7. Proposals and recommendations

7.1. The data gathered during survey and analysis has allowed us to draw conclusions about the condition and distribution of Newham's green and water infrastructure assets. The value of ecosystem services provided by these Natural Capital assets has also been assessed. The impact of population growth between 2023 and 2038 on these assets has also been assessed.

7.2. In Section 6, these conclusions have been used to develop a series of principles that should underpin the Council's response to these challenges and how these principles respond to the main issues that the Council will have to continue to address and that can be affected by a successful green and water infrastructure policy:

- The health and wellbeing of people living and working in the Borough
- The climate change emergency
- The biodiversity emergency

7.3. In Section 8, the tools available to the Council to address these issues is discussed in detail. These are:

- Planning policy tools
- Financial tools
- Organisational tools

7.4. In this section, we consider how these tools might be deployed to address the Borough's green and water infrastructure needs.

Quality uplift

7.5. 70% of Newham's playgrounds are 'very poor', 'poor' or fair'. Figure 7.1 shows the distribution of these sites across the Borough. In common with parks, most poor quality playground sites are to be found in the most deprived Lower Supper Output Areas across the Borough.

7.6. The Borough's green spaces and playgrounds are not in good condition.

7.7. 30% of the Borough's parks and gardens are either 'very poor' or 'fair'. Figure 7.2 shows the distribution of 'fair' and 'very poor' parks across the Borough. With three exceptions, these sites are all located in Lower Super Output Areas in the lowest three deciles defined by the Office for National Statistics.

