features or areas of ground that have considerable wildlife interest, and all will benefit from actions in the Lambeth BAP.

## **10.6. Tree Preservation Orders**

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are orders made by local planning authorities in England to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands in the interests of amenity. A TPO can be made to prohibit the cutting down, topping, lopping, uprooting, wilful damage and wilful destruction of designated trees without the planning authority's written consent. There are over 5,000 trees in Lambeth with TPOs attached to them; the majority are in private ownership or in areas where the risk of loss to development means they need additional protection.

Trees make up a significant proportion of Lambeth's biodiversity because of the numerous habitats they provide to wild plants and animals, and their role in helping wildlife move into and out of existing areas to colonise new places. Because many trees with TPOs associated with them are often of considerable age, height and maturity, they can be of considerable significance in terms of the borough's biodiversity, and their ability to enable local people to have intimate access to nature where they live or work.

## **11. Delivering for Biodiversity in Lambeth – Habitat Action Plans**

Traditional Biodiversity Action Plans used to be made up of a series of action plans for priority habitats and species in the borough where the plan applied. A newer and more practical approach is to build a BAP around a smaller number of 'habitat action plans', or HAPs, based around major land uses in a borough judged to have ecological value.

This is because the current view is that if a borough is protecting and managing its priority habitats correctly, and investing appropriate resources into improving or extending them, then many different species, whether rare or common, also benefit directly or indirectly. It also ensures the resulting BAP is less unwieldy and easier to read and apply, rather than full of excessive plans and actions that don't integrate well or are difficult to manage and monitor. This is the approach that Lambeth is taking with its new Lambeth BAP.

However, the Lambeth BAP also includes appendices, including 'advice notes' or planning guidance, which provide further information on specific actions and activities to benefit key species or assets and provide support for planners, developers or land managers.

Each priority habitat action plan in the Lambeth BAP sets out what stakeholders can do to achieve objectives and targets for these habitats, and any species benefiting from them, and what will be done to raise awareness of biodiversity in Lambeth. It also shows linkages back to the borough's priorities and how it helps deliver local, regional and national policies.

The priority habitats in the Lambeth BAP, which action plans are developed for, will be:

- a) the built environment;
- b) parks and public open spaces (including cemeteries and churchyards);
- c) private gardens and growing spaces (including allotments and community gardens);
- d) railway linesides;
- e) rivers and standing water;
- f) the tidal Thames;
- g) trees and woodlands.



**Plate 16. The 'Edible Bus Stop' in Stockwell, an important wildlife-friendly food growing project included in the Private Gardens and Growing Spaces Action Plan**

It must be noted that these priority HAPs do not include excessively long lists of detailed actions to be undertaken to achieve the objectives and targets of that HAP; each has a simple set of actions that are easy to understand and respond to. This is because actions in the Lambeth BAP need to be realistic.

We need to accept that what we know and understand about each habitat in the borough will change and evolve as new information or opportunity becomes available through the lifetime of the BAP. This means there is always a risk some actions promised at inception, although aspirational, might not be achievable or ideal for the habitat or the species that benefit from it. We could end up with a BAP that was unable to deliver on its actions by the time it expires.

Therefore, we have set actions in each HAP that are simple and achievable. As the Lambeth BAP progresses, these actions will be subject to review where felt necessary, and amended in the document where appropriate. A detailed record will be kept of what actions were identified at the beginning, and how they are being delivered.

Progress on delivering objectives and outcomes for each HAP and the priority habitat in question will be entered on a Biodiversity Reporting System (BRS). This is a database set up by Lambeth Council to monitor progress on delivering the BAP in the borough, and made freely available to all partners and stakeholders.

In addition, progress on delivering the Lambeth BAP will be reported at a national level to Government Agencies via the National Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS). It will also be reported at a regional level to the Greater London Authority to assist in monitoring progress on delivering policies in the London Plan and the Mayor's Environmental Strategy.

## **12. Monitoring**

Implementing and delivering the Lambeth BAP through a series of action plans and outcomes, is only part of the story in protecting and improving the quality, coverage and accessibility of Lambeth's biodiversity. We need to measure how effective these actions have been, which have had the greatest impact, and what can we learn from them to refine and improve actions in the next version of the BAP. It is essential to commit to monitoring the BAP, and regularly reviewing and updating actions, habitat action plans and the BAP itself on a regular basis.

We will review the Lambeth BAP on an annual basis, reviewing each habitat action plan, its aims, objectives and specific actions, and to use this to refine and improve these elements as well as the overall BAP. Each habitat action plan will have timescales for reviews on key actions, as well as being subject to a final evaluation exercise when the Lambeth BAP comes towards its completion in 2024.

There are a number of practical strategies and approaches we will engage in to monitor progress and performance of the Lambeth BAP, including obtaining data from others and gathering our own data, so that the changes and decisions we make in the plan or its actions are based on sound evidence.

Lambeth Council has a 'Service Level Agreement' (SLA) with Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL, [www.gigl.org.uk](http://www.gigl.org.uk)), which is Greater London's environmental records centre. Under this SLA GiGL will provide the council with accurate and current data, including maps, as to the distribution and abundance of key habitat types and species in the borough. This data also includes information on changes in the area, typology and condition of any statutory and designated sites within Lambeth, e.g. LNRs and SINCs, or changes in any AoDs for access to nature. This data is normally provided as quarterly 'data downloads', but we can also make specific requests for data on particular species, habitats and sites as we require it for special projects or reports.

In addition, Lambeth Council will regularly obtain or collate data obtained by its own staff, community stakeholders or other partners, such as records of and field surveys of habitats and species, and provide this to GiGL, or any official wildlife recorders (e.g. for birds or butterflies) as part of this SLA. This will help improve the dataset that GiGL holds for Lambeth, so that the information then provided to us is constantly refined and more reliable.

We will work with our stakeholders and partners to undertake regular assessments of our wildlife sites, especially those covered by and integral to each priority habitat action plan, ensuring any field survey data or records are collated and submitted to GiGL. This ensures the information used to monitor the BAP's performance is based on best available data.



**Plate 17. Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, a proposed new Site of Importance for Nature Conservation based on the many ecological improvements delivered on site**

GiGL-derived data will be incorporated into Lambeth Council's own geographical information mapping (GIS) systems and other data management applications. This can then be used to inform current and future planning policy, e.g. revisions to the Lambeth Local Plan or its Proposals Map. It will also inform decisions made by planning officers regarding development applications on and adjacent to sensitive sites (including SINCs, LNRs and MOLs) or locations where protected or important species and habitats are recorded, or within any existing AoDs for access to nature.

The Lambeth BAP will be monitored on how it is performing in helping deliver the Lambeth Local Plan, and how existing protected or designated sites and species are being protected or benefiting from informed planning decisions, conditions of consent or planning enforcement.

The Lambeth BAP will be monitored on its performance in securing mitigation and/or enhancement for biodiversity in the borough, key aspects of each priority habitat action plan. This will be measured through a combination of physical actions or improvements recorded and measured on site (e.g. number and area of biodiverse green roofs and walls, number of bat/bird boxes installed, or area of wildflower meadow created).

It will also be measured by the amount of financial investment secured, including through s106 or CIL allocations, or funding from external grants, or the amount of match and 'in-kind' funding secured through volunteering hours or donated materials, skills and equipment.

### 13. Resources and References

'Future Lambeth – our Borough Plan ([www.lambeth.gov.uk/elections-and-council/about-lambeth/future-lambeth-our-borough-plan](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/elections-and-council/about-lambeth/future-lambeth-our-borough-plan))

Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL, [www.gigl.org.uk](http://www.gigl.org.uk)) – the capital's environmental records centre

Lambeth Local Plan 2015 ([www.lambeth.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/lambeths-local-plan-guide](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/lambeths-local-plan-guide)) – the current planning policy and development control document for the London Borough of Lambeth

Lambeth Local Plan Proposals Map ([www.lambeth.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/lambeths-local-plan-guide](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/lambeths-local-plan-guide)) – the map of Lambeth showing where various policies in the Local Plan apply, including for biodiversity and nature conservation

Lambeth Local Plan Revision 2018 ([www.lambeth.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/lambeths-local-plan-guide](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/lambeths-local-plan-guide)) – proposals for revisions to the Lambeth Local Plan to accommodate recent changes in national and regional planning policy

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs, <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/acdf4a9e-a115-41fb-bbe9-603c819aa7f7/local-nature-reserves-england>) – information on LNRs and their designation

London Biodiversity Action Plan 2014 (LBAP, <https://www.gigl.org.uk/londons-biodiversity-action-plan/>) – the original Biodiversity Action Plan for Greater London

London Plan 2016 ([www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/current-london-plan](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/current-london-plan)) – the current Mayor of London's planning policy and development control document

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC 2006, [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents)) – information on the legislation regarding a public or local authority's duties regarding biodiversity

New London Plan 2018 ([www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan)) – proposed revisions and alterations to the London Plan

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs, [www.gigl.org.uk/designated-sites/non-statutory-sincs/](http://www.gigl.org.uk/designated-sites/non-statutory-sincs/)) – non-statutory designated wildlife sites in Greater London

UK Biodiversity Action Plan 1994 (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ukbap>) – the Biodiversity Action Plan for the UK

## 14. The Built Environment

### Introduction

The London Borough of Lambeth is predominantly urban in nature and is characterised by numerous buildings, roads, pavements and other hardstanding areas, all of different sizes, shapes, heights and materials. Buildings can include private and social housing, individual roofs and walls, as well as school grounds, housing estates, streets and the wider public realm.



**Plate 18. Part of the living roof on the Michael Tippett School, Herne Hill, which is still one of the largest green roofs on any school building in Greater London**

This complex of structures, surfaces and materials, all serving different functions and purposes, what we term the ‘built environment’, might be judged as an ‘ecological desert’, devoid of life or any worthwhile wildlife interest. However, this is not the case. Lambeth’s built environment, like that of many other London boroughs, is full of wildlife, especially if you know where to look for it and are prepared to manage it properly for its biodiversity value.

The ‘built environment’ is without doubt a highly significant aspect in terms of Lambeth’s overall biodiversity and nature conservation interest, given just how abundant it is across the borough and how diverse it is in terms of what it looks like. It contains many different habitats which in turn are home to numerous species of wild plants and animals. This is because the built environment is full of what we know as ‘green infrastructure’ – a mosaic of different types of landscaping and planted features, along with numerous areas of greenspace, although some might be public or private, and some may be on the ground or above it, including on the roofs or walls of existing buildings.

This complex green infrastructure provides a range of habitat types that offer wild plants somewhere to grow and establish, in locations where they escape disturbance or removal as a result of 'manicuring' or 'tidying up' spaces to make them look neat and presentable. These habitats, and the plants that grow in them, provide homes for different animals including birds, bats and invertebrates, who use them for shelter, roosting or foraging.



**Plate 19. Plant growth on an old wall in North Lambeth, showing the diversity of species which can be found on built structures**

As well as relatively common and abundant species, Lambeth's built environment contains others that are relatively uncommon or rare, as well as some that are under serious threat of extinction in London and the UK as a result of habitat loss or degradation. Equally interesting is that some wild plants and animals have adapted remarkably well to exploiting habitats and ecological niches that are offered by the built environment, including in Lambeth.

One example is the Common Swift (*Apus apus*), an increasingly rare and endangered wild bird which has become so well adapted to nesting in buildings across many parts of Lambeth that it prefers these to other more rural or natural features typical of its original habitats.

There is growing concern for wildlife in the built environment as a result of increasing pressure to provide additional space for housing, provide new places for employment and improved transport, or to 'tidy up' existing areas of open and under-used land. This means wildlife habitats risk being reduced, degraded or lost to inappropriate or inconsiderate development. As a consequence many plants and animals depending on the built environment could be at risk of seeing numbers and distribution across the borough reduced or being lost altogether.

Lambeth is committed to protecting all of its biodiversity, and this includes that living in and depending on its built environment. This means working to protect what wildlife we have in the more built up parts of the borough from inappropriate development or loss. It also involves looking for opportunities across Lambeth's built environment to secure new wildlife habitat, especially on and around either new or existing buildings or public realm developments.



**Plate 20. Erecting combined swift and bat nesting boxes on buildings at Lambeth Hospital, Landor Road, in partnership with South London & Maudsley NHS Trust**

It also means securing mitigation and/or compensation, especially where existing wildlife habitat within Lambeth's built environment will be lost or reduced in order to facilitate new developments.

This habitat action plan is focused on viewing Lambeth's current and future built environment as an opportunity for improving the borough's biodiversity and protecting its wildlife. Wildlife must not be seen as a hindrance or threat to development or the efficient functioning of the built environment, but as something intrinsic to it and a vital component of making it greener, safer, healthier and adding to our economic prosperity and quality of life.

### **Priority Species of the Built Environment**

There are a number of species of plant and animal which are intimately associated with the built environment in Lambeth, where the protection, improvement and creation/extension of suitable features or habitat is critical to ensure their continued presence in the borough. These 'priority species' will benefit significantly from increasing awareness of the biodiversity importance of the built environment, concurrent with the delivery of various actions which are described later in the plan.

Common/Species Name	Comments
Black redstart ( <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i> )	A robin-sized bird of the thrush family, one of Britain's rarest birds. Once known as the 'bombsite' bird, it is frequently associated with wasteland and industrial sites including many in Lambeth.
Common Swift ( <i>Apus apus</i> )	A spectacular summer visitor to the UK, and found in some parts of Lambeth. Nests in open eaves and gables of many types of buildings, before adults and young leave for traditional wintering grounds in southern and central Africa in early August.
House sparrow ( <i>Passer domesticus</i> )	House sparrows were once a familiar sight throughout London but are now in serious decline. Lambeth still contains some large and important colonies of house sparrows.
Eurasian kestrel ( <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> )	Regularly seen in Lambeth hovering in flight to search for its prey of small mammals, amphibians and birds. It often uses buildings for nesting sites, and many of the borough's parks and open spaces provide nesting opportunities as well as cover for its prey.
Peregrine falcon ( <i>Falco peregrinus</i> )	A large and powerful falcon, famous for its high-speed dive to attack and kill its prey, known as a 'stoop', where it can reach speeds of up to 200 mph! Increasingly common on and around tall buildings and open spaces in Lambeth.
Bats, e.g. Common Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> ); Soprano Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> ); Nauthusius' Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i> )	All three of the UK's pipistrelle bat species are frequently associated with buildings, trees and green spaces throughout Lambeth's built environment.

## Objectives

The Built Environment Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will:

- Produce a database and map of 'opportunity areas' where improvements can be made to the extent and quality of biodiversity within Lambeth's built environment, especially within areas currently deficient in terms of quality natural greenspace or access to nature.
- Secure exterior landscaping design proposals for developments which include features to protect and improve biodiversity in line with current best practice. Priority is given to existing areas of deficiency for access to nature.
- Ensure that all developments within the borough, wherever feasible, include living roofs and walls in line with Lambeth Local Plan Policies EN1 and EN4.
- Ensure that species of conservation concern living in and depending on the built environment, such as swifts and black redstarts, are afforded appropriate protection from harm or loss of nesting/feeding habitat, and opportunities to provide additional or new habitat are provided within new and existing buildings or other aspects of a proposed development.

## Principal Outcome

Lambeth's built environment will make a progressive and positive net contribution to the borough's biodiversity and green infrastructure, through the inclusion of features such as biodiverse living roofs and walls, along with exterior and public realm landscaping that incorporates a significant biodiversity element.



**Plate 21. View of the grounds of St. Mark's CE Primary School in Kennington, showing the diversity of ground cover habitat within a school environment**

### Key Targets

- 75% of all living roofs installed in Lambeth are biodiverse extensive roofs ('biodiverse brown roofs'), in line with current best practice. Priority is given to providing features within existing areas of deficiency for access to nature within the borough.
- At least 3 hectares of additional living roof and wall habitat, which is of significant benefit for biodiversity, will be secured in the borough through appropriate planning agreements on both new and existing buildings.

### Delivering the Lambeth Borough Plan

The Built Environment Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will support creating inclusive growth, reducing inequality and building strong and sustainable neighbourhoods in the borough.

## **Delivering the London Plan**

The Built Environment HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current London Plan:

2.18 (Green infrastructure); 5.3 (Sustainable design and construction); 5.9 (Overheating and cooling); 5.10 (Urban greening); 5.11 (Green roofs and development site environs); 5.12 (Flood risk management); 5.13 (Sustainable drainage); 7.5 (Public realm); 7.14 (Improving air quality); 7.18 (Protecting open space and addressing deficiency); 7.19 (Biodiversity and access to nature); 7.21 (Trees and woodlands); 7.22 (Land for food); 7.23 (Burial spaces).

## **Delivering the Lambeth Local Plan**

The Built Environment HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current Lambeth Local Plan:

EN1 (Open space and biodiversity); EN2 (Local food growing and production); EN4 (Sustainable design and construction); EN5 (Flood risk); EN6 (Sustainable drainage systems and water management); Q6 (Public realm); Q9 (Landscaping); Q10 (Trees); Q14 (Developments in gardens and on backland sites).



**Plate 22. A biodiverse living roof on part of the Fenwick Estate in Clapham – ideal habitat for species like the Black Redstart, bats and numerous invertebrates**

## 15. Parks and Open Spaces

### Introduction

There are 62 areas of land within the London Borough of Lambeth that are officially designated as 'public parks and public open spaces', scattered right across the borough. These sites make up about 270 ha of the total land area for Lambeth, which amounts to about 10% of the overall area of the borough. There are also a number of small sites which, although privately owned, are still managed as 'open spaces' for the public to use and enjoy.

