



PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

2026-2036



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Memorial Woodland, Mill Hill Park



FOREWORD

We are privileged in Barnet to have over 250 parks and open spaces, covering 1,200 hectares of land – around 20% of the borough. A third of Barnet is designated Green Belt, with millions of visits to our parks each year. Our parks provide opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, improved wellbeing and community cohesion. They also positively impact public health, culture, environmental protection and economic development.

Our parks form part of the fabric of Barnet, providing a valuable resource for residents and visitors. This strategy highlights the progress we have made in delivering a range of improvements from new play areas to environmental initiatives, and how we aim to continue this journey by providing quality parks and enhancing biodiversity.

Well-run parks play a vital role in our neighbourhoods. Through this strategy, we will ensure that our open spaces maintain character and connectivity to local place, alongside improving the natural environment.

Our strategy is a framework to guide the development of our parks and open spaces over the next ten years. We have worked with over 800 residents and stakeholder groups to develop this strategy and shape the future of our parks and open spaces, and my thanks go to everyone who got involved.

I hope you continue to enjoy our parks and open spaces.

Cllr A. Schneiderman

Cabinet Member: Environment & Climate Change



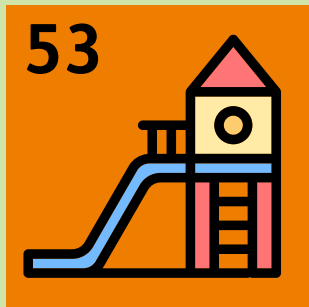
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PARKS AND OPEN SPACES AT A GLANCE



53

53 Playgrounds



19

19 Multi use sports/games areas (MUGA)



58

58 Sports courts

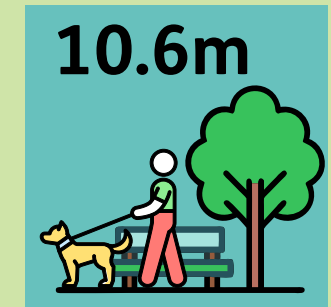


One Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)



£40m

The value of recreation is over £40 million per year



10.6m

Around 10.6 million visits are made to Barnet's parks and open spaces each year



81

81 Sports pitches



14

14 Cafes



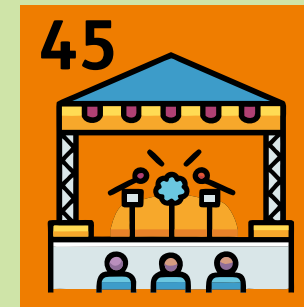
843

843 Hectares of open spaces



73KM

73 KM of public rights of way (PRoW) and footpaths



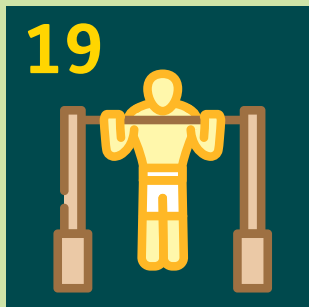
45

Over 45 events hosted in parks each year



1000

Over 1000 volunteering hours per year



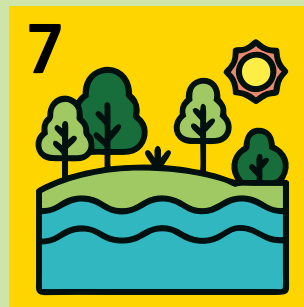
19

19 Outdoor gyms



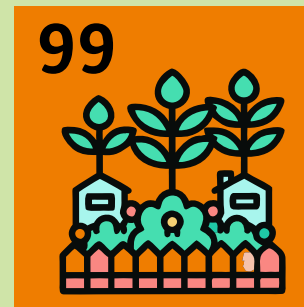
66

66 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)



7

7 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)



99

99 Hectares of Allotments, Community Gardens and City Farms



50,000

Over 50,000 trees



PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

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VISION

Our vision for Barnet over the next ten years is **“to provide high-quality, inclusive and sustainable parks and open spaces that enhance wellbeing, celebrates local identity, enhance biodiversity and empower communities”**.

It builds on the three pillars of Barnet’s Plan of Caring for People, Places and Planet, especially our commitment to look after our precious parks and green spaces in ways to attract and support a wide range of wildlife, and to make them happy places to have fun, relax and improve our health and wellbeing.

People 

Parks and open spaces are delivered where they are needed most to ensure the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and reduction in environmental inequalities. Communities are engaged in the decision-making processes and involved in the delivery of events, projects, and volunteering initiatives.

Planet 

Service delivery is underpinned by sustainable management practices as Barnet aims to become a net zero carbon council by 2030 and borough by 2042. A focus on nature recovery will deliver ecosystem services that will improve the quality of the local environment, improve air quality, reduce flood risks, and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Places 

Placemaking values are at the heart of new and existing open space developments. Parks are safe and attractive, contributing to the conservation and restoration of landscapes and enhancing areas by creating new high-quality landscapes to which local people feel connected. Open spaces reflect the character of the local environment, promoting a sense of community and strengthening local and neighbourhood identities.

Through collaborative partnerships and community engagement, we will foster a sense of ownership and pride, empowering residents to actively contribute to the stewardship of these vital resources.



STRATEGIC AIMS

We have developed **6 strategic aims** to guide delivery and support our ambitions.

AIM 1



Ensure inclusive access.

Ensure our parks are safe, accessible and welcoming for all regardless of age, ability or background.

AIM 2



Support health, wellbeing and active lifestyles.

Ensure parks and open spaces are a resource to support physical and mental wellbeing.

AIM 3



Promote environmental sustainability and nature recovery.

Safeguard and improve the biodiversity of Barnet's parks and open spaces.

AIM 4



Strengthen partnerships, community engagement and stewardship.

Work with stakeholders, partners and local communities to shape the future of our parks and open spaces.

AIM 5



Deliver sustainable investment and innovation.

Maximise available funding to maintain and improve Barnet's parks and open spaces, including innovative approaches.

AIM 6



Promote learning, culture and heritage.

Use our parks and open spaces to connect people with nature, history and culture.

INTRODUCTION

This strategy relies on building strong partnerships with an extensive network of organisations to maximize the benefits of green space.

It outlines our commitment to tackle climate change through improvements such as natural flood management, carbon sequestration, and a reduction in air pollutants.

We have already embarked on developments with wetland creation at Halliwick Recreation Ground and Watling Park, river bank naturalisation along the Upper Dollis Brook, community food growing initiatives, species identification and a review of grassland management regimes, alongside planting around 1,000 trees a year.

Through this strategy we are also making a commitment to improve access to parks and open spaces and tackle inequalities; working with community organisations and stakeholders, we will continue to ensure our parks are inclusive, safe and feel welcoming for everyone.

The assessments undertaken as part of developing this strategy will help us channel resources where they are most needed and where they will have the greatest impact. They will also inform the next review of Barnet's Local Plan.

There is a balance in protecting and improving open spaces. This strategy outlines how we plan to adopt smart ideas, like nature-based solutions, to create spaces that can be used for recreation and wellbeing whilst helping the natural environment.

