

Barnard Park – public engagement FAQ's

Q. What is the Barnard Park Masterplan?

A. The Barnard Park Masterplan is the result of a series of consultations and feedback exercises with residents and stakeholders over several years on how to develop Barnard Park and improve it for all. The masterplan now being presented to residents is an updated and improved version.

The key elements of the masterplan have not changed. The 9v9 size sports pitch and new level grass areas have been agreed with Sport England and these cannot be changed. Stakeholder engagement was carried out on the sports pitch in 2019 and targeted engagement was carried out with key stakeholders and user groups on the hub building in 2020 to develop the design.

Q. What are you looking for feedback on?

A. We would like feedback on the changes to the park masterplan that have been made during the last year in response to advice from the council's planning team.

The changes include:

- improved biodiversity and ecological enhancements. We are looking to remove areas of unnecessary hard surface such as concrete and replace it with plants that encourage wildlife. Paths will be made permeable where possible to help drainage. Closed entrances will be planted with biodiverse planting.
- improved pathways and circulation. The proposal simplifies the path network to make it easier to move around the park, give better access to entrances and create larger open spaces
- improved entrances and accessibility. It is proposed to close the entrance at Boxworth Grove and create a new entrance at Sheen Grove with level access and better sightlines. The narrow entrance from Copenhagen Street will be closed and transformed into a planted wildlife area.

Q. What changes have been made to the park masterplan?

A. We have developed the park masterplan over the last year in a series of three workshops as part of the formal pre-application process with the Islington Council Planning Department. The changes have been made as a response to this advice as part of the normal planning process and to improve the design.

The key principles of these changes are to make it easier to get around the park, increase the amount of green space and biodiversity and improve the entrances and accessibility. The changes to the park masterplan will make the park a better place for people and nature, and improve the likelihood of getting planning permission.

More green space

These principles will increase the amount of green space and reduce the hard built space such as removal of paths to closed entrances at Boxworth Grove and Copenhagen Street and removal of the end of Alma Grove paving, creating more useable, larger grass areas which will complement the natural elements of the park.

A safer park

By improving the views into, out of and across the park the new layout will reduce opportunities for antisocial behaviour. The circulation around and across the park and the removal or reduction of physical and visual barriers will help with this as well.

A healthier place

The health benefits for people using the park will be improved with new walking and running routes around the park and direct walking routes through it to improve exercise and active travel options. An outdoor gym will provide facilities to exercise for different ages and abilities. Pathways and entrances will be accessible to ensure that everyone can enter and move around the park easily. Running routes will be signposted to give directions and distance markers.

Ample cycle parking will be provided at different locations in the park to promote cycling to the park and giving people the opportunity to securely lock their bike and use facilities within the park.

A park for people and nature

People's access to nature will be greatly improved. With all the proposed ecological enhancements there will be a Biodiversity Net Gain of 52%. This has been calculated using Biodiversity Metric 2.0 Biodiversity Calculation Tool Beta Version (Natural England, December 2019) and the full Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment is available on the project webpage. There will be increase of 887 square metres of thicket planting, shrubs, climbers, groundcovers and bulbs and 1471 square metres of wildflower meadow and areas of relaxed mowing. This will give park people the opportunity to get closer to plants and wildlife.

The proposed changes will help biodiversity, adding to the park's existing ecological value demonstrated by its SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) designation. It is hoped that the higher level of SINC designation will be achieved with the following changes:

- 51 new carefully positioned trees (and 18.5% increase), and an increase in diversity of tree species on site and in the overall numbers of trees in the park. Tree planting across the site has been designed in collaboration between arboriculturalists, landscape architects and ecologists. The tree species selected will provide a high diversity of native tree species to attract and support native wildlife, particularly invertebrates
- Re-purposing removed trees on site for tree trunk play features, log piles and mulching of planted areas
- A new traditional orchard area – this is a UK Priority Habitat
- New large areas of thicket planting and native shrub planting to increase biodiversity in the park
- New areas of wildflower meadow and relaxed mowing
- New native hedgerows providing a continuous corridor of habitat for birds and other wildlife
- A new wildlife pond with marginal planting – a London and UK Priority Habitat
- Sensory planting area providing feeding resource for butterflies, bumblebees and other pollinators
- New bird and bat boxes across the park in trees and on the new hub building
- Sustainable drainage features to capture rainfall and prevent flooding including swales and permeable paths
- The hub building will have a biodiverse green roof and air source heat pump to reduce the building carbon footprint

These changes will create a park that is sustainable and maintainable in the long term.