### Lambeth's Public Parks and Open Spaces

Lambeth's parks and open spaces not only provide people with numerous opportunities for relaxation, recreation and play, but also for them to observe and enjoy both landscapes and wildlife. They act as 'green lungs' for people living in our urban environment, whom for whatever reasons cannot live in or visit the wider countryside. Our parks and open spaces are also important in providing an 'environmental' element in the enrichment of the quality of our lives, giving immediate access to wildlife, a sense of environmental responsibility and promoting health and wellbeing.



**Plate 23. Aerial view of Brockwell Park, one of Lambeth's largest and busiest public open spaces, during the 'Lambeth Country Show' in July 2018**

Both London and Lambeth are justly acclaimed for many of their parks, commons and other public open spaces, and some of them are 'go to' destinations for people from across Greater London and beyond.

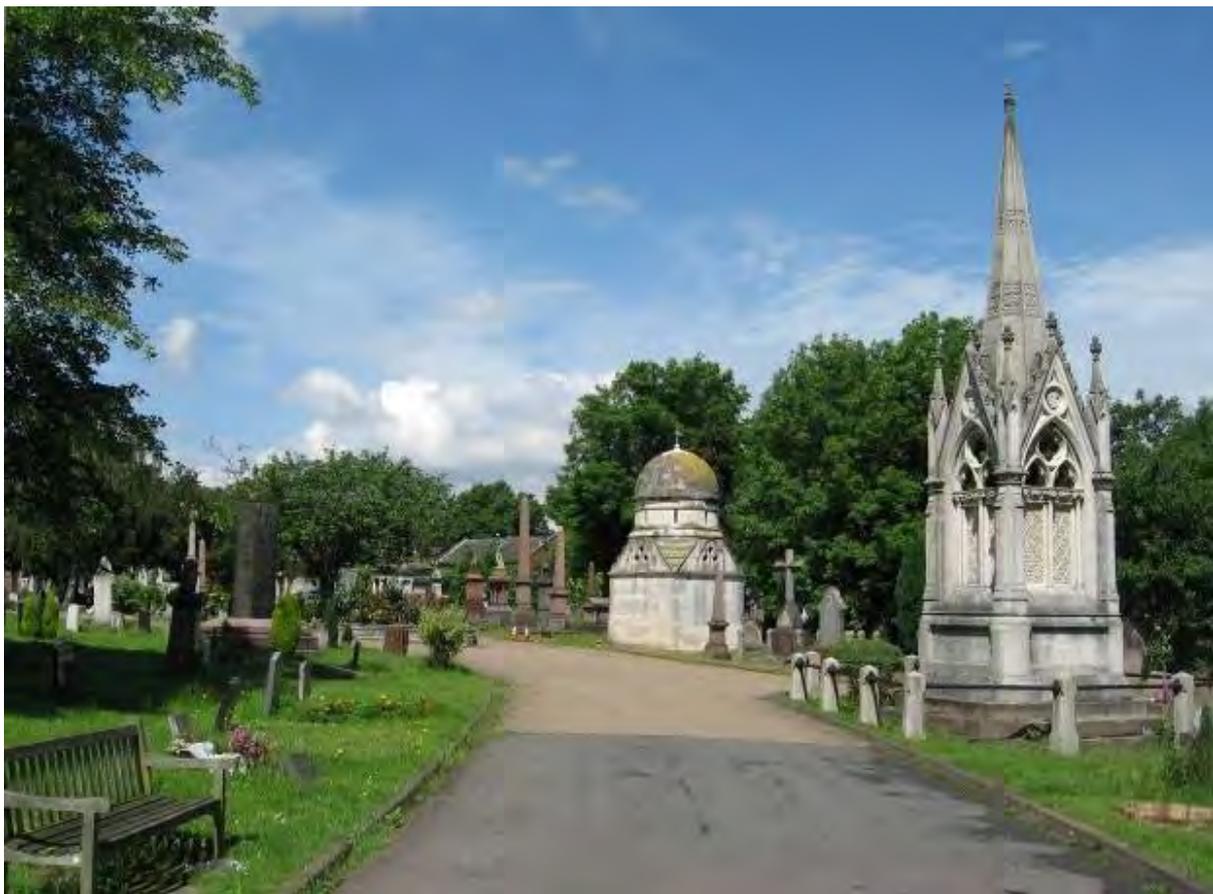
However, until quite recently protecting, promoting and managing those for biodiversity wasn't a priority for the borough. The general public perception tended to be that parks and open spaces were there for public access, recreation and leisure, and nature conservation was a minor consideration.

Thankfully this attitude has been gradually changing, as more people recognise the wildlife importance of their local parks and open spaces. This is especially true in Lambeth, where access to open space was, and is increasingly, at a premium, not just for people but also for the heritage, facilities and nature that they value and cherish. Lambeth's residents and visitors now recognise the importance of the borough's parks and open spaces as havens for wildlife where they live and work, and as a vital component of the biodiversity of not just Lambeth but Greater London as a whole.

This is why it is essential that we make a commitment to not only protect the wildlife – the habitats and species of wild plant and animal – that we currently have in Lambeth's parks and open spaces, but also improve the extent, quality and diversity of this wildlife through a range of appropriate actions and interventions.

### **Lambeth's Cemeteries and Churchyards**

Lambeth is also lucky to contain, or have responsibility for, a number of cemeteries and churchyards which are located in the borough. Churchyards are burial grounds associated with an identifiable church building: some churches also have extensions and detached burial grounds to provide additional space. They are scattered across the borough, often located at the centre of a historical 'settlement' which once had its own parish church. Once a churchyard is full in terms of burials, it becomes a 'closed churchyard'. On becoming closed the maintenance (but not always actual ownership) of many church burial grounds has devolved to Lambeth Council.



**Plate 24. View into West Norwood Cemetery, one of Lambeth's three cemeteries – all three are designated as Borough Grade Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in recognition of their importance for biodiversity and people's access to nature**

On occasions the closed churchyard has been converted into a 'church garden', usually when gravestones have been removed or levelled, and the site is landscaped with amenity turf, formal bedding and trees or shrubs. Cemeteries are often much larger burial grounds, usually interdenominational, which are under either municipal or private ownership and normally outside the confines or jurisdiction of a religious site.

There are 15 registered churchyards in Lambeth, of which seven are managed by Lambeth Council. There are also three cemeteries managed by Lambeth Council, although only one, West Norwood Cemetery, is actually within the Borough itself: the other two, Lambeth Cemetery and Streatham Cemetery, are in nearby Wandsworth. Churches and cemeteries within Lambeth's boundaries make up about 19.78 ha of land, which amounts to about 0.8% of the total area of the borough (this doesn't of course include Lambeth and Streatham Cemeteries, as they are outside the borough's boundaries).

Although originally designed, laid out and initially managed to provide a very formalised and tidy environment, Lambeth's churchyards and cemeteries have gradually evolved and matured over the passing years to include areas which have a more informal, sometimes more 'naturalised' character and appearance.

As a consequence, coupled with a more 'relaxed' management style, this gradually resulted in a range of habitats in many of Lambeth's cemeteries and churchyards including meadow and species rich neutral grassland, woodland, scrub and even some areas of wetland.



**Plate 25. View of St. John's Church Gardens, a small closed churchyard in Waterloo that has been transformed into a unique wildlife haven and a community asset**

At least seven of Lambeth's churchyards and all of its cemeteries are widely recognised for their nature conservation and biodiversity value. These were historically managed in such a way which has retained certain habitats and species which would have once derived from the woodland, grassland and agricultural landscape which surrounded their original church and its immediate settlement, or the land the cemetery was constructed on, until quite recently.

Species associated with cemeteries and churchyards are those typical of woodland and woodland edge habitats like bats, stag beetle, spotted flycatcher, tawny owl and song thrush, as well as holly blue, speckled wood and orange tip butterflies. Shaded and damp conditions in some corners and around the monuments in Lambeth's cemeteries and churchyards also provide important habitat for many different species of fungi and moss.

The gravestones, monuments and walls which abound in and around Lambeth's cemeteries and churchyards often provide unusual 'horizontal' or 'vertical' habitats based on the diversity of rock types used to make them and the surfaces they are finished in, such as limestone, sandstone, granite, basalt and even concrete. These materials, as they weather and age, create a wide range of 'microhabitats' and thin soils which favour different species of fern, moss, lichen and herb; these in turn provide food and shelter for a wide range of invertebrates, as well as birds which feed on them and the plants themselves.



**Plate 26. Sedum and other drought-tolerant native plants growing on and around an old grave in West Norwood Cemetery**

Like its parks and open spaces, Lambeth's cemeteries and churchyards make a significant contribution to local biodiversity, often because they are the only available 'green lung' within certain parts of the borough where access to a park or other open space, especially one with existing wildlife interest, is limited. However, like public parks and open spaces, they are not 'nature reserves', as they have to provide a range of services to the public.

The main function of burial grounds like cemeteries and churchyards in Lambeth is burial of the dead, and their veneration and commemoration, as well as protecting important heritage features like tombs, monuments and walls. Nevertheless, wildlife seems to respect this purpose surprisingly well and nature conservation, heritage and bereavement tend to successfully co-exist within Lambeth's cemeteries and churchyards.

Lambeth is committed to protecting all of its biodiversity, and this includes habitats, plants and animals that live within its parks, commons, cemeteries, churchyards and other public open spaces. We will work with a wide range of stakeholders and partners to protect wildlife in our parks and other open spaces from inappropriate management, inappropriate development or avoidable loss.

Alongside this we will work to identify and secure additional or new wildlife habitat within the borough's green spaces, especially in and around sites that are currently of low ecological value or where the public have poor or limited access to and enjoyment of nature where they live, work or study.



**Plate 27. An annual and perennial wildflower-rich meadow in Palace Road Nature Garden, Streatham Hill, offset by a colourful community-designed and created mural**

We will work with our stakeholders and partners to secure appropriate mitigation and/or compensation where existing wildlife habitat within the borough's parks and other open spaces is at risk of being compromised, reduced or lost as a result of poor management or unavoidable development. We will also work to secure opportunities to not only create new public open spaces, especially in areas of deficiency to accessible open space in the borough, but also provide features that will provide new or extended wildlife habitat which will also help improve the public's access to nature in these locations.



**Plate 28. Corporate volunteers helping to lay a native hedge in Ruskin Park, Camberwell, in order to create and extend an important 'wildlife corridor'**

This habitat action plan views all of Lambeth's open spaces as opportunities for improving the borough's overall biodiversity and protecting its wildlife. Biodiversity is an integral and inviolate aspect of each park, common, cemetery, churchyard or other public green space, and its protection, management and enhancement is what makes each site special for both people and wildlife in Lambeth. The borough's open spaces are also 'wildlife reservoirs' for the entire borough and will be managed to enable them to provide 'launch points' from which wild plants and animals can migrate out and colonise other existing or new sites and areas of Lambeth.

Lambeth will work with our stakeholders and partners to secure appropriate mitigation and/or compensation where existing wildlife habitat within the borough's parks and other open spaces is at risk of being compromised, reduced or lost as a result of poor management or unavoidable development.

## Priority Species for Lambeth's Parks and Open Spaces

There are numerous species of plant and animal which the public closely identify with Lambeth's parks, commons, cemeteries, churchyards and other open spaces. However, for some of these, both common and rare, their continued presence and survival in the borough depends heavily on appropriate management and improvement of key habitats found in our open spaces. These 'priority species' will benefit significantly from increasing awareness of the biodiversity importance of Lambeth parks and open spaces, along with delivering the various actions described later in the plan.

Common/Species Name	Comments
Pollinators, e.g. honey, solitary, mason and sand bees, mason wasps, bumblebees, moths, butterflies and hoverflies.	Forage for pollen and nectar in flowerbeds or flower-rich meadow grasslands in many of Lambeth's parks, commons, cemeteries and open spaces. Numbers of many pollinator species have been in serious decline across London and the UK as a whole.
Song thrush ( <i>Turdus philomenos</i> ) and Mistle thrush ( <i>Turdus viscivorus</i> )	Once common but now in serious decline both nationally and regionally. However, it is still frequently seen in many of Lambeth's parks and other open spaces, thanks to the retention or planting of native hedgerows and dense shrub borders.
House sparrow ( <i>Passer domesticus</i> )	House sparrows were once a familiar sight throughout London but are now in serious decline. Lambeth still contains important colonies of house sparrows, especially in a number of its parks and other open spaces.
Eurasian kestrel ( <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> )	Regularly seen over Lambeth's larger parks and commons, hovering in flight to search scrub and grassland areas for its prey of small mammals, amphibians and birds.
Bats, e.g. Common Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> ), Soprano Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> ), Nauthusius' Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus nauthusii</i> ), Noctule ( <i>Nyctalus noctula</i> ), Serotine ( <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i> ), Leisler's ( <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i> ) and Daubenton's ( <i>Myotis daubentonii</i> ).	At least seven of the UK's 16 species of bat species are frequently seen or recorded flying and roosting in many of Lambeth's parks, cemeteries and other open spaces due to the increasing abundance of suitable feeding and roosting habitats.
Eurasian hedgehog ( <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i> )	In serious decline across the entire UK. However relict populations have been recorded in Lambeth, including in or around parks, cemeteries and other open spaces in the centre and south of the borough.

## Acid Grassland

As a consequence of its underlying geology, as well as how the land has been shaped by both nature and people, Lambeth is fortunate to contain some areas of what is termed 'acid grassland'. This is a type of grassland that gradually developed on soils that originated from the decomposition of ancient beds of sands and gravels that were freely draining and low in nutrients. This made the soils relatively acidic in character, i.e. they give an acid pH when tested, unlike other more nutrient- and humus-rich ones which tend to be more 'neutral' in terms of their pH and retain surface and percolating water better.

Acid grassland is an important habitat type as it favours the establishment, growth and survival of plant species that prefer acidic soil conditions, and don't do so well in places where the underlying soils have an alkaline or neutral pH.

Acid grassland usually contains a mixture of various fine-leaved grasses and wildflowers which can tolerate and thrive in acid, low nutrient conditions, like sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), wavy hair grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), heath bedstraw (*Galium saxitale*) and tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*).

Dwarf shrubs, such as heather and bilberry may also be present, while unusual fungi, such as fairy-clubs, earth-stars and earth-tongues are commonly found due to the low nutrient status. Acid grasslands also can have a high cover of bryophytes (mosses) and dry acid grasslands can also be rich in lichens.

Acid grasslands in London are extremely important for their distinctive invertebrate populations, particularly insects and spiders. This is due not just to the specific grass and nectar-rich flower species which are present on acid grasslands, but also the loose and often bare soils, plus the dry and sun-exposed aspect of these grasslands. Many of the invertebrates that occur in acid grassland are specialists, and a number are rare such as many field crickets, some of which are UK BAP priority species.



**Plate 29. A female Tube Web Spider (*Segestria florentina*), a species often associated with acid grassland habitat, recorded on a tarmac path on Streatham Common**

Prominent invertebrate species found in acid grassland in Lambeth include hole-nesting bees, wasps and ants, many species of butterfly and moth, meadow ants, and birds like meadow pipit, skylark and green woodpecker. The London and UK distribution of these species is rather restricted, and this unique assemblage is part of the nationally important 'Thames Terrace Gravels' habitat type of which Greater London is a major component.

There are approximately six hectares of acid grassland within Lambeth, which equates to about 0.22% of the total land area of the borough. The main sites is the upper section of Streatham Common, with other fragments on Clapham Common and in Brockwell Park and Norwood Park; there is also evidence of relict acid grassland at Peabody Hill in West Dulwich.

Unfortunately, acid grassland in Lambeth, as in London, is under constant threat from a number of factors.

- **Habitat Fragmentation.** All of the acid grassland sites in Lambeth are physically isolated from each other, with no 'green connections' between them. This restricts the opportunity for acid grassland-loving plants and invertebrates to move between sites.
- **Lack of Appropriate Management.** To be successfully retained acid grassland needs careful management. Low-intensity grazing by livestock is the preferred method, but the fragmented nature of sites in Lambeth prevents farmers placing animals on or moving stock between them. The average site size is not large enough to support viable flock or herd sizes. Availability of suitable stock or local farms, and disturbance of livestock by the public or their dogs in such urban settings, is also prohibitive.

In the absence of grazing, mowing is the main means of maintaining the open character of acid grassland, but this is far from ideal as it can destroy features important for supporting diverse invertebrate communities, like anthills and tussocky grasses or scrub plants. It is also nowhere near as selective as grazing, as it cuts back many plants which may be important refugia or feeding resources for invertebrates and birds.



**Plate 30. Acidic grassland habitat on Streatham Common; the encroachment of self-set tree saplings, bramble and thistles is a concern that needs attention**

- **Amenity Use.** Acid grasslands in Lambeth are found in or close to existing open spaces or dense residential settlements, with heavy pressure on site managers or contractors to avoid complicated management regimes. Acid grassland can be lost through inappropriate management which benefits more formal recreational areas but not acid grassland or plants and animals which depend upon it.

Lambeth is committed to protecting what acid grassland it presently contains and working with stakeholders and other partners to increase the quality and quantity of acid grassland throughout the borough. As well as raising the profile of acid grassland within Lambeth, widening and strengthening appreciation by landowners and the public of its ecological value, we will secure appropriate management of all of our acid grassland sites by 2020.

