



Metz Way/Abbeymead Avenue Landscape Assessment




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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report

1.1.1 The report has been prepared by Senior Landscape Architect, Amey to provide information in relation to the landscape and visual impact of the proposed junction improvement schemes, as part of the Metz Way and Abbeymead Avenue Corridor development. This report will form part of the business case and will assist in determining the following:

- What are the impacts on the physical and cultural characteristics of the local area and does the scheme affect any designated areas of landscape value?
- Are there any impacts on the setting of buildings, structures and open spaces in urban areas which are of high value (in terms of visual appearance and usage by people)?

1.1.2 The landscape assessment considered the Arboricultural Report 43041187 Rev 0 prepared by Amey which was undertaken in accordance with BS5837:2012, Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations. The survey identified significant trees on the site and on neighbouring land adjacent to the development boundary where they may affect or be affected by proposals.

1.1.3 No site visit was carried out as part of the landscape assessment. The landscape assessment presented in the report has been carried out on the basis of professional judgement and is intended to provide information for a business case rather than planning applications.

1.2 Site Situation

1.2.1 The proposed scheme covers seven sites as shown in Figure 1 , these include:

- Site 1: Metz way/Eastern Avenue Junction (Carriageway widening)
- Site 2: Existing Controlled Crossing Point (St Lawrence Rd) (upgrade)
- Site 3: Coney Hill Road to North Upton Lane Cycleway Improvements
- Site 4: North Upton Lane/Abbeymead Avenue Junction (Carriageway widening)
- Site 5: Existing Controlled Crossing Point (upgrade)

- Site 6: Abbeymead Avenue/Kimberland Way/Abbots Road Junction (upgrade of traffic signals)
- Site 7: Existing Controlled Crossing Point (upgrade).

