

Loughborough & District Civic Trust

TREES '73

The Government's Plans

The Tree Planting campaign for 1973, announced by the Secretary of State for the Environment, has coincided very happily with studies this society has been making of trees in the Borough over the last few years.

The campaign, in which local authorities, industry, amenity organisations, youth organisations, schools and other interests are being encouraged to take part, is supported by Exchequer assistance to local authorities (see D.O.E. Circular 99/72 Appendix B for summary of grants available). Its aim is not only to encourage special tree planting efforts in 1973, but to stimulate long term programmes of regular tree planting as a means of beautifying both town and countryside.

According to members of the Horticultural Trades Association stocks should be available to meet a considerable expansion of demand in the Spring and Autumn of 1973 for trees suitable for urban planting. Also the National Farmers' Union will advise on alternative sources of supply where there is difficulty in obtaining a particular species locally.

The Loughborough and District Civic Trust are pleased to be able to put forward the results of their surveys, together with proposals for planting in the Town Centre, at this particular time.

Loughborough

When viewed from a vantage point, such as the Outwoods, Loughborough appears as a town very well provided with large trees - apart that is from the newest suburbs which present a rather bald roofscape. But wandering around the town, the picture appears a little less happy. The centre of the town, except for Queen's Park, the Parish Church, and Southfields, has very few trees. Nor can the inner suburbs and industrial areas boast of very much. The scene is better in the two extensive education areas, Burton Walks and Ashby Road, where existing trees and new planting are very good, and in the middle suburbs where mature gardens with well grown trees still survive and including the Green Belt on Forest Road, and the middle section of Ashby Road. Existing and new trees, with development set back behind them, help to create attractive approaches to the town along the Leicester, Nanpantan, and Ashby Roads, and no doubt Derby Road will be treated in this way and ultimately the new Nottingham Road. Unfortunately in the outer suburbs, existing trees have frequently been taken down before building commenced, and opportunities to develop and plant amenity areas at the time of building were missed. Elsewhere, many of the splendidly large trees are past their prime, some unhappily lopped about, others gradually disappearing as development occurs.

Nothing but praise must be given to the new and replacement planting which has been undertaken, and the efforts made to retain mature trees. Nevertheless this is a good moment to take a cold hard look at the age and condition of the existing stock of trees in the town, and to assess their value as an amenity or otherwise.

Planting Opportunities

The opportunities for enhancing Loughborough's green framework by further tree planting are extremely good. The town falls naturally into specific areas, added to which will be the opportunity, indeed the necessity, for landscaping the new major roads, and also the chance, which it would be criminal to miss, of creating the green lanes of a pedestrian network. These opportunities, shown on the plan "Green Framework" are:-

1. Areas suitable for large scale planting schemes by industry, education, and local authorities, with belts or groups of forest trees which can be allowed to attain their full stature. Much good work has already been done.
2. The main approach roads, Western bypass, and Inner Circulatory, suitable for planting with trees appropriate in scale and type for the areas through which the roads pass.
3. New housing areas, where the preservation of existing trees and landscape features should be carefully integrated into the layout before any development takes place.
4. General Improvement Areas, and Local Authority housing areas, where small scale planting can be introduced in environmental improvement schemes under the Housing Acts - but why wait?
5. All other housing zones, where the planting of amenity areas with either small scale or medium trees can take place according to the site available.
6. Green lanes or walkways which can be developed along the brook courses, the Canal, and disused railway line, and planted with "natural" rather than "ornamental" trees.
7. The Parish Church or Conservation Area, where particular care is required to maintain the visual qualities of both buildings and planting in an integrated scheme.
8. The Town Centre, essentially hard surfaced, but with the introduction of some significantly placed individual trees in conjunction with good quality urban landscaping.
9. Individual sites, largely in central industrial areas, where the addition of even a few shrubs would help to brighten a forecourt, screen a car park or an ugly view, or otherwise articulate a space. There might even be eyesores around the Borough where complete reclamation and planting could work wonders!