We have a target to secure resources and expertise, not only to maintain and improve the quality and species diversity of our existing acid grassland habitats, but also increase the net area of acid grassland within Lambeth by 25% by 2024, taking it from 6 to 7.5 hectares. This will be achieved by reclaiming land that was originally acid grassland, based on past records, through appropriate intervention and management where soil and ground conditions permit.

### Priority Species for Acid Grassland in Lambeth

There are a number of plant and animal species which are closely associated with acid grassland, and which are found in certain locations in Lambeth. However, their continued presence and survival depends heavily on appropriate management and improvement of acid grassland, and on the rehabilitation or recreation of new areas of acid grassland on suitable soils. These 'priority species' benefit significantly from increasing awareness of the biodiversity importance of acid grassland, concurrent with the delivery of various actions which are described later in the plan.

Common/Species Name	Comments
"Acid Grassland Plant Species Assemblage" e.g. Sheep's fescue ( <i>Festuca ovina</i> ), common bent ( <i>Agrostis capillaris</i> ), wavy hair grass ( <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> ), sheep's sorrel ( <i>Rumex acetosella</i> ), heath bedstraw ( <i>Galium saxitale</i> ) and tormentil ( <i>Potentilla erecta</i> ).	Species of grasses and plants associated with nutrient poor acid soils which identify the presence of well managed acid grassland but also potential to create new or restore it. The amount of land in London which contains this unique assemblage has been in serious decline.
Pollinators, e.g. solitary, mason, mining and sand bees or wasps, bumblebees, moths, butterflies and hoverflies.	Certain invertebrate pollinators are closely associated with well managed acid grassland habitats in Lambeth, and their distribution and abundance is a key indicator of their health and condition.
Yellow meadow ant ( <i>Lasius flavus</i> )	Frequently associated with acidic grasslands, where their prominent raised anthills are widely distributed. Still found in selected areas of certain parks and commons in Lambeth.

## Neutral Meadow and Wildflower-Rich Grassland

Lambeth is fortunate to have large numbers of open spaces, large and small in size, including public parks like Brockwell Park and Ruskin Park, metropolitan commons such as Clapham Common and Streatham Common, and cemeteries such as West Norwood Cemetery and two other cemeteries in Wandsworth, Lambeth and Streatham Cemeteries.

One of the most dominant habitat types in many of these open spaces is 'amenity grassland' – grassland which is cut frequently and usually short to provide a rough 'lawn' for people to use for sports, games, relaxation and events. However, it's actually a relatively new phenomenon, and is now often taken for granted in public open spaces and is 'how it's always been' as people have never known anything different to it.

It's not known exactly when amenity grassland came to be the dominant feature of many public open spaces but it was probably as a consequence of the Victorian and Edwardian ages and their obsession with 'tidying up', with the perception that short-cut grass looked better and engendered a stronger sense of civic pride in public spaces, and also helped determine where the public could sit and what they could do in such locations.

There is now a growing and widely supported move towards the conversion of areas of amenity grassland in public open spaces to a more 'relaxed' or 'naturalised' form of grassland management, that is much better for biodiversity and landscape effect. Although some people feel that this is being done as a cost-saving exercise, arguing that councils are saving money by cutting the grass less and leaving it longer, this is not always the main consideration.



**Plate 31. A south-west view across Brockwell Park, Herne Hill, showing the contrast between an area of amenity grassland in the foreground, and a more extensive area of species-rich meadow grassland on the upper slopes of the park**

Naturalised grasslands are normally created on areas of land that are more suited to a less intensive management regime and where the existing ground conditions (e.g. poor soil nutrient levels or constant waterlogging) constantly defeat regular machine-mowing. Managing such areas in a more ecologically appropriate way then allows increasingly limited resources to be directed to other locations where amenity grassland is easier to maintain to the required standard and where the public really need them, rather than just doing it in these less amenable places for the sake of just doing what's always happened in the past.

Naturalised grasslands are normally best established on 'neutral' soils, which have a pH at or close to 7 (neutral). This then tends to favour numerous wild grasses and plants, including many that are important sources of nectar and pollen for pollinator species, or fruits and seeds for many wild birds and small mammals. They also form a 'tussocky' habitat that provides shelter and nesting habitat for many birds and small mammals, plus excellent conditions for ground hibernation by the larvae and pupae of many important invertebrates.



**Plate 32. Species-rich meadow grassland in Ruskin Park, Herne Hill, which has become an important resource for numerous invertebrates, small birds and small mammals**

In some cases amenity grassland isn't actually being converted into a new habitat type, as some people believe, but may in fact be reverting to how it always was at one time. The land on which many of Lambeth's parks and public open spaces are built on was once dense woodland which was gradually cleared and converted into rough grassland or pasture for the grazing of livestock. The soils and ground conditions might have been good for such traditional land management but they have never been ideal for a short-cut and intensively maintained grassland regime as grass growth and health has always been poor.

Managing such areas in future as meadow grassland and pasture, especially if this is concurrent with increasing the diversity of species of grasses, wildflowers, invertebrates and bird, is more realistic and certainly more sustainable, and also adds colour, form and diversity to the ecology and landscape of Lambeth's open spaces.

Other places where public open spaces now sit were once dominated by woodland and pasture that was constantly flooded by surface waters derived from nearby rivers, such as the Rivers Effra or Graveney, or by underlying springs. In such locations creating and then maintaining amenity grassland has been fraught with constant problems of poor grass growth/health and ground damage caused by mowing machinery, due to a high water table, waterlogged soils and leaching out of important plant nutrients.

Reverting such low-grade amenity grassland areas back into a wet meadow grassland regime is a more realistic option, reducing the risk of permanent damage to the ground and equipment, and again improving Lambeth's biodiversity and landscape.

The number of areas in Lambeth's parks and open spaces that are being managed as wet meadow grassland is also steadily increasing, especially in places where the groundwater table is high or they are prone to flooding and waterlogging. These wet grasslands are also important in helping manage and mitigate for surface water flooding in both the open space and surrounding roads or properties, slowing down the movement of water into higher risk areas and allowing it to dissipate before it causes material and financial damage elsewhere.



**Plate 33. An area of meadow grassland in Norwood Park, developed on wet ground which helps mitigate for surface water flooding, not just within the park but also to protect an adjacent network of heavily used railway lines**

These wet meadow grasslands are not only important components of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in Lambeth, but they are often composed of wild grasses and other plant species that favour such conditions, and add additional colour and ecological diversity to our open spaces and the whole borough.

Lambeth's parks and other public open spaces already contain areas that are specifically managed as meadow grassland, both as wet and dry habitat. Some are composed of many different species of wild grasses and other tall herbs, but are still of great importance to many wild animals typical of less intensively managed grasslands. These grasslands often show an abundance of many different species of invertebrate like grasshoppers, crickets, butterflies and moths, and are used by grassland birds such as grass warbler, skylark and dunnock.



**Plate 34. The 'Wildflower Lido Slope' in Brockwell Park, showing what can be done by converting an area of poor quality ground into a colourful wildlife attraction**

Other areas of grassland in the borough are being designed and maintained as species-rich wildflower meadows. These are areas where the type and frequency of grass-cutting, along with regularly collecting the sward and disposing of it elsewhere, is designed to favour early germinating, flowering and seeding wild plant species over more aggressive grasses. In some cases the rich topsoils and dense grass sward is stripped off, inverted or rotavated out to lower soil fertility, and wildflowers are seeded or plug-planted out along with subsequent rolling, harrowing and cut/collect to maintain a high wildflower species diversity in subsequent years.

It is estimated that Lambeth's parks and public open spaces contain approximately 243 hectares of grassland of various types, with amenity grassland making up 208 hectares (86% of total grassland cover). This means only 35 hectares of Lambeth's public open spaces constitute grassland defined as 'meadow or biodiverse grassland' (14%). Of this only around 10 hectares (4%) is being maintained as species-diverse meadow or wildflower grassland.



**Plate 35. Corporate and community volunteers creating a new wildflower meadow in Palace Road Nature Garden, winter 2016; the end results in summer 2017, with a diversity of native grasses and annual/perennial flowers**

We are committed through appropriate intervention and management, to increase the amount of meadow grassland, including wet meadow, in Lambeth's parks and public open spaces from 35 to 40 hectares by 2024. We will also increase the amount of wildflower species-rich meadow grassland from its current 10 hectares to 15 hectares in the same timeframe.



**Plate 36. Shire horses from 'Operation Centaur', Richmond Park, ploughing over an old 'Redgra' football pitch in Brockwell Park, spring 2019, in order to create a new species-rich wildflower meadow with funding provided by SUEZ Environment Trust**

Given the abundance of clayey, nutrient-rich soils across Lambeth and in many of its parks and open spaces, we accept that successfully creating and then maintaining overly-ambitious pristine wildflower meadows, of the type seen on chalk downlands or 'showcase' sites such as in London's Olympic Park, may not always be achievable. We are realistic, and will design schemes that are appropriate to the prevailing ground and soil conditions, and with reasonable maintenance regimes that can maintain species diversity and habitat quality.

Our aim is to steadily and gradually improve the overall species diversity and habitat quality of such features compared to their present condition, using species of grass, wildflower and other plants that will successfully establish but also provide other ecological benefits such as for pollinators or to provide opportunities for colonisation from other locations.

### **Priority Species for Lambeth's Meadow Grasslands**

Certain plant and animal species can be used to indicate and then monitor the location, quality and condition of meadow grasslands, especially once they have been created and improved. Lambeth's parks, commons, cemeteries, churchyards and other open spaces.

These 'priority species' benefit significantly from increasing awareness of the biodiversity importance of the protection and creation of species-rich meadow grasslands, concurrent with the delivery of various actions which are described later in the plan.

Common/Species Name	Comments
Invertebrate pollinators, e.g. honey, solitary, mason and sand bees, mason wasps, bumblebees, moths, butterflies and hoverflies.	Closely associated with well-managed and flower-rich meadow or grasslands in parks, commons, cemeteries and open spaces throughout Lambeth. However, numbers of many species have been in serious decline across London and the UK as a whole.
Eurasian kestrel ( <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> )	Regularly seen hovering over species-rich or well-managed meadow grasslands in Lambeth's larger parks and commons, due to the abundance of small mammals, amphibians and small birds attracted by suitable habitat and food sources.
Bats, e.g. Common Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> ), Soprano Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> ), Nauthusius' Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus nauthusii</i> ).	All three species of pipistrelle bat are now commonly found flying over species-rich meadow grasslands in many of Lambeth's parks, cemeteries and other open spaces, due to the abundance of invertebrate prey.



**Plate 37. A male kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) 'quartering' in Brockwell Park, searching for small mammals across the extensive areas of meadow grassland**

## Objectives

The Parks and Open Spaces Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will:

- Improve the quantity and quality of information for the location, distribution, abundance and condition of wildlife habitats and wildlife species in Lambeth's parks and public open spaces in order to improve management and protection of biodiversity in the borough.



**Plate 38. A mistletoe bush and a family of sparrowhawks in Archbishop's Park, Waterloo – beneficiaries of a more ecologically sensitive approach to managing Lambeth's parks and open spaces**

- Raise and sustain awareness among residents and communities of the importance of the borough's parks and public open spaces with regards to the protection and conservation of biodiversity, for their own benefit as well as that for wildlife in general.
- Encourage and promote good nature conservation practice within parks and public open spaces to encourage a progressive increase in the abundance and diversity of wild plants and animals throughout the borough.
- Encourage and promote good nature conservation practice within parks and public open spaces to encourage a progressive increase in the net area, diversity and quality of wildlife habitats throughout the borough.
- Increase the net area of Lambeth actively managed for a measurable biodiversity benefit, whether by the creation of new or extension of existing areas of wildlife habitat in the borough's parks and public open spaces.

- Secure additional and new investment to improve the quality of biodiversity management in parks and other public open spaces, and secure their long-term sustainability through additional revenue income and volunteering.
- Encourage good nature conservation practice within other open spaces, whether public or private, such as housing estates, schools and business units and secure a progressive increase in the abundance of wildlife habitats and species in the borough.
- Increase the number of residents, groups and businesses involved, and the frequency of participation, in management and improvement of parks and public open spaces to provide a measurable benefit for biodiversity and their own access to and enjoyment of nature.
- Maintain and improve the quality and species diversity of existing meadow and acid grassland habitats through appropriate intervention, management and advice.



**Plate 39. ‘Colour Your Common’ in 2018 – creating strips of species-rich wildflower meadow on Clapham Common to boost its importance for pollinators and people**

### **Principal Outcome**

At least 25% (27 hectares) of the total measured area of parks and other public open spaces, including cemeteries and churchyards, in Lambeth will be proactively managed and suitably maintained in order to provide a measurable biodiversity and educational benefit for its residents and wildlife by 2024.

### **Key Targets**

- Increase the net area of acid grassland within Lambeth by 25% by 2024, from 6 to 7.5 hectares through appropriate intervention and management where soil and ground conditions permit.
- Increase the net area of dry and wet neutral meadow grassland in parks and public open spaces to 40 hectares by 2024, through appropriate intervention, management and advice.

- Increase the net area of wildflower species-rich wet and dry neutral meadow grassland to 15 hectares by 2024, through appropriate intervention, management and advice.



**Plate 40. The end product for ‘Colour Your Common’; an incredible diversity of annual and perennial wildflowers in the very heart of Clapham Common**

### **Delivering the Lambeth Borough Plan**

The Parks and Open Spaces Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will support creating inclusive growth, reducing inequality and building strong and sustainable neighbourhoods.

## **Delivering the London Plan 2016**

The Parks and Open Spaces HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current London Plan:

2.18 (Green infrastructure); 5.3 (Sustainable design and construction); 5.9 (Overheating and cooling); 5.10 (Urban greening); 5.12 (Flood risk management); 5.13 (Sustainable drainage); 7.14 (Improving air quality); 7.17 (Metropolitan Open Land); 7.18 (Protecting open space and addressing deficiency); 7.19 (Biodiversity and access to nature); 7.21 (Trees and woodlands); 7.22 (Land for food); 7.23 (Burial spaces)

## **Delivering the Lambeth Local Plan**

The Parks and Open Spaces HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current Lambeth Local Plan:

EN1 (Open space and biodiversity); EN2 (Local food growing and production); EN4 (Sustainable design and construction); EN5 (Flood risk); EN6 (Sustainable drainage systems and water management); Q6 (Public realm); Q9 (Landscaping); Q10 (Trees); Q21 (Registered parks and gardens)



**Plate 41. The Old Bowling Green Garden in Ruskin Park; converted from a neglected bowling green into a species-rich, pollinator-friendly resource**

## 16. Private Gardens and Growing Spaces

### Introduction

Private gardens are defined as ‘private open space surrounding residential dwellings where householders or the landowner has sole responsibility for management’. This term can also be taken to include ‘communal’ areas of green space within or surrounding council or privately owned housing estates.

This is especially important in Lambeth where mixed-use social housing makes up a significant proportion of the borough’s total land area, and where many flats or dwellings don’t have their own private gardens but have to share a communal area, which may be on the ground or in some cases above ground on the roof or a terrace.

The term ‘private gardens’ can also be stretched to incorporate certain other areas of green space that are not normally freely open to the general public, but are managed to provide occupants of the building or site they are found on with various recreational or shared benefits.

This includes the grounds of many public and private schools and children’s nurseries in Lambeth, the grounds of hospitals, doctor’s surgeries or clinics, and the grounds of museums or places of worship which are not in council ownership or managed for free public access. The grounds of notable historic buildings in Lambeth, such as the Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Gardens or Tate Mews in Streatham, which were once the grounds of a convent but are now in private occupation, would also fall into this category.



**Plate 42. Two view of the gardens of Lambeth Palace, which is actively managed for biodiversity and is now a Borough Site of Importance for Nature Conservation**

The London ‘rule of thumb’ infers about 20% of Lambeth is covered with private gardens, individual or communal, which equates to around 550 hectares. They certainly vary enormously in size, shape, management and suitability for wildlife.

The distribution of private gardens in Lambeth is mixed, with most in the south-central half of the Borough, i.e. Streatham, Norwood, Clapham and Herne Hill. There are also many private gardens across the northern half of the Borough (Brixton, Stockwell, Camberwell, Kennington, Vauxhall and Waterloo), but the abundance of high-density social housing is a limiting factor. In such urbanised locations, communal gardens tend to provide the greenspace for local residents, although their size, accessibility and ‘green-ness’ can be very variable.

These private greenspaces form an important part of Lambeth's rich heritage, culture and landscape, and often provide places for residents or occupants of the buildings to enjoy frequent contact with nature where they and their families live or work. They are often some of the most varied areas of greenspace in Lambeth, and range in size from tiny 'pocket handkerchief' backyards to elaborate landscaped vistas.



**Plate 43. Myatt's Fields Estate North, Brixton – local residents making the most of small front garden spaces to grow plants and flowers that also have an ecological benefit**

Private gardens and similar spaces are often full of features which provide a direct or indirect benefit to biodiversity. For instance, many of the borough's gardens contain ponds of various origins and sizes. These can all support important wildlife species such as amphibians, water beetles and dragonflies, and provide many wild birds with places to drink, feed and wash.

Many of Lambeth's private gardens contain areas of dense or minimally managed scrub and undergrowth which provides breeding sites for birds, many of which have suffered significant declines in the countryside. Hedgehogs, bats and butterflies, species of which are in serious decline or limited in distribution, are frequently associated with private and communal gardens.

Larger gardens and gardens with adjoining areas of semi-natural habitat, which occur in some of the less urbanised parts of the borough, support rare species like grass snakes and slow-worms, and birds such as green and great spotted woodpeckers, nuthatches and even owls.

