
Green Spaces

Climate Emergency Working Group
6 November 2019

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Trees in Merton - Current Situation

Number of trees:

- 3,000 trees in Merton schools
- 14-15,000 in Merton parks, not including woodlands (uncounted)
- 17,000 trees on Merton highways (excl. TFL land)
- Yet, most trees in Merton ($\frac{2}{3}$) are on private land

Tree officers (5):

- Park & school trees - 2 officers; Highways trees - 2 officers (FTEs); Trees on private land - 1 officer in the Planning Development Control team (TPOs, etc.)

Tree wardens:

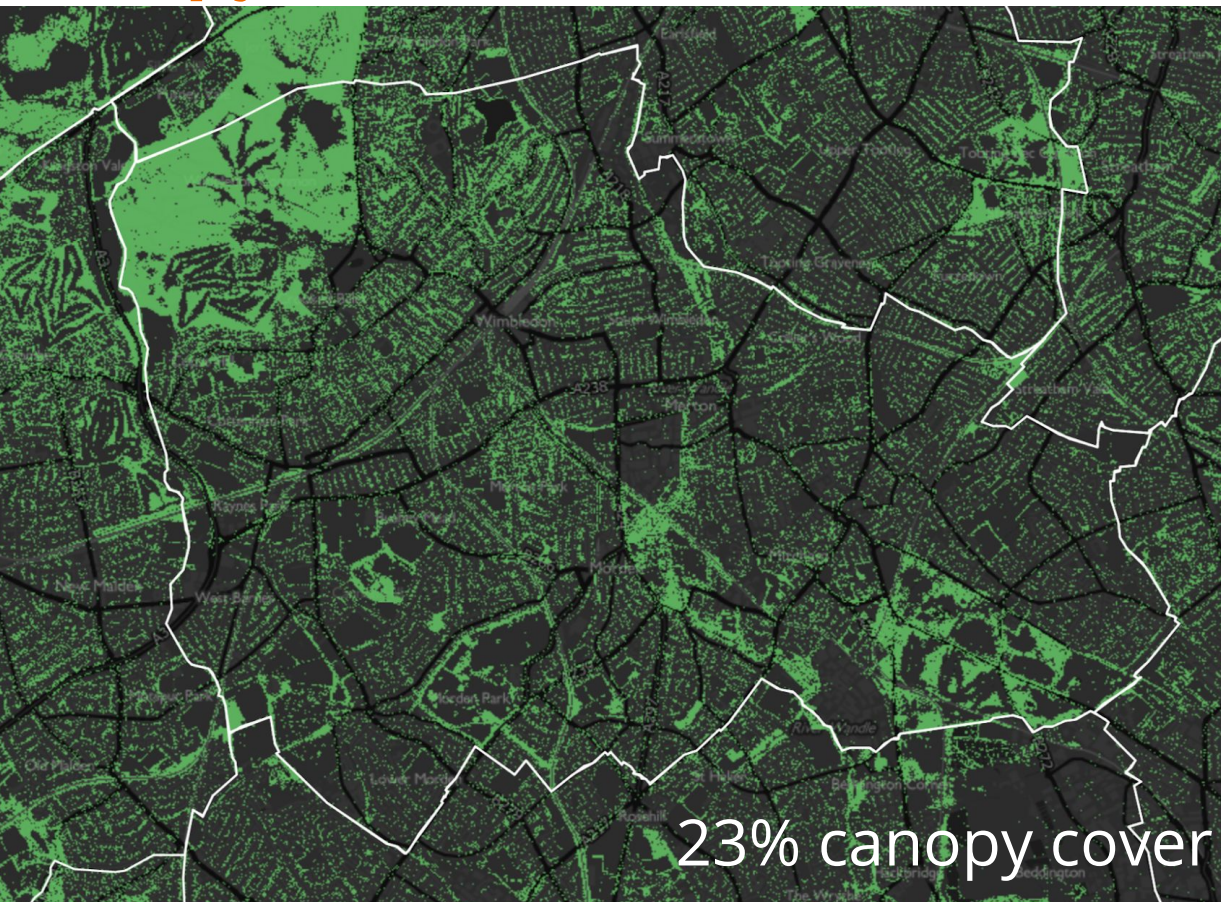
- 12 (active) volunteers

Budget:

- No regular budget for tree planting in parks - instead, rely on grants, 'Friends of' groups, etc
- The annual budget for tree planting on highways (street trees) is £60,000

No Tree Strategy

Canopy Cover in Merton



Merton's Urban Forest Canopy is between **20.5 % and 24%** of land surface of the borough.


