PROPOSAL TO PLANT TREES IN ACTON TOWN CENTRE

July 2014
PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Introduction
This proposal has been prepared and led by Mill Hill Park Residents’ Association (MHPRA) and Churchfield Community Association (CCA), in close collaboration with Ealing Tree Service Department, Dale Mortimer, and the Community Champions Co-ordinator Susan Wyatt.

The primary addressees of this document are the Councillors of South Acton and Acton Central wards, London Borough of Ealing (LBE):
- Yvonne Johnson, South Acton Councillor
- Mik Sabiers, South Acton Councillor
- Josh Blacker, South Acton Councillor
- Patricia Walker, Acton Central Councillor
- Abdullah Gulaid, Acton Central Councillor
- Daniel Crawford, Acton Central Councillor

Residents from Mill Hill Park Residents’ Association (MHPRA) and Churchfield Community Association (CCA) both believe that greener streets should be among the changes made to foster the successful regeneration of Acton.

Proposal to plant trees
The essence of this proposal is to plant 60 trees in Acton Town Centre, concentrated on four key streets: Acton High Street and the neighbouring Gunnersbury Lane and Horn Lane. A successful implementation of this proposal will bring the total of trees on Acton High Street to 50 trees or 1/4 of the expected density of 200 trees observed on a typical high street in London (ref.: Barcham Tree Specialists research). Other identified main streets will benefit from more trees to help manage pollution and traffic noise. The feasibility study has already been conducted by the Tree Service Department to identify suitable places.

Budget required
The scheme is proposed to be funded from three primary sources: Mayor of London LEAF programme, South Acton ward and Acton Central ward. The costs are based on the quote provided by the Tree Service Department in July 2014:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total cost of the planting scheme</td>
<td>Supply and plant 50 semi-mature trees suitable for urban planting at a cost of £450 per tree</td>
<td>£22,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match funding from Mayor’s LEAF programme</td>
<td>The grant will provide £200 per tree to the council (application in progress by Tree Service)</td>
<td>£10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional funding required from Acton Central ward</td>
<td>Proposed 50% share between wards or 25 trees at a cost of £250 per tree</td>
<td>£6,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional funding required from South Acton ward</td>
<td>Proposed 50% share between wards or 25 trees at a cost of £250 per tree</td>
<td>£6,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ealing Tree Service has already applied for the funding from the Mayor’s fund for trees, which is only available on a match fund basis. £10,000 from this budget can be allocated to Acton High Street.

In order to benefit from match funding the budget requested from the wards must be met in full.
DETAILED PROPOSAL

Objectives sought in the outcome of this proposal:
1. To create an attractive Town Centre for all residents and visitors of Acton to enjoy.
2. To improve the quality of life for Acton residents.
3. To support the implementation of London wide and LBE specific Tree Strategy.
4. To support the work of Ealing Council in conjunction with the Environmental Agency to improve the quality of air in Acton Town Centre.

Further specification:
This proposal has been developed in collaboration with the Tree Service Department, reflecting practical requirements for urban planting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>Acton High Street - from Gunnersbury lane up to the over-ground bridge Gunnersbury Lane Horn Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>50 trees: High Street – 26 (as per the feasibility study); Gunnersbury Lane – 22; Horn Lane – 22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species</td>
<td>The species selected by Tree Service must be able to provide attractive foliage and bark to create an impact. For the maximum impact it is desirable to have all trees of the same species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>The planting density is recommended to be 7-10 meters, in line with urban policy for high streets – subject to feasibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girth size</td>
<td>Semi-mature 16-35 cm trees of this size will provide good resistance to casual damage and provide excellent initial impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock quality</td>
<td>To ensure that the new trees survive in high usage areas, a good quality stock is required. Ealing Council sources trees from Barcham Tree Specialists, recognised for high stock quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting period</td>
<td>Autumn/Winter 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasibility</td>
<td>The feasibility study has been conducted by the Tree Service Department. One of the recommendations is to consider a wider coverage for the tree planting scheme to include the nearby Gunnersbury Lane and Horn Lane.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional considerations:
Out of the scope for this proposal, yet to bring the Council’s attention to the vital matters, critical to the look and feel of Acton High Street:
1. King Street/Mount: attractive and coordinated tree planting and hard landscaping, which requires a well-considered, high quality design on a stand-alone basis.
2. Phase II: Subsequent planting of further 100 trees (2015-2016) in Acton Town Centre to bring the density in line with norm.
3. Replacement of concrete with paving stones on the pavement and deep cleaning.
4. De-cluttering of street signs and other unnecessary road furniture.
5. Upgrade to Christmas lights.
6. Business regeneration programme to diversify the retail proposition, beyond pound shops, betting shops and pawnbrokers, currently dominating Acton High Street.
Acton, whose name derives from “Oak Town,” carries a wealth of history and features remarkable architectural sites, such as Acton Library, The George and Dragon pub, the Old Fire Station, and many others. Acton High Street brings together some of the best examples of Georgian and Edwardian architecture.

Whilst the development of affordable housing and industrial estates has accelerated in Acton in recent years, efforts to control pollution and upgrade the infrastructure required to support an increase in the population and traffic, have been lagging behind.

