DRAFT REPORT OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	**WARDS:** All
REPORT TITLE The application of the circular economy in the work of Camden Council and support for the principles of circularity in the public and private sectors in the Borough.	
REPORT OF Councillor Julian Fulbrook on behalf of the five members of the Scrutiny Panel.	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Culture & Environment Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2023	**DATE** 1 November 2023

SUMMARY OF REPORT

PURPOSE

To scrutinise the applicability of concepts related to the circular economy in the work of Camden Council and to consider any appropriate recommendations for circularity within the Council and more broadly in support for circularity in the public and private sectors within the Borough.

The Panel was established by the Culture & Environment Scrutiny Committee "to work to develop a changing narrative and practice within Camden on the use of materials, away from just waste and recycling collection services, to a more progressive ambition of lower resource usage and reduction in 'consumption emissions'."

Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information

No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report'.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That the C&E Scrutiny Committee considers the recommendations as outlined in the report, comments on any issues, and forwards the recommendations as appropriate for further investigation and implementation by Cabinet Members and officers.

Signed: The final report must be signed by an Executive Director or Director (of partner organisation if applicable) before it is submitted to Committee Services for inclusion on a committee agenda.

Date:

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of a circular economy is a theory first put forward by Kenneth Boulding in 1966. A British economist, strongly influenced by his membership of the Society of Friends (Quakers), he held a series of academic posts first at Edinburgh and then in a number of Universities in the USA. An obituary in the *New York Times* in 1993 suggested that his approach could be summarised by imagining “someone who was half Milton Friedman, half Mahatma Gandhi”.

The circular economy approach has gained considerable influence, particularly in the last decade, notably across Europe, in Japan and the USA. It is a critique of the traditional linear economy use of materials, characterised by “take, make, waste, dispose”. Instead the mantra of the circular economy is to “reduce, re-use, recycle”.

The circular economy is therefore about a theoretical model of production and consumption with applicability in many areas. Important strands of its approach towards materials include sharing, renting not buying, leasing, re-using, repairing, refurbishing, re-manufacturing, recycling, composting, and above all, reducing or even eliminating waste and other related societal problems such as toxic emissions.

Subsequent research and practical developments of the circular economy approach cover a very wide field, but the principal objectives are, so far as is possible:

to eliminate waste and pollution,
to circulate products, materials and “stuff” of all descriptions,
to regenerate natural systems, and
to reduce carbon footprint and bring about a carbon neutral economy.

The targets of such an approach aim to tackle the climate emergency, to halt the loss of biodiversity, and in particular to safeguard against waste and pollution, as so many products end up in landfills or in an incinerator when they could be put to better use.

The nine areas of much circular economy thinking and debate relate to the following sectors (in alphabetical order, but clearly with very different impacts on sustainability):

Agriculture and food waste.
Construction of buildings.
Furniture and household goods.
Logistics, deliveries and packaging.
Motor vehicles and their effect on toxic emissions and particulates.
Oil, gas and renewable energy.
Rare earth elements recovery.
Textiles.
Zero waste objectives, and particularly the eradication of harmful materials such as plastic.

Necessarily some of the options are in the realm of national and international policy decisions, but that should not stop us in Camden thinking through what might be possible on a local level. This Scrutiny Panel report highlights some excellent good practice in Camden, both in the public and private spheres. It is vital that we support what is already done well by the Council and its partners, even though some of that practice is controversial and indeed occasionally under attack. But the Scrutiny Panel also had a remit to consider what further trajectories in Camden might be possible and how it has a

role to play in supporting initiatives and indeed cross-fertilising and modelling useful ideas across sectors in the Borough.

2. CAMDEN'S EXISTING POLICIES

At the outset it is important to note that Camden already has made very significant progress on sustainability, and in particular is committed to achieving a carbon neutral economy by 2030. All Council decision-making is now conducted through the lens of guidelines on stated environmental implications, which necessarily will consider any impact on climate. Specific areas of focus for Camden are listed as:

energy use: has energy demand been reduced as far as possible? is the residual energy requirement met through renewable energy sources? Is the approach to delivery now less carbon intensive than before?
air pollution: have we reduced air pollution as far as possible? How have we ensured that the proposal does not place vulnerable residents closer to sources of air pollution How has low emission transport been prioritised over fossil fuel based transport? Have we avoided unnecessary transport impacts in this decision, for example by procuring from local suppliers or through improved consolidation of deliveries?
environmental policy: Does any supplier of goods and services have a strong environmental policy that evidences that their operations are performed in a way that minimises their environmental impact?
resource efficiency: have food miles and the use of single use plastics been minimised? Is the proposal or design sufficiently adaptable to ensure longevity? Has the option to re-use or re-purpose the existing asset been considered? How has resource efficiency been achieved?
climate resilience: is any proposal designed to adapt to and protect residents from the impacts of climate change, for example, if it is a development proposal are the buildings designed to minimise solar heating gains, reduce surface water run-off and improve water efficiency. How are vulnerable residents protected from climate impacts?

3. THE SCRUTINY PANEL FRAMEWORK

In line with the Council's approach for short timelines for Scrutiny Panels this Panel has held a series of meetings with council officers, leading experts in the field, and key stakeholders. We also requested written communications and suggestions from Camden residents, looking in particular at examples where local government is modelling best practice. Necessarily we have focussed on what a Council can do to support sustainability in practical terms and within its limited local government remit, and what impactful levers Camden can use. Questions such as "what can Camden Council do that others are not able to do?", "how can the Council provide conditions for circularity within the local economy?", and "how can the Council support partners" were all considered. Nevertheless, in searching for best practice and how Camden can try to continue as a leader in the field we have also considered some broader themes where local authorities can act as role models and as part of a wider public discussion underway. The fundamental question is what Camden can do to prompt change and to unleash the potential for increased sustainability.

At our first scoping meeting members of the Panel selected an area to focus on from the nine general areas of circular economy thinking outlined above. These topics were further

refined. Given the time constraints for individual members and also given the brevity of the Scrutiny Panel's timeline the aim was not to come to definitive conclusions but to spark some recommendations which would lead to further discussion within the Council as to additional actions that could be taken, scrutinising current practices and building on existing Council policies. It was anticipated that in all there would be six meetings of the Panel, one meeting being to engage with key Camden officers on their understanding of a circular economy and the considerable work already done in the Borough towards circularity, and then another meeting online with leading experts. For various reasons it was not possible to have all the Panel on every site visit, but individual members were in contact with and visited key locations both in Camden and elsewhere. Practice in other London Boroughs, at central government and regional level, as well as that internationally, was also investigated by individual members. A letter to local newspapers indicated that the Panel would be receptive to any ideas from local Camden residents.

It should not be a surprise that in an initial meeting of this scrutiny exercise on an overarching theme of "reduce" it was clear from the data that the top three sources of carbon emissions in the London Borough of Camden are transport, housing and food. Indeed, there is obvious overlap with these three sectors, particularly with logistics, which will often involve deliveries by polluting vehicles to construction sites and food delivery points. Transport, housing and food were three of the themes selected by Panel members to pursue for further research and recommendations. But as well as the "Big Three" challenging sustainability there are many other areas of potential action for the circular economy options of recycling and repair. These often involve culture and behaviour change. Recycling in particular is vital tool of the circular economy, feeding materials such as plastics, paper, metal and glass back into manufacturing and reducing the need for virgin materials. Two other areas focussing on recycling were selected by members of the Scrutiny Panel - repairs and textiles - and discussion on these themes produced some innovative ideas as to how sustainability could be factored in to achieve a lower carbon footprint in Camden.

The five topics selected by the Scrutiny Panel were:

Cllr Camron Aref-Adib: food waste.
Cllr Siân Berry: repairs.
Cllr Nina De Ayala Parker: textiles and fashion.
Cllr Julian Fulbrook: transport, toxic emissions and particulates.
Cllr Matthew Kirk: construction and the repurposing of buildings.

We have been particularly assisted in our work by Sola Odusina, Principal Committee Officer; Maddy Thimont Jack, Senior Policy and Project Officer; and Richard Bradbury, Director of Environment and Sustainability. Many other officers have also contributed to our work, and we would additionally like to thank external experts, community activists and local residents who made contributions.

In considering what Camden might do to effect change it was particularly helpful to engage with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation; with ReLondon which is the partnership of the Mayor of London and London"s Boroughs to improve waste and resource management in the capital; with Olio a sharing app with the slogan "Don't buy it or bin it - Olio it!; and with the Centre for Future Infrastructure of Edinburgh University. In addition Cllr Kirk, in looking at repurposing buildings, had separate and useful discussions with Climate Emergency Camden and Power up North London. The Scrutiny Panel were also able to conduct site visits and discuss concerns with Camden officers and a number of organisations in the

Borough and elsewhere who are researching in the field and considering options for more sustainability.

4. THE SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND AND KEY THEMES

This is an arena which is inevitably fraught with controversy. What can no longer be in dispute is the scientific fact of a climate emergency in which the traditional linear economy plays a major role. The past two years have seen record temperatures across the UK and globally the problems with wildfires and flooding have brought home the realisation to many that we need to reduce greenhouse gases on an emergency basis. While the overall nature of the problem is undeniable, it is important to take account of the science, but also to appreciate that science may be developing some possible solutions to this crisis in a rapidly changing situation. While there are grounds for deep pessimism there is also the vital need to search out practical ways to achieve sustainability. For example, while aviation accounts for around 2.5% of global carbon emissions, and is one of the more visible industries to consider when tackling adverse climate change it would seem that sustainable aviation fuel is already being trialled in Britain, with synthetic fuel giving carbon savings of up to 80%. The Royal Air Force conducted a world-first 100% sustainable aviation fuel flight in 2022 and Virgin Atlantic is carrying out its first sustainable aviation transatlantic flight this year (Matthew Gorman, “The sky’s the limit for net zero aviation” *New Statesman,* 6 October 2023). We need necessarily to take account both of the existing science but also the technological progress in combatting the problems. And we need to seek out ways to rapidly turn around decades of neglect in failing to meet the challenges in many areas.

It is important to recognise that many of the concerns are interlinked, particularly when it comes to logistics, delivery and polluting vehicles when there is little if any circularity. For example, as well as transporting passengers the same air flights, and other cargo flights, are carrying food and other products which are also huge challenges to sustainability. The impact of “agriculture and food waste” has perhaps been less visible in the public perception as causing global warming than transport, but increasingly food production and particularly food waste have been seen as very serious issues, not only globally but in Camden. As much as 40% of food produced globally is wasted, and when food is wasted, all the water and energy used to grow it is at risk of being lost too. It is one of the themes we consider below in this Scrutiny Panel report. Food ties in with so many other health challenges. For example, in western countries there is now a clear “obesity epidemic”, and the World Health Organization has indicated that in Europe in particular almost two thirds of adults and one in three children are overweight, and this is a rising trend. Obesity has become a major determinant of death and ill-health, and in the UK it is predicted to overtake smoking as the main risk for preventable cancer (WHO, 3 May 2022; see also “Obesity will overtake smoking as biggest cause of cancer among women under 60”, *The Times,* 6 October 2023). The recent UK government announcement of a New Zealand style legislative ban on cigarette sales to age cohorts shows just how controversial health-related issues can be. The House of Commons will have a free vote on the issue, partly because several prominent Cabinet members are smokers but also because of “libertarian” concerns expressed by some critics.