Choice of Species

When selecting the species of trees for planting in urban areas, consideration is given to the ultimate size of the tree, its root pattern, tolerance of soils, exposure, and pollution, casting of heavy shadows, resistance to disease, rate of growth, and so on, together with the requirements of underground services and adjacent buildings. An immense amount of information is available (again see D.O.E. circular 99/72, Appendix A). But it is also necessary to assess the aesthetic effect of new tree planting on the character of a district. Some places call for a mixed planting of trees which complement each other in form and foliage, some for groups of a single species, some for the solidity of conifers, some for the lightness of deciduous trees. In all cases suitability to the neighbourhood, coherence of pattern, and attractiveness throughout the year should be aimed at. The expert advice of the specialists in arboriculture, and landscape design, is required to find the best answers to these questions.

The Town Centre

The Town Centre has been chosen for detailed study for several reasons. For instance, the shopping area has been particularly dismal over the past few years, with old familiar shops disappearing under a plethora of new buildings, more and more cars circling first this way and then that, uncertainty hovering over the siting of the market, and the continual delays in the formulating of a planning policy for the town. The eventual publication of the Draft Local Plan however, has given a positive lead regarding future developments. The proposed Inner Circulatory Road and pedestrianisation of the Market Place opens up the possibility of a genuine face lift for the shopping centre, in which the introduction of trees could play a significant part.

Old photographs of the town centre show street scenes and shop frontages with posed figures, but nothing in the way of trees or grass. Our city fathers were no doubt proud of their securely paved and drained streets, keeping the mud of a more primitive environment at bay. Up to a hundred years ago, it must be remembered, the town was so tightly packed with cottages, shops, shambles, taverns and yards in such a typical way as to almost preclude the existence of trees apart from the occasional orchard in a rear enclosure - but the open country was quite literally only 7 or 8 minutes walk from the Market Place, or a little more in the Nottingham Road direction.

As the inner suburbs developed around the turn of the century, they were planted with trees along the pavements, and the boulevard effect must have been very pleasant. At the same time, Queen's Park was laid out, and we can still enjoy the fine trees there. Unfortunately the street planting was less successful, the ultimate height of the limes (60 ft.) and the planes (90 ft.) has had to be restricted by annual lopping for as long as anyone can remember.

Besides the Park, the other two significant groups of trees which impinge on the town centre are in the Parish Church Area, and at Southfields, but otherwise the treeless appearance of the Market Place, Baxter Gate, the Rushes, and Woodgate at the time of the survey in Autumn 1972 was most marked. Losses of trees around the town centre include the former Island House site, Granby Street, some at the Old Rectory site, poplar avenue at Limehurst School, elms at Burton Walks (happily replaced by limes), and again on the credit side a scattering of silver birch have appeared in Lemington Street/Fennel Street in connection with new buildings.

The opportunities for further new planting in the Town Centre are excellent, some sites can be made available immediately. A particular challenge occurs along the whole Market Place/Devonshire Square axis, and something surely might be done to improve the appearance of Ashby Square. Further opportunities for planting will arise with the redevelopment of central area sites, and the eventual construction of the Inner Circulatory Road. Details of existing and proposed planting in the Town Centre are given in the following schedule and shown on the plan "Trees for the Town Centre".

Schedule

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|------|------------------------|-----------|--|
| 1. | All Saints Churchyard | Plane 50' | A fine specimen, excellent shape and position, seen from the whole length of Churchgate. |
| * 2. | " " " | | Proposed planting to screen backs of houses. Parks Dept. has scheme for 1973/74. |
| 3. | " " " | | 2 sycamore, attractive and valuable position. |
| 4. | " " " | Ash 40' | Valuable specimen tree. |
| 5. | Three Nuns Garden | Beech 40' | Large important tree. |
| 6. | Steeple Row, west side | 8 | good trees on grass verge. |
| | Steeple Row, east side | 7 | " " " " " |
| 7. | Rectory Grounds | 10 or 12 | mature trees, valuable as a group. |
| 8. | Old Rectory Grounds | 19 | mature trees, many necessarily raised, but a good group. |
| 9. | " " " | | Proposed shrubs along fence. |
| 10. | Rectory Place | Beech 40' | Important specimen tree and valuable site. |
| 11. | Sparrow Hill | | Proposed screen of trees to close this gap, if not rebuilt. |

All the foregoing are included in the proposed Conservation Area.

