

Report to: Head of Highways, East Sussex County Council

By: Major Projects & Growth Team

Title: East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan - A259 Upperton Road/Station Parade, Tree Felling Consultation Outcome Report

Purpose: This report presents the outcome of the statutory consultation, considers the themes relating to the representations received, and provides the basis upon which the Head of Highways can make an informed and transparent decision regarding the proposed removal of the highway tree on A259 Upperton Road/Station Parade, Eastbourne.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) To agree on the felling of one tree on A259 Upperton Road/Station Parade, Eastbourne.**

1 Background Information

1.1 The East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) A259 Upperton Road/Station Parade, Eastbourne scheme aims to improve the reliability of bus services by reducing delays. This includes measures to help buses move more efficiently through the roundabout and align correctly with bus stops for safer and easier boarding.

1.2 A new eastbound bus lane is planned on the A259 Station Parade between Wharf Road and the railway station. To accommodate this, changes to the existing road layout are required.

1.3 The bus priority scheme is integral to delivering the objectives of the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4, enabling residents to enjoy higher quality bus services, improved journey times with reduced delays, that provide a frequent, integrated and comprehensive choice and an alternative to the car. The proposals also aim to improve safety and accessibility for all road users within the area.

1.4 The scheme is being funded by East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan capital funding, which the County Council has received from the Government's Department for Transport for the purpose of delivering bus priority infrastructure within the county.

1.5 To achieve the necessary carriageway width, while maintaining suitable pavement widths, one silver birch tree has been identified for removal. The tree is located on the edge of the kerb on the north side of the A259 Station Parade, outside No. 3 Station Parade.

1.6 The tree has been assessed through arboricultural survey as Category B2, indicating that it is of moderate arboricultural value, being in the mature age class, in good physiological and fair structural condition, with an estimated remaining contribution of at least 20 years. The tree is not protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and is not located within a designated Conservation Area.

1.7 Images 1&2 show the trees location which is proposed to be felled (T1):-

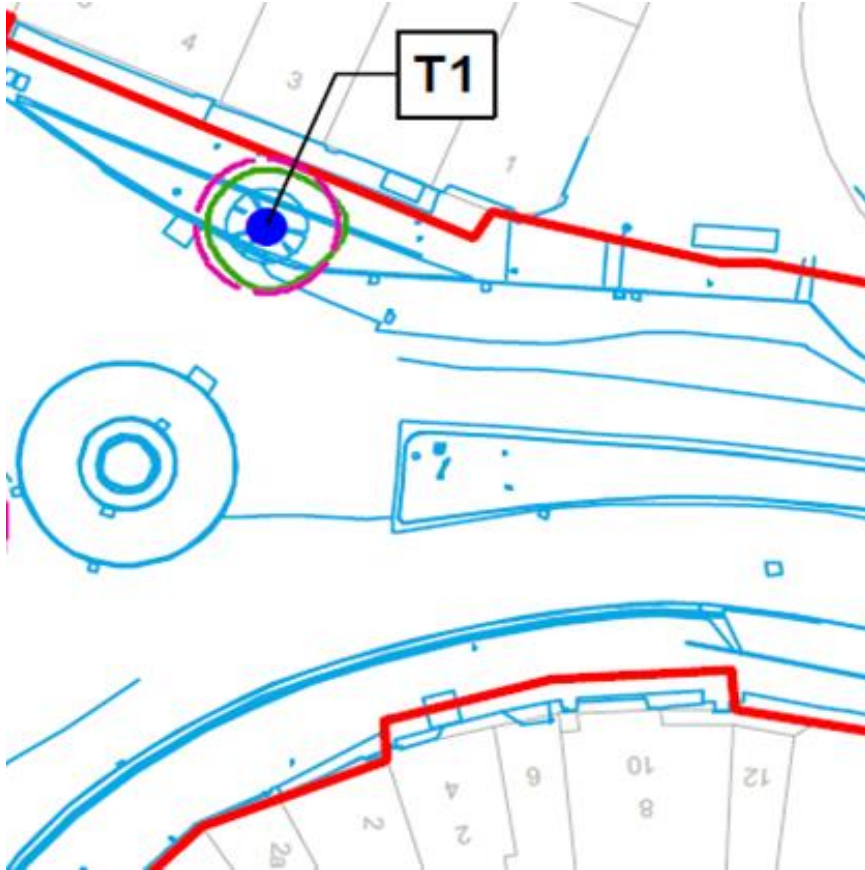


Image 1:- Shows the area of the tree



Image 2: The tree in situ 26 May 2026

2 Supporting Information

2.1 The Eastbourne Station Area scheme has been developed to improve bus journey time reliability, accessibility and the overall operation of the transport network within the station and town centre area. Throughout the design process, detailed traffic modelling, technical assessments and independent road safety audits have been undertaken to ensure that the proposals are both appropriate and proportionate.

