Blue and Green Infrastructure



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Green and Blue infrastructure is the network of multifunctional open and green space, water, and other environmental assets in urban and rural areas, which help to deliver a wide range of environmental and health and wellbeing benefits for local communities.

Improvements to Green and Blue infrastructure will support the Council's commitment to achieving net zero and improving air quality by delivering greener neighbourhoods, cleaner air and healthier lives.

Planned Projects

Open Space

Providing residents and visitors to the City with high-quality green open space provision aligns closely with the council's commitment to delivering a Fairer Environment as well as that of Fairer Communities. Infrastructure provision for Open space includes the servicing which supports the creation of quality green spaces which people will want to visit and steward. Open, green space facilities urban cooling and will be crucial to delivering upon our commitment to becoming a net zero council by 2040. Below are the current, future and planned provision of projects which will deliver upon this objective.

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Open Space & Recreation	
Category	**Details**
Lead	Westminster's network of open spaces is both publicly and privately owned, requiring the Council to work in collaboration with a variety of partners and stakeholders. Key partners include the GLA, Royal Parks, landowners, neighbouring boroughs, Zoological Society of London, Canals and Rivers Trust, London Wildlife Trust and Resident Associations.
Current Provision	The Council's Green Infrastructure Audit in 2023/2024 identifies over 80 parks, 28 of which have green flag status in Westminster, 32% has Green Cover and 33 (23.7 of Westminster's land) Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) - We also carried out an assessment of these SINC sites to evaluate their current status (no SINC's saw a change to their designation) and identify measures that could be taken to enhance their ecological value. Open space from large, multi-functional areas such as Paddington Recreation Ground to small gardens, squares and 'pocket parks'. Most of these spaces offer free access to the public. The city provides more than the national average of publicly available open space, with 2.17 hectares per 1,000 residents. Over half of Westminster's open spaces have a heritage designation, with 85 London Squares and 23 English Heritage-listed parks, including the five Royal Parks. The City Plan identifies 33 Sites of Importance for Natural Conservation (SINCs) in Westminster, which account for over 3,000 hectares. This includes eighteen Metropolitan SINCs.
Known Planned Provision	To support the development of the Open Spaces and Biodiversity Strategy, the Council commissioned an audit of open and green spaces and community consultation exercise aimed at assessing current provision and identifying opportunities for improvement. Findings from this work identified the following priorities: Green infrastructure - delivery of more green infrastructure, focusing on public access and visibility wherever this is achievable. Space for Play - addressing a lack of spaces for play provision, with a particular shortage of facilities geared towards older children. Walking in and around open spaces - focusing on walking routes through and around parks and open spaces, including raising awareness of available green space locally. This includes making green spaces more accessible for the elderly. Biodiversity - The council will shortly be publishing a Greening & Biodiversity Strategy in September 2024 which will outline the key visions for Westminster's Green Space. The strategy, and any subsequent action plans, will be centred around 6 principles: • Protect and Enhance nature in the city • Corridors for nature and people • Make our streets cleaner and more liveable • Improve resilience to climate change and pollution

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	• Ensure access to nature for all • Empower local stewardship Fairer Westminster Strategy has set a deliverable to increase tree canopy cover by planting more trees to enhance urban greenery, air quality and biodiversity. In addition, the Council's Park Makers[1] scheme regulates, facilitates, and enables the use of the borough's parks and open spaces by various community providers.

Schedule									
Prioritisation	**Programme / Strategic project**	**Location/s**	**Description**	**Provider**	**Estimated WCC cost**	**Phasing (Start)**	**Phasing (End)**	**Timescale**	**Total Funding gap**
Crucial	Grosvenor Sidings open and playspace provision	Grosvenor Sidings	Open space to facilitate the site allocation at Grosvenor Sidings as identified by the City Plan Partial Review	Network Rail	none	2028	2032		
Essential	Forest schools in parks and open spaces	Borough-wide	To develop several forest schools infrastructure in our parks and open spaces where children will learn about their natural environment - supporting %232035	WCC	£500,000	2024	2027	Short	
Essential	Cemetery Improvements Programme		Ongoing programme for site improvements and to increase burial capacity in our 3 out of borough cemeteries.	WCC	£4,300,000	2024	2040	Long	
Essential	Fountains Improvement Programme	Borough-wide	Ongoing programme for improvements to	WCC	£650,000	2024	2029	Medium	

			fountains in our parks and open spaces.						
Essential	Greening and Biodiversity Parks and Open Spaces Improvements Programme	Borough-wide	Ongoing programme to improve habitat and biodiversity in our Parks and Open Spaces supporting #2035, the Ecological Emergency declaration made by WCC, and an emerging greening and biodiversity strategy	WCC	£4,300,000	2024	2040	Long	
Essential	Communities Parks and Open Spaces Improvement Programme	Borough-wide	Ongoing programme to involve our communities in the co-design and development of our parks and open spaces - including consultation work.	WCC	£3,000,000	2024	2040	Long	
Desirable	Parks and Cemeteries Tree Planting	Borough-wide	This project aims to provide funding for tree planting in Westminster's parks and out of borough cemeteries. There has been a lack of available funding for tree planting in parks and cemeteries in recent years, and whilst there is limited space for new tree planting, the majority of the funding will be used to provide replacements for those trees which have had to be removed for safety or other reasons.	WCC	£478,000	Ongoing	/	Long	Fully funded for 2023/24. future funding subject to future capital bids

	We have a Fairer Westminster deliverable for April 2024-March 2025 to increase tree canopy cover by planting more trees to enhance urban greenery, air quality, and biodiversity.
Funding	In addition to Greening Westminster grant funding, additional funding through development and other suitable funding sources is required, such as development funding through the Council's Capital Programme.