Green Infrastructure (GI) of all types – trees and other natural surfaces and cover – are nearly 50% of the surface of the borough but less than 1/3 is in Local Government control (12-15% of total area).

Close to half of all Merton controlled GI is made up of trees and woodland (c.**6.5% of total area**). This consists of:

- Individually identifiable trees 4%
- Woodland cover 2.5%

[[i-Tree Canopy](#) and [OSCCA](#) (Open Source Canopy Cover Assessment) are the sampling tools used to assess tree canopy cover.]




Sample Mapping Tool: Street trees, some parks

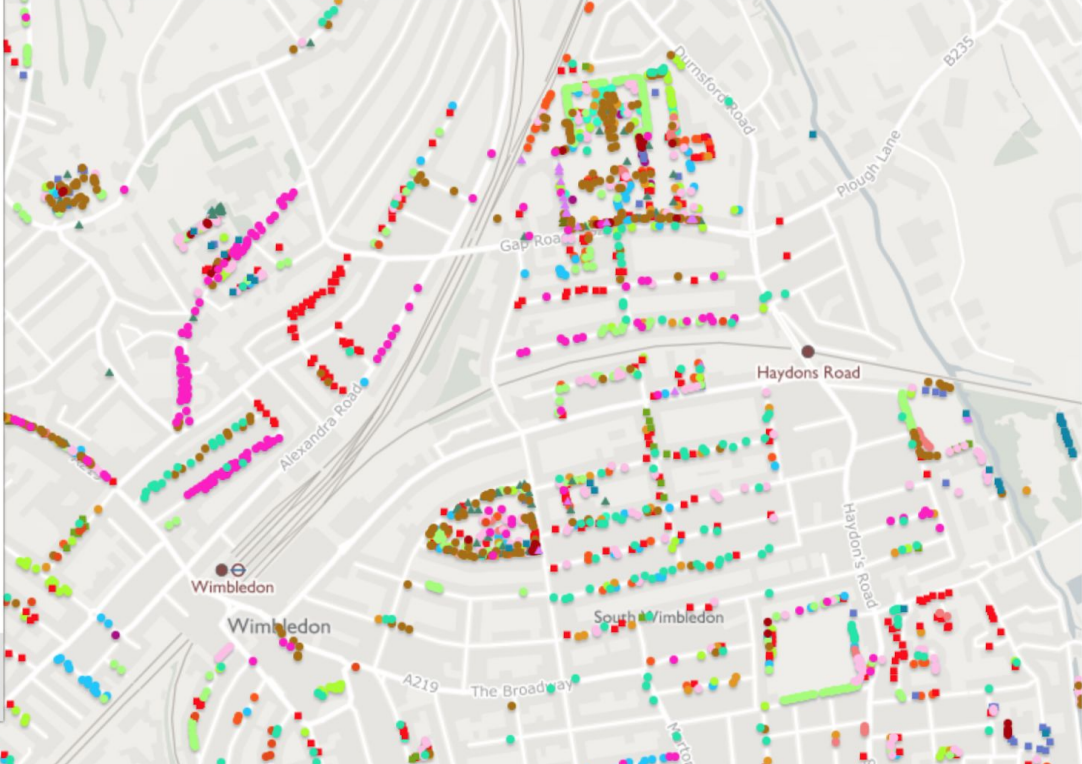
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- Chestnut
- Cypress
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- Hawthorn
- Hazel
- Hornbeam
- Lime
- Maple
- Oak
- Other
- Pear
- Pine
- Plane
- Poplar
- Whitebeam
- Willow

Clear All | Show All

About   



2014-15



London, UK

Currently in view

<p>561 trees</p>	<p>0 cm average trunk width</p>
<p>87 species</p>	<p>? average tree age</p>
<p>100.7 hectare</p>	<p>unknown average tree health</p>



How many trees needed...or should we aspire to?

“Whilst urban trees can undoubtedly contribute towards long-term goals to reduce atmospheric carbon levels, it is important to set their value in context.

