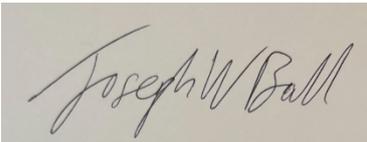


LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Improving Food Waste Recycling in Camden	
REPORT OF Councillor Joseph Ball, Cabinet Adviser on Food Waste Recycling	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee	DATE 10 th March 2026
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report contains the findings and recommendations of Councillor Joseph Ball in his role as Cabinet Adviser on Food Waste Recycling Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in preparation of this report Contact Officer: Amy Leung Cabinet Officer amy.leung@camden.gov.uk 020 7974 3310 Town Hall, Judd Street, London, WC1H 9JE	
RECOMMENDATIONS (i) Note the report of Councillor Joseph Ball, Cabinet Adviser on Food Waste Recycling (ii) Discuss and comment on the recommendations made by the Cabinet Adviser, which will be incorporated in a report to Cabinet  Signed by: Councillor Joseph Ball Agreed by: Director of Environment and Sustainability Date: 26 th February 2026	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Cabinet Adviser position exists to provide evidence-based recommendations and policymaking support to Camden Council's Cabinet. [The Leader appointed two Cabinet Advisers for the 2025/26 municipal year.](#) Councillor Joseph Ball was appointed as the Cabinet Adviser on Food Waste Recycling (FWR), with a remit to understand how Camden can improve and increase FWR and successfully navigate the upcoming national Simpler Recycling legislation.
- 1.2 Cabinet Advisers play a key role in shaping policy, supporting evidence-based decision-making, facilitating cross-departmental collaboration, and ensuring that the Council's priorities are delivered effectively and efficiently. They do not sit as part of the Cabinet, and do not have delegated decision making or executive powers, but act in an advisory capacity to Cabinet Members, with a focus on specific policy areas within their portfolios. Cabinet Advisers conduct research, engage with key stakeholders, and develop recommendations that will be considered by the relevant Cabinet Member and Scrutiny Committee, and by Cabinet.
- 1.3 This report sets out recommendations to enhance Camden's existing FWR service and to support the effective implementation of collections for flats above shops (FAS), in line with forthcoming Simpler Recycling legislation.

2. Context and Background

- 2.1. In 2019, Camden declared a climate and ecological emergency, recognising the existential threat of climate change and the damage to our planet that it is causing. A key [We Make Camden](#) ambition is for Camden to be a green, clean, vibrant, accessible, and sustainable borough with everyone empowered to contribute to tackling the climate emergency.
- 2.2. Camden's Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2020-2025 was developed in response to the climate emergency and has been delivered alongside Camden's Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) 2023-26. Both these and the upcoming CAP (2026-2030) outline actions to work together with communities, partners, and businesses to help reduce emissions and support a local transition towards a circular economy.
- 2.3. Camden's household recycling rate (measured as the percentage of the total weight of waste that is recycled) has flatlined between 26-31% over the past decade, and is currently at 29%. This compares to the London average of 33% and a national average of 45%. This 29% figure is made up of 20% dry mixed recycling (paper, card, metal, glass, and plastic), 5% garden waste, and 4% food waste. Food waste comprises almost one third (27%) of the average household bin in Camden, and 75% of this is avoidable food waste.
- 2.4. The waste hierarchy initially prioritises waste prevention, then reuse, then recycling. Therefore whilst food waste is not the most optimal solution, it still has an important role to play in improving the sustainable handling of waste. Given its relative weight, increasing FWR will have a disproportionately positive effect on the recycling rate.