Sensory Garden Opening, Victoria Park

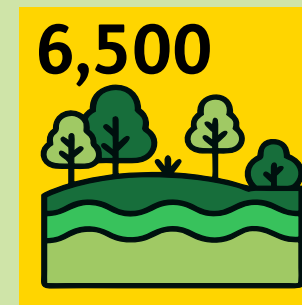


THE JOURNEY SO FAR

- Creation of strategic sport hub masterplans at Cophall Playing Fields & Mill Hill Open Spaces, West Hendon Playing Fields and Barnet Playing Fields & King George V Playing Fields.
- Development of masterplan proposals for Rushgrove Park and working with external partners to bring forward investment plans for Claremont Park, Clitterhouse Playing Fields and Heybourne Park.
- Refurbishment of 46 Tennis Courts and introducing an online bookings system
- 40 new or improved playgrounds, for example at Barnet Playing Fields, Princes Park and Watling Park
- 9 new Outdoor Gyms
- Fair Play Barnet, the UK's first maximum inclusive play area.
- £7m investment in Montrose Playing Fields, Silkstream Park and Colindale Park, with new sports pitches, playgrounds and biodiversity improvements
- Delivered a programme of Community Growing Spaces in partnership with Public Health and local communities.
- Developed a mixture of grassland management regimes at over 50 locations to enhance the biodiversity in these habitats.
- Worked in partnership with Highways to deliver Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) in parks that protect homes from flooding risk and create new habitats and features for example Halliwick Recreation Ground, Watling Park and Friary Park.
- Investing over £3 million to improve West Hendon Playing Fields.



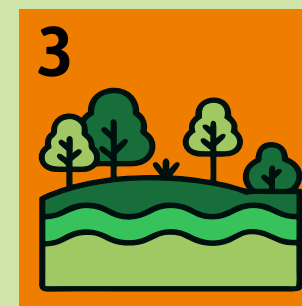
Delivered over £28M investment focusing improvements on park infrastructure, play and recreation at over 50 locations



Over **6,500 new trees** planted in parks since 2017.



London's first **3x3 Basketball Court** at Barnet Playing Fields



Created **three Tiny Forests** in partnership with Earthwatch UK

HOW WE DEVELOPED THIS STRATEGY

Analysis

We carried out a detailed review of what we have — including how much green space there is, who owns it, what condition it's in, and how well it's being used. This includes important nature sites known as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). The review looked at all publicly owned parks and open spaces, as well as some privately owned ones that are open to the public. While we know that places like allotments, roadside verges, and roundabouts also support nature, they weren't included in this review.

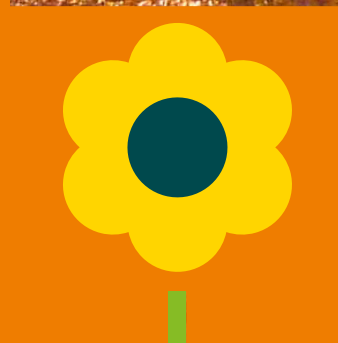
This analysis will also help us develop a Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP) — a key part of protecting and improving nature in our borough. Like all London councils, our LNRP will follow on from the publication of the Mayor of London's Nature Recovery Strategy.

Engagement

We also carried out extensive engagement with local residents and key stakeholders to find out how they use Barnet's parks and open spaces and what their priorities for the future are.

This was conducted through a survey, workshops, drop-in sessions and focus groups. These involved adult residents, children and young people, community groups, and people from specific groups such as disabled people and faith communities.

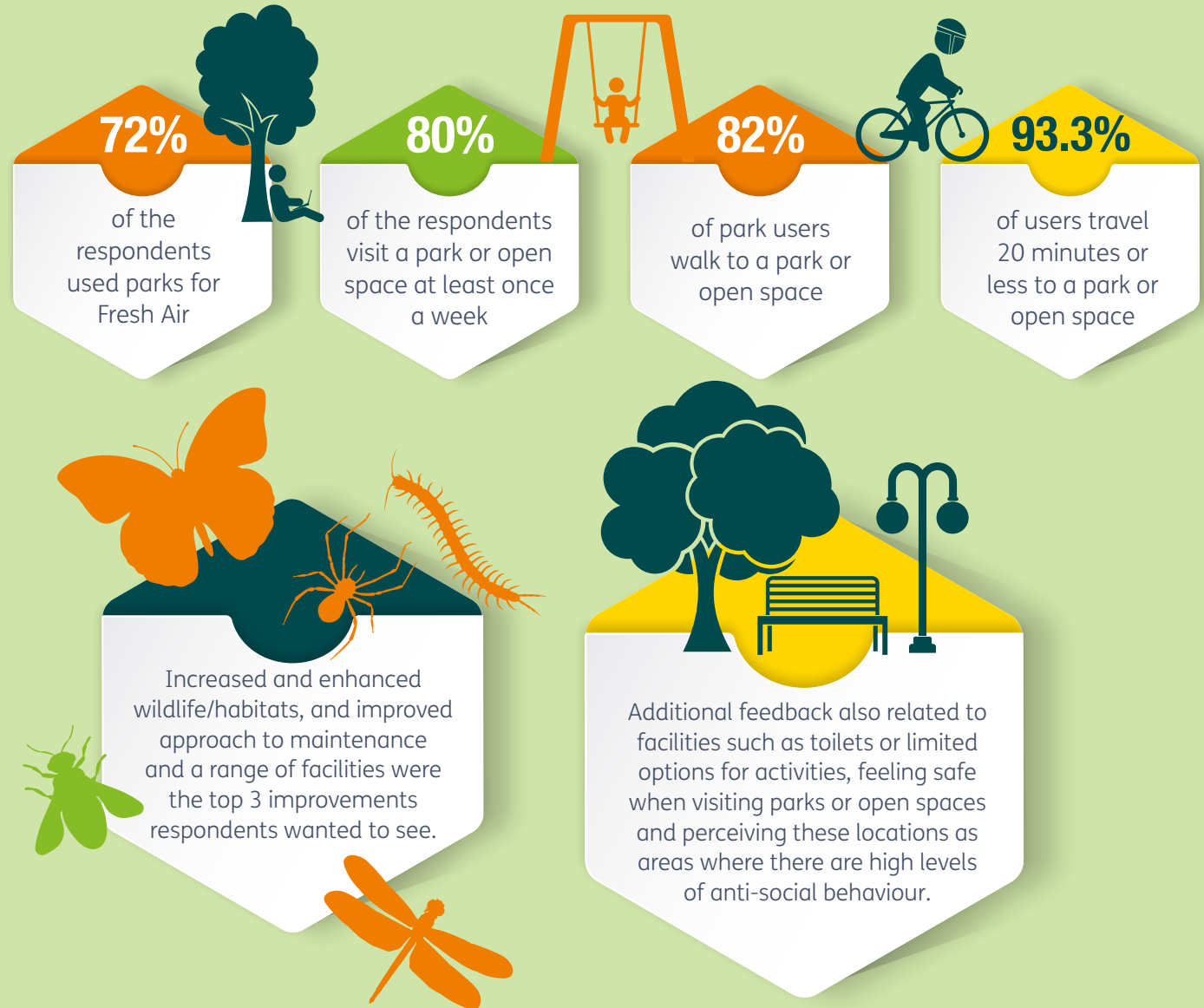
Hendon Park



WE HEARD FROM:

- Residents survey – 772 responses;
- Barnet Green Spaces Network – workshop with 26 represented groups;
- Officers' workshops – 2 workshops and other Officer meetings;
- Children and Young Persons survey – 142 responses;
- Friends Groups survey – 14 groups responded;
- Drop-in sessions – Barnfield Primary School, Coppetts Wood Children's Centre, Fairway Children's Centre, Silk Stream Children's Centre, and Underhill Children's Centre;
- Focus Groups and meetings – Inclusion Barnet members, Multi-Faith Forum executive committee, Barnet Children's Partnership Board, and Barnet Age Champions; and
- Barnet Youth Board – 2 workshops.

