

A photograph of a community garden. In the foreground, a wooden trellis structure stands over a raised garden bed. The bed contains various plants, including a dark red dahlia and green leafy plants. In the background, several people are engaged in gardening activities. A man in a white shirt and dark trousers is on the left, gesturing towards a woman in a black top and khaki shorts on the right. Other people are visible under a blue canopy in the distance. The scene is set outdoors on a sunny day.

MAYOR OF LONDON

GREY TO GREEN

A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY-LED DEPAVING PROJECTS

GREY TO GREEN

London is one of the greenest cities in the world and the Mayor's ambition is to make it even more so. In July 2019, London was recognised as the world's first National Park City. This is because of the work that is happening in London to increase and improve green space, and encourage more biodiversity and wildlife, helping to make London greener, healthier and wilder.

What is Depaving?

'Depaving' is the process of removing impermeable surfaces such as concrete and tarmac and replacing them with materials such as soil, gravel and permeable paving which allow water to move through them. The depaved areas can be planted with a wide variety of of suitable plants.

Benefits of Depaving

Climate change is expected to result in more frequent and intense rainfall. Turning grey areas of impermeable surfacing to green reduces the risk of flash flooding by intercepting and slowing down the flow of rainfall to our sewers and waterways, helping to better protect our homes from surface water and sewer flooding

There are many ways you can turn grey to green and this guide provides a few simple examples of where community groups can start. It's easy to get involved in depaving and it doesn't matter if you only have a small space. Lots of small changes can add up to a big impact.



Pelham House, Morningson Avenue, W14 8SP



All Saints Square, Clydesdale Road, W11 1JE



Osborne Close, Herne Hill, SE24 0HB



Sutton House Breaker's Yard, Hackney, E9 6JQ



Queen Caroline Estate, W6 9BS

WHERE TO START

There are plenty of opportunities for community-led depaving projects, especially large areas of hard paving where there is a deficiency of green space that would benefit from improvement.

Setting up a community group

Forming a group of people with the same goal can be the first step in the successful planning of your depaving project. The group can oversee the project and take part in planting events and longer term maintenance. There is plenty of useful information to help you on your way to forming a community group. The Mayor of London has produced a Community Projects Handbook, which is a great place to start.

Community group guidance

Greater London Authority – www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/funding-opportunities/crowdfund-london/resources

Groundwork - www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/projecttoolkit/pages/setting-up-your-group-tips

Depaving and greening guidance

Greater London Authority - www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/parks-green-spaces-and-biodiversity/urban-greening

Royal Horticultural Society - www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/greening-great-britain

London Wildlife Trust - www.lbhf.gov.uk/sites/default/files/section_attachments/living_with_rainwater_in_hf_guide.pdf

London Metropolitan University - www.rewildmystreet.org

International (Portland, USA) - <https://depave.org>



RESEARCH AND PERMISSIONS

Firstly, you will need to identify an appropriate site for depaving. It could be an existing open space which has areas of hard surfacing or a section of pavement which is wide enough for some paving to be removed. You could even consider greening or planting up the walls or roof of a building.

Identifying the land owner and gaining permission

It is essential to get the permission in writing of whoever owns the land. A private owner can be identified on the Land Registry. Also do contact your Local Authority to confirm if they are the landowner, and if they will give permission for the project. Always check with your Local Planning Authority to see whether the proposals may need planning permission.

Identifying underground utilities

Before starting any work yourself or with a contractor you must establish if there are existing underground services, for example gas or electric cables. This can be found out using the website www.digdat.co.uk or by contacting services providers individually. If in doubt, your contractor can hire a cable avoidance tool (CAT scanner) to check the area you are depaving to see if any cables are buried underground.



It is important to check for underground services before digging.