Plashet Park

Figure 7.1 Publicly accessible playgrounds quality mapping

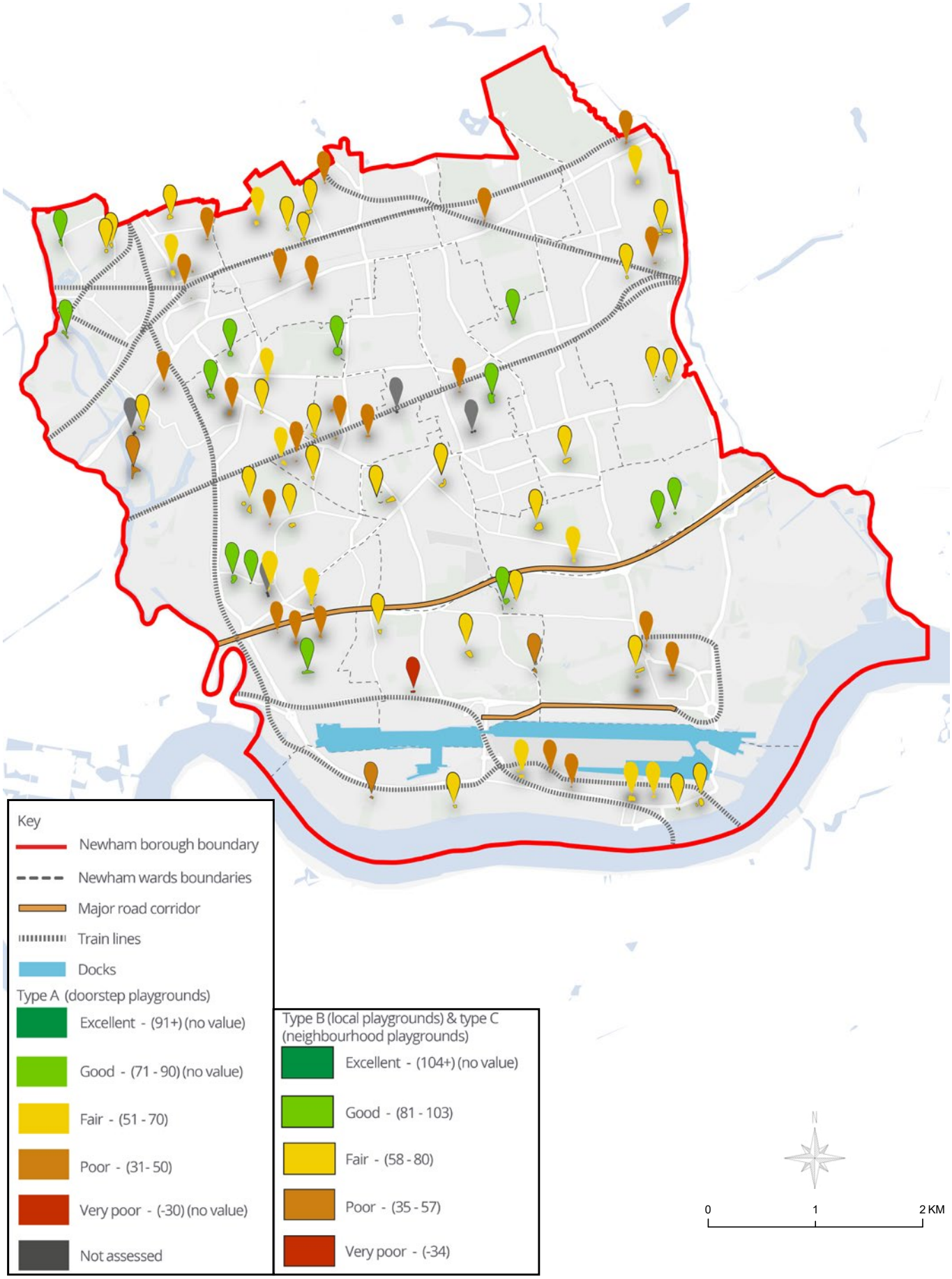
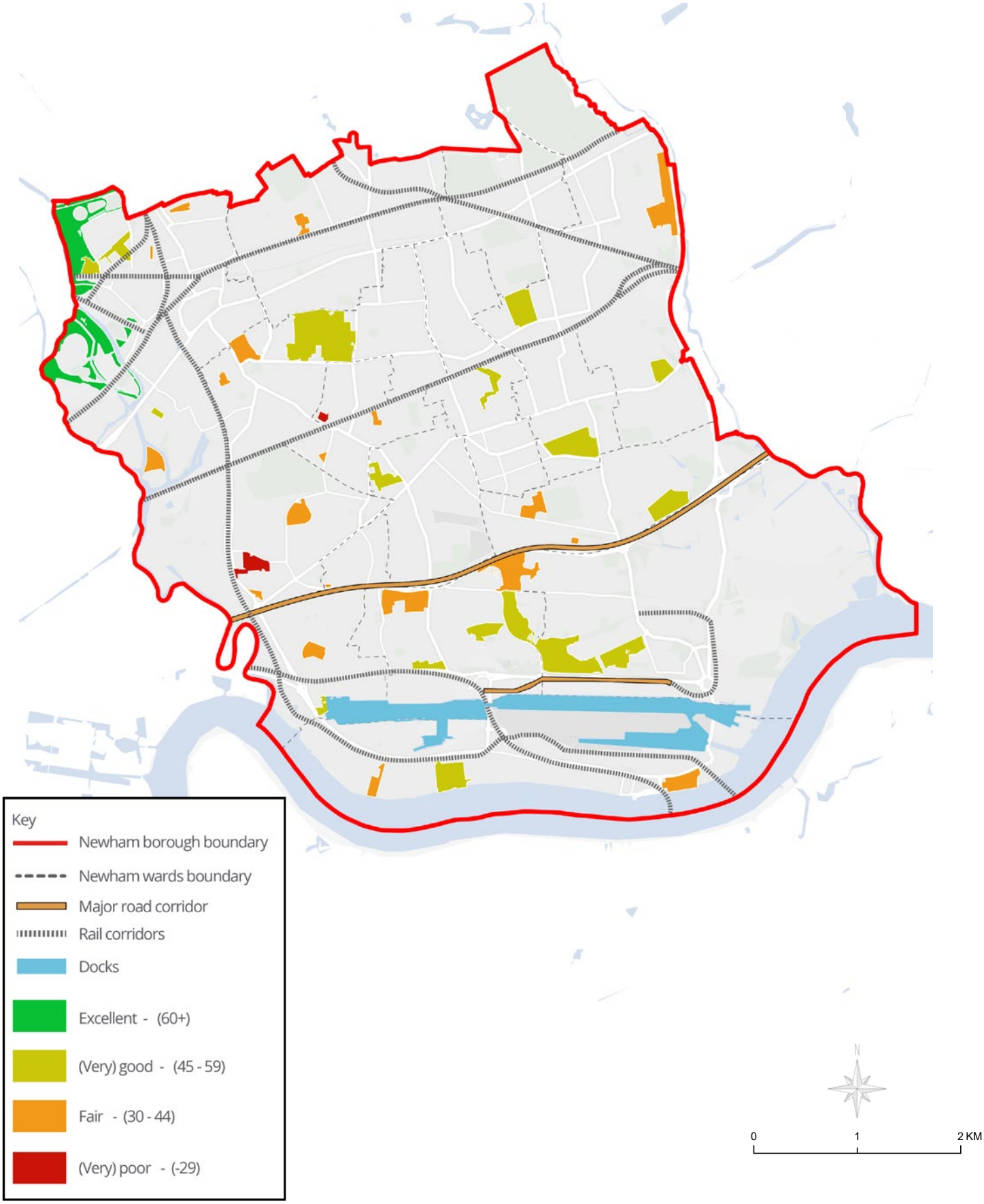


