

Meeting date: 19 December 2022

Report to: Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure

Report title: B4102 Blossomfield Road – Road Safety Concerns

Report from: Paul Tovey - Head of Highway Management

Report author/lead contact officer: Davinder Chohan - Engineer

Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege
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Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph:

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To investigate concerns regarding potential road safety risks on Blossomfield Road in the vicinity of its junction with White House Way.
- 1.2 The report considers the recent road traffic collision history and associated risks. It reviews two options in respect of retaining or removing two mature trees that restrict forward visibility and makes an informed recommendation that on balance, the safety of all road users would benefit from the removal of the trees.

2. Decision(s) Recommended

- 2.1 Cabinet Member is asked to:
- (a) Note the contents of the report and actions taken so far.
- (b) Agree to remove the two mature trees (one either side of the junction) on Blossomfield Road immediately adjacent to its junction with White House Way, as shown on the plan in Appendix A.

- (c) Agree to continue to monitor performance of the B4102 Blossomfield Road / White House Way junction without re-introducing a yellow box junction or revoking the existing “No right turn” prohibition from Blossomfield Road, into White House Way, for the reasons set out in the report.
- (d) Agree the on-going performance monitoring of this junction be included as part of the B4102 Blossomfield Road Active Travel Corridor Experimental Traffic Regulation Order project.

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3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 Concerns have been expressed by residents regarding potential road safety risks faced by motorists at the junction B4102 Blossomfield Road / White House Way.
- 3.2 Blossomfield Road forms part of the B classified main road network in Solihull; provides access to local commercial, educational and retail establishments and as a result, carries high volumes of traffic, including public transport.
- 3.3 White House Way provides access to a small residential estate, has relatively low volumes of mainly light residential traffic with some goods and service vehicles. Its junction with Blossomfield Road is on the outside of a gentle bend in the alignment of the main road, and access is controlled by a give way sign and markings.
- 3.4 Drivers state that visibility is impaired whilst exiting White House Way, and this has worsened since the introduction of the new cycle lane on Blossomfield Road forcing traffic closer to vehicles emerging from the side road.
- 3.5 The matter under consideration is whether to remove the two mature trees, situated either side of the White House Way junction, either now or review in the future.
- 3.6 As part of the Blossomfield Road scheme two other un-related matters have been raised. Firstly, re-instatement of a “yellow box” junction that helped motorists during peak periods and secondly, removal of a prohibition of turning right from Blossomfield Road into Whitehouse Way. These matters are being reviewed as part of the Active Travel Scheme and will be included in the associated monitoring and evaluation report that will be considered no later than July 2023.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 Upon receipt of the initial complaint, a road safety review of the junction was undertaken which resulted in the removal of the trees’ basal and side growth to maximise forward visibility for motorists. Whilst these works improved the situation, concern remains that this is only a temporary solution due to future growth of the trees.
- 4.2 The review of the junction confirmed the carriageway markings remain in a good condition and motorists comply well with the need to give way to traffic on the main road. The carriageway surface on the main road was resurfaced earlier this year and is in a very satisfactory condition. A copy of the full site report including photographs illustrating the current situation is provided in Appendix A.
- 4.3 A study of the most recent full 3 year (2019-2021) recorded personal injury collisions shows that there have been 2 slight collisions. One of these incidents involved a vehicle turning right from the side road into the path of an oncoming vehicle on the main road; the other did not involve a vehicle emerging from the side road. Both collisions occurred before the Active Travel Scheme was introduced earlier this year

(May 2019 and October 2021 respectively). The evidence suggests that currently there is not a significant road safety risk.

- 4.4 The advice contained with the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets 2 (MfS2) sets out the forward visibility requirements for this environment.
- 4.5 There are two key pieces of information used to check visibility requirements at junctions. Firstly, the "x" distance or the "set back" distance on the side road from the main road. This is the assumed position for a motorist when stationary at the give way line. For built up areas, a minimum "x" distance of 2.4 metres is prescribed, from a motorist's eye height of 1.05 metres.
- 4.6 The other factor is the "y" distance required from the side road, on both sides of the main road, and is based on Stopping Sight Distances (SSD) i.e. the un-interrupted view a motorist has to the left and right when stationary at the give way line. For a 30mph speed limit, a "y" distance of 43 metres is desirable.
- 4.7 The visibility for motorists emerging from the White House Way junction was measured to be 13 metres to the left (towards Solihull town centre) and 11 metres to the right (towards the A34 Stratford Road). Both directions are significantly below the desirable minimum standard.
- 4.8 There is evidence in MfS2 which suggests a reduction in forward visibility does not necessarily increase the risk of road traffic collisions occurring. However, this evidence does not quantify what level of reduction is acceptable and with continued growth in the Borough, traffic levels are set to increase, leading to fewer acceptable gaps in opposing traffic for vehicles joining Blossomfield Road. It is considered important that motorists have good visibility. It is estimated that removal of the two trees would improve the driver visibility and bring it much closer to the MfS2 standard.
- 4.9 Is it recognised that the two mature trees have significant environmental value, therefore, removal is not an easy option to recommend given the low road user casualty history.
- 4.10 Retaining the trees will continue to cause a further reduction in already poor levels of visibility. Due to the basal growth of this tree species, there will need to be regular maintenance. There is also damage to the footway caused by the tree roots, leading to an increased trip risk for pedestrians and higher footway maintenance and insurance costs.
- 4.11 If it is agreed that the best solution is to remove the two mature trees, the project will replant six new highway trees to offset the environmental loss in the Autumn 2023 planting season, at appropriate location on the highway in local residential area.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 Visibility at road junctions is of particular importance, as most road traffic collisions occur at this type of location, where several external factors, including mechanical, medical or some form of distraction can contribute to a road traffic collision.
- 5.2 Visibility can be improved by removing the obstruction and replanting the trees in a less critical location. The cost to carry out this work, which includes removal of the trees, appropriate traffic management and footway reinstatement is in the region of £15,000.
- 5.3 According to the Department for Transport's Road Traffic Casualty Statistics, the average cost of road traffic collisions in 2020, ranges from £16,000 (slight collision) up to nearly £2,000,000 (fatality).
- 5.4 Unknown factors are the environmental costs and the impact on road safety due to the removal of the trees.
- 5.5 There is a high risk of future road traffic collisions occurring at this junction due to the poor forward visibility. It is therefore recommended that approval be granted for the two mature trees, either side of the White House Way junction to be removed as soon as practical.

6. Implications and Considerations

- 6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull.2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it.3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.4. Enable communities to thrive.	<p>The presence of the trees will create a pleasing aesthetic effect for the local community.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres.6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2.	<p>No impact</p>

Priority:	Contribution:
7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.	
Environment: 8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.	The trees being retained will have a good environmental impact.
9. Promote employee wellbeing	No Impact.

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1. The ward members are aware of the requests for the trees to be removed on Blossomfield Road.

6.3 Financial implications:

6.4 The financial implications our set out in the main body of the report. The cost of any works approved can be funded from the un-allocated element of the Local Network Improvement capital allocation.

6.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

6.5.1. Future risks due to the trees being retained has been assessed. Research has shown that reductions in visibility splays are unlikely to lead to an increase in collisions.

6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1. No implications.

6.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

6.7.1. No links.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 Appendix A – Full Site Report.

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 Manual for Streets 2 (MfS2).

9. List of Other Relevant Documents

9.1 None.