Consistent with the residents’ (MHPRA’s and CCA’s) views are a number of local and central government policies that have been put into action to improve the appearance of London streets:

1. The Mayor of London has committed £6 million to plant 10,000 trees in London by March 2015 under the LEAF Programme – this is to improve the appearance and air quality in local neighbourhoods. (ref.: Mayor’s Street Tree Initiative)
2. The Ealing Tree Strategy states that £885,000 is allocated by LBE for planting and maintenance of trees in the borough (ref.: Ealing Tree Strategy 2013 to 2018, August 2013).
3. Among key Acton Town Development Framework objectives is “To create an attractive and good quality public realm; to improve the accessibility, movement and linkages to and within Acton Town Centre; to maximise the regenerative potential and coherence of Acton” (ref.: Acton Town Centre Development Framework: Summary).

The nearby boroughs and wards have been actively utilising this investment:

- Approximately £8m has been allocated for Ealing town centre regeneration; this project has also received a grant from the Mayor’s fund for trees;
- Southall has been awarded £4.4m from the Mayor’s Regeneration Fund, matched by £1.4m from Ealing Council and £1.9m from Transport for London to improve High Street’s road, pavements, shop fronts, and plant more trees;
- Wandsworth Council (Putney) has spent £250,000 on Putney High Street improvements with trees planting at the heart of it;
- The London Borough of Hounslow spent £169,000 on improvements in Chiswick to Turnham Green Park alone, which included trees planting and landscaping.

Acton is certain to be the prime candidate to benefit from similar investments, even though it is a late runner-up compared to Ealing, Chiswick and other nearby towns in West London.
RATIONALE FOR THIS PROPOSAL

Against the backdrop of accelerated housing development, residents in Acton are also very concerned over the following environmental issues:

1. **Very high air pollution rates:** frequently cited highest levels of pollution in London have been recorded on Horn Lane (High: 7 out of 10), as measured by London Air Quality monitoring station on 16/07/14. Furthermore, Acton is surrounded by industrial sites, some of which are aggressive environmental polluters, such as Hanson Concrete production plant on Horn Lane. Horn Lane, Gunnersbury Lane and High Street are the busiest roads in Acton, experiencing constant slow and heavy traffic. The low tree density in the area perpetuates high pollution rates, as indicated by the lighter areas on the map.

2. **High housing and population density:** South Acton estate is adding additional 2,350 housing units (ref: South Acton regeneration master plan) and the development of a new housing estate at the Oaks Shopping Centre plants will create further 142 units (ref: //www.theoakacton.co.uk/proposal.html). This will increase the population density further, which is already very high compared to other wards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>South Acton</th>
<th>Acton Central</th>
<th>Ealing Common</th>
<th>Ealing Broadway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>14,873</td>
<td>15,427</td>
<td>14,019</td>
<td>14,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density (persons per hectare)</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ref.: Census, 2011)

3. **Higher crime rates:** when comparing total monthly crime figures with nearby wards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>South Acton</th>
<th>Acton Central</th>
<th>Ealing Common</th>
<th>Chiswick Southfield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly total crime counts</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime rate (per 1000 population)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ref.: Metropolitan Police crime mapping, April 2014)

4. **Widespread enviro crime:** illegal actions such as graffiti, fly-tipping, overspill of high local shops onto the street, and dumped rubbish are all persistent in Acton. These factors are aggravated by the low density of trees in Acton, compared to other LBE wards, such as Ealing Broadway, Ealing Common and Southfields, and other London areas.

MHPRA-CCA Proposal for tree planting scheme in Acton Town Centre
BENEFITS SOUGHT

There is a large body of evidence to support the case for more urban tree planting. Several prominent and reputable sources are referenced below.

**Ealing Trees Strategy 2013 to 2018 emphasises that:**
- Trees create a distinctive landscape and impart an appreciation of a place.
- Trees provide important soft landscaping and sense of community.
- Large mature trees provide a sense of history, longevity and permanence.
- Trees create space for relaxation, relief from stress and enhance emotional wellbeing.
- They reduce the incidence of asthma and breathing difficulties by providing cleaner air.
- Trees offer valuable shade and reduce the potential risks of skin cancer.

**Kew Gardens state that:**
- 1 mature tree provides enough oxygen for 5 people for a whole year.

**The US Forest Service has determined that:**
Trees reduce criminal activity in inner city locations.

**Barcham Tree Specialists have established through research that:**
- Trees assist in cleaning out contaminated land near industrial sites.
- Trees are a sustainable source of energy and oxygen - plastic and painted trees are not.
- Trees slow down the impact of flash flooding and soil erosion.
- Trees enhance the character of local areas.
- Trees soften the landscape and mask the intrusive nature of many developments where space is at a premium, making them greener and more attractive.

**MHPRA and CCA believe that trees in Acton Town Centre will:**
- Help create a sustainable community in Acton.
- Improve the quality of life for a large number of Acton residents, especially for many of those who do not have a private outdoor space.
- Act as a traffic calming measure, as referenced in the Acton Town regeneration framework.
- Reduce air pollution and traffic noise.
- Last but not least, give a powerful headstart to the Town Centre’s regeneration, which is yet to happen in Acton.

**Summary**

This proposal reflects a strong endorsement from Acton residents, supported by the Tree Service Department and the Woodland Trust’s Tree Wardens Initiative. It is hoped that a joined up approach from united residents across Acton will be positively received, and result in a tangible outcome for all Acton residents.

MHPRA and CCA strongly recommend that this proposal is approved for funding *in full* for this budget year of 2014/15, corresponding with the tree planting season and the last year of Mayor’s tree funding scheme.