

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY

Appendix D: Open Space Strategy Engagement Session - Summary Report



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INTRODUCTION

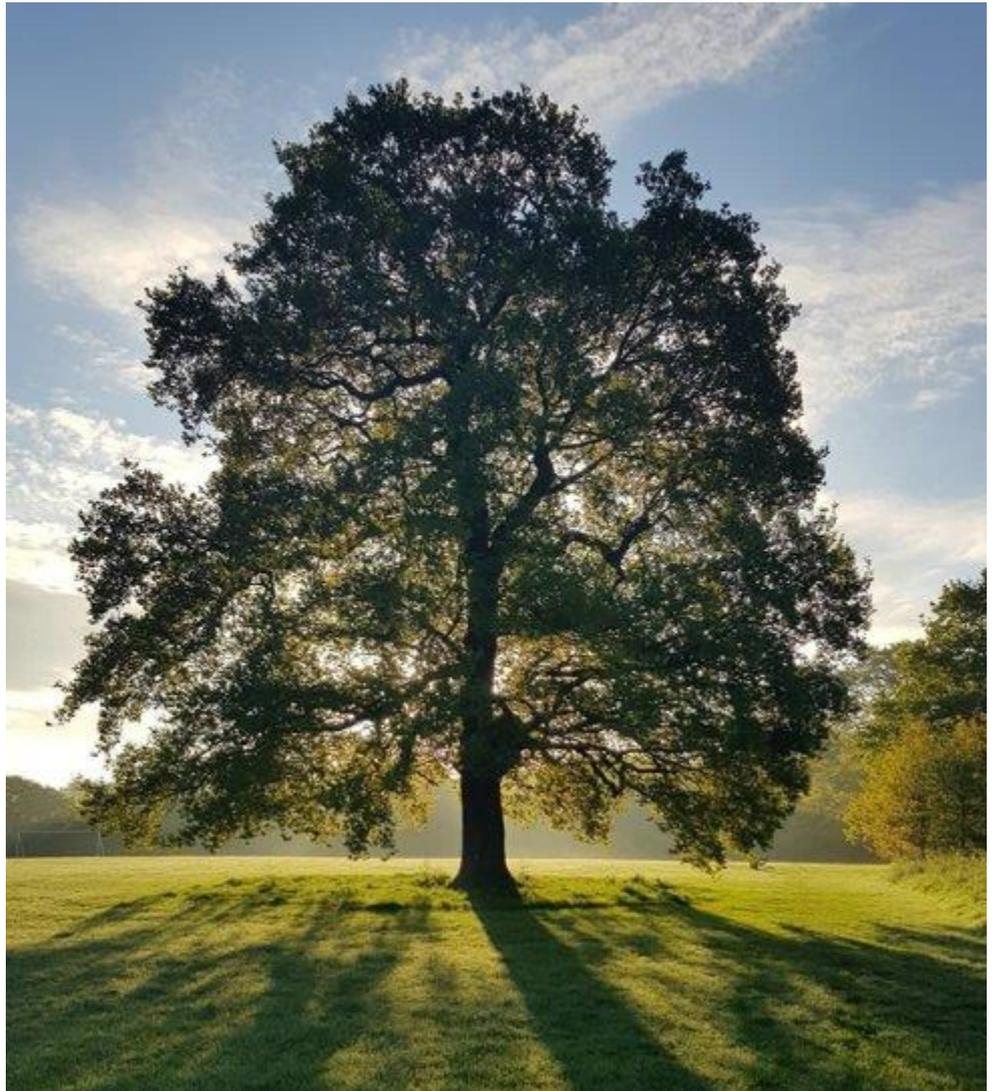
On the 7th October 2021, a virtual engagement session was hosted for residents of Bromley. The London Borough of Bromley ('The Council') shared a summary of feedback received on the Draft Open Space Strategy by residents' and an overview of updates made since. Residents then asked questions regarding these updates.

The evening was hosted by Anthesis on behalf of the Council. The discussion was split into two main sections, each lasting around 30 minutes, based on differing feedback themes. A total of 48 people (out of 89 registered) attended the session.

This report presents an overview of the poll results summarises, followed by the topics raised by residents that were judged to be the most significant in line with the key feedback theme groupings. Many audience questions were repeated or covered similar topics. Where this occurred, it has been consolidated into a single, more concise question.

A summary of the Council response to all stakeholder questions posed during the engagement session is given in Appendix A.

