

Decision Report

Proposed Tree Pits in Centre of Carriageway on Portland Road (Norland ward)

15 January 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper summarises the responses received to the recent consultation on proposals to introduce five trees in islands in the central carriageway parking bays at the southern end of Portland Road, W11.

2. Description of proposal

- 2.1 The proposal would replace two existing traffic islands with new islands containing trees, plus the installation of three additional islands with trees on a stretch of resident parking that is 65 metres long. This should be sufficient space to park thirteen vehicles, assuming a standard bay is five metres in length. In practice, 12 vehicles is often the practical capacity of the space.

- 2.2 The tree pits will be 0.8 metres cubed and they will be constructed in two metre long by 1.5 metre wide traffic islands.

- 2.3 The new islands will be constructed to leave three 15 metre resident parking bays, with the islands separating them. The 15 metre resident bays provide space for up to three vehicles in each section, allowing for 12 vehicles to be parked overall. This will mean a nominal reduction in capacity of one parking space.

- 2.4 The tree types had not been selected at the time of the resident consultation. However, the council's Senior Arboriculturist recommends that one of two tree species are used. The two selected species are:

- Field Maple (*Acer Campestre*) – Forms a medium sized tree on maturity. It is an upright form which is more appropriate to highway placement than a wider spreading canopy type tree. It is a native tree that provides good autumn colour and has excellent particulate absorption capabilities.



Figure 1 – Field Maple (*Acer Campestre*)

- Sargents Cherry (*Prunus Sargentii Rancho*) – The upright form of this tree is already planted on the eastern side at the southern end of Portland Road. It's an upright rather than spreading form of tree. As with all Cherries, there are nice flowers in the spring and it's the best of all species of Cherry for Autumn colour.



Figure 2 – Sargents Cherry (*Prunus Sargentii Rancho*)

- 2.5 The Norland ward councillors, local resident association and respondents to the original consultation will be contacted and given the opportunity to comment on which of the two selected tree types they prefer. Suggestions for alternative species will not be considered.
 - 2.6 The cost of installing five islands and the associated trees will be approximately £20K, using 'Green Fund' monies already allocated.
 - 2.7 The funding allocation is available for the 2024/2025 financial year, as confirmed by email from the Cleaner, Greener and Cultural Services Department in December 2024.
 - 2.8 The layout of the proposed islands and trees is shown in the consultation plan in Appendix 2.
- 3. Consultation**
- 3.1 The non-statutory consultation ran for six weeks between 20 September and 31 October 2024.
 - 3.2 The consultation consisted of resident letters, an online consultation page and online survey, street notices and emails to local resident associations.
 - 3.3 Key stakeholders, such as the emergency services, utility companies, refuse collection teams and neighbouring boroughs were also informed of the consultation by email.
 - 3.4 The resident letters were delivered to 83 addresses in the vicinity of the southern end of Portland Road. A copy of the letter is included in Appendix 3.

- 3.5 There were 77 responses to the consultation, 76 via the online survey and a letter. Sixty-five of the responses came from RBKC residents and 59 gave a W11 address.
- 3.6 Fifty-eight (75 percent) of the responses supported the proposal, eight (ten percent) supported in part and eleven (14 percent) objected to the scheme. All the responses are provided in Appendix 1 (attached separately).
- 3.7 Of the residents who supplied a W11 postcode, 44 supported the scheme, six supported in part and nine objected.
- 3.8 The main themes from the comments made in support of the scheme are set out below:
- Extra trees will improve the appearance/amenity of the street (21 respondents);
 - It will have a positive effect on the environment (15 respondents); and
 - The benefits of the trees will outweigh the slight reduction in parking (10 respondents).
- 3.9 A summary of the main reasons for objecting, as well as their frequency, are set out in Table 1. Some of the objectors cited more than one reason for objecting. Officers' responses to the objections are included in the table. An asterisk denotes comments made by those who supported the proposals, supported them in part or selected 'no opinion'.

Table 1 - Summary of Objections

Summary of objections to the proposals		Qty.
1	There is not enough parking available to cope with any loss of spaces.	10 (3*)
Parking occupancy surveys carried out in 2022, show that the central parking bays were less than 70 percent occupied at all times, except for Saturday afternoons, when they were between 70 and 79 percent occupied. The Saturday afternoon surveys showed that the resident bays on the west side of Portland Road were less than 70 percent occupied during the same time period, so there will still be enough capacity to meet demand.		
2	There are already enough trees in this area.	7 (1*)
This scheme has been developed at the request of local residents and ward Councillors. There are five footway trees on the western side of this section of Portland Road and three on the eastern footway. The trees along this section of Portland Road are planted at a lower density than Holland Park Avenue, and due to the width of the Portland Road at this point, the proposed addition of five trees does not seem to be excessive. While this is a matter of opinion, the consultation results suggests that most respondents felt more trees would be of benefit.		

