

Highways Major Projects Tree Removal Report

Wellington Road, Cheltenham

Tree(s) to be removed: Silver Birch (Betula Pendula) x 2

Location(s): Wellington Road, Cheltenham

Tree locations plan



Major Projects Scheme

A435 Cheltenham to Bishop's Cleeve Cycleway – Wellington Road to Central Cross Drive.

Scheme Background

The A435 Cheltenham to Bishop's Cleeve Cycleway forms part of the Gloucestershire Cycle spine, extending across the county from Stroud in the south to Bishop's Cleeve in the north, incorporating both Gloucester and Cheltenham. The improvements support the County Councils ambitions for a greener Gloucestershire, aligns with Gloucestershire County Council's aims of becoming carbon net zero by 2045, supports improvements to public health and makes it easier for people to cycle and walk to work, homes and transport hubs. The scheme will contribute to a significant cycling and walking network across Gloucestershire, improving quality and connectivity.

The A435 Cheltenham to Bishop's Cleeve Cycleway section of the route runs between the Honeybourne Line and along A435 Evesham Road in Cheltenham and the GE roundabout at the southern edge of Bishop's Cleeve.

The scheme will improve facilities for cyclists, pedestrians and non-motorised users in the area and make a further contribution to CO2 reductions. It will provide improved walking and cycling access between Cheltenham and Bishop's Cleeve and directly to public transport hubs such as Cheltenham train station and the Racecourse Park and Ride along with destinations including GE Aviation, Cheltenham Leisure Centre, Pittville Park and the multiple schools and University of Gloucestershire campuses within the area.

The Wellington Road to Central Cross Drive section of the scheme will include:

- Installation of a new segregated cycleway alongside A435 Evesham Road.
- New push button crossings for pedestrians and cyclists on the north, east and west arms of the Evesham Road / Wellington Road junction.
- New footway links to the Pittville Park inner footway.

Reason for tree removal

In order to facilitate new pedestrian and cycle signalised push button crossings on the east and west arms of the junction of A435 Evesham Road and Wellington Road, it is necessary to remove two Silver Birch (*Betula Pendula*) trees as per the location plan. Please see scheme plan drawing ref GCCCCSP2-ATK-HGN-WR2CC-DR-CH-000107 showing the proposed layout at this junction.

For both safety and maintenance reasons, the Silver Birch trees need to be removed to accommodate the installation of traffic signals equipment for the new push button pedestrian and cycle crossings.

The north-east Birch tree (T1) on the corner of Pittville Park has a direct clash with the proposed crossing location on the Eastern arm of Wellington Road, as this is where the proposed traffic signals poles need to be located. Relocating this crossing further east would introduce clashes with other trees and also importantly, remove the crossing from the ideal desire line of pedestrians and cyclists.

The Birch tree (T2) on the south-west corner of Wellington Road and A435 Evesham Road is likely to need removal, but this is not yet confirmed; we have undertaken an Arboricultural survey which has determined that there is a high likelihood of the new traffic signals equipment being within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of this tree and therefore clash with major roots. Until construction starts and the ground is excavated, we cannot confirm the location of the roots, however, given the uplifted ground conditions near this tree, it is highly likely that major roots will be impacted and the tree will need to be removed.

Tree loss mitigation

Gloucestershire County Council and Cheltenham Borough Council tree officers, together with the scheme project team, have agreed that 6 new trees will be planted in the surrounding area, including 2 new Silver Birch (*Betula Pendula*) trees on Wellington Road.

Exact locations will be determined by suitable locations which will ensure the new trees:

- Establish well and survive.
- Should not interfere with underground utilities.
- Should not lead to any road safety issues.
- Should not create structural issues on either the highway or adjacent buildings.
- Are easily maintainable.

Alternative options

To retain the trees on both sides, the following alternatives were considered:

- **Moving crossings closer to the junction** - it is best practice to keep the crossings away from the radius kerb of the junction to allow drivers an opportunity to see pedestrians when turning. This option would put pedestrians in a more vulnerable position in respect of safety.
- **Moving the crossings away from the junction** - this would mean losing other, potentially larger trees whilst also disobeying the pedestrian desire line.
- **Narrower crossing** - this option would not follow Local Transport Note 1/20 design guidance. The proposal is a 3.2m wide crossing for a shared use path and going below this dimension at this location would compromise funding.
- **Relocating traffic signals equipment** - this would lead to safety issues for drivers/non-motorised users trying to navigate the junction, as well as liability issues and it would no longer be following best design practices in siting traffic signals equipment.

