

**RESPONSE TO THE LB OF BARNET'S DRAFT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE SPD**

## INTRODUCTION

The Barnet Society welcomes the broad scope and detail of this document, which draws together the many and growing threads of environmental concern, and we support most of the measures proposed in principle. However, we have some general and specific comments to make.

General comments

1. Although para 1.2.3 states that the document is aimed at developers, planning officers and members of the local community, it is not user-friendly to the last of these groups. To inform members of the community a summary, or at least headlines, would be essential – together with readable maps. We also suspect that all but the most informed Councillors would also find that helpful.

2. Our members take a great interest in trees, so we are pleased to learn that a Tree Policy and its associated Action Plan (3.4.3-4 & 5.2.15) is being prepared in parallel with this document, and we wish to have the opportunity to comment on it. But we understand from Cara Elkins that the draft Policy and Plan will not be subject to public consultation except for a brief window between their publication five days before the Council's Environment Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and the deadline for comments or questions three working days before that. Such a short period is impractical, and we request a reasonable extension please.

3. While we see the theoretical advantage of a methodology for evaluating parks and open spaces (1.1.6, 1.2.2, 4.3 et al), we are sceptical about the reliability of the Corporate Natural Capital Account (CNCA) in practice. The Borough's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy last year produced some highly questionable evaluations of 'quality' and 'value' for some sites within the Chipping Barnet area. For example, spaces deemed 'low quality, low value' included:

- Monken Hadley Common & Wood
- Hadley Cricket outfield
- Hadley Highstone
- Byng Playing Fields
- Ravenscroft Gardens
- Rowley Green Nature Reserve
- King George V Playing Fields
- The Tudor Golf Course
- Potters Lane Open Space
- Highlands Gardens

It is bizarre – to take one example – to classify Hadley Wood as low in both quality and value. It is a remarkable enclave of ancient and mainly indigenous woodland (the former Enfield Chase) miraculously preserved within London, and unique in Barnet.

4. It would be helpful to have an indication of how the various proposals might dovetail with the Mayor's promotion (in his review of the London Plan) of a National Park City and the CPRE & London Green Belt Council's proposal for a Green Belt National Park.

5. We would like the value of employing properly qualified landscape architects to design, specify and oversee GI projects to be asserted, as part of multi-disciplinary teams where appropriate.

6. Although the document mentions a variety of possible actions, it would be helpful to have a comprehensive chart, cross-referenced to each of the main themes, and an indication of ownership, sources of funding and likely timescales.

### Specific comments

1.1.3 – The valuable role of the London Green Belt Council should be acknowledged.

1.3 – We would like clarification of policy on school use of Green Belt land, both for buildings and sports or leisure activities.

1.3.1 – The term ‘landscape’ is not defined in Appendix A. In public and professional circles it is often used for a wide variety of non-green environments, for example industrial or brownfield sites.

1.3.4 – In reality many public open spaces (e.g. parts of Barnet Playing Fields and the Dollis Valley) have been, and are continuing to be, under incremental pressure by developers (including, on occasion, the Council), particularly where they are modest, not well known or hidden away – with little or no resistance by the Council.

1.4.4 – This appears to give permission for commercial ‘partners’ to pursue profit as their sole objective.

2.2.1 & 2.3.3 – The creation of Watling Chase Community Forest and, within it, the Whittings Hill plantations of 1995, is in good measure due to past campaigning by the Barnet Society, with the Council as an essential delivery partner. The trees have prospered reasonably well, but need to have a proper management plan.

3.4 – We would like to see more explicit commitment to the preservation of existing trees and other greenery on sites threatened with development, for example the Whalebones estate on Wood Street.

3.4 & 5.2.3 – Natural threats to trees such as Ash Die-back and Oak Processionary Moth deserve mention.

3.4.2 – Replacement of tree stock removed for development does not always happen, e.g. the Council’s Tapster Street housing site. Clearer commitment to adequate regular maintenance of trees and other planting would be appreciated, for example timely and appropriate pruning of trees near St John the Baptist, Chipping Barnet, and St Mark’s, Barnet Vale. Public and WHO concerns about the health and safety of pesticides such as glyphosate should also be acknowledged.

3.4.4 & 5.2.5 – Does the Mayoral tree programme refer to the Mayor of London’s award of £25k to Barnet Council (in early 2017), or will additional funding be forthcoming?

4.4 – We see voluntary groups as opportunities, not necessarily weaknesses. Over the last two decades Chipping Barnet, at least, has benefitted significantly from vigorous and intelligent input by the Barnet Society. Such ideas and initiatives should be welcomed.

5.2.6 – Why is Hadley Wood, one of Barnet’s best surviving examples of ancient woodland, omitted?

5.2.9 – The importance of management plans – and their adequate revenue funding – should be emphasized. Whittings Hill and the other Watling Chase trees planted by the Council to the north and west are an example of a large area of woodland currently without one.

5.3.11 – Our concerns about the health and safety of pesticides such glyphosate (3.4.2) are relevant here.

5.3.17 – We would be interested in more information about the sports hub proposed for Barnet Playing Fields, and how it would relate to the community sports facilities proposed by Ark Pioneer Academy (if the latter's current planning application is approved). We do not want to lose any more of its green openness in a welter of structures, fences and so on.

5.7.i & elsewhere – We would like to see more explicit support for well-planned, appropriately specified and properly maintained street trees and other planting, particularly in High Streets (including our own, Chipping Barnet), critical road junctions (such as the A1000/Underhill/Fairfield Way fronting the former Old Red Lion), and less well-endowed parts of Barnet (e.g. Barnet Vale).

5.7.11 – We would like a strong statement about the detrimental consequences of paving over gardens for car parking.