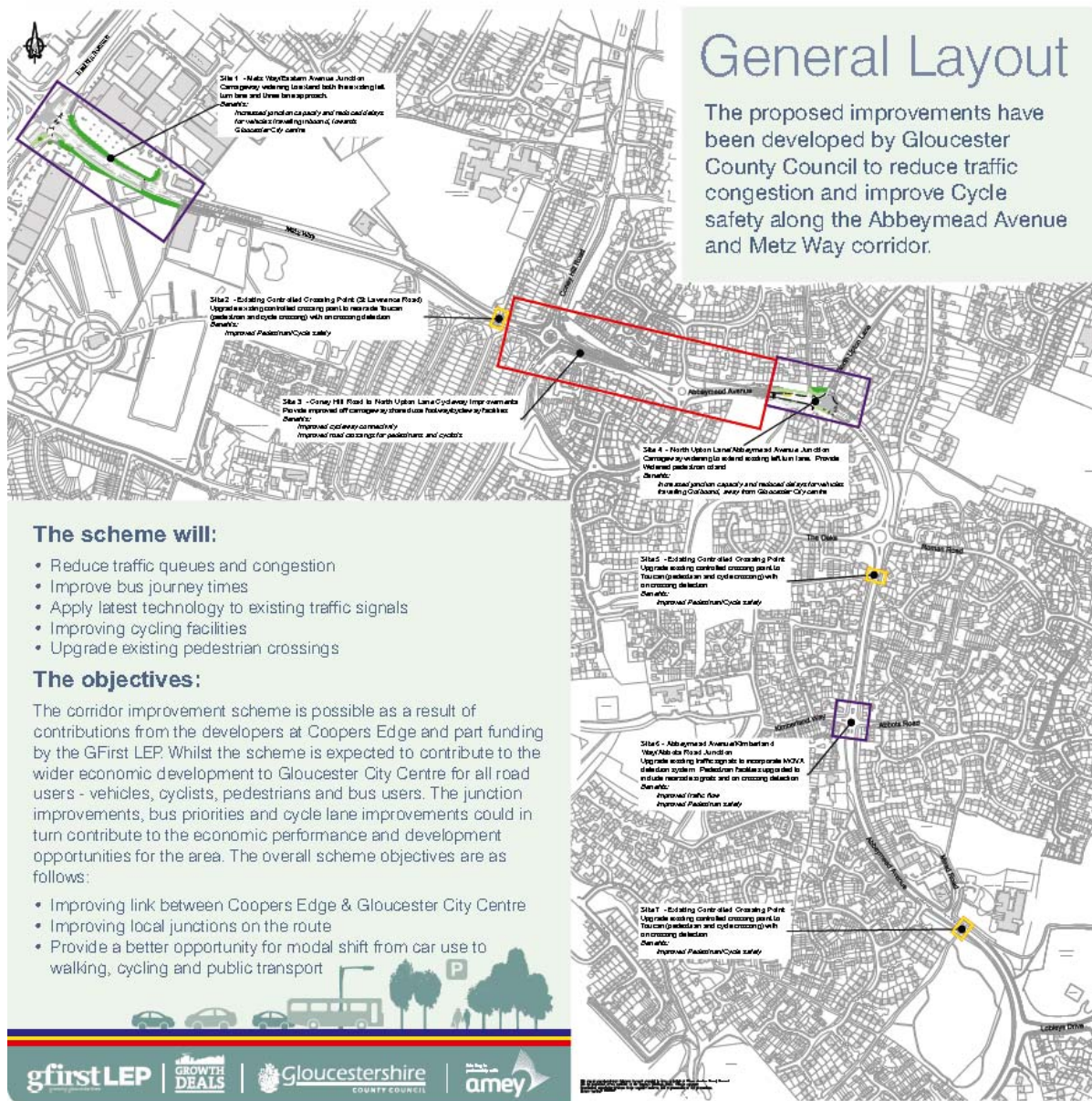


Figure 1: Scheme locations

1.2.2 Carriageway widening are proposed at the following locations;

- Metz Way/Eastern Avenue junction (Site 1)
- North Upton Lane/Abbeymead Avenue junction (Site 4).

1.2.3 The sites are situated to the south east of Gloucester city centre.

1.3 Proposed Works

- 1.3.1 The scheme has been designed to increase queueing capacity at the junctions and reducing delays. There will also be provision for bus priority to prevent bus delays. Shared use footways/cycleways will also be included within the scheme, as well as upgrades to existing controlled crossing points for improved pedestrian/cycle safety. Only three of the sites have been assessed within the scheme.

Metz Way/Eastern Avenue junction (site 1)

- The carriageway will be widened into the existing verge area
- The carriageway will be widened to extend the existing left turn lane on the southern side of the road
- The carriageway will be widened on the northern side to accommodate the extended three lane approach.

Metz Way/Coney Hill Road/Abbeymead Avenue Roundabout (Site 3)

- Widening of existing shared use footway/cycleway to provide 3m wide facility

North Upton Lane/Abbeymead Avenue junction (site 4)

- The carriageway will be widened on the north side to increase the left hand turn lane capacity
- The existing shared use footway will be widened
- Land will be purchased to accommodate the widening
- Crossing facilities will be improved.

- 1.3.2 Upgrade of existing crossing points will take place at:

- Metz Way/St Lawrence Rd (site 2)
- Abbeymead Avenue south of The Oaks/Roman Road (site 5)

Abbeymead Avenue, south of Mead Road (Site 7). Existing traffic signals and pedestrian facilities will be upgraded at Abbeymead Avenue/Kimberland Way/Abbots Road junction (site 6).

2 Site Description

Landscape Character

- 2.1.1 The sites are located within the National Character Area (NCA) 106: Severn & Avon Vales which covers approximately 2103 square kilometres. The River Severn flows north to south through the NCA and the River Avon meanders east to west between Stratford and Tewkesbury where it joins the Severn. To the south and east the NCA is dominated by nucleated towns and villages; larger town and cities are mostly located on riversides, including the cathedral cities of Worcester and Gloucester, and the Abbey Towns of Tewkesbury and Pershore, which form prominent features in the landscape.
- 2.1.2 A small proportion of the National Character Area (NCA) is urban and includes towns such as Worcester, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Stratford-upon-Avon, with its world famous Shakespearian connections.
- 2.1.3 Some of the key characteristics of this area are listed below:
- A diverse range of flat and gently undulating landscapes strongly influenced and united by the Severn and Avon rivers which meet at Tewkesbury
 - Prominent oolitic limestone outliers of the Cotswold Hills break up the low-lying landscape in the south-east of the area at Bredon Hill, Robinswood Hill, Churchdown Hill and Dumbleton Hill
 - West of the Severn the Mercia Mudstones predominate, producing poorer silty clay soils. Lias clays in the Avon Valley and east of the Severn create heavy but productive soils. River terrace gravels flank the edges of watercourses
 - Woodland is sparsely distributed across this landscape but a well wooded impression is provided by frequent hedgerow trees, parkland and surviving traditional orchards
 - Small pasture fields and commons are prevalent in the west with a regular pattern of parliamentary enclosure in the east. Fields on the floodplains are divided by ditches (called rhines south of Gloucester) fringed by willow pollards and alders

- A strong historic time line is visible in the landscape, from the Roman influences centred at Gloucester, earthwork remains of medieval settlements and associated field systems through to the strong Shakespearian heritage at Stratford-upon-Avon
- Highly varied use of traditional buildings materials, with black and white timber frame are intermixed with deep-red brick buildings, grey Lias and also Cotswolds stone.

Landscape Designations

- 2.1.4 The scheme is not within a conservation area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Cotswold AONB starts approximately 800m south east of the scheme. However there is one Tree Preservation Area located at the roundabout at Coney Hill Road and Metz Way.