SOME OF THE KEY THINGS YOU TOLD US ARE:



COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

According to the 2023-24 Adult Resident Perception Survey, our parks and open spaces are highly valued, with 82% of adult residents expressing satisfaction with our parks. This is higher than the England and London percentage scores. The Young Peoples Resident Perception Survey (YPS) also reported that 85% of children and young people are satisfied with our parks, and 87% feel safe when using parks and open spaces, an increase from the previous 2019 study.

Further insights gathered as part of the first stage consultation of this strategy also highlighted;

- Barriers for people using parks and open spaces included safety concerns, perceptions of anti-social behaviour, and needing more information—especially disabled people and infrequent visitors.
- Top improvement priorities for residents included enhanced wildlife/habitats, an improved approach to maintenance, more facilities including toilets, dog control.
- Young people also want more events, inclusive play areas, and improved safety.
- Investment priorities differ slightly with young people focusing on lighting and social spaces, while residents prefer better buildings and landscaping.
- A new Regional Park is seen as an opportunity to address climate, nature and cultural goals.

We have used this feedback from residents and stakeholders to shape this strategy, and we will continue to work with residents throughout implementation.



3x3 Court, Barnet Playing Fields

BARNETS PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Barnet is proud to be one of London's greenest boroughs. Our parks and open spaces are a big part of what makes Barnet special.

This section gives a picture of Barnet's parks and open spaces—what they're like, how they're managed, and how they fit into the borough's neighbourhoods and natural environment. It also looks at the people who live in Barnet and how local open spaces meet their needs now and in the future.

Barnet is one of the greenest boroughs in London. Barnet has over 250 parks and open spaces covering over 1,200 hectares, in addition to 2,466 hectares of Green Belt land (28%) and 690 hectares of Metropolitan Land (8%). Within the traditional suburbs, smaller areas of open space contribute to the green and leafy character of built-up areas and provide residents with important local opportunities for leisure and recreation.

There are also other open spaces in the borough for which the council is not the custodian or manager which have been excluded from the strategy and its analysis, including extensive areas of farmland, allotments, private cemeteries, private sports grounds, golf courses, and woodlands.

All these open spaces help to define the character of the borough and contribute significantly to Barnet's unique identity, quality of life and social and economic well-being.

Parks and open spaces in Barnet also include priority habitats including ancient woodland, deciduous woodland reedbeds, lowland heathland, lowland meadows and good quality semi-improved grassland.

The importance of open space is recognised in Barnet's Local Plan Vision that aims to:

“ ...[get] the best out of our natural environment through expanding and improving access to green and blue infrastructure, delivering biodiversity net gain and restoring the borough's rivers to the benefit of people and wildlife whilst protecting our communities from flooding. ”

OPEN SPACE ANALYSIS

As part of the developing this strategy, Barnet's parks and open space provision was analysed to understand how it performs. This was considered alongside our projected population growth to understand the future need for parks and open spaces for our residents. Each park and open space was assigned a primary typology based on key characteristics and functionality.

The typologies included were:

Parks – 561ha, 88 sites

Accessible high quality, multifunctional space which provides opportunities for recreation, events and relaxation

Natural greenspaces – 278ha, 32 sites

Provides space for wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education awareness.

Amenity greenspaces – 27ha, 28 sites

Opportunities for informal activities close to where people live or work. Characterised by fewer amenities and lower biodiversity value than parks or natural green space.

Green corridors – 67ha, 19 sites

Linear public access green routes supporting walking and cycling activities for leisure or travel. Provide opportunities for wildlife migration.

Allotments, community gardens and city farms – 99ha, 55 sites

Opportunities for the community to grow their own produce as part of the promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.

Provision for children, young people, and other recreation – 9ha, 82 sites

Areas designed primarily for play for children and young people, such as equipped play areas and ball courts.

Outdoor sports – 120ha, 29 sites

Sites offering opportunities for participation in sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside. Some of these are privately owned or leased.

Golf courses – 318ha, 12 sites

May contribute to the wider green infrastructure network and include public rights of way.

Cemeteries – 158ha, 38 sites

May provide an informal open space offer for quiet contemplation and reflection, particularly in areas where access to other types of open space is limited.

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

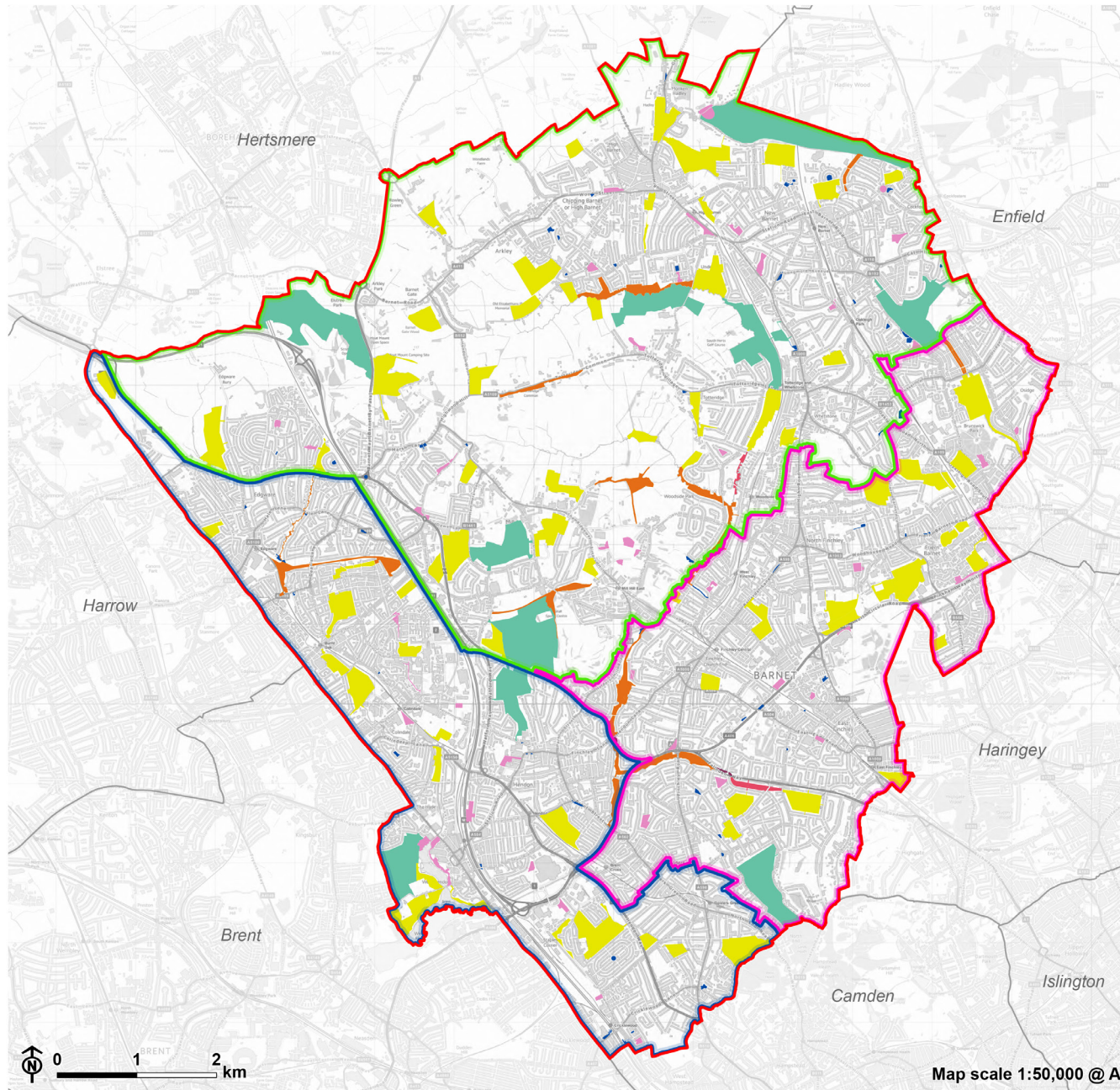
The Mayor of London's guidance highlights the importance of local councils knowing how much open space they have, how much is needed, and where there are gaps. This helps us plan for new open spaces and improve the ones that already exist. The guidance recommends that local authorities identify all open spaces, categorise them by function and size and carry out an on-site audit of open space.