- 2.5. An estimated 4,129,000 tonnes of food is purchased by households in London annually, of which 22% is wasted, producing an estimated 250,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions through disposal. [The Waste and Resources Action Programme \(WRAP\)](#) estimates that wasted food costs the average UK household approximately £50 per month.
- 2.6. Camden offers an FWR service to all kerbside properties, providing a 7L kitchen caddy and 23L outdoor collection caddy. Around 50% of estate properties currently have a communal collection service. Free compostable caddy liners are available at all Camden managed libraries and sports centres. Subsidised home compost bins are also available, and we encourage residents to prevent avoidable food waste.
- 2.7. Food waste collected for recycling is taken to the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) anaerobic digestion facility in Hertfordshire. Anaerobic digestion produces biogas to provide heat and electricity to households, and the digestate can be used as fertiliser on agricultural land. This process also prevents methane from being released into the atmosphere. Residual waste processed through the NLWA costs about £100 a tonne, whereas FWR costs approximately £20 a tonne, presenting a significant cost saving opportunity. Nine recycled banana peels can generate enough energy to fully charge a laptop, whilst one caddy of food waste can produce enough energy to power a home for an hour.
- 2.8. Simpler Recycling legislation seeks to standardise recycling across England. However, the implementation of the legislation will not be uniform, and will take the local circumstances of councils into account. Businesses and non-domestic premises with 10 or more employees were mandated to have a food waste collection in place from 1 April 2025, and FWR will be implemented for all households by 1 April 2026. Small and micro-businesses will be included from 1 April 2027. Those that fail to comply may receive a compliance notice from the Environment Agency and potential fines or further enforcement action.
- 2.9. There are currently 16,600 households in Camden without a food waste service, 4882 FAS and 11,718 on estates. We will be providing FWR to all FAS and gradually expanding the service to all our estates, but this will take time as estates require tailored solutions.

3. The FAS Trial

- 3.1. To prepare for the implementation of Simpler Recycling legislation, a trial was launched in January 2026 to test on-street food waste collections for FAS. FWR was introduced as a for some FAS at Belsize Village, Camden Road, and Malden Road. A table summarising the trial is included in Appendix A.
- 3.2. **Quantitative insights:** After a strong start, the data shows a concerning reduction in food waste collected over the course of the trial. This has been partly attributed to reduced footfall due to poor winter weather, and it is anticipated that participation will be higher with warmer weather and longer daylight hours during spring, summer, and autumn. Nevertheless, the reduction

is waste collected shows the importance of effective ongoing communications to residents and smooth operation of the service to maximise the amount of food waste collected. Whilst only one collection was not conducted due to contamination, this nonetheless shows the importance of education and communication to prevent contamination issues during the FAS service rollout.

- 3.3. **Qualitative insights:** Many residents interviewed at their properties were happy with the service introduction. Specific positive comments included: “so glad this is finally happening”, “this will be great as I normally just have to throw everything away”, “this will be great as I have so many coffee grounds that I’d like to recycle”, “I’ve been bringing my food waste to nearby estates where they have food waste bins so this is much more convenient”. Some residents were previously unaware that Camden and Veolia offered free FWR and were pleased to learn of the service. Some residents were initially confused about the service, and took time to change their behaviour, but enthusiastically participated once they understood FWR and its objectives.
- 3.4. **Resident concerns:** Some residents commented negatively on the size of the bin housings and said that they had not been consulted prior to the installations. Some residents were worried about the smell in the summer and the bins attracting flies or vermin. There were also concerns that this would encourage businesses to leave their bags and food out on the street.
- 3.5. **Rollout of FWR service to FAS:** Current mapping estimates that approximately 95 containers (sited within 100m of properties) will be required to cover FAS without an existing FWR service. This mapping will be reviewed and updated over the next few months based on learnings from the trial, so this number may change. There is sufficient capital funding (c.£761,000) from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) for the roll out of the containers.

