**SoWN Response to Lambeth’s Strategic Plan for Trees**

**22/10/2020**

South Bank and Waterloo Neighbours (SOWN), which prepared and secured approval for the South Bank and Waterloo Neighbourhood Plan, has established an active Environment Group working on such matters as parks and open spaces, air quality and trees. As part of this work, we have established a Trees subgroup which has undertaken two initial tasks.

First, we wish to respond to the Council’s Strategic Plan for Trees. Our response is below. I appreciate it is reaching you slightly beyond the deadline but hope it will be accepted and that our comments will be helpful. We are ready to discuss them with you at your convenience.

Secondly, members of our Trees sub-group have worked on a tree audit of the SOWN area, which on the Lambeth side takes in almost all of Bishop’s Ward and also extends into Southwark. We plan to continue and expand this work and would appreciate your cooperation as it proceeds.

Issues which have arisen and further work include

* Plans to number trees in the public realm to allow for easier reporting of issues. We would of course wish to coordinate this work with you to facilitate collaboration and avoid duplication.
* Developing an action plan for ongoing audit and observation of trees in the SOWN area, to flag up planting opportunities and maintenance issues.
* Monitoring of planning applications in respect of tree planting opportunities and ongoing maintenance needs.
* Engagement with occupiers and TRA’s concerning trees on estates.

We have a particular practical interest in tree replacement policies, impact of utility works, and green wall opportunities.

Clearly this work will be much more productive if undertaken in close collaboration with you and your colleagues in the Lambeth part of our area, and with Southwark colleagues with whom we are also in contact.

We would welcome a discussion about how this may best be taken forward.

Canon Giles Goddard

Chair, SOWN Environment Group

**Delivering against Strategic Principles

Principle 1/Overview**

1. This is an excellent proposal, but we question whether it is realistically achievable, particularly in the present circumstances.   For example, when we see the neglect of new street trees planted in the last 2 or 3 years, significantly more staff and resources will be needed to monitor regularly for 3 years (Delivery 1, point 9) the proposed minimum of 1000 newly planted trees (Delivery 5, point 12).   Many other proposals have significant demand on resources.

2.  A number of trees which are not thriving are Highway Assets.  We are trying to understand the process by which they are planted and maintained but understand that Lambeth will be involved in their planting.  We understand that this will not form part of Tree Strategy and Delivery because it will not be part of the 5 yr investment plan.  In Waterloo that is significant given the number of trees that are planted this way.  Important also as green infrastructure is of critical importance to the well being of this neighbourhood.

3.   We also have to note that this neighbourhood is an area that can lose hedges through hostile vehicle mitigation works.

**Principle 4:**Should surely  be : planting and maintaining healthy trees rather than tackling pests and diseases?

**Principle 6 : Working with Residents**

1.   Will specific ways of communication with people be part of the Service Development Plan for Neighbourhoods?

2.   Will working with Open Space/gardening groups be part of the Service Development Plan for Neighbourhoods?

3.   When will the Tree Strategy be published?

4.   We appreciate trees have an open data number. How will this be translated for the benefit of people reporting concerns.  As a newly formed (local residents) group as part of SOWN we would be happy discuss how this might work in practice.

5.   It will be helpful if any reporting or information point differentiates between Lambeth and Highway asset trees with the necessary clarification.

**Principle 5/7**

1.   We think it important that planting and maintenance of trees is an integral part of the planning application process.  Clearly, this particular neighbourhood has a significant number of major applications in process or anticipated and this, in general, will not be covered by the 5 yr investment plan and so not referred to in this document.  Clearly the greening of these developments is critical to residents, workers, visitors and tourists and is part of our Neighbourhood Plan.

2.Where existing trees are to be removed to assist in a building development, the developer should be required to specify equivalent replacements within the development.