



Islington Borough Council

ORVal Report

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Context

Islington is one of the Northern Boroughs of London and covers an area of 1,486ha. The borough has a total of 16 wards and a population estimate of 231,200¹. The tree population of Islington's publicly owned trees is approximately 40,000. It could be said that Islington currently has one tree, for every six people.

According to the report *Better Environment, Better Health*, written by the Greater London Authority in 2013 and the dataset published in 2018, green spaces account for 12% of the borough. This is 19% below the average for London. Interestingly *"40 per cent of households in 4 out of 16 wards, have deficient access to nature"*². Despite the limited number of green spaces within Islington, tree canopy cover significantly exceeds the average (17%) with 25%. At the time of the study, levels of physical activity, were higher than the London average, up to 22% of the borough's population took part in physical activity for at least 30 minutes 5 times per week. Additionally adult obesity was also below the average for London at 18%³.

Figure 1 illustrates both green spaces and canopy cover within Islington. Our Canopy Cover Report found that areas with increased tree cover scored higher for community wellbeing. This supports the findings of the 2016 study carried out by Ulmer et al, which examined health benefits of tree canopy cover. The report stated that *"The results indicated that more neighborhood tree cover, independent from green space access, was related to better overall health, primarily mediated by lower overweight/obesity and better social cohesion, and to a lesser extent by less type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and asthma"*³.

¹ GLA, 2019

² GLA, 2018

³ Ulmer, J.M, et al, 2016

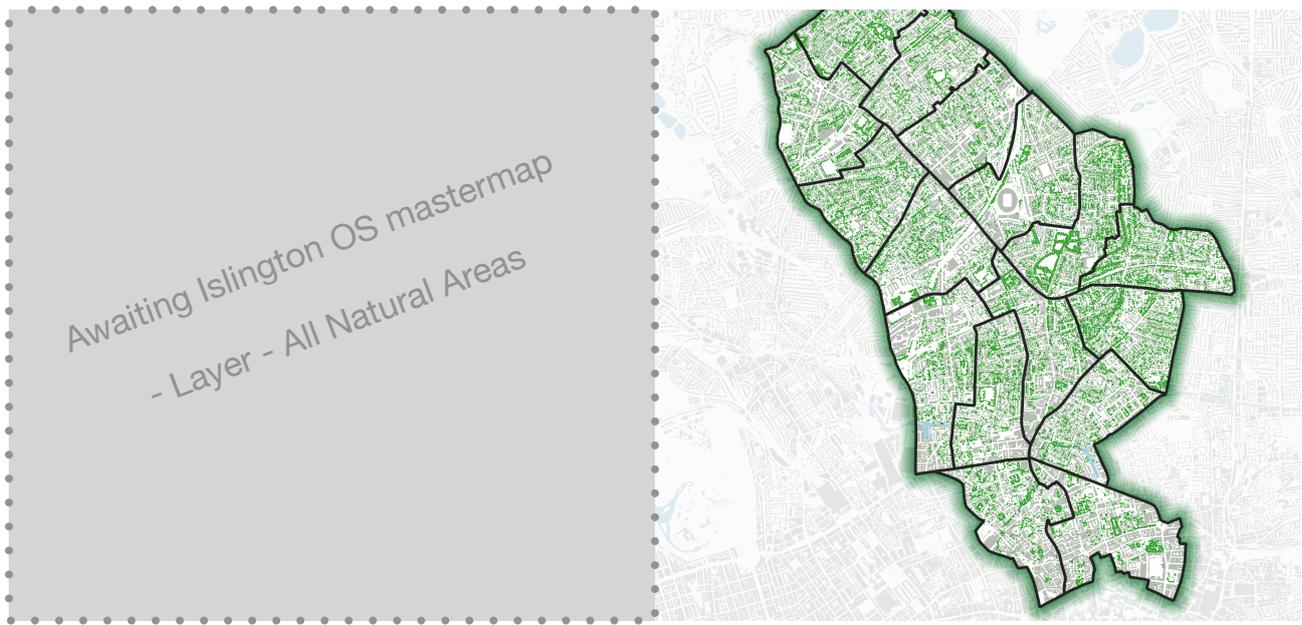


Figure 1: OS Mastermap of green spaces and Bluesky canopy cover map of Islington.