Figure 7.2 Publicly accessible parks and gardens quality mapping



7.1. As the Borough's population increases, demand on parks and playgrounds will increase and without investment, quality of provision will decrease. When quality decreases, ecosystem service flows (especially in respect of health and wellbeing) also decrease.

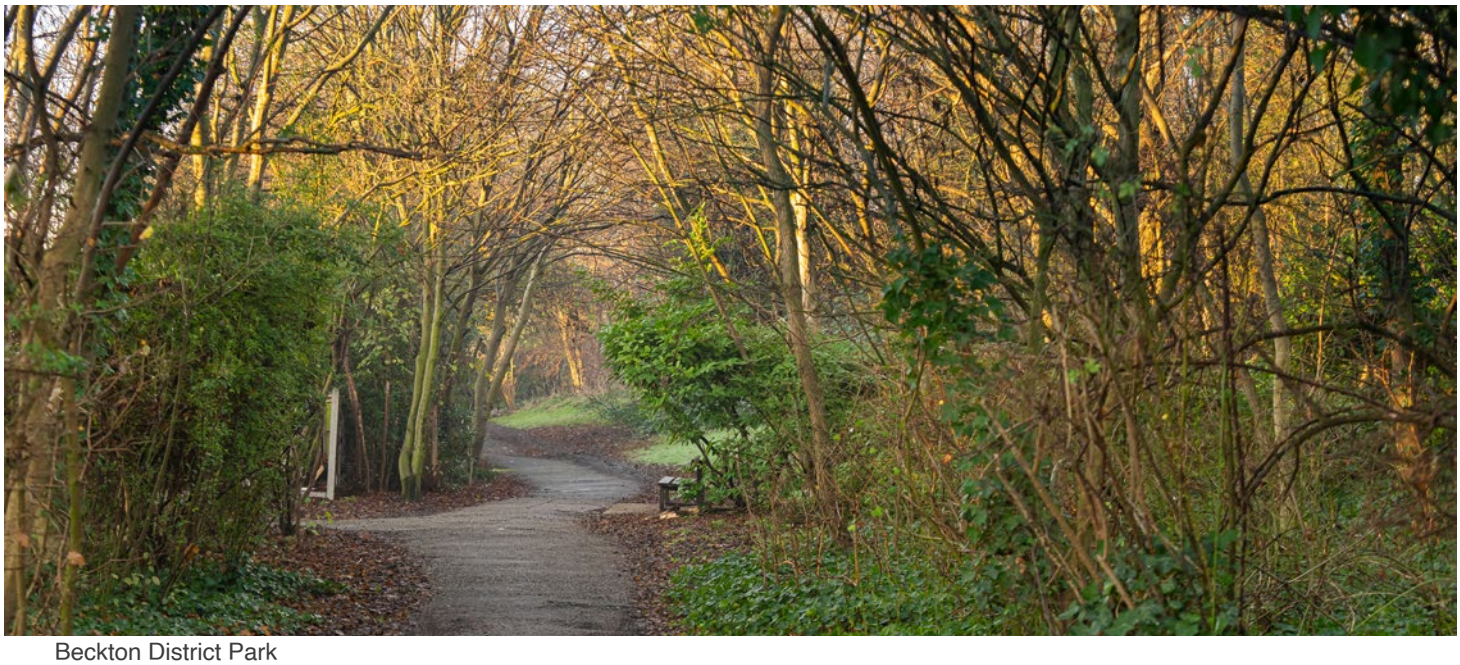
7.2. The Council needs a capital investment programme for its parks and playgrounds to ensure that service flows continue in the face of demographic change.