In summary the alternative scenarios could not be recommended on safety, funding and/or scheme functionality grounds.

Consultation record

Consultation carried out	Consultation period
Councillors (email)	07.05.24 – 04.06.24
Stakeholders (email)	07.05.24 – 04.06.24
Letters to properties within at least 100m of tree(s) (853 letters delivered)	07.05.24 – 04.06.24
Tree removal information and consultation period dates on scheme webpage	07.05.24 - 04.06.24

Comments received

- **Councillors:** No objections received.
- **Stakeholders:** No objections received.
- **Members of the public:** 3 objections and 1 concern.

Ref. 1S	Comments
	<p>I firmly object to the removal of the two silver birch trees from the junction of Wellington Road and Evesham Rd. I understand now that despite asking for comments you have proven throughout the process of designing and implementing this cycle way plan you have no interest in the comments of residents, cyclist, pedestrians of other road users. I am a cyclist, pedestrian and road user who lives within this area and the cycle route plan is unsafe and is already spoiling the aesthetics of this once beautiful town. It is a total waste of taxpayers money and will result in increased pollution due to long lines of slow moving cars, stopping and starting at all these lights and crossing points. You are breaking the basic rules of flow with a system that brings cyclist, pedestrians, and automobiles into direct conflict. Now you wish to remove beautiful and well establish trees which is completely unnecessary. The replacement planting will not reach the size of the existing trees for more than thirty years and I and others are unlikely to see the new planting reach the same maturity in our lifetime. Please do not remove these trees.</p>
	<p>GCC Response</p>
	<p>For both safety and maintenance reasons, the Silver Birch trees need to be removed to accommodate the installation of traffic signals equipment for the new push button pedestrian and cycle crossings.</p> <p>The north-east Birch tree (on the corner of Pittville Park) has a direct clash with the proposed crossing location on the Eastern arm of Wellington Road, as this is where the proposed traffic signals poles need to be located. Relocating this crossing further east would introduce clashes with other trees and also importantly, remove the crossing from the ideal desire line of pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>The birch tree on the south-west corner of Wellington Road and A435 Evesham Road is likely to need removal, but this is not yet confirmed; we have undertaken an Arboricultural survey which has determined that there is a high likelihood of the new traffic signals equipment being within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of this tree and therefore clash with major roots. Until construction starts and the ground is excavated, we cannot confirm the location of the roots, however, given the uplifted ground conditions near this tree, it highly likely that major roots will be impacted and the tree will need to be removed.</p> <p>Generally, trees and highways equipment should not be placed together to avoid long-term maintenance issues whereby the roots could inflict damage upon the infrastructure.</p> <p>We have done our best to avoid tree removal where possible, but in order to provide new infrastructure as requested by local residents and required by Active Travel schemes, this removal is necessitated.</p>

6 new trees will be planted in the area to mitigate for the loss of these trees, of which two new Silver Birch trees will be planted on this section of Wellington Road. Silver Birch trees are relatively fast-growing trees and the trees planted will already be at over a metre in height when planted, meaning they will grow to a significant height in just a few years.

I am unsure as to why you feel this scheme is unsafe. New pedestrian and cycling push button crossing facilities at this crossroad junction will enable a much safer and easier crossing of A435 Evesham Road and Wellington Road for pedestrians and cyclists. Local residents and people who travel through the area have been requesting push button crossings at this junction for many years now and the introduction of them will greatly improve the safety and amenity of the area for people.

The cycleway extension along A435 Evesham Road, between Wellington Road and Central Cross Drive, will be separated from both the carriageway and footway by grass verge or park areas and so will create a safer environment for all users than currently. The scheme also includes new surfaced path links to the inner footway along existing desire lines, meaning people will no longer need to walk across wet and muddy grass areas to access it.