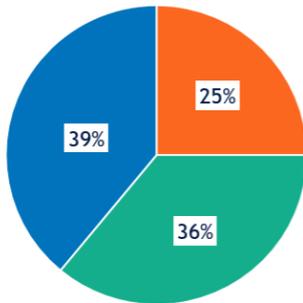
It should be noted that due to the nature of the event, discussion was not always fully in sequence with the presented themes. This was allowed, to facilitate a more natural discussion between the audience and the council. In this summary, we have aligned the questions as closely as possible to the two Q&A themes and added a separate section for more general or crosscutting topics.



POLL RESULTS

POLL 1

What is your motivation for joining today's session?



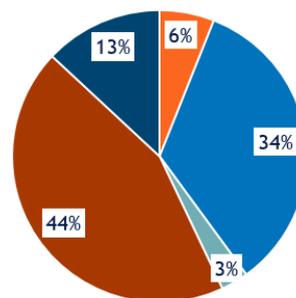
- To see how the results of the consultation have been used
- I am a keen user of parks and care for their future
- I want to learn about the Council's plans for our parks

46 people were present for the first poll question. 78% of people engaged with and responded to this poll question.

POLL 2

A total of 46 people were in attendance during this poll question. 70% of those people engaged and responded to this poll question.

Which topics strike you as a priority topic for discussion today?



- Layout and Legibility
- Cross referencing
- Additional Policies
- Clarity of message
- Enhancement and commercial activity

QUESTION AND ANSWER #1



Introduction

This segment was intended to focus on the first 3 points mentioned in the second poll:

- **Layout and Legibility**
- **Clarity of Message**
- **Cross Referencing**

During this section, around 10 questions were answered in real time. We have reviewed the discussion, and full list of questions, and below summarise questions judged to be key to the topics above.

Key Questions from the residents

- *“The strategy provides a succinct vision on page 11. What is your 'elevator pitch' for the 108-page strategy?”*
- *“The Strategy does not appear to be cross referenced to the Climate Change Emergency. Why is this? In view of forthcoming CoP 26 - are there any links to the climate emergency that could be brought out?” (Several questions were asked referencing climate change and the importance of this)*
- *“Did you consider cross referencing with Nature Recovery Networks and London Nature Recovery Strategy? Both are felt to be important, especially after Environment bill has passed, and throughout the lifetime of the strategy.” (Several questions were asked on this topic, highlighting the need to cross reference with other nature-based strategies)*
- *“Regarding climate change and cross referencing- is there a separate strategy to maintain & enhance ecosystem services, including carbon capture & storage (for example, through soil), soil moisture retention & urban cooling, & pollution reduction?”*
- *“Could a final draft be more concise and concentrate on actions and timescales? Is there opportunity to look to refine further elements?”*

Summary

Overall, many of the repeat questions focused on referencing towards other documents, both Bromley's own strategies as well as wider London-based strategies, to better integrate the strategy. Other questions focused on layout and legibility, with little focus on the Clarity of Message, despite that being a major topic based on the poll results.

All the questions raised were answered during the engagement session by Council Officer Panelists.



QUESTION AND ANSWER #2

Introduction

This segment was intended to focus on the final 2 points mentioned in the second poll as well as an opportunity for people to ask more general questions about the report:

- **Enhancement and commercial activity**
- **Additional Policy**
- **Any other comments/Observations** (included some more general comments not specifically relating to the contents of the draft- see overleaf)

During this section, around 20 questions were answered. We have reviewed the discussion, and full list of questions, and below summarise questions judged to be key to the first topics above.

Key questions from the residents

- *“The Strategy states that it covers all the land the Council are responsible for, and that maintained by Idverde. Therefore, why does it exclude Urban Grass verges and alleyways?” (Multiple questions were asked on the topic of excluded spaces, including grass verges and agricultural spaces)*
- *“How does the strategy take account of heritage issues in parks? Most of the issues discussed are related to natural environment, but many parks have significant heritage aspects. Who in the Council leads on this?” (Several questions were asked about defining ‘heritage’ in parks and open spaces)*
- *“It is not clear how the aspirations set out in the strategy align with national and regional open space policy. For example, it does not appear to further the policies defined in the All London Green Grid Area Framework 06. Further clarity on this point will be helpful” (For example, was this considered/acknowledged? This topic was covered in multiple questions)*
- *“Common Land; what are the protections in place to protect this against housing development?” (Multiple questions on the future development and sale of open spaces)*
- *“The use of petrol leaf blowers and strimmers near to housing or public buildings and community areas during dry spells causes hazardous dust and particulate pollution - will this be addressed? Similarly - pollution from idling vehicles was raised - can this be included?”*
- *“Will COVID-19 trigger any improvements to rights of way? (One attendee felt like access to parks has been on the agenda for a while but with minimal progress.)*
- *The Strategy has good proposals for developing Management Plans for parks. For the largest parks, where there be many stakeholders and multiple issues to consider (such as heritage), are you satisfied there are sufficient skills and resources to produce plans for complex sites in a reasonable timescale?*
- *Drastically improved cycle infrastructure is key to many environmental and health targets and should be prioritised - can you summarise how cycling plans overlap with green space?*