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| 12. | Lemyington Street | Acer 25' | Good condition, useful site. |
| 13. | " " | | Birch saplings. |
| 14. | " " | | Birch sapling, good position. A good example of new planting being carried out simultaneously with new building. |
| 15. | Churchgate | | Proposed planting, depending on building line. |
| 16. | Fennel Street Car Park | 12' | birch saplings, good position. |
| 17. | " " " " | " " " | Also excellent example of planting planned with building. |
| 18. | " " " " | " " " | |
| * 19. | Dead Lane | | Proposed small tree at North end of café. |
| 20. | " " | | Proposed trees to screen new development. |
| 21. | Bridge Street | | Proposed trees on B.W.B. land alongside Inner Circulatory Road. |
| 22. | The Rushes | | A very dreary stretch of road. Proposed shrubs in conjunction with car parking. |

- * 23. Ashby Square Plane 20' severely lopped. Proposed replacement a few yards to the south by a large and effective tree to form a focus along Market Street.

- 24. Ashby Road Proposed planting on south side between Frederick Street and William Street when re-development occurs.

- * 25. Asjby Road Proposed planting on south side between William Street and Granville Street in advance of redevelopment.

- 26. Asjby Road/Inner Circulatory Proposed planting on redevelopment.

- 27. Burleigh Road/Inner Circulatory Proposed planting to screen housing in conjunction with new road.

- 28. Rear of Arthur Street/Inner Circulatory Proposal as no. 27.

- 29. William Street } 6 limes
- 30. Frederick St. } 5 limes
- 31. " " } 6 limes
- 32. Packe Street } 14 limes
- 33. Granby Street } 27 planes

- 34. Brown's Lane Tall Austrian pine, a unique specimen but possibly threatened by development.

- 35. Brown's Lane Proposed planting of large trees on South side of road, depending on proposals for Leisure Centre.

- 36. New Street s. side 4 limes
n. side 3 limes Very small and lopped. 2 trees on main road pavement edge.

- 37. Queens Park At least 120 well grown and well cared for trees. Horse chestnut and lime predominate, with ash, copper beech, sycamore, elm, holly etc. (Summarised from detailed survey carried out by boys of Loughborough Grammar School). Avenue of limes rather close and dark. Two trees just inside gates opposite Library are severely lopped and no longer have any aesthetic value, should be removed.

- * 38. Bedford Quare Proposed planting of large distinctive tree to close the view from Market Place and Devonshire Square, and to give character to Bedford Square.

- * 39. Devonshire Square Large distinctive tree proposed to punctuate the Market Place/Devonshire Square/Bedford Square axis.

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| * 40. Market Place | Proposed small scale planting to articulate the Market Place. |
| * 41. Market Place | Proposed trees to close end of Market Place, and to soften the skyline to the N.E. |
| | It is recognised that any scheme for the Market Place/Bedford Square axis must allow primarily for traffic, market trading, and easy pedestrian movement. Traditional events such as the November Fair and the Boxing Day Meet need not preclude consideration of improvements. |
| * 42. Precinct | A scheme is already in hand for the planting of small trees in the new precinct. |
| * 43. Inner Circulatory/
Southfields | Proposed planting to the south of the new road. |
| 44. Southfields grounds | 10 large trees, deciduous and conifer mixed, also many saplings. A large group of hollies and smaller conifers and 2 or 3 Scots Pines at the Leicester Road end of the belt. These trees could be affected by the line of the Inner Circulatory, and if so replacement planting could be considered at an early stage. |
| 45. Southfields Road | 3 trees in Moss' forecourt, one close to the road is attractive but could be affected by the Inner Circulatory. |
| 46. Woodgate | Very devoid of greenery. Possibility of planting if Baptist Church is redeveloped. |
| * 47. Woodgate | Rear of cinema. Possibility of improving appearance of car park by planting even shrubs in boxes would help. |
| 48. Barrow Street | Vacant land on s. side. Proposed planting on completion of roadworks, tubs might be considered as a temporary measure. |
| * 49. Moor Lane/Inner Circulatory | Proposed planting of small trees in association with the flats. |
| 50. Pinfold Jetty | Proposed planting on completion of roadworks. |
| 51. Pinfold Gate/Inner
Circulatory | Proposed planting to screen industrial premises. |
| * 52. Pinfold Gate/Sparrow Hill | Proposed planting of small trees in conjunction with housing. |
| 53. Sparrow Hill | Proposed planting in front of Post Office after completion of East section of Inner Circulatory road. |

* indicates proposals which can be considered for implementation in the coming season

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