3	Waste of money. Funds could be better used elsewhere or on other priorities.	4
<p>The funding for the proposed trees and islands has been allocated to 'green' improvements and in this case specifically to trees and islands. If the scheme were not to proceed, officers would need to agree with the money would be returned to the Green Fund for re-allocation to other 'green' schemes.</p>		
4	Consider three trees rather than five to limit loss of parking	0 (4*)
<p>The proposed trees will be planted with 15 metres spacing between islands (with the trees themselves approximately 17 metres apart). 'Tree lined' avenues in the borough often have similar or slightly closer spacing between the trees, so these trees are not being specified excessively close together. While fewer trees could be proposed, which would reduce the loss of parking by four metres, it is unlikely three trees with more than 30 metres between them would provide a continuous 'tree lined' feel to the road. The extra four metres of parking would be of marginal benefit.</p>		
5	The calculation for the loss of spaces is incorrect due to poor parking and larger modern cars	3
<p>Our resident parking bays are not marked out as individual bays, so we assume five metres as a nominal space. National guidance allows standard parking bays to be a little as four and half metres long, and some of our individually marked Pay By Phone bays are marked at that size. The five metre assumption for parking spaces in this instance is not unreasonable. While modern cars are getting larger, the driver assist facilities are also arguably making them easier to park.</p>		
6	Have local retailers been approached for comment, as the loss of parking is an extra challenge for them.	3
<p>The letter delivery did cover some of the retailers on Holland Park Avenue, as well as all of the retailers at the southern end of Portland Road. The street notices advertising the consultation were also visible to anyone using Portland Road and the parking along there. Of those retailers that responded, some did raise concerns with the loss of parking, as covered in the officer response above.</p>		
7	Details of type of tree required / do not plant London Plane trees	1 (2*)
<p>The type of tree to be installed is yet to be decided and will be selected by the Council's Arboriculturists. However, the trees will not be London Plane trees.</p>		
8	The islands will attract rubbish, abandoned hire bikes etc.	2
<p>While we do still see hire bikes outside designated parking places, they are not generally seen on islands such as those proposed, because the islands are too small.</p> <p>The islands will be part of our regular street cleaning rounds, so any rubbish should be regularly cleared.</p>		

9	Who will maintain the trees and will the tree maintenance budget be increased as more trees are planted.	2
The Council's Arboriculture Team will maintain the trees.		
10	Reduction in light to residents	1 (1*)
Trees planted in the centre of the road would need to be much taller than trees planted on footways or in front gardens, in order to affect light to properties.		
11	Convert one or two PBP bays to resident parking to offset the parking loss or find extra parking bays elsewhere.	0 (2*)
As discussed in the response to Objection one, the parking bays are rarely at capacity and if they are full, then there is likely to be at least one space available in the resident bay on the western side of Portland Road.		
12	Cars are too large to manoeuvre between the islands so they will damage the islands when parking.	1
The islands will be constructed with 300 millimetre wide granite kerbs, so they are able to withstand some over running by normal vehicles. We are not expecting heavy goods vehicle to park in these spaces, but if they do, they will most likely need the entire 15 metre section to be available, so they are less likely to strike the islands. See also response to Objection five.		
13	Spend the money improving the traffic island which is regularly damaged at the junction of Portland Road / Ladbroke Road	1
The Council has a maintenance budget for repairing damage to existing highway infrastructure. Any damage to islands can be reported online using this link: https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/contact-us/report-problem/report-problem-roads-and-pavements		
14	The new trees split the road visually, as they are in the centre of the road and not on the pavement.	1
The trees are unlikely to cause more of a visual split in the road than the current central parking bays, or the existing footway trees, but officers acknowledge that view is subjective and some people may not like the 'tree lined boulevard' impression the trees could give once they have matured.		
Summary of other comments on the proposals		Qty.
15	The tree roots will damage the surrounding road.	0 (1*)
The trees will be planted in 800 millimetres square tree pits, protected by the islands, so the roots are not likely to damage the road surface as they roots have space to grow away from the surface immediately below the carriageway.		

