

- 8.6.6 Biodiversity net gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. This means that where biodiversity is lost as a result of a development, the compensation provided should be of an overall greater biodiversity value than that which is lost. This approach does not change the fact that losses should be avoided, and biodiversity offsetting is the option of last resort. The Mayor will be producing guidance to set out how biodiversity net gain applies in London.

Policy G7 Trees and woodlands

- A London's urban forest and woodlands should be protected and maintained, and new trees and woodlands should be planted in appropriate locations in order to increase the extent of London's urban forest – the area of London under the canopy of trees.
- B In their Development Plans, boroughs should:
- 1) protect 'veteran' trees and ancient woodland where these are not already part of a protected site¹³⁹
 - 2) identify opportunities for tree planting in strategic locations.
- C Development proposals should ensure that, wherever possible, existing trees of value are retained.¹⁴⁰ If planning permission is granted that necessitates the removal of trees there should be adequate replacement based on the existing value of the benefits of the trees removed, determined by, for example, i-tree or CAVAT or another appropriate valuation system. The planting of additional trees should generally be included in new developments – particularly large-canopied species which provide a wider range of benefits because of the larger surface area of their canopy.

¹³⁹ Forestry Commission/Natural England (2018): Ancient woodland and veteran trees; protecting them from development, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-applications-affecting-trees-and-woodland>

¹⁴⁰ Category A, B and lesser category trees where these are considered by the local planning authority to be of importance to amenity and biodiversity, as defined by BS 5837:2012

- 8.7.1 **Trees and woodlands play an important role** within the urban environment. They help to trap air pollutants, add to amenity, provide shading, absorb rainwater and filter noise. They also provide extensive areas of habitat for wildlife, especially mature trees. The urban forest is an important element of London's green infrastructure and comprises all the trees in the urban realm, in both public and private spaces, along linear routes and waterways, and in amenity areas. The Mayor and Forestry Commission have previously published a London Tree and Woodland Framework and Supplementary Planning Guidance on preparing tree strategies to help boroughs plan for the management of the urban forest.¹⁴¹ These, and their successor documents, should inform policies and proposals in boroughs' wider green infrastructure strategies.
- 8.7.2 The Mayor wants to increase tree canopy cover in London by 10 per cent by 2050. Green infrastructure strategies can be used to help boroughs identify locations where there are strategic opportunities for tree planting to maximise potential benefits. Trees should be designed into developments from the outset to maximise tree planting opportunities and optimise establishment and vigorous growth. When preparing more detailed planning guidance boroughs are also advised to refer to sources such as Right Trees for a Changing Climate¹⁴² and guidance produced by the Trees and Design Action Group.¹⁴³
- 8.7 An i-Tree Eco Assessment of London's trees quantified the benefits and services provided by the capital's **urban forest**.¹⁴⁴ This demonstrated that London's existing trees and woodlands provide services (such as pollution removal, carbon storage, and storm water attenuation) valued at £133 million per year. The cost of replacing these services if the urban forest was lost was calculated at £6.12 billion. Consequently, when trees are removed the asset is degraded and the compensation required in terms of substitute planting to replace services lost should be based on a recognised tree valuation method such as CAVAT¹⁴⁵ or i-Tree Eco.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Tree and Woodland Strategy Guidance, Mayor of London, 2013, <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/london-plan-guidance-and-spgs/tree-and-woodland>

¹⁴² The Right Trees for Changing Climate Database, <http://www.richtrees4cc.org.uk/>

¹⁴³ Trees and Design Action Group guidance, <http://www.tdag.org.uk/guides--resources.html>

¹⁴⁴ Valuing London's Urban Forest - Results of the London i-Tree Eco Project, Treeconomics, 2015, <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/environment/environment-publications/valuing-londons-urban-forest>

¹⁴⁵ CAVAT, <https://www.ltoa.org.uk/resources/cavat>

¹⁴⁶ i-Tree Eco, <https://www.itreetools.org/>

