Forever Green?

Privatisation, neglect and financial gain: why 50 London parks and green spaces are under threat and how we can save them

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There are currently more than 50 precious green sites across London threatened with development.

These include parks, recreation grounds, open fields, small green spaces in housing estates, sports fields and nature reserves. Many of these sites have protected Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land status.

Why does it matter? This situation is extremely alarming. London only has half the green space it needs for a population its size[1]. And the limited green spaces we have are coming under more pressure since the start of the pandemic despite their greater use and value.[2]

Additionally, proposed development in the Green Belt threatens to create sprawling, car-dependent housing estates. These destroy our countryside while simultaneously adding to congestion, pollution and carbon emissions, at a moment in time when London urgently needs to tackle climate, air quality and health crises.

These sites are threatened despite plentiful availability of brownfield sites[3] and previously developed land, often in areas in desperate need of regeneration, which can accommodate the new homes and other infrastructure we need.

An urgent response is required. We need the public and politicians to take action if we are to halt the loss of green space in the capital.

In this report, we explore:

A. Why are London's parks and green spaces still under threat?
B. What can we do to save our green spaces and what commitments do we want from local election candidates and Councillors?
C. More than 50 cases where parks and green spaces are under threat across the capital.

CPRE London is currently aware of threats to more than fifty green spaces in Greater London. There may be other sites we don't yet know about that are at risk: the picture is continually changing. We therefore welcome information on threats not covered in this report and any updates on the cases we outline.

[1] Fields in Trust Green Spaces Index
[2] Recent polling show nearly two-thirds (63%) of people think protecting and enhancing green spaces should be a higher priority after the lockdown.
[3] The capacity of previously developed brownfield land has increased by more than 20% in just one year and could accommodate more than 350,000 new homes – enough for almost nine years at current rates of building. And this is just the tip of the iceberg.

A. Why are London's parks and green spaces still under threat?

There are many reasons parks and green spaces come under threat and it is usually connected to money in one way or another. Underlying that are other problems:

There is currently no mechanism that provides robust legal protection for parks and open spaces in London. Ownership structures and related legal powers and duties are diverse and often not well defined. In many cases they have evolved over time as a result of ownership transfers and piecemeal legislative changes without proper consideration of the effects these have for the future protection of London's open spaces.

The planning system doesn't seem provide adequate protection anymore either. Despite welcome policies in the London Plan, the national reforms in 2012 have opened the system up to greater challenge, so if you can argue that building on a green space is 'sustainable development' or needed for major infrastructure development then that seems to trump all protections. Obviously that is arguable but it just creates a bonanza for lawyers and puts the party able to pay for legal support in the strongest position.

In our experience, some councils fail to consider properly the powers and duties they have in relation to open spaces.

Local communities lack the resources to challenge threats to open spaces and there is no funding available to enable them to pursue legal action, if necessary, which can result in a lack of effective public scrutiny of councils' decisions.

More detailed reasons (these are illustrated by over 50 cases in Part C):

Financial gain. Planning permission significantly increases land value and any land in London is worth a great deal more if such permission can be gained. So developers often acquire green sites and 'landbank' them with a view to applying for planning permission at a later date.

'Sell the park to pay for the park'. At least one threat has arisen recently because the organisation which manages the park says it cannot afford to maintain it, so needs to sell part of it to pay for maintenance. But all parks in London are suffering from tight budgets: selling off parks to pay for maintenance is not the answer. Once a park has gone, it's gone forever.

Professional sport or public park? Perhaps surprisingly, the close relationship between many football clubs and borough councils sometimes means they collaborate to take over 'protected' land (Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land) and even, almost unbelievably, public parks. We believe disposing of public parks or restricting their use for private sports is highly questionable, short sighted and, in many cases, unlawful.

Private land: public amenity. Many of London's protected green spaces are privately owned but have a covenant for public amenity use. Sometimes they may also be part of a park, such as a golf course. If the site is run by a sports club, it might not appear to be for public use, but it is often there for public benefit or 'amenity', providing anyone can join or play at a reasonable cost. But in a number

of cases the public amenity of these sites is being undermined, in favour of private or exclusive interests.

School development. Historically, many green spaces in London have been lost to school development and these pressures continue. The option of expanding school capacity on existing brownfield sites, for example by adding an extra storey to existing buildings, is unfortunately not often considered. This is short-sighted given that school rolls can increase and decrease quite dramatically over time, so boroughs can sometimes find they have too much school capacity, having just built over a green space to build a new school.

Dereliction and neglect. Too many green space sites in London have fallen into disuse and become derelict. Often this is deliberate: the owners, whether a private company, individual or local authority, might allow the site to be neglected with a view to gaining planning permission later. If it can be demonstrated, as a result, that the site is not providing public amenity, it might then be easier for them to argue it is not needed. Neglect creates a cycle of decline and is, sadly, a well-understood path to loss of green space.

Incremental development. One small building or change to surfacing can often lead to expansion of buildings in a park. Sometimes land is converted to hardstanding for car parking, for example, and, over time, it starts to appear as if it is no longer actually part of the park. This can then be exploited and used to justify the case for new building.