4. Next Steps and Recommendations

- 4.1. **Targeted and sustained communications across Camden:** Veolia has successfully improved food waste participation in certain low collection wards such as Camden Town, Regent’s Park, and St Pancras & Somers Town through a targeted programme that delivered 3321 letters, engaged 246 residents, and resulted in a 23.5% increase in caddies presented and a 70% increase in tonnes collected. As of February 2026, Veolia is running a food waste participation project targeting approximately 1200 residents in Primrose Hill & Regent’s Park. Whilst these programmes have been successful, monitoring low collection rounds and taking action to increase uptake should be institutionalised as standard procedure. Additionally, these programmes have focussed on the south of Camden where collections are relatively low, but achieving a substantial uplift in FWR across the borough will also require intensive engagement in the north and west of Camden, as well as a sustained borough-wide communications campaign across all collection rounds to gradually change resident behaviour. In accordance with ReLondon guidance, communications should be bold, engaging, and tailored to individual estates or streets. We should conduct A/B testing to determine the most effective

messaging to residents, and consider conveying the positive environmental impact of FWR, as well as nudge theory techniques, such as sharing the granular and measurable impact of FWR. Including informative and persuasive labels on caddies could help residents engage with the service.

- 4.2. **Empower local advocates for FWR:** Launched in November 2025, the Neighbourhood Champions programme aims to empower residents to support effective waste collection in their areas. 25 residents have signed up, and in-person training commenced in February 2026. These Neighbourhood Champions will be important advocates for the service and should work with Community Champions on estates to promote FWR. Appointing FWR Champions for estates should also be considered. Young people are more environmentally conscious and open to changing their behaviours, so the school engagement projects run by Veolia and NLWA should be amplified across the borough, with a particular focus on getting the children to change the behaviour of their parents. Student accommodation buildings should also be targeted with dedicated engagement programmes.
- 4.3. **Roll out fox proof caddies and optimise collections:** The collection experience is critical in ensuring that uptake of the service is sustained. Only circa 3% of food waste caddies are fox proof currently, and gradually replacing all existing outdoor caddies with fox proof caddies that have lockable lids would prevent food waste from being spilled onto the street by foxes or strong winds and improve perceptions of the service, thus making it more attractive. Contamination of food waste bins with other waste streams is currently a major cause of missed collections, and whilst further communications and advocacy should in theory reduce contamination rates, specific anti-contamination campaigns should be considered. When doorstep collections are missed due to bins being in areas that crews overlook, resident reports of missed collection must be effectively communicated to crews so they can collect correctly in future. Periodic breakdowns of Veolia fleet vehicles and staff shortages, and parked cars blocking access to sites are common causes of missed collections. These can be tackled through ongoing work with to accelerate fleet electrification and ensure resilient staffing, monitored through contract review meetings, and Environmental Services encouraging Neighbourhoods Teams to implement Traffic Management Orders (TMOs) for collection sites that are frequently blocked by vehicles.
- 4.4. **Drive collaboration and institutionalise FWR as a priority:** Camden and Veolia are jointly responsible for increasing FWR, and changing resident behaviour will require sustained communications, changes to the physical environment, and collaboration between departments and external partners. Establishing a Food Waste Recycling Taskforce, composed of officers from Environmental Services, Housing, Neighbourhoods, and Veolia counterparts, will stimulate greater collaboration and maintain the prioritisation of increasing FWR in Camden. To continue promoting the importance of FWR, it should become an annual item for the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee, and Veolia should attend these meetings to enable more effective scrutiny. Camden should also set an example by reviewing and promoting FWR provision within its buildings, encouraging officers and members to use the service at home.