Even more controversial is the debate on another known adverse health factor, which is the role of meat in the diet. The World Health Organization since 2015 has classified processed meats including ham, bacon, salami and frankfurters as known carcinogens, and current research recommends cutting out processed meat altogether (see generally

WHO, “Cancer: Carcinogenicity of the consumption of red meat and processed meat” 26 October 2015). Inevitably there are strongly held views on food; although herself a vegetarian the Home Secretary Suella Braverman criticised opposition parties in the House of Commons on a public order bill debate in the following terms: “It’s the Labour party, it’s the Lib Dems, it’s the coalition of chaos, it’s the Guardian-reading, tofu-eating wokerati, dare I say, the anti-growth coalition that we have to thank for the disruption that we are seeing on our roads today” (*Hansard* 17 October 2022).

We are hardly likely to get agreement on overall food policy, or dietary likes and dislikes, but the school meals contract is an obvious procurement lever in Camden for a move towards healthier eating and cutting food waste. Currently in that contract there has been an understandable trend towards a plant-based diet for both health and sustainability reasons, so the current Camden contract has one meatless day each week. Should this move further along the continuum of a “retreat from meat”? Famously the renowned Harvard physician Frank Sacks, the inventor of the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension [the DASH diet], while acknowledging that the research showed conclusively that meat was a major contributory factor for hypertension as well as a range of cardiovascular problems and cancers, adopted a pragmatic approach. He stated that the DASH diet would have the “benefits of a vegetarian diet yet contain enough animal products to make them palatable to nonvegetarians” (N. M. Karanja et al, “Descriptive characteristics of the dietary patterns used in the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension trial”, *J Am Diet Assoc* 1999;99(8 Suppl):S19-27]). The meat industry has in answer raised an issue of “missing protein”, as animal products are relatively high in protein, which is an essential nutrient made up of amino acids. But of course there are many plant products which are also complete proteins, notable of which are soya, beans of all sorts, and quinoa. Top non-animal sources of protein include foods such as tofu, tempeh, seitan, lentils, chickpeas, nuts, seeds and peanut butter. Spinach, kale, broccoli and cauliflower have nearly double the protein value than beef or chicken calculated on a per gram serving. Such vegetables easily meet the protein needs of schoolchildren and make tasty meals with the addition of appropriate herbs and spices to give them a sound nutritional basis which will stand them in good stead for life and ward off serious ill-health. Research at Oxford University found that plant-based diets reduce food’s emissions by up to 73% (see generally Dr Joseph Poore, “New estimates of the environmental cost of food”, 1 June 2018, www.ox.ac.uk/news).

Because of the huge effect on agriculture and food, as well as benefits to health, it makes sense to moderate meat consumption. Moving towards more plant-based meals is, according to Dr Joseph Poore of Oxford University who led this wide-ranging study, “the single biggest way to reduce your impact on planet Earth, not just greenhouse gases, but global acidification, eutrophication, land use and water use. It is far bigger than cutting down on your flights or buying an electric car. (see generally “Reducing food’s environmental impacts through producers and consumers”, *Science,* 22 February 2019). The Council already gives useful advice on healthy eating (https://www.camden.gov.uk/healthy-eating-families) but certainly has a direct procurement lever with the school meals contract. Currently that provides for the one meat-free day per week, and in line with medical advice schools actively encourage eating fresh fruit and vegetables rather than processed foods. In this academic year, 2023-24, all children in Camden schools year 3 to year 6 can get free school meals, regardless of benefits or household earnings. This gives an opportunity to re-think the menu to make sure that the healthiest and most sustainable diet is offered.

It has been clear for some time that major causes of global warming are: burning coal, oil and gas products producing carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide; deforestation, as trees help to regulate the climate by absorbing carbon to ward off the greenhouse gas effect; livestock farming; the use of fertilisers; and fluoridated gases emitted by equipment and products (European Commission, “Causes of climate change”, https://climate.ec.europa.eu/climate-change/causes-climate-change_en) Again, we can see obvious linkages, particularly as swathes of the Amazon rain forest, one of the largest and most biodiverse locations on earth, are decimated for industrial soya production. After two or three harvests this renders the land practically useless except for cattle-grazing. The soya in turn is principally used for animal feed for fattening cattle, pigs and poultry. There is, as is often pointed out, a direct relationship with food consumed in the UK and particularly in North America (“Demand for meat is destroying the Amazon. Smarter choices at the dinner table can go a long way to help.”, *Washington Post,* 9 March 2022).

Poor air quality is clearly an absolutely vital health issue in London and Camden. Air pollution is rightly high in the list of environmental objectives for the Borough, but could we do more to protect vulnerable residents and in particular move more rapidly towards low emission transportation, particularly on deliveries? Pollution contributes to the premature deaths of an estimated 9,000 Londoners each year, causes disability from cancer, asthma and other lung diseases, and is a factor in the rising incidence of dementia. Cancer Research UK points out that “many more lung cancer cases are still caused by tobacco use than by air pollution - the ratio is nine to one - but all air pollution can exacerbate asthma and lung disease in general." As noted by UCL Professor Charles Swanton of the Francis Crick Institute in Camden: “The risk of lung cancer from air pollution is lower than from smoking, but we have no control over what we all breathe” (European Society for Medical Oncology conference in Paris, September 2022).

Camden has for some time had a strong commitment to improving the environment with specific objectives relating to improving air quality and mitigating climate change. In 2018 the Council formally adopted the World Health Organization guideline values for air quality, setting stringent targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and particulate pollution to safer levels by 2034. The main areas for concern in Camden are listed as: climate change and greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide (CO2) which precipitate this; air quality; waste and resource inefficiency; biodiversity such as the loss of species and habitats; and our ability as a Borough to adapt and be resilient to increasing heat and flood risk. The existing strategies are contained in the Camden Plan, the Clean Air Action Plan 2019-2022 and Camden’s Transport Strategy Plan 2019-2041. In 2020 Camden Council’s Constitution changed to place an obligation on elected councillors to consider and limit the environmental impact of all Council decisions and activities. Camden was in fact the first local authority to place environmental stewardship at the heart of its Constitution and decision-making.

Breaking new ground in our Scrutiny Panel deliberations were discussions on two other areas selected by Panel members: repairs and textiles. It is alarming that so many household items are thrown away when they could have a further life, often with just simple repairs. These components form a significant contribution to waste and embodied carbon. An estimate by ReLondon is that 45% of carbon emissions causing global heating comes from all the food, materials and products that we make, use and consume. By improving how we help people in the Borough to keep things going for longer and in good repair would be hugely beneficial. This also of course prevents the expense of buying new items, or having to do without, so that appropriate repair mechanisms can help people struggling with the cost of living crisis. We already have in the Borough some excellent

initiatives. For example, the repair work done by the “Fixing Factory” in Queen's Crescent assists householders in repairing a “wide range of portable appliances - pretty much any household item with a battery or plug”. “Think and Do Camden” is dedicated to bringing forward “imaginative ideas and projects” to create “solutions that tackle climate change and also help social inclusion and cohesion”. Other initiatives such as the “Library of Things” in Kentish Town and also in Kilburn allow borrowing of a whole range of tools, such as carpet cleaners, drills and gardening equipment. This is hugely cost-effective when compared to purchasing such items, but also assists when there is tight storage in an urban setting, particularly when there would only be occasional usage. This “repair economy” has exciting possibilities and will be able to grow with appropriate support. Another illustration is “The Bike Project” in Camberwell which collects secondhand bicycles, fixes them up and then donates them to refugees and people seeking asylum in London and Birmingham. Having fled persecution and atrocity in their country of origin, most refugees arrive in the UK with absolutely nothing, so a bicycle helps them to access food banks, legal advice, healthcare, education and much more. If they are fortunate enough to receive official refugee status, a bicycle can help refugees find employment.

Textiles and fashion are also a very significant area we discussed at our Scrutiny Panel. The textiles industry is the second-largest industrial polluter, accounting for 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, According to the United Nations, textile production, which is dominated by clothing manufacture, exceeds the pollution impact of maritime shipping and international flights combined. When factoring in the entire lifecycle of a garment, from manufacturing to transportation to, ultimately, ending up in landfill, in total 1.2 billion tonnes of carbon emissions are released by the fashion industry every year. Furthermore, the industry is the third largest source of water degradation and land use. Textile production is estimated to be responsible for about 20% of global clean water pollution from dyeing and finishing products (Nadra Nittle, “Your outfit is killing the planet”, *The Guardian* 13 August 2021). And then in the subsequent laundering of clothes it is estimated that synthetic clothing accounts for 35% of primary microplastics released into the environment; for example, a single laundry load of polyester clothes can discharge 700,000 microplastic fibres into the drainage system, and as these fibres are so small they pass through filtration processes in sewage treatment facilities and then into rivers and seas, and ultimately into the food chain (Sienna Somers, “Our clothes shed microfibres – here’s what we can do”, www.fashionrevolution.org).

Particular attention is drawn by this Scrutiny Panel to the “Amsterdam Roadmap” and “Circular Innovation Programme 2016-2018”. This examined twenty circular projects in the city, looking carefully at procurement and land development, after assessing 73 construction projects of various descriptions. In 2015 this Dutch municipality became the first local authority in the world to explore explicitly the opportunities of a circular economy. Their case study indicates which action is possible to further accelerate that city’s transition to a circular economy. The lessons learned in Amsterdam show clearly that a transition to a circular economy is not just realistic but financially more competitive than traditional projects when external costs are taken into account.

The Amsterdam Roadmap was also successfully applied in four circular tenders in other areas than construction, with interesting possibilities in changing direction for biomass and the food value chain. Projects included sugar extraction and heat production from biomass, ammonia extraction from sewage water - and somewhat novel - phosphate extraction from urine. In support of these projects the municipality focuses mainly on research, networking and information exchange and, in some cases, offers financial support.

Amsterdam also intervenes in the local consumer goods value chain, principally by supporting second-hand shops with a payment for the collection of specific products. Textiles in particular are being collected in the city, with dozens of sharing platforms.

5. LESSONS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Many private businesses have found that the transformation to a circular economy is not only feasible but brings with it great potential for new opportunities, higher profit margins and long-term security. While elected Councils and other public bodies do not have the same financial objectives, as their prime duty will be for public service, nevertheless with continuing government austerity and also mindful of value for money for residents there are some valuable lessons to be learned. The literature suggests that the approach by private industry on the success of circularity requires a consideration of new systems, the right strategy and, above all, staying power. This can certainly require a paradigm shift from traditional linear economy thinking to the circular economy, but in both public and private sectors there is a very clear gain when resources are used more efficiently, when there is an extension in the life of service products, when there is close attention paid to the use of materials, and when serious objectives include minimising the generation of waste and polluting emissions.

Examples abound of circular economy solutions which have already had an impact, particularly in the private sector. These have driven innovations and have saved costs. They have also had an impact on the public realm. Some classic examples are the system adopted in many European countries and in the USA for a deposit and return system for recycling drink cans and bottles. With the building industry being responsible for approximately 39% of global carbon dioxide emissions, the recycling and re-use of buildings and building materials has also had a major impact; an example is the Circle House to be completed in 2023 in Aarhus, Denmark, with 90% of its building material able to be remounted and re-used or resold without loss of value. This is the world's first social housing project constructed according to circular principles, using cork and newspapers for the façade, eelgrass for insulation and used car tyres for the flooring underlay. Camden Council has a long track record of building some of the best and most innovative social housing (see below) but this current Danish example seems to take inventiveness to a wholly new level. It is clear that planning decisions nationally and in Camden should place much more emphasis on the refurbishment of existing buildings rather than as a default heading straightforwardly to "demolish and rebuild" schemes.