Failure to use brownfield land. National and London planning policies state 'brownfield' sites should be used before greenfield sites for new development. London has plenty of brownfield land but boroughs are failing to prioritise these sites for development or to work with owners and developers to bring them forward.

Right-to-buy and estate regeneration. Over many years, the 'right to buy' council homes, with no replacement, has meant council housing stock has been substantially depleted. Estate regeneration or 'infill' development on London's council estates is a means by which boroughs, who own the land, can make the building of new, much-needed social housing financially viable. This is increasingly common around London and can mean the loss of valued green or communal open space on estates.

Inappropriate political pressure. Sometimes politicians make commitments towards a good cause without taking account of wider considerations. Too often short-term political interests seem to override the long-term importance of protecting precious green spaces for future generations.

B. What can we do to save our green spaces?

Whatever the reason a site is coming under threat, the solution invariably lies in communities being engaged with a site, ensuring it is well used and valued and campaigning to save it when possible threats emerge. This story tends to play out continually over time: many of the parks we have today only exist as a result of historic, hard-fought campaigns.

One thing is clear: communities will always need to be vigilant. We recognise this and so support the London Friends of Green Spaces Network, the movement to create and grow park friends

groups, who are able to champion their local park, ensure it is a well-used and loved local asset, and if necessary spring into action if a threat arises. There are currently around 700 friends groups in London but, with more than 4,000 green spaces, many more are needed.

London borough elections will be held in May 2022. Now is the time to ask for commitments from candidates and local Councillors elected to serve until 2026. Here's what to ask them to pledge if you want to see them take action to halt to loss of green space in your borough:

Halting threats to London's precious and protected green spaces: six commitments we want to hear from local Councillors and May 2022 London Borough election candidates

*"**I will…** identify derelict and neglected green spaces in my borough, and any green spaces under threat, and actively work with the community to bring them back into use especially if they are at risk."*

*"**I will…** ensure housing estate 'infill' schemes don't leave residents with inadequate green space and where necessary will create more green and communal open space by turning 'grey space', currently given to car parking and roads, into green and community open space."*

*"**I will…** invest in parks, support park friends groups and promote and champion our parks. I will ensure parks are well maintained, improved and valued and I will support the creation of more local Park Friends Groups, so we make best use of our green spaces."*

*"**I will…** protect our parks and green spaces including by promoting the use of the Local Green Space* designation. I will not sell, permit development on, or commercialise parks and green spaces in the borough, either to raise money or benefit private or exclusive interests. I will respect public amenity covenants, even on privately owned land."*

*"**I will…** protect Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land and ensure new housing and other necessary development is built on brownfield sites. I won't justify loss of green space by citing the need for homes, schools or other development: these can be accommodated on previously developed land."*

*"**I will…** create 30 more parks in areas with not enough green space by 2026, by converting greyspace into 'streetparks'."*

What can you do?

- Ask your election candidates or local Councillors to support the pledges
- Identify neglected green sites in your area, tell us about them and perhaps set up a local group to create a new or better local park or green space there. There is lots of advice available from Parks Community or get in touch with us office@cprelondon.org.uk.
- Join your local park friends group – you can find their details at GoParksLondon.

CPRE London's commitment to London's parks and green spaces

- ✓ We support local groups, helping them save vital parks; and supporting them to create new parks from neglected and derelict green spaces.
- ✓ We identify the reasons spaces are coming under threat and work to tackle the causes.
- ✓ We champion parks, green spaces, Metropolitan Open Land and Green Belt, showing why they are so important.
- ✓ We publicise threats and advocate for political commitment, new policies and legislation to tackle them.

*Use of the Local Green Space designation introduced over ten years ago is low in London compared with other parts of the country.

C. More than 50 parks and green spaces under threat in London

In this section we outline current threats to green spaces and protected sites in London, including relevant designations, existing uses and links to local campaign groups where possible.

What do we mean by 'under threat'? We deem a site to be threatened if there is serious concern it will be lost as a result of development. A few sites are included where proposed surrounding development would significantly impact on its openness or other qualities.

Threats arising from Local Plan Reviews

1. Hounslow Local Plan
2. Enfield Local Plan
3. Croydon Local Plan
4. Barking and Dagenham Local Plan

Threats to parks

5. Victoria Tower Gardens (Westminster)
6. West Ham Park (Newham)
7. Green Dale (Southwark)
8. Wormwood Scrubs (Hammersmith and Fulham)
9. Whitewebbs Park (Enfield)
10. Wimbledon Park (Merton)
11. Crystal Palace Park (Bromley)
12. Tooting Common (Wandsworth)
13. Fairlop Waters (Redbridge)
14. Thames Water Depot on Lea Bridge Road (Waltham Forest)

Threats to playing fields / sports pitches

15. Belvedere Road Playing Field (Bexley)
16. Imperial Fields (Merton)
17. Oakfields Sport Ground (Redbridge)
18. Playing fields next to River Quaggy nr Lee Town Centre (Greenwich)
19. Leigh Road Sports Ground, Royston Gardens and River Roding sites
20. Disused playing fields and open land around Banbury Reservoir (Waltham Forest)

