

<b>To:</b>	Active Travel Eastern Division, DfI Roads
<b>From:</b>	City Regeneration & Development
<b>Date:</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> January 2025
<b>Re:</b>	Response to Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme consultation

**PROPOSAL:** The Department is undertaking the legislative process for the installation of new cycling and traffic calming measures on Island Street, Belfast. This also includes sections of Ballymacarrett Road, Belfast and Dee Street, Belfast. The scheme is identified as Scheme No10 within the short-term Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan.

This scheme will include the installation of the following measures as listed below.

- New Two-Way Cycle Lane on Ballymacarrett Road & Island Street.
- New Shared Footway on Dee Street & Island Street.
- New Disabled Parking Places on Ballymacarrett Road.
- Relocation of Toucan Crossing on Dee Street.
- Prohibition of Waiting - At Any Time – ‘Loading / Unloading Not Permitted’ on Ballymacarrett Road & Island Street. (Northern Sides).
- Prohibition of Waiting - At Any Time – ‘Loading / Unloading Permitted’ on Ballymacarrett Road & Island Street. (Southern Sides).
- 1 x flat top road hump, 12.5m long, kerb to kerb width, 80mm high.
- 1 x flat top road hump, 31m long, kerb to kerb width, 80mm high.
- 6 x flat top road humps tapered, 4.1m long, kerb to kerb width, 80mm high.

### **General comments**

Council welcomes the publication of the Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme consultation as part of the delivery of the Belfast Cycling Network. We note that the proposed cycling infrastructure and traffic calming improvements on Island Street, includes the segregation from vehicular traffic, which enhances safety and inclusivity and could encourage more people to cycle with confidence. This provides better connectivity along the National Cycle Route 99, linking the Connswater Greenway, Titanic Quarter and Belfast City Centre, while also strengthening connections to the Comber Greenway, aligning with the Belfast Agenda and its commitment to delivering enhanced cycle infrastructure across the city.

To ensure local support and future usage we would encourage the Department to ensure that there is communication and engagement about the scheme with local residents and users starting from this initial design stage. We also suggest that engagement should include information on the delivery timeframe and nature of the proposed works and outline how these are being delivered in line with best practice guidance.

## **Detailed feedback on the scheme from the Council's Tree Officer**

### **Site Details**

Along this stretch of public road and pedestrian footpaths there are a number of existing trees of various species (including London plane, Acer / Maples, Limes, Rowan), size and age. Some trees are used as existing vehicular traffic calming measures and linear boundary trees which offer public visual amenity offering upon the surrounding streetscape, promoting biodiversity, act as natural sound & screen buffers and also soften the hard urban street terrain along Island Street.

### **Comments:**

Regarding the proposal, from limited plans the team are able to assess, please see following points which should be taken on board to ensure the proposal will not directly or indirectly impact the existing trees during construction process:

- It would be advised to show all existing trees within the proposal site including locations, species, root protection area and radial canopy spreads. It would also be beneficial to show indicated age class, physiological condition, structural condition, and any preliminary management recommendations for each tree, such as treatment and tree surgery (noting the specific tree surgery details – in accordance with BS 3998). There are a number of trees which may require appropriate pre or/post canopy management prior to any works commencing site, the proposed works should be recommended by an arborist or professional and insured tree surgeon.
- Any existing trees to be removed should be clearly indicated and reason for removal. The desire would be for existing healthy trees to be retained and designed to accommodate and integrate the trees into the proposal. The council approach seeks to adopt and promote the precautionary principle when considering the impacts of a proposed development on trees of visual, biodiversity or amenity quality and significance.
- To ensure no damage to existing trees such as root / soil compaction or root severance), a tree protection plan would be advised. The protection plan shows the location of appropriate tree protective fencing, all construction works should be outside the fenced areas to avoid causing any stress or strain on the trees which may impact

their future health. Tree protective fencing is typically erected prior to any works commencing on site and installed in accordance with BS:5837:2012 - Trees in relation to design, demolition, and construction – Recommendations.



- During the construction phase in proximity to trees being retained it is advised there should be no damage to existing roots through manoeuvring of machinery, storage of materials, underground cables / pipeworks etc temporary access paths, soil mounds or construction operations - steel plates, ground protection mats, heavy-duty plywood set onto a compressible woodchip layer and pinned into position are approaches to help prevent root and soil compaction during the construction phase.



- Details within the plans indicate existing trees to be removed with no replacement trees indicated within the plan to help ensure a net gain in tree cover as part of the proposal which council seek to secure with proposed development within the council area (refer to TRE1 within Belfast LDP – *‘Where the loss of trees is unavoidable, proposals must include provision for replacement planting and other mitigation works on-site or, in exceptional circumstances, at an appropriate location in the immediate vicinity.’*)
- Any proposed landscaping should pay careful consideration and focus on appropriate species choice accounting for establish species size, canopy spread and future maintenance requirements.

*For example, species of trees suitable adjacent to cycle-lanes / streetscapes could be clear-stems with tight canopies to avoid from issues from arising. Suggested species: Tilia cordata 'greenspire', Pyrus calleryana chanticleer, Carpinus betulus fastigiata & Liquidambar styraciflua.*

- There should be no decrease in level changes within the root protection areas (RPAs) of existing trees within the proposal site as this can impact on a tree's future health and condition. For ground with a vegetation layer, excavations may be appropriate to remove the turf layer and surface vegetation, but this should be agreed by an appointed supervising arboriculturist (use of an air spade etc.) If a three-dimensional cellular confinement system such as geocell membrane is to be utilised, the advice is to install it according to the manufacturer's technical specification – the ground surface finish must be porous to allow water and nutrients to pass. Ideally, all new surfacing in RPAs will be no-dig approach, i.e., requiring no excavation.
- An Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Methods Statement is strongly recommended which shall identify, evaluate, and mitigate where appropriate the extent of direct and indirect impacts on existing trees that may arise as a result of the site layout proposal.
- There could be opportunities to upgrade some appropriate existing trees being retained with resin bound surfacing, which is extremely durable, fully porous and a contemporary surfacing system that is compliant with Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SUDS) requirements – it is often used in streetscapes across urban areas.

### **Summary:**

- The proposal should be designed in a manner will seeks to avoid creating future stress and strain upon existing trees which could impact on future health, condition, and structural integrity of existing trees.
- Proposed landscaping should be included within the proposal to achieve a net gain in future tree cover within the context of the surrounding area.

- It may be an option to redesign the proposed cycle path at certain pinch points away from mature tree cover to prevent long-term damage from arising.

Further assistance and information can be found below:

- *BS: 5837: 2012 - Trees in relation to design, demolition, and construction – Recommendations.*
- *NJUG 10 – Guidelines for the planning, installation, and maintenance of utility services in proximity to trees.*
- *Belfast City Council – Trees & Development - Supplementary Planning Guidance  
May 2023  
Trees and Development*
- *BS 8545:2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape - Recommendations*