Within Islington are green spaces of varying size. The larger selection of parks include; Highbury Fields, Paradise Park, Caledonian Park, Barnard Park and Rosemary Gardens. Gillespie Park, Olden Garden Community Project, Crouch Hill Park and Barnsbury Wood are Local Nature Reserves⁴. Gillespie Park and Ecology Centre is a 2.8 ha nature reserve, the woodland, wetland and meadow habitats are home to 244 species of plant, 94 species of bird and 24 types of butterfly⁵. The land and conservation designations of Islington can be seen in Figure 1. As seen within the map there are several areas of Special Scientific Interest, parts of Barnsbury Wood SSSI have 2 areas of favourable condition and one of unfavourable condition. Barnsbury Wood is a smaller Nature Reserve in Islington and is home to a wildlife garden and woodland which hosts a range of interesting species. Barnsbury Wood is well used by environmental education groups alongside members of the community⁶

⁴ Islington, 2013

⁵ Islington, anon

⁶ Islington, anon

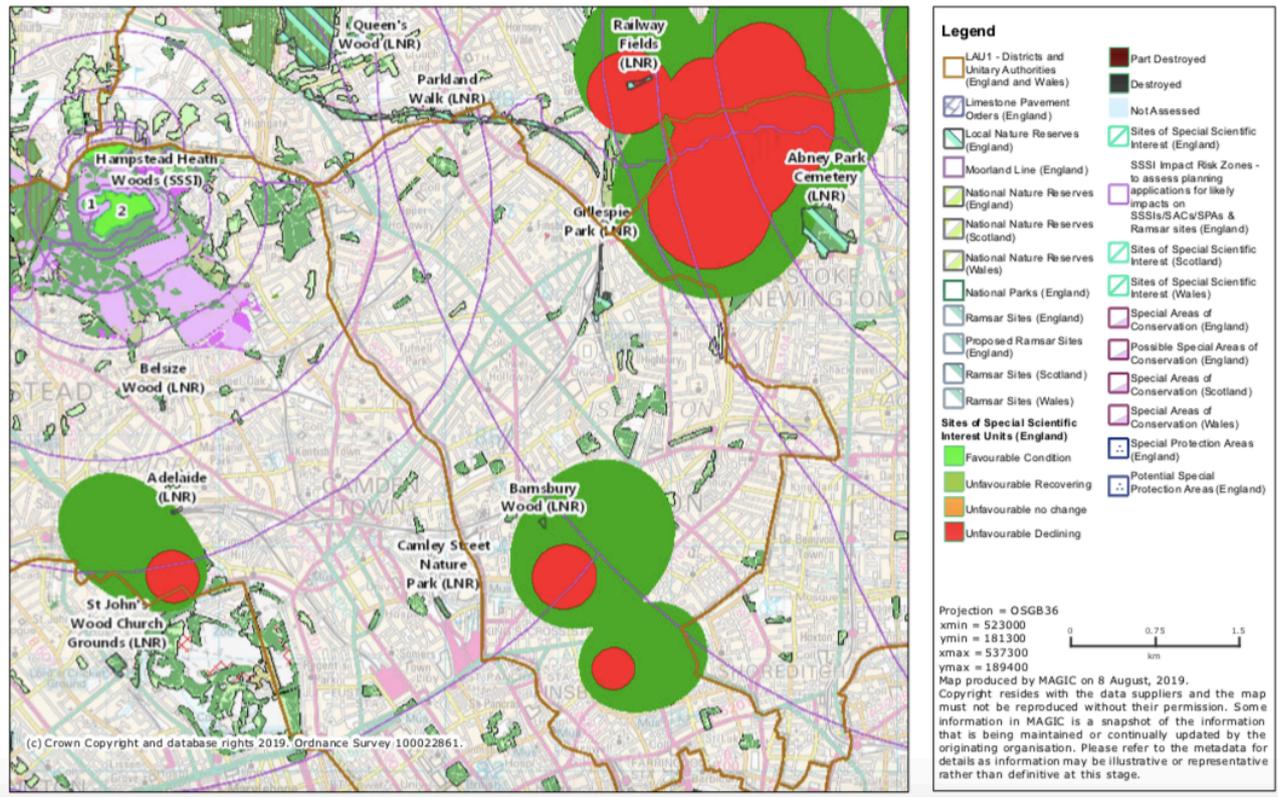


Figure 1: MAGIC map displaying the scientific and conservation land designations in Islington.

The ORVal Tool

ORVal, is an online application which has been “*developed as a collaboration between the Land, Environment, Economics and Policy (LEEP) Institute at the University of Exeter and DEFRA*”. The tool aims to provide information which can enable benefits derived from accessible green space in England and Wales to be interpreted and analysed. The data can be explored using the mapping tool (<http://leep.exeter.ac.uk/orval>). Estimations of the number of visits and the welfare value are “*derived from a statistical model of recreational demand*”⁷.

The term ‘welfare’ refers to “*the sense of well-being or utility that an individual feels from their experiences.*” The tool assumes that when someone visits a green space the welfare exceeds that of other activities such as watching television. Estimations of which green spaces an individual might visit are involved in the generation of annual welfare values by the statistical tool.

An individual’s socioeconomic characteristics, their location of residence, the day of the week and month of the year, in addition to site specific conditions and qualities are accommodated within the modelling¹. Travel costs and duration are calculated based upon a value of 25p per km and Department for Transport time estimations¹.