- Greater London’s 8.4 mio trees are estimated to store 2.4 mio t of carbon and sequester about 77,200 t of carbon each year (Rogers et al. 2015).
- ***This is approximately 3% of Greater London’s annual carbon emissions, or [...] enough to cover its carbon emissions for about 12 days.***
- Therefore, in the grand scheme of things, urban forests make fairly modest contributions to the global challenge of reducing carbon emissions.” *

FoE: ***Double UK tree cover by 2045.*** to deliver sequestration of c 37-50 Mt CO₂e per year. That’s equal to c 10% of the UK’s current greenhouse gas emissions.”

Mayor has a target in the [London Environment Strategy](#) to ***increase tree cover by 10%*** from current levels by 2050.

*Hirons, A.D. and Sjöman, H. (2019) Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure: A Guide for Specifiers, Issue 1.3. Trees & Design Action Group.

Council Viewpoint: What is feasible?

- Tree/canopy cover is more important than number of trees. Focus on retention (concern about decline).
- Focus on protecting existing trees, rather than new planting (concern about loss of mature trees).
- Funding is needed for maintenance and management, not just planting.
- “Sequestration not that much potential. Adaptation has greater potential.” (Dave)
- “Doubling tree cover is a fantasy” (Dave Lofthouse, Arboriculture Manager for LBM)
- “Not realistic to plant more large trees.” (Jane Plant, Tree Warden)
 - No space in parks; conflict with development
 - Planting for sustainability.

Tree Planting – Obstacles and constraints

Parks and open spaces:

- Lack of space for big schemes; Merton has lots of small and medium parks
- Sports - need for large, flat open space
- Safety concerns - shielding anti-social/criminal behaviour
- Lack of capital for new planting
- Compete with other priority habitats

Operational and Planning:

- No Tree Strategy
- Two tree databases - parks and highways
- Lack of enforcement e.g. paving over front gardens, felling trees in Conservation Areas or under TPOs
- Regeneration by housing associations
- New developments removing mature trees

Streets - trees compete for priority with:

- Street furniture (signage, etc.)
- CCTV - trees block views
- Underground cabling
- Dropped kerbs
- Vehicle crossovers
- Impact on traffic flow
- Proximity to housing - shade; foundation lift

Tree Planting – Best Opportunities

- **Highways**

- 1,500 highway verges (in comparison with 117 parks and open spaces)
- Some highways have open spaces which are wide – bigger than some parks

- **Schools**

- Utilise land
- Wrap around playgrounds
- Wildlife gardens and edible playgrounds

- **Private land**

- 63-70% of trees are on private land
- Capitalise on this; enhance

Preliminary Recommendations

1. Improve internal council processes

- **Develop a Tree Strategy!**
 - Assess what there is, consolidate, analyse → where are trees needed? How to preserve trees, retain canopy cover?
 - Integrate into Local Plan
- **Are more Tree Officers needed?**
- **Biodiversity Officer?**
- **Grants Officer?**
- **Planning - making best use of section 106 funds and CAVAT tools**
- **Consolidate tree databases - IT issue**

Preliminary Recommendations

2. Tree planting (council) ---> schools and highways

- More funding for highway planting and maintenance
- Ringfence Community Investment Levy (CIL), CAVAT
- Schools champion/facilitator
- Identify tree opportunity pockets/parcels - take maps to the people

3. Tree planting (private) ---> residential and business

- Public campaign - to promote and facilitate planting on private land
- Tree champions - residents who will sign up individual households to plant (free?) trees on own land
- Business partnerships - planting on site and community outreach
- Utilise 'Friends of' groups, housing associations, etc.

Example: Tree Opportunity Mapping



Wandle Trail by Plough Lane

Preliminary Recommendations (contd)

Unlike other CEWG workstreams, Green Spaces can encapsulate both mitigation and adaptation.

3. Increase overall green infrastructure

Focus on small multifunctional green spaces:

- Pocket parks
- Rain gardens
- SuDS features
- Green/living walls and roofs
- Green corridors - link open spaces

4. Develop a Biodiversity Action Plan

Benefits:

Air quality

Cooling

Stormwater/ flood attenuation

Traffic calming/ walkability

Biodiversity enhancement



K Gunnell

SuDS in Earlsfield



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What next for Green Spaces team?

- Gather sample Tree Strategies; determine how one can be developed in Merton feasibly
- Interact with Planning and Transport dept - to determine what is possible?
- Help to develop a community engagement strategy
- Determine how will we measure success (number of trees, canopy cover, carbon capture, etc.)