

London Borough of Hackney Equality Impact Assessment Form

The Equality Impact Assessment Form is a public document which the Council uses to demonstrate that it has complied with Equality Duty when making and implementing decisions which affect the way the Council works.

The form collates and summarises information which has been used to inform the planning and decision-making process.

Title of this Equality Impact Assessment:

Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2021-2031

Purpose of this Equality Impact Assessment:

This Equality Impact Assessment sets out:

1. How we have considered how we can meet our public sector equalities duties set out in the 2010 Equalities Act, throughout the development process for the Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2021-2031.
2. The practical steps we will take going forward, to monitor the positive and negative impacts the strategy may have on eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity, promoting cohesion and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Officer Responsible: *(to be completed by the report author)*

Name: Sam Parry - Parks Development Manager	Ext: 4899
Directorate: Neighbourhoods and Housing	Department/Division: Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces/Public Realm



Comment: This has been approved by Aled Richards

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

In completing this impact assessment you should, where possible, refer to the main documentation related to this decision rather than trying to draft this assessment in isolation. Please also refer to the attached guidance.

STEP 1: DEFINING THE ISSUE

1. Summarise why you are having to make a new decision

- 1.1 The decision to develop, adopt and deliver a new Parks and Green Spaces Strategy is a policy decision, designed to provide strategic direction for the Parks and Green Spaces Service over the next ten years.
- 1.2 The Mayor has identified 5 priorities for the Council, one of which is “prioritising quality of life and the environment...protecting our parks and green spaces”.
- 1.3 Hackney’s Parks & Green Spaces Service has not had a Parks Strategy since 2013, and the world is a very different place since the last strategy was in place. Specifically:
 - Technology has changed. People are using electric bikes, electric scooters and drones in our parks and green spaces. Affordable electric trimmers, leaf blowers and electric vehicles are all now available. Mobile phones enable quicker, more efficient communication with our park users, but users in turn often expect quicker responses.

- There is a greater focus on sustainability. Hackney Council declared a climate emergency in 2020, and our residents are increasingly concerned about air pollution, the use of chemicals, single use plastics and the loss of biodiversity.
- People are using our parks and green spaces differently. There has been an increase in cyclists, in professional dog walkers and people using outdoor gym equipment, for example.
- As Hackney's population continues to grow, and it becomes an increasingly desirable place to live, work and visit, the pressure on its parks and green spaces has grown. The increase in use of our parks and green spaces often means more litter, more damage to park facilities, greater compaction of the ground and higher operating costs.
- Coupled with an increase in use, austerity has meant that we need to think differently about how our service is delivered. We may need to work more in partnership with volunteer groups to help look after our green spaces, and look at alternative income generation models to maintain our existing high standards.

1.4 Finally, the integration of Hackney's Parks and Green Spaces Service with the Housing Grounds Maintenance Service is due to be undertaken in 2021. A strategy is required to provide direction to the joint service, with commitments that cover both services, and that recognise that all Parks and Green Spaces in Hackney are part of a wider network of green infrastructure.

1.5 The process used to develop the Parks and Green Spaces started in late 2019 and included the following main steps:

- Starting with a blank page, a focus group of residents, staff, young people and subject experts helped us discuss, debate and decide the topics the new Strategy needed to cover towards the end of 2019. The focus group suggested key people we should be speaking to, how and where we should be hearing from them, and the themes and issues we should be asking people about.
- We then read everything that was shared with us, and organised over 50 meetings and focus group sessions with key staff, stakeholders and local people. The transcriptions from these meetings and the insight, feedback and ideas that were shared about Hackney's parks and green spaces helped us create a draft vision and set of commitments to guide the work of the Service over the next 10 years. Although the pandemic changed the way we undertook engagement, we were able to adapt and meet with large numbers of people virtually.
- We distilled everything that people told us and created a first draft of the Strategy. The draft contained 30 commitments grouped under three themes - ensuring our communities are more actively involved in our parks, ensuring that our parks and green spaces are activated, and ensuring that the Service is more environmentally sustainable.

- The Strategy was designed from the outset to be concise, readable and attractive. It relies heavily on graphics to make it an accessible document that the public will engage with and is focused largely on the actions that we will implement over the next ten years.
 - A public consultation exercise on the draft Strategy was launched in December 2020 and ran until January 2021. A total of 967 people took part in the public consultation. 656 people completed the online survey, with 95% of online respondents being Hackney residents. 270 Hackney residents also took part in 16 focus group sessions and feedback meetings, 15 people emailed in feedback or filled in the survey over the phone, and 37 people took part in online polls.
 - The response to the consultation was overwhelmingly positive, with 95% of respondents reporting that they like or love their local park. There was broad support for the Strategy as a whole, with just a few suggestions for amendments.
 - 28% of people wanted us to address the amount of litter in green spaces, 20% were concerned about cyclists riding too fast, and 19% highlighted irresponsible dog owners and dog mess as an issue. People also wanted better toilet facilities, more benches and more places to buy food and drink. Essentially, people wanted to ensure we were getting the basics right, and we responded by introducing a new theme into the Strategy committed to creating 'A Welcoming Park', with new commitments linked to launching a litter campaign, and committing to upgrade all of our park toilet facilities.
 - The majority of the remaining feedback we received was supportive of the commitments that we had already made - 30% of people wanted us to include a wider range of people when improving green space for example, 18% of people wanted better publicity and promotion of volunteering opportunities, activities and events, and 35% wanted us to make parks and green spaces wilder and more natural. The full consultation analysis is available as a separate report.
- 1.6 Following adoption of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, we will create annual Delivery Plans to make it easier to understand how the commitments in the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy will be delivered. The Parks and Green Spaces Annual Reports will report back on progress.
- 1.7 The key documents produced include:
- [Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2021 - 2031](#)
 - [Cabinet Paper Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2021 - 2031](#)
 - [Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Consultation Report 2021](#)