6. SELECTED TOPICS

A. REDUCE: A STEP CHANGE FOR FOOD WASTE

It is sobering to know that UK households throw away seven million tonnes of food and drink every year, the majority of which could be eaten. Food typically is one of the largest components of household waste. Camden's households and businesses also produce considerable amounts of food waste at a time when people are struggling to make ends meet in a cost of living crisis. Camden Council estimates that around 15,000 tonnes of food waste are disposed of every year in the Borough. 70% of that comes from households who could save up to £500 a year by reducing this waste.

Producing food requires significant resources including land, energy and water. Globally, 25 to 30% of total food produced is lost or wasted, and food waste is estimated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to contribute 8 to 10% of total man-made greenhouse gas emissions. If food waste were a country, it would be the world's third largest emitter after China and the USA. Great progress has been made in the UK, but food waste from households and businesses is still around 9.5 million tonnes, 70% of which was intended to be consumed by people (30% being the 'inedible' parts). This had a value of over £19 billion a year, and would be associated with more than 25 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. The food that could have been eaten, amounting to 6.4 million tonnes, would make the equivalent of over 15 billion meals. That would be enough to feed the entire UK population three meals a day for 11 weeks. There is no comparable estimate for food waste before being shipped out of the farm gate in the UK, but the Waste Resources and Action Programme (WRAP) has estimated food waste levels from primary production at 1.6 million tonnes. That means that some 20% of territorial UK greenhouse gas emissions are associated with food and drink, mostly created during production in agriculture and associated manufacturing, and these are of course needless emissions if the food and drink are subsequently wasted. WRAP also estimates that food waste costs UK restaurants approximately £682 million a year. All of this amounts to a colossal wastage.
(https://wrap.org.uk/taking-action/food-drink/actions/action-on-food-waste)

One of the interesting examples in the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's "deep dive" into the circular economy is a reference to a Californian company Apeel, which has come up with an innovative way to eliminate single-use shrink wrap plastic packaging on fresh fruit and vegetables, while at the same time tackling food waste. This is most certainly working with nature, as Apeel is a layer of edible, plant-based coating applied to fresh products that mimics and enhances the natural defences of fruit and vegetables. This slows down the two main things that cause spoilage – water loss and oxidation. The technique ingeniously designs out food waste by preventing premature rotting but also eliminates plastic waste. For example, covering one avocado with Apeel saves 23 litres of water and enough energy which would be used in the production of the routine non-biodegradable plastic wrapping; this would be enough energy to charge a smartphone nine times over:
https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-examples/apeel

Closer to home, the website "Eat Like a Londoner" aims to "pull together the very best recipes, hacks, tips and tricks to deliver a weekly dose of inspiration that will help you save money, eat better and help the planet":
https://eatlikealondoner.com
This is a food platform which is designed to help Londoners shop, cook and eat better, and more sustainably and also more cost-effectively. The platform has reviewed London's best food habits and ideas, and has created a destination for those who want to eat in a more future-friendly way. Another helpful platform is "Love Food Hate Waste", which stresses that with "just a few small actions you can make a real difference both to your pocket and the planet":
https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

Steps are also being taken to limit food waste within the hospitality sector. The "Too Good to Go" app, launched in 2015, enables users to search for restaurants, bakeries and grocery stores and purchase items left over at the end of the day. The aim here is to "rescue" unsold food from an untimely fate at a destination local to the enquirer:
https://www.toogoodtogo.com/en-gb

“Misfits Market” is an idea originating in the USA, which is an online grocer specialising in organic products and helping to break the cycle of food waste by selling fruit and vegetables at a very considerable discount when stores will not want those products due to their shape. One British organisation taking up the concept is “Oddbox” which delivers fruit and vegetables that are “too wonky” and would otherwise go straight to waste: https://www.oddbox.co.uk/why

Some food waste is unavoidable, and in Camden, many homes are eligible for our weekly food waste recycling service. When food waste is recycled, it is sent to processing plants and is transformed into low-carbon electricity or turned into compost that can be used as fertiliser. But what might Camden and other local authorities do more to tackle food waste? Effective communication is often an under-appreciated tool to tackle waste, especially food waste. Camden should make use of existing campaigns to drive home the point of how bad food waste is for the environment, whilst also providing tips on how best to store food. A coordinated campaign led by the local authority can have a major impact not just on our households, but also on businesses, and particularly shops, restaurants and hotels.

Expanding the reach of our food waste recycling services is also critical. In a scheme in North East Lincolnshire Council in 2021, which rolled out food waste collection for residents in five wards, the scheme saw on average households recycling 3.26 kg a week. The number of food waste bins presented for collection each week was also high, at around 53%. Whilst Camden does offer food waste recycling, not all homes are eligible and expanding this is now paramount. The message does not yet seem to come across, even where it is repeatedly stated that items such as “fruit and vegetable peelings, tea bags and coffee grounds, stale bread and pastries, meat and fish bones (raw and cooked), dairy products, eggs and eggshells, plate scrapings and leftovers” are all acceptable for the current service. There is some excellent advice on the Council website about recycling food waste, but we feel it could be communicated more widely, particularly using social media. In scrutinising Camden’s performance it should be noted that there is a regional and national problem for local authorities in dealing with food waste. Government figures suggest that just 2.2% of all waste is “separately collected food waste” (National statistics: local authority collected waste management - annual results 2021/22, updated at 14 April 2023). The Scrutiny Panel sees this as a priority area for further action.

Another related area to focus on is encouraging local restaurants, pubs, shops and hotels to donate any food that cannot be used in time. Camden is a hub for the hospitality sector in the UK and these establishments should play a leading role in limiting food waste, working with the Council to donate food that might go to waste to where it is most needed. Under requirements in the Environment Act 2021, businesses and other organisations in England will be required to arrange for the separate collection of a core set of materials, including the separate collection of food waste, and following a government consultation, it will be important for Camden with so many catering establishments in the Borough to respond appropriately. Waste is a devolved matter, so this will be a complex set of arrangements.

An interesting development is the national organisation “Far Share”, which is a network of charitable food redistributions, made up of 18 independent charities. This has the aim of taking good quality surplus food from right across the food industry and making it available to nearly 8,500 frontline charities and community groups. This includes school breakfast clubs, older people’s luncheon clubs, homeless shelters, and community cafés. Every week this scheme is currently providing enough food to create almost one million meals for vulnerable people. We strongly endorse the development of this scheme:

https://fareshare.org.uk

Reviewing procurement practices to ensure that tackling waste is embedded into those decisions is important. As noted, the procurement of the contract for school meals presents an opportunity to ensure that the provider is one that is providing wholesome meals but also taking necessary steps to limit food waste, so that this is built into the contract.

More generally on recycling, nine out of ten Britons now regularly recycle some of their household waste, but as well as food at least half of the population miss out on other items that could be recycled, mainly because they are unaware of the range of possibilities. Household recycling rates have stalled at about 44% for a decade in England, despite earlier having grown rapidly. London's current household recycling rate is 33% and its non-household rate is 48%. In Camden the household rate is 26%, because there are particular challenges, which include generally lower performance in deprived areas; a highly transient population in some parts of the Borough; a high proportion of younger residents, often renters, who generally recycle less; a large influx of daytime visitors who create extra litter and can contaminate recycling efforts; logistical issues on large estates; and difficulties in communicating clear messages with many languages spoken in the Borough. There are also national inconsistencies over recycling, particularly in respect of plastic, glass and TetraPak, and different local authorities have differing guidelines, which all adds to the confusion. As yet Camden cannot, for example, provide food waste recycling for flats above shops, which is a significant feature in the Borough, but on the other hand Camden is generally in the lead with kerbside collections and local recycling bins. Nationally there has been a problem with delays on the introduction of the government's "Simpler Recycling" reforms. At one point there was a plan for seven waste streams from British homes: metal, glass, plastic, paper and card, food waste and garden waste, which seemed to make sense. But the Primeminister in September claimed he had "scrapped" what he referred to as "a government diktat to sort your rubbish into seven different bins". This was puzzling as there was never any plan for seven bins, but inconsistencies across the country causes confusion, particularly so in Camden where there can be rapid turnover of population ("Recycling rules revamped to end postcode lottery" *The Times,* 21 October 2023).. With the twentieth anniversary of "Recycle Week" taking place in October 2023 an online "Big Recycling Hunt" was launched in an effort to assist on what "forgotten items" can also be recycled, which is a helpful assistance to bewildered residents:
https://www.recyclenow.com

Over many years food cooperatives and shops have been moving towards system deliveries where there is "bulk food shopping". Arrangements vary, but one objective is to cut food waste but also to minimise packaging. Customers bring their own containers, generally re-using their own empty plastic bottles or glass jars. This follows up on international schemes to get rid of plastic shopping bags by refusing to provide free bags and encouraging customers to bring in their own bags, but this trend has been developed further, One such store not far across the Camden border exemplifying this "own container" method is the "Harmless Store" in Crouch End:
https://harmlessstore.co.uk
There are many other examples of this increasingly helpful approach, which makes a great deal of sense. The Scrutiny Panel would very strongly endorse this approach.

B. REPAIRING AND RE-USING

The Scutiny Panel heard some very good news about the North London Waste Authority's efforts to rescue, repair and resell items that are brought into recycling centres across the area. This is part of a wide movement across Europe to re-cycle commodities of all sorts, some of which at first sight seem irreparable but which with ingenuity can be brought back into useful life. There is also some recent good news from Veolia who now have a Materials Recovery Facility in Southwark, where there is advanced separation technology that sorts waste from Camden and elsewhere. The technology enables recovery of paper and card, drinks and steel cans, aluminium, glass, plastic, and wood. The recovered material is of high-quality and is supplied for use by manufacturers to make recycled products.

What the Scrutiny Panel think would now be useful is to support possible options for repair by individuals. We do not yet have more than a few limited options for residents who want to repair items themselves. Instead of throwing away "rubbish" opportunities for personal repair, training and facilities would give an array of commodities longer lives. The organisation "Possible" has been spearheading a number of imaginative ideas on climate action, and one of them is to to put "a repair hub on every High Street", so that we can move to a zero carbon country. They were supportive of the excellent "Fixing Factory" arrangements in Camden and Brent, supported by national lottery funding, which not only help residents to repair items "from tablets to toasters" but has training courses on a range of repair possibilities:
https://www.fixingfactory.org/traininggeneral
At present this is small scale, but we think the proposals are well worth supporting, and the individual repair concept should be developed further.

One model for this has been the Restart Project in South London, which aims "to fix our relationship with electronics", running regular "Restart Parties" where people can teach each other "how to repair their broken and slow devices – from tablets to toasters, from iPhones to headphones". The Restart Project started in 2013 out of "frustration with the throwaway, consumerist model of electronics":
https://therestartproject.org

Allied to these self-help "fix it" groups and strongly supporting them is an independent trust set up in 2015 called "Power to Change". In addition this organisation also supports a trend back towards local shopping and the restoration of "high streets", rather than what happens in much of the country, which is car-based "edge of town" or even "out of town" shopping. Power to Change aims to "take back the high street", noting that the country is "perilously close to losing these community spaces that are vital to local economies, community cohesion and civic pride and more":
https://www.powertochange.org.uk
Camden as an urban area of "villages" is in a good position to safeguard local shopping, markets and communities which can be walked or cycled to and the Scrutiny Panel feels that even more can be done to support this development. For example, unused space such as multi-storey or underground parking, far less relevant with excellent public transport, could be made available at rebated prices for workshops, storage and community space. A further audit of what the Council could make available would be useful.

