

# CLlr Smith

## Briefing Note



Subject: Highway Buildouts for Trees Scheme

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Approved by: Sarah Rye, Head of Public Realm

Cc: Kevin Goad, Director City Highways

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**Date: 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

### **Response required**

A decision is required by Cllr Smith, Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways, to acknowledge the progress made so far and to approve the further development of this scheme in relation to site investigations, site specific designs and programme of works.

### **Background**

In August 2019, Cabinet Member agreement was given for a scheme to increase the number of trees in the City. It was recognised that there are a number of constraints to planting trees within existing footways and a finite number of remaining locations for street tree planting. In order to create more space for trees, the highway buildouts project was initiated to accommodate trees within buildouts constructed on highway land, in addition to those planted within existing footways. Following Cabinet Member agreement, capital funding of £2.5 million has been allocated to the highway buildouts scheme over a period of 3 years.

This scheme aligns closely with the Council's City for All – Vision and Strategy, in particular the Greener and Cleaner objective.

The *Trees and the Public Realm – a tree strategy for Westminster* document, identifies and acknowledges the value and importance of trees. Trees can provide a wealth of benefits that can positively impact the lives of those who live, visit and work in the city. Alongside their aesthetic benefits, trees provide a myriad of sustainability benefits that in turn ensure a climate resilient Westminster. As an authority in the heart of central London the carbon sequestration and storage benefits of trees are of significance as they can help to mitigate against the impact of climate change across the capital.

### **Methodology**

In order to assess the ability to plant of additional trees across the City, our consultants, WSP, have been commissioned to;

- Create assessment criteria based on the presence of existing trees and parking density, the latter of which involved seeking advice from the Parking Team;
- Identify and prioritise locations, based on the defined assessment criteria;
- Develop three standard details of highway buildouts and provide estimated costs associated with each option for consideration

The methodology looked at two key considerations when identifying possible locations for highways buildouts for tree: parking occupancy, to understand if a loss of parking would impact negatively on the surrounding area; and tree provision, to appreciate where there are currently low levels of trees. Further detail on this methodology and a map of these locations can be found in the appendix. It is important to note that any street with a parking occupancy of >80% was excluded in order to ensure that the impact to existing parking availability will be minimal. The Tree Team then undertook a desktop study of these locations, followed by site inspections in order to examine any initial site-specific constraints on the locations identified. within the emerging programme.

Following this assessment, 18 locations were shortlisted:

<b>Street Name</b>	<b>Ward</b>
<b>Marlborough Hill</b>	Abbey Road
<b>Ebury Street</b>	Churchill
<b>Lancaster Gate</b>	Harrow Road
<b>Star Street</b>	Hyde Park
<b>Prince Consort Road</b>	Knightsbridge & Belgravia
<b>Kensington Gore</b>	Knightsbridge & Belgravia
<b>Grosvenor Crescent</b>	Knightsbridge & Belgravia
<b>Belgrave Place</b>	Knightsbridge & Belgravia
<b>Inverness Terrace</b>	Lancaster Gate
<b>Wimpole Street</b>	Marylebone High Street
<b>Wigmore Street</b>	Marylebone High Street
<b>Prince Albert Road</b>	Regent's Park
<b>Surrey Street</b>	St. James's
<b>Whitehall Place</b>	St. James's
<b>Atterbury Street</b>	Vincent Square
<b>Cambridge Street</b>	Warwick
<b>Park Street</b>	West End
<b>Brook Street</b>	West End

Further site investigations will need to be undertaken to ascertain:

- a) Whether these sites can progress to detailed design and implementation based on physical surveys of the location. Locations with the following constraints are unlikely to be progressed; underground services; vaults and cellars; impacts to road safety; conflict with existing assets and infrastructure; and unsuitable townscapes/historic environments.
- b) Which highway buildout design option is most appropriate for each location. The design selection will depend upon: available space; environmental constraints; opportunity for additional public realm assets; and townscape features.

WSP have produced three standard highways buildout designs. The three designs vary in scale and complexity, all of the designs will utilise carriageway space and will therefore not reduce the available space on the footway:

- Option A – standalone highways buildout accommodating one tree. The buildout will be separate from the footway. It is similar in design to the tree buildouts found in Pimlico, please see the appendix for a photograph.
- Option B – highways buildout, accommodating one tree, incorporated into the surrounding footway.
- Option C – highways buildout, accommodating two trees, incorporated into the surrounding footway and including additional public realm assets, for example cycle stands or seating.

Each design will be evaluated against each location, in order to ensure that the most appropriate design is selected.

Alongside site and design selection, the success of Westminster's street tree planting and tree maintenance relies on selecting the right trees for the right locations. As a rule of thumb, the largest tree that a site can accommodate is selected, in order that canopy cover and environmental benefits are maximised.

Other considerations include:

- species diversity and biodiversity
- other ecosystem services - for example air quality, pollution absorption
- size, form and canopy shape
- townscape and urban design considerations
- resilience to the harsh street environment
- climate change resilience
- aesthetic qualities
- specific negative characteristics for example brittle branches or surface rooting
- resistance to pest and diseases.

This scheme will proactively coordinate with existing and proposed public realm projects, in order to ensure the greatest efficiencies.

## Programme

Following further site investigations, the construction of the highway buildouts will proceed on a site by site basis. Three initial locations will be selected in order to pilot the three types of highways buildout design. Officers will engage with the relevant Ward Councillors to seek their views on the location and highways design. It is intended that the three pilot locations will be completed within the forthcoming planting season – October 2020 to March 2021.

