

Camden Friends of the Earth

Response to the consultation on
Camden's Environmental Sustainability Plan (2011-2020)

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Dear Sir/Madam,

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

1. Reducing Camden's carbon emissions

The paragraphs related to embodied emissions and the rebound effect (pp 7-8) are much appreciated. Some tangibles examples would further help understanding what is at stake.

For instance, we recommend the Council refer to the [2006 Life Cycle Assessment of Vehicle Fuels and Technologies](#) in order to illustrate the impact of embodied emissions. Thanks to this research, one could say that the purchase of a new vehicle releases as much CO₂ as driving 25,000 km with an old car. That's assuming a manufacturing and retail footprint of 5t CO₂ compared to driving an existing car emitting 200g CO₂/km (well to wheel). Alternative sources would estimate the carbon footprint of the industrial process at a much higher level: 7.2 t CO₂ per £10,000 spent (source: *How Bad Are Bananas? The Carbon Footprint of Everything* by Mike Berners-Lee quoted in [Guardian in Sept. 2010](#))

We also suggest the council can not only "raise awareness of these issues" (p8) concerning embodied emissions but should also actively seek to support residents' low carbon purchasing choices e.g. through facilities such as 'Give & Take' days and re-use centres.

2. Adapting to a changing climate

We notice that a great effort has been made to communicate on how dry South-East England actually is (p 9). We trust such comparisons will have an effect on behaviours.

We suggest that Camden should scope potential climate change adaptation projects along the lines of [Mayesbrook Park](#) in Barking & Dagenham - the UK's first 'climate change park'. Not only is this an exemplar of climate change adaptation, it also helps engage and inform local communities about climate change impacts.

3. Managing and reducing waste

London is plagued with a take-away culture which essentially relies on disposable cups and cutlery. These items are never recycled and tend to quickly fill up public bins. Residents also find these items dumped in their recycling bags or food waste caddies. Businesses such as the Camden Lock Market orange juice street stall don't even accept or collect items if their customers try to return them.

We suggest Camden should support the creation of a club of responsible take-away merchants. Members would establish a charter, which would attract a grant (justified by the reduced burden on street cleaning) or other form of support from the Council (publicity for instance). The charter would specify the use of compostable containers or the provision of discounted drinks to customers who return/reuse their cups.

The 10% decrease in residual household waste in more than 10 years is an extremely conservative target. As a share of total household waste, this is a shift of 7 percentage points in 10 years! This means that residual waste would still account for 461kg /household /yr in 2020. [Defra statistics](#) (NI 191) for 2009/10 reveal that two London Boroughs are already beating this target: Tower Hamlets and Kensington & Chelsea. In England, 11 local authorities already stand below the 400kg threshold. Moreover, we noticed that households in Kingston upon Thames and Bexley recycle/compost close to 50% of their waste while the equivalent figure in Camden is 30%. Camden residents also recycle less than the national average, which is 40%.

We have noticed the success of the latest communication campaign "New Face". Beside, Camden FoE's 2010 survey showed strong interest from residents for better management of waste in the borough. It is not time to give up. These targets must reflect the ambitions of a progressive Borough, building on a recent success. Instead of a 37% recycling target, a 50% target would be more appropriate. Even better, a 60% recycling target would be in line with the latest Friends of the Earth campaign to halve households residual waste by 2020.

We strongly support the removal of the second residual waste collection (p30). We suggest savings from removing this service could be invested in enhancing recycling facilities/collections or improving access to re-use centres.

4. Improving air quality

On Air quality, p13, we would like to see a ban on greenwashing, starting with the Council's own media. The illustration reads "zero emission vehicle" and "no air pollution". As far as we know, electricity and hydrogen don't come from clean power plants. Emissions are simply outsourced. On p14 and p18, the strategy reads "We have increased the number of clean vehicles in our fleet". First, an increase in "share" would be more informative than an increase in "number". Second, we wonder if "clean" is a suitable word or pure greenwash.

On p14, the [TravelFootprint](#) initiative is mentioned but, unlike in the rest of the document, no hypertext link is embedded. This website is a great illustration of the principle of embedded emissions. Considering the shortage of public funds, we believe that existing tools must be used and deserve to be promoted, at least with a hyperlink! The Guardian Environment also points towards Camden's analysis (links to the [article](#) and the [spreadsheet](#))

5. Enhancing biodiversity, improving green spaces and involvement in gardening and food growing

On p16, regarding tree planting, we anticipate the need for money and for space. We would like to inform the Council that we would strongly support a reallocation of space from residential parking to tree planting. The demand for parking could be down-sized through higher permit charges. These higher charges could be better accepted if they were allocated to a tree planting programme.

We noticed a high share of unused private parking capacity in Bloomsbury, a fact which would support a reallocation of the public bays to more legitimate uses such as trees, waste collection, disabled parking and car clubs.

The council should also develop a policy of productive planting in all parks, gardens and open spaces (including council estate communal gardens) that should include fruit trees, bee-friendly flowers and other species that benefit wildlife.