One important factor here on the use of space is the scam known as "box shifting", which is a loophole in England used by owners of premises to evade business rates. It loses revenue but also loses space which could be put to better purposes. A campaign led by

Fleur Anderson MP with support from over 30 Members of Parliament has highlighted that "some unscrupulous landlords and multi-chain operators" put boxes in an empty commercial property and state that the space is occupied for six weeks; they then remove the boxes and the landlord receives three months of empty property rates relief. The cycle then repeats. English councils are haemorrhaging rates income, which could more usefully go to public service funding. Legislation has already been passed in Scotland and Wales to ban this practice. The Local Government Association has estimated that in England some £250 million is lost to this avoidance process. A legislative change in England staunch this depletion of the public finances, but also assist with the view that some of these premises could be put to so much better use ("Close empty property business rates relief loophole, say MPs", *The Times,* 25 September 2023). As a Council we should strongly support this campaign to change the law.

With space at a premium in a densely packed urban landscape one very useful idea is sharing that existing space. As well as the Council considering the use of its own space, which has obviously been a recurrent process by Property Services in putting space to the best use, sometimes that space can be offered to other organisations, either at market level rent or where appropriate at rebated levels or even for free. The organisation "Think & Do", with the support of Camden, has expanded the idea of using space in Somers Town with a "pop up Sharing Space". The activities there are planned and run by local residents and include "sewing, food waste workshops, eco stay and play, free lunch every week, recycling craft sessions, board games" and more. Items like toys, bags and hats are resold or given away locally to other residents:
https://www.thinkanddocamden.org.uk
Sharing ideas and skills can also help with repair and that can be particularly useful. This excellent initiative in Somers Town is duplicated in many different ways across Camden community centres and it is vital to retain such initiatives.

Camden currently provides charities with land space in Camden to institute textile banks for residents, so that they can deposit clothing and shoes. These items, sometimes brand new or scarcely used, are sorted and then resold in charity shops or online, with end-of-life cloth fibres recycled to make bedding or new cloth such as felt. Residents are therefore asked to take their no longer needed clothing, shoes and textiles items to their local charity provider or their nearest public textiles bank, as unfortunately so often some of these items end up in general waste. Necessarily the message about these better options needs constantly to be reiterated. A particular problem, hopefully now more historic, has been the inappropriate disposal of nappies, leading to clogged drains. Camden promotes a "real nappies and reusable nappies" scheme offering a £70 voucher:
https://www.realnappiesforlondon.org.uk
Veolia also offers a separate collection for nappies. The law on this matter may be in the process of change following the launch in 2019 of a Nappy (Environmental Standards) Bill, so there may be further developments. Camden recently trialled an innovative "bring along skip event" which included accepting textiles, which included items such as towels, sheets, blankets and soft furnishings, as well as clothes and shoes. These can also be taken to the main Regis Road Reuse and Recycling Centre, and it is good to note that an increasing array of items can be dealt with. For example in a recent trial that centre is now accepting hard plastics such as garden furniture, buckets and bins. One difficulty with this location in Kentish Town is that it generally seems to be used by those with motor vehicles, so the more collection points in the Borough with straightforward pedestrian access the better. Further use of the "being along skip event" could be very useful elsewhere and particularly in areas where car ownership is very low. We commend these schemes and

also the expansion of web arrangements to give “postcode” information to residents on what can be recycled and where.

There should also be a focus on the Council’s own operations, and particularly in housing. All members of the Scrutiny Panel knew of instances when people move into and out of Council homes where household fittings and fixtures were dumped rather than re-used. Sometimes items left out on the pavement, often in itself an eyesore, can be picked up by passers-by on an *ad hoc* basis, but we need to shift to a more organised system where items can be restored and brought back into active use, rather than being ripped out or sent to waste collection. Examples include curtains, blinds, shelving, rugs, white goods and appliances, and even furniture such as tables, beds and garden seating. The current “throwaway” arrangements inevitably wastes potentially valuable material and also imposes costs on new tenants who may be at a point in their lives when they can least afford to fit out a new home. The Council needs also to be setting an example here, acting as a role model for private landlords, where the same “dumping” of potentially valuable material applies.

Restoration and refurbishing furniture in particular can be extremely useful. This is a process taken to a high level with antiques in specialist shops, but a number of charity organisations such as the British Heart Foundation engage too. BHF pick up **furniture** and electrical items for free, and then donated items are sold in their furniture stores to help fund their lifesaving research:
https://www.bhf.org.uk/shop/donating-goods/book-furniture-collection-near-me
When households are “de-cluttering” or engaged in complete “clearance” this trajectory is so much better than taking still useful items to the skips at Regis Road. Although recycling rates at Regis Road are getting better a visit there demonstrates that quite useful material is not reprocessed. It is important to note that, as with charities such as BHF there are important constraints on local authorities and charities; for example, for legal and health and safety reasons, BHF lists that they cannot accept “washer/dryers and certain models of washing machines, oil-filled heaters without a thermostat, hard-wired electrical heaters, children's items such as cots or prams, ivory or fur, upholstered items without fire safety label, used personal items, safety equipment such as helmets or harnesses, weapons, flammables or hazardous liquids”. But BHF can take a very wide range of other household goods, particularly furniture, when household clearances take place. And such organisations should be encouraged.

Several European cities, such as Berlin, have established an internal marketplace for furniture. Berlin claims to take “(almost) everything” and then “take care of sustainable recycling”:
https://www.berlin-recycling.de
Their systems are impressive, particularly with furniture restoration. Some furniture delivered to “waste” is actually in pristine condition, but other pieces of furniture needs just simple refurbishment by, for instance, new upholstering. This furniture is then made available to second hand shops at a modest price for further sale. Germany has a long tradition of such shops, called “Trödelladen” or “Ramschladen” as well as open air “flea markets” which recycle surprisingly large amounts of merchandise. “Car boot sales” are perhaps the British equivalent, and could be further encouraged by using, for example, school playgrounds at the weekend.

One important aspect of household goods is their original design for longevity and their innate repairability. IKEA the Swedish multinational conglomerate based in the Netherlands has committed itself to transforming into a circular business by 2030.

They have been the world's largest furniture retailer since 2008. With 19 stores in the UK and approaching 10% of the furniture market here, IKEA is the category leader ahead of John Lewis and Argos for a wide range of furniture and domestic products, so this is a significant development in re-use through circular economy principles. Very importantly IKEA have assessed 9,500 of their products capable of being brought back into use and have in stock over 21 million assembly parts to prolong the life of these products. Another interesting aspect pioneered by IKEA is a programme called "Byback and Resell". The foirm points out that every year millions of secondhand furtniture goes straight to waste and the buyback scheme allows used IKEA furniture such as chairs, shelves and chests of drawers to have "as many lives as possible". In-store credit is then given for pieces that are in good condition:
https://www.ikea.com/gb/en/customer-service/services/buy-back/

A point made to us by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, reiterated on their website and repeated in Camden's documentation, is that many consumer products "are designed to be disposed of or replaced to drive financial returns for manufacturers". One example is that, between 2007 and 2017, Apple introduced fourteen new iPhones but stopped supporting the first-generation phones within three years. Not only did this generate significant waste (according to a 2014 UN Report, Europe produced the highest per-capita electronic waste, over 15 kilograms per person every year), but it also "led to the extraction and mining of additional raw materials such as copper and lithium with related environmental impacts":
https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/topics/circular-economy-introduction/overview

Finally, we should mention on this section, although she was too modest to note it herself, the excellent book by Siân Berry, "Mend It! 400 Easy Repairs" (2009) . She notes that "In today's throwaway culture, it can often seem easier to ditch a broken item rather than attempt to repair it. But this all seems like madness when we're all trying to be thrifty, and at the same time reduce the amount of rubbish we contribute to landfill."

C. REDUCE, RE-USE, REPAIR, RECYCLE TEXTILES AND FASHION

The circular economy approach for textiles is a strategy to take responsibility for reducing, re-using and recycling textile "waste" and boosting markets and outlets for used clothing. Camden, is home to a large consortium of fast fashion brands such as Asos and Urban Outfitters and we should urge them and other companies such as boohoo, Missguided and Amazon to adopt more sustainable fashion, as well as more sustainable supply chain practices. One of our recommendations is for Camden to organise a round table with such companies, which would be open to the public, and would gather ideas for the transition to sustainable, and regenerative approaches, along with solutions on other aspects of fashion and textiles generally. As stated by Camden itself the aim is to transition to NetZero by 2030, and to address the climate, ecological, and biodiversity crises locally and globally.

Currently only 1% of material used in clothing nationally is recycled into new clothing. A survey in 2019 across London found that of the 142,700 tonnes of clothing discarded (amounting to around 44 items of clothing per person), over 40% ended up in the waste bin. The remaining 60% is collected by charities and we would hope that this percentage can be increased:
https://relondon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Londons-fashion-footprint_report.pdf

Of the 40% binned, some 90% will go to produce energy from incineration, which at least is productive, but still 10% goes to landfill.

Camden-Veolia now provides textile collection for residents, which is an opt-in service when requested, and this should be more widely known. Residents are issued with sacks and present their tied sacks in their bin room or beside their recycling bin. A similar service exists for small electrical items and batteries. There is inevitably a need to keep the public fully informed of current practice. Unfortunately residents, perhaps new to the Borough, put textiles into their comingled recycling bins without knowing that bins may be rejected prior to collecting if found to have the wrong items inside. Items reaching the North London Waste Authority reprocessing plant can be recovered, as these facilities have the capacity to extract textile, but occasionally textiles can become cross contaminated under the sorting process, for example with shards of broken glass, so need to be rejected. Otherwise textiles can be sent for processing by the Salvation Army in Kettering, where items can be given a new lease of life. Articles that cannot be resold are repurposed into items such as, cloths, insulation and soundproofing materials:
https://www.nlwa.gov.uk/article/what-happens-my-recycling/textiles

In July 2023 the European Commission proposed rules to make producers responsible for the “full lifecycle of textile products” and to support the sustainable management of textile waste across the EU. It is estimated that member states generate 12.6 million tonnes of textile waste per year, and that clothing and footwear alone accounts for 5.2 million tonnes of waste, equivalent to 12 kg of waste per person every year. Currently, only 22% of post-consumer textile waste is collected separately for re-use or recycling, while the remainder is often incinerated or landfilled. That European initiative will accelerate the development of the separate collection, sorting, re-use and recycling sector for textiles. Sadly, the UK government shows little aptitude for following the European model. Currently just 1% of material in clothing is recycled into new clothing (See generally on the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Corcular Textiles:
https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/textiles-strategy_en

Extended Producer Responsibility schemes have in the past been successful in improving the management of waste from several products, such as packaging, batteries, electric and electronic equipment. Producers could cover the costs of the management of textile waste, which would give them some incentive to reduce waste. It was hoped that a similar approach in the EU would increase the circularity of textile products. Unfortunately the current government have repeatedly stalled on such an initiative. While such schemes are necessarily to be considered at an international or national level it is useful to think of local schemes, of which there are several social enterprises in Camden, which support textile circulation, by separate collection, sorting, re-use, repair and recycling.