Threats to valuable local green spaces

21. Duncombe Hill green space (Lewisham) PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE
22. Warren Farm (Ealing)
23. Beddington farmlands (Sutton)
24. Buckthorne Railway Cutting (Lewisham)
25. Grove Park railway cutting (Lewisham)
26. Belmont Gardens (Tower Hamlets)
27. Walden Woods (Bromley)
28. Edgebury Grazing Land (Bromley)
29. Finchley Memorial Hospital (Barnet)
30. Dovers Farm Green (Havering)
31. Peckham Green (Southwark)
32. Limehouse Triangle (Tower Hamlets)
33. Lea Bridge Station Sites (Waltham Forest)
34. Park Road Allotments (Hounslow)
35. St Dunstan's Gardens (Ealing)

Planning applications on Green Belt land

36. Addington (Croydon)
37. Hasmonean School (Barnet)
38. Partingdale Lane (Barnet)

Infilling: threats to housing estate play areas and green spaces

39. BARNET - Brownswell Estate
40. HACKNEY – De Beauvoir Estate
41. SOUTHWARK – 20 sites (see Annex 1)
42. HARINGEY - Remington Road
43. BRENT – Kilburn Square
44. LEWISHAM – various sites
45. WANDSWORTH – York Gardens / Randall Close
46. ISLINGTON – York Way Estate

ANNEX 1: Estate infill case study: Southwark

47. Bells Gardens
48. Lindley Estate
49. Elim Ballcourt and Garden, Elim Estate
50. Kingston Estate
51. Haddonfield Estate, Rotherhithe
52. Lancaster Estate
53. Cherry Garden School site
54. Longfield Estate, South Bermondsey
55. Nunhead Estate, Nunhead Lane
56. Lomond Grove - Elmington Estate
57. Linsey Street, Eveline Lowe Estate
58. Rennie Estate, South Bermondsey
59. Vauban Estate
60. 'Little Dodson', Dodson & Amigo Estate
61. Tissington Court, Silverlock Estate
62. Goschen Estate
63. Seavington House, Champion Hill Estate
64. Rye Hill Park, Peckham Rye
65. Clifton Estate, Peckham Rye
66. Woodland Road Estate, Gipsy Hill

Threats arising from Local Plan Reviews

1. Hounslow Local Plan

GREEN BELT

The council is proposing to release 184 hectares of Green Belt for development and to remove the designation from a further 375 hectares. In total this is nearly half of all the Green Belt in the borough, and a space four times the size of Hyde Park. The council should focus on bringing forward the many brownfield sites in the borough for development, instead of developing Green Belt. One of a number of local groups campaigning to save Hounslow's Green Belt is Friends of the River Crane Environment.

2. Enfield Local Plan

GREEN BELT

Enfield Council is proposing to release a huge area of Green Belt for new development, equivalent to over 500 football pitches. However, their proposals fail to recognise the substantial opportunities to regenerate and intensify brownfield sites in the borough. Evidence shows there is enough brownfield land to accommodate the family and affordable homes needed in Enfield within medium-rise blocks with attractive shared open space.



Enfield Green Belt. Photo: www.enfieldsociety.org.uk

Campaign Groups: Enfield Society and Enfield RoadWatch Action Group

3. Croydon Local Plan

GREEN BELT METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND

The Croydon Local Plan proposes several green spaces are allocated for development. CPRE London believes these should remain protected as Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land, or designated as Local Green Space, and that the substantial amounts of previously developed and brownfield land in Croydon are used for much needed new homes instead. The green spaces identified for development are also in areas with poor public transport, so they will be car dependent and lead to increased congestion and pollution.

4. Barking and Dagenham Local Plan

NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT

The Council is proposing to develop several green spaces, including a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) at Padnall Lake and a Local Nature Reserve at Barking Riverside.

Threats to parks

5. Victoria Tower Gardens (Westminster)

PUBLIC PARK





Victoria Tower Gardens. Photo: www.designingbuildings.co.uk

This is a much-loved park used for informal recreation by individuals, groups of adults and school children. Despite being a Grade I listed Royal Park, it has been targeted as a site for the construction of a Holocaust Memorial which will mean the loss of a large portion of the park. CPRE London and other campaigners have fought to save the park, saying there are other more appropriate sites which would not involve loss of a park, for example at the Imperial War Museum. They point out the area is already saturated with monuments, over-crowded with visitors and deficient in green space. Nevertheless, planning permission was granted. Campaigners managed to get a public inquiry but the Government gave it the go-ahead. At the time of writing, campaigners are appealing the decision. Campaign Group: Save Victoria Tower Gardens

6. West Ham Park (Newham)

PUBLIC PARK NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT

This 77-acre, Grade II listed park is owned and managed by City of London Corporation who have said they want to develop blocks of flats on an area of the park which until recently was greenhouses and a plant nursery used to supply bedding plants. The Corporation say they need the money, but CPRE London and local campaigners are pointing out that all London parks are suffering from funding deficits. The space is also protected as part of the park. And the area is already lacking in good quality green space. We say the site should be regenerated and returned to park as open land or as greenhouses reflecting the heritage of the site (from 1762-80 it was owned by Dr John Fothergill, a Quaker physician and noted botanist, who planted a famous botanic garden here). Campaign Group: Friends of West Ham Park