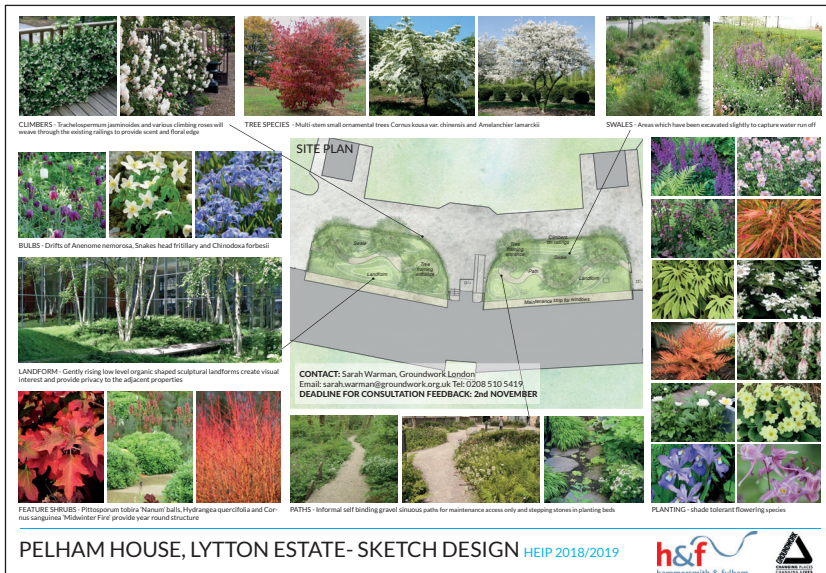
DESIGN

Once you have agreed on a site you will need to develop a design. Whether you are designing it yourself or employing a landscape professional, it's a good idea to get advice from someone who knows about landscape design and managing projects.

There is plenty of guidance available for deciding on your planting choices, for example on the Royal Horticultural Society website or you can contact your local plant nursery for advice and availability.

www.rhs.org.uk/advice/how-to-green-your-grey-front-garden

A professional Landscape Architect will work with your needs and aspirations to ensure the site can reach its full potential. They can also help with project management, landowner and planning permissions, budgeting, tendering and appointing a suitable contractor and overseeing the works. Their fees will need to be included in your project budget. The Landscape Institute have a directory of all registered Landscape Architects within your area: <https://my.landscapeinstitute.org/directory>



Example of a landscape architect's plan

FUNDING

As a community group, you may be able to apply for funding to pay for your project. Once you have agreed the initial design of your project you can start to fundraise the budget required to pay for your project.

An outline estimate of cost may be sufficient to determine whether to move ahead with the project. Later on, more accurate figures can be calculated in order to establish a fundraising target. There are various costs to be established, including professional fees, permits and licences. The excavation and disposal of hard paving can be costly, it is worth first contacting your local council to discuss the removal of non-residential waste, as some may be able to assist by removing this for free. If your council are unable to help then you will need to employ a contractor to dispose of the waste, so should factor this into your budgeting. It is important to make sure the contractor has the appropriate waste carriers licences for the waste that will be removed, check the Environment Agency register for this – <https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers>. It is important that any new planting receives extra care and maintenance for its first growing season (one year).

The final costs for each individual project will be known once the scheme has been priced by the chosen contractor, but as a guide, a depaving project of 50m² carried out in 2019 in London had the following costs:



Professional fees £3,400 (lump sum)
Contractor insurances, traffic management and permits - £4,500 (lump sum)
Clearance and excavation of paving slabs - £40 (per square metre)
New metal edging to plant bed - £85 (per square metre)
New topsoil 450mm depth - £145 (per cubic metre)
New planting - £55 (per square metre)
12 months planting maintenance - £2,000 (lump sum)

FUNDING

Potential funders

There are many sources of funding to consider, including grant applications, crowd-funding and community schemes such as:

Funding streams with specific mention of depaving:

Greener City Fund - www.london.gov.uk/greenercity

Our Space Award - www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/london/pages/our-space-award

Tesco's Bags of Help - www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/tescocommunityscheme

Potential depaving funding streams:

National Lottery Community Fund - www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk
(focus on community space improvements)

National Lottery Heritage Fund - www.heritagefund.org.uk (focus on heritage features)

Crowd-funding - www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/funding-opportunities/crowdfund-london (focus on crowd-funding campaigns which could include depaving/greening)

UKCF - www.ukcommunityfoundations.org

LCF - www.entrust.org.uk/landfill-community-fund/finding-funding

Many Housing Associations - www.groundwork.org.uk/Pages/Category/working-with-social-housing-providers

Funding advice / searches:

Funding Central - www.fundingcentral.org.uk

Locality - locality.org.uk/about/what-we-do

The Community Shares Unit - communityshares.org.uk

KnowHow NonProfit - knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/funding/fundraising

CONSTRUCTION

If the project is small-scale then you may not need any professional assistance during construction, but you might want to employ the services of a landscape contractor to build the scheme. You can search for a local landscape contractor on various websites and publications.