There are now also innovatory research and development initiatives with technology that can support circularity in the textiles sector, such as fibre-to-fibre recycling. Another possibility is being increasingly explored, which is to consider clothing from natural resources, which can then be regenerated. This aspect of the circular economy, for example using sustainability through the prism of natural materials would support biodiversity. This is clearly an area where important strides could be made towards zero waste.

The latest IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report is a doomsday warning: without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all sectors, limiting global warming to 1.5°C is beyond reach. However, the textiles-apparel industry has an

important role to play in averting this “Armageddon” scenario. The IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Report has repeatedly emphasised on the need to shift to bio-textiles. For example, cellulose-based and bio-textiles can replace cotton, the production of which requires enormous amounts of water, but also chemical fertilisers and pesticides to ensure high yields. The effects of cotton production can be devastating; for example the world's fourth largest lake in 1960, the Aral Sea, which lies between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, has dramatically shrunk as a result of unsustainable cotton cultivation that began just a few decades ago (UN, “Dry tears of the Aral Sea, *UN Chronicle* 1999).

We need to move as a society from fast to sustainable, conscious fashion. “Fast fashion” is a term used to describe the production of cheap clothing, which is poorly made, often in a developing country and by those working in garment factories in inhumane conditions, vulnerable to exploitation. Fast fashion responds to and fuels our throwaway culture and inevitably, people and planet pay for this cheap consumerism. Garment factory workers in countries like Bangladesh and Thailand experience barbaric working conditions in “sweatshops”, as clothing businesses chase cheaper costs to increase profit. It is significant that an overwhelming 87% of the total consumption-based emissions produced by London’s fashion supply chain are linked to imports. This is in significant contrast to the 12% of emissions that are associated with clothing that is manufactured within London. The remaining 1% comes from emissions linked to post-consumer waste management. However, the UK is the biggest consumer of clothes in Europe, inevitably pulling in garments from abroad that are contributing elsewhere to high emissions and particularly the excessive use of water. The response should be a more discerning shift to lower emission fibres and a focus on extending the life of existing clothing by repair, exchange and re-use. In September 2015, the UK signed up to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals including a commitment to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Yet still, progress by the British government has been very slow.

What is Camden doing? In the Borough we have several Oxfam collection points for donating clothing. The Oxfam shops then sell clothes and other donated items such as shoes, accessories and jewellery to generate money to help fight poverty overseas: https://www.oxfam.org.uk/donate/donate-to-our-shops/donate-clothes/
Oxfam bookshops do similar work with donated items. Camden actually has a multiplicity of charity shops doing similar work, particularly in the Hampstead area, although these are often “pop up shops” for a limited time, making use of empty property. Such initiatives have accelerated the development of the separate collection, sorting, re-use and recycling sector particularly for textiles, but now for a range of “collectable” items.

One extension here for the use of old clothes is the possibility of carpets, rugs and blankets being woven from the fabric. Such an initiative would re-use worn, broken and holed clothes, and weave them into warm carpets, rugs and blankets for the winter. We commend such an approach and suggest that Camden bring interested parties together to explore this possibility.

A particular concern is that more schools in Camden have moved in recent years to a mandatory school uniform and in addition some demand badged sports kit too. Such items can be very expensive when new, so some parent teacher associations locally have acted to support the recycling of such clothing for individual schools. Recently the BBC focussed on the “Hartlepool Reloved Clothing” scheme which provides free, second-hand uniforms to people struggling with costs. The project has an initiative to support “transferable logos, which can be stitched onto plain blazers, rather than parents having to purchase a branded blazer from a school provider." In the last year over 5,000 “reloved” uniforms were

made available to families in Hartlepool ("Hartlepool Council urges schools to address uniform cost":
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tees-67183106
The Scrutiny Panel most definitely support any such school initiatives in Camden to assist struggling families.

Textiles and furniture products are closely interlinked and we have already seen that IKEA, a market leader in furniture and household items, has committed itself to transforming into a circular business by 2030. In addition IKEA has become a polyester industry leader in having already achieved 100% recycled polyester in textile products by 2020. Polyester is the most commonly used synthetic fibre in the world. Together with other companies such as the H&M group IKEA are researching raw materials such as corn, sugar cane and woody biomass to make polyester:
https://www.ikea.com/global/en/our-business/people-planet/a-world-without-waste/

What can you do? The good news is that it is possible, individually, to make change consciously, and within your means. The following list are some suggestions, a list taken from the World Wide Fund for Nature's proposals and updated in fitting with Camden residents:

• Buy less. Take our challenge and avoid buying fast fashion for three months. That's a season. Can you re-wear clothes, or upcycle your clothes? Try new combinations? Loving what you already own is the most sustainable option.
• Buy used. Charity shops. Buy second hand, this can save money, and simultaneously you can donate to a good cause like Save the Children or Cancer Research. You can also use resale websites like eBay and Vinted.
• Look at upcycling, recycling or clothes swapping sites to find items new to you. It's an interesting way to shop or change items and gives real value to your clothes. Look out for clothes swaps and repair stations in Camden.
• If you need to buy new, invest in quality items that will last instead of disposable temporary trends. Building a capsule wardrobe of essential items that fit your classic taste for years - not weeks - can give you your own sense of style and free you from fast fashion's endless cycle of change.
- Be aware that many retailers aren't honest about how sustainable their products are. Watch out for 'greenwashing': marketing spin many businesses use to make them seem more environmentally-friendly. Often information given is misleading and can lead customers to make ill-informed buying choices that support harmful practises: https://www.wwf.org.uk/myfootprint/challenges/fast-fashion-disaster).

D. REDUCE: A STEP CHANGE IN ROAD TRANSPORT

Air pollution, like climate change, is caused principally by the burning of fossil fuels such as gas, petrol, diesel and oil, but is particularly associated in Camden with road transport and heating equipment such as gas boilers. On transport, while the Council has made considerable progress with its own vehicle fleet policy and has also set standards for its contractors, we need to consider further ways in which to protect against the impact of exposure to air pollution, having particularly disproportionate consequences in deprived areas, for the elderly, children and those with pre-existing health conditions.

Of particular concern is that road transport, and especially the use of elderly diesel vehicles, is also a very serious source of nitrogen dioxide and ultra-fine particulate matter

emissions, as well as carbon dioxide. In addition there is the recently emerging further source of particulates, not just from diesel exhaust, but from tyre road wear particles [TRWP]. A recent study by Imperial College London estimates that 52% of all small particle pollution from road transportation comes from tyres and brakes on vehicles, with London producing 9,000 metric tons of TRWP annually. Research on this issue has so far been scarce but the Imperial College study suggests it should now be a priority. It is clear that changing to electric, hybrid or hydrogen vehicles is by no means a complete answer to the particulates issue (February 2023). What needs to be done is to reduce private vehicular traffic in the Borough, particularly by unnecessary commuting, when public transport by rail, tube and bus, along with walking, cycling and scooting could be used. With some of the best public transport links in the whole of Europe it is clear that many car journeys into and within Camden are wholly unnecessary, except for those needed by disabled persons, emergency services or for the support of vulnerable patients going to hospital appointments or the elderly and disabled to community care facilities.

The "Ultra Low Emission Zone" in London, which is still politically very controversial and came under sustained legal and political attack by Conservative-ruled boroughs in London, is an attempt to focus primarily on the most polluting diesel vehicles. London has of course had a low emission zone for larger vehicles such as buses, lorries and coaches since 2008, but the zone has been gradually expanded, as air quality is not just a problem in central London, but also a serious factor outside the Congestion Charge zone.

This is a multi-faceted issue. Improving public transport and encouraging cycling, scooting and walking can most definitely help to reduce the number of commuter vehicles that cause a significant proportion of carbon emissions in Camden. One estimate is that some 35,000 private cars enter the London Borough of Camden every day of the working week, and a considerable number too at weekends, although for many such journeys there are clear alternatives. The approach by Lucy Saunders termed “Healthy Streets” has been a major force in the last decade in improving social, economic and environmental sustainability through how streets are designed and managed. Her concept of ten indicators of Healthy Streets has been adopted by the GLA and Camden and has been very helpful in changing the Borough’s streetscape. However, alterations and lobbying for funding to create new infrastructure has been slow, although it is possible to see some incremental progress across London and also in Camden. For example, it is worth noting that an estimated 12% of Londoners cycled at least once a week in 2021 and most people walk every day. Camden has been at the forefront of a programme for more segregated cycle lanes and a strategy to widen pavements, and these are perceptibly contributing to a 'healthy streets' policy (See generally Healthy Streets, Healthy Travel, Healthy Lives: Camden Transport Strategy 2019-2041).

Some serious efforts have been made to reduce emissions from London buses and taxis by converting them to electric or hybrid vehicles. A taxi de-licensing scheme introduced by Transport for London in 2017 supported the successful removal of over 4,000 older and more polluting diesel vehicles. In addition there was an Low Pressure Gas conversion scheme which again assisted in a move for taxis to be zero emission. At one time black cabs contributed 25% of all transport nitrous oxide (NOx) in central London, and that has now been dramatically reduced with “Zero Emission Capable” taxis, which is a welcome trend (“Emissions standards for taxis: the plan to deliver the greenest taxi fleet in the world”:
https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/taxis-and-private-hire/emissions-standards-for-taxis

A very important remaining factor is that commercial goods vehicles now account for 30 per cent of all traffic in central London, with delivery vehicles making an estimated 281,000 trips per day. Globally, urban freight accounts for around 10 to 15 per cent of all kilometres travelled in cities, but in London this proportion is much higher, with an abundance of liveried vehicles and the ubiquitous “white van”. These delivery vehicles are the most expensive and polluting part of the logistics chain, as they are traditionally powered by vans and trucks that run on fossil fuels, even if the goods being transported are light and are often just small parcels. It is very important in Camden to support serious change so as to guarantee air quality, cut gridlock and improve road safety, and the Council in its “Green Vehicle Fleet Standard for Contractors” is not only “getting its own house in order” but establishing serious benchmarks for those who do business with the Council. This template established in January 2021 makes it clear that Camden has a strong commitment to “reducing emissions of CO2 and local air pollutants from vehicles used by Camden *and its contractors and service providers*” [emphasis added].

Heavy trucks for construction projects are an obvious area for change, using circular economy arguments. HGVs are also a public safety hazard, as can be seen in the very regrettable deaths in Camden, particularly for cyclists. Re-using buildings with innovative insulation cladding and internal refurbishment, rather than demolishing and rebuilding them, could also be an important factor here. Planning controls, particularly on Construction and Management Plans, are a vital lever for the Council. For example, it is an ominous prospect that the demolition and rebuilding of the frontage to the iconic Great Ormond Street Hospital will involve "up to 42 thirty tonne diesel lorries driving through narrow residential streets every day for three years". It is also perhaps significant that the development manager of the construction company SISK contracted to do the work, who has also personally engaged with the Borough when he was building Camden housing at Maiden Lane, is very aware of the problems. He cycles to work himself and he has promised to use electric vehicles and cargo bikes whenever he can. One very puzzling aspect of construction and management plans is that they are often in a generic form and not fully completed before planning applications are considered. They are certainly not subject to public scrutiny before planning permission is considered. The developers always say it will be done when the contractor is appointed and this will not occur until planning is resolved. However there is no reason that the developers on major schemes should not be obliged to provide definitive plans with stated objectives and proscriptive requirements that the public can be involved in developing, which will form part of the tendering package given to contractors by the developer. The consequence of the present arrangement is that any leverage that the Council may have over the plans will be significantly reduced once planning permission is granted and any comments from the public have little likelihood of being incorporated. As the contractor is primarily concerned with issues such as a contract completion date and cost control there is no incentive to consider seriously the public’s comments.