With regards to traffic congestion, there are several reasons why it is not expected that the addition of push button crossings at this junction will add to traffic congestion and that the scheme should help contribute to less motor traffic on these roads:

- The junction is already signalised to traffic, meaning the addition of push button crossings should have little additional impact to traffic flow.
- Traffic modelling of the new signalised junction setup has not indicated any notable negative impact to traffic flow.
- The signals will be upgraded to the latest intelligent signal technology, which will mean traffic levels on each arm of the junction will be managed better than currently. This also applies to pedestrians and cyclists.
- The lights will only work for pedestrians and cyclists when called, and so vehicles will not be held up if no pedestrians or cyclists have called them.
- The aim of the scheme is to provide improved walking and cycling facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, to encourage more people to walk and cycle through the area. This will lead to a reduction of vehicles on the road and traffic congestion. With this junction and area sitting between residential areas, schools, university campuses, Pittville Park, several green spaces, employers and the town centre, this is a real opportunity to improve the area for pedestrians and cyclists, encourage more people to walk and cycle and reduce people using motor vehicles for journeys.

Ref. 2L	Comments
	I firmly object to the removal of the two silver birch trees from the junction of Wellington Road and Evesham Rd. I do not understand the need to remove beautiful and well establish trees. The replacement planting will not reach the size of the existing trees for more than thirty years and I and others are unlikely to see

the new planting reach the same maturity in our lifetime. Please do not remove these trees.

GCC Response

For both safety and maintenance reasons, the Silver Birch trees need to be removed to accommodate the installation of traffic signals equipment for the new push button pedestrian and cycle crossings.

The north-east Birch tree (on the corner of Pittville Park) has a direct clash with the proposed crossing location on the Eastern arm of Wellington Road, as this is where the proposed traffic signals poles need to be located. Relocating this crossing further east would introduce clashes with other trees and also importantly, remove the crossing from the ideal desire line of pedestrians and cyclists.

The Birch tree on the south-west corner of Wellington Road and A435 Evesham Road is likely to need removal, but this is not yet confirmed; we have undertaken an Arboricultural survey which has determined that there is a high likelihood of the new traffic signals equipment being within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of this tree and therefore clash with major roots. Until construction starts and the ground is excavated, we cannot confirm the location of the roots, however, given the uplifted ground conditions near this tree, it is highly likely that major roots will be impacted and the tree will need to be removed.

If you have not viewed the scheme plans already I would recommend viewing them on the Wellington Road to Central Cross Drive section of the A435 Cheltenham to Bishop's Cleeve cycleway webpage www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/a435cycleway to better understand why their removal is necessary.

Generally, trees and highways equipment should not be placed together to avoid long-term maintenance issues whereby the roots could inflict damage upon the infrastructure.

We have done our best to avoid tree removal where possible, but in order to provide new infrastructure as requested by local residents and users of the area and required by Active Travel schemes, this removal is necessitated.

6 new trees will be planted in the area to mitigate for the loss of these trees, of which two new Silver Birch trees will be planted on this section of Wellington Road. Silver Birch trees are relatively fast-growing trees and the trees planted will already be at over a metre in height when planted, meaning they will grow to a significant height in just a few years.

New pedestrian and cycling push button crossing facilities at this crossroad junction will enable a much safer and easier crossing of A435 Evesham Road and Wellington Road for pedestrians and cyclists. Local residents and people who travel through the area have been requesting push button crossings at this junction for many years now and the introduction of them will greatly improve the safety and amenity of the area for people.

The cycleway extension along A435 Evesham Road, between Wellington Road and Central Cross Drive, will be separated from both the carriageway and footway by grass verge or park areas and so will create a safer environment for all users than currently. The scheme also includes new surfaced path links to the inner footway along existing desire lines, meaning people will no longer need to walk across wet and muddy grass areas to access it.

The aim of the scheme is to provide improved walking and cycling facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, to encourage more people to walk and cycle through the area. This will lead to a reduction of vehicles on the road and traffic congestion. With this junction and area sitting between residential areas, schools, university campuses, Pittville Park, several green spaces, employers and the town centre, this is a real opportunity to improve the area for pedestrians and cyclists, encourage more people to walk and cycle and reduce people using motor vehicles for journeys.