The following reports are available on the project webpage.

- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Ecological Enhancements Summary
- Arboricultural Report
- I-Tree Eco Inventory Report for Barnard Park
- BS5837 Survey and Schedule

Q. Why are you removing trees from the park?

A. The layout of the park is changing considerably to allow the new 9v9 pitch and new level grass area for informal sport and leisure. The new community hub building and the change in alignment of the north-south central path also need to fit into the layout and create a park that is not dominated by the sports pitch and permits direct routes through the park.

The position of the pitch will allow people to move around the park and avoid creating pinch points at its corners. The positioning allows the design of the paths to remain wide enough for people to pass each other with enough space. We have investigated moving the pitch further to the east but it was determined that it would result in the lighting from the pitch being too close to residents on Barnsbury Road. Moving the pitch to the east would have resulted in further trees being removed on that side.

We have had an Arboricultural Report produced including an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and it states that alternative design solutions would likely require additional tree removals and restrict the number of trees that could be viably planted to screen the sports pitch from the north.

Reluctantly, after many changes to the layout, it was decided that to provide a workable plan for the park some large trees need to be removed. We intend to mitigate the tree loss by planting 51 carefully selected new trees which will increase the overall number of trees on site and increase the ecosystem services of the trees in the long term. We commissioned an iTree report looking at trees on site and proposed removals and new trees and forecasted comparative benefits to 2036 based on growth estimates. Many of the results were positive over a 15-year period and would improve further over a longer period. Findings include.

- Improved tree species diversity, population and resilience in the future. Ecology and sustainability improved with proposed trees.
- If existing trees are retained with growth projected it is forecasted that the pollutant removal in 2036 will be 58 kg; with our proposed removals and new planting this forecast to reach 62 kg per year.
- With projections of growth in 15 years, it was forecast that with the site unchanged, and the entire tree population surviving in good health, that the value of carbon sequestration would be 1.9 tonnes; this reaches 2.1 tonnes under our plans should the proposed new trees grow at the expected rate.
- Projections on water interception and avoided run off to 2036 demonstrate that the development will potentially have a positive impact on the hydrology of the site.

- This development will impact on ecosystem services – however given suitable time to establish, and with continued maintenance undertaken it would be expected that ecosystem services will increase in the long term.

We will also be making the many other enhancements to the biodiversity on site as detailed previously.

All Arboricultural reports including the iTree Report will be made available on the project webpage.

Q. Why are you changing the entrances at the north of the park?

A. We are proposing to close the entrance at Boxworth Grove and create a new entrance at Sheen Grove to create a safer and more visible entrance into the park. The current entrance at Boxworth Grove is dark and has poor sightlines. The proposed new entrance at Sheen Grove will create a much more accessible and visible entrance into the park from the north. This new entrance will link into the new path network that creates circulation around the park. The closed entrance at Boxworth Grove will allow for a new area of wildlife-friendly planting and a larger green space in this corner of the park.

Q. When can we see plans for the new community hub building?

A. The plans for the new building will be finalised and form part of the planning application. The layout and design will be available to view as part of statutory consultation. Key user groups of the building have been part of extensive targeted engagement sessions on the design development of the building.

Q. Why are you closing the park entrance at Copenhagen Street?

A. We are proposing to close this small pedestrian entrance to the park as it has poor accessibility and poor sightlines into the park. Closing this entrance from the street will follow Secure by Design standards and look to reduce the potential for crime. Closing this entrance also allows for removing unnecessary paths and provides larger grass areas. The space inside the closed entrance will also feature more planting to enhance biodiversity. This entrance is also close to the main primary entrance to the park from Charlotte Terrace and this main entrance provides the link to walking routes through the park.