



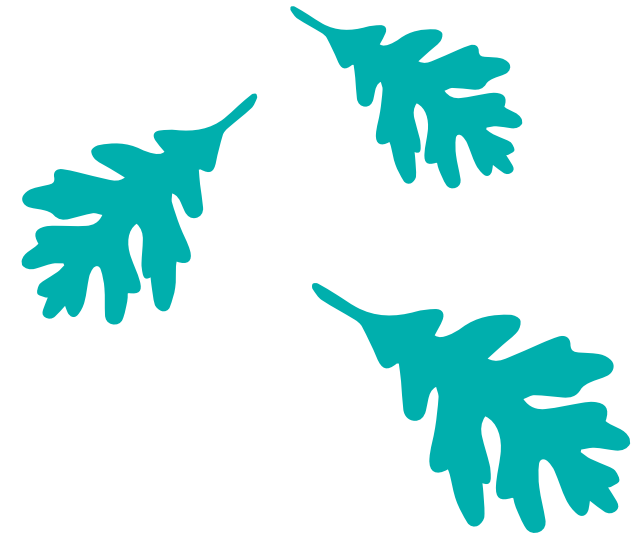
# UrbanForest

Strategy 2023-2030



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# Foreword

**In January 2019 Lambeth became the first London council to declare a climate emergency.** We set ourselves a bold target – to become net-zero compatible and climate resilient by 2030.

Our first Citizens' Assembly on climate change in 2021 made clear that by everyone working together we can achieve this.

Lambeth is the fifth most densely populated borough in the UK. Our summers are already getting hotter, and flooding is a growing risk. We all know that climate change impacts will not be felt equally, and the already vulnerable are at greater risk.

These impacts will be felt most in built-up areas where the urban heat island effect will further increase temperatures. Within as little as 60 years, average annual temperatures in the UK may increase by between 1° and 5°C or higher.

Greater winter rainfall intensity and drier summers will be accompanied by more frequent storms, heatwaves and other severe weather incidents. Our urban environment with its hard surfaces will only heighten the risk of surface water flooding. But we can all take positive steps by carefully planning our urban environment for the future.



Butterfly Conservation/Jim Asher.

COVID-19 brought home the vital role that nature and green spaces play in improving our mental health and wellbeing. Trees are a long-term endeavour; the decisions we make now will have a profound impact on future generations.

Planting trees in the right locations is one of the most positive measures we can take. At the same time, they will enhance biodiversity by providing habitats and food sources for wildlife.

This strategy sets out how we will meet our commitment to plant at least 5,000 trees across Lambeth over the next four years, ensuring that resources are targeted to where they are most effective. We will also protect and enhance our existing tree stock, enabling Lambeth to maximise the benefits provided by its urban forest.



**Cllr. Rezina Chowdhury**  
Cabinet Member for Sustainable Lambeth and Clean Air



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# Introduction

## Lambeth – a borough with social and climate justice at its heart.

Lambeth 2030: Our Future, Our Lambeth sets out bold ambitions for the future of the borough, including Making Lambeth Neighbourhoods Fit for the Future.

In particular, the ambition is that 'By 2030, Lambeth will be a clean, vibrant and climate-resilient borough where people can lead healthier, happier lives.'

The trees that make up the borough's urban forest are more vital than ever in future-proofing Lambeth. Yet despite the extensive benefits of trees, challenges remain. Trees reduce some of the impacts of climate change, but they will also suffer as a result. Lambeth is currently below the strategy's canopy cover aspiration of 20%, and whilst our tree stock is diverse overall, there is an unsustainable reliance on a few species.

As a result, existing and emerging pests and diseases threaten the health of our trees. We are not immune locally to biodiversity loss, which threatens biosecurity across a range of plant species and animals.





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In response to these challenges, we have developed the Lambeth Urban Forest Strategy (UFS), an enabler of Lambeth 2030. It will help us create a resilient and diverse urban forest, increasing Lambeth's tree stock and canopy cover, and providing wide-ranging environmental and wellbeing benefits for all residents.

The ongoing climate emergency means that we must change the way we think and act in Lambeth. Inaction and inadequate responses will have irreversible consequences.

The Council is committed to tackling the climate and ecological crisis. But we cannot do this alone. Collaboration is key to enhancing and protecting our tree stock, and making Lambeth's neighbourhoods fit for the future.





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# Why Do Trees Matter?

**Trees are essential to a healthy environment and cohesive communities.** They cool hot places, condition the air we breathe, and even contribute to psychological balance and longevity. They are vital in the fight to reduce climate change impacts, and are highly valuable for wildlife and biodiversity.



## How trees help our environment

- Trees support a wide range of wildlife by providing food and habitat for birds, insects, and fungi. Planting more trees will produce a net gain in biodiversity.
- Trees prevent huge volumes of water from entering Lambeth's drainage system each year, helping to alleviate the risk of localised flooding.<sup>1</sup>
- Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and lock up the carbon in their wood.

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## How trees improve our health and social wellbeing

- Trees can save lives by reducing the urban heat island effect (UHIE), where heat is absorbed in artificial surfaces, like pavements. They also provide shade, and cool<sup>2</sup> the air around us.
- Trees can remove tonnes of air pollution annually through their leaves, branches and stems.
- Research shows people are happier in leafier environments, and experience fewer health issues, higher life expectancy, and lower levels of mental fatigue and stress<sup>3</sup>.
- Tree environments can promote recreational activity and alternative methods of transport.

## How trees help our economy

- Property values are inflated by up to 15% in areas where the canopy cover is higher, compared to areas with low canopy cover.
- Trees attract more inward investment such as tourism in areas with high canopy cover<sup>4</sup>.
- When strategically placed around buildings, they can reduce energy consumption, delivering 10–50% savings in air conditioning costs by providing shade and releasing moisture.





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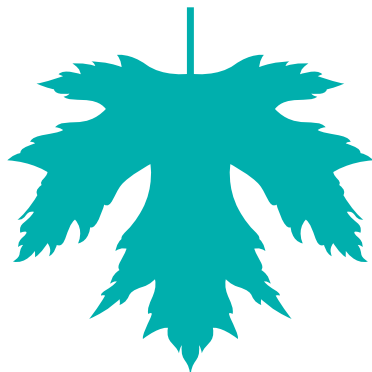
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# What do we know about Lambeth's Urban Forest?

We manage approximately 40,000 trees across Lambeth's streets, parks, commons, housing estates, cemeteries and other public green spaces.

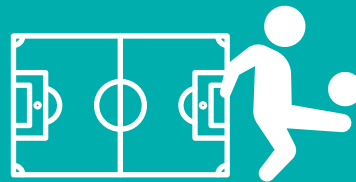


There are 17 hectares of identified woodland sites, which amounts to about 0.62% of the total land area of the borough.

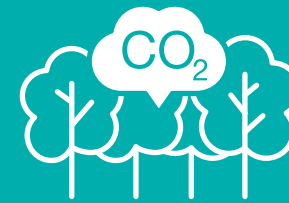


The council has more than 320 different tree species from 108 genera, indicating a diverse tree stock; however, we have a strong reliance on ash, lime and maple.