7. Green Dale (Southwark)

METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND PUBLIC PARK NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT



Green Dale. Photo: www.southwarknews.co.uk

A damaging scheme to build a new stadium for Dulwich Hamlet Football Club on Metropolitan Open Land at Green Dale, which is also SINC, was given permission by Southwark Council and will mean the loss of a large chunk of this park. A large free-to-use astroturf pitch will also be lost; and a high, visually impermeable fence will obstruct views across the open space and beyond and significantly impinge on its sense of openness. Friends of Greendale campaigners are resisting the development and considering taking the case to judicial review. Campaign Group: Friends of Greendale

8. Wormwood Scrubs (Hammersmith and Fulham)

METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND PUBLIC PARK

This site lies adjacent to the proposed site for a High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) and Crossrail station at Old Oak. This is part of a large-scale regeneration project which is being phased-in up until 2026. Regeneration of urban areas surrounding Wormwood Scrubs is ongoing. The Strategic Case for HS2 document states that the HS2 phase one development will directly affect three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and 18 ancient woodland sites. HS2 Limited has bought part of Wormwood Scrubs park to help build Old Oak Common station. The transport secretary granted permission for work to begin in 2022. Campaign Group: Save Wormwood Scrubs

9. Whitewebbs Park (Enfield)

PUBLIC PARK PARK NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT

Enfield Council has indicated it will support a bid from Tottenham Hotspur to build a training facility on Whitewebbs Park golf course. This would mean loss of public access to a large section of the park as well as loss and destruction of natural surface and important habitat. Campaigners point out that the park was purchased by the local authorities with the intention it should be available for public amenity. They say it should not be leased to a wealthy private company, for exclusive use, as this will lead directly to loss of public amenity. Campaign Group: Friends of Whitewebbs



Whitewebbs Park Golf Course. Photo: www.golffeatures.com

10. Wimbledon Park (Merton)

METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND PUBLIC PARK

The All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) wishes to expand the Wimbledon Tournament site into a section of Wimbledon Park which to date has been a private golf course with provision for public access. Plans include a new 8,000 seat stadium, 10 other private buildings, 9.4 kms of roads and paths and 38 tennis courts, none of which will be available to the public. Local campaigners point out this is protected Metropolitan Open Land, a Grade II* listed park, also subject to restrictive covenants, which should never be built on, and that the development will have a devastating impact on the historic Capability Brown landscape. Although a small part of the land is being offered as a 'permissive' park, permission could be withdrawn at any time and no access will be allowed when tennis is played elsewhere.



Wimbledon Park Golf Course. Photo: www.golfpunkhq.com

Campaign Groups: Wimbledon Park Residents Association and AELTC Archives - The Wimbledon Society

11. Crystal Palace Park (Bromley)

PUBLIC PARK METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND

Bromley Council is looking to build new housing in Crystal Palace Park on the site of the caravan park to finance the regeneration of the rest of the park. However, the site is designated as Metropolitan Open Land and local residents believe it should be returned to parkland. Campaign Group: The Sydenham Society

12. Tooting Common (Wandsworth)

PUBLIC PARK NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT

Wandsworth Council is planning to fence off and charge for access to a section of Tooting Common as part of a new commercial football facility. The proposal involves enclosing a 38,500 square foot area of the common in order to build a pay-to-play floodlit football facility behind an 80 yard long, 15-foot high mesh fence. Many local residents have objected to this enclosure and privatisation of public land and the loss of access. A public inquiry will be held over the plans in June. Campaign Group: Friends of Tooting Common



Damage at Fairlop Waters. Photo: Jenny Chalmers www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk

13. Fairlop Waters (Redbridge)

GREEN BELT PUBLIC PARK NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT

Redbridge Council recently converted part of Fairlop Waters Country Park into an overflow car park, without seeking the required planning permission and despite the park already having a large parking area. The works involved uprooting trees and digging up grassland on this Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Local campaigners continue to question the creation of more space for car parking given the council's targets to reduce car trips in the area, the impact on habitat and 'encroachment' concerns that the new overflow car park might eventually lead to further, even more damaging development. Campaign Group: Aldborough Hatch Defence Association

14. Thames Water Depot on Lea Bridge Road (Waltham Forest / Hackney border)

METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND PUBLIC PARK (Part of Lea Valley Regional Park)

The site of the old Essex Filter Beds was leased to Thames Water many years ago, to be used as a depot, with a view to it being returned to the Lea Valley Regional Park in due course. Adjacent filter beds became a nature reserve. However, the site was sold and a planning application was submitted for two schools to be built on it. Waltham Forest Council rejected the application, confirming its status as Metropolitan Open Land and making it very clear that the schools were inappropriate development on such land. To pre-empt further threats, local residents are now campaigning to buy the site, to return it to use as part of the Regional Park and create a new East London Waterworks Park for wild swimming and rewilding. Campaign Group: The East London Waterworks Park

Threats to playing fields / sports pitches

15. Belvedere Road Playing Field (Bexley)

PLAYING FIELDS

In the latest draft of the Local Plan, Bexley Council has proposed development on a playing field behind Belvedere Road. Sport can generate significant benefits to physical and mental health and wellbeing and improve community cohesion. Places where sport is played should be protected and managed for that purpose, not built on. CPRE London says this green space should be maintained for local community use as a public park and playing field.