Tranquillity

- 2.1.5 Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) work to protect, promote and enhance our towns and countryside to make them better places to live, work and enjoy, and to ensure the countryside is protected for now and future generations. They have developed a robust methodology that encompasses the different experiences of tranquillity and produced detailed maps showing how tranquil different places are. The sites vary in levels of tranquillity however, as expected they are all of a lower level.

Vegetation

Metz Way/Eastern Avenue junction

- 2.1.6 To the north of the carriageway there are a number of specimen trees which line the boundary between the carriageway and the commercial buildings (Figures 3 & 4). The trees surveyed in the arboricultural report consist of six species; birch *Betula* species, Norway maple *Acer platanoides*, cherry *Prunus* species, pine *Pinus* species, larch *Larix* species and Robinia species.
- 2.1.7 The structural and physiological condition of the trees within the scheme is predominantly good although there are some stunted trees that are considered to be in poor condition. The trees on this scheme fall within British Standard 5837:2012 categories B and C.

- 2.1.8 There is also a variety of species within the ornamental shrub planting under the specimen trees. This forms a dense boundary and wide area north towards the commercial buildings.
- 2.1.9 The trees and shrubs to the north and south of the carriageway both contribute to the positive visual amenity and also help screen the rear of the commercial properties and the carriageway from road users.

Metz Way/Coney Hill Road/Abbeymead Avenue Roundabout

- 2.1.10 There is line of trees to the southern corner of Abbeymead Road and Coney Hill Road with an understorey shrub layer approximately 16 metres wide. The trees are predominantly deciduous species including birch *Betula pendula* and although not mature appear to be in fair - good condition.
- 2.1.11 No tree survey has been carried out to date in relation to this site.
- 2.1.12 The trees provide slight screening of the carriageway from Harleys View residents although this will be reduced in autumn after leaf fall. There is currently no provision for pedestrians or cyclists with only a maintained grass verge up to the edge of the boundary vegetation. Residents to the north in Stowel Mews and Harleys View to the south have mainly upper floor views over the boundary vegetation or through the sparse tree planting. Clear views are afforded from the properties in Coney Hill Road.

North Upton Lane/Abbeymead Avenue junction

- 2.1.13 There is a woodland strip approximately 17m wide north of Abbeymead Avenue on the eastbound approach to the roundabout. The trees surveyed in the arboricultural report consist of three species; Norway maple *Acer platanoides*, pine *Pinus* species, and field maple *Acer campestre*. Scrub planting is growing to the edge of the trees.
- 2.1.14 The structural and physiological condition of the trees within the scheme is predominantly good. The trees on this scheme fall within British Standard 5837:2012 categories B and C.
- 2.1.15 The larger mature trees are located nearest to the carriageway provide good screening for the residential receptors in Stone Close and Pinery Road. Sites 2, 5 6 and 7 have trees/hedging in close proximity to the carriageway/footway.

3 Landscape Assessment

3.1.1 This section contains a description of the likely impacts of the proposals on the existing landscape features and views from adjacent visual receptors relevant to the site locations for sites 1, 3 and 4. As noted in section one it is based on professional judgement.

Metz Way/Eastern Avenue junction

3.1.2 This site comprises of mainly commercial properties which are of low sensitivity in terms of visual impact. There is encroachment into the existing landscaped areas at this location therefore tree removal and/or tree protection measures are required to accommodate the proposals.

3.1.3 The proposed new carriageway construction, depth of excavation approximately 800mm and the proposed new footway construction, depth of excavation 250mm so it is highly likely the tree roots will be impacted if the trees are in close proximity and works will be within the tree protection zones. This has been confirmed in the tree report as shown below:

- Tree impact will depend on the construction methods and working space required. Trees 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 will need to be removed.
- Trees 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 12 may be able to be retained if appropriate working methods are employed. However if the rooting area is compromised these trees may need to be removed.
- Access facilitation pruning will be required to implement the scheme as well as to provide the required clearance for the shared use footway/cycleway.

3.1.4 The trees are located to the north of Metz Way appear to be within the neighbouring land. There is a duty of care to retain and protect the tree and shrub planting located along the boundaries and verges and trees located in neighbouring land. Clarification is required and if this is confirmed consultation with the landowner should be carried out. The ownership of the shrub and hedge planting to the south should also be clarified as it appears to be part of the commercial development grounds.

- 3.1.5 There are minimal trees to the north but there is extensive shrub planting along the footway. The planting should be protected where possible to retain the positive visual amenity.
- 3.1.6 The removal of trees/vegetation will open up the views from the adjacent visual receptors however commercial properties with lower visual sensitivity are located at this location so this would reduce the impact.
- 3.1.7 Replacement planting will be difficult if at all possible due to the space constraints. There is approximately 1.5m available and it is not recommended that tree planting is proposed as this may impact the visibility and also encroach onto the pedestrian footway increasing maintenance requirements.