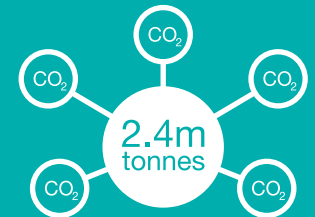
The borough's urban forest provides significant ecosystem benefits to Lambeth:



Our canopy cover area is 17%, equivalent to nearly 650 football pitches.



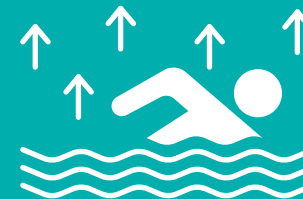
Our trees store up to 33 million tonnes of carbon, equating to £17.8m.



Annual carbon sequestration is over 2.4 million tonnes, which equates to £358,000.



Pollution removal is valued at £207,000 annually.



The water held in the tree canopy and re-evaporated after each rainfall event is the equivalent of 92 Olympic-sized swimming pools.



Our trees provide annual ecosystem benefits of over £770,000 annually. The CAVAT amenity valuation of council-owned trees is £1.28 billion.

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# Why do we need an Urban Forest Strategy?

The Lambeth Urban Forest Strategy contributes to Lambeth 2030: Our Future, Our Lambeth.

We know that the impact of climate change is felt unequally across communities. As part of our relentless drive to become a Borough of Equity and Justice, the Urban Forest Strategy helps tackle inequality and ensure that everyone can benefit from local climate action.

The Urban Forest Strategy will also support the delivery of the [Lambeth Climate Action Plan](#), [Biodiversity Action Plan](#), [Air Quality Action Plan](#) and [Kerbside Strategy](#). This strategy meets best practice in London and the UK, as it aligns with the [England Trees Action Plan](#), [HM Environment Plan](#), and the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), among others.

Together, this network of plans and strategies will work in harmony to take the bold action required to make Lambeth a safe, strong and resilience borough for everyone – now and in the future.



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# Our Vision and Principles

## Our Strategic Principles >

We have developed six strategic principles to work towards and deliver our vision:

1. Increasing canopy cover
2. Protecting and valuing our trees
3. Increasing collaboration and partnerships
4. Promoting resilience
5. Increasing biodiversity
6. Ensuring better standards for planting and tree care

## Our Urban Forest Vision >

To proactively manage, protect and grow Lambeth's tree stock and canopy cover, creating a resilient and diverse urban forest which will provide a wide range of long-lasting environmental, amenity and wellbeing benefits.





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# Increasing canopy cover



# 1 Increasing canopy cover

Canopy cover is the area of a tree's canopy when viewed from above. The ecosystem benefits of an urban forest are proportional to the size of its canopy cover; increasing canopy cover will help Lambeth towards its climate goals.

Lambeth's current canopy cover varies significantly from ward to ward, averaging 17% overall, but is not distributed evenly or equitably.

Lambeth is a densely populated urban borough, so there are relatively few opportunities for creating new large natural spaces. It will be a challenge to increase average canopy cover to Lambeth's target of 20%, and even up its distribution across the borough.

## Equity and climate justice for all

Everyone will experience the impacts of climate change. However, some groups are disproportionately vulnerable. This strategy honours our Lambeth 2030 commitment to equity and justice by creating a borough of climate justice. Creating more green space and planting trees where they are needed will ensure that Lambeth is a safe place for everyone to grow up and age well.

## Current canopy cover within Lambeth by ward

Ward	Canopy Cover %
Waterloo & South Bank	11.01
Brixton Acre Lane	11.17
Vauxhall	11.44
Streatham Hill West & Thornton	13.74
Brixton Rush Common	13.82
Brixton Windrush	13.82
Streatham St Leonard's	14.30
Brixton North	15.33
Clapham East	15.47
Oval	16.09
Clapham Common & Abbeville	16.54
Knight's Hill	16.58
Herne Hill & Loughborough Junction	17.15
Clapham Park	17.26
Stockwell West & Larkhall	18.05
Clapham Town	18.07
Streatham Common & Vale	18.16
Streatham Wells	18.25
St Martin's	18.52
Myatt's Field	18.58
Stockwell East	18.77
Kennington	20.07
Gipsy Hill	21.00
Streatham Hill East	21.09
West Dulwich	24.20

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### Addressing Lambeth's environmental risks

Because Lambeth is the fifth most densely populated borough in England and Wales, it will experience the urban heat island effect as temperatures continue to rise. Heat, poor air quality from harmful emissions and storm water flooding will expose residents to health risks, especially those that are the most vulnerable. Planting more of the right trees in the right places will help us adapt to these risks.

### Promoting tree planting

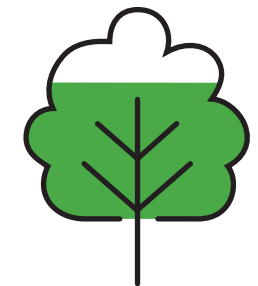
There was a net deficit of 141 trees in Lambeth in the five years ending 2020. This strategy will re-address this with a plan to increase canopy cover with a significant injection of 5,000 new trees, using a strategic approach to planting.

We must protect and preserve the trees we already have wherever possible, as well as planting new ones on public and private land, if we are to reap the future benefits of our urban forest.

### Prioritising Tree Planting in Lambeth

To increase canopy cover and reduce Lambeth's environmental risks whilst ensuring equity and climate justice for all, we will prioritise where tree planting will provide the greatest benefits. We have analysed data including canopy cover by ward; areas of poor air quality; areas of the highest health risks from heatwaves and local sites at risk of flooding.

We have also targeted groups who are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change based on age, health and how far they live from high quality green space with trees. With the resulting priority scores for individual streets and communal housing estates we can target where to focus our efforts.



There was a net deficit of 141 trees in Lambeth in the 5 years ending 2020



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# Prioritising Tree Planting in Lambeth

**To increase canopy cover and reduce Lambeth's environmental risks, whilst ensuring climate justice for all, we will focus on areas where tree planting will provide the greatest benefits.**

We have analysed a range of environmental data including canopy cover; areas of poor air quality; areas of the highest risks from heatwaves and sites at risk of flash flooding.

We have also targeted groups who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and how far they are from trees.

By overlaying this data onto a range of maps, we have developed a priority rating system for Lambeth streets, housing estates, education settings, residential homes and sheltered accommodation which will help us to target where to focus our planting efforts, to achieve the greatest benefits.