- 4.5. **Prioritise larger estates when expanding the service and shift to smaller communal containers:** Of the approximately 50% of estates that do not currently have access to FWR, the larger estates should be prioritised for the roll out of the service, in order to achieve the benefits of economies of scale. The launch of the service should be accompanied by distinctive messaging across the estate, and in collaboration with TRAs or other community groups. Ideally, new FWR bins should be co-located with existing rubbish and dry mixed recycling bins, but if necessary, on-street containers should be installed for estates that have limited room for communal bins or that would present access challenges for crews. Accelerating the downsizing of containers would also improve the offer on estates, as the large 1100L bins can be difficult to clean, use, and maintain, whereas the smaller 240L containers are easier to clean and use, especially for residents who struggle to reach or lift the lids of the larger containers. Environmental Services must work with the Neighbourhoods Service and Veolia to introduce changes recommended in the [ReLondon Recycling for Flats Toolkit](#) to increase participation, such as push pedal access for bins, installing more engaging signage, and regular monitoring. Some residents on estates have opposed FWR in the past, so it will be important to convince estate residents of the benefits of the service when introducing it.
- 4.6. **Expand the FWR offer in blocks of private residences:** Under Simpler Recycling, landlords have additional duties to offer FWR provision and guidance to their tenants. Private tenants represent 35% of Camden residents and so it will be important for Camden and Veolia to promote FWR by working with landlords, tenants, and groups such as the Camden Federation of Private Tenants.
- 4.7. **Engage with large ‘chain’ businesses for efficient results and promote the containerisation of commercial food waste:** Information on the Simpler Recycling reforms and requirements was circulated to all businesses in Camden via the business rates mailout in February 2025, and Veolia provide a commercial food waste caddy collection service for business customers. However, only 95 businesses in Camden are currently signed up to Veolia’s food waste service, so more engaging ongoing communications are needed to increase uptake. Large grocery retailers and hospitality companies operating in the borough should be priority targets for an efficient return on investment, and collaborating with neighbouring boroughs and the NLWA to influence these large organisations will be key. Promoting the containerisation of commercial waste (such as the Bagel Bakery cabinets on Swaine’s Lane and the Belsize Streatery) would encourage a more attractive alternative to bags on the street for business collections. Given the relative scale of food waste generated by businesses compared to individual households, business engagement has the potential to yield significant results. Given the food waste hierarchy, businesses should of course also be encouraged to reduce food waste or repurpose food that will be waste, either by donating it for redistribution through charities like The Felix Project, or through private sector solutions like Too Good To Go.
- 4.8. **Make enforcement more collaborative and proactive:** The Community & Environmental Safety Enforcement Team are already working to get more businesses onto waste contracts, and we can capitalise on this by getting businesses signed up to FWR simultaneously. Working closely with the Environment Agency will also improve compliance.

- 4.9. **Get the FAS service right from the start:** A [key learning from WRAP](#) is that getting the service right at inception is critical, as this can be the difference between a high performing collection and a low performing collection. This is because residents have a low tolerance of poor service delivery for FWR and may stop using the service as a result. Therefore, before the service starts, ward councillors should join meetings with officers and Veolia to select sites so they can bring a local perspective and insights. When rolling out the new FAS service, we should leverage best practice and learnings from other Central London boroughs, as well as guidance from ReLondon and WRAP. Given the requirements of competing stakeholders such as Transport for London (TfL) for limited pavement space, as well as resident concerns about large containers, we should deploy 120L rather than 240L containers where appropriate. Trial data indicates a significant reduction in FWR after the first week, so ongoing communication to residents will be key in maintaining recycling rates. Some residents living near the FAS trial locations who were ineligible for the trial complained about the containers, so we should communicate to all proximate residents, not just the intended targets.
- 4.10. **Collaboratively lobby for additional funding and policy changes:** The change in national legislation is focussed on FWR provision for FAS, but of the approximately 16,000 households in Camden without a food waste service currently, only 4882 are in FAS, compared to 11,718 on estates. Although the national legislation on FWR is accompanied by additional funding, the funding formula does not take into account the additional complexities and challenges faced by inner city councils such as Camden and other members of the NLWA, and Camden does not have access to additional funding from central government to offer FWR to more estates. Therefore Camden, in conjunction with other local authorities and the NLWA, should lobby central government for funding to roll out FWR across estates, and continue to push NLWA's policy position for infrastructure investment for specific urban FWR challenges. Additionally, Camden should advocate for other NLWA policy positions such as updating planning rules to better incorporate FWR and requiring fruit and vegetables to be sold loose unless the packaging reduces waste. Given the national nature of Simpler Recycling legislation, we should lobby for a national or at least London-wide communications campaign on FWR with co-ordinated messaging. Indeed, whilst councils can drive progress locally, lobbying for further regional and national policy changes will be required to further improve FWR and fundamentally reshape the food system.

