INTRODUCTION

1. The damage to or loss of significant individual trees, tree groups, woodland and other associated vegetation on application sites can have a detrimental impact on the landscape and visual character of an area. All trees regardless of their protected status can be a material consideration in a planning application.

2. The purpose of this annex is to remind staff of the issues associated with planning applications for development on sites where there are existing trees or woodland within or adjoining the site boundary. The annex should assist case officers in deciding the level and nature of detail which they should be requesting from applicants/agents.

3. The advice contained in this annex is relevant in all circumstances where new development is proposed on such a site. However, it will not generally be required for householder applications (unless the site contains a large number of trees or woodland or trees of exceptional quality or amenity value).

4. On sites where there are trees or woodland worthy of retention and protection, the information set out below should be requested at the outline or full stage of the application process. It is imperative that an outline application is not approved which will compromise the retention of trees/woodland (it is too late at Reserved Matters stage if an initial site layout, for example, has been
approved which has compromised tree/woodland retention).

5. The same good practice as laid out below applies to any situation where development proposals may affect trees or woodland on an adjoining property.

**GUIDANCE**

6. There are a number of issues which case officers should be aware of when considering the successful and appropriate retention of trees and the integration of development both during and after construction. These include:-

- Tree protection through legislation;
- Information required from the applicant - based on BS5837:2005: ‘Trees in Relation to Construction’;
- Amenity;
- Protective fencing; and
- Tree management.

**Tree protection through legislation**

7. In dealing with planning applications for development on an application site with individual trees, groups of trees or woodland, the case officer must consider the following:-

Tree Preservation Order, Retention Condition or Conservation Area
8. Where trees have been protected by a Tree Preservation Order, or retention condition or are located within a Conservation Area (where trees are protected as though there was a TPO on them), the presumption will be that these trees will be retained and their removal will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Provisional Tree Preservation Order

9. Where trees, groups of trees or woodland have not been previously protected as in paragraph 8 above and where it is considered expedient in the interests of amenity to do so, the case officer should inform the officer responsible for trees within their Divisional Planning Office as soon as possible, who in turn, at this time, will make a request to Landscape Architects Branch (LAB) for a Provisional TPO to be imposed (reference articles 64, 65, 65A and 66, The Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991). This will then be considered within the resources available to Planning Service. Procedural guidance is available in PC 04/08 and Explanatory Guidance.

Information required from an applicant – based on BS5837:2005: ‘Trees in relation to construction’

10. In order for a case officer to properly assess and determine an application on a site with individual trees, groups of trees or woodland, the following information must be submitted by the applicant. The full details of the impact on trees or woodland should generally be fully considered prior to the granting of planning permission.

11. The information below is based on the requirements of BS5837:2005 ‘Trees in Relation to Construction’ which sets out the British Standard provision in respect of development sites, for a balanced approach on deciding
which trees are appropriate for retention, on the effect of
trees on design considerations and on the means of
protecting trees during development. Applicants requiring
further information should be referred to the British

An Accurate Tree Survey

12. Trees should be tagged on site and a corresponding
accurate tree survey plan, clearly numbered and showing
the exact location and crown spread of all trees should be
submitted. It should be stressed that the accuracy of this
plan may be critical in terms of tree retention in any future
layout.

13. In the case of groups of trees or woodlands, the location of
the centres of the trees should be accurately plotted
together with crown spread of the trees around the edge of
the group or woodland.

14. In the case of other vegetation such as large shrub groups,
the edge of vegetation should be accurately plotted.

A Health and Condition Tree Survey Report

15. A health and condition survey carried out by a qualified
Arboriculturist and including the tree tag number, species,
age, condition, height, and crown spread, the girth
measured at 1.5 metre above ground, observations and
recommended remedial action.

16. In the case of groups of trees, the tree centres should be
plotted, the number of trees in the group stated, and the
group described under the headings as in paragraph 15
above.
17. In the case of woodland, the edge species should be described under the headings as in paragraph 15 with general comment on the above and the remainder of the woodland.