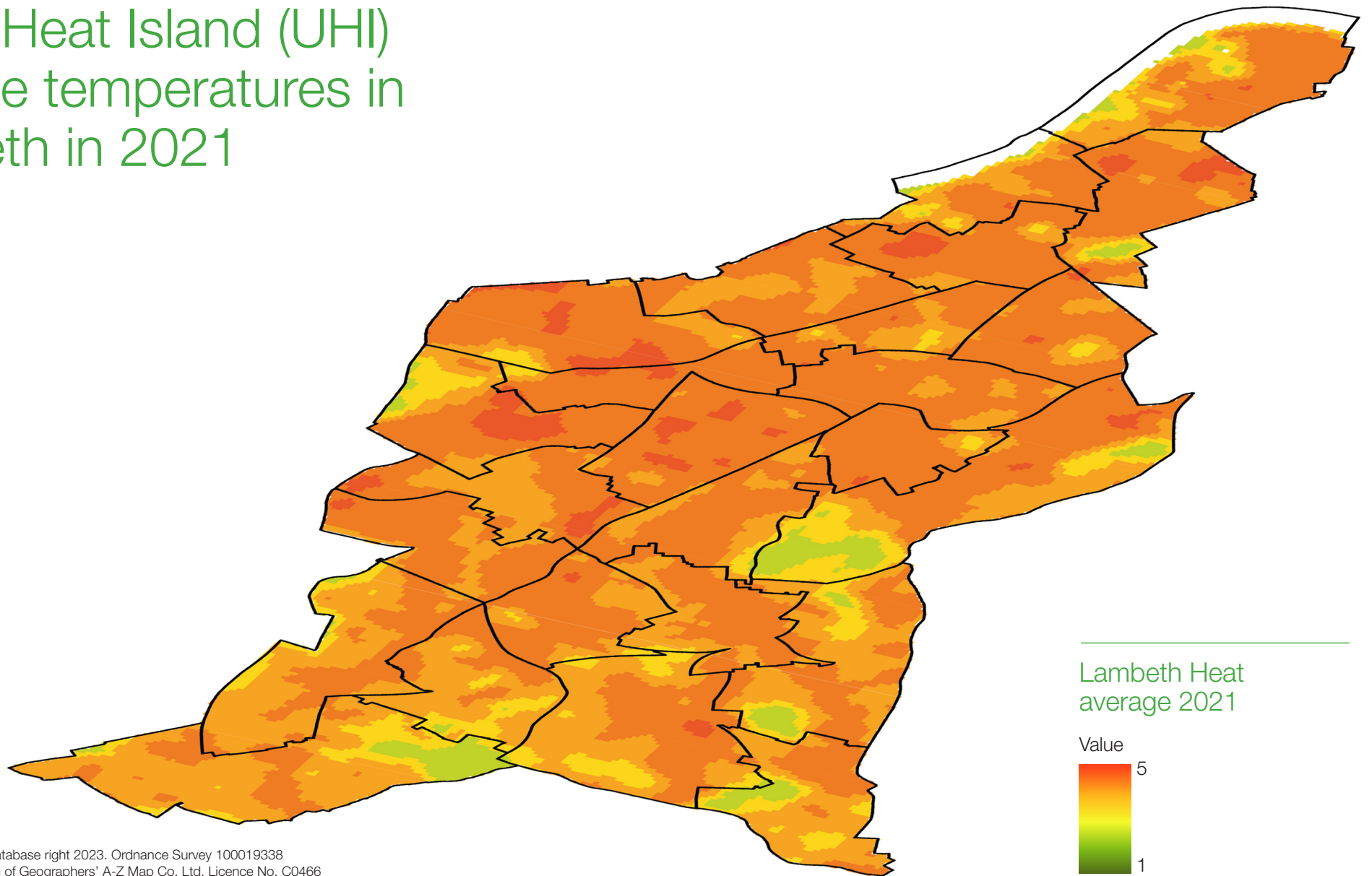
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# Urban Heat Island (UHI) average temperatures in Lambeth in 2021



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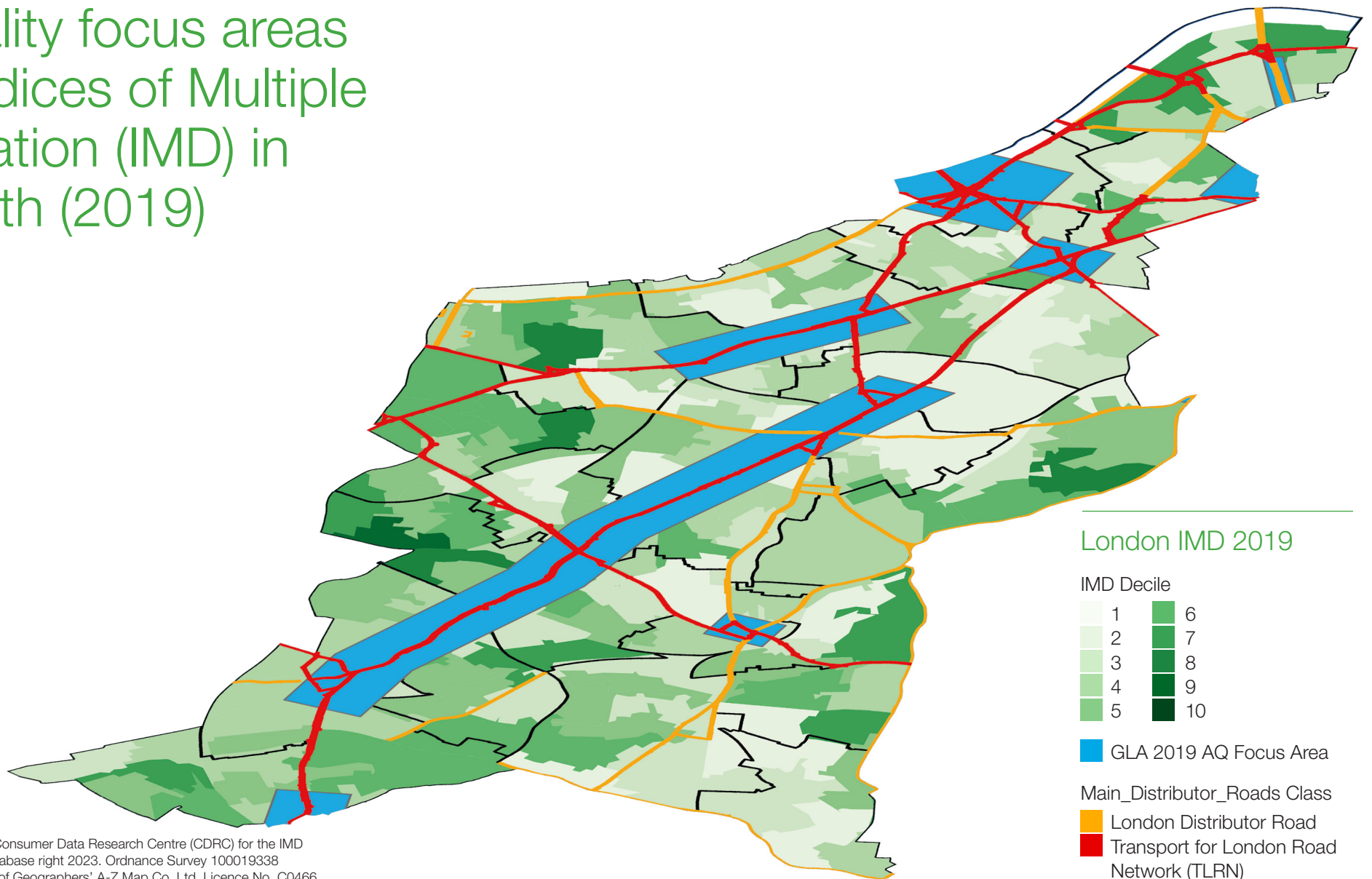
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# Air quality focus areas with Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in Lambeth (2019)