Ref. 3D	Comments
	I object to you chopping down two perfectly healthy trees and then suggest there are plans for replanting. Please stop your idiotic destruction of the environment this conservation area.
GCC Response	
	<p>With regards to the trees at the Wellington Road / Evesham Road junction, for both safety and maintenance reasons, the Silver Birch trees need to be removed to accommodate the installation of traffic signals equipment for the new push button pedestrian and cycle crossings.</p> <p>The north-east Birch tree (on the corner of Pittville Park) has a direct clash with the proposed crossing location on the Eastern arm of Wellington Road, as this is where the proposed traffic signals poles need to be located. Relocating this crossing further east would introduce clashes with other trees and also importantly, remove the crossing from the ideal desire line of pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>The birch tree on the south-west corner of Wellington Road and A435 Evesham Road is likely to need removal, but this is not yet confirmed; we have undertaken an Arboricultural survey which has determined that there is a high likelihood of the new traffic signals equipment being within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of this tree and therefore clash with major roots. Until construction starts and the ground is excavated, we cannot confirm the location of the roots, however, given the uplifted ground conditions near this tree, it highly likely that major roots will be impacted and the tree will need to be removed.</p> <p>Generally, trees and highways equipment should not be placed together to avoid long-term maintenance issues whereby the roots could inflict damage upon the infrastructure.</p> <p>We have done our best to avoid tree removal where possible, but in order to provide new infrastructure as requested by local residents and required by Active Travel schemes, this removal is necessitated.</p>

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Ref. 4M	Comments
	<p>Concerned that the new pedestrian crossing that is being installed in Wellington Rd, requires 2 mature silver birch trees to be removed. Customer says this is a great shame and there are workers at the moment and has concerns over these beautiful trees to be taken down. Customer is sure that this crossing can be done without affecting these trees.</p>
GCC Response	<p>Firstly, I would like to assure you that our designers always consider all options and do their best to avoid any tree removal where they can.</p> <p>The north-east birch tree (on the corner of Pittville Park) has a direct clash with the proposed crossing location on the eastern arm of Wellington Road as this is where the proposed traffic signals pole needs to be located. Relocating this crossing further east would introduce clashes with other trees and moving it away from the desire line where the majority of pedestrians would want to cross.</p> <p>The birch tree on the south-west corner of Wellington Road and A435 Evesham Road is likely to be removed but this is not confirmed yet; we have undertaken an arboricultural survey which has showed that there is a high likelihood of the new traffic signals equipment being within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of this tree and therefore clash with major roots. Until construction starts and the ground is excavated, we cannot confirm the location of the roots, however, given the uplifted ground conditions near this tree, it highly likely that major roots will be impacted, and the tree should be removed.</p> <p>We fully understand the importance of trees in Pittville Park and benefit they bring to the environment. For this reason, we have been working with Cheltenham Borough Council's tree officers to select suitable location and species to plant several new trees to mitigate the loss of any removed tree(s).</p>

Following responses being provided to all the above individuals to address their concerns, no additional correspondence has been received from these individuals further expressing their wish to object.

Decision

1. **Remove Silver Birch (Betula Pendula) trees x 2 as identified on location plan.**
- ~~2. Retain Silver Birch (Betula Pendula) trees x 2 as identified on location plan and not implement new crossings as per scheme design.~~


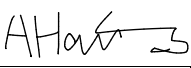
The importance of trees for biodiversity, C02 reduction and visual enhancement is understood and every effort has been made in the design of the A435 Cycleway scheme to retain trees wherever possible. This is evident in this Wellington Road to

Central Cross Drive section where new links to existing footways have been provided, rather than creating new footways alongside the cycleway which would have resulted in further tree and grass area loss.

In order to accommodate the new push button pedestrian and cycle crossings at this junction - something the local community and Councillors have been requesting for a long period of time and are of great importance for the safe crossing of the road and improving the route for pedestrians and cyclists, the removal of the 2 Silver Birch (Betula Pendula) trees is unfortunately necessary.

Mitigation planting has been agreed which will see 6 new trees planted, including 2 new Silver Birch (Betula Pendula) on Wellington Road. This has been assessed to be suitable mitigation and as the trees mature will create an even greater contribution to improving biodiversity and CO2 reduction in the area along with the visual enhancement to it.

Tree removal authorisation

Title	Name	Signature
Project Manager	Richard Lane	
Local Major Projects Team Leader	Alex Haworth	
Highway Programme and Major Projects Manager	Alan Bullock	