'Gowing spaces' is a broad term that is designed to cover places that the public have created to grow food for their own consumption or which is to be shared with others living there or within a defined locality. The most obvious types of growing space in Lambeth include allotments and community gardens, but the term includes much more than just these.

Community gardens are places where land management and use is 'communal' and reflects a consensus of all members or people on site. Whilst growing food may be a major activity, community gardens can also be managed for environmental education, training and play purposes, or act as the location of wildlife gardens. Lambeth is fortunate to have a whole network of community gardens which are located right across the borough.



**Plate 44. Communal garden within part of the Caldwell Estate, Stockwell, created by local residents and community groups to grow healthy food and benefit local wildlife**

At one time allotments were primarily places provided for individuals to grow their own food but on land segregated into 'plots' of various sizes. Individual allotment ploholders were normally viewed by the public as focused on producing food for their own consumption and not communicating much with other ploholders or the 'outside world'.

However, this has changed considerably and modern ploholders take a cooperative approach to the management of the whole site and support each other in terms of advice, materials and good practice. Lambeth's three council-owned allotments are very communal in nature, and also work with each other to improve what they grow and can learn from each other.

Community gardens and other small growing spaces are a crucial component of Lambeth's current landscape and provide residents with access to healthy, nutritious food for their own or shared consumption. They have also enabled underused or neglected parcels of land to be brought back into productive use, helping brighten up many a housing estate, school grounds or business premises, and significantly improve people's health and wellbeing.

The diversity of sizes, functions and purposes of Lambeth's growing spaces is astonishing. They can be small window boxes outside a flat on a large housing estate, but can just as easily include raised beds and planters in a communal garden area, allotments or part of an existing public park which has been rescued and converted by the community into a productive space for growing and cooking food. They also make a significant contribution to the biodiversity of Lambeth, as almost all of them are managed organically with minimal if any reliance on herbicides or other pesticides, and with areas deliberately left and managed for wildlife.



**Plate 45. The 'Edible Bus Stop' on Landor Road, Stockwell – before and after; what a local community can do to convert a poor quality area of open space into a unique food growing opportunity that also has significant benefits for biodiversity**



**Plate 46. View of Lorn Road Allotments, a small council-owned allotment site with a plothead community actively committed to organic, biodiversity-friendly gardening**

There are well over 20 identified allotment and community garden sites in Lambeth comprising a total area of around 18 hectares, which amounts to about 0.7% of the total land area of the borough. There are 15 known allotment sites, some private and some council owned, covering a total of 15 hectares.

However, if one adds in the many smaller growing and gardening spaces in Lambeth, many of which are within communal gardens or on land not identified as green space, the true figure is higher and may easily surpass 22 hectares or over 0.8% of the borough.

### **Challenges and Threats to Private Gardens and Growing Spaces**

In principle Lambeth's private gardens, allotments, community and other growing spaces, because they are viewed in planning policy and practice as part of the borough's 'open space', are afforded various levels of protection from inappropriate development or loss. However, because they are often seen as 'private' rather than 'public' open space, and are not afforded the higher levels of designation and protection many public parks and open spaces receive, they can be much more vulnerable to neglect, damage, reduction and loss.

As well as affecting access to and enjoyment of green space, this can adversely affect local wildlife, as important habitat or 'green corridors' are reduced or removed through inappropriate management or development of the land. There are many factors threatening private gardens and growing spaces, and the biodiversity benefits they provide to the borough.

**Style of Management.** This can have a profound effect on the wildlife associated with private gardens and growing spaces. An intensively managed garden or growing site will support far fewer species than a site which contains a range of habitats like shrubs, climbers, long grass, a pond and dead wood. The pressure to keep garden maintenance simple and cost-effective is often a major issue, especially where they are in housing estates or where there is an obsession with having everything 'manicured' and free of weeds and scrub.

**Inappropriate Planting or Landscaping Schemes.** The way a garden is designed, landscaped and planted has a major impact on its wildlife. Some plants improve a garden's wildlife value, but other plants have comparatively little ecological value, for example cultivated varieties which produce little or no nectar. The trend towards formal or ornamental gardens, with exotic plants that look good or impress guests, means many plants that are far better for biodiversity might be excluded from the garden, with obvious effects.

**Pesticide Use.** This is a major cause of the decline of certain species, especially many garden birds and hedgehogs. Pesticides may also have more direct effects, for example insecticides will kill insects beneficial to gardens as well as target species whose destruction is desired by certain gardeners or landscapers. Although organic gardening is very popular in Lambeth, along with more environmentally friendly pest control methods, the desire for a 'quick fix' solution tends to limit choices of pest control methods for most gardeners, especially if they are time short and have busy lives or want an aesthetic effect over a more natural one.



**Plate 47. A European Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), photographed in West Norwood – a once common species of gardens which is now in serious UK decline**

**Garden Size and Location.** The size of a garden and its physical connections with adjacent greenspace, which can act as a 'pool' for new species colonisation or migration, is a major factor influencing whether wildlife will actually use it. If a good wildlife garden or growing space is physically isolated from other 'reservoirs' of wildlife by sterile gardens or hard landscaping that offers no green connections, then it may not manage to sustain its biodiversity or increase it over time. A large and complex garden is also better for wildlife than a very small one.

**Impacts from London and Lambeth Housing Targets.** Lambeth, like other London boroughs, is under enormous pressure from the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Mayor London's London Plan, to find more land to accommodate an ever increasing number and density of mixed housing and infrastructure. This runs the risk that existing private greenspaces, including in existing houses, housing estates and communal spaces, are allocated for new housing and are built upon.

**Lack of Suitable Garden Space.** There has been a gradual reduction in the size of gardens in many new housing or communal developments, as developers try to 'cram in' as many residential units as they can on to one site. This can limit how much land is then given over to garden space, and how much space residents might have to allocate for biodiversity, when they will have other competing uses for that land.

**Availability of Allotments and Community Garden Spaces.** Lambeth has a low number of allotment plots relative to its population. With only 15 working sites there are around 600 plots in Lambeth against a borough population of 320,000 – 1 plot for every 533 citizens. Other historic sites have long been lost to provide new housing or expanding schools.

Compounding this situation is the fact that, as an 'Inner London Borough' Lambeth has no legal obligation to provide statutory allotments for residents. The [London Government Act 1963 s55](#) provides an exemption to older legislation (e.g. Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s23(1)) that requires boroughs to provide sufficient allotments to meet local demand on petition. However, this does not mean Lambeth cannot create new allotment spaces where there is suitable land. Unfortunately there is often an overriding need for homes and schools which takes precedence over allotments wherever the council may have available land.

**Inappropriate or Poor Gardening Methods.** Where people manage to get an allotment plot or community growing area, they might be inexperienced and have a lack of success with traditional more ecologically friendly methods. They can be tempted to manage the site or their plot in an aggressive 'all out' manner, so they don't provide space for wildlife or are tempted to use chemicals to fertilise the ground or control pests to maximum return.



**Plate 48. Growing beds inside the 'Clapham Common Bandstand Beds', adding more colour and biodiversity to the Common, as well as a safe place to grow healthy food**

**Funding Pressures on Allotment and Community Gardens.** Many local authorities, with increasing pressures on budgets and demands for expenditure on statutory or core services, can view allotments and community gardens as 'non-core' and cut funding accordingly. This means sites may fall into neglect or be abandoned, and any wildlife habitat is taken over by dense scrub and aggressive weeds, reducing the site's ecological value.

### **Legal Status of Private Gardens and Growing Spaces**

Private or communal gardens would not be protected from loss and development solely on the basis of biodiversity. However, it is a factor to be considered in the determination of planning policies designed to protect garden land.

The Lambeth Local Plan 2016 includes Policy Q14 'Developments in gardens and on backland sites', which states:

"The council does not consider gardens to be potential development sites and will resist proposals which would result in the loss of biodiversity, soft landscaping/permeable drainage or openness", subject to various criteria including ensuring as much soft landscaping as possible is retained and the parking area surface is permeable.

In terms of allotments, community gardens or growing spaces Policy EN2 'Local food growing and production' in the Lambeth Local Plan states:

"The use of land and buildings as new allotments, orchards and for local food growing spaces and production will be supported, including the temporary use of vacant or derelict land or buildings and the use of incidental open space on housing estates and other open space areas, where this does not conflict with other policy objectives or land use priorities.

The incorporation of community gardens, allotments, orchards and innovative spaces for growing food, including green roofs, will be encouraged and supported in major new developments where possible and appropriate, particularly where there is demand for food growing space in the vicinity of the application site."

In addition, many of Lambeth's private and communal gardens, allotments and other growing spaces are in Conservation Areas or have Tree Preservation Orders attached to them; which confer them with additional protection from inappropriate development, landscaping or the removal of certain trees which may have ecological value. It must also be remembered that many animals using private and communal gardens or growing spaces are protected by current wildlife legislation; examples include bats, slow-worms, great crested newts and common lizards.

This means that, as part of any changes of use or inappropriate development, any attempts to intentionally kill such protected species or disturb nesting or breeding sites could render the landowner and land managers liable to prosecution or refusal of their proposals.

### **Priority Species for Lambeth's Private Gardens and Growing Spaces**

There are a number of species of plant and animal which are indicative of a well-managed garden, allotment or other growing space where there is ample provision and benefit for biodiversity – suitable space and opportunity is made available for wildlife amongst other uses and needs for the garden. These 'priority species' will benefit significantly from increasing awareness of the biodiversity importance of the gardens and growing spaces, concurrent with the delivery of various actions which are described later in the plan.



**Plate 49. Front garden of a flat on the Caldwell Gardens Estate, Stockwell, showing what committed and enthusiastic residents can do for biodiversity and community**

Common/Species Name	Comments
House sparrow ( <i>Passer domesticus</i> )	House sparrows were once a familiar sight throughout London but are now in serious decline. Lambeth still contains important colonies of house sparrows, especially in private gardens or communal growing areas where dense hedges or border shrubberies have been planted, retained or extended.
Bats, e.g. Common Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> ); Soprano Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> ); Nauthusius' Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus nauthusii</i> )	All three of the UK's pipistrelle bat species are regularly seen frequenting houses and gardens throughout Lambeth, along with many allotments, community gardens and housing communal areas.
Eurasian hedgehog ( <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i> )	In serious decline across the UK. However relict populations are found in Lambeth, including many private gardens, allotments, community gardens and other small 'wild areas' found between properties, especially in the centre, west and south of the borough.



**Plate 50. Communal area inside Lorn Road Allotments, along with a small and charming example of a wildlife-friendly 'living wall'!**

### **Objectives**

The Private Gardens and Growing Spaces Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will:

- Improve the quantity and quality of information on the location, distribution, abundance and condition of wildlife habitats and species in Lambeth's private gardens and growing spaces to improve the management and protection of biodiversity in the borough.
- Raise and sustain awareness among residents and communities of the importance of the borough's private gardens and growing spaces with regards to protection and conservation of biodiversity, for their own benefit as well as for wildlife in general.
- Encourage and promote good nature conservation practice within Lambeth's private gardens and growing spaces to encourage a progressive increase in the abundance and diversity of wild plants and animals throughout the borough. This includes:
  - Promoting sustainable gardening, food production and landscape maintenance;
  - Reducing and eliminating inappropriate use of pesticides, promoting methods of mechanical and biological pest control, mulching and companion plants;
  - Introducing or retaining features that are important for or beneficial to wildlife;
  - Promoting good practice which supports pollinator or pest control species;
  - Include gardens and growing spaces in award schemes to recognise good practice in the management of gardens for biodiversity, such as Blooming Lambeth, London in Bloom, Green Flag Award and 'Bees Needs'.
- Identify and secure new or additional resources, including funding, training, volunteering and in-kind contributions, which is invested in private gardens and growing spaces to improve management to protect and improve biodiversity.



**Plate 51. View of the Streatham Common Community Garden at Streatham Rookery**

### **Principal Outcomes**

To protect the current area coverage of private gardens, communal greenspaces, allotments, community gardens and other growing spaces in Lambeth in order to maintain their positive net contribution to the biodiversity and green infrastructure of the borough.

### **Key Targets**

To increase the number and area of communal gardens, allotments, community gardens and other growing spaces in the London Borough of Lambeth rated as 'being positively managed' for biodiversity benefits. The aim is to increase the baseline value as measured in 2019 by 5% in each successive year.

### **Delivering the Lambeth Borough Plan**

The Private Gardens and Growing Spaces Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will support creating inclusive growth, reducing inequality and building strong and sustainable neighbourhoods across the borough.



**Plate 52. View of Harleyford Community Garden in Vauxhall, a well-used community greenspace, and a Borough Site of Importance for Nature Conservation**

### **Delivering the London Plan**

The Private Gardens and Growing Spaces Habitat Action Plan will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current London Plan:

2.18 (Green infrastructure); 5.9 (Overheating and cooling); 5.10 (Urban greening); 5.11 (Green roofs and development site environs); 5.12 (Flood risk management); 5.13 (Sustainable drainage); 7.14 (Improving air quality); 7.18 (Protecting open space and addressing deficiency); 7.19 (Biodiversity and access to nature); 7.21 (Trees and woodlands); 7.22 (Land for food).

### **Delivering the Lambeth Local Plan**

The Private Gardens and Growing Spaces Habitat Action Plan will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current Lambeth Local Plan:

EN1 (Open space and biodiversity); EN2 (Local food growing and production); EN5 (Flood risk); EN6 (Sustainable drainage systems and water management); Q9 (Landscaping); Q10 (Trees); Q14 (Developments in gardens and on backland sites); Q21 (Registered parks and gardens).

## 17. Railway Linesides

### Introduction

'Railway lineside' is a term used to describe the network of vegetated land that runs alongside or adjacent to operational above-ground railways, including lines used by trams and underground trains. Railway lineside also includes railway embankments, cuttings, areas around stations and junctions, land above tunnel mouths, derelict and operational sidings and marshalling yards. All these can contain features and habitats of importance for nature conservation. Habitats on railway linesides include grassland, scrub, woodland and ruderal vegetation, which are colonised by many different wildlife species.

Railway linesides in Lambeth provide numerous wild species with an absolutely brilliant means to spread, colonise and disperse across large areas of the borough, or to come into and leave it from surrounding boroughs. They act as 'green corridors' for the movement of plants and animals where traditional routes for their movement may not exist or have become fragmented due to past and current developments or other activities. They make a significant contribution to Lambeth's green infrastructure, and add positively to the net area of the borough that is 'green' as seen in aerial photographs or passing through it.

There are about 24 kilometres of 'railway corridor land' within the Borough of Lambeth, which makes up about 2.9% of London's total. About 40 hectares of Lambeth is classified as 'railway lineside', which constitutes around 1.47% of the total area of the borough.



**Plate 53. View of railway lineside habitat near Streatham Common station, part of a large Borough Site of Importance for Nature Conservation**

At present 34 hectares of railway lineside in Lambeth are currently classified as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in the Proposals Map for the Lambeth Local Plan 2016. A SINC is one of the borough's most important classifications for biodiversity and the protection of its wildlife. There are presently seven areas of railway lineside in Lambeth which are designated as SINC, all of Borough Importance, and they equate to 1.3% of the total land mass of Lambeth and 3.5% of the London total for railside SINC.

The seven main areas of SINC railside land in Lambeth are in the south-centre of the borough. They are a) around the Leigham Vale and Tulse Hill Junctions; b) around Peabody Hill in West Dulwich/Herne Hill; c) sections between Tulse Hill and Streatham called 'Streatham Cuttings'; d) land around Streatham Hill; e) a long section between Streatham Common and Norbury railway stations; f) a long section between Tooting Bec Common and Norbury railway station; and g) a section in West Norwood between West Norwood and Gipsy Hill railway stations.

Although making up a small proportion of the borough's total land area, Lambeth's railway linesides make up a significant contribution to its overall biodiversity status, containing as they do significant stretches of natural or semi-natural vegetation and a diversity of habitat types. Many sections of railway lineside habitat is relatively open in character, as a result of ongoing and regular clearance of self-set native and non-native trees for rail safety and operational purposes, combined with cutting back scrub and dense grass where this could pose a fire risk.

Although this removal of trees might be seen as potentially harmful to the biodiversity of railway linesides and the borough, if done appropriately and sensitively it provides positive benefits. A mosaic of scrub, grassland, bare ground and trees, all of differing height, density and species, offers a high diversity of habitats and microhabitats, and different microclimates, which favours an equally high diversity of important wildlife like invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals and birds.



**Plate 54. Male and female slow worms, a species frequently recorded or seen on open railway lineside habitat and scrub in Lambeth**

It is still important to retain a proportion of mature and semi-mature trees on railway linesides, particularly in those parts of the borough which are relatively deficient in good and continuous tree cover, such as in central and north Lambeth, or where trees on railway land provide additional green corridors connecting nearby green spaces or other important habitats.



**Plate 55. Common mullein and common teasel, two plants of significant importance for birds and pollinators, frequently recorded on railway linesides in Lambeth**

Finally, railway linesides can make a significant if subtle contribution to delivering environmental and economic resilience in Lambeth, especially the council's obligations around preventing or mitigating surface water flooding and improving air quality.

Many areas of railway land are open in character with large swathes of grassland, scrub, woodland and trees, which absorb carbon dioxide, as well as trapping and fixing harmful pollutants like nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons and particulates, so helping counteract poor air quality in the borough.

Railway lineside habitat can also play an important role in sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) in the borough, proving space for features which can intercept and store excess rainwater and surface water. Open grassland, woodland and scrub habitat, as well as wetland features like pools and scrapes, slow down the movement of water, preventing it flooding not just adjacent railway lines, but also surrounding streets and residential or business properties.