GLA for the air quality and Consumer Data Research Centre (CDRC) for the IMD  
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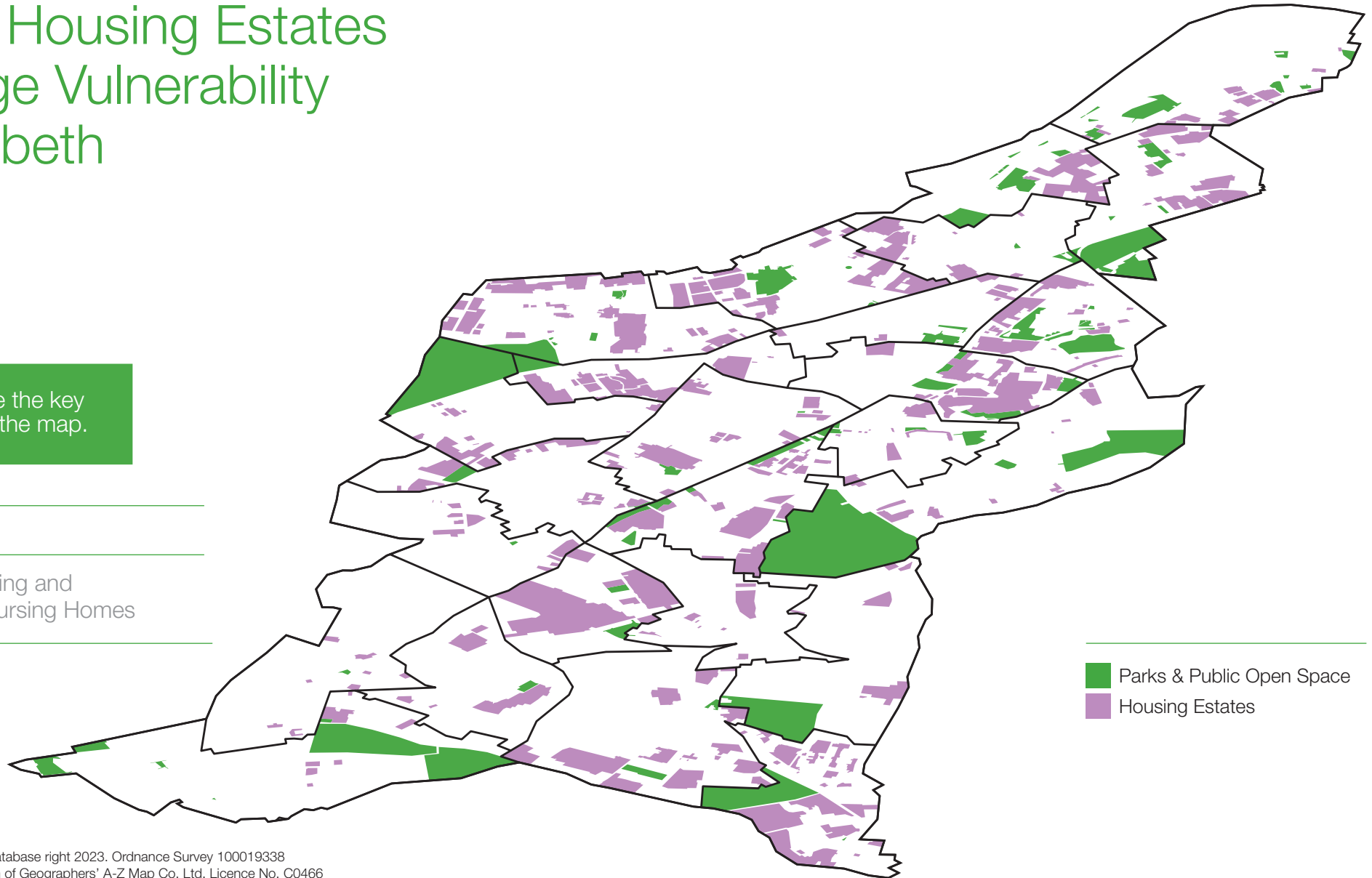
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# Parks, Housing Estates and Age Vulnerability in Lambeth

You can use the key to navigate the map.

Schools

Sheltered Housing and Residential & Nursing Homes



- Parks & Public Open Space
- Housing Estates

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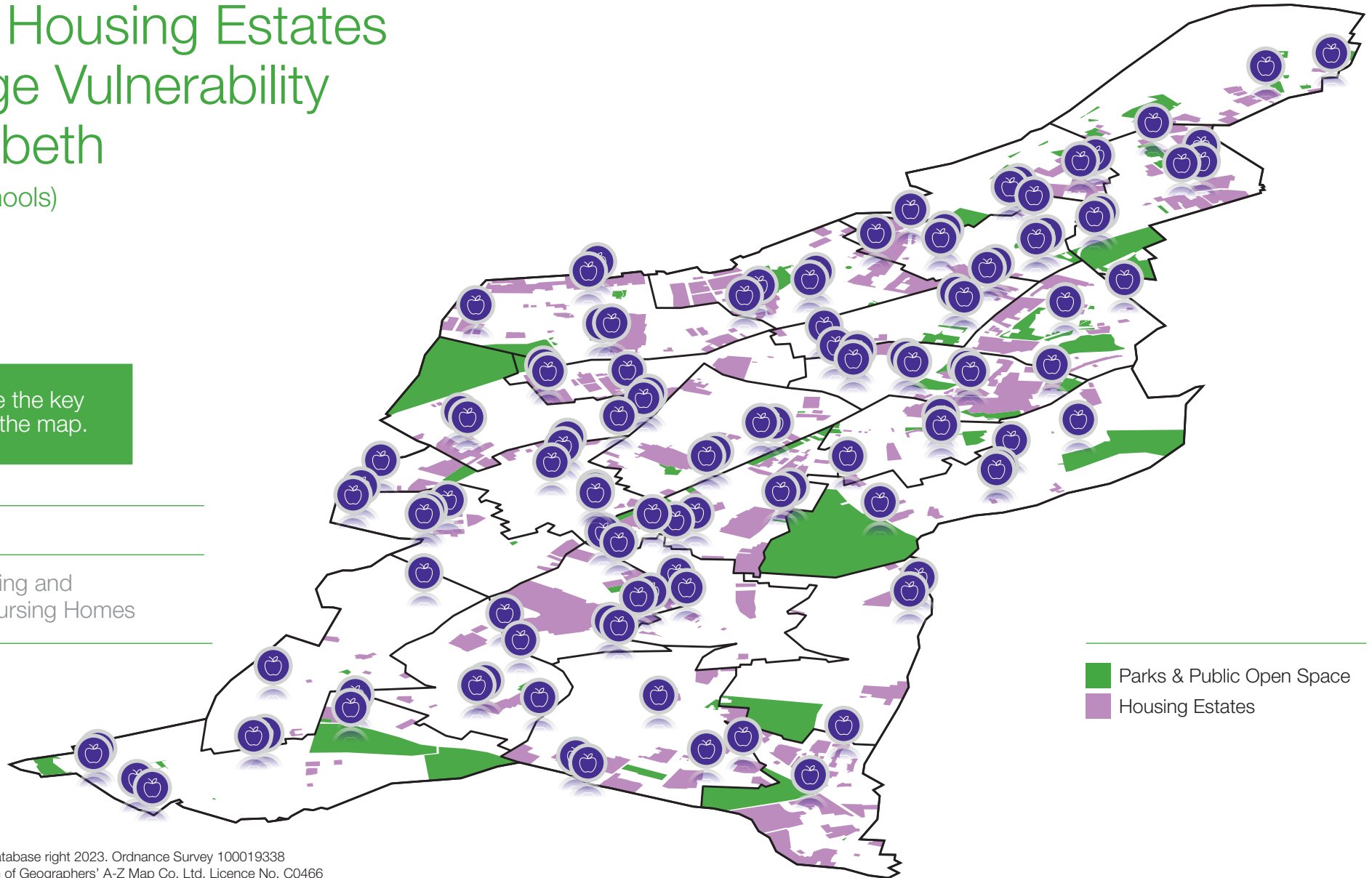
# Parks, Housing Estates and Age Vulnerability in Lambeth