A PROPOSAL FOR A FEASIBILITY STUDY TO EXPLORE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STREET SUSTAINABILITY LEADERS SCHEME TO SUPPORT FASTER BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

We need to achieve significant reductions in resource and carbon use to meet ambitious targets that have been set by Camden Council. It is worth remembering that the sustainability plan is heavily relying on national emission reduction targets being met. If they are not then it is unlikely that we will meet our target. Having a more ambitious approach to behaviour change could act as a safety net. In this area councillors and staff can do a lot, but only a fraction of what can be achieved as compared with facilitating the sharing of the voluntary sustainability expertise and passion of Camden's citizens.

Research is consistent in its finding that the majority of the British population care about the environment and are concerned about climate change but are confused as to what they can do about it.

The philosophy of the Big Society is that we all have the power and the responsibility to take control in our own lives and that of our neighbourhood.

The question perhaps, is how can the Council best support this process when it comes to changing behaviour to help us all meet our targets?

We proposed that the council carry out a feasibility study to explore how Camden could set up and promote a web-based social networking tool that creates opportunities, on a street by street level, for people to volunteer themselves to assist their neighbours with any of the following:-

1. Energy efficiency in the home
2. Recycling
3. Sustainable Transport
4. Growing your own food

Based on similar principles as the highly successfully Camden eco home project, neighbours who have some knowledge on these issues and who are happy to support others struggling to identify ways forward will be provided with a social networking tool through which they will easily be able to make themselves known to their neighbours. Such a scheme would complement the work of the Smallsteps helpline. The council could use the tool to help ensure that Camden Citizens are aware of all the targets that are relevant to them. This tool would send out the clear message that ordinary citizens have a really valuable role to play in ensuring that targets are met.

In the feasibility study the council would have to explore the best avenues to promote the system as well as ways of supporting and training people who volunteer for these street leadership roles to ensure a consistent quality message, eg endorsing the ideas that have the most significant impact. Ideas for rewards or recognition should also be considered.

The system that we have been able to identify that is closest to what we have in mind is the Archway community mapping project.

<http://www.communitymaps.org.uk/version3/includes/MiniSite.php?minisitename=Archway>

However this is not a system that allows individuals to volunteer and network with the neighbours in the way that we have envisaged.

How would a Street Sustainability Leaders Scheme interact with Transition Towns?

There are likely to be benefits that flow in both directions between a local transition town programme and the borough wide streetsustainability leaders scheme. It is possible that individuals involved in transition towns would be happy to volunteer as part of the street scheme. A Transition Towns forms only when a group of committed individuals decide to start one. The new sustainability leaders scheme should lead to an increase of the number of transition towns in the borough as it will enable sustainability activists to find and network with each other more easily.

ACTIONS

1. Leading by example

We would like to see the Council allocate funds to comprehensive environmental training of all their staff. We believe green concepts deserve to be explained and given names. In order to achieve economy of scale, procurement of such training could be arranged jointly with partner Boroughs, or through ALG? School staff could also be trained in order to deliver this knowledge to children.

Action 4 - We suggest that the council's procurement policy should incorporate environmental impact rating of suppliers' operations as a key criteria in evaluating potential suppliers. This will help ensure that money spent by the council supports more sustainable business activities.

Action 7 - We suggest the council should roll out recycling facilities to **all** council buildings (not just 'more'). This should include food waste/composting.

4. Encouraging businesses, institutions and the voluntary community sector to take responsibility

We encourage the Council to carry on working with businesses and further develop this approach, especially in light of the fact that emissions from business have increased. For instance, we would like to see more white vans replaced by bicycles. This is perfectly achievable but would obviously require some practice-sharing.

5. Encouraging schools and children and young people to take responsibility

In light of the fact that there is flexibility built into the curriculum, we support a greater share of green living in the education of Camden's children. A way of doing this would be to create an educational resource to be used by teachers and pupils to help them to understand the targets that Camden has for 2020 and to help the children to explore and commit to playing their part in making sure the targets are achieved.

6. Improving homes and supporting households

(p31) We suggest the council install lighting controls (e.g. sensors) where applicable on council buildings to reduce energy spend on lighting and upgrade old inefficient lighting.

We strongly support a roll-out of a pilot project for a 'green street' energy efficient retrofit of solid wall homes.

OTHER COMMENTS

Hyperlinks on p35 don't work. Would they work, we would be more likely to consider this plan as a convenient key reference document.

Where the report refers to 'carbon' or 'carbon emissions' we assume the council refers to carbon dioxide equivalent. Mitigation of all greenhouse gases is essential, therefore care should be taken to clarify where/if the document refers to CO2 only or if figures/actions consider all greenhouse gases.

We would also welcome more concrete and measurable targets on all issues to ensure meaningful outcomes. Whilst many of the actions in the plan are commendable, weak wording in actions such as 'further promote..' 'continue to...', 'explore...' are difficult to measure and potentially lacking in ambition.