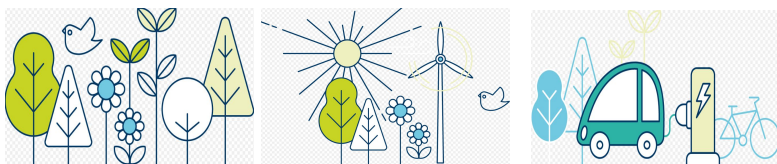


# Sutton's Environment Strategy FAQ

## Topic: Greening

The council consulted on its Environment Strategy for eight weeks in August 2018. As well as answering the questions, participants were invited to provide comments. We received nearly 700 comments, all of which were reviewed and influenced the final draft of the strategy. A lot of the comments were very similar, and we have curated these comments into a comprehensive FAQ documents giving the answers for the public to view.



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**1. The vision should be tweaked to say that 'the Borough's trees and green spaces will be protected'. We need to maintain the current stock of trees and plant more all around the borough.**

In recent years the Council has planted more trees on Council land than were lost to disease and age. There is commitment in the Corporate Plan to plant at least 3500 trees by 2021. The Council's tree policy also protects Council owned trees and ensures that only dead, diseased or dangerous trees are removed unless there is a community need for a tree to be removed and then permission has to be given in writing by the Director of Environment in consultation with the Chair of the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee. Trees on private land are protected through designation of areas as Conservation Areas or specific trees and groups and trees can be protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

**2. How do you plan to improve access to green spaces for all?**

The Council will seek to improve access by developing new parks where this is possible, for example pocket parks, or by improving access to existing open space, by creating new access points. In addition the type of facility on each site can be improved, for example by adding a playground or sports activities at an existing open space.

**3. What is your tree planting target?**

Our aim is to plant 3,500 trees between 2018 and 2022.

**4. More trees will result in more leaves, creating a safety issue for cyclists and pedestrians. How will you overcome this?**

There is recognition and evidence that trees are beneficial to the environment overall. This directly improves the lives of cyclists, by helping to keep summer temperatures lower in built up areas, providing shade, filtering pollution from the air and reducing wind speed. Leaf fall can be dealt with through improved street cleansing regimes.

**5. How do you plan to meet your targets when you are cutting down lots of trees e.g in Beddington park and destroying natural habitats?**

To allow renewal of the Beddington Park landscape it was necessary to remove 70 trees, mostly on the islands in the lake which needed to be completely reconstructed to enable removal of the silt. However as part of the creation of the Sutton Decentralised Energy Network (SDEN) there have been 733 trees planted and the HLF project in Beddington Park will deliver more than 3,500 new trees, most of which have already been planted.

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## **6. Plant more trees in streets, open spaces and encourage more planting on private land.**

The forthcoming revised Strategy and Action Plan for Council Owned Trees which will form part of the overall Parks and Open Spaces Strategy will address this issue and the resources required. Since May 2017 the Council has planted 881 standard trees and a greater number of whips (baby trees).

## **7. The existing trees need to be maintained in addition to planting new trees.**

All Council owned trees are inspected for health and condition on at least a four yearly basis and works are carried out based on best practice and to maintain the Council's duty of care. Residents can report damaged trees through the contact centre.

## **8. More young trees are needed in green spaces.**

We are always looking for ways to fund more trees and find locations to plant them. Our aim is to plant 3,500 trees between 2018 - 2022. The Mayor London started an initiative in 2018 where Londoners were offered young trees to plant via a giveaway.

## **9. More tree planting is needed in Parks to create a second layer of hedgerow.**

The Council's Biodiversity Action Plan looks at opportunities for marginal planting and has an action plan to deliver targets. More information is available at [www.sutton.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.sutton.gov.uk/biodiversity)

## **10. There needs to be clearer enforcement of tree preservation orders and a major replanting of saplings alongside their management e.g watering many have died in Beddington park since the recent investment.**

The extremely dry weather last summer led to a small number (approximately 35) of the 3,500 trees planted in Beddington Park as part of the HLF project failing. These trees were regularly watered as part of the maintenance contract. These will all be replaced in March 2019.

