

## Hedging or Trees as mitigation on development sites for loss of trees.

After years of work by the Tree Forum (Clive Stevens - now a Councillor) and Bristol Trees (then under the control of the Council Officer Richard Ennion) a Tree Replacement policy was developed and then enforced.

Under this policy, if trees are lost because of the development of a site, then they must be replaced, either on site or nearby. The “nearby” planting will thus be on public land. It is usually within 1 mile of the development site.

The on-site planting is made a condition of planning, and the planting on Council land is made part of an s106 agreement, and specifies Street Tree replacement (often an s106 says that the money must be spent on Parks and Green Spaces to mitigate other parts of development effects).

Planting on Council land as part of an s106 agreement is expensive - £765 per tree - so you can well understand that efforts will be made by developers to avoid such payments/obligations even though they make huge profits on their developments (usually).

The number of trees required is calculated by a formula related to the girth of the tree(s) to be lost. So felling a mighty oak or a London Plane is expensive - but so is the cost to the environment and to the visual amenity of the loss of the mature tree, so anything that makes developers think twice before felling trees is a good thing - and we get to have replacement mature trees in the future. Well done Bristol!

<u>Trunk Diameter of tree lost to development</u> <u>(cm measured at 1.5 m)</u>	<u>No of replacement Trees</u>
<15	0-1
15-19.9	1
20 - 29.9	2
30-39.9	3
40 - 49.9	4
50-59.9	5
60 - 69.9	6
70-79.9	7
80+	8

One way of avoiding the replacement obligation is to clear away trees that are not in Conservation Areas or not subject to a TPO before making the application to develop. But environmentally aware hawk eyed residents and activists spot this and report it, either to the Council directly via the planning portal or to their local NP reps or to the Tree Champion or all three, and on several occasions we have managed to enforce the BTRS when developers had thought they had slipped a fast one. The BTRS is now being enforced retrospectively if we can produce evidence that there used to be trees on the site. The aerial views on Google Earth mapping and on KnowYourPlace are proving invaluable in this respect.

Lately in BS9 we have seen attempts by developers to suggest that planting a hedge can be part of BTRS mitigation. I have discussed this with Councillors and the Environment Group and with the Bristol Tree Forum (BTF) and I intend to bring it to the BTF as a formal Agenda item so we can, if they agree, take it to the Planners at BCC and see what they say. I shall propose that BTRS is modified/amended to exclude hedging.

Our two recent examples were/are:

**16/03832 and 16/03833** I was told that when these application went before the Development Committee that there were suggestions that the planting of a privet hedge would be suitable mitigation for the loss of some of the trees. The species suggested on the website now to discharge the conditions states that 9 Ligustrum Lucidum will be planted. This is Privet by another name. It can grow into a small tree but on the RHS website it is suggested as suitable for **Low Maintenance Hedging & Screens** so make of that what you will. It certainly worries me.

**16/06917.** This one remains outstanding awaiting a decision. There was an earlier application to build two houses after the land was cleared, and this is one where the land was cleared before a development application was submitted in an effort I am sure to avoid the BTRS - but it was spotted by vigilant residents. This - the second application - has owned up to there having been trees on the site, and an accompanying arboricultural report states that 21 trees are required in mitigation for the loss. But that same report then goes on to state

“It is suggested that the remaining 11 trees should be of smaller hedging stock than the above ‘standard’ size and therefore a higher number of trees could be sourced (to a number and spacing appropriate to fill the allocated space) for a hedge planting scheme to be planted around the boundary of the site to replace the screening feature lost (shown as yellow on Plan 1 below). The species suggested would lend themselves to being managed as a low hedge (<2m) and maintained as such due to the close proximity of the new property adjacent to the boundary. They would replace the lost screening and provide year around interest together with good ecological value. Suggested species: Field Maple (Acer campestre), Holly (Ilex aquifolium), Hazel (Corylus avellana), Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna), Yew (Taxus baccata).. “

**So the community is being offered a hedge instead of trees to mitigate for canopy loss.** I think this is appalling and a very dangerous precedent. I ask Councillors locally to object to this proposal and I'll bring this to the attention of the Bristol Tree Forum.