16. Imperial Fields (Merton)

METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND PLAYING FIELDS PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE

This site is threatened with development of a 6-storey block of 77 flats on Metropolitan Open Land which is also designated locally as Protected Open Land, is part of a Green Corridor and is sited within the Wandle Valley Regional Park. The plans include a large area of surface car parking on what is currently green space. Planning permission was granted in 2020 by Merton Council after the London Mayor chose not to intervene. Development has not yet begun. Campaign Group: Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

17. Oakfields Sport Ground (Redbridge)

PLAYING FIELDS GREEN BELT

The popular grassroots club, Bealonians FC is at risk of losing its current home to make space for a West Ham United FC academy facility. The club's lease negotiations with the Redbridge Council were ceased, and according to campaign group Save Oakfield Society (SoS), Redbridge Council is in negotiations that could see part of the Oakfield site used as a West Ham Academy, effectively privatising a public amenity. Campaigners are calling for the land to be protected from development and for its public amenity status to be retained for future generations. Campaign Group: Save Oakfield Society

18. Playing fields next to River Quaggy nr Lee Town Centre (Lewisham/Greenwich border)

PLAYING FIELDS METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND

A number of playing fields between Lee and Kidbrooke are coming under pressure. Most of these spaces are privately owned and designated as Metropolitan Open Land, with some actively used as sports pitches, and others fenced off. The owners use these pitches as 'landbanks' with the idea of making huge sums of money through future development of land that was put in trust for public use. To reduce the level of threat, local campaigners are fighting for the sites to be brought back into public use.
Campaign Group: Friends of Quaggy Playing Fields



Quaggy Playing Fields.
Photo: www. friendsofquaggyplayingfields.com

19. Leigh Road Sports Ground, Royston Gardens and sites adjacent to River Rodin (Barking & Dagenham / Newham / Redbridge)
PLAYING FIELDS NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND
Two large areas of green space have been bought by developers and fenced off with a view to their being developed for private profit. Local campaigners feel these sites are extremely vulnerable and likely to come under threat in the near future unless action is taken. River Roding Trust is working to create a vision for the whole area called 'Edgelands' with a view to bringing the sites back into use to reduce the threat of future development.
Campaign Group: River Roding Trust

20. Disused playing fields and open land around Banbury Reservoir (Enfield / Waltham Forest border)
PLAYING FIELDS METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND GREEN BELT
Various playing fields around Banbury Reservoir have become derelict and disused, and one has been acquired by a developer, despite the fields being on protected land. A Green Belt site to the north is threatened with having its designation removed as part of the Enfield Local Plan review, which will leave it highly vulnerable to development. CPRE London is working to help local residents establish a campaign because of concern that the land and related public amenity will be lost.

Threats to valuable local green spaces

21. Duncombe Hill green space (Lewisham) PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE
This small pocket of green space has been accessible to and used by the public for many years. It is also a key open space and on the Brockley Three Peaks trail route. The local community was unaware that the land was not owned by the council until developers bought it on a speculative basis and enclosed it with hoardings. The council required the hoardings to be removed and placed preservation orders on the trees. But the developer submitted an appeal after their application was refused and it remains a threatened site for now. Campaign Group: Save Duncombe Hill Green

22. Warren Farm (Ealing)
NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND
These disused playing fields, owned by Ealing Council, have been derelict for many years. For a time, the site was threatened with development of QPR's training ground. Local campaigners fought to save it as it had returned to nature and become home to diverse and rare species. The site remains in limbo with no clear identity although there is now an active campaign to establish it formally as a nature reserve.
Campaign Group: Warren Farm Nature Reserve


Warren Farm. Photo: www.remotelondon.com

23. Beddington farmlands (Sutton)

NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND

This very large and important site was meant to be restored and opened to the public as a nature reserve: this was a condition attached to planning permission for an incinerator. But the land has since been neglected, the habitat is in decline and it remains closed to the public. Residents fear it will be lost forever if the planning conditions are not enforced so they are campaigning to ensure it is restored and opened up for public use.
Campaign Group: Beddington Farmlands Nature Reserve

24. Buckthorne Railway Cutting (Lewisham)

NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT

This site is a valuable nature habitat and was used for many years for public amenity by the Scouts. The landowner has now fenced the site off and has allowed it to become derelict. Fearing that a planning application is imminent, local campaigners are seeking protection for the site so it can be used for scouting once again and established as a nature reserve. Campaign Group: The Buckthorne Cutting Nature Reserve