Experimenting with electric, hybrid and hydrogen vehicles is a good way to replace diesel vehicles. Unfortunately, electric vehicles also have their downsides: it is difficult to recycle the batteries, and their manufacture raise many uncomfortable questions about mineral extraction, which often involves child labour in Africa and Latin America. Electric vans are certainly a step forward compared to diesel-powered vans, but they are not a complete solution, as motorised vehicles of all types cause a very high number of personal injuries and the excessive number of vans is a major cause of traffic congestion, leading to higher emissions when vehicles are stationary with engines idling. And there is of course now increasing knowledge of tyre wear causing particulates.

In dealing with this key issue of emissions it is becoming increasingly obvious that the use of cargo and e-cargo bikes would have quite significant benefits in an urban area such as ours. They offer a virtually completely carbon neutral transport solution for actual deliveries and consistently show faster pick-up and delivery times compared to a motorised delivery service. Research by “Pedal Me”, a company founded by former Camden officer Ben Knowles, noted that journeys were 1.61 times faster than a comparable delivery van because the electrically assisted cargo bikes are able to achieve a higher average speed in dense urban areas (see generally “Radical Lessons From The Pedal Me Experience”, November 2022). This is true across London. In boroughs such as Camden, where separated cycle lanes have been increasingly installed, these cargo bike speeds are even higher, when often traffic on the main roads becomes gridlocked. One of the great benefits of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), apart from halving road accidents as the recent TfL dashboard surveys show (“TfL launches online data platform to raise awareness of road collisions in London”, 11 January 2021), is that LTNs provide a safe “short cut” for speedy deliveries by bike.

It is often surprising to non-cyclists how much can be carried on a single bicycle with baskets and panniers. Particularly in respect of the majority of Camden housing repairs an initial inspection is often required to guage the extent of a problem or just an easily transportable tool need. On some very common situations such as a lift breakdown (sometimes just requiring a re-set), leaks and flooding (sometimes just turning off a stopcock), damp and mould (initial checking with a moisture meter) and blockages (requiring a plunger) there is no need for vehicular transportation. Having talked over some of the issues with key housing repair operatives in Camden it is clear that some jobs do require a larger container for tools, and this needs to have a safe, lockable box to protect against the theft of tools. However, with the new generation of cargo and e-cargo bikes there is now a very large capacity approaching that of a small delivery van, and such a “vehicle” is suitable for a considerable array of work tools. Clearly for major jobs a van with a full workshop will be necessary, but there is no need for such a vehicle to be deployed on every call out.

Similarly when private contractors are indispensably required there should be an emphasis on the use of solo bicycles or cargo and e-cargo bikes. Camden was one of five London councils this year signing up to a “cargo bike charter”. The charter includes a five-point plan to improve the infrastructure for cargo bikes and support for individuals and businesses to switch away from polluting vehicles. According to an estimate by the campaign group “Cargo Revolution”, local authorities could save £660 million annually by switching to e-cargo bikes. (Camden, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Lambeth and Westminster; “British Local Authorities Urged To Swap Diesel Vans For Cargo Bikes”, *Forbes,* 16 June 2023).

Delivery providers both in the public and private sectors could also be encouraged to consolidate loads, both within their current workload and possibly by cooperation with other providers. Camden’s far-sighted IT policy in operating an Open Data service may offer a way for providers to share load data. It would seem very useful that a suitably-designed shared parcel management system could help reduce the many trivial delivery trips currently seen in Camden, by assigning deliveries to localised delivery services.

In a comment in 2021 by Dr Ersilia Verlinghieri, a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Westminster "cargo bikes have a whole range of positive impacts, including reducing air and noise pollution and improving public spaces. They are more efficient and much cleaner than using vans." It is estimated that human-powered cargo bikes could replace

around 51% of all motorised freight trips in European cities. A study in Paris shows that it would be technically possible to make up to 91% of all freight trips in that city using e-cargo bikes (see generally “Using cargo bikes for deliveries cuts congestion and pollution in cities, study finds”: https://www.westminster.ac.uk/news/using-cargo-bikes-for-deliveries-cuts-congestion-and-pollution-in-cities-study-finds

In terms of commercial benefits for delivery companies, a key feature of cargo and e-cargo bikes is that they can deliver “door-to-door”. Traditional delivery vehicles also incur significant costs for vehicle purchase, depreciation, repairs and maintenance, tax, high insurance premiums, congestion and ULEZ charges, parking fees (and even parking fines!) and, of course, the ever-increasing cost of fuel. The savings from switching to cargo and e-cargo bikes can be huge. The world's largest delivery company, Amazon, has recognised the benefits and introduced its first fleet of cargo and e-cargo bikes in the UK - the latest step in a growing trend. DHL has been testing cargo and e-cargo bikes in Edinburgh in Scotland. UPS has a small number of bikes in use around the world. And this year FedEx became the first global courier brand to invest in a North American fleet. It is perhaps surprising that Royal Mail and Parcelforce, both of which have large depots in Camden, have not yet begun to explore these opportunities from these hubs, but that too could be in process.

One possibility in Camden might be to share a distribution point, particularly for small package deliveries but also even for sizeable deliveries. It is not helpful that various retail chains all have their own distribution systems with large lorries and vans doing the rounds when, if there were local service bay facilities, then the larger vehicles could be brought to one or more central hubs in the Borough and then cargo and e-cargo bikes could take items to individual shops. The re-use of underground car parks for this shared facility, with say local secure cycle stores with showers and maintenance service stations, would be very useful. One classic environmental disaster perpetrated many years ago in the Borough is the underground car park at Bloomsbury Square and there are several others in the central area which could be re-purposed. The Soho Society in conjunction with Arup has indicated how the catering industry could coordinate their servicing and reduce traffic movements over the border in Westminster, which seems a useful way forward. In considering its own land use the Council could also plan for hubs in the same way that, for example, they established a GP surgery on the ground floor of the Dudley House development when there was a clear need for such a facility in the neighbourhood.

Across London the nature of the physical terrain is highly suitable for cycling. Although Camden has the highest point in the metropolitan region with Whitestone Pond in Hampstead, the entire Borough is appropriate for cycling, and indeed even easier with an e-bike. It was interesting that some of the campaigning against the creation of cycle lanes on Haverstock Hill focused on the gradient of this modest climb. But of course an e-bike makes short work of such obstacles. It was also interesting to note that a subsequent survey of local residents, after adjusting to the road layout changes, approved by a majority the proposal to make that scheme permanent.

There are inevitably some heavy loads that require a large vehicle, especially on construction projects. Advances can be expected in engines that run on conventional fuels with the advent for airlines of synthetic fuels, but even problems caused by heavy good vehicle journeys can sometimes be ameliorated with a little forethought. One of the innovative housing projects in Camden was Chestnut Court in Gospel Oak, where the buildings were manufactured in panels outside London, using predominantly sustainable

timber construction methods, and then transported to Camden and bolted together. This required precision worki, but the project saved significantly on emissions and transport - for example there were hardly any concrete mixers or brick deliveries needed at that site, which are traditionally required in construction transport. This was clearly a useful example of several factors in the circular economy approach.

In order to formulate recommendations for Camden, it has been helpful to know what barriers there are to increased use of cargo and e-cargo bikes. One difficulty could be that even for small parcels and packages, a sizeable vehicle is needed to take a large load to a distribution centre or hub from where cargo and e-load bikes can then be used. The Holborn-based firm “Absolutely”, established in 1865 by the Thompson family, is a role model for moving towards zero emissions deliveries. Now taken over by DPD that firm often uses an electric-powered truck to deliver a full load to the Holborn hub before that freight is then split up and delivered by cargo and e-cargo bikes. Business bays for loading have long been a feature of Camden Parking and this is no doubt a requirement for further such business endeavours needing hubs to reduce emissions. Advanced software has also become very helpful for courier and delivery services, and as with the famous “Eddie Stobart Logistics” company, this can help maximise the movement of goods in both directions, which in turn can halve shipment traffic. A navigation device such as GPS has both advantages and disadvantages - it is a clear advantage when it comes to getting optimal delivery routes and tracking deliveries, but unfortunately GPS has also led to "rat runs" through residential areas, a problem that could be alleviated by rapidly increasing the number of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods [LTNs] in Camden. It may be that such traffic calming measures are not appropriate in rural areas of the UK, such as the Primeminister’s constituency in North Yorkshire, but they have been of huge benefit in Camden. In 2019 the Council of course declared a climate emergency and held the UK’s first Citizens’ Assembly on the Climate Crisis to develop local proposals, and Camden’s LTNs have been an excellent part of a local strategy to reduce vehicle emissions and to encourage safe cycling and walking.

Cargo bikes, trailer bikes and tandems have increasingly been used for the “school run”. It is an observable fact in some parts of Camden that with half terms and school holidays car traffic reduces, sometimes quite dramatically. However, although some schools have safe cycle parking facilities, not all do. Elsewhere in the UK and certainly in other European countries there are extensive cycle parking facilities to encourage cycling to schools by children, parents and staff. The first pilot school project in Camden, in which Ben Knowles was involved as a Camden officer, was to install folding bollards for temporary street closure of Macklin Street, so as to protect schoolchildren, parents and siblings during the critical time when the school day is over. This initiative needs clearly to be considered in the local context, but the impetus, and the lessons learned at St Joseph’s, need to be more widely spread for other Camden schools (See generally “Healthy School Streets” and in particular:
https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/0/Healthy+School+Streets+Initial+Report+Final.pdf/7f0497ec-2d4d-e25b-7072-2a600e5832f2
Until recently very few schoolchildren in Camden were transported to school by cargo bike, but with this increasing and welcome trend, Camden Learning and the Council should be considering carefully what road space can be used for cycle and cargo-bike parking outside schools. The ancillary aim, as with street eateries expansion and widening pavements, should also be to reduce the availability of road space for vehicle movements and parking. The clear message should be that walking or cycling, particularly to primary schools, should be the default mode of travel for pupils and their parents. And for secondary school attendance, while public transport may be more appropriate for longer trips by students, the viability of cycling with improved cycle

infrastructure and good cycle parking facilities could be increasingly important to reduce vehicle emissions.

E. REDUCE: A STEP CHANGE IN CONSTRUCTION

Construction is high amongst our most carbon and resource intensive activities and currently relatively little building waste is re-used or recycled. Construction waste contributes over a third of waste. More positively, it is an area where a local authority is well positioned to effect change – most importantly as a planning authority but also as a significant developer in its own right.

It was abundantly clear to the Panel that, generally, retro-fitting and re-purposing existing buildings will be far more efficient in terms of resource use as well as carbon footprint than "demolition and rebuild". That was the view of all experts consulted and was established by a wealth of examples. The Scrutiny Panel recognise that individual planning decisions will fall to the Planning Committee acting in a quasi-judicial manner and involving a range of circumstances, including the detailed resource and carbon calculations of each application.