(including schools)

You can use the key to navigate the map.

## Schools

Sheltered Housing and Residential & Nursing Homes



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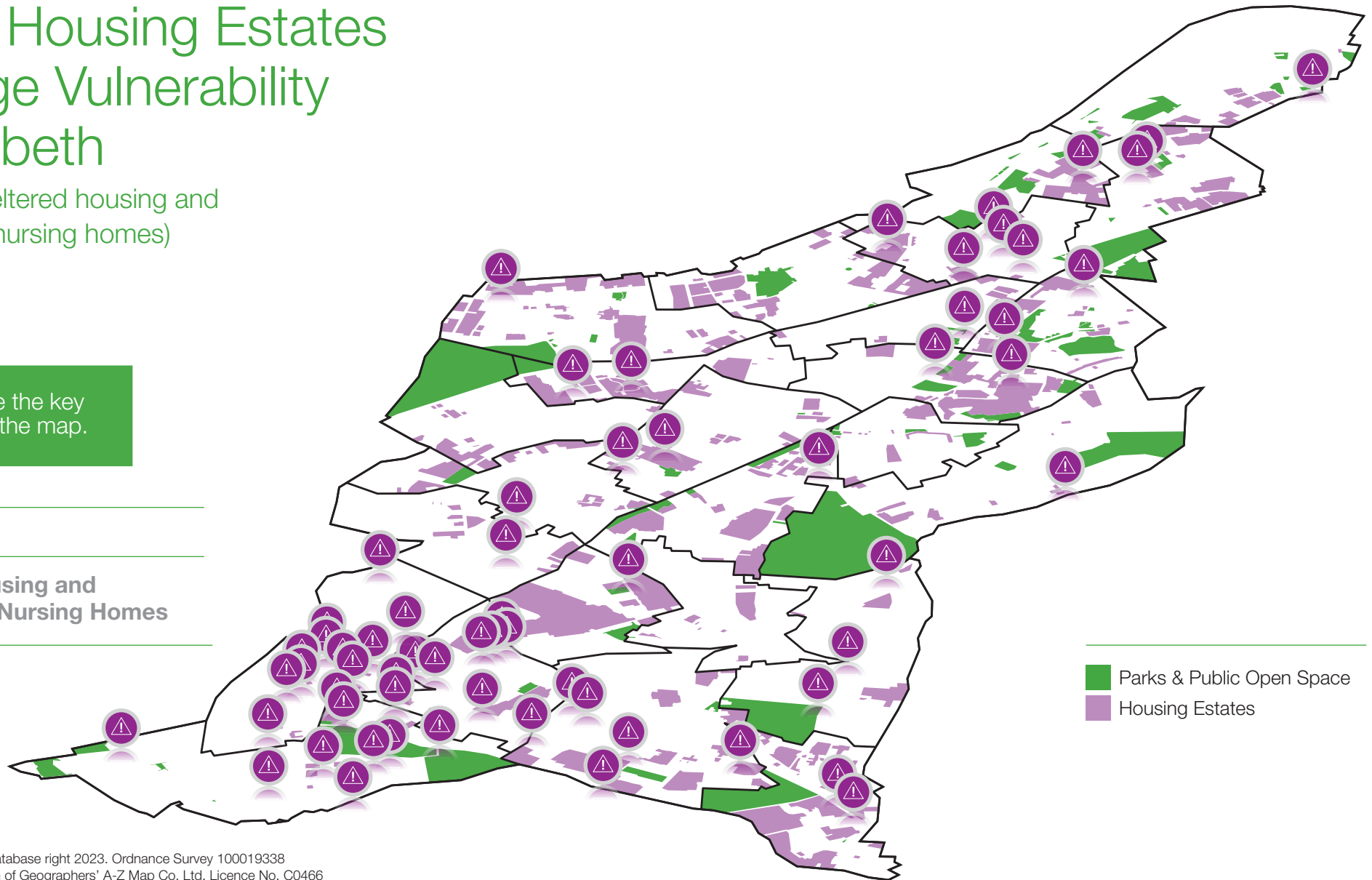
# Parks, Housing Estates and Age Vulnerability in Lambeth

(including sheltered housing and residential & nursing homes)

You can use the key to navigate the map.

Schools

Sheltered Housing and Residential & Nursing Homes



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## Objectives

Our goal is to increase Lambeth's net canopy cover to 20% to support the Climate Action Plan's target of increasing green coverage by 15% by 2028, and ensuring that everyone lives within 400m of high-quality green infrastructure.

We will actively seek opportunities for new planting on the premise of right tree, right location. We will prioritise trees that deliver the most ecosystem benefits at a ward, street and Lambeth communal housing level as part of regeneration, environmental and capital schemes.

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## Key Actions

- 1 Target tree planting in line with the council's ambitions for climate adaptation, air quality and other health-related benefits.
  - 2 Ensure canopy cover ambitions co-ordinate with other Lambeth strategies and policies.
  - 3 Monitor the tree inventory and changes in vulnerability data every four years, including air quality, UHI hot spots, flood risk and canopy cover, and change priorities where necessary.
  - 4 Include tree-planting targets and monitoring costs in long-term sustainable climate change action plans, with guaranteed delivery through long-term secured funding streams.
  - 5 Revise our tree-planting sponsorship scheme and promote it on our website and social media.
  - 6 Ensure adequate resources are made available to carry out the additional maintenance that arises from a larger tree stock.
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# Protecting and valuing our trees





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# 2 Protecting and valuing our trees