Summary

There were overall more questions asked in section, and we allocated more time to this part of the session. Questions tended towards the potential commercialization of space. Many residents also used the interaction as a chance to raised points or themes they felt weren't considered in the report.

All of the questions raised were answered during the engagement session by Council officer panelists.

GENERAL QUESTIONS



Introduction

Some questions asked were more general and did not fit into either of the topics presented for discussion, particularly those regarding the decision-making process behind the development of the session agenda and invitations. Some of these questions are highlighted below.

General Questions from residents and stakeholders

- *“Please can you explain why the invite to this Open Space Strategy Engagement Session has only been sent to a “select few”? What was the extent of promotion and what was the rationale for this? (This question was asked the most above any other in the session)*
- *“Please can you explain why Bromley Council has not made the updated draft of the OSS available on the Bromley Council website?”*
- *“Who has rewritten the latest draft?”*
- *“How many open spaces are owned by the Council that are not managed/ maintained by Idverde?”*

All of the questions raised were answered during the engagement session by Council Officer Panelists.

Email Questions

After the session was complete, several questions were received from residents through Anthesis’ “Go To Webinar” account. These applied to several categories. Some are repeat questions, while some additional comments have been highlighted below.

- *“Strategy Objective 1: Quality and Accessibility - With regard to the audit of entire open space by 2022 we would like to know when the results of this audit would be available to view by the stakeholders. This will enable us to plan in advance availability of key expert members to be involved in discussions and plans for management of areas.”*
- *“We request the use of chemical pesticides, herbicides and peat containing compost is stopped due to the detrimental effects that these products have on the environment, health of wildlife and risk to residents.”*
- *“P42 - ‘Enhanced Playground Facilities’ - this mentions Kings Meadows - which has already been completed. Why is this included in the 2021-2022 strategy when it was completed in 2020?”*
- *“The Open Space Strategy seeks to achieve more funding to enable maintenance and investment. Our experience with recent investment projects is that Idverde’s own processes, skills and experience will need improvement to be able to handle the sorts of projects that this will entail. How does Idverde intend to deal with this?”*

Summary

The majority of the more general questions focused on accessibility to both the most recent draft of the Open Space Strategy, and engagement session.

The email questions above were not the only points or topics covered, and the selection is intended to show the variety of questions that were asked.

APPENDIX: COUNCIL RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

Question and Answer Section 1

The strategy provides a succinct vision on page 11. What is your 'elevator pitch' for the 108-page strategy?"

Attendees were reminded of said succinct vision on Page 11 which stated that the Council's overarching vision for the Open Space Portfolio was one that 'promotes the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the borough, allowing our residents, communities and wildlife to thrive'.

The Council noted that this statement summarized what it believed to be a high level but comprehensive strategy that incorporates the suite of challenges facing the Portfolio including ensuring its accessibility for all, protecting its diverse natural habitats and cultural assets, improving community health and wellbeing, supporting growth in the local economy, and ensuring that the Portfolio is financially sustainable in order to fund all of the strategies ambitious aims and objectives.

"The Strategy does not appear to be cross referenced to the Climate Change Emergency. Why is this? In view of forthcoming CoP 26 - are there any links to the climate emergency that could be brought out?"

Attendees were made aware of the Council's Net Zero Action Plan which has now been published online, along with Year 1 and 2 progress reports. The Plan sets out the key priorities for the Council that will be delivered to ensure the target date of 2029 is achieved. The Council's Green Recovery Working Group are looking at ways to make individual council services more resource efficient, with a Zero Emissions vehicle charging strategy for the borough being presented to the Environment and Community Services PDS committee meeting on 17th November, alongside a progress update on the Council's four-year street tree planting programme.

"Did you consider cross referencing with Nature Recovery Networks and London Nature Recovery Strategy? Both are felt to be important, especially after Environment bill has passed, and throughout the lifetime of the strategy."

The Council noted that this had been an oversight when drawing up the strategy and that it would look to incorporate this legislation in further iterations of the strategy.