Buckthorne Railway Cutting
Photo: www.fourthreserve.org.uk

25. Grove Park railway cutting (Lewisham)

NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT

A series of protected green spaces with importance for nature conservation, this site has been subject to sale and planning applications bringing the whole area under threat. Recognising its heritage and nature value, and its importance as a local park, local campaigners now want to give the area an identity as the 'Railway Children Park' referencing Edith Nesbit who lived nearby. Campaign Group: The Baring Trust

26. Belmont Gardens (Tower Hamlets)

The council has submitted its own planning application to demolish a local Canal Club and encroach on the north bank of the canal. Over the past decade the occupants of Belmont Wharf have transformed the site from an industrial wasteland into a community garden and haven for wildlife. The current proposal will destroy this habitat. At the time of writing a planning consultation had just closed. Campaign Group: Friends of Regent's Canal

27. Edgebury Grazing Land (Bromley)

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE

Slades Drive in Chislehurst is the site of the proposed development of a new school despite it being designated Local Open Space, having extremely poor access for vehicles and being prone to frequent flooding. There are alternative, more appropriate sites in Bromley which could be considered for this facility including redevelopment of other education facilities. CPRE London argues that green space should not be considered until all alternatives have been properly assessed. The planning application was approved in June 2021.

28. Walden Woods (Bromley)

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE / NATURE RESERVE / SINC / VALUABLE HABITAT

This site is renowned for its biodiversity and aesthetic beauty. It is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and remnant ancient woodland. Although the 2016 Local Plan secured Walden Woods as public open space, Bromley Council designated an adjacent area for educational purposes and is now proposing to build a 150 pupil SEN school. The Council has annexed part of the woods and granted a 150 year lease to Rivermead Inclusive Trust to provide the school. Apart from being open space, the site has poor road access, is next to an electricity substation and sits in a very wet, low-lying area. If building goes ahead, around a quarter of open space will be lost. There are also fears that this might be the start of a wider encroachment on this precious woodland. Campaign Group: Friends of Chislehurst Recreation Ground

29. Finchley Memorial Hospital (Barnet)

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE PUBLIC PARK

A large private property development is planned for the green space in front of Finchley Memorial Hospital. This land was promised to the community when the new hospital was built on designated playing fields. The development will mean the loss of accessible public green parkland and increased traffic and pollution on already congested roads. Campaign Group: Finchley Memorial Action



Finchley Memorial Hospital. Photo: www.finchleymemorialaction.org

30. Dovers Farm Green (Havering)

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE

This popular green space which houses a war memorial commemorating ANZAC soldiers, has been the subject of numerous development applications since 2015. Local campaigners are pushing for the site to be protected from future development and are calling on the council to designate it as a village green. The council has recently expressed support for protecting the site through the upcoming review of the borough's Local Plan.

31. Peckham Green

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE

Peckham Green, aka Jocelyn Street Park, is 1.4 acres of green space in the centre of Peckham. Southwark Council temporarily designated it as Open Space in 2001, and for 20 years it has been well-used and loved and maintained as a park. Southwark then applied to build on the green in 2016 but this was apparently not well advertised or understood by the local community. They were devastated to find in 2020 that it was under threat and that there was almost nothing they could do to save this important park in an area with very little green space. Campaigners fought a last-minute campaign but construction started in August 2021 against huge local opposition. Campaign Group on twitter: @peckham_green

32. Limehouse Triangle (Tower Hamlets)

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE

This treasured small piece of green space is located in a densely populated part of Tower Hamlets with very little green space nearby. It was created by the council as a haven for wildlife and a breathing space for local people but in a change of heart the council decided it should be developed. Since 2016 residents have repeatedly fought applications to build on the land but in 2019 the council gave permission for a block ranging from 5 to 8 storeys high to be built here. Campaign Group: The East London Garden Society

33. Lea Bridge Station Sites (Waltham Forest)

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE

This 'pocket park', created in 1990s, was intended to act as an anti-pollution measure due to heavy traffic in the area. It was also provided as a green open space for benefit of residents. It contains 91 trees which help reduce air pollution, are a valuable habitat for wildlife, and support flood management in an area with high ground water level. Having created this space, Waltham Forest Council now intends to build on it.. Campaign Group: Orient Way Pocket Park @OrientSave

34. Park Road Allotments (Hounslow)

Northumberland Estates has proposed to build on the allotments in Park Road, Isleworth. They are a treasured wildlife haven and provide the local community with a much-needed tranquil location in an otherwise urban setting. The development proposal was rejected by Hounslow planning committee in October 2021. It was the second time that the plans have been rejected and campaigners hope they will now admit defeat, rather than appeal the decision. Campaign Group: The Isleworth Society



Park Road Allotments. Photo: www.theisleworthsociety.org

35. St Dunstan's Gardens (Ealing)

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE

A huge care home with associated parking spaces could be built over the whole of this much-loved park. Documents submitted by the developer suggest that back in 1924, the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths gave Ealing Council responsibility for the land's upkeep. But the Council has not yet decided whether to grant permission for the plans.