Tendering

Tendering is the process by which you find the best value contractor for your project. Provide as much detail as possible to achieve reliable costs and always get a number of competitive quotes to compare them.

Construction and Health and Safety

Construction can involve activities that may put people at risk of accidents, so it is important to ensure that your contractor has relevant insurance cover. If you aren't using a contractor then it is advisable to contact your local council to discuss whether they can help provide the necessary cover. In addition to this an awareness of Health and Safety procedures is important. The HSE has useful advice - www.hse.gov.uk

Community planting event

A community planting event is a great way to involve the local community in the fun parts of the project!



Lowden Road rain garden, Herne Hill, SE24 0BH

MAINTENANCE

Maintenance is a very important aspect for the long term success of your scheme. It is also great way to regularly involve the local community through looking after the green spaces that benefit them. Before you begin, always find out who maintains the space and talk to them about your project .

Planting maintenance

New planting will need regular watering and extra upkeep while establishing. This can include some pruning in winter to ensure shrubs look their best, weeding to tidy up planting beds and adding new plants to keep things looking great.

For detailed month-by-month advice on planting maintenance refer to the RHS website www.rhs.org.uk/advice

Cleaning

It is also helpful to regularly check your new green spaces for litter, potential damage or any other issues which can easily be resolved.



CASE STUDY



Before

The residents on the Lytton Estate were determined to make this paved and unused space into somewhere that all the residents could enjoy. Their vision was to:

- ~ Create a visually beautiful space
- ~ Build pride amongst all residents and motivate them to 'love where they live'
- ~ Add an area of beauty with a relatively low labour maintenance need
- ~ Provide a tranquil area where residents can stroll and enjoy the outdoors
- ~ Enhance the effect of the 'wild garden' opposite
- ~ Give focus and increase activity for the resident youth gardening club
- ~ Discourage littering and loitering in the area
- ~ Encourage resident participation and build on a sense of community
- ~ Remove and rehouse the bin storage areas

Pelham House, Lytton Estate, W14 8SP

Cost: £49,875 +VAT

Land owner: LB

Hammersmith and Fulham

Funding: Mayor of London,
LB Hammersmith and
Fulham

Time: 4 weeks to build

Size: 300m²





Working with the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF) and Groundwork London, the group have now realised their vision and have a space they can be proud of.

Cost breakdown:

Professional fees	£10,600
Contractor insurances etc.	£3,300
Clearance and excavation	£11,000
Paving and drainage	£2,100
Plants	£21,000
Maintenance (1 year)	£1,875



CASE STUDY



Before

The London Borough of Lambeth and Groundwork London worked in collaboration with 'We are Waterloo', a Business Improvement District (BID) who are focused on creating a safer and more pleasant trading environment for businesses.

The blank pavement area on Secker Street was identified as a good site for depaving. The site is near a school, a Church and a Kings College building and during consultation there was a great deal of interest from the local community in taking part in a community planting day.

The vision for the space was that the linear planting would unravel like a piece of string along the street. The Secker Street 'String Park' could be an exemplar for many other locations across London where long narrow spaces are available.

Secker Street, Waterloo SE1 8UF

Cost: £23,000 + VAT

Land owner: LB Lambeth
(Highways Dept)

Funding: Mayor of London,
We Are Waterloo BID

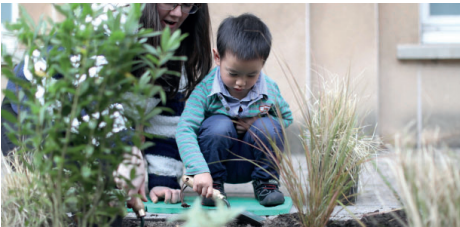
Time: 1 week to build

Size: 32m²





After



Cost breakdown:

Professional fees	£3,390
Contractor insurances etc.	£4,500
Clearance and excavation	£5,650
Paving and drainage	£6,060
Plants	£3,400

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

A simple checklist to use once you have carried out your research, gained permissions, completed the design and have your funding

- Agree date for construction and appoint contractor
- Put together list of plants (refer to RHS website for further info)
- Contact plant nurseries to place order for planting (this can take a few weeks, depending on the time of year)
- Contact suppliers to place orders for all other materials
- Arrange for excavated materials to be removed (some Local Authorities can provide skips for free)
- Promote depaving project on social media
- Coordinate all labour and deliveries for construction
- Arrange a community planting event
- Take photos of construction and planting as a case study