## Factors Affecting Railway Linesides and their Biodiversity Value

**Poor or Inappropriate Land Management.** Railside land must be managed in order to maintain operational continuity and passenger safety standards, such as preventing trees growing too near to the tracks, obscuring signals or sightlines or dropping excessive leaf litter on the lines. However, it needs to be proportionate and justifiable, and not excessive or done in one single 'mass clearance'.

If a 15 metre swathe is regularly clear felled adjacent to the railway lines, as has happened in the past, this will be inadequate in maintaining existing grasslands, nor will it help in restoring grassland which has since evolved into scrub and woodland. Clear felling of trees without considering the ecological impacts is unacceptable, whereas careful selective pruning, removal or thinning out of dense tree cover will have positive biodiversity benefits.



**Plate 56. View of railway lineside habitat near Streatham station, part of a large Borough Site of Importance for Nature Conservation**

**Negative or Hostile Perceptions.** 'Traditional' railway estate management perceptions can be biased against vegetation on or close to railway land, because of concerns over effects on the smooth and safe running of rail operations. This might pressure the rail operators to remove the risk altogether, removing or vigorously cutting back all lineside vegetation. Concerns over litigation from injured parties following accidents can reinforce this attitude, with a 'better not wait for it to happen' attitude forcing vegetation to be removed altogether and at the wrong time or all at once.

**Contract Performance and Financial Pressures.** The increasing use of contractors for lineside management often means works are being driven by financial and contract performance targets, with little leeway for landscape or nature conservation considerations. Contractors can be reluctant to alter their work timings or patterns to take into account biodiversity issues when encountered out of season or outside the specifications they are issued with or are contracted to deliver.

**Development or Operational Requirements.** Railway lineside biodiversity can be harmed due to development and operational requirements, especially the loss of marshalling yards and reduction of space around junctions to housing. Recent proposals for new strategic rail links, e.g. London Crossrail and Thameslink, has required some existing railway corridors to be widened, which risked removing substantial areas of existing railway lineside habitat without providing appropriate replacement habitat.

**Misuse and Antisocial Behaviour.** Railway linesides suffer from flytipping and vandalism; this then creates complaints from local residents if they feel their area is being blighted or trespassers are using the railway land as cover for vandalism, burglaries or antisocial activities. This forces railway operators to keep linesides closely mown and free of trees and fire risks, or remove places where flytipping is dumped or hidden. As a consequence areas of wildlife habitat can often be reduced or lost if not carefully managed.

**Habitat Degradation or Loss by Invasive Plant Species.** A range of highly invasive or alien plants such as Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Sycamore, Cherry Laurel and Buddleja are now abundant along many sections of railway lineside, including in Lambeth. These plants can over-dominate indigenous wild plants, encroach on or shade out bare, open ground and grassland habitats, so affecting species distribution and diversity along the whole lineside.

**Excessive Use of Chemical Herbicides.** Railway operators and maintenance contractors can view herbicides as a cheap and effective way to control invasive plants choking up the railway linesides, keeping scrub, grassland and woodland under check and preventing them becoming a safety and operational issue. However, herbicides are generally indiscriminate in the plant species they target, and as a result many indigenous native plant species can be affected or eliminated, if herbicide use is inappropriate, excessive or not properly managed.

**Pressures for Railway Expansion and Railway Station Improvements.** Lambeth's population is continuing to grow and new housing is being constructed to accommodate them. Many residents need to travel into London and around it for work, school or home, and this means a greater demand on the railway system. This then places pressure on increasing the number of railway lines and extending the size and length of railway stations and platforms, so that there are more and longer trains for the burgeoning numbers of commuters.

Policy T4 'Public transport infrastructure' in the Local Plan also supports an increase in the connectivity, quality and capacity of public transport. This includes an improved and increased quality and frequency of train services to stations in Lambeth, including extensions of Thameslink and the Croydon Tramlink to Crystal Palace and Streatham.

Policy T4 also supports improvements to facilities and access at railway and underground stations, new transport infrastructure and interchange facilities, especially in areas that need more frequent services and better connections in the south and east of the borough such as in Streatham, West Norwood and West Dulwich.



**Plate 57. A sparrowhawk, with its prey, feeding on a fence alongside railway linesides between Herne Hill and Tulse Hill stations – a common sight along railway land**

Unfortunately, extending existing or creating new railway stations/platforms or increasing the number of railway lines can, if not carefully planned, impact negatively on existing wildlife habitat on each side of the railway lines or around stations. Railway lineside wildlife is fairly tolerant of humans and human activity, so it can be accommodated or recover, but there might need to be replacement or compensatory land provided, especially if open grassland/scrub or good quality tree cover is being removed as a consequence of the development.

### **Legal Status of Railway Lineside Habitat in Lambeth**

All sections of railway lineside land within Lambeth that are designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in the Lambeth Local Plan Proposals Map are suitably protected from loss or inappropriate development through Policy EN1 (Open space and biodiversity). The Local Plan recognises the importance of railway lineside land for nature conservation and as 'green corridors' for wildlife movement and dispersal. It also emphasises the need for rail operators and developers to consider the wildlife interest of railside land surplus to operational requirements before applying for any change of use.

Many sections of railway land in Lambeth are within or immediately adjacent to listed buildings or structures, listed historic parks and gardens, Conservation Areas or contiguous with land which has Tree Preservation Orders attached to them. These designations confer these sites with additional protection from inappropriate development, landscaping or the removal of certain trees which may have ecological value.

It must be remembered that many animals using railway lineside for travel, shelter, feeding, nesting or breeding are protected by wildlife legislation; examples include invertebrates like stag beetles, reptiles and amphibians like slow-worms, birds and bats.



**Plate 58. Well-managed railway land with a diversity of different habitat types, and good 'green corridor connections' surrounding wildlife habitat, including local gardens**

This means that, as part of any changes of use, inappropriate development or inconsiderate management for Lambeth's railway land, any attempts to intentionally kill these protected species or disturb their nesting or breeding sites could render the rail operators and/or their contractors, or indeed any neighbouring property owners, liable to prosecution or the refusal of their development or management proposals.

In conclusion it is clear that railway lineside habitat in Lambeth is important as a net contributor to the borough's biodiversity. It is also a critical component of its green infrastructure and maintains and sustains the green corridor network required by wildlife to colonise and move around the borough. For this reason it is essential that we raise awareness of the importance of railway linesides in Lambeth as a significant wildlife habitat resource and for their contribution to its nature conservation value.

We also need to work with other stakeholders and partners, especially the rail operators, train companies and their contractors to encourage and deliver sensitive and sympathetic management of Lambeth's railway corridors and lineside habitats in order to both protect and enhance their current and future biodiversity status.

## Priority Species for Railway Linesides in Lambeth

There are a number of species of plant and animal which are intimately associated with the habitat types found on or alongside railway linesides throughout Lambeth, and where protection, improvement and creation/extension of this habitat mosaic is critical to ensure their continued presence in the borough. These 'priority species' will benefit significantly from increasing awareness of the biodiversity importance of railway land in the borough, concurrent with the delivery of various actions which are described later in the plan.



**Plate 59. A male common lizard in a garden beside railway linesides in Streatham Vale**

Common/Species Name	Comments
Grasshoppers and Crickets (Order <i>Orthoptera</i> )	Extensive areas of open grassland and scrub on railside habitat in many parts of Lambeth encourage healthy populations of different species of grasshopper and cricket.
Slow worm ( <i>Anguis fragilis</i> )	A legless lizard recorded on open grassland and scrub habitat found alongside areas of railway lineside in the south and centre of the borough.
Common lizard ( <i>Lacerta vivipara</i> )	A relatively rare reptile in Lambeth: the only confirmed sightings are on certain areas of open, sandy grassland found alongside railway land in the south of the borough.

Black redstart ( <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i> )	Areas of open, scrubby, shingle-rich ground alongside many of Lambeth's railway lines, or the presence of flat, gravelly roofs on many railway buildings are thought to favour the presence of this rare bird.
Eurasian kestrel ( <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> )	Often seen hovering over open railway land in many parts of Lambeth searching for prey. The retention and maintenance of open scrub and grassland alongside many railway lines is thought to be a key factor in their increased presence, along with the use of many railway buildings for nesting sites.
Bats, e.g. Common Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> ), Soprano Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> ), Nauthusius' Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus nauthusii</i> ), Noctule ( <i>Nyctalus noctula</i> ), Serotine ( <i>Eptescius serotinus</i> ), and Leisler's ( <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i> ).	An impressive number of UK bat species are frequently seen flying along or foraging over land alongside or associated with railway lines in the borough. Bats are thought to use railway lineside habitat in Lambeth not just to find food but also to 'commute' between roosts and other nearby feeding areas.

## Objectives

The Railway Linesides Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will:

- Improve the quantity and quality of information as to the location, distribution, abundance and condition of wildlife habitats and species on Lambeth's railway linesides to improve management and protection of biodiversity.
- Raise and sustain awareness among residents and communities of the importance of railway lineside habitat with regards to protection and conservation of biodiversity for their own benefit, as well as for wildlife in general.
- Encourage and promote good nature conservation practice on railway linesides in Lambeth through a partnership with railway land owners, operators and contractors to deliver a progressive increase in the abundance, diversity and quality of wildlife habitats on the borough's railway land.
- Protect and increase the net amount of operational or other railway land in Lambeth being positively managed for biodiversity whether through creation of new, or extension of existing, areas of wildlife habitat including for all railway linesides designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).
- Where railway lineside habitat within Lambeth is redeveloped or built upon for justifiable operational use or for public transport expansion, compensatory land of both equal area and of equal/greater ecological quality is secured - this is mandatory for railway lineside habitat that is part of a designated SINC.
- Where compensatory land for railway lineside habitat loss cannot be secured, appropriate mitigation or biodiversity enhancements are secured on any retained railway land which is of greater ecological quality and benefit than the land lost or redeveloped - this is mandatory for any railway lineside habitat that is part of a designated SINC.

## Principal Outcomes

Lambeth's railway lineside habitat makes a progressive and positive net contribution to the quality of biodiversity and green infrastructure in the borough.

There is no net loss of railway lineside habitat within Lambeth, especially for any sites which are designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in the current or any future versions of the Lambeth Local Plan and its Proposals Map. The current value of 34 hectares of railway lineside SINC is fully protected.

## Key Targets

There is a progressive increase in the net area of railway lineside habitat in Lambeth designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) from the current 34 hectares to 38 hectares, a net increase of 12%, by 2024.

## Delivering the Lambeth Borough Plan

The Railway Linesides Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will support building strong and sustainable neighbourhoods.



**Plate 60. A new biodiverse living roof being constructed on the Fenwick Estate in Stockwell; the close proximity of a network of railway lines, as seen in the distance, was a key reason for its installation in order to extend and improve wildlife habitat**

### **Delivering the London Plan**

The Railway Linesides HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current London Plan:

2.18 (Green infrastructure); 5.10 (Urban greening); 5.12 (Flood risk management); 5.13 (Sustainable drainage); 7.14 (Improving air quality); 7.18 (Protecting open space and addressing deficiency); 7.19 (Biodiversity and access to nature); 7.21 (Trees and woodlands).

### **Delivering the Lambeth Local Plan**

The Railway Linesides HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current Lambeth Local Plan:

EN1 (Open space and biodiversity); EN5 (Flood risk); EN6 (Sustainable drainage systems and water management); T4 (Public transport infrastructure); Q10 (Trees).

## 18. Rivers and Standing Water

### Introduction

Lambeth's rivers, streams, ponds and other areas of open or standing water have a rich history associated with them. They have immense value for communities providing access to water for recreational, educational, aesthetic and nature conservation activities. Lambeth's ponds are used for fishing, model boating, socialising, entertainment, education and nature conservation, and many have associations or groups who manage, protect or develop them.

Lambeth's rivers and ponds are valued for their contribution to nature conservation. Many are rich in habitats, plants and animals which are increasingly restricted or uncommon in London, act as 'refuges' for wildlife as other important habitat is lost or declines in management and quality, or are used for environmental education purposes, whether formal and informal.



**Plate 61. View of Mount Pond on Clapham Common**

Rivers, ponds, lakes and wetlands are seen by conservationists, educationalists and site managers as a tool to raise awareness and interest in urban wildlife, nature conservation and biodiversity, as well as in landscape history.

Many water bodies in Lambeth might have already been lost to neglect or development, but others are suitably protected or slowly being brought back to life by various restoration projects or the actions of the council, non-governmental conservation organisations and local community or volunteer groups.

Lambeth's ponds and areas of standing water support a diverse population of aquatic and terrestrial birds, invertebrates and plants. They act as 'green corridors' allowing wild plants and animals to 'hop' between individual sites to colonise new habitat, or migrate out to new areas as a result of overcrowding or population pressures.

Considerable effort has been made in Lambeth to provide marginal vegetation in ponds and rivers, as well as floating islands in ponds and marshy areas around existing ponds or as 'scrapes' in woods, meadows and boundary features in many parks and public greenspaces.

They also play a vital role in Lambeth's resilience strategy for dealing with flooding caused by excessive or uncontrolled flows of ground and surface waters, which is a major issue in many parts of the borough. They are often integrated into various sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) across the borough, or new shallow ponds and scrapes can help temporarily store flash flooding or excessive rainfall until it can be gradually dispersed or drained safely away from high risk areas like roads, housing or business estates.



**Plate 62. The consequences of flash flooding in Lambeth, Herne Hill Junction 2004; ponds, streams and other water features in nearby Brockwell Park are increasingly designed and managed to help prevent or reduce future incidents like this**

In terms of rivers the biggest one in Lambeth is, of course, the River Thames where it flows through the borough boundary. However, because the River Thames, with its foreshore and walls, is highly unique in terms of its estuarine character as well as its hydrology, ecology and management, it will be addressed in a separate habitat action plan.

Lambeth contains some stretches of moving water, although these are often hidden from public view and for a variety of reasons. The most famous river in Lambeth is the River Effra which originates in the hills of Upper Norwood and Crystal Palace. It then makes its way north through Lambeth and Southwark before finally discharging into the River Thames next to Vauxhall Bridge. A large section of the Effra's extensive catchment is located within Lambeth, as are a number of its smaller tributaries.

Unfortunately for most of its length the Effra is a 'hidden' or buried river, having been covered over or integrated into London's sewage system during the Victorian and Edwardian era. However, small sections of some of its tributaries can be found in places like Brockwell Park which are still open to the air, and its route can still be traced through numerous parks and open spaces as well as along roads and streets in the borough.

Lambeth also contains part of the River Graveney, one of the main tributaries of the River Wandle. The Graveney's catchment includes a large area of Streatham and Knight's Hill, and minor tributaries are found running through Streatham Common and the Rookery. These minor tributaries are open to the air but only running with water following heavy and persistent rainfall which either recharges the aquifers that feeds the springs at source, or through percolation of surface and groundwater into the stream's local catchment.



**Plate 63. Part of the 'cascade' in the Rookery at Streatham; this ornamental feature may have been created out of one of the smaller spring-fed tributaries of the River Graveney**

A long section of the Graveney proper can be found running through the borough north-west from Norbury through Streatham Vale before passing into Wandsworth near Streatham Park. Sadly most of this section is either buried under roads or pavements, or trapped within a vertically-walled concrete channel which limits access and wildlife value. More could be done with the Graveney to make it ecologically better.

It is estimated that there is no more than 6,000 square metres (0.6 ha) of open streams within Lambeth, which equates to no more 0.022% of the total land area.

The 2007 Lambeth Borough Habitat Survey, undertaken by London Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Mayor of London as part of a rolling survey of the biodiversity of London's boroughs, indicated 23 ponds and areas of open water in Lambeth.

However, this figure is certainly incorrect, as smaller ponds or those in relatively inaccessible locations, including many private gardens or school grounds, may have been omitted from these surveys, so the true figure is probably higher; a conservative estimate of 30 ponds has been made since then.

The net area of ponds and open water bodies in Lambeth is small, no more than 3.5 hectares in total or less than 0.13% of the total land area of the borough. The majority of Lambeth's larger ponds are in public spaces like Ruskin Park, Brockwell Park and Clapham Common but others are in smaller greenspaces like Palace Road Nature Gardens, Agnes Riley Gardens or Streatham Rookery. The remainder are on private land such as Tate Gardens Streatham and Lambeth Palace, or where access is restricted as in allotments, schools or housing estates.

### **Factors Affecting the Biodiversity of Rivers and Standing Waters**

**Neglect and Lack of Management.** Neglect or a lack of maintenance of rivers and ponds usually results in the forces of 'natural succession' taking over, with a loss of important aquatic and semi-aquatic habitats and species, and replacement by those typical of dry land.



**Plate 64. The main pond in Ruskin Park; a key landscape and ecological feature**

**Inappropriate Management.** Many of those responsible for the management of rivers and ponds often use maintenance contracts or regimes that are driven by cost. Maintenance regimes which do prioritise nature conservation will result in rivers and standing water bodies that are managed to keep them looking neat and safe, so that marginal habitat is thinned out or cut back without consideration for the needs of wildlife.

**Conflicts over Use and Access.** Conflicts can occur in water bodies where there is demand for recreational and leisure uses like fishing, boating, swimming, picnicking, music, events and dog walking. Pressure on river/pond banks, and the water itself, could 'squeeze out' or confine areas of wildlife importance to limited locations, or noise and disturbance can drive out or deter wildlife, especially more sensitive species or when they are nesting or hibernating.