Metz Way/Coney Hill Road/Abbeymead Avenue Roundabout

- 3.1.8 There are trees and understorey shrub planting in close proximity to the footway/carriageway. A number of specimen trees line each side of the pedestrian footway and range in age although their structural and physiological conditions vary. The existing vegetation in particular the trees will be affected by the proposals. However, mitigation using alternative surfacing should be considered for this location in order to retain the trees and the positive visual amenity.
- 3.1.9 The views are close from the adjacent visual receptors travelling eastbound on Metz Way, although the trees help slightly screen the views of the proposed scheme. A combination of clear views is afforded from Coney Hill Road and restricted views due to existing boundary treatments and planting. There is a TPO located to the northeast of the roundabout although this will not be affected. Highly sensitive visual receptors are located each side of the carriageway however there is likely to be no significant adverse impact due to the small scale nature of the proposals.

North Upton Lane/Abbeymead Avenue junction

- 3.1.10 Widening the carriageway into verge to extend existing left turn lane is likely to require tree removal. This was confirmed by the arboricultural report:
- Trees 1 to 15 inclusive will need to be removed according to the current proposals
 - Access facilitation pruning will also be required to implement the scheme as well as to provide the required clearance for a footway.

- 3.1.11 Although trees are in close proximity to the works flexible surfacing solutions within the root protection area should be considered with the arboricultural officer. Significant pruning would be required as the trees have been flailed in the past and are currently low over the footway. This will alter the view in the short term. At this location if the trees need to be removed due to work methods it will open up the view to the adjacent visual receptors. Vegetation will remain between the road and the houses although the screening will not be as dense and therefore views are likely to remain largely the same.
- 3.1.12 There is no opportunity to replant due to the limited space however the existing vegetation should continue to screen the carriageway from the visual receptors in Stone Close, west of North Upton Lane and Pinery Road. However the visual receptors in Quail Close and The Oaks will have close views of the proposals from the upper floors over the boundary vegetation but no significant impact is likely as a result of the proposals.

3.2 Landscape Mitigation

- 3.2.1 Landscape planting is normally considered to reduce/mitigate the impact on landscape and visual effects due to improvement schemes. However, there are constraints in terms of limited space within some of the sites and therefore no mitigation is possible.
- 3.2.2 Collaboration through the design process with the arboricultural officer is required to ensure a robust design.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1.1 The responses to inform the business case are as follows:

What are the impacts on the physical and cultural characteristics of the local area and does the scheme affect any designated areas of landscape value?

4.1.2 The local character of the area is predominantly urban across several residential areas with sections of amenity grassland and parkland. The scheme is not within a conservation area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Cotswold AONB starts approximately 800m south east of the scheme. However there is one TPO identified adjacent to the roundabout at Conley Hill Road and Metz Way however this will not be affected by the proposals. Vegetation clearance would have a negative impact on the current landscape setting although this is not likely to have a significant adverse impact. However, at least twenty four trees will be removed as a result and this could be increased as a result of the proposals and is an adverse impact.

4.1.3 Although the carriageway widening will increase the urban factor of the landscape, the impact is expected to be minimal. If further vegetation clearance is required then the landscape architect should be consulted to assess any additional impact and for recommendations for mitigation. Flexible surfacing solutions within the tree root protection areas should be considered with the arboricultural officer to ensure current positive visual amenity is retained.

Are there any impacts on the setting of buildings, structures and open spaces in urban areas which are of high value (in terms of visual appearance and usage by people)?

4.1.4 Although the scheme is highly visible from urban areas and open spaces the new road furniture and carriageway widening is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on the surrounding settings. There is currently a road present and visible to a number of visual receptors. Although predominantly urban there are a number of commercial properties which are considered of lower sensitivity and therefore the proposals are likely to have no significant adverse impacts.

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- 4.1.5 The bus priority measures will encourage greater use of the bus and as a result more people will walk to bus stops. Cycle lane improvements along the key direct commuter corridor will also encourage cycling from Coopers Edge and Abbeymead to the centre. The scheme therefore increases levels of physical activity.
- 4.1.6 Available space is a constraint in some areas therefore replacement planting will not be achievable. Minimal tree/shrub removal is recommended to ensure the positive visual amenity and screening of the carriageway is retained and that visual impact is prevented or at least reduced for highly sensitive visual receptors. The landscape proposals should also consider the future maintenance requirements associated with the proposed sites. The retention of trees in close proximity to the carriageway increases the maintenance and in turn will increase the costs and disruption to road users and pedestrians during maintenance operations. It is recommended that a landscape architect/clerk of works is present on site to inspect the works.



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