2. Who are the main people that will be affected?

- 2.1 This new strategy will help frame and direct the Council's work over the next ten years in relation to parks and green spaces.
- 2.2 The Parks and Green Spaces Strategy will impact on people's experience of using parks and green spaces in Hackney. In this broad sense it will affect everyone who uses parks and green spaces, but also people who live close by, and organisations who deliver services in parks and green spaces. As a result of its broad reach and strategic purpose, the strategy is likely to impact on the lives of people affected by one or more of all nine protected characteristics.
- 2.3 In the process of developing the new strategy we reviewed stakeholder feedback and community insight obtained by the policy team in their community research to develop *Hackney: A Place for Everyone* (2014) and the *Single Equalities Scheme* (2018). In their report we found a number of equalities and cohesion issues affecting Hackney that the Strategy needs to consider, including:
- Women are slightly more likely to report a long-term health conditions, be obese and far less likely to meet recommended levels of physical activity
 - Disabled people are also less likely to be satisfied with the local area
 - Nearly half of trans people questioned did not use public, social and leisure facilities for fear of discrimination
 - Childhood obesity in Hackney is above the national average
 - Older and disabled people have concerns about poor driver and cyclist behaviour
 - Young people in focus groups valued parks and open spaces, but some felt they were not welcome to "hang out" and would be moved on and also that local leisure facilities were not welcoming for young people
 - Mobility and access is a key concern for older and disabled residents who talked about access issues in the public realm and in businesses as part of the Hackney a Place for Everyone.
 - Young people talked about safety, and how concerns about safety might impact on their mobility around the borough.
 - Hackney has a higher percentage of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities than the London and England averages
 - There are some parts of the borough which experience far worse levels of air pollution, leading to inequalities. These can also be parts of the borough where poorer people live (busy roads).

- African Caribbean residents in the borough are more likely to experience poorer outcomes in health, education and employment and are more likely to be concerned about crime and be a victim of crime, affecting how they access and use public spaces and services
- There are a number of areas where Turkish/Kurdish residents have poorer health on average, and Turkish / Kurdish groups are also more likely to have someone in the house with a health condition. Smoking and rates of child obesity are higher, as are diabetes and other related issues connected with diet. Turkish and Kurdish residents are almost twice as likely to experience overcrowding
- Members of the travelling community face health inequalities
- Many health indicators show that the Orthodox Jewish population has worse outcomes in a number of areas compared to the general population.
- Whilst just over three quarters of residents had a close bond with other residents, one in ten felt isolated and just over 1 in 4 knew fewer people than a few years ago. Isolation is more likely to be experienced by semi-skilled, manual and very low income groups, social tenants and Asian residents. One in five Muslim residents said they felt isolated. Social and community networks (social capital) can provide an important first level of support in the community and give people access to new opportunities. Residents expressed an appetite to contribute to their community through volunteering.
- Older people are more likely to have health conditions, less likely to undertake physical exercise and this could be worse for black and minority ethnic groups and people who are from poorer backgrounds
- Migrants who are more vulnerable because of their immigration status or because of level of spoken and written English

2.4 In addition to the broader Hackney research, there is also some national research into the link between access to parks and green spaces and health / equality / deprivation.

- Evidence shows that living in a greener environment can promote and protect good health and aid in recovery from illness and help with managing poor health. People who have greater exposure to green space have a range of more favourable physiological outcomes¹.
- Greener environments are associated with better mental health and wellbeing outcomes including reduced levels of depression, anxiety, and fatigue, and enhanced quality of life for both children and adults, and green space can help to bind communities together and reduce loneliness¹.
- Disadvantaged groups appear to gain a larger health benefit and have reduced socioeconomic-related inequalities in health when living in greener communities¹.

¹ Public Health England, *Improving access to greenspace* (2020)

- The intention to walk more post-Covid is higher for people who identify as BAME than those who identify as white².
- People aged 18-24 intend to walk more post-Covid than those aged 55 and over².
- People who identify as being from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background are less likely to have good access to green space²
- People on a low incomes are less likely to have good access to green space²
- People of BAME background are twice as much likely than a white person to live within England's most green space-deprived areas.³
- There is strong evidence that when people value their local green space and are likely to feel safe in it, they use it more and are more physically active. Concern about personal safety is the most important barrier to the use of green space, and perceptions of individual safety differed between ethnic groups⁴
- Barriers to using green spaces are related to ethnicity. They include feelings of insecurity due to the fear of personal attack or racism; exclusion due to the domination of a space by a particular group; and the presence of dogs (dog-fouling or fear of dogs)⁴.