16	The improvements should be focused on Notting Hill Gate, not Portland Road	0 (1*)
<p>As mentioned in the response to Objection three, the funding for the scheme is allocated to this scheme, rather than wider local improvements. However, an improvement scheme for Notting Hill Gate is being developed separately. More information is available using this link:</p> <p>https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/place-shaping/notting-hill-gate-local-action-plan</p>		
17	Plans should be more ambitious (ped and cycle zone closing the street, small play park, street market etc.	0 (1*)
See response to Objection three.		
18	Add more electric parking options	0 (1*)
See response to Objection three.		

4. Emergency Services Consultation Responses

- 4.1 Emergency services, our refuse collection company, utilities companies and neighbouring councils have all been informed of the consultation.
- 4.2 There were no objections to the scheme from any of these stakeholders.

5. Further Consultation Required Including Traffic Orders

- 5.1 Should the proposed tree planting be approved to proceed, no further consultation will be required as we no longer amend the traffic management order to change the parking restriction as the islands preclude anyone from parking in those locations.

6. Ward Councillors' Comments

- 6.1 Norland ward councillors support the implementation of five new trees in the carriageway on Portland Road.

Councillor Petit – *“I support the Portland Road tree-planting project. While parking concerns are valid, the significant support for this scheme, driven by substantial environmental and aesthetic benefits, outweighs the minor parking reduction. The project enhances air quality, reduces the urban heat island effect, and beautifies the streetscape, aligning with council sustainability goals. The consultation demonstrates community engagement. I recommend proceeding.”*

Councillor Lindsay – *“I favour this tree-planting initiative in Portland Road. I fully acknowledge that there are some objections to the loss of one parking bay – but am aware, too, of the reduction in parking pressures in the Borough over the last decade and more, due to fewer residents’ permits. I acknowledge that some are concerned at both the number and the sort of trees to be planted: I am very open about the sort of tree that should be planted – but believe that residents should*

ideally be given a choice of two from which to choose one. I concur with the sentiments to have suitably robust saplings. Overall, the benefits to the environment, to amenity generally, as well as aesthetically, outweigh the modest reduction in parking bays.

At a time when many are concerned at pollution levels, I think this project aligns well with the Borough's sustainability and green goals of planting more trees, and care for the environment more generally. It will enhance the area, and I hope other areas with similar characteristics (i.e. parking down the middle of a road, as here in Portland Road) might consider following Portland Road's example."

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Given the level of support for the proposed scheme officers **recommend to the Director the installation of five new islands and trees proceed as proposed.**

8. Decision

I agree to this report's recommendations.



Andrew Burton (CEng MICE) – Director of Highways and Regulatory Services
Date of Decision 21 January 2025

Appendix 1

Responses received for “Portland Road - New trees in carriageway islands” consultation

(See attached document)

Appendix 2

Portland Road Islands with Trees - Consultation Plan

(See attached document)

Appendix 3

Portland Road Island with Trees Consultation Letter Text

Dear Resident / Occupier,

Portland Road - Proposed tree planting in parking bays

Following a request from Norland ward councillors and a local resident to introduce new trees along Portland Road, the Council is now seeking views on the proposals.

The proposed works will be funded by the Council's Green Fund, which is money set aside to make environmental improvements.

Tree planting proposals

The proposal is to introduce five new trees along Portland Road. The trees will be planted in five new traffic islands positioned in, or at the end of, the central parking bays at the southern end of Portland Road.

The approximate locations of the new trees and the traffic islands they are planted in are shown in the attached plan.

Overall, the trees and their islands will take up around six metres of residents' parking, equivalent to the space taken by just over one parked car.

We understand that parking spaces are an important facility for local people, but the carriageway is the only area where we can fit in new trees along the road. The ground underneath the footways is congested with utility service ducts and cables, so it's not possible to plant the trees in the footway.

The loss of parking will be minimal, and we feel would be justified by the benefits of the new trees, but we would like to hear your views before we decide whether to proceed with the scheme.

Have Your Say

We are keen to hear your views, so this is the chance for you to have your say on this proposal.

If you would like to **support** or **object** to these proposals, or make any other comments about them, please visit the Councils' consultation website and complete the short survey at: <https://consult.rbkc.gov.uk/communities/portland-road> or scan the QR code on the next page, by **Thursday 31 October 2024**.



The Council's Director for Transport and Regulatory Services will consider all the comments received, in consultation with Norland ward councillors and the Lead Member for Planning and Public Realm, before deciding on whether to proceed.

If you would like the survey in another language or format, or have any other queries, please email traffic@rbkc.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully,

ENDS