

Report from the Waterlow Park Trees and Views working party

Status: third draft 12/6/17 - Approved by Friends of Waterlow Park with contributions from Camden & revisions from working party

Brief

The Working Party was asked to arrive at recommendations for a forward plan combining both trees and views.

General observations

Waterlow Park has a varied terrain and mix of open and more wooded areas with a rich variety of trees of different maturity.

Approach to tree planting and species variety

Preserving and increasing diversity of tree species is desirable, with regard paid to those likely to offer resistance to changing climate conditions and stress. As the Park used to be an estate with an arboretum by Lauderdale House, there is a case to be made for encouraging some more exotic trees. Native species are important, as are species that absorb pollutants efficiently.

Tree health

Camden perform surveys of tree health around the park every three years, with a report guiding any tree surgery that may be required or removal of diseased trees where they are substantially weakened and a potential danger to the public, or might allow disease to spread. The survey should include smaller and young trees which may need to be thinned, coppiced or pollarded.

Key views

A number of key views have been identified along with some secondary views, and others which might be created with comparatively minor works to trees or shrubs, undergrowth or overhanging branches. Refer to fig 1 and notes.

The single most significant view in the park is from the vicinity of the statue of Sir Sydney Waterlow looking towards the London skyline over the park. This view is subject to change as the trees in the lower park mature, and preserving this needs some particular care. Specifically there is a good prospect of St Pauls Cathedral. Unlike the views from Hampstead Heath near Kenwood and Parliament Hill where high rise buildings in the same sight-line have caused the dome to be diminished and hard to discern, from Waterlow Park the view is unobstructed and St Pauls still stands as a principal London landmark. The Trust should ensure that this view is clearly registered with central London boroughs such that planning permission is denied for multi-story blocks which might either come between the park and the cathedral, or be behind it in the same alignment such that it would be visually overpowered as it has been from Hampstead Heath. Refer to Fig 2 and notes.

Tree management to maintain and enhance views

The varied topography of the park, the nearby landmarks of Lauderdale House, St Joseph's, The Whittington mental health wing, Swains Lane Lodge and Highgate Cemetery all offer opportunities for focal points, as well as features within the park, the ponds, shelters, historic walls, and fauna.

Tree Context

Just as trees in open space have the grass around them maintained by mowing, so the underlayer of shrubs, ground cover and small trees should be maintained with reference to trees that are more enclosed. The management of the immediate area around a tree, or stand of trees, should be co-ordinated so the visual aspect of that area is maintained or enhanced. Trees should to the maximum extent possible be sited so that it is expected that they will grow to their full spread undistorted by neighbours. The 'green fringe' the park enjoys which includes substantial low level bushes under taller trees should be maintained, especially in areas that would otherwise be visually degraded. This applies especially to the boundary with Fairseat (Channing Junior School) and the Swains Lane boundaries.

Proposed tree locations for new planting

An initial survey has suggested 25 possible planting locations which might be spread over the next few years. It is proposed that in the summer or early autumn preceding a planting year Camden circulate specific proposals for species choosing from these locations or suggesting others. The Advisory Group is likely to delegate review of specific plans to the Friends of Waterlow Park in collaboration with the Camden tree department and sign off on recommendations before planting proceeds. See fig 3 and notes

Recommendation

A trees and views policy for Waterlow Park authorised by the Trust and integrated into Camden's management would significantly enhance public appreciation of the park. It is proposed that such a policy be prepared, specifying areas of the park with specific arboricultural character. The policy would take precedence over the existing Camden Owned Tree Policy¹, in order to specifically address the following areas:

- Maintenance of key views and enhancement of views.
- Consultation on both annual and memorial planting with Friends of Waterlow Park.
- Memorial / funded planting to be encouraged to tie in with identified needs in the park and tree planting programme.
- Crowning of trees for the purposes of maintaining key views to be authorised.
- In restricted circumstances and following consultation felling of self-set and closely packed trees to be authorised.
- Trees should be considered in the context of the whole park. Trees, views, shrubs, borders, flowers, leisure areas, fabric and buildings should be maintained and enhanced as a coherent whole.