Post Session: Following this comment, the Council has ensured that the aims of both Nature Recovery Networks and the London Nature Recovery Strategy have been included in Strategic Objective 2 under both the 'Nature Friendly Regime Management' and 'Natural Regeneration of Open Space' sections. It also at the suggestion of attendees met with colleagues in the Planning department who endorsed the strategies content in relation to these two points.

"Regarding climate change and cross referencing- is there a separate strategy to maintain & enhance ecosystem services, including carbon capture & storage (for example, through soil), soil moisture retention & urban cooling, & pollution reduction?"

Attendees attention was drawn to Strategic Objective 2 which contains provision to ensure through Nature Friendly Regime Management that the benefits to biodiversity and associated Ecosystem services would be enhanced. Attendees attention was also drawn to Strategic Objective 1 which contains provision for a Natural Capital Accounting Assessment, which will provide a framework for decision making within the Portfolio that brings the Environment together with socio-economic factors to ensure that the enhancement of Ecosystem Services is one of a suite of benefits delivered to the portfolio by this strategy. Their attention was also drawn to the Council's recently updated Biodiversity Strategy which would also look to incorporate these issues.

Post Session: Following feedback from several sources on this theme, the Council has further noted Ecosystem Services (e.g. the storing of Carbon in soils and trees, removal of pollutants etc.)

that should be considered in any project for the regeneration of Open Space, and within individual site management plans.

“Could a final draft be more concise and concentrate on actions and timescales? Is there opportunity to look to refine further elements?”

The Council noted that in response to feedback with regards to the first draft of the strategy, that it had been designed to provide further detail (albeit at a high level) around concepts and ideas contained within it whose meanings and intentions may not be immediately obvious to all. Attendees' attention was also drawn to the monitoring system contained within the strategy, along with the detail as to how this would ensure that all actions are being met to timescale and how the strategy would be continually updated to ensure that it remains relevant and considers changes in strategic priorities including any that may have been unforeseen at its start.

Question and Answer Section 2

“The Strategy states that it covers all the land the Council are responsible for, and that maintained by Idverde. Therefore, why does it exclude Urban Grass verges and alleyways?”

The Council noted that the strategy is clear that it applies to all sites stated in the comprehensive list in Appendix A that meet the above definition. The Council noted that whilst the strategy is not intended to apply to every single bit of greenspace within the borough that it does contain provision to implement policies that may influence positively decisions made at some of these sites (e.g., The Service Provider Environmental Awareness Programme may implement policies that improve biodiversity on the borough's grass verges).

With regards to Grass Verges, the Council noted the 'Wildflower Verges' project that is contained within Appendix 2 as an example of a Change in Management Regime.

With regards to alleyways, attendees attention was drawn to the Rights of Way Strategy which once updated, would include improvement plans for these locations.

“How does the strategy take account of heritage issues in parks? Most of the issues discussed are related to natural environment, but many parks have significant heritage aspects. Who in the Council leads on this?”

Attendees' attention was drawn to Strategic Objective Number 2 within the strategy which contains a section on heritage issues within Parks including the Council's plans for the Moated Manor at Scadbury Park and the Bowie Bandstand at Croydon Road Recreation Ground. It also noted that it contains provision for the enhancement of other less prominent (but no less important) heritage assets within its Open Space Portfolio including Victorian Fountains. It was also noted that these heritage assets and specialist status that they confer on a particular site would have these reflected in their individual site management plans with plans for their enhancement.

The Council noted that the Regeneration Department also play a significant role in Heritage assets, and that it would look to collaborate closely with them moving forward.

“It is not clear how the aspirations set out in the strategy align with national and regional open space policy. For example, it does not appear to further the policies defined in the All London Green Grid Area Framework 06. Further clarity on this point will be helpful”

Attendees' attention was drawn to Appendix 4 within the strategy, which outlined how it had been designed to actively respond to the requirements of national and regional legislation, whilst also being sensitive to the Bromley context within both London and Kent. The Council also outlined that the strategy had been designed to support key elements in a suite of national and regional open space policies.

With regards to the All London Green Grid Area Framework, the Council outlined how the strategy had identified key strategic locations within the Portfolio that are included within this framework

and aims to help produce improvements to them (e.g. the promotion of a Green Active Transport Network to support the existing South East London Green Chain in Strategic Objective 3).

“Common Land; what are the protections in place to protect this against housing development?”

The Council noted that where references had been made to the Enhancement of Open Space that this was about identifying land and building with untapped potential so that the resulting use improves the space in question for the benefit of the community. It has made clear that this was not about the disposal of any Open Space for private development. The Council also noted that much of the Common Land contained within the borough falls under designations such as Green Belt or Urban Open Space, and that these designations provide protection from a planning perspective and prevent unsuitable development that would undermine their designation.