Green links and green corridors

7.3. Newham is a densely populated Borough and is amongst the top 3% most densely populated local authority areas in England[18]. Given this level of population density, green space provision is low relative to the rest of London. 6.04% of London's overall surface area is taken up by public parks and gardens. In Newham, parks and gardens only occupy 5.33% of the Borough's total area. When considering overall green space, only 13.1% of Newham's area is taken up by green space compared with 39% for London as a whole.

7.4. Given this low level of provision and the increase in population projected for the Borough over the Local Plan period, opportunities should be sought to create new green infrastructure provision in street and public spaces. The development of a green grid across the Borough can provide a range of ecosystem services to people living and working in the Borough:

- Combating the urban heat island effect: as Section 3 suggests, the greening of streets and grey spaces can help to alleviate the climate change effect of rising temperatures in cities by providing shade and by absorbing heat
- Addressing local flood risk: plants and trees absorb significant volumes of surface water; rain gardens and other sustainable urban drainage systems reduce the risk of local flooding
- Biodiversity connectivity: planting new trees and planting increases the number of species in urban areas and provides all-important corridors for urban wildlife
- Air quality effects: urban trees remove pollutants from the atmosphere (with an annual value to Newham of £800,000). Mature trees also absorb CO^2 from the atmosphere (with an annual value to Newham of £40,000)



Beckton District Park

18 ONS: 2021 Census https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000025/

7.5. Figure 7.3 illustrates how a green grid of connected green and water infrastructure can be created across the Borough to provide additional green infrastructure.

Figure 7.3 Newham's Green and Water Space Grid

Woodlands

7.6. Only 16% of the overall area of Newham has tree canopy cover, which is the second lowest in London. Newham has 75 Ha of woodland (slightly over 2% of the Borough's surface area). Areas of managed mature woodland provide a greater volume of ecosystem services than isolated trees. Mature woodlands support a greater range of species, deliver a greater volume of air quality effects, absorb more significant volumes of precipitation and stabilise soil structures, combating erosion across wide areas of land.

7.7. In common with the other green and water infrastructure assets, the capacity of woodlands to deliver ecosystem services is linked to their condition. Woodlands that are managed successfully and for which there are well-developed succession planting strategies will deliver a greater range and volume of services over a longer period. The development of management plans for Newham's woodlands can begin with the 17 Ha under Council management.

Rivers, docks and wetlands

7.8. Newham has a unique set of water infrastructure that includes the Thames and two of its major tributaries (the Lea and Roding) and an extensive area of repurposed dock infrastructure that is now a significant focus area for regeneration. The Borough's water infrastructure provides a significant variety of services that will be protected and further developed:

Social benefits: Health and wellbeing

7.9. Access to water infrastructure can enhance physical and mental health and wellbeing by providing capacity for active and passive recreation and by providing physical space (contrasting with adjoining densely developed urban areas).

Social benefits: Social capital

7.10. Water infrastructure can provide a range of recreational, cultural and educational benefits that can support community cohesion.

7.11. In Newham, social benefits can be reinforced by providing better access to the Borough's water infrastructure (e.g. by protecting and extending the Thames Path and by enhancing connectivity along the Lea and Roding River corridors). The development of programmes of sports, arts and cultural programming on the Borough's water infrastructure will encourage participation and bring more visitors to the Borough.

Economic benefits: Property value

7.12. Proximity to good quality water assets provides a premium to property values that supports the business case for the regeneration of current or industrial areas of river and dock frontage.

Economic benefits: Tourism

7.13. Sports, arts and cultural programmes support sense of 'place' for unique waterside and docks areas and can generate economic benefits from the tourist economy.

7.14. The development of much of Newham's water infrastructure frontage is driven by the higher property values that follow from visual access to rivers and docks. Sensitively designed regeneration supports a sense of 'place', the creation of sustainable communities and the distinctive social and cultural characters of neighbourhoods.

Environmental benefits: Biodiversity

7.15. Newham's rivers and docks add significantly to the Borough's biodiversity capacity and provide unique habitat opportunities (particularly in the tidal and inter-tidal areas of rivers). The Borough's water infrastructure assets all function as wildlife corridors, connecting different parts of the Borough and to a broader green and

water infrastructure hinterland beyond the Borough boundary.