Flood Risk Management

The Council is the lead Local Flood Authority, responsible for managing local flood risks in the city, for example, risks of flooding from surface water, ground water and smaller watercourses. Due to the density of the city combined with its drainage capacity, surface water flooding is the most likely cause of flooding; the impact of this is that Westminster's infrastructure risks being overwhelmed. Maintenance of the sewer network within Westminster will be the key to managing increasing flood risk in the future.

The council is currently refreshing the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, which is a statutory document and is set to be adopted early 2025. The strategy outlines our approach to managing local flood risk across Westminster and how we intend to work with key stakeholders, including other risk management authorities (Environment Agency, Thames Water and Transport for London). Both the Local Flood Risk Management strategy and the Environment SPD advise the inclusion of SuDS where possible in

Desirable	New tree and rain garden provision		A. New trees throughout various locations, including along Talbot Road and Needham Road; B. New Rain gardens on Westbourne Grove west of Chepstow to help separate the seating areas of WestGrove café and footways. This might be part of the overall FIVEWAYS project.		£0.00				

development to manage flood risk in the borough. Westminster was particularly affected by two major surface water flooding events in July of 2021 when 270 properties flooded, primarily in the northwest and south of the borough.

Westminster is collaborating with Thames Water and the Environment Agency to work together to develop flood risk management schemes and understand the potential for delivering SuDS across Westminster.

As the city will have to deal with future impacts of climate change and flooding, it is important to mitigate the impacts of development on the environment, and effectively plan and deliver flood risk management projects.

Flood Risk Management	
Category	**Details**
Lead	The Council is the lead Local Flood Authority, responsible for surface water, groundwater, and ordinary watercourse flood management. The Environment Agency oversees flood risk from the River Thames, and Thames Water is responsible for preventing sewer flooding.
Current Provision	Despite Westminster's vulnerability to flooding, it benefits from robust flood defences. The city has 4.7km of tidal Thames frontage protected by the partly listed Embankment wall. In addition, the Thames Barrier and associated Thames Tidal Flood Defences provide a 1 in 1000-year protection standard.
Known Planned Provision	The council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy demonstrates what work has been completed, is underway, or is planned by the council and partners. The delivery of infrastructure projects such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) has been identified as a major way of building future flood resilience in the city, and a programme of SuDS is underway since 2024. The LLFA team is also exploring opportunities to maximise the potential of disused underground assets to store storm water during major rainfall events. As stated by the Thames Estuary 2100 Plan, all Thames River flood defenses west of the Thames Barrier (i.e. Westminster) will have to be upgraded by 2050, and we should have a Riverside Strategy in place by 2030 for this work.
Funding	Contributions towards flood risk management include FCERM Grant in Aid funding on behalf of DEFRA, local Levy funding, S106 agreements and CIL. Additional funding could be secured through private sources such as contributions from landowners.

Schedule									
Prioritisation	**Programme / Strategic project**	**Location/s**	**Description**	**Provider**	**Estimated WCC cost**	**Phasing (Start)**	**Phasing (End)**	**Timescale**	**Total Funding gap**
Essential	Sustainable Drainage	Across Westminster	SuDS are designed to manage stormwater locally and to mimic natural drainage, encourage its infiltration, attenuation and	WCC	£3.7mil	2024	2028	Medium	£700k

	Systems (SuDS)		passive treatment. This includes features such as permeable paving, rain gardens and enhanced tree pits.						
Essential	Unknown but significant	Across Westminster	Identifying novel solutions to attenuate large amounts of storm water and divert pressure from the combined sewer system. This would include utilising unused or decommissioned underground spaces such as underpasses, public conveniences and car parks to store flood water during extreme weather events and then release it back into the sewer system when water levels have reduced.	WCC, major landowners, Thames Water, TfL, Royal Parks	£4.9mil	2025	2030	Medium	£4.9mil
Essential	Riverside flood defenses	Thames Embankment	As per Thames Estuary 2100 Plan (Environment Agency), all riverside defenses west of the Thames Barrier will need to be raised by .5 meters by 2050. As WCC owns sections of the riverside wall, we will be responsible for these flood defense upgrades. We will also have a major role to play in coordinating other riverside landowners to upgrade their defenses.	WCC, major landowners, Central Government, TfL	Unknown but significant	2030	2050	Long	