**Trees and green spaces are invaluable tools to reduce the impacts of climate change.**

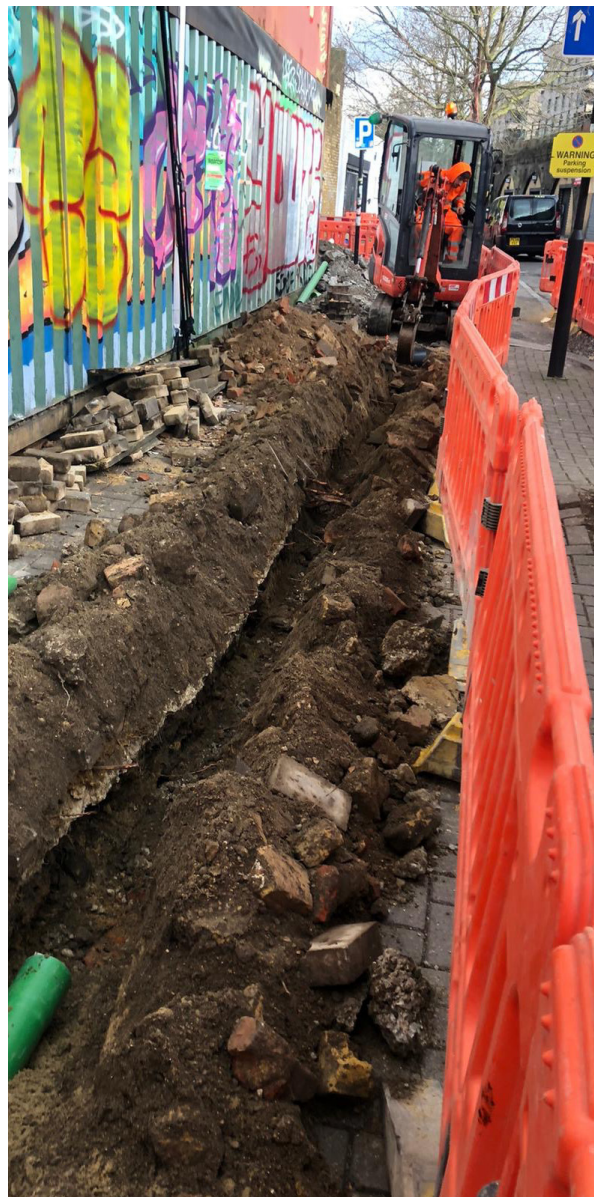
However, they also suffer from many challenges. By recognising the risks posed to trees and creating solutions, we can better protect them and safeguard the benefits they bring.

### **Subsidence & Development**

Most of Lambeth sits on London Clay subsoil which shrinks when it becomes drier. Trees can make the drying worse, as they remove moisture from the soil below building foundations. Subsidence issues will worsen as the climate brings dry weather and droughts. To reduce this problem, we will plant smaller or lower water-uptake trees in problem areas.

### **Space for Trees**

Planting trees in hard surfaces can be very challenging as they have to contend with a lack of fertile rooting medium to grow in, compacted soil and root damage from footway excavation. Our streets are also crowded with a multitude of street furniture, CCTV cameras plus utility cables and pipes all vying for limited space.



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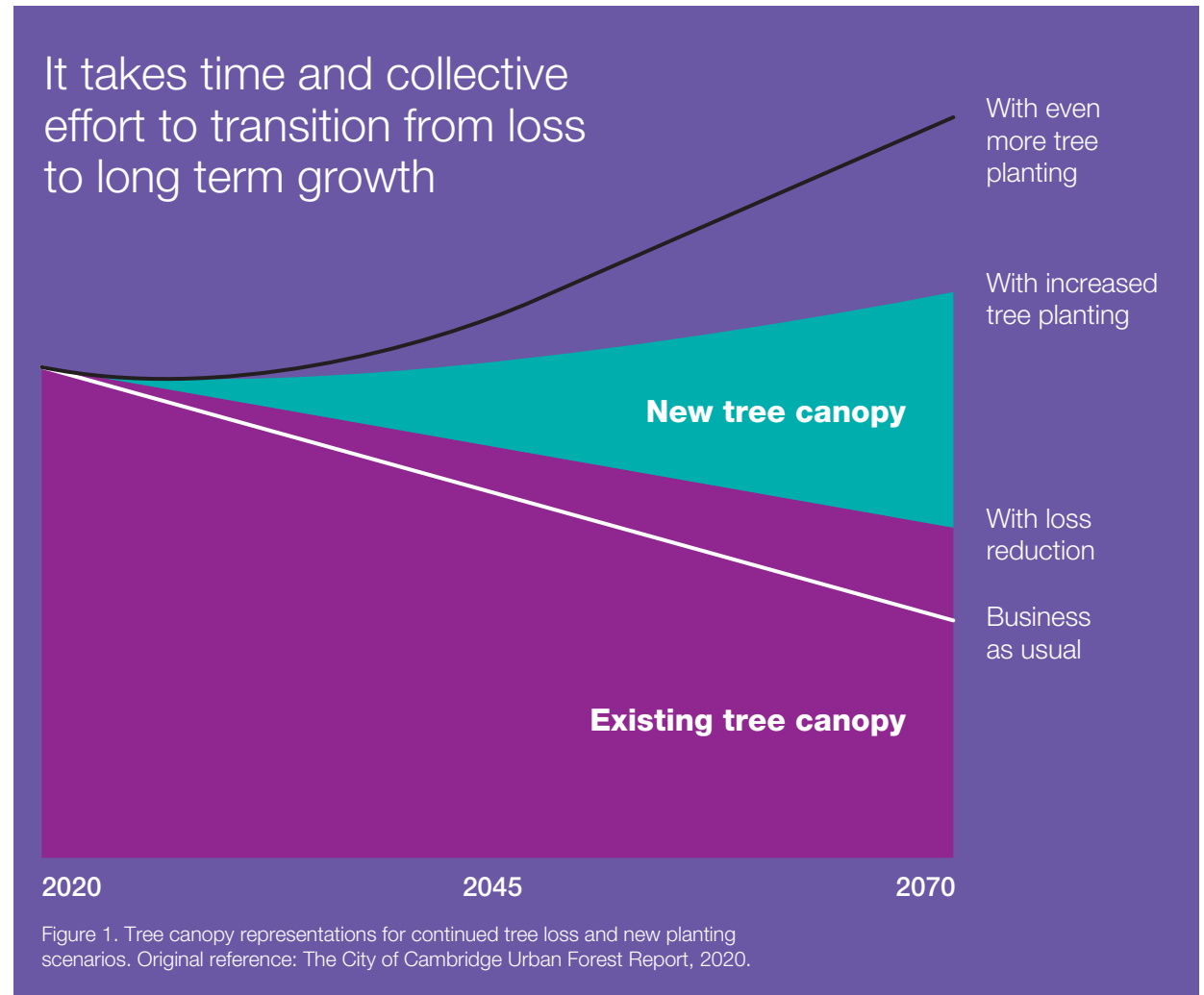
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Trees can improve development viability by increasing property values. It is important that well-established trees are not unnecessarily removed as part of development, and that there is a sustainable balance between mature-tree retention and new planting for long-term canopy cover.

It will take a long time to reverse the trend from loss to gain, as newly planted trees can take many decades before they provide useful climate adaptation benefits.

As Lambeth's population continues to grow, more areas become developed with grey infrastructure and green space is often lost. Planting trees in hard surfaces can be very challenging and costly.