Re-using or repurposing or retrofitting existing buildings is a crucial part of the new way forward in an urban environment such as Camden. There have been several very controversial schemes in the Borough where a "demolish and re-build" proposal has been found acceptable to planning officers and the Planning Committee. It would perhaps be invidious to re-hash those decisions in Camden which no doubt had other considerations taken into account, but a very useful case study is the M&S Oxford Street decision in the neighbouring City of Westminster. The ultimate decision from the Secretary of State on this flagship store in Central London was that the "planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate … [i]t should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions". This approach necessitates that there will be a "strong presumption in favour of repurposing and reusing buildings", meaning that "a strong reason would be needed to justify demolition and rebuilding", which can be characterised as a "RetroFirst" approach in national policy as a material planning consideration, with an obligation, right at the start of the design process, to look at the viability and deliverability of repurposing and re-using existing buildings, alongside any proposal to demolish. ["Deep Dive: Retrofit, embodied carbon and the M&S Decision – refusal and recrimination on Oxford Street", 9 August 2023: https://cornerstonebarristers.com/deep-dive-retrofit-embodied-carbon-and-the-ms-decision-refusal-and-recrimination-on-oxford-street/

The estimate in Oxford Street was that the standard "demolish and re-build" model would result in unnecessary carbon emissions of approximately 40,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide. In addition, there were of course important heritage issues there, as there often are in Camden too, but given the housing crisis in Central London it would seem that repurposing vacant grade B office buildings for quality affordable housing should be prioritised. It would also seem much more reasonable to reduce commuting by having more people live in the Borough to support local shops and services that part-time office workers, particularly with the spread of "home office", no longer support.

This M&S Oxford Street decision should be a catalyst for Camden planning officers to advise from the outset at pre-application meetings that potential developers and architects of large sites should consider circularity alternatives well before any draft plans. Inevitably by the time of an actual planning application huge resources will have been deployed. It then becomes extremely difficult for planning officers and the Planning Committee to stop what is often the proverbial "juggernaut". There is therefore a need to look critically at whether the existing Camden guidance on "re-purpose and re-use" is sufficiently robust. Given that the Greater London Assembly and the Mayor of London in March 2022 finalised their "Circular Economy Statements Guidance", and this post-dates the declaration in Camden's Five Year Climate Action Plan, the Scrutiny Panel will recommend that it will be

necessary for Camden to update in the light of those requirements and also in view of the important M&S Oxford Street decision:
https://consult.london.gov.uk/circular-economy-statements

Local, London and national plans should clearly incorporate the principle that developers should look to retro-fit and repurpose existing buildings and where they do seek to demolish and rebuild they should justify that approach with detailed resource and carbon calculations. There should be clear standards for those calculations and for their presentation. Consideration of those calculations should be at the heart of decision-making. The Scrutiny Panel recognises that this is an area in which significant work has been and is being done both at a local level and – in conjunction with other authorities and by lobbying – at a London and national level.

Every single expert consulted by the Scrutiny Panel stated that this was a complex and developing area and that training was essential for officers and for Planning Committee members properly to consider these issues. It was noted that there will be a training session on 8 November. In particular we heard from Professor Sean Smith, the Director of the Centre for Future Infrastructure at the University of Edinburgh who commented on concepts such as “design for deconstruction” or “design for disassembly”, which is a key area of focus and development in architecture and architectural technology. These concepts are simple: right from the outset a new building’s design and construction should anticipate the separation and re-use of its materials at the end of its life. It may be a helpful analogy to consider the way in which modern approaches to packaging are designed to enable recycling. Although “design for deconstruction” a dominant topic in the industry and the focus of much discussion by regulators and legislators, it is yet to feature in regulation or plans. It inevitably will. We make a specific recommendation that Camden looks to take a lead in this area. It should be required or expected of planning applications above an appropriate threshold that they demonstrate how they conform to the principles of “design for deconstruction”.

The application of circular economy principles is immensely useful in dealing with planning control and building construction generally. It can transform tired partly worn-out buildings into state-of-the art modern offices and homes without the dust, noise and destructive “demolition and new build” model which can cause so much environmental impact. A classic example is the re-modelling of the 1960s Bidborough House, once Camden’s Housing Department. Like many Camden departments of that era it was actually rented, but with the opportunity to purchase the freehold and then invest a similar amount of capital into re-structuring the building, Camden was able to meet modern “green standards”. The refurbished building also provided a good working environment which became a model for “hot desking” elsewhere. In due course the sale of Bidborough House in 2014 to UCL for £25 million assisted the Council to re-organise and then to create the 5 Pancras Square complex for the Council. A particular feature of the “recycled” Bidborough building was that it was the first ever multi-service chilled beam project in the UK, used in conjunction with heat pumps [see generally on active chilled beams created by the Frenger system:
https://www.frenger.co.uk/products/chilled-beams.php

Of course Camden has long been known for its innovative architecture [see generally Mark Swenarton, “Cook’s Camden: The Making of Modern Housing” (2017, Lund Publishing). This included the exemplary schemes pioneered by then Borough Architect Sydney Cook in the 1960s and 1970s, and in particular with architects such as Neave Brown, Peter Tabori and those in the firm Benson & Forsyth. Schemes such as Alexandra Road, Fleet

Road (where Neave Brown himself lived in his latter years), Highgate New Town, Branch Hill, schemes in Gospel Oak and the original Maiden Lane, all created a new type of urban housing, based on a return to streets with front doors. The only comparable set of innovative housing projects is probably the Berlin Modernism Housing Estates complex, built from 1910 to 1933 by such architects as Bruno Taut, Martin Wagner and Walter Gropius, which was awarded UNESCO World Heritage Status. A more recent housing development thrust by Camden has been the Community Investment Programme (CIP), launched formally in 2010 and taken up as a model by other Councils. The aim here was to invest in homes, schools and community spaces when no moneys were available from central government because of austerity cuts. A critical part of the programme was to build housing for the long-term future, designed to be sustainable and much more energy efficient. The flagship project that started CIP was the development of Chester Balmore, where a sustainable, mixed-use development of 53 residential units in Highgate was the first time in thirty years that Camden acted as developer and landlord, and the very first time in the UK that an estate had gained Passivhaus standard certification on completion. Half of those units were affordable homes for Camden residents. Professor Wolfgang Feist, the creator of Passivhaus was at the topping out ceremony, modestly suggesting that his innovative approach was “merely standing on the shoulders of giants”:
https://blog.passivehouse-international.org/first-passive-house-wolfgang-feist/
More recent Camden CIP schemes have built on this basic template of a 50/50 leasehold/ tenant approach to the underlying financing and have also experimented with some of the latest options in sustainability and the re-use of materials.

The vital need to recycle building materials is because the construction industry in the UK is responsible for between one-third and 40% of all waste, as very few construction components and materials are re-used or recycled. Camden through its statutory planning powers could therefore have a significant effect on substantially reducing carbon emissions in this sector within the Borough and could be a paradigm model for other local authorities. Indeed, some construction materials are never used before they are scrapped. Research suggests that globally as much as 20 to 30% of the materials delivered to construction sites in Brazil are discarded without being used. In the UK, this figure is around 13% and in the Netherlands dramatically lower, at between 1-10%. Circular economy approaches aim to move away from this resource-hungry traditionalist model. It is clearly wholly inappropriate that virgin materials are extracted, used or processed, and then discarded at the end of their life. It is essential that we move to a model which focuses on raw material reduction, retention and re-use. By collecting unused materials from construction sites, processing them and selling them on it is possible to “harvest” enormous amounts of surplus building materials even if a decision has to be taken to demolish existing structures. As other European countries have shown in “rubble reclamation” a great deal more can be done to shift the built environment away from the take-make-waste economy towards a more sustainable future. (See generally on this theme:
https://ukgbc.org/our-work/topics/circular-economy/
While currently hardcore and rubble can be taken to any north London re-use and recycling centres there are currently limitations such as six standard rubble sacks each month, and we feel that this is an area where further development would be advantageous. The current limitations also unfortunately leads to flytipping in some instances, which is thoroughly unpleasant. While rubble is already re-used on many construction sites in the Borough we have been persuaded that establishing a specific “rubble reclamation centre” and support for a network where building material can be exchanged would be highly advantageous.

There was a clearly expressed view at our roundtable discussion on 16 June by circular economy experts that the Council must strengthen our local plan and guidance to developers to refurbish buildings rather than demolishing and rebuilding them. There needs to be a requirement for a very rigorous whole life carbon emissions assessment comparison of the two options by the developer, prior to any application, which is then critically reviewed by the planning officers. While noting that Camden is one of the few London Boroughs that specifically discourages demolition, there are obviously several examples where refurbishment would have been possible but planning permission has been granted to “demolish and rebuild”. As well as preventing unnecessary demolition there should be a strong encouragement for the the re-use of existing materials in construction. In addition the exchange of materials between developers for re-use elsewhere in developments and refurbishment is an increasingly significant option using circular economy methodology.

Camden in 2009 led the way in St Augustine’s Road with a low-energy “retrofitted Eco House” in conjunction with UCL. This was particularly important as it was a house in a conservation area, which is approximately the situation with 60% of Camden street property homes. This project produced a 50% carbon reduction, predominantly by internally insulating walls and double glazing windows. Heating exchange units assisted greatly with warmth, and the use of low energy bulbs cut electricity costs too. Solar power panels on the roof heated the hot water needed by the household:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yv4NiNoBikE
In a recent study almost a third of British people have never heard of “retrofitting”, which is making home improvements to become much more energy efficient. And two thirds surveyed cite confusion about the upfront costs of making such improvements as a barrier (“The ultimate guide to retrofitting your house” *Sunday Times* (22 October 2023). There are now over 1,500 homes in Britain that match Passivhaus standards, either built or retrofitted with very high levels of insulation, triple-glazed windows and an airtight, draught-free structure. In 2021 Camden carried on its pioneering work in this area by building 216 council homes at Agar Grove, which is the largest Passivhaus scheme in the country; residents have seen a reduction in their energy bills of up to 70% over their old homes (“Passivhaus: how to insulate your home against soaring heating bills”, *Guardian* (19 February 2022). On individual homes even greater strides have been taken, led in Camden by the legendary engineer Max Fordham (involved at Camden’s Alexandra Road estate, which was the first post-war housing estate to be listed (Grade II*) but building his own home to Passivhaus standards. It was the first residential building in the UK to be verified as “net zero carbon”. This was an astonishing achievement and well worth studying for use in both estates building and in retrofitted private homes:
https://www.maxfordham.com/projects/max-fordham-house
Although Max Fordham passed away in 2022 his pioneering work in Camden and elsewhere is a great legacy for moving buildings towards zero carbon footprint.