⁷ Day *et al*, 2018

Estimated Visitation



Figure 3: Infographic to display the estimated number of visits to Islington (per year) by car and not by car.

Islington is visited over 4,000,000 times per year by residents and tourists. As illustrated in Figure 2, more visitors come to the park not by car than by car. This could perhaps be due to more visitors being local residents of Islington and therefore do not require car transport to access green spaces. We can examine the value in terms of visitation in further detail by exploring contributions from each of the four social grades. The ORVal tool uses the ONS grading system as explained by both IPSOS and the National Readership Survey (NRS) to disaggregate the data.

The four social grades include AB, C1, C2 and DE, these codes are based on the NRS System (National Readership Survey), which has since been updated by The Office for National Statistics

(ONS) in 2001. This system uses a numerical category system. Using a conversion, it can be said that the AB group includes individuals who hold a professional, managerial position, C1 refers to professional roles and some small employers. Lower level supervisors and technical roles fall into the C2 category whereas semi/ unskilled manual positions fall into the DE category alongside those who are unemployed (ONS, 2001).

It is interesting to note that individuals within the AB category make more visits to Islington than any other group (1,913,172). These members of the community (within the AB category) typically hold managerial, professional roles. This was also the case when a similar study was carried out for Hyde Park in London. The social group with the lowest number of visits (509,497) includes people who are considered to hold lower level lower level supervisory or technical roles (C2).

Welfare Value



Figure 3: Infographic to show the welfare value of Islington and its highest social group.

The London Borough of Islington has an annual Welfare Value of £15,837,677. This is a higher value than that of Hackney Borough to the right of Islington, and City of London, which lies to the south. These boroughs have values of £15,385,983 and £2,935,532 respectively. Camden, to the left of Islington however, has a significantly greater welfare value of £28,023,549. Camden is a much larger borough and includes 40 designated Conservation Areas, covering around 50% of the total borough⁸.