This strategy focuses on priorities around tree planting to ensure better protection and management of our urban forest.



## Objectives

We will seek to promote the wide-ranging benefits of trees to residents and businesses, and their importance as part of Lambeth's green infrastructure.

We will strive to protect, maintain and increase the urban forest to achieve a healthy, resilient and sustainable tree population, and inform stakeholders of the importance of trees through calculating the benefits arising from Lambeth's tree stock.

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## Key Actions

- 1 Adopt and enforce CAVAT for tree loss or damage in relation to council trees scheduled to be felled as part of planning developments, or where damaged in the public realm.
  - 2 Produce an Insurance Mitigation Plan and Tree Design Guide.
  - 3 Create guidance for council staff and contractors to minimise tree and root damage during operations.
  - 4 Work with our Highways team and utility companies to avoid new installations adjacent to kerbside areas, which permanently prevents tree planting.
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# Increasing collaboration and partnerships



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# 3 Increasing collaboration and partnerships

By fostering engagement with the community, we can work alongside residents to meet our tree-planting goals.

Involving our "Friends of" groups, residents, local businesses and statutory undertakers will provide opportunities for cooperation in the planting and nurturing of the borough's trees, whilst identifying opportunities and funding for tree planting, so that successional and new planting is planned wherever possible.

Involving local schools can increase the participation of children, while also educating future generations about the value of trees.



## Objectives

**We will actively work with our Friends groups, residents, community groups, the voluntary sector, businesses, landowners and our institutions so they can promote the benefits of trees and help create opportunities for tree planting in Lambeth.**

**We will involve volunteers and businesses in tree-planting schemes, identifying potential planting locations, looking after young trees and tree pits, and monitoring trees. Everyone can contribute!**

**We will encourage residents, schools and other stakeholders to plant suitable trees in their own gardens and land.**

## Key Actions

- 1 Implement a Tree Champion scheme and establish a plan for sustainable community watering to prevent tree losses.
- 2 Update the council website with tree removal information, new tree planting locations and generally improve communication about trees.
- 3 Organise events to celebrate trees and connect with national campaigns on biodiversity.
- 4 Work with Friends groups to produce “tree trails” in parks as part of health walks.
- 5 Collaborate with institutions, the voluntary sector and other organisations on tree planting and related climate resilience and biodiversity projects.
- 6 Encourage the growth of fruit trees and orchards on public and private land.



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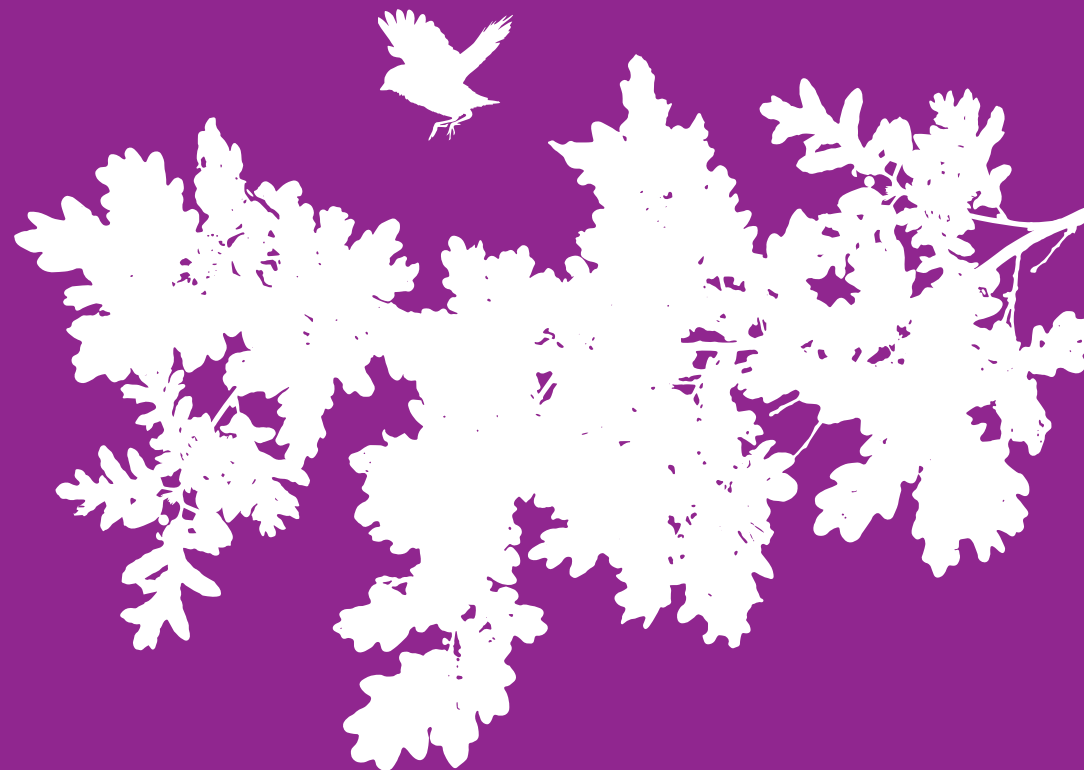
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# Promoting resilience



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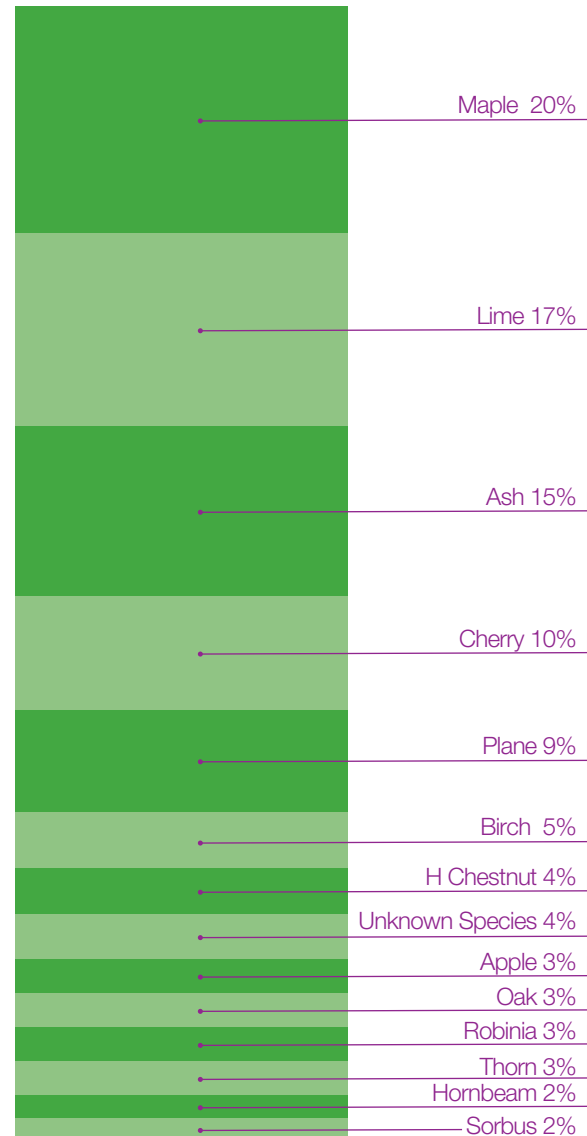
# 4 Promoting resilience

Climate change, international travel and trade have dramatically increased the frequency of new pests and diseases entering the UK.