2.2 The design includes the widening of the road on the north side of the A259 Station Parade, which will require the removal of the single silver birch tree in this location. The tree's proximity to the existing kerb line combined with the requirement to widen the carriageway to enable buses to align correctly with the bus stop, means that its removal is necessary.

2.3 Options that did not impact on the trees were considered during the design process, including moving the roundabout and the retention of the existing layout. It was determined that both options introduced conflicts with vehicle movements, increased risk for impacts on underground utilities, would lead to additional construction costs and potential risks to the tree root systems of the three trees within the construction area.

2.4 Site visits have taken place with East Sussex County Council Senior Asset Engineer and the Project Design Team to exhaust all possible engineering solutions to reduce the impact on the tree. The options assessed demonstrated that retaining the tree would compromise safety, reduce the effectiveness of the bus priority measures, or introduce further constraints to the scheme.

2.5 If the tree were not removed this entire scheme would require a full redesign, and further Traffic Regulation Order to be approved. This would likely introduce a programme delay of at least six months, putting the scheme at risk of not being able to be completed in line with the DfT funding deadlines. Furthermore, the cost associated with redesign, consultation, statutory processes and programme delay could result in the scheme exceeding its available budget, requiring significant descoping of the proposed measures or potentially rendering the scheme undeliverable.

2.6 Options that would retain the tree would result in reduced footway widths and would not meet inclusive mobility standards, disproportionately impacting pedestrians with mobility impairments, wheelchair users and those with visual impairments. The carriageway widening is required to ensure buses can correctly align with the kerb at the bus stop, which is essential for safe and accessible boarding, particularly for passengers with reduced mobility.

2.7 As mitigation for the removal of this tree, the replanting of one suitable new tree will be required to provide an appropriate level of mitigation. Opportunities for replacement planting within the immediate area may be limited, and alternative locations will therefore be considered as part of the wider scheme.

2.8 A public consultation on the felling of the single silver birch tree took place between 29 May - 26 June 2026. This link provides you access to view the detailed design option drawings [The consultation webpage includes the detailed design options drawings and Landscape plans](#)

2.9 Notices were placed on the tree in question with a QR code on which directed people to the consultation web page. A contact email address was also provided on the notice.

2.10 There were a total 194 responses received to the consultation, six in support of the tree felling and 188 objecting to the tree felling. Four responses have not been considered due to duplicate email addresses and correspondent details. A summary of all key objection themes is provided below.

2.11 Objections were raised regarding the age and health of the tree. Feedback included complaints about the proposed loss of a healthy/disease-free tree, or the loss of mature trees in Eastbourne. The Council acknowledges the amenity and arboricultural value of the tree. Retention of the tree was considered throughout the design process, however, no reasonably practicable alternative was identified that would enable the tree to be retained whilst also meeting the safety, accessibility and operational objectives of the scheme. Replacement tree planting will be delivered as part of the wider scheme where suitable opportunities exist. This will assist in maintaining the visual quality of the public realm and contribute towards the establishment of new landscape features over time.

2.12 Objections were raised regarding the environmental, ecological and climate impacts of the tree removal. Feedback included concerns about the impact on air quality, carbon capture, biodiversity, wildlife habitats and shading and cooling, often mentioning the ongoing effects of climate change/global warming. The Council recognises the environmental and biodiversity benefits provided by mature trees, including their contribution to local amenity, air quality and habitat provision. The potential impacts associated with the removal of the tree have been considered as part of the assessment process. Alternative options to retain the tree were

explored but were found to introduce unacceptable constraints or impacts on the scheme. Replacement tree planting will be delivered as part of the wider scheme and will contribute towards maintaining and enhancing the urban tree resource over the longer term. Whilst replacement planting cannot immediately replicate the environmental benefits provided by an established mature tree, it will provide a resilient and sustainable replacement over the longer term.

2.13 Objections were raised regarding the contribution of the tree to the appearance and character of Station Parade and the wider town centre. Feedback included concerns relating to visual amenity, local identity, the loss of greenery within the urban environment and the contribution of the tree to the setting of Eastbourne Station and the surrounding streetscape. The Council acknowledges the contribution of the tree to the character and appearance of Station Parade and the wider streetscape. The tree forms a visible feature within the public realm and provides local amenity benefits. However, the visual effects associated with its removal have been balanced against the wider transport benefits of the proposed scheme, having regard to the urban context within which the tree is situated. Replacement tree planting will be delivered as part of the wider scheme where suitable opportunities exist. This will assist in maintaining the visual quality of the public realm and contribute towards the establishment of new landscape features over time.