5. Acknowledgements

- 5.1. Thank you to all who contributed to this report, including Councillor Adam Harrison, Richard Bradbury, Rachel Bailey, Fran Evans, Molly Critchley, Amy Leung, Tim Gray, Winfield Greenidge, James Dunlop, Martin Capstick, Victoria Hemmingway, Nicholas Hearn, Laura O'Mahony, and all of the Veolia crew members.

6. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

- 6.1. Legal Services have been consulted and confirmed they have no specific comments on the report

7. Finance Comments of the Director of Finance

- 7.1. Camden's FWR Service is delivered through the Veolia contract. As noted in the report, Camden along with other local authorities has received capital and revenue grant to meet the changes in the legislation.
- 7.2. The Committee should take account of any financial implications of the recommendations. However, it is anticipated that most of the recommendations could be delivered within the existing budget for the service.

8. Environmental Implications

- 8.1. The programmes and work outlined in this report have positive environmental implications which align with the Council's ambitions in We Make Camden, the Camden Reduction and Recycling Plan and the Camden Climate Action Plan.

Appendix A: FAS Trial Data

Appendix B: Communications Campaigns

Appendix C: Photographs

REPORT END

Appendix A: FAS Trial Data

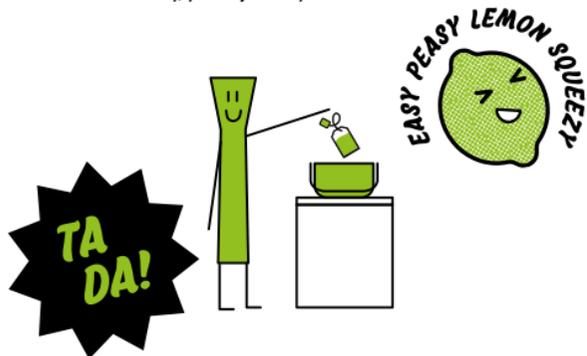
Bin Location	BELSIZE LANE/TERRACE, LONDON, NW3 5AS	BELSIZE JUNCTION, LONDON, NW3 5AS	57-73 Camden Road	110-128 Camden Road	84 (Highstone Mansions)- 100 Camden Road	145-163 Malden Road	165-181 Malden Road	Total Daily FWR Collected	
19/01/2026	11	12	8	11	10	9	11	72	
20/01/2026	15	11	7	12	13	10	8	76	
21/01/2026	16	18	12	10	8	9	6	79	
22/01/2026	8	8	14	11	9	11	13	74	
23/01/2026	16	6	11	8	6	12	10	69	
26/01/2026	10	9	12	6	14	12	11	74	
27/01/2026	10	12	4	4	5	3	3	41	
28/01/2026	7	1	5	2	4	4	1	24	
29/01/2026	3	1	1	3	4	2	4	18	
30/01/2026	1	1	3	4	2	4	3	18	
02/02/2026	6	1	1	4	5	2	2	21	
03/02/2026	1	1	4	3	2	1	1	13	
04/02/2026	9	5	3	4	4	3	5	33	
05/02/2026	0	5	2	5	0	2	1	15	
06/02/2026	2	4	3	1	2	4	3	19	
09/02/2026	3	1	1	3	4	1	2	15	
10/02/2026	0	0	2	5	1	2	4	14	
11/02/2026	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	6	
12/02/2026	0	0	12	8	7	0	1	28	
13/02/2026	3	1	4	1	1	3	7	20	
16/02/2026	12	19	5	7	3	2	22	70	
17/02/2026	13	10	2	4	4	0	3	36	
18/02/2026	1	1	2	3	2	4	11	24	
19/02/2026	2	1	2	1	1	5	1	13	
20/02/2026	0	3	1	3	1	2	0	10	
23/02/2026	19	0	3	1	1	1	21	46	
24/02/2026	2	0	0	0	Not completed due to contamination		3	0	5
25/02/2026	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	4	
Total FWR Collected	171	131	125	125	113	113	159	937	

Appendix B: Communications Campaigns

A fresh Way

To recycle food waste

Pop the kettle on. Make yourself a tea and read me. Then recycle the tea bag. Hey, you've just recycled food waste!



