

Green Action for Change

Camden's environmental sustainability plan (2011-2020) - draft

Executive summary



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Introduction

Our aspiration

- To achieve a better quality of life for ourselves and future generations
- To nurture all our natural resources and reduce carbon emissions and waste
- To mobilise people to take action to change their life styles and behaviour.

This is an endeavour where everyone in Camden has to take responsibility and play their part.

Our promise

Our promise as a Council is to:

- Lead by example in reducing the environmental impacts from our own operations
- Create the foundations for success through our planning policy, support for green infrastructure and supporting the local green economy
- Attract the necessary investment for green infrastructure, buildings and transport
- Engage and empower communities and individuals to take responsibility for their own environmental impacts
- Work with our local, regional and national partners in the public, private and voluntary sector.

Good progress has been made in greening the borough in recent years. However, changes to national and regional policies and programmes, together with the state of the public finances, have required us to renew and refocus our approach.

This new draft Plan focuses on the key environmental issues on which the Council and our partners can have the biggest impact, and on working together with residents, businesses and communities in the Borough to deliver an agenda far wider than the Council can achieve alone.

This executive summary covers the key environmental issues for Camden and some headline actions from the full Plan.

The [full plan](#) also includes a range of actions that households, schools, organisations and communities can take to play their part.

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The key issues and challenges in Camden

Reducing Camden's carbon emissions

Climate change remains an urgent priority and our greatest environmental threat. Surveys have told us that over 70% of people in Camden are concerned about climate change and want the Council to play a leading role.

Our [study](#) on how we can reduce borough-wide CO₂ emissions by 40% by 2020 has provided us with an evidenced-based approach.

What we want to achieve

Reduce carbon emissions from 2005 levels by:

- 10% by 2012
- 40% by 2020
- 80% by 2050

What will be different?

- Low, and wherever possible, zero carbon buildings
- Fewer car journeys made in lower carbon emitting vehicles, with more people walking and cycling
- Informed residents, businesses and communities taking responsibility to reduce their own impacts on the environment.

Adapting to a changing climate

As well as reducing carbon emissions to prevent further climate change, we need to prepare for the climate changes that scientists say are very likely to take place.

They predict that in Camden climate change could increase the risk of flooding caused by heavy storms, as well as leading to longer, hotter and more frequent heatwaves, which can have serious impacts on human health. It will also put pressure on our already stretched water resources.

Camden Council has been undertaking research and delivering policy and projects to help prepare for the changes to our climate.

What we want to achieve

- To better understand, manage and mitigate the risks to Camden from a changing climate.

What will be different?

- Less risk of flooding
- More buildings designed and retrofitted to cope with the changing climate
- Fewer water shortages
- Better 'cool zones' such as parks, green spaces and the public realm
- More residents, organisations and communities informed of the role they can play in helping us adapt to a changing climate.

Managing and reducing waste

Waste that goes to landfill is a waste of the resources and energy used in its production, and kitchen and food waste also creates the powerful greenhouse (climate change causing) gas methane when it decomposes in landfill. If food and garden waste is composted instead it produces little to no methane when it decomposes, and the compost can also be used as a resource for farming and gardening.

There are high costs associated with sending waste to landfill, and even fines for landfilling too much food and garden waste.

Increasing the amount of waste that is recycled, reused and - especially - composted, is vital. Camden's reuse, recycling and composting rates have been steadily increasing over the past few years.

What we want to achieve

- To reduce residual household waste (the waste that is left after reuse, recycling and composting) per household from 2008/09 levels by:
 - 3% by 2012
 - 5.5% by 2015
 - 10% by 2020
- Contribute to a North London recycling / composting rate of 50% by 2020
- To increase commercial waste recycling levels.

What will be different?

- Less waste produced
- More waste reused
- More waste recycled and composted
- More energy efficient waste and recycling services.

Improving air quality

The main cause of air pollution in Camden is road traffic and gas boilers. Air pollution can worsen heart and lung conditions and has been linked with 5,000 premature deaths per year in London.

Reducing public exposure to air pollution is particularly challenging in urban areas like Camden. The European Union and UK Government have set objectives for a number of air pollutants, and Camden (like much of the rest of London) is currently breaching the limits set for the pollutant nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), and is at risk of breaching limits for particulate matter (PM₁₀) near some busy roads.

We have a number of initiatives in place to reduce air pollution and raise awareness of its sources and health effects, and what measures people can take to reduce their exposure.

What we want to achieve

- Reduce levels of NO₂ by up to 50% by 2015 on our most polluted roads, in partnership with regional and national government, to achieve the NO₂ air quality objectives

- Continue to comply with the air quality objectives for PM₁₀ concentrations and endeavour to reduce these in the long term in order to protect public health.

What will be different?

- Lower levels of road traffic and increased use of sustainable transport
- Higher proportion of low emission vehicles on our roads such as biomethane, electric, hybrid
- Reduced energy use from gas boilers
- Improved awareness of the sources and health impacts of air pollution and how to avoid generating pollution.

Enhancing biodiversity, improving green spaces and involvement in gardening and food growing

Protecting biodiversity is about maintaining and increasing the variety and number of different insects, birds, plants and animals. It is crucial to keeping our planet balanced and healthy.

Green spaces contribute to the quality of life for people living, working and visiting Camden by offering opportunities for personal relaxation and enjoyment.