**Plate 65. Fishing on Eagle Pond, Clapham Common; the needs of recreational sports and nature conservation can sometimes be in conflict, unless properly managed**

**Pollution.** Many moving or standing water bodies are affected by various forms of pollution, especially sewage resulting from misconnected or leaking sewers or discharges of waste waters from industries, road runoff or deliberate dumping of wastes in a 'convenient' water body. There is evidence that pollutants directly or indirectly affect wildlife habitats and wild species living in and around the margins of rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and wetlands.

**Vandalism and Flytipping.** Many moving and standing water bodies suffer from vandalism, such as tampering with inlet valves or drains, which results in chronic or catastrophic water loss and drying out. They are also used as dumping sites for wastes, especially if hidden away from public view or along the back of private residence or business premises. This not only reduces the aesthetic quality of the affected water body and its surroundings, but also has direct or indirect impacts upon wildlife habitats and species in it.

**Alien and Invasive Species.** Many rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands in London and the UK are affected or threatened by deliberate or accidental introductions of alien or invasive plant and animal species like Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed, Zebra Mussel and Floating Marsh Pennywort. If allowed to colonise, establish and disperse unchecked, these species can aggressively compete with native plants and animals in rivers and standing water bodies, sometimes to the point where indigenous species are out-competed, suppressed or even excluded, which results in a rapid and often irreversible loss of ecological quality, and can then act as a reservoir for other nearby water bodies to be infected.

**Excessive Health and Safety Culture.** Many rivers, ponds and lakes have been lost to direct loss or infilling for safety reasons, especially where they are no longer regarded as essential to existing operations or changes in use of the land. Many ponds have also been lost as to various developments like housing, industrial estates or the laying down of new hardstanding.

### **Legal and Protected Status of Lambeth’s Rivers and Standing Water Bodies**

None of the rivers and ponds in Lambeth have specific designations to confer protection solely for their nature conservation status. However, a number of ponds and parts of the catchments of the Rivers Effra and Graveney are within existing Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) for Lambeth, and provided with protection from inappropriate use or loss in the Lambeth Local Plan under Policy EN1 (Open space and biodiversity).



**Plate 66. View across the main pond at Brockwell Park, following extensive restoration and landscaping, including new biodiversity features, in 2012**

A number of ponds and parts of the catchments of the Rivers Effra and Graveney are within Conservation Areas, are part of sites designated as Metropolitan Open Land, or in a Historic England listed historic park or garden. All these designations confer a level of protection on such sites, and by inference on the water bodies within them.

The three ponds on Clapham Common, being part of a registered Metropolitan Common, also have protection through commons legislation. In addition, all of the ponds on Clapham Common, in Brockwell Park and in Ruskin Park are 'registered fisheries', and as such are protected as such from loss or inappropriate use, and their management for biodiversity is encouraged as this improves their quality for management of existing fish stocks.



**Plate 67. Mound Pond on Clapham Common, following a major restoration programme, with ecological enhancements including marginal reedbeds and floating islands**

It must also be remembered that many animals using rivers and standing water bodies, and any marginal habitats including trees, for travel, shelter, feeding, nesting or breeding are protected by current wildlife legislation; examples include invertebrates like great diving beetles, reptiles and amphibians like great crested newts, as well as birds and bats.

This means that, as part of any use, management and development of rivers and standing water bodies, any attempts to intentionally kill protected species or disturb their nesting or breeding sites could render the landowners and managers and/or contractors liable to prosecution or the refusal of their development or management proposals.

## Priority Species for Rivers and Standing Water in Lambeth

There are a number of species of plant and animal which are intimately associated with moving and standing water bodies in Lambeth. Some of these are rare or are highly sensitive to poor water quality or inappropriate management, and require that those water bodies where they are found are suitably protected, maintained and improved. Where possible new water bodies which could be colonised by these 'priority species' should be created, or existing ones that are in poor condition should be better managed to encourage colonisation or recovery.

These species benefit significantly from increasing awareness of the biodiversity importance of Lambeth's rivers and bodies of standing water, concurrent with the delivery of various actions which are described later in the plan.

Common/Species Name	Comments
Dragonflies ( <i>Anisoptera</i> ) and Damselflies ( <i>Zygoptera</i> )	Large winged predatory insects with large compound eyes and colourful abdomens, whose adults and larvae hunt in or around many types of water body in Lambeth. Key indicators of the health of rivers and ponds, and have become increasingly abundant in the borough as a result of recent pond improvement projects.
Great crested newt ( <i>Triturus cristatus</i> )	Britain's largest native newt, identified by a prominent crest on the back of a breeding male. Very rare in Lambeth, but a number of ponds are known to contain them.
Common toad ( <i>Bufo bufo</i> )	Experienced a serious decline across much of the UK; once widely recorded in Lambeth although current numbers are very low and distribution is patchy. Lambeth is a partner in a project to improve management of ponds to increase opportunities for their return.
Swan ( <i>Cygnus olor</i> )	A key flagship species in Lambeth in terms of the health and positive management of Lambeth's larger ponds and lakes, especially with respect to breeding success.
Bats, e.g. Common Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> ), Soprano Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> ), Nauthusius' Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus nauthusii</i> ), Noctule ( <i>Nyctalus noctula</i> ), Serotine ( <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i> ), Leisler's ( <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i> ) and Daubenton's ( <i>Myotis daubentonii</i> ).	Over seven species of UK bat species are intimately and frequently associated with rivers, ponds and other standing water bodies throughout Lambeth, whether in public parks and open spaces or in private properties.

## Objectives

Lambeth's rivers, ponds and other standing water features are widely recognised as a net contributor to the borough's biodiversity. This is why it is essential that we encourage good nature conservation practice in terms of the management and use of Lambeth's rivers and other water bodies, in order to maintain and promote greater habitat and species diversity.



**Plate 68. Adult and juvenile dragonflies, species which have benefitted significantly from improved ecological management of Lambeth's ponds and open water bodies**

We also need to raise awareness with the general public and other site users of the ecological importance of Lambeth's rivers and standing waters, and encourage their active involvement in the development of these features for a wide range of positive uses such as education and recreation compatible with their biodiversity.

The Rivers and Standing Water Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will:

- Improve the quantity and quality of information on the location, distribution, abundance and condition of wildlife habitats and species in Lambeth's rivers and standing water bodies in order to improve the management and protection of biodiversity.
- Raise and sustain awareness among Lambeth's residents, businesses and communities of the importance of moving and standing water bodies with regards to protection and conservation of biodiversity, for their own benefit as well for wildlife in general.
- Encourage and promote good nature conservation practice in terms of the management of rivers and standing water bodies to encourage a progressive increase in the abundance and diversity of wildlife habitats and species.



**Plate 69. Fish netting and collection exercise on Long Pond at Clapham Common, undertaken with the Environment Agency to help improve fish stocks and biodiversity**

- Increase the net area of Lambeth's rivers, ponds and standing water bodies classified as 'good' or better in terms of biodiversity value, through regular assessment of their habitat quality and species abundance/diversity.
- Secure additional and new investment from internal and external sources to improve the quality of biodiversity management in the borough's rivers and standing water bodies, and secure their long-term sustainability through additional income and volunteering.

- Increase the number of residents, groups and businesses involved, and frequency of their participation, in management and improvement of Lambeth’s rivers, ponds and standing water bodies to provide a tangible and measurable benefit for biodiversity and their own access to and enjoyment of nature.



**Plate 70. Staff from the Environment Agency assisting with scrub and reed removal on Mount Pond, Clapham Common, to improve habitat quality and diversity**

### **Principal Outcomes**

Lambeth’s rivers, streams, ponds, wetlands and other bodies of standing or moving water make a progressive and positive net contribution to the quality of biodiversity and green infrastructure within the borough.

### **Key Targets**

There is no net loss of open river, pond or standing water within Lambeth, especially in locations designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in the current or any future versions of the Lambeth Local Plan.

The current value of 0.6 hectares of open moving water and 3.5 hectares of standing water in Lambeth is protected, and progressively increased as resources and opportunities permit.

To increase the number and area of rivers, ponds and standing water bodies in borough rated as ‘being positively managed’ for biodiversity benefit. The aim is to successively increase the baseline value, as measured in 2019, in each year of assessment.

## **Delivering the Lambeth Borough Plan**

The Rivers and Standing Water Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will support creating inclusive growth, reducing inequality and building strong and sustainable neighbourhoods.

## **Delivering the London Plan**

The Rivers and Standing Water HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current London Plan:

2.18 (Green infrastructure); 5.3 (Sustainable design and construction); 5.9 (Overheating and cooling); 5.10 (Urban greening); 5.12 (Flood risk management); 5.13 (Sustainable drainage); 7.5 (Public realm); 7.17 (Metropolitan Open Land); 7.18 (Protecting open space and addressing deficiency); 7.19 (Biodiversity and access to nature); 7.21 (Trees and woodlands); 7.30 (London's canals and other rivers and waterspaces).



**Plate 71. Volunteers relaxing by the side of one of the two wildlife ponds in Palace Road Nature Garden, Streatham Hill**

## **Delivering the Lambeth Local Plan**

The Rivers and Standing Water HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current Lambeth Local Plan:

EN1 (Open space and biodiversity); EN4 (Sustainable design and construction); EN5 (Flood risk); EN6 (Sustainable drainage systems and water management); Q6 (Public realm); Q9 (Landscaping).

## 19. Tidal Thames

### Introduction

Of all the natural or landscape features of Greater London that have shaped and controlled the origins, evolution and present circumstances of the London Borough of Lambeth, none has been more influential than the River Thames and the way it too has been used and changed over time. The borough itself in turn has also played a role in changing the river over many centuries, and continues to still do so today.

'Tidal Thames' is a term which reflects the highly dynamic and complex nature of the River Thames as it passes through London and Lambeth. It describes a "partially enclosed area of water and tidal shore which receives saline water from the North Sea and fresh water from the River Thames together with its numerous tributaries and land run-off".

The River Thames has been and still is a major transport route, a drain for wastes and sewage, a view, a development site, a historical record, a home and a visitor attraction. However, it is also recognised and celebrated as an important biodiversity resource and wildlife corridor for Greater London and beyond. Numerous wildlife habitats and species are present along its entire length, and many are closely linked to London's identity, history and development.



**Plate 72. A view looking south west of the River Thames outside the South Bank Centre, Waterloo – probably one of the most iconic views of the Thames in London**

The Tidal Thames is also a classic example of a 'recovering ecosystem' of great importance not only to London, Kent and Essex but also the North Sea and upstream catchments. Historical abuse and misuse is being rectified to make the Thames look better, more attractive to live and work by, and safer. It is also restoring important wildlife habitat destroyed or reduced by poor land and water management, creating new opportunities for habitats and species.

As a consequence this habitat action plan fits into an array of policies designed to protect and improve the river, its walls, foreshore and tributaries. This plan links into the London Tidal Thames Habitat Action Plan, which is a component of a much larger scale Tidal Thames Habitat Action Plan, which covers the Thames across Greater London, Essex and Kent.

### **The Tidal Thames in Lambeth**

About 3.2 kilometres of the Tidal Thames runs through Lambeth, along its northern/north western boundary - this equates to about 4.5% of the total length of the Tidal Thames. The Tidal Thames in Lambeth covers about 43 hectares, from the recognised sea walls to the mid-river political boundary with Wandsworth, Westminster and Southwark.

However, though relatively short in length, the section of the River Thames in Lambeth is one of the best known because of the many historical features and tourist attractions along the Albert Embankment and South Bank. The section of the Thames in Lambeth was once fed by the River Effra, but recent developments have obscured its route and it is now a buried or 'lost' river of London, with only a storm discharge outlet visible beside Vauxhall Bridge.



**Plate 73. A view of the River Thames at low tide looking north, highlighting the extensive banks of shingle, gravel and mud, of critical importance for wildlife species**

The Tidal Thames in Lambeth is part of a Metropolitan Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (Reference M31), one of the biggest for Greater London, and the only site in the borough with this status. The SINC designation covers the tidal foreshore, submerged riverbed and all vertical walls, flood defences, wharves and jetties within the borough boundary.

Lambeth straddles two important ecological 'zones' of the Tidal Thames. Upstream of Vauxhall Bridge is the 'Freshwater Zone', where plant and animal species reflect habitats typical of more natural bank management and fresh water dominance. Downstream of Vauxhall Bridge the Thames is in the 'Brackish Zone', which is under considerable stress from changing proportions of fresh and saltwater, and vertical and hard flood defence walls dominate.

There has been a general trend of recovery and improvement within the Tidal Thames since the 1960s, as a result of improvements in water quality and habitat. Today, the Thames in London supports a diverse flora and rich populations of invertebrates, fish and aquatic birds. Since 1957, 119 species of fish have been recorded, and numbers of wading and aquatic birds found on the foreshore or on the water has also steadily increased.

The diversity of different materials used to construct sea walls and defences of the Thames within Lambeth, and the variety of materials deposited on the foreshore such as muds, sands, gravels and decomposed aggregates, as well as concrete and wooden fenders or jetties (some of which are abandoned and gradually rotting into the river bed) is enormous. These provide an incredible diversity of microhabitats and microclimates for many wild plants and animals, which are able to exploit and tolerate the constantly changing conditions resulting from the tidal actions of the river and the changing practices of humans both past and present.



**Plate 74. A view of the River Thames at low tide looking north, highlighting the wooden fenders which line large sections of the walls of the river within Lambeth – an important wildlife microhabitat, especially for plants, invertebrates and molluscs**

## Factors Affecting the Biodiversity of the Tidal Thames

**Development-led Encroachment.** The Tidal Thames has a long history of suffering from human activities, especially development-led encroachment, which since Roman times has reduced the net area of estuarine habitat within London. Despite stronger planning legislation and constraints imposed by flood defences and protected jetties and walls, foreshore habitat loss is still at risk from various riverside redevelopments.



**Plate 75. The River Thames at low tide outside of the Oxo Tower building in Waterloo, showing the tight juxtaposition of buildings and footways to walls and foreshore**

This is not helped by a growing demand for new land to build housing, and the fact people are willing to pay a premium for a 'riverside view' – a far change from previous times when generations of Londoners were so disgusted and embarrassed by the state of the river that they 'turned their backs on it', or gave up the river frontage to warehouses and industries like boat building, potteries and chemical works.

Developers want their properties, whether new developments or conversions of old warehouses and factories, to look smart and clean, and this can extend to wanting the adjacent sea walls and defences, steps and jetties to be tidied up and covered with smooth, shiny or wholly inappropriate materials. This could result in existing rough, broken or uneven surfaces or structures, which provide wild plants and animals with niches to form habitats and survive, being lost and not replaced with features of equal or better biodiversity value.

**Sewage, Storm Outflows and Poor Water Quality.** Water quality standards in the River Thames have steadily improved over the last 150 years, but Greater London is still heavily dependent on its old and ageing Victorian sewage network. During periods of heavy rain, combined sewer overflows discharge diluted sewage and rainwater into the Tidal Thames, which under conditions of low river flow, heavy rain and warm weather can lead to a collapse in dissolved oxygen levels in the water and subsequent fish kills.



**Plate 76. Lack's Dock near Vauxhall Bridge; the accumulation of litter dumped or lost in to the River Thames is another issue which can affect its ecological quality**

**Excessive Freshwater Abstraction.** During the summer the Tidal Thames frequently experiences low freshwater flows downstream from its tributaries and inland sources as a result of upstream abstraction for drinking water. This means the saline tidal waters penetrate further upstream into the upper part of the river, bringing with it marine animals but also estuarine silt, which can change the habitat and lead to a reduction in invertebrate diversity, or force certain saltwater-intolerant fish and plants to be forced out or upstream.

**Impeded Water Flow and Oversiltation.** A number of tidal barrages and weirs have been introduced to the River Thames in London over the years for navigation or to promote regeneration. Barrages can alter the ecology of the river, restricting species movement (especially for migrating or breeding fish), destroying the low tide feeding habitat upstream of the structure and increasing siltation. A classic example is the Wandle Barrage in nearby Wandsworth which has had a number of adverse effects on water flow and biodiversity around where the Wandle joins the Thames, which is why it is now being removed.

**Alien and Invasive Species.** Certain exotic or problem plants and animals like Japanese Knotweed, Buddleja and Chinese Mitten Crab have become established along the Tidal Thames. Further research is required to determine the effect of these species on biodiversity, but many are known to be aggressive colonisers of estuarine or freshwater habitat and can often out-compete native species in other locations where they have become established. They can also burrow into or damage stone and concrete, so they pose a potential risk to the integrity and stability of sea walls and other defences along the river, especially ones which are already have uneven surfaces or fissures.

**Dredging and Navigational Channel Maintenance.** Dredging involves removing deposits of sands, gravels and muds to maintain navigation through the Thames. Removal and alteration of these deposits can result in the loss of species, while the redistribution of sediment results in changes to normal river flows.

### **Legal and Protected Status of the Tidal Thames in Lambeth**

The Tidal Thames within Lambeth is heavily protected from inappropriate development or encroachment through a range of policies in the London and Lambeth Local Plan. The Tidal Thames and its foreshore, walls and other structures are recognised for many functions, including their nature conservation and biodiversity value, as is its status as a Metropolitan Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (M31) for Lambeth and London.

Large sections of the Thames’s walls and riverside paths, greenspaces and buildings are within Lambeth Conservation Areas, or are listed by Historic England and Lambeth Planning; these designations confer a considerable level of protection on such sites, and by inference on the Thames, and its foreshore that abuts onto them.