All Planning Enforcement cases are investigated (including those involving Tree Preservation Orders) and are viewable by the public. These can be searched by address via the Council's online Planning Register - <https://planningregister.sutton.gov.uk/online-applications/>

## **11. More allotments are needed. They will help to protect biodiversity and should also be used by schools as a way of providing access to local, seasonal food.**

The council has thirty six allotment sites with over two and a half thousand plots borough wide. Many sites have plots that are vacant and that can be rented. Please contact [slwp.allotments@idverde.co.uk](mailto:slwp.allotments@idverde.co.uk) for details of vacant plots and waiting lists for the sites.

**12. You could grow fruit or vegetables in publicly accessible areas instead of trees. This would contribute towards help prevent food poverty.**

A community orchard was set up in St Helier open space which was funded through the public realm scheme and applied for by a local community group and Councillors. This orchard, once mature, will provide fruit and a space for the community to enjoy and will help to improve air quality in the area. We will always aim to encourage the application of community orchards and the Borough already has more than 2200 allotment plots for rent for local food production.

**13. Improved access to fruiting trees in public space is needed.**

As part of the Heritage Lottery Funding project at Beddington Park a community orchard has been planted with a range of apple and pear trees.

**14. How will you stop trees from damaging buildings? Are there any plans to remove them and replace them with small growing varieties which can be more easily managed?**

All Council owned trees are inspected for health and condition on at least a four yearly basis and works are carried out accordingly. The Council has around 17,000 street trees and has no plans to remove them and replace with smaller trees. Issues of damage to property are low and are dealt with on a case by case basis. Large trees provide greater environmental benefit and add to local character. The species of tree has more relevance to whether it is likely to cause damage than size.

Protected trees can be pruned but requires consent from the Council to ensure that the works do not negatively impact their amenity value or health. A Tree Works Application can be made at any time, free of charge. The application form can be found at -

[https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200154/planning\\_and\\_building\\_control/1111/tree\\_preservation\\_orders/5](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200154/planning_and_building_control/1111/tree_preservation_orders/5)

**15. What about the effect the tree canopy cover will have on street cleansing and drainage? The trees will need maintaining to prevent problems such as blocked drains.**

The Boroughs trees are inspected on a four yearly cycle and pruned to maintain tree health and keep them safe for the community. If there are issues with street cleanliness or gully efficiency these should be reported on the Council's website so the issues can be addressed through street cleansing.

**16. What are your plans to improve greening on streets? These are the areas people visit.**

The borough runs its own competition Sutton In Bloom to encourage residents and businesses to green their gardens. The council also enters London in Bloom each year. There are a range of categories to enter and an awards event is hosted by the Mayor. Leaflets are available in libraries and on the council website. Hanging baskets and greening on the streets is also done via public realm, in which community groups and individuals can apply via their local ward councillor or local committees.

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**17. More street trees are needed.**

Officers are always looking for ways to fund more trees and find locations to plant them. Between 2018 and 2022, our aim is to plant over 3,500 new trees across the borough. Consideration is given to the eventual height of any planted tree as well as its eventual spread and the local soil type when selecting trees.

**18. The existing green spaces need to be managed better - grass verges need mowing.**

The Council has arranged for all the verges under its control to be maintained during the growing season i.e. March to November. Residents with concerns about specific verges may contact Neighbourhood Services using the online form to report their concerns.

**19. Mowing of verges is often unnecessary and could be reduced. This would allow a wide variety of plants to flourish enhancing the biodiversity.**

The Council has arranged for the verges under its control to be maintained regularly. The Council is also looking to improve biodiversity on verges where this is appropriate, by adjusting the mowing frequency, e.g. on wide verges in more rural areas to benefit the environment.

**20. Verges could be replaced with hedges rather than grass which requires less maintenance.**

Hedges on verges can offer improved biodiversity, but there are relatively expensive to maintain and can cause obstruction to pedestrians and where there is adjacent car parking. This may need some thought but is worth considering in the right locations.

**21. Some verges need removing and replaced with pavement parking. This would help ensure emergency access is available on narrow residential streets.**

There are no plans for such action which would increase hard surfaces and reduce the ground where water can drain away. This would increase the risk of flooding and surcharging the ground water sewers. It would also be expensive.

