

Dear Haringey Councillors,

Open Letter: St Ann's 'New Neighbourhood' - reject this planning application!

As local residents and community group members, we are shocked that Catalyst Housing's proposals for St Ann's Hospital, Haringey, will result in the loss of nearly 50% of the trees on the development section of the site.

Haringey Council's [press release](#) of 30 September 2022 does nothing to address our concerns. 'Tough action', it states, 'is in the pipeline' to put in place 'a dedicated trees policy with a clear expectation of developers to retain and protect mature and veteran trees rather than fell or damage them'. This will come too late for 114 mature trees, 30 tree groups and 260.5m hedgerow at St Ann's. Haringey's promise of future action is at best vague, and at worst could be read as greenwashing.

The press release promises future consultation with residents on its trees policy. But local people were never consulted about tree losses at St Ann's, despite Catalyst's claims to be 'putting nature at the heart of the development'. This makes a mockery of local co-design, and ignores the work of community groups struggling to make South Tottenham a greener place to live. If this devastating destruction goes ahead, it will represent the largest felling of trees for any recent development in Haringey. The Friends of St Ann's Green Spaces petition on Change.org has generated nearly 1,000 protest signatures in just a few days, which demonstrates the strength of local feeling.

St Ann's Hospital site is a green lung for South Tottenham – an Area of Deficiency in Access to Nature as defined in the 2016 [Mayor's London Plan](#). It contains many mature and rare trees; the woodland area along the southern perimeter is a SINC (Site of Importance to Nature Conservation) and home to a rich variety of wildlife. Botanist David Bevan's 2015 review found that, "Some of the trees are more than 80 years old and many are rare in cultivation."

The [Arboricultural Impact Assessment \(AIA\) Survey](#), submitted as part of Catalyst's planning application, proposes a huge reduction in trees, including rare species, fruit trees and mature hedgerow on the 60% section of the site currently owned by the GLA. This will have a detrimental impact on air pollution (particularly from St Ann's Road), and significantly reduce biodiversity. Most worryingly, the reduction in tree canopy combined with increased heat generated by the new housing and 106 parking spaces will intensify the impact of worsening London temperatures. St Ann's ward tree canopy is well below Haringey's target of 30% - see its new [Parks and Green Spaces strategy](#). The proposed green roofs and post-development planting of new trees will do little to ameliorate this. Housing is desperately needed, but not at the expense of green canopy in our climate emergency.

St Ann's development proposals directly contradict Haringey Council's own [Climate Emergency declaration](#), passed unanimously in 2019, which commits the council to achieving a net zero carbon borough. Trees are the ultimate carbon capture mechanism, and the felling

of mature trees at St Ann's will result in significant carbon release that cannot be replaced by planting new saplings. Renowned arboriculturist Russell Miller, says of Catalyst's development plans:

'the scale of tree and canopy loss is extraordinarily high. Given the climate emergency and record London temperatures in 2022, loss of canopy of this magnitude should lead to an automatic rejection of the design. People in London are dying from excessive heat and air pollution... All planning guidance in London is for increasing canopy cover.'

The Mayor's London Plan [Policy G7, p. 329](#) directs boroughs to 'protect and maintain London's urban forest and woodland', and to *retain* existing trees wherever possible. [Research](#) by Imperial College London demonstrates the importance of retaining complex tree ecosystems, and cautions that, 'poorly planned planting efforts can actually increase the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere and increase global warming.' Catalyst's proposals for *biodiversity offsetting* by extending the SINC woodland is deeply problematic: the reduction of overall canopy cover will result in a likely loss of biodiversity. The London Plan (Policy G6) recommends that actions to protect SINC's should include 'the protection and conservation of priority species and habitats that sit *outside* the SINC network'. It also notes that 'biodiversity offsetting is the option of last resort'.

A huge increase in UK woodland is required to meet net zero carbon emissions by 2050, as reported in the Committee on Climate Change's [Report](#) to Parliament 2022. Haringey Council's aim to plant 10,000 new trees by 2030, while admirable, will be too late. Carbon retention and sequestration does not occur for at least 10 years after trees are planted: retaining mature trees needs to be a priority.

In August 2022 St Ann's became one of two new Low Traffic Neighbourhood's for Haringey, and we are seeing significant improvements in air quality. But these benefits will be undermined if the St Ann's development goes ahead. It is time for Haringey Councillors to take genuine responsibility for the future of Haringey's residents, and to create a legacy of hope. St Ann's Catalyst Housing development could and should be an exemplar of green planning and affordable housing. We ask you to reject this planning application.

Yours sincerely,

Friends of St Ann's Green Spaces (StAGS)

Friends of Finsbury Park

Friends of Railway Fields

Ladder Community Safety Partnership

Tottenham and Wood Green Friends of the Earth

Friends of Chestnuts Park

Friends of Harringay Stadium Slopes

Gardens Residents Association

Haringey Tree Protectors

Woodlands Park Residents Association