Planting with a healthy mix of different species and ensuring age diversity through regular, long-term planting, can build resilience and ecological diversity into the urban forest, enabling it to adapt better to the impacts of climate change and protecting it from existing and emerging pests and diseases.

The presence of these emerging tree diseases and pests demands that we diversify our urban forest and build in resilience.

## Current tree species within Lambeth



## Objectives

We will increase the resilience of our urban forest through a range of measures including improving species diversity, reducing our reliance on a relatively small number of trees.

We will work proactively to reduce the impact of pests and diseases by implementing procedures to limit their introduction and spread across the borough, and more widely where practicable.

We will move towards UK-only grown trees as soon as possible and practical, whilst striving to deliver net biodiversity gains.

## Key Actions

- 1 Produce a Tree Resilience and Biosecurity policy with reference to the Forestry Commission and other expert bodies.
- 2 Analyse genus, species, age distribution and tree condition by ward to assist with species selection and determine threats to the tree stock, and repeat every 4 years.
- 3 Create targets for species and age diversity, such as ensuring that where possible no one species represents more than 10% of any new planting.
- 4 Ensure all relevant council departments are aware of guidance for ensuring species diversity and resilience as part of planting programmes.
- 5 Include biosecurity requirements in procurement contracts for tree planting such as UK grown, 'Plant Healthy' certification scheme and quarantine measures.



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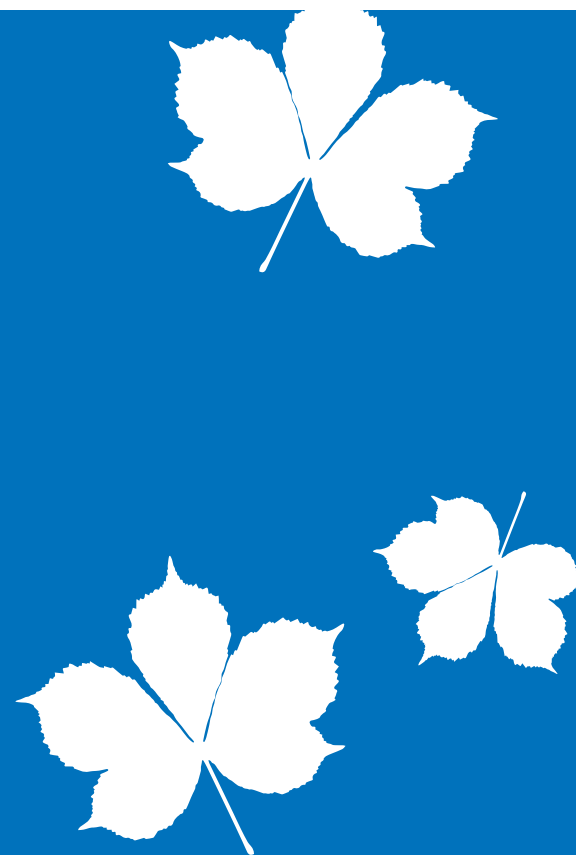
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# Increasing biodiversity



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# 5 Increasing biodiversity

Lambeth's trees are an integral component of its biodiversity, providing important nesting, foraging opportunities, and predator cover for many species of bird, bat and invertebrate.



Woodlands are often crucial for endangered or protected species that can't live in other urban habitats.

Lines of trees also provide living 'highways' for many wild plants and animals. Trees act as 'scaffolding' for many wild plants that use them for support or to access light and nutrients. Their role as ecological green corridors in a place like Lambeth is vital to the borough's environmental health.

To ensure that we can deliver our Biodiversity obligations, this UFS will be implemented in conjunction with Lambeth's Biodiversity Action Plan to identify opportunities to maximise biodiversity.



Butterfly Conservation/Mark Parsons.



Butterfly Conservation/Iain H Leach.

## Objectives

**We will maximise the biodiversity benefits of our urban forest by choosing species that are good food and habitat sources for wildlife, to make a progressive and positive net contribution to the biodiversity and green infrastructure of the borough.**

**We will develop and implement a Woodland Management Strategy.**

## Key Actions

- 1 Produce a tree species list indicating which trees are beneficial for biodiversity, to be shared with colleagues, residents and private landowners.
- 2 Progressively increase the net area of Lambeth land managed for a biodiversity benefit, by creating new – or extending existing – areas of wildlife habitat in streets, parks and other spaces.
- 3 Where it is safe to do so, standing deadwood will be left when trees die, or laid in situ when felled in non-highway locations.
- 4 Manage our ancient and veteran trees in accordance with current best conservation practice and according to site and woodland management plans for the benefit of wildlife.
- 5 Work with parks colleagues, partners and our communities to increase biodiversity net gain through tree planting and management including hedges.
- 6 Develop and implement a ‘woodland management strategy’ to support the conservation and improvement of Lambeth’s woodlands, as well as individual site management plans.

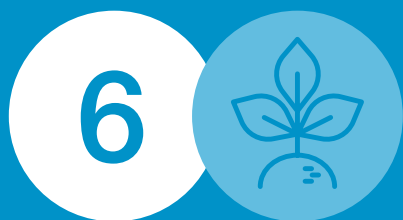


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# Ensuring better standards for planting and tree care



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# 6 Ensuring better standards for planting and tree care

**It is essential that newly planted trees receive the best start so that they become able to grow without further help.**

Establishment failure is not only costly, but it can also upset the communities where the tree was planted, and lower the morale of the professionals involved in the planting.

This support starts by ensuring sufficient resources are made available for tree establishment. The tree planting season runs from October to March. New tree planting will need to be scheduled for these months, and stock chosen in June/July prior to planting.

We should ensure that the right tree has been selected in the right location, that the tree pit and soil volume are adequate, and planting practices must follow industry best practice and be carried out by well-trained staff.

Tree watering and aftercare are essential for at least three years following planting, and a maintenance log should be completed for each tree. Formative pruning plans should prioritise high quality structural growth and tree health.



## Objectives

We will aim high by managing and planting all of our trees sustainably, following industry best practice and investing in staff training and development.

## Key Actions

- 1 Develop a Tree Planting Design Guide including tree pit details, SuDS schemes, how to design for the “right tree in the right place”, and a tree-planting, species and aftercare specification.
- 2 Provide professional skills sharing/training opportunities based on the Tree Design Guide.
- 3 Ensure all council planting follows the planting specification requirements.
- 4 Monitor and record tree planting data including survival rates to successful establishment.
- 5 All tree operations teams (internal and external) to work within current industry best practice guidance<sup>5</sup>.



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- 4 Commission for Architecture and the built environment (CABE) Space, 2005. Does money grow on Trees?, Welwyn Garden City: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment Space.
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To look at the full strategy, delivery plan and other useful information, please click on the following link [TBC](#)