

# ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT - TREE CLUSTER DETAILS

## OVERVIEW

Having been used as grazing land for decades, tree coverage on site is generally limited to boundaries. One area of broader tree coverage occurs adjacent to the R617, evolving since road improvements in the latter part of the 20th century.

This assessment presents the existing conditions (drawing L102) and the anticipated removals (drawing L103) as a result of development. There are two key components of the proposals that illustrate the intent to retain the vast majority of existing trees.

1) The scheme is designed to provide public open space and an amenity path along the western boundary stream. This protects tree root zones.

2) The central hedgerow is retained and buffered by public open space, protecting tree root zones. The proposed road is aligned with a gap in the hedgerow.

Protection of these two areas means that 100% of the trees of merit will be retained and protected. With over 200 native hedgerow trees on site and full protection of them, a Tree Survey Report that details each tree individually is unnecessary. The trees to be removed do not contain individual specimens, but instead function as groups of trees. The groups of trees to be removed are presented below.

## REMOVALS

Tree removal consists of 3 no. full cluster removals and 2 no. partial cluster removals. Beyond these clusters, no individual trees will be removed. The 5 no. clusters are described below.

### Tree Cluster no. 1

*Tree Species:* Sitka Spruce and Fir (*Picea sitchensis*, *Abies grandis*)

*Estimated Age and Height:* 30 years, 8-10m

*Habitat Value:* Poor

*Description:* These are commercial woodland species, but planted as a roadside hedgerow and not a plantation. They are evergreen and create a dense visual screen. They are non-native and have suppressed the development of a biodiverse understorey. They are green, but not a contributing factor to the R617 character.

*Long-Term Prognosis:* These should be removed in the near future, whether there is development or not. They are approaching the age where windthrow becomes a concern. They are periodically used as perches by crows and pigeons (as are ESB wires), but have otherwise low habitat value.

### Tree Cluster no. 2

*Tree Species:* Willow (*Salix caprea*, *Salix cinerea*)

*Estimated Age and Height:* 30 years, 5-8m

*Habitat Value:* High

*Description:* This cluster appears to have colonised a disturbed piece of ground at one distinct point (likely R617 road improvements). The Willows are native and are early to flower, providing a valuable nectar

source. They have good habitat value, but offer an 'unkempt' aesthetic along an urban fringe and are consequently not a contributing visual factor to the R617 character.

*Long-Term Prognosis:* The Willow cluster would likely live for decades, as they are good at regenerating. However, given the current growth, the production of future specimens of merit is unlikely and will ostensibly perform as a cluster of plants. Their removal results in immediate habitat loss, but their value is easily replaced and new clusters closer to the stream would be more beneficial.



View of tree clusters no 1 and 2, from within the site. The conifers of Cluster no.1 are to the right and Willows of Cluster no. 2 to the left.

### Tree Cluster no. 3

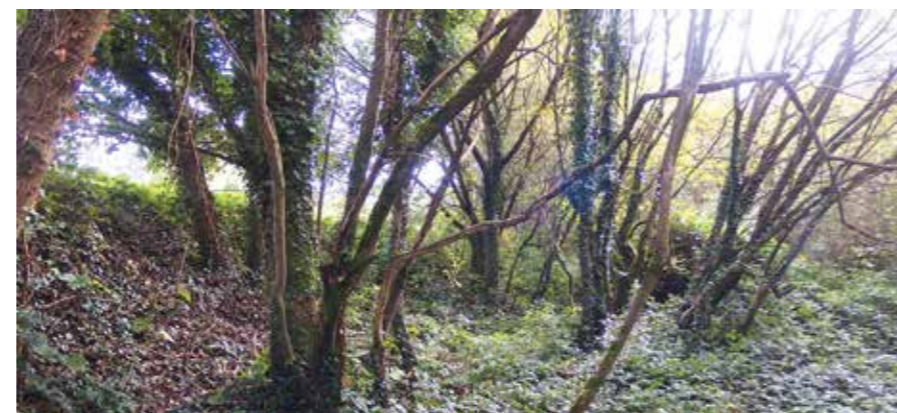
*Tree Species:* Sycamore, Poplar (*Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Populus nigra*)

*Estimated Age and Height:* 30 years, 8-10m, 18m (Poplars)

*Habitat Value:* Low

*Description:* This is a uniform canopy of non-native deciduous trees. 90% are Sycamores, resulting in the cluster being a monoculture (single species). The trees appear to have arisen after improvements to the R617 and offer some habitat value, particularly with the Ivy understorey, but limited as a monoculture. The low activity in the Bat Survey report for this area substantiates this. The trees contribute to the R617 character with an attractive canopy.

*Long-Term Prognosis:* The cluster could easily live for another century. But without intervention, it would remain a monoculture, creating a dead zone in the biodiversity link. Full removal would have a negative impact. Ideally, partial removal and replacement with a new mixed native woodland species combined with select Poplar and Sycamore retention would prove a beneficial balance.



Cluster no.3 as viewed internally, with few dominant stems.

### Tree Cluster no. 4

*Tree Species:* Willow (*Salix caprea*)

*Estimated Age and Height:* 25-30 years, 4-6m

*Habitat Value:* High

*Description:* This area of trees is also a monoculture, but with a high biodiversity value. Given the ages of the trees, the Wet Willow woodland (refer Ecology report) appears to have flourished after improvements to the R617. Portions of the core of the cluster are perpetually wet and the presence of dead trees alludes to the theory that drainage has likely degraded over time.

*Long-Term Prognosis:* The cluster provides a high, diverse habitat value and could continue for decades. Without management, more of the trees are likely to die, which could impact diversity. Full removal would have a significant negative impact. Ideally, removal of some struggling plants combined with drainage management will result in a healthier wet woodland and improved biodiversity future.

*Note, an image of these trees can be seen on drawing L105.*

### Tree Cluster no. 5

*Tree Species:* Monterey Cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*)

*Estimated Age and Height:* 60-70 years, 16-22m

*Habitat Value:* Low

*Description:* A non-native evergreen planted as a wind shelter, likely in the mid-twentieth century (fashionable as a quick screen at the time). They have a low habitat value, but are attractive perches for larger bird species.

*Long-Term Prognosis:* The trees are visible from the surrounding countryside and screen the farm shed. They have reached a stage where they are heavy trees and periodically lose large branches. They could live for a century, but could be dangerous in a residential setting. Fostering large canopy native varieties would have a significantly greater habitat benefit than retention of these trees.



Cluster no.5 sheltering the farm shed; proposed for removal.

## CONCLUSION

The proposed development is well-designed to protect the key trees on site. The clusters of trees to be removed are primarily non-native, with only a modest degree of habitat value. The high quality wet woodland is being 75% retained, with a link to new native woodland where Sycamores are being removed. Consequently, the proposals have a low degree of impact on existing tree habitat, which is substantially improved when the landscape scheme is implemented.

## Notes

1. This report to be read in conjunction with maps on drawings L102 and L103. For location of tree clusters on plan, refer dwg. L103.