F. OTHER RELATED SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS PARTICULARLY ON LITTER

Litter is still a very serious problem on Camden streets and there is some litter beyond the reach of recycling. The Keep Britain Tidy project entitled “Bin the Butt” found that dropped cigarettes are actually the most common form of littering. The survey also questioned smokers and found that 39% of them admitted to throwing a cigarette down a drain. These “fag ends” are extremely harmful to aquatic life when washed in to rivers and the oceans, as cigarettes contain micro-plastic elements, so they are comparable to the harm caused by the dumping of plastic bottles, which has been recognised as a serious environmental

hazard across the world. Following a lead from University campuses across America and then the cities of Los Angeles and Chicago, New York City in 2011 became the largest metropolitan area to attempt to cut down on the amount of litter and second-hand smoke by enacting smoke-free ordnances for all open space areas. That means that smoking and vaping are prohibited within all of New York City's parks, beaches and pedestrian plazas. We should follow that lead. In the UK Camden in conjunction with the local NHS has been in the forefront of smoking cessation programmes and tobacco control has also been adopted in all Camden buildings, as well as many other public buildings in the Borough. The Council also attempts to enforce national legislation to create smoke-free zones in pubs, restaurants and catering establishments. Ten years after that ban came into effect Cancer Research UK noted athat there were 1.9 million fewer smokers in Britain compared to 2007 and Sir Harpal Kumar, their chief executive, described himself as “thrilled” with this “enormous success” that has had such dramatic health effects by steering people away from this “lethal addiction” https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2017/07/01/british-smokers-down-by-19million-since-the-ban/
But with strong public support in opinion polls we can now go further and follow New York Fity by initiateping a byelaw to ban smoking and e-cigarette vaping in all Camden parks. Somewhat extraordinarily there is no mention of litter or cigarette butts as a nuisance in Camden’s current byelaws for its parks, but also nothing about the nuisance and damaging health effects caused by second-hand smoke, particularly for those with asthma and other health issues:
https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/2205925/PARKS+BYELAWS.pdf/d9ef4e64-3c7c-badc-f70e-03647d9ad3d7
An upgraded byelaw would obviously also assist in health targets being met in the Borough, as happened with smoking banned inside pubs, but also as a role model for children (see generally the local government sections in Action on Smoking and Health, *Smoke Free by 2030?).* There is also, as pointed out by ASH, the leverage by restaurant and indeed pavement licensing to cut levels of littering and second-hand smoke. Major institutions in the Borough such as the LSE and UCL prohibit smoking within 5 metres of any entrance onto the public roadway or pavement. 2021 legislation in respect of hospitals banned smoking in their grounds, along with school grounds and public playgrounds, as well as outdoor day care and childminding settings, but these rules are not often enforced, and enforcement is conspicuously lacking in Camden open spaces where some “No Smoking” signs are occasionally displayed in designated areas for children to play in. Camden should now declare the requisite “need to make a byelaw” on this topic, consult, enact and enforce a smoke-free zone for all its open spaces (Local government legislation: byelaws:
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-government-legislation-byelaws

An earlier example of a bye-law change which did result in some comsiderly changed social behaviour was in respect of dog fouling. As a result that has been on the wane in some parts of the Borough since bylaws introduced fines. Dog excrement cannot be taken to a recycling centre, along with other materials such as dead animals, carcasses and human faeces. However, the public nuisance from dog fouling, which is thoroughly unpleasant, could be curtailed rather more with a change in the bye-laws and we recommend investigating this.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

It should be noted that these recommendations are formed on the basis of the personal opinions of the five members of the Scrutiny Panel, put forward in good faith to be considered by officers and the appropriate Council committees. They are not to be taken

as Council policy but an effort to spark discussion. In addition the Scrutiny Panel has taken care not to make recommendations that would involve significant financial outlay by the Council, but rather to point to existing good practice in the Borough, both within and outside the Council, and to suggest further potential developments. The opportunities for tackling climate change with the tools of the circular economy, and in partnership with public, private and voluntary sectors, are in our view immense, and should be readily seized.

FOOD

1. That the Council in conjunction with schools and Camden Learning consider very carefully the framework of renegotiating the school meals contract, taking into account the Council's leverage for moving towards a healthier diet for schoolchildren and embedding the principles of the circular economy into that procurement contract.

2. That the excellent work suggested by Camden's healthy eating agenda be linked to food waste issues, creating both health and environmental improvements for residents.

3. That Camden should make use of existing campaigns to drive home the point of how bad food waste is for the environment, whilst also providing tips on how best to store and prepare food.

4. That Camden considers how it can expand the reach of our food waste recycling services so that all homes are eligible.

5. That Camden should support efforts to encourage local restaurants, pubs, shops and hotels to donate any food that cannot be used in time.

6. That Camden should strongly endorse the national organisation "Fare Share", which is a network of charitable food redistributions, with the aim of taking good quality surplus food from across the food industry and making it available to charities and community groups, including school breakfast clubs, older people's luncheon clubs, homeless shelters, and community cafés.

7. That Camden should support the delivery method in shops of cutting food waste and further minimising packaging by encouraging customers to bring in their own containers and shopping bags.

REPAIRS

8. That Camden further supports repair stations across the Borough with the aim of having a repair workshop in walking distance of every ward.

9. That all Council teams, and in particular Voids and Repairs, be asked about the extent to which they prioritised re-use and repair of materials, which would alert management as to areas where a more strategic approach was needed if there was no fully cognisant answer.

10. That the Voids team should be asked to draw up new procedures so that more fixtures and fittings that could be useful to new tenants are left *in situ*, repaired if need be, and then

offered as part of the new let to the new tenant (with liability waivers signed if needed). Where these fittings are not wanted then there should be an appropriate way of offering them elsewhere.

11. That in respect of the excellent repair projects in the Borough, such as Fixing Factory, Sharing Spaces and the Library of Things, consideration be given to utilising Community Investment Levy funding to develop further such local initiatives elsewhere in Camden.

12. That Camden try to co-ordinate or provide further training for community centres, tenants and residents associations and local businesses who need support for expansion or for consistency in delivery of sustainability projects.

13. That Camden continue to support localised shopping options which can be walked or cycled to, and Camden property services in their continuing audits should be encouraged further to make available such unused space as multi-storey or underground parking as well as commercial premises for workshops, storage and community facilities.

14. That Camden continue to support appropriate use of space, for example by use by charities and other *bona fide* organisations of school playgrounds at weekends for “car boot sales” and other methods of recycling and reselling items.

TEXTILES

15. That Camden creates a charity shop directory and map on its website so that residents can easily see which charity shops are accessible in their area.

16. That Camden brings together its partners to organise a carpet, rug and blanket making workshop.

17. That Camden conduct research into what “fast fashion” companies there are in the Borough, and organise a roundtable with these brands to discuss the practicalities of moving towards more sustainable fashion and eco-conscious supply chains.

18.That Camden review its own textile production carbon footprint.

19. That Camden encourages regular local clothes swaps at community centres and schools across Camden, and advertises these clearly across the Council’s website and social media channels, as well as supporting notification in community centres, libraries, and on council estate noticeboards.

20. That Camden encourages the recycling of school uniform and school specific sports kit by school and community organisations.

21.That Camden support sustainable textile-apparel businesses by organising a “sustainable fashion fair”, inviting them to advertise and sell their clothes.

TRANSPORT

22. That Camden in continuing with its Healthy Schools projects aim to secure suitable cargo bike parking, particularly outside schools when children can be delivered by cargo bike.

23. That Camden should comsider appropriate land use for further development of “last mile” hubs, with associated parking provision for larger vehicles delivering bulk supplies to these distribution centres.

24. That Camden, clearly in the lead on the use of cargo and e-cargo bikes for deliveries should now reach out further to firms, large and small, in the Borough to support cargo and e-cargo bike use to a greater degree.

25. That Camden in seeking to reduce vehicular traffic caused by major construction sites should change to a much clearer expectation that Construction and Management Plans (CMPs) should be available in the pre-planning process, so that these plans can form part of the tendering package given to contractors by the developer, as opposed to only being required after planning permission has been granted. While we accept it is not always practical to agree CMPs prior to planning permissions, as has been explained to members frequently, best practice for larger projects should enhance the Camden expectation that there will be full public consultation and at the earliest stage possible.

BUILDINGS

26. That a response be requested from Camden planning officers to the unanimous suggestion by circular economy experts at the roundtable discussion on 16 June that the Council strengthens the local plan and guidance to developers in refurbishing buildings rather than demolishing and rebuilding them. While noting that Camden is one of the few London Boroughs that already specifically discourages demolition, and much of course depends on what is possible and indeed financially viable, there have been examples given to the Scrutiny Panel where refurbishment would have been possible in Camden, but planning permission had been granted to “demolish and rebuild”, and we heard considerable criticism from experts and residents, so we recommend greater clarity in this area.

27. That the Camden default should be more straightforwardly based on preventing unnecessary demolition and there should be a strong encouragement for the re-use of existing materials in construction. The Scrutiny Panel welcomes what has been achieved and recommends that work continues and deepens.

28. That Camden take advantage of an offer from various voluntary organisations, which we were informed about, to provide training for officers and Planning Committee members in this rapidly changing terrain.

29. That Camden looks to further lead in this area. It should be required or expected of planning applications above an appropriate threshold that they demonstrate how they conform to the principles of “design for deconstruction”.

28. That Camden should establish a “rubble reclamation centre” and support a network where building material can be exchanged between developers for re-use elsewhere in developments and refurbishment.

29. That Camden update its planning guidelines, given that the GLA and the Mayor in March 2022 finalised their “Circular Economy Statements Guidance”, and this post-dates the declaration of Camden's Five Year Climate Action Plan: https://consult.london.gov.uk/circular-economy-statements

30. That in every large new development in the Borough there should be consideration in the pre-planning process not just of separate space for re-use and recycling relating to that specific site, which already occurs, but for wider considerations of additional space to be used to further the aims of sustainability in local and Borough-wide projects.

OTHER

31. That Camden utilise the RELondon database of all the organisations, bidders, and businesses who have indicated that they have have circular economy objectives, so that those within the Borough can be identified and linked up.

32. That such organisations be asked if they are looking for support from Camden, not necessarily of a financial nature, but possibly in terms of space, networking and sharing ideas.

33. That Camden should take immediate steps to commence the formal process of a new bye-law making all parks smoke-free zones, on the basis of health, litter reduction and setting a suitable example for children and young people.

34. That when Camden redevelops the Recycling Centre at Regis Road it should prioritise significant space for the exchange and re-use of still functioning and repairable items.

35. That further consideration should be given to the Council communicating about these issues through social media, for example by such apps as “nextdoor” and “Facebook Marketplace” that appear to have a large following, and that in this way the Council could use its leverage to change narratives about re-using commodities.

36. That Camden Council should very strongly support the campaign to outlaw the loophole in business rates rules which allows a commercial landlord to move boxes or equipment into an empty space and claim it is in use, so that after removal a further period of business rates relief is triggered.

37. That Camden should further encourage the ethical use of any such empty commercial or residential property.

38.. That Camden should also use its power to disseminate good practice by encouraging further the initiative in some food shops of “bulk food shopping” to minimise packaging, where customers are prompted to bring in their own containers.

39. That Camden should support any government proposals to have returnable deposits on bottles (Deposit Return Schemes), as has been hugely successful in so many other countries.

40. That Camden should appoint among current officers a Programme Lead to try to articulate a vision for the Borough on the circular economy and co-ordinate activity across the Council’s work to foster the use of this tool towards increasing sustainability.

8. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

This section MUST appear in all reports. Ensure that you send the report to the relevant Corporate Finance advisor for comments in good time.

9. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

This section MUST appear in all reports. Ensure that you send the report to the relevant Legal adviser for comments in good time.

The costs of the recommendations of this Scrutiny Panel for further positive environmental action by the Council are not considered to be significant. The costs to society of not pursuing sustainability are catastrophic.

10. Environmental Implications

The aim throughout the work of this Scrutiny Panel has been to enhance the Borough's Movement towards carbon neutrality and full sustainability.

REPORT ENDS