This strategy provides an updated analysis of parks and open spaces based on quantity, accessibility, condition and functionality and uses the Public Open Spaces Categorisation as set out in the London Plan Policy G4.

The London Plan sets out the standards for the provision of public space. The minimum standard for:

- Parks: 1.63 ha per 1,000 residents.
- Natural Green Spaces: 2.05 ha per 1,000 residents.
- Playing pitches: 0.75 ha per 1,000 residents.

Open space by London Plan hierarchy



- London Borough of Barnet
- Neighbouring borough
- London Borough of Barnet area boundary**
- North Area
- East Area
- West Area
- Green corridors
- Open space by London Plan Hierarchy***
- District open space (20-60ha)
- Local open space (2-20ha)
- Small open space (0.4-2ha)
- Pocket open space (less than 0.4ha)

*The following typologies were included in the open space by London Plan Hierarchy: parks, natural greenspace and amenity green spaces.

Map scale 1:50,000 @ A3

QUANTITY AND ACCESS

The northern part of Barnet has the most green space per resident, primarily due to greenbelt connectivity, in addition to the volume of open space and access to natural open space. The east and west of the borough have much larger population densities and an urban character which influences quantity and access to open space.

In Barnet there is currently 0.26 hectares of allotments, community gardens, and city farms for every 1,000 residents. Based on data from the Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGI), this is above the London average.

Our quantity of play space is close to the London average; however, it falls slightly below the recommendation (of 10m² per child) in some developments. We are leading the way in inclusive design, with standout projects such as 'Fair Play' Barnet recognised by the GLA, setting national benchmarks.

Barnet is already the second most populous borough in London, with significant future population growth projected. Based on the guidelines, the analysis shows that in the future, there is a need for an additional 507 hectares of natural green space and 75.3 hectares of parkland, along with additional play areas for children.

We're planning ahead to make sure we meet future needs. This includes looking at our green corridors and how they perform a key role in connecting the larger open spaces from the north to the south of the borough.

We know things change over time, so we'll keep tracking data and adjusting our plans to make sure we meet the needs of our residents.

Greenhill Gardens



CONDITION AND FUNCTIONALITY

To understand the quality of our parks and open spaces, we carried out a detailed review using eight key categories based on the Green Flag Award—a national standard for well-managed open spaces. Each site was scored on two main things:

- Function – how well the space meets the needs of the community
- Condition – the physical state and upkeep of the space

We adapted the criteria to suit different types of open spaces, so the assessment reflects the unique role each one plays. We audited 160 parks and open spaces and 90 play areas across Barnet. Here's what we found:

- 64% of open spaces meet or exceed expected standards for condition and functionality
- Play spaces are evenly spread across the borough
- Local play areas for children aged 5–11 performed well, with 79% scoring highly
- 54% of neighbourhood play spaces (for ages 0–11+) met high standards



SUDS, Halliwick Recreation Ground

NATURAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTING

Well-managed parks and open spaces do much more than provide places to relax and play. They support many important priorities, including improving health and wellbeing, protecting nature and wildlife, reducing flood risk, and helping to bring people together. They also play a key role in regeneration and making neighbourhoods more vibrant and connected.

Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) is a framework for measuring and valuing natural resources and the benefits they provide, treating them as assets. It aims to integrate environmental considerations into economic and policy decision-making by assessing the stock and flow of natural resources, like water, minerals, and ecosystems, and the services they provide.

Research commissioned by the Greater London Authority, National Trust, and Heritage Lottery Fund found that recent trends for reducing funding for parks and green spaces is a false economy, showing that:

- London's public green space have a gross asset value in excess of £91 billion, providing services valued at £5 billion per year.
- For each £1 spent by local authorities and delivery partners on public green space, Londoners enjoy at least £27 in value.
- Londoners avoid £950 million per year in health costs due to public green space.
- The value of recreational activities is estimated to be £926 million per year.

- For the average household in London, the monetary value of being near a green space is over £900 per year.
- The total value of carbon sequestered by main habitats in the parks and open spaces (i.e. woodland, amenity grassland and neutral grassland) is estimated to be £0.1 million per year.

NATURAL CAPITAL ACCOUNT FOR BARNET

Barnet was the first London Borough to develop a Corporate Natural Capital Account for 200 of its parks and open spaces using a framework to capture the financial value of natural capital assets and to quantify the costs of sustaining these benefits over time.

This accounting shows the enormous value of open spaces for the wellbeing of residents, with the net value of the borough's natural capital assets estimated at over £1.8 billion and costs of maintaining the services delivered by natural capital were estimated at £72 million over the same period.

Parks and open spaces are used by over 100,000 people (approximately 30% of the population) to meet their physical activity targets through visits to the natural environment each week. The value of this activity, through the avoided health costs of inactivity, is estimated at over £19 million per year.

Silkstream Park





STRATEGIC AIMS

AIM 1: Ensure inclusive access

We want our open spaces to be welcoming, easy to access enjoyable for all- whether you like playing tennis, skateboarding, running, taking part in conservation activities, attending events or simply enjoy being in out in the open, there should be something for all ages and interests.

We want to make the most of opportunities to create new open spaces and to strengthen green corridors—natural routes that connect parks and open space. This will increase access to green spaces, by linking them to homes, schools, and town centres and other key destinations. This approach also reflects the Barnet Local Plan.

Case Study – Brent Cross Town

Brent Cross Town’s pledge to create more than 50 acres of green space, includes Claremont Park which involved redesigning a former linear greenspace in a flourishing green space with imaginative play and sports facilities, calming water features, nature trails, a kiosk and a public art.

