

Trees and Views in Waterlow Park

Jan 2021

The Trees and Views Group

The Trees and Views Volunteer Group has existed for a number of years. It was initially constituted by the Friends of Waterlow Park. A varying number of people are involved with the group at any time. As of Jan 2021 there are 8 people on the Group list who remain informed and are more or less active subject to availability and circumstances. Both Camden and iDverde are represented, and we are fortunate to have individuals with particular arboricultural expertise as part of the Group.

2017 report

The Group was asked by TAG in 2017 to respond to a brief¹ in order to arrive at a forward plan combining both trees and views. Some members of the Group formed a Working Party and produced a report which was partially adopted by TAG in 2017².

Tree loss

The Park has lost a number of fine trees since the 2017 report, and there are now other, mature trees, which may need removal in the not too distant future if signs of disease progress to the point where they are deemed to be potentially dangerous. Certain species in particular seem to be stressed, as for example holly trees, many of which have thinned considerably³. Climate change is a factor in species stress, and in planning planting the Group in collaboration with Camden tree department consider species resilience with a view to an increasingly unpredictable future.

Notable issues

Following the 2017 report there have been a couple of instances of trees being inappropriately sited and having to be moved. One such tree, a *Populus*, was planted in front of the Eagle Steps and as it matured would have obscured an identified key view when approaching the top of the steps from the formal garden. This has been moved to a more suitable location, the other side of the middle pond. Another tree, a *Thuja*, was moved to a location identified and mapped along with other potential locations⁴ near the Highgate High Street gate. Sadly it did not survive, probably due to insufficient watering. It is hoped that with ongoing consultation between Camden and the Trees and Views Group⁵ based around maps and documents such as the species and locations list from Feb 2020⁶ such issues can be avoided in future.

¹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1avcggYVWdNiSNUzyG2mS07ubD7Yh4IDF/view?usp=sharing>

² The 2017 report only reached 3rd draft status. Its recommendations on policy could not be adopted by TAG at the time, as the Trust was only newly assuming a public face, and its website and branding of noticeboards was not fully in place. It was therefore deemed premature to adopt policy different to Camden central policy in areas which might attract public notice. It was however agreed by TAG on behalf of the Trust that the broad approach it proposed and notably the importance of the views it identified be recognised, and that Camden Tree Department be made aware of it and continue to work with the Group in agreeing species and locations for new planting. The report can be seen at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B_gBUg80ak1iE_HqkqZ0-S_w0CyiU-XK/view?usp=sharing

³ Soil management and compaction should be addressed as part of a holistic approach to the Park

⁴ See https://drive.google.com/file/d/1--l_EbZtirVu_iVyktM0QxASdnnxErCk/view?usp=sharing

⁵ All members of the Trees and Views Group can be reached at trees@waterlowparktrust.org.uk

⁶ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zbDRkvRacdtSvokc5P_MsQcNh3_BWT4m/view?usp=sharing

Preserving and opening views

Inevitably as trees grow views of the landscape change. A number of key views were identified and mapped in the 2017 report, and some of them are under particular threat. It is not possible to address views properly without a change in policy for trees in Waterlow Park which allows for selective felling of self-set trees and the crown reduction of some carefully selected trees, especially those obscuring the London skyline.

A view of huge significance to the Park under particular threat which was even submitted to the London Plan for inclusion as a protected view, is that of St Pauls Cathedral from near the statue of Sir Sydney Waterlow. This has changed significantly since the turn of the century, and in the coming years risks being obscured unless action is taken.



2004

2011

2021

Recommendations⁷

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 Tree Policy⁸, 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 should tie in with identified needs in the Park and a tree planting programme.
- Crown reduction of trees for the purposes of maintaining key views to be authorised.
- In restricted circumstances and following consultation, removal of self-set and closely packed trees to be authorised. Tree removal to be publicly explained.
- Trees should be considered holistically in the context of the park. Trees, views, shrubs, borders, flowers, leisure areas, fabric and buildings should be maintained & enhanced as a coherent whole.

⁷ Substantially based on the 2017 review

⁸ The main Camden Tree Policy would continue to apply to all matters where not specifically superseded by a Waterlow Park Trust Trees and Views Policy