2.5 For an overview of the demographic profile of local people with protected characteristics see the Hackney Borough Profile 2019.

STEP 2: ANALYSING THE ISSUES

3. What information and consultation have you used to inform your decision making?

3.1 We reviewed local data and research relating to parks and green spaces as well as consulted with stakeholders and residents about their experiences of parks and green spaces. We also reviewed a wide range of existing internal policy documents and strategies, as well as relevant external reports.

3.2 This strategy for Hackney has been built over a period of time and is based on

- What residents have told us about their experiences of parks and green spaces through focus groups;
- What stakeholders working in Hackney have said are big issues for them through briefing sessions;
- The evidence we have about how Hackney is likely to change over the coming years and
- An extensive public consultation exercise undertaken between December 2020 and January 2021

² Ramblers, *Why access to green space matters (2020)*

³ Friends of the Earth, *England's green space gap (2020)*

⁴ CABE Space, *Community Green (2010)*

Equality Impacts

4. Identifying the impacts

In informal consultation and feedback provided by stakeholders, the key issues of note were:

- The need for us to engage properly with local communities when improving parks and green spaces
- The 'basics' of a welcoming park - ensuring that parks and green spaces are clean, welcoming and safe for all
- The importance of access to nature for people

4 (a) What positive impact could there be overall, on different equality groups, and on cohesion and good relations?

- 4.1 The new strategy seeks to make parks more accessible to all with commitments to involve younger and older people in decision-making and engage a wide range of people in improvements, with a special effort made to reach and hear from underrepresented groups.
- 4.2 We commit to undertaking a review of Hackney Parks Forum to ensure that it is fit for purpose and representative of our diverse local communities.
- 4.3 We will develop a work experience and apprenticeship programme and explore supported opportunities for people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in our parks and green spaces.
- 4.4 We will also involve older people in designing and improving our parks and green spaces to reflect the recommendations of the Ageing Well Strategy.

4 (b) What negative impacts could there be overall, on different equality groups, and on cohesion and good relations?

- 4.2 The key risks associated with producing a high level strategy like this that could result in negative impacts on equality and cohesion in the borough include:

- That the vision we have developed is not accessible or is not perceived as a credible, collective vision for the future of Hackney’s parks and green spaces that local people and organisations will support and help deliver. As a result the community and other system leaders do not engage with what we do next to deliver it.
- That we fail to make sufficient progress towards delivering the strategy for a range of reasons;
 - Wider events may limit our ability to deliver on these commitments,
 - The Council and its partners may be severely constrained financially and unable to sufficiently resource the actions committed to in the Strategy
 - New national legislation may limit our powers to take effective action,
 - Future waves of Covid19 may lead to activity being paused.

In the next section we set out some actions that will help us mitigate against this.

STEP 3: REACHING YOUR DECISION

5.1 We recognise that this is something that we will need to continue to review, take action on and monitor and so we are recommending:

- That the Cabinet and the Council adopt this Strategy as it will help us to proactively meet our equalities duty.
- That once the Strategy document has been formally adopted we take steps to make the vision and the direction in the Strategy more accessible to a wider number of local people, organisations and our own staff – including by:
 - Producing a delivery plan and annual reports feeding back on progress
 - Producing a poster to go in park notice boards and park depots summarising the commitments in the strategy
 - Publicising the annual reports with all stakeholders who we have engaged with.

There is an action plan below with more details on what, how and when we will do this.

STEP 4 DELIVERY – MAXIMISING BENEFITS AND MANAGING RISKS

6. Equality and Cohesion Action Planning

No	Objective	Action	Outcomes highlighting how this will be monitored	Timescale	Lead officer
1	Once the Strategy has been formally adopted, steps are taken to make it accessible to a wider number of local people, organisations and our own staff.	Producing a delivery plan, sharing this with staff Producing a poster sharing the commitments with staff and the public Producing annual Reports to feedback on progress	Delivery plans will be produced in order to deliver the work The poster will be erected in park depots and park noticeboards The Parks and Green Spaces Service will reshape the Annual Report to report back on Parks Strategy progress	April 2021 Autumn 2021 June 2022	Parks Development Manager Parks Development Manager Parks Development Manager
2	Develop a Parks and Green Spaces Strategy Board that will monitor strategy delivery	Board to be established	Monitoring framework developed	May 2021	Parks Development Manager
3	Where possible, involve	Connect with representative	Stakeholder involvement in commitment delivery to be monitored at Parks and Green Spaces Board	Ongoing	Head of Leisure,

	representatives of groups with protected characteristics to advise on the delivery of certain commitments in the strategy	groups as specific commitments are being delivered			Parks and Green Spaces
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