Over 300 new trees, including an orchard of fruiting trees that will provide a food source for the local bird and insect population were planted as part of the project. Wildflower meadows, a pond with a viewing deck and swales have all been added to the park to improve biodiversity in the local area.

The new park includes a new playground with climbing structures, swings, roundabouts, and slides, as well as a Pocket Sports Zone you’ll find a basketball hoop and mini-scooter and skate area. The new Claremont Park was delivered as part of the Brent Cross development at no cost to the Council and is managed and maintained by the developer.



Fair Play Barnet, Victoria Recreation Ground



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The design of a park can have a direct impact on our perception of safety and willingness to use a space, whether that be lighting, visibility, or maintenance. We will ensure that our work addresses safety, especially amongst women and girls, and tackles anti-social behaviour.

The council, especially our Community Safety Team (CST), works closely with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime in our Parks. In 2022 a borough wide Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPOs) was introduced to combat issues that are detrimental to the local community's quality of life. Through the co-ordination of patrols, we have seen an improvement in user experience and compliance with byelaws. By co-ordinating targeted park patrols this also acts as a deterrent and provide reassurances to visitors.

User experience and safety within our parks is important. We will continue to carry out safety inspections on all play equipment and outdoor gyms to ensure that equipment remains compliant with ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents).

This also includes ensuring that trees within our parks are surveyed as part of our cyclical programme. We will also continue to work with Highways and explore option to improve park accessibility for residents, such as dropped kerbs, tactile paving and crossing points to support safety.

In developing this strategy, litter and dog fouling were also common issues highlighted by residents. In recent years the council has launched a campaign 'Pick It, Bag It, Bin It' to improve the attractiveness of all spaces and encouraging users to support park cleanliness. This has also been supplemented by redesigning areas to minimise any conflict between dog walking areas and spaces for informal sport and children's play. We will continue to monitor and review this as part of individual park improvement plans and our communications plan.

We are already making improvements to parks signage and information. We aim to install new signage and interpretation boards as part of future park investments and to expand these across the borough as funding becomes available. We will also make sure that events and activities in parks and open spaces are promoted so that residents are aware of what is available.

Future investment in our parks and open spaces will consider Green Flag guidelines, and we will carry out community engagement when designing new and refurbished spaces.

AIM 1: STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

We will:

- Target investment in parks and open spaces that are most in need of improvement
- Target investment in play areas where the need is greatest.
- Consider whether informal open spaces can be diversified to offer opportunities for informal play, sport and nature conservation.
- Explore opportunities to enhance active travel links along green and blue corridors to improve the network of open spaces
- Continue to address safety and antisocial behaviour (ASB) in parks through regular patrols and enforcement, alongside exploring opportunities to increase a presence through collaboration with formal user groups, the Safer Neighbourhoods Team and the council's Community Safety Team (CST) to promote park byelaws and encourage respectful use of parks.



AIM 2: Support health, wellbeing and active lifestyles

Good quality open spaces help people stay healthy and an overwhelming percentage of residents through the strategy consultation expressed how parks support their physical and mental wellbeing.

Insights:

Our survey of residents showed:

- 80% of adults and 56% of children/young people visit parks weekly.
- 82% of visits are made on foot, usually within 20 minutes.
- 95% value parks as safe walking and cycling routes.
- Reasons given for visiting parks and open spaces included:
Fresh air (72% of respondents)
Walking/jogging (67% of respondents)
Relaxation (62% of respondents)
Health benefits (60% of respondents)
- 97% of residents and 92% of young people believe parks support mental and physical wellbeing.
- Two-thirds of residents and over 75% of young people want more activities in parks and open spaces promoting healthy, active lifestyles.

Being active regularly can help prevent and manage many health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, some cancers, stress, and depression.

Our Fit and Active Barnet Strategy (FAB) sets out a vision for a more active and healthier borough, and our open spaces are a free resource that provides opportunities for everyone to lead an active lifestyle, including our free to use outdoor gyms. Our popular weekly guided walks combine exercise with social interaction, in addition to a range of other walking routes and heritage trails across our parks.

We will continue to support a wide range of groups to deliver physical activity in parks. We offer a wide variety of outdoor sports facilities such as pitches for association football, rugby, cricket, baseball, and Gaelic football, alongside hard-court surface areas for multi-use games, basketball and casual activities. We will collaborate with partners to promote inclusive participation.

We will continue to provide for both competitive and recreational opportunities, promoting inclusivity and participation, maintaining facilities to a suitable standard. Where capital investment is required, this will be considered as part of assessing usage, condition, safety and need.

Barnet offers a wide variety of play opportunities, featuring traditional equipment primarily designed for younger children. Our aim is to create engaging and enjoyable play spaces within inclusive environments, removing barriers to participation so that every child feels welcome and included. We will also consider how to improve areas for older children and teenagers.

Tiny Forest, Mutton Brook



Case Study – 3x3 Basketball

In 2025 the Council launched London’s first 3x3 basketball court at Barnet Playing Fields, created in collaboration with the UK’s leading 3x3 basketball organisation; RISE 3x3, and artwork designed by North London artist Darren John at Absolutely Studio.

The new court replaced a small basketball shooting area that had no lines and was not big enough for any meaningful games to be played. The new court provides a fantastic facility for players to enjoy.

Our aim is to make it easier for people to walk or cycle between open spaces by improving paths and routes in our parks, through the council’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) and Transport Strategy. This includes the introduction of the ‘Barnet Loop’, a 17-mile trail around the borough for recreational walking, running and cycling that passes through a number of our parks and open spaces.

We want to take forward the creation of a new Regional Park in Barnet, to expand public access to nature and offer more space for walking, playing, relaxing, and connecting with wildlife. The goal is to create a park that supports health, wellbeing, and nature—now and for future generations.

This is included in the Barnet Local Plan, which outlines the council’s commitment to promoting a new park within the Brent Valley’s Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land (Policy GSS13).

To make this happen, we’ll work closely with local partners and communities to:

- Develop a shared vision and identity for the park
- Review best practice from elsewhere
- Explore funding opportunities
- Review how the park could be managed and maintained

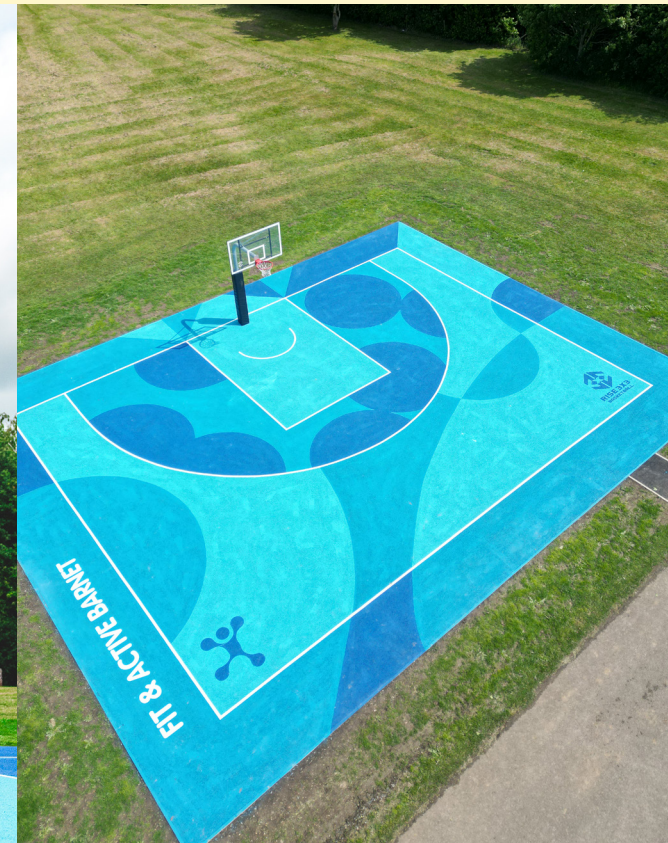
AIM 2: STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

We will:

- Ensure that playing pitch provision is sufficient to meet local need and supports increased participation.
- Promote active travel between open spaces and along green chains, networks and corridors.
- Develop improved play provision for all children and young people, including space for more informal urban sports and activities.
- Progress the development of a Regional Park for Barnet.