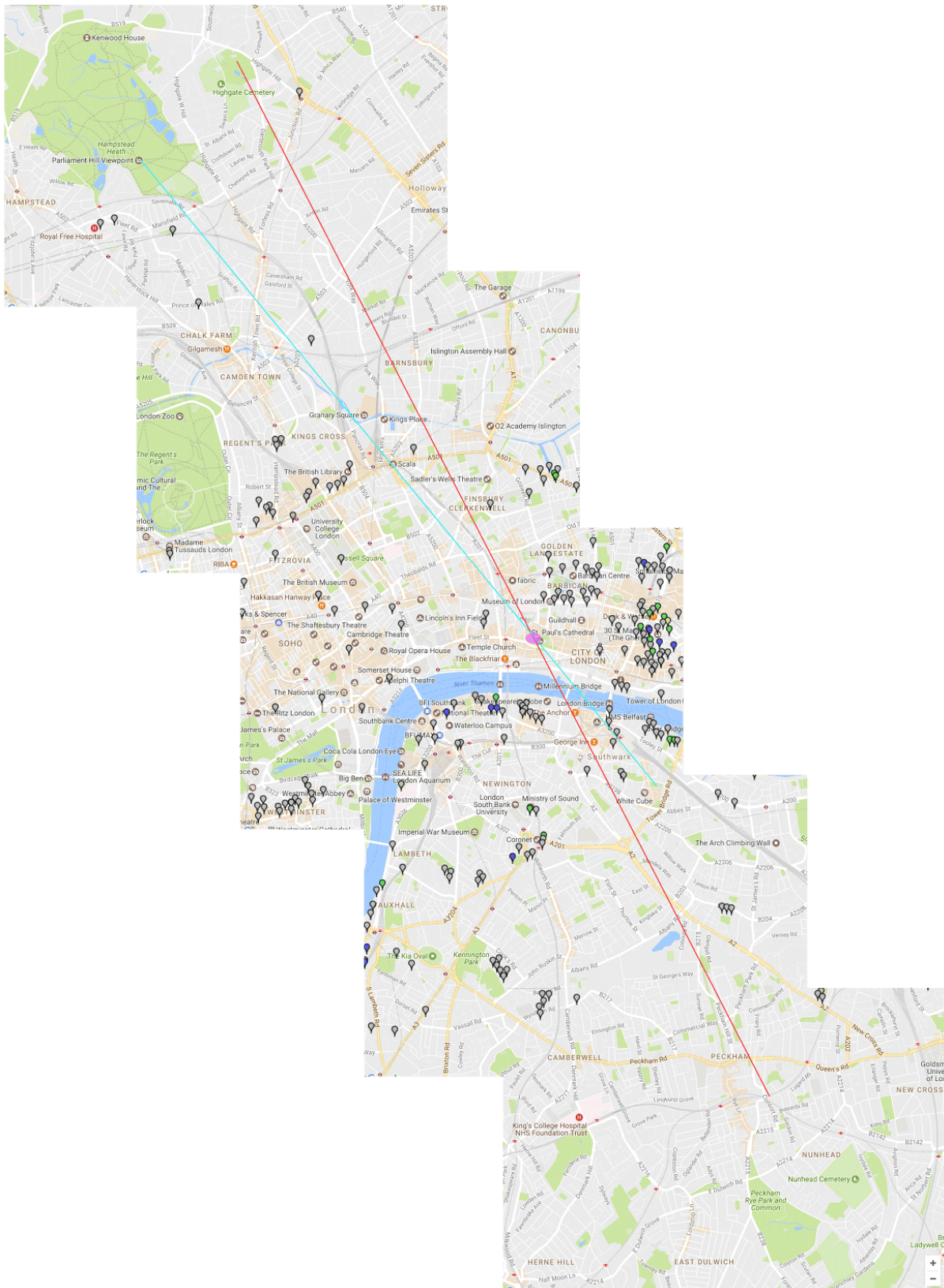
¹ The Camden Owned Tree Policy would continue to apply to all matters where not specifically superseded by a Waterlow Park Trust Trees and Views Policy

Fig 1. Selected views in Waterlow Park



The signature view from the park is of the London skyline and St Paul's Cathedral from the statue of Sir Sydney Waterlow. This is being compromised by the height of a lime tree at location A. In the near future a Swamp Cyprus by the lower pond will also grow to a height that will if unchecked obscure the view. (This tree is close to the indicated position of the view towards the cascade)

Fig 2. View of St Paul's Cathedral dome from the statue of Sir Sydney Waterlow



It is important for the integrity of this view not just to avoid obstruction in front of St Paul's, but also taller buildings in the sight line for some miles behind the dome which would have the effect of diminishing it's prominence at the heart of London. This view should be registered with relevant authorities to ensure its preservation.

Fig 3 Suggested tree planting locations



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Trees at locations 21 and 22 should be ones that do not grow to substantial height in order to avoid obstructing the signature view from the statue of Sir Sydney. Sight-lines from the mound will need calculating. Some of the trees along the southern boundary might be evergreen to bring colour in the winter months.

Shaded areas are particularly to be maintained as open and sunny.

Maintenance detail

Trees in Waterlow Park are part of a wider established 3 year cyclical inspection / maintenance programme for all the trees Camden maintains. The other borough wide programmes, which include trees within the park are:

- A biennial programme for removing basal growth on Lime trees
- An annual programme to inspect and remove infected branches/limbs in London Plane trees for the fungus *Massaria (Splanchnonema platani)*
- An annual inspection of Oak trees for Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) (*Thaumetopoea processionea*), with referral to the Forestry Commission for control where OPM outbreaks are discovered.

The trees in the park are currently maintained in line with:

- The Council's Tree Policy for Council Owned Trees 2015²
- The principles applied by the Tree & Landscape officers, Planning department, in respect of the Town & Countryside Planning Act 1990, re: Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and Conservation Area (CA) legislation. (Waterlow Park is within a Conservation Area and therefore all trees with a trunk diameter of 75mm at 1.5m above ground level are afforded protection under the Act.)
- Other legislation applies to the trees within the park, which is outlined within the Council's Tree Policy, section 2

In terms of good arboricultural practice, pruning trees unnecessarily in relation to the reasons highlighted in section 6 of the Tree Policy, can increase the risk of pest and diseases attacking the tree, with resulting decay and decline of the tree's health.

² Note that this report proposes that the Council Owned tree policy should not be treated as the primary policy document governing the maintenance of trees in the park, but the secondary policy allowing proposals such as the selective crowning of trees which obstruct views to take precedence and be enshrined in a Waterlow Park Trust policy.