The initial locations will allow for further design modification to occur, if necessary, and will also provide the project team an opportunity to identify lessons learned before proceeding with the remaining programme of works.

## Funding

This project is funded by the capital award of £2.5 million over three years.

The cost of planting trees within highway space will be greater than the standard street tree planting approach. It is estimated that highway build outs will cost between £5,000.00 and £15,000.00 per site. Exact costs will be confirmed on a site specific basis, as they will need to take site conditions and constraints into account. The cost of each highway buildout will also depend on the complexity of the design.

An uplift in the Tree team revenue budget is required in order to provide ongoing maintenance commitment to these additional trees.

This funding stream will be reassessed as part of the capital review process, so any future spending is subject to the out come of this review.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Cllr Smith approves the continuation of work on this scheme, including the following budget profile, subject to the outcome of the capital review:

20/21: £0.500m

21/22: £1,000m

22/23: £1,000m

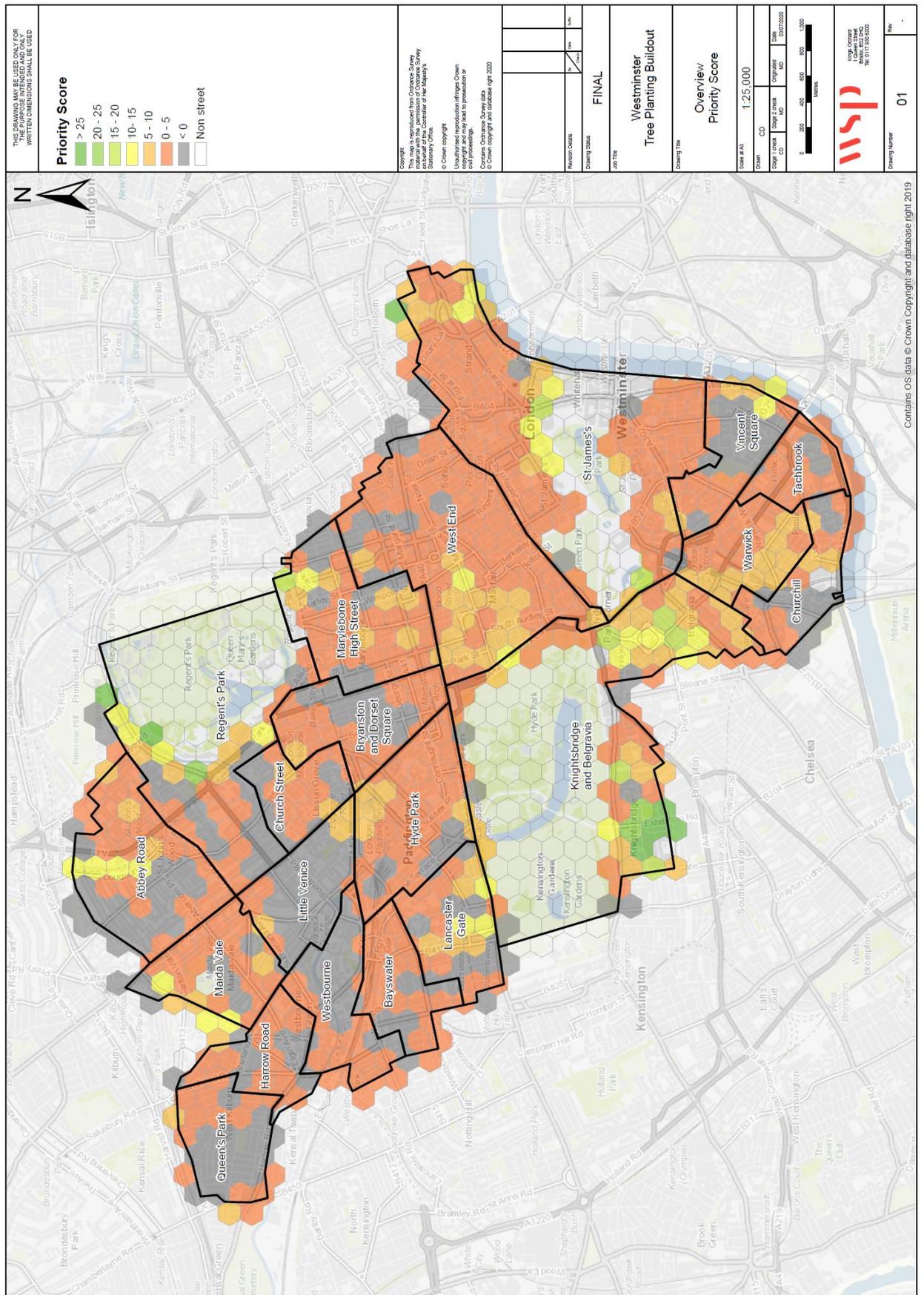
Total : £2.500m

## **Appendix:**

### a) Detailed methodology:

- The streets were prioritised by comparing the existing tree density with the existing parking demand.
- The parking occupancy on each street was obtained from WCC's 2018 base parking beat surveys which enabled a weighted score that was produced for each street, with the help of WCC's parking services. This scoring system acknowledged the different types of parking bay as well as the occupancy. Any street with a parking occupancy of >80% was excluded to ensure that the impact to existing availability is likely to be minor.
- The existing street tree density was also reviewed, assuming a maximum of 1 tree per 10m length of footway; streets were then scored based on their deviation from this maximum density. Trees outside of the highway boundary such as in parks, were not captured in the initial data set.
- The two scores were then combined to provide an initial list of potential sites and have been sense checked through an internal review, providing a robust list of high priority sites.

b) Map of locations identified



c) Example of existing tree build out located in the highway in Pimlico