Planning applications on Green Belt land

36. Addington (Croydon)

GREEN BELT

A local landowner has constructed gates to block public access to a large field and has started to build an access road through Green Belt land, apparently without agreement from the legal landowner and with no planning permission or agreement with the council. After the council was slow to act, members of the Addington Residents' Association took matters into their own hands, installing huge concrete blocks to stop construction vehicles from gaining access to the Green Belt designated field. The legal owner of the land is

currently in discussion with Croydon council to get the land restored and the gates removed. Campaign Group: Addington Residents' Association

37. Hasmonean School (Barnet)
GREEN BELT
This case involves the proposed demolition of the existing girls school and construction of a new combined girls and boys school, which will result in the loss of 21 acres of Green Belt including 1.2 hectares of woodland. In October 2016 a planning officer recommended refusal for this proposal stating that the Hasmonean High School had failed to demonstrate the 'very special circumstances' necessary to override Green Belt protections. The officer also highlighted that it would result in the loss of irreplaceable public open space. Despite heavy opposition, Barnet Council approved this planning application in February 2017. The London Mayor directed Barnet Council to issue a refusal but a final decision has yet to be made. Campaign Group: Green Belt Destruction NW7

38. Partingdale Lane (Barnet)
GREEN BELT
A deeply unpopular proposal to construct a battery storage facility including inverter and transformer stations, battery storage containers, security fencing and lighting on Green Belt land adjacent to Partingdale Lane. Campaign Group: Mill Hill Preservation Society

Infilling: threats to housing estate play areas and green spaces

In recent years CPRE London has been contacted with increasing frequency about loss of green space on council housing estates happening as a result of 'infill' development where councils use land on existing estates to build new homes. This is a serious concern which we highlighted in a blog in 2021 Infill development on housing estates should not lead to loss of green space and play spaces. The cases below are examples. It is likely there are many more such cases across London which we are not yet aware of. In Southwark there are so many cases campaigners have now created a borough wide campaign (see below and Annex 1).

39. BARNET - Brownswell Estate
Barnet Homes want to build two blocks of flats infilling on green space in an area identified in the Barnet Local plan as an area of open space deficiency. A much-loved playground and several mature trees will also be lost. Campaign Petition

40. HACKNEY – De Beauvoir Estate
An infilling development on this estate will result in a loss of green space and mature trees as well as a reduction in the proportion of communal open space per person. The council is creating some new green space but the amount per person remains very low and a local group is now campaigning to turn the road to the north of the estate into a 'streetpark'.

41. SOUTHWARK – 20 sites (see also Annex 1)
Southwark Council is pursuing estate infill on a widescale basis, building housing on estate green spaces. Many residents say they were unaware of Southwark's plans to build on their estates until alerted by other groups. Borough-wide resident groups *Infilling Harms Estates*

(@CourtCampaign) and *Yes To Fair Redevelopment* (@SouthwarkYFR) are campaigning against the strategy. Some infill schemes have, for now, been halted, for example at Priory Court where 9 flats were to be built on the estate's small green space (@CourtCampaign) and Brenchley Gardens Estate @Save_Brenchley (private flats for sale on the estate's green spaces and allotments). We have been made aware of twenty green spaces and amenities still under threat, many for flats for private sale, and these are detailed at Annex 1.

42. HARINGEY – Remington Road

Many green spaces around the borough which are undesignated or are part of or next to Council estates (including at Fairbanks Road N17, Scales Road N17 on corner with Chestnut Grove, in N15 at the junction of St Ann's Road and Seven Sisters Road and in N8 at Ramsey Court on Park Road – see petition) are threatened by council infilling plans. In a recent example, high rise flats will be built on green space next to Remington Road and Pulford Road in Seven Sisters. Planning officers admit the scheme is not in line with the council's own policy that there should be "no net loss of open space". However, the application was approved by the planning subcommittee in January 2022.

43. BRENT – Kilburn Square

Mature trees, a playground, a football pitch and green space will be removed as part of a major development planned for Kilburn Square. Campaign Group: Save Kilburn Square @Save_Kilburn_Sq



Kilburn Square. Photo: www.wembleymatters.blogspot.com

44. LEWISHAM – various sites

Building over green space on estates is also happening in Lewisham at Mais House, Dacres Road Estate, Greystead Road Estate, Valentines Court, Drake Court and many more. Campaign Groups on twitter: @OfMais, @GreenerySave, @SaveGreystead

45. WANDSWORTH – York Gardens / Randall Close

York Gardens is one of the very few green spaces left in the SW11 area. Wandsworth Council and Taylor Wimpey builders plan to build on this historic site and fell around 50 trees, for a leisure centre and housing. Only a small proportion of the new homes will be social housing. Campaign Group: Save York Gardens**.** Green space is also due be lost and 30 trees felled on the estate to make way for three high rise blocks of up to 6 storeys. Campaign Petition



York Gardens. Photo: www.swlondoner.co.uk

46. ISLINGTON – York Way Estate

Islington Council has granted planning permission to the City of London to build as many as 100 additional flats on York Way Estate, destroying a significant amount of the estate's precious green space in the process**.** Campaign Petition

ANNEX 1 – Example of the extent of infilling on estate green spaces in one London borough - Southwark

There are 20 housing estate infill schemes in Southwark which have or will lead to loss of amenity green or play space, that we are currently aware of.