**22. Plant more trees on the grass verges and replace fallen trees on verges -all verges to have trees.**

Officers are always looking for ways to fund more trees and find locations to plant them. Between 2018 and 2022, our aim is to plant over 2,000 new trees across the borough. Consideration is given to the eventual height of any planted tree as well as its eventual spread and the local soil type when selecting trees.

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**23. It is easy to make an area greener, what is more difficult is the maintenance of that area. Not all current green spaces are looked after to expected standards or are only allowed certain planting because of maintenance issues. There needs to be realistic planning of the additional time needed to maintain the current spaces to the level of expectation and then the additional green spaces.**

Agreed; this is an important consideration for the planning of any green space especially in times of reducing budgets.

**24. Green spaces should be protected not built over. Trees and open spaces are good for air quality, health and wildlife and should be protected.**

Agreed, and the Council has protected green spaces through planning designations.

**25. Remove all guardrailing around the parks; this will provide opportunity for more planting and more access.**

Not many parks in Sutton have guard railings or fences. Usually these features have a practical purposes such as to secure the site overnight, prevent cars accessing pedestrian areas or to direct traffic.

**26. BBQs in the park should be stopped.**

Due to anti-social behaviour, excessive littering, and air quality concerns, it has been decided that the barbecue rental scheme has been withdrawn and it is unlawful to light fires and barbecue in any of Sutton's parks.

**27. There should be no more building on what should have been our Regional Park. This negatively impacts air quality and nature.**

It is important to understand that Regional Park designation is a planning designation and does not mean that the whole area will be open, green space with public access. Nevertheless Beddington Farmlands will over time have extensive land available for wildlife and provide large additional areas of public open space.

**28. What is happening with Beddington Farmlands? Why isn't it finished?**

The Planning condition for the implementation of the restoration of the landfill site was linked to the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility application and signed off in June 2016. The restoration completion date is 2023. The Council has been working with Viridor to ensure delivery of the various habitats. Phase 1 wet grassland has started and is due to be completed in spring 2019, whilst the first tranche of bird hides, the main access / cycleway and new grazing enclosures, fencing and additional

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hedgerows should be delivered before the end of 2019 to improve public access and viewing of the site. Delivery of the restoration is an action point within Sutton's Local Plan Policy 26.

**29. The targets are ok, but how do you stop the travellers invading the sites and excluding the residents and at cost to Sutton.**

The Council is increasing security features on a large number of its parks and open spaces to deter a range of unauthorised encampments. It has also successfully achieved a three year injunction at the High Court in London against persons unknown from occupying its parks and open spaces.

**30. Convert the little used rail line between Sutton and Epsom Downs to public green space.**

This area is not within council control, it is private land owned by Network Rail.

**31. Children from nurseries and school should be taught about green spaces and how to look after them from a young age**

More than 5,000 children are involved, each year, in activities run at Sutton Ecology Centre. Sutton Ecology Centre runs both formal and informal environmental education sessions with children . Formal education sessions are with school groups, aged 3-11yrs, focusing on habitats, species and sustainability. Informal holiday activities engage families in nature conservation through fun and innovative activities. Sutton Council is collaborating with the South East Rivers trust to deliver SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) in Sutton's schools, which aim to provide sustainable drainage in the form of rain gardens, planters, permeable paving etc to educate children on reducing the risk of flooding, improving biodiversity and educating them on ecology and green spaces.

**32. Run community projects planting areas that are run down or on waste land**

Parks Friends Groups often run planting days to help tidy up and brighten open spaces. However community planting days require additional resources to organise and staff. 'Waste Land' may be a subjective term, as it could already be good for wildlife but does not accord with the general perception of being good / tidy etc. If there are areas of concern these need to be dealt with on a case by case basis. It should also be recognised that newly created areas / habitats require ongoing management, for which extra resources would need to be made available. Crowdfund 2019 is an initiative by the Mayor of London to help improve and regenerate areas in London. Community groups can apply for funding, with assistance from LBS. Note also that the Council has no authority to organise works on privately owned land.