3x3 Court, Barnet Playing Fields



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AIM 3: Promote environmental sustainability and nature recovery

Insights:

- Nature-rich spaces are seen as inspiring and enjoyable by residents.
- Over half of residents visit parks to connect with nature, and this is strongly valued by both adults and young people.
- Children and young people rank biodiversity enhancement in parks second only to health and wellbeing in importance.
- There is overall support from adult residents and young people for habitat creation including meadow and wetlands improvements, orchard planting and woodland management.
- Friends of Parks groups actively support biodiversity efforts and welcomed the council's appointment of an ecologist.
- The Barnet Multi-Faith Forum raised concerns about poor air quality, especially near major roads, and welcomed measures to address this.

The diversity of Barnet's open spaces provides a range of important habitats that support nature. Wildflower meadows, ancient woodlands and watercourses in our parks are essential for sheltering, foraging and breeding wildlife, including priority and protected species, such as bats, badgers, great crested newts and birds.

Barnet is home to a rich variety of sites designated for nature conservation. These include one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), seven Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), 66 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). SINCs, a non-statutory designation, are afforded a high level of protection within the planning system and are locally designated areas which are recognised as being of particular importance to wildlife and biodiversity.

SUDs, Halliwick Recreation Ground



Designation	Number of sites	Coverage within Barnet (%)
Site of Special Scientific Interest	1	0.38
Local Nature Reserve	7	1.76
SINC	66	13.41
Metropolitan	9	3.58
Local	22	1.9
Borough (Grade 2)	25	5.16
Borough (Grade 1)	10	2.77

Our SSSI is the Brent Reservoir (Welsh Harp) which is a SSSI, SINC and LNR.

Our other LNRs are:

- Rowley Green Common LNR
- Oak Hill Woods LNR
- Scratchwood and Moat Mount LNR
- Coppetts Wood and Glebelands LNR
- Totteridge Fields LNR
- Big Wood and Little Wood LNR

² Hampstead Heath Woodland SSSI is on the borough boundary, but lies within the London Borough of Camden. The site is considered during the planning process to ensure developments within Barnet will not negatively impact the site, or the features for which it is designated.

SINCs

- Nine of Barnet’s SINCs are classified as being of Metropolitan Importance
- Ten are classified as being of Borough Importance Grade 1
- Twenty six are classified as being of 26 of Borough Importance Grade 2
- Twenty two are classified as being of Local Importance
- Together these cover 13.4% of the borough

31 SINCs are owned by Barnet Council with a further eight in shared ownership.

The borough also contains priority and notable habitats including:

Priority habitat type	Area within Barnet (ha)	Coverage within Barnet (%)
Ancient woodland	71.5	0.8
Deciduous woodland	611.8	7.1
Good quality semi-improved grassland	34.6	0.4
Lowland heathland	31.2	0.4
Lowland meadows	58.8	0.7
Reedbeds	4.4	0.1
Surface water	46.5	0.5
Traditional orchard	6.1	0.1

Ancient woodland

Barnet supports 71.5ha of ancient woodland, all which is protected within the SINC network. A large cluster of woodland can be found in the north of the borough, within the Metropolitan SINC and LNR of Scratchwood, and the Borough Grade 2 SINC and LNR of Moat Mount Open Space and Mote End Farm.

Wetland habitats and strategic corridors

Barnet lies within the River Brent catchment, emerging from springs in Totteridge and Stanmore. This catchment includes tributary streams in Barnet including the Silk Stream and the Dollis Brook. All of watercourses within the Brent Catchment in Barnet converge in the Welsh Harp SSSI reservoir, on the boundary with the London Borough of Brent. The River Lea catchment is located in the north-east of the borough and includes the Pymmes Brook and its tributaries. These watercourses act as green and blue corridors running through the borough and are a valuable ecological asset.

SINCs

To improve access to nature, we’ll look at ways to upgrade and expand important nature sites so more people can enjoy them. We will take forward a range of opportunities to improve our SINC network, looking at enhancements and boundaries, which will be a key part of our nature recovery plan. As we open up more areas for people to enjoy, we’ll also make sure wildlife has the quiet, protected habitats it needs to shelter, breed, and flourish. It’s all about finding the right balance—so both people and nature can benefit.

Case Study – Action for Silkstream

Action for the Silk Stream (AfSS) is a partnership project, led by London Borough of Barnet and London Borough of Harrow, aiming to increase flood resilience, improve water quality and engage residents with the Silk Stream and its tributaries.

The project represents the shift away from concrete flood defences to natural flood management, which will have multiple benefits for both people and nature. AfSS has been funded by Defra as part of the £200 million Flood and Coastal Innovation Programme, which is managed by the Environment Agency.

This work, which began in 2021, spans a 6-year period and includes interventions that increase natural flood storage such as wetland creation and river restoration. Biodiversity enhancements, invasive species removal and water quality monitoring have occurred at many locations across the catchment as part of this project, all done in collaboration with partner organisations. These organisations include Thames21, Thames Water, Environment Agency, Greater London Authority, Canal and River Trust, Brent Catchment Partnership, Friends of the Silk Stream, Silk Stream Flood Action Group and residents.

A majority of the work in Barnet has occurred in parks and open spaces, with additional Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) like rain gardens and basins being constructed within the urban landscape. These features not only slow down the flow of water, but help remove pollutants from road runoff, which helps improve the quality of water before it enters our watercourses.

AfSS has taken a catchment-based approach to address flooding, and uses a variety of nature based solutions that have benefits to both people and nature across the Brent Catchment and beyond.

AIM 3: STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

We will:

- Identify opportunities to increase and enhance habitats.
- Pursue funding to support our Local Nature Recovery Plan including opportunities such as Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Protect sites identified as at risk of maintaining their ecological status.
- Pilot and test alternative techniques in landscape management to support nature recovery and biodiversity
- Explore project and funding options for daylighting and deculverting, following on from the Action for Silk Stream.
- Identify opportunities for parks and open spaces to provide flood protection, for example Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- Promote understanding of biodiversity and conservation through signage, initiatives and community engagement.

Wetlands, Watling Park





AIM 4: Strengthen partnerships, community engagement and stewardship.