A Tree Constraints Plan

18. A Tree Constraints Plan carried out by a qualified Arboriculturist, which will identify a developable area and include the below ground constraints represented by the Root Protection Area (RPA) (refer to paragraph 30 for calculation of RPA) and the above ground constraints, coupled with the potential for further growth.

19. Above ground constraints should take account of the:

- Extent of the existing crown spread;
- Potential for future tree growth; and
- Need to provide adequate amenity distance.

A Tree Protection Plan

20. This drawing should show the position and tag number of all the trees on the site, identifying those to be retained and those to be removed, as well as the precise location and type of protective fencing to be erected marked as a Tree Protection Area (TPA) on the plan.

21. In terms of clarity, the Tree Protection Plan should be overlaid onto the site layout.
Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS)

22. All construction, including foundations and service trenches etc should be kept outside the protective fencing.

23. However, where works are required **by necessity** within the line of the protective fencing an Arboricultural Method Statement should be required and requested from the applicant prior to the issue of any decision. This should clearly show the detail of the proposed works, the method of construction and any remedial action which shall be necessary to mitigate any potential damage.

24. Only hand-dig methods of construction will be allowed within the area of the protective fencing.

Construction Details and Materials

25. Construction details and materials of all hard surfaces, structures, retaining and other walls, fences etc. should be submitted where they may have an effect on trees or tree roots.

Cross sections and other relevant information on levels

26. Cross-sections, contoured plans and other relevant information on levels should be provided on existing and proposed ground levels, finished floor levels and driveway gradients, especially in proximity to trees for both the development site and adjoining sites where trees are located. The cross-sections must clearly and accurately show, at an appropriate scale, the position of any existing adjoining buildings or structures.
Amenity Distance

27. The amenity distance is the closest distance to the edge of the trees or woodland that development should be allowed to be constructed. Leaving a reasonable amenity distance has many benefits including creating useable garden space and reducing the need for requests for tree surgery/removal due to either threat to public safety or nuisance factors.

28. As a rule of thumb the amenity distance should be measured from the edge of the RPA or the crown spread (which ever is the greater) of the tree, and this should be a minimum of 6.0 metres to the front and rear elevations of development and 3.0 metres to the side gables. Consideration should also be given to the potential for further growth when dealing with the larger species.

29. The amenity distance is, however, dependent on the species of tree. For larger and more heavily shading tree species, such as beech, horse chestnut, oak etc. it is recommended that the amenity distance is increased to 10 metres+.

Protective fencing

30. BS5837:2005 sets out ‘best practice’ distances for protective fencing. Fencing should be erected at a minimum distance of 12 times the tree diameter at 1.5m height. This provides a radius from the centre of the tree upon which the area to be protected is derived. The area to be protected is known as the Root Protection Area (RPA). The table below gives a number of useful calculations in relation to radii which may be of assistance. BS5837:2005 Section 5.2 Table 2 provides the actual calculation for the minimum area in m² which should be left undisturbed around each retained tree but for case officers the radius is
the critical distance which should be ascertained in most cases.

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<th>Diameter at 1.5 m height (cm)</th>
<th>Radius m</th>
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<tr>
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31. Protective fencing should comply with BS5837:2005: Section 9.2 and figure 2. Fencing should consist of a scaffold framework with verticals driven a minimum of 600mm in to the ground, with weldmesh panels fixed with standard scaffolding clamps, well-braced to resist impacts.

32. Details of protective fencing should be shown as described in the Tree Protection Plan as described in paragraph 20 above.

**Tree Management**

33. Long-term management proposals in relation to all trees must be included within a Landscape Management Plan. This should include the aims and objectives of the management as well as an action plan.

**Consultation and additional information**
34. In all other cases, the first point of contact for advice is the officer responsible for trees within the local Divisional Planning Office.

35. It is recommended that all approved tree works (tree removal/surgery) should be carried out prior to the commencement of construction works on site.

36. It should be noted that Roads Service will not adopt roads or footpaths which have been constructed using “no dig” methods. “No dig” may however, be considered for private roads and footpaths not intended for adoption.