“The use of petrol leaf blowers and strimmers near to housing or public buildings and community areas during dry spells causes hazardous dust and particulate pollution - will this be addressed? Similarly - pollution from idling vehicles was raised - can this be included?”

Attendees attention was drawn to the Educational Policy contained within Strategic Objective 2 which refers to Biodiversity, Ecological and Sustainability management practices which the Council's Grounds Maintenance contractor idverde is already making progress on (e.g. its reduction in use of herbicides via the implementation of Foamstream technology). Whilst the above scenario was not specifically mentioned as an example in the strategy, the Council noted that it is something to consider once it has been endorsed and is put into action via detailed delivery plans.

Post Session: Following feedback using the above and similar examples (e.g. the use of rotary mowers), these have been noted for review by idverde once the strategy is in action.

“Will COVID-19 trigger any improvements to rights of way?”

The Council acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that the Open Space Portfolio has taken on an even greater importance to the lives of its residents but had also placed new demands upon it at different times of the day to those previously seen.

Attendees' attention was drawn to Strategic Objective 3, which makes provision to support and encourage active forms of transport to parks by the enhancement of green networks that link them which would in itself trigger improvements to rights of way. However the Council drew attention to its Rights of Way Strategy which it is currently updating to reflect changes in context since its first iteration, and noted that it was here that any improvements to meet better provision for its users of the kind that stakeholders would wish to see would be met.

The Strategy has good proposals for developing Management Plans for parks. For the largest parks, where there be many stakeholders and multiple issues to consider (such as heritage), are you satisfied there are sufficient skills and resources to produce plans for complex sites in a reasonable timescale?

The Council noted that it was committed to ensuring that there were management plans for all the key sites within the Portfolio and noted that it was confident that it would be able to complete this in a reasonable timescale, owing to the fact that it had split them into two tranches in the strategy. Where there were any knowledge gaps within the skills, it noted that it would ensure that it would call upon resources in other departments or within its grounds maintenance contractor to ensure that it was able to consider the full suite of issues that an individual site management plan would need to cover.

Drastically improved cycle infrastructure is key to many environmental and health targets and should be prioritised - can you summarise how cycling plans overlap with green space?

Attendees attention was once again drawn to Strategic Objective 3, which includes provision to introduce the appropriate infrastructure to assist and encourage people to undertake active forms of transport to the Open Space Portfolio (e.g. the provision of cycle racks at key locations, shared walking and cycling routes etc.)

The Council updated that the plans for cycling overlap with Open Space not only through the encouragement of people to use the networks to visit the Portfolio by bike, but to also create new and expand existing community endeavours that support cycling within the borough, including the new all wheeled bike track at Hoblingwell Wood Recreation Ground and the accompanying cycle club that will be set up alongside it, and an expansion of the Council's 'Bike ability' training.

General

“Please can you explain why the invite to this Open Space Strategy Engagement Session has only been sent to a “select few”? What was the extent of promotion and what was the rationale for this?”

The Council noted that invites were sent to the Engagement Session to those that had reached out to it with extensive feedback during the initial draft. The Council attempted to invite all for which it had an email address, but those who responded on the Questionnaire did not leave an email address or any other personally identifiable information so were unable to be contacted (however all feedback received from the first draft was read and considered in the redrafting process).

The Council noted that the Engagement Session was intended to inform stakeholders about the changes that had been made to the strategy and not further consultation, hence it was not a wider public event.

“Please can you explain why Bromley Council has not made the updated draft of the OSS available on the Bromley Council website?”

The Council reiterated that as the purpose of this session was to update stakeholders on the changes that had been made to the strategy (and were still being made) so it had not been put on the website.

The Council noted that a fully designed version of the strategy would be available on its website after endorsement by the Environment and Community Services PDS Committee in November 2021.

“Who has rewritten the latest draft?”

The Council noted that its officers had led on redrafting the strategy and has drawn on the relevant expertise (both within the Council and externally) to ensure that it links to and doesn't contradict other key strategies.

“How many open spaces are owned by the Council that are not managed/maintained by Idverde?”

The Council noted that it did not have a precise number of the exact number of Open Spaces that are not maintained by Idverde that it owns, but that the strategy did make provision for enhancement to be made for sites that are included within the remit of this strategy in order to create a network of habitats that stretch across the borough and beyond. Any surrounding habitats and their potential for improvements to biodiversity (regardless of whether owned by the Council or not) would be considered when proposing any project.