

Meeting with Camden Green Spaces, the Waterlow Park Trustee, the Trees and Views Group, the Friends of Waterlow Park and a representative of the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum in Waterlow Park North Shelter 9:30am 9 March 2023

Oliver Jones (Trustee of the Waterlow Park Trust) Ian Henghes (leader of Trees and Views Group) David Houghton (Head of Trees at Camden), Andrew Hinchley (Head of Green Spaces at Camden), Gabi Howard (Park Services Manager, Camden), Patricia Walby (Friends of Waterlow Park), April Cameron (Friends of Waterlow Park), Richard Webber (Highgate Neighbourhood Forum).

The meeting was called to clarify issues surrounding a proposed consultation on the views of St Paul's and to resolve what might be within the remit of a consultation.

IH drew attention to the long standing aims to protect the view of St Paul's from the park, by ensuring it was not masked by trees, and to seek designation of a protected view status to protect the sight line from tall building development that might obscure the view.

OJ said that as a Trust park Waterlow Park could have policy variation to Camden Council's tree policy which does not provide for any work to protect views, but would need evidence of public support in making a decision about any work to trees.

PW drew attention to the historic importance of views in the park and the position of the statue of Sir Sydney, funded by public subscription, which was placed to enjoy the view of London of which he was Lord Mayor. PW said she would like to see the view protected, and this was endorsed by IH, AC and RW. IH noted an Illustrated London News article from the inauguration of the park specifically mentioning the view of St Paul's and the sundial marking a level with the top of the dome.

AH said that there would be criteria for the designation of a view at the London Plan level and that evidence from local groups and the Neighbourhood Plan would be important. It was agreed that pursuing designation in the protected views of the London Plan could be in parallel to a consultation and any subsequent work to trees. Research is needed regarding the GLA's criteria for strategic view corridors.

Despite poor weather meaning the London skyline was not visible at the time of the meeting two specific proposals were discussed. A) the proposal by the Trees and Views group from Oct. 5 2021 for significant height reduction of a lime which would retain views of St Paul's from the path near the Waterlow statue and open the view of the London horizon significantly whilst walking along the path, and B) an alternative proposal from Camden Trees made in an Arboricultural Impact response v2 from Feb. 2022 for some lateral trimming of branches to the same lime. This would provide a narrow glimpse of St Paul's from a position about 10 meters from the path near the base of a birch tree. This position might be marked as a viewpoint in some way.

Re A) IH explained that having considered a number of other options, proposal A was currently believed by the Trees and Views Group to represent the best

compromise, despite not being good arboricultural practice, not least as it would also enhance the view of the London skyline walking along the path to a substantial extent which the Proposal B would not. DH explained this approach would not be good arboricultural practice, and not consistent with Camden's Tree Policy. There is a danger the tree might perish following the work though IH thought it was also accepted that limes are generally quite tolerant. IH said the tree was not especially noticeable when walking close by it due to surroundings lower trees, and that it was not easy at all to spot from the lower pond.

Re B) IH said that lateral trimming would not be noticeable to people on the path or make it possible to see St Paul's from there as far as it could be judged. Only from a position close to the birch would there be any benefit. The broader skyline would not benefit at all and the majority of visitors would likely not notice that there was a view. IH expressed reservations about such a proposal being of sufficient scale to demonstrate that the view of St Pauls be formally designated as clearly of importance in the park.

OJ explained that consultation giving the public an opportunity to contribute meaningfully and input on proposals was required. It would be especially important to investigate public opinion in establishing the balance between views of St Paul's Cathedral and the necessary work to trees and the impact of this on their holistic value in the context of the park.

IH countered the Tree department's concern about precedent being set by doing work in Waterlow Park which goes against Camden Tree Policy, saying this can be dispelled by virtue of the park being held by the Waterlow Park Trust and being clearly branded and identified for the last few years as a Trust park. In Waterlow Park Camden Green Spaces are managers so the policy governing their work can be different to the borough as a whole and this can be readily explained to the public.

GH and DH added that tree issues can be very emotive and consultation material needs to be well planned and as inclusive as possible. In recommending any consultation material presented to it prior to final approval by the Trustee TAG also needs to ensure that proposals for the processes around consultation and collation of results are also in place.

It was agreed that the Trees and Views group should work with Camden to develop consultation materials with the intention of going public once trees are in leaf. The Friends website should provide a principal point of entry to the consultation which should be signposted from the Camden website and the Trust website, and the Camden website might host a questionnaire. Engagement in the park and other communication channels will also be important to get a broad spectrum of feedback.

AH said that properly illustrating options and providing background will be important in the consultation along with presenting pros and cons of each option. Interpretation panels by the path should be used during the consultation.