What can I recycle in my new food bin?



WE TAKE:

Food scraps like meat and fish raw or cooked, including bones and skin
Fruit and vegetables
Eggs including shells
Dairy and cheese
Bread, cakes and pastries
Rice, pasta and beans
Tea bags and coffee grounds



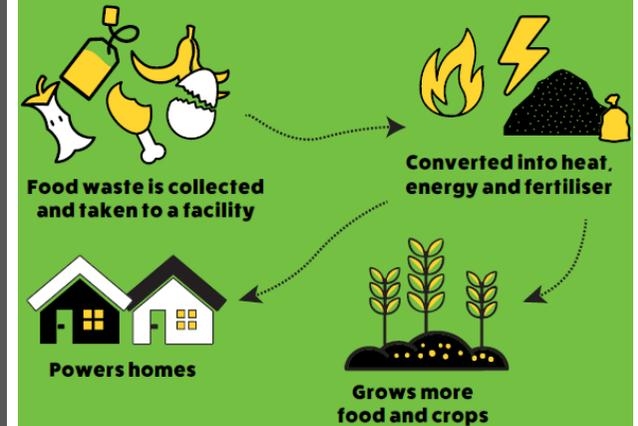
WE DON'T TAKE:

Liquids like milk and oil
Packaging
Pet waste
Garden waste

For more information call: 01234 567 891
or visit: councilwebsite.co.uk



What happens to your food waste?



To find out more about your food waste,
visit camden.gov.uk/foodwaste

THANK YOU

FOR RECYCLING YOUR FOOD WASTE

Find out more at: camden.gov.uk/food-waste

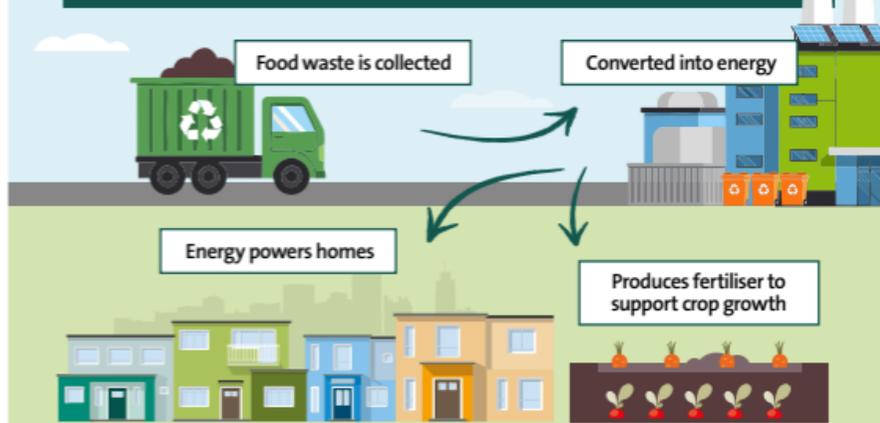


Camden recycles

VEOLIA Camden

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Thank you for doing your part by recycling your food waste. Every fruit peel you recycle helps create green energy to support crop growth or even power a lightbulb for 24 hours.



Yes please



Plate scrapings



Fruit and vegetables



Meat, fish and bones



Tea bags and coffee grounds



Bread, pasta and rice



Cheese and eggs

No thanks



Pet waste



Nappies, tissues and sanitary items



Packaging and wrappers



Liquids



Fat, oil and grease



Garden waste

To order a caddy, please visit camden.gov.uk/orderbins and collect free compostable liners from Camden libraries or leisure centres.

REMEMBER:

Recycling food waste is as easy as 1, 2, 3...

1 LINE

your indoor caddy with a compostable liner

2 FILL

your lined caddy with food waste, tie it up and put it in your outdoor caddy

3 POP

the outdoor caddy outside before 7am on your collection day



Camden recycles

VEOLIA Camden

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Appendix C: Photographs