**33. Plant more trees and plants. Keep areas around the river wandle clean and tidy and not just rely on locals to do it, especially around the Hackbridge/Carshalton end.**

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Trees and plants need to be the right species for the right place and require suitable upkeep. With regards the Wandle, the South East Rivers Trust (a local charity) organise a number of river clean up days. The ownership of the river is split between many organisations, meaning each organisation is responsible for its section.

**34. Ban Network rail from spraying toxic weed killer in the borough along all the rail lines (which they plan to do ).**

This is private land and the Council has no power to ban herbicide use by other organisations or residents.

**35. More greenery will both improve air quality and lower temperatures.**

Agreed; this is recognised in the strategy

**36. The council should be leading on plans for green spaces, not relying on the community to apply for grants.**

The Council is currently developing an Open Spaces Strategy to support and maintain parks and open spaces for the future. This may involve seeking outside funding. Funds are not always available directly to the council; some must be bid for by community groups who wish to be involved in the maintenance and development of their local parks and open spaces. The Council will continue to apply for funding where it is able to do so.

**37. The tree canopy target is not ambitious enough, it should be much more than 10% and the deadline should be sooner, not by 2050.**

Between April 2018 and March 2019 the Council will have planted over 3,200 trees on schools, housing sites, development land, parks and highways. This is made up of a mixture of saplings through to large heavy standard trees. We will continue to plant more trees, throughout the delivery of the strategy. It is important however that open spaces also have room for other activities and that requires a balance of planted and open areas.

**38. Do not build on flood risk areas, this will also free up some green space for your use.**



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Agreed. Sutton's new Local Plan (February 2018) states that proposed developments should avoid or minimise all sources of flood risk to people and property by avoiding inappropriate development within flood risk areas and by locating the most vulnerable uses within areas of lowest flood risk where possible. Specific policy requirements are included for all buildings to be set back at least 8 metres from the banks of main rivers; enhancing river banks biodiversity by removing hard infrastructure; and taking a river-wide corridor (or 'catchment-based') approach to flood risk management along the length of the Wandle and other watercourses throughout the borough. Key site allocations identified in the Local Plan have also been assessed and steered towards areas of lowest flood risk. In 2017-18, only 2 of the 934 dwellings built within the borough (excluding residential conversions) were located within Environment Agency Flood Zones 2 (medium risk) or 3 (high risk).

**39. Stronger tangible commitments are needed to ensure new build developments do not negatively impact on existing green spaces and wildlife.**

Agreed. Sutton's new Local Plan (February 2018), introduces stronger policy protections for green spaces and wildlife by (1) maintaining strong protection for green belt, metropolitan open land (MOL), green chain, public open space, nature conservation sites, green corridors and back garden land (2) actively supporting the creation of new habitats identified in the council's Biodiversity Action Plan; and (3) promoting the aims of the Wandle Valley Regional Park. The council has since prepared guidance for developers on both GSF scoring and biodiversity accounting.

**40. More information is needed to help people create green roofs or walls.**

Throughout the duration of the strategy we will be promoting how people can install measures such as green walls and green roofs. This will include informing people about their benefits as well as how to create a green wall or roof.

**41. Is it possible to introduce free garden waste collections for people who haven't paved their gardens?**

As part of the SLWP Contract, the council has secured services priced on a costed model for garden waste collections that does not include dispensations. The Council and its contractor Veolia would need to undertake a cost benefit analysis across the SLWP if it was to consider this as a viable option and affordable for residents of the borough.

**42. People need to stop paving over their gardens. You should be encouraging the planting of hedges and greenery. How will you achieve this?**

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The action plan for the Greener Borough chapter includes actions around planting new trees and encouraging people not to pave over their front gardens. We will highlight the impact this has for flood risk as well as biodiversity and greening. There are lots of resources available about how it is possible to still park on your drive but leave space for nature. We will look at how we can use the Sutton in Bloom competition to support this as well.

**43. More funding is needed to deliver improvements to areas.**

The council will bid for available funding to deliver the strategy. This may be in partnership with other organisations or working with community groups who are best placed to bid for resources. This can be time-consuming and there may be times when we are unable to progress work within the timescales the community would like to see, but that is the reality of working within reduced budgets and the requirement to seek external funding.