

Birmingham City Council

Economy Directorate - Transportation & Connectivity

Scrutiny Task & Finish Group – Tree Policy Review 30th November 2017

Introduction

Transportation & Connectivity (T&C) deliver transportation and infrastructure projects. The nature of the work, which often involves road widening and junction modifications, does impact on trees. As the work is primarily on the public highway the trees affected are highway trees. The maintenance of highway trees is the responsibility of the Highways Maintenance Contractor – Amey.

Current Practice

When preparing scheme proposals the Project Manager has a number of constraints to balance, including:

- The need to deliver a scheme that achieves the desired outcomes. For example:
 - road widening to provide additional road capacity to better manage traffic;
 - the introduction of safety improvements to reduce accidents;
 - new infrastructure to improve access to jobs and housing to support economic growth;
 - the introduction of cycle routes to support sustainable travel.
- Working within the highway limits, extending the scheme beyond the public highway into private land may require a Compulsory Purchase Order which would considerably extend the project programme and can be costly and there is no certainty of success.
- Impact on underground services, diverting services is costly, designs where possible should minimise impact on services.
- Providing environmental benefits by maintaining landscape areas and trees.

The Project Manager will endeavour to maintain landscaping and trees whenever possible, where landscaping and trees are affected appropriate landscape and tree planting mitigation is considered. Additional landscape and tree planting will also be provided if possible working within the above mentioned constraints.

In recent years, at the outset of the project, T&C appoint the City Council's Landscape Practise Group (LPG) to manage on its' behalf the landscape and tree process from concept to handover to the maintenance providers (Amey for Trees and Parks for landscaping areas). T&C have adopted this approach to ensure, by engaging LPG for the duration of the project, the landscape and tree impacts are properly managed and designs are fit for purpose and, at the maintenance handover stage, there will be no or very few issues.

The landscape and tree planting works are delivered through the City Council's Landscape Construction Framework Agreement 2015-2019 managed by LPG. The

landscape and tree works are co-ordinated by the Project Manager alongside the main roadwork's contract.

For every tree removed two trees are planted. It is not always possible to plant the new trees at the same location for various reasons, including:

- there may not be public highway space available;
- there is no other available City Council land adjoining the scheme boundary;
- underground services may prevent new tree planting;
- visibility lines for road users may be obscured.

In the event new trees cannot be planted within the scheme limits or on adjoining City Council land suitable locations within the vicinity of the scheme are considered, this may be on the public highway or on 'Parks' land.

The works contractors appointed by T&C are from the City Council's Highways and Infrastructure Works Framework Agreement. As stipulated in the Contract, the framework contractors work to the following guidelines to ensure the correct working methods are adopted when working close to existing trees:

- (i) BS 5837: 2005 Guide for Trees in Relation to Construction;
- (ii) NJUG 10 Proximity of Trees to Services.

The appointed roadwork's contractor is responsible for the maintenance of the tree for the first two years, maintenance liability then moves to the Highways Maintenance Contractor for trees in the public highway or to Parks for non highway trees. There is of course an additional maintenance cost as a result of removing a tree and replacing with two new trees. The annual cost of maintaining a tree in the public highway ranges from around £60 to £140.

Site Investigation Works – in order to establish if trees can be planted on the public highway it is often necessary to carry out trial hole investigations to determine the exact location of underground services. Usually a Ground Penetration Radar survey will be done first to locate the approximate position of the services (based on plans provided by the service companies). Trial hole works can be expensive as temporary traffic / pedestrian management measures need to be put in place to undertake the works safely, all these costs have to be built into the overall Project cost.

Planning Consent – most improvement work undertaken on the public highway is permitted development. New roads require planning consent. The planning process will determine the scope of landscaping and tree planting on new road projects.

Conclusion

1. With respect to design development, delivery and handover of tree works undertaken on Projects managed by T&C it is proposed to continue with the current arrangement. That is to engage LPG to work with the Project Manager to manage the whole process and to appoint a contractor through the Landscape Construction Framework Agreement 2015-2019. To date this has proved to be an effective delivery model.

2. Space for tree planting on the public highway is becoming more restrictive mainly due to underground services, the size of tree pits required and the need to maintain sight lines. Therefore, the current arrangement to plant replacement trees off highway (on City Council land) is to continue subject to securing the agreement of the Parks Manager. The cost for ongoing maintenance will need to be moved from the Highway budget to the Parks budget.
3. T&C would welcome, for further discussion, the development a tree replacement policy based around the tree amenity value rather than a rigid 2 for 1 policy. It is accepted that the replacement of a mature established tree with two small trees is unlikely to offer an equivalent amenity value, so therefore would be detrimental to the area from an environmental view point.

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