1. **Bells Gardens** Proposals involve construction of three housing blocks on the communal green space in front of the blocks and on the football court, leading to loss of outdoor play space and felling of 37 trees. Campaign Group on twitter: @SaveBells
2. **Lindley Estate** Southwark has given itself permission to demolish low rise flats and build a block of 44 flats on the estate's green space, adjacent to Bells Gardens.
3. **Elim Ballcourt and Garden, Elim Estate** Southwark, through its housing management partner Leathermarket CBS, plans to build over the community's basketball court to make way for a new housing development. Campaign Group on twitter: @BallcourtGarden
4. **Kingston Estate** This proposal involves loss of a community garden, green space and vegetable patch, and felling of mature trees planted by the council as Heygate Legacy Trees. This is for 8 flats in front of the existing housing block. Campaign Group on twitter: @SaveKingstonEst
5. **Haddonfield Estate, Rotherhithe** Promoted by the council as infill development on 'land no longer required for its current purposes', this actually proposes taking 730 sqm of Haddonfield Estate Community Garden, along with loss of trees and shrubs. It is now under construction.
6. **Lancaster Estate** During consultation, Southwark Council claimed it was only going to build 'infill' housing on garages (and a one-storey rooftop development). But plans show they intend to build over the community garden and cut down all mature trees, for an infill block with private gardens and car parking. Campaign Group on twitter: @LancasterEstSE1



Kingston Estate. Photo: www.southwarknews.co.uk

7. **Cherry Garden School site, Southwark Park Road, Bermondsey** Mature trees will be felled at this site, sold to developers Higgins, for 56 flats, 30 of which will be for private sale, with 150sq.m. of retail space.
8. **Longfield Estate, South Bermondsey** This development will mean the loss of public green space, amenities and trees, for 7 flats.
9. **Nunhead Estate, Nunhead Lane** This development of eighteen infill flats will be on public green space.
10. **Lomond Grove, Elmington Estate** This development is planned on public green space, including a grassy woodland area that is a haven for wildlife and a valuable 'green corridor' linking Burgess Park with Camberwell Green.
11. **Linsey Street, Eveline Lowe Estate** This involves loss of green space on Amina Way to make way for the building of 11 flats.
12. **Rennie Estate, South Bermondsey** This proposal is for a larger tower and smaller tower on the estate's public green space, for 49 flats.

13. **Vauban Estate** This development will mean construction on public space and 'redevelopment' of other green spaces on the estate for 13 flats. Campaign Group on twitter: @SaveVauban
14. **'Little Dodson', Dodson & Amigo Estate** This will mean demolition of a block of 8 bedsit flats, green space and garages for 11 flats. Campaign Group on twitter: @AmigoDodson
15. **Tissington Court, Silverlock Estate** This will mean **l**oss of public green space and a full size ball court, to make way for an infill block of 35 council flats.



Dodson & Amigo Estate. Photo: www.southwarknews.co.uk

16. **Goschen Estate** This involves loss of estate green space and trees for two 5-storey blocks, 16 flats, and is currently under construction.
17. **Seavington House, Champion Hill Estate** This will mean loss of trees and public green space for housing blocks, for 25 flats on corner of Dog Kennel Hill and Champion Hill.
18. **Rye Hill Park, Peckham Rye** Twenty-three flats are to be built on green space directly in front of an existing block. Campaign Group on twitter: @RyeHillParkEstate
19. **Clifton Estate, Peckham Rye** Fifteen infill flats are to be built on public green space on Clayton Road. Campaign Group on twitter: @EstCliftonSE15
20. **Woodland Road Estate, Gipsy Hill** Southwark has issued permission for 14 infill flats on Woodland Road Estate's green space gardens.

This report was written and researched
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CPRE London is a membership-based charity with 2,500 members across London. We campaign for the protection and enhancement of vital green spaces in the capital, as well as the improvement of London's environment for the health and wellbeing of all.

Our commitment to London's parks and green spaces

- ✓ We support local groups, helping them save vital parks; and supporting them to create new parks from derelict and neglected green spaces
- ✓ We identify the reasons spaces are coming under threat and work to tackle the causes
- ✓ We champion parks, green spaces, Metropolitan Open Land and Green Belt, showing why they are so important
- ✓ We publicise threats and advocate for political commitment and new policy and legislation

More from CPRE London about the issues in this report

- The importance of Green Belts and compact cities
- Why London' Green Belt is our Climate Safety Belt
- The history and purpose of London's protected land The Strongest Protection 2016 (updated 2017)
- How to stop infill development leading to loss of green space on London's housing estates
- Mapping and promoting London's 4,000+ public green spaces through our GoParksLondon project

PLEASE DONATE

We are a very small charity but we have a high profile and we make a big difference. We rely on donations and you can support our vital work by making a donation. Thank you!

Contact us

Do you have information on threats to green spaces in London? Please contact office@cprelondon.org.uk

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