7.16. Steps will be taken with the Council's partners to enhance the effectiveness of these unique habitats to maximise their potential to address the issues presented by the biodiversity emergency.

Environmental benefits: Climate change

7.17. Newham's rivers present opportunities to mitigate the impact of climate change. Rivers and docks will continue to absorb surface water run-off and have a cooling effect on adjoining urban areas (limiting the urban heat island effect at a local level). Rivers also constitute a climate change related threat in the form of an increased risk of flooding that is a consequence of rising sea levels and more volatile weather patterns.

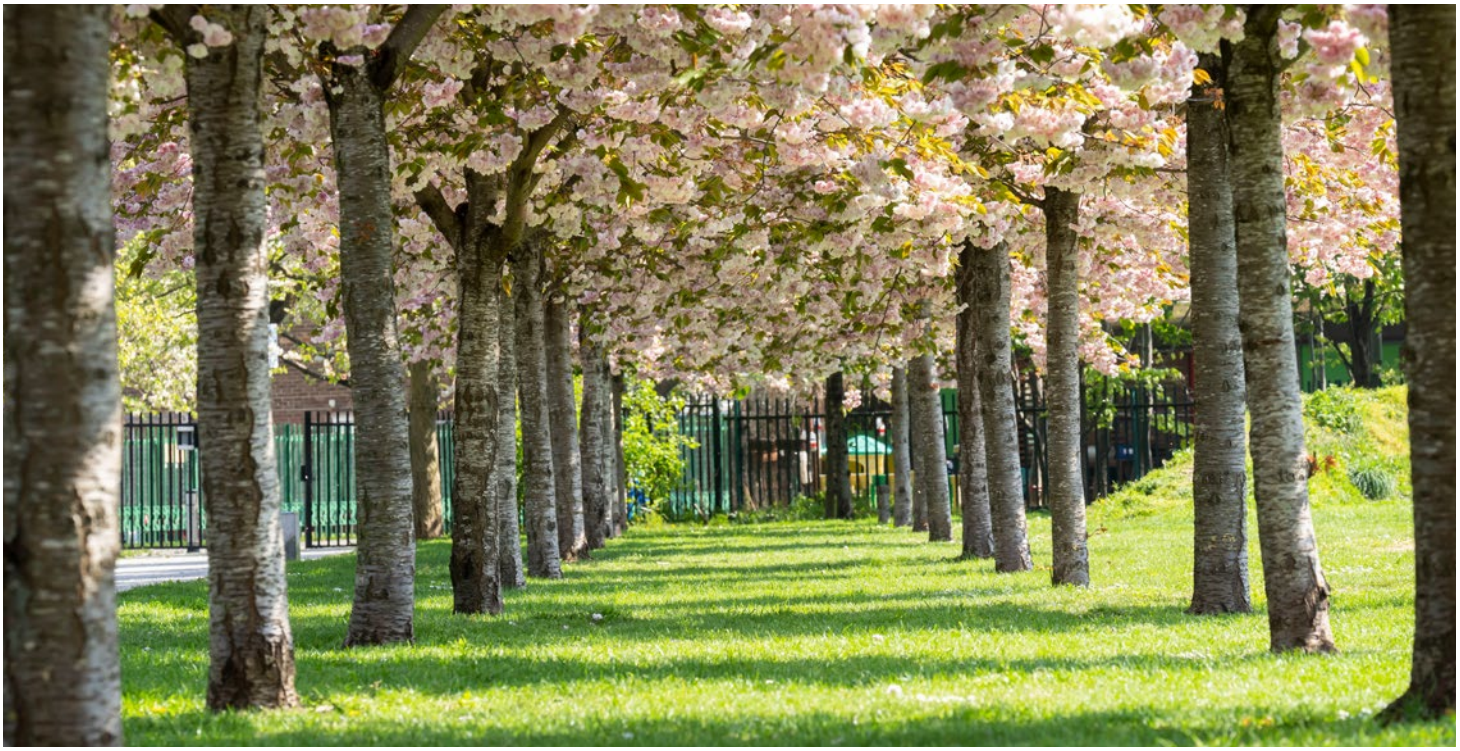
7.18. Newham's water spaces will continue to be managed as an important component in the Council's climate change and flood risk management strategies and the Council will continue to develop partnerships with external agencies that can help to deliver against these priorities.