The ORVal tool estimates that, in addition to having the highest number of visits, the AB Socio Economic Category also has the highest Welfare Value of £6,319,092 annually. With C1 having the lowest value at just £1,766,019, this is a difference of 72% (£4,553,073). A study which examined 'Perceived Neighbourhood Environment and Park Use as Mediators of the Effect of Area Socio-

⁸ Camden, 2019

Economic Status on Walking Behaviours' similarly concluded that individuals with a higher socio-economic position within the community had a higher frequency of local park use. Their study concluded that this social group reported higher levels of security, maintenance and aesthetic qualities which encouraged socialising and reduced antisocial behaviours. To support this finding it also stated that residents with a higher socio economics position reported “an average 22% more weekly minutes of recreational walking” than those in a lower position⁹.



Figure 5: Infographic to show the the value of some key recreational sites within Islington.¹⁰

It is very interesting to note that the C2 social group have the lowest welfare value followed by the DE Category. The DE social group have a welfare value of £2,556,512 which is £790,493 higher. This could perhaps be explained by the lifestyles of the individuals who fall into these social groups. The

⁹ Leslie, E. *et al*, 2010

¹⁰ Image Source; Islington Council, anon

DE social group includes both unemployed and state pensioners who may have more quality time to enjoy green spaces.

The largest recreational site within Islington is Highbury Fields. Covering 11.94 ha in total size with an area of broadleaved woodland covering 5 ha of the site. The National Trust own a very small proportion of the site (0.06 ha). It has a Welfare Value of £491,015 with the AB social group holding the highest value at £204,767. The socio economic value by social group trend reflects Islington as a whole. Highbury Fields has 197,093 visits annually and the most visits are made by the AB social group, while the C2 social group make the least number of visits.

Gillespie Park, mentioned earlier in the report is a smaller site at 2.8 ha and has a range of land use, such as, maintained grass and broadleaf/ mixed species woodland. This park is a designated Local Nature reserve and has a Welfare Value of £117,749. As with Highbury Fields the pattern of welfare value by socio economic grouping reflects the Borough of Islington with the AB social group having the highest value at £46,010 per year. The park is visited approximately 34,089 times per year with more visits (21,567) being made not by car than by car (12,522).

Rosemary Gardens covers an area of 2.63 ha and is comprised on a large area of broadleaved woodland. As you can see from Figure 5, Rosemary Gardens has excellent recreational sport facilities such as tennis courts to add to its value as a green space in such a central location. Rosemary Gardens has a welfare value of £193,936 per year and is visited approximately 65,601 times per year. Rosemary Gardens is a smaller area than Gillespie Park, yet has a larger number of visits and welfare value.

Elthorne Park is a little smaller than Gillespie park and Rosemary Gardens at 2.44 ha. It has a similar range of land cover to Gillespie Park and Highbury Fields, in addition to its formal garden cover 0.13 ha of the park in total. It has a welfare value of £184,992 per year and is visited approximately 58,906 times per year.

Conclusion

Islington is a London Borough North of City and has a higher Welfare value than Hackney its neighbouring borough. Approximately 231,200¹¹ people live in Islington alongside around 40,000 trees. The AB social category, (managerial and professional roles) has both the highest number of site visits and the highest welfare value. The C2 category had the lowest number of site visits and welfare value. These reflect the findings from our canopy cover report which identified that areas of higher canopy cover, generally scored higher with regards to socio economic status, wellbeing and health indicators. Islington has a limited green space cover of just 12%, which is below the average for London, however, it's canopy cover is 25% which is much higher than that of London as whole. Despite the limited green space, physical activity remains good for the borough and levels of adult obesity are below the average for London.

Islington is accessed significantly more by those on foot or using public transport than those who travel by car. With such an emphasis on the current climatic situation, it would be recommended that maintaining public transport and on foot access remains a high priority to preserve this strong quality of Islington. Islington is of huge value to the local and visiting community and it would be interesting to explore the data further to give a detailed view of the benefits provided by these outstanding green spaces.

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