What we want to achieve

- Enhance parks and green spaces for nature and encourage improvement of private gardens as habitat for a range of wildlife
- Improve the built environment for biodiversity and improve wildlife corridors within the urban landscape
- Protect and enhance habitats such as waterways, wetlands, woodland, hedgerows and trees.

What will be different?

- More green space and a greater variety of plants and animals
- Better ecological connectivity within the urban landscape
- More people actively involved in nature conservation and with an appreciation of the value of biodiversity
- Open space used for food growing where it doesn't conflict with nature conservation interest.

3 Actions

Leading by example as a council

The Council recognises the need to lead by example in reducing the environmental impacts from our own estate and operations if we are to expect local people and businesses to take responsibility for their own actions.

Actions include:

- Refresh our Carbon Management Programme 2010-15 following completion of the 40% by 2020 study for our own estate
- Adopt a new corporate environmental sustainability procurement policy backed up by guidance and training for staff
- Continue to build on the numbers of clean vehicles in our fleet.

Creating the foundations for success – planning, infrastructure and capacity

We need to make it as easy as possible for our diverse communities, residents and businesses to take responsibility for their own environmental impacts.

We can support this through sustainable planning policy, identifying and attracting investment for green, low carbon and low waste infrastructure and technologies, and supporting the local green economy.

Actions include:

- Agree a clear and coordinated approach to support Green Deal delivery to our homes and buildings from 2012 - the balance between heritage and energy conservation being a key area of focus
- Identify and deliver opportunities for combined heat and power (CHP)-led local energy networks in partnership with developers and major asset owners in the borough. (CHP captures waste heat from local electricity generation for use in nearby buildings, unlike central power stations where 60% of energy used is lost up cooling towers)
- Deliver the new Camden draft Transport Strategy, including measures to promote car clubs and low emission vehicles and improved cycle and pedestrian facilities
- Implement the [Air Quality Action Plan \(2009-2012\)](#)
- Implement the [Biodiversity Action Plan \(2010-2012\)](#)
- Review the skills needs for the emerging green economy and seek to develop programmes using existing resources such as the King's Cross Construction Skills Centre and the proposed Skills and Training Network to meet this new demand.

Empowering our communities

The Council and our partners have a central role to play in enabling our diverse communities to take responsibility for their own environmental impacts.

There is already an extensive and growing network of green groups in the borough and we want to expand this further and to harness their expertise and enthusiasm.

Actions include:

- Review and share best practice from the Camden Communities Green Fund
- Provide community groups with the tools to identify and reduce their carbon emissions and other environmental impacts
- Create a network of green champions across the borough.

Encouraging businesses, institutions and the voluntary community sector to take responsibility

Camden has a thriving business community contributing around 1% to the national GDP. It also has a large voluntary community sector with 2,478 organisations active in the Borough. 65% of carbon emissions in Camden come from non-domestic buildings occupied by businesses and other institutions.

Camden is committed to providing the advice, assistance and networks to help the business and voluntary community sector to reduce carbon emissions and waste, and to harness the opportunities presented by a new green economy.

Actions include:

- Continue to support businesses and other institutions through the [Camden Climate Change Alliance](#) to understand and reduce their own carbon emissions
- Continue to provide networking and practice sharing opportunities for Camden-based organisations
- Continue to work with business improvement districts and other business networks to enable joint sustainability projects
- Review opportunities for promoting green issues through voluntary community sector commissioning.

Encouraging schools and children and young people to take responsibility

Schools represent almost one third of Camden Council's carbon emissions, and they also play a key role in influencing the behaviour of children and young people and their families and communities.

In order to deliver sustainability projects, school staff often need support, guidance, additional resources and opportunities to share ideas with other schools. The Council has an important role in supporting and facilitating schools to take a 'whole school approach' to improving their sustainability performance and introducing sustainable development into the curriculum.

Actions include:

- Provide strategic guidance encouraging schools to take a 'whole school approach' to managing their sustainability performance and contribute to the delivery of this plan
- Explore setting up a Revolving Energy Fund to support capital investment in lower carbon school buildings
- Continue to work with schools to promote sustainable travel
- Provide recycling and composting schemes.

Improving homes and supporting households

Homes in Camden account for 25% of all CO₂ emissions in the borough. Improving the energy efficiency of homes in the borough remains a challenge. Over 75% of residential buildings are in multiple occupation which also presents challenges in collecting waste and recycling.

The vast majority of homes in the borough that will be standing in 2050 have already been built and are of older, solid wall construction which is difficult and expensive to insulate. If the Council is to meet its long term target of reducing CO₂ emissions by 80% by 2050, it will be critical to address the energy efficiency of this portion of Camden's existing housing stock. Indeed, our study on how to cut carbon in Camden by 40% by 2020 confirmed that we will need to insulate a significant proportion of our solid wall homes if we are to meet this target. The Government's Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation are being introduced from 2012 to make it more affordable and easier to do this.

Camden remains committed to supporting households at risk of fuel poverty (people and families on low incomes and people with long term sickness) to be able to afford to heat their homes.

Actions include:

- Continue to provide the free small steps environmental advice service to serve as a single point of contact for advice and information on all domestic sustainability initiatives available to residents in the borough
- Complete our existing cavity wall and loft insulation programmes in council and privately-owned homes
- Seek to play a borough level co-ordinating role in the Government's Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation
- Complete the roll out of the enhanced recycling service
- Implement further pilot solid wall insulation projects on different dwelling types.

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Contacts

To view the full plan visit: www.camden.gov.uk/greenaction or contact:

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