Biodiversity enhancement

7.19. The passing into law of the Environment Act of 2021 enshrines biodiversity net gain into planning policy and this became mandatory in the autumn of 2023.

7.20. Newham faces significant challenges to the implementation of biodiversity net gain and urban greening factor. Newham is adopting a high-density approach to population growth which can (if well-planned) support a greater diversity of land use in densely developed areas of the Borough, providing communities with a wider range of services and amenities including publicly accessible green space and enhanced biodiversity capacity.

7.21. Given the lack of available space and the need to maximise connectivity between different green and water infrastructure assets, green roofs, green walls and other areas of 'constructed' (as opposed to natural) urban green space can help to maximise the capacity of the built environment to provide ecosystem services and to address the requirement of biodiversity net gain, local nature recovery and urban greening.



Keir Hardie Recreation Ground

Newham Green and Water Space Grid

7.22. Section 3.23 of the Strategy describes how the character of Newham is defined by its different neighbourhoods. These are described in detail in the Borough Characterisation Study commissioned by the Council in 2022 (updated 2024). This section assesses the provision of green infrastructure across Newham's 17 neighbourhoods and proposes how this provision can be enhanced.

7.23. The Baseline Assessment of publicly accessible green space across Newham (Section 5) assesses the provision of the following typologies of green infrastructure:

- Parks (using the provision standard of 0.72 Ha /1,000 Head of Population proposed in the Strategy)
- Playgrounds (using the Fields in Trust Guidance for Sport and Play LAP, LEAP and NEAP typologies and the 0.25 Ha/1,000 HoP)
- Allotments and community growing sites (0.125 Ha/1,000 HoP proposed by the National Allotment Society)

7.24. The assessment identifies Wards across the Borough where provision falls below the proposed standards of provision. To an extent, the shortfall in provision can be addressed through new green infrastructure identified on housing site allocations. By identifying provision deficits at Wards level, recommendations can be made for new or enhanced provision for each allocation site. Due to the scale of sites and the need for other land uses, recommendations are made to provide either a Local Park (consolidated 2ha), Small Open Space (under 2ha) or Pocket Park (under 0.4ha) depending on the nature of the deficiency the site is within, and the scale of the site.

7.25. Connectivity is also examined as part of this analysis, and opportunities for green links and green corridors are identified where it is feasible to do so at this scale. For the purposes of this report a green link is associated with providing linear links between open space for the benefit of people. Green links can also be green corridors if designed with wildlife and ecological connectivity in mind. The terms can be used interchangeably as the more detailed design of linear spaces is what defines their potential to connect to facilitate either active travel or ecological benefits.

7.26. Since the Regulation 18 Local Plan took place in 2023, this version of the Green and Water Infrastructure Strategy (2025) has been updated to reflect the 17 neighbourhood boundaries in Newham (previously 16). The revision to the neighbourhoods was made in response to the representations received at the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation from residents, landowners, developers and community groups. Changes were made to the Regulation 18 Local Plan boundaries to:

- reflect neighbourhoods that residents recognise
- to make sure that the boundaries did not result in places, such as parks or local centres, being split between neighbourhoods

7.27. This change, to Newham's Local Plan neighbourhoods occurred too late to be accommodated in the 2024 version of the Green and Water Infrastructure Strategy. Instead, this amendment was included as an addendum to the version of the Green and Water Infrastructure Strategy published as part of the Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation in 2024.

7.28. As a consequence of this update and further refinements to mapping within the strategy, play space and growing space requirements for some Local Plan site allocations have been updated and do not match what is published in this version of the Strategy (2025). In these instances, the play and growing space requirements published in the Regulation 19 Submission Local Plan (2024) remain in force and will not be altered.

7.29. However, due to the overall lack of good quality play space and the low levels of growing space in Newham, should a development seek to exceed its onsite play or growing space requirement and meet the standard set out this version of the Green and Water Infrastructure Strategy (2025), this would be supported. In these instances, play and growing space provision will form part of pre-application discussions with Newham's Development Management team.

Figure 7.4 Newham Green and Water Space Grid