Insights:

- One in five respondents to the consultation indicated that they volunteer, often through Friends of Parks groups, conservation, gardening or sports coaching.
- Biodiversity is seen as a keen motivator for volunteers.
- There is strong support for expanding and better supporting volunteer opportunities, especially among young people, who indicated that they prefer one-off events.
- Friends of Parks groups play a key role in supporting local parks, averaging nearly 1,000 volunteer hours annually across Barnet.

The council works with a range of partners to keep our parks safe and well managed and there is continued enthusiasm from residents and community groups to get involved in activities. Barnet has an extensive network of partners: community organisations and groups, national organisations such as the Environment Agency, sport governing bodies, environmental charities, leisure providers, sports clubs, and local businesses, who all play an important role in supporting our open spaces to thrive.

We will continue to work with communities, ensuring we include a wide range of people and views in our decision making, improvement projects and in looking after our parks and open spaces.

In 2025 the council achieved Green Flag Awards at Cherry Tree Wood and Mill Hill Park, working in partnership with the 'Friends of' groups to achieve this status. The Green Flag Award scheme is a nationally recognised quality standard for parks. Working with the Barnet Green Spaces Network, we are committed to maintaining the Green Flag status at existing locations and exploring how we can increase the number of locations in the future.



Volcano Playground, Colindale Park



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Case Study – Barnet Green Spaces Network

An extensive network of over 55 ‘Friends of’ and other volunteer groups support the maintenance of our parks and open spaces. The Councils greenspaces team works closely with each group to explore options on how best to improve and enhance spaces.

All groups are members of ‘The Barnet Green Spaces Network’, which was established in July 2019. The objective of the network is to support identified group ‘leaders’ who volunteer across our green spaces. This provides a forum to discuss matters of common concern and to ensure there is a strong working relationship with Council officers and Councillors. The network is affiliated to the London Friends of Green Spaces Network, which is affiliated to the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces.

We are members of the Brent Catchment Partnership (BCP), a group of organisations working together to make the rivers, streams, lakes and canals of the River Brent catchment cleaner, more accessible and more attractive, to both local communities and wildlife. As part of this we have carried out water quality monitoring, mapping and removal of invasive non-native species (INNS), and the re-naturalisation of the Dollis Brook project.

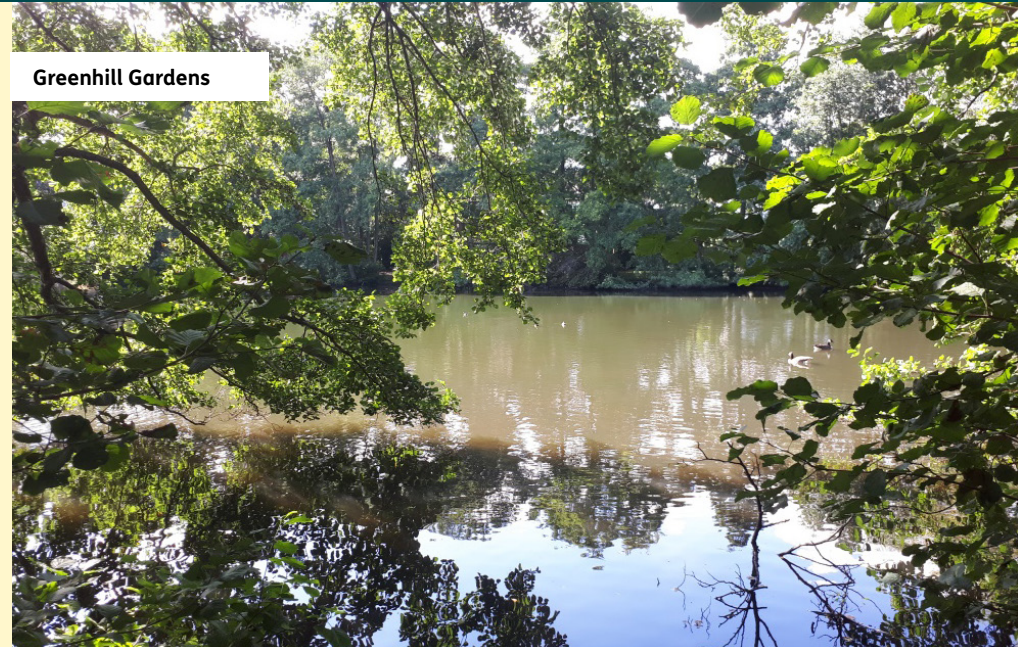
The council also works in partnership with National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) to improve facilities in our parks, including playing pitches across the borough, alongside more targeted investment. A most recent example of this has been the delivery of borough wide investment and significant improvements with public tennis facilities in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA).

AIM 4: STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

We will

- Support and encourage partnerships that help deliver green infrastructure projects, like flood prevention schemes, and improvements to nature and the environment.
- Work in partnership with key stakeholders to support improvements to play, recreation and sports infrastructure in our parks and open spaces.
- Contribute to regional partnerships that are working to maintain and enhance the natural environment.
- Work with Friends groups on a range of projects and strengthen volunteering opportunities.

Greenhill Gardens



Outdoor Gym, Watling Park





AIM 5: Deliver sustainable investment and innovation

Insights:

- Strategy consultation showed that there is support for commercial activity in parks if surpluses generated are reinvested
- Community groups are interested in managing specific facilities and support a more flexible 'Adopt a Place' model

In recent years, £28m has been invested in parks and open spaces. Much of this funding has been secured through strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). As part of our efforts to improve our parks, we have also secured external grants to deliver improvements such as:

- Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation funding for the Silk Stream project
- Lawn Tennis Association and UK Government funding for tennis court refurbishments in parks across Barnet.

We will continue to seek opportunities to secure grant funding and options to generate income, to sustain improvements in our parks and open spaces. We will also support community involvement and ownership, building on the success of the redevelopment of Market Place Playground and Fair Play Barnet, a maximum accessibility and inclusive playground.

We will look to bring forward investment cases for revenue generation opportunities and explore opportunities to attract funds.

We will review location such as sports pavilions, playgrounds, benches, and pathways to assess their suitability for carefully placed and appropriate sponsorship or advertising.



Playground, Montrose Playing Fields

Whilst the Council currently benefits from established income such as fees and charges for events, sports bookings and rental income from parks assets we will continue to review opportunities whilst being sensitive to the needs of users and the environment.

Barnet has attracted a modest level of external funding in the last 10 years and has been supported by funders such as the London Marathon Trust and the Greater London Authority (GLA). There are future opportunity to support the enhancement of our parks through external investment. We will continue to explore more traditional routes such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sport England and the London Marathon Foundation and ensure that the funds are compatible with our aims and objectives.

Case Study – Fair Play

Fair Play Barnet Playground - Victoria Recreation Ground, New Barnet

In 2024 the Council opened a maximum accessibility and inclusive playground for children and adults. Understood as the first playground of its kind in the country, a total of £500,000 was invested to deliver the scheme. This included £100,000 from the Council and £400,000 raised through third party donors.

All equipment is ‘off the shelf’ and there were no bespoke items installed in the playground. The design was developed in conjunction with a range of partners, including local residents, the Seneca Trust, Kompan; the Council’s play contractor to gauge further knowledge to support designs. The playground also includes new communication boards which have been installed at two different heights to enable wheelchair users to easily access them.

