



Further examples of streets made unique by tree species would be Linden Lea, and the short section of Middleway lined by service trees. These hybrids are really more effective as specimen plantings, as at the lowest point of Brim Hill where that magnificent service can be viewed from every angle, including from above if you dare take your eyes off the road for a second.

The top section of Erskine Hill is possibly the most creative and imaginative composition in terms of tree planting locally, though it is doubtful if it was every actually 'imagined' in advance. The roadsides are planted with small cockspur thorn trees, but the dense dark green yew hedges contain superb mature pale locust trees absolutely contrasting in colour and form both with the yews and the thorns. This is uniquely effective.

The street trees are maintained by the Parks Section of the Controller of Engineering's Department of the Council. It is their policy to inspect each tree annually, and carry out repair or replacement as needed. Unfortunately resources do not allow watering or feeding and the Parks Section are preparing a circular for distribution in the Suburb asking residents to water the trees in time of drought.

When trees die, or become dangerous replacement, according to Council policy is carried out using a sapling of a contrasting species to that replaced. This is to avoid the danger of loss of an entire street of trees to a disease specific to a particular variety, birch or thorn. A road lined originally with elms would for example have been destroyed by Dutch elm disease. This is a strong and sound argument so far as it goes, but surely where all the efforts at architectural control in the Conservation Area aim to preserve the architectural cohesion of the Suburb, the same principle should apply to the street planting. If each tree in a row is different, almost no total effect is created, just as if each house in the street was totally different from its neighbours. It would not be necessary for an entire road to be planted with a single species; Medway is most satisfactorily landscaped with a succession of tree types sensitively related to changes in the alignment of the road itself.

Should not a masterplan be prepared, to be implemented gradually as the existing trees are replaced, which would make possible an imaginative new landscape at least as effective as the best existing examples mentioned above? Piecemeal replacement without such a plan can only result in a characterless overall uniformity.

Chris Gregory

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