

Independent Tree Panel for Sheffield

Simon Green
Executive Director of Place
Sheffield City Council

By email

16 May 2016

Dear Simon

General advice

The Independent Tree Panel for Sheffield is completing its review of the Council's plans for the removal and replacement of trees on 14 streets in the Dore Zone.

I will be writing to you to provide our advice about each of these streets.

The purpose of this letter is to draw your attention to a number of general issues that have policy and strategy implications.

Household survey

We consider the household survey to be a reasonable way for the Council to elicit residents' views about the Council's plans for the trees on their street. The survey has had a variable response rate of between 4% and 32% of the households on the street concerned. In two instances just one response objecting the Council's plans resulted in the street being referred to the Panel. We consider that the Council would be justified in revising its policy regarding referral to the Panel so that streets where there is a very low response rate and a low rate of households objecting to the Council's plans are not in future referred. We advise the Council to consider this.

Damage to the network - kerbs

We understand that the Council's contract with Amey requires the remedying of all damage to the highways network. We recognise the considerable need in the city to achieve this given the very poor condition of so much of the network and that the Streets Ahead programme provides the means to do so.

We have identified one particular situation where the definition of "damage to the network" does not appear to be sufficiently clear. We have been informed that the absence of a continuous kerb line would mean that there remained "damage to the network". However,

engineering solution 5 “removal of displaced kerbs leaving a gap in the channel” would appear to permit this outcome.

This is exemplified by the oak tree on Vernon Road, the trunk and buttress root of which interrupt the line of the current kerb. It would clearly not be possible in this instance to maintain the current line of the kerb, with a complete line of kerb stones, and retain the tree. This is among the reasons cited by the Council for its plan to remove and replace this tree. The same situation is present on Chatsworth Road (although other issues pertain on this road as well). We understand that there are other streets in the city which may be referred to the Panel where this situation affects many trees, including some where it may be the only reason for removing and replacing existing trees.

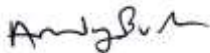
We consider that engineering solutions which leave the kerb line interrupted would be justified to permit the retention of trees. We advise that the Council should confirm its policy in this regard, and ensure that Amey follows this policy where its application permits the retention of trees where there are no other reasons to remove and replace a tree.

We also consider that there may be instances in which the Council would be justified in negotiating with Amey to allow engineering solutions which would see the kerb line moved a short distance into the street to allow a continuous kerb and the retention of trees. We recognise this may have cost implications, and fully understand that the Council will wish to weigh these against the possible benefits of a higher cost solution. We advise that the Council should consider this policy option in some instances.

Damage to the network – retention of pavements

We understand that there are some instances where the Council would consider replacing existing pavements with grass, although we recognise that this is among the “other solutions” which may require additional funding. We have identified two streets where this might be an appropriate solution, both cul-de-sacs with very low footfall on the sections of pavement concerned. We advise the Council to consider whether it would wish in some instances to agree with Amey to this solution being used.

Yours sincerely



Andy Buck
Chair

Copy:
Dave Caulfield
Andrew Walshaw
Independent Tree Panel members