It must also be remembered that many animals using the River Thames and its walls and foreshore for travel, shelter, feeding, nesting or breeding are protected by current wildlife legislation; examples include many of the wild birds that feed on the foreshore, or nest in walls and other structures on the banks.

This means that, as part of any use, management and development of the Thames, its foreshore, structures and walls, any attempts to intentionally kill protected species or disturb their nesting or breeding sites could render the land owners and managers and/or contractors liable to prosecution or the refusal of their development or management proposals.

### **Priority Species for the Tidal Thames in Lambeth**

There are a number of species of plant and animal which are intimately associated with the Tidal River Thames within or adjacent to Lambeth. The protection, improvement and creation/extension of suitable features or habitat, especially on the foreshore or river walls, is critical to ensure their continued presence in the borough. These ‘priority species’ will benefit significantly from increasing awareness of the biodiversity importance of the Tidal River Thames, concurrent with the delivery of various actions which are described later in the plan.

<b>Common/Species Name</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Common flounder ( <i>Platichthys flesus</i> )	A marine fish spending its juvenile months in the Tidal Thames, providing a nursery area for fish spawned in the North Sea. Numerous areas of shallow water, creeks and foreshore gravel and sand beds within the Thames in Lambeth provides flounder fry with habitat and food during spring and summer.

Smelt ( <i>Osmerus eperlanus</i> )	A cousin of the Atlantic salmon with characteristic smell of cucumber! A good indicator of water quality, spawning amongst the gravels and shallow waters near Wandsworth. Appropriate management of the Thames within Lambeth is designed to protect this crucial spawning ground and provide feeding habitat for adults and fry.
Common tern ( <i>Sterna hirundo</i> )	A summer visitor to the Tidal Thames, breeding on derelict structures and purpose built 'tern-rafts' on docks. Regularly seen fishing on the Thames within Lambeth, especially at low tide on gravel and sand banks along the borough foreshore.
Oystercatcher ( <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> )	Frequently seen in the middle and lower reaches of the Tidal Thames. Associated with mudflats, creeks and, at high water, derelict barges, jetties and other undisturbed roost sites, especially within Lambeth.

## Objectives

The Tidal Thames where it passes through and contributes to Lambeth is universally recognised as a significant net contributor to the borough's biodiversity and green infrastructure. This means it is essential we encourage good nature conservation practice in terms of the management and use of the Tidal Thames in Lambeth, so as to maintain its current ecological value and promote or secure greater habitat and species diversity along it.

Examples of how this has been and is being delivered include the Thames Tideway scheme, where a new 'super sewer' is being constructed under the Thames itself to intercept combined sewer overflows (CSOs) along the river. The tunnel will then transfer diluted sewage and foul rainwater further downstream for subsequent treatment, which will significantly improve water quality within the main body of the river.

Lambeth Council has been working with Thames Tideway to construct a new wetland and reedbed habitat feature around Vauxhall Bridge (<https://www.tideway.london/locations/albert-embankment-foreshore>). This will cover the new interception structure for CSOs from Clapham and Brixton, as well as extending part of the existing river bank and sea wall to surround another component of the interception system. These new features incorporate features in the river, on its foreshore and on its walls which have a significant biodiversity benefit, especially for migrating and feeding fish, birds and invertebrates.

Therefore the Tidal Thames Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will:

- Secure continuing and additional protection for wildlife habitats and species within or adjacent to the Tidal Thames in Lambeth through the statutory planning process.
- Improve the quantity and quality of information on the location, distribution, abundance and condition of wildlife habitats and species within or associated with the waters, foreshore, walls and banks of the Tidal Thames to improve management and protection of biodiversity in the borough and River Thames as a London-wide resource.



**Plate 77. Artist's impression of the at new Thames Tideway CSO interception point on Albert Embankment beside Vauxhall Bridge, along with marginal estuarine reedbed habitat and a new viewing stage to improve managed access to enjoy the Thames**

- Raise and sustain awareness among residents, landowners, businesses and communities of the importance of the Tidal Thames with regards to the protection and conservation of biodiversity for their own benefit, as well as for wildlife in general.
- Encourage and promote good nature conservation practice in terms of the sustainable development and management of the Tidal Thames in Lambeth in order to encourage a progressive increase in the abundance and diversity of wildlife habitats and species.
- Secure additional and new investment to improve the quality of biodiversity management within or adjacent to the Tidal Thames, and secure their long-term sustainability through additional income or volunteering.
- Where wildlife habitat within the Tidal Thames is redeveloped or removed for navigation, access or strategic transport purposes, compensatory habitat of equal area and of equal or greater ecological quality will be secured in every case within the Tidal Thames.
- Where compensatory wildlife habitat loss in the Tidal Thames cannot be secured appropriate mitigation or biodiversity enhancements will be secured on intertidal land or other features that is of greater ecological quality and benefit than the land lost.



**Plate 78. A community clean up event on the Thames foreshore below Gabriels Wharf in Lambeth, to help remove any litter but also re-engage the public with the Thames**

### **Principal Outcomes**

The entire length and area of the Tidal Thames within Lambeth's boundaries makes a progressive and positive net contribution to the quality of biodiversity within, and both the blue and green infrastructure of, the borough.

There is no net loss of habitat or land currently included within the Tidal Thames Metropolitan Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for the London Borough of Lambeth. Any loss of habitat or land is fully compensated for by alternative habitat of equal or greater biodiversity quality or by appropriate mitigation within the SINC which improves its biodiversity value.

Every development which proposes encroachment up to or into the boundary of the Tidal Thames Metropolitan SINC in Lambeth will provide financial or material contributions to the Tidal Thames to improve habitat and species diversity. Examples include insertion of timber fenders on sea walls to provide vertical and horizontal habitat, marginal reedbed habitat along river banks, nesting boxes for swifts, or living roofs/walls for invertebrates or black redstarts.

### **Key Targets**

The net area of moving water (high or low tide), foreshore, walls, sea defences and vertical structures in the Tidal Thames within Lambeth classified as 'good' or better in terms of their habitat quality and ecological value is progressively increased in each compared to the baseline value as measured in 2019.

## **Delivering the Lambeth Borough Plan**

The Tidal Thames Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will support the Lambeth Borough Plan by: creating inclusive growth (promoting and stimulating investment in and regeneration of the borough); reducing inequality (addressing inequalities including job opportunities and the quality of life and health); and building strong and sustainable neighbourhoods (providing and maintaining safe, clean and cohesive communities across the borough).

## **Delivering the London Plan**

The Tidal Thames HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current London Plan:

2.18 (Green infrastructure); 5.12 (Flood risk management); 5.13 (Sustainable drainage); 7.5 (Public realm); 7.18 (Protecting open space and addressing deficiency); 7.19 (Biodiversity and access to nature); 7.24 (Blue Ribbon Network); 7.28 (Restoration of the Blue Ribbon Network); 7.29 (The River Thames); and 7.30 (London's canals and other rivers and waterspaces).



**Plate 79. A Thames 21 event held on the foreshore to launch a new 'River Watch' scheme for local residents to monitor water quality on the Thames**

## **Delivering the Lambeth Local Plan**

The Tidal Thames HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies, amongst others, in the current Lambeth Local Plan:

EN1 (Open space and biodiversity); EN4 (Sustainable design and construction); EN5 (Flood risk); EN6 (Sustainable drainage systems and water management); Q9 (Landscaping); Q24 (River Thames).

## 20. Woodlands and Trees

### Introduction

Lambeth contains a large number of trees, both as individual specimens and within hedges, boundary features and woodlands of various sizes and complexity. They afford residents with a refuge from the pressures of living in a busy, noisy and congested urban environment. Trees and woodland are a resource for stimulating public enjoyment and improving the quality of life.

Trees, woodlands and mature hedges make up the 'urban forest' – a complex network of trees and the habitats they both make up and support. Lambeth's urban forest plays a crucial role in supporting and maintaining the ecological infrastructure of not just the borough but also of London and our neighbouring boroughs of Croydon, Lewisham, Southwark and Wandsworth.



**Plate 80. Mature deciduous woodland on Streatham Common**

For example, Lambeth is a partner in the 'Great North Wood' project, managed by London Wildlife Trust (LWT) and funded by the Heritage Lottery and National Lottery, which aims to reconnect existing areas of woodland in Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark, both physically and ecologically, but also to 'reconnect' people with these woodlands, their history and wildlife, and promote them as places to visit, use and volunteer in.

Lambeth's trees and woodlands are important for their and the borough's heritage value, and often have a rich cultural, historical and landscape history associated with them, or the people who planted trees, or owned, managed or lived in our woodlands past and present.

Trees and woodlands also have 'diversity': they vary in height, shape and form, and woodlands have enormous diversity in their composition and structure, and the ground they covers. In all cases this is important in terms of biodiversity; the more variation in the species and form of tree and woodland structure, the greater the biodiversity tends to be in and around them.

There are numerous benefits derived from the trees, woodlands and hedgerows found in Lambeth, and some are described below.

### **Environmental Benefits of Trees and Woodlands**

Trees and woods provide valuable 'breathing spaces' for people in a heavily urbanised and densely built-up environment. For many of Lambeth's residents the borough's parks, commons and woodlands are the only accessible green space they might have, as well as providing shelter and shade from hot, sunny, wet or windy weather conditions.



**Plate 81. A magnificent mature Cedar of Lebanon on Tulse Hill Estate**

Lambeth's trees play a crucial role in helping mitigate for and minimising climate change, and reducing the harmful effects on our health and comfort from the 'urban heat island' that covers most of the borough and London. The average mature tree can capture, store and convert over 22 kg of carbon dioxide a year from the air around it, so helping mitigate for the 'greenhouse effect' caused by increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere.

Trees also have a role to play in actually cooling down ambient air temperatures where the urban heat island is most severe. As they transpire, their leaves release water vapour which helps cool down and humidify the air around them, which makes the local environment feel cooler as this vapour rises and pulls hot air with it.

Trees, whether on our streets, in our gardens or parks or in woodlands, are essential for improving air quality, which is currently poor in Lambeth. Their leaves absorb a wide range of airborne pollutants such as ozone, carbon monoxide and especially nitrogen oxides.

Tree roots also absorb nitrogen and sulphur oxides washed out of the air by rain, incorporating them into their tissues or breaking them down by microbes and fungi intimately associated with their root systems (mycorrhiza). Dust and other particulates, especially ones known to be harmful to health, in particular respiration, are collected on and by tree leaves and then washed to the ground by rain or dew rather than remaining in the air to be breathed in by people.

Trees have a major role to play in preventing and managing heavy rainfall or surface flooding, especially in urban locations or places where the underlying soils are impermeable or compacted. Trees, if carefully selected and planted, can act as barriers or 'bunds' to the rapid and uncontrolled movement of water into sensitive areas like roads and housing, and can also stabilise or buttress any physical flood defences.

Trees and plants with abundant and wide leaves also provide a greater area to intercept rainfall, and slow down the speed at which it hits the ground, allowing more time for the water to soak into soils or be taken up by tree roots. Woodlands and mature hedges are especially important in flood mitigation and SuDS systems, due not only to the large number of trees within them but also their huge root coverage and the often loose porous soils, which help trap and slow down the movement of water and then quickly absorb it into the trees.



**Plate 82. A veteran English Oak in Brockwell Park, probably over 500 years old, and still providing an enormous diversity of environmental benefits to both the park and the wider community**

## Ecological Benefits of Trees and Woodlands

Lambeth's trees are an integral component of its urban biodiversity. They provide important nesting, roosting, foraging opportunities and predator cover for numerous species of bird, bat and invertebrate. Many species of animal are closely associated with certain species of tree, or are very selective about which species of tree or tree habitat they will use; woodlands are often crucial for many endangered or protected species that can't live in other urban habitats.

Lines of trees, whether on streets, in gardens or in woodlands and hedgerows, provide living 'highways' for many wild plants and animals to migrate to and from existing habitats in order to colonise or disperse to new ones, especially young animals, animal eggs and plant seeds. Their role as ecological green corridors in a place like Lambeth cannot be overemphasised.

Trees also act as 'scaffolding' for many wild plants that use them for support or to access light and nutrients. Ivy and wisteria, for example, provide many different wild animals with shelter, food and nesting habitat, especially invertebrates, birds and bats, and provide additional cover and protection from predators and human disturbance on the ground.



**Plate 83. Fungi growing on poplar and beech trees within Eardley Road Sidings Nature Reserve, help recycle nutrients but also provide food and habitats for other species**

## Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Trees and Woodlands

Trees are sometimes the only 'bits of green' that people living in a heavily built up urban place like Lambeth might have close to where they live, work, study and relax. This is especially the case for residents living in large council or private housing estates, where any flats may have no gardens, or communal gardens are small or bland. If these trees die and are removed, and not replaced or added to, then people can feel bereft of greenery and nature, which can cause them to feel depressed or undervalued as citizens.

Woodlands of differing sizes and complexity are often seen as places to visit and are used to get away from the pressures and demands of urban life; they offer some seclusion and peace to walk, walk the dog or just relax, provided that the woodlands are appropriately managed to mitigate for any access, safety or security issues.



**Plate 84. Autumnal colours on trees in Brockwell Park, which all adds to the value of Lambeth's parks and public spaces as places of tranquillity and relaxation**

Trees play an important role in acting as living green screens to absorb and attenuate (reduce) levels of ambient noise from nearby traffic or human activities. They also help trap and absorb many different gaseous, particulate or soluble air pollutants, so helping improve the air that people are breathing whilst living at home, or travelling to and from work, school or college.

Trees play a significant role in compensating for elevated or persistently high air temperatures, especially during extreme summer weather or heatwaves, by cooling down the ambient air. Elevated air temperatures are known to increase respiratory distress in vulnerable adults and young children, and exacerbate the medical effects of gaseous and solid air pollutants.

### **Aesthetic and Social Benefits of Trees and Woodlands**

Trees, as well as woodlands and hedgerows, contribute to forming and defining the character of Lambeth. They are important local landmarks and give residents a sense of community, continuity and 'place'. Many of our woodlands have a rich and fascinating history, and often lie on land that is intimately linked to the borough's heritage and the evolution of its communities.

Certain species of tree found in Lambeth have become part of what gives identity to a local neighbourhood or area. Avenues of London plane and common lime, first planted by the Victorians or Edwardians, are what make certain roads, squares, parks and gardens in Lambeth unique; and contributes to their landscape character. Many of the borough's parks and open spaces contain avenues of horse chestnuts, common oaks and grey poplars which give them distinctiveness, and contribute to their landscape and ecological value.

Trees, and where appropriate woodlands and mature hedges, provide privacy where this is felt necessary or appropriate, especially for rear gardens, around schools or care homes. They can also emphasise important views but they can equally help screen out objectionable or intrusive views (e.g. screening out industrial estates or car/bus parking). They help reduce glare and reflection: trees, woods and hedges are less likely to leak, scatter or focus harsh lighting into people's homes and cars unlike shiny, reflective, smooth or hard surfaces.

Finally trees and woodlands provide softer and more calming backgrounds to buildings and other forms of architecture, especially modern designs which might be bulky, blocky or made of harsh, bright and imposing materials.

### **Trees and Woodlands in Lambeth**

There are thought to be over 150,000 individual trees in Lambeth, with at least 70,000 being owned and maintained by Lambeth Council, found on streets and pavements, or in parks, cemeteries, housing estates and school grounds. Many of the other trees are found in private gardens, in business estates, on railway and other operational land or in hospitals.



**Plate 85. A mature London Plane on Windrush Square in the very heart of Brixton – a vital part of Lambeth's 'green lung' as well as a unique heritage and landscape asset**

There are approximately 17 hectares of identified woodland sites in Lambeth, which amounts to about 0.62% of the total land area of the Borough.

Most woodland cover in Lambeth is found in Streatham and Norwood, and there is a clear deficiency of woodland cover in the northern half of the Borough. The main woodland sites in Lambeth are Bishop Thomas Grant School Rough, Eardley Road Sidings, Clapham Common, Knight's Hill Wood, Palace Road Nature Garden, Peabody Hill, Streatham Common and Unigate Wood. There are other smaller blocks of woodland in the borough often in parks, back gardens, along railway linesides, and within the grounds of schools and some housing estates.

Virtually all of the woodland currently found in Lambeth is believed to be 'secondary woodland'; sites which had been cleared of older 'primary' or 'ancient' woodland centuries ago and then used for other purposes, or which were never actually wooded. New woodland then naturally developed on the site following abandonment for farming or pasture, or was encouraged through tree plantings alongside a relaxed management style.



**Plate 86. A view into the woodlands at the top of Streatham Common; these woods are secondary woodland which has recovered from previous historical clearance**

If there is any pristine primary or ancient woodland remaining in Lambeth, it is almost impossible to prove because of an absence of continuous historical records. It is probable that certain larger or mature trees within some of these woodland sites could be remnants of the original primary woods, and managed to survive past clearances or were protected in back gardens or private estate grounds. Other large trees with a similar provenance are found on some of Lambeth's roads, gardens of private residences or some housing estates, and may have once been part of the original woodland before it was removed for development.

## Factors Affecting the Biodiversity of Trees and Woodlands in Lambeth

Woodland is arguably one of the UK's richest wildlife habitats, yet it is extremely vulnerable to losses of actual habitat and changes in management, both of which have drastic impacts on its species richness. Over 40 UK woodland species have died out over the last 100 years, and a further 140 woodland species have so declined in both numbers and distribution that they are now described in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan as 'requiring urgent action' to save them.

The same applies to woodland in both Greater London and Lambeth, and a number of important historic woodland sites have been reduced in size and quality, or even lost to other uses, which emphasises even more the need to protect what is currently left.