2.14 Objections were raised regarding the need to remove the tree to facilitate the proposed scheme. Feedback included suggestions that alternative design solutions should be explored, including amendments to traffic signal operation, bus stop relocation, alterations to the roundabout layout, carriageway redesign, footway realignment, tree transplantation or retention of the existing arrangement. Alternative design options were considered during scheme development to determine whether the tree could be retained. Options assessed included moving the roundabout and the retention of the existing layout. It was determined that both options would introduce conflicts with vehicle movements, increase the risk of impacts on underground utilities, result in additional construction costs and create potential risks to the root systems of the three trees within the construction area. No reasonably practicable alternative was identified that would retain the tree whilst meeting the scheme objectives. The proposed design represents the option that best balances delivery of the scheme objectives whilst minimising impacts on the surrounding environment.

2.15 Objections were raised regarding the bus lane scheme itself. Feedback included suggestions that the proposed highway improvements were unnecessary, would increase congestion, adversely affect businesses and accessibility, result in unnecessary construction disruption and represent poor value for money. Concerns were also raised regarding the level of public support for the proposals and the consultation process. Comments relating to the principle and merits of the wider bus priority scheme have been noted. However, the principle of the scheme has been considered through previous consultation and approval processes. This consultation relates specifically to the proposed removal of the tree required to facilitate delivery of the approved scheme. No mitigation is proposed as these comments relate to the wider scheme rather than the proposed tree removal.

2.16 Objections were raised regarding the adequacy of the proposed replacement planting and associated mitigation measures. Feedback included concerns that replacement trees would not provide the same environmental, ecological or amenity benefits as the existing mature tree for

many years, together with requests for greater clarity regarding replacement planting locations, species selection and long-term maintenance arrangements. The concerns regarding the adequacy of replacement planting are acknowledged. The Council recognises that newly planted trees cannot immediately provide the same environmental, ecological and amenity benefits as an established mature specimen. Nevertheless, replacement planting remains an important mitigation measure and contributes towards maintaining and enhancing the wider urban tree resource over the longer term. Replacement tree planting will be delivered as part of the wider scheme and will be supported by appropriate establishment and maintenance measures to maximise its long-term success. The location and species selection will be informed by site constraints and available opportunities, with the aim of providing a resilient and sustainable replacement that contributes positively to the public realm.

2.17 In addition, responses were received in support of the tree felling and wider scheme proposals. Feedback highlighted the benefits of improving bus reliability, increasing the attractiveness of public transport, supporting modal shift and enhancing connectivity between Eastbourne Station and the wider bus network. These comments have been noted and taken into account as part of the overall consideration of the proposal. No mitigation is required in relation to these representations.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The proposed removal of the single Silver Birch tree has been considered carefully throughout the development of the Eastbourne Station Area scheme and is only proposed where no reasonable alternative engineering solution has been identified. While the consultation specifically related to tree removal, wider scheme comments have been noted and will inform ongoing engagement.

3.2 The Eastbourne Station Area scheme has been designed to improve bus journey time reliability, accessibility and the overall operation of the transport network within the station and town centre area. The scheme has been developed through detailed traffic modelling, technical assessments and independent road safety audits to ensure that the proposals are both proportionate and appropriate to the identified transport objectives.

3.3 A range of alternative options were considered during the design process to avoid impacting the tree, including retaining the existing highway layout and relocating the proposed roundabout arrangement. However, these options introduced significant operational and engineering challenges, including conflicts with vehicle movements, increased risks associated with underground utilities, additional construction costs and potential impacts on the root protection areas of other trees within the construction zone. Consequently, these options were not considered suitable for progression.

3.4 Failure to remove the tree would place the delivery of the entire Eastbourne Station Area scheme at significant risk and could prevent the scheme from being completed in accordance with the objectives and funding requirements set by the Department for Transport. This would jeopardise the transport, accessibility and public transport benefits the scheme is intended to provide.

3.5 Having considered the engineering requirements of the scheme, the alternative options assessed, the safety and operational implications of retaining the tree, the funding constraints associated with the project and the proposed mitigation measures, it is concluded that the removal of the Silver Birch tree is justified, and no reasonably practicable alternative has been identified that meets the scheme's safety, accessibility and operational requirements.

This report has been approved and signed off by:

ANDREW TURNER CEng MICE

Head of Highways

East Sussex County Council, Communities, Economy and Transport

DATE: 3 July 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ASTW', with a long horizontal stroke extending from the top of the 'A' across the 'S' and 'T'.

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