Fair Play Barnet, Victoria Recreation Ground



Case Study – Market Place

Market Place Playground, East Finchley

In September 2024, Market Place Playground reopened following a significant park transformation. The Friends of Market Place Playground (FOMPP) and the East Finchley Community Trust (EFCT) raised over £466,000 to deliver the refurbishment of Market Place playground. £201,000 of this funding was from the council’s Community Infrastructure Levy.

The council worked together with FOMPP, EFCT and their appointed landscape architect to deliver the project. The council procured the contractor to undertake the work. The project includes new play equipment, a table tennis table, new park furniture and the planting of 14 trees, with the purpose of creating a more open space that is accessible and can be enjoyed by everyone. The council carries out the ongoing maintenance of the playground.



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Case Study – Tennis

There are 58 tennis courts across 22 parks in Barnet, during 2023/24 the Council, in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) refurbished 39 tennis courts at 14 parks locations. The total value of this investment was £1.3m, including match funding from the LTA.

As part of delivering improvements, a new sustainable model was introduced. The structure focuses on a charging scheme which includes pay and play options, an annual membership for children and adults and free sessions at all locations. In addition, a licenced coaching scheme has been introduced at specific locations, delivered by commissioned providers.

The investment has substantially increased participation levels; during 2024/25 there were over 60,000 bookings which equated to over 120,000 attendances in a year.

AIM 5: STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

We will

- Review scope to optimise income opportunities through third party activities, supported by robust business cases.
- Maximise opportunities to fund open space improvements via development agreements.
- Explore funding opportunities through alternative sources such as partnerships, grants and sponsorship arrangements.

Tennis Launch , Sunny Hill Park





AIM 6: Promote learning, culture and heritage

Insights:

- Events and activities in parks and open spaces are valued by 78% of residents and 65% of young people consulted.
- Feedback shows there is strong support for integrating arts and culture into parks
- Community food growing is valued for nutrition, social, and wellbeing benefits.

Our parks provide an opportunity to reflect the cultural richness of local communities, offering spaces for celebration and cultural exchange. We want to continue to reflect the diversity of our borough by enabling activities and events to take place, acknowledging the need to protect the environment.

This is guided through our Events in Parks Policy which balances the interests of residents and event organisers and participants to ensure that events held in parks are safe, protect the environment and provide an enjoyable experience for everyone.

Events in parks typically range from theatre, funfairs to community, cultural and music festivals. Barnet's Culture Strategy identifies opportunities in parks to celebrate the borough's diverse culture and to host more creative activities and events.

Peace Statue, Friary Park



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Case Study – Our Yard

In 2015 Our Yard took over the management of an overgrown yard area within Clitterhouse Playing Fields under an Adopt a Place Agreement with the aim to build and develop and deliver a multi-use horticultural space that would provide opportunities for training, volunteering and to reduce of social isolation and aid in mental and physical wellbeing.

Today Our Yard’s mission as set out on their website is to build and support resilient and sustainable communities in and around Clitterhouse Farm and Northwest London, and to become an innovative community-led exemplar for embedding social value in regeneration projects. Through the conservation and enhancement of this important heritage asset we aim to provide a thriving and socially-inclusive space within which communities and small businesses can work collectively to respond to social and environmental need, both at the local and national level. We champion and promote the importance of local history, sustainable living, arts and culture and seek to provide opportunities, services, events and facilities that are attractive and financially accessible to all.

Some parks in our borough have a rich heritage and unique character, such as Friary Park, Oak Hill Park, Hadley Green and Hendon Park. They also help shape the identity of the wider local area. These parks are valuable places for learning and community engagement.

Several successful forest schools are already operating in our open spaces. We will continue to foster learning opportunities by collaborating with local schools and external organisations.

We have actively supported community food growing, bringing people together to grow fresh, healthy, and affordable food. These shared spaces at locations such as Montrose Playing Fields help tackle food insecurity, celebrate cultural traditions, and turn underused areas into community hubs. These initiatives are an important aspect of achieving our sustainability goals and we will continue to explore opportunities to increase community food growing projects across our parks.



Community Growing, Montrose Playing Fields

Case Study – Barnet Community Food Growing Network

The Barnet Community Food Growing Network project was set up in 2024 by Greenspaces, Public Health and Incredible Edible Barnet. It began as a one-year pilot project, funded by the Council, and aimed to increase access to food growing opportunities for residents and community groups by:

- Creating 4 new community food growing sites within parks or community spaces
- Building the capacity and skills of residents, allowing them to start and lead community food growing projects
- Supporting existing food growers in the borough to share their knowledge and experience

In 2024, 54 participants completed the 16-week training course, learning how to run their own community garden space. 4 new community food growing sites were set up and enjoyed by the local community. The new spaces have established links with nearby schools, act as venues for environmental events, fostering social interaction among a diverse range of participants. Baseline and endline surveys showed significant improvements in participants' food growing skills, connection to nature and the local community, and overall wellbeing. Food growing spaces can also be one of the most biodiverse habitats in an urban environment,

and ongoing biodiversity monitoring of the sites is underway. The project has gained attention across London, leading to presentations and discussions with other boroughs for replication.

In 2025, the project received Area Committee funding to continue for another year. The course teaching residents how to run their own community gardening space has continued, with the addition of drop in sessions offered throughout the growing season. The gardens have also expanded in size, increasing the capacity for growing food.



Community Growing, Montrose Playing Fields

AIM 6: STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

We will:

- Support the delivery of the borough's Cultural Strategy through promoting the use of parks and open spaces as venues for activities and events.
- Support opportunities for formal and informal learning to promote awareness of nature, sustainability and biodiversity.
- Offer volunteering opportunities that support skills development and community involvement.
- Explore ways in which we can integrate play, education and learning into our parks and open spaces.
- Support the delivery of the councils Food Plan by exploring opportunities for new community growing spaces and enhancing existing access.

POLICY CONTEXT

As well as co-production, feedback, data and analysis, this strategy has also been developed based on the requirements of key strategies and policies. This strategy recognises the assent of the Environment Act (2021) and future policy considerations required in relation to biodiversity, including restoration of nature under the London Local Nature Recovery Strategy framework (to be published Autumn 2025).

Following this, we will produce a Barnet Local Nature Recovery Plan. In 2022 Barnet Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, committing the council to becoming net zero by 2030 and the borough being net zero by 2042. Parks and open spaces are vital assets in supporting the council to achieve this mission.

Barnet's 'Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) details recommendations on the proposed provision, protection and enhancement in respect of formal outdoor sports. The PPS has a direct connection to this strategy and is important context in shaping opportunities to support grassroots sport via access to our open spaces.

This strategy has been informed by key Barnet council strategies and plans, such as the Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy, Fit & Active Barnet Strategy, Tree Policy, Transport Strategy, Sustainability Strategy, Culture Strategy, Food Plan and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

This strategy is also informed by the National Planning Policy Framework, London Plan and reflects the priorities set out in the Mayors Open Space Strategy, in addition to the councils adopted Local Plan (2025) and associated policies

TAKING ACTION

To make sure the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (POSS) is working well, we will develop an action plan and regularly monitor progress, making updates if things change along the way.

This approach will help us stay flexible and focused on delivering real benefits for Barnet's communities.