**Avoiding or Removing Liability and Financial Losses.** Trees on the highway, housing estates or in communal gardens can be viewed as a potential liability to be removed or avoided. Examples include trees being blamed for causing subsidence on roads or in people's homes, blocking views for street lighting and CCTV, causing nuisance from leaves in gutters or blocking satellite reception, and creating trip hazards or other accidents.



**Plate 87. Trees overhanging a major public highway and pavement, and a tree allegedly causing damage to a listed wall – two reasons why removing the tree can be seen as a quick and easy solution to 'removing the problem'**

There is a risk that landowners or council departments see the only solution, one that reduces or removes legal and financial liabilities, is to remove the tree being blamed, or to prune or reduce it so severely any ecological value is effectively eliminated.

Woodlands, or the trees in them, can be viewed by surrounding residents as a nuisance and risk to the safety of their homes, or places burglars or vandals can hide in or escape detection by the police and CCTV. The gut reaction might be to fell or reduce trees alleged as being the source of the problem, or in securing off woodlands or sections of them, which reduces their management and accessibility, so affecting habitat quality and biological diversity.

**Isolation and Habitat Fragmentation.** Many of the trees on streets and in estates, and all of the woodland sites, in Lambeth are often physically isolated from each other, with no strong or continuous 'green connections' between them. This 'habitat fragmentation' restricts the opportunity for plants and animals associated with trees and woods to move between sites, which normally sustains or enriches existing species diversity within that locality.

**Poor or Inappropriate Management.** Trees and woodlands can suffer, or have suffered, for various reasons from poor or inappropriate arboricultural and habitat management. Although trees and woodlands are included in a number of tree or grounds maintenance specifications and contracts in the borough, traditionally these were not specifically designed to maintain or improve tree or woodland biodiversity. Tree maintenance can be primarily focused on public, vehicle and building safety and reducing the financial exposure of the landowner, rather than on the needs of wildlife or protecting the ecological value of the tree or the woods.



**Plate 88. Scrub and young tree sapling encroachment into woodland pasture on Clapham Common – reducing open ground cover and reducing ecological quality**

**Land Use and Increased Access.** Woodlands across London have become popular for amenity use such as horse-riding, cycling, jogging, dog walking, and cross-country running. However, excessive use for these activities or by unacceptable ones like motorcycling or having barbeques, can affect woodland biodiversity by disturbing animals, causing fires and leaving litter, erosion or compaction of soils, or causing internal habitat fragmentation.

**Development Pressures.** Substantial areas of Lambeth once covered by woodland have long since been lost to development, such as for new housing and roads. This has increased the degree of woodland habitat fragmentation in the borough, which in turn affects biodiversity by removing those essential green corridors for wildlife to migrate in and out to new areas. All of the remaining woodlands in Lambeth are within prime development areas or where there is continuing population growth, with the added pressure to release land for new housing.

**Vandalism and Antisocial Behaviour.** Many woodlands in Lambeth are targets for vandalism or illegal dumping of household, industrial or building wastes. Flytipped waste smothers valuable woodland ground cover, introduces pollutants or invasive weeds, attracts vermin and discourages public use as the site becomes unsightly. Even trees in streets or on housing estates can be targets for vandalism, such as when people don't want one outside their home, see them as easy targets for causing damage or hit or run over them when reversing or parking cars and other vehicles without appropriate care or attention.



**Plate 89. Historical flytipping in Eardley Road Sidings Nature Reserve, 2004; considerable effort has been spent on preventing future occurrence of this type**

**Invasive or Nuisance Plant Species.** Dumping of garden or horticultural waste frequently introduces invasive or alien plants like Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Sycamore, Rhododendron, Cherry Laurel or Buddleja. All these plants can come to dominate indigenous woodland species or shade out ground flora, so affecting the species richness and distribution of the woodland, and reducing its biodiversity value.

Inappropriate selection of tree species for planting on streets, estates or in woods can create future management problems, especially if these species are poisonous, produce irritant pollen or hairs or are associated with causing ground damage, increased risk of subsidence or attract pests and diseases.

**Nuisance Animals.** Animal damage to trees is a constant threat. Grey squirrels strip bark from many tree species, causing stunting and sometimes death of the tree; rabbits and deer can also damage trees and ground flora where they exist, and large flocks of some birds can strip young trees of their seeds and fruit especially in very cold or dry weather when they are forced to look for alternative sources of food.

**Pests and Diseases.** Although all of the UK's trees are affected to varying degrees by many different pests, most manage to adapt to and live with indigenous pests and these don't cause any long-term harm or damage to the trees. However, there are an increasing number of pests and diseases that are affecting our trees, often non-native or introduced, which are causing harm or the loss of many of our common or iconic tree species.

For example, Dutch elm disease has caused structural and species changes in many woodlands in Lambeth that contained stands of elm trees. Other fungal and bacterial pests and diseases such as Bleeding Canker in horse chestnuts, alder or oak dieback, and sudden oak death syndrome, may be serious problems in the future, along with Massaria, ash dieback and plane wilt. All these diseases are made worse by warmer, wetter conditions or increased stress caused by waterlogging, drought and soil compaction, which many solitary or stands of trees on streets, in parks and woodlands are suffering from or prone to.

Other problems are being caused to trees, including in woods, by numerous insect pests, some of which have been introduced to the UK by poor quarantine or provenance controls for imported tree stock. Examples include the Asian longhorn beetle, box tree moth and its caterpillars, oak processionary moth and horse chestnut leaf miner moth.



**Plate 90. 'Nests' and caterpillars of the Oak Processionary Moth on oak trees – a new and growing threat to oaks in both woodlands and in open spaces across the UK**

Many other insect pests are indigenous to our trees and don't normally cause any long-term harm or damage to them. However, they can become a problem as a result of prolonged periods of wet or dry weather, or when the tree becomes stressed or affected by other problems and diseases, or if trees are planted in the wrong places or not properly maintained. Examples of native pests that sometimes cause serious infestations or damage include wood wasps, sawflies, leaf weevils, and the oak apple and knopper gall wasps.

### **Legal and Protected Status of Lambeth's Trees and Woodlands**

All of Lambeth's trees and woodland sites are protected through various policies in the current Lambeth Local Plan which recognises their biodiversity, heritage and environmental value, and as requiring protection from inappropriate land management or development. Of particular relevance are Policies EN1 (Open space and biodiversity); Q6 (Public realm); Q9 (Landscaping); Q10 (Trees) and Q14 (Developments in gardens and on backland sites).



**Plate 91. Mature evergreen trees within the Rookery at Streatham; all of the trees within this unique heritage and nature conservation site are fully protected from loss**

All publicly owned trees and woodland sites in Lambeth are covered by various legislation which prevents the felling or maltreatment of amenity trees, especially for attempts to damage or vandalise trees to elicit removal or 'facilitate' development.

Trees in tended or managed areas that are not growing wild are also protected from vandalism under the Criminal Damage Act 1971; trees growing wild are also covered by this Act except in respect of foliage and fruit.

Many privately owned trees in Lambeth are also protected by 'Tree Preservation Orders' (TPOs), which are designed to recognise and confer additional protection on certain trees on the basis of their amenity value and contribution to the character of a given area. TPOs can also help protect many mature trees in recognition of their biodiversity value.

A number of woodland areas in the borough are either Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), or are part of a larger SINC, and are therefore protected from inappropriate use or loss in the Lambeth Local Plan under Policy EN1 (Open space and biodiversity) by virtue of the ecological importance and for providing access to nature.

Many of Lambeth's trees and wooded areas are within Conservation Areas, are part of sites designated as Metropolitan Open Land, or in a Historic England listed historic park or garden; all these designations confer a considerable level of protection on these trees and woods.

Many animals using trees, woodlands and any marginal habitats including trees like hedges and boundary habitat, for travel, shelter, feeding, nesting or breeding are protected by wildlife legislation. Examples include bats and birds, invertebrates like stag beetles, and even amphibians like great crested newts, where the land or woodland is wet and contains ponds and streams.



**Plate 92. A male Greater Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*); frequently recorded in Lambeth and its known habitats are fully protected through local planning policies**

This means that, as part of the management and development of trees and woods, any attempts to intentionally kill protected species or disturb their nesting or breeding sites by inappropriately timed tree works, could render land owners and managers and/or contractors liable to prosecution or the refusal of their development or management proposals.

The London Borough of Lambeth is developing a 'Lambeth Tree Strategy' designed to provide a policy framework for the protection, management and improvement of the borough's publicly-owned tree stock. This includes recognising the ecological and landscape importance of the borough's trees, public and private, and will require landowners and managers to have due regard to the protection of trees and woods to retain and improve their biodiversity value.

### Priority Species of the Built Environment

There are a number of species of plant and animal intimately associated with trees and woodlands in Lambeth. Their continued presence or increased abundance is dependent on appropriate management of our existing trees and woodlands, as well as the planting of new trees or the extension of woodland cover. These 'priority species' also benefit significantly from increasing awareness of the biodiversity importance of Lambeth's trees and woodlands, alongside the delivery of the various actions which are described later in the plan.

For example, a colony of White-letter Hairstreak butterflies (*Satyrrium w-album*) was recorded by surveyors from [Butterfly Conservation](#) on a number of elm trees next to a multi-use games court (MUGA) on Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens in July 2017.



**Plate 93. A White-letter Hairstreak butterfly (*Satyrrium w-album*) butterfly resting on elm leaves, its larval food plant (courtesy of Butterfly Conservation)**

The elm trees being used by the adult White-letter hairstreak butterflies and their larvae are a new cultivar called *Ulmus* New Horizon, which was planted in Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens in 2005. *Ulmus* New Horizon is a hybrid cultivar elm that is highly resistant to Dutch elm disease. This was the first time that White-letter Hairstreak has been recorded breeding on this particular variety of elm, and it is the first time the butterfly has been recorded in Vauxhall or this close into the centre of London.



Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens – *Ulmus* 'New Horizon' with a colony of White-letter Hairstreaks, 23 June 2017

**Plate 94. View of Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, showing the New Horizon elms surrounding the games court, which are used by White-letter hairstreak butterflies**

This discovery prompted making not only White-letter hairstreaks a priority species for Lambeth, but also the planting and retention of Dutch elm disease resistant elm species wherever possible across the borough. This is in order to retain existing colonies of White-letter hairstreaks, but also to help increase the coverage of elms, especially Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) and *Ulmus* New Horizon in Lambeth as part of future tree and hedge planting/replacement schemes. This will improve and extend habitat cover/density but also provide additional green linkages for this particular butterfly and indeed other species associated with elms or other similar native tree species to migrate in or colonise new locations around each area where they have been planted or retained.

For more information on the White-letter Hairstreak, refer to [www.butterfly-conservation.org/679-709/white-letter-hairstreak.html](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/679-709/white-letter-hairstreak.html) or Butterfly Conservation's [White-letter Hairstreak Conservation Factsheet](#)

Common/Species Name	Comments
Common oak ( <i>Quercus robur</i> )	A highly significant UK native tree of which Lambeth contains many impressive specimens; of significant importance as a home for many other wildlife species.
Common hornbeam ( <i>Carpinus betulus</i> )	Lambeth contains important populations of this UK native tree, which is home to many other wildlife species.
Elm: particularly Dutch elm disease resistant varieties, e.g. <i>Ulmus</i> New Horizon or Wych elm ( <i>Ulmus glabra</i> )	Provides shelter and food for many increasingly uncommon or rare invertebrates, especially butterflies like the White-letter hairstreak, which is becoming increasingly abundant in Lambeth
Common mistletoe ( <i>Viscum album</i> )	Semi-parasitic plant found on many different species of tree, and relatively common in Lambeth. An important food source for many insects and birds, including redwing, fieldfare, Song and Mistle thrush.

White-letter hairstreak ( <i>Satyrrium w-album</i> )	A relatively uncommon native butterfly which is becoming relatively abundant in Lambeth, especially where disease resistant elm species have been planted.
Purple Hairstreak ( <i>Favonius quercus</i> )	An elusive yet strikingly beautiful butterfly associated with mature oak woodlands, of which Lambeth contains many fine examples in the south of the borough.
Greater stag beetle ( <i>Lucanus cervus</i> )	A very large beetle, with males having highly modified mouthparts or 'antlers'. London is a nationally important stronghold for the stag beetle, and it is found widely across Lambeth in parks, gardens and woodlands.
Greater spotted woodpecker ( <i>Dendrocopos major</i> )	An attractive bird of woodlands and gardens, often seen and heard 'drumming' old trees in many parts of Lambeth to find its insect food.
Tawny owl ( <i>Strix aluco</i> )	A nocturnal predatory bird feeding on rodents. Many of Lambeth's parks, cemeteries and churchyards contain mature trees which provide important nesting and perching sites, as well as hunting grounds.
Bats, e.g. Common Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> ), Soprano Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> ), Nauthusius' Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus nauthusii</i> ), Noctule ( <i>Nyctalus noctula</i> ), Serotine ( <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i> ), Leisler's ( <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i> ) and Daubenton's ( <i>Myotis daubentonii</i> ).	Seven species of UK bat species are found in many of Lambeth's woodlands, parks, cemeteries, churchyards and gardens. Lambeth's trees play a vital role in providing bats with roosts as well as excellent sources of their insect food.

## Objectives

Lambeth's trees and woodlands are recognised as being significant net contributors to the borough's overall biodiversity. It is essential to encourage appropriate nature conservation practice in terms of the management of Lambeth's trees (public and private), woods, hedges and orchards to maintain this current value but also to greater habitat and species diversity.

We must raise awareness with the public, landowners/managers and site users of the ecological importance of Lambeth's trees and woods, and encourage active involvement in development of these features for a wide range of positive uses such as income generation, education and recreation provided they are compatible with their biodiversity.

Therefore the Trees and Woodlands Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will:

- Improve the quantity and quality of information on the location, distribution, abundance and condition of Lambeth's trees, tree-rich sites and woodlands in terms of providing wildlife habitats to improve management and protection of biodiversity in the borough.
- Raise and sustain awareness among Lambeth's residents and communities of the importance of the borough's trees and woodlands, with regards to the protection and conservation of biodiversity for their own benefit, as well as that for wildlife in general.

- Encourage and promote good nature conservation practice in the management of Lambeth’s trees and woodlands, whether in public or private ownership, to encourage a progressive increase in the net area, diversity and quality of tree or woodland wildlife habitat throughout the borough.
- Progressively increase the net area of woodland and tree-rich land in Lambeth actively managed for a biodiversity benefit, whether by creation of new or extension of existing areas of wildlife habitat in streets, parks and other open spaces.
- Secure additional and new investment from both internal and external sources to improve the quality of biodiversity management for Lambeth’s trees and woodlands, and secure their long-term sustainability through additional revenue income and volunteering.
- Progressively increase the number of residents, groups and businesses involved, and the frequency of participation, in the planting, management and improvement of Lambeth’s trees and woodlands (including hedges and orchards) to provide a measurable benefit for biodiversity and access to and enjoyment of nature.



**Plate 95. Corporate and community volunteers planting new native trees in Norwood park as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded ‘Great North Woods’ project**

**Principal Outcomes**

Lambeth’s tree and woodland cover will continue to make a progressive and positive net contribution to the biodiversity and green infrastructure of the borough

Lambeth will have an adopted ‘Lambeth Tree Strategy’ by 2020 which includes policies and actions to maintain and improve the ecological value of the borough’s public tree stock, whether in the public realm on housing land or in parks and open spaces.

## Key Targets

Native tree cover/content, as a proportion of Lambeth's total tree population, will be maintained and progressively increased by 5% by 2024, through appropriate tree management and planting. Priority is given to trees in those parts of the borough where there is a net deficiency in tree cover, whether in the public realm or with little accessible woodland.

Native tree cover/content, as a proportion of an individual woodland site's total tree population, will be maintained and progressively increased by 5% by 2024, through appropriate tree management and planting. Priority is given to trees in those parts of the borough where there is a net deficiency in tree cover or accessible woodland cover is low.



**Plate 96. Staff from Lambeth's Landscapes team planting a new community orchard in Archbishop's Park to increase tree cover and biodiversity in the north of the borough**

All of Lambeth's woodlands, private or public, will have a working management plan or management agreement in place by 2024 to help maintain and improve access, landscape quality and biodiversity value.

## Delivering the Lambeth Borough Plan

The Woodland and Trees Habitat Action Plan for Lambeth will support creating inclusive growth (investment in and regeneration of the borough), reducing inequality (improving mental and physical health and the quality of life), and building strong and sustainable neighbourhoods (providing safe, clean and cohesive communities).

## **Delivering the London Plan**

The Woodland and Trees HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current London Plan:

2.18 (Green infrastructure); 5.9 (Overheating and cooling); 5.10 (Urban greening); 5.12 (Flood risk management); 5.13 (Sustainable drainage); 7.5 (Public realm); 7.14 (Improving air quality); 7.18 (Protecting open space and addressing deficiency); 7.19 (Biodiversity and access to nature); 7.21 (Trees and woodlands).



**Plate 97. A diversity of tree species and ages on Streatham Common**

## **Delivering the Lambeth Local Plan**

The Woodland and Trees HAP will enable Lambeth to deliver the following policies in the current Lambeth Local Plan:

EN1 (Open space and biodiversity); EN4 (Sustainable design and construction); EN5 (Flood risk); EN6 (Sustainable drainage systems and water management); Q6 (Public realm); Q9 (Landscaping); Q10 (Trees); Q14 